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# Ed speak

**SENNA, SWIFT, RS, A110, ST, URUS...** all six came along to drive at once this month and, in the case of Alpine's new A110 coupe, to test

against key rivals for the first time.

Starting months ago, deputy editor Adam Towler and road test editor James Disdale have been pooling their logistical skills to pull together six of the key drives of 2018. They even sent Dickie Meaden to the Isle of Man *and* the Nürburgring to make sure he had a proper drive of Porsche's 911 GT3 RS. His verdict? 'Yeah, it's OK, but it's no 964 RS...' You can read his genuine reply on page 58.

In a world that is constantly telling us that the car enthusiast is doomed, that the fine art of driving and the thrill that only a great drive in our favourite car can provide will soon be confined to memories, this month's array of new metal provides a great deal of hope. Yes, along the way we have lost some of the magic of yesteryear. With no manual gearbox option, Alpine may be missing a sizeable trick, but if it was a case of the car being built if the engineers agreed not to have one, or the car never seeing the light of day if they insisted upon it, I'm relieved a compromise was found.

At the other end of the scale, it certainly sounds like Lamborghini acknowledged the wishes of its customers in designing an SUV, before heading off to build a Lamborghini that just so happens to have four doors, a raised ride height and the option of 23-inch wheels. Each to their own and all that, but you've got to love the variety this industry can turn out at times.

But it was two of the smaller and more affordable new cars we drove this month that had the majority of us hanging on to hear the verdict: Ford's Fiesta ST and Suzuki's Swift Sport. Both **evo** heroes in previous guises and both thoroughly updated to meet today's ever-changing requirements. Both equally as important to our world as Porsche's new 911 GT3 RS and the McLaren Senna, too.

Enjoy the issue.

**Stuart Gallagher, Editor** @stuartg917

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## THIS MONTH

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- ▶ BMW M5: all six generations at Anglesey Circuit
- ▶ Porsche 911 on the Targa Florio with 'Quick' Vic Eiford

All in the June 2018 Issue of *Octane* magazine, on sale now



## THIS QUARTER

### FERRARI'S GREATEST GTs

The best Ferrari GTs ever, from Daytona to 812

## PLUS

- ▶ Hunting down rare Ferraris with Talacrest
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All in the Summer 2018 issue of *Enzo* magazine, on sale now



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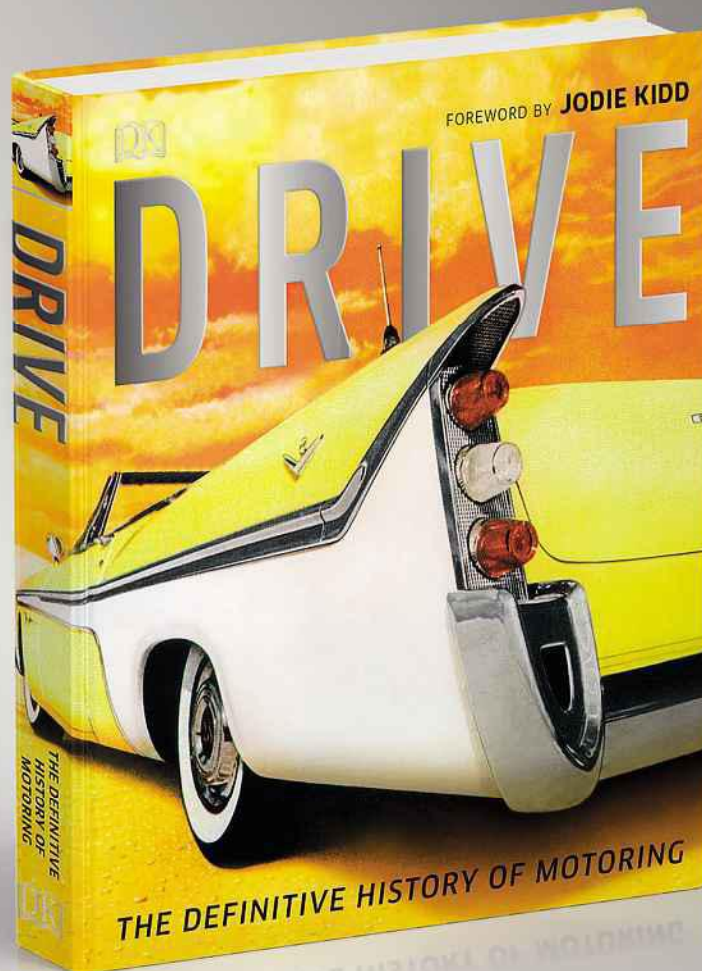
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### **Porsche 911 Turbo / Turbo S (991.2)**

Slip-On line (Titanium) with Rear Carbon fiber diffuser

More power

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# POLE POSITION

With 70 years of racing heritage behind it, Brabham's £1million track-only BT62 is just the start for the Anglo-Australian firm



'SO WHAT DO YOU THINK OF THE CAR?'

David Brabham's question catches me off-guard. It's all too easy to become jaded by the constant influx of glitzy supercars and track-focused hypercars these days; most of them fall far beyond the reach of mere mortals, and more than a fraction simply never see the light of day.

I'd been sceptical about Brabham's new BT62, too, but perhaps I shouldn't have been. It's still early days, but Brabham looks set to offer something genuinely unique in the track car market – not least an enviable 70 years of motor racing heritage since David's father, Jack, started building Midget racers, before going on to become the only man to win an F1 title in a car bearing his own name.

If all goes well, there are plans for a range of vehicles, and a Le Mans attempt, too. But for now, here's everything you need to know about the BT62.

## 1 ENGINE & TRANSMISSION

The BT62's 5.4-litre V8 is Brabham-built, albeit based on unnamed architecture from elsewhere. Naturally aspirated, the quad-cam, 32-valve unit breathes through drive-by-wire individual throttle bodies and exhales through a motorsport exhaust system that, at 98 dB, should just sneak onto some UK trackdays. Output is 700bhp, with 492lb ft at 6200rpm. The transmission is a proper motorsport unit, too, a Holinger six-speed pneumatically actuated sequential operated by paddles – capable of full-throttle upshifts and auto-blipping downshifts. There are no solid performance figures: 'You don't really need to focus on 0-60 times and top speeds with a track-focused car,' explains Brabham.

## 2 BODY

It can't be an easy task designing a track-only supercar that looks unlike the many other track-focused supercars on the market, but Brabham may just have managed it. Spend long enough and you might see hints of others in its carbonfibre bodywork, but much of the shape, including the carbon floorpan, barge boards, adjustable rear wing and rear diffuser, are a result of computational fluid dynamics testing. Exterior personalisation depends on the car: the first 35 examples are the Celebration Series, with each chassis number corresponding to the 35 Brabham Grand Prix wins and featuring the relevant livery. The second 35 cars are the Signature Series, with more scope for personalisation.



“ The first 35 cars are the Celebration Series, with each chassis number corresponding to the 35 Brabham Grand Prix wins and featuring the relevant livery ”







### 3 INTERIOR

It's refreshingly businesslike in here, akin to a particularly well-trimmed GT car or Le Mans prototype. So the tube frame is visible, along with the carbonfibre body construction, but the seats and carbon dashboard are trimmed in Alcantara with contrasting stitching and there's a neatly integrated driver display and switch panel. The interior shown depicts one of the first 35 cars, with a plaque celebrating Jack Brabham's 1966 French Grand Prix win. The seats (and six-point harnesses) are fixed – instead, as in Ford's GT, the pedal box can be adjusted to suit different drivers. Owners will familiarise themselves with the car and its cabin through an academy programme, bringing them up to speed with the BT62's performance under professional guidance.

### 4 CHASSIS

David Brabham describes the chassis construction as 'tubular metallic architecture', similar to that used in GT racing, with combined chassis and rollover protection. The aims are strength, safety and light weight, and with a dry kerb weight of 972kg the latter is in little doubt. Suspension is by double wishbones at all four corners, with pushrods for the Öhlins TTX coilover springs and dampers. The anti-roll bars are adjustable. Rolling stock comprises 18-inch Brabham centre-lock racing wheels, 11 inches wide at the front, 13 at the rear. Michelin competition rubber is used. Brakes are Brembo carbon-carbon units – 380mm at the front, 355mm at the rear, all grabbed by six-piston calipers.



#### SPECIFICATION

Engine	V8, 5387cc
Power	700bhp @ 7400rpm
Torque	492lb ft @ 6200rpm
Weight (dry)	972kg
Power-to-weight	732bhp/ton
0-62mph	n/a
Top speed	186mph+ (claimed)
Basic price	£1million (plus taxes)
On sale	Now

# DAVID AND THE GOLIATHS

David Brabham outlines his company's ambitions – on track and road

McLAREN P1 GTR, FERRARI FXX K, ASTON Martin Vulcan – just a small selection of the track-only hypercars to have hit the market in recent years, with several more on the way. To compete is no easy task, but there's a lot to be said for an evocative name – Brabham Automotive, for example. At the BT62's official debut, we sat down with David Brabham to find out a little more, from the car's raison d'être, to future road cars, and a crack at Le Mans...

**What makes now the right time to build a car such as the BT62?**

It's a combination of factors. There seems to be an appetite for cars like this right now, but ultimately it's about what I wanted the car to be like, a kind of unrestricted GT car, influenced by my experience from 35 years of racing.

**How does the car compare to some of the race cars you've driven over the years?**

It's a big step forward from the GT1 cars – I'd say it's somewhere between a GT1 and a Le Mans Prototype, that kind of range.

**And was the decision to go with a track-only supercar the most desirable option? Similar technology could produce a road car or a full race car, for example.**

It was, because our brand is as a thoroughbred racing company. We're celebrating 70 years of racing history this year, which is incredible – Ferrari celebrated its 70th last year, Porsche this year... If Brabham's going to come out with



**Above:** David Brabham says the BT62 will set the scene for what Brabham Automotive does next

something, it makes sense for it to have high performance, blistering lap times, to be durable – and that sets the scene for what you do next.

**How far away is the BT62 from being road-legal?**

We've certainly looked into it in some detail, but our primary goal is to produce BT62 as a track car. But you never know...

**Are you looking to become the next big supercar brand – a McLaren competitor?**

We have ambitions to produce a road car, but it's a bit too far down the road to talk about that yet. We're not going to be a mass-production supercar company, though – it's going to be more niche.

**You've got ambitions to go to Le Mans with the company. Is that with the BT62? And is there a timeframe?**

It's not been designed to race in a particular championship. Our next model will probably be designed more with GT racing in mind. There are a lot of regulation discussions going on with the ACO in terms of GT and LMP, and it certainly opens up a window of opportunity for us. We have to wait until those regulations become firm – we're talking around 2020 – and we can respond quickly once those regulations have been revealed.

**Where do you see Le Mans regulations heading? GT cars rather than prototypes?**

That's a very good question. GT has always been pretty strong. LMP1 has always gone in circles, and I've lived in that world where one minute it's the hot thing and the next minute it's not. Manufacturers spend gazillions trying to win Le Mans and then it all changes. There's a possibility that there could be another class, or that LMP becomes simpler – a little like IMSA. What's important is that we have a business that supports the race team.

**Would you race again yourself – aiming for a win in a car bearing your name?**

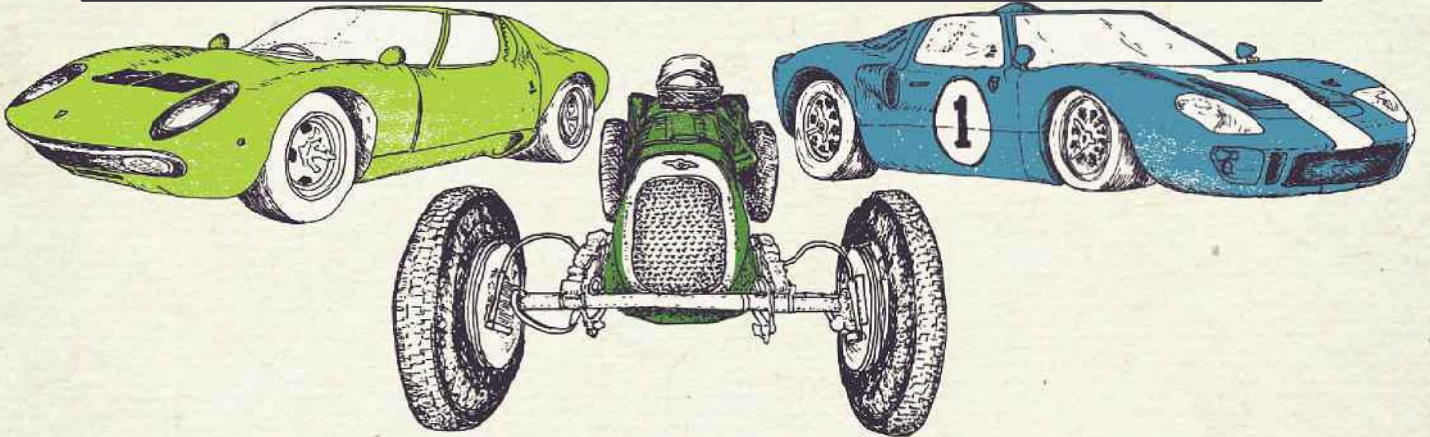
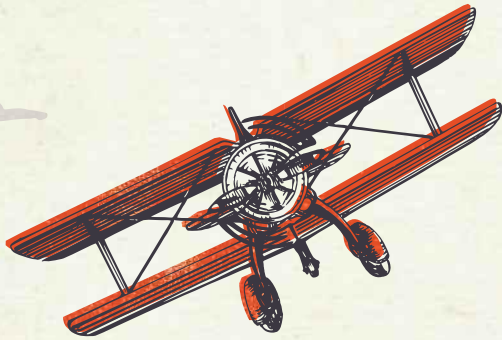
Obviously there's a part of me that thinks that's pretty cool! But as a driver... in 2020 I'm going to be like 54, 55, so will I feel like I can get in and do the job? I'm either going to contribute properly as a driver, and if not, then I'll stick somebody else in. It's all about the performance.





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# DB11 AMR earns its stripes

Upgraded 630bhp V12 helps make 208mph AMR Aston's fastest road car

ASTON MARTIN COULD BE FORGIVEN for leaving its DB11 on the back-burner after the launch of the new Vantage, but instead it has unveiled a new flagship variant called the DB11 AMR. This is the third product under the AMR (Aston Martin Racing) banner, after the previous-generation Vantage AMR and the very limited edition V12 Vantage AMR Pro.

Utilising a subtly upgraded version of the 5.2-litre twin-turbo V12 from the standard DB11, power has been lifted by

30bhp to 630bhp. This makes the DB11 AMR the fastest Aston Martin on sale, reaching 62mph in 3.7sec (0.2sec quicker than a standard V12 DB11) and able to hit 208mph (8mph faster). A more vocal exhaust system is also fitted, emphasising the AMR's role as a sporting coupe, rather than a more relaxed GT. The chassis has been tightened, too, but without, claims Aston, affecting the DB11's supple ride.

The AMR can be picked out from lesser DB11s by its numerous styling changes.

Gloss black for the roof, grille, sills and splitter are key identifiers, likewise darker finishes for the lighting units. There are also 20-inch forged wheels borrowed from the new Vantage. Priced at £174,995 – a £17,095 premium – the DB11 AMR will reach customers in the next few months.

For those after a little more exclusivity, Aston Martin is also offering three 'Designer Specifications', including just 100 units in AMR's signature Stirling Green and Lime livery (pictured), at £201,995.

**Right:** new DB11 AMR can do 0-62mph in 3.7sec on its way to 208mph



## MERCEDES-AMG E53 SALOON AND ESTATE GO HYBRID

AMG's new mild-hybrid 'EQ Boost' 3-litre turbocharged straight-six engine has just found a new home in the E-class saloon and estate. Already available in the CLS and E-class coupe and cabriolet, the E53 saloon and estate share the same 429bhp combined output. The new AMG E53 will replace the E43 model, and will cost £61,835 and £63,835 for the saloon and estate respectively.



## BMW M5 COMPETITION GETS POWER UPLIFT TO 616BHP

BMW's M5 will soon reclaim the title of most powerful supersaloon on sale with a new Competition variant. Peak power from the 4.4-litre twin-turbo V8 rises to 616bhp, 24bhp more than the standard M5, and 12bhp more than the Mercedes-AMG E63 S. The sprint to 62mph drops by a tenth to 3.3sec. Revised suspension, black styling details and new forged 20-inch wheels also feature.



## POLESTAR 1 PITCHED AGAINST HIGH-END RIVALS

Volvo's new performance offshoot, Polestar, has announced pricing for its first model, the carbonfibre-clad Polestar 1. Adding to the ranks of electrified performance cars on the market next year, at €155,000 (c£135,000) it will not be cheap. Priced £10k above the Mercedes-AMG S63 Coupe and only £20k less than the new Bentley Continental GT, it's a high price to pay for a new type of GT.

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# Limited-run evo Elise

Just 15 examples of Elise Sport 220 evo Edition will be built, marking Lotus's eCoty victory

**L**OTUS IS MARKING ITS VICTORY in the sports car category of last year's evo Car of the Year competition with a limited-run Elise Sport 220 evo Edition.

Based on the Sport 220 that won said award, it has a kerb weight of just 904kg and is powered by a 1.8-litre, 217bhp supercharged engine. Limited to just 15 examples, the evo Edition is available in two colours – metallic orange (in homage to the Series 1 Elise that appeared on the dummy 'issue 000' of evo 20 years ago) and metallic black.

The Sport 220 won our hearts for its real-world performance and its modest dimensions. As Colin Goodwin concluded: 'The Lotus Elise Sport 220 shows not only how it used to be done, but how it should still be done.'

What marks out the £42,000 evo Edition from a standard Sport 220? Wisely the mechanical make-up is untouched; instead Lotus has included



**Above:** bespoke components feature on the limited-run Elise Sport 220 evo Edition

a number of bespoke fit-and-finish components while allowing you to cherry-pick a few optional luxuries (in Lotus terms) such as a titanium exhaust.

The standard kit includes lightweight forged wheels, carbonfibre sill covers, interior and exterior colours packs, contrasting stitching and seatbelts and exclusive evo logos for the seats and bodywork. Add these options to a regular £39,900 Sport 220 and you'd need to find an additional £5000.

If it was us ordering an evo Edition, we'd be nostalgic and go for orange.



# Concours to showcase 100 years of motoring

The rare and the exotic take pride of place in City of London gathering

evo and its sister title Octane will return to the Honourable Artillery Company's HQ on Thursday 7 and Friday 8 June to host the second City of London Concours, where a gathering of coveted road and race cars will go on display.

In a similar fashion to last year's event, a collection of performance cars dating back more than 100 years will feature, including the Pagani Huayra, the Mercedes-Benz 300SL Gullwing and

the 135mph 1911 Fiat S76. These cars embody the exhibition theme 'A Celebration of Speed'.

When all the exotic and rare metal starts to overwhelm, you can retire to the pavilions or marquees encircling the five-acre green to find food and drink vendors, while elsewhere on site there will be upmarket retailers selling apparel, art and watches.

Tickets are on sale now on the London Concours

website ([londonconcours.co.uk](http://londonconcours.co.uk)). Entry for either day is £35 for an adult, £18 for a child or student, or £25 for a senior. However, a discounted adult ticket is available for £23 if you enter our promotional code 'DENNISVIP' when prompted.

Hospitality packages, for breakfast or lunch, are available, too, costing £120 and £216 respectively. Gates will open at 10am on both days, and close at 8pm on the Thursday and 5.30pm on the Friday.



# INSIDE FERRARI'S MOST POWERFUL V8 EVER

When the Ferrari 488 Pista arrives in the summer, 50 per cent of the components that make up its 710bhp twin-turbo V8 engine will be brand new. Here's why





by SHANE O'DONOGHUE



## 1 Reduced charge air temperature

The temperature of the air entering the engine was a major focus for Ferrari's engineers. A reduced temperature is desirable as it allows more spark advance before 'knock' sets in. This, in conjunction with higher valve lift for more turbulence, means faster combustion, improved efficiency and, ultimately, more power.

Repositioned engine air inlets compared with those on the 488 GTB allow for larger intercoolers ahead of the rear wheels, and the radiators in the nose are tilted so the hot air exiting them doesn't find its way to those intercoolers. All that accounts for a six-degree drop in intercooler outlet temperature.

Next, a new, smaller carbonfibre air plenum and shorter runners feature 'intake detuning' at full load, making the air in the cylinders some eight degrees cooler at 8000rpm.

## 2 Improved throttle response

Ferrari claims that the 488 GTB already had best-in-class responsiveness and the Pista's data reveals further improvements. A big part of this is down to the 17 per cent reduction in the weight of moving masses, achieved by measures including hollow inlet valves and new springs, titanium connecting rods and a lightened flywheel. This, in turn, has allowed for a lighter crankshaft.

The sharpest response is reserved for Race mode, where the closely integrated control of the wastegates, throttle bodies

and spark timing results in a 0.3-second improvement in getting to full air-plenum pressure and vehicle acceleration when the driver pushes from 40 per cent throttle at 3000rpm to wide-open throttle.

## 3 Increased output

Taking a bigger leap up in power than previous special series models such as the 458 Speciale and 430 Scuderia, the Pista makes 710bhp at 8000rpm, up from 661bhp at 6500rpm in the GTB. Peak

torque is up 7lb ft to 568lb ft.

Surprisingly, these improvements are not due to more boost pressure. Indeed, the only change to the two IHI turbochargers is the addition of inductive speed sensors, allowing accurate optimisation of their speed limit rather than relying on model data. Instead, it's the air temperature and spark changes (see point 1) that bring the bulk of the extra power. Meanwhile, new Inconel exhaust manifolds with longer runners and a larger pipe diameter mean reduced back pressure and pumping losses.

## 4 Reduced mass

Of the 488 Pista's total 90kg weight reduction over the 1475kg GTB, the engine accounts for a significant 18kg. That's despite the higher loads on the components due to ten per cent higher peak firing pressures.

The Inconel exhaust manifolds save 9.7kg, ancillaries including the air con compressor's pulley account for 2.3kg, titanium connecting rods save 1.7kg, the flywheel is 1.5kg lighter, thinner cylinder liners save a further 1.3kg, the new crankshaft is 1.2kg lighter thanks to the elimination of the central balancing webs, and the hollow inlet valves and their lighter springs account for another 300g.

How big a difference this all makes we'll find out when we drive the car in a few months' time.

### FERRARI 458 SPECIALE

Engine	V8, 4497cc
Power	597bhp @ 9000rpm
Torque	398lb ft @ 6000rpm
Weight	1395kg
Power-to-weight	435bhp/ton
0-62mph	3.0sec (claimed)
Top speed	202mph+ (claimed)
Basic price	£208,000 (2014)
On sale	2014-2015

### FERRARI 488 PISTA

Engine	V8, 3902cc, twin-turbo
Power	710bhp @ 8000rpm
Torque	568lb ft @ 3000rpm
Weight	1385kg
Power-to-weight	521bhp/ton
0-62mph	2.9sec (claimed)
Top speed	211mph+ (claimed)
Basic price	£230,000 (est)
On sale	Summer 2018

**Above:** how the 488 Pista compares with its naturally aspirated 458 Speciale predecessor



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## HENRY CATCHPOLE

CONTRIBUTING  
WRITER

This year *evo* celebrates its 20th birthday. To mark the occasion, in this series we're asking key members of the team to recall their most memorable *evo* moments

### Tell us your earliest *evo* memory

I was 16 years old and Bruce, my best friend at school, brought in a copy of this new car magazine with a silver Maserati 3200 GT on the front. It might sound fanciful, but it was after reading issue 001 cover to cover that I knew exactly what I was going to say to the careers advisor.

### What was the first car you drove for *evo*?

A black Mini Cooper S. The second car I drove for *evo* was a white Mini Cooper S.

### What was your first car launch for *evo*?

The Smart Forfour Brabus (issue 079). Not a very memorable (or good) car, but I do have memories of the wonderful hairpin roads around Sospel in the south of France and the smell of hot brakes. It wasn't a big launch, but I remember thinking how glamorous it all was.

### What's the most memorable *evo* test you've been part of?

The drive stories are what I've always enjoyed doing the most. Finding a jaw-

dropping piece of road and then working with a photographer to get a shot of an amazing car doing something cool is very rewarding. I've also been very lucky to do the trips with people I consider friends. I think my most memorable journey was with Dean Smith when we took an MP4-12C to Morocco and drove over the Atlas Mountains and back (issue 173). Never did see goats climbing trees, though.

### And your most memorable *evo* drive?

My *best* drive was probably in a WRC car... or a Caterham... or an R26.R, but undoubtedly my most memorable was in XP5, the dark green prototype McLaren F1 we had in our analogue supercars test (issue 186). It was at night and I was chasing Jethro Bovingdon through a patchily damp Wales. He was in an F40, so it was like an early '90s schoolboy dream come to life. The F1's headlights were pretty terrible and I can vividly remember seeing the sparks from under the Ferrari as it encountered some of the more vicious bumps. It was intense, to say the least, as I think the insurance excess on the McLaren would have bankrupted *evo*. The addictive sound of the V12 was just incredible, though. Indelible even.

### Your worst *evo* moment is...?

My worst moment was actually at the start of one of the greatest things I've ever done for *evo*. In fact, it was more like a

**Below:** going rallying in Kielder Forest fulfilled a Catchpole dream, but it wasn't entirely plain sailing

worst evening. Several months and quite a bit of my own meagre funds had led to the moment when I finally got behind the wheel of a little Suzuki rally car. It was the Pirelli Rally, the first round of the British Rally Championship, and we were in Kielder Forest for three special stages (*evo* 119). The darkness felt all encompassing, the ruts big enough to swallow the car whole, and it seemed like we were permanently on the verge of having a massive accident. I was terrified. So terrified that between stages two and three I wanted to get out of the car and never get back in. I felt like a fearful failure and it was horrible. Thankfully, the rest of the season was rather better!

### Tell us about the most disappointing car you've driven for *evo*

A small yellow thing called an Elfin MS8 Clubman. It was Australia's answer to a Caterham, with a V8 under its protuberant snout. The recipe sounds fun, but the reality was rather unpalatable. The steering was slow yet had almost no lock. Try to slide the car and a spin was almost inevitable. It was christened the Elfin safety hazard.

### What's the one car you wish you had driven during the last 20 years?

I've never driven a Ferrari 550 Maranello (or a 575, for that matter). As it was proclaimed *evo*'s greatest driver's car in 2004 (just before I joined), it feels like a small piece is missing from my own *evo* jigsaw. One day...





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# Essentials

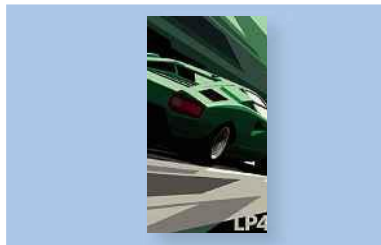
Our pick of the best new motoring products



## TOY CAR

**Playforever 502 Clyde Midnight**  
£38 [playforever.co.uk](http://playforever.co.uk)

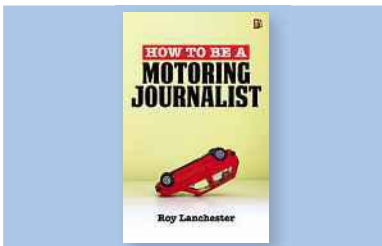
Do you have delusions of dressing your children in rolled-up capris and bright Mary Janes? Even if you don't, this circa-1950s 502 Clyde Midnight racer might just be all the period glamour they need. It's even available in a fetching purple and copper combo.



## PRINT

**Guy Allen Countach print**  
£65 [guyallen.co.uk](http://guyallen.co.uk)

Arguably *the* iconic supercar, this Lamborghini Countach has been captured in a sleek Guy Allen print in desirable LP400 form. The green colour scheme is a pleasing contrast to the usual pomp surrounding a Lamborghini and makes for a surprisingly subtle piece of automotive artwork.



## BOOK

**How to be a Motoring Journalist**  
£7.99 [amazon.co.uk](http://amazon.co.uk)

**evo** columnist Richard Porter has been scribbling into a book again, this time as his alter ego Roy Lanchester. A motoring journalist from another era, Roy's memoirs contain stories that would make an influencer cry over their freshly wrapped supercar. Read it and weep (with joy, hopefully).



## TOOL

**PCL DTPG7 tyre pressure gauge**  
£35.06 [pcl-online.com](http://pcl-online.com)

Tyre pressure monitoring is an increasingly common feature in cars, but it's not always as reliable as you might like. To figure out whether that annoying bong from the dash is fact or fiction, PCL's compact digital gauge is a perfect glovebox accessory.



## FOOTWEAR

**Gandys MCL33 Halo Edition flip-flops**  
£24 [gandyslondon.com](http://gandyslondon.com)

Clothing brand Gandys donates ten per cent of its profits towards building homes for underprivileged children in countries such as Sri Lanka, Malawi and Nepal. The company launched by selling flip-flops, and has just teamed up with McLaren for this new Halo Edition design.



## AUDIO

**Pure Highway 400 DAB adaptor**  
£129.99 [pure.com](http://pure.com)

If you drive anything more than a few years old you might be frustrated that your favourite DAB station is not easily accessible on the move. The Pure Highway 400 DAB adaptor is an easy way to get that access on the run, patching in to your existing stereo through a normal aux input.

# WATCHES



## Gauge Timeline

From £300, [gauge.watch](http://gauge.watch)

Available in six different instrument-inspired designs, each limited to 999 pieces, the Timeline has a 42mm case and an automatic movement. Quote EVO30 to get 30 per cent off.



## TAG Heuer Carrera Calibre 16 Chronograph

From £3400, [tagheuer.com](http://tagheuer.com)

Two new Carreras, each sporting vintage-style red accents, mark the model's 55th anniversary. The blue-dial version gets a steel bracelet, the black dial a leather strap.



## Nomos Autobahn

£3800, [nomos-glashuette.com](http://nomos-glashuette.com)

Combining a simple 41mm case with an unusual dished dial, the Autobahn is available in three colour schemes, two of which take their hues from the signs of Germany's fastest roads.

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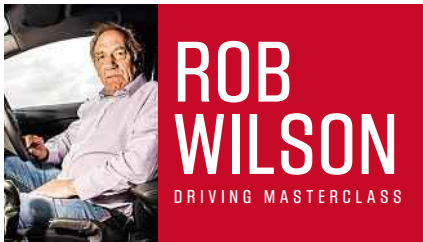
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## The shortest possible corner

**A**FTER LOOKING AT BRAKING technique last month, it's now time to get into the substance of the turn. Here we often want the car to rotate slightly more than you might think, not for the benefit of the corner itself, but for what follows afterwards – often a straight.

This technique is not applicable for every corner – at Copse at Silverstone, for example, you just want to get round

in a harmonised way taking a geometric line. However, in many corners, creating the shortest possible corner with this extra rotation reduces tyre wear and improves exit speed.

To do this, we need to put on another couple of degrees of steering angle in the middle of the corner near what we call the apex – it may not be the geometric apex of the corner, but it's *our* apex on *our* line – so that we can then take a couple of degrees out immediately afterwards, and then do a subtly diagonal line towards the outside of the track. This means your wheels are pointing straighter on the exit, taking an awful lot of kilos (remember our weight transfer lesson) out of the loaded side of the car, and it therefore accelerates faster.

It's very subtle – not that visible to the naked eye – but like the edge of a 50p piece. Introducing that extra steering angle does give us a slightly higher peak load at the tyre momentarily during the middle of the curve, but the payback is less load over the next eight car lengths



**'The shortest corner reduces tyre wear and improves exit speed'**

to the exit. Think of it like placing your hand on a red-hot stove for a split second, compared with holding it on a cooler, but still hot, stove for ten seconds – the latter will always do more damage.

Rob tutors aspiring racing drivers and current professional racers

# evo NEXT MONTH

ON SALE WEDNESDAY 13 JUNE

## ASTON MARTIN VANTAGE VERSUS ITS RIVALS

evo (USPS 024-183) is published monthly by Dennis Publishing Ltd, 31-32 Alfred Place, London, WC1E 7DP, United Kingdom. For subscriptions in the USA and Canada, visit [www.imsnews.com](http://www.imsnews.com), phone 1-800-428-3003, fax 1-757-428-6253, or email [cs@imsnews.com](mailto:cs@imsnews.com). U.S. Agent Pitney Bowes International Mailing Services, 158 Mt Olivet Avenue, Newark NJ 07114-2114. Periodicals postage is paid at Paterson NJ and additional mailing offices. US POSTMASTER: Please send address changes to Pitney Bowes International Mailing Services, 158 Mt Olivet Avenue, Newark NJ 07114-2114. Subscription records are maintained by Dennis Publishing Ltd, 31-32 Alfred Place, London, WC1E 7DP, United Kingdom. Subscription prices: UK £47.99, Europe £58.20, Rest of World £88.40, USA \$115. All for 12 issues.

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# Driven

McLAREN SENNA // BMW i8 ROADSTER //  
ALPINA B5 // SUZUKI SWIFT SPORT

## McLaren Senna

Strap yourself in for six intense, brain-scrambling laps of Silverstone in a production-spec prototype of McLaren's ultimate road-legal track car



THE FIRST SERIOUS MOTOR RACE I went to at Silverstone, 'our' track when growing up, was the then WEC equivalent World Sportscar Championship round of 1988. The era of Group C. Big cars, He-Man aero, even bigger power. Given I was a car-mad youngster, my life was never the same again after that day.

Today, as the McLaren Senna's butterfly door clicks shut above my head, and the thud of the V8's baritone exhaust blare instantly switches to a deep hum down the ear canals and a tingle in the back, that bitterly cold spring day in 1988 flashes across my mind: here I am, in a brutish, mid-engined machine, wraparound screen and pared-back pod of a cockpit, 789bhp under my right foot, bespoke Trofeo R tyres that, in spite of tread, must surely give a 30-year-old design of slick a run for its money, and an almost weightless carbon rear wing to rival the one on an AEG-sponsored Sauber-Mercedes C9. Gulp.

You've probably already read plenty about the Senna – McLaren's ultimate road-legal track car. Like most of us, you may have gasped,

perhaps in horror, at the initial pictures, and shared a collective scepticism when those who had seen the car in the carbon seemed infatuated by it. I am of that camp: bemused on first acquaintance, but besotted having walked around it, understood the crazy shapes, and felt its presence. The Senna has stellar presence, just like its namesake had when he walked into a room.

We're at Silverstone – the International circuit to be precise – to have a first 'go' in the Senna. This is not the main launch event, simply half a dozen laps in the car, but there are no cone chicanes, and while I have WEC GTE pro Euan Hankey sitting beside me, he's there to advise, not to limit rev usage or top speed.

Having suspended myself in mid-air across the sill and then fallen with as much grace as I can muster into the 8kg moulded carbonfibre seat – with cushioned pads in strategic places – I'm clamped in place, notably across the shoulders, and I clip in the four-point harness that the McLaren tech then pulls tight over the HANS device.

We're in Race mode, with ESP off but some









# Driven

of the Senna's traction-enhancing software on. I click in first gear with the smooth, engineered action of the right-hand paddle and brush the throttle to tentatively edge us away from the pit garage.

You don't faff about when driving the Senna. Hankey has already briefed me about the brakes; that they don't respond to being finessed – they're about muscle power, confidence and, to some extent, aggression. The idea behind the Senna is that it, and you, are totally focused on the driving experience. This it achieves because there really isn't much to look at inside, and more than that, there isn't time to look around, nor to admire the scenery. As I squeeze the throttle to the stop in third gear the car sucks the road's surface towards us and Village corner immediately beckons. Yep, that brake pedal is solid, but wonderfully reassuring at the same time, as if wilt and inadequacy are abhorrent.

Across the Link section, feel the car go light over the awkward bump and the rears get slightly agitated. Now guide the nose early into the right-hander, letting it then run wide as

there's room on the exit. Time, then, to unleash the full straight-line fury of the Senna. There is no pause, it's already in the zone, and angry – angrier than virtually any internal combustion engine I can recall. I'm operating entirely by feel and sound: sensing the engine increasing in revolutions by the shift in harmonics, how at a certain rpm the V8 induces a fizzy twitch in my spinal cord, how the dorsal intake really sucks and screams as the red line approaches. Colours flash in my lower peripheral vision, which I take to mean 'change up now, you fool'. I register a glimpse of 8000rpm, I think, possibly, and so it goes on, each gear taking less than you're requiring to read a line of this story, the Hangar Straight a bitstream of grey and green. And Stowe is approaching.

Ah Stowe. A hero's corner. Mansell's corner. I don't know how quickly we're travelling, but fifth gear, that must be really fast, right? Resisting every last urge to brake, I leave it until what seems ludicrously late and then stamp on that left pedal. What follows is what separates the Senna from any other road car I've driven. The Senna just stops; digs into the



**Above:** evo's Towler is briefed by Hankey before heading out. **Below and right:** the Senna has the measure of F1-grade circuits such as Silverstone, yet it can be legally driven on the road, too



---

‘The Senna digs into the asphalt like it has drilled down to the hardcore and moored itself on giant chains’





asphalt like it's drilled down to the hardcore beneath that old RAF runway and moored itself on giant iron chains.

I was too early. Far too early. Never mind. Guide the nose into Stowe. Don't apex too early. Those attributes that we look for in a road car – the response, weighting and accuracy of the steering, the sense of balance to the chassis – all seem spot-on. I don't once question their authenticity. It's another big stop for Club Corner, where a trailing-in on the brakes reveals a wonderfully predictable sense of rotation, then out past the Wing building and the finishing line.

The Abbey to Farm Curve complex highlights the Senna's other key attribute: aero – all 800kg of the stuff at 155mph. Dammit, with each lap I try to leave the gas on more, just breathing on the brakes and turning in earlier, even when that seems like a ticket to understeer oblivion, only to hear Hankey's encouragement to push harder still

on the entry. It's the same at Stowe, which my left shoulder can attest to as it's crushed repeatedly against the seat.

I'm leaving the braking that bit later, squeezing that cornering speed a bit higher. I know I'm nowhere near the limit yet, but oh man does it feel fast. Yet there's something else: by the last lap I am getting tired. Or more specifically, the Mk1 eight-bit device atop my shoulders is starting, just slightly, to lose its grip. A missed apex here, an incorrect gear choice there. I am glad to pit – I need to digest everything, ruminate, then head out again. If only.

Yes, the Senna is mind-fryingly quick, but it's the braking and cornering speed that astound. That, and the intensity of the experience. This validation prototype – VP736 – is 'currently what we think will be production spec'. We'll drive the finished article this summer. I may have just about calmed down by then.

**Adam Towler** (@AdamTowler)



## Specification

Engine	Power	Torque	0-62mph	Top speed	Weight (dry)	Basic price
V8, 3999cc, twin-turbo	789bhp @ 7250rpm	590lb ft @ 5500-6700rpm	2.8sec (claimed)	211mph (claimed)	1198kg (669bhp/ton)	£750,000

➕ Astounding braking and cornering speed, stellar presence    ❌ All 500 examples are spoken for

**evo rating** ★★★★★





# BMW i8 Roadster

BMW has taken its cutting gear to the roof of the i8 coupe to create a car even more striking than the original. But is it as electrifying to drive as it looks?

**B** MW HAD NO INTENTION OF offering its i8 as a roadster, but such was customer demand that the company's engineers literally took a saw to the carbonfibre roof of an i8 coupe to see what would happen when they cut it off. Unsurprisingly, the carbon tub didn't fold in on itself like a '70s British sports car at its first MOT, and so the i8 Roadster was born.

What followed was a development process never envisaged when BMW launched its plug-in hybrid coupe four years and 13,000 examples ago. While removing the roof was relatively straightforward, it did present a handful of new issues to overcome. Chief amongst these was airflow. The i8 coupe expels the hot air from its front-mounted radiators through a vent in the front bonnet, the air then flowing over and along the roof of the car and across the rear deck. Without a roof, that 70deg C air now headed straight over the header rail and into the passengers' laps; great in the winter, less so in sunny California. So, the vent was plugged and the warm air redirected to exit through the wheelarches and

under the car, providing a solution, but creating a new problem at the same time.

The combination of the redirected air under the car and the removal of the fixed roof played havoc with the airflow. The aero team suggested a fixed rear wing, but the designers sent them back to their drawing boards to think again. They returned with a revised rear diffuser and, at the front, positioned low

behind the front bumper, a new spoiler, which combine to solve the problem.

Very little additional bracing was required for the tub, bar a few additional layers of carbon in the A-pillars and the windscreen header, while a plate was secured to the outer corners of the underside of the i8 to guarantee stiffness. The butterfly doors are also new, despite looking pretty much identical to the coupe's originals minus the window frames. Yet this alteration brought a need for new hinges and amended weight distribution in order for the doors to stay open.

Then there is the roof.

Neither BMW nor its customers wanted a metal folding roof or a lift-out targa-style panel. The former was vetoed because it would remove all luggage space (not that there's a great deal to start with), the latter because storing it in the car would be an issue and leaving it at home not an option. Naturally, the soft-top that was settled upon is electric. It can open or close in 15 seconds and be operated at road speeds of up to 31mph, but it does mean the small, 911-style rear seats of



**Above:** butterfly doors, now frameless to match the open top, required redesigning for the roadster





**Above:** there's little buffeting with the roof open and only a slight increase in wind noise when it's closed. **Left and below:** E-Copper metallic and Donington Grey metallic are new colour options

'With the roof open, sensations are heightened as a new wave of sounds wash over you'



the coupe have gone, replaced with a further 100 litres of luggage space.

Visually the i8 Roadster is arguably more striking than the coupe, upping the kerbside appeal as it delivers a hit of genuine design freshness, with the integration of the open roof harming not a single line on the car.

Coinciding with the Roadster's arrival is BMW's latest eDrive technology, which will be fitted to the i8 coupe, too. The significant change is to the battery pack, which remains the same physical size but with cell capacity increased and its energy capacity up from 7.1 to 11.6kWh. Primarily this is to improve the i8's electric-only driving range (now up to 33 miles, from 20) and the speeds at which you can drive without the help of the (unchanged) 1.5-litre three-cylinder turbo petrol engine. But

there's also a mild, 12bhp power increase to 141bhp for the electric motor, which combines with the three-pot's 228bhp to give a total of 369bhp. Torque remains at a strong 420lb ft.

Despite an additional 60kg to move along compared with the coupe's 1535kg, there's little noticeable performance disadvantage. The ability to drive for longer and faster – up to 70mph – under electric power is welcome, and with the roof open the sensations are heightened as a new wave of sounds that would normally be drowned out by an engine, exhaust note and tyre noise (the i8 still runs a narrow front and rear tyre) now wash over you. There's a hint of Formula E about it, which petrol-power purists will most likely hate.

Select Sport mode, awaken the internal combustion engine, and it and the exhaust

note add a layer of character that brings the sports car out of the i8. The gruffness of the engine is more small-capacity '60s sports car than large-lunged '90s behemoth, but add in the turbocharger's chuff and puff and the i8 audibly encourages you to push harder than the coupe ever does.

With new spring and damper rates the Roadster grips, steers and changes direction better than the original coupe, too. There's still little feel from the steering, but the front tyres work much harder before falling into understeer, and with the traction systems off, all four corners flow as one.

It's no M-car, and it's certainly no 911, but it is a fine roadster that delivers a unique and engaging thrill that few, if any, can match.

**Stuart Gallagher** (@stuartg917)

## Specification

Engine	Power	Torque	0-62mph	Top speed	Weight	Price
In-line 3-cyl, 1499cc, turbo; 105kW electric motor	369bhp @ 5800rpm	420lb ft @ 3700rpm	4.6sec (claimed)	155mph (limited)	1595kg (235bhp/ton)	£124,735

+ Looks; uniqueness; powertrain makes more sense with more range and performance - Dynamics; still more GT than sports car

**evo rating** ★★★★★



# Alpina B5

M5 and E63 S too vulgar? Then Alpina's 'reserved' 600bhp B5 just may fit the bill

**D**OES THE WORLD REALLY NEED another 600bhp, four-wheel-drive BMW supersaloon? Time was when Alpina's take on the Fast Five recipe used a different engine, and gearbox for that matter, and its character differentiation was blatantly obvious. Not any more. Look at the spec sheet of the new G30-based B5 and you'll see the familiar 4.4-litre biturbo V8 engine, and an eight-speed ZF auto 'box as well. Those are the same core ingredients found in the new M5.

Yet the answer to the above-posed question is emphatically 'yes'. It's no coincidence that the B5's tailpipes poke out discreetly from under the rear valance, unlike the M's four bazookas; it speaks volumes about how these cars go

about their respective tasks in life.

However, don't go thinking it illustrates a lack of firepower on the B5's part, because at 600bhp and 590lb ft of torque it significantly better its factory relation's 592bhp and 553lb ft. Alpina goes its own way with engine development on the N63 lump, with a unique air intake and its own extensive cooling measures, the latter in part because Alpinas aren't speed-limited like their factory counterparts. This one hits a thundering 205mph.

As for the chassis, Alpina fits its own front wishbones for increased negative camber, runs a bespoke set-up on Bilstein adaptive dampers and makes use of BMW's Integral Active Steering and Dynamic Drive systems.

The 20-inch 'Classic' rims may have a familiar design, but they are now forged for a significant weight saving. They're also shod with a bespoke Pirelli P Zero tyre – the first time the Italian manufacturer has featured on an Alpina since 1985 – and to go behind them there's an optional (£1400) high-performance brake set-up, as fitted to our test car and comprising drilled metal discs and harder pads.

All of which is enticing, but the first thing that registers about the B5 is how subtle it looks, especially when you park it next to an M5. Without the carbonfibre roof, two-tone alloys and gaping vents of the M, the B needs an educated eye to differentiate it from an M Sport 540i. This is, of course, all part of its appeal.



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'While there's no everything-off drift mode, it will oversteer wildly given the space'





**Left:** cabin is classy, and the opportunity for customisation is vast.  
**Below:** 20-inch alloys are now forged to save weight; this car features optional performance brakes



and something reinforced when you open the door and register the Alpina customisation. As ever with the products from Buchloe, if you're prepared to pay for it, you can specify pretty much anything you like, but the leather on the steering wheel alone has a rich softness that has to be felt to be believed. It's this reserved, deep-rooted quality, combined with extreme exclusivity, that attracts Alpina's dedicated and well-heeled clientele. For them, one suspects a BMW M, or an AMG, is far too brash, too obvious.

For whatever reason, the BMW V8 has never got close to AMG's 'hot V' engine when it comes to a soundtrack, yet while the B5 can't match an Affalterbach car for volume or aggression, it has a deliciously creamy growl that's entirely natural. The B5 builds on the brilliance of the G30 – its refinement across all areas – with an added feeling of luxurious consumption and utterly effortless power. Only a touch of throttle is required to surge from 30mph limit to 60mph cruise; a more committed yet still measured depression of the pedal is enough for a swift overtake. The 'box is predictably well behaved, but a switch into the car's overall Sport setting and a knock of the lever across into manual mode gives more control, and also sharpens the whole experience, firming the damping and energising the engine's responses.

As you might expect, the B5's all-out shove is colossal, and moments where you can keep the throttle pinned for any amount of time are slim. But while turbo lag is non-existent, there is still a sense that basic physics requires the inertia



of almost two tons to be overcome before acceleration can really begin.

Dynamically, the difference between the B5 and its mainstream rivals is more apparent. The Alpina lacks the ability to disguise its weight like an E63 S or M5 in their more sportive settings, its rate of turn and the weighting at the wheel feeling more natural for a big car, but a little less aggressive. Traction is superb, and while there's no everything-off drift mode, it will oversteer wildly given the space and commitment. Where it really excels is on fast A-roads, feeling so sure-footed in high-speed sweepers and with powerful brakes available on demand. Only

the ride quality on poor urban surfaces mildly disappoints, with each of those giant wheels thumping through potholes. Ironically, a switch to Sport improves wheel control, even if the rebound is a little more abrupt, but it's the M5 that adapts better to this particular challenge, not the more comfort-focused Alpina.

While the B5 might not offer the same driver appeal as an M5, its more reserved character, combined with massive performance and exclusivity, means it annexes its own territory against the odds. If nothing else, at £89,000 it's the cheapest 200mph car on sale in the UK.

**Adam Towler** (@AdamTowler)

## Specification

Engine	Power	Torque	0-62mph	Top speed	Weight	Basic price
V8, 4395cc, twin-turbo	600bhp @ 5750-6250rpm	590lb ft @ 3000-5000rpm	3.5sec (claimed)	205mph (claimed)	1940kg (314bhp/ton)	£89,000

➕ Huge performance hidden under a subtle exterior; exclusivity    ➖ The price of exclusivity; low-speed ride on some surfaces

**evo rating** ★★★★★

# Suzuki Swift Sport

Now below a ton, and with turbo power, does the third-generation Swift Sport still captivate?

**C** LICHÉ ALERT, BUT SOMETIMES small really is beautiful – and few cars better adhere to this minimalist maxim than the Suzuki Swift Sport. Introduced in 2006, the original was an instant hit here at *evo*, its combination of pint-sized dimensions, a voracious appetite for fun and bargain-basement price tag easily offsetting its modest straight-line pace, even if its frenzied character did result in most two-hour motorway journeys leaving you with a four-hour headache. The second-generation car arrived in 2012 and brought a welcome injection of refinement and dynamic polish, but not at the expense of the original's infectious appetite for a good time.

So, we're understandably excited about

the all-new version. It certainly looks good on paper, its 975kg kerb weight making it a full 70kg lighter than the old car, while under the bonnet is a new downsized turbo motor that delivers greater muscle. The 1.4-litre Boosterjet unit first saw the light of day in the Vitara S SUV, but here it gets a new intercooler and turbo wastegate to deliver 138bhp at 5500rpm and 170lb ft of torque at 2500-3500rpm – the old car managed 134bhp and 118lbft. Power goes to the front wheels via the familiar six-speed manual transmission, now tweaked for greater precision and a shorter throw.

The Sport sits on a track that's 40mm wider than the standard Swift's, while the ride height is 15mm lower and Monroe dampers are used all round. The strut front suspension

gets heavier-duty anti-roll bar mounts, plus each wheel hub and its bearings have been combined into a single unit, with a greater width between the bearings for a 15 per cent increase in camber rigidity. At the rear there's the basic model's torsion beam set-up but with bespoke trailing arms.

It looks pretty good in the metal, the new Swift Sport, with just enough visual aggression to mark it out from the standard car. The changes are neatly integrated and the revised front bumper and grille, side skirts and rear diffuser with dual-exit exhausts add sporting intent, while the 17-inch alloys help deliver a more muscular stance. If you want to attract even more attention, the new Championship Yellow paint option should do the trick.







Inside, you'll find a pair of heavily bolstered front seats and a flat-bottomed steering wheel, plus a generous helping of red trim accents. There's red paint splashed over the dials, too, which are joined by an uprated trip computer that features various boost gauges and a G-meter. There's also a stack of kit, from a 7-inch infotainment touchscreen to radar cruise control and autonomous emergency braking. Only the cheap-feeling plastics and rubber gearlever knob let the side down.

Thumb the starter button and the turbocharged motor fires near silently into life. The exhaust is claimed to be a sports system tuned for optimum gas flow and characterful noise, but there's precious little aural indication that this is something a bit special. It's a theme that continues as you work the unit harder, when it sounds muted and anodyne, eliciting nothing more than a distant growl. It makes the Swift a far more hushed and capable cruiser, but surely that's missing the point in a machine like this?

As you'd expect from a lightweight car with a torquey motor, the Swift Sport accelerates with a glorious lack of inertia. There's almost no lag and the car responds, ahem, swiftly to the throttle, gathering speed with an impressive effortlessness. It feels fast, too, pulling strongly and uncomplainingly from as little as 1500rpm. Yet while the outright urge is strong, the new car misses the top-end vivacity of the old, naturally aspirated model, which felt a bit flaccid low down but came alive as the rev counter's needle homed in on the 7000rpm red line. There's more



**Top:** Sport now comes only as a five-door (with 'hidden' rear handles), making the 70kg weight loss over the old three-door car all the more impressive

performance everywhere in the new car, but as with many forced-induction motors, there's no real incentive to wring its neck, especially as the rev limiter kicks in abruptly at just over 6000rpm. Whereas in the old car acceleration on a twisting B-road was hard won with plenty of stirring of the gearlever, in this latest version you often never need to leave third, which is a shame because the 'box has a light and accurate throw that would encourage cog-swapping when mated to a peakier motor.

As with the engine, it's clear the Suzuki's chassis has been tuned to deliver a more

cultured and mature feel, but make no mistake, with so little mass to control and such wieldy dimensions, the Swift Sport still feels light on its feet. Down some of the tighter and twistier roads of our Spanish test route it is surprisingly compliant, the suspension soaking up the few bumps we could find with admirable suppleness. There's some firmness in the vertical movements, but it feels plushly damped, rounding off the worst of the imperfections. Yet body movements are well checked, with only really big bumps upsetting the car's composure – and even then it only suffers from the tiniest hint of float.

The electrically assisted steering is decently weighted and positive enough off the straight-ahead, and while the variable-ratio

‘While it’s more accomplished than ever, it raises fewer smiles per mile’



system doesn't deliver the last word in feel, there's enough communication to give a good indication of grip, plus it's precise, allowing you to place the Swift accurately and with confidence. Turn-in bite from the 195-section Continentals is fairly tenacious, too, the Suzuki clinging on gamely when driving briskly.

However, some of the old car's sparkle is missing. Start to push hard and the nose begins to wash wide a little as the outside-front wheel bears the brunt of the cornering forces. Lifting the throttle tucks the nose in and gets you back on line, but that's about as throttle adjustable as the car gets. Unlike the similarly powerful Ford Fiesta ST-Line, or even the previous Swift Sport, the new car's chassis doesn't feel like the front and rear axles are sharing the loads equally. The whole car feels nose-led, as if it's pivoting around a point just ahead of the gearlever rather than by your hips. Where the old car revelled in being taken by the scruff of the neck, this is a more measured machine, favouring a less energetic and engaging approach.

Still, get into a rhythm and you can cover ground at a surprising lick. The well-weighted controls, progressive brakes and perfectly placed pedals all help deliver effortless pace over switchback secondaries. And that



**Above:** lag-free turbocharged 1.4 pulls strongly from 1500rpm. **Right:** 17-inch wheels contribute to muscular stance



muscular motor plays its part, too, zapping you along the straights. The Sport has the sort of slick, polished and poised demeanour of a Volkswagen GTI in this respect. Yet while it's clearly technically more accomplished than ever before, it raises fewer smiles per mile.

The VW comparison doesn't end with the driving experience, because at £17,999 the Swift clearly has similarly upmarket aspirations. To put that price in perspective, the only slightly slower and barely any less spacious Up GTI will set you back £14,155 in five-door form, while the 197bhp Polo GTI is £21,145 – and the old Swift Sport weighed in at

£15,349 when it was pulled last year. Value is no longer one of the Suzuki's calling cards.

Still, it's extremely well equipped, plus it's more spacious than before. Factor in the improved refinement and you have a much more mature proposition for daily driving duties. However, in the push for premium the Swift has lost some raw charm and appeal. It's faster in a straight line and through corners, but the fun factor has been diminished. It's a more accomplished machine with a broader spread of talents, but we'd happily trade some of the polish for a dash of the old car's magic.

**James Disdale**

## Specification

Engine	Power	Torque	0-62mph	Top speed	Weight	Basic price
In-line 4-cyl, 1373cc, turbo	138bhp @ 5500rpm	170lb ft @ 2500-3500rpm	8.1sec (claimed)	130mph (claimed)	975kg (144bhp/ton)	£17,999

➕ Composed chassis, brisk performance, refinement, lots of kit    ➖ Adjustability and character of old car have been diluted; price

**evo rating** ★★★★★



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## BMW M850i xDrive

Prototype drive gives early taste of new 523bhp 6-series replacement

**F**OR SEVEN YEARS NOW, EACH APRIL and October, BMW engineers and their prototypes have been coming to north Wales, drawn by the roads, their unique and varied surfaces and the challenges they present for a chassis, and because the area is never too busy.

Today, *evo* is here as well. We've been invited to sample a pre-production version of the 523bhp, four-wheel-drive M850i, which is in the final throws of development ahead of its June launch. Beneath the camouflage wrap is a virtually off-tool car, with just a few prototype body and trim parts. Its chassis is evolved from that of the 7-series xDrive (not the new M5 with its two-wheel-drive mode) and it features adaptive dampers, rear-wheel steering, a new e-diff and, on this particular example, active anti-roll bars.

It's a big car, chunky-looking, with hints of BMW's past big coupes in the rear side-window profile. Inside, the seats look sporty, but feel generous and comfortable. Only small children would say the same of the rear seats. Ahead of the driver are TFT instruments, shared with the new X5, and a head-up display.

The engine gives a good indication as to what sort of car the M850i is intended to



be. Press the starter button and the V8 fires up with a sweet rumble that lets you know it's a traditional V8 rather than a flat-plane crank V8 like the M5 motor: it's based on the established twin-turbo 4.4-litre, but is much-revised, and more potent, too. In its default Comfort mode, the V8 burble soon melts away to nothing, though the amount of urge on tap with just a light squeeze of the throttle is substantial; the engine develops its 553lb ft peak torque from just 1800rpm.

Another clue to the intended nature of the car is the steering. For me, it's overly light below 20mph and lacking a bit of feel. The efforts improve from around 20mph and by this time the ride already impresses. The M850i is traverses the challenging test route

with an ease that is both uncanny yet natural in feel, taking the sting out of sharp wheel inputs without feeling stiff, yet effortlessly controlling big bumps without feeling soft and loose. The active anti-roll bars limit roll – but don't eliminate it – and disconnect in a straight line so the dampers are free to get on with their job. Meanwhile, the rear-wheel steering counter-steers so the car feels agile into corners and then parallel steers to stabilise it once the car has turned.

Traction is pretty much total, with just an occasional subtle slip-catch at the inside rear when pulling quickly out of a wet junction. Such is the poise of the chassis that there's never any strong sense that the car is powered from the rear, although it is until there's not enough grip there and the system sends drive forward. Despite all of this, the M850i doesn't feel like a car you want to turn loose.

Overall, the M850i feels more like a very good GT than a sports coupe. Within a year there will be more variants: a convertible and the production version of the four-door Gran Coupe. And there will be a 600bhp M8, too, underpinned by the M5's running gear. Maybe BMW is keeping its powder dry for that model.

**John Barker** (@evoJB)

### Specification

Engine	Power	Torque	0-62mph	Top speed	Weight	Basic price
V8, 4395cc, twin-turbo	523bhp	553lb ft @ 1800rpm	Sub-4.0sec (est)	155mph (limited)	c1900kg (est)	c£100,000

➕ Impressive chassis and great refinement    ➖ It's a big car, and its steering could be sportier

**evo rating** ★★★★★

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## M2 little

As an M2 owner, I read with interest the launch information on the new M2 Competition [above] (evo 248). M4 seats, mirrors and engine all sound good, but a 7 per cent gain in bhp per ton doesn't really set my heart racing. The biggest surprise is that there are no changes to the springs and dampers – this is where I will be spending my money.

### ***Sión Price***

## Vantage lament

Though I'm pleased for Aston Martin that its new Vantage [above right] seems to have been well received by the press, I am disappointed that it doesn't appear to be a replacement for my much-loved N430 Vantage manual.

Firstly, it's now priced in a completely new segment. At £120,900 it's no longer a rival for the £87k 911 Carrera S. In fact it's priced beyond the £112k 911 GT3, for which it clearly isn't a competitor. And no Vantage will leave the factory at the list price, either. It's a £135k purchase, minimum.

But what really disappoints me is that no manual gearbox is being offered currently. So I have a deposit on the upcoming TVR, which I sadly now see as a closer replacement for the old Vantage.

I'm probably wrong and the new Vantage will sell like hot cakes, so I wish you luck, Aston. I love the brand, but please don't alienate your old customer base like Land Rover is now doing. But that's another story...

**Jonny Horsfield**



## Grinded by gears

Why is it that car manufacturers feel the need to include ever more gears in every iteration of their gearboxes? There are seven-speed, eight-speed, nine-speed and now, in the updated V8 Mustang (Driven, evo 248), ten-speed gearboxes.

Modern turbocharged engines (OK, the Mustang's V8 isn't turbocharged, but it hardly lacks twist) are now giving fantastic spreads of torque – flat plateaus of 3000rpm or more, or in the case of Ferraris and others a slightly increasing uplift in torque as the revs increase. For me, one of the joys of driving is to enjoy a modern engine's flexibility by staying in one gear and enjoying the torque and increasing power rather than having a 'box constantly trying to shift through multiple gears for optimum acceleration.

Well-spaced ratios and flat torque curves do not require multiple gears. Why with 450-plus lb ft of torque do AMG models, for instance, need nine-speed gearboxes? They don't is the answer. Rather there is a pressure to further trim 0-62 times and also reduce emissions on some test rig that does not reflect real-world driving.

Personally I would rather just have a maximum of six gears, so that you know which one you are in at any given time and can enjoy the engine's performance more thoroughly. But would that be enough in a world seemingly obsessed with statistics?

**Douglas Henderson,  
Aberdeen**



## LETTER OF THE MONTH

# City lights

**THE FIRST CAR I WANTED TO READ ABOUT IN** the latest issue of *evo* (248) was... the Volkswagen Up GTI [above]. You see, I live in a city where superminis such as the Toyota Yaris dominate and a small GTI is often considered to be not only more efficient but also more fun than a typical 2-litre hot hatchback.

I spent my early driving years behind the wheel of a Peugeot 106 XSi, so you can imagine my excitement every time a new small GTI is presented. Nowadays, of course, cars like the Abarth 595, the Vauxhall/ Opel Adam S and the VW Up GTI are larger, safer and even faster than that Peugeot, but they somehow slightly lack the vital ingredient of pure and simple driving satisfaction.

Hopefully, this segment will continue to develop and perhaps someday I will find myself driving a new Peugeot, Suzuki or even Fiat and be really glad about it.  
**George Tsapogas, Athens, Greece**

## The Letter of the Month wins an MHD watch

The writer of this month's star letter receives an MHD AGT watch worth £550. Sharing design values and its designer, Matthew Humphries, with the Alcraft GT electric performance car, it has an automatic movement and is limited to an edition of just 100 pieces.

**MHD**





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## INBOX



### Missed opportunity

I read your review of the Audi R8 RWS [above] (*evo* 247) with a heavy heart. Finally, I thought, the good people at Audi Sport had built the rear-wheel-drive driver's car that everyone has been pining for since the R8's conception.

A quick sortie of the motorsports parts bin should at the very least have created something to leave Stuttgart's Messiah, the GT3, quaking in its Michelines. Even if they didn't want to stick a manual 'box in it, lighter and more focused were very easily achievable, surely. But, alas, you report that the way it drives is little different from the standard, four-wheel-drive version.

I'm not sad, Audi, just disappointed. We know you can make fast cars. Now make some fun ones.

**Greg Evans**

### Insulted

That's it, then. Everyone, and that probably includes quite a few *evo* readers, who thinks that there is too much political correctness is a 'crashing bore'.

I like your magazine, but I read it to be entertained, not to be insulted. Reading Mr Porter's column (*evo* 247) on the exit of grid girls from Formula One, it seems he has a left-wing chip on his shoulder.

Oh well, if he ever finds himself looking for employment I'm sure he would be welcomed with open arms by Momentum.

**Roger Wood**

### F1 abandoned

I'm a big fan of Ted Kravitz. There aren't many people out there today who understand Formula

One like he does. However, I feel his recent column regarding the new season (*evo* 247) missed the point.

Ted states that despite the current issues with F1, the new season is exciting because we have so many former champions and so much talent on the grid. I would argue that having all that talent in a formula that does not allow for close, exciting, skilful racing makes it the most depressing start to an F1 season I can remember, and I've watched every season for 26 years.

Why is it that all the fans of F1 can see that less disruptive aero, less complicated power units and tyres that allow the drivers to drive flat-out would improve the spectacle exponentially, but the people involved in the sport seem to be oblivious?

I've now cancelled my Sky Sports subscription. This will be the first year since I was a child that I won't be watching F1. Given the choice, I'd rather pay to watch MotoGP (no disruptive aero, high-revving naturally aspirated engines, tyres that allow riders to go flat-out...).

And don't get me started on the halo. F1 is open-cockpit racing. If you don't like it, hand your £20million back and go drive something else!

**Matt Westby**

### A curious coupe

The Range Rover SV Coupe [above] (*Briefing, evo* 247) completely confuses me.

If you can afford to spend £240k on a car, the chances are you'll want to show it off. And if it's a Range Rover, you're likely to show it off to equally wealthy





friends over a dinner party or similar social gathering, as opposed to at a trackday.

I find the thought hilarious: well-dressed, well-off folks waiting patiently for the electric seats to chug forwards in order to clamber (presumably) inelegantly into the Coupe's rear. Then the driver or front-seat passenger must wait until the seat moves back to its original position – at which point the rear-seat passengers may start to question the £240k price tag, regardless of how nice the interior is.

Or will these people continue to do what they already do and get into a four-door Range Rover SV Autobiography or Bentley Bentayga, with a little more grace and without the need to wait for the seats to slowly move?

**Tim Lane**

### Keep it down

Yet another potential five-star car – the Porsche Cayman GTS [above] – gets marks deducted because it has a 'lacklustre soundtrack' (**evo** 247). Why are car journalists obsessed with how a car sounds and whether that makes it a better car or not? For 99 per cent of our time behind the wheel the last thing we want to hear is the engine!

Some of the more expensive marques sell their products on how quiet they are on the road. Meanwhile, in any car the first thing you do before driving off is to switch on some alternative sound to listen to – and one of the first things you journos complain about is when there is no USB port or similar in a car.

Back in the day I had a TVR Griffith 5-litre. Now there's a



soundtrack! However, after 15 minutes of driving you would start to develop a headache from the noise it made, while communication with a passenger could only be done by signing. That car definitely needed a star deducting for its soundtrack!

**Dave Brown**

### Archive offer

My husband, Brian Shaw, a long-time fan of **evo**, was diagnosed with early onset Alzheimer's last year, aged 67. He has collected every issue of **evo** from 001.

He has always been an ardent fan of motoring in all forms, building a TVR from a kit when they first came out, but now he has a medical review licence and cannot get insurance as he once did. We have had to sell his 911.

We now have to downsize and can no longer accommodate his magazine 'archives'. They constitute years of enjoyment for Brian, so he would be very happy if they went to another **evo** fan. We would therefore like to offer them to a good home via your letters page.

**Jan Shaw, Alsager, Cheshire**

*If you are interested in Brian's **evo** collection, please contact letters@evo.co.uk and we'll put you in touch.*

### The lost Espada

I can't help thinking that the Lagonda Vision Concept [above] (Briefing, **evo** 247) looks more like a Lamborghini than a Lagonda. If only the Italian firm had built this instead of the Urus...

**Srullie Bertram, New Jersey, USA**

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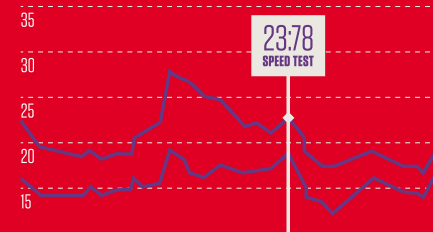
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# RICHARD MEADEN

*Unlike the virtual world, the cards in my wallet will always be a real-life licence to thrill*

**T**HIS SUMMER MARKS MY 30TH YEAR SINCE I passed my driving test. Thirty years! That seems ridiculous for many reasons, not least because I can still remember some of my driving lessons – in a Mazda 323, in case you were wondering – and the momentous day I passed my test.

As my parents and teachers will attest, passing things was not my strong point as a youth. I didn't hate college – largely because I didn't spend a great deal of time there – but it's fair to say if I'd applied myself as diligently to my A-level studies as I did at Driving School my grades would have been rather better. Then again there always seemed a point to learning to drive. One that algebra, the works of William Shakespeare and the periodic table were so obviously missing.

I'm not sure what it is about cars and driving that captivated me so completely, but I've always been fascinated by them. It therefore stands to reason that learning to drive would be the biggest single thing in my young life. Little did I know driving would become my life, but that's the beauty of drifting through school and college with no fixed plan. A succession of careers advisers looked at me blankly when I waved a copy of *CAR* magazine under their noses, so I kind of made things up as I went along. Thankfully while a driving licence and a laptop are the tools of my trade a 'proper' job will always elude me.

If my driving test remains the single most significant thing I've ever passed, holding a race licence has been a constant source of pride and pleasure. It's 25 years since I headed to Silverstone for my ARDS test – a combination of written classroom paper and practical driving assessment by a qualified race instructor. If you can remember a few flag signals and don't turn the wrong way down the pit lane, then getting your MSA National B licence is like falling off a log, but it opens up a whole new world. One in which you will take newfound pride in your driving and provide you with the motivation and opportunity to work on improving your skills every time you get behind the wheel.

Trackdays are fun, but racing is something else entirely. As much a test of your mettle as your driving ability, any form of competitive motorsport is truly character-building stuff. Unless you're in the Armed Forces or a first responder I guarantee the

range and intensity of emotions you go through immediately before, during and after your first race will exceed anything you'll experience in normal life. I also guarantee it's a feeling you'll want to repeat. On different tracks and in faster cars.

I hold a third driving licence, though it's not especially useful as there are but two places on Earth it has any clout: El Mirage Dry Lake Bed and Bonneville Salt Flats. There's no physical piece of paper or plastic card to show for it, but I'm one of a handful of Brits licensed by the Southern California Timing Association to drive at more than 200mph at El Mirage or Bonneville. Which basically makes me Chuck Yeager, at least in my own mind.

It's this licensing process – acquired by successfully driving consecutive runs on the salt flats at 150, 175 and 200mph – that then gave me the opportunity to chase (and set) a new class record during the 2011 Bonneville Speed Week in a specially prepared Skoda Octavia vRS. My Bonneville 200MPH Club 'Life Member' card has sat in my wallet ever since, removed occasionally to reflect on the day I skimmed across Utah's hallowed salt flats at nearly 230mph in a Czech-built saloon. I'm not sure I'd ever have the nerve to do it, but this would be quite the document to produce in the event of a roadside interview with the police.

It makes me sad to think driving is becoming less and less relevant for more and more young people. Of course I understand it's yet another prohibitively expensive aspect of life. One that you doubtless feel you can do without in an increasingly connected world. What's lost in all this is that rather than delivering a digital version of reality to the palm of your hand, driving delivers you to actual places, people and experiences good Wi-Fi and an iPhone X can never hope to match.

It might sound a bit lame to some people – though hopefully not to any of you – to say my life revolves around driving and racing cars. That's why the pink plastic DVLA card, white MSA-issue Race International C and Rally National A Stage licence and the slightly dog-eared 200MPH Club Membership card are so precious to me. Much more than mere licences, they are passports to a life I couldn't possibly have imagined.

If you have a road licence, cherish it. If you don't, get one. And if you've ever thought about getting a competition licence, do it! In my experience 'screen time always beats Screen Time.

**'Driving delivers you to actual places, people and experiences an iPhone never could'**

@DickieMeaden

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

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# RICHARD PORTER

*If the Irish can cope without moles, are there some car companies that we can all live without?*

**D**ID YOU KNOW THERE ARE NO MOLES IN Ireland? I won't bore you with the details, save to say it's something to do with the Ice Age and you can look up the rest. I discovered this last week and found it fascinating, because you assume that places in close proximity and sharing the same climate generally have the same wildlife. Yet there are the Irish, across a small stretch of sea, happily carrying on without moles.

How does this impact them, I wondered. You imagine that all animals have some role to play and that lacking one would have severe knock-on effects, like that time the Chinese tried to kill all the sparrows and then got overrun with locusts. But no, Ireland seems to be fine, and that's because moles, beyond slightly aerating the soil and leaving behind mole-poo fertiliser, don't really do much. You can live without moles. And this got me thinking, which car firms could we happily do without?

I'll start with Ford because I've just been driving the latest Fiesta ST-Line and it's absolutely brilliant; a reminder that Ford delivers everyday amusement tied to sensible running costs and lo-lo finance deals. So we need it around. Likewise Toyota, which Richard Meaden made an impassioned and entirely correct case for in *evo* 246. Honda can stay, too, because we'd miss its Type Rs and we live in hope that it'll usurp whoever styled the latest Civic by hiring someone who can draw. Since we're in Japan, Nissan can stay because of the GT-R, and indeed the 370Z, which is still around and has just been refreshed – a discovery as curious as finding someone has just revised Stonehenge. Oh, and let's not bin off Subaru, because you never know, it might do something fantastic again.

A stay of execution, too, for Citroën, because the Cactus says it's still got some mojo. We can't do without Renault, either – the Alpine A110 reminds us of that. And while Peugeot would have seemed expendable until recently, the genuinely brilliant 208 and 308 GTis say otherwise. SEAT? For going through with that idiotic pretence that Cupra is a standalone brand it can have a death laser to the face, but it does make some decent – sometimes very decent – hot hatches. So SEAT can stay. We'd miss VW, BMW, Mercedes and Porsche if they weren't around,

and we need Volvo because without it what would you do if you required a handsomely un-German way to get to Waitrose? In fact, once you get into it, it's actually quite tricky to think of a car company that we could live without.

But then we get to Vauxhall. I'm sorry, but if it wasn't there, who would shed a tear? Even sales reps don't want Vauxhalls, they want Audis, so Vauxhall exists only as a way to punish employees the fleet manager doesn't like. No, we can live without Vauxhall.

It also saddens me to ask, but what has Fiat done for us lately? The answer is not a lot. And if the knitwear nitwit in charge keeps going we might find out the hard way whether we'll miss it or not. From that looming wreckage we probably should keep Alfa Romeo, mostly for the Giulia Quadrifoglio, and we need Ferrari in road cars and motorsport, if only for the amusing annual pantomime of watching it pretend it's leaving Formula One. Lamborghini is essential to the *evo* ecosystem, too, for looks and for drama and for understanding the exciting essence of the supercar, even if the nicest way to experience an Aventador is looking at it from the comfort of another car.

Overall, we need the car makers of Italy. Or do we? I haven't mentioned Maserati because that's a difficult one. It's a wonderful name, but on current form would we miss it if it wasn't there? Well, the GranTurismo is ancient, the Ghibli

and Quattroporte underdone, and the SUV thing looks like a cheap Chinese knock-off of an Infiniti. Wipe the lot from the face of the earth and are you going to weep? Obviously, if we follow the model of moles in Ireland we have to pretend Maserati never existed at all, which means losing the Merak and Khamsin and all those groovy coupes of the '70s, but maybe we can relax the rules. What if modern Maser is gone but you can still see those older beasts in the same way Irish people can look at pictures of moles but don't have to suffer the disappointment of having them on their shores.

Sad as it sounds, I'm suddenly struggling to think what Maserati is giving us at the moment and what we'd miss if it was vaporised. Somehow, I think we'd manage. Rather like the Irish seem to cope without moles.

**‘Overall, we need the car makers of Italy. Or do we? Maserati is a wonderful name, but on current form would we miss it if it wasn't there?’**

@sniffpetrol

Richard is *evo*'s longest-serving columnist and the script editor on *The Grand Tour*

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M135i/M235i » 410+BHP  
i8 » 415BHP  
120i/220i/320i/420i » 275+BHP  
116D/216D/316D » 160BHP  
118D/218D/318D » 225BHP  
120D/220D/320D/420D » 240BHP  
328i/428i » 295BHP  
335i/435i » 410+BHP  
330D/430D/530D/730D » 360BHP  
335D/435D/535D » 395+BHP  
550i/650i » 555+BHP (+DE-LIMIT)  
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# TED KRAVITZ

*Without their own magic aids, Seb's rivals are up the creek without a paddle*

**T**HINK ABOUT YOUR STEERING WHEEL. Imagine if you had some sort of magic paddle, maybe mounted high on the right-hand side, something long that you could manipulate gently – tickle, even – with your right index finger. Now think about what you'd like it to do. That's the precise thought process going through the minds of everyone in Formula One who isn't Sebastian Vettel or a select group of Ferrari engineers.

Let me explain. Vettel has always been very secretive about his steering wheel. Last year, he had a titanium finger grip fitted to his clutch paddle that gave him a better feel for the clutch bite point. It worked. Seb got some cracking starts that helped him win races. He and his Ferrari mechanics went to extraordinary lengths to keep it hidden, storing it in a special box in the garage and making sure it was covered with an umbrella on the grid. After Vettel smashed up his Ferrari against Lance Stroll's Williams on the slow-down lap of the Malaysian Grand Prix, the German even took his steering wheel with him back to the pits rather than leave it with his stricken car, as he was supposed to. Eventually all the other teams found out his secret, but it was a nice advantage to have while it lasted.

Now it seems he's at it again, this time with the magic paddle. But what does it do? Engage the caterpillar drive? Drop oil out the back, Bond-style? Snap a selfie? It could serve any number of purposes, but closer inspection confirms it's not an on/off switch: the paddle is attached to a little cylindrical sensor so that Vettel can operate it in a gradual way. That immediately narrows down the kinds of things it could change. It can't be anything aerodynamic, like moving a wing angle to give more or less downforce depending on what kind of corner you're in, because that would be illegal. Moveable aerodynamic devices are a no-no.

So if it's not aerodynamic it must be mechanical. Suspension? A graduated switch to support one side of the car in a certain corner, or to raise the nose or drop the rear for better feel? Surely not: that kind of thing is pre-programmed into the suspension systems – why burden the driver with extra workload?

No, it has to be something Sebastian wants complete control over, not something that is pre-programmed by engineers.

Could it be trying to fix something? Vettel's problem with the car earlier this season was that it was lazy on braking and turn-in, something Kimi Räikkönen could live with, but which worked against Vettel's driving style. He likes the car to be spot-on precise under braking and razor-sharp when turning into the corner, and when the car doesn't give him confidence in either, the lap time ebbs away. So could it be some kind of electronic brake assist, or power steering adjustment? The magic paddle is only on Sebastian's car, not Kimi's, so it must be something to cure that lazy brake/turn-in problem, right?

Then again, it could be exhaust blowing. Those with good memories will recall how Vettel's Red Bull cars mastered the concept of off-throttle exhaust blowing: engine maps that kept the Renault unit revving enough to produce exhaust gas that was blown through or over the diffuser to produce mid-corner downforce, even when the driver was off the throttle. All very clever and very effective at the time, before it was prohibited.

Teams are very tightly restricted on such engine maps these days and the exhaust pipe is regulated in terms of where it can be located and at what angle it can be pointed, but you can't unlearn what you already know, and Renault has designed its exhaust pipe and rear wing specifically to mimic the beneficial effect of pumping high-velocity exhaust under the rear wing to make it work harder.

Ferrari has denied rumours that the paddle acts as some kind of gradual engine-map change, with the goal of altering settings mid-corner to keep the exhaust blowing even when off throttle. So if it's not that, our best guess is either a clever diff adjust or a manual battery power boost through the MGU-K: the 'Motor/Generator Unit – Kinetic' that's linked to the engine's crankshaft.

Whatever, one strength of this year's Ferrari is that it's remarkably quick in a straight line – faster than the Mercedes; something that hasn't been the case in recent years. Lewis Hamilton recently described it as 'very strange' how the Ferrari is quickest in all conditions, temperatures and on all kinds of circuit, whereas Mercedes is struggling. It's not strange, Lewis, it's the magic paddle. Problem is, you're no nearer to figuring out what the hell it does than the rest of us.

**'What does Sebastian's magic paddle do? Engage the caterpillar drive? Drop oil out the back, Bond-style? Snap a selfie?'**

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by RICHARD MEADEN

PHOTOGRAPHY by ASTON PARROTT

# THE DIRECTOR'S CUT

*It's hard to imagine how the last 911 GT3 RS could be improved upon. But somehow, with yet further honing of the model's engine, chassis and aero, Porsche has managed it*





**'IT'S A  
GUNSLINGER  
OF A CAR:  
ARMED,  
CAPABLE AND  
UNAFRAID'**





**HOW MUCH BETTER THAN THE** 991.1 GT3 RS can it be? I mean, really, how much better? That's what I was thinking when Porsche unveiled the 991.2 GT3 RS at the Geneva motor show. Well pass me a knife and fork because I've got an extra-large portion of humble pie to eat: the new RS is a sensationally good car.

Was I foolish to succumb to superlative fatigue when it comes to Porsche's ramped-up product cycle? Possibly. But was I right to be sceptical at just how meaningful an improvement could be made on the already fabulous Gen 1 991 RS? Absolutely. And yet, the new car proves me wrong.

Just how good Weissach-Flacht's newest export is will become abundantly clear during the two-stage media launch. At least it's a two-stage launch for me, as I've bagged a spot on both the road drive and the track test a few weeks later. The venues? The Isle of Man for the former (including guided laps of the TT course behind Mark Higgins, he of the Subaru lap record) and the Nürburgring for the latter. No, not the Nordschleife – the lap's too long and too big a risk for press tests in a model this quick. Besides which, Kévin Estre proved the car's ultimate potential there, clocking a remarkable 6:56.4, just 9sec behind the brutally powerful GT2 RS.

And so to Ramsey and the iconic backdrop of the TT course start/finish line for leg one of the RS drive. It's a small gathering of people – just a handful of German, UK and US journos – but a mighty gathering of cars, with a regular and Weissach Package-equipped 991.2 GT3 RS on hand, plus all its water-cooled RS ancestors to offer some context. Oh, and a beautiful 2.7 RS, just to make the day that bit more surreal. The weather isn't being kind, but it'll take more than a bit of rain and low cloud to dampen my spirits.

It's always good to get back into a GT3 RS. The sense of occasion is palpable, but not so strongly as the sheer sense of purpose. A 911 might not have the seductive swagger of an Italian supercar, but GT3 RSs have long been blessed with a different kind of allure. One that crackles with intent. Even in such illustrious company this Gen 2 991 is a gunslinger of a car: armed, capable and unafraid.

You'll no doubt be well-versed in the technical details, but they're worth recapping. The engine is easy to remember, as it's the same 4-litre unit first seen in the 991.1 GT3 RS, then the non-RS 991.2 GT3. Compared with the one in the previous RS, the motor now has 200rpm more to offer, taking the red line to 9000rpm, plus lower-friction internals, an improved oil system, sharper responses and increased outputs, peaking at 513bhp and 347lb ft of torque – up 20bhp and 8lb ft on the aforementioned GT3 and RS.



However, the biggest changes centre on the chassis and aerodynamics, along with greater scrutiny applied to weight savings. The chassis benefits from a set-up philosophy first explored on the current GT2 RS. Stiffer springs (double the rate of the previous GT3 RS at the front end, 50 per cent up at the rear) deliver sharper responses and increased feel, the trade-off being a reported slight loss of ride quality – a sacrifice Porsche believes RS buyers will be happy to make.

Continuing the quest for feel and precision, all the suspension is rose-jointed with the exception of the rear-axle steering links. There's still a Sport mode (which has been recalibrated) available via the PASM button. The rear Michelin Pilot Sport Cup 2s are bespoke, with a specific compound that differs from the GT2 RS's to suit the delivery of the less torquey, naturally aspirated motor. Optional, stickier, road-legal but track-focused Cup 2 Rs will be available, but aren't fitted to our test car.

Aero-wise, the GT3 RS now shares its rear wing with the GT2 RS. This sits higher up than the old GT3 RS item. Together with the new underbody aero and rear diffuser there's an almost eight per cent gain in downforce, but with less drag. Other detail changes include an eight per cent lower final drive, which mitigates the slightly larger wheels – new forged items, 100g lighter each – and tyres. The trademark brake cooling louvres in the front wings are the more aggressive ones from the GT2 RS.

For the truly hardcore the Weissach Package (price to be announced, but think circa £20k like that for the GT2 RS) is mouthwatering. It includes magnesium wheels from the GT2 RS (a whopping 11kg saving), a titanium half-cage (another 9.6kg saved), a carbonfibre bonnet and front anti-roll bar, and an exposed carbon roof that's even lighter than the magnesium panel fitted as standard. Strong demand for the Weissach Package has put strain on the supply chain for the magnesium wheels, resulting in production delays. All we can say is they are well worth the wait – and the weight saving.

**Top left:** Meaden prepares to find out just how the RS has been improved upon. **Left:** Weissach Package is a visual assault on the senses



The pleasure to be had from the new RS begins long before you slip behind the wheel. Both the examples on the Isle of Man are finished in Lizard Green, the colour you'll remember from the model's initial reveal (evo 246). It's a spectacular hue, but not for everyone. The Weissach kit cranks up the drama with its exposed carbon. In a more subdued colour a non-Weissach car would be much more discreet, though whatever the spec the GT3 RS is a real rock star of the road.

The stance and aero kit send an explicit message. One that serves to increase your heart rate as you drop into the hard-edged bucket seat. The 911 has changed much over the decades, but the essential simplicity of the driving environment is always welcome for the ease of familiarity, and because the lack of fuss focuses you on the driving experience. From the moment you start the engine there's a feeling of getting down to business. Perhaps a frisson of intimidation, too, at





depends on your tolerance for the compromises that come with a track-honed car. Being a 964 RS owner I think you can guess my stance on this matter, but I wouldn't be surprised if some existing RS owners feel this car is simply too stiff. When we get to drive it on some of the UK's lumpier A- and B-roads I suspect I may agree, but recent experience of a GT2 RS on home turf gives me cause to feel the amplified attitude and outright ability on the 'right' roads will make the trade-off worthwhile. One thing is absolutely clear: you don't need to touch the PASM button unless you're on a track. And a smooth one at that.

The PDK 'box is perfectly happy to be left to its own devices, but it's testament to the enthusiasm the RS fosters in you that it feels more natural to pull the selector across the gate and use the paddles. It really is an uncannily good transmission, with shifts that snap home rapidly but also effortlessly at modest speeds and throttle openings, yet crack home with synaptic immediacy when you're absolutely on it.

It's at this point you'd expect me to say something about missing a clutch and gearlever. I have no doubt a stick would create a very different driving experience – one that majors on the process by which you make progress rather than the pace and efficiency with which you can cover the ground. Nevertheless, I'd be lying if I said I was craving the need to slot home each gear with a lever. Besides, it's not like there's a shortage of things to connect your senses to this fabulous machine.

Much has been written about this engine and you should believe every word, for it is utterly sensational – even though you rarely get the opportunity to fully extend it on the road. No matter, for it sounds fabulous through the mid-range: deep and packed

**'WHATEVER THE SPEC, THE GT3 RS IS A REAL ROCK STAR OF THE ROAD'**

least on damp roads, where you can't help but consider the width of the rubber and the promise of a chassis that's even more responsive and aggressively set up than the previous RS's.

Respect is most certainly due, but you soon relax into the driving, largely because you quickly feel so completely connected to each corner of the car. There's just something about the blend of steering weight, front-end response and the clean, filtered yet highly detailed feel you get through your hands that tells you exactly where you are. Even at low speeds. I'd go so far as to say it has the best steering of any 991, and even teaches a few 997s a thing or two about tactility.

Yes, there's plenty of road noise and the ride is hard, but there's enough sense of pliancy to suggest the springs and dampers simply crave some dynamic loading to settle into their operating window. How well you feel an RS should work on the road

**Top left:** chassis allows for uncanny accuracy. **Left:** cabin puts the focus on the driving experience; seven-speed PDK 'box feels appropriate

with character as it begins to get on top of the low and intermediate gears, before ceding to a steely shriek as you chase that magic 9k red line.

What you perhaps wouldn't expect from such a high-revving engine is a generous spread of torque, but such is the smooth swell of propulsion that you can squeeze the throttle in a higher gear and feel the satisfying shove of an engine that's got meaningful mid-range muscle to flex. You really don't need to hang on to the lower gears to make imperious progress – simply using the elasticity of this amazing, naturally aspirated flat-six is enough to suck in the ribbon of road standing between you and the horizon like an endless strand of spaghetti.

**TWO WEEKS PASS BETWEEN DRIVING THE RS** on the Isle of Man TT course and heading to the Nürburgring track test, but the sensations are still fresh. I arrive in Germany with a very real sense that this car is truly something special, but this will be the first opportunity to really stretch it and experience the car in its natural environment.

If there will be some debate over just how aggressive an RS should feel on the road, there's no question a 911 wearing the RS badge should be a no-excuses star on track. It takes a handful of laps around the Nürburgring GP circuit to appreciate that even amongst the constellation of fabulous modern-era RSs, this latest one shines with rare brilliance.

Free to work quickly towards the limits of grip, you're struck by many things: the responsiveness of the steering; the bite and hold that the front Michelin Cup 2s generate; how well matched the chassis feels front-to-rear. It all combines to create a sense of the car being under you from the first corner.

You feel a difference in pretty much everything it does, but especially in those moments of transition between brake and throttle – the moment when an experienced 911 driver will want to feel not only that the front end has initiated the turn, but that the rear end is settled. In earlier RSs, even the Gen 1 991, there are times when you need to wait just a moment longer to allow the rear end to catch up with the front. Sometimes you need to open the steering a little, to reduce the lateral load. In the Gen 2 car it has so much more stability that you can carry significantly more speed deep into the heart of a corner, then lean on the exceptional traction to fire you out. Rapid direction changes are equally impressive.

If this all sounds like Porsche has ironed-out more of the 911's unique dynamic wrinkles then you'd be right. But far from making the RS less enjoyable and characterful, it only serves to amplify your enjoyment, because you feel so connected to what it's doing. There's much talk of increased precision, but it's not until you've experienced just how accurately you can place the car in a corner that you appreciate what all









the talk means. It's uncannily accurate whether you're feeling for, are at or are over the limit. You don't have to have the skill of a Porsche factory driver to see why Estre felt happy to squeeze every last drop of pace from the car around the most unforgiving circuit of them all.

As for the question of Weissach Package or no Weissach Package, I suspect you'd feel an improvement in wheel control on the road between a car fitted with the magnesium wheels and one without, but kudos apart there's really not much to choose between them. Personally I'd want the Weissach Package, simply because it is comprised of the most exquisite things. The titanium cage is particularly pleasing, its precise welds and immaculate finish offering a constant reminder whenever you look in the rear-view mirror.

Ultimately, whether you're driving on the road or the racetrack, the real joy of this new GT3 RS is the way in which every aspect has not only been improved and honed, but perfectly matched to complement one another. The boss of Porsche's GT cars, Andreas Preuninger, describes it as '11,000 parts working

as one', which just about hits the nail on the head.

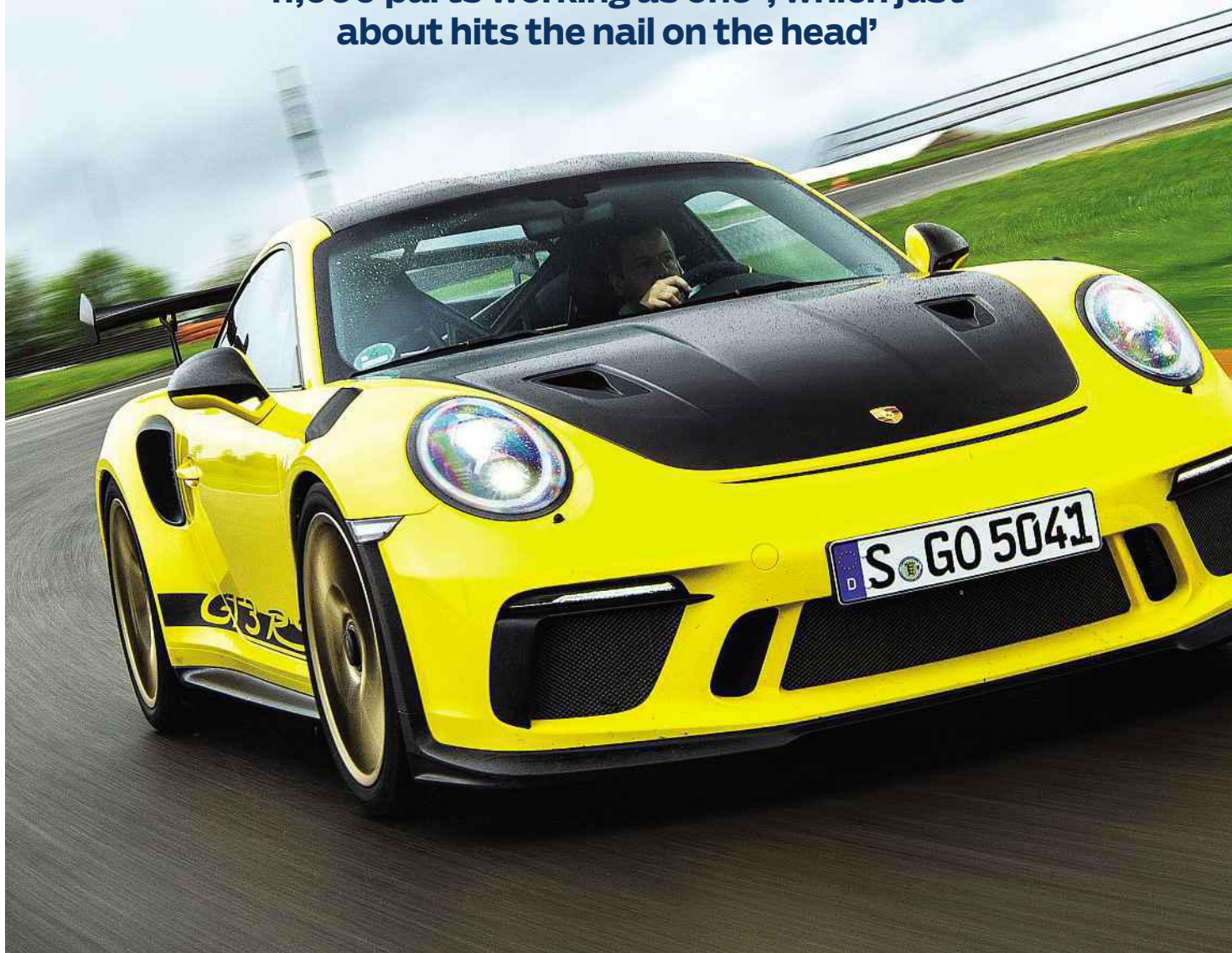
I came to this latest GT3 RS wondering how it could possibly improve on its predecessor. I've come away wondering how Porsche has managed to make it this much better. It's easy to get blasé about these unerringly brilliant motorsport 911s, but I think history will judge this particular RS as something very special indeed. ❌

### Porsche 911 GT3 RS (991.2)

**Engine** Flat-six, 3996cc **Power** 513bhp @ 8250rpm **Torque** 347lb ft @ 6000rpm **Transmission** Seven-speed twin-clutch, rear-wheel drive, limited-slip diff, torque vectoring **Front suspension** MacPherson struts, coil springs, adaptive dampers, anti-roll bar **Rear suspension** Multi-link, coil springs, adaptive dampers, anti-roll bar **Brakes** Carbon-ceramic discs, 410mm front, 390mm rear (option) **Wheels** 9.5 x 20in front, 12.5 x 21in rear **Tyres** 265/35 ZR20 front, 325/30 ZR21 rear **Weight** 1430kg **Power-to-weight** 364bhp/ton **0-62mph** 3.2sec (claimed) **Top speed** 193mph (claimed) **Basic price** £141,346

**evo rating** ★★★★★

**'Andreas Preuninger describes it as  
"11,000 parts working as one", which just  
about hits the nail on the head'**







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by ADAM TOWLER

# BULL SHIFT

*From mid-engined supercars to this. Has Lamborghini pulled off the seemingly impossible by creating an SUV that doesn't dilute everything the brand stands for?*



**'TO MEET ITS  
OBJECTIVES  
LAMBORGHINI  
HAS HAD TO  
PULL ALL OF  
ITS TOYS OUT'**







**L**AMBORGHINI'S CHOICE OF HOTEL for the launch of the Urus is all marble-and-gold Italian luxury. A towering and formidable edifice of '60s extravagance on the outskirts of Rome, its grandiose entrance, complete with de rigueur fountain, must have looked little different when it was newly constructed, complemented by some suave playboy pulling up to the concierge in his factory-fresh Miura. Transport yourself back to standing in the still heat of a Rome morning 50 years ago, and imagine suggesting to our Persol-adorned lothario that the same company which created the first, true manifestation of the supercar would one day create a vehicle like the Urus. What would Dallara, Bizzarrini and Gandini, young men burning midnight oil to realise an impossible dream, have made of this design brief?

Today, you can probe Maurizio Reggiani, Lambo's charismatic engineering chief, over whether a modern-day Espada might have made a more authentic 'practical' Lamborghini, but he's too polished at dealing with the media to comment outright, even if the twinkle in the eye and the expressive shrug of the shoulders suggests he'd be carving up that Panamera mule and putting an Aventador V12 on an engine crane faster than you can say Sant'Agata Bolognese.

Quite simply, if we are to talk sensibly about this car, we need to park the die-hard enthusiast hurt. I feel it. I know many of you do, too. But Lamborghini's customers – both current and those waiting in the wings – have spoken. They had the choice of a four-door saloon, premiated by the Estoque concept in 2008, but they chose the SUV, and the reasons are straightforward. In a world that gives the impression of spiralling into conflict and social unrest, the high net worth individuals that form the Urus's customer base want to feel safe. They want to look down on other road users, either for a literal sense of superiority, possibly, or more likely for that subconscious feeling of security that looking down on the world brings. Many will be driven by women, with their children on board. They want useful luggage space, and five seats that are easy to ingress and egress. These are not my

words – these are words direct from Lamborghini's senior team; what its customers have told them they wanted, and exactly why.

So the challenge has been to take such a vehicle, complete with all the engineering compromises the SUV brings, and make it feel like a true Lamborghini. How do you do that? For Reggiani it's about making it unequivocally the fastest SUV on the market, whether in a straight line, down a B-road, or around a circuit – asphalt or rough – while retaining all those practical attributes. Not a small job, then.

The other key reason Lamborghini can do this is because it is part of the VW Group, and that means, inevitably, platform sharing. A company that sells only 3500 cars a year can't hope to develop something as advanced as a luxury SUV, and that's also why you're unlikely to see an SUV wearing a McLaren badge any time soon. Urus sales will double Sant'Agata's production volume, which is why Lamborghini has invested in doubling the square footage of its factory and hiring 500 new staff. But it also removes a little of the mystique surrounding the Urus, for its raw constituent parts are nothing if not predictable.

It's based on VW's MLB-evo platform that underpins cars such as the Porsche Cayenne and Audi SQ7, and its engine's roots are resolutely Teutonic. It's the ubiquitous 4-litre twin-turbo V8, its twin-scroll turbines located within the vee for improved response and a burgeoning torque curve that made it the only realistic choice for a vehicle such as the Urus. Nevertheless, Lamborghini has gone its own way with the V8 to achieve the final numbers of 641bhp and 627lb ft, developing new cylinder heads, cooling systems, turbochargers, camshafts and so on.

The V8 sends drive to the usual eight-speed torque-converter gearbox, but from there the Urus charts its own path. It soon becomes clear that to meet its objectives Lamborghini has had to pull all the toys out of the cupboard, from the four-wheel-steer set-up

**Above left:** 'Tamburo' offers a myriad of driver settings. **Left:** Urus feels big on public roads. **Below left:** interior a step-up in quality and sophistication over other Lamborghinis'





**'THE URUS IS  
A MONSTER –  
A FREAKISH  
MANIPULATOR  
OF PHYSICS'**







first employed on the Aventador S (and a regular on Porsches), to the active anti-roll bars (think Bentayga) and adaptive air suspension and variable damping. Where it differs to say, a Cayenne, is in the drivetrain, because the Urus features a Torsen differential at the centre (not the Porsche's 'hang-on' viscous clutch) with an active torque-vectoring diff on the rear axle. In numbers, this means the Torsen runs at 40:60, front:rear, in a steady state, but can send up to 70 per cent to the front axle and 87 per cent to the rear, while up to 75 per cent of torque can go to either rear wheel.

With so many electronically managed systems, the key, as usual, is integration. The driver can influence this via the Tamburo (that's 'drum' in Italian), a cylindrical-shaped collection of levers and buttons at the base of the centre console. On the left is the ANIMA (Adaptive Network Intelligent Management) switch, offering the choice of Strada (road), Sport, Corsa (race) and Neve (snow), plus, optionally, Terra (gravel) and Sabbia (sand). To the right are the 'Ego' buttons for steering, powertrain (engine and 'box) and damping. Each of these has three settings – Smooth, Medium and Sport. You are either in one of the ANIMA modes, or mixing and matching yourself, not both. There are three ride-height levels, too.

At over 5 metres long, 2 metres wide and with a wheelbase of over 3 metres, the Urus is intimidatingly large. But it's also obvious it sits lower than the traditional SUV (it's wider, longer but lower than a Cayenne), an impression bolstered when you clamber aboard. Recalling the Aventador S from the 4WD megateam in *evo* 246, it seems impossible that the same company now also makes this, such is the ramp-up in quality and sophistication. The broad centre stack houses the latest flush-fit Audi-Porsche-style touchscreen, while extensive use of leather and an Alcantara headlining create the required luxury ambience. The driving position is most un-SUV-like in its sportiness, but a glance over the shoulder shows there's plenty of legroom regardless of whether the three-seat bench or twin adjustable rear seats are fitted, although the sloping roofline means that for those over six feet tall (me), headroom is a little tight.

Right, enough of the practicalities: we drive the Urus at Vallelunga circuit first. Frustratingly, really, for it's obviously of limited relevance, but Lamborghini is determined for us to experience what the car can do.

Quite simply, it has created a monster. A freakish manipulator of physics which, while you'd never take it to a trackday, would embarrass many with its pace if you did. The initial overriding sensation is of acceleration: raw, unending forward thrust that grabs hold of 2.2 tons and forces it through the air with all the bovine strength the Urus name suggests. Gearchanges are crisp enough, and the brakes hold out – for a few laps of punishment, at least. Just how long those calipers and discs – ten-piston with 440mm carbon-ceramics at the front – can last before wilting remains to be seen, but the fact they aren't juddering by the second lap is something of a miracle.

What you really notice is the agility, the crispness in how the Urus changes direction. Yes, it is a one-dimensional experience, an exercise in restraint and weight management – overcommit to a corner and the outside-front tyre makes that truck-racing *whur-whur-whur* noise – but it's hugely impressive all the same.

Finally we're let out onto the road, and the Urus feels inherently right. The steering is effortless but utterly accurate, and with nicely linear weighting. Switching to a sportier setting induces more rear-steer effect, vividly ramping up the sense of agility. It can't hide the width of the car, though: on narrow lanes you're acutely aware that the Urus is taking up an awful lot of space, just as it feels even more potent now than it did on the wide-open spaces of the track.

What disappoints is the ride quality. All the 'road route' cars on the launch are shod with the optional 23-inch rims and P Zeros (on track it was 22s with P Zero Corsas; for off-road it'll be standard 21s with Pirelli Verde Scorpions). These giant alloys give the Urus a Tonka toy-like visual quality, but there's a good chance the weight of the wheels and the meagre

**Above left:** plenty of room in the rear. **Left:** Urus manages its 2.2 tons surprisingly well. **Below left:** optional 23-inch rims don't help the ride quality



sidewalls contribute to the knobby ride. The Urus's overall deportment is relaxed, but it's agitated by potholes. True, the roads around Vallelunga are unremittingly awful, but the air suspension struggles to isolate the cabin from the constant battering, too much noise and vibration making its way through. This is a pity, for the Urus has the core elements to be a fine everyday or long-distance companion. How the car rides on smaller wheels remains to be seen.

And off-road? We're offered a drive on something resembling a rallycross track. It's fun kicking up sand like a Dakar truck, but it doesn't really tell us much.

Cards-on-the-table time. As someone passionate about old 911s, flimsy hot hatchbacks and cars in general that reward at real-world speeds and on real roads, I am immediately suspicious of the Urus. It is an engineering conjuring trick – the application of power and technology to answer a question that possibly need not have been asked. But, I admire it because relative to the brief, Lamborghini has done a very decent job.

Where Bentley has struggled with the Bentayga, which doesn't ride as it should given its leaning towards luxury and comfort, and seems poorly packaged for space, Lamborghini has come much closer to nailing its objective, blending many different attributes under a Lambo-like skin. If the Urus does ride better on smaller wheels, it deserves to succeed. But given the first two years of production are already sold out, there no doubt that it already has. ❌

### Lamborghini Urus

**Engine** V8, 3996cc, twin-turbo **Power** 641bhp @ 6000rpm **Torque** 627lb ft @ 2250-4500rpm **Weight** 2200kg (296bhp/ton) **0-62mph** 3.6sec (claimed)  
**Top speed** 190mph (claimed) **Basic price** c£185,000 **evo rating** ★★★★★

## BUT IS IT A LAMBO?

Chief engineer Maurizio Reggiani on realising the Urus



'We wanted to have the fastest SUV. I think you will be impressed with the car on the track. You will also see the off-road course we have here at the launch. It is gravel. My interpretation is this – speed on gravel, not off-road like a Land Rover!

'We can choose what we need from within the group – the technologies that

enable us to realise the performance we need. The V8 engine was the only engine choice we could make, for example, because you need the torque available at very low rpm. However, while we work within the platform, if anyone [brands within the VW Group] wants something specific, such as we need with the cooling of the engine – oil, water and the gearbox – then we can take responsibility for this.

'It's the same with the engine: we have developed at Lamborghini a new intake manifold, cylinder head, camshafts, air filter, new twin-scroll turbos and the exhaust system. It is a Lamborghini engine. The sound is very important with a Lamborghini, but with a turbocharged engine you lose the sound, so we have a resonator in the exhaust to take the harmonics and sound into the cabin.

'To develop the car we have taken on many more engineers. When I started at Lamborghini [in 1998] we had maybe 40, 50 engineers at the time of the Murciélago, whereas now we have hundreds – and this is to realise the Urus. We have tested the vehicle all over the world. Yes, we have tested it at the Nürburgring, where we have had a big development with the tyres: there are so many types of bumps, surfaces, corners and high-speed sections, it is so much easier there. I said during development that the Urus would set the fastest time, but yes, at the moment there is not so much competition in this class.'





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# THE FAST AND THE CURIOUS

*From a Special Forces off-roader to an everyday supercar and numerous one-off specials, Lamborghini's 'other' creations make the Urus look run of the mill*

by JORDAN KATSIANIS



**T**HE CHANCES ARE YOU know the story of how an industrious Italian by the name of Ferruccio stuck it to the world's pre-eminent maker of sports cars by building his own. Of course, Signor Lamborghini's cars were only made possible by the business that funded his side of the spat with Ferrari. Tractors.

Lamborghini Trattori still exists today, so the notion of a Lamborghini 'Chelsea tractor', as the uncharitable might call the Urus, is perhaps less sacrilegious than some are suggesting. The Urus isn't even the company's first SUV. In fact, Lamborghini has numerous models in its back catalogue that don't conform to the mid-engined supercar format that we tend to associate with the firm today. Here are some of the highlights.

## ← LM002

Built between 1986 and 1993, the Urus's direct predecessor made Lamborghini the first supercar manufacturer to venture into SUVs – and this long before Audi took control at Sant'Agata.

The term SUV could even have been created with the LM002 in mind. The Countach's V12 took care of the 'sports' bit, and the 'utility' was never in doubt, thanks to an open load bed and the ability to scale inclines that would have given a contemporary Land Rover a nose bleed.



## Cheetah

The LM002 wasn't Lamborghini's first all-terrain vehicle, as nearly ten years before it there was the Cheetah, commissioned by the American Special Forces.

Rather than using a Lamborghini V12, the Cheetah was powered by a Chrysler-sourced 5.9-litre V8 that was rear-mounted and waterproofed. A prototype Cheetah was built by a defence contractor in the US, then sent to Italy where Lamborghini applied the finishing touches before the vehicle's debut at the 1977 Geneva motor show.

The Cheetah never made production, but it could be considered a predecessor to the iconic Hummer.





### 400 GT Monza

The first cars built by Lamborghini were the front-engined V12 350 GT (1964) and its successor, the 400 GT (1966). However, with the coachbuilding era in full swing, it wasn't long before some even more special one-off commissions began to appear.

Cue the 400 GT Monza of 1966, with unique fastback bodywork by Neri and Bonacini. Initially built for an American customer, after homologation issues it ended up being sold to a Spanish client, with whom it remained – largely unseen – until his death in the early '90s.



### 400 GT Flying Star II

The second one-off 400 GT-based model was the Flying Star II, a two-door shooting brake from coachbuilder Carrozzeria Touring.

Very modern-looking for its era, with sharp creases and elegant proportions, the Flying Star II may have been built as a prototype but was also fully functional.

The car was shown at the Turin motor show in 1966 and was to be the last design to come from the illustrious coachbuilder until its revival in 2006.



### Islero

Two years after Marcello Gandini of Bertone had applied his hand to the magnificent Miura supercar, Lamborghini decided to replace its ageing 400 GT with a new front-engined coupe.

Unfortunately, Gandini's deft touch didn't reach the Islero of 1968, the design instead being the work of Carrozzeria Marazzi. So although the Islero gained the Miura's fabulous Bizzarrini V12, it lived in the shadow of its mid-engined sibling – and of Gandini's other recent commission for Lamborghini, the Marzal concept car...



### Marzal

The Marzal shocked the motoring world with its wild proportions and stunning detailing at the 1967 Geneva motor show. Defined by its glazing and hexagonal rear louvres, the four-seater Marzal set a precedent for Bertone design and inspired the subsequent Espada.

The one-off Marzal then disappeared, not appearing again in public until 1996, when a collection of Bertone's most iconic models were gathered together in California for Monterey Car Week.

### ↑ Espada

Arriving in 1968, the Espada was the productionised realisation of the Marzal concept. Donning a similar Gandini-designed silhouette, it traded the show car's Perspex doors and silver leather for a sophisticated palette of materials, yet was no less striking.

Under the vast bonnet was the same Bizzarrini V12 as in the Miura, but here intended to effortlessly transport one very wealthy driver and three friends across the continent in comfort.

It may not be the prettiest V12 Lambo, but it sure is one of the most distinctive.



### Jarama

By 1970, the Miura and Espada had raised Lamborghini's profile to that of a global supercar manufacturer. But Gandini's expressive design did leave space for a slightly more understated GT, especially in the US, which had not warmed to the Espada's quirky proportions.

The Jarama was built for just that purpose: an 'everyday' Lamborghini that was less of a statement supercar. It was also the car that company founder Ferruccio drove every day. ☒



HOT



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by ANTONY INGRAM

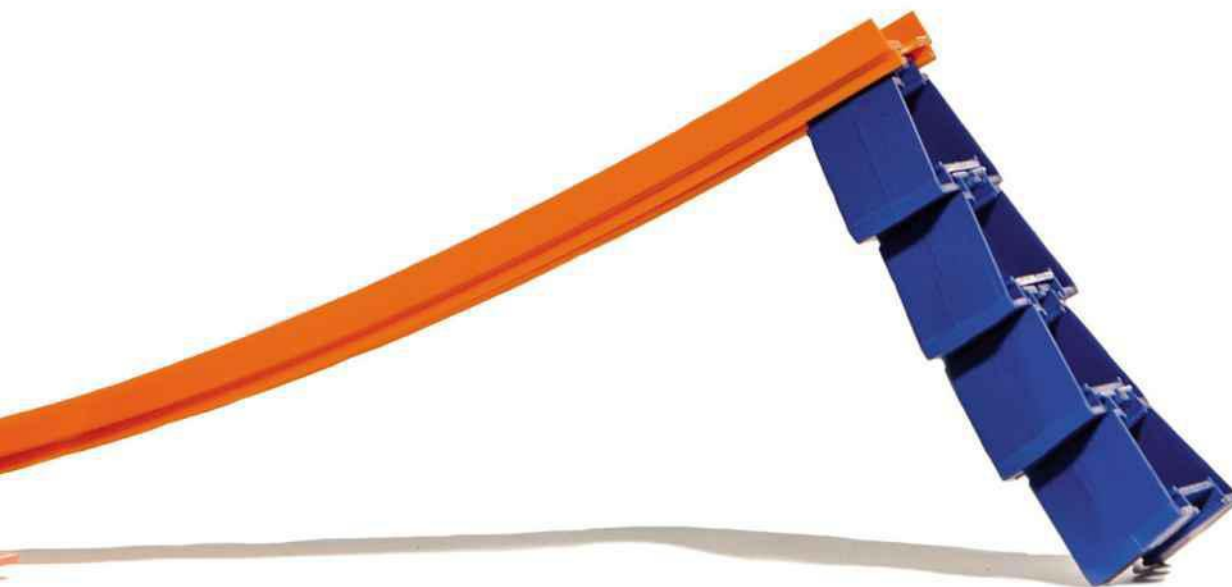
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PHOTOGRAPHY by ASTON PARROTT

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*From the wacky to the wonderful, it's been the entry point into the world of cars for millions of youngsters (and big kids) around the globe. And 50 years on Hot Wheels is still...*

# STUFF



# V

## **VOLKSWAGEN, CONTRARY TO**

what you might have read elsewhere, is not the world's biggest car maker. True, it may have produced 10.7million cars in 2017 – enough to put it ahead of Toyota and Renault-Nissan – but there's one company, celebrating its 50th anniversary on 19 May, that can match that figure virtually every week.

I'll not draw out the analogy too much longer as the images on this page will have given the game away somewhat, but just as Lego makes more rubber tyres than any other company on the planet, so Hot Wheels can stake a pretty good claim to being the world's largest car maker.

Gimmicks aside, is it a company deserving of space in *evo*? Absolutely. Ahead of even Scalextric, Tamiya, or videogames such as *Gran Turismo*, the brand has served for many of us as the first step into that long journey to becoming a petrolhead. You might not remember your first Hot Wheels car (or perhaps your first Matchbox car; the British brand was bought by Hot Wheels owner Mattel in 1997), but from the moment you were old enough to grind them against the skirting board rather than attempting to swallow them, the little diecast models were acting as your first point of reference for automotive colour, style, brand and – on some level, at least – driving fun.

Hot Wheels was the brainchild of Mattel founder Elliot Handler, whose wife Ruth had, in 1959, created that other mid-century toy icon, Barbie. First mooted in 1966, the idea behind it was to create a new and exciting way for kids to experience 'vehicle play' and the thrill of the custom hot-rod culture that defined the American automotive landscape post-war. It was Handler who coined the name, too. Remarking on the design and the speed at which one of the prototypes rolled along the floor, he was said to have exclaimed: 'Those are some hot wheels!'



This idea spawned the first line of 16 vehicles that debuted in 1968, known as the Original Sweet 16. Eleven of these were the work of Harry Bentley Bradley, an automotive designer who had worked with General Motors between 1962 and 1966 and penned several designs for Detroit-based customisers the Alexander Brothers.

His most famous design, the Dodge Deora forward-control pickup, would become one of the Original Sweet 16, but the very first car produced by Hot Wheels was the Custom Camaro. Based on the brand new 1967 Chevrolet Camaro – itself hot property at the time – it was joined by other contemporary pony cars such as the Mustang, Cougar, Barracuda and Firebird. Each featured a sparkling 'Spectraflame' paint scheme – a coloured lacquer over a zinc-plated casting – and other unique touches that echoed the era's car culture, such as side-exit exhausts and staggered wheel set-ups.

An almost endless list of iconic designs quickly followed, from the Twin Mill – a dart-like hot-rod powered by a pair of 8.2-litre supercharged big-block Chevy V8s – to the Beach Bomb, a VW camper van equipped with a pair of surfboards. Today, rare early designs can command big money: a hot pink prototype version of the Beach Bomb was bought for \$72,000 by its current owner, renowned Hot Wheels collector Bruce Pascal. It's since been valued at up to \$150,000, or around half the most ever paid at auction for a real split-window VW Type 2...

Over its first half century Hot Wheels has produced a diecast of pretty much every vehicle you can think of, and with a tradition of designing complete ground-up custom models, a good few you'd struggle to even imagine. More





**Above and below:** the Original Sweet 16 from 1968. **Left:** a Countach on that unmistakable orange track

than 20,000 different models have been created to date, and currently over 130 new car designs are introduced each and every year. A dedicated team works to render real-world cars in miniature form and come up with entirely new vehicles: it could be a branded car for one of the company's 350 partners – everyone from motoring personalities such as Magnus Walker to big-name manufacturers – or a new variation on the hot-rod theme, or a *Star Wars* or *Toy Story* character car.

That variety is one of the highlights of the job, according to Jun Imai, who has been at Hot Wheels for 14 years and leads

## 'A prototype hot pink VW camper van was bought for \$72,000, and has since been valued at up to \$150,000'

the transportation design team. About three-fifths of the designs the team works on are licensed vehicles replicating the kind of modern cars and classics you'll see on the road, while the remainder are what the company calls Hot Wheels Originals, from the pop culture-themed toys to fantasy vehicles directly from the minds of the designers.

As car enthusiasts, the team take particular pleasure in replicating some of their favourite shapes in miniature. Imai's own passion is in older Japanese metal and classic Porsches. He owns a classic Datsun 510 wagon and 260Z, and a 1985 911 Carrera, all modified, and changes Imai has made to his Datsuns in particular have inspired some of the custom 510s and Z-cars available in the Hot Wheels line-up. 'Real-world and toys go hand-in-hand for me,' says Imai. 'I'll sometimes try something out on one of my cars, and it might inspire one of my designs the next day.'

Along similar lines, fellow designer Ryu Asada has pushed several Honda

designs onto the shelves over the years, and true to form owns both an S2000 and a first-generation NSX. Other members of the design team are Porschephiles, while some own and covet muscle cars. This variety heavily and unavoidably influences each year's diverse wave of new 1:64-scale models.

This passion for cars has opened a few doors, too. Hot Wheels has formed some high-profile collaborations in recent years, pairing up with names such as *Fast & Furious* franchise star Sung Kang and the aforementioned Magnus Walker to create miniatures based on customised real-world vehicles.

A fan of Sheffield-born Walker since watching the cult *Urban Outlaw* documentary, Imai describes the collaboration that followed as a 'very organic process', with Walker's enthusiasm and ideas inspiring a line of Urban Outlaw cars, from 935s and GT3s to a replica of his famous '277', as driven in *evo* issue 209. Kang, too, is a petrolhead to the core, making the





eventual introduction through a mutual friend of Imai and Kang relatively easy. The car that resulted, a pumped-up replica of Kang's custom Datsun 240Z named 'Fugu Z', has since spawned several other custom 240Zs, including a take on Imai's own wide-arched Z-car.

The process for creating non-licensed vehicles is even more fascinating. Imai describes it as a 'different mindset', with designers imagining not just individual vehicles but a whole world in which the cars operate, assigning different roles to different vehicles whether they're relatively straightforward concept-style cars or... well, wheeled dinosaurs. Imai notes that the team will always design vehicles as if they're real cars, though, with space for drivers and powertrains, however fantastical the overall shape. This is something best illustrated by the full-scale, functioning replica of the famous Twin Mill that the company built for the SEMA show in 2001.



Designing the diecast cars to function is another consideration. Hot Wheels is as much known for its orange track as it is for the cars that run on it, and the size of this track has led to fairly consistent requirements from the 1:64-scale models, from standardised wheel sizes to enough ground clearance that a car can negotiate a loop at high speed. 'It's a bit like platforms in the car industry,' explains Imai.

At the same time, modern production techniques have allowed designs to become more true-to-life and more complex – and Imai says that they've even been able to implement some of the techniques discovered by the company's huge customising fan base to improve castings.

Those castings will change further in response to other factors, too. Just as early cars like the Deora, Whip Creamer and Twin Mill are redolent of the era in which they were conceived, the march of modern car design and automotive trends influences the latest Hot Wheels designs. Imai says he's particularly interested in the burgeoning market for electric cars, the way it's allowing smaller car makers to make a bigger impact in the market, and how that affects car and toy design, as well as materials technology. 'I'm keen to do more in terms of motorsports, too,' he says. 'Formula E, in particular, is super exciting – the thrill and the speed of motorsport, but a consideration for environmental concerns, too.'

Hot Wheels' earliest days are still appealing, though. 'I'd love to bring back some of the older cars,' adds Imai. 'They're still an inspiration for us. Perhaps replicating some of our Original Sweet 16, but produced with the technology we're now able to incorporate.'

Hot Wheels? The next 50 years should be even hotter. ❏

Left: advert from 1968 – the year Hot Wheels launched. Top left: the set that every boy wanted in the early '70s

16.5  
 CARS MADE  
 PER SECOND

SIX  
 BILLION  
 PRODUCED  
 SINCE 1968

519  
 MILLION  
 PRODUCED  
 PER YEAR



2  
 BILLION  
 WHEELS  
 PRODUCED  
 PER YEAR

6000  
 MILES OF  
 ORANGE  
 TRACK MADE  
 PER YEAR

20,000  
 DIFFERENT  
 HOT WHEELS  
 DESIGNS

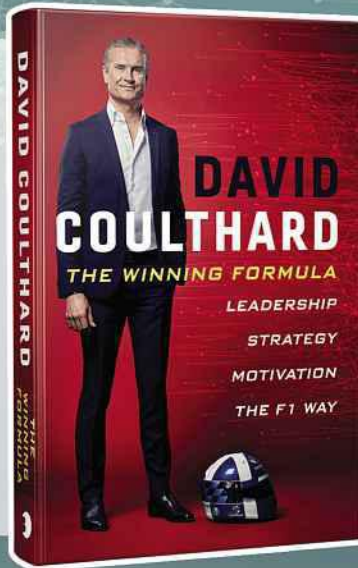


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# evo Supertest

by JOHN BARKER PHOTOGRAPHY by MATT HOWELL

## A110 v 718 Cayman S v TT RS



*Alpine's A110 is a breath of fresh air in the German-dominated sports coupe sector. But has the French upstart got what it takes to vanquish the established players?*



ALPINE A110 v PORSCHE 718 CAYMAN S v AUDI TT RS





# THE DRIVE

**T**HE PORSCHE AND THE AUDI ARE ALREADY parked, side-by-side, waiting for the Alpine to show. In bold colours, sitting on 20-inch wheels, they look solid and well made, confidently hewn. When the A110 arrives and swings in next to them, I'm shocked at how small and low it is. It's the first time I've seen one in the metal and it never occurred to me that one of the reasons it's so light is that it's small, with small wheels – 17s as standard, 18s on this, the launch edition.

Feedback from the A110 launch was highly complimentary, with many experienced testers, including our own Steve Sutcliffe (*evo* 244), claiming that the Cayman's dominance was under threat. Well, this is where we find out just how credible the Alpine is. The price of this A110 Première Édition is strong at £51,805 (though all 1955 examples were snapped up in days) and the top-line production version, the 'Legende', won't be far off £50k, so the rivals here to meet it are the Cayman S (base price £51,853) and the TT RS (£52,480).

The A110 was always going to be a hard sell: a new and unproven mid-engined sports coupe powered by a 1.8-litre, four-cylinder turbo engine. Or, for the same money, the Cayman: charismatic, polished and dynamically peerless. So I imagine the management

at Alpine couldn't believe their luck when Porsche announced it would be scrapping the silky, flat-six engines of the Boxster and Cayman and replacing them with turbocharged flat-fours. That's one objection of the potential Alpine customer scotched.

There's a lot more to the Cayman than just the engine though, as the three-hour journey to this café in picture-postcard pretty Hutton-le-Hole in the North York Moors has reiterated. The 718 Cayman S looked fabulous on my driveway, better than any previous version, and it swallowed both my luggage and – more impressively – the gear of photographer Matt Howell. It rides beautifully, too, supple yet controlled, and show it any sort of corner and it will show you some flair, with incisive but calm steering and natural balance and agility – it seems to rotate around a point between the seats. Boy, it's good.

'It sounds awful,' says Howell. 'When you started it up I didn't realise it was a four, but now...' I have to agree. I had hoped it would be better, this being a heavily revised version. The original flat-four installation was jaw-droppingly bad with, amongst other aural maladies, a mid-range coarseness that was worse on the overrun and a number of whooshes and sighs that would have been deemed turbo character if they related to the demand being made of the engine, but instead seemed random. Two years on and all that noise has gone or been suppressed, and it









# 'The A110's ride creates an impression of suppleness and effortlessness, like an original Lotus Elise'

is 100 per cent better, but what's left is a mournful, monotone, mid-range drone.

The tragedy is that in most other respects, there's never been a better Cayman. There's no question that the 2.5-litre flat-four delivers the claimed 345bhp, and it works in a superb close harmony with the (optional) seven-speed PDK gearbox, and dynamically the car is as sweet as. So when you've just threaded it along a few good miles of choppy Yorkshire B-road and wrung out the engine to the red line – where it sounds at its best – you know that it's still going to take something special to unseat it.

That something could be the Alpine. With 249bhp it might be 96bhp down on the Cayman, but it's stayed pretty much the same size in the Porsche's rear-view mirror, bobbing around in its wake, small, low and blue, and distinctive with its inset driving lamps. It's time to see what all the fuss is about.

Pound for pound, you get less for your money with the A110, which is a good thing if you are open to the many benefits of less mass. Build light from the start, as Alpine has, investing in aluminium construction (94 per cent of the body and chassis is aluminium) and you set the car on a virtuous circle of weight reduction. Less initial weight means you need less power for the same performance, which means you can use a smaller engine with fewer cylinders, which further reduces weight, allowing smaller brakes and smaller wheels and tyres, which means less unsprung weight, which allows lighter springs and smaller dampers, and so on...

It's a philosophy championed by Lotus, and it has been obsessively adhered to by the Alpine development team, too, but while Hethel's modern offerings tend to look chunky and feel spartan, the Alpine looks more like a scaled-down conventional coupe – sleek, with crisp shut lines, and a warm, welcoming cockpit with many of the expected modern trappings. There's a band of leather across the dash fascia, the instruments are provided by a big TFT screen with neat, unique graphics, while beneath the arc of centre console, neatly trimmed in carbonfibre, is a space for phones and other chattels. The high-sided seats make this cubby awkward to get at, though, and beyond the leather and carbon there is quite a lot of hard, scratchy plastic, which is probably stiff and light, but which feels more out of place in a £51k coupe than the body-coloured trim on the door casings.

The seats, with their quilted leather sides and fixed-back lightweight frames, look seriously sporty, but in fact are easy to get into and very comfortable, as well as being supportive. They're part of the launch edition upgrades, as are the numerous tricolour flashes and carbon trim for the air vents and centre console. Another remarkable thing about the A110 is that although it looks

small on the outside, it doesn't feel like it from the inside.

Hidden behind the insulating cover beneath the wrap-around rear screen is the all-new, all-aluminium turbocharged 1.8-litre in-line four-cylinder engine, mounted in a bespoke aluminium subframe and coupled to an evolution of the Renault Clio's Getrag dual-clutch gearbox. Thumb the big orange button on the centre console and the noise it makes when it fires up is cleaner and sweeter than the flat-four in the Porsche. Not much of a stretch, admittedly, but there's a lightness to the way it responds when you blip the throttle, too, and within a couple of miles it has proved to be decently characterful, with a nutty, hollow bark when pulling hard, overlaid with turbo-spooling *whoosh*. More importantly, it feels properly sparky – well up to the task, though that's as much to do with the mass of the car.

Those first couple of miles aren't about the performance, though. What grabs your attention is the way the Alpine feels on the road, how it reacts to steering inputs and bumps and bends. It feels genuinely light, through the electrically assisted steering and its connection to the road, as if the front tyres are even slimmer than their 205/40 R18 dimensions and are offering little resistance. Then there's the ride, which is loose-limbed and feels long-legged, helping create a unique impression of suppleness and effortlessness. It's like an original Lotus Elise but not quite, the ride of the Alpine being a little more easily disturbed at the front.

Pick up speed and the steering effort required increases appropriately, giving a workable level of effort, while the feel around centre, previously soft and open, closes to bring welcome



**Left:** A110 seems made for these types of road, but certain bumps can unsettle it. **Top left:** it doesn't feel tight inside despite it being the smallest of the three cars here. **Right:** Disdale and Barker take the chance to refuel

precision. Squeeze on the throttle and after a moment's hesitation (there's a moment of lag in all three cars) the Alpine surges down the road, a quick and seamless upshift providing unbroken acceleration. And the ride parries some of the bigger bumps and neutralises some of the detail of a road surface that the Cayman proved was oddly tricky and wrong-footing when we drove up. I'm grinning; I like the attitude and approach of this Alpine. It feels modern and classic French at the same time.

The TT RS is looking a bit too familiar, but you'd be wrong to dismiss it, for a few good reasons. The first and most significant is that it's not a car that will struggle for engine power or character, because installed transversely beneath its mirror-finish gloss red bonnet is an in-line five-cylinder turbo engine cranking out almost 400bhp.

At the weigh-in, our corner-weight scales threw up a couple of surprises. The fact that the TT was the heaviest wasn't one of them. That at 1487kg it was only 38kg heavier than the Cayman S was... As was the fact that the A110 came in at just 1094kg, under the claimed figure (1103kg) and almost 400kg less than the Audi.

That's not the whole story, of course, because while the Porsche distributes the load with something approaching equity (44:56 front:rear), and the Alpine slightly less so (42:58), the Audi gets nowhere near that. The latest straight-five may have an aluminium cylinder block, helping reduce the engine's overall mass by a useful 30kg, and it may be installed transversely (as opposed to longitudinally like a battering ram in the Ur-Quattro), but it all still sits forward of the front axle line. As a result, more than 900kg rests on the front axle for a nose-heavy 61:39 distribution.

Mind, there is at least one upside of being front-engined, and that's that the TT has rear seats. Small ones, granted, but useful

## 'The Porsche Cayman sounds like a muted Impreza crossed with an air-cooled Beetle'

for shopping or luggage if you don't have small children. There's a half-decent boot, too, so it rivals the Cayman for practicality. The Alpine is merely OK, with a stowable boot beneath the small bootlid and a rectangular space beneath the bonnet that looks millimetre-perfect for a prêt-à-porter suitcase ('max load 40kg').

It's the bling that catches your eye first in the TT: the machine-turned centre console plate and door pulls, the five air vents with (optional) coloured bands, and the shiny centre buttons that are the controls for the air conditioning and heated seats. Then there's the Alcantara-rimmed wheel with its see-through spokes and starter button and Drive Select mode switch hanging off it, all of which helps make for a clean centre console. In contrast, the 'fireplace' of the Cayman – that space ahead of the gear selector – looks like a dump for switches and buttons. Braille would probably help find the one you want in the dark. The driving position of the TT is less special than those of the Cayman and A110, though, being high in comparison, like in a hot hatch.

If you're a fan of the Ur-Quattro, the first press of the starter button is a moment to savour. There's a *pop-crackle* flare followed







**Above:** Cayman S feels good for its 345bhp and is as dynamically sorted as ever. **Left:** interior can't match that of the Audi; optional seven-speed PDK gearbox works in superb harmony with the turbocharged flat-four engine

by that distinctive, evocative mellow warble. It simply blows the others away – the Porsche sounds like a muted Impreza crossed with an air-cooled Beetle, while the Alpine sounds like a plain old hot hatch. On the move the TT is a bit less distinct, like you're being followed by an Ur-Quattro, but just ahead of the gear selector there's a button to sort that. It engages a physical, exhaust plumbing enhancement rather than sound piped through the audio system, and it adds just the right amount of richness and edge.

The steering needs similar help. The rim is unusually but comfortably shaped, and nicely tactile thanks to the faux suede parts, but the efforts it demands are just a bit too low to inspire confidence when you pick up the pace. A dip into the adaptive setting of the driver modes allows steering weight and other parameters to be adjusted, including damping.

It certainly doesn't need to be any stiffer on these Dales roads. There's an underlying tautness to the TT RS that can feel very granular at times, which I'd put money on being down to the 20-inch wheel option on this car.

I've got road test editor James Disdale behind in the Alpine, and the TT is so fast and such a straightforward, undemanding car to hustle along it feels like I should be able to shake him, on the straight bits at least. There's impressive grip and traction – no slip

at either end at sane speeds – but the Alpine is always there. And as the road gets more lumpy, the Audi gets less poised. You start to wince dropping into compressions, while over sharp crests the car feels launched... at which point it feels every one of those 393 kilos heavier than the Alpine, and you fear for the 30-section tyres (and the rims) when you land.

It's been a fun run, illuminating, too. James has a knowing look on his face when we pull up on the cobbles outside of our hotel at the top of the hill in Reeth. 'The A110 simply goes with the flow, while the Audi jiggles and hops in a way that suggests it's simply not getting on with the surface,' he observes.

In isolation, the TT RS would feel indomitable: incisive, with terrific cornering grip and massive punch. It lacks the engagement of the A110 and the Cayman, though, that sense that you're a part of the process of making the car go quickly, other than steering it accurately and getting on the power at the right time. The Alpine stays in touch because it rolls into the turns carrying more speed and, despite the horsepower deficit, hangs on to the TT's tailpipes because it's so much lighter and more responsive. There are a few foibles, though. The sense of connection to the front wheels isn't as strong as you'd like sometimes, and occasionally a sequence of bumps will set off a lateral bobble, as if the front wheels are shimmying in turn.

'The TT feels more like a very fast hot hatch than a genuine sports car, though that howling motor sounds part Group B rally car and part R8 V10,' grins James. On the other hand, the Porsche, we agree, is dynamically sublime. 'The steering is quick without



## 'The Audi jiggles and hops in a way that suggests it's simply not getting on with the surface'

being nervy, and once the front tyres are biting it delivers by far the most detailed feedback,' says James. 'Factor in the beautiful balance, near faultless damping and tenacious grip and the Cayman is both fast and fun. It's also the only one here that's really throttle-adjustable.'

### DAY TWO OF OUR TOUR DE YORKSHIRE SEES LIGHT

rain falling out of a clear blue sky. In a reverse of our arrival, James leads away in the Alpine and I'm behind in the Audi. The wetted surface seems to be making him more circumspect and the TT is able to manage the gap, playing with the French coupe like a cat with a mouse. I feel relaxed; the Audi has grip and grunt to spare and does some things very well: its dual-clutch gearbox is slick and intuitive, its selector lever logic-natural and tactile (the Porsche's feels clunky, the Alpine's buttons a cop-out), and after you've pulled a paddle the 'box holds manual mode for just the right amount of time. Turns out that on the damp surface, James didn't quite trust that the front of the Alpine was turned and so was trail-braking into some corners to help it in.

The Buttertubs Pass is breathtaking when we arrive, bathed in watery light. It's a narrow, lollypop bit of road, and the TT once again feels its mass if you misjudge your speed or the severity of a dip or crest. It feels like the perfect road for the small, softly sprung Alpine, and once we've got the shots we came for, I slip into the embrace of the A110's bucket seat and lead James in the Porsche back down to Hawes. Initially the Alpine does feel made for this part of the world, but a couple of big dips bring sounds of light contact – wheels rubbing the arches is our guess – and the front is again distracted by certain combos of bumps. Of course, if there wasn't an acid yellow Porsche behind, the pace would be somewhat less enthusiastic.

The Cayman is having no such issues. Yes, it's a significantly heavier car, but – as is so often the case with a Porsche – keep asking more of the car and you'll be amazed to find just how deep its abilities run. It's quite something, dynamically. There's always a 'but', though. 'There's no denying the flat-four's effectiveness,' says James, 'but by gum it sounds awful'.

The in-line four in the back of the Alpine can whine on the overrun, but mostly it sounds keen and clean, revving out with enthusiasm. Stroking along the road to the Ribbleshead Viaduct, I seem to find just the road and just the pace to suit the Alpine, and it's sublime. The car flows along with a lightness of touch that's almost magical, smoothing the surface, composed, effortlessly responsive to your inputs and handling. Everything clicks into place. It will be interesting to see what it can do against the stopwatch and around the lap...

**Top right:** heavier and less nimble Audi loses out to the Porsche and Alpine on these roads.

**Above left:** TT's cabin is a quality place to spend time. **Left:** Cayman can expose the A110's weaknesses when the going gets tough









## THE DATA

**L**AUNCH CONTROL IS THE order of the day for all three of these cars, making straight-line figuring fairly straightforward. Schoolboy French is needed to translate the Alpine's instructions (Sport or Track mode, left foot on the brake, pull both paddles, then mash the throttle), but once sorted it sets a respectable 4.6sec for the 0-60mph dash – although the engagement of the clutch is always a little slurred, suggesting a few tenths are literally slipping away.

The Cayman gets away more cleanly, managing an impressive 3.9sec. Yet neither car can catch the all-wheel-drive Audi here, its combination of total traction and awesome firepower helping to record a mind-boggling 3.5sec time. Think about that. There are bona fide supercars that are only a biscuit faster to 60mph.

A different picture emerges during our

in-gear tests, however. Here, the TT's vast reserves of torque are offset by its mass and taller gears, meaning the much lighter and shorter-g geared Alpine pretty much matches it blow-for-blow, only falling behind as the speeds rise above 70mph.

It's a similar story with the Porsche, which is hobbled by long-striding gearing that'd be more at home in a continent-crossing diesel. It means the Cayman is lethargic at low revs, only coming on strong

**'There are bona fide supercars that are only a biscuit faster to 60mph'**

when the welt of turbocharged torque really starts to hit home at about 3000rpm.

The Porsche is the only car specified with optional carbon-ceramic brakes, so it's no surprise it stops from 100mph in the shortest distance. Less expected is the fluctuation in performance over the ten high-speed stops, as it also records the *longest* stopping distance. Its pedal also has the worst feel when stopping quickly, going very soft then pushing back against your foot as the emergency braking systems relinquish control as you come to a halt.

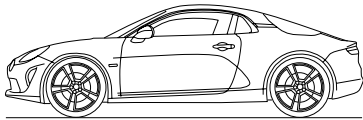
The Alpine is more consistent, its pedal only going softer in the last couple of runs – although there's no big drop-off in performance. Best of the bunch is the Audi, which delivers the most consistent stopping distances and maintains a firm pedal throughout.

**James Disdale**



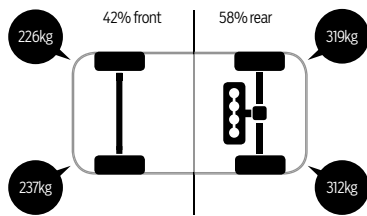
## Alpine A110 Première Édition

Length 4180mm Wheelbase 2420mm



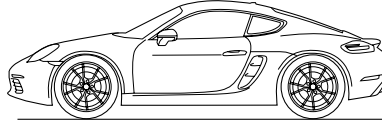
<b>Engine</b>	In-line 4-cyl, 1798cc, turbo
<b>Power</b>	249bhp @ 6000rpm
<b>Torque</b>	236lb ft @ 2000-5000rpm
<b>Transmission</b>	Seven-speed dual-clutch, rear-wheel drive
<b>Tyres</b>	205/40 R18 front, 235/40 R18 rear, Michelin Pilot Sport 4
<b>Height/width</b>	1252mm/1798mm
<b>Weight</b>	1094kg as tested (1103kg claimed)
<b>Power-to-weight</b>	231bhp/ton using test-car weight (229bhp/ton claimed)
<b>0-60mph</b>	4.6sec as tested (4.5 to 6.2 claimed)
<b>Top speed</b>	155mph (limited)
<b>evo mpg</b>	34.4
<b>Basic price</b>	£51,805 (£51,805 as tested)
<b>PCP monthly price</b>	Not currently available

### Weights & balance



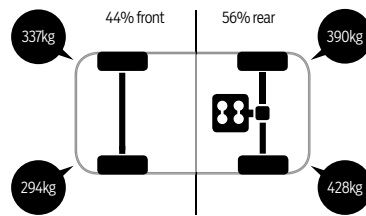
## Porsche 718 Cayman S

Length 4379mm Wheelbase 2475mm



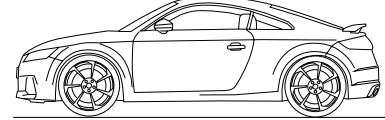
<b>Engine</b>	Flat-four, 2497cc, turbo
<b>Power</b>	345bhp @ 6500rpm
<b>Torque</b>	310lb ft @ 1900-4500rpm
<b>Transmission</b>	Seven-speed dual-clutch (option), rear-drive, LSD with PTV (option)
<b>Tyres</b>	235/35 R20 front, 265/35 R20 rear (option), Pirelli P Zero
<b>Height/width</b>	1295mm/1801mm
<b>Weight</b>	1449kg as tested (1355kg claimed)
<b>Power-to-weight</b>	242bhp/ton using test-car weight (259bhp/ton claimed)
<b>0-60mph</b>	3.9sec as tested (4.4 to 6.2 claimed)
<b>Top speed</b>	177mph (claimed)
<b>evo mpg</b>	24.6
<b>Basic price</b>	£51,853 (£74,277 as tested)
<b>PCP monthly price</b>	£428 (36 months, £12,100 deposit, 10,000 miles per annum limit)

### Weights & balance



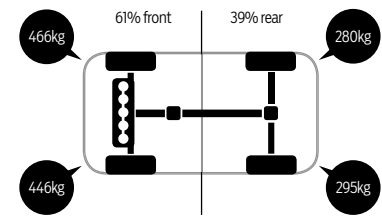
## Audi TT RS

Length 4191mm Wheelbase 2505mm

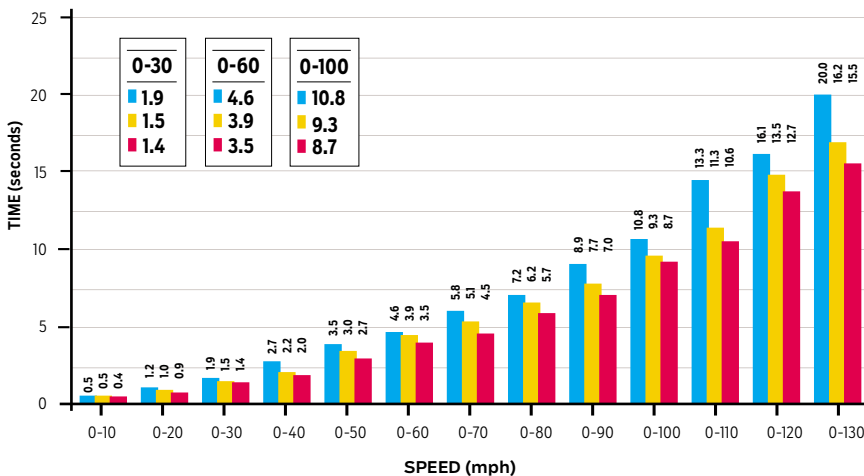


<b>Engine</b>	In-line 5-cyl, 2480cc, turbo
<b>Power</b>	394bhp @ 5850-7000rpm
<b>Torque</b>	354lb ft @ 1700-5850rpm
<b>Transmission</b>	Seven-speed dual-clutch, four-wheel drive
<b>Tyres</b>	255/30 R20 front, 255/30 R20 rear (option), Pirelli P Zero
<b>Height/width</b>	1344mm/1832mm
<b>Weight</b>	1487kg as tested (1440kg claimed)
<b>Power-to-weight</b>	269bhp/ton using test-car weight (278bhp/ton claimed)
<b>0-60mph</b>	3.5sec as tested (3.7 to 6.2 claimed)
<b>Top speed</b>	155mph (limited)
<b>evo mpg</b>	23.0
<b>Basic price</b>	£52,480 (£61,780 as tested)
<b>PCP monthly price</b>	£549 (48 months, £11,069 deposit, 10,000 miles per annum limit)

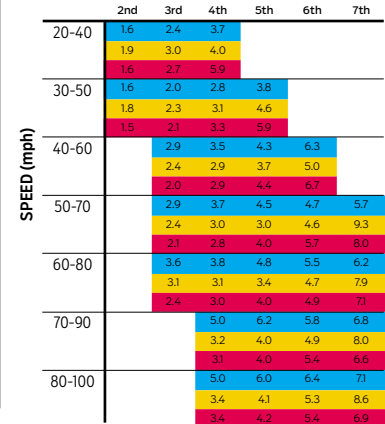
### Weights & balance



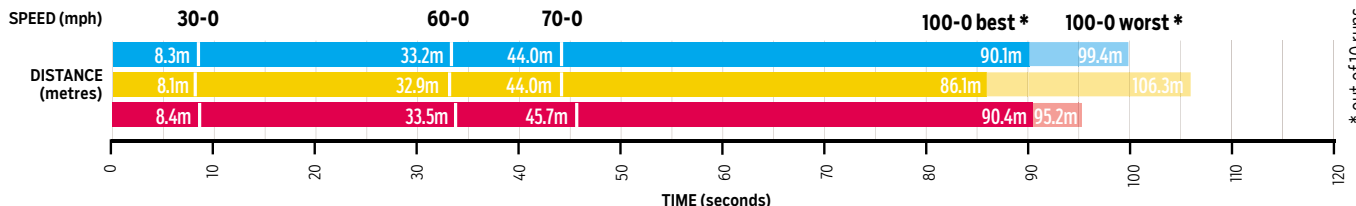
### Acceleration from standing start



### In-gear acceleration



### Braking



\* out of 10 runs



ANDY MORGAN

## ON TRACK

**A**UDI FIRST. THERE'S A feeling this might be the TT's best shot at showing the others how it's done. On the road it seems to have boundless grip and traction, and the in-line five feels the strongest engine here. And indeed it feels pretty quick around the lap, punching out of corners on full throttle with very little understeer.

Once the nose is hooked into a curve, the fat, low-profile Pirellis hang on tenaciously – it's everything you'd expect of a compact and powerful four-wheel-drive coupe.

There is a small amount of adjustability into the fastest corners that finish the lap (O'Rouge and Tower), so you can get on the power very early and accelerate flat-out all the way through. The clock stops at 1:25.2, which doesn't seem to reflect quite how it feels.

What a contrast the Alpine is, again. It feels like it's floating over the surface, and wringing out the in-line four, the A110 doesn't feel any slower than the TT, but there's a huge difference in how it tackles the corners. There's so much more

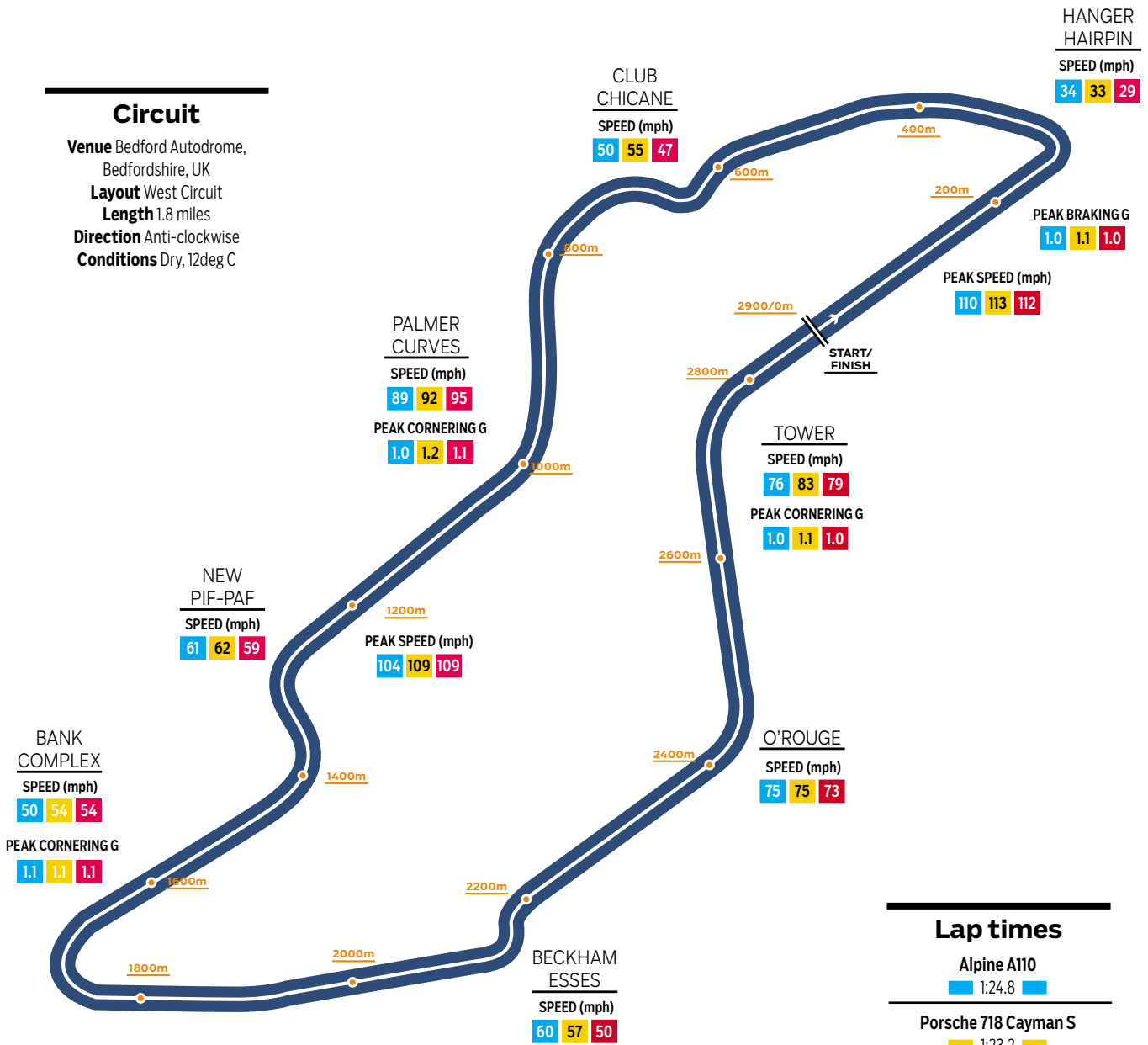
movement, so much more obvious shifting of masses – and also a sense of so much less mass. Yes, it rolls massively into the turns and sits back on its rear wheels when the throttle is snapped open, slicing through corners with a much more obvious balance – but it feels effective.

After a couple of fast laps its Michelins go off a little, meaning a light understeer in the quickest corners and oversteer everywhere else. But this isn't an issue because even when the Alpine kicks its tail out, you can use it to steer the car with surprising



## Circuit

**Venue** Bedford Autodrome,  
Bedfordshire, UK  
**Layout** West Circuit  
**Length** 1.8 miles  
**Direction** Anti-clockwise  
**Conditions** Dry, 12deg C



## Lap times

Alpine A110

1:24.8

Porsche 718 Cayman S

1:23.2

Audi TT RS

1:25.2

precision, partly because the tail doesn't keep on going, thanks to low mass and inertia. It's more exploiting its adjustability than over-driving it.

There was some fade of the TT's brakes by the last flying lap and the Alpine's rumble a bit but keep on working just as effectively. And the readout shows a best of... 1:24.8.

Can the Porsche do it? Having experienced the Cayman on a wet racetrack and marvelled at its disdain for the conditions, I wouldn't bet against it. It's

**'The Cayman combines the TT's solid grip with the A110's agility... and nails the time on its second flyer'**

dry today, and I'm slightly concerned early in the first flying lap when the tail eases generously out of line under power at the hairpin, but a couple more corners further round, everything is hooked up. And then there's no stopping it.

As on the road, it combines the TT's solid grip with the A110's agility... and nails the time on its second flyer – 1:23.2. That's two seconds a lap faster than the TT, and 1.6sec faster than the Alpine. Fast and fun, job done. Though I wonder how much the £22,424 of options contribute to this.

# THE VERDICT

## evo ratings

Alpine A110



Audi TT RS



Porsche 718 Cayman S



**T**HE TT HAS THE MOST POTENT and easily the most charismatic engine here, all 394 warbling horsepower of it, and for that we love it. But it's not enough. If you enjoy the process of driving and the feeling of engagement with a car, the Audi delivers the least of these three. It's very fast and easy to drive quickly, which is what most people would expect of a grippy, quattro Audi. But there's little interaction, and the optional 20-inch alloys with even lower-profile tyres do more harm than good on our B-roads, adding grip, sure, but also adding an extra degree of agitation and tactility to a ride that's already firm.

This is a two-car battle for top honours. The A110 is a breath of fresh air, the product of an obsessive pursuit of light weight. 'Alpine is to be praised for producing something that's both light and imbued with a character all of its own,' says James Disdale. 'It would have been all too easy to create a clone of the German competition, but Alpine has resisted,

and delivered something fast, fun and genuinely different.'

Porsche's decision to go from a silky, characterful flat-six to an uninspiring flat-four is a gift, a self-inflicted chink in the previously impervious Cayman armour. The A110 exploits it for all it's worth. Its own four-cylinder engine is sweeter, more energetic-sounding and, despite being almost 100bhp in arrears, gives the Alpine plenty of pace. It isn't perfect – Lotus manages suppleness with control rather better – but it's a unique take on how a sports coupe can feel and behave, and on any road there's something beguiling about it. It looks great, too, and it's good to be in. It's expensive, but it's an exquisite, all-aluminium performance car.

Would we really have one over this Cayman? The Porsche is handsome and well made and formidably well developed, with great steering and reserves of grip that you don't have to fully exploit to feel rewarded. Would it be quite so polished without the optional big wheels,

adaptive damping, limited-slip diff, torque vectoring and carbon brakes? Experience says it would still be deeply impressive. And £20,000 cheaper, of course.

But that engine. Yes, it's strong, but the note is such a disappointment, even this more refined version. Most of the time it's droney and uninspiring, and only in the last 1500rpm does it sound keen and pure. Some in the *evo* office would dismiss the Cayman purely because of its engine, but others still find it hard to resist, because on any decent road it will tread so adroitly you'll (almost) forget what it sounds like.

Yet the idea of finding the small, lithe Alpine on your driveway each morning is quite compelling, as are its unique, almost classic car dynamics. It feels special, a car you'd enjoy taking out on high days and holidays, but which you could use every day. Today the Cayman claims the narrowest of victories, but without its optional dynamic components it could be a very different result. Porsche really should be worried. ❌





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by JAMES DISDALE PHOTOGRAPHY by ANDY MORGAN

# TRUE BLUE?

*It's one of the most eagerly awaited cars of 2018. But can the new three-pot Fiesta ST match its illustrious predecessor?*











**IT'S A SMALL CAR, THE FIESTA ST, BUT** it's got some big shoes to fill. The previous version of Ford's hottest Fiesta was something of a phenomenon, providing way more performance and driving fun than its bargain-basement price tag would have you believe. It was a hugely entertaining drive, and simple with it – no driver modes or chassis configurations, just press the starter button and go laugh yourself silly on your favourite road. And it wasn't just us. People bought them as quickly as Ford could build them.

At the car's 2012 Geneva motor show unveiling, one engineer let slip that, as far as he and his colleagues were concerned, this was the best performance car they'd created since the Escort RS Cosworth. Think about that for a moment. This little supermini-based pocket rocket was, to them, more exciting than every generation of front-drive Focus RS, any Ford Puma and a whole raft of massaged Mondeos. So, no pressure for the new car, then?

Or perhaps there was, because while this latest ST has arrived much sooner in its base car's life cycle than its predecessor did – that car made its debut five years after the regular models – it has still been a little while coming. We first glimpsed the ST back at its official unveiling in February 2017, but it's taken more than a year to finally get behind the wheel. The lengthy wait has been punctuated with Ford people giving evasive answers to questions as to why the car wasn't ready, with many reading between the lines that Ford Performance, which was tasked with developing and signing-off the car, wasn't happy with the early work. Just rumours, of course, but when a car is tasked with replacing such an esteemed machine, it's not hard to believe them.

So, what have we got, and has it been worth the wait? Well, the good news is that the basic structure of the old car has been carried over, while our drives of lesser current Fiestas suggest the base is good for a more extreme version. However, there are also big changes, the biggest of which is the adoption of a downsized 1.5-litre three-cylinder motor. The all-aluminium unit isn't short of poke, with 197bhp (a match for the old four-pot motor when it was on overboost) and 214lb ft of torque (likewise). It's not shy with the technology, either, with turbocharging and variable valve timing joined by both port and direct injection, which are claimed to boost efficiency with no loss in power. There's also cylinder deactivation, taking it down to two cylinders, which seems a little like overkill on an engine that's hardly overburdened with pistons.

There's also a sports exhaust with active valving, designed to deliver a 'soundtrack that will speak to petrolheads whatever their language'. Hmmmm. As before, the engine's mated to a six-speed manual gearbox, but now there's the option of a Quaife torque-biasing limited-slip differential. Serious stuff.

Yet it's the suspension and steering that have really been treated to some serious thought, and a lot of elbow grease. For starters, the electrically assisted steering features a 12:1 ratio, making it the quickest rack yet on any Ford Performance model. Also new are the 'force vectoring' springs. Developed and patented by Ford, these non-uniform, non-interchangeable directionally wound coils are fitted to the torsion beam rear suspension and are said to absorb

**Left:** standard Recaros offer great support. **Far right:** flat-bottomed steering wheel is on the large side; wheels are 17-inch as standard, with 18-inchers an option







both vertical *and* cornering forces, meaning that engineers have been able to boost lateral stiffness at the rear without resorting to a hefty (around 10kg) Watts linkage.

Another innovation are the dampers, which feature Ford's Ride Control 1 valving to create what is essentially a mechanically adaptive set-up. Depending on the frequency and load of compression and rebound, the damper valving changes to compensate, hopefully creating greater control when pushing on, but improved comfort when cruising.

And, of course, there are now driving modes – there would be, wouldn't there? Normal, Sport and Track each feature a unique map for the throttle response, steering weight and stability control intervention (Track essentially being Sport but with a looser, but not totally cast off, electronic safety net). Considering how good the old car was without this technology it's arguable this is the most controversial addition, in an over-egging the pudding sort of way.

Has Ford spoiled what was a great hot hatch, or made the best even better? Well, the ST certainly feels 'right' as you settle into the driver's seat. You sit just low enough, with the standard Recaros supremely supportive. The steering wheel is a little large, but pedal positioning is spot on and the dashboard is laid out clearly and looks and feels 'upmarket'. Thumb the starter and that three-cylinder unit fires quickly before settling to a purposeful idle. Even in Normal mode the Fiesta responds crisply to the throttle, while the gearshift is quick, light and precise. There's bags of torque low down, with virtually no lag to speak of, while squeezing the pedal harder reveals a generous dollop of mid-range, giving the ST that glorious feeling of elastic energy that marks out all relatively light cars powered by muscular motors. So far, so good.

Wring the engine out, however, and the old car's frantic race to the limiter is missing, the three-pot feeling as if it's done its best work by around 5000rpm – well short of the the 6500rpm red line. Make no mistake, the Fiesta is a quick car and feels easily good for a



six-and-a-half-second sprint to 62mph, it's just there's not the same rush of ever-increasing energy you get with its predecessor, or a 208 GTi for that matter. Flicking the Sport button adds extra urgency to the throttle, but Normal is so well calibrated that the gains are marginal. What you do get is an enhanced vocal performance.

As is the fashion these days, the engine note is augmented through the hi-fi, with Sport adding extra depth and volume. Crucially, it also opens a flap in the exhaust, resulting in a carefully choreographed report of pops and bangs on the overrun. Yet there's a curious mismatch of sounds when you work the unit hard, with the deep exhaust blare overlaid by the city-car three-cylinder thrum of the engine. It's not unpleasant, merely a little artificial.

Regardless of mode, the Fiesta feels taut and alert from the moment you start rolling. The trick dampers are just as firm as before, but they round the edges off sharper impacts, making long motorway runs more restful. On smooth roads the Fiesta corners fast and flat, flowing down twisting tarmac with the sort of poise

**Top:** exhaust features an active flap that opens up in Sport mode, and is augmented by engine noise played through the speakers inside the car





## 'Its poise and pace will make it a constant irritant to theoretically faster and far more exotic machinery'

and pace that'll make it a constant irritant to theoretically faster and far more exotic machinery. Better still, the steering is quick, precise and uncorrupted, allowing you to slice through corners accurately. Its weighting is good too, particularly in Normal (Sport adds some heft, but doesn't feel quite as natural), and the rate of response and feedback are 'just so'. There's some stiffness to the steering out of slower corners as the differential does its stuff, but the impressive traction makes this a small price to pay.

Up the pace and the ST responds eagerly, delivering strong turn-in bite that's assisted by some very slickly integrated torque vectoring, giving you confidence to lean hard on the front tyres and commit to some outrageous corner entry speeds. The new car has lost just a fraction of the old one's acrobatic agility, that feeling that the whole car is pivoting around an invisible pole that punctures the centre of the roof and heads straight down through a point just between the gearlever and handbrake, but there's a real sense of the front and rear axles working in unison, giving the car a gloriously four-square stance through the really quick stuff.

With the ESP in Sport or switched off completely, you can start to explore the Ford's natural balance. It's not quite as playful as the old ST, but neither is it as edgy as the Peugeot. Instead you can push the car up to the limit of grip before subtly altering your line with a lift of the throttle or a dab of the brakes. It's beautifully progressive and controlled, never feeling like it's going to get out of hand. Throw in some bumps and broken tarmac and things get a little busier, however, particularly the steering.

Accelerate hard out of a corner on a heavily crowned or corrugated road and the nose takes on a mind of its own as the diff sends torque this way and that as it attempts to make best use of it. It never gets truly unruly, but it's at odds with the otherwise slick steering. I'd be intrigued to try a car without the diff, because experience with the old car suggested that for most situations it coped admirably well with the open set-up and torque vectoring. Yet this flightiness is more a niggle than a flaw, and for some the boisterousness will merely add to the car's considerable appeal.

Elsewhere, there are welcome improvements in all areas for the Fiesta, which is more refined, fractionally more practical and far better equipped than before – as an everyday proposition it has its predecessor licked. Yes, it's lost a fraction of the old car's irrepressible spirit, while the addition of driver modes feels more marketing decision than engineering choice. We're also not totally convinced by the new engine. For now it's safe to say that the new Fiesta ST has retained much of its predecessor's magic. But its toughest test is still to come – against Peugeot's 208 GTi. ❏

### Ford Fiesta ST

**Engine** In-line 3-cyl, 1497cc, turbocharger **Power** 197bhp @ 6000rpm  
**Torque** 214lb ft @ 1600-4000rpm **Transmission** Six-speed manual, front-wheel drive, limited-slip diff (option), torque vectoring **Front suspension** MacPherson struts, coil springs, dampers, anti-roll bar **Rear suspension** Torsion beams, coil springs, dampers, anti-roll bar **Brakes** 278mm ventilated discs front, 253mm solid discs rear  
**Wheels** 17in front and rear (18in option) **Wheels** 205/45 R17 front and rear (205/40 R18 option) **Weight** 1187kg **Power-to-weight** 169bhp/ton **0-62mph** 6.5sec (claimed)  
**Top speed** 144mph (claimed) **Price** £18,995  
**evo rating** ★★★★★

## PAST FAST FIESTAS – THE GOOD & THE BAD



**XR2 (1981)** You could argue that the Supersport was the original fast Fiesta, but the XR2 is where Ford got serious. It boasted an 84bhp 1.6-litre Kent engine, lowered suspension and could crack 100mph. Good.



**RS Turbo (1990)** The lowest point not only in the history of Fast Fiestas, but in the entire history of Fast Fords. The engine was crude, the dynamics woeful, and it had three-spoke alloys. Awful.



**Zetec-S (1999)** Arguably something of a lost gem, it was no ball of fire (the 1.6-litre four-pot mustered 101bhp), but Ford Puma steering, front suspension and gearshift made for sweet and engaging handling.



**ST (2004)** Another overlooked hot hatch, the 148bhp ST lacked the firepower of its Renault and Peugeot rivals, but its torquey 2-litre offered deceptive pace and the chassis was poised and polished.



**ST (2013)** The outgoing ST was a pure evo hot hatch, thanks to sharp and engaging handling and its punchy turbocharged pace. It was cheap to buy and run, too. Mountune versions were faster still.

# THE 911

A photograph of three Porsche 911s driving on a two-lane road. The lead car is a silver Carrera S with license plate PG05 UMK. Behind it is a dark grey Carrera S with license plate R632 YCC. On the right, the front of a dark blue Carrera S is visible. The background shows a green field and a cloudy sky.

*Think the classic car boom has pushed used 911 prices beyond reach? Think again. We look at three enticing options in the £13,000-35,000 range*

# CAN A



by ADAM TOWLER PHOTOGRAPHY by ANDY MORGAN

# 1s YOU



# FFORD

# A

**MONGST CAR ENTHUSIASTS,** I reckon there are three main groups when it comes to the Porsche 911: those who have always wanted a 911; those who pretend they hate 911s but secretly really want one anyway; and those who are blissfully unaware of what they are missing out on, but who often – although not always – succumb when they try one. This rear-engined institution

of complex contradictions may not be for everyone, but there aren't many who can avoid falling under its spell at some point.

The trouble is, the words 'value' and 'Porsche' have become increasingly distanced of late, as you may have noticed. No marque has benefited more – or suffered, depending on your viewpoint – from the classic car boom. Aren't old Porsches all about investment values and classic car shows now? All those rusty 911 SCs, once £10,000, now positioned as brilliant classics by specialist vendors determined to give you a history lesson of the type at the start of their ads before you get to the nitty gritty about the car itself. Those 964s, those same 964s that leaked oil like the Exxon Valdez and were received with lukewarm indifference by the press at launch, no longer sub-£15,000 cars but fifty thou' and rising. And let's not even mention the GT3 market; it's too depressing if you're of meagre means. Cars designed and built for track work, now often too valuable to risk on the track.

Yet here's the thing: the ten-grand 911 is alive and well (see page 115), and for a little more there's a plethora of choices – as long as you're prepared to go water-cooled. Twenty years on from the first 911 Carrera to feature a radiator, these are now terrific **evo** cars to be had at realistic prices. So if that new 991.2 GT3 RS has

whetted your appetite, but your bank account is firmly anchored in the real world, then read on.

Where to start with the 996 Carrera? One half of the double-act that saved Porsche the company; a complete re-imagination – bar the rear suspension – of the then 35-year-old 911, yet still unmistakably a 911 to the very core. A smooth, deceptively complex collection of radii and form that aged rapidly until it became '90s passé, yet now looks as pure as a Highland spring. A car, let's face it, with a reputation for, er, blowing its engine to pieces.

Do your homework and you'll come to realise that the 996 isn't the most susceptible of the water-cooled 911s for engine issues, although they all began with this car. They range from relatively harmless oil leaks – the RMS issue (rear main seal) – to the potentially much more debilitating IMS problem, where the bearing on the intermediate shaft (taking drive from the crank to the cams) fails, depositing swarf into the engine, with terminal results. It's more likely to happen on later 996s, and there are ways and means to prevent it. Finally, and most troublingly, there are the issues with the bores themselves on the M96 engine. A few early cars experienced cracked blocks, but the real issue is scoring and ovaling of the liners. There are a million theories why this might happen, with no definitive answer, but a combination of Lokasil liners and a cooling circuit that should never be compromised have a lot to do with it. Treating the engine kindly from cold and making sure it never overheats is a good place to start, and there's an old adage that says if it hasn't failed by now, then it's unlikely to do so.

The trouble for the 996 – and the 997 for that matter – is that its engine frailties have come, in many ways, to define it – certainly on the internet. That's understandable in a way, because it's a Porsche and expectations are always sky high, but most high-value/high-performance cars have engine or major component weaknesses at higher mileages that can be hideously expensive. Moreover, few in-period rivals will have amassed the same level of mileage as



**'There's a plethora of choices – as long as you're prepared to go water-cooled'**





### Porsche 911 Carrera (996, 3.4)

**Engine** Flat-six, 3387cc  
**Power** 300bhp @ 6800rpm  
**Torque** 258lb ft @ 4600rpm  
**Weight** 1320kg (231bhp/ton)  
**0-62mph** 5.2sec (claimed)  
**Top speed** 174mph (claimed)  
**Price today** £13,000-29,000  
**On sale** 1998-2001  
**evo rating** ★★★★★

the average 911. So you need to take a view: be scared off by the screaming headlines, or do some homework and then buy one of the very best cars **evo** has ever tested?

Given you'll no doubt gravitate towards a coupe, not a convertible, and a manual gearbox is a must, not the slushy old Tiptronic, then it is only just still possible to buy a car like Henry Powell's R-pole 996 you see here for around £13,000, and probably for not much longer. This isn't any old 996 either – it's a piece of history. One of only 14 996s brought into the UK late in 1997, before any cars had reached customers, it is a true survivor.

The wonderful thing about the 996 is its Germanic pragmatism. It predates the era of Lane Change Assist and programmed-in exhaust burbles on the overrun. It's gimmick-free, light (1320kg), compact, and almost entirely focused on driving pleasure. While the type grew physically over the 993, it retains the shallow dashboard, relatively upright windscreen and narrow width that are such a part of the 911 – and are diluted in the 991 – yet still feels like a modern car with all the usability and refinement that entails.

To be fair, it has tested Henry's patience. Not long after he bought it the very worst happened with the engine (although not, oddly, one of the usual issues), and it's been a complicated and expensive road to get where he is today. But then I glance in the rear-view mirror of the car I'm driving, and clock the broad grin on Henry's

**Above and right:** early 996 Carrera is the most affordable of our trio, with prices starting around £13k for a coupe manual; it's worth that entry price for the steering feel alone



face as he uses a healthy dose of revs to stick on my tail, and I know he feels that every penny was worth the recovery price.

Driving it, I can see why. The 3.4-litre engine is revvy and potent (300bhp). Every control has that polish and uniformity of weight that's the hallmark of a Porsche, and you soon find yourself picking cornering lines with the fingertips and savouring every gearchange. And that hydraulic steering... oh man. When you drive a car like the 996 you realise that Porsche's current electrically assisted systems, however good they are for their kind, simply don't impart the same sense of connection with the road's surface.

So, it's a great 911: purrs and yelps where a similarly powerful

## Porsche 911 Carrera S (997.1)

**Engine** Flat-six, 3824cc  
**Power** 350bhp @ 6600rpm  
**Torque** 295lb ft @ 4600rpm  
**Weight** 1420kg (246bhp/ton)  
**0-62mph** 4.6sec (claimed)  
**Top speed** 182mph (claimed)  
**Price today** £20,000-40,000  
**On sale** 2004-2008  
**evo rating** ★★★★★



718 Cayman sounds like a fairground generator, offers that ever-useful 2+2 seating and reasonable luggage space, yet manages to feel like a proper sports car. It's unlikely to be hot-hatch cheap to run, but it is at least rising in value, not depreciating, and it doesn't feel like a lot of money to acquire a definite modern classic.

Double our cash and we're in 997 territory, and you'll no doubt be drawn to the delectable shape of the Carrera S, with its meaty, 350bhp 3.8-litre motor (a close relation of the M96 known as an M97), bigger wheels and quad exhausts. These first-generation 997 Ss are perhaps the most likely to suffer bore issues of all the Porsches in this era, possibly because there's simply less metal in and around the engine with the bigger bore size.

But beyond its potential to bring financial hardships, the Gen 1 997 has so much going for it. For many, the return to a more traditional exterior style was just what the 911 needed, and the car still looks glamorous today to my eyes. The interior is more conventional but obviously more 'premium', though it wears no better than a 996's, if even at that. For taller drivers the ergonomics are improved, too, with the seat dropping lower, more adjustment on the wheel, and the pedals further away. It may be largely the same as its 996 predecessor under the skin, but the 997 is such a thorough evolution that it feels like a different car. Those die-hard 911 fans still had something to moan about, though: back in 2004, the 997's switch to a variable-ratio rack was a major topic for forum debate, just as every new generation of 911 upsets the faithful somehow. It's a heavier car than the 996, too, by 100kg.

This particular example, an early S in the default silver exterior/black leather interior combination, was sourced from Porsche



specialist RPM Technik. It's a car RPM bought just prior to our photoshoot, on behalf of a customer as a donor vehicle for one of its CSR conversions. As such, it's by no means 'retail' quality, but rather is an interesting window on to what you might find if you buy a 'cheap' 997 S privately. Having given it a safety inspection prior to our collection, RPM reckoned wear to the suspension and brakes was significant – the CSR conversion will replace all those bits anyway – and you can feel that from the moment you're under way. The magic that means the 997 usually breezed a group test back in the day is still there, but it's hidden under a veil of lazy damping, imprecision from

**Top and above:** 997-generation Carrera S still looks, and feels, surprisingly modern, and rewards like few other performance cars; prices start at around £20k





### Porsche 911 Turbo (996)

**Engine** Flat-six, 3600cc, twin-turbo

**Power** 414bhp @ 6000rpm

**Torque** 413lb ft @ 2700rpm

**Weight** 1540kg (273bhp/ton)

**0-62mph** 4.2sec (claimed)

**Top speed** 190mph (claimed)

**Price today** £35,000-70,000

**On sale** 2000-2006

**evo rating** ★★★★★

worn bushes and general tiredness. At 13 years and 120,000 miles old this 997 needs a thorough renovation if the magic is to return, which is very expensive if you do it all in one go. You can find out the sort of figures we're talking about in Fast Fleet over the coming months...

That's the reality, but look past the negatives and I still think it's hard to find a car that rewards on so many levels like a 997. It's just so... *right*. From the way it looks to the way it sounds – all sonorous, chesty, then wailing at higher rpm – to the way it drives, the driving position... Heck, everything! I simply adore it. For the same money as a new Peugeot 208 GTi it is indescribably tempting, even if the purchase price won't be the last cost.

The later Gen 2 997s are holding up well in terms of value. They use the completely different MA1 engine also found in the back of the Gen 1 991, which doesn't suffer from the same issues as the M97. However, they're also much more rare and considerably more expensive. And if you do have that budget – let's say £35,000 upwards – then for similar money we can head back in time again to the mighty 996 Turbo, which is where things get really serious.

The 996 Turbo is one of the classic supercars. There have been louder, flashier, bigger 911 Turbos since, but it only takes a mile at the wheel of this lovely example borrowed from Harrington Finance to feel the magic that made it such a critical and commercial success at the turn of the millennium. Sadly, the days of the twenty-five grand Turbo have long gone. You'll need £35,000 upwards for a higher-mileage manual Turbo (don't even think about a Tiptronic

**Above and right:** 996 Turbo combines compact proportions, a gutsy engine and four-wheel drive for stonking all-weather, all-roads pace; yours from just £35k



– it blunts the car's performance USP), and around ten grand more for a nice car with under 60,000 miles. Go for the run-out Turbo S, with its 450bhp 'X50' power upgrade featuring bigger turbos for the 3.6-litre motor, and ceramic brakes, and you'll be looking at over £60,000 for the very best.

The cornerstone of the Turbo's appeal is 'The Mezger'. Named after famed Porsche engineer Hans Mezger, it is one of the great internal combustion engines, with its roots in Porsche's racing units of the 1970s, and more recently, the 911 GT1. Designed for use in the 996 GT3, but adopted in adapted form for the Turbo (where it was coded, confusingly, M96.70), it brought economies of scale and enabled production of both models, right the way through to the 997.2 GT3 RS 4.0 and the 997.1 Turbo. Like the RB26 in the



## AFFORDABLE 911s

Nissan Skyline GT-R, the Mezger's racing roots mean that it's as hard as nails and capable of being substantially tuned: with uprated turbos you can get over 600bhp before you need to open the engine up for strengthening.

While there's more lag than you get with a modern Turbo, there's an awful lot less than with an original 1970s/'80s 930. Connected to a manual gearbox, the more traditional boosted delivery of the 996 Turbo actually makes it more exciting than its modern equivalent, more of a driving challenge. In fact, it's perfectly possible to drive around without waking the turbochargers at all, and still keep up with traffic. (Another reason to seek out a car with the manual gearbox.) There's a delectable kind of serenity from driving around thus, finessing the weighty but rewarding 'box and clutch, savouring all that feedback from the steering wheel, but knowing at any moment a squeeze of throttle will catapult you past slower traffic. And yes, the Turbo still feels massively fast, even with the standard 414bhp this car has. You see a gap, open the taps, and *whoosh*, there's that weightless feeling that's so addictive.

Naturally, the four-wheel-drive, wide-arched Turbo is heavier than the little rear-drive Carrera bobbing along behind (by 220kg). It's a more serious, measured sort of driving experience, but with narrower

rubber than a modern Turbo, it manages to combine immense security and traction with a lower ultimate threshold of grip, so when it does start to oversteer – which it will – it happens in a more progressive, manageable way. It's not a car that feels 'four-wheel drive'.

The Turbo was a car designed and built for the well-heeled who demanded that ultimate GT performance car from Porsche: a car equally capable of lapping the Ring, blasting across Europe for hours on end in terrible weather, or commuting into the city. That's all yours for the same price as a new BMW 420i M Sport. Sure, the 'Turbo tax' on parts and the fact that it's a 15-year-old supercar mean it's still expensive to run – the intercoolers and pipework need looking after, and as with the Carreras, healthy bushes and dampers are key to a Turbo driving as you'd hope – but at least you don't have to worry anything like as much about its engine.

So there you have it. The classic 911 ship has not sailed without you. It's simply available now with antifreeze. ❌

*With thanks to Henry Powell, RPM Technik, and Alex Read at Harrington Finance.*







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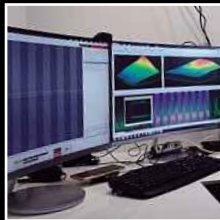




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# THE £10K PORSCHE 911

*Dai Davies realised a childhood dream when he bought a 143,000-mile C4... and he doesn't regret it one bit*

Words by Adam Towler Photography by James Cheadle

**M**Y MATE DAI DAVIES AND I sing from very much the same hymn sheet when it comes to 911s. The want from childhood: the poster of the red SC with tea-tray rear wing, squeezing onto the Porsche stand at late-1980s motor shows, model 911s, the wonder of 911s in the movies with brick phones in the centre console, and that ludicrous black 935-alike in the hopelessly cheesy flick *Condorman*, with his 911-driving henchmen. In a way, the Porsche 911 has been an integral part of our lives, and as Dai says: 'I always said, one day I will have one.'

'Over time the 996 just grew on me,' he reflects, 'and I came to love its beautiful curves and compact proportions. It was unloved for a long time, but I think it now looks fantastic, and crucially, I could just about afford one.'

So early last year the pursuit began for real. 'The essentials for me were a coupe and a manual gearbox. Ideally I wanted

a "2" [rear drive], but would compromise with a Carrera 4 if I had to. Worryingly, I noticed there were fewer and fewer such 996s coming on for around £10,000.'

Eventually Dai spotted this silver C4 on eBay. The mileage was high at 143,000 but it seemed like it had lived a good life, and he was down there before any of us could say 'what about the IMS bearing?'

'At that point all the advice went out of the window!' says Dai. 'I looked it over in a train station car park; next thing I knew I'd bought it. For £9500. Driving it home all I could think was, "Oh my god, I'm driving my 911." Followed by discovering the air con didn't work, and thinking, "Oh no, what have I done?" It was excitement mixed with a bit of fear. Then I found a great stretch of road and thought "Yes!" Knowing it was probably worth £8k in parts was my get-out, but I figured if it had lasted this long it must have something right about it.'

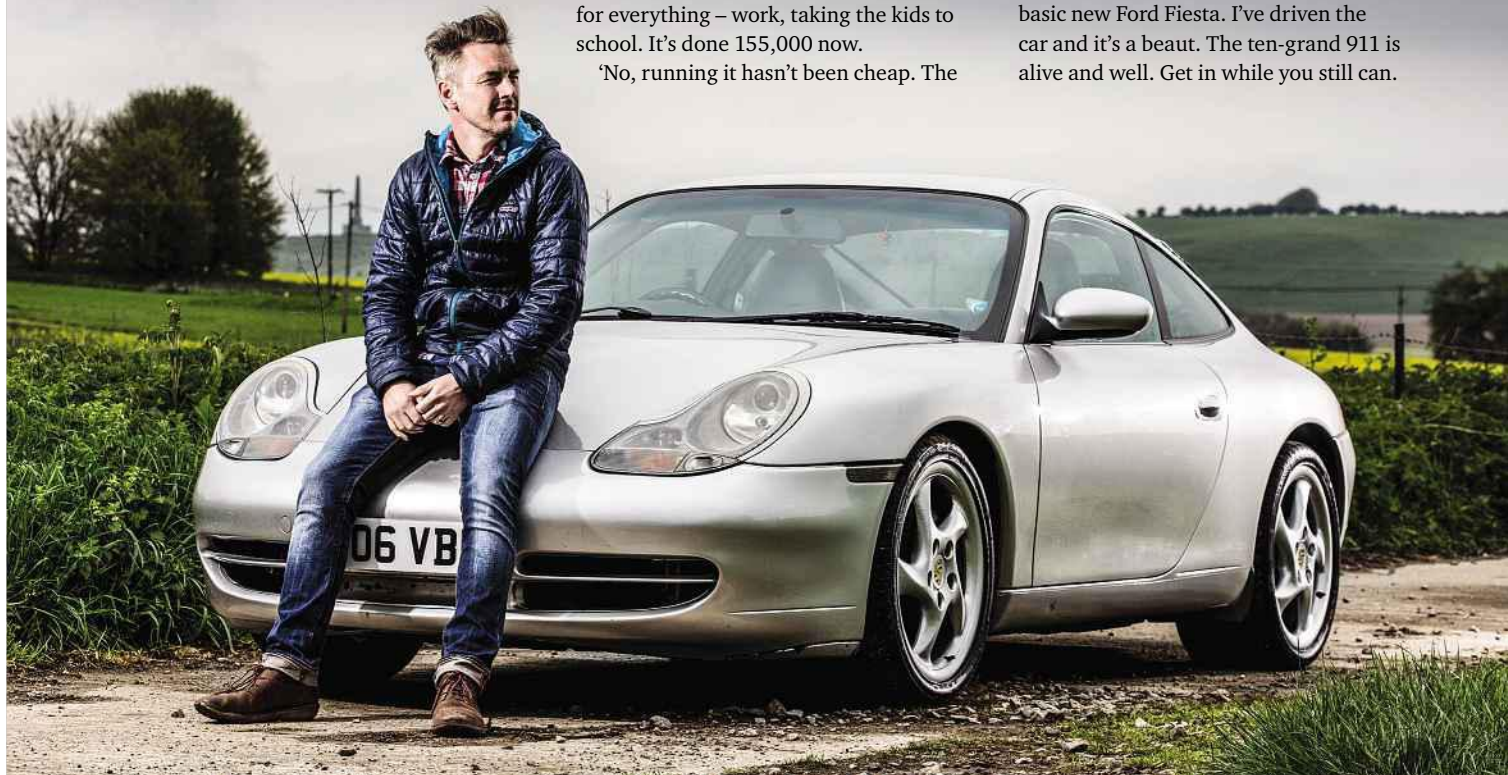
'I put 2000 miles on it in the first week on a driving holiday in Scotland. It was brilliant, warts and all. And now I use it for everything – work, taking the kids to school. It's done 155,000 now.'

'No, running it hasn't been cheap. The

first service cost £1200, and it failed its MOT on blowing exhausts and a shot damper. I had to find a cost-effective repair but we got there in the end, and I've never had a moment where I've wanted rid of it. It's been a bit scary at times: it's a cheap car to buy but still a Porsche to run.'

Any advice then, Dai, for the fellow enthusiast? 'I'd say listen to your head. Do your checks. But overall it's about how comfortable you are with risk – if you're not, then the horror stories, the wondering about that noise it made yesterday, well, I don't think you could live with it. But for me, every day I drive it, just walking up to it, knowing I have a 911 – that removes all of the worry instantly. Whatever the journey, I always take the 911: with my car every occasion is a 911 occasion. It'll be interesting to see what it's like at 200,000 miles.'

There you have it: 12,000 miles of 911-bred smiles in 12 months, for a third less than the price of the cheapest, most basic new Ford Fiesta. I've driven the car and it's a beaut. The ten-grand 911 is alive and well. Get in while you still can.



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## THE AFFORDABLE 911: ALL YOU NEED TO KNOW

*1998-2012 models were a colourful choice, both inside and out*

### CHOOSE YOUR SPEC

WHILE THE 996 WAS LAUNCHED AS just one model with the rear-wheel-drive Carrera, it wasn't long before additional variants arrived. Buyers soon had the choice of the Carrera 4 drivetrain, which from the outside looked all but identical, and then Cabriolet and later Targa variants, the latter continuing the sliding glass roof idea first seen on the 993. The later C4S 996 (there never was a 996 C2S) used the wider body of the Turbo, and this was carried over with the '4' 997s which used the wider body in both regular and S guises. All the cars were available with either a six-speed manual or five-speed Tiptronic torque converter auto 'box, with the latter replaced by the first-gen PDK 'box on the 997.2 in 2008

Both the 996 and 997 were made in the era when silver was a hugely popular exterior colour, and you'll find most of the cars for sale so painted. If they're not silver, then they're usually black, or grey, or occasionally blue. Nevertheless, in the 996 era there was still some '90s Germanic flamboyance going on with the colour palette, so Pastel Yellow and Ocean Jade can occasionally be found, amongst numerous other shades.

One infamous aspect of the 996, particularly when the cars were unfashionable, was its interior. While available in the usual (very) all-black finish, you could also order Graphite

Grey, Space Grey, Metropole Blue, Savanna, Nephrite Green and Boxster Red, with Cinnamon Brown, Dark Grey and Natural Brown appearing on later cars. Being Porsche, the approach was not to incorporate flashes of colour on specific trim elements, but to drop a tin of paint into the interior and give it a very good shake. The resultant effect, punctuated by the stark contrast of black plastic switchgear, is an eyeful, to say the least. Much the same approach was carried over to the 997, albeit perhaps with a little more success (but much more rare).

On the mechanical side, the switchable sports exhaust is always popular and has a particularly sweet tone compared to many aftermarket systems. The sports suspension option on both models was a fixed-rate, lower set-up, so don't expect the same level of comfort as a modern 911, although they are fun to drive. A limited-slip differential was a desirable option, as well, as were xenon headlamps later on (the standard lamps are weak), while the factory powerkits are very rare on the Carreras (X51) but more common on the Turbos (X50). The debate will rage on about which wheels look best, but at least with the 996 Turbo there was just the one hollow spoke wheel available.



## ESSENTIAL CHECKPOINTS

### 1. FRONT-END WEAR

One well-known area of concern for any water-cooled Porsche of this era is damage to the radiators in the car's nose. Typically, leaves and general road detritus enters via the intakes and gets lodged against the rads, where if left to rot will then corrode the radiators. Expensive.

### 2. BORE ISSUES

Damage to the engine's bores, whether by scoring or them turning ovoid and even cracking, is one of the 996/997's weaknesses. Lots of theories abound as to why this should happen, but it's wise to get any potential purchase inspected with a borescope before you buy. Undesirable noises from the engine at idle can be an indicator, too, although most flat-sixes are a bit noisy with age.



### 3. THE IMS

The Intermediate Shaft Bearing was a constant thorn in Porsche's side during the lifetime of the 996 and Gen 1 997, only disappearing when the all-new MA1 DFi engine was released in 2008. Porsche changed the design repeatedly throughout production, and today you have the choice of replacing like-for-like, or fitting an upgraded unit, with ceramic and independently oil-fed versions available.

### 4. SUSPENSION

With its complex multi-link rear suspension and beautifully resolved ride and handling, the 996/997 has much to lose by wear in this department. While springs and dampers aren't especially expensive, the lower suspension arms have an integral bush and replacing all four is £1000 in parts alone. For a complete rebuild reckon on £5000.

#### PORSCHE INITIALISMS DECIPHERED

**PASM** Porsche Active Suspension Management

**PCCB** Porsche Ceramic Composite Brakes

**PCM** Porsche Communication Management

**PSE** Porsche Sports Exhaust

**PSM** Porsche Stability Management

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# THE PERFECT 911 SPEC

*Go easy on the options list and you'll have the perfect new Carrera for little more than list price*

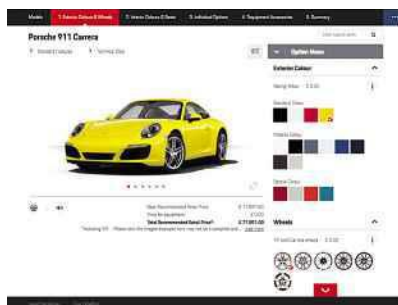
Words by Adam Towler

**T**HESE DAYS £77,891 BUYS you a new 911 Carrera, the root of the 911 family tree, and the lowest-powered, humblest version of the world's favourite rear-engined coupe.

On *evo*, we never get to see such a car, because the press office likes to spec cars that show off the additional technology and customisation features available. Similarly, walk into a Porsche Centre tomorrow and the salesperson will be only too keen to indulge your wishes for more of everything – at a cost, of course, noting that it 'really is necessary for resale values'. And anyway, on a PCP finance deal it's easy to tick boxes and worry tomorrow. This is why the £100,000 911 is the norm these days. Feels expensive, doesn't it, for a 'base' 911.

Manufacturers rely on this back door inflation of the price tag to harvest significant profit (heard the one about Ferrari's £2400 Apple CarPlay option?), and while you might be wasting your hard-earned, you may also be spoiling the car you're buying. The standard car is usually, if not always, the car the engineers have sweated over longest to perfect, and adding goodies adds unnecessary weight and complexity.

Take the Carrera. We've never been completely convinced by Porsche's first



**Above:** Porsche's configurator can be a tempting, but bank account-draining, place to spend time

turbocharged Carrera models, but one thing we all agree on in the *evo* office is that the standard Carrera gives you 99.9 per cent of the 991.2 Carrera experience.

To the configurator! There are four primary colours available. Either Guards Red or solid black is a fine choice, saving a minimum of £834 over metallic shades. Stick with the standard 19-inch wheels: they're a good design (for once); you don't want to try to make it look like an S or a Turbo, plus the ride will be nicer, and the car more usable, with a taller sidewall. A black leather interior is a no-cost selection, although on a black car I'd be tempted by Saddle Brown (it's very dark) to make things a bit more interesting (the salesperson won't like that one). A £324

upgrade to the basic sports seats is worth it for the additional shoulder support, but sadly you can't get manual – and hence lighter – normal seats any more.

Now to the 'exterior' options. LED lamps are £1835, but there's nothing wrong with the bi-xenons. 'Porsche Entry and Drive' for £774? Privacy glass? I don't think so. You'll save £2483 by sticking with three pedals, and in spite of the seven-speed manual's relative clunkiness, it's still a lovely thing to have a manual Carrera, and an instant credibility 'win'. You definitely don't need ceramics at £6018. A sports exhaust? Unnecessary at £1844 – the turbo motor is hardly a naturally aspirated Mezger. I'd go without the mode switch, too – more endless fiddling, and for £1271, too.

Spending £228 on cruise control seems useful for those continental jaunts, but the active system is always a pain and not worth £1557. Seat ventilation? Oh come on. Sounds? That's what the flat-six is for.

All in, that means a princely sum of £552 on options, and a retail price of £78,443. My one possible weakness? A £543 GT (smaller) steering wheel trimmed in Alcantara, with matching gearlever: driver contact points are crucial, electronic toys are not. Stand your ground and spec wisely.



TUNER DRIVEN

# Revo S3 Sportback

370bhp upgrade brings near-RS3 potency, but has the Audi's refined character been retained or discarded?

Photography by Dean Smith



**R**ECENTLY, WE TESTED A FORD Focus RS equipped with Revo's 434bhp Performance Pack (evo 245). Blue Oval cars are relatively new territory for the Northamptonshire-based tuner, yet we were impressed with the way the upgrades magnified the essence of the raucous RS while also giving it more poke (an extra 89bhp and 21lb ft to be precise).

With this tuned Audi S3, we're back in Revo's comfort zone. For 16 years the company has been tuning Volkswagen Group cars, starting out with just ECU upgrades before expanding into hardware and performance parts. Today it's the firm's intention to offer complete tuning packages for its core cars – as we saw with the Focus. These enable it to guarantee the promised power gains and ensure reliability across its worldwide network of dealers.

However, Performance Packs for models based on the VW Group's MQB platform won't be released until later this year, so for now this test car is equipped with just the company's Carbon Series air intake (£779) and Stage 1 ECU software (£719). Together they take the S3's peak power figure from 306 to 370bhp and lift torque from 295 to 360lb ft. It may not have the full Performance Pack, but these increases of more than 20 per cent are still significant. For reference, Audi's own RS3, which has five cylinders to the S3's four, has just 24bhp more – and 6lb ft less.

Revo has also delved into the control unit of the DSG gearbox to change its characteristics, altering the automatic shift points to suit the more powerful engine and removing the kick-down feature when manual mode is selected. Although Revo has been offering DSG tuning

for a while, its software for the new seven-speed wet-clutch transmission in the most recent S3 is still in the development stage.

This test car is also fitted with Revo's own 19-inch cast alloy wheels, finished in matt bronze (£1199). Not only are they lighter than the factory S3 wheels, they are also designed to accommodate Revo's big brake kit. Also fitted here is an Eibach Pro spring set.

The EA888 four-cylinder turbocharged engine found in most MQB hot hatches, S3 included, is a deeply impressive powerplant, being both smooth and powerful, but it does lack a little character and drama. Revo's changes go some way to rectify its tepid nature. Between 4000 and 5000rpm the engine is ballistic, the punch of acceleration within that window nothing short of aggressive. However, much like the standard



## ‘Acceleration between 4000 and 5000rpm is nothing short of aggressive’

unit, as you break into the last portion of the available revs the potency tails off slightly. It's not totally pointless revving the engine to its red line, but you won't find that same addictive hit of acceleration above 5000rpm as you get just below it. So instead you knock the gear selector to the left and shuffle up and down through the gears yourself, searching for your next fix of 4500rpm shove.

Because switching to manual mode soon becomes second nature, the changes Revo makes to the transmission's automatic shift points do seem a bit pointless. The removal of the kick-down is very welcome, though, as it eliminates one of the most frustrating things about the S3 while also handing more control to the driver. The 'box still automatically changes up when the engine hits the red line, but with the motor's sweet spot being 1000rpm lower down, this is rarely irritating.

The extra power and torque have the potential to ruin the S3's ace card of incredible all-weather, all-surface traction, but the Audi more than copes with the added grunt. On cold and wet tarmac only a few flickers of the traction control light appear when accelerating hard from a standstill or low speeds, but the rest of the time the S3 demonstrates typical locked-down quattro-style grip. Such sure-footedness when accelerating means corner exits remain this car's forte, and just like the standard S3, it turns in sharply and decisively, with a slight degree of off-throttle adjustability helping you to rotate the car to the right angle to get on the power as early as you dare and make the most of all that thrust.

With oodles of grip still, but with more savage acceleration, the Revo modifications take advantage of the S3's strengths and, as with that modified Focus RS, by and large exaggerate the car's inherent character – in this case a well-polished one. And with its DSG remap, Revo has shifted the balance of control away from the car and towards the driver, enabling you to get even more enjoyment from the S3 along your favourite road.

**Will Beaumont** (@WillBeaumont)

- + Fantastic pace and increased driver involvement
- Engine still disappointing at its top end

**evo rating** ★★★★★



**Top:** air intake and ECU software changes have freed up an extra 64bhp and 65lb ft of torque.

**Above:** new alloys reduce unsprung weight





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# TUNER ESSENTIALS

New ways to enhance your car that have taken our fancy this month



**Powerflex polyurethane engine mount insert for Alfa Romeo 4C**  
**£23.57**

The Alfa 4C may be pretty, but owners of the carbonfibre sports car may want to find any excuse to upgrade the way it drives. Powerflex now offers a polyurethane engine mount insert to stop the motor moving quite as much as the standard mount alone. Add that to the long list of improvements you'll want to make to the 4C.



**Eibach full chassis upgrade for Mercedes-AMG CLA45**  
**£847.64**

AMG's all-wheel-drive small saloon, the CLA45, is undoubtedly fast and effective, yet still it never truly delivers an exciting drive. In a quest for more involving handling you might want to consider Eibach's full chassis upgrade. The package includes springs, anti-roll bars, front camber adjustable bolts and wheel spacers.



**ABT Sport GR20 wheels for VW T6 and MQB-based cars**  
**£3285.71** (£2882.24) for four

The German Audi and VW tuner ABT revealed an interesting new wheel concept at this year's Geneva motor show with a carbonfibre disc attached to its rim. The aero wheels are still in the prototype phase, but the company still offers a range of more conventional alloys including these 20-inch items.



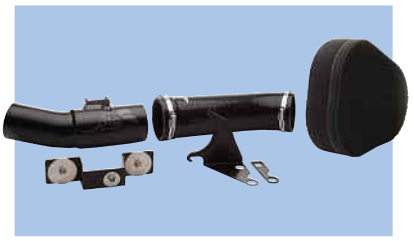
**Goodridge braided brake lines for BMW M4**  
**£102.95** for all four corners

The BMW M3 and M4 were the first cars in a long line of M-cars to not have terrible, inadequate brakes. But even with solid multi-piston callipers as standard, you can improve the F82's stoppers with braided brake lines, and for relatively little money.



**Bilstein B16 coilovers for Nissan 370Z**  
**£1524.60**

The British 370Z, no matter how charming it might seem, is ripe for some chassis improvements. Bilstein's coilover kit promises more sophisticated dampers than the standard Nissan items, and allows you to tweak and adjust the ride-height as well as bump and rebound.



**ITG induction kit for Ford Fiesta ST**  
**£250**

The 1.6 Fiesta ST has been usurped by the new 1.5-litre version, but if you're not thinking of replacing your Ford hot hatch for the latest model you might be considering a few upgrades. ITG's kit, that uses the company's trademark foam filter, has seen a 15bhp increase in power.



**Forge oil catch tank for Audi S4 (B9)**  
**£299.99**

You are not going to see huge performance upgrades from a separate catch tank alone. However, if you're thinking of tuning a modern engine you'll want to think of a solution that's better, and kinder to the engine, than pumping second-hand oil vapour back through the inlet. This catch tank fits in the B9 S4 perfectly.



**Revshift polyurethane engine mounts for BMW N54/N55 engines**  
**£254**

These engine mounts, with billet aluminium cups, can be bought in two different levels of stiffness and colour: the black is slightly stiffer than the OEM mounts, while the green is suitable for fast road and track use. They also come with a heat-resistant protective sleeve for the exhaust side.



**EBC two-piece floating discs for Nissan GT-R**  
**£1026** per axle

Lightweight floating discs that reduce operating temperatures and reduce pad knock-back make braking immediate, more consistent and would be a benefit on any car. EBC's range of floating discs now includes items for the Nissan GT-R: a big, heavy car where any braking advantages are worthwhile.



**14 (64) Cayman GTS** **£56,981**  
 White/Black leather with Alcantara®,  
 20-inch 911 Turbo Design wheels, PDK.  
 13,100 miles



**16 (66) Cayman GT4** **£88,881**  
 White/Black leatherette with Alcantara®,  
 20-inch GT4 wheels, 6-speed manual gearbox.  
 1,700 miles



**18 (67) Macan GTS** **£65,000**  
 White/Black leather GTS package,  
 20-inch RS Spyder Design wheels, PDK.  
 4,000 miles



**16 (66) Cayenne GTS** **£79,301**  
 Jet Black Metallic with GTS interior package  
 in Rhodium Silver, 8-speed Tiptronic S.  
 4,650 miles



**17 (67) Cayenne Turbo** **£83,993**  
 Jet Black Metallic with Black leather interior,  
 8-speed Tiptronic S.  
 7,700 miles



**17 (66) Panamera Turbo** **£105,600**  
 Agate Grey Metallic with Black leather interior,  
 21-inch 911 Turbo Design wheels, PDK.  
 7,750 miles



**12 (12) 911 Carrera 4 GTS Coupe** **£69,900**  
 Basalt Black Metallic with Black leatherette interior,  
 19-inch RS Spyder wheels, PDK.  
 24,800 miles



**15 (65) 911 Turbo S Cabriolet** **£122,899**  
 GT Silver Metallic with Black leather interior, PDK.  
 13,999 miles

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**PORSCHE**



# Buying journey

Owen Lloyd's extensive car history includes a near-flawless Japanese sports coupe and a rare, ultra-cool Swede

## OWEN HAD TO WHITTLE HIS

history of over 100 cars down to just these highlights. As you'd expect from such a choice, there's real variety and plenty of desirable machinery, too.

### 1. Volkswagen Golf 1.5 GLS (Mk1)

'“The Colander” had a leaky roof and rust holes. I was given it for getting good exam grades and spent the summer fixing it up.'

### 2. Peugeot 205 Rallye

'Fantastic steering and throttle response, and, amazingly, it was totally reliable.'

### 3. Toyota Corolla GT (AE82)

'The AE82 looked subtle with its brown interior, but it revved to 8000rpm, pulled hard and sounded brilliant.'

### 4. Volkswagen Jetta GTI 16v (Mk2)

'The Jetta handled brilliantly. However, it ran much better on 97-octane fuel – tough to stomach as a poor student.'

### 5. Peugeot 306 Rallye

'The lift-off oversteer was hilarious. I wish I'd never sold it.'

### 6. Audi S4 (C4)

'This had lived a pampered life in Chelsea. The engine warble was glorious, but numb steering made it so-so to drive.'

### 7. Honda Integra Type R (UK DC2)

'Probably the best car I have owned. Was almost completely without fault.'

## WHAT NEXT?

'I'm thinking of getting a Maserati GranTurismo; they're so painfully desirable. However, there's a Porsche 997 C2S I'm trying not to buy, but I suspect I will sign on the dotted line in the end – albeit with a contingency fund in place...'

Email your buying journey to [eds@evo.co.uk](mailto:eds@evo.co.uk)



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### 8. BMW 3.0 CSI Coupe (E9)

'The most beautiful car I've owned. It was such an effortless cruiser, when it wasn't having something fixed...'

### 9. Saab 900 Turbo Ruby Edition

'This limited edition not only had extra power, it had cool written all over it.'

### 10. Honda Insight (Mk1)

'This was surprisingly fun to drive. It had done 290k miles yet still felt fresh after a new battery pack was fitted.'

### 11. Citroën Xsara VTS

'I bought this to try to recapture the magic of the 306. It blew up on the M4, but was great fun up to that point.'

### 12. BMW M5 (3.6 E34)

'It handled so well, and amazing throttle response and surprising torque meant you could really steer it on the throttle.'

### 13. Lotus Elise (S1)

'I'm never letting go of this car. The

steering, how responsive the car is, how it handles and rides... I love it all – even after its many faults over the years.'

### 14. Honda S2000 (AP2)

'I've spent a lot sorting the handling and making my S2000 drive right, but its engine has made it all worthwhile.'

### 15. Volvo V70 R (Mk2)

'It really hauled, in all senses of the word. And it looked sinister.'

### 16. BMW M3 (E46)

'Used as a track car, it had an immense feel-good factor, but the steering wasn't as good as that of some other M-cars.'

### 17. Jaguar XJR (4.0 X306)

'I'd always been rude about Jaguars so thought it time to try one. It was truly effortless, yet fun and engaging when you wanted it to be.'

### 18. Audi RS6 Avant (C5)

'Layer Cake. That is all.'



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# Fast Fleet

## THIS MONTH

BMW M5 // LAMBORGHINI MURCIÉLAGO // SEAT IBIZA FR // MAZDA MX-5 RF //  
HYUNDAI i30 N PERFORMANCE // VW GOLF GTE // SKODA SUPERB SPORTLINE 4x4 //  
HONDA CIVIC TYPE R // MERCEDES-AMG C43 ESTATE // AUDI RS3

### NEW ARRIVAL

## Kia Stinger GT S

Kia is intent on upsetting the established sports saloon appccart, and first impressions of our new Stinger GT S long-termers suggest it just might succeed







'I came to the Stinger with an open mind and so far it has impressed me'

**T** HERE'S A LOT OF INTEREST AROUND the Stinger. You can see people on the streets watching it go by, and lots of friends have asked about it. I have to say I'm a fan. A £40k Kia is a hard sell, even one with 365bhp, but I came to the car with an open mind and so far it has impressed me, delivering most of what I'd expect of a sports saloon to rival... what? There's not much else with this much power, space and kit for £40,535, but that's rather the point, isn't it?

Kia is out to challenge the established premium brands, undercutting rivals from Audi, BMW, Jaguar and Mercedes. The Stinger is imposing and stylish like an A7, CLS or XF, and bigger than a 440i Gran Coupe, but costs much less. Its absolute closest competitor is the Infiniti Q50 3.0T Sport. You know the one? Me neither. Will Beaumont does, though: 'It has the worst steering of any car I've ever driven.'

This ambition to get noticed probably explains why the standard colour for the GT S is yellow. Any other colour is a £645 option. Right now, our car is the only blue Stinger in the country because it's a one-off that Kia Motors UK brought in to see if it wanted to add blue to the colour options (it does).

It's a decent-looking saloon, low and long, with elements of the Maserati Quattroporte around the rear door/pillar, and an imposing

nose. There's a big boot, roomy interior, and the leather-trimmed cabin is neat, with quality, Mercedes-like metal details and a huge amount of standard kit. This includes the usual suspects – satnav, air con, electric memory seats and a glass sunroof – plus the less expected: Apple CarPlay, a heated and electrically adjusted steering wheel, heated and cooled front seats, heated rear seats and a head-up display.

It's been a gentle run up to and beyond the 1000-mile mark. Impressive right away is the refinement, of the engine and drivetrain, and also wind and road noise. The ride is good in terms of overall control; slightly lumpier than I'd hoped, but better with more speed, and it may still be settling in. No matter, the seats are comfortable and supportive, and it's a fine place to rack up the miles – exactly what a big saloon ought to be able to do.

Early on I've concluded there are three things that Kia has absolutely nailed. The first is the steering, which is connected, communicative and perfectly weighted for me. Then there are the Brembo brakes, which have superb top-of-the-pedal feel and step-in response. In this respect they're the best I've tried for a while. The third is the Harman Kardon sound system, which, cheekily, has metal, pepper pot-style speaker covers like you find on Burmester systems in top-line Mercs. But,



**Top:** 365bhp twin-turbo V6 is refined, but gets pleasingly vocal in Sport mode. **Above:** leather-trimmed cabin features supportive seats

likewise, it's one classy-sounding set-up.

I've stretched the engine a few times and the performance is more subtle than the blistering, sub-5sec to 60mph time suggests, but only because it's such a refined car. Switch to Sport mode and the V6 twin-turbo is more vocal, in an authentic-sounding way, too, even though I suspect some of it is through the speakers. The handling is going to take a bit more getting to know, I think. It's poised and surprisingly agile most of the time, in a big-car way, and traction is surprising given the torque (376lb ft), so it can flow remarkably well, but it does feel heavy. So far, though, the Stinger is ticking a lot of boxes.

**John Barker** (@evoJB)

<b>Date acquired</b>	April 2018
<b>Total mileage</b>	1224
<b>Mileage this month</b>	815
<b>Costs this month</b>	£0
<b>mpg this month</b>	25.5





NEW ARRIVAL

# BMW M5

A 4WD M5 joins our fleet – and we've got lots of questions to ask of it

**M**5: A LETTER AND NUMBER COMBO that raises the eyebrow of many a car enthusiast. And while the debate will continue to rage as to which car was the original supersaloon (some older folk look wistfully at Jaguar's Mark 2 for this), the M5 is most certainly the model that defined it, and has done for over 30 years. It is an enigma. An icon. The undisputed champ. And the latest member of the **evo** Fast Fleet.

With our M5 being sourced directly from BMW UK's media activities, the opportunity to spec it came down to selecting which exterior and interior colour pairing we preferred. The exterior choice was Donington Grey, Rhodonite Silver or Black Sapphire. Despite suggestions

to the contrary, I didn't select that last option just to cause **evo** staff photographer Aston Parrott's quiff to wilt, but because the former two colours were matched with a black interior, whereas this example is trimmed in Aragon Brown leather and should hopefully kick-start my campaign to stop people ordering drab interior colour schemes.

With a basic price of £87,160, the new M5 isn't a car left wanting when it comes to spec, but nevertheless YK18 KNP has a couple of options packs fitted. These are Premium (£1995 and including soft-close doors, front-seat massaging and ventilation, cabin air fragrancing and ionisation, and a ceramic finish for the controls) and Comfort (£1195 and

adding steering-wheel heating, a display key, sun-protection glass, split-folding rear seats and heating for the front and rear seats). Then there's the sports exhaust (£1100), carbon-ceramic brakes (£7495), Apple CarPlay (£235), Bowers & Wilkins stereo (£3090) and Online Entertainment (£160). All in, you're looking at £103,210. Yes, that is quite expensive, isn't it?

Of course, there is more to the M5 than some options. Much, much more. Such as the 4.4-litre twin-turbo V8 with its 592bhp and 553lb ft of torque. There's also an eight-speed auto 'box, M-specific adaptive dampers, revised geometry and a stiffer shell. There are three modes each for the steering and engine, six gearshift settings, an active differential in the rear axle, and M xDrive four-wheel drive, making this the first all-wheel-drive M5. But, like its E63 S rival from AMG, you can turn everything off that's marked as a driver aid, giving you a rear-wheel-drive powertrain.

Over the next six months we'll aim to answer a handful of M5-related questions, such as: Has four-wheel drive diminished the M5's appeal? Even with nigh on 600bhp, does the 1855kg kerb weight soften the car's performance? And crucially, is it still the daddy, the unstoppable force that has brought Audi, Jaguar, Mercedes, Porsche et al to the supersaloon party in recent decades?

**Stuart Gallagher** (@stuartg917)



Date acquired	March 2018
Total mileage	3084
Mileage this month	919
Costs this month	£0
mpg this month	23.7





# Lamborghini Murciélago

The Lambo attracts customs officers (twice) and meets its doppelgänger on a Scandinavian odyssey

**A** COUPLE OF MONTHS AGO THE BIG Lambo and I found ourselves in a sunny but bitterly cold Sweden, heading towards the Norwegian border at Halden. I'd always fancied touring this part of the world, so a week or so earlier I'd taken the ferry from Hull across the North Sea to the Netherlands, from where a 1000-mile trek north began.

It had been a pretty bad winter, even by Scandinavian standards, with far more snow than usual. Although, unsurprisingly, Scandinavia was far better prepared for severe weather than we are in Blighty. So apart from an all-over layer of caked-on rock salt, which I guess would have a garage queen's owner in tears, the Murciélago fared rather well.

Which is more than could be said for me. A

couple of weeks earlier I had taken a tumble from a stepladder, badly spraining my left wrist. I'm not a fan of paddleshifts, as some will have gathered, but on this trip I would have killed for a semi auto. The manual shift in the Lambo is slow and methodical and requires some modicum of strength – especially when it's cold – so I had to mainly use my right hand to change gear, which wasn't exactly ideal.

Upon disembarking the ferry at Rotterdam, the run north-east to Hamburg was ticked off in a steady four hours. The city's Crowne Plaza hotel provided overnight accommodation, and upon checking out the next morning I was amused to find 'Trigger's Broom' had picked up an identical twin during the night. It turned out the Luxembourg-registered Arancio Atlas-coloured Murciélago also sported a

manual 'box and an orange interior, and with 80,000km on the odo was nicely run in.

Its owner, avid **evo** reader Bo Christensen, a Dane living in Luxembourg, was travelling back to his homeland. On the way he'd be stopping at the Jyllandsringen race circuit in central Denmark to take part in a photoshoot for Danish car magazine *Bil Magasinet*. Having recognising SG54 LAM he introduced himself and invited me along, so that morning we found ourselves in two identical Murciélagos snaking through rush-hour Hamburg traffic. Once over the border we almost stopped the traffic entirely as gobsmacked Danes did a double take: supercars are all but non-existent in Denmark due to huge vehicle import taxes, so two Lamborghinis beating up the E45 highway was bound to attract attention.



Talking of which, Danish customs didn't hesitate to wave us both down for a few 'routine' questions – closely followed by polite requests for a few selfies with the cars.

After a couple of enjoyable hours at the circuit it was goodbye to Bo and his twin Lambo and time to point the Murciélago's nose towards Frederikshavn, at the northern tip of Denmark, where I found a pretty basic hotel for the night right next to the port.

Next morning saw a ram-packed Easter ferry (lots of Danes own holiday cottages in Sweden) and a pretty rough crossing of the Skagerrak strait. Docking at Gothenburg four hours later, Swedish customs – also extremely polite – couldn't resist a quick poke around before waving me through. Not like their French equivalents a few years back, I might add. Regular readers may recall they had their sniffer dogs all over the Ferrari 458 I was driving on that occasion. Mind you, I didn't help the situation by mixing up the French word for dog with the word for pig...

Jönköping was the next destination, around two hours east and situated on the southern end of Vättern, Sweden's second largest lake. After a few pleasant days here with my feet up I decided on a whim to travel towards Karlskoga, around 150 miles north, hugging the east shore of Lake Vänern on the way, before turning west towards the Norwegian border at the aforementioned Halden.

Sure, a trip such as this would be a tad more comfortable in the summer, particularly compared with when it's -10deg C outside and you have a temperamental heater that only bangs out hot air when it feels like it. And I'll admit to occasionally wishing I was in a big SUV instead, but where would be the sense of adventure in that?

The reaction from a Swedish hotel receptionist summed it up best. Upon eyeing the filthy Lambo in the car park surrounded by similarly dirty Volvos she looked incredulous, asking: 'So you drive all the way from England... in that?'

'Urm, yeah.'

So where next? I was undecided whether to continue on the E18 hugging Norway's spectacular southern coast round to Larvik, from where I could catch a ferry back to Denmark, or if I should wimp out and turn back sooner. I'll let you know what I did next time.

**Simon George** (@6gearexperience)

<b>Date acquired</b>	September 2004
<b>Total mileage</b>	264,077
<b>Mileage this month</b>	1211
<b>Costs this month</b>	£1088 four tyres
<b>mpg this month</b>	14.0

## SEAT Ibiza FR

The Spanish warm hatch may still be settling into life on the **evo** Fast Fleet, but it's already shown its love of the Dark Side

**H**AVING GOT TO KNOW THE Ibiza a little better, I'm finding its interior is full of contradictions. While the bang-up-to-date design is sleek to look at, it's also very dark, with enough gloss black plastic to put Darth Vader's helmet to shame.

At least being a warm FR means the interior gets a smattering of brighter accents. The black Alcantara seats (£365) certainly look the part with their contrasting red stitching – also used on the handbrake, gearlever gaiter and steering wheel. Strangely, though, SEAT's online configurator won't let you spec anything other than rather plain-looking Nora Black FR cloth seats, so check with your dealer if they take your fancy.

Meanwhile, the chunky, flat-bottomed steering wheel gets an FR logo to match those on the front grille and tailgate. Like an excited puppy, the infotainment screen has also been welcoming me with an FR logo on start-up in case I've forgotten which model I'm in.

Unlike the recent penchant for dash-top infotainment screens, the Ibiza's is integrated below the central air vents. Granted, this is neater and makes it easier to use, but the downside is the heating controls are set lower down, drawing your eyes further from the road. And because the connectivity hub takes up the space beneath, the cup holders have to live behind the gearlever, meaning if you do have a cup of coffee on board,

or even worse two, your left arm must work at an unnatural and uncomfortable height when changing gear.

More impressive is how quickly I've felt 'at home' with the car, and finding a comfortable position has been a doddle. Some cars take a little getting used to, but not the Ibiza. It just feels right.

Having five doors – the only option on the current Ibiza – adds practicality, but getting in and out is quite tight for the driver, as the B-pillars are set quite a way forward. If, like me, you pull the seat back a bit before getting out, things get even worse. The seat bases are quite steeply raked, too, all of which can call for a bit of Houdini-like contortionism. Or maybe that's just me.

Other niggles? The matt and high-gloss surfaces show up fingerprints too easily, and the shallow rear window combined with the privacy glass makes reversing into tight spots a bit of a chore.

So a bit of a mixed bag, then. The cabin does seem well screwed together and looks and feels like it will stand the test of time. I just wish, being an FR model, the interior was a little less like looking out from the bridge of the Death Star.

**Jonathan Baker**

<b>Date acquired</b>	January 2018
<b>Total mileage</b>	4525
<b>Mileage this month</b>	1216
<b>Costs this month</b>	£0
<b>mpg this month</b>	45.9









END OF TERM

# Mazda MX-5 RF

After an indifferent start and a few niggles, the tin-top Japanese roadster bows out having become an **evo** office favourite

**T**HE FOURTH-GENERATION MAZDA MX-5 received a frosty reception when we first tested it at **evo**.

While I understood the reasoning (it lacked dynamic focus next to some of our favourite performance cars), it never really harmed the fun factor for me. As such, it gives me a quiet satisfaction that a few others at **evo** have also become MX-5 converts during our time with VN66 ZHR, a 2-litre MX-5 RF Sport Nav that joined us after a twin test back in February 2017 (issue 234). While it finished runner-up to the Toyota GT86 on that windy day in Wales, it spent the following 12 months worming its way into our affections in a way that even the Toyota might not have managed.

It's difficult to pinpoint just what about the RF experience stood out the most, though the coupe-like roofline and convenience of that electric roof could both lay claim. While a little stubby from some angles, the RF looks surprisingly exotic on the road, and our Ceramic White example was especially crisp. The convenience of a tin-top also made bad weather more bearable, though contrary to expectations, the buttresses seemed to result in more wind noise than the soft-top with the roof down.

Those larger of frame felt a little squeezed within the cabin, but despite some misgivings about seat comfort – they lacked lumbar support, and the leather trim meant plenty of sliding around when the roads got twisty – it was a joy to slip into the low-slung driving position. There was a great view over the ridged bonnet, all the controls were well placed and the cabin design was simple and classy.

Even the infotainment set-up wasn't too bad – the satnav proved relatively easy to fathom, and the iDrive-style controller made navigating the menus very simple. Storage was more of an issue, with no glovebox and only a couple of small cubbies between the seats, but the boot proved suitably sized for supermarket shopping, or a carry-on bag when travelling.

Problems were few. Our car was serviced just before it finally left us, and while the bill

was relatively large at just over £600, that did include a full set of front brake discs and pads. Unusual wear? Not for a car that did four **evo** track evenings during its time with us.

A brief period of inactivity led to a flat battery that caused a few issues once it was recharged, notably a lack of power assistance to the steering for the first few miles. Neither problem raised its head again after more regular use, though.

It's worth noting that we suffered no problems with the manual gearbox, either, despite some evidence of failures on various MX-5 forums. In fact, by the time the car was returned to Mazda the shift felt as snappy as ever, complementing the 2-litre's keen throttle response and light clutch. Zipping up and down the 'box was always one of the RF's greatest attributes, even if the 158bhp Skyactiv engine itself lacked a little personality and top-end zing. The trade-off? Excellent economy – figures in the 40s were the norm.

And the chassis? Originally one of our criticisms of the first fourth-gen MX-5s, I found it enjoyable from the outset. Admittedly, a little less body movement would have been welcome when really pressing on, but at a gentler pace the roll felt more in tune with the steering, brakes and throttle.

It was this combination of talents that made the RF a joy. Being able to enjoy a sunny day with the roof down, a balanced chassis underneath you, and the prospect of manageable fuel bills, is a rare pleasure these days, particularly in a traditional front-engined, rear-drive package. One has to wonder how much longer a car of this formula can exist – but it's worth celebrating while it does.

**Antony Ingram** (@evoAntony)

<b>Date acquired</b>	February 2017
<b>Duration of test</b>	12 months
<b>Total test mileage</b>	13,573
<b>Overall mpg</b>	42.9
<b>Costs</b>	£601.01 service & brakes
<b>Purchase price</b>	£26,645
<b>Value today</b>	£20,300





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# Hyundai i30 N Performance

Cherry-picking from the bewildering array of driver settings makes the most of the Korean's star qualities

**L**AST MONTH I INTRODUCED OUR i30 N with the promise of delving into the car's driving modes and settling upon a custom set-up – one that brings out the best in the car without going full 'N', which can prove a bit extreme, particularly on roads slick from springtime rainshowers.

Driving modes come up frequently in **evo** office conversation, usually in frustration when a particular car fails to offer the perfect combination for a person's personal taste. At this point, someone will invariably don their rose-tinted spectacles and pine for the days when buttons were things you used to fasten a Caterham's roof into place and to make a car feel sportier you simply selected a lower gear.

But if we're to have driving modes then you might as well do things properly, and Hyundai's N division – headed by ex-BMW M man Albert Biermann, remember – has done. The choice of variables borders on the obscure: three engine modes, four rev-matching levels, two settings for the E-LSD, three exhaust modes, three settings for the dampers, a trio of steering weights and three stability control options.

Altering these gives you an 'N Custom' mode, accessed with a press of the little chequered-flag button on the steering wheel. Two presses actually, as this button is also used to engage the hardcore 'N' mode, which itself is one of four base driving modes (the other three being Eco, Normal and Sport, which are accessed via another button on the opposite spoke of the wheel). The good news is that the rest of this report should be a great deal simpler, because my own 'Ingram mode' involves switching everything to its sportiest setting apart from the suspension, steering and ESC. That's it.

Oh, you want more? Well, there's sound logic behind it all. The engine, naturally, should be in its most responsive mode (Sport+) for quick

**“Ingram mode” switches everything to its sportiest setting apart from ESC, suspension and steering’**

throttle response, and if you're going to do that then you might as well match it with the Sport+ exhaust mode, too, which gives you the full WRC crackle-fest. I've also opted for Sport+ for the rev-matching setting, for one fewer thing to concentrate on when braking into a turn – and because the i30 N's pedals are a bit awkwardly sited for the DIY method anyway, so the auto-blip makes even more sense. You only get two modes for the E-LSD, and while the Sport setting means a bit more wheel-tugging, it also provides great traction.

Chassis now, and this is where I've toned down the aggression. There are Normal, Sport and Sport+ options for the dampers, and since I'm yet to find an on-road situation where Normal feels out of its depth, I've stuck with that. Ditto the steering – the Sport and Sport+ settings promise 'increased' and 'maximum road feel', but as with many such systems this confuses feedback with weight, so I've left it in the Normal (already meaty) setting, which also makes the car feel lighter on its toes.

Finally, ESC. One or two colleagues keep switching this off entirely, but frankly I've got my 106 Rallye if I want to experience lift-off oversteer. I left it in Sport for a while – 'allowing some oversteer', according to the menu – but after *experiencing* some oversteer on a cold, greasy corner I've since left it in Normal, and may relax it as the weather improves.

The end result of all this is a car that doesn't sacrifice driveability for performance, making the most of the N's fantastic drivetrain and chassis – and it's only a button-press away.

**Antony Ingram** (@evoAntony)

<b>Date acquired</b>	February 2018
<b>Total mileage</b>	3717
<b>Mileage this month</b>	1080
<b>Costs this month</b>	£0
<b>mpg this month</b>	25.6



**END OF TERM**

# VW Golf GTE

Our hybrid hatch had many Golf attributes, but suffered from something of an identity crisis

**T**HE THEORETICAL CLOCK IS TICKING, and when it chimes-in New Year's Day 2040, the days of traditional petrol and diesel cars will finally be numbered. So where will that leave us, the sort of people who seek genuine driving thrills?

Well, more than likely we'll be behind the wheel of a hybrid machine, like our Golf GTE. This was the second plug-in performance car we've had on Fast Fleet, but unlike the sub-supercar i8, the Volkswagen is more of a car for, well, the people. So, after six months of hard and varied use, what's the verdict?

It turned out to be a bit of a mixed bag, really. First things first – the GTE isn't really a hot hatch. Not in the traditional sense, anyway. The Golf GTI styling add-ons, eye-catching blue trim inserts and 201bhp power output certainly gave off all the right messages, but by the time those messages got to the driver the meaning was all muddled.

Even in its sportiest driver mode the Golf failed to set the pulse racing. In fact, I can count on the fingers of two hands the number of times I put the car in its hottest GTE setting. Why was that? Simply because it always felt

out of sorts in this mode. Performance wasn't a problem, the 148bhp 1.4-litre turbo petrol engine benefiting from electric-motor torque-fill for surprisingly spirited performance – our timing gear recorded 6.8 seconds for the 0-60mph sprint. Fuel economy was less impressive, and when driven with vigour would slump to under 30mpg, which is no better than the far faster GTI and around 20mpg less than the equally brisk GTD offers.

Pushing through a series of corners also had the GTE all at sea, even with the optional two-stage dampers in their firmest setting. Mass was the problem here – our scales revealed the car weighed in at a hefty 1609kg, which was 201kg more than the five-door GTI. Performance we tested in *evo* 246.

It meant the Golf felt a bit ragged at the limit as the suspension struggled to contain body movements and the low-rolling-resistance tyres strived to cling on. Driven at eight-tenths the GTE felt fine, with the same slick and composed handling as any Golf, and through quick changes of direction that heavy, rear-mounted battery pack's pendulum effect even added to the fun.

Unexpectedly, the greatest driver satisfaction was to be gained in zero-emissions electric mode, which gave about 25 miles of range on a full charge, which itself took about four hours to achieve from a domestic 13-amp supply. To manage this sort of distance required real care and concentration. Good anticipation and smoothness were needed, both of which helped maintain valuable momentum through corners and roundabouts. There was also the challenge of mastering the regenerative



<b>Date acquired</b>	August 2017
<b>Duration of test</b>	6 months
<b>Total test mileage</b>	14,229
<b>Overall mpg</b>	54.8
<b>Costs</b>	£0
<b>Purchase price</b>	£38,185
<b>Value today</b>	£25,000

braking – lift off the throttle and the deceleration was strong enough that on many journeys you could steer clear of the brake pedal altogether. The result was impressive fuel consumption of up to 70mpg.

Ultimately, the GTE was a car that didn't quite know what it wanted to be – family-friendly funster or eco-warrior? – and so, in the end, did neither job particularly well. On the plus side, the hybrid drivetrain was neatly integrated, reliable and relatively straightforward to use, plus as a car the GTE was every bit as easy to live with as a standard Golf. Crucially, the industry has still got more than two decades to produce something that delivers both eco-friendliness and the thrill of driving.

**James Disdale**







# Skoda Superb SportLine 4x4

The Czech saloon takes holiday duties – and a blast up a Jersey hill climb – in its stride

**T**HERE AIN'T NO REPLACEMENT FOR displacement, as the old saying goes. But when it comes to a family of four's week away it's boot capacity rather than engine capacity that's king. So when the time came to book the ferry to Jersey, it was our Skoda Superb's registration number that was top of my list.

As expected, the big Czech machine proved to be the perfect companion. Its vast, 690-litre boot swallowed everything I threw at it, while the relaxed ride and hushed refinement made mincemeat of the motorway drag down to Poole, where we jumped on the ferry and headed to the Channel Islands.

Once there, the blanket 40mph speed limit and narrow, wall-lined roads meant that chances to exploit the car's 276bhp blown four-pot were few and far between. However, while you can take the boy out of **evo** for a week, you can't take **evo** out of the boy, and it didn't take me long to seek out some fun.

Despite its small size, Jersey has a thriving motorsport scene, including its own two-day stage rally and the occasional race along some of the long, wide beaches. Yet it's the Bouley

**'The switchback climb measures just over half-a-mile long and is particularly tricky, but on it the Skoda felt surprisingly adept'**

Bay Hill Climb that's arguably the highlight, and upon seeking out the course, which is public road most of the time, it wasn't hard to see why. After the door mirror-scrapingly narrow routes found on most of the island, the wide and snaking strip used for the competition looks like it's been lifted from a European mountain range and dropped from the sky onto this tiny island off the coast of France.

I took the opportunity to try a couple of runs up and down, to both get a feel for the course and to have a play with the Skoda's

driver modes. The switchback climb measures just over half-a-mile long and is particularly tricky, starting quickly before sucking you into a number of deceptively tight hairpins. I was never going to beat the 37.6sec record set by Wallace Menzies in a DJ Firestorm single-seater in 2013 – especially not with the 40mph speed limit – but the Skoda was surprisingly adept. With the dampers in their Sport setting the Superb was transformed and felt impressively planted and agile, with the combination of the torquey turbocharged unit and four-wheel drive firing it effortlessly out of the tight turns.

I'm not going to pretend it was the most thrilling and engaging experience, but for such a big, practical and unassuming-looking machine it was a remarkably polished performance and a further reminder of why our respect for this car continues to grow.

**James Disdale**

<b>Date acquired</b>	September 2017
<b>Total mileage</b>	10,498
<b>Mileage this month</b>	2152
<b>Costs this month</b>	£0
<b>mpg this month</b>	27.6





## Honda Civic Type R

Its suspension may have been finessed, bringing a ride that's less harsh, but it's done nothing to diminish the latest Type R's focus



‘O W! MY SPINE!’ CRIED MY WIFE, somewhat melodramatically, from the passenger seat. ‘Can’t you do something to make it more comfortable?’

I already knew the answer, but I glanced in the instrument binnacle just to double-check which mode the Honda was in. Yup: Comfort.

When it was first suggested that this latest Civic Type R would be more useable than its predecessor, and would even gain the aforementioned Comfort mode, some fans of the old model, myself included, feared that the CTR might be about to ‘turn soft’ and in the process lose a big part of its appeal.

This clearly hasn’t happened. In its default mode of Sport, the maximum amount of suspension travel feels not dissimilar to what I recall from the previous-generation Type R

that I also ran – in other words, less than what the makers of most other hot hatches deem acceptable. The ride, therefore, is still firm. But it’s a different kind of firm, because despite the wheels being an inch bigger than before (they’re now 20s), every imperfection they encounter appears to be introduced to the car’s body more gently and handled more deftly, largely eradicating the harsh edge that

**‘Passengers will still complain, particularly in town as the Civic fidgets over damaged tarmac’**

was ever-present in the old car’s ride and inspiring even greater confidence in what the new model’s chassis can deal with.

In Comfort mode you can feel more bounce being permitted before things are pulled taut again, but this is all very much relative: it doesn’t exactly turn the Type R into an S-class. Passengers will still complain, particularly in town as the Civic fidgets and jiggles over damaged tarmac and sunken manhole covers. At speed, however, the ride settles somewhat, and so do your passengers.

At the other end of the scale there’s still a +R mode. On the previous CTR this was best saved for track use, unless you found yourself on billiard-table-smooth tarmac (literally). I rather admired how hardcore it was, because it removed any temptation to attempt to use +R on the public highway. But now it is a viable option on the road, again mainly down to how inputs to the suspension are handled, rather than a significantly wider band of overall movements being permitted. That said, I can’t honestly say that I can find any obvious advantage – in pace or enjoyment – in using





**Above left:** FK8 Type R has gained bigger wheels, but they haven't made the ride worse. **Above:** hardcore +R mode still best saved for trackdays

this mode on the road, so it's probably still one best kept for the track.

There are palpable benefits, then, to the FK8's new, multi-link rear suspension, its 38 per cent stiffer bodyshell, and what they have enabled Honda's engineers to achieve with the suspension tuning. And, thankfully, the Type R also remains a highly focused proposition.

None of which solves the problem of the amateur dramatics from the passenger seat, but I have my own fix for that: I simply let my wife drive. Once behind the wheel, all thoughts of wishing we were instead in a softer-riding Golf GTI mysteriously evaporate...

**Ian Eveleigh**

<b>Date acquired</b>	January 2018
<b>Total mileage</b>	3641
<b>Mileage this month</b>	1268
<b>Costs this month</b>	£0
<b>mpg this month</b>	23.8

## Mercedes-AMG C43 Estate

The stealthy estate goes about its business in a more subtle way than some others on our Fast Fleet

**T**HE C43 CONTINUES TO impress, although I'm now wise to the fact that it has a more subtle way of getting under one's skin than other cars on the **evo** Fast Fleet.

Perhaps I was almost too successful in downplaying the exterior when we specced our car, for as soon as it attracts a layer of grime – which is very quickly with black paint, predictably – it tends to merge into the background.

But that's to underestimate the depth of the C43's appeal. For me, it's the combination of mid-range grunt and pliant ride quality that are the cornerstone of its terrific real-world pace. I don't know about the area where you live, but my usual journey to the office is almost constantly punctuated by potholes. It is actually a game in itself to avoid them – the agility of the C43 is impressive at this alone – but there's always the odd one you can't swerve. In many cars this elicits a thud, crack or shudder violent enough to grind the teeth in horror, but in the C43 they're usually something of a non-event. A good sort of non-event, at that. It must help that our C43 has the standard 18-inch wheels, with meaty 45-profile tyre sidewalls at the front, 40 at the rear.

Some of this must also be due to

the adaptive damping. Even in its Sport setting there's a notable pliancy, both front to rear and in terms of body roll, that allows the car to react to sudden bumps and more longer-wave undulations without constantly having to be at war with the road. And while the four-wheel-drive system isn't set up to oversteer like those of some AMGs, it'll always chuck enough to the rear to adopt a neutral cornering attitude, especially if you've not overcommitted on turn-in.

Overall, it's this multi-talented persona that defines the car. Even being driven with some enthusiasm the fuel economy seems to be hovering around 26mpg, and a longer motorway cruise can see that rise well over 30mpg. When I think of the sort of consumption figures offered by diesel performance estate cars in the real world, that feels like a small price to pay for 362bhp under your right foot and an exhaust note that, in loud mode, ricochets off buildings and howls like a demon.

**Adam Towler** (@AdamTowler)

<b>Date acquired</b>	January 2018
<b>Total mileage</b>	5100
<b>Mileage this month</b>	1050
<b>Costs this month</b>	£0
<b>mpg this month</b>	25.9





## Audi RS3

Now it's run-in, our 394bhp Audi can be fully unleashed (weather depending)

**I**T'S BEEN A FAIRLY BUSY MONTH for the mean green machine, with family trips to North Yorkshire and South Devon helping to make fairly straightforward work of the running-in period. As a result, I've finally been able to unleash the star of the RS3's dynamic package: the engine.

Until recently, the 394bhp turbocharged five-pot has been kept on a tight leash, with restricted revs and a careful eye on the oil level. A tall seventh gear meant that fast motorway cruises were OK, while the low-down torque delivered more than enough poke to pull clear of traffic elsewhere. But it's only beyond 4000rpm that this engine really gets into its stride.

It's not just the electrifying acceleration I crave, it's the noise, too. As the needle on the digital rev counter sweeps past the big '4', the valves in the exhaust open and the RS3 finds its voice, and then some, blending the warbling offbeat war cry of the Ur-Quattro with the sharper mechanical howl of the R8's V10. It's a truly addictive sound.

And it's all natural – no sound symposers or hi-fi-enhanced notes, just the sound of superunleaded being ingested, compressed, ignited and exhausted quite a few thousand times every minute. It's just the right side of



loud, too, both inside and outside, letting both occupants and passers-by know that this is no ordinary A3 (the paint does a good job of that, too), but without the over-the-top, in-your-face bombast of AMG's V8-engined products.

The engine is so good in fact, that it's easy to overlook the rest of the car (apart from the paint, obviously). It even looks the part, with a proper cam cover and a lovely crackle-finished inlet plenum. Opening the bonnet for a peek is a genuine pleasure. OK, maybe that's just me.

I'm also quickly discovering that there are few faster cars in the real world than this Audi. Sure, it's not the most agile or engaging thing (there's still too much weight over the nose), but the combination of four-wheel drive and wieldy dimensions mean that the RS3 is quick and composed come rain or shine. Some more adjustability would be welcome, but take a

neat and precise approach and be spot on with your corner entry speed and the Audi can pick apart the average B-road at a barely believable rate. It also keeps going when the snow starts falling (again!), which isn't something that can be said for its rear-drive rivals.

There are some niggles though, the biggest of which is the seven-speed twin-clutch 'box, which is lightning quick and as smooth as a silkworm's pyjamas when pushing on, but can get wrong-footed when at a crawl. It's at its worst when pulling away from roundabouts or junctions, where patience and a sensitive right foot are needed – go for a quick getaway and it feels like the transmission tries to engage two gears at once, then changes its mind and simply drops the clutch, causing you to lurch off like a learner. I'm going to try disabling the start-stop to see if this smooths things out. Still, once the RS3 is rolling, normal service with the gearbox is resumed, meaning you can just get on with enjoying that engine.

**James Disdale**

<b>Date acquired</b>	February 2018
<b>Total mileage</b>	4270
<b>Mileage this month</b>	2991
<b>Costs this month</b>	£0
<b>mpg this month</b>	27.7





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# Land Rover Defender Works V8

Old-fashioned workhorse meets luxury cruiser courtesy of JLR Classic

**D**INTRIGUED? SURELY JUST A LITTLE bit? Like a very hot chilli there are some things that you feel inexorably drawn to, no matter how much you're pretty sure you won't like the result. They seem like a crazy notion, but nonetheless there is a Siren-like lure to them. And so it is with the Defender Works V8. However much you dislike 4x4s or think £150,000 is ridiculous for something based on a farm runaround, there is probably a nagging desire to sample it. Just once.

It's worth pointing out that this is not a new vehicle. Not just conceptually, but physically. Land Rover has been buying up good, low-mileage, late examples of Defenders in order to convert them into the 150 Works V8s that it intends to sell. You can choose between a 90 or a 110 and it will then be stripped and rebuilt in the JLR Classic workshop.

The heart of the thing is Jaguar's naturally aspirated 5-litre V8, putting out 399bhp and 380lb ft of torque through a ZF eight-speed auto. The springs, dampers, anti-roll bars and,

perhaps most importantly, brakes have all been uprated to give the chassis a fighting chance. You can spot a Works V8 by its 18-inch wheels (a first for a Defender) and, if you look a little closer, the door handles machined from aluminium. Inside, things are positively luxurious, with lots of leather, bucket seats and Land Rover Classic's new DAB Classic Radio, which even has a little screen for satnav.

If you ever find yourself behind the wheel of a Works V8 then I recommend sampling a full-bore standing start. It's not a course of action I would promote in a lot of cars, but I think it's the best way to get straight to the nub of this vehicle's character. A 0-60mph time of 5.6sec might seem pretty tame, but the alarming reality is anything but. I think the biggest reason for this is that, even more than in a Discovery or Range Rover, you really feel like you're sitting up high, on top of a chassis rather than in it, so the speed feels precarious. Think old-fashioned, wooden toboggan (with a short-fuse rocket attached) as opposed to modern, plastic tea-tray sledge.

It is also important to note that while it will keep up with quick hot hatches in a dash away from the lights, a Works V8 will drop back significantly when corners are involved. The slow rack and knobbly tyres mean the steering has the vagueness of a politician answering questions about his or her university days. Although disconcerting, the only way to

improve the situation and get a better idea as to how hard you're pushing the tyres is to turn in with more commitment. This means you go through all the Defender's innate roll and lean more positively on the tyres. However, having rallied a Defender, I wouldn't recommend getting one out of shape to any great degree.

Curiously, the mighty Works V8 is actually at its best when pottering or cruising. It's during this sort of everyday travel that the increased refinement is appreciated. The fact that the V8 doesn't sound quite as raucous as you might expect also makes more sense, and you realise that the main benefit of the larger engine is simply the greater ease with which you can keep up with other traffic and maintain a decent speed on the motorway.

Yes, a supercharged Range Rover Autobiography or AMG G63 is cheaper. And, having driven the Works V8, I think it remains intriguing rather than inspired. But it's certainly not insipid, and for that reason alone I'm rather glad it exists.

**Henry Catchpole** (@HenryCatchpole)

- + Nippy in a straight line; nicely finished
- Slow in the corners; expensive

**evo rating** ★★★★★

**'A 0-60mph time of 5.6sec might seem pretty tame, but the reality is anything but'**



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# Mercedes-Benz CLS400d 4Matic

CLS combines driver appeal and a refined diesel to give it the upper hand

**T**HERE AREN'T MANY DIESEL ENGINES we'll miss when the government bans them during its next bout of blunderbuss-selected legislative decisions, but we might shed a tear for units like Mercedes' latest 'OM 656' in-line six. In CLS400d form it's the company's most powerful diesel ever, producing 335bhp at 4400rpm, and putting 516lb ft to all four wheels from 1200 to 3200rpm – good for a 5.0sec 0-62mph time.

The figures imply an effortless drive and that's exactly what you get. The straight-six pulls lustily from idle to a few hundred rpm short of its red line, but it's equally happy hammering along in the mid-range, kept there

with flicks of the wheel-mounted paddles and kept in check by powerful, progressive brakes. Even the tone is satisfying, sounding much like a petrol six played an octave lower, but back off and the engine plays its other trump card: near-silence and petrol-style smoothness.

Such an engine might outshine the rest of the car, but as we discovered with the petrol-hybrid AMG CLS53 in *evo* 247, there's plenty of appeal there, too. The S-class-influenced cabin is comfortable and tranquil, with easy-to-operate controls, a great driving position and just about enough space in the rear.

The steering is accurate and well weighted (with more heft if you select Sport or Sport+

mode), and puts you in touch with a precise and grippy front axle. The CLS400d uses multi-link suspension with passive dampers at both ends, which work admirably at controlling roll and pitch in faster driving without a ruinous ride quality – only harsher surfaces trouble it.

If you're a fan of the styling then the £59,195 CLS400d succeeds in matching luxury and driver appeal where its closest rival, the Audi A7 Sportback, fails.

**Antony Ingram (@evoAntony)**

- + Smooth and lusty engine, effortless drive
- Harsher surfaces can trouble the ride

**evo rating** ★★★★★☆



# Jaguar XF S Sportbrake Diesel

Brisk estate's speed and refinement make up for E-Pace let-down

**T**HE LAST JAGUAR I DROVE – THE new E-Pace crossover in range-topping petrol trim (*evo* 243) – was one of the most disappointing cars I've driven in this job. That it struggles to shine in a class not known for its diamonds is unfortunate; that it's not even as appealing as the seven-year-old Range Rover Evoque with which it shares its platform is unacceptable.

Whoever signed it off can't have had much to do with the XF Sportbrake, which is, in contrast, one of the better cars in a significantly more competitive sector, particularly in 3-litre V6 diesel form as here. It succeeds in all the areas where the E-Pace failed. It is, unlike that car, a proper Jaguar.

Proper Jaguars should ride and handle with fluidity and insouciance for the surface below, and the £51,510 S Sportbrake Diesel does both, even on optional 20-inch wheels. Satisfying off-centre steering weight sets you in ideal

stead for the precision and grip that follow, allowing you to carve through turns, while the double-wishbone front suspension and self-levelling, air-suspended rear absorb the road surface without isolating you from it.

The result is a car that, despite a 1924kg kerb weight (and that despite the XF's aluminium construction), feels fleet of foot, and its 296bhp and 516lb ft of torque are able to exploit this. In corners the car's line tightens pleasingly as the driven rear wheels over-rotate, and you're thrust down the road with ample pace and refinement. The 0-62mph dash takes 6.6 seconds.

The V6 isn't as sonorous as some rivals, and at low speeds it works unhappily (and noisily) with the eight-speed auto, but regardless of this – and the rather dreary, if comfortable, cabin – the XF remains one of the most engaging cars in its class.

**Antony Ingram (@evoAntony)**



- + Feels like a proper Jaguar despite its hefty weight
- Rivals sound better; dreary cabin

**evo rating** ★★★★★☆



*Image courtesy of Steve McCoy Photography – stevemccoy.co.uk*

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# Abarth 124 GT

Carbonfibre hard-top adds little to an already fun package

**T**HE GREAT IRONY ABOUT THE modern mainstream roadster is that by utilising a conventional monocoque construction but without a roof panel in place, it is intrinsically less rigid, and therefore less dynamically adept, than the term 'sports car' would have you believe. That doesn't apply to drop-tops with a tub-style build – Elises, McLarens, etc – but it does, sadly, to Fiat's MX-5-based roadster, the 124.

That doesn't stop us loving the Abarth version all the same, because its playful chassis, complemented by the amusingly rorty 168bhp 1.4-litre turbo engine, is a giggle-a-minute when combined with a B-road and a warm summer's day. What's a little rear-view mirror wobble among friends, anyway?

However, this new GT model looks, on paper at least, to take the 124's appeal even further. By screwing a carbonfibre roof panel in place,

torsional rigidity is said to improve – although Abarth hasn't revealed by how much. The car retains its fabric roof too, but lighter OZ wheels (by 4kg each) offset the extra 16kg of the new hard-top when it's fitted.

When I first heard of the GT I got all excited, thinking it could be a more civilised 124 Rally. I was imagining proper seats, a driving position that didn't mean I had to look over the cant rail, and a much more focused chassis. But the GT is no such thing. The increase in rigidity is hard to detect on smooth roads, although it does feel like there's a small difference. Other than that it's the same old loveable Abarth 124. But given a hefty chunk of that car's appeal comes from top-down motoring with a simple unlatching of the roof, I'm not sure the tiny improvements here are worth it – even before the ten per cent price increase to £29,565.

**Adam Towler** (@AdamTowler)



- + Same playful chassis and rorty engine as base 124
- Benefit of additions hard to detect, or to justify

**evo rating** ★★★★★



# Porsche 718 Boxster GTS

It ain't cheap, but it is the best Boxster on sale

**R**EMEMBER WHEN THE BOXSTER was an affordable entry point to a brilliant sports car? Me too, but this new GTS costs £61,727, which sounds like a price that should be stuck to the windscreen of a 911 Cabriolet. Then again, today's cars are expensive because it's all about the deposit and monthly payment. In Porsche terms this equates to £12k down and £500 a month. For three years. Not cheap either, but have you seen the cost of a pint of beer these days?

Regardless of how you pay for it, Porsche's 718 Boxster GTS is a gem. It follows the familiar GTS recipe of a little more power and some

additional components fitted as standard that would cost you extra to add to an S, such as the PASM chassis. And it's these that make the GTS the standout car of the Boxster line-up.

The 2.5-litre turbocharged flat-four produces 15bhp more than in the S, taking the total up to 360bhp at 6500rpm, but it still sounds broken despite a noticeable improvement acoustically over earlier 718s we drove. However, it's what the GTS achieves through the bends that reminds you few, Lotus aside, make a roadster as good as Porsche.

There's not a single area that stands out, rather there's multiple. It steers so cleanly and

accurately you need a pretty good memory of Porsche's old hydraulic system to know what you are missing. There is no body roll – not a fraction of a degree – but the GTS doesn't shock and awe its way down a road, either. The damping action is so super-clean that only monumental imperfections get through to the cabin, the balance is pin-point accurate, and the standard brakes question the need for costly carbon-ceramics.

Ultimately, it still has the feel of a specialist sports car despite being built by a manufacturer that shifts 250,000 cars a year.  
**Stuart Gallagher** (@stuartg917)

- + As fluent as ever; still feels bespoke
- Engine note continues to disappoint; pricey

**evo rating** ★★★★★





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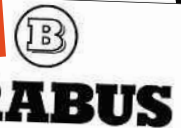


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# The Knowledge

## RATINGS

★ = Thrill-free zone ★★ = Tepid ★★★ = Interesting ★★★★ = Seriously good ★★★★★ = A truly great car

⊕ = new entry this month. Cars in italics are no longer on sale. **Issue no.** is for our most recent major test of the car (D = Driven, F = feature). Call 0330 333 9491 for back issues. **Engine** is the car's combustion engine only – electric motors aren't shown. **Weight** is as quoted by the manufacturer for the car in basic spec, e.g. with a manual gearbox. In most cases this is to DIN standards (i.e. with fluids but without a driver), but where the manufacturer only quotes a 'dry' weight (i.e. without fluids) this is indicated by \*. Note that a dry weight will make the car's power-to-weight ratio (bhp/ton) appear more favourable. **0-62mph (claimed)** is the manufacturer's 0-62 figure, with a manual gearbox where offered. Our **0-60mph** and **0-100mph (tested)** figures could be with either a manual or automatic/DCT gearbox.

## SUPERMINIS / HOT HATCHES



### OUR CHOICE

**Honda Civic Type R.** Building on the promise shown by the short-lived FK2 version, the FK8 Type R is a more rounded proposition – and is all the better for it. It's outrageously fast on every kind of road, edges ahead of its rivals on track, offers oodles of interaction and is practical to boot.



### BEST OF THE REST

If you can't stomach the Civic's styling, the classy **Volkswagen Golf R** may be more up your street (there's even a handy estate version), while the **Hyundai i30 N Performance Package** is an intriguing – and impressive – alternative to the usual suspects. From the smaller hatches, we wouldn't hesitate to choose the **Peugeot 208 GTI by PS** (left).

MAKE & MODEL	ISSUE NO.	PRICE	ENGINE CYL / CC	BHP / RPM	LB FT / RPM	WEIGHT	BHP / TON	0-62MPH (CLAIMED)	0-60MPH (TESTED)	0-100MPH (TESTED)	MAX MPH	EVO RATING	
Abarth 595 Competizione	196 D	£19,890	4/1368	178/5500	184/3000	1035kg	175	6.8	-	-	140	+ Spirited engine, still looks great - Favours fun over finesse	★★★★☆
Abarth 695 Biposto	205 F	£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 Veloce/QV	199 D	£29,635	4/1742	237/5750	251/2000	1320kg	182	6.0	-	-	152	+ Still looks good, and now it's got the 4C's engine - Pricey, and it has more rewarding rivals	★★★★☆
Alfa Romeo Giulietta Cloverleaf	144 D	10'-14	4/1742	232/5500	251/1900	1320kg	179	6.8	-	-	150	+ Shows signs of deep talent... - ...but should be more exciting	★★★★☆
Alfa Romeo 147 GTA	187 F	03'-06	6/3179	247/6200	221/4800	1360kg	185	6.3	6.0	15.5	153	+ Mk1 Focus RS pace without the histrionics - Slightly nose-heavy	★★★★★
Audi S1	246 F	£27,125	4/1984	228/6000	273/1600	1315kg	176	5.8	-	-	155	+ Compliant and engaging chassis; quick, too - Looks dull without options	★★★★★
Audi A1 quattro	181 F	13	4/1984	253/6000	258/2500	1420kg	181	5.7	-	-	152	+ Polished 253bhp all-wheel-drive A1 - Just 19 for UK, Porsche Cayman price	★★★★★
Audi RS3 Sportback	240 D	£44,300	5/2480	394/5850	354/1700	1510kg	265	4.1	-	-	155	+ Hugely quick point-to-point - Sometimes speed isn't the be-all and end-all	★★★★★
Audi S3	188 F	13'-16	4/1984	296/5500	280/1800	1395kg	216	5.2	5.4	12.5	155	+ Lots of grip and one of the best-sounding four-pot turbos - Still a little too clinical	★★★★★
Audi RS3 Sportback	221 F	15'-16	5/2480	362/5500	343/1625	1520kg	242	4.3	3.6	-	155	+ Addictive five-cylinder noise; monster pace - Chassis not exactly playful	★★★★★
Audi S3	106 F	06'-12	4/1984	261/6000	258/2500	1455kg	183	5.7	5.6	13.6	155	+ Very fast, very effective, very... er, quality - A little too clinical	★★★★★
Audi RS3 Sportback	156 F	10'-12	5/2480	335/5400	332/1600	1575kg	216	4.6	-	-	155	+ Very fast, very effective, very... er, quality, with added five-pot character - A little too clinical	★★★★★
BMW 125iM Sport	176 D	£28,940	4/1997	221/5200	229/1400	1400kg	160	6.1	-	-	155	+ Performance, price, running costs - Dull four-pot soundtrack	★★★★★
BMW M140i	-	£32,205	6/2979	335/5500	369/1520	1445kg	236	4.8	-	-	155	+ Pace; compact size suits UK roads well - Lacks the precision of the best performance cars	★★★★★
BMW M135i	212 F	12'-15	6/2979	321/5800	332/1300	1430kg	228	5.1	5.2	-	155	+ Powertrain, noise, chassis - M235i looks nicer, and has an LSD option	★★★★★
BMW 130iM Sport	106 F	05'-10	6/2996	261/6650	232/1750	1450kg	183	6.0	6.1	15.3	155	+ Fantastic engine - Suspension can still get a little boingy	★★★★★
Citroën DS3 1.6 THP	142 F	10'-15	4/1598	154/6000	177/2400	1240kg	126	7.3	-	-	133	+ 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	+ A faster, feistier DS3 - Not as hardcore as its 'Racing' tag suggests	★★★★★
Citroën Saxo VTS	020 F	97'-03	4/1587	120/6600	107/5200	935kg	130	8.7	7.6	22.6	127	+ Chunky, chuckable charger - Can catch out the unwary	★★★★★
Citroën AX GT	195 F	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	★★★★★
DS 3 Performance	222 D	£21,415	4/1598	205/6000	221/3000	1175kg	177	6.5	-	-	143	+ All the right ingredients - Undercooked	★★★★★
Fiat Panda 100HP	132 F	06'-11	4/1368	99/6000	97/4250	975kg	103	9.5	-	-	115	+ About as fun as small cars get - Optional ESP can't be turned off	★★★★★
Ford Fiesta ST	207 F	13'-17	4/1596	197/5700	214/2500	1088kg	184	6.9	7.4	18.4	137	+ Chassis, price, punchy performance - Have you heard of Mountune?	★★★★★
Ford Fiesta ST Mountune	213 F	13'-17	4/1596	212/6000	236/2750	1088kg	198	6.4	-	-	140	+ One of the best mid-sized hatches made even better - Badge snobbery	★★★★★
Ford Fiesta ST200	225 F	16	4/1596	212/6000	236/2500	1088kg	198	6.7	-	-	143	+ Massive fun - They only made 400	★★★★★
Ford Fiesta Zetec S	123 D	08'-13	4/1596	118/6000	112/4050	1045kg	115	9.9	-	-	120	+ Genuinely entertaining supermini - Renault Sport Twingo and Suzuki Swift are even more fun	★★★★★
Ford Fiesta Zetec S Mountune	132 F	08'-13	4/1596	138/6750	125/4250	1080kg	130	7.9	-	-	120	+ A touch more go, and a fantastically loud exhaust... - ...if you're 12 years old	★★★★★
Ford Fiesta ST	075 D	05'-08	4/1999	148/6000	140/4500	1137kg	132	7.9	-	-	129	+ Great looks, decent brakes - Disappointing chassis, gutless engine	★★★★★
Ford Focus ST TDCi Estate (Mk3)	219 D	£26,195	4/1997	182/3500	295/2000	1488kg	124	8.3	-	-	135	+ Performance not sacrificed at the altar of economy - Gets ragged when really pushed	★★★★★
Ford Focus ST (Mk3)	207 F	£25,095	4/1999	247/5500	265/2000	1362kg	184	6.5	-	-	154	+ Excellent engine - Scrappy when pushed	★★★★★
Ford Focus ST Mountune (Mk3)	187 D	£25,595	4/1999	271/5500	295/2750	1362kg	202	5.7	-	-	154+	+ Great value upgrade - Steering still not as feelsome as that of some rivals	★★★★★
Ford Focus ST (Mk2)	119 F	05'-10	5/2522	222/6000	236/1600	1392kg	162	6.8	6.7	16.8	150	+ Value, performance, integrity - Big engine compromises handling	★★★★★
Ford Focus RS (Mk3)	246 F	£32,765	4/2261	345/6000	347/2000	1547kg	227	4.7	4.9	12.6	166	+ Torque-vectoring 4WD brings new sensations to hot hatch sector - Needs to be driven hard	★★★★★
Ford Focus RS Edition (Mk3)	246 D	£36,295	4/2261	345/6000	347/2000	1547kg	227	4.7	-	-	166	+ Front limited-slip differential brings more precise handling - Pricey and still heavy	★★★★★
Ford Focus RS (Mk2)	195 F	09'-11	5/2522	300/6500	324/2300	1467kg	208	5.9	5.9	14.2	163	+ Huge performance, highly capable FWD chassis - Body control is occasionally clumsy	★★★★★
Ford Focus RS500 (Mk2)	181 F	10'-11	5/2522	345/6000	339/2500	1467kg	239	5.6	5.6	12.7	165	+ More power and presence than regular Mk2 RS - Pricey	★★★★★
Ford Focus RS (Mk1)	207 F	02'-03	4/1998	212/5500	229/3500	1278kg	169	6.7	5.9	14.9	143	+ Some are great - Some are awful (so make sure you drive plenty)	★★★★★
Ford Escort RS Cosworth	157 F	92'-96	4/1993	224/6250	224/3500	1275kg	179	6.2	-	-	137	+ The ultimate Essex hot hatch - Unmodified ones are rare, and pricey	★★★★★
Ford Puma 1.7	095 F	97'-02	4/1679	123/6300	116/4500	1041kg	120	9.2	8.6	27.6	122	+ Revvy engine, sparkling chassis, bargain used prices - Rusty rear arches	★★★★★
Ford Racing Puma	128 F	00'-01	4/1679	153/7000	119/4500	1174kg	132	7.9	7.8	23.2	137	+ Exclusivity - The standard Puma does it so well	★★★★★
Honda Civic Type R (FK8)	244 F	£30,995	4/1996	316/6500	295/2500	1380kg	233	5.8	5.9	12.6	169	+ Wildly exciting, with improved refinement - Looks still challenging for some	★★★★★
Honda Civic Type R (FK2)	227 F	15'-17	4/1996	306/6500	295/2500	1378kg	226	5.7	5.4	12.4	167	+ Great on smooth roads - Turbo engine not as special as old nat-asp units; styling a bit 'busy'	★★★★★
Honda Civic Type R (FN2)	102 F	07'-11	4/1998	198/7800	142/5600	1267kg	158	6.6	6.8	17.5	146	+ Looks great, VTEC more accessible - Steering lacks feel, inert balance	★★★★★
Honda Civic Type R Championship White (FN2)	126 D	09'-10	4/1998	198/7800	142/5600	1267kg	158	6.6	-	-	146	+ Limited-slip diff a welcome addition to the FN2 Type R - It should've been on the standard car	★★★★★
Honda Civic Type R Mugen (FN2)	248 F	09'-11	4/1998	237/8300	157/6250	1233kg	195	5.9	-	-	155	+ Fantastic on road and track - Only 20 were made, and they're a tad pricey...	★★★★★
Honda Civic Type R (EP3)	075 F	01'-05	4/1998	197/7400	143/5900	1204kg	166	6.8	6.8	16.9	146	+ Potent and great value - 'Breadvan' looks divide opinion; duff steering	★★★★★
Honda Civic Type R (EK9)	210 F	97'-00	4/1595	182/8200	118/7500	1040kg	178	6.8	-	-	135	+ Sublime early incarnation of the Type R recipe - Good ones are thin on the ground	★★★★★
Hyundai i30 N Performance	245 F	£27,995	4/1998	271/6000	279/1450	1429kg	193	6.1	-	-	155	+ A brilliant, thoroughly developed hot hatch - Imagine if it was lighter, too...	★★★★★
Kia ProceeD GT	217 D	£23,310	4/1591	201/6000	195/1500	1359kg	143	7.3	-	-	150	+ Fun and appealing package - Soft-edged compared to rivals	★★★★★
Lancia Delta HF Integrale Evoluzione	194 F	91'-92	4/1995	207/5750	220/3500	1300kg	162	6.0	-	-	134	+ One of the finest cars ever built - Demands love, LHD only	★★★★★
Mazda 3 MPS	137 F	06'-13	4/2261	256/5500	280/3000	1385kg	188	6.1	6.3	14.5	155	+ Quick, eager and very good value - The steering's iffy	★★★★★
Mercedes-AMG A45	221 F	£40,695	4/1991	316/6000	350/2250	1480kg	258	4.2	3.9	-	155	+ Tremendously fast - But not a true great	★★★★★
Mercedes-Benz A45 AMG	194 F	12'-15	4/1991	355/6000	332/2250	1480kg	244	4.6	4.3	10.6	155	+ Blisteringly quick everywhere - Not as rewarding as some slower rivals	★★★★★
Mini Cooper (F56)	194 D	£15,775	3/1499	134/4500	162/1250	1085kg	125	7.9	-	-	130	+ Punchy three-cylinder engine, good chassis - Tubby styling	★★★★★
Mini Cooper S (F56)	248 D	£20,630	4/1998	189/4700	221/1250	1195kg	161	6.8	-	-	146	+ Competent and fun chassis - Not as lively as some other small hot hatches	★★★★★



MAKE & MODEL	ISSUE NO.	PRICE	ENGINE CYL/CC	BHP/RPM	LB FT/RPM	WEIGHT	BHP/TON	0-62MPH (S.ECON)	0-100MPH (S.ECON)	MAX MPH	EVO RATING
Mini John Cooper Works (F56)	211 F	£23,305	4/1998	228/5200	236/1250	1200kg	193 6.3	-	-	153	+ Fast, agile, nimble - Chassis lacks sparkle found in previous JCWs
Mini John Cooper Works Challenge (F56)	237 F	'16-'17	4/1998	228/5200	236/1250	1215kg	191 6.3	-	-	152	+ A more hardcore JCW - The ride could be considered a little too hardcore
Mini Cooper (R56)	185 F	'09-'14	4/1598	120/6000	118/4250	1075kg	113 9.1	-	-	126	+ Brilliant ride and composure; could be all the Mini you need - You'll still buy the 'S'
Mini Cooper S (R56)	149 F	'06-'14	4/1598	181/5500	177/1600	1140kg	161 7.0	7.0	-	142	+ Like the Cooper, but with added shove - Google 'Mini death rattle'
Mini John Cooper Works (R56)	184 F	'08-'14	4/1598	208/6000	206/2000	1160kg	182 6.9	7.2	16.7	148	+ A seriously rapid Mini - Occasionally just a little unruly
Mini John Cooper Works GP (R56)	231 F	'13-'14	4/1598	215/6000	206/2000	1160kg	188 6.3	-	-	150	+ Bravely hyperactive - Too much for some roads and some tastes
Mini John Cooper Works Coupe (R58)	164 F	'11-'15	4/1598	208/6000	206/2000	1175kg	180 6.3	-	-	149	+ The usual raucous Mini JCW experience - But wearing a backwards baseball cap
Mini Cooper S (R53)	077 F	'02-'06	4/1598	168/6000	155/4000	1140kg	143 7.2	7.8	19.9	135	+ Strong performance, quality feel - Over-long gearing
Mini Cooper S Works GP (R53)	144 F	'06	4/1598	215/7100	184/4600	1090kg	200 6.5	-	-	149	+ Storming engine, agility - Tacky styling 'enhancements'
Nissan Juke Nismo RS	208 D	£22,905	4/1618	215/6000	206/3600	1315kg	166 7.0	-	-	137	+ Quirky character and bold styling - Still not a match for a pukka hot hatch
Nissan Juke Nismo	184 F	£20,495	4/1618	197/6000	184/2400	1306kg	153 7.7	-	-	134	+ More than the sum of its parts - Not enough to add up to a pukka hot hatch
Peugeot 106 Rallye (Series 2)	-	'97-'98	4/1587	103/6200	107/3500	865kg	121 8.8	-	-	121	+ Bargain no-frills thrills - In much fazz as original I.3
Peugeot 106 Rallye (Series 1)	095 F	'94-'96	4/1294	100/7200	80/5400	826kg	123 10.6	-	-	118	+ Frantic, thrashy fun - Needs casing to extract full potential
Peugeot 106 GTi 16v	034 F	'97-'04	4/1587	120/6600	107/5200	950kg	128 7.4	-	-	127	+ Fine handling supermini - Looks its age
Peugeot 208 GTi by Peugeot Sport	247 F	£23,550	4/1598	205/6000	221/3000	1160kg	180 6.5	-	-	143	+ The most focused small hatch on sale - Odd driving position; obscured dials
Peugeot 208 GTi	184 F	'12-'16	4/1598	197/5800	203/1700	1100kg	173 6.8	6.8	17.9	143	+ Agile chassis works well on tough roads - Could be more involving
Peugeot 205 GTi 1.9	195 F	'88-'91	4/1905	130/6000	119/4750	1010kg	145 7.6	-	-	124	+ Still scintillating after all these years - Brittle build quality
Peugeot 308 GTi (270) by Peugeot Sport	245 F	£28,590	4/1598	266/6000	243/1900	1205kg	224 6.0	-	-	155	+ A great entertainer with a cracker of an engine - Tiny steering wheel obscures the dials
Peugeot 308 GTi 250 by Peugeot Sport	223 F	'15-'16	4/1598	246/6000	243/1900	1205kg	207 6.2	-	-	155	+ A very capable hot hatch... - ...that lacks the sheer excitement of the best in class
Peugeot 306 GTi 6	020 F	'93-'01	4/1998	167/6500	142/5500	1215kg	139 7.9	7.2	20.1	140	+ One of the great GTIs - They don't make them like this anymore
Peugeot 306 Rallye	095 F	'98-'99	4/1998	167/6500	142/5500	1199kg	142 7.8	6.9	19.2	137	+ Essentially a GTi 6 for less oosh - Limited choice of colours
Renault Twingo GT	248 F	£14,250	3/898	109/5750	125/2000	1010kg	111 9.6	-	-	113	+ Nippy performance - Less fun than a rear-engined Renault Sport-fettled car should be
Renault Sport Twingo 133	175 F	'08-'13	4/1598	131/6750	118/4400	1050kg	127 8.7	-	-	125	+ Renault Sport experience for pocket money - Optional Cup chassis gives bouncy ride
Renault Sport Clio 200 Auto	184 F	£19,725	4/1618	197/6000	177/1750	1204kg	166 6.7	6.9	17.9	143	+ Faster, more refined, easier to drive - We miss the revvy N.A engine and manual box
Renault Sport Clio 220 Trophy	229 D	£22,425	4/1618	217/6050	206/2000	1204kg	183 6.6	-	-	146	+ Willing chassis - Awful paddleshift gearbox
Renault Sport Clio 200 Cup	247 F	'09-'13	4/1998	197/7100	159/5400	1204kg	166 6.9	6.6	16.7	141	+ The hot Clio at its best - They don't make 'em like this anymore
Renault Sport Clio 197 Cup	115 F	'07-'09	4/1998	194/7250	158/5550	1240kg	161 6.9	-	-	134	+ Quick, polished and capable - Not as much sheer fun as 182 Cup
Renault Sport Clio 182	066 F	'04-'05	4/1998	180/6500	148/5250	1100kg	165 7.1	6.6	17.5	139	+ Took hot hatches to a new level - Flawed driving position
Renault Sport Clio 182 Cup	187 F	'04-'05	4/1998	180/6500	148/5250	1090kg	168 6.9	-	-	139	+ Full of beans, fantastic value - Sunday-market upholstery
Renault Sport Clio Trophy	231 F	'05-'06	4/1998	180/6500	148/5250	1090kg	168 6.9	6.6	17.3	140	+ The most fun you can have on three (sometimes two) wheels - Just 500 were built
Renault Sport Clio 172 (Phase 2)	034 F	'01-'03	4/1998	170/6250	147/5400	1100kg	156 7.2	7.1	20.0	138	+ Poised, predictable, fast - Lacks aggressive edge
Renault Sport Clio 172 Cup	048 F	'02-'03	4/1998	170/6250	147/5400	1011kg	171 6.9	6.5	17.7	138	+ Bargain old-school hot hatch - Nervous in the wet, no ABS
Renault Sport Clio 172 (Phase 1)	146 F	'00-'01	4/1998	170/6250	147/5400	1035kg	167 7.2	6.6	18.2	138	+ Brilliantly accomplished - Imperfect driving position
Renault Clio Williams	233 F	'93-'96	4/1988	148/6100	126/4500	981kg	153 7.8	7.6	20.8	134	+ One of the best hot hatches ever - Can be fragile
Renault 5 GT Turbo	195 F	'87-'91	4/1397	118/5750	122/3000	855kg	140 7.3	-	-	120	+ Clio Williams' grand-daddy - Few unmodified ones left
Renault Sport Clio V6 255	231 F	'03-'05	6/2946	251/7100	221/4650	1400kg	182 6.0	-	-	144	+ Super car drama without the original's edgy handling - Uninspired interior
Renault Sport Clio V6	029 F	'99-'02	6/2946	227/6000	221/3750	1410kg	164 6.6	5.8	17.0	145	+ Pocket supercar - Mid-engined handling can be tricky
Renault Mégane RS	246 F	£29,000	4/1798	216/6000	288/2400	1430kg	196 5.8	-	-	155	+ Shot through with real magic - Looks underpowered compared with some rivals
Renault Sport Mégane 275 Cup-S/Nav 275	223 D	'16	4/1998	271/5500	265/3000	1394kg	198 5.8	-	-	158	+ The same engine as the Trophy-R - They don't make it anymore
Renault Sport Mégane 265 Cup	195 F	'12-'15	4/1998	261/5500	265/3000	1387kg	191 6.0	6.4	14.8	158	+ A hot hatch benchmark - Cupholder could be better positioned
Renault Sport Mégane 275 Trophy	212 F	'14-'15	4/1998	271/5500	265/3000	1376kg	200 5.8	-	-	159	+ Another cracking Trophy model - Stripped-out Trophy-R is even more thrilling
Renault Sport Mégane 275 Trophy-R	231 F	'14-'15	4/1998	271/5500	265/3000	1297kg	212 5.8	-	-	158	+ As absorbing as a 911 GT3RS on the right road - Too uncompromising for some; pricey
Renault Sport Mégane 250 Cup	139 F	'09-'12	4/1998	247/5500	251/3000	1387kg	181 6.1	6.1	14.6	156	+ Fantastic chassis... - ...partially obscured by new-found maturity
Renault Sport Mégane dCi 175 Cup	119 F	'07-'09	4/1995	173/3750	265/2000	1470kg	119 8.3	8.3	23.5	137	+ A diesel with a genuinely sporty chassis - Could take more power
Renault Sport Mégane 230 FI Team R26	195 F	'07-'09	4/1998	227/5500	229/3000	1345kg	171 6.5	6.2	16.0	147	+ The car the R26.R is based on - FI Team stickers in dubious taste
Renault Sport Mégane R26.R	231 F	'08-'09	4/1998	227/5500	229/3000	1220kg	189 6.0	5.8	15.1	147	+ One of the true hot hatch heroes - Two seats, plastic rear windows
SEAT Mii	-	£9655	3/999	59/5000	70/3000	854kg	70 14.4	-	-	99	+ Like Volkswagen's Up but more expensive - Still predictably slow
SEAT Ibiza Cupra	225 F	'16-'18	4/1798	189/4300	236/1450	1185kg	162 6.7	-	-	146	+ 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	+ Punchy engine, unflappable DSG - Lacks engagement, DSG only
SEAT Leon Cupra 300	241 F	£30,155	4/1984	296/5500	280/1800	1300kg	231 5.7	6.2	12.7	155	+ Already potent Cupra gets yet another 10bhp - The Mk7.5 Golf R
SEAT Leon Cupra R	244 D	£34,995	4/1984	306/5800	280/1800	1378kg	226 5.8	-	-	155	+ Sharper handling and better body control - High price and limited availability
SEAT Leon Cupra 290	227 F	'16-'17	4/1984	286/5900	258/1700	1300kg	224 5.9	6.4	13.4	155	+ Serious pace and agility for Golf GTI money, now with an extra 10bhp - The Mk7 Golf R
SEAT Leon Cupra 280	220 F	'14-'15	4/1984	276/5600	258/1750	1300kg	216 5.8	-	-	155	+ Serious pace and agility for Golf GTI money - The Mk7 Golf R
SEAT Leon Cupra	105 F	'07-'11	4/1984	237/5700	221/2200	1375kg	175 6.4	-	-	153	+ Great engine, composure - Doesn't have the adjustability of the old Cupra R
SEAT Leon Cupra R	139 F	'10-'12	4/1984	261/6000	258/2500	1375kg	193 6.2	6.1	14.0	155	+ Bold car, blinding engine - Lacks the character of its rival megahatches
SEAT Leon Cupra R 225	067 F	'03-'06	4/1781	222/5900	206/2200	1376kg	164 6.9	-	-	150	+ Cross-country pace, practicality, value - Not as thrilling as some
Skoda Citigo	-	£8275	3/999	59/5000	70/3000	854kg	70 14.4	-	-	101	+ Like Volkswagen's Up, but 2mph faster flat out - 101mph isn't something to boast about
Skoda Fabia vRS (Mk2)	146 D	'10-'14	4/1390	178/6200	184/2000	1218kg	148 7.3	-	-	139	+ Clever twincharged engine and DSG box - Do your homework on the reliability of the engine
Skoda Fabia vRS (Mk1)	077 F	'03-'07	4/1896	130/4000	229/1900	1315kg	100 9.6	-	-	127	+ Fun and frugal hot hatch - A little short on steering feel
Skoda Octavia vRS (Mk3)	187 D	£24,885	4/1984	217/4500	258/1500	1345kg	164 6.8	-	-	154	+ Quick, agile, roomier than a Golf - Ride is harsh for what would be a family car
Skoda Octavia vRS 230 (Mk3)	215 D	£25,130	4/1984	221/4700	258/1500	1345kg	171 6.7	-	-	155	+ Limited-slip diff makes for a sharper steer - It could handle more than the extra 10bhp
Skoda Octavia vRS TDI 4x4 (Mk3)	223 D	£28,050	4/1968	181/3500	206/1750	1475kg	125 7.6	-	-	142	+ Four-wheel drive tightens the vRS chassis - Diesel and DSG only
Skoda Octavia vRS (Mk2)	163 F	'05-'13	4/1998	197/5100	206/1700	1395kg	143 7.3	-	-	149	+ Drives like a GTI but costs much less - Green brake calipers?
Subaru Impreza WRX S	125 D	'08-'10	4/2457	251/5400	288/3000	1395kg	180 5.5	-	-	130	+ An improvement over the basic WRX - Still not the WRX we wanted
Subaru Impreza STI 330S	124 F	'08-'10	4/2457	325/5400	347/3400	1505kg	219 4.4	-	-	155	+ A bit quicker than the regular STI... - ...but not better
Suzuki Swift Sport (Mk2)	175 F	'12-'17	4/1586	134/6900	118/4400	1045kg	130 8.7	-	-	121	+ Still a great pocket rocket - Not quite as adjustable as the original
Suzuki Swift Sport (Mk1)	132 F	'05-'11	4/1586	123/6800	109/4800	1030kg	121 8.9	-	-	124	+ Entertaining handling, well built - Lacking in steering feedback
Toyota Yaris GRMN	248 F	£26,295	4/1798	209/6800	184/5000	1135kg	187 6.3	-	-	143	+ Appealingly feisty supercharged supermini - Artificial steering; they're only making 400
Vauxhall Corsa VXR	211 F	£19,245	4/1598	202/5800	206/1900	1278kg	161 6.8	-	-	143	+ Begs to be wrung out - You'll need the £2400 Performance Pack
Vauxhall Corsa VXR	154 F	'07-'14	4/1598	189/5850	192/1980	1166kg	165 7.2	-	-	140	+ Looks snazzy, punchy engine - Lacks feel, uncouth compared with rivals
Vauxhall Corsa VXR Nürburgring/Clubsport	164 F	'11-'13/'14	4/1598	202/5750	206/2250	1166kg	176 6.8	-	-	143	+ VXR gets more power and a limited-slip diff - But they come at a price
Vauxhall Astra/GTC VXR (Mk2)	207 F	£29,665	4/1998	216/5500	295/2500	1475kg	190 6.0	-	-	155	+ Loony turbo pace - Lacks the Renault Sport Mégane's precision
Vauxhall Astra VXR (Mk1)	102 F	'05-'11	4/1998	237/5600	236/2400	1393kg	173 6.4	6.7	16.7	152	+ Fast and furious - Lacks a little composure and precision
Volkswagen Up	171 F	£9320	3/999	59/5000	70/3000	854kg	70 14.4	-	-	99	+ Accomplished city car is dynamically sound... - ...but predictably slow
Volkswagen Up GTI	248 F	£13,750	3/999	113/5000	147/2000	995kg	115 8.8	-	-	122	+ Infectious appetite for fun - City car roots are still there
Volkswagen Lupo GTI	034 F	'01-'04	4/1598	123/6500	112/3000	1038kg	120 8.2	8.9	30.1	127	+ Looks, performance, chassis - Lacks the fizz of the 106 GTI
Volkswagen Polo GTI	244 D	£21,140	4/1984	197/4400	236/1500	1280kg	156 6.7	-	-	147	+ Decent performance, mature ride and handling - Lacks driver involvement
Volkswagen Polo GTI	211 F	'15-'17	4/1798	189/4200	236/1450	1197kg	160 6.7	-	-	146	+ Smooth and brawny - Fiesta ST is more engaging
Volkswagen Polo GTI	154 F	'10-'14	4/1390	178/6200	184/2000	1184kg	153 7.4	-	-	142	+ Modern-day Mk1 Golf GTI gets twin-clutch DSG - It's a little bit bland
Volkswagen Golf GTI (Mk7.5)	233 D	£27,865	4/1984	227/4700	258/1500	1289kg	179 6.4	-	-	155	+ Still the most capable all-round hot hatch - Should be more thrilling
Volkswagen Golf GTI Performance (Mk7.5)	245 F	£29,820	4/1984	242/500							



# Allow us to demonstrate.



The **Birds B-Series Dynamics Package** for the BMW M235i and M240i combines the grip-finding Quaife ATB Differential with our signature B2 Sport Suspension set up - a kit developed uniquely with the help of industry consultants and professional drivers to achieve both superior ride quality and unrivalled handling performance on the U.K's diverse road surfaces.

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MAKE & MODEL	ISSUE NO.	PRICE	ENGINE CVL/CC	BHP/PPM	LB FT/PPM	WEIGHT	BHP/TON	0-62MPH (S.ECON)	0-80MPH (S.ECON)	0-100MPH (S.ECON)	MAX MPH	EVO RATING	
Volkswagen Golf R32 (Mk5)	087 F	'06-'09	6/3189	246/6300	236/2500	1466kg	170	6.5	5.8	15.2	155	+ The traction's great and you'll love the soundtrack - We'd still have a GTI	★★★★☆
Volkswagen Golf R32 (Mk4)	053 F	'02-'04	6/3189	237/6250	236/2800	1477kg	163	6.6	6.4	16.3	154	+ Chassis - Boomy engine can be tiresome	★★★★☆
Volkswagen Golf GT16v (Mk2)	195 F	'88-'92	4/1781	139/6100	123/4600	960kg	147	7.9	-	-	129	+ Still feels everyday useable - Too many have been modified	★★★★☆
Volkswagen Golf GTI (Mk1, 1.8)	224 F	'82-'84	4/1781	109/3500	109/3500	860kg	132	8.2	-	-	114	+ The car that started it all - Tricky to find an unmodified one	★★★★☆
Volvo V40 T5 R-Design Polestar	242 D	£36,010	4/1969	250/5500	295/2000	1507kg	169	6.2	-	-	149	+ An intriguing alternative to the norm - Rivals offer more for less	★★★★☆
Volvo C30 T5 R-Design	122 F	'08-'12	5/2521	227/5000	236/1500	1347kg	165	6.7	6.6	16.9	149	+ Good-looking, desirable Volvo - Lacks edge of best hatchbacks; avoid the auto version	★★★★☆

## SALOONS / ESTATES / SUVs



### OUR CHOICE

**Alfa Romeo Giulia Quadrifoglio.** At last, an Alfa Romeo we can love not just for its badge, for the noise it makes and for being Italian, but because it's a great car. In fact, the Giulia Quadrifoglio is a saloon car that feels like a sports car - and thankfully that sports car isn't a 4C.




### BEST OF THE REST

If you prefer your fast saloons German, consider the **Mercedes-AMG C63 S** or its more focused rival, the **BMW M3**. Moving up a size, the **Mercedes-AMG E63 S 4Matic+** (left) is relentlessly rampant but has finesse too, while the **Porsche Panamera Turbo** runs the E63 close and feels good for its 7min 38sec Ring time.


Alfa Romeo Giulia 2.0 Turbo Super	234 D	£31,180	4/1995	197/5000	243/1750	1429kg	140	6.6	-	-	146	+ Keen engine, enjoyable handling - Firm low-speed ride	★★★★☆
Alfa Romeo Giulia Veloce	244 F	£38,260	4/1995	276/5250	295/2250	1429kg	196	5.7	-	-	149	+ Supple and satisfying - Engine reluctant to rev	★★★★☆
Alfa Romeo Giulia Quadrifoglio	244 F	£61,595	6/2891	503/6500	443/2500	1620kg	315	3.9	-	-	191	+ If Ferrari built a saloon (really) - Lacks the final polish of German rivals	★★★★☆
Alfa Romeo Stelvio	234 D	£43,690	4/1995	276/5250	295/1750	1660kg	169	5.7	-	-	143	+ Agile feel, quick steering, attractive cabin - Engine not truly inspiring	★★★★☆
Alfa Romeo Stelvio Quadrifoglio	244 D	£69,500	6/2891	503/6500	442/2500	1830kg	279	3.8	-	-	176	+ Rivals the Macan GTS - Needs optional P Zero Corsa tyres to give its very best	★★★★☆
Alpina D3 Biturbo (F30)	192 D	£47,950	6/2993	345/4000	516/1500	1585kg	221	4.6	-	-	173	+ 173mph from a 3-litre diesel! Brilliant chassis, too - Auto only	★★★★☆
Alpina B3 Biturbo (F30)	188 D	'13-'16	6/2979	404/5500	442/3000	1630kg	252	4.3	-	-	190	+ Understated appearance, monster performance - E90 M3 is better on the limit	★★★★☆
Aston Martin Rapide	141 F	'10-'13	12/5935	470/6000	443/5000	1990kg	240	5.3	-	-	188	+ Better than its DB9 sibling - More of a 2+2 than a proper four-seater	★★★★☆
Aston Martin Rapide S	201 D	£147,950	12/5935	552/6650	465/5500	1990kg	282	4.4	-	-	203	+ Oozes star quality; gearbox on 2015MY cars a big improvement - It's cosy in the back	★★★★☆
Audi S3 Saloon	192 D	£35,405	4/1984	306/5500	280/1800	1430kg	210	5.3	-	-	155	+ On paper a match for the original S4 - In reality much less interesting	★★★★☆
Audi RS3 Saloon	243 F	£45,250	5/2480	394/5850	354/1700	1515kg	264	4.1	-	-	155	+ Mini RS4 looks; stonking pace - Not the most involving driving experience	★★★★☆
Audi S4 (B9)	225 D	£44,600	6/2995	349/5400	369/1370	1630kg	218	4.7	-	-	155	+ Strong response and delivery from turbo engine - Chassis feels softer than before	★★★★☆
Audi S4 (B8)	166 F	'08-'16	6/2995	328/5500	324/2900	1650kg	202	5.0	-	-	155	+ Great supercharged powertrain, secure chassis - The RS4	★★★★☆
Audi RS4 Avant (B9)	246 F	£62,175	6/2894	444/5700	442/1900	1790kg	252	4.1	-	-	155	+ Very 'real world' fast - Some may feel it lacks character and drama	★★★★☆
Audi RS4 Avant (B8)	216 F	'12-'15	8/4163	444/8250	317/4000	1795kg	251	4.7	4.5	10.5	174	+ Looks and sounds the part, thunderously fast - Unnatural steering, dull dynamics	★★★★☆
Audi RS4 (B7)	231 D	'05-'08	8/4163	414/7800	317/5500	1650kg	255	4.7	4.5	10.5	155	+ 414bhp at 7800rpm! And there's an estate version too - Busy under braking	★★★★☆
Audi RS4 (B5)	192 F	'00-'02	6/2671	375/6100	325/2500	1620kg	236	4.9	4.8	12.1	170	+ Effortless pace - Not the last word in agility; bends wheel rims	★★★★☆
Audi RS2	214 F	'94-'95	5/2226	315/6500	302/3000	1595kg	201	4.8	4.8	13.1	162	+ Storming performance (thanks to Porsche) - Try finding one	★★★★☆
Audi S5 Sportback	233 D	£44,000	6/2995	349/5400	369/1370	1660kg	214	4.7	-	-	155	+ More capable than you think; strong V6 engine - Gearbox frustrating in auto mode	★★★★☆
Audi S6	091 D	'06-'11	10/5204	429/6800	398/3000	1910kg	228	5.5	-	-	155	+ Fast, and discreet with it - Very muted V10	★★★★☆
Audi RS6 Avant (C7)	203 F	£81,355	8/3993	552/5700	516/1750	1935kg	290	3.9	3.6	8.2	155	+ Performance, foolproof powertrain, beefy looks - Feels a bit one-dimensional	★★★★☆
Audi RS6 Avant Performance (C7)	224 D	£88,270	8/3993	591/6100	553/2500	1950kg	311	3.7	-	-	155	+ The extra power is no hassle for the chassis - But it is a stern test of your self-control	★★★★☆
Audi RS6 Avant (C6)	116 F	'08-'10	10/4991	572/6250	479/1500	1985kg	293	4.5	4.3	9.7	155	+ Was the world's most powerful estate - Power isn't everything	★★★★☆
Audi RS6 Avant (C5)	052 F	'02-'04	8/4172	444/5700	413/1950	1865kg	242	4.6	4.8	11.6	155	+ The ultimate estate car? - Numb steering	★★★★☆
Audi S7 Sportback	171 D	£65,950	8/3993	414/5000	406/1400	1945kg	216	4.6	-	-	155	+ Looks and drives better than the S6 it's based on - Costs several thousands more	★★★★☆
Audi RS7 Sportback	208 F	£86,985	8/3993	552/5700	516/1750	1930kg	291	3.9	-	-	155	+ Stonking performance, great looks - Numb driving experience	★★★★☆
Audi S8 Plus	217 D	£100,510	8/3993	591/6100	553/2500	1990kg	305	3.8	-	-	155	+ Fantastic drivetrain, quality and refinement - Dynamic Steering feels artificial	★★★★☆
Audi RS Q3	206 D	'13-'16	5/2480	335/5300	332/1600	1655kg	206	4.8	-	-	155	+ Surprisingly characterful; better than many RSs - High centre of gravity	★★★★☆
Audi SQ5	237 D	£51,200	6/2995	349/5400	369/1370	1870kg	190	5.4	-	-	155	+ Fine chassis; deceptive pace - Lacks excitement	★★★★☆
Bentley Flying Spur V8	200 D	£132,800	8/3993	500/6000	487/1700	2342kg	217	5.2	-	-	183	+ Effortless performance with real top-end kick - Determinedly unsporting	★★★★☆
Bentley Flying Spur V8 S	230 D	£142,800	8/3993	521/6000	502/1700	2342kg	226	4.9	-	-	190	+ Old-school approach to comfort and luxury - Kid-school tech	★★★★☆
Bentley Flying Spur	185 D	£154,900	12/5998	616/6000	590/1600	2400kg	261	4.6	-	-	199	+ For those who still want their Flying Spur with a W12 - Car feels its weight; engine sounds dull	★★★★☆
Bentley Bentayga V8	247 D	£136,200	8/3996	542/6000	568/1960	2313kg	238	4.5	-	-	180	+ The pick of the Bentayga range - A top-end Range Rover is still more polished	★★★★☆
Bentley Bentayga	217 D	£162,700	12/5950	600/5000	664/1350	2365kg	258	4.1	-	-	187	+ Sublime quality, ridiculous pace - Inert driving experience, SUV stigma	★★★★☆
Bentley Mulsanne	178 F	£229,360	8/6752	505/4200	752/1750	2610kg	197	5.3	-	-	184	+ Drives like a modern Bentley should - Shame it doesn't look like one too	★★★★☆
Bentley Mulsanne Speed	235 D	£252,000	8/6752	530/4000	811/1750	2610kg	206	4.9	-	-	190	+ Exaggerated; effortless performance - Passengers have more fun than you do	★★★★☆
BMW 330d M Sport (F30)	180 D	£38,590	6/2993	254/4000	413/2000	1540kg	168	5.6	-	-	155	+ Great engine, fine handling, good value - Steering confuses weight with feel	★★★★☆
BMW 340i M Sport Touring (F31)	228 D	£42,055	6/2998	321/5500	332/1380	1615kg	202	5.5	-	-	155	+ Feels more 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	6.1	-	-	155	+ New-age four-pot 328i is great all-rounder - We miss the six-cylinder soundtrack	★★★★☆
BMW 435i Gran Coupe	203 D	'14-'16	6/2979	302/5800	295/1200	1585kg	194	5.5	-	-	155	+ Superb straight-six, fine ride/handling balance - 335i saloon weights and costs less	★★★★☆
BMW M3 (F80)	211 F	£57,355	6/2979	425/5500	406/1850	1560kg	277	4.3	4.1	8.6	155	+ Looks, performance, practicality - Body control on rough roads; engine lacks character	★★★★☆
BMW M3 Competition Package (F80)	237 F	£59,595	6/2979	444/7000	406/1850	1560kg	289	4.2	-	-	155	+ The car the F80 M3 should have been from the start - Less refined at low speeds	★★★★☆
BMW M3 (E90)	123 F	'08-'11	8/3999	414/8300	295/3900	1605kg	262	4.9	4.9	10.7	165	+ Every bit as good as the E92 M3 coupe - No carbon roof	★★★★☆
BMW M3 CRT (E90)	179 F	'11-'12	8/4361	444/8300	324/3750	1580kg	285	4.4	-	-	180	+ Saloon chassis + weight savings + GTS engine = best E90 M3 - Just 67 were made	★★★★☆
BMW M5 (F90)	244 F	£89,640	8/4395	592/5600	553/1800	1855kg	324	3.4	-	-	155	+ Fun in two- or four-wheel drive - Insufficient steering connection and engine character	★★★★☆
BMW M5 (F10)	208 F	'11-'16	8/4395	552/6000	501/1500	1870kg	300	4.4	-	-	155	+ Twin-turbocharging suits M5 well - Can feel heavy at times	★★★★☆
BMW M5 (E60)	129 F	'04-'10	10/4999	500/7750	384/6100	1755kg	289	4.7	-	-	155	+ Close to being the ultimate supersaloon - SMG gearbox feels old-tech	★★★★☆
BMW M5 (E39)	110 F	'99-'03	8/4941	394/6600	369/3800	1795kg	223	5.3	4.9	11.5	155	+ Magnificent V8-engined supersaloon - We'd be nitpicking	★★★★☆
BMW M5 (E34)	110 F	'92-'96	6/3795	335/6900	295/4750	1725kg	197	5.8	4.9	13.6	155	+ The Godfather of supersaloons - The family can come too	★★★★☆
BMW M5 (E28)	182 F	'86-'88	6/3453	282/6500	251/4500	1431kg	200	6.1	-	-	156	+ 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	+ Enormous performance, stylish looks - Price looks silly next to rivals, M5 included	★★★★☆
BMW M760Li xDrive	233 D	£132,310	12/6592	602/5500	590/1550	2180kg	281	3.7	-	-	155	+ More capable than you'd think; strong engine - Too much of a limo to be genuinely exciting	★★★★☆
BMW X5 M50d	191 D	£67,220	6/2993	376/4000	546/2000	2190kg	174	5.3	-	-	155	+ Straight-line pace - Driving experience identical to standard X5, despite the M badge	★★★★☆
BMW X6 M	212 D	£95,430	8/4395	561/6000	553/2200	2265kg	254	4.2	-	-	155	+ 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	+ Fast, refined and comfortable - But it definitely lacks the M factor	★★★★☆
Cadillac CT6	226 D	£69,990	6/2997	411/5700	409/2500	1950kg	214	5.7	-	-	149	+ Caddy's S-class rival scores on comfort - But not on driver involvement	★★★★☆
Cadillac CTS-V	148 F	'08-'15	8/6162	556/6100	551/3800	1928kg	293	3.9	-	-	191	+ Stands out among M-cars and AMGs - The novelty might wear off	★★★★☆
Honda Accord Type R	012 F	'98-'03	4/2157	209/7200	158/6700	1306kg	163	7.2	6.1	17.4	142	+ One of the finest front-drivers of all time - Convincing your friends of that	★★★★☆
Infiniti Q50S Hybrid	195 D	£41,450	6/3498	359/6800	402/5000	1762kg	207	5.4	-	-	155	+ Good powertrain, promising chassis - Lacklustre steering, strong rivals	★★★★☆
Jaguar XE 2.0d AWD	227 D	£35,335	4/1999	178/4000	311/1750	1615kg	112	7.9	-	-	140	+ Great chassis gets more traction - Shame the engine isn't as polished	★★★★☆
Jaguar XE S	237 D	£48,045	6/2995	375/6500	332/3500	1655kg	230	5.0	-	-	155	+ AMG-beating power; handling - Expensive; cabin quality and space lags behind rivals	★★★★☆
Jaguar XE S	213 D	'15-'17	6/2995	335/6500	332/4500	1635kg	208	5.1	-	-	155	+ Neat handling, neat design - V6 loses appeal in the real world	★★★★☆
Jaguar XF S	214 D	£51,100	6/2995	375/6500	332/4500	1710kg	223	5.3	-	-	155	+ Outstanding ride and handling balance - Engine lacks appeal	★★★★☆
Jaguar XF S Diesel	219 D	£50,100	6/2993	296/4000	516/2000	1750kg	172	6.2	-	-	155	+ 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	4.7	4.8	10.2	155	+ Brilliant blend of pace and refinement - Doesn't sound as special as it is	★★★★☆
Jaguar XFR-S													


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MAKE & MODEL	ISSUE NO.	PRICE	ENGINE CVT/CC	BHP/RPM	LB FT/RPM	WEIGHT	BHP/TON	0-62MPH (s)	0-100MPH (s)	0-100MPH (s)	MAX MPH	EVO RATING
Jaguar E-Pace P300	243 D	£45,660	4/1998	296/5500	295/1200	1894kg	159	6.4	-	-	155	+ Decent grip and balance - Dreary engine; heavier than a V6 F-Pace
Jaguar F-Pace S	222 D	£53,365	6/2995	375/6500	332/4500	1884kg	202	5.5	-	-	155	+ A match for Porsche's SUVs - Supercharged V6 needs to be worked hard
Kia Stinger 2.0 GT-Line	247 D	£31,995	4/1998	244/6200	260/1400	1717kg	144	5.8	-	-	149	+ Out-Jaguars Jaguar's XE and XF - Except in the looks department
Kia Stinger GT S	242 D	£40,495	6/3342	365/6000	376/1300	1780kg	168	4.7	-	-	168	+ Playful handling, deep-chested performance - Engine lacks soul, steering lacks feel
Lexus GS F	243 D	£73,375	8/4969	471/7100	391/4800	1790kg	267	4.6	-	-	168	+ Glorious engine, balanced handling - Gearbox is off the pace
Lexus IS F	151 F	'07-12	8/4969	417/6600	372/5200	1714kg	247	5.2	4.7	10.9	173	+ Shockingly good Lexus - The M3's available as a four-door too
Lotus Carlton	245 F	'91-'93	6/3615	377/5200	419/4200	1658kg	231	5.4	4.8	10.6	176	+ The Millennium Falcon of saloon cars - Every drive is a work-out
Maserati Ghibli	186 D	£53,590	6/2979	325/5000	406/1750	1810kg	182	5.6	-	-	163	+ Bursting with character; good value compared to Quattroporte - It's still a big car
Maserati Ghibli S	198 D	£64,510	6/2979	404/5500	406/4500	1810kg	227	5.0	-	-	177	+ Stands out from the crowd; sounds good too - Chassis lacks finesse, engine lacks reach
Maserati Quattroporte S	184 D	£82,750	6/2979	404/5500	406/1750	1860kg	221	5.1	-	-	177	+ Tempting alternative to the V8 - Feel-free steering, ride lacks decorum
Maserati Quattroporte GTS	226 D	£115,980	8/3798	523/6800	479/2250	1900kg	280	4.7	-	-	193	+ Still pretty - Off the pace dynamically
Maserati Quattroporte	085 F	'04-'08	8/4244	394/7000	333/4500	1930kg	207	5.6	-	-	171	+ Redefined big-car dynamics - Don't use auto mode
Maserati Quattroporte S	137 F	'08-'12	8/4691	425/7000	361/4750	1990kg	216	5.4	4.1	12.1	174	+ A QP with the bhp it deserves - Grille is a bit Hannibal Lecter
Maserati Quattroporte Sport GTS	141 F	'08-'12	8/4691	433/7000	361/4750	1990kg	221	5.1	-	-	177	+ The most stylish of super saloons - Slightly wooden brakes, unforgiving ride
Maserati Levante Diesel	221 D	£54,335	6/2897	271/4000	442/2000	2205kg	125	6.9	-	-	143	+ Impressive blend of ride and handling - Performance is mild for a Maserati
Mercedes-Benz CLA45 AMG	186 D	£43,245	4/1991	355/6000	332/2250	1510kg	239	4.6	-	-	155	+ Strong performance, classy cabin - Pricy compared with A45 AMG hatchback
Mercedes-Benz GLA45 AMG	205 F	£46,875	4/1991	355/6000	332/2250	1510kg	239	4.8	-	-	155	+ An aggressive and focused sports crossover - Low on driver interaction
Mercedes-AMG C43 4Matic Estate	228 D	£46,985	6/2996	362/5500	383/2000	1660kg	222	4.7	-	-	155	+ Incredibly fast and composed - Difficult to engage with
Mercedes-AMG C63 (W205)	209 D	£62,180	8/3982	469/5500	479/1750	1640kg	291	4.1	-	-	155	+ Fast and feelsome - Lacks the ultimate finesse and response of the C63 S
Mercedes-AMG C63 Estate (W205)	216 F	£63,380	8/3982	469/5500	479/1750	1710kg	279	4.2	-	-	155	+ Much more fun than it looks - Gearbox dim-witted at low speeds
Mercedes-AMG C63 S (W205)	211 F	£68,930	8/3982	503/5500	516/1750	1655kg	309	4.0	-	-	155	+ Tremendous twin-turbo V8 power - Not quite as focused as an M division car
Mercedes-Benz C63 AMG (W204)	151 F	'08-'14	8/6208	451/6800	442/5000	1655kg	277	4.5	4.4	9.7	155	+ Monstrous pace and extremely engaging - Same-era M3 is just a little better...
Mercedes-Benz C55 AMG (W203)	088 F	'04-'08	8/5439	367/5250	376/4000	1635kg	228	5.2	-	-	155	+ Furiously fast, commendably discreet - Overshadowed by M3 and RS4
Mercedes-Benz 190E 2.5-16	185 F	'89-'92	4/2498	204/6750	177/5500	1300kg	159	7.5	-	-	146	+ M-B's M3 alternative - Not as nimble as the Beemer
Mercedes-AMG E63 4Matic (W213)	236 D	£57,275	6/2996	395/6100	383/2500	1765kg	227	4.6	-	-	155	+ Some of the E63's looks and performance - Not enough of its performance
Mercedes-AMG E63 4Matic+ (W213)	242 D	£78,765	8/3982	563/5750	553/2250	1875kg	305	3.5	-	-	155	+ More rounded than the E63 S - Could be a little too discreet for some tastes
Mercedes-AMG E63 S (W213)	246 F	£87,375	8/3982	604/5750	621/2500	1880kg	326	3.4	3.4	7.4	155	+ Fast, refined, effective and fun - At nearly two tons, it's not 911 nimble
Mercedes-Benz E63 AMG (W121)	187 D	'13-'16	8/5461	549/5500	531/1750	1770kg	315	4.2	-	-	155	+ Power, response and accuracy in spades - A little lacking in originality
Mercedes-Benz E63 AMG S (W203)	208 F	'13-'16	8/5461	577/5500	590/1750	1795kg	327	4.1	-	-	155	+ Effortless power; intuitive and approachable - Sluggish auto 'box
Mercedes-Benz E63 AMG (W121)	165 F	'11-'13	8/5461	518/5250	516/1750	1765kg	298	4.4	-	-	155	+ Turbo engine didn't dilute the E63 experience - Sometimes struggles for traction...
Mercedes-Benz E63 AMG (W121)	134 D	'09-'11	8/6208	518/6800	465/5200	1765kg	298	4.5	-	-	155	+ Indulgent chassis, brilliant engine - Steering still vague
Mercedes-Benz E63 AMG (W11)	096 D	'06-'09	8/6208	507/6800	465/5200	1765kg	292	4.5	-	-	155	+ Brilliant engine, indulgent chassis - Vague steering, speed limits
Mercedes-Benz E55 AMG	052 F	'03-'06	8/5439	469/6100	516/2650	1760kg	271	4.7	4.8	10.2	155	+ M5-humbling grunt, cosseting ride - Speed limits
Mercedes-Benz S63 AMG L	246 D	£125,690	8/3982	604/5500	664/2750	1940kg	316	4.3	-	-	155	+ Performance doesn't come at the expense of luxury - But pure driving thrills do
Mercedes-AMG CLS53 4Matic+	247 D	£65,000	6/2999	451/6100	567/1800	1905kg	302	4.5	-	-	155	+ Impressive chassis and hybrid powertrain - 4Matic, only and heavy, too
Mercedes-Benz CLS63 AMG S	199 D	'14-'17	8/5461	577/5500	590/1750	1795kg	327	4.1	-	-	155	+ Quick and characterful - Dated gearbox, no four-wheel-drive option in the UK
Mercedes-Benz CLS63 AMG	178 F	'11-'14	8/5461	518/5250	516/1700	1795kg	293	4.4	-	-	155	+ Monster performance, 549bhp an option - Not as desirable as a Bentley or Aston
Mercedes-Benz CLS63 AMG	099 F	'06-'11	8/6208	507/6100	464/2650	1830kg	281	4.5	-	-	155	+ Beauty, comfort, awesome performance - M5 has the edge on B-roads
Mercedes-Benz GL63 AMG S	218 D	£96,950	8/5461	577/5500	560/1750	2270kg	258	4.2	-	-	155	+ Stonking pace, extreme refinement - Feels remote
Mercedes-Benz GL63 AMG S Coupe	213 D	£96,575	8/5461	577/5500	560/1750	2275kg	258	4.2	-	-	155	+ Subtler than an X6 M - More force than finesse
Mercedes-Benz ML63 AMG	176 F	'12-'15	8/5461	518/5250	516/1750	2270kg	232	4.7	-	-	155	+ Great engine, surprisingly good dynamics - Same money buys a Boxster and an ML350...
Mercedes-Benz G63 AMG	172 D	£135,025	8/5461	537/5500	560/2000	2475kg	220	5.4	-	-	130	+ It exists; epic soundtrack - Ancient chassis, silly price
Mitsubishi Evo X FQ-300 SST	118 F	'08-'14	4/1998	290/6500	300/3500	1590kg	185	4.5	5.2	13.9	155	+ First Evo with a twin-clutch transmission - Not as exciting as its predecessors
Mitsubishi Evo X FQ-330 SST	134 F	'08-'14	4/1998	324/6500	322/3500	1590kg	207	4.4	-	-	155	+ Great engine and gearbox combo - It still lives in the shadow of the Evo IX
Mitsubishi Evo X FQ-360	122 D	'08-'14	4/1998	354/6500	363/3500	1560kg	231	4.0	-	-	155	+ Ridiculously rapid Evo - A five-speed gearbox?!
Mitsubishi Evo X FQ-400	181 F	'09-'10	4/1998	403/6500	387/3500	1560kg	262	3.8	-	-	155	+ Most powerful factory Evo ever... - About X Grand too much when new
Mitsubishi Evo IX FQ-340	088 F	'05-'08	4/1997	345/6800	321/4600	1400kg	250	4.2	4.3	10.9	157	+ Gives Porsche drivers nightmares - Points. Lots of
Mitsubishi Evo IX MR FQ-360	181 F	'05-'08	4/1997	366/6887	363/3200	1400kg	266	4.0	-	-	157	+ Well-executed engine upgrades - Prison food
Mitsubishi Evo VIII	055 F	'03-'05	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	037 F	'03-'05	4/1997	305/6800	289/3500	1400kg	221	4.9	-	-	157	+ Extra pace, extra attitude - Extra money
Mitsubishi Evo VII	051 F	'02-'03	4/1997	276/6500	282/3500	1360kg	206	5.1	5.0	13.0	140	+ Terrific all-rounder - You tell us
Mitsubishi Evo VI Tommi Mäkinen Edition	231 F	'00-'01	4/1997	276/6500	275/2750	1365kg	205	4.6	-	-	150	+ Our favourite Evo - Subtle it is not
Porsche Panamera 4S Diesel	232 D	£91,788	8/3956	416/3500	621/1000	2050kg	206	4.3	-	-	177	+ Sharp chassis, impressive tech - Performance doesn't meet expectations
Porsche Panamera Turbo	237 F	£115,100	8/3996	542/5750	568/1960	1950kg	276	3.6	3.4	8.3	190	+ Searing pace with body control that's a real step up; superb rear wing, too - Still very heavy
Porsche Panamera Turbo Sport Turismo	239 D	£118,828	8/3996	542/5750	568/1960	2035kg	271	3.8	-	-	188	+ Looks great; drives better than its weight would suggest - Not exactly a load-lugger
Porsche Panamera GTS	208 F	'11-'16	8/4806	434/6700	383/3500	1925kg	229	4.4	-	-	178	+ Vivacious V8, entertaining balance - Can feel light on performance next to turbocharged rivals
Porsche Panamera Turbo	137 F	'10-'16	8/4806	493/6000	516/2250	1970kg	254	4.2	3.6	8.9	188	+ 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	3.8	-	-	190	+ Pace, excellent ergonomics - Steering feel, ride
Porsche Macan S	205 F	£48,287	6/2997	335/5500	339/1450	1865kg	183	5.4	-	-	157	+ No less compelling than the Macan Turbo - Although lacks its ultimate speed and agility
Porsche Macan GT	244 F	£55,158	6/2997	355/6000	369/1650	1895kg	190	5.2	-	-	159	+ Handles like an SUV shouldn't - Still looks like an SUV
Porsche Macan Turbo	207 D	£63,981	6/3604	394/6000	406/1350	1925kg	208	4.8	4.5	11.1	165	+ Doesn't feel like an SUV - Not a match for a proper sports saloon
Porsche Macan Turbo Performance Package	236 D	£69,505	6/3604	434/6000	442/1500	1925kg	229	4.4	-	-	177	+ Staggeringly quick and hugely capable - Do you really need this much power?
Porsche Cayenne Turbo (Mk3)	243 D	£99,291	8/3996	542/5750	568/1960	2175kg	254	4.1	-	-	177	+ Huge performance, surprising agility - It's still a two-ton-plus SUV
Porsche Cayenne GTS (Mk2, V6)	211 D	'15-'17	6/3604	434/6000	442/1600	2110kg	209	5.2	-	-	163	+ The driver's Cayenne... - ...but why would a driver want an SUV?
Porsche Cayenne GTS (Mk2, V8)	173 D	'12-'15	8/4806	414/6500	380/3500	2085kg	202	5.7	-	-	162	+ Dynamically the best SUV of its era - At two tons, it's still no sports car
Porsche Cayenne Turbo (Mk2)	212 D	'10-'17	8/4806	513/6000	533/2250	2185kg	239	4.5	-	-	173	+ Remarkable performance, handling, completeness - Vague steering, dated engine
Porsche Cayenne Turbo S (Mk2)	184 D	'10-'17	8/4806	562/6000	590/2500	2235kg	255	4.1	-	-	176	+ More power and torque than a Zonda S T3 - In an SUV
Range Rover Evoque Coupe Si4	160 D	£44,545	4/1999	237/6000	251/1900	1670kg	144	7.0	-	-	135	+ Striking looks, sporting dynamics - Hefty price, and petrol version is auto-only
Range Rover Velar P380	239 D	£70,210	6/2995	375/6500	332/3500	1884kg	202	5.7	-	-	155	+ A more advanced, opulent alternative to an F-Pace - Its weight ultimately limits its agility
Range Rover Sport SDV8	-	£87,350	8/4367	334/3500	546/1750	2359kg	144	6.5	-	-	140	+ A brilliant long-distance machine - Doesn't live up to the 'Sport' branding
Range Rover Sport V8 Supercharged	186 D	£87,680	8/5000	503/6000	460/2500	2335kg	219	5.0	-	-	155	+ Deceptively quick and capable sports SUV - It's still got a weight problem
Range Rover Sport SVR	248 D	£99,680	8/5000	567/6000	516/3500	2310kg	249	4.5	-	-	176	+ Characterful and amusingly rapid - Heavy, thirsty and just a bit obnoxious
Range Rover SDV8	180 D	£83,900	8/4367	334/3500	516/1750	2360kg	144	6.5	-	-	140	+ Lighter and more capable than before, even more luxurious - Diesel V6 model feels more alert
Rolls-Royce Ghost	186 D	£223,368	12/6592	563/5250	575/1500	2360kg	242	4.7	-	-	155	+ It's quicker than you think - It's more enjoyable driven slowly
Rolls-Royce Phantom	054 F	£318,120	12/6749	453/5350	531/3500	2560kg	180	5.7	-	-	149	+ Rolls reinvented for the 21st century - The roads are barely big enough
Subaru WRX STI	201 F	£31,995	4/2457	296/6000	300/4000	1534kg	196	5.2	-	-	158	+ Subaru saloon soldiers on - Without a power increase
Subaru WRX STI	151 D	'10-'13	4/2457	296/6000	300/4000	1505kg	200	5.2	-	-	158	+ Fast Subaru back as a saloon - Without the blue paint and gold wheels
Subaru Impreza STI ('Hawkeye')	090 F	'05-'07	4/2457	276/6000	289/4000	1495kg	188	5.3	-	-	158	+ Stunning to drive - Not so stunning to look at
Subaru Impreza GB270	109 D	'07</										



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MAKE & MODEL

Vauxhall Vectra VXR  
 Vauxhall VXR8 GTS  
 Vauxhall VXR8 GTS-R  
 Volvo V60 Polestar

ISSUE NO.	PRICE	ENGINE CVT/CC	BHP/RPM	LB FT/RPM	WEIGHT	BHP/TON	0-62 MPH (S.E.T.I.D.)	0-100 MPH (S.E.T.I.D.)	MAX MPH
102 D	'06-'09	6/2792	276/5500	262/1800	1580kg	177	6.1	-	161
215 D	'15-'17	8/6162	576/6150	546/3850	1834kg	319	4.2	-	155
245 F	'17	8/6162	587/6150	546/3850	1880kg	317	4.2	-	155
222 D	£49,665	4/1969	362/6000	347/3100	1721kg	214	4.8	-	155

EVO RATING

★★★★☆ Great engine, effortless pace, good value - Numb steering, lumpy ride  
 ★★★★★ Monster engine; engaging driving experience - Woeful interior  
 ★★★★★ Blistering performance; bursting with character - The end of an era  
 ★★★★★ Subtle, well-executed performance car - Plays a little too safe

## SPORTS CARS / CONVERTIBLES

### OUR CHOICE

**Lotus Elise Sport 220.** Delivering just the right amount of power from its supercharged 1.8-litre engine to make the most of its low kerb weight, the Sport 220 is gutsy, grippy, accurate and enthusiastic. And, of course, it rides beautifully. It's the sweetest spot in the already-very-sweet Elise range.



### BEST OF THE REST

For even more precision and outright performance, a **Lotus 3-Eleven 430** is hard to beat, while the **Caterham Seven** remains an exemplar of sports car purity in all its guises. More habitable and everyday useable, the **Abarth 124 Spider** (left) is capable of putting a big smile on your face even at sane speeds.



MAKE & MODEL	ISSUE NO.	PRICE	ENGINE CVT/CC	BHP/RPM	LB FT/RPM	WEIGHT	BHP/TON	0-62 MPH (S.E.T.I.D.)	0-100 MPH (S.E.T.I.D.)	MAX MPH	REMARKS	EVO RATING	
Abarth 124 Spider	238 F	£26,920	4/1368	168/5500	184/2500	1060kg	161	6.8	-	143	A little car with a big soul - Vague and lifeless front end	★★★★☆	
Alfa Romeo 4C Spider	223 F	£59,505	4/1742	237/6000	258/2200	940kg*	256	4.5	-	160	Stunningly beautiful; better steering than coupe version - Still has the coupe's other foibles	★★★★☆	
Alfa Romeo 8C Spider	161 F	'09-'11	8/4691	450/7000	354/4750	1675kg	273	4.4	-	181	Beauty meets beast. They hit it off - Boot is useless for touring	★★★★☆	
Ariel Atom 3 245	248 F	£30,573	4/1998	245/8600	177/7200	520kg*	479	3.1	-	145	Even better than its predecessors - Can still be a bit draughty	★★★★☆	
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 F	£64,800	4/1998	350/8400	243/6100	550kg*	647	2.6	-	155	Remarkable balance, poise and pace - Pricey	★★★★☆	
Ariel Atom 3 Supercharged	138 F	'09-'12	4/1998	300/8200	162/7200	550kg*	554	3.3	-	155	It's brilliant - It's mental	★★★★☆	
Ariel Atom Mugen	165 F	'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 Nomad	248 F	£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 (4.7)	130 F	'09-'16	8/4735	420/7000	346/5750	1710kg	250	4.8	-	180	Sportiest, coolest drop-top Aston in years - Feels dated compared to contemporaries	★★★★☆	
Aston Martin V8 Vantage S Roadster	161 F	'11-'17	8/4735	430/7300	361/5000	1690kg	258	4.8	-	189	Sounds amazing, looks even better - Still not the best drop-top in its class	★★★★☆	
Aston Martin V12 Vantage Roadster	175 F	'12-'14	12/5935	510/6500	420/5750	1760kg	294	4.5	-	190	As good as the coupe, with amplified V12 rumble - Just a smidgen shakier	★★★★☆	
Aston Martin V12 Vantage S Roadster	212 F	'14-'17	12/5935	565/6750	457/5750	1745kg	329	4.1	-	201	A brilliant two-seat roadster... - let down by a frustrating automated manual gearbox	★★★★☆	
Aston Martin DB9 Volante	150 D	'04-'15	12/5935	510/6500	457/5500	1890kg	274	4.5	-	183	Consummate cruiser and capable when pushed - Roof-wind noise	★★★★☆	
Aston Martin DB11 Volante	247 F	£161,900	8/3982	503/6000	498/2000	1870kg	273	4.1	-	187	Impressively wide range of dynamic personalities - Cabin could be better at this price	★★★★☆	
Audi TTS Roadster	207 D	£42,565	4/1984	306/5800	280/1800	1450kg	214	5.2	-	155	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	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	Terrific engine... - is the best thing about it	★★★★☆	
Audi R8 V8 Spyder	186 D	'11-'15	8/4163	424/7900	317/6000	1660kg	259	4.8	-	187	More delicate and subtle than the V10 - The V10 sounds even better	★★★★☆	
BAC Mono	189 F	£165,125	4/2261	305/7700	206/6000	580kg*	534	2.8	-	170	The most single-minded track car available - That means no passengers...	★★★★☆	
BMW Z4 sDrive 35i M Sport (Mk2)	186 D	'13-'17	6/2979	302/5800	295/1300	1505kg	204	5.2	-	155	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	Terrific straight-six - Handling not as playful as we'd like	★★★★☆	
BMW Z4 M Roadster	091 F	'06-'09	6/3246	338/7900	269/4900	1410kg	244	5.0	-	155	Exhilarating and characterful, that engine - Stiff suspension	★★★★☆	
BMW M2	002 F	'98-'02	6/3246	325/7400	258/4900	1375kg	240	5.1	-	155	M3 motor; hunky looks - M Coupe drives better	★★★★☆	
BMW Z8	026 F	'00-'03	8/4941	400/6600	369/3800	1585kg	256	4.7	4.8	11.1	M5-powered super-sportster - M5's more fun to drive	★★★★☆	
Caterham Seven 160	239 F	£19,495	3/660	80/7000	79/3400	490kg*	166	6.9	-	100	The fabulous Seven formula at its most basic - Gets pricey with options	★★★★☆	
Caterham Seven SuperSprint	247 D	£29,995	3/660	95/7000	82/5600	490kg*	197	6.9	-	100	Accessible limits with proper pace - You need to enjoy being exposed to the elements	★★★★☆	
Caterham Seven 370	219 F	£23,995	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 210	227 D	£25,495	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 F	£27,495	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 F	£30,495	4/1999	210/7600	150/6300	560kg*	381	3.8	4.0	10.3	136	It's the one we built for ourselves - Trickier on the limit than lesser-powered Sevens	★★★★☆
Caterham Seven 420R Donington Edition	240 D	£47,500	4/1999	210/7600	150/6300	560kg*	381	3.8	-	136	One of the best Sevens we've driven - Only ten are being made	★★★★☆	
Caterham Seven CSR	094 F	£46,495	4/2261	256/7500	200/2000	656kg*	460	3.1	3.8	11.1	155	Brilliant for high days, holidays and trackdays - Wet Wednesdays	★★★★☆
Caterham Seven 620S	220 D	£45,495	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	239 F	£50,490	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 Roadsport 125	105 F	'07-'14	4/1596	125/6100	120/5350	539kg*	235	5.9	-	112	Great debut for Ford-engined model - Bigger drivers need SV model	★★★★☆	
Caterham Seven Supersport	165 F	'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 F	'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 F	'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 Seven R300	068 F	'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 F	'99-'06	4/1796	230/8600	155/7200	460kg*	510	3.4	3.6	8.8	146	The K-series Seven at its very best - No cup holders	★★★★☆
Elemental Rpl	238 D	£98,700	4/1999	320/n/a	332/2000	630kg	516	2.7	-	165	Sensational, explosive, captivating, exploitable - Price will test your level of commitment	★★★★☆	
Ferrari Portofino	247 F	£166,180	8/3855	591/7500	560/3000	1664kg	361	3.5	-	199	Better than the California - Not better than a DB11 Volante	★★★★☆	
Ferrari California T	229 D	'14-'17	8/3855	553/7500	557/4750	1729kg	324	3.6	-	196	Turbocharged engine is a triumph - Still places daily useability above outright thrills	★★★★☆	
Fiat 124 Spider	228 F	£21,050	4/1368	138/5000	171/2250	1050kg	134	7.5	-	134	It's an affordable Italian(ish) sports car - Lacks Italian brio	★★★★☆	
Honda S2000	243 F	'99-'09	4/1997	237/8300	153/7500	1260kg	191	6.2	-	150	An alternative and rev-happy roadster - A Boxster's better	★★★★☆	
Jaguar F-type Convertible 3.0 V6 340PS	186 F	£59,550	6/2995	335/6500	332/3500	1587kg	214	5.7	-	161	Beautiful, enjoyable, responsive - Noticeably the junior F-type	★★★★☆	
Jaguar F-type Convertible 3.0 V6 380PS	183 F	£70,300	6/2995	375/6500	339/3500	1604kg	238	5.5	-	171	A more rounded F-type than the V8s - We like V8s	★★★★☆	
Jaguar F-type R Convertible AWD	-	£98,145	8/5000	542/6500	501/3500	1665kg	331	4.1	-	186	Pace, characterful engine - Costs nearly £25k more than the hot V6	★★★★☆	
Jaguar F-type SVR Convertible	230 D	£118,165	8/5000	567/6500	516/3500	1720kg	335	3.7	-	195	Huge performance - Unpleasant soundtrack; unsettled on bumpy roads	★★★★☆	
Jaguar F-type S Convertible	183 F	'13-'17	6/2995	375/6500	339/3500	1604kg	238	5.5	-	171	Better-damped and more rounded than the V8 S - A Boxster S is cheaper	★★★★☆	
Jaguar F-type Project 7	212 F	'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 XKR Convertible	130 F	'09-'14	8/5000	503/6000	461/2500	1725kg	296	4.8	-	155	Fantastic 5-litre V8 - Loses sporting ground to its main foes	★★★★☆	
Jaguar XKR-S Convertible	167 F	'11-'14	8/5000	542/6500	502/2500	1725kg	319	4.4	-	186	Low 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	Extraordinary ability, now in a more road-friendly package - Price	★★★★☆	
KTM X-Bow R	165 F	£87,480	4/1984	296/6300	295/3300	816kg	369	3.9	-	144	Sharper handling, more power - Pity it's not even lighter, and cheaper	★★★★☆	
KTM X-Bow	138 F	'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	-	'17	4/1598	134/6800	118/4400	856kg	159	6.5	-	127	1.6-litre Elise is light and fantastic - Smaller engine could put some off	★★★★☆	
Lotus Elise Sprint	-	'17	4/1598	134/6800	118/4400	830kg	164	6.2	-	127	Even lighter version of the 1.6 Elise - It'll cost you nearly £200 per kilo saved	★★★★☆	
Lotus Elise Sport 220	244 F	£39,300	4/1798	217/6800	184/4600	904kg	244	4.6	-	145	Perfect power-to-weight ratio - A bit short on creature comforts	★★★★☆	
Lotus Elise Sprint 220	236 D	£44,300	4/1798	217/6800	184/4600	878kg	251	4.5	-	145	Makes the most of its lightness - Heavyweight price	★★★★☆	
Lotus Elise Cup 250	238 D	£47,400	4/1798	243/7200	184/3500	917kg	269	4.3	-	154	Elise gets quicker again - Prioritises grip over adjustability	★★★★☆	
Lotus Elise Cup 260	243 F	£59,500	4/1798	250/7200	195/5500	902kg	282	4.2	-	151	Quickest Elise yet - Just 30 being built	★★★★☆	
Lotus Elise Club Racer	183 F	'11-'15	4/1598	134/6800	118/4400	852kg	160	6.5	-	127	Even lighter, even more focused than a standard 1.6 Elise - Are you prepared to go this basic?	★★★★☆	
Lotus Elise S Club Racer	189 D	'13-'15	4/1798	217/6800	184/4600	905kg	244	4.6	-	145	Purist approach intensifies ability - Lightweight, option-free spec requires commitment	★★★★☆	
Lotus Elise R	068 F	'04-'11	4/1796	189/7800	133/6800	860kg	223	5.4	5.6	13.9	138	A most thrilling Elise - Blaring engine note	★★★★☆
Lotus Elise SC	131 F	'08-'11	4/1794	218/8000	156/5000	870kg	254	4.6	4.5	11.4	145	All the usual Elise magic - Supercharged engine lacks sparkle	★★★★☆
Lotus Elise S	104 F	'06-'10	4/1794	134/6200	127/4200	860kg	158	6.1	6.3	18.7	127	Brilliant entry-level Elise - Precious little	★★★★☆
Lotus Elise III S	049 F	'02-'04	4/1796	156/7000									

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MAKE & MODEL	ISSUE NO.	PRICE	ENGINE Cyl/CC	BHP/PPM	LB FT/PPM	WEIGHT	BHP/TON	0-62MPH (S.MIBS)	0-60MPH (UK)	0-100MPH (RETI)	MAX MPH	EVO RATING	
Lotus Elise (S1)	235 F	'96-'01	4/1796	118/5500	122/3000	731kg	164	5.9	6.1	18.5	126	+ A modern classic - A tad impractical?	★★★★★
Lotus Elise S Roadster	186 F	'13-15	6/3456	345/7000	295/4500	1166kg	301	4.0	-	-	145	+ Like the hard-top Exige S, but more road-friendly - 981 Boxster S is a better all-rounder	★★★★★
Lotus Exige Sport 350 Roadster	221 F	£55,900	6/3456	345/7000	295/4500	1125kg	312	3.9	-	-	145	+ An Exige with added sunny-day appeal - A Boxster would be more practical	★★★★★
Lotus Exige Sport 380 Roadster	231 F	£67,900	6/3456	375/6700	302/5000	1100kg	343	3.7	-	-	178	+ Like the 350 Roadster, but faster and even purer - A Boxster would still be more practical	★★★★★
Lotus 3-Eleven 430	248 F	£102,000	6/3456	430/7000	325/4500	920kg*	475	3.2	-	-	180	+ A fitting send-off for a brilliant Lotus - Just 20 being made, and they're not cheap	★★★★★
Lotus 3-Eleven	220 F	'16-'17	6/3456	410/7000	302/3000	925kg*	450	3.4	-	-	174	+ A fantastically exciting Lotus - If not exactly a groundbreaking one	★★★★★
Lotus 2-Eleven	126 F	'07-'11	4/1796	189/7800	133/6800	720kg	267	4.5	-	-	140	+ Not far off the supercharged 2-Eleven's pace - You want the supercharged one, don't you?	★★★★★
Lotus 2-Eleven Supercharged	123 F	'07-'11	4/1796	252/8000	179/7000	745kg	344	4.0	-	-	150	+ Impressive on road and track - Not hardcore enough for some	★★★★★
Lotus 340R	126 F	'00	4/1796	190/7800	146/5000	700kg	275	4.5	4.5	12.5	126	+ Hardcore road-racer... that looks like a dune buggy from Mars	★★★★★
Maserati GranCabrio MC	185 D	£112,400	8/4691	454/7000	383/4750	1973kg	234	4.9	-	-	179	+ Most powerful GranCabrio yet - The GranCabrio is starting to show its age	★★★★☆
Mazda MX-5 1.5 (Mk4)	230 F	£18,795	4/1496	129/7000	111/4800	975kg	134	8.3	-	-	127	+ Lightest MX-5 since the Mk1 - Lacks intensity	★★★★☆
Mazda MX-5 2.0 Sport Nav (Mk4)	228 F	£24,195	4/1998	158/6000	147/4600	1000kg	161	7.3	-	-	133	+ Brilliant basic recipe - The desire for stiffer suspension and more power	★★★★☆
Mazda MX-5 RF 2.0 (Mk4)	234 F	£23,395	4/1998	158/6000	147/4600	1045kg	154	7.4	-	-	134	+ Drives just like its soft-top brother - Significant wind noise with the roof down	★★★★☆
Mazda MX-5 2.0i Sport Tech (Mk3.5)	212 F	'09-'15	4/1999	158/7000	139/5000	1098kg	146	7.6	-	-	138	+ Handles brilliantly again; folding hard-top also available - Less-than-macho image	★★★★☆
Mazda MX-5 1.8i (Mk3)	091 F	'05-'09	4/1798	124/6500	123/4500	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 F	'98-'05	4/1839	146/7000	124/5000	1065kg	140	8.5	-	-	123	+ Affordable ragtop doesn't get much better - Cheap cabin	★★★★☆
Mazda MX-5 1.6 (Mk1)	131 F	'89-'97	4/1597	115/6500	100/5500	971kg	111	8.8	-	-	114	+ The original and still (pretty much) the best - Less than rigid	★★★★☆
Mercedes-AMG SLC43	222 D	£47,600	6/2996	362/5500	383/2000	1520kg	242	4.7	-	-	155	+ Twin-turbo V6 well-suited to baby roadster - But also highlights the chassis' age	★★★★☆
Mercedes-Benz SLK55 AMG	186 F	'12-'15	8/5461	416/6800	398/4500	1615kg	262	4.6	-	-	155	+ Hardcore and more economical than ever - Needs to be sharper, too	★★★★☆
Mercedes-Benz SLK55 AMG	087 F	'05-'10	8/5439	355/5750	376/4000	1575kg	229	4.9	-	-	155	+ Superb engine, responsive chassis - No manual option, ESP spoils fun	★★★★☆
Mercedes-Benz SLK55 AMG Black Series	110 F	'07-'08	8/5439	394/5750	383/3750	1495kg	268	4.5	4.9	11.2	174	+ AMG gets serious - Dull-witted auto 'box, uneven dynamics	★★★★☆
Mercedes-AMG SL63	228 D	£116,430	8/5461	577/5500	664/2250	1770kg	331	4.1	-	-	155	+ Effortless performance - Needs more involvement to go with the pace	★★★★☆
Mercedes-AMG GT Roadster	239 F	£111,360	8/3982	469/6000	465/1700	1595kg	299	4.0	-	-	188	+ An AMG GT with added fresh air - Ride and handling go slightly to pieces on UK roads	★★★★☆
Mercedes-AMG GT C Roadster	235 D	£140,660	8/3982	549/5750	501/1900	1660kg	336	3.7	-	-	196	+ As above but with more shove - Road noise can get wearing on long journeys	★★★★☆
Mercedes-Benz SL500	169 D	'12-'16	8/4663	429/5250	516/1800	1710kg	255	4.6	-	-	155	+ 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	+ Monster performance, lighter than before - Still heavy, steering lacks consistency	★★★★☆
Mercedes-Benz SL65 AMG	183 D	'13-'16	12/5980	621/4800	731/2300	1875kg	336	4.0	-	-	155	+ Chassis just about deals with the power - Speed limits	★★★★☆
Mercedes-Benz SL63 AMG	117 D	'08-'13	8/2028	518/6800	464/5200	1970kg	278	4.6	-	-	155	+ 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	4.2	-	-	155	+ Gob-smacking performance - Costly to run	★★★★☆
Morgan 3 Wheeler	198 F	£31,140	2/1976	82/5250	103/3250	525kg*	159	6.0	-	-	115	+ Quirky, characterful, brilliant - Can become a two-wheeler if you push too hard	★★★★☆
Morgan Plus 8	171 F	£85,461	8/4799	362/6300	370/3600	1100kg*	334	4.5	-	-	155	+ Hilarious mix of old looks and new mechanicals - Refinement is definitely old-school	★★★★☆
Morgan Plus 8 Speedster	202 F	'14	8/4799	362/6300	370/3600	1000kg*	368	4.2	-	-	148	+ Fantastic old-school roadster experience - Gets unsettled by big bumps; only 60 were made	★★★★☆
Morgan Aero 8	105 F	£94,665	8/4799	362/6300	361/3400	1180kg*	312	4.5	-	-	170	+ Glorious sound, view over bonnet, dynamics - Awkward-looking rear	★★★★☆
Morgan Aero SuperSports	145 F	'10-'11	8/4799	362/6300	370/3600	1180kg*	312	4.2	-	-	170	+ It's an Aero 8 with a V8 and targa top - Limited edition, costing proper supercar money	★★★★☆
Nissan 370Z Roadster	143 F	'10-'14	6/3696	326/7000	269/5200	1554kg	213	5.5	-	-	155	+ The Zed's old-school character remains intact - Its purposeful looks don't	★★★★☆
Porsche 718 Boxster	224 D	£44,758	4/1988	296/6500	280/1950	1335kg	225	5.1	-	-	170	+ Chassis as good as ever - Four-cylinder's tuneless din would be hard to live with	★★★★☆
Porsche 718 Boxster S	222 F	£53,714	4/2497	345/6500	310/1900	1355kg	259	4.6	4.4	9.8	177	+ Still sensationally capable - Turbo four-cylinder engine lacks appeal of the old flat-six	★★★★☆
Porsche Boxster (981)	238 F	'12-'16	6/2706	261/6700	206/4500	1310kg	202	5.8	-	-	164	+ Goes and looks better than the 987 Boxster - Shame about the electric steering	★★★★☆
Porsche Boxster S (981)	186 F	'12-'16	6/3436	311/6700	265/4500	1320kg	239	5.1	-	-	173	+ 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	+ Superb dynamics, fantastic engine, great looks - Sport suspension is very firm	★★★★☆
Porsche Boxster Spyder (981)	223 F	'15-'16	6/3800	370/6700	310/4750	1315kg	286	4.5	-	-	180	+ An even faster, even more rewarding Boxster - Feedback trails the Cayman GT4's	★★★★☆
Porsche Boxster S (987)	161 F	'05-'12	6/3436	306/6400	266/5500	1355kg	229	5.3	-	-	170	+ Second-gen Boxster's as brilliant as ever - It's a typically Porsche redesign	★★★★☆
Porsche Boxster Spyder (987)	188 F	'10-'12	6/3436	316/7200	273/4750	1275kg	252	4.9	-	-	166	+ Lighter, more driver-centric Boxster - Collapsed-broily roof not the most practical	★★★★☆
Porsche Boxster S (986)	070 F	'99-'04	6/3179	256/6200	229/4600	1320kg	200	5.7	-	-	164	+ Added power over the non-S Boxster is seductive - Very little	★★★★☆
Radical SR3 SL	174 F	'11-'14	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	★★★★☆
Renault Sport Spider	231 F	'96-'99	4/1998	148/6000	136/4500	930kg	157	6.5	-	-	131	+ Rarity, unassisted steering - Heavier than you'd hope; disappointing engine	★★★★☆
Rolls-Royce Dawn	222 D	£264,000	12/6592	563/5250	575/1500	2560kg	223	4.9	-	-	155	+ Effortless driving experience - Driver involvement not a priority	★★★★☆
Toyota MR2 (Mk3)	187 F	'00-'06	4/1794	138/6400	125/4400	975kg	141	8.0	7.2	21.2	131	+ Tight lines, taut dynamics - Minimal luggage space	★★★★☆
TVR Tamora	070 F	'01-'07	6/3605	350/7200	290/5500	1060kg	335	4.2	-	-	175	+ Well-sorted soft-top TVR - Awkward styling	★★★★☆
TVR Chimaera 5.0	007 F	'93-'03	8/4997	320/5500	320/3750	1060kg	307	4.4	-	-	167	+ Gorgeous noise, tarmac-ripping grunt - Details	★★★★☆
TVR Griffith 4.3	068 F	'92-'93	8/4280	280/5500	305/4000	1040kg	274	4.4	4.8	11.2	155	+ The car that made TVR. Cult status - Mere details	★★★★☆
TVR Griffith 500	009 F	'93-'01	8/4997	320/5500	320/4000	1060kg	307	4.1	-	-	167	+ Gruff diamond - A few rough edges	★★★★☆
Vauxhall VX220	023 F	'00-'04	4/2198	145/5800	150/4000	875kg	168	5.9	-	-	136	+ Absurdly good Vauxhall - The badge?	★★★★☆
Vauxhall VX220 Turbo	066 F	'03-'05	4/1998	197/5500	184/1950	930kg	215	4.9	-	-	151	+ Nothing comes close for the money - Marginal everyday usability	★★★★☆
Vuhl 05	220 F	£59,995	4/2000	285/5600	310/3000	725kg	405	3.7	-	-	152	+ Impressive pace and quality - You can get a more thrills from a Caterham at half the price	★★★★☆
Zenos E10 S	214 F	£30,595	4/1999	250/7000	295/2500	725kg*	350	4.0	4.2	-	145	+ Neutral and exploitable - Prescriptive balance	★★★★☆

## COUPES / GTs

### OUR CHOICE

**BMW M4 Competition Package.** It's taken a while to get there, but the Competition Package is the car the M4 should have been from the start. Less spiky, more trustworthy, and above all fast and fun, it feels like it has been developed with the driver's best interests at heart.



### BEST OF THE REST

The **Alpine A110** (left) is, at last, a true rival for Porsche's Cayman. The **911 Carrera GTS** - in two-wheel-drive, manual spec - is our favourite Porsche coupe, however, though the basic **911 Carrera** and **Carrera S** run it close. The **Audi RS5**, meanwhile, has an impressively wide bandwidth of abilities, as does the **Bentley Continental GT**.



Alfa Romeo 4C	209 F	£51,505	4/1742	237/6000	258/2200	895kg*	269	4.5	-	-	160	+ Carbonfibre tub, mini-supercar looks - Hot hatch engine, clunky gearbox	★★★★☆
Alfa Romeo 8C Competizione	120 F	'07-'09	8/4691	450/7000	354/4750	1585kg	288	4.2	-	-	181	+ Fun, exclusivity, noise, balance - Cost more now than they did new	★★★★☆
Alpine A110	244 F	£51,805	4/1798	249/6000	236/2000	1103kg	229	4.5	-	-	155	+ Looks playful and deceptively fast - If only it had a manual gearbox	★★★★☆
Alpina D4 Biturbo	206 F	£50,950	6/2993	345/4000	516/1500	1585kg	221	4.6	-	-	173	+ Fifth-gear oversteer - Sounds like a diesel; fuel economy not as good as you might hope	★★★★☆
Alpina B4 S Biturbo	245 D	£63,000	6/2979	434/5500	487/3000	1615kg	273	4.2	-	-	190	+ Stanking engine, stealthy speed - Steering is slow and lacks feel	★★★★☆
Alpina B4 Biturbo	206 F	'14-'16	6/2979	404/5500	442/3000	1615kg	254	4.2	-	-	188	+ More fluid than the M4; better traction, too - Not as precise as the M-car over the limit	★★★★☆
Aston Martin Vantage	248 D	£120,900	8/3982	503/6000	505/2000	1530kg*	334	3.6	-	-	195	+ Performance that's a huge leap forward - At this price, it's no longer a 911 Carrera S rival	★★★★☆
Aston Martin V8 Vantage (4.3)	109 F	'05-'07	8/4280	380/7000	302/5000	1630kg	237	5.0	5.2	12.0	175	+ Gorgeous, awesome soundtrack - Can't quite match a 911 dynamically	★★★★☆
Aston Martin V8 Vantage (4.7)	169 D	'08-'16	8/4735	420/7000	346/5750	1630kg	262	4.8	-	-	180	+ Still feels special - But also a little dated	★★★★☆
Aston Martin V8 Vantage S	168 F	'11-'17	8/4735	430/7300	361/5000	1610kg	271	4.8	-	-	190	+ Keener engine, V12 Vantage looks - Slightly sluggish auto only	★★★★☆
Aston Martin V8 Vantage N430	218 F	'14-'16	8/4735	430/7300	361/5000	1610kg	271	4.8	-	-	189	+ Malleable, involving - Never feels rampantly quick	★★★★☆
Aston Martin Vantage GT8	229 F	'16-'17	8/4735	440/7300	361/5000	1530kg	292	4.4	-	-	190	+ Enough drama to fill a Netflix mini-series - Just 150 made	★★★★☆
Aston Martin V12 Vantage	146 F	'09-'13	12/5935	510/6500	420/5750	1680kg	308	4.2	4.4	9.7	190	+ The car we hoped the V8 Vantage would be - Erm, a tad thirsty?	★★★★☆
Aston Martin V12 Vantage S	238 F	'13-'17	12/5935	563/6650	457/5500	1665kg	344	3.9	-	-	205	+ Amongst the best Astons ever made - Old-school automated 'box (so get the manual)	★★★★☆
Aston Martin Vantage GT12	214 F	'15-'16	12/5935	592/7000	461/5500	1565kg	384	3.5	-	-	185	+ The GT3-style Vantage we waited so long for - Only 100 made	★★★★☆
Aston Martin DB11 V8	241 D	£144,90											



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MAKE & MODEL	ISSUE NO.	PRICE	ENGINE (L/HP)	BHP/RPM	LB FT/RPM	WEIGHT	BHP/TON	0-62MPH (s)	0-100MPH (s)	0-100MPH (G)	0-100MPH (L/100M)	MAX MPH	EVO RATING
Aston Martin DB9	178 F	'04-'16	12/5935	510/6500	457/5500	1785kg	290	4.6	-	-	-	183	+ A great start to Gaydon-era Astons - Automatic gearbox could be quicker
Aston Martin DBS	142 F	'07-'12	12/5935	510/6500	420/5750	1695kg	306	4.3	-	-	-	191	+ Stupendous engine, gearbox, brakes - Pricey; can bite the unwary
Audi TT 2.0 TFSI (Mk3)	204 F	£31,685	4/1984	227/4500	273/1650	1230kg	188	6.0	-	-	-	155	+ Desirable, grippy and effortlessly quick - Still not the last word in interaction
Audi TT 2.0 TFSI quattro (Mk3)	203 D	£34,895	4/1984	227/4500	273/1600	1335kg	173	5.3	-	-	-	155	+ Looks, interior, decent performance and handling - Lacks ultimate involvement
Audi TTS (Mk3)	209 F	£40,840	4/1984	306/5800	280/1800	1365kg	228	4.9	-	-	-	155	+ Dynamically interesting (for a TT) - Still not as interactive as a Cayman
Audi TT RS (Mk3)	230 F	£52,480	5/2480	394/5850	354/1700	1440kg	278	3.7	3.4	-	-	155	+ Soundtrack; tremendous point-to-point pace - A bit one-dimensional in the long run
Audi TTS (Mk2)	193 F	'08-'14	4/1984	268/6000	258/2500	1395kg	195	5.4	-	-	-	155	+ A usefully quicker TT, with a great drivetrain - Still steers like a computer game
Audi TT RS (Mk2)	158 F	'09-'14	5/2480	335/5400	332/1600	1450kg	235	4.7	4.4	11.1	-	155	+ Sublime five-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	+ Stonkingly fast cross-country - Shockingly expensive for a TT
Audi TT Sport (Mk1)	081 D	'05-'06	4/1781	237/5700	236/2300	1390kg	173	5.7	-	-	-	155	+ Deliciously purposeful interior, crisp chassis - Numb steering
Audi S5	233 F	£47,875	6/2995	349/5400	369/1370	1615kg	220	4.7	-	-	-	155	+ Chassis rewards commitment... - but doesn't offer a challenge. Plain engine, too
Audi RS5	240 F	£62,900	6/2894	444/5700	442/1900	1655kg	273	3.9	3.6	9.0	-	155	+ Lighter, quicker, makes green paint look good - Lacks the character of the old V8
Audi RS5	206 F	'10-'16	8/4163	444/8250	317/4000	1715kg	263	4.5	4.3	-	-	155	+ Brilliant engine and improved chassis - Lack of suspension travel; inconsistent steering
Audi R8 V8	201 F	'07-'15	8/4163	424/7900	317/4500	1560kg	276	4.6	4.1	9.9	-	188	+ A true 911 alternative - Exclusivity comes at a price
Bentley Continental GT	244 F	£156,700	12/5950	626/5000	664/1350	2169kg	293	3.7	-	-	-	207	+ Astonishing agility for such a big, heavy car - Thirst
Bentley Continental GT V8	178 F	'12-'17	8/3993	500/6000	487/1700	2220kg	229	4.8	-	-	-	188	+ A proper driver's Bentley with decent economy - W12 suddenly seems pointless
Bentley Continental GT V8 S	204 F	'13-'17	8/3993	521/6000	502/1700	2220kg	238	4.5	-	-	-	192	+ An even better driver's Bentley - Vast weight makes its presence felt in harder driving
Bentley Continental GT	152 D	'03-'17	12/5998	567/6000	516/1700	2245kg	257	4.5	-	-	-	198	+ Near 200mph in utter comfort - Weight; W12's thirst
Bentley Continental GT Speed	230 D	'12-'17	12/5998	633/5900	620/2000	2245kg	286	4.1	-	-	-	206	+ Desirability meets exclusivity and performance - We'd still have the V8
Bentley Continental Supersports	234 D	'17	12/5998	700/6000	750/2050	2205kg	323	3.5	-	-	-	209	+ Massive performance, surprisingly agile - Styling and soundtrack far from desecret
Bentley Continental GT3-R	203 D	'14-'17	8/3993	572/6000	518/1700	2120kg	274	3.8	-	-	-	170	+ The best-handling Continental of its generation - Expensive; it still weighs 2120kg
BMW 1-series M Coupe	188 F	'11-'12	6/2979	335/5900	369/1500	1495kg	228	4.9	-	-	-	155	+ Character, turbo pace and great looks - Came and went too quick
BMW M240i Coupe	229 D	£35,865	6/2998	335/6800	369/1520	1470kg	232	4.8	-	-	-	155	+ Adjustable and plenty of fun - Lacks finesse and precision
BMW M235i Coupe	225 F	'14-'16	6/2979	321/5800	332/1300	1455kg	224	5.0	5.2	12.7	-	155	+ Powertrain, chassis, looks, size - Limited-slip diff is an option, not standard
BMW M2	243 F	£46,430	6/2979	365/6500	369/1450	1495kg	248	4.5	4.5	-	-	155	+ More progressive chassis balance than the M4 - Feels unsettled on rough tarmac
BMW 440i M Sport Coupe	233 F	£43,430	6/2998	332/5500	332/1380	1540kg	212	5.2	-	-	-	155	+ Almost-too-powerful engine - Doesn't feel specially ungo to drive
BMW M4	218 F	£60,420	6/2979	425/5500	406/1850	1560kg	277	4.3	-	-	-	155	+ Ferociously fast - A handful on less-than-perfect or less-than-bone-dry roads
BMW M4 Competition Package	244 F	£63,420	6/2979	444/7000	440/1850	1560kg	289	4.2	4.4	9.2	-	155	+ The car the M4 always should have been - Not so good on 20-inch wheels
BMW M4 CS	247 F	£91,050	6/2979	454/6250	442/4000	1580kg	292	3.9	-	-	-	174	+ The first M4 you could enjoy on any road, in any conditions - It ain't cheap
BMW M4 GTS	237 F	'16	6/2979	493/6250	442/4000	1510kg	332	3.8	3.7	8.0	-	190	+ Vast improvement on lesser M4s - So it should be, given its price
BMW M3 (E92)	196 F	'07-'13	8/3999	414/8300	295/3900	1580kg	266	4.8	4.3	10.3	-	155	+ Fends off all its rivals... - ...except the cheaper 1-series M Coupe
BMW M3 GTS (E92)	232 F	'10-'11	8/4361	444/8300	324/3750	1530kg	295	4.4	-	-	-	190	+ Highly exclusive; one of the most focused M-cars ever - Good luck trying to find one
BMW M3 (E46)	066 F	'00-'07	6/3246	338/7900	269/5000	1495kg	230	5.2	5.1	12.3	-	155	+ One of the best BMWs ever, Runner-up in Coys 2001 - Slightly artificial steering feel
BMW M3 CS (E46)	219 F	'05-'07	6/3246	338/7900	269/5000	1495kg	230	5.2	-	-	-	155	+ CSL dynamics without CSL price - Looks like the standard car
BMW M3 CSL (E46)	200 F	'03-'04	6/3246	355/7900	273/4900	1385kg	260	4.9	5.3	12.0	-	155	+ Still superb - Changes from the automated single-clutch 'box are... a... bit... sluggish
BMW M3 Evolution (E36)	148 F	'96-'98	6/3201	317/7400	258/3250	1515kg	215	5.5	5.4	12.8	-	158	+ Performance, image - Never quite as good as the E30
BMW M3 (E30)	165 F	'89-'90	4/2302	212/6750	170/4600	1165kg	185	6.7	6.7	17.8	-	147	+ The best M-car ever - Prices have got out of hand
BMW Z4 M Coupe	097 F	'06-'09	6/3246	338/7900	269/4900	1420kg	242	5.0	-	-	-	155	+ A real driver's car - You've got to be prepared to get stuck in
BMW M Coupe	005 F	'98-'03	6/3246	321/7400	261/4900	1375kg	237	5.3	-	-	-	155	+ Quick and characterful - Lacks finesse
BMW M6 (F13)	218 F	'09-15	8/4395	552/6000	501/1900	1850kg	303	4.2	-	-	-	155	+ Mighty ability, pace, technology - You'll want the Competition Package upgrade, too
BMW M6 (E63)	106 F	'05-'10	10/4999	500/7750	384/6100	1635kg	311	4.2	4.8	10.0	-	155	+ Awesome GT, awesome sports car - SMG gearbox now off the pace
BMW i8	210 F	£106,310	3/1499	357/5800	420/3700	1485kg	244	4.4	-	-	-	155	+ Brilliantly executed concept, sci-fi looks - Safe dynamic set-up
Chevrolet Camaro Z/28	220 F	'14-'16	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 F	£63,295	8/6162	460/6000	465/4600	1496kg	312	4.2	4.4	9.4	-	180	+ Performance, chassis balance, supple ride - Body control could be better
Chevrolet Corvette Z06 (C7)	227 F	£90,445	8/6162	650/6000	650/3600	1598kg	413	3.7	-	-	-	196	+ Mind-boggling raw speed; surprisingly sophisticated - Edgy when really pushed
Ford Mustang 2.3 EcoBoost	222 D	£33,645	4/2261	313/5500	319/3000	1655kg	192	5.8	-	-	-	155	+ Ninety per cent as good as the V8 - Missing ten per cent is what makes the Mustang
Ford Mustang 5.0 V8 GT	248 D	£41,095	8/4951	444/7000	390/4600	1668kg	270	4.6	-	-	-	155	+ 2018MY version gets improved dynamics - Still some way off Europe's finest
Honda Integra Type R (DC2)	200 F	'96-'00	4/1797	187/8000	131/7000	1100kg	173	6.7	6.2	17.9	-	145	+ Arguably the greatest front-drive car ever - Too raw for some
Infiniti Q60S Sport 3.0T	228 D	£43,535	6/2997	400/6400	350/1600	1799kg	226	5.0	-	-	-	155	+ Impressive tech - Electronic systems reduce feeling of involvement
Jaguar F-type Coupe 2.0 i4 300PS	239 D	£50,795	4/1997	296/5500	295/1500	1525kg	197	5.7	-	-	-	155	+ Turbo four-cylinder engine sounds good - But it lacks top-end verve
Jaguar F-type Coupe 3.0 V6 340PS	204 D	£54,065	6/2995	335/6500	332/3500	1567kg	217	5.7	-	-	-	161	+ Drop-dead looks, brilliant chassis, desirable - Engine lacks top-end fight
Jaguar F-type Coupe 3.0 V6 380PS	211 D	£64,815	6/2995	375/6500	339/3500	1584kg	241	5.5	-	-	-	171	+ Exquisite style, more rewarding (and affordable) than roadster - Scrapy on the limit
Jaguar F-type R Coupe AWD	227 D	£92,660	8/5000	542/6500	501/3500	1730kg	318	4.1	3.5	8.1	-	186	+ Better than the rear-drive R in the wet - Less involving in the dry
Jaguar F-type SVR Coupe	224 D	£112,680	8/5000	567/6500	516/3500	1705kg	338	3.7	-	-	-	200	+ A marginally better drive than the AWRD - But by enough to justify the extra outlay
Jaguar F-type R Coupe (RWD)	218 F	'14-'17	8/5000	542/6500	501/3500	1650kg	334	4.2	-	-	-	186	+ Looks, presence, performance, soundtrack - Numpy and boistrous
Jaguar XKR	168 F	'09-'14	8/5000	503/6000	461/2500	1753kg	292	4.8	-	-	-	155	+ Fast and incredibly rewarding Jag - The kids will have to stay at home
Jaguar XKR-S	168 F	'11-'14	8/5000	542/6000	502/2500	1753kg	314	4.4	-	-	-	186	+ Faster and wilder than regular XKR - The F-type R Coupe
Lexus RC F	226 F	£61,310	8/4969	470/6400	391/4800	1765kg	271	4.5	-	-	-	168	+ Great looks, noise, sense of occasion - Too heavy to be truly exciting
Lexus LC 500	241 D	£76,595	8/3456	354	n/a	1985kg	181	5.0	-	-	-	168	+ Excellent comfort and refinement; fine chassis - Hybrid system hurts the fun factor
Lexus LC 500h	231 D	£76,595	8/3456	470/7100	398/4800	1935kg	247	4.7	-	-	-	168	+ Glorious engine, rewarding chassis for a GT car - Numb steering, messy ergonomics
Lister Thunder	247 D	£139,950	8/5000	666/6000	720/5940	1650kg	410	3.2	-	-	-	208	+ Deceptively fast reworked F-type - Never feels as ferocious as the figures suggest
Lotus Evige S (V6)	209 F	'12-'15	6/3456	345/7000	295/4500	1176kg	298	3.8	-	-	-	170	+ Breathtaking road-racer; our joint 2012 Car of the Year - Gearshift not the sweetest
Lotus Evige Sport 350	221 F	£55,900	6/3456	345/7000	295/4500	1125kg	312	3.9	-	-	-	170	+ Further honed Evige, with vastly improved gearshift - Still not easy to get into and out of
Lotus Evige Sport 380	231 F	£67,900	6/3456	375/6700	302/5000	1100kg	343	3.7	-	-	-	178	+ Intense, absorbing and brilliantly capable - Perhaps not an everyday car
Lotus Evige Cup 380	240 D	'17	6/3456	375/6700	302/5000	1050kg	345	3.6	-	-	-	175	+ An absolute riot; feels worth the £83k (new) price tag - Limited build numbers
Lotus Evige Cup 430	243 D	£99,800	6/3456	430/7000	325/2600	1093kg	400	3.3	-	-	-	180	+ The ultimate Evige - Isn't cheap
Lotus Evige S (S2)	105 F	'06-'11	4/1796	218/7800	158/5500	930kg	238	4.3	-	-	-	148	+ Lightweight with a hefty punch - Uninspiring soundtrack
Lotus Evige (S1)	200 F	'00-'01	4/1796	192/7800	146/5000	780kg	247	4.6	-	-	-	136	+ Looks and goes like an Elise racer - A tad lacking in refinement
Lotus Evora	138 F	'09-'15	6/3456	276/6400	258/4700	1382kg	203	5.1	5.6	13.6	-	162	+ Sublime ride and handling, Our 2009 Car of the Year - The Evora S
Lotus Evora S	168 F	'10-'15	6/3456	345/7000	295/4500	1430kg	245	4.8	-	-	-	172	+ A faster and better Evora - But one which spars with the Porsche 911
Lotus Evora 400	216 F	£72,000	6/3456	400/7000	302/3500	1395kg	291	4.2	-	-	-	186	+ Evora excitement levels take a leap - Gearbox still not perfect; punchy pricing
Lotus Evora Sport 410	230 F	'17	6/3456	410/7000	310/3500	1325kg	314	4.2	-	-	-	190	+ Even lighter and sharper Evora - Engine and gearbox behind the best at this price
Lotus Evora GT430	246 F	£112,500	6/3456	430/7000	325/4500	1299kg	336	3.8	-	-	-	190	+ Genuine race-car feel on the road - It ain't cheap; just 60 being made
Maserati GranTurismo Sport	188 F	£93,145	8/4691	454/7000	383/4750	1880kg	245	4.8	-	-	-	186	+ A real sense of occasion to drive; wonderful engine - Rather long in the tooth
Maserati GranTurismo MC	239 D	£109,740	8/4691	454/7000	383/4750	1873kg	246	4.7	-	-	-	186	+ As above but with knobs on - Those knobs don't make it feel any younger
Maserati GranTurismo	114 F	'07-'17	8/42										




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MAKE & MODEL	ISSUE NO.	PRICE	ENGINE Cyl/CC	BHP/RPM	LB FT/RPM	WEIGHT	BHP/TON	0-62MPH (CLAMER)	0-60MPH (0.100)	0-100MPH (0.100)	MAX MPH	EVO RATING
Nissan 370Z	204 F	£29,180	6/3696	323/7000	268/5200	1496kg	219 5.3	-	-	-	155	+ Quicker, leaner, keener than 350Z - Not quite a Cayman-killer
Nissan GT-R Nismo	209 F	£39,375	6/3696	339/7400	274/5200	1496kg	230 5.2	-	-	-	155	+ Sharper looks, improved ride, extra thrills - Engine lacks sparkle
Nissan 350Z	107 F	'03-'09	6/3498	309/6800	264/4800	1532kg	205 5.6	5.5	13.0	155	+ Huge fun, and great value too - Muscle-car vibe not for everyone	
Nissan 242 F	£82,525	6/3799	562/6800	470/3600	1752kg	326 2.7	-	-	-	196	+ More refinement, much improved interior, still fast - Feels a touch less alert	
Nissan GT-R Track Edition (2017MY)	229 D	£94,525	6/3799	562/6800	470/3600	1745kg	327 2.7	-	-	196	+ GT-R regains its sharpness - Getting pricey these days	
Nissan GT-R Nismo (2017MY)	232 F	£151,525	6/3799	592/6800	481/3600	1725kg	349 2.7	-	-	196	+ Incredibly focused - Still too firm to be at its best on UK roads	
Nissan GT-R (2012MY-2016MY)	238 F	'12-'16	6/3799	542/6400	466/3200	1740kg	316 2.7	3.2	7.5	196	+ Quicker and better than before - Stopping your Porsche-owning friends calling it a Datsun	
Nissan GT-R Track Edition (2017MY)	229 D	£93,875	6/3799	562/6800	470/3600	1745kg	327 2.7	-	-	196	+ GT-R regains its sharpness - Getting pricey these days	
Nissan GT-R Nismo (2014MY)	205 F	'14-'16	6/3799	592/6800	481/3200	1720kg	350 2.6	-	-	196	+ Manages to make regular GT-R feel imprecise - Compromised by super-firm suspension	
Nissan GT-R (2010MY)	152 F	'10-'12	6/3799	523/6400	451/3200	1740kg	305 3.0	-	-	194	+ More powerful version of the original - But they're not worlds apart to drive	
Nissan GT-R (2008MY)	125 F	'08-'10	6/3799	473/6400	434/3200	1740kg	276 3.8	-	-	193	+ Our 2008 Car of the Year - You won't see 200mpg often	
Nissan Skyline GT-R (R34)	248 F	'99-'02	6/2568	276/7000	289/4400	1560kg	180 4.8	4.7	12.5	165	+ Big, brutal, and great fun - Needs more than the standard 276bhp	
Nissan Skyline GT-R (R33)	196 F	'97-'99	6/2568	276/6800	271/4400	1540kg	182 4.9	5.4	14.3	155	+ Early proof that Japanese high-tech could work (superbly) - Limited supply	
Peugeot RCZ 1.6 THP 200	155 F	'09-'15	4/1598	197/5500	202/1700	1420kg	141 7.6	7.3	18.1	147	+ Distinctive looks, highly capable handling - Could be a bit more exciting	
Peugeot RCZ R	209 F	'14-'15	4/1598	266/6000	243/1900	1280kg	211 5.9	-	-	155	+ Rewarding and highly effective when fully lit - Dated cabin, steering lacks feel	
Porsche 718 Cayman	229 D	£42,897	4/1988	296/6500	280/1950	1335kg	225 5.1	-	-	170	+ Chassis remains a dream - Sounds like a Toyota GT86	
Porsche 718 Cayman S	230 F	£51,853	4/2497	345/6500	310/1900	1355kg	259 4.6	4.4	-	177	+ Faster and better to drive than ever - Bring earplugs	
Porsche 718 Cayman GTS	247 F	£59,866	4/2497	360/6500	310/1900	1375kg	266 4.6	-	-	180	+ Cracking package of upgrades - Flat-four soundtrack still disappoints	
Porsche Cayman S (981)	202 F	'13-'16	6/3436	321/7400	273/4500	1320kg	247 5.0	4.5	10.5	175	+ The Cayman comes of age - Erm...	
Porsche Cayman GTS (981)	219 F	'14-'16	6/3436	335/7400	280/4750	1345kg	253 4.9	-	-	177	+ Tweaks improve an already sublime package - Slightly 'aftermarket' looks	
Porsche Cayman GT4 (981)	221 F	'15-'16	6/3800	380/7400	310/4750	1340kg	288 4.4	-	-	183	+ Evo Car of the Year 2015 (even though the 991 GT3 RS was there!) - Second-hand prices	
Porsche Cayman S (987)	231 F	'06-'13	6/3436	316/7200	273/4750	1350kg	237 5.2	-	-	172	+ Still want that 911? - Yeah, us too	
Porsche Cayman R (987)	158 F	'11-'13	6/3436	325/7400	273/4750	1295kg	255 5.0	-	-	175	+ Total handling excellence - Styling additions not to all tastes	
Porsche 911 Carrera (991.2)	218 F	£77,891	6/2981	365/6500	332/1700	1430kg	259 4.6	-	-	183	+ Forced induction hasn't ruined the Carrera - Purists won't be happy	
Porsche 911 Carrera T (991.2)	245 F	£85,576	6/2981	365/6500	332/1700	1425kg	260 4.5	-	-	182	+ Lightweight windows, no rear seats, an LSD... Only 5kg lighter than a basic Carrera	
Porsche 911 Carrera S (991.2)	217 F	£87,335	6/2981	414/6500	369/1700	1440kg	292 4.3	-	-	191	+ Blindingly fast - You'll want the sports exhaust	
Porsche 911 Carrera GTS (991.2)	238 F	£95,795	6/2981	444/6500	406/2150	1450kg	311 4.1	-	-	193	+ In rear-drive coupe format, it's everything a 911 should be - Not all GTSs are rear-drive coupes	
Porsche 911 Carrera S (991.1)	201 F	'12-'15	6/3800	394/7400	324/5600	1415kg	283 4.5	4.3	9.5	188	+ A Carrera with supercar pace - Electric steering robs it of some tactility	
Porsche 911 Carrera 4S (991.1)	179 F	'13-'15	6/3800	394/7400	324/5600	1465kg	273 4.5	-	-	185	+ More satisfying than rear-drive 991.1 Carreras - Choose your spec carefully	
Porsche 911 Carrera 4 GTS (991.1)	208 D	'15	6/3800	424/7500	324/5750	1470kg	293 4.4	-	-	189	+ The highlight of the 991.1 Carrera line-up - Pricey for a Carrera	
Porsche 911 Carrera S (997.2)	121 F	'08-'11	6/3800	380/6500	310/4400	1425kg	271 4.7	-	-	188	+ Poise, precision, blinding pace - Feels a bit clinical	
Porsche 911 Carrera S (997.1)	070 F	'04-'08	6/3824	350/6600	295/4600	1420kg	246 4.6	-	-	182	+ Evo Car of the Year 2004 - Tech overload?	
Porsche 911 Carrera (996, 3.4)	008 F	'98-'01	6/3387	300/6800	258/4600	1320kg	231 5.2	-	-	174	+ Evo Car of the Year 1998; beautifully polished - Some like a bit of rough	
Radical RXC Turbo 500R	227 D	'16	6/3496	600/6700	465/4200	1070kg*	561 2.8	-	-	185	+ Immense accessible performance - Fit, finish and detailing lack finesse	
Radical RXC Turbo 500	209 D	'15	6/3496	530/6100	481/5000	1100kg*	490 2.6	-	-	185	+ Huge performance, intuitive adjustability, track ability - Compromised for road use	
Radical RXC Turbo	205 F	'14	6/3496	454/6000	500/3600	940kg*	491 2.6	-	-	185	+ Eats GT3s for breakfast - Might not feel special enough for its price	
Rolls-Royce Wraith	205 D	£240,768	12/6592	624/5600	590/1500	2360kg	260 4.6	-	-	155	+ Refinement, chassis, drivetrain - Shared componentry lets cabin down	
Subaru BRZ	248 F	£22,495	4/1998	197/7000	151/6400	1230kg	163 7.6	-	-	140	+ Fine chassis, great steering - Weak engine, not the slide-happy car they promised	
Toyota GT86	234 F	£26,410	4/1998	197/7000	151/6400	1240kg	161 7.6	6.9	16.5	140	+ More fun than its Subaru BRZ cousin - Same lack of torque, poor interior quality	
Toyota MR2 (Mk1)	237 F	'84-'89	4/1587	122/6600	105/5000	977kg	127 8.2	-	-	124	+ Mid-engined fun comes no more affordable - Finding a good one will take time	
TVR T350C	057 F	'03-'07	6/3605	350/7200	290/5500	1187kg	300 4.5	4.7	10.0	175	+ Kicks, engine - Unsupportive seats, chassis lacks ultimate polish	
TVR Sagaris	097 F	'05-'07	6/3996	406/7500	349/5000	1078kg	383 3.7	-	-	185	+ Looks outrageous - 406bhp feels a touch optimistic	
TVR Tuscan S (Mk2)	076 F	'05-'07	6/3996	400/7000	315/5250	1100kg	369 4.0	-	-	185	+ Possibly TVR's best ever car - Aerodynamic 'enhancements'	
TVR Cerbera Speed Six	004 F	'98-'04	6/3996	350/6800	330/5000	1130kg	315 4.4	5.0	11.4	160+	+ Accomplished and desirable - Check chassis for corrosion	
Volkswagen Scirocco GT 2.0 TSI / GTS	155 F	£26,050	4/1984	211/4500	258/1500	1369kg	158 6.5	-	-	153	+ Golf GTI price and performance - Interior lacks flair	
Volkswagen Scirocco R	200 D	£30,690	4/1984	276/6000	258/2500	1426kg	187 5.7	-	-	155	+ Great engine, grown-up dynamics - Perhaps a little too grown-up for some	

## SUPERCARS



### OUR CHOICE

**McLaren 720S.** The looks take a little getting used to, but there's no arguing with the driving experience, which blends scalpel-sharp precision with mind-boggling pace and suspension that works with the road to make it all useable. And it's faster than a P1 on track, too. An electrifying experience.



### BEST OF THE REST

The **Ferrari 488 GTB** has a spectacular turbocharged V8 and the chassis to exploit it, while the **Lamborghini Huracán Performante** (left) counters with a rip-roaring naturally aspirated V10. The Lambo's relative, the **Audi R8 V10**, is a corking entry-level supercar, and the latest **Porsche 911 GT3** is as great to drive as they have always been.

Aston Martin Vanquish (Mk2)	203 F	£192,995	12/5935	568/6650	465/5500	1739kg	332 3.8	-	-	201	+ Much better than the DBS it succeeds, especially in 2015MY form - It's no Ferrari F12
Aston Martin Vanquish S (Mk2)	235 F	£199,950	12/5935	595/7000	465/5500	1739kg	348 3.5	3.9	8.3	201	+ Noise, poise, drama and charm - Not as rounded as the DB11
Aston Martin Vanquish S (Mk1)	110 F	'05-'07	12/5935	520/7000	425/5800	1875kg	282 4.8	4.9	10.1	200	+ Vanquish joins the supercar greats - A tad intimidating at the limit
Aston Martin One-77	179 F	'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 RWS	247 F	£112,450	10/5204	533/7800	398/6500	1590kg	341 3.7	-	-	199	+ The first rear-wheel-drive Audi for 40 years - Drives largely like its 4WD counterpart
Audi R8 V10	234 F	£123,330	10/5204	533/7800	398/6500	1640kg	330 3.5	-	-	198	+ All the R8 you really need - Some may hanker after a manual gearbox
Audi R8 Spyder V10	239 F	£132,020	10/5204	533/7800	398/6500	1720kg	315 3.6	3.2	7.2	197	+ Open top even better for enjoying that V10 - Being mistaken for a poser; cramped seating
Audi R8 V10 Plus	229 F	£138,330	10/5204	602/8250	413/6500	1580kg	387 3.2	-	-	205	+ 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 4.1	3.9	8.4	194	+ Real supercar feel - The V8 is cheaper, and still superb
Audi R8 V10 Plus	190 F	'13-'15	10/5204	542/8000	398/6500	1570kg	351 3.8	-	-	198	+ 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 F	'15	10/5204	562/8000	398/6500	1595kg	358 3.4	-	-	198	+ More of everything that makes the R8 great - S-tronic transmission not perfect
BMW M1	110 F	'78-'81	6/3500	277/6500	239/5000	1303kg	216 5.9	-	-	161	+ Early supercar icon - A bit under-endowed these days
Bugatti Chiron	244 F	£2.5m	16/7993	1479/6700	1180/2000	1995kg	753 2.5	-	-	261	+ Backs up the numbers with feel and emotion - Limited top speed(!)
Bugatti Veyron 16.4	134 F	'05-'11	16/7993	987/6000	922/2200	1888kg	531 2.5	2.8	5.8	253	+ Superbly engineered four-wheel-drive quad-turbo rocket - Er, lacks luggage space?
Bugatti Veyron Grand Sport	133 F	'09-'15	16/7993	987/6000	922/2200	1990kg	504 2.7	-	-	253	+ Warp speed and ferocious noise sans-roof - Ridiculous broly/roof thing
Bugatti Veyron 16.4 Super Sport	151 F	'10-'11	16/7993	1183/6400	1106/3000	1838kg	654 2.5	-	-	258	+ Was once the world's fastest supercar - Limited to 258mph for us mere mortals
Bugatti Veyron Grand Sport Vitesse	185 F	'11-'15	16/7993	1183/6400	1106/3000	1990kg	604 2.6	-	-	255	+ The world's fastest convertible - Limited to 258mph for us mere mortals
Bugatti EB110	078 F	'91-'95	12/3500	552/8000	451/3750	1618kg	347 3.6	-	-	213	+ Superbly engineered four-wheel-drive quad-turbo rocket - It just fizzled out
Chevrolet Corvette ZR1	133 F	'09-'13	8/6162	638/6500	604/3800	1528kg	424 3.4	3.8	7.6	205	+ Huge pace and character - Take plenty of brave pills if there's rain
Ferrari 488 GTB	228 F	£183,984	8/3902	661/6500	561/3000	1475kg	455 3.0	-	-	205+	+ Staggeringly capable - Lacks a little of the 458's heart and excitement
Ferrari 488 Spider	216 D	£204,411	8/3902	661/6500	561/3000	1525kg	440 3.0	-	-	203+	+ All the usual 488 thrills, but with the wind in your hair - See left
Ferrari 458 Italia	221 F	'09-'15	8/4497	562/9000	398/6000	1485kg	384 3.4	3.2	6.8	202+	+ An astounding achievement - Paddleshift only
Ferrari 458 Speciale	248 F	'14-'15	8/4497	597/9000	398/6000	1395kg	435 3.0	-	-	202+	+ Evo Car of the Year 2014 - If you don't own a regular 458, nothing
Ferrari F430	163 F	'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 F	'07-'10	8/4308	503/8500	347/5250	1350kg	378 3.6	3.5	7.7	198	+ Successful F1 technology transplant - Likes to shout about it
Ferrari 360 Modena	163 F	'99-'04	8/3586	394/8500	275/4750	1390kg	288 4.5	-	-	183+	+ Worthy successor to 355 - Not quite as involving as it should be
Ferrari 360 Challenge Stradale	242 F	'03-'04	8/3586	420/8500	275/4750	1280kg	333 4.1	-	-	186	+ Totally exhilarating road-racer - Automated single-clutch 'box dates it



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MAKE & MODEL	ISSUE NO.	PRICE	ENGINE CYL/CC	BHP/RPM	LB FT/RPM	WEIGHT	BHP/TON	0-62MPH (CLAM)	0-60MPH (EST)	0-100MPH (EST)	MAX MPH	EVO RATING
Ferrari F355 Berlinetta	231F	'94-'99	8/3496	374/8250	268/6000	1350kg*	281	4.7	-	-	183	+ Looks terrific, sounds even better - Are you kidding?
Ferrari F12 Superfast	238F	£253,004	12/6496	789/8500	529/7000	1630kg	492	2.9	-	-	211	+ Over-delivers on your expectations - Not a classic beauty
Ferrari F12 Berlinetta	190F	'12-'17	12/6262	730/8250	509/6000	1630kg	455	3.1	-	-	211+	+ 730bhp isn't too much power for the road - Super-quick steering is an acquired taste
Ferrari F12tdf	230F	'17	12/6262	769/8500	520/6250	1520kg	514	2.9	-	-	211+	+ Alarmingly fast - Doesn't flow like a 458 Speciale
Ferrari 599 GTB Fiorano	101F	'06-'12	12/5999	611/7600	448/5600	1690kg	368	3.7	3.5	7.4	205	+ evo Car of the Year 2006 - Banks are getting harder to rob
Ferrari 599 GTO	161F	'11-'12	12/5999	661/8250	457/6500	1605kg	418	3.4	-	-	208+	+ One of the truly great Ferraris - Erm, the air con isn't very good
Ferrari 575M Fiorano Handling Pack	200F	'02-'06	12/5748	508/7250	434/5250	1688kg	298	3.7	4.2	9.6	205+	+ Fiorano pack makes 575 truly great - It should have been standard
Ferrari 550 Maranello	169F	'96-'02	12/5474	478/7000	420/5000	1690kg	287	4.4	-	-	199	+ Everything - Nothing
Ferrari GTC4 Lusso T	246D	£200,165	8/3855	602/7500	560/3000	1865kg	328	3.5	-	-	199	+ Effortless, comfortable GT - Misses the richer soundtrack of the V12
Ferrari GTC4 Lusso	225D	£230,430	12/6262	680/8000	514/5750	1920kg	360	3.4	-	-	208	+ Rear-wheel steering increases agility - Not as engaging as other Ferraris
Ferrari FF	194F	'11-'15	12/6262	651/8000	504/6000	1880kg	347	3.7	-	-	208	+ Four seats and 4WD, but a proper Ferrari - Looks divide opinion
Ferrari 612 Scaglietti	090F	'04-'11	12/5748	533/7250	434/5250	1875kg	289	4.0	4.3	9.8	199	+ Awesomely capable grand tourer - See above
Ferrari LaFerrari	203F	'13-'15	12/6262	950/9000	664/6750	1574kg	613	3.0	-	-	217+	+ Perhaps the greatest Ferrari ever - Brakes lack a touch of precision on track
Ferrari Enzo	203F	'02-'04	12/5999	651/7800	485/5500	1365kg	485	3.7	3.5	6.7	217+	+ Intoxicating, exploitable - Cabin detailing falls short of a Zonda or F1s
Ferrari F50	186F	'95-'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	222F	'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	241F	\$450,000	6/3497	647/6250	550/5900	1385kg*	475	2.8	-	-	216	+ Everything it does on track - Too many of the things it does on the road
Ford GT	180F	'04-'06	8/5409	550/6500	500/3750	1583kg	353	3.9	-	-	205	+ Our 2005 Car of the Year - Don't scalp yourself getting in
Hennessey Venom GT	200F	'11-'17	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	246F	£144,765	6/3493	573	476/2000	1776kg	328	2.9	3.0	6.9	191	+ Blisteringly quick and brilliantly engineered - Limited range on a full tank
Honda NSX (NA2)	188F	'97-'05	6/3179	276/7300	224/5300	1410kg	196	5.7	-	-	168	+ The useable supercar - 276bhp sounds a bit weedy today
Honda NSX-R (NA2)	100F	'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
Jaguar XJ220	157F	'92-'94	6/3498	542/7200	475/4500	1470kg	375	3.7	-	-	213	+ Britain's greatest supercar... until McLaren built the F1
Koenigsegg One:1	202F	c£2.0m	8/5065	1341/7500	1011/6000	1306kg	1002	2.9	-	-	273	+ One of the most powerful cars we've tested - It's sold out. We couldn't afford one anyway
Koenigsegg Agera R	180F	'11-'14	8/5032	1124/7100	885/2700	1435kg	796	2.8	-	-	273	+ As fast and exciting as your body can handle - It's Veyron money
Koenigsegg CCRX Edition	118F	'08-'10	8/4800	1004/7000	796/5600	1280kg*	797	2.9	-	-	250+	+ One of the world's fastest cars - Spiky power delivery
Lamborghini Huracán RWD	229F	£155,400	10/5204	572/8000	397/6500	1389kg*	385	3.4	-	-	199	+ More seductive than the 4WD Huracán - Feels like there's more to come
Lamborghini Huracán	209D	£186,760	10/5204	602/8250	413/6500	1422kg*	430	3.2	-	-	201+	+ Defies the numbers; incredible point-to-point pace - Takes work to find its sweet-spot
Lamborghini Huracán Performante	242F	£125,000	10/5204	631/8000	442/6500	1383kg*	464	2.9	-	-	201+	+ The realisation of the Huracán's ever elusive potential - Kitchen-worktop carbonfibre
Lamborghini Gallardo LP560-4	180D	'08-'13	10/5204	552/8000	398/6500	1410kg*	398	3.7	-	-	202	+ Still a missile from A to B - Feels a little dated next to some rivals
Lamborghini Gallardo LP550-2 Balboni	138F	'09-'10	10/5204	542/8000	398/6500	1380kg*	399	3.9	-	-	199	+ Mad, rear-wheel-drive Lambo - Limited numbers
Lamborghini LP570-4 Superleggera	152F	'10-'13	10/5204	562/8000	398/6500	1340kg*	426	3.4	3.5	-	202	+ Less weight and more power than original Superleggera - LP560-4 runs it very close
Lamborghini Gallardo	094F	'03-'08	10/4961	513/8000	376/4250	1430kg*	364	4.0	4.3	9.4	196	+ On a full-bore start it spins all four wheels. Cool - Slightly clunky e-gear
Lamborghini Gallardo Superleggera	104F	'07-'08	10/4961	522/8000	376/4250	1376kg*	373	3.8	-	-	196	+ Lighter, more agile - Grabby carbon brakes, clunky e-gear
Lamborghini Aventador S	246F	£271,146	12/6498	730/8400	509/5500	1575kg*	471	2.9	-	-	217	+ A more agile, more connected Aventador - Synthetic steering
Lamborghini Aventador SV	216F	£321,723	12/6498	740/8400	509/5500	1509kg*	493	2.8	-	-	217+	+ More exciting than the standard Aventador - ISR gearbox inconsistent
Lamborghini Aventador	194F	'11-'17	12/6498	690/8250	509/5500	1575kg*	445	2.9	-	-	217	+ Most important new Lambo since the Countach - Can feel a little clumsy
Lamborghini Murciélago LP640	093F	'06-'11	12/6496	631/8000	487/6000	1665kg*	385	3.8	-	-	211	+ Compelling old-school supercar - You'd better be on your toes
Lamborghini Murciélago LP670-4 SV	200F	'09-'11	12/6496	661/8000	487/6500	1565kg*	429	3.3	3.2	7.3	212	+ A supercar in its truest, wildest sense - Be prepared for stares
Lamborghini Murciélago	089D	'01-'06	12/6192	572/7500	479/5400	1650kg*	351	4.0	-	-	206	+ Gorgeous, capable and incredibly friendly - V12 feels stressed
Lamborghini Diablo VT 6.0	019F	'00-'02	12/5992	543/7100	457/5500	1625kg*	343	3.9	-	-	208	+ Best-built, best-looking Diablo of all - People's perceptions
Lexus LFA/LFA Nürburgring	200F	'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	079F	'04-'05	12/5998	621/7500	481/5500	1445kg	437	3.8	-	-	205	+ Rarer than an Enzo - The Ferrari's badge
McLaren 540C	234F	£135,000	8/3799	533/7500	398/3500	1311kg*	413	3.5	-	-	199	+ An excellent junior supercar - The 570S is still better to drive
McLaren 570S	229F	£149,000	8/3799	562/7500	443/5000	1440kg	397	3.2	-	-	204	+ A truly fun and engaging sports car - McLaren doesn't call it a supercar!
McLaren 570S Track Pack	235D	£159,750	8/3799	562/7500	443/5000	1415kg	404	3.2	-	-	204	+ Feels like a 675LT that's been dialled down a couple of notches - Engine response lacks edge
McLaren 570S Spider	239F	£164,750	8/3799	562/7500	443/5000	1498kg	381	3.2	-	-	204	+ Even more fun and engagement than hard-top 570S - Industrial engine note
McLaren 570GT	228F	£157,000	8/3799	562/7500	443/5000	1495kg	382	3.4	-	-	204	+ Blurs the line between grand tourer and supercar brilliantly - 570S is more involving
McLaren 570GT Sport Pack	246D	£161,900	8/3799	562/7500	443/5000	1486kg	384	3.4	-	-	204	+ 570GT looks with 570S responses - It should be the standard set-up
McLaren 720S	244F	£218,200	8/3994	710/7250	568/5500	1283kg*	562	2.9	2.9	5.6	212	+ evo Car of the Year 2017 - Favours precision over emotion
McLaren 650S	196F	'14-'17	8/3799	641/7250	500/6000	1428kg	456	3.0	-	-	207	+ Better brakes, balance and looks than 12C; more power too - Which all comes at a price
McLaren 675LT	228F	'15-'17	8/3799	666/7100	516/5500	1328kg	510	2.9	-	-	205	+ Runner-up at eCoty 2015; asks questions of the P1 - Aventador price tag
McLaren 675LT Spider	222D	'16-'17	8/3799	666/7100	516/5500	1368kg	495	2.9	-	-	203	+ Spectacularly fast; involving, too - Might mess up your hair
McLaren 12C	228F	'11-'14	8/3799	616/7500	442/3000	1434kg	435	3.3	-	-	207	+ Staggering performance, refinement - Engine noise can be grating
McLaren P1	228F	'13-'15	8/3799	903/7500	664/4000	1490kg	616	2.8	-	-	217	+ Freakish breadth of ability - At its mind-bending best on track
McLaren F1	228F	'94-'98	12/6064	627/7500	479/4000	1188kg	560	3.2	-	-	240	+ Still the most single-minded supercar ever - There'll never be another
Mercedes-AMG GT R	236F	£143,260	8/3982	571/6250	516/1900	1555kg	377	3.6	3.3	7.1	198	+ Fun and blisteringly fast; a true rival for the 911 GT3 - A touch showy, perhaps
Mercedes-Benz SLS AMG	159F	'10-'15	8/6208	563/6800	479/4750	1620kg	335	3.9	4.1	8.4	197	+ Great engine and chassis (gullwing doors too!) - Slightly tardy gearbox
Mercedes-Benz SLS AMG Black Series	204F	'13-'15	8/6208	622/7400	468/5500	1550kg	408	3.6	-	-	196	+ Stunning engine, superb body control - Be careful on less-than-smooth roads...
Mercedes-Benz SLR McLaren	228F	'03-'07	8/5439	617/6500	575/3250	1693kg	370	3.8	-	-	208	+ Zonda-pace, 575-style drivability - Dreadful brake feel
Noble M600	186F	c£200,000	8/4439	650/6800	604/3800	1198kg*	551	3.5	3.8	7.7	225	+ Spiritual successor to the Ferrari F40 - It's a bit pricey
Pagani Huayra	185F	c£1m	12/5980	720/5800	731/2250	1350kg*	542	3.3	-	-	224	+ Our joint 2012 Car of the Year - Engine isn't as nape-prickling as the Zonda's
Pagani Zonda 760RS	170F	£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 T3	096F	'02-'05	12/7291	555/5900	553/4050	1280kg*	441	3.7	-	-	220	+ evo Car of the Year 2001 (in earlier 2.0 form) - Values have gone up a fair bit since then
Pagani Zonda F	186F	'05-'06	12/7291	602/6150	575/4000	1230kg*	497	3.6	-	-	214+	+ Everything an Italian supercar ought to be - Looks a bit blingy next to a Carrera GT
Pagani Zonda Cinque Roadster	147D	'09-'10	12/7291	669/6200	575/4000	1210kg*	562	3.4	-	-	217+	+ The best Zonda ever - Doesn't come up in the classifieds often
Porsche 911 GT3 (991.2)	247F	£111,802	6/3996	493/8250	339/6000	1413kg	355	3.9	-	-	198	+ Almost impossible to criticise - Not the easiest car to place an order for
Porsche 911 GT2 RS (991.2)	243F	£207,506	6/3800	690/7000	553/2500	1470kg	477	2.8	-	-	211	+ A proper, angry turbocharged Porsche - Too noisy for trackdays; 'limited availability'
Porsche 911 GT3 (991.1)	206F	'16-'16	6/3799	468/8250	324/6250	1430kg	333	3.5	-	-	196	+ evo Car of the Year 2013 - PDK only
Porsche 911 GT3 RS (991.1)	223F	'15-'16	6/3996	493/8250	339/6250	1420kg	353	3.3	3.0	7.1	193	+ Sensationally good to drive - The Cayman GT4 is even better
Porsche 911 R (991.1)	229F	'16	6/3996	493/8250	339/6250	1370kg	366	3.8	-	-	200	+ evo Car of the Year 2016 - Limited availability
Porsche 911 GT3 (997.2)	182F	'09-'11	6/3797	429/7600	317/6250	1395kg	312	4.1	4.2	9.2	194	+ Even better than the car it replaced - Give us a minute...
Porsche 911 GT3 RS (3.8, 997.2)	200F	'10-'11	6/3797	444/7900	317/6750	1370kg	329	4.0	-	-	193	+ We named it our favourite car from the first 200 issues of evo - For people like us, nothing
Porsche 911 GT3 RS 4.0 (997.2)File	187F	'11-'12	6/3996	493/8250	339/5750	1360kg	368	3.8	-	-	193	+ evo Car of the Year 2011 - Unforgiving on-road ride; crazy used prices
Porsche 911 GT2 RS (997.2)	204F	'10-'13	6/3600	611/6500	516/2250	1370kg	453	3.5	-	-	205	+ More powerful than a Carrera GT. Handles, too - Erm...
Porsche 911 GT3 (997.1)	182F	'07-'09	6/3600	409/7600	298/5500	1395kg	298	4.3	4.3	9.4	192	+ Runner-up at evo Car of the Year 2006 - Ferrari 599 GTBs
Porsche 911 GT3 RS (997.1)	105F	'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 already brilliant GT3
Porsche 911 GT3 (996.2)	221F	'03-'05	6/3600									



## MILTON KEYNES

*Where better for drifting away than an urban jungle in the dead of night – the perfect playground*

BLEARILY YOU MAKE YOUR WAY BACK across the dark landing, navigating the creaky floorboards like a somnambulating ninja so that no noise should trigger more crying from the small set of lungs next door. You sink into bed and, as your eyes close, you wonder if perhaps you can get just one more hour until a demand for milk is made...

The street lights flicker, illuminating the road ahead in pools of orange. There's something a bit *Initial D*, a bit *Midnight Togue* about the scene, yet it looks like your commute to the station. It *is* your commute to the station. But there won't be many trains running out of Milton Keynes Central at this time of night. A dual carriageway stretches ahead of you, part of the much-mocked MK grid system laid out in the 1960s. And at the end of the half-mile stretch of tarmac is... a

roundabout. One of 130 roundabouts. The perfect playground.

You look across at the large piece of metal pipe protruding from the floorpan. Things begin to make sense. The yellow stripe marking 12 o'clock on the steering wheel starts to take on more significance.

Select first with a *clunk*, pull back on the big handbrake, lots of revs, then sidestep the clutch to leave a perfect 11 on the road as you rattle up through the gears.

Hard on the brakes, second gear, don't match the revs but instead clutch-kick the rear of the car out to the right. Hold the slide on the throttle until the last moment, then lift off, and as the rear tyres grip and flick the back of the car across to the left, let the wheel run smoothly through your hands. Pick up the throttle so as not to hit the lock-stops and then hold the drift past all four exits as you complete a full

lap of the circular road furniture.

Spot the exit through the side window, bring the car smoothly back into something like a straight line and admire the ghostly white miasma in your mirrors as you accelerate away. It's like the roundabout has blown a flawless smoke ring at the sky.

You make your way across the city in a series of growls, chuffs and chirrups, the rear wheels spinning in unison with the locked diff. The larger, more open roundabouts allow for faster drifts; quick, positive pulls on the big handbrake lever pitching the Nissan 200SX into high-speed slides. A petrol station attendant looks up as a wall of sound and smoke provides the briefest of interludes to his otherwise noiseless night shift. It's past so fast that it might have been an apparition were it not for the lingering vaporised rubber, illuminated by the forecourt lights.

In a flash you realise you've passed the station, so you prepare to back it into the next roundabout and return on the other side of the road. There's a wail of protest from the tyres. Perhaps they're down to the canvas? Oh, no. It's more of a cry. Time for milk. Just a dream.

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