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NEW MÉGANE RS v CIVIC TYPE R v GOLF R

Few automotive sectors are as competitive as that of the hot hatch. Honda has enjoyed a prolonged time in the limelight and Volkswagen has shaken the foundations with its Golf R. But now Renault Sport is back, and with its new Mégane RS is looking to reclaim its crown once more. Two days on the road and a day at the test track will determine who claims top spot

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IT WOULDN'T HAVE BEEN POSSIBLE WITHOUT

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Bedford Autodrome, Rob Gould



Ed speak

ONE CAR. ONE ROAD. WHAT WOULD

they be? It's the perennial question that's impossible to ignore in this game and always a

brain scrambler to answer.

Your reply needs careful consideration. You don't want to blurt out 'Mk3 Fiesta RS1800 on the A414', or anything involving an MGF, for reasons that should be plainly obvious to all who have had the misfortune to drive either.

You also need to avoid nominating a car you've never driven but quite like the look of, because that could end in you suggesting you'd like to drive an Alfa 4C, which will only take you on a journey to colossal disappointment.

You need to avoid crashing into the obvious cliché, too. A Ferrari on the Stelvio Pass? Italy has so many more great roads to offer than one full of tourist coaches and cyclists, and the last thing you want when enjoying a prime slice of Maranello metal is a crowd. Supersaloon on a German autobahn? Once you've hit the limiter, what next? Keep bashing into it with the frequency of a teenager throwing a tantrum each time you turn the Wi-Fi off?

Not easy, is it? This month, evo's deputy editor Adam Towler faced the dilemma of which road to drive McLaren's Senna on – as you can read on page 54, I think you'll agree he chose well. From the roads, to the landscape and the hospitality, the Scottish Highlands are near-impossible to beat.

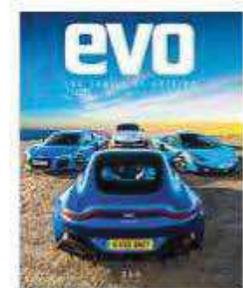
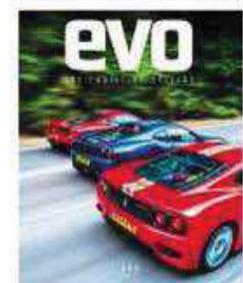
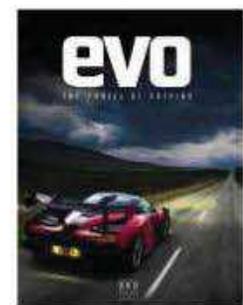
So where would you go and what would your car be? Let me know your one-car, one-road combination at letters@evo.co.uk.

While you're deliberating the above, why not join us at Rockingham on 24 August for our penultimate track evening of the season. With our other dates sold out, this is your last opportunity this year to drive BMW's latest range of M-cars on track, and to meet the evo team and enjoy passenger rides in our Fast Fleet cars. You can book your space at evo.co.uk. I'll see you there.

Stuart Gallagher, Editor @stuartg917

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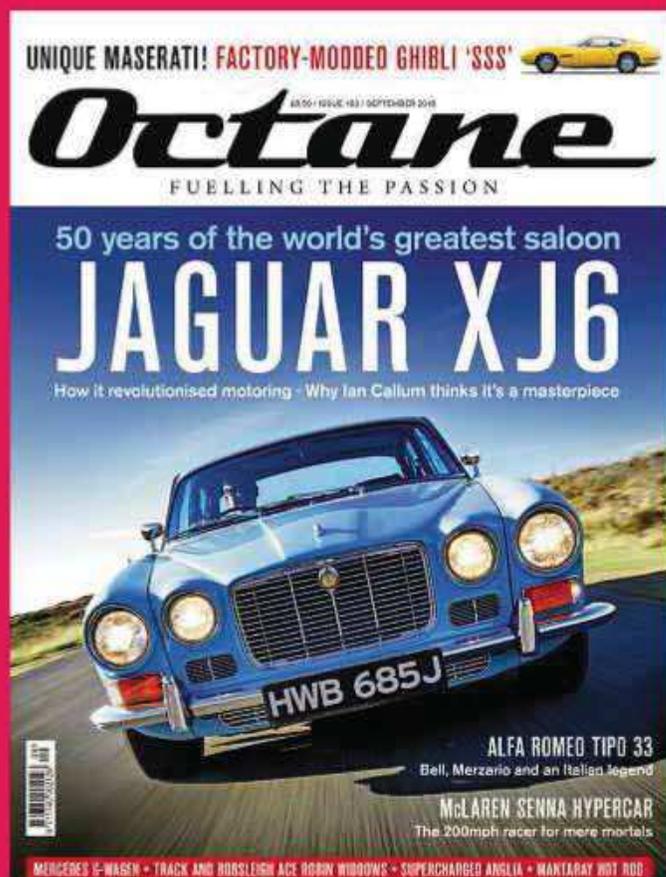
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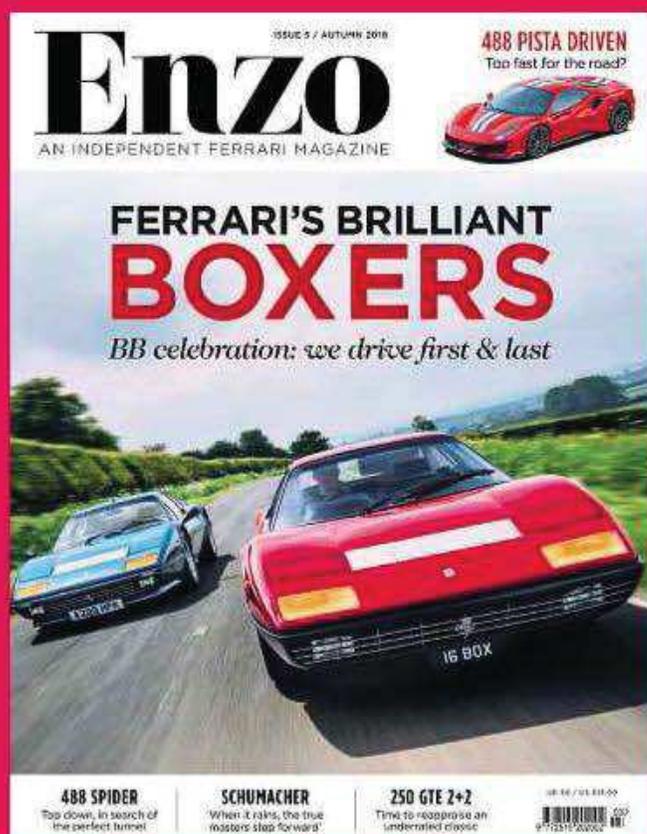
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- ▶ Bell, Merzario and Galli on the flat-12 Alfa Romeo Tipo 33 racer
- ▶ Mercedes G-Wagen: off-road in the original Land Rover rival

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Atom bomb

A new Ariel Atom? That's
next year's trackdays
sorted, then...

THIS IS THE ALL-NEW ARIEL ATOM 4. AT A glance it may look near-identical to the three Atoms that have come before, but closer inspection reveals a host of significant changes under the (minimalist) skin.

The fourth-generation Atom features a new chassis and engine, revised suspension, and new, very 21st century additions such as optional carbonfibre wheels and a new TFT driver's display behind the steering wheel. The car's core ideology is much the same as before, however, keeping the Atom exactly where we want it, and that's focusing on offering the most scintillating driving experience possible, on road and track.

Set for production in the spring of next year, this is all you need to know about 2019's most exciting new track car.



1 CHASSIS

The Atom 4 shares the same type of exoskeletal chassis as previous iterations, but it has, according to Ariel, been thoroughly redesigned for the new car. Utilising larger-diameter tubular steel for the main structure, the chassis is bronze-welded by hand and boasts a 15 per cent increase in rigidity over the Atom 3's. The bodywork has also been honed, reducing drag and improving the overall aero balance over the car. The aeroscreen has been revised, too, now more effectively funnelling air into the top-mounted intake.

2 ENGINE

The supercharged 2-litre Honda K20Z engine used in previous Atoms has been swapped for a different 2-litre Honda unit: the turbocharged K20C, as fitted to the current Civic Type R. Power is rated at 320bhp, with 310lb ft of torque available at 3000rpm. The switch to a turbocharged motor will mean the loss of the previous car's ferocious top end and addictive supercharger whine, but the new turbo rush could bring its own character to this latest Atom.

3 'INTERIOR'

Inside, there have been a number of ergonomic changes. Firstly, the Atom's traditional joined seats have been replaced with individual buckets, allowing further refinement of the driving position. The cockpit itself is slightly longer and wider, too, so can now accommodate bigger occupants. The instruments have also been updated, the old car's LCD digital display having been replaced with a colour TFT screen, which brings with it much greater functionality, including the ability to tailor the display for road or track driving.



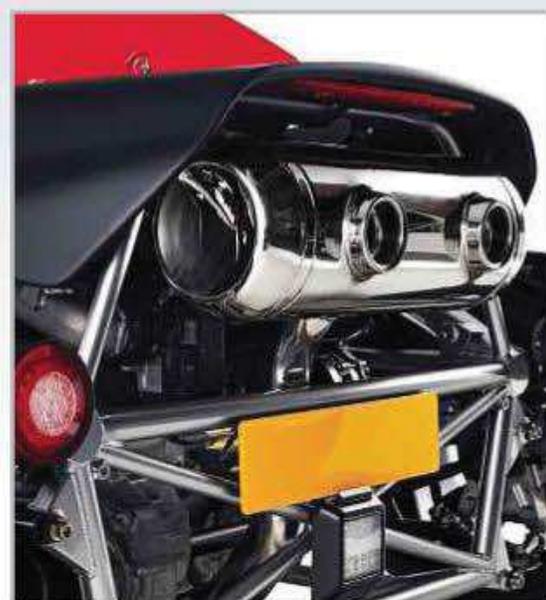
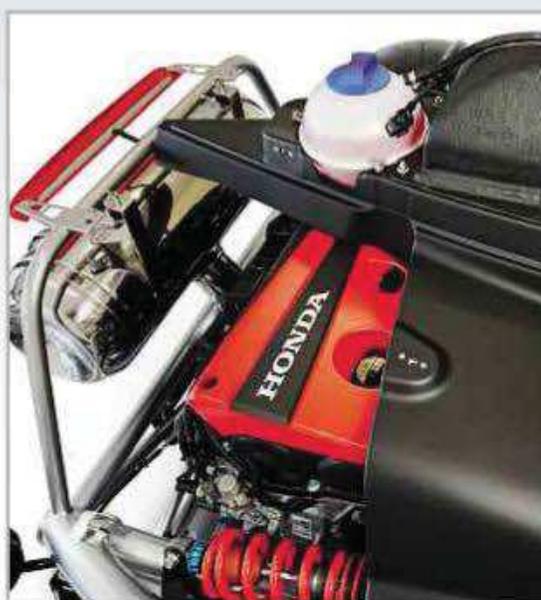
4 SUSPENSION

The Atom 4 retains the inboard pushrod suspension that has been in continual development since the original Atom's conception nearly 20 years ago, but this latest car introduces new geometry that aims to reduce squat and dive under acceleration and braking and minimise roll at speed. All-new Bilstein dampers are utilised as standard, while an optional Öhlins package is currently in development and will be available as an option.

HOW THE ATOM 4 COMPARES

	ARIEL ATOM 4	ARIEL ATOM 3.5	CATERHAM SEVEN 620S
Engine	In-line 4-cyl, 1996cc, turbocharger	In-line 4-cyl, 1998cc, supercharger	In-line 4-cyl, 1999cc, supercharger
Power	320bhp @ 6500rpm	310bhp @ 8400rpm	310bhp @ 7700rpm
Torque	310lb ft @ 3000rpm	169lb ft @ 7200rpm	219lb ft @ 7350rpm
Weight	595kg (dry)	550kg (dry)	610kg (dry)
Power-to-weight	546bhp/ton (dry)	573bhp/ton (dry)	516bhp/ton (dry)
0-60mph	2.8sec	2.7sec	3.4sec
Top speed	162mph	155mph	155mph
Basic price	£39,975	£38,000	£47,995
On sale	Spring 2019	Now	Now

“The previous car’s ferocious top end will be lost, but the new turbo rush could bring its own character”



Above left: turbo engine produces 10bhp and 14lb ft more than outgoing supercharged unit. **Left:** heavily redesigned chassis is 15 per cent stiffer



New P1 confirmed for 2025

British supercar maker announces successor to its 903bhp hypercar along with hybrid power for all new McLarens within six years as part of £1.2billion plan

FIFTEEN YEARS. THAT'S HOW LONG IT took McLaren Automotive to replace its very first hypercar – its very first series road car – the F1 with the P1. Now the Woking concern is hoping to slash a third off that time when it comes to replacing the latter, having confirmed that the P1's successor will arrive before 2025.

The announcement came at the Goodwood Festival of Speed in July. As the covers were coming off the new 600LT, McLaren CEO Mike Flewitt also presented a new 'Track 25' strategy, which outlines the company's targets as far as 2025. This itself is an update to the earlier Track 22 strategy (up to 2022) revealed at the Geneva motor show in 2016.

Just over 24 months ago that plan was to launch 15 Sports, Super and Ultimate Series cars, along with a handful of specials, by 2022, all paid for by a £1billion investment. Fifty per cent of these cars would be hybrid powered. That plan has now been revised.

While three years have been added to the timescale, so has a further £200million of investment. The model count has increased to 18, too, and starts post 600LT. And rather than 50 per cent of the range being hybrid powered, all new McLarens will have some form of hybrid power by 2024.

Alongside the new Sports and Super

Series models (we expect the 570 line-up will be completely replaced, as will the 720S), McLaren will also deliver both the three-seat Speedtail (previously codenamed BP23), a handful of specials in a similar vein to the Senna, and a successor to the P1.

Designed to be the fastest McLaren ever, the Speedtail will take on the mantle of being the true successor to the three-seat F1, with the remit of topping its maximum speed of 240.1mph. The Speedtail is still on track for a 2019 reveal. However, what wasn't in the Track 22 strategy, but is in Track 25, is a new P1.

Expected to be the last model in the Track 25 programme, the new P1 will again utilise a hybrid powertrain, but Flewitt is conscious that McLaren can't just build a more powerful V8-engined P1. 'We won't get into a power race with any of our cars, but we are happy to be in a lightweight race. I think we're currently winning that race,' he said.

TRACK 25: THE NUMBERS

18 new models **100 per cent** hybrid power by 2024 **£1.2bn** investment **7-year** timeframe **6000** production target for 2025 **70 per cent** McLaren Automotive's contribution to McLaren Group **£800m** turnover

The next P1 will therefore be the ultimate expression of everything McLaren knows about lightweight construction. Its carbonfibre cell and bodywork will be the lightest imaginable, that's a given, but it's the powertrain that will define the car and the company.

Along with advancements in both electric motor and battery technology, McLaren will use everything it learnt during the P1's development to guarantee its replacement leads the field. Who knows, it might even set a lap time at the Ring...

We should also expect a new internal combustion engine, too, for the existing twin-turbocharged V8 will have been in production for a decade come 2021.

But could the next P1 be pure electric? The idea hasn't been dismissed. However, at this stage the technology is considered to be better suited to a Sports or Super Series car. 'An electric McLaren would have to meet a very strict set of requirements,' Flewitt explained. 'It would need a range of 300km or be able to complete ten flat-out laps at the Nardo Proving Ground. We're probably a way off from that just yet. We are looking at synthetic, CO2-neutral E-fuels, however, to use in our combustion engines.'

For one so young, McLaren's ambitions continue to grow.





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by ANTONY INGRAM & JORDAN KATSIANIS

Mégane RS Trophy to land this autumn

Hot hatch's 296bhp heralds most powerful Renault Sport car ever

RENAULT IS WASTING NO TIME IN offering a Trophy version of its latest Mégane RS. Set to go on sale this autumn, the new Trophy follows a familiar path, gaining more power and a sharper chassis to take it beyond the standard car.

With 296bhp – 20bhp more than the regular RS – the Trophy will be Renault Sport's most powerful car to date. It's far from an ECU job, though. Upcoming WLTP emissions regulations have necessitated the fitment of a particulate filter, which has increased exhaust back-pressure,

so the engineers have responded with a lower-friction, ceramic ball bearing turbocharger for quicker responses, and a valved exhaust for greater flow – and more noise when it's desired. Six-speed manual and dual-clutch EDC transmissions are available, the latter rated for greater torque (310lb ft versus 295 for the manual, compared to 288 for the standard car).

The Trophy will get the Cup chassis as standard, which brings a Torsen limited-slip differential, firmer dampers and stiffer springs and anti-roll bars. Bi-

material (aluminium and cast-iron) front brake discs – an option on the regular RS – are standard, saving 1.8kg apiece and being more resistant to fade. From 2019 it will also be possible to replace the standard 19-inch wheels and Bridgestone S001 tyres with lighter (by 2kg per corner) 19s fitted with stickier S007s. And Recaro seats will be an option from the off.

Of course, the new model still leaves room for an even more hardcore Trophy R, so you might want to hold off on that Civic Type R purchase for a little longer...



Superlight Singer

Light weight, heavy price

CALIFORNIA-BASED PORSCHE TUNER AND restomodder Singer Vehicle Design has revealed its most extreme take on the 911 yet. Actually a collaboration between Singer and Williams Advanced Engineering, the 'Dynamic Lightweight Study' makes extensive use of carbonfibre, magnesium and titanium for a kerb weight of 990kg and is powered by a 500bhp 4-litre flat-six with a 9000rpm red line. It's not cheap, though, at £1.4million...



Macan facelifted

New look for mid-sized SUV

FOUR YEARS AND 350,000 UNITS AFTER its launch, Porsche's Macan SUV has been treated to a facelift. Highlights include a new, wider-looking nose with LED headlights as standard, a redesigned rear featuring Porsche's increasingly ubiquitous light bar, and, inside, the company's latest infotainment package. Engine changes have yet to be announced, but are likely to be minor.



Pauled Porker

Light weight, lighter price

IF THE £1.4MILLION ASKING PRICE OF the Singer DLS (far left) is a little steep for you, may we suggest this: the Paul Stephens Le Mans Classic Clubsport. Like the Singer, it's based on a smorgasbord of Porsche components from the last 50 years. It has a 300bhp 3.4-litre air-cooled flat-six and can be had in Lightweight or Touring trim, the former weighing in at just 970kg. And the price? A snip at £250,000.





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by STUART GALLAGHER

Sergio Marchionne, 1952-2018

Auto industry heavy-hitter who took on the challenge of transforming the fortunes of Fiat and Alfa Romeo, and succeeded, succumbs to complications following shoulder surgery

SERGIO MARCHIONNE – CHIEF executive officer of Fiat Chrysler Automobiles and chairman and CEO of Ferrari – has passed away following complications after shoulder surgery. The 66-year-old had been admitted to Zurich University Hospital for a routine procedure but passed away on Wednesday 25 July.

'Unfortunately, what we feared has come to pass. Sergio Marchionne, man and friend, is gone,' confirmed John Elkann, of the FCA-controlling Agnelli family, in a statement.

Marchionne joined Fiat in 2003, when the then ailing Italian car maker was on the verge of bankruptcy, posting a loss of €6billion. Within two years he had turned the loss into a profit, helped considerably by securing €2billion from an alliance with GM. He also laid off thousands of workers, embarked on an ambitious new model plan and insisted new models should be brought to market within 18 months and not the four years it had been taking. In 2009 he orchestrated the deal to take control of Chrysler, saving it from bankruptcy and giving Fiat and Alfa Romeo a foothold in the United States.

Along with increasing the company's value tenfold, he was also instrumental in floating Ferrari on the New York Stock Exchange in 2015. He was due to present the supercar manufacturer's latest strategy in September.

A workaholic who expected similar levels of commitment from his management team, Marchionne spread his time between Turin, London and Detroit, fuelled on espresso and tobacco until a year ago when he gave both up. An exec who divided opinion on how you should manage a global car business, his approach wasn't favoured by all, most notably the unions and politicians who objected to his job cuts and cost-cutting.

There was no disputing the results he achieved, however. Under his leadership, Fiat Group sales grew from 320,000 units in 2009 and are expected to reach 1.2million (now as

FCA) in 2018. Fiat may no longer be competitive in the volume markets, but its 500 model has been a great success and profit-spinner, and Alfa Romeo's resurgence can be traced back to Marchionne's refusal to give up on a plan. In a world of suits and corporate blather, Marchionne's no-nonsense approach will be sorely missed.

A month before his passing, Marchionne had delivered his latest strategy for Alfa. Building on the success of the Giulia and Stelvio, he laid out a blueprint for a successor to the 8C, in the guise of a 700bhp, two-seater hybrid supercar, as well as a Giulia-based 2+2 GTV coupe. Two new SUVs are also planned to arrive before

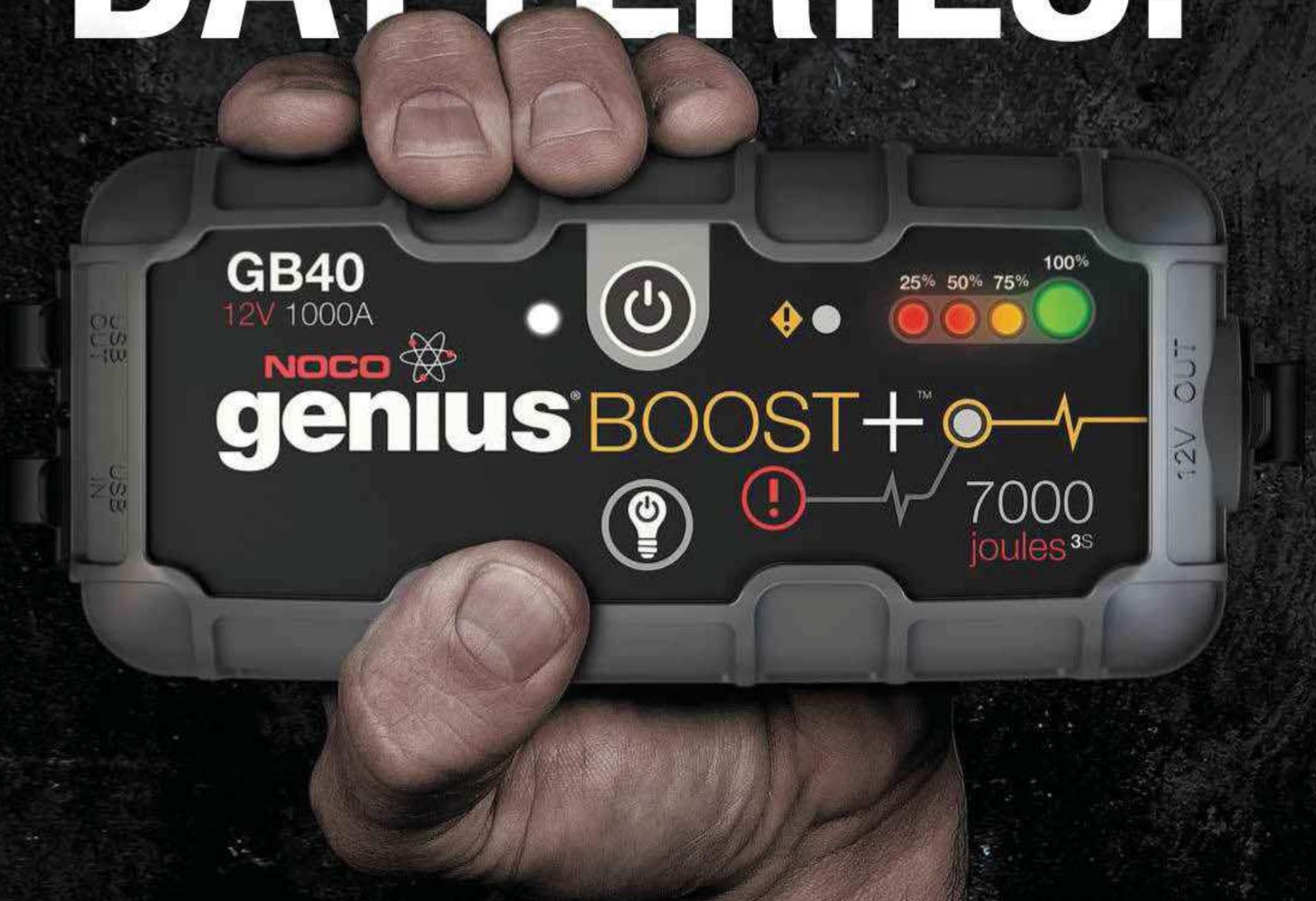
2022. The target set was for Alfa to deliver 400,000 cars a year in four years' time.

The plans for Ferrari were no less ambitious. Having confirmed the iconic supercar maker was to succumb to the pressures of building an SUV, there is every possibility he was set to confirm the return of a smaller, six-cylinder car as a spiritual successor to the Dino.

What becomes of those strategies will now be down to the men taking on Marchionne's roles. Brit Mike Manley will take up the position of FCA's chief executive officer, while Elkann is now chairman of Ferrari. Louis C Camilleri is set to be appointed new CEO of Ferrari. All three have big ambitions to fulfil.



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IAN EVELEIGH

MANAGING EDITOR

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

Stumbling across issue 001 in a newsagent's one day back in 1998 and reading it cover to cover that same evening. Finally someone had had the good sense to make the kind of car magazine I wanted to read. Perhaps less sensibly, that first issue contained a competition for which one of the prizes was to join *evo* on a group test. I entered and won, and eventually spent a couple of days testing a Honda Accord Type R and four of its rivals in the Yorkshire Dales (issue 012), meeting *evo* stalwarts Stuart Gallagher, David Vivian and Andy Morgan in the process. They seemed to think that what they were doing was work. It made me start thinking about a career change.

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

I believe it was the Mondeo ST200 on the aforementioned test. After that test it would be a further four long years before I drove another car for *evo*. This time it was for my first 'proper' job for the mag: a feature on Run What Ya Brung drag racing, for which I used my own Mk1 Golf GTI, rather foolishly missing

an opportunity to borrow something far more tasty from a manufacturer's press office. I clearly had a lot to learn.

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

The second Grand Challenge, with the convertibles, and specifically the day when we lapped our open-top sheds on a snow-covered Bedford Autodrome (*evo* 129). Drifting my team's MGF around the West Circuit was a hoot, Jonathan Palmer photographing proceedings from his helicopter above was surreal, and the laughter in the pitlane as people slipped and stumbled during driver changes was unforgettable.

And your most memorable *evo* drive?

evo Car of the Year 2009, on the Isle of Skye, driving a Murciélago SV in pursuit of John Simister in a Noble M600 while Matt Monro crooned 'On Days Like These' on the radio. (My memory may be playing tricks with the details here.)

Your worst *evo* moment is...?

Issue 210. The absolute low point in *evo*'s disorganised years, and boy did we pay for it with some long, long days in the office. One particular feature in that issue, called 'Fast, Fun and Under Warranty', has gone down in *evo* legend for how

Below: atrocious conditions at the Bedford Autodrome – and an equally atrocious car – made for an unexpectedly memorable day for Eveleigh

behind schedule it got. It very nearly kept us in the office till sunrise. Turns out that working for a car magazine *can* be a bit like a real job at times.

Tell us about the most disappointing car you've driven while at *evo*

The BMW M3 CSL. Anyone who can overlook that gearbox is considerably more charitable than I am.

Your favourite *evo* story by a colleague?

David Vivian going in search of the Grossdeutschlandring in an Audi R8 GT in minus 14-degree temperatures (*evo* 169) springs to mind. A proper *evo* driving adventure and classic Viv. It's a shame readers never got to see the uncut version with its longer passage about driving on an autobahn with frozen washer jets. The sense of peril was amazingly palpable.

The one car you wish you had driven during the last 20 years?

The Lexus LFA. With anything else I've missed out on I can build a mental picture of what it might be like from related models. But the LFA sits by itself: a Japanese supercar with a front-mounted V10 and rear-wheel drive. I haven't got a good reference point for that.

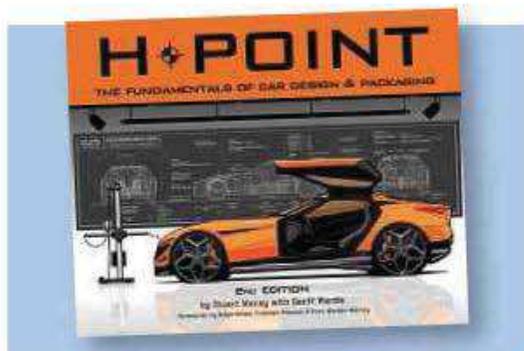
And finally, what's your favourite car launched in the last 20 years?

I want to say something different, I really do, but it has to be the 3.8-litre 911 GT3 RS. Sorry.



Essentials

Our pick of the best new motoring products



BOOK

H-Point Volume II
\$54.95 designstudiopress.com

Known as 'The Bible' in automotive design circles, H-Point is the consummate guide to all things car design and packaging related. It also appeals to a wider audience, as rendered within its pages in easy-to-understand graphics are all sorts of fascinating technical components.



DRINKWARE

Legacy Legends mugs
£7.95 legacylegends.co.uk

Legacy Legends has just released a massive set of motorsport-inspired mugs, each with a distressed look but a gloss finish. Highlights include the liveries from the Renova Mazda 787B Le Mans racer (pictured), 917K Pink Pig, Silk Cut Jaguar, and Ayrton Senna's helmet.



MODEL

Lego Technic Bugatti Chiron
£329.99 lego.co.uk

If you thought the Lego Technic 911 GT3 RS was cool, this Chiron kit will blow your mind. Complete with a working rear wing and a W16 engine that actually turns, this is the ultimate set of the ultimate hypercar. And with 3599 pieces to assemble, the price seems pretty reasonable.



BATTERY CHARGER

CTEK MXS 5.0
£89 ctek.com

The CTEK MXS 5.0 features patented technology specifically designed for optimum long-term maintenance charging of your car's battery. It also comes with automatic temperature compensation and a special reconditioning mode for deeply discharged batteries.



EYEWEAR

Serengeti sunglasses
From £149 sunglasses-shop.co.uk

Serengeti is an industry leader in lens technology. Its sunglasses combine glare-reducing polarisation with light-reacting photochromic properties for maximum contrast and clarity. The company also provides lenses for racing helmets, including those used in the Le Mans 24 Hours.



BARBECUE

Landyuc
£149.99 chickenshedcreations.co.uk

The Land Rover Defender is back! Sort of. The Landyuc is a barbecue grill in the shape of the classic British 4x4. It's able to be used on or off the supplied legs, and it works, too – as was proven at a recent office cookout organised by our colleagues at *Land Rover Monthly* magazine.

WATCHES



MHD AGT Black Edition

mhdwatches.com £550

British car designer Matthew Humphries has launched a second version of his AGT watch, with a black sunray dial as opposed to the original's steel. Just 100 pieces will be made.



Certina DS Podium Chronograph 1/100sec

certina.com From £650

With an even clearer dial design, this 2018 update for the DS Podium can still measure down to 1/100 of a second, and is available with a bare stainless steel or black PVD case.



Zenith Defy Zero G

zenith-watches.com From c£73,000

The Zero G features a patented 'gravity control' module, which cancels the effects of gravity on the running rate of the watch to enhance accuracy. Handy for keen trackday goers...

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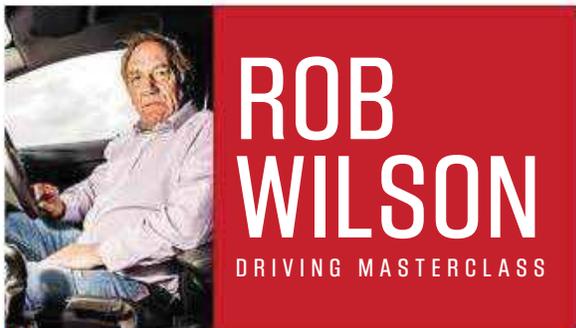
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Exhaust system for BMW M5 (F90) 2018 // Evolution line (TITANIUM)

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Why keeping a clear head is vital

WE'VE TALKED THROUGH A lot of techniques over the past few months, but possibly the most important of all is the ability to keep a clear head when driving quickly. You need to be able to separate the feel from the fear: when that corner is bearing down on you it's about keeping calm and not thinking about what could happen if you get it wrong. If you're anxious, your muscles will stiffen up and you'll be

putting unwanted energy spikes into the car, and given the most important factor is how you transfer your own weight into the controls, and thereby how that weight in the car is moved between the tyres, if you're too tense then achieving the required smoothness will be impossible.

While many will view this as simply driving 'smoothly', it's actually a deeply manipulative way of driving where you maintain control over the car, rather than the car dictating events to you. If you're on the limit of your own abilities, reacting to situations and relying on your reflexes to sort things out, you are already losing time. Instead you need to be determined mentally, but relaxed, not trying to find the limit by dramatically overstepping it, but by working up to it.

If you do go way over the limit, the next time you're naturally a lot more cautious, and therefore much slower than you might have otherwise been. It then takes time to remove the fear and get back to where you should be.

I suppose in driver terms it's the Alain



'You need to be determined mentally, but relaxed'

Prost technique versus a driver like Gilles Villeneuve, where a so-called smooth driver may not look that fast to watch, but the stopwatch suggests otherwise. The right state of mind is everything.

Rob tutors aspiring racing drivers and current professional racers

evo NEXT MONTH

ON SALE WEDNESDAY 5 SEPTEMBER

ON THE LIMIT WITH THE WORLD'S FASTEST ROAD & TRACK CARS



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THE TIME OF THEIR LIVES

Testing Continental's Ultra High Performance Tyre range on the superb roads of the south of France – it was a tough job, but the winners of the Continental Black Chili Driving Experience had to do it...

IF YOU'RE TESTING PREMIUM car tyres of the calibre developed by Continental Tyres, there's only one place to go – the south of France. Set amidst scenery of jaw-dropping beauty, the roads there are challenging for tyres, car and driver; they're also tremendously entertaining and home to several of the most iconic stages of the Monte Carlo Rally.

Though hardly essential to the enjoyment of tyre testing, it would be remiss not to also mention the glorious climate and the endemic sense of glamour and style that pervades the whole region as further attractions for visiting this part of the world. And this is where the 12 winning teams of the Continental Black Chili Driving Experience found themselves in the baking heat of early July, with the mission of learning more about Continental's range of Ultra High Performance Tyres (UHPTs).

The region's switchback hairpins and fast, sweeping corners would provide ample opportunity to discover how the company's unique Black Chili tread compound and new Micro Flexibility Compound help strengthen the bond between tyre and road surface. Helping with the lessons was a diverse fleet of premium cars – a Mercedes-AMG C43, a BMW M240i, an Audi RS3, a Range Rover Velar, a Tesla Model S and a Porsche Boxster – that the winners and their co-drivers would swap between on a frequent basis during three solid days of dynamic driving.

With meals and accommodation thrown in, the Continental Black Chili Driving Experience was a spectacular prize, as all of the attendees confirmed. 'It was awesome,' enthused Andrew Smitheman, 'and it's still hard to believe that I went on it.' Julie Edwards reckoned



‘it was a truly magical experience’, while Adam Hance called it a ‘money-can’t-buy trip that we were all completely blown away by’.

Rob Sadler was equally effusive: ‘The whole thing was brilliantly well put together. The locations were breathtaking and the roads marvellous – I can’t see how the Continental team could have done anything better than they did.’ Alex Hawkins agreed with Rob. ‘Everything ran so smoothly and on point,’ he said, ‘and the route books were just like I use for rallying. And the roads they chose couldn’t have been more perfect, especially for a rally driver.’

Ian Medforth was another fan of the region’s roads, which during the trip wound between coast and mountain, alternated between broad and extremely narrow, and presented surfaces that ranged between supremely smooth and

wickedly lumpy. ‘I’ve driven through the Gorges du Verdon before,’ he revealed, ‘but it was great to enjoy the local knowledge brought to the event by the Continental crew that threw us along some wonderfully snaking back-roads.’

Continental Tyres country, then. Rosie and Kevin Rose certainly thought so. ‘On its SportContact™ 6 tyres the Boxster felt like it wasn’t going to be budged from its chosen line through a corner,’ enthused Kevin, ‘and the confidence the tyres gave you was enormous.’ Tim Naylor was of the same mind about the tyres’ virtues, but thought a different car highlighted them best: ‘In the Audi RS3 [equipped with the Audi-approved ContiSportContact™ 5 P] I found I could really push to the limit of the grip.’

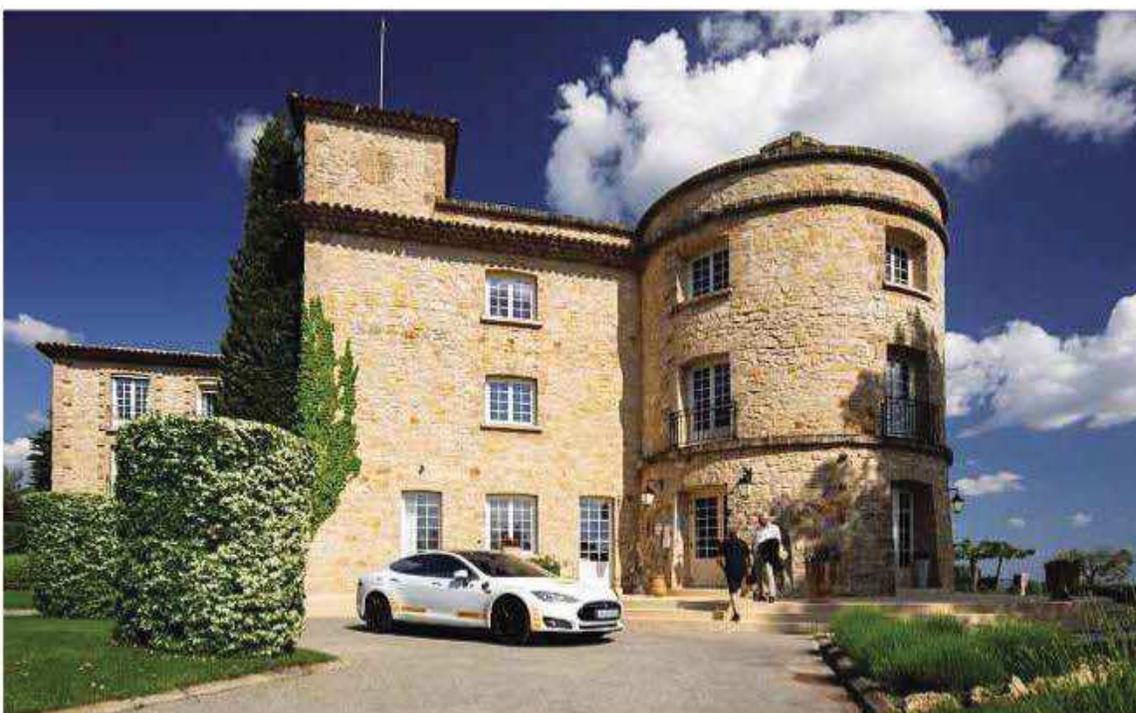
Several of the testers commented on the road-holding that the Jaguar Land Rover-approved ContiSportContact™ 5

tyres endows the Range Rover Velar with. ‘On these tyres the Velar really punched above its weight,’ remarked Matthew Richardson, ‘and gripped in a way I wasn’t expecting.’ And everyone was knocked out by the ContiSilent™ tyres fitted to the all-electric Tesla. As Julie and Dale Edwards pointed out: ‘Not only did the Tesla have very impressive grip, but the absence of roar from the tyres meant you were travelling in silence, which was an interesting experience.’

As it was time to head – somewhat reluctantly – homewards, rally driver Alex Hawkins summed up everyone’s feelings about Continental’s UHPT offerings. ‘Over the years I’ve tried many, many tyres,’ he said, ‘but these are the best road tyres I’ve ever experienced.’

So, is it worth you entering the Continental Black Chili Driving Experience 2019? We’ll let Kevin Rose answer that: ‘We drove some excellent cars equipped with outstanding tyres along some stunning roads. We stayed in fantastic hotels and ate amazing food. And the Continental team were so friendly and efficient.’

‘It was a life-changing experience. It gave my wife Rosie more confidence in her driving and has given both of us the inspiration to get out and travel a bit more: without Continental we’d never have thought about doing so.’



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Driven

Aston Martin DBS Superleggera

The £225,000 carbonfibre-bodied 'Superlight' replaces the Vanquish S. Is this the best new-era Aston yet?

HERE'S ANOTHER NEW CAR TO emerge from Gaydon, and how's this to grab your attention: it has 664lb ft of torque from just 1800rpm. I thought that'd do it.

The DBS is a DB11 V12 on full afterburner reheat, both visually and in performance, but given our rather indifferent opinion of the DB11 V12 – itself now replaced by the moderately improved DB11 AMR – it seems quite a stretch for an evolution of that car to challenge Ferrari's extraordinarily angry 812 Superfast for front-engined supercar supremacy.

Nevertheless, one of this car's key strengths was actually relatively easy to achieve: extracting 715bhp from Aston's twin-turbocharged V12 may seem like a landmark achievement, but getting the extra 85bhp and 148lb ft over what the AMR offers simply required an ECU remap, taking the 5.2-litre lump to the extreme of what it can manage

before hardware changes are required. It's hooked up to a new gearbox – still an eight-speed ZF auto, but a larger, stronger unit to handle the massive torque now pulsating through it. There's a mechanical limited-slip differential after that, with torque vectoring, and a shorter final drive for the benefit of acceleration. Dealing with those massive outputs at the ground are 21-inch wheels shod with bespoke Pirelli P Zero tyres, 265/35 at the front, 305/30 at the rear.

Aston has dusted off the old Superleggera badge because the DBS features carbonfibre body panels over the company's latest aluminium chassis architecture, echoing in spirit the alloy panels and tubular-frame chassis of models such as the DB5. The carbon body contributes to a 25kg weight saving over the DB11 AMR, although the 'Superlight' description is a bit of a misnomer because at 1770kg this is emphatically not a light car.





Driven

With its gaping jaw ready to Hoover up anything and everything in its path, and numerous aerodynamic enhancements, the DBS exudes a simmering menace and also produces a handy 180kg of downforce at its 211mph top speed. Most of all, it's the sheer size of the car that makes a lasting impression: whichever angle you view it from it's a Goliath, in particular the length of the bonnet, which Dick Dastardly would surely have approved of.

The downside to these proportions is a practical one: sitting low in the driver's seat I can barely see the top of the bonnet, let alone where it might end. Yes, the hyper-GT proportions are part of the car's charm, but it's worth noting that the combination of poor visibility and the car's substantial girth will make committing with conviction to country roads in the UK a challenge. Copious use of Alcantara and luxuriously soft leather lifts the rather dour cabin, but I miss the sheer theatre of the Bez-era Astons, even if everything actually works much better these days.

So, a 0-62mph time of 3.4sec suggests the DBS is fast, but it has such a raging, relentless, yet eerily smooth tide of mid-range torque

that it actually feels even quicker. Then again, its claimed 0-100mph time of 6.4sec is only one-tenth off a McLaren F1's; essentially, it's a real dragster in a straight line.

What's quickly apparent is that the DBS is a very different car to the Superfast. This is a good thing, and a wise move. Where the Ferrari suggests it might be a trans-continental GT with a hypercar engine, but in reality is as hyperactive and demandingly edgy as any wild-looking mid-engined device, the Aston lays its talents out on more familiar ground: it's still a big grand tourer, with a slush 'box and a ride quality that, on largely smooth Austrian roads at least, feels very composed. I get the feeling you could drive it all day, and long into the night, and not feel overly tired.

However, you can undoubtedly hustle it along, too. There are the usual three modes for the engine and gearbox, and a further three for the Skyhook adaptive suspension. With both set to their most relaxed settings the DBS is suitably demure, and it's only when the road turns more

Above right: cabin is largely shared with the DB11, and lacks a little of the old Aston Martin flair



‘Whichever angle you view it from it’s a Goliath, with a bonnet Dick Dastardly would have approved of’





testing that you suddenly crave more body control, sensing the car's substantial mass shifting laterally. Switching out of GT mode into Sport provides a keener throttle response, and a lot more noise, including the now seemingly de rigueur exhaust pops and bangs, which feel a bit forced to my ears.

Those modern Aston Martin genes are very much present, which is hardly surprising when the core components and layout are largely the same as on the DB11s and the Vantage, but here the tuning and individual parts – the bushes and the damper internals, for example – are pitched somewhere between the two in terms of spirit. I'm still unsure about the rate of the steering, which turns the nose very quickly once away from the straight ahead and requires restraint if you're not to 'over steer' the car in a curve, but on the plus side it's nicely weighted and not without feedback. Where the DBS struggles on occasion is when the rear suspension is heavily loaded, as we found with the new Vantage (evo 250). There's less vertical movement at the back here, but there's still the distinct feeling of the rear subtly shuffling around in random directions, nibbling away at your confidence. Sure, there's so much torque it was always going to be

a trial for the rear axle, and the relative softness at the rear does assist outright traction, but it can be a little unnerving all the same.

As for the carbon-ceramic brakes, they provide faultless stopping power with good feel underfoot, while the gearbox essentially does its best to keep up. Like all torque converters used in high-power applications, it's unbeatable at smoothing the changes out in normal driving, but less confident when tasked with a full-bore upshift near the red line.

Overall, the DBS feels the most coherent of the three new-era Astons. You'd hope so, given it costs from £225,000, but by combining readily exploitable talents, the firm may just have hit upon a particularly sweet recipe.

Adam Towler (@AdamTowler)

Engine V12, 5204cc, twin-turbo **Power** 715bhp @ 6500rpm **Torque** 664lb ft @ 1800-5000rpm
Weight 1770kg (410bhp/ton) **0-62mph** 3.4sec
Top speed 211mph **Basic price** £225,000

+ Pace, broad spread of talents, ride

- Twitchy rear end, poor visibility, a squeeze on B-roads

evo rating ★★★★★

Above: DBS feels big on a B-road. **Right:** Superleggera badge reflects extensive use of carbonfibre





Jaguar XE 300 Sport

More power for Brit sports saloon – but is it enough?

JAGUAR HAS LONG NEEDED A HALO model to give the XE a push from the top; a model to sprinkle some sex appeal across the rest of the XE range, which, let's face it, has so far failed to take it to the Germans that dominate this sector, both commercially and/or dynamically.

The £150k, 592bhp XE SV Project 8 (evo 250) is too far removed, too unattainable to really do the job. And while the 375bhp V6-powered XE S, which this new turbocharged, four-pot 300 Sport effectively replaces due to emissions issues, tried reasonably hard to perform the role, truth is it never quite pulled it off. Cars like the Audi S4, BMW 340i M Sport and Mercedes-AMG C43 were, to be blunt, all well beyond the reach of the refined but by no means rabid XE S.

Enter the new XE 300 Sport, which although still not a fully committed attempt to solve this issue, at least seeks to undercut its German rivals by entering the space just

below the S4 and Co, with styling and dynamic upgrades that should, reckons Jaguar, connect more clearly with the enthusiast audience. Question is, does it go far enough?

Well, in its quest to engage with the keener driver, the 300 Sport is powered by the pokiest version yet of Jaguar's – thus far – ever-so-slightly underwhelming four-cylinder turbocharged 'Ingenium' engine. In this case it produces 296bhp at 5500rpm and 295lb ft between 1500 and 4500rpm – outputs that are still only so-so beside its aforementioned Teutonic opponents.

Jaguar says the Ingenium has been tickled internally to improve its refinement, and to deliver smoother but more sporting responses via new mapping for the throttle, exhaust and transmission – which is inevitably the ubiquitous eight-speed auto from ZF.

The chassis has also been fettled, although to be fair the four-wheel-drive 300 Sport is little more than a collection of parts that were

previously optional on the V6 S. Adaptive dampers become standard, as do slightly bigger brakes, while the wheels and tyres also grow to 19 inches, with 20-inchers available as an option (fitted to the car we tried).

Zero to 60mph takes a claimed 5.4sec (5.7sec to 62mph), while top speed is 155mph. Just guessing, we'd say the 0-100mph time is around the 12 to 13 second mark. So although the 300 Sport is no madman in a straight line, it's still decently rapid for a 1690kg car.

Visually, the 300 Sport has the likeable, if typically restrained, air of a Q-car. Despite its 300 Sport badging on the nose, tail and sides, plus a subtle black tail spoiler and those big wheels and tyres, it doesn't shout about itself too loudly. Inside there are numerous bits and bobs to distinguish it above and beyond any other XE (more 300 Sport badging on the seat headrests and door casings, etc), yet it still feels quantifiably like a regular XE from behind the wheel. Again, the Germans all go a touch



—
‘It is clearly more entertaining to drive than any other XE, but it could do with a bit more drama’

further and feel more bespoke in this respect.

Yet on the road the 300 Sport does feel perkier and more sporting than any other XE, even if its overall dynamic personality remains that of the calm, collected, composed character, rather than that of the true road-burner. It is deceptively rapid across the ground, however, and the highlights are the steering – which has a lovely smooth accuracy to it and suffers from seemingly zero kickback, even over the roughest surfaces – and the way the adaptive suspension breathes so cleanly with the road, which is a delightful thing to experience. As is the almost magical absence of tyre and road noise generally.

Jaguar really has nailed the refinement of the 300 Sport, and it feels quietly majestic on the move as a result, even if it never quite manages to make the hairs on your neck stand to attention. Maybe it’s a touch too chilled for its own good, given the brief to spread some bravura across the rest of the range?



Because on the one hand it’s hard, if not impossible, to objectively criticise what the 300 Sport does in any particular area. It covers the ground with supreme ease and speed, while providing enough entertainment in the process to engage most keen drivers, most of the time. In this instance it achieves exactly what Jaguar wanted it to because it is clearly more entertaining to drive than any other XE on sale. But on the other hand, subjectively the 300 Sport could do with a bit more drama from its near-silent engine and exhaust, plus a touch more edge to its dynamics in general, if only to take it a bit closer to what the S4, C43 and 340i M Sport all deliver in their own different ways.

And this is where it gets a bit difficult for the 300 Sport. Take the 340i M Sport, which costs £42,930 yet has more power (321bhp) and torque (332lb ft) than the Jaguar, a touch more performance (0–62mph in 5.1sec) and a fair bit more aural appeal thanks to its six-

Above: dark accents and discreet badging mark out the 300 Sport; optional 20-inch wheels will set you back an extra £840

cylinder turbocharged engine. And the Jaguar, remember, costs £45,640 before you add those 20-inch wheels and tyres.

Then again, the 300 Sport really is a lovely thing to drive in many respects, with a fine chassis, a tasteful and roomy interior, great steering and deceptively strong cross-country pace. If that’s exactly what you’re looking for from your sports saloon, the Jaguar might just be worth the extra outlay.

Steve Sutcliffe

Engine In-line 4-cyl, 1997cc, turbocharged
Power 296bhp @ 5500rpm **Torque** 295lb ft @ 1500–4500rpm **Weight** 1690kg (178bhp/ton) **0–62mph** 5.7sec
Top speed 155mph **Basic price** £45,640

+ Suspension, ride, steering, Q-car styling

- Pricier and slower than a BMW 340i M Sport

evo rating ★★★★★



Mercedes-AMG C63 S Estate

A midlife update brings a new nine-speed transmission and a plethora of driver modes

MERCEDES IS THE CAR INDUSTRY'S niche-filler extraordinaire, and AMG's willingness to offer one of its bombastic derivatives in every sector the mothership operates in knows no bounds. Unless, of course, you want an AMG-fettled B- or V-class, because even Tobias Moers has a threshold for what he will ask his engineers to work on.

By far the widest AMG choice comes from the C-class line-up, the volume seller that chases BMW 320d sales as hard as it hounds Audi RS and BMW M customers for their monthly payments. And following the regular C's midlife nip and tuck last month, AMG has presented its updated C63 range, from saloon to coupe, cabriolet to estate, with two tunes of hot-vee V8 to get stuck into: the 469bhp non-S and 503bhp S.

You'll need to be a C63 fanboy – or girl – to spot the difference with this new one, though. There's a new AMG grille and rear diffuser, and if size matters you can ditch the standard 18-inch wheels for a set of new 19-inch forged items from the AMG GT R (both sizes are fitted with

Michelin's Super Sport tyre). There's also some tweaking to the air inlets, but that's about it.

Inside there's a bit more nip and a few more tucks, the biggest of which is the introduction of 12.3- and 10.5-inch TFT screens – the former for the instrument cluster, the latter for the infotainment centre. There's a new flat-bottomed steering wheel, too, featuring touchpad controls first seen on the S-class.



Above: estate shows no trade-off on the road when compared to coupe and saloon versions

You can also specify AMG's interpretation of Ferrari's manettino by adding a rotary mode control to the bottom of the wheel.

So far, so midlife facelift, but what about beneath the toned haunches and aerodynamically efficient wheels? Remarkably, AMG has not touched the V8. Sure, it's been tweaked to pass the most recent emission tests, but power, torque and peak revs all remain the same. If it ain't broke...

Dynamic engine mounts are also still standard for the S model, but what has changed is the gearbox. Out goes the seven-speed auto and in comes a nine-speed unit controlling an electronic differential that is now standard across all C63 models.

Also new is serious chassis and driver mode technology. The S model now gets AMG Traction Control – the same nine-stage system first seen on the GT R – and in AMG Dynamic Select there are also five predetermined driver modes, along with an Individual mode that allows you to choose the engine, gearbox, steering and exhaust settings. You also have AMG Ride Control (steel springs, adaptive



Above: new 12.3- and 10.5-inch screens plus a new steering wheel are among the changes. **Below:** revised grille one of the few subtle differences that mark out the updated car for keen C63 spotters



dampers) to play with. Within Dynamic Select there is also AMG Dynamics, which enables you to manage the ESP settings and torque distribution to the rear axle through four further settings: Basic, Advanced, Pro and Master. Keeping up? Good.

If all this sounds like too much choice, you're thinking along the right lines, because at times it's baffling as to which are the best options for the circumstances. Obviously those with an account at Blackcircles will turn everything off, while those with some self-preservation will settle on something resembling Comfort damping, a Sport or Sport+ throttle map and steering with some weight to lean against if you like that kind of thing. Exhaust? Depends if you like your neighbours.

You'll probably also choose an S Coupe when it comes to the body style, certainly if you live in the UK, but seriously, go for the estate. There is something achingly desirable about a car that offers more practicality than its siblings but without any noticeable trade-off in how it drives.

The V8 remains a modern-day turbocharged

'The C63 S remains an absolute thug, but it will also blend in'

masterpiece. Gutsy, full-bodied and capable of delivering across a wider spectrum than Audi and BMW's six-cylinder RS and M engines. Its throttle response remains un-turbo-like, its willingness to chase revs unrestricted. The new nine-speed automatic is super-smooth no matter which way the ratios are heading, and although on track the downshifts can be a little slower than you might expect (I know, I bet Lewis doesn't have this problem), on the road it's so intuitive and the engine's torque so strong that third and fourth will devour most areas of the countryside.

As for how it drives, it's just like the old C63 S, which means one of the finest all-round compact performance cars you can buy. An M4 Comp Pack may have the dynamic edge, but the AMG's no-nonsense approach has huge appeal. The confidence it inspires, the way it devours straights and scythes or slides through corners will leave you wanting to find the long way round to everywhere.

When you need it to be, the C63 S remains an absolute thug: shouty, aggressive, driving a fine line between impeccably behaved and borderline psychotic. But it will also blend in and cover ground at a rude rate of knots to remind you why you must have a 503bhp, V8-engined, rear-drive estate car in your life.

Stuart Gallagher (@stuartg917)

Engine V8, 3982cc, twin-turbo **Power** 503bhp @ 5500-6250rpm **Torque** 516lb ft @ 2000-4500rpm **Weight** 1750kg **Power-to-weight** 292bhp/ton **0-62mph** 4.1sec **Top speed** 174mph (limited) **Price** £77,000 (est)

+ V8 performance, not too shouty

- Baffling array of driver settings

evo rating ★★★★★

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BMW M5 Competition

Power and chassis upgrades make an excellent supersaloon even more tempting

THERE'S A SENSE THAT NOT EVEN BMW is quite sure why buyers might choose a standard M5 over the new Competition variant. Yes, there's the price, but when you're already spending the thick end of £90,000, what difference does an extra £6500 really make? Even a senior M engineer struggled with the question. He seemed perplexed, as if he knew he had to come up with an answer but couldn't think why anyone wouldn't buy the sharpest M tool in the box. Eventually he suggested that 'maybe the owner of a standard car wants to spend more time on the autobahn'. Hmm, maybe indeed.

So, what have we got? There's more power, with the twin-turbo V8 producing 616bhp (up 24bhp), but torque remains unchanged at 553lb ft. However, the standard car isn't exactly a sluggard, evidenced by the fact the Competition improves on the regular M5's 0-62mph time of 3.4sec by just a single tenth. That said, BMW does claim it's 0.3sec quicker to 124mph, which is useful.

If I'm honest, any performance gains are hard to detect, the Competition accelerating with the same deranged intensity that puts it toe-to-toe with some seriously exotic sports cars. Still, the Comp adds a little extra spice in the form of a new M Sport exhaust that allows the V8 to find its full baritone bark. It's not as ear-splittingly, look-at-me loud as the Mercedes-AMG E63 S, but for many the BMW's *sotto voce* approach is more in keeping with the Q-car qualities of a proper supersaloon.



While the gains from the engine upgrade are marginal, the changes to the chassis are much more worthwhile. For starters, this M5 sits 7mm lower, which combined with the new 20-inch forged alloy wheels gives it a much more purposeful stance. Other changes include 10 per cent stiffer springs complete with recalibrated adaptive dampers, plus firmer anti-roll bar mounts front and rear, ball-joints for the rear toe links and more negative camber for the front wheels. In addition, the engine mounts are 50 per cent stiffer.

You feel the changes immediately, the M5 Competition riding with a little more stiffness, even in Comfort mode. Yet it's still fairly supple, and once you've upped the pace any small loss in compliance is easily offset by greater control. The car responds with greater alacrity to the steering (although there's still too little communication through the chunky rim); the front tyres bite harder on turn-in. It helps give the Comp a remarkable sense of agility for such a big machine, a sensation

enhanced by the remapped dampers (Sport is best for hard road driving; Sport+ is too stiff-legged) and tougher springs, which keep the BMW more planted and poised over the twisted and torn stretches of tarmac of our Spanish test route. It would be stretching the truth to say the Competition 'shrinks around you' – on some tighter sections the M5's girth causes a sharp intake of breath as you squeeze past oncoming traffic – but it feels more nimble than before and far lighter on its feet than an E63... and a standard M5.

As before, the trick M xDrive transmission plays its part, delivering rear-drive adjustability to keep things entertaining, but assured traction when it gets slippery. Like the standard car, you can also shortcut your favourite settings using the M1 and M2 switches on the wheel, including the hooligan 2WD mode.

There are issues with the M5 Competition – it's too big and the steering's still too mute – but the chassis changes have helped turn a really, really good car into one that's on the verge of being one of the very best.

James Disdale

Engine V8, 4395cc, twin-turbo **Power** 616bhp @ 6000-6700rpm **Torque** 553lb ft @ 1800-5800rpm

Weight 1865kg (336bhp/ton) **0-62mph** 3.3sec

Top speed 155mph (limited); 189mph with optional M Driver's package) **Basic Price** £96,205

+ Incredible performance, sharper handling

- Steering still lacks feel; it's a big old bus

evo rating ★★★★★



Ford Focus ST-Line X

Ford's family hatchback regains its focus on driving fun

MOST FAMILY HATCHBACKS AREN'T fun to drive. The original Ford Focus was an exception. It was sensible, practical and affordable, but also handled with a fluidity that some significantly more expensive cars struggled to emulate, and engaged the driver in a way few of its rivals – nimble Peugeot 306 excepted – could match.

Subsequent generations maintained many of the first car's qualities but, as often happens as model generations progress, the Focus grew larger and its responses became dulled. This new Focus has refound the fun factor. Not laugh-out-loud, spring-out-of-bed-at-4am fun, but certainly change-up-a-bit-later, lift-off-mid-corner-to-see-what-happens fun. You can't go too far wrong driving anything on the sinewy Route Napoleon in southeast France, but the new Focus positively goads you into skirting the Alps rather than plodding up the autoroute with the trucks and poverty-spec Citroën C3s.

There's an all-new platform, and for the first time Ford now offers a torsion beam rear end on lower-powered models, with others (including this ST-Line) using independent suspension. Ford claims a 20 per cent rigidity improvement over the last Focus, with 'structural foam' used within some cavities to boost strength and reduce vibration. ST-Line models also get 10mm lower suspension, with retuned dampers and stiffer springs.

Wheels are 17-inch, with an 18-inch option for ST-Line X variants – our X-trimmed test car (which gets part-leather trim, navigation and a



few other goodies) was wearing 17s.

Power comes from a detuned version of the 1.5-litre three-cylinder EcoBoost unit from the new Fiesta ST, making 148bhp in the ST-Line (from £22,050) and 179bhp in the X (£25,300). While the three-pot slightly detracts from the Fiesta ST's immediacy compared to its predecessor, there are no such problems in the more sensible Focus, and once the engine wakes up at 2000rpm it spins smoothly and with a distant thrum to the 6500rpm red line.

Outright performance is hampered slightly by long, economy-biased gearing, and that's a pity, not only because it'd feel even more fleet with a shorter final drive, but also because there's good throttle response and the six-speed manual gearshift is a cracker.

The chassis is the real pleasure though. It's softer than the average modern hot hatch, but ST-Line models have enough firmness to their damping to minimise body movements without punishing the driver with a harsh ride.

Grip feels even at both ends, leaving cornering attitude up to the driver – easily-



managed push if you ask too much of the front tyres, and a tightening line and eventually progressive oversteer if you back off mid-corner. It's at once safe and secure but also involving and entertaining. The same applies to the steering, which pairs keen responses with progressive effort and just a hint of actual road feel. The result is a rack that feels well-matched to the already excellent chassis.

That the new Focus is also a generally better car than the one it replaces – more spacious, better-built, and with an infotainment system that finally feels like it originated this decade – will be the main draw for its huge customer base. But the way it drives should also endear it to people like us.

Antony Ingram (@evoAntony)

Engine In-line 3-cyl, 1497cc, turbocharged
Power 179bhp @ 6000rpm **Torque** 177lb ft @ 1600rpm
Weight 1294kg (141bhp/ton) **0-62mph** 8.3sec
Top speed 138mph **Basic price** £25,300

+ A genuinely fun family car

- UK roads will be the final test

evo rating ★★★★★

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Phwoar Horse

Interesting recollection by Richard Porter regarding the Stratton 288 GTO in the mid-'80s (column, *evo* 251). I was a little older myself at the time and had not long started my first job. I bought a Lancia Volumex Coupe (from Alan Brown, the 1950s racing driver) and, well, I loved that car to bits. I used to dash out along the A50 in it to Mangoletsi (the Alfa/Lancia dealer). What a glorious road that used to be at the time before all the speed limits were reduced!

Anyway, one day on a jaunt, what should come winging past but the very same 288 GTO as I'd read about in the *Car* magazine article that Porter mentioned. What a beautiful car! I still remember staring at the castings on the transaxle gearbox and at the massively wide rear tyres and arches as I tried to keep up. It's as if it was yesterday!

I agree that modern supercars don't quite provide the same excitement. Richard mentioned the photograph of the GTOs lined up, waiting to be delivered to their first owners, and the effect that it had on him. There's also a similar picture with Lancia 037s [above] that provokes the same reaction in me.

Thanks for a great memory and a great magazine.

A Hale, Cheshire

Heavy metal

I read with some dismay about the new Aston Martin Vantage [above right] not having competitive handling versus its nearest rivals (*evo* 250). To my mind it does at least offer

something different, being more of a GT/supercar hybrid than its rivals. However, it is hard to understand how Aston, along with Jaguar, can make overweight aluminium sports cars. This weight – 1739kg in the case of the Vantage – has a knock-on effect to cost and performance that indicates a lack of discipline in design and/or compromise from stretching a platform too far.

In my enthusiasm for the Vantage I'd almost forgotten about the new TVR Griffith. A quick check of its suggested weight (1250kg) and a bit of research about the involvement of Gordon Murray's iStream process suggests that TVR has got something very right in its choice of base technology, design and pricing. Perhaps it will teach the likes of Jaguar and Aston a tough lesson.

Simon McCaul

Up in arms

Thank you Dickie Meaden for another excellent piece (column, *evo* 250) – such consistent writing since issue 001, which I do have in my collection!

Like Dickie, I stand by baffled as the power arms race gathers momentum, and the recent purchase of an Audi S3 has brought this into particular focus for me. Why? Because there is also an RS3. With another 100bhp. It's simply not necessary. When does anyone arrive home by S3 totally frustrated by their underpowered steed?

Yes, I've had a V8. TVR, old school, no power steering, right engine, right package. V6 3.5?



LETTER OF THE MONTH

A step too far

I EAGERLY OPENED THE SEPTEMBER 2018

issue of *evo* – on 12 July 2018. And Einstein doubted the possibility of time travel... What did he know?

Anyway, the first article in the issue was about the new McLaren 600LT, which we're told will offer more comfort and practicality and will weigh less. Wow! How will they shed weight from a car that is already bulimic? Oh, the usual high-end stuff: carbon body parts, lighter wheels and brakes, etc. Fair enough. Anything else? Er, yes, you'll have to do without door pockets and a glovebox. What! I thought it was going to be more practical? And how much weight will that save?

When I win the lottery or marry a rich widow, I want door pockets and a glovebox. Where else am I going to put my fizz and crisps?

Dave Dunlavy

The Letter of the Month wins an MHD watch

The writer of this month's star letter receives an MHD SQ1 watch worth £250. Designed by British car designer Matthew Humphries, the SQ1 is inspired by watches and rev counters from the 1960s and is limited to an edition of just 300 pieces.

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INBOX



Yes, 350Z. Perfect match. But the best match of all? 125bhp Swift Sport. Pure fun. Pure **evo**.

John Bathgate

Brushed off

As a petrolhead who takes a lot of pride in his cars, there was an image in **evo** 249 that I found quite unsettling. The picture in question can be found on page 91 [and above] – where an Alpine A110 is shown being washed down using a *brush*!

This is not OK.

Jack Williams

It is when the photographer demands a clean test car and you're on the moors... – Ed

The perfect pair

Reading the first two letters in **evo** 250's InBox pages, I felt a letter coming on. By the time I got to the first page of Fast Fleet, that was confirmed.

Your Letter of the Month in that issue mused that the £1million cost of the new, track-only Brabham BT62 would buy a tasty McLaren 650 GT3, a truck to transport it in and some spares.

The next letter pointed out that a Tiptronic 911 Turbo is a criminally underestimated and often undervalued tool.

Finally, your opening Fast Fleet report declared that 'if there is one car that comes closest to distilling the very essence of "the thrill of driving", then it's a Caterham Seven'.

With all this in mind, let me put to you the following proposition. I own a 2007 Tiptronic 997 Turbo purchased for £48k and a 2006 Caterham CSR purchased for £34.5k [both pictured above]. A

further £17k would comfortably cover, say, three years' running costs and still bring the budget to under £100,000 rather than £1,000,000. (And – oh joy – both cars tend to appreciate rather than depreciate.)

The 911 is a car that will cross continents, that my wife is happy to use for shopping and that I can leave on the street. And when on track (with the electronics disabled) it will also see off most other road cars – decisively so in wet or wintry conditions.

With regard to the CSR, I refer your readers to your claim of 'the very essence of "the thrill of driving"', enhanced in this case by 256bhp rather than your car's 152. That means 460bhp per ton – check out how little else achieves that – and a 0-60mph time of 3.1 seconds. Sure, the Brabham and the McLaren will be somewhat faster round a track, but I seriously doubt that the drivers will be any more thrilled.

Oh, and with independent rear suspension and Cosworth flexibility, as well as driving to the track you can also cross continents and do the shopping in it if you insist.

What's not to like?

Chris Wood

DIY GT3 Touring

Has anyone else noticed the prices of used Porsche 911 GT3s fitted with the Touring Package? They're about £30k-40k more than a regular manual GT3!

Surely anyone wanting a Touring should just buy a normal GT3 and then fit a new engine cover with the electric spoiler (the Carrera T has a higher lifting spoiler – the same as



the Touring). The saving would be huge!

In my opinion all 911s should retain the classic wingless silhouette anyway. Perhaps GT3s should come with two interchangeable engine covers – one with a wing for the track and one without a wing for the road. They just need to be easy to remove and re-attach.

There you go, Porsche – a new addition for the options list for future GT3s!

K Li

Sorted

Recounting to my wife the bittersweet story in your letters section (issue 249) of the lady looking for a new home for her husband's **evo** collection, my better half suggested it was time I got my own 'house in order' and tidied up my own collection [results pictured above].

Quite naturally, a half-hour job took up most of the day as each cover inspired me to reminisce and reacquaint myself with article after article.

Then it struck me that over the last 20 years **evo** has been with me through some of my most important moments. For example, I found a copy with a stain of baby sick on it, from when **evo** was my reading of choice during the wee small hours of feeding time. Others have slightly chewed corners, evidence of when puppies first arrived.

I was also reminded of the privilege of owning quite a few models that have graced your pages (with varying degrees of approval) – a Corrado VR6, a TVR Chimaera, a Ford Puma 1.7 and a Honda S2000 to name but

a few. I have also had around 12 letters printed, two of which were deemed Letter of the Month.

Many thanks to you all for some fantastic memories, and here's to **evo** celebrating the next 20 years. I have a feeling they will be far more evolutionary/revolutionary than even the last 20 have been.

Euan Gibson

Hidden powers

After reading the heartfelt farewell to your Fast Fleet Skoda Superb SportLine 4x4 (**evo** 251), in which you describe it as a modern Q-car and lament that such things are few and far between, I have a suggestion for you: the BMW 540i xDrive Touring.

We bought one [above] as our family car and it excels at wafting about silently on the school run while also dispatching traffic at an alarming rate thanks to its silky smooth straight-six. Best of all, it has a cavernous boot and a split tailgate, so your photographers wouldn't have to sit in the back with an open boot and assorted harnesses.

It's the consummate Q-car – impervious to snow, rain or sunshine – and with the normal 19-inch wheels and its silent engine, everyone will confuse it for a 520d.

Yavor Adel

Wakey-wakey

Yes, Henry, Australia's Great Ocean Road is indeed a great route with amazing views (Dream Drive, **evo** 251)... but there's an 80kph limit along most of its length and plenty of enthusiastic police patrols, so it's a good thing you were only dreaming!

Sandy Higgins

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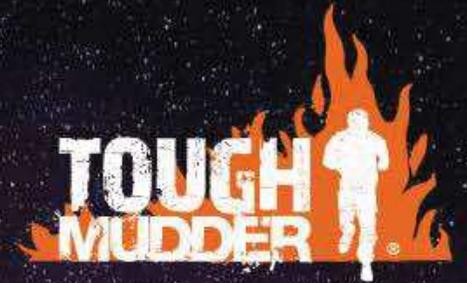
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RICHARD MEADEN

Alpine's leading a lightweight revival and that's something we should all be overjoyed about

I'VE BEEN A FAN OF FAST RENAULTS AND Alpines in particular for as long as I can remember. My parents had a new Renault 5 GT Turbo Raider, which was followed by a new Clio Williams, and prior to the arrival of those fine hot hatches in the Meaden household I'd long been fascinated by an ageing A310 V6 that was parked in an unprepossessing housing estate on my route to college.

Rare and quirky, this dramatic slice of French fibreglass seemed so out of place parked on a suburban street that it left a real impression on me. Likewise the purple V6 Turbo Le Mans that graced the cover of *Performance Car* magazine around the same time, and the yellow A610 long-term test car run by Peter Tomalin in the same magazine in the late-'90s.

I've still not managed to drive an A310 or A610 – gaps in my experience I really need to address – but this only seems to reinforce the mythical status these exotic machines assumed in my head all those years ago. Every now and again I scan the classifieds for them, knowing they'd be trouble and that I don't have the cash, but also knowing that one day I will have one.

While the road cars have eluded me, such is the strangeness of my job I've been fortunate to experience a number of Alpine competition cars. Most recently the 1978 Le Mans-winning A442B at this year's Festival of Speed, and most notably racing an exquisite, diminutive and wonderfully streamlined M65 at Le Mans Classic a handful of years ago. Both true hero cars with exceptional history – thrilling chapters in one of the most storied sporting automotive brands of them all. Few names, Porsche included, can claim a greater breadth of success. Fewer still have a cooler back catalogue of road, race and rally machinery.

It's against all this that the new A110 was delivered to my house. A pre-production left-hand-drive example in that beautiful azure blue metallic that suits old and new A110s so well, it was very definitely a case of love at first sight. But it was also tempered by a very real fear that it might fall short of my elevated hopes, not to mention the glowing reports I'd read in the motoring media. What I've experienced this week has left me utterly smitten and rather dumbfounded. Not because I had a reason to feel Renault Sport's talented team was somehow deficient, but because in recent years Alfa Romeo and Porsche have shown it's not easy to

make a truly desirable four-cylinder mid-engined sports car.

It's not often I get in a car and feel it's genuinely something exceptional. And by that I mean a game-changer. Another lightweight mid-engined sports car – the S1 Lotus Elise – still sets the high-water mark for me, but the A110 comes close. Very close. In industry terms it's a remarkable achievement because it signals the rebirth of a pure and dynamic brand with huge potential. For the first time in a very long time not only do we have a car fit to be mentioned in the same breath as the Cayman, but one I know I would choose over the previously impregnable Porsche.

I won't labour over describing the styling, as you all know what the thing looks like. Suffice to say I think it's one of the best pieces of design in recent years. What's just as impressive is the way it

goes, sounds and feels. Alpine paid great attention to saving weight, and you can feel it in everything the car does. There's grip and poise and feel that roots you to the road and connects you to the car.

Unlike Alfa's uncouth-sounding 4C and the Cayman's effective but horribly thrummy flat-four, the A110's motor is sweet and characterful. Even the paddle-shift transmission – a low point in the RS Clio – is a pleasure to use.

The brakes have great feel and power, the chassis has a great combination of reassuring balance and generous grip, but at the same time telegraphs what it's doing from low speed onwards so you get something from it without having to drive the wheels off it.

What excites me most about the A110 is that it could and should be the beginning of a new and thrilling family of sports cars. I don't have the inside scoop on Alpine's future model plans, but given the A610 was always seen as a left field 911 rival I'd love to see a big brother for the A110 challenge the iconic Porsche on its own terms. Given the brand's Le Mans-winning pedigree (Google some of Alpine's efforts from the '60s and '70s – they are mind-blowing machines) and Renault's growing presence in Formula One I'd also love to see Alpines back at La Sarthe in the top category rather than just LMP2.

I know, I'm getting over-excited, but a great new (or newly revived) sports car brand is a rare thing indeed. Alpine is spearheading the lightweight revival, and with Lotus now enjoying investment from Chinese owner Geely, we have some truly cracking cars to look forward to.

'What excites me most is that it could be the beginning of a new and thrilling family of sports cars'

 @DickieMeaden



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 S65 » 780BHP (+DE-LIMIT)
 SL65 AMG » 690BHP (+DE-LIMIT)
 SL65 BLACK » 720BHP (+DE-LIMIT)
 SLK 55 AMG » 420BHP
 200 CDI (ALL MODELS) » 173BHP
 220 CDI (ALL MODELS) » 230BHP
 250 CDI (ALL MODELS) » 260BHP
 C300 HYBRID » 285BHP
 C300E » 350BHP
 C400/E400 » 400BHP
 350 CDI (ALL MODELS) » 315BHP
 420/450 CDI (ALL MODELS) » 358BHP

ALL 2017 RANGE ROVERS AVAILABLE
 RR 50SC/SVO/SVR STAGE1 » 600+BHP
 RR 50SC/SVO/SVR STAGE2 » 650+BHP
 2.0/2.2 DIESEL (ALL MODELS) » 220+BHP
 RR 4.4 TDV8 » 395 BHP
 RR TDV6 3.0D » 305+ BHP
 RR SDV6 3.0D » 350+BHP
 DEFENDER 2.2 » 180BHP

PORSCHE
 996 TURBO/GT2 » 600+ BHP
 997 TURBO 3.6 » 625+ BHP
 997 GT2 RS » 670+ BHP
 997 TURBO/S 3.8 INC PDK » 611 BHP
 997 GT3 RS » 480 BHP
 991.2 GT2 RS » CALL
 991 TURBO/S (ALL MODELS) » 750+BHP
 991 GT3 3.8 (ALL MODELS) » 490+BHP
 991 GT3 RS 4.0 (ALL MODELS) » 525+BHP
 997 CARRERA S » 376+ BHP
 997 CARRERA PDK » 368 BHP
 997 CARRERA S PDK » 400+ BHP
 997 CARRERA GTS » 435 BHP
 991 CARRERA (ALL MODELS) » 500+BHP
 991 CARRERA S (ALL MODELS) » 500+BHP
 991 CARRERA GTS (ALL MODELS) » 540+BHP
 BOXSTER/CAYMAN 718 GTS » 420+BHP
 BOXSTER/CAYMAN 718 S » 420+BHP
 BOXSTER/CAYMAN 718 » 380+BHP
 BOXSTER/CAYMAN 981 GT4 » 430+BHP
 BOXSTER/CAYMAN 981 GTS » 375+BHP
 BOXSTER/CAYMAN 981 S » 345+BHP
 CAYENNE GTS » 450 BHP
 CAYENNE TURBO 4.5 » 565+ BHP
 CAYENNE TURBO 4.8 (ALL MODELS) » 650+ BHP
 CAYENNE TURBO S 4.8 (ALL MODELS) » 650+ BHP
 CAYENNE 4.2 DIESEL » 450+ BHP
 CAYENNE 3.0 DIESEL » 318+ BHP
 MACAN S » 420+BHP
 MACAN GTS » 440+BHP

MACAN TURBO (ALL MODELS) » 480+BHP
 MACAN S DIESEL » 318+BHP
 PANAMERA TURBO » 600+ BHP
 PANAMERA DIESEL » 305+ BHP

EXOTIC / MISC
 FERRARI CALI T » 660BHP
 FERRARI F12 » 780+BHP
 FERRARI 599 » 647 BHP
 FERRARI 488 » 750+BHP
 FERRARI 430 » 525 BHP
 MCLAREN MP4-12C » 700 BHP
 MCLAREN 650S » 720 BHP
 MCLAREN 675LT » 750BHP
 MCLAREN 570/S » 680+BHP
 AVENTADOR » 750+BHP
 HURACAN LP610 » 650BHP
 GALLARDO LP560 » 600+BHP
 BENTLEY 4.0 T V8 » 700BHP
 BENTLEY GT/F-SPUR » 680BHP
 GT SPEED / SUPERSPORT » 690+BHP
 BENTAYGA W12 » 700+BHP
 MASERATI Ghibli 3.0S PETROL » 470 BHP
 MASERATI Ghibli 3.0 DIESEL » 312 BHP
 MASERATI GT/QPORT » 438 BHP
 MASERATI GT S / MC » 479+ BHP

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RICHARD PORTER

With the relentless march of the SUV, the normal car's days are surely numbered

ONE OF MY FAVOURITE THINGS ABOUT FLYING abroad is the hire car lottery. It plays on my mind, all the way through the airport, in the queue for passport control, during the time I'm wondering what special brand of mush-for-brains moronism makes people think their bags will arrive any faster if they stand right next to the baggage carousel.

And then it's just a quick trudge over to the rental car area, a bracing two-hour canter through all the forms even though I feel like I did exactly this stuff online two weeks ago, and the game is on. The lottery machine spins and I'm giddy with excitement at what the benign gods of Avis or Hertz will bestow upon me this time.

I don't know why this is so exciting. It's not as if Europcar policy upon running out of Category B cars is to give you a Lamborghini Jalpa. On any Euro holiday the end result is likely to be a tin box with a diesel engine. But some tin boxes are better than others, and when we went away to Italy last month the nice man at the desk actually gave me a choice of two keys. One was for a Peugeot 5008. The other to a Ford Mondeo.

This was not a hard decision. I know Peugeot has been trying very hard recently to become less cack, and the terrific 308 GTi by Peugeot Sport says it's getting there, but its regular stuff isn't a patch on the forgotten star of everyday fun times that is the Mondeo.

When I started my first proper job 20 years ago we sometimes used to get Mk1 Mondeos as hire cars and they were absolutely terrific. The 2 litre, in particular, was a riot, having the plums to really work that lovely chassis. Then the Mk2 came along, which felt more grown-up but still with some of that sparkle, like a mate who's now something in accountancy but will still go to a music festival and lose one of his shoes. Then came the Mk3, which was a bit more sensible again, and finally the latest model, which still has some of that sweet-driving magic, hidden under a business-casual bushel.

Our rented Mondeo was the estate in full hire-car spec, by which I mean there wasn't a surface on it that hadn't been kissed by another car and/or wall, and not a floor mat that didn't seem

to have a whole beach underneath. It was leggy for a rental, too, showing over 50,000km on the clock, yet it felt tight and healthy behind the flesh wounds and sand. After a week all I could think was, what a nice car. Sensible, practical, user-friendly, but underpinned by a sense that people who know what they're doing had polished all the dynamic bits.

After a week, however, I also felt a bit sad for the Mondeo because, let's be honest, it's a dead car walking. At the hire car desk in Milan I may have chosen the Ford over a jacked-up hatchback pretending to be an SUV, but in showrooms that's not what people are doing. During the first six months of this year Ford sold just over 27,000 Mondeos in Europe. Over the same

period the seven-seat Peugeot 5008 and its five-seater sister, the 3008, collectively shifted 125,000 units.

People don't want normal hatchbacks and estates any more. And that's a shame because it's easy to forget how much nicer to drive they are. I know we're all very impressed when a new SUV or SUV-lite comes along and someone says it's very 'car-like' to drive, but this is really only in the way that people sip alcohol-free beer and say it's 'not bad, actually'. Getting modern SUVs to handle in a half-decent manner is like getting a bear to dance: everyone's very impressed, but it's just not natural.

Unfortunately, the world doesn't see it like this and normal cars are on the back foot. That especially applies to the Mondeo, which is about to be deleted

from the US market and will therefore lose the economies of scale that come from making it a global car. Without that, it's surely on its way out in Europe and that's very sad because I've just been reminded that cars, especially Mondeos, are nicer to drive than SUVs.

Of course, I say that as a clattering hypocrite because we've got an SUV as our family car with the excuse that it's easier to load small children into their seats without popping an important part of your spine. But once the kids are old enough to load themselves I'd love to go back to a proper car. I just have a feeling that by then there won't be many normal, sweet-driving family cars to buy. Or indeed to get in the hire car lottery.

'Getting modern SUVs to handle in a half-decent manner is like getting a bear to dance: everyone's very impressed, but it's just not natural'

@sniffpetrol

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TED KRAVITZ

For F1's drivers there's no hiding from the stark reality of the results table

I LOVE A GOOD RESULTS TABLE. FROM A FULL championship classification to a grubby time sheet after 12 special stages, there's something pure about a list of competitors and their results that allows the reader to write their own story of any sporting competition.

I'm not alone. There's a reason newspapers and websites still publish full cricket scorecards and football league tables – those who appreciate sport often border on the obsessive, and a table contains just the numbers, without embellishment. I like to think there are subeditors on national papers taking great pleasure in printing full results tables, as if to say, 'Here are the facts of the game/match/race, without any of the elaboration, addition or omission that the half-pissed idiot on the desk behind me is about to add.'

I use the official FIA Formula 1 drivers' and constructors' classification tables all the time. On the Thursday preceding every race weekend, each driver is available for interview on whatever topic you fancy. Most subjects are glaringly obvious, but sometimes one comes abruptly face-to-face with a driver and it helps to have their season results immediately to hand to assist with an opening question. 'Well, Checo, six points last time out, having not scored in the previous three races – relieved?' I know what you're thinking, I should have all this memorised and on the tip of my tongue, but come on, life's too short. Besides, what better use for a results table?

The story that leaps off the page of this year's F1 championship classification is the East African Rift-size split between the rich top three teams – Ferrari, Mercedes and Red Bull Racing – and the remaining not-quite-so-rich outfits. At the time of writing, Red Bull, in 3rd, has 200 points, whereas Renault, in 4th, has just 70. Yes, that's Renault, the 20billion-euro car company, being dropped by a fizzy drinks brand with more than double the points. McLaren, once the biggest of F1's big teams, has just 48.

It's simplistic to put this down to money – that since Ferrari, Red Bull and Mercedes have, between them, won all the Grands Prix held since April 2012, they've been able to trouser all the serious prize money and so have employed the best people and spent the money on fruitful research and development programmes.

Actually, it's not simplistic, that's exactly how F1 has ended up with a First and Second Division. In qualifying, unless something weird happens, the top six are silver, red or blue, and then there's a massive gap of between eight-tenths to a second per lap to the 'best of the rest' in 7th. Usually, by virtue of being a handy little pedaller in a decent car, that's Nico Hülkenberg, but on their day it could be any one of Pierre Gasly, Kevin Magnussen, Romain Grosjean, Carlos Sainz, Esteban Ocon and so on and so on. The Second Division margins are so slim that the difference between 7th and 17th could depend on how recently you went to the toilet.

But then there's the race results, and this is where a familiar name has not only kept himself in contention for the honorary 'Second Division World Champion' title, but also has nearly wrecked his young teammate's career: Fernando Alonso.

Having won Le Mans at his first attempt, Fernando still has the mental energy to go at 'em hammer and tongs in F1 races in a worsening McLaren, leaving broken front wings, floors and racing director Eric Boullier in his wake. The table says Alonso has scored 40 points, whereas his teammate Stoffel Vandoorne has only eight. Drivers need to be beating or equalling their teammate's points tally, anything less without a very good reason and their boss might reasonably ask what the bloody hell they're playing at. Vandoorne has scored just 17 per cent to Alonso's 83 per cent of McLaren's points

so far. The only figures more humiliating than that are at Toro Rosso, where crashes and engine failures have left Brendon Hartley at a 95 per cent to five per cent deficit to Gasly, and at Williams, where Lance Stroll has scored all four of the team's points this year, making that 100 per cent record over his hapless teammate Sergey Sirotkin the only victory he'll taste all season.

While the points tallies are healthier in the First Division, there are still notable splits between teammates, particularly at Red Bull, where Daniel Ricciardo's two wins put him 4th, whereas Max Verstappen is 6th, bottom of the First Division.

Of course there are ifs, buts and maybes. Had Verstappen not made mistakes in early races, he'd be 2nd in the standings now, but bad luck stories, excuses and 'if onlys' mean nothing to the results table. Its cold, hard numbers never lie, and they never will.

'There's something pure about a list of competitors and their results that allows the reader to write their own story of a competition'

 @tedkravitz

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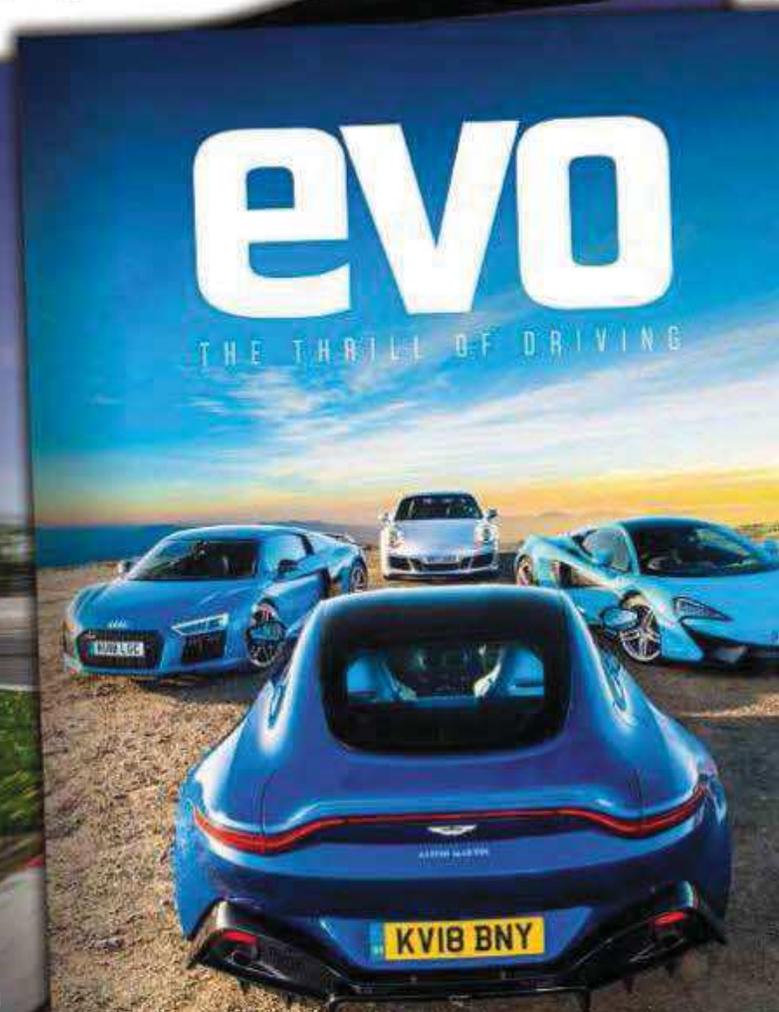
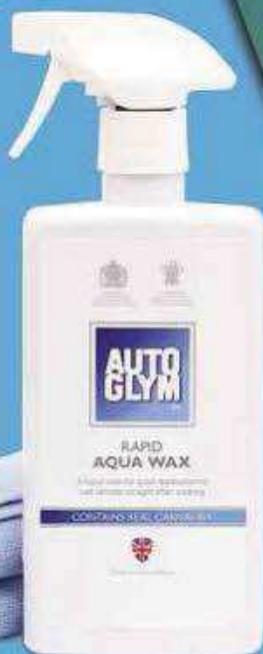
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by ADAM TOWLER

PHOTOGRAPHY by ASTON PARROTT

WITCH CRAFT

It's designed for the track, but can the extraordinary McLaren Senna work its magic on the road, too? We find out on Scotland's remarkable North Coast 500



EVEN FROM AN ENIGMA SUCH as Ayrton Senna, his answer was intriguingly obscure: ‘Fullerton. Name, Fullerton.’ He’d been asked ‘Who was your toughest rival?’ and, having carefully considered it, began talking about Terry Fullerton, his karting teammate from a decade previously. ‘It was pure driving, pure racing,’ said Senna with quiet reflection, a memory of a time before he was the megastar driver; a simpler time, free from the influence of politics and money, when only the next apex mattered.

Purity. Most of us seek it to some degree, yet as a state of mind it’s increasingly hard to achieve in the modern world. Our connected society – from the moment we wake up, our drive to work, to a day in the office – is all online, multitasked, assisted and artificially enhanced, while simultaneously being more complex and, invariably, more stressful, too. Performance cars, sadly, have not escaped this trend, with their instant gratification, endless driver modes, and preoccupation with retaining everyday usability: it’s no wonder the simpler pleasures of modern classics are increasingly popular.

McLaren Automotive likes to think it’s pure. Its models are carbon-tubbed, mid-engined, relatively lightweight supercars. It even retains hydraulic assistance for its power steering, choosing purity of feedback over a small improvement in fuel economy. But now it has built a car with the sole remit of providing maximum driving thrills, mainly on track, and it’s named it after the great man himself. That’s either an inspired partnership – an association no other company could, or would, dare flaunt – or a level of expectation that can’t possibly be equalled.

Something else has resonated, too: right from the very beginning, McLaren has repeatedly stressed how the car’s on-road manners – its ride quality, NVH and so on – have been compromised in the pursuit of that incredible track ability. But maybe, just maybe, it was



worrying unnecessarily – might the Senna’s adherence to a pure doctrine, its very rawness – actually make it a more memorable road car, more involving and more of an experience, more of the time? That’s why we’ve decided to bring what might just be the ultimate car, arguably named after the ultimate driver, to what for me is the ultimate road – the western stretch of the North Coast 500 in the Scottish Highlands. If it works here, there really isn’t anything left to prove.

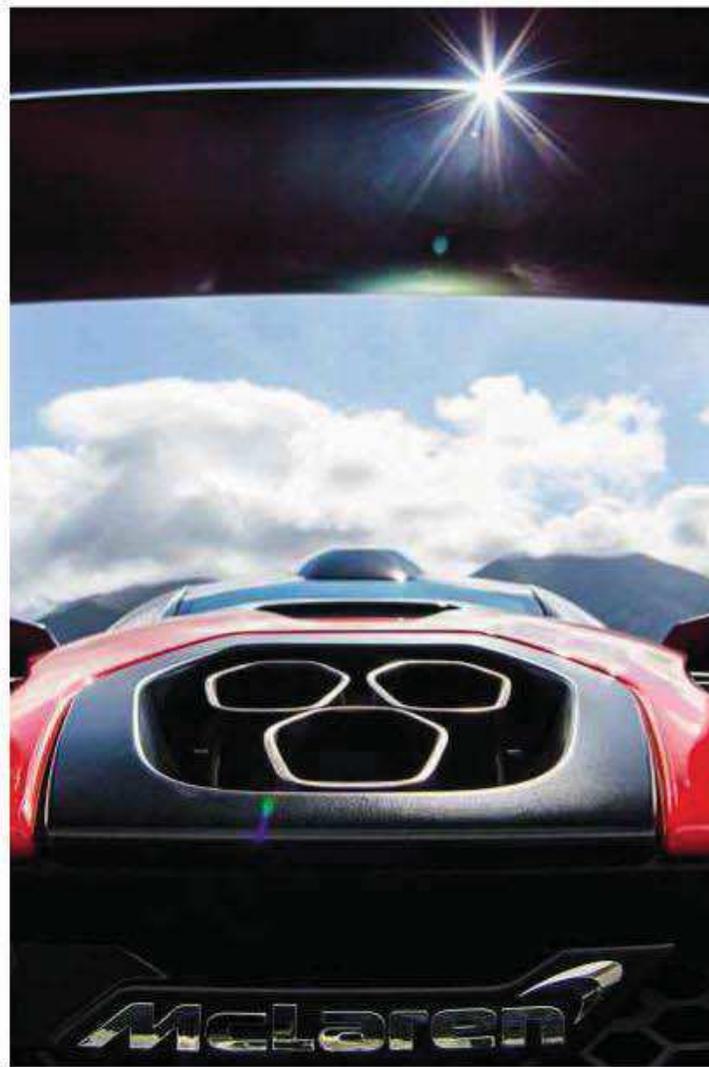
It’s difficult to adequately describe the feeling when someone opens the doors of an innocuous covered trailer to reveal a Senna with your name on the paperwork. It’s a preposterous-looking device, but to spend any time with it is to quickly fall in love with its alien form, its intergalactic presence and the sheer extravagance of something this bonkers wearing number plates. The figures are already etched on my brain: 789bhp, 1198kg dry, 0-62mph in 2.8sec, 669bhp per ton, 800kg of downforce at ‘only’ 155mph. Just for a moment I can honestly say I feel rather overwhelmed, and more than a little emotional, but the desire to get behind the wheel soon obliterates that and I reach into the space below the car’s beltline to pop the butterfly door open.

Somewhere, in a layby en route, is a rental Vauxhall Zafira with the rest of Aston Parrott’s camera gear in it, because there’s no way that’s fitting in the Senna. There’s no storage space in the front or the rear, and the only place to put anything is on a small shelf behind the seats, where you might just be able to squeeze in a soft travel bag if you’re lucky. To do so would decimate vision to the rear, but on this

Above and right: active rear wing and front aero blades help the Senna produce 800kg of downforce at 155mph. **Below left:** a future road-tester in the making...







Above: driving position is second to none. **Bottom right:** padded carbonfibre shell seats weigh just 8kg each

particular car there is none anyway, given it has the solid rear bulkhead option.

There are so many observations during the first few miles that my brain feels like it's swelling up like a nappy dropped in a swimming pool. But I'm going to prioritise one straight away, and it answers perhaps the biggest question of all about using the Senna on the road: it rides. Yes, it has an inherently stiff-legged approach below 20mph, but the faster you go, the better it gets, and once you're driving at pace you never question whether a road, however poorly surfaced, is going to upset either you or the car. At one point on our route there's a collapsed road surface, lasting for over a mile, but the Senna glides across it at unprintable speed in a manner that makes Aston and I turn to each other simultaneously with a look of utter bemusement. I don't know how it does it, but clearly some very clever people have been involved with the Senna's hydraulically interlinked damping.

As we trace our way along the coastline, much of the Senna's intimidation factor has already evaporated. Visibility aft is poor, but I've soon developed a technique to improve the line of sight from the side-mounted mirrors. Recalling how a Spitfire pilot taxis on the ground, weaving from side to side to peer down past the skywards-pointing Rolls Royce Merlin V12, I adopt the same technique in the Senna, gently weaving one way then the other when I want a clear view of behind. We christen it the 'Spitfire shuffle', and it soon becomes second nature.

Even by McLaren's formidable standards the driving position is exceptional, the wheel pulled back in the

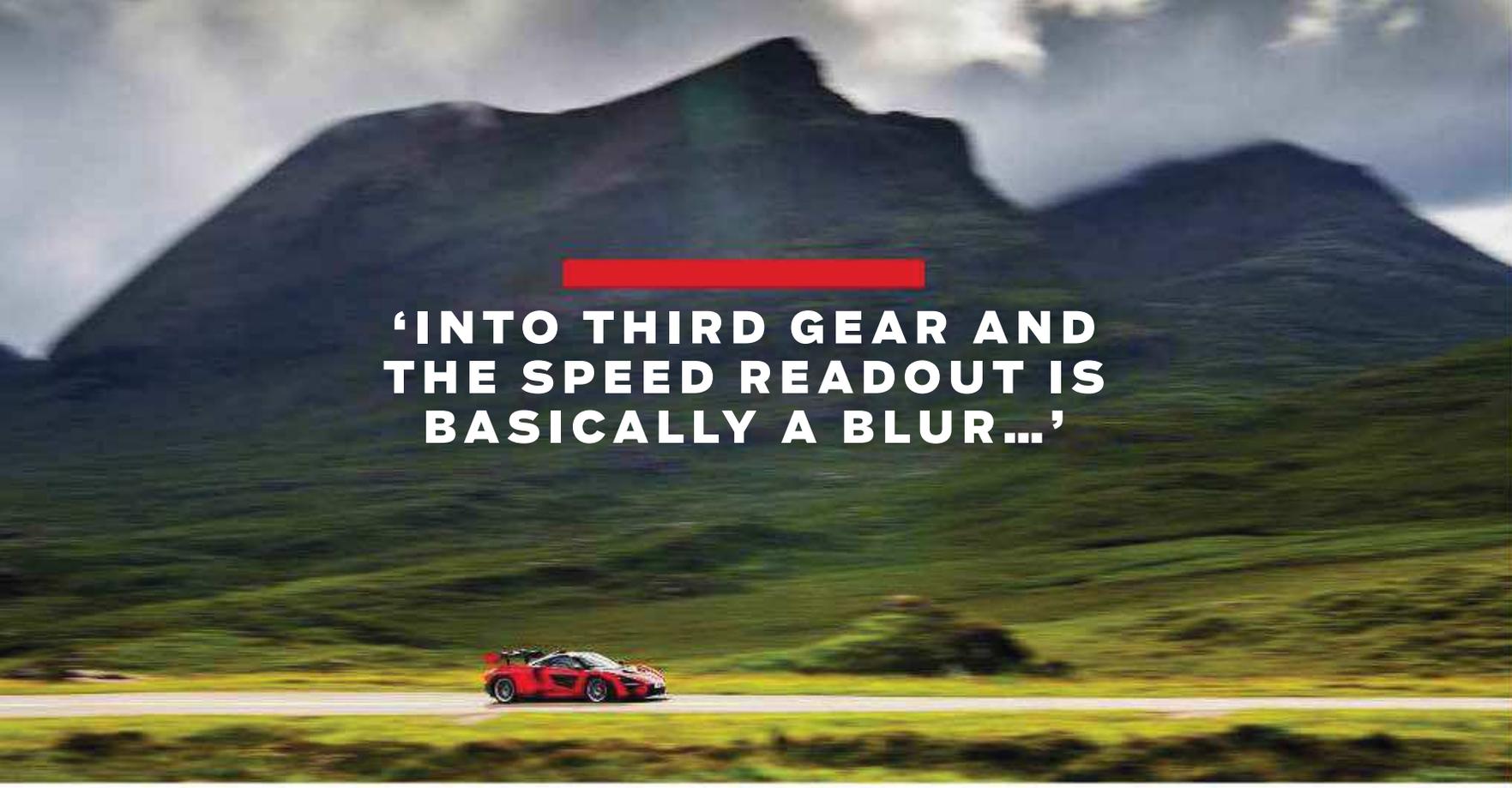
chest and an unobscured view of the rotating dial pack familiar from the 720S, with beyond that a sightline straight down to the road's surface just in front of the protruding snout. Above my head is a pod with the starter button and interior lighting, while in the middle of the dash a sliver of a TFT screen angled towards the driver constitutes the centre console, and the usual transmission selectors are placed in a carbon pod that's actually attached to the driver's seat, and hence moves with it. And what seats they are. Carbon shells with Alcantara pads, they weigh just 8kg each and I've quickly realised they're incredibly supportive and comfortable. I won't get a single twinge from driving the Senna, even after almost 12 hours solid. Talking of twinges, the twin-turbo V8 is already making its presence felt, a tremor via the stiff engine mounts relaying its efforts directly into my body.

There are three distinct levels to driving the Senna. You can drive it slowly, and thanks to its fanatically efficient twin-clutch 'box that's so easy anyone could do it. However, I can't bring myself to drive a car such as the Senna in auto, so I thumb Active on the centre panel then choose from the familiar Comfort, Sport and Track modes for both handling and powertrain, leaving both in Sport for much of the time. Even Track mode isn't overly stiff, though. There's a Race mode, too, but with its reduced ride height (by 39mm front, 30mm rear) that's not an option for the road.

What I'm enjoying most of all is the Senna's steering, which is unlike that of almost any other car currently on sale. In fact, you'd have to turn – no pun intended – to the products of Lotus and Caterham to find a

‘YOU NEVER QUESTION WHETHER A ROAD, HOWEVER POORLY SURFACED, IS GOING TO UPSET THE CAR’





‘INTO THIRD GEAR AND
THE SPEED READOUT IS
BASICALLY A BLUR...’



Above: lower door windows enhance the sensation of speed.

Above right: pedal feel from carbon brakes is unmatched by any other road car

system on a par, for the Senna's wheel chatters, cajoles, informs and occasionally shouts at the driver in a constant diatribe of astonishing clarity about what's happening down at the front wheels. Yes, it loves to run with a camber, but you soon learn that the secret to driving the Senna well is to understand what it's trying to tell you, and that 80 per cent of those movements away from the straight ahead are self-correcting: it's knowing the 20 per cent that need a subtle input from the driver that's the key.

By the time the road runs along the cliff edge past Loch Ewe, my restraint has long since evaporated. Time for 'level two', where you work the engine typically between 3000 and 5000rpm, feeling the true force of that 590lb ft of torque. Now there's a breathy *paah* every time I lift my foot from the accelerator, and a *WHOOSH-PAAAH* if lots of boost has built up and is suddenly expended. The giant Pirelli Trofeo Rs are so sticky to the touch it's like squeezing liquorice between your fingers, but cornering grip starts to take on a new meaning because something else, something deeply profound, is making its presence felt and lifting the Senna into another dimension. I'm talking about downforce. The sense that it's squeezing the Senna

unwaveringly into the tarmac is palpable, the stability of the car hugely confidence inspiring. There is always more grip than you think, but that doesn't make the car aloof; you don't have to use all the grip to feel the reward. So beautifully direct and informative is the hydraulically assisted steering, so finely weighted, that apexes become a ludicrous game of dare with kerbstones and verges, an analogue activity where it's utterly absorbing to deal in fractions of a degree. I've left Aston on the cliff top, snapping away, and I swear the improved power-to-weight ratio is detectable, the Senna feeling even more heroically feisty. The road rushes past my peripheral vision through the glazed lower doors and I feel like I'm in a spaceship pod, not a car. Blimey. I think I need to pull over.

Coffee and cake on a remote hillside is a chance to lower the heart rate and contemplate. I am stunned by the Senna's immersive driving experience, staggered at its ability to ride with aplomb over the ultimate B-road. I love how raw it is: that there's no radio fitted, or carpets, and no air con. Yes, you really notice the heat soak when stationary, but the tiny side windows that drop below the split line supply fresh air without any buffeting at speed. I run through everything my



mind has absorbed over and over again, but I can find only one thing that doesn't enthrall, and that's the noise it makes. The M840TR engine, like all McLaren V8s, is a tool for the job, and not about enriching the soul. When it's idling it feels like all those valves, springs, cam lobes and everything else are oscillating, rotating, vibrating right next to your ear canal, so close does it seem. *Gah-gah-gah* it goes, with all the aural sophistication of a fairground generator. It's dramatic and intimidating, I'll give it that – a constant reminder that there's 789bhp connected to my right foot, like holding a very powerful chainsaw and suddenly contemplating that one slip that could have life-changing consequences.

Suitably refreshed, I know it's time to experience the top strata of the Senna's ability. My heartbeat speeds up and my hands tingle in anticipation, an in-built guilt mechanism primed to face down the devil that's about to take control, because I know what I'm about to do is wrong, but we really are miles from civilisation, on the side of a mountain, so now's as good a time

Above: otherworldly Senna is in its element on the fast, sweeping roads of Scotland's North Coast 500







**'IT'S LIKE BEING
STRAPPED TO
THE NOSE CONE
OF A BALLISTIC
MISSILE'**

**'I IMAGINE IF AYRTON
WERE HERE, WHAT HE
WOULD THINK OF THIS
CAR – THIS CRAZY,
WONDERFUL CAR'**



as any. Combining the final 3000rpm of the Senna's engine output with its peak braking performance and aero-assisted grip on the road is like the Ghostbusters crossing the streams. Risky, and liable to set your hair on fire, but if you want the ultimate it needs to be done.

The Senna goes utterly berserk past 6000rpm. At first it seems heavily torque-restricted in the first two gears, albeit smooth in delivery, only really gaining impossible urgency once third gear has registered with a click of the right-hand paddle. But this is simply the ESP system massaging away the carnage. Switch the ESP to Dynamic, or off, and it all makes sense: it's loopy, it's like being strapped to the nose cone of a ballistic missile, it's absolutely bloody marvellous. Even on a dry road the fat, sticky Pirellis spin up at the top of first and second gears, the rear axle faithfully betraying what's going on, the tail occasionally swaying gently from side to side under full power in the pursuit of traction.

Into third and the speed readout is basically a blur, but a corner is approaching and the game crystallises on how long you leave the taps open for, how late you dare brake. You know you can brake impossibly late; you know the giant ceramic discs and parachute-like rear wing rotating forwards will mean the Senna will stop, and more convincingly than any car you've driven before, but such are the accelerative forces that everything is condensed into milliseconds. A blink of an eye too long on the throttle and it could be too much.

The road twists randomly, and over the worst of the undulations the Senna's rear wheels pick up and the engine slaps the rev limiter – *ra-tat-tat* – the car landing a few degrees sideways then moving back into line. Was it me, did I subconsciously get the lock on and then off again, or did the car sort it? No time to ponder, because we're deep into a corner and on the brakes, the firm pedal giving the best feel to be found on any car currently on sale. Trail off and sense the nose bite hard and the tail edge out: one turn, one line, everything in harmony. The Senna comes alive when it's driven this hard, rising onto its tiptoes once enough forces are put through its chassis. Get a little greedy in the slower stuff and you can edge the tail out more with excess power, although it feels like juggling with cavalry sabres for a hobby.

An inadvertent whoop of laughter follows a successful slide, as much through relief that we're not sliding backwards down a mountainside, composing the first line of an email to the insurance company, as it is through excitement. What really scrambles my brain is one downhill third-gear left-hander. Just at the apex there's a pronounced compression, and the Senna is forced down onto its outer front wheel with enough G-force to thump my chin against my chest. Yet that large front splitter never once even kisses the road's surface. That's extraordinary damping; revelatory poise. It's verging on witchcraft.

And then it's all over, for the simple reason that the intensity, the physical battering the body gets,

shoulders pinned repeatedly to the seat, becomes too much. As soon as I dial back the pace, I notice my mouth is dry, my forearms pumped, and although there's no mirror to look up into, I bet my pupils are the size of squash balls. Frankly, I'm grateful we need to take some static shots – that is if we can avoid being mobbed by the inquisitive passers by and die-hard car nuts who converge instantly on the car every time we stop, like the local midges on exposed flesh. You get to meet a lot of people when you drive a Senna...

Soon we need to push on again. The light is fading now, and the gloomy peaks of Canisp and Beinn Gharbh have a looming menace. The road is fast – long straights, occasionally punctuated by sweeping curves that roll lazily left and right. I'm back at level two in the Senna, pushing on but well within its limits. The windows are down, the cabin full of sweet, fresh Highland air, but again weirdly with no blustering, no distractions, just the rush of scenery and the feeling of the car almost floating over the ground. And there, for the next thirty minutes, I think I've found my definition of automotive purity: thirty minutes where every bend, every crest and every straight is completely absorbing, enriching, unforgettable.

I don't want it to end, but I know that once past Kylesku Bridge the road eventually narrows to a single track, and that won't be any place for a Senna. No, I'd rather call it quits at the zenith of this drive, and with a grin stretching my face until it hurts I feed the car off the main road, roll it slowly down a lane and come to a stop on a slipway just a few feet from the lapping water of a loch. It really is, literally, the end of the road.

With the Senna's engine shut down there's an all-enveloping cloak of silence, and as I look out across the loch and on to the unending vista of the foreboding Atlantic, my overstimulated brain wanders and I imagine if Ayrton were here, what he would think of this car – this crazy, wonderful car. It's an older, greyer Ayrton, wearing the same 'Nacional' cap, now slightly faded. It's an Ayrton who didn't put ink to paper on a Williams-Renault contract, but decided instead to hang up the famous yellow helmet for good, retire to Brazil, and concentrate on his charitable foundation. I turn to him with embarrassing childlike excitement and say: 'Ayrton, that's the thrill of driving right there, isn't it?' And that inimitable quiet smile starts in the corner of his mouth and breaks across his face, and he simply says: 'That's pure driving.' God rest his soul.

McLaren Senna

Engine V8, 3999cc, twin-turbo **Power** 789bhp @ 7250rpm
Torque 590lb ft @ 5500-6700rpm **Transmission** Seven-speed dual-clutch, rear-wheel drive **Front suspension** Double wishbone, coil springs, adaptive dampers **Rear suspension** Double wishbone, coil springs, adaptive dampers **Brakes** Carbon-ceramic discs, 390mm front and rear **Wheels** 19in front, 20in rear **Tyres** 245/35 ZR19 front, 315/30 ZR20 rear **Weight (dry)** 1198kg **Power-to-weight** 669bhp/ton
0-62mph 2.8sec **Top speed** 211mph **Basic price** £750,000

evo rating ★★★★★

AT HOME WITH THE SENNA

An exhilarating road performer it may be, but it's on a race circuit where the Senna's ultimate talents lie

WE'VE GONE PAST THE POINT OF NO return. If I screw up the braking now, we're nose-first into the barrier; there's no shying away from that alarming fact. But it's OK. I've already driven a prototype Senna at Silverstone (evo 249), so I know its powers of braking are unlike those of any other road car I've ever driven, born from a combination of ludicrous downforce, tyres so sticky they squidge under thumb pressure, and ceramic brakes that take nearly as long as a human pregnancy to manufacture. I know the Senna stops from very high speeds like it has driven headlong into a superglue manufacturing plant. 'I KNOW THIS!' I scream, silently, to the sensible half of my brain, the one that's currently questioning my sanity as the 200-metre board approaches at 180mph.

On the previous lap I hit the brakes hard at 300 metres. It felt like I was leaving things perilously late, yet I looked silly, because I had to accelerate again to take Estoril's slow, 90-degree turn one. This time, despite every muscle in my leg twitching to come off the power, I will keep

my foot in until the 200m board. Yes, I will.

It's this re-evaluation of what's possible that defines driving the Senna on a track. It does indeed slow from 180mph to 40mph in just 200 metres – in fact, just inside that mark by the end of the session. Rolling off the brakes as I turn in pivots the car into the corner, then we blast out, a single breath and then an early application of steering lock into the infamously ballsy turn two, before a big stop into turn three. The exit then is uphill, and it's only on this corner that the remaining ESP net shows any sign of intervening, and then only if you're a bit clumsy with the throttle.

It's turn five that illustrates the extraordinary amount of downforce available. Earlier, lapping in a 720S, the

right-hand kink required a lift in fourth gear, and a sharp intake of breath. It was an uncomfortable corner that probed just how much commitment you were prepared to show. In the Senna it's fifth-gear flat, an exhilarating rush through as if attached on a monorail, the delicacy of the steering input reflected in the car's stability.

You also feel that extraordinary downforce in the final – and appropriately named – Ayrton Senna Parabolica, a fast right-hand curve that seems to last for an eternity. But it's downforce that isn't at the expense of adjustability, for any mild understeer can be trimmed away by miniscule alterations to the throttle.

And through all of this one thing I've barely considered is the car's power, even though it's quick enough to squish your vital organs to the back of your chest cavity under full-bore acceleration. A 789bhp car and yet its straight-line speed is almost an afterthought: that tells you everything you need to know about what the Senna's like to drive on a circuit. ☒

Adam Towler

**'IT FELT LIKE
I BRAKED
PERILOUSLY
LATE, YET I
LOOKED SILLY'**





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Arriving Soon



2015 Lotus Exige LF1

POA

Arriving Soon



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Red, 1,700 Miles

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Our Demonstrator



2016 BMW M2 3.0 (s/s)
Long Beach Blue, 21,200 Miles

£34,950

Pre-Owned Example



2015 Nissan GT-R 3.8 V6 Recaro 4WD
Pearl Black, 20,500 Miles, Litchfield Stage 4.25

£59,995

Pre-Owned Example



2015 Porsche Cayman 3.8 981 GT4 (s/s)
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by STUART GALLAGHER

PHOTOGRAPHY by MATT HOWELL

TITLE FIGHT

At last, it's the head-to-head we've been waiting for, as Porsche Cayman GTS squares up to Lotus Exige Sport 410. So, which of these killer coupes will land the knockout punch?





IGNORE THE SPEC SHEETS FOR THE MOMENT, specifically the prices, because when it comes to mid-engined, rear-drive sports coupes, Lotus's Exige and Porsche's Cayman have been like two boxers slinging insults at each other and puffing their chests out, but never actually ducking under the rope and getting in the ring.

There have been a few excuses from both sides as to why they've avoided a tear-up. Most have come from the Norfolk-based camp and have primarily centred around not being in peak condition at the same time as the Stuttgart swinger. Lotus's contender has also fluctuated between classes by overdoing the training and being more on a par with the Cayman's bigger-hitting 911 GT3 uncle. Oh, and for the last 36 months the Hethel firm has been devoid of a press fleet, making anything other than a handful of laps of its test track and Norfolk's B-roads nigh-on impossible. Thankfully, that's now changed for the better.

Not that Porsche has made it easy, either. When it kicked the naturally aspirated flat-six out of the Cayman, a huge part of the model's character was also mislaid. Not being a 911 had allowed the Cayman to be layered with an individual character in contrast to the rear-engined car's, because despite its iconic status the 911 has been making it harder to find those elements that have made it stand head and shoulders above the rest for so long. So since 2012, while the 911 has been in search of its mojo, the combination of a rev-happy, crisp-sounding and energetic naturally aspirated six and one of the sweetest manual gearboxes of a generation – possibly *the*

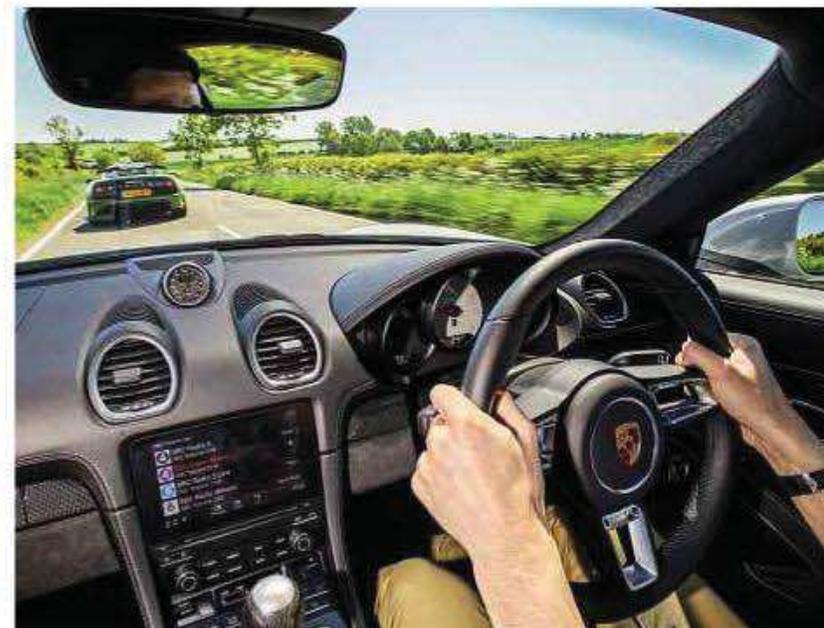
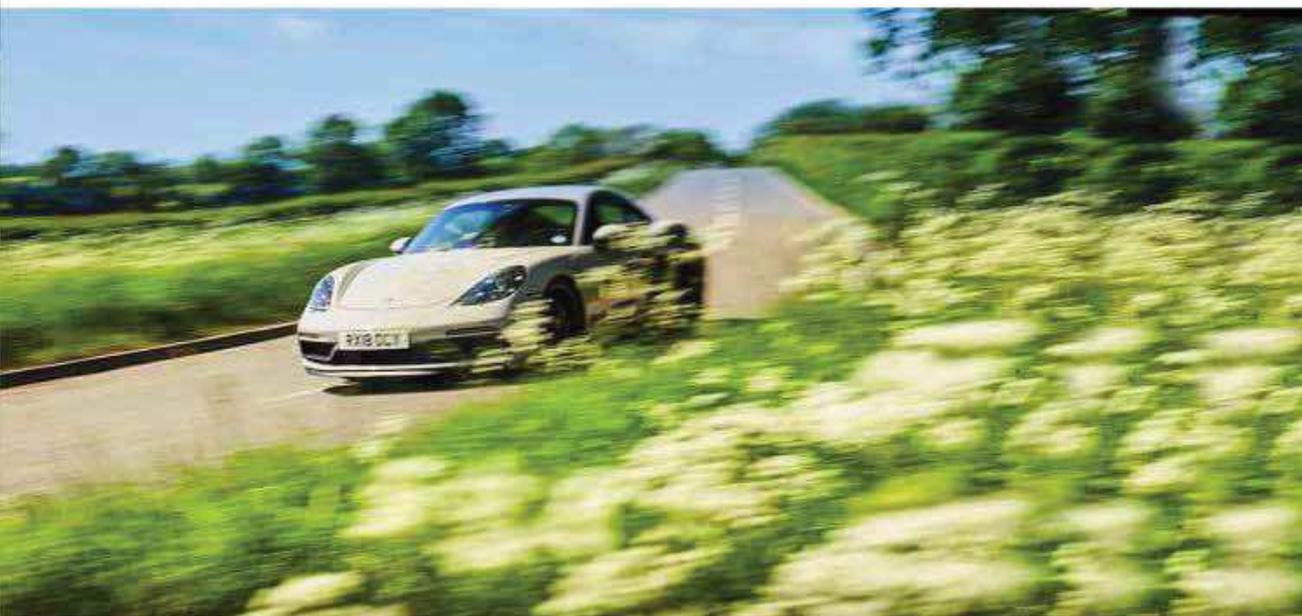
sweetest – always resulted in the Cayman managing to do more than just creep into our affections. Not so now.

Replacing those glorious half-dozen cylinders with a turbocharged four hasn't exactly KO'd the Porsche, but it's no longer the firm favourite. It still does the numbers – in top-line GTS form it's the most powerful series-production Cayman to date, with 360bhp and a haymaker 310lb ft punch enough to get you to 62mph in a claimed 4.6sec, with the double-whammy hit of a turbo-fuelled shove of torque pretty much wherever you need it. Although the intergalactic gearing still has you questioning what planet the transmission team was on when it came up with the ratios.

Engine aside (for the moment, because it cannot be ignored), the Cayman GTS remains a sports coupe that's impossible to ignore. Balance, precision, poise, with not a single gram of fat in its dynamics. Even the electrically assisted steering has improved with age to match the chassis' organic make-up.

Like a retired boxer trading on former glories and telling tales of how dominant they once were, the Exige Sport 410, despite its newfangled name and latest carbonfibre diet, could well be considered an old stager that's picked one fight too many. But that would be to underestimate what's been going on behind the scenes while chaos has seemingly reigned at Lotus since... well, for quite some time.

Trimmer than any previous Exige Sport model, more powerful too (the supercharged Toyota V6 may be essentially the same but its 410bhp was once reserved for the 911 GT3-rivalling Evora



Sport 410), and with so much more street and track know-how, the Sport 410 sits plum in the Exige line-up and is the prime contender to the Cayman GTS.

Before they square up, it's time to talk spec. The 410 isn't cheap – £85,600 is an incredible sum for a car that would appear to have evolved at a much slower rate than its cost has increased. It is also, however, a finely detailed and tuned device dripping with the kind of desirable components that you expect of a low-volume manufacturer that, due to its modest production numbers and available resources, can be perfectly served by third-party experts. So, there's a set of AP brakes, Team Dynamics wheels to the same spec as those made by the West Midlands company for McLaren, and Öhlins dampers. Then there are the benefits of 20 years of continuous development. The latest six-speed gearshift, the new approach to cabin design (less unnecessary detritus and better-quality core components) and the sort of attention to detail you get when a car is developed by people who consider their role a privilege rather than a job.

It's still expensive though; for the same money you can build a very special Cayman GTS. One with ceramic brakes (£5177), lowered PASM Sports suspension (£168), the snug-fitting Sports Bucket Seats (£2315) and other goodies to boot. But while you can in theory buy a basic GTS for £59,866, to go toe-to-toe with the

'EVERY ROAD, EACH JOURNEY AND ALL TRIPS IN THE CAYMAN BECOME AN EVENT'

Lotus you're going to need all the help you can get to get past the opening round.

It takes seconds for the GTS to remind you why the Cayman is held in such high regard. Its ergonomics, the natural control weights, the instinctive precision of every key procedure – they all make you want every car engineer from every car company

to just sit in one to experience how it can be done. Sadly, a cloud drifts into the cabin when the four-pot is started. It truly is an awful-sounding collection of mechanical components. Many have likened it to an early VW Beetle engine running on its last millilitre of oil, but I've blown a Beetle engine into a million tiny pieces and seconds before she blew she still sounded better than this. Sorry, Porsche.

Thankfully it's only the note that fails to meet expectations, as every other facet of the GTS's motor is hard to fault. By spreading its torque so wide across the rev band it masks its turbocharged delivery, in turn allowing you to drive it as if it were naturally aspirated. The way the throttle responds to the smallest of inputs is at odds with everything you know about forced-induction engines and it means that the GTS is still a huge thrill to drive.

Every road, each journey and all trips become an event. The rate

Top right: Cayman cabin mixes everyday habitability with perfect ergonomics.

Above left: Exige's interior feels more raw and purposeful



**‘THE EXIGE
ATTACKS EVERY
DEVIATION
WITH BARELY
BELIEVABLE
ABILITY’**



LOTUS

AUI8 BHY



Above: Cayman GTS is exquisitely balanced, but ultimately can't match the Exige Sport 410 for pace or thrills

of response of the steering, the precision of the damping and the absolute control it has over the body is a delicious reminder that in a world of autonomous cars there are still those who want to build cars for drivers. It's a car you seek out the interesting road in, no matter how far out of your way it takes you.

PTV (Porsche Torque Vectoring) is standard on the GTS, and it makes an already exquisitely balanced car even more so. With the stability control switched off it's one of the most naturally rewarding cars you can buy. Yes, allowing the standard locking diff to operate unhindered could add even more to the experience, but there are times when showboating can be outplayed by the sensation of hooking a series of apexes together with absolute control.

And those expensive brakes? Less unsprung mass is always welcome, but it's the consistency they offer, the way they allow you to brake as deep as you wish, corner after corner, with the reassurance of next to no fade or unsettling judder, that goes a long way to justifying their outlay. The Exige is facing a tough opponent.

A wide sill, bare floor, Vauxhall switchgear – for some, these will put this £80,000-plus Exige on its backside inside the first round. But stick with it – it's worth it. The V6 isn't exactly a choirmaster alongside the Porsche's flat-four, but it instantly reminds you how more cylinders are a good thing. The throttle response isn't as



**'IT'S CLEAR
THAT THE EXIGE
IS THE PURER,
MORE INVOLVING
AND THRILLING
DRIVE'**

instant, but with less mass to move (1108kg v 1375kg) the Exige has no issues with forward momentum. And its gearshift is as sweet as that of the Porsche, with a great weight and action to its throw.

Where the Cayman impresses within the first 20 seconds of moving off, the Exige halves that, delivering a couple of quick blows to remind you you're in for a workout. The unassisted steering is unexpectedly heavy in a world of EPAS and over servoed systems, but reach 30mph and it becomes the most beautiful rack you'll experience in a modern car. Instantly you feel an integral component of the car, at the heart of the process.

After every back-to-back drive it's clear the Exige is the purer, more involving and thrilling drive. In a straight line it has so much more performance and is so much more violent as the revs trouble the higher end of the tacho. And when you step out of the Cayman thinking driving perfection comes no better, the Exige delivers its sucker punch. It can carry so much more speed into, through and out of every corner, leaving the GTS needing to call on everything in its technical armoury to keep the Exige from walking away with it.

You can feel the Sport 410 work its Michelins harder (Cup 2s compared to the Cayman's Super Sports – an option opportunity missed by Porsche), and with so much more grip it attacks every deviation along any straight with barely believable ability. It is

the most natural of driving experiences – instinctive and oh so rewarding – and there's nothing the Cayman GTS can do about it.

A victory for Hethel, then. But the bout doesn't end there, because after every victory comes a new challenger, but in this case it's a used one. When we started I told you to ignore the price until later and that time is now. Because for the same cost as this astonishing Sport 410 you can buy another mid-engined Porsche; a lightly used one with a naturally aspirated engine and a manual gearbox, and a chassis that offers elements of motorsport adjustability. A former eCoty champion, no less. Throwing the Cayman GT4's hat into the ring would be an altogether tougher challenge for this Exige. Time for a rematch? ☒

Porsche 718 Cayman GTS

Engine Flat-four, 2497cc, turbo
Power 360bhp @ 6500rpm **Torque** 310lb ft @ 1900-5500rpm
Weight 1375kg
Power-to-weight 266bhp/ton **0-62mph** 4.6sec (claimed)
Top speed 180mph (claimed)
Basic price £59,866

evo rating ★★★★★

Lotus Exige Sport 410

Engine V6, 3456cc, supercharger
Power 410bhp @ 7000rpm **Torque** 310lb ft @ 3500rpm
Weight 1108kg
Power-to-weight 376bhp/ton **0-62mph** 3.4sec (claimed)
Top speed 180mph (claimed)
Basic price £85,600

evo rating ★★★★★



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TYRE TEST 2018

This year, evo's annual test puts the most popular 19-inch performance tyres through their paces

by JOHN BARKER

PHOTOGRAPHY by PETE GIBSON

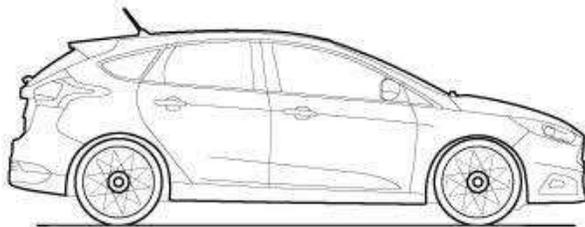
IF YOU'RE DRIVING A CAR FITTED with 19-inch rims, it's probably a performance car made in the last few years, a car still in its prime in terms of performance and dynamics. Chances are that it's fitted with 235/35 R19s, the tyre size we're putting through the demanding evo test in 2018.

We will again be rating our contenders objectively and – uniquely – subjectively, with subjective assessment contributing 40 per cent of the overall mark. So we can offer a complete picture, telling you which tyres deliver outstanding dry-road grip, which are exceptional in the wet, which offer the sharpest feel, which are most comfortable and which offer a measured blend of characteristics.

Our six contenders include most of the premium brands. However, Bridgestone declined to take part, as its contender is still the S001, which wasn't great last time we tested it; stock issues ruled out Hankook; and Kumho, Pirelli and Vredestein all said they had new-spec tyres in this size imminent.

THE CAR

The front-drive Ford Focus ST has a lot going for it as a platform to test tyres, principally grainy, detailed steering feel and a chassis that is calm and well balanced and offers the option of a small amount of tail movement to help get the car turned in. This will reveal the composure of our tyres at the limit while the generous torque from the 247bhp turbo 2-litre engine – a hefty 265lb ft at just 2000rpm – will test traction.



THE TRACK

It's been a few years since we've been to Goodyear's Mireval test track near Montpellier in the south of France. Its location delivers a hot, stable climate, and since our last visit the demanding wet handling circuit has been resurfaced and now offers more consistent friction, all the better to test grip and composure. The one-time racetrack that serves as the dry handling circuit does the same, with its high-speed, high-commitment turns and low-speed technical challenges.

THE TYRES



1. Continental SportContact 6
235/35 R19 91Y XL
£141



2. Dunlop SportMaxx RT 2
235/35 R19 91Y XL
£127



3. Falken Azenis FK510
235/35 R19 91Y XL
£102



4. Goodyear Eagle F1 Asymmetric 3
235/35 R19 91Y XL
£123



5. Michelin Pilot Sport 4 S
235/35 R19 91Y XL
£160



6. Toyo Proxes Sport
235/35 R19 91Y XL
£101

All of the tested tyres were independently sourced.

WET HANDLING

G LISTENING IN A parched landscape, the weird wet handling circuit climbs and falls on the gentle slope of the proving ground, challenging grip and composure in a number of ways. The second-gear hairpin tests braking on the way in and traction on the way out, while the rest is third gear, mostly medium speed with one sweet line, but there's also a series of high-speed left-right-left sweeps that really test balance and grip. And confidence.

It's no coincidence that the tyres that were quickest also felt the best and so were awarded the highest subjective marks. On home turf, topping the time table was the Dunlop, setting the pace at 64.1sec –

2.7sec faster than the last-placed tyre. But it was only a tenth ahead of the second fastest, its stablemate the Goodyear, which scored highest subjectively. 'You can get on the throttle so early, the tyre feels so grippy,' I noted. 'And it's "unnervous", allowing you to keep digging deeper into its reserves until you're at the limit.' The Dunlop was similarly impressive: 'Rarely puts a foot wrong. The tail edges out in medium-speed turns, but slowly, so you can exploit it.'

The Michelin placed third subjectively and on the time sheet, lapping half a second slower than the Goodyear. It felt like the gap might be bigger because it felt edgier and wouldn't commit to the fast sweeps with the same positivity.

WET LAP

Tyre	Seconds	%
Dunlop	64.1	100
Goodyear	64.2	99.8
Michelin	64.7	99.1
Falken	65.6	97.7
Toyo	65.8	97.4
Continental	66.8	96.0

WET HANDLING - SUBJECTIVE

Tyre	Score	%
Goodyear	62.0	100
Dunlop	59.5	96.0
Michelin	57.0	91.9
Falken	52.0	83.9
Toyo	48.0	77.4
Continental	42.5	68.5



However, once turned in it held the line well. Almost a second behind the Michelin came the Falken: ‘Responses feel softer, grip less strong, but has a decent, exploitable balance. Oversteer in the faster turns tempers its pace, though.’

Fifth on time and score was the Toyo. It had a similar feel to the Falken but offered less grip: ‘You can find a balance. The feedback is all a bit mushy, though.’ Sixth and last was the Continental, a whole second adrift of the Toyo. It literally felt out of its depth at times, the driven fronts lifted by a couple of deeper patches of water. Also, it wouldn’t turn in for the fast sweeps at the speed of the others and slipped into oversteer where the others were secure. Not confidence inspiring.



WET CIRCLE

THE WET CIRCLE shows how much outright lateral grip a tyre has. Unexpectedly contradicting the circuit results, lapping fastest here was the Continental, while the Goodyear was a slightly distant fifth. The fastest on track, the Dunlop, finished second here, though. In last place, and a fair chunk off the pace, was the Toyo.

WET CIRCLE

Tyre	Seconds	%
Continental	14.18	100
Dunlop	14.23	99.6
Falken	14.35	98.8
Michelin	14.36	98.7
Goodyear	14.54	97.5
Toyo	14.90	95.2



BRAKING AND ROLLING RESISTANCE

THE MOST CONSISTENTLY good performer in the braking tests was the Michelin; it topped the wet table by almost half a metre (the test being to slow from 80kph to 1kph) and was a very close second in the dry too (from 100kph). Continental just pipped it there and was fifth in the wet, which is better than it sounds because it needed less than a metre more than the best.

Dunlop was a strong performer, a solid third in the dry and joint second in the wet, where it tied with the Falken – one of that tyre’s best results. The Toyo was some way off the pace, needing over

3 metres more than the best to stop in the wet and a yawning 4.4 metres – a whole car length – more in the dry.

Fuel economy is influenced by rolling resistance, and tyre labelling should reflect this. By this information, the Dunlop, Goodyear and Michelin (rated ‘C’) should appear in the top half of the table, the Continental, Falken and Toyo (rated ‘E’) in the bottom. The surprise here, then, is a strong third from Toyo.

DRY BRAKING

Tyre	Metres	%
Continental	34.0	100
Michelin	34.1	99.7
Dunlop	34.9	97.4
Goodyear	35.6	95.5
Falken	36.5	93.2
Toyo	38.4	88.5

WET BRAKING

Tyre	Metres	%
Michelin	23.2	100
Dunlop	23.6	98.3
Falken	23.6	98.3
Goodyear	24.0	96.7
Continental	24.1	96.3
Toyo	26.3	88.2



ROLLING RESISTANCE

Tyre	Coefficient	%
Dunlop	8.76	100
Goodyear	8.80	99.5
Toyo	8.92	98.2
Michelin	9.16	95.6
Continental	9.57	91.5
Falken	9.60	91.3

AQUAPLANING

AQUAPLANING TESTS reveal the point at which a tyre is no longer in contact with the road – the point at which it offers no control. We measured the speed at which each tyre overspeeds by more than 15 per cent in a straight line and then on a curve, though the calculations mean that the speed and rating don't always correlate. Topping both tests is the Dunlop, with the Goodyear close behind. The Toyo puts in a strong performance to finish third in both tests, while the Continental, Falken and Michelin are in touch in the straight-line test but a long way off the best in the curved test.



STRAIGHT-LINE AQUAPLANING

Tyre	Max kph	%
Dunlop	86.3	100
Goodyear	85.4	99.0
Toyo	83.6	96.9
Falken	82.3	95.4
Michelin	82.0	95.0
Continental	79.8	92.5

CURVED AQUAPLANING

Tyre	Max kph	%
Dunlop	69.1	100
Goodyear	71.0	99.7
Toyo	68.4	97.7
Falken	68.1	85.3
Continental	66.7	83.4
Michelin	66.5	79.4

DRY HANDLING

FROM THE FIRST corner – a fast, blind right-hander that drops away – this former race circuit challenges grip and precision. Braking from speed while turning through turn two for the tighter turn three really tests balance and composure, while the series of tight corners that bring the circuit back uphill test traction and agility.

Topping the times is the Continental with a lap of 84.9sec, with the Michelin breathing down its neck. This is no surprise because around here this duo felt sharp, connected and direct. The Continental had superbly precise steering and delivered strong grip and a calm, exploitable balance. The Michelin had the same decisive, keen character and carried speed with the same confidence, losing out only because its grip didn't feel quite so tenacious.

Illustrating the performance gap, the third- and fourth-place Dunlop and Goodyear were almost two seconds a lap adrift, and felt like it, too, with

softer steering response and a less hooked-up feel. The Goodyear scored slightly better subjectively, being better composed when turning and braking: 'Biddable, willing to adjust its line and good on the brakes,' I noted. 'Just lacks the precision feel and traction of the best.' The Dunlop attracted similar notes: 'Good agility, no vices, just feels rather ordinary after the Continental.'

The Falken almost matched the Goodyear and Dunlop on lap time but was further away subjectively. It felt hard to exploit: 'Rather inert, and less adjustability makes it feel dull. Less good on the brakes too, so you can't carry speed into the trail-brake turns.'

Sixth and last was the Toyo, over half a second slower than the Falken and similar in character. It didn't feel strong on the brakes and was traction limited, giving the impression it wasn't keyed into the track. However, what it lacked in outright grip it made up for in balance, flowing well through the quick corners early in the lap.



ROAD ROUTE

THE ROAD ROUTE IS about feel and feedback in general driving, the tyres being rated for steering feel and feedback and how they cope with different surfaces.

Just as in the dry handling test, in this discipline the field breaks into two camps: the overtly sporty – Continental and Michelin – and the rest, which have more rounded attributes. The scores are quite close, though, the Continental topping the table thanks to its excellent steering: ‘Responds crisply to inputs and feels connected and precise.’ It was a relatively hard, noisy ride though. The Michelin struck a similar compromise and was ranked equal third: ‘Direct, tactile steering but a noisier, more tactile and sharper-edged ride.’

In second place was the Dunlop, which scored decently across the attributes, with steering that was a touch woolly at low speed but felt better connected by 50mph, allied to a ride that was quieter than the sportiest tyres and more absorbent. The Goodyear was equal third with the Michelin and had more steering feel than the Dunlop but gave a higher-pitched noise and wasn’t as good at taking the sting out of ridges and other impacts. The Falken steered like the Dunlop but with lighter efforts and its ride was more jiggly, while the Toyo had softly connected steering and was noisy but compliant.



DRY LAP

Tyre	Seconds	%
Continental	84.9	100
Michelin	85.0	99.9
Dunlop	86.8	97.8
Goodyear	86.8	97.8
Falken	87.0	97.6
Toyo	87.6	96.9

DRY HANDLING - SUBJECTIVE

Tyre	Score	%
Continental	62.0	100
Michelin	60.5	97.6
Goodyear	50.5	81.5
Dunlop	49.5	79.8
Falken	45.5	73.4
Toyo	43.5	70.2

ROAD ROUTE

Tyre	Score	%
Continental	22.5	100
Dunlop	21.5	95.6
Goodyear	21.0	93.3
Michelin	21.0	93.3
Falken	20.5	91.1
Toyo	20.0	88.9

RESULTS

6TH TOYO The least expensive tyre and it brought up the rear in many tests, though was rarely a long way off the pace. Was at its best in the wet, especially in aquaplaning, but was less good in the standard braking tests. Didn't feel great, though, rarely feeling hooked into the surface.

BLACKCIRCLES SAYS... *Despite it not coming with the best tyre label scores for fuel efficiency, customers have left mostly positive reviews for the Toyo, mentioning good road-holding and reliable braking performance.*

5TH FALKEN Scored competitively in the measured wet and dry tests, especially wet braking, and was close to the pace on the wet and dry handling circuits. Felt reasonably exploitable and grippy in the wet but

in the dry lacked a direct, connected steering feel. **BLACKCIRCLES SAYS...** *Not as high a seller as some of the other well-known tyres in this test. However, customers who have purchased the Falken are generally pleased with its overall performance.*

4TH CONTINENTAL If you're looking for a tyre that excels in the dry and will make your car feel keen and precise, this is a great choice. Fastest and best-rated on the dry track, and felt sportiest on the road. The downside is that in the wet it was off the pace and tricky.

BLACKCIRCLES SAYS... *The Continental consistently scores well with our customers, with regular comments focusing on the tyre's good levels of grip, handling and performance. Many state that they would buy this tyre again.*

3RD DUNLOP Ran the Goodyear close for second with best results in wet handling, aquaplaning, and rolling resistance. Not as direct and connected as the best in the dry, though, as was reflected in lap times and subjective scores. Feels more like an all-rounder than a sporty tyre.

BLACKCIRCLES SAYS... *With a review score of 4.6 out of 5 on Blackcircles.com, over 900 motorists have been impressed with the Dunlop. Many cite the tyre's low noise, smooth performance and reliable grip as its positives.*

2ND GOODYEAR Rated best in the wet, dealing with the tricky wet handling track in a calm, exploitable and effective way. Scored well enough everywhere else too, but, like the Dunlop, lacks the crispness of steering

and response to engage and reward in the dry.

BLACKCIRCLES SAYS... *This is a popular tyre amongst our customers – over 2500 reviews have seen it achieve a score of 4.6 out of 5, with reviewers impressed by its dry and wet performance.*

1ST MICHELIN Delivers the steering feel, grip and instant response in the dry of a true performance tyre and uniquely combines this with good performance in the wet. Not cheap, but if you want to get the best out of your high-performance car in all conditions, this is the one.

BLACKCIRCLES SAYS... *Relatively new, this tyre is already a firm favourite – with an overall score of 4.8 out of 5, it is a high-scoring tyre. Positive customer reviews frequently praise the tyre's grip, comfort and handling.*



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 **MICHELIN**

Michelin Pilot Sport 4 S

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RATED
4.8/5
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GOODYEAR

**Goodyear
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MÉGANE RS v CIVIC TYPE R v GOLF R

Renault's trick new Mégane RS is out to steal its crown back from Honda's Civic Type R. But could Volkswagen's Golf R actually be the hottest hatch of all? The rigours of an evo Supertest will provide the answers

evo SUPERTEST

by DAVID VIVIAN PHOTOGRAPHY by ASTON PARROTT





T PROBABLY GOES WITHOUT SAYING THAT THE rivalries we are about to witness on the roads that rock and roll across the Pennines will clash with extreme prejudice. Forget McLaren's supercar tussles with Ferrari, Lamborghini and Porsche – the quest to build the ultimate hot hatch appears to be far more serious than that. 'Needle match' is too blunt a description.

Despite a persistent obsession to nut things out against the clock on Germany's Nordschleife, the contest is no mere grab for power and speed. The beauty of this apex gathering is diversity: a conspicuous absence of 'me too-ism', rock-solid conviction in the respective approaches and tech, and an honest, boldly defined pitch for your £30k or so. Apart from the things required to be called a car, all the Volkswagen Golf R and Honda Civic Type R share is a letter of the alphabet. Attitudinally and aesthetically, they're matter/anti-matter opposites – high-functioning sleeper-level stealth plays whatever message you care to infer from Honda's decision to glue the entire history of hot hatch, supercar and touring car iconography to the Civic's already 'out there' unadorned shape. It's a tad busy.

Between the two extremes there's an ocean of space for a third way that steers much closer to the seminal hot hatch blueprint. It's called the third-generation Renault Mégane RS. The Volcanic Orange example we have here comes with the Cup chassis option (£1500), which combines a limited-slip diff with beefed-up springs, dampers and anti-roll bar. Even if you don't go Cup, the Mégane's hydraulic bump stops promise to soften the blow if you hit a big compression at speed and use up all the suspension travel.

Arguably, the Renault is the closest thing we have to meticulously evolved hot hatch royalty, with a lineage that reaches back 15 years

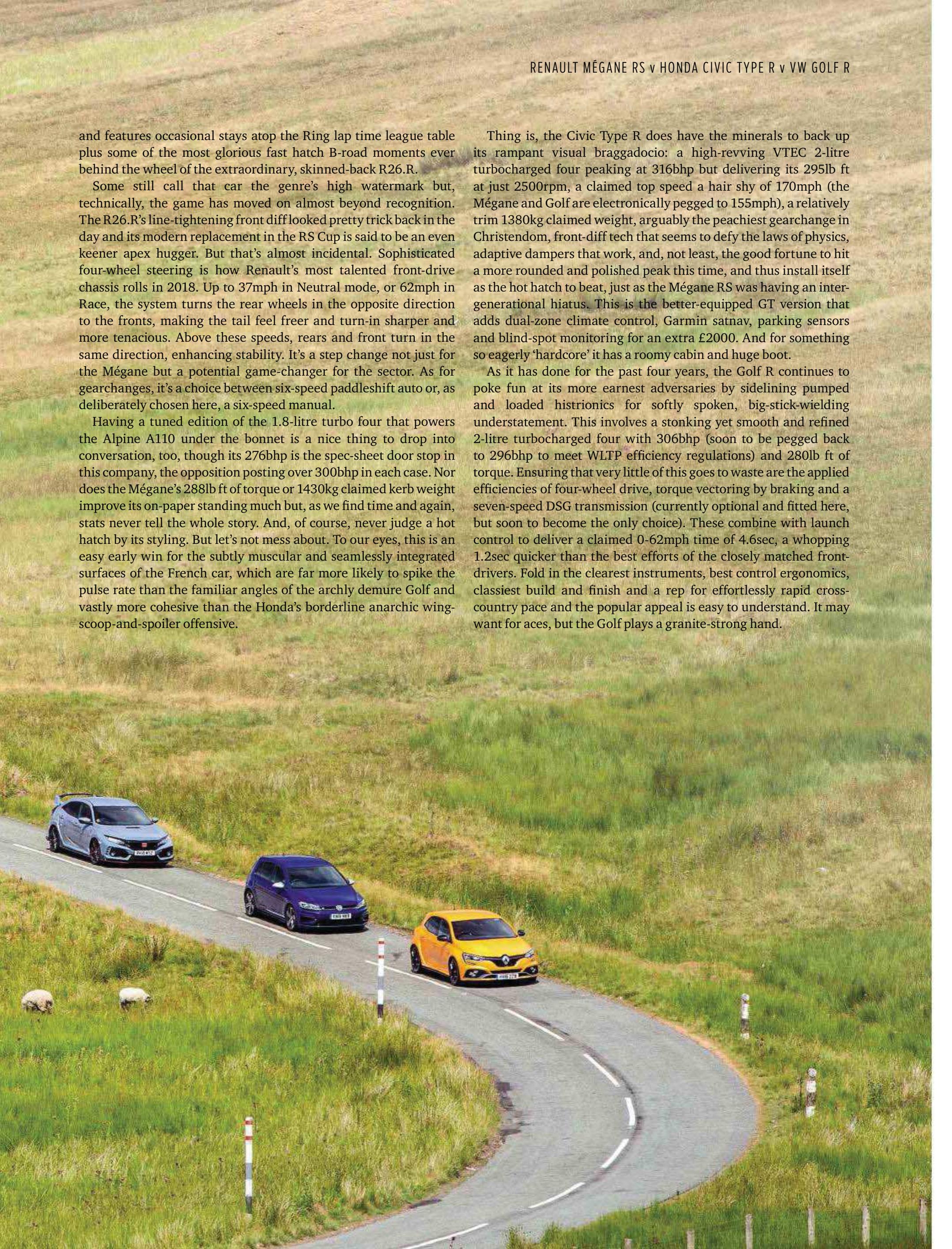
and features occasional stays atop the Ring lap time league table plus some of the most glorious fast hatch B-road moments ever behind the wheel of the extraordinary, skinned-back R26.R.

Some still call that car the genre's high watermark but, technically, the game has moved on almost beyond recognition. The R26.R's line-tightening front diff looked pretty trick back in the day and its modern replacement in the RS Cup is said to be an even keener apex hugger. But that's almost incidental. Sophisticated four-wheel steering is how Renault's most talented front-drive chassis rolls in 2018. Up to 37mph in Neutral mode, or 62mph in Race, the system turns the rear wheels in the opposite direction to the fronts, making the tail feel freer and turn-in sharper and more tenacious. Above these speeds, rears and front turn in the same direction, enhancing stability. It's a step change not just for the Mégane but a potential game-changer for the sector. As for gearchanges, it's a choice between six-speed paddleshift auto or, as deliberately chosen here, a six-speed manual.

Having a tuned edition of the 1.8-litre turbo four that powers the Alpine A110 under the bonnet is a nice thing to drop into conversation, too, though its 276bhp is the spec-sheet door stop in this company, the opposition posting over 300bhp in each case. Nor does the Mégane's 288lb ft of torque or 1430kg claimed kerb weight improve its on-paper standing much but, as we find time and again, stats never tell the whole story. And, of course, never judge a hot hatch by its styling. But let's not mess about. To our eyes, this is an easy early win for the subtly muscular and seamlessly integrated surfaces of the French car, which are far more likely to spike the pulse rate than the familiar angles of the archly demure Golf and vastly more cohesive than the Honda's borderline anarchic wing-scoop-and-spoiler offensive.

Thing is, the Civic Type R does have the minerals to back up its rampant visual braggadocio: a high-revving VTEC 2-litre turbocharged four peaking at 316bhp but delivering its 295lb ft at just 2500rpm, a claimed top speed a hair shy of 170mph (the Mégane and Golf are electronically pegged to 155mph), a relatively trim 1380kg claimed weight, arguably the peachiest gearchange in Christendom, front-diff tech that seems to defy the laws of physics, adaptive dampers that work, and, not least, the good fortune to hit a more rounded and polished peak this time, and thus install itself as the hot hatch to beat, just as the Mégane RS was having an inter-generational hiatus. This is the better-equipped GT version that adds dual-zone climate control, Garmin satnav, parking sensors and blind-spot monitoring for an extra £2000. And for something so eagerly 'hardcore' it has a roomy cabin and huge boot.

As it has done for the past four years, the Golf R continues to poke fun at its more earnest adversaries by sidelining pumped and loaded histrionics for softly spoken, big-stick-wielding understatement. This involves a stonking yet smooth and refined 2-litre turbocharged four with 306bhp (soon to be pegged back to 296bhp to meet WLTP efficiency regulations) and 280lb ft of torque. Ensuring that very little of this goes to waste are the applied efficiencies of four-wheel drive, torque vectoring by braking and a seven-speed DSG transmission (currently optional and fitted here, but soon to become the only choice). These combine with launch control to deliver a claimed 0-62mph time of 4.6sec, a whopping 1.2sec quicker than the best efforts of the closely matched front-drivers. Fold in the clearest instruments, best control ergonomics, classiest build and finish and a rep for effortlessly rapid cross-country pace and the popular appeal is easy to understand. It may want for aces, but the Golf plays a granite-strong hand.





THE PENNINES ARE A FAIR SCHLEP FROM WHERE I live on the north Kent coast – 252 miles to the most interesting section of the B2675, a few miles from Brough. Worth it, though. The blue-sky battalions of tourists towing caravans we might reasonably have expected to encounter simply haven't materialised. Not much in the way of itinerant sheep or Spandex-sweaty Tour de France fantasists, either. What we do have here, though, is just the right gauge and smooth-to-scarred quality of twisting, swooping and soaring tarmac, into which the trim size of these cars fits perfectly. Best of all is the mile after mile of clear sight lines, allowing speed to be carried and moves strung together in one seamless, never-ending, memory-searing rush. For this test with these cars, it's the Goldilocks zone.

I've arrived in the Golf R, if not exactly fizzing on an adrenaline high then none the worse for the multitude of miles that have passed rather briskly and, for the most part, comfortably under the VW's unfailingly grippy Bridgestone Potenzas. I don't hear any dissent from road test editor James Disdale or staff writer Will Beaumont when I propose that the Golf is the obvious weapon of choice to drive to and away from this tin-top showdown, especially if the weather happened to be mucky, which it plainly isn't today.

Apart from the security blanket of all-wheel drive, it's simply that much more, well, *couth* than the others, with a satnav that's actually easy to use and which you can rely on. This might sound trivial, but it's just a function of how sussed and grown-up the endlessly honed and fine-tooth combed Golf is. All well and good. But can it still convince against its more assertively combative rivals when the brief is maximum-effort entertainment on roads that make you smile when simply observed from a sun-scorched verge? I'm eager to know.

So, resisting the urge to run across to the Civic Type R and chuck my torso between the insanely huge side bolsters of its low-slung bucket seat, I stick with Captain Sensible for the next half hour. I know what you're thinking – that's just an everyman disguise and bubbling beneath the surface is a wild spirit with blazing coat tails and a demonic cackle. Nice try.

When asked to light the afterburners, the Golf delivers brilliantly and in a blink. But while the G-forces swell impressively and the scenery blurs then streaks, the dynamic precedence of flow, traction and grip over snap, response and agility is largely unchanged and, to be honest, doesn't require much of an input upgrade from the bloke behind the wheel. On this initial and, for me, exploratory foray down the long and winding road, without the others in tow, it soon becomes clear that the Golf R has a remarkably elastic comfort zone.

I'm trying pretty hard but can't avoid the impression that what

might/should turn into runaway enthusiasm is being tempered by a higher intelligence. It's almost as if the Golf is whispering – oddly, in a southern Californian accent – 'Chill, buddy, I've got this.' I suspect we'll find out exactly what the Golf has got later when we head, in convoy, for our overnight hotel along a road that photographer Aston Parrott assures me is simply spectacular. Until then, I have a hunch there's talent as yet untapped nestling behind the layers of Teutonic efficiency, but being an impatient sort, I need a more explicit fix right now.

With photography under way, the class-hero Honda is already the subject of 'detail' shots which, for obvious reasons, could take some time. But that's OK because, for sheer contrast, I think the Mégane probably takes it. Some of the racy Renault's signature quirks are familiar: the plastic card instead of a key that also enables the proximity locking/unlocking so, like the living or demised state of Schrödinger's cat, you're never quite sure if the



'When asked to light the afterburners, the Golf R delivers brilliantly and in a blink'

Top left and above right: high levels of commitment feel natural in both the Civic and the Golf thanks to the way both cars engender confidence in their drivers, yet the driving experiences couldn't be further apart

Mégane is secure; the inexplicably slightly-too-high seat, made still stranger by the extreme, Sébastien Ogier WRC driving position left by James (though the seat itself is deeply contoured and locates as firmly as the Honda's) and, well, just the cabin's overarching *vive la difference* ambience, cranked up this time round with a vaguely melodic yet amusingly bombastic battle cry played through the audio system when you get in that makes Audi's *puh-dum, puh-dum* seem distinctly half-hearted.

The reams of red stitching, drilled metal pedals, top-dead-centre steering wheel marker and smattering of 'RS' badges are all predictable, less so the large portrait-orientated infotainment touchscreen that comes with TomTom Live services and looks a bit McLaren and a bit Tesla but, James has warned me, is trickier to navigate than the Venetian canal network.

Such concerns don't linger. In fact, I'm struggling to recall a car I have driven before that engages as swiftly, urgently and startlingly as this one. It isn't so much the engine, which is as feisty and un-laggy as you could wish for, but chassis dynamics that grab like a meat hook and, to begin with, are far from a lovely thing – at least not when confronted with the welter of quickly changing surfaces and corrupted cambers up here. The key alerts lighting up my frontal lobes are ride and steering – the former unyielding, the latter busy with camber sensitivity and more than a sniff of torque-steer.

It all seems a bit old school, like dumping the icy digital perfections of the Golf for a warped vinyl LP on a highly strung high-end turntable. My reflexive response is to fight it, to tighten my grip on the fat steering wheel rim and try to muscle the Mégane to my will. Wrong. After a few exciting but

'I'm struggling to recall a car I have driven before that engages as swiftly, urgently and startlingly'

scrappy miles it becomes clear that's a no-win. Relaxing helps a lot. And understanding that, like a puppy desperate to please, the Renault just wants to play and involve you. Give in to that, loosen up, wind on some pace and the initial tensions and doubts simply fall away.

The combined agencies of a trick slippery diff and four-wheel steering may define the lively feel of the chassis, but phenomenal grip and agility are key to its speed across the ground. It must be said, though, that until you get used to the Mégane's all-action way of doing things, the car's extraordinary limits aren't intuitively easy to access. Initially, it's a leap-of-faith deal but, as the miles pile on, so trust grows and the Renault's on-paper shortfall of gee gees flutters away in its slipstream. Bottom line, the Mégane RS is savagely quick point-to-point. A little speed works wonders for the ride, too, which although still prone to fidget over small irregularities has a real depth of tautly controlled pliancy when the chips are down.





Above: Mégane's four-wheel-steering system turns the rear wheels in the opposite direction to the fronts at lower speeds for keener responses. **Left:** driving seat is set too high; touchscreen is tricky to navigate, too

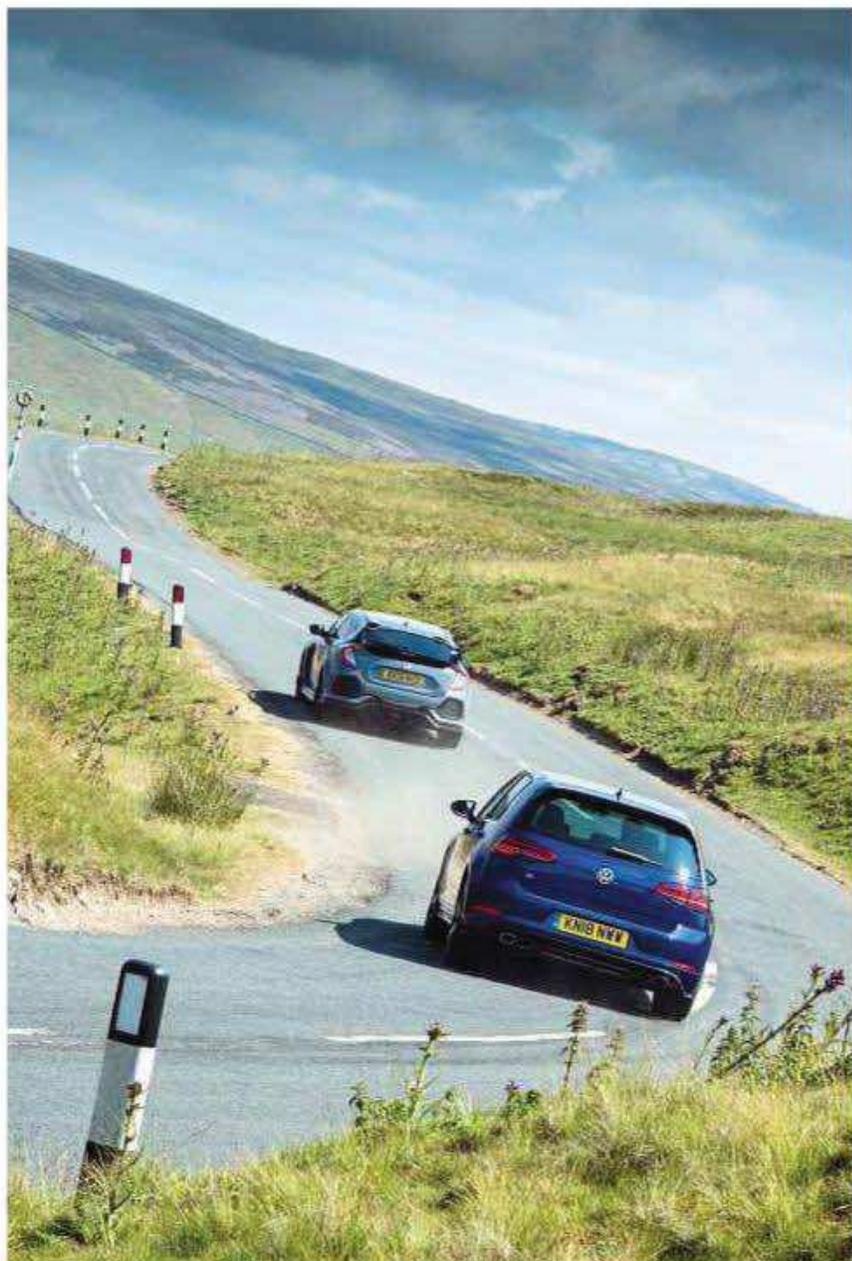
I return to base somewhat later than promised, a jot perplexed but mile-weariness in the much-travelled Golf gone and mood significantly improved. No time to swap notes: we're off to the next location and, boy, I've been looking forward to this, my first go in the Civic Type R. Whatever (possibly fretful) thoughts cross your mind as you walk towards the much addended Honda – mine revolve around how the sheer quantity of stuff attached to the aft part of the car somehow shrinks what should be the magnificent presence of 20-inch rims in the rear arches – there's salvation on the inside. Yeah, it's über-racy with loads of red piping and one of those instrument displays dominated by a huge crescent of rev counter, not to mention the red binnacle skirt lighting that comes on when you select the sportier chassis/throttle map modes with the switch on the centre console. But wriggling down into the low, huggy seat, all the control relationships and weightings feel precise, solid and spot on – something you can't say in the Renault or even the Golf.

With a judicious spray of car park gravel, I slot in behind Will in the Mégane, assured that on days like these, he only has one speed, and it isn't Slow. With James and the Golf tucked in behind we're on it almost straight away and, apart from anything else, it's illuminating to watch the Mégane dancing, ducking and

diving up ahead and, just occasionally, as Groove Armada once put it, shakin' that ass. Curiously, because I wasn't expecting this, it doesn't feel that much of a stretch for the Honda to keep up. I'm in Sport rather than +R mode, and apart from the need sometimes to use full throttle to close the gap when Will and the Renault have combined forces to carry seemingly impossible pace through a compound corner with indeterminate apexes, it all seems a bit too easy and immaculately executed.

Bafflingly, there is no torque-steer, no telegraphed camber caressing – no tugging at the rim at all. After the Renault, this feels spooky and, despite its four-wheel drive, nor is the Golf's lighter steering quite as stainless and artefact-free. The ride is remarkably flat and calm, too; amazingly so for a car wearing watch-strap 30-section rubber. You'd certainly never guess it was that extreme from the way the steering behaves. Whatever the front wheels and grip-scavenging diff are doing – and their ability to sling the Civic through an angle, however tight, isn't found wanting in this company – the information fed back through the helm isn't nearly as busy and alive about the straight-ahead as it is in the Renault. On lock there's weight and accuracy and seemingly limitless bite, but it all feels quite heavily damped with nothing in the way of core-writhe or edge-nibble.

Admittedly, this contributes to a sense of composure and control at the pointy end that bests even the Golf's robust refusal to be ruffled. It's also the antithesis of the Renault's nerve-endy



'The Type R can usher in feelings of invincibility which may well be a first for a hot hatch'

approach and, for better or worse, immediately inspires massive confidence. With prolonged exposure, it's so good and consistent it can usher in feelings of invincibility which may well be a first for a hot hatch. At this stage, I'd go as far as to say the Civic Type R feels more like a pocket-sized supercar than a Samurai-sharp hot hatch but, for me, it hasn't spiked my pulse rate and fascination like the Mégane has. Oh, and team James-Golf stayed glued to the Civic's bumper. Most of the time.

The sun is shedding heat and mellowing as it begins its final drift behind feathery clouds towards the horizon, so it's time to check out Aston's 'excessively entertaining' route to our overnight stopover at the Nent Hall Country House Hotel near Alston. It is, indeed, a humdinger of a road, unprecedented for as long as I can remember in being completely traffic-free. So entertaining and empty, in fact, I can't divulge the exact parameters of our more breathless moments, save to say that, in terms of raw pace, you couldn't slide a Rizla roll-up paper between the three cars. When it comes to freestyle expression for the amusement of the driver, however, radically distinct differences crystallise our thoughts.

Over an evening of hydration-restoring beers and health-giving carbohydrates, there's a broad consensus about the talents the Golf R has brought on the day's proceedings – and they aren't at all shabby. Less collegiately, there seems to be an ideological rift when it comes to Mégane versus Civic. I think the Renault, despite having a gearchange that exhibits a bit of stiction between third and fourth, a blot-on-the-dashboard infotainment display, and palpably less, though far from enfeebling, power and torque than the others, counters with a properly transparent, three-dimensional dynamic personality that needs some learning but will be a constantly engaging and rewarding companion in the long run. For me, and for all its hot hatch transcending superpowers, the Civic Type R is too immediately and easily gratifying, holding few hidden depths to explore over time, and with the best will in the world, it looks like a tasting menu at Crufts. James and Will disagree – not with the Crufts bit – but both are slightly spooked by the Renault's unevenness and frustrated by the Golf's largely prescriptive modus operandi that shuts down genuine excitement at the limit.

Tomorrow morning, after breakfast, final assessments will land and lock before the necessarily more mundane bits-and-bobs photography wrap and slog back down the A1. But before we get to the verdict, let's take a look at how our trio performed when pushed to their absolute limits against the clock and on track.

Right and far right: Civic and Mégane sport Brembo brakes; the latter's can be upgraded with lighter and more powerful bi-material (aluminium and cast-iron) discs, although our test car's standard items don't disappoint





THE DATA

THE GOLF, WITH ITS FOUR-wheel drive, twin-clutch gearbox and launch control, is a doddle to fire off the line. Select ESP Sport, hold the car briefly on the brakes with your left foot and mash the throttle with your right. With the brakes released, the car pauses as if taking a deep breath, then launches down the straight like it's been fired from a cannon, streaking to 60mph in 4.5sec. From there on the VW accelerates with a relentless energy the other two can't match, its gearbox firing each ratio home with the speed and precision of a Bruce Lee one-inch punch.

Launching the Renault and Honda requires a couple of runs to refine the perfect technique. The Mégane is more dramatic, flaring into wheelspin and sending shockwaves through the transmission with the flat-chat change from first to

second. It feels brutal and it hits 60mph in 6.3sec. Getting the Civic away from the line involves less mechanical torture, partly because the turbocharged 2-litre won't rev beyond 3500rpm when the car's stationary. Still, that's enough to get a peachy getaway with just a dash of wheelspin, and 60mph arrives 0.3sec quicker than in the Renault.

Once rolling it's harder to split our trio, but it's the Renault with its tightly spaced and relatively short intermediate ratios

'The VW fires each ratio home with the speed of a Bruce Lee one-inch punch'

that makes lighter work of the third-, fourth- and fifth-gear tests. That said, we're talking tenths of a second.

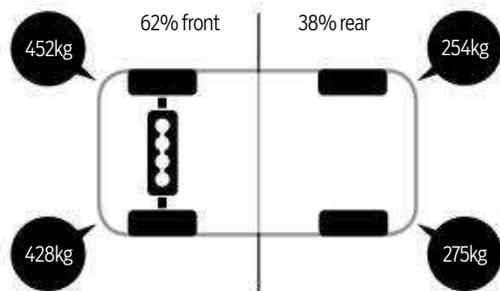
Given its blistering display in the standing-start test, it's a surprise to find the Golf bottom of the pile at braking. Its best and worst stopping distances are the longest, and its pedal starts to go mushy after the fourth stop and has virtually sunk to the floor by the tenth (accompanied by clouds of smoke). By contrast, the Renault's pedal response only starts to go soft by the seventh run and only the whiff of singed friction material lets you know the Brembos are feeling the heat. Best here is the Honda. Its stopping distances get a little longer with each run, but the pedal remains firm and the brakes always feel like they have plenty of bite, even after the tenth stop. In fact, the Civic feels like it'd happily do the whole thing again.

Honda Civic Type R

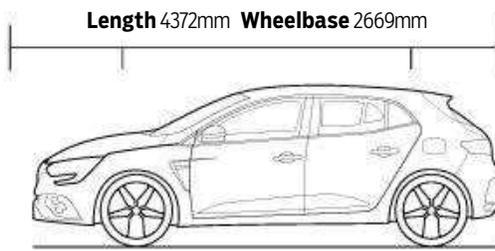


Engine	In-line 4-cyl, 1996cc, turbo
Power	316bhp @ 6500rpm
Torque	295lb ft @ 2500-4500rpm
Transmission	Six-speed manual, front-wheel drive, limited-slip differential
Tyres	245/30 R20 front and rear, Continental SportContact 6
Height/width	1434mm/1877mm
Weight	1409kg as tested, 1380kg claimed
Power-to-weight	228bhp/ton using test-car weight, 233bhp/ton claimed
0-60mph	6.0sec as tested, 5.8 to 62 claimed
Top speed	169mph (claimed)
evo mpg	28.5
Price	£31,525 basic, £34,050 as tested
PCP monthly price	£473 (36 months, £4000 deposit, 10,000 miles per annum limit)

Weights & balance

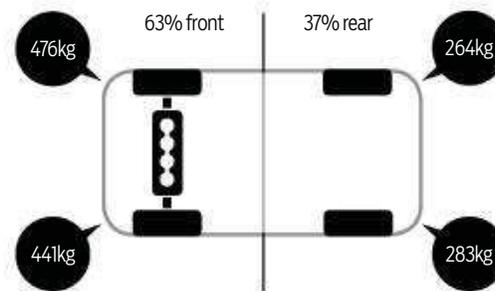


Renault Mégane RS

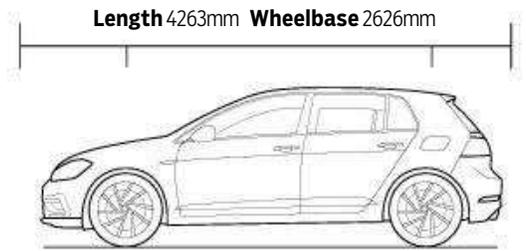


Engine	In-line 4-cyl, 1798cc, turbo
Power	276bhp @ 6000rpm
Torque	288lb ft @ 2400-4800rpm
Transmission	Six-speed manual, front-wheel drive, limited-slip diff (option)
Tyres	245/35 R19 (option) front and rear, Bridgestone Potenza S001
Height/width	1445mm/1874mm
Weight	1464kg as tested, 1430kg claimed
Power-to-weight	192bhp/ton using test-car weight, 196bhp/ton claimed
0-60mph	6.3sec as tested, 5.9 to 62 claimed
Top speed	155mph (limited)
evo mpg	33.4
Price	£27,495 basic, £34,345 as tested
PCP monthly price	£362 (36 months, £4000 deposit, 10,000 miles per annum limit)

Weights & balance

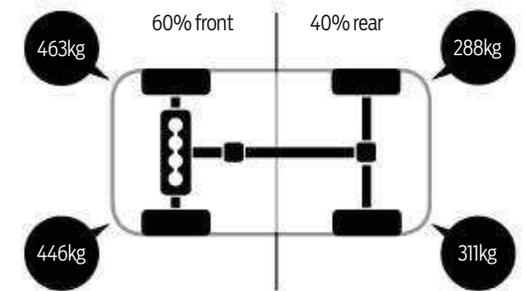


Volkswagen Golf R

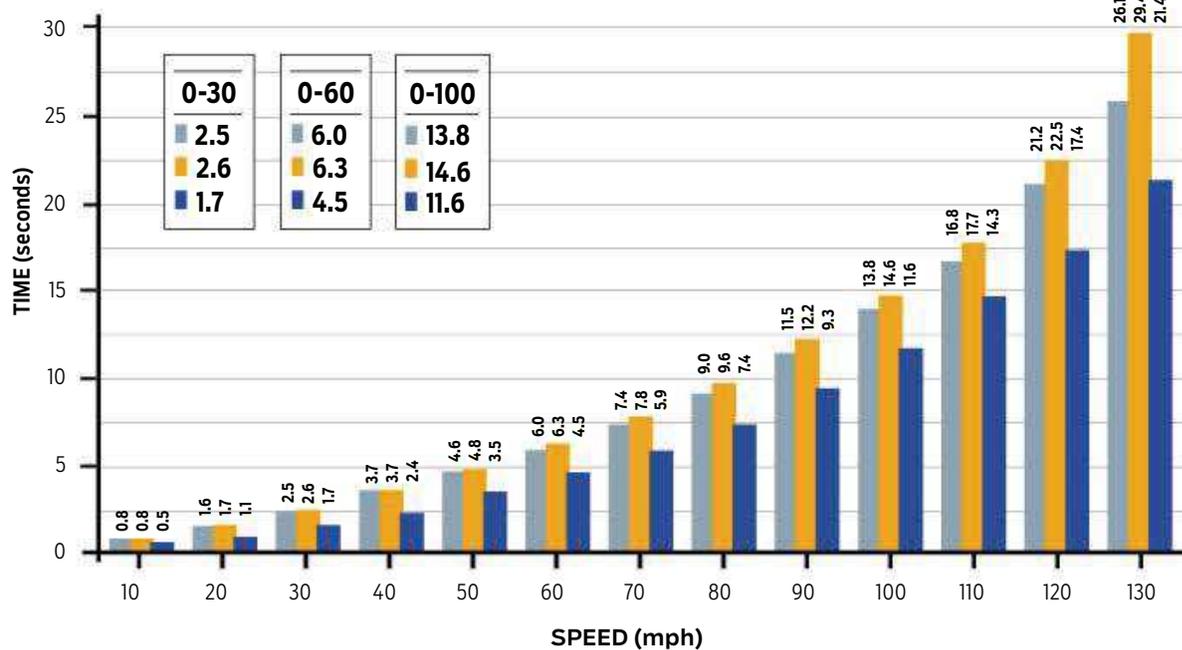


Engine	In-line 4-cyl, 1984cc, turbo
Power	306bhp @ 5500-6500rpm
Torque	295lb ft @ 2000-5400rpm
Transmission	Seven-speed dual-clutch (option), 4WD, torque vectoring by braking
Tyres	225/40 R18 front and rear, Bridgestone Potenza S001
Height/width	1465mm/1799mm
Weight	1508kg as tested, 1408kg claimed
Power-to-weight	206bhp/ton using test-car weight, 221bhp/ton claimed
0-60mph	4.5sec as tested, 4.6 to 62 claimed
Top speed	155mph (limited)
evo mpg	27.1
Price	£32,880 basic, £37,635 as tested
PCP monthly price	£520 (36 months, £4000 deposit, 10,000 miles per annum limit)

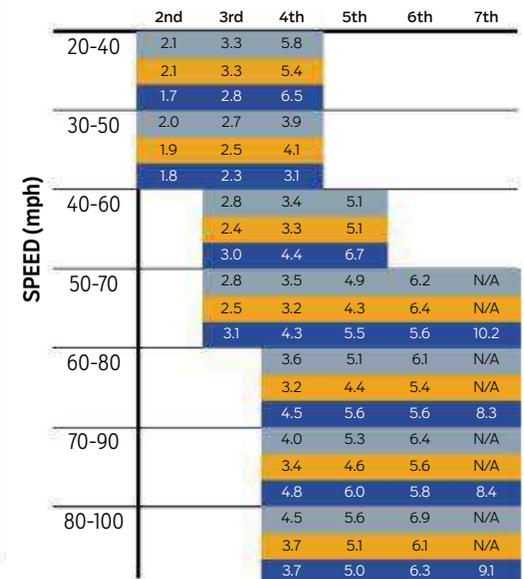
Weights & balance



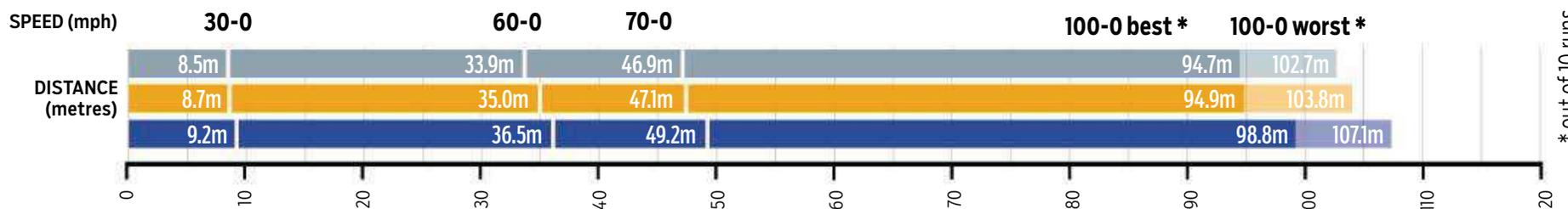
Acceleration from standing start



In-gear acceleration



Braking



* out of 10 runs



ASTON PARROTT

FIRST TO ROLL OUT ONTO the West Circuit is the Golf. Race mode is engaged, ESP disabled and the gearlever tapped to the left for full manual control. Initial impressions are good, with strong traction out of the hairpin and a gloriously measured, well-oiled feel to the steering. Yet there's an underlying softness that effectively undermines the Golf's bid for circuit supremacy as you up the pace. It simply feels a bit lost here. On standard passive dampers the R rolls and

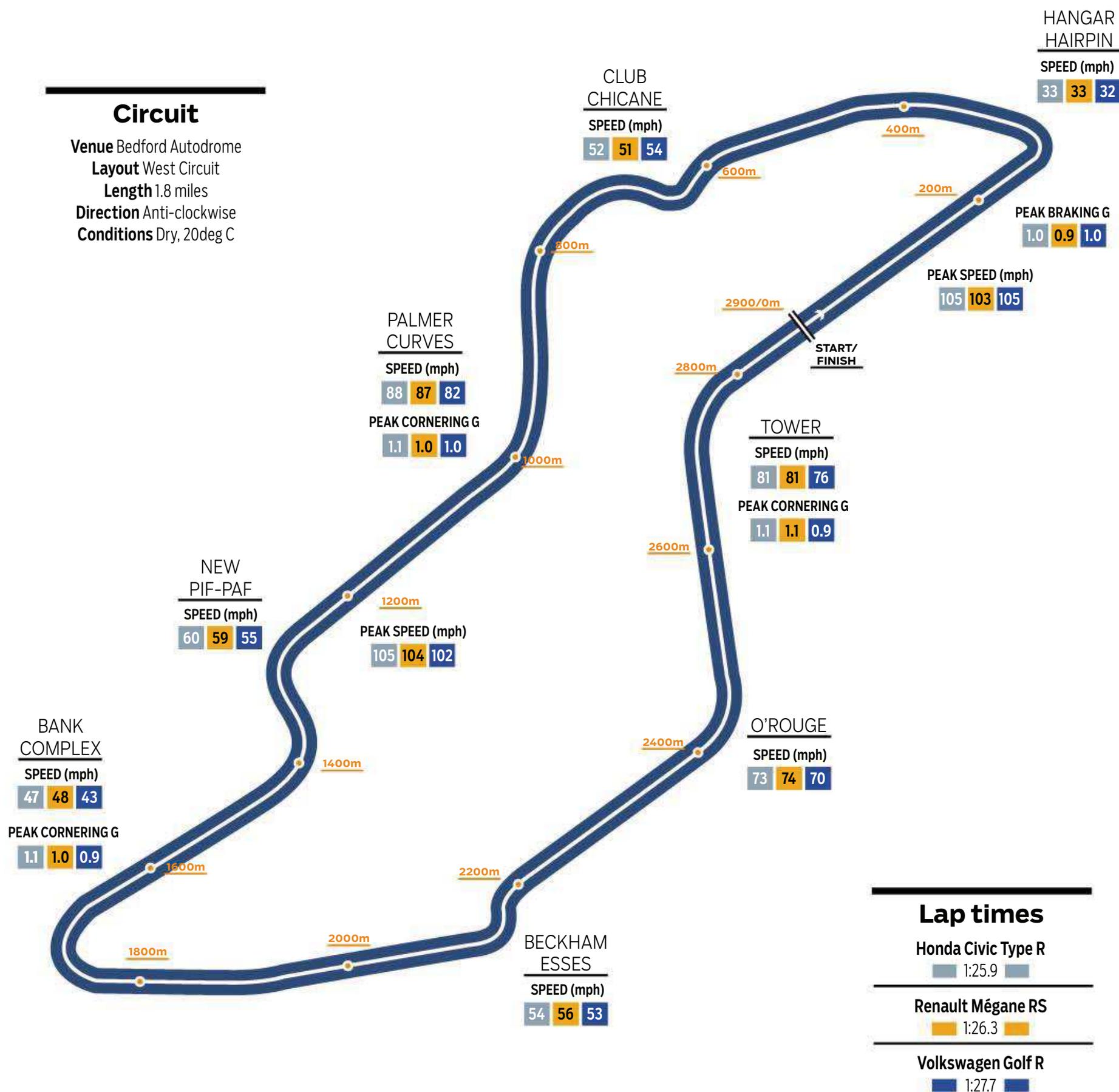
pitches more than you'd expect, and the Bridgestones' strong initial bite melts away, particularly through the fast turn of Palmer and quick direction change of Pif-Paf, forcing you to wait before you get back on the throttle. The Golf gives up its best time of 1:27.7 on the first flying lap, subsequent laps seeing times spiral up as tortured tyres and wilting brakes cry 'enough'.

Instantly the Renault feels like a more focused proposition, its meaty steering weight, taut ride and flat cornering stance sending all the right track-honed messages.

With the four-wheel steer on high alert in Race mode, the Renault initially feels a handful, as the combination of cold tyres and aggressive rotation from the rear axle give the impression you're permanently on the brink of turn-in oversteer disaster. It calms down a little with some tyre temperature, but that sensation of the rear end getting involved never goes away. However, once you trust that the grip is there, the Renault carries eye-widening speed through corners (it's the quickest through Beckham Esses and O'Rouge). It

Circuit

Venue Bedford Autodrome
Layout West Circuit
Length 1.8 miles
Direction Anti-clockwise
Conditions Dry, 20deg C



Lap times

Honda Civic Type R

1:25.9

Renault Mégane RS

1:26.3

Volkswagen Golf R

1:27.7

has its advantages through the slow stuff, too, where the Mégane nails a higher minimum speed and straighter exit, allowing its limited-slip differential to work more effectively, finding traction where the Honda spins an inside front. It never feels totally natural (there's a curious sense of detachment right at the limit), but a 1:26.3 lap proves it's fantastically effective.

The Honda feels like a track natural the moment you hunker into that low-slung driving position. A lazier early throttle response means it doesn't feel as initially

'It's no surprise the Honda turns in a blistering 1:25.9. A time you feel it'll happily nail lap after lap'

eager as the others, but beyond 2500rpm the Civic accelerates with intent. Yet it's the chassis that makes the Type R special. It's not quite as keen to change direction as the hyperactive Mégane, but it's not far off and its steering is more measured. More importantly it communicates more, telling you just how much grip you've got, which is lots. Factor in brakes that bite hard throughout and it's no surprise the Honda turns in a blistering 1:25.9. A time you feel it'll happily nail lap after lap. Remarkable.
James Disdale

THE VERDICT

evo ratings

Renault Mégane RS



Honda Civic Type R



Volkswagen Golf R



THERE ARE GOOD TIMES TO be had in the Golf R, but it's the first of our hatches to step onto the podium. Will Beaumont nails exactly why: 'There are moments in the VW where you witness its genius. It enters a corner on its nose, all skittish and lively, then, as you get on the throttle, you feel the rear tyres driving the back end round. But these moments aren't that frequent, and, even more frustratingly, they aren't repeatable – you see a corner approaching that you think it's going to come alive around, but instead it just turns and grips, dispatching the bend with ruthless efficiency.'

'Yes, driven aggressively, it comes alive more often, but it's difficult to maintain such levels of commitment on the road. As fast as it is, you aren't gratified all that often with some proper excitement.'

I've advanced my defence for the Mégane and James seems largely to agree, but there are caveats. 'It drives well, but you've got to be prepared to relearn

the way you approach corners,' he says. 'It's all down to that four-wheel-steer system, which has the ability to generate outrageous grip and agility. It feels eerie at first, with the rear sashaying around just a fraction of a second behind your instructions to the steering. But start to go faster and it begins to make sense.'

Certainly does. But James isn't wholly convinced: 'It's a shame that Race mode adds a horrible droning bassiness to proceedings. The engine responds crisply enough, mind, with a gutsy mid-range and enough bite at the top end to make visits to the red line worthwhile. I just wish the gearbox was as good. There's a pleasingly mechanical feel to changes, but our test car suffered from a baulky third to fourth shift that required repeated exposure and patience to bypass.'

I could live with that. Not sure James could. The Mégane is runner-up, then.

A split-team decision, maybe, but then the Civic Type R is, all told, too extraordinary to be denied. I admired it,

felt flattered by it, but didn't love it. My fellow testers are less equivocal, Will being perhaps the most enthusiastic advocate.

'There's a feeling in the Civic that its tyres are some kind of qualifying specials. Not only do they grip as though the rubber is fusing with the tarmac but they absorb most of the road's roughness, too – even though you're acutely aware of their scarily low profile. The Honda's engine may not be that refined and its steering may not be as pleasant as the others, but its gearchange and brake pedal feel so much tighter and firmer respectively that they certainly make up for it.'

'And then there's the incredible sophistication to the chassis, its ability to ride with that much comfort while generating that much traction and keeping the body supremely controlled is a trick that can't be matched by any other sub-£100k car you can currently buy.'

Fair enough. But I'm already counting down the days till the Type R has to square up to the forthcoming Mégane Trophy. ❌





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by JAMES DISDALE

TAKE 2

BMW's smallest M-car has been extensively reworked, but is it enough to elevate the all-new M2 Competition to the top of the class?







IT'S ALWAYS BEEN A BIT OF A HEAD-scratcher, the BMW M2. On paper its combination of compact dimensions, thumping six-cylinder performance and good old-fashioned rear-drive fun should have made it the pick of the M line-up. Yet it never quite gelled. It always felt like a car engineered to a price rather than to the exacting standards we've come to expect of the M division.

You could find evidence of this in the M2's slightly ragged handling, but the biggest clue to its somewhat mongrel status was its 3-litre turbocharged straight-six, which was essentially a lightly modded version of the N55 unit used in the now-defunct M135i. It wasn't a bad engine, but neither was it an outstanding one. Preferring to do its work in the mid-range, it lacked both the top-end frenzy and nape-tingling war cry of proper M-cars. It sounded and felt, well, a bit ordinary.

This is where the M2 Competition comes in.

It replaces the standard M2, and rather than undergoing a spot of light cosmetic surgery, it's had a full-on heart transplant in the form of the M4's glorious S55 motor, twin-turbos, 'closed-deck' block, lightened crankshaft, enhanced cooling system, strengthened pistons and all. There's also a new exhaust system, complete with de rigueur active bypass valves for more bombast. The result is 404bhp and 406lb ft of torque – increases of 39bhp and 37lb ft respectively. Very promising, albeit slightly down on an M3/M4's 425bhp, even if the torque figure is a match.

The M4 also donates its carbonfibre brace for the front struts and bulkhead, increasing rigidity for more precise and accurate steering, or so the theory goes. Elsewhere it's as before, which means the same M4-derived suspension, with the same spring and (passive) damper rates. However, the multi-link rear axle gets ball joints in place of rubber bushes, while both the electronically controlled rear differential and stability control have received some digital development to cope with the car's 'greater agility'.

It's in at the deep end with the M2 Competition at the beautiful Ascari circuit that twists, rises and falls through the mountainous scenery of southern Spain. I've chosen a manual car (there's a £2645 seven-speed DCT option, but the M2 has always been a natural three-pedal machine) and after a short briefing we're out on the circuit for some high-speed 'follow the leader'. A few things quickly crystallise, the first of which is that the duck to our ducklings, factory GT driver Nicky Catsburg, isn't hanging about. The second is that the M2 is a car transformed. It's the engine you notice first. Yes, the performance is stronger (top speed is a heady 174mph with the £2095 M Driver's Package), but it's the delivery that's changed. It pulls from low down with the same lag-free muscle of the old unit, but it now hungers for revs, eagerly spinning to the 7500rpm red line with a lovely mechanical growl and a hint of turbo whistle. It's enough to make 718 Cayman owners weep.

The body strengthening has also done the trick. The already meaty steering now feels more precise, the front end responding crisply to instructions. Traction is strong out of slower corners, while through faster stuff there's glorious balance, with subtle stabilising understeer easily neutralised with a lift or prod of the throttle. Switching off the stability control reveals a car that can be steered as effectively with your right foot as it can with the steering, the stiffer rear axle and tweaked diff delivering a more faithful and progressive breakaway. At

Middle right: S55 engine contributes to an unfortunate 55kg weight gain, taking the total to 1550kg; the Competition is a small car then, but not a particularly light one



the end of our stint the only demerits are the six-speed manual's slightly baulky shift action and the grumbling of brakes – although they still stopped the M2 effectively.

Yet it's on the road that the Competition really makes sense. The roads around Ascari are genuinely testing, running from smoothly surfaced and quick to tight and viciously lumpy. You notice the firmness first, the BMW jiggling in rhythm with the road at low to medium speeds. Yet pick up the pace and this tautness is your ally, helping keep the Competition's cornering stance flat and tightly controlling body movements – only over a short but wickedly bumpy stretch does the car get unruly.

At saner speeds there's virtually no front-end slip, the Competition simply latching tenaciously onto your chosen line. Yet there's still plenty of scope for the car to show its playful side, the combination of generous torque, sharp throttle (you can now tune throttle and steering individually) and new-found precision in the rear axle allowing you to either revel in strong traction or tease the car's tail out at corner exit. The M Dynamic Mode is particularly impressive, giving you just enough slide before gently intervening. And when you're not chasing a lap time you can be more patient with the gearshift, finessing the stubby, short-throw lever. That said, such is the engine's elasticity that along these switchback roads third is all you need, the twin-turbo pulling willingly from just over 1000rpm before howling to the wrong side of 80mph. Up here in the hills the agile and engaging M2 is a genuine hoot.

In fact, one word keeps springing to mind: fun. Make no mistake, the Competition is a serious piece of kit (the £3k premium confirms that), but it's also always up for a good time. It allows you to access more of its performance and grip more of the time and, crucially, places the driver front and centre of the action. The head-scratching is over, because the M2 is finally the car it always should have been and is arguably the pick of today's M line-up. ✕

BMW M2 Competition

Engine In-line 6-cyl, 2979cc, twin-turbo **Power** 404bhp @ 5250-7000rpm
Torque 406lb ft @ 2350-5200rpm **Transmission** Six-speed manual, rear-wheel drive, limited-slip differential **Front suspension** Independent struts, coil springs, passive dampers, anti-roll bar **Rear suspension** Independent five-link axle, coil springs, passive dampers, anti-roll bar **Brakes** Ventilated discs, 380mm front, 370mm rear
Wheels 9 x 19in front, 10 x 19in rear **Tyres** 245/35 ZR19 front, 265/35 ZR19 rear
Weight 1550kg **Power-to-weight** 265bhp per ton **0-62mph** 4.4sec
Top speed 155mph (limited) **Price** £49,805
evo rating ★★★★★

BABY M-CARS THROUGH THE AGES

IF YOU'RE TALKING FAST AND FUN COMPACT BMWs then you've got to start with the 2002 Turbo. An M-car in spirit rather than name, this 167bhp forced-induction pioneer built quite a reputation during its production run of fewer than 1700 cars. Killed off by the 1973 fuel crisis, its cause wasn't helped by turbo lag you could measure on a calendar and edgy handling.

There were no such mistakes with the 1986 E30 M3, which set such sky-high standards for its agile and engaging handling that BMW has been struggling to recreate the homologation special's magic ever since. Each subsequent generation of M3 got faster and more powerful than the original, but also got bigger and less involving to drive.

The Z3 M Coupe of 1998 may not have been the last word in aesthetic grace or dynamic sophistication, but at least it was exciting. Combining a subtly detuned 317bhp version of the E36 M3 Evolution's straight-six (late cars got the E46 M3's engine and an extra 3bhp) with relatively crude semi-trailing-arm rear suspension, it was blisteringly quick in a straight line, blessed with a sonorous soundtrack and good fun in the corners – if your idea of fun was oversteering everywhere, even when you hadn't planned to. It has rarity on its side, as well, with fewer than 1000 right-hand-drive examples finding their way to the UK.

As the M3 continued to grow, BMW's next stab at a really exciting compact coupe was the 1M. With just 450 examples for the UK it was even more exclusive than the Z3, but with suspension components pinched from the E92 M3 it promised to be more dynamically assured – although with such a short wheelbase its on-limit behaviour is best described as 'twitchy'. However, its bid for greatness was undermined by its engine, which, like the subsequent M2, featured a tweaked version of a standard 1-series unit, in this case the turbocharged 3-litre straight-six from the 135i.





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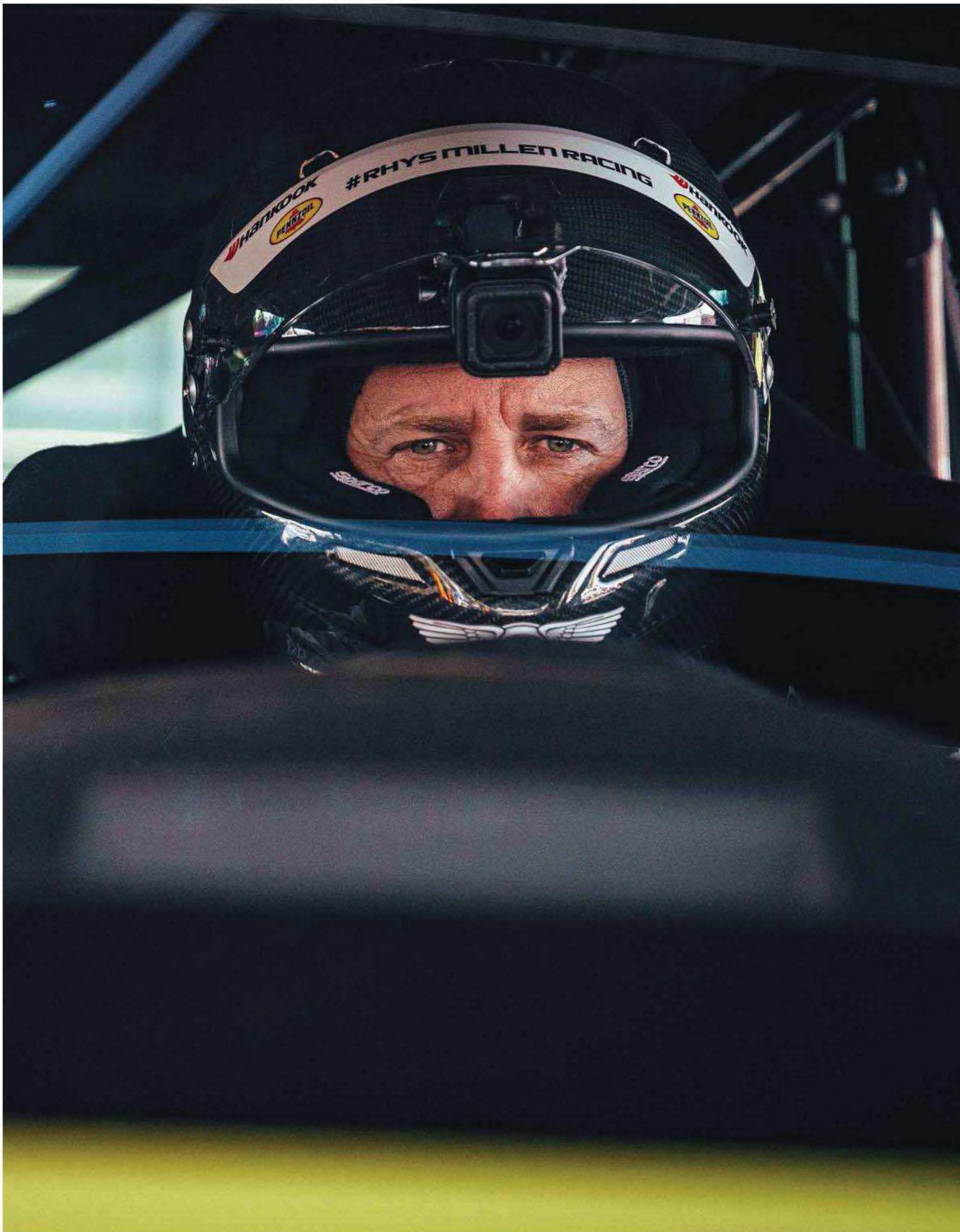


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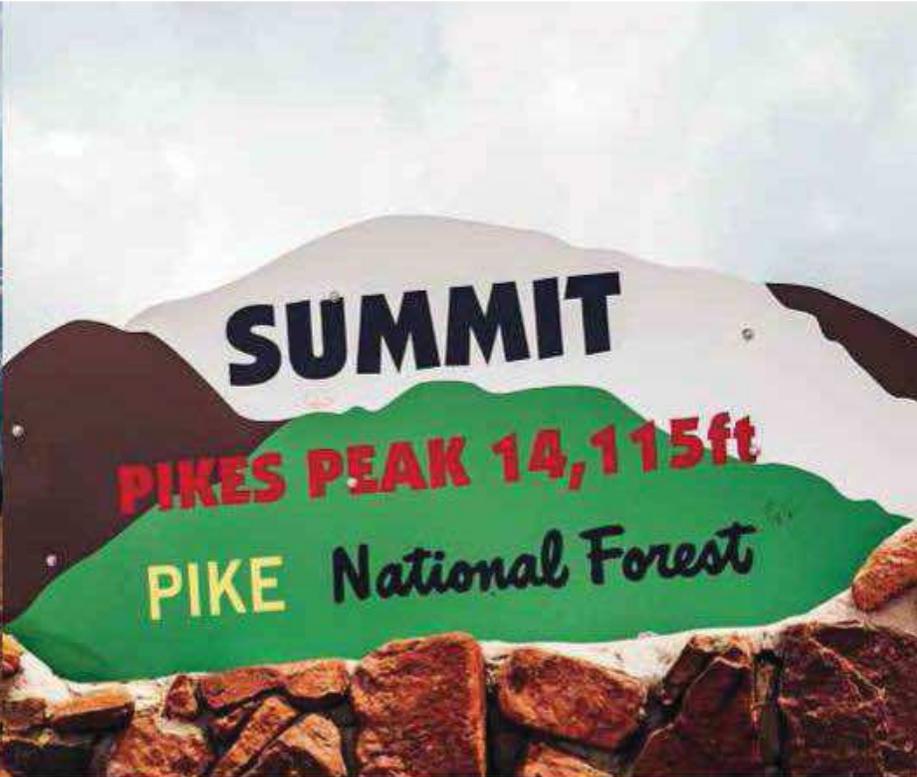
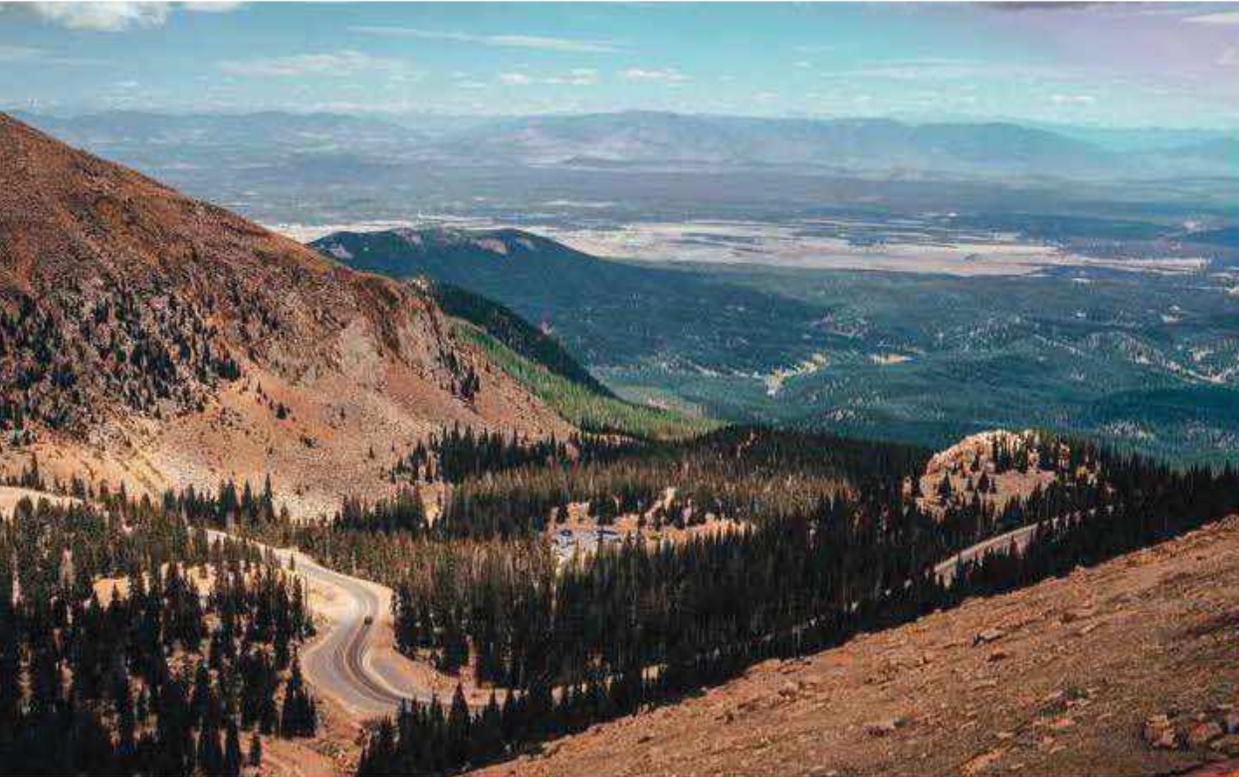


by STUART GALLAGHER

PEAKY BLINDER

Rhys Millen claimed his two outright Pikes Peak victories in purpose-built race cars. This year he set a very different course record – in a two-ton Bentley Bentayga SUV





'H

EY RHYS, SWEET ride. What car are you running to the summit tomorrow?' Rhys Millen, two-time Pikes Peak champion and multiple class

winner, D1 drift king and stunt driver to the stars, turns and points to the lime green Bentley. 'This one,' he says, his New Zealand accent still pushing back against the LA twang that comes from living in America's West Coast metropolis. The well-wisher is confused. He looks over the 46-year-old's shoulder before taking a tentative step towards the Crewe-built SUV, unsure of what to make of it, and Millen's reply. His apprehension is understandable.

Millen is Peak royalty, and along with paddock neighbour Paul Dallenbach, who has brought along a more conventional Pikes Peak machine in the shape of his PVA Dallenbach Special, between them the pair have more experience on the legendary Colorado hill climb than they care to remember. Millen's first race to the clouds was in 1992, when he won his class and took home the Rookie of the Year honour (two years before his father, Rod, secured his first of five outright victories). In 2012 Millen claimed his first overall victory with a time of 9min 46.164sec in a Hyundai Genesis Coupe (this was also the year the 12.42-mile course switched from its famed tarmac-gravel mix to a full-course strip of bitumen). In 2015 Millen won his second title, this time with the all-electric eO PP03 – the first time such a car had won on the hill.

For 2018 Millen is forgoing the opportunity to claim a third outright title and is instead looking to break the Production SUV record in the most unlikely of 'race cars': a Bentley Bentayga W12. He's leaving the overall honours to VW, Romain Dumas and the electric-powered ID R racer to fight for. (As it'll turn out, it won't be much of a fight, Dumas taking over 16 seconds off Sébastien Loeb's 8min 13.878sec time set in 2013 with a Peugeot 208 T16.)

Which begs the question, why? 'In 2014 I did some promotional work with Land Rover and the new Range Rover Sport here on the mountain,' says Millen. 'Later that year my mate Paul [Dallenbach] set a record for the fastest production SUV with the [Range Rover] Sport. I thought, well played. That's quite the challenge in a standard road car, on street tyres, weighing that much. Then, honestly, I didn't think about it again.'

'When Bentley's call came seven months ago to discuss this project, something flickered inside me and I thought, why not? This could be exciting.' And so Bentley's director of motorsport, Brian Gush, set his small Crewe team (the project is separate from M Sport, the organisation that builds, prepares and runs the Continental GT3 programme) the task of modifying a standard Bentayga to meet the Production SUV class regulations. Which actually didn't amount to much. 'We could add a roll-cage, fire extinguisher system and an oxygen supply for Rhys, but there was little else the regulations would allow,' explains Gush.



The end result is a Bentayga with a pair of Recaro seats and a complex roll-cage dissecting the hand-stitched leather interior, with the only trim removed or modified being items that obstructed the safety cell. Even the steering wheel is a standard Bentayga item, albeit one lovingly hand-wrapped in Alcantara. That's it.

That 6-litre twin-turbo W12? It's standard, bar a number of additional sensors for the engineers to gather some data from (which may lead to enhancements for customer Bentaygas) and an Akrapovic exhaust for some added drama. The eight-speed ZF gearbox is untouched and the only chassis tweaks are courtesy of tyre pressures. 'All I have to play with are tyre pressures,' says Millen. 'When you only have one variable to adjust you're hunting for the smallest change in the car's behaviour. We changed the pressure for one run and I was two seconds slower. Went again, slight pressure change, and I'm only half a second slower. It's tiny incremental changes to find that sweet spot.'

The course may now be all-tarmac, but Millen feels it's no less a challenge: 'Certainly it's safer, but the risk is still there: put a tyre out of place; miss a braking point. Get on the gas too early and maybe the extra grip from the tarmac will buy you a tenth or two extra to react when the car wants to break away, but the consequences are still the same if it goes wrong.' Six competitors have lost their lives during the 96 hill climbs that have been held to date.

At 9390ft (2862m), the start line on race day may be bathed in early summer sun, but the temperature is beholden to the fast-moving cloud cover above. 'Surface temperatures are crucial,' explains Millen.

'WHEN BENTLEY'S CALL CAME, SOMETHING FLICKERED INSIDE ME'

Top left: the start line at 9390ft; summit is another 4725ft further up (left).
Middle left: Bentayga makes for an unusual sight on the Pikes Peak course



Above: Volkswagen's electric ID R, driven by Romain Dumas, set a new Pikes Peak record of 7min 57.148sec.

Below: Rhys Millen celebrates setting a new record time in the Production SUV class

'We practise and qualify early morning when it's 40-50deg F [4-10deg C], but for the timed run at closer to midday it can be 70-80deg F [21-26deg C].'

The bikes get the proceedings underway at 8am, and with the climb a single road, every accident and breakdown requires a stoppage. The Bentley's 10.30am start time slips to 11am. Then one of the medical helicopters needs to go off to refuel. It's midday and still Millen waits, as do the competitors who have already completed their runs and are sitting patiently at the summit, ready to return to base camp. Even VW and Dumas are made to wait at the start, so long in fact that Dumas drains his oxygen supply and the mechanics try to adapt a Walmart oxygen canister to fit the ID's built-in system. It's the one thing they fail at all weekend.

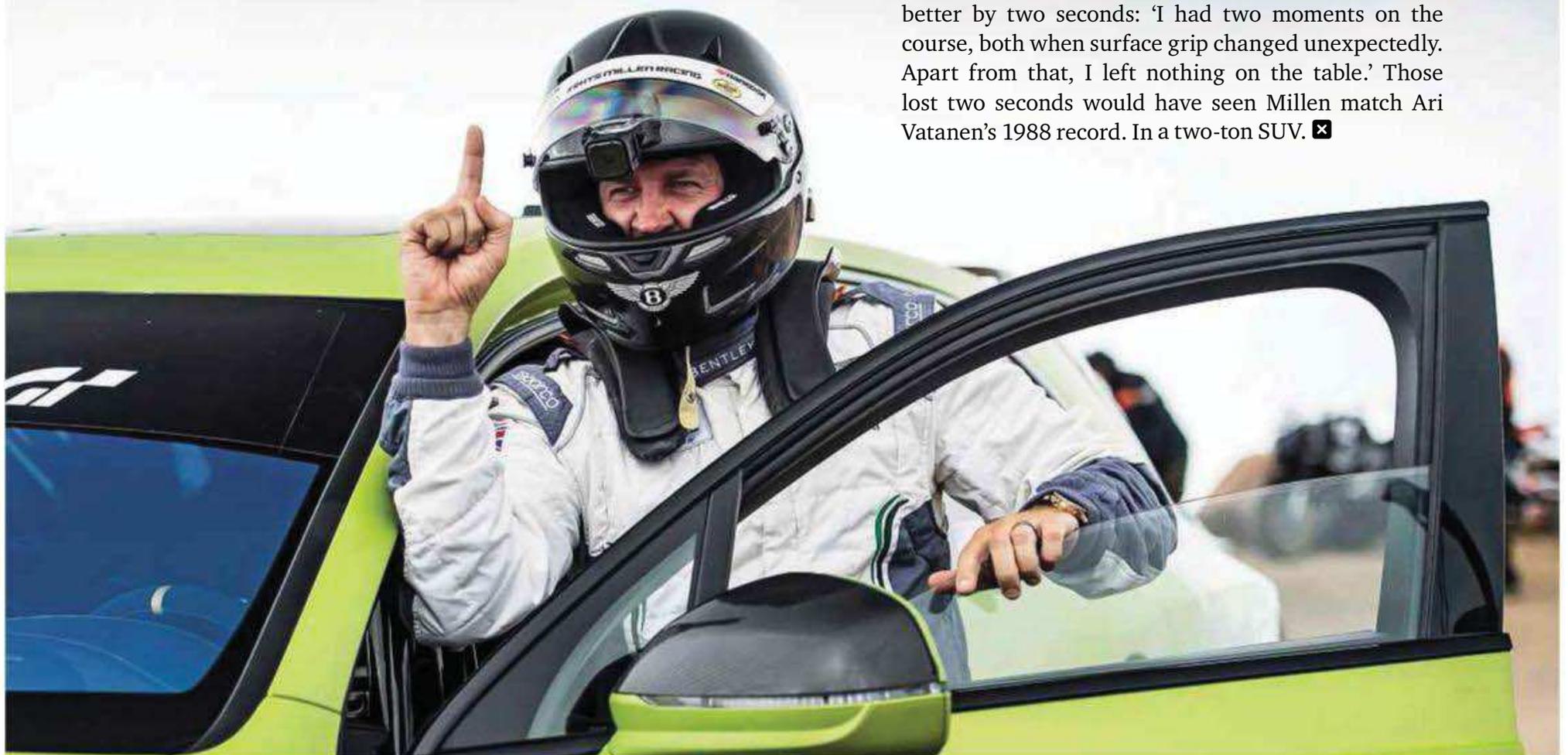
At 1pm Millen fires the Bentayga off the line, setting it up for the left-hander that leads to the rolling start. He flashes under the starting gantry at over 70mph and hits the first corner – a sweeping right-hander – at 107mph. 'I know if the run is going to be a good one when I turn in for that right-hander,' Millen told me earlier. 'Once I know what the grip is there, I know where I can push and where I'll need to hold back for

the rest of the course.' Some 156 corners to negotiate, including 13 first-gear hairpins, and Millen knows if the run is a winner after turn one.

The 6-litre W12 never looks to tire. It may lose 120bhp as the altitude increases, but with 600bhp to start with and plenty of displacement (a key factor, according to Millen), its stride is never broken. Three-figure speeds regularly flash up on the digital speedo, the peak of 121mph within 1.5 miles of the summit, where if you get it wrong there's a 9000ft barrel roll to the bottom. There simply is no margin for error. The fastest corner is taken at 105mph, the average speed for the run 70mph, and all at an altitude that would allow you to look down on Ben Nevis. Having driven the course myself the day before in a regular Bentayga, there are sections where I wouldn't want to meet another car coming in the opposite direction at the mandatory 25mph, let alone get well into fourth gear before asking 410mm of carbon-ceramics, which regularly see 500deg C temperatures, to slow 2300kg of Bentley on a track little wider than a British B-road, with a rock face to the left and nothing to the right but Colorado Springs 9000ft below.

Watching the run via the onboard camera, it's the steering input that transfixes you (after you've got over the view through the windscreen). Millen's inputs look slow, long-winded perhaps, and the Bentayga appears to be suffering from chronic understeer. But this is a production car with a regular – read 'slow' – production car steering rack. It's another new challenge Millen has had to manage. But with every hairpin, every flick-flack left-right, and every long, sweeping never-ending turn with its apex hidden in a cloud, there's a calmness to Millen's style that's at odds with the unpolished and natural feel to this event.

What it lacks in blood and thunder as it races to the clouds the big Bentley makes up for with speed. At 10min 49sec it smashes the Range Rover's record by nearly two minutes, a time Millen feels he could only better by two seconds: 'I had two moments on the course, both when surface grip changed unexpectedly. Apart from that, I left nothing on the table.' Those lost two seconds would have seen Millen match Ari Vatanen's 1988 record. In a two-ton SUV. ❌





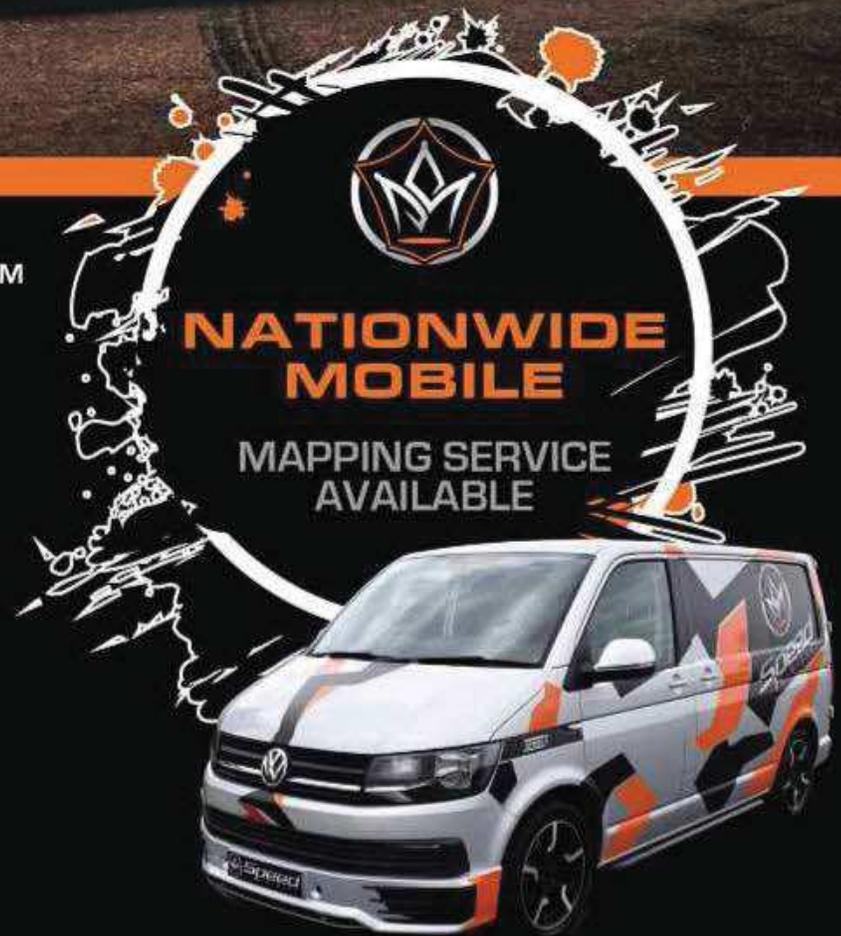
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HEART V HEAD

GT-R VS5

Two turbocharged, six-cylinder, four-wheel-drive coupes, but where's your money going?



by WILL BEAUMONT & ADAM TOWLER
PHOTOGRAPHY by ASTON PARROTT



T HIS MONTH'S NEW versus used comparison is between two big four-wheel-drive coupes, both powered by turbocharged six-cylinder engines. Yes, on paper there's plenty to connect a brand new Audi S5 coupe with a used Nissan GT-R. Nevertheless, you don't need us to tell you that in reality these two are as disparate as wurst and sushi.

OK, their silhouettes are almost identical: deep sided, with hulking shoulders over each wheel, swooping rooflines, and gaping, hungry mouths dominating their frontal areas to cool V6s that generate copious amounts of heat when worked hard. And yes, £50,000 in the hand secures not only a shiny new S5, but also a six- to seven-year-old GT-R. Fifty grand for a still-current GT-R? For many of us the very thought of Nissan's four-wheeled institution makes the fingers twitch towards that banking app, and that's unlikely to be something you'd say about the smooth but predictably clinical Audi.

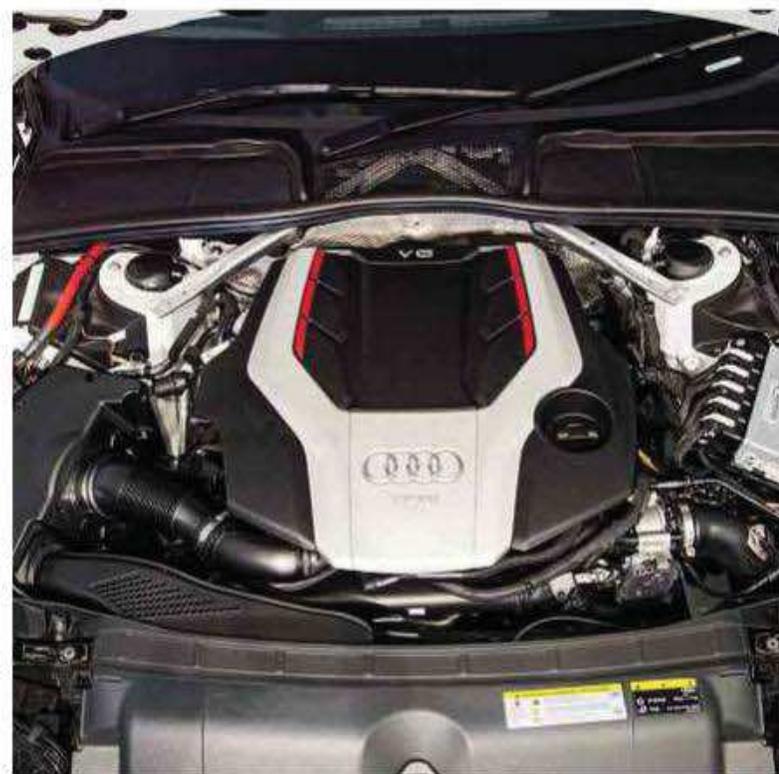
The GT-R's V6 has a 0.8-litre surplus of displacement over the Audi, along with an extra turbocharger, plus a remit to be an awful lot less cuddly and refined than the 3-litre single-turbo unit in the S5. The result is that it generates 523bhp here (in 2010MY form), comfortably eclipsing the

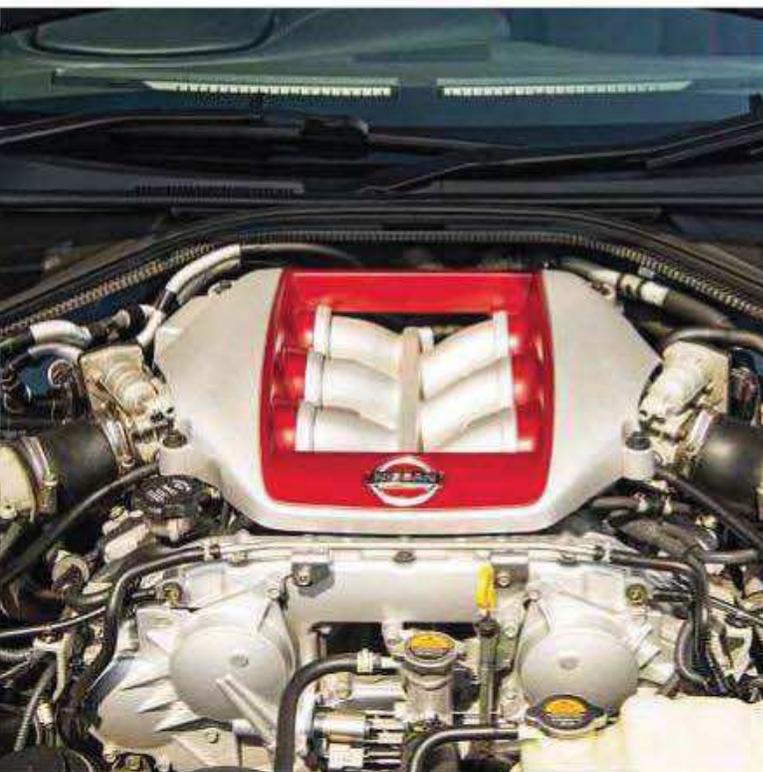
Audi's 349bhp, and as we all know, with all the tuning options available that's potentially just the beginning.

In terms of raw performance there is simply no comparison. The GT-R's 0-60mph time of three seconds dead still puts the frighteners on supercars costing five times the price today, and as a used car it is probably the performance bargain of the moment.

So why on earth would you entertain the Audi? The answer lies in all the reasons people always buy cars like the S5. They may not be the sort of reasons that earn you *evo* points, but in the 'real world' that the vast majority of us have to live in, the S5 does have a lot going for it. There's no evidence to suggest the Audi is put together under the skin better than any other mainstream car, nor that its components are of a higher standard, but the natural assumption is that it's a higher-quality product when you touch the materials used in its cabin, and subconsciously note the crispness of its exterior panel fit.

It's all very 'slick'; all very quietly impressive. It's the kind of car that will impress the neighbours while ruffling no suburban feathers, which let's face it, isn't something you can say about the GT-R – especially if it's fitted with the kind





of upgraded howitzer of an exhaust that makes the double glazing rattle in nearby mock Tudor mansions.

If you're feeling so inclined you can pad around in the S5 with an effort level registering barely above zero. The torque-converter auto shuffles gears smoothly and quickly, and the V6 is completely lag-free, with a healthy punch from barely above idle speed. Essentially, the S5 could whisk you to work every day, securely and rapidly, in all weathers, take the family out at weekends, and quietly impress all who drive or are driven in it. And to be fair to it, it also has another side – given the correct adjustment of the different driving modes.

Like all VW Group cars that use the 'MLB evo' platform, the S5 melds extraordinary refinement with a fine sense of balance and natural poise. The steering is very light – as are all the controls, in fact – and typically there's little in the way of feedback to help judge what's happening down at the road's surface, but it's smooth and accurate, and it's always surprising to look at the speedo and see just how rapidly the S5

Above left: GT-R's 523bhp trumps the S5's 349bhp. **Left:** Nissan boasts fat Recaro seats; S5 pews could do with being lower

is accelerating, and how much speed it can carry through a corner. It's typically four-wheel drive, with

'THE S5 IS ALL VERY "SLICK", ALL VERY QUIETLY IMPRESSIVE'

no theatrics, majoring instead on total traction and a largely neutral attitude to cornering. You would also be right to expect an entirely trouble-free and reassuringly 'premium' ownership experience from the Audi, from its low service costs in its early years to the quality of the cappuccino at your local Audi Centre.

I've no idea what the cappuccinos are like at Auto Torque (where this GT-R was sourced from), but as a car nut it's much more preferable to be surrounded by the knowledgeable fellow enthusiasts who work there and the numerous GT-Rs that fill the firm's pristine workshops. Opting for the used GT-R sets you down a completely different path: these two cars may cost the same to buy, but the GT-R will undoubtedly cost a lot more to run, albeit retaining a much larger percentage of that fifty grand over the next few years.

After the cool textures of the Audi,



Top: Interior of the Audi typically plush and well screwed together. **Above:** Nissan's cabin is plasticky but full of purpose

the GT-R's interior is best described as functional, but it's also appropriately solid, with a fat-rimmed steering wheel and well-padded Recaro seats. Then again, as we found recently when we ran a GT-R on the **evo** Fast Fleet, for such a big car there's not a lot of room in the rear of the Nissan.

Manoeuvring at walking pace in a dusty layby you can hear the drivetrain clunking and crunching as diffs lock, clutches open and close, and individual tyres grab at the gravelly surface. It feels resolutely hardcore, like its mechanical parts were engineered by Isambard Kingdom Brunel. Yet despite the industrial feel and the range of mechanical sounds, this example – with 26,000 miles on the clock – is smooth to drive and makes no worrying noises.

The engine is much more vocal than the Audi's at idle, and far more natural in sound. It's one of those turbocharged motors with a frenzied appetite for air, fuel and boost, stampeding through the gears that thump home via the twin-clutch gearbox. GT-Rs have got steadily more refined over their production life, but this is still a raw, **evo** car at heart.

Yet, despite the brutal acceleration, it's the chatter of the four-wheel-drive system that continues to be the dominant aspect of the GT-R. Every time you use any meaningful throttle you can feel the system juggling torque between the axles, the front end occasionally clawing away as the back squats and squirms. The effect is even more pronounced mid-corner; as well as seeking out every last bit of grip, the system works overtime to bully the GT-R around the corner, while the



‘IN THE FIGHT BETWEEN TARMAC AND NISSAN, THE LATTER WINS’

fabulously detailed steering is your ally in understanding both what the car is doing and the road surface beneath.

In the fight between tarmac and Nissan, it feels as though the latter wins – you half expect to look in your mirror and see the road folded up like a discarded black ribbon after it’s been run through the GT-R’s rollers. Ironically, that old jibe that the GT-R is like a computer game, that it does everything for the driver, is as true for the S5 as it is inappropriate for the involving Nissan.

That you can follow a GT-R in the S5 and keep up tells you plenty about just how well resolved the S5 is as a package. Add in all the other aforementioned qualities and the S5 is not without considerable appeal. However, the worry will always be that before long you’ll tire of its undemanding character and anytime, anywhere performance, and long for something much more authentic, something altogether more exciting. You’ve got to really want the Nissan to put up with its drinking habit and servicing costs, but thankfully it’s a very easy car to love, and for people like us that’s often what matters most of all.

With thanks to AT Performance Cars for the loan of the Nissan GT-R

SPECIFICATIONS AND COSTS

NISSAN GT-R

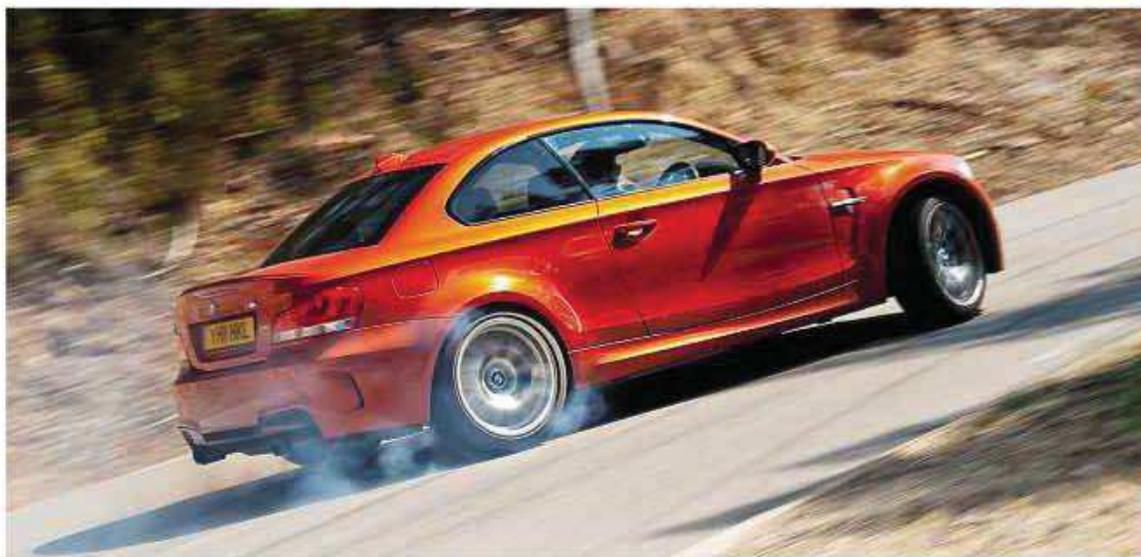
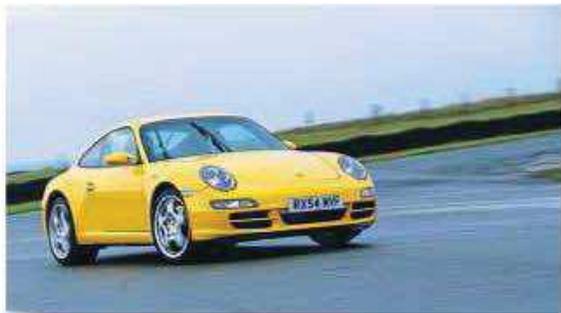
Engine	V6, 3799cc, twin-turbo
Power	523bhp @ 6400rpm
Torque	451lb ft @ 3200rpm
Transmission	Six-speed dual-clutch, four-wheel drive
Weight	1740kg
Power-to-weight	305bhp/ton
0-62mph	3.0sec
Top speed	194mph
Price new	£69,950 (2010)
Value today	£50,000
Full service	£773
Short service	£436
Front discs	from £354 each
Rear discs	from £348 each
Front pads	from £248 per axle
Rear pads	from £176 per axle
Big brake kit	£5414 (AP Racing front and rear)
Front damper	£342
Rear damper	£296
Upgraded bell housing	£1068
Exhaust	£1500 (cat back)
650bhp tune	£4800
Tyres	£284.36 front, each £354.71 rear, each (Dunlop SP Sport Maxx GT 600)
Insurance	£450 (£500 excess)

AUDI S5

Engine	V6, 2995cc, turbo
Power	349bhp @ 5400rpm
Torque	369lb ft @ 1370rpm
Transmission	Eight-speed auto, four-wheel drive
Weight	1615kg
Power-to-weight	220bhp/ton
0-62mph	4.7sec
Top speed	155mph (limited)
Price new	£48,880
Full service	£380
Short service	£203
Brake fluid replacement	£65
Pollen filter	£55
Front discs	£180 each
Front pads	£182 per axle
Rear discs	£113 each
Rear pads	£88 per axle
Tyres	£229.09 each, front and rear (Bridgestone Potenza S007)
Insurance	£500 (£500 excess)

Parts prices include VAT but exclude fitting. Nissan costs from Auto Torque. Tyre prices from Blackcircles. Insurance quotes from Adrian Flux, for a 40-year-old male, living in Bedfordshire, no convictions, no accidents.





Clockwise from top left: coupe alternatives for the same £50k or less include Porsche's 997-generation 911 Carrera S, while Audi's V8 R8 gets you two more cylinders but two fewer seats; there's also Audi's Ur-Quattro, BMW's 1M Coupe, and with a little patience possibly even an R34 Nissan Skyline GT-R

THE RIVALS

Could a 911, Skyline or even an Ur-Quattro tempt you?

YOU CAN'T TALK FOUR-SEAT, ALL-wheel-drive, turbocharged coupes without considering a Porsche 911 Turbo. Between £45,000 and £50,000 you have the choice of either a 996 manual or a 997 with the Tiptronic transmission. If you're willing to sacrifice turbos, then newer 997 Carrera, Carrera 4 or 4Ss with less miles are well within budget.

You don't have many alternatives to the S5 if you have your heart set on an Audi. First-generation V8 R8s that have covered around 30,000 miles start at £45,000 but, no matter how brilliant it may be, the R8 doesn't have rear seats. Decent Ur-Quattros do, on the other hand, and decent ones start at £40,000, but they're proper classics, and don't expect R8 or even S5 levels of performance.

It's a similar story with Nissans: the

only other four-seat coupes that are in the same ballpark are now considered classics. The very best and rarest R32 Skyline GT-Rs are over £40,000 but the later R34 version has gained real traction on the market and you'll only find a few for less than £50,000.

If the classic status and appreciating value of the R34 seems appealing, then there's a pair of limited-run BMWs that might tempt you away from four-wheel-drive traction. An E46 M3 CSL with about 50,000 miles is within budget, and so is a 1M Coupe with 40,000 miles or more.

Very similar to the 1M, both in terms of attitude and price, is the brand new M2 Competition (see page 100), but it isn't the most natural alternative to a new S5 – the Mercedes-AMG C43 4Matic Coupe occupies that space.

NISSAN GT-R EXPERT VIEW: CHRIS MARSHALL OF AUTO TORQUE

'THE MAIN THING WHEN THINKING ABOUT buying a GT-R is working out whether you want a tuned one or a standard one. There's a big saving to be had if the modifications have already been done.

'The GT-R's engine is pretty bulletproof. We tune them up to 650bhp, which is what everyone calls a Stage 4.25 tune. That's basically injectors, induction kit and full exhaust. If you tune it to that level you have to cap the torque to about 630lb ft, because you don't want to put too much strain on the clutch and the gearbox.

'A full service history is important and GT-Rs do have frequent service intervals. Pre-facelift cars, from 2009 to 2010, have to be serviced every six months or 6000 miles. Every service sees the engine oil changed, but not the transmission fluid – that alternates. They also have a running-in service after the first 1000 miles or so.

'Later cars – 2011 onwards – are serviced at 12 months or 12,000 miles. We'd always recommend stretching to a later car if you can. As well as the service schedule there were a few modifications that prevent a couple of issues. For instance, the headlights don't mist up like the earlier units.

'People want to see the service book fully stamped, but the people who buy these cars are real enthusiasts and they don't mind if the history is a mix of main dealer and specialist. They realise it's not a bad thing going to a non-Nissan garage, like us, because we see more GT-Rs than a main dealer would. Also, you can't just rock up at any Nissan main dealer and get your GT-R serviced; it has to be a High Performance Centre, and there's not that many about.

'Early, high-mileage cars are really clunky, really mechanical sounding; it doesn't necessarily mean anything's wrong, it's just the nature of the car. But it does depend on where the noise is coming from. A common fault is the bearing in the bell housing wears and rattles. You can hear it chattering from underneath the driver's seat when the car is up to temperature and idling in park or neutral. On a standard car with around 25,000 to 30,000 miles it will happen to all of them. We do an upgraded version, with a much longer life expectancy.

'There are a few areas of minor corrosion, especially on early cars. It starts to bubble up underneath the mirrors and at the back bottom edge of the door. I've been told it's where the robots pick up the doors – it takes some of the protective coating off. There's also a bit of corrosion sometimes on the underneath of the bootlid.'

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Fast Fleet

Peugeot 308 GTi & Hyundai i30 N

They've met before on a group test, but how do these two rival hot hatches compare as long-term propositions?



p124 Volkswagen Up GTI



p126 Lamborghini Aventador



p133 Audi RS3 Saloon

PLUS: BMW M5 ■ Peugeot 106 Rallye ■ BMW 2002 ■ BMW M240i ■ Kia Stinger GT S
■ Honda Civic Type R ■ Mercedes-AMG C43 Estate ■ Caterham Seven 310R

THE EVO CAR PARK IS CURRENTLY an embarrassment of riches for hot hatchback fans. Richard Meaden has recently taken delivery of one of the cheapest ways into the segment with an Up GTI (see p124), and a Suzuki Swift Sport has just arrived, too (we'll introduce that next month). There's also Ian Eveleigh's Civic Type R, while my own 106 Rallye and Adam Towler's 205 GTI wave the old-school flag.

Then there's the 308 GTi and the i30 N. We're more familiar with these two than most of the others, having taken them to Dartmoor with a Golf GTI (*evo* 245) to see if the Korean interloper could fend off rivals from two companies with a good three-quarters of a century of hot hatchback experience combined. The result was close, but the Hyundai managed to match the best elements of its competitors without the Peugeot's quirks or the Golf's... Golfness.

After five months on our fleet, its talents are even easier to appreciate. In contrast, the 308 is a grower. It got within a whisker of the i30 on Dartmoor for thrills, and while the Hyundai is a car that nobody can resist pinching the key to whenever I unwisely leave it unattended, the Peugeot is the car in which everyone returns pleasantly surprised after initial reluctance to pick up the key.

It's certainly not a car that immediately enamours itself. Where the i30 N is subtly menacing, the 308 is just subtle; its regular

'In some ways the Pug more than has the measure of the Hyundai'

keeper, *evo* art editor Rich Browne, thinks it's a shame the styling doesn't reflect its performance. Alongside the Golf, it's about the polar opposite to the supercar presence of our Civic. Personally I like something in-between, so first blood goes to the Hyundai.

The same is true of their interiors. Where settling down into the Hyundai's unbranded bucket seat, staring at clear and conventional dials and grasping the chunky wheel feels instantly right, dropping into the Peugeot's thickly padded pew with your hands on a wheel not dissimilar in size to the Logitech I use to play *Gran Turismo* feels quite odd, and peering at the high-mounted dials with their contra-rotating speedo and tacho needles also takes some getting used to. And the other controls are no easier to fathom – the central touchscreen is slow and the lack of physical buttons grates.

Just as well then that the 308 is better to drive than it is to be around. In some ways, it more than has the measure of the Hyundai.

It's amazing how much power – 266bhp – Peugeot has managed to extract from a 1.6-litre four-cylinder for a start, and it feels stronger than many 2 litres, including the Hyundai's 271bhp unit.

Weight really makes a difference here – the 308 was 161kg lighter than the i30 when we put each on our scales (1316kg v 1477kg), but there's also an addictive rush once boost builds at around 2000rpm, all the way to the red line. The Hyundai's engine makes you giggle, too, but more for its borderline-illegal noises than pure straight-line speed. As Rich notes, it's thirstier than the Peugeot, too.

The 308 feels like a grown-up 208 to drive, too – which is a good thing – being as agile and adjustable as hot hatches this size get. The tiny steering wheel makes more sense once you key into its responses – it's hyper-sensitive to inputs and the front tyres have the grip to back it up. In contrast, the Hyundai feels more serious, with heftier steering and a precision to the controls that hints not only at an involving drive but also real longevity – the i30 feels tight and tied-down, and its boot-mounted strut brace really does seem to reduce body flex.

The most impressive thing is that both cars entertain the driver to a greater degree than the Golf we originally pitched them against, but neither is actually a burden to use day to day. An office straw poll suggests the i30 encourages more spirited driving, the



308 feeling more relaxed when you want it too. I still prefer the Hyundai's focused feel and more conventional cabin, but the 308's driving experience is hugely underrated. And I'd take either over their German rival.

Antony Ingram (@evoAntony)

HYUNDAI i30 N PERFORMANCE

Date acquired February 2018
Total mileage 7200 **Mileage this month** 528 **Costs this month** £0
mpg this month 31.2

PEUGEOT 308 GTi by PS

Date acquired June 2018 **Total mileage** 6164 **Mileage this month** 1315 **Costs this month** £0
mpg this month 37.1

BMW M5

The Beemer tries some alternative rubber

NEW TYRE TIME FOR THE M5. The Pirelli P Zeros that the car arrived on had survived 9000 miles (the majority on road, a few hundred on track), but the last 1500-2000 miles had seen a marked drop-off in their performance, primarily in the wet where the front-end precision washed away and an element of unpredictability crept in at the rear. I also felt they had hardened over those last few thousand miles, adding a brittleness to the M5's ride that wasn't there when the car arrived and the tyres were fresh.

BMW homologated two tyres for the M5 during its development: the Pirelli and Michelin's Pilot Sport 4 S. While there appears to be no option to specify a specific tyre when you order an M5, BMW GB opted to fit the Italian rubber to its press cars following feedback from the engineering team, who found the P Zero performed better on track and delivered a quicker lap time.

However, my concerns over the Pirelli's performance as wear increased pushed me towards the alternative French rubber this time. When the P Zeros came off, the maximum tread depth on the rears was 3mm, but in the middle

of the 285-section tyre the tread had worn to less than 2mm. And while the fronts had worn a little slower and with a more consistent sub-4mm across their carcass, there was a noticeable amount of scrubbing to the shoulders. Although for a car of the M5's weight (1800kg on our scales), with 600bhp and 553lb ft shuffling between front and rear axles, an amount of scuffing was to be expected.

I've covered 150 miles on the Michelin so far and while it's far too early to make a call on their performance, the ride has regained its suppleness when everything is knocked back to Comfort. Interestingly, the tread pattern of the Pilot Sports looks more track-performance orientated than that of the outgoing P Zeros, which is at odds with the claims by BMW that the Pirellis deliver a quicker lap time. I feel a track booking coming on.

Other news to report is that the pair of rain gutters had started to lift at the rear of the carbon roof panel. The fix required a 24-hour body-shop visit, but a search unearthed Berry BMW at Heathrow, who could carry out the work while I headed to Pikes Peak for a couple of days.

Stuart Gallagher (@stuartg917)

Date acquired March 2018
Total mileage 9172 **Mileage this month** 1471 **Costs this month** £990 four tyres, £125 fitting
mpg this month 24.7





New arrival

Volkswagen Up GTI

Richard Meaden drops four litres and five cylinders with his latest daily companion, and he's relishing every mile of it

RUNNING LONG-TERM TEST CARS is one of the best parts of a rather silly job. Over the past few years I've had an R8 V10 Plus, a Bentley Continental GT V8 and an AMG C63 Coupe, plus a few months here and there in a BMW i8 and a Mustang 5.0 Convertible. And now I have a VW Up GTI.

Have I done something to upset editor Stuart Gallagher? Almost certainly, but the little Vee Dub was all my own doing. I've always enjoyed running hot hatches, and I have a soft spot for the smallest and most terrier-like examples. Some of my fondest Fast Fleet memories are of living with a Fiat Panda 100HP, so when I heard *evo* was to get an Up GTI for six months I shamelessly put myself forward, even though I hadn't actually driven one.

I didn't get a chance to spec KS18 XNF, but to be honest I'm not sure I'd have done it any differently. I prefer the looks of the three-door

and love the Tornado Red paintwork, especially with the contrasting black roof (a £125 option). I also love the nods to the original Golf GTI, especially the Jacara Red tartan upholstery, and the 17-inch Oswald alloy wheels look great.

There's not much scope to option the GTI, but ours features a few useful extras: the Cruise and Park Pack (£300) gives rear parking sensors and cruise control, while the beefy-sounding £370 Beats hi-fi packs a 300W punch. I'm not sure I'd opt for the City Emergency Braking Pack (£380), though it does include automatic wipers and headlights. It also comes with a Vodafone Protect and Connect 6 vehicle tracker (£485, including 12-month subscription), which suggests VW's insurers expect the Up GTI to be coveted by car thieves as well as downsizing motoring journalists. All-in, our Up retailed at £15,805 compared to the basic on-the-road price of

'Given the Up weighs less than a ton and sits 15mm closer to the road, it promises to be a hoot'

£13,755. Judged on looks and image alone, that seems like a lot of new car for the money.

Hardware-wise that buys you three cylinders, 999cc, one turbo, 113bhp and 147lb ft of torque. Hardly the stuff of dreams, but given the GTI weighs less than a ton and sits 15mm closer to the road on firmer sports suspension and 195/40 R17 tyres, it promises to be a hoot.

First impressions are all good, with a comfortable driving position and spacious cockpit. The engine is characterful and generous in its delivery, the thrummy motor offering a surprising amount of torque and decent in-gear urge. And the six-speed manual 'box has a light shift quality and a nicely defined gate. Indeed, all the controls are light



Clockwise from top right: spacious cabin gets sporty red highlights; 999cc three-cylinder engine not short on character; 17-inch wheels look the part; GTI sits 15mm lower than other Ups

but finessed. The brakes (discs up front, drums at the rear) have a reassuringly strong bite, and the steering is sweetly judged, with a quick yet natural rate of response and finely filtered but reasonably detailed feel.

The day the Up arrived I drove it to Spa. It was a great trip – the perfect way to run everything in and a proper test of its ability to tackle a big journey. I'm pleased to say it completed the round trip with flying colours, munching the motorway miles with aplomb and averaging just under 50mpg. The odometer has already passed the 3000-mile mark – quite a tally for the first month or so of my tenure, but indicative of a car I simply love driving.

Richard Meaden (@DickieMeaden)

Date acquired May 2018
Total mileage 3001 **Mileage this month** 2939 **Costs this month** £0
mpg this month 45.6

Peugeot 106 Rallye

With a leaky exhaust now a thing of the past and a fresh new system fitted, the extent of the Rallye's pulling power can now be fully appreciated

OF MANY THINGS THAT attracted me to this Rallye was the comprehensive history retained by its former keeper. It's always nice to be handed a large folder full of old bills and service records, even if you'll give them only a cursory glance when excitedly leafing through them before a purchase.

One thing I did notice was a note on the latest MOT certificate failing the car for a large exhaust leak. This was fixed and a fresh MOT handed out according to the paperwork, but the seller admitted it was more of a patch-up job than anything else.

And true enough, soon after buying the Rallye I noticed it was becoming rather loud under hard acceleration and at a cruise. I'm under no illusions of the 106 being a quiet car in the first place, but we all have limits, so I got in touch with Klarius, who'd previously attached a free-flowing exhaust to my Eunox. The company keeps thousands of exhaust parts in stock, so it wasn't a surprise when R&D chief Doug Bentley informed me the correct pieces for the Rallye were available – manufactured in-house in aluminised steel and fully type-approved.

Fitting the pipes at Klarius HQ near Cheadle was too good an opportunity to miss, too, not least to take a proper look

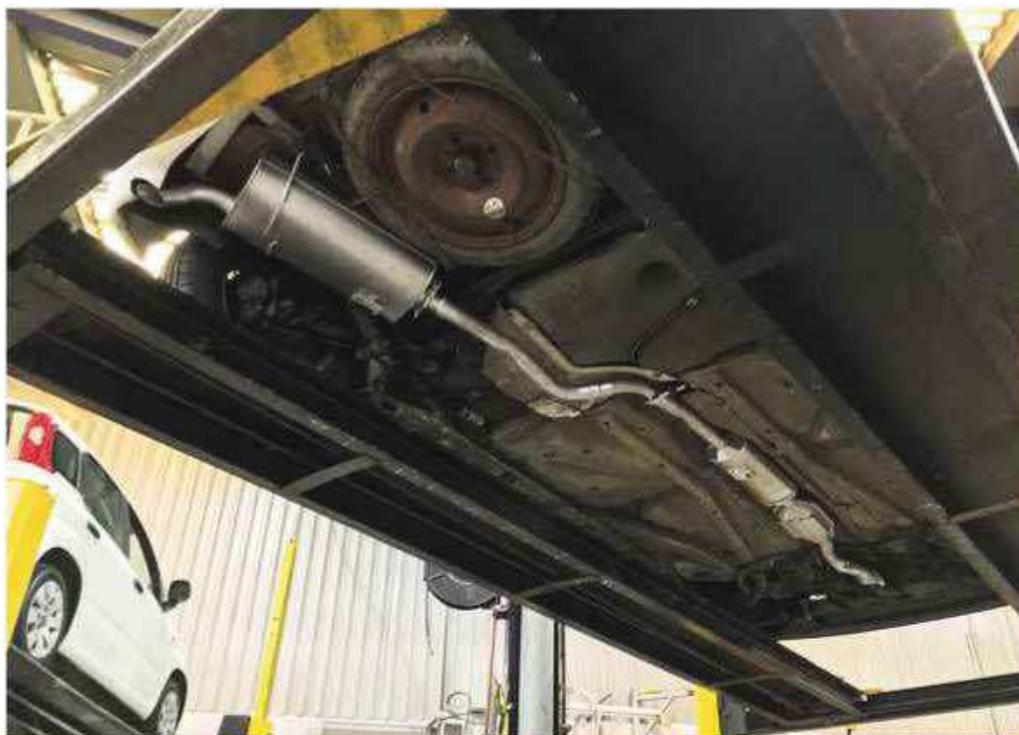
underneath the car and scope out any potential problem areas. The great news was... well, there weren't any problem areas. Apparently my 106 was one of the cleanest of any kind the technicians had seen, and while it was up on the ramps they gave it a squirt of underseal to keep it that way for a little longer.

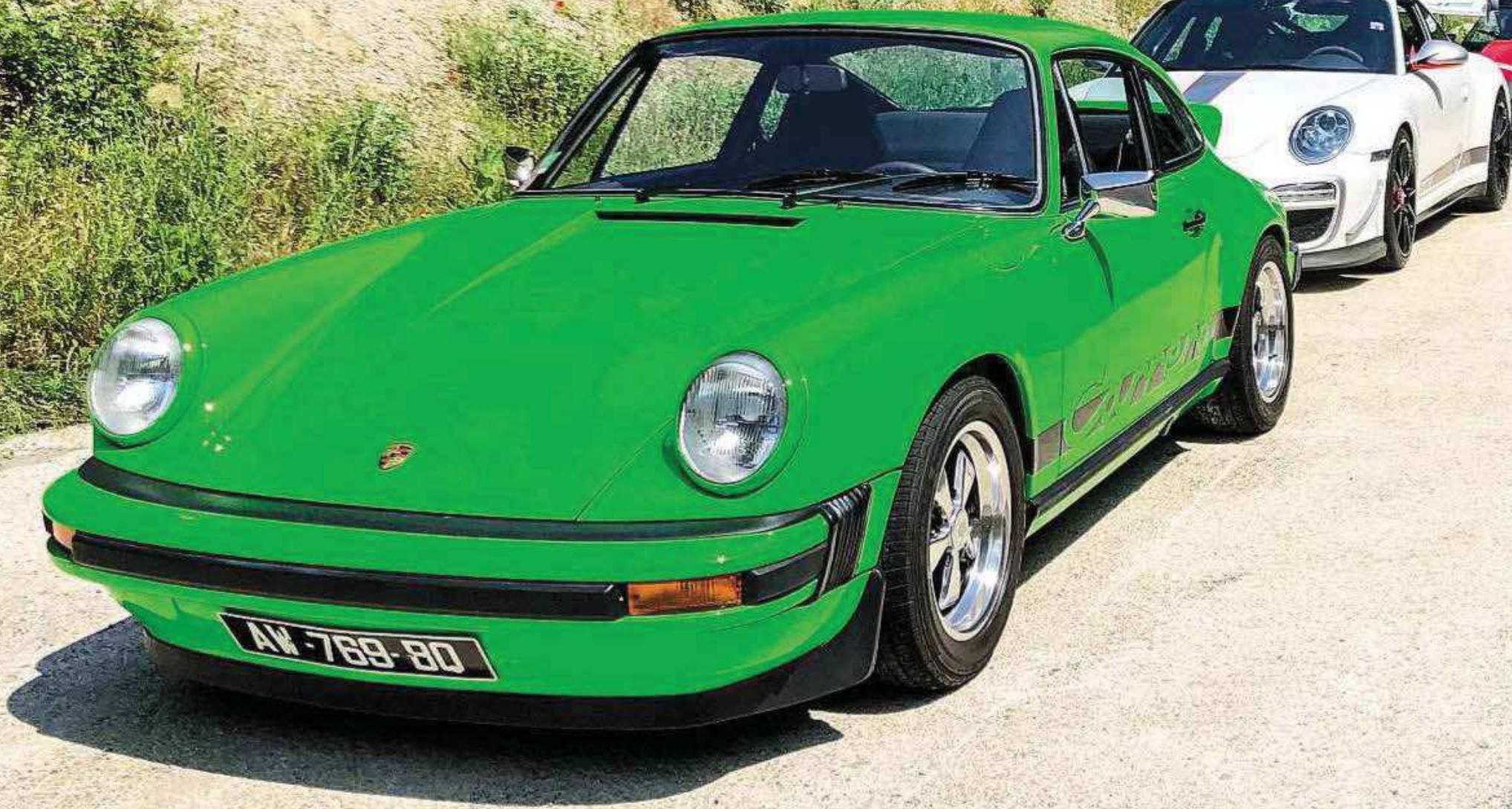
Off came the old exhaust – showing evidence of several holes and plenty of paste over the main failure point – and on went the new. And as soon as the engineers started it up the difference was apparent. No more bassy grumbings, just a smooth, typically tappety idle with gases pattering quietly out of the back.

It's good on the road, too, it being easier to appreciate the way the 1.6 will pull cleanly from idle to the 7000rpm red line now that it's making the proper noises, with still enough volume to know what's going on. It's a great engine, deep-chested and quick-revving, and all the better for breathing through a fresh new exhaust.

Antony Ingram (@evoAntony)

Date acquired August 2017 **Total mileage** 112,058 **Mileage this month** 246 **Costs this month** £250 exhaust (fitted) **mpg this month** 34.6





Porsche 911 GT3 RS 4.0, Ariel Atom & Lamborghini Aventador Roadster

The modern Porsche, Ariel and Lambo are almost upstaged by a 1970s icon

THE MADNESS OF THE GRAND PRIX hit Monaco in May, and with a few friends in town it provided the perfect opportunity for a blast around some of the amazing roads that form the gateway to the French Alps.

There were eight drivers amongst four cars: my Porsche 911 (997) GT3 RS 4.0, Ariel Atom and Lamborghini Aventador Roadster, plus a special guest, a friend's 1974 911 2.7 Carrera with mechanical fuel injection.

A spiritual grandfather of the GT3 RS 4.0, this 2.7 Carrera makes around 210bhp and looks stunning following a full body-off restoration last year. It has been fitted with up-to-date Ruf suspension and, as a result, delivers a classic but incredibly involving driving experience. Everyone who drove the car spoke of the banshee wail approaching 4000rpm, the rewarding gearchange and detailed steering feedback. Not once did I feel

that the car's widow-maker reputation might bite, instead it rewarded commitment and careful positioning... slow in and fast out.

While the GT3 RS would, of course, show it a clean pair of heels with a committed drive, the '70s car held its own in this company. Its ability to push on must have completely humbled its contemporaries in 1974. I was pleasantly surprised and wholly entertained by its sheer breadth of ability and approachability. The brakes provided one of the few reminders that this was a 44-year-old car, but overall it really was something special, as the grins of passengers and drivers of the 'crazy green 911' would attest to.

The road from the coast to Sospel is full of well-sighted corners and amazing topography (not to mention several French delivery drivers who appear to be against their own imaginary purple-sector clock). The Ariel Atom was in its element here, allowing all those who fancied

it the chance to smear parallel black lines out of the super-tight hairpins, the car being predictable and unhinged all at the same time. Yet while it was happy to move around at relatively low speeds, it also provided plenty of hints that overstepping the mark and having that rear-mounted engine swing too far could be disastrous on the tight and twisty mountain roads.

The GT3 RS again made its case for being one of the most accomplished driver's cars of all time, with universal praise from all those who drove it for its handling, engine, noise and feedback. The Aventador, meanwhile, blasted away from villages, startling bystanders and unwary passengers alike and convincing rock climbers that there might be an avalanche coming, even in the height of summer. It bludgeoned roads into submission in a way that only it could, but it was no less entertaining as a result, even if it's perhaps not



'Its ability to push on must have humbled its contemporaries in 1974'

the tool you would naturally choose to dissect a route such as this.

That meant there was a three-way tie on this road trip: the GT3 RS and Atom displayed why they were so at home on these roads, but the moral victory went to the 44-year-old Porsche, defining the spirit of driving as much now as I'm sure it did in 1974.

John Black (@john_m_black)

PORSCHE 911 GT3 RS 4.0

Date acquired February 2016
Total mileage 18,887km **Mileage this month** 786km **Costs this month** £0 **mpg this month** 18.0

ARIEL ATOM

Date acquired August 2014
Total mileage 11,979 **Mileage this month** 435 **Costs this month** £0 **mpg this month** 22.0

LAMBORGHINI AVENTADOR ROADSTER

Date acquired November 2015
Total mileage 8952km **Mileage this month** 854km **Costs this month** £0 **mpg this month** 9.9

BMW 2002

Will Beaumont finds himself in a bit of a tight squeeze when his plans to replace the old radiator on his classic BMW run into some unexpected bother



EAH, MAKE IT A BIT THICKER.

'I'm sure there will be space.' I said it with such confidence that the guys at Forge who were making a new aluminium radiator for my 2002 didn't even question me. Why would they? It's my car, I've worked on it a lot and I should know how much space there is between the front of the engine and the radiator. So when I dropped off my crusty old radiator at Forge's Gloucester HQ and ran through the specs for my new one – to be mounted exactly the same way and be exactly the same shape, only 'a bit thicker' – I said 'go for it'.

A few weeks later an enormous box was delivered. It contained the flaky old radiator and the brand new aluminium one, which sure enough was almost identical in shape but thicker. Actually, quite a lot thicker. No thicker than Forge had said it would be, admittedly, but thicker than I had imagined. Oh dear. My internal calibration system was clearly well out of whack.

With the radiator installed in the car, the shaft from the water pump sat no more than 3mm away from its delicate fins. Thankfully, though, as I didn't have to mount a fan to the water pump (there's an electric item ahead of the radiator

instead) a good proportion of the exposed shaft was redundant. So off came the pump and out came the grinder. With a cutting disc and a steady hand, my dad and I chopped the outer extremity off the front of the water pump.

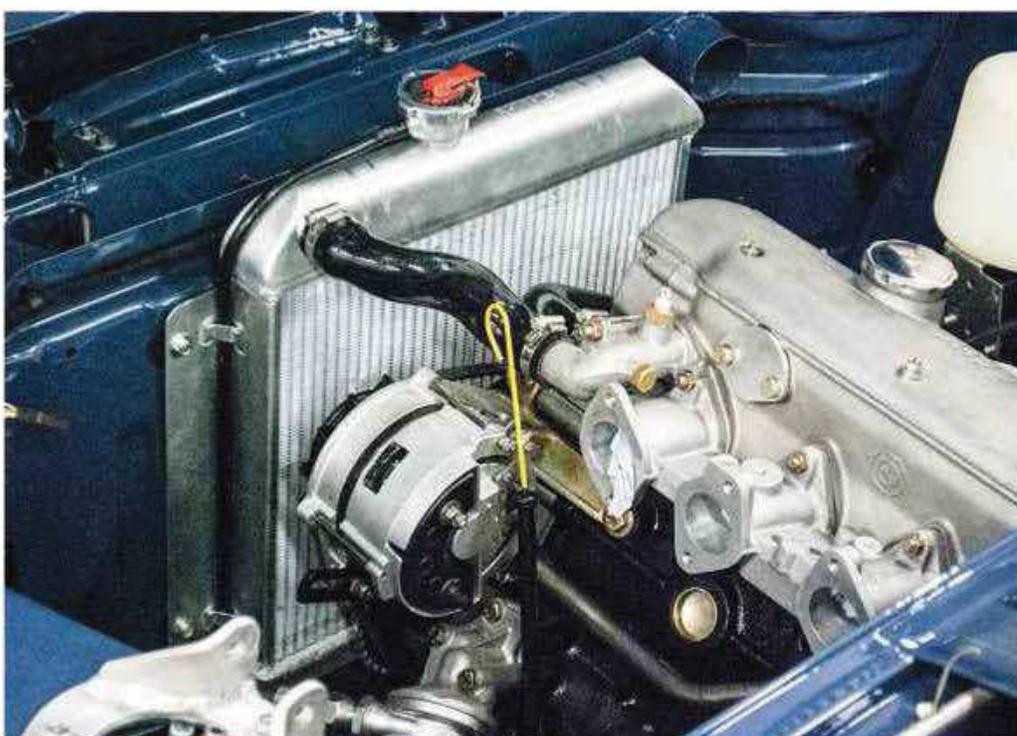
After painting the newly exposed metal, the pump went back on and the radiator quickly followed. The water pump shaft is still close, don't get me wrong, but now there's enough space for the engine to move forward a little bit without it chewing up my lovely new radiator. With 185-section road tyres, I doubt I'll be creating enough force to shift it forward enough under braking.

Although the new radiator will help keep the more powerful engine cool, I've also added an oil cooler. Tucked up just behind the kidney grille, it's probably going to cause me issues when trying to fit the other front grilles, but making things fit in tight spaces is becoming my speciality.

Will Beaumont (@WillBeaumont)

Date acquired July 2008

Total mileage 146,050-ish **Mileage this month** 0 **Costs this month** £650 radiator, £140 oil cooler **mpg this month** n/a



End of term

BMW M240i

The compact coupe divided opinion, but it also won over many with its 335bhp straight-six engine and M-car-lite attitude



OUR BMW M240i MAY NOT HAVE been an ideal photographer's car, lacking as it did the generous load space of an estate or even the convenience of a hatchback's tailgate, but with a turbocharged 3-litre straight-six engine producing a healthy 335bhp and 369lb ft of torque in a small coupe body, all was forgiven on any occasion when I wasn't trying to fit a stepladder inside.

It could, I think, have been even more enjoyable had it been equipped with the manual gearbox, which would have upped the involvement levels a little further. But I have to admit that the £1600 eight-speed Sport Automatic transmission was perfect for the motorway slogs that photoshoots demand.

Our M240i was also fitted with BMW's

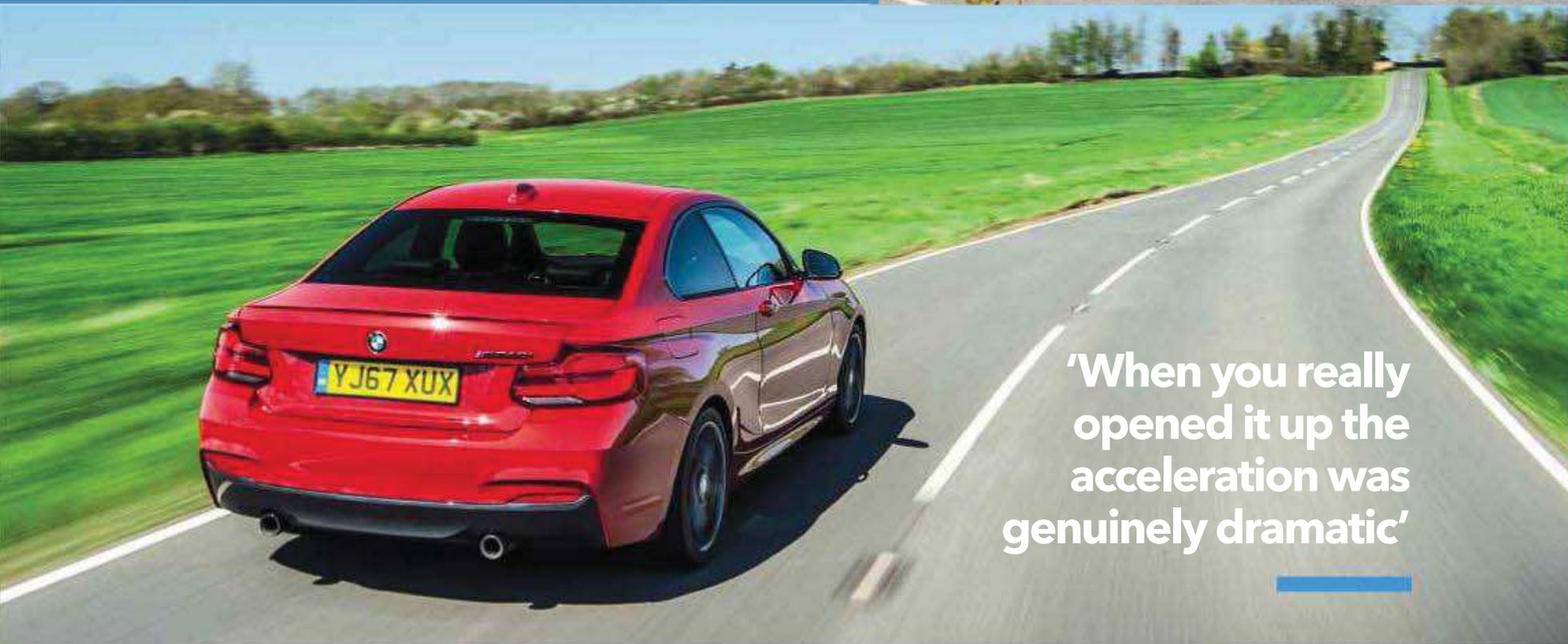
Adaptive M Sport suspension – a £515 option but a worthwhile box to tick if you are looking to use a car like this every day, as it allows you to adjust the ride to suit your mood. The Melbourne Red metallic paint cost an extra £550 and was great for our photos, but if the car had been my own I would have gone for the cool Mineral Grey, with the 18-inch M double-spoke alloy wheels in Ferric Grey, not the darker and £175-more-expensive Orbit Grey. The Michelin Pilot Super Sport tyres were also a £175 upgrade, but they performed well and still had life left in them at the end of our 10,000-plus miles with the car.

One other notable exterior option was the electric glass sunroof. It was a pricey one too at £895, and probably not an essential extra,

but in the summer months it was a nice alternative to having the windows down or the air con blasting, and it also came in handy for taking the odd high-up car-to-car shot, too.

Inside, the no-frills Dakota Black leather seats were comfortable, but more shoulder support would have been welcome during enthusiastic driving. I probably wouldn't have ticked the option box for the £600 Harman Kardon hi-fi had I specced the car myself, but actually this turned out to be totally worth the money – it was amongst the best systems I've heard on a Fast Fleeter. It's just a pity its ability to pick up a DAB signal was so patchy.

All of these options, along with several other minor ones, pushed our M240i's price up from £36,415 basic to a not insignificant



'When you really opened it up the acceleration was genuinely dramatic'

£42,340. Yet it clearly still wasn't a perfect car. During its time with us it attracted comments such as 'it doesn't feel as special as a true M-car' and 'the abrupt gearchanges from the automatic transmission are horrible'. However, the one thing everyone could agree on was the engine. Staff writer Antony Ingram commented that having a large, expensive-feeling 3-litre six in such a small car made it feel special. I totally agree; having 335bhp under your control in a compact shape is a real treat, and when you really opened it up the acceleration was genuinely dramatic (the claimed 0-62mph time of 4.6sec should give you a taste of what it was capable of).

Despite being *evo*'s BMW fanboy, Will

Beaumont didn't rush to take a turn in the M240i. When he eventually did, however, he discovered he'd underestimated it, as he found more M-car traits than he expected. Once in Sport or Sport+ mode, every full-throttle upshift would send a shock through the drivetrain, almost as if trying to unsettle the car – just like an M-car does. (Initially I complained about this, but later, after spending more time behind the wheel, I grew to enjoy this surprisingly hardcore characteristic.) Will also found that the chassis had less body roll and more precision than he had anticipated and that, even though there wasn't a limited-slip differential, the throttle had a much greater influence on the car's attitude than he thought it would.

The fanboy seal of approval, then. Which I was pleased to hear, as I really enjoyed my time with this car, too. No, it may not have been to my preferred spec or a full-fat M-car, but it was an accomplished commuter with a great sound system, and was a real weekend weapon, too – the kind of car that really could make you get up early on a Sunday to go hunting for that perfect driver's road.

Aston Parrott (@AstonParrott)

Date acquired November 2017
Duration of test 8 months **Total test mileage** 10,141 **Overall mpg** 22.9
Costs £0 **Purchase price** £42,340
Value today £27,000



Kia Stinger GT S

Our Kia gets even more practical, but better gearbox software is on the wish list

THE STINGER CONTINUES TO generate interest and, mostly, admiration wherever it goes. This month it helped out with tracking photography on an *Enzo* magazine photoshoot based out of Car-Iconics in Oakham. The guys there love their cars, trading not just in Ferraris but anything that interests them, and the Kia did that. To some people the Stinger looks a fraction too long, but most love its visual impact, especially ours in its unique (for now) metallic blue paint. And having been for a ride around some of their favourite lanes nearby, the Car-Iconics guys were deeply impressed.

The GT S does comfort and agility well, a twist of the mode button to shift from Comfort to Sport tightening up the suspension a little, adding a welcome growl to the V6 and making the auto more alert. It could go a little further on the damping, the uplift in control being quite subtle and the car needing to be more firmly controlled when you're pressing on. To passengers, though, it simply feels fast, fluid and refined.

Ambling, it'll return an indicated 33mpg, yet the fuel gauge sinks more like it's doing 23mpg because the tank is effectively only 55 litres big. To see how accurate the range prediction was, I played a game of refuel chicken, getting

'The sensors squawk when you select reverse, but you get a close-up of the bikes in the camera'

the remaining range down to a solitary mile. On filling up, it took... (drum roll)... 57 litres. A 75-litre tank would make a useful difference.

I lost our Stinger back to Kia Motors (UK) for a few days recently. I'd asked if it was possible to make it even more practical by having a tow bar fitted, and indeed it was. However, the car's return was intercepted by the *evo* office so that it could star in issue 250's 'Korea High' feature, so it was a couple of weeks before it was back on my driveway.

The tow bar is detachable, so from a distance the rear end looks no different, but up close you can see the letter box slot that's been cut in the lower valance. The electrical plug swings down and the tow bar plugs up. The whole lot cost £745 including fitting. With my (excellent) Thule three-bike rack locked

and loaded, the parking sensors squawk when you select reverse, but at least you get a close-up of the bikes in the rear-view camera.

Speaking of reverse, the frustrating gearbox issue isn't getting any better. It goes something like this: reverse out of the driveway into the road, row back on the lever for Drive, rev the engine in Neutral, go for the lever and Drive again (assuming operator error), get the same result, wave an apologetic hand at mounting traffic, try and fail again, press Park, select Drive, depart the scene, apologetically. I'm hoping there's a software update when the time comes for the car's first service.

Also this month, to the ever-longer list of features that seem fancy but turn out to be really useful and which I'm going to want on all subsequent cars, I can now add cooled seats. They're standard on the top Stinger and in the recent unrelentingly hot weather they impressed the (chilled) pants off me and everyone else who has sat in them.

John Barker (@evoJB)

Date acquired April 2018
Total mileage 4812 **Mileage this month** 2061 **Costs this month** £745
tow bar mpg this month 28.1

Honda Civic Type R

New boots this month, while an NSX encounter provides some food for thought

ONE'S A £31,000 HOT HATCH, THE other's a £145,000 supercar. Both are built by Honda, but do they share any DNA? I got to find out recently when I spent a few days behind the wheel of an NSX.

In physical terms, the similarities begin and end with the shared indicator/wiper stalks and infotainment-system software. Curiously, those stalks sound hollow and plasticky in the NSX but are satisfyingly clunky in the Civic, which is surely the wrong way round. However, the NSX clearly has a superior processor for its infotainment system, as it demonstrates none of the annoying lag of the Civic's. In fact, the NSX's interior is largely more premium in its feel, design and operation, as you'd hope.

Dynamically it'd be a stretch to say there is much likeness beyond a focused attitude and impressive agility, although both cars lap up a typical British B-road. You'd expect nothing less of a hot hatch, but perhaps not of a 573bhp supercar. Yet the NSX feels sufficiently compact, offers great visibility and can be positioned so precisely that you can just get on with enjoying it rather than fretting about it.



Ultimately, though, there's not a lot in common here, which makes sense given the two cars were developed by different teams on different continents. But it's interesting to contemplate what could be if the two models *did* have a greater affinity. I can't say I've ever hankered after any form of electronic power boost in a hot hatch, but if a slickly integrated system like the NSX's could be incorporated into a hatch like the Type R – bringing even more performance and four-wheel torque

vectoring – I'd definitely be intrigued.

Conversely, what if the NSX, like the original version in the nineties and noughties, got the R treatment? A little less weight, a little more power, an even sharper chassis... Or perhaps I'm dreaming an impossible dream.

In other news, the Civic's front Continental SportContact 6s have called time at just shy of 6500 miles, a mileage that seems rather low given I don't tend to shred my way through tyres. Michelin claims its Pilot Sport 4 S offers marginally better performance than the Contis, but with a significantly slower wear rate. This sounded like a combination worth investigating, so I had a full set fitted – unaware that editor Gallagher had put the same rubber on his M5 just a day earlier (see p123). I'll report back with my findings soon.

Ian Eveleigh

Date acquired January 2018 **Total mileage** 6441 **Mileage this month** 623 **Costs this month** £917.28 **four tyres (fitted)** **mpg this month** 31.3

'It's interesting to contemplate what could be if these two cars had a greater affinity'





Image courtesy of Steve McCoy Photography – stevemccoy.co.uk

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Mercedes-AMG C43 Estate

The C43 has loosened up, just as a revised model comes along

WE'VE HAD OUR C43 MORE THAN SIX months now, so its time on the *evo* Fast Fleet is nearly up. With 10,750 miles on the clock, it feels as though the engine has really loosened up; at what point do the bushes and dampers start to lose their edge, though? By 40,000 miles I assume there's some deterioration, but I wonder if there's a golden period before that where all the stars align. If you're an engineer, I'd be interested to hear views on that topic.

This version of the C43 and its ilk have been replaced by a facelifted model, with larger turbochargers and a remap offering a little more lung capacity at the top of the rev range, and a 23bhp jump to 385bhp. I understand that tweak: 'my' C43 is all about that mid-range thump, which comes on with a wallop from 2500rpm. However, those last 1000 crank revolutions before the red line can sometimes feel a bit forced. I imagine the new car eliminates that sensation.

Another big change with the newer C43 appears to be the adoption of Mercedes' latest digital instrumentation and infotainment screens, which certainly take the cabin upmarket. The passage of time has meant I've got entirely used to the way our C43 operates, but its diverse range of screens, switchgear, menus and so forth never feels as minimalist and snappy as I would prefer. Maybe the new car sorts that one out, as well.

Adam Towler (@AdamTowler)

Date acquired January 2018 **Total mileage** 10,750 **Mileage this month** 1600 **Costs this month** £0 **mpg this month** 27.1

Audi RS3 Saloon

A family trip to Devon puts the saloon's boot space to the test, while the firmer-than-ideal ride frustrates

YOU WANT SOME FAMILY-friendly versatility, so you need a hatchback, right? Actually, that's not always the case. A hatchback can be brilliant if you want to fold the back seats down and carry a large object or two, but the rest of the time there's a lot to be said for having a decent-sized boot slung out the back.

This is especially the case with the RS3, because to squeeze that bulky five-cylinder engine under the bonnet, Audi's engineers had to move the battery to the boot. This eats into the load space and results in a back-seats-up carrying capacity of 280 litres for the Sportback, against the saloon's more useable 315 litres. It's not a massive difference, I grant you, but when you've a family that's yet to master the art of travelling light it makes a difference, as was confirmed to me this month when I managed to squeeze all sorts of seaside paraphernalia into our RS3 Saloon for a trip down to the South Devon coast.

Practicality aside, the three-box shape is just so much cooler than the hatchback. There's something about

the RS3's discreet looks (don't mention the paint) and balanced profile that bring to mind other under-the-radar supersaloons, such as the Ford Sierra Sapphire RS Cosworth and the original BMW M5. In fact, the more time I spend with the Audi, the more I'm convinced that the saloon is the pick of the RS3 bunch, even ignoring the small dynamic benefits of its wider rear track compared to the Sportback's.

Making less of an impressive case for itself is the car's adaptive damper option. The ride is far from jarring in the Comfort setting, but it is firmer than it needs to be with this technology – a drive in an RS4 shows that Audi can get it right. To really put the boot in, a recent outing in a passively damped RS3 revealed that there was little between it and our car for either comfort or high-speed body control.

James Disdale

Date acquired March 2018 **Total mileage** 8341 **Mileage this month** 1130 **Costs this month** £0 **mpg this month** 26.8





Caterham Seven 310R

With a bit of forward planning there's no reason why a Seven can't make a perfectly acceptable daily driver. Right?

A SKED ABOUT THE PROS AND CONS of Caterham 'ownership', you'd probably expect me to wax lyrical about the immersive driving experience and the car's utter brilliance on track, but also to moan about the compromises needed to drive it on the road. And you'd be right, except for the last point.

I'm sure others will disagree, but for me there's huge appeal in using a Seven for daily driving duties. It's not the easy choice by any means, but equally it's not a hardship, even on my commute into the office, which features more than its fair share of motorways.

Of course, there are caveats. Firstly, if you're over six feet tall and are the owner of feet that only fit shoes size 10 or over then you're going to feel cramped, but then there's always the wide-body SV if you need more room.

Secondly, you have to think about what you're going to wear. On anything other than

a warm summer's day, toasty, waterproof clothing is a must, because you'll want to travel with the roof down regardless of the weather. The hood's actually not that fiddly to erect, but it's rather claustrophobic and, well, why buy a Caterham if you don't want to get up close and personal with the elements?

For me, the standard chassis is just perfect. It's snug rather than spacious, but the low-set, straight-legged layout instantly puts you at ease, while the transmission tunnel and door armrest are perfectly placed to take the weight of your arms, reducing fatigue.

Then there's the ride, which is so remarkably supple – such is the beauty of a light car, the damping can deftly deal with bumps and deliver low-roll handling. As a result, if you're willing to deal with a bit of noise (OK, a lot of noise) then the Caterham will happily do long-haul trips. There's remarkably little buffeting from the wind, while the blaring exhaust note

gets dragged into the slipstream before it gets irritating. Yes, there's always a slight ringing in the ears after hours behind the wheel, but never any aches or pains.

Yet what I really love about commuting in a Caterham is its ability to deliver a sort of motoring mindfulness. With no clock, no radio and no Bluetooth you're left to simply concentrate on driving, which in a car like the Seven is pure heaven. Relatively mundane routes become far more stimulating, while motorways become a giant game of fast-moving chess as you hone your lane discipline and dodge the catseyes with each move. And when you do encounter some more interesting stretches of tarmac, even short ones, you can exploit the fun instantly without any need to delve into endless driver modes.

So there you have it: the Caterham Seven is the ultimate daily driver. Probably.

James Disdale

Date acquired March 2018
Total mileage 3854 **Mileage this month** 311 **Costs this month** £0
mpg this month 33.1



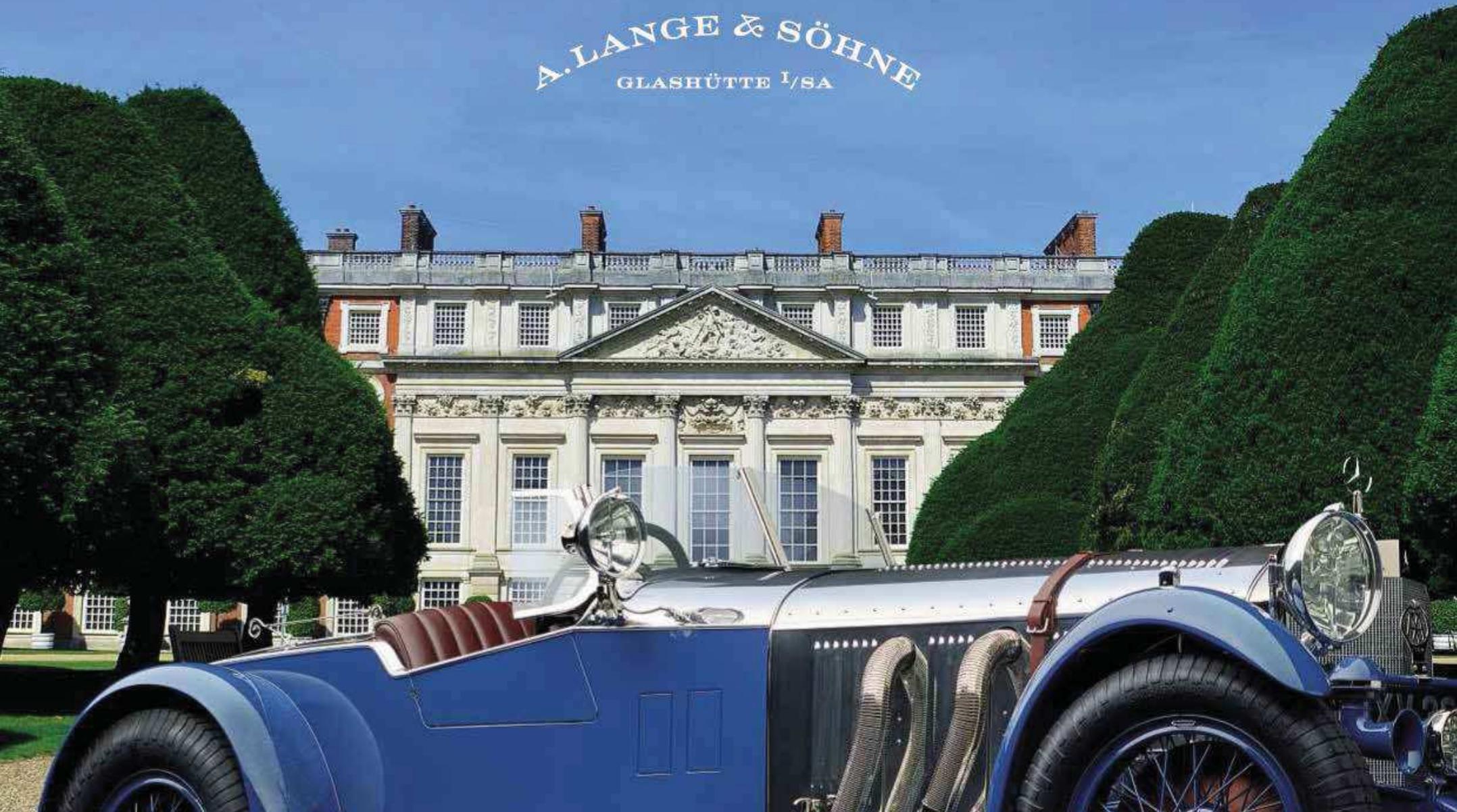
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Buying Journey

Car ownership is about choosing cars that *you* like, and James Mills should be applauded for that

Nissan Micra Colette (Mk1) ‘There was nothing good about my Micra, yet I loved it as it was my first car. It got more hand washes than anything else I’ve owned.’ **Fiat Bravo HLX (Mk1)** ‘It was fun and quickish, but the appalling build quality meant I’ve never owned another Italian car.’ **MGB GT (1)** ‘I owned this for a decade as a third car. It was one of the last made and I loved the rubber bumpers and hilariously roly-poly suspension.’ **Toyota Avensis Saloon 1.8 GLS (Mk1)** ‘Simply awful – the ultimate repmobile. I owe a great thanks to the 17-year-old who wrote it off after driving into me on an east London roundabout.’ **VW Bora 1.6** ‘The Bora was dull to drive, but looked great and was beautifully built.’

BMW 525d SE (E60) (2) ‘A comfortable executive saloon and a car that could still be fun on a back-road. The best-looking 5-series ever, too.’ **BMW 325d M Sport Touring (E91) (3)** ‘This was a fabulous car for the father of newborn twins.’ **VW Golf GTI Edition 30 (Mk5) (4)** ‘When I lost my company car I was able to get into something I really wanted. I loved my Mk5 GTI; it’ll be a real classic.’ **Ford Mustang GT 5.0 (Mk5) (5)** ‘I moved to Mexico, so took advantage of being in the Americas and bought the 2013 Mustang GT 5.0 that wasn’t available as a British import. It was a beast, particularly on poor Mexican roads, and the soundtrack was unforgettable.’

Audi TT 3.2 V6 quattro (Mk2) (6) ‘Moving back to Britain I made a quick purchase. I’d read all the negative reviews but loved this car when I got behind the wheel. My first experience of DSG and the fabulous VR6 engine helped.’ **Mercedes-Benz E350 CDI AMG Sport Cabriolet (MK4) (7)** ‘I bought this to impress my wife, which it did, but it bored me and got traded in when I saw an M3 Convertible at a bargain price. Great-looking car, though.’ **BMW M3 Limited Edition 500 (E93) (8)** ‘My best car ever. The ability to hear that high-revving V8 was worth more than pure performance on an everyday basis.’ **Audi S3 Saloon** ‘Last year I moved to the snowy American Midwest. I really appreciate the S3’s instant performance, its traction in the snow and the everyday usability of it. I’d have bought the RS3 but they’re as rare as rocking horse muck here.’

What’s next?

‘I have two dream cars that I’d like to get next – a Porsche 911 Turbo or a Nissan GT-R. My son is campaigning hard for the latter. If I can’t stretch to either of those, the Alfa Giulia Quadrifoglio could finally tempt me back to Italian.’

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Audi Q8 50 TDI S-line

Flagship SUV combines punchy V6 with sorted suspension – outside the UK, at least

IT'S ALWAYS A JOY DISCOVERING stretches of bituminous spaghetti in the most remote places. The B-159 just north of San Pedro de Atacama, in Chile's Antofagasta region, is one such road, the relatively straight and flowing sections of which are broken occasionally and briefly by a rollercoaster wiggle through trickier terrain.

Something like an Audi Ur-Quattro would be perfect here, particularly given access to unpaved roads nearby and the settling snow further up in the mountains. An animated and amusingly swearsy Audi designer is trying to draw comparisons between the brick-like icon and Audi's new Q8 SUV, but doing so having called the rally star 'f**king ugly' perhaps isn't the kind of comparison the attendant PRs were hoping for.

Nor do the few shared styling cues (sharply ridged wings, the C-pillar graphic, a black plastic band between the tail lights) exude quite the same sense of purpose on the Q8 as they do on Audi's old stager, but at least with its wider body, lower roofline, more prominent grille and chunky 21-inch wheels, the Q8 is more distinctive than the Q7 on which it's based. It even looks appropriate slewing along a gravel track and sloshing through streams, its air suspension in its highest 'Off Road' position.



Ah, air suspension. We've had mixed results with it on Audis recently. An A8 rides well enough, albeit less syrupy-smoothly than an S-class, but the A6 and A7 shudder along harshly and without a sparkling chassis as compensation. The Q8 chassis won't have you leaping out of bed early for a drive either, but as tested this 50 TDI S-line absorbs the Atacama's rumblier sections far better than other recent air-sprung Audis.

'As tested'? Ah yes... Unfortunately, UK-bound Q8s will be denied this conventional air set-up, instead getting Sport air suspension that may well result in that unwanted thump and jiggle. Given the Q8's body control seems fine on Chile's B-159 when in Dynamic mode, it's a shame we won't get to enjoy true comfort in Comfort on Bedfordshire's B660.

At least Dynamic all-wheel steering (optional on the S-line) works better here than it does on the lighter Audi saloons. The reduction in steering feel is easier to trade for the increased agility and tighter turning circle, while Dynamic mode adds back some of the missing steering weight. It also sharpens throttle response, which is useful, and drops a couple of gears in the eight-speed Tiptronic automatic 'box, which is irritating, but the 3-litre, mild hybrid-assisted turbodiesel V6 and torque-shuffling centre differential work well together. The former is smooth, quiet and punchy, the latter helps you drive through unpaved corners with just a hint of attitude.

And, naturally, all the stuff Audi usually gets right is right here, too: refinement is class-leading, as is cabin quality and space, and the dual-screen MMI Touch Response console and Virtual Cockpit display remains one of the better infotainment set-ups on the market.

The Q8 is an impressive car overall then, but we'd still take an Ur-Quattro for a run through the Andes.

Antony Ingram (@evoAntony)

+ Andes-level quality and refinement

- Pennines-level thrills

evo rating ★★★★★

BBR GTi

BBR MX-5 ND / MK4 CONVERSIONS



SUPER 175



SUPER 190



SUPER 200

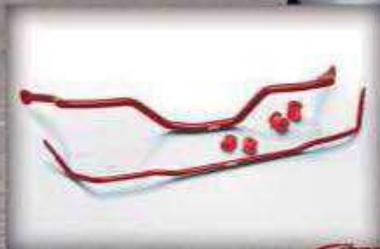


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Skoda Citigo Monte Carlo

Sportier Citigo brings a dash of fun to the city car segment



DON'T LET THE CITIGO'S PINT-SIZED dimensions and first-car vibe fool you. It's a quality product engineered to a point far beyond its city car rivals. Furthermore, in this new Monte Carlo guise, priced at £11,500, it's an enjoyable drive, too.

The Monte Carlo benefits from a sportier chassis set-up, which sees the ride height reduced by 15mm and the fitment of larger wheels shod with 10mm wider tyres. Under the bonnet sits the usual naturally aspirated 999cc three-cylinder engine, its unchanged power and torque outputs of 59bhp and 70lb ft respectively translating to a 101mph top speed,

with 0-62mph taking a lengthy 14.4sec.

This is largely due to the tall, economy-biased gearing: second will see you past 60mph and third beyond 90mph. A shorter final drive would be welcome, but that said you don't miss swapping gears frequently as the shift action is rubbery and reluctant.

Best, then, to focus on the handling. While the steering is far from communicative, it's light, precise and well judged. Riding lower, with the sub-ton mass better contained, the Monte Carlo nips into corners with an inertia-free enthusiasm, so you soon find yourself carrying more speed into each turn you encounter.

Key to the fun is exploiting the car's tiny footprint, which leaves you with lots of space on the road and numerous cornering lines to choose from. Trace the straightest one to preserve momentum and you can really hustle the Citigo, settling into an addictive rhythm.

It's not quite an Up GTI-lite, but the Monte Carlo is still a great reminder that you don't always need big power to have fun.

Lee Stern (@DorqueSteer)

+ Nippy handling, well engineered, spacious

- Tall gearing, rubbery gearshift

evo rating ★★★★★☆

Audi TTS

It's quicker than before, despite a power drop, but is it better to drive?

AUDI'S FACELIFTED TTS MAY HAVE less power than the version it replaces, but that doesn't mean it's any slower. In fact, it's quicker. A particulate filter in its exhaust system has cut maximum power by 4bhp to 302bhp, but 62mph now arrives in 4.5sec, four-tenths sooner than before. That's due to the extra gear ratio in the new seven-speed wet- and dual-clutch transmission, plus 15lb ft more torque, bringing the total up to 295lb ft.

A little less power here and a little more torque there has had very little effect on how the TTS drives. That gearbox, however, is noticeably different – and noticeably better. Just when you thought dual-clutch 'boxes couldn't shift gears any faster or more seamlessly, Audi goes and surprises you by achieving both. The sensation that the gearchanges are instant is exaggerated here by the small, plastic wheel-mounted paddles:

they may not be the most luxurious things to touch, but as they barely move a millimetre it takes just a tensing of your hand to engage the next gear.

As you'd expect from a performance Audi, the £41,205 TTS is four-wheel drive and provides quite incredible traction and security. The ride on the optional 20-inch wheels is always firm, even with the dampers set to Comfort, but you can make swift progress down an unfamiliar road with absolute confidence that the TTS won't catch you out. There's never any hint that the rear axle might break away, yet the car turns in with real enthusiasm, allowing you to maintain remarkable momentum.

Impressive as this is, it's only really enjoyable for the first few corners. Just as before, then, once you've got the measure of the TTS, you're left wanting more from the experience.

Will Beaumont (@WillBeaumont)



+ Quite exceptional grip and traction

- Enjoyment fades after the first few corners

evo rating ★★★★★☆

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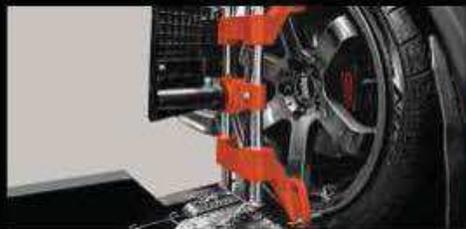
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Volvo XC40 T5 AWD R-Design

Another month, another compact SUV

IF THERE'S A DISAPPOINTMENT with this Volvo XC40, it's the use of the T5 badge on its tailgate. That letter/number combination brings to mind the idiosyncratic off-beat war cry of a '90s 850 in full flight, but here it merely denotes where in the power hierarchy the turbo'd 2-litre four-pot stands (there's also a lesser T4 and T3).

The 244bhp unit is punchy enough, but rather soulless, emitting a wheezy drone when extended, plus it's connected to an eight-speed 'box that's not the quickest or smoothest when pressing on. Yet get past this and, in the world of compact crossovers at least, the £35,420 T5 is a rather good thing.

The steering is quick and connected to a front axle that bites harder than you expect, while the rear end is keen to get in on the action, delivering the lovely sensation of the car rotating around your hips. It's surprisingly



agile for such a high-riding machine and you can cover ground at a surprising lick – some hot hatches will be humbled. There's some roll, and big undulations result in a little float, but the £750 adaptive dampers do a decent job of keeping the body in check most of the time.

The rest of the time the XC40 is a relaxing way to get about, the supple ride and strong refinement taking the sting out of daily duties, while the cabin's cool Swedish ambience is an enlightened environment after the more sombre surrounding of German rivals.

So, if you must have an upmarket compact SUV in your life, the accomplished and entertaining XC40 is well worth a punt.

James Disdale

- + Agile handling, comfort, quick enough
- Characterless engine, lumpy transmission

evo rating ★★★★★



Jaguar XF R-Sport AWD

Mid-size saloon makes for pleasant progress... if you avoid the 2-litre

WHY DON'T MORE PEOPLE BUY XF's? Its recent refresh gave it a punchier nose, adding some much-needed dynamism – from the front at least, because the rear looks a little unfinished, as if the team went home on a Friday and forgot what they were doing by Monday morning. Overall, I like how it looks, although it's very spec-dependent and can go from tailored suit to cardigan and zip-up slippers with a simple misjudged selection on the configurator.

It's still pleasant inside. The infotainment system is comically bad in everything it does,

but the ergonomics for those who enjoy driving are unquestionable – best in class, I'd say. The fit and finish may lag behind those of German rivals, but spec an XF with consideration and it's all rather pleasant. And it comes loaded with enough kit to make an Audi salesman wince.

It drives pretty smartly, too. The R-Sport AWD is four-wheel drive – which isn't really needed, but the suburbs believe it is because the BBC showed a 4x4 pulling a Waitrose lorry up a hill last winter and now they want in on the action. It steers sweetly, as all Jags do, with a clarity and sense of precision few volume

manufacturers manage. There's great body control, the damping is neatly controlled and miles and hours behind the wheel disappear without sucking the life out of you.

But there's a colossal elephant in the room: this £43,810 version's 2-litre, 237bhp four-cylinder turbodiesel engine. It sounds like something Citroën stuffed in a BX in 1986 and has the responses and performance to match, which is a shame because Jag has spent a fortune on the slick eight-speed ZF auto. So buy an XF, just make it the smooth, responsive 3-litre V6 turbodiesel instead.

Stuart Gallagher (@stuartg917)

- + Sharper (front end) looks, drives well, decent kit
- Rough engine; a bit grandad if specced wrongly

evo rating ★★★★★

RPM Technik Cayman 981 CSR

Modified six-cylinder Cayman gets shorter gearing, but can it come close to the magical GT4?

Photography by Aston Parrott

HOW NICE TO BE ABLE TO TALK about a Porsche Cayman without the gravelly cacophony of the current four-cylinder engine barging its way to the front of the narrative. As a conversion based on the previous, 981-generation Cayman, the car you see here is powered by the direct-injection, naturally aspirated 'MA1' flat-six, in this case in 3.4-litre S tune, and that is unequivocally a very good start indeed.

You can apply individual CSR elements to your Cayman, but sampled all together in one car the resulting RPM Technik 981 CSR can be viewed ostensibly as a Cayman GT4-lite, or possibly even a GT4 alternative. The Hertfordshire-based Porsche specialist has built nearly 30 of its more driver-focused CSR conversions over recent years, mainly based on water-cooled 911s. This car showcases RPM's work on the mid-engined alternative, built up

for a keen trackday-attending customer.

Frankly, of most interest to me is that this car runs RPM's own crown wheel and pinion, reducing the final drive ratio and hence supplying the driver with a punchier gearset to work with. There has never been much to criticise with the 981, but its economy-optimised, overly long ratios blunted the accelerative potential of the car – GT4 included – and reduced driver interaction with what is otherwise a superbly slick manual gearbox. RPM has combined the new final drive with a limited-slip differential, plus a lightweight clutch and flywheel assembly, which, I have to break it to you, costs £9300 all-in, yet the thought of those lower ratios is so enormously tempting.

Engine modifications are confined to a K&N air filter, new exhaust manifolds and a remap, but there's no change to the exhaust back

box, so the CSR is surprisingly quiet from the outside – a practical arrangement for a car aimed at UK track use. Suspension is now via a set of Öhlins coilovers, with GT4 anti-roll bars and RPM's own geo set-up, while there are now larger, 355mm floating discs on the front axle, gripped by six-pot calipers. With the additional modification of a lightweight battery, plus lighter seats from OMP, there's a small overall weight reduction to complement the claimed 10 per cent power and torque improvements over the regular S's 321bhp and 273lb ft.

There's one burning concern that dominates my thoughts as I wriggle down into the deeply sided bucket. The Cayman GT4 was our 2015 eCoty winner; it is without question one of my all-time favourite cars. Any Cayman that challenges the GT4 is inviting a potentially disastrous comparison, and I wonder whether I should initially push thoughts of Porsche's





'real deal' from my mind to stop this being a bloodbath at RPM's expense. What I can't deny, though, is that the CSR looks like it's itching for the fight, with a GT4 front bumper, a larger rear wing (although nothing like as big as the GT4's) and 19-inch HRE wheels shod with Michelin Cup 2 tyres.

In reality, the CSR's character is subtly, but significantly, different, creating clear air between it and the factory car. It's also more affordable – just (GT4s are currently £75,000 upwards, while this CSR has cost its owner approximately £40k on top of the price of an S, which these days are available from £30,000). The biggest divergence is, of course, the engine: the 3.4 hasn't got the presence of the big 3.8-litre lump in terms of mid-range shove or aurally in the cockpit, but it counters by feeling more focused, more energetic; even, perhaps, angrier. Spurred on by those lower ratios, this is a car that just zips forward with the merest provocation with the throttle, punctuated by a wrist-flick of the short-shift lever into the next gear, the revs dropping off between shifts with the minimum of inertia. It's an engine that you want to really wring out, and the first time you breach 7000rpm you'll discover the real sting in the tail: a wide-eyed lunge for the rev limiter and a distillation of the

'It's like a standard Cayman with all its muscle sinews stretched taut'

induction note into a singular, piercing howl. Extending the engine throughout its rev range soon becomes hopelessly addictive.

Dynamically, the CSR also has a more insistent, immediate edge to its personality. The Öhlins, set up for lapping a circuit, are very firm for the road, but you can tell they're quality items because even with backside squeezed into a thinly padded seat there's enough compliance and polish to their reactions to make the car still more than bearable. Poorly maintained country lanes give it a real workout, but on anything smoother it just feels focused, and fun. The geometry is more aggressive, too, the car turning into corners sharply and continuing to bite hard into your chosen line. It's like a standard Cayman with all its muscle

Left: high-speed stability apparent on track.

Above right: rear wing larger than on standard car; Michelin Cup 2s just like on the GT4

sinews stretched taut, ready for action.

On the track, the high-speed stability is very apparent, although some of us feel this is at the slight expense of agility through lower-speed curves. Given how adjustable the set-up is, it can surely be tailored to individual tastes.

All of which makes the 981 CSR one of the more appealing modified cars we've driven in a while. It may lack the heritage of a GT4, but as an unofficial 'Club Sport' interpretation of the Cayman S it's a fun and effective machine.

Adam Towler (@AdamTowler)

+ Takes standard Cayman S and turns up the wick

- Upgrades require deep pockets

evo rating ★★★★★



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TUNER ESSENTIALS

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



Eibach Pro-Street-S coilovers for Renault Sport Clio 3
£881.28

If Renault Sport knows anything, it's how to set up a front-wheel-drive chassis. So modifying your third-generation Clio shouldn't be done lightly, but Eibach's height-adjustable coilovers aren't only quality items, they can be customized, too. Road-orientated springs can be swapped for firmer ones, and at no extra cost.



Techart performance package for Porsche 911 (991.2) Turbo S
£26,502

To celebrate the current 911 Turbo S, Techart has developed the GTsport 'refining' kit featuring power, chassis, interior and exterior upgrades. Power and torque increase from 572bhp and 553lb ft to 631bhp and 649lb ft, helping reduce the 0-62mph time from 2.9sec to 2.7sec. The GTsport kits are limited to just 30 units.



Forge charge cooler for BMW M3 and M4
£1798.80

When BMW increased the output of its S55 engine for the M4 GTS, its solution to reducing intake temperatures was to install water injection. Forge's answer is an uprated charge cooler – a simpler and lighter solution. Forge has seen a consistent power improvement of 20bhp from its all-aluminium water-to-air intercooler.



Revo Performance Pack for 2-litre TSI VW Group cars
£ TBA

Revo has released software and hardware upgrades for many EA888-powered VW Group cars. The Performance Pack includes Revo's ECU software (and DSG remap on dual-clutch models), uprated intercooler and feed and Carbon Series intake.



Akrapovič Evolution Line titanium exhaust system for BMW M2
£5375

Slovenian exhaust specialist Akrapovič has proved its systems can create some wonderful sounds, so its new one for the BMW M2 will likely be similarly impressive. The system is 5.8kg lighter than the stock exhaust and improves power and torque by 9.2bhp and 6.5lb ft, respectively.



Bilstein B14 coilovers for Renault Twingo 3
£744

It may have had involvement from Renault Sport, but there's definitely room for improvement with the new Twingo GT's chassis. Bilstein now offers a set of height-adjustable coilovers with progressive Eibach springs that help improve handling. Comfort is said to be improved, too.



Abt performance package for Audi A8 50 3-litre TDI
£6860

Abt's new engine control module for the diesel Audi A8 takes the big saloon's power from 282bhp to 325bhp and torque from an already very healthy 442lb ft to 479lb ft. The engine also retains its factory safety functions. The full performance package also includes 22-inch, ten-spoke, diamond-cut wheels.



Quaife automatic torque-biasing differentials for Fords
From £240

Ford uses Quaife LSDs in many of its performance cars, so it's no surprise that there's a vast selection of the firm's torque-biasing diffs available for the aftermarket. Clever diffs with floating helical gears aren't just available for modern Fords, though – Escorts with live 'English' and 'Atlas' axles can be upgraded, too.

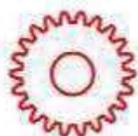


Powerflex polyurethane shift arm bushes for BMWs
From £16.74

Polyurethane expert Powerflex can offer a manual gear linkage upgrade for almost all BMWs from the past 30-plus years. These bushes are designed to tighten up worn-out or even new linkages by replacing the standard rubber bush with ones that can withstand greater forces and are resistant to oil, salt and chemicals.

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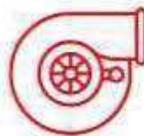
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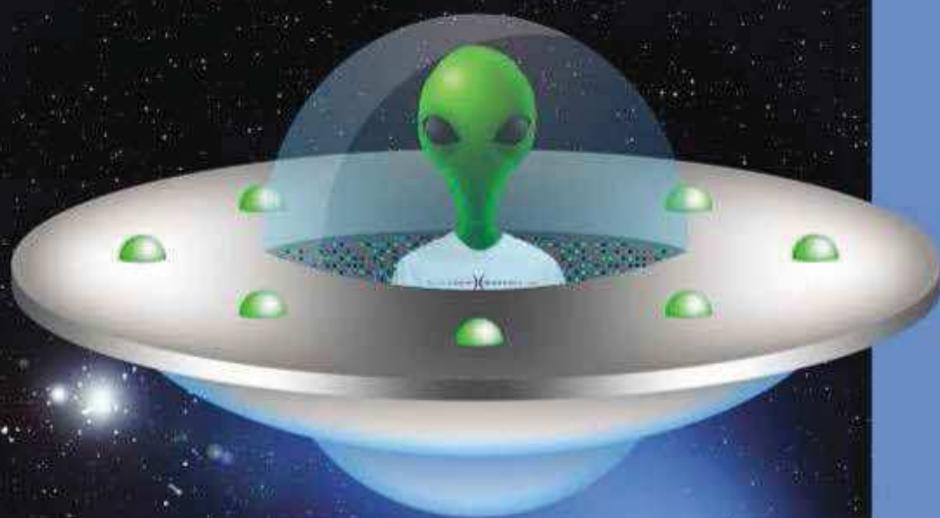
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The Knowledge

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, T = Driven Too, 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.

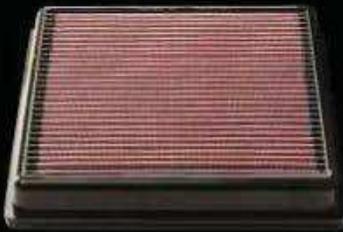


BEST OF THE REST

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** is an intriguing – and impressive – alternative to the usual suspects. If it's a smaller hot hatch you're after, look no further than the new **Ford Fiesta ST** (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 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 125i M 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 130i M Sport	106 F	'05-'10	6/2996	261/6650	232/2750	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	177/1400	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-Line 140	251 F	£17,965	3/998	138/6000	133/1500	1144kg	123	9.0	9.2	26.4	125	+ Quality chassis makes for a born entertainer - Tall gearing and dull engine can spoil the fun ★★★★★
Ford Fiesta ST	249 F	£18,995	3/1497	197/6000	214/1600	1187kg	169	6.5	-	-	144	+ Still eager, now with added refinement - Lost a fraction of its predecessor's spirit ★★★★★
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	£31,525	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	145/5900	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	6.6	14.9	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	376/6000	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 ★★★★★

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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	
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	★★★★☆
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	+ Brazenly 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 - Not a match for a pukka hot hatch	★★★★☆
Peugeot 106 Rallye (Series 2)	-	'97-'98	4/1587	103/6200	97/3500	865kg	121	8.8	-	-	121	+ Bargain no-frills thrills - Not as much fizz as original 1.3	★★★★☆
Peugeot 106 Rallye (Series 1)	095 F	'94-'96	4/1294	100/7200	80/5400	826kg	123	10.6	-	-	118	+ Frantic, thrashy fun - Needs caning 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	'15-'18	4/1598	205/6000	221/3000	1160kg	180	6.5	-	-	143	+ A highly focused small hatch - Odd driving position; obscured dials	★★★★★
Peugeot 208 GTi	184 F	'12-'16	4/1598	197/5800	203/1700	1160kg	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	910kg	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	6.0	13.8	155	+ A great entertainer with a cracker of an engine - Tiny steering wheel obscures the dials	★★★★★
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 any more	★★★★★
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 dosh - Limited choice of colours	★★★★★
Renault Twingo GT	248 F	£14,250	3/898	109/5750	125/2000	1001kg	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 NA 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 172 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	1110kg	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	1110kg	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	251/7150	221/4650	1400kg	182	6.0	-	-	144	+ Supercar 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	£27,495	4/1798	276/6000	288/2400	1430kg	196	5.9	-	-	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 GT3 RS 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 F1 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 - F1 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 you 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 could be a family car	★★★★★
Skoda Octavia vRS 230 (Mk3)	215 D	£25,130	4/1984	227/4700	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 245 (Mk3)	250 F	£27,250	4/1984	242/5000	258/1600	1370kg	179	6.6	-	-	155	+ A credible, entertaining performer - You won't get out of bed at 4am to drive it	★★★★★
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 WRXS	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 (Mk3)	251 F	£16,499	4/1373	138/5500	170/2500	975kg	144	8.1	7.6	20.1	130	+ Composed and brisk - Adjustability and character have been diluted	★★★★☆
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	+ Begg 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	276/5500	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					

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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
Volkswagen Golf GTI (Mk5)	195 F	'04-'09	4/1984	197/5100	207/1800	1336kg	150	7.3	6.7	17.9	145	+ Character and ability; the GTI's return to form - Lacking firepower? ★★★★★
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	+ Charismatic - Boomy engine can be tiresome ★★★★★
Volkswagen Golf GTI 16v (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	112/5800	109/3500	860kg	132	8.2	-	-	114	+ The car that started it all - Tricky to find an unmolested 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 ★★★★★

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 B5	249 D	£89,000	8/4395	600/5750	590/3000	1940kg	314	3.5	-	-	205	+ Huge performance under a subtle exterior - Low-speed ride can be poor ★★★★★
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	3.6	8.8	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 D	'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)	250 F	'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 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	597/6100	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	597/6100	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 - Old-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	250 D	£252,000	8/6752	530/4000	811/1750	2610kg	206	4.9	-	-	190	+ Extravagant; 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	+ Feelsome rear-drive chassis - Easy to drive it beyond its comfort zone ★★★★★
BMW 328i (F30)	165 D	'11-'15	4/1997	242/5000	258/1250	1430kg	172	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 weighs and costs less ★★★★★
BMW M3 (F80)	211 F	£59,905	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	£62,865	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 CS (F80)	250 F	£86,380	6/2979	454/6250	442/4000	1585kg	291	3.9	-	-	174	+ Improved chassis and mid-range urge - Costs over £20k more than an M3 Comp Pack ★★★★★
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	567/6000	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 ★★★★★
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 2.0 180PS Diesel AWD	227 D	£35,865	4/1999	178/4000	317/1750	1685kg	107	8.4	-	-	132	+ Talented chassis gets more traction - Shame the engine isn't as polished ★★★★★
Jaguar XE 2.0 240PS Diesel AWD	251 T	£39,180	4/1999	237/4000	368/1500	1718kg	140	6.5	-	-	155	+ Perfect. If you love diesels - A great chassis with a poor engine if you don't ★★★★★
Jaguar XE S	237 D	£48,045	6/2995	375/6500	332/3500	1655kg	230	5.0	-	-	155	+ Engaging handling, decent pace - Expensive; cabin quality and space lags behind rivals' ★★★★★
Jaguar XE SV Project 8	250 F	£149,995	8/5000	592/6500	516/3500	1745kg	345	3.7	-	-	200	+ A GT3 for the family - There will only be 300 of them, and all will be left-hand drive ★★★★★
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	208 F	'13-'15	8/5000	542/6500	501/2500	1800kg	306	4.6	-	-	186	+ XF turned up to 12 - Tyres aren't cheap ★★★★★
Jaguar XJR	191 D	£91,755	8/5000	542/6500	502/2500	1875kg	294	4.6	-	-	174	+ Hot-rod vibe, fine cabin - Opinion-dividing looks ★★★★★
Jaguar XJR575	251 D	£93,780	8/5000	567/6250	516/3500	1875kg						

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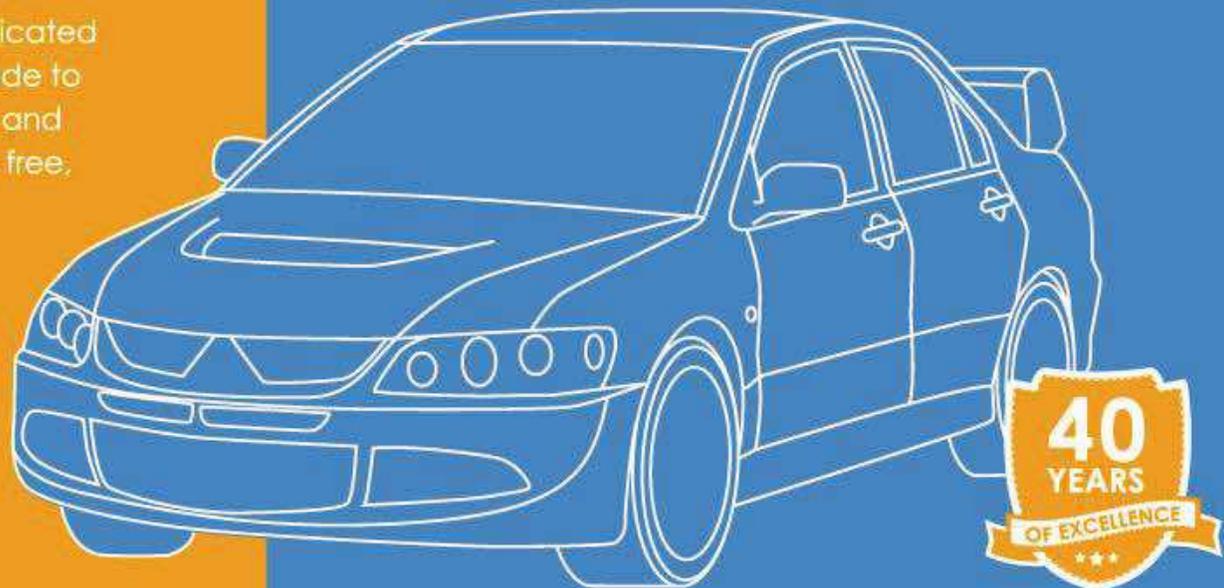
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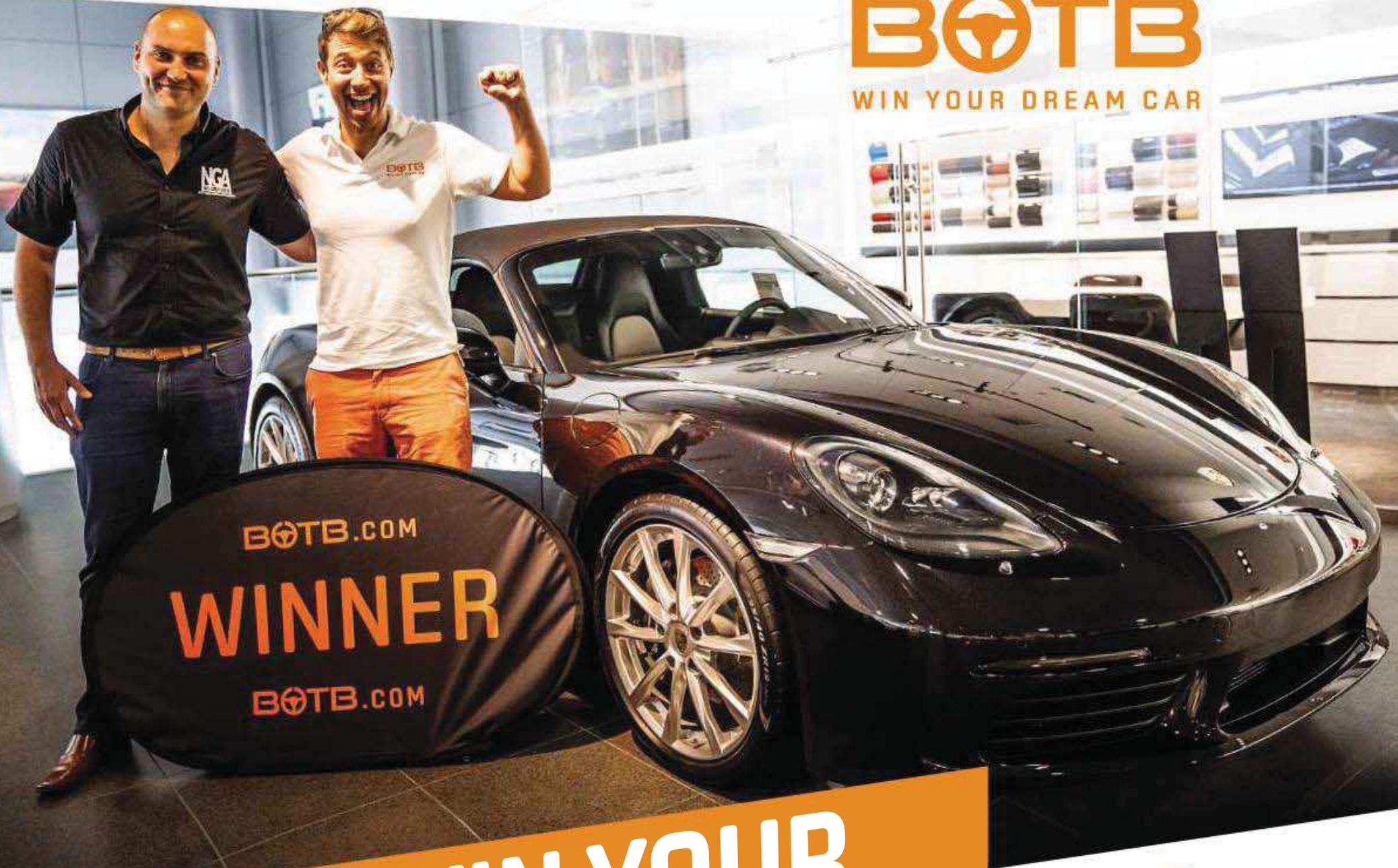
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- Club Member Discounts
- Track Day Cover

MAKE & MODEL	ISSUE NO.	PRICE	ENGINE CYL/CC	BHP/RPM	LB FT/RPM	WEIGHT	BHP/TON	0-62MPH (CLAMED)	0-60MPH (TESTED)	0-100MPH (TESTED)	MAX MPH	EVO RATING	
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	★★★★☆
Jaguar I-Pace HSE	251 D	£74,445	-	394	513	2208kg	181	4.8	-	-	124	+ Impressive chassis and point-to-point pace - Range anxiety and hefty kerb weight	★★★★☆
Kia Stinger GT-Line 2.0	247 D	£31,995	4/1998	244/6200	260/1400	1642kg	151	5.8	-	-	149	+ Out-Jaguars Jaguar's XE and XF - Except in the looks department	★★★★☆
Kia Stinger GT-Line 2.2 CRDi	251 T	£34,225	4/1999	197/3800	324/1750	1735kg	115	7.3	-	-	143	+ Smooth daily driver with a decent interior - Frustrating auto 'box, heavy kerb weight	★★★★☆
Kia Stinger GTS	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	★★★★☆
Lamborghini Urus	249 F	£185,000	8/3996	641/6000	627/2250	2200kg	296	3.6	-	-	190	+ A freakish manipulator of physics - But also rather one-dimensional	★★★★☆
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 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	5.1	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 supersaloons - 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 (S205)	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 E43 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	£78,675	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 4Matic+ (W213)	246 F	£87,375	8/3982	604/5750	627/2500	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 (W212)	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 (W212)	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 (W212)	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 (W212)	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 (W211)	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, cossetting 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 GLE63 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 GLE63 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-AMG G63	250 D	£143,305	8/3982	577/6000	627/2500	2485kg	236	4.5	-	-	137	+ Vastly improved chassis, fabulous engine - Dynamic ability still limited	★★★★☆
Mercedes-Benz G63 AMG	172 D	'12-'18	8/5461	537/5500	560/2000	2475kg	220	5.4	-	-	130	+ Epic soundtrack - Ancient chassis	★★★★☆
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	057 F	'03-'05	4/1997	305/6800	289/3500	1400kg	221	4.9	-	-	157	+ Extra pace, extra attitude - Extra money	★★★★☆
Mitsubishi Evo VII	031 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	627/1000	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	1995kg	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 GTS	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	-	-	-	+ 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 7.3 - 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 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										

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MAKE & MODEL	ISSUE NO.	PRICE	ENGINE CYL/CC	BHP/RPM	LB FT/RPM	WEIGHT	BHP/TON	0-62MPH (CLAMED)	0-60MPH (TESTED)	0-100MPH (TESTED)	MAX MPH	EVO RATING	
Vauxhall Vectra VXR	102 D	'06-'09	6/2792	276/5500	262/1800	1580kg	177	6.1	-	-	161	+ Great engine, effortless pace, good value - Numb steering, lumpy ride	★★★★☆
Vauxhall VXR8 GTS	215 D	'15-'17	8/6162	576/6150	546/3850	1834kg	319	4.2	-	-	155	+ Monster engine; engaging driving experience - Woeful interior	★★★★☆
Vauxhall VXR8 GTS-R	245 F	'17	8/6162	587/6150	546/3850	1880kg	317	4.2	-	-	155	+ Blistering performance; bursting with character - The end of an era	★★★★☆
Volvo V60 Polestar	222 D	£49,665	4/1969	362/6000	347/3100	1721kg	214	4.8	-	-	155	+ 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.

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-up wind noise	★★★★☆
Aston Martin DB11 Volante	247 F	£161,900	8/3982	503/6000	498/2000	1795kg	285	4.1	-	-	187	+ Impressively wide range of dynamic personalities - Cabin could be better at this price	★★★★☆
Audi TTS Roadster (Mk3)	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 TT RS Roadster (Mk3)	250 D	£54,230	5/2480	394/5850	354/1700	1530kg	262	3.9	-	-	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 M Roadster	002 F	'98-'02	6/3246	325/7400	258/4900	1375kg	240	5.1	-	-	155	+ M3 motor; hunky looks - M Coupe drives better	★★★★☆
BMW i8 Roadster	249 D	£124,735	3/1499	369/5800	420/3700	1595kg	235	4.6	-	-	155	+ Unique and engaging - Still more GT than sports car	★★★★☆
BMW Z8	026 F	'00-'03	8/4941	400/6600	369/3800	1585kg	256	4.7	4.8	11.1	155	+ 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 270	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 310	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	200/6200	565kg*	460	3.1	3.8	-	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	★★★★☆
Dallara Stradale	250 F	c£162,000	4/2300	394/6200	369/3000	855kg*	468	3.3	-	-	174	+ Startling performance - Its limits always feel slightly beyond your reach	★★★★☆
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	177/2250	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	+ Loud and mad; most exciting Jag in years - It was also the most expensive in years	★★★★☆
KTM X-Bow GT	183 D	£95,880	4/1984	281/6400	310/3200	875kg	326	4.1	-	-	144	+ 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 - Lightest, 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-'											

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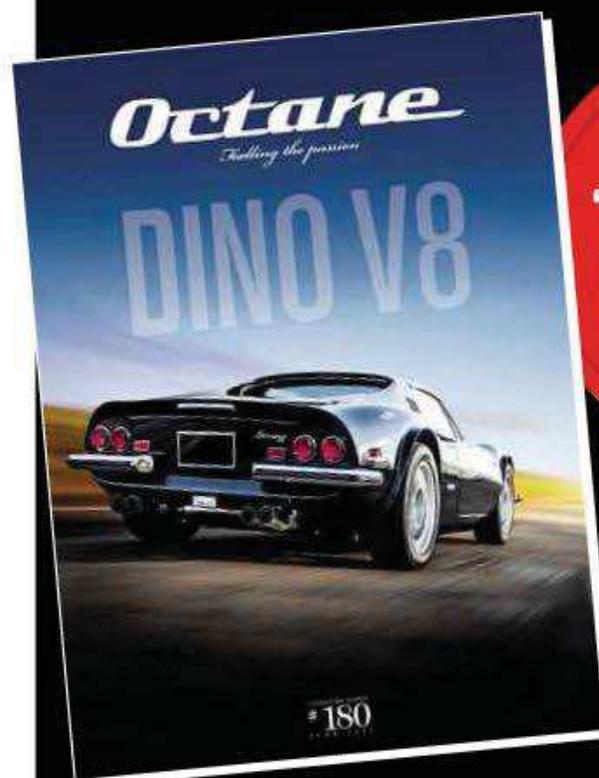
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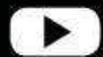
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MAKE & MODEL	ISSUE NO.	PRICE	ENGINE CYL/CC	BHP/RPM	LB FT/RPM	WEIGHT	BHP/TON	0-60MPH (CLAMED)	0-60MPH (TESTED)	0-100MPH (TESTED)	MAX MPH	EVO RATING	
Lotus Elise Sport 135	040 D	'03	4/1796	135/6200	129/4850	726kg	189	5.4	-	-	129	+ One of our fave S2 Elises - Brakes need more bite and pedal feel	★★★★★
Lotus Elise (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 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 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	701kg	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 ragtops don't get much better - Cheap cabin	★★★★☆
Mazda MX-5 1.6 (Mk1)	131 F	'89-'97	4/1597	115/6500	100/5500	971kg	120	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	+ Quicker 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	+ Wafty 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	737/2300	1875kg	336	4.0	-	-	155	+ Chassis just about deals with the power - Speed limits	★★★★☆
Mercedes-Benz SL63 AMG	117 D	'08-'13	8/6208	518/6800	464/5200	1970kg	278	4.6	-	-	155	+ 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 718 Boxster GTS	249 D	£61,727	4/2497	360/6500	310/1900	1375kg	266	4.6	-	-	180	+ The best Boxster spec - Doesn't come cheap	★★★★☆
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-brolly 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	★★★★☆
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-rippling 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

Porsche 911 Carrera 4 GTS. Turbocharging has given more muscle to the Carrera flat-six (here with 444bhp), while the GTS chassis brings dexterity and delicacy to the party. Add practicality, usability and the security of four-wheel drive and you have a brilliantly rounded package.



BEST OF THE REST

The **BMW M4 Competition Package** is the car the M4 should have been from the start; the **Audi RS5** counters with an impressively wide bandwidth of abilities. The **Lotus Exige** continues to go from strength to strength in all its guises, and the **Alpine A110** (left) has finally given the **Porsche 718 Cayman S** a true rival to worry about.

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	+ Looks, exclusivity, noise, balance - Cost more now than they did new	★★★★☆
Alpine A110	249 F	£51,805	4/1798	249/6000	236/2000	1103kg	229	4.5	4.6	10.8	155	+ Fast, fun and genuinely different - 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	+ Stonking 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	250 F	£120,900	8/3982	503/6000	505/2000	1530kg*	334	3.6	4.5	9.1	195	+ Performance that's a huge leap forward - Chassis struggles when really pushed	★★★★☆
Aston Martin V8 Vantage (4.3)	251 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	£144,900	8/3982	503/6000	498/2000	1685kg	303	4.0	-	-	187	+ Potent and characterful engine; sharper chassis than V12 - Do we still need the V12?	★★★★☆
Aston Martin DB11	235 F	£157,900	12/5204										



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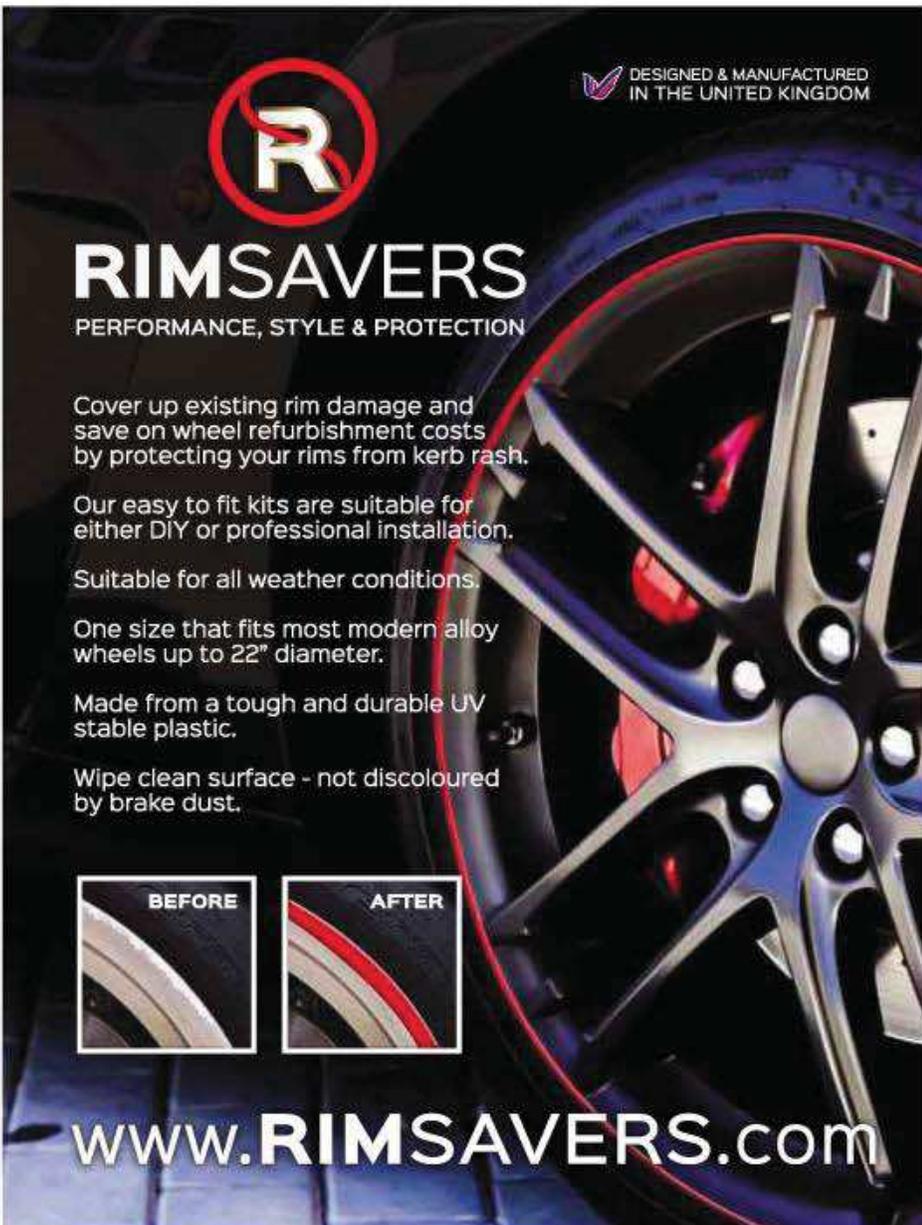


MAKE & MODEL	ISSUE NO.	PRICE	ENGINE CYL/CC	BHP/RPM	LB FT/RPM	WEIGHT	BHP/TON	0-62MPH (CLAIMED)	0-60MPH (TESTED)	0-100MPH (TESTED)	MAX MPH	EVO RATING	
Aston Martin DB9 GT	214 D	'15-'17	12/5935	540/6750	457/5500	1785kg	307	4.5	-	-	183	+ More power; still has bags of character - Needs an eight-speed auto 'box	★★★★★
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)	249 F	£52,480	5/2480	394/5850	354/1700	1440kg	278	3.7	3.5	8.7	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	2255kg	323	3.5	-	-	209	+ Massive performance, surprisingly agile - Styling and soundtrack far from descreet	★★★★☆
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	4.9	10.8	155	+ More progressive chassis balance than the M4 - Feels unsettled on rough tarmac	★★★★☆
BMW 440i M Sport Coupe	233 F	£43,430	6/2998	321/5500	332/1380	1540kg	212	5.2	-	-	155	+ Almost-too-powerful engine - Doesn't feel special enough to drive	★★★★☆
BMW M4	218 F	£60,985	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	£63,985	6/2979	444/7000	406/1850	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	£91,615	6/2979	454/6250	442/4000	1580kg	292	3.9	-	-	174	+ A further-honed M4 - 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 of 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 eCoty 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	£95,580	8/4395	552/6500	501/1500	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	£112,735	3/1499	369/5800	420/3700	1535kg	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	251 F	£41,745	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	131/7300	1101kg	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, desirability - 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 - Scrappy 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 AWD R - Not 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 - Bumpy 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 500h	241 D	£76,595	6/3456	354	n/a	1985kg	181	5.0	-	-	168	+ Excellent comfort and refinement; fine chassis - Hybrid system hurts the fun factor	★★★★☆
Lexus LC 500	231 D	£76,595	8/4969	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 Exige 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 Exige Sport 350	221 F	£55,900	6/3456	345/7000	295/4500	1125kg	312	3.9	-	-	170	+ Further honed Exige, with vastly improved gearshift - Still not easy to get into and out of	★★★★☆
Lotus Exige Sport 380	231 F	'16-'18	6/3456	375/6700	302/5000	1100kg	343	3.7	-	-	178	+ Intense, absorbing and brilliantly capable - Perhaps not an everyday car	★★★★☆
Lotus Exige Cup 380	240 D	'17	6/3456	375/6700	302/5000	1105kg	345	3.6	-	-	175	+ An absolute riot; feels worth the £83k (new) price tag - Limited build numbers	★★★★☆
Lotus Exige Sport 410	250 D	£85,600	6/3456	410/7000	310/3500	1108kg	376	3.4	-	-	180	+ A first-rate swansong for this generation of Exige - Some may balk at the price	★★★★☆
Lotus Exige Cup 430	243 D	£99,800	6/3456	430/7000	325/2600	1093kg	400	3.3	-	-	180	+ The ultimate Exige - Isn't cheap	★★★★☆
Lotus Exige 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 Exige (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	430/700									



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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	
Mercedes-AMG GT S	216 F	£113,260	8/3982	515/6250	494/1800	1570kg	333	3.8	-	-	193	+ Fantastic chassis, huge grip - Artificial steering feel; downshifts could be quicker	★★★★★
Mercedes-AMG GT C	241 D	£129,260	8/3982	549/5750	501/1900	1625kg	343	3.7	-	-	196	+ As good as being a GT as it is a sports coupe - Difficult to drive fast and smoothly	★★★★★
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 370Z 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 GT-R (2017MY)	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 20mpg 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 RCZR	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	249 F	£51,853	4/2497	345/6500	310/1900	1355kg	259	4.6	3.9	9.3	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	+ Everything a 911 Carrera should be - Costs nearly £20k more than a basic Carrera	★★★★★
Porsche 911 Carrera 4 GTS (991.2)	250 F	£100,781	6/2981	444/6500	406/2150	1495kg	302	4.0	3.1	7.5	192	+ Arguably the most complete sports coupe you can buy - Turbo'd engine lacks character	★★★★★
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)	249 F	'04-'08	6/3824	350/6600	295/4600	1420kg	246	4.6	-	-	182	+ evo Car of the Year 2004 - Do your homework on potential engine issues	★★★★★
Porsche 911 Carrera (996, 3.4)	249 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	★★★★★
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 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	217/4500	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 Pista** (left) is an astonishing successor to the hardcore Speciale. The **Lamborghini Huracán Performante** counters with a rip-roaring naturally aspirated V10. The Lambo's relative, the **Audi R8 V10**, is a corking entry-level supercar, and the **Porsche 911 GT3 RS** is simply a superb road and track machine.

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 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	£126,200	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	250 F	£141,200	10/5204	602/8250	413/6500	1580kg	387	3.2	2.9	6.3	205	+ Timeless drivetrain, huge performance - Some may find it ordinary at steady speeds	★★★★★
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	c£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 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 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 Pista	251 F	£253,715	8/3902	710/8000	568/3000	1385kg	521	2.9	-	-	211+	+ Ferrari at the very top of its game - Can feel like it's being held prisoner on the road	★★★★★
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	251 F	'13-'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?	★★★★★

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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	
Ferrari 812 Superfast	251 F	£262,963	12/6496	789/8500	529/7000	1630kg	492	2.9	-	-	211	★★★★★	+ Incredible engine - Finding opportunities to exploit it
Ferrari F12 Berlinetta	190 F	'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	230 F	'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	101 F	'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	161 F	'11-'12	12/5999	661/8250	457/6500	1605kg	418	3.4	-	-	208+	★★★★★	+ One of the truly great Ferraris - Erm, the air con isn't very good
Ferrari 575M Fiorano Handling Pack	200 F	'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	169 F	'96-'02	12/5474	478/7000	420/5000	1690kg	287	4.4	-	-	199	★★★★★	+ Everything - Nothing
Ferrari GTC4 Lusso T	246 D	£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	225 D	£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	194 F	'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	090 F	'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	203 F	'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	203 F	'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 F1's
Ferrari F50	186 F	'95-'97	12/4699	513/8500	347/6500	1230kg*	424	3.9	-	-	202	★★★★★	+ A better driver's Ferrari than the 288, F40 or Enzo - Not better looking, though
Ferrari F40	222 F	'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	241 F	\$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	200 F	'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	180 F	'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	246 F	£144,765	6/3493	573	476/2000	1776kg	328	2.9	3.0	6.9	191	★★★★★	+ Blistering quick and brilliantly engineered - Limited range on a full tank
Honda NSX (NA2)	188 F	'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)	100 F	'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	157 F	'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	202 F	£2.0m	8/5065	1341/7500	1011/6000	1360kg	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	180 F	'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 CCXR Edition	118 F	'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	229 F	£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	209 D	£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	242 F	£215,000	10/5204	631/8000	442/6500	1382kg*	464	2.9	-	-	201+	★★★★★	+ The realisation of the Huracán's ever elusive potential - Kitchen-worktop carbonfibre
Lamborghini Gallardo LP560-4	180 D	'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	138 F	'09-'10	10/5204	542/8000	398/6500	1380kg*	399	3.9	-	-	199	★★★★★	+ Mad, rear-wheel-drive Lambo - Limited numbers
Lamborghini LP570-4 Superleggera	152 F	'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	094 F	'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	104 F	'07-'08	10/4961	522/8000	376/4250	1420kg*	373	3.8	-	-	196	★★★★★	+ Lighter, more agile - Grabby carbon brakes, clunky e-gear
Lamborghini Aventador S	246 F	£271,146	12/6498	730/8400	509/5500	1575kg*	471	2.9	-	-	217	★★★★★	+ A more agile, more connected Aventador - Synthetic steering
Lamborghini Aventador S Roadster	251 D	£301,754	12/6498	730/8400	509/5500	1625kg*	456	3.0	-	-	217	★★★★★	+ As dynamic as the coupe - Fiddly and (very) expensive roof
Lamborghini Aventador SV	216 F	£321,723	12/6498	740/8400	509/5500	1525kg*	493	2.8	-	-	217+	★★★★★	+ More exciting than the standard Aventador - ISR gearbox inconsistent
Lamborghini Aventador	194 F	'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	093 F	'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	200 F	'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	089 D	'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	019 F	'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	200 F	'10-'12	10/4805	552/8700	354/6800	1480kg	379	3.7	-	-	202	★★★★★	+ Absurd and compelling supercar - Badge and price don't quite match
Maserati MC12	079 F	'04-'05	12/5998	621/7500	481/5500	1445kg	437	3.8	-	-	205	★★★★★	+ Rarer than an Enzo - The Ferrari's better
McLaren 540C	250 F	£127,890	8/3799	533/7500	398/3500	1311kg*	413	3.5	3.2	6.4	199	★★★★★	+ An excellent junior supercar - The 570S is still better to drive
McLaren 570S	229 F	£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	235 D	£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	239 F	£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	228 F	£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	246 D	£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	244 F	£218,020	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	196 F	'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	248 F	'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 12C	228 F	'11-'14	8/3799	616/7500	442/3000	1434kg	435	3.3	-	-	207	★★★★★	+ Staggering performance, refinement - Engine noise can be grating
McLaren Senna	249 D	£750,000	8/3999	789/7250	590/5500	1198kg*	669	2.8	-	-	211	★★★★★	+ Astounding performance, stellar presence - Only 500 being made
McLaren P1	228 F	'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	228 F	'94-'98	12/6064	627/7500	479/4000	1138kg	560	3.2	-	-	240	★★★★★	+ Still the most single-minded supercar ever - There'll never be another
Mercedes-AMG GT R	249 F	£144,460	8/3982	577/6250	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	159 F	'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	204 F	'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	228 F	'03-'07	8/5439	617/6500	575/3250	1693kg	370	3.8	-	-	208	★★★★★	+ Zonda-pace, 575-style drivability - Dreadful brake feel
Noble M600	186 F	£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	185 F	£1m	12/5980	720/5800	737/2250	1350kg*	542	3.3	-	-	224	★★★★★	+ Our joint 2012 Car of the Year - Engine isn't as nape-prickling as the Zonda's
Pagani Zonda S 7.3	096 F	'02-'05	12/7291	555/5900	553/4050	1280kg*	441	3.7	-	-	220	★★★★★	+ evo Car of the Year 2001 (in earlier 7.0 form) - Values have gone up a fair bit since then
Pagani Zonda F	186 F	'05-'06	12/7291	602/6150	575/4000	1230kg*	497	3.6	-	-	214+	★★★★★	+ Everything an Italian supercar ought to be - Looks a bit blingy next to a Carrera GT
Pagani Zonda Cinque Roadster	147 D	'09-'10	12/7291	669/6200	575/4000	1210kg*	562	3.4	-	-	217+	★★★★★	+ The best Zonda ever - Doesn't come up in the classifieds often
Porsche 911 GT3 (991.2)	247 F	£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 GT3 RS (991.2)	249 F	£141,346	6/3996	513/8250	347/6000	1430kg	364	3.2	-	-	193	★★★★★	+ Even better than the 991.1 RS - See above
Porsche 911 GT2 RS (991.2)	243 F	£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)	206 F	'13-'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)	223 F	'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)	229 F	'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)	182 F	'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)	248 F	'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)	187 F	'11-'12	6/3996	493/8250	339/5750	1360kg	368	3.8					



LE MANS

A flat-six is your companion for the run down to – and onto – the iconic French endurance circuit

THE WALK BACK FROM TERTRE ROUGE after 'just one more beer' has been both long and magical. Watching the first signs of dawn lightening the inky sky to the sound of buzzed kerbs and stressed race engines is almost enough to make you push on through. But an hour's nap will do you good, so you crawl into the tent and close your eyes as the sound of a Corvette shakes the ground beneath your sleeping bag...

Péage pain looms as a row of barriers blocks the way ahead. A series of mini Le Mans starts appear to be taking place as drivers of right-hand-drive cars nip round to insert cards or hand over euros. Your steering wheel is on the left, but you're so low that an awkward moment still looms. Then, just as you're considering having a shot at driving clean under the barrier, all of them lift. Free passage for all.

You select first in the H-pattern 'box

and then concentrate on the heavy clutch as you crawl through, emerging on the other side to see three police cars waiting. But the gendarmes are all waving you on. Not just nonchalantly either, but enthusiastically, one clearly giving the international signal for 'floor it'. So you do.

There's the gruff sound of a flat-six behind you, but it's angrier and louder than in most road-going Porsches. Then, as 4000rpm arrives, the rate of acceleration ramps up as two turbos and the full 536bhp get to work. With only 1120kg to push along, the autoroute is soon flashing past as you hammer towards Abbeville. But the best is still to come.

After Rouen you forego the péage and take the N138: the old way to the Circuit de la Sarthe. Long straights with long crests let the GT1 stretch its legs to over 190mph. Elderly villagers, other drivers and, yes, the police, all wave,

**'THERE ARE NO CHICANES,
JUST ONE LONG RUN DOWN
HUNAUDIÈRES TO THE KINK
AND MULSANNE'**

hoot or casually light another cigarette in appreciation. On the roundabouts you get to enjoy the beautifully slick gearshift and the surprisingly detailed steering. It's curious because so much of it feels and sounds like a 993, but the chassis balance is more benign.

You drive through the centre of Le Mans and then out the other side. As you approach Tertre Rouge, where the road is closed to traffic, you're just considering a celebratory beer when another gendarme waves you through a gap in the barriers. A glance in the door mirrors reveals that another two pairs of headlights have followed you through. As the speed builds and the trees on either side begin to blur, so a Mercedes and a McLaren both pull out of your slipstream.

It's anachronistic but there are no chicanes, just one long run down Hunaudières to the kink and Mulsanne. Who will brake first? No one is giving an inch. You can feel the heat soaking into the cockpit and then there's a jolt as you stand on the middle pedal, followed by confusion as you hear a car accelerating. You open your eyes to the sun beating through the flimsy fabric of the tent. Still eight hours to go. Just a dream.



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