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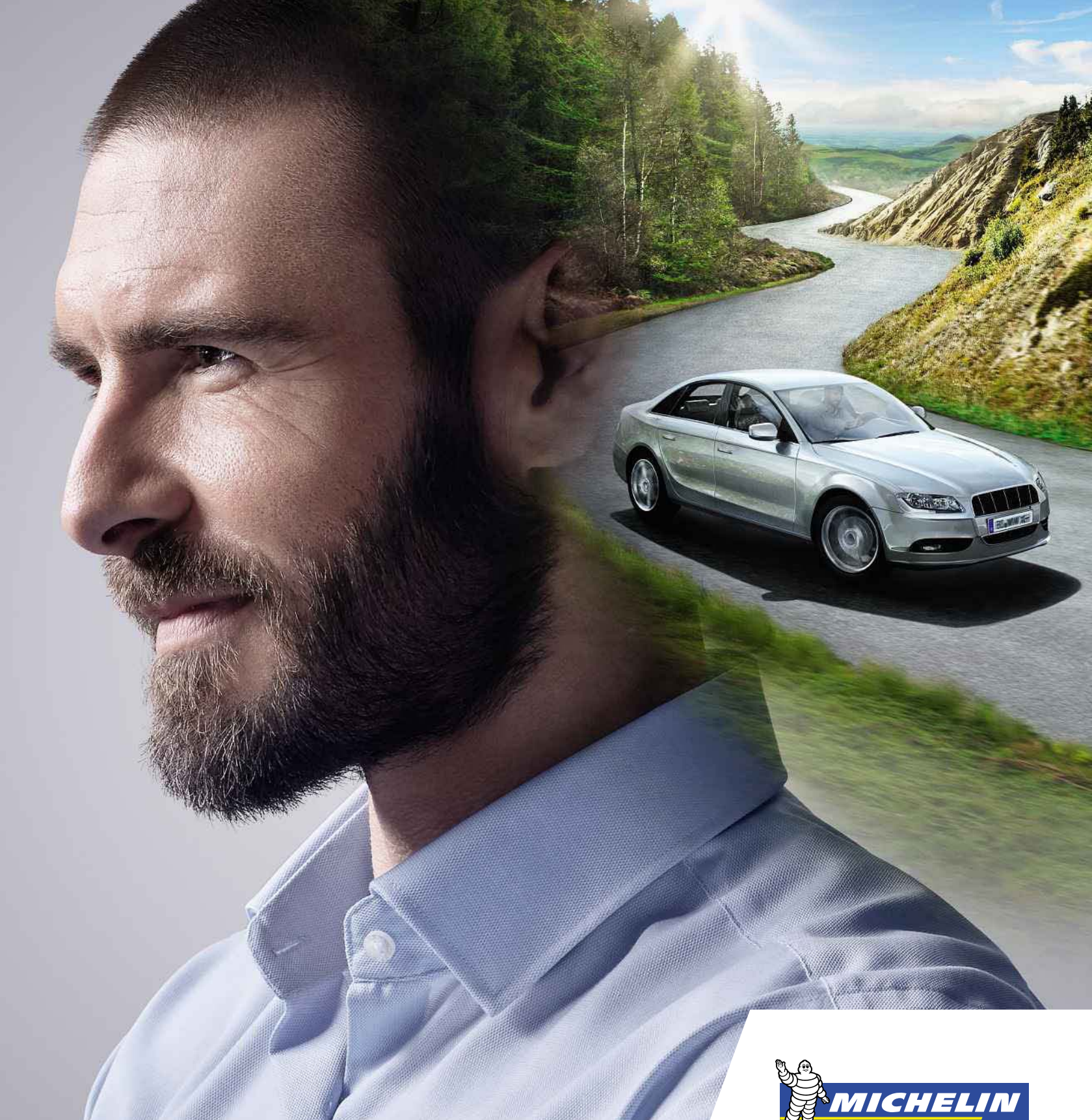
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Ed speak

IN THIS ISSUE WE PUBLISH THE RESULTS OF our annual tyre test (page 102). An **evo** regular since 2002, our test of the most popular size of performance tyre is second only to eCoty in terms of the organisation required to pull it all together.

Following a week at the test centre, **evo**'s John Barker and tyre-testing veteran Kim Adams spent twice as long again analysing the data, and retested any tyres that had thrown up an anomaly in the results. With tyres independently sourced and the manufacturers having no input aside from being asked to recommend which tyre they feel is most suitable for the test, **evo**'s evaluation is one of the most rigorous in the business. As it should be: tyre choice is one of the most pivotal factors in the performance of any car.

Clearly there's the safety aspect, but as performance cars become faster and chassis limits increase, the reliance on a tyre that has been developed and honed for a particular car's dynamic make-up is greater than ever. It's why more and more manufacturers are working closely with tyre makers to ensure they have the right tread and compound for the job at hand.

This makes it frustrating when people consider claims that 'tyre X is the only tyre suitable for car Y' to be nothing but a marketing tie-up. It's a conclusion as illogical as the decision to buy replacement rubber based on cost rather than capability. Those black rings are the only component that connects the car you're travelling in along a back-road (or through Paddock Hill Bend) and the tarmac, so why compromise?

Safety aside, there is also the small matter of experiencing the best your car can offer. You've invested time and money in finding the right **evo** car, and as a reader of this magazine, that decision is more likely than not based on your desire to enjoy your time behind the wheel – something that's undermined if the black, round rubber things beneath you aren't up to the job. ✕

Stuart Gallagher, Editor ————— @stuartg917

'Tyre choice is one of the most pivotal factors in the performance of any car'

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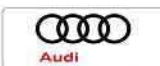
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NEW v OLD

Deciding whether to pour cash into a new car or take a chance on the second-hand market has never been easy, but a number of factors, including extended warranties and improving build quality, are making the used option more appealing than ever. We've put together four head-to-heads (see right) to see where the strongest temptation lies

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HONDA CIVIC TYPE R

We drive the 316bhp hot hatch billed as a true return to form for hot Hondas. Just how good is it?

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ABARTH 124 SPIDER v PORSCHE BOXSTER

Our love of flat-six Boxsters is no secret, so it's unlikely the plucky (albeit brand new) Abarth Spider will spring a surprise, right?

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VW GOLF R ESTATE v MERC C63 AMG ESTATE

They're both practical and evenly matched for real-world pace, so it's a choice of either big-capacity character or peace of mind

080

BMW M4 v NISSAN GT-R

Two powerhouse coupes, but has the ageing R35 GT-R still got enough to see off a box-fresh M4?

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PORSCHE 911 GTS v ASTON V12 VANTAGE S

Stuttgart's best 991 Carrera is hard to fault and boasts the latest kit, but could you really say no to that fabulous 6-litre V12?

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FERRARI 812 SUPERFAST

Once again, Maranello raises the bar – this time with a 789bhp replacement for the F12



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AKRAPOVIČ



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FINAL FRAME

Sometimes no words are required – we pick a photograph that has given us pause to reflect this month



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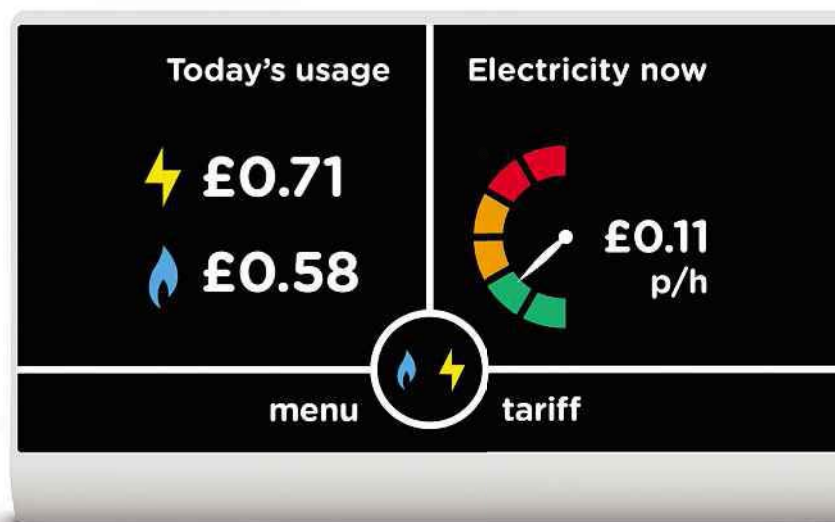
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briefing



WE'RE GOING ON AN 'M' HUNT

by STUART GALLAGHER

Jaguar asked its Special Vehicle Operations division to build an M4 GTS rival. So it has

TWO - HUNDRED miles per hour, nigh-on 600bhp and aerodynamics at the forefront of the design. Built in a limited production run and conceived by a skunkworks team. To this day, Jaguar's XJ220 remains an enigma, a topic of conversation that fires the imagination and a car many regret not buying when values dropped below the price of a new F-type.

In 2017, Jaguar's 'Saturday Club' no longer gathers unofficially at Castle Bromwich to try to squeeze a V12 into a sleek structure and cover it all with an aluminium body. Today the club is called

Special Vehicle Operations and it operates legitimately out of its own facility in Coventry.

To celebrate its first birthday, SVO thought it would build itself a suitable present. A present that just so happens to be the most powerful road car Jaguar has ever made. Called the XE SV Project 8, it's as singularly focused as it looks.

It will also be the first car that SVO has built. Until now, SVO's focus has been on *developing* JLR products, and repainting or trimming where required, leaving construction to the firm's major plants. This is very different.

Only two of the Project 8's external body panels remain untouched from a standard XE – the roof and the front door-skins. The bumpers, bonnet, wings and lower sills are all carbonfibre, as

are the adjustable front splitter and rear wing, the rear diffuser and even the spokes of the 20-inch wheels fitted with Michelin Pilot Sport Cup 2 tyres. It's this wheel and tyre combination that plays a part in the design of the outrageous front and rear wheelarches.

To house the 265-section front tyres, SVO had to widen the front bodywork by 38mm (with the rear of the arch cut away to allow high-pressure air to escape) and move the headlamps forward 14mm. For the rear, the arches have swollen by 55mm to house 305-section rubber. Aero requirements meant the rear of these arches also had to be opened up and the back doors modified, too. All the body-in-white changes are taken care of by a third-party supplier, with the shells returned to SVO for painting



“ Only two body panels remain from the standard XE saloon ”

and two weeks of hand-assembly.

Under those enlarged arches remains the XE's double-wishbone (front) and integral link (rear) suspension, with Jaguar's active dampers recalibrated to suit the increased grip, reduction in weight and hike in performance. Other chassis changes include a new suspension-knuckle design and ceramic bearings to reduce weight, increase stiffness and improve steering response. There are also stiffer bushes, although the upper control arms use ball joints instead, and both front and rear anti-roll bars have been tweaked to increase grip and traction.

Go for the optional Track Pack and you get height-adjustable spring platforms and upgraded coil springs, the former allowing two ride heights: one for the road



(regular XE height) and another for the track (15mm lower). The Track Pack also swaps the rear bench for a half-cage, adds torso-clenching buckets up front, and trims 12.2kg from the car's weight.

Beneath the carbon bonnet is a 5-litre supercharged V8. It has been pushed as far as Jaguar is happy to go without costly new internals being required. The focus has been on improving cooling and breathing, and the fitment of a titanium exhaust helps yield 592bhp. The four-wheel-drive powertrain uses ZF's eight-speed auto 'box, and there's also a rear e-diff and torque vectoring. The brakes are Brembo carbon-ceramics. Inside, a regular trigger-style gearlever replaces Jaguar's usual rotary selector.

Of course, you don't build a car like this without announcing some serious numbers: top speed is said to be 'at least' 200mph and the 3.3sec 0-60mph time a 'worst-case scenario'. Meanwhile, it's claimed that in its lightest form the Project 8 will weigh 1745kg. It will cost from £149,995 and all 300 examples will be left-hand drive (switching to RHD would have reduced chassis stiffness). There's another number, too. Though Jaguar has yet to set a lap time of the Nürburgring, it expects to better the 7min 28sec of BMW's M4 GTS.

SVO: JAGUAR'S AMG DIVISION?

YOUTH ISN'T GETTING IN THE way of SVO's grand plans. Having moved into its Oxford Road plant in 2016, allowing it to paint and assemble SVR-branded Jaguars and armour-plated Land Rovers, SVO is now set to build its own cars from scratch.

The F-type Project 7 was a toe in the water that stoked demand for more of the same, hence the Project 8 and more limited-run models based on existing Jaguars – SVO calls them Collectors' Cars, sadly – in the pipeline.

SVO is also looking beyond production cars. The ultimate goal? To build a bespoke Special Vehicle Operations model. Perhaps the C-X75 hypercar isn't dead yet.

SPECIFICATION

Engine	V8, 5000cc, supercharged
Power	592bhp
Torque	516lb ft
0-60mph	3.3sec (claimed)
Top speed	>200mph (claimed)
Weight	1745kg
Power-to-weight	345bhp/ton
Basic price	£149,995
On sale	Now
Deliveries	May 2018



Above: Track Pack sees a half roll-cage fitted for the full touring-car vibe. **Left:** wider arches house huge 305-section tyres at the rear – handy when you're putting down nearly 600bhp

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911 GT2 RS leads new-metal charge

New 691bhp, rear-drive GT2 is Porsche's most powerful 911 road car to date. And a tyre company's best friend



EVEN DURING OUR BRIEF ride in a prototype car (evo 237), Porsche kept its cards close to its chest regarding the headline figures for the new **GT2 RS**. Now, however, we know more about this monstrous 911.

Taking the 3.8-litre twin-turbo flat-six from the 911 Turbo S, Porsche has found an extra 119bhp, bringing the grand total to 691bhp (with an unchanged 553lb ft of torque). This in a rear-wheel-drive 911. The increase has been achieved by installing a pair of larger turbochargers, increasing the boost pressure and fitting a water-injection system to provide the necessary cooling. Engine breathing has also been improved and there's a new lightweight titanium exhaust system, saving seven kilos compared with the Turbo's exhaust.

Drive is sent through a revised version of Porsche's seven-speed dual-clutch transmission, with shifts

expected to be notably faster than in even the latest GT3. The potency of the engine, a relatively low kerb weight of 1470kg and those lightning gearchanges result in a claimed 0-62mph time of just 2.8sec and a top speed of 211mph.

The GT2 RS also gets rear-wheel steering adapted from that on the latest GT3 and, just like for the 918 Spyder, there's an optional Weissach

pack. It costs £21,042 on top of the £207,506 list price and shaves 30kg from the kerb weight. Included in the pack are a carbonfibre roof (replacing the standard magnesium item), carbonfibre anti-roll bars and lashings of carbon for the interior. The pack also includes magnesium wheels, further reducing unsprung weight along with the standard carbon-ceramic brakes.

Brutal aerodynamic bodywork comes in the form of a vast rear wing and deep intakes in the front bumper along with NACA ducts in the carbon bonnet. Michelin's Pilot Sport Cup 2 tyres (265-section at the front, 325 at the rear) provide the mechanical grip.

Deliveries are scheduled for early 2018 with premiums expected to be asked by speculators soon after.

Like Porsche, McLaren also chose





the Goodwood Festival of Speed to reveal its latest derivative, the **570S Spider** (above and right), which joins the 570S coupe and 570GT in the company's Sports Series lineup.

The new model's retractable hard-top roof mirrors those of previous McLaren Spiders, and with the structural rigidity of the car's carbonfibre MonoCell, no additional strengthening is required. This means weight gains are kept to 58kg over the coupe. It takes just 15 seconds to open or close the roof, which can be done at road speeds of up to 25mph.

The 570S Spider sprints to 62mph in 3.2sec – equal to the coupe – and its top speed depends on whether the roof is closed (204mph) or open (196mph). The ability to drive topless

may also alleviate one of the few problems we have with the 570 – the noise. The engine note of the 562bhp 3.8-litre twin-turbo V8 has never been overly engaging, but a little more volume in the cabin should at least help matters.

The 570S Spider will cost £164,750 and is expected to become the best-selling Sports Series model.

A little more restrained and designed to compete with the latest BMW 5-series Touring and Mercedes E-class Estate, Jaguar has announced a new **XF Sportback** (below). As with the XF saloon it has an aluminium structure and the most potent engine will be a supercharged V6 petrol producing 375bhp. With four-wheel drive it will hit 62mph in



5.5sec. Unfortunately Jaguar has no current plans to introduce an XF rival to AMG's E63 Estate.

Volkswagen has revealed its latest Polo and with it a new **Polo GTI** (below). Fitted with a 197bhp 2-litre turbocharged four, it will be available with the choice of a six-speed manual gearbox or a seven-speed DSG, and there will also be two chassis options: Sport (standard) and Sport



Select (with adjustable dampers). Performance figures have yet to be confirmed but expect this new Polo GTI to outperform the 0-62mph in 6.7sec and 146mph top speed benchmarks of its predecessor.

Finally, **Ferrari's 661bhp 3.9-litre twin-turbo V8** (bottom right), as installed in the 488 GTB and Spider (below), has been named the International Engine of the Year.



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Left: prototype tips the scales at just 1103kg.
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The white stuff?

evo catches a ride in the Alpina A110, the French lightweight with big boots to fill

by STEVE SUTCLIFFE

THIS IS A BIG MOMENT in the history of Alpine, the once iconic French brand that went dormant for a couple of decades but is now on the brink of making a spectacular return with an all-new A110.

I'm sitting next to Terry Baillon, Renault Sport's head of chassis development, as we spear serenely but also very quickly through the French countryside just south of Lyon. He's driving, I'm watching, wondering, trying to work out just how good the new A110 will be to drive, because from the passenger seat it already feels pretty damn tidy to me.

It's an intriguing car for all sorts of weird and mostly wonderful reasons. It deliberately eschews huge horsepower, boasting just 249bhp and 236lb ft of torque from its mid-mounted 1.8-litre

turbocharged four-cylinder engine. Instead, Alpine has gone back to its roots and obsessively kept mass to an absolute minimum – to a point where the claimed weight for the prototype we're riding in is just 1103kg with fluids, including half a tank of petrol.

As a result, it has a power-to-weight ratio of 229bhp per ton – a fraction better than a Porsche 718 Cayman's 225bhp per ton. But to generate that number, the Porsche needs more power (296bhp) because it weighs more (1335kg). And that, in a nutshell, is what will make the A110 so different to drive from its nemesis, claim its creators.

'We have gone for maximum agility with this car,' explains Baillon as we continue to drive along what turns out to be a great road at a faintly ridiculous speed. 'By removing as much weight



“ The sounds – and thrust – are highly convincing ”

as we could, everything else is so much easier to get right.’ And from the way the A110 changes direction, seemingly with almost no perceptible inertia, one can’t help but think Alpine is a long way towards getting it spot-on.

From the passenger seat, the interior of the car looks high in quality, low in complexity. It feels expensive in here, the ultra-lightweight carbon seats are lovely to snuggle right down into and visibility is excellent for a mid-engined car. The sounds – and thrust – coming from the engine just behind my left ear are also highly convincing. The noise is far nicer to listen to than the more anodyne thrum of the new turbocharged Cayman, and the acceleration feels proper. As in 0-60mph in not a lot more than four seconds and, just guessing, 0-100mph in around 12 seconds.

But it’s the ride and the suspension control that feel most impressive of all from the passenger

seat. As ever, there are different modes to scroll through that alter the characteristics of the engine, exhaust and gearbox maps, none of which I’m especially aware of from the wrong seat. But the suspension and dampers remain the same in all modes, which is a refreshing departure and shows the confidence Alpine has in this car. And, to put it simply, it just works.

The A110 glides across the ground in a similar way to an early Elise, in that it appears to have huge grip and composure but also a beautifully fluid ride. There are no harsh edges to its responses. Instead, the springs and dampers appear to be able to deal with just about anything they encounter.

It feels quite soft in its roll stiffness, true, but with Baillon at the wheel the A110 simply feels fast, composed and refined.

We drive the A110 for ourselves in late October/early November. After this brief experience from the other seat, I for one just can’t wait.



SPECIFICATION COMPARISON

	Alpine A110	Porsche Cayman	Alfa Romeo 4C
Engine	In-line 4-cyl, 1800cc, turbo	Flat-four, 1988cc, turbo	In-line 4-cyl, 1742cc, turbo
Power	249bhp	296bhp @ 6500rpm	237bhp @ 6000rpm
Torque	236lb ft	280lb ft @ 1950-4500rpm	258lb ft @ 2200-4250rpm
0-62mph	4.5sec (claimed)	5.1sec (claimed)	4.5sec (claimed)
Top speed	155mph (limited)	170mph (claimed)	160mph (claimed)
Weight	1103kg	1335kg	963kg (est)
Power-to-weight	229bhp/ton	225bhp/ton	250bhp/ton (est)
Basic price	£48,000-52,000	£42,897	£51,505

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TECH

Aftermarket brakes

As performance upgrades go, braking is usually a high priority. But as we've found out, things are about to get rather complicated

by Brett Fraser

STOPPING. IT'S AS important as going. Maybe more so. (You can only brag about hitting 150mph if you didn't subsequently hit an immovable object at a barely diminished speed.)

Traditionally, the aftermarket has been able to offer improved slowing power because the engineers of mass-produced cars have to fit brakes that fall within a budget set by their company's accountants. But improved safety legislation and higher customer expectations have raised the OEM game. The more switched-on marketing departments are even

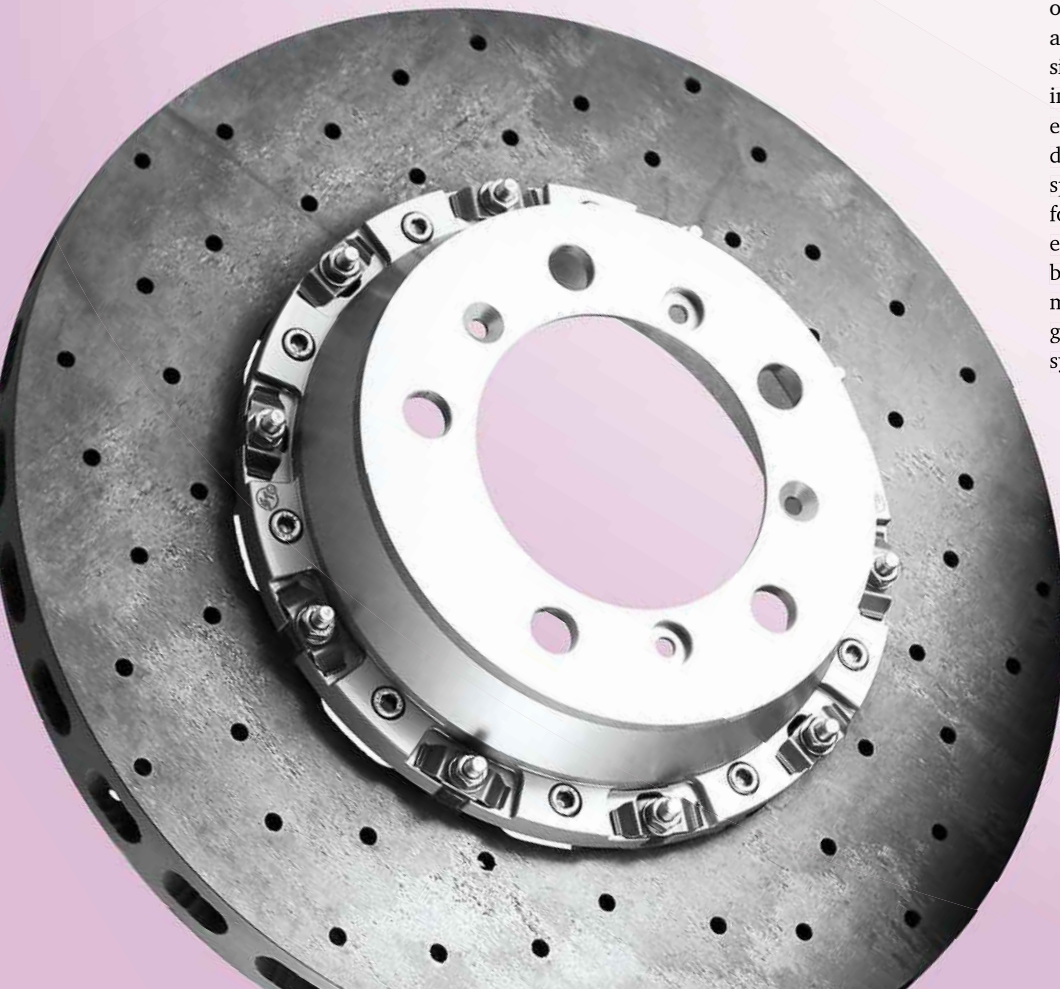
promoting their own trackdays for owners, so a very high standard of braking in extreme conditions has become more desirable and therefore fiscally acceptable.

Another factor shaping the aftermarket is that, for many years now, the big players have been inextricably linked with the car makers themselves. Brembo, AP Racing, Alcon and others are the go-to guys when a manufacturer wants to prove how serious it is about the stopping equipment on its new model. As a consequence, the aftermarket is having to adhere to mainstream rules and regulations. Some of these, such

as those for particulate emissions containing copper from brake pads, are industry-wide anyway, but an association with a major car maker is an encouragement to meet new standards sooner rather than later.

For the medium- to long-term future, the biggest challenge facing the braking aftermarket is the proliferation of electro-mechanical automatic emergency braking systems, or AEBs. This is a technical extension of many of the systems we now take for granted: ABS, traction control, stability control, electronic brake-force distribution and, in the era of hybrid and fully electric cars, brake-by-wire and regenerative-braking systems. AEB setups are on the brink of becoming part of a holistic car-control package – a single controlling computer that integrates all of the on-board electronics – that will assess data from throttle position, road speed, steering angle, slip angle, forward-facing radar sensors and even GPS, and trigger an optimum braking response that is beyond the majority of drivers. Several national governments are pushing for AEB systems to be mandatory.

Further down the line, braking will also be governed by information from roadside sensors and even other cars – a broken-down vehicle around a blind bend, for instance, could communicate with your car, which then cuts the throttle and applies the brakes. Such a complex setup would likely require exact data about brake-disc diameter, brake-pad compounds, caliper spec, etc – information that could be corrupted by upgrading your





“
*Further down the line
 braking will also be governed
 by information from roadside
 sensors and even other cars*
 ”

discs and pads. Unless, of course, the aftermarket industry is working with the car manufacturers from the outset. Such relationships will be critical in the future.

On a more mundane yet crucial level, through its mainstream connections the aftermarket is embracing the issues vexing the automotive industry in general. Weight saving, for example. Even the smallest reductions impact the power required to move a car down the road, affecting its fuel consumption and CO2 emissions. Aftermarket leaders such as Brembo have refined the design of the internal cooling vents of their high-performance discs, enabling

those discs to be smaller in diameter and therefore lighter, all for the same heat-dissipation qualities. Not terribly sexy, perhaps, but it goes down well with legislators.

Composite discs – an iron disc with an aluminium hat (the element that mates with the wheel hub) – also reduce weight. Good for CO2 and also for cutting unsprung mass, potentially to the benefit of ride and handling. And the aluminium hat has superior heat-dissipation qualities, aiding fade-resistance in extreme driving conditions.

At the top end of the aftermarket, Surface Transforms is marketing what it claims is the ‘next generation’ of carbon-ceramic discs.

Instead of short strands of chopped carbonfibre, the Liverpool-based firm uses long strands that have superior heat conductivity; they’re combined with a carbon-silicon carbide ceramic. The company calls the resulting material Carbon Fibre Reinforced Ceramic, or CFRC, and reckons its discs run at operating temperatures 100C lower than regular carbon-ceramic discs and offer far greater longevity. The BAC Mono uses CFRC discs and Surface Transforms is a technical partner on the Aston Martin Valkyrie hypercar project.

More affordably, EBC is now promoting Balanced Brake Kits. As the name implies, this is a package of front and rear discs, pads, brake lines and fluid, tailored to your car. The idea is to provide a properly balanced setup that aids your car’s handling. A good aftermarket brakes retailer would advise similar, but EBC has seized the initiative and trademarked the concept, further demonstrating that when it comes to improving stopping power, it’s no longer just a matter of fitting the biggest discs that will fit inside your wheels.

Silent charge

Performance brands begin to show their teeth in the electric arms race

by Louis Frankel



PURE-ELECTRIC VEHICLES seem set to one day dominate the automotive landscape, and many fear the thrill of driving may diminish. However, the horizon may not be as dim as first thought, as two marques at opposite ends of the **evo** spectrum have announced plans for electric offerings.

SEAT intends to develop hybrid and pure-electric Cupra models, according to the company's R&D boss, Matthias Rabe. The hybrids



will use torque-rich motors to bolster acceleration and a full EV would get a dedicated platform. 'Cupra and electrification is not a

contradiction,' says Rabe, who also claims SEAT's first EV, due in 2019, will boast a 300-mile range.

Aston Martin, meanwhile, has announced that it's planning an electric car based on the Rapide AMR. Imaginatively named RapidE, the model will spearhead Aston's zero-emission strategy, with Williams Advanced Engineering (which assisted Jaguar in building the hybrid C-X75 hypercar and has played a pivotal role in the nascent

Formula E series) enlisted as lead engineering partner.

Electric motors will supplant the Rapide's 5.9-litre V12, and Aston has hinted that 4WD and torque vectoring will feature. If that's the case, 1000bhp could be on the cards, and who would turn down the chance to drive a 1000bhp Aston, no matter the powertrain?

Gaydon's first crack at a purely electric car will enter production in 2019, with a limited run of 155 cars.

WATCHES: FOR PORSCHE FANS



Rec 901

Price: from \$1695 (c£1300)
From: recwatches.com

Since its launch in 2014, Rec – short for 'Recover, Recycle, Reclaim' – has already produced watches incorporating salvaged material from classic Minis and Ford Mustangs (we featured the latter piece in **evo** 221). Now it's the 911's turn with this, the 901, which takes its name from the rear-engined Porsche's short-lived original model number. The 901 has a 44mm case, an automatic movement and is available in three different colour schemes.



Porsche Design Monobloc Actuator

Price: from €5950 (c£5200)
From: porsche-design.com

Back in 1980, Porsche Design created the first titanium-cased chronograph. It continues to use the tough, lightweight material today, including in this new piece, the Monobloc Actuator. Its name stems from the fact that the start/stop and reset buttons for the chronograph are integrated into the design of the 45.5mm case in the form of a large 'hidden' rocker switch – look closely and you might just see the joins.



Singer Track 1

Price: 39,800 CHF (c£32,000)
From: singerreimagined.com

In addition to 're-imagining' 911s, Singer is now doing the same for the chronograph watch with this, the Track 1. Its 43mm titanium case has a classic, 1970s-style 'barrel' shape, but what's inside is far less conventional: the three chronograph hands reside at the centre of the dashboard-instrument-inspired dial – putting the focus on measuring time – while the time of day is shown on two discs that rotate around the outer edge.

Like watches? Read *Chrono*, the digital watch magazine for iOS and Android, available **FREE** inside the **evo** app.

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GTE battle royale

THE NO. 97 ASTON MARTIN VANTAGE GTE of Darren Turner, Jonathan Adam and Daniel Serra leaves its pit-box ahead of the Chevrolet Corvette C7.R of Jan Magnussen, Antonio Garcia and Jordan Taylor late in this year's running of the Le Mans 24 Hours. Both cars were involved in a spectacular penultimate-lap battle that saw Adam sneak ahead of Taylor as they crossed the line to start their final lap. Taylor then suffered a puncture, handing second in the GTE Pro class to the no. 67 Ford GT driven by Harry Tincknell and teammates Pipo Derani and Andy Priaulx.

The battle for overall victory wasn't quite as close, particularly after Toyota followed up 2016's misfortune with yet more problems. The no. 8 TS050 Hybrid LMP1 car required repairs early on, then the leading no. 7 car – having set a new circuit record during qualifying with Kamui Kobayashi at the wheel – had a clutch failure and was unable to return to the pits. Toyota no. 9 then retired after a collision. Porsche had problems too, but eventually the no. 2 LMP1 919 Hybrid of Timo Bernhard, Brendon Hartley and Earl Bamber overtook the leading LMP2 cars to take Porsche's 19th overall win at La Sarthe.



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Ring irrelevance

Much as I enjoy your road and track tests, I always find it somewhat debatable when you refer to a car's ability to lap the Nürburgring. The driver is a major constituent of lap times and if, as you recently claimed, the BMW M4 CS is capable of lapping that track in 7min 38sec then who was driving it? Maybe not a Hamilton, but not the bloke next door either, to whom such a time is utterly irrelevant.

Paul Bentley, Oxford



Living in fear

With a heavy heart I feel Richard Meaden was right in his recent column when he said modern performance cars are becoming too fast to use on today's roads (*evo* 237).

Recently I had a five-hour round-trip to a sick relative, mostly via the M6. I was travelling at a legal speed in a high-performance modern car. At journey's end, sliproad ahead, no-one else around, I indulged myself for perhaps four or five seconds by using the car's accelerative potential. Blowing away the cobwebs, the pent-up frustration of a long journey and a traumatic occasion – call it what you will.

There was less danger to myself or anyone else, and a larger margin of safety, than when driving at low speed through a village centre. But as I approached the sliproad I saw the police car waiting on the bridge, my line of sight to it having until then been obscured by another bridge.

I spent the next minute driving along swearing at myself whilst waiting for the flashing blue lights to appear in my mirror. Then I spent the next six weeks checking the post every day with dread, worrying that I would lose my licence, if not more.

Has this tainted my enjoyment of driving? Yes. Have I changed my driving habits? In the bluntest sense of being turned into a slow-moving obstacle on dual carriageways, yes. Do I see fewer idiots making dangerous mistakes at ordinary speeds every single day? Of course not. But as Meaden would say, that's hardly a defence. The laws are there and we know how heavily they are enforced.

So I can understand where he is coming from. Five or ten years from now, you'll be able to sit in front of your 100-inch curved LCD screen as it displays damn-near real-life graphics, and you'll be 'in' any car you can imagine. Your friends, wherever they are in the world, can be alongside you in their chosen cars, too, and you can all be on any road in existence, or even one that doesn't exist anywhere outside a computer.

All you would need to complete the experience is a high-speed fan to blow your hair about and perhaps a Pirelli or Michelin-scented candle to give the dedicated eDriver the smell of burnt rubber. And best of all, there will be no threat to your licence whatsoever.

Tod Coates



Another world

There is an alternative to Richard Meaden's suggestion that we should abandon enjoying the roads and our fast cars in favour of electronically rendered substitutes.

Back before we had families, my friends and I would often head out late in a fleet of cars when everyone else was in the pub. We'd stop only for a chat and a cigarette, or perhaps some petrol and a Red Bull. Then we'd head home to watch the sunrise before getting back to bed.



LETTER OF THE MONTH

Taking the CS

FIRSTLY, THANK YOU BMW FOR ADDRESSING THE shortcomings of the M4 with the new M4 CS (Driven, *evo* 237). After the unruly, uncomfortable standard M4, it's good to see the M division come back from its 'dropping of the ball'.

Reading through *evo's* review, it appeared that many wrongs have been righted with the introduction of the upgraded model, but the last paragraph revealed a new problem: the £89,130 price tag.

And that's the basic price. No salesman worth his salt would allow a customer to leave the dealership without blunting his pencil on the options list. Carbon-ceramic brakes aren't standard, so that'll be £6250. And surely Sir or Madam wouldn't be able to hold their head up in company without specifying a paint colour from the BMW Individual palette...

I doubt many M4 CSs will be delivered sub £100k, and I'm sorry, good as it may be, and curing many of the ills of the regular M4 as it may, that is quite simply ludicrous money for a 4-series.

I expect them to fly off the shelf.

Euan Gibson

The Letter of the Month wins an Aviator watch

The writer of this month's star letter receives an Aviator Airacobra P45 Chrono. Inspired by the pilots' watches of the 1940s, it has a 45mm case, a Swiss-made quartz movement, and SuperLuminova indexes for outstanding legibility.



Peter Jackson
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INBOX



It made early starts in the City office on a Saturday bearable. Driving through Silvertown and around the East India Docks at 5am... it was like a different world.

But one day really does beat all for a pre-dawn raid in the car, especially out of town. I've never seen a single other car on the road at this time on Christmas Day. It used to be my annual personal event (you don't half get some weird looks from non-petrol types in the family circle).

But you never know what time the kids will wake up in the morning so it's too much of a risk now. I can't wait until they're driving, so I can introduce them to it. And get back to it myself.

Dan Rickard

The thrill of hypermiling

Further to Richard Meaden's 'too fast for the road' column, as a north London resident subjected to blanket 20mph speed limits and average speed zones everywhere, I have to admit to quitting the fast road car habit for a new form of entertainment called hypermiling, where your right foot controls the mpg graph on the dash of your hybrid.

It never ceases to amaze me how efficient (85mpg has been my best average), quiet, relaxing and ridiculously cheap to buy and run these cars are now. The times have changed and I'm embarrassed to say I have embraced it before losing my licence or worse. When you spend so much time behind Uber drivers trying to save fuel, you might as well join them in the mpg game. After all, I need something to keep me awake at 22mph.

If manufacturers don't wake up and make cars more entertaining to drive at the speed limit, the thrill of driving threatens to be extinguished forever.

Richard Darsa

Double vision

Is it me, or do all recent McLarens look so much alike that, to an untrained eye, they are almost indistinguishable?

Browsing **evo** 236, with its tests of the 12C and 650S [above left], and then the new 720S right after that... All three cars look so much alike, especially the first two, that I had a hard time telling which was which!

Admittedly, here in Greece there are not so many (if any, really) McLarens on the streets, so all we have to go by is what we see in the pages of **evo**, but I'm not sure the differences would be an less subtle in real life.

Stelios Chatzopoulos, Athens, Greece

Hyundai hurrah

Turning the page from your review of the new Porsche 911 GT3 (**evo** 236) and seeing a Hyundai hot hatch that wasn't yet production ready, I wasn't sure I'd get involved with the article. How wrong was I? Being a massive fan of hot hatches and owning one myself, I would never have guessed that a Hyundai could generate so much praise from Steve Sutcliffe.

It was also refreshing to see how Hyundai's Albert Biermann (formerly of BMW M) listened to **evo**'s recommendations and got the car changed, purely in the interest of making it as good as it could be. Looks like the i30 N [above] could be a car to tempt us away from the mainstream hot hatches and into something seriously impressive.

Patrick Horton

Gone but not forgotten

I've loved everything about **evo** for many years now. I also buy old issues off eBay that have relevant info on cars that I am planning to buy.



My current car, and to me my everyday supercar that I won't be selling anytime soon, is a 2001 996-generation Porsche 911 Carrera coupe [above]. A few months ago I opened **evo** and did what I always do: headed straight to The Knowledge section at the back to read the little comments about my car. But this time I discovered that the 996 Carrera had been removed!

At first I thought it was a mistake, so I left it a few issues to be sure, but it has not reappeared. Surely this is an oversight? I remember it was awarded a full five stars back in the day...

Ross Keogh

Unfortunately we had to remove the 996 Carrera to make space for new cars that we have reviewed in recent months. It's never easy choosing which cars to cut in these circumstances – in fact sometimes the decisions can be quite painful.

However, the good news is that The Knowledge has been revamped for this issue and now contains more entries than ever before – nearly 700 in total, in fact. And amongst them, a certain 911 Carrera has made a return. – Ed

Race for the stars

I was very interested to read about Volkswagen's Golf GTI TCR customer race car [above right] (**evo** 236). With its relatively straightforward and affordable spec, I think it is a great idea. I know we already have the BTCC, but with 15 FIA TCR championships in place around the globe, it would be great if the UK could have one of its own. Just imagine seeing the GTI up against, say, a Honda Civic Track Edition, or a Ford Focus RS Racing, all with similar upgrades to the Golf.

But why stop there? You could

also have different categories for anything from a Renault Twingo GT and a Brabus ForTwo, up to an Aston Martin Valkyrie, AMG Project One and Ferrari FXXK.

To spice it up even further, you could have some famous Formula 1, rally or touring car drivers taking part. The Red Bull-developed Valkyrie could be driven by Max Verstappen, the Mercedes by Hamilton and the Ferrari by Vettel. I know in this particular case the cars are already sold out, but it would surely help sales of the same manufacturers' more down-to-earth vehicles to know that you could walk into a showroom and order an identical copy of the car you had seen a world-famous F1 driver race.

Jamie Dilnot

Realistic journeys

Each month I marvel at the car history of the latest **evo** reader in your Buying Journey series. Without exception they will have owned a number of interesting cars and they will often have chosen wisely, enjoying a rise in values and ending up now owning a supercar or an E30 BMW M3.

I think it's about time you featured a few more realistic journeys from some real car addicts. For example, I've owned 70 cars to date and I'm still only in my 40s, and so far I've only made money on one of them!

I know I'm not alone in my addiction to cars, and post-pub eBay bids that lead to 300-mile road-trips to pick up interesting cars with no MOT is an unfortunate side effect. The total value of the three cars I limit myself to at any given time probably isn't much more than £15k, yet while I'm never going to own a McLaren or a Ferrari, I do have a lot of fun along the way.

Peter Garforth

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It costs almost £100,000 and is from a company you've probably never heard of, but this trackday weapon can do things most supercars can only dream about

Elemental Rp1

Photography: Otis Clay

IT IS NOT A CAR FOR THE faint of heart, the all-new Elemental Rp1. Designed and built by an amiable collection of mavericks from the UK, some ex-McLaren, some ex-Ford, it is unlike any other road car.

And now, after a two-year gestation period, it is upon us – in full production form, complete with a beautifully finished carbonfibre tub at its core, a 2-litre Ford EcoBoost engine in its tail, and the sort of performance that even supercar drivers will have nightmares about.

It costs £98,700, has 320bhp and weighs just 630kg with fluids. How quick is it? As yet, not even Elemental is sure. So far, the car has recorded a two-way 0-60mph run of 2.7sec with 0-100mph in 6.4sec. But that was on

a car that still needed its mapping perfected. In reality, we're talking sub-2.5sec to 60mph and less than six seconds to 100mph, with a top speed (who cares in a car like this anyway?) of around 170mph.

The driving position was very much the Rp1's ground-zero moment, because that's where Elemental began its quest to deliver 'the fastest trackday car in the world by 2020'. Thus, you sit with your feet several inches above your backside, arms outstretched, with your back at an angle of around 45 degrees to the road. Much like in an F1 car, then.

Once the firm had got this aspect of the car right, all the rest fell neatly into place, apparently, including a quite phenomenally efficient aero package that, on the road, will give

the Rp1 over 400kg of downforce.

There are three engine options, all Ford EcoBoost units: a 1-litre, a 2-litre and – recently confirmed – the 2.3-litre from the Focus RS. It's the middle unit that most customers have been going for so far, and that's the one we have here. It gives the Rp1 a power-to-weight ratio of 516bhp per ton. In reality, though, it's the torque-to-weight figure of 535lb ft per ton that gives the best indication of sheer pace.

In the flesh, the Rp1 looks sensational, as if it's been produced by a company that's been honing its art for decades, not months. Climb aboard and the first thing that hooks you is that driving position. You realise that your feet are pretty much at eye level and think, 'Hmm,



HX66 LXS

Right: underbody aero helps the Rp1 develop more than 400kg of downforce at 150mph. **Below:** carbon seats are designed to elevate the driver's feet; the five driving modes are selectable on the slim centre console



this is different.' In fact, the car feels very much like a single-seater, but with a lot more elbow room and a lovely clean view of the road ahead.

To get the Rp1 moving requires no great skill: you fire it up, dip the clutch, give the engine some revs, then smoothly release the clutch and away you go, much like in a normal car. The gearbox is a sequential six-speed unit by Hewland with pneumatic actuators and a small carbonfibre paddleshifter either side of the steering wheel. The entire mechanism – though fully manual in practice – is operated by the main ECU so that the engine and gearbox are protected from erroneous shifts. It won't let you blow the engine to pieces by downshifting when you shouldn't, basically. Which is nice.

'It feels like it wants to blow your eyeballs out the back of your skull'

Once you're on the move, no clutch is needed, and everything else about the Rp1 feels equally racing car from that moment onwards.

The non-assisted steering is heavy-ish to begin with but fine above 10mph, and its immediacy of response and the pure feel through

the rim is delicious. It's one of those cars that you steer with your brain rather than with your hands.

But then, to be honest, that's how the Rp1 feels on the move, full stop. Everything it does provides either a mild or very strong sense of amazement. The acceleration is borderline ridiculous, and you can alter its severity by scrolling through five engine maps: Road 1, Road 2, Track, Race 1 and Race 2.

In Road 1 the Rp1 already feels nutcase-fast but also quite reassuring, inasmuch as the traction control comes in quite early, and the boost is wound down a touch to provide a more manageable flow of torque. The madness goes up in a sliding scale from there onwards, until eventually in Race 2 the Rp1

feels like it wants to blow your eyeballs out the back of your skull from the moment you so much as breathe on the throttle.

The best thing, though, is that this car, with its carbon tub and double wishbones front and rear (complete with adjustable Nitron dampers), has a chassis to match. Boy does it have the chassis to match. And the brakes, and the steering, and the gearchange.

At all speeds the Rp1 feels beautifully balanced, the front end displaying a bit more bite than the rear. Yet at no speed does it ever feel edgy in its handling. It flows across the ground in a way that only really well sorted cars do, and even when it lets go, it never does so in a 'now you see it, now you don't' kind of way. It's sharp but progressive in the way it relinquishes grip, so if you know what you're doing you can play about with it without getting bitten. Given how much aerodynamic grip it generates, this makes the Elemental Rp1 very special indeed, even beside the best of the best in this rarefied class. **✖**

Steve Sutcliffe

Specification

Engine	Power	Torque	0-60mph	Top speed	Weight	Basic price
In-line 4-cyl, 1999cc, turbo	320bhp @ n/a	332lb ft @ n/a	2.7sec (claimed)	170mph (claimed)	630kg (516bhp/ton)	£98,700

+ Sensational, explosive, captivating capability in a package you can exploit **-** At this price you've got to be very committed to the hardcore ethos

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Audi RS5

Audi reckons this car is a luxury cruiser, but the spec-sheet begs to differ

Photography: Aston Parrott



THIS IS A CAR THAT HAS to cover a broad range of uses,' explains Stephan Winkelmann, Audi Sport's cool-as-a-cucumber CEO and the man ultimately responsible for the success of the all-new, second-generation RS5. 'Our owners drive these cars every day, and so want comfort as well as high performance. The RS5 is the gran turismo of RS models.'

You don't need to do much reading between the lines to see that Audi is trying to distance its fast coupe from hardcore rivals such as the BMW M4 and Mercedes-AMG C63. And yet a quick glance at the car's mechanical make-up tells a slightly different story; one

that appears to have the pursuit of performance at its heart.

For starters, the latest RS5 is much lighter than before, while the old car's naturally aspirated V8 has been ditched in favour of a turbocharged V6 that's smaller yet far more muscular. Then there's the heavily redeveloped four-wheel-drive system, which is claimed to be faster-acting and to deliver more engaging handling. Plus there's a new eight-speed auto gearbox. Oh, and there's the way the Audi looks, too.

Taking the fearsome 90 quattro IMSA GTO racer as inspiration, the RS5 is no shrinking violet. There are the bulging wheelarch blisters that have been an Audi trademark since the Ur-Quattro, a larger front grille

and deeper bumpers crammed with intakes and sharply defined creases. Then there are the neatly integrated (but fake) air vents nestling beside the headlamps and tail lights.

Scratch the surface and there's more evidence the RS5 might not be as soft as Stephan is letting on. It's the weight saving that catches your eye first, with a headline reduction of 60kg over the old model. Crucially, over half of this figure (31kg to be precise) can be accounted for by the new twin-turbocharged 2.9-litre V6 – that's a lot of mass removed from the nose, which means sharper handling should be on the menu.

Elsewhere, the use of aluminium with high-strength steel means the body is 15kg lighter, while the front and rear axle assemblies are 6kg and 5kg lighter respectively. New electro-mechanical steering gear shaves a further 3.5kg. And if you want to subject your RS5 to an even stricter diet, there's the option of a carbon roof (saving 3kg), while forged 20in alloy wheels save 8kg of unsprung mass, as do carbon-ceramic brakes for the front axle.

Propelling this less cumbersome coupe, that new V6 engine matches



Above: exhaust valve beefs up the sound of the turbo'd V6 when the car is in its sportier modes. **Left:** cabin quality is ahead of that of the RS5's rivals





'It's the weight-saving in the nose that really pays dividends'

the old 4.2-litre V8's 444bhp but packs much greater punch low down thanks to an increase in torque from 317 to 443lb ft, which is now delivered from a lazy 1900rpm. Audi claims the launch control- and 4WD-assisted 0-62mph sprint is seen off in 3.9sec.

On the road this RS5 feels every bit as fast as the numbers suggest, a sensation that's enhanced by the new eight-speed automatic gearbox, which delivers even quicker shifts than the old twin-clutch S-tronic transmission yet is smoother and more relaxed if you want to cruise.

However, there's very little drama, as the linear power delivery means the car is fast but rather characterless; there's not the high-end frenzy you get in an M4 or the instant, sledgehammer hit of a C63.

This engine doesn't quite sound the part, either. There's a muted growl when you really work it, but it lacks the spine-tingling, 8000rpm excitement of the old V8.

Flick the car into Dynamic mode (there's also Auto, Comfort and Individual, where you can pick 'n' mix your favourite engine, steering, suspension and transmission settings) and the RS5 instantly feels more focused. The adaptive dampers take on a harder edge, weight is added to the steering and throttle response is sharpened. It's all very promising.

Yet it's the weight-saving in the nose that really pays dividends, allowing the RS5 to turn in more keenly, change direction with greater agility and flow down roads that the old car would take in scrappy chunks. The more sporty quattro four-wheel drive plays its part here, letting you power hard out of a tight corner with the rear axle helping to rotate the tail a little. Be more aggressive and the car will start to slide before the system sends torque to the front wheels to counter it.

And yet you never really feel fully

engaged in the process; simply turn the weighty but lifeless wheel, bury the throttle and let the transmission and terrific grip do the rest. It's a fantastically fast and effective way to cover ground, but there's little dialogue between car and driver.

Take it a little easier, engage Auto mode and the RS5 impresses with its surprisingly supple ride and excellent refinement. It also boasts a cabin that delivers unrivalled quality and the sort of slick design that justifies the £62,900 price tag (for reference, an M4 Competition Pack costs £61,365).

In the real world, the RS5's blend of performance, poise and pampering refinement makes it a hugely desirable choice – and one that more than lives up to Winkelmann's claims. Yet, as a dedicated driver's machine it still lacks that spark that separates the very good from the great. ❌

James Disdale

Specification

Engine	Power	Torque	0-62mph	Top speed	Weight	Basic price
V6, 2894cc, twin-turbo	444bhp @ 5700-6700rpm	442lb ft @ 1900-5000rpm	3.9sec (claimed)	155mph (limited)	1655kg (273bhp/ton)	£62,900

+ Effortless performance, confidence-inspiring handling, impressive refinement and comfort **-** Characterless engine; lacks driver involvement of rivals

evo rating ★★★★★☆

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Alfa Romeo Giulia Veloce

The Quadrifoglio's mega performance comes at a cost. So what of the middle-man of the Giulia range?

THE ALFA ROMEO GIULIA Veloce that is about to go on sale in the UK will have rear-wheel drive. The Alfa Romeo Giulia Veloce that the UK press has been invited to assess and which you're reading about here uses Q4 all-wheel drive. Arese may be making pretty good cars these days, but its corporate capacity for tumultuous, arm-waving ineptitude remains reassuringly unmatched.

Thankfully, Alfa's most recent models really are good enough to forgive this fluster. The Stelvio SUV (Driven, *evo* 234) is a case in point, and the Giulia saloon has raised even more eyebrows, particularly in 2.9-litre V6 turbo-engined Quadrifoglio form. If Alfa's £61,300 M3 rival has one major fault, it's that it has made the rest of the Giulia range look a little unexciting.

The £37,935 (in rear-drive form) Veloce fills this performance gulf, producing 79bhp more than the next most powerful petrol Giulia down the range and packing a few choice specification improvements to close the visual chasm between rep-spec models and the pumped-up Quadrifoglio. Chief among these is the stunning Misano Blue paintwork you see here, newly offered with the Veloce (for £695), but a set of Quadrifoglio-matching 19-inch wheels



doesn't hurt (18s are standard) and neither do aggressive front and rear bumpers, with xenon lights at the bow and a twin-exit tailpipe astern. Think of it as an M Sport-kitted 330i compared with the full M3 experience and you've got the idea.

An eight-speed torque-converter automatic transmission remains standard, and that's no bad thing. Certainly not when it's controlled, as here, by a pair of Ferrari-style aluminium paddles (part of the optional Performance Pack, as is a limited-slip diff) that are as cool to the touch as they are to behold and instantly make the Veloce feel more special than any of its rivals.

That you can appreciate them at all is a credit to the Giulia's impressive cabin. Bar one or two quality-related misgivings – the infotainment system is lousy and the gear selector feels a

'The fast steering soon has you dancing through curves like Gabriele Tarquini'

bit Fisher-Price next to those paddles – there's a lot to like in here. Great driving position, attractive design, comfortable seats, good refinement; it ticks plenty of boxes. A stern-faced Audi engineer might not be impressed (and they'd be horrified by the uneven exterior panel gaps), but providing it doesn't all come to pieces in six months, the average Giulia buyer will probably be happy enough.

Driving enthusiasts will, too. With 276bhp and 295lb ft of torque, the Veloce justifies its badging. Alfa's new four-pot engine doesn't quite have the high-rev zest of an old Twin Spark, but there's a strong mid-range to work with, great throttle response and plenty of tactile joy to be had flipping those alloy paddles for 20-millisecond changes both up and down the gearbox.

Traction from the rear-biased

all-wheel-drive system is excellent, and since you can't turn off the ESP on non-Quadrifoglio Giulias, the rear-drive Veloce will offer only a small margin of extra throttle-steerability over the Q4 version. More important is that the chassis has fantastic balance and is happy to indulge in quick direction changes. A kerb weight of 1530kg – quite modest for a four-wheel-drive saloon – helps here, and the rear-drive car should feel even more nimble, tipping the scales at 1429kg.

Central to the driving experience is a fast steering rack. It takes a little acclimatisation but soon has you dancing through curves like Gabriele Tarquini. It's light but feels natural, and the levels of response and accuracy mean the relative lack of feedback never becomes an issue. There's good grip, too, and while the brake pedal feels a little soft underfoot (and activates the hazard lights under even moderately hard braking), there's still plenty of stopping power, if not quite to carbon-ceramic-equipped Quadrifoglio levels. The Veloce even rides reasonably on those 19s.

Another hit from Alfa then, and another reason not to buy something German, silver and wearing an alphanumeric badge on the boot. ✘

Antony Ingram (@*evoAntony*)

Specification

Engine	Power	Torque	0-62mph	Top speed	Weight	Basic price
In-line 4-cyl, 1995cc, turbo	276bhp @ 5250rpm	295lb ft @ 2250rpm	5.2sec (claimed)	149mph (claimed)	1530kg (183bhp/ton)	See text

+ Great chassis; fills the performance gap to the Quadrifoglio - Some reservations over quality

evo rating ★★★★★

Peugeot 308 GTi by Peugeot Sport

The facelift is mild, but has Peugeot Sport improved an already excellent hot hatch?

Photography: Adam Shorrock

YOU'LL HAVE TO EXCUSE the cliché, but when it comes to the new Peugeot 308 GTi by Peugeot Sport, the phrase 'if it ain't broke, don't fix it' could have been penned purely for the feisty French hot hatch.

Like The Fonz from *Happy Days*, standing in front of a mirror, comb held aloft and uttering a self-satisfied 'Eyyyy!', the GTi has considered a bit of preening but has taken stock and reckons it's just about perfect as it is.

You see, unlike most midlife facelifts, the Pug doesn't get enhanced engines or suspension tweaks. Instead, it's identical to its predecessor in these respects – though the less powerful '250' model has been dropped. This means there's the same fiery 266bhp 1.6-litre turbo engine from the pre-facelift 308 GTi 270, still with a

limited-slip differential and still with brakes that can trace their roots back to Peugeot's world-beating 206 WRC competition car. You also get the same brilliant chassis, one that seamlessly melds engaging handling with an easy-going ride that takes the sting out of daily duties.

Now, this lack of change might seem a bit odd for a car calling itself 'new', but when a hot hatch is as good as the 308 GTi, it would be a shame to mess with a winning formula. That said, Peugeot knows it has to do something to attract buyers into its showrooms, plus there are rivals such as the new Honda Civic Type R (driven on page 58) lurking around the corner, so it has made some minor cosmetic and technological tweaks.

Outside, the biggest difference is found at the front, where the larger, more aggressive grille and

redesigned headlamps take their cues from the 3008 crossover. Move around to the rear and you'll spot the subtly altered tail lights that now feature lightly smoked lenses. There are also a number of new colours, including the distinctive – or divisive, depending on your point of view – Coupe Franche scheme in Magnetic Blue and Black Perla Nera, as featured on our test car.

You're likely to have even more trouble spotting the changes inside. As before, Peugeot's i-Cockpit layout dominates, with its high-set dials and teeny-tiny steering wheel. It looks a little odd at first, but you quickly get used to it, while the high-backed seats feel soft yet provide good support. The cabin is also robustly built from high-grade materials.

Look harder and you'll notice that the infotainment system is a little different. There's the familiar

9.7-inch screen and layout, but the graphics have been improved to deliver crisper resolution, plus there's now Apple CarPlay and Android Auto. Better still, the capacitive touchscreen is more sensitive, meaning there are far fewer instances when you have to tap the display two or three times to get a response.

More prosaically (but no less importantly), the 308 GTi is now available with all the latest safety kit. Traffic-sign recognition, active blind-spot monitoring and adaptive cruise-control with autonomous emergency braking can all be optioned. Happily, none of this interferes with the way the Peugeot drives, which is pretty bloody brilliantly.

At the heart of the 308 GTi, the enthusiastic four-cylinder engine is crammed with exotic components

‘Trust the diff and you’ll be exiting corners at electrifying speeds’

Right: two-tone ‘Coupe Franche’ paintjob splits opinion, but the hot Pug’s strong performance doesn’t. **Below:** 1.6-litre turbo four remains unchanged, which is a good thing as it’s a right little firecracker



such as forged pistons, a twin-scroll turbo and a reinforced block. It doesn’t have the elastic low-down punch of the larger-capacity engines fitted to VW Group rivals, but once this engine spins smoothly beyond 3000rpm, the 308 GTi accelerates with real vim – Peugeot claims 0-62mph in 6.0sec, which feels entirely plausible.

Driving modes are kept to a minimum, with a choice of Normal and Sport settings. The latter delivers a slightly sharper throttle response and turns the back-lighting on the dials from white to a menacing red. Unfortunately, it also pipes an artificially rorty engine note into the cabin. For this reason, the Sport button is best left alone. Happily, the chassis settings are fixed, so you can enjoy the Peugeot’s excellent ride and handling balance anytime and anywhere.

As before, the steering is well weighted and boasts a natural rate of response, plus there’s just enough feel to make things interesting. The Michelin Pilot Super Sport tyres grip hard, while the Torsen differential allows you to get on the power way earlier than you’d expect. It’s a curious sensation at first, but learn

to trust its ability to keep the GTi’s nose locked onto your chosen line and you’ll soon be exiting corners at electrifying speeds. There’s some wheel tug when accelerating hard on bumpier roads, but it’s nowhere near bad enough to offset the huge traction benefits.

There’s genuine adjustability in the car’s balance, too. Lift off the throttle or brush the brakes mid-corner and you can feel the rear axle go light and the nose tucking in. Speaking of the brakes, the massive, 380mm front discs offer tireless stopping power and beautiful progression once you’ve got past the sharp initial bite at low speed.

Elsewhere, the passive dampers control body movements extremely well while also delivering a reasonably refined ride. Yes, it’s firm, but the suspension rounds off any sharp edges. It’s everything a Focus ST struggles to be. Factor in the acceptably low levels of wind and road noise – and consider the spacious cabin – and the Peugeot 308 GTi is a car that’s as easy to live with as it is fun to drive. Just like the old car, in fact. *Plus ça change*, as they say in France. ✘

James Disdale

Specification

Engine	Power	Torque	0-62mph	Top speed	Weight	Basic price
In-line 4-cyl, 1598cc, turbo	266bhp @ 6000rpm	243lb ft @ 1900-5500rpm	6.0sec (claimed)	155mph (claimed)	1205kg (224bhp/ton)	£28,950

➤ Strong performance, agile handling, everyday refinement ➤ i-Cockpit and Coupe Franche paintwork won’t be to all tastes

evo rating ★★★★★



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Lotus Elise Cup 250

Lotus's ongoing weight-saving mission reaches the track-biased Cup 250 – with predictably good results



IF LOTUS HAS TURNED a corner as a company, it's probably down to the persistence of the idea that nothing turns a corner like a Lotus. And keeping the idea buoyant is naturally an ongoing obsession at the company's slimmed-down, post Dany Bahar, Hethel HQ.

With an all-new, US-compatible Elise being some three years distant, CEO Jean-Marc Gales' most immediate concern is making sure the pot stays bubbling. To that end, hot on the heels of the stripped-back Elise Sprint 220 (*evo* 236) comes this newly facelifted version of the more track-biased Elise Cup 250, and it's a timely reminder that Lotus's stalwart, glove-fit sports car remains bang on message. If you thought all the pips had already been squeezed from this little miracle, think again. As on many previous occasions, added lightness and heavier aero come to the rescue and reset the bar. But leaner and meaner doesn't get any easier.

Or cheaper. Warning: the following figures are a little scary, but then extracting more weight from an already very light car has its price. It all starts at £47,400 for the standard Cup 250 and, frankly, you might want



'It's a supremely skilled poise and purchase practitioner'

to stop right there. You'll be buying an Elise that's 917kg at the kerb (14kg lighter than before) and powered by a 1.8-litre supercharged four-cylinder Toyota engine that directs 243bhp and 184lb ft of torque to the rear wheels via a manual six-speed gearbox. A 269bhp per ton power-to-weight ratio means that, at 4.3sec, the Cup 250 sprints to 62mph nearly a second quicker than a similarly priced Porsche 718 Boxster.

But if you're determined to spend more for less there's a systematic BMI

reduction regime that trims a further 24kg. It includes a carbon aero pack and carbon hard-top, saving 3.7kg and 3kg respectively, while a rather more substantial 7kg vanishes if you tick the box for the titanium exhaust. Tick all the boxes and you'll be looking at £18,400 in the plus column, aka your actual £65,800 Elise.

And it's one of these that Lotus has laid on for a few laps of its test track, where it should be possible to appreciate the effect of the ace-looking aero kit and its 125kg of downforce at 140mph. The already impressive stiffness of the bonded body structure further benefits from a T45 motorsport roll-over hoop, while the suspension gets Bilstein dampers and Eibach coils that are respectively 12 and 9 per cent firmer in compression than before front and rear and 20 and 30 per cent firmer in rebound. Track cred is further enhanced by Yokohama Advan A048 LTS covers for the forged alloy rims, which if used with the optional £1500 two-piece disc brakes jettison 4kg of unsprung weight. File the lithium-ion battery, polycarbonate rear screen and carbonfibre race seats under 'every little bit helps'.

And so off we go. As you might

surmise, it's probably impossible to have more instantly accessible fun in a car round the two-mile Hethel track than in this one. The fusion of finesse and force is extraordinary. All the high-speed stuff is taken more or less flat, the long, long right-hander called Windsock at a barely believable 105mph. And the usually tricky Graham Hill complex is easier to nail than ever, the Cup 250 slicing through the switches and riding the kerbs like Marcel Hirscher attacking the giant slalom.

So precise is the steering, so physical and full of textured and shaded feel, it gives you the confidence to do just that. You quickly learn that the Cup 250 is a supremely skilled poise and purchase practitioner, parlaying serious stonk into fairly stunning speed through a polished fusion of grip, neutrality and benign adjustability. Going fast seems almost trivially easy.

In keeping with a dynamic template that reaches all the way back to Colin Chapman's first principles, the Elise Cup 250 is absurdly, addictively agile, engaging and entertaining. The price is high but, remarkably, the payback is higher still. **X**

David Vivian (@davidjvivan)

Specification

Engine	Power	Torque	0-62mph	Top speed	Weight	Basic price
In-line 4-cyl, 1798cc, supercharged	243bhp @ 7200rpm	184lb ft @ 3500-5500rpm	4.3sec (claimed)	154mph (claimed)	917kg (269bhp/ton)	£47,400

+ The Elise just keeps on giving **■** Ultimate spec doesn't come cheap

evo rating ★★★★★

Bentley Continental GT prototype

The all-new Continental GT promises to prioritise sporting credentials to a far greater degree than the original. We get a taste of what's in store

THE SILHOUETTE IS certainly familiar. So is the aristocratic throb of the big W12 at idle, but the driving experience is alien for something hailing from Crewe. Fourteen years after its inception, the original Continental GT has matured into a vastly improved machine compared with those blunt, wallowing coupes of 2003, but the truth is a VW Phaeton's underpinnings can only be honed to a certain degree. Physics will always tell. So here at last is an all-new Conti GT, and it promises to be a very different beast.

It's based on the new VW Group MSB platform, better known to you and me as the new Porsche Panamera. However, not only has 200mm been snipped from the big Porsche's wheelbase, but Bentley engineers were sitting at the table with their colleagues from Stuttgart even at a conceptual stage.

The result is that Bentley has gained Porsche technology such as the PDK transmission and the 'hang-on clutch' 4WD system. In turn, Panameras benefit from increased localised stiffness in certain areas to boost rigidity. Why? Because Bentley demanded it, knowing its car could not afford the road noise and refinement levels tolerable to Porsche customers.

As you might expect, the new platform is much stiffer, stronger and lighter than its ageing predecessor. Proportionally, the car is much more coupe-like. In terms of exterior dimensions, not a lot has changed, but the front wheels are pushed significantly further forward, the engine moved rearwards and the car's beltline is now higher. The result, disguised on these rough development cars, with their bulky cladding mimicking the hunched form of the current car, is



Above and left: don't be fooled by the disguise – the clunky cladding hides what will be a much more svelte body than that of the outgoing Continental GT



a much leaner, sportier aesthetic. The weight distribution is also significantly improved, with a 52:48 split front to rear (the old GT was 56:42), and the car is around 100kg lighter. OK, so that's still over two tons, but then Bentley isn't skimping on the luxury aspect.

The W12 remains the centrepiece of the Continental GT range. It's essentially the heavily revised unit introduced in the Bentayga SUV (evo 217). While no official figures have been released yet, bet on around 650bhp with 664lb ft of torque. As mentioned, it's now connected to

'No official figures have been released, but bet on around 650bhp with 664lb ft'

Porsche's latest twin-clutch 'box. Gone too is the old Torsen centre diff with its fixed 60:40 torque split, replaced by Porsche's electronically controlled clutch. The new GT is 100 per cent rear-wheel drive almost all of the time, only sending torque to the front when slip is detected.

For a car as multi-faceted and complex in character as a luxury GT, it would be foolhardy to draw any sweeping conclusions from a handful of laps around Anglesey Circuit and a passenger ride across South Africa's northern territories a few months previously. However, one thing is

obvious: no car wearing a Bentley badge has ever driven like this.

The good news starts the moment you open the door. The driving position is much more rakish than before, the steering wheel coming out to meet you, and the view through the letterbox windscreen imposing in a classic, big-grand-touring style.

Although the fit-and-finish on these development cars is still understandably a work in progress, it's clear the Conti will once again have an interior to wow, with acres of timber and a surprise-and-delight



feature I won't spoil for now. At last, a thoroughly modern electronic architecture allows Bentley to offer a cutting-edge infotainment setup, the 12.3in widescreen system from the Panamera being redeveloped with a unique Bentley front end.

Traditionalists will be relieved to see a smattering of buttons on the centre console. They're part of engineering chief Rolf Frech's belief in keeping things simple. That's also borne out by his approach to driving modes. Yes, the GT has Comfort, the everyday 'Bentley' mode and Sport, plus an 'Individual' mode that can be tailored by the driver, but there is just a single setting for steering response regardless of the mode selected.

'The steering is the main point of contact between the driver and the car,' says Frech, preaching from a gospel close to our hearts at **evo**. 'I don't like adapting to different steering modes. I wanted a really precise centre-point – not with a heavy offset either side, but nearly linear behaviour.'

It's the steering I notice first. It's not especially weighty – no surprise in a luxury car – but it has an accuracy and a lack of stiction that lead the driver to trust its actions.

Bentley's other secret weapon is the 48-volt active anti-roll system, as seen on the Bentayga. Here, the electro-mechanical roll bars aren't so much about just stabilising the body as separating that function from the other tasks the springs and pneumatic dampers undertake.

In short, the new GT feels perfectly at home on the circuit. Frech mentions the ubiquitous Ring testing as part of the one-million-kilometre test-fleet programme, and notes wryly that the old car struggles to do a lap at speed without cooking its brakes. Here, even after several enthusiastic laps, the Conti's cast-iron discs give no complaint. This is also the first time that I've really sensed the fire in the W12's aluminium belly. The noise will be toned down for production, but it has a pleasingly gritty howl, sharp throttle response and predictably massive acceleration.

Most notably, the whole car feels vastly more responsive – up on its toes after the blundering mass of the old GT. Before, it was all about wiping off all the speed, trying to get it to turn in and then waiting, and waiting, until it was safe to get on the power. The new car is much defter. It can

'The whole car feels vastly more responsive and up on its toes'

Below: infotainment system is a huge step on from the dated offering in the current Conti (it's also not giving away many clues as to how the new car will look)

be turned in on the brakes and steered around on the throttle, the line adjusted with a lift. Hauling hard out of a turn, you sense the torque being redistributed, the GT adopting a neutral attitude, the gear ratios clicking through instantly.

'We have maintained the luxury but really moved the boundaries on performance with the new car,' says Frech. We await a road drive of the finished product to fully experience that, but there's no doubt, based on this first taster, that this is a tremendously exciting new car and potentially a watershed moment for the marque. ✕

Adam Towler (@AdamTowler)



Specification

Engine	Power	Torque	0-62mph	Top speed	Weight	Basic price
W12, 5950cc, twin-turbo	c650bhp @ n/a	c664lb ft @ n/a	3.8sec (est)	210mph+ (est)	c2140kg (c309bhp/ton)	TBC

➤ Herculean engine; chassis gives the driver something to think about ➤ We've only driven it on the smooth tarmac of a race circuit

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RICHARD MEADEN

It's all too easy to moan about the seemingly extortionate prices attached to new performance cars, but is that actually the case? Meaden investigates

IT HAS ALWAYS STRUCK ME AS A HAPPY AND fortuitous coincidence that almost from the moment we launched **evo** back in 1998, we've experienced an unbroken boom in the quality, quantity, frequency and diversity of new high-performance cars brought to market.

From hot hatches to supercars, the kind of kit we all love to drive or dream of owning has enjoyed a renaissance. Not only have these cars got quicker, safer and more sophisticated, but they are also more reliable, more capable and more exploitable. And with the rise of previously artisanal marques such as Aston Martin, Bentley, Lamborghini, Ferrari, McLaren and even Porsche, there are far more fast cars being built.

One thing I hadn't paused to consider is how much we're paying for these cars relative to the past. Are they better value, costing us more, or merely keeping pace with inflation? In an attempt to find out, I've taken three benchmark **evo** cars – the Golf GTI, BMW M3 and Porsche 911 Turbo – rummaged through some old magazines (those randomly selected are from the mid-'90s and mid-'00s) for list prices, then crunched the numbers through an inflation calculator. I've also popped in a few other cars – wildcards, if you like – to further test the theory and inject a bit of fun.

In 1995, a five-door Golf GTI was listed at £13,745, a 3-litre E36 M3 coupe was £33,850 and a 3.6-litre Porsche 911 Turbo was £91,950. The same cars today are officially listed at £28,575, £56,385 and £128,692 respectively. Apply the effects of inflation and those 1995 prices equate to £25,120 for the VW, £61,865 for the Beemer and a whopping £168,000 for the Porsche.

OK, so that era of Golf GTI was a bit of a stinker, but if you take a GTI from 2005 (when the excellent Mk5 was on sale) its list price of £20,635 becomes £29,100 when corrected – more than today's Mk7.5. Interestingly, if you fast-forward by the same ten years, to 2005, the 911 Turbo's list price actually dropped, to £90,520. That's £131,500 in today's money, which is near as dammit the equivalent of today's 991.2 Turbo – an indication of Porsche's progression from purveyor of largely hand-built and rather quirky cars to a prolific and hugely profitable global brand.

And now for those wildcards. Look back to the 2003 launch of the Porsche Carrera GT and it was listed at £416,058. Crunch

that through the inflation calculator and it equates to £669,637, which is actually more than the £652,849 Porsche asked for the 918 Spyder in 2013. Compare this with the Ferrari F50, which was £330,000 in 1995 – £603,121 in today's money – and the LaFerrari's £1,150,000 list price and it's clear Ferrari's pricing has shifted to exploit the number of millionaires and billionaires prepared to pay huge premiums for these limited-run cars. With LaFerrari values now hovering somewhere in the region of £2.5m, you can't really blame Ferrari for upping the price of entry.

It's much the same story with Ferrari's entry-level supercar, the 488 GTB, which is listed at £184k. Back in 2004, a 360 Modena was £103,275, or £150k when inflation is applied. Once again, Ferrari is working its brand equity to profitable effect.

However, try a supersaloon such as the BMW M5 and if you look back to the mid-'90s, the 335bhp, 3.8-litre six-cylinder E34 model was on sale at £52,480, or £96,000 in today's money. The final list price for the just-retired, 552bhp F10 M5? Just under £74,000. The same is true of AMG's C36. It was £39,995 in 1995, or £73,100 in today's money; 2017's equivalent – the C63 AMG – is £59,800. They might not be the rarities they used to be, but today's M and AMG models offer terrific

bang-per-buck value compared with their pricey predecessors.

Perversely, the used-car market often requires deeper pockets, relatively speaking. Or at least it does in the area of the market we tend to inhabit, largely because the sought-after stuff now enjoys such strong residual values. Think BMW 1M. Cars that are highly rated against their direct replacements tend to hold their value better than ever before, but if you choose well, the initial hit of depreciation suffered by the first owner will help you buy a bit above your budget. Even better, those strong residual values should look after you in the longer term. We've explored the phenomenon with our 'New versus Old' series of tests in this very issue.

Bargains? Well, there are a few. Most notably the 996 Carrera – our first eCoty winner, don't forget. Early Bentley Conti GTs are for buttons, Aston V8 Vantages likewise, not to mention a plethora of affordable AMG Mercs and RS Audis. Whichever way you slice it, these are good times to be buying fast cars, new or used. So cast all doom-laden talk of autonomous cars, draconian policing and super-heated classic markets aside and fill yer boots. ☒

'Once again, Ferrari is working its brand equity to profitable effect'



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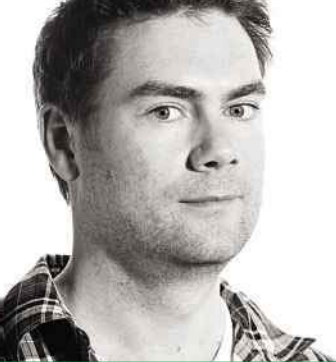
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RICHARD PORTER

Posers look away – Porter’s on the warpath and he’s got an increasingly popular options-list staple in his sights

WHEN YOU ORDER YOUR McLAREN 720S, you will be faced with a bewildering series of choices. Do you want a sports exhaust? Do you want orange seatbelts? Do you want a lap-timer and three built-in cameras? Do you want an ashtray? That last one is only 50 quid, making it something of a bargain next to the £150 fire extinguisher or the £510 banjo strap to hold down your bag. And we haven’t even got to the carbonfibre yet.

With the 720S, you can have carbon on everything. Carbon splitter, carbon vents, carbon intakes, carbon bumpers, carbon diffusers, carbon seat-backs. If you’re feeling really flush, why not spec the carbonfibre exterior mirror arms, a snip at £3500? Play around with the McLaren configurator and you’ll find there’s no part of the car that can’t be optionally rendered in carbon, to the extent that it would be unsurprising to find checkboxes for carbon tyres and a carbon windscreen. Spend too long on there and you become so snared in a world of carbon options that you start to lose all perspective on what ‘carbonfibre’ actually means. Can this be carbonfibre? What are carbonfibre? Am I carbonfibre? A lovely portion of carbonfibre please, nurse.

McLaren isn’t alone in this, of course. Ferrari and Lamborghini will happily slather vast swathes of your next supercar in carbon weave if you choose. Mercedes will take £3370 and give you carbon fillets in the bumpers ‘n’ skirts of your C63. Hand Jaguar £1045 and they’ll garnish the dash in your XE S with the stuff. Everyone’s in on the carbon-trimming game these days, which is fine except for one teeny, tiny little problem. Carbonfibre is sodding horrible.

Obviously I wouldn’t be saying this if I were an F1 driver and heading directly towards something likely to cause an uncomfortable accident, such as a barrier, tyre wall or Lance Stroll. In that context carbonfibre is absolutely marvellous stuff. It’s light, it’s strong, and top-end motorsport would be much worse off without it. As a functional item, I’ve nothing against carbonfibre at all.

As a cosmetic add-on, however, it’s time we all admitted that it’s ugly, unpleasant, and incredibly vulgar. If you do it with the micron precision and mirror-image weave of Pagani, I can see

there’s something mildly pleasing about it, but bog-standard dashboard-trim carbonfibre, especially the fake, printed stuff, just looks like a ’70s telly gone out of tune.

I’m sure some car designers think it’s interesting and technical, but it’s not. Even slathered with a glossy lacquer it looks jagged and raw. That’s fine on a racing car, where it’s there to do a job, but as a cosmetic add-on it’s vile. You wouldn’t have the stuff in your house, would you? Carbonfibre is so nasty to look at that it wouldn’t be at home even amongst the black leather and depressing laminate floor of a divorced-dad flat. So why is it being smeared all over our cars like Ron Dennis’s idea of a dirty protest?

‘Why is carbonfibre being smeared all over our cars like Ron Dennis’s idea of a dirty protest?’

Well, you might say, it’s weight-saving. Except it isn’t. Switching aluminium dash veneers or black air-dam inserts for pieces of carbon just makes your car look worse. If it was all about the weight-saving, the car companies could run to a few nanograms of paint on top to hide the wretched stuff from view. But they don’t, because this kind of carbonfibre is there to be seen. Specifically, it’s there so that awful bores can nod knowingly as if it’s truly making their handling better, when in truth they could make a more significant contribution to mass reduction by going for a sturdy turd.

There’s a lot of nasty carbonfibre around at the moment, but I struggle to think of a more egregious example than the ugly weave that comes as standard on the roof of the generally disappointing BMW M3. That’s a weight-saving measure, the company might claim. And yet the M3 also comes with light-up M badges in each of the front seats. So it’s not serious about saving weight, it’s just serious about appealing to clueless buffoons.

However, I wouldn’t say the same about the McLaren 720S. I know John Barker had some reservations when he drove it in *evo* 234, but it sounds like a phenomenal piece of engineering, right down to the entirely appropriate and legitimate use of carbonfibre for the cleverly designed central cell. It’s a remarkable looking thing too, and in years to come I think we’ll look back on it as a notable moment in the evolution of supercar styling. Just as long as we can find an example that hasn’t been covered in cosmetic bloody carbonfibre. ☒



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TED KRAVITZ

F1 team radio gives us a PR-free glimpse at who the men behind the wheel really are. Kravitz considers the consequences of careless talk

I F SOMEONE – EVERYONE, ACTUALLY – COULD listen in to what you say when you're alone in your car, what would they think? In my case they'd be hearing a mix of Yiddish insults learned from my grandmother and pretty much every Anglo-Saxon swear word on Ofcom's category A list. And unless you're giving a lift to a member of the clergy, or you are a member of the clergy, you're probably similar.

By extension, if you knew everyone was indeed listening in on everything you say when you're alone in your car, you probably wouldn't say that much. Strangely, that doesn't apply to Formula 1 drivers. Take a cool-as-you-like, slightly spoiled young sportsman, add stress, physical exertion, a bit of red mist and the white-hot focus of competition, and voila! Self-restraint jettisoned from the cockpit. That's the beauty of Formula 1 team radio, where the PR pretence drops and we get to hear what the drivers really think of their team, their car, the governing body, and their fellow competitors.

Team radio is valuable because once it's out there, it can't be bluffed away – it's a known known. This is especially true when drivers bite the hand that feeds and tear a strip off their own team, inevitably following a cock-up that's cost them the race.

The drivers know the team can hear it. They know the viewers can hear it. But they're so angry and frustrated they just have to blurt it out. Some say such frankness is intended to make a very public point to people higher up the chain of command. But I'm not sure that's true. The driver hasn't got time to calculate the right words for maximum political effect, he just wants to tell the incompetent idiots on the pit wall what he really thinks of them. Daniel Ricciardo's words upon losing last year's Monaco GP – 'Save it. Nothing you can say can make that any better' – were as cutting as Kimi Raikkonen's 'Why didn't you stop me when I asked you?' and as revealing as Mark Webber's 'Not bad for a number 2 driver – cheers.'

Much of the time team radio just confirms what the viewers already know: that a car is a dog. Drivers sound optimistic in interviews before the weekend starts, saying positive things about how their package is improving, only for the facade to drop spectacularly on Sunday afternoon: 'I've never raced

with so little power in my life' (Fernando Alonso), 'We look like amateurs' (Fernando Alonso) and the succinct 'Embarrassing, very embarrassing' (yup, him again).

Something that's definitely not premeditated is when drivers criticise their fellow competitors, not least because they'll have to look them in the eye in the shared Learjet back to Nice when the race is over. It is probably a bit embarrassing when you've told the world, as Jenson Button did, that a rival 'thinks he's quick, but he's not', or more directly, Sebastian Vettel's conclusion that 'He's a f***er, that's what he is.'

But the team radio insults that drop drivers in real trouble are those directed at the stewards or FIA race director Charlie Whiting. In Mexico last year Sebastian Vettel, labouring under the misapprehension that Whiting had approved an evasive driving tactic by Max Verstappen, let forth with the immortal: 'You know what, here's a message for Charlie: f*** off! Honestly, f*** off.' I loved the 'honestly'.

The FIA were ready to ban Vettel for a race for this equivalent of swearing at the referee but a grovelling letter of apology from Seb to Charlie and the FIA saved his bacon. Most recently, in Canada, Daniil Kvyat seemed to refer to someone in authority as a 'c***'. This was badly bleeped so you could more-or-less hear exactly what he was saying on TV, which, while amusing, was a bit close to the bone, but at least we have this precious

insight into what kind of people our heroes actually are.

That's especially valuable as the last 20 years have seen the gradual disappearance of F1's colourful characters. Whether it's the James Hunt-style shagger, schemers such as Nelson Piquet or Gerhard Berger and his pranks. Where have they all gone and do we care?

Damon Hill does. He's started the Professional Racing Drivers' Association, to give racing drivers a voice, or rather give them back the voice they once had before they were too petrified of saying something that would land them in PR hot water. Kimi Raikkonen learned early that you'll save yourself time and mental effort if you effectively say nothing. This is a shame, as Kimi is one of the few maverick personalities on the grid. The drivers are the stars, these are our heroes: Set them free. ❌

'When drivers criticise fellow competitors, they'll have to look them in the eye in the jet back to Nice'

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HONDA CIVIC TYPE R

HYPER TYPE R





by ADAM TOWLER

PHOTOGRAPHY by ASTON PARROTT

The Civic Type R is back, with more power and a brand new platform that promises to address the shortcomings of the old car. Has Honda succeeded?



'Honda claims the Type R is the only hot hatch to generate real downforce, not merely cancel lift'



T'S A MONDAY MORNING ON THE

German autobahn network, somewhere in the rural east. The new Honda Civic Type R is cruising at 150mph, 19mph short of its potential, perpetually frustrated in its attempts to reach maximum velocity by traffic on this two-lane stretch towards Leipzig. The Civic is rock-solid – a testament to the considerable attention that's been paid to aerodynamic efficiency, to the extent that Honda claims the Type R is the only hot hatch to generate real downforce, not merely cancel lift. I can almost sense the vortices, gusts and eddies tumbling from the porcupine ridges of the vortex generators at the end of the roof and onto that brazen rear wing. Ahead of me, the bonnet is vibrating unashamedly in the slipstream, the new central air intake that protrudes into your peripheral vision wobbling like the hump of another Japanese performance favourite from two decades ago. Did someone say Subaru Impreza 2000 Turbo?

And in a way, the comparison isn't so far-fetched. Why? Because at £31,000 – or around £300 per month on Honda's finance – the Honda apes the relative affordability (inflation considered and for performance relative to the mainstream) of the fabled Impreza. That it has four doors, loads of room in it and a generous boot; that it absolutely pulverises a challenging road while remaining everyday useable; that it hails from Japan (OK, via Swindon); that it's an object of derision for many on account of its looks... well, you must admit, it's not a completely outlandish comparison. And yes, I did say 'everyday usable' intentionally – the latest Type R is nothing like the last one.

Hideki Kakinuma is described by his colleague and translator as a 'living legend within Honda'. A suspension engineer, he created and led the team that has developed this new car. His job was made infinitely easier thanks to the arrival of the new Civic model, and for some fairly obvious reasons.

It is quite simply a far better starting point. It's 20mm lower overall, so the quasi-MPV look has been consigned to the past. It's 38 per cent stiffer torsionally and the body-in-white is 16kg lighter. The weight distribution has moved slightly rearwards, which is helpful, and in the Type R the driver's hip point is 25mm lower than before. The wheelbase, meanwhile, has grown by 105mm. Allied to that is the return to a multi-link rear





‘When you really go for it, there’s a fervour to the Type R that’s as hard-edged as a diamond drill bit’

axle, not seen on a Civic Type R since the halcyon days of the EP3 model at the turn of the millennium. Kakinuma is candid on what this means for the Type R.

‘The multi-link [setup] is of huge benefit to [suspension] geometry stability. A torsion beam has a certain movement under lateral forces, which is not always good for toe stability. It tends to toe out,’ he says.

As such, the new car has much more precise control of its rear suspension, the rear wheels toeing in under braking for stability. I ask if that contributed to the record Ring time for a front-driven road car of 7min 43.8sec.

‘It’s particularly good at Aremberg,’ says Kakinuma, referring to a deceptive right-hander approached at very high speed. ‘The Nürburgring is the only known environment to evaluate all aspects of the car. We wanted the car to be fast, but also confidently fast, and for that to be replicated on the public road. You can induce oversteer at low speeds with this car by lifting the throttle, but it’s much more controllable than with the old car. It’s very important that the car is fun to drive.’

In addition, Kakinuma notes that the multi-link setup improves ride quality, negating the awkward lateral forces on the dampers that compromise their performance. Talking of dampers, they now have three settings tied to three driving modes (instead of two): Comfort, Sport and +R. We are promised a greater breadth of ability in both directions.

The engine, six-speed gearbox and brakes are largely carried over from the FK2, with only detail changes. Honda has shied away from the power race, finding only another 10bhp to take the total to a still feisty 316bhp, with torque remaining at 295lb ft. The increase in performance is mainly due to reducing exhaust backpressure, but there’s more to the story than that. One of our key criticisms of the old car, after its firm ride, was

Above left: gearshift was a highlight of the previous CTR, so the fact it is largely unchanged here is good news. **Above:** aero addenda won’t be to all tastes, but Honda claims it’s essential at speed

the driveability and refinement of the engine. Honda has started from scratch with its calibration, apparently stripping away a lot of the code that was supposed to aid refinement but which inadvertently dulled response. Switching to a single-mass flywheel has helped, too, and there’s been a seven per cent reduction in the final drive ratio (partly negated by larger wheels).

The shift quality of the manual ‘box was one of the best bits about the outgoing car, and the engineers proudly state that its 40mm shift stroke is just 5mm more than that of the S2000. Why is it so good? Because it’s ‘a Honda gearbox made by Honda’ is the gist of the reply. The same logic also explains why there’s no twin-clutch auto option, as Honda doesn’t have one, and as Kakinuma remarks with a laugh, the nine-speeder from the NSX doesn’t fit. He also makes the point that real hot hatches don’t have automatic gearboxes.

It takes just a hundred metres to feel the difference all of the above has made. Essentially, the new Type R is no more taxing to drive in traffic than a Golf GTI. The ride quality is vastly better than it was, the structure feels so solid, and the engine is quieter, doing without the resonances of before. It is a most unexpected transformation, and after a while I’ve completely forgotten how wild, or awesome, or awful (I’m going to leave that one entirely up to you) the exterior design is. Only when a car draws alongside and its occupants offer an enthusiastic thumbs up does what’s outside return to the forefront of my mind.

The latest Civic also provides a much more appealing backdrop inside the cabin. Sure, the finer points of its execution – the detail design, the fonts, the materials where you notice them most – don’t quite match a Golf’s, as clichéd as it may be to say, but it is a huge improvement on the old car and much more cohesive overall. Moreover,



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
Front suspension MacPherson struts, coil springs, adaptive dampers
Rear suspension Multi-link, coil springs, adaptive dampers
Brakes Ventilated 350mm front discs, solid 305mm rear discs
Wheels 20in front and rear
Tyres 245/30 R20 front, 245/30 R20 rear
Weight 1380kg
Power-to-weight 233bhp/ton
0-62mph 5.7sec (claimed)
Top speed 169mph (claimed)
Basic price £30,995
On sale Now

evo rating ★★★★★

the Type R absolutely aces the contact points that really matter: the gorgeous red bucket seats, a fine driving position, the small alloy ball of the gearlever, the pedal location, a slim but shapely steering wheel. Just sitting in the car makes you want to drive it flat out.

The turbocharged 2-litre unit may have none of the theatricals associated with VTEC engines of yore, but it still has a definable character very separate to a VW Group TSI motor. Once again, it revs strongly to the 7000rpm red line, sacrificing just a little immediacy at very low revs for sharpness later on. It sounds good, too: not tuneful, as such, but natural, without a hint of electronic fakery and with the breathy exhaust note of an old Mégane RS under heavy load. And it's fast. With only 1380kg to haul, rather than the 1524kg of a Focus RS, for example, the Civic snaps to attention and then charges forward with real conviction. Because the power continues to build right up to the red line, it's easy at first to snag the limiter, a brusque device that restrains the engine to a *blat-blat-blat*.

But the previous car was also fast, and actually, on the right road, there's no denying it was a lot of fun as well. Thankfully, for all its additional qualities, admirable though they are, the new one is very much in the same mould. When you really go for it, there's a fervour to the Civic Type R that's as hard-edged as a diamond drill bit.

The steering rack now uses a variable ratio, so most inputs are small ones, and while it's not exactly dripping with feel, it's well weighted and accurate, acquiring more weight in Sport and +R modes. You probably won't be surprised to hear that grip is rarely an issue given the wider, 245-section front tyres now used. They're on 20in wheels as standard, with a new and specially developed Continental ContiSport 6 tyre that Honda (boldly) claims is a match for a Michelin Pilot Sport Cup 2. There's a mild torque-steer effect under full acceleration, but nothing that's uncomfortable, and most of the time the Civic is unerringly precise in everything it does.

These are the special moments in the Type R: when the engine is zipping up and down the rev range, the speed of your heel-and-toe downchanges limited only by the dexterity of your lower leg. Braking deep into a corner will shake the rear axle free but the Civic is mostly more tied down than that. It's a big car – every time I climb out and look back, I think it's more like a sports saloon than a hatch – and that contributes to a different feel than, say, the traditionally hyperactive French hot hatch recipe. That's not to say this Civic Type R is dull in any way, because it isn't. It's wildly exciting, in fact.

It'll take British roads and the very severe test we're intending to put the Type R through to really know if Honda has built a hot hatch class-leader for the first time in its history. But on this evidence, its rivals should be very worried indeed. ✕

Below left: engine has been tuned to offer sharper responses, while a reduction in exhaust back-pressure is largely responsible for the 10bhp increase over the old car. **Below:** powerful Brembo brakes have been carried over



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 M5 V10 » 548+ BHP (205 MPH)
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 1M » 411+ BHP
 M3 E90/92 » 445 BHP (+DE-LIMIT)
 M135i/ M235i » 402 BHP
 M4/M3 3.0T » 520+ BHP
 M5 F10/M6 (STAGE 1) » 680 BHP
 M5 F10/M6 (STAGE 2) » 730 BHP
 F10 520D » 240 BHP
 F10 530D » 305 BHP
 335i/135i/X6 » 370+ BHP (+DE-LIMIT)
 123D » 252 BHP

- 316D/216D/116D » 160 BHP
 318D/218D/118D » 225 BHP
 330D E90 » 296+ BHP
 320D E90 » 215 BHP
 420i/320i/220i/120i » 275+ BHP
 435i/ F30 335i » 390 BHP
 428i/328i » 295 BHP
 535D / 335D / X5 SD » 355+ BHP
 640D/335D/535D/435D » 390 BHP
 730D » 305+ BHP
 X5 4.0D / 740D » 370 BHP
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 C400 » 400 BHP
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 '500' 4.7 Bi-TURBO ALL MODELS » 498+BHP
 S65 (W222) » 780 BHP
 SL65 BLACK » 720+ BHP (+DELIMIT)
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 CL600 Bi-TURBO » 580+ BHP
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 997 TURBO/GT2 » 625+ BHP
 997 GT2 RS » 670+ BHP
 996 TURBO/GT2 » 600+ BHP
 997 CARRERA S PDK » 400+ BHP
 997 CARRERA S » 376+ BHP
 997 CARRERA PDK » 368 BHP
 997 CARRERA GTS » 435 BHP
 997 GT3 UP » 436 BHP
 BOXSTER 3.4S » 336+ BHP
 CAYMAN S » 342 BHP
 MACAN 3.0D » 315 BHP
 CAYENNE GTS » 440 BHP

- CAYENNE TURBO 4.8 » 578+ BHP
 CAYENNE TURBO S 4.8 » 600+ BHP
 CAYENNE 4.2 DIESEL » 450+ BHP
 CAYENNE DIESEL » 315+ BHP
 PANAMERA TURBO » 600+ BHP
 PANAMERA DIESEL » 315+ BHP

- EXOTIC / MISC**
 FERRARI CALIFORNIA » 487 BHP
 FERRARI 599 » 647 BHP
 FERRARI 430 » 525 BHP
 GALLARDO » 546 BHP
 LP560 » 608+BHP
 LP640 » 707 BHP
 HURACAN » 640+ BHP
 AVENTADOR » CALL FOR DETAILS
 MCLAREN MP4-12C » 700 BHP
 MCLAREN 650S » 720 BHP
 MURCIELAGO LP640 » 707 BHP
 MASERATI GHIBLI 3.0S PETROL » 470 BHP
 MASERATI GHIBLI 3.0 DIESEL » 400 BHP
 MASERATI GHIBLI 3.0 DIESEL » 312 BHP
 MASERATI GT/OPORT » 438 BHP
 MASERATI GT S / MC » 479+ BHP
 BENTLEY 4.0 T V8 » 690 BHP
 BENTLEY CGT / F-SPUR (INC 2013) » 680+ BHP
 BENTLEY GT SPEED (INC 2013 ON) » 695 BHP
 BENTLEY SUPERSPORT » 720+ BHP

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RPM
EQUALS
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MPG**



NEW VS USED

It's the ultimate car-buying conundrum: go for something new and shiny, or spend the same cash on a used machine that was previously out of reach?



NOT THAT LONG AGO, MAKING THE CHOICE BETWEEN A new and a used car was simplicity itself. You want peace of mind, the latest kit and that box-fresh smell? Easy. Simply head to a dealer, tick some option boxes and wait for your freshly minted motor. Want a bargain? Okay, take the same cash and sink it into something second-hand that's likely to be higher up the pecking order when it comes to performance and premium appeal.

However, these days the lines are a little more blurred. The proliferation of personal-contract-plan (PCP) finance deals has made it easier and far more affordable to get the keys to some very desirable metal. At the same time, manufacturer-approved used-car buying schemes and vastly improved mechanical

reliability mean purchasing pre-owned isn't so much of a leap into the unknown as it once was.

However you look at it, this is great news for people like us, because it means greater choice with fewer compromises. And to demonstrate, we've gathered together four disparate pairs of contenders to discover which makes the best buy – new or used. We've also dusted off the calculator and worked out what some of the essential real-life costs of running these cars will be.

There is one drawback to these encounters, though: you're guaranteed to lose hours constantly tweaking new-car configurator choices and trawling through the classifieds as you search for your perfect new or used partner.

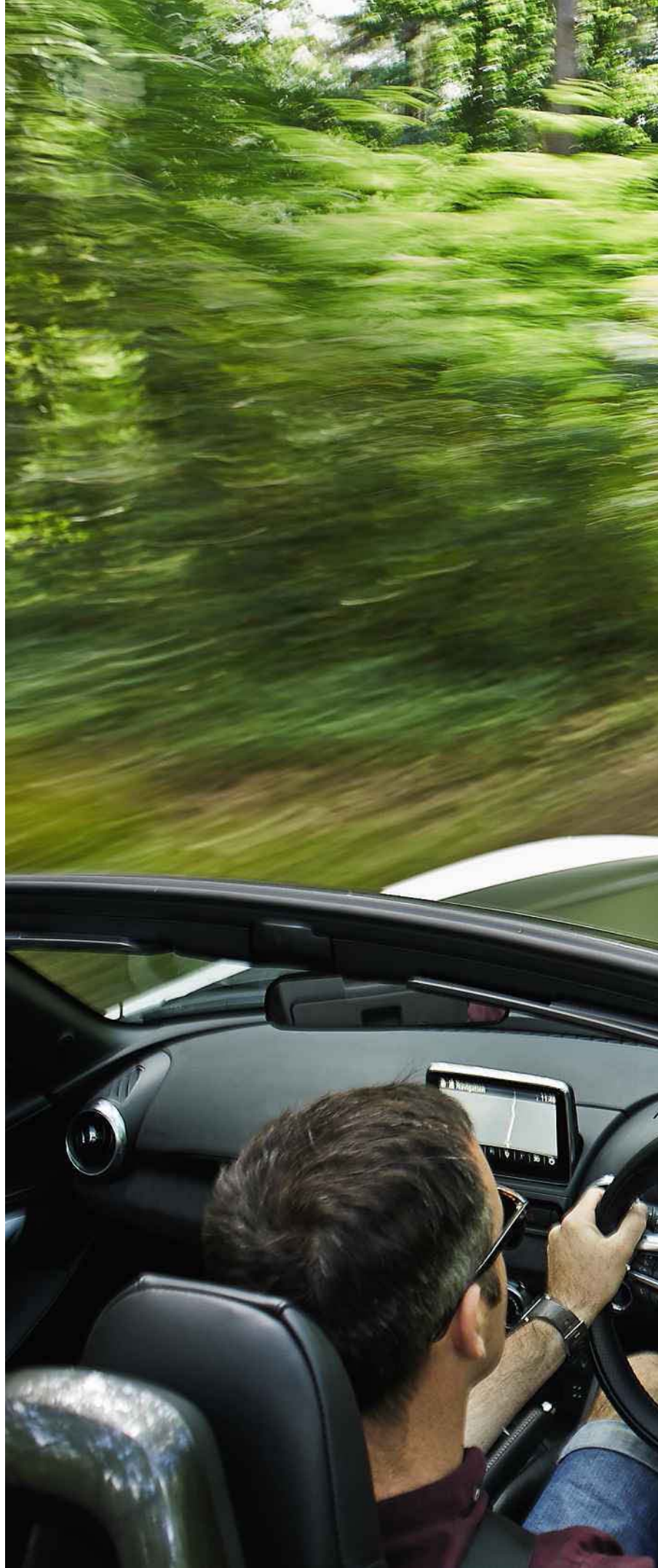


Running scared

Foregone conclusion, right? The second-hand Porsche Boxster will wipe the floor with the upstart Abarth? Well, not so fast, because the £27,000 124 Spider is quite the character

by ADAM TOWLER

PHOTOGRAPHY by
GUS GREGORY





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WIST THE KEY AND WAIT FOR THAT briefest sliver of a second: *whump-burrrrr*. Ah, bliss. There you are, old friend. That naturally aspirated flat-six catches with a yelp and settles into a gargling cold-start idle. Makes me go all tingly inside. I imagine if you'd just spent £30,000 on a second-hand 981 Boxster like this very car, it would make you smile too, and generally feel a glow of Zen-like happiness that, through your daily endeavours, the ups and the downs of life, it was there on your own driveway, every morning, come rain or shine. Yours. A proper Porsche.

That burst of feel-good adrenaline is such a big part of why we all go through the financial pain, sacrifice, arguments and everything else in the quest for the best performance car we can possibly afford. It has to make you smile. That the very same smile contorts into a grimace when a four-pot 718 Boxster fires up from cold is part of the problem Porsche is facing at the moment. Anyway, right

now I'm already falling back in love with the 981, and wondering what on earth is the point in a comparison between said German sporting marvel and an Abarth that's really a Fiat that's really a Mazda. However, I can tell you now that there is an interesting day ahead, and it won't end how you might think.

The Boxster has ruled the posh end of the roadster market ever since the very first, the 986, appeared in 1996. This is because it has always combined a largely painless ownership experience, surprising practicality and *that* badge with the attributes of being sublime to drive and properly quick with it. It's the sports car that appeals to both enthusiasts and the wider public, and no other manufacturer has quite managed to pull off the same trick.

As the last of the naturally aspirated Boxsters, the 981 holds a special place in all our affections, and residual values reflect that. Paradoxically, a 30,000-mile Boxster that's three to five years old





'The Abarth knows how to strike deep into the Boxster's soft underbelly'



Above left: Spider's 1.4-litre turbo engine is properly feisty, but no match for the Boxster's naturally aspirated flat-six. **Left:** difference in aesthetic approach between the elegant Porsche and the rally-inspired 124 Spider evident in their wheel designs

feels in the gut like a lot of car for the money, but it's also one that has retained a good proportion of its original sale price. To drive the Boxster is to love it, but I'm purposefully going to shy away from that at first as I know it well enough, and it's the braggadocio of the little Abarth parked alongside that begs to be investigated first.

Yes, it's dripping in retro marketing tinsel, but the Abarth's riffing on its maker's rally escapades with the original 124 Spider back in the early 1970s are rapidly grinding any cynicism out of me. Matt-black bonnet and bootlid? Paint named 'Turini 1975 White'? Those Scorpion badges? A 'Monza Record' exhaust? I just can't help it; resistance is futile.

Stripped of all these addenda, though, the 124 has all the hallmarks of a car designed around the hardpoints set for another model. It looks lovely from some angles, blocky and unconfident from others. It's patently an MX-5 at heart, and its swollen-in-places panelwork gives the impression, however absurd, that underneath the Italianate cladding lies a bemused Mazda, ready to emerge blinking into the sunlight.

But the little Abarth has every right to look cocky, and I'm about to discover why. You see, it knows something many others do not. It knows the way to strike deep into the soft underbelly of the Boxster, the bit almost no one gets to see. And I don't just mean the engine, hidden under its inspection hatch. I mean because the Abarth understands *fun*.

It's obvious the 124 isn't going to take itself too seriously from the moment the longitudinally mounted 1.4-litre four-pot coughs into life. It idles with a brazen off-beat gurgle that sounds like a canal boat manoeuvring through a lock. This is no apologetic, low-pressure modern turbo engine: it's

a bad-mannered street scrapper with surprisingly sharp throttle response and a lack of inertia, particularly when the 'Sport' toggle switch has been flicked forwards. Other than that switch, the Abarth is refreshingly free from adjustable this and that; you just jump in – almost literally when the roof is down – and drive.

That it drives very much like a current MX-5 is hardly a Dieselgate-esque revelation, but that's no bad thing in itself. There's less of the exaggerated roll and pitch found with Mazda's roadster, and while the stubby gearlever has the same delicious shift action, the engine it is connected to gives the car as a whole a distinctly different character.

The Abarth demands to be driven hard, everywhere. No, scratch that. It *begs* you, waves its arms around and bawls at you like a Neapolitan market trader, urging you to extract every last ounce of performance it can muster. It's impossible not to succumb to this persuasion in the finest tradition of sporting Italian cars. The turbocharged torque-to-weight ratio (a torque peak of 184lb ft means you have 176lb ft per ton) is the chief culprit. It pitches the Abarth's nose upward and shoves it forward whenever you demand it, and with an immediacy an MX-5 can't match.

It's not an especially quick car by modern standards – 0-62mph in 6.8sec is the claim – but rarely has a car illustrated a contempt for mere numbers so clearly. Because its 168bhp is so accessible, it's easy to use all of the Spider's performance so much more of the time. When I took the Abarth home on a warm summer's night I arrived at my destination in what felt like a cloud of brake dust, sweat and dead flies – and with a dazed smile on my face. The speeds hadn't been antisocial, but I'd had more fun on that journey than I can remember in just about anything else.

Suddenly, I'm no longer looking at the Porsche with the same sense of desire. There's something else that's troubling me, too – I've just glanced inside the cabin. It's a PDK. 'Oh come on, don't start all that,' I hear you say. And no, I'm not about to berate the car for having Porsche's excellent twin-clutch (even though, deep inside, the thought that it doesn't have the slick manual makes me rageful). The problem is it's a PDK without paddles. With the standard-issue push-me-pull-me lozenges on the steering wheel, both of which do the same thing, it essentially sends out the message that this car was specced to be driven around as an automatic. What a shame.

It's the related issue of gearing that's the 981's other significant flaw, for the ratios are simply far too long. Second stretches well beyond the legal motorway limit, which in a 'small' sports car is ludicrous. It's also bad news for the lovely, fizzy little 261bhp 2.7-litre motor in a way that's far less of an issue for the 3.4-litre S model. Because the standard car musters 'only' 206lb ft at a relatively high 4500rpm, it struggles to climb the heights of the ratios until it's in the final reaches of its rev-

band. Hence a good B-road becomes an exercise in the judicious use of the appropriate gears, with first often the reality on the really tight stuff if the engine isn't to bog down. Finding a manual car would resolve the problem of the unintuitive gearchange action, but it wouldn't solve the fundamental problem. Does anyone make lower final drives or new gearsets for 981s yet?

Otherwise, as you already know, the 981 is a gloriously polished drive, its handling beautifully fluid and balanced, its suspension never caught out by anything, all the controls with the uniformity of weighting and action that Porsche does so well. Yet after the Abarth there's a slight remoteness – a sense of passiveness to the experience that only peels back as the speeds rise. Everything is satisfyingly precise, but the car's competence, and the muted feedback of the electrically assisted steering rack, make it a more grown-up machine than its 987 predecessor, and it's only when you're troubling the top of the rev range and putting proper loads through the chassis that it really starts to talk back. It's a surprisingly big car too, requiring most of a lane on smaller country roads where the Abarth's slender physique bequeaths a multitude of choices through a corner.

The 124's relationship with the road is like that of a bluebottle caught on a sturdy breeze. It zips along, skipping over the bumps instead of crashing into them, the steering quick enough that any inputs need to be calm to avoid deliberately upsetting the car – it's all too easy to take corners in a series of jagged angles, rather than one fluid motion. Traction, at least in the dry, is rarely an issue, but let the boost rush in on a roundabout and you'll soon be teasing the standard-fit limited-slip differential in a gentle, entertaining way.

Of course, the Boxster is in a different league when it comes to refinement, long-distance comfort, driving position, fit-and-finish, panel gaps, instrumentation and so on. The Abarth is badly hamstrung by the lack of a reach-adjustable steering wheel, so anyone over six-foot has to adopt an 'arms straight' driving position as though they're Stirling in a 250F. It's a needless flaw. The rather high-set seats also lack shoulder support.

Michael Watkins, sales manager at Surrey-based Cridfords, where this Boxster is for sale, sells around six 981s a month, and confirms that their strength is how they appeal not only to enthusiasts but also to all sorts of buyers after 'a nice car'. Servicing is only every two years or 20,000 miles, and the cars are young enough that, for now, you can hope to avoid big bills. As for the Abarth, that's just under £30,000 with its Heritage Look pack.

Personally, my feelings are unchanged on the 981 Boxster. It's a stunning car – something I'd love to own, although not in this spec – and I can't imagine anyone being disappointed by one. However, quite a few of us at **evo** are now in love with a curious little Italian roadster whose soul is considerably bigger than its engine displacement.



Above: curvaceous Porsche is easily the more powerful car, yet overly long gearing and a surprisingly large footprint hamper it on narrow, twisty B-roads



‘Suddenly, I’m no longer looking at the Porsche with the same sense of desire’

SPECIFICATIONS & RUNNING COSTS

Abarth 124 Spider



In-line 4-cyl, 1368cc, turbo
 168bhp @ 5500rpm
 184lb ft @ 2500rpm
 1060kg
 161bhp/ton
 6.8sec (claimed)
 143mph (claimed)
 £26,920
 n/a
 £265 minor, £524 major
 £89 front and rear
 (Yokohama Advan Sport V105)
 Included (3 years)
 £200 first year, then £140 pa

★★★★☆

Engine	Flat-six, 2706cc
Power	261bhp @ 6700rpm
Torque	206lb ft @ 4500rpm
Weight	1310kg
Power-to-weight	202bhp/ton
0-62mph	5.4sec (claimed)
Top speed	164mph (claimed)
Basic price new	£38,810 (2015)
Used price now	£27,500-35,000
Servicing	£480 minor, £610 major
Tyres	£141 front, £170 rear (Dunlop Sport Maxx RT 2)
Warranty	£700 per annum
Road tax	£280 per annum
evo rating	★★★★★

Porsche Boxster (981; 2012-2016)



VW GOLF R ESTATE v MERCEDES C63 AMG ESTATE

NEW  USED

Wagons roll!



*Four-wheel drive and 306bhp make VW's Golf R Estate
a formidable foe, but could you resist a generation-old
Mercedes C63 AMG Estate for the same money?*

by JAMES DISDALE

PHOTOGRAPHY *by* ASTON PARROTT



T WOULD HAVE BEEN ALL TOO EASY TO decide the outcome of this encounter on noise alone. You wouldn't even need to get behind the wheel; simply close your eyes and ask a willing assistant to fire each contender into life.

Car one catches quickly then immediately settles into an idle with just a hint of low-frequency burble. It's an unremarkable four-cylinder soundtrack, one that's overlaid with a dash of turbocharged *whoosh* when the throttle pedal is given a quick stab. It clearly means business, but it could be any car. Your pulse certainly isn't racing with the revs.

Move on to car two and there's a brief mechanical churning before the engine erupts with a flare of revs and a baritone blare that could only come from a very special V8. Squeeze the throttle and the soundtrack quickly changes from a rumble to a glorious cacophony of cracks and pops as the crank spins past 3000rpm. If you're not already smiling like a loon and thinking of your favourite driving roads, then your assistant's next job will be to check you for signs of life. We have a winner, surely?

Not so fast. If anything, the stark differences between the exhaust notes of our duo act as a metaphor for the head-versus-heart battle that defines this contest. Both are compact estate cars that'll set you back around £35,000, but they go about their business in very different ways.

In the blue corner is the freshly facelifted VW Golf R Estate, which oozes cutting-edge appeal and is packed with the latest performance-enhancing technology. In the white corner is a pre-loved W204 Mercedes C63 AMG Estate – an old-school muscle machine that's arguably the last of its kind.

Despite the differences, these cars do cover similarly broad briefs. For starters, they won't be weekend warriors or hidden away in a garage, waiting for high days and holidays. Instead, they'll be expected to earn their keep, tackling everything from the daily grind to frequent, just-for-the-hell-of-it blasts down roads that are only found when you take the long way home.

They also have to make sense when you do the sums – regular fill-ups and massive maintenance





bills can quickly lead from honeymoon to heartache when it comes to a family motor. Whichever way you look at it, these cars really do have the toughest of briefs, making the struggle between the sensible and the emotional hard to reconcile.

Nearly a decade after making its debut, and six years after this example rolled out of Affalterbach, the C63 still demands your attention. With its power-bulged bonnet, pumped-up wheelarches bursting with 19-inch rims, and a quartet of field-gun-style exhausts, the AMG is unlikely to be confused with a garden C-class wagon. This is a car that means business, and with a set of age-disguising vanity plates it still looks as fresh as a daisy. A really muscular and angry daisy, that is.

By contrast, the go-faster Golf looks a little, well, subdued. Eighteen-inch alloys, deeper front and rear bumpers and multiple tailpipes are the very minimum you'd expect for entry to the high-performance club, but in all other respects the R is just a little low-key. For some, the only way to go is incognito, but when you're dropping this amount of cash on what's essentially a mainstream estate, you want a little more razzamatazz. Advantage Merc.

Yet the tables are turned once you're inside. The pursuit of premium is stronger than ever these days, so nothing is likely to date a used car more than its interior – and the Mercedes is no exception. Where the Golf is all soft-touch materials, curved surfaces and slick touchscreens, the Mercedes is hard edges, heavily grained plastic and clumsy-looking switchgear. There's nothing wrong with the way it's screwed together – shiny steering-wheel rim and crumpled leather trim aside, our 37,000-mile example feels as tight as a drum – or the quality of materials; it's just a little old fashioned.

'The C63's hand-built V8 is one of the last of the great naturally aspirated engines'

Top left: it's turbo'd four-pot versus free-revving V8; this pair of engines couldn't be more different. **Left:** these compatriots are roughly matched for real-world pace, but which is the more fun?

Worst offender is the infotainment system, with its tiny five-inch screen, blocky graphics and almost dial-up levels of connectivity. There's Bluetooth, but that's about it. Smartphone disciples will feel far more at home in the CarPlay- and Android Auto-equipped Golf, which has wall-to-wall TFT screens and more access to the web than most internet cafes.

The AMG also has the more cramped rear and, crucially, the driver doesn't get as much seat and wheel adjustment. That means you sit higher in the Merc. You're also on more intimate terms with your passenger as there's not as much shoulder room. However, the C63 rides with greater suppleness than the occasionally stiff-legged VW – both are on passive dampers here, but the Golf is available with optional, and very worthwhile, adaptive items.

Okay, so maybe with all this talk of practicality and ride comfort we're listening too much to the head. Let's allow the heart have its say, because on the move the C63's wild side comes out to play, and it refuses to act its age.

You'll no doubt be familiar with the Merc's bombastic V8, but it's always worth revisiting its vital statistics. The hand-built 6.2-litre unit is one of the last of the great naturally aspirated engines, pumping out a thumping 451bhp at 6800rpm and a herculean 442lb ft. The latter arrives at a heady 5000rpm, but with plenty of twist available much lower down the rev range, the AMG feels quick from the get-go. Few engines offer such an intoxicating power delivery and, as we've already discovered, such a glorious soundtrack. There's so much to feel and hear when you bury the throttle that you find yourself gunning it at every available opportunity.

Despite its large capacity, the V8 needs working hard to give its best, only really starting to come



alive as the revs rise beyond 3000rpm. Get caught napping at low revs in a high gear and the turbocharged Golf will easily pull a couple of car lengths out of a corner.

In fact, despite its measly looking – in this company, at least – figures of 306bhp and 280lb ft, the VW has little trouble keeping the AMG in its sights. This is partly down to the benefits of forced induction (peak torque arrives at just 2000rpm), but mostly a result of its lighter kerb weight (1518kg plays 1720kg).

Factor in four-wheel-drive traction and easy-peasy launch control and the DSG-only VW will sprint from standstill to 62mph in a claimed 4.8sec. More impressively, it'll do pretty much the same figures come rain or shine. With perfect conditions and a peachy getaway, the more powerful Merc will cover the same benchmark in 4.6sec. That's remarkably close, yet the way they go about generating this performance is poles apart.

One word springs to mind when considering the Golf's tried-and-tested EA888 2-litre: 'clinical'. It's not particularly characterful, but there's no denying it gets the job done with ruthless efficiency. There's torque everywhere and once the turbo is boosting – from about 1800rpm – the VW accelerates with real vigour. Various drive modes sharpen the throttle response (and add weight to the electrically assisted steering), but whatever setting you choose, the R is never anything but blisteringly quick down the straights.

Yet there's no joy in extracting the performance. A clever sound-symposer adds a growl in the sportier drive modes, but your ears aren't fooled, and the linear delivery doesn't encourage you to wring every last rev out of the blown four-pot.

Back in the Benz the contrast couldn't be starker. Keep the big V8 on the boil and it's startling: not only are you assaulted by the NASCAR bellow as the needle on the rev-counter swings quickly

'Where the Benz can get scrappy, the Golf remains totally planted'

Above: Golf R's cabin unsurprisingly the more modern, but the step-up in kit and materials is an eye-opener. **Below:** 18in alloys the Golf, 19in for the C63



around to the 7000rpm war-paint, but the C63 also accelerates with real violence.

Perhaps more surprising is the effectiveness of the Merc's 7G-tronic transmission. The torque-converter is a bit old-hat these days, especially compared to the VW's rapid-fire seven-speed twin-clutch DSG, but it's perfectly suited to the AMG's 6.2-litre engine. And because the power delivery is far more progressive than with the current crop of turbocharged AMG motors (which dump great gobs of torque all in one sitting), traction is surprisingly strong. Bumpy or wet roads will have the ESP light flickering, but most of the time the Merc is impeccably behaved. In fact, the AMG is so approachable that you can switch off the electronic safety net without fear of sudden spikes of destabilising wheelspin.

This gives you the confidence to push the AMG hard through corners, where despite its greater mass it initially feels slightly lighter on its feet than the Golf. The steering isn't as quick or hefty, but it delivers more feedback, and the combination of prodigious power and rear-wheel drive gives you the option to trim your line using the throttle. It's a process that's as absorbing as it is entertaining.

Of course, with nearly 40,000 miles under its wheels, this Mercedes is starting to sag a little, and its older springs, dampers and bushes mean it can't hope to contain body movements nearly as well as the Golf. Try to match the R's outright speed through a corner and the discombobulation will result in white knuckles at best.

Where the Benz can get scrappy near its limit, the Golf remains totally unflappable and completely planted. And where the Merc is expressive and adjustable, the VW is taut and accurate. It simply demolishes torn and twisty British back roads with a laser-guided precision. The process is simple: stand on the brakes, turn-in, stamp on the throttle and then let the four-wheel drive sort out the rest.

This might paint the R as a one-dimensional companion, but it melds this incredible competence with genuine interaction. It won't be goaded into pulling the same hilarious shapes as the Merc, but if you want, the car's balance and trajectory can be subtly altered with a lift of the throttle. The clever AWD, meanwhile, shuffles torque so unobtrusively that the R feels like an agile front-wheel-drive machine with unbreakable traction.

So, the Golf is fast, fun and comes with the peace of mind that only buying a new car can bring, plus it'll return 30mpg (the Merc's consumption is hovering around 18mpg. Gulp!).

On the other hand, the AMG is a hand-assembled performance thoroughbred that's powered by one of the greatest engines of the last decade. It's also every bit as fast as the young pretender in a straight line, but even more fun to drive. And while the running costs will inevitably be higher, someone else has already shouldered the depreciation.

And then there's the noise. Sometimes, it really does pay to listen to your heart.



SPECIFICATIONS & RUNNING COSTS

Volkswagen Golf R Estate



In-line 4-cyl, 1984cc, turbo
 306bhp @ 5500-6500rpm
 280lb ft @ 2000-5400rpm
 1518kg
 205bhp/ton
 4.8sec (claimed)
 155mph (limited)
 £35,300
 n/a
 £185 minor, £399 major
 £102 (Goodyear Eagle
 F1 Asymmetric 2)
 Included (3 years)
 £800 first year, then £140 pa

★★★★★

Engine V8, 6208cc
Power 451bhp @ 6800rpm
Torque 442lb ft @ 5000rpm
Weight 1720kg
Power-to-weight 266bhp/ton
0-62mph 4.6sec (claimed)
Top speed 155mph (limited)
Basic price new £56,765 (2012)
Used price now £27,000-35,000
Servicing £200 minor, £800 major
Tyres £106 front, £117 rear
 (Goodyear Eagle F1 Asym.)
 £250-600 per annum
Warranty £535 per annum
Road tax £535 per annum
evo rating ★★★★★

Mercedes C63 AMG Estate (2008-2014)



BMW M4 COMPETITION PACK v NISSAN GT-R



NEW  USED

Face off



£60,000 buys a new BMW M4 with 444bhp, but could a lightly used example of Nissan's supercar slaying GT-R hold even more appeal?

by DAVID VIVIAN

PHOTOGRAPHY by ASTON PARROTT

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HE TRICK, OF COURSE, IS FINDING A relatively pure Nissan GT-R for sale – one that hasn't had a rolling power upgrade every time Dwayne Johnson arches an eyebrow in the tediously interminable *Fast & Furious* film franchise. Unless you buy a new one, it won't be easy.

Less a model line than a global phenomenon, Nissan's R35 has become, over its ten gradually evolved years of production, the internet's greatest automotive fascination. It's an already preternaturally gifted and rapid performance coupe that can be tuned to countless filmed Veyron-slaying heights on the drag strip. Thus, by proxy, it lives a poster-child existence as the people's champion, a sort of über-hypercar, capable of rinsing a LaFerrari or McLaren P1 any old day of the week. So if you think you can handle a blood-vessel-bursting 1500bhp GT-R, they're out there, and for considerably less than a million bucks.

Simon Fisher, on the other hand, wanted a more practical car to replace his Audi R8 V10 Plus, which he liked very much but which had a tendency to warm up the groceries in its front boot on the drive back from the supermarket. A GT-R seemed to fit the bill and, after filtering out a number of dubiously molested *Fast & Furious* wannabes, Simon bought a pristine 2015MY example with just 3000 miles on the clock. Not quite standard, it came with a Litchfield Stage 2 kit, around 590bhp (up from 542), adjustable Öhlins dampers and a 10mm drop in ride height. Seems a very reasonable way to spend £60,000 and I'm glad he's brought it along.

Or, for the same money, and arguably more practical still, Simon could have bought a just-facelifted BMW M4 Competition Package. He admits he's never really been into BMWs but, just as I am, he's curious to see how a new M-division product fares against the car some call 'Godzilla'. Outmatched? On paper, completely. Even with the extra 19bhp the Competition Package brings, 444bhp is nearly 100bhp adrift of the Nissan's standard-spec peak, which equates to a good number of seconds in a sprint to 100mph.

That was always a given. What should divert this comparison away from being a straight slug-fest, however, is the rest of the honing and new kit that comes with the Competition Package. It's aimed at making the on-limit handling of the rear-drive chassis less spiky and a more effective executor of the twin-turbo motor's bounteous mid-range torque. To this end, the M4's Active M Differential, along with the Dynamic Stability Control system, has been retuned to improve traction. Further dynamic support comes from new springs, dampers and anti-roll bars. Additionally, BMW says the

drive modes have been reconfigured and adaptive dampers are now standard fit.

Remarkably, when you factor in the modest £3000 price hike over a regular M4, the package also includes rakishly redesigned door mirrors and achingly pretty 20-inch wheels that mimic the design of those fitted to the M4 GTS. (However, our test car sports the 19-inch alloys from the standard M4 – a no-cost option that quite likely benefits ride and handling.) Cabin fettling includes lightweight sports seats with meaty bolsters and seatbelts with the BMW M colours woven into them. Nice touch.

Black paintwork does our BMW a big favour, adding a much-needed whack of subtlety by de-emphasising all the carbon bits, of which there are many – roof panel, boot lip spoiler, front ducts and aero and faux rear diffuser, to be exact. The upshot, for this car anyway, is that it looks stealthier and more integrated than the gaudily hued first batch of M4 press cars. Those machines accentuated what appeared to be a rather clunking disconnect between the essentially prim and delicate 4-series coupe's form and the bolt-on, battle-grade butchware.

The GT-R's oh-so-distinctive shape is now a decade old, but it still looks mean from any angle. A tad dated, maybe, but the Chris Hoy distribution of mass (most of it seems to be concentrated in the haunches) lends the profile a muscular forward impetus, especially with that 10mm drop. It's a large, heavy car that makes the pumped M4 look almost dainty, but the way one broad swathe of bodywork cuts into another works a little aesthetic magic that still turns heads.

Inside, both cars have a lot of configurability. For an owner, this means plenty of laborious fiddling around until optimisation is achieved, with alternative settings on standby for special conditions. With its iconic row of 'Race' buttons, the GT-R is a bit friendlier in this respect but painfully old-hat in others, and the gloomy cabin ambience is borderline depressing. Great seat and driving position, of course, but the M4's lightweight bucket locates torso slightly more firmly.

On the road, neither car makes a great noise. Their soundtracks are a melange of road-rush and atonal six-cylinder hash, the BMW's with additional exhaust-blare seasoning, the Nissan's a thinner, stinging mechanical edge. All right, we know that Japan's streetfighter is significantly the quicker of the two cars in a straight line, but it's the way the GT-R delivers its performance that remains, frankly, astonishing. Fine, it doesn't do the 'charisma thing' aurally, but the way the sublimely fast, silky double-clutch transmission makes

Right: M4's interior feels far more modern, light and ergonomically sussed than the GT-R's. **Far right:** both cars boast a half-dozen cylinders, only in different arrangements



‘The GT-R’s distinctive shape still looks mean from any angle’





everything seems much rosier. No, the M4 won't remind you of a small Lotus, but the faster you go, the friskier and more agile it becomes. Once you start to push really hard it's a car transformed, its real dynamic talent residing much closer to the limit of adhesion, where it seems to acquire almost balletic balance, agility and adjustability. In the regular M4, this can seem too much, requiring concentration to be focused on limiting oversteer to manageable proportions, but it gives the M4 Comp Pack an extra dimension to its dynamic personality that the mighty GT-R doesn't have.

Viewed with heartless objectivity, this could all have been over so quickly it would hardly have seemed a fight at all. A glint and blur of the GT-R's Samurai skills and the M4 is taken apart. Punishingly quick as the Beemer is, this GT-R's performance is in a different place, where McLarens and Ferraris roam. However hard you think you can corner in the German coupe before it begins to smear its sticky Michelin Pilot Super Sport rubber in gentle arcs on the surface of the road, the tweaked Japanese coupe corners harder, the optimum angle of attack merely requiring a suitable level of commitment and trust from the driver. This bleak overshadowing is no disgrace for the M4. If getting between two places on a challenging road as swiftly as possible is the objective, few cars on earth can live with a GT-R.

But where does that leave us? Not, as it transpires, with the BMW eating the Nissan's dust. Pull the focus back from ultimate abilities and the BMW not only starts to ask questions of the Nissan but also cunningly flips the argument, making you evaluate afresh what it is you really want and expect from this kind of car when that initial adrenaline-rush subsides. If the GT-R is a more immediately seductive proposition that can make stunning speed across the ground seem as easy as swallowing a pill, the M4 Comp Pack is much more of a slow-burner that you need to learn to extract the best from, and the layers run deep. Simply choose your weapon.

accelerating one tumultuous, fairground-ride surge is pretty devastating next to the (optionally) DCT M4's abruptly punctuated lunges.

Although the Competition Package liberates a little more power and top-end lung-capacity, the M4's straight-six is still a bit of a curiosity, possessing massive mid-range wallop but tempered by a reluctance to rev out with commensurate force – a combination not helped by gearing that leaves an awkward gap between second and third. Making a point of kissing the red line with every upshift is slightly less pointless than in the regular M4, but knowing when to optimally change up is still something of an acquired art. Get it right, though, and the M4 feels satisfyingly ballistic.

As a car to jump into and drive fast straightaway, however, Simon's 590bhp GT-R verges on the miraculous. The thing about the GT-R is that it doesn't matter whether you're an ice-cold pro going for a Nordschleife lap time or a revved-up mortal feeding purely off synaptic reactions and pumping adrenaline, the Nissan's all-drive chassis simply processes the inputs as speed across the ground – minimising mistakes, rewarding aggression and commitment, flattering in extremis. It makes you feel a better, braver driver than you are. Simply set everything to Race and go for it. It's impossible not to be staggered by the sustained speed, the instant, lag-free urge, the way the chassis, despite the resolute firmness of Simon's adjustable Öhlins setup, rides the road's humps, dips, kinks and cranky cambers. It carries absurd pace through the trickiest of bends with iron-fisted stability, even with half a turn of opposite lock wound on.

Stepping from the GT-R to the M4 is almost surreal. The BMW feels oddly ponderous, slow-witted and heavy by comparison. Its steering weight is meatier but you seem to need 50 per cent more lock to get the nose to turn in. What you don't do is get in and give it the beans immediately. This isn't to say the M4 is ponderous, slow-witted and heavy. It's just the initial shock of having to make the adjustment from the Nissan. Once acclimatised,

'The faster you go, the friskier and more agile the M4 gets'

Right: the older car could destroy the German for point-to-point pace, but will that be enough to satisfy in the long-term?

Below: the Nissan's cabin feels dated and inelegant





SPECIFICATIONS & RUNNING COSTS

BMW M4 Competition Package



Straight-six, 2979cc, twin-turbo
 444bhp @ 7000rpm
 406lb ft @ 1850-5000rpm
 1515kg
 298bhp/ton
 4.2sec (claimed)
 155mph (limited)
 £61,365
 n/a
 £999 for 3 years
 £191 front, £172 rear
 (Michelin Pilot Super Sport)
 Included (3 years)
 £1200 first year, then £140 pa
 ★★★★★

Engine
Power
Torque
Weight
Power-to-weight
0-62mph
Top speed
Basic price new
Used price now
Servicing
Tyres
Warranty
Road tax
evo rating

V6, 3799cc, twin-turbo
 542bhp @ 6400rpm
 466lb ft @ 3200-5800rpm
 1740kg
 316bhp/ton
 2.7sec (claimed)
 196mph (claimed)
 £75,000 (2012)
 £45,000-70,000
 £300 minor, £830 major
 £208 front, £264 rear
 (Michelin Pilot Super Sport)
 c£1200 per annum
 £535 per annum
 ★★★★★

Nissan GT-R (2012-2016)







NEW  USED

Coupe of the day

Porsche's 911 is hard to beat at the best of times, and the latest GTS is a real gem. But perhaps a truly special used alternative in the form of a nearly-new Aston Martin V12 Vantage S might sway you...

by RICHARD MEADEN

PHOTOGRAPHY by
BARRY HAYDEN



N

EW PORSCHE 911 OR NEARLY NEW V12 Aston? Now isn't that a nice dilemma to ponder? Two of the most **evo** cars you could ever wish to drive, made by two of the world's most illustrious high-performance brands. Yours for the taking. But which to choose?

It's perhaps a measure of how far Porsche has propelled the 911 that the basic list price of a Carrera GTS is £95,795. Or almost exactly the same money you'll need to put your name and address on the V5 of this very nice 64-plate V12 Vantage S. It's not from the slightly murky world of online classifieds, but purchased from a bona fide plate-glass-and-limestone Aston dealership (complete with complimentary posh coffee and rock-hard Italian biscuit-thingy, obviously).

They make a compelling duo. As much for their contrasting approaches as for their tantalising price parity. The match is made that bit more special by the fact the Vantage is still on Aston's price lists, which makes it feel very much as though we're comparing two new cars that should be separated by more than £40,000. Stick a private plate on the Aston and no one would know...

The new-versus-used paradox is a source of endless angst and opportunity. We can all dream about dropping sensible money on something utterly ridiculous, and most likely ruinous, but would you actually do it? Probably not. But when the choice is between something fab and new, and something equally fab and nearly new (and therefore unlikely to keel over and consume your life savings), the choice is harder. Much harder.

One look at this Graphite Blue 991.2 Carrera GTS and I'm sold. That's partly to do with the colour choice, and partly to do with the optional Porsche Dynamic Chassis Control (£2273), complete with 20mm-lower sports suspension that gives the car the perfect stance. Factor in the satin-black Turbo S wheels (a no-cost option) and the GTS's centrally mounted sports exhaust and you have one very fine-looking 911.

We – and therefore you – know 991s inside-out, but the GTS is something a little different. Essentially a brilliantly packaged options bundle, it's like Porsche has appointed us **evo** types with a personal shopper. More power is top of the list, the new, downsized, twin-turbo 3-litre motor yielding

444bhp – 30bhp more than the Carrera S. It's not so long ago that the fabled 993 GT2 road-racer sported that kind of firepower.

This car has the seven-speed manual transmission. It's much better than the early iterations, with a less stringy shift and a more fluid gate. Seven still feels like one gear too many when you're stirring a stick, but at least it's enjoyable to use. The motor is lusty and generous from low revs but really sings through the upper reaches of its range, combining the thump of turbocharging with more naturally aspirated zing than you might expect. It sounds good, too, though the pops and crackles in Sport mode are a bit contrived.

The optional sports suspension is too stiff for my liking. On bumpy roads it's tiring and fidgety, even in its most pliant setting. Consequently, genuine opportunities to engage the stiffer Sport mode are few and far between. Better is the lively balance and agility bestowed on the wide-bodied chassis thanks to the standard mechanical limited-slip differential and optional rear-wheel steer. The chassis has tons of grip and traction when you need it, but a timely lift on turn-in brings the

whole thing to life, especially if you've disabled the stability control.

The standard cast-iron brakes don't have the outright stopping power of the PCCB ceramics, and neither do they have quite the pedal feel, though they remain immensely capable. Another immensely capable aspect of the car is its infotainment system. The satnav in particular is ultra-responsive to address inputs (it accepts letters as quickly as your fingers can tap them on the touchscreen) and the whole system is brilliantly intuitive. As we'll be reminded in a moment, it makes the Aston feel like it has a ZX Spectrum secreted behind the dashboard. Much as I'd like to profess these things are incidental to the core appeal of a drivers' car, in 2017 they do make a difference. Especially at £100,000.

All these slick, highly polished attributes coalesce into a very complete and enjoyable car. Hugely rapid when you need it to be, but civilised and tractable when you don't (hard ride apart, that is). The GTS is a supremely likeable car. I still think a well-specced Carrera S could be the 991 sweet spot, but that's not what we're here to argue.

Below: a pair of iconic silhouettes, though one has been around a bit longer than the other; the Aston is surprisingly compact, including being 143mm shorter in overall length than the Porsche

'It feels as though we're comparing two new cars that should be separated by more than £40,000'



And so to the Aston. The V12 Vantage S is an interesting one. Overshadowed by the original and highly collectable manual-only V12 Vantage that preceded it, then pushed from the limelight by the quirky seven-speed dog-leg manual that was introduced as a no-cost option last year, the regular car – with Aston’s admittedly slightly shonky Sportshift III single-clutch paddleshift transmission – has been hidden in plain sight. That £95,000 will now get you a very nice one indeed makes it seem like a special car for the money.

Stylistically speaking, few cars have aged better than the Vantage. It’s surely one of the defining designs of the 2000s and an all-time great Aston. It’s a similar story inside. Sitting low between the high sills of the aluminium tub, you feel tucked into the car, yet the lavish swoop of dashboard and centre-console creates a sense of roominess that is unusual in a compact sporting coupe.

Gaydon-era Astons aren’t the wholly hand-built cars of the ’80s and ’90s but they’re still very much crafted rather than manufactured. This shows in the choice of materials – the supple leather with prominent hand-stitching is a cut above that of mass-produced cars (even the Porsche), so there’s a real feel-good factor as soon as you settle behind the wheel. You could only be in an Aston.

Many of you will be familiar with the spec, but it bears repeating. Not least because it’s an excuse to consider once more the placement of a 5.9-litre V12 in the nose of Aston’s smallest model. The S engine is a considerably fiercer creature than the non-S motor, with more power (563bhp, up from 510), more torque (457lb ft, up from 420) and sharper throttle response. It’s a mighty thing, and provides a sense of awe-filled occasion that never

diminishes. And it’ll propel the car to 205mph, which wins immense bragging rights, even if you’re unlikely to ever experience such speed.

What makes the V12 Vantage S special is, despite the obvious show-stopping drama of that engine, it’s not all about the power and straight-line speed. The rest of the package is pretty special, ironically because the Vantage was approaching its dotage when the S model was introduced. That means it really is a size smaller than its contemporary rivals – its footprint is smaller even than the GTS’s – and that’s something that pays immediate dividends when you drive it down an A- or B-road, because you have noticeably more tarmac to play with from corner entry to exit.

Compared with the Porsche, the steering (hydraulic, not electric), requires more muscle than you might expect. There’s a certain substitution of weight for feel, but the Vantage is a communicative car. One that offers less finely filtered feedback than the somewhat processed sensations you get from the 911.

Unleashed down the same stretch of road, the Vantage is much the wilder and more exuberant car. It feels rather too potent for its own good, especially once it gets on top of the intermediate gears. Wheel travel feels limited over crests, so there’s a flare of revs if you’re on the gas – you’ll probably want to relax the stability control into Sport mode to allow some wriggle room. Switch it off and you need to be on your A-game.

The brakes – monster carbon-ceramics as standard – are feelsome, progressive and more than man enough for the job. You need to check them for cracks (harsh chemicals beloved of ‘£5 hand car wash’ operatives can harm them,



‘With the Aston, you’d have to be happy piloting a car with a truly wild side’



Below left and right: Aston has double the cylinder count of the Porsche, but the latter car makes its lighter kerb weight and twin turbos count. **Far right:** Vantage cabin showing its age, but still charming







Below: 911 cabin feels thoroughly modern and is blessed with a superb new infotainment system, but it lacks the hand-finished appeal of the Aston's interior



apparently), but otherwise the Aston's watchlist centres on clutch wear with the Sportshift 'box and silly niggles such as condensation in the tail lights. Aston builds these babies tough, by all accounts.

The biggest barrier to purchase will be that Sportshift transmission. If you're used to dual-clutch transmissions, or even a good torque-converter auto, this automated sequential manual will test your patience. In fact, I'd go so far as to say more than half of you would dislike it sufficiently to walk away from a car you otherwise love. To the rest of you I'll offer some solace, in that it's one of those automated gearboxes that a bit of human improvisation and input can improve. The E46 M3 CSL was the same. In all honesty, you shouldn't have to, but if you lift a fraction on upshifts, and even attempt a very mild heel-and-toe blip on downshifts, it adds some of the finesse that's missing from the machine's skillset.

Making a call between these two coupes is a tough one; a decision almost entirely based on what you intend to do with your choice. You could quite easily use either as an everyday car – particularly the Porsche – but I'm not sure that's how to get the best from the experience. To me, they make more sense as cars to savour, whether taken on the occasional commute (to remind yourself of the good things that come from going to work), frivolous A-to-A blasts or a long weekend to the Highlands.

Would you sink your notional £100,000 into a nearly new Aston over a box-fresh Porsche? If you're an emotional sort who places an emphasis on character and heart, the Vantage will be hard to resist. And of course, it's an Aston, so immense kudos comes as standard. That said, you'll also have to be prepared to turn a blind eye to its shortcomings, and be happy piloting a car with a truly wild side.

If you're a picky sort then the Porsche

is for you. It's the more polished product with better manners, a far superior infotainment system and a greater depth of engineering. It has character and warmth too, though that personality doesn't run as deep as the Aston's.

As a fan of both marques, I'd be chuffed with either of these cars in my garage. The only distinction I can make is this: in committing to the Aston you'd be making a conscious decision to step off the model-cycle merry-go-round. This would be your statement, your line in the sand. A keeper.

Go with the GTS and you're clearly still drawn to the seductive and addictive charms of the new. Nothing wrong with that – you just have to be prepared to feed your addiction more frequently. The good news is that with this contrasting, compelling pair, you really do win either way. ❏

Thanks to HWM Aston Martin for the Vantage.

SPECIFICATIONS & RUNNING COSTS

Porsche 911 Carrera GTS



Flat-six, 2981cc, twin-turbo
444bhp @ 6500rpm
406lb ft @ 2150-5000rpm
1450kg
311bhp/ton
4.1sec (claimed)
193mph (claimed)
£95,795
n/a
£485 minor, £615 major
£175 front, £241 rear
(Pirelli P Zero)
Included (3 years)
£1200 first year, then £140 pa

★★★★★

Engine	V12, 5935cc
Power	563bhp @ 6650rpm
Torque	457lb ft @ 5500rpm
Weight	1665kg
Power-to-weight	345bhp/ton
0-62mph	3.9sec (claimed)
Top speed	205mph (claimed)
Basic price new	£138,000 (2017)
Used price now	£80,000-105,000
Servicing	£650 minor, £890 major
Tyres	£146 front, £250 rear (Conti SportContact 6)
Warranty	£1295 per annum
Road tax	£515 per annum
evo rating	★★★★★

Aston Martin V12 Vantage S (2016-)



TASTEFULLY ENHANCING THE FERRARI F12



FERRARI F12 UPGRADES

- Novitec NF4 Wheels fitted with plug-and-play lowering variable-rate sport springs (maintains standard ride comfort)
- Suspension geometry tuning available for customised handling results



- Full carbon fibre rear valance/bumper to remove standard plastic
- Carbon rear tailpipe surrounds and enlarged ceramic end tips
- Carbon rear diffuser and diffuser wings



- Full Novitec F1 Switchable Sports Exhaust System with enhanced exhaust valve control at the manettino switch
- Rear silencers, centre section and 100-cell sport catalysis - when bundled with non-invasive ECU upgrade, yields +51bhp

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by STEVE SUTCLIFFE

PHOTOGRAPHY by BARRY HAYDEN

Prancing force

With nearly 800bhp, the 812 Superfast is Ferrari's most powerful model since the LaFerrari hypercar. But there's no hybrid tech here, just one mighty naturally aspirated V12. How does it go?

There's a clue in its name...





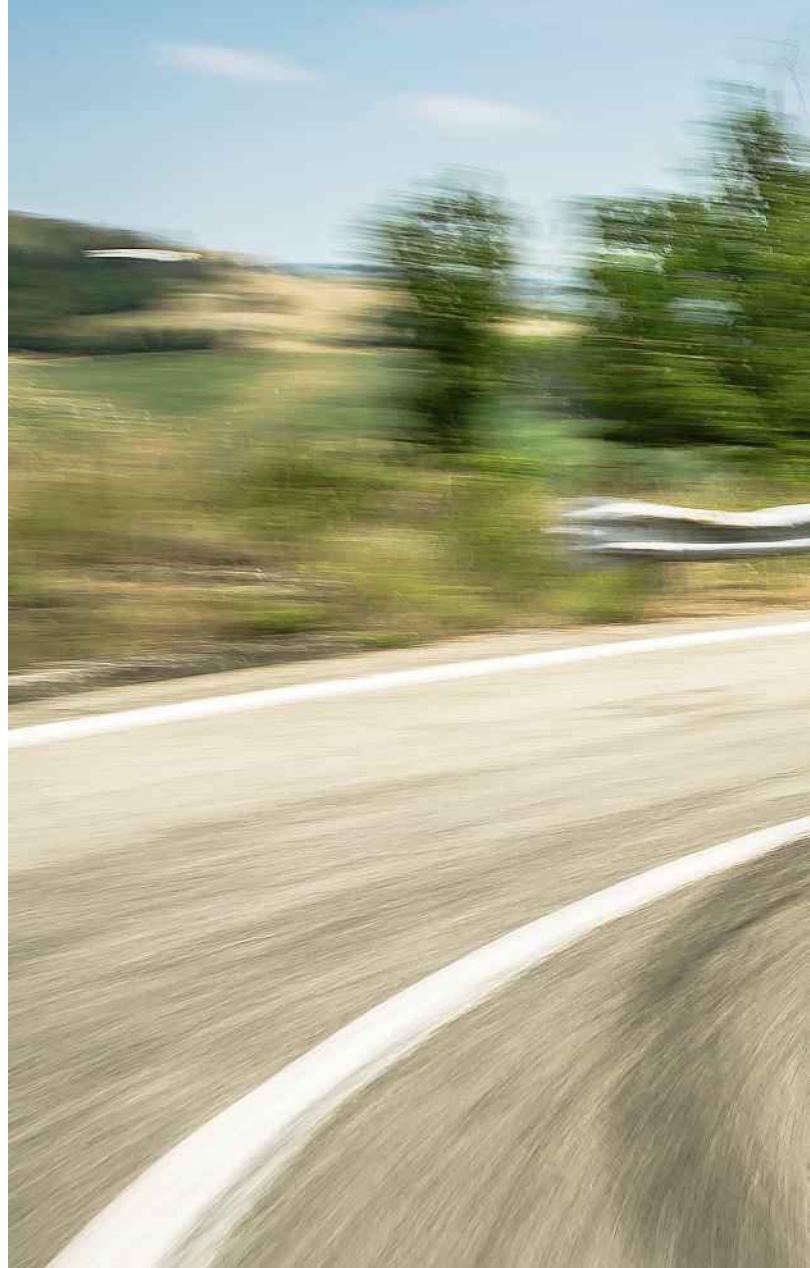
STANDING ON THE TOP OF AN Italian mountain road, alone, waiting for the 812 Superfast to reappear, knowing that when it does it will once again shatter the tranquillity of the countryside.

I can hear it a long, long time before I can see it, its V12 engine screaming above the trees, the shifts of its dual-clutch gearbox punctuating those cries with a speed and precision that's quite shocking to listen to. On downchanges it sounds like an automatic rifle being fired. On the way up there is seemingly zero delay between one ratio and the next; instead, the engine note just drops a bit and the scream continues. And still I haven't caught sight of the car, its progress up the mountain being tracked purely by my ears, and sometimes by my chest too, which vibrates ever so slightly whenever the V12 dips down lower in the rev range.

Finally it appears, a bright red missile with silver wheels that glint momentarily in the sun. It looks magnificent and it sounds quite unbelievable. And when its driver – another journalist doing much the same thing as me, namely behaving like a child while on the launch of Ferrari's most powerful front-engined car – smokes the rear tyres out of the final corner then howls right past me at 8900rpm in second gear, I clap my hands over my ears, shake my head and giggle. In full flow, the 812 Superfast is *that* loud, *that* ridiculous to behold. And good grief does it go as its name suggests.

Then again, as a replacement for the mighty F12, the 812 Superfast was always going to need to be something special. The F12, let's not forget, was one of the greatest front-engined, rear-wheel-drive performance cars of all time. So, to replace it, Ferrari has had to pull out all the stops and invent a fair few new tricks along the way.

Thus, the £253,004 Superfast has yet more power (789bhp, up from the F12's 730bhp), yet more performance, and an even bigger V12 nestling beneath its long and luscious bonnet. It also has all sorts



‘To replace the F12, Ferrari has had to pull out all the



Left and above: elements of F12 can be clearly seen in the 812's silhouette; the design of the car's rear, meanwhile, has changed substantially to accommodate the new diffuser



stops and invent a fair few new tricks along the way'

of new electronic trickery up its sleeve and, according to Ferrari, is even more exciting to drive than the F12 as a result.

Are they right? Is the 812 SF not merely a step up technically and in its potency, but also more engaging than the F12 where it really matters? And if so, where does that leave the likes of the new Lamborghini Aventador S (see *evo* 233), other than reeling on the floor, holding its crotch in agony?

We'll come to the answers in more detail in a moment, but for the time being, take it as read that the Superfast is an almighty piece of work on Ferrari's behalf. At its core but set well back within the front of the aluminium chassis sits a 6496cc V12 that is 75 per cent new, according to its creators. It features the same bore as the F12's 6.2-litre V12 but has a longer, 78mm stroke and a compression ratio, deep breath, of 13.64:1. As a result of this, plus numerous other upgrades – predominantly to the intake system to help it breathe better – the new V12 produces its peak power at 8500rpm, 529lb ft at 7000rpm and revs to 8900rpm before the limiter intrudes.

The shape of both the power and torque curves are quite different from those of the F12, in which the torque fell away towards the

top end. In the 812, torque is stronger from the word go and builds to a crescendo until the rev-limiter comes into play, pretty much mirroring the power curve. And this, says Ferrari, provides the car with a much more exciting form of power delivery (although I don't remember the F12 feeling especially dull in its delivery); one that builds very quickly as the revs rise, becoming stronger and more visceral the faster the engine spins.

The exhaust system also features a new six-into-one manifold that's significantly more efficient than the one in the F12, allowing the engine to breathe better. And the sound it produces over the last 3000rpm really does need to be experienced to be believed.

Ferrari's official claims are 0-62mph in 2.9sec (with launch control), 0-124mph in a vaguely surreal 7.9sec and a top speed of 211mph. Ferrari says the Superfast will get from 62mph to rest in just 32 metres, which is deeply impressive for a 1630kg car.

Technically, the 812 has a very big box of tricks to call upon, bigger than any other production Ferrari's. Quite apart from its V12 engine and seven-speed dual-clutch gearbox (which has shorter, more closely stacked ratios than in the F12, with 30 per cent faster

upshift times and 40 per cent quicker downshifts), there's a wealth of new electronic wizardry employed to help it bend the space/time continuum. Plus some very clever new aerodynamic elements.

At the back there's a new electronic rear-wheel-steering system that increases stability, says Ferrari, while dramatically improving turn-in response and all but eradicating understeer. Together with a new electronic differential and the fifth-generation version of Side Slip Control, this creates what Ferrari refers to as a Virtual Short Wheelbase system, all of which is engaged (or disengaged) via the traditional manettino switch on the steering wheel.

At the front there's a new electric power-steering system with variable torque assistance. This sounds a bit weird and indeed is, slightly, to begin with, especially when you realise that the system is designed to help you apply opposite lock when the rear end steps out of line. The brakes are by Brembo and feature vast, 398mm carbon-ceramic discs at the front and 360mm discs at the rear. Interestingly, the tyres are regular Pirelli P Zeros, rather than P Zero Corsas. Ferrari justifies this choice on the grounds that it wants the Superfast to be perceived as a fully useable road car first, not a track weapon that can merely be tolerated on the road.

The aero on the car is sophisticated. There are passive (i.e. they move depending on air resistance) flaps on each side at the front that open above 124mph to stall the underbody diffuser and reduce drag. There's also an active wing at the back and huge scoops on the sides to manage the airflow across the car at speed. The result is much more downforce but much less drag than with the F12.

So what, then, is the new Ferrari 812 Superfast like to drive?

Pretty epic, truth be told. You look at all the new electronic bits and you do begin to wonder how digitised it is going to feel from behind the wheel. In reality, however, it still feels essentially analogue in its behaviour. And the V12 engine and gearbox are simply off-the-chart wonderful in the way they behave.

As ever, it's the sound that hooks you first, and the higher you rev the 812, the more magnificent it gets. But the pure performance of the car in a straight line and the traction it somehow manages to generate, even on quite bumpy Italian back-roads, are what leave you with the deepest impressions of all. To begin with, at any rate.

It feels nothing short of rabid in a straight line, with the kind of throttle response that only ever comes from a big, naturally aspirated engine that revs high and hits hard, everywhere. Even at 4000rpm in third gear the car feels ready to take off. And at 8500rpm in second gear it's actually hard to describe how fast it feels, how loud it sounds, how utterly fantastic it just is. And the way the gearbox slices through the ratios, up or down, is very much integral to the overall experience. I think this is surely the best dual-clutch gearbox there has ever been in any road car.

And the chassis isn't too far behind, with a slightly spooky blend of handling agility, ride comfort, traction, grip, precision and composure. But there are a couple of small caveats, and the first – indeed the only main one, really – involves the steering.

All Ferraris feature steering that's light and unusually fast in its response; we've simply come to expect that over the last few years. In the 812 it's perhaps a touch heavier than before, which is good, but also even faster in its responses, which is not so good. Not unless you





‘This is the surely the best dual-clutch gearbox there has ever been in any road car’



Left: ‘75 per cent new’ 6.5-litre V12 sits way back in the chassis; it produces 789bhp without any form of forced induction. **Top:** interior is hard to fault, though the super-fast steering takes a little while to acclimatise to

‘The 812 over-delivers on your expectations in just about every department’



Ferrari 812 Superfast

Engine V12, 6496cc **Power** 789bhp @ 8500rpm **Torque** 529lb ft @ 7000rpm **Transmission** Seven-speed dual-clutch, rear-wheel drive, E-Diff 3
Front suspension Double wishbones, coil springs, adaptive dampers **Rear suspension** Multi-link, coil springs, adaptive dampers, rear-wheel steer
Brakes Carbon-ceramic discs, 398mm front, 360mm rear **Wheels** 10 x 20in front, 11.5 x 20in rear **Tyres** 275/35 ZR20 front, 315/35 ZR20 rear
Weight 1630kg **Power-to-weight** 492bhp/ton **0-62mph** 2.9sec (claimed) **Top speed** 211mph (claimed) **Basic price** £253,004 **On sale** Now

evo rating ★★★★★

are naturally hardwired to drive a car as if it were a fighter jet. You do eventually get used to the way the steering hyper-reacts to your inputs, and after a while it does then get close to becoming intuitive, at which point you start to guide the car more with your brain than with your hands, which is of course Ferrari's ultimate intention. But the moment you climb into any other car you will think that its steering rack is broken, when actually it's the 812 that's out of kilter with the rest of the car world.

In all other respects, however, this is a quite incredible car to drive, and to merely be in. The new seats are hard but clamp you in place to perfection. The new interior as a whole is a thing of rare beauty and it impresses across just about all of the senses: it looks lovely, it feels expensive, it's more intuitive to interact with than before and it even smells quite delicious. And from the moment you climb aboard, have a good poke around and finally press the starter button, the 812 begins to over-deliver on your expectations in just about every department.

On the track it feels lighter and more agile – and just faster – than you would ever believe possible from this kind of car. And to be honest, the best way to get the most enjoyment out of it is to eradicate the new electronic bits and wind the manettino all the way to the right and turn everything off. Only then can you revel in the extraordinary balance the 812 displays on and off the throttle.

As such, it goes sideways just about everywhere, sometimes even in fourth and fifth gear, but always remains friendly and

manageable. With everything off, you can drive the 812 Superfast like you can a V8-engined BMW M3, and that's pretty incredible.

It's faster and arguably more 'impressive' with the systems switched back on, of course, but if anything the electronics are a bit too keen to take the throttle away from you on the track, even if they do allow a fair bit of slip before the safety net is deployed.

On the road, the electronics are very much there to help you keep your quarter-of-a-million-pound supercar out of the undergrowth, and they do so very well indeed. On the road, in fact, you never really notice they're there at all. Instead, the 812 just squats and goes, boasting more traction than it has any right to, and a much better ride quality – with the 'bumpy road' button pressed – than you would ever believe possible having first driven it on a track.

And on the road, of course, the 812 feels twice as fast as it does on the track, to a point where I can't really imagine anything else, with any engine configuration, feeling any quicker. Even the steering makes more sense on the road, somehow, with its immediacy allowing you to guide the SF through corners and along horribly tight hedgerows with minimum effort but maximum precision.

No, the *only* problem I have with the 812 is the way it looks. After the F12, which was simpler and more classically beautiful, it does seem a touch fussy and a bit too aerodynamically complex, especially along its flanks. But then maybe that's just me, because the rest of the 812 Superfast is 100 per cent sensational. Maybe the best yet from Ferrari, which is saying something. ✕



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BE ONE WITH IT



evo TYRE TEST 2017



This year we test the most popular performance tyre size of all, the 225/40 R18. Nine brands go head-to-head in the toughest objective and subjective tests

by JOHN BARKER

PHOTOGRAPHY by ASTON PARROTT

IT'S HARD TO OVERSTATE THE

importance of tyres. The safety of the best-handling car can be compromised simply by fitting a poor set of tyres. The effectiveness of its finely tuned chassis hardware and sophisticated stability control and collision-mitigation software rely totally on the contact between tyres and road. Any car can only work with the grip that it's got. And the same goes for ride and handling. As an enthusiast you have almost certainly paid your money for a car based on how it drives. Why would you then go and compromise how it feels, how it stops, turns and accelerates, by fitting poor tyres?

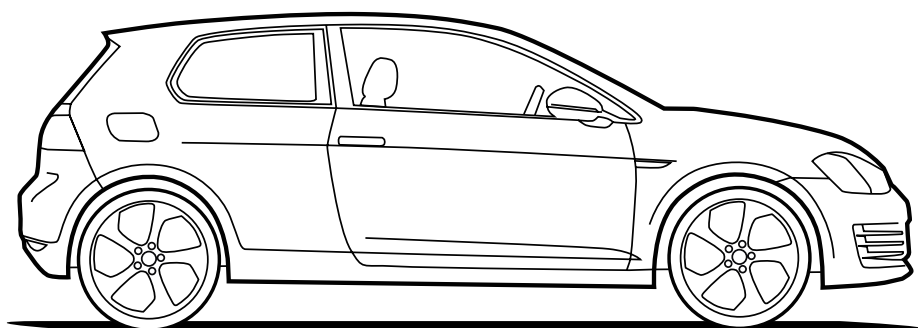
It can be painful, forking out for a complete set of brand new, quality tyres, but if you value how your car performs there is no such thing as a cheap tyre. There are, however, better value tyres, which is why we go to such lengths to produce our independent tyre tests. Yes, all tyres are black and round and keep your alloys off the ground, but all tyres are not created equal. So if you want to know which tyres – here in the most popular 18in fitment of 225/45 – perform best in both objective tests and subjective feel, read on.

THE CAR

With a keen front end offering ample feedback and a rear that will swing to help agility, the Mk7.5 VW Golf GTI is an ideal dynamic platform to hang tyres off. With a turbocharged 227bhp plus 258lb ft from 1500rpm channelled through the front tyres, it will also test straight-line traction and each tyre's ability to take torque when at the limit of cornering grip. The GTI's stability control cannot be turned off completely, only backed off to a 'sport' level, but this is relaxed enough to allow both ends some slip, so the ability and character of each tyre will be revealed.

THE TRACK

We've visited Continental's test track, the Conridrom, near Hannover, Germany, on a number of occasions. It has pretty much every facility you need to fully assess a tyre objectively, including a tricky wet circuit and a sinuous dry layout. It also has a vertiginous banked track and an array of special surfaces with features such as transverse ridges, coarse textures and raised and sunken manhole covers to help with the subjective assessment of ride quality and road noise.



THE TYRES

This year our chosen tyre is the 225/40 R18, the most popular 'UHP' – Ultra High Performance – size on the market. Nine well-known brands compete, including all the usual 'premium' suspects plus Falken, Hankook and Toyo. All nine have identical load (92) and speed (Y) ratings and range in weight from 8.9kg (Dunlop) to 10.1kg (Falken). Tyres were sourced from the wholesale market; prices are from blackcircles.com where possible.

PRICES

	Tyre	Price (£)	Score
1	Toyo	72.00	100.0
2	Hankook	74.00	97.3
3	Dunlop	76.80	93.8
4	Goodyear	77.40	93.0
5	Falken	79.30	90.8
6	Continental	85.00	84.7
7	Bridgestone	89.50	80.4
8	Michelin	90.40	79.6
9	Pirelli	94.00	76.6



Bridgestone Turanza T001 Evo
(9.5kg, £89.50)



Continental PremiumContact 6
(9.3kg, £85.00)



Dunlop Sport Maxx RT2
(8.9kg, £76.80)



Falken Azenis FK510
(10.1kg, £79.30)



Goodyear Eagle F1 Asymmetric 3
(9.3kg, £77.40)



Hankook Ventus S1 evo2
(9.9kg, £74.00)



Michelin Pilot Sport 4
(9.7kg, £90.40)



Pirelli P Zero PZ4
(9.4kg, £94.00)



Toyo Proxes Sport
(10.0kg, £72.00)

WET HANDLING

S OAKED ASPHALT CAN OFTEN be the most significant and portentous test of all, and so it proved this year. Unexpectedly, however, the number of tyres that felt as though they really worked on this 1823m track was small. Just two tyres gave the Golf GTI the feeling of control, the sense that you could exploit the handling and pick your own lines. Most just coped, a couple felt treacherous.

Fastest around the lap was the Pirelli, in 84.13sec, just over a second faster than the second-placed Michelin (85.27sec). They both felt grippy and exploitable, but subjectively the Michelin was preferred. It offered lots of grip and tactile feedback, letting you know how hard you were pushing. You could be accurate

with it, turn-in was crisp and the rear would swing because the front was so hooked up. The Pirelli gave a less complete performance, feeling distinctly average in a straight line but great when turning. The rear was loose but the front found the mid-corner traction to pull the car out of corners like no other. Uncanny. Not the best feel but undeniably effective.

The Continental was third fastest, but didn't inspire confidence, with no outstanding traits. The Bridgestone wasn't especially quick but at least felt connected and reasonably grippy; it stopped, turned and hooked up but could be easily overloaded, resulting in the front washing wide or the rear swinging too much.

The midfield pack mostly felt like they were just coping with the wet conditions. Fourth and

fifth fastest were the Goodyear and Falken. The Falken was the better of the two in terms of feel, offering a gritty, grippy feel early in the turns, which was a little offset by a tendency to oversteer on a trailing throttle.

Like the Bridgestone, the Hankook lapped at around the 87.5sec mark, but spent more time slithering wide of the apex. This pair and the slowest two, the Dunlop and Toyo, could be easily pushed into side-slip by modest throttle inputs and backing off caused their rears to swing excessively. Dead last was the Toyo, a massive 5.7sec a lap slower than the Pirelli, and it felt like it too, offering little grip to work with; turn-in was weak, and it took a very delicate throttle and cautious lift-off to keep it close to the desired line. Hard work.

WET LAP

Tyre	Time (sec)	Score
1 Pirelli	84.13	100
2 Michelin	85.27	98.7
3 Continental	86.10	97.7
4 Goodyear	86.89	96.8
5 Falken	86.92	96.8
6 Bridgestone	87.50	96.1
7 Hankook	87.64	96.0
8 Dunlop	88.29	95.3
9 Toyo	89.79	93.7

WET HANDLING – SUBJECTIVE

Tyre	Points	Score
1 Michelin	56.0	100
2 Pirelli	54.5	97.3
3 Bridgestone	52.0	92.9
4 Falken	50.0	89.3
5 Continental	49.5	88.4
6 Goodyear	48.0	85.7
7 Hankook	47.5	84.8
8 Dunlop	46.5	83.0
9 Toyo	41.0	73.2

WET STEERING PAD

Tyre	Time (sec)	Score
1 Pirelli	11.17	100
2 Michelin	11.31	98.8
3 Continental	11.51	97.0
4 Goodyear	11.61	96.2
5 Falken	11.68	95.6
6 Hankook	11.80	94.7
7 Bridgestone	11.85	94.3
8= Dunlop	11.90	93.9
8= Toyo	11.90	93.9



WET STEERING PAD

AS YOU WOULD EXPECT, there is a strong correlation between the lap times of the tyres on the wet handling circuit and their performance in the simpler task of circulating an evenly wetted, 57.5m circle. The Pirelli was happiest on the wet circuit when it was turning and that shows here; at 11.17sec it is the quickest by a small but significant margin from the other strong track performer, the Michelin, on 11.31sec. There's a bit of a gap then to the third quickest, the Continental, which was third on track too, followed by the Goodyear and Falken. Bringing up the rear on identical times of 11.90sec are the Dunlop and Toyo, a sizeable 0.73sec behind the best.



WET TOTAL

	Tyre	Score
1	Michelin	297.5
2	Pirelli	297.3
3	Bridgestone	283.3
4	Continental	283.1
5	Falken	281.7
6	Goodyear	278.7
7	Hankook	275.5
8	Dunlop	272.2
9	Toyo	260.8

BRAKING AND ROLLING RESISTANCE

IF YOU'RE LOOKING FOR long, consistent braking performance in the wet and the dry, Michelin and Continental deliver. The Michelin was the best slowing from 80kph (50mph) on sodden asphalt and second best from 100kph (62mph) in the dry, while the Continental was second in the wet and third in the dry. Best in the dry – just – was the Pirelli, but in the wet it was fourth, taking 1.3m further to stop than the lead tyre.

The Falken was third best in the wet and in the dry was part of a close midfield pack on 36.5m. Easily the weakest tyre in both braking

tests was the Toyo, its performance in the dry being well off the pace and meaning that when the best tyre had stopped, the Toyo would still be travelling at 30kph (19mph).

Rolling resistance is a measure of the energy required to roll a tyre on a given surface and therefore its impact on fuel economy. The lowest friction score of 0.783 is generated by the Dunlop, and it's a chunk better than the second-placed tyre, the Bridgestone. The highest recorded friction of 0.915 goes to the Falken and this would, roughly, make its economy 0.5mpg worse than the Dunlop's on a car that returned 30mpg.

DRY BRAKING

	Tyre	Distance (metres)	Score
1	Pirelli	35.3	100
2	Michelin	35.4	99.7
3=	Continental	36.1	97.8
3=	Goodyear	36.1	97.8
5	Hankook	36.3	97.2
6	Dunlop	36.4	97.0
7	Falken	36.5	96.7
8	Bridgestone	36.7	96.2
9	Toyo	38.8	91.0

ROLLING RESISTANCE

	Tyre	Coefficient	Score
1	Dunlop	0.783	100
2	Bridgestone	0.825	94.9
3	Continental	0.829	94.5
4	Toyo	0.842	93.0
5	Hankook	0.849	92.2
6	Goodyear	0.855	91.6
7	Michelin	0.861	90.9
8	Pirelli	0.898	87.2
9	Falken	0.915	85.6

WET BRAKING

	Tyre	Distance (metres)	Score
1	Michelin	29.8	100
2	Continental	30.7	97.1
3	Falken	30.9	96.4
4	Pirelli	31.1	95.8
5	Bridgestone	31.7	94.0
6	Hankook	32.2	92.5
7	Goodyear	32.3	92.3
8	Dunlop	32.7	91.1
9	Toyo	33.2	89.8



AQUAPLANING

WHEN A TYRE CAN NO LONGER clear the water passing beneath it, it lifts, losing contact with the asphalt and meaning you are no longer in control. We measured the road speed at which each tyre would overspeed by more than 15 per cent in a straight line in controlled standing water, and then the maximum lateral acceleration when cornering in standing water.

Topping the straight-line test is the Michelin at 72.3kph (50mph), with the Goodyear and Pirelli just behind. Least good is the Toyo, though the margin is modest. In the curved test, the Dunlop is the top tyre with the Goodyear a close second, and considerably off their performance are the Pirelli and Bridgestone.



STRAIGHT-LINE AQUAPLANING

	Tyre	Max speed (kph)	Score
1	Michelin	72.3	100
2	Goodyear	72.1	99.7
3	Pirelli	71.5	98.9
4	Falken	71.1	98.3
5	Bridgestone	71.0	98.2
6	Dunlop	70.7	97.8
7	Continental	69.8	96.5
8	Hankook	69.2	95.7
9	Toyo	68.9	95.3

CURVED AQUAPLANING

	Tyre	Lateral accel (m/s ²)	Score
1	Dunlop	3.01	100.0
2	Goodyear	2.99	99.3
3	Falken	2.77	92.0
4	Toyo	2.72	90.4
5	Michelin	2.68	89.0
6	Continental	2.61	86.7
7	Hankook	2.52	83.7
8	Pirelli	2.42	80.4
9	Bridgestone	2.40	79.7



DRY HANDLING

IT STARTS WITH A SHALLOW left-hander entered under power at 145kph (90mph) before diving into a string of ever-tighter curves. You know where you stand with a tyre by the time you've made that first apex – or not. The spread of times is not nearly as large as it is on the wet handling circuit but subjectively the difference between the fastest and slowest is huge.

Unusually, the same tyre sets the pace in the dry as it did in the wet – the Pirelli. And, as in the wet, the second-placed tyre, the Michelin, felt better to drive. It gave the best steering feel – sharp, connected, direct – and although there was some adjustability it wasn't needed because it turned in so well, held the line and took power early. It gets the best out of the Golf and is quiet, too. The Pirelli does everything the Michelin does – finds every apex, hugs the line, drives out of turns well and isn't noisy – but is let down by dulling the steering and being less engaging.

Third fastest is the Dunlop. It's effective

but not a particularly enjoyable experience – ignore the howls of protest and the soft steering and simply muscle the car to the clipping points.

The remaining six are as close on lap times as makes no difference, so we'll rank them subjectively. A whisker behind the Pirelli is the Falken, which has the same crisp steering as the Michelin and is also willing and accurate. Next up is the Continental, which feels biddable and shows good traction but needs to be lightly handled to not wash wide. The Bridgestone feels willing and has good steering feel but simply lacks the sense of grip of the best. The Hankook is similar to the Dunlop in character, being noisy but effective, with good exit traction, while the Toyo has fair grip and traction but feels woolly, squidgy and vague in comparison with the best. Bottom of the table is the Goodyear, thanks to steering response that is slow and rubbery, and grip that is fair but which needs to be teased out of the tyre – try too hard and it'll wash you wide of the apex.



ROAD ROUTE

T THIS IS ALL ABOUT EVERYDAY performance; steering feel in normal driving, and ride comfort and refinement over a variety of common and more testing surfaces. The Michelin tops the table, essentially because it gives steering character that's appealing and which suits the car, the Golf feeling connected and keen to turn, effortlessly agile. This is backed up with quietness and rounded comfort, especially at slower, town speeds.

The Continental was a good performer and not far behind, offering good ride refinement and having clean, direct steering – characteristics shared with the Hankook. The Pirelli was good too, with slightly better noise suppression than the Michelin and similarly impressive comfort, but it was marked down for steering, the Golf feeling decidedly less keen and non-linear.

The Dunlop and Goodyear were equally good at isolating road imperfections but both were let down by steering that felt dull and lacking in immediate response. Although it had better steering feel, the Bridgestone's brightness was also apparent in its surface sensitivity, with a hollow, ringing sound over sharp impacts. The Falken and Toyo, meanwhile, were the least refined and comfortable of all, being generally the noisiest and reacting sharply to ridges and both raised and sunken manhole covers.



DRY HANDLING – SUBJECTIVE

	Tyre	Points	Score
1	Michelin	41.0	100
2	Pirelli	39.0	95.1
3	Falken	38.5	93.9
4	Continental	36.5	89.0
5	Bridgestone	34.0	82.9
6	Dunlop	33.5	81.7
7	Hankook	32.0	78.0
8	Toyo	31.5	76.8
9	Goodyear	29.5	72.0



DRY LAP

	Tyre	Time (sec)	Score
1	Pirelli	52.26	100
2	Michelin	52.40	99.7
3	Dunlop	52.65	99.3
4	Hankook	52.85	98.9
5	Falken	52.93	98.7
6	Bridgestone	52.98	98.6
7	Goodyear	53.04	98.5
8	Toyo	53.04	98.5
9	Continental	53.11	98.4



ROAD ROUTE

	Tyre	Points	Score
1	Michelin	22.5	100
2	Continental	22.0	97.8
3=	Dunlop	21.0	93.3
3=	Hankook	21.0	93.3
3=	Pirelli	21.0	93.3
6	Goodyear	20.5	91.1
7	Bridgestone	19.5	86.7
8	Falken	18.0	80.0
9	Toyo	17.0	75.6

RESULTS

9 TOYO
PROXES SPORT **86.9**

Finishing behind most of the pack in all the objective tests bar curved aquaplaning and rolling resistance would have placed it near last, but what made this a certainty was its woeful subjective performance. It felt awful on the wet handling circuit, slithering everywhere, was woolly on the dry handling, and on the road it was noisy, harsh and felt disconnected. A tyre with few redeeming qualities.

8 GOODYEAR
EAGLE F1 ASYMMETRIC 3 **90.7**

It's a surprise to find such a big brand and previous strong performer at this end of the final order. The Goodyear was good in the wet handling, best overall in the aquaplaning tests, and did well in dry braking too. However, it was slow on the dry circuit and was easily overloaded and lacked steering sharpness – subjectively it was the lowest scoring tyre. Scored well for refinement, though.

7 HANKOOK
VENTUS S1 EVO2 **91.6**

Not outstanding in any one area in the measured tests but, at the same time, not poor either. Midfield in the objective dry tests but a little off the pace in the wet tests, particularly curved aquaplaning. Subjectively, the Hankook didn't shine on either the wet or dry handling circuit but was appealing on the road, combining keen steering response with a comfortable, quiet ride.

6 BRIDGESTONE
TURANZA T001 EVO **91.8**

The highlight of the Bridgestone's performance was its subjective feel in the wet handling test, where it ranked third thanks to good steering feel and a fragile but exploitable grip. It had low rolling resistance – claiming second place here – and scored decently in most of the measured tests, and although it was quite surface sensitive the payoff was crisp, tactile steering.

5 DUNLOP
SPORT MAXX RT2 **92.1**

A tyre of contrasts, being one of the quickest in the dry handling test but faring poorly in the wet, coming second to last and producing the joint lowest wet lateral G. Yet it scored best in the curved aquaplane test. On the road it was good in parts, too, with decent ride comfort and impact noise suppression but dull steering. It was also the lightest tyre and delivered the lowest rolling resistance.

4 FALKEN
AZENIS FK510 **92.8**

The Falken was the heaviest tyre, one of the least refined on road and it recorded the highest rolling resistance. That said, it performed well in both wet and dry measured tests and was particularly strong in curved and straight-line aquaplaning. It was fast around the dry handling track and backed this up with good feel too, being praised for precise, accurate steering.

3 CONTINENTAL
PREMIUMCONTACT 6 **94.3**

Started well, with a solid third fastest in the wet, but didn't back that up with feel, being a little skittish and disconnected. Was slowest of all in dry handling but felt better than that, being biddable and responsive, if easily overloaded. Best of all, it was second only to the Michelin in terms of on-road feel, being quiet and comfortable and having clean, connected steering.

2 PIRELLI
P ZERO P24 **95.7**

Fastest of all around both the dry and wet handling circuits, where it showed strong turn-in and mid-corner grip and great exit traction that kept the swinging rear in check. Had a poor result in the curved aquaplaning but it was an impressive performance overall, and all that kept it off the top step was steering that lacked tactility and brightness compared with the best tyre here.

**1 MICHELIN**
PILOT SPORT 4 **98.1**

A clean sweep of subjective ratings helped secure victory for the Michelin. Its feel was peerless in the wet, where it was among the few to feel connected and exploitable, and that description applied to its dry track performance too. It scored consistently well in all the measured tests and on the road it was effortlessly agile and refined too. Simply a great tyre.

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DEEP DIVE RENAULT SPORT CLIO: FROM 172 TO 200

Who hasn't considered an RS Clio at some point? If one is on your shortlist, allow evo's Deep Dive to show you the wide variety of choices available to you

by Bob Harper



THE PHASE 1 CLIO 172 WAS launched in the spring of 2000 and featured a 170bhp 1998cc 16-valve engine mated to a five-speed manual gearbox. It was an instant hit. With bespoke bumpers, wider front wings and a set of OZ Racing 15in alloys, it looked the part, while under the skin was a sports handling pack with uprated springs and dampers and a reworked steering rack.

Renault Sport has served up many special-edition Clios over the years and the first, also arriving in 2000, was the Exclusive. Just 172 came to the UK, all in Scarab Green with grey leather and 15in BBS alloys.

The Phase 2 172 made its debut in June 2001, and while the engine was unchanged, this facelifted model gained 16in alloys, a further stiffening of the chassis, xenon headlights, and climate control instead of air con.

The pared-back 172 Cup arrived in August 2002. With no xenons, air con or ABS, weight was reduced by 99kg. It had a wider track, lower and even firmer suspension, an additional front lip and a larger rear spoiler.

The engine remained unchanged but the claimed 0-62mph time dropped from 7.2 to 6.9sec. The 172 Cup came in either Mondial Blue or Iceberg Silver and it was a significant £2100 cheaper than a standard 172.

In 2004 Renault Sport went one better with the 182, giving the engine an extra 10bhp and trimming the 0-62mph time of the standard car to 7.1sec. Its spec included xenon headlights, half-leather seats, climate control and twin exhausts, and there were two optional Cup packs – a spoiler pack and a chassis pack. The former brought the 172 Cup's external additions while the latter brought a 3mm lower ride height, stiffer springs and dampers, and anthracite wheels.

A specific 182 Cup model was launched in September 2004 and this featured both Cup packs while deleting the xenons. ABS and air con were retained, so the Cup was not significantly lighter than a standard 182. Like the 172 Cup, the 182 only came in two colours, this time Racing Blue or Inferno Orange. It was £1000 cheaper than the base 182.

The 182's swansong was the Clio Trophy, launched in July 2005. Five-hundred examples were made for the UK, plus 50 for Switzerland, all in Capsicum Red. It had Recaro seats, manual air con, Sachs suspension, 16in Speedline Turini wheels, a front splitter and a larger rear spoiler.

The third-gen Clio arrived in 2005 and in mid-2006 the Renault Sport version, the 197, made its debut. It followed the successful formula of a pumped-up body, RS-fettled chassis and an uprated engine, now good for 194bhp. Weight was up by 200kg from the original 172 but a six-speed gearbox with closely stacked ratios

resulted in a 6.9sec 0-62mph time, while Brembo four-pot calipers ensured it stopped properly. A year after its launch, the F1 Team R27 edition made its debut, limited to 500 units for the UK. The R27 saw the arrival of the Cup chassis, which was 7mm lower and featured stiffer springs and dampers along with anthracite 17in wheels, Recaro seats and a number of F1 decals and logos.

Later in 2007, the 197 Cup arrived with the same chassis as the R27 but no xenons and with manual air con. Colours were restricted (Racing Blue, Nimbus Grey and Glacier White) and like earlier Cups it was cheaper – by

'Renault Sport went one better with the 182, giving the engine an extra 10bhp and trimming the 0-62mph time to 7.1sec'

Below left: Phase 2 172 got a new face and a tweaked chassis. **Above right:** 197 was Renault Sport's first third-gen Clio. **Right:** Raider was one of the last. **Below:** quick Clios have always boasted juicy details, from the 197's Brembo brakes (bottom left) to the Recaro seats in the Trophy (below) and, optionally, in the 200 (below right, in yellow)



RENAULT SPORT CLIO TIMELINE



FIRST AND LAST



CLIO 172 (PHASE I)

Engine	In-line 4-cyl, 1998cc
Max power	170bhp @ 6250rpm
Max torque	147lb ft @ 5400rpm
Weight	1035kg
Power-to-weight	167bhp/ton
0-62mph	7.2sec (claimed)
Top speed	138mph (claimed)
On sale	2000-2001
Price new	£15,995 (2000)



CLIO 200

Engine	In-line 4-cyl, 1998cc
Max power	197bhp @ 7100rpm
Max torque	159lb ft @ 5400rpm
Weight	1204kg
Power-to-weight	166bhp/ton
0-62mph	6.9sec (claimed)
Top speed	141mph (claimed)
On sale	2009-2013
Price new	£15,570 (2009)



£1000 – than a standard 197.

To coincide with the Clio's mid-life refresh, the 197 was updated in 2009 with reshaped bumpers, new headlights, five-spoke alloys and an additional 3bhp to become the 200. Both the standard car and the Cup were available at launch with spec more or less as per the 197. Unlike previous Cup models, most of the RS Clio's colours could be chosen.

The 200 spawned three special editions: Gordini, Silverstone GP and Raider. The Gordini arrived in 2010 and was a well-optioned 200 with Gordini addenda – mainly stripes and badges. The Silverstone GP was limited to just 50 cars, all metallic silver with a host of extras such as the Cup chassis. Just 28 Raiders came to the UK and they had 18in alloys, the Cup chassis, leather Recaros and a host of bespoke trim.

In 2013, Renault Sport turned its attention to the new Clio and turbo power. RIP the naturally aspirated Clio – we won't see its like again.



June 2007



197 FI Team R27

October 2007



197 Cup

November 2008



197 Lux

May 2009



200/200 Cup

July 2010



200 Gordini

July 2011



200 Silverstone GP

October 2011



200 Raider

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ALL YOU NEED TO KNOW ABOUT... PAINT-PROTECTION FILM

With deep bumpers and wide arches, performance cars are particularly susceptible to paint damage. So how does protective film help?

by Bob Harper



WHAT IS IT?

Paint-protection film is generally made from a tough, clear, flexible acrylic, urethane or polyurethane film. It is applied to a car's surfaces.

WHAT DOES IT DO?

It is designed to protect your car's paint from stone chips, environmental contaminants, bird lime, insects, scratches and minor abrasions.

WHERE DID IT ORIGINATE FROM?

It was originally developed for military use in the Vietnam War. It was applied to helicopter rotor blades, which were susceptible to damage.

HOW IS IT FITTED?

Most installers will use templates that have been designed to achieve a precise fit for your car. The bodywork will be carefully cleaned and prepared for the application of the film and each section will be applied by hand using water and a slip solution to slide the film into position. Once the film is in place, the liquid underneath is squeezed out. Some companies wrap the film around the edge of the panel, others leave it flush with the edge.

CAN IT BE FITTED TO PANELS WITH NON-ORIGINAL PAINT?

Yes, it can, but if a panel has been repainted it needs to be a high-quality repair otherwise it's possible the paint could come away when the film is removed. New paint should also be allowed time to cure fully before the film is applied.

'Scratches that don't penetrate the self-healing layer disappear when the film gets heated by the engine, sun or warm water'

DOES IT COVER THE WHOLE CAR?

You can decide whether to cover just the most vulnerable areas, such as the bumpers, bonnet and wheelarches, or whether to cover the entire car.

HOW LONG DOES FITTING IT TAKE?

That depends on how much is being fitted. It can take from a morning to a couple of days.

CAN YOU FIT IT YOURSELF?

It's possible to fit smaller sections at home – some companies sell motorbike kits for DIY application – but it's generally best left to the professionals.

WHEN SHOULD I GET IT APPLIED?

Ideally, paint-protection film is applied when a car is new, before it has suffered any wear and tear.

HOW DO I LOOK AFTER IT?

Wash your car in the normal way, although if you use a pressure washer, care should be exercised. After washing, the film can be polished or waxed, just as you would a painted surface.

WHAT IF IT GETS DAMAGED?

You can easily peel off the damaged piece – a bit of gentle heat from a hairdryer will make this easier – and have a new section installed.

I'VE SEEN SELF-HEALING FILMS MENTIONED – WHAT ARE THESE?

Most film has a self-healing layer. Scratches that don't penetrate this layer disappear when the film gets heated by the engine, sun or warm water.

I'VE SEEN CARS WITH FILM THAT LOOKS YELLOW AND NASTY – IS THIS NORMAL?

When paint-protection film was in its infancy, the film or gel used underneath it could deteriorate over time leading to the discolouring. However, the quality of film has improved over the years, so this is no longer the problem it once was.

HOW MUCH DOES IT COST?

It varies depending on the complexity of your car's body. Prices start at around £400 for a front bumper and rise to over £5000 for an entire car.

USEFUL CONTACTS

fxuk.net

topazdetailing.com

reflectology.co.uk

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Buying guide



TVR GRIFFITH (1991-2002)

With TVR on the brink of an unlikely resurgence, perhaps it's time to buy the purest sports car it ever made

by Peter Tomalin

ALMOST EXACTLY 25 YEARS AGO, I DROVE THE first Griffith press car to the Lake District and fell head over heels in love with it. I dreamed of owning one then and, in idle moments, I still do. Just a few minutes ago, while researching this article, I was looking at the classifieds and daydreaming, as you do. Really good examples are currently somewhere between twenty-five and thirty grand. Spookily, that's close to precisely what they cost when the car was launched. In spring 1992, the 4-litre V8 version was £24,802 and the 4.3 £27,206.

It was the 4.3, with a claimed 280bhp, that I drove that spring for *Performance Car*, and which colleague John Barker figured at Millbrook, returning what was for the time a truly astounding set of stats: 0-60mph in 4.8sec, →



CHECKPOINTS

ENGINE

Our guide is Dom Trickett of Coventry-based Powers Performance (formerly TVR Power, which was responsible for building all the Rover V8s for TVR). 'The main thing to check for is oil leaks,' he says. 'They do tend to seep a bit, but if there's a lot of oil, you've got problems – it may be burning oil, so it pressurises the crankcase and blows out the rear main seal, which then leaks on the clutch. Also check that the fan kicks in [at just over 90C]. Camshaft wear is the other main issue: they generally last about 50,000 miles, and a top-end overhaul costs around £2000.'

As for 'serp' and 'pre-serp' engines, this refers to the ancillary belt drive configuration. On the serp engine,

introduced in '94, a single belt follows a 'serpentine' route. These later engines had slightly less peak power but were smoother-running and had improved water and oil distribution.

TRANSMISSION

Early Griffis had a Rover L77 five-speed 'box, as used in the SD1. It was replaced in 1993 by the Borg-Warner T-5, which is superior. If the clutch has a high biting point or shows signs of slipping, negotiate some money off – a clutch change is an £800 job.

SUSPENSION, STEERING, BRAKES, TYRES

No power-assistance for the steering on early Griffis, though it was an

option in the mid-'90s and standard later on. Suspension was by Koni at the start, switching to Bilstein after two years. Any clonks probably indicate worn bushes. Rather than fitting poly bushes, Dom recommends sticking with original-spec parts.

When finding tyres, note that the front wheels are 15in while the rears are 16in. Mainstream tyre suppliers can struggle, but tvr-parts.com usually has suitable Toyos and they're not extortionately expensive.

BODY, INTERIOR, ELECTRICS

'The biggest issue is the outriggers,' says Dom. These are steel tubes that run under the floor of the car, supporting the body. 'They tend to rust from the inside, so you have to

get the car on a ramp and have a poke around and scrape away any sealant that might be hiding the problem.' Just behind the front wheel is a good place to look.

If they're perforated, they'll need repair sections welding in. Some repairs can be done with the body on, but to do a proper job you need to lift it off, which costs around £6500, or up to £10,000 if you have suspension, brakes, etc, refurbed. Once properly done it ought to last for many years.

The GRP body is resilient; just examine the nose in particular for cracks. Check the windscreen for milkeness caused by delamination, and the condition of the roof – and the stitching around the rear window, the door seals, and the carpets for dampness caused by a leaky roof.

0-100mph in 11.2sec. More telling was the sheer grunt of the thing: in fourth gear it dispatched each of the 20mph increments – 30-50mph, 50-70mph, 70-90mph, even 90-110mph – in a fraction over four seconds. It was properly quick, with a top speed on the banked bowl of 155mph (which meant 160mph on the flat).

There was even more to come, first with the Big Valve version of the 4.3, and from 1993 with the 5-litre engine that powered the Griffith 500. Peak power for the 500 was originally quoted as 340bhp, later 320bhp (with a catalytic converter), though as with TVR's weight figures, these were best taken with a pinch of salt!

Putting scepticism to one side, there's no question that the Griffith was the car that turned TVR into a 'player' virtually overnight and marked the start of its golden era under Peter Wheeler. Production ended in 2002 with a final run of 100 Special Editions that featured bigger headlights, revised tail lights, an upgraded cockpit with aluminium switchgear and also came with power-assisted steering as standard.

But the Griffith was never built in huge numbers – with a total production of around 2500 it was outsold roughly three-to-one by the marginally more refined and bigger-booted Chimaera.

With the Griffith now viewed as a bona fide classic, and with exports now possible to the United States under the 25-year rule (a controversial rule whereby cars younger than a quarter of a century old cannot legally be brought into the country on safety grounds), those numbers are only going to go one way. So Griffiths look a decent bet as an investment. Just a pity I still can't afford one! However, if you fancy owning one of Blackpool's finest, here's what you need to know.

Right, from top:

glassfibre body is generally robust, but check front end for cracks; go to specialists to find tyres in the correct sizes; oil leaks can signal major engine problems; check interior for leaks

WHAT TO PAY

The entry point to Griffith ownership is currently £15,000, but be wary – while there are sound, well-maintained cars at this level, perhaps in need of superficial improvement, there are also some where a pretty body is hiding serious structural problems. Generally, £25,000 buys a good 4.0 or 4.3, and around £30,000 a very nice 500. Occasionally you'll see late, very low-mileage 500s advertised for more, but higher prices are generally speculative.

The car pictured here is a 1995 Griffith 500 with 38,000 miles on the clock. It's currently for sale at Bespoke Performance, Hertfordshire, priced at £25,995. Call 01920 468 580.



INFORMATION

SPECIFICATION

GRIFFITH 4.3 (NON-CAT 500 IN BRACKETS)

Engine	V8, 4280cc (4997cc)
Max power	280bhp @ 5500rpm (340bhp @ 5500rpm)
Max torque	305lb ft @ 4000rpm (350lb ft @ 3750rpm)
Transmission	Five-speed manual, rear-wheel drive, limited-slip differential
Weight	1040kg (1060kg) claimed
Power-to-weight	274bhp/ton (326bhp/ton)
0-60mph	4.4sec (4.1sec) claimed
Top speed	158mph (167mph) claimed
Price new	£27,206 in 1992 (£32,995 in 1993)

PARTS PRICES

Prices from powersperformance.co.uk. Tyre prices from tvr-parts.com. All prices include VAT but exclude fitting charges.

Tyres (each)	£101.94 front, £127.62 rear (Toyo Proxes T1-R)
Front pads (set)	£44.99
Front discs (pair)	£95.98
Dampers (set of four)	£719.99 (Gaz Gold Pro)
Clutch kit	£443.99 (AP Racing heavy-duty)
Spark plugs (set)	£47.90

SERVICING

Prices from powersperformance.co.uk, including VAT. Service at 6000 miles or annually, whichever is sooner.

Minor service	£420
Major service	£510

USEFUL CONTACTS

FORUMS, ADVICE, EVENTS

tvr-car-club.co.uk
pistonheads.com

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powersperformance.co.uk
str8six.co.uk
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racinggreentvr.com
tonygilbertcars.co.uk
ppctvr.co.uk

CARS FOR SALE

classicandperformancecar.com



'I BOUGHT ONE'

PAUL BENNETT

'As soon as I saw the Griffith – when it debuted in 1991 – I knew I had to have one. That was confirmed when Ian Flux, one of the Tuscan racing drivers, took me out in a pre-cat Griffith. Wow. I was grinning for days!

'I've had a number of other TVRs over the years, but I bought this car in 2006. It's the first 4.3-litre Big Valve model – it was actually the factory press car for the first few years of its life and appeared in many magazine articles. It then became a development mule at the factory, so it's had an interesting life! The guy who had it before me spent a lot of money returning it to the original spec.

'In total it's covered around 230,000 miles, though in its

early years it was averaging around 30,000 a year. I only do between 500 and 1500 miles a year, which isn't the best thing for these cars. There always seems to be something that requires attention – often niggly little things, and often electrical – but then it's a handmade car, built by some blokes in Lancashire!

'My wife also has a Griffith – a 500 that we bought in 2003. For the first eight years it was her everyday car. She did about 70,000 miles in that time, and it was as reliable as anything. These cars really like to be used.

'With performance, there's hardly anything in it. The 4.3 is

that bit more free-revving and freer-breathing without the cats. When it's running well, it's fantastic – and the noise is just wonderful. There's nothing quite like it for the money; parts and support are widely available and not too expensive, and the owners are a great bunch.

'Always buy on condition, and don't let a high mileage put you off. Take someone who knows TVRs with you and try not to buy the first you see as the noise will get you reaching for your cash!'



IN THE CLASSIFIEDS



1999 GRIFFITH 500
£24,995

43,000 miles, Imperial Blue with Magnolia/Prussian hide, FSH, chassis outriggers replaced, four previous owners
hhsportscars.co.uk



1998 GRIFFITH 500
£25,995

55,200 miles, Halcyon Midas with grey leather, Leven alloy stalks, steel dash, FSH, excellent chassis and outriggers
mole-valley.co.uk



1998 GRIFFITH 500
£29,995

21,000 miles, Imperial Blue with grey leather, blue roof, FSH, previous owner kept the car for 14 years
tonygilbertcars.co.uk

WHAT WE SAID



GRIFFITH 500 v SI ELISE v 986 BOXSTER v S2000

'Sitting low in a comfortable, softly stuffed seat, the Griff feels good. The mother of all transmission tunnels bisects the cockpit at armpit height, while walnut veneer surrounds simple dials set across the dashboard. It's a classic sports car interior.

'This [1997 car] is the full, caveman-spec Griffith 500, with ultra-heavy steering. The factory has since added power-assistance as standard, along with a lighter clutch. The soul of the 500, though, always will be its engine. Displacing 5 litres and developing a raucous 340bhp, to say it makes this car quick is a laughable understatement. It's one of those cars that hits 140mph with just a mild flex of your right foot.

'Chasing through the mountains, the Griffith annihilates everything out of the corners. It's got a surprising amount of traction, but with such immense torque, the rear Bridgestones can only hang on for so long. When they do let go, the Griffith stays with you, allowing your right foot to steer in unison with the quick, meaty steering.' – *evo* 009

RIVALS

CATERHAM SEVEN

When it comes to the thrill of driving, nothing delivers quite like a Seven; £25k-30k gives you a wide choice of models, from BDR-engine classics to nearly new Roadsports and Supersports.

MORGAN PLUS 8

The Griffith's thundering V8 is a big part of its appeal, and Morgan has been fitting the Rover engine since the '60s. The cheapest are now around £30k, with a retro chassis to match the styling.

BMW M ROADSTER

If you're looking for a big, torquey engine, open-top motoring and reasonable civility, the M Roadster ('98-'02) is worth a punt. The straight-six from the M3 makes 325bhp, and the best are currently £22k-27k.

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BUYING JOURNEY

evo reader Gareth Richardson's magnificent buying history

THE CARS

Triumph Dolomite 1500HL

Triumph Herald 13/60 Convertible

Ford Fiesta Popular (Mk1)

Triumph TR7

Rover 820 Fastback

Triumph Spitfire (Mk3)

Triumph TR5

Lotus Elan DHC (S4)

Lotus Elise (S1)

Lotus Elise (S2)

Lotus 340R

Triumph Stag

Mini Cooper S (R53)

Peugeot 406 Coupe

Porsche 911 Carrera (996)

Ferrari 365 GTB/4 Daytona

Maserati GranSport

Mini Cooper (R56)

BMW X5 3.0d

Lamborghini Murciélago

Porsche 911 GT3 RS (996)

Triumph TR2

Porsche 911 Turbo (996)

Ferrari 360 Challenge Stradale

Porsche Cayenne Turbo

GARETH'S CURRENT COLLECTION OF cars would make a good Buying Journey on its own. It comprises a 1955 Triumph TR2, a Lotus 340R, a Lotus Elan, a Porsche 911 GT3 RS, a Porsche Cayenne Turbo, a Lamborghini Murciélago and a Ferrari 360 Challenge Stradale.

As well as cramming a selection of **evo** five-star machines into his car history, Gareth has stayed loyal to a few marques. His first car, a Dolomite 1500HL, was made to look like a Sprint by its previous owner, and it started a love affair with

Triumph. There have been numerous Lotuses, too. Gareth has owned his Elan for 17 years, but he has also indulged in some more modern models from the Norfolk firm. He describes his S1 Elise as 'probably the best car I've owned', but it made way for a newer Elise and then the 340R. Just like the Elan was, the 340R is used for trackdays, sprints and hill climbs. He has no plans to sell it.

Gareth has also owned three 996-generation 911s, including a Turbo – 'a brilliant alternative to the normal daily' – and that GT3 RS.



Lotus Elise (S1)

'This was the first brand new car I ever purchased. The fact I was still in my mid-20s and couldn't really afford it added to the suspense and anticipation. It was my only car and I used it as a daily driver as well as for holiday road-trips. The driving experience was sublime – a revelation compared with the old Triumphs – and in two years I never had a problem with it.'



Ferrari 365 GTB/4 Daytona

'The Daytona was *the* supercar in the year I was born. I missed them at £80k but when they doubled within two years, I realised I had to remortgage the house and buy one while I still had the chance. I tried to get to the Ring in it the first summer I had it, but sadly a brake problem put paid to that before I even got to the Channel Tunnel. Unfortunately, during my divorce, three years after I bought the car, I had to sell it to buy my ex a house. I doubt I'll ever have another one. A Daytona, that is, not a wife.'

Ferrari 360 Challenge Stradale

'If I absolutely had to choose between the GT3 RS and the Challenge Stradale, it would be incredibly difficult, but it would be the Ferrari. The sound from its V8 as you accelerate is something I never tire of. It has an ability to shrink around you, feeling smaller than it is. It's so agile and its direct steering is superb. It's proven comfortable on long trips to Le Mans and this year I am taking it to Italy. My mate will join me in the GT3 RS, which we share, and we'll meet up with our families, who will be flying out.'



WHAT NEXT?

'I'd love a 1920s Cricklewood Bentley. I am planning my semi-retirement somewhere warm, and touring in a big, open Bentley sounds like a perfect way to spend the afternoons. As for more modern machinery, I have an Alfa Romeo Giulia Quadrifoglio on order to replace the Cayenne, and I've registered my interest in the next 911 GT3 RS, but who knows whether that will come to fruition.'

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Porsche GT3

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Porsche 911 Carrera 4S
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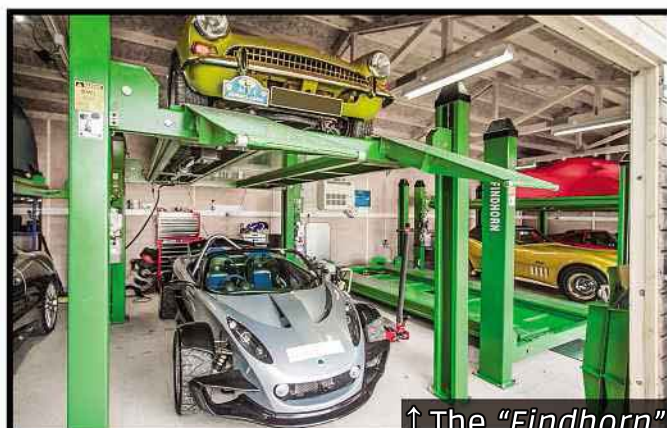
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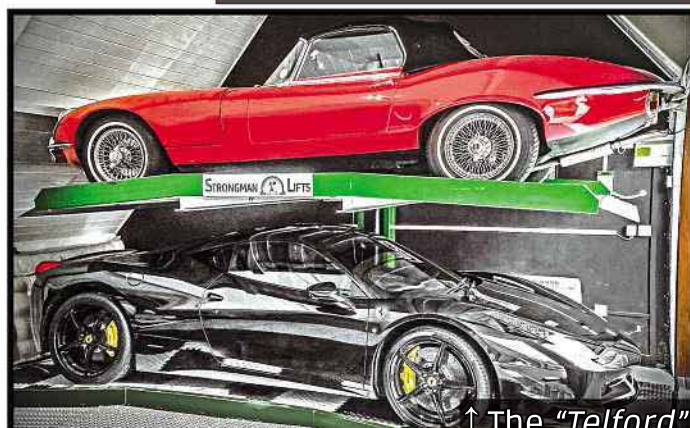
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I WANT TO BUY A... £20,000 PORSCHE

by Bob Harper

YOU'VE GOT £20,000 BURNING A HOLE in your pocket and you've always wanted a Porsche, but which one to choose? To help you decide, *evo*'s John Barker, Richard Meaden, Adam Towler and Stuart Gallagher offer their suggestions.

JB: Back in the mid-'90s, Walter Röhrl described the 968 Club Sport as Porsche's best handling car and – though it took time – that is now recognised in the market. Prices are way beyond £20k. So, if you like the idea of a front-engine, rear-drive Porsche but don't fancy the hefty 928, what is there? May I suggest the 944 Turbo S? It's a pretty special 944, very different to the standard model, including a new nose – for the greater cooling demands – and 911 brakes, and with 247bhp it also has plenty more power than the CS. It's a decent drive as standard but I imagine it could be coaxied into making more power, and how hard could it be to make it handle better, using Club Sport learning?

RM: £20k is an awkward amount. Not enough for my first choice – a decent 996 Carrera 4S – as they're in the mid-20s now. So if you want a 911 you're stuck in standard 996 country. Targas are nice and more individual than a Carrera 2, but they're thin on the ground. I'd also be tempted by a 944 Turbo or S2. Some of the prices are silly, but there are good



transaxle cars to be had for this budget. They're beautifully built and increasingly cool, too.

AT: OK, I admit it, I'm biased because I own one, but it has to be a 996 Carrera. Although prices have risen, you should get something really nice for £20k, whereas a 997 at this price has 'money-pit' written all over its curvy form. Although some are trying to shift gen-one 996 Carreras at this price point, most will be the gen-two, with the teardrop headlamps and the larger, 3.6-litre engine. The relationship between power and torque, kerb weight, aerodynamics and gearing means a good one feels much quicker on the road than the numbers suggest. There are plenty of pitfalls, but do your homework – and it's not as though there isn't enough to read on the subject matter – and get one now before they all cost a fortune. They're great cars.

SG: An original, 987-generation Cayman S is a no-brainer for me at this price point. It has plenty of punch from its 316bhp, downsized Carrera engine, and it has brakes from the same model, too. Lovely chassis – so fluid – delightful steering and a great first performance car. Caymans also tend to be owned by more sympathetic drivers, and as very few were sold it has a bit of exclusivity, too. Our budget should secure a 2008 example with around 40,000 miles. Tempted?

'Some of the prices are silly, but there are good transaxle cars to be had for this budget'

Clockwise from top left: 996-gen Carreras are the 911 of choice at this price point; 944 Turbo S increasingly appealing; tread carefully with a 997 Carrera at £20k; or play safe and enjoy an original Cayman S

STILL WAITING?



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THE PORSCHE 930 TURBO



RENAISSANCE
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Press and public first cast eyes over the wide body of the new Porsche flagship model at the Frankfurt auto show in autumn of 1973. 'The Turbo' as it would be known was released into production after a further year of intensive development in October of 1974.

The Turbo's dramatically flared wheel arches and large 'Tea tray' rear spoiler instantly inspired the imagination of car enthusiasts the world over. Thought of as the world's first practical 'super car' the Turbo's roots began primarily as a homologation special. A completely reworked 3.0 litre flat 6 boxer engine matched with a KKK turbocharger provided unrivalled performance and gave the car a fearsome reputation. Enter into a conversation with someone who owned one of these cars in the late 70's and you will see their eyes open wide with excitement as they explain the way that time changed when the engine came into boost.



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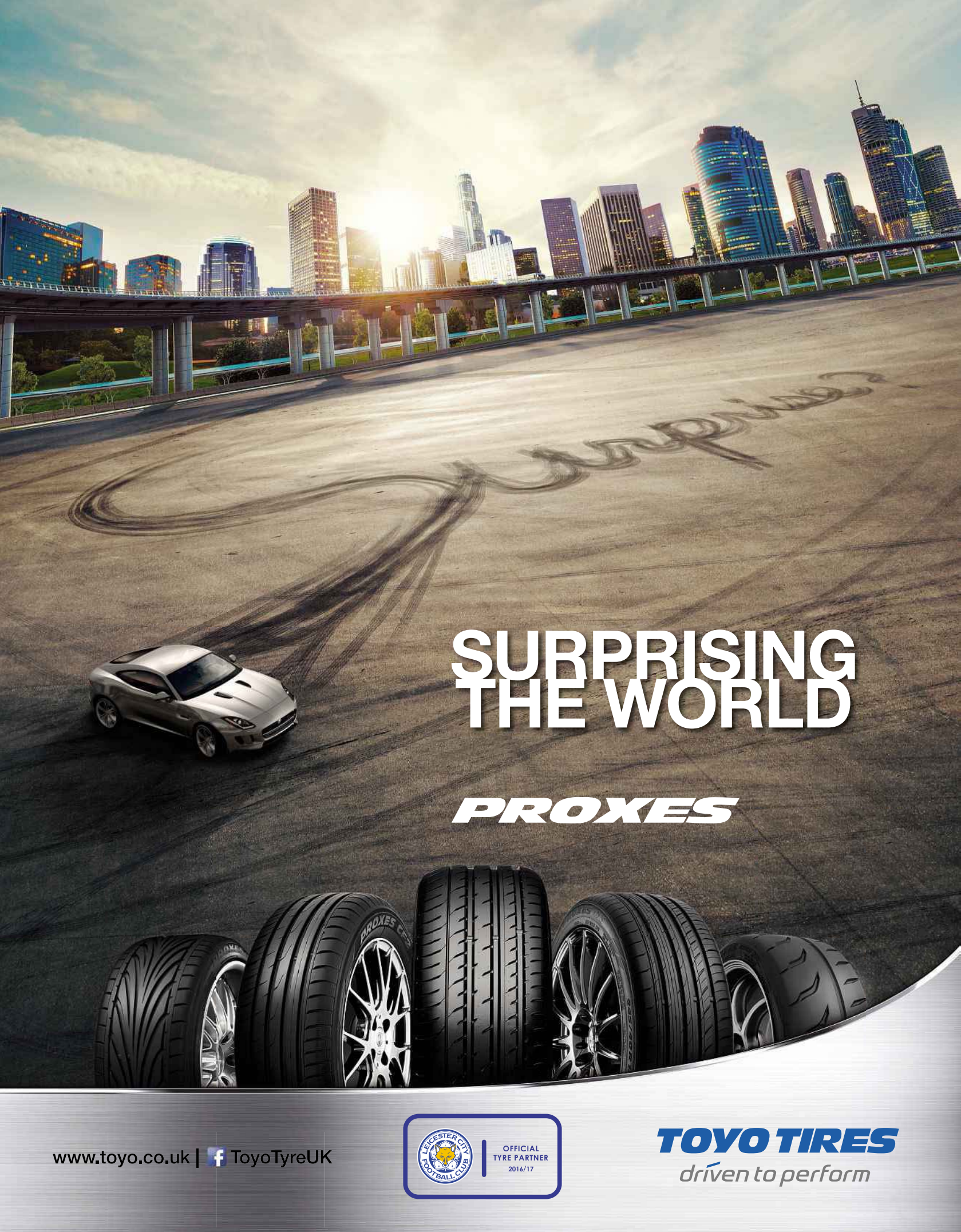
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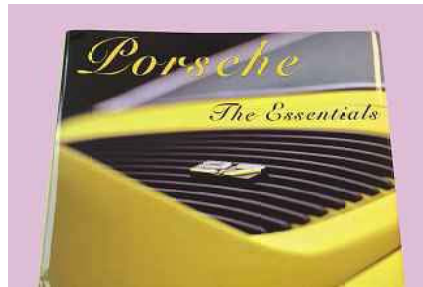
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END OF TERM

BMW i8

It's not a group-test winner, but after eight months with us, did the i8 score as a long-term proposition?

THERE ARE A NUMBER OF REASONS why **evo** runs the cars that it does on its Fast Fleet. One is that models that shine on their launch event or batter the opposition in a group test also need to prove they aren't highly-strung and hateful things to live with. Or there's the polar opposite: the car that doesn't win the group test or float our boat on that first drive but is one you sense that, over time, could be the best alternative choice.

The latter is where BMW's i8 comes in and why its carbonfibre tub and aluminium and plastic body were allocated a space in the **evo** car park for eight months. The i8 had impressed us back in 2014 when it was new, but further exposure to it left us enthralled and nonplussed in equal measure. It looked cool to some, drove okay for others, and most of us admired its



tech. But whenever we had an i8 around for a few days to test there was never a fistfight to win the key for the night. Perhaps a longer stint with one could help our view become more concrete.

'My' i8 had been specced by the BMW press office, so therefore not only arrived with a £116,605 price tag – a £12,065 premium over the basic figure – but also a rather arresting paint scheme. Most called it purple, BMW called it Twilight Purple Pearl and charged £5495 for what it calls 'post production applied special paint'. Other options included £1700 of carbonfibre interior trim, Carpo Carum grey leather at £1850, a Harman/Kardon stereo (£895), internet connectivity (£95), comfort access (£795), 20in W-spoke alloys (£1150) and an eDrive exterior sound pack (£85) to break the silence when running on electric power.

Naturally, our i8's colour polarised opinion. I thought it looked great on a car so distinctive, but less so on the 3-series Touring I once parked next to that had been finished in the same hue. That said, the i8 doesn't need special paint to turn heads; three years on from its launch it is

still a car that draws attention like few others. Tesla aside, there are few, if any, that break the modern-day car-design code as much as this one. It's a design perfectly suited for the next-generation technology packaged within. The dihedral doors wowed young and old, but they did make egress and ingress a challenge and contributed to the reason Mrs Gallagher despised the i8 so; little legs and a high, wide sill do not make for an elegant entry or exit.

It was, however, the car's powertrain and how the i8 drove that both got under my skin and was the main topic of conversation with strangers. With a 13-amp three-pin socket in the **evo** car park and a 7kW Pod Point charger installed at home (£359 with an OLEV grant), making use of the i8's battery technology wasn't an issue. It took the best part of a working day to fully charge the batteries from empty at the office, but no more than two hours at home. Both resulted in up to 20 miles of electric range.

I always got a smug, satisfactory glow leaving the house with a full charge and silently driving through my town. The complete antithesis to

the gargling, snarling V10 of an Audi R8, the i8's silent performance was no less impressive for very different reasons. It was the silent running that made the penny drop for EV sceptics, too. Travelling emissions free (okay, tailpipe-emissions free) focused your mind on how internal combustion engines are so inefficient for driving in town or residential areas. I could complete all those short runs that fill every spare minute of a normal weekend (around 60 miles in my case) on nothing but battery power. That's a big appeal in my book.

How the i8's powertrain could maximise its potential to suit your driving impressed, too. Yes, I got in the habit of always charging it at home or at work, but why wouldn't you? And yes, my driving style adapted to make the most of the regen capabilities to boost the range. Again, why not? It's how the car was designed to work. In terms of economy, not exactly an **evo** hot topic but relevant here, over the 12,500 miles on test it returned 39.9mpg and cost in the region of £3 to charge overnight at home on a cheap energy tariff.



Clockwise from left: carbonfibre cabin trim wasn't cheap; trackday finished off the rear tyres; styling and special paint colour were both eye catching; London-dwelling **evo** columnist Richard Porter also sampled our i8 for a few weeks and concluded that he would 'have one in a heartbeat'



Other expenditure extended to a set of rear tyres courtesy of Mr R Meaden Esq and an **evo** track evening, and a windscreen, which wasn't covered on our insurance and cost £1500.

So, is the i8 an **evo** car? For the majority, probably not. Its focus isn't on pure performance, and the 228bhp three-cylinder, 1.5-litre petrol engine is the weakest link, partly due to it lacking character and partly because it needs the assistance of a fully charged battery and the 129bhp electric motor to give its best performance. Even then, acceleration is only on a par with a Porsche Cayman S rather than a 911 Carrera GTS, despite the BMW being more closely priced to the latter than the former.

The i8's steering also lacked feel and the low-speed ride felt rough on surfaces other cars from its class would float over. But tighten the powertrain with Sport mode and fire the i8 down an interesting road and it could earn its keep. The eco-friendly Bridgestones broke away earlier than you were expecting and the front would push wide way before the rear would break away, resulting in a lack of the fluidity you'd expect from a mid-engined car. But play to its strengths and it was rare to be frustrated by the i8.

Ultimately, there are two ways people will look at the i8. There will be those who see a sports coupe wannabe that doesn't deliver that last 15 per cent of the thrills

expected from a model costing this much from BMW. Others will see it as a fine achievement for a first attempt at a plug-in performance car. This is where I stand on the i8. It's not perfect: the powertrain needs to engage you more and deliver a stronger punch either via its electric motor, internal combustion engine or preferably both. And for a 2+2 coupe the luggage space is next to hopeless; a Lotus Elise has more. But as a car, and ultimately a piece of automotive engineering, it's hard not to come away from the i8 without being hugely impressed by its capabilities. I can't wait to try version 2.0. ✕

Stuart Gallagher
(@stuartg917)

'It was the complete antithesis to the gargling, snarling V10 of an Audi R8, but no less impressive'

Date acquired	November 2016
Duration of test	8 months
Total test mileage	12,511
Overall mpg	39.9
Costs	£359 charging point, £452 rear tyres, £1500 windscreen
Purchase price	£116,605
Value today	£70,000-75,000



DS 3 Performance

Is a luxurious hot hatch an oxymoron? It seems not

MONTH TWO WITH DS's take on a 'luxury' hot hatch has proved enlightening, as expected, with further time behind the wheel highlighting more of the car's contradictory traits.

To recap, my initial doubts about the DS 3 Performance concerned its confusing ethos of being a vivacious, pint-sized hot hatch and a luxury proposition (with a price tag to match) at the same time. That's not

really possible at this level, right?

Well, perhaps it is. Let's start with the aesthetics, which are an area in which DS has succeeded in melding a little opulence with pure hot-hatch thuggishness. This car has minimal overhangs and a low stance, and thanks to the yellow paintjob the rugged wheelarch extensions pop like black eyeliner paired with a pretty floral dress. All good things. I'm not sure chrome

really has a place on hot hatches, but I reckon DS has managed to make it work in this case, perhaps because the headlight design is quite elegant while the gaping maw of the radiator grille gives the car the necessary aggression. A bit of bling is forgivable, then, although I say that as someone who secretly admires the quirkiness of Citroën's Cactus, so you may wish to take that with a pinch of salt.

Unfortunately, the DS3's interior is less successful. The shiny plastics fail in their mission to impart a sophisticated vibe and the dashboard elements don't feel as well screwed together as you

might hope. The steering wheel also feels overly large for a hot hatch. An interior worthy of a car with a £23,335 price tag? Not really. A Mini John Cooper Works costs roughly the same and, just like the DS, goes for an indulgent cabin feel, but with far greater success. By using textured metals alongside higher-quality plastics, it exudes a feeling of quality that's in another league.

One thing the DS 3 undeniably nails, however, is its seats. From what I can tell, they're the same as those in the Peugeot 208 GTi by Peugeot Sport, which is most definitely a good thing. Broad-shouldered and with Alcantara



'I'm not sure chrome has a place on hot hatches, but I reckon DS has managed to make it work'



Mini JCW Challenge

Bad news: it still rides like a touring car. Good news: it sounds like one too

CURIOSITY GOT THE better of me recently and I decided to finally have a go in our Mini Challenge. OK, that's a lie. It was all that was left in the car park one evening, so I had no choice but to take it.

Still, as the person who ran *evo*'s regular-spec F56-generation JCW, and our R56 Mini GP a couple of years before that, I was curious to find out how the Challenge compares – and to discover for myself exactly how firm its ride is. The latter has been the talk of the office for the last few months, but as someone who is not averse to a jiggly ride, I had wondered if my colleagues were just being a bit, well, wimpish about it all.

It took no further than the gentle speed bump at the exit to the office car park to confirm that they weren't. Over the days that followed I adopted a near-permanent wincing expression as I pogoed from minor bump to mild dip, internal organs bouncing around inside my torso, my speed frequently tempered as I tried to mitigate the discomfort. Yes, there were brief flashes of enjoyment – essentially whenever a smooth (obviously), clear, dry corner

was encountered – but the rest of the time it was a largely unpleasant experience. This didn't feel like a track-biased car that could also be regularly used and enjoyed on the public road like, say, a Mini GP or a Mégane R26.R. It felt like a track car full stop.

Surely this couldn't be the spec

'The salute of firecracker pops and bangs every time you lift off the throttle is an absolute hoot'

our erstwhile colleagues Prosser and Bovingdon had settled upon while helping to develop the Challenge, and surely this couldn't be what most of the 100 customers who have shelled out £32,000 for one thought they were buying into. Well, it turns out maybe not – in more ways than one. Rumour has it that the car's Nitron dampers may require a service from time to time, especially if the car they are

fitted to has been subjected to a lot of track work, which ours most definitely has.

Mini will be taking a look at our car soon to see if that's what is needed here. We'll keep you posted, and keep our fingers crossed for an improvement.

To end on a happier note, one aspect of the Challenge that I *did* enjoy was its JCW Pro exhaust system. It takes a bit of programming to bring it fully to life, specifically two presses of the button that lives in one of the cupholders to open the flap in the exhaust, plus a flick of the collar around the base of the gearlever to select Sport mode for the engine, but the riotous result – an arrhythmic salute of firecracker pops and bangs every time you lift off the throttle – is an absolute hoot. Well, unless you happen to live along one of the more rural parts of my route to the *evo* office, perhaps... ✕

Ian Eveleigh

Date acquired	July 2016
Total mileage	9538
Mileage this month	1594
Costs this month	£0
mpg this month	32.3

centre sections, they look the part, and though they don't lock you into place like, say, the optional Recaro buckets in the Focus RS, they're still adequately supportive and yet comfy enough on longer drives. However, despite this, I really struggle to find that sweet spot in the driving position. There's seemingly no escaping the feeling of sitting on the car, rather than in it.

I've yet to take the DS 3 Performance on track, but I certainly don't envisage myself slipping awkwardly across the seat as the car's Michelin Pilot Super Sport tyres bite and the limited-slip differential hooks up. It ought to be good fun, especially as with 205bhp and a kerb weight of just 1175kg, this car has the go to justify the show. That next *evo* track evening can't come around soon enough.

Louis Shaw (@L_Shaw_)

Date acquired	May 2017
Total mileage	2524
Mileage this month	1034
Costs this month	£0
mpg this month	38.1



NEW ARRIVAL

Seat Leon ST Cupra 300 4Drive

Don't be deceived by its looks. Our latest Cupra is the most potent we've ever run



I GUESS THIS IS KIND OF what I wished for. A couple of years back I was helping out backstage on eCoty and one of the contenders was the SEAT Leon Cupra Sub8. I loved its clean, understated looks and its colour combo of pale bluey-grey bodywork and washed out orange rims, which looked like faded Gulf colours. Even more, I loved how it went. Thanks to sticky Michelins and a solid 276bhp it was able to latch onto the diffused backsides of even the fastest supercars and ride out the buffeting and occasional overrun flames for mile after twisting mile. Sub8 at the Nürburgring? Yep, I believe that.

Back then, I said I'd happily swap my much-loved Mk5 Golf GTI for the Cupra, and now I have. Only it's not a three-door Sub8 but a five-door estate. And it doesn't have the VAQ electronically controlled limited-slip differential that enhances corner-exit traction because it has 4Drive,

the familiar VAG Haldex-equipped four-wheel-drive system. That also means it has the six-speed DSG gearbox because there's no manual option with 4Drive. And its 19in alloys are shod with regular Pirelli P Zeros rather than the gummy Pilot Sport Cup 2s of the Ring car.

So it's not a replica Sub8 car in estate form, which is fine by me, because the estate gives me the space to comfortably pack a dog and its cage and my boys and our luggage and happily travel a few hours across the country.

I've enjoyed tinkering with the drive modes – Comfort, Sport, Cupra and Individual – that last one allowing you to go à la carte and separately set the feistiness of the damping, engine response and steering weight. The steering stays permanently in the lightest, Comfort setting but the damping shifts between Cupra (fully laden) and Comfort (just me). Having the engine set to Cupra is great for

'It trumps the Sub8's piffling 276bhp with a total of 296bhp. SEAT claims 0-62mph in 4.9sec'

Date acquired	May 2017
Total mileage	3286
Mileage this month	1995
Costs this month	£0
mpg this month	34.1

throttle response but also puts the DSG 'box on high alert, so I think that'll be just for proper back-road hacks.

The 4Drive estate costs £34,485 basic and looks good in metallic white (add £575) with those contrasting gloss black alloys (standard), but the Cupra styling tweaks are subtle. It's definitely a Q-car, which is no bad thing in my book, and here's the best bit: my vanilla estate outpunches the Sub8 because it trumps the Sub's piffling 276bhp with a total of 296bhp. SEAT claims 0-62mph in 4.9sec.

It's heavier than the three-door hatch, of course, but after you've been mooching for a while and find yourself with an opportunity to nail the throttle and feel a couple of red-line upshifts, the amount of top-end urge is shocking. From 5000rpm onwards it goes nuts, and the upshifts are instant and seamless and the straight suddenly isn't long enough and the kids and the dog have gone quiet... ✕

John Barker (@evoJB)

Ford Focus ST Estate

Could a road-trip to a French race circuit play to our fast estate's strengths?

I IT'S BEEN A FEW MONTHS since my last regular Fast Fleet steed went back to its maker, so I've been taking the opportunity to try some of **evo's** other cars. Last month I spent a while with the i8; this month I borrowed the Focus ST Estate.

I had a particular journey in mind for it – an 1100-mile round-trip to Dijon for the Grand Prix de l'Age d'Or historic race meeting, where I was competing in a much faster Ford: a spectacular GAA Cosworth-engined Cologne Capri.

With plenty of space and the promise of brisk performance and decent mpg, what the Focus lacks in look-at-me exoticism it makes up for in practicality and unobtrusive pace. That's important when you're lugging a load of kit and plying the heavily policed French autoroutes.

I hadn't driven an ST for ages, so it was back to first impressions. To be honest they were mixed. Once behind the wheel it felt a bit tight

up front – as though everything had been pushed forwards a little to make more space in the back. The infotainment system proved rather annoying, largely because of its reliance on the small and rather fiddly touchscreen. There's also just enough latency in the system that you prod at things twice, which tends to confuse it. Cue much swearing.

On the positive side, the Recaro seats are well bolstered and nicely yielding. It took me a while to find a comfortable position, but I have to say the five-hour run from Calais to Dijon – punctuated by just one stop for fuel – left me with no aches or pains. On smooth French autoroutes the ST felt settled, but on concrete sections and country roads there was a lot of road noise (doubtless made worse by the increased load area) and it fidgeted on its springs.

The 247bhp EcoBoost motor made for effortless progress, with plenty of torque to quickly surge by

slower-moving traffic before settling back to a Gendarme-friendly 85mph cruise. On the more enjoyable country roads near Dijon-Prenois the ST came to life, but the gruff engine note seemed a bit too contrived for my liking. The car also scrabbled for traction in lower gears, though the tyres aren't in their first flush of youth. An average mpg of 32.5 over 1100 miles isn't too bad, though given most of that was at a steady cruise I'd have hoped to get closer to 35.

I got on okay with the ST over the course of my trip, then, but the niggles and annoyances never really faded and I struggled to bond with it as I'd hoped. Verdict: a solid, capable, but somewhat uninspiring car. ❌

Richard Meaden
(@DickieMeaden)

Date acquired	October 2016
Total mileage	20,164
Mileage this month	2869
Costs this month	£0
mpg this month	32.5



'What the Focus lacks in look-at-me exoticism it makes up for in practicality and unobtrusive pace'





Volkswagen Golf GTI Clubsport Edition 40

END OF TERM

Plenty at **evo** saw this Golf as the sweet-spot of the GTI range, but one thought its long-winded name was a bit of a misnomer

I SPENT A COUPLE OF days in a new, Mk7.5 Golf GTI recently. Just a basic one: 227bhp, passive dampers. With our Mk7 GTI Clubsport Edition 40 heading back to VW a week or so later, it was perfect timing, providing a reminder of what the regular Golf GTI now offers and where the Edition 40 goes beyond that.

With its modest-by-modern-standards power output, it's easy to overlook the standard GTI. I know I've been guilty of that. Yet it's still an impressive thing. It can cover ground at a surprising pace, erasing any concerns about the quality of

the road surface you're passing over, effortlessly maintaining maximum momentum around bends, and always completing overtakes quicker than the numbers on the spec sheet might lead you to expect. It's still a great hot hatch.

How does the Edition 40 improve upon it? Well, there's the extra power, of course: 261bhp in first and second gears, 286bhp in third and above. The chassis, meanwhile, gets firmer and lower springs with retuned dampers, an electronically managed limited-slip differential and a shift in the grip bias towards the front of the car. And then there's

Right: Edition 40's cabin gained a more sporting feel with the use of Alcantara on the steering wheel and doors and for the gearlever gaiter; our car also boasted buzzing trim and an ill-fitting carpet

the unique looks: the revised front bumper, with 'air-curtain' vents that neatly start the stripes that continue down the car's flanks, plus a larger spoiler atop the tailgate. All-in-all, it's a neat package of improvements that seems well worth the premium, the exact figure being £2675 more than the regular Mk7.5 GTI, or £1315 more than the 242bhp Mk7.5 GTI Performance. That said, our long-termer came in at £36,366 against a £31,250 starting price thanks to a generous helping of options, including adaptive dampers, 19-inch alloys, satnav, some driver-assist features, a paint upgrade and two extra doors, all of which I could happily have lived without.

Sure enough, our Edition 40 proved faster, keener, more involving and more entertaining than the latest 227bhp car. It felt like a Golf GTI that had been perfectly amplified in every aspect, stopping just short of causing any distortion. And yet... can't a little distortion sometimes be a good thing? By compromising a car in some ways, it can be elevated in others, and made to feel truly special. And that's exactly what I expected given the use of the word 'Clubsport' in this Golf's name.

For me it's a label that conjures up images of something super-focused, with a level of power that feels barely contained, suspension firm enough to make passengers (but not drivers) complain, seats so buckety

that you occasionally find them a chore to get into, and styling that would make some onlookers frown in disapproval. But this Clubsport had none of that. You get the feeling VW could have used the same spec as the default for the Mk7.5 GTI and it wouldn't have felt out of place.

Perhaps that's why I mostly found myself referring to the car as 'the Edition 40', no 'Clubsport'; a subconscious attempt to suppress those expectations. In fact, had this car been named thus, following the pattern of its anniversary-celebrating predecessors, the Edition 30 and Edition 35, I think those fleeting moments of disappointment would never have existed.

They certainly didn't seem to exist for my colleagues. Whoever borrowed the Edition 40, they would always return the key singing the car's praises, which seems to confirm that any problems with the Edition 40 are mine, not the car's.

Actually, our long-termer did have a few problems, albeit minor ones. A bit of trim on the driver's door would buzz quietly every now and then, while the front bumper developed an annoying and rather loud creak/squeak that would sound whenever the car travelled over bumps or rough surfaces. Nearby, but seemingly unrelated, one of the headlamp washer jets wouldn't return fully to its hidden position

'Whoever borrowed the GTI Edition 40, they would always return the key singing the car's praises'



after popping out to do its business, and there was also an annoying bit of carpet that refused to stay correctly tucked behind the plastic trim for the driver's door aperture. But all of these were small snags in the grand scheme of things, and all no doubt easy fixes for a VW dealer.

Otherwise this Golf proved faultless. The running costs were pretty good, too. It averaged over 30mpg, which is respectable given my commute contains lots of B-roads that are driven with enthusiasm. And fuel aside, we didn't spend a penny on it. When it left us with nearly 10,500 miles on the clock it was still wearing its original tyres, the fronts with at least a couple of thousand miles left in them, the rears much more. It was also still 4400 miles away from needing a service, and it's worth noting that VW offers a package that gets you the first two of these for just £287.82.

So the Clubsport Edition 40 is a good car, then. A very, very good car, in fact. If, like me, you prefer your hot hatches with a more hardcore edge – think Cup-spec RS Méganes or the outgoing Civic Type R – you may find the Edition 40 a touch too polite. But if you fancy the idea of a keener Golf GTI that addresses the shortcomings of the regular and Performance models' specs, then look no further. ❌

Ian Eveleigh



Date acquired	October 2016
Duration of test	7 months
Total test mileage	10,468
Overall mpg	30.8
Costs	£0
Purchase price	£36,366
Value today	£26,500-29,000



Mazda MX-5 RF

There's a lot to be said for a good seat – and, it seems, even more that can be said about a bad one

I I'VE SPENT A LOT OF TIME behind the wheel of our RF recently. For the most part, this has been a good thing. It's not unusual in this job to go weeks without getting anywhere near your long-term test car as other press vehicles come and go. Worse still is when you're away on a succession of jobs and a colleague decides to 'look after' your car while you're absent and discovers that 'oh, it'll be around for the trackday then will it?'

One downside to spending so much time ensconced within the RF is that, roof up or down, it's not all that comfortable. It's taken a while for me to put my finger on the problem, but I think it boils down to the design of the seats, which don't offer quite enough padding in quite the right places to support my back over the course of a longer journey. They feel underpadded right at the base of the backrest, where pelvis meets spine. It's an area overlooked by a surprising number of

car makers, whose lumbar-support mechanisms seem to start a few vertebrae too high, at least for me, and leave a gaping void where my lower back ends up.

The Mazda doesn't have lumbar-support adjustment, so there's not even the promise of mild improvement. And the backrests seem to have very little in the way of stuffing, almost as if the tension of the leather trim is all that keeps the seats in shape. I'm no chiropractor, but I imagine this isn't great for the shape of my spine.

They're not great seats in general, really. You can adjust the seat squab for under-thigh support with a rotary knob on the side of the cushion, but not enough to fully support my thighs, which means my posterior alone is carrying most of my weight. And because the seats are leather – a fairly plasticky leather at that – they don't offer any natural grip, so as the miles pass, you gradually slip and slide into a sub-optimal

'Take a corner quickly and you slide about like you're going down a flume at a water-park'

shape without really noticing.

Leather, while my hackles have risen, is an idiotic material to use on the seats of a sports car at the best of times. Not only does it become uncomfortably hot and clammy on warm days or under the motions of enthusiastic driving, but as soon as you take a corner even vaguely quickly you slide about like you're going down a flume at a water-park. Hard braking is also a nuisance, since road-car seats (and the RF's are no exception, under-thigh support or not) often don't

incline enough to support you in the longitudinal plane.

So no, the seats in the RF aren't really adequate, and it's something we noticed with our previous long-term MX-5, too. Unusually, it's not a problem with my quarter-century-old Eunos Roadster, the seats of which seem to have been designed by people who don't have an irrational fear of foam padding.

The solution, I expect, is to do as many MX-5 owners do (but perhaps not many RF owners at this stage) and swap out the seats for something aftermarket and buckety. The right chairs wouldn't just do wonders for my long-term comfort, they'd also make the RF even more fun to drive quickly. ✘

Antony Ingram (@evoAntony)

Date acquired	February 2017
Total mileage	6779
Mileage this month	1135
Costs this month	£0
mpg this month	44.5

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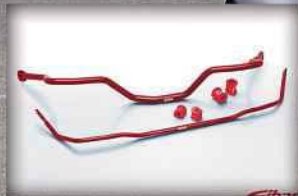


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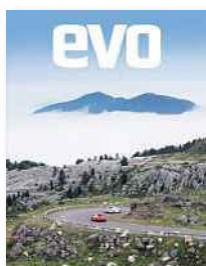
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 ★★ = Tepid
 ★★★ = Interesting
 ★★★★ = Seriously good
 ★★★★★ = A truly great car

⊕ = new entry this month. Cars in italics are no longer on sale. **Issue no.** is for our most recent major test of the car (D = Driven, F = feature). Call 0330 333 9491 for back issues. **Engine** is the car's combustion engine only - electric motors aren't shown. **Weight** is as quoted by the manufacturer for the car in basic spec, e.g. with a manual gearbox. In most cases this is to DIN standards (i.e. with fluids but without a driver), but where the manufacturer only quotes a 'dry' weight (i.e. without fluids) this is indicated by *. Note that a dry weight will make the car's power-to-weight ratio (bhp/ton) appear more favourable. **0-62mph (claimed)** is the manufacturer's 0-62 figure, with a manual gearbox where offered. Our **0-60mph** and **0-100mph (tested)** figures could be with either a manual or automatic/DCT gearbox.

SUPERMINIS / HOT HATCHES

OUR CHOICE

Volkswagen Golf R. The Mk7.5 Golf R continues the Mk7's trick of being the answer to just about every automotive question, combining four-wheel-drive security with impressive pace and a truly engaging driving experience. It's both classy and classless, and there's even a handy estate version.



BEST OF THE REST

If the Golf R is too mature to appeal, try the **Ford Focus RS**, or if front-drive is your thing, consider a **SEAT Leon Cupra 300**. The **VW Golf GTI**, with 227bhp in basic form of 242bhp in 'Performance' spec, punches above its weight, too. Amongst the smaller hatches, the **Ford Fiesta ST Mountune** (pictured) just edges the **Peugeot 208 GTI by Peugeot Sport**.

MAKE & MODEL	ISSUE NO.	PRICE	ENGINE (CV/C)	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	★☆☆☆☆
Abarth 695 Biposto	205 F	£33,055	4/1369	187/5500	184/3000	997kg	191	5.9	-	-	143	★☆☆☆☆
Alfa Romeo Mito Cloverleaf	149 F	'09-'16	4/1368	168/5500	184/2500	1145kg	149	7.5	-	-	136	★☆☆☆☆
Alfa Romeo Giulietta Veloce/QV	199 D	£29,635	4/1742	237/5750	251/2000	1320kg	182	6.0	-	-	152	★☆☆☆☆
Alfa Romeo Giulietta Cloverleaf	144 D	'10-'14	4/1742	232/5500	251/1900	1320kg	179	6.8	-	-	150	★☆☆☆☆
Alfa Romeo 147 GTA	187 F	'03-'06	6/3179	247/6200	221/4800	1360kg	185	6.3	6.0	15.5	153	★☆☆☆☆
Audi S1	211 F	£25,940	4/1984	228/6000	273/1600	1315kg	176	5.8	-	-	155	★☆☆☆☆
Audi A1 quattro	181 F	'13	4/1984	253/6000	258/2500	1420kg	181	5.7	-	-	152	★☆☆☆☆
Audi S3	188 F	'13-'16	4/1984	296/5500	280/1800	1395kg	216	5.2	5.4	12.5	155	★☆☆☆☆
Audi RS3 Sportback	221 F	'15-'16	5/2480	362/5500	343/1625	1520kg	242	4.3	3.6	-	155	★☆☆☆☆
Audi S3	106 F	'06-'12	4/1984	261/6000	258/2500	1455kg	183	5.7	5.6	13.6	155	★☆☆☆☆
Audi RS3 Sportback	156 F	'10-'12	5/2480	335/5400	332/1600	1575kg	216	4.6	-	-	155	★☆☆☆☆
BMW 125iM Sport	176 D	£28,940	4/1997	221/5200	229/1400	1400kg	160	6.1	-	-	155	★☆☆☆☆
BMW M140i	-	£32,205	6/2979	335/5500	369/1520	1445kg	236	4.8	-	-	155	★☆☆☆☆
BMW M135i	212 F	'12-'15	6/2979	321/5800	332/1300	1430kg	228	5.1	5.2	-	155	★☆☆☆☆
BMW 130iM Sport	106 F	'05-'10	6/2996	261/6650	232/2750	1450kg	183	6.0	6.1	15.3	155	★☆☆☆☆
Citroën DS3 16 THP	142 F	'10-'15	4/1598	154/6000	177/1400	1240kg	126	7.3	-	-	133	★☆☆☆☆
Citroën DS3 Racing	153 D	'11-'12	4/1598	204/6000	203/2000	1240kg	167	6.5	-	-	146	★☆☆☆☆
Citroën Saxo VTS	020 F	'97-'03	4/1587	120/6600	107/5200	935kg	130	8.7	7.6	22.6	127	★☆☆☆☆
Citroën AX GT	195 F	'87-'92	4/1360	85/6400	86/4000	722kg	120	9.2	-	-	110	★☆☆☆☆
DS 3 Performance	222 D	£21,415	4/1598	205/6000	221/3000	1175kg	177	6.5	-	-	143	★☆☆☆☆
Fiat Panda 100HP	132 F	'06-'11	4/1368	99/6000	97/4250	975kg	103	9.5	-	-	117	★☆☆☆☆
Ford Fiesta ST	207 F	£18,145	4/1596	197/5700	214/2500	1088kg	184	6.9	7.4	18.4	137	★☆☆☆☆
Ford Fiesta ST Mountune	213 F	£18,944	4/1596	212/6000	236/2750	1088kg	198	6.4	-	-	143	★☆☆☆☆
Ford Fiesta ST200	225 F	'16	4/1596	212/6000	236/2500	1088kg	198	6.7	-	-	140	★☆☆☆☆
Ford Fiesta Zetec S	123 D	'08-'13	4/1596	118/6000	112/4050	1045kg	115	9.9	-	-	120	★☆☆☆☆
Ford Fiesta Zetec S Mountune	132 F	'08-'13	4/1596	138/6750	125/4250	1080kg	130	7.9	-	-	120	★☆☆☆☆
Ford Fiesta ST	075 D	'05-'08	4/1999	148/6000	140/4500	1137kg	132	7.9	-	-	129	★☆☆☆☆
Ford Fiesta ST185 Mountune	115 F	'08	4/1999	185/6700	147/3500	1137kg	165	6.9	-	-	129	★☆☆☆☆
Ford Focus ST TDCi Estate (Mk3)	219 D	£26,195	4/1997	182/3500	295/2000	1488kg	124	8.3	-	-	135	★☆☆☆☆
Ford Focus ST (Mk3)	207 F	£25,095	4/1999	247/5500	265/2000	1362kg	184	6.5	-	-	154	★☆☆☆☆
Ford Focus ST Mountune (Mk3)	187 D	£25,595	4/1999	271/5500	295/2750	1362kg	202	5.7	-	-	154+	★☆☆☆☆
Ford Focus ST (Mk2)	119 F	'05-'10	5/2522	222/6000	236/1600	1392kg	162	6.8	6.7	16.8	150	★☆☆☆☆
Ford Focus RS (Mk3)	229 F	£31,765	4/2261	345/6000	347/2000	1524kg	230	4.7	4.7	12.4	165	★☆☆☆☆
Ford Focus RS (Mk2)	195 F	'09-'11	5/2522	300/6500	324/2300	1467kg	208	5.9	5.9	14.2	163	★☆☆☆☆
Ford Focus RS500 (Mk2)	181 F	'10-'11	5/2522	345/6000	339/2500	1467kg	239	5.6	5.6	12.7	165	★☆☆☆☆
Ford Focus RS (Mk1)	207 F	'02-'03	4/1998	212/5500	229/3500	1278kg	169	6.7	5.9	14.9	143	★☆☆☆☆
Ford Escort RS Cosworth	157 F	'92-'96	4/1993	224/6250	224/3500	1275kg	179	6.2	-	-	137	★☆☆☆☆
Ford Puma 1.7	095 F	'97-'02	4/1619	123/6300	116/4500	1041kg	120	9.2	8.6	27.6	122	★☆☆☆☆
Ford Racing Puma	128 F	'00-'01	4/1679	153/7000	119/4500	1174kg	132	7.9	7.8	23.2	137	★☆☆☆☆
Honda Civic Type R (FK2)	227 F	'15-'17	4/1996	306/6500	295/2500	1378kg	226	5.7	5.4	12.4	167	★☆☆☆☆
Honda Civic Type R (FN2)	102 F	'07-'11	4/1998	198/7800	142/5600	1267kg	158	6.6	6.8	17.5	146	★☆☆☆☆
Honda Civic Type R Championship White	126 D	'09-'10	4/1998	198/7800	142/5600	1267kg	158	6.6	-	-	146	★☆☆☆☆
Honda Civic Type R Mugen (FN2)	195 F	'09-'11	4/1998	237/8300	157/6250	1233kg	195	5.9	-	-	155	★☆☆☆☆
Honda Civic Type R (EP3)	075 F	'01-'05	4/1998	197/7400	145/5900	1204kg	166	6.8	6.8	16.9	146	★☆☆☆☆
Honda Civic Type R (FK9)	210 F	'97-'00	4/1595	182/8200	118/7500	1040kg	178	6.8	-	-	135	★☆☆☆☆
Kia Procede GT	217 D	£23,310	4/1591	201/6000	195/1500	1359kg	143	7.3	-	-	150	★☆☆☆☆
Lancia Delta HF Integrale Evoluzione	194 F	'91-'92	4/1995	207/5750	220/3500	1300kg	162	6.0	-	-	134	★☆☆☆☆
Mazda 3 MPS	137 F	'06-'13	4/2261	256/5500	280/3000	1385kg	188	6.1	6.3	14.5	155	★☆☆☆☆
Mercedes-AMG A45	221 F	£40,695	4/1991	376/6000	350/2250	1480kg	258	4.2	3.9	-	155	★☆☆☆☆
Mercedes-Benz A45 AMG	194 F	'12-'15	4/1991	355/6000	332/2250	1480kg	244	4.6	4.3	10.6	155	★☆☆☆☆
MG Metro 6R4 Clubman	181 F	'84-'87	6/2991	250/7000	225/6500	1000kg	254	4.5	-	-	140	★☆☆☆☆
Mini Cooper (F56)	194 D	£15,775	3/1499	134/4500	162/1250	1085kg	125	7.9	-	-	130	★☆☆☆☆

MAKE & MODEL	ISSUE NO.	PRICE	ENGINE Cyl/DC	BHP/RPM	LB FT/0RPM	WEIGHT	BHP/TON	0-60MPH (S.MED)	0-60MPH (CERT)	0-100MPH (CERT)	MAX MPH	EVO RATING	
Mini Cooper S (F56)	196 D	£19,130	4/1998	189/4700	206/1250	1160kg	166	6.8	-	-	146	+ Still has that Mini DNA - Expensive with options	★★★★★
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	£32,000	4/1998	228/5200	236/1250	1215kg	191	6.3	-	-	152	+ A more hardcore JCW, honed with help from evol - Just 100 being built	★★★★★
Mini John Cooper Works Clubman (F54)	232 D	£29,345	4/1998	228/5000	258/1450	1475kg	157	6.3	-	-	148	+ Better looking than the standard Clubman - A disappointing lack of urge and finesse	★★★★☆
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 - Still not a match for a pukka hot hatch	★★★★★
Nissan Juke Nismo	184 F	£20,495	4/1618	197/6000	184/2400	1306kg	153	7.7	-	-	134	+ More than the sum of its parts - Not enough to add up to a pukka hot hatch	★★★★★
Peugeot 106 Rallye (Series 2)	-	97-98	4/1587	103/6200	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	97-00	4/1587	120/6600	107/5200	950kg	128	7.4	-	-	127	+ Fine handling supermini - Looks its age	★★★★★
Peugeot 208 GTi by Peugeot Sport	225 F	£22,904	4/1598	205/5800	221/1750	1185kg	176	6.5	-	-	143	+ The most focused small hatch on sale - Fiesta ST Mountune is thousands cheaper	★★★★★
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	229 F	£29,335	4/1598	266/6000	243/1900	1205kg	224	6.0	-	-	155	+ Thrilling and engaging on smooth roads - A real handful on bumpy ones	★★★★★
Peugeot 308 GTi 250 by Peugeot Sport	223 F	15-16	4/1598	246/6000	243/1900	1205kg	207	6.2	-	-	155	+ A very capable hot hatch... .. that lacks the sheer excitement of the best in class	★★★★★
Peugeot 306 GTi 6	020 F	93-01	4/1998	167/6500	142/5500	1215kg	139	7.9	7.2	20.1	140	+ One of the great GTIs - They don't make them like this 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	231 D	£13,755	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	4/1998	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	19-25	4/1618	197/6000	171/1750	1204kg	166	6.7	6.9	17.9	143	+ Faster, more refined, easier to drive - We miss the revvy naturally aspirated 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	195 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 it any more	★★★★★
Renault Sport Clio 197 Cup	115 F	07-09	4/1998	194/7250	158/5550	1240kg	161	6.9	-	-	134	+ Quick, polished and capable - Not as much sheer fun as 182 Cup	★★★★★
Renault Sport Clio 182	066 F	04-05	4/1998	180/6500	148/5250	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	1101kg	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	1101kg	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	221/6500	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 Sport Mégane 275 Cup-S	223 D	16	4/1998	271/5500	265/3000	1394kg	198	5.8	-	-	158	+ Cup chassis, LSD, the same engine as the Trophy-R - Could be too hardcore for some	★★★★★
Renault Sport Mégane Nav 275	-	16	4/1998	271/5500	265/3000	1394kg	198	5.8	-	-	158	+ A more luxurious 275 - Cup chassis is an option	★★★★★
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 dCi175 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 spicacious - Could take more power	★★★★★
Renault Sport Mégane 230 FI Team R26	195 F	07-09	4/1998	227/5500	229/3000	1345kg	171	6.5	6.2	16.0	147	+ The car the R26.R is based on - FI Team stickers in dubious taste	★★★★★
Renault Sport Mégane R26.R	231 F	08-09	4/1998	227/5500	229/3000	1220kg	189	6.0	5.8	15.1	147	+ One of the true hot hatch heroes - Two seats, plastic rear windows	★★★★★
SEAT Mii	-	£9655	3/999	59/5000	70/3000	854kg	70	14.4	-	-	99	+ Like VW's Up but more expensive - Still predictably slow	★★★★☆
SEAT Ibiza Cupra	225 F	£18,465	4/1998	189/4300	236/1450	1185kg	162	6.7	-	-	146	+ Quick, competent, refined, and manual only - Not exciting enough	★★★★★
SEAT Ibiza Cupra	183 D	70-15	4/1390	178/6200	184/2000	1259kg	144	6.9	-	-	142	+ Punchy engine, unflappable DSG - Lacks engagement, DSG only	★★★★★
SEAT Leon Cupra 300	234 D	£30,140	4/1984	296/5500	280/1800	1320kg	228	-	-	-	155	+ Already potent Cupra gets yet another 10bhp - The Mk7.5 Golf R	★★★★★
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, binding 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 VW's Up, but 2mpg faster flat out - 101mph isn't something to boast about	★★★★★
Skoda Fabia vRS (Mk1)	146 D	70-14	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 (Mk2)	077 F	03-07	4/1896	130/4000	229/1900	1315kg	100	9.6	-	-	127	+ Fun and frugal hot hatch - A little short on steering feel	★★★★★
Skoda Octavia vRS (Mk3)	187 D	£24,885	4/1984	217/4500	258/1500	1345kg	164	6.8	-	-	154	+ Quick, agile, roomier than a Golf - Ride is harsh for what would be a family car	★★★★★
Skoda Octavia vRS 230 (Mk3)	215 D	£25,130	4/1984	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 TDI 4x4 (Mk3)	223 D	£28,050	4/1968	181/3500	206/1750	1475kg	125	7.6	-	-	142	+ Four-wheel drive tightens the vRS chassis - Diesel and DSG only	★★★★★
Skoda Octavia vRS (Mk2)	163 F	05-13	4/1998	197/5100	206/1700	1395kg	143	7.3	-	-	149	+ Drives like a GTi but costs much less - Green brake calipers?	★★★★★
Subaru Impreza WRX	125 D	08-10	4/2457	251/5400	288/3000	1395kg	180	5.5	-	-	130	+ An improvement over the basic WRX - Still not the WRX we wanted	★★★★★
Subaru Impreza STi 330S	124 F	08-10	4/2457	325/5400	347/3400	1505kg	219	4.4	-	-	155	+ A bit quicker than the regular STi... .. but not better	★★★★★
Suzuki Swift Sport (Mk2)	175 F	£13,999	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	★★★★★
Vauxhall Corsa VXR	211 F	£19,245	4/1598	202/5800	206/1900	1278kg	161	6.8	-	-	143	+ Began 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	+ Better than the Mk1 Astra VXR; loony turbo pace - Lacks the Renault Sport Mégane's precision	★★★★★
Vauxhall Astra VXR (Mk1)	102 F	05-11	4/1998	237/5600	236/2400	1393kg	173	6.4	6.7	16.7	152	+ Fast and furious - Lacks a little composure and precision	★★★★★
VW Up	171 F	£8995	3/999	59/5000	70/3000	854kg	70	14.4	-	-	99	+ Accomplished city car is dynamically sound... .. but predictably slow	★★★★★
VW Polo GTI	211 F	£19,430	4/1798	189/4200	236/1450	1197kg	160	6.7	-	-	146	+ Smooth and brawny - Fiesta ST is more engaging	★★★★★
VW Polo GTI	154 F	70-14	4/1390	178/6200	184/2000	1184kg	153	7.4	-	-	142	+ Modern-day Mk1 Golf GTI gets twin-clutch DSG - It's a little bit bland	★★★★★
VW Golf GTI (Mk7.5)	233 D	£27,865	4/1984	227/4700	258/1500	1289kg	179	6.4	-	-	155	+ A still the most capable all-round hot hatch - Should be more thrilling	★★★★★
VW Golf GTI Performance (Mk7.5)	236 F	£29,280	4/1984	242/5000	273/1600	1312kg	187	6.2	-	-	155	+ A GTI with an extra 15bhp and an LSD - Could still be more thrilling	★★★★★
VW Golf R (Mk7.5)	235 D	£32,310	4/1984	306/5500	280/2000	1408kg	221	5.1	-	-	155	+ Outrageously yet accessible performance - Manual gearshift isn't the best	★★★★★
VW Golf GTD (Mk7)	200 D	13-17	4/1968	181/3500	206/1750	1302kg	141	7.5	-	-	143	+ Pace, fuel economy, sounds good for a diesel - Lacks the extra edge of the GTI	★★★★★
VW Golf GTI (Mk7)	229 F	13-17	4/1984	217/4500	258/1500	1276kg	173	6.5	-	-	153	+ Brilliantly resolved - Lacks the punch of newer rivals	★★★★★
VW Golf GTE (Mk7)	202 D	15-17	4/1395	201	258	1524kg	134	7.6	-	-	138	+ The most enjoyable plug-in hybrid in its price range - Golf GTI still quicker and more fun	★★★★★

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OUR CHOICE

Mercedes-AMG E63 S 4Matic+. With 603bhp and 627lb ft of torque, of course it's relentlessly rampant. But it's not all about straight-line speed – there's finesse here, too, with pin-sharp steering and a four-wheel drive chassis set up to provide an entertaining degree of rear-end mobility. The king of supersaloons.



BEST OF THE REST

The Porsche Panamera Turbo runs the E63 close and feels good for its 7min 38sec Ring time. Moving down a size, the Alfa Romeo Giulia Quadrifoglio (pictured) is, at last, an Alfa we can love simply because it's a great car. The Mercedes-AMG C63 S is also highly desirable, although some may prefer the more focused feel of a BMW M3.

MAKE & MODEL

Table with columns for Make & Model, Issue No., Price, Engine Cyl/CC, BHP/RPM, LB FT/RPM, Weight, BHP/TON, 0-62MPH (Gearbox), 0-62MPH (Urban), 0-100MPH (0-62/60), and Max MPH. It lists various car models and their specifications.

EVO RATING

Keen engine, enjoyable handling - Firm low-speed ride + If Ferrari built a saloon (really) - Lacks the final polish of German rivals + Agile feel, quick steering, attractive cabin - Engine not truly inspiring + 173mph from a 3-litre diesel! Brilliant chassis, too - Auto only + Understated appearance, monster performance - E90 M3 is better on the limit + Oozes star quality; gearbox on 2015MY cars a big improvement - It's cosy in the back + Better than its DB9 sibling - More of a 2+2 than a proper four-seater + On paper a match for the original S4 - In reality much less interesting + Finally, an RS3 for enthusiasts; saloon has mini RS4 looks, too - Can be unyielding on rough roads + Strong response and delivery from turbo engine - Chassis feels softer than before + Great supercharged powertrain, secure chassis - The RS4 + Looks and sounds the part, thunderously fast - Unnatural steering, dull dynamics + 414bhp at 7800rpm! And there's an estate version too - Busy under braking + Effortless pace - Not the last word in agility; bends wheel rims + Storming performance (thanks to Porsche) - Try finding one + More capable than you think; strong V6 engine - Gearbox frustrating in auto mode + Fast, and discreet with it - Very muted V10 + Performance, foolproof powertrain, beefy looks - Feels a bit one-dimensional + The extra power is no hassle for the chassis - But it is a stern test of your self-control + Was the world's most powerful estate - Power isn't everything + The ultimate estate car? - Numb steering + Looks and drives better than the S6 it's based on - Costs several thousands more + Stonking performance, great looks - Numb driving experience + Fantastic drivetrain, quality and refinement - Dynamic Steering feels artificial + Surprisingly characterful; better than many RSs - High centre of gravity + Fine chassis; deceptive pace - Lacks excitement + Effortless performance with real top-end kick - Determinedly unsporing + Old-school approach to comfort and luxury - Old-school tech + For those who still want their Flying Spur with a W12 - Car feels its weight; engine sounds dull + Sublime quality, ridiculous pace - Inert driving experience, SUV stigma + Drives like a modern Bentley should - Shame it doesn't look like one too + Extravagant; effortless performance - Passengers have more fun than you do + Great engine, fine handling, good value - Steering confuses weight with feel + Feelsome rear-drive chassis - Easy to drive it beyond its comfort zone + New-age four-pot 328i is great all-rounder - We miss the six-cylinder soundtrack + Superb straight-six, fine ride/handling balance - 335i saloon weighs and costs less + Looks, performance, practicality - Body control on rough roads; engine lacks character + The car the F80 M3 should have been from the start - Less refined than standard car at low speeds + Every bit as good as the E92 M3 coupe - No carbon roof + Saloon chassis + weight savings + GT5 engine = best E90 M3 - Just 67 were made + Twin-turbocharging suits M5 well - Can feel heavy at times + Close to being the ultimate supersaloon - SMG gearbox feels old-tech + Magnificent V8-engined supersaloon - We'd be nipping + The Godfather of supersaloons - The family can come too + The original storming saloon - Understated looks + Enormous performance, stylish looks - Price looks silly next to rivals, M5 included + More capable than you'd think; strong engine - Too much of a limo to be genuinely exciting + Straight-line pace - Driving experience identical to standard X5, despite the M badge + Big improvement on its predecessor - Coupo roofline still of questionable taste + Fast, refined and comfortable - But it definitely lacks the M factor + Stands out among M-cars and AMGs - The novelty might wear off + Caddy's S-class rival scores on comfort - But not on driver involvement + One of the finest front-drivers of all time - Convincing your friends of that + Good powertrain, promising chassis - Lacklustre steering, strong rivals + Great chassis gets more traction - Shame the engine isn't as polished + AMG-beating power; engaging handling - Expensive; cabin quality and space lags behind rivals' + Neat handling, neat design - V6 loses appeal in the real world + Outstanding ride and handling balance - Engine lacks appeal + Great chassis, good looks, better engine than V6 petrol - It's still a diesel + Brilliant blend of pace and refinement - Doesn't sound as special as it is + XF turned up to 12 - Tyres aren't cheap + Hot-rod vibe, fine cabin - Opinion-dividing looks + A great Jaguar - But not as great as the XJR... + A match for Porsche's SUVs - Supercharged V6 needs to be worked hard + Superb engine, exploitable chassis - Gearbox is off the pace + Shockingly good Lexus - The M3's available as a four-door too + The Millennium Falcon of saloon cars - Every drive a work-out + Bursting with character; good value compared to Quattroporte - It's still a big car + Stands out from the crowd; sounds good too - Chassis lacks finesse, engine lacks reach + Tempting alternative to V8 - Feel-free steering, ride lacks decorum + Still pretty - Off the pace dynamically + Redefined big-car dynamics - Don't use auto mode + A QP with the bhp it deserves - Grille is a bit Hannibal Lecter + The most stylish of supersaloons - Slightly wooden brakes, unforgiving ride + Impressive blend of ride and handling - Performance is mild for a Maserati + Strong performance, classy cabin - Pricey compared with A45 AMG hatchback + An aggressive and focused sports crossover - Low on driver interaction + Incredibly fast and composed - Difficult to engage with + Fast and feelsome - Lacks the ultimate finesse and response of the C63 S

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MAKE & MODEL	ISSUE NO.	PRICE	ENGINE Cyl/CC	BHP/RPM	LB FT/RPM	WEIGHT	BHP/TON	0-62MPH (s)	0-100MPH (s)	0-100MPH (0-100)	MAX MPH	EVO RATING
Mercedes-AMG C63 Estate (W205)	216 F	£63,380	8/3982	469/5500	479/1750	1710kg	279	4.2	-	-	155	+ Much more fun than it looks - Gearbox dim-witted at low speeds
Mercedes-AMG C63 S (W205)	211 F	£68,930	8/3982	503/5500	516/1750	1655kg	309	4.0	-	-	155	+ Tremendous twin-turbo V8 power - Not quite as focused as an M division car
Mercedes-Benz C63 AMG (W204)	151 F	'08-'14	8/6208	451/6800	442/5000	1655kg	277	4.5	4.4	9.7	155	+ Monstrous pace and extremely engaging - Same-era M3 is just a little better..
Mercedes-Benz C55 AMG (W203)	088 F	'04-'08	8/5439	367/5250	376/4000	1635kg	228	5.2	-	-	155	+ Furiously fast, commendably discreet - Overshadowed by M3 and RS4
Mercedes-Benz 190E 2.5-16	185 F	'89-'92	4/2498	204/6750	177/5500	1300kg	159	7.5	-	-	146	+ M-B's M3 alternative - Not as nimble as the Beemer
Mercedes-AMG E63 4Matic (W213)	236 D	£57,275	6/2996	395/6100	383/2500	1765kg	227	4.6	-	-	155	+ Some of the E63's looks and performance - Not enough of its performance
Mercedes-AMG E63 S 4Matic+ (W213)	237 F	£88,295	8/3982	603/5750	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	191 D	£124,910	8/5461	577/5500	664/2250	1995kg	294	4.4	-	-	155	+ Monster pace - Average steering feel
Mercedes-Benz CLS63 AMG S	199 D	£89,130	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	1800kg	281	4.5	-	-	155	+ Beauty, comfort, awesome performance - M5 has the edge on B-roads
Mercedes-Benz GL63 AMG S	218 D	£96,950	8/5461	577/5500	560/1750	2270kg	258	4.2	-	-	155	+ Stonking pace, extreme refinement - Feels remote
Mercedes-Benz GL63 AMG S Coupe	213 D	£96,575	8/5461	577/5500	560/1750	2275kg	258	4.2	-	-	155	+ Subtler than an X6 M - More force than finesse
Mercedes-Benz ML63 AMG	176 F	'12-'15	8/5461	518/5250	516/1750	2270kg	232	4.7	-	-	155	+ Great engine, surprisingly good dynamics - Same money buys a Boxster and an ML350...
Mercedes-Benz ML63 AMG	172 D	£135,025	8/5461	537/5500	560/2000	2475kg	220	5.4	-	-	130	+ It exists, epic soundtrack - Ancient chassis, silly price
Mitsubishi Evo X FQ-340	118 F	'08-'14	4/1998	290/6500	300/3350	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	322/3350	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	363/3350	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	289/3350	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	289/3350	1400kg	221	4.9	-	-	157	+ Extra pace, extra attitude - Extra money
Mitsubishi Evo VII	031 F	'02-'03	4/1997	276/6500	282/3350	1360kg	206	5.1	5.0	13.0	140	+ Terrific all-rounder - You tell us
Mitsubishi Evo VI Tommi Makinen 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 4S	208 F	'11-'16	8/4806	434/6700	383/3350	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	217 D	£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	-	-	163	+ Staggeringly quick and hugely capable - Do you really need this much power?
Porsche Cayenne GT3 (Mk2, V6)	211 D	£76,430	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 GT3 (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	£96,193	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	£121,550	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 Sport SDV8	-	£87,350	8/4367	334/3350	546/1750	2359kg	144	6.5	-	-	140	+ A brilliant long-distance machine - Doesn't live up to the 'Sport' branding
Range Rover Sport V8 Supercharged	186 D	£87,680	8/5000	503/6000	460/2500	2335kg	219	5.0	-	-	155	+ Deceptively quick and capable sports SUV - It's still got a weight problem
Range Rover Sport SVR	212 D	£97,780	8/5000	542/6000	501/3500	2335kg	236	4.5	-	-	162	+ Characterful drivetrain; genuine off-road ability - Not a match for its rivals on the road
Range Rover SDV8	180 D	£83,900	8/4367	334/3350	516/1750	2360kg	144	6.5	-	-	140	+ Lighter and more capable than before, even more luxurious - Diesel V6 model feels more alert
Rolls-Royce Ghost	186 D	£223,368	12/6592	563/5250	575/1500	2360kg	242	4.7	-	-	155	+ It's quicker than you think - It's more enjoyable driven slowly
Rolls-Royce Phantom	054 F	£318,120	12/6749	453/5350	531/3500	2560kg	180	5.7	-	-	149	+ Rolls reinvented for the 21st century - The roads are barely big enough
Subaru WRX STI	201 F	£31,995	4/2457	296/6000	300/4000	1534kg	196	5.2	-	-	158	+ Fast Subaru saloon soldiers on - Without a power increase
Subaru WRX STI	151 D	'10-'13	4/2457	296/6000	300/4000	1505kg	200	5.2	-	-	158	+ Fast Subaru back as a saloon - Without the blue paint and gold wheels
Subaru Impreza STI ('Hawkeye')	090 F	'05-'07	4/2457	276/6000	289/4000	1495kg	188	5.3	-	-	158	+ Stunning to drive - Not so stunning to look at
Subaru Impreza WRX GB270	109 D	'07	4/2457	266/5700	310/3000	1410kg	192	5.2	-	-	143	+ Fitting final fling for the Impreza badge on a fast Subaru - End of an era
Subaru Impreza WRX320	105 F	'07	4/2457	316/6000	332/3350	1495kg	215	4.8	-	-	155	+ Fitting tribute to a rallying legend - Too hardcore for some?
Subaru Impreza WRX STI PPP ('Blobeys')	073 F	'03-'05	4/1994	300/6000	299/4000	1470kg	207	5.4	5.2	12.9	148	+ A Subaru with real edge - Bit too edgy in the wet
Subaru Impreza Turbo ('Classic')	011 F	'98-'00	4/1994	215/5600	214/4000	1235kg	177	5.8	5.4	14.6	144	+ Destined for classic status - Thirsty
Subaru Impreza RBS	187 F	'99	4/1994	237/6000	258/3500	1235kg	195	6.1	5.0	14.1	144	+ Perfect blend of poise and power - Limited numbers
Subaru Impreza PI	200 F	'00-'01	4/1994	276/6000	260/4000	1283kg	219	4.7	4.9	13.3	150	+ One of our favourite Imprezas - Doesn't come cheap
Subaru Impreza 22B	188 F	'98-'99	4/2212	276/6000	265/3200	1270kg	220	5.3	5.0	13.1	150	+ The ultimate Impreza - Prices reflect this
Tesla Model S P100D	235 F	£129,400	-	595	713	2108kg	287	2.4	2.9	7.7	155	+ Killer RWYB performance - Can take up to 30 minutes to warm up for a Ludicrous+ launch
Tesla Model S P85D	208 D	'15-'16	-	457	687	2239kg	314	3.2	-	-	155	+ Dual motors and 4WD equals extraordinary acceleration - Lack of charging points
Tesla Model S Performance	196 F	'14	-	410	443	2100kg	201	4.2	-	-	130	+ Intoxicating performance, soothing refinement - Generic styling, charging limitations
Vauxhall Insignia Grand Sport 2.0T 4x4	237 D	£27,710	4/1998	257/5300	295/2500	1649kg	158	6.9	-	-	155	+ A more spacious and stylish Insignia - Still lacking the performance gene
Vauxhall Insignia VXR SuperSport	189 D	'13-'17	6/2792	321/5250	321/5250	1825kg	179	5.6	-	-	170	+ A 170mph Vauxhall - Should be a more engaging steer
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	£56,380	8/6162	576/6150	545/3850	1834kg	319	4.2	-	-	155	+ Monster engine; engaging driving experience - Woeful interior
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

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OUR CHOICE

Lotus 3-Eleven. It may not be groundbreaking but it is hugely exciting. The 410bhp supercharged V6 sounds fabulous and the open linkage on the manual gearbox looks fantastic. A circuit is obviously its natural habitat but it has surprisingly civilised road manners, so you could happily drive to and from a trackday in it.



BEST OF THE REST

The **Jaguar F-type** impresses in most forms, and we'd defy anyone not to be charmed by an **Aston Martin Vantage S Roadster** (pictured), whether in V8 or V12 form. Unsurprisingly, you won't find a duffer in the **Lotus Elise** and **Exige Roadster** ranges, and the same goes for the evergreen **Caterham Seven**.

MAKE & MODEL	ISSUE NO.	PRICE	ENGINE Cyl/CC	BHP/RPM	LB FT/RPM	WEIGHT	BHP/TON	0-62MPH CLAMPER	0-60MPH OVER 10	0-100MPH CLAMPER	MAX MPH	EVO RATING
Abarth 124 Spider	225 D	£26,920	4/1368	168/5500	184/2500	1060kg	161	6.8	-	-	143	+ Predictable and fun rear end - 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 the coupe version - Still has the coupe's other foibles
Alfa Romeo 8C Spider	161 F	09-'11	8/4691	450/7000	354/4700	1675kg	273	4.4	-	-	181	+ Beauty meets beast. They hit it off - Boot is useless for touring
Alpina D4 Biturbo Convertible	212 D	£56,000	6/2993	345/4000	516/1500	1815kg	193	5.0	-	-	171	+ As much torque as a 997 Turbo - A diesel convertible wouldn't be our choice of Alpina
Alpina B4 Biturbo Convertible	227 D	76	6/2979	404/5500	442/3000	1840kg	223	4.5	-	-	187	+ A great GT - Not as exciting to drive as the numbers may suggest
Ariel Atom 3 245	113 D	£30,573	4/1998	245/8600	171/7200	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	712-'13	4/1998	270/8300	188/6000	550kg*	499	2.9	-	-	150	+ Perfect engine for the Atom's chassis - Only ten were made
Ariel Atom V8 500	165 F	10-'12	8/3000	475/10500	284/7750	550kg*	877	2.3	3.0	5.8	170	+ An experience unlike anything else on Planet Car - It cost £150k when new
Ariel Nomad	220 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 S Roadster	161 F	£103,995	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 S Roadster	212 F	£147,000	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 V8 Vantage Roadster	130 F	09-'16	8/4735	420/7000	346/5750	1710kg	250	4.8	-	-	180	+ Sportiest, coolest drop-top Aston in years - Feels a bit dated compared with its contemporaries
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 V8 Vantage Roadster	105 F	07-'09	8/4280	380/7000	302/5000	1710kg	226	5.0	-	-	174	+ Still looks and sounds fabulous; drives great too - You'll want the later 4.7-litre engine
Aston Martin DB9 Volante	150 D	04-'15	12/5935	510/6500	457/5500	1890kg	274	4.5	-	-	183	+ Consume a cruiser and capable when pushed - Roof-up wind noise
Aston Martin DBS Volante	133 D	09-'12	12/5935	510/6500	420/5750	1810kg	286	4.3	-	-	191	+ A feel-good car par excellence - It's a bit of a heavyweight
Audi TT RS Roadster	207 D	£42,565	4/1984	306/5800	280/1800	1450kg	214	5.2	-	-	155	+ A serious proposition, ranking close behind a Boxster S - Coupe still looks better
Audi TTS Roadster	122 D	08-'14	4/1984	268/6000	258/2500	1455kg	187	5.6	-	-	155	+ Effortlessly quick - Long-term appeal open to question
Audi TT RS Roadster	133 D	09-'14	5/2480	335/5400	332/1600	1510kg	225	4.7	-	-	155	+ Terrific engine... - ...is the best thing about it
Audi R8 V8 Spyder	186 D	11-'15	8/4163	424/7900	317/6000	1660kg	259	4.8	-	-	187	+ More delicate and subtle than the V10 - The V10 sounds even better
BAC Mono	189 F	£165,125	4/2261	305/7700	206/6000	580kg*	534	2.8	-	-	170	+ The most single-minded track car available - That means no passengers...
Bentley Continental GT V8 Convertible	168 F	£154,400	8/3993	500/6000	487/1700	2395kg	212	5.0	-	-	187	+ One of the world's best topless GTs - Still no sports car
Bentley Continental GT V8 S Convertible	194 D	£164,800	8/3993	521/6000	502/1700	2395kg	221	4.7	-	-	191	+ A true drivers' Bentley - Excessively heavy; feels like it could give more
Bentley Continental GT Speed Convertible	187 D	£185,800	12/5998	626/6000	605/1700	2420kg	263	4.3	-	-	203	+ Effortless performance, style - Running costs a tad on the high side
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 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	205 F	£19,495	4/660	80/7000	79/3400	490kg*	166	6.9	-	-	100	+ The fabulous Seven formula at its most basic - Gets pricey with options
Caterham Seven 270	219 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 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, 'habitability' for a Seven...
Caterham Seven 620R	187 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 Levante	131 F	09-'10	8/2398	550/10000	300/8500	520kg*	1074	3.0	4.8	8.2	150	+ Twice the power-to-weight ratio of a Veyron! - Not easy to drive slowly
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
Ferrari California T	229 D	£155,254	8/3855	553/7500	557/4750	1729kg	324	3.6	-	-	196	+ Turbocharged engine is a triumph - Still places daily useability above outright thrills
Ferrari California	171 D	08-'14	8/4297	483/7750	372/5000	1735kg	283	4.1	-	-	193	+ Revised with sharper performance and dynamics - We'd still take a 458 Spider
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	118 D	99-'09	4/1997	237/8300	153/7500	1260kg	191	6.2	-	-	150	+ An alternative and rev-happy roadster - The Boxster's better
Jaguar F-type Convertible 3.0 V6 340PS	186 F	£57,750	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	£68,500	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	-	£92,345	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	£115,485	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 V8 S Convertible	183 F	13-'14	8/5000	488/6500	461/2500	1665kg	298	4.3	-	-	186	+ Wilder than the V6 S - Could be too exuberant for some
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	-	£32,300	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	-	£37,300	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	-	£39,300	4/1798	217/6800	184/4600	904kg	244	4.6	-	-	145	+ Epic grip and pace - A bit short on creature comforts
Lotus Elise Sport 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	224 F	£45,600	4/1798	243/7200	184/3500	931kg	265	4.3	-	-	154	+ Quickest Elise yet - Priorities grip over adjustability
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 thrillsome Elise - Blaring engine note
Lotus Elise SC	131 F	08-'11	4/1794	218/8000	156/5000	870kg	254	4.6	4.5	11.4	145	+ All the usual Elise magic - Supercharged engine lacks sparkle
Lotus Elise S	104 F	06-'10	4/1794	134/6200	127/2400	860kg	158	6.1	6.3	18.7	127	+ Brilliant entry-level Elise - Precious little
Lotus Elise IHS	049 F	02-'04	4/1796	156/7000	129/4650	860kg	197	5.1	-	-	131	+ A genuinely useable Elise - Air-con? In an Elise?
Lotus Elise Sport 135	040 D	03	4/1796	135/6200	129/4850	726kg	189	5.4	-	-	129	+ One of our fave S2 Elises - Brakes need more bite and pedal feel
Lotus Elise Sport 190</												

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MAKE & MODEL

	ISSUE NO.	PRICE	ENGINE CYL/CC	BHP/RPM	LB FT/RPM	WEIGHT	BHP/TON	0-62MPH (CLAMPER)	0-60MPH (DRIVER)	0-100MPH (DRIVER)	MAX MPH	EVO RATING
Lotus Exige Sport 350 Roadster	221 F	£55,900	6/3456	345/7000	295/4500	1125kg	312	3.9	-	-	145	+ An Exige with added sunny-day appeal - A Boxster would be more practical
Lotus Exige Sport 380 Roadster	231 F	£67,900	6/3456	375/6700	302/5000	1100kg	343	3.7	-	-	178	+ Like the 350 Roadster, but faster and even purer - A Boxster would still be more practical
Lotus Exige S Roadster	186 F	'13-15	6/3456	345/7000	295/4500	1166kg	301	4.0	-	-	145	+ Like the hard-top Exige S, but more road-friendly - 981 Boxster S is a better all-rounder
Lotus 3-Eleven	220 F	£82,500	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	754kg	344	4.0	-	-	150	+ Impressive on road and track - Not hardcore enough for some
Lotus 2-Eleven GT4	138 F	'09-11	4/1796	266/8200	179/7200	750kg	360	3.7	-	-	155	+evo Track Car of the Year 2009 - Expensive; regular 2-Elevens make better road cars
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
Lotus Elan SE	095 F	'89-95	4/1588	165/6600	148/4200	1022kg	164	6.7	-	-	137	+ Great front-drive chassis - Less involving than a good rear-drive sports car
Maserati GranCabrio	142 D	£98,970	8/4691	434/7000	332/4750	1980kg	223	5.2	-	-	177	+ As good to drive as it is to look at - Lacks the grunt of some rivals
Maserati GranCabrio Sport	161 D	£104,565	8/4691	444/7000	376/4750	1980kg	228	5.0	-	-	177	+ Looks, performance, cruising ability - Brakes could be sharper
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	4/1946	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	4/1998	123/4500	108/3000	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	'96-05	4/1839	146/7000	124/5000	1065kg	140	8.5	-	-	123	+ Affordable ragtop doesn't get much better - Cheap cabin
Mazda MX-5 1.6 (Mk1)	131 F	'89-97	4/1597	115/6500	100/5500	971kg	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	1570kg	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 C63 S Cabriolet	226 D	£73,575	8/3982	503/5500	516/1750	1850kg	276	4.1	-	-	155	+ A Born hoologian - Body flex takes away some control
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 C Roadster	235 D	£139,445	8/3982	549/5750	502/1900	1678kg	332	3.7	-	-	196	+ Arguably the best AMG GT yet, with added fresh air - Road noise can get wearing on long journeys
Mercedes-Benz SL500	169 D	'12-16	8/4663	429/5250	516/1800	1710kg	255	4.6	-	-	155	+ Wafly performance, beautifully engineered - Lacks ultimate sports car feel
Mercedes-Benz SL63 AMG	171 D	'12-16	8/5461	530/5500	590/2200	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 SL65 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
Mercedes-Benz SL55 AMG Roadster	167 F	'12-14	8/6208	563/6800	479/4750	1660kg	345	3.7	-	-	197	+ Loses none of the coupe's talents - But (understandably) loses the gullwing doors
Morgan 3 Wheeler	198 F	£31,140	2/1976	82/5250	103/3250	525kg*	159	6.0	-	-	115	+ Quirky, characterful, brilliant - Can become a two-wheeler if you push too hard
Morgan Plus 8	171 F	£85,461	8/4799	362/6300	370/3600	1100kg*	334	4.5	-	-	155	+ Hilarious mix of old looks and new mechanicals - Refinement is definitely old-school
Morgan Plus 8 Speedster	202 F	'14	8/4799	362/6300	370/3600	1000kg*	368	4.2	-	-	148	+ Fantastic old-school roadster experience - Gets unsettled by big bumps; only 60 were made
Morgan Aero 8	105 F	£94,665	8/4799	362/6300	361/3400	1180kg*	312	4.5	-	-	170	+ Glorious sound, view over bonnet, dynamics - Awkward-looking rear
Morgan Aero SuperSports	145 F	'10-11	8/4799	362/6300	370/3600	1180kg*	312	4.2	-	-	170	+ It's an Aero 8 with a V8 and targa top - Limited edition, costing proper supercar money
Nissan 370Z Roadster	143 F	'10-14	6/3696	326/7000	269/5200	1554kg	213	5.5	-	-	155	+ The Zed's old-school character remains intact - Its purposeful looks don't
Porsche 718 Boxster	224 D	£44,758	4/1988	296/6500	280/1950	1335kg	225	5.1	-	-	170	+ Chassis as good as ever - Four-cylinder's tuneless din would be hard to live with
Porsche 718 Boxster S	222 F	£53,714	4/2497	345/6500	310/1900	1355kg	259	4.6	4.4	9.8	177	+ Still sensationally capable - Turbo four-cylinder engine lacks appeal of the old flat-six
Porsche Boxster (981)	172 F	'12-16	6/2706	261/6700	206/4500	1310kg	202	5.8	-	-	164	+ Goes and looks better - 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 GT3 (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	265/5500	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	'05-12	6/3436	316/7200	273/4750	1275kg	252	4.9	-	-	166	+ Lighter, more driver-centric Boxster - Collapsed-broly roof not the most practical
Porsche Boxster S (986)	070 F	'99-04	6/3179	256/6200	229/4600	1320kg	200	5.7	-	-	164	+ Added power over the non-S Boxster is seductive - Very little
Radical SR3 SL	174 F	'11-14	4/2000	300/6000	265/4000	775kg*	393	3.4	-	-	161	+ Our 2011 Track Car of the Year, and it's road-legal - You'll need to wrap up warm
Radical SR8LM	138 F	'09-12	8/2800	460/10,500	260/8000	680kg*	687	3.2	-	-	168	+ Held the Nordschleife road-car lap record for eight years! - Convincing people it's road legal
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 Tuscan Convertible	091 F	'05-07	6/3996	365/6800	315/6000	1100kg	337	3.8	-	-	195+	+ Spirit of the Griffr reborn - Over 195mph? Really?
TVR Chimaera 5.0	007 F	'93-03	8/4997	320/5500	320/3750	1060kg	307	4.4	-	-	167	+ Gorgeous noise, tarmac-ripping grunt - Details
TVR Griffith 4.3	068 F	'92-93	8/4280	280/5500	305/4000	1040kg	274	4.4	4.8	11.2	155	+ The car that made TVR. Cult status - Mere details
TVR Griffith 500	009 F	'93-01	8/4997	320/5500	320/4000	1060kg	307	4.1	-	-	167	+ Gruff diamond - A few rough edges
Vauxhall VX220	023 F	'00-04	4/2198	145/5800	150/4000	875kg	168	5.9	-	-	136	+ Absurdly good Vauxhall - The badge?
Vauxhall VX220 Turbo	066 F	'03-05	4/1998	197/5500	184/1950	930kg	215	4.9	-	-	151	+ Nothing comes close for the money - Marginal everyday usability
Vuol 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 GTS. Adjustable, playful, communicative and with top-class body control and damping, the 991.2-generation Carrera GTs is everything a 911 should be. It even has the best steering to date in a 991 Carrera. Just make sure you order the two-wheel-drive, manual coupe version.



BEST OF THE REST

Lower down the 991.2 range, the Porsche 911 Carrera and Carrera S haven't been ruined by the addition of turbos, while among their rivals we'd take a Mercedes-AMG C63 S Coupe (pictured) over a standard BMW M4, although the M4 CS responds to that - at a price. Elsewhere, the Lotus Exige and Evija continue to offer sublime handling in all guises.

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
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 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 V8 Vantage S	168 F	£94,995	8/4735	430/7300	361/5000	1610kg	271	4.8	-	-	190	+ Keener engine, V12 Vantage looks - Slightly sluggish auto only
Aston Martin Vantage GT8	229 F	£165,000	8/4735	440/7300	361/5000	1530kg	292	4.4	-	-	190	+ Enough drama to fill a Netflix mini-series - Just 150 being made
Aston Martin V8 Vantage (4.3)	129 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 N430	218 F	'15-16	8/4735	430/7300	361/5000	1610kg	271	4.8	-	-	189	+ Malleable, involving - Never feels rampantly quick
Aston Martin V12 Vantage S	224 D	£138,000	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 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 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 were made
Aston Martin DB11	235 F	£157,900	12/5204	600/6500	516/1500	1770kg	344	3.9	4.0	8.1	200	+ An excellent GT - Suffers in outright handling terms as a result
Aston Martin DB9 GT	214 D	£140,000	12/5935	540/6750	457/5500	1785kg	307	4.5	-	-		

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MAKE & MODEL	ISSUE NO.	PRICE	ENGINE Cyl/CC	BHP/HPM	LB/TT/HPM	WEIGHT	BHP/TON	0-60MPH (SECS)	0-100MPH (SECS)	0-100MPH (MILES)	MAX MPH	EVO RATING	
Audi TT 2.0 TFSI (Mk3)	204 F	£31,685	4/1984	227/4500	273/1650	1230kg	188	6.0	-	-	155	+ Desirable, grippy and effortlessly quick - Still not the last word in interaction	★★★★☆
Audi TT 2.0 TFSI quattro (Mk3)	203 D	£34,895	4/1984	227/4500	273/1600	1335kg	173	5.3	-	-	155	+ Looks, interior, decent performance and handling - Lacks ultimate involvement	★★★★☆
Audi TTS (Mk3)	209 F	£40,840	4/1984	306/5800	280/1800	1365kg	228	4.9	-	-	155	+ Dynamically interesting (for a TT) - Still not as interactive as a Cayman	★★★★☆
Audi TT RS (Mk3)	230 F	£52,100	5/2480	394/5850	354/1700	1440kg	278	3.7	3.4	-	155	+ Soundtrack; tremendous point-to-point pace - A bit one-dimensional in the long run	★★★★☆
Audi TTS (Mk2)	193 F	£08-'14	4/1984	268/6000	258/2500	1395kg	195	5.4	-	-	155	+ A usefully quicker TT, with a great drivetrain - Still steers like a computer game	★★★★☆
Audi TT RS (Mk2)	158 F	£09-'14	5/2480	335/5400	332/1600	1450kg	235	4.7	4.4	11.1	155	+ Sublime five-cylinder turbo engine - Rest of package can't quite match it	★★★★☆
Audi TT RS Plus (Mk2)	185 D	£12-'14	5/2480	355/5500	343/1650	1450kg	249	4.3	-	-	174	+ Stonkingly fast cross-country - Shockingly expensive for a TT	★★★★☆
Audi TT Sport (Mk1)	081 D	£05-'06	4/1781	237/5700	236/2300	1390kg	173	5.7	-	-	155	+ Deliciously purposeful interior, crisp chassis - Numb steering	★★★★☆
Audi S5	233 F	£47,875	6/2995	349/5400	369/1370	1615kg	220	4.7	-	-	155	+ Chassis rewards commitment... - ...but doesn't offer a challenge. Plain engine, too	★★★★☆
Audi RS5	206 F	£70-'16	8/4163	444/8250	317/4400	1755kg	263	4.5	-	-	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 V8	178 F	£140,300	8/3993	500/6000	487/1700	2220kg	229	4.8	-	-	188	+ A proper drivers' Bentley with decent economy - W12 suddenly seems pointless	★★★★☆
Bentley Continental GT V8 S	204 F	£149,800	8/3993	521/6000	502/1700	2220kg	238	4.5	-	-	192	+ An even better drivers' Bentley - Vast weight makes its presence felt in harder driving	★★★★☆
Bentley Continental GT	152 D	£150,500	12/5998	567/6000	516/1700	2245kg	257	4.5	-	-	198	+ Near 200mph in driver comfort - Weight; W12's thirst	★★★★☆
Bentley Continental GT Speed	230 D	£168,900	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	£212,500	12/5998	700/6000	750/2050	2250kg	323	3.5	-	-	209	+ Massive performance, surprisingly agile - Styling and soundtrack far from discreet	★★★★☆
Bentley Continental GT3-R	203 D	£237,500	8/3993	572/6000	518/1700	2120kg	274	3.8	-	-	170	+ The best-handling Continental ever - Expensive; it still weighs 2120kg	★★★★☆
BMW 1-series M Coupe	188 F	£11-'12	6/2979	335/5900	369/1500	1492kg	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	£45-'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	230 F	£45,700	6/2979	365/6500	369/1450	1495kg	248	4.5	4.5	-	155	+ More progressive chassis balance than the M4 - Feels unsettled on rough tarmac	★★★★☆
BMW 440i M Sport Coupe	233 F	£43,430	6/2998	321/5500	332/1380	1540kg	212	5.2	-	-	155	+ Almost-too-powerful engine - Doesn't feel special enough to drive	★★★★☆
BMW M4	218 F	£58,365	6/2998	425/5500	406/1850	1515kg	285	4.3	-	-	155	+ Ferociously fast - A handful on less-than-perfect or less-than-bone-dry roads	★★★★☆
BMW M4 Competition Package	226 F	£61,365	6/2979	444/7000	406/1850	1515kg	298	4.2	-	-	155	+ Better tied-down than the regular M4 - Torque delivery still rather abrupt	★★★★☆
BMW M4 CS	237 D	£89,130	6/2979	454/6250	442/4000	1505kg	307	3.9	-	-	174	+ Finally, an M4 you can enjoy on any road, in any conditions - It ain't cheap	★★★★☆
BMW M4 GTS	237 F	£6	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	£70-'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 BMW's 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	1655kg	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	£66-'09	6/3246	338/7900	269/4900	1420kg	242	5.0	-	-	155	+ A real drivers' 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	552/6000	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	£106,310	3/1499	357/5800	420/3700	1485kg	244	4.4	-	-	155	+ Brilliantly executed concept; sci-fi looks - Safe dynamic set-up	★★★★☆
Chevrolet Camaro Z/28	220 F	£74-'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	225 F	£38,095	8/4951	410/6500	391/4250	1711kg	243	4.8	4.8	11.6	155	+ Looks, noise, performance, value, right-hand drive - Comes undone on rougher roads	★★★★☆
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 3.0 V6 340PS	204 D	£52,265	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	£63,015	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	£90,860	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	£110,880	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	£74-'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 RC200t F Sport	225 F	£38,695	4/1998	242/5800	258/1650	1675kg	147	7.5	-	-	143	+ Fluid ride - Lacks body control and outright grip	★★★★☆
Lexus RC F	226 F	£61,310	8/4969	470/6400	391/4800	1765kg	271	4.5	-	-	168	+ Great steering, noise, sense of occasion - Too heavy to be truly exciting	★★★★☆
Lexus LC500	231 D	£76,565	8/4969	470/7100	398/4800	1935kg	247	4.4	-	-	168	+ Glorious engine, rewarding chassis for a GT car - Numb steering, messy ergonomics	★★★★☆
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	£67,900	6/3456	375/6700	302/5000	1110kg	343	3.7	-	-	178	+ Intense, absorbing and brilliantly capable - Perhaps not an everyday car	★★★★☆
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 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 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	£82,000	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	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	★★★★☆
Maserati GranTurismo	114 F	£83,790	8/4244	399/7100	339/4750	1880kg	216	5.2	5.5	12.7	177	+ Striking, accomplished GT - Doesn't spike the pulse like an Aston or 911	★★★★☆
Maserati GranTurismo Sport	188 F	£95,650	8/4691	454/7000	383/4750	1880kg	245	4.7	-	-	185	+ The best everyday GranTurismo yet - Starting to get long in the tooth	★★★★☆
Maserati GranTurismo MC Stradale	193 F	£111,645	8/4691	454/7000	383/4750	1880kg	256	4.5	-	-	188	+ Brilliant blend of road racer and GT - Gearbox takes a little getting used to	★★★★☆
Mazda RX-8	122 F	£03-'11	2R/1308	228/8200	156/5500	1429kg	162	6.4	6.5	16.4	146	+ Never mind the quirks, it's a great drive - Wafer-thin torque output; thirsty (for petrol and oil)	★★★★☆

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MAKE & MODEL	ISSUE NO.	PRICE	ENGINE CYL/CC	BHP/RPM	LB FT/RPM	WEIGHT	BHP/TON	0-62MPH (S.ECONDS)	0-60MPH (S.ECONDS)	0-100MPH (S.ECONDS)	MAX MPH	EVO RATING
Mercedes-AMG C43 4Matic Coupe	233 F	£47,605	8/2996	362/5500	383/2000	1660kg	222	4.7	-	-	155	+ Fast and instilled with a real sense of quality - Not enough emphasis on fun
Mercedes-AMG C63 S Coupe (W205)	229 F	£70,385	8/3982	503/5500	516/1750	1725kg	296	3.9	4.3	100	155	+ Mouth-watering mechanical package; better than an M4 - Light steering
Mercedes-Benz C63 AMG Coupe (W204)	162 F	£11-14	8/6208	451/6800	442/5000	1655kg	277	4.5	4.4	10.3	155	+ A proper two-door M3 rival - C63 saloon looks better
Mercedes-Benz C63 AMG Black Series (W204)	171 F	£12-13	8/6208	510/6800	457/5200	1635kg	317	4.2	-	-	186	+ The C63 turned up to 11 - Too heavy; not as fiery as Black Series cars of old
Mercedes-Benz CLK63 AMG Black Series	106 F	£07-09	8/6208	500/6800	464/5250	1760kg	289	4.2	-	-	186	+ AMG goes Porsche-hunting - Dull-witted gearshift spoils the party
Mercedes-Benz E400 4Matic Coupe	234 D	£50,775	8/2996	328/5200	354/1600	1770kg	188	5.3	-	-	155	+ Good looks, classy cabin, relaxed performance - Not much here in the way of real thrills
Mercedes-AMG S63 Coupe	205 D	£130,680	8/5461	577/5500	664/2250	1995kg	294	4.2	-	-	155	+ Thunderously fast S-class built for drivers - Lacks badge appeal of a Continental GT
Mercedes-AMG S65 Coupe	209 D	£188,550	12/5980	621/4800	737/2300	2110kg	299	4.1	-	-	186	+ Almighty power, fabulous luxury - Nearly £60k more than the S63!
Mercedes-AMG GT	227 D	£98,760	8/3982	456/6000	442/1600	1540kg	301	4.0	-	-	189	+ A true sports coupe that also does luxury - Takes time to reveal its talents
Mercedes-AMG GT S	216 F	£112,060	8/3982	503/6250	479/1750	1570kg	326	3.8	-	-	193	+ Fantastic chassis, huge grip - Artificial steering feel; downshifts could be quicker
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)	230 F	£81,875	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	£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 (2017MY)	232 F	£150,875	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 Nismo (2012MY-2016MY)	218 F	£12-16	6/3799	542/6400	466/3200	1740kg	316	2.7	3.2	7.5	196	+ Even quicker, and great fun - Stopping your Porsche-owning friends calling it a Datsun
Nissan GT-R Track Edition (2016MY)	223 F	£15-16	6/3799	542/6400	466/3200	1740kg	316	2.7	3.4	7.7	196	+ Recreates much of the Nismo's ability, without the rock-hard ride - Interior feels dated
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)	196 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 (superly) - Limited supply
Peugeot RCZ 1.6 THP 200	155 F	£09-15	4/1598	197/5500	202/1700	1421kg	141	7.6	7.3	18.1	147	+ Distinctive looks, highly capable handling - Could be a bit more exciting
Peugeot RCZ R	209 F	£14-15	4/1598	266/6000	243/1900	1280kg	211	5.9	-	-	155	+ Rewarding and highly effective when fully lit - Dated cabin, steering lacks feel
Porsche 718 Cayman	229 D	£42,897	4/1988	296/6500	280/1950	1335kg	225	5.1	-	-	170	+ Chassis remains a dream - Sounds like a Toyota GT86
Porsche 718 Cayman S	230 F	£51,853	4/2497	345/6500	310/1900	1355kg	259	4.6	4.4	-	177	+ Faster and better to drive than ever - Bring earplugs
Porsche 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 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)	233 D	£95,795	6/2981	444/6500	406/2150	1450kg	311	4.1	-	-	193	+ In rear-drive coupe format, it's everything a 911 should be - Not all GTs are rear-drive coupes
Porsche 911 Carrera S (991.1)	201 F	£12-15	6/3800	394/7400	324/5600	1415kg	283	4.5	4.3	9.5	188	+ A Carrera with supercar pace - Electric steering robs it of some tactility
Porsche 911 Carrera 4S (991.1)	179 F	£13-15	6/3800	394/7400	324/5600	1465kg	273	4.5	-	-	185	+ More satisfying than rear-drive 991.1 Carreras - Choose your spec carefully
Porsche 911 Carrera 4 GTS (991.1)	208 D	£15	6/3800	424/7500	324/5750	1470kg	293	4.4	-	-	189	+ The highlight of the 991.1 Carrera lineup - Pricey for a Carrera
Porsche 911 Carrera S (997.2)	121 F	£08-11	6/3800	380/6500	310/4400	1425kg	271	4.7	-	-	188	+ Poise, precision, blinding pace - Feels a bit clinical
Porsche 911 Carrera S (997.1)	070 F	£04-08	6/3824	350/6600	295/4600	1420kg	246	4.6	-	-	182	+evo Car of the Year 2004 - Tech overload?
Porsche 911 Carrera (996, 3.4)	008 F	£08-01	6/3387	300/6800	258/4600	1320kg	231	5.2	-	-	174	+evo Car of the Year 1998 - Ross Keogh complains when we remove it from The Knowledge
Radical XRC 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 XRC Turbo 500	209 D	£15	6/3496	530/6100	481/5000	1100kg*	490	2.6	-	-	185	+ Huge performance, intuitive adjustability, track ability - Compromised for road use
Radical XRC Turbo	205 F	£14	6/3496	454/6000	500/3600	940kg*	491	2.6	-	-	185	+ Eats GT3s for breakfast - Can't not feel special enough for its price
Radical XRC	189 F	£13	6/3700	350/6750	320/4250	900kg*	395	2.8	-	-	175	+ A real trackday weapon - Can't match the insanity of a Caterham 620R
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	204 F	£22,495	4/1998	197/7000	151/6400	1230kg	163	7.6	-	-	140	+ Fine chassis, great steering - Weak engine, not the slide-happy car they promised
Toyota GT86	234 F	£26,410	4/1998	197/7000	151/6400	1240kg	161	7.6	6.9	16.5	140	+ More fun than its Subaru BRZ cousin - Same lack of torque, poor interior quality
Toyota MR2 (Mk1)	237 F	£84-89	4/1587	122/6600	105/5000	977kg	127	8.2	-	-	124	+ Mid-engined fun comes no more affordable - Finding a good one will take time
TVR T350C	057 F	£03-07	6/3605	350/7200	290/5500	1187kg	300	4.5	4.7	10.0	175	+ Looks, engine - Unsupportive seats; chassis lacks ultimate polish
TVR Sagaris	097 F	£05-07	6/3996	364/7500	349/5000	1078kg	383	3.7	-	-	185	+ Looks outrageous - 406bhp is 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
VW 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
VW Scirocco R	200 D	£30,690	4/1984	216/6000	258/2500	1426kg	187	5.7	-	-	155	+ Great engine, grown-up dynamics - Perhaps a little too grown-up for some

SUPERCARS



OUR CHOICE

Ferrari 488 GTB. Its turbocharged V8 engine is spectacular, with unbelievably good throttle response, and it's got the chassis to exploit it, too. The 488 is also a fully rounded, three-dimensional car: civilised, refined, smooth, intuitive and beautifully built. Clearly the work of a team of engineers at the top of their game.



BEST OF THE REST

The **Lamborghini Huracán Performante** (left) makes an appealing alternative to the 488, while the latest **Porsche 911 GT3** is yet another outstanding Porsche Motorsport model (but sadly another that's difficult to actually buy). The **McLaren 540C, 570S and 570GT**, meanwhile, are all corking entry-level supercars, as is the **Audi R8 V10**.

Aston Martin Vanquish (Mk2)	203 F	£192,995	12/5935	568/6650	465/5500	1739kg	332	3.8	-	-	201	+ Much better than the DBS it succeeds, especially in 2015MY form - It's no Ferrari F12
Aston Martin Vanquish S (Mk2)	235 F	£199,950	12/5935	595/7000	465/5500	1739kg	348	3.5	3.9	8.3	201	+ Noise, poise, drama and charm - Not as rounded as the DB11
Aston Martin Vanquish S (Mk1)	110 F	£05-07	12/5935	520/7000	425/5800	1875kg	282	4.8	4.9	10.1	200	+ Vanquish joins the supercar greats - A tad intimidating at the limit
Aston Martin One-77	179 F	£10-12	12/7312	750/6000	553/7600	1740kg	438	3.7	-	-	220+	+ The engine, the looks, the drama - Gearbox hates manoeuvring; only 77 were made
Audi R8 V10	234 F	£123,330	10/5204	533/7800	398/6500	1595kg	340	3.5	-	-	198	+ All the R8 you really need - Some may hanker after a manual gearbox
Audi R8 Spyder V10	235 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
Audi R8 V10 Plus	229 F	£138,330	10/5204	602/8250	413/6500	1555kg	393	3.2	-	-	205	+ Timeless drivetrain, huge performance - Needs to be driven hard to really engage
Audi R8 V10	181 D	£10-15	10/5204	518/8000	391/6500	1620kg	325	4.1	3.9	8.4	194	+ Real supercar feel - The V8 is cheaper, and still superb
Audi R8 V10 Plus	190 F	£13-15	10/5204	542/8000	398/6500	1570kg	351	3.8	-	-	198	+ An R8 fit to take on the 458 and 12C - Firm ride may be too much for some
Audi R8 GT	169 F	£10-12	10/5204	552/8000	398/6500	1520kg	369	3.6	-	-	199	+ Everything we love about the R8 - Not as hardcore as we wanted
Audi R8 LMX	208 F	£15	10/5204	562/8000	398/6500	1595kg	358	3.4	-	-	198	+ More of everything that makes the R8 great - S-tronic transmission not perfect
BMW M1	110 F	£78-81	6/3500	277/6500	239/5000	1303kg	216	5.9	-	-	161	+ Early supercar icon - A bit under-endowed these days
Bugatti Chiron	235 F	£132,020	16/7993	1479/6700	1180/2000	1995kg	753	2.5	-	-	261	+ Backs up the numbers with feel and emotion - Limited top speed(!)
Bugatti Veyron 16.4	134 F	£05-11	16/7993	987/6000	922/2200	1888kg	531	2.5	2.8	5.8	253	+ Superbly engineered four-wheel-drive quad-turbo rocket - Er, lacks luggage space?
Bugatti Veyron Grand Sport	133 F	£09-15	16/7993	987/6000	922/2200	1990kg	504	2.7	-	-	253	+ Warp speed and ferocious noise sans-roof - Ridiculous brolly/roof thing
Bugatti Veyron 16.4 Super Sport	151 F	£10-11	16/7993	1183/6400	1106/3000	1838kg	654	2.5	-	-	258	+ Was once the world's fastest supercar - Limited to 258mph for us mere mortals
Bugatti Veyron Grand Sport Vitesse	185 F	£11-15	16/7993	1183/6400	1106/3000	1990kg	604	2.6	-	-	255	+ Was the world's fastest convertible - Limited to 258mph for us mere mortals
Bugatti EB110	078 F	£91-95	12/3500	552/8000	451/3750	1618kg	347	3.6	-	-	213	+ Superbly engineered four-wheel-drive quad-turbo rocket - It just fizzled out
Chevrolet Corvette ZR1	133 F											

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Bought, Sold & Exchanged

MAKE & MODEL	ISSUE NO.	PRICE	ENGINE CYL./CC	DRY P/W	LB. FT/PPH	WEIGHT	DRY/TON	0-62MPH (CALC)	0-60MPH (TESTED)	0-100MPH (TESTED)	MAX. MPH	EVO RATING
Ferrari 488 GTB	228 F	£183,984	8/3902	661/6500	561/3000	1475kg	455.30	-	-	-	205+	+ Staggeringly capable - Lacks a little of the 458's heart and excitement
Ferrari 488 Spider	216 D	£204,411	8/3902	661/6500	561/3000	1525kg	440.30	-	-	-	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	384.34	3.2	6.8	-	202+	+ An astounding achievement - Paddleshift only
Ferrari 458 Speciale	203 F	'14-'15	8/4497	597/9000	398/6000	1395kg	435.30	-	-	-	202+	+ <i>evo Car of the Year 2014</i> - If you don't own a regular 458, nothing
Ferrari F430	163 F	'04-'10	8/4308	483/8500	343/5250	1449kg	339.40	-	-	-	196+	+ Just brilliant - Didn't you read the plus point?
Ferrari 430 Scuderia	121 F	'07-'10	8/4308	503/8500	347/5250	1350kg	378.36	3.5	7.7	198	205+	+ Successful F1 technology transplant - Likes to shout about it
Ferrari 360 Modena	163 F	'99-'04	8/3586	394/8500	275/4750	1390kg	288.45	-	-	-	183+	+ Worthy successor to 355 - Not quite as involving as it should be
Ferrari 360 Challenge Stradale	068 F	'03-'04	8/3586	420/8500	275/4750	1280kg	333.41	-	-	-	186+	+ Totally exhilarating road-racer. It's loud - It's very, very loud
Ferrari F355 Berlinetta	231 F	'94-'99	8/3496	374/8250	268/6000	1350kg*	281.47	-	-	-	183+	+ Looks terrific, sounds even better - Are you kidding?
Ferrari F12 Berlinetta	190 F	£241,053	12/6262	730/8250	509/6000	1630kg	455.31	-	-	-	211+	+ 730bhp isn't too much power for the road - Super-quick steering is an acquired taste
Ferrari F12tdf	230 F	£340,051	12/6262	769/8500	520/6250	1520kg	514.29	-	-	-	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	368.37	3.5	7.4	205	205+	+ <i>evo Car of the Year 2006</i> - Banks are getting harder to rob
Ferrari 599 GTO	161 F	'11-'12	12/5999	661/8250	457/6500	1605kg	418.34	-	-	-	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	580/7250	434/5250	1688kg	298.37	4.2	9.6	205+	208+	+ 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	287.44	-	-	-	199+	+ Everything - Nothing
Ferrari GT4 Lusso	225 D	£230,430	12/6262	680/8000	514/5750	1920kg	360.34	-	-	-	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	347.37	-	-	-	208	+ Four seats and 4WD, but a proper Ferrari - Looks divide opinion
Ferrari LaFerrari	203 F	'13-'15	12/6262	950/9000	664/6750	1574kg	613.30	-	-	-	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	1380kg	485.37	3.5	6.7	217+	217+	+ Intoxicating, exploitable - Cabin detaching falls short of a Zonda or F1's
Ferrari F50	186 F	'95-'97	12/4699	513/8500	347/6500	1230kg*	424.39	-	-	-	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*	437.41	-	-	-	201	+ Brutally fast - It's in the dictionary under 'turbo lag'
Ford GT	236 F	£450,000	6/3497	647/6250	550/5900	1385kg*	475.28	-	-	-	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	353.39	-	-	-	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	1016.25	-	-	-	270	+ 0-200mph in 14.5sec, and it handles too - Looks like an Exige
Honda NSX	233 F	£144,765	6/3493	573	476/2000	1776kg	328.29	3.0	6.9	191	191	+ Blisteringly quick and brilliantly engineered - Limited range on a full tank
Honda NSX (NA2)	188 F	'97-'05	6/3179	276/7300	224/5300	1410kg	196.57	-	-	-	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	221.44	-	-	-	168	+ <i>evo Car of the Year 2002</i> - Hard to find in the UK
Jaguar XJ220	157 F	'92-'94	6/3498	542/7200	475/4500	1470kg	375.37	-	-	-	213	+ Britain's greatest supercar... - ...until McLaren built the F1
Koenigsegg One:1	202 F	£2.0m	8/5065	1341/7500	1011/6000	1360kg	1002.29	-	-	-	273	+ One of the most powerful cars we've tested - It's sold out, not that we couldn't afford one anyway
Koenigsegg Agera R	180 F	'11-'14	8/5032	1124/7100	885/2700	1435kg	796.28	-	-	-	273	+ As fast and exciting as your body can handle - It's Veyron money
Koenigsegg CCRX Edition	118 F	'08-'10	8/4800	1004/7000	796/6500	1280kg*	797.29	-	-	-	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*	385.34	-	-	-	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*	430.32	-	-	-	201+	+ Defines the numbers; incredible point-to-point pace - Takes work to find its sweet-spot
Lamborghini Huracán Performante	237 F	£215,000	10/5204	631/8000	442/6500	1382kg*	464.29	-	-	-	201+	+ The realisation of the Huracán's seemingly ever elusive potential - Kitchen-worktop carbonfibre
Lamborghini Gallardo LP560-4	180 D	'08-'13	10/5204	552/8000	398/6500	1410kg*	398.37	-	-	-	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*	399.39	-	-	-	199	+ Mad, rear-wheel-drive Lambo - Limited numbers
Lamborghini LP570-4 Superleggera	152 F	'10-'13	10/5204	562/8000	398/6500	1340kg*	426.34	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*	364.40	4.3	9.4	196	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*	373.38	-	-	-	196	+ Lighter, more agile - Grabby carbon brakes, clunky e-gear
Lamborghini Aventador	194 F	£260,040	12/6498	690/8250	509/5500	1575kg*	445.29	-	-	-	217	+ Most important new Lambo since the Countach - Can feel a little clumsy
Lamborghini Aventador S	233 F	£271,146	12/6498	730/8400	509/5500	1575kg*	471.29	-	-	-	217	+ A more agile, more connected Aventador - Erm... expensive?
Lamborghini Aventador SV	216 F	£321,723	12/6498	740/8400	509/5500	1525kg*	493.28	-	-	-	217	+ More exciting than the standard Aventador - ISR gearbox inconsistent
Lamborghini Murciélago LP640	093 F	'06-'11	12/6496	631/8000	487/6000	1665kg*	385.38	-	-	-	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*	429.33	3.2	7.3	212	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*	351.40	-	-	-	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*	343.39	-	-	-	208	+ Best-built, best-looking Diablo of all - People's perceptions
Lexus LFA/LFA Nürburgring	200 F	'10-'12	10/4805	552/8700	354/6600	1440kg	379.37	-	-	-	202	+ Absurd and compelling supercar - Badge and price don't quite match
Maserati MC12	079 F	'04-'05	12/5988	621/7500	481/5500	1455kg	437.38	-	-	-	205	+ Rarer than an Enzo - The Ferrari's better
McLaren 540C	234 F	£126,000	8/3799	533/7500	398/3500	1311kg*	413.35	-	-	-	199	+ An excellent junior supercar - The 570S is still better to drive
McLaren 570S	229 F	£145,305	8/3799	562/7500	443/5000	1440kg	397.32	-	-	-	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	404.32	-	-	-	204	+ Feels like a 675LT that's been dialled down a couple of notches - Engine response lacks edge
McLaren 570GT	228 F	£154,000	8/3799	562/7500	443/5000	1495kg	382.34	-	-	-	204	+ Blurs the line between grand tourer and supercar brilliantly - 570S is more involving
McLaren 720S	236 F	£208,600	8/3994	710/7250	568/5500	1283kg*	562.29	-	-	-	212	+ Astonishingly, effortlessly fast - Oddly exciting
McLaren 650S	196 F	'14-'17	8/3799	641/7250	500/6000	1428kg	456.30	-	-	-	207	+ Better brakes, balance and looks than 12C, more power too - Which all comes at a price
McLaren 675LT	228 F	'15-'17	8/3799	666/7100	516/5500	1328kg	510.29	-	-	-	205	+ Runner-up at <i>eCoty 2015</i> ; asks questions of the P1 - Aventador price tag
McLaren 675LT Spider	222 D	'16-'17	8/3799	666/7100	516/5500	1368kg	495.29	-	-	-	203	+ Spectacularly fast; involving, too - Might mess up your hair
McLaren 12C	228 F	'11-'14	8/3799	616/7500	442/3000	1434kg	435.33	-	-	-	207	+ Staggering performance, refinement - Engine noise can be grating
McLaren P1	228 F	'13-'15	8/3799	903/7500	664/4000	1490kg	616.28	-	-	-	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	560.32	-	-	-	240	+ Still the most single-minded supercar ever - There'll never be another
Mercedes-AMG GT R	236 F	£143,260	8/3982	577/6250	516/1900	1555kg	377.36	3.3	7.1	198	198	+ Fun and blisteringly fast; a true rival for the 911 GT3 - A touch showy, perhaps
Mercedes-Benz SL S AMG	159 F	'10-'15	8/6208	563/6800	479/4750	1620kg	335.39	4.1	8.4	197	197	+ Great engine and chassis (gullwing doors too!) - Slightly lardy gearbox
Mercedes-Benz SL S AMG Black Series	204 F	'13-'15	8/6208	622/7400	468/5500	1550kg	408.36	-	-	-	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	370.38	-	-	-	208	+ Zonda-pace, 575-style drivability - Dreadful brake feel
Noble M600	186 F	£200,000	8/4439	650/6800	604/3800	1198kg*	551.35	3.8	7.7	225	225	+ Spiritual successor to the Ferrari F40 - It's a bit pricey
Pagani Huayra	185 F	c£1m	12/5980	620/7500	317/2250	1350kg*	542.33	-	-	-	224	+ Our joint 2012 Car of the Year - Engine isn't as nape-prickling as the Zonda's
Pagani Zonda 760RS	170 F	£1.5m	12/7291	750/6300	575/4500	1210kg*	630.33	-	-	-	217+	+ One of the most extreme Zondas ever - One of the last Zondas ever (probably)
Pagani Zonda S F3	096 F	'02-'05	12/7291	555/5900	553/4050	1280kg*	441.37	-	-	-	220	+ <i>evo Car of the Year 2001</i> (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*	497.36	-	-	-	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*	562.34	-	-	-	217+	+ The best Zonda ever - Doesn't come up in the classifieds often
Porsche 911 GT3 (991.2)	236 F	£111,802	6/3996	493/8250	339/6000	1413kg	355.39	-	-	-	198	+ Almost impossible to criticise - Not the easiest car to place an order for
Porsche 911 GT3 (991.1)	206 F	'16-'16	6/3799	468/8250	324/6250	1430kg	333.35	-	-	-	196	+ <i>evo Car of the Year 2013</i> - PDK only
Porsche 911 GT3 RS (991.1)	223 F	'15-'16	6/3996	493/8250	339/6250	1420kg	353.33	3.0	7.1	193	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	366.38	-	-	-	200	+ <i>evo Car of the Year 2016</i> - Limited availability
Porsche 911 GT3 (997.2)	182 F	'09-'11	6/3797	429/7600	317/6250	1395kg	312.41	4.2	9.2	194	194	+ Even better than the car it replaced - Give us a minute...
Porsche 911 GT3 RS (3.8, 997.2)	200 F	'10-'11	6/3797	444/7900	317/6750	1370kg	329.40	-	-	-	193	+ We named it our favourite car from the first 200 issues of <i>evo</i> - For people like us, nothing
Porsche 911 GT3 RS 4.0 (997.2)	187 F	'11-'12	6/3996	493/8250	339/5750	1360kg	368.38	-	-	-	193	+ <i>evo Car of the Year 2011</i> - Unforgiving on-road; crazy used prices
Porsche 911 GT2 RS (997.2)	204 F	'10-'13	6/3600	611/6500	516/2250	1370kg	453.35	-	-	-	205	+ More powerful than a Carrera GT. Handles, too - Erm...
Porsche 911 GT3 (

Track times

= new this month. **Red** denotes the car is the fastest in its class on that track.



ANGLESEY COASTAL CIRCUIT

Anglesey, UK, **GPS** 53.188372, -4.496385, **LENGTH** 1.55 miles

Car	Lap time	issue no.	YouTube
BAC Mono 2.5 (fastest sports car)	1:07.7	229	Yes
Radical RXC Turbo 500 (fastest coupe)	1:10.5	-	Yes
McLaren P1 (on Pirelli P Zero Trofeo R tyres) (fastest supercar)	1:12.2	200	Yes
Porsche 918 Spyder	1:12.4	200	Yes
McLaren P1	1:12.6	200	Yes
Ferrari 488 GTB	1:12.8	228	Yes
McLaren 675LT	1:12.8	228	Yes
Porsche 911 GT3 (991.2)	1:13.4	-	Yes
Porsche 911 GT3 RS (991.1)	1:13.6	-	Yes
Porsche 911 Turbo S (991.1)	1:13.6	-	Yes
Ferrari 458 Speciale	1:14.2	198	Yes
McLaren 570S	1:14.5	-	Yes
Porsche 911 Turbo (991.1)	1:15.2	210	Yes
Aston Martin Vantage GT12	1:16.0	214	Yes
Nissan GT-R (2014MY)	1:16.9	210	Yes
Mercedes-AMG GT S	1:17.0	210	Yes
Porsche 911 Carrera (991.1)	1:17.8	199	Yes
Porsche Cayman (981)	1:18.2	209	-
Aston Martin N30	1:19.1	210	-
Lotus Evija S (V6)	1:19.1	209	-
SEAT Leon Cupra 280 Sub8 (fastest hot hatch)	1:19.1	212	Yes
BMW M4	1:19.2	199	Yes
BMW i8	1:19.4	210	-
Honda Civic Type R (FK2)	1:19.5	212	-
Renaultsport Mégane Trophy 275	1:19.6	212	-
BMW M5 Competition Pack (F10M) (fastest saloon)	1:19.7	-	Yes
Audi TT S (Mk3)	1:19.9	209	-
Audi R8 V8 (Mk1)	1:20.1	201	-
BMW M135i	1:20.4	212	-
Nissan 370Z Nismo	1:20.5	209	-



BEDFORD AUTODROME WEST CIRCUIT

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

SEAT Leon Cupra 280 Ultimate Sub8 (fastest hot hatch)	1:23.1	215	-
Renaultsport Mégane 275 Trophy-R	1:23.6	215	Yes
Alfa Romeo Giulia Quadrifoglio (fastest saloon)	1:23.6	237	-
Mercedes-AMG C63 S Saloon	1:24.0	211	Yes
VW Golf GTI Clubsport S	1:24.1	227	-
SEAT Leon Cupra 290 (on optional Michelin Pilot Sport Cup 2 tyres)	1:24.2	227	-
Ford Focus RS (Mk3, on optional Michelin Pilot Sport Cup 2 tyres)	1:24.6	227	-
Honda Civic Type R (FK2, on Michelin Pilot Sport Cup 2 tyres)	1:24.6	227	-
BMW M3 Competition Package (F80)	1:24.7	237	-
VW Golf R (Mk7)	1:26.1	-	Yes
Audi RS3 Sportback (2015MY)	1:26.6	-	Yes
Ford Fiesta ST Mountune	1:29.5	213	-
Mazda MX-3.0i Sport (Mk4) (fastest sports car)	1:29.8	-	Yes
Toyota GT86 (fastest coupe)	1:29.9	-	Yes



BLYTON PARK OUTER CIRCUIT

Lincolnshire, UK, **GPS** 53.460093, -0.688666, **LENGTH** 1.6 miles

Ariel Atom 3.5R (fastest sports car)	0:58.9	205	-
Radical RXC Turbo (fastest coupe)	1:00.4	205	Yes
BAC Mono	1:01.4	189	-
Porsche 911 GT2 RS (997.2) (fastest supercar)	1:01.8	204	Yes
Porsche 911 GT3 (991.1)	1:01.9	205	Yes
Caterham Seven 620R	1:02.1	189	-
Nissan GT-R Nismo	1:02.1	205	Yes
Mercedes SLS AMG Black Series	1:02.5	204	Yes
Pagani Huayra	1:02.5	177	-
McLaren 12C	1:02.7	187	-
Radical RXC	1:02.9	189	-
Ariel Atom 3.5 310	1:03.4	189	-
Audi R8 V10 Plus (Mk1)	1:03.4	-	Yes
Porsche Cayman GT4	1:03.6	221	Yes
Lotus Evija S (V6)	1:04.4	177	-
Porsche 911 Carrera (991.1)	1:05.1	177	-
Chevrolet Camaro Z/28	1:05.1	220	Yes
Porsche 911 GT3 (997)	1:05.2	-	Yes
Porsche Boxster S (981)	1:05.5	177	-
Porsche Cayman GT3 (981)	1:05.5	-	Yes
Porsche Cayman S (981)	1:05.5	189	-
Caterham Seven 420R	1:05.7	220	Yes
Vuoll 05	1:06.5	220	Yes
Zenos E10 S	1:06.6	214	-
Mercedes-Benz C63 AMG Black Series	1:06.9	177	-
Renaultsport Mégane 275 Trophy-R (fastest hot hatch)	1:07.3	205	Yes
SEAT Leon Cupra 280 Sub8	1:07.6	220	-
BMW M135i	1:07.7	177	-
Porsche Cayman (981)	1:07.7	-	Yes
BMW M235i	1:08.7	-	Yes
Mini John Cooper Works GP (R56)	1:08.7	181	-
Renaultsport Mégane R26R	1:08.9	181	-
VW Golf GTI Performance Pack (Mk7)	1:10.3	192	-
Toyota GT86	1:12.8	177	-

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Y1 AAB £1800	J14 DD £990	ST14 DAN £590	AI FHH £1280	J1W 912 £490	411 LY £5300	J33 PDJ £540	37 SRL £2420
J80 AAJ £290	Y1 ADJ £990	N26 DAN £1800	75 FJ £3700	A9 J1W £680	31 LYN £4600	W33 PEA £890	SRO 701 £1400
H9 AAT £390	Y11 AGM £690	VX02 DAV £290	32 FK £4500	JK 9946 £3200	P12 MAP £390	Y29 PEN £690	N15 SC £1300
R16 ABD £290	S555 AHP £290	BL14 DAV £580	FK 7575 £1500	IKZ 3531 £290	M14 MAG £990	PEZ 2482 £290	AI5 STD £990
ABE 2S £1800	AIG 5018 £290	G15 DAV £290	FL 59 £4300	T22 JLL £190	Y300 MAG £790	PFE 273 £100	STU IL £4500
40 ABE £4800	912 AL £4400	S002 DAY £290	FIL FD £490	IM 1444 £3100	MAL 77 £3100	11 FH £3500	M155 STU £1830
T9 ABP £490	Y008 ALD £290	A4 DCN £590	TI FMW £1230	VIJMF £1300	CV15 MAR £190	I585 PG £1900	M880 STV £2900
RI ABW £1100	LE08 ALF £390	DDZ 885 £590	60 FN £4500	X800 JMS £690	1W15 MAR £190	I505 PH £1900	555 SU £1300
B19 ACA £490	K70 ALH £820	324 DEL £1800	AM51 FOX £490	INE 41 £1500	N24 MAS £990	5388 PH £1900	A7 SUE £3700
7 ACN £4500	WNC 985A £190	N31 DEN £1800	EG60 FOX £790	D055 JOB £290	OX02 MCK £250	W2 PHG £390	J9 SUE £2700
JI ADJ £990	S26 AND £790	R130 DEN £1900	FP 3562 £1900	JOE 21W £2300	PP07 MCM £190	K3 PHH £390	F10 SUE £590
J30 ADW £290	BD14 ANE £590	V444 DEN £990	FP 3598 £1900	Y27 JUE £990	T27 MDG £190	J44 PHH £190	SUE 466 £1900
400 AE £3500	E20 ANP £490	DES 775 £1900	31 FR £3900	V1JOT £1200	DB65 MEB £190	T888 PHL £390	SUR IM £2940
S6 AEL £590	N5 ARV £590	DFP 586 £890	GD56 FRY £290	243 JOY £2100	E749 MEL £675	P7 PHR £390	S44 SWC £290
AEO I97 £890	LI ARO £1100	T9 DFT £95	2378 FS £1900	M69 JPB £290	X21 MES £730	PLJ 458 £1200	M70 SWC £290
A15 AGK £190	ARV 534 £1100	DFV IY £490	AI FSN £890	N21 JPS £590	D3 MFE £290	PG 16W £290	S80 SWC £290
W11 AGM £690	H12 ARY £2940	C10 DHA £1500	24 FUS £1500	N28 JRC £495	M44 MGA £290	97 PN £3700	M90 SWC £290
S555 AHP £290	M222 ASME £390	L33 DHR £290	III FV £3600	JRG 75 £3300	23 MHO £2300	444 POR £8000	M200 SWC £190
Porsche 918 Spyder	6837 AT £1900	M4 DHT £290	FI FVC £690	JS 4862 £3300	CI MHR £1300	PP 9129 £1900	X1 6964 £290
McLaren P1	M1 AYE £990	DH2 6520 £490	K900 GAM £590	V38 JUE £990	CI MHW £1100	A14 PPK £190	HI SXI £590
Ferrari 488 GTB	BAG 42S £790	X100 DJC £790	L12 GAY £490	J77 JVB £190	V27 MJF £490	PPN 104 £1100	515 SY £5300
McLaren 675LT	BAB 772S £290	S2 DLA £490	MI GCT £1500	27 JVT £1900	P7 MMB £590	PR 49 £10900	SYB 61L £1800
Porsche 911 GT3 (991.2)	503 BAH £2020	X61 DLE £1300	RI GCT £1600	N2 JWE £390	61 MO £7200	AS PRX £290	KK54 TAM £315
Porsche 911 Turbo (991.1)	W9 BAW £390	JF DLF £1900	GEF 385 £2600	R2 JWE £390	B5 MOE £790	P666 PSD £190	A15 TAN £1880
Aston Martin Vantage GT12	Y24 BBA £590	R7 DLV £290	240 GER £1800	X30 JWK £290	MO 177P £290	S20 P50 £190	R065 TAR £290
Nissan GT-R (2014MY)	I97 BCY £1300	CI DNA £1500	GEZ 3726 £390	P1 JYC £590	MR 6646 £2800	P7H 487 £1300	N27 TAS £595
Mercedes-AMG GT S	D9 BCM £690	N4 DNO £710	M8 GGS £4900	F2 KAT £1800	MRC 68 £5410	I7 PU £4400	PHO TAV £190
Porsche 911 Carrera (991.1)	BDM 8I £2200	351 DOC £2200	R7 GHC £490	KW10 KAW £190	M5B 69 £2200	X5 PUB £790	B7 TAZ £590
Porsche Cayman (981)	W1 BDB £1300	M44 DDO £240	GHP IN £1300	WIS KAW £290	C2 MSN £490	PUI 666 £1800	P20 TCR £190
Aston Martin N30	CS B0S £790	B24 DOE £590	GIL 1449 £890	CK 6804 £2500	8439 MT £1900	30 PY £3900	737 TE £2500
Lotus Evija S (V6)	BEE 568W £490	D0F 7 £4800	400 GJ £3600	59 KE £3200	7 MT £390	30 PV £3900	CH08 TEL £390
SEAT Leon Cupra 280 Sub8 (fastest hot hatch)	AL55 BEL £490	DNV HV £2500	R70 JG £290	N31 KEL £190	36 MJ £4400	25 PY £3900	T70 TEL £190
BMW M4	P477 BEL £490	V66 DON £290	D88 GKA £720	B6 KEW £290	T52 MUM £290	A1 PYH £390	88 P £190
BMW i8	L10 BEO £190	D06 98 £7600	J88 GLA £720	A1 IHP £490	MVF IP £490	W10 BAR £990	L12 THG £190
Honda Civic Type R (FK2)	J88 BEV £1100	472 DON £2400	A9 GME £290	DI KEY £2500	MYO 779 £1380	RU02 RAJ £490	RI11 THV £390
Renaultsport Mégane Trophy 275	P200 BEV £690	1875 DP £2200	D10 GMF £390	118 KFK £95	M44 MYS £290	RAJ 798X £890	THZ 5876 £190
BMW M5 Competition Pack (F10M) (fastest saloon)	39 BF £4700	T123 DPH £190	H7 GNL £390	K4 KHJ £290	BPO2 NAN £190	DR54 RLK £290	C9 TA £390
Audi TT S (Mk3)	A14 BFH £590	8055 DR £2800	GNP 3N £390	A911 KUT £390	D1A NAS £9659	B16 RAO £290	X400 TJM £290
Audi R8 V8 (Mk1)	H4 BFR £290	DR7 7462 £290	B6 GOB £390	M600 KMC £390	W7 NAT £1630	P4 RAR £690	BE 11T £390
BMW M135i	RI B6S £890	824 DS £3600	K9 GOP £290	S55 KMD £290	N102 NCJ £190	A16 RAW £190	TM 3069 £890
Nissan 370Z Nismo	BL 632 £3300	DS 9076 £1880	1966 GR £2200	K22 KMS £390	D14 NCJ £490	66 RAY £790	TMW 20 £2245
SEAT Leon Cupra 280 Ultimate Sub8 (fastest hot hatch)	T2 BLW £290	H7 DTR £490	GR 9992 £2600	K70 KMW £290	89 ND £4300	RAY 809 £3300	67 TN £4400
Renaultsport Mégane 275 Trophy-R	NG03 BMW £490	DUG 321T £790	K800 GRA £590	920 KM £4300	857 ND £3300	RAZ 5434 £490	C7 THE £4400
Alfa Romeo Giulia Quadrifoglio (fastest saloon)	B1 BNF £690	55 DV £4400	W7 GRH £490	V2 KPR £390	J16 NDK £290	RBC 843 £1200	39 TO £6400
Mercedes-AMG C63 S Saloon	C4 BHN £390	DWC 653 £2200	P60 GRN £290	862 KR £2600	B4 NDK £390	RC 8043 £2520	T0 885 £3800
VW Golf GTI Clubsport S	HS58 BOB £790	S5 DWO £590	PI GSU £590	MI11 KRW £390	NDM 298 £1300	GI RCE £990	CA 70B £990
SEAT Leon Cupra 290 (on optional Michelin Pilot Sport Cup 2 tyres)	B0B 902BE £400	R9 DXN £190	GT 5963 £2500	C7 KSP £390	K300 NES £390	TI RCE £990	MR10 TOD £490
Ford Focus RS (Mk3, on optional Michelin Pilot Sport Cup 2 tyres)	N29 BOM £190	84 DYE £3200	MI GTL £990	CI KSR £1300	74 NET £3900	RO 1078 £2300	L1 TOG £990
Honda Civic Type R (FK2, on Michelin Pilot Sport Cup 2 tyres)	X3 BOB £1400	G15 E £4700	I6 GU £4500	N2 KST £490	NEV 689P £690	D2 R0G £790	JW05 TOM £490
BMW M3 Competition Package (F80)	1686 BP £1880	52 EA £4100	SI GUS £2500	GI KTF £790	J600 NEY £590	N28 RB £395	L692 TOY £490
VW Golf R (Mk7)	J66 BRH £190	EMO07 EAM £190	H20 GVC £95	NI KWE £490	C7 NCP £390	REG 5M £1500	P26 TRA £490
Audi RS3 Sportback (2015MY)	B12 BRT £390	EB 712 £3100	J14 GWA £95	K666 LAF £190	MI NJD £1600	REG 333E £1400	P29 TRA £490
Ford Fiesta ST Mountune	W7 BRY £1300	T2 ECL £390	SI GWS £1200	AC08 LAL £190	L4 NJT £790	G13 TRK £190	L38 TRK £1880
Mazda MX-3.0i Sport (Mk4) (fastest sports car)	LI0 BRJ £1100	LS EDF £290	489 GYM £1200	42 LAN £6300	700 NK £3600	A3 RGE £490	TRT 87 £2200
Toyota GT86 (fastest coupe)	BS 8072 £1700	E1 ED £990	8026 HA £1500	W16 LAR £490	T3 NK £390	T55 RHF £190	K155 TRV £490
SEAT Leon Cupra 280 Sub8 (fastest hot hatch)	TI BSC £890	AA EB £490	JD07 HAM £190	N19 LAS £590	AI NKG £1100	RH62 RHJ £390	835 TS £4700
Renaultsport Mégane 275 Trophy-R	S2 BSL £490	GR51 EEK £590	HAN 1J £5100	K4 NKR £495	K4 NKR £495	Y2 RJK £190	L15 TUR £590
Alfa Romeo Giulia Quadrifoglio (fastest saloon)	K6 BTE £290	N31 EEL £2100	882 HAR £2500	RL02 LAW £390	321 NL £4748	N8 RKR £390	24 TV £3600
Mercedes-AMG C63 S Saloon	C2 BTY £390	87 EG £4400	N2 HCK £290	X787 LAX £490	L2 NLB £490	S21 RKS £390	16 TWT £290
VW Golf GTI Clubsport S	I7 BU £4200	200 EJ £3400	S8 HCN £190	S1 LBI £890			

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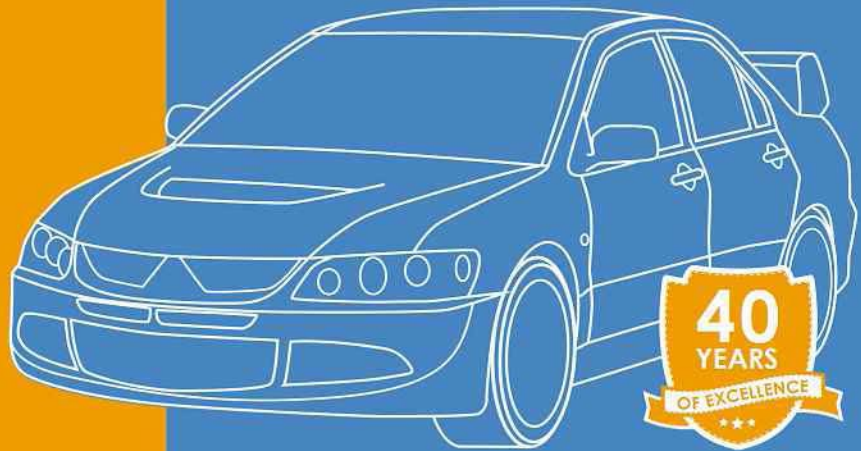
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