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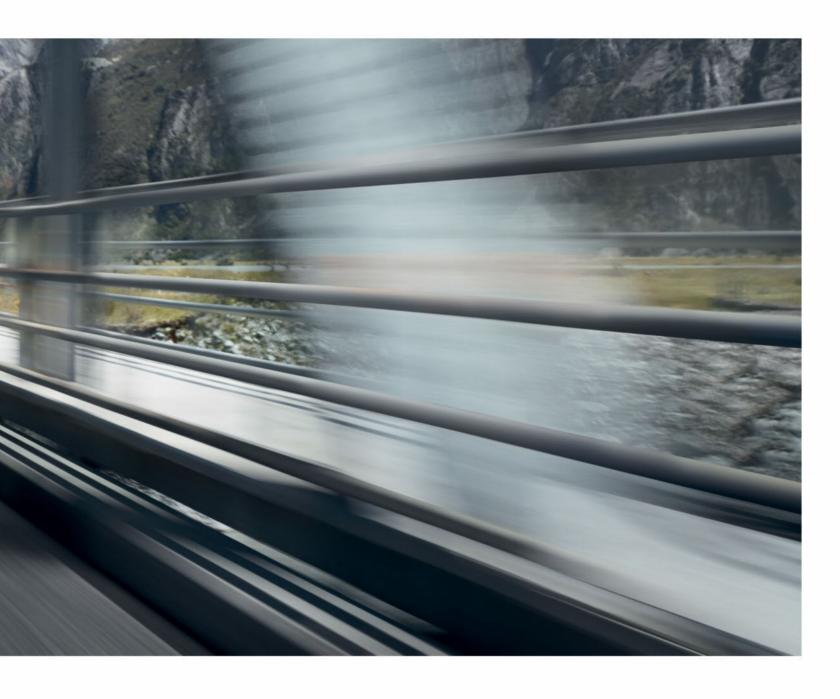
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Information correct at the date of publication.

Michelin 855 200 507 RCS CLERMONT-FERRAND - Integer - 09/2016. © Getty Images.







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THE 2017 NISSAN GT-R





THE ETERNAL MOVEMENT

Ulysse Nardin, from the movement of the sea to the perpetual innovation of Haute Horlogerie. For over 170 years, the powerful movement of the ocean has inspired Ulysse Nardin in its singular quest: to push back the limits of mechanical watchmaking, time and time again.





"It'll last three issues." Those were the words of a very senior publishing executive when **evo** Australia announced itself to the world more than four years ago.



NOW THAT WE'VE TURNED 50 ISSUES OLD,

I'm half tempted to send him a copy for his records. But, to be honest, he wasn't alone and there were plenty of doubters when we burst onto newsstands with an audacious lap of Australia in a half-a-million-dollar AMG SLS supercar. Everyone thought that publishing as a whole was coughing up blood and that print was

already dead. Of course, there are elements of truth to those trains of thought, and the publishing industry continues to be a very challenging environment. However, the continued success of **evo** Australia, and the resurgence of global powerhouses such as *Vanity Fair* (a magazine that ceased publishing in the 1980s) proves that there are still customers for the right offering.

That's not to say that I didn't have my own twinges of doubt when I left a comfortable role within Australia's largest magazine publisher for the independence of **evo** Australia. But those doubts were erased in a 15-minute flurry of phone calls and emails that rang and pinged into my phone as I sat on the beach in Byron Bay four and a half years ago. Within that quarter of an hour, the Mercedes-AMG SLS for our launch story had been confirmed, along with the Audi R8 V10 Plus and Nissan GT-R for our first comparison. Three invitations to international launches rolled in, including a trip to Pikes Peak to witness Sebastian Loeb's record-breaking run. Then there were bookings from Ferrari, Porsche, BMW and Aston Martin.

The industry had accepted **evo** Australia and the first hurdle had been cleared. As we reflect on 50 issues of success and fun, and look forward to the excitement and challenges ahead, it would be remiss of me not to acknowledge those who've made it all possible. My sincere thanks go to our past and present staff and freelance contributors. I'd like to offer special mention to **evo** Australia director, Matthew O'Malley, for the courage to launch a new title, and to art director, Chris Andrew, for his unwavering calmness and artistic brilliance.

Thanks to the printers, distributors and baristas (who've kept me plied with caffeine). Very special thanks also to our advertisers and to the public relations departments of the car companies. And of course, a final and most hearty debt of gratitude is owed to you, dear reader. After all, it is you for whom we strive each day to bring the Thrill of Driving.

Jesse Taylor Editor

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RADAR

NEWS • TECHNOLOGY • WATCHES



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by STUART GALLAGHER

W O - H U N D R E D miles per hour, over 400kW 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, guards 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 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

WE'RE GOING ON AN 'M' HUNT

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





Above: Track Pack sees a half roll-cage fitted for the full touring-car vibe.

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 5.0-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 441kW. The all-wheel-drive powertrain uses ZF's eight-

66 Only two body panels remain from the standard XE sedan 99

speed auto 'box, and there's also a rear e-diff and torque vectoring. The brakes are Brembo carbonceramics. Inside, a regular triggerstyle 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' 322km/h (200mph) and the 3.4sec 0-100km/h time a 'worst-case scenario'. Meanwhile, it's claimed that in its lightest form the Project 8 will weigh 1745kg. Unfortunately, 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 441kW
Torque 700Nm
0-100km/h 3.4sec (claimed)
Top speed >322km/h (claimed)

1745kg

Weight Power-toweight On sale

Deliveries

Not available in Australia May 2018 (UK)

253kW/tonne





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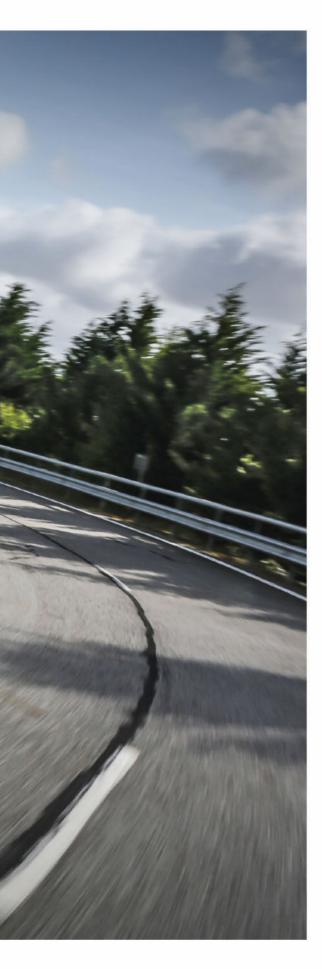
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Left: prototype tips the scales at just 1103kg. Right: details – and quality – send out the right message.













The white stuff?

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

by STEVE SUTCLIFFE

HIS 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 185kW and 320Nm from its midmounted 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 168kW per tonne – a fraction better than a Porsche 718 Cayman's 165kW per tonne. But to generate that number, the Porsche needs more power (220kW) 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 as





66 The sounds – and thrust – are highly convincing >>



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 ultralightweight carbon seats are lovely to snuggle right down into and visibility is excellent for a midengined 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 turbo Cayman, and the acceleration feels proper. As in 0-100km/h in not a lot more than four seconds and, just guessing, 0-160km/h 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. 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 experience from the other seat, I for one 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	185kW	220kW @ 6500rpm	177kW @ 6000rpm
Torque	320Nm	380Nm @ 1950- 4500rpm	350Nm @ 2200- 4250rpm
0-100km/h	4.5sec (claimed)	5.1sec (claimed)	4.5sec (claimed)
Top speed	250km/h (limited)	275km/h (claimed)	257km/h (claimed)
Weight	1103kg	1335kg	960kg
Power-to- weight	168kW/tonne	165kW/tonne	184kW/tonne
Basic price	c\$100,000	\$115,300	\$89,000



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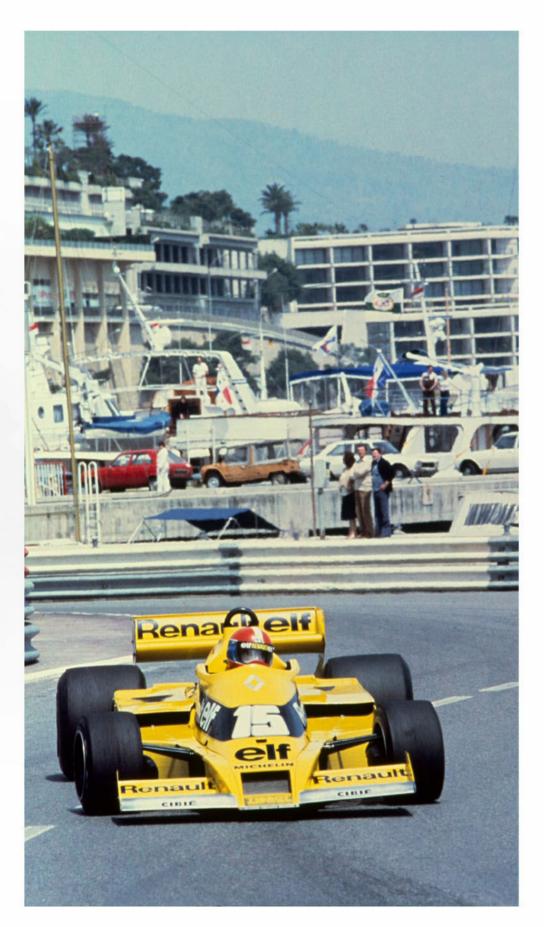


ZAGAME





O CELEBRATE THE 40TH anniversary of Renault in Formula One, Bell & Ross has designed a model inspired by Renault's first ever-single seater from 1977, the R.S.01 (pictured right at Monaco, where the official anniversary recently took place). On the occasion, Jerome Stoll, President of Renault Sport Racing said, "Renault is proud of its position as one of the most historic brands in Formula One. Over the past forty years our involvement has taken many forms, ranging from the ground-breaking RS01 V6 Turbo, the V10 engine, through the record-breaking V8 era through to our current venture with Renault Sport Formula One Team. We have not only gained a tremendous amount of success, knowledge, expertise and experience over these years, we have helped contribute



to the sport as it is today. In Monaco we celebrated our forty-year history, however, our focus is firmly on the future. We recently showcased our vision of a potential Formula One future with the R.S.2027 Vision and we are dedicated to our ongoing role in Formula One. Here's to the next forty years!"

The Bell & Ross BR 126 Renault Sport 40th Anniversary is an invitation to get into the shoes of the professionals who work under extreme conditions. It is not only an instrument designed to support them in their missions, but an ally at all times.

This vintage model immerses us into the world of racing by taking its inspiration from Renault's first Formula One races' DNA: its 41mm case is made of satin-finish steel and its black and yellow dial is a reference to the colours of the Renault Sport Formula One Team. The timer is black on a yellow strip, reminiscent of the hatched decoration of Formula One in the Seventies, and guarantees an optimal reading of the chronograph function. The two-counter chronograph offers both 60-second and

66 Renault is proud of its position as one of the most historic brands in Formula One 🎐

30-minute timers for extreme functionality and accuracy.

The colours, the ultra-domed crystal, the rubber bracelet and the shape of the horns reinforce the vintage look of this piece.

The historic logos of Renault from the Seventies and the chequered flag from the finish line appear on the dial of this unique timepiece and are also engraved on the bottom of the case. Inside the 41mm stainless steel case resides a calibre BR-CAL.301 automatic mechanical movement. Unless you drop it into the harbour at Monaco, you're unlikely to require the 100 metres of water resistance, but it's nice to know that it's there.

This limited edition of 170 pieces, that symbolizes the number of Renault's victories in Formula One, will seduce all lovers of extreme sensations and the many enthusiasts of this sport.

RADAR



BREITLING

Stunning new Navitimer Rattrapante is a technological tour de force



REITLING UNVEILS ITS OWN SPLIT seconds chronograph movement - one of the most sophisticated horological complications. Developed in the spirit of instruments for professionals, this Manufacture Breitling Caliber B03 is distinguished by its innovative construction ensuring a maximum of precision, sturdiness and reliability. To present this major technical breakthrough, Breitling has chosen its most emblematic model, the famous Navitimer, interpreted in steel or gold with an exclusive bronze-coloured dial.

Few watch brands have their own mechanical chronograph movements. Fewer still also offer a proprietary split-seconds movement genuinely developed and produced in-house.

The major challenge for the developers of a split-seconds chronograph movement relates to the level of energy. The constant stopping and starting of the split-seconds hand results in variable energy requirements that can prove detrimental to chronometric precision and reduce a watch's power reserve. One of the means of resolving this issue consists in equipping the movement with an isolating system serving to disconnect the split-seconds hand when it is stopped. This was the approach chosen by Breitling. However, the brand engineers and watchmakers revisited the construction of the splitseconds mechanism in order to achieve a more reliable and effective solution. They developed two innovations for which patents have been filed, and the first breakthrough relates to the isolating system. The component driving the split-seconds lever normally takes the form of a cylindrical pin: an organ that is complex to produce below a certain diameter. Breitling has replaced this pin by a stamped part enabling it to achieve a more precisely defined shape, as well as enhanced sturdiness. Thanks to this isolating system, the use of the split-seconds hand has no impact on the precision of the timing, nor on the 70-hour power reserve of the Navitimer Rattrapante.

The second innovation concerns the mechanism for stopping the split-seconds hand. Watchmakers traditionally use a wheel (either smooth or with extremely fine toothing) that is clamped in place. This system is complicated to produce and can lead to a certain degree of inaccuracy. Inspired by bicycle brakes equipped with rubber pads, Breitling's engineers had the idea of surrounding the wheel with an O-ring seal that would be compressed by the clamp. This results in extremely precise stopping and a system that is simpler to produce and thus more reliable.

66 Few watch brands have their own movement, fewer still offer a split-seconds movement 🎐

by SIMON DE BURTON

PORSCHE

A trio of timepieces inspired by the Stuttgart sportscar maker

B Sportscars, Porsche is an object of inspiration in the design and horological worlds. Here we examine three Porsche-inspired watches.

Singer Track 1

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 while the time of day is shown on two discs that rotate around the outer edge.

Singer is now re-imagining the chronograph

Rec 901

Since its launch in 2014, Rec – short for 'Recover, Recycle, Reclaim' – has produced watches using salvaged material from classic Minis and Ford Mustangs. 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 and an automatic movement.

Porsche Design Monobloc Actuator

In 1980, Porsche Design created the first titanium-cased chronograph. It continues to use the 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.





LAMBORGHINI MELBOURNE

HURACÁN PERFORMANTE

The Huracán Performante has reworked the concept of super sports cars and taken the notion of performance to levels never seen before. The vehicle has been re-engineered in its entirety; as regards its weight, engine power, chassis and above all by introducing an innovative system of active aerodynamics: ALA. The combination of these modifications and the skilled work of the team at Lamborghini, took the Huracán Performante to complete a lap at Nürburgring in 00:06:52:01 setting a new record for best lap and becoming the fastest standard production car at the Shrine of Speed.

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Put up your Jukes

Nissan created one of the wildest-ever production cars when it stuffed a compact SUV with the guts of Godzilla

SMALL CAR, BIG ENGINE. It's a time-honoured tradition in the car industry and a sure-fire way to capture the attention of car enthusiasts. Hot hatches are perhaps the biggest beneficiaries of the engineering technique, but it's also been employed in sports cars and sports sedans - it's how AMG came about, along with such automotive legends as the BMW M5. However, the poster-child for crazy engines swaps has got to be the GT-R-engined Nissan Juke.

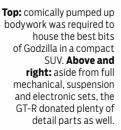
More than a mere heart transplant, though, the compact SUV benefitted from the R35's dual-clutch transaxle, all-wheel-drive system and full suite of electronics when it morphed into the Juke-R and Juke-R 2.0. And that 2.0 had nothing to do with engine capacity as it packed the full-fat twin-turbocharged 3.8-litre Godzilla V6.

When it broke cover back in 2010, Juke-R was, in Nissan's words, the "fastest, most exciting and daring compact crossover in the world". With the regular Juke's marketplace so tame, such a boast wasn't too hard to achieve. But with 358kW and all of the GT-R's electronic trickery on board, this pumped up version should have hang onto such bragging rights for quite some time. But then, four years after Nissan put the Juke-R into very limited production (at a staggering cost of over \$700,000), Version 2.0 came along with an even more outrageous output of nearly 450kW. That's actually a fistful of kilowatts more than today's King of the Hill Nissan GT-R Nismo.



The Juke-R spits you out the other end for another bout of ruthless acceleration









Shoehorning the guts of Godzilla into a Juke was no easy task with the mini-SUV's body requiring much fettling to make its new mechanicals fit. Its wider track front and rear and its new 20-inch RAYS Engineering forged alloys required some pumped-up wheel arches, for instance, while the propshaft was considerably shortened due to the Juke's shorter wheelbase. Impressively, this was done without confusing the GT-R's complex computer system.

Nissan and Nismo farmed out the majority of the development and eventual production to UK-based race engineering firm RML. The RML team were responsible for the rather excellent, 350Z-engined Nissan Micra R a few

The interior also required an overhaul, the driving position forced back by the bigger engine while space on the dashboard has been cleared for the GT-R's 7-inch LCD display



screen. The Juke's trademark motorcycle-inspired centre console remained, though, despite the addition of an FIA-spec roll cage and a pair of racing seats and harnesses up front. Based on the updated Nissan Juke that launched in 2014, the Juke-R 2.0 was injected with further levels of GT-R testosterone to reach 447kW. Still sporting the iconic 'R' matt black, the Juke-R 2.0 was an even more muscular, bolder and powerful version of its predecessor.

So what was it like to drive? Here's what we said at the time:

Clamber over the roll cage, sink into the Alcantara trimmed bucket seats, buckle up the four-point harness and you're ready to go. There's limited adjustability in the driving position, so you sit long-legged and arms outstretched, with the GT-R cabin architecture but stubby bonnet and high roofline adding to the alien environment.

The engine fires to a metallic and fizzy idle, pressing the brake and the moving the GT-R gear selector down and across to 'Drive' sees us roll down the pit lane at Silverstone's Stowe circuit and out onto the track.

Straight line speed is so fast that it's almost comical, with Nissan claiming 0-100km/h in an estimated 2.9 seconds – that's almost a one second improvement over the first Juke-R. The acceleration is relentless and the gear changes ferocious as you tear through the rev range, pulling the right paddle as the rev counter closes in on 7000rpm.

Stamp on the brakes and the Juke squirms and wiggles before you turn. Carry too much speed and you'll be greeted by speed-sapping understeer, but a lift of throttle will see it neutralise as the wide rubber bites into the tarmac and the Juke spits you out at the other end for another bout of ruthless acceleration. It really is properly, crazily fast.

Loosen the reins on the stability control by flicking it into R mode and you can feel the Juke moving around beneath you, not so much that it becomes intimidating but enough to let you know where the limit lies. The added width to the front and rear tracks provide astonishing levels of grip and high-speed stability, but the shorter wheelbase gives the Juke-R 2.0 a far greater level of agility than its stocky proportions would leave you to believe. It really does feel like an overpowered hot hatch on stilts, but with the grip and traction to make it all work.

And the Juke-R 2.0 isn't only confined to the racetrack, in fact its completely road legal. Better still, if a 450kW Juke sounds like something that might interest you, Nissan may even sell you one. Two versions of the original Juke-R were sold for upwards of \$700,000 to the same buyer in the Middle East and Nissan has no objections to making a few more.





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 Australia 049). 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 \$211K 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. 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 \$250K, 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 a leather cleaning kit from Mothers



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

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 Australia 049).

Recently I had a five-hour round-trip to a sick relative. 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 town 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, or perhaps some petrol and a Red Bull. Then we'd head home to watch the sunrise before getting back to hed

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

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 Australia 048, with its tests of the 12C and 650S, 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





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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

T HAS ALWAYS STRUCK ME AS A HAPPY AND fortuitous coincidence that almost from the moment the we launched **evo**, 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 iconic cars – the VW Golf GTI, Mercedes-Benz SL500 and Porsche 911 – rummaged through some old magazines 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 1990, a Volkswagen Golf GTI was listed at \$31,490, a Mercedes-Benz 500SL at \$256,583 and a Porsche 911 Carrera was \$174,499. The same cars today are officially listed at \$41,490, \$278,715 and \$217,500, respectively. Apply the effects of inflation and those 1990 prices equate to \$59,773 for the VW, a staggering \$487,039 for the Mercedes and \$331,229, for the Porsche.

In 1990, Porsche was pre-Boxster and post 924, so the entry-level sportscar from Stuttgart was the 944 S2. At \$126,276, it was more expensive than today's circa \$110K Boxster. Apply the inflation factor to the 944's price, however, and you'd be shelling out a few dollars short of \$240K – that's almost 911 Carrera S money today.

What about some wildcards? Look back to 1990 and the Lamborghini Countach was making way for the Diablo with the controversially styled 25th Anniversary model. Listed at \$545,000, it was the most expensive new car available for official sale in Australia. Fast forward to today, and corrected for inflation, that Countach would set you back \$1,035,000. Lamborghini's range-

topping, 544kW Aventador S has just launched in Australia with a list price of \$789,425.

It's much the same story with the ultra-high-end luxury market occupied by Bentley and Rolls-Royce. In 1990, Bentley's top-shelf Turbo R would have set you back \$423,990, or \$805K in today's money. Of course, you can nab yourself a bargain and pick up a Mulsanne Speed for \$733,387. Rolls-Royce's 1990 Silver Spur was listed at \$378,200 or \$718K with inflation applied. Of course, today's range-topping Phantom starts at \$855,000 and extends to \$990K for the long wheelbase variant.

But nowadays, brand's such as Lamborghini, Bentley and

Rolls-Royce offer a greater variety models, so it's possible to enter the club for less. The cheapest way to plonk down a Lamborghini key is now 'just' \$378,900, while Bentley and Rolls-Royce membership costs \$378K and \$595K, respectively.

Curiously, Ferrari's current pricing is the most closely aligned with inflation, and therefore, doesn't reflect the same theoretical value as other examples – and fails to take into account the vast leaps in performance and technology. Ferrari's current, and fabulous, entry-level supercar, the 488 GTB, is listed at

\$469,988 before options. Back in 1990, the now-unloved 348 was \$255,325, or \$484,650 when inflation is applied.

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.

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.

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@DickieMeaden



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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

HEN 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? What about a fire extinguisher or a 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? 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 a chunk of your money and give you carbon

fillets in the bumpers 'n' skirts of your C63. Hand Jaguar a wedge of cash 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 1970s 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?

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 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** Australia 048, 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.

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

(a) @sniffpetrol



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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

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 moreor-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

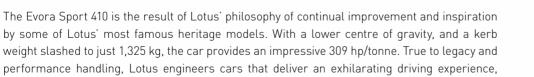
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second-generation Audi RS5 sticks to the current industry script with a twin-turbocharged 2.9-litre V6 replacing the gloriously tuneful 4.2-litre naturally aspirated V8 of the first-gen German muscle coupe.

That charismatic 4.2-litre naturally aspirated V8 made 331kW and 470Nm, while the new car produces an identical 331kW, but is now pumping out 600Nm from its twin-turbo V6 - there are some compensations for downsizing. The

Both Audi Sport Stephans (CEO, Winkelmann, and head of technical development, Reil) commented that customers may buy power, but that they drive torque, and this is what will set the RS5 apart from both the BMW M4 and Mercedes-AMG C63 Coupe.

Audi claims that the launchcontrol equipped and all-wheel-drive aided RS5 will scramble to 100km/h in just 3.9 seconds - that's 0.6 seconds faster than the old model,

The engine is a twin-turbo 2.9-litre version of the 260kW, 500Nm 3.0-litre single-turbo V6 found in the S4 range - itself a development of the twin-turbocharged 4.0-litre V8 used by both Porsche and Audi. Like the V8, the RS5's V6 mounts its turbochargers inside the vee of the engine for shorter intake paths, resulting in crisper throttle response. The 331kW output matches that of the 3.0-litre twin-turbo straight six in the M3 Comp Pack (and is up





50Nm), but falls some way short of the 2.9-litre twin-turbo V6 in the Alfa Giulia QV and biturbo 4.0-litre V8 in the AMG C63 S (both make 375kW, and 600Nm and 700Nm, respectively).

The dressed engine weighs just 182kg, which represents a 34kg saving over the naturally aspirated V8. This is all weight taken off the front axle of the RS5, a stat that bodes well for the dynamic capabilities of the Audi coupe.

Drive is sent to the tarmac via an eight-speed torque converter gearbox (replacing the previous dual-clutch transmission) and to a quattro system with a nominal split of 40:60 – but the electronics can vary the torque distribution to a maximum of 85 per cent to the front and 70 per cent to the rear axle.

Unlike that of the AMG C63 or BMW M4, you don't need to respect the outright power or its delivery in the RS5 – the all-wheel-drive system ensures maximum traction. Some respect needs to be paid to the 1665kg weight of the car, but



The RS5's competency goads you into driving harder and harder

generally it's very benign and takes whatever input you or the road may throw at it. Of course, that means the Audi doesn't challenge you or get under your skin like the AMG of M cars can. The RS5's competency goads you into driving harder and harder until there's little margin left on the table. Driven with abandon, you can feel the torque split move rearwards, but the thrill is in the speed and not the way in which it is attained or delivered.

The steering – long a chink in the armour of fast Audis, is quick and naturally weighted. True, it doesn't babble with information, but it can be used to accurately guide the RS5 and doesn't leave you guessing with synthesised, gloopy feel.

Australian-spec cars arrive in November and will feature as standard the sports rear diff, RS exhaust and Dynamic Ride Control adjustable dampers (along with Virtual Cockpit and LED headlights). The highly-specced Australian models will also feature 20-inch wheels (19s are standard in Europe)

with 275/30 ZR20 tyres at each corner. Carbon ceramic rotors (400mm) for the front axle remain on the options list – the standard steel rotors measure 375mm up front and 330mm on the rears. After a fast run up and down the Pyrenees on the international launch, the sixpiston calipers had squeezed the life out of the front rotors and they were smoking furiously. The pedal went a little long, but quickly recovered after some cruising.

An inspection of the tyres after our day of play revealed how much of the RS5's pace comes down to the grip of the front tyres. The shoulders of the 275 fronts were chewed and rounded, while the same-sized rears remained square-shouldered and barely feathered. A similar day's driving in an M4 or C63 would reveal a more-even distribution of tyre wear, perhaps with a rear bias.

In some ways, the RS5 feels much like the S5 Coupe – fast, secure, well-mannered and just a bit stand-offish. During my time in the Pyrenees, I thought that the RS5









was a little too closely related to the S5, and that it was difficult to justify the circa \$50K price differential between the two Audi coupes. But in a stroke of luck, I returned from the RS5 launch to find an S5 Coupe sitting in the **evo** Australia garage. Aside from the interior, very little of which is different in the RS5, the topspec model does offer meaningful upgrades in performance, looks and character. Though it lacks the performance and aural excitement of the M4, Alfa or AMG engine, the RS5's V6 does add a layer of speed and character that is missing from the S5. And the RS5's pumped-up, IMSA GTO-inspired body looks terrific compared to the more-subtle lines of the S5 (itself a beautiful shape). The jump isn't as stark as that between a C43 and C63 AMG (which employ different engines),



Above left: Pumped up body draws inspiration from the 1990 IMSA GTO race car. Left: interior doesn't do enough to justify circa \$50K price premium over S5 Coupe.

but the S5 and RS5 are not as closely matched as I first thought. And the well-mannered ride of the RS5 asks for few concessions compared to that of the S5.

We won't know the local price of the second-generation RS5 until closer to its November launch, but Audi Australia has already suggested that it will sneak under the \$160,000 barrier. The first-gen car debuted in Australia for \$175K but closed at around \$160K - just 490 of the 13,000-unit production run made it to our shores. At circa \$160K, the RS5 faces very stiff competition from the BMW M4 (\$154,900) and AMG C63 S Coupe (\$162,115). Though a different body shape, it's also worth mentioning the Alfa Romeo Giulia OV at \$142K. Then there's the S5 Coupe at \$106K. ■ Jesse Taylor

Specification

Engine Power 0-100km/h Top speed Weight **Basic price** Torque 2894cc V6, dohc, 24v, twin-turbo 331kW @ 5700-6700rpm 3.9sec (claimed) 280km/h (limited) 1665kg (199kW/tonne) c\$160,000 600Nm @ 1900-5000rpm 🛂 Fast and capable, easy to drive, looks terrific 🧧 Does it do enough to justify premium over S5 Coupe?



Elemental Rp1

It costs almost \$200,000 and is from a company you've probably never heard of, but this trackday weapon can do things most supercars can only dream about

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 2.0-litre Ford EcoBoost engine in its tail, and the sort of performance that even supercar drivers will have nightmares about.

It costs £98,700 in the UK (\$165K plus taxes), has 240kW and weighs just 630kg with fluids. How quick is it? As yet, not even Elemental is sure. So far, the car has recorded a twoway 0-100km/h run of 2.7sec with 0-160km/h in 6.4sec. But that was on a car that still needed its mapping perfected. In reality, we're talking sub-2.5sec to 100km/h and less than six seconds to 160km/h, with a top speed (who cares in a car like this anyway?) of around 275km/h.

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 RpI over 400kg of downforce.

There are three engine options, all Ford EcoBoost units: a 1.0-litre, a 2.0-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 Rpl a power-to-weight ratio of 381kW per tonne. In reality, though, it's the torque-to-weight figure of 714Nm per tonne 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,





Right: underbody aero helps the Rp1 develop more than 400kg of downforce at 240km/h. 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 15km/h, 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.

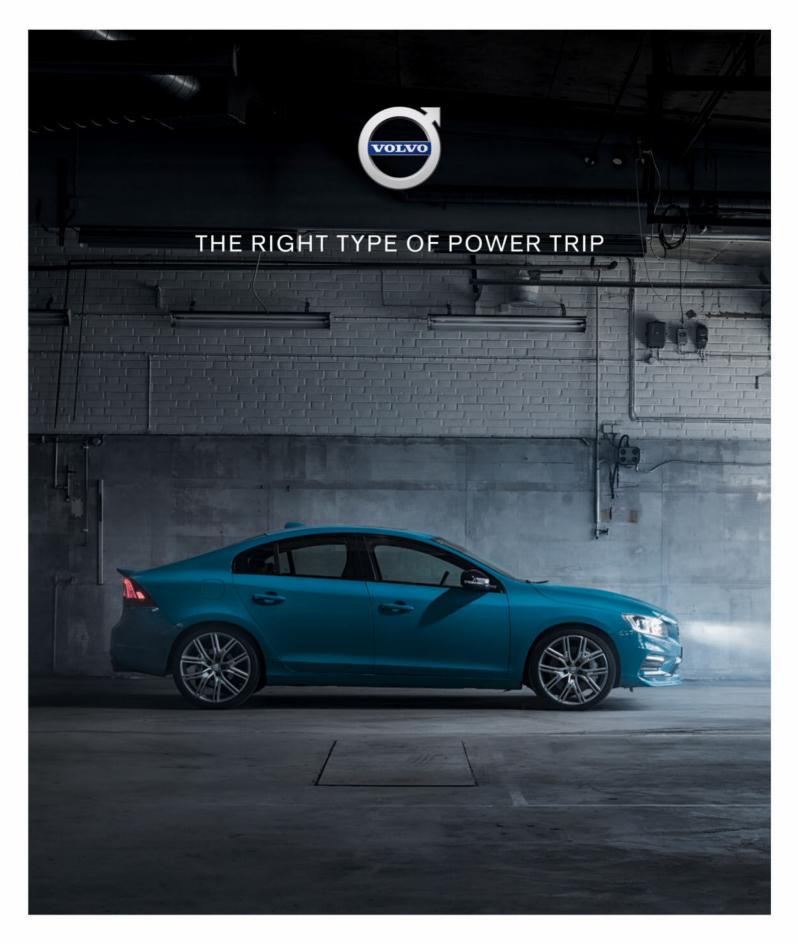
In Road 1 the Rp1 already feels nutcase-fast but also quite reassuring, inasmuch as the traction control comes in early, and the boost is wound down a touch to provide a more manageable flow of torque. The madness goes up in a sliding scale from there onwards, until eventually in Race 2 the Rp1 feels like it wants to blow your eyeballs out the back of your skull from the moment you 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	0-100km/h	Top speed	Weight	Basic price
In-line 4-cyl, 1999cc, dohc, 16v, turbo	240kW @ n/a	450Nm @ n/a	2.7sec (claimed)	275km/h (claimed)	630kg (381kW/tonne)	c\$200,000
Sensational, explosive, captivating of the sensational captivation captivating of the sensational captivation captivating of the sensational captivation captivatio	apability in a package you can	exploit 📮 At this price you've g	got to be very committed	to the hardcore ethos	evo rating	****



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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 'hangon 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 farther 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. Okay, so that's still over two tonnes, 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. While no official figures have been released yet, bet on around 485kW with 900Nm. As mentioned, it's now connected to Porsche's latest

No official figures have been released, but bet on around 485kW with 900Nm

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 that I won't spoil for now. At last, a thoroughly modern electronic architecture allows Bentley to offer a cutting-edge infotainment setup, the 12.3-inch 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-millionkilometre 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 and up on its toes. The old car was all about wiping off speed, trying to get it to turn in and then waiting until it was safe to get on the power. The new car is much defter. It can be turned in

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).

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	0-100km/h	Top speed	Weight	Basic price
5950cc W12, dohc, 48v twin-turbo	c485kW @ n/a	c900Nm @ n/a	3.8sec (est)	340km/h (est)	c2140kg (c227kW/tonne)	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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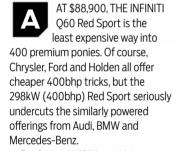
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Infiniti Red **Sport**

Packed with power, the hottest O60 coupe offers plenty of bang for your buck



Producing 298kW at 6400rpm, the Red Sport's twin-turbocharged 3.0-litre V6 is almost twice as powerful as the Q60 GT (155kW from its 2.0-litre four-cylinder) yet asks a premium of \$26K, or just \$18K if compared to the more luxurious but still 155kW GT S Premium. Factor in the very high level of standard equipment, and the Red Sport offers significant bang for your bucks.

The 298kW power peak is accompanied by 475Nm that arrives at an impressively low 1600rpm and stays constant until 5200rpm. Given the stout power figure, however, it did immediately strike me that 475Nm didn't quite marry up, and this thought was confirmed when I considered that Mercedes-AMG's 3.0-litre twin-turbo V6 in the C43 Coupe produces 270kW but a stronger 520Nm. It certainly gives



The 298kW power peak is accompanied by 475Nm that arrives at just 1600rpm

a clue to the character of the Infiniti's turbocharged V6 and a hint to how the coupe might drive.

Slugged with a hefty 1784kg kerb weight, the Red Sport packs a power-to-weight ratio of 167kW and 266Nm per tonne. The 1660kg C43 Coupe boasts 163kW and 313Nm per tonne. There's no official 0-100km/h

claim for the sportiest Infiniti, but considering the C43 Coupe's 4.7 second claim, and after consulting our well-tuned seat-of-thepantsometer, we'd estimate that the Red Sport might just sneak into the fours. Maybe.

In maximum attack mode, the otherwise slick seven-speed torque converter auto doesn't do the Red Sport any favours, upshifting at least 200rpm short of redline even when in manual mode. It's a shame, as the engine is really beginning to stir along at this point and sounds great doing so with a raspy V6 note overlaid with proper induction whoosh.

While the kerb weight blunts the Red Sport's ultimate pace, the suspension does a fine job of keeping it in check when you're exploiting the high grip levels generated by the 245/40 Dunlop tyres (mounted on 19-inch alloys).

Those tyres, however, are runflats and, combined with the tautness of the suspension, deliver a choppy lowspeed ride that isn't really justified by the Red Sport's sportier side. That's not to damn the Infiniti with a worstof-both-worlds statement, but a little more one way or the other would give the Red Sport a more resolved USP.

Infiniti led the way with steerby-wire technology and has been stung by criticism of the system. To its credit, it's taken note and worked hard to improve the system in an attempt to give it more linear and organic feel. While significantly improved over earlier Infiniti models. the steering in the Red Sport remains its weakest link. In fact, if only there were a link...

Regardless of which of the three modes you select (Standard, Sport and Sport+), there's an inconsistent gloopiness that fails to transmit any real information about the levels of front end grip. To drive the Red Sport to its potential, you first need to overstep the mark a few times to learn where the limit is and adjust your driving accordingly. It feels a bit like putting the horse before the cart and it's not the way I like to approach a car.

If this all sounds a bit negative, it's not meant to. The Q60 Red Sport is significantly more resolved than previous offerings from the brand and it offers loads of performance and luxury for a sub-\$100K entry point. Fix the steering, improve the ride and the Red Sport could hit the spot.

■

Jesse Taylor

Specification

Engine 0-100km/h Top speed Weight **Basic price** Torque 1784kg (167kW/tonne) 2997cc V6, dohc, 24v, twin-turbo 298kW @ 6400rpm 475Nm @ 1600-5200rpm 4.9sec (estimated) 250km/h (limited) \$88,900 evo rating $\star\star\star\star$













BMW 530i

Mid-tier 5-Series lays excellent foundation for next-gen M5

THE MARCH OF TIME and progress is relentless in all industries, but the development in the automotive game is quick enough to render long-held perceptions obsolete in a handful of model cycles. I'm old enough to remember how HSV's 185kW VR Clubsport heralded a new era of fast. In what doesn't seem like a long time to me, 185kW is no longer enough to keep you at the pointy end of the hot hatch hierarchy, and it's the power peak of the BMW 530i. A 530i that is no longer powered by a 3.0-litre naturally aspirated straight six (as was once the case and is still implied by the badge), but by a turbocharged 2.0-litre four-cylinder. Hailing from Bathurst, I recall seeing plenty of V8powered cars wearing stickers that mocked, 'only milk and juice comes in 2.0 litres'. Hmm.

If you want a 3.0-litre straight-six 5-Series, you'll need to step up to the turbo-diesel 530d (more on this in a minute) or the 250kW, 450Nm, \$136,900 540i petrol.

The HSV's 5.0-litre V8 was good for 400Nm, while the BMW's turbocharged milk carton musters 350Nm. But that's a fair trade for an engine that returns 5.8L/100km on



In contrast to the 530d, the 185kW 530i builds speed in a more measured way

the combined cycle, compared to mid-14s for the old-school HSV. And the BMW's 6.2-second 0-100km/h dash easily out paces that of the HSV, which, on a good day might sneak into the sevens. The 530i's top speed is electronically limited to 250km/h, while the HSV ran out of puff at a smidgen over 240km/h.

Of course, no one is cross shopping a brand-new Bavarian against an ageing Australian icon, so a fair comparison is with the 530d, which we tested the week prior to the 530i. With a starting price of \$119,900 (against \$108,900 for the 530i), and even with a parsimonious combined cycle rate of 4.7L/100km, it's going to take a life time of servo visits to recoup the extra outlay. But the big diesel has charms beyond economy and its 195kW/620Nm outputs never feel less than muscular - backed up by the 5.7-second 0-100km/h claim.

Around town and on the open road, the 530d can slip through traffic with a guiet assurance or storm by dawdlers with a stab of throttle. In contrast, the 530i builds speed in a more measured way. Both offer refinement that you'd normally associated with the class above, but the more expensive 530d really channelled its inner 7-Series. Both engines are backed by an eight-speed torque converter auto that delivers smooth and fairly prompt shifts more so on the way up the ratios. Shift paddles are available for those that must take command, but as you'd expect from the torque output, the diesel doesn't suffer from being

set and left to D. Neither does the petrol, but if you're trying to wring every drop of performance from the 2.0-litre four-cylinder, holding onto gears manually does help.

Despite their luxury leanings, both models are adept at covering ground at a rate at which would leave a 20-year-old bona fide sports sedan gasping. Neither model is screwed down tightly, so there's a reasonable amount of roll and float when you're attacking a windy and undulating ribbon of tarmac, but there's honest grip from both ends. So long as you don't overcook corner entry, understeer is mild – the general balance being neutral-toundersteer. Power oversteer takes real provocation, but the diesel's thumping torque can briefly fizz up the back tyres before ESC quells the tide.

Both 530s ride well in nearly all circumstances, though some lowspeed, sharp-edged hits had the tyres slapping at the surface.

While neither the 530i nor the 530d offers genuine driving thrills, they do enough to suggest that the upcoming M5 will be something special.

Jesse Taylor

Specification

Weight **Engine** Power **Torque** 0-100km/h Top speed Price 1700kg (109kW/tonne) 185kW @ 5200-6500rpm 350Nm @ 1450-4800rpm \$108,900 1997cc in-line four-cylinder, turbo 6.2sec (claimed) 250km/h (limited)

📴 Excellent refinement, surprising back-road pace, but diesel 530d is quicker still 🧧 530i no longer the poor man's M5









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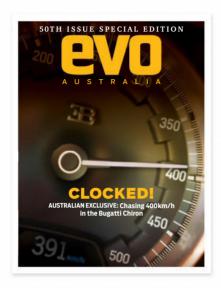


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The meaning Douglas Adams was right. The answer to the meaning of life, the universe and everything is, indeed, 42. Of all the incredible numbers associated with the Bugatti Chiron (more on these in a minute), it the comparatively small figure of 42 that means the

The Bugatti Chiron is a car of mind-scrambling numbers: 1103kW, 1600Nm, \$4.4 million, 1995kg, and that famous 420km/h top speed. Jesse Taylor had just 42 minutes to try to make sense of it all

by JESSE TAYLOR

it's the comparatively small figure of 42 that means the most to me. The 42 minutes I spent in the supple leather driver's seat, staring at that 500km/h speedo while being shoved in the back by a force beyond comprehension, are imprinted onto my mind with indelible ink.

To be granted those 42 minutes took months of logistical wrangling from the other side of the world. In fact, my first two attempts to get behind the wheel of the Chiron were thwarted. To score wheel time in the world's fastest and most expensive series production car took the cashing in of all favours and goodwill chips that I'd accrued in two decades in this job. And here's the thing about those 42 minutes; it was meant to be sixty, but road works and heavy traffic meant I was running late. I'll forever wonder how I could have spent those 18 minutes...





 The sonic boom thunders through the carbonfibre super structure as the 355/25 R21 rear tyres slap over the expansion joint between the sections of concrete. Had I not been previously warned to expect a thunder clap within the cockpit, it'd have surely startled me into twitching at the wheel or touching the brakes. Forewarned, however, I continued holding the beautiful aluminium throttle pedal to the bulkhead, and kept a light touch on the leather and carbonfibre steering wheel. The Chiron merely shrugged off the expansion joint and continued hauling in the horizon at over 100 metres per second.

Even for someone who's driven lots of very fast cars, including the Veyron, it's difficult for me to find a frame of reference for the Chiron's speed. Conventional measurements are meaningless in a car with 1103kW and 1600Nm. With launch control engaged, the Chiron will breach 100km/h in under 2.5-seconds and I know of one European publication that recorded a 2.3-second run. The first 200km/h (not even a 50 per cent score on the Chiron's ultimate ability) is dispatched with disdain in 6.5 seconds. Many people's idea of a fast car would begin with the likes of a Volkswagen Golf GTI, and it's good for 0-100km/h in about 6.5sec. Up to 200km/h, the Chiron is accelerating at such a mind-scrambling rate that it's all you can do to process the stream of scenery pouring through the windscreen. The speedo needle swept through the first half of its arc and beyond 250km/h at top-dead centre. With the four-turbochargers delivering their full 1.85-bar head of steam, the speedo's accompanying digital numbers flickered in meaningless chunks of 15-20km/h.

There was no let up as the speed built towards 300km/h (something that takes just 13.6 seconds) but my mind finally caught up and began to comprehend and appreciate the acceleration. An Aston Martin Vanquish takes over 40 seconds to pass 300km/h, and very fast cars such as a Porsche 911 Turbo need 30 seconds. Something truly ballistic, think Ferrari 812 Superfast, takes around 24 seconds.

In an attempt to comprehend the scale of the Chiron's performance, consider that its 1103kW power peak is more than twice that of a Lamborghini Aventador S or three times the power of a BMW M4 GTS. The Bugatti's 1600Nm represents twice the torque - plus another 60Nm - of the ballistic McLaren 720S. But this is the craziest comparison of all - the Chiron has 221kW and 350Nm more than the Veyron Supersport, a car already capable of a mind-bending 431km/h. That's a Golf R on top of a Veyron.

My Chiron continued its rush, storming beyond 300km/h like most performance cars run to 150km/h. Thirty years ago, the Ferrari F40 became the first production car to exceed 200mph (322km/h), but the Chiron didn't even draw breath as it powered beyond that milestone. Remaining rock solid and tracking arrow straight, the Bugatti powered beyond my previous vmax PB of 341km/h (set 11 years ago in a fully wrung-out Lamborghini Murcielago LP640).

At just beyond an indicated 350km/h, the expansion joint exploded through the back of the car like I'd driven over a landmine. I did wonder if those in the still and calm air outside the Chiron registered the shockwave.

Even as the speedo's digital display tripped into the 370s, the digits were still skipping ahead in clusters of three and five km/h, while the analogue needle swept on in a smooth motion. I'm sure that, like all cars, the Chiron's accelerative fury is eventually reined in by the demands of drag, but there was a feeling of plenty more to come.

Finally, after a 30-second rush that is still buzzing through my veins a week later, the electronics said enough. One final glance at the speedo revealed that the digits had settled at an indicated 391km/h. Later interrogation

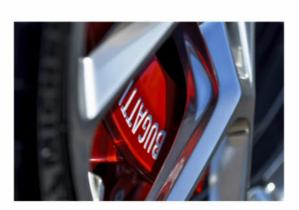


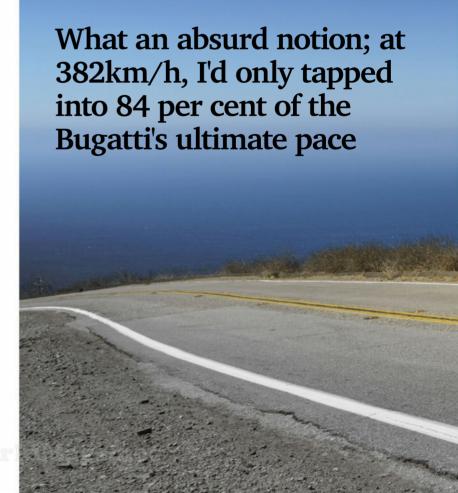


Thirty years ago, the Ferrari F40 became the first 200mph supercar, but the Chiron didn't even draw breath as it powered beyond that milestone









of the data-logger confirmed that the first stage of the electronic limiter was working and the true speed was 382.4km/h. That's 106 metres per second, but 38km/h short of the Bugatti's second-stage limiter (accessed via the 'speed' key that is inserted into the sill), and about 75km/h short of the Chiron's unfettered potential. What an absurd notion; at 382km/h, I'd only tapped into 84 per cent of the Bugatti's ultimate pace.

Merely lifting at this speed triggered a rate of deceleration similar to that of a firmly applied brake pedal at 100km/h in a regular car. But with the road running out and the Chiron eating it up in football-pitch mouthfuls, a firm brush and bury of the pedal poured heat into the carbon ceramic brakes. Both at high- and, surprisingly, low-speed, the pedal is easy to modulate, but given the speed of the car, I'd prefer a larger pedal than the round lozenge that is, thankfully, ideally located for left-foot braking – perhaps something that would accommodate both of my size 12s.

After my two vmax runs (the warm-up yielded a mere 366km/h) it occurred to me that the Chiron was as fuss-free at 350km/h as a 911 Turbo is at 200. To remove a task from my overloaded brain, I'd left the seven-speed dual-clutch in auto mode, but the assurance of the Bugatti was such that this was an unnecessary precaution. Fitness for purpose has never been more apt.

My time with the Chiron was so fleeting that I'm not going to claim this as a comprehensive road test. But I am confident that, beyond the Bugatti's headline speed, it's no mere bauble for the ultra rich. Speaking of which, Bugatti has sold more than 270 of the 500-unit production run at a minimum price of \$4.4 million. The example I drove featured a \$300K optional paint finish and a few other options that took the final price just beyond \$4.9m.

Aside from drumming road noise, the Chiron does slow and mundane as easy as a Golf, luxury better than any Bentley and drama on a scale that a Lamborghini cannot match. That it also combines engaging dynamics with its outrageous speed rounds out a complete skillset. That you could buy a dozen dream cars for the cost of the Bugatti is missing the point. Not only is the Chiron the world's fastest car, it's also the world's finest GT car. Think of it as a Ferrari 812 Superfast on EPO – it would make a sensational daily.

On a more typical backroad, and while not trying to trouble all 1103kW, the Chiron exhibits involving handling and surprisingly chatty steering. Far from being an overpowered 1995kg lump of energy, the Bugatti is at least as engaging as a Nissan GT-R. By the way, the quoted 1103kW, 1600Nm maximum outputs are actually the minimums. Bugatti says that these numbers are available at altitude and at temperatures of 50-degrees Celsius. At sea level or in cooler temperatures, the Chiron, like the Veyron before it, makes more than it says on the tin.

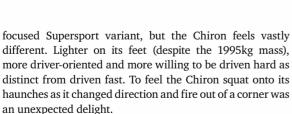
The steering is nicely weighted, with a natural response rate. It's no 911 GT3, but the Chiron is miles away from being a straight-line specialist. I only drove early examples of the Veyron rather than the later, more powerful and more

Left and below far left: Interior offers materials and craftsmanship beyond that of Rolls-Royce. Arcing spar and vast transmission tunnel divide cabin into cosy cockpit. Taylor could have done with a bigger brake pedal for his size 12s.









Cruising in the calm after the vmax storm, it's hard not to be even more impressed with how complete the Chiron feels. The cabin, dominated and divided by that great arcing spar of aluminium, is utterly captivating. The quality is in a realm of one and the Chiron even smells fast.

The two poles of the Chiron are making an entrance and clocking a number beyond comprehension. But even if you never chased a number, nor used it to arrive, you would still marvel at the abilities of this engineering wonder. You might also just own the finest car ever made.



Bugatti Chiron

Engine 7993cc W16, dohc, 64v, quadturbocharged

Power 1103kW @ 6700rpm Torque 1600Nm @ 2000-6000rpm Transmission Seven-speed dual-clutch, all-wheel drive

Weight 1995kg

Power-to-weight 553kW/tonne 0-100kmh 2.5sec (claimed) Top speed 420km/h (limited) Basic price c\$4.4million

evo rating ★★★★★

Top: Though road noise is much improved over the Veyron, it's the Chiron's only copybook blot. **Above:** Rear wing adjusts through multiple heights and angles of attack on beautifully crafted actuators.

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PRANCING FORCE

With nearly 600kW, 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...





TANDING 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 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 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 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, rearwheel-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 \$610,000 Superfast has yet more power (588kW, up from the F12's 544kW), yet more performance, and an even bigger V12 nestling beneath its long bonnet. It also has all sorts of new



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

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** Australia 047), 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 812 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, 718Nm 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 0-100km/h in 2.9sec (with launch control), 0-200km/h in a vaguely surreal 7.9sec and a top speed of 340km/h. Ferrari says the Superfast will get from 100km/h 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. 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 200km/h 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 more downforce but 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 reven 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 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. 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 modern Ferraris feature steering that's light and unusually fast in its response. 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 are naturally hardwired to drive a





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 588kW without any form of forced induction. **Top:** interior is hard to fault, though the super-fast steering takes a little while to acclimatise to.



Ferrari 812 Superfast

Engine 6496cc V12, dohc, 48v Power 588kW @ 8500rpm Torque 718Nm @ 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 20 x 10.0-inch front, 20 x 11.5-inch rear Tyres 275/35 ZR20 front, 315/35 ZR20 rear Weight 1630kg Power-to-weight 361kW/tonne 0-100km/h 2.9sec (claimed) Top speed 340km/h+ (claimed) Basic price \$610,000 On sale Now

evo rating ★★★★

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 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.

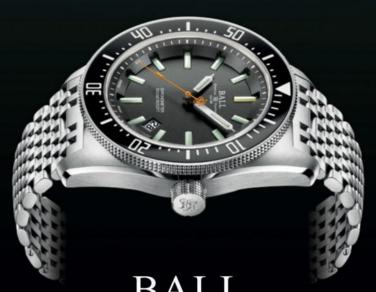
No, the only problem I have with the 812 is the way it looks. After the F12, which was simpler and more classically beautiful, it does seem a touch fussy and a bit too aerodynamically complex, especially along its flanks. But then maybe that's just me, because the rest of the 812 Superfast is 100 per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



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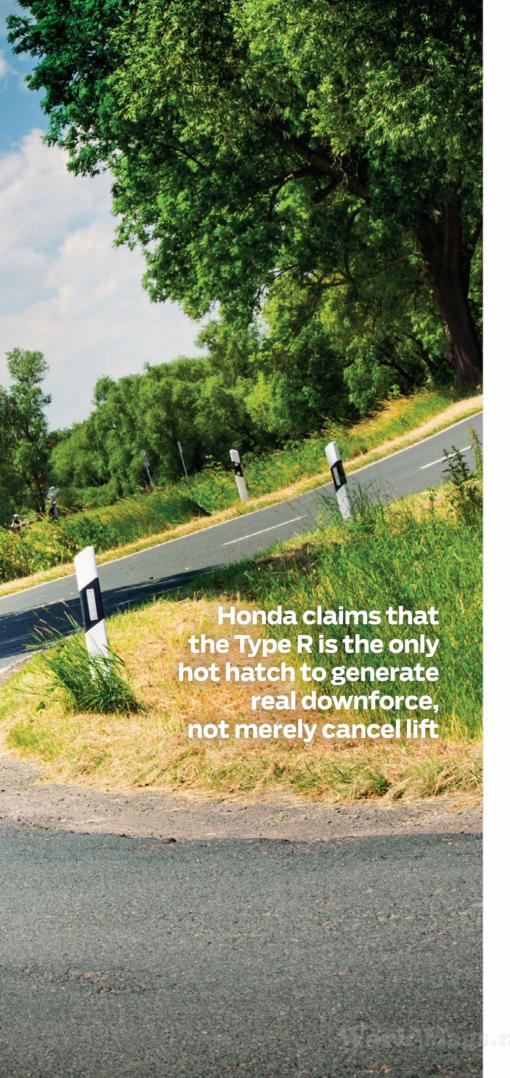
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T'S A MONDAY MORNING ON THE

German autobahn network, somewhere in the rural east. The new Honda Civic Type R is cruising at 240km/h, 30km/h 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 rocksolid - testimony to the considerable attention that's been paid to aerodynamic efficiency, to the extent that Honda claims that 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 a Subaru WRX from two decades ago.

And in a way, the comparison isn't so far-fetched. Why? Because at \$50,990 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; 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 useable' 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 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











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

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 7kW to take the total to a still feisty 235kW, with torque remaining at 400Nm. It needs to be noted, however, that Australian-delivered cars (due in October) will have 228kW. The increase in performance is mainly due to reducing exhaust back-pressure, but there's more to the story than that. One of our key criticisms of the old car, after its firm ride, was the driveability and refinement of the engine. Honda has started from scratch with its calibration, apparently

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.

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 gearbox 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 twinclutch 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, but it is a huge improvement on the old car and much more cohesive overall. Moreover, the Type R absolutely aces the contact points that really matter: the gorgeous red bucket seats, a fine driving position,



Honda Civic Type R

Engine 1996cc in-line 4-cyl, dohc, 16v, turbo Power 228kW @ 6500rpm

Torque 400Nm @ 2500-4500rpm Transmission Six-speed manual, frontwheel 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 165kW/tonne

0-100km/h 5.7sec (claimed) Top speed 272km/h (claimed) Basic price \$50,990

On sale October

evo rating ★★★★

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 2.0-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 redline, 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 redline, 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-tipped 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. Grip is rarely an issue given the wider, 245-section front tyres now used. They're on 20-inch 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 (it does have 400Nm, after all), 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 sedan 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 local 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 7kW increase over the old car -Australian cars will retain the 228kW output. Below: powerful Brembo brakes have been carried over.









THRUUL SBBKBRS

evo Australia has turned 50 - issues that is. And to celebrate we're counting down our 50 favourite cars that we've driven

LIKE THE UNIVERSE, EVO AUSTRALIA began with a bang. The very first issue contained some serious metal, including a Nissan GT-R versus Audi R8 V10 Plus all-wheeldrive slug fest and our epic 18,734km lap of Australia in AMG's awesome SLS Roadster. We've never looked back, pinning the throttle on millions of dollars worth of hypercars, supercars, hot hatches and super sedans. In fact, very few cars have escaped our clutches; the most obvious of which are the Ferrari LaFerrari and McLaren P1. But we hope that our Australian-exclusive speed run in the Bugatti Chiron (page 68) makes up for those two misses.

Speaking of the Bugatti, it fails to make this list not because we don't rate it (it is truly amazing and more than an over-powered, over-priced speed freak), but because we drove it late in the production of this issue and there was no time to include it in the list for voting. I wonder where it would have placed in the final wash up?

To save you reaching for the Casio Scientific, the average Top 50 car is powered by a 4.2-litre, eight-cylinder engine, with outputs of 377kW and 600Nm. It weighs 1634kg and will cost you \$378,000 (the total list cost is \$18,906,500, and the Chiron would have added nearly \$5million to that). Around 60 per cent of the list features forced induction of some description, and only 20 per cent of the list is available with a manual gearbox. Frankly, were a little surprised that the percentages aren't higher and lower, respectively.

What's missing? Beyond the Bugatti Chiron, LaFerrari and McLaren P1, where is the Pagani Huayra, Mercedes-AMG

GT R or Honda NSX? Unfortunately, no one from the evo Australia office has yet had the opportunity to get behind the wheel of these weapons – and believe us, we're working hard to fill in these blanks. Beyond that, there were some tough calls around several Porsches. You could easily make a case for various additional Boxsters, Caymans and 911s, but we had to draw a line somewhere.

Perhaps our most controversial calls centre around the inclusion of the Audi SQ7, Toyota 86 and Rolls-Royce Wraith. The Toyota might be a lightweight in terms of outputs, but put aside any thirst for power and the 86 engages and thrills on so many levels. At 2435kg, the Rolls-Royce is the heaviest car on the list and it's unlikely to appear on the fun side of a pit wall, but the memory of blasting down a backroad and having the big coupe roll into a fairly dramatic angle of oversteer won't soon be forgotten. But what of the Audi SQ7? It's the only diesel on the list and the only SUV, but it represents the best of a breed that nearly always shares garage space with one of the other cars on the list, and, therefore, we feel cannot be ignored.

The Top 50 was compiled thanks to an overwhelming reader response both via our web poll and email musings. Thanks to all who helped and, judging by the order at the pointy end, your taste, as ever, is impeccable. That doesn't mean everyone will agree with the list or its final order, let us know your thoughts at contact@evomag.com.au. Here's to the next 50 issues and the future of performance cars and the Thrill of Driving.



CAN AM X3 RS (ISSUE 042)

This year I've driven a Ferrari across the Stelvio Pass, tackled Targa Tasmania in a BMW M2 and unleashed Godzilla around Phillip Island. And I'd swap all of those experiences for just five more minutes in the Can Am Maverick on the fabulous Baja course.



47

MERCEDES-AMG S63 S (046)

Unlikely though they are to appear on the fun side of a pitwall anytime soon, the S63 Coupe and Cabriolet shouldn't be dismissed by keen drivers. Monster torque, top-shelf luxury and a surprisingly agile chassis all made the two-door S63 one of our favourites.



45

BMW M6 GRAN COUPE (004)

Quietly upgraded to 441kW (the same output as the off-tap M5 30 Jahre edition), the M6 Gran Coupe is soon to be pensioned off, but it is going out with a bang. Long wheelbase makes it more progressive than the sometimes spiky M5, and it looks the business. Proper sled.



49

BMW 7-SERIES (032)

Proving that the Thrill of Driving comes in all shapes and sizes, the current-generation BMW 7-Series (particularly the finely honed 750Li) is our favourite plus-sized sports sedan. Firing the 750Li down one of our sternest test roads had us laughing like drains at what it could do.



48

AUDI SQ7 (036)

After a month that included a Ferrari 488 GTB, Porsche Cayman GT4 and AMG GT3 race car, along with a 339km/h blast in an Audi R8 V10 Plus, you'd think that the SQ7 might be forgotten. But the 320kW SUV was the surprise of the month.



46

FERRARI CALIFORNIA T HS (023)

There's a bit of snobbery about the California among motoring journalists, but it's completely misguided. The current car looks good, goes very hard and is properly entertaining. No, it's not as exciting as a 488, but that's missing the point, isn't it?



44

AUDI TT RS (049)

With 294kW deployed through quattro all-wheel drive, the TT RS is claimed to accelerate to 100km/h in 3.7 seconds – that's as quick as a 997 GT2 could manage. In truth, the TT RS is even faster, and it's a cracking car on a twisty road or race track.



43

TOYOTA 86 (019)

With just 147kW, the 86 is swamped in a power race with just about everything else on this list, but it counters with delicate tactility of steering and brakes. The chassis is a peach and the whole car rewards smooth and positive inputs. A genuine driver's car.



» 42

VW GOLF GTI 40 YEARS (039)

Today's GTI 40 Years dwarfs the first GTI in every sense. Its engine makes 195kW (213kW during overboost) and 350Nm (380Nm on overboost) making the new car 141 per cent more powerful (163 on overboost). Its 250km/h top speed is 68km/h faster, too.



39

AUDI RS3 (046)

More than once I wondered whether you really need a faster car than the new RS3. Audi quotes a launch control-assisted 0-100km/h time of 4.1 seconds and an electronically limited top speed of 280km/h. And the speed is accompanied by a traditional five-cylinder aria.



41

BMW i8 (023)

The i8 is at its dynamic best when it's allowed to flow along a road and breathe with the surface. While the instant torque hit is at its most brutal punching the BMW out of tighter bends, the mid-range surge through moreopen corners is properly satisfying.



38

PORSCHE 911 CARRERA 2S (033)

Ultimately, the engine note isn't as serrated as that of the old naturally aspirated car, but only decades of exposure to 911s gives me the confidence to make that call. If you're new to 911s, you'll absolutely love the engine's soundtrack and belting performance.



37

BENTLEY CONTINENTAL GT SPEED (007)

Effortless fast is just about apt. Effing fast, more so. I last drove a Speed on an autobahn near Munich and on that occasion, the 460kW Continental owned the fast lane, breaching 300km/h with regularity and disdain. Its digital speedo twice indicated 333km/h.



40

PORSCHE PANAMERA TURBO (047)

Keep your right foot buried and the Panamera Turbo will dispatch 0-200km/h in 12.7 seconds. For those with an autobahn on their doorstep, top speed is quoted at 306km/h. Continue down that autobahn to the Nurburgring and the Turbo is capable of lapping in 7:38. See 1995kg kerb weight, drop jaw.



36

ROLLS-ROYCE WRAITH (019)

The Wraith might weigh 2360kg, but the 465kW twin-turbocharged V12 can propel the Rolls-Royce to improbable speeds in short amounts of time. I'll take to my grave the experience of pushing the Wraith's throttle pedal into the carpet and holding it there for 30 seconds.



MERCEDES-AMG E63 S (043)

Responsive, linear in its delivery and furiously powerful, the engine is a masterpiece. It endows the AMG with prodigious straight-line performance - perhaps more than any other super-sedan - and despite its use of a pair of turbochargers, the soundtrack is very evocative.



34

FERRARI FF (017)

Is there one car that can truly do it all? One car that scratches the itch or soothes the commute; one that transports four or entertains one. If one such car exists, Ferrari's 485kW 6.3-litre V12, four-seat, all-wheel-drive FF lays a strong claim to the title.



33

JAGUAR F-TYPE SVR (049)

The Jaguar is proud of its loud and announces itself at every brush of the throttle. The noise works is a 5.0-litre supercharged V8 that produces 423kW and 700Nm. If anything, that torque figure feels under-quoted and the Jaguar never feels anything less than ferociously fast.



32

MERCEDES SLS ROADSTER (001)

On the forecourt of Melbourne's Crown hotel, and after 17 days and 18.734km. I silence the awesome 6.2-litre V8 for the last time. My ears rings and my head swims with tiredness, a sense of achievement and genuine emotion. I've never felt so attached to a car. This car has soul and history.



31

BMW M2 (035)

While it's a thoroughly modern sports coupe, there's a raw honesty to the M2's drivetrain and dynamics that feels like it's from M division's back catalogue. It feels like an M car that you and I might build if we were let loose in BMW's parts bin.



30

BMW M3 COMPETITION PACK (038)

Much like that of the Bugatti Veyron, there's a threatening omnipotence to the engine note of the M3 Comp Pack. The fearsome potential is there for all to hear, and while it doesn't ebb and flow like that of an atmo engine, the noise is forceful and imbues the M3 with real character.



29

ASTON MARTIN DB11 (047)

Beyond the stirring delivery, the engine is a proper powerhouse with 447kW matched to a very stout 700Nm. And the sound is unmistakably Aston V12 - cultured at low revs, but with the hardness and clarity of diamond as the revs increase.



28

AUDI R8 LMS (024)

Through Stoner on the approach to Honda Hairpin, the throttle is wide open in fifth with hand-of-God downforce pressing the LMS into the tarmac. I drop three gears and 150km/h, the aero washes off and the Audi falls back into the mortal world of mechanical grip.



PORSCHE GROUP 4 REPLICA (014)

Though I'm usually a purist, that the Autohaus Hamilton Group 4 isn't 'real' or doesn't have a priceless race history attached doesn't detract from the experience. In fact, it does the opposite. Instead of treating it like a Faberge egg, you can get stuck in and drive it with purpose.



24

FORD FOCUS RS (033)

The RS's all-wheel-drive system is quite special. For one thing, it uses a couple of clutch packs in the rear drive unit for proper torque vectoring. We can take it as a sign of those Ford engineers being thoroughly likeable blokes that what they want is for the RS to powerslide.



22

MERCEDES-AMG C63 S COUPE (036)

The engine is a great example of turbocharging done well. The power delivery is linear, the throttle response crisp and the engine and exhaust notes are entertaining. What's more, the C63 is properly fast, with a top speed electronically limited to 290km/h.



26

BMW M5 30 JAHRE (020)

With its afterburners lit, I cannot overstate how crazily powerful and fast the M5 feels – the 700Nm feels like it's been under-called by at least 150Nm. I'd be staggered if there's not a temporary overboost function that endows the 30 Jahre with 460kW and 850Nm.



23

ASTON MARTIN VANOUISH (019)

The origami folds of the anorexic road are lined on one side with unforgiving rock faces and buckled Armco on the other. The Vanquish confounded my expectations by chomping into apex after apex, and bursting out of each corner on a howl of naturally aspirated urgency.



21

AUDI RS6 PERFORMANCE (042)

Such is the balance of performance and dynamics (and with only a mild acknowledgement of the 2025kg weight), that you can toss the 445kW, 750Nm twinturbocharged RS6 Performance down a twisty road with something akin to abandon.



25

MERCEDES-AMG 507 (005)

Maybe I'm living in the past, but 373kW and 610Nm seems like absurd amounts of power and torque for a compact sports sedan. After all, that's more power than a Ferrari F40, the original Lamborghini Diablo or Porsche's 996 911 GT2. The extra power is most noticeable above 5000rpm where the V8 lunges towards 7000rpm like a baritone Vtec.



20

ALFA ROMEO GIULIA OV (037)

Any worry that the stability control might have been masking something nasty is quickly banished after the very first slide. The rate of roll is easy and the steering feels natural, but the most impressive thing is the progressive way the bespoke Pirellis spin up and break traction.



PORSCHE 911 TURBO S (015)

Like all 911s, the Turbo S does more with its on-paper numbers than just about any other car on the planet, and when the numbers are huge to begin with, the scale of performance is hard to fathom. Three successive launches netted 0-100km/h in 2.85, 2.86 and 2.83 seconds.



17

MERCEDES-AMG GT3 (036)

Onto Sydney Motorsport Park's main straight near the top of third gear, the magnificent atmo 6.2-litre V8 engine unleashes a rock concert of noise and ingests fourth and fifth gear before taking a nibble out of sixth at around 260km/h.



16

McLAREN 540C (049)

Impressively for a twin-turbocharged unit, the McLaren V8 zings beyond 8000rpm, matching the rev ceiling of many naturally aspirated engines. However, even wound up to its most aggressive Track setting, the powertrain is potent but polite.



AUDI R8 V10 (039)

The memory of pulling 285km/h down Conrod or skating across Skyline at 200km/h will stay with me. My next Plus-sized adventure occurred late at night on an autobahn near Frankfurt where the heroic Audi powered beyond 300km/h on at least 50 occasions, twice rubbing the revlimiter at an indicated 339km/h.



18

MERCEDES-AMG GT S (019)

The uphill approach to the Corkscrew at Laguna Seca has the GT S nudging 200km/h. It's here that the power of the twinturbo 4.0-litre V8 really hits home. Despite fighting against the climb, the GT S is piling on pace at a rate that would make a Porsche 911 Turbo draw breath.



12

ASTON V12 VANTAGE S (015)

The V12 is alive with crackles and whoops, and its linear delivery imbues the whole car with a natural, organic feeling. With the incredibly linear performance from the engine and faithful feedback from the steering, you can lean heavily on the grip on corner exit. The Vantage clearly informs you of the approaching limits and you can choose to provoke it into oversteer.



LAMBORGHINI HURACAN LP-580-2 (037)

Get it understeering a touch on turn-in. That's the key, because it means that the car is poised and carrying just the right amount of speed. Then you open the throttle. It needs to be a sharp, precisely measured input. Then you need to throw the corrective lock at it. Then you're sliding...



LAMBORGHINI AVENTADOR S (047)

The Aventador S is now a proper driver's car and at Phillip Island proved to be one of the fastest and most exciting cars I've ever driven there. Scything through Stoner Corner at over 200km/h, with the rear tyres nudging into a few degrees of oversteer, highlighted the ability of the revised chassis.



BMW M3 CSL (038)

Despite spending the day in the company of the furiously fast M3 Competition Package, the CSL's performance isn't shown up. Sure, it requires a gear or two lower and at least another 1000rpm on the tacho, but its size and unflappable dynamic composure allow you to lean on it with confidence.



LOTUS EXIGE S (001)

Stick a number on the door and it'd look just like a threequarter scale Group C Le Mans racer. With its curved windscreen, big single wiper and impatient high-tensile fizz as it buzzes through traffic, the Exige S does feel genuinely special, like the mini-supercar Lotus is billing it as.



MERCEDES-AMG SLS BLACK SERIES (006)

The Black Series has all the grip, aero and dynamic balance of a GT3 RS, but with an extra 100kW and 200Nm. The V8 sounds epic from start-up to the 8000rpm limiter and the pops and bangs on downshifts are straight out of Le Mans. The 6.2-litre has an aural malevolence that is unmatched.



FERRARI 488 GTB (039)

Despite the dizzying speed of the 488 GTB, the chassis always feels calm and gives you time to make minor adjustments, even if the torque has overwhelmed the rear grip and you've got a mid-engined car tripping into oversteer. Never has such performance been so deployable.







NISSAN R32 SKYLINE GT-R (033)

This R32 might be 25 years old, but it offers a serious turn of speed. With just five ratios, the gearing is tall and the shift action isn't Porschelike, but by the time the engine is boosting in third, the GT-R is streaking down the road. The engine relishes the task of getting on top of the gearing and I can't help but run deep into fourth. The performance must have seemed completely alien when the R32 arrived in 1989.





PORSCHE 911 GT3 RS (034)

Very much like a race car, the RS needs speed and commitment to come alive. It will tolerate going slowly down a challenging road, but it feels like you're merely operating the car rather than driving it. There is so much front-end grip that the GT3 RS is starting to feel mid-engined in its behaviour. Like the Cayman GT4, the RS doesn't require the patient turn-in technique that two decades of driving 911s has taught me. Instead, and like a slick-shod race car, the RS can square off a corner with a brutal last-second turn in. It's a hell of a party trick to play on passengers.



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FERRARI 458 SPECIALE (013)

Never in my experience has a car so easily picked apart such a challenging section of tarmac. Though the 458 Speciale has barely broken a sweat, I'm breathless from what the Ferrari has just done to one of my favourite ribbons of Australian bitumen. The section of road is less than 10km in length, but it possesses every weapon to chink away at a car's armour. This dynamic crucible has spat out all previous challengers, but today, the road bowed before the car. In fact, I can't think of another road that wouldn't bend to the Speciale's incredible will.







PORSCHE CAYMAN GT4 (029)

Fifteen years of GT3-brilliance have heaped a weight of expectation on the GT4. Can the ultimate Cayman possibly live up to that expectation? I needn't have worried, as the 283kW, 420Nm GT4 answers with a heft of its own, and one that permeates all of the major controls. There's something deliciously analogue about the GT4, and this impression is magnified by the increasingly feel-free digital world in which we live.

There's no doubting the Cayman GT4's five-star credentials, nor its rightful place as a genuine Porsche Motorsport model.

by MATTHEW O'MALLEY

SIMPLY THE BEST

While we all hanker for the hightensile thrills of a GT3 RS or the upcoming GT2 RS scary monster, the new GTS might be the genuine sweet spot of the 911 range



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evo Australia has been called Porsche Monthly more times than I can count, that perception no doubt helped (or hindered) by the fact that the 911 has won 11 of the 19 evo Car of the Year titles. So, to bare our souls, we are fans of pretty much all

Porsche products. If you are okay with that read on, if not, turn to page 110. Sorry for being honest.

We have all gotten used to 911s being pretty darn good at well, pretty much everything they do. That they are brilliant drivers' cars is now a given. I'll argue that they are practical, too. Driving one around town is as simple as driving a Golf, getting in and out won't crush that well-ironed business shirt and the front boot swallows up more luggage than it has any right to, especially compared with all previous generations except the 997 and 996. No, you can't fit a set of clubs in the boot, but if you have any 911 you should be driving it rather than driving a three-wood anyway. And you can always chuck the clubs on the back seat, which is useful for pre-teen children or short hops for even shorter adults.

So, 911s are great to drive, they are practical and reliable and if you look in the back of this magazine, they are all five-star cars. But which one is the best?

The new 911 GTS that we have here may just be the sweet spot of 911s. It has all the brilliance of the 'regular' Carrera S turned up a notch, combined with a lot of the visual appeal of the GT3, just turned down a notch. It's also extremely comfortable in a way that defies belief, but I'll come back to this.

So, what do you get over a Carrera S?

First up, the engine; the 3.0-litre flat six is fitted with larger turbochargers and it now produces 331kW and 550Nm, those are a handy and noticeable 22kW and 50Nm more than the regular Carrera S. The transmission is a seven-speed dual-clutch automatic, with the option of rear or all-wheel-drive. A manual gearbox (also with seven speeds) is also available, but sadly we didn't get to experience it.

You get larger brakes, re-tuned sports suspension that sits the GTS a lot lower than a Carrera S. The GTS also features 305mm-wide rear boots mounted on black 20-inch, race-style centre-lock wheels that look the ducks and that you cannot stop staring at. If you curbed one you would cry and if you are prone to doing just that (curbing, not crying) order two spare wheels and keep them in your garage should disaster strike. One scratch and the visual appeal of the car is destroyed.

The bodywork changes are also rather extensive, with the GTS having an aggressively styled front bumper that Left: centre-lock 20-inch alloys look amazing and liquorice-thin rubber doesn't compromise ride quality. **Below:** tauter suspension, wider rubber and more power and torque make the GTS one very focused and fast 911. sits, to my eyes at least, somewhere between Carrera and GT3. The revised bar also aids cooling of the GTS' massive brakes, meaning that there is purpose behind the look. The rear of the car is also a noticeable 44mm wider.

The changes don't stop there. Inside, the cabin of the GTS gains a lot of carbonfibre and my favourite interior surface covering, Alcantara. It also adds sports seats and a smaller steering wheel that excludes the information and entertainment buttons from the Carrera S. Everything looks spot on and very focused, but not in an overly pared-back-to-basics way. The only fault with the interior, as with all 911s, is the lack of centre storage. But now I'm just being picky so that you don't think that you're reading Porsche Monthly.

All of the above equates to around \$50K worth of additions over the Carrera S, but for only \$26K more. On paper, the 'upsell' should already equal an 'upsold' to anyone looking at a Carrera S. But does it equal a \$26K better driving experience? In short, the answer is a firm yes.

Encouraging us to drive the new GTS on roads that would make driving a 1990s 964 a dancing-with-death experience is very telling of Porsche's confidence in the new GTS. We set off on damp and patchy roads that would better suit the launch of an Audi Allroad or Mercedes-Benz E-Class All-Terrain, but the most-focused

DOES THE GTS
DELIVER A \$26,000
BETTER DRIVING
EXPERIENCE?
THE ANSWER IS A
FIRM YES





THE GTS SPEC IS AVAILABLE ACROSS ALL 911 BODY STYLES AND IN RWD AND AWD, ALONG WITH MANUAL AND PDK

911 Carrera models didn't even hint at complaining. Grip, even in a rear-drive GTS, is encouraging to the point where you feed in more and more power, trusting the traction being developed. Add to that the ability of the suspension to not only soak up terrible surfaces, but to absorb them in a way that makes no sense considering the size of the rubber attached. Only the road noise generated by those tyres becomes noticeable, but in hindsight that's only because nothing else does.

The only thing the GTS seems to share with the 'lesser' Carrera S is steering feel. Directions appear to change a touch faster, but that could just be the smaller, more driver-focused steering wheel playing a mind trick.

Only the lack of noise from the twin-turbocharged engine, even with the exhaust in sports mode, hurts, for the sound emitted by the previous-generation GTS was up there as one of the best of all-time. At least Porsche has not done anything daft like introducing fake noise into the cabin. It is what it is I guess and over long-term ownership probably isn't a bad thing.

The GTS is available in three body styles; coupe, Cabriolet and Targa, and in rear- and all-wheel-drive for each variant. In overall appearance, we think that it's the intriguing-look of the born-again Targa takes top spot, but it's no surprise that the coupe remains the driver's choice, while the cabriolet is a fine cruiser and a better poser than the Targa. Sadly, the Targa's cross bar also creates far too much wind noise, even at relatively slow speeds.

Left: GTS coupe offers the right blend of aggressive and classic 911 subtlety. Below right: interior now features beautifully simple, smaller-diameter steering wheel. The GTS range kicks off at \$282,700 for a manual, rear-drive coupe, rising through various steps (accounting for the optional PDK, body style and all-wheel-drive chassis choices) to \$327,790 for a Targa 4 GTS PDK. Merely for reference (and perhaps just a little bit of devil's advocate), the 991.2 GT3 is soon to arrive at \$327,100 with a choice of manual or PDK.

What would I spec? It's a predicable choice, and without even trying it, I'd go for a coupe optioned with a manual gearbox. Why? I think I'd hold onto my GTS a lot longer than a regular owner would and for the following reason; Porsche says that the vast majority of customers option the PDK, not only for its operational brilliance both around town and track, but for resale. If you plan on upgrading when the next edition comes out that makes perfect sense.

But if you plan on holding onto your 911 GTS for longer, the rarity of a manual will keep its value higher in the longer term. Don't believe me? Jump onto an online classified site, look at any previous-gen 911 and tell me I'm wrong. While your GTS holds its value, you also get to experience something that is pure brilliance.

Whatever the case, the new 911 GTS is not only a better and smarter buy than a Carrera S, it also happens to be the best 911 on sale right now. ■



Porsche 911 GTS

Engine 2981cc flat-6cyl, dohc, 24v, twin-turbo

Power 331kW @ 6500rpm Torque 550Nm @ 2150-5000rpm Transmission Seven-speed dual-clutch, rear-wheel drive, limited-slip differential

Weight 1470kg
Power-to-weight 225kW/tonne
0-100km/h 3.7sec (claimed)
Top speed 310km/h (claimed)
Basic price \$290,090

evo rating ★★★★★









ABRIEF HISTORYOF POWER





What began in a tiny workshop has grown into a powerhouse with 1500 employees and annual sales of 100,000 units. We celebrate AMG's 50th anniversary

11,686kW. THAT'S THE TOTAL power figure of all AMG models on sale in Australia.

power figure of all AMG models on sale in Australia. Coupled to that outrageous power play is 22,140Nm. And these enormous numbers don't take into account the 750kW that the Formula One-powered Project One hypercar will add to the AMG range next year.

Tobias Moers, former chief engineer for AMG and now the company's Chairman of the Board of Management, outlines his brand's current position and future direction:

"Our strategic expansion of the product range has put us on course for success around the world. With more than 400 Performance Centres, we have also continued our expansion at the point of sales. The 63 series models still constitute our core model series. In addition, our sports car series, which was developed entirely in-house, is now available as a broad based family, to which we will add a four-door variant next year, once more demonstrating our competence as a sports car brand. We will further expand our broad product range with a new product line in the compact segment. In this way we have set the course for continued sustainable growth. It is up to us to not only celebrate the success story of Mercedes-AMG now, but to help shape the performance of the future during one of the most exciting periods of automotive history."

To celebrate these 50 years, we've cherry picked our favourite AMGs from this rich automotive tapestry.





Above: just four years after hanging out its shingle, AMG burst onto the world motorsport stage with second outright at the 1971 Spa 24-Hour. Left and top left: AMG is famous for its one-man, one-engine build philosophy.



RED SOW

WHEN FOUNDED IN 1967, AMG

was a two-man team operating out of a tiny workshop in a retired mill near Stuttgart. Hans-Werner Aufrecht and Erhard Melcher had gained experience in building racing engines for Mercedes-Benz, but when the company shut the doors on all motorsport activities, the pair were forced to go into business for themselves.

The firm was named using the first letters of the pair's surnames, along with the the G from the town they were from: Aufrecht and Melcher, Großaspach.

Given the noise that their creations would go on to generate, it was a quiet start for AMG, mainly working at the grassroots level of motorsport. The company's big break didn't come until 1971, when the newly developed 300 SEL 6.8 took a class win and second outright at the Spa 24-hour.

This long-wheelbase limousine was certainly the Goliath amongst a 60-strong field of tiny

Davids, and as it lined up on a grid littered with much lighter coupés, few would have put money on its podium finish a day later.

With Aufrecht and Melcher's mechanical $know\text{-}how, the \ original \ 6.3\text{-}litre \ V8 \ was \ up\text{-}sized$ to 6.8 litres, new pistons were fitted, camshafts were reprofiled, and cylinder heads were polished and ported with an end result of 320kW and 607Nm. The rest is history.

Above and below:

The Red Sow nickname, or Rote Sau in native German, was initially applied in a mocking fashion but is now a term of endearment.





HAMMER

THE OPPORTUNITY TO SIT ON THE

seat behind the big wheel and analogue dials of an AMG Hammer surely rates up there as one of the holy grails of motoring experiences. I never thought I'd get the chance of even seeing one, let alone being given the keys to drive one.

So what's it like to drive? Well the steering is cumbersome and the suspension softer than any car made today. This car is all about that 6.0-litre V8 engine. That's it. There are no setting options for engine, auto gearbox or suspension, and there is something very refreshing about that level of simplicity.

Back in the 1980s, the Hammer was famous for being faster than contemporary supercars such as the Ferrari Testarossa and Lamborghini Countach. By today's standards, however, it does not feel fast, but I assure you that it is. Perhaps the speed disconnection is caused by the interior that feels so obviously 1980s Mercedes-Benz. It is simply made for getting



Above and left:

available with a 5.6-litre V8 or optional 6.0-litre variant, the Hammer was built in sedan or very rare wide-body coupe body styles. It was faster than a Lamborghini Countach.

one from Dusseldorf boardroom to Munich home on a Friday evening on the autobahn at high speed and in comfort. The only thing missing was a massive Motorola brick phone bolted onto the centre console. And I'm sure that if I looked closer I would have found the old screw holes.

The Hammer is a rare beast that does not shout its existence and I'm in love with it

instantly. Following a yellow SLS Black Series, itself a rare beast, through a German village close was rather telling. The majority see (and hear) the SLS, but those in the know grabbed the guy next to them and pointed at the Hammer. It gets 'knowing' thumbs up that the SLS, even in Black Series form, will never experience.

Quite possibly the ultimate Q car.





JUMPING OUT OF AN SLS BLACK Series directly into anything else should feel like the Millennium Falcon when its coming out of hyperspace. Things are meant to slow down.

But I'm now seated in the CLK63 AMG Black Series. It's down on power to the SLS Black Series (but then again, most things are down on power compared to the hard-as-nails 464kW SLS Black) but surprisingly it's up in steering feel and directness. Significantly.



The CLK63 Black Series is a very tactile weapon. Its 6.2-litre naturally aspirated V8

Its 6.2-litre naturally aspirated V8 engine packs a massive 373kW punch, but it's the on-edge chassis that makes it fast. Like an idiot I find myself saying "bravo" aloud after the very first corner. An Italian word of appreciation said of a German car by an Australian at the Nurburgring. Why can't all cars make you feel like this?

The bold bodykit is there for purpose, feeding air and downforce – it's not for show but it's not awkward either. The aggressive front apron and wide arches make it look like a period DTM racer. Like the 190E, it's another link with what 'everyday' AMGs have now become.

To me, it's all about that steering, and I've been racking my brain ever since to think of a car that can better it. It's what makes the CLK63 AMG Black Series so incredible to drive.

The most entertaining car I've driven in 2017 is one made in 2007.



I'll get the predictable comparison with the original BMW M3 out of the way early. While on paper and on race tracks they were competitors, the road-going examples were very different cars. If you are expecting E30-thrills from the 190E you might be disappointed. But you shouldn't be, because the 190E 2.3 is special in its own right.

It looks subtle in a way that only 1980s and early '90s Mercs can – only its wheels, a blacked-out grille and mini-Hammer-style rear spoiler giving the game away. Park it next to a regular 190 and only a keen eye would spot the differences. Even the interior feels like a standard 190.

Subtle looks or not, the 190E is all about a big engine in a rather small car. The engine is smooth and powerful. It's linear and it can't be made to be anything but, especially with a four-speed automatic taking care of the torque delivery. You learn to drive with its delivery, too, rather than pointing and squirting like we are accustomed to today. There are no frantic movements with its steering, either. The suspension is firm for the era but likely softer than comfort setting in any modern equivalent. It feels like the perfect everyday performance car, even today.

More than anything though, and even more than the Hammer, it put AMG on the map. I'd even argue that the 190E 2.3 gives us the AMG we have today.



Above: 190E was almost unadorned, unlike the wild Evo examples (black car, top image). Left and main: CLK63 Black Series featured a thundering naturally aspirated 6.2-litre V8 and sharp chassis.



SL65 BLACK SERIES

THE SL65 BLACK SERIES TAKES

liberties with exaggeration, proportioning, macho posturing and quasi-DTM racer detailing that verge on, but stay just the right side of, caricature. The SL65 Black has the presence of a flame thrower in a ticker-tape factory.

It doesn't even look much like the car on which it's based. Apart from the grille, lights and doors, the SL bits have been completely subsumed by the mostly carbon Black Series bits, which add girth, attitude, price and exclusivity in unprecedented quantities but, via some clever re-engineering and ditching the folding Vario roof for a fixed one, cleave a handy 250kg from the kerb weight, too. It also boasts a completely re-worked chassis and a one-man, hand-built 6.0-litre twin-turbo V12 generating 493kW at 5400rpm and a capped torque output of 1000Nm between 2200 and 4200rpm (otherwise it would be a transmission-trashing 1200Nm plus).

AMG's engineers have plumped out the

track by 97mm at the front and 85mm at the rear to exploit the new spring links, camber struts, pull/push rods and weight-optimised aluminium wheel carriers developed in conjunction with German motorsport specialists KW.

The SL65 Black, despite its visual potency and turbo-massaged firepower, has a curiously calm aura, rather like the Nissan GT-R's, that carries an implied 'don't make me angry, you wouldn't like me when I'm angry' threat, but keeps it securely locked away until needed. The SL65 Black sprints from rest to 200km/h in just 11sec and, if it wasn't electronically limited to 320km/h, would top out at 354km/h.

Driving the SL65 Black at Laguna Seca certainly got the adrenalin pumping. The body control feels absolute and allows even the Corkscrew to be attacked with total commitment. With so much torque to play with, powerslides are a hoot too.



Above and main: with a 493kW twin-turbo 6.0-litre V12, the SL65 Black Series remains the most powerful Mercedes product fitted with an internal combustion engine.













RACING

TOURING CARS, DTM, GT3, WEC and Formula One are just some of the categories in which AMG has tasted the champagne of success. From bursting onto the world motorsport stage with the Red Sow's stunning second outright at the 1971 Spa 24-Hour race, AMG has conquered circuits around the globe, and even dabbled in the World Rally Championship.

DTM is considered the finest and toughest form of tin-top racing anywhere in the world and AMG has taken seven drivers' titles in the modern era that began in 2000, to go with nine constructors' championships. Four of those five drivers' titles were won by current AMG brand ambassador, Bernd Schneider. Schneider also twice finished third for Mercedes in the Deutsche Tourenwagen Meisterschaft series (the precursor to the current DTM format), before snaring that championship in its final year.

Schneider is also a regular at the Bathurst



12-Hour race, winning the event in 2013 driving an SLS AMG GT3.

Of course, for a German brand, the Holy Grail of motorsport is victory at the Nurburgring 24-Hour and it's fitting that in 2013, the SLS GT3 (AMG's first model developed entirely in house), gave Mercedes-Benz its maiden win at the Green Hell enduro. Any guess as to who one of the four winning drivers was? That's right, Mister DTM, Bernd Schneider added a Nurburgring 24-Hour trophy to his over-flowing cabinet.

Mercedes-AMG has now announced that it is withdrawing from DTM at the end of the 2018 season in favour of fielding a factory team in the booming Formula-E category.

Above: Just some of the legendary AMG-fettled racing cars from the brand's first 50 years. The company is about to embark on its next adventure, joining the Formula-E series for the 2019/2020 season.



SLS BLACK SERIES

THE ROAD THROUGH THE MOJAVE

Desert is dead straight for seven kilometres. Visibility is excellent and there's not even a speck on the horizon. It'd be rude not to. The Black Series jumps forward and blurs through the first four gears, and it's not until I pluck fifth at 230km/h that I draw breath. The mighty M159, however, keeps ingesting air and fuel at a dizzying rate. There's no let up through sixth and into seventh. Unlike the regular SLS, which drops into a soft spot as you grab seventh at 290km/h, the Black, with its shorter final drive, barely registers the taller cog.

The Black thunders across the desert at a velocity that would surely catch the attention of the tracking devices hidden behind the razor wire of nearby Edwards Air Force Base. Thankfully, no jets are scrambled and the other type of radar also misses out on a big catch.

The SLS doesn't let up. It's not until deep

into seventh gear that the mph speedo slows its three- and five-digit jumps to flick through the 190s in single-unit measures. Eventually, after around 40-seconds of ear-splitting throttle, the digits settle at 202mph, while the tacho reads 7700rpm. A smaller set of numbers in the bottom of the display does the conversion for me – 326 km/h.

Backing off at this speed unleashes a series of bangs and backfires that'd wake the dead. The Black Series coasts down to well below the 65mph speed limit while I wait for the photographer in the pursuing C63 Edition 507 to catch up.

After my impromptu need for speed near Edwards, I hunt out some bumpier back roads. To my surprise, the Black isn't the harshriding Le Mans escapee that its pumped-up body hints at. It's firm, yes, but left in the softest of the two settings, the suspension never assaults the kidneys and spine like an earlier R35 Nissan GT-R.



G636X6

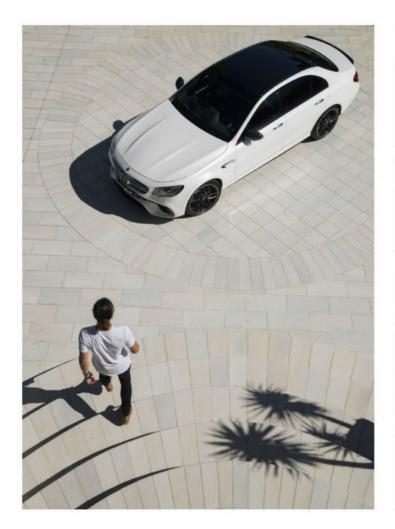
For proof of a German sense of humour, check out the above image. Originally conceived for the Australian Army, the military version of the 6x6 makes do with a 3.0-litre diesel engine, but the plusher civilian version gets AMG's twin-turbocharged 5.5-litre V8, that produces 400kW and 760Nm. These are handy outputs since the G63 6x6 tips the scales at a pretty hefty 3775kg. Power is transferred via a seven-speed automatic gearbox, and is nominally split 30:40:30 between the three axles.

A 0-100km/h of under 6sec is quoted, while there's a limited top speed of 160km/h – on whatever surface you choose to use it on. The regular four-wheeled G63 was a handful at its 210km/h limit, so one can only image that the lower limit is prudent.

Mercedes says that the 6x6 is likely to return around 19L/100, which would pose a slight problem if crossing a desert, so two fuel tanks totalling a 159-litre capacity are provided. Our brief blast through the desert confirmed both the speed and thirst of the 6x6, with the trip computer averaging over 40L/100km.

Since the car is designed to be used in the toughest off-road conditions, Mercedes has increased the standard G-wagen's ground clearance to an impressive 460mm and fitted huge, 37-inch tyres. The 6x6 obviously has a longer wheelbase than the standard car to accommodate the extra axle, drive shaft and differentials.









E63S

AS WE ENTER THE LATTER STAGES

of the decade, there are hot hatches that boast up to 280kW from heavily boosted engines, more 375kW sports cars than ever and, if you're not packing at least 430kW, you can forget the supercar classification for your new mid-engined wedge. But it's not just a power war, as rapid advancements in electronics mean that these outrageous outputs are deployable. The hatches can scamper to 100km/h in under four seconds, the sports cars are in the threes and many supercars are sneaking into the two-second bracket. In fact, modern cars are now so fast that the 0-100km/h benchmark is out of date and meaningless. If you really want to see who is the king of the jungle, it's better to examine the 0-200km/h times, or, ludicrously, even the 0-300km/h figure.

Against this back drop, however, the new AMG E63 S hits with an intensity that makes it stand out even among the 400kW crowd.



But as we discovered, it's far from a one-trick power pony. In fact, for a few short weeks, we rated it as the most complete AMG product in the company's storied history.

The launch of the hardcore AMG GT R (complete with its 7:10 lap of the Nürburgring) might have ended the E63's reign, but the Stuttgart super sedan has fired a mighty salvo at both Munich and Ingolstadt.

With 450kW and 850Nm, it's little surprise that the new E63 S is the most powerful E-Class ever. It stands as a monument to what defines a big AMG sedan in 2017 – turbo power, all-wheel drive and packed with class-leading driver assistance technologies – but, cleverly, it also remains true to the time-honoured values that made AMG the celebrated performance division it has become. Fast, capable and refined, then, but it's also capable of being just as wantonly excessive and brutally overpowered as any AMG that's gone before it.



GTR

THE GT R IS LOW, WIDE, ARTFULLY

swollen, artfully retro (obvious nod to the 300 SL racer that won the Panamericana road race in Mexico in 1952 at the front) and looks as if it eats small animals when it's not tearing chunks of distance out of the road ahead. Its signature Green Hell paint presumably alludes to the fact that it has lapped the Nürburgring in 7min 10sec, which, if not quite in Porsche 918 Spyder sub-7 territory, bests those other Dwayne Johnson-grade frontengined, rear-drive muscle cars, the Viper ACR and Chevrolet Corvette ZR1.

Such a feat is not achieved through muscle alone, although the GT R has plenty. There's an additional 55kW for the hand-built 4.0-litre V8 over the version in the not-exactly-underendowed GT S, bringing the total to 430kW. The detailed engine work, including revised turbos, reworked exhaust ports and a lighter flywheel, also promises an improved throttle response. In addition, the GT R is 15kg

lighter than the GT S, giving a very respectable 277kW per tonne power-to-weight ratio. Porsche's latest 911 GT3 manages 257kW per tonne. Mercedes claims 0-100km/h in 3.6sec, which is swift rather than shattering but don't get too hung up on that, this thing's mindwarpingly rapid.

All that power gets plenty of backup. Most interesting is four-wheel steering, which can alter the rear toe angle by 1.5 degrees. Then there's the active aero panel beneath the engine that automatically lowers 40mm at 120km/h (80km/h in Race mode), reducing front-axle lift. The redesigned suspension comes with wider tracks (by 46mm front, 57mm rear), and there's a nine-stage traction control that should appeal to skidding novices and connoisseurs alike who want to fully exploit the dynamics of the adjustable coilover spring and damper units and standard and sticky Michelin Pilot Sport Cup 2 tyres of immodest width.



Above and top: like the SLS before it, the GT family was developed entirely in-house at AMG. To the current line-up, AMG will add a four-door variant next year.



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 18-inch fitment of 225/45 – perform best in both objective tests and subjective feel, read on.

THE TYRES

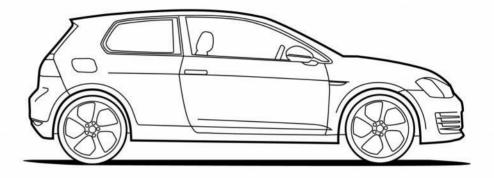
This year our chosen tyre is the 225/40 R18, the most popular 'UHP' – Ultra High Performance – size on the market. Nine well-known brands compete, including all the usual 'premium' suspects plus Falken, Hankook and Toyo. All nine have identical load (92) and speed (Y) ratings and range in weight from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

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 169kW plus 350Nm 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 Contridrom, 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.





Bridgestone Turanza T001 Evo (9.5kg)



Continental PremiumContact 6 (9.3kg)



Dunlop Sport Maxx RT2 (8.9kg)



Falken Azenis FK510 (10.1kg)



Goodyear Eagle F1 Asymmetric 3 (9.3kg)



Hankook Ventus S1 evo2 (9.9kg)



Michelin Pilot Sport 4 (9.7kg)



Pirelli P Zero PZ4 (9.4kg)



Toyo Proxes Sport (10.0kg)

WET HANDLING



SOAKED 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

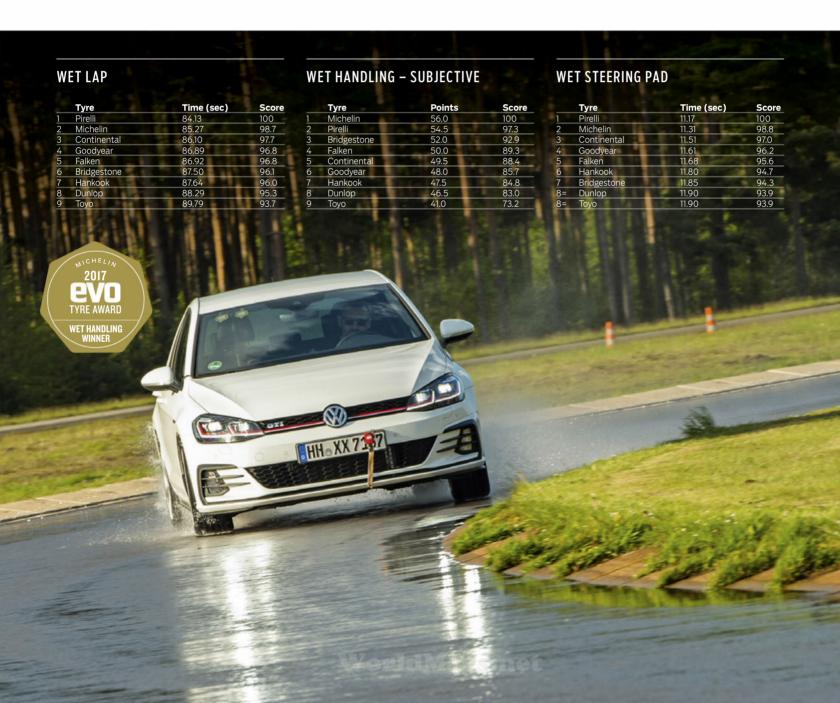
with it, turn-in was crisp and the rear would swing because the front was so hooked up. The Pirelli gave a less complete performance, feeling distinctly average in a straight line but great when turning. The rear was loose but the front found the mid-corner traction to pull the car out of corners like 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 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.





BRAKING AND ROLLING RESISTANCE

IF YOU'RE LOOKING FOR strong, consistent braking performance in the wet and the dry, Michelin and Continental deliver. The Michelin was the best slowing from 80km/h on sodden asphalt and second best from 100km/h 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 farther 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 30km/h.

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 0.4L/100km worse than the Dunlop's on a car that returned 9.5L/100km.

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

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

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
4 5 6	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



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 72.3km/h, 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 (km/h)	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	Tovo	68.9	95.3

CURVED AQUAPLANING

	Tyre	Lateral accel (m/s²)	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 145km/h 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.







DRY HANDLING - SUBJECTIVE

	Tyre	Points	Score
1	Michelin	41.0	100
2	Pirelli	39.0	95.1
2	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
Pirelli	52.26	100
Michelin	52.40	99.7
Dunlop	52.65	99.3
Hankook	52.85	98.9
Falken	52.93	98.7
Bridgestone	52.98	98.6
Goodyear	53.04	98.5
Toyo	53.04	98.5
Continental	53.11	98.4
	Pirelli Michelin Dunlop Hankook Falken Bridgestone Goodyear Toyo	Pirelli 52.26 Michelin 52.40 Dunlop 52.65 Hankook 52.85 Falken 52.93 Bridgestone 52.98 Goodyear 53.04 Toyo 53.04

ROAD ROUTE

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.



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

88.3

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.

HANKOOK VENTUS SI 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.

7 BRIDGESTONE Turanza tooi evo

92.2

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.

GOODYEAR EAGLE FI ASYMMETRIC 3

92.8

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.

5 FALKEN Azenis FK510

93.0

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.

4 DUNLOP SPORT MAXX RT2

93.9

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 noise suppression but dull steering. It was also the lightest tyre and delivered the lowest rolling resistance.

3 CONTINENTAL PREMIUMCONTACT 6

94.6

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.

PIRELLI P ZERO PZ4

95.3

Fastest of all around both the dry and wet handling circuits, where it showed strong turnin 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.



MICHELIN PILOT SPORT 4

97.9

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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THIS MONTH

BMW i8 // DS 3 PERFORMANCE // SEAT LEON ST CUPRA 300 4DRIVE // MINI JOHN COOPER WORKS CHALLENGE // FORD FOCUS ST ESTATE // VOLKSWAGEN GOLF GTI CLUBSPORT EDITION 40 // MAZDA MX-5 RF

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 it arrived with a rather arresting paint scheme. Most called it purple, BMW called it Twilight Purple Pearl and charged circa \$15,000 for what it calls 'post production applied special paint'. As suggested, the paint is applied to the removeable body panels after the completed i8 has left the factory. It was certainly striking and made a change from the usual dark greys or whites of the few i8s that you see on the road. Our i8 was also fitted with Carpo Carum grey leather at \$1500,

The BMW i8 had impressed us when it was new, but further exposure to it left us enthralled and nonplussed in equal measure

taking the total to just under \$320K from the Australian-market price of \$303.300.

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 modernday 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, 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 30km 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 100km 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 7.1L/100km and cost in the region of \$5 to charge overnight at home on a cheap energy tariff.

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 \$3200.

So, is the i8 an **evo** car? For the majority, probably not. Its focus isn't on pure performance, and the 170kW three-cylinder, 1.5-litre petrol engine is the weakest link,

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

Clockwise from left:

carbonfibre cabin trim; 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 heartheat"

partly due to it lacking character and partly because it needs the assistance of a fully charged battery and the 96kW 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)









Date acquired	November 2016
Duration of test	8 months
Total test km	20,130
Overall L/100km	7.1
Costs	c\$1100 rear tyres,
	c\$3200 windscreen
Basic price	\$303,300
Value todav	c\$230,000-250,000





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'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 lumbarsupport 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, underthigh 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 quartercentury-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 seats 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 km	10,907
Km this month	1826
Costs this month	\$0
L/100km this month	6.3



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 \$34K price tag? Not really. A Mini Cooper S costs around \$4K more, 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. Broadshouldered and with Alcantara







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



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 153kW 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 km	4061
Km this month	1664
Costs this month	\$0
L/100km this month	7.4

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. Okay, 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 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

July 2016
15,347
2565
\$0
8.7





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. Hoved 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 206kW it was able to latch onto the diffusered 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 wagon. And it doesn't have the VAQ electronically controlled limited-slip differential that enhances cornerexit traction because it has 4Drive, the familiar VAG Haldex-equipped all-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 wagon form, which is fine by me, because the wagon 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 206kW with a total of 221kW. SEAT claims 0-100km/h in 4.9sec

 Date acquired
 May 2017

 Total km
 5287

 Km this month
 3210

 Costs this month
 \$0

 L/100 this month
 8.3

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 wagon looks good in metallic white with those contrasting gloss black alloys, 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 206kW with a total of 221kW. SEAT claims 0-100km/h 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 redline 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 wagon's strengths?

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 1800km 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 economy, 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 184kW EcoBoost motor made for effortless progress, with plenty

of torque to quickly surge by slower-moving traffic before settling back to a Gendarme-friendly 145km/h cruise. On the more enjoyable country roads near Dijon-Prenois the ST came to life, but the gruff engine note seemed a bit 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 of 8.7L/100km over 1800km isn't too bad, though given most of that was at a steady cruise I'd have hoped to get closer to 8-flat.

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

Date acquired	October 2016
Total km	32,444
Km this month	4616
Costs this month	\$0
/100km this month	87



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







Plenty at evo saw this Golf as the sweet-spot of the GTI range, but one thought its longwinded 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: 169kW, 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-modernstandards 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: 195kW in first and second gears, 213kW 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 \$5650 more than the regular Mk7 GTI on which it was based and \$5500 more than the new 7.5 GTI (\$41,490 manual or \$43,990 for the seven-speed dual-clutch).

Sure enough, our \$46,990 Edition 40 proved faster, keener, more involving and more entertaining than the latest 169kW 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 (which was, of course, dropped for the Australian market lest you confuse a hot hatch with an HSV).

For me, however, it's a label that conjures up images of something super-focused (think Porsche 911 GT3 with Clubsport package fitted), 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 after popping out to do its business,

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



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 Volkswagen dealer.

Otherwise this Golf Edition 40 proved faultless. The running costs were pretty good, too. It averaged just over 9L/100km during its time with us, which is respectable given my commute contains lots of B-roads that are driven with enthusiasm. And fuel aside, we didn't spend a cent on it. When it left us with nearly 17,000km on the odometer it was still wearing its original tyres, the fronts with at least a couple of thousand kilometres left in them, the rears much more. It was also yet to have its first proper service – it had its free first inspection very early in its life with us.

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





October 2016
7 months
16,843
9.2
\$0
\$46,990
c\$45,000

THE KNOWLEDGE





SUPERMINIS / HOT HATCHES



OUR CHOICE

Volkswagen Golf R. A flagship Golf to get *really* excited about, the new R offers immense pace and a truly engaging driving experience in a compromise-free package with class and quality aplenty. Cake both possessed and consumed.



BEST OF THE REST

BMW's M135i feels like a bargain at \$70K, and it's rear-wheel drive too, of course. At less than half the money, the Ford Fiesta ST (left) is an absolute riot, as is the mental Mercedes A45 AMG. Benz's latest weapon packs 265kW from just 2.0 litres.

Car	Price	Engine cyl/cc	kW/rpm	Nm/rpm	Weight	kW/tonne	0-100km/h	Top speed	L/100km	evo rating	
Alfa Romeo Mito	\$25,200	4/1368	125/5500	250/2500	1145kg	109	7.5	219	6.0	+ Great MultiAir engine, impressive ride - Not as feisty as we hoped	***
Alfa Romeo Giulietta Cloverleaf	\$39,150	4/1742	173/5500	340/1900	1320kg	179	6.8	240	7.6	+ Shows signs of deep talentbut should be more exciting	***
Audi A1 1.4 TFSI Sport	\$42,500	4/1390	136/6200	250/2000	1190kg	155	7.0	227	5.9	+ Audi's Mini rival is an accomplished thing - But not a hugely fun one	***
Audi S3	\$59,900	4/1984	206/5100	380/1800	1455kg	142	4.9	250	6.9	+ Very fast, very effective, very err, quality - The VW Golf R is a touch more exciting	***
BMW 125i	\$46,100	4/1997	160/5000	310/1350	1345kg	119	6.4	250	6.6	+ Performance, price, running costs - Dull four-pot soundtrack	***
BMW M135i	\$68,400	6/2979	235/5800	450/1300	1425kg	165	5.1	250	8.0	+ Great fun, storming engine, playful chassis - Not a looker	***
Citroën DS3 Dsport	\$29,990	4/1598	115/6000	240/1400	1165kg	99	7.2	214	6.7	+ First fun Citroën in ages - Petrolheads might find it too 'designed'	***
Fiat 500 Abarth Esseesse	\$38,990	4/1368	118/5750	230/3000	1035kg	114	7.4	210	6.5	+ Tough but cute looks - Price buys lots of hotter hatches	***
Ford Fiesta ST	\$25,990	4/1596	134/6000	240/1600	1197kg	112	6.9	220	6.2		***
Ford Focus ST	\$38,290	4/1999	184/5500	360/1750	1362kg	135	6.4	248	-		***
Ford Focus RS500	'09-'11	5/2522	257/6500	460/2300	1467kg	175	5.9	262	-	+ Huge performance, highly capable fwd chassis - It could be the last RS	***
Mazda 3 MPS	\$39,490	4/2261	190/5500	380/3000	1385kg	137	6.5	250	9.9	+ Quick, eager and very good value - Not on the radar of most buyers	***
Mercedes-Benz A250	\$49,900	4/1991	155/5500	350/1200	1445kg	108	6.6	240	6.6	+ Mercedes builds a proper hot hatch - But denies it a manual gearbox	***
Mercedes-Benz A45 AMG	\$74,900	4/1991	265/6000	450/2250	1480kg	179	4.5	270	6.9	+ Fastest, most powerful hatch ever made - Very firm ride	***
Mini Cooper S	\$40,500	4/1598	135/5500	240/1600	1140kg	118	7.2	228	5.8	+ New engine, Mini quality - Lacks old car's direct front end	***
Mini John Cooper Works	\$49,200	4/1598	155/6000	280/2000	1130kg	137	6.5	238	6.9	+ A seriously rapid Mini - Occasionally just a little unruly	***
Mini John Cooper Works Coupe	\$52,600	4/1598	155/6000	280/2000	1165kg	133	6.5	240	7.1	+ The usual raucous Mini JCW experience - But with a questionable 'helmet' roof	***
Mini John Cooper Works GP	\$56,900	4/1598	160/6000	280/2000	1140kg	140	6.3	241	7.1	+ Brazenly hyperactive - Too much for some roads and some tastes.	***
Nissan Juke Nismo	n/a	4/1598	147/6000	250/2400	1293kg	114	7.8	216	6.9	+ More than the sum of its parts - Juke is coming to Oz, but maybe not the Nismo version	***
Peugeot 208 GTi	\$29,990	4/1598	147/5800	275/1700	1133kg	130	6.8	230	5.9	+ Supple suspension an playful chassis - Some ergonomic issues	***
Renaultsport Clio 200 Turbo	\$29,290	4/1618	147/6000	250/1750	1204kg	122	6.7	230	-	+ Faster, more refined, easier to drive - We miss the revvy atmo engine and manual 'box	***
Renaultsport Clio 200 Cup	'09-'13	4/1998	147/7100	215/5400	1281kg	115	7.2	227	8.2	+ The hot Clio at its best - Why the long face?	***
Renaultsport Mégane 265 Cup	\$42,640	4/1998	195/5500	360/3000	1375kg	142	6.0	250	8.2	+ Standard RS Mégane gets same power as Trophy; chassis still superb - Not a lot	***
Renaultsport Mégane 265 Trophee	\$47,140	4/1998	195/5500	360/3000	1375kg	142	6.0	250	8.2	+ Hot Mégane gets more power and fwd Ring record - A pricey upgrade	***
Skoda Fabia vRS	\$27,990	4/1390	132/6200	250/2000	1253kg	105	7.3	224	6.2	+ Well priced, well made, with great engine and DSG 'box - Dull steering	***
Skoda Octavia vRS	\$37,490	4/1998	147/5100	280/1700	1460kg	101	7.3	240	7.7	+ Drives like a GTI, a bit cheaper and more practical - Interior quality doesn't match VW	***
Suzuki Swift Sport	\$23,990	4/1586	100/6900	160/4400	1060kg	94	8.7	195	6.5	+ The Swift's still a great pocket rocket - But it's lost a little adjustability	***
VW Polo GTI	\$27,790	4/1390	132/6200	250/2000	1189kg	111	7.0	228	6.1	+ Modern-day Mkl Golf GTI gets twin-clutch DSG - It's a little bit bland ★★	***
VW Golf GTI (MkVII)	\$41,990	4/1984	162/4700	350/1500	1354kg	120	6.5	246	7.2	+ More refined and faster than the MkVI - Still doesn't thrill like a Megane	***
VW Golf GTI (MkVI)	'09-'13	4/1984	155/5300	280/1700	1360kg	114	6.9	238	7.7	+ Still a very accomplished hot hatch - Not as fun as a Megane RS	***
VW Golf GTI Edition 35	'12-'13	4/1984	173/5500	300/2200	1318kg	179	6.5	248	8.1	+ MkVI GTI gets the power it craves - Expensive compared to the standard car	***
VW Golf R (MkVI)	'10-'13	4/1984	188/6000	330/2500	1476kg	127	5.9	250	8.7	+ Great engine, tremendous pace and poise - High price, ACC only optional	***
VW Golf GTI (MkV)	'05-'09	4/1984	147/5100	280/1800	1336kg	110	6.7	233	-	+ Character and ability: the original GTI is back - Lacking firepower?	***
VW Golf R32 (MkV)	'06-'09	6/3189	184/6300	320/2500	1510kg	122	5.8	250	10.7	+ Traction's great and you'll love the soundtrack - We'd still have a GTI	***
VW Golf R32 (MkIV)	'02-'04	6/3189	177/6250	320/2800	1477kg	120	6.4	248	11.5	+ Charismatic - Boomy engine can be tiresome	***
VW Golf GTI 16v (MkII)	'88-'92	4/1781	100/6100	168/4600	1111kg	93	8.0	200	9.8	+ Arguably the best all-round Golf GTI ever- We'd be splitting hairs	***
VW Golf GTI (MkI)	'82-'84	4/1781	83/5800	148/3500	840kg	99	8.1	180	7.8	+ The car that started it all - Tricky to find an unmolested one	***
Volvo C30 T5 R-Design	'08-'12	5/2521	169/5000	320/1500	1469kg	113	6.7	240	8.7	+ Good-looking, desirable Volvo - Lacks edge of best hatches	***

SEDANS / WAGONS / 4X4S



OUR CHOICE

Mercedes-Benz E63 S. The facelifted E63 S looks better and, with a 430kW, 800Nm version of AMG's twin-turbo 5.5-litre V8, it goes even harder than before. It'll nail 100km/h in 4.2 seconds, cruise in comfort or tear up a mountain pass. And it sounds terrific. Best big sedan ever made.



BEST OF THE REST

Audi's RS6 Avant runs the E63 S close and is the practical choice. Twin-turbo 4.0-litre V8 has great throttle response and eightspeed auto is brilliant. Want something smaller? Try Merc's C63 sedan or wagon (and coupe). Last of the line 507 Edition models have arrived as a swansong to the atmo 6.2-litre V8.

Aston Martin Rapide	\$371,300	12/5935	350/6000	600/5000	1950kg	179	5.2	306	14.9	+ Performance, soundtrack, looks - Rear room is absurb. Brakes lack bite	****
Audi A4 2.0 TFSI quattro	\$61,700	4/1984	155/4300	350/1500	1530kg	101	6.5	246	6.8	+ A good match for its German foes - No longer any naturally aspirated options	****
Audi S4	\$120,400	6/2995	245/5500	440/2900	1705kg	144	5.0	250	8.1	+ Seriously rapid, sounds good - Too subtle for some, RS4 overshadows it	****
Audi RS4 Avant (Mk3)	\$149,400	8/4163	331/8250	430/4000	1795kg	184	4.6	250	10.7	+ Looks, value, quality, noise, balance - Harsh ride, unnatural steering	****
Audi RS4 (Mk2)	'06-'08	8/4163	309/7800	430/5500	1650kg	194	4.5	250	13.5	+ A leap on for fast Audis, superb engine - Busy under braking	****
Audi RS4 Avant (Mk2)	'07-'08	8/4163	309/7800	430/5500	1710kg	183	4.9	250	13.5	+ Screaming V8 - Everyone thinking you're married with kids	****
Audi RS4 (Mk1)	'00-'02	6/2671	280/6100	440/2500	1620kg	163	4.9	274	16.6	+ Effortless pace - Lacks finesse.	****
Audi RS2	'94-'95	5/2226	235/6500	410/3000	1595kg	150	5.0	262	15.7	+ Storming performance (thanks to Porsche) - Try finding one	****
Audi RS6	\$225,000	8/3993	412/5700	700/1750	1935kg	213	3.9	305	9.8	+ Sounds great, stunning acceleration and grip - Slightly inert steering	****
Audi RS6	'08-'10	10/4991	426/6250	650/1500	1985kg	218	4.5	250	13.9	+ Looks and drives better than estate version - M5 still looks tempting	****
Audi RS6 Avant	'08-'10	10/4991	427/6250	650/1500	2025kg	214	4.6	250	14.0	+ The world's most powerful wagon - Power isn't everything	****
Audi RS6 Avant	'02-'04	8/4172	331/5700	560/1950	1865kg	180	4.9	250	14.6	+ Amazing V8 rumble, point-to-point ability - Numb steering	****
Audi S6	\$168,900	8/3993	309/5000	550/1400	1885kg	164	4.6	250	9.6	+ The ultimate Q-car- A little too Q?	****
Audi S7	\$179,900	8/3993	309/5000	550/1400	1945kg	159	4.7	250	9.6	+ Looks and drives better than S6 it's based on - Costs a bomb more	****
Audi S8	n/a	8/3993	383/5800	650/1700	1975kg	194	4.2	250	10.2	+ Quicker and much more economical than before - But still underwhelming to drive	****
Audi SQ5	\$89,400	6/2967	230/3900	650/1450	1880kg	122	5.2	250	6.8	+ Performance, economy, comfort - Steering lacks feel	****

SEDANS / WAGONS / 4X4S Continued

Car	Price	Engine cyl/cc	kW/rpm	Nm/rpm	Weight	kW/tonne	0-100km/h	Top speed	L/100km	evo rating	
Bentley Continental Flying Spur	\$374,634	12/5998	460/6000	800/2000	2475kg	166	4.6	322	16.6	+ Performance, wonderful interior - Have you seen petrol prices?	****
Bentley Mulsanne	\$662,857	8/6752	377/4200	1020/1750	2585kg	146	5.3	296	16.9	+ Drives like a modern Bentley should - Shame it doesn't look like one too	****
BMW 328i	\$65,900	4/1997	180/5000	350/1250	1455kg 1520kg	124	5.9 5.5	210	6.3	+ New-age four-pot 328i is great all-rounder - We miss the six-cylinder soundtrack	****
BMW 335i BMW M3 (E90)	\$91,400 '08-'11	6/2979 8/3999	225/5800 309/8300	400/1500 400/3900	1605kg	148 193	5.5 4.9	250 250	7.2 12.4	+ Great engine, fine handling, good value - Steering confuses weight with feel + Every bit as good as the M3 coupe - No carbon roof	****
BMW M3 CRT (E90)	'11-'12	8/4361	331/8300	440/3750	1580kg	285	4.4	290	12.7	+ Sedan chassis + weight savings + GTS engine = best E90 M3 - Just 67 were made	****
BMW 335i M Sport (E90)	'05-'11	6/2979	225/5800	400/1500	1535kg	147	5.8	250	9.6	+ Stunning drivetrain, controlled chassis - Looks a bit steady	****
BMW 528i	\$98,200	4/1997	180/5000	350/1250	1610kg	112	6.3	250	6.8	+ Four-pot 528 is downsizing near its best - You'll miss the straight-six sound effects	****
BMW 535i	\$115,600	6/2979	225/5800	400/1200	1700kg	132	5.9	250	8.4	+ New 5-series impresses But only with all the chassis options ticked	***
BMW M5 (F10M)	\$229,145	8/4395	423/6000	680/1500	1870kg	220	4.4	250	9.9	+ Twin-turbocharging suits all-new M5 well - Can feel heavy at times	****
BMW M5 (E60)	'04-'10	10/4999	373/7750	520/6100	1755kg	289	4.7	250	14.8	+ Screaming V10, great chassis - SMG gearbox feels old-tech	****
BMW M5 (E39)	'99-'03	8/4941	294/6600	500/3800	1795kg	223	5.5	250	13.9	+ Magnificent V8-engined super sedan- We'd be nit-picking	****
BMW M5 (E34)	'92-'96	6/3795	250/6900	400/4750	1653kg	209	6.1	250	16.5	+ The Godfather of super sedans - The family can come too	****
BMW M5 (E28)	'86-'88	6/3453	210/6500	340/4500	1431kg	200	6.1	251	7.5	+ Look what it started - Understated looks	****
BMW X5 M50d BMW X6 xDrive50i	\$147,000 \$150,400	6/2993 8/4395	280/4000 300/5500	740/2000 600/1750	2190kg 2190kg	128	5.4 5.4	250 250	12.5	+ Triple turbo has heaps of shove - Do you really need that in an SUV? + Stunningly good to drive - Will you want to be seen arriving?	****
RMW X6M	\$190,900	8/4395	408/6000	680/1500	2305kg	177	4.7	250	13.9	+ Fast and with physics-defying handling - But it definitely lacks the M factor	****
Chrysler 300C SRT8 Core	\$56,000	8/6410	347/6100	631/4150	1983kg	175	4.8	250	13.0	+ Stripper model offers incredible value - Is it too bare?	****
Chrysler 300C SRT8	\$66,000	8/6410	347/6100	631/4150	1983kg	175	4.8	250	13.0	+ Refined and very fast - Still not a proper sports sedan	****
Ford Mondeo 2.0 Eco Boost Titanium	\$44,990	4/1999	149/6000	300/1750	1581kg	94	7.6	238	8.0	+ Terrific chassis, sweet engine - Interior feels dated next to Mazda 6	****
Ford Falcon XR6T	\$46,235	6/3983	270/5250	533/2000	1694kg	159	5.0	250	12.0	+ Performance car bargain - Its 2016 demise weighs heavily on buyer's minds	****
FPV F6	\$64,390	6/3983	310/5500	565/1950	1805kg	172	4.9	250	12.3	+ Jet-like thrust from turbo six - Chassis barely contains the power	****
FPV GT	\$70,790	8/4951	335/5750	570/2200	1822kg	184	4.9	250	13.6	+ Fabulous supercharged V8 - Styling isn't subtle	****
Holden Commodore SSV	\$45,490	8/5967	270/5600	530/4400	1745kg	155	5.5	250	11.5	+ Great value and strong performance - Generic styling	****
HSV Clubsport	\$60,990	8/6162	317/6000	550/4600	1792kg	177	5.0	250	-	+ Carry over engine, imporved refinement - Lacks equipment next to SSV	****
HSV Clubsport R8 SV	\$76,285	8/6162	340/6000	570/4600	1764kg	193	4.9	250	-	+ SV engine option and lightweight wheels - Styling isn't subtle	****
HSVGTS	\$92,990	8/6162	430/5250	740/200	1800kg	239	4.4	250	-	+ Monster grunt from supercharged Chev LSA V8 - Supercar scare, anyone?	****
Infiniti M37S	\$97,900	6/3696	235/7000	360/5200	1765kg	133	6.2	250	10.2	+ Stands out from the crowd - Not as involving as some rivals	****
Jaguar XF 3.0 V6 Supercharged	\$95,295	6/2995	250/6500	450/3500	1695kg	147	5.9	250	9.8	+ Fast, comfortable, refined - Bland engine, poor economy compared to diesel V6	***
Jaguar XFR	\$189,545	8/5000	346/6000	575/2000	1800kg	192	4.9	250	12.2	+ Brilliant blend of pace and refinement - Doesn't sound as special as it is	****
Jaguar XFR-S Jaguar XJ Supersport	\$222,545 \$319,645	8/5000 8/5000	404/6500 375/6000	680/2500 625/2500	1912kg 1795kg	211 209	4.6 4.9	300 250	9.6	+ Strong engine, superb auto gearbox, supple susension - Styling is a bit overt	****
Lamborghini LM002	'86-'89	12/5167	335/6800	500/4500	2700kg	124	7.8	210	9.0	+ Superb handling, monster performance - Opinion-dividing looks + Craziest 4x4 ever, Countach V12 - Craziest 4x4 ever	****
Lexus IS-F	\$126,300	8/4969	311/6600	505/5200	1714kg	181	4.7	270	11.4	+ Shockingly good Lexus - The M3's available as a (second hand) four-door too	****
Maserati Quattroporte S	\$250,000	8/4691	316/7000	490/4750	1990kg	157	5.4	280	15.7	+ Finally, a QP with more power - Grille is a bit Hannibal Lecter	****
Maserati O'porte Sport GTS	\$298,800	8/4691	331/7000	510/4750	1990kg	166	5.0	287	15.7	+ The most stylish sedan in the world - Slightly wooden brakes, unforgiving ride	****
Mercedes-Benz C63 AMG	\$154,900	8/6208	336/6800	600/5000	1730kg	194	4.4	250	12.0	+ Monstrous pace and extremely engaging - M3's just a little better	****
Mercedes-Benz C63 AMG Edition 507	\$169,407	8/6208	373/6800	610/5200	1730kg	216	4.2	280	12.0	+ Harder-edged and faster than regular C63 - Rear suspension a touch firm	****
Mercedes-Benz C55 AMG	'04-'08	8/5439	269/5750	510/4000	1635kg	164	5.2	250	11.9	+ Furiously fast, commendably discreet - Overshadowed by M3 and RS4	****
Mercedes-Benz E63 AMG S	\$249,900	8/5461	430/5550	800/1750	1845kg	233	4.2	250	10.0	+ Engine is a monster but chassis is a match for it - Seats could be more supportive	****
Mercedes-Benz E63 AMG	'06-'09	8/6208	378/6800	630/5200	1840kg	280	4.5	250	14.3	+ Brilliant engine, indulgent chassis - Vague steering, speed limits	****
Mercedes-Benz E55 AMG	'03-'06	8/5439	350/6100	700/2650	1835kg	271	4.7	250	12.9	+ M5-humbling grunt, cosseting ride - Speed limits	****
Mercedes-Benz E55 AMG	'98-'02	8/5439	260/5500	530/3000	1642kg	219	5.7	250	12.1	+ Dragster disguised as a limo - Tyre bills	****
Mercedes-Benz S63 AMG	\$392,400	8/5461	400/5500	800/2000	2120kg	192	4.5	250 250	10.6 14.3	+ Massive torque, massively reduced emissions - Massive car	****
Mercedes-Benz S65 AMG Mercedes-Benz CLS63 AMG	\$498,700 \$263,000	12/5980 8/5461	450/4750 386/5250	1000/2000 700/1700	2260kg 1870kg	203 210	4.4	250	10.0	+ God's own supersedan - Unholy price and thirst + Monster performance - Not as desirable as a (more expensive) Bentley or Aston	****
Mercedes-Benz ML63 AMG	\$179,400	8/5461	386/5250	700/1700	2345kg	232	4.4	250	11.8	+ Great engine, surprisingly good dynamics - \$180K almost buys a Boxster and an ML350	****
Mercedes-Benz G63 AMG	\$216,730	8/5461	400/5500	760/2000	2475kg	220	5.4	210	13.8	+ It exists; epic soundtrack - Ancient chassis, silly price	****
Mercedes-Benz G55 AMG	'04-'12	8/5439	350/6100	700/2750	2580kg	190	5.5	210	15.9	+ Thuggishness, anti-style statement - It's a bit silly	****
Mitsubishi Evo X	\$56,990	4/1998	217/6500	407/3500	1590kg	185	4.7	250	10.8	+ Evo gets twin-clutch transmission - Not as exciting as it used to be	****
Mitsubishi Evo VI Mäkinen Edition	'00-'01	4/1997	206/6500	373/2750	1365kg	205	5.0	241	-	+ Our favourite Evo - Subtle it is not	****
Porsche Panamera S	\$287,100	8/4806	294/6500	500/3500	1770kg	226	5.6	285	12.5	+ Great cabin and typically fine Porsche chassis - Only a mother could love its looks	****
Porsche Panamera GTS	\$318,300	8/4806	316/6700	520/3500	1920kg	228	4.5	288	10.7	+ Sharper chassis; more urgent and vocal V8 - A BMW M5 is \$90K less	****
Porsche Panamera Turbo	\$382,400	8/4806	368/6000	700/2250	1970kg	254	4.2	303	11.5	+ Fast, refined and dynamically sound - It still leaves us cold	****
Porsche Panamera Turbo S	\$443,600	8/4806	405/6000	800/2250	1995kg	276	3.8	306	11.5	+ Pace, excellent ergonomics - Steering feel, ride	****
Porsche Cayenne GTS	\$150,400	8/4806	309/6500	515/3500	2085kg	202	5.7	261	10.7	+ Dynamically the best SUV on sale - At two tons, it's still no sports car	****
Porsche Cayenne Turbo	\$222,100	8/4806	368/6000	700/2250	2170kg	231	4.7	278	11.5	+ Greener, faster, better - Odd rear styling, numb steering	****
Range Rover Evoque Coupe Si4	\$61,395	4/1999	177/5500	340/1750	1670kg	144	7.6	217	8.7	+ Striking looks, sporting dynamics - Hefty price, and petrol version is auto-only	****
Range Rover Sport V8 Supercharged Range Rover SDV8	\$161,000	8/5000 8/4367	375/6000 250/3500	625/2000 700/1750	2590kg 2360kg	200 144	6.2	225 217	14.9 8.7	+ Thumpingly fast and hugely comfortable - It's no Cayenne in the corners + Lighter, more capable, even more luxurious - Diesel V6 model feels more alert	****
Range Rover V8 Supercharged	n/a '09-'12	8/5000	375/6000	625/2000	2300kg	189	5.4	225	14.9	+ Fast, comfortable, luxurious - Big, heavy, thirsty	****
Rolls-Royce Ghost	\$645,000	12/6592	420/5250	780/1500	2435kg	235	4,9	250	13.6	+ More sporting, more affordable Rolls-Royce - But it still costs \$650K	****
Rolls-Royce Phantom	\$855,000	12/6749	338/5350	720/3500	2650kg	181	5.9	240	14.8	+ Rolls reinvented for the 21st Century - The roads are barely big enough	****
Subaru WRX STI	\$59,990	4/2457	221/6000	407/4000	1515kg	200	5.2	255	10.5	+ Still a point-to-point weapon - Merc's A45 AMG is close on price	****
Subaru Impreza 22B	'98-'99	4/2212	206/6000	363/3200	1270kg	220	5.3	248	11.2	+ On paper, the ultimate - On the road, too uncompromising	****
Volvo S60 Polestar	\$99,950	6/2953	257/5700	500/2800	1684kg	153	4.9	250	10.2	+ Capable of very swift, smooth progress - Could be a bit more fun	****



PORSCHE 911 GT3 997.2

With a 3.8-litre flat six known as The Masterpiece, the 997.2 promised something special. Here's what Richard Meaden thought

The GT3 is a weapon. Completely new or thoroughly revised in every detail save the crankcase, the new engine is known within Porsche's Motorsport department as 'The Masterpiece', so it's no surprise that its performance claims are outrageous. You'll

blast 0-100km/h in 4.3 seconds, 0-160km/h in 8.7sec and flat-out, the GT3 is good for 310km/h.

On tight, narrow, dusty roads, the GT3 simply flows. And grips. But it's not the sheer grip and composure that defines the car's character; it's the way it engages and demands your concentration

that is truly spell binding. Compared to both its immediate, first-generation 997

predecessor and especially the 996 original, this latest GT3 might be a tad more civilised but the new model is still the Porsche 911 of choice for genuine driving enthusiasts.



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OUR CHOICE

Audi R8 Spyder. The Spyder boasts supercar looks, presence and performance, yet you really could drive one every day. And while the V10-engined car makes the more spine-tingling noise, the lighter and even more agile V8 version gets our vote.



BEST OF THE REST

The mk3 Porsche Boxster S is a brilliant all-rounder, while the Lotus Exige S Roadster counters with a more focused driving experience. Jaguar's F-type also impresses in both V6 S (left) and V8 S forms. Mazda's MX-5 is best for budget rear-drive fun, but for the ultimate thrills, get a Caterham 620R or Ariel Atom.

Car	Price	Engine cyl/cc	kW/rpm	Nm/rpm	Weight	kW/tonne	0-100km/h	Top speed	L/100km	evo rating	
Aston Martin V8 Vantage Roadster	\$260,000	8/4735	313/7000	470/5750	1710kg	183	4.9	290	13.8	+ Sportiest, coolest drop-top Aston in years - Lacks real teeth	****
Aston Martin Vantage S Roadster	\$280,600	8/4735	321/7300	490/5000	1690kg	190	4.6	305	12.9	+ Sounds amazing, looks even better - Still not the best drop-top in its class	****
Aston Martin V12 Vantage Roadster	\$431,561	12/5935	380/6500	570/5750	1760kg	216	4.5	306	16.4	+ As good as the coupe, with amplified V12 rumble - Just a smidgen shakier	****
Aston Martin DB9 Volante	\$380,500	12/5935	380/6500	620/5500	1815kg	210	4.6	295	14.3	+ Consummate cruiser and capable when pushed - Roof-up wind noise	****
Aston Martin DBS Volante	n/a	12/5935	380/6500	570/5750	1810kg	210	4.3	305	15.5	+ A feelgood car par excellence - It's a bit of a heavyweight	****
Audi TTS Roadster	\$102.800	4/1984	200/6000	350/2500	1455kg	187	5.6	250	8.2	+ Effortlessly guick - Long-term appeal open to guestion; not cheap either	****
Audi TT RS Roadster	n/a	5/2480	265/5400	465/1650	1510kg	225	4.4	280	9.1	+ Terrific engineis the best thing about it	***
Audi S5 Cabriolet	\$146,000	6/2995	245/5500	440/2900	1875kg	178	5.4	250	8.5	+ Gets the S4's trick supercharged engine - Bordering on dull	***
Audi RS5 Cabriolet	n/a	8/4163	331/8250	430/4000	1920kg	235	4.9	250	10.7	+ Pace, looks, interior, naturally aspirated V8 - Not the last word in fun or involvement	***
Audi R8 Spyder V8	\$308,400	8/4163	316/7900	430/4500	1660kg	259	4.8	300	14.4	+ Dynamically outstanding, sounds terrific - V10 sounds even better	****
Audi R8 Spyder V10	\$395,800	10/5204	386/8000	530/6500	1720kg	183	3.8	311	14.9	+ Looks and sounds sensational - It's the most expensive Audi ever	****
Bentley Continental GTC V8	\$449,500	8/3933	373/6000	660/1700	2470kg	151	5.0	301	10.9	+ Still arguably the world's best topless GT - Still no sports car	****
BMW Z4 sDrive 20i (Mk2)	\$79.900	4/1997	135/5000	270/1250	1470kg	92	6.9	232	6.8	+ The Z4 has grown upand got fat	****
BMW Z4 sDrive 35i (Mk2)	\$119,900	6/2979	250/5900	500/1500	1505kg	166	4.8	250	9.0	+ As above, with more power - Not as much fun as it used to be	****
BMW Z4 M Roadster	'06-'09	6/3246	252/7900	365/4900	1410kg	178	5.0	250	12.1	+ Exhilarating and characterful, that engine - Stiff suspension	****
BMW M Roadster	'98-'02	6/3246	236/7400	350/3250	1375kg	171	5.4	250	11.1	+ Fresh-air M3, that motor, hunky looks - M Coupe drives better	****
BMW 335i	\$112,900	6/2979	225/5800	500/1300	1735kg	130	5.8	250	8.8	+ Looks good, great to drive, fantastic engine - A bit shaky	***
BMW M3 Convertible (E93)	\$173,450	8/3999	309/8300	400/3900	1810kg	171	5.3	250	12.7	+ M DCT transmission, pace, slick roof - Extra weight blunts the edge	***
BMW Z8	'00-'03	8/4941	294/6600	500/3800	1585kg	185	4.7	250	14.5	+ M5-powered super-sportster - M5's more fun to drive	***
Caterham Seven Classic	n/a	4/1397	78/6000	129/5000	540kg	144	6.8	177	-	+ The Caterham experience starts here - It's pretty raw	****
Caternam Seven Roadsport SV 120	\$69.990	4/1596	85/6000	155/4150	675kg	126	6.0	190	6.2		****
Caternam Seven Roadsport SV 175	\$84,990	4/1999	127/7200	177/6000	675kg	188	4.9	208	8.2	+ New Ford-engined model is just great - Bigger drivers need SV model + The Caterham for everyday use - Loses intensity of R300	****
Caternam Seven CSR 175	\$84,990 \$89.990	4/1999	127/7200	177/6000	700kg	181	5.0	208	8.2	+ Focused dynamics, more than enough performance - The usual Caterham downsides	****
Caterham Seven Supersport		4/1595	104/6900	163/5790		200	4.9	193	- 0.2		****
	n/a	4/1999	134/7300	194/6100	520kg		4.9	209		+ One of the best Caterhams - You can build it yourself	
Caterham Seven Supersport R	n/a				535kg	250			-	+ The best road-and-track Seven yet - Impractical, noisy, uncomfortable	****
Caterham Seven 485	\$108,990	4/1999	177/8500	206/6300	675kg	262	3.4 3.2	240	7.7	+ Hits 100km/h in 3.4sec and feels even faster - Will shock those coming out of a Boxster	****
Caterham Seven CSR 260 Superlight	n/a	4/2261	191/7500	271/6200	565kg	338		250	- 10.5	+ Brilliant for high days, holidays and trackdays - Wet Wednesdays	****
Ferrari California T	\$409,888	8/3855	412/7500	755/4750	1729kg	238	3.6	315	10.5	+ A brilliant GT with an impressive turbo engine - doesn't engage like other Ferraris	****
Jaguar F-Type V6	\$138,645	6/2995	250/6500	450/3500	1597kg	157	5.3	260	9.0	+ Supercharged V6 sounds great - lots of expensive options	****
Jaguar F-Type V6 S	\$171,045	6/2995	280/6500	460/3500	1614kg	173	4.9	275	9.1	+ The sweet spot of the F-Type range - most supercars have more boot space	****
Jaguar F-Type V8 S	\$201,945	8/5000	364/6500	625/2500	1665kg	219	4.3	300	11.1	+ V8 punches hard but chassis doesn't sparkle - Starting to get pricey	****
Jaguar XK 5.0	\$213,000	8/5000	283/6500	515/3500	1621kg	175	5.6	250	11.2	+ Basic XK gets extra powerbut loses some of its GT refinement	****
Jaguar XKR	\$233,000	8/5000	375/6000	625/2500	1725kg	217	4.8	250	12.3	+ Gains Jag's fantastic new V8 - Loses sporting ground to its main foes	****
Jaguar XKR-S	\$299,000	8/5000	404/6000	680/2500	1725kg	234	4.4	300	12.3	+ Loud and mad; most exciting Jag in years - It's also the most expensive in years	****
Lotus Elise 1.6	\$67,990	4/1598	100/6800	160/4400	876kg	114	6.5	204	6.3	+ New 1.6 Elise is light <i>and</i> fantastic - Smaller engine could put some off	****
Lotus Elise S	\$79,990	4/1798	162/6800	250/4600	924kg	175	4.6	234	7.5	+ New supercharged Elise boasts epic grip and pace - Pricey) options	****
Maserati GranCabrio	\$328,000	8/4691	324/7000	490/4750	1980kg	164	5.5	283	15.4	+ As good to drive as it is to look at - Lacks the grunt of some rivals	****
Maserati GranCabrio Sport	\$338,000	8/4691	331/7000	510/4750	1980kg	167	5.2	285	14.5	+ Looks, performance, cruising ability - Brakes could be sharper	****
Mazda MX-5 2.0	\$47,280	4/1999	118/7000	188/5000	1173kg	101	7.6	213	8.1	+ Handles brilliantly again - Less than macho image	****
Mercedes-Benz SLK350	\$118,595	6/3498	225/6500	370/3500	1465kg	154	5.6	250	8.3	+ Best non-AMG SLK yet - Still no Boxster-beater	****
Mercedes-Benz SLK55 AMG	\$154,690	8/5461	310/6800	540/4500	1690kg	183	4.6	250	8.5	+ AMG SLK is quicker and more economical than ever - Should be sharper, though	***
Mercedes-Benz SLK55 AMG Black	'07-'08	8/5439	295/5750	520/3750	1495kg	197	4.5	280	12.2	+ AMG gets serious - Dull-witted 7G-Tronic auto box, uneven dynamics	****
Mercedes-Benz SL500	\$304,145	8/4663	320/5250	700/1800	1785kg	179	4.6	250	9.4	+ Wafty performance, beautifully engineered - Lacks ultimate sports car feel	****
Mercedes-Benz SL63 AMG	\$381,145	8/5461	395/5500	800/2000	1785kg	221	4.3	250	10.1	+ Monster performance, lighter than before - Still heavy, steering lacks consistency	****
Mercedes-Benz SLS AMG Roadster	\$486,645	8/6208	420/6800	650/4750	1695kg	248	3.8	317	13.3	+ Loses none of the coupe's talents - But (understandably) loses the gullwing doors	****
Mini John Cooper Works Convertible	n/a	4/1598	155/6000	280/2000	1185kg	131	6.9	235	7.1	+ A manlier Mini cabrio. As hardcore as the hatchwhich is still better	****
Morgan 3 Wheeler	\$97,500	2/1990	60/5300	140/3250	525kg	114	6.0	185	-	+ Quirky, characterful, brilliant - Unnatural brake feel; you'd better not be shy	****
Morgan Plus 8	\$254,000	8/4799	270/6300	490/3400	1100kg	245	4.5	250	12.1	+ Hilarious mix of old looks and new mechanicals - Refinement is definitely old-school	****
Nissan 370Z Roadster	\$76,500	6/3696	245/7000	363/5200	1554kg	158	5.8	250	11.2	+ The Zed's old-school character remains intact - Its purposeful looks don't	****
Porsche Boxster (Mk3)	\$101,500	6/2706	195/6700	280/4500	1310kg	149	5.8	264	8.2	+ Goes & looks better; cleanest Boxster ever - Steering now electric to help cut consumption	****
Porsche Boxster S (Mk3)	\$126,500	6/3436	232/6700	360/4500	1320kg	178	5.1	279	8.8	+ Boxster steps out of 911's shadow - But gets 911's less appealing new steering	****
Porsche 911 Carrera S Cabrio (991)	\$266,200	6/3800	295/7400	440/5600	1465kg	201	4.7	301	9.7	+ All-new open 911 drives just like the coupe - Which means the same artificial steering	****
				. 10, 5550	1515kg	198	4.8	302	11.2	+ The best 911 drop-top you can buy - Lacks glamour of an R8 Spyder	

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FORD GT



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OUR CHOICE

Porsche 911 GT3. PDK, electric steering, a new engine with zero racing pedigree... Yes, we were nervous about the new GT3 before its arrival. Thankfully, it's still fully deserving of the badge, although you'll now need a healthy disregard for your licence to feel it truly come alive.



BEST OF THE REST

The new Cayman S is right up there with its 911 bigger brother – put simply, it's sensational. The Lotus Exige S (left) is a proper road racer for \$120K and our joint 2012 Car of the Year. Audi's R8 is another gem, especially in supercar-rivalling V10 Plus form. And, of course, there's always the Nissan GT-R...

Car	Price	Engine cyl/cc	kW/rpm	Nm/rpm	Weight	kW/tonne	0-100km/h	Top speed	L/100km	evo rating	
Aston Martin V8 Vantage (4.7)	\$231,000	8/4735	313/7000	470/5750	1630kg	192	4.9	290	13.8	+ 2012 upgrades keep the V8 Vantage on song - Starting to feel a little dated, though	****
Aston Martin V8 Vantage S	\$251,700	8/4735	321/7300	490/5000	1610kg	199	4.5	305	12.9	+ Keener engine, V12 Vantage looks - Slightly sluggish auto only	****
Aston Martin V12 Vantage	\$386,391	12/5935	380/6500	570/5750	1680kg	230	4.2	305	16.4	+ The best series production car that Aston Martin makes - Erm, a tad thirsty?	****
Aston Martin DB9	\$349,500	12/5935	380/6500	620/5500	1785kg	216	4.6	295	14.3	+ Better than the old DB9 in every respect - Automatic gearbox could be quicker	****
Aston Martin DBS	n/a	12/5935	380/6500	570/5750	1695kg	228	4.3	295	16.3	+ Stupendous engine, gearbox, brakes - Pricey. Can bite the unwary	****
Audi TT 2.0 TFSI	\$75,050	4/1984	155/4300	350/1600	1295kg	128	6.1	245	7.1	+ Front-driver loses nothing to quattro TTs - Steers like a computer game	****
AudiTTS	\$98,400	4/1984	200/6000	320/2500	1395kg	145	5.2	250	7.7	+ Usefully quicker TT; great drivetrain - Still steers like a computer game	****
Audi TT RS	\$139,400	5/2480	250/5400	450/1600	1450kg	175	4.3	250	8.5	+ Sublime 5-cylinder turbo engine - Rest of package can't quite match it	****
Audi S5	\$135,400	6/2995	245/5500	440/2900	1675kg	148	4.9	250	8.1	+ Supercharged V6 makes S5 cleaner and faster - Pricey once you add options	****
Audi RS5	\$161,400	8/4163	331/8250	430/4000	1715kg	183	4.5	250	10.8	+ Brilliant engine and improved chassis - Still not as exciting as you'd hope	****
Audi R8 V8	\$279,500	8/4163	316/7900	430/4500	1560kg	201	4.6	302	14.2	+ Finally, a true 911 alternative - Exclusivity comes at a price	****
Audi R8 V10	\$366,900	10/5204	386/8000	530/6500	1620kg	242	3.9	316	13.9	+ Real supercar feel - We still prefer the V8	****
Audi R8 V10 Plus	\$408,200	10/5204	404/8000	540/6500	1570kg	262	3.8	317	14.9	+ More power and aggression, less weight - Firm ride may be too much for some	****
Audi R8 GT	'10-'12	10/5204	412/8000	540/6500	1520kg	275	3.6	320	13.9	+ Everything we love about the R8 - Not as hardcore as we wanted	****
Bentley Continental GT V8	\$370,000	8/3993	373/6000	660/1700	2295kg	165	4.8	303	10.6	+ A proper drivers' Bentley with decent economy - W12 suddenly seems pointless	****
Bentley Continental GT	\$408,870	12/5998	423/6000	700/1700	2320kg	185	4.5	318	14.5	+ 325km/h in utter comfort - Weight, thirst	****
Bentley Continental GT Speed	\$450,000	12/5998	460/6000	800/2000	2320kg	192	4.2	325	14.5	+ 330km/h in utter comfort - Feels nose-heavy in slow corners	****
Bentley Continental Supersports	'10-'12	12/5998	463/6000	800/1700	2240kg	210	3.9	329	16.3	+ A thoroughly impressive carrather than a fun and involving one	****
BMW 335i M Sport	\$108,700	6/2979	225/5800	400/1300	1525kg	150	5.5	250	8.4	+ Eager engine, exploitable chassis - Slightly unadventurous styling	****
BMW M3 (E92)	\$155,100	8/3999	309/8300	400/3900	1580kg	148	4.8	250	12.4	+ Fends off all of its talented new rivalsexcept the cheaper 1-series M	****
BMW M3 GTS (E92)	'10-'11	8/4361	331/8300	440/3750	1530kg	220	4.4	305	12.7	+ Highly exclusive, most focused M-car ever - Good luck trying to find one	****
BMW M3 (E46)	'00-'07	6/3246	252/7900	365/4900	1495kg	172	5.2	257	11.9	+ One of the best BMWs ever - Slightly artificial steering feel	****
BMW M3 CS (E46)	'05-'07	6/3246	338/7900	269/5000	1495kg	172	5.1	250	11.9	+ CSL dynamics without CSL price - Looks like the standard car	****
BMW M3 CSL (E46)	'03-'04	6/3246	265/7900	370/4900	1385kg	194	4.9	259	11.9	+ Stripped-down road-race M3 - Standard brakes barely adequate	****
BMW Z4 M Coupe	'06-'09	6/3246	252/7900	365/4900	1420kg	180	5.0	250	12.1	+ A real drivers' car - You've got to be prepared to get stuck in	****
BMW M Coupe	'98-'03	6/3246	236/7400	350/3250	1375kg	178	5.4	250	11.2	+ Quick and characterful - Lacks finesse	****
BMW M6	\$292,500	6/2993	412/6000	680/1500	1790kg	130	4.2	250	9.9	+ Great engine and economy, excellent build - Numb steering, unsettled B-road ride	****
Honda CR-Z	\$38,490	4/1497	99/6600	172/1000	1198kg	83	9.0	200	5.0	+ The first hybrid with sporting intent - No match for a good diesel hot hatch	***
Hyundai Veloster Turbo	\$31,990	4/1591	136/5500	265/1500	1313kg	106	8.4	214	6.8	+ The usual Hyundai value, with added fun - Styling might be too quirky for some	****
Infiniti G37S Coupe	\$83,500	6/3696	235/7000	360/5200	1706kg	140	5.9	250	10.5	+ Softer 370Z delivers sharp-driving swing at the Germans - Bland looks	****
Jaguar XK 5.0	\$189,000	8/5000	283/6500 375/6000	515/3500	1585kg	182	5.5	250	11.2	+ Fine car for the likes of us - Jag buyers may not like the harder edge	****
Jaguar XKR	\$209,000	8/5000		625/2500	1678kg	227	4.8	250	12.3	+ Fast and incredibly rewarding Jag - The kids will have to stay at home	****
Jaguar XKR-S Lotus Exige S (V6)	\$299,000	8/5000	405/6000	680/2500 400/4500	1678kg	245	4.4	300 274	10.1	+ The most exciting XKR ever - It's nearly \$300,000	****
	\$119,990	6/3456	257/7000		1176kg	224	5.1	262	9.3	+ Breathtaking road-racer; our joint 2012 Car of the Year - Doubts over Lotus's future	****
Lotus Evora S	\$123,990 \$145,990	6/3456 6/3456	206/6400 257/7000	342/4700 400/4500	1382kg	151 183	4.8	286	9.5	+ Sublime ride and handling. Our 2009 car of the year - Pricey options	****
Maserati GranTurismo	\$288,800	8/4244	302/7100	460/4750	1430kg 1780kg	161	5.2	285	14.3	+ A faster and better Evora - But one which spars with the Porsche 911 + Striking, accomplished GT - Doesn't spike the pulse like an Aston or 911	****
Maserati GranTurismo Sport	\$308,800	8/4691	338/7000	520/4750	1880kg	183	4.7	298	15.5	+ The best everyday GranTurismo yet - Starting to get long in the tooth?	***** ****
Maserati GT MC Stradale	\$364,900	8/4691	338/7000	520/4750	1770kg	190	4.6	301	14.4	+ Brilliant blend of road racer and GT - No rear seats	****
Mercedes-Benz C63 AMG Coupe	\$157,900	8/6208	336/6800	600/5000	1730kg	197	4.5	250	12.1	+ Mercedes makes a proper two-door M3 rival - C63 saloon looks better	****
Mercedes-Benz C63 AMG Black	12	8/6208	380/6800	620/5200	1730kg	226	4.2	300	12.1	+ The C63 turned up to 11 - Too heavy, not as fiery as Black Series cars of old	****
Mercedes-Benz CLK63 AMG	'06-'09	8/6208	354/6800	630/5000	1755kg	207	4.6	250	14.2	+ Power, control, build quality - Lacks ultimate involvement	****
Mercedes-Benz CLK63 AMG Black	'07-'09	8/6208	373/6800	630/5250	1760kg	215	4.2	300	15.3	+ AMG goes Porsche-hunting - Dull-witted gearshift spoils the party	****
Mercedes-Benz CL63 AMG	\$422,800	8/5461	400/5500	800/2000	2135kg	197	4.5	250	10.6	+ Presence, pace, monster engine - Stiff ride, stiff competition	****
Nissan 370Z	\$69,500	6/3696	245/7000	363/5200	1520kg	163	5.4	250	10.5	+ Quicker, leaner, keener than 350Z - Not quite a Cayman-killer	****
Nissan GT-R (MY13)	\$172,000	6/3799	404/6400	632/3200	1740kg	235	2.7	320	11.8	+ GT-R is quicker and better than ever - Suspension is too firm for Australian roads	****
Nissan Skyline GT-R (R34)	'99-'02	6/2568	206/6800	392/4400	1560kg	134	4.7	265	14.1	+ Big, brutal, and great fun- Very firm ride	****
Peugeot RCZ 1.6	\$58,990	4/1598	147/5500	275/1700	1421kg	105	7.6	231	6.7	+ Distinctive looks, highly capable handling - Could be a bit more exciting	****
Porsche Cayman S (Mk3)	\$139,900	6/3436	239/7400	370/4500	1320kg	184	5.0	283	8.8	+ The Cayman comes of age - Erm	****
Porsche Cayman (Mk2)	'11-'13	6/2893	195/7200	300/4400	1330kg	148	5.8	265	30.1	+ Extra power, just as involving - Still lacks the desirability of other Porsches	****
Porsche Cayman S (Mk2)	'11-'13	6/3436	235/7200	370/4750	1350kg	177	5.2	277	29.7	+ Still want that 911? - Yeah, us too	****
Porsche Cayman R	'11-'13	6/3436	243/7400	370/4750	1295kg	190	5.0	282	9.7	+ Total handling excellence - Styling additions not to all tastes	****
Porsche Cayman S (Mk1)	'06-'09	6/3387	217/6250	340/4200	1415kg	163	5.5	275	10.6	+ Pure and rewarding - If they'd just move the engine back a bit	****
Porsche 911 Carrera (991)	\$206,500	6/3436	257/7400	390/5600	1380kg	181	4.8	289	9.0	+ 911 becomes cleaner and cleverer - But some of its character's gone AWOL	****
Porsche 911 Carrera S (991)	\$243,100	6/3799	295/7400	440/5600	1395kg	214	4.5	304	9.5	+ As above, but with supercar pace - Electric steering robs it of some tactility	****
Porsche 911 Carrera 4 (991)	\$222,200	6/3436	257/7400	390/5600	1430kg	183	4.9	285	9.3	+ A touch more engaging than 2wd 991 - Still stand-offish compared to 997	****
Porsche 911 Carrera 4S (991)	\$258,800	6/3799	295/7400	440/5600	1445kg	207	4.5	299	9.9	+ The best 991-generation Carrera - Choose your spec carefully	****
Porsche 911 GT3 (991)	\$294,100	6/3799	350/8250	440/6250	1430kg	242	3.5	315	12.4	+ Our 2013 eCOTY. Brilliant - Some purists will moan about the lack of manual	****
Porsche 911 Carrera (997.2)	'08-'11	6/3614	254/6500	390/4400	1415kg	183	4.9	290	10.3	+ Faster and greener than the mk1 997 - Lost a little of the 911 magic	****
Porsche 911 Carrera S (997.2)	'08-'11	6/3799	283/6500	420/4400	1425kg	202	4.7	302	10.6	+ Poise, precision, blinding pace - Feels a bit clinical	****
Porsche 911 Carrera GTS (997.2)	'11-'12	6/3799	300/7300	420/4200	1420kg	215	4.6	306	10.6	+ Fitting finale for the 997 generation - Absolutely nothing	****
Porsche 911 Carrera S (997.1)	'04-'08	6/3824	261/6600	400/4600	1420kg	183	4.7	293	11.5	+ evo Car of the Year 2004; like a junior GT3 - Tech overload?	****
Porsche 911 Carrera 4S (996)	'02-'05	6/3596	235/6800	370/4250	1405kg	163	5.1	285	11.1	+ Second best 996 only to the GT3- Very little	****
Porsche 911 Carrera (996 3.4)	'98-'01	6/3387	221/6800	350/4600	1320kg	172	5.2	280	10.1	+ evo Car of the Year 1998; beautifully polished - Some like a bit of rough	****
Porsche 911 Carrera (993)	'94-'97	6/3600	200/6100	330/5000	1370kg	157	5.3	267	11.1	+ More character than 996 - Harder work at speed	****
Porsche 911 GT3 (997.2)	'09-'11	6/3797	320/7600	430/6250	1395kg	233	4.1	312	12.6	+ Even better than the car it replaced - Give us a minute	****
Porsche 911 GT3 RS (997.2)	10-11	6/3797	331/7900	430/6750	1370kg	295	3.9	310	13.2	+ Our 2010 car of the year - Looks and noise are slightly OTT	****
Porsche 911 GT3 RS 4.0 (997.2)	'11-'12	6/3996	368/8250	460/5750	1435kg	274	3.9	310	13.8	+ The ultimate modern 911, and our 2011 Car of the Year - Unforgiving on-road ride	****
Porsche 911 GT3 (997.1)	'07-'09	6/3600	305/7600	405/5500	1395kg	222	4.3	310	13.0	+ Runner-up evo Car of the Year 2006 - Ferrari 599 GTBs	****
Porsche 911 GT3 RS (997.1)	'07-'09	6/3600	305/7600	405/5500	1375kg	225	4.2	310	13.0	+ evo Car of the Year 2007 - A chunk more money than the brilliant GT3	****
Porsche 911 GT3 (996.2)	'03-'05	6/3600	280/7400	385/5000	1380kg	202	4.5	306	12.9	+ evo Car of the Year 2003 - Chassis is a bit too track-focused for some roads	****
Porsche 911 GT3 RS (996.2)	'03-'05	6/3600	280/7400	385/5000	1330kg	213	4.4	306	12.9	+ Track-biased version of above - Limited supply	****
Porsche 911 GT3 (996.1)	'99	6/3600	265/7200	370/5000	1350kg	202	4.8	302	13.0	+ Our Car of the Year 1999 - Porsche didn't build enough	****
Porsche 911 RS (993)	'95	6/3746	221/6500	355/5400	1270kg	179	5.0	277	12.4	+ Barking engine note, gearchange - Not quite hardcore enough	****
Porsche 968 Club Sport	'93-'95	4/2990	176/6200	305/4100	1335kg	136	6.5	254	10.3	+ One of the all-time greats - Lots have been driven very hard	****
Subaru BRZ	\$37,150	4/1998	147/7000	205/6600	1216kg	120	7.6	226	7.8	+ Fine chassis, great steering - Weak engine, not the slide-happy car they promised	****
Toyota 86	\$29,990	4/1998	147/7000	205/6600	1257kg	119	7.6	226	7.8	+ More fun than its cousin (above) - Same lack of torque, poor interior quality	****
VW Scirocco GT 2.0 TSI	n/a	4/1984	155/5300	280/1700	1373kg	114	6.9	240	7.4	+ Golf GTI price and performance - Interior lacks flair	****
	\$47,990	4/1984	188/6000	330/2500	1351kg	146	6.0	250	8.1	+ Great engine, grown-up dynamics - Perhaps a little too grown-up for some	****

RATINGS ★ Thrill-free zone ★★ Tepid ★★★ Interesting ★★★★ Seriously good ★★★★ A truly great car





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OUR CHOICE

Ferrari 458 Speciale. The regular 458 Italia is amazing enough in itself - in fact it used to occupy this very space – but the Speciale follows in the tradition of the 360 Challenge Stradale and 430 Scuderia and makes the car it is based on even more, well, special. The supercar to buy.



BEST OF THE REST

Porsche's 918 Spyder (left) pips the McLaren P1 on the road, and vice versa on the track. (Is the LaFerrari better still? We'll let you know when we get one together with its hybrid rivals.) Meanwhile, Pagani's Huayra was our joint 2012 Car of the Year and Lamborghini's Aventador offers true supercar drama.

Car	Price	Engine cyl/cc	kW/rpm	Nm/rpm	Weight	kW/tonne	0-100km/h	Top speed	L/100km	evo rating	
Aston Martin Vanquish (Mk2)	\$472,840	12/5935	421/6750	620/5500	1739kg	246	4.1	295	14.4	+ A much better car than the DBS it succeeds - Shame it looks little different, then	****
Aston Martin One-77	'10-'12	12/7312	559/6000	750/7600	1740kg	326	3.7	354	24.5	+ The engine, the looks, the drama - Gearbox hates manoeuvring; only 77 were made	****
BMW M1	'78-'81	6/3500	204/6500	330/5000	1303kg	161	5.9	262	-	+ Early supercar icon - A bit under-endowed these days	****
Bugatti Veyron 16.4	n/a	16/7993	736/6000	1250/2200	1950kg	389	2.5	407	24.1	+ Superbly engineered 4wd quad-turbo rocket - Er, lacks luggage space?	****
Bugatti Veyron Grand Sport	n/a	16/7993	736/6000	1250/2200	1990kg	380	2.7	407	24.9	+ Warp speed and ferocious noise sans-roof - Ridiculous brolly/roof thing	****
Bugatti Veyron Super Sport	n/a	16/7993	882/6400	1500/3000	1838kg	488	2.5	415	23.1	+ The world's fastest supercar - Limited to 415km/h for us mere mortals	****
Bugatti EB110	'91-'95	12/3500	412/8000	618/3750	1566kg	267	4.2	342	-	+ Superbly engineered 4wd quad-turbo rocket - It just fizzled out	****
Chevrolet Corvette ZR1	n/a	8/6162	476/6500	819/3800	1528kg	316	3.6	330	15.0	+ Huge pace and character - Take plenty of brave pills if there's rain	****
Ferrari 458 Italia	\$525,772	8/4499	419/9000	540/6000	1485kg	286	3.4	325	13.3	+ An astounding achievement, looks fantastic - There'll never be a manual	****
Ferrari 458 Spider	\$588,806	8/4499	419/9000	540/6000	1430kg	278	3.4	320	11.8	+ A 458 that sounds and feels more organic - Er, 5km/h slower?	****
Ferrari 458 Speciale	\$550,000	8/4499	445/9000	540/6000	1395kg	320	3.0	325	13.3	+ The most exciting car available for sale in Australia - Just about perfect, so nothing	****
Ferrari F430	'04-'10	8/4308	360/8500	465/5250	1449kg	253	4.0	315	15.2	+ Just brilliant - Didn't you read the plus point?	****
Ferrari F430 Spider	'04-'10	8/4308	360/8500	465/5250	1520kg	243	4.1	311	15.2	+ Berlinetta dynamics, 8000rpm with the roof down - Looks?	****
Ferrari 430 Scuderia	'07-'10	8/4308	375/8500 294/8500	470/5250	1350kg	282	3.6	320	15.7	+ Successful F1 technology transplant - Likes to shout about it	****
Ferrari 360 Modena	'99-'04	8/3586		373/4750	1390kg	215	4.5	295	16.6	+ Worthy successor to 355 - Not quite as involving as it should be	****
Ferrari 360 Challenge Stradale	'03-'04 '97-'99	8/3586	312/8500	373/4750	1280kg	248 210	4.1	300		+ Totally exhilarating road-racer. It's loud - It's very, very loud	****
Ferrari F355 F1 Berlinetta Ferrari F12 Berlinetta	\$691,100	8/3496 12/6262	279/8250 545/8250	363/6000 690/6000	1350kg	339	3.1	295 340	16.9 15.0	+ Looks terrific, sounds even better - Are you kidding? + 545kW isn't too much power for the road - Not as dramatic as an Aventador	****
Ferrari 599 GTB Fiorano	106-12	12/5202	456/7600	608/5600	1630kg 1688kg	274	3.7	330	17.9	+ evo Car of the Year 2006 - Banks are getting harder to rob	****
Ferrari 599 GTB Fiorano HGTE	10-12	12/5999	456/7600	608/5600	1688kg	274	3.7	330	-	+ As above, but with a bit more edge - Can be a little too edgy in the wet	****
Ferrari 599 GTO	11-12	12/5999	493/8250	620/6500	1605kg	311	3.4	335	17.5	+ One of the truly great Ferraris - Erm, the air con isn't very good	****
Ferrari 575M Fiorano Handling Pack	'02-'06	12/5748	379/7250	589/5250	1730kg	222	4.2	325	22.9	+ Fiorano pack makes 575 truly great - It should have been standard	****
Ferrari 550 Maranello	'97-'02	12/5474	357/7000	569/5000	1716kg	219	4.4	320	22.9	+ Everything - Nothing	****
Ferrari FF	\$625,000	12/6262	486/8000	683/6000	1880kg	259	3.7	335	15.4	+ Four seats and 4WD, but a proper Ferrari - Looks divide opinion	****
Ferrari 612 Scaglietti F1	'04-'11	12/5748	397/7250	588/5250	1840kg	219	4.0	320	20.5	+ Awesomely capable grand tourer - See above	****
Ferrari Enzo	'02-'04	12/5998	485/7800	657/5500	1365kg	361	3.7	350	-	+ Intoxicating, exploitable - Cabin detailing falls short of Zonda or F1	****
Ferrari F50	'96-'97	12/4698	383/8500	471/6500	1229kg	316	3.7	325	-	+ The best drivers' Ferrari - Lines lack tension	****
Ferrari F40	'87-'92	8/2936	351/7000	577/4000	1100kg	328	4.1	324	-	+ The shape that launched a thousand posters - Er	****
Ferrari 288GTO	'84-'85	8/2855	295/7000	496/3800	1160kg	261	4.9	305	-	+ Painfully beautiful, rarer than the F40 - You are joking?	****
Ford GT	'04-'06	8/5409	410/6500	678/3750	1538kg	263	3.9	330	-	+ Our 2005 Car of the Year - JC had one. Reckoned it didn't handle	****
Jaguar XJ220	'92-'94	6/3498	404/7200	644/4500	1470kg	280	4.1	343	-	+ Britain's greatest supercaruntil McLaren built the F1	****
Lamborghini Gallardo LP550-2	\$409,500	10/5204	405/8000	540/6500	1380kg	298	3.9	320	13.3	+ The mad rear-driven Lambo is back! - Gallardo not feeling as fresh as the 458	****
Lamborghini Gallardo LP560-4	\$455,000	10/5204	412/8000	540/6500	1410kg	298	3.7	325	13.7	+ Still a missile from A to B - Starting to show its age	****
Lamborghini LP570-4 Superleggera	n/a	10/5204	419/8000	540/6500	1340kg	318	3.4	325	13.7	+ A reminder of how great the Gallardo is - LP560-4 does as good a job	****
Lamborghini LP570-4 Performante	n/a	10/5204	419/8000	540/6500	1485kg	286	3.9	324	13.8	+ It's a Superleggera Spyderthat's not actually that super-light	****
Lamborghini Gallardo	'06-'08	10/4961	383/8000	510/4500	1520kg	255	4.0	315	17.0	+ On a full-bore start it spins all four wheels. Cool - Slightly clunky e-gear	****
Lamborghini Gallardo Superleggera	'07-'08	10/4961	390/8000	510/4250	1420kg	278	3.8	315	-	+ Lighter, more agile - Grabby carbon brakes, clunky e-gear	****
Lamborghini Aventador LP700-4	\$761,500	12/6498	515/8250	690/5500	1575kg	331	2.9	350	17.2	+ Most important new Lambo since the Countach - Erm expensive?	****
Lamborghini Aventador Roadster	\$795,000	12/6498	515/8250	690/5500	1625kg	321	3.0	350	17.2	+ Sensational engine and styling - A wee bit on the thirsty side	****
Lamborghini Murciélago	'01-'06	12/6192	427/7500	650/5400	1650kg	262	4.0	332	-	+ Gorgeous, capable and incredibly friendly - V12 feels stressed	****
Lamborghini Murciélago LP640	'06-'11	12/6496	471/8000	660/6000	1665kg	287	3.8	340	21.4	+ Compelling old-school supercar - You'd better be on your toes	****
Lamborighini Murciélago LP670-4 SV	'09-'11	12/6946	493/8000	660/6500	1565kg	320	3.3	337	20.6	+ A supercar in its truest, wildest sense - Be prepared for stares	****
Lamborghini Diablo GT	'99-'00	12/5992	423/7300	630/5500	1490kg	292	4.4	338	-	+ Briefly the world's fastest production car- They made only 80	****
Lamborghini Diablo 6.0	'00-'02	12/5992	405/7100	620/5500	1625kg	255	3.9	335	-	+ Best-built, best-looking Diablo of all - People's perceptions	****
Lamborghini Countach QV	'88-'91	12/5167	339/7000	500/5200	1447kg	238	4.9	298	20.6	+ Still the definitive supercar - Visibility, pract- oh hell, who cares?	****
Lexus LFA/LFA Nürburgring	'10-12	10/4805	412/8700	480/7000	1480kg	282	3.7	325	-	+ Absurd and compelling supercar - Badge and price don't quite match	****
McLaren MP4-12C	n/a	8/3799	459/7500	600/3000	1434kg	324	3.1	333	11.7	+ Staggering performance, refinement - Lacks design flair	****
McLaren 12C Spider	n/a	8/3799	459/7500	600/3000	1474kg	318	3.2	329	11.7	+ No discernible dynamic compromises - Requires commitment to come alive	****
McLaren F1	'94-'98	12/6064	461/7500	617/4000	1137kg	418	3.6	387	14.9	+ Still the most single-minded supercar ever - There'll never be another	****
Mercedes-Benz SL65 AMG Black	'09-'10	12/5980	493/5400	1000/2200	1876kg	267	3.8	320	14.4	+ Bonkers looks, bonkers speed - Bonkers price	****
Mercedes-Benz SLS AMG	\$467,965	8/6208	420/6800	650/4750	1620kg	250	3.8	317	13.3	+ Great engine and chassis (gullwing doors too!) - Slightly tardy gearbox	****
Mercedes-Benz SLS AMG Black Series	\$639,000	8/6208	464/7400	635/5500	1550kg	299	3.5	315	13.7	+ The most thrilling car to wear the pointed star - Can intimidate	****
Mercedes-Benz SLR McLaren	'04-'07	8/5439	460/6500 537/5800	780/3250	1768kg	284	3.8	334	14.5	+ Zonda-pace, 575-style drivability - Dreadful brake feel	****
Pagani Huayra	n/a	12/5980		1000/2250	1350kg	404 470	3.3	360	-	+ Our joint 2012 Car of the Year - Engine isn't as nape-prickling as the Zonda's	****
Pagani Zonda 760RS	n/a	12/7291	567/6300	780/4500	1210kg			349	-	+ The most extreme Zonda ever - The last Zonda ever (probably)	****
Pagani Zonda C12S Pagani Zonda F	'01-'05 '05-'06	12/7291 12/7291	410/5500 443/6150	750/4100 760/4000	1250kg	337 370	3.7 3.6	317 345	-	+ evo Car of the Year 2001 - Harry's sold his long-termer	****
	109-110	12/7291	443/6150	780/4000	1230kg 1400kg	3/0	3.6	345	-	+ Everything an Italian supercar ought to be - Choose interior carefully + The best Zonda ever - Doesn't come up in the classifieds often	****
Pagani Zonda Cinque Roadster Porccho 011 Turbo (007.2)	'09-'10					238	3.4	349	11.5	+ The Turbo at the very top of its game - The GT3's cheaper	****
Porsche 911 Turbo (997.2) Porsche 911 Turbo S (997.2)	10-13	6/3800 6/3800	368/6000 390/6250	650/1950 700/2100	1570kg 1585kg	253	3.7	312	11.4	+ The Turbo at the very top of its game - The GT3's cheaper + As above, with more power - The GT3's even cheaper	****
Porsche 911 GT2 RS (997.2)	10-13	6/3600	456/6500	700/2100	1370kg	338		330	11.9	+ As above, with more power - The GT3's even cheaper + More powerful than a Carrera GT. Handles, too - Erm	****
Porsche 911 Turbo (997.1)	10-13		353/6000	680/2100	1570kg	226	3.5 3.7	310	12.8	+ More powerful than a Carrera Gr. Handles, too - Erri + Monster cornering ability - A bit woolly on its standard settings	****
Porsche 911 Turbo (997.1)	'00-'06	6/3600 6/3600	309/6000	560/2700	1540kg	203	4.2	304	13.5	+ worster cornering ability - A bit woolly on its standard settings + evo Car of the year 2000; the 911 for all seasons - We can't find any reasons	****
Porsche 911 GT2 (996)	'04-'06	6/3600	355/5700	640/3500	1540kg 1440kg	253	4.2	319	12.9	+ Later revisions made it even more of a star - Care still required	****
Porsche 911 Turbo (993)	'95-'98	6/3600	300/5750	540/4500	1500kg	206	4.0	290	15.7	+ Later revisions made it even more of a star - Care still required + Stupendous all-weather supercar - It doesn't rain enough	****
Porsche 911 GT2 (993)	95-96	6/3600	321/5750	540/4500	1215kg	253	4.4	290	13.7	+ Hairy-arsed homologation special - Harry won't buy one	****
Porsche Carrera GT	'04-'06	10/5733	450/8000	590/5750	1213kg 1380kg	332	3.9	330	-	+ Probably the greatest modern supercar - Can bite	****
. o. oor to carrora ar	04 00	10,3133	331/6500	500/5000	1450kg	232	3.7	300		+ Tech showcase, still a great drive - Limited choice of colours?	****





AUDI RS6

Why would you?

Madcap pace and bombastic soundtrack thanks to Lamborghini Gallardo-derived 5.0-litre V10 with twin turbos and 427kW. All-wheel drive makes it all-weather capable, and it's discreet and super practical, too, especially in Avant form.

What to pay

Very few come up for sale in Australia and at the time of going to press, just a single, low-kilometre example was advertised for \$95K.

What to look out for

Early cars suffered from loose or fractured oil pipes, but otherwise

the V10 ought to be trouble-free. The Tiptronic auto should shift silkily and you need to budget for an oil change every 30,000km to keep it that way. You should expect a near-perfect body and interior, though there is likely to be some wear to the driver's seat

SPECIFICATION

Years 2008-2010 Engine4991cc V10, twin-turbo Power 427kW @ 6250rpm **Torque** 650Nm @ 5900rpm 0-100km/h 4.6sec (claimed) **Top speed** 250km/h (limited) Rating ★★★☆





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