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Model shown is an all-new 508 GT 1.6L PureTech 225 EAT8 S&S with optional Night Vision. Information correct at time of going to print.



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Bedford Autodrome, Rob Gould,
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Ed speak

TWO WEEKS BEFORE McLAREN

revealed its fastest-ever production road car, the team behind the Bloodhound land speed

record bid announced it had run out of cash and had been forced into administration. For many, the concept of a land speed record belongs in a time when the UK was still excited by having four TV channels, and newspapers printed in colour made the, er, news. Today, billionaire man-children fire their electric sports cars into space for fun, but an LSR remains one of the biggest challenges in both automotive engineering and human endeavour.

No one has ever claimed a significant benefit of travelling at 763mph on land in a single-seat, four-wheeled rocket, but when Andy Green went supersonic in 1997 it felt like a genuine moment of pioneering adventure. Just as every Space Shuttle launch and landing meant a couple of hours of lesson-free time at school to watch it and every opportunity to catch a glimpse of Concorde had us bursting through the back door, so every land speed record attempt was an intoxicating and inspiring event.

In the 11 years since the Bloodhound project began it has not only been a catalyst to R&D engineering, it has also formed a significant part of an education campaign that has reached over 2million children across 5500 schools. It has inspired a generation to learn about the unimaginable. Dream the impossible is possible.

Bloodhound requires around £25m to see the project through to completion on the Hakskeen Pan in South Africa's Northern Cape, a sum that is a fraction of the cost required to finish last in today's Formula 1 World Championship. Projects such as Bloodhound have always been made possible by the public giving generously in both support and much-needed cash, but now it requires the backing of a partner that sees the value in inspiring the next generation of pioneers. Hopefully this still means something to those in a position to fund such extraordinary endeavours.

Stuart Gallagher, Editor @stuartg917

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Why give yourself one 70th birthday present when you can treat yourself to two? Porsche reveals its GT3-engined 911 Speedster and GT2 RS-powered 935 track car

THIS MONTH HAS BEEN A GOOD one for individuals on Porsche's hallowed whitelist, with the unveiling of two special models on the 911 platform. The Porsche 911 Speedster and Porsche 935 will go on sale in 2019, though their 2018 announcement ensures both play a part in the company's 70th anniversary celebrations.

Even Porsche dare not build a 911 GT3 Convertible or Targa, so for those desperate to hear the GT3's 9000rpm flat-six *im freiluft*, the new 911 Speedster will be

the only way to do so short of breaking out the power tools. The GT3 donates its six-speed manual gearbox and titanium exhaust system too, along with its chassis set-up, while the speedster bodywork is a refinement of the Carrera 4 Cabriolet's wide-arched and topless lines.

The basic design is identical to that of the Speedster concept presented earlier this year, with cut-down windows and a steeper rake to the windscreen. The bonnet, engine cover and front and rear wings are carbonfibre, while a large



PORSCHE 911 SPEEDSTER & 935

by ANTONY INGRAM

carbonfibre double-bubble cover spans the section behind the rear seats, hiding a rollover protection structure and providing somewhere to affix the lightweight, manually fitted tonneau roof.

Further details come courtesy of Porsche Exclusive's Heritage Design Packages, from the 'Talbot' bullet mirrors to the 21-inch centre-lock, cross-spoke alloy wheels inspired by those of the 911 RSR and GT3 R racers. The fuel filler cap sits in the centre of the front bonnet, and the GT3-style seats of the show car are trimmed in perforated black leather with red highlights. The red paintwork is inspired by the 1988 911 Speedster, and Porsche will build 1948 examples, neatly referencing the registration year of the company's first road car, Porsche 356 'Number 1'.

Fewer still 935s will be built, with just

**'THEIR
ANNOUNCEMENT
ENSURES BOTH
PLAY A PART IN
PORSCHE'S 70TH
CELEBRATIONS'**

77 due to hit the world's racetracks when the £738k special goes on sale in June 2019. Inspiration, of course, comes from the 935/78 racer, a point that's emphasised by the Martini livery of the concept shown here.

The bad news: Frank-Steffen Walliser, Porsche's vice president of motorsport and GT cars, says the 935 has been developed free of homologation requirements, and if there's any chance at all that we'll see it or a car like it racing (the campaign starts here for Le Mans 2020...), Porsche is remaining tight-lipped.

The good news: it looks fantastic, its 911 GT2 RS-derived 3.8-litre twin-turbocharged flat-six makes 690bhp, and... well, that it exists at all is something to celebrate.

Styling and aerodynamics lean heavily upon the original 'Moby Dick' racers, with carbonfibre bodywork extensions stretching length to 4870mm (321mm longer than a GT2 RS) and width to 2030mm (150mm wider), and the aero discs on the centre-lock 18-inch forged wheels are directly inspired by those of the 935/78. Other 935 attributes are like a Greatest Hits of Porsche's racing success: front wing vents from the GT3 R customer race cars, LED lights on the endplates of the enormous 1900mm rear wing inspired by the 919 Hybrid, side mirrors from the 919 RSR and titanium tailpipes echoing those of the 1968 908.



PORSCHE 935

Engine Flat-six, 3800cc, twin-turbo **Power** 690bhp @ 7000rpm
Torque 553lb ft @ 2500-4500rpm **Weight** 1380kg **Power-to-weight** 508bhp/ton **0-62mph** 2.8sec (estimate) **Top speed** 211mph (estimate) **Basic price** c£738,000 **On sale** June 2019



Far left, top: no rear side windows on the 935; instead, a filler for the water-spray system for the charge-air coolers and the connector valve for the car's air jacks. **Far left, bottom:** steering wheel and instruments taken from the GT3 R racer. **Left:** Speedster styling identical to earlier concept's

The 935's driving environment is as beautifully trimmed as the brand's road cars, but there are notable differences from your common-or-garden GT2 RS. The steering

wheel and instrument display are direct carry-overs from the GT3 R, the laminated wood gear selector for the PDK 'box is a nod to the 917 (and Carrera GT), and air conditioning juxtaposes with a full roll-cage, racing seat and six-point harness.

Footage of the 935 testing at Monza has already emerged, and the car sounds tamer than it looks – but in the world of track-only specials, the decision process has just become a little bit more difficult.

PAST PORSCHE SPECIALS



GT1

To homologate the GT1 race car, which won Le Mans in 1998, Porsche built 23 road-legal GT1 Straßenversions.



911 SPORT CLASSIC (1997.2)

Rear-drive but with the wider Carrera 4S body, plus a 402bhp Powerkit, Fuchs wheels and a ducktail spoiler. Just 250 made.



911 SPEEDSTER (1997.2)

Sister model to the Sport Classic, the 2010 911 Speedster had the same 402bhp engine. Some 356 (geddit?) were built.

911 30 JAHRE JUBILEE EDITION (1964)



A celebratory Carrera 2 with Turbo-style wide arches. Launched in March 1993 and limited to 911 examples.

911 TURBO CABRIOLET (1993)

Just 14 1993-generation Turbo Cabriolets were made, all to special order in 1995. Each cost nearly half as much again as a standard Turbo.



PORSCHE 911 SPEEDSTER

Engine Flat-six, 3996cc **Power** 493bhp @ 8250rpm
Torque 339lb ft @ 6000rpm **Weight** TBC **Power-to-weight** TBC
0-62mph 3.9sec (estimate) **Top speed** 190mph (estimate)
Basic price TBC **On sale** First half of 2019



If it ain't broke...

BMW's all-new 3-series blends new technology with familiar style



THE ORIGINATOR OF THE sports saloon sector, BMW's 3-series is now in its seventh incarnation and still regarded as the benchmark. Audi and Mercedes continue to chip away at its armoury, and the A4 and C-class have got close at times, but the 3-series has continued to cross the line ahead of both, especially when it comes to driving and dynamics.



And despite roads congested with SUVs – soon to be joined by EVs – the 3-series remains one of BMW's most important cars, appealing to fleets, private customers and, crucial to *evo*, drivers. Failure is not an option.

1 ENGINES

Two-litre four-cylinder TwinPower engines will kick things off: a 187bhp, 295lb ft diesel (320d) and 254bhp, 295lb ft petrol (330i). The 320d comes as a six-speed manual or eight-speed Steptronic auto, while the 330i is auto only. The 320d will also be available with four-wheel drive. By summer 2019 there'll be a 254bhp six-cylinder 340i, with 1.5-litre three-cylinder petrol engines and a 330d arriving later.

2 CHASSIS

There are wider front and rear tracks, a longer wheelbase, stiffer suspension mountings, a 25 per cent more rigid body, and spring rates that are 20 per cent up on their predecessor's. Adaptive M Sport dampers are optional, while regular passive dampers fitted with hydraulic bump stops (a first for BMW) are standard. If you opt for the M Sport Plus package on 330i/d models you can also specify an M Sport electronic differential.

3 DESIGN

A 3-series is never going to set the design world alight and this seventh-generation model is steady rather than revolutionary. Much of Adrian van Hooydonk's work has focused on efficiency and aerodynamics, and while there's a little too much 5-series in how it looks (at the rear, particularly), the '3' should retain its roadside distinctiveness.

Inside, however, is where the big changes are, most notably the instrument display. Gone is BMW's traditional two-dial design, in its place a TFT screen offering a plethora of visual options. BMW's iDrive control system remains, with key functions still served via traditional switchgear, while 'Hey BMW' – the company's voice assistant – will be rolled out across the model range.



INFINITI'S DARK KNIGHT RISES

'Project Black S' coupe gains F1 powertrain tech

DESPITE ITS NAME ADORNING THE ENGINE covers of multiple Formula 1 World Championship-winning Red Bulls, Infiniti's road cars are more Formula Renault 3.5 than RB9: a series of saloons, coupes and SUVs (what else?) that have failed to inspire thanks to their mix of humdrum design and so-so dynamics and powertrains. In short, Infiniti has lacked an edge, a sense of purpose and any reason for *evo* to consider any of its models as a credible alternative to the establishment.

There could be hope, however, because Infiniti has been loosening its tie since 2017, when it started the development of Project Black S. Yes, it remains a concept, but it's based on the existing Q60 coupe road car and has far more potential to make production than your regular show-stand concept.

Previously only a design study, Project Black S has now gained a powertrain. It

comprises the company's 3-litre twin-turbocharged V6, assisted by three motor-generator units (MGUs) derived from the technology used in the Renault F1 engines that Infiniti once paid a rumoured \$70million a year to Red Bull for the privilege of having its name associated with.

With an MGU-K unit recovering kinetic energy under braking and two MGU-H units harvesting energy from the heat produced by the two electric turbochargers, the reclaimed energy is stored in a lithium-ion battery pack ready to assist the 400bhp V6 to the tune of 163bhp. No torque figure has been released, but the car weighs 1775kg, giving it a 322bhp-per-ton power-to-weight figure (higher than a V8 Jaguar F-type R's).

Continuing the F1 link, Infiniti has also fitted a rear wing that, while designed to proportionally fit the Q60, is set to the same aero profile as used by the current Renault F1 cars at circuits such as Monza.

Will Project Black S see the light of day? Running F1-style KERS in a production car from a brand more used to servicing unstressed V6s could be an ambition too far, but a more aggressive sports coupe to take on rivals from Europe and at home would be a much-needed shot in the arm for Infiniti.



Above: Project Black S is based on the existing, 400bhp Q60 coupe, but a trio of MGUs add a further 163bhp. **Below:** rear wing utilises same aero profile as that used on Renault's F1 cars



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NBCSN

by ANTONY INGRAM

Mazda's rotary revival

Pistonless engine will return in 2020 as a range extender for electric vehicles

NO COMPANY HAS PERSISTED WITH rotary engines as long as Mazda. From 1967's Cosmo 110S until RX-8 production ended in 2012, Felix Wankel's design was a staple of the Hiroshima firm's range, finding its way into everything from sports cars to saloons, pickup trucks and even a bus.

Rumours have predicted its return ever since, and the design may finally have found its niche, with Mazda confirming that the pistonless design will live again as a range-extending engine for a future electric vehicle.

The rotary range extender will be sold alongside a pure battery electric vehicle when it comes to market in 2020. Both will play a part in Mazda's 'Sustainable Zoom-Zoom 2030' technology plan, which includes research into alternative fuels, and advanced powerplants such as its Skyactiv-X spark-controlled compression-ignition engine (see *evo* 247).

Rotaries have so far proven problematic as a car's primary power source. Renowned for

high fuel consumption, they've also developed a reputation for fragility, needing regular oil top-ups to prevent excessive wear of the rotor-tip seals that provide the design with the compression needed for combustion.

While some of the design's limitations are a problem in conventional use, they may not be so much of an issue in a range-extending application. Range extenders tend to have a fairly well-defined usage pattern, without the variability of regular engines – think constant revs and load rather than varying engine speeds and loads. This, in turn, means the engine can be optimised for its range-extending purpose, without the same fuel, oil and component wear seen up until now.

Rotaries also have several inherent advantages over conventional reciprocating-piston engines, and it's these that could make it the ideal solution as a range extender. They're smaller and lighter than other combustion engines for a given output – ideal

for mitigating the weight of a hybrid drivetrain – and with rotating rather than reciprocating internals are considerably smoother, too. They're also compatible with several different fuel types, future-proofing them somewhat depending on the supply of different fuels.

The decision from Hiroshima to offer electric models does seem unusual given its recent claims that its Skyactiv-X combustion technology is equal to an electric powertrain in terms of well-to-wheel emissions, but by combining EVs, advanced combustion technologies and research into alternative fuels, Mazda looks agile enough to cover most market changes resulting from future legislation and consumer preference.

Perhaps best of all for people like us is that Mazda's product plans aren't coming at the expense of making cars that are both fun to drive and mechanically and technically intriguing. The campaign for a lightweight ReX-7 starts here...



Left: small size and light weight makes the rotary engine particularly suited to its new application

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SWISS WATCHES SINCE 1888





ANDY MORGAN

STAFF
PHOTOGRAPHER
(1998-2007)

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

Tell us your earliest *evo* memory

I found the first issue for sale, right next to where I was working in Peterborough – at the same publishing house where several months earlier the founders of *evo* had been working. Any magazine that had an NSX buyer's guide was going to be good. It was the first magazine that truly reflected how I felt about cars.

What was your first photoshoot for *evo*?

I was asked to take some photographs for a feature, shooting alongside one of the top photographers in the country: Gus Gregory. I couldn't have been more nervous. We started at MIRA in the pouring rain and I proceeded to constantly get in Gus's way whilst we both tried to shoot – on transparency film – the cars going sideways around a handling track. Art editor Damian Smith asked if I wanted to photograph the opening image, of Dickie Meaden going sideways past 13 static cars (*evo* 011). It was the most nerve-racking thing I had ever shot. Then it was off to north Wales for the six finalists to shoot it out. The opening

shot for that, by Gus, is one of the best multiple car-to-car shots I've seen. I must have done OK – I was offered the staff photographer job a couple of weeks later.

What was your first car launch for *evo*?

The Ford Fiesta Zetec S, with Stuart Gallagher, in Barcelona (*evo* 014). Our hotel was next to the Camp Nou football ground. Barcelona were playing rivals Madrid that evening and Stu and I got stuck for an hour in the traffic. It wasn't the first time we'd got stuck that day. I got the Fiesta stuck in mud on a building site whilst trying to do a static. Not the best introduction to launches, or Barcelona.

What was the most memorable *evo* story that you photographed?

'The Devil's Playground' (issue 022) was a 'pinch yourself' shoot. It started for me as a passenger with Dickie, who pedalled a Dodge Viper through the night from the UK to Maranello. The magazine had secured the top supercars of the time and we were taking them to Tuscany. Dream moments such as shooting a 360 Modena; chasing a Zonda through cypress tree-lined roads; being feet away from a Diablo on full charge, kicking the clay dust into the air – they almost became normal for those three days. Reversing a 911 Turbo into a ditch did scar my trip a bit, though.

What was your worst *evo* photoshoot?

It should have been amazing. The plan was to hit 250mph on a runway in the Koenigsegg CCR (*evo* 073). Except it was raining. Lots! My camera was soaking wet and playing up. After a few runs I

jumped into the CCR to read the climbing speeds out for the very focused Dickie. We did a run that saw us hit 170mph and Dickie had had to wrestle the CCR all the way. On the next run we spun at about 130mph, careering off. I knew we were in trouble when I could see Dickie no longer had his hands on the steering wheel and was looking at me! When we came to a stop we found a trail of flattened grass leading back to the runway, passing with only inches to spare by a concrete platform. It still makes me shudder.

Your favourite shoot by another photographer?

Gus Gregory shot a 911 GT3 on the Targa Florio (*evo* 028) and completely nailed it. There wasn't one shot that I wouldn't have wanted in my portfolio.

What's the one car that you wish you had photographed?

I've been so incredibly lucky to shoot some of the greatest cars there have ever been. But the one car I have never had the chance to shoot is a Lotus Cortina. Ironic, as it was the first car I ever went in.

Your favourite car that you have photographed for *evo*?

The Lotus 72 studio shoot for a 'Legends' feature (issue 068). The JPS 72 is motorsport royalty. I had a poster of it on my bedroom wall when I was very small and the chance to have it to myself in a studio was incredible. I even managed to get a new poster out of it.

Below: capturing a drift past 13 parked cars was one of Andy's first shots for *evo* – no pressure...



MAKING DREAMS

Many of us fantasise about owning a Bugatti Chiron, but our funds fall short of our ambition. Thankfully LEGO® Technic™ has come to the rescue with a more affordable alternative: of course, you will have to build it yourself...

NEVER MEET YOUR heroes, it's sometimes said. But what if your hero is the Bugatti Chiron? The dream car that sent *evo* into raptures. 'Quite simply, nothing combines the Chiron's civility and savagery. Its capabilities are mind-blowing, its potency almost unimaginable,' raved veteran road tester Richard Meaden.

So, a hero very much worthy of a personal encounter. Although with a price tag of about £2.1million before local taxes, the chances of such a meeting are slim. But what about building your own Bugatti Chiron – at a fraction of the cost and an eighth of the size?

The LEGO® Technic™ Bugatti Chiron

lets you build for real your very own hypercar, with the full sanction and collaboration of the iconic French marque. It's a 1:8-scale model and a marvel of plastic engineering. It comprises 3599 pieces, and despite comprehensive and extensive instructions, constructing this Chiron is a challenge of concentration and patience: but then you wouldn't expect – wouldn't want – anything less from LEGO Technic.

The technical sophistication of the LEGO Technic Bugatti Chiron manifests itself in many ways, all of which convey the engineering excellence of the 261mph Bugatti. The LEGO model features a four-wheel-drive transmission, and on the end of each axle is a beautifully rendered replica of the real thing's alloy wheel, complete with the famous 'EB' (for company founder Ettore Bugatti) at its centre. There's also a functional seven-speed (plus reverse)

paddleshift gearbox, operated via paddles on the steering column, as per the genuine item. The gearbox even has a 'neutral' setting, for extra realism.

The Bugatti-logoed steering wheel is, of course, connected to the steerable front wheels, yet it's under the rear deck that the model's greatest complication resides – a replica, in miniature, of the breathtaking 1479bhp 8-litre quad-turbo W16 engine. The creative engineers at LEGO Technic have designed some clever bespoke internals that allow the pistons to move up and down in the same sequence as those of the real car: the deliberate lack of cylinder heads is so you can see them working, a process you can't fail to be mesmerised by. And if you wish you could hear the engine working as well as see it, LEGO has thought of that too, providing a link to a ringtone download for your mobile phone featuring the W16 in all its aural majesty.

The visual essence of the Bugatti Chiron is also captured wonderfully by this LEGO Technic replica; its hunkered-down stance



Above and above right: active rear wing and suspension set-up are amongst the numerous moving parts

Right and below: Art, Forme and Technique course through the Bugatti brand DNA; see it recreated from every angle in this model's French racing blue exterior, curved signature line, single-beam tail light, horseshoe grille with logo, and more



and brutal beauty, its hallmark two-tone colour scheme. Captivating details abound, such as the famous 'horseshoe' front grille and the eye-catching full-width tail lights. With the help of a special 'top speed key', the active rear wing can be raised and lowered between its handling-biased and top speed positions, and if you press down gently on the finished model you feel the working suspension resisting the force.

There's similar attention to detail inside. Under the lid of the front stowage compartment resides a piece of bespoke Bugatti fitted luggage. Accessible through opening doors, sports seats grace the cabin, and through the steering wheel the Chiron's main instrumentation is visible. The only shame of it is that you can't physically climb aboard, although LEGO has attended to that issue too, by building a one-off full-scale drivable LEGO Technic Bugatti Chiron. To view this remarkable creation, search for 'life-size LEGO Technic Bugatti Chiron' on YouTube, or hear about its creation in the LEGO Technic Bugatti

Chiron podcast series. It's the ultimate iteration of the LEGO Technic company mantra, 'build for real'.

The 1:8-scale version is driven by the same philosophy: to give you a sense of the technical complication that lies beneath the real Chiron's chic, muscular bodywork. And just like the real thing, purchasing the LEGO Technic Bugatti Chiron is a special experience. Its high-quality box is impressively dimensioned and the photography on its lid first class. Lift off the lid and you're greeted by different sections of construction pieces corralled into their own separate boxes. Meanwhile the build manuals are more like books, and also feature behind-the-scenes stories about the Chiron from Bugatti itself.

The Bugatti Chiron is already an automotive legend despite its comparative youth – the 1:8-scale LEGO Technic Bugatti Chiron seems destined to become just as covetable.

See more of the **LEGO® Technic™** range of outstanding supercars and hypercars at www.LEGO.co.uk/technic

The **LEGO® Technic™** Bugatti Chiron is available from www.LEGO.co.uk/technic, priced at **£329.99**.

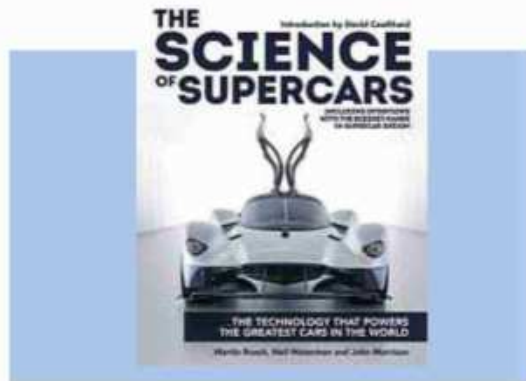
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Essentials

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BOOK

The Science of Supercars

£20 waterstones.co.uk

Dive into a history of supercars – and more specifically the science behind them – in this new hardback, which details how the drive for performance has seen huge forward strides in aero, powertrain and chassis technology.

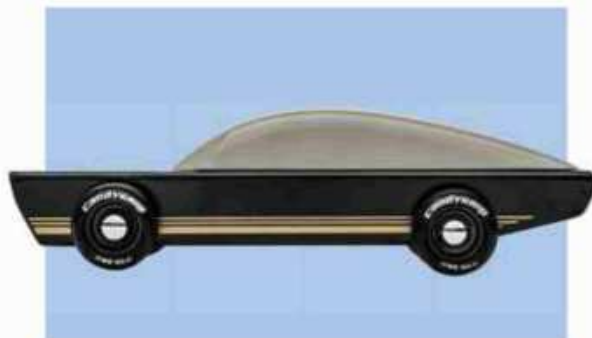


EYEWEAR

Ray-Ban Caravan sunglasses

From £408 ray-ban.com/uk

Japanese-made and featuring ultra-lightweight titanium frames, Ray-Ban's new Caravan sunglasses make a smart alternative to the firm's ubiquitous Aviators. Go for the polarised lens option for minimal glare while driving.



TOY

Candylab Legend Wooden Car

£28.99 candylabtoys.com

Take the kids (or yourself) back to the '80s with Candylab's 'Legend' toy car. Made from solid beech and hand-painted, it's just one example from a vast range of model cars worthy of the top shelf in the study rather than the toy box.



FOOTWEAR

Archibald London Sneakers

£165 archibaldlondon.com

Adidas Stan Smiths too common for you? Luxury clothing and accessory brand Archibald London now has a luxury sneaker. Made from top-grade leather and with a soft leather sole, they're the perfect driving shoe for this cooler time of year.



WALL ART

Renault F1 Engine Cover

£1100 mementoexclusives.com

Grab yourself a piece of motorsport history with an engine cover pinched from a 2012 Renault Formula 1 car. Sporting the classic black and gold livery, the carbonfibre piece can now be easily wall-mounted in your man cave.



TOOL

Ring RIL3900HP Inspection Lamp

£39.99 ringautomotive.com

Light up the narrowest of spaces with Ring's slimmest ever lamp. At just 6mm thick it's ideal for finding the bolt head on a Subaru's almost inaccessible spark plugs – or maybe just that pound coin down the side of your driver's seat.

WATCHES



Leyden Lorentz

leydenwatches.com €395

Only the second model from relative newcomer Leyden, this piece has a sporty separate second hand and a Swiss-made hand-wound movement. Three colour schemes are available.



Christopher Ward C3 Morgan Chronograph

christopherward.co.uk From £450

The latest product of Christopher Ward's partnership with Morgan is this vintage-style quartz chronograph. It's available with a choice of straps or on a steel bracelet.



Farer Segrave

Farer.com £1675

One of three debut chronographs from Farer, each named after a British land speed record holder. This one is a nod to Henry Segrave, who reached 203.79mph back in 1927.

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Driven



Ariel Atom 4

Its looks may suggest otherwise, but this latest Atom is all-new – and a huge leap forward, too

A FAVE MOTORSPORT VHS OF MINE back in the day was *Nine Days in Summer*, a Ford promo film that followed the introduction of the Cosworth DFV V8 into F1 during the 1967 season. That year was the second season of the ‘Return to Power’; 3-litre engines with serious horsepower, the last full season before the appearance of aerodynamic wings – and cars unsullied by sponsorship, too. A different world, full of bold, primary colours, larger-than-life characters and majestic but savagely unforgiving circuits.

And it’s the patriotically hued British Racing Green Lotus 49 Cosworth that springs to mind now, as I stand beside the new Ariel Atom 4, nearly 20 years after the first Atom appeared. The Atom 4 seems lower, sleeker, downright faster-looking than Atoms of yore, its blood-red airbox slicked back to better shepherd the air it’s ingesting, the slim snout of a nose now providing passage to the front-mounted radiator, much like the Lotus. Sure, the tubular-frame structure doesn’t have the slippery fuselage of a ‘60s F1 car, but the spindly exposed wheels at each corner and minimalist ethos riff comprehensively off those vicious monoposto racers of half a century ago.

Only the pedal box, steering wheel and top of the steering column are carried over from the old Atom 3.5; the rest of the car is completely new. The engine is still a Honda unit – a relationship the firm cherishes – but it’s now the feisty turbocharged 2-litre from the latest Civic Type R. Switching from supercharging to that sometimes demonised

form of forced induction brings a little unease in a car as ostensibly pure as an Atom, but with the benefit of a new MBE ECU the motor is good for not only 320bhp but also 310lb ft of torque, the latter potentially bringing a whole new dimension to the car’s performance.

The familiar exoskeleton tubes are now larger in diameter, increasing chassis rigidity, and the revised suspension features anti-dive and anti-squat geometry, allowing a slightly softer spring rate from the new, Bilstein-damped suspension. The seats are now individual items, mounted in a wider cockpit, and while the track measurements are the same, the car is longer, mainly due to the engine installation. A small increase of around 45kg takes weight to a claimed 595kg at the kerb. Ariel’s development car is running optional carbonfibre wheels and AP Racing brakes, while the firm is now partnered with Avon, so the 4 is shod with a ZZR tyre in sizes 195/50 R16 front and 255/40 R17 rear. This is the first Ariel to have seen the inside of a wind tunnel, and it’s also the first Atom to be entirely represented in CAD.

Ariel director Tom Siebert shows me the controls on the new dashboard, its hi-res tablet-like screen and brightly hued switchgear looking more like something from an LMP1 car. It’s classic Ariel – simple, but brilliantly executed. There’s an adjustable boost button, which turns through three settings. ‘Level one and you’d let your nan drive it. It’s around 200bhp. Really tame. It’s like a “wet” setting,’ says Siebert. ‘Level two is about as fast as the old supercharged car – around 260bhp. And



—
**‘It leaves me breathless,
slightly disorientated and
screaming expletives’**





setting three [the full 320bhp] is hold-on-tight. I would start on three – you won't want to drive it around in the lower power modes.'

So, temps up to level, it's time to see what the Type R's blown four-pot feels like when I'm strapped inside a motorised children's climbing frame with little else attached. The result leaves me breathless, slightly disorientated and screaming expletives into the Nomex lining of my crash helmet. There have been supercharged Atoms with nearly as much power in the past, but they haven't mustered that savage stab of torque from such low revs. Floor the throttle and the Atom quivers for a millisecond, as if you've connected the metal frame to the mains, before slamming forward with a ferocity that makes it difficult to focus on the vanishing point. And then *KER-CHUMPF*, as my foot comes off the accelerator pedal and boost pressure is expelled. Even wearing a full-face lid that release of pressure is astonishingly loud: the Atom soundtrack is no longer defined by roar or whine, but by that noise. Throttle response is sharp, if just a few per cent shy of the old car's.

It dawns on me that the 'nan' setting still easily bests our Fast Fleet Caterham 310R, and that it may be a decent place to begin after all. So configured, the Atom is still astonishingly quick, just without the ultimate venom that makes the world go a little bit weird. But it does mean I have the mental capacity left over to think about the rest of the experience. The driving position feels a little higher-set than a Caterham's, but I find it very comfortable, the small aero screens more effective now at fending off turbulence. Meanwhile the slightly slower steering rack and longer wheelbase make the car less nervous. Years ago an Atom's steering would weight up markedly in a turn, but the 4 is actually a very delicate machine to handle, requiring only carefully managed inputs to adjust its trajectory down a road.

Above left: Atom 4 wears Avon ZZR rubber. **Top:** turbocharged 2-litre Honda motor produces 320bhp – 4bhp more than the same unit in the Civic Type R

The brakes are not only obviously powerful, but couldn't be more perfectly weighted for heel-and-toe work, while the manual gearshift requires just one finger to guide it through. A couple of times I hook fifth instead of third going up the 'box, but I soon realise the gate is closely spaced and, much like the rest of the car, needs delicacy to get the best from it. Driving the Atom 4 well feels a little like patting your head and rubbing your stomach to begin with, in that you must divorce the accelerative carnage from the overall driving experience if you're to learn the car and drive it with any semblance of smoothness. Production cars will have variable traction control, a benefit of using a standalone ECU for the first time. Without it there's the sense there's a whole world of trouble, much of it enjoyable, lying in wait. In the wet it must be an animal.

Clark and Hill were the envy of the field in '67 with their 400bhp DFVs, but they also lined up on the grid at around 700kg. Think about that. And then consider the Atom 4 costs £39,975 and, with Honda power, should be entirely reliable. That contemporary engine and CAD data also mean Ariel will soon press ahead with European Small Series Type Approval, allowing it to sell in Europe and territories beyond. Exciting times, but nothing like as wild as when you're belted into an Atom 4 on 1.3bar boost.

Adam Towler (@AdamTowler)

Engine In-line 4-cyl, 1996cc, turbocharged
Power 320bhp @ 6500rpm **Torque** 310lb ft @ 3000rpm
Weight 595kg (546bhp/ton) **0-60mph** 2.8sec
Top speed 162mph **Price** £39,975

+ Performance, sensory overload, wonderful design details

- You'll get wet if it rains, lacks old car's frantic soundtrack

evo rating ★★★★★

Ford Mustang Bullitt

Is the Bullitt a car Steve McQueen himself would be proud of, or is it just a standard Mustang in drag?

SO THE KEY QUESTION THAT HANGS OVER THE BULLITT Mustang is surely this: is it little more than a cynical marketing exercise on Ford's part, or is it, in fact, a rather tasty new performance model in its own right? On paper you'd be inclined to plump for option one, because to be honest there isn't a great deal of substance beneath that dark green paintwork to distinguish the Bullitt above or beyond a regular V8 Mustang.

True, it boasts a natty new set of Torq Thrust 19-inch alloy wheels with Michelin Pilot Sport tyres, and to be fair the combination of that green paint and some subtly applied flashes of chrome around the rear windows do lend it a look that is markedly different to and, to these eyes, more appealing than that of the regular V8 model. But mechanically we are not talking about a transformation here. Far from it. Which is perhaps a touch disappointing given that, at £47,545, the Bullitt costs five grand



more than the standard V8. And the total rises to £49,145 if you go for the excellent MagneRide adaptive suspension, which most owners should. More on why in a bit.

And yet the subtle modifications that Ford's Performance division *has* applied have, as it turns out, made quite a bit of difference to the way the Bullitt drives, specifically to the way it sounds, which is borderline magnificent. Lift the bonnet and you'll see a huge, new, bright-yellow air filter, which Ford calls an Open Air Induction System. Mated to a new intake manifold and whopping great 87mm throttle bodies that have been lifted straight from the flat-crank Shelby Mustang GT350 (which we don't get in the UK, boo-hiss), what you end up with is a V8 that sounds, well, just how a V8 should.

Helpfully, there's also a new 'good neighbour' feature whereby you

can dial the noise right back on start-up via a drive modes menu that contains no less than five different options, including a Drag Strip mode in which you can reduce the expensive rear Michelins to dust in seconds, if that's what turns you on.

Of rather more significance is the new rev-matching feature for the six-speed manual gearbox, which automatically dials up just the right amount of revs on downshifts the moment you depress the clutch and slot a lower gear. It works a treat in practice, even if it does render the art of using both feet to heel and toe entirely (and somewhat weirdly) redundant. Sounds good, though, and makes you look like a true pro from the outside, with the brake lights ablaze and an almighty burst of revs being perfectly applied when you shift from, say, third to second into a corner. The white cue-ball gearknob also feels lovely in your hand and





somehow manages to make the shift feel a touch crisper than normal, even though the mechanism remains unchanged.

Inside the Bullitt you get a pair of bespoke Recaro front seats that are pretty decent but, for me, don't adjust low enough, possibly due to the amount of electronic gubbins required within to provide movement in all desired directions except down, or maybe to meet the latest crash protection legislation.

Not-so-subtle Bullitt badging appears on the steering wheel boss, the sills and the tail, which is fair enough; you need to be reminded where your money is going. You also get Ford's new Sync system as standard, complete with a nice, big 12-inch touchscreen, plus Apple CarPlay and a top-notch B&O sound system for good measure. So although the vibe might feel quite traditional, quite old-fashioned even, the Bullitt is anything but inside.

Same goes for the way it drives, although being front-engined and rear-wheel drive and featuring a 'six-on-the-floor' manual 'box, there is a certain old-school feel to the way it goes down the road. It's still a big car, and feels it, especially if you start to lean on it through

Top: Dark Highland Green paint harks back to that on McQueen's Fastback in the 1968 movie.
Above right: tweaked V8 sounds the business

a set of S-bends, when eventually the level of mass wants to take over, causing the nose to run wide to begin with, followed by a fairly sharp transfer of weight away from the tail if you then choose to back off. To begin with, indeed, the Bullitt can seem a bit of a handful if you take it by the scruff and simply expect it to go where you point it. A BMW M3 it is not.

And that's where ticking the £1600 option box marked MagneRide comes into its own, because although this doesn't solve the Mustang's big-bruiser handling and ride completely, it does make a big difference on the move. As such, and once you've learned to manage the weight on corner entry, and use the car's fine traction towards the exit, you can hustle the Bullitt across country at some decently ridiculous speeds, as I discovered when driving it across the famous Mountain Road on the Isle of Man. I came across a local chap driving a V8 M3 who clearly knew a) his car, and b) his way over the mountain, yet he

didn't manage to drop the Bullitt. If anything, the Mustang had the edge in a straight line, which I wasn't expecting at all.

But then it does go a bit, the Bullitt. Its new breathing apparatus has definitely given it a fair bit more edge over the final 2000rpm, and if you keep it in that sweet spot it feels, and is, properly quick. The spec sheet says 453bhp and 390lb ft of torque, with 0-62mph in 4.6sec. But it feels quicker than that, especially above 5000rpm. My new friend in his M3 will attest to that, giving a big thumbs up as we went our separate ways.

Cynical marketing exercise? Yes, perhaps, but also a surprisingly committed – and really rather good – V8 performance car at the same time.

Steve Sutcliffe

Engine V8, 5038cc **Power** 453bhp @ 7000rpm

Torque 390lb ft @ 4600rpm

Weight 1668kg (276bhp/ton) **0-62mph** 4.6sec

Top speed 155mph **Basic price** £47,545

+ Proper V8 sound, proper V8 performance, looks

- Still feels big and heavy near the limit

evo rating ★★★★★☆



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Hyundai i30 N

Minus the Performance model's extra power and chassis upgrades, does the i30 N still deliver?

A LIST OF WHAT YOU MISS OUT ON if you buy the regular Hyundai i30 N rather than stumping up an extra £3000 for the i30 N Performance: 24 brake horsepower. An electronically controlled limited-slip differential. Larger brakes. Nineteen-inch wheels and specially developed Pirelli P Zero tyres. A 4mm lower ride height. An active exhaust valve.

It's a not insignificant collection of items, and one that might lead you to believe, as it did us, that the basic i30 N might feel a little hollow, desperate for a more aggressive set-up to help it come alive and give it the chops to compete with – and defeat – rivals from the likes of Volkswagen and Peugeot.

Spoiler alert: we need not have worried. True enough, the i30 N doesn't shine quite as brightly in standard form as it does with three grand's worth of upgrades, but just one run down a familiar road is enough to confirm that the basic, unadorned N remains one hell of a hot hatch.

Two hundred and forty-seven horsepower doesn't seem a lot for a modern hatch, certainly combined with a 1400kg kerb weight. In this class only the Volkswagen Golf GTI Performance and Skoda Octavia vRS 245 send less power to their front wheels (242bhp each), and both – even the bulky Octavia – are lighter on paper (1312kg for the Golf, 1370kg for the Octavia).

The Hyundai carries it well, though. The 2-litre turbocharged four is eager and happy spinning to the red line, even if long gearing



means you'll only hit that red line legally in first and second. A larger downside is that the standard exhaust lacks the raucous growl of the Performance version, and you hear more of the less appealing noise generator as a result.

The gearshift feels good, however – short, firm and mechanical, if baulky when you're pottering – and in the more aggressive drivetrain modes the car bursts forward eagerly with every squeeze of the throttle. An auto rev-matching function is still available via a button on the steering wheel, and it still blips the throttle with annoying perfection on every downchange.

Surprisingly, the smaller wheels and taller-sidewalled Michelin Super Sports haven't had any great effect on the ride quality, but they do ever-so-slightly soften off responses to the steering. Conversely, you gain a similarly small increase in progression at the limit, without a dramatic drop-off in the levels of outright grip available. The missing limited-slip diff is no real barrier to enjoyment, either, only becoming

apparent when the inside wheel scrabbles for traction in tighter corners.

The upshot of all this is a car that makes you relish those opportunities to duck off major routes and find twistier, quieter tracks, where the i30 N continues to feel like a car whose dynamics are perfectly judged for entertainment on normal roads. There's polish and real engineering to the mechanicals, but not so much it feels anodyne, and while you never feel short-changed for grip or straight-line punch, you can still safely exploit the N's potential on the road, where a Civic Type R cackles at your puny mortal driving abilities.

With the same seats as the Performance (albeit trimmed as standard in cloth, rather than leather and Alcantara) and the same exterior additions, you're not losing much in terms of aesthetics or comfort, either, and the basic i30 package remains practical, refined and easy to use.

In fact, the only real downside to the i30 N is that £3000 price gap. When you're paying by the month, we can think of no reason not to stump up just a fraction extra and enjoy the i30 N to its full, Performance potential.

Antony Ingram (@evoAntony)

Engine In-line 4-cyl, 1998cc, turbocharged
Power 247bhp @ 6000rpm **Torque** 260lb ft @ 1500-4000rpm
Weight 1400kg **0-62mph** 6.4sec
Top speed 155mph (limited) **Basic price** £25,760

+ Very close to the Performance version on ability...

- ...but not that far away on price

evo rating ★★★★★



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christopherward.co.uk



Simply bred

I enjoyed your 'Half-price Supercars' feature (*evo* 254). I own an Audi R8 of a similar vintage to the one featured, albeit a V8 manual.

What's interesting to me is how cars such as the R8 seem so analogue in comparison to modern machines. My previous car was a newer BMW M2 auto, and although similar in performance terms on paper, the differences between it and the R8 are amazing, particularly with regards to driver modes.

I don't understand why any performance car needs driver modes (apart from for meeting emissions legislation, perhaps), as surely by their very nature they should be permanently in a single Sport mode and anything else should be adjusted by your brain and your right foot!

In the R8 there is no such nonsense – when I am cruising along I select my own imaginary Comfort mode and when I am in the right mood and conditions allow I sometimes slip it into imaginary Sport Plus – all without an iDrive in sight!

Dave Crammer

Suppressed modes

A very interesting discussion on driver modes ('Pick and Mix', *evo* 253). I remember my old E39 M5 being a wonderful thing, only ruined by the sharpening of the throttle response and weighting up of the steering wheel when you pressed the M button.

I tried it a few times in the first six months of ownership, but then forgot it was there until I came to

sell the car seven years later and the prospective buyer asked if it worked.

My current 2010 Mini Cooper S has the same annoying habit when you press Sport, but I keep coming back to this one because it makes the exhaust crackle, pop and bang. If only I could have just that and leave the steering and throttle as standard.

The Porsche 968 Club Sport – a model which you revisited in the same issue [pictured above] – is the best car I've ever had the fortune to take the wheel of, thanks to a generous friend. And that has driver nothings, let alone modes. I wish I'd bought one before the prices rose so high.

Dan Rickard

Ready, settings, go!

My take on driver modes is that they make a driver feel a greater part of the driving experience. Just as a manual transmission brings more involvement, you feel part of each journey when you tailor the car to your needs.

We live in a world where configuring electronic equipment – from smartphones to TVs to domestic appliances – to better suit our needs is part and parcel of daily life, so why should cars be any different?

With the rapidly growing popularity of electric vehicles, the amount of 'tweakable' driver technology will only increase.

Faisal Rafique, Surrey

Rallying cry

I could not agree more with Stuart Gallagher's Ed Speak thoughts in *evo* 253. I truly do



LETTER OF THE MONTH

Go with the flow

READING ABOUT THE NEW AND BEAUTIFUL- looking Aston Martin DBS Superleggera (*evo* 252 and 254), one thing that has caught my attention is the amount of downforce it generates: 180kg.

You think, 'Yeah, that's a decent amount for a road-going grand tourer that's not got any frilly bits attached to increase downforce.' But then you read that that figure is achieved at the car's top-whack speed of 211mph. How many DBS drivers are going to be attacking corners at 211mph, exactly?

Why isn't there a realistic control speed for which all downforce measurements are given? As it stands, the Superleggera's headline figure of 180kg makes it sound like the Aston delivers more downforce than a car such as the Lotus Exige Sport 410, which has 'just' 150kg of downforce at its top speed. But that top speed is lower by more than 30mph. I'm pretty sure that at 100mph the Exige would have more downforce acting on its body and wings than a DBS does at 100mph.

Brad Johnson, Leeds

The Letter of the Month wins an MHD watch

The writer of this month's star letter receives an MHD CR1 chronograph worth £300. Designed by British car designer Matthew Humphries, the CR1 captures the style of '60s and '70s motoring watches in a modern timepiece and is limited to an edition of just 500 examples.

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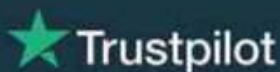
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INBOX



not understand why Citroën pours so much money into WRC only to fail to capitalise on its achievements with related road-going models. What does it go rallying for? Silver cups for its glass shelves?

Which brings me on to the question of why on earth did Citroën drop Kris Meeke? The brand does not really need wins, it needs publicity, and Meeke's character brought it in spades.

What's needed from WRC today is the kind of action, show and nerve-racking performances that bring lots of viewers. And then, finally, for manufacturers to make something for us, the fans, to buy apart from the collectable models [above].

Andy V

Stage struck

Mr Gallagher had a problem with the World Rally Championship's future back in February 2017 (Ed Speak, **evo** 231), taking issue with their being too much aero, programmable centre diffs, etc.

Now in **evo** 253 he has a problem with manufacturers not building road versions of the World Rally Cars we see on the stages. Whilst I do understand how great it is to see an old Group B homologation special, how often do you actually see one? Almost never. And even if manufacturers did produce a handful of road-going versions of today's WRC cars, they would be unobtainium to most of us, and hidden away in climate-controlled spaces by most of those who could afford them.

But I have seen loads of very exciting World Rallying from

brilliant-looking cars, with all the flaps and spoilers just like the good old Group B cars had. Long may it continue.

Pieter van der Westhuizen, Mallorca

Superu

I've just read Adam Towler's article about the 'Impreza' and meeting Jimmy McRae (**evo** 253). It was such a compelling read that, combined with a shared appreciation of the many memories Adam describes, it actually brought a tear to my eye.

I took delivery of a brand new Impreza Turbo 2000 back in 1998 and after the running-in period I took a work colleague out in it. We were flat out round a left-hand kink when we hit a slight bump in the road. My passenger grabbed his seat (sorry, David), I kept my foot in, and the car executed a perfectly neutral four-wheel drift and, in what seemed like slow motion, with a slight chirrup from the tyres, came back on line.

It's a memory seared into the 'great motoring moments' part of my brain – along with my first sight of Colin McRae on TV absolutely hammering a Vauxhall Nova on a stage of what must have been the British Rally Championship. He was visibly faster than anything else: absolute commitment, absolute legend. Thanks, Adam.

Paul Everitt

The price is right

In these days of endless new supercars, I find myself increasingly flicking through **evo** in search of articles on everyday performance cars. Adam Towler's Subaru farewell



hit the spot nicely and made for compelling reading.

Being a Scot and a motorsport fan, it's great to hear that the Colin McRae influence lives on. For those of us who enjoy the quiet and challenging terrain of Scottish B-roads, the imagery in that story alone captured the essence of the latest incarnation of 'Scooby' perfectly.

Even more compelling was the Lotus Exige S2 v Toyota GT86 comparison (Heart v Head, also **evo** 253). Advice about properly entertaining driver's cars for under £30k must surely be the sweet spot for your readers, as most would be able to realistically shoot for ownership of either car.

More of this type of article would be very well received!

Iain Robertson

One trick pony

I think the end-of-term report on your Ford Mustang V8 Convertible (**evo** 253) underlines the 'right car in the right place' argument. I have always hired Mustangs when visiting West Coast USA and they've been great. In Europe a 3-series makes more sense, and the sad state of UK roads probably encourages visitors to hire small SUVs!

Bob Bull

Lost in translation

Recently you called a BMW car a 'Beemer'. A Beemer is a motorcycle; a BMW car is a Bimmer. Now, when introducing the Bugatti Divo to your readers (**evo** 253), you state that it weighs 'nearly two tons'. But 1960kg – Bugatti's claim – equals 4321 pounds. A ton is 2000

pounds, so two tons would be 4000 pounds. Therefore the Divo weighs *more* than two tons.

Dennis Everett, New York, USA

Rather than being mistakes, these are in fact both examples of how we do things differently on opposite sides of the Atlantic.

In the UK a Beemer can be a BMW car or motorcycle – it even says so under an entry for 'Beemer' in the Oxford English Dictionary.

Meanwhile, to us a ton is 2240 pounds (or 1016kg); only in the US and Canada is a ton considered to be 2000 pounds (or 907kg). So from a British perspective, to say that 4321 pounds is 'nearly two tons' is correct, because it's slightly less than 4480 pounds.

Turns out the confusion doesn't end with wing/fender, bonnet/hood, boot/trunk, etc.

Electric scream

In the spirit of *Private Eye*, please cancel my subscription, now. Thanks for the ride, it's been a blast, etc, etc.

In **evo** 254 Richard Porter used his column to extol the virtues of an electric car. I like Richard, I've always liked Richard, I've stood up for him when people knock him. But 'the battery pack E-type is a clever bridge between heritage and modernity'? Nope. Please hand back your **evo** staff badge and no swiping Sellotape on the way out with your P45. Perhaps there's an opening for you as a staff writer at *Electric Cereal Box Monthly*.

I'm joking, obviously, but underneath the joke is a cold steely lump of *not joking*, Richard.

William Hage

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RICHARD MEADEN

The 488 Pistas of the world may be 'better' on paper, but they're not a patch on the 'flawed' F40

ONE OF THE GREAT JOYS OF BEING CAR enthusiasts is that, though we're all united by the same passion, we're all wired slightly differently. For instance, some people love Citroën 2CVs, but I can't abide the darned things. Similarly, I have a life-long love of original Minis and have developed something of an obsession with Porsche 911s, but I know either (or possibly both) leave some of you stone cold.

One thing we can agree on is there's no such thing as the perfect car. Nor will there ever be. Which is weird when you consider the entire automotive industry is geared towards achieving this unachievable goal. It really is a thankless task. Especially if you're an engineer, for while design is very much a subjective discipline, by its very nature engineering can be measured. Trouble is, if you can't quantify perfection, in what direction do you keep chipping away to nudge closer and closer to it? We're well used to the whole 'less weight, more power, quicker lap times' mantra, but is this the answer? Possibly, possibly not. And that's the problem, for perversely the 'better' cars get, the more we long for the things that have been mitigated, eradicated or replaced by a new and empirically improved set of attributes.

The aforementioned 911 is perhaps the best example of how making flawed things better is an obsession unique to the industry. Not to mention a lesson in how the process of improving and intensifying some things inevitably dilutes qualities that are held sacred. Don't get me wrong, I'm not about to rubbish half a century of engineering endeavour. Especially as in recent years Porsche has shown itself capable of doing what few others would and take what conventional thinking would suggest are retrograde steps, such as offering a manual 'box GT3.

Sticking with the 911 theme, I'd also suggest a greater part of the latest GT3 RS's magic is rooted in the decision to make its suspension unapologetically firm and not filtering its steering feel so finely. It's not as compliant and less of an everyday-capable car as a result, but it's sensational for those who crave an unusual level of focus and aggression. Of course, the engineers' hard-won gains in engine performance and chassis balance are welcome, but it's the pursuit of this divisive damping set-up that appeals to me most.

But for me no car expresses the Perfection Paradox more

eloquently than the Ferrari F40: simultaneously one of the most flawed and revered cars of all time. I've been fortunate to have driven a number of examples, none of which were remotely consistent with one another, but they all shared a basic brilliance that came from being a machine intended solely for going very quickly and employing race car thinking and technology.

This, of course, is what makes the F40 so bloody wonderful. And why so many were crashed. Even now, 30 years since it first blew us away, an irresponsible half-hour in one of these crazed contraptions on a challenging road is more than enough to have your sweat and adrenal glands crying for mercy. The demands it places on you to keep it on the boil and out of the hedgerow would never be sanctioned or accepted today, which is precisely why its

'The demands the F40 places on you to keep it on the boil would never be sanctioned today'

legend grows. Lag you can measure with an egg timer followed by a big spike of boost, plus white-knuckle bump steer and barely adequate brakes are all matched by a driving position that basically rests your forehead against the windscreen header rail and a derisory nod to build quality that sees green adhesive smeared round the chassis like a half-arsed DIY attempt at curing a leaking shower cubicle. Even the thin paintwork taunts you with the visible composite weave beneath: a finish now seen as a mark of originality and badge of

honour for prioritising low weight over deep shine.

Ironic, then, that Ferrari's 488 Pista appears to have fallen into the trap of chasing perfection to the detriment of the overall experience. Zero turbo lag, perfectly managed boost, tireless brakes and dazzling electricravery makes it a remarkable technical achievement and an extraordinarily fast car on road or track. It trumps the F40 in every measurable area, and yet its character is one-dimensional and its delivery less nuanced, even than the 458 Speciale it replaced. Quite how I can feel this way about a twin-turbocharged, 710bhp, 211mph Ferrari is perplexing.

The last thing our world needs is faster, grippier and more exploitable supercars. What we do need is their makers to have the courage and imagination to look beyond ironing-out every last dynamic wrinkle or steamrolling spiky power curves, and acknowledge what some of us have felt for years: much like people you meet in life, the most memorable, engaging and enduringly intriguing cars are the ones defined by their quirks and imperfections.

 @DickieMeaden

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RICHARD PORTER

Why a Range Rover could help you avoid a run-in with Espace man – and your ex

A FEW WEEKS AGO I SPENT SOME TIME DRIVING the latest Range Rover. It was very pleasant. Range Rovers are incredibly relaxing, they have a tremendous view out and they loom over faux-by-four crossovers as if to remind them who's the daddy. Which is, in turn, another part of their appeal; Range Rovers are alpha cars. You might think the driver is a total arse, but you can't deny they're probably important and influential. A Range Rover driver might own anything from half of Shropshire to a chain of betting shops, but either way you wouldn't mess with them because they've probably got a gun in the boot.

This makes the Range Rover the very opposite of the Rover 75. In fact, the Rover 75 is the least alpha car I've ever bought. It was many years ago, I'd just run a Smart Roadster and then a Fiesta ST as *evo* Fast Fleet cars and what I needed was some respite from rock-hard ride quality. The Fiesta was pretty firm. The Smart was so stiff it made your brain bounce off the inside of your skull like a squash ball. Short of finding a '70s Rolls Shadow, the Rover 75 seemed to promise the highest level of buttery bump absorption for my budget. Also, I was just shy of my 30th birthday so I thought it was amusing to roll in the most geriatric car since the Allegro Vanden Plas. And I'm not going to lie, I just liked the Rover 75. So I bought one, in Dorchester Red (brown) with an Aubergine interior (purple). After the frenzied stylings of the Smart and the Fiesta, it was calming and comfortable. It also earned absolutely zero respect from other road users.

When you drive a Rover 75 you get used to many things, aside from class-leading ride quality and a dashboard like your great aunt's sideboard. People don't let you out of side turnings, cruelly assuming that you're palpably close to death, or at least the day when your relatives need to have that 'difficult' conversation that ends with your house being sold and your dinner being brought to you at 4pm by someone in a smock. You also learn to live with another car being right up your bum, and again I presume it's because other drivers think you're well into the outer suburbs of senility and are driving too slowly. You could be streaking down the M1 at 120mph and there'd still be an Audi A4 about 14mm

from your back bumper with the driver's hand hovering over the high beams. After a while it gets a bit wearing.

This came to a head one rainy Sunday afternoon when I was returning home in the company of the woman who had recently become my ex-girlfriend and, as such, could legitimately claim to hate me more than anyone else in the world. Although this title was shortly to be challenged by a man in a Renault Espace. We were driving down a narrow road near my house, one of those London streets with cars parked either side which means traffic can pass between in only one direction at a time. The path seemed clear until Espace man pulled out of a side turning and, rather than waiting by the junction, decided to carry on driving straight towards me. 'It's some piss-sodden pensioner,' I

presume he thought, 'they'll back up out of my way.'

But I didn't. I stopped. Espace man kept coming and then, baffled that he wasn't able to muscle an oncoming octogenarian into a befuddled retreat, switched to plan B, which was to start squeezing his practical Renault through the narrow gap between my Rover and the parked cars. As he inched level with my car I dropped the window. Rain plopped onto the Aubergine leather. His window slid down too. 'Why didn't you wait?' I asked politely. 'Why didn't *you* wait?' he hissed. 'Because I was already coming down here,' I replied, 'and you could have waited.' The man visibly bristled. His tone edged into aggression, like the surprisingly sporty engine note of

a Rover 75's V6 when you really wind it up. 'YOU SHOULD HAVE LOOKED, YOU STUPID BASTARD!' he shouted.

Unprepared for hostilities to escalate so quickly I had no robust comeback pre-loaded in my brain. Espace man had been edging forward this whole time and now there was enough gap for me to unleash a fierce burn and then scarper. In a panic my mental Rolodex span round to the section marked 'swears' and I grabbed at the first thing that appeared. 'SHIT OFF!' I yelled, and then surged the 75 out of range of his reply. My recently ex-girlfriend looked at me with such withering disdain it puckered the cream piping on the seats. 'Shit off?' she said with utter disgust.

This was my life in Britain's least alpha car. In retrospect, I wish I'd bought a Range Rover.

'I just liked the Rover 75. It was calming and comfortable. It also earned absolutely zero respect from other road users'

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TED KRAVITZ

The truly great circuits aren't just about the tracks, they're about the fans, too

WHAT MAKES A GREAT RACETRACK? THEY'RE all good – anywhere you can rock up, put your foot down and thrash round, worrying only about your skills rather than the speedo, is near enough nirvana these days, but there are some track layouts that surpass the merely enjoyable, tracks that test both driver and car to their limits, tracks that are truly great.

Step forward the Suzuka Circuit. Built in 1962, the track was designed by the late John Hugenholtz, a Dutch lawyer turned journalist who had a racer's instinct for what made an exhilarating track to drive. The long straights of the old Hockenheim was one of his, as were the up-and-overs through the sand dunes of Zandvoort. Hugenholtz was a fast-sweep to cambered-corner man, and racing drivers have loved him for it ever since.

Which is more than can be said for modern circuits, many of which have been designed by Hermann Tilke. A racing driver turned engineer, the affable Tilke has shied away from fast corners, preferring long straights followed by hairpins and countless off-camber 90-degree corners, apparent in his designs from Sochi to Delhi, Abu Dhabi to Bahrain. Arguably Tilke's only great tracks have been Istanbul Park, home of the now-defunct Turkish Grand Prix, and the Circuit of The Americas in Austin, Texas, where he basically built a big hill before cutting and pasting a few corners from other tracks and joining them up to create a 'greatest hits' circuit.

Tilke can build a hill but he can't move mountains, so somewhere like Spa-Francorchamps, based as it is around rolling public roads, isn't a fair comparison. Intriguingly, there was an advert for Spa on one of Suzuka's giant billboards, designed, presumably, to persuade Japanese race-goers to make the journey to Belgium for a race at Spa. If they did, though, the average Japanese race fan would be in for one hell of a shock.

That's because, though it pains me to say it, Spa is one of the worst organised venues on the calendar. Your average Japanese visitor would find only one small area at the bottom of Eau Rouge that has things they might find engaging – food stalls and merchandise shops – while the rest of the track is just grandstands and general access viewing banks, plus exposed escarpments

where people perch on top of rocks to get a half-decent view. It's all completely open to the elements, which in Belgium are always pretty hostile. Talking of hostile, the organisers clearly think there's a civil disobedience problem, as every year they employ security guards with attack dogs to roam around looking for Dutch fans sitting on the wrong piece of rock. F1 photographers get menaced by these dogs at regular intervals during the Grand Prix weekend. It's a curiously unpleasant approach by the organisers, given the paying customers are their primary source of income and the photographers are just doing their jobs.

The best-organised circuits often have the smallest tracks, as there's less of a sprawling estate to manage. Austria's Red Bull Ring has had millions of energy-drink euros spent on it, and it

shows – facilities are truly excellent and the whole circuit is run with typical Austrian efficiency. Silverstone is huge by comparison and much harder to get around, even though the facilities, parking and traffic management have been revolutionised in recent years. This stuff matters: Paul Ricard cocked up its traffic management so badly this year (partly due to a dispute with the local police) that many fans vowed never to return. Barcelona's Circuit de Catalunya only serves alcohol-free beer – something that must come as a shock to stag weekenders.

The circuit that gets it consistently right is Melbourne's Albert Park: beautiful setting, great bar, food and viewing

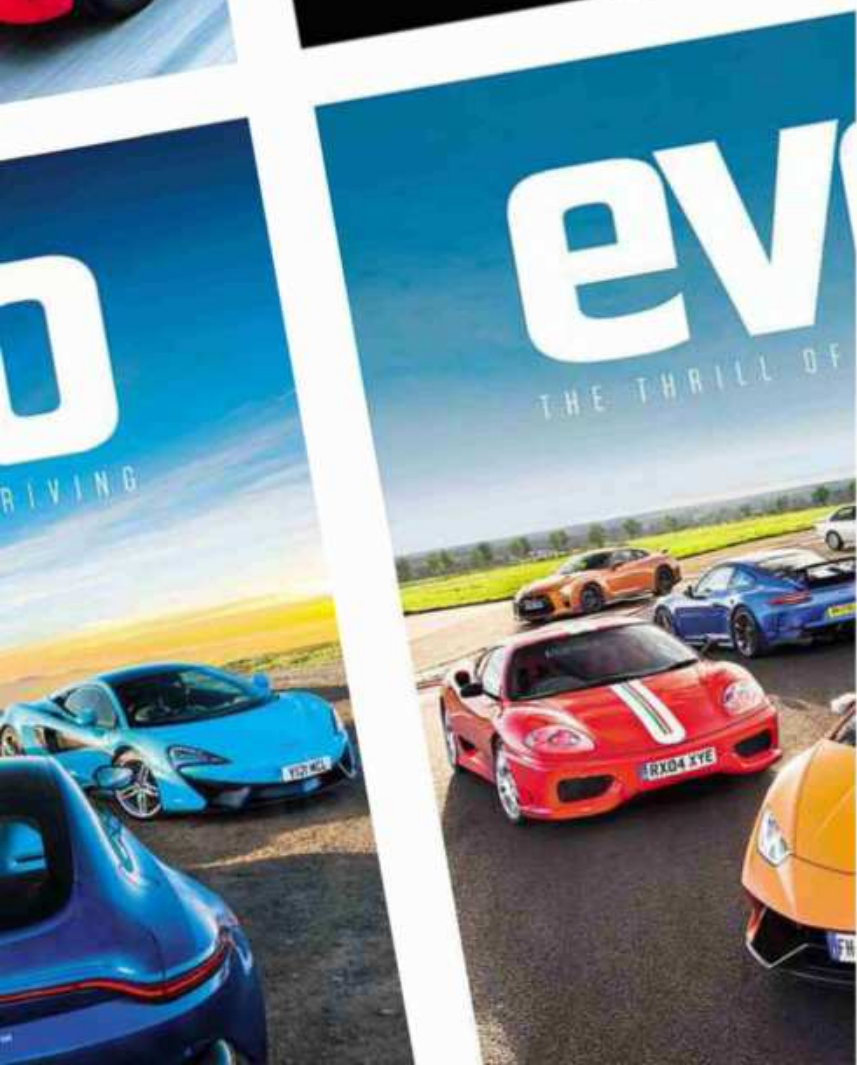
facilities, and easy public transport access to one of the world's most liveable cities. Other notables are Monaco, Baku and Singapore, who run a pretty slick organisation considering the logistical nightmare of shutting down a city. Hockenheim and the Hungaroring are tricky to get to but have a great summer atmosphere. Bahrain and Abu Dhabi are pleasant and efficient but hot as hell and fairly soulless. Mexico and Brazil (my favourite) have soul to spare but are a little chaotic on the organisation and aren't in the safest of cities, while Russia and China are only for those in search of adventure but aren't too bothered to find disappointment. Montreal is lovely, but Japan has it all: clinically efficient, respectful Japanese organisation and passionate, knowledgeable fans, mostly in amusing team-themed fancy dress. Try it one year – you'll have as superb a time as the drivers.

'Every year Spa employs security guards with attack dogs to roam around looking for Dutch fans sitting on the wrong piece of rock'

 @tedkravitz

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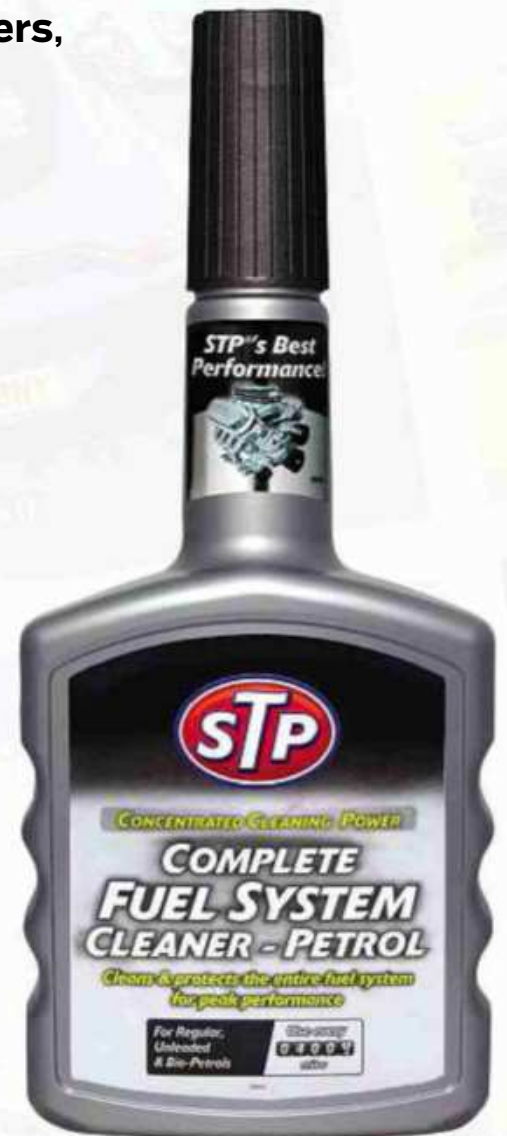
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SECOND COMING





by STUART GALLAGHER

Twenty years after the last F1 was delivered, McLaren has revealed its successor. It's called the Speedtail and it's the most extraordinary car yet to emerge from modern-era Woking



Left: flexible carbon ailerons trim aero as required. **Right:** front wheel hubs hide carbon brakes shared with the Senna

design that cloaks an unapologetic level of performance.

Normally at this stage of a new McLaren's reveal the car in question is only a few months of final calibration away from production. That's not the case with the Speedtail. The Speedtail Silver car pictured here is a working example and representative of the finished article, give or take a shutline or two. It can move under its own power (although max-speed runs are probably a step too far today) and features every function and design detail that will make its way onto the final production cars. There are also two development mules, one affectionately called Albert after the original Ultima-based F1 test car. Today McLaren has its own models to build its mules from, so a couple of 720Ss have had their rear decks stretched and a three-seat driving layout fitted.

What McLaren is offering in terms of detail is the following. The 4-litre turbocharged V8 petrol engine will be assisted by an electric motor fed by a battery that will be induction charged. Drive will be to the rear wheels, which will need to manage 1050 PS (1036bhp in *evo* money) and a 0-300kph (186mph) time of 12.8sec. To save you looking it up, that's 3.7sec quicker than a P1, a car that we've yet to find anyone step from and say it felt a bit tardy.

When it comes to top speed the Speedtail will reach 250mph – 10mph more than the McLaren F1 achieved – although this is a minimum figure because work with Pirelli on a bespoke tyre is still in the early stages. 'We need a tyre that has enough sidewall compliance for the Speedtail to deliver on its GT credentials, but will still be capable of 403kph,' explains Andy Palmer, vehicle line director for McLaren's Ultimate Series cars. (The pictured car is fitted with Pirelli P Zeros measuring 235/35 ZR20 front, 315/30 ZR21 rear.) Bugatti and Michelin might want to book some track time next year. Like the Bugatti, to reach the Speedtail's top speed you will need to select a different driving mode – 'Velocity' mode in McLaren speak – which also lowers the car 35mm and retracts the 'door mirrors'. More on those later.

Those numbers only tell part of the story. So much of the Speedtail and its goals lie in its design and the way it looks. 'When designing the Speedtail we designed everything for a reason,' explains Rob Melville, McLaren's design director. 'To achieve what we wanted we had a number of design pillars to work to: using the right materials were key, it had to be light but it also had to be functional. There had to be no excess on the car. With the Senna we had a purpose – it was a car always designed for the track so downforce was a priority. With Speedtail top speed, acceleration and comfort were our primary focus so we needed a clean design, the cleanest possible. It meant we had to rethink how we approached previous areas of McLaren design.'

'We needed the design to be very functional; to deliver the target speed every area of the car has to have a function. But it also had to have a level of engagement beyond anything we have produced before. We had to be brave every step of the way to achieve our goals. We had to take risks.'

Melville and his team certainly did that. As you'd expect, the Speedtail is low – in its lowest setting the highest point is just 1.1 metres off the ground – and at 5.2 metres long we're talking long-wheelbase S-class in length. But it's well proportioned

F I HAD THE FIRST IDEA ABOUT MUSIC

I'd shoehorn in a 'tricky second album' analogy right about now. But seeing as my audio tastes start and stop at *Test Match Special* I'm a bit stuck. So here is McLaren's replacement for the F1. A car McLaren owners and fans have been waiting two decades for and a car that redefines today's hypercars.

As per the original, this is a money-no-object (within reason), no-compromise automobile that reinvents a genre and, perhaps, will once again make the establishment wake from its slumber and understand that at the higher echelons of the automotive world a 'that will do' approach isn't an option. Neither is an SUV.

Twenty years ago the last F1 was produced, the project cut short due to a financial climate in which spending \$1million on a car left an uneasy feeling. Twenty years later McLaren has started the journey that will see the F1's true successor arrive in less than 18 months' time with a price starting from £1.75million (plus tax).

The Speedtail is only the second McLaren to get a name rather than a letter-and-number identifier and it comes from the Ultimate Series stable, where at one end sits the Senna and the Senna GTR, in the middle will be the successor to the P1 (due before the end of 2025), and parked at the opposite end to the Senna will be the Speedtail.

What, then, is the Speedtail exactly? It's a hyper-GT car that will also be the most powerful and fastest McLaren to date. It looks like it's landed from an episode of *The Jetsons*.

While the next P1 will, like the original, be McLaren's pioneer car and the model that sets out what we can expect in terms of design, performance and technology from the brand going forward, and the Senna remains McLaren's ultimate expression of a track car – or ultimate, ultimate if we're talking about the track-only GTR model – the Speedtail is the ultimate road car. It is everything McLaren Automotive knows distilled into an elegant

**‘VELOCITY
MODE LOWERS
THE CAR 35MM
AND RETRACTS
THE “DOOR
MIRRORS”’**



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McLAREN SPEEDTAIL

with a hip-high roofline and hammerhead nose that has the appearance of a smoothed-over 720S front end; the cuts, slashes and scoops appearing to have been filled in with liquid carbonfibre. There are narrow LED headlights, while the upright DRLs are positioned on the leading edges of the nose and incorporate a pair of air curtains that draw air in, along and out under the doors and down the side of the car as smoothly and cleanly as possible. The front is low and broad-shouldered to punch that initial hole in the air.

The teardrop-shaped cockpit is made from four single pieces of glass – one for the windscreen, which curves up to form part of the roof, a piece each for both doors, and a single curved section that tapers into the engine cover. The technology employed in the glasshouse has allowed McLaren to remove much of the visual roof bars, further improving airflow over the body. The side windows also double up as the top half of the doors, allowing the removal of the carbon door frames.

Manufactured from Thin-Ply Technology Carbon (TPTC), the material is just 30-microns deep and was developed in conjunction with a watch manufacturer and allows the surface to be milled to an unheard-of precision for a car. Combined with Titanium Deposition Carbon Fibre (TDCF), a material that has just 1000 fibres per thread rather than the usual 3000, has allowed more intricate and lighter bodywork to be produced.

Just three pieces of carbon make up the rear of the car, two of which are the largest single-form pieces of the material fitted to a production car, and were instrumental in allowing Melville and his team to create the Speedtail's remarkable look. The result is a cross between the car we all drew as an eight-year-old when asked to think what the future holds, mixed with the elegance of pre-war streamliner racers.

For a car with so few overt design details it's hard to pull yourself away from it because what details are there take a while to get your head around. There are, for example, no door mirrors – not because it's so early in the project's life but because McLaren will use a digital mirror system: a wide-angle camera glides out from each door and relays the image it captures onto a small screen on the corresponding side of the cockpit. When you select Velocity mode the cameras retract to reduce drag.

You'll notice there are no aerodynamic wings, either, partly because of the associated drag, but also because a car with



the Speedtail's performance only requires an element of aerodynamic assistance to keep it the right way up. There are, however, two hydraulically actuated ailerons on the trailing edge of the rear clamshell that are formed in flexible carbon and trim the aero as required. And those front wheel covers? They're fixed items manufactured from carbonfibre, secured to the hub through the wheel, with barely millimetres of clearance between the inner face of the disc and the wheel. They're only on the front because there was minimal benefit to be gained by fitting them to the rear wheels. Behind the forged wheels are the same carbon-ceramic brakes as fitted to the Senna.

Beneath the carbon body is a new MonoCell with lower sills and no upper door frames or roof bracing. The wheelbase is 50mm longer than the 2670mm of the 720S, with the additional space freed for battery storage between the passenger cell and engine. The two passenger seats either side of the central driver's seat are integrated into the carbon tub. There's also a new front bulkhead to accommodate the central driving



Above: narrow LED headlights neighbour DRLs and air intakes.

Right: teardrop cockpit formed from four pieces of glass

‘THIS SPEEDTAIL HAS £450K OF EXTRAS. THAT’S TWO 720SS IN OPTIONS...’

position, and unlike the F1 the driver can enter or exit through either door, as there’s no gearlever in the way.

In addition to the ‘mirror’ screens, occupants are presented with three TFT displays – one directly ahead of the driver for the instruments, with one either side angled in for the infotainment and navigation systems. There are a handful of switches on the roof, including controls for the gearbox and driving modes, and like the Kenwood CD player in the F1, the Speedtail has a bespoke Bowers & Wilkins system that’s designed to maximise the central driving position. And there are no sun visors: instead the four glass panels are fitted with electro-chromatic technology to change their tint at the touch of a button.

Personalisation plays a big part in the Speedtail’s DNA and McLaren has developed plenty of ways to feed customers’ needs to be individual, such as titanium-fused carbonfibre that can be colour-coded to your requirements. Such are the opportunities to personalise your Speedtail that this example has £450,000 of options fitted to it. That’s two 720Ss in options; we’ll just let that sink in.

With only 106 Speedtails destined to be built (once McLaren has finished the run of Senna GTRs, which it can’t start until the last Senna is delivered later this year) the chances of seeing one in the flesh are thin on the ground, although McLaren owners do appear to enjoy their cars more than owners of rival products. Even so, a car costing this much and chasing a top speed that holds little relevance to so many should be considered a total folly. And yet it’s not. Just as Bugatti’s Chiron, the Koenigsegg One:1 and Aston Martin’s Valkyrie represent the very best each has to offer, the Speedtail is the ultimate expression of McLaren’s pioneering spirit. Just like the F1. ✕

HOW THE SPEEDTAIL COMPARES

	SPEEDTAIL	P1	F1
Engine	V8, 3999cc, twin-turbo, electric motor	V8, 3799cc, twin-turbo, electric motor	V12, 6064cc
Power	1036bhp	903bhp @ 7500rpm	627bhp @ 7500rpm
Torque	1000lb ft (est)	664lb ft @ 4000rpm	479lb ft @ 4000-7000rpm
Weight	1430kg (dry)	1490kg	1138kg
Power-to-weight	736bhp/ton (dry)	616bhp/ton	560bhp/ton
0-186mph	12.8sec	16.5sec	22.0sec
Top speed	250mph	217mph	240mph





by DAVID VIVIAN

PHOTOGRAPHY by ASTON PARROTT

STING IN THE TAIL

From Speedtail to Longtail, as McLaren's 600LT hits the road for the first time. Can a Sports Series model really be as deserving of the Longtail name as its esteemed predecessors?

Here's where we find out





N

OTHER CAR MAKER

I know of does evolution as aggressively as McLaren Automotive. Conceivably, very few others could without fracturing the hierarchical structures that underpin the way cars have always been marketed and sold. The once seemingly immutable rule

so vigorously stress-tested by Woking's wunderkind is this: the performance and abilities of a new model shall not be allowed to match, let alone eclipse, those of an existing or recently retired model from the next tier up.

Witness Porsche's unceasing manoeuvres to maintain daylight and a desirability gap between the optimally mid-engined Boxster/Cayman and the awkwardly rear-engined 911. It's understandable for the 911's sake, but leaves Porsche's market strategy vulnerable to the F1-style open-ended, fast-rolling development ethos that has informed McLaren's rise from rookie purveyor of a new but imperfect supercar paradigm (the 12C) to a high-tech omnipresence with an array of cutting-edge skill sets

that come across like Tony Stark's rapidly evolved *Iron Man* suits.

The company doesn't advertise its overarching instinct to simply build a better supercar, wherever it falls in the range, in 30ft neon letters, of course. On the surface, there's structure as pointy as The Shard's: Sports Series (540C, 570GT, 570S, 600LT) looks up to Super Series (720S) looks up to Ultimate Series (Senna and the forthcoming Speedtail). Thing is, the company doesn't obsess about its latest move treading on the toes of an older, pricier effort. Sure, it will create complicated spider charts to target and pin specific areas in which to excel, but the general thrust is onwards and upwards. Take the 720S. For all practical purposes, it's at least as quick as the company's P1 hybrid hypercar. That's fast-track progress with titanium bells on.

It's interesting that the chart McLaren did for its latest release, the £185,500 and 592bhp 600LT, references not just the car on which it's based, the 570S, but its £73,500 more expensive and 74bhp more powerful Longtail predecessor, 675LT – and in the areas of lap time and chassis engagement it shades the 675LT, both

Above right: one of three McLaren F1 GT Longtail road cars built for homologation purposes. **Right:** the F1 GTR Longtail was introduced to counter the growing threat from Porsche and Mercedes in GT racing



‘Possibly, it’s the best modern McLaren road car yet this side of £1million’

cars’ performance markers stretching out to near the perimeter of the web with the hardly sleepy 570S way back near its centre. Safe to say, the 600LT is more than a stripped-down, lightweight 570S. Possibly, as a yet sharper distillation of the Longtail special brew, it’s the best modern McLaren road car yet this side of £1million.

Longtail, LT, is often read as McLaren’s ‘RS’, but it’s a little more literal than that: 74mm of additional aero in the case of the 600LT, only the fourth car to be granted the hallowed suffix. The first was the F1 GTR race car in 1996, and its ‘Longtail’ implementation was both urgent and invested with glorious purpose – i.e. to recover the F1’s competitive edge when the GT rules changed and to start winning again. For homologation, three road cars were built as the ‘F1 GT’, and F1 designer Gordon Murray insisted everything be done to the letter of the regulations. The result was, nonetheless, spectacular, and anchored in Murray’s belief that brute force is



Left: Longtail F1 GTR debuted in 1997. **Below left:** road-going 675LT would resurrect the Longtail name 18 years later

seldom the answer. The extra power coaxed from the BMW-sourced V12 paled against the improbable act of cutting 135kg from an already svelte 1050kg race-trim weight. Especially given that the biggest change of all was a downforce-generating tail that increased the car's length by 641mm.

On driving the lighter, longer F1 GTR, JJ Lehto – who helped pilot the pre-Longtail F1 GTR to victory at Le Mans in 1995 – is reported to have said that the difference felt like jumping from Formula 3000 to Formula 1. The extra power and lighter weight helped, but downforce was key. 'On another level,' according to Lehto. As fate would have it, his Longtail didn't go the distance at Le Mans in '97 but two others did, finishing 1st and 2nd in the GT1 class, the leading McLaren just one lap adrift of the race-winning LMP Porsche WSC-95.

So Longtail: not just another nebulous go-faster nomenclature concocted by a marketing department, but a precisely defined charter for a talent top-up transferable from track to road. Thus, the changes that turned around the fortunes of the F1 GTR would go on to become the template for McLaren's most focused and track-savvy output. First fruit was 2015's 675LT, remembered fondly in these parts for engendering genuine affection and awe rather than the cool admiration previously afforded Super Series Maccas, and also for edging ahead of Porsche's terrific 911 GT3 RS after an epic battle at eCoty 2015 (*evo* 216).

Just like the seminal F1 GTR Longtail, the aero-optimised 675LT – available as a coupe or spider – was lighter, longer and more powerful than the car it was based on, the already ballistic 650S. The larger wing/airbrake-based rear-end stretch may have been only 34mm, yet together with the new front splitter and rear diffuser it was enough to generate 40 per cent more overall





'It is fair to say that the 600LT lacks the 675LT's softer side'

downforce (measured at 186mph) than the 650S. It helped that McLaren saw no harm in raiding the P1 goodie box, but the core assets of the twin-turbo 3.8-litre V8 were clearly formidable: 666bhp, 516lb ft of torque, a best-in-class power-to-weight ratio of 510bhp per ton, 0-62mph in 2.9sec and 0-124mph in 7.9sec.

It was all too much for the 911 GT3 RS at eCoty. However hard the Porsche tried – and it was in the conviction and mechanical purity of its vein-bulging exertions that it won most friends – the more expensive and sophisticated McLaren had it covered with talent to spare. It owed a lot not just to the P1-inspired fettling of the chassis but also the advanced nature of its architecture. As with the original 12C, the dampers were connected hydraulically and linked to a gas-filled accumulator, providing adaptive responses depending on road conditions and mode settings. The system virtually eliminated body roll in corners while decoupling the suspension in a straight line for better wheel articulation and compliance. It didn't have or need conventional mechanical anti-roll bars, saving weight and improving ride comfort. It made the 675LT a little less engaging and exciting than the GT3 RS to lean on in extremis, but also gave it a wonderful dual personality that mixed a loping, supple quality into its hardcore chops.

With its passive suspension set-up and Longtail job sheet, the 600LT isn't like that at all. Photographer Aston Parrott and I are heading to some of *evo's* favourite local stomping grounds

to see how the good time deputy editor Adam Towler had at the Hungaroring last month translates to bumpier, more erratically contoured blacktop, and it's fair to say the 600LT, although auto short-shifting through its transmission's seven speeds with commendable 'off-duty' laziness, lacks the 675LT's softer side. It feels a lot closer to what I remember of the GT3 RS – raw and nuggety, engine vibrations throbbing through the cabin with next to no cushioning or dampening. If I'd just stepped out of a 675LT, I'd be inclined to ask, 'What's gone wrong?' But as McLaren is happy to advise that, if lap times are my thing, I'd be better off betting on the 600LT, it's perhaps more a question of what's gone right?

Well, having the 570S as a starting point – arguably still the sweetest steer in the McLaren portfolio – can't be bad. The 600LT is 84kg lighter (1356kg) and has 592bhp, 30bhp more than the 570S. Twenty-three per cent of the parts are new, though the moveable aero and hydraulic cross-linked dampers of the 675LT are off-limits for Sports Series models. Changes are thoroughgoing nonetheless and include new cams and a new ECU; the removal of more than 27kg from the wheels, tyres and forged aluminium suspension; recalibrated dampers; a lowered ride height; widened tracks and, once again showing that McLaren doesn't mind pinching good stuff, the uprights from the 720S. The aero, the Longtail bit, divides the 74mm increase in overall length between the extended front splitter and rear diffuser and not the new fixed rear wing. But the wing does have a heatproof coating to repel the hot gases and, indeed, shooting flames from the new top-exit exhaust system that, as well as truncating the exhaust plumbing, has been designed to also ramp-up the aural drama – in volume and violence, if not musical content. It all contributes to 100kg of downforce at 155mph. On the way there, 62mph is dispatched in a 675LT-matching 2.9sec, 124mph in 8.2sec (0.3sec behind the 675LT but a tenth faster than Porsche's 911 GT2 RS) and the





**‘It allows a clarity
of control that is
unprecedented
in a road car’**

quarter-mile in 10.4sec. A ‘10-second car’ in *Fast & Furious* speak.

If the way the 600LT handles and rides fails to shadow the 675LT, its departure from the 570S is perhaps even more remarkable. As we hit open countryside, completely gone is that car’s light touch and almost magical indifference to ravaged tarmac, replaced with positively fibrous feedback, laser-like resolve and ride quality that connects, unfiltered, with the road. Back in 2016, the 570S all but mesmerised eCoty (*evo* 229) in the way it would skim over broken surfaces as if its body were held in a perfect relationship with terra firma by some external magnetic force while its wheels merely danced over the skin of the road. But it had its downsides, too: light steering, a vague sense of cool aloofness, and fascinating but arguably inappropriate delicacy. I invoked Albert Einstein’s ‘spooky action at a distance’ attempting to describe it.

There’s something Einsteinian about the way the 600LT corners, too, but for different reasons. Once used to the freaky amount of speed it can carry into and through a bend – even by 675LT standards it takes numerous goes to sink in – it’s the impression of time slowing down that confounds reason. Perhaps we should call it Federer syndrome, a nod to the way the Swiss tennis legend is able to move less to greater effect because he sees things so much better – not through greater visual acuity but a faster processor that, for him, dials back the frame rate and enhances precision.

The 600LT gifts its driver a similar superpower. To an outside observer, the McLaren’s cornering pace can seem unreal but, from

behind its rather lovely Alcantara-rimmed wheel, there’s no sense of rush, no tangled transient forces or prescriptive protocols to sheer the nose or tail away from a clean and natural line. That’s up to you, but because of the absence of complication, the tight fusion of grip and direction, and a very singular cornering dynamic, it’s a combination that seems to put intention way out ahead of process and allows a clarity of control that, in my experience, is unprecedented in a road car. Let me put it another way. The 600LT is the best-handling car I’ve ever driven. It can do so much with the mighty thrust delivered by its (still) rather industrial-sounding twin-turbo V8 and (still) less-than-silky dual-clutch gearbox that the 675LT-embarrassing track prowess is no surprise.

McLaren Automotive has become a seemingly unstoppable supercar force and seemingly unmatched in its ability to fold cutting-edge tech and performance into its more affordable cars. The 600LT might not be as easy to live with as its Longtail progenitor or as civilised as the 570S on which it’s based, but if ever a car has understood ‘the zone’ and how to exploit it, this is it. ☒

McLaren 600LT

Engine V8, 3799cc, twin-turbo **Power** 592bhp @ 7500rpm
Torque 457lb ft @ 5500-6500rpm **Weight** 1356kg **Power-to-weight** 444bhp/ton
0-62mph 2.9sec **Top speed** 204mph **Basic price** £185,500

evo rating ★★★★★

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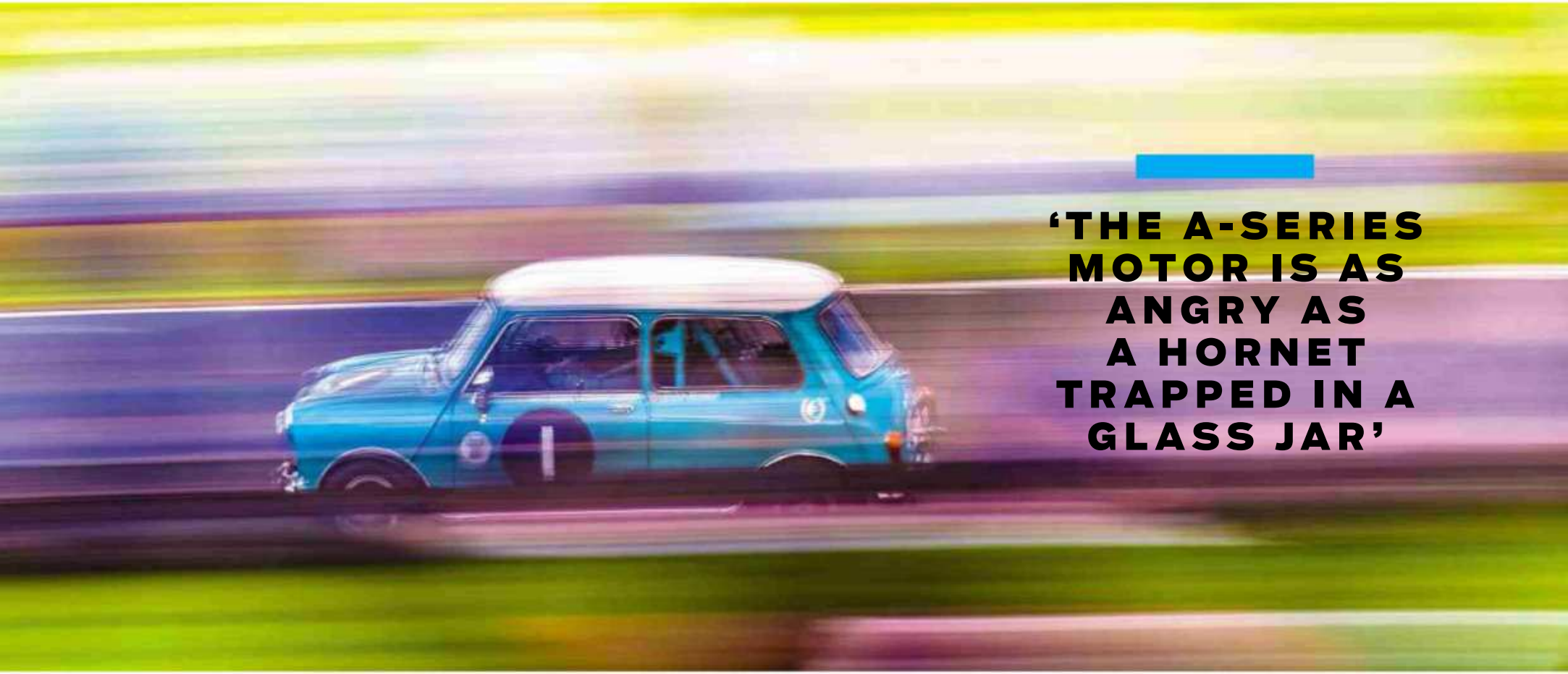


by RICHARD MEADEN

PHOTOGRAPHY by DREW GIBSON

OLDEN WONDER

The 1960s Mini Cooper S was one of the original British performance-car greats. Richard Meaden races one at the Goodwood Revival – with unexpected consequences



**'THE A-SERIES
MOTOR IS AS
ANGRY AS
A HORNET
TRAPPED IN A
GLASS JAR'**



I'VE READ ABOUT IT LOTS OF times, but right up until a split second before the impact I never thought I'd do it myself. Let go of the steering wheel and shut my eyes, that is.

Crashing a racing car is an odd feeling. Already in a heightened state, the instant you lose control your brain starts processing things at ten times normal speed. Things do genuinely seem to slow down and you find yourself making bizarrely lucid decisions. In this case wrestling the car into a slightly more favourable trajectory before letting go of the wheel, lifting my feet away from the pedals, shutting my eyes and bracing for the impact.

As you may have gathered, my participation in September's Goodwood Revival didn't end quite the way I'd hoped. But before we come to the crunch, so to speak, let me fill you in on why the St Mary's Trophy is one of the highlights of the Revival weekend and how I came to be on the grid with former F1 drivers, Le Mans winners and a constellation of BTCC and WTCC stars.

Exclusively for tin-tops and divided across two 25-minute races that count towards an aggregate result, the St Mary's Trophy alternates between pre-1960 and pre-1966 periods. This year was the turn of the pre-'66 cars, with the 30-car grid comprising Mk1 Lotus Cortinas, Alfa GTAs, BMW 1800 TiSAs, gloriously oversized and overpowered American metal and a swarm of Mk1 Mini Cooper Ss, a beautiful Surf Blue example of which I would be sharing with its owner, Jason Stanley.

Being a tin-top race it was no surprise to see a host of familiar touring car heroes on the entry list, but with 2018 being the 60th anniversary of the British Touring Car Championship, Goodwood had pulled out all the stops with the invites. The calibre of the driver line-up was ridiculous: 2017 BTCC champ Ash Sutton joined by fellow champs Andrew Jordan, Matt Neal, Gordon Shedden, Gabriele Tarquini and Jason Plato, plus WTCC champions Andy Priaulx and Rob Huff. Then there was three-time Le Mans winner André Lotterer, five-time winner Emanuele Pirro, LM class winners Jonny Adam and Darren Turner, plus LM winner, F1 and Indy ace Mark Blundell. Other famous names included Tiff Needell, Jochen Mass, Jörg Müller, Romain Dumas, Tom Blomqvist (BMW WEC driver and son of Stig) and Tom Coronel.

Like all races at the Revival, it's a standing start, made at the drop of a Union flag. The grid is tightly packed and flanked so closely by pits and grandstands that you really sense the watching crowd. Immediately ahead of me is Lotterer, in an Alfa GTA, while alongside him is Dumas in a colossal Ford Galaxie 500. Directly alongside me is Blomqvist in another Mini Cooper S (his dad is driving the car in the second race tomorrow), while in my mirrors are more than a dozen assorted pre-'66 touring cars of all shapes and sizes.

As the starter fiddles with the flag, engine revs rise and a haze of octane-rich fumes fills the air, then tyre smoke as we all leave the line. Well, all apart from me, as evidently I don't quite have the Mini in gear... I'm



swamped and lose nine places before the first corner, leaving me close to dead last. What. A. Disaster.

The first few laps are terrific fun as I fight my way back. In the dry the quickest Cortinas and big-banger American stuff are up to four seconds a lap faster, but I hope to uphold my qualifying honours as fastest Mini by finishing ahead of all the other Minis. For a moment it feels like a tall order, but one by one I reel in all but Blomqvist, who's just ahead in a red Cooper S.

I cut my teeth on souped-up road Minis in my youth, but nothing comes close to this Mk1 Cooper S race car. It's unbelievably good: immense fun and properly quick, thanks to the stonking Swiftune engine that revs to 8500rpm and develops around 130bhp. No A-series motor I've ever driven has felt so sweet, sharp or willing to rev. It's as angry as a hornet trapped in a jar.

The gearbox has a light throw, the tall lever and dainty lozenge-shaped gearknob flicking through the four-speed H-pattern gate as fast as you can move your arm. The bus-like angle of the little steering wheel looks odd but feels fine, at least if you're used to Minis. It's not a physical car to drive, but you're always busy. The chassis is fabulously agile with plenty of grip and has a magnificent propensity to settle into a perfect four-wheel drift.

It sounds like a terrible cliché to liken it to a kart, but my (very) limited experience of karting tells me the analogy is spot-on. For one thing, momentum is everything, so you want to waste as little of it as possible with unwanted tyre scrub. Consequently you nudge and agitate the Mini at the point of turn-in, then open the steering angle as quickly as you can and let it do its four-wheel-drift thing. Every now and again you need to make a lightning-quick correction, but the car is so small and light it never seems to get too far out of shape, so your focus is always on letting it dance beneath you and using every scrap of track with as little intervention as your courage will allow.

Above: evo's Meaden, in the blue car, gets embroiled in a battle with Tom Blomqvist (pictured left, with dad Stig)



Above: Jason Stanley's Cooper S cuts a sad figure after the race; Meaden's name is cleared in the post-race inquiry

Having got onto Blomqvist's tail I get a brilliant tow through Fordwater and nip by into the first part of St Mary's corner, then chase Lotterer's Alfa and Jackie Oliver's Cortina. The Mini's terrific on the brakes, enabling me to duck by the former into Woodcote and the latter into Madgwick. It buys a little breathing space but Blomqvist is soon an inch off my bumper. We have an epic battle, passing and re-passing one

another two or three times. It's pure, on-the-limit racing lap after lap and we're having a blast. Such a blast that we're taking too much from our tyres and slowing one another down, as evidenced by the re-appearance of Lotterer's Alfa and Oliver's Cortina looming inexorably larger in our mirrors.

Which brings us back neatly to my unplanned exit at one of the fastest points on the lap, a second or two before the braking area for Woodcote. The Alfa's coming by me on the left, but there's no point deviating from my line as the Mini is a good 10mph down on the bigger cars at this point. Better to concentrate on the fast-approaching braking area and try to sneak down the inside. Then, with no warning, the Mini's tail slews wildly to the right. There's no saving it.

As the bruise that will later appear on the ball of my right foot will tell me, I all but push the brake pedal through the floor in a vain effort to slow the car. GPS in the Mini's GoPro camera will say I was tipped into the spin at 117mph and hit the earth bank at 66mph. The impact is pretty much head-on, but some of the energy gets dissipated by the subsequent mid-air spin. Does it hurt? Kind of. Concentrated heat in my elbows tells me I've smacked them pretty hard. Likewise my

feet have clattered around in the footwell. I'm bruised and shaken-up, but otherwise fine thanks to my HANS device and a supremely tough little car. That I'm swearing – concisely and repeatedly – before the Mini has come to a complete halt confirms as much to the marshals, and I quickly clamber out.

After being given a once-over by the paramedics and then accompanying the poor battered Mini to Goodwood's crashed car boneyard, I spend a chunk of the afternoon in the Driving Standards office talking to former F1 driver – and survivor of one of the most savage crashes in motorsport history – Martin Donnelly. It's the start of a process involving marshals' reports, driver interviews, countless reviews of trackside broadcast footage and frame-by-frame scrutiny of all available in-car footage. It's a fascinating exercise. One I'd prefer not to be part of, but something that's taken very seriously and conducted with an impressive level of detail by all concerned. In the end it's deemed a racing incident by Donnelly and the stewards – albeit a serious and entirely avoidable one with no blame on my part – and results in a licence endorsement and a Revival red card for Oliver. For me, it's a sad and scary end to a fantastic race. For Stanley it's expensive and heartbreaking, severe damage to the car meaning there's no chance of him making the grid for Sunday's race. In incidents such as this there are only losers.

Nevertheless, driving one of the all-time great British cars in one of the most star-studded touring car races ever seen is an opportunity only the Revival can offer, and an experience from which I take only the best possible memories. Along with a deep – possibly irresistible – desire to one day own a Swiftune-built Mini. Few racing cars, and no other front-wheel-drive car I've ever driven, is more exciting or entertaining. Just like the era Goodwood Revival so brilliantly recreates, the Cooper S is old but gold. ✕

'WITH NO WARNING, THE MINI'S TAIL SLEWS WILDLY TO THE RIGHT. THERE'S NO SAVING IT'



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by STEVE SUTCLIFFE

PHOTOGRAPHY by ASTON PARROTT

THE GRAND TOUR

Bentley claims the new Continental GT is as much a sports car as it is a grand tourer, so we took it on a 1000-mile trip to one of the most famous road-racing courses in the world



Left and opposite: slumming it in Naples before heading for the Targa Florio course on Sicily. **Bottom:** GT attracts admiring looks; disembarking in Messina

ACCORDING TO BENTLEY, THE NEW Continental GT is a two-door, four-seat grand touring car of supreme, if not unrivalled ability. Which means what, exactly?

Yes, it has two doors. Yes, it has four seats – although those in the back are pretty cramped, all things being equal. And no, you can't really argue about its ability to 'tour': it has a nice big fuel tank to give it a real-world range of over 400 miles, despite its unceasing appetite for unleaded, and it also has an uncanny ability to eat motorways almost as if they don't exist, courtesy of its 626bhp 6-litre twin-turbo W12 engine and its air-suspended, digitally controlled four-wheel-drive chassis. But is the latest Bentley Continental GT really and truly a grand touring car? And what exactly is a grand touring car anyway? Three days behind the wheel of a new Conti GT on the roads of Italy, Sicily and the Targa Florio should see us find out.

Day 1, Naples

Unloading a bright orange, two-and-a-bit-ton Bentley onto a street in downtown Naples amid the early evening rush hour is not the easiest of tricks to pull off, nor is it the best way to begin a three-day road trip around Italy. But 15 minutes later the GT is off the truck, sitting on the street, percolating, surrounded

by a crowd of bemused locals, some of whom look authentically threatening.

For tonight we simply need a secure lock-up – a very secure lock-up – and that comes courtesy of Christian's Garage, which has a 15-foot-high steel door that's a good three inches thick, behind which the Bentley will sit and, hopefully, remain throughout the night. Although having said that it's not hard to imagine Christian and his mates doing a Ferris Bueller and ragging the GT across Naples the moment photographer Aston Parrott and I have disappeared round the corner to our hotel.

It's still there in the morning, however, and the odometer suggests there have been no night-time shenanigans, so before we head out of Naples we take some nice snaps of the Conti amongst some typically Neapolitan street scenery, including a dead chicken, then point its big nose south towards Sicily.

Today is all about putting miles beneath the GT's almighty 21-inch wheels and tyres, so I select 'Bentley' mode, which automatically keeps the suspension in an optimum state for the conditions, nestle down into the big comfy driver's seat and thumb the button that switches the massage system on. And I have to admit, the GT is a pretty fine place in which to find yourself when faced with a 350-mile journey, most of which is on not especially well surfaced motorways.

Along these Italian motorways it glides but still feels beautifully controlled. Its steering is meaty, yes, but accurate too. The weighting is judged just about right for long stints, and I also like the thickness and design of the wheel itself – it's chunky but not overly so, unlike certain M-badged BMWs whose steering wheels are, for me, simply too fat to get my pinkies around comfortably.





**‘IT’S A
FINE PLACE
IN WHICH
TO FIND
YOURSELF
ON A
350-MILE
JOURNEY’**

The GT's cruise control seems to work unusually well on these roads too, in that you can tailor the gap to the car in front more finely than you can in most other cars with distance-sensing systems. So you can sit closer to the car in front, basically, which means even in Italy you don't end up being constantly undertaken, although the BOB factor (Big Orange Bentley) probably plays a role here as well. In this colour, especially, the GT possesses a certain intimidation factor that even the boldest locals don't seem too comfortable messing with. Instead, the Continental gets a lot of smiles and a lot of thumbs up from other drivers on the SS18. And when there are moments of light or no traffic I give it the occasional burst of full throttle, just to remind myself of the sheer energy that lurks beneath that big, long, chrome-infested bonnet.

Sitting there in the Bentley's gentleman's club of an interior, listening to some calming tunes on its B&O sound system, the outside world locked out behind windows that are double-glazed and contain a third acoustic layer for extra sound deadening as well, it's

easy to forget you're also in a car that can do 207mph, and which can fire its way to 62mph in a mere 3.7sec. But the instant you prod the throttle properly, you remember. How could you ever forget?

To be honest, the sound emitted by the twin-turbo W12 engine isn't all that wondrous – it's more industrial than it is rousing – which is a touch disappointing. But the thrust on offer is something else, it really is, and it appears to get stronger the faster you go. Put your foot down at 40mph and it still takes a quarter of half a moment for the 664lb ft to do its thing and produce sufficient energy to get the big GT moving. But do the same at 80mph and the response is more instant, and therefore a fair bit more outrageous. At times, and at certain speeds, the GT can feel ever-so-slightly Veyron-like in the way it erupts towards the horizon, leaving a vast ball of swirling hot air behind it as it goes.

It quaffs through fuel if you drive it like this, mind. As in 15mpg or worse, although to be fair it averages just under 23mpg over the 300 miles between Naples



and Villa San Giovanni, the town that sits pretty much at the toe of Italy's boot and from where you can catch a 38-euro ride across to Sicily on a Caronte & Tourist ferry. These sail all day and night, every 40 minutes, and the crossing itself takes less than 20 minutes, which is nice.

Inevitably the GT causes something of a stir on the ferry, and also when we alight the other side in the town of Messina. A lot of selfies are taken on the docks by a lot of locals, and once we've negotiated our way out of town and onto the SS113 heading west (not easy, as it happens, because Messina is essentially a maze masquerading as a seaside town) it's then another hour and a half and a hundred miles or so of fairly tedious motorway to reach the town of Campofelice di Roccella, halfway along Sicily's northern coast.

But this is where the real fun begins on this road trip, because Campofelice sits at the eastern end of the infamous Buonfornello straight – all six and a bit kilometres of it – and it's where we'll join the Targa Florio route.

Day 2, Targa Florio

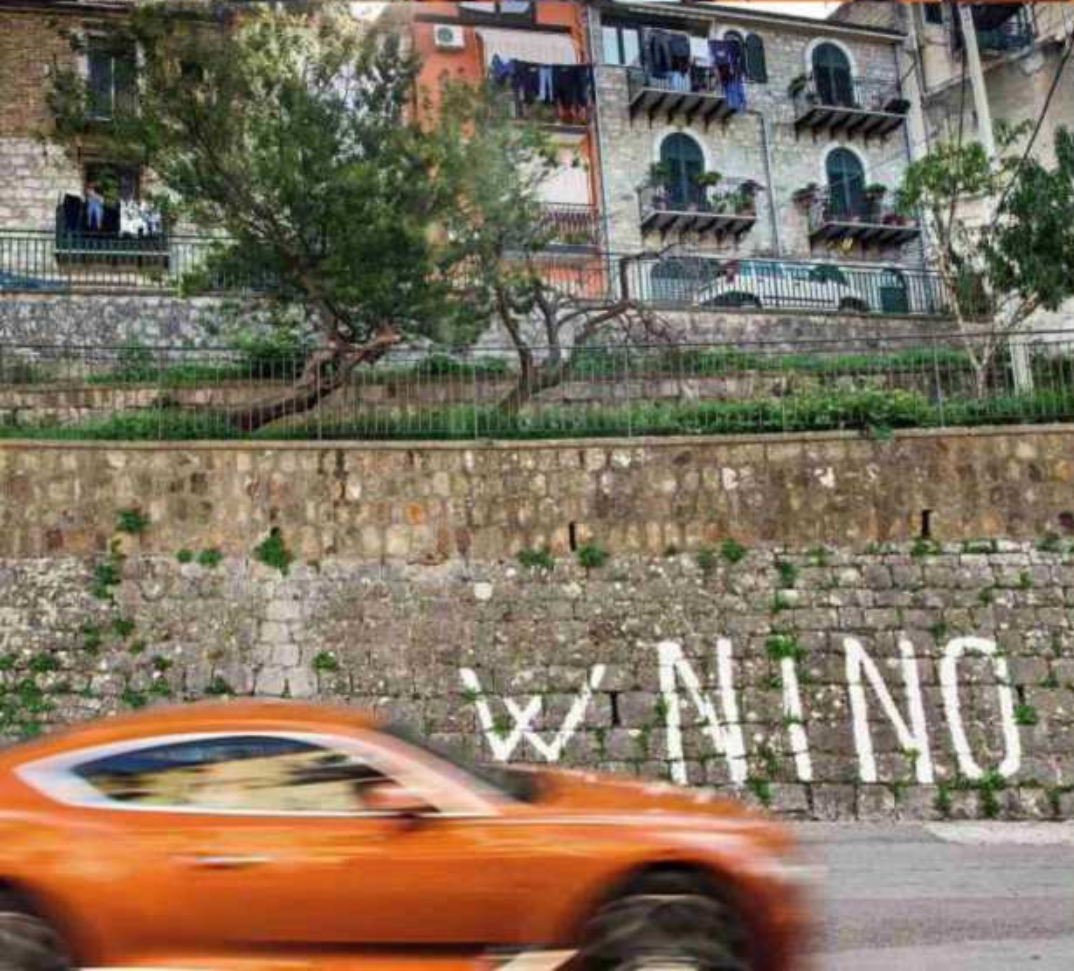
We're up before the sun, on a mission to drive and photograph the GT on and all the way round the legendary 45-mile-long 'Piccolo' Targa Florio circuit, the one they used for the last 27 runnings of the Targa until it folded in 1977. Crucially, it's the circuit they used in the '60s and '70s, and on which drivers such as 'Quick Vic' Elford, Brian Redman, Jo Siffert and, most famous of all as far as Sicilians were concerned, local hero Nino Vaccarella all raced.

There were actually three major layouts in all: the Grande circuit of just under 150km long, as established at the inaugural 1906 event; the shorter Medio circuit of 108km, which was introduced in 1919; and the 72km Piccolo, used from 1932 to 1936 and then again from 1951 until the end.

All the layouts ran anti-clockwise from a start/finish line a few miles north of the town of Cerda. From there the cars headed into Cerda itself, which is where you see those famous pictures of adoring fans lining the streets, waving at the Ferrari 312 PBs, the Alfa 33/3s



**‘AT TIMES THE CONTI
CAN FEEL EVER-SO-
SLIGHTLY VEYRON-LIKE
IN THE WAY IT ERUPTS
TOWARDS THE HORIZON’**



and the Porsche 908s as they scream past, just inches from their toes. Then it was south to Caltavuturo, from where the Piccolo essentially linked the towns of Scillato, Collesano and Campofelice, before heading back towards Cerda via the Buonfornello straight. It's nice and easy to follow nowadays, too, because the locals have put brown signs up that say 'Targa Florio this way' with an arrow showing you where to turn off. It gets a bit messy near Scillato on the eastern leg due to some subsidence, which means you can't follow the original route for a couple of miles, but for the other 98 per cent of the lap you can drive on the exact same roads they raced on way back when. And most of them are thoroughly spectacular.

We're joining the Piccolo lap two-thirds of the way round, and make our first photo stop a couple of kilometres after the far end of Buonfornello straight, where the main pit complex can be found still very much in situ. After the Bentley dances around beneath a giant painting of a Ferrari, we head south towards Cerda, and the road immediately goes crazy. It's so tight and twisty the GT feels a bit too big and clumsy here, even with the drive mode switched to Sport, which sends the majority of torque towards the rear axle, essentially making the car feel all but rear-wheel drive in nature.

But at least it's an opportunity to let rip in the Conti for a bit, to sample its cheek-rippling acceleration, its monstrous traction, its surprisingly nimble handling and, on more than one occasion, its towering brakes. These come in quite handy whenever we encounter an enthusiastic local coming the other way, on the racing line, in a Panda that the Bentley would make a fine mess of if the worst happened. After approximately the 14th near miss this last-second avoidance technique has become almost second nature. No one seems too bothered about it locally, either, the Continental being greeted by yet more thumbs up wherever it goes, often from the person driving the same car you only just didn't make contact with five minutes ago.

As we pass through Cerda and head up towards

'THERE IS SOME PRETTY GRUESOME HISTORY TO THE TARGA AS WELL'

the very beautiful mountain town of Caltavuturo, the roads get a touch more open, the scenery a lot more beautiful, and you can't help but drift away in your mind, wondering what on earth it must have been like driving this circuit in a 600bhp prototype sports race car. Helmut Marko (of Red Bull notoriety nowadays) once described the Targa Florio as 'totally insane'. But that didn't stop him from setting the outright lap record in 1972, driving a works Alfa 33 TT3 round the Piccolo circuit in 33min 41sec at an average speed of 128.253kph (just under 80mph) and presumably scaring himself half to death in the process.

Inevitably there is some pretty gruesome history to the Targa as well, to go with the natural romance of the place, and in 1977 it all came to an end when two spectators were killed and the race was shut down by the local police after just four laps. The fact it hosted rounds of the World Sportscar Championship between 1955 and 1973 does seem reasonably nuts, but drivers used to put different ingredients in their soup back then, and tended to require unusually large underpants as a result.

Either way, the road today is still a peach to drive in places. Pretty tight and twisty, yes, and often with a rutted and lumpy surface to go with it, on which even the GT's sophisticated air suspension struggles and sometimes fails to cope. But still there's the rhythm and feel of a road-racing track, especially near Caltavuturo, and between Scillato and Collesano before the run towards Campofelice. In all these places you can do some proper driving, and can only try to imagine what it might have been like hussling a Ferrari 512S across these roads.

Top left: passing the pit complex. **Far left:** Continental cabin is fabulously cossetting. **Below left:** Sutcliffe gets all nostalgic



'THE GT DEFIES WHAT YOU THINK IS POSSIBLE FROM SUCH A BIG CAR'

Porsche never took the mighty 917 to Sicily because it thought it would be too big for the roads, so instead it took the smaller, more agile 908s and 907s to compete against the Alfas and the Ferraris, amongst others. And it worked. Porsche won the race five years on the trot between 1966 and 1970 and ended up naming a hard-top version of the 911 after its success.

But for the locals it was the sight of their beloved Nino at the wheel of a Ferrari or an Alfa that was the most sacred sight of all. He was their hero, born in Palermo, and he won the Targa three times, partly because 'he knew the roads of Sicily like the back of his hand' according to fellow competitor Elford. In every sense Vaccarella was 'the local expert' at the Targa.

In Collesano we stop off at the little Targa museum and pay five euros each to enter, and the sense of history is rich, the outfits on display startlingly basic. It's well worth a visit if you go, as is Collesano itself, where the tributes to Vaccarella and his kin are writ large over many of the town walls. From here it's another wildly twisting section of road into and through Campofelice before we're back at the start of the Buonfornello straight, ready to do it all over again. Which we do at night this time, just for the heck of it.

It is an amazing thing to experience a modern-day lap of the Targa Florio, especially in a car such as the GT, which is a bit too big for certain sections, true, but still mightily good fun to be in on others. Quite a lot more so than I was expecting it to be, if I'm honest.

But that's the thing about the new Continental: in almost everything it does it defies what you think is

possible from such a big, heavy car. It is almost a sports car in its own right, yet at the same time it is one of the most relaxing, luxurious machines you could ever wish to find yourself in when faced with a seriously long journey over not especially interesting terrain. And then when you drive it into the town square in the middle of nowhere in Sicily, all the locals go berserk for it, with cries of 'bellissima!' and 'wow!' greeting it on every street corner. That's quite some combination of assets to squeeze under just one roof.

Day 3, Catania

On our last day we set off for Catania airport, around 200km away on Sicily's eastern coast, and we get there not a lot more than an hour later, again amazed at just how civilised, no, how utterly brilliant this car is as a high-speed cruising express. It's effortless but at the same time engaging to be in, and I guess in the end that's what true grand touring cars are all about. They contain a range of attributes that seem to suit almost every occasion. And so, yes, Bentley is spot on with its description of this car. The new Continental GT really is one of the best grand touring cars money can buy. Make that *the* best at this moment in time. ✕

Bentley Continental GT

Engine W12, 5950cc, twin-turbo **Power** 626bhp @ 5000-6000rpm

Torque 664lb ft @ 1350-4500rpm **Weight** 2169kg (293bhp/ton)

0-62mph 3.7sec **Top speed** 207mph **Basic price** £156,700

evo rating ★★★★★





Aston Martin : GTZ | Service & Preparation : Bamford Rose | Photography : Ian Winstanly | Location : Warwickshire | Brand : Sure Creative



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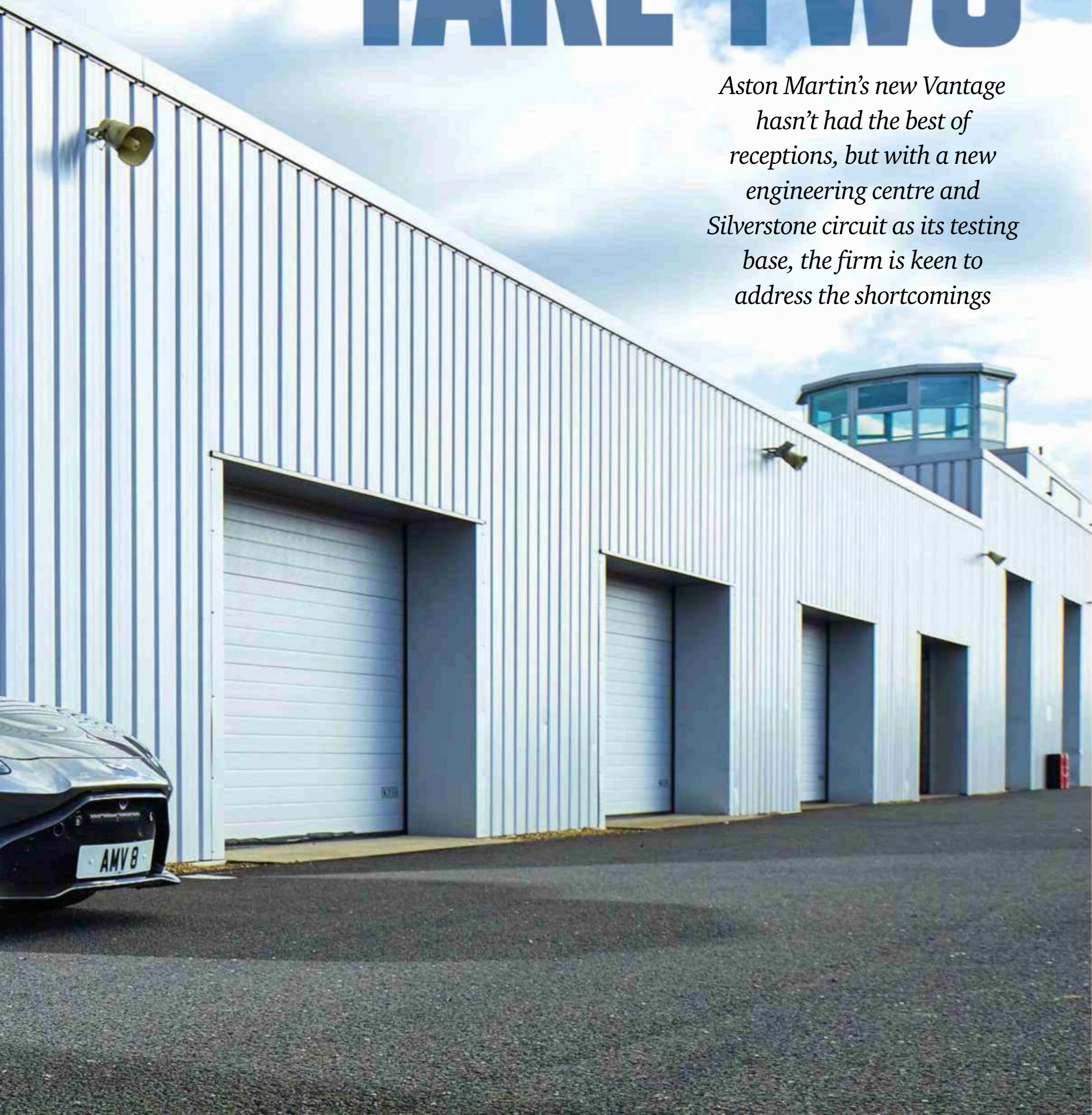


by ADAM TOWLER

PHOTOGRAPHY by MATT HOWELL

TAKE TWO

Aston Martin's new Vantage hasn't had the best of receptions, but with a new engineering centre and Silverstone circuit as its testing base, the firm is keen to address the shortcomings





IT'S A SHORT DRIVE THROUGH THE Warwickshire lanes from Aston Martin's familiar Gaydon HQ to its new engineering centre at Wellesbourne, but a significant one nonetheless. Not only because the towering structure that greets me on arrival is a visible reminder of the firm's post-IPO ambition, but also because I've really enjoyed the drive here. And for reasons that will become clear, I wasn't quite expecting that to be the case.

Not long after I eased the broad and sharply creased snout of the Vantage out from Gaydon's gravel car park was I convinced that this particular example is a much more cohesive and simply downright more desirable car than the blue one that starred on the cover of *evo* 250, and which took part in a four-car group test within – and lost, comprehensively. Hmmm. Curious. This Vantage just feels – better. And having dissected a decent Warwickshire B-road in it I'm torn between two emotions: on one hand, delight, because who doesn't want a great British performance brand such as Aston Martin to be class competitive? But also puzzlement, because just what is going on?

I think it's fair to say *evo*'s verdict on the new Vantage in that group test, along with the outcomes of tests in other magazines, went down rather badly within the higher echelons of Aston Martin. Questions were asked. Investigations made. This is what we know.

It transpires that the blue car had incorrect suspension geometry after the replacement of components made in the run-up to it being lent to *evo*. This caused its handling to be, shall we say, sub-

optimal, and led in some part to our criticisms about its steering characteristics and general handling. It doesn't explain why it failed to match its performance claims with our test gear attached, which remains a mystery, or answer our other concerns over its damping, and the general feel of the car, the latter being hard to define but felt by all present, but the invite to the headmaster's office suggests I'm to learn more about that, along with how Aston's new engineering approach will make such things much less likely to happen again – and make for better Aston Martins overall.

Wearing the mortar board and a stern face is Aston's 'chief engineer – vehicle engineering', Matt Becker. Actually, he's not stern at all really, and thankfully there are no lines to write repeatedly on the whiteboard. The first thing he says is that the car *evo* had for our group test was a '2PT' car in the company's new naming structure, but what does that actually mean? Like all car makers, Aston Martin's development process is a highly structured programme that progresses through phases; Becker describes it as a pyramid, with the finished car at the pinnacle. In the latter stages the cars are all but indistinguishable from the ones you may go on to buy in the showroom, but they will never be sold and most will be crushed.

The first physical cars are 'X1' vehicles, commonly referred to as mules. It's the kind of thing you see snapped in 'spy' pictures – battered prototypes with odd proportions, cars that started off as familiar machines but that have been cut about to accept new engines, suspensions and suchlike. Aston is shortening this part of the development timeline by adopting computer simulation,

and, specifically, driving simulation. This means less time and less expense, because the early prototypes are the most expensive of all.

'M1' vehicles are next, which feature the correct floorpan and running gear, but with fake upper-body panels reinforced artificially for strength. After this come the 'production trials' cars: 1PT, 2PT and 3PT. These are 'proper' cars built on a separate line at Gaydon as the manufacturing team gets to grips with building the real thing, refining their processes and the quality of components as they go. They're also the cars that the engineers then fine-tune to a fever pitch: 'Imagine every bush, every component, has a tolerance,' says Becker, 'and those tolerances go through a state of flux, until by the time we reach 2PT stage we can only make very small changes as the bandwidth of tuning gets narrower, and the refining continues until the Job 1 car you've driven today.' Job 1 cars should be identical in every way to the cars reaching the dealerships – they're the real deal. 'You'll notice the quality of the car has improved, too – the sound of it, the interior. The car is more homogenous.' It is no accident. 'We can't use Job 1 cars for press launches, otherwise the cars would be in dealerships before the reviews came out, but we should be using them for comparison tests from now on.'

The new Wellesbourne centre is like a NASA laboratory compared to the old Gaydon set-up, which had cramped and dated facilities, and restrictive access due to traffic problems on the site. In effect, engineers were restricted to coming and going between 9am and 3pm, unless they wanted to waste time stationary in traffic. Up to 250 engineers and technicians work at the new building, over three

floors, with 40 vehicle ramps (twice the number of before). Over the road is another huge green box that's concerned with the company's parts and logistics supply, and there's also a smaller facility for building the forthcoming Valkyrie hypercar.

For a development engineer it must be heaven; prototypes are now built here rather than in various stages around the Midlands, allowing continuous and close attention from the engineers. There's also an instrumentation area where all sorts of data-logging devices are wired in; an area for crash-test cars and their analysis; the suspension area for setting geometry; a 'damper room' where suspension components can be adjusted, analysed and so on; an area for thermal and cooling test cars; an NVH 'quiet room'; and a dedicated area for the press fleet. Walking around the facility it's not hard to spot all sorts of cars here, from competitor vehicles in for examination to things I've signed on a dotted line to say I won't talk about. Yet.

However, Aston Martin's engineering capability is about to take another significant leap forward with the introduction of a dedicated testing circuit in the style of Fiorano or Weissach. As you may have seen, Aston has done a deal with Silverstone to take over the use of the Stowe circuit and associated workshops, with the opportunity to access the larger circuits there as needed.

'Ever since I started here three-and-a-half years ago I've been saying we need a track,' confides Becker. 'At the moment, when we make changes to the [development] cars we have to travel to the Nürburgring or Nardò to test, and the process takes too long. With



**'THE NEW
CENTRE IS LIKE
A NASA LAB
COMPARED TO
THE OLD GAYDON
SET-UP'**





‘IT DEALS WITH
CHALLENGING
B-ROADS IN A
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INCONCEIVABLE
BEFORE’

the Silverstone facility the car should improve much faster – we’ll be able to run through many more changes, plus quickly get onto local good and less-busy roads. The workshops will have seven ramps along with dedicated technicians. Porsche and Ferrari have this, and to be a main player you need it.’

We can’t compare this final-spec Vantage back-to-back on the same roads as the blue car, as during the last six months 2PT and 3PT cars have moved to this final Job 1 spec, but the journey to Aston’s new ‘home track’ certainly highlights the positive steps the Vantage has taken. The most obvious change is to the steering, which no longer has a disjointed, hard-to-read response; corners can now be taken with a single, measured input, reliably. And the pitching that we felt back then, from the rear axle when under lateral load and hard acceleration, seems virtually eliminated. You can really hustle this Aston along, and moreover, you’re inclined to do so.

As Becker suggested, there are indeed some very challenging B-roads near Silverstone, and this Vantage deals with them in a way that was inconceivable before. It still feels wide, with the extremities far away and largely hidden from the driver’s seat, and we also know that losing a few kilos would be beneficial, but from its much higher-quality interior to its driving dynamics, this is a much improved car.

Obviously, I can’t say the Vantage as it is now would have won that original group test; road test editor James Disdale’s story was about those actual cars, over those two days, and in those conditions, but

I do feel confident in saying that this car would have certainly been much closer to the competition. In short, it feels like the Vantage we were promised all along. It drives like it looks: a meaty, hard-edged, but also very useable sports coupe with a ferocious exhaust note.

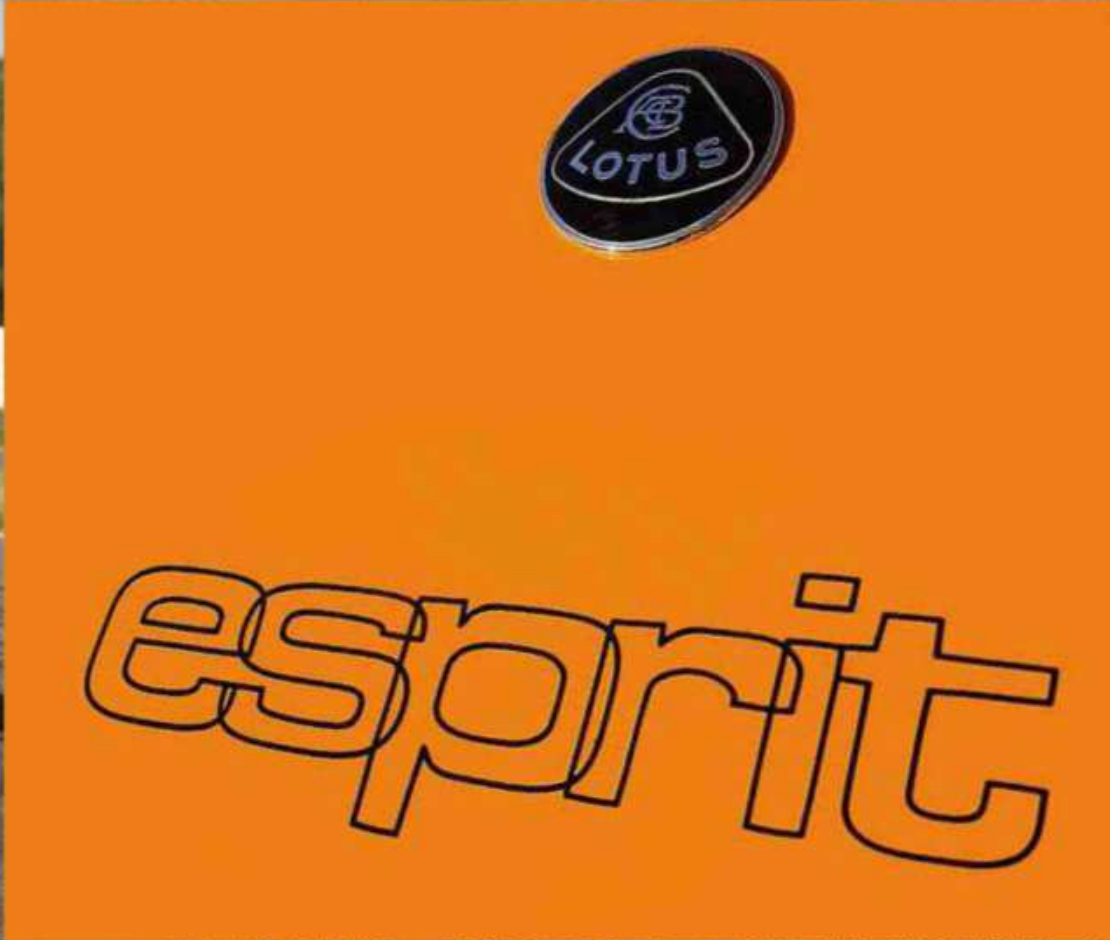
There’s nothing more melancholic than a deserted racing circuit, and it feels odd to walk around the deserted Stowe Complex buildings, flyers for corporate driving days still evident, unused hospitality beverages still where they were when the last guests left. Aston Martin got the keys on 16 October, and expects to have everything kitted out within six weeks, whereupon the crackle and roar of V8s and V12s should suddenly become a signature tune for this bleak and blowy plain in north Northamptonshire. The Stowe circuit is small at just under a mile, and the firm may yet change one end of it to make a properly fast corner, but it doesn’t take much imagination to picture the silver shutter doors on the row of garages whipping up and down all day long, spewing Aston Martins onto the track in droves to realise the firm’s formidable product plan. ✕

Aston Martin Vantage

Engine V8, 3982cc, twin-turbo **Power** 503bhp @ 6000rpm **Torque** 505lb ft @ 2000-5000rpm **Weight (dry)** 1530kg **Power-to-weight (dry)** 334bhp/ton

0-62mph 3.6sec **Top speed** 195mph **Basic price** £120,900

evo rating ★★★★★





70

To celebrate 70 years since Colin Chapman began building cars, some 1600 Lotuses recently gathered at the firm's Norfolk HQ. evo was there to witness the spectacle and meet the cars' owners

WORDS AND PHOTOGRAPHY

by **BRETT FRASER**



NINETEEN FORTY-EIGHT. QUITE THE year for launching iconic car brands. Porsche popped into the world that year. So did Land Rover. And 70 years ago this year, Colin Chapman began building cars, too.

Because the company that would emerge from his endeavours has perched on the edge of the precipice so many times during the last 30 years and more, it's easy to become distracted by the traumas of its more recent history and overlook the considerable achievements of its production and racing car back catalogue. But for its 70th anniversary celebrations at its Hethel home on a sunny Saturday at the end of September, Lotus sought to remind us all – and perhaps just as importantly its new Chinese owner – that its heritage is rich and exciting.

Considerable fondness towards the company was exhibited by the 8000 or so visitors who'd come to Hethel to celebrate the marque's Quite Big Birthday. Many rocked up in Lotus merchandise, both recent and dating back to the golden years when John Player Special sponsored the F1 team and created one of the most distinctive liveries ever seen on a Grand Prix race car. And then there were the cars. Lots and lots and lots of Lotuses. At one point there was a two-mile queue to get in through the factory gates, a delay that wasn't kind to some of the older cars.

Lotus reckoned it had issued 1600 car entry tickets for the day, of which 700 made their way into a display on the Hethel test track. By the standards of some other one-make

gatherings those figures might not seem remarkable, but when your vision of the company is clouded by the knowledge that in January 2018 Lotus sold just 22 cars in Europe, the anniversary assembly was a reminder that tough times have been weathered before. And to give further positive spin to the occasion, amongst the 1600 cars that showed up to Hethel, a healthy proportion was of models from the past five or six years, their owners just as rabidly pro-Lotus – and generally much younger – as those folk who have owned their S1 Elan Sprint for the past 35 years.

As well as the sheer number of cars present, it was their diversity that impressed. From bare-alloy early Sevens and Elevens, to gorgeous Elites and original Elans, via chiselled Esprits and dumpy front-drive 'M100' Elans to the Elise-era cars, the whole spectrum of Lotus was on show. The company's famous collaborative projects were too, such as the Lotus Cortinas, Lotus Sunbeam and Lotus Carlton, though there was no sign of an Isuzu Piazza Turbo or DeLorean.

A small selection of Grand Prix cars deafened the crowd and then potted around a section of the track; Lotus test drivers smokily drifted modern road cars; there was a parade of one of every Lotus model and then at the end of the day came an attempt to set a world record for the most Lotuses circulating a track at one time. That last one didn't really work out so well. Getting 700 cars to move as one was a bit of an ask. But it didn't matter. What was important was that Lotus put on a good show, both for its loyal fan base and its new owner, Geely.

But back to those owners. At the event we spoke with just a small cross-section of them – old and young, with cars classic and new – to find out what Lotus means to them.





Terry Fox, Esprit S4

Although his garage is also home to a Lamborghini Countach, Terry Fox is a Lotus man at heart. ‘My very first car was a Lotus Cortina Mk2,’ he reveals. ‘I bought it for £400 and I wish I still had it: it’s slightly scary what people are asking for them these days. I’ve also owned a Europa S2, which was another car I regret parting with.’

As with so many, Fox was an early convert to the brand: ‘I used to see them when I was a kid and it sparked something – Lotus is more than just a hobby, it’s been a passion of mine for the past 28 years.’

That Fox now owns an Esprit S4 was more by lucky circumstance than a conscious desire to buy one. ‘This was my uncle’s and when he came to sell it he gave me first refusal. It’s wonderful. My car has had a £7000 engine upgrade, essentially taking it to S4S spec, and produces 281bhp. And it has twin spoilers, which I think is unique.’

Fox’s Esprit is now for sale as it was always his intention to use it for a while and move it on. Could another Lotus replace it? ‘Well,’ he muses, ‘I quite fancy an Evora. But I still wish I hadn’t flogged the Europa...’



Matthew Mantle, Elan S4 SE

Where other Lotuses gleam and dazzle beneath multiple layers of polish at the 70th celebrations, Matthew Mantle’s Elan S4 SE barely has a single layer of paint. Its skin is faded, pitted and cracked. It’s the most beguiling car of the event.

Though looking like a scrapheap escapee, Mantle’s Elan is mechanically sound, even if it does suffer those annoying sporadic maladies that Lotuses were once infamous for. Not that it fazes Mantle much. ‘I grew up with Lotuses,’ he explains. ‘I went to school in them because my dad’s company used to rebuild Coventry Climax race engines.’

‘At one stage Dad imported several Elans from the States, including this one, which we converted from left-hand drive, sorted out a chassis bent in an accident in 1973 that ripped a big chunk of the nose off, and rebuilt the suspension and engine.’

‘That was all about 20 years ago, and rather than worry too much about the bodywork, I’ve just driven it. It’s always a thrill to drive.’



Kevin Connolly, 340R

Rarity, impracticality and climbing values have consigned many a 340R to garage confinement except on the occasional warm, dry day. But that’s not the life that Kevin Connolly’s 340R enjoys, as he proudly tells us: ‘Mine has now done 48,000 miles and I reckon that’s the highest mileage in the UK. And I track it about 15 times a year – that’s what it was made for, don’t you think?’

‘I’ve always been a Lotus fan. They’re the most fun you can have with your clothes on – light, agile and brilliant track cars. And from the moment I first saw one I knew the 340R would be an awesome Lotus: it looks like nothing else, drives like nothing else. I’ve owned mine for 17 years now, and while I’ll never replace it, I do rather fancy a V6 Exige. Or maybe an original Elite.’

‘Though largely standard, my 340R does have the optional ultra-close ratio gearbox, carbon seats and a boost tube. For pure performance the 340R is often outgunned on the track by more modern sports cars, but while they fly by on the straights, I usually get them back under braking and through the corners.’



Iain Ogilvie, Elise S1

With almost childish excitement, Iain Ogilvie points to a signature written in black marker pen on the passenger-side B-pillar of his S1 Elise. ‘Elisa Artioli, after whom the Elise was named, did that for me this morning,’ he enthuses, ‘and another signature on the inside of the passenger door. She’s a really lovely person.’

But those signatures aren’t what make Ogilvie’s Elise so remarkable, it’s the mileage – this ‘frail’ Lotus has done more than 260,000 miles. ‘When I was little we lived near Hethel and as a kid I decided I would one day have an Esprit,’ explains Ogilvie. ‘And that wish did come true, because as well as the Elise I now have an S3 Esprit Turbo.’

But back to the Elise... ‘I got it in 2001 and I’ve used it for my 95-mile round-trip commute ever since. It still makes me smile. It had a clutch at 225,000 miles, had just the one head gasket replacement, and hit a deer four years ago, but otherwise has run faultlessly. I’ve never found a good replacement, although I am sometimes tempted to add a yellow and green *Prisoner*-era S2 Seven to my fleet.’



Huw Jones, Europa S (2006)

In common with so many of the Lotus fraternity, ask Huw Jones why he has one and he tells you that he’s always been a fan of the brand. Dig a bit deeper, though, and he has another reason: ‘I guess that I also like Lotus out of a sense of patriotism. I love the story of the underdog. The same is true of TVR, of course, but for me there’s an indefinable something that sets Lotus apart from its British rival.’

The Europa S isn’t Jones’s only Lotus. ‘I’ve also got an old second-hand M100 [front-drive Elan] that I bought seven years ago. But I was taken with the Europa because of its rarity, because I think it’s lovely looking, and because it has the more reliable Vauxhall engine. And compared with an Elise or Exige, it has more creature comforts. That said, my son Morgan and I have driven across from Wrexham to be here and my legs were feeling stiff by the time we arrived.

‘I do enjoy the fact the Europa is a little bit different and you rarely see another, and that I can do a fair bit of the maintenance myself. As for the driving experience, I bottle out long before the car does.’



David Jacklin, Evora 400

Even if Lotus hadn’t laid on sunshine for its 70th shindig, there’d have been no missing David Jacklin’s vibrantly coloured Evora 400. ‘It’s a Lamborghini colour – Verde Mantis,’ he reveals. ‘And I believe that mine is the only 2017 Evora to be painted that shade.’

Prior to buying the Evora, Jacklin had been a fan of the Lotus experience, even though he didn’t own the genuine article. ‘I used to have a GBS Robin Hood [replica Seven/Caterham] with 240bhp and decked out in Gulf colours,’ he tells us. ‘I wasn’t really looking to sell it, but a friend was opening a sports car showroom and wanted something eye-catching when he first opened the doors. I gave him a figure of what I might consider letting the car go for, and he got it!

‘So I was then in the market for something else. I fancied a Caterham 620 until I discovered it was £55,000. Then an Evora popped up at a dealership near home... It only had 59 miles on the clock when I bought it, but my wife and I took it on a fantastic 1000-mile trip to central Italy and back, and now, 2700 miles later, I’m even more in love with this car, the sound of it and the way it drives.’



Leigh Greenham, Elite S2

Colin Chapman may have begun by building bare-bum-basic sports cars, but by the end of the '70s the products emerging from the factory were courting the prestige market. And Chapman himself liked to travel in style and comfort, which is why he specified this very Elite S2 as the F1 team's support road car during European rounds of the 1980-1981 Grand Prix seasons.

Says current owner Leigh Greenham: 'I grew up watching Lotus JPS F1 cars on TV, so Lotus has always been special to me. Then in 1997 I learned of a Dutch collector who had 21 Lotuses and a heart condition... His doctor advised he dispose of the cars for the sake of his health, so later that year I travelled to a dusty Dutch barn and acquired the Elite.'

According to the car's impressively large history file, other famous backsides to grace the red leather upholstery include those of Mario Andretti, Elio de Angelis and Nigel Mansell. The blue paintwork and red cabin – as well as the badges on the doors – are in tribute to the F1 team's then-sponsor, Essex Petroleum.



Ashley Bray, Exige S (V6)

For Ashley Bray the Lotus connection is bittersweet. 'Dad had Lotuses when he was younger, but had to give them up for a while when he and Mum raised a family,' Bray explains. 'A bit further down the line, though, he was able to get back into Lotus ownership and bought an Elise S1.'

'Sadly, he was then diagnosed with a brain tumour and after he died Mum inherited the Elise but didn't use it much. Eventually I took it home, cleaned it up, and had Dad's car – as you can imagine, it was very special to me and it was a very emotional moment when I came to sell it to help finance the Exige. I had a cancer charity wristband wrapped around the Elise's gearlever and that's now in the Exige as a reminder of Dad.'

Bray bought his Exige a couple of years ago and remains smitten. 'I immediately fell for the Krypton Green and I've yet to see another one. What I find interesting about the car is that you can still feel the original Elise in it, just more grown up.'



Doug Boomer, Elan S3

Doug Boomer's journey towards Lotus ownership took him three decades. 'My first Lotus experience was during my 20s,' Boomer explains. 'I did some work on an Elan Plus 2, including rebuilding its engine. It drove exceptionally well and planted the idea in my mind that I would one day have a Lotus of my own.'

He probably had little idea it would take 30 years to realise that ambition, and even when he was in the position to buy his first Lotus six or seven years ago, he didn't rush into it. 'I wanted an Elan that would make a good restoration project. It took about a year to find the right car, which was tatty but a runner.'

Boomer then built a car for himself rather than for the concours circuit, which is why his car has non-standard flared wheelarches and 'a number of S4 bits and pieces'. And he enjoys driving it. 'In 2015 I racked up 4000 miles. I took it to the Le Mans Classic, then drove it all round the North Coast 500 in Scotland.'

Does he have a dream Lotus? 'An original Elite,' Boomer quickly replies. 'If only I could afford one.'

Badge engineering

While many of Lotus's engineering consultancy projects have been shrouded in client confidentiality, there are several high-profile exceptions where the firm's connection has been proudly visible



1981

DeLOREAN DMC-12

A pretty dismal car with a scandalous back story that saw Colin Chapman implicated in the misappropriation of several million pounds of British taxpayers' money, but the gullwing-doored DMC-12 at least proved the ingenuity of Lotus's production engineers in the face of substantial challenges.

When American automotive industry maverick John Zachery DeLorean approached Lotus in 1978 to prepare his dream machine for production, it was a barely driveable concept car. A scant 28 months later Lotus had managed to get the stainless-steel panelled coupe certified for production – an incredible feat.



1979

TALBOT SUNBEAM LOTUS

Ah, the stuff of dreams... A rear-drive, 960kg hatchback powered by a 2.2-litre 16-valve engine related to the Esprit's and producing 150bhp, capable of being tuned to 200bhp.

When Chrysler Europe sought to challenge the dominance of the Escort in Group 4 rallying, it turned to the company that had served Ford so well: Lotus. By the time the project was realised, Chrysler Europe had been acquired by the PSA Group and the Sunbeam wore Talbot badges, which were soon muddied during victory on the 1980 Lombard RAC Rally. And although competing against the Audi Quattro the following year, the Talbot still won the manufacturer's title.

1968

FORD ESCORT TWIN CAM



The Escort Twin Cam's genesis sprang from a 'what if?' moment within Ford's rally team: what if we stuff the running gear from the Lotus Cortina into the lighter bodysell of the Escort? A good question with a very satisfactory answer. As a rally car the Twin Cam won the World Championship for Makes in 1968 and 1969, and with its engine further tuned by Cosworth, the Twin Cam also took the 1968 British Saloon Car Championship.



1963

LOTUS CORTINA MK1

Famously photographed in neat, finely balanced high-speed four-wheel drifts – with the likes of Jim Clark, Graham Hill, Jackie Stewart, Jack Sears and Roger Clark behind the wheel – the Lotus Cortina established Colin Chapman and Lotus as the 'go to' guys for competition tuning of everyday cars.

With its (Lotus engineer) Harry Mundy-designed and Grand Prix-proven twin-cam cylinder-head under the bonnet, plus lightweight panels and heavily revised suspension, the 'Consul Cortina Developed by Lotus' helped Jim Clark win the 1964 BRSCC Saloon Car Championship, then bagged the European Saloon Car Championship for Sir John Whitmore the year after. Victory on the 1966 RAC Rally showed it was robust as well as quick.



1990

LOTUS CARLTON

An error in the first draft of the supersaloon's press release described it as the 'Louts Carlton': how accidentally appropriate.

Its specs are indelibly imprinted on every car enthusiast's mind: 3.6-litre twin-turbo, 377bhp, 177mph. And if you were around at

the time you may also recall the righteous and often hysterical indignation from the general media that Vauxhall should build a car so flagrantly capable of smashing the speed limit.

Shake off Vauxhall's dowdy image? Mission accomplished.



1990

CHEVROLET CORVETTE (C4) ZR-1

General Motors had acquired Lotus in 1986, so it was the obvious partner to turn Chevrolet's C4 Corvette into the world's fastest production car. Lotus went radical on the engine design, creating an all-aluminium quad-cam 32-valve V8 – the LT5 – initially producing 380bhp, later 405bhp. It missed the 'world's fastest' target, but Lotus's additional input into the brakes, steering and handling saw the Vette start to be taken seriously by the world outside America.



2000

VAUXHALL VX220

Like the Lotus Carlton, this was another welcome anomaly from Vauxhall/Opel. Although heavily based on Elise architecture, the VX220 was powered by Vauxhall's own 2.2-litre Ecotec engine and the car's overall spec was dictated by GM to favour refinement and ease of use. Lotus may have fretted that it was still close enough in spirit to be an Elise rival, but ambivalent dealers and television advertising that featured Griff Rhys-Jones in his Y-fronts meant the fear was unfounded.

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www.track-club.com

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T H E L A S T A E R O

This Aero GT is the final Morgan to be powered by BMW's 4.8-litre V8. But as well as marking the end of an era, it heralds a new and exciting time for this most British of car makers

by ADAM TOWLER PHOTOGRAPHY *by* ANDY MORGAN





WHAT. A. NOISE. THE MORGAN AERO GT'S 4.8-litre BMW engine has a note so deep in frequency that if I were to imitate it with my own vocal chords, I'd be coughing and spluttering within seconds attempting to reach those depths. The pulsating rabble ejected from the side-exit exhausts is the kind of sound that seals many a deal: it is reason alone for buying one of these cars, and Morgan knows it. And it's this visceral experience that lies at the heart of its products – along with a level of personification beyond what the so-called premium brands can offer – which makes the Morgan approach so intriguing.

Yet this is also a poignant cry that echoes across the Malvern Hills, for this is the last Morgan to ever be powered by the naturally aspirated BMW N62 V8, its final demise due to the new WLTP emissions regulations that are having a significant effect on the performance car world in general. And I don't just mean this is the last Morgan *model* to have this engine, although as one of eight Aero GTs that's also true, rather than this is the actual last car to be built. To commemorate the N62 leaving production, Morgan has built 50 Plus 8 50th Anniversary Editions (as driven in *evo* 253) and eight Aero GTs such as this one, each GT completely unique. With them sold, the firm currently has no V8-powered flagship in its range for the first time in decades.

In fact, the N62 disappeared from the BMW line-up as long ago as 2010, replaced by the 4.4-litre twin-turbo N63, and only Malvern Link's 'special relationship' with BMW has ensured it has remained in small-scale production since. As Morgan MD Steve Morris tells me: 'It's no mean feat for a small manufacturer. They set up a bespoke line for us [post-2010], including a hot test bed. The Morgan brand must carry a lot of weight for them to want to do it.' They can't have done it for any impact on their bottom line, that much seems obvious.

Overshadowed by BMW M's outrageous V10s in period, and consigned to a much quieter life in the 650i, X5 and 7-series, this quad-cam, all-alloy V8 never really got to show its true mettle in its own brand's products, but it did when it acquired a ticket to Worcestershire. For Morgan the BMW link-up has been of vital importance, too: a thoroughly modern engine from a company with highly respected engineering principles was an inspired 'fit'

'THE AERO HAS COME A LONG WAY SINCE 2001, AS THIS GT IS ABOUT TO PROVE'

for a car that broke with its maker's formidable tradition, at least under the skin at any rate.

The Aero was first seen at the 2000 Geneva motor show. Morris, a 35-year lifer at the company, remembers working a week of all-nighters on the show car when he headed up the 'tin shop' in the factory. The show car and all early Aero 8s were powered by the N62's forebear, the single-Vanos-equipped M62, the engine placed in a new aluminium chassis that cut straight through the image of the firm's traditional wooden-based production, ripping the company into the present without worrying about the intervening decades. The styling, still very much Morgan proportionally, was heavily influenced by aerodynamics, the cow-catcher nose channelling plenty of air into a tight engine bay. But that was no surprise given the car's name, or where it had come from.

The Aero project has its roots in a thug of a Plus 8-based racer, the GTR, which contested the BPR sportscar series – the forerunner to the short-lived FIA GT Championship that spawned cars such as the McLaren F1 GTR Longtail and Porsche GT1. Over the next couple of seasons it was thoroughly developed, gaining the aluminium chassis, and it was also a chance meeting in the paddock at the Nürburgring between BMW directors and the Morgan team that started the relationship between the two. By '98 the racing effort had been shelved to concentrate on fully developing the P8000 prototype, the car that would go on to become the Series 1 Aero 8, which finally went into full production in late 2001.

Despite all of this, what most people remember about the early Aero 8 is the headlamps – inverted Beetle units, chosen on grounds of cost, and which gave the car a peculiar squint. They're long gone, replaced during five different evolutions of the Aero that have





‘INEVITABLY, IT’S THE SOUND THAT HAS ME HOOKED’

included the Targa-roofed SuperSports, the Coupe, and of course the limited-run AeroMax with its highly sculptural tail.

I confess, it’s been over a decade since I last drove an Aero. The younger me didn’t think a great deal of that car – I mainly just remember it being a complete handful – but the Aero has come a long way since, as the GT is about to prove. I also can’t help hypothesising that the context might make a difference: back then there were plenty of tactile driver’s cars, with manual gearboxes and naturally aspirated engines. Now, not so many.

This Aero GT is based on the race-winning 2009 SuperSports GT3 car, its GT styling flourishes mainly those that were left on the sketch pad after the open Aero was reintroduced in 2015. It’s an Aero in beast mode, essentially, striking a curious but instantly loveable balance between the vintage and a copiously vented, hardcore track car. From this starting point, the car’s owner, Jon Hildred, worked closely with Morgan head of design Jonathan Wells on every detail – the result is unique, not necessarily to all tastes, but beautifully created, from the zebrano wood on the dash to the bonnet pinstriping. Hildred also has a range of modern supercars in his garage, but is clearly besotted with this car and, even more so, the Morgan marque – to the point of helping to build his car on the factory floor. This is his third Aero and he couldn’t

be happier. It’s a car he describes as being ‘just fun to drive’.

I’m a little more self-aware than usual as I clamber behind the wheel of the GT, the fact that it’s completely unique, a piece of Morgan history and a privately owned car combining to sound a cautionary warning klaxon in my brain. But straight away there’s the strange but intriguing paradox of this car: slender carbonfibre bucket seats, but with sections trimmed in diamond-stitched caramel-hued leather. It’s cosy rather than cramped, and ahead the large-diameter wheel, with its squidgy rim and glinting spokes, turns the nose of the car extremely quickly with just the lightest amount of pressure exerted, a sensation exaggerated by sitting virtually on top of the rear axle. That feeling, coupled with the angry V8 soundtrack, makes me instantly recall driving a Mercedes-AMG GT R, and like the German machine it takes a few miles to calm down the steering inputs and work out how the Aero GT likes to tackle a corner. In fact, once you’re past the initial turn-in phase the steering seems to slow in its response, and so you learn to be measured but not wary, relying on the front-end grip and getting a feel for the overall balance of the car. The six-speed ZF manual ’box has a very light but accurate shift quality, and coupled with a structure and chassis that doesn’t feel anything like the antiquated set-up the looks might suggest, means that progress in the Aero GT is already pretty rapid.

Yet, inevitably, it’s the sound of the car that has me hooked. Blipping every downchange is a must, and the reverberations of the V8 are something you feel as much as hear, as they send shockwaves through your body. The bassy beat creates an odd phenomenon, because the needle on the rev counter seems much closer to the red

Top left: Morgan MD Steve Morris. **Above, top:** BMW’s N62 V8. **Right:** the eighth and final Aero GT outside the Malvern factory

line than sounds probable from what my ears are telling me, and it also makes the speed of the car slightly deceptive. With 367bhp propelling 1180kg (dry), 60mph is over in 4.5sec and the Aero hammers along with persuasive conviction and instant reactions, but it's tricky to place that acceleration in context with rivals given how unique the overall experience is. It's also obvious how much this car has improved since 2005. While that earlier Aero traded heavily on being 'an event', the GT is both that and also something you feel fairly comfortable driving close to its limits.

Back at the factory there's the gentle hum of a busy workplace, with cars in various states of build everywhere you look, moving from building to building, the aroma of wood being worked and metal being bent adding to the general air of industry. There are groups of onlookers too, because 30,000 people a year are now coming here just to walk around, learn how the cars are made and immerse themselves in everything that is Morgan. The firm recently bought back its factory, having sold it and then leased it back to raise finance a few years ago, and the pride is evident in the newly surfaced roads and freshly painted buildings.

It's a pivotal moment. Talk to anyone here at the factory and they'll say the AeroMax changed everything, showing that great design could be part of Morgan's DNA, that the product could evolve, attract a younger buyer – and command more money, too. And so we await the next chapter in the firm's history with genuine excitement, because the snippets we're hearing are fascinating. With that aforementioned context of cars that really connect with the driver being more relevant than ever for our enthusiast outpost where driving is seen as an activity to actually enjoy, what's currently lurking in prototype form behind those shed doors could be very interesting indeed. We'll keep you posted. ✕



Morgan Aero GT

Engine V8, 4799cc **Power** 367bhp @ 6300rpm
Torque 370lb ft @ 3400rpm **Weight (dry)** 1180kg (316bhp/ton)
0-62mph 4.5sec **Top speed** 170mph **Basic price** £144,000

evo rating ★★★★★



by RICHARD MEADEN

PHOTOGRAPHY by ANDY MORGAN

SOMETHING WICKED...

Jaguar's 592bhp XE SV Project 8 is a beast, of that there's no doubt. But does this four-door track car have what it takes to monster Anglesey's Coastal Circuit?



WATCHING A JAG XE GET lowered 15mm on its springs (the adaptive dampers have a track calibration) and its rear wing cranked to its maximum downforce setting is more like something from a Time Attack event than a magazine test of a supersaloon. There's no denying it's an impressive sight, as you'd hope for from a £150,000 limited-edition four-door saloon with a 592bhp, 516lb ft supercharged V8, all-wheel drive and a headline-grabbing 7min 21.2sec lap time around the Nürburgring Nordschleife.

Today we're at Anglesey Circuit to see how it goes and, more importantly, how it feels on a more typical racetrack. Despite the thuggish looks, first impressions are that the XE SV Project 8 feels surprisingly deft. The steering is free, accurate and responsive without feeling contrived or overly jumpy. There's strong traction too, as you'd expect with all-wheel drive. The eight-speed automatic transmission isn't the sharpest, though, especially under braking from high speed into slower corners, when the downshifts and throttle blips feel a bit soft and sleepy.

The 5-litre motor has always been a bruiser, and in the Project 8 it's properly punchy. Part-throttle response is meaty so you get a real sense of urgency when you get back on the gas. It's also well measured, so you can precisely meter the power and torque delivery through fast and slow corners alike.

For the first timed laps I run in Track mode, with the transmission in S, which means I'm making the shifts. The measured steering response is welcome because it enforces a level of calm on proceedings and makes it easy to keep your inputs smooth and avoid over-driving.

On a max-effort lap the car's behaviour is consistent with the first few sighting laps, but there's a layer of feel missing when you push to its limits. The Track-mode ESP is clean in the way it catches the car, but it holds it too tightly for too long. The Project 8 is sensitive to steering angle too, the difference between the front end gripping and washing wide just a few additional degrees. The onset of a front- or rear-end slide isn't telegraphed especially well, so one moment you're leaning on it with what feels like more to come, then the next you're managing understeer or oversteer.



The handling is actually rather inert, even in slow and medium-speed corners, and while the P8 has impressive grip, when the limit is reached it just tends to push wide. There's the briefest spike of a slide on the exit of Church, which is unwelcome, but exploitable oversteer is in very short supply. The carbon-ceramic brakes are impressive, as is the car's stability when hitting them super-hard into the daunting uphill-into-a-plateau 133mph braking zone before Rocket. You can feel a very slight softening of the pedal after five full-bore laps, but given this Project 8 weighs 1793kg on our scales, that's to be expected.

After a pause to check and adjust tyre pressures we head out again, this time with ESP off. It's a little edgier through Church and requires more steering correction, but everywhere else it feels much freer and more flowing. This is confirmed by a 1:15.3 lap, some six-tenths faster than the best with Track mode engaged.

The Project 8 is a likeable, charismatic machine that's effective on track. But it's also a somewhat confused car, Anglesey revealing neither a scalpel-sharp track weapon, nor the tyre-smoking hooligan the press shots had us believe. Ultimately, the Project 8 is a car that can't quite achieve its maker's aspirations.

Above: ready for action with suspension (manually) dropped by 15mm – a 40-minute job. **Below:** the Project 8 flows better with ESP off, but it's still not the sharpest track weapon

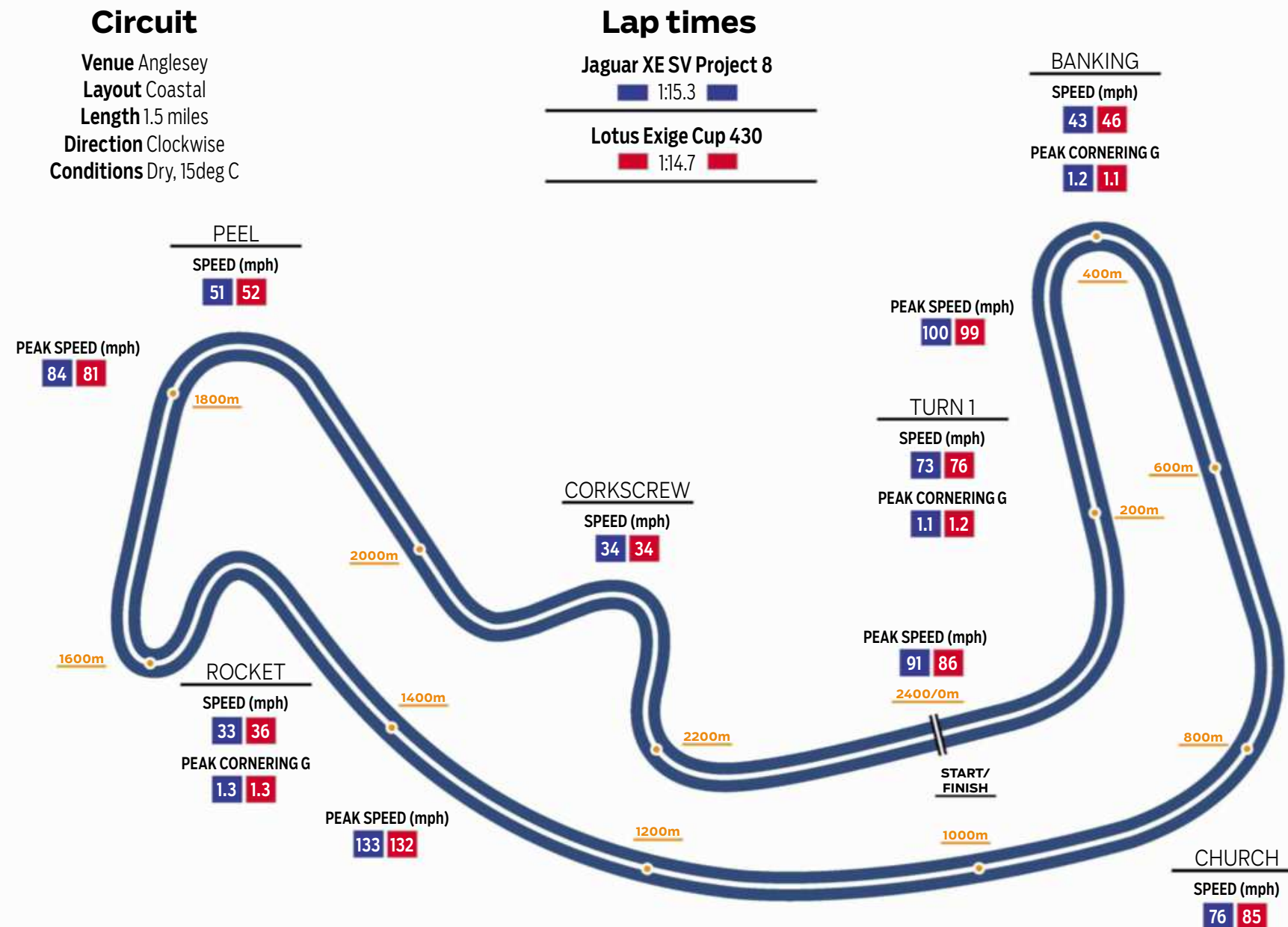
Jaguar XE SV Project 8

Engine V8, 5000cc, supercharger **Power** 592bhp @ 6500rpm
Torque 516lb ft @ 3500-5000rpm **Weight** 1745kg (claimed)
Power-to-weight 345bhp/ton **0-62mph** 3.7sec **Top speed** 200mph
Basic price £149,995 (£159,995 as tested)
evo rating ★★★★★



Lap analysis Jaguar XE SV Project 8 v Lotus Exige Cup 430

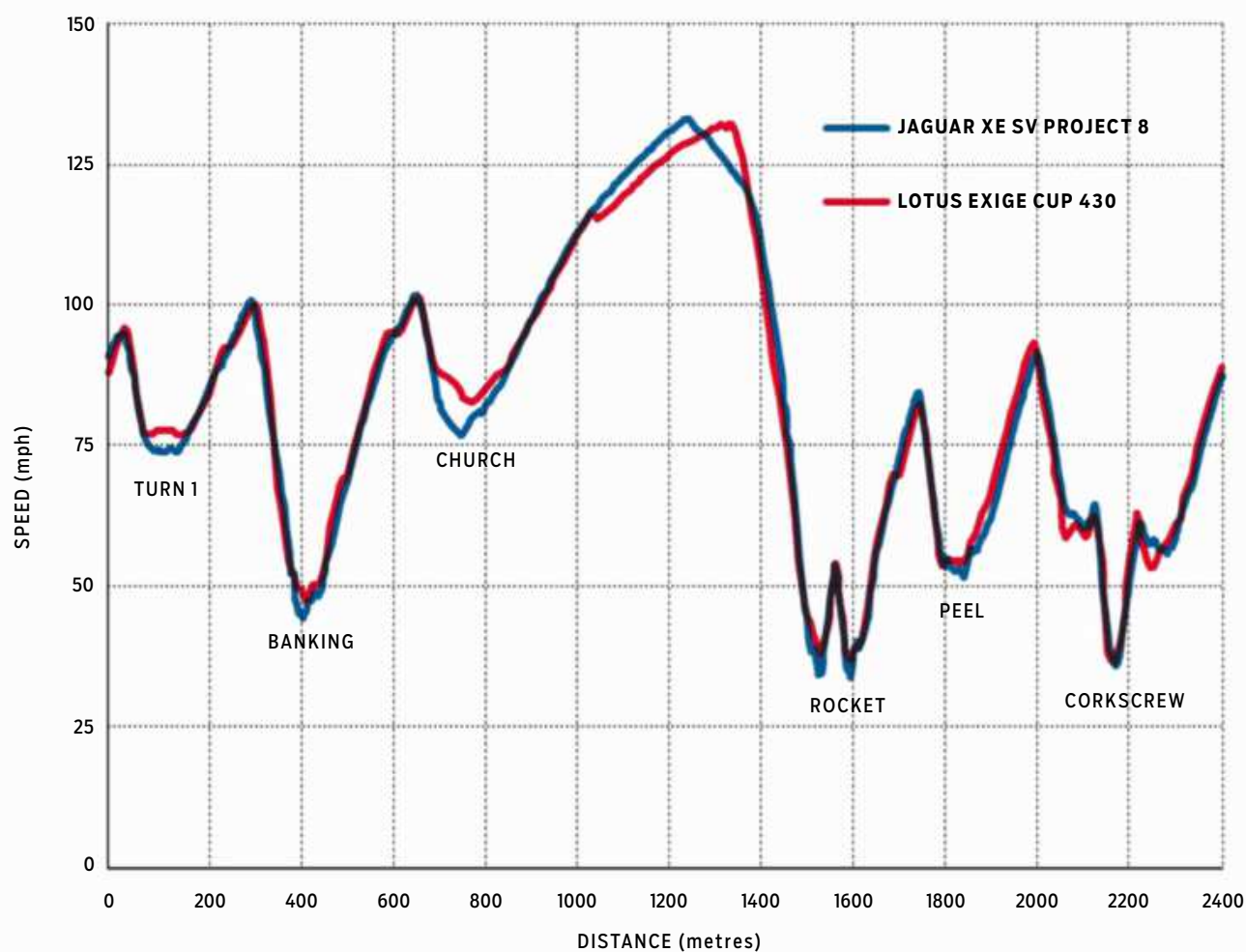
Jaguar's SVO division has made strong claims about Project 8's on-track ability. Here we examine its lap alongside that of the track-honed Lotus Exige Cup 430



GIVEN HOW DIFFERENT THESE TWO are, it's uncanny how closely their traces follow one another. Predictably, the Lotus Exige Cup 430 (lapped in issue 253) fights physics less when changing direction and generating lateral load, but remarkably the Jag all but matches it under braking, despite being almost a ton heavier. That'll be those 400mm carbon-ceramic discs and a generous footprint of Cup 2 rubber.

The decel curves may plummet at identical rates, but the Lotus lets you roll off the middle pedal sooner and carry more speed through all but the slowest corners, most noticeably at Church. The upward accel curves are also similar, but the torquey Jag punches out of corners so regains ground on the run up to Rocket, eventually overhauling the Exige's 132mph peak speed before the uphill kink.

It's nip and tuck for the remainder of the lap, the P8 powering through the opening radius at Peel, the Exige nailing the awkward downhill approach to Corkscrew and pinching more ground through the final corner. Traction, torque and braking help the P8 to an impressive 1:15.3; poise, agility and a formidable power-to-weight ratio see the Exige nick it by 0.6sec.





LIGHT



*The Caterham Seven 620R,
Elemental Rp1 and Ariel
Atom 3.5R are three of the most
extreme British lightweights
you can buy. Time to crown
the undisputed champion*

CLUB

by STEVE SUTCLIFFE

PHOTOGRAPHY by ASTON PARROTT & DEAN SMITH

DRIVING A CAR THAT WEIGHS NOT A lot – as in less than 650kg – but which boasts a seismic amount of power – ideally 300bhp or more – has always held a unique, if slightly unhinged form of appeal for the genuine rev-head. At times it can feel as if it is not you but the car itself that is in control. And in a curious kind of way that's a rather wonderful thing to experience on four wheels every now and again.

But only if the car in question has been thoroughly engineered by people who really do know what they are on about. The perfect overpowered, lightweight, four-wheeled Exocet missile ideally needs a well-balanced, rear-wheel-drive chassis and pin-sharp steering without any form of power assistance. Most important of all, it should be equipped with a mighty set of brakes that can keep its potential to deliver mayhem firmly in check.

What we have here are three of the very best exponents of this unusual breed of car, two of which you will be familiar with, one of which you may not.

The first two – the Caterham Seven 620R and Ariel Atom 3.5R – have been around for quite some while now and are clearly established as the go-to solutions for punters with a) a mild death wish, and b) at least £50k to spend on ultimate lightweight driving thrills.

The £52,990 Caterham has a supercharged 2-litre Ford Duratec engine in its nose with 310bhp and 219lb ft of torque, and puts its prodigious power on the road via a sequential six-speed gearbox. It weighs 572kg dry, boasts 551bhp per ton (also in 'dry' terms) and can, says Caterham, hit 60mph in just 2.79sec.

The £64,800 Atom 3.5R has just been replaced by the new Atom 4 (see page 30), but we still invited it along because, well, it's one of those cars you can never really get enough of. It too is powered by a supercharged 2-litre engine, but this one is from Honda, not Ford, and is mounted behind the occupants and mated to a sequential six-speed 'box with pneumatically actuated paddleshifters. The 3.5R weighs 550kg with fluids and generates 350bhp, giving it an even more crazed power-to-weight ratio of 647bhp per ton. There's also 243lb ft of torque, so the Ariel should be even more mighty than the Caterham for mid-range muscle.

Which just leaves the new boy in town to discuss,



the Elemental Rp1. Designed and built by a team of ex-McLaren and ex-Ford engineers, the £139,800 Rp1 features a carbonfibre tub at its core and a driving position that is similar to that of an F1 car, reckons Elemental. This so-called 'feet up' design enhances the aerodynamic qualities of the car significantly, so they say, and helps the Rp1 generate a claimed 500kg of downforce at 150mph. Its 2.3-litre turbocharged Ford engine (there's also a 2-litre option) sits behind the two hyper-raked seats and produces a maximum of 320bhp in its fruitiest mode – there are numerous boost levels to choose from – accompanied by 354lb ft. With a dry weight of 620kg, that means 524bhp per ton (dry).

Like the others, the Rp1 has no form of traction control or ESP, and no power steering either. So you are on your own when you select the wildest Race mode, especially in the car we're testing today, which has had its engine boosted a touch further via a factory upgrade to 340bhp, just for extra carnage. That in turn takes the power-to-weight ratio of this particular car up to 557bhp per ton.

Driving cars such as these on the public road is undoubtedly fun, but by far the best place to get the most out of them is on a track. Hence we've brought all three to Anglesey Circuit to establish several different things. One, which is the most engaging to drive. Two, which is the least terrifying to drive hard. And three, which is quickest against the stopwatch.

I drive the Elemental first because it feels like the one that might need the most time to get the best out of, and I am right. Even just climbing aboard is not easy, but once you're ensconced the driving position feels very single-seater, even though it isn't. Your feet are roughly on a level with your chin, and for me there isn't quite enough support to keep my head up, meaning I need to strain just to keep my eyes on the level. It's almost there but not quite in terms of driving position, although having said that the pedals are perfect and the paddles on the steering wheel are spot-on, as is the wheel itself.

I try the Rp1 in its most basic Road setting first and

Below and top right: Ariel can be driven on the edge without scaring yourself. **Above right:** Caterham's precise steering a thing of wonder





**‘IT’S A BIT INSANE
HOW FAST THE RP1
FEELS, AND THAT’S
WHAT CARS LIKE THIS
SHOULD BE ABOUT’**

the throttle feels a bit dead to begin with. Not so the acceleration, which is utterly ridiculous, even in this novice mode. Traction is also extraordinary, while the steering feels hyper-reactive, maybe too much to begin with, possibly because the owner of this example has fitted a quicker rack that has increased response but upped the weighting at the same time.

Either way, the Rp1, though astonishingly quick, doesn't feel quite as sweet as I'd hope. It feels like a bit of a wrestling match to be honest, even though the level of grip it generates is impressive, its sequential gearbox works superbly and the acceleration on offer is eye-watering.

So I decide to try it in full beans mode, at which point the throttle response goes from so-so to stark raving mental, and the acceleration becomes simply too much for the rear tyres (Toyo Proxes R888Rs) to cope with out of most corners.

It's a little bit insane how fast the Rp1 feels in this mode, and in a way that's what cars like this should be all about. But the mapping needs work as it's simply too aggressive. The torque arrives in such a rush it actually becomes quite a difficult car to drive smoothly. Or quickly. Eventually I manage to not spin the Rp1 to a Coastal Circuit lap time of 1:13.2 – 2.1sec faster than the Jaguar Project 8 lap you've just read about, 0.4sec behind

a McLaren 675LT (evo 228) – and it feels entirely unhinged in the process. But the truth is it would go miles quicker with a less aggressive map yet still with the full 340bhp. I climb out of the Rp1 oscillating slightly, glad to still be in one piece.

By comparison the Caterham feels quite civilised. But, amazingly, it also doesn't feel anything like as explosive in a straight line as the car I've just stepped out of, which is not something you find yourself saying about a 620R too often.

The sequential gearbox on this example is not at its best, causing the rear wheels to lock momentarily in the big stopping zones, which is not good. Yet there's still something utterly addictive about ragging the 620R around a lap. The Seven's steering remains a thing of wonder, too: so precise, so sharp, that you end up aiming it more with your mind than your hands. Plus the throttle response is fantastic.

With the gearbox hindering the lap time I clock a best of 1:14.2 – a full second behind the Elemental – but as with the Rp1, it would go way quicker in perfect condition.

Which just leaves the Atom, which is 100 per cent healthy, and just very, very quick, full stop. From its light but super-direct steering, via its incredible blend of acceleration and traction, to its perfect throttle response, its immaculate brake

'THE ATOM FEELS IN A DIFFERENT LEAGUE ROUND ANGLESEY'

response and power and, perhaps best of all, its awesome pneumatic paddleshift gearbox, the 3.5R feels in another league round Anglesey.

It's almost as mind-scrambling as the Rp1 in a straight line but has more grip, much better traction and – most important of all – is much more forgiving on or near the limit. This means you can drive it right on the edge, everywhere, but somehow without scaring yourself, which ultimately means you can drive it harder *and* have more fun in the process.

In the end I do a 1:12.3 lap in the Atom – just two-tenths behind what we've recorded in a 911 GT2 RS (evo 253) – and I don't ever want to climb out of it. The Rp1 could learn a thing or two from the Ariel in this respect, even if it is – in theory – the more sophisticated of the two. And costs more than twice as much... ❌

Ariel Atom 3.5R

Engine In-line 4-cyl, 1998cc, supercharger

Power 350bhp @ 8400rpm

Torque 243lb ft @ 6100rpm

Weight 550kg

Power-to-weight 647bhp/ton

0-62mph 2.6sec

Top speed 155mph

Basic price £64,800

evo rating ★★★★★

Caterham Seven 620R

Engine In-line 4-cyl, 1999cc, supercharger

Power 310bhp @ 7700rpm

Torque 219lb ft @ 7350rpm

Weight (dry) 572kg

Power-to-weight (dry) 551bhp/ton

0-60mph 2.8sec

Top speed 155mph

Basic price £52,990

evo rating ★★★★★

Elemental Rp1

Engine In-line 4-cyl, 2261cc, turbocharger

Power 340bhp @ n/a rpm

Torque 354lb ft @ n/a rpm

Weight (dry) 620kg

Power-to-weight (dry) 557bhp/ton

0-60mph 2.6sec

Top speed 165mph

Basic price £139,800

evo rating ★★★★★



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HEART v HEAD

5 GT TURBO v UP GTI

Classic '80s hot hatch meets modern supermini bargain. The big question is, where will you put your money?

by WILL BEAUMONT

PHOTOGRAPHY by ASTON PARROTT



IT'S NOT THE PORSCHE 911 GT3 RS or the McLaren 600LT; the real 'new car of the moment' is the Volkswagen Up GTI. It's not only those seeking an affordable entry point into performance cars who are lapping up the Up, either – there are people with supercars, limited-edition track cars and thoroughbred classics who are dedicating a small corner of their vast garages to the little hot hatch.

However, there are other small, front-wheel-drive performance cars in demand – second-hand ones. It won't have escaped your notice that prices of 1980s hot hatches have shot up in recent years. Not too long ago worth only what their tinny bodies could be weighed in for, some are now well into five figures.

The Renault 5 GT Turbo is one such hatch, with the mean average price for a good 'un currently being £13,000-14,000. This puts it perfectly on par with the £14,055 three-door Up GTI in price terms, but judged purely on performance data the old car seems better value. The Up's turbocharged 1-litre triple makes 113bhp compared to the 118bhp from the 5's turbo four-cylinder unit, but while the VW has 25lb ft more torque (147lb ft), it's also 140kg heavier (995kg), which means its claimed time for the 0-62mph sprint



'A STOCK 5 GT TURBO IS AN ABSOLUTE TREAT'

(8.8sec) is 1.5sec slower than the Renault's.

Still, the Up certainly looks good value from inside. There's kit aplenty from the twice-the-price Golf GTI and everything has the solid feel you'd expect of a Volkswagen. The engine noise at idle is, perhaps, not as cultured as those of other Wolfsburg products, but it's far from offensive. Make the motor work and it emits a harder growl – nothing too aggressive, but meaningful enough that you feel like you're making progress. And you are, because the Up GTI is quick. Well, relatively, but certainly far quicker than you'd think sub-120bhp would ever feel in a car this size.

That's where the surprises end, because everything about the Up feels so comfortable and natural, so after mere minutes of progress you're confidently tipping it into corners, its tall body propped up by the firm suspension. It scurries from corner to corner with undwindling enthusiasm and you can't help but encourage it along. Yes, you can pick holes in what the Up does: the wheel control is poor over rough roads and this erodes traction, and the engine's excessive flywheel effect occasionally makes it tricky to make quick upshifts, while heel-and-toe downshifts are even harder. There are also times when you think the Up could relinquish a little more control to the driver and extend some of its childish joy to the driver aids (they can't be disabled and in the wet cut in early to quell anything too exuberant). But then you remember that the Up really is cheap for a new performance car and offers oodles of instantly accessible, immediate, fuss-free fun, so you forgive each and every one of its foibles.

That's once you have your hands on one, anyway. Such is the demand for the feisty little VW that there's a seven-month waiting list. It might actually be quicker to scour the country for a clean Renault 5 GT Turbo...

You might imagine, with the 5 being one of the main objects of the *Max Power* generation's glassfibre and P38-filler fetish, that standard ones would be hard to come by. But, remarkably, there's a serious lack of bad-boy bonnets, three-spoke wheels and satellite-sized subwoofers in the GT Turbo classifieds. Most examples are absolutely standard, which is a boon, as a stock 5 GT Turbo is an absolute treat. Its smooth, pear-shaped body isn't conventionally pretty, but it's so distinctive, with just enough presence from its blocky arches and bumpers and flashy decals, that it's easy to fall for. Still on the fence? Let me draw your

Above left: finding suitable tyres for the Renault's 13-inch wheels can be tricky. **Left:** no such problems with the VW's 17s, which look huge by comparison





Top: Up's steering wheel will be familiar to anyone who's sat in a recent Golf GTI. **Above:** Turbo's interior as '80s as a Grace Jones album cover

attention to the yellow fog lights. You absolutely can't resist their Gallic charm, can you?

The 5's dash makes you long for more freedom in modern car design, with curves, angles and quirks that make the inside of a McLaren 720S look humdrum. But touch any part of it and it feels as though it might disintegrate. That said, as it approaches 100,000 miles, this car has worn far better than you'd expect, with just the squeaks and rattles that came as standard with most cars in the '80s. The seats are soft and supportive, the gearstick substantial, and not only is the steering wheel the ideal size, it also has the correct balance between quirky looks and motorsport influence. Perfect.

The engine is surprisingly quiet. The loudest thing you can hear is the electric fan when it cuts in (it runs for a while after you switch the engine off – a tweak that was intended to cure the hot-starting issues of early GT Turbos) and the four-pot's hushed tones make it seem friendly and approachable. One prolonged stamp on the throttle changes all that. This is '80s turbocharging, so there's a significant amount of rather steady acceleration before the needle on the Jaeger turbo-boost dial pings to the end of its range and a moment later the Renault surges forward. It may be old, but it certainly isn't slow. When it's on boost, the surprisingly quick Up struggles to keep up.

On tarmac that hasn't seen rain for weeks, the idea of a car with no traction or stability control and no ABS – let alone one from an age when the biggest killer was lift-off oversteer, or so I'm told – means corners are an unnerving prospect. But there's no need to worry, as there's so much travel in the suspension; it's soft, supple and, without much mass to keep in check, provides plenty of control, so the car never snaps or bites back aggressively. As a result you can comfortably play with the 5's limits: Will it oversteer with a lift of the throttle? Can you spin the wheels if you're a bit eager with your right foot? Will the brakes lock up? Yes, yes and yes. But the car's tiny size means you have room to experiment, even at the speeds the GT Turbo likes to operate at.



A good stretch of road with a variety of corners and a change in elevation is enough to make you forget this is a delicate old car. Coming to a stop in this particular example brings it all back to the fore, though. The drain of the lights, wipers and fan on the alternator means that, unless you brush the throttle with the outside of your foot every time you come to a halt, the engine stalls. I'm sure a twiddle of the carburettor's idle screw would fix the issue, but it shows that even the best 5 GT Turbos will need constant attention.

Catching sight of the mess of hoses, wires and heat shields under the bonnet might be enough to put off the amateur mechanic. However, GT Turbo specialist Bob Beamond of CGB Motorsport says that they're simple cars to work on: 'There are lots of hoses and it's a lot of engine in a small space. I think that's what makes it look a bit daunting. But it's all quite simple mechanics; there are no computers in there and only a little electrical wiring, and the engine is basic.'

Still, it's a classic car and no matter how much money you're initially willing to fork out, it will require attention and more cash to keep it in the same condition. Any grand plan to make a fortune on an appreciating classic could easily be dashed by maintenance costs, unless you're very lucky or, god forbid, you simply don't use it. That would be a sin, because on a base level the Renault is a better driver's car than the Volkswagen – you, and only you, are in charge, and there are deeper layers to explore. However, the Up counters by being an instant pleaser with no worries to distract you from the fun, and as a result you're likely to spend more time behind its wheel with a smile on your face.

‘WHEN THE 5 IS ON BOOST THE UP STRUGGLES TO KEEP UP’

SPECIFICATIONS AND COSTS

RENAULT 5 GT TURBO

Engine	In-line 4-cyl, 1397cc, turbo
Power	118bhp @ 5750rpm
Torque	122lb ft @ 3000rpm
Transmission	Five-speed manual, front-wheel drive
Weight	855kg
Power-to-weight	140bhp/ton
0-60mph	7.3sec
Top speed	120mph
Price new	£7360 (1986)
Value today	£13,000-14,000
Full service	£156
Short service	£60
Front discs	£30 pair
Front pads	£18 per axle set
Rear discs	£75 pair
Rear pads	£18 per axle set
Exhaust	£240 (stainless steel replacement)
Clutch	£456 (fitted)
Tyres	£130 each, front and rear (Avon Turbospeed CR27)
Insurance	£150 (£150 excess)

VOLKSWAGEN UP GTI

Engine	In-line 3-cyl, 999cc, turbo
Power	113bhp @ 5000rpm
Torque	147lb ft @ 2000-3500rpm
Transmission	Six-speed manual, front-wheel drive
Weight	995kg
Power-to-weight	115bhp/ton
0-62mph	8.8sec
Top speed	122mph
Price new	£14,055
Oil change service	£105.02 (10,000 miles)
Full service	£187.50
Short service	£127.50
Front discs	£141.48 pair
Front pads	£82.22 per axle set
Rear shoes	£75.73 per axle set
Brake fluid replacement	£46.88
Pollen filter replacement	£38.70
Tyres	£92.30 each, front and rear (Goodyear EfficientGrip Performance)
Insurance	£285 (£200 excess)

Parts prices include VAT but exclude fitting unless otherwise stated. Renault costs from CGB Motorsport. Renault tyre prices from Longstone Classic Tyres. Volkswagen tyre prices from Blackcircles. Insurance quotes from Adrian Flux, for a 40-year-old male, living in Bedfordshire, no convictions, no accidents.





Clockwise from top left: Peugeots 205 GTI and 208 GTi are classic and nearly-new alternatives for £15k; around £5k less buys supercharged entertainment aplenty with a first-gen Mini GP; Mk1 Golf GTI is another £15k classic option; current Renault Twingo GT is the Up's closest brand-new rival, but falls short for fun

THE RIVALS

From '80s classics to more recent offerings, there's plenty of choice

SEARCH FOR A HOT HATCH FOR under £15,000 and you'll have to wade through hoards of very tempting recent Ford Fiesta STs. The ST offers real hot hatch thrills and, because it's a modern car, is incredibly usable. The same can be said of the Peugeot 208 GTi by Peugeot Sport, but there are fewer available.

Go a little older and there's Renault Sport's Clio (182) Trophy – hot hatches don't get much more serious, or fun. The best ones, which have covered less than 50,000 miles and have the fancy Sachs dampers in good working order, are now around £10k. At a similar price are the Mk1 Ford Focus RS and Mk1 Mini JCW GP, both of which feel hardcore and special in a similar fashion to the Trophy.

If the Up's GTI badge is a big draw, there are second-hand alternatives for

this, too. Previous-generation Polo GTIs are within budget, but there are much better options, namely those wearing the 'Golf' badge. The Mk1 GTI has gained classic status, so you'll need the full £15k budget for a decent, standard one. The next few generations are much cheaper; only when you get to the best low-mileage Mk5 Edition 30s do they creep over £10k. Mk6 and 7 GTIs are also within range.

Depending on condition and originality, most '80s and early '90s hot hatches are available below £15,000, including the Fiat Uno Turbo, Ford Fiesta XR2 and RS Turbo, and the Peugeot 205 GTi – although the best 1.9s command a lot more money.

But the Up GTI really has the new-car corner tied up. The Renault Twingo GT and Forfour Brabus fail to stack up on paper, price or driver satisfaction.

RENAULT 5 EXPERT VIEW: BOB BEAMOND

OF CGB MOTORSPORT

'THE GT TURBO HAS GONE THROUGH SO many different stages. There was a period where they were modified, there was a racing period where they were used on the quarter-mile, and now we are in a period where they're going back to standard. And that's where the problem is: there aren't very many standard cars about and a lot of the original parts were put in the bin.

'Good interior trim is rare and that's what's making the clean, tidy cars very, very expensive – the body doesn't rot too badly. The interior is typically French, so it's a bit delicate. Over the years we've broken about 500 Renault 5 GT Turbos, and from all of those we've never had a decent set of rear "door cards". We also have one customer who's been offered £700 for his second-hand gearknob.

'Mechanical parts, engine parts, though – all that's available. Turbo units, suspension parts – not a problem. We can do a complete engine rebuild for about £1000; new pistons, new liners, new crank. A thousand pounds for an engine or £700 for a gearknob – it doesn't quite marry up.

'The GT Turbo has a pushrod engine. It's as simple as they get and it's easy to work on. Standard, it has about 120bhp, but if you put a boost adjuster bleed valve – which only costs a tenner – to the turbo actuator and turn the boost up, you'll get 150bhp easily. In the past, people added a bleed valve, turned it a quarter of a turn, then drove their car and thought, "Wow! That's a bit more potent." But the temptation was to turn it another quarter to get even more power... Eventually the carburettor wouldn't be able to put enough fuel into the engine, it'd run lean and the head gasket would go.

'Today you can just put a lambda sensor in the exhaust and it tells you, via a gauge on the dash, exactly what the fuelling is doing. If you turn the boost up too much and it runs lean, it'll tell you on the gauge. So you just turn the boost down or increase the fuel accordingly without needing to go on a rolling road. I used to sell loads of head gaskets. I sell very few of them now because people fit air/fuel ratio gauges.

'Generally what we see now is that people do modifications that they can reverse. A common one is to fit 15-inch wheels off a Mk1 Clio, because running 15-inch wheels makes life a lot easier. The standard 13-inch wheels have a certain size tyre – 195/55 13 – which was only ever made for the Renault 5. The original tyres are from Uniroyal and the rumour is they only make them when they have enough orders.'

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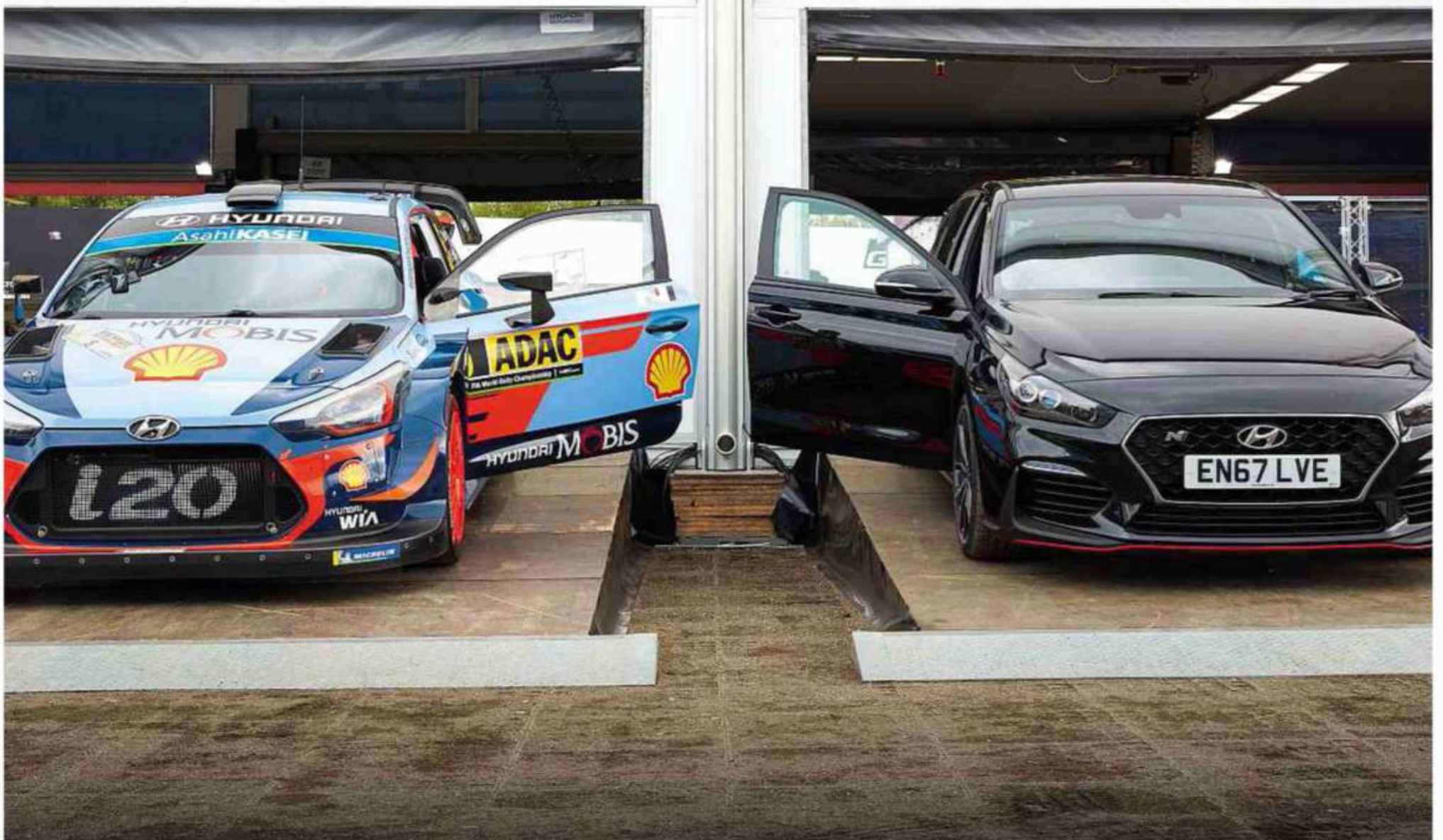
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Fast Fleet

Hyundai i30 N Performance

Our Hyundai hot hatch shares garage space with its fire-breathing WRC cousin on a trip to Rallye Deutschland



p125 Volkswagen Up GTI



p130 Ferrari 458 Speciale



p132 BMW M5

PLUS: Honda Civic Type R ■ Porsche 911 Carrera (993) ■ Audi RS4 Avant ■ Lamborghini Aventador Roadster
■ Suzuki Swift Sport ■ Peugeot 308 GTi by Peugeot Sport ■ Abarth 124 Spider ■ Caterham Seven 310R



I SHOULD HAVE KNOWN IT WAS coming. One too many mentions in Fast Fleet reports of the i30 N's 'WRC-style' exhaust note, and the next thing I know there's an email inviting me to drive our long-termer to the Moselle to see some actual WRC cars at Rallye Deutschland. And as it transpires, a Hyundai i20 Coupe WRC makes the N's exhaust sound like a bumblebee in a cola can.

Can't complain, though. The last six months have rather flown by, so the opportunity for a special trip before Hyundai reclaims our i30 would make a welcome change from the car's usual diet of commuting, airport runs and weekend blasts.

A thousand-mile motorway return trip wouldn't have been my first choice to get some serious wheel time in one of our favourite hot hatches, but if there's one thing you can guarantee around a rally it's twisting roads, and if it's a rally in Germany then one or two stretches of derestricted autobahn may also present themselves.

Plan hatched, alarm set, Chunnel booked and destination tapped in, I aimed the N's nose towards Bosen, a small town nestled in the Saarland that the entrants would be calling home over the course of the event.

'Watching the Hyundai rally team engineers at work was fascinating'

It was no relaxing schlep, this one, as we'd been granted a brief chance to slot the i30 in the very garage spot that Hyundai Motorsport driver Thierry Neuville's car would occupy each time it returned to service. A 30-minute window from 3.30pm was all we'd have to capture the shots, and with more than 500km to cover once we hit mainland Europe, each fuel stop had more in common with F1 than WRC.

And fuel stops are not uncommon when you undertake a long journey in the i30 N. Low-30s real-world fuel economy is respectable enough given the 271bhp on offer, but when combined with a 50-litre tank and the need to refuel while you still have sensible reserves, a range of 250-300 miles is the norm, even at sub-autobahn speeds. Granted, though, these kind of numbers aren't unique to the Hyundai: the Civic Type R's fuel tank is 4 litres smaller

while its engine is thirstier still...

Use of those derestricted sections facilitated a timely arrival. Everything was then conducted with the precision and professionalism you'd expect of a World Rally team, from the speed at which they guided me up onto the carbonfibre ramps, to the efficiency with which they shuffled around the growling WRC machines for the photos. We returned the favour with timeliness, the shutter clicking on the last shot after 29 minutes precisely.

The i30's burble as I moved it up ramps and around the service park was somewhat overshadowed by the angry, core-shaking blare of the i20. Despite losing around 400cc to the N, its 1.6-litre four-cylinder bests the road car by 104bhp and 53lb ft, even when breathing through a choking 36mm air restrictor. Incidentally, if the next generation of hot hatches don't feature airboxes wrapped in heat-reflecting gold foil like those of the WRC field, they'll be missing a real motorsport-inspired trick. It'd certainly enliven the engine bay of the N, which looked a little tame when Hyundai's engineers popped the bonnets of the competition cars.

Watching them get to work on the WRC cars was fascinating. Entire body panels and



engine components were removed with an ease that would make the average dealership mechanic weep. Perhaps greater ease of maintenance for road cars would lend credence to 'improves the breed' claims by manufacturers.

After sticking around for a few rough and tumble stages the next day it was time to make the long journey home, but not before exploring one or two roads not in use by the rally. Closures and redirections rendered them largely free of traffic, and the N's capacity for amusement shone brighter than ever on Germany's ultra-smooth tarmac.

The precise and weighty steering, great throttle response, crackling exhaust and strong brakes might pale in comparison to those of its distantly related competition cousin, but a chance to bring the two together over a rally weekend showed there really is substance behind comparison with the company's motorsport products.

Antony Ingram (@evoAntony)

Date acquired February 2018
Total mileage 9881 **Mileage this month** 1551 **Costs this month** £0
mpg this month 33.8

Volkswagen Up GTI

The little city car is loosening up nicely - and proving itself a worthy long-haul companion

I'M SURE THE UP IS GETTING faster. Not massively so, but I'd swear there's a palpable increase in urgency. The little turbocharged triple isn't a rev head, but it seems a little bit freer and more enthusiastic, the early bolt of boost pushing the stubby tacho needle round the dial with a bit more gusto. I know some cars like a lot of miles to loosen up; perhaps the Up is one of them.

It's continuing to get plenty of attention, too, and from people who know their cars. On a recent trip to Goodwood for pre-Revival testing I saw Mike Jordan (father of BTCC driver Andrew), who's an avid magazine reader and total petrolhead. In a paddock filled with fantastic old cars he made a beeline for the Up, having read good things and wanting a closer look.

One of the great Fast Fleet rites of passage is driving your long-termer to and from a job involving something stratospherically fast. The theory is that if you still enjoy the drive home you know you've got a good 'un. The Up's moment came when I tested the Ferrari 812 Superfast at Anglesey last month.

Things got off to an encouraging start

when I chose to shun heading up the night before, instead tackling the 550-mile round trip in a day - not something you tend to do in a car you don't like spending time in. Fresh from the four-hour drive to Ty Croes, after a quick coffee it was straight into a full-on day of fast laps against the clock, with a video and stills shoot thrown in for good measure, then back in the Up for the journey home.

I won't lie, the first few miles did feel a bit flat. This happens when you've become used to 789bhp, then have the best part of 700 taken away, but within minutes my head was back into enjoying the Up. More often than not when faced with the journey back from Anglesey I head for the A55 'top' route and submit to the motorway. This time, for the first in many a year, I made both trips using the A5. It didn't take any longer and was a great deal more fun. That pretty much describes the Up in a nutshell.

Richard Meaden (@DickieMeaden)

Date acquired May 2018
Total mileage 6189 **Mileage this month** 991 **Costs this month** £0
mpg this month 47.3



End of term

Honda Civic Type R

It had an innate ability to thrill like few others, but a single apparent flaw marred our long-term Type R experience



LET'S START WITH THE GOOD STUFF. And there is oh-so-much very good stuff about the FK8 Civic Type R. Believe every positive word you've read about it: every group test win, every track battle victory. It really is that special. For me, it's on a par with my all-time favourite hot hatches, namely the very best ones from Renault Sport.

It's fast, that's for sure. With 316bhp it was never going to be anything but. Yet there's so much more to it than that. There's the confidence-inspiring composure, the remarkable sense of control, the lashings of feedback from every point where your body is in contact with the car. Never did I tire of the way you could snap the deliciously mechanical gearshift from third to fourth with just a flick

of the fingertips, or the way the FK8 could rip into a corner then slingshot itself out the other side. Heck, from the driver's seat even all that overwrought exterior styling seemed appropriate – the Honda has the moves to justify the ostentation. Put simply, I *adore* the way the Civic Type R drives.

But now the reality check. It isn't a perfect car to live with. Its low-speed ride will likely be considered irritatingly firm by non-petrolhead passengers, the infotainment system is laggy and unintuitive, and the satnav seems largely oblivious to traffic problems that it is supposed to display. Also, as I found with the previous-generation CTR, the heat/dust shields behind the front brake discs have an irritating habit of catching loose stones, which then rattle

around like a solitary boiled sweet in a metal tin, or cause embarrassing screeching noises during parking manoeuvres. But these were all niggles I could easily overlook in exchange for that sublime hot hatch driving experience.

Our long-termer also had a couple of bugs of its own. The front parking sensors would chime false warnings during and after rain, and the tyre pressure monitor needed to be reset two or three times after any tyre or tyre pressure change before it would stop reporting phantom punctures. But these were minor things, offset by a rock-solid build quality inside, with a total absence of rattles and creaks that would shame many a car costing several times the Type R's £30,995 asking price (or £32,995 with our car's GT trim, which adds



'I never tired of the way the FK8 could rip into a corner then slingshot itself out the other side'

super-low-profile tyres (245/30s) don't mix with British roads. Further evidence of this had come months earlier, when a pothole bent the outer edge of one of the rims. This cost £174 to have straightened and refurbished by a specialist, but at least this was cheaper than the £541 Honda asks for a new wheel.

And it was these two events that caused my relationship with the Type R to turn sour. From then on, every journey was tainted. I found myself scanning the road for the smallest imperfection, to the point of distraction, and rarely daring to properly commit to a good road for fear of another bent rim or four-hour wait for a recovery truck. The car simply felt too fragile to be used as I wanted to use it.

Ultimately, this knocked the FK8, as it is, off my shortlist of cars to buy used one day. An FK8 on some tasteful aftermarket 18-inch wheels, however. Now that I might consider...

Ian Eveleigh

goodies such as parking sensors, dual-zone climate control and an upgraded stereo).

In terms of running costs, an overall average of 29.9mpg seemed quite reasonable given the pace the Civic could offer and how frequently I enjoyed it. Our car was due its first service at around 10,100 miles – about 500 miles after it went back – and this would have cost £230 at my nearest dealer. However, the brake pads were close to needing replacement too, so that figure would have soon ramped up. The original front Continental Sport Contact 6s were done long before that, at 6500 miles, which included a couple of track outings. We replaced the Contis with four Michelin Pilot Sport 4 Ss (£917.28), as we were intrigued by

Michelin's claim that the 4 S has a significantly slower wear rate than the Sport Contact 6. Sure enough, if the front pair continued to wear at the rate we saw over the first 3000 miles, we could have got over 11,000 road miles from them, which seems far more palatable. Their performance was impressive too, with at least equal levels of outright grip and traction as the Contis, but with the limits more clearly signalled by a much larger breakaway window. They seemed like a good match for the Type R.

Shame, then, that two of them were destroyed after just 250 miles when a nasty ridge in the road caused the inner rims of both left-hand-side 20-inch wheels to pierce the tyres' sidewalls. Not the Michelins' fault, I'm sure, rather a sign that such large wheels with

Date acquired January 2018 **Duration of test** 8 months **Total test mileage** 9014 **Overall mpg** 29.9 **Costs** £917.28 four tyres, £30 to refit two original tyres, £174 wheel repair, £478.66 windscreen replacement **Purchase price** £33,520 **Value today** £29,000

Porsche 911 Carrera (993)

The '90s 911 stretches its legs on road, and sand, with an outing to south Wales

THE 993 IS A PERFECT CAR FOR weekends away. The storage space under the front bonnet can take two medium-sized bags, and even with the newly installed half-cage (see *evo* 250) I can still slot two Billingham camera bags behind the front seats. Meanwhile the large windows allow for obstruction-free viewing of the landscape you're travelling through and the car's small size means that it fits down the narrowest of country lanes without worry.

So it was the obvious choice for a recent 650-mile trip to and around south Wales and back. It was my girlfriend's birthday and I had suggested spending a long weekend away. The weather was perfect but the Porsche's air con struggled against outside temperatures of 22deg C, so we spent most of the journey there with the windows down and music up, classic American-movie road-trip style.

Driving with the windows down is something I need to do more often; it takes a while to adjust to, but the sensation of speed is intensified by the extra road noise, the wind rushing through the side windows and the sounds from the air-cooled flat-six flirting with you to keep your foot flat up to 7000rpm.

The drive to our destination took five-and-a-half hours, with a couple of coffee stops,



but luckily the Recaro bucket seats proved perfectly comfortable.

Part of our minibreak took us to Slebech Park, a lovely remote hotel by the River Cleddau and a perfect location for relaxing walks in the countryside. What I didn't mention to Cara – and wouldn't for a while yet – was that it was also only 20 miles from Pendine Sands, and that it was the Hot Rod Races weekend...

But first we spent a couple of days visiting nearby seaside towns, including Tenby, and enjoying the empty roads – and the 993 – in between them. This car really gets under my skin, as everything about it feels special, from the RS short-shift gearchange to the white instrument dials. At some point a previous owner fitted a Garmin satnav, and while the install has been done very nicely, I still hate it,

maybe because it's at odds with the simplicity of the rest of the interior. But on this trip I actually found it really useful: with so many twisty, unfamiliar roads it was nice to be able to glance down to see upcoming turns or possible overtaking opportunities.

On our last day I finally broached the question: 'Fancy a drive to Pendine Sands? It's meant to have a lovely beach...'

The village of Pendine was filled with the noises of V8 engines, and as we followed signs to a car parking area we found ourselves in a convoy of American hot-rods driving onto the beach. Once there I was pleased to see a wider variety of cars present, so I wasn't 'that idiot who thought he would just rock up in his non-hot-rod for a run up the beach'.

The whole event was spectacular, and with attendees dressed in 1950s clothing it had something of a mini-Goodwood Revival vibe. It made the perfect ending to the weekend away. I think Cara quite enjoyed it, too...

Aston Parrott (@AstonParrott)

Date acquired April 2016
Total mileage 80,841 **Mileage this month** 651 **Costs this month** £0
mpg this month 26.1





Audi RS4 Avant

Refreshingly simple driver modes are a welcome discovery

AFTER INTRODUCING THE RS4 IN Fast Fleet last month, now it's time for the gritty reality. Well, not really; actually I periodically have to pinch myself that I'm living with a 444bhp estate car as my 'daily'. It would, for most people after all, be a pretty skewed reality: a practical estate that also just happens to serve up supercar performance in all weathers.

But as is so often the case, once you live with a car for a while, so its plus and, inevitably, minus points move more sharply into focus. I wrote at length in the introductory report that getting the right – generous – optional spec with the RS4 is crucial, and nowhere more so than when it comes to ticking the adaptive damping box. But while this option makes the car a fine everyday companion, it still doesn't offer the perfect solution.

There are three suspension modes – Comfort, which doesn't seem to bring that much more comfort at all, Auto, which is an excellent catch-all middle setting, and Dynamic, which as the name suggests, is the sportive setting. I've barely used Comfort,

'The car's so rapid that when you're really pressing on the Auto setting isn't reacting fast enough'

but I've used Dynamic even less because the rebound damping is so abrupt I find it hard to focus on where I'm going. It's the kind of ride quality where if you wear a coat while driving, the fabric constantly squeaks against the leather seats...

I know this isn't just me being oversensitive, because I recently came across a dual carriageway that had been resurfaced just the day before and was as straight and smooth as any asphalt I've ever seen in the UK. And yet we still pogoed down the road, the RS4 and I. It's a real shame, for while Auto is ideal 95 per

cent of the time, there are those situations when the RS4 could do with just a little more body control, a little less initial roll. Essentially, the car's so rapid that when you're really pressing on, the Auto setting isn't reacting fast enough. With the adaptive technology, surely a better range could have been achievable?

All this brings us on to the obligatory driver modes discussion, but unlike with my old C43 AMG, this time there's very little to be said. The overall modes are also called Comfort, Auto and Dynamic, with a further Individual setting. The elements within these modes are the suspension, the steering, the engine and gearbox (grouped together), the differential, the exhaust and, weirdly, the cruise control. I simply leave the car in Individual, which I have programmed with Auto for the suspension and Dynamic for everything else (no idea on the cruise because I never use it).

In practice there's then no need to fiddle with the modes, as the only element that ever needs changing is the engine/'box mapping. Basically, you can't use the more aggressive setting for this if you want to drive the car as an auto, because it's far too excitable. But as Ian Eveleigh found with his old RS5 Fast Fleeter, if you want to amble along you can just nudge the gearshifter back to switch the 'box from Sport auto to the 'normal' D mode, and if you want to drive quickly you can just palm it sideways to select manual mode, which automatically brings the more aggressive engine/'box setting. Mercifully simple.

Adam Towler (@AdamTowler)

Date acquired August 2018
Total mileage 4200 **Mileage this month** 1100 **Costs this month** £0
mpg this month 25.1

New arrival

Ferrari 458 Speciale & Lamborghini Aventador Roadster

A highly anticipated new addition joins John Black's open-top Lambo for a closed-road run through Italian countryside



MUCH HAS BEEN WRITTEN IN THE pages of *evo* about the Ferrari 458 Speciale, from Jethro Bovingdon's immersive early review (issue 198) and the team's views when the car won eCoty in 2014 (issue 203), all the way to Adam Towler's recent piece in issue 251 comparing all incarnations of Ferrari's road-racing V8 models, culminating in the Pista. All these articles, and more, have resulted in the Speciale being at the top of my 'want' – nay – 'longing for' list for some time, and recently my perfect car finally became available.

I've been lucky enough to have had three Rosso Corsa Ferraris in the past, so this one was always going to be in a different shade. I didn't think I could live with a yellow Ferrari,

and there are enough black and grey cars around, so they were out, too. The Bianco Avus car you see here is a 2014 example and had covered just 2000 miles – which was only important to me so that I could put on many thousands more and it still be only a reasonably above-average-mileage car in a few years. A show pony this will not be!

The car's first outing as mine was in the foothills of the alps in the south of France, which has some of the most amazing driving roads in Europe. Smooth, grippy tarmac and great weather made for wonderful driving conditions, and, in order to provide a back-to-back benchmark, a good friend and I took my Porsche GT3 RS 4.0 along for the ride.

I was slightly nervous that, having

voraciously read every article I could find on the Speciale and rewatched so many review videos, there was a danger it might not live up to my expectations. I feared it could feel like going to the cinema to see the latest overhyped blockbuster, only to discover that, no matter how good the movie was, it simply didn't match everybody's claim of brilliance. Well I'm delighted to report that there is no such thing as 'too much hype' about the 458 Speciale. It is, quite simply, a sensational car. It is impossible to step out of it after a spirited drive and not feel incredibly alive, just buzzing with excitement from the experience.

The Ferrari fizzes with energy in a completely different way to the Porsche. The GT3 RS rewards hugely with its slow-in, fast-



out approach, feeling completely planted and the steering letting you know continuously what's going on. In comparison, the Speciale feels much more immediate and reactive, its super-quick steering making the car feel like it's diving for every apex before you even think you've turned the steering wheel. The 597bhp naturally aspirated engine simply adds to the experience with its manic dash to the 9000rpm limit, the wheel-mounted shift lights indicating when it's time to grab another gear and do it all again. I have fallen in love with this amazing car in a way I fear I never will with the McLaren 720S.

I also had the great pleasure of taking the Speciale and the Lamborghini Aventador to the Best of Italy Race in Emilia-Romagna in

September – a 26km closed-road hill climb in rolling Italian countryside. Now in its third year, the event is a celebration of all things Italian: racing and road motorbikes, bicycles, race cars, supercars and hypercars head up the hill twice per class over the weekend. Both Black fleet cars were a blast on the hill, the Aventador bludgeoning the route into submission and the Speciale dancing up the twisty road like a demented ballerina. A great event attended by lots of like-minded petrolheads, I thoroughly recommend it. Entry is being opened up to numerous non-Italian models next year, too, so if your car qualifies, get yourself signed up and make a long weekend of it.

In the meantime, I'll be spending some more time getting to know the Speciale and

look forward to filling you in on the ownership experience as the months go by.

John Black (@john_m_black)

FERRARI 458 SPECIALE

Date acquired September 2018 **Total mileage** 4890km **Mileage this month** 1685km **Costs this month** £2200 paint protection film **mpg this month** 19.9

LAMBORGHINI AVENTADOR ROADSTER

Date acquired November 2015 **Total mileage** 12,116km **Mileage this month** 1424km **Costs this month** £0 **mpg this month** 14.8



BMW M5

After being called upon at the last minute, the supersaloon shows it's the perfect steed for a Cumbrian adventure

WITH 'MY' CIVIC TYPE R LONG-termers required for one last photoshoot when I was hoping to be 250 miles away with it on holiday, I found myself in the unusual position of having the editor begging me to take 'his' M5 for the week instead. Much as I'd miss the opportunity to indulge in a late-evening run in the Honda on some of my favourite Lake District roads, I did have some concern that day-upon-day of the Type R's fidgety low-speed ride might cause a mild grumbling noise to develop somewhere in the region of the front passenger seat. So all things considered, the trade sounded like a good one. And besides, you never turn down a free upgrade to business class, do you?

The journey north couldn't have been more effortless, the M5 doing its relaxing limo thing and – even at legal-ish cruising speeds – making every passing mile feel like a seven-

tenths-scale version of itself. Doubling the distance we had to travel that day wouldn't have been a chore, and I doubt even a mega-bucks GT would have made for more agreeable progress. The M5's cabin offers everything you could wish for, from dual-zone climate control that even offers individual fan speeds, to the 'pick an album, any album' Deezer subscription for the stereo. (There are also some features you might not wish for, such as the gesture control for the stereo that every now and then mistakes a mid-conversation gesticulation for a volume-change command, or the Ambient Air system that pumps a fragrance into the cabin and makes you feel like you're trapped inside a *Honey, I Shrunk the Kids* Glade PlugIn. Thankfully both can be switched off.) I also found the hectares of Aragon Brown leather inside our M5 pleasingly uplifting compared with the default sombre black

'I doubt a mega-bucks GT would have made for more agreeable progress'

that afflicts so many cars. Perhaps I suffer from the car-interior equivalent of seasonal affective disorder...

So far, so lovely, but I was still a little apprehensive about spending a week traversing Cumbria's numerous size-zero roads in what is clearly a plus-size car. Thankfully, those feelings soon subsided when I discovered that it's surprisingly easy to get a handle on the M5's girth from the driver's seat. And when you are forced down to a snail's pace because you've got to thread the big BMW between a stone wall and a wide-body campervan in the least appropriate place in Britain to drive a wide-body campervan, a plethora of parking sensors and camera views spring into action to help prevent any embarrassing scrapes.



Above left: the big BMW gets to stretch its legs.
Top: brown interior makes for a refreshing change.
Above: M5's horsepower isn't to be sniffed at, but the Kendal Mint Cake in the boot clearly is

Throw in an incredibly well-behaved twin-turbo V8, oodles of torque for tackling those 33 per cent ascents, an auto gearbox that knows to hold a low gear for the subsequent descent, and four-wheel drive to minimise slippage out of greasy hairpins and you have a quite brilliant touring machine.

Even the 26.1mpg average achieved over the 800-or-so miles seemed respectable given what was under the bonnet. Especially as I still managed to fit in that late-evening drive and give the M5's 592bhp some proper exercise. Admittedly, it did necessitate seeking out some wider roads, but as in the process I also got to discover that I have a new favourite current M-car, I'm pretty sure it was worth it.

Ian Eveleigh

Date acquired January 2018
Total mileage 14,071 **Mileage this month** 1653 **Costs this month** £0
mpg this month 26.1

Suzuki Swift Sport

With the Sport's steering continuing to irk, is the £2500 cheaper 1-litre turbocharged SZ5 model a better bet? A back-to-back comparison holds the answer

BEFORE WE HAD OUR FIRST taste of the Swift Sport earlier this year, we teased ourselves with an ordinary, not-at-all-sporty Swift to see if the base car showed any promise for the then-still-to-be-released Sport. And it did. Yes, it was too complicated with its many driver 'assistance' systems and its mild hybrid boost, but it was sprightly and entertaining in a way little superminis should be. But not better than the Swift Sport, surely?

Actually, my memory of the humdrum, everyday Swift put it close to the Sport in terms of frivolous, smile-making fun, but I needed to try them back-to-back to know for sure. Suzuki obliged this month with a 109bhp 1-litre Swift SZ5 Boosterjet (the red car pictured here).

As you'd expect there are plenty of similarities between these two cars. The interiors are practically identical, and also like the Sport, the SZ5 Swift is surprisingly quick. Not as brisk as the 138bhp Sport, naturally, but it's happy to motor along at a decent rate and there's a similar safe and secure balance. It's only when you encounter a particularly nasty dip or a mid-corner bump that you are aware of the Sport's superior control.

The biggest difference between the

two is the steering. I know a report on the Sport hasn't gone by without the steering being mentioned, but it's so overwhelming it's difficult to ignore. Compared to the regular Swift, the Sport feels as though its front wheels have a significant gyroscopic effect that makes them reluctant to move away from the straight-ahead position. And then, once you've forced them from pointing directly forward, the steering becomes really light and easy to move. The SZ5's steering, meanwhile, is far more consistent; there's not much feedback, but it feels normal and it doesn't obstruct your enjoyment of the car.

The SZ5, thanks considerably to its steering, is a more natural car to drive. Its performance, chassis and attitude are all pitched at the same level so it requires no explanation or excuses. The Sport is slightly more fun – its more powerful engine and more robust chassis see to that – but perhaps not by enough to justify its £2500 premium over the £15,499 SZ5.

Will Beaumont (@WillBeaumont)

Date acquired July 2018
Total mileage 7089 **Mileage this month** 1179 **Costs this month** £0
mpg this month 46.1



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Abarth 124 Spider

Dear Abarth, any chance of a more village-friendly mode for that exhaust?

DO YOU KNOW WHAT THE ENGINE IN an Abarth 124 Spider sounds like? Me neither, and I've been driving ours for a couple of months now. It's not the engine's fault, I'm sure, rather it's that the exhaust dominates. Everything.

From the moment it fires into life and next door's cat scarpers for the nearest hedge, there's no escaping that caterwaul. Not surprisingly, it's noisiest under hard acceleration, but whether at idle or on the move it's a constant presence. I must admit on first hearing it I wasn't sure how we would get along, and to be honest, I'm still not sure we do. It's so rorty and parpy that at times you yearn for the ability to turn it off. But you can't. It would be so much nicer if in the 'normal' driving mode it was quieter, then Sport awoke its inner demon when the mood takes.

You can always use the stereo to drown it out, of course, and thanks to the really-rather-cool in-headrest speakers the system does an admirable job of keeping the exhaust at bay. But still you have to be prepared for a lot of attention. It must have come as a bit of a

shock to the quiet country village I live in. ('I can hear you coming down the street,' my wife assures me.)

But maybe I'm being harsh, because in all other respects I'm loving driving the 124. It's got a decent seating position (you sit low, but can still see the bonnet), even if the steering wheel only adjusts for rake, and the stubby gearlever is perfectly positioned. Its short, slick throw is a delight, with a wonderfully mechanical feel that almost matches that of the Mazda MX-5. All of which helps to give the car that feeling that it's flowing along the road, because the Spider is a joy to point at a



corner, that long bonnet helping you pick your line, and with that same lovely chuckability as the Japanese roadster but with some extra turbocharged shove.

I'd been eager to see what the Abarth's Sport mode offered, as the equivalent in my last long-termer, the SEAT Ibiza FR, was decidedly *unsporty*. So it's a pleasure to report that here it's a good 'un. There's no endless configuring of settings to fathom, just a simple flick of a rocker switch behind the gearlever. You notice the change instantly, with a sharpening of the throttle's response and a slight tightening of the steering. It suits the car better than the default mode, but isn't so extreme that it becomes tiring. And, importantly, the exhaust is no louder. Which is fine by me. And the rest of the village...

Jonathan Baker

Date acquired July 2018
Total mileage 6501 **Mileage this month** 1486 **Costs this month** £0
mpg this month 34.3

'Whether at idle or on the move, the exhaust note is a constant presence'





Peugeot 308 GTi by PS

The Pug's brakes are the real deal

MUCH GETS SAID ABOUT THE PUG'S punchy engine and crisp handling, but equal billing in its overall performance has to go to its brakes. The Alcon four-piston calipers behind the front wheels are a big deal, going about their business without squeaks or snatchiness in day-to-day driving but ready to stop on the proverbial sixpence when required.

When you know the GTi has this ability in its locker it can really boost your confidence. But it can also come as a surprise to passengers (mainly my wife), who sometimes think I'm about to plough into the rear of the car ahead only to then experience the Peugeot effortlessly wipe off the required speed with ample space to spare. I can also confirm that jumping into a Ford Edge and absent-mindedly expecting the same braking performance is not recommended...

The 308's steering and downsized steering wheel have come in for criticism from others, but I've found that I've enjoyed them both, particularly in terms of the crispness and accuracy of response. Our Peugeot is a something of a workhorse much of the time, but it's qualities such as this that make my daily hour-long commute and never-ending trips around the country for my kids' swimming competitions more bearable.

Not as bearable, however, is the horrific alarm noise the car makes if you open the driver's door without the parking brake engaged. My neighbours must think we've gone to DEFCON 1 such is its loudness and angry tone. This is a very minor gripe, though, and the fun continues as I savour every minute I spend in the 308 (apart from those swimming trips).

Richard Browne (@washlander)

Date acquired June 2018 **Total mileage** 9705 **Mileage this month** 1556 **Costs this month** £0 **mpg this month** 37.1

Caterham Seven 310R

Already a featherweight, the Caterham decided to make itself even lighter at a recent *evo* trackday...

IT WAS A REASONABLE EXIT from Bedford Autodrome's far hairpin, and the long straight of the South West Circuit stretched out ahead of us. In no time at all the Seven seemed to be bothering its limiter in sixth gear, and a faster car – which we'd passed only a few corners back – decided to put the little lightweight terror in its place. This is a reality of tracking a relatively low-powered Caterham: it's significantly quicker than most cars over the course of a lap, but sometimes egos come to the fore when expensive performance machinery is passed, and the long straight is their chance for revenge.

And so it was that the Porsche pulled out of the slipstream created by the Seven's brick-wall aerodynamic qualities, and passed with a wail of flat-six. Just as it reached our 10 o'clock there was a flash in front – too quick to really register what it was – and as I glanced in the rear-view mirror I saw tumbling down from upon high the 310's bonnet. I looked across at my passenger – an *evo* reader out for the ride – and his eyes were like giant saucers of milk. Thankfully the bonnet landed safely away from the track, and a marshal returned the now-slightly-crumpled panel to us in the pitlane a little later.

So what caused the bonnet to break free? It's hard to say. We'd checked the oil



level before driving to the circuit; did the bonnet not go back on properly, or were the fastenings not quite right? The car had already done about ten laps without issue, but whether our fault or just a poor fit on the car, something about the turbulence of that Porsche going past ripped that bonnet off like a plaster being yanked off a knee. I guess that's the dark art of aerodynamics in action.

Adam Towler (@AdamTowler)

Date acquired March 2018 **Total mileage** 4317 **Mileage this month** 150 **Costs this month** £0 **mpg this month** 32.2





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Buying Journey

Want to know what car is about to shoot up in value? Ask Nathan Robinson what he's about to sell...



Renault Clio 1.9 diesel (Mk1) 'My first car, donated by my mum. It was red, smelly, but capable of carrying all my possessions to and from uni.' **Volkswagen Golf GTI (Mk1) (1)** 'This was my first proper car, and it turned me into a petrolhead. It was brilliant, and the only car I've ever sold for more than I paid for it. Which was useful because I blew the engine up and the profit paid for the repair debt. I would buy it back in a heartbeat.' **Rover 214** 'A company car hand-me-down, and the worst car I've ever driven.'

Lancia Delta Integrale Evo 1 (2) 'Fragile, amazing, frustrating and intoxicating in equal measure. It's easily the best-handling car I've ever owned. I sold it for £8000. I wish I could afford to buy another.'

Renault Clio 172 Cup 'The pain of repair bills on the 'Gale pushed me to buy a brand new car. This was a lot of fun.' **Saab 9000 auto** 'Another company car. A huge white thing, its only redeeming feature was air con.' **BMW M Coupe (3)** 'I have a bit of a thing for ugly cars with great engines. I love its clown-shoe, fastback shape. *evo* featured my car many years ago as a £10k alternative to the then new 1-series. It's another car that's shot up in value...' **Mini JCW (R53)** 'I don't think I ever tired of its supercharger whine. This was the first car I did a trackday in.' **Mazda MX-5 (Mk1) (4)** 'I bought it and a week later took it to the Nürburgring. It was an unusual spec with a half-cage and no power steering, and was great on trackdays.'

Fiat Panda 100HP 'This was bought after reading the *evo* review. I did 47,000 miles in it, the highlight of which was going out for a loaf of bread in the snow after I put winter tyres on it.' **BMW Z4 M Coupe (5)** 'Another clown-shoe car with a great engine. It performed wonderfully around the Ring.' **BMW M5 (E39)** 'My first V8. I liked it so much I bought it back from the friend I sold it to. It was debadged and had an armoured windscreen and the speed limiter removed. That last point was confirmed on the autobahn where I clocked 176mph. It then lapped Spa at 11mpg and drove home at 30mpg. An incredible car that I still own.' **Mazda MX-5 RS-Limited (Mk1)** 'This car is up there with the Integrale for handling and has survived countless trackdays. I don't think I'll ever sell it.'

What's next?

'What I want next changes so often, but I'm currently lusting after an Alfa Romeo Giulia Quadrifoglio, and I still haven't scratched a Clio V6 itch...'

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Mercedes-AMG E53 Cabriolet

New in-line six brings effortless pace, if not AMG fire

AS IT TURNS OUT, A MERCEDES-AMG E53 Cabriolet isn't the ideal choice for a jaunt through Austin and its suburbs. Not that it's inappropriate, as Mercedes products seem to make up one in every four cars in the Texas city. It's more that southern summer heat and humidity mean you're better off with the roof firmly closed and the air con cranked to an Arctic chill.

Roof up, there's not a lot to differentiate the £69,285 Cabriolet from the concurrently launched E53 Coupe. Refinement is excellent, with no more wind, road or powertrain hum than in the fixed-roof car, and only over the harshest bumps can you detect any shimmy from the open shell. When the mercury does eventually drop, it's barely more blustery with the multi-layer hood stowed.

We'd take the £64,790 Coupe on looks, too. The non-AMG models are already among the most elegant cars Mercedes builds (a long-standing tradition with the brand's pillarless coupes), and with the E53's quad tailpipes, lip spoiler and wider track – by 61mm at the front, 50mm at the rear – there's welcome muscle. The Cabriolet's fabric roofline detracts somewhat from the vibe, but drop the hood and it has the desired speedboat effect.

Mercedes-AMG's new in-line six is smoother



than any powerboat, though. In E53 form it gets 'EQ Boost' technology, with electric motor and electric turbocharger assistance for the turbocharged 3-litre unit. Peak power of 429bhp is still up high, but torque builds low and 383lb ft of twist is available through most of the rev counter's sweep.

A nine-speed automatic handles shifting duties, with power sent to all four wheels with full variable distribution. Power delivery is buttery smooth and impressively linear, helped by swift gearchanges and unflappable traction. With some AMG exhaust magic you even get burbles and crackles when lifting off at high revs.

What you don't get is a real punch in the kidneys as you would from AMG's brawnier V8 63s. It feels little quicker than the AMG E43

it replaces, for that matter, which may be in part because the delivery is so viceless and the engine note so unruffled. Weight may also have something to do with it – at 2055kg it's had one too many helpings of barbeque ribs.

Impressive, then, that it doesn't feel quite so portly in corners, where the increased track seems to have doubled down on what was already a pretty tied-down platform. The ride is firm but pliant over most surfaces and there's next to no roll even with the air suspension set in Comfort. On the few twisty sections of rural Texas we found, the E53 simply slowed, turned and went. That's not as dull as it sounds thanks to accurate, well-weighted and even reasonably talkative steering, while keen throttle response and progressive brakes add to the sense of interaction, even if it's not explosively fast.

And that's kind of the point of the E53. It falls short of being a proper Affalterbach hot-rod, but the trade-off is a car that feels expertly judged to worm its way into your affections in the day-to-day.

Antony Ingram (@evoAntony)

+ Silken powertrain, good ride and handling balance

- Doesn't have that full AMG kick

evo rating ★★★★★

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SEAT Leon ST Cupra 300 Carbon Edition

Cupra estate gets an aesthetic fettling before it goes all, well, Cupra...

A S A LAST HURRAH BEFORE THE current Leon Cupra loses its SEAT badges and goes full Cupra for its next generation, the Spanish marque has launched this limited-edition estate version with a few choice upgrades.

As well as the Cupra R's redesigned wheels (mercifully without the copper-coloured accents), the Carbon Edition gets a front splitter, side skirts and rear diffuser in carbonfibre, dark-finish quad oval exhausts in place of the regular dual items, and, inside, body-hugging bucket seats. Under the skin

is the same 296bhp iteration of the 2-litre turbocharged four-cylinder engine as found in the standard Cupra 300, combined with the ST Cupra's usual six-speed dual-clutch gearbox and Haldex-type all-wheel-drive system.

On the face of it, then, the Carbon Edition is little more than a Golf R Estate in carnival drag, but if you're hoping for a frisky Spanish overtone you might be disappointed. The Leon lacks the Golf's ability to dig into the road surface and work the chassis, feeling slightly more removed from the action. The ride on the standard adaptive dampers is just too firm

for UK roads, too, containing roll well but at the expense of refinement. The 1446kg kerb weight also blunts straight-line performance, not to mention changes of direction.

With fewer than 50 units destined for the UK, the Carbon Edition will likely lean on its rarity rather than its capability, and at £35,575, it'll probably need to.

Jordan Katsianis (@JordanKatsianis)

- + Aggressive looks, relative rarity
- Not as sharp as a Golf R Estate, firm ride, pricey

evo rating ★★★★★



Alfa Romeo Giulia Quadrifoglio

Can the standard cast-iron brakes fix this supersaloon's only flaw?

W E'RE BIG FANS OF THE ALFA GIULIA Quadrifoglio. Its 503bhp, twin-turbo V6 is a monster of an engine, its steering is unusually quick but oh so accurate and direct, and as for its rear-drive chassis, what a honey: predictable, natural, compliant and delightfully engaging.

If the Quadrifoglio has one weakness we'd point to its brakes. The optional carbon-ceramic items fitted to the examples we've experienced so far are not only nearly impossible to modulate smoothly in traffic, meaning you rarely come to a halt without testing the seatbelt pre-tensioner, but at speed they only come into their own if you apply enough pressure to bend the brake pedal.

Now Alfa has sent us a Quadrifoglio with the standard cast-iron discs and... there's very little in it. They are still reluctant to hold the car stationary without you having to reapply pressure to the pedal, which becomes tiresome

in traffic. And to bring the car smoothly to a halt still requires a touch so deft over the last few millimetres of travel that Lewis Hamilton would most likely struggle, too.

There's little performance deficit in terms of stopping distance, although ceramic brakes are more to do with consistent braking rather than shorter stopping distances, and it takes at least half a dozen nose-scraping stops before there's any sign of fade from the iron rotors. If anything, before the fade develops the standard brakes are easier to modulate due to a more consistent feel. It's only when the heavy stops don't let up that the ceramics' advantage takes hold. It's why we'd save the £5500 and stick with the standard stoppers.

Stuart Gallagher (@stuartg917)

- + Everything
- Except inconsistent brakes

evo rating ★★★★★



'Retro Ford' Cortina

With a modern 2-litre Zetec engine and numerous chassis upgrades, this Mk1 Cortina really is a blast from the past

Photography by Aston Parrott

THIS IS NOT A RESTOMOD, A backdated modern or an icon reimagined. Nor is it a regular Mk1 Cortina that's been restored to within an inch of its life and is now claiming to be an example of its more famous Norfolk-educated brother in order to massage its provenance and improve its result at auction. No, this is a run-of-the-mill 1960s Ford Cortina that's been rebuilt with what feels like the **evo** reader very much in mind.

Engineered by Retro Ford, this demo car showcases the Corby-based firm's complete 2-litre Zetec conversion kit. Replacing the original Kent engine, in basic tune it produces in the region of 170bhp, which is around 100bhp more than the car would have as standard, and it costs £4351. Included in the price is a new Zetec engine and everything required to convert it for use in a longitudinal configuration with rear-wheel drive, rather than the transverse front-wheel-drive layout

for which it was designed. So there's a new sump, water pump, engine mounts, flywheel and clutch assembly, exhaust manifold, starter motor, ignition system, some outrageous individual throttle bodies and an ECU to control it all. Retro Ford also recommends you use a more substantial gearbox, which means you'll need a further £300 to buy a 'box from a dead MX-5 and an additional £1075 for the fitting kit. An upgraded, larger-capacity aluminium radiator is also available for £294.

A substantial increase in power and performance on a car launched in 1962 is also going to mean considerable work to the chassis and brakes is required. In this instance Retro Ford has fitted a pair of coilovers at the front, anti-roll and anti-tramp bars, a bias brake pedal box and ventilated front discs. There is also the option of 5-, 6- or 7-inch-wide steel wheels equipped with rubber in a more modern spec. This example has also had the standard worm-and-wheel steering box replaced with the company's rack-and-pinion conversion. It costs £1268, but does offer both a wider choice of steering ratios and has been engineered to minimise bump steer if you also decide to lower the car, which most customers are prone to doing.

If this has you craving a piece of Ford iconology with a 21st century focus, there is a

downside: Retro Ford doesn't build, let alone sell, complete converted cars, which means you either need to have a Mk1 Cortina at your disposal or be prepared to source one. The cheapest example we found in the classifieds was listed at £7700, with the majority well into five figures. And, of course, you'll need to be handy with the spanners in order to build your Zetec-engined Cortina...

This particular car has had a few more modifications made to its Zetec engine, too. There are more aggressive cams and lighter pistons allowing it to rev higher, which has resulted in a claimed power output of 255bhp (on par with a Caterham Seven CSR). It's also finished to a drag-racing specification, in that it only has one seat and very little else inside in a bid to keep weight to a minimum – it tips the scales at comfortably under the standard car's 787kg – while the differential is a permanently locked item (a spool diff). Together these help this Cortina cover the quarter-mile in 11.9sec – just 0.1sec slower than we've recorded in a 542bhp Porsche Panamera Turbo (**evo** 237).

A 255bhp 2-litre Zetec is more engine than a Mk1 Cortina needs: the smallest of throttle openings at low revs sparks rampant acceleration. But, crucially, it isn't more engine than the car can cope with. Its acceleration may be immediate and savage but there's

'It can cover the quarter-mile just 0.1sec slower than a Panamera Turbo'

not a hint of fragility about the car. In fact it encourages you to grab it by the scruff and take advantage of its slick-shifting 'box and new-found performance.

But more so than its performance it's the soundtrack that draws you in: the air rushing through the 48mm-choke throttle bodies, the gurgle under load at low revs, the rasp from the exhaust and the deep bark as the throttles open wider and the crank heads for 7000rpm. It's a magnificent sound, totally unapologetic about the decibels being generated and the greatest antidote to today's anodyne turbocharged motors.

Despite its thoroughly modern performance, there's no getting away from the Cortina's 55-year-old underpinnings. There's no shortage of turn-in grip and the upgraded brakes resolutely deliver, but once you're into a corner you feel the front and rear axles reacting at different rates – a symptom of the car having independent front suspension and a live rear axle. Yet because there's enough grip and control the sensation isn't as off-putting as it sounds, just a pleasant reminder that this is a car from a period when cross-ply tyres were considered the norm.

As you exit a corner there's more squat across the rear axle than you'd get from any modern car, and it doesn't take much additional throttle to overcome traction, but there's enough clarity of feedback from the steering – nicely weighted, if heavy at low speeds – and your backside to allow you



to drive right up to the edge of grip. It's an uncorrupted approach to the thrill of driving. Within a few miles you sense you know everything about how the car is going to react and why. By the end of a day behind its wheel you're making a mental note to add 'Mk1 Cortina' to your classifieds watch list.

A conversion such as this is a very personal project, from the exact mechanical specification you go for down to how you present the car – either as a drag car such as this, or a sleeper still dressed as a 1200 Deluxe but built to scare the wits out of unsuspecting Audi RS3 drivers. But no matter what your inspiration and the finished result, it remains a hugely desirable way to experience a degree of old-school Ford thrills with a thoroughly modern performance twist.

Will Beaumont (@WillBeaumont)

- + Performance, component quality, the noise
- You need a donor car, the kit and time to build it

evo rating ★★★★★☆

Top left: peak power on this car is around 255bhp, up 85bhp on Retro Ford's standard 2-litre Zetec upgrade. **Above middle:** no excess weight here...





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£7313 peron-automotive.co.uk

While Akrapovič's exhaust system might claim to save 9.4kg of weight and add 11bhp of power and 16lb ft of torque, it's the noise of an aftermarket exhaust that really makes the difference.

Akrapovič systems reduce annoying drones when cruising, but allow the exhaust noise to be louder and more aggressive when driving harder.



Forge Motorsport boost gauge fitting adapter for Audi RS3/TT RS
£89.99 forgemotorsport.co.uk

This thick aluminium plate has been designed to not only create a point on Audi's five-cylinder performance cars to take a boost pressure reading, it also requires no other modifications to fit and comes with a second port that can be used for a dump valve or, for seriously modified cars, water/methanol injection.



Abt upgrades for Audi A4
From £1920 richtersport.co.uk

It's not just the S and RS Audi models that Abt focuses on, the humble A4 gets the full treatment, too. As well as a host of body parts and wheels to change the way the A4 saloon or Avant look, Abt also makes coilovers for cars with passive or adaptive suspension and offers engine upgrades for diesel and petrol models.



KW Variant 4 coilovers for Mercedes-AMG GT R
£5000 kwsuspensions.co.uk

Despite the GT R's ability to live with some of the best track-focused road cars, there'll still be those who want to tweak the chassis. These coilovers can be adjusted for rebound, high- and low-speed compression and height. An optional lift system can raise the nose by 40mm, too.



ITG Profilter for VW Up GTI
£88.80 itgairfilters.com

ITG has adapted its Tri-Foam technology to work with VW's little hot hatch. The filter consists of a stainless steel structure and three layers of increasingly fine foam that catch smaller and smaller particles. With ITG's filter and an ECU remap, the Up GTI can make close to 150bhp.



New Weber carbs for classic Porsche 911s
From £1554 webcon.co.uk

Webcon is now reproducing the original Weber 40 and 46 IDA carburetors for air-cooled 911s. New tooling based on the Italian manufacturer's original drawings has been used to create the carbs, but Webcon has also used modern technology to ensure better quality.



ST Suspensions wheel spacers for Porsche
£145.80 pair st-suspensions.net

The dynamic advantages of wheel spacers aren't all that obvious, but a wider track undeniably adds a bit of menace to any car. ST Suspensions' 30 or 40mm-thick, black anodized aluminium spacers are designed to work with Porsches with 5x130 PCD hubs and 71.6mm centre-bore wheels, from the 1970s 928 to the 991 911.



Powerflex anti-roll bar link bushes for Audi RS4
£88.56 for four powerflex.co.uk

An anti-roll bar is only as good as its connection to the suspension – soft or sloppy bushes are only going to detract from how effective it can be. Powerflex's polyurethane RS4 ARB bushes can be had in two different stiffnesses: slightly harder than the factory spec or Powerflex's track-focused Black Series compound.



Pioneer SPH-10BT single DIN head unit
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Adding satnavs, Bluetooth phone integration or voice activation into a classic car is often difficult and rarely stylish. Pioneer's new head unit fits into an old school single DIN radio space and, out of a cassette-sized hole, a smartphone holder appears. The phone is controlled by the buttons or voice commands via Bluetooth.



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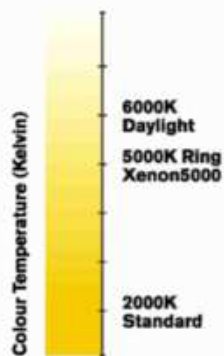


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The Knowledge

RATINGS

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

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

SUPERMINIS / HOT HATCHES



OUR CHOICE

Honda Civic Type R. Building on the promise shown by the short-lived FK2 version, the FK8 Type R is a more rounded proposition – and is all the better for it. It's outrageously fast on every kind of road, edges ahead of its rivals on track, offers oodles of interaction and is practical to boot.



BEST OF THE REST

If you can't stomach the Civic's styling, the **Renault Mégane RS** runs it very close for cross-country pace and thrills, while the **Hyundai i30 N Performance** is an intriguing – and impressive – alternative to the usual suspects. If it's a smaller hot hatch you're after, look no further than the new **Ford Fiesta ST** (left).

MAKE & MODEL	ISSUE NO.	PRICE	ENGINE CYL/CC	BHP/RPM	LB FT/RPM	WEIGHT	BHP/TON	0-62MPH (CLAIMED)	0-60MPH (TESTED)	0-100MPH (TESTED)	MAX MPH	EVO RATING	
Abarth 595 Competizione	196 D	£20,890	4/1368	178/5500	184/3000	1035kg	175	6.8	-	-	140	+ Spirited engine, still looks great - Favours fun over finesse	★★★★☆
Abarth 695 Biposto	205 F	£33,115	4/1369	187/5500	184/3000	997kg	191	5.9	-	-	143	+ Engineered like a true Abarth product - Desirable extras make this a £50k city car	★★★★☆
Alfa Romeo Giulietta Veloce/QV	199 D	£30,205	4/1742	237/5750	251/2000	1320kg	182	6.0	-	-	152	+ Still looks good, and now it's got the 4C's engine - Pricey, and it has more rewarding rivals	★★★★☆
Alfa Romeo 147 GTA	187 F	'03-'06	6/3179	247/6200	221/4800	1360kg	185	6.3	6.0	15.5	153	+ Mk1 Focus RS pace without the histrionics - Slightly nose-heavy	★★★★☆
Audi S1	246 F	£27,140	4/1984	228/6000	273/1600	1315kg	176	5.8	-	-	155	+ Compliant and engaging chassis; quick, too - Looks dull without options	★★★★☆
Audi A1 quattro	181 F	'13	4/1984	253/6000	258/2500	1420kg	181	5.7	-	-	152	+ Polished 253bhp all-wheel-drive A1 - Just 19 for the UK, with a Porsche Cayman price	★★★★☆
Audi RS3 Sportback	240 D	£44,755	5/2480	394/5850	354/1700	1510kg	265	4.1	-	-	155	+ Hugely quick point-to-point - Sometimes speed isn't the be-all and end-all	★★★★☆
Audi S3	188 F	'13-'16	4/1984	296/5500	280/1800	1395kg	216	5.2	5.4	12.5	155	+ Lots of grip and one of the best-sounding four-pot turbos - Still a little too clinical	★★★★☆
Audi RS3 Sportback	221 F	'15-'16	5/2480	362/5500	343/1625	1520kg	242	4.3	3.6	-	155	+ Addictive five-cylinder noise; monster pace - Chassis not exactly playful	★★★★☆
Audi S3	106 F	'06-'12	4/1984	261/6000	258/2500	1455kg	183	5.7	5.6	13.6	155	+ Very fast, very effective, very... er, quality - A little too clinical	★★★★☆
Audi RS3 Sportback	156 F	'10-'12	5/2480	335/5400	332/1600	1575kg	216	4.6	-	-	155	+ Very fast, very, effective, very... er, quality, with added five-pot character - A little too clinical	★★★★☆
BMW 125i M Sport	176 D	£32,310	4/1997	221/5200	229/1400	1400kg	160	6.4	-	-	155	+ Performance, price, running costs - Dull four-pot soundtrack	★★★★☆
BMW M140i	-	£33,925	6/2979	335/5500	369/1520	1445kg	236	4.8	-	-	155	+ Pace; compact size suits UK roads well - Lacks the precision of the best performance cars	★★★★☆
BMW M135i	212 F	'12-'15	6/2979	321/5800	332/1300	1430kg	228	5.1	5.2	-	155	+ Powertrain, noise, chassis - M235i looks nicer, and has an LSD option	★★★★☆
BMW 130i M Sport	106 F	'05-'10	6/2996	261/6650	232/2750	1450kg	183	6.0	6.1	15.3	155	+ Fantastic engine - Suspension can still get a little boingy	★★★★☆
Citroën DS3 1.6 THP	142 F	'10-'15	4/1598	154/6000	177/1400	1240kg	126	7.3	-	-	133	+ A proper French hot hatch - Petrolheads might find it too 'designed'	★★★★☆
Citroën DS3 Racing	153 D	'11-'12	4/1598	204/6000	203/2000	1240kg	167	6.5	-	-	146	+ A faster, feistier DS3 - Not as hardcore as its 'Racing' tag suggests	★★★★☆
Citroën Saxo VTS	020 F	'97-'03	4/1587	120/6600	107/5200	935kg	130	8.7	7.6	22.6	127	+ Chunky, chuckable charger - Can catch out the unwary	★★★★☆
Citroën AX GT	195 F	'87-'92	4/1360	85/6400	86/4000	722kg	120	9.2	-	-	110	+ Makes terrific use of 85bhp - Feels like it's made from paper	★★★★☆
DS 3 Performance	222 D	£24,030	4/1598	205/6000	221/3000	1175kg	177	6.5	-	-	143	+ All the right ingredients - Undercooked	★★★★☆
Fiat Panda 100HP	132 F	'06-'11	4/1368	99/6000	97/4250	975kg	103	9.5	-	-	115	+ About as fun as small cars get - Optional ESP can't be turned off	★★★★☆
Ford Fiesta ST-Line 140	251 F	£17,965	3/998	138/6000	133/1500	1144kg	123	9.0	9.2	26.4	125	+ Quality chassis makes for a born entertainer - Tall gearing and dull engine can spoil the fun	★★★★☆
Ford Fiesta ST	253 F	£18,995	3/1497	197/6000	214/1600	1187kg	169	6.5	-	-	144	+ Still eager, now with added refinement - Lost a fraction of its predecessor's spirit	★★★★☆
Ford Fiesta ST	207 F	'13-'17	4/1596	197/5700	214/2500	1088kg	184	6.9	7.4	18.4	137	+ Chassis, price, punchy performance - Have you heard of Mountune?	★★★★☆
Ford Fiesta ST Mountune	213 F	'13-'17	4/1596	212/6000	236/2750	1088kg	198	6.4	-	-	140	+ One of the best mid-sized hatches made even better - Badge snobbery	★★★★☆
Ford Fiesta ST200	253 F	'16	4/1596	212/6000	236/2500	1088kg	198	6.7	-	-	143	+ Massive fun - They only made 400	★★★★☆
Ford Fiesta Zetec S	123 D	'08-'13	4/1596	118/6000	112/4050	1045kg	115	9.9	-	-	120	+ Genuinely entertaining supermini - Renault Sport Twingo and Suzuki Swift are even more fun	★★★★☆
Ford Fiesta ST	075 D	'05-'08	4/1999	148/6000	140/4500	1137kg	132	7.9	-	-	129	+ Great looks, decent brakes - Disappointing chassis, gutless engine	★★★★☆
Ford Focus ST TDCi Estate (Mk3)	219 D	£26,860	4/1997	182/3500	295/2000	1488kg	124	8.3	-	-	135	+ Performance not sacrificed at the altar of economy - Gets ragged when really pushed	★★★★☆
Ford Focus ST (Mk3)	207 F	£25,930	4/1999	247/5500	265/2000	1362kg	184	6.5	-	-	154	+ Excellent engine - Scrappy when pushed	★★★★☆
Ford Focus ST Mountune (Mk3)	187 D	£26,430	4/1999	271/5500	295/2750	1362kg	202	5.7	-	-	154+	+ Great value upgrade - Steering still not as feelsome as that of some rivals	★★★★☆
Ford Focus ST (Mk2)	119 F	'05-'10	5/2522	222/6000	236/1600	1392kg	162	6.8	6.7	16.8	150	+ Value, performance, integrity - Big engine compromises handling	★★★★☆
Ford Focus RS (Mk3)	246 F	£32,795	4/2261	345/6000	347/2000	1547kg	227	4.7	4.9	12.6	166	+ Torque-vectoring 4WD brings new sensations to hot hatch sector - Needs to be driven hard	★★★★☆
Ford Focus RS Edition (Mk3)	246 D	£36,295	4/2261	345/6000	347/2000	1547kg	227	4.7	-	-	166	+ Front limited-slip differential brings more precise handling - Pricey and still heavy	★★★★☆
Ford Focus RS (Mk2)	195 F	'09-'11	5/2522	300/6500	324/2300	1467kg	208	5.9	5.9	14.2	163	+ Huge performance, highly capable FWD chassis - Body control is occasionally clumsy	★★★★☆
Ford Focus RS500 (Mk2)	181 F	'10-'11	5/2522	345/6000	339/2500	1467kg	239	5.6	5.6	12.7	165	+ More power and presence than regular Mk2 RS - Pricey	★★★★☆
Ford Focus RS (Mk1)	207 F	'02-'03	4/1998	212/5500	229/3500	1278kg	169	6.7	5.9	14.9	143	+ Some are great - Some are awful (so make sure you drive plenty)	★★★★☆
Ford Escort RS Cosworth	157 F	'92-'96	4/1993	224/6250	224/3500	1275kg	179	6.2	-	-	137	+ The ultimate Essex hot hatch - Unmodified ones are rare, and pricey	★★★★☆
Ford Puma 1.7	095 F	'97-'02	4/1679	123/6300	116/4500	1041kg	120	9.2	8.6	27.6	122	+ Revvy engine, sparkling chassis, bargain used prices - Rusty rear arches	★★★★☆
Ford Racing Puma	128 F	'00-'01	4/1679	153/7000	119/4500	1174kg	132	7.9	7.8	23.2	137	+ Exclusivity - The standard Puma does it so well	★★★★☆
Honda Civic Type R (FK8)	254 F	£31,525	4/1996	316/6500	295/2500	1380kg	233	5.8	5.9	12.6	169	+ Wildly exciting, with improved refinement - Looks still challenging for some	★★★★☆
Honda Civic Type R (FK2)	227 F	'15-'17	4/1996	306/6500	295/2500	1378kg	226	5.7	5.4	12.4	167	+ Great on smooth roads - Turbo engine not as special as old nat-asp units; styling a bit 'busy'	★★★★☆
Honda Civic Type R (FN2)	102 F	'07-'11	4/1998	198/7800	142/5600	1267kg	158	6.6	6.8	17.5	146	+ Looks great, VTEC more accessible - Steering lacks feel, inert balance	★★★★☆
Honda Civic Type R Championship White (FN2)	126 D	'09-'10	4/1998	198/7800	142/5600	1267kg	158	6.6	-	-	146	+ Limited-slip diff a welcome addition to the FN2 Type R - It should've been on the standard car	★★★★☆
Honda Civic Type R Mugen (FN2)	248 F	'09-'11	4/1998	237/8300	157/6250	1233kg	195	5.9	-	-	155	+ Fantastic on road and track - Only 20 were made, and they're a tad pricey...	★★★★☆
Honda Civic Type R (EP3)	075 F	'01-'05	4/1998	197/7400	145/5900	1204kg	166	6.8	6.8	16.9	146	+ Potent and great value - 'Breadvan' looks divide opinion; duff steering	★★★★☆
Honda Civic Type R (EK9)	210 F	'97-'00	4/1595	182/8200	118/7500	1040kg	178	6.8	-	-	135	+ Sublime early incarnation of the Type R recipe - Good ones are thin on the ground	★★★★☆
Hyundai i30 N Performance	254 F	£28,760	4/1998	271/6000	279/1450	1429kg	193	6.1	6.6	14.9	155	+ A brilliant, thoroughly developed hot hatch - Imagine if it was lighter, too...	★★★★☆
Kia Proceed GT	217 D	'13-'18	4/1591	201/6000	195/1500	1359kg	143	7.3	-	-	150	+ Fun and appealing package - Soft-edged compared to rivals	★★★★☆
Lancia Delta HF Integrale Evoluzione	194 F	'91-'92	4/1995	207/5750	220/3500	1300kg	162	6.0	-	-	134	+ One of the finest cars ever built - Demands love, LHD only	★★★★☆
Mazda 3 MPS	137 F	'06-'13	4/2261	256/5500	280/3000	1385kg	188	6.1	6.3	14.5	155	+ Quick, eager and very good value - The steering's iffy	★★★★☆
Mercedes-AMG A45	221 F	£41,890	4/1991	376/6000	350/2250	1480kg	258	4.2	3.9	-	155	+ Tremendously fast - But not a true great	★★★★☆
Mercedes-Benz A45 AMG	194 F	'12-'15	4/1991	355/6000	332/2250	1480kg	244	4.6	4.3	10.6	155	+ Blisteringly quick everywhere - Not as rewarding as some slower rivals	★★★★☆
Mini Cooper (F56)	254 T	£17,345	3/1499	134/4500	162/1250	1085kg	125	7.9	-	-	130	+ Driving a slow car fast - Driving a car with Union Jack tail lights	★★★★☆
Mini Cooper S (F56)	253 T	£20,635	4/1998	189/4700	221/1250	1195kg	161	6.8	-	-	146	+ Capable chassis - Not as lively as some other small hot hatches	★★★★☆



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MAKE & MODEL	ISSUE NO.	PRICE	ENGINE CYL/CC	BHP/RPM	LB FT/RPM	WEIGHT	BHP/TON	0-62MPH (CALC)	0-60MPH (TESTED)	0-100MPH (TESTED)	MAX MPH	EVO RATING	
Mini John Cooper Works (F56)	211 F	£24,430	4/1998	228/5200	236/1250	1200kg	193	6.3	-	-	153	+ Fast, agile, nimble - Chassis lacks sparkle found in previous JCWs	★★★★☆
Mini John Cooper Works Challenge (F56)	237 F	'16-'17	4/1998	228/5200	236/1250	1215kg	191	6.3	-	-	152	+ A more hardcore JCW - The ride could be considered a little too hardcore	★★★★★
Mini Cooper (R56)	185 F	'09-'14	4/1598	120/6000	118/4250	1075kg	113	9.1	-	-	126	+ Brilliant ride and composure; could be all the Mini you need - You'll still buy the 'S'	★★★★★
Mini Cooper S (R56)	149 F	'06-'14	4/1598	181/5500	177/1600	1140kg	161	7.0	7.0	-	142	+ Like the Cooper, but with added shove - Google 'Mini death rattle'	★★★★★
Mini John Cooper Works (R56)	184 F	'08-'14	4/1598	208/6000	206/2000	1160kg	182	6.9	7.2	16.7	148	+ A seriously rapid Mini - Occasionally just a little unruly	★★★★★
Mini John Cooper Works GP (R56)	231 F	'13-'14	4/1598	215/6000	206/2000	1160kg	188	6.3	-	-	150	+ Brazenly hyperactive - Too much for some roads and some tastes	★★★★★
Mini John Cooper Works Coupe (R58)	164 F	'11-'15	4/1598	208/6000	206/2000	1175kg	180	6.3	-	-	149	+ The usual raucous Mini JCW experience - But wearing a backwards baseball cap	★★★★☆
Mini Cooper S (R53)	077 F	'02-'06	4/1598	168/6000	155/4000	1140kg	143	7.2	7.8	19.9	135	+ Strong performance, quality feel - Over-long gearing	★★★★★
Mini Cooper S Works GP (R53)	144 F	'06	4/1598	215/7100	184/4600	1090kg	200	6.5	-	-	149	+ Storming engine, agility - Tacky styling 'enhancements'	★★★★★
Nissan Juke Nismo RS	208 D	'15-'17	4/1618	215/6000	206/3600	1315kg	166	7.0	-	-	137	+ Quirky character and bold styling - Not a match for a pukka hot hatch	★★★★☆
Peugeot 106 Rallye (Series 2)	-	'97-'98	4/1587	103/6200	97/3500	865kg	121	8.8	-	-	121	+ Bargain no-frills thrills - Not as much fizz as original 1.3	★★★★☆
Peugeot 106 Rallye (Series 1)	095 F	'94-'96	4/1294	100/7200	80/5400	826kg	123	10.6	-	-	118	+ Frantic, thrashy fun - Needs caning to extract full potential	★★★★★
Peugeot 106 GTi 16v	034 F	'97-'04	4/1587	120/6600	107/5200	950kg	128	7.4	-	-	127	+ Fine handling supermini - Looks its age	★★★★★
Peugeot 208 GTi by Peugeot Sport	254 F	'15-'18	4/1598	205/6000	221/3000	1160kg	180	6.5	-	-	143	+ A brilliantly focused small hatch - Obscured dials	★★★★★
Peugeot 208 GTi	184 F	'12-'16	4/1598	197/5800	203/1700	1160kg	173	6.8	6.8	17.9	143	+ Agile chassis works well on tough roads - Could be more involving	★★★★★
Peugeot 205 GTi 1.9	195 F	'88-'91	4/1905	130/6000	119/4750	910kg	145	7.6	-	-	124	+ Still scintillating after all these years - Brittle build quality	★★★★★
Peugeot 308 GTi by Peugeot Sport	245 F	£28,590	4/1598	266/6000	243/1900	1205kg	224	6.0	6.0	13.8	155	+ A great entertainer with a cracker of an engine - Tiny steering wheel obscures the dials	★★★★★
Peugeot 306 GTi 6	020 F	'93-'01	4/1998	167/6500	142/5500	1215kg	139	7.9	7.2	20.1	140	+ One of the great GTIs - They don't make them like this any more	★★★★★
Peugeot 306 Rallye	095 F	'98-'99	4/1998	167/6500	142/5500	1199kg	142	7.8	6.9	19.2	137	+ Essentially a GTi 6 for less dosh - Limited choice of colours	★★★★★
Renault Twingo GT	248 F	£14,255	3/898	109/5750	125/2000	1001kg	111	9.6	-	-	113	+ Nippy performance - Less fun than a rear-engined Renault Sport-fettled car should be	★★★★☆
Renault Sport Twingo 133	175 F	'08-'13	4/1598	131/6750	118/4400	1050kg	127	8.7	-	-	125	+ Renault Sport experience for pocket money - Optional Cup chassis gives bouncy ride	★★★★★
Renault Sport Clio 200 Auto	184 F	£20,300	4/1618	197/6000	177/1750	1204kg	166	6.7	6.9	17.9	143	+ Faster, more refined, easier to drive - We miss the revvy NA engine and manual 'box	★★★★☆
Renault Sport Clio 220 Trophy	229 D	£23,000	4/1618	217/6050	206/2000	1204kg	183	6.6	-	-	146	+ Willing chassis - Awful paddleshift gearbox	★★★★☆
Renault Sport Clio 200 Cup	247 F	'09-'13	4/1998	197/7100	159/5400	1204kg	166	6.9	6.6	16.7	141	+ The hot Clio at its best - They don't make 'em like this anymore	★★★★★
Renault Sport Clio 172 Cup	115 F	'07-'09	4/1998	194/7250	158/5550	1240kg	161	6.9	-	-	134	+ Quick, polished and capable - Not as much sheer fun as 182 Cup	★★★★★
Renault Sport Clio 182	066 F	'04-'05	4/1998	180/6500	148/5250	1110kg	165	7.1	6.6	17.5	139	+ Took hot hatches to a new level - Flawed driving position	★★★★★
Renault Sport Clio 182 Cup	187 F	'04-'05	4/1998	180/6500	148/5250	1090kg	168	6.9	-	-	139	+ Full of beans, fantastic value - Sunday-market upholstery	★★★★★
Renault Sport Clio Trophy	253 F	'05-'06	4/1998	180/6500	148/5250	1090kg	168	6.9	6.6	17.3	140	+ The most fun you can have on three (sometimes two) wheels - Only 500 were built	★★★★★
Renault Sport Clio 172 (Phase 2)	034 F	'01-'03	4/1998	170/6250	147/5400	1110kg	156	7.2	7.1	20.0	138	+ Poised, predictable, fast - Lacks aggressive edge	★★★★★
Renault Sport Clio 172 Cup	048 F	'02-'03	4/1998	170/6250	147/5400	1011kg	171	6.9	6.5	17.7	138	+ Bargain old-school hot hatch - Nervous in the wet, no ABS	★★★★☆
Renault Sport Clio 172 (Phase 1)	146 F	'00-'01	4/1998	170/6250	147/5400	1035kg	167	7.2	6.6	18.2	138	+ Brilliantly accomplished - Imperfect driving position	★★★★★
Renault Clio Williams	233 F	'93-'96	4/1988	148/6100	126/4500	981kg	153	7.8	7.6	20.8	134	+ One of the best hot hatches ever - Can be fragile	★★★★★
Renault 5 GT Turbo	195 F	'87-'91	4/1397	118/5750	122/3000	855kg	140	7.3	-	-	120	+ Clio Williams' grand-daddy - Few unmodified ones left	★★★★★
Renault Sport Clio V6 255	231 F	'03-'05	6/2946	251/7150	221/4650	1400kg	182	6.0	-	-	144	+ Supercar drama without the original's edgy handling - Uninspired interior	★★★★★
Renault Sport Clio V6	029 F	'99-'02	6/2946	227/6000	221/3750	1410kg	164	6.6	5.8	17.0	145	+ Pocket supercar - Mid-engined handling can be tricky	★★★★☆
Renault Mégane RS	252 F	£27,495	4/1798	276/6000	288/2400	1407kg	199	5.8	6.3	14.6	155	+ Outrageous grip and agility - Four-wheel steering takes some getting used to	★★★★★
Renault Sport Mégane 275 Cup-S/Nav 275	223 D	'16	4/1998	271/5500	265/3000	1394kg	198	5.8	-	-	158	+ The same engine as the Trophy-R - They don't make it anymore	★★★★★
Renault Sport Mégane 265 Cup	195 F	'12-'15	4/1998	261/5500	265/3000	1387kg	191	6.0	6.4	14.8	158	+ A hot hatch benchmark - Cupholder could be better positioned	★★★★★
Renault Sport Mégane 275 Trophy	212 F	'14-'15	4/1998	271/5500	265/3000	1376kg	200	5.8	-	-	159	+ Another cracking Trophy model - Stripped-out Trophy-R is even more thrilling	★★★★★
Renault Sport Mégane 275 Trophy-R	231 F	'14-'15	4/1998	271/5500	265/3000	1297kg	212	5.8	-	-	158	+ As absorbing as a 911 GT3 RS on the right road - Too uncompromising for some; pricey	★★★★★
Renault Sport Mégane 250 Cup	139 F	'09-'12	4/1998	247/5500	251/3000	1387kg	181	6.1	6.1	14.6	156	+ Fantastic chassis... - ...partially obscured by new-found maturity	★★★★★
Renault Sport Mégane dCi 175 Cup	119 F	'07-'09	4/1995	173/3750	265/2000	1470kg	119	8.3	8.3	23.5	137	+ A diesel with a genuinely sporty chassis - Could take more power	★★★★☆
Renault Sport Mégane 230 F1 Team R26	195 F	'07-'09	4/1998	227/5500	229/3000	1345kg	171	6.5	6.2	16.0	147	+ The car the R26.R is based on - F1 Team stickers in dubious taste	★★★★★
Renault Sport Mégane R26.R	231 F	'08-'09	4/1998	227/5500	229/3000	1220kg	189	6.0	5.8	15.1	147	+ One of the true hot hatch heroes - Two seats, plastic rear windows	★★★★★
SEAT Mii	-	£10,560	3/999	59/5000	70/3000	854kg	70	14.4	-	-	99	+ Like Volkswagen's Up but more expensive - Still predictably slow	★★★★☆
SEAT Ibiza Cupra	225 F	'16-'18	4/1798	189/4300	236/1450	1185kg	162	6.7	-	-	146	+ Quick, competent, refined, and manual only - Not exciting enough	★★★★☆
SEAT Ibiza Cupra	183 D	'10-'15	4/1390	178/6200	184/2000	1259kg	144	6.9	-	-	142	+ Punchy engine, unflappable DSG - Lacks engagement, DSG only	★★★★☆
SEAT Leon Cupra 300	241 F	£30,495	4/1984	296/5500	280/1800	1300kg	231	5.7	6.2	12.7	155	+ Already potent Cupra gets yet another 10bhp - The Mk7.5 Golf R	★★★★★
SEAT Leon Cupra R	244 D	'18	4/1984	306/5800	280/1800	1378kg	226	5.8	-	-	155	+ Sharper handling and better body control - High price and limited availability	★★★★★
SEAT Leon Cupra 290	227 F	'16-'17	4/1984	286/5900	258/1700	1300kg	224	5.9	6.4	13.4	155	+ Serious pace and agility for Golf GTI money, now with an extra 10bhp - The Mk7 Golf R	★★★★★
SEAT Leon Cupra 280	220 F	'14-'15	4/1984	276/5600	258/1750	1300kg	216	5.8	-	-	155	+ Serious pace and agility for Golf GTI money - The Mk7 Golf R	★★★★★
SEAT Leon Cupra	105 F	'07-'11	4/1984	237/5700	221/2200	1375kg	175	6.4	-	-	153	+ Great engine, composure - Doesn't have the adjustability of the old Cupra R	★★★★★
SEAT Leon Cupra R	139 F	'10-'12	4/1984	261/6000	258/2500	1375kg	193	6.2	6.1	14.0	155	+ Bold car, blinding engine - Lacks the character of its rivals; only 24 came to the UK	★★★★★
SEAT Leon Cupra R 225	067 F	'03-'06	4/1781	222/5900	206/2200	1376kg	164	6.9	-	-	150	+ Cross-country pace, practicality, value - Not as thrilling as some	★★★★★
Skoda Citigo	-	£8860	3/999	59/5000	70/3000	854kg	70	14.4	-	-	101	+ Like Volkswagen's Up, but 2mph faster flat out - 101mph isn't something to boast about	★★★★☆
Skoda Fabia vRS (Mk2)	146 D	'10-'14	4/1390	178/6200	184/2000	1218kg	148	7.3	-	-	139	+ Clever twincharged engine and DSG box - Do you homework on the reliability of the engine	★★★★★
Skoda Fabia vRS (Mk1)	077 F	'03-'07	4/1896	130/4000	229/1900	1315kg	100	9.6	-	-	127	+ Fun and frugal hot hatch - A little short on steering feel	★★★★★
Skoda Octavia vRS (Mk3)	187 D	'13-'17	4/1984	217/4500	258/1500	1345kg	164	6.8	-	-	154	+ Quick, agile, roomier than a Golf - Ride is harsh for what could be a family car	★★★★★
Skoda Octavia vRS 230 (Mk3)	215 D	£25,690	4/1984	227/4700	258/1500	1345kg	171	6.7	-	-	155	+ Limited-slip diff makes for a sharper steer - It could handle more than the extra 10bhp	★★★★★
Skoda Octavia vRS 245 (Mk3)	250 F	£28,095	4/1984	242/5000	258/1600	1370kg	179	6.6	-	-	155	+ A credible, entertaining performer - You won't get out of bed at 4am to drive it	★★★★★
Skoda Octavia vRS TDI 4x4 (Mk3)	223 D	£29,015	4/1968	181/3500	206/1750	1475kg	125	7.6	-	-	142	+ Four-wheel drive tightens the vRS chassis - Diesel and DSG only	★★★★★
Skoda Octavia vRS (Mk2)	163 F	'05-'13	4/1998	197/5100	206/1700	1395kg	143	7.3	-	-	149	+ Drives like a GTi but costs much less - Green brake calipers?	★★★★★
Subaru Impreza WRXS	125 D	'08-'10	4/2457	251/5400	288/3000	1395kg	180	5.5	-	-	130	+ An improvement over the basic WRX - Still not the WRX we wanted	★★★★★
Subaru Impreza STI 330S	124 F	'08-'10	4/2457	325/5400	347/3400	1505kg	219	4.4	-	-	155	+ A bit quicker than the regular STI... - ...but not better	★★★★★
Suzuki Swift Sport (Mk3)	251 F	£17,999	4/1373	138/5500	170/2500	975kg	144	8.1	7.6	20.1	130	+ Composed and brisk - Adjustability and character have been diluted	★★★★★
Suzuki Swift Sport (Mk2)	175 F	'12-'17	4/1586	134/6900	118/4400	1045kg	130	8.7	-	-	121	+ Still a great pocket rocket - Not quite as adjustable as the original	★★★★★
Suzuki Swift Sport (Mk1)	132 F	'05-'11	4/1586	123/6800	109/4800	1030kg	121	8.9	-	-	124	+ Entertaining handling, well built - Lacking in steering feedback	★★★★★
Toyota Yaris GRMN	254 F	'18	4/1798	209/6800	184/5000	1135kg	187	6.3	-	-	143	+ Appealingly feisty supercharged supermini - Artificial steering; they only made 400	★★★★★
Vauxhall Corsa GSi	254 D	£18,995	4/1364	148/5000	162/2750	1278kg	129	8.9	-	-	129	+ Gippy and eager - Older than time itself, and feels it	★★★☆☆
Vauxhall Corsa VXR	211 F	'14-'18	4/1598	202/5800	206/1900	1278kg	161	6.8	-	-	143	+ Begg to be wrung out - You'll need the £2400 Performance Pack	★★★★★
Vauxhall Corsa VXR	154 F	'07-'14	4/1598	189/5850	192/1980	1166kg	165	7.2	-	-	140	+ Looks snazzy, punchy engine - Lacks feel, uncouth compared with rivals	★★★★★
Vauxhall Corsa VXR Nürburgring/Clubsport	164 F	'11-'13/14	4/1598	202/5750	206/2250	1166kg	176	6.8	-	-	143	+ VXR gets more power and a limited-slip diff - But they come at a price	★★★★★
Vauxhall Astra/GTC VXR (Mk2)	207 F	'12-'18	4/1998	276/5500	295/2500	1475kg	190	6.0	-	-	155	+ Loony turbo pace - Lacks the Renault Sport Mégane's precision	★★★★★
Vauxhall Astra VXR (Mk1)	102 F	'05-'11	4/1998	237/5600	236/2400	1393kg	173	6.4	6.7	16.7	1		

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MAKE & MODEL	ISSUE NO.	PRICE	ENGINE CYL/CC	BHP/RPM	LB FT/RPM	WEIGHT	BHP/TON	0-62MPH (CLAIMED)	0-60MPH (TESTED)	0-100MPH (TESTED)	MAX MPH	EVO RATING
Volkswagen Golf GTI (Mk5)	195 F	'04-'09	4/1984	197/5100	207/1800	1336kg	150	7.3	6.7	17.9	145	+ Character and ability; the GTI's return to form - Lacking firepower? ★★★★★
Volkswagen Golf R32 (Mk5)	087 F	'06-'09	6/3189	246/6300	236/2500	1466kg	170	6.5	5.8	15.2	155	+ The traction's great and you'll love the soundtrack - We'd still have a GTI ★★★★★
Volkswagen Golf R32 (Mk4)	053 F	'02-'04	6/3189	237/6250	236/2800	1477kg	163	6.6	6.4	16.3	154	+ Charismatic - Boomy engine can be tiresome ★★★★★
Volkswagen Golf GTI 16v (Mk2)	195 F	'88-'92	4/1781	139/6100	123/4600	960kg	147	7.9	-	-	129	+ Still feels everyday useable - Too many have been modified ★★★★★
Volkswagen Golf GTI (Mk1, 1.8)	224 F	'82-'84	4/1781	112/5800	109/3500	860kg	132	8.2	-	-	114	+ The car that started it all - Tricky to find an unmolested one ★★★★★
Volvo V40 T5 R-Design Polestar	242 D	£36,010	4/1969	250/5500	295/2000	1507kg	169	6.2	-	-	149	+ An intriguing alternative to the norm - Rivals offer more for less ★★★★★

SALOONS / ESTATES / SUVs



OUR CHOICE

Alfa Romeo Giulia Quadrifoglio. At last, an Alfa Romeo we can love not just for its badge, for the noise it makes and for being Italian, but because it's a great car. In fact, the Giulia Quadrifoglio is a saloon car that feels like a sports car – and thankfully that sports car isn't a 4C.

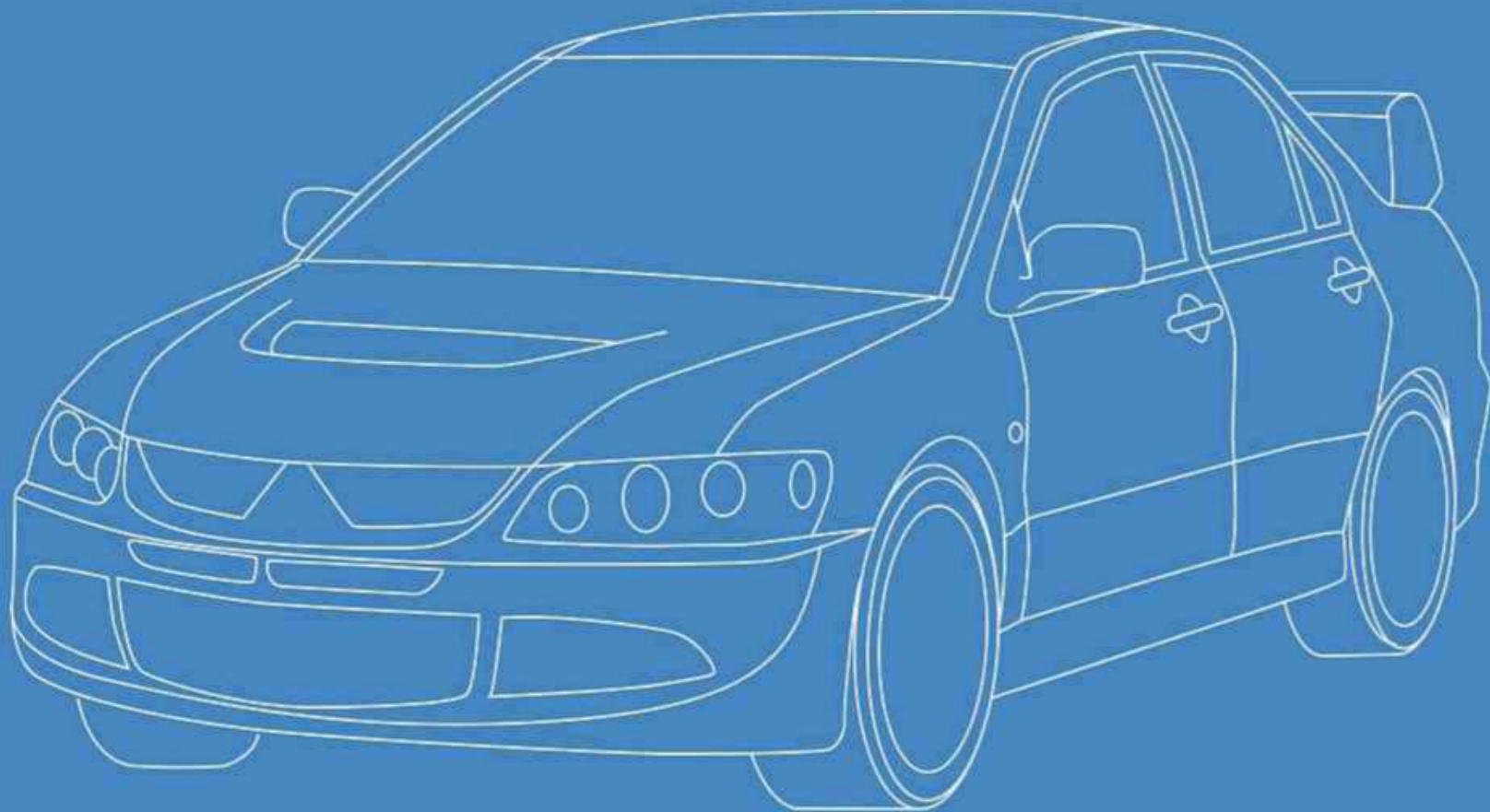


BEST OF THE REST

If you prefer your fast saloons German, consider the **Mercedes-AMG C63 S** or its more focused rival, the **BMW M3**. Moving up a size, the **Mercedes-AMG E63 S 4Matic+** (left) is relentlessly rampant but has finesse too, while the **Porsche Panamera Turbo** runs the E63 close and feels good for its 7min 38sec Ring time.

Alfa Romeo Giulia 2.0 Turbo Super	234 D	£31,580	4/1995	197/5000	243/1750	1429kg	140	6.6	-	-	146	+ Keen engine, enjoyable handling - Firm low-speed ride ★★★★★
Alfa Romeo Giulia Veloce	244 F	£38,265	4/1995	276/5250	295/2250	1429kg	196	5.7	-	-	149	+ Supple and satisfying - Engine reluctant to rev ★★★★★
Alfa Romeo Giulia Quadrifoglio	244 F	£61,625	6/2891	503/6500	443/2500	1620kg	315	3.9	-	-	191	+ If Ferrari built a saloon (really) - Lacks the final polish of German rivals ★★★★★
Alfa Romeo Stelvio Speciale AWD	234 D	£43,705	4/1995	276/5250	295/1750	1660kg	169	5.7	-	-	143	+ Agile feel, quick steering, attractive cabin - Engine not truly inspiring ★★★★★
Alfa Romeo Stelvio Quadrifoglio	244 D	£69,500	6/2891	503/6500	442/2500	1830kg	279	3.8	-	-	176	+ Rivals the Macan GTS - Needs optional P Zero Corsa tyres to give its very best ★★★★★
Alpina D3 Biturbo (F30)	192 D	£48,000	6/2993	345/4000	516/1500	1585kg	221	4.6	-	-	173	+ 173mph from a 3-litre diesel! Brilliant chassis, too - Auto only ★★★★★
Alpina B5	249 D	£89,000	8/4395	600/5750	590/3000	1940kg	314	3.5	-	-	205	+ Huge performance under a subtle exterior - Low-speed ride can be poor ★★★★★
Aston Martin Rapide	141 F	'10-'13	12/5935	470/6000	443/5000	1990kg	240	5.3	-	-	188	+ Better than its DB9 sibling - More of a 2+2 than a proper four-seater ★★★★★
Aston Martin Rapide S	201 D	£149,500	12/5935	552/6650	465/5500	1990kg	282	4.4	-	-	203	+ Oozes star quality; gearbox on 2015MY cars a big improvement - It's cosy in the back ★★★★★
Audi S3 Saloon	192 D	£36,120	4/1984	306/5500	280/1800	1430kg	210	5.3	-	-	155	+ On paper a match for the original S4 - In reality much less interesting ★★★★★
Audi RS3 Saloon	243 F	£45,705	5/2480	394/5850	354/1700	1515kg	264	4.1	3.6	8.8	155	+ Mini RS4 looks; stonking pace - Not the most involving driving experience ★★★★★
Audi S4 (B9)	225 D	£46,080	6/2995	349/5400	369/1370	1630kg	218	4.7	-	-	155	+ Strong response and delivery from turbo engine - Chassis feels softer than before ★★★★★
Audi S4 (B8)	166 D	'08-'16	6/2995	328/5500	324/2900	1650kg	202	5.0	-	-	155	+ Great supercharged powertrain, secure chassis - The RS4 ★★★★★
Audi RS4 Avant (B9)	246 F	£62,215	6/2894	444/5700	442/1900	1790kg	252	4.1	-	-	155	+ Very 'real world' fast - Some may feel it lacks character and drama ★★★★★
Audi RS4 Avant (B8)	216 F	'12-'15	8/4163	444/8250	317/4000	1795kg	251	4.7	4.5	10.5	174	+ Looks and sounds the part, thunderously fast - Unnatural steering, dull dynamics ★★★★★
Audi RS4 (B7)	250 F	'05-'08	8/4163	414/7800	317/5500	1650kg	255	4.7	4.5	10.5	155	+ 414bhp at 7800rpm! And there's an estate version too - Busy under braking ★★★★★
Audi RS4 (B5)	192 F	'00-'02	6/2671	375/6100	325/2500	1620kg	236	4.9	4.8	12.1	170	+ Effortless pace - Not the last word in agility; bends wheel rims ★★★★★
Audi RS2	214 F	'94-'95	5/2226	315/6500	302/3000	1595kg	201	4.8	4.8	13.1	162	+ Storming performance (thanks to Porsche) - Try finding one ★★★★★
Audi S5 Sportback	233 D	£48,880	6/2995	349/5400	369/1370	1660kg	214	4.7	-	-	155	+ More capable than you think; strong V6 engine - Gearbox frustrating in auto mode ★★★★★
Audi RS6 Avant (C7)	203 F	£81,470	8/3993	552/5700	516/1750	1935kg	290	3.9	3.6	8.2	155	+ Performance, foolproof powertrain, beefy looks - Feels a bit one-dimensional ★★★★★
Audi RS6 Avant Performance (C7)	224 D	£88,385	8/3993	597/6100	553/2500	1950kg	311	3.7	-	-	155	+ The extra power is no hassle for the chassis - But it is a stern test of your self-control ★★★★★
Audi RS6 Avant (C6)	116 F	'08-'10	10/4991	572/6250	479/1500	1985kg	293	4.5	4.3	9.7	155	+ Was the world's most powerful estate - Power isn't everything ★★★★★
Audi RS6 Avant (C5)	052 F	'02-'04	8/4172	444/5700	413/1950	1865kg	242	4.6	4.8	11.6	155	+ The ultimate estate car? - Numb steering ★★★★★
Audi S7 Sportback	171 D	£66,725	8/3993	414/5000	406/1400	1945kg	216	4.6	-	-	155	+ Looks and drives better than the S6 it's based on - Costs several thousands more ★★★★★
Audi RS7 Sportback	208 F	£87,610	8/3993	552/5700	516/1750	1930kg	291	3.9	-	-	155	+ Stonking performance, great looks - Numb driving experience ★★★★★
Audi S8 Plus	217 D	£100,510	8/3993	597/6100	553/2500	1990kg	305	3.8	-	-	155	+ Fantastic drivetrain, quality and refinement - Dynamic Steering feels artificial ★★★★★
Audi RS Q3	206 D	'13-'16	5/2480	335/5300	332/1600	1655kg	206	4.8	-	-	155	+ Surprisingly characterful; better than many RSs - High centre of gravity ★★★★★
Audi SQ5	237 D	£51,955	6/2995	349/5400	369/1370	1870kg	190	5.4	-	-	155	+ Fine chassis; deceptive pace - Lacks excitement ★★★★★
Bentley Flying Spur V8	200 D	£132,800	8/3993	500/6000	487/1700	2342kg	217	5.2	-	-	183	+ Effortless performance with real top-end kick - Determinedly unsporting ★★★★★
Bentley Flying Spur V8 S	230 D	£142,800	8/3993	521/6000	502/1700	2342kg	226	4.9	-	-	190	+ Old-school approach to comfort and luxury - Old-school tech ★★★★★
Bentley Flying Spur	185 D	£154,900	12/5998	616/6000	590/1600	2400kg	261	4.6	-	-	199	+ For those who still want their Flying Spur with a W12 - Car feels its weight; engine sounds dull ★★★★★
Bentley Bentayga V8	247 D	£136,200	8/3996	542/6000	568/1960	2313kg	238	4.5	-	-	180	+ The pick of the Bentayga range - A top-end Range Rover is still more polished ★★★★★
Bentley Bentayga	217 D	£162,700	12/5950	600/5000	664/1350	2365kg	258	4.1	-	-	187	+ Sublime quality, ridiculous pace - Inert driving experience, SUV stigma ★★★★★
Bentley Mulsanne	178 F	£229,360	8/6752	505/4200	752/1750	2610kg	197	5.3	-	-	184	+ Drives like a modern Bentley should - Shame it doesn't look like one too ★★★★★
Bentley Mulsanne Speed	250 T	£252,000	8/6752	530/4000	811/1750	2610kg	206	4.9	-	-	190	+ Extravagant; effortless performance - Passengers have more fun than you do ★★★★★
BMW 330d M Sport (F30)	180 D	£41,070	6/2993	254/4000	413/2000	1540kg	168	5.6	-	-	155	+ Great engine, fine handling, good value - Steering confuses weight with feel ★★★★★
BMW 340i M Sport Touring (F31)	228 D	£43,930	6/2998	321/5500	332/1380	1615kg	202	5.5	-	-	155	+ Feelsome rear-drive chassis - Easy to drive it beyond its comfort zone ★★★★★
BMW 328i (F30)	165 D	'11-'15	4/1997	242/5000	258/1250	1430kg	172	6.1	-	-	155	+ New-age four-pot 328i is great all-rounder - We miss the six-cylinder soundtrack ★★★★★
BMW 435i Gran Coupe	203 D	'14-'16	6/2979	302/5800	295/1200	1585kg	194	5.5	-	-	155	+ Superb straight-six, fine ride/handling balance - 335i saloon weighs and costs less ★★★★★
BMW M3 (F80)	211 F	£59,905	6/2979	425/5500	406/1850	1560kg	277	4.3	4.1	8.6	155	+ Looks, performance, practicality - Body control on rough roads; engine lacks character ★★★★★
BMW M3 Competition Package (F80)	237 F	£62,905	6/2979	444/7000	406/1850	1560kg	289	4.2	-	-	155	+ The car the F80 M3 should have been from the start - Less refined at low speeds ★★★★★
BMW M3 CS (F80)	250 F	£86,380	6/2979	454/6250	442/4000	1585kg	291	3.9	-	-	174	+ Improved chassis and mid-range urge - Costs over £20k more than an M3 Comp Pack ★★★★★
BMW M3 (E90)	123 F	'08-'11	8/3999	414/8300	295/3900	1605kg	262	4.9	4.9	10.7	165	+ Every bit as good as the E92 M3 coupe - No carbon roof ★★★★★
BMW M3 CRT (E90)	179 F	'11-'12	8/4361	444/8300	324/3750	1580kg	285	4.4	-	-	180	+ Saloon chassis + weight savings + GTS engine = best E90 M3 - Just 67 were made ★★★★★
BMW M5 (F90)	244 F	£89,705	8/4395	592/5600	553/1800	1855kg	324	3.4	-	-	155	+ Fun in two- or four-wheel drive - Insufficient steering connection and engine character ★★★★★
BMW M5 Competition (F90)	252 D	£96,205	8/4395	616/6000	553/1800	1865kg	336	3.3	-	-	155	+ Incredible performance, sharper handling - It's still a big old bus ★★★★★
BMW M5 (F10)	208 F	'11-'16	8/4395	552/6000	501/1500	1870kg	300	4.4	-	-	155	+ Twin-turbocharging suits M5 well - Can feel heavy at times ★★★★★
BMW M5 (E60)	129 F	'04-'10	10/4999	500/7750	384/6100	1755kg	289	4.7	-	-	155	+ Close to being the ultimate supersaloon - SMG gearbox feels old-tech ★★★★★
BMW M5 (E39)	110 F	'99-'03	8/4941	394/6600	369/3800	1795kg	223	5.3	4.9	11.5	155	+ Magnificent V8-engined supersaloon - We'd be nitpicking ★★★★★
BMW M5 (E34)	110 F	'92-'96	6/3795	335/6900	295/4750	1725kg	197	5.8	4.9	13.6	155	+ The Godfather of supersaloons - The family can come too ★★★★★
BMW M5 (E28)	182 F	'86-'88	6/3453	282/6500	251/4500	1431kg	200	6.1	-	-	156	+ The original storming saloon - Understated looks ★★★★★
BMW M6 Gran Coupe	190 D	'13-'18	8/4395	552/6000	501/1500	1875kg	299	4.2	-	-	155	+ Enormous performance, stylish looks - Looks overpriced next to rivals, M5 included ★★★★★
BMW M760Li xDrive	233 D	£138,335	12/6592	602/5500	590/1550	2180kg	281	3.7	-	-	155	+ More capable than you'd think; strong engine - Too much of a limo to be genuinely exciting ★★★★★
BMW X5 M50d	191 D	£72,705	6/2993	376/4000	546/2000	2190kg	174	5.3	-	-	155	+ Straight-line pace - Driving experience identical to standard X5, despite the M badge ★★★★★
BMW X6 M	212 D	'15-'17	8/4395	567/6000	553/2200	2265kg	254	4.2	-	-	155	+ Big improvement on its predecessor - Coupe roofline still of questionable taste ★★★★★
Cadillac CT6	226 D	£71,770	6/2997	411/5700	409/2500	1950kg	214	5.7	-	-	149	+ Caddy's S-class rival scores on comfort - But not on driver involvement ★★★★★
Honda Accord Type R	012 F	'98-'03	4/2157	209/7200	158/6700	1306kg	163	7.2	6.1	17.4	142	+ One of the finest front-drivers of all time - Convincing your friends of that ★★★★★
Infiniti Q50S Hybrid	195 D	£41,495	6/3498	359/6800	402/5000	1762kg	207	5.4	-	-	155	+ Good powertrain, promising chassis - Lacklustre steering, strong rivals ★★★★★
Jaguar XE 2.0 180PS Diesel AWD	227 D	£35,865	4/1999	178/4000	317/1750	1685kg	107	8.4	-	-	132	+ Talented chassis gets more traction - Shame the engine isn't as polished ★★★★★
Jaguar XE 2.0 240PS Diesel AWD	251 T	£39,180	4/1999	237/4000	368/1500	1718kg	140	6.5	-	-	155	+ Perfect. If you love diesels - A great chassis with a poor engine if you don't ★★★★★
Jaguar XE 300 Sport	252 D	£45,640	6/1997	296/5500	295/1500	1690kg	178	5.7	-	-	155	+ Fine chassis, deceptively quick cross-country pace - Could use a bit more drama ★★★★★
Jaguar XE S	237 D	'17-'18	6/2995	375/6500	332/3500	1655kg	230	5.0	-	-	155	+ Engaging handling, decent pace - Cabin quality and space lags behind rivals' ★★★★★
Jaguar XE SV Project 8	250 F	£149,995	8/5000	592/6500	516/3500	1745kg	345	3.7	-	-	200	+ A GT3 for the family - An actual GT3 is a sharper track tool ★★★★★
Jaguar XF S Diesel	219 D	£52,010	6/2993	296/4000	516/2000	1750kg	172	6.2	-	-	155	+ Great chassis, good looks, better engine than V6 petrol - It's still a diesel ★★★★★
Jaguar XF S	214 D	'15-'18	6/2995	375/6500	332/4500	1710kg	223	5.3	-	-	155	+ Outstanding ride and handling balance - Engine lacks appeal ★★★★★
Jaguar XFR	181 D	'09-'15	8/5000	503/6000	461/2500	1800kg	284	4.7	4.8	10.2	155	+ Brilliant blend of pace and refinement - Doesn't sound as special as it is ★★★★★
Jaguar XFR-S	208 F	'13-'15	8/5000	542/6500	501/2500	1800kg	306	4.6	-	-	186	+ XF turned up to 12 - Tyres aren't cheap ★★★★★
Jaguar XJR	191 D	'14-'17	8/5000	542/6500	502/2500	1875kg	29					

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MAKE & MODEL	ISSUE NO.	PRICE	ENGINE CYL/CC	BHP/RPM	LB FT/RPM	WEIGHT	BHP/TON	0-62MPH (CLAMED)	0-60MPH (TESTED)	0-100MPH (TESTED)	MAX MPH	EVO RATING	
Jaguar E-Pace P300	243 D	£44,510	4/1998	296/5500	295/1200	1894kg	159	6.4	-	-	155	+ Decent grip and balance - Dreary engine; heavier than a V6 F-Pace	★★★★☆
Jaguar F-Pace S	222 D	£54,440	6/2995	375/6500	332/4500	1884kg	202	5.5	-	-	155	+ A match for Porsche's SUVs - Supercharged V6 needs to be worked hard	★★★★☆
Jaguar I-Pace HSE	251 D	£74,445	-	394	513	2208kg	181	4.8	-	-	124	+ Impressive chassis and point-to-point pace - Range anxiety and hefty kerb weight	★★★★☆
Kia Stinger GT-Line 2.0	247 D	£31,995	4/1998	244/6200	260/1400	1642kg	151	5.8	-	-	149	+ Out-Jaguars Jaguar's XE and XF - Except in the looks department	★★★★☆
Kia Stinger GT-Line 2.2 CRDi	251 T	£34,225	4/1999	197/3800	324/1750	1735kg	115	7.3	-	-	143	+ Smooth daily driver with a decent interior - Frustrating auto 'box, heavy kerb weight	★★★★☆
Kia Stinger GT S	242 D	£40,495	6/3342	365/6000	376/1300	1780kg	168	4.7	-	-	168	+ Playful handling, deep-chested performance - Engine lacks soul, steering lacks feel	★★★★☆
Lamborghini Urus	249 F	£185,000	8/3996	641/6000	627/2250	2200kg	296	3.6	-	-	190	+ A freakish manipulator of physics - But also rather one-dimensional	★★★★☆
Lexus GS F	243 D	£73,375	8/4969	471/7100	391/4800	1790kg	267	4.6	-	-	168	+ Glorious engine, balanced handling - Gearbox is off the pace	★★★★☆
Lexus LS 500h	253 T	£72,959	6/3456	354	-	2175kg	165	5.4	-	-	155	+ Stunning cabin - Complex and compromised drivetrain, jarring ride	★★★★☆
Lexus IS F	151 F	'07-'12	8/4969	417/6600	372/5200	1714kg	247	5.2	4.7	10.9	173	+ Shockingly good Lexus - The M3's available as a four-door too	★★★★☆
Lotus Carlton	245 F	'90-'93	6/3615	377/5200	419/4200	1658kg	231	5.4	4.8	10.6	177	+ The Millennium Falcon of saloon cars - Every drive is a work-out	★★★★☆
Maserati Ghibli	186 D	£57,015	6/2979	345/5000	406/1750	1810kg	194	5.5	-	-	166	+ Bursting with character; good value compared to Quattroporte - It's still a big car	★★★★☆
Maserati Quattroporte S	184 D	'13-'18	6/2979	404/5500	406/1750	1860kg	221	5.1	-	-	177	+ Tempting alternative to V8 - Feel-free steering, ride lacks decorum	★★★★☆
Maserati Quattroporte GTS	226 D	'16-'18	8/3798	523/6800	479/2250	1900kg	280	4.7	-	-	193	+ Still pretty - Off the pace dynamically	★★★★☆
Maserati Quattroporte	085 F	'04-'08	8/4244	394/7000	333/4500	1930kg	207	5.6	-	-	171	+ Redefined big-car dynamics - Don't use auto mode	★★★★☆
Maserati Quattroporte S	137 F	'08-'12	8/4691	425/7000	361/4750	1990kg	216	5.4	5.1	12.1	174	+ A QP with the bhp it deserves - Grille is a bit Hannibal Lecter	★★★★☆
Maserati Quattroporte Sport GTS	141 F	'08-'12	8/4691	433/7000	361/4750	1990kg	221	5.1	-	-	177	+ The most stylish of supersaloons - Slightly wooden brakes, unforgiving ride	★★★★☆
Maserati Levante Diesel	221 D	£58,315	6/2897	271/4000	442/2000	2205kg	125	6.9	-	-	143	+ Impressive blend of ride and handling - Performance is mild for a Maserati	★★★★☆
Mercedes-Benz CLA45 AMG	186 D	£43,245	4/1991	355/6000	332/2250	1510kg	239	4.6	-	-	155	+ Strong performance, classy cabin - Pricy compared with A45 AMG hatchback	★★★★☆
Mercedes-Benz GLA45 AMG	205 F	£46,875	4/1991	355/6000	332/2250	1510kg	239	4.8	-	-	155	+ An aggressive and focused sports crossover - Low on driver interaction	★★★★☆
Mercedes-AMG C43 4Matic Estate	228 D	£46,985	6/2996	362/5500	383/2000	1660kg	222	4.7	-	-	155	+ Incredibly fast and composed - Difficult to engage with	★★★★☆
Mercedes-AMG C63 (W205)	209 D	£62,180	8/3982	469/5500	479/1750	1640kg	291	4.1	-	-	155	+ Fast and feelsome - Lacks the ultimate finesse and response of the C63 S	★★★★☆
Mercedes-AMG C63 Estate (S205)	216 F	£63,380	8/3982	469/5500	479/1750	1710kg	279	4.2	-	-	155	+ Much more fun than it looks - Gearbox dim-witted at low speeds	★★★★☆
Mercedes-AMG C63 S (W205)	211 F	£68,930	8/3982	503/5500	516/1750	1655kg	309	4.0	-	-	155	+ Tremendous twin-turbo V8 power - Not quite as focused as an M division car	★★★★☆
Mercedes-AMG C63 S Estate (S205)	252 D	£77,000	8/3982	503/5500	516/2000	1750kg	292	4.1	-	-	174	+ One of the finest all-round compact performance cars - Baffling array of driver settings	★★★★☆
Mercedes-Benz C63 AMG (W204)	151 F	'08-'14	8/6208	451/6800	442/5000	1655kg	277	4.5	4.4	9.7	155	+ Monstrous pace and extremely engaging - Same-era M3 is just a little better...	★★★★☆
Mercedes-Benz C55 AMG (W203)	088 F	'04-'08	8/5439	367/5250	376/4000	1635kg	228	5.2	-	-	155	+ Furiously fast, commendably discreet - Overshadowed by M3 and RS4	★★★★☆
Mercedes-Benz 190E 2.5-16	185 F	'89-'92	4/2498	204/6750	177/5500	1300kg	159	7.5	-	-	146	+ M-B's M3 alternative - Not as nimble as the Beemer	★★★★☆
Mercedes-AMG E43 4Matic (W213)	236 D	£57,275	6/2996	395/6100	383/2500	1765kg	227	4.6	-	-	155	+ Some of the E63's looks and performance - Not enough of its performance	★★★★☆
Mercedes-AMG E63 4Matic+ (W213)	242 D	£78,675	8/3982	563/5750	553/2250	1875kg	305	3.5	-	-	155	+ More rounded than the E63 S - Could be a little too discreet for some tastes	★★★★☆
Mercedes-AMG E63 S (W213)	246 F	£87,375	8/3982	604/5750	627/2500	1880kg	326	3.4	3.4	7.4	155	+ Fast, refined, effective and fun - At nearly two tons, it's not 911 nimble	★★★★☆
Mercedes-AMG GT63 S 4-Door	254 D	£135,500	8/3982	630/5500	664/2500	2045kg	313	3.2	-	-	196	+ Agile and immensely quick - Lacks the coupe GT's drama	★★★★☆
Mercedes-Benz E63 AMG (W212)	187 D	'13-'16	8/5461	549/5500	531/1750	1770kg	315	4.2	-	-	155	+ Power, response and accuracy in spades - A little lacking in originality	★★★★☆
Mercedes-Benz E63 AMG S (W212)	208 F	'13-'16	8/5461	577/5500	590/1750	1795kg	327	4.1	-	-	155	+ Effortless power; intuitive and approachable - Sluggish auto 'box	★★★★☆
Mercedes-Benz E63 AMG (W212)	165 F	'11-'13	8/5461	518/5250	516/1750	1765kg	298	4.4	-	-	155	+ Turbo engine didn't dilute the E63 experience - Sometimes struggles for traction...	★★★★☆
Mercedes-Benz E63 AMG (W212)	134 D	'09-'11	8/6208	518/6800	465/5200	1765kg	298	4.5	-	-	155	+ Indulgent chassis, brilliant engine - Steering still vague	★★★★☆
Mercedes-Benz E63 AMG (W211)	096 D	'06-'09	8/6208	507/6800	465/5200	1765kg	292	4.5	-	-	155	+ Brilliant engine, indulgent chassis - Vague steering, speed limits	★★★★☆
Mercedes-Benz E55 AMG	052 F	'03-'06	8/5439	469/6100	516/2650	1760kg	271	4.7	4.8	10.2	155	+ M5-humbling grunt, cossetting ride - Speed limits	★★★★☆
Mercedes-Benz S63 AMG L	246 D	£125,690	8/3982	604/5500	664/2750	1940kg	316	4.3	-	-	155	+ Performance doesn't come at the expense of luxury - But pure driving thrills do	★★★★☆
Mercedes-AMG CLS53 4Matic+	247 D	£72,095	6/2999	451/6100	567/1800	1905kg	302	4.5	-	-	155	+ Impressive chassis and hybrid powertrain - 4Matic only, and heavy, too	★★★★☆
Mercedes-Benz CLS63 AMG S	199 D	'14-'17	8/5461	577/5500	590/1750	1795kg	327	4.1	-	-	155	+ Quick and characterful - Dated gearbox, no four-wheel-drive option in the UK	★★★★☆
Mercedes-Benz CLS63 AMG	178 F	'11-'14	8/5461	518/5250	516/1700	1795kg	293	4.4	-	-	155	+ Monster performance, 549bhp an option - Not as desirable as a Bentley or Aston	★★★★☆
Mercedes-Benz GLC63 AMG S Coupe	253 D	£76,860	8/3982	503/5500	516/1750	1945kg	263	3.8	-	-	174	+ Unquestionable performance - Lacks adjustability and engagement	★★★★☆
Mercedes-Benz GLE63 AMG S	218 D	£96,950	8/5461	577/5500	560/1750	2270kg	258	4.2	-	-	155	+ Stonking pace, extreme refinement - Feels remote	★★★★☆
Mercedes-Benz GLE63 AMG S Coupe	213 D	£96,575	8/5461	577/5500	560/1750	2275kg	258	4.2	-	-	155	+ Subtler than an X6 M - More force than finesse	★★★★☆
Mercedes-AMG G63	250 D	£143,305	8/3982	577/6000	627/2500	2485kg	236	4.5	-	-	137	+ Vastly improved chassis, fabulous engine - Dynamic ability still limited	★★★★☆
Mercedes-Benz G63 AMG	172 D	'12-'18	8/5461	537/5500	560/2000	2475kg	220	5.4	-	-	130	+ Epic soundtrack - Ancient chassis	★★★★☆
Mitsubishi Evo X FQ-300 SST	118 F	'08-'14	4/1998	290/6500	300/3500	1590kg	185	4.5	5.2	13.9	155	+ First Evo with a twin-clutch transmission - Not as exciting as its predecessors	★★★★☆
Mitsubishi Evo X FQ-330 SST	134 F	'08-'14	4/1998	324/6500	322/3500	1590kg	207	4.4	-	-	155	+ Great engine and gearbox combo - It still lives in the shadow of the Evo IX	★★★★☆
Mitsubishi Evo X FQ-360	122 D	'08-'14	4/1998	354/6500	363/3500	1560kg	231	4.0	-	-	155	+ Ridiculously rapid Evo - A five-speed gearbox?!	★★★★☆
Mitsubishi Evo X FQ-400	181 F	'09-'10	4/1998	403/6500	387/3500	1560kg	262	3.8	-	-	155	+ Most powerful factory Evo ever... - ...about X grand too much when new	★★★★☆
Mitsubishi Evo IX FQ-340	088 F	'05-'08	4/1997	345/6800	321/4600	1400kg	250	4.2	4.3	10.9	157	+ Gives Porsche drivers nightmares - Points. Lots of	★★★★☆
Mitsubishi Evo IX MR FQ-360	181 F	'05-'08	4/1997	366/6887	363/3200	1400kg	266	4.0	-	-	157	+ Well-executed engine upgrades - Prison food	★★★★☆
Mitsubishi Evo VIII	055 F	'03-'05	4/1997	276/6500	289/3500	1410kg	199	5.1	-	-	157	+ The Evo grows up - Brakes need beefing up	★★★★☆
Mitsubishi Evo VIII MR FQ-300	057 F	'03-'05	4/1997	305/6800	289/3500	1400kg	221	4.9	-	-	157	+ Extra pace, extra attitude - Extra money	★★★★☆
Mitsubishi Evo VII	031 F	'02-'03	4/1997	276/6500	282/3500	1360kg	206	5.1	5.0	13.0	140	+ Terrific all-rounder - You tell us	★★★★☆
Mitsubishi Evo VI Tommi Mäkinen Edition	231 F	'00-'01	4/1997	276/6500	275/2750	1365kg	205	4.6	-	-	150	+ Our favourite Evo - Subtle it is not	★★★★☆
Porsche Panamera 4S Diesel	232 D	£91,788	8/3956	416/3500	627/1000	2050kg	206	4.3	-	-	177	+ Sharp chassis, impressive tech - Performance doesn't meet expectations	★★★★☆
Porsche Panamera Turbo	237 F	£115,100	8/3996	542/5750	568/1960	1995kg	276	3.6	3.4	8.3	190	+ Searing pace with body control that's a real step up; superb rear wing, too - Still very heavy	★★★★☆
Porsche Panamera Turbo Sport Turismo	239 D	£118,828	8/3996	542/5750	568/1960	2035kg	271	3.8	-	-	188	+ Looks great; drives better than its weight would suggest - Not exactly a load-lugger	★★★★☆
Porsche Panamera GTS	208 F	'11-'16	8/4806	434/6700	383/3500	1925kg	229	4.4	-	-	178	+ Vivacious V8, entertaining balance - Can feel light on performance next to turbocharged rivals	★★★★☆
Porsche Panamera Turbo	137 F	'10-'16	8/4806	493/6000	516/2250	1970kg	254	4.2	3.6	8.9	188	+ Fast, refined and dynamically sound - It still leaves us cold	★★★★☆
Porsche Panamera Turbo S	159 D	'11-'13	8/4806	542/6000	590/2250	1995kg	276	3.8	-	-	190	+ Pace, excellent ergonomics - Steering feel, ride	★★★★☆
Porsche Macan S	205 F	£48,287	6/2997	335/5500	339/1450	1865kg	183	5.4	-	-	157	+ No less compelling than the Macan Turbo - Although lacks its ultimate speed and agility	★★★★☆
Porsche Macan GTS	244 F	£55,158	6/2997	355/6000	369/1650	1895kg	190	5.2	-	-	159	+ Handles like an SUV shouldn't - Still looks like an SUV	★★★★☆
Porsche Macan Turbo	207 D	£63,981	6/3604	394/6000	406/1350	1925kg	208	4.8	4.5	11.1	165	+ Doesn't feel like an SUV - Not a match for a proper sports saloon	★★★★☆
Porsche Macan Turbo Performance Package	236 D	£69,505	6/3604	434/6000	442/1500	1925kg	229	4.4	-	-	-	+ Staggeringly quick and hugely capable - Do you really need this much power?	★★★★☆
Porsche Cayenne S (Mk3)	253 T	£68,330	6/2894	434/5700	406/1800	2020kg	218	5.2	-	-	164	+ Impressive surface-coated brake tech - We'd rather have it on a sports car	★★★★☆
Porsche Cayenne Turbo (Mk3)	243 D	£99,291	8/3996	542/5750	568/1960	2175kg	254	4.1	-	-	177	+ Huge performance, surprising agility - It's still a two-ton-plus SUV	★★★★☆
Porsche Cayenne GTS (Mk2, V6)	211 D	'15-'17	6/3604	434/6000	442/1600	2110kg	209	5.2	-	-	163	+ The driver's Cayenne... - ...but why would a driver want an SUV?	★★★★☆
Porsche Cayenne GTS (Mk2, V8)	173 D	'12-'15	8/4806	414/6500	380/3500	2085kg	202	5.7	-	-	162	+ Dynamically the best SUV of its era - At two tons, it's still no sports car	★★★★☆
Porsche Cayenne Turbo (Mk2)	212 D	'10-'17	8/4806	513/6000	533/2250	2185kg	239	4.5	-	-	173	+ Remarkable performance, handling, completeness - Vague steering, dated engine	★★★★☆
Porsche Cayenne Turbo S (Mk2)	184 D	'10-'17	8/4806	562/6000	590/2500	2235kg	255	4.1	-	-	176	+ More power and torque than a Zonda S 7.3 - In an SUV	★★★★☆
Range Rover Velar P380	239 D	£70,210	6/2995	375/6500	332/3500	1884kg	202	5.7	-	-	155	+ A more advanced, opulent alternative to an F-Pace - Its weight ultimately limits its agility	★★★★☆
Range Rover Sport V8 Supercharged	186 D	£87,680	8/5000	503/6000									

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MAKE & MODEL	ISSUE NO.	PRICE	ENGINE CYL./CC	BHP/RPM	LB FT/RPM	WEIGHT	BHP/TON	0-62MPH (CLAMED)	0-60MPH (TESTED)	0-100MPH (TESTED)	MAX MPH	EVO RATING	
Vauxhall Insignia VXR SuperSport	189 D	'13-'17	6/2792	321/5250	321/5250	1825kg	179	5.6	-	-	170	+ A 170mph Vauxhall - Should be a more engaging steer	★★★★☆
Vauxhall Vectra VXR	102 D	'06-'09	6/2792	276/5500	262/1800	1580kg	177	6.1	-	-	161	+ Great engine, effortless pace, good value - Numb steering, lumpy ride	★★★★☆
Vauxhall VXR8 GTS	215 D	'15-'17	8/6162	576/6150	546/3850	1834kg	319	4.2	-	-	155	+ Monster engine; engaging driving experience - Woeful interior	★★★★☆
Vauxhall VXR8 GTS-R	245 F	'17	8/6162	587/6150	546/3850	1880kg	317	4.2	-	-	155	+ Blistering performance; bursting with character - The end of an era	★★★★☆
Volvo V60 Polestar	222 D	£49,665	4/1969	362/6000	347/3100	1721kg	214	4.8	-	-	155	+ Subtle, well-executed performance car - Plays a little too safe	★★★★☆

SPORTS CARS / CONVERTIBLES



OUR CHOICE

Lotus Elise Sport 220. Delivering just the right amount of power from its supercharged 1.8-litre engine to make the most of its low kerb weight, the Sport 220 is gutsy, grippy, accurate and enthusiastic. And, of course, it rides beautifully. It's the sweetest spot in the already-very-sweet Elise range.



BEST OF THE REST

For even more precision and outright performance, a **Lotus 3-Eleven 430** is hard to beat, while the **Caterham Seven** remains an exemplar of sports car purity in all its guises. More habitable and everyday useable, the **Abarth 124 Spider** (left) is capable of putting a big smile on your face even at sane speeds.

Abarth 124 Spider	254 F	£29,625	4/1368	168/5500	184/2500	1060kg	161	6.8	-	-	143	+ A little car with a big soul - Vague and lifeless front end	★★★★☆
Alfa Romeo 4C Spider	223 F	£59,505	4/1742	237/6000	258/2200	940kg*	256	4.5	-	-	160	+ Stunningly beautiful; better steering than coupe version - Still has the coupe's other foibles	★★★★☆
Alfa Romeo 8C Spider	161 F	'09-'11	8/4691	450/7000	354/4750	1675kg	273	4.4	-	-	181	+ Beauty meets beast. They hit it off - Boot is useless for touring	★★★★☆
Ariel Atom 3 245	248 F	£30,573	4/1998	245/8600	177/7200	520kg	479	3.1	-	-	145	+ Even better than its predecessors - Can still be a bit draughty	★★★★☆
Ariel Atom 3.5 Supercharged	180 D	£38,000	4/1998	310/8400	169/7200	550kg	573	2.7	-	-	155	+ As mad as ever - Rain	★★★★☆
Ariel Atom 3.5R	205 F	£64,800	4/1998	350/8400	243/6100	550kg	647	2.6	-	-	155	+ Remarkable balance, poise and pace - Pricey	★★★★☆
Ariel Atom 3 Supercharged	138 F	'09-'12	4/1998	300/8200	162/7200	550kg	554	3.3	-	-	155	+ It's brilliant - It's mental	★★★★☆
Ariel Atom Mugen	165 F	'12-'13	4/1998	270/8300	188/6000	550kg	499	2.9	-	-	150	+ Perfect engine for the Atom's chassis - Only ten were made	★★★★☆
Ariel Nomad	248 F	£33,000	4/2354	235/7200	221/4300	670kg*	365	3.4	-	-	134	+ Off-road capabilities make for a super plaything - No Bluetooth	★★★★☆
Aston Martin V8 Vantage Roadster (4.7)	130 F	'09-'16	8/4735	420/7000	346/5750	1710kg	250	4.8	-	-	180	+ Sportiest, coolest drop-top Aston in years - Feels dated compared to contemporaries	★★★★☆
Aston Martin V8 Vantage S Roadster	161 F	'11-'17	8/4735	430/7300	361/5000	1690kg	258	4.8	-	-	189	+ Sounds amazing, looks even better - Still not the best drop-top in its class	★★★★☆
Aston Martin V12 Vantage Roadster	175 F	'12-'14	12/5935	510/6500	420/5750	1760kg	294	4.5	-	-	190	+ As good as the coupe, with amplified V12 rumble - Just a smidgen shakier	★★★★☆
Aston Martin V12 Vantage S Roadster	212 F	'14-'17	12/5935	565/6750	457/5750	1745kg	329	4.1	-	-	201	+ A brilliant two-seat roadster... - ...let down by a frustrating automated manual gearbox	★★★★☆
Aston Martin DB9 Volante	150 D	'04-'15	12/5935	510/6500	457/5500	1890kg	274	4.5	-	-	183	+ Consummate cruiser and capable when pushed - Roof-up wind noise	★★★★☆
Aston Martin DB11 Volante	247 F	£161,900	8/3982	503/6000	498/2000	1795kg	285	4.1	-	-	187	+ Impressively wide range of dynamic personalities - Cabin could be better at this price	★★★★☆
Audi TTS Roadster (Mk3)	207 D	£42,565	4/1984	306/5800	280/1800	1450kg	214	5.2	-	-	155	+ A serious proposition, ranking close behind a Boxster S - Coupe still looks better	★★★★☆
Audi TT RS Roadster (Mk3)	250 T	£54,230	5/2480	394/5850	354/1700	1530kg	262	3.9	-	-	155	+ Terrific engine... - ...is the best thing about it	★★★★☆
Audi R8 V8 Spyder	186 D	'11-'15	8/4163	424/7900	317/6000	1660kg	259	4.8	-	-	187	+ More delicate and subtle than the V10 - The V10 sounds even better	★★★★☆
BAC Mono	189 F	£165,125	4/2261	305/7700	206/6000	580kg*	534	2.8	-	-	170	+ The most single-minded track car available - That means no passengers...	★★★★☆
BMW Z4 sDrive 35i M Sport (Mk2)	186 D	'13-'17	6/2979	302/5800	295/1300	1505kg	204	5.2	-	-	155	+ Looks, hard-top versatility, drivetrain - Clumsy chassis is upset by ragged surfaces	★★★★☆
BMW Z4 3.0si (Mk1)	094 D	'06-'09	6/2996	265/6600	232/2750	1310kg	205	5.7	-	-	155	+ Terrific straight-six - Handling not as playful as we'd like	★★★★☆
BMW Z4 M Roadster	091 F	'06-'09	6/3246	338/7900	269/4900	1410kg	244	5.0	-	-	155	+ Exhilarating and characterful; that engine - Stiff suspension	★★★★☆
BMW M Roadster	002 F	'98-'02	6/3246	325/7400	258/4900	1375kg	240	5.1	-	-	155	+ M3 motor; hunky looks - M Coupe drives better	★★★★☆
BMW i8 Roadster	249 D	£124,735	3/1499	369/5800	420/3700	1595kg	235	4.6	-	-	155	+ Unique and engaging - Still more GT than sports car	★★★★☆
BMW Z8	026 F	'00-'03	8/4941	400/6600	369/3800	1585kg	256	4.7	4.8	11.1	155	+ M5-powered super-sportster - M5's more fun to drive	★★★★☆
Caterham Seven 160	239 F	£19,495	3/660	80/7000	79/3400	490kg*	166	6.9	-	-	100	+ The fabulous Seven formula at its most basic - Gets pricey with options	★★★★☆
Caterham Seven SuperSprint	247 D	£29,995	3/660	95/7000	82/5600	490kg*	197	6.9	-	-	100	+ Accessible limits with proper pace - You need to enjoy being exposed to the elements	★★★★☆
Caterham Seven 270	219 F	£23,995	4/1596	135/6800	122/4100	540kg*	254	5.0	-	-	122	+ Feisty engine, sweetly balanced, manic and exciting - The temptation of more power	★★★★☆
Caterham Seven 310	254 F	£25,495	4/1596	152/7000	124/5600	540kg*	286	4.8	-	-	126	+ Intense and exciting - Sticky tyres limit the amount of throttle adjustability	★★★★☆
Caterham Seven 360	209 F	£27,495	4/1999	180/7300	143/6100	560kg*	327	4.8	-	-	130	+ Extra power is welcome - You'll need the six-speed gearbox to make the most of it	★★★★☆
Caterham Seven 420	223 F	£30,495	4/1999	210/7600	150/6300	560kg*	381	3.8	4.0	10.3	136	+ It's the one we built for ourselves - Trickier on the limit than lesser-powered Sevens	★★★★☆
Caterham Seven 420R Donington Edition	240 D	£47,500	4/1999	210/7600	150/6300	560kg*	381	3.8	-	-	136	+ One of the best Sevens we've driven - Only ten are being made	★★★★☆
Caterham Seven CSR	094 F	£46,495	4/2261	256/7500	200/6200	565kg*	460	3.1	3.8	-	155	+ Brilliant for high days, holidays and trackdays - Wet Wednesdays	★★★★☆
Caterham Seven 620S	220 D	£45,495	4/1999	310/7700	219/7350	610kg*	516	3.4	-	-	155	+ Ludicrous, near-620R pace, with added habitability - Well, 'habitable' for a Seven...	★★★★☆
Caterham Seven 620R	239 F	£50,490	4/1999	310/7700	219/7350	572kg*	551	2.8	-	-	155	+ Banzi on track, yet still relevant on the road - £50k for a Seven?	★★★★☆
Caterham Seven Roadsport 125	105 F	'07-'14	4/1596	125/6100	120/5350	539kg*	235	5.9	-	-	112	+ Great debut for Ford-engined model - Bigger drivers need SV model	★★★★☆
Caterham Seven Supersport	165 F	'11-'14	4/1596	140/6900	120/5790	520kg*	273	4.9	-	-	120	+ One of the best Caterhams is also one of the cheapest of its era - It's quite minimalist	★★★★☆
Caterham Seven Supersport R	180 D	'13-'14	4/1999	180/7300	143/6100	535kg*	342	4.8	-	-	130	+ One of the best road-and-track Sevens - Impractical, noisy, uncomfortable	★★★★☆
Caterham Seven Superlight R300	150 F	'09-'12	4/1999	175/7000	139/6000	515kg*	345	4.5	-	-	140	+ Possibly all the Caterham you need - They're not cheap	★★★★☆
Caterham Seven Superlight R500	123 F	'08-'14	4/1999	263/8500	177/7200	506kg*	528	2.9	-	-	150	+ Better power-to-weight ratio than a Veyron - Until you add the driver	★★★★☆
Caterham Seven R300	068 F	'02-'06	4/1796	160/7000	130/5000	500kg*	325	4.7	-	-	130	+ Our 2002 Trackday Car of the Year - Not for wimps	★★★★☆
Caterham Seven R500	200 F	'99-'06	4/1796	230/8600	155/7200	460kg*	510	3.4	3.6	8.8	146	+ The K-series Seven at its very best - No cup holders	★★★★☆
Dallara Stradale	250 F	c£162,000	4/2300	394/6200	369/3000	855kg*	468	3.3	-	-	174	+ Startling performance - Its limits always feel slightly beyond your reach	★★★★☆
Elemental Rpl	238 D	£98,700	4/1999	320/ n/a	332/2000	630kg	516	2.7	-	-	165	+ Sensational, explosive, captivating, exploitable - Price will test your level of commitment	★★★★☆
Ferrari Portofino	247 F	£166,180	8/3855	591/7500	560/3000	1664kg	361	3.5	-	-	199	+ Better than the California - Not better than a DB11 Volante	★★★★☆
Ferrari California T	229 D	'14-'17	8/3855	553/7500	557/4750	1729kg	324	3.6	-	-	196	+ Turbocharged engine is a triumph - Still places daily useability above outright thrills	★★★★☆
Fiat 124 Spider	228 F	£21,050	4/1368	138/5000	177/2250	1050kg	134	7.5	-	-	134	+ It's an affordable Italian(ish) sports car - Lacks Italian brio	★★★★☆
Honda S2000	243 F	'99-'09	4/1997	237/8300	153/7500	1260kg	191	6.2	-	-	150	+ An alternative and rev-happy roadster - A Boxster's better	★★★★☆
Jaguar F-type Convertible 3.0 V6 340PS	186 F	£59,550	6/2995	335/6500	332/3500	1587kg	214	5.7	-	-	161	+ Beautiful, enjoyable, responsive - Noticeably the junior F-type	★★★★☆
Jaguar F-type Convertible 3.0 V6 380PS	183 F	£70,300	6/2995	375/6500	339/3500	1604kg	238	5.5	-	-	171	+ A more rounded F-type than the V8s - We like V8s	★★★★☆
Jaguar F-type R Convertible AWD	-	£98,145	8/5000	542/6500	501/3500	1665kg	331	4.1	-	-	186	+ Pace, characterful engine - Costs nearly £25k more than the hot V6	★★★★☆
Jaguar F-type SVR Convertible	230 D	£118,165	8/5000	567/6500	516/3500	1720kg	335	3.7	-	-	195	+ Huge performance - Unpleasant soundtrack; unsettled on bumpy roads	★★★★☆
Jaguar F-type S Convertible	183 F	'13-'17	6/2995	375/6500	339/3500	1604kg	238	5.5	-	-	171	+ Better-damped and more rounded than the V8 S - A Boxster S is cheaper	★★★★☆
Jaguar F-type Project 7	212 F	'15	8/5000	567/6500	501/2500	1585kg	363	3.9	-	-	186	+ Noise, performance, adjustability - Expensive, and not the GT3 rival we would have liked	★★★★☆
Jaguar XKR Convertible	130 F	'09-'14	8/5000	503/6000	461/2500	1725kg	296	4.8	-	-	155	+ Fantastic 5-litre V8 - Loses sporting ground to its main foes	★★★★☆
Jaguar XKR-S Convertible	167 F	'11-'14	8/5000	542/6500	502/2500	1725kg	319	4.4	-	-	186	+ Loud and mad; most exciting Jag in years - It was also the most expensive in years	★★★★☆
KTM X-Bow GT	183 D	£95,880	4/1984	281/6400	310/3200	875kg	326	4.1	-	-	144	+ Extraordinary ability, now in a more road-friendly package - Price	★★★★☆
KTM X-Bow R	165 F	£87,480	4/1984	296/6300	295/3300	816kg	369	3.9	-	-	144	+ Sharper handling, more power - Pity it's not even lighter, and cheaper	★★★★☆
KTM X-Bow	138 F	'08-'12	4/1984	237/5500	229/2000	818kg	294	3.8	-	-	137	+ Mad looks; real quality feel - Heavier and pricier than you'd hope	★★★★☆
Lotus Elise Sport	-	'17	4/1598	134/6800	118/4400	856kg	159	6.5	-	-	127	+ 1.6-litre Elise is light and fantastic - Smaller engine could put some off	★★★★☆
Lotus Elise Sprint	-	'17	4/1598	134/6800	118/4400	830kg	164	6.2	-	-	127	+ Even lighter version of the 1.6 Elise - It'll cost you nearly £200 per kilo saved	★★★★☆
Lotus Elise Sport 220	244 F	£39,300	4/1798	217/6800	184/4600	904kg	244	4.6	-	-	145	+ Perfect power-to-weight ratio - A bit short on creature comforts	★★★★☆
Lotus Elise Sprint 220	254 F	£44,300	4/1798	217/6800	184/4600	878kg	251	4.5	-	-	145	+ Makes the most of its lightness - Heavyweight price	★★★★☆
Lotus Elise Cup 250	238 D	£47,400	4/1798	243/7200	184/3500	917kg	269	4.3	-	-	154	+ Elise gets quicker again - Prioritises grip over adjustability	★★★★☆
Lotus Elise Cup 260	243 F	£59,500	4/1798	250/7200	195/5500	902kg	282	4.2	-	-	151	+ Quickest Elise yet - Just 30 being built	★★★★☆
Lotus Elise Club Racer	183 F	'11-'15	4/1598	134/6800	118/4400	852kg	160	6.5	-	-	127	+ Even lighter, even more focused than a standard 1.6 Elise - Are you prepared to go this basic?	★★★★☆
Lotus Elise S Club Racer	189 D	'13-'15	4/1798	217/6800	184/4600	905kg	244	4.6	-	-	145	+ Purist approach intensifies ability - Lightest, option-free spec requires commitment	★★★★☆
Lotus Elise R	068 F	'											

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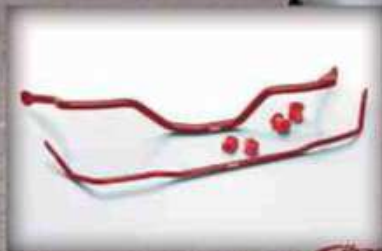


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Lotus Elise 111S	049 F	'02-'04	4/1796	156/7000	129/4650	860kg	197	5.1	-	-	131	+ A genuinely useable Elise - Air-con? In an Elise?	★★★★★
Lotus Elise Sport 135	040 D	'03	4/1796	135/6200	129/4850	726kg	189	5.4	-	-	129	+ One of our fave S2 Elises - Brakes need more bite and pedal feel	★★★★★
Lotus Elise (S1)	235 F	'96-'01	4/1796	118/5500	122/3000	731kg	164	5.9	6.1	18.5	126	+ A modern classic - A tad impractical?	★★★★★
Lotus Exige Sport 350 Roadster	221 F	£55,900	6/3456	345/7000	295/4500	1125kg	312	3.9	-	-	145	+ An Exige with added sunny-day appeal - A Boxster would be more practical	★★★★★
Lotus 3-Eleven 430	248 F	£102,000	6/3456	430/7000	325/4500	920kg*	475	3.2	-	-	180	+ A fitting send-off for a brilliant Lotus - Just 20 being made, and they're not cheap	★★★★★
Lotus 3-Eleven	220 F	'16-'17	6/3456	410/7000	302/3000	925kg*	450	3.4	-	-	174	+ A fantastically exciting Lotus - If not exactly a groundbreaking one	★★★★★
Lotus 2-Eleven	126 F	'07-'11	4/1796	189/7800	133/6800	720kg	267	4.5	-	-	140	+ Not far off the supercharged 2-Eleven's pace - You want the supercharged one, don't you?	★★★★★
Lotus 2-Eleven Supercharged	123 F	'07-'11	4/1796	252/8000	179/7000	745kg	344	4.0	-	-	150	+ Impressive on road and track - Not hardcore enough for some	★★★★★
Lotus 340R	126 F	'00	4/1796	190/7800	146/5000	701kg	275	4.5	4.5	12.5	126	+ Hardcore road-racer... - ...that looks like a dune buggy from Mars	★★★★★
Maserati GranCabrio MC	185 D	£112,400	8/4691	454/7000	383/4750	1973kg	234	4.9	-	-	179	+ Most powerful GranCabrio yet - The GranCabrio is starting to show its age	★★★★☆
Mazda MX-5 1.5 (Mk4)	230 F	£18,795	4/1496	129/7000	111/4800	975kg	134	8.3	-	-	127	+ Lightest MX-5 since the Mk1 - Lacks intensity	★★★★☆
Mazda MX-5 2.0 (Mk4)	228 F	'15-'18	4/1998	158/6000	147/4600	1000kg	161	7.3	-	-	133	+ Brilliant basic recipe - The desire for stiffer suspension and more power	★★★★☆
Mazda MX-5 2.0 (Mk4, 184PS)	254 D	£22,295	4/1998	181/7000	151/4000	1030kg	178	6.5	-	-	136	+ At last, a more powerful factory MX-5 - It's still no fireball	★★★★☆
Mazda MX-5 2.0i Sport Tech (Mk3.5)	212 F	'09-'15	4/1999	158/7000	139/5000	1098kg	146	7.6	-	-	138	+ Handles brilliantly again; folding hard-top also available - Less-than-macho image	★★★★☆
Mazda MX-5 1.8i (Mk3)	091 F	'05-'09	4/1798	124/6500	123/4500	1080kg	108	9.3	-	-	122	+ Gearchange, interior - Lost some of the charm of old MX-5s; dubious handling	★★★★☆
Mazda MX-5 1.8i (Mk2)	017 F	'98-'05	4/1839	146/7000	124/5000	1065kg	140	8.5	-	-	123	+ Affordable ragtops don't get much better - Cheap cabin	★★★★☆
Mazda MX-5 1.6 (Mk1)	131 F	'89-'97	4/1597	115/6500	100/5500	971kg	120	8.8	-	-	114	+ The original and still (pretty much) the best - Less than rigid	★★★★☆
Mercedes-AMG SLC43	222 D	£47,600	6/2996	362/5500	383/2000	1520kg	242	4.7	-	-	155	+ Twin-turbo V6 well-suited to baby roadster - But also highlights the chassis' age	★★★★☆
Mercedes-Benz SLK55 AMG	186 F	'12-'15	8/5461	416/6800	398/4500	1615kg	262	4.6	-	-	155	+ Quicker and more economical than ever - Needs to be sharper, too	★★★★☆
Mercedes-Benz SLK55 AMG	087 F	'05-'10	8/5439	355/5750	376/4000	1575kg	229	4.9	-	-	155	+ Superb engine, responsive chassis - No manual option, ESP spoils fun	★★★★☆
Mercedes-Benz SLK55 AMG Black Series	110 F	'07-'08	8/5439	394/5750	383/3750	1495kg	268	4.5	4.9	11.2	174	+ AMG gets serious - Dull-witted auto 'box, uneven dynamics	★★★★☆
Mercedes-AMG SL63	228 D	£116,430	8/5461	577/5500	664/2250	1770kg	331	4.1	-	-	155	+ Effortless performance - Needs more involvement to go with the pace	★★★★☆
Mercedes-AMG GT Roadster	239 F	£111,360	8/3982	469/6000	465/1700	1595kg	299	4.0	-	-	188	+ An AMG GT with added fresh air - Ride and handling go slightly to pieces on UK roads	★★★★☆
Mercedes-AMG GT C Roadster	235 D	£140,660	8/3982	549/5750	501/1900	1660kg	336	3.7	-	-	196	+ As above but with more shove - Road noise can get wearing on long journeys	★★★★☆
Mercedes-Benz SL500	169 D	'12-'16	8/4663	429/5250	516/1800	1710kg	255	4.6	-	-	155	+ Wafty performance, beautifully engineered - Lacks ultimate sports car feel	★★★★☆
Mercedes-Benz SL63 AMG	171 D	'12-'16	8/5461	530/5500	590/2000	1770kg	304	4.3	-	-	155	+ Monster performance, lighter than before - Still heavy, steering lacks consistency	★★★★☆
Mercedes-Benz SL65 AMG	183 D	'13-'16	12/5980	621/4800	737/2300	1875kg	336	4.0	-	-	155	+ Chassis just about deals with the power - Speed limits	★★★★☆
Mercedes-Benz SL63 AMG	117 D	'08-'13	8/6208	518/6800	464/5200	1970kg	278	4.6	-	-	155	+ More focused than old SL55 AMG - Lost some of its all-round appeal	★★★★☆
Mercedes-Benz SL65 AMG	071 D	'04-'10	12/5980	604/4800	737/2000	2035kg	302	4.2	-	-	155	+ Gob-smacking performance - Costly to run	★★★★☆
Morgan 3 Wheeler	198 F	£31,140	2/1976	82/5250	103/3250	525kg*	159	6.0	-	-	115	+ Quirky, characterful, brilliant - Can become a two-wheeler if you push too hard	★★★★☆
Morgan Plus 8 50th Anniversary Edition	253 D	£129,000	8/4799	367/6300	370/3600	1100kg*	339	4.5	-	-	155	+ V8 performance and sound, driver involvement - Getting flies in your teeth	★★★★☆
Morgan Aero 8	105 F	£94,665	8/4799	362/6300	361/3400	1180kg*	312	4.5	-	-	170	+ Glorious sound, view over bonnet, dynamics - Awkward-looking rear	★★★★☆
Morgan Aero SuperSports	145 F	'10-'11	8/4799	362/6300	370/3600	1180kg*	312	4.2	-	-	170	+ It's an Aero 8 with a V8 and targa top - Limited edition, costing proper supercar money	★★★★☆
Nissan 370Z Roadster	143 F	'10-'14	6/3696	326/7000	269/5200	1554kg	213	5.5	-	-	155	+ The Zed's old-school character remains intact - Its purposeful looks don't	★★★★☆
Porsche 718 Boxster	224 D	£44,758	4/1988	296/6500	280/1950	1335kg	225	5.1	-	-	170	+ Chassis as good as ever - Four-cylinder's tuneless din would be hard to live with	★★★★☆
Porsche 718 Boxster S	222 F	£53,714	4/2497	345/6500	310/1900	1355kg	259	4.6	4.4	9.8	177	+ Still sensationally capable - Turbo four-cylinder engine lacks appeal of the old flat-six	★★★★☆
Porsche 718 Boxster GTS	249 T	£61,727	4/2497	360/6500	310/1900	1375kg	266	4.6	-	-	180	+ The best Boxster spec - Doesn't come cheap	★★★★☆
Porsche Boxster (981)	238 F	'12-'16	6/2706	261/6700	206/4500	1310kg	202	5.8	-	-	164	+ Goes and looks better than the 987 Boxster - Shame about the electric steering	★★★★☆
Porsche Boxster S (981)	186 F	'12-'16	6/3436	311/6700	265/4500	1320kg	239	5.1	-	-	173	+ Boxster steps out of 911's shadow - But gets 911's less appealing electric steering	★★★★☆
Porsche Boxster GTS (981)	203 D	'14-'16	6/3436	325/6700	273/4500	1345kg	246	5.0	-	-	174	+ Superb dynamics, fantastic engine, great looks - Sport suspension is very firm	★★★★☆
Porsche Boxster Spyder (981)	223 F	'15-'16	6/3800	370/6700	310/4750	1315kg	286	4.5	-	-	180	+ An even faster, even more rewarding Boxster - Feedback trails the Cayman GT4's	★★★★☆
Porsche Boxster S (987)	161 F	'05-'12	6/3436	306/6400	266/5500	1355kg	229	5.3	-	-	170	+ Second-gen Boxster's as brilliant as ever - It's a typically Porsche redesign	★★★★☆
Porsche Boxster Spyder (987)	188 F	'10-'12	6/3436	316/7200	273/4750	1275kg	252	4.9	-	-	166	+ Lighter, more driver-centric Boxster - Collapsed-brolly roof not the most practical	★★★★☆
Porsche Boxster S (986)	070 F	'99-'04	6/3179	256/6200	229/4600	1320kg	200	5.7	-	-	164	+ Added power over the non-S Boxster is seductive - Very little	★★★★☆
Renault Sport Spider	231 F	'96-'99	4/1998	148/6000	136/4500	930kg	157	6.5	-	-	131	+ Rarity; unassisted steering - Heavier than you'd hope; disappointing engine	★★★★☆
Rolls-Royce Dawn	222 D	£264,000	12/6592	563/5250	575/1500	2560kg	223	4.9	-	-	155	+ Effortless driving experience - Driver involvement not a priority	★★★★☆
Toyota MR2 (Mk3)	187 F	'00-'06	4/1794	138/6400	125/4400	975kg	141	8.0	7.2	21.2	131	+ Tight lines, taut dynamics - Minimal luggage space	★★★★☆
TVR Tamora	070 F	'01-'07	6/3605	350/7200	290/5500	1060kg	335	4.2	-	-	175	+ Well-sorted soft-top TVR - Awkward styling	★★★★☆
TVR Chimaera 5.0	007 F	'93-'03	8/4997	320/5500	320/3750	1060kg	307	4.4	-	-	167	+ Gorgeous noise, tarmac-rippling grunt - Details	★★★★☆
TVR Griffith 4.3	068 F	'92-'93	8/4280	280/5500	305/4000	1040kg	274	4.4	4.8	11.2	155	+ The car that made TVR. Cult status - Mere details	★★★★☆
TVR Griffith 500	009 F	'93-'01	8/4997	320/5500	320/4000	1060kg	307	4.1	-	-	167	+ Gruff diamond - A few rough edges	★★★★☆
Vauxhall VX220	023 F	'00-'04	4/2198	145/5800	150/4000	875kg	168	5.9	-	-	136	+ Absurdly good Vauxhall - The badge?	★★★★☆
Vauxhall VX220 Turbo	066 F	'03-'05	4/1998	197/5500	184/1950	930kg	215	4.9	-	-	151	+ Nothing comes close for the money - Marginal everyday usability	★★★★☆
Vuhl 05	220 F	£59,995	4/2000	285/5600	310/3000	725kg	405	3.7	-	-	152	+ Impressive pace and quality - You can get a more thrills from a Caterham at half the price	★★★★☆
Zenos E10 S	214 F	£30,595	4/1999	250/7000	295/2500	725kg*	350	4.0	4.2	-	145	+ Neutral and exploitable - Prescriptive balance	★★★★☆

COUPES / GTs



OUR CHOICE

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



BEST OF THE REST

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

Alfa Romeo 4C	209 F	£51,505	4/1742	237/6000	258/2200	895kg*	269	4.5	-	-	160	+ Carbonfibre tub, mini-supercar looks - Hot hatch engine, clunky gearbox	★★★★☆
Alfa Romeo 8C Competizione	120 F	'07-'09	8/4691	450/7000	354/4750	1585kg	288	4.2	-	-	181	+ Looks, exclusivity, noise, balance - Cost more now than they did new	★★★★☆
Alpine A110	249 F	£51,805	4/1798	249/6000	236/2000	1103kg	229	4.5	4.6	10.8	155	+ Fast, fun and genuinely different - If only it had a manual gearbox	★★★★☆
Alpina D4 Biturbo	206 F	£50,950	6/2993	345/4000	516/1500	1585kg	221	4.6	-	-	173	+ Fifth-gear oversteer - Sounds like a diesel; fuel economy not as good as you might hope	★★★★☆
Alpina B4 S Biturbo	245 D	£63,000	6/2979	434/5500	487/3000	1615kg	273	4.2	-	-	190	+ Stonking engine, stealthy speed - Steering is slow and lacks feel	★★★★☆
Alpina B4 Biturbo	206 F	'14-'16	6/2979	404/5500	442/3000	1615kg	254	4.2	-	-	188	+ More fluid than the M4; better traction, too - Not as precise as the M-car over the limit	★★★★☆
Aston Martin Vantage	250 F	£120,900	8/3982	503/6000	505/2000	1530kg*	334	3.6	4.5	9.1	195	+ Performance that's a huge leap forward - Chassis struggles when really pushed	★★★★☆
Aston Martin V8 Vantage (4.3)	251 F	'05-'07	8/4280	380/7000	302/5000	1630kg	237	5.0	5.2	12.0	175	+ Gorgeous; awesome soundtrack - Can't quite match a 911 dynamically	★★★★☆
Aston Martin V8 Vantage (4.7)	169 D	'08-'16	8/4735	420/7000	346/5750	1630kg	262	4.8	-	-	180	+ Still feels special - But also a little dated	★★★★☆
Aston Martin V8 Vantage S	168 F	'11-'17	8/4735	430/7300	361/5000	1610kg	271	4.8	-	-	190	+ Keener engine, V12 Vantage looks - Slightly sluggish auto only	★★★★☆
Aston Martin V8 Vantage N430	218 F	'14-'16	8/4735	430/7300	361/5000	1610kg	271	4.8	-	-	189	+ Malleable, involving - Never feels rampantly quick	★★★★☆
Aston Martin Vantage GT8	229 F	'16-'17	8/4735	440/7300	361/5000	1530kg	292	4.4	-	-	190	+ Enough drama to fill a Netflix mini-series - Just 150 made	★★★★☆
Aston Martin V12 Vantage	146 F	'09-'13	12/5935	510/6500	420/5750	1680kg	308	4.2	4.4	9.7	190	+ The car we hoped the V8 Vantage would be - Erm, a tad thirsty?	★★★★☆
Aston Martin V12 Vantage S	238 F	'13-'17	12/5935	563/6650	457/5500	1665kg	344	3.9	-	-	205	+ Amongst the best Astons ever made - Old-school automated 'box (so get the manual)	★★★★☆
Aston Martin Vantage GT12	214 F	'15-'16	12/5935	592/7000	461/5500	1565kg	384	3.5	-	-	185	+ The GT3-style Vantage we waited so long for - Only 100 made	★★★★☆
Aston Martin DB11 V8	253 T	£144,900	8/3982	503/6000	498/2000	1685kg	303	4.0	-	-	187	+ Potent and characterful engine; sharper chassis than V12 - Do we still need the V12?	★★★★☆
Aston Martin DB11	235 F	'17-'18	12/5204	600/6500									

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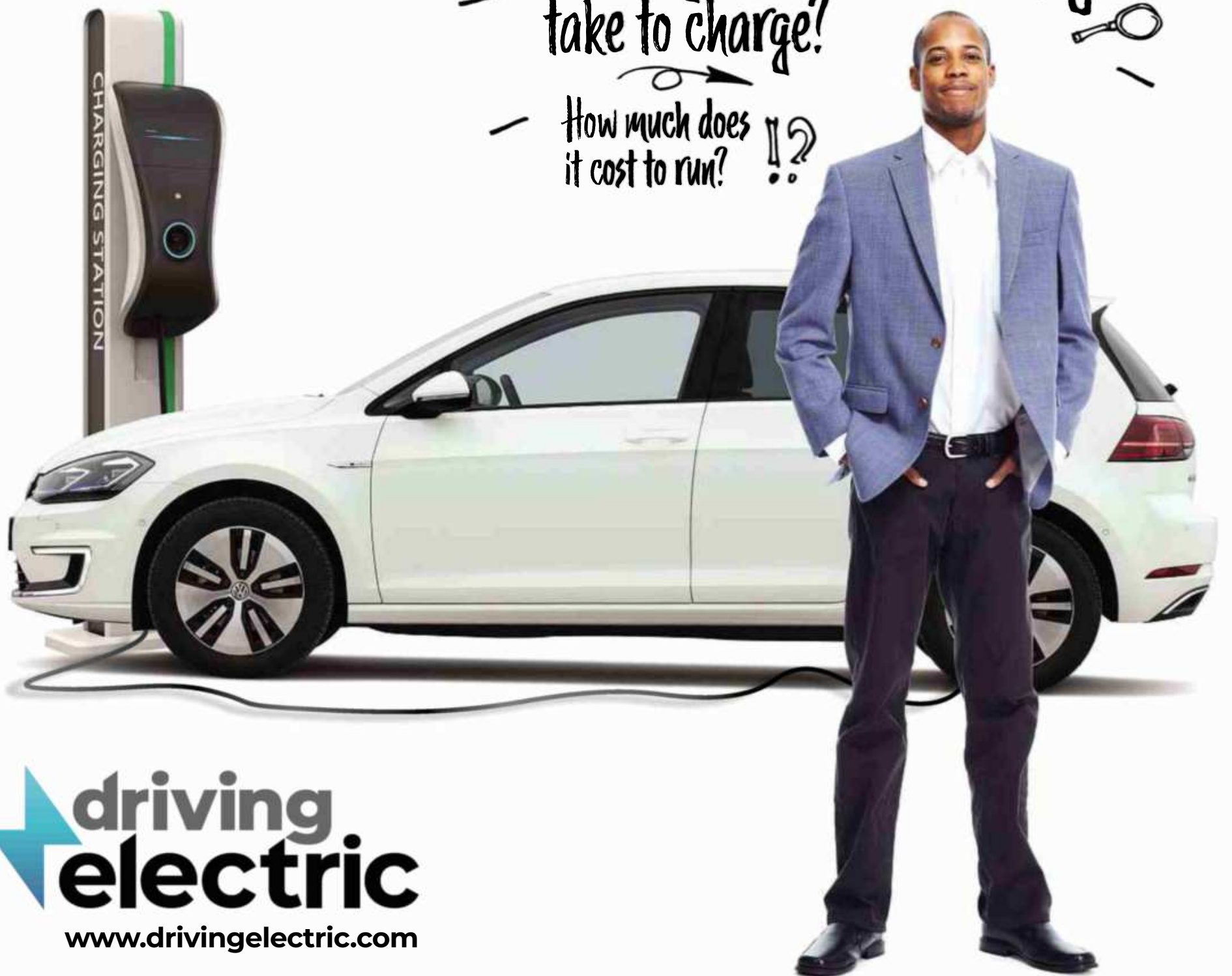
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MAKE & MODEL	ISSUE NO.	PRICE	ENGINE CYL/CC	BHP/RPM	LB FT/RPM	WEIGHT	BHP/TON	0-62MPH (CLAIMED)	0-60MPH (TESTED)	0-100MPH (TESTED)	MAX MPH	EVO RATING	
Aston Martin DB9 GT	214 D	'15-'17	12/5935	540/6750	457/5500	1785kg	307	4.5	-	-	183	+ More power; still has bags of character - Needs an eight-speed auto 'box	★★★★★
Aston Martin DB9	178 F	'04-'16	12/5935	510/6500	457/5500	1785kg	290	4.6	-	-	183	+ A great start to Gaydon-era Astons - Automatic gearbox could be quicker	★★★★★
Aston Martin DBS	142 F	'07-'12	12/5935	510/6500	420/5750	1695kg	306	4.3	-	-	191	+ Stupendous engine, gearbox, brakes - Pricey; can bite the unwary	★★★★★
Audi TT 2.0 TFSI (Mk3)	204 F	£31,685	4/1984	227/4500	273/1650	1230kg	188	6.0	-	-	155	+ Desirable, grippy and effortlessly quick - Still not the last word in interaction	★★★★★
Audi TT 2.0 TFSI quattro (Mk3)	203 D	£34,895	4/1984	227/4500	273/1600	1335kg	173	5.3	-	-	155	+ Looks, interior, decent performance and handling - Lacks ultimate involvement	★★★★★
Audi TTS (Mk3)	252 T	£41,205	4/1984	302/5400	295/2000	1285kg	239	4.5	-	-	155	+ Exceptional grip and traction - Excitement fades after the first few corners	★★★★★
Audi TT RS (Mk3)	249 F	£52,480	5/2480	394/5850	354/1700	1440kg	278	3.7	3.5	8.7	155	+ Soundtrack; tremendous point-to-point pace - A bit one-dimensional in the long run	★★★★★
Audi TTS (Mk2)	193 F	'08-'14	4/1984	268/6000	258/2500	1395kg	195	5.4	-	-	155	+ A usefully quicker TT, with a great drivetrain - Still steers like a computer game	★★★★★
Audi TT RS (Mk2)	158 F	'09-'14	5/2480	335/5400	332/1600	1450kg	235	4.7	4.4	11.1	155	+ Sublime five-cylinder turbo engine - Rest of package can't quite match it	★★★★★
Audi TT RS Plus (Mk2)	185 D	'12-'14	5/2480	355/5500	343/1650	1450kg	249	4.3	-	-	174	+ Stonkingly fast cross-country - Shockingly expensive for a TT	★★★★★
Audi TT Sport (Mk1)	081 D	'05-'06	4/1781	237/5700	236/2300	1390kg	173	5.7	-	-	155	+ Deliciously purposeful interior, crisp chassis - Numb steering	★★★★★
Audi S5	252 F	£48,880	6/2995	349/5400	369/1370	1615kg	220	4.7	-	-	155	+ Chassis rewards commitment... but doesn't offer a challenge. Plain engine, too	★★★★★
Audi RS5	240 F	£62,900	6/2894	444/5700	442/1900	1655kg	273	3.9	3.6	9.0	155	+ Lighter, quicker; makes green paint look good - Lacks the character of the old V8	★★★★★
Audi RS5	206 F	'10-'16	8/4163	444/8250	317/4000	1715kg	263	4.5	4.3	-	155	+ Brilliant engine and improved chassis - Lack of suspension travel; inconsistent steering	★★★★★
Audi R8 V8	201 F	'07-'15	8/4163	424/7900	317/4500	1560kg	276	4.6	4.1	9.9	188	+ A true 911 alternative - Exclusivity comes at a price	★★★★★
Bentley Continental GT	244 F	£156,700	12/5950	626/5000	664/1350	2169kg	293	3.7	-	-	207	+ Astonishing agility for such a big, heavy car - Thirst	★★★★★
Bentley Continental GT V8	178 F	'12-'17	8/3993	500/6000	487/1700	2220kg	229	4.8	-	-	188	+ A proper driver's Bentley with decent economy - W12 suddenly seems pointless	★★★★★
Bentley Continental GT V8 S	204 F	'13-'17	8/3993	521/6000	502/1700	2220kg	238	4.5	-	-	192	+ An even better driver's Bentley - Vast weight makes its presence felt in harder driving	★★★★★
Bentley Continental GT	152 D	'03-'17	12/5998	567/6000	516/1700	2245kg	257	4.5	-	-	198	+ Near 200mph in utter comfort - Weight; W12's thirst	★★★★★
Bentley Continental GT Speed	230 D	'12-'17	12/5998	633/5900	620/2000	2245kg	286	4.1	-	-	206	+ Desirability meets exclusivity and performance - We'd still have the V8	★★★★★
Bentley Continental Supersports	234 D	'17	12/5998	700/6000	750/2050	2205kg	323	3.5	-	-	209	+ More progressive chassis balance than the M4 - Styling and soundtrack far from descreet	★★★★★
Bentley Continental GT3-R	203 D	'14-'17	8/3993	572/6000	518/1700	2120kg	274	3.8	-	-	170	+ The best-handling Continental of its generation - Expensive; it still weighs 2120kg	★★★★★
BMW 1-series M Coupe	188 F	'11-'12	6/2979	335/5900	369/1500	1495kg	228	4.9	-	-	155	+ Character, turbo pace and great looks - Came and went too quick	★★★★★
BMW M240i Coupe	229 D	£35,865	6/2998	335/6800	369/1520	1470kg	232	4.8	-	-	155	+ Adjustable and plenty of fun - Lacks finesse and precision	★★★★★
BMW M235i Coupe	225 F	'14-'16	6/2979	321/5800	332/1300	1455kg	224	5.0	5.2	12.7	155	+ Powertrain, chassis, looks, size - Limited-slip diff is an option, not standard	★★★★★
BMW M2	243 F	'16-'18	6/2979	365/6500	369/1450	1495kg	248	4.5	4.9	10.8	155	+ More progressive chassis balance than the M4 - Feels unsettled on rough tarmac	★★★★★
BMW M2 Competition	252 F	£49,805	6/2979	404/5250	406/2350	1550kg	265	4.4	-	-	155	+ A more capable and involving M2 - More expensive and heavier, too	★★★★★
BMW 440i M Sport Coupe	233 F	£43,430	6/2998	321/5500	332/1380	1540kg	212	5.2	-	-	155	+ Almost-too-powerful engine - Doesn't feel special enough to drive	★★★★★
BMW M4	218 F	£60,985	6/2979	425/5500	406/1850	1560kg	277	4.3	-	-	155	+ Ferociously fast - A handful on less-than-perfect or less-than-bone-dry roads	★★★★★
BMW M4 Competition Package	244 F	£63,985	6/2979	444/7000	406/1850	1560kg	289	4.2	4.4	9.2	155	+ The car the M4 always should have been - Not so good on 20-inch wheels	★★★★★
BMW M4 CS	254 F	£91,050	6/2979	454/6250	442/4000	1580kg	292	3.9	-	-	174	+ A further-honed M4 - It ain't cheap	★★★★★
BMW M4 GTS	237 F	'16	6/2979	493/6250	442/4000	1510kg	332	3.8	3.7	8.0	190	+ Vast improvement on lesser M4s - So it should be, given its price	★★★★★
BMW M3 (E92)	196 F	'07-'13	8/3999	414/8300	295/3900	1580kg	266	4.8	4.3	10.3	155	+ Fends off all of its rivals... except the cheaper 1-series M Coupe	★★★★★
BMW M3 GTS (E92)	232 F	'10-'11	8/4361	444/8300	324/3750	1530kg	295	4.4	-	-	190	+ Highly exclusive; one of the most focused M-cars ever - Good luck trying to find one	★★★★★
BMW M3 (E46)	066 F	'00-'07	6/3246	338/7900	269/5000	1495kg	230	5.2	5.1	12.3	155	+ One of the best BMWs ever. Runner-up in eCoty 2001 - Slightly artificial steering feel	★★★★★
BMW M3 CS (E46)	219 F	'05-'07	6/3246	338/7900	269/5000	1495kg	230	5.2	-	-	155	+ CSL dynamics without CSL price - Looks like the standard car	★★★★★
BMW M3 CSL (E46)	200 F	'03-'04	6/3246	355/7900	273/4900	1385kg	260	4.9	5.3	12.0	155	+ Still superb - Changes from the automated single-clutch 'box are... a... bit... sluggish	★★★★★
BMW M3 Evolution (E36)	148 F	'96-'98	6/3201	317/7400	258/3250	1515kg	215	5.5	5.4	12.8	158	+ Performance, image - Never quite as good as the E30	★★★★★
BMW M3 (E30)	165 F	'89-'90	4/2302	212/6750	170/4600	1165kg	185	6.7	6.7	17.8	147	+ The best M-car ever - Prices have got out of hand	★★★★★
BMW Z4 M Coupe	097 F	'06-'09	6/3246	338/7900	269/4900	1420kg	242	5.0	-	-	155	+ A real driver's car - You've got to be prepared to get stuck in	★★★★★
BMW M Coupe	005 F	'98-'03	6/3246	321/7400	261/4900	1375kg	237	5.3	-	-	155	+ Quick and characterful - Lacks finesse	★★★★★
BMW M6 (F13)	218 F	£95,580	8/4395	552/6000	501/1500	1850kg	303	4.2	-	-	155	+ Mighty ability, pace, technology - You'll want the Competition Package upgrade, too	★★★★★
BMW M6 (E63)	106 F	'05-'10	10/4999	500/7750	384/6100	1635kg	311	4.2	4.8	10.0	155	+ Awesome GT, awesome sports car - SMG gearbox now off the pace	★★★★★
BMW i8	210 F	£112,735	3/1499	369/5800	420/3700	1535kg	244	4.4	-	-	155	+ Brilliantly executed concept; sci-fi looks - Safe dynamic set-up	★★★★★
Chevrolet Camaro Z/28	220 F	'14-'16	8/7008	505/6100	481/4800	1732kg	296	4.2	-	-	175	+ Scalpel-sharp engine, great chassis (really) - Feels very stiff on UK roads	★★★★★
Chevrolet Corvette Stingray (C7)	197 F	£63,295	8/6162	460/6000	465/4600	1496kg	312	4.2	4.4	9.4	180	+ Performance, chassis balance, supple ride - Body control could be better	★★★★★
Chevrolet Corvette Z06 (C7)	227 F	£90,445	8/6162	650/6000	650/3600	1598kg	413	3.7	-	-	196	+ Mind-boggling raw speed; surprisingly sophisticated - Edgy when really pushed	★★★★★
Ford Mustang 2.3 EcoBoost	222 D	£33,645	4/2261	313/5500	319/3000	1655kg	192	5.8	-	-	155	+ Ninety per cent as good as the V8 - Missing ten per cent is what makes the Mustang	★★★★★
Ford Mustang 5.0 V8 GT	251 F	£41,745	8/4951	444/7000	390/4600	1668kg	270	4.6	-	-	155	+ 2018MY version gets improved dynamics - Still some way off Europe's finest	★★★★★
Honda Integra Type R (DC2)	200 F	'96-'00	4/1797	187/8000	131/7300	1101kg	173	6.7	6.2	17.9	145	+ Arguably the greatest front-drive car ever - Too raw for some	★★★★★
Infiniti Q60S Sport 3.0T	228 D	£43,535	6/2997	400/6400	350/1600	1799kg	226	5.0	-	-	155	+ Impressive tech - Electronic systems reduce feeling of involvement	★★★★★
Jaguar F-type Coupe 2.0 i4 300PS	239 D	£50,795	4/1997	296/5500	295/1500	1525kg	197	5.7	-	-	155	+ Turbo four-cylinder engine sounds good - But it lacks top-end verve	★★★★★
Jaguar F-type Coupe 3.0 V6 340PS	204 D	£54,065	6/2995	335/6500	332/3500	1567kg	217	5.7	-	-	161	+ Drop-dead looks, brilliant chassis, desirability - Engine lacks top-end fight	★★★★★
Jaguar F-type Coupe 3.0 V6 380PS	211 D	£64,815	6/2995	375/6500	339/3500	1584kg	241	5.5	-	-	171	+ Exquisite style, more rewarding (and affordable) than roadster - Scrappy on the limit	★★★★★
Jaguar F-type R Coupe AWD	227 D	£92,660	8/5000	542/6500	501/3500	1730kg	318	4.1	3.5	8.1	186	+ Better than the rear-drive R in the wet - Less involving in the dry	★★★★★
Jaguar F-type SVR Coupe	224 D	£112,680	8/5000	567/6500	516/3500	1705kg	338	3.7	-	-	200	+ A marginally better drive than the AWD R - Not by enough to justify the extra outlay	★★★★★
Jaguar F-type R Coupe (RWD)	218 F	'14-'17	8/5000	542/6500	501/3500	1650kg	334	4.2	-	-	186	+ Looks, presence, performance, soundtrack - Bumpy and boistrous	★★★★★
Jaguar XKR	168 F	'09-'14	8/5000	503/6000	461/2500	1753kg	292	4.8	-	-	155	+ Fast and incredibly rewarding Jag - The kids will have to stay at home	★★★★★
Jaguar XKR-S	168 F	'11-'14	8/5000	542/6000	502/2500	1753kg	314	4.4	-	-	186	+ Faster and wilder than regular XKR - The F-type R Coupe	★★★★★
Lexus RCF	226 F	£61,310	8/4969	470/6400	391/4800	1765kg	271	4.5	-	-	168	+ Great looks, noise, sense of occasion - Too heavy to be truly exciting	★★★★★
Lexus LC 500h	241 D	£76,595	6/3456	354	-	1985kg	181	5.0	-	-	168	+ Excellent comfort and refinement; fine chassis - Hybrid system hurts the fun factor	★★★★★
Lexus LC 500	231 D	£76,595	8/4969	470/7100	398/4800	1935kg	247	4.7	-	-	168	+ Glorious engine, rewarding chassis for a GT car - Numb steering, messy ergonomics	★★★★★
Lister Thunder	247 D	£139,950	8/5000	666/6000	720/5940	1650kg	410	3.2	-	-	208	+ Deceptively fast reworked F-type - Never feels as ferocious as the figures suggest	★★★★★
Lotus Exige S (V6)	209 F	'12-'15	6/3456	345/7000	295/4500	1176kg	298	3.8	-	-	170	+ Breathtaking road-racer; our joint 2012 Car of the Year - Gearshift not the sweetest	★★★★★
Lotus Exige Sport 350	221 F	£55,900	6/3456	345/7000	295/4500	1125kg	312	3.9	-	-	170	+ Further honed Exige, with vastly improved gearshift - Still not easy to get into and out of	★★★★★
Lotus Exige Sport 380	231 F	'16-'18	6/3456	375/6700	302/5000	1101kg	343	3.7	-	-	178	+ Intense, absorbing and brilliantly capable - Perhaps not an everyday car	★★★★★
Lotus Exige Cup 380	240 D	'17	6/3456	375/6700	302/5000	1105kg	345	3.6	-	-	175	+ An absolute riot; feels worth the £83k (new) price tag - Limited build numbers	★★★★★
Lotus Exige Sport 410	252 F	£85,600	6/3456	410/7000	310/3500	1108kg	376	3.4	-	-	180	+ A first-rate swansong for this generation of Exige - Some may balk at the price	★★★★★
Lotus Exige Cup 430	253 F	£99,800	6/3456	430/7000	325/2600	1093kg	400	3.3	-	-	180	+ The ultimate Exige - Isn't cheap	★★★★★
Lotus Exige S (S2)	253 F	'06-'11	4/1796	218/7800	158/5500	930kg	238	4.3	-	-	148	+ Lightweight with a hefty punch - Uninspiring soundtrack	★★★★★
Lotus Exige (S1)	200 F	'00-'01	4/1796	192/7800	146/5000	780kg	247	4.6	-	-	136	+ Looks and goes like an Elise racer - A tad lacking in refinement	★★★★★
Lotus Evora	138 F	'09-'15	6/3456	276/6400	258/4700	1382kg	203	5.1	5.6	13.6	162	+ Sublime ride and handling. Our 2009 Car of the Year - The Evora S	★★★★★
Lotus Evora S	168 F	'10-'15	6/3456	345/7000	295/4500	1430kg	245	4.8	-	-	172	+ A faster and better Evora - But one which spars with the Porsche 911	★★★★★
Lotus Evora 400	216 F	£72,000	6/3456	400/7000	302/3500	1395kg	291	4.2	-	-	186	+ Evora excitement levels take a leap - Gearbox still not perfect; punchy pricing	★★★★★
Lotus Evora Sport 410	230 F	'17	6/3456	410/7000	310/350								

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MAKE & MODEL	ISSUE NO.	PRICE	ENGINE CYL/CC	BHP/RPM	LB FT/RPM	WEIGHT	BHP/TON	0-62MPH (CLAIMED)	0-60MPH (TESTED)	0-100MPH (TESTED)	MAX MPH	EVO RATING	
Mercedes-AMG GT S	216 F	£113,260	8/3982	515/6250	494/1800	1570kg	333	3.8	-	-	193	+ Fantastic chassis, huge grip - Artificial steering feel; downshifts could be quicker	★★★★★
Mercedes-AMG GT C	241 D	£129,260	8/3982	549/5750	501/1900	1625kg	343	3.7	-	-	196	+ As good at being a GT as it is a sports coupe - Difficult to drive fast and smoothly	★★★★★
Nissan 370Z	204 F	£29,180	6/3696	323/7000	268/5200	1496kg	219	5.3	-	-	155	+ Quicker, leaner, keener than 350Z - Not quite a Cayman-killer	★★★★☆
Nissan 370Z Nismo	209 F	£39,375	6/3696	339/7400	274/5200	1496kg	230	5.2	-	-	155	+ Sharper looks, improved ride, extra thrills - Engine lacks sparkle	★★★★★
Nissan 350Z	107 F	'03-'09	6/3498	309/6800	264/4800	1532kg	205	5.6	5.5	13.0	155	+ Huge fun, and great value too - Muscle-car vibe not for everyone	★★★★☆
Nissan GT-R (2017MY)	242 F	£82,525	6/3799	562/6800	470/3600	1752kg	326	2.7	-	-	196	+ More refinement, much improved interior, still fast - Feels a touch less alert	★★★★★
Nissan GT-R Track Edition (2017MY)	229 D	£94,525	6/3799	562/6800	470/3600	1745kg	327	2.7	-	-	196	+ GT-R regains its sharpness - Getting pricey these days	★★★★★
Nissan GT-R Nismo (2017MY)	232 F	£151,525	6/3799	592/6800	481/3600	1725kg	349	2.7	-	-	196	+ Incredibly focused - Still too firm to be at its best on UK roads	★★★★★
Nissan GT-R (2012MY-2016MY)	238 F	'12-'16	6/3799	542/6400	466/3200	1740kg	316	2.7	3.2	7.5	196	+ Quicker and better than before - Stopping your Porsche-owning friends calling it a Datsun	★★★★★
Nissan GT-R Track Edition (2017MY)	229 D	£93,875	6/3799	562/6800	470/3600	1745kg	327	2.7	-	-	196	+ GT-R regains its sharpness - Getting pricey these days	★★★★★
Nissan GT-R Nismo (2014MY)	205 F	'14-'16	6/3799	592/6800	481/3200	1720kg	350	2.6	-	-	196	+ Manages to make regular GT-R feel imprecise - Compromised by super-firm suspension	★★★★★
Nissan GT-R (2010MY)	252 F	'10-'12	6/3799	523/6400	451/3200	1740kg	305	3.0	-	-	194	+ More powerful version of the original - But they're not worlds apart to drive	★★★★★
Nissan GT-R (2008MY)	125 F	'08-'10	6/3799	473/6400	434/3200	1740kg	276	3.8	-	-	193	+ Our 2008 Car of the Year - You won't see 20mpg often	★★★★★
Nissan Skyline GT-R (R34)	248 F	'99-'02	6/2568	276/7000	289/4400	1560kg	180	4.8	4.7	12.5	165	+ Big, brutal, and great fun - Needs more than the standard 276bhp	★★★★★
Nissan Skyline GT-R (R33)	196 F	'97-'99	6/2568	276/6800	271/4400	1540kg	182	4.9	5.4	14.3	155	+ Early proof that Japanese high-tech could work (superbly) - Limited supply	★★★★★
Peugeot RCZR	209 F	'14-'15	4/1598	266/6000	243/1900	1280kg	211	5.9	-	-	155	+ Rewarding and highly effective when fully lit - Dated cabin, steering lacks feel	★★★★★
Porsche 718 Cayman	229 D	£42,897	4/1988	296/6500	280/1950	1335kg	225	5.1	-	-	170	+ Chassis remains a dream - Sounds like a Toyota GT86	★★★★☆
Porsche 718 Cayman S	249 F	£51,853	4/2497	345/6500	310/1900	1355kg	259	4.6	3.9	9.3	177	+ Faster and better to drive than ever - Bring earplugs	★★★★★
Porsche 718 Cayman GTS	254 F	£59,866	4/2497	360/6500	310/1900	1375kg	266	4.6	-	-	180	+ Cracking package of upgrades - Flat-four soundtrack still disappoints	★★★★★
Porsche Cayman S (981)	202 F	'13-'16	6/3436	321/7400	273/4500	1320kg	247	5.0	4.5	10.5	175	+ The Cayman comes of age - Erm...	★★★★★
Porsche Cayman GTS (981)	219 F	'14-'16	6/3436	335/7400	280/4750	1345kg	253	4.9	-	-	177	+ Tweaks improve an already sublime package - Slightly 'aftermarket' looks	★★★★★
Porsche Cayman GT4 (981)	221 F	'15-'16	6/3800	380/7400	310/4750	1340kg	288	4.4	-	-	183	+ evo Car of the Year 2015 (even though the 991 GT3 RS was there!) - Second-hand prices	★★★★★
Porsche Cayman S (987)	231 F	'06-'13	6/3436	316/7200	273/4750	1350kg	237	5.2	-	-	172	+ Still want that 911? - Yeah, us too	★★★★★
Porsche Cayman R (987)	158 F	'11-'13	6/3436	325/7400	273/4750	1295kg	255	5.0	-	-	175	+ Total handling excellence - Styling additions not to all tastes	★★★★★
Porsche 911 Carrera (991.2)	218 F	£77,891	6/2981	365/6500	332/1700	1430kg	259	4.6	-	-	183	+ Forced induction hasn't ruined the Carrera - Purists won't be happy	★★★★★
Porsche 911 Carrera T (991.2)	245 F	£85,576	6/2981	365/6500	332/1700	1425kg	260	4.5	-	-	182	+ Lightweight windows, no rear seats, an LSD... - Only 5kg lighter than a basic Carrera	★★★★☆
Porsche 911 Carrera S (991.2)	217 F	£87,335	6/2981	414/6500	369/1700	1440kg	292	4.3	-	-	191	+ Blindingly fast - You'll want the sports exhaust	★★★★★
Porsche 911 Carrera GTS (991.2)	238 F	£95,795	6/2981	444/6500	406/2150	1450kg	311	4.1	-	-	193	+ Everything a 911 Carrera should be - Costs nearly £20k more than a basic Carrera	★★★★★
Porsche 911 Carrera 4 GTS (991.2)	250 F	£100,781	6/2981	444/6500	406/2150	1495kg	302	4.0	3.1	7.5	192	+ Arguably the most complete sports coupe you can buy - Turbo'd engine lacks character	★★★★★
Porsche 911 Carrera S (991.1)	201 F	'12-'15	6/3800	394/7400	324/5600	1415kg	283	4.5	4.3	9.5	188	+ A Carrera with supercar pace - Electric steering robs it of some tactility	★★★★★
Porsche 911 Carrera 4 GTS (991.1)	208 D	'15	6/3800	424/7500	324/5750	1470kg	293	4.4	-	-	189	+ The highlight of the 991.1 Carrera line-up - Pricey for a Carrera	★★★★★
Porsche 911 Carrera S (997.2)	121 F	'08-'11	6/3800	380/6500	310/4400	1425kg	271	4.7	-	-	188	+ Poise, precision, blinding pace - Feels a bit clinical	★★★★★
Porsche 911 Carrera S (997.1)	249 F	'04-'08	6/3824	350/6600	295/4600	1420kg	246	4.6	-	-	182	+ evo Car of the Year 2004 - Do your homework on potential engine issues	★★★★★
Porsche 911 Carrera (996, 3.4)	249 F	'98-'01	6/3387	300/6800	258/4600	1320kg	231	5.2	-	-	174	+ evo Car of the Year 1998; beautifully polished - Some like a bit of rough	★★★★★
Radical RXC Turbo 500R	227 D	'16	6/3496	600/6700	465/4200	1070kg*	561	2.8	-	-	185	+ Immense accessible performance - Fit, finish and detailing lack finesse	★★★★★
Rolls-Royce Wraith	205 D	£240,768	12/6592	624/5600	590/1500	2360kg	260	4.6	-	-	155	+ Refinement, chassis, drivetrain - Shared componentry lets cabin down	★★★★★
Subaru BRZ	248 F	£22,495	4/1998	197/7000	151/6400	1230kg	163	7.6	-	-	140	+ Fine chassis, great steering - Weak engine, not the slide-happy car they promised	★★★★☆
Toyota GT86	253 F	£26,410	4/1998	197/7000	151/6400	1240kg	161	7.6	6.9	16.5	140	+ More fun than its Subaru BRZ cousin - Same lack of torque, poor interior quality	★★★★☆
Toyota MR2 (Mk1)	237 F	'84-'89	4/1587	122/6600	105/5000	977kg	127	8.2	-	-	124	+ Mid-engined fun comes no more affordable - Finding a good one will take time	★★★★☆
TVR Sagaris	097 F	'05-'07	6/3996	406/7500	349/5000	1078kg	383	3.7	-	-	185	+ Looks outrageous - 406bhp feels a touch optimistic	★★★★★
TVR Tuscan S (Mk2)	076 F	'05-'07	6/3996	400/7000	315/5250	1100kg	369	4.0	-	-	185	+ Possibly TVR's best ever car - Aerodynamic 'enhancements'	★★★★★
TVR Cerbera Speed Six	004 F	'98-'04	6/3996	350/6800	330/5000	1130kg	315	4.4	5.0	11.4	160+	+ Accomplished and desirable - When it's running	★★★★★
Volkswagen Scirocco GT 2.0 TSI / GTS	155 F	£26,050	4/1984	217/4500	258/1500	1369kg	158	6.5	-	-	153	+ Golf GTI price and performance - Interior lacks flair	★★★★☆
Volkswagen Scirocco R	200 D	£30,690	4/1984	276/6000	258/2500	1426kg	187	5.7	-	-	155	+ Great engine, grown-up dynamics - Perhaps a little too grown-up for some	★★★★☆

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BEST OF THE REST

The **Ferrari 488 Pista** (left) is an astonishing successor to the hardcore Speciale. The **Lamborghini Huracán Performante** counters with a rip-roaring naturally aspirated V10. The Lambo's relative, the **Audi R8 V10**, is a corking entry-level supercar, and the **Porsche 911 GT3 RS** is simply a superb road and track machine.

Aston Martin DBS Superleggera	254 F	£225,000	12/5204	715/6500	664/1800	1770kg	410	3.4	-	-	211	+ Broad spread of talents - It's not really 'Superlight'	★★★★☆
Aston Martin Vanquish S (Mk2)	235 F	'17-'18	12/5935	595/7000	465/5500	1739kg	348	3.5	3.9	8.3	201	+ Noise, poise, drama and charm - Not as rounded as the DB11	★★★★★
Aston Martin Vanquish S (Mk1)	110 F	'05-'07	12/5935	520/7000	425/5800	1875kg	282	4.8	4.9	10.1	200	+ Vanquish joins the supercar greats - A tad intimidating at the limit	★★★★★
Aston Martin One-77	179 F	'10-'12	12/7312	750/6000	553/7600	1740kg	438	3.7	-	-	220+	+ The engine, the looks, the drama - Gearbox hates manoeuvring; only 77 were made	★★★★★
Audi R8 V10 RWS	254 F	£112,450	10/5204	533/7800	398/6500	1590kg	341	3.7	-	-	199	+ The first rear-wheel-drive Audi for 40 years - Drives largely like its 4WD counterpart	★★★★★
Audi R8 V10	234 F	£126,200	10/5204	533/7800	398/6500	1640kg	330	3.5	-	-	198	+ All the R8 you really need - Some may hanker after a manual gearbox	★★★★★
Audi R8 Spyder V10	239 F	£132,020	10/5204	533/7800	398/6500	1720kg	315	3.6	3.2	7.2	197	+ Open top even better for enjoying that V10 - Being mistaken for a poser; cramped seating	★★★★☆
Audi R8 V10 Plus	250 F	£141,200	10/5204	602/8250	413/6500	1580kg	387	3.2	2.9	6.3	205	+ Timeless drivetrain, huge performance - Some may find it ordinary at steady speeds	★★★★★
Audi R8 V10	254 F	'09-'15	10/5204	518/8000	391/6500	1620kg	325	4.1	3.9	8.4	194	+ Real supercar feel - The V8 is cheaper, and still superb	★★★★★
Audi R8 V10 Plus	190 F	'13-'15	10/5204	542/8000	398/6500	1570kg	351	3.8	-	-	198	+ An R8 fit to take on the 458 and 12C - Firm ride may be too much for some	★★★★★
Audi R8 GT	169 F	'10-'12	10/5204	552/8000	398/6500	1520kg	369	3.6	-	-	199	+ Everything we love about the R8 - Not as hardcore as we wanted	★★★★★
Audi R8 LMX	208 F	'15	10/5204	562/8000	398/6500	1595kg	358	3.4	-	-	198	+ More of everything that makes the R8 great - S-tronic transmission not perfect	★★★★★
BMW M1	110 F	'78-'81	6/3500	277/6500	239/5000	1303kg	216	5.9	-	-	161	+ Early supercar icon - A bit under-endowed these days	★★★★☆
Bugatti Chiron	244 F	c£2.5m	16/7993	1479/6700	1180/2000	1995kg	753	2.5	-	-	261	+ Backs up the numbers with feel and emotion - Limited top speed(!)	★★★★★
Bugatti Veyron 16.4	134 F	'05-'11	16/7993	987/6000	922/2200	1888kg	531	2.5	2.8	5.8	253	+ Superbly engineered four-wheel-drive quad-turbo rocket - Er, lacks luggage space?	★★★★★
Bugatti Veyron 16.4 Super Sport	151 F	'10-'11	16/7993	1183/6400	1106/3000	1838kg	654	2.5	-	-	258	+ Was once the world's fastest supercar - Limited to 258mph for us mere mortals	★★★★★
Bugatti EB110	078 F	'91-'95	12/3500	552/8000	451/3750	1618kg	347	3.6	-	-	213	+ Superbly engineered four-wheel-drive quad-turbo rocket - It just fizzled out	★★★★★
Chevrolet Corvette ZR1	133 F	'09-'13	8/6162	638/6500	604/3800	1528kg	424	3.4	3.8	7.6	205	+ Huge pace and character - Take plenty of brave pills if there's rain	★★★★☆
Ferrari 488 GTB	228 F	£183,984	8/3902	661/6500	561/3000	1475kg	455	3.0	-	-	205+	+ Staggeringly capable - Lacks a little of the 458's heart and excitement	★★★★★
Ferrari 488 Pista	251 F	£253,715	8/3902	710/8000	568/3000	1385kg	521	2.9	-	-	211+	+ Ferrari at the very top of its game - Can feel like it's being held prisoner on the road	★★★★★
Ferrari 488 Spider	216 D	£204,411	8/3902	661/6500	561/3000	1525kg	440	3.0	-	-	203+	+ All the usual 488 thrills, but with the wind in your hair - See left	★★★★★
Ferrari 458 Italia	222 F	'09-'15	8/4497	562/9000	398/6000	1485kg	384	3.4	3.2	6.8	202+	+ An astounding achievement - Paddleshift only	★★★★★
Ferrari 458 Speciale	251 F	'13-'15	8/4497	597/9000	398/6000	1395kg	435	3.0	-	-	202+	+ evo Car of the Year 2014 - If you don't own a regular 458, nothing	★★★★★
Ferrari F430	254 F	'04-'10	8/4308	483/8500	343/5250	1449kg	339	4.0	-	-	196+	+ Just brilliant - Didn't you read the plus point?	★★★★★
Ferrari 430 Scuderia	251 F	'07-'10	8/4308	503/8500	347/5250	1350kg	378	3.6	3.5	7.7	198	+ Successful F1 technology transplant - Likes to shout about it	★★★★★
Ferrari 360 Modena	163 F	'99-'04	8/3586	394/8500	275/4750	1390kg	288	4.5	-	-	183+	+ Worthy successor to 355 - Not quite as involving as it should be	★★★★★
Ferrari 360 Challenge Stradale</													

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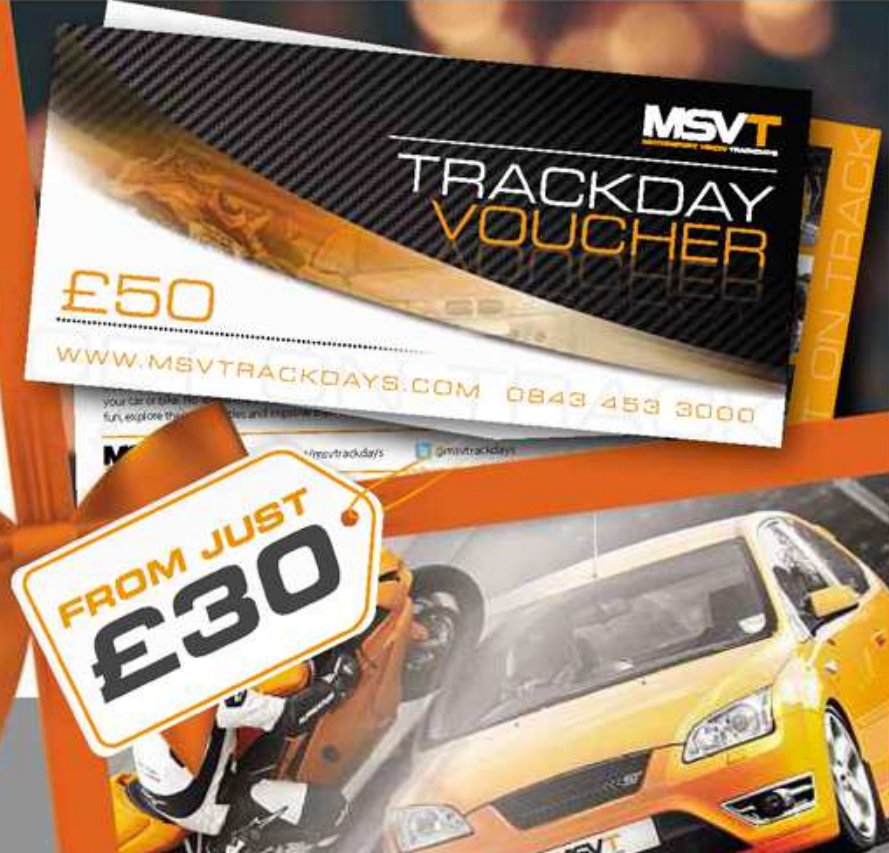
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MAKE & MODEL	ISSUE NO.	PRICE	ENGINE CYL/CC	BHP/RPM	LB FT/RPM	WEIGHT	BHP/TON	0-62MPH (CLAIMED)	0-60MPH (TESTED)	0-100MPH (TESTED)	MAX MPH	EVO RATING	
Ferrari F12tdf	230 F	'17	12/6262	769/8500	520/6250	1520kg	514	2.9	-	-	211+	+ Alarming fast - Doesn't flow like a 458 Speciale	★★★★★
Ferrari 599 GTB Fiorano	101 F	'06-'12	12/5999	611/7600	448/5600	1690kg	368	3.7	3.5	7.4	205	+ evo Car of the Year 2006 - Banks are getting harder to rob	★★★★★
Ferrari 599 GTO	161 F	'11-'12	12/5999	661/8250	457/6500	1605kg	418	3.4	-	-	208+	+ One of the truly great Ferraris - Erm, the air con isn't very good	★★★★★
Ferrari 575M Fiorano Handling Pack	200 F	'02-'06	12/5748	508/7250	434/5250	1688kg	298	3.7	4.2	9.6	205+	+ Fiorano pack makes 575 truly great - It should have been standard	★★★★★
Ferrari 550 Maranello	169 F	'96-'02	12/5474	478/7000	420/5000	1690kg	287	4.4	-	-	199	+ Everything - Nothing	★★★★★
Ferrari GTC4 Lusso T	246 D	£200,165	8/3855	602/7500	560/3000	1865kg	328	3.5	-	-	199	+ Effortless, comfortable GT - Misses the richer soundtrack of the V12	★★★★★
Ferrari GTC4 Lusso	225 D	£230,430	12/6262	680/8000	514/5750	1920kg	360	3.4	-	-	208	+ Rear-wheel steering increases agility - Not as engaging as other Ferraris	★★★★★
Ferrari FF	194 F	'11-'15	12/6262	651/8000	504/6000	1880kg	347	3.7	-	-	208	+ Four seats and 4WD, but a proper Ferrari - Looks divide opinion	★★★★★
Ferrari 612 Scaglietti	090 F	'04-'11	12/5748	533/7250	434/5250	1875kg	289	4.0	4.3	9.8	199	+ Awesomely capable grand tourer - See above	★★★★★
Ferrari LaFerrari	203 F	'13-'15	12/6262	950/9000	664/6750	1574kg	613	3.0	-	-	217+	+ Perhaps the greatest Ferrari ever - Brakes lack a touch of precision on track	★★★★★
Ferrari Enzo	203 F	'02-'04	12/5999	651/7800	485/5500	1365kg	485	3.7	3.5	6.7	217+	+ Intoxicating, exploitable - Cabin detailing falls short of a Zonda or F1's	★★★★★
Ferrari F50	186 F	'95-'97	12/4699	513/8500	347/6500	1230kg*	424	3.9	-	-	202	+ A better driver's Ferrari than the 288, F40 or Enzo - Not better looking, though	★★★★★
Ferrari F40	222 F	'87-'92	8/2936	471/7000	426/4000	1100kg*	437	4.1	-	-	201	+ Brutally fast - It's in the dictionary under 'turbo lag'	★★★★★
Ford GT	253 F	\$450,000	6/3497	647/6250	550/5900	1385kg	475	2.8	-	-	216	+ Everything it does on track - Too many of the things it does on the road	★★★★★
Ford GT	200 F	'04-'06	8/5409	550/6500	500/3750	1583kg	353	3.9	-	-	205	+ Our 2005 Car of the Year - Don't scalp yourself getting in	★★★★★
Honda NSX	246 F	£144,765	6/3493	573	476/2000	1776kg	328	2.9	3.0	6.9	191	+ Blisteringly quick and brilliantly engineered - Limited range on a full tank	★★★★★
Honda NSX (NA2)	188 F	'97-'05	6/3179	276/7300	224/5300	1410kg	196	5.7	-	-	168	+ The original useable supercar - 276bhp sounds a bit weedy today	★★★★★
Honda NSX-R (NA2)	100 F	'02-'03	6/3179	276/7300	224/5300	1270kg	221	4.4	-	-	168	+ evo Car of the Year 2002 - Hard to find in the UK	★★★★★
Jaguar XJ220	157 F	'92-'94	6/3498	542/7200	475/4500	1470kg	375	3.7	-	-	213	+ Britain's greatest supercar... ..until McLaren built the F1	★★★★★
Koenigsegg One:1	202 F	£2.0m	8/5065	1341/7500	1011/6000	1360kg	1002	2.9	-	-	273	+ One of the most powerful cars we've tested - It's sold out. We couldn't afford one anyway	★★★★★
Koenigsegg Agera R	180 F	'11-'14	8/5032	1124/7100	885/2700	1435kg	796	2.8	-	-	273	+ As fast and exciting as your body can handle - It's Veyron money	★★★★★
Koenigsegg CCXR Edition	118 F	'08-'10	8/4800	1004/7000	796/5600	1280kg*	797	2.9	-	-	250+	+ One of the world's fastest cars - Spiky power delivery	★★★★★
Lamborghini Huracán RWD	229 F	£155,400	10/5204	572/8000	397/6500	1389kg*	385	3.4	-	-	199	+ More seductive than the 4WD Huracán - Feels like there's more to come	★★★★★
Lamborghini Huracán	209 D	£186,760	10/5204	602/8250	413/6500	1422kg*	430	3.2	-	-	201+	+ Defies the numbers; incredible point-to-point pace - Takes work to find its sweet-spot	★★★★★
Lamborghini Huracán Performante	242 F	£215,000	10/5204	631/8000	442/6500	1382kg*	464	2.9	-	-	201+	+ The realisation of the Huracán's ever elusive potential - Kitchen-worktop carbonfibre	★★★★★
Lamborghini Huracán Performante Spyder	253 D	£238,000	10/5204	631/8000	442/6500	1507kg*	425	3.1	-	-	201+	+ As above, but even louder for the driver - Not for the shy and retiring	★★★★★
Lamborghini Gallardo LP560-4	180 D	'08-'13	10/5204	552/8000	398/6500	1410kg*	398	3.7	-	-	202	+ Still a missile from A to B - Feels a little dated next to some rivals	★★★★★
Lamborghini Gallardo LP550-2 Balboni	138 F	'09-'10	10/5204	542/8000	398/6500	1380kg*	399	3.9	-	-	199	+ Mad, rear-wheel-drive Lambo - Limited numbers	★★★★★
Lamborghini LP570-4 Superleggera	152 F	'10-'13	10/5204	562/8000	398/6500	1340kg*	426	3.4	3.5	-	202	+ Less weight and more power than original Superleggera - LP560-4 runs it very close	★★★★★
Lamborghini Gallardo	094 F	'03-'08	10/4961	513/8000	376/4250	1430kg*	364	4.0	4.3	9.4	196	+ On a full-bore start it spins all four wheels. Cool - Slightly clunky e-gear	★★★★★
Lamborghini Gallardo Superleggera	104 F	'07-'08	10/4961	522/8000	376/4250	1420kg*	373	3.8	-	-	196	+ Lighter, more agile - Grabby carbon brakes, clunky e-gear	★★★★★
Lamborghini Aventador	194 F	'11-'17	12/6498	690/8250	509/5500	1575kg*	445	2.9	-	-	217	+ Most important new Lambo since the Countach - Can feel a little clumsy	★★★★★
Lamborghini Aventador S	246 F	£271,146	12/6498	730/8400	509/5500	1575kg*	471	2.9	-	-	217	+ A more agile, more connected Aventador - Synthetic steering	★★★★★
Lamborghini Aventador S Roadster	251 D	£301,754	12/6498	730/8400	509/5500	1625kg*	456	3.0	-	-	217	+ As dynamic as the coupe - Fiddly and (very) expensive roof	★★★★★
Lamborghini Aventador SV	216 F	'15-'17	12/6498	740/8400	509/5500	1525kg*	493	2.8	-	-	217+	+ More exciting than the standard Aventador - ISR gearbox inconsistent	★★★★★
Lamborghini Aventador SVJ	254 F	£350,000	12/6498	759/8500	531/6750	1525kg*	506	2.8	-	-	218	+ A significant step on from the SV - Have we mentioned the gearbox?	★★★★★
Lamborghini Murciélago LP640	093 F	'06-'11	12/6496	631/8000	487/6000	1665kg*	385	3.8	-	-	211	+ Compelling old-school supercar - You'd better be on your toes	★★★★★
Lamborghini Murciélago LP670-4 SV	200 F	'09-'11	12/6496	661/8000	487/6500	1565kg*	429	3.3	3.2	7.3	212	+ A supercar in its truest, wildest sense - Be prepared for stares	★★★★★
Lamborghini Murciélago	089 D	'01-'06	12/6192	572/7500	479/5400	1650kg*	351	4.0	-	-	206	+ Gorgeous, capable and incredibly friendly - V12 feels stressed	★★★★★
Lamborghini Diablo VT 6.0	019 F	'00-'02	12/5992	543/7100	457/5500	1625kg*	343	3.9	-	-	208	+ Best-built, best-looking Diablo of all - People's perceptions	★★★★★
Lexus LFA/LFA Nürburgring	200 F	'10-'12	10/4805	552/8700	354/6800	1480kg	379	3.7	-	-	202	+ Absurd and compelling supercar - Badge and price don't quite match	★★★★★
Maserati MC12	079 F	'04-'05	12/5998	621/7500	481/5500	1445kg	437	3.8	-	-	205	+ Rarer than an Enzo - The Ferrari's better	★★★★★
McLaren 540C	250 F	£127,890	8/3799	533/7500	398/3500	1311kg*	413	3.5	3.2	6.4	199	+ An excellent junior supercar - The 570S is still better to drive	★★★★★
McLaren 570S	229 F	£149,000	8/3799	562/7500	443/5000	1440kg	397	3.2	-	-	204	+ A truly fun and engaging sports car - McLaren doesn't call it a supercar!	★★★★★
McLaren 570S Track Pack	254 F	£159,750	8/3799	562/7500	443/5000	1415kg	404	3.2	-	-	204	+ Feels like a 675LT that's been dialled down a couple of notches - Engine response lacks edge	★★★★★
McLaren 570S Spider	239 F	£164,750	8/3799	562/7500	443/5000	1498kg	381	3.2	-	-	204	+ Even more fun and engagement than hard-top 570S - Industrial engine note	★★★★★
McLaren 570GT	228 F	£157,000	8/3799	562/7500	443/5000	1495kg	382	3.4	-	-	204	+ Blurs the line between grand tourer and supercar brilliantly - 570S is more involving	★★★★★
McLaren 600LT	254 F	£185,500	8/3799	592/7500	457/5500	1356kg	444	2.9	-	-	204	+ McLaren's Sports Series at its purest - There's no glovebox	★★★★★
McLaren 570S	229 F	£149,000	8/3799	562/7500	443/5000	1440kg	397	3.2	-	-	204	+ A truly fun and engaging sports car - McLaren doesn't call it a supercar!	★★★★★
McLaren 720S	244 F	£218,020	8/3994	710/7250	568/5500	1283kg*	562	2.9	2.9	5.6	212	+ evo Car of the Year 2017 - Favours precision over emotion	★★★★★
McLaren 650S	196 F	'14-'17	8/3799	641/7250	500/6000	1428kg	456	3.0	-	-	207	+ Better brakes, balance and looks than 12C; more power too - Which all comes at a price	★★★★★
McLaren 675LT	248 F	'15-'17	8/3799	666/7100	516/5500	1328kg	510	2.9	-	-	205	+ Runner-up at eCoty 2015; asks questions of the P1 - Aventador price tag	★★★★★
McLaren 12C	254 F	'11-'14	8/3799	616/7500	442/3000	1434kg	435	3.3	-	-	207	+ Staggering performance, refinement - Engine noise can be grating	★★★★★
McLaren Senna	252 F	£750,000	8/3999	789/7250	590/5500	1198kg*	669	2.8	-	-	211	+ Astounding performance, stellar presence - Only 500 being made	★★★★★
McLaren P1	228 F	'13-'15	8/3799	903/7500	664/4000	1490kg	616	2.8	-	-	217	+ Freakish breadth of ability - At its mind-bending best on track	★★★★★
McLaren F1	228 F	'94-'98	12/6064	627/7500	479/4000	1138kg	560	3.2	-	-	240	+ Still the most single-minded supercar ever - There'll never be another	★★★★★
Mercedes-AMG GT R	253 F	£144,460	8/3982	577/6250	516/1900	1555kg	377	3.6	3.3	7.1	198	+ Fun and blisteringly fast; a true rival for the 911 GT3 - A touch showy, perhaps	★★★★★
Mercedes-Benz SLS AMG	159 F	'10-'15	8/6208	563/6800	479/4750	1620kg	335	3.9	4.1	8.4	197	+ Great engine and chassis (gullwing doors too!) - Slightly tardy gearbox	★★★★★
Mercedes-Benz SLS AMG Black Series	204 F	'13-'15	8/6208	622/7400	468/5500	1550kg	408	3.6	-	-	196	+ Stunning engine, superb body control - Be careful on less-than-smooth roads...	★★★★★
Mercedes-Benz SLR McLaren	228 F	'03-'07	8/5439	617/6500	575/3250	1693kg	370	3.8	-	-	208	+ Zonda-pace, 575-style drivability - Dreadful brake feel	★★★★★
Noble M600	186 F	£200,000	8/4439	650/6800	604/3800	1198kg*	551	3.5	3.8	7.7	225	+ Spiritual successor to the Ferrari F40 - It's a bit pricey	★★★★★
Pagani Huayra	185 F	£1m	12/5980	720/5800	737/2250	1350kg*	542	3.3	-	-	224	+ Our joint 2012 Car of the Year - Engine isn't as nape-prickling as the Zonda's	★★★★★
Pagani Zonda S 7.3	096 F	'02-'05	12/7291	555/5900	553/4050	1280kg*	441	3.7	-	-	220	+ evo Car of the Year 2001 (in earlier 7.0 form) - Values have gone up a fair bit since then	★★★★★
Pagani Zonda F	186 F	'05-'06	12/7291	602/6150	575/4000	1230kg*	497	3.6	-	-	214+	+ Everything an Italian supercar ought to be - Looks a bit blingy next to a Carrera GT	★★★★★
Pagani Zonda Cinque Roadster	147 D	'09-'10	12/7291	669/6200	575/4000	1210kg*	562	3.4	-	-	217+	+ The best Zonda ever - Doesn't come up in the classifieds often	★★★★★
Porsche 911 GT3 (991.2)	254 F	£111,802	6/3996	493/8250	339/6000	1413kg	355	3.9	-	-	198	+ Almost impossible to criticise - Not the easiest car to place an order for	★★★★★
Porsche 911 GT3 RS (991.2)	249 F	£141,346	6/3996	513/8250	347/6000	1430kg	364	3.2	-	-	193	+ Even better than the 991.1 RS - See above	★★★★★
Porsche 911 GT2 RS (991.2)	253 F	£207,506	6/3800	690/7000	553/2500	1470kg	477	2.8	-	-	211	+ A proper, angry turbocharged Porsche - 'Limited availability'	★★★★★
Porsche 911 GT3 (991.1)	206 F	'13-'16	6/3799	468/8250	324/6250	1430kg	333	3.5	-	-	196	+ evo Car of the Year 2013 - PDK only	★★★★★
Porsche 911 GT3 RS (991.1)	223 F	'15-'16	6/3996	493/8250	339/6250	1420kg	353	3.3	3.0	7.1	193	+ Sensationally good to drive - The Cayman GT4 is even better	★★★★★
Porsche 911 R (991.1)	229 F	'16	6/3996	493/8250	339/6250	1370kg	366	3.8	-	-	200	+ evo Car of the Year 2016 - Limited availability	★★★★★
Porsche 911 GT3 (997.2)	182 F	'09-'11	6/3797	429/7600	317/6250	1395kg	312	4.1	4.2	9.2	194	+ Even better than the car it replaced - Give us a minute...	★★★★★
Porsche 911 GT3 RS (3.8, 997.2)	248 F	'10-'11	6/3797	444/7900	317/6750	1370kg	329	4.0	-	-	193	+ We named it our favourite car from the first 200 issues of evo - For people like us, nothing	★★★★★
Porsche 911 GT3 RS 4.0 (997.2)	187 F	'11-'12	6/3996	493/8250	339/5750	1360kg	368	3.8	-	-	193		



THE AUTOBAHN

The ultimate motorway needs a suitable set of wheels to match. The dream combination...

STILL 100 RUNS SHORT AND ONLY three wickets remaining. Canute had about as much chance when he tried to improve his beach holiday. Never mind, it's just nice to hear the sound of willow on leather and have the sun beating down. And even as a cry of 'catch!' goes up from the slips you find you're dozing off...

Bowling along the motorway something feels different. You move a thin piece of machined aluminium and indicate to overtake the lorry in front. The steering action has a delicious smoothness as you add a few degrees and move to the middle lane. Squeeze the throttle gently and an easy surge adds speed in tens, not ones.

Another glance in the mirror and a set of lights in the outside lane that weren't there a few seconds ago are about to flash past your left shoulder. You notice you're doing a relaxed 120mph as a nondescript BMW 5-series thunders past, gently headbutting a 155mph limiter. Welcome to the autobahn.

As its tail lights recede, you realise that two of the three lanes in front are now empty. The bottom-left segment of the steering wheel has a small rotary switch. A smooth quarter turn clockwise reminds you of an old workbench vice in its weightily slick action. It also moves the car from EB mode to Autobahn mode, reducing the ride height, adding some rake and raising the rear wing.

The temptation is to drop a few gears, but instead you hold it in seventh and enjoy the sensation of that W16 engine gathering momentum, swelling in stature with first two, then, at 3800rpm, four turbochargers forcing air into the 8-litre leviathan behind you and loading the driveshafts with more and more energy until... you hit an electronic wall. 236mph. No more. Unless...

You pull into the next service area, brim the tank and smile as the attendant says there's no need to pay. You also note the tyres, that clearly have 'Michelin

'THE POLTERGEIST OF ACCELERATIVE G PUSHES YOU INTO THE BUCKET SEAT AS THE WHITE LINES RAPIDLY BLUR'

Experimental' printed on the shallow sidewalls with Bibendum looking as smiley as ever. At the top of the slip road you stop, remove the second, small, silver key from its resting place between seat and sill and then activate the Chiron's Top Speed mode. The rear wing recedes, flaps in the front diffuser deploy and the ride height drops even more.

With the tyres still warm the Bugatti will take full throttle, even in first gear, and this time you give it everything. The poltergeist of accelerative G pushes you into the bucket seat as the Armco and white lines of the miraculously empty autobahn rapidly blur. Wind noise increases. The instinctive nervousness builds. You pass three miles a minute, then a mile every 15 seconds. The central speedo indicates 261mph. V-max.

But the Chiron isn't done yet: 280 as you flash under a bridge. Time and fuel must be running out by now: 290 as you rip past a junction. Even with 1479bhp it's now like wading through treacle and the wheels must surely be about to explode...

'And that's the 300, my dear old thing. Who would have thought it about half an hour ago? A splendid innings and a remarkable partnership for the last wicket...' You blink. There is gentle applause all around. Just a dream.



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