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STUART GALLAGHER

# Are electric cars on a charge?

**THE PACE OF PROGRESS FEELS GLACIAL, THE** entry point looks financially restrictive and the appetite is there but only in the form of curiosity. Similar to choosing the tasting menu because it's the only scenario in which you could ever consider eating steak and strawberry pie, taking the decision that your next performance car is going to have some form of electric propulsion is a bold one. Albeit one with fewer risks to your digestive system.

At one end of the spectrum there is Tesla. A decade ago we looked at its mildly restyled Elise and read its tech spec, made a noise that mixed recognition with a dose of cynicism and went back to marvelling at an 8-litre, 16-cylinder petrol engine that could propel the car to which it was anchored to 253mph, having reached 60mph in 2.8sec. Today, Tesla's P100D with Ludicrous mode will reach 60mph in 2.5sec. This from a four-door, five-seat Panamera rival. It will also travel up to 300 miles on a 'tank' of fully charged batteries, a similar range to that of an M5.

But for us it's not about range, it's about the performance advantages that electric motors, a battery pack and associated tech such as torque vectoring can offer. Not only in terms of straight-line performance but dynamically, too.

As impressive as the Honda NSX and Porsche 918 Spyder that star in this month's issue are against the clock – as is Rimac's Pikes Peak racer – it's how the engineers have harnessed this new energy source to benefit the overall performance of a car that really stands out. Driving evo's Fast Fleet BMW i8 I get to experience this shift in dynamic theory with every drive, and it's an eye-opener.

While naturally aspirated, high-revving internal combustion engines will still dominate evo's narrative for some time to come, the prospect of the next generation of performance cars looking to electricity to complement their traditional means of distilling the thrill of driving is as fascinating as the technology is complex.

@stuartg917

*'Tesla's P100D  
will reach 60mph  
in 2.5sec. This  
from a four-  
door, five-seat  
Panamera rival'*

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### NSX v 918

*More than a million pounds separates the latest Honda NSX and the Porsche 918 Spyder, but the hybrid newcomer is infused with the same spirit of brilliance as the hypercar hero. Some are therefore claiming that the NSX is a 'junior 918 Spyder'. We drive the Honda at length, take it to the test track and then compare it side-by-side with a 918*

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

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**CITROËN prefers TOTAL.** Model shown: New Grand C4 Picasso PureTech 130 S&S 6-speed manual Flair. OTR price £28,005 (incl. Lazuli Blue metallic paint at extra cost of £520). \*Optional at extra cost on New Grand C4 Picasso Feel, available as standard on New Grand C4 Picasso Flair.

# briefing

## CUBIC CAPACITY FIGHTS BACK

by ANTONY INGRAM

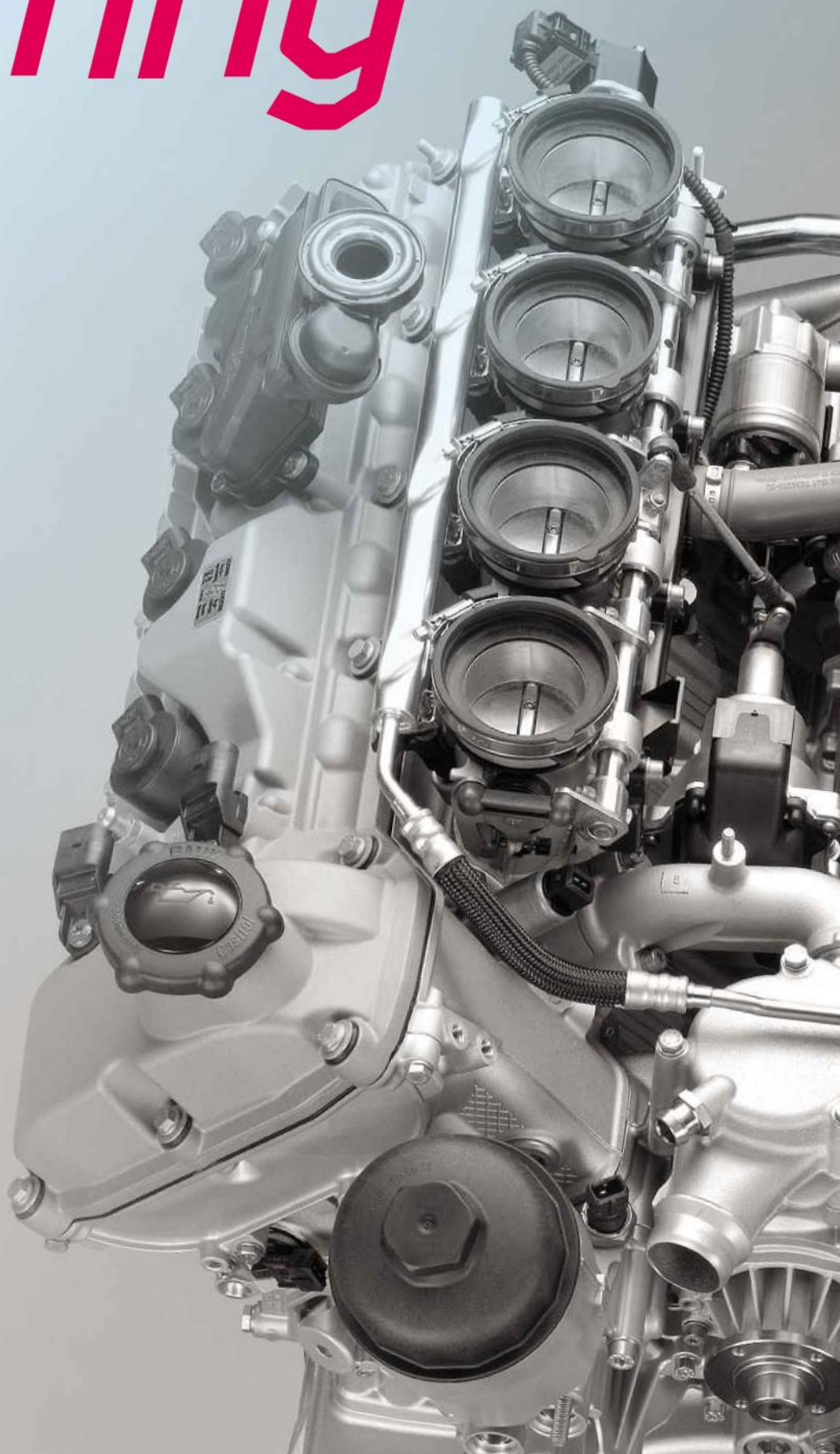
Forget downsizing (hurrah!), because the next trend in engine design could well be 'right-sizing'. Plus: all the latest news in the evo world, from Pagani to Dendrobium

**M**AKE SURE YOU'RE SITTING DOWN for this, but the Toyota Yaris is getting a bigger engine. Where once was a 1.33-litre four-cylinder unit, there will soon be a 'big-block' 1.5-litre four.

As a result, power climbs from 98bhp to 110bhp, torque from 92lb ft to 100lb ft, and the 0-62mph time drops from 11.8sec to 11sec dead. Exciting stuff.

But there's an important subtext to Toyota's strategy, and it's one we may start to see more frequently in the coming years with **evo** engines. The change won't just benefit performance and put some favourable numbers in the next Yaris brochure, but also improve driveability and real-world economy and emissions.

Economy and emissions have been two major factors in the trend for engine downsizing. The theory is sound: reduce engine size and you reduce fuel use; attach a turbocharger to the



1



engine and you make up for the deficit in performance created by choosing a smaller engine. But in practice, real-world economy hasn't increased nearly as quickly as it has on paper.

Testing procedures are mostly to blame, because straying even slightly from the ultra-low-speed and low-revs methods used in official tests – as you need to if you want to get along at any sort of acceptable rate on real roads – and you wake up the turbochargers on these tiny engines, introducing more air and more fuel to go with it. At which point they behave much like the bigger engines they've replaced.

But often, with less character. The turbocharged Porsche 718 Boxster and Cayman are prime examples: performance has improved, but then the old engines were hardly short of go and had crisper responses. They sounded wonderful, too, while the new 718 sounds like an old Beetle with a hole in the exhaust. Another thing: the lifetime economy of the 718 Cayman S we drove in issue 230 read under 20mpg. As *evo* road test editor Dan Prosser put it: 'Did we really lose that lovely naturally aspirated six for sub-20mpg?'

Mazda is one of very few manufacturers taking a different tack. The company has a policy of 'right-sizing' – essentially, using engines of appropriate size for the cars in which they'll be used. The engines are revvy, have good performance for their respective applications and deliver strong real-world economy. Toyota's new 1.5-litre follows a similar theme: a higher compression ratio, clever valve timing, and in Toyota's case, a water-cooled exhaust manifold that removes the need for a richer mixture at cruising speeds to keep combustion temperatures low.

It anticipates upcoming Real Driving Emissions requirements, conceived to prevent situations like Volkswagen's Dieselgate scandal ever occurring again. Cars will have to perform largely as well in real-world driving as they do in the lab, something that may rule out

downsized, turbocharged engines. Instead, we're likely to see more manufacturers right-sizing like Mazda, and others taking the hybrid path, improving performance while being able to harvest and deploy energy to the benefit of efficiency.

It's perhaps too early to say whether all manufacturers will start achieving their performance and efficiency targets with larger, more appropriately sized engines, but we won't shed too many tears if downsizing eventually dies.

“  
*Williams  
Advanced  
Engineering is  
doing the legwork  
on the electric  
powertrain*  
”

THERE WAS UNDOUBTEDLY method behind offering the current **Porsche 911 GT3** and GT3 RS solely with a seven-speed PDK transmission. But for many of us it was also madness, because while Porsche always claimed the GT3 models were about outright on-track performance, which PDK facilitated, the lack of a manual gearbox removed a vital layer of interaction that – as the later 911 R illustrated – could add so much to the experience.

With the next 911 GT3, being unveiled at the Geneva motor show in March, Porsche will atone for its sin. As confirmed to *evo* by a well-placed insider, the 991.2 version will be offered with a choice of a six-speed manual or the seven-speed PDK. For that, we have the 911 R (1) to thank, as its runaway success confirmed to Porsche that some buyers want the interaction and control of a manual

– and with the new GT3 getting a development of the naturally aspirated 4-litre flat-six currently found in the GT3 RS and R, what an engine they'll be interacting with.

It isn't all good news in the automotive world, however, as British firm **Zenos**, creator of the E10 sports car **(2)**, has entered administration. Cancelled overseas orders have left the firm short of funds and, as this issue of **evo** went to press, administrators Begbies Traynor had been called in to help find a buyer.

There's bad news for **Ford Mustang** owners, too. Not because the newly facelifted 2018 'Stang **(3)** looks a little like it's melted in the sun, but because the existing car has been awarded – if that's the right word – just two stars out of five in the latest round of Euro NCAP testing. A shortage of electronic safety aids is partly to blame (e.g. no pre-collision warning or braking systems), but testers found problems with the protection offered by the pony car's airbags, too.

Given those results, the Mustang probably doesn't need any more power, though those wishing to get closer to Beelzebub might be tempted by the 750bhp supercharged Shelby Super Snake. Faster still is the new Ford GT **(4)** – the company has confirmed its new supercar will top out at 216mph, courtesy of 647bhp and 550lb ft of torque from its turbocharged 3.5-litre EcoBoost V6.

From the latest version of a legendary supercar to a brand-new one: **Dendrobium (5)**. It may sound like an antibiotic-resistant superbug, but it's actually a new electric hypercar from Singapore, named after a flower native to the country. We know nothing of the e-powertrain at this stage, but we do know Williams Advanced Engineering is doing the legwork and Scottish tannery Bridge of Weir will supply low-carbon leather for its inevitably extravagant cabin. The company behind it, Vanda Electrics, has an inauspicious background



5



2



4



3

6



for hypercar development, being best known for electric scooters and back-to-basics commercial vehicles. The car will debut at the Geneva motor show.

Both **Alpine** and **Pagani** continue their frustrating drip-feeding of teaser images and information before their respective cars – the new Alpine sports coupe and Pagani's Huayra Roadster – also debut at the Geneva show. The former has shown its car's aluminium structure (6) and detailed flat underbody aerodynamics, while the latter has said little beyond suggesting the Roadster will look even more barmy than the coupe. Not in quite those words, but that's the gist of it.

**McLaren**, meanwhile, has said its upcoming Super Series model will use a twin-turbo 4-litre V8 (7). Codenamed M840T, the engine is larger than the 3.8-litre V8 that powers everything in Woking's current lineup, with less turbo-lag and 'significantly enhanced' (but as yet undisclosed) power and torque figures. Characteristically coy as the car is readied for its Geneva debut, McLaren has at least said its 650S replacement will accelerate to 124mph in 7.8sec – a tenth quicker than even the 675LT.

Another joining the Geneva fray is **Mercedes-AMG**, with estate versions of the recently launched E63 and E63 S (8). Like the saloons, the estates will be all-wheel drive, with 563 and 603bhp respectively. Ikea furniture may never have travelled so quickly.

Mercedes is also giving us a glimpse into its future with the 'Aesthetics A' sculpture (9), which takes the form of a sleek saloon. The next A-class should be the first car to debut the firm's new, cleaner styling, which chief design officer Gordon Wagener says reduces 'creases and lines ... to the extreme'.

Over at **BMW**, the 4-series has had a facelift, M4 included, while the M3

“  
*McLaren says its 650S replacement will accelerate to 124mph in 7.8sec – a tenth quicker than the 675LT*  
”

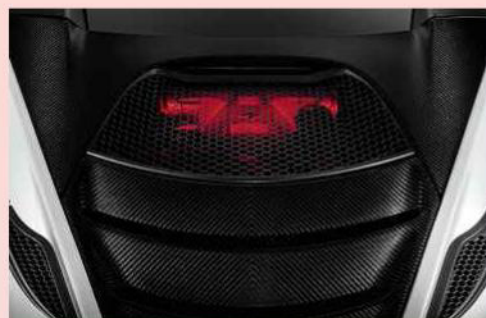
(10) gets similar changes – new DRLs and LED headlights – already enjoyed by the rest of the 3-series lineup.

In greener news, we've learned that **Volkswagen's** impending electric 'ID' range may include GTI-badged models, while **Honda** and **General Motors** have expanded their fuel cell collaboration (first announced in 2013) to a production agreement, to supply future fuel-cell vehicles.

And last but by no means least this month, **evo** spoke to **Honda's** chief engineer for the Civic, Mitsuru Kariya, at the launch of that car's new 1-litre and 1.5-litre variants. Anyone thinking Type Rs are now all power and too much weight should be reassured by some of the details we've learned about the next Civic Type R (11).

The new Civic's body-in-white is already 19kg lighter than the old car's, but the Type R will shed more weight still, using an aluminium bonnet in addition to alloy front wings (the current CTR only has the latter). There's more aluminium in the structure too, and Honda has eschewed spot welds for greater use of adhesive bonding. Adhesive saves 20kg over the equivalent spot welding.

7



10



8



11



9



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# Inside Bugatti

Describing the Chiron's production facility as a factory would be crude, so Bugatti calls it 'the Atelier'. Just 20 employees will piece together the new French hypercar inside the logo-mimicking, oval-shaped building. Previously the birthplace of the Veyron, it has undergone numerous modifications, including the installation of a new dyno able to handle the Chiron's 1479bhp. The site can now fulfil 70 orders per year, each car taking six months to complete.

Lee Stern



## WATCHES: CONNECTED HYBRIDS



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**Hagen Connected**

**Price:** from £185 **From:** skagen.com

The first of this month's trio of timepieces for people who fancy a watch with smart functions, but not an actual smartwatch, comes from Danish firm Skagen. It looks pleasingly like a conventional watch but will connect to your Android or Apple phone, enabling it to offer activity tracking, sleep monitoring, smartphone notifications, easy switching between dual time zones and even the ability to control the music playing on your phone. It has a 42mm case and comes in a range of colour schemes.



**Citizen Eco-Drive**  
**Limited Edition Proximity**

**Price:** £599 **From:** citizenwatch.co.uk

This new addition to Citizen's solar-powered Eco-Drive range gains a number of features when connected to an iOS or Android phone. It can make you aware of incoming calls or other notifications with visual, audible or vibration alerts, can automatically correct its time as you cross time zones and, as its name suggests, can tell you when you've wandered off and left your phone behind. The Proximity has a 46mm case and is also available in two non-limited-edition variants priced from £399.



**Breitling for Bentley**  
**Supersports B55**

**Price:** from £6025 **From:** breitlingforbentley.com

Released to coincide with the launch of the new 211mph Continental Supersports, the B55 is the first Breitling for Bentley model equipped with an electronic movement instead of a mechanical one. Its LCD displays offer a host of clever timing possibilities, such as the ability to record up to 30 rally stage times, including intermediate times and penalties incurred. The data can also be viewed on the accompanying app. The B55 has a 46mm titanium case and a carbonfibre dial. Just 500 will be made.

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## TYRES

# Michelin Pilot Sport 4S

Replacement for the Super Sport range promises better wet braking and stronger lateral grip



**D**URING LAST YEAR'S *evo* summer tyre test at Continental's vast Uvalde proving ground in Texas (issue 226), one tyre outshone all the others in the dry tests.

The 1.8-mile handling circuit is designed to be as demanding and revealing a test of a tyre as possible. Tight and tricky in places and fast and flowing in others, it tells you everything you need to know about a tyre – about its lateral grip, traction, braking, steering precision and linearity – within just a couple of laps. The tyre that set both the fastest lap time and scored highest in my subjective assessment was the Michelin Pilot Super Sport.

Until the end of 2016, the Super Sport, launched in 2010, was the

grippiest and most stable ultra-high-performance tyre available this side of really aggressive, track-focused hardware such as Michelin's own Pilot Sport Cup 2. For that reason, the Super Sport was still the tyre of choice for the likes of the BMW M3.

Michelin has now killed off the Super Sport and replaced it with an all-new tyre, the Pilot Sport 4S, which it claims is improved in every single parameter. Available in 19- and 20-inch sizes, the 4S borrows technology and know-how from the aforementioned Cup 2. The main objectives, says Hermann Götz, Michelin's chief engineer, were to improve dry grip and wet braking over the Super Sport. For that reason the new tyre uses one compound for

“  
*First impressions are of a tyre that gives very good steering precision with excellent cornering grip and strong braking performance*  
”

the outer edge of the tyre, which gives cornering grip, and another for the middle and inner sections, which provide longitudinal grip for traction and braking.

Around a nominal 1.5-mile circuit the new tyre should be two-tenths of a second faster than the Super Sport. My first impressions of the 4S, having driven it both on the road and at the Thermal Club circuit near Palm Springs, are of a tyre that gives very good steering precision and linearity with excellent cornering grip and strong braking performance. There's a painfully long left-hand corner at Thermal Club that sends most cars into ploughing understeer, but the BMW M4 test car held a good line throughout. Given past experience of that same car on a set of Super Sports, I had expected a fraction less understeer, but that discrepancy may be down to the track's very smooth surface.

A frustration some buyers had with the Super Sport was that it could be tricky to find. And with no 17- or 18-inch options for the 4S for now, this rules out many cars. Cost is also likely to be an issue for some. Blackcircles.com is quoting £195.58 per tyre, fitted, compared with a typical price of around £140 for a Pirelli P Zero.

Overall, the Pilot Sport 4S is a useful improvement over the tyre it replaces in the dry, but we'll have to wait until we can test it more thoroughly before we rank it against its rivals across a range of conditions.

**Dan Prosser**



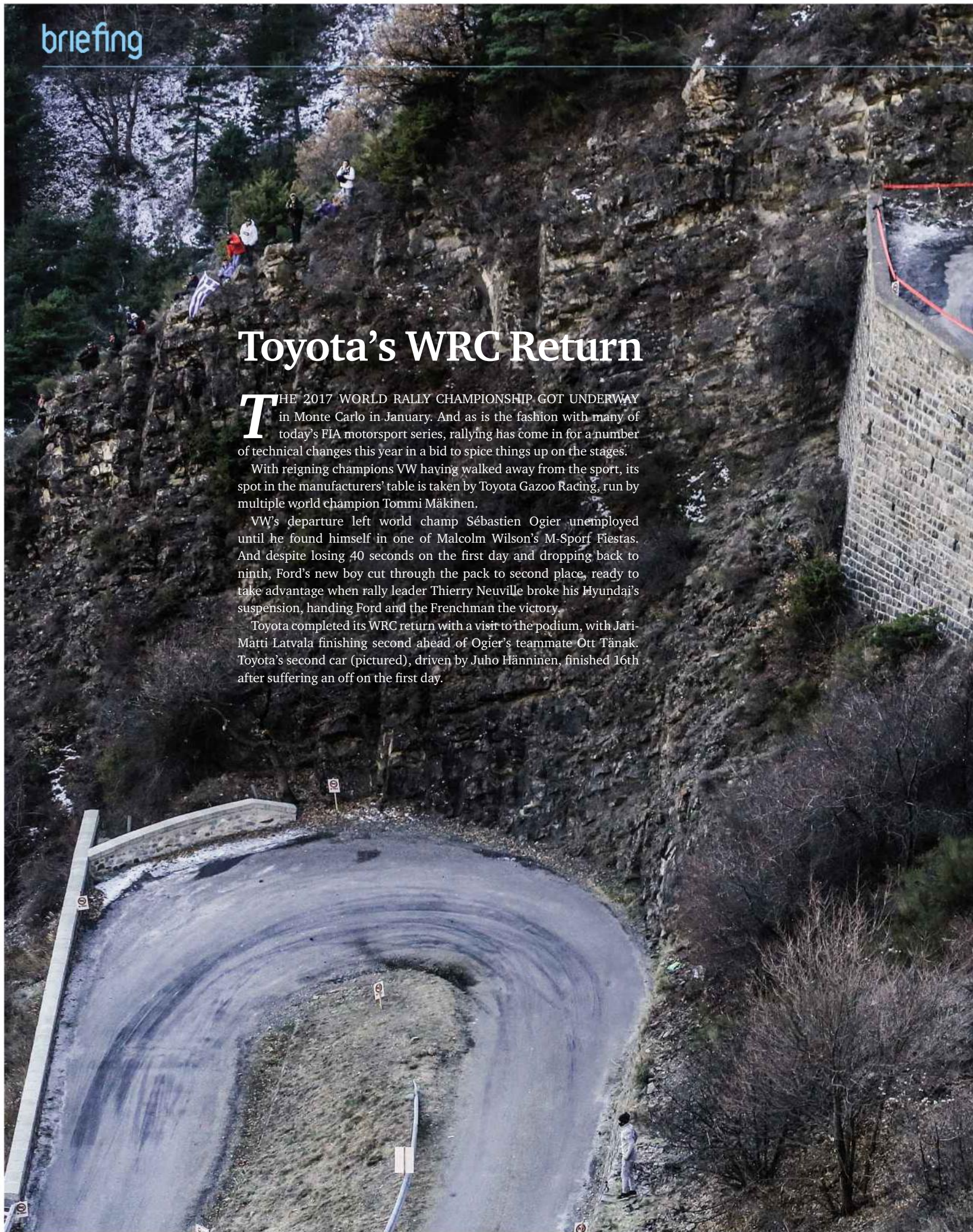
## Toyota's WRC Return

**T**HE 2017 WORLD RALLY CHAMPIONSHIP GOT UNDERWAY in Monte Carlo in January. And as is the fashion with many of today's FIA motorsport series, rallying has come in for a number of technical changes this year in a bid to spice things up on the stages.

With reigning champions VW having walked away from the sport, its spot in the manufacturers' table is taken by Toyota Gazoo Racing, run by multiple world champion Tommi Mäkinen.

VW's departure left world champ Sébastien Ogier unemployed until he found himself in one of Malcolm Wilson's M-Sport Fiestas. And despite losing 40 seconds on the first day and dropping back to ninth, Ford's new boy cut through the pack to second place, ready to take advantage when rally leader Thierry Neuville broke his Hyundai's suspension, handing Ford and the Frenchman the victory.

Toyota completed its WRC return with a visit to the podium, with Jari-Matti Latvala finishing second ahead of Ogier's teammate Ott Tänak. Toyota's second car (pictured), driven by Juho Hänninen, finished 16th after suffering an off on the first day.





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## i8 opener

After reading your BMW M3 GTS v M4 GTS test (**evo** 232), am I the only one wishing for a return of a one-make BMW race series like the M1 Procar Championship of 1979-80? How about using race-prepped i8s this time? Stripped out (minus 200kg?), fixed wings, slicks, water-injected race engines, stock hybrid systems, and a total output per car of, say, 425bhp with 495lb ft.

It would make a great addition to an F1 race weekend...

**Mike Spencer**



## Facing the future

Am I the only one who thinks that some of the new technology appearing in cars is a bit pointless? The upcoming Faraday Future FF 91 [pictured above] (**Radar**, **evo** 232) will have facial recognition to unlock the car. I can see this opening up a whole world of frustration as you stand outside your car with a new haircut, pulling different faces to try to open the door to the amusement of onlookers.

As a car company that is not exactly thriving, perhaps it should focus on technology that enhances the driving experience, instead of gimmicks like this.

**Peter Tsim, Nottingham**

## F430 second opinion

I would like to take issue with a couple of points made in your Model Focus article on the F430 (**evo** 231).

First, the manual gearbox is OK but by no means Ferrari's best: the pedals are poorly spaced for heel and toe and the shift action is

certainly less satisfying than a 355's or even a 308's. It appears the car was engineered primarily for the F1 gearchange. Don't pay up to 30 per cent more for misplaced nostalgia.

Second, the ceramic brakes are certainly expensive if you need to change them, but in normal use they last many years. My car has now done 13,000 miles and it is showing less than 10 per cent brake and clutch wear. Ceramics also give better ride quality via reduced unsprung weight, and the wheels don't get dirty with brake dust.

Lastly, although I guess all true **evoistas** should go for coupes, 99 per cent of the time you're not on a track and even if you are the additional chassis flex is negligible; what's between your ears will have a far bigger impact on lap time. And if you think the coupe sounds good, a top-down Spider will blow your mind!

**Tim Gosling**



## Porsche potential

Your review of the 718 Boxster S by TechArt (**evo** 231) was a joy to read. I had the pleasure of driving all of TechArt's current models last year, from its 480bhp Carrera S to a 520bhp Cayenne GTS and even the 720bhp GTstreet R. The company does some amazing work on the engines, which is easily overlooked because of the excessive exterior and interior designs.

Like **evo**, I haven't been excited by Porsche's switch from natural aspiration to turbocharging, but driving the TechArt 718 and 991s you really get a sense of just how much performance Porsche is leaving



## LETTER OF THE MONTH

# Leading by example

**READING SIMON GEORGE'S 'I BOUGHT ONE' THOUGHTS** regarding his 80,000-mile Ferrari 458 Italia (**Buying Guide**, **evo** 232), something struck a chord. He wrote: 'There's no need to fear putting big miles on a 458, except of course for the depreciation.'

Now this got me thinking... What if all supercar owners actually got out and used their cars more? And when I say all, I really mean *all*. The 458 has shown it can handle it, the various new McLarens seem to be fine with miles, Porsche has never shied away from big numbers, and with Lambo now stealing much from Audi – including build quality if a certain orange V12 is anything to go by – I have no doubt the days have long gone where you couldn't get your Countach to the petrol station and back before its carbs needed tweaking.

So if everyone took advantage of this and used their supercar more, values wouldn't plummet too greatly as they would all be gaining miles collectively. Just imagine looking at these machines with 40k, 50k, 60k on them. Of course you would lose some, but surely enjoying these wonderful machines would be worth it!

**Russell Fitch**

## The Letter of the Month wins an Aviator watch

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



Peter Jackson THE JEWELLER





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on the table with these new engines – a topic that should be discussed, because it would surely help get enthusiasts more excited about them.

**Guido Komp, Mühlthal,  
Germany**

### More unobtainium?

So the new 911 GT3 will have a normally aspirated engine and a manual transmission? More unobtainium from Porsche? I love its cars but when will it just make as many as it can take orders for?

Restricting supply leads to speculators and investors ruining it for us petrolheads and results in beautiful cars sitting in air-conditioned garages to protect their value.

My 13-year-old Porsche gets ragged every time I get behind the wheel, because that's what it was built for. Sometimes my heart bleeds (petrol) when I read about these beautiful beasts that will never be set free to do what they were designed for.

I fear Adrian Newey's hard work on the AM-RB001 [pictured above] will go the same way. I wonder how he feels about it?

**Marcus Waldoock**

*Good news, Marcus: the GT3 won't be a limited-edition model, so anyone who wants one can buy one (funds permitting). – Ed*

### Range rearranged

I've been thinking a bit about Porsche's range strategy of late. It seems as if, at least for 'basic' 911s, the company's engineers have become a little too good at working around the balance issues presented by a rear-engined layout. This is perhaps in part due to the need for the 911 to

be at the top of the Porsche sports car tree. With the current marketing and pricing it would be embarrassing were the mid-engined Cayman to be quicker than the 911.

But I worry that this leads to a less than optimal development environment for both cars, with the Cayman held back from being as good as it could be and the 911 stripped of some of what has made so many people lust after one.

Accordingly, I propose the following: that Porsche no longer has a tiered model range, but parallel sports car ranges. There could be a 'base spec' 911, bringing old-school rear-engined thrills at Cayman prices. It wouldn't even need that much power to be fun. More expensive 911s such as the GT3 and Turbo could stay as they are, but be joined at their price points by super-Caymans like the GT4 or even an all-wheel-drive Cayman Turbo.

One need only look at the popularity of classic 911s to see there's a real demand for the driving challenges that come with mastering traditional rear-biased weight distribution. It seems everyone would benefit if Porsche were to make this available to a wider audience – with a warranty and a sharp price – and also to make superb cars like the GT4 a staple part of the range.

**Andrew Dibb**

### Déjà view

Imagine our excitement when we first saw the subscribers' front cover of **evo** 232 and realised that your photograph of the M3 and M4 GTS was taken on the exact same corner that we chose for a photo location on our Pyrenees tour in our Caterham Sevens. [See above.] Fabulous road...

**David Harrold**



## Scirocco swapped

In his Petrolhead column (**evo** 232), Richard Porter speculates where all the new Volkswagen Sciroccos have gone, concluding they are probably at the bottom of the sea. If his quoted 28,000 annual production target and last year's 10,034 European sales figures (Jan-Nov, according to carsalesbase.com) are both correct then he may have a point.

However, I'm guessing VW Group has renegotiated supplier terms and shifted output of its AutoEuropa factory to the VW Sharan/SEAT Alhambra MPVs. Sales figures for those last year were 29,417 and 29,054 units respectively (Jan-Nov) – nearly 6:1 in favour of the people carrier. Hardly the stuff of 'the thrill of driving', but a Scirocco won't get a family of four and all their luggage to the airport, or six friends into town for a night out...

Admittedly, Volkswagen Group's decision not to bring the third-gen (2008-onwards) Scirocco to the US does seem a little misguided. If it was worried it may have impacted on Golf GTI sales then why sell both in Europe, or even build it at all? Strange big-company logic at work...

**Mike Spencer (again)**

## Wait and WRC

I have to take issue with Stuart Gallagher's comments on the new-for-2017 WRC cars (**evo** 231). Firstly, the rewriting of the technical regs to allow cars to have much bigger aero devices, more power and active centre differentials came about purely to appeal to fans, to make rallying more exciting again.

In rallying's Group B heyday the cars had practically unlimited power, aero and technology. That's what

the FIA has given us again: relaxed rules that allow the creation of faster, better-sounding, wilder-looking cars. Given that Group B is relentlessly and unanimously heralded as rallying's most exciting era, are we now saying this direction isn't exciting after all?

Mr Gallagher also reckons that driver skill isn't top of the agenda with the arrival of the new cars. Again, I totally disagree. Similar driving styles and skill-sets will be required, only at an arguably even higher level due to the increased speeds... Same challenge as it's always been, just do it faster!

Don't get me wrong, I love the Mk2-Escort, sideways-everywhere side of rallying as much as the next person, but I'd put serious money on the new cars being just as awe-inspiring if not more so. Feel free to correct me at the end of the season if I'm wrong.

**James Gunston**

## In the clear

To respond to Steve Holley (Inbox, issue 232) about **evo** 'setting a bad example' by getting four wheels airborne in wintry conditions, I'm sure that given the location of the photographer and the time taken for him to set up the shot that he is in radio contact with the driver about when to go, making sure the road ahead is clear etc.

If youngsters are taught correctly by their parents to be responsible then it's not an issue. They don't all go out shooting people after watching a violent film, or drifting around their cities after watching *Fast & Furious*. The photos are there for us enthusiasts to enjoy and should be viewed for what they are: well set up shots, not a journo being an arse.

**Kerry Giddings**



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# Driven

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# Porsche 911 Carrera GTS

The new 911 GTS is the best 991-series Carrera that you can currently buy – provided you choose the correct variant and the right options

**T**HE NEW PORSCHE 911 Carrera GTS, which slots in between the Carrera S and the forthcoming GT3, is super-agile, ultra-responsive and very rewarding to drive. It's also lethargic, lazy and a bit top heavy. It steers very well and also quite poorly. It's good value for money, though far too expensive.

It comes in three bodystyles – coupe, Cabriolet and Targa – with the first two of those available with rear- or four-wheel drive. All versions can be fitted with either a manual gearbox or Porsche's PDK twin-clutch transmission. On top of all this, buyers can specify rear-wheel steering and variable anti-roll bars, tyre option A or tyre option B, and choose between the standard brakes and the very expensive

carbon-ceramic ones. That's before they've decided on the paint colour and interior trim. It's baffling.

In fact, the range is so mind-numbingly expansive that for every single word of praise or criticism that anyone might level at a sports car, there'll be a GTS to which it applies. Fun and responsive? That'll be the two-wheel-drive coupe. Flat-footed with dull steering? Targa PDK.

With that in mind, be vigilant. When some bloke down the pub one day brags about his new GTS, he could either be a man shot through with such righteous stuff that he actually owns what probably is the best new 911 that you can actually buy in a showroom, or he might prefer a dash of lime in his Carling and drive a paddleshift Targa.



For simplicity's sake I'm going to focus on just one version here, and the best one at that. It's the rear-drive coupe with the seven-speed manual gearbox. This Miami Blue test car also has a pair of optional bucket seats, deleted rear seats and track-ready Pirelli P Zero Corsa tyres. The 911 Carrera has never been fitter or faster than this. If you want even more performance and sharper handling from your 911 you'll have to get your name added to the waiting list for the aforementioned new GT3, with the manual gearbox.

The GT3 is less an in-depth engineering exercise and more a judicious raiding of the standard Carrera's options list. There are no bespoke suspension components, for example. Instead, it simply uses Porsche Active Suspension Management and the familiar sports chassis, both of which are available on the Carrera S. That configuration lowers the GT3 by 20mm compared

with a base-spec Carrera. All GT3s use the wider 911 bodysell that's normally draped over four-wheel-drive models. This means you can have a two-wheel-drive car with the more muscular-looking shell, which sounds just about perfect. Incidentally, Porsche's engineers were ready to adjust the spring and anti-roll bar rates on the two-wheel-drive GT3 to suit the wider rear track, but in testing they found it just wasn't necessary.

The 3-litre, twin-turbo flat-six is carried over from the standard Carreras, but new turbos and higher boost pressure lift power by 30bhp over the Carrera S to 444bhp, with peak torque now 406lb ft (up 10lb ft) from 2150rpm. Driving its rear wheels through a mechanical limited-slip differential, this brand of GT3 sprints to 62mph in 4.1sec and doesn't stop shoving until 193mph.

All GT3 models come with the Sport Chrono kit, which includes

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**'It has much of the focus and immediacy of a 911 GT3, suffused with the refinement and day-to-day ease of use of any other Carrera'**

dynamic engine mounts, the steering wheel-mounted drive-mode switch and a sports exhaust. Visually, the GT3 stands out from other Carreras with its centre-lock wheels, smoked rear lights and, on two-wheel-drive versions, a thin black strip that runs between them.

Twin-turbocharged, 430bhp-plus, rear-wheel-drive 911s with manual gearboxes and lots of power used to have a little badge on their behinds that read 'GT2'. It would be daft to suggest that this GT3 is some sort of spiritual successor to those rare and fearsome Porsche Motorsport machines, but the likeness in mechanical layout does demonstrate why this new car is worth getting excited about. In a word, the GT3 is brilliant.

It is in this specification, anyway. With its grippy tyres and supportive bucket seats, this test car has much of the focus and immediacy of a 911 GT3, suffused with the refinement



and day-to-day ease of use of any other Carrera. That spread of talents arguably makes this the best 911 currently on sale, and while the Turbo is faster and every bit as useable, you can't specify the heavy-hitting model with rear-wheel drive or a manual gearbox. Increasingly, this GTS looks like it represents the 911's sweet spot.

Our test car also has a number of extras fitted to it that aren't so easy to recommend, such as Porsche Dynamic Chassis Control. The system uses variable anti-roll bars to take lean out of the car during cornering and is adjustable from inside the cabin by flicking between their Normal and Sport settings. Sport keeps the car very flat-bodied and makes it feel totally planted to the road, which sounds like a good thing in theory, but in practice it simply means you don't feel any of those natural shimmies and body movements that let you

know how hard you're working the car. The system is very effective on circuit, where you do want as much precision and control as possible, but on the road it makes the car feel slightly wooden.

Rear-wheel steering is another contentious option. In simple terms it reduces the car's turning circle at low speed and makes it more stable at high speed. That added high-speed stability means the steering can be made more immediate, but it's a marginal thing from behind the wheel. Porsche's online configurator lists rear-wheel steering as 'Recommended by Porsche', but when quizzed over dinner on the media launch in South Africa, a tall German chap called Walter said rear-wheel steering only really makes a difference in sudden lane-change manoeuvres.

The 911 Carrera S is still a class-leading sports car, but the truth is it isn't a tactile, interactive machine in



**Top:** Alcantara trim gives the cabin a sporty ambience. **Left:** centre-lock alloys are standard, PCCB carbon-ceramic brakes are an option



the manner of earlier 911s. On paper this GTS isn't all that different to the Carrera S – it has a wider rear track but the chassis settings are basically the same – and yet, one way or another, it is massively more rewarding and engaging to drive quickly. It might be that those sticky Corsa tyres bring the chassis to life, chewing into the road surface and teasing little body movements out of the car where the less aggressive tyres would just slip slightly. That extra grip also seems to multiply the messages fizzing through the structure and steering rack.

Whatever's making the difference, it's transformational. The steering is better now than it's ever been in the 991-generation Carrera (the GT3 and GT3 RS have always had more

physical steering racks), so you can instinctively lean on the grip just as soon as you turn into a corner. The front end still has a degree of 911 lightness, but it locks into a bend with laser-guided precision.

From that point on, the GTS feels hunkered down in corners, and although the PDCC robs some feel, leaving the adaptive anti-roll bars out of their very stiff Sport mode draws a degree of expression from the chassis. You also feel the rear axle take on attitude immediately after turn-in, just enough to let you know how much grip it's finding. This car feels like a 911 should: adjustable, playful, communicative, with top-class body control and damping.

This twin-turbo flat-six isn't as evocative as the old normally

**'This GTS feels like a 911 should: adjustable, playful, communicative, with top-class body control and damping'**

aspirated 3.8, but it's almost impossibly linear and responsive for a turbocharged engine and it likes to be wound out to its limiter at 7400rpm, too. The soundtrack isn't all flat turbo blare, either, although the best notes are reserved for onlookers and passing wildlife. With so much torque throughout the rev range the GTS has serious overtaking performance, and the quality of the manual gearshift is now superb.

The 911 Carrera has come a long way from those delicate, very tactile, endlessly rewarding little things we have grown to love over the years. This version of the GTS proves Porsche still knows exactly what it takes to make an exceptional, world-beating sports car. 🏆

**Dan Prosser** (@TheDanProsser)

## Specification

Engine	Power	Torque	0-62mph	Top speed	Weight	Price as tested
Flat-six, 2981cc, twin-turbo	444bhp @ 6500rpm	406lb ft @ 2150-5000rpm	4.1sec (claimed)	193mph (claimed)	1450kg (311bhp/ton)	£94,316

➕ In rear-drive coupe format, it's everything a 911 should be ➖ Not all GTS models are rear-drive coupes

**evo rating** ★★★★★

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# VW Golf GTI

One of the best all-round hot hatches gets a mild makeover to keep it ahead of the pack

**I**N WHAT MIGHT WELL GO down as the mildest facelift in the history of the motor car, VW has updated its Mk7 Golf GTI with a slightly different look, a touch more power and a handful of new interior technology options. The easiest way to spot the revised model is to look for the forward-facing radar panel, which has been moved from its clumsy location in the lower intake to a much more discreet position behind the VW badge. The bumpers and grille have also been tweaked and the lights are now LED as standard.

For the most part, though, the Golf GTI looks the same as before. That's no bad thing, because the quick Golf has arguably never looked better than it does in Mk7 guise (Mk1 and Mk2 purists will now be hopping up and down furiously) and it remains a handsome, subtly aggressive design.

Of more interest than any of that, however, is the increase in power, no matter how modest. The base model GTI, as tested here, climbs by 10bhp to 227bhp. The GTI Performance, meanwhile, jumps by 15bhp to 242bhp. With its limited-slip diff and uprated brakes, it's the one you want. On paper that means the GTI still lags behind many rivals for sheer power output, but VW's front-driven hot hatch doesn't tend to feel significantly slower than a Civic Type R or Peugeot 308 GTi out on the open road. A useful wedge of torque – an unchanged 258lb ft between 1500 and 4600rpm – certainly helps in that regard.

Gearbox options remain a six-speed manual or DSG. VW quotes a 0-62mph time of 6.4sec (0.1sec quicker) and a limited 155mph top speed for the base GTI with a manual shifter.

There haven't been any significant

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**'When you arrive at the limit of its ability the car is secure and forgiving rather than snappy'**

mechanical revisions, but the car is now available with a raft of driver-assistance and infotainment technologies. The touchscreens are all larger, the biggest being the optional Discover Pro system that comes with a vast 9.2-inch screen. It looks impressive and the bigger icons are easier to tap when on the move, but doing away with conventional rotary knobs for stereo volume and map zoom is a backwards step.

Discover Pro also features gesture-control, which allows the driver to shuffle through various menus and perform basic tasks by swiping a hand mid-air in front of the screen. The Golf is the first car in its class to offer this function, but the touchscreen interface tends to be much easier to operate. Buyers can now specify an Active Info Display, too – a 12.3-inch screen that replaces the analogue dials

**Left:** spot the difference (hint: the LED lights are new and the radar panel has disappeared behind the badge). **Below:** 2-litre turbocharged engine gains an extra 10bhp, taking the basic model to 227bhp



and gauges in the instrument binnacle behind the steering wheel.

It won't be any surprise to learn the revised Golf GTI drives just the same as the previous one. Much like the evolutionary styling, that's no criticism at all, because the Golf GTI's ride and handling have been expertly judged for the last few generations. This new model remains one of the most refined hot hatches on the market while still being fast and fun to drive.

What hot Golfs, this one included, give up to the likes of the Focus RS is the final few degrees of excitement right at the limit. Whereas the four-wheel-drive RS – around £3000 more expensive than the GTI Performance, but 118bhp more powerful – feels alive and edgy at the limit, the GTI is completely secure and stable. That makes it very confidence-inspiring to drive quickly, but it just isn't as thrilling.

Our test car is fitted with Dynamic Chassis Control (£830), which gives a supple ride quality combined with tight-fisted body control. It's worth ticking that box, particularly if upgrading to 19-inch wheels, because the adaptive dampers lend the car a certain long-distance refinement.

There's enough control and precision in the chassis in the Normal damper mode on most road surfaces, but on very smooth stretches the stiffer Sport setting usefully sharpens the car's responses.

The steering is crisp and very direct, which means you have a clear idea of how much grip there is across the front axle and how hard you can commit to a bend. When you arrive at the limit of its ability the car is secure and forgiving rather than snappy – it really is a performance all-rounder rather than an out-and-out thriller.

Despite its modest on-paper power output, the GTI doesn't feel short of straight-line performance, and the engine is responsive and torquey. It revs well to 5500rpm but beyond that it starts to feel strangled. The more powerful versions of this four-cylinder engine are much more energetic in the run to the red line.

The Golf GTI has always put breadth of ability further up its priorities list than pin-sharp dynamics, and that's what has made it arguably the best all-round hot hatch. With this latest version, nothing has changed. **X**

**Dan Prosser** (@TheDanProsser)

## Specification

Engine	Power	Torque	0-62mph	Top speed	Weight	Price
In-line 4-cyl, 1984cc, turbo	227bhp @ 4700-6200rpm	258lb ft @ 1500-4600rpm	6.4sec (claimed)	155mph (limited)	1289kg (179bhp/ton)	£27,865

**+** Still the most capable all-round hot hatch **+** Should be more thrilling

**evo rating** ★★★★★

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

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318D/218D/118D » 225 BHP  
330D E90 » 296+ BHP  
320D E90 » 215 BHP  
420i/320i/220i/120i » 275+ BHP  
435i/ F30 335i » 390 BHP  
428i/328i » 295 BHP  
535D / 335D / X5 SD » 355+ BHP  
640D/335D/535D/435D » 390 BHP  
730D » 305+ BHP  
X5 4.0D / 740D » 370 BHP  
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MACAN 3.0D » 315 BHP  
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CAYENNE TURBO S 4.8 » 600+ BHP  
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MASERATI Ghibli 3.0 PETROL » 400 BHP  
MASERATI Ghibli 3.0 DIESEL » 312 BHP  
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MASERATI GT S / MC » 479+ BHP  
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# BMW M760Li xDrive

The fastest-accelerating BMW road car to date isn't all that it claims to be



**T**HE MOST POWERFUL BMW road car ever built. The fastest accelerating, too. Its long-wheelbase body also makes it the longest. And at over two tons it's one of the heaviest to wear a tri-colour M-badge on its flanks and rump, making the BMW M760Li xDrive the most unlikely performance car.

A folly, then. An exercise in excess for those with more disposable income than sense. The answer to a question no one asked, because let's be honest, has anyone ever thought: 'Yes. I need a £132,310, 602bhp, 590lb ft 7-series that will reach 62mph quicker than any BMW that has gone before'?

Actually, they have. Quite a few people, in fact, because BMW expects to sell at least £13.2million's worth of M760Lis in the UK every year, and that revenue will only increase once the option boxes have been ticked and the Individual trim selected.

In return for the six-figure fee, each owner's M760Li will be powered by a 6.6-litre twin-turbocharged V12, quite the motor for BMW to mark its 30th anniversary of producing V12s. There's also an eight-speed Steptronic gearbox that drives both pairs of wheels via BMW's xDrive four-wheel-drive technology. In today's world



of turbocharged engines delivering unprecedented levels of torque from engine speeds that barely register above tickover, rear-wheel drive was never an option for the M760Li. Neither was a short wheelbase.

As an M Performance model, the 760Li passes through the workshops of Carsten Pries, BMW M's master. But his team wasn't given the remit to produce an all-out M7 model. 'From the beginning we were always going to build an M Performance 7-series as it meets the requirements of the customer,' explains Pries. 'This is what they are asking for. They still want the luxury and style a 7-series offers, and an M7 would perhaps have to sacrifice some of these elements.'

What those customers do get are 20-inch wheels, M Performance aero elements – larger air intakes in the

## 'It never feels as ferocious or as responsive as an M6 Gran Coupe or M5 saloon'

front bumper and the smallest of spoilers fixed to the boot – and the availability of matt Cerium Grey paint. Inside, the subtlety goes a step further with a regular 7-series interior, which is no bad thing because it's a fine place to be. But this is an M Performance model and no matter what level of luxury a 7-series owner may expect, it's an opportunity missed to not give the M760Li's cabin a more performance-orientated look.

The sports exhaust is a little restrained, too. Unless born in Gaydon, V12s rarely raise their voice, but even by twin-turbocharged V12 standards the M760Li's tone is more limo than supersaloon. This engine is an impressive weapon, though. From the off the torque mountain arrives quickly – it spreads from 1550 to 5000rpm – and hauls 2180kg along

at an impressive rate. The 0-62mph time of just 3.7sec may make this the fastest-accelerating BMW road car to date, but it never feels as ferocious or as responsive as an M6 Gran Coupe or M5 saloon. It's all a bit too reserved.

For such a big car it is agile, though. Active anti-roll bars stem the body roll to an extent, although it doesn't take much provocation to get the M760Li keeling over in a corner. From here the front end begins to push, but keep your foot in and the xDrive system does a good job of shuffling the torque to the rear axle to the point where you can exit the corner with the big beast neatly balanced. Switch off the stability control and it will wag its tail, too.

Ultimately the M760Li xDrive is less of a performance saloon and more of a luxury limo wearing soft-soled shoes. When required it will reach silly speeds (186mph with the limiter removed), but it sacrifices outright performance to retain the 7-series' core luxury attributes. We'd rather save £35k and buy an M6 Gran Coupe, which offers more thrills for a small sacrifice in luxury. And if we needed more rear seat space, Porsche's Panamera Turbo Executive would get our money.

**Stuart Gallagher** (@stuartg917)

## Specification

Engine	Power	Torque	0-62mph	Top speed	Weight	Price
V12, 6592cc, twin-turbo	602bhp @ 5500-6500rpm	590lb ft @ 1550-5000rpm	3.7sec (claimed)	186mph (de-limited)	2180kg (281bhp/ton)	£132,310

+ More capable than you'd think; strong engine - Too much of a limo to be genuinely entertaining

**evo rating** ★★★★★

# Mazda MX-5 RF

The extra weight of a folding metal roof doesn't dull the MX-5 experience



**T**HE MK3 MX-5 HAD THE same silhouette whether it had a soft-top or a metal folding roof: with their roofs down, both looked practically identical. The same can't be said of the Mk4, as this new MX-5 RF, with its rear buttresses and coupe-like profile, looks very different to its soft-top sibling.

Despite its individual appearance – for which you'll pay a £2000 premium – most of the RF's bodywork is, in fact, unchanged from the roadster's. The wings, bumpers, bonnet and doors are all the same. Only the new roof section, rear deck and boot have changed, and the shapes and proportions of the new bodywork, most notably those buttresses, work well with the MX-5's taut, shrink-wrapped style.

RF stands for 'retractable fastback', but that doesn't really describe the roof mechanism. The rear pillars stay in situ and only the centre section disappears, which means it's better described as a targa. A switch in front of the gearlever operates the roof, and the opening sequence is 12 seconds of pure theatre that can be performed at road speeds of up to 6mph. It starts with the panel incorporating the two buttresses elevating, the roof section then folds in two and slots beneath it, the rear screen drops behind the cockpit, then the rear panel lowers again to hide the stowed roof.

Despite the size and complexity of the new roof and bodywork, the RF is only 40-45kg heavier than the equivalent soft-top. But that weight sits high, to the detriment of the

car's centre of gravity, so the RF's suspension has been retuned to counteract the effect: the diameter of the front anti-roll bar has been increased, the spring and damper rates altered, and changes made to the upper link of the rear suspension. The new roof structure has improved the RF's torsional rigidity, though. Or has it? So dedicated has Mazda been to making the RF behave just like the roadster that it has modified one of the lower reinforcements to *increase* flexibility in the body; the company's engineers say the stiffer bracing ruined the RF's balance.

Under the bonnet the RF is unchanged from the regular MX-5. This means a naturally aspirated four-cylinder engine displacing either 1.5 litres with 129bhp and 111lb ft of

torque or 2 litres producing 158bhp and 147lb ft. The latter is available with a six-speed automatic gearbox – the first auto on an MX-5 – though our test car is a 2-litre manual, which comes with a limited-slip differential as standard. With the same power and slightly more weight, the RF's performance lags behind that of the soft-top models, though only marginally: the 2-litre's 7.4sec 0-62mph time is just 0.1sec slower than the roadster's.

When enclosed, the RF's cabin is a slightly nicer place to be than roof up in the soft-top. The engine noise reaching the cabin isn't noticeably different either in terms of note or volume, but there's less wind noise and consequently it's a more relaxing environment. However, once the roof has performed its party trick and

‘The RF may have its own look, but it’s an MX-5 through and through’

**Below, from left:** switch for the roof is very low-key; a graphic in the instruments shows you the roof’s progress; roof lowered, there’s fresh air behind you as well as above



opened the interior to the elements, those rear buttresses cause a problem. Above 55mph or so there’s significant buffeting where the top of the side window joins the rear pillar. It’s loud and unpleasantly close to your ear. Lowering the window seems to lower the source of the sound, but it doesn’t reduce its volume.

Dynamically, it doesn’t take long to realise that Mazda’s attempts to make the RF feel like the roadster have been successful: it still feels light, small and responsive. The weight gain hasn’t noticeably dented the

performance, either, which means you can make swift if not staggeringly quick progress.

Try very hard to find a difference between the RF and the soft-top and it’s possible to detect slightly less twist in the RF’s body. Rough roads, potholes and catseyes still send tremors through the shell, but it doesn’t constantly resonate like the roadster’s, adding to its calmer vibe. There’s also marginally less body roll in the RF, but that doesn’t stop it behaving just like a regular MX-5, with those familiar exaggerated body

movements. The way the RF dives and rolls means it’s easily manipulated, allowing you to place the car’s weight over whichever wheel or axle you choose and to play around with the available grip at sensible speeds. Feeling your way down an unfamiliar road, at a brisk but not frantic pace, is when the RF, just like other MX-5s, is at its best; it’s a fun, faithful, predictable companion.

But as your confidence grows, you start to drive out of its comfort zone, and exerting greater forces makes the chassis feel clumsy and slow to react.

It’s easy to get on the throttle too early in a corner and induce understeer, for example. You might reasonably expect a sports car to rise to the occasion when you want a more spirited drive, but sadly the RF feels out of its depth.

The RF may have its own look, but it’s an MX-5 through and through. The quiet, more refined cabin ambience with the roof in place is offset by increased wind noise once it’s stowed, but the slightly stiffer shell makes the RF **evo**’s MX-5 of choice. **X**

**Will Beaumont**  
(@WillBeaumont)

## Specification

Engine	Power	Torque	0-62mph	Top speed	Weight	Basic price
In-line 4-cyl, 1998cc	158bhp @ 6000rpm	147lb ft @ 4600rpm	7.4sec (claimed)	134mph (claimed)	1045kg (154bhp/ton)	£23,095

**+** Practically indistinguishable from its soft-top brother **-** Significant amounts of wind noise with the roof down

**evo rating** ★★★★★☆



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# Audi S5 Sportback

Rapid but unfailingly staid, that was the S5 Sportback. But now it's finally got the chassis to match its looks



**S**OMEWHERE IN THE depths of Ingolstadt there is an analyst who can tell you the number of permutations possible within the Audi model range. They spend their working day calculating just how many variants the company could build, should enough people order each model in every trim and specification available.

This new S5 Sportback will only add to that algorithm. In simple terms, it's the four-door coupe-saloon based on the all-new A4, a car that's proving to be far from a flat-footed Audi and one that, in S4 guise (Driven, *evo* 225), is a genuine rival to AMG's C43 and BMW's 440i.

In times past, the S5 Sportback has fallen off the radar. An S4 Avant has wider appeal because it's a fast, premium German estate car, an S5 Coupe because it has a more fashion-conscious two-door body. Even the regular S4 saloon has more often than not got the nod over the S5 Sportback because, well... I'm not exactly sure. Aesthetically the Sportback has always looked better to these eyes and it has driven at least on a par with the saloon, although 'agility' was rarely mentioned. It seems that the S5

Sportback's biggest failing has been that few people know it even exists.

But Audi needs to remove the invisibility cloak, because like the S4 it shares so much with, this new model is a window into the impressive development work that former Audi technical director Ulrich Hackenberg put into the firm's road cars before his departure following Dieselgate.

Weight is down 85kg to 1660kg, with its new 3-litre V6 turbo engine accounting for 14kg of that saving. Power is up 21bhp to 349bhp and torque swells by 44lb ft to 369lb ft, which when hooked up to the eight-speed Tiptronic gearbox and the latest quattro system helps the car reach 62mph four tenths quicker than its predecessor, at 4.7sec.

Straight-line speed isn't the S5 Sportback's only trick, however. Running a standard 19-inch wheel and optional active dampers, our test car's ride is taught without being a constant nuisance. The primary ride has it floating over most surfaces without isolating you, while the secondary ride is quick to settle and filters out any unwanted interference. Considering the spring and damper rates are stiffer than before, there's a fine balance of comfort and agility. A

**'You'll ask why it has taken Audi so long to sharpen the claws of its S-cars'**

further option on our test car is the rear Sport diff – essential because it adds a further layer of precision to the dynamic process, tightening the front axle's line and lending the rear axle an unexpected precision.

The lower weight and its improved distribution bring an eagerness to the S5 that encourages you to push far more than you felt inclined to do in its predecessor. The optional Dynamic Steering of our test car is a further development of the system we love to hate, but it's improved, delivering a more natural weighting, if not any genuine feel. It's precise and intuitive and the confidence it breeds allows you to get into the throttle earlier. After a few runs along familiar roads, you'll ask why it's taken Audi so long



to sharpen the claws of its S-cars.

Indeed, cross-country is where the S5 surprises most. The V6 has plenty of guts and the gearbox is at its best when you change gear. Left to its own devices, it will always hunt out the highest ratio, resulting in a frustrating wait as it drops back down for slower, tighter turns. However, on roads that would have dealt its predecessor an uninspiring verdict from us, this car is alive, involving and rewarding.

With an interior to make rivals weep and now as capable as you'd expect a 349bhp sports saloon-coupe to be, unless you need the practicality of an S4 Avant, the S5 Sportback is the pick of the family. **X**

**Stuart Gallagher**  
(@stuartg917)

## Specification

Engine	Power	Torque	0-62mph	Top speed	Weight	Basic price
V6, 2995cc, turbo	349bhp @ 5400-6400rpm	369lb ft @ 1370-4500rpm	4.7sec (claimed)	155mph (limited)	1660kg (214bhp/ton)	£47,000

**+** More capable than you think; strong V6 engine **+** Gearbox response in auto mode

**evo rating** ★★★★★

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# K-Tec Racing Mégane

With a revised turbocharger increasing power to 360bhp, this tuned Renault Sport Mégane is ready to fight the latest hot hatch leaders

Photography: Aston Parrott



**I**T SAID MUCH ABOUT THE talents of the Mk3 Renault Sport Mégane that even as it reached the end of its production cycle, it could still see off the latest and greatest from Volkswagen, Honda, SEAT and BMW (*evo* 227). But while it felt uncomfortable to mutter it about one we've loved so dearly, the advancing years had begun to show, even in 275 Trophy-R form. In a class where 300 horses are rapidly becoming the norm, it was starting to feel just a little breathless.

However, Renault tuning specialist K-Tec Racing in Dorset may just have a solution, promising to easily overturn that performance deficit with claims of 360bhp and 420lb ft of torque from its Stage 2 kit – up from the 271bhp and 265lb ft of the latest factory Méganes, although the kit can also be fitted to earlier 265 and 250 models.

At the heart of the conversion is a fundamental rework of the Mégane's turbo. A larger billet compressor wheel and an upgraded turbine wheel have required machining to the turbo housing to make them fit. The turbine also has the back edges of its blades ground flat to reduce lag, while there's a 360-degree thrust bearing and a stainless-steel heatshield, too.

## 'The induction kit whooshes, chirps and sneezes like a Group A Cossie'

Given the engine now runs with 1.8bar of boost, and therefore requires more fuel, new 630cc injectors are used, while the engine breathes through a KTR induction kit and a sports cat plus a full three-inch KTR exhaust system. There's also a larger intercooler, and all these changes are controlled by a remapped ECU. Budget on £4200 for all the above, including fitting. In addition, this particular car has KW Variant 3 coilover suspension, (at £2016 including fitting), although K-Tec also offers suspension options from Bilstein, Nitron and RSC.

Initial impressions are promising. There are no nasty resonances from the new exhaust, and although the note is a little louder, I prefer its deeper tone to that of the titanium item that was a factory option. There are no holes in the mapping either, so driving



in stop-start traffic elicits no awkward lurches or hesitations. Nevertheless, this isn't additional power by stealth because the induction kit that nestles under the scuttle whooshes, chirps and sneezes like an old Group A Ford Sierra Cosworth. It's amusing at first, but could become tiring after a while.

Unsurprisingly, deploying over 400lb ft of torque makes for a hatch that bristles with antagonistic energy, one that not only rips through the mid-range but also carries on pulling ferociously to the red line.

If there is a downside – in the sub-zero temperatures of our test, at least – it's that it's hard to put that power down cleanly in second gear, so I soon fall into a rhythm of using third gear and above. Third has tremendous reach, but the more gradual build-up of boost also gives the front wheels

a greater chance of finding traction, even if it does blunt the car's response and partly undo the on-paper gains. Get greedy with the throttle too early mid-corner and the nose now also pushes dramatically wide. Again, slippery roads don't help, and drier conditions will doubtless calm the unruliness of the understeer.

As for the KWs, this 'fast road' setup has enough initial pliancy to take the edge off the worst road scars and potholes. The K-Tec Mégane sits lower, and turn-in on corner entry is very direct, but the trade-off appears to be less wheel travel and the ride is busy over poor roads at speed.

The KWs offer plenty of adjustment, which probably means there's a fine trackday setup to be found, but even in its standard form the Renault Sport Mégane's B-road dynamics are its biggest draw and personally I'd be reluctant to tamper with them.

The desirability of these upgrades hinges on where you intend to drive your Mégane the most, and how you derive the most pleasure from it. For a road-only car, I'd probably pass on the KW suspension, but the extra power puts this Mégane back at the forefront of the class for outright pace. **✖**

**Adam Towler** (@AdamTowler)

## Specification

Engine	Power	Torque	0-60mph	Top speed	Weight	Price as tested
In-line 4-cyl, 1998cc, turbo	360bhp @ 5250rpm	420lb ft @ 4000rpm	5.5sec (est)	160mph+ (est)	1387kg (264bhp/ton)	See text

**+** More than addresses the Mégane's power deficit to the latest hot hatch crowd **+** Does the Renault Sport Mégane really need this much power to be fun?

**evo rating** ★★★★★



# RICHARD MEADEN

*Some of the most deranged automotive one-offs are the result of engine swaps. Meaden identifies his favourites*

**O**F ALL THE LEFTFIELD AREAS OF automotive mischief, the engine swap must surely be right up there with the most amusing and enduring. If you explore the annals of motoring history you'll discover the notion of dropping an unlikely motor into an equally unlikely recipient is almost as old as the car itself.

Look back to the Edwardian era and there's all kinds of crazy, from somewhat sophisticated Siamese engines to the rather less subtle but undoubtedly effective practice of building a car around a massive aircraft engine. Not only were these behemoths road-legal, but they were often raced by their slightly nutty owners.

In more modern times the engine swap has become a favourite of the tuning industry. The so-called 'crate' engines offered by GM and Ford's performance divisions are ideal for the job. You won't believe what you can buy from them for less than silly money. Or where the engines will turn up. Look back at *evo* 152 and you'll find a TVR Sagaris that was taken by its owner to Topcats Racing, who junked the Speed Six engine in favour of a 575bhp LS7 small-block V8. It was a truly ballistic car and – perhaps surprisingly – genuinely accomplished on road and track.

I also recall a couple of decades ago driving a first-generation BMW Compact built by Racing Dynamics. Called the K55, it had a 5.5-litre, 427bhp V12 from an 850Ci stuffed under the bonnet. The weight distribution was that of a lump hammer, but it actually drove surprisingly well (on the public road!) and remains hard to beat for pure lunatic creativity.

Manufacturers aren't averse to getting in on the engine-swap act, either. A large part of why Aston Martin's V12 Vantage even exists is because it was thought impossible to fit the company's biggest engine into its smallest model. That is until the RS Concept show car came along, sporting a derestricted 600bhp engine from the DBRS9 GT3 race car. It spat fire and outran Aston Martin Racing's Le Mans-winning DBR9 GT1 car down Paul Ricard's Mistral Straight. Though milder mannered, the eventual production version preserved much of that car's maverick spirit.

Sometimes things get too crazy for a manufacturer to make road-legal. When BMW shoehorned a McLaren F1 V12 into the nose of an X5 it created a sublime monster even the most ardent

SUV hater could get behind. Especially when Hans Stuck slung it round the Nürburgring Nordschleife to great effect.

Even *evo* has had a go at the engine swap, when erstwhile editor John Barker and I embarked on our now legendary 'Ed-to-Ed' project-cars saga. JB indulged a long-held desire to create the ultimate Ford Capri, complete with a 5-litre Rover V8, while I decided to explore the opposite end of the engine-swap scale by building a Caterham Seven with a Honda Fireblade motor.

Both cars were tilting at a target power-to-weight ratio of 300bhp per ton and were intended for road and trackday fun. They became personal obsessions for John and me. Follies too, truth be told: I pursued lightness with such manic zeal my car became so pared to the bone (369kg, including fluids) I hardly drove it, while the Capri

devoured John's cash and much of his will to live. We can laugh about it now – we *can* laugh about it, can't we John? – and the Ed-to-Ed series remains one of the most popular in *evo*'s history. Largely, I'm sure, because of our unconventional choice of engines.

Currently the most fertile ground for the engine-swap phenomenon is the US Formula Drift championship. You might not 'get' this smoky branch of motorsport, where drivers battle in tandem to impress the judging panel, who award points based on aggression, precision, speed and drift angle, but the cars

are totally insane. From Nissans with NASCAR motors and Mazda MX-5s with wild, whooping rotaries to – get this – a Toyota GT86 with a Ferrari 458 engine under the bonnet, they embrace the spirit of anything-goes engineering to incredible effect. Search YouTube. You won't be disappointed.

So, the question is what car and engine combination would you most like to see? Based on my unshakeable belief that everything is better with a Cosworth DFV, I'd like to see a Series 1 Lotus Elise with one of Keith Duckworth's masterpieces nestling behind the seats. Just as in period, the bulk of today's historic F1 grids are powered by the DFV, which has now been limited to 10,000rpm for reliability, and to try to keep a lid on engine development. Tuned thus they are far more tractable, developing decent torque and close to 500bhp, together with a uniquely evocative sound that's about as close to perfection as my ears have ever heard. If my lottery numbers come good I hereby swear to make it happen. ✕

**'When BMW put a McLaren F1 V12 into an X5, it created a sublime monster'**

**"LIFE SHOULD NOT BE A JOURNEY TO THE GRAVE WITH THE  
INTENTION OF ARRIVING SAFELY IN A PRETTY AND WELL  
PRESERVED BODY, BUT RATHER TO SKID IN BROADSIDE IN A  
CLOUD OF SMOKE, THOROUGHLY USED UP, TOTALLY WORN  
OUT, AND LOUDLY PROCLAIMING..."**



# RICHARD PORTER

*Where will you find the most sophisticated four-wheel-drive system available? Look no further than man's best friend, says Porter*

**A**LMOST FIVE SUMMERS AGO WE ACQUIRED a small furry bundle purporting to be a puppy. Some time later, based on its full-grown size, appetite and aroma, I now suspect it to be the spawn of a polar bear. This is why our house is now home to a sizeable off-white oaf that ruins the flowerbeds, shouts at the postman and sneaks onto the sofa when she thinks no one's around. Diamonds are a girl's best friend, while as a man I get lumbered with a drooling buffoon that, unlike my wife's wedding ring, demands to be taken out for several miles of brisk walking every day, no matter what the weather.

It's particularly tricky at this time of year because it's cold and sometimes icy, which brings the ever-present prospect of taking a nasty fall in some unseen alley or parkland corner as you get caught unawares by a patch of ice or, since I live in London, a slick of frozen sick. I regularly picture myself being found several hours later, a podcast still playing in my ears while the panting moron we call a pet has got bored of trying to eat the treats from my inside pocket and has wandered off onto a dual carriageway with a spare turd bag wrapped around her face.

This is a particular fear of mine when I'm walking the massive moron on a lead, because she's forever trying to zoom up perilous slopes or swerve violently across frosty verges and it's all I can do not to follow, given that she's the size and strength of a foul-smelling shire horse. In a desperate attempt to stop her yanking me down another gulley slick with permafrost I'll yank on her lead, at which she'll turn around and give me that ear-raised, waggly eyebrowed look that says, 'What?' To which I mutter, 'We can't go down there because I'll fall over.' There's a pause while she cocks the other tufted, fox-poo-encrusted brow. 'I'll be fine,' she seems to be saying. 'Yeah, I know you'll be fine,' I hiss. 'But it's okay for you, you're four-wheel drive.' And this leads me to a very important question: exactly what is the torque split of a dog?

It's quite easy to study this because she's a filthy buffoon and as soon as she's off the lead she's drawn towards the biggest and slickest patch of mud within any five-mile radius. From observing

her behaviour on a loose surface, it's easy to assume that the dog simply splits her power evenly between both ends like an original Audi Quattro: 50:50 front-to-back, hammer down, spinning up all four in a way that makes rally Quattros look cool and dogs appear to be in a cartoon. But the dog isn't as simple as all that, much though there are many things about her that appear to be jammed in one mode. Her fuelling system, for example, is incapable of ignoring and not eating mouldy food from the gutter, despite the inevitably unpleasant side effects that sometimes end with another trip to the vet. And when that happens there will be 'tests', which take so long you've plenty of time to remortgage your house

to pay for them. This also has a terrible effect on her emissions, which are awful enough to make a Volkswagen engineer blush. And then slightly gag.

The torque apportioning part of a dog, however, is clearly quite sophisticated. For one thing, in the middle of a mire she can briefly lose traction on one rear corner, then instantly prevent more power being wasted as she turns the move into a neat powerslide. Ergo, I believe my dog has a slippery diff. Better yet, when she really gets the hammer down on the soft stuff, she can sometimes turn on a sixpence in a way that suggests some pretty tricky side-to-side shuffling of power to increase manoeuvrability. In other words, I'm pretty certain that the stinking mutt has torque vectoring. And the actual front-to-back split is pretty clever, too, because I've

just remembered the time she fell in that pond and then extracted herself up a sodden mud bank using extreme power punted exclusively through the front end. And there's plenty of four-wheel-drive cars that can't do that.

In fact, if you're a car maker and you're looking to design and calibrate your next-generation all-wheel-drive technology, forget minutely analysing a Nissan GT-R – you should be dismantling a dog. But not mine. She's noisy, she stinks, she mauls house guests in a slobbery maelstrom of over-affection, and she's frequently prone to using her clever doggy diffs to pull me into a flower bed. Or a lake. Yet despite all this, I think she's probably my very favourite four-wheel-drive thing in the whole world. 🐾

**'It's easy to assume a dog splits its torque 50:50 front-to-back, spinning up all four in a way that makes rally Quattros look cool'**

**'WOW! WHAT A RIDE!'**

HUNTER S. THOMPSON



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# TED KRAVITZ

*Sky Sports' F1 pitlane reporter joins **evo's** team of columnists to tell us what's really going on in motorsport's premier division*

**I T'S A FRESH START FOR FORMULA 1 THIS** season. Wide track, low rear wings and 1980s-throwback fat tyres will make the cars lap faster and look better. They'll still sound terrible, but instead of any change to the exhaust note, we'll be hearing a few new names.

There's no more Bernie: kicked upstairs into an honorary position because the latest people to buy the business didn't want him in charge. It's a brutal ousting of the man who built modern F1, but the £3billion that Ecclestone made over the years might be some consolation and some improvements may result. It's a massive change, because for 40 years Bernie's name has been law. 'Bernie says' meant you'd better do it. 'Bernie wants to see you' meant you hadn't done it to his satisfaction. The summons brought even the toughest team boss out in a cold sweat.

No single person can replace Bernie, so new owner Liberty Media has got three people to do it. Chase Carey is the boss while Sean Bratches milks the commercial side and Ross Brawn wisely ruminates on the sport's future technical direction. Carey, Brawn & Bratches. Good name for a firm of solicitors.

While Brawn returns to familiar ground in the pitlane and paddock, Carey and Bratches have a lot of names to learn. They'll have the established F1 management team to help them out, of course, as well as being powerful enough not to have to know every Tom, Dick and Heinz-Harald personally, but they'll want to: the quickest way to establish a commanding presence in F1 is to start by knowing who everyone is.

The same is true for the drivers, especially when they change teams and there are 75 new faces on the travelling race unit and another 800 back at the factory to put names to. Valtteri Bottas has inherited Nico Rosberg's group of engineers and mechanics at Mercedes and has attached as much importance to learning everyone's name as learning how the buttons and dials on his new steering wheel differ from those on his Williams.

Michael Schumacher was famously fastidious in remembering not only who everyone on his team was, but the names of their partners and kids. Others (including two world champions on the current grid) simply don't bother. Their reasoning is that they shouldn't waste mental energy on things that won't make their car

go faster, and that if they deliver, their mechanics will love them anyway and won't mind being greeted in the morning with an 'All right, mate?' or 'How you doing, chief?'

To help the subset of F1 drivers who do care about knowing everyone's name but can't be bothered to learn them, team bosses have, in recent years, obliged with a well-placed name tag on the uniform. Red Bull's are handily positioned on the left breast pocket, making it easy to confirm a name with a quick glance, something David Coulthard was very proud of instigating when he drove for Red Bull Racing.

McLaren used to make its drivers work a bit harder by placing names on the T-shirt hemline, necessitating an embarrassing head tilt to the groin when they wanted to personally thank a gearbox mechanic for pulling an all-nighter. Well-heeled Ferrari – which, let's not forget, pockets \$100million more in prize money than any other team just for showing up – tends to scrimp on its embroidery costs. Each team member receives only a few interchangeable, embroidered, Velcro-backed name strips (for example: 'S. Vettel' – Ferrari doesn't do first names). Every morning, everyone must precisely align the name strip onto the receiving Velcro section of their garment before beating it repeatedly with a clenched fist to set it firm for the day. Still, it's the thought that counts: named shirts are a friendly, helpful touch, although

BMW Sauber's Benjamin Titz and Ferrari's Roberto Cunti might have preferred a little more anonymity.

The cars have names too, and most GP teams honour their history by maintaining chassis prefix lineage. From Fangio's W196 to Hamilton's W08, Mansell's FW14B to Massa's FW40, we all appreciate a bit of naming tradition.

So McLaren's decision to drop its 'MP4' naming protocol in favour of 'MCL' seems a little odd, especially as cars like MP4/4 attract such reverence. But such is the brutally forensic removal of all things Ron Dennis from the new McLaren, that his long-protected prefix never stood a chance.

Bernie Ecclestone, Ron Dennis, reigning world champion Nico Rosberg, Jenson Button, the Manor team and the MP4, all history. Formula 1 isn't just in for a makeover in 2017 – it's a clean slate. ❌

**'No single person can replace Bernie, so new owner Liberty Media has got three people to do it'**

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# PASSIONATE ABOUT PERFORMANCE CARS?

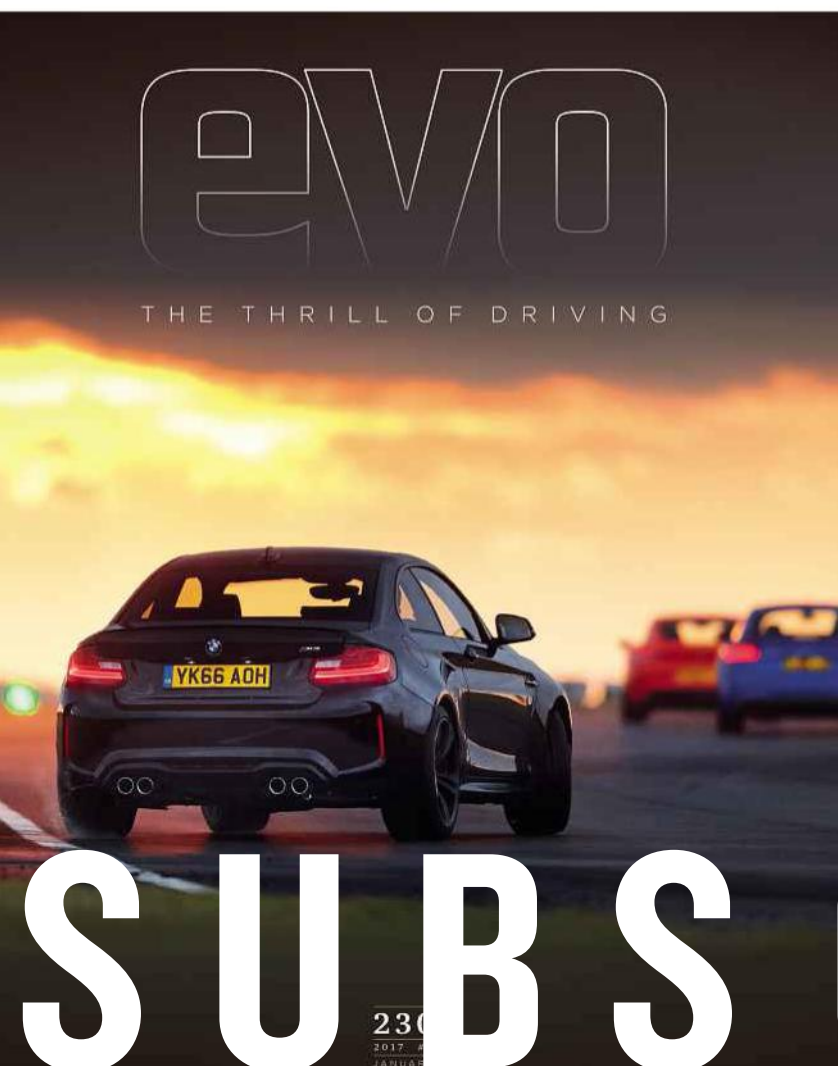
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by RICHARD MEADEN  
PHOTOGRAPHY by DEAN SMITH

# NSXtasy

*It finished fourth in our 2016  
Car of the Year contest, so we  
know the new Honda NSX  
is up there with the best. But  
what's it like to live with?  
Exactly how fast is it against  
the clock? And can it really  
rival a Porsche 918 Spyder?  
Time to find out*



E

**ENCRUSTED IN A GRITTY CARAPACE OF SALTY** winter crud, the NSX is a long way from the dazzling vision of hybrid technology and immaculate engineering that you might expect of Honda's halo car. Here, high up on the North York Moors, a week's worth of driving is crystallising – literally and metaphorically – into thoughts and feelings about a unique and fascinating supercar.

It was a similar story back in 1993, when as a 22-year-old road tester working for a now long-defunct publication, I was handed the gorgeous Monel alloy ignition key to a brand-new NSX. And for an entire weekend. A 'Senna-spec' 3-litre NA1 model with manual transmission, unassisted steering, blood-red bodywork and piano-black turret top, it was an exquisite machine and the first bona fide supercar I'd been allowed to truly get to know. It was a weekend, and a car, to remember.

Then, as now, the NSX was cloaked in an air of mystery and scepticism. For starters, it took an age to reach production. That's become something of a Japanese tradition, but it only served to feed those also keen to point out that it wasn't class-leading in terms of engine power or straight-line performance. And despite Honda's mighty efforts and tremendous success in Formula 1, the very idea of a mainstream Japanese manufacturer building a proper Ferrari-rivalling mid-engined supercar still seemed mildly preposterous.

Yet the NSX was the real deal. Albeit one that went about its business in an entirely different way. Not for Honda the truculent and slightly flaky approach of Italian exotica. Or the

**Right:** leather, carbon and Alcantara abound within the NSX's cabin, but its emphasis is far more on feeling 'right' than looking special; visibility is aided by A-pillars that are thinner than those of the original NSX of 1990





**‘THE NEW NSX  
WAS NEVER  
GOING TO BE  
RUN-OF-THE-  
MILL, BUT FEW  
EXPECTED IT  
TO BE QUITE  
SO BOLD’**

fierce-yet-flawed delivery of Porsche’s 964 Turbo, or Aston’s aristocratic but outmoded Virage. The NSX was something new.

Visually there was little to frighten the established players – its styling was sleek but polite, the interior nicely made, if rather subdued and unrelentingly black – but by splicing advanced aerodynamics, extensive use of aluminium and that fabulous, howling midship-mounted VTEC V6 with everyday practicality, comfort and durability, the NSX created a new envelope of abilities that extended beyond raw speed and sex appeal.

Much has changed since those distant days. Performance has leapt remarkably across the spectrum, and advances in transmissions, tyres, brakes and electronics have made it much more accessible. The supercar sector has grown almost exponentially, with brands as diverse as Audi and McLaren now occupying the same space as Ferrari and Lamborghini, while Aston Martin, Mercedes and Porsche provide fearsome alternatives.

And then there’s the rise of the hybrid hypercar. Packed with tech and boasting million-pound price tags, they have forged ahead into a whole new realm of speed, drama

and – thanks to their use of electric propulsion to augment their internal combustion engines – a degree of social conscience.

The new NSX was never going to be run-of-the-mill, but few expected it to be quite so bold. We’ve gone into detail about its technology before (*evo* 217), so I won’t revisit the minutiae here, but even the basic details make impressive reading: a twin-turbo 3.5-litre V6 with 500bhp and 406lb ft of torque, bolstered by a trio of electric motors: one between the engine and the nine-speed (count ‘em!) DCT gearbox, delivering its 47bhp and 108lb ft to the rear axle, plus a pair of 36bhp/54lb ft motors acting on the front wheels.

The contribution of these motors is made at different phases in the low- and mid-zone of the petrol engine’s rev range, so you’re never shoved down the road by all those maximum outputs together. Thankfully, to help dumb-asses like me get my head around what it all means, the clever people at Honda have calculated that 573bhp and 476lb ft are the largest combined outputs you’ll get from the NSX. To put that into context, the similarly priced Audi R8 V10 Plus has 602bhp and 413lb ft, a rear-drive Lamborghini Huracán



**Clockwise from left:** optional carbon-ceramic brakes save 23.5kg; start button brings to life the carbon-clad 500bhp V6 – and the three electric motors that support it; gaping air intakes send cooling air to the mid-mounted engine and over the rear deck for greater downforce



has 572bhp and 397lb ft, and a McLaren 570S has 562bhp and 443lb ft. Safe to say the NSX has some stonk, though at 1776kg it needs all the grunt it can muster.

Thanks to a succession of unfortunate diary clashes, I managed to miss the opportunity to try the NSX at one of the many drip-fed official drive exercises, and worse, at last year's **evo** Car of the Year extravaganza, too (issue 229). This, then, is my first exposure to the car.

Why test it again? Well, we threw the NSX into eCoty knowing that the nature of that test places freakish demands on the cars and the test team. Extended single-car tests, where you spend unbroken days and many miles on all manner of roads, are where you really get to explore a new car's character and abilities. So this is a chance to devote some quality time to this complex and compelling car.

It's not often I can say a new supercar fosters great fascination and a real hope yet raises genuine concerns it won't be convincing or

seductive to drive. Years of testing cars mean you can usually build a picture in your mind of how a car will feel and, perhaps more importantly, how it will make you feel, but because the NSX is one of those rare, clean-sheet projects, it's impossible to second-guess.

The first test of any supercar begins before you even open the door. I had some doubts about the NSX's looks, but the difference between seeing it on a page or screen and seeing it in real life is huge. The size of it, the stance and its individuality mean it really does look the part. White really suits it – as fitting for a Japanese supercar (albeit one developed in the USA) as red is for a Ferrari – and the detailing is bold and memorable without being gimmicky. The hawkish nose, angular flanks and stubby tail shrink the car's scale and slam it to the road like a stingray hugs the seabed.

Open the door and the interior is busy but well laid-out. Not as clean and minimal as a McLaren's, as ordered as an Audi's or as inviting

as a Ferrari's, but it looks the part and feels of decent quality. The driving position is spot-on. It's low but not too low, and the faceted steering wheel is generous in diameter and feels good in your hands. Most importantly, despite the incredible technology packed into the car, it's intuitive to simply jump into and drive.

As you'd expect, there are a multitude of driving modes. Accessed via a rotary control in the centre of the dashboard 'waterfall', on offer is everything from Quiet to Track, with Sport and Sport+ in between. Each one incrementally alters powertrain response, damping firmness, control weights and stability-control thresholds, not to mention the sound piped into the cockpit from the induction system.

You soon discover each is distinct from the others. Quiet mode is surprisingly satisfying, for it cloaks the NSX in a serene calm. The engine is extremely well muffled, which makes for discreet early-morning start-ups, and though this isn't a plug-in hybrid like the

**'THERE'S SPEED TO SPARE. YOU HAVE TO  
RESTRICT YOURSELF TO SHORT BURSTS AND  
ENJOY THE WAY THIS CAR FLOWS'**





Porsche 918, the battery soon gains and stores enough energy for the NSX to switch itself into electric mode and waft you along at low speeds with a whirr and a modest kerfuffle of road and wind noise. The novelty of this never wears off.

Nudge to Sport and you immediately feel more immersed in familiar territory. There's an energy and intent about the car, exciting as much for the reserves of pent-up performance yet to be tapped as for the confident, polished way in which it makes swift, unfussed progress. The magnetic damping strikes a nice balance between support and suppleness, so although there's a tangible increase in tautness as you switch from Quiet to Sport, it doesn't come with sharp edges.

If you came to the NSX in blissful ignorance of its hybrid tech, you'd merely think it had an absolute mutha of an engine tucked behind your shoulders. If you concentrate, you'll detect a faint depletion of shove once the electric motors have done their bit up to 4000rpm, but in truth the sensation of slingshotting out of corners and down the road is all-consuming. Similarly, the fly-by-wire brakes – one of the bigger challenges with hybrid tech – are extremely well honed, disguising the varying

degrees of regen effect with a firm, consistent pedal and deeply impressive stopping power.

You need a smooth road to truly enjoy it, but upping the ante to Sport+ is where you really feel like the NSX is turning up the heat. With more weight in the steering, more immediacy to the power delivery and greater firmness in the damping, it feels as if both you and the car have been plumbed into a shared adrenal gland. The nine-speed DCT transmission is one of the best judged of its kind, with ultra-clean and eerily prescient up- and downshifts when left to its own devices. That said, it's more fun to flip the paddles yourself.

The steering is alert but not jumpy in its responses, and while it's not as immediately communicative as, say, a Ferrari 488's, if you give yourself a chance to dial yourself in there's feel and connection to be found. The front end has terrific bite. Almost too much for the tail to keep up with, in fact. Sometimes, if you're aggressive with your initial steering input, you'll feel the tail begin to rotate, at least in slow corners, but the stability-control system brings things back into line. Through faster corners the NSX is calmer but still incredibly agile. It feels alive, up on its toes but somehow

**'IT FEELS ALIVE,  
UP ON ITS TOES  
BUT SOMEHOW  
STILL PLANTED,  
SO YOU TRUST  
IN THE GRIP  
AND LEAN ON IT  
EARLY'**

still planted, so you trust in the grip and lean on it early and with increasing conviction.

Let loose across the moors, the NSX is a spellbinding car. Of course, there's speed to spare. So much that you have to restrict yourself to short bursts of acceleration before settling into a reined-in canter, trading raw G-force for enjoying the way this car finds a flow. It copes with crests and compressions so well, cuts clean lines through fast, transient bends and puts its power down emphatically. Stay in Sport or Sport+ and the damping feels just right – tight and controlled, but free enough to let the car find its feet and get in sync with the road, breathing with the nuances of its surface.

There's a clarity to what this car does. It's not exuberant or wildly expressive in the manner of a Ferrari, but it feels connected and it works so well on fast and challenging roads. It's effortlessly quick and admirably light on its feet, without divorcing you from the excitement of driving. And when you do decide to pull the pin, it feels otherworldly fast, not just accruing speed but grabbing it in 10mph chunks.

As ever with hybrid cars, the elephant in the room is exactly what all the batteries and motors bring, apart from the pros of bolstered

performance and short bursts of zero-emission driving and the cons of weight and frightening complexity. During our performance testing at Bruntingthorpe Proving Ground (see p66) and a return trip to Yorkshire, the NSX averages 15.3mpg. The trip-computer's lifetime average is a slightly more palatable 23.2mpg. Hardly numbers to get you evangelical about hybrids.

There are packaging penalties, too, with no space for bags or coats behind the seats and a modest petrol tank that means a range of around 240 miles (much less if you're going for it). Given the NSX makes light work of daily driving and big journeys, that's a shame.

A shame, but far from a deal-breaker. The NSX is a truly fantastic and intriguing car. Blisteringly quick, brilliantly engineered and utterly individual in looks and deeds, it stands apart from its rivals yet goes toe-to-toe with the very best for performance and dynamics. I knew it would be impressive and hoped it would be engaging. It delivers on both counts. What I wasn't expecting was to be left feeling quite so warm about a car that could so easily have been a cold and calculating science experiment. This is a Honda with true heart and soul.

**Left:** with combined peaks of 573bhp and 476lb ft of torque, plus four-wheel drive and expertly judged damping modes, the NSX monsters the North York Moors and requires restraint from the driver





SILVERSTONE

PIT LANE ACCESS  
DRIVERS ONLY



by DAVID VIVIAN

PHOTOGRAPHY by DEAN SMITH

# NSX v 918

*Thanks to similarities in its technical layout, some have suggested that the new Honda NSX is a 'junior' Porsche 918 Spyder. But how close does the hybrid newcomer really get to the icon?*

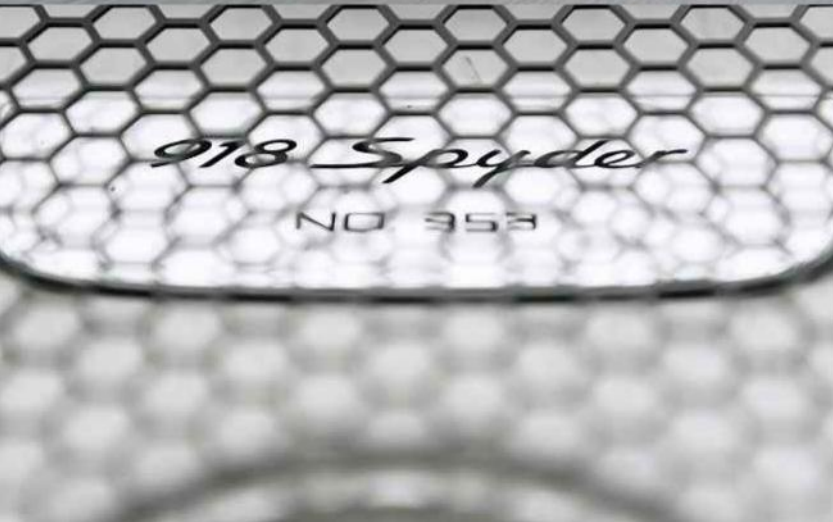
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**N 22 JULY 2014, SOMETHING HAPPENED THAT** made my life a little simpler. It ironed out a wrinkle of uncertainty that had always snagged the smooth running of any conversation heading towards a particular, job-related question. The best car I'd ever driven? Not a clue. Over the years I'd lied, hedged, sat on the fence until my bum went numb. I could make a case for a Frankencar amalgam, maybe a two-way split. But never one set of wheels. Then, sometime around 3pm that Tuesday afternoon, a moment of clarity...

For one day only, the Porsche 918 Spyder was the eye of a perfect storm that gathered and raged on the *evo* Triangle. Weird thing is, it's a car I'm not sure I ever want to drive again. The memory is too precious, the embedded thrill too potent. Warm air, cloudless sky, a dry and all but deserted Triangle save for a McLaren P1, driven by stunt driver and tester Mauro Carlo, keeping company in the Porsche's rear-view mirror.

Far from having to scratch for meaningful references, here was almost too much context – not least that provided by the open dihedral door to a Woking-flavoured alternate hypercar reality from which to measure and ponder the reach of the Weissach-spec 918's abilities. If there was an epiphany to emerge from this collision of competing 'ultimates' on the ultimate road over the course of this perfect day, everything was in exquisite alignment.

**Below:** Porsche 918 Spyder is king of the dramatic, both from behind the wheel and in all its details; 4.6-litre V8 started life in the LMP2 RS Spyder





## ‘THE PORSCHE SEEMED TO BE COMPOSED ENTIRELY OF SUPERPOWERS THAT COULD BE SUMMONED IN THE SNAP OF A SYNAPSE’

What transpired was this. The Porsche 918 Spyder smoked the mighty McLaren P1. Not statistically – the lighter, more powerful P1 should have been quicker, yet largely thanks to the Porsche’s four-wheel drive and mammoth, electro-massaged 944lb ft of torque, there was little to choose between them against the clock, and nothing on the road. But experientially... this is what really got to me. Frequently sublime and magnificent as the McLaren was, the Porsche seemed to be composed entirely of superpowers that could be summoned in the snap of a synapse. I’d never driven a car able to transition from sub-7sec 0-60mph zero-emissions silence to sub-6sec 0-100mph V8 violence in a blink, a car that could excite quite so many hairs on the back of my neck or corner so swiftly I could feel the tug of gravity on my cheek. It simply didn’t seem possible that such preternatural performance, grip and dynamics could also be so approachable, transparent and trustworthy.

The 918 Spyder was thus logged in the Vivian memory bank as a unique high, never to be repeated. But then Honda UK managed to get hold of a new NSX, the long overdue, US-flavoured hybrid reboot of the Japanese

legend some critics were glibly dubbing ‘a cut-price 918’. Since you could no longer buy a 918 new, or a P1 or a LaFerrari for that matter, and with used examples of the Porsche fetching in the region of £1.3million, the temptation to enrol a bargain-basement successor with trickled-down hybrid hyperness was perhaps understandable, if largely the result of wishful thinking.

Yes, there are a few basic similarities. Both mid-engined cars have four-wheel drive, more electric motors than are strictly necessary to fulfil the hybrid brief, weigh significantly more than their non-hybrid rivals, yet are well versed in the compensatory dark art of advanced torque vectoring – augmented by rear-axle steering in the Porsche’s case. But the petrol part of the Honda package, a purpose-built twin-turbo 3.5-litre V6, is conceptually closer to the P1’s twin-turbo 3.8-litre V8 than the 918’s naturally aspirated, race-derived 4.6-litre aluminium, titanium and steel V8. And, although the NSX has an even broader distribution of electric motive parts, the Porsche’s generate far more energy from a higher capacity battery, allowing it to operate purely and swiftly as an electric car (for up



to 20 miles) or make you believe there's a 10-litre monster under the engine cover when combustion and current are giving it the lot together.

Apart from their torque-vectoring duties – which, admittedly, are many and ingenious – the Honda's electric motors' main contribution to forward motion is torque-fill, much in the manner of the McLaren's. Then there are the starkly one-sided respective power-to-weight ratios: 531bhp per ton for the 918 plays 320bhp per ton for the NSX. Against the clock it's no contest. In the seven and a half seconds Honda claims the NSX takes to sprint from rest to 100mph, the Porsche is the far side of 125mph, nutting it out with the P1 and La Ferrari.

But forget all of that. What I can tell you – indeed, have already told you in last year's eCoty 2016 – is this: 'The NSX reminds me vividly and outrageously of the Porsche 918 Spyder.' Before a wheel turned in anger, Colin Goodwin and I had already discussed the likelihood of the NSX being a 'junior 918' and, based on what we already knew and Henry Catchpole's generally positive thoughts from the launch event, believed it to be a dim and distant possibility at best, but a possibility nonetheless.

It didn't take long on the first decent stretch of Day One's route for the sensations and skills I thought I'd revisit only as memories to materialise behind the wheel of the Honda. All right, the sense of occasion was vastly diminished, the soundtrack's fire subdued and the cabin's quality fittings non-existent. But the similarities were just as compelling. Over the ensuing days, some notably rapid cars on eCoty didn't see which way the NSX went. Returning to eCoty HQ one evening on fast and flowing but slightly damp back roads, the NSX simply walked away from the Porsche 911 R. The big difference was that Henry Catchpole in the 911 was nibbling the limit and Dan Prosser in the NSX was wondering where on Earth it might be.

Like the 918, the NSX is able to cover ground at a speed that seems faintly absurd and bears scant relation to the conventional constraints of its power and weight. In fact, the apparent gap between cause and effect is even more pronounced in the Honda, but both cars acquire their advantages in remarkably similar ways. Aided by a seven-speed PDK transmission with speed-of-thought shift times, the 918 driver can deploy instant, crushing low- and mid-range torque, either in a straight line or devastatingly early exiting a bend thanks to all-wheel drive, understeer-quelling torque vectoring, and rear-steer. Although it doesn't have as much twist or any rear-steer at its disposal, the NSX and its comparably swift-shifting nine-speed auto pull off exactly the same trick, mitigating the potential lag-boost effects of its twin turbos with immediate throttle response, the right gear and the full weight of the electric motors' precisely vectored torque. Huge instant-access acceleration with massive traction and grip: a killer combination.

Along with similarly firm but expertly calibrated suspension electronics and damping, it allows both cars to manage their mass brilliantly. They both feel much lighter and more agile than their circa 1700kg kerb weights would suggest. Also helping to dissipate the impression of excessive weight are tremendously powerful braking systems that, despite their regenerative function, also share superb pedal feel.

Let's not overstate this. The new Honda NSX isn't a substitute Porsche 918 Spyder. It doesn't have enough engine, electricity, aural charisma or material quality to pull that one off. Its tech and modus operandi, on the other hand, owe much to the German hypercar and serve it extremely well.

Swapping between the McLaren 570S and the NSX on eCoty felt spookily reminiscent of that sunny day on the **evo** Triangle in July 2014, when the P1 and 918 went toe-to-toe. And that's remarkable enough.

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**Right:** outgunned by the 918 Spyder in almost every department, the NSX nevertheless is imbued with the same spirit as the Porsche and on public roads is outrageously fast



## Honda NSX

**Engine** V6, 3493cc, twin-turbo, plus 2 x 36bhp electric motors, front, and 47bhp electric motor, rear  
**Power** 573bhp (combined)  
**Torque** 476lb ft (combined)  
**Transmission** Nine-speed dual-clutch gearbox, four-wheel drive, limited-slip differential

**Front suspension** Double wishbones, double-joint lower control arms, adaptive dampers, anti-roll bar

**Rear suspension** Multi-link, adaptive coil-over dampers, anti-roll bar

**Brakes** Carbon-ceramic discs (option), 380mm front, 361mm rear, ABS, EBD

**Wheels** 8 x 19in front, 11 x 20in rear  
**Tyres** 245/35 ZR19 front, 305/30 R20 rear

**Weight** 1776kg  
**Power-to-weight** 320bhp/ton

**0-62mph** 2.9sec (claimed)  
**Top speed** 191mph (claimed)

**Basic price** £143,950  
**On sale** Now

**evo rating:** ★★★★★

## Porsche 918 Spyder

**Engine** V8, 4593cc, plus 127bhp electric motor, front, and 154bhp electric motor, rear

**Power** 875bhp (combined) @ 8500rpm

**Torque** 944lb ft (combined) @ 6600rpm

**Transmission** Seven-speed PDK gearbox, four-wheel drive, limited-slip diff, PTV

**Front suspension** Double wishbones, coil springs, PASM dampers, anti-roll bar

**Rear suspension** Multi-link, coil springs, PASM dampers, anti-roll bar, rear-steer

**Brakes** Carbon-ceramic discs, 410mm front, 390mm rear, ABS, EBD

**Wheels** 9.5 x 20in front, 12.5 x 21in rear  
**Tyres** 265/35 ZR20 front, 325/30 ZR21 rear

**Weight** 1675kg (1634kg Weissach Package)

**Power-to-weight** 531bhp/ton (544 WP)

**0-62mph** 2.6sec (claimed)

**Top speed** 214mph (claimed, 215mph WP)

**Value today** £1.3m-1.5m

**On sale** 2013-2015

**evo rating:** ★★★★★



# AGAINST THE CLOCK

BRUNTINGTHORPE

by RICHARD MEADEN



**THERE USED TO BE AN ART TO** figuring supercars. Precisely judging the right revs for the standing start, deciding whether to abruptly drop the clutch or feed it in smoothly, balancing torque against available traction, using a smear of wheelspin to keep a cammy or laggy engine on the boil, nailing the first-to-second upshift, not clipping the rev limiter. And, of course, not breaking anything.

These days it's not much more than selecting the correct dynamic mode. The NSX is no exception. Engaging launch control entails turning the simple rotary dynamic mode switch clockwise and holding it until Sport+ becomes Track. Then step on the brake with your left foot, engage first gear with a pull on the right-hand paddleshifter, push the throttle firmly into the carpet, whip your foot off the brake pedal and let the car do the rest.

What happens next is at once effortless and somewhat startling, the NSX leaping off the line with zero fuss and maximum propulsion. With the electric motors doing what they do best, the Honda snaps forward with such immediacy it momentarily leaves your head – and senses – behind.

Bruntingthorpe's runway surface was designed for Cold War nuclear bombers, not optimum traction, yet our first few runs see the

NSX happily hitting 60mph in 3.1sec, 100mph in 6.9sec and going on through the gears until we run out of straight. Sadly we only have access to the second half of the runway today, but it's enough room for the NSX to run just shy of 160mph and then demonstrate its other party piece: eye-popping braking.

We repeat the process a few times – using launch control and automated gearshifts – and the times are identical. By now I've noticed the NSX always shifts a little early from first to second gear, so I try a few runs where I change gear myself, in an effort to wring every last bit of reach from the first few gears. The revs rise incredibly quickly through first and second, and on the first run I clip the rev limiter. I manage to just pre-empt the limiter on my next run, stealing a small but very satisfying tenth of a second to 60 and 100mph, which drops the NSX's times to 3.0 and 6.8. A third run yields identical times.

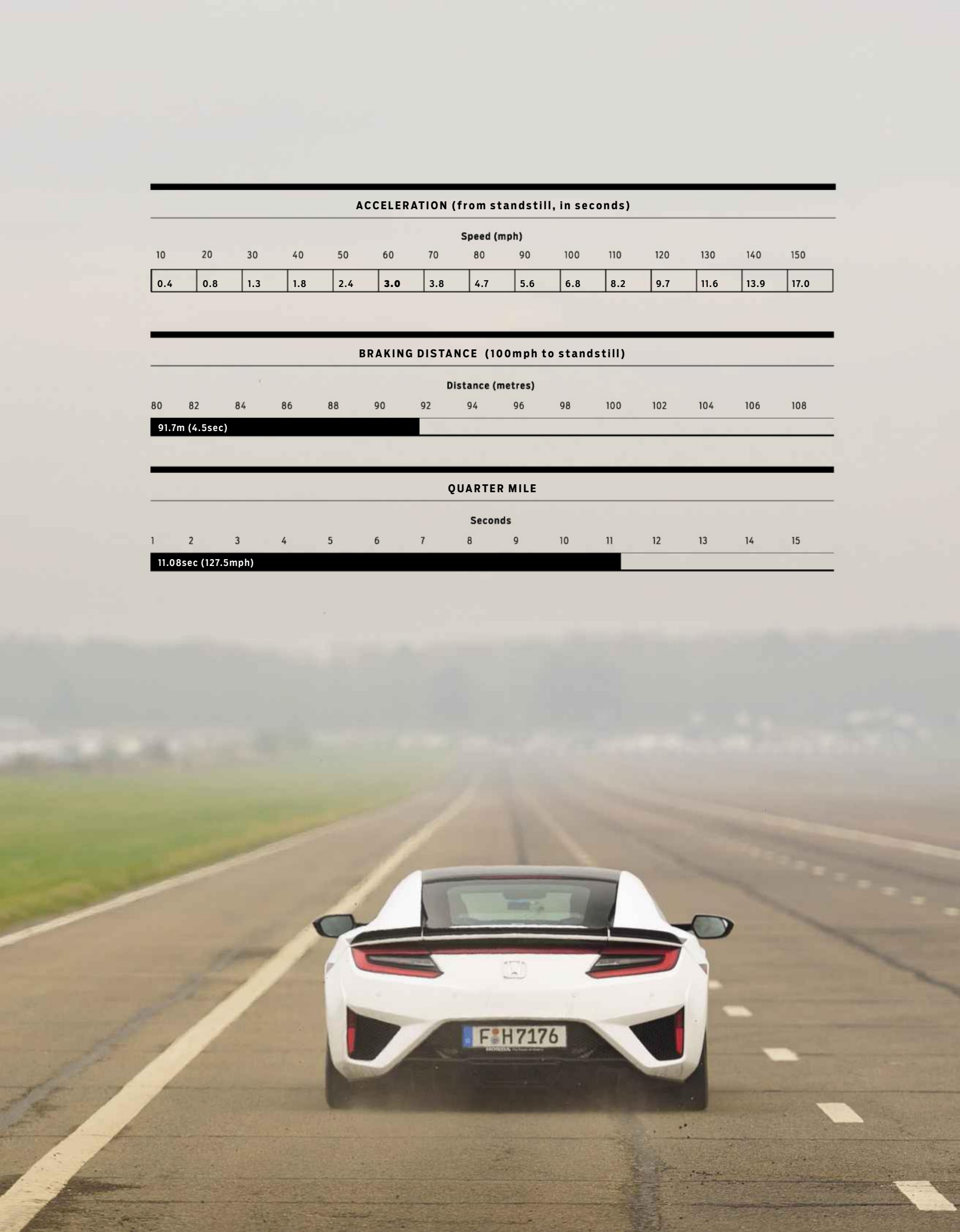
That's pretty bloody impressive on cold concrete with the car running on 'prime' Continental rubber, rather than the stickier 'option' Pirellis. Perhaps best – and most unexpectedly – of all, even a car laden with technology responds to a bit of human input and improvisation. Maybe the art of figuring isn't dead after all. ☒

**'I'VE NOTICED THE NSX ALWAYS SHIFTS A LITTLE EARLY FROM FIRST TO SECOND GEAR, SO I TRY A FEW RUNS WHERE I CHANGE GEAR MYSELF'**

ACCELERATION (from standstill, in seconds)														
Speed (mph)														
10	20	30	40	50	60	70	80	90	100	110	120	130	140	150
0.4	0.8	1.3	1.8	2.4	3.0	3.8	4.7	5.6	6.8	8.2	9.7	11.6	13.9	17.0

BRAKING DISTANCE (100mph to standstill)														
Distance (metres)														
80	82	84	86	88	90	92	94	96	98	100	102	104	106	108
91.7m (4.5sec)														

QUARTER MILE														
Seconds														
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15
11.08sec (127.5mph)														



ERUNNER ELECTRIC PIKES PEAK RACER

# PEAK

*Electric race cars came of age when Rhys Millen's battery-powered beast won Pikes Peak overall in 2015. We drive the electric Tajima Rimac eRunner, which soon hopes to repeat the feat*

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by DAN PROSSER

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PHOTOGRAPHY by ASTON PARROTT

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POWER

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#### THE SUMMIT OF THE PIKES PEAK

International Hill Climb course is over 14,000ft above sea level. That's halfway to the top of Mount Everest. What this means, of course, is that the air is very thin, which makes the simple act of breathing a real struggle. You gulp harder and faster and more deliberately at the air, but your lungs just don't get the oxygen they need.

Down at sea level, where the air is so thick in comparison it feels like you could front-crawl through it, oxygen makes up 21 per cent of the atmosphere. Three miles up, at the top of Pikes Peak, that number drops to just 12 per cent. Being up there is like drowning in slow motion.

Anything that needs oxygen to operate suffers in the same way, internal combustion engines included. A car might produce 700bhp on the start line, but by the time it reaches the finish it'll struggle to crank out much more than 400bhp as it chokes on the thin, wispy air, the explosions in the combustion chambers popping like soggy fireworks rather than going off like grenades. This is where the electric motor steals an advantage. As long as the batteries feed it a current, the motor will spin away just as hard and as fast at the top of a mountain – or even at the point where flight becomes space travel – as it would on the shores of the Atlantic. The electric motor has no need for oxygen.

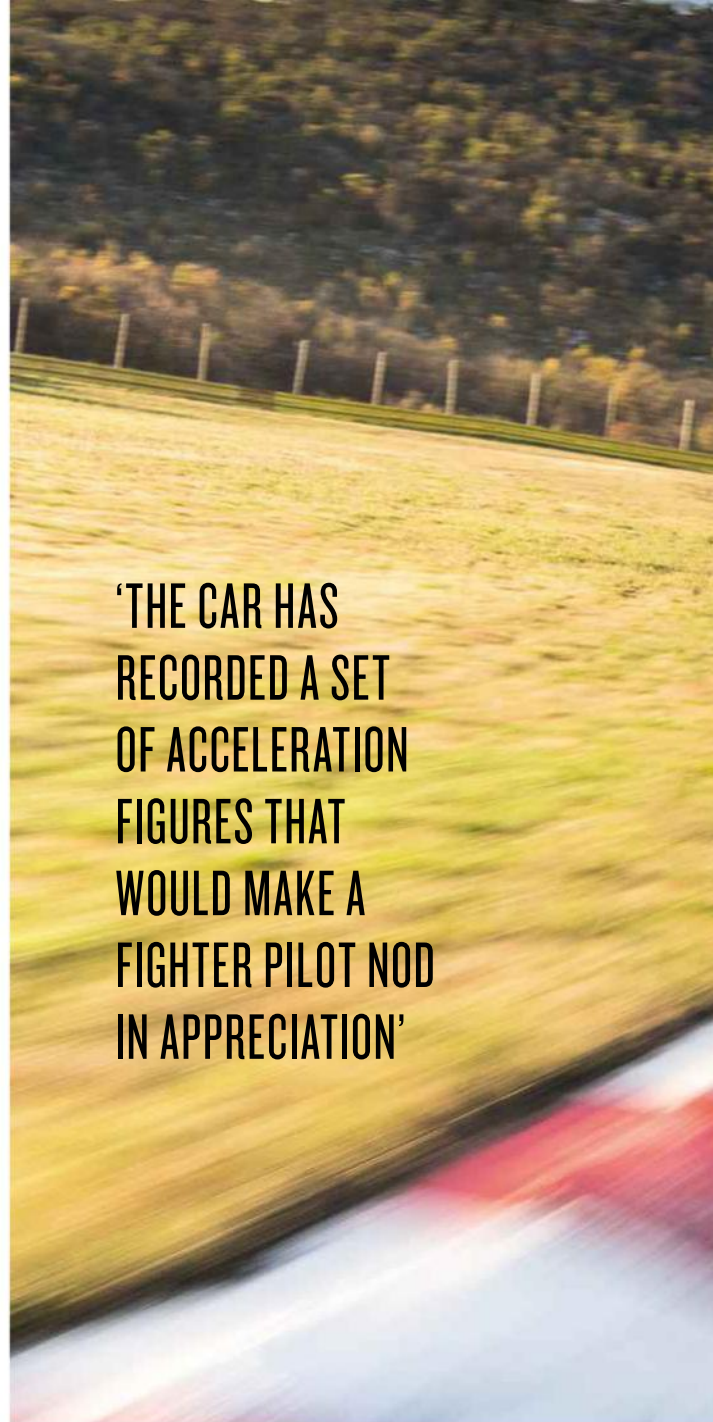
That's why electric cars are starting to have it their way at Pikes Peak. We're at a sort of crossover point right now; an electric car will win one year and a combustion-engine car the next. But the trend suggests the Rocky Mountains might not rock to the sound of V8s, straight-sixes and turbocharged fours for a whole lot long longer.

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IN APPRECIATION'



**Left:** orange cable trailing from the eRunner hints that fossil fuels aren't required in this pit garage.

**Above:** through corners the car's steering plays a less important role than its torque vectoring system





The Race to the Clouds was first won by an electric car in 2015. The open-top, Radical-style machine, driven by New Zealander Rhys Millen, used six electric motors to develop 1400bhp, plus enough instantly available torque to unscrew a White House intern. It set a time of 9 minutes 7.2 seconds on the 12.4-mile course, beating the best-placed petrol-engined competitor by almost half a minute.

The car you see here, the Tajima Rimac eRunner, finished second that year, trailing Millen's machine by 25 seconds. It, too, is all-electric, and were it not for brake failure part-way up the climb, it may well have beaten Millen's time. The eRunner is the result of a collaboration between Monster Sport, the race team owned by nine-time Pikes Peak winner Nobuhiro 'Monster' Tajima, and Rimac Automobili, the Croatian upstart behind the spectacular Concept One supercar (evo 227). It's insured for around £3million, which means I'll be trying very hard not to crash.

Monster Sport was responsible for the rolling spaceframe chassis, the bodywork and the aero, while Rimac developed the motors, the

batteries, the cooling system and the software for the very clever torque-vectoring system. Just like the road-going Concept One, the eRunner uses one motor for each wheel, here producing a total power output of 1500bhp. The driver sits centrally beneath a fighter jet-style canopy, flanked on either side by huge battery packs. At 1500kg the eRunner is no flyweight.

You couldn't call it a pretty race car, either, and from certain angles it seems quite tall and narrow, but it could hardly look more purposeful. With its carbonfibre bodywork removed and a tangle of bright orange and yellow cables running across it like some colour-coded central nervous system, it looks dangerous, as though you should stand well back or risk getting fried. The huge rear wing helps to generate 800kg of downforce at 100mph, although that drops by half at the top of the course as the air thins. Incidentally, the car carries an oxygen supply to make sure the driver doesn't wilt like the downforce.

The eRunner has actually been around since 2012, long before Rimac got involved. The original version used Mitsubishi-supplied



**Left:** a lot to take in: the eRunner's fascia is awash with switches and buttons. **Right:** spaceframe chassis is the work of Monster Sport; battery packs reside either side of the driver's seat



**'THE TORQUE VECTORING IS SO EFFECTIVE THAT THE DRIVER HAS TO UNLEARN THEIR OWN DRIVING TECHNIQUE TO SOME EXTENT'**





batteries and although it did have an electric motor on each wheel, there was no torque vectoring. It developed some 800bhp, but riddled with gremlins it never set Pikes Peak alight. When Tajima met Rimac Automobili founder Mate Rimac late in 2014, a plan was hatched to drop the Concept One's drivetrain into the car.

Like all the best motorsport projects, this one was desperately short on time. The chassis only arrived at Rimac's Zagreb premises in March 2015, just three months ahead of that year's event. 'It was a crazy time for us,' says Tomislav Šimuni, vehicle dynamics team leader at Rimac. During those three months the company's technicians worked around the clock, fitting the motors, the power distribution unit, the heavy-duty wiring, the pair of 200kg battery packs and the four chains that transfer drive from the motors to the wheels. The build was finished in May, leaving just a couple of weeks to make sure the thing actually worked before it was shipped to Colorado.

In the same way that a top-fuel dragster is designed specifically to accelerate over the quarter mile as quickly as possible, or the way a Bonneville racer is designed to reach high speeds over a longer distance, the eRunner is built for Pikes Peak and nothing else. It has a range of 15 miles, which leaves just enough sparks in reserve at the top of the climb to ensure the batteries don't drop below the dreaded 20 per cent mark, the point at which power output starts to fade rapidly. The slick tyres, too, are designed to cover just 15 miles: the rubber is so soft you imagine you could burrow through the tread and down to the carcass using your fingernails alone. Even the weight distribution has been optimised at 52:48 front to rear to suit the course's seven per cent incline.

During early shakedown runs the team recorded a set of acceleration figures that would make a fighter pilot nod in appreciation. From a

standing start the car hit 62mph in 2.3sec and 124mph in just 5.4sec. It accelerated at 1.3 G all the way to 100mph, which is more G-force than a Porsche 911 GT3 can pull in an emergency braking manoeuvre. There was no doubt about it: Tajima's men and Rimac's boys had built some special kind of monster.

The eRunner's party piece, though, is its all-wheel torque vectoring. With a motor per wheel, the computers can send drive exactly where it's needed with incredible precision, and with much more immediacy than a combustion engine and a set of differentials can manage. It's all about clawing every last ounce of grip from those four bubble gum-in-the-sun super-tacky tyres.

The torque vectoring is so effective, however, that the driver has to unlearn their own driving technique to some extent. For Tajima, who was 65 at the time, that didn't come naturally. The Japanese rally driver made his name wrestling fearsomely quick petrol-engined monsters up Pikes Peak, back when it was paved in places and loose in others (it's now all paved), and in that time he inevitably developed a certain style. 'I've never seen a driver as aggressive as him,' comments Šimuni. 'He's an old-school driver and sometimes he fights the torque vectoring.'

'The first thing I saw him do when he tried the car for the first time,' adds Kruno Hrvatini, Rimac's torque-vectoring genius, 'was turn up the power to 100 per cent, accelerate at full throttle, then brake so hard that all four wheels locked. We hadn't locked the wheels once at that point.'

In an all-wheel-torque-vectoring car such as this one, the steering wheel is less a device for controlling or balancing the vehicle and more a means of guiding it. The steering angle is really the only way the car can know where you want it to go, which means traditional rally-style techniques such as Scandinavian flicks and to some extent even opposite



lock just don't work. You'll confuse the hell out of it. Instead, you should simply point the steering wheel where you want the car to go and leave it to get you there, no matter how much you think it might oversteer here or push on there. It takes a neat, delicate driving style, not a flamboyant one honed over several decades on gravel rally stages.

With a record nine Pikes Peak victories Tajima is, of course, a driver with a rare natural ability, but he's also less adaptable to new types of car than a younger, less experienced driver might be. Having spent so long pedalling conventional cars, Tajima also prefers a high level of regenerative braking to replicate engine braking. That's good for the batteries' state of charge, but as Hrvatini explains: 'It just isn't smooth. Driving dynamics theory says the optimal amount of torque to put through the tyres at the apex of a corner is zero, so you want the motors to be disengaged, not recovering energy.' Still, Tajima dragged this thing up Pikes Peak faster than anybody with a cylinder block in 2015, so he must have been doing something right.

The car looks huge when it's right in front of you. I swivel over the two-foot-wide battery pack on the left side and fall into the cockpit, noting how downright wrong the seating position is for my body shape. The seat-back is bolt upright, the steering wheel is huge and almost out of reach, there's no support for my thighs and the gap between the brake pedal and the throttle is so wide I worry my right foot might drop straight

through the void just as I dive into the biggest braking zone on the circuit I'll be driving it on. Tajima likes it that way.

The drawn-out starting procedure – prime this system here and isolate that doodad there, but only after you've double-checked that really important whasit – is almost as baffling as the bank of dials and switches behind the steering wheel, dials and switches that toggle through countless settings for the power steering and the torque vectoring and the regen braking and whatever else. You could commute in this thing for a year and still only figure out what half of them do. It's all a bit much.

The circuit is very cool, though, and properly atmospheric with it. A couple of hours west of Zagreb, Grobnik is an unmanicured, tumbledown sort of place with flaky pit buildings and a crumbling track surface. And lots of stray cats. The kerbs are high and steeply angled and the corners are heavily cambered, which gives the track the runaway flow of a rollercoaster. In the shadow of a rugged mountain range it's as characterful a circuit as you'll find anywhere.

Electric cars are normally very quiet, but as soon as this eRunner gets moving at anything over walking pace it shrieks and screams and wails and whines so manically that I wonder if I've been sold a lie. Even through my helmet I can barely hear myself think. Chain drives. My word, they make a racket.

That's just the first of many overwhelming sensory inputs, the second

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being the outrageous straight-line acceleration. Now, the eRunner's batteries have lived a life – the car went back to Pikes Peak in 2016 and finished fifth overall, running 20 seconds quicker than the previous year – so they're beyond their best, which means the total power output is down to around 1000bhp. No biggie – 50-year-old Mike Tyson remains a deadly pugilist in the grand scheme of things, and even after a tough life and a bruising comeback, the eRunner still packs an almighty punch.

Powerful electric machines have an immediate, uninterrupted way of flinging themselves down the road or circuit, and they feel faster and faster and seem to accelerate harder and harder the longer you keep your foot in, until you suddenly hit top speed. It's less like accelerating in a petrol-powered car and more like plummeting from some great height. The sense of panic is the same, too. The eRunner shoots away from standstill like nothing I've ever driven, yet once rolling it doesn't shove a whole lot harder than a really quick road car, such as a McLaren 675LT. But with another 500bhp? I can only imagine.

The brakes are strong and the steering very light, if quite vague. In fact, while the eRunner looks like a wild, untameable, only-the-brave competition machine, it's no effort to drive around Grobnik: a Caterham track car takes more exertion. The significant factor here is the torque vectoring. With the system switched off the car does feel big and heavy, but with the computers juggling torque this way and that, dragging the inside wheels on the way into a corner to make it pivot, overloading the outside rear from the apex through to the exit to keep it on line, it feels like a different machine. It's like taking 500kg out of it, or adding 500kg of downforce, or replacing worn-out tyres with sticky new slicks.

All-wheel torque vectoring is akin to black magic. It gives freakish dynamic ability and levels of grip and agility that normal cars just can't hope to match. It's as though the eRunner is hooking onto a pivot point on the inside of every corner and swinging around it like a chimp swinging from treetop to treetop. It makes me feel excited about the not-so-faraway Faraday future of the performance car, and when Šimuni says, 'One day an electric car will beat Sébastien Loeb's record time at Pikes Peak' – which would mean going 45 seconds faster than any electric car has ever gone – I simply have to believe him. ✕

**Above:** huge rear wing contributes to 800kg of downforce at 100mph, at sea level, at least. **Right:** eRunner's tyres have super-soft tread designed to last just 15 miles



*There was plenty of scepticism about Formula E when the electric race series launched in 2014, but it has since developed into a sporting event that could teach Formula 1 a few lessons about racing and competition, argues Antony Ingram*

# FORMULA 1



**MANSELL VERSUS SENNA AT** Monaco in 1992. The rain-sodden BTCC feature race at Donington Park in '98 (also featuring 'Our Nige'). Button's charge from the back at the 2011 Canadian GP. René Arnoux and Gilles Villeneuve bashing wheels at Dijon in 1979. Asked to name the greatest races of all time, most of you could probably reel off a similar list.

Mine would also include the final few laps of the 2016 Buenos Aires ePrix. Why? Sébastien Buemi on the charge of a lifetime, having started from the back of the grid. British driver Sam Bird fighting for rear grip as he defends a lead he's had since the flag dropped. Both drivers with enough battery energy to drive flat-out to the finish.

'My car last year was very overweight,' Bird tells me. 'And all that weight was at the rear and quite high up, which made for a very oversteery car...'

It wasn't the only race last year that he

fought with his car. 'No matter what we did with the setup, after a couple of laps the weight came into effect, I'd overheat the rear tyres, and be sliding all over the place,' he says. That came to a head at round 4 in Buenos Aires. Buemi's on-board footage was incredible – Bird's car stepping out of line at nearly every turn. There was more action in those final few laps than I've seen in F1 for years.

Some will scoff at including Formula E in a list of greatest anythings. You may already be turning the page. But do me a favour: seek out that Buenos Aires race. You won't regret it. And the races (and qualifying) are held on Saturdays, so you can still enjoy a snooze at around 1pm each Sunday without missing any action. It might be difficult for petrolheads to marry the ideas of excitement and electric drivetrains, or motorsport without sound (Formula E does have sound, just not the kind we're used to), but racing is

racing and Formula E enjoys some of the best four-wheeled competition around right now.

Bird will tell you the same. As will the 19 drivers he competes against and rates highly. Higher than some in F1. I ask him the obvious question: if he got that call from Mercedes, or Red Bull, would Formula E be a distant memory?

'No. I don't have the £15million needed for a seat,' he says. 'That's what's great about Formula E – drivers are paid for their talent. It's not just arrive and drive. Nobody is here because of sponsorship.' That feeling of exasperation every time an F1 team hires a Maldonado with millions in sponsorship behind them? Not in Formula E: every driver is there on merit.

Also easy to appreciate is the appeal of a series where the cars are so closely matched. F1 is characterised by vast budgets and dominant teams exploiting loopholes in otherwise restrictive rules

# FORMULA E



(think blown diffusers, or Mercedes' split turbocharger), leading to stretches where previous winners don't get a look-in – and low-budget backmarkers fall ever further behind. Formula E's budgets are much lower, development more gradual. No team is leaps and bounds ahead, even if some – Renault e.dams, ABT, DS Virgin – have made greater progress than others. In a couple more seasons' time we'll see even greater changes, but the racing should remain close.

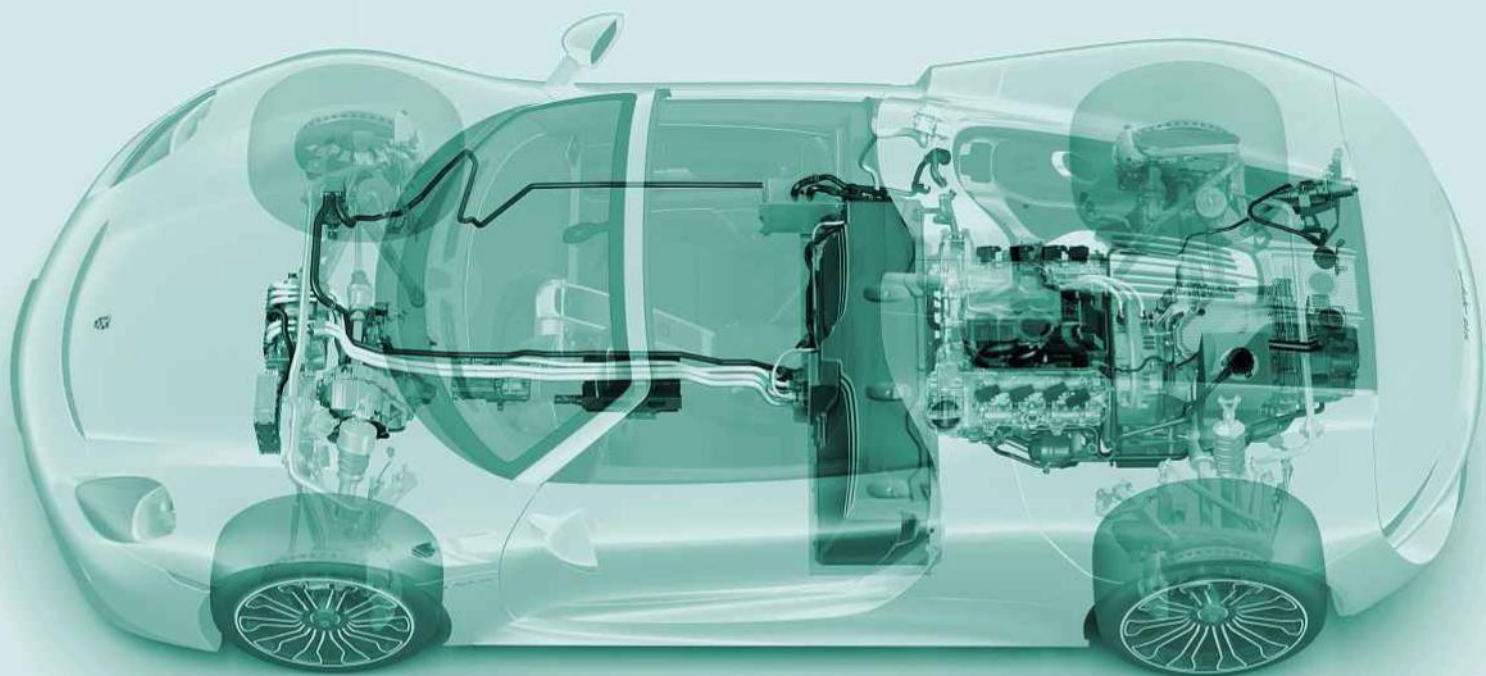
There are still problems to be ironed out. When pushed, Bird admits he'd like more performance, but that will come. They already make more power than during the 2014-15 season, using less energy. Eventually, battery technology will improve to the extent that the gimmicky car swapping will no longer be necessary.

Regardless, excitement levels will still be high. Formula E's street-circuit approach works on many levels: silver-

**'Formula E's street-circuit approach works on many levels: city backdrops, bumpy surfaces that test the skill of the drivers, and a real sense of jeopardy'**

screen city backdrops; low grip (tyres and tarmac), bumpy surfaces that test the skill of the drivers; accessibility for spectators; and a real sense of jeopardy, since one mistake could end a driver's race. Packed with character (and overtaking spots) they're a real antidote to the soulless Tilke-designed ribbons F1 has long suffered. Better still, there's interest in setting up tracks in 'old' markets like France, Italy, Germany, the UK and America, rather than government-backed outposts.

That Formula E cars aren't as quick as those of some other single-seater series barely matters, as the close confines and even closer racing make the action look far more dramatic than it would on an open course with acres of friendly run-off. Anyone who has ever watched Formula Ford, or even Mini Se7ens, will realise that speed is less important to the racing spectacle than close competition. We'll just have to get used to the noise...



# BEYOND HYBRIDS

by DAN PROSSER

*The trouble with hybrids tends to be the component we are so fond of championing – the internal combustion engine. So should we ditch that part altogether and go fully electric?*

**H**YBRID POWERTRAINS are a stopgap technology. By and large hybrid cars are less satisfying to drive than full EVs, hindered as they so often are by their limp, laggy engines and meagre electric-only ranges. All too often they don't match their claimed fuel economy figures in the real world, either, unless you can stop to plug in every nine miles. In fact, it's not unusual to drive a hybrid car and think, 'This thing is being let down by its combustion engine, not its electric motors...'

Of course, there are one or two petrol-electric sports cars that marry monstrous engines with some form of electrification to devastating effect – the Porsche 918 Spyder would seem to be the prime example, mating a screaming race-derived V8 to a plug-in hybrid unit – but that's little comfort to those of us who don't earn a footballer's pay packet.

BMW's i8 demonstrates the frustration

better than most. Its three-cylinder, 228bhp combustion engine is unresponsive and unsatisfying to wring out. Its soundtrack is so dismal BMW actually had to fake the exhaust note using the stereo. Like a lazy, disinterested bass player who drags the rest of the band down with him, that charmless engine is what stands between the otherwise brilliant i8 and greatness. With the weight of the engine and the gearbox and the fuel tank and whatever else given over to motors and battery packs, the i8 would surely be better to drive, and perhaps even faster. That said, I have often thought the i8 would be faster and better to drive if its entire drivetrain was replaced by a whacking great V8, but that seems unlikely these days.

The Honda NSX isn't saddled with such a miserly combustion engine as the i8, but even its twin-turbocharged V6 is unremarkable at best and entirely flat on the ear, too. The new Porsche Panamera 4 E-Hybrid, meanwhile, is a particularly guilty offender. Its V6 is coarse,

the calibration between the two power units is clumsy at times, and the electric-only range is pretty limited at a claimed 15-31 miles.

When you drive a really good EV you simply don't miss the petrol engine, not even in something fast and exotic. The strange, relentless power delivery and sci-fi soundtrack of an electric performance car are so compelling that you just don't pine for pistons and spark plugs. And if the EV in question uses a single motor on each wheel, as Rimac Automobili's Concept One (*evo* 227) does so effectively, it can pull off moves that few petrol-powered cars could hope to keep step with.

I don't wish to sound the death knell for the four-stroke performance car. Being a terrible Luddite I would basically prefer it if all high-performance cars did without any form of electrification at all. But if they absolutely must – and these days it seems that they must – let's be smart about it and get rid of the noisy, oily, smoky, smelly bit altogether. ❏

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by ADAM TOWLER

PHOTOGRAPHY by ASTON PARROTT

# SIX MACHINES

*Which of these sub-£50k, six-cylinder coupes  
should you choose: Audi's new turbocharged S5,  
BMW's 440i M Sport or Mercedes-AMG's C43?*

# Nice.

Not a good word, nice. It's a word you dread hearing after a first date. It's bland but pleasant, inoffensive, nondescript, toothless – a word we were banned from using in English class at school.

At first glance the new Audi S5, BMW 440i M Sport and Mercedes-AMG C43 coupes are all 'nice' cars: expensive, fast, comfy. Nice badges on the nose. Nice dealerships, too, with nice coffee and nice sales people. They're the indulgent purchase without getting too carried away. After all, each tends to have a bigger brother that gets the really exciting looks, the outrageous performance, the headlines: the M4s, the RS5s, the C63s – the real deal. Below our trio sit the big-engined diesel variants of the same cars, so smug in their claims that 'in the real world' they're just as quick, while offering lower CO2 and fuel consumption. Given these are usually daily drivers often run through a company, not Sunday-morning thrillers, that's uncomfortable pressure; awkward numbers on the tax bill. But what if 'The Thrill of Driving' motivates you? Where do they fall then: a potent everyday compromise, or an awkward irrelevance?

The 'old money' in this test is the BMW. Not because Munich's representative has a penchant for tweed and also owns a 30-year-old Volvo estate – although it is the oldest design in this confrontation, dating back to 2014 – but because long, long ago, before Audi was capable of producing a convincing powerful luxury sports coupe and Mercedes was seemingly disinterested, this was BMW's natural stomping ground. So if you wanted a small-ish, sporty, two-door body with an oversized and blue-blooded six-pot motor up front and a focus on enthusiast driving dynamics, once upon a time you'd just have bought the BMW and been done with it.

Times have long since changed. It's no great surprise that we're hanging this group test off the arrival of the new Audi S5, because the art of making a thoroughly useable, slickly designed, beautifully appointed and unassumingly rapid coupe has become an Audi hallmark. And from the outset, the S5 presses all the right buttons. It's a great big chiselled hunk of German automotive power with its immaculate radii, and there's just enough of the original A5's distinctive lines intact to continue the resemblance. At its core is an all-new, 349bhp 3-litre V6 with a single turbocharger instead of the supercharger of before. It's priced at £47,000, but thanks to its extravagant list of optional extras our test car costs £57,895, the most expensive here.

What then of the BMW? The current 4-series may well adhere to the definition of a coupe but it rather plays it down in spirit. It costs £42,235, but like the Audi, this particular 440i suffers from the usual options price inflation, no doubt

**'The BMW may be the least powerful car here, but it's also the lightest and feels extremely keen'**



**Top:** the BMW 440i – the only rear-wheel-drive car in our trio – can be made to waggle its tail, but its sloppy, lifeless steering discourages you from doing so



subsumed on the monthly PCP or lease smoke and mirrors. It remains the 'cheapest' car here (only just), but it's still a meaty £55,350. Sadly, the 440i badge doesn't equate to a 4-litre V8 but rather the latest iteration of BMW's single-turbocharged straight-six, here producing 321bhp.

Finally, there's the C43. That's another nameplate that sparks distant memories, but this is AMG's junior model line to the V8-powered C63, using the 3-litre V6 with twin turbos that appears in cars such as the SL400. Here it has 362bhp. Like the Audi, but not the BMW, the Mercedes is four-wheel drive. At £47,605 it's a few quid more than the Audi, but at £55,935 as tested that order is overturned today.

All three cars here use a traditional torque converter auto 'box, rather than anything more racy such as a twin-clutch unit (as in the old S5). The BMW, note, is the only one also available with a stick and three pedals.

First impressions of the Audi continue to be positive when opening the door and dropping down into the deeply bolstered sports seat. Ahead is the glow of the 12.3-inch

Virtual Cockpit screen, just one element of a broad, narrow dash and high centre console festooned with carbon and silver-highlighted switchgear. It feels special and exudes quality. That may only be a perception, not based on any cold hard fact of how reliable the oily parts underneath may turn out to be, but it's not hard to see the S5 signing up converts before it's even left the showroom floor.

The Merc shares the Audi's extrovert nature inside; in fact, it's more flamboyant but in a notably different way, with curvier, friendlier shapes to the interior, just as the view out, while narrow-of-glass and coupe-like, is softer than the Audi's brutal, straight-edged vista. I can never quite make up my mind on these new-age interiors from Mercedes. On one hand I applaud the willingness to experiment, to use different materials and textures, but look beneath that and it doesn't feel like the sturdiest of creations. The BMW is unquestionably the least interesting of the three inside, with its broad, blocky centre stack and familiar switchgear. Having said that, it is the one I find easiest to use, and the additional



leather surfaces and 'Individual' seats lift this particular 4-series cabin hugely, if at a cost.

All of these cars place an ability to adapt to time, place, circumstance and driver mood at the very heart of their proposition. And all choose to achieve it with configurability accessible through drive modes and an adaptive chassis. Mercedes includes it in the list price whereas, for example, the adaptive sports suspension is part of the optional M Sport Plus package on the BMW, and our S5 has the options of S suspension with damping control, Dynamic Steering and the Sport Differential. However, the bottom line is that driving, at least in the initial stages, is inevitably going to be a chore of button pressing and experimentation.

The overriding first impression of the S5 is of cool, exacting competence. It drives how its looks suggest it might, how its interior makes you feel. It's a very refined car, and while the ride quality is firm, in Comfort or Auto it's actually very well controlled. It takes less than a mile to realise that this is another very well sorted Audi; that those years of ham-fisted dynamics and harsh rides with little to compensate for them are very much behind us. Oddly, the new V6 seems notable by its absence, a small flourish on start-up, then retreating until it's little more than a murmur, shuffling through the gears briskly under light throttle loads like all these cars do.



**Clockwise from left:** the new S5's cabin continues the great Audi tradition of high-quality efficiency; the BMW's cabin architecture is familiar yet remains stylish; bold and slightly brash, the AMG's interior feels a tad fragile



**‘It’s hard to get the S5 to understeer. In extremes it’s more likely to slide deftly with all four wheels’**

You tend to drive the Audi with small, precise inputs. The Dynamic Steering gives a fast ratio, and in the less sporty modes the steering is very light. Frankly, it’s a rather odd facsimile of what a steering rack in a car used to feel like, but thankfully there’s nothing too weird about its self-centring or general weighting to make it feel actually unpleasant.

A few miles in the BMW is very revealing. The 440i is entirely capable of padding around, offering minimal intrusion into the driver’s life while they access one of the seemingly endless different ways you can listen to media. Fine. But the manner in which it goes about this is hugely disappointing. The chief culprit is the steering: in the standard setting it’s as if its initial operation and weighting are controlled via a mechanism of elastic bands. It’s so sloppy and lifeless, so disconnected, you can’t help but wonder how it could be signed off like that. The BMW’s ride quality is curious too. In essence it rides well in Comfort on a smooth A-road or motorway, and with its comfortable seats (a shade better than the AMG’s, a lot better than the S5’s) and great driving position, it’s a really nice way to travel. But on urban or B-roads the body control is poor, and the dampers seem to run out of ideas very quickly, after which the intrusion of a pothole seems to be transferred straight into the bodyshell, complemented with a bang or a creak from the interior.

The BMW may well be the least powerful car here, but it’s also the lightest, and whatever the figures say on paper it feels extremely keen. So keen that with winter road temperatures the 4-series has a really hard time of containing the sudden, massive build-up of torque from the straight-six, and the rear tyres more often than not give up the fight.

Shouldn’t we be extolling such things as ‘character’, the antidote to ‘nice’? Yes and no. It’s always worth peeling back



a layer of DSC, else you become a prisoner to it, but while the 440i's willingness to wag its tail is sometimes a giggle, without a limited-slip diff there's not a great deal you can do with it, and it's hard to know just how much 'entertainment' you're going to get. It's well worth moving into Sport or Sport+ mode, because the steering gains weight and the body control tightens up too. Driven thus it can be amusing, even if a lot of your time is spent managing traction. Incidentally, in left-hand-drive markets the 440i is available with xDrive four-wheel drive, which would undoubtedly help today.

It's AMG time. The biggest mistake you can make is to approach the C43 as though it's a 'diet' version of the C63 Coupe, or any other V8 AMG monster of recent years. It is a proper AMG, but it's not anything like the V8s, certainly not in spirit and definitely not in terms of oversteer. Like the other cars here, it's an effortless place to cover big miles in, the ride compliant enough in Comfort although without the same control and isolation as the Audi. What's initially most impressive is the steering, for while it's a relatively feedback-free device in the modern style, it combines an immediate response with linearity and normal weighting, and I never

give it a second thought – which is meant as a compliment. You can add more weight to it, but it's hardly necessary.

The AMG-fettled biturbo V6 is distant in normal driving but it builds boost rapidly and punches very, very hard, as you might expect with 383lb ft of torque. Free from the traction headaches of the BMW, it's probably the quickest car here, and it's not all low-down punch either – it likes to rev as well. When you want to have fun the AMG is best driven in manual mode, though with nine gears it can be hard to know precisely where you are. In auto it's too keen to downshift. With so much torque, part of the joy is to feel the performance build in a gear, but the constant shuffling of cogs in auto blunts that feeling and interrupts the acceleration, albeit briefly.

The C43 has more in common with an all-wheel-drive hot hatch than a rowdy coupe. Even in terrible weather it finds amazing traction (69 per cent of the torque goes to the rear axle), which combined with strong brakes and the AMG-developed chassis (C63 parts, stronger components and completely new geometry) means you can really commit to corners with confidence and maintain a lot of corner speed. It's not the most three-dimensional driving experience, but

**Below:** despite its bellowing, crackling biturbo V6, the four-wheel-drive C43 finds massive levels of grip, even when the weather conditions are poor



some sense of personality is added by the sports exhaust, which howls, pops and bangs ludicrously loudly.

In comparison, the Audi never quite steps up to the same level. Instead it takes its inherent competence and simply goes down a road in a significantly quicker manner when asked to do so. Select Dynamic for the steering and it really takes on weight. The V6 finds its voice in its Dynamic setting, but it's a curiously thin, reedy note, in keeping with an engine that's more effective than charismatic. It's the sort of car where you really need the speedo to get a sense of how fast you're travelling, while the response of the gearbox seems a little slow at times, as though it can't quite make up its mind.

The behaviour of the S5's chassis is more impressive. Possessed of a sense of measured control in almost all conditions, it's also surprisingly neutral when pushed to the limit. The optional Sport Differential doesn't mean oversteer on demand, yet it's also hard to get the S5 to understeer, and in extremes – say, provoked by braking into the corner – the car is more likely to slide deftly with all four wheels. If there's a disappointment, it's that after a few miles there's a realisation that it's just not that much

fun: the car has proved it can do it, job done.

BMW doesn't make an M Performance 440i, but that would be a more natural rival to the other two here: the regular 440i, despite its almost too powerful engine, doesn't feel special enough, either in a touchy-feely sense or to drive. The caveat is that the 4-series range gets another facelift this spring, and we're told the suspension, steering and stability will be improved via higher quality suspension components and retuned dynamics. But for now, the BMW's nice in parts, but bringing up the rear in this test.

The Audi is a fine car. Too good to be labelled 'nice', yet hard to truly love. It's impressive, capable and fast, and if that's the beginning and end of what you're looking for then fine. But as an **evo** reader, you'll be after more. Hence the AMG C43 is our winner here.

If these three cars really are about duality of purpose then the AMG is best at it. It's very good at being comfortable and undemanding and linking to a smartphone, but it's also got a wild side where it can get from A to B in foul weather at a crazy rate while making a lot of noise. Naughty but nice – now that's a winning combination. ✖

### Audi S5 Coupe

**Engine** V6, 2995cc, turbo  
**Power** 349bhp @ 5400-6400rpm  
**Torque** 369lb ft @ 1370-4500rpm  
**Transmission** Eight-speed Tiptronic automatic, quattro four-wheel drive  
**Tyres** 255/35 R19 front and rear  
**Weight** 1615kg  
**Power-to-weight** 220bhp/ton  
**0-62mph** 4.7sec (claimed)  
**Top speed** 155mph (limited)  
**Basic price** £47,000  
**evo rating:** ★★★★★

### Mercedes-AMG C43 4Matic Coupe

**Engine** V6, 2996cc, twin-turbo  
**Power** 362bhp @ 5500-6000rpm  
**Torque** 383lb ft @ 2000-4200rpm  
**Transmission** Nine-speed automatic, 4Matic four-wheel drive  
**Tyres** 225/45 R18 front, 25/40 R18 rear  
**Weight** 1660kg  
**Power-to-weight** 222bhp/ton  
**0-62mph** 4.7sec (claimed)  
**Top speed** 155mph (limited)  
**Basic price** £47,605  
**evo rating:** ★★★★★

### BMW 440i M Sport Coupe

**Engine** In-line 6-cyl, 2998cc, turbo  
**Power** 321bhp @ 5500rpm  
**Torque** 332lb ft @ 1380-5000rpm  
**Transmission** Eight-speed automatic (option), rear-wheel drive  
**Tyres** 225/40 R19 front and rear (option)  
**Weight** 1555kg  
**Power-to-weight** 210bhp/ton  
**0-62mph** 5.0sec (claimed)  
**Top speed** 155mph (limited)  
**Basic price** £42,235  
**evo rating:** ★★★★★



*Lamborghini's biggest hitter has upped its game, with more power, four-wheel steering and improved aero. It's got a new name, too – Aventador S – and it might just be the best V12 Lambo ever made*

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by STEVE SUTCLIFFE

# QUANTUM LEAP

**WHEN THE LAMBORGHINI AVENTADOR WAS** first unleashed upon us in 2011, the atmosphere among the upper echelons of the world's fastest cars was considerably less dense than it is now. Back then McLaren Automotive was still in its infancy, the P1 was little more than a speculative rumour amid the news pages of this magazine, and the 918 Spyder and LaFerrari were still in the minds and on the drawing boards of their designers and engineers at Weissach and Modena respectively.

Back then, in fact, the Aventador's carbonfibre-monocoque chassis, its radical pushrod suspension and its seven-speed single-clutch gearbox mated to a Haldex four-wheel-drive system were absolutely at the cutting edge. And then a couple of years later the floodgates opened, and the world of fast cars changed forever.

Which left the dear old Aventador looking a wee bit sorry for itself technically. So Lamborghini's reaction, under the guidance of its ebullient new boss Stefano Domenicali, former F1 team chief at Ferrari, is the car you see here: the Aventador S.

Don't think of this car as a direct rival to the triumvirate of hypercars from you-know-who, because in reality it is nothing of the sort. For starters, it costs a third of the price of such cars, at 'just' £271,000. Second, it remains powered by a tweaked version of the wondrous 6.5-litre







V12 from the original Aventador, with not an electric motor or a turbocharger in sight. And third, it will sell in vastly greater numbers than any of the royal trio did, with no restriction on production numbers, even if there's already a decent waiting list.

The big news technically is the new electronic four-wheel-steering system. But as you can see, there have been numerous design changes as well, including a delightful new treatment around the rear wheelarches that is an unashamed nod to the Countach. Front, back and sides, the car looks quite different from the original in the flesh, even though the fundamental template remains. The way the car flows through the air has changed, too. Thanks in part to a new active electronic rear wing, Lamborghini claims the S develops 130 per cent more downforce than the old car, and that it's 50 per cent more efficient aerodynamically overall. Which are some claims.

And the development of the S doesn't stop there. The electronic dampers and suspension have also been comprehensively re-engineered so that they react and respond in accordance with the new four-wheel-steering system. There's also a bespoke new Pirelli tyre, developed because the dynamics of a car with rear steering alter the demands placed on the rubber. And finally, the dynamic drive program that previously featured three modes – Strada, Sport and Corsa – has been re-written to include a fourth setting called Ego.

Forget the narcissistic connotations of the name if you can because, in practice, the Ego setting finally allows the driver to alter the parameters of the steering, powertrain and suspension separately from one another, which is a

minor eureka moment for the Aventador. No longer do you have to put up with thump-in-the-back upshifts in Corsa mode just because you want maximum response from the steering and dampers. Take your S to the Nürburgring, for example, and Ego will enable you to select the softest suspension settings (desirable at the Ring) but with the engine, steering and gearbox set to full attack, and so on.

The other key technical change is the fitment of one single ECU to control *all* the car's dynamic functions. There are many other smaller ECUs to deal with stuff like the air con, the new TFT instruments, the lights, the electric seats and so forth, but the engine, seven-speed automated-manual gearbox, steering, ESP, 4WS – everything to do with the fundamental dynamics of the car – are all controlled by a single electronic unit.

What are the advantages of doing this? Lamborghini's technical overlord, Maurizio Reggiano, says it has enabled his engineers to develop a harmony of response that you simply can't achieve when separate ECUs control separate dynamic functions. By having one brain control the whole shebang, you get a consistency of reaction to a driver's inputs that Lamborghini has never been able to achieve before, and that, says Reggiano, is apparent at any speed.

On paper, then, the 'dramatically improved' S would appear to represent strangely good value at £271,000. I know that sounds like a weird conclusion to reach considering the outlay, but think about it for a second, and then consider the raw numbers.

The V12 engine develops a whopping 730bhp at 8400rpm – a rise of 40bhp – and an unchanged 509lb ft at 5500rpm, and the car weighs a mere 1575kg dry. Its

**Above:** front bumper is among several aero changes that help the new car develop 130 per cent more downforce.

**Right:** redesigned rear arches are in homage to the Countach



**‘After a while  
you realise that,  
at long last,  
Lamborghini has  
finally got what  
this whole driving  
thing is all about’**





**'It's a genuine track weapon that can be driven – and relished – right up near to the edge without scaring yourself half to death'**



headline performance statistics might not quite be up there with the fastest hypercars but 0-62mph is still not far off at 2.9sec, thanks to the car's launch control and AWD. Neither is 8.8sec to 124mph, and the top speed of 217mph means the S is rarely going to get spanked by anything, at any price, on top end.

Plus, of course, there's the way it sounds, and the Krakatoa-like way in which it responds to the throttle, both of which are unique to the Aventador and specifically its huge atmospheric V12.

Reggiano's also dead right about the harmonic clarity of the car's reactions to your inputs. On the move the first thing you notice is how much less steering input is required, how direct this makes the front end feel, and how much more feel, proper feel, there is through the rim.

Then you notice how much cleaner and more consistent the throttle response is. In the old car you'd sometimes get strange bursts of unwanted revs from relatively small doses of throttle, followed by almost no response. But in the S every millimetre of travel on the pedal makes a difference. You instantly feel much more in control of the car as a result. *You drive it* rather than the other way round, and from this initial realisation flows a more gradual journeying of the penny south, and after a while you realise that at last, at long last, Lamborghini has finally got what this driving thing is all about.

And the key word is 'detail'. The old car never lacked much when it came to generating headline numbers, neither was it short on pure brute force or noise. From the outside looking in, it seemed to have everything. But from behind the wheel it could be a clumsy car in some respects, with brake-pedal responses that didn't quite match those of the throttle, steering that always felt detached from the rear axle somehow, and a four-wheel-drive chassis setup that was nothing if not determined in its desire to provide safe but endless amounts of understeer. Fundamentally it felt like a big, heavy car on the move, did the Aventador; bigger and heavier than it actually was. The detail, for whatever reason, was absent. It felt almost as if the engineers were happy to sign everything off at 90 per cent then go home, working on the assumption that the customer would never notice.

With the S, though, they've gone all the way and then some, and this is almost certainly a consequence of Domenicali's famously obsessive approach to detail – his desire to get deep beneath the skin with the engineering and fine-tuning of his cars. To the point where even the engineers admit that he can be somewhat challenging to work for, even though they adore his overall approach.

So, this four-wheel-steering system. How does it work and what does it do for the Aventador's dynamic repertoire? In simple terms, it turns the rear wheels in the opposite direction to the fronts by up to three degrees at low speeds, then at higher speeds it turns them in the same direction as the fronts by up to 1.5 degrees. The switching 'window' is 78-84mph, depending on how much yaw is detected, and the transition is seamless. All you're aware of is much sharper front-end bite on turn-in, with maybe a hint of neutral oversteer that never develops into full-blown oversteer. It's a massive step in the right direction. At high speed the car feels, to all intents and purposes, pretty much glued at both ends, with far less



**Above left:** it's not all V12 fireworks – within, the S gets Apple CarPlay and customisation options that are 'virtually limitless'.  
**Above:** multi-spoke wheels are borrowed from the Aventador SV



steering input required to get it to turn, plus a lovely sense of control on the throttle mid-corner.

And because the car is *so* much better balanced under power across all speeds, the engineers were able to send much more torque to the rear axle at any given time. This has the effect of making the S feel like a rear-wheel-drive car most of the time, and a very well set up one at that.

We do lots of laps at the Valencia MotoGP circuit, in all sorts of conditions. In the soaking wet the car is still a touch understeery, true, but mainly because anything and everything understeers around this strangely greasy-when-wet circuit; as things dry out, the car feels sharper and sweeter with every lap, and then in the bone-dry the Aventador S properly blows me away.

The engine we knew about already. It's a thing of rare loveliness and its longevity, says Domenicali, is guaranteed for many years yet. In the S it pulls harder in the mid-range and revs a further 150rpm before its limiter intrudes, at 8500rpm. And it sounds even more incredible in this installation, too, if such a thing is possible. Thank the lighter exhaust system for that. We also know about the gearbox, which works OK but not brilliantly compared with the best. The carbon-ceramic brakes, which are excellent in their overall power, now deliver a lot more feel through the pedal, which gives you more confidence.

But the chassis, well, it's something else. Seemingly out of nowhere, Reggiano and his team have turned their

big V12 monster from a wild animal into a genuine track weapon, one that turns in properly, is quite beautifully balanced mid-corner, has mind-boggling traction on the way out of bends and which can be driven – and relished – right up near to the edge without scaring you half to death.

And it's the harmony of response that Reggiano talks about that lies at the core of the car's appeal. Everything in the Aventador S works 'as one' now, and it feels lighter on its feet and much better sorted as a result. Reggiano's claim is that the collective effects of the 4WS system, the new suspension software, the aerodynamic improvements, the single ECU and the bespoke Pirelli rubber have shortened the wheelbase of the car – subjectively – by half a metre. Sounds ludicrous if you think about it, but he's not wrong. I climb out of the S thinking that it feels like a Huracán with a V12. Except, if anything, it feels better than that car, even the rear-drive LP580-2, because it turns in better, feels more neutral everywhere and is more agile. It's more connected to the bits of your mind and body that are on high alert when driving a car like this quickly.

Oh yes, and on the road it also rides less uncomfortably than before when in Strada, thanks to the revised damping, and it benefits from a smoother-shifting auto setting within the gearbox. And a slightly more intuitive instrument display that alters in design as you scroll up through the various drive modes. It's just a better supercar. A much better supercar. ☒

## Lamborghini Aventador S

**Engine** V12, 6498cc  
**Power** 730bhp @ 8400rpm  
**Torque** 509lb ft @ 5500rpm  
**Transmission** Seven-speed ISR automated manual, four-wheel drive, limited-slip differential, ESP  
**Front suspension** Double wishbones, inboard coil springs and dampers, anti-roll bar  
**Rear suspension** Double wishbones, inboard coil springs and dampers, anti-roll bar  
**Brakes** Carbon-ceramic discs, 400mm front, 380mm rear, ABS, EBD  
**Wheels** 9 x 20in front, 13 x 21in rear  
**Tyres** 255/30 ZR20 front, 355/25 ZR21 rear  
**Weight (dry)** 1575kg  
**Power-to-weight (dry)** 471bhp/ton  
**0-62mph** 2.9sec (claimed)  
**Top speed** 217mph (claimed)  
**Basic price** £271,146  
**On sale** Now

**evo rating:** ★★★★★

AGE v PERFORMANCE

# AGE CONCERN

by COLIN GOODWIN

PHOTOGRAPHY by JAMES LIPMAN





*What impact does age have on your ability to drive? We put three racing drivers, aged from 27 through to 76, through a series of tests to find out*

## **The Goodwood Revival, 1999.**

A red McLaren M5A powered by a 3-litre BRM V12 is being driven fast and aggressively. Suddenly it tangles with another car, leaves the circuit and slams backwards into the tyre wall. In it is Sir Jack Brabham, who is knocked out but thankfully suffers no more than a few nights in hospital in Chichester. Brabham, who died in 2014, was 73 years old when he drove in that race. It wasn't his last either, for he continued to take part in classic events until 2004.

The link between age and speed has always fascinated me. At what stage in life does age start to affect a driver's performance behind the wheel? And what factors are involved? Do reactions slow with age? To find out, we've brought together three generations of racing drivers at the Porsche Experience Centre at Silverstone to put them through a series of physical tests and driving challenges.

First we have 27-year-old Dan Cammish. Winner of the British Porsche Carrera Cup in 2015 and 2016 and this year contesting the F1-supporting Supercup series as well as the Carrera Cup GB. With 12 wins out of 16 starts in 2016 he's one of the hottest sports car drivers in the world.

Next we have David Brabham, youngest son of Sir Jack and winner of Le Mans in 2009 at the wheel of a Peugeot. He's now 51 years old.

Finally, we have Richard Attwood. Winner of Le Mans in 1970 driving a Porsche 917, Attwood was also a prolific talent in single-seaters. At last year's Goodwood Revival he drove his old BRM P126 F1 car to qualify fourth in the Glover Trophy with a fourth in the race itself. Only an engine short of 2000rpm prevented an even more impressive result. Still, fourth is damned good going for a man 76 years of age.

Here's our plan. First we're going to subject our three drivers to a session in Porsche's Human Performance lab under the expertise of sports scientist Jack Wilson. Then, when we've gathered data on their fitness and physical shape, we're going to get them out onto the centre's test tracks to see how they perform behind the wheel. Sitting next to them for each of the sessions will be a highly experienced instructor from the centre who will assess and comment on their driving.

## Human Performance

David Brabham is our first victim, strapped to a machine that analyses the body's composition and measures its levels of fat. 'I've only just started training again after a break of a few years,' says Brabham. Having neatly made his excuses we look at the results. The Aussie tips the scales at 72.1kg of which 19.7 per cent is fat and 32.7kg muscle. Dan, our youngest driver, weighs in at 80kg of which 17.3 per cent is fat and 37kg is muscle. 'I've only recently started training,' he explains. 'Up until now I've simply relied on my driving talent, but now that I'm moving up a level I'm taking the fitness side of it more seriously.'

In Attwood's day training was unheard of. For one thing they were driving so much they were always match fit. That said, Attwood clearly looks after himself pretty well. 'Over 50 your muscle mass drops by 1-2 per cent per year,' explains Jack Wilson, 'but there's a lot you can do to slow it down.' Attwood's active lifestyle, including tennis once a fortnight or so, has resulted in a body-fat score of 24.6 per cent and a muscle mass of 29.6kg.

**'Dan's spine is that of a 50-year-old. We're seeing this a lot in young drivers because karting is not good for the back'**

Next up is a posture check. This involves standing against a background grid while our experts mark it with a felt pen and eye the subject up. Brabham is a bit right-side low – the result of a once broken collarbone. Young Dan is a surprise, for his spine is all over the place. It's not helped by a pelvis broken in a Formula Ford crash, but according to Wilson's team this is not the only factor: 'Dan's spine is that of a 50-year-old. We're seeing this a lot in young drivers because they start karting at such a young age and being in a kart is not good for the back.' Dan concurs: 'I started karting at 13 and was racing 42 weekends a year.' Both David and Richard have spinal columns that have been affected by thousands of hours in racing cars. Both also demonstrated a lack of mobility through the spine in all common movements, particularly on their right sides, possibly as a consequence of lapping on predominantly clockwise circuits throughout their careers.

Next is a couple of reaction tests. One uses a Saccadic fixator, which features lights that flick on at random and have to be turned off by touching them with a fingertip. The other test uses a Batak machine, which has larger illuminated pads over a wider area that are hit with the palm of your hand to turn them off. Cammish scores well on both machines, helped by the fact he's from the digital generation and has been brought up texting and playing computer games. David has slightly slower reactions, scoring 74 on the Batak machine to Dan's 91. Richard does much less well on the Saccadic fixator but scores 65 on the Batak machine. 'Richard's score is what we'd expect to see from a Porsche customer attending the Porsche Human Performance centre who is 30-35 years old,' says Wilson. Clearly Richard's tennis playing is a help but even considering that he has excellent reactions and mobility for his age.

Lastly there's a test for grip strength, jump height (which gives an indication of overall core strength) and a session on the bike to measure maximum oxygen uptake, or 'VO2 max'. David has a very good grip strength, better than Dan's, with Richard coming in third with a still impressive 40.0 score from his right hand against David's 49.9 and Dan's 48.6. Attwood is excused from the jump test and the VO2 max test because a few years ago he had to have a bit of work done to his ticker's plumbing and so we're not keen to strain it. As you'd expect, Dan produces a better score than David with a VO2 score of 48 ml/min/kg against Brabham's 39 ml/min/kg.

## Porsche Cayenne Hybrid on the 'Loop'

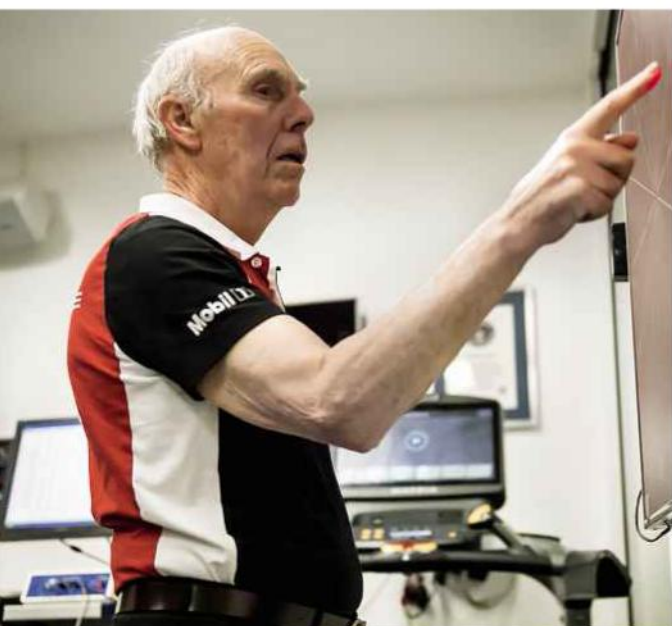
Our trio's first driving test is in a Porsche Cayenne Hybrid on the centre's 'Loop' circuit. As its name suggests, the course is a loop, but with the addition of a downhill twisty section that ends in a hairpin and a climb uphill to rejoin the main loop. The challenge for the drivers is to cover 15 laps in the shortest time with the lowest fuel consumption. The task will involve smooth driving and an understanding of the hybrid's technology.

All three drivers are offered sighting laps. Attwood declines, as he regularly instructs at the centre and so knows the course and the car. As I had expected, all three of them are hugely competitive. The relaxed Attwood is suddenly a blur of activity, firing off questions to instructor Ben McLaughlin on how to adjust this and that for a better performance. But while his brain is racing, his driving is extremely smooth. 'Richard hardly used the brakes at all,' comments McLaughlin. 'He rolled into all the corners and was very light on the throttle down the straights.'

Brabham sets off more aggressively, using more throttle than Attwood. The main indicator for how much energy is being used is the 'power' dial on the dashboard that has a needle that ideally should be no more than halfway along the scale. It's a tall order to concentrate on driving and to monitor the battery use and variables on the dashboard. 'David realised too late that his aggressive approach was not making best use of the Cayenne's hybrid system and in particular the EV mode,' says McLaughlin. 'He only slowed at the end when it was too late to achieve a good mpg figure.'

Dan sets off in the same aggressive way as David but soon realises his mistake. 'The readout was showing

**Above right and top right:** 27-year-old Cammish is a newcomer to working out. **Right and far right:** 76-year-old Attwood on the Saccadic fixator and with the Batak machine. **Bottom right:** 51-year-old Brabham prepares for the oxygen uptake test



29mpg when he adapted his driving to be much smoother with less braking,' observes McLaughlin.

As you can see from our table of results, Richard achieved by far the best outcome, matched only in average speed by Dan and exceeding the younger driver's average mpg by some margin. McLaughlin, who has been an instructor for 20 years, says Richard is the smoothest driver he's ever met. It's that smoothness, coupled with an ability to analyse what's going on, that has put him on top of the podium for this test.

### **Porsche 911 GT3 RS on the main circuit**

Now for some excitement. It's pretty simple: each driver, under the watchful eye of instructor Ed Pead, has ten laps in the GT3 RS (including the out lap) against the stopwatch. As well as the watch, the car's onboard data logger will transmit detailed information that can





be read via an app to check up on the driver's throttle, brake and steering inputs.

One look at Ed Pead's expression walking away from the RS after David Brabham's laps gives a pretty good idea of David's pace and approach: 'He was in qualifying mode straight out of the car park. He pushed the car very hard initially, to the point where the car was oversteering or understeering on every corner. He turned in very aggressively and powered out confidently. Also, he was late on the brakes, which helps rotate the car.'

'I've not driven the car before,' explains Brabham, 'and I've never driven on this circuit. I knew from experience that I had to find the limits straight away if I was going to get a good time.' It worked, for the Australian posts today's best time with a 39.54sec lap.

Next up is Dan Cammish, as experienced as anyone in a 911. 'I was surprised how similar the car felt to my racing car,' he says after his laps.

'Dan pushed the car quite hard initially to find the grip levels and was very comfortable with the car moving around underneath him,' says Ed. 'His general technique was to slow the car at the apex and square off the corner to get on the power early and gain good exit speed. Also, he worked the car hard on turn-in to make sure the car rotated on entry to the corner.' Cammish's more restrained approach saw lap times dropping by seconds each lap to a best of 40.52 on his final lap.

Now to Attwood, who knows the circuit intimately from his thousands of hours sitting next to customers. 'I have never driven a car around the circuit as hard as that. Ever,' comments the veteran racer after his laps. 'I'd never give a customer a ride like that.' The smooth style already demonstrated in the Cayenne was employed in the totally different RS. 'Richard drove a very smooth session, especially on turning in,' says Ed. 'He tended to carry the speed round the apex and be quite progressive on the throttle on the exit of the corner.' A very measured and controlled approach that nevertheless produced a fastest lap of 40.76sec. That's two-tenths slower than a man who is 50 years younger and who competes on a very regular basis.

## Porsche 911 Carrera S wet handling

Drifting a car is a very particular skill. I've got a long history of watching drifting contests and have seen drivers as skilful as Jody Scheckter and even Richard Burns struggle with it. It's a discipline that's very different to racing or even rallying.

Both David and Dan struggle with the 911 on the low-friction and damp-handling circuit. There's lots of understeer from both drivers and plenty of aggressive throttle stabbing. Richard, familiar with the experience, is much smoother and uses the classic 911 tactic of letting the steering wheel slip through his hands and then catching it and balancing the car on the throttle.

As both instructors note, if Dan and David had an extra half-hour in the car with no audience they'd both master the skill. Richard, with this naturally smooth style, is always going to be particularly quick around a wet and slippery circuit.

## Conclusion

If there's one thing our tests have revealed, it's that if you've got it, you can hang on to it. Although the effects of ageing may chip away at your fitness, strength and speed of reaction, it would appear that even this can be offset to a good extent by keeping in good shape and continuing to practice the art of driving.

'I suppose it is like riding a bike,' says Richard Attwood. 'Though some speed must have been lost, I make up for some of it by experience.'

Perhaps, though, there's one more thing you need: raw talent. The kind of talent that has enabled Dan Cammish to be a stranger to the gymnasium yet dominate two championships, that has allowed David Brabham to put in a ridiculously fast lap in an unfamiliar car on a new circuit, and made it possible for Richard Attwood, at 76 years old, to maintain his pace nearly 50 years after winning Le Mans. ✕

## The results

### Dan Cammish



#### Cayenne results

Time	18min
Distance	8.8 miles
Average mpg	35.1
Average speed	29mph
E-range left	9 miles
Zero-emissions distance	4.6 miles

#### RS lap times

49.09, 44.11,
42.46, 41.98,
43.54, 41.33,
48.84, 42.20,
40.52

### David Brabham



#### Cayenne results

Time	20min
Distance	8.8 miles
Average mpg	28.4
Average speed	27mph
E-range left	10 miles
Zero-emissions distance	4.0 miles

#### RS lap times

43.50, 41.29,
40.31, 41.40,
39.84, 40.06,
40.20, 39.94,
39.59

### Richard Attwood



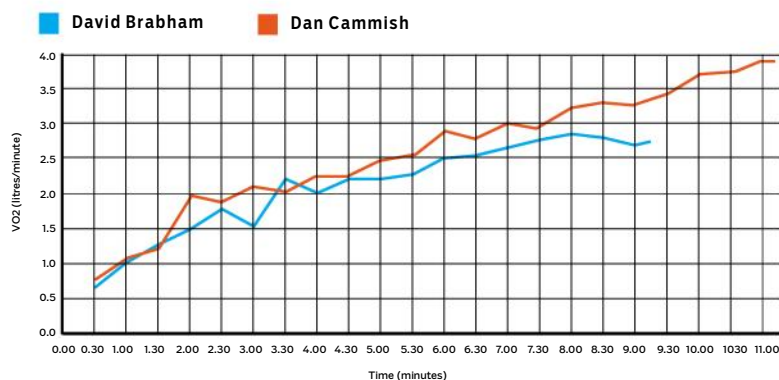
#### Cayenne results

Time	18min
Distance	8.8 miles
Average mpg	43.2
Average speed	29mph
E-range left	8 miles
Zero-emissions distance	4.8 miles

#### RS lap times

45.94, 45.14,
42.75, 44.02,
40.76, 42.09,
42.33, 41.63,
42.30

## Maximum oxygen uptake



ICON: RENAULT CLIO WILLIAMS





by ADAM TOWLER


PHOTOGRAPHY by ASTON PARROTT

# GOLDEN OLDIE

*A homologation special that permitted Renault to take its hatchback rallying, the Clio Williams was the first hot hatch to put the legendary Peugeot 205 GTI in the shade*

ICON: RENAULT CLIO WILLIAMS





‘Now as then  
it’s the engine  
that shines  
the brightest,  
producing  
148bhp at  
6100rpm’

S

#### **SUCCESSION IS ALWAYS INTRIGUING.**

Sometimes the master won't go quietly, doesn't have to, and so plays on. Sometimes the handover of power is crushingly unsentimental, final.

It's the early 1990s, and the 1.8-litre Clio 16v has tussled for hot-hatch glory with the ageing Peugeot 205 GTI 1.9. It's a better car by many objective criteria, but not a convincingly faster one, and in the eyes of many the GTI still holds the crown. Yes, you could argue that Renault already holds the balance of power with the Clio's forefather, the 5 GT Turbo. You'll find a few at **evo** who believe that, and they're not necessarily wrong, although I can't agree with them.

It took a truly special car to convincingly wrest supremacy away from Peugeot, to really bury the old-timer and to refine the class in the process. That car was the Clio Williams – so much more than simply a Clio 16v with an extra 200cc.

Sold with the compelling marketing tinsel of an F1 team association, the Williams was actually an homologation special in the familiar mould. It was built because Renault Sport wanted to go rallying and the class maximum displacement stood at 2 litres. Given this was still the era of homologation into classes A and N – oh how we all miss that – Renault simply had to build 2500 road cars to qualify, although it would eventually build many more.

Naturally, Renault Sport did a thorough job. The suspension uses a reinforced front subframe borrowed from the Clio Cup racer, plus uprated springs, dampers, rear torsion arms and thicker anti-roll bars. The track is increased by 34mm and the 7J Speedline alloys are half an inch wider than the 16v's, and unforgettably gold. Obviously. The gearbox is stronger, too, with revised ratios. There was just one exterior colour offered for the first generation of Williams – '449' Metallic Sports Blue – and the cumulative effect of body (already blistered of arch, front and rear, and bulging of bonnet from the 16v), paint and those wheels is as close to hot-hatch perfection as I think you could ever hope to get. It is a small car, with a wheel pushed to the very extremity of each corner; a little shorter, slightly wider and significantly lower than a Clio 172 or 182; so tiny as to be incomparable with a current RS Clio.

Now as then it's the engine that shines the brightest, producing 148bhp at 6100rpm and 126lb ft at 4500rpm. Codenamed F7R and developed from the 16v's 137bhp F7P unit, it features a longer stroke and bigger bore size, and benefits from a stronger crankshaft (borrowed from the diesel Clio) plus new pistons, camshafts and conrods, with bigger

valves and a lightweight exhaust manifold. Granted, those numbers today seem almost comically weak for a frontline supermini hot hatch, particularly the lowly rev-peak for maximum power – it may be naturally aspirated, but it's hardly a 'screamer'. Yet, as ever, context paints an altogether different picture: the Williams weighs just 981kg (marginally more than the 16v) and the big benefit of the new engine over the regular 1.8-litre lump was torque; not just the peak, but the fact that 85 per cent of it arrives from 2500rpm.

I should also say right now that this left-hand-drive example is '0001' – the car that sat idle in the Williams Grand Prix Collection for many years and is now owned by Renault UK. With just over 2000 miles on the clock it looks, smells and drives like a new car. It really is like stepping through a time portal back into 1993, to be one of those lucky 390 souls in the UK who handed over £13,275. If I'd thought about it in advance I could have brought The Orb along on cassette, and maybe acquired some baggy, shiny suit from a charity shop, which I then could have stored in the Williams' curious zip-up suit holder that's attached to the underside of the parcel shelf. Clearly French rally drivers liked to arrive at the next time control in some style.

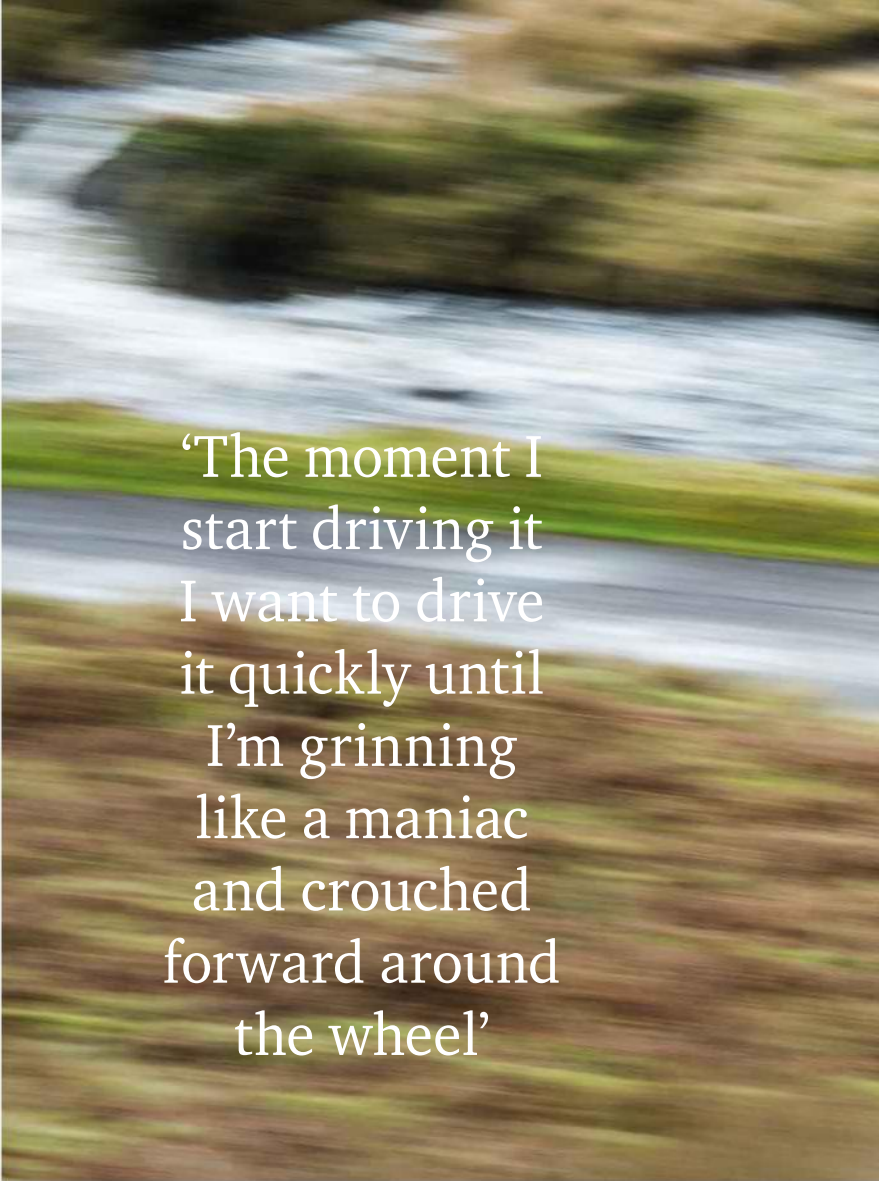
Actually, there'd be no 'Little Fluffy Clouds' today (just the Welsh variety scudding over our heads), for when I lift the elephant-hide-textured plastic lid in the centre-console, the single DIN slot is deliberately empty – there's no radio-cassette in this car. Otherwise, it's fairly plush in a '90s, French way, an interpretation of automotive luxury utterly alien to the current widely held notion of it.

The deeply bolstered sports seats are squishy in the traditional French style and covered in a curiously soft velour material, the random black pattern of which makes them look threadbare even when brand new – as these effectively are. An oversized blue 'W' is imprinted into the backrest. Renault Sport was not subtle with the blue theme: there are blue seatbelts, a *filet* of blue atop the gearknob, imprinted with the layout of the car's five forward gears and reverse, and blue faces for the Sagem dials, including a trio of oil-obsessed instrumentation at the top of the centre-console: level, temperature and pressure. Why don't manufacturers do this anymore?

Nineteen-nineties man would have felt smug in here, pinballing down a B-road, the Clio's solidity a notable improvement on what the 205 offered. I do too, until a little later when the front wheels lock momentarily over a damp crest and I remind myself with some urgency that ABS was not offered on the first Williams, and that the squishy pad in the centre of the steering wheel is for decoration.

The essence of our initial few miles through the Welsh mountains defines what currently makes '90s performance cars so compelling: the Williams is defiantly mechanical in spirit, but also competent to a degree even a newly qualified motorist of today could relate to. Its power-assisted steering has surprising weight for anyone weaned on modern machinery but avoids the clumsy heft of a 205's unassisted rack at low speeds, and its general manners are at least in the same orbit as cars from the past decade. That's not to say that it doesn't creak: it does, even this example, in inimitable French hot-hatch style, from the very moment you're underway.

That 1988cc four-cylinder engine is familiar from the moment the starter churns – a flare of revs overlaid with belt whine, the slightly lumpy idle with that soft *whur-whur-whur*



'The moment I  
start driving it  
I want to drive  
it quickly until  
I'm grinning  
like a maniac  
and crouched  
forward around  
the wheel'

backbeat. Anyone who's ever driven a naturally aspirated Renault Sport Clio could identify it blindfolded. For a car to be an icon it must have its own signature, and sound is often one of the elements that makes up that unique scrawl. The Williams is no exception.

The engine's presence never fades. There's a harmonic in the mid-range that sends a fizz through the shell and the seat, and an under-bonnet chuckle on the overrun not dissimilar to that of a later Renault Sport Clio as the revs fall back past 5000rpm. The gearlever vibrates and moves markedly with driveline shunt. This all reinforces the notion that the Williams is a tiny car with a mightily powerful engine, the sinews of its muscular delivery bulging the bonnet to the point of buckling the metal like the Hulk's sacrificial T-shirt.

It is fast. Fast enough. It revs out raucously and keenly, if not dazzlingly so, but it's the mid-range muscle that had journos of the time really wowed. Today we take for granted the immediate low-down shove of modern turbocharged performance engines, but back then the Williams' ability to snap forward at 3000rpm must have seemed very special when combined with its energetic final 1500rpm.

The moment I begin to drive it I want to drive it quickly, until I'm grinning like a maniac and crouched forward around the wheel in a weird, legs-splayed, Tazio Nuvolari-drives-Auto



**Right:** 2-litre engine offered 11bhp more than the Clio 16v's 1.8, and 28bhp more than a 205 GTI's 1.9. **Below:** this particular example – '00001' – was the first ever built and has a scant 2000 miles on the clock





**Right:** soft suspension allows you to feel every inch of the way into a corner, and really encourages a gung-ho style. **Below:** fat arches and gold wheels give away the Williams' homologation pedigree

Union style. In truth, part of that posture is because of a driving position that tilts the wheel with a pronounced forward rake. It's a stretch to reach the top dead centre with my palms, and combined with the weight of the steering and the size of the wheel it means that the Williams is not a car I can drive from just my wrists; I'm working the wheel, moving my grip to feed the car into a corner, not flicking it. This is also precisely the moment that the Williams truly comes alive. It seems to almost visibly fizz with energy at the prospect of a challenging road, the more lumpy and awkward the better.

The Williams' approach to enthusiastic cornering almost exclusively involves just three wheels. The fourth – the wheel on the rear axle that's on the inside of the curve being taken – gets a welcome respite, and hangs for a fleeting moment in thin air, spinning with futility. This tripod is masterfully effective, forming a stable platform from which the car can summon terrific grip and poise. In fact, it's not so much the ultimate grip level that betrays the car's age, but its initial reaction to a turn. The whole car is much softer than a 182 Cup, let alone a current 220 Trophy. There's more give. That body roll, the moment during which the car settles, detracts from the immediacy of the driving experience deemed so essential in modern sporting machinery, but it also communicates so much about what's happening at the tyres' contact patches.

It's the difference between studiously reading a book's foreword and every page, and skipping straight to the main event in chapter five. You learn so much more about what's going on around the main characters, not just what actually happens. It also allows the Williams to soak up even the nastiest of cambers and holes while refusing to be nudged off line. As the miles betwixt hedgerows pass, the Williams feels a more sophisticated, matured product than the fabled Peugeot. That's not to say it's all grown up and lacking in humour, but whereas the flighty, lighter 205 tip-toes down a road always on the brink



## Renault Clio Williams

**Engine** In-line 4-cyl, 1988cc, turbo

**Power** 148bhp @ 6100rpm

**Torque** 126lb ft @ 4500rpm

**Transmission** Five-speed manual, front-wheel drive

**Front suspension** MacPherson struts, coil springs, dampers, anti-roll bar

**Rear suspension** Torsion beam, coil springs, dampers, anti-roll bar

**Brakes** Ventilated 259mm front discs, solid 238mm rear discs

**Wheels** 7 x 15in front and rear

**Tyres** 185/55 R15 front and rear

**Weight** 981kg

**Power-to-weight** 153bhp/ton


**0-60mph** 7.6sec (tested)

**Top speed** 134mph (claimed)

**Price when new** £13,275 (1993)

**Value today** £4000-8000

**evo rating:** ★★★★★



‘The Williams’  
approach to  
enthusiastic  
cornering  
almost  
exclusively  
involves just  
three wheels’

of oversteer that demands to be correctly handled, the Williams works its rear axle in a more precisely measured fashion; it will swing around, but it's never what you might term 'wild'.

Controversy stalked the Williams like it often does with icons, automotive, human or otherwise. Having made a brilliant car, and with the realisation it had a lucrative success on its hands, Renault couldn't resist making a Williams '2' in 1994. Almost identical in specification, including colour, but based on the phase-two Clio Mk1 and devoid of a numbered plaque.

Owners of the original were not happy, their initial investment now looking decidedly shaky. There was even an action group set up, and the situation left an unpleasant fug of exploitation clinging to the car, a lesson to manufacturers that promises could not necessarily be broken. Even so, in 1995 Renault made a third instalment, this time in Monaco Blue, a lighter shade of the familial hue, and with ABS. Again, it wasn't numbered. In total, 12,100 Clio Williams were made.

By now, the original great era of the hot hatch was fading fast, soured on car crime, insurance costs and changing fashion. In the mid-'90s manufacturers became obsessed with coupes, and hot-hatch residuals collapsed. Many were thrown into the scenery; plenty have since corroded past the point of no return.

That doesn't apply to 0001, of course. It inevitably sits atop a pricing structure that has climbed spectacularly in recent years. And right now it's time to take it back to its home, or the

warm, dry confines of its covered transport that awaits, to be precise – a rig that's significantly further away than planned due to some 'misinterpretation' of the map. Ahem.

With the rain beading rapidly up the heavily detailed windscreen to the point where the wipers are barely necessary, the Clio zips along in the darkness, past the faint silhouettes of distant mountains, expansive reservoirs and the distracting mirrors of roadside standing water. Just the Williams and me, mile after mile, the little car with the big heart, not intimidating despite the surroundings, its rarity or its value, and as ever demanding to be driven with a *joie de vivre* that strikes right to the absolute core of what driving for fun is about.

Perversely, it gives me time to think. The Clio Williams qualifies effortlessly for 'icon' status because it set a new performance benchmark in the hot-hatch arena, because it successfully completed the succession from the hitherto imperious 205, and because its visual presence carries an indefinable gravitas that requires no explanation. It's also brilliantly entertaining to drive.

But I think for me, somewhere on this dark, wet road in Wales, what really makes the Williams an icon is that even now, in 2017, it's able to accelerate, brake, turn and corner at a level that's genuinely not far off the current crop of supermini tearaways. For a 24-year-old car, that's exceptional. In 1993 it must have been a thing of wonder. ☒

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## ANALYSIS WHY NOW IS THE TIME TO BUY A TVR

TVR is on the verge of a renaissance, but past models offer something unique in the world of proper sports cars. Here's what you need to know

by Adam Towler

AS THE WAIT CONTINUES FOR THE ALL-new TVR, with expectation and cynicism vying for primacy across the wider car-enthusiast world, the market for TVR as-it-was continues to build on the momentum gained over the past few years.

Although a rise in prices has largely been led by the last and arguably the best TVR yet made, the Sagaris, let's start with what are the traditional entry points for 'modern' TVR ownership: the Griffith and Chimera. Although many buyers now choose to enter TVR ownership with later models, it's these earlier Rover V8-powered cars that still form the backbone of the TVR scene.





The Chimera ('92-'03) remains the most accessible model from this era of TVR. Still, prices have risen to a typical £12,000-15,000, with the best now at £20,000-plus. Like any performance car, there's a big difference between the rough and the very good, and as ever it pays to buy the best you can afford. Regardless of that, the Chimera is a great example of a post-modern 'classic' British sports car: evocative, fast, useable, and not forgetting that inevitable sobriquet, hairy-chested.

The Griffith ('92-'02) maintains its desirability over the Chimera, with prices around £10,000 more across the board. Decent '500' models now fetch £25,000, and late, low-mileage cars can be a lot more. They're a handful to drive, but for many this is the iconic TVR from the Peter Wheeler era and the lure of those looks will never wane. Like any TVR,

## 'A wise Tuscan purchase now consists of finding a car with a recent engine rebuild'

it's chassis corrosion that can be the most expensive issue to put right, and it's often where you can't see without taking the body off. A professional inspection is worth the investment.

Once into the era of TVRs with the firm's own engines – either the Speed Six or AJP V8 – there's a broader selection of models on offer, and over a broader price spectrum, too. These cars are more complicated to maintain and restore, and a poorly cared for car will be in a very sorry state by now – both structurally and

mechanically. There's also more than a little truth in the notion that TVR carried out its development work on its initial customers, so early Cerberas and Tuscons, to mention just two models, were often plagued by issues. A 'sorted' early car by now should be vastly better, but still, it's something to consider. As Jason Clegg of TVR specialist Str8six says: 'For all the grief Nikolai [Smolensky – the Russian investor who bought the company off Wheeler] gets, he did do a lot to improve quality on the Mk3 Tuscan and Sagaris models.'

Early AJP-engined Cerberas (the model ran from '96 to '03) can still be bought on the cheap, but most will be restoration projects or have a tale to tell by now if priced in the low teens; find a late car in good condition and you could be looking at £40,000-plus. However, a decent car at around £20,000 offers incredible

performance and so much theatre for the money, although it's not for the inexperienced behind the wheel.

But it's the Tuscan ('99-'06) that retains much of the limelight. For years beset by engine problems with the Speed Six motor, a wise purchase now consists of finding a car with a recent engine rebuild by one of the well-known specialists. With their modifications the unit should be reliable, allowing you to focus on all the positives, such as the uniqueness, the sound, and the raw performance. The Mk2, which arrived in 2005, was a more refined package, though a late Mk1 S can still command more. The Mk3 of 2006 was another step forward again – if you can find one.

Of the other Speed Six cars, T350s ('02-'06) are notably rising in value – from around £25,000 for a tired car to £40,000 for the best – while the open-top Tamora (also '02-'06) is good value at around £20,000.

The fabulous Sagaris ('05-'06) sits at the top of the tree, although only the best cars are pushing the £70,000 marker. With so few made, rough cars tend to hang around in showrooms as an educated market knows they're ones to avoid. Some worry that the arrival of a new TVR may dent the value of these cars, but given their unique appeal, that seems unlikely to happen.

## SUMMARY

Any good Griffith-onwards TVR is increasing in its appeal, diverging ever further from the sanitised, electronically controlled norm of contemporary performance. Far from being outdated, these machines take on evermore relevance for enthusiasts turned off by modern technology.

If you've ever contemplated a traditional 1960s British sports car, a Chimera looks like great value and serves those classic ingredients, while the rare T350 adds a slightly modern twist; the right Cerbera at the right price also looks tempting.

But our money would go on a cared-for Tuscan in a subtle colour. It's a shape that hasn't really aged, and at current values it remains a lot of car, a lot of fun and a lot of performance for the money.



**Opposite page:** Tuscan, in Mk2 form. **Clockwise from left:** T350 would evolve into the sought-after Sagaris, and prices are on the up; Chimera is the most affordable modern TVR; a good Cerbera can be great value; Straight Six engine had plenty of 'issues' early on; Griffith a classic Wheeler-era TVR

## EXPERT VIEW

### MARK KENT

bespokeperformance.co.uk

'The market is good at the moment as there'll never be another car like a TVR: it's raw, sometimes crude, there's no ABS. A TVR will highlight the skill you haven't got, which is either a burst of adrenalin you love or it scares you and you sell. I think over the next 20 years they'll become very valuable. I have a lot of customers who are becoming collectors.'

'However, right now I think the market is perhaps over-buoyant – just because one car sold for £70k doesn't mean they're all worth that. We sold a Sagaris for £63k, but it was the right car at the right money, and even then you have to wait for the right buyer. I'm not convinced that TVR's return will put prices up, but it will increase awareness.'

### JASON CLEGG

str8six.co.uk

'Prices have been on the up since 2009, starting with the Sagaris. Those cars hit a low of £28k in 2008, when they were only three years old. Back then it was a constant battle with buyers worrying that the engine was a grenade waiting to go off.'

'However, specialists have carried on developing the Speed Six and there's confidence in the market now that it can be reliable. We've raced ours in 4.7-litre form since 2011 and only had three DNFs in that time, none engine related. And we've beaten all the AJP8-powered cars! Today, if we get a low-mileage, immaculate Sagaris in stock, that's £75,000. The T350 was the next one to go up, and post-2003 Cerberas are very desirable now, too.'

### SIMON BARTLETT

fernurst-tvr.co.uk

'The era you're dealing with starts with the pre-cat Griffith in 1992. Whatever the engine spec fitted, these cars are sought-after, and very rare. I don't think we'll see massive jumps in their values as they really are a handful to drive. They're cheap to keep on the road and a great experience, but just not for the faint-hearted. The Griffith 500 appeared in 1993, but it's the post-'95 cars that you want as they were much more reliable. You'll need mid-£20,000s for a decent car now, and we've achieved £50,000 for perfect, low-mileage ones. The Chimera is fantastic value for money, but once again I'd avoid the earlier cars. The best are the post-'97 models, made through until 2001. They're very reliable.'

## FOUR TO BUY



### 1998 GRIFFITH 500

£33,000

21,500 miles. Very appealing example of the later-spec Griffith 500, finished in pearlescent red, with only one owner from new and originally supplied by this dealer. One of the more expensive Griffiths out there, but it looks like a really good one. Black, half-hide interior.

FERNHURST-TVR.CO.UK



### 2006 TUSCAN S TARGA MK3

£52,000

27,250 miles. This menacing-looking Mk3 S in black is believed to be one of fewer than 20 of the type built, and dates from the final year of TVR production. Last owner since 2009. Low-mileage, and expensive, but one of the best.

STR8SIX.CO.UK



### 2004 T350C

£34,995

44,000 miles. A handsome T350 coupe in an Aston Martin metallic grey with matching grey leather interior. This car benefits from a previous rebuild of its Speed Six engine and a complete TVR service history.

BESPOKEPERFORMANCE.CO.UK



### 1997 CHIMERA 400

£13,500

49,000 miles. Iris Blue with Magnolia/Prussian Blue half-leather interior, this Chimera has been looked after by this dealer since 2002, being serviced 15 times. Fitted with power-steering.

FERNHURST-TVR.CO.UK

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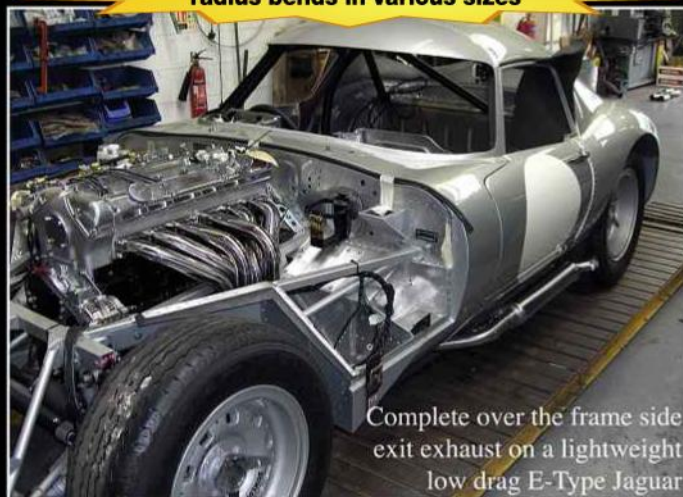
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# USED RIVALS EVO CARS FOR £30,000

by Adam Towler



## LOTUS EVORA

### SPECIFICATIONS

Engine	V6, 3456cc
Power	276bhp @ 6400rpm
Torque	258lb ft @ 4700rpm
Weight	1382kg [203bhp/ton]
0-62mph	5.1sec [claimed]
Top speed	162mph [claimed]
On sale	2009-2015
evo rating	★★★★★

### EXAMPLE

**2010 £32,750**

**Hilton and Moss**

Arctic Silver with a black leather interior, close-ratio gearbox and the Sport pack. Complete with a full service history and 25,000 miles under its belt.



### BUYING ADVICE

'At this sort of money you should be able to find a good car with sensible mileage. The biggest thing to be mindful of is what state the clutch is in. At around 40,000 miles you'll probably need a new one soon, and that's at least £2500. If you see a car advertised with a new clutch don't be wary – that's a good thing. Otherwise, check the air conditioning blows cold, and that the interior is holding together well. The anti-roll bar bushes can wear on the front axle, so listen for a knock, but it's not a difficult job to change them. The brakes last well, and you'll have a very tough time getting the engine to go wrong. Lastly, the Premium and Tech packs are really must-haves for the Evora.'

Jamie Matthews, bellandcolvill.co.uk



## LANCIA INTEGRALE EVO

### SPECIFICATIONS

Engine	In-line 4-cyl, 1995cc, turbo
Power	207bhp @ 5750rpm
Torque	220lb ft @ 3500rpm
Weight	1300kg [162bhp/ton]
0-62mph	5.7sec [claimed]
Top speed	137mph [claimed]
On sale	1991-1994
evo rating	★★★★★

### EXAMPLE

**1993 £35,000**

**Walkers Garage**

Metallic black with a black leather interior. An original UK car, with just two owners from new and a full service history; 103,000 miles on the clock.



### BUYING ADVICE

'These days good cars are fetching a lot of money, but the other side of that is that everyone now thinks their car is worth a fortune, and there are plenty of bad ones about. The market for anything decent is £25,000-50,000, so if you don't mind a car that's had some corrosion remedial work in the past you'll get a car for your budget here. There aren't any new parts or panels from Lancia, so we're into cutting back corrosion and making new parts these days, not just servicing and MOT-ing. We've had a lot of Evos imported from Japan coming through our workshop recently; some need lots of work. Their bodies tend to suffer less corrosion, but most have been messed about in some way.'

Steve Smith, walkers-garage.co.uk



## BMW M3 (E90/92)

### SPECIFICATIONS (E92 COUPE)

Engine	V8, 3999cc
Power	414bhp @ 8300rpm
Torque	295lb ft @ 3900rpm
Weight	1580kg [266bhp/ton]
0-62mph	4.8sec [claimed]
Top speed	155mph [limited]
On sale	2007-2013
evo rating	★★★★★

### EXAMPLE

**2011 £26,990**

**Vas Vehicle Solutions**

This rare E90 saloon M3 has a manual gearbox and is finished in silver with a grey leather interior. Big spec, just two owners and 41,000 miles.



### BUYING ADVICE

'With the engines on these you need to be mindful of the throttle actuators. There's one per bank of cylinders and although they're not difficult to replace, they cost £900 each. The engine can also suffer from rod-bearing failure, but otherwise they're fairly reliable. Water pumps do wear out, and you may be able to hear the sound of the plastic impeller. The engine mounts can shear, which leads to a funny vibration, and it's not easy to spot. Gearboxes and clutches don't really give any problems, but the EDC dampers – an option most cars have – can split down at the bush where they meet the wheel carriers. Otherwise it's the usual wear and tear items in the suspension.'

Raikku, waffzuff.co.uk

# BUYING JOURNEY

**evo** reader Robert Kehoe's ownership roster goes from Ford to Ford – via Porsche

## THE CARS

1996	<b>Ford Escort 1.3 LX (1991)</b>
1998	<b>Fiat Cinquecento Sporting (1996)</b>
2001	<b>Peugeot 306 XSi (2000)</b>
2002	<b>Mazda MX-5 Mk2 (2002)</b>
2005	<b>VW Golf GTI Mk5 (2005)</b>
2008	<b>Land Rover Defender 90 (2008)</b>
2010	<b>BMW Z4 3.0 SE Roadster (2005)</b>
2012	<b>BMW Z4 M Roadster (2006)</b>
2014	<b>Porsche 911 Targa 4S (2009)</b>
2016	<b>Ford Fiesta ST M-Sport Edition (2016)</b>
2016	<b>Ford Focus RS Mk1 (2002)</b>

### Porsche 911 Targa 4S

'I bought my Gen 2 997 Targa in 2014. The car had been owned by an internet guru who had ticked every conceivable leather trim option – it's known among my friends as the "leather-air-vent car". It's a fantastic pan-European GT, capable of munching the autobahn but then being agile enough for the tight turns of the Alpine passes. I've taken it back to Stuttgart for a factory tour then onward to Modena. This spring we toured Scotland's North Coast 500 in it and I hope to do the Route Napoléon and Monaco next summer.'

## WHAT NEXT?

'I think the only thing that would shift the Targa's place in my affections would be a second-gen Boxster Spyder, but the market would need to stabilise first. I think it solved a lot of the shortcomings of the earlier Spyder and would be perfect for Alpine trips. As for a 991 911, well, the 997 may be with me a while as the newer car seems a little big.'

**R**OB'S JOURNEY BEGAN WITH A Mk5 Escort. Seduced by the sunroof and rear spoiler, he embellished it with the obligatory '90s Oakley sticker in the rear window, which obviously took his mind off what was one of the least inspiring cars to wear the blue oval badge.

He followed it up with an original Cinquecento Sporting, but then began work in Aberdeen, where 400-mile jaunts home to London quickly felt like a very long way. A Peugeot 306 XSi replaced the Fiat,

but its sublime chassis still couldn't take Rob's mind off the 306 Rallye that had tempted him at purchase time. A Mk2 MX-5 began an odyssey of exploring great roads and rear-wheel drive, something he would later build on with successive Z4s: first a 3-litre, then the M variant, whose limited fuel range required a watchful eye on the gauge.

His most recent purchases have been fast Fords: a daily-drive M-Sport Fiesta ST, and a Mk1 Focus RS bought to cherish.



### Mazda MX-5 Mk2

'I cut my teeth with rear-wheel drive in this car, and used it as my daily driver for two years. I've always felt this was a perfectly balanced sports car and I think everyone should have one at some point. At first I had an MGF in mind but a quick demo of an MX-5 changed that. Through the local owners' club I discovered a lot of great driving routes and loved open-top motoring at night.'



### VW Golf GTI Mk5

'A move to south-west France just as the Mk5 GTI came out was a great coincidence: GTIs do not have the same following there, and my car took just six weeks to be delivered instead of six months in the UK. Having grown up as a child of the '80s I loved the tartan seats, and the performance was great, making the car a bit of a sleeper. I have happy memories of a north-south crossing of Spain in a day to arrive in Portugal at nightfall, and of trips across the Alps.'





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# Buying guide



## MERCEDES SLS AMG (2010-2015)

Gullwing doors, aluminium construction, 563bhp and the last big naturally aspirated AMG engine – what's not to like?

by Peter Tomalin

**W**E'VE ALWAYS BEEN SUCKERS for a classically configured big-capacity V8, and the SLS's is one of the best. Even on a light-throttle overrun, it rumbles and crackles like distant thunder and lightning. The mighty 6.2 was, of course, the first designed-from-scratch AMG engine – the original made its debut in the E63 supersaloon in 507bhp tune. Thoroughly re-engineered for the SLS, with 120 unique parts and a dry-sump oil system, the net result was a mighty 563bhp.

Prodigious power and an evocative soundscape aren't the only things that give the SLS its unique sense of drama. The gullwing doors, harking back to the legendary 300SL of the 1950s, endow it with





## CHECKPOINTS

### ENGINE

Most SLSs will be out of the original three-year manufacturer's warranty, so you might want to consider a Mercedes-Benz extended warranty or a third-party alternative (budget £1000-1500 annually, depending on the level of cover). That said, the powertrain is well-proven and is so far proving immune to major maladies. Nigel Seopardie at independent Mercedes specialist NJS Solutions describes them as 'bulletproof'. Simon Gregg at Bramley Motor Cars

knows a car with 100,000 miles with no apparent issues.

The M159 engine is a close relation of the M156, which appears in a number of AMG models and over the years has proved generally trouble-free, provided it has regular (usually annual or 10,000-mile) oil-changes with the recommended Mobil 1. The valve-gear problems that afflict some M156s don't appear to be an issue here. Servicing costs are reasonable for a car with this level of performance, and servicing can be carried out by any

official Mercedes dealership as well as by specialists with the latest Star diagnostics.

### TRANSMISSION

The Speedshift DCT transmission is a recalibrated version of the Getrag twin-clutch transaxle used in the Ferrari California and 458, joined to the engine by a carbonfibre propshaft. As with the engine, it's proving robust and largely issue-free.

On the test drive, auto shifting should be virtually seamless. Check all the paddle-actuated changes, both up and down the

'box, and the modes that sharpen the response. The changes were never the slickest when the SLS was new, and if the car has had the AMG factory software upgrade, that's a definite plus. Any clutch glitches can usually be cured by resetting the clutch-positioning sensors and updating the software.

Clutch life can be checked via diagnostics, and with replacements costing several thousand pounds, this would be wise. A specialist like NJS Solutions will carry out a full inspection for around £300.

### SUSPENSION, STEERING, BRAKES

Most SLSs feature iron discs, but carbon-ceramics were an option – and add considerable value today. As ever, they're fiercely expensive to replace, so it's essential to get them inspected, particularly if the car has been used on track.

The standard wheels were a seven-spoke design, while five-twin-spoke and ten-spoke forged rims were options – all should be checked for damage on both the outside and inside edges.

### BODY, INTERIOR, ELECTRICS

No corrosion issues as yet, so you're looking for signs of accident repairs and also for stone-chipping on the nose and sills. Inspect the gullwing door alignment and all the surrounding panel gaps: adjustment is tricky, even for a specialist.

Ensure all the electronics work and there are no warning lights, as rectification can be extremely costly. And if you're not particularly tall, check that you can reach the door to close it from the driver's seat!

genuine supercar presence. The SLS was also the first car to be designed and built from the ground-up by AMG, and the last with a naturally aspirated engine. For these reasons, it has always had future classic written all over it.

All that power feeds through a seven-speed dual-clutch gearbox with several driving modes to sharpen its responses. However, even using the 'Race Start' launch control, we couldn't match Mercedes' claim of 0-62mph in 3.8sec, though 0-60 in 4.1 is hardly to be sniffed at. The SLS backed up its immense performance with terrific all-round ability – and usability. When we tested it against a range of rivals, including Aston's V12 Vantage, Ferrari's 599 HGTE and Porsche's 911 Turbo S (see 'What we said'), the Merc's broad range of talents won the day.

Sales started in mid-2010, and a Roadster with a powered fabric top followed roughly a year later. The drop-top SLS lost the gullwing doors and thus a little of its appeal, but none of its all-round brilliance. The immensely rigid aluminium structure was key here – both outer body and main structure are aluminium, another first for a Mercedes.

An up-specced GT version arrived towards the end of 2012, available in coupe or Roadster body styles. A 20bhp power hike to 583bhp knocked a tenth off the claimed 0-62mph time and was accompanied by tweaks to the transmission and suspension, new trim options and some extra toys.

In 2013 came the even rarer, stripped-out, carbon-slathered and ferociously expensive Black Series with a near race-spec 622bhp engine. For the last few months of production in 2014 there was a GT Final Edition, featuring some of the Black's carbonfibre battledress. Again, rare and expensive.

But the regular SLS coupe has bags of appeal, tons of character and a winning combination of supercar performance and GT levels of refinement.



## WHAT TO PAY

Having dropped to as low as £90k, values rose sharply last year and have generally stayed strong. Dealer prices currently start at around £140k, rising to £170k for the very best low-mileage examples with desirable options such as ceramic brakes and the B&O hi-fi. Coupes tend to fetch more than equivalent convertibles. Also be aware that Japanese imports are starting to creep into the UK market and should be priced lower. GTs are a lot more (£225,000-plus). Ultimate Editions more still, and as for the Black Series, if you have to ask...



## INFORMATION

### SPECIFICATION

<b>Engine</b>	V8, 6208cc
<b>Max power</b>	563bhp @ 6800rpm
<b>Max torque</b>	479lb ft @ 4750rpm
<b>Transmission</b>	Seven-speed dual-clutch gearbox, rear-wheel drive
<b>Weight</b>	1620kg
<b>Power-to-weight</b>	335bhp/ton
<b>0-62mph</b>	3.8sec (claimed)
<b>Top speed</b>	197mph (limited)
<b>Price new</b>	£157,500 (2010)

### PARTS PRICES

Prices from [mercedes-benzofcambridge.co.uk](http://mercedes-benzofcambridge.co.uk). Tyre price from [blackcircles.com](http://blackcircles.com). All prices include VAT but exclude fitting charges.

<b>Tyres (each)</b>	£187.75 front, £249.06 rear (Continental Sport Contact)
<b>Front pads (set)</b>	£238.62
<b>Front discs (pair)</b>	£1190.90
<b>Damper (single, front)</b>	£1002
<b>Clutch control unit</b>	£4334.40

### SERVICING

Prices from [mymercedesservice.co.uk](http://mymercedesservice.co.uk), including VAT. Variable service intervals, but usually annually.

<b>Standard service</b>	£307.54
<b>Major service</b>	£819.42 (includes transmission oil change, spark plugs, etc)

### USEFUL CONTACTS

#### FORUMS, ADVICE, EVENTS

[mbclub.co.uk](http://mbclub.co.uk)  
[mbworld.org](http://mbworld.org)  
[mercedes-amg.com](http://mercedes-amg.com)

#### SPECIALISTS

[mercedes-benz.co.uk](http://mercedes-benz.co.uk)  
 (AMG Performance Centres)  
[njs-solutions.com](http://njs-solutions.com)  
[ddrsurrey.co.uk](http://ddrsurrey.co.uk)

#### CARS FOR SALE

[bramley.com](http://bramley.com)  
[comansinternational.com](http://comansinternational.com)  
[pistonheads.com](http://pistonheads.com)  
[classicandperformancecar.com](http://classicandperformancecar.com)



## 'I BOUGHT ONE'

**LEE FULFORD**

'I bought my SLS four years ago. It was just over two years old and had 9000 miles on the clock. It's one of the launch colours, Daytona Blue Metallic, and has the desirable ten-spoke wheel option.

'It's now done about 21,000 miles. I bought it as a car to use daily, which I did when I first had it, but to be honest I haven't used it a lot in the last year or so. As is often the case when cars become collectible, you become more aware of the value and the effect that mileage has on that. So you end up not using it as much as you'd like to. It's a shame, because it's a really useable car.

'Niggles? The gearbox was very lethargic in manual mode

and jerky when manoeuvring. I took it to the AMG factory to have the software upgraded and this has made the gearchanges so much sharper and the rev-matching much better on downshifts. It cost 1500 euros but it sorted all the issues, so it was money well spent.

'I've also got an Aston DBS, and it's interesting to compare the two. The SLS is a lot more aggressive in the way it feels and drives, but it's also a lot more accomplished and a lot more fun. It's phenomenally quick and sounds wonderful. It's also a mile-muncher, very comfortable on longer journeys, though at 6ft 3in my son's head touches the roof. Taller people might find it a bit claustrophobic. Conversely,

short people can find it a bit of a stretch to reach up to close the door, but the advantage is you can park much closer to something, because the doors open using far less space.

'A big service at the Mercedes dealer is around £1000, a small service around £300, which I think is very reasonable. The only problem I've had was the pads got stuck to the [iron] discs once and had to be chiselled off and replaced. Otherwise, it's been good as gold.'



## IN THE CLASSIFIEDS

### 2010 SLS AMG £139,990

17,300 miles, Obsidian Black/red leather, diamond-cut alloys, front and rear parking sensors, Capristo sports exhaust  
[simonfurlonger.co.uk](http://simonfurlonger.co.uk)



### 2011 SLS AMG ROADSTER £144,950

22,000 miles, Bright Silver/Ruby soft-top/black leather, carbon interior pack, front and rear parking sensors, rear camera  
[tomhartley.com](http://tomhartley.com)



### 2013 SLS AMG £159,900

6000 miles, left-hand drive, Designo Mystic White/red leather, carbon package, rear camera  
[bobforstner.co.uk](http://bobforstner.co.uk)



## WHAT WE SAID



### GROUP TEST, AUGUST 2010

'Hit the red start button, feel and hear the 563bhp, 6.2-litre V8 erupt, drop the stumpy, fat-headed gear selector into D, squeeze the throttle and... after a brief pause... you're away.

'It's perhaps the SLS's least enjoyable characteristic, the tardy responses of its gearbox. It makes smooth, snappy full-throttle upshifts when left to its own devices, but use the paddles and there's a delay between pull and shift.

'That apart, the SLS feels at home here [on the *evo* Triangle] almost immediately. There's an easy, natural feel to the well-weighted steering, and the ride is nicely judged, offering fine body control and the right degree of compliance. The SLS steers with accuracy, too, and so although it feels like a big car as you set off, you don't think about its width again.

'It feels brilliant over the faster, more flowing sections, dealing tightly with crests and compressions, all four corners planted, while the big V8 feels mighty, with terrific throttle response. Wrung out to 7000rpm, it feels as potent as anything here. Power and control: a compelling combination.' – *evo* 146

## RIVALS

### FERRARI 599 GTB FIORANO

Closest in concept to the SLS. Its front-mounted naturally aspirated 6-litre V12 produces 611bhp, giving 0-60mph in 3.5sec and a top speed of 205mph. Currently from around £100k.

### PORSCHE 911 TURBO S (991.1)

With its 552bhp twin-turbo flat-six, PDK 'box and 4WD, the Turbo S is phenomenally quick (0-62mph in 3.1sec, 197mph) and still the most useable supercar of all. From around £100k.

### McLAREN 12C

One of the fastest and most sophisticated sports cars ever built, the 592bhp (later 612bhp), 200mph+ 12C is currently priced from £100k and makes for a fantastic first McLaren.

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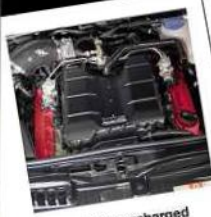


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## EXPERT VIEW

**RICHARD ALBANS**  
**TTS-PERFORMANCE.CO.UK**

'S2000s are mechanically very strong. Forged engine internals mean they'll rev to 9100rpm for over 100,000 miles easily. However, the cam-chain tensioners can back off with high miles, and this needs fixing because the chain could eventually jump a few teeth, damaging the engine.'

'We've also found the very last cars aren't built to the same standards as the rest, with a few engine issues such as run main bearings and seized pistons, though we're not sure why this would be. Also, if you fill the engine up to the full mark with oil they do tend to burn it off quite quickly to a midway point on the dipstick, but most burn it slowly after that.'

'We also offer a supercharger conversion that not only gives the cars a lot more power – 400bhp-plus – but makes them much better to drive all-round, as the VTEC comes in at just under 3000rpm.'

'Elsewhere, a set of lowering springs with the standard dampers can really improve the handling. The standard brakes are fine, even for trackdays, with just a change of pad material required. And remember a lot of the cars out there are Cat C or D by now.'

**TOM GANNON**  
**TGMSPORT.CO.UK**

'Values for these are on the up. We've had customers who bought one four years ago, used it lightly, and have now sold it for more money than they paid for it.'

'They're a tricky car to drive on the limit. Throw bad weather, worn tyres and an inexperienced driver into the mix and quite a few have visited the scenery. It then depends on how the car has been repaired – a lot have not been recorded and repaired badly, so the car warrants a good inspection before buying.'

'They're inherently very strong mechanically, so just check the usual as you would with any used car. Be aware that the bolts tend to seize up underneath the car: the S2000's suspension is very adjustable, but you may find a car with incorrect geometry that can't then be adjusted without cutting off the old bushes and bolts, which can cost £1000. Otherwise they don't have a particular rot problem, although we've done the arches on a few early, high-mileage cars.'

'When modifying, most traditional mods do very little as the engine is so efficient from the factory. I'd supercharge it to get more performance, and we fit quality Öhlins, Nitron or Bilstein suspension to improve the handling.'

## MODEL FOCUS

# HONDA S2000

Unique, divisive and undoubtedly special, if Honda's high-revving roadster is your kind of sports car, here's what you need to know

by Adam Towler

**T**HE RAW INGREDIENTS ARE certainly memorable, with double-wishbone suspension, a fabulously direct gearshift, and of course that jewel of a four-cylinder engine mounted longitudinally and entirely behind the front axle line. It produces 237bhp and revs to over 9000rpm; the quality and materials that made this possible also mean it's a very tough, reliable unit capable of high mileages.

Nevertheless, 'try before you buy' is a great adage with the S2000: early cars in particular are very tricky on the limit, and given the VTEC zone doesn't start till nearly 6000rpm, it's an engine that needs to be thrashed if you're to feel what it can offer. That's either a thrill or a chore, depending on personal taste.

The electrically assisted power steering was always the car's biggest weakness, and Honda actually had three goes at taming the handling. In 2002 there were chassis changes and a glass rear window was introduced, while the 2004 facelift cars saw more significant dynamic alterations. The US also received a larger 2.2-litre engine, but UK buyers stuck with the higher-revving 2-litre lump. More chassis changes and a limited-edition model arrived towards the end of production.

Today the market for S2000s is on the rise, with early, leggy and possibly storied cars starting from £5000, £10,000-12,000 bagging something really smart, and the very best low-mileage cars topping out at the mid-teens. Given there will never be another car like it, it should be on your drive list.





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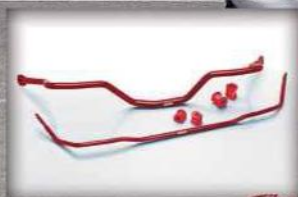


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	1993 Ferrari 348 Targa TS - 39,205 Miles, Rosso Corsa, Nero Leather, Extensive History, Recent Overhaul circa £10,000.....	£64,995
	2017 Lamborghini Aventador SV - 40 Miles, Arancio Atlas, Nero Cosmos, Carbon Skin Package, Magneto-Rheological Suspension.....	£409,995
	1989 Lamborghini Countach 25th Anniversary - 9,668 Miles, Rosso Savaglia, Crema Hide, Extensive File, Huge Investment.....	£334,995
	2010 Lamborghini Murcielago SV - 6,477 Miles, Avus White, Nero Alcantara, Aeropack Wing, Carbon Fibre Two Level Diffuser.....	£329,995
	1991 Lamborghini Countach 25th Anniversary - 24,505 Miles, Rollis Royce Green, Rear Wing, Sports Exhaust, Extensive File.....	£325,995
	2009 Lamborghini Murcielago SV - 8,453 Miles, Rosso Mars, Nero Alcantara, Aeropack Wing, Carbon Two Level Diffuser System.....	£325,995
	2015 Lamborghini Aventador - 8,500 Miles, Rosso Mars, Nero Ade Leather, Lifting Suspension, Huge Specification.....	£279,995
OTHERS	2014 Lamborghini Aventador - 6,370 Miles, Grigio Estoque, Nero Ade, Branding Package, Sensonum Sound, Huge Specification.....	£259,995
	1997 Lamborghini Diablo SV - 9,000 Miles - Giallo, Nero Alcantara, SV Graphics, Outstanding Condition, Huge Investment.....	£249,995
	1999 Lamborghini Diablo VT Roadster - 13,628 Miles, Giallo, Nero Leather, Rear Wing, Sports Exhaust, Power Clutch.....	£249,995
	2017 Lamborghini Huracan Avio - 234 Miles, Limited Edition 1 of 250, Matt Verde Turbine, Black Alcantara, Huge Specification.....	£219,995
	1999 Lamborghini Diablo VT - 8,440 Miles, Yellow Skirt Hic, Bianco Leather, Pop Up lights, 5 Speed Manual Box, V12.....	£189,995
	2014 Lamborghini Huracan - 7,400 Miles - Bianco Icarus, Nero Ade, Dynamic Steering, Lifting System, Style Package.....	£164,995
	2004 Porsche Carrera GT - 18,824 Miles, GT Silver Metallic, Dark Grey, 128 of 1270 ever produced, Huge Investment Opportunity.....	£499,995
	2015 Aston Martin Vanquish Volante 60th Anniversary - 50 Miles, 1 of 6, Hammerhead Silver, Obsidian, Outstanding Investment.....	£299,995
	2006 Mercedes-Benz McLaren SLR LHD - 13,995 Miles, Crystal Galaxite Black, Black, Huge Investment Opportunity.....	£229,995
	2016 Aston Martin DB11 - 859 Miles, Cinnabar Orange, AML Special Metallic Black Leather, Launch Edition, Huge Specification.....	£199,995
OTHERS	2016 McLaren 650S Spider - Delivery Mileage, Carbon Black, Black Alcantara, Huge Carbon Specification, Lifting System.....	£189,995
	2016 Jaguar F-Type S/C Project 7 - 60 Miles, 1 of 250, Ultra Blue, Quilted Racing Diamond Style Pattern, Decals, Racing Harnesses.....	£179,995
	2014 Aston Martin Vanquish Volante Carbon Edition - 14,532 Miles, Morning Frost White, Obsidian, Carbon Side Strakes.....	£138,995
	2017 Aston Martin Rapide S - Delivery Mileage, Skyfall Silver AML Special, Obsidian, Exterior Carbon Pack, Rear Seat Ent.....	£119,995
	2015 Maserati Granturismo MC Stradale Centenario Edition - 2,516 Miles, Rosso Magma, Nero, Extensive Specification.....	£89,995

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# ESSENTIALS

## THE ROUND-UP

New motoring products that have caught our eye this month



### VIDEOGAME

Cranks and Goggles  
£4.99

[store.steampowered.com](http://store.steampowered.com)

If you ever played the old *Micro Machines* games, you'll be familiar with the idea of top-down racers, and *Cranks and Goggles* is as wonderful and whimsical as the name suggests. The graphics aren't dissimilar to old Grand Prix posters, but there's surprising realism to the handling.



### T-SHIRT

Oppo  
£25

[t-lab.eu](http://t-lab.eu)

The folks at t-lab see more than a touch of insouciance to the phrase 'a dab of oppo', as if applying a dab of aftershave, so have immortalised it in a cheeky 'Oppo, pour homme' design. The graphic is also subtle enough not to mark you out as too much of a 'helmsmith'...



### PRINT

MP4-4  
£POA

[facebook.com/carprofileart](https://facebook.com/carprofileart)

Hand-drawn and hand-painted by artist (and former McLaren employee) Matthew Jeffreys, each Car Profile Art print is reproduced in limited numbers. Keep tabs on Matthew's Facebook page – if you're a McLaren fan you'll find much to like.



### CLOTHING

Suixtil Bonnet  
£60

[meandmycar.co.uk](http://meandmycar.co.uk)

Driving top-down in winter will test the resolve of even the most determined anti-hat types. If the weather has finally broken you, the least you can do is wear a hat with a bit of style, which is where this cashmere and wool piece – with woven-in goggles – comes in.



### MODEL

BMW 635 CSI Bathurst '84 Hulme/von Bayern  
£80

[racingmodels.com](http://racingmodels.com)

Applying John Player Special livery makes almost any car desirable, but when the car in question is the BMW 635 CSI driven at Bathurst by Denny Hulme and Leopold von Bayern, you have pure automotive cool. This resin model is made by Czech Master Resin.



### ACCESSORIES

Prestone Rapid De-Icer  
From £4.99

[holtsauto.com/prestone/buy](http://holtsauto.com/prestone/buy)

Remember when cassette cases made fantastic ice scrapers? They say smartphones can do anything, but you'd best not try that with your iPhone. De-icer is better, and Prestone's works down to -40C. It's quick too and prevents re-icing once you're underway.

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# Fast Fleet

## THIS MONTH

FORD FOCUS ST ESTATE // AUDI R8 SPYDER // VW GOLF GTI CLUBSPORT EDITION 40 // BMW i8 // CATERHAM SEVEN 420R // MERCEDES-AMG C63 S COUPE // LAMBORGHINI MURCIÉLAGO // McLAREN 675LT SPIDER // SKODA OCTAVIA vRS 230 // PEUGEOT 308 GTI 270 // FORD FOCUS RS



NEW ARRIVAL

## Porsche 911 Carrera

An old 911 joins the fleet, and being a 993, it's one of the best of the breed

**I** I'VE ALWAYS HAD A THING for 1990s automotive design. The decade gave us the last true 'box' hot hatches – the Clio Williams, the Integrale Evo and, of course, the big-bumper Mk2 Golf GTi – and some truly stunning supercars such as the McLaren F1, the Ferrari F50 and the Bugatti EB110. Pure, uncensored car porn.

So getting to own a piece of precious metal from the same era is something of a dream come true for me. And here it is: a 1994 993-generation Porsche 911 Carrera in Midnight Blue. The car was already in the family but it's now under my care. Manual gearbox, rear-wheel drive, 268bhp. Bliss.

Most of you will know that the 993 was the last of the air-cooled 911s, but it was also the last generation to be hand assembled. This particular example has had some interesting

parts fitted over the last 23 years, too, including the rear wing, front bumper and side-skirts from a Carrera RS of the same era. It's also got a set of Gemballa dampers, and the 18-inch wheels (which I adore) were made by OZ Racing for Porsche-tuner extraordinaire Ruf. They're wrapped in Pirelli P Zero Rossos – 225/40 at the front and 285/30 at the back – and there's a set of four-piston Brembo brake calipers from a 993 Turbo to boot.

The car's not quite standard, then, but the 3.6-litre engine is unchanged but for a Carrera Cup airbox with a K&N panel filter. The exhaust has the silencer from the Carrera RS Clubsport (and sounds rather good), and the six-speed gearbox has a quickshift fitted, also from the RS.

The cabin is wonderfully airy compared with those of modern cars and contains a set of seats

from a 996 GT3 and some more Ruf goodies, including a leather steering wheel and a steel gearknob that feels like it was stolen from a racer. There's also a funky (OK, dodgy) '90s-style satnav with more Ruf badges attached.

I love the way this car looks – all sultry curves and quiet intent – and I reckon the motorsport hardware really elevates it as a package. I'm a big fan of modified 911s, and from talking to guys such as Alex Ross at Californian Porsche tuner SharkWerks, I can really understand the benefits of going down this path.

The plan now is just to get the car set up correctly and then take it to some good driving roads. I also want to properly understand what it is to drive an old-school 911 correctly, and how to handle its (in)famous weight distribution. Wish me luck! ☒

**Aston Parrott** (@AstonParrott)

'I want to properly understand what it is to drive an old-school 911 correctly, and how to handle its (in)famous weight distribution'

<b>Date acquired</b>	April 2016
<b>Total mileage</b>	78,563
<b>Mileage this month</b>	268
<b>Costs this month</b>	£0
<b>mpg this month</b>	23.5



# Ford Focus ST Estate

It's the biggest challenge yet for a Fast Fleet ST: impressing someone who doesn't need 1502 litres of boot space

**F** FLICK THROUGH PAST issues of this magazine and you'll notice that brisk estates, such as this Focus ST, have long been a feature of **evo**'s Fast Fleet. Whether diesel or petrol, front-, rear- or all-wheel-drive, and regardless of the badge on the nose, a fast estate pairs performance – something we're rather keen on – with everyday practicality.

Or at least, I assume it does. I've never really needed a fast estate myself because I don't have a family to cart around and my shopping trips rarely fill a passenger footwell, let alone an extended luggage area. In fact, I'd go as far as saying that any car with more than two seats is a bit excessive for my needs. The most decadent, cavernous car I've ever personally owned was a nearly new Fiat Panda 100HP.

As I write this, I've been custodian of our Focus ST Estate for around two weeks and have just realised that I've not even so much as looked in the boot yet. So I can't tell you whether you'll fit a refrigerator, wardrobe or the England XI in there (all popular measures of estate-car volume, I'm led to believe), and given that this ST spent a few weeks with former **evo** videographer Sam Riley, I'm not sure I want to break the seal on Pandora's Box and let forth into the world any horrors lurking within.

To all intents and purposes, then, my experience with the ST will be as per a regular five-door hatchback, albeit one whose rear screen looks slightly further away in my rear-view mirror and whose profile is slightly more elegant – particularly in Deep Impact Blue – than that of the slightly dumpy hatch. I've not yet been able to appreciate the full (deep) impact of the colour as winter roads have rendered the car a sludgy shade of dull navy, and having the thing cleaned in this weather is about as satisfying as trying to scoop up air with a fork.

I'm already settling in well, though, not least because there's a warming



'The highs and the lows of our old ST are all flooding back, from the engaging steering to the enraging touchscreen'



<b>Date acquired</b>	November 2016
<b>Total mileage</b>	10,622
<b>Mileage this month</b>	770
<b>Costs this month</b>	£0
<b>mpg this month</b>	32.7

sense of familiarity to it all. Back in September 2015 I took our previous, diesel long-term ST on a 3600-mile trip around Europe. The highs and the lows of that car are all flooding back, from the engaging steering to the enraging touchscreen system. The former is as welcome on early morning trips to Heathrow as it was on the Route Napoléon. The latter is

already giving me visions of one day having to make an awkward phone call to Ford explaining exactly why I pushed one of its cars off a very tall cliff. Thankfully that earlier car's infuriating habit of blowing electric seat fuses is absent, so I won't feel the urge to flick a lit match in there for good measure. ✕

**Antony Ingram** (@evoAntony)

# Audi R8 Spyder

Our Audi reveals exactly what we're going to miss when every sports car is turbocharged



**H** HAVE YOU EVER CHOPPED a firm, ever-so-slightly under-ripe tomato with a really sharp, professional-quality kitchen knife? It's strangely satisfying. The forged-steel blade slices through the skin and then flesh of the helpless little fruit and down to the chopping board almost under its own weight. You barely need to apply any downward pressure yourself.

It's a thousand times more enjoyable than trying to chop a squidgy, over-ripe tomato with the blunt old thing you inherited from the previous tenants, the one you swore you were going to throw away but haven't got around to doing so yet. Maybe that's just me. Anyway, the tomato just sort of flattens a bit as you attempt to force the blade through the skin and all you're left with is a juicy, fleshy blob like a pig's liver rather than neat, precisely cut slices.

It's a bit like driving a really high-revving, normally aspirated engine compared with a blunt, soupy, turbocharged one. Once you've got over the fun of the forceful, torque-rich power delivery of a turbo motor, which never takes all that long, a similarly powerful non-turbo engine is just massively more enjoyable to wind out to the red line. The soundtrack, the way the rate of acceleration builds and builds throughout the rev range like a heavy object falling off a high bridge, the drama of the delivery right at the top end... It's no contest as far as I'm concerned.

There aren't very many of those high-revving, normally aspirated engines left in new cars these days. The Porsche 911 GT3's six-cylinder lump certainly qualifies – and, incidentally, its 9000rpm engine is so much more thrilling than the GT3 RS's more powerful, 8800rpm unit. Another is the Audi R8 V10 Plus's unit, which also revs all the way to

9000rpm and feels sharp enough at the top end to cut through bone.

The R8 Spyder uses a less powerful version of the same 5.2-litre V10 (533bhp plays 602bhp), and after more than 3000 miles at the wheel of our long-termer, I've had to conclude that its engine isn't quite as spectacular as the more potent one. The red line is set 500rpm lower in this version, which means you shift gears a moment or two before your head feels like it's going to explode with the noise and the fury of it all, and that seems like a shame.

But let's get some perspective on this. A 533bhp ten-cylinder engine that spins to 8500rpm is still a very special thing. In fact, it's categorically one of the best-sounding and most exciting engines on sale from new today. It's still at the very heart of the R8 Spyder ownership experience and I don't see that appeal wearing thin any time soon. **✉**

**Dan Prosser** (@TheDanProsser)

'The way the rate of acceleration builds and builds is like a heavy object falling off a high bridge'

<b>Date acquired</b>	November 2016
<b>Total mileage</b>	4020
<b>Mileage this month</b>	820
<b>Costs this month</b>	£0
<b>mpg this month</b>	22.0

# Volkswagen Golf GTI Clubsport Edition 40

The Clubsport's wild side can be unleashed at the touch of a button (well, a few buttons)

**L**AST MONTH I PRAISED the Golf's ability to shrug off a rough road surface, but in the weeks since I've started to notice a downside to this impressive behaviour. With the optional DCC dampers in their oh-so-capable Normal setting, I've frequently found myself driving along quiet countryside roads without the enthusiasm that I perhaps should, or in other cars would. Instead I've been slipping into a cruise. Yes, a fast cruise, but a cruise nonetheless. Like the regular Golf GTI, it's something the Clubsport is particularly good at, but what's the point in having this special version of the GTI if you're not getting more from it?

So to combat this curious semi-apaty, I've now adopted a policy of always driving the Clubsport with its suspension in Sport mode, relenting only when carrying passengers or if outside temperatures threaten frost or ice. The jigglier ride instantly makes the car feel more purposeful,

which in turn prods me into getting more involved, and that's a very good thing, because this Golf really shines when you show it some commitment.

Selecting Sport for the suspension also brings more information through the seat, and a hint more through the steering, too. The latter is a constant stream of subtle and subtly varying vibrations that paint a picture of the road-surface texture. This is welcome stuff, but the addition of greater changes in steering weight to help you assess the remaining grip levels would be even more useful. Sadly, cornering speeds in the wet in particular are still based almost entirely upon educated guesswork rather than steering feedback, but that's those pesky modern electronically assisted systems for you.

You can add more weight to the steering if desired, but it only does just that – add more weight – so going there seems somewhat

pointless. It's for this reason that I've avoided the Golf's across-the-board Sport setting and have instead, as is customary, created my own version of it in the Individual mode. This has the suspension and the limited-slip differential in Sport (the latter helping to keep unwanted wheelspin at bay), but leaves the steering and the engine noise in Normal (the louder soundtrack for the cabin is fine, but I find it more of a distraction than a genuine enhancement).

Set up thus, the Clubsport Edition 40 feels more like the sort of car I imagine it should be all of the time, more like a specialist tool. It may be less comfortable, and I'm not sure that the more restricted damping makes the Clubsport any more capable on British B-roads – in fact it probably nudges it in the other direction. But by configuring it to be slightly worse for day-to-day use, I'm finding the Clubsport more enjoyable. Logic be damned. ☒

**Ian Eveleigh**

'What's the point of having this special version of the GTI if you're not getting more from it?'

<b>Date acquired</b>	October 2016
<b>Total mileage</b>	5755
<b>Mileage this month</b>	1089
<b>Costs this month</b>	£0
<b>mpg this month</b>	30.4





**END OF TERM**

## Caterham Seven 420R

Though it left us in less than auspicious circumstances, our Caterham offered some addictive highs

**U**NTIL I DROVE THE NEW Seven Sprint (Driven, **evo** 230), I thought the only type of Caterham to have was a slightly bonkers trackday model that deafened you with its ripsaw induction noise. The Sprint taught me that there is a simple joy in a narrower, less grippy Seven, but as fun and charming as that car is, the Caterham I'd want would still look a lot like our departed 420R.

Jethro Bovingdon and Dan Prosser spent a gruelling day at Llandow Circuit choosing which of the Caterham lineup would be the most fun to have as a long-termers and which options we should specify (**evo** 209). They didn't try the entire range: the 160 was considered too gutless and the supercharged 620

too expensive. That left the 270, 360 and 420, each of them equipped with the £3995 R pack that adds a limited-slip differential – essential in a Seven, even with the 135bhp of the 270 – plus Sport suspension, a lightweight flywheel, a carbonfibre dash, shift lights and an uprated brake master cylinder.

After a full day of play – sorry, *work* – Jethro and Dan decided the 420R was The One. On top of the R pack we went for a six-speed gearbox (£1495), ventilated front brake discs with four-piston calipers (£675), and amenities such as a quick-release Momo steering wheel (£150), doors, a roof and a windscreen (£1550) and padded seats rather than bare buckets (£400). In all it cost £37,390, up from £26,995 basic.

And when I say 'basic' I mean 'basic'. Caterham charges £2500 to factory-build a Seven, but we thought it would be fun to try to do it ourselves. However, despite the use of Mission Motorsport's Oxfordshire workshop and our vast mechanical knowledge, this was something we didn't actually manage to do. Poor instructions and the lack of some fundamental parts, including transmission mounts and rear brake lines, was our well-rehearsed excuse. We did manage to bolt-up the front suspension and install the engine and gearbox, but eventually we admitted defeat and asked Caterham to finish the job.

Once the 420R was back with us and run-in, its rabid 210bhp 2-litre Ford Duratec engine and

**'Irrespective of whatever injury our Seven imparted, the incredible thrills it delivered made the suffering absolutely worth it'**

playful chassis meant it quickly won our hearts. Despite the creature comforts our car was fitted with, it was still physical to drive. During a particularly enthusiastic session, whether on road or track, it would often give you a good beating. I bruised my knees, elbows and even my palm over just one weekend. But irrespective of whatever injury our Seven imparted, the incredible thrills it delivered made the suffering absolutely worth it.

The 420R backed up its charms with pure performance, too. In **evo** 214 we saw how it stacked up against the Zenos E10 S in a data test. Although the Zenos accelerated marginally faster (hitting 60mph in 4.2sec to the Seven's 4.3), the 420R stopped better and lapped Blyton Park 0.9sec faster. Then in issue 223 we put the Caterham up against a

**Below, clockwise from top left:** **evo** staffers get stuck into building the 420R from scratch – a move that could have saved us £2500; getting rescued after the alternator made a bid for freedom; in pristine condition after a £160 service; raw Seven also proved the perfect tool for driver-training duties

Porsche 911 GT3 RS. Even though the 911 was faster in every measurable way, we worked out that our 420R provided 81 per cent of the GT3 RS's performance for just 26 per cent of the price. Just think about that...

In between those two challenges, the 420R also managed to score a podium finish in our 2016 Track Car of the Year test (**evo** 220), rubbing shoulders with Porsche's Cayman GT4 and Radical's RXC Spyder.

Problems? The alternator bracket broke, loosening the auxiliary belt and leaving the car briefly stranded. Then a few days later a stuttering engine was traced to a worn bit of wiring loom. And then there was the big one. You may remember the Caterham finished one trackday in a pool of its own oil. It transpired that oil starvation had caused the engine to throw a rod and puncture the

block, leaving a fist-sized hole for oil to escape from. The car's dry-sump setup is the same as the one used by Caterham's R300 racers, so it's safe to say this wasn't the cause of the oil starvation. The conclusion was that the oil level had been allowed to get too low, either at the time of the failure or at some earlier point, though the cockpit oil gauges never recorded anything other than a correct level and pressure. Regardless, Caterham's warranty doesn't cover failures that occur on track, so there would be no repair under warranty. And that was that.

Sad circumstances under which to say goodbye to our Seven, then, but they shouldn't detract from what a wonderful little giant-killing, thrill-dispensing machine it was. x

**Will Beaumont**  
(@WillBeaumont)



<b>Date acquired</b>	August 2015
<b>Duration of test</b>	18 months
<b>Total test mileage</b>	5901
<b>Overall mpg</b>	31.8
<b>Costs</b>	£443.40 four tyres, £160 service, £72 alternator bracket, £39 sub-loom, £52.80 spark plugs
<b>Purchase price</b>	£37,390
<b>Value today</b>	£34,000-36,000



## McLaren 675LT Spider

The orange dream-machine gets a serious workout with a 1000-mile road-trip. So what are the drawbacks?

**T**HE MILES I'VE COVERED so far in my McLaren 675LT Spider have left me deeply impressed and completely enamoured with this latest Woking convertible. It is a car that inspires you to think of as many reasons as possible just to go out for a drive. It's also one of those rare cars that delivers fun and fulfilment at both low speeds and closer to the legal limit. And with just under 1000 miles clocked up in a single month, this one is certainly getting plenty of road time.

The majority of that mileage came on a long-weekend road-trip up through Vermont and New Hampshire. The first part of

the trip was a quick dash up the highway from New York to the New Hampshire border. Or at least it should have been a quick dash, and was until we hit a massive traffic jam caused by a downed tree. It then took an hour to crawl five miles, during which time the 675LT stayed much calmer (and cooler) than its owner, which is by no means a given with cars of this ilk.

Once clear and needing to make up time, we pushed on and the LT really started flowing. A brief but biblical downpour reinforced just how planted the long-tailed Mac is and we were able to continue making miles disappear at a rapid clip.

Day two was spent on A- and B-type roads, heading west and then south across Vermont. As they twist their way through the mountains, these are some of the best driving roads in the north-east United States. In this environment the McLaren 675LT Spider really shone, and after a bit of trial and error, I settled on a configuration of Sport for the twin-turbo V8 powertrain and Normal for the handling. The former ensures gearchanges from the twin-clutch transmission are close to instantaneous, each pull of a paddle followed by a

'The way the 675LT turns in and tracks through corners on the road is almost on par with the P1'

smile-inducing whack as the drivetrain re-engages. The LT's grip, meanwhile, is extraordinary, turbo-lag is basically non-existent, and the main challenge when pulling out to overtake is to not suddenly find yourself closing on the horizon much faster than anticipated. Indeed, the way the 675LT turns in and tracks through corners on the road is almost on par with the P1.

The rest of the trip was spent on a combination of highways and B-roads. Each day we travelled with the roof both opened and closed and noticed little difference in comfort level and the ability to carry on a conversation. Wind protection is also outstanding, meaning long distances are comfortable, even in a machine this hardcore. In terms of flaws, I haven't found any yet.

I have a few more New England-based road-trips planned for the 675 through the coming months. As a result, the car will stay in the area for a while before it heads west to its more permanent home in the Rocky Mountains. This month has been absolutely terrific and I can't wait to get back behind the wheel of the LT once again. ✉

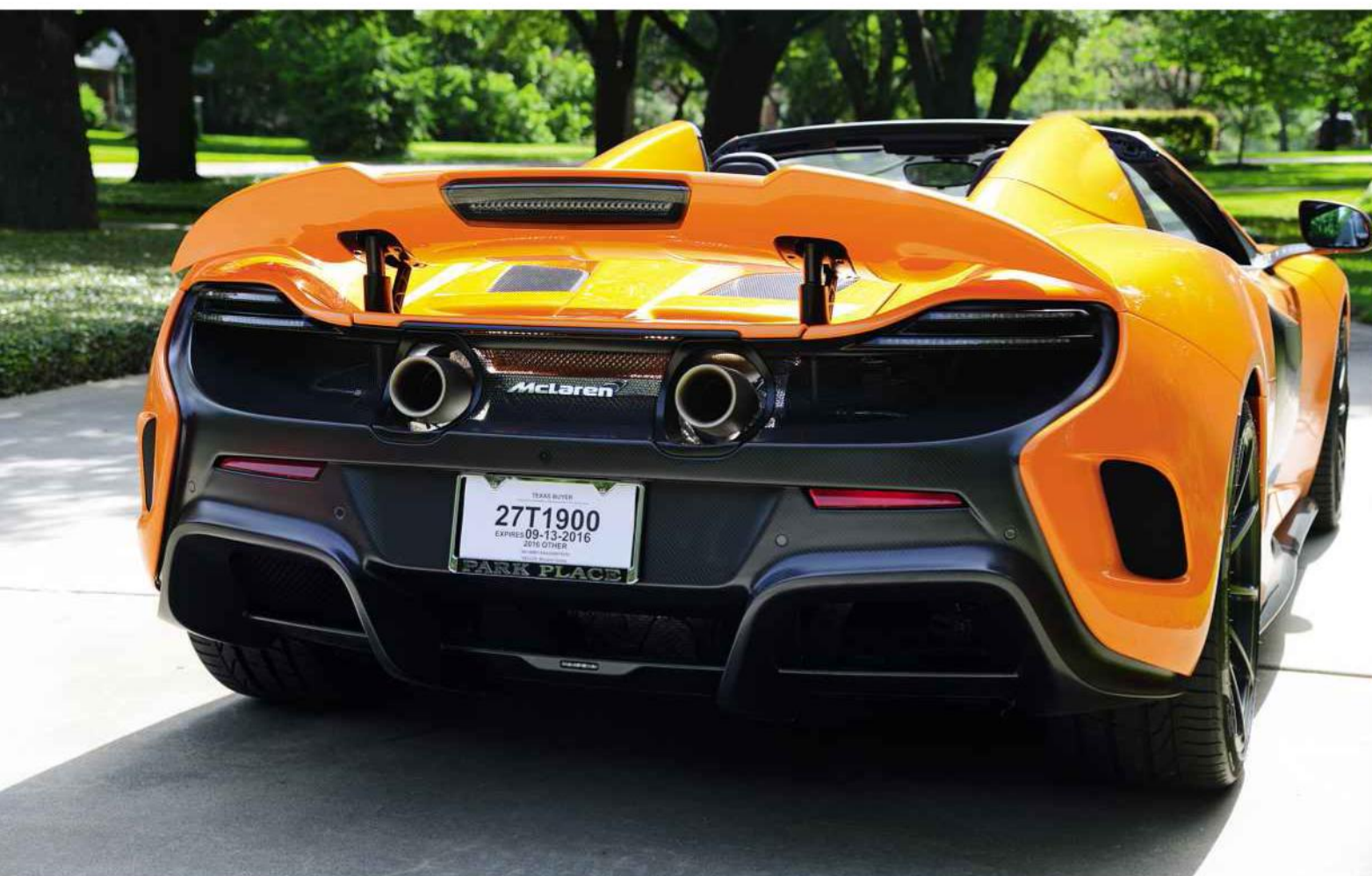
**Secret Supercar Owner**  
(@SupercarOwner)

<b>Date acquired</b>	September 2016
<b>Total mileage</b>	980
<b>Mileage this month</b>	951
<b>Costs this month</b>	£0
<b>mpg this month</b>	15.0

## Mercedes-AMG C63 S Coupe

The irresponsibility of AMG's engine builders is mitigated only by the brilliance of its software engineers





**W**ITH WELL OVER 3000 miles driven, and deep into the British winter, I'd expected this update to include mention of a switch to all-season tyres. However, when nature decided to treat the UK to some long spells of unseasonably mild weather – it was 13C on Christmas Day, for heaven's sake! – I became loath to ditch the C63 S's Michelin Super Sport tyres.

And so it has remained, albeit with the nagging worry that this leaves me vulnerable to typically British cold snaps – or 'Arctic blasts' as the *Daily Express* prefers to describe them.

On the few occasions the mercury has headed below zero, the Merc has indeed been quite a handful, snapping and grabbing for traction as deep-frozen rubber compounds

remain in hibernation just when you need them most. Still, as long as you pay it the respect due to a rear-driven car with over 500bhp, the electronics do an admirable job of keeping you facing in the correct direction. Just how good a job was revealed in an impromptu experiment (for scientific purposes, obviously) that saw the 63 – with DSC switched off – spinning its wheels from a standstill to some way north of, er, 'motorway speeds' in fourth gear.

This suggests a car that's crazy over-powered. I suppose it is in tricky conditions with nothing to rein it in, but with the electronics engaged it never ceases to amaze me how much of its performance you can access. The twin-turbo V8 is utterly addictive, as is the way it pulls and

pulls all the way to 7000rpm, with a nice *brap* from the exhausts on the upshift. It's so much more exciting and special than the BMW M4's twin-turbo straight-six there's almost no comparison.

Inevitably, it does like a drink. Thus far I've averaged a smidge over 22mpg. The absolute best I've seen is 27, but that was on a relatively steady motorway run. That means a range of around 300 miles, though this will drop to more like 250 if you're clogging it on A- and B-roads. It hurts your credit card, but as any AMG driver will attest, the pain lasts just as long as it takes to walk from the filling station kiosk, get back behind the wheel and press the big silver starter button. ✕

**Richard Meaden**  
(@DickieMeaden)

'The V8 is so much more exciting and special than the BMW M4's twin-turbo straight-six there's almost no comparison'

<b>Date acquired</b>	October 2016
<b>Total mileage</b>	3367
<b>Mileage this month</b>	1153
<b>Costs this month</b>	£0
<b>mpg this month</b>	22.6

## Lamborghini Murciélago

Four years ago this car suffered a horror crash. You've read about the restoration – now it's back on the black stuff

**I** IT'S BEEN A WHILE SINCE the odo on SG54 LAM turned a few clicks, but turn they recently did – albeit only around a distinctly unglamorous industrial estate at first. I can't deny I was a touch nervous as the car later pulled out onto a dual carriageway again for the first time. I suppose the severity of the impact it had suffered and the consequent damage to the chassis meant I was half expecting things to not feel quite right. But the further the fat Pirellis travelled, the more confident I became, and the big Lamborghini tracked up the road straight as an arrow.

So the old girl is back. Finally! Sod's Law it's also now winter, of course. However, that's never stopped me using this car before, so the first overseas journey back 'home' to Sant'Agata is planned for very soon. A 1000-mile round trip in



**'I was a touch nervous pulling out onto a dual carriageway again for the first time'**

the Italian winter should definitely blow any cobwebs away, especially the run through the snow tunnels of the Gotthard Pass.

Right now, though, the Murciélago is sitting quite contentedly in a Leeds shopping centre, doing promotional work for 6th Gear Experience's supercar-driving events. During the rebuild I decided to have the Tubi exhaust back-box and tips refitted, and the sound is, well, pretty deafening. Either that or I'm getting old. Whichever, driving it in the confined space of the mall created such a din that the security team insisted the car be pushed the final yards to its stand.

Whether I keep this setup on the car, bearing in mind the many more miles the Lambo is set to cover, or change the Tubi back-box for the factory item whilst keeping the tips (a nice compromise), will depend on the difference the long-awaited interior headlining makes when installed. That part, it should be said, has been on factory back-order for a good six months. In the meantime, I'll just have to get used

to seeing people who are waiting at a pedestrian crossing take a conscious step back from the kerb as the orange monster approaches.

Driving the Lambo again after a four-year break, the one thing that strikes me is the care needed with its manual gearbox, which has always required such a methodical approach. Just before the crash it had been totally rebuilt, so consequently the clutch is fabulously light. I've said more than once that premature clutch wear in a Murciélago is without doubt down to poor driving technique. Reversing up a hill or riding the car's left pedal is a real no-no. This example has had seven clutches so far, averaging one every 40,000 miles or so (not bad going), so I'm hoping the eighth is some way off yet. **X**

**Simon George**

(@6gearexperience)



<b>Date acquired</b>	September 2004
<b>Total mileage</b>	258,322
<b>Mileage this month</b>	224
<b>Costs this month</b>	£0
<b>mpg this month</b>	n/a

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## BMW i8

Time to answer that all-important question: is it a sports car?



**I** IT WAS TO BE EXPECTED that the i8, especially in purple, would draw curiosity every time I stepped out of it. The questions? 'Is that one of those electric cars?' closely followed by queries regarding its colour, range, fuel economy, price, performance and finally the big one: 'Is it a proper sport car?' This is the question that always requires a pause, though I've no idea why because it's the question

I answer more than any other. The simple answer is yes, it is; the i8 is a sports car. It has the performance to match the looks, although it's at its prime when there's charge in the battery and the Sport driving mode is selected to get the most out of the three-cylinder petrol motor. It's the initial surge of acceleration that grabs your breath as the electric motor serves up its 184lb ft in an instant and is quickly

**'BMW's engineers have delivered a supple chassis without losing the sharpness of a Munich-built car'**

joined by the turbocharged engine's 236lb ft. The 129bhp produced by the electric motor and the 228bhp from the combustion engine feel secondary in the role of shoving the i8 down the road. A session at the test track is booked to provide a definitive answer as to how fast it actually is.

Away from the drag strip, the most impressive dynamic element of the i8 is how it disguises its weight. It tips the scales at 1485kg, but there

## Peugeot 308 GTi 270 by PS

Some buttons are best left alone...

**I** I'M REALLY ENJOYING the 308 GTi. OK, it isn't quite as sprightly as its little brother, the 208 GTi by Peugeot Sport, and it doesn't feel as sophisticated as the RCZ R, but it's a mighty fine hot hatch. Every time I rev the 266bhp engine to its 6500rpm limit, it surprises me with its potency. Below 4500rpm it's unassuming and allows you to make swift progress, but rev it up and the 308 explodes forwards.

It's rare for a modern turbo engine to take on such a distinctly different temperament as the boost increases, and the 308's ballistic top end gives its 1.6 a loveable character.

There are no downsides, either. Rather than feeling old-school or laggy, the transition from mild-mannered to insane is predictable and so well managed that you can deploy the Pug's wild side any time.

What I'm struggling to get my head around is the Sport mode, which turns the dials red, changes the throttle map and increases the engine noise in the cabin. Sadly, not one of these changes improves the car. The all-red dials mean you have to really concentrate on where the needle is to see when the limiter is approaching, yet the last thing you want when the engine goes berserk is for your attention to be



<b>Date acquired</b>	November 2016
<b>Total mileage</b>	7443
<b>Mileage this month</b>	1074
<b>Costs this month</b>	£0
<b>mpg this month</b>	39.1

are no circumstances where it feels bulky and overstretched. Yes, the steering is too light and never gains any weight, no matter the loads put through the front Bridgestones (our car runs the wider 215 front and 245 rear tyres), but it's precise, allowing the car to be easily placed in a corner, and the stiffness offered by the i8's carbonfibre shell has allowed BMW's engineers to deliver a supple chassis without losing the sharpness expected of a Munich-built car. The regenerative brakes are unexpectedly progressive, too.

Ultimately, you don't feel as plugged in as you do in a 911. It's not as visceral as a McLaren 540C and an M6 will demolish it in a straight line, too. But in its own unique way, the BMW i8 feels every bit as special as its traditional rivals, and I'm enjoying my time with it far more than I expected I would. ✕

**Stuart Gallagher**  
(@stuartg917)

<b>Date acquired</b>	July 2016
<b>Total mileage</b>	14,216
<b>Mileage this month</b>	1195
<b>Costs this month</b>	£0
<b>mpg this month</b>	33.1

on the instruments. The more eager throttle is no better, either – it makes it difficult to gradually feed in the power and it's all too easy to provoke the front wheels into losing traction. As for the extra noise, well, it's just so blatantly synthetic. It wouldn't be so offensive if the noise from the engine was dull or unpleasant when the 308 is in its default setting, but it's not.

Sport mode, then, is best left off. The 308 GTi is an exciting, fun and well-calibrated car as it is. ✕

**Will Beaumont**  
(@WillBeaumont)

## Skoda Octavia Estate vRS 230

Its firepower may be modest, but our low-key estate is a gem nonetheless



ON 19 AUGUST 2011, AT around 7.45am, a Skoda Octavia vRS piloted by **evo** contributing editor Richard Meaden became the world's fastest 2-litre forced-induction production car, hitting a top speed of 227mph on Utah's Bonneville Salt Flats.

You can read the full story back in issue 162, but check out this picture if you've never seen the Octavia that set the record (it's the one on the right). Our 227bhp vRS met up with the 227mph legend for a brief photo op this month, and the very focussed nature of the 600bhp car got me thinking about what a brilliant all-rounder the vRS 230 Estate is. One minute it's the consummate load-lugger, then when a decent stretch of road comes along I simply switch from Comfort to vRS mode – which I've configured to give greater steering weight and sharper engine response – and it

comes alive. There's good feedback through the seat and steering wheel, and the car takes a great stance through corners, the limited-slip diff encouraging you to really push on.

The fruity sound from the sports exhaust motivates you to keep the needle up past 5000rpm, too, which is a real treat in what is essentially a practical car in a relatively modest price bracket. Sure, the power delivery is not as aggressive as it is in, for example, a Volkswagen Golf R or SEAT Leon Cupra, but the engine still pulls strongly at the top end of the tach. The smoothness of the gear throw could be improved, though, as it feels a little clunky on shifts around second gear.

New cars are generally predictable in that they have everything you need for a fuss-free daily drive. You just jump in, the engine starts every time, and you begin your journey. With the vRS, Skoda is offering this

**'The fruity sound from the sports exhaust motivates you to keep the needle up past 5000rpm'**

kind of motoring but with a huge dose of practicality and a big chunk of excitement. But... wouldn't it be fabulous if the company capitalised on its record-breaking achievement and sold an Octavia vRS Bonneville Edition, with, say, the 306bhp engine from the Golf GTI Clubsport S, some neat aero additions and even a few flashy decals? I'm sure I wouldn't be the only one interested. ✕

**Aston Parrott** (@AstonParrott)

<b>Date acquired</b>	November 2016
<b>Total mileage</b>	9533
<b>Mileage this month</b>	2047
<b>Costs this month</b>	£0
<b>mpg this month</b>	31.4



## Ford Focus RS

Brought low by a problem buried deep within its blue bodywork, our Focus RS needed expert attention

**I** I'VE GOT A LOT OF TIME for this car. It once clocked 17,000 miles in a year and yet never felt anything less than one of the most absorbing hot hatches you could ever wish for. During that time we bonded closely, partly because of its steadfast reliability and partly because of its character, which is that of a loveable hound whose crazed energy levels occasionally lead it to shred something it doesn't really mean to. Perfect? No, but never, ever dull.

Indeed, the big Sparco buckets and sweeping visibility even made it a pleasant companion for those times when we weren't blatting along a country road, and it always elicited a glance over the shoulder in car parks (the true mark of a special bit of kit). Owners' club members may be evangelical about these cars almost to the point of ridicule, but I tell you, they're on to something.

Sadly, recent weeks have eaten up a lot of my patience. I trekked across London to pick the car up for a drive but it just wouldn't start. Turn-over? Yes. Firing? Nope. The AA arrived to investigate a suspected immobiliser fault, but to no avail, and some hours later a flat-bed appeared to take it to Allen Ford in Northampton. Here it was unceremoniously jettisoned outside the dealer, late at night, all alone and, to my eyes, outrageously vulnerable.

Ford charged £110 to diagnose a fuel-pump fault, which for a Focus of this vintage means dropping the tank to replace the pump *and* the sender at a cost that would have Ferrari owners sitting up. The quote was around £1000 – blue-collar brand, white-collar prices. A bad joke, in other words, and as the car also needed its belts done, I



'It was an irritatingly perfect example of the sort of hitch many cars develop around this mileage'

<b>Date acquired</b>	January 2015
<b>Total mileage</b>	79,055
<b>Mileage this month</b>	366
<b>Costs this month</b>	£335.34 fuel pump £407.88 belts £157.31 wheel bearing
<b>mpg this month</b>	26.9

was left to mull a total bill of £1600 as a minimum.

Reduced to the role of an Imperial Blue bauble, gorgeous and useless, the poor car was flat-bedded for the second time in as many days, this time to the sanctuary of Graham Goode Racing in Leicester.

Ford folks will know that name. The company is respected for its tuning packages for the Mk2 Focus RS in particular, and the man himself spent years dispensing hidings in his Sierra Cosworth touring car. In truth I should have made the switch to a good indie sooner (it's nice to have the official stamps in the book, but Ford no longer sees enough of these cars to have the same level of expertise, or to justify its inflated service charges). The new analysis was more detailed, too – a lack of fuel pressure from corroded pins in the plug to the in-tank fuel pump was to thank for all this mayhem.

And mayhem it was. A real nightmare to fix, in fact, because

replacement units no longer exist. But, after a little experimentation, Graham Goode paired an in-tank unit from a standard Focus with one of its own high-flow pumps. The terminals in the wiring loom were also replaced for good measure and so the fuel gauge not only now reads accurately (this had, I confess, been an issue for some time before the pump gave out), but the connection between tank and engine should also be failsafe for many years to come. The belts were also changed, of course, and so was the front right wheel bearing.

In summary: tiny fault, colossal fallout – an irritatingly perfect example of the sort of hitch many cars develop at around this mileage. Now it's fixed, though, I'm confident the RS will continue to exhibit the bulletproof dependability that's pretty rare for stuff this raw. At least it better had, because I can't afford another financial bombshell. ☒

**Richard Lane** (@\_rlane\_)

# NEXT MONTH

McLAREN BMW PORSCHE

PININFARINA FERRARI

# 2017'S MOST WANTED

LAMBORGHINI ALPINE

AMG AUDI HONDA

## ISSUE 234

ON SALE WEDNESDAY 22 MARCH

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# THE KNOWLEDGE

🔴 = new entry this month. \* = grey import. Entries in italics are for cars no longer on sale. **Issue no.** is for our most recent major test of the car (D = Driven, R = Road test or group test, F = Feature, FF = Fast Fleet). Call 0844 844 0039 to order a back issue. **Price** is on-the-road including VAT and delivery charges. **Engine** is the car's main motor only – additional hybrid tech isn't shown. **Weight** is the car's kerb weight as quoted by the manufacturer. **bhp/ton** is the power-to-weight ratio based on manufacturer's kerb weight. **0-60mph** and **0-100mph** figures in bold are independently recorded, all other performance figures are manufacturers' claims. **CO2 g/km** is the official EC figure and **EC mpg** is the official 'Combined' figure or equivalent.

MAKE & MODEL	ISSUE NO.	PRICE	ENGINE CYL/CC	BHP/RPM	LB FT/RPM	WEIGHT	BHP/TON	0-60MPH	0-100MPH	MAX MPH	CO2 G/KM	EC MPG	EVO RATING	
Abarth 595 Competizione	196 D	£19,090	4/1368	158/5500	170/3000	1035kg	155	7.4	-	130	155	43.5	+ Spirited engine, still looks great - Favours fun over finesse	★★★★☆
Abarth 695 Biposto	205 R	£33,055	4/1369	187/5500	184/3000	997kg	191	5.9	-	143	-	-	+ Engineered like a true Abarth product - Desirable extras make this a £50k city car	★★★★☆
Alfa Romeo Giulietta QV	199 D	£28,330	4/1742	237/5750	251/2000	1320kg	182	6.0	-	151	162	40.3	+ Still looks good, and now it's got the 4C's engine - Pricey, and it has more rewarding rivals	★★★★☆
Alfa Romeo Giulietta Cloverleaf	144 D	70-14	4/1742	232/5500	251/1900	1320kg	179	6.8	-	150	177	37.2	+ Shows signs of deep talent... - ...but should be more exciting	★★★★☆
Audi S1	211 R	£25,595	4/1984	228/6000	273/1600	1315kg	176	5.8	-	155	162	40.4	+ Compliant and engaging chassis; quick, too - Looks dull without options	★★★★☆
Audi Al quattro	181 R	13	4/1984	253/6000	258/2500	1420kg	181	5.7	-	152	199	32.8	+ Polished 253bhp all-wheel-drive Al - Just 19 for UK, Porsche Cayman price	★★★★☆
Audi S3	188 R	£31,230	4/1984	296/5500	280/1800	1395kg	216	5.4	12.5	155	162	40.4	+ Lots of grip and one of the best-sounding four-pot turbos - Still a little too clinical	★★★★☆
Audi RS3 Sportback	221 R	£40,795	5/2480	362/5500	343/1625	1520kg	242	3.6	-	155	189	34.9	+ Addictive five-cylinder noise; monster pace - Chassis not exactly playful	★★★★☆
Audi S3	106 R	06-12	4/1984	261/6000	258/2500	1455kg	183	5.6	13.6	155	198	33.2	+ Very fast, very effective, very... err, quality - A little too clinical	★★★★☆
Audi RS3 Sportback	156 R	11-12	5/2480	335/5400	332/1600	1575kg	216	4.5	-	155	212	31.0	+ Above, with added five-pot character - Again, see above...	★★★★☆
BMW 125i M Sport	176 D	£27,060	4/1997	218/5000	228/1350	1420kg	156	6.4	-	155	154	42.8	+ Performance, price, running costs - Dull four-pot soundtrack	★★★★☆
BMW M135i	212 R	£32,010	6/2979	321/5800	332/1300	1430kg	228	5.2	-	155	188	35.3	+ Powertrain, noise, chassis, price - M235i looks nicer, and has an LSD option	★★★★☆
BMW 130i M Sport	106 R	05-10	6/2996	261/6650	232/2750	1450kg	183	6.1	15.3	155	-	34.0	+ Fantastic engine - Suspension can still get a little boingy	★★★★☆
Citroën Saxo VTS	020 R	97-03	4/1587	120/6600	107/5200	935kg	130	7.6	22.6	127	-	34.9	+ Chunky, chuckable charger - Can catch out the unwary	★★★★☆
Citroën AX GT	195 R	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	★★★★☆
Citroën DS3 1.6 THP	142 R	10-15	4/1598	154/6000	177/1400	1240kg	126	7.2	-	133	155	42.2	+ 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	149	-	+ Faster, feistier version of above - Not as hardcore as its 'Racing' tag suggests	★★★★☆
DS 3 Performance	222 D	£20,495	4/1598	205/6000	221/3000	1175kg	177	6.5	-	143	125	50.4	+ All the right ingredients - Undercooked	★★★★☆
Fiat Panda 100HP	132 R	06-11	4/1368	99/6000	97/4250	975kg	103	9.5	-	115	154	43.5	+ Most fun per pound on the market - Optional ESP can't be turned off	★★★★☆
Ford Fiesta ST	207 R	£17,545	4/1596	197/5700	214/2500	1088kg	184	7.4	18.4	137	138	47.9	+ Chassis, price, punchy performance - Not as powerful as key rivals	★★★★☆
Ford Fiesta ST Mountune	213 R	£18,144	4/1596	212/6000	236/2750	1088kg	198	6.4	-	140	138	-	+ One of the best mid-sized hatches made even better - Badge snobbery	★★★★☆
Ford Fiesta ST200	225 R	£22,745	4/1596	212/6000	236/2500	1088kg	198	6.7	-	143	140	46.3	+ Massive fun - Mountune version offers the same power for considerably less	★★★★☆
Ford Fiesta Zetec S	123 D	08-13	4/1596	118/6000	112/4050	1045kg	115	9.9	-	120	134	48.7	+ Genuinely entertaining supermini - Grown up compared to Twingo/Swift	★★★★☆
Ford Fiesta ST	075 D	05-08	4/1999	148/6000	140/4500	1137kg	132	7.9	-	129	-	38.2	+ Great looks, decent brakes - Disappointing chassis, gutless engine	★★★★☆
Ford Focus ST TDCi Estate	219 D	£23,295	4/1997	182/3500	295/2000	1488kg	124	8.3	-	135	110	67.3	+ Performance not sacrificed at the altar of economy - Gets ragged when really pushed	★★★★☆
Ford Focus ST	207 R	£22,745	4/1999	247/5500	265/2000	1362kg	184	6.5	-	154	159	41.5	+ Excellent engine - Scrappy when pushed	★★★★☆
Ford Focus ST Mountune	187 D	£25,940	4/1999	271/5500	295/2750	1362kg	202	5.7	-	154+	169	-	+ Great value upgrade - Steering still not as feelsome as that of some rivals	★★★★☆
Ford Focus ST	119 R	05-10	5/2522	222/6000	236/1600	1392kg	162	6.7	16.8	150	224	30.4	+ Value, performance, integrity - Big engine compromises handling	★★★★☆
Ford Focus RS (Mk3)	229 R	£31,250	4/2261	345/6000	347/2000	1524kg	230	4.7	12.4	165	175	36.7	+ Torque-vectoring 4WD brings new sensations to hot hatch sector - Needs to be driven hard	★★★★☆
Ford Focus RS (Mk2)	195 R	09-11	5/2522	300/6500	324/2300	1467kg	208	5.9	14.2	163	225	30.5	+ Huge performance, highly capable FWD chassis - Body control is occasionally clumsy	★★★★☆
Ford Focus RS500 (Mk2)	181 R	10-11	5/2522	345/6000	339/2500	1467kg	239	5.6	12.7	165	225	-	+ More power and presence than regular Mk2 RS - Pricey	★★★★☆
Ford Focus RS (Mk1)	207 R	02-03	4/1998	212/5500	229/3500	1278kg	169	5.9	14.9	143	-	-	+ Some are great - Some are awful (so make sure you drive plenty)	★★★★☆
Ford Escort RS Cosworth	157 R	92-96	4/1993	224/6250	224/3500	1275kg	179	6.2	-	137	-	-	+ The ultimate Essex hot hatch - Unmodified ones are rare, and getting pricey...	★★★★☆
Ford Puma 1.7	095 R	97-02	4/1679	123/6300	116/4500	1041kg	120	8.6	27.6	122	-	38.2	+ Revvy engine, sparkling chassis, bargain used prices - Rusty rear arches	★★★★☆
Ford Racing Puma	128 R	00-01	4/1679	153/7000	119/4500	1174kg	132	7.8	23.2	137	-	34.7	+ Exclusivity - The standard Puma does it so well	★★★★☆
Honda Civic Type R	227 R	£30,000	4/1996	306/6500	295/2500	1378kg	226	5.4	12.4	167	170	38.7	+ Great on smooth roads - Turbo engine not as special as old NA units; styling a bit 'busy'	★★★★☆
Honda Civic Type R (FN2)	102 R	07-11	4/1998	198/7800	142/5600	1267kg	158	6.8	17.5	146	215	31.0	+ Looks great, VTEC more accessible - Steering lacks feel, inert balance	★★★★☆
Honda Civic Type R Champ'ship White	126 D	09-10	4/1998	198/7800	142/5600	1267kg	158	6.6	-	146	-	31.0	+ Limited-slip diff a welcome addition - It's not available on the standard car	★★★★☆
Honda Civic Type R (EP3)	075 R	01-05	4/1998	197/7400	145/5900	1204kg	166	6.8	16.9	146	-	31.7	+ Potent and great value - 'Breadvan' looks divide opinion, duff steering	★★★★☆
Kia Proceed GT	217 D	£20,205	4/1591	201/6000	195/1500	1359kg	143	7.3	-	150	170	38.2	+ Fun and appealing package - Soft-edged compared to rivals	★★★★☆
Lancia Delta Integrale	194 R	88-93	4/1995	207/5750	220/3500	1300kg	162	5.7	-	137	-	23.9	+ One of the finest cars ever built - Demands love, LHD only	★★★★☆
Mazda 2.1 S Sport	132 R	£15,995	4/1498	102/6000	101/4000	1030kg	107	10.4	-	117	135	48.7	+ Fun and funky - Feels tiny after a Mini	★★★★☆
Mazda 3 MPS	137 R	06-13	4/2261	256/5500	280/3000	1385kg	188	6.3	14.5	155	224	29.4	+ Quick, eager and very good value - The steering's iffy	★★★★☆
Mercedes-AMG A45	221 R	£39,995	4/1991	376/6000	350/2250	1480kg	258	3.9	-	155	162	40.9	+ Tremendously fast - But not a true great	★★★★☆
Mercedes-Benz A45 AMG	194 R	12-15	4/1991	355/6000	332/2250	1480kg	244	4.3	10.6	155	161	40.9	+ Blisteringly quick everywhere - Not as rewarding as some slower rivals	★★★★☆
Mini Cooper (F56)	194 D	£15,485	3/1499	134/4500	162/1250	1085kg	125	7.9	-	130	105	62.8	+ Punchy three-cylinder engine, good chassis - Tubby styling	★★★★☆
Mini Cooper S (F56)	196 D	£18,840	4/1998	189/4700	206/1250	1160kg	166	6.8	-	146	133	49.6	+ Still has that Mini DNA - Expensive with options; naff dash displays	★★★★☆
Mini John Cooper Works (F56)	211 R	£23,050	4/1998	228/5200	236/1250	1200kg	193	6.3	-	153	155	42.2	+ Fast, agile, nimble - Chassis lacks sparkle found in previous JCWs	★★★★☆
Mini John Cooper Works Challenge (F56)	224 R	£32,000	4/1998	228/5200	236/1250	1215kg	191	6.3	-	152	155	42.2	+ A more hardcore JCW, honed with help from evo! - Just 100 being built	★★★★☆
Mini John Cooper Works Coupe (R58)	164 R	11-15	4/1598	208/6000	206/2000	1175kg	180	6.3	-	149	165	39.8	+ The usual raucous Mini JCW experience - But with a questionable 'helmet' roof...	★★★★☆
Mini Cooper (R56)	185 F	09-14	4/1598	120/6000	118/4250	1075kg	113	9.1	-	126	127	52.3	+ Brilliant ride and composure; could be all the Mini you need - You'll still buy the 'S'	★★★★☆
Mini Cooper S (R56)	149 R	06-14	4/1598	181/5500	177/1600	1140kg	161	7.0	-	142	136	48.7	+ New engine, Mini quality - Front end not quite as direct as the old car's	★★★★☆
Mini Cooper SD (R56)	158 D	11-14	4/1995	141/4000	225/1750	1150kg	125	8.0	-	134	114	65.7	+ A quick diesel Mini with impressive mpg - But no Cooper S alternative	★★★★☆
Mini John Cooper Works (R56)	184 R	08-14	4/1598	208/6000	206/2000	1160kg	182	7.2	16.7	148	165	39.8	+ A seriously rapid Mini - Occasionally just a little unruly	★★★★☆
Mini John Cooper Works GP (R56)	231 R	13-14	4/1598	215/6000	206/2000	1160kg	188	6.3	-	150	165	39.8	+ Brazenly hyperactive - Too much for some roads and some tastes	★★★★☆
Mini Cooper S (R53)	077 R	02-06	4/1598	168/6000	155/4000	1140kg	143	7.8	19.9	135	-	33.6	+ Strong performance, quality feel - Over-long gearing	★★★★☆
Mini Cooper S Works GP (R53)	144 R	06	4/1598	215/7100	184/4600	1090kg	200	6.5	-	149	-	32.8	+ Storming engine, agility - Tacky styling 'enhancements'	★★★★☆
Nissan Juke Nismo RS	208 D	£21,995	4/1618	215/6000	206/3600	1315kg	166	7.0	-	137	165	39.2	+ 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	-	34.0	+ Bargain no-frills thrills - Not as much fizz as original 1.3	★★★★☆
Peugeot 106 Rallye (Series 1)	095 R	94-96	4/1294	100/7200	80/5400	826kg	123	10.6	-	118	-	35.6	+ Frantic, thrashy fun - Needs caning to extract full potential	★★★★☆
Peugeot 208 GTi	184 R	£18,895	4/1598	197/5800	203/1700	1160kg	173	6.8	17.9	143	125	47.9	+ Agile chassis works well on tough roads - Could be more involving	★★★★☆
Peugeot 208 GTi by Peugeot Sport	225 R	£21,995	4/1598	205/5800	221/1750	1185kg	176	6.5	-	143	125	47.9	+ The most focused small hatch on sale - Nearly £4k more than a Fiesta ST Mountune	★★★★☆
Peugeot 308 GTi 250 by Peugeot Sport	223 R	£26,855	4/1598	246/6000	243/1900	1205kg	207	6.2	-	155	139	47.1	+ A very capable hot hatch... - ...that lacks the sheer excitement of the best in class	★★★★☆

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## OUR CHOICE

**Volkswagen Golf R.** In Mk7 form the 'R' Golf has finally become a model it's possible to *really* get excited about, because joining the usual class, quality, four-wheel-drive security and impressive pace is a truly engaging driving experience. There's even an estate version, too.



## BEST OF THE REST

If the Golf R is too mature to appeal, try the Ford Focus RS (pictured), or if front-drive is your thing, consider the Golf GTI Clubsport Edition 40 or SEAT's Leon Cupra 290. Amongst the smaller hatchbacks, the Fiesta ST Mountune just edges the Peugeot 208 GTI by Peugeot Sport.

MAKE & MODEL	ISSUE NO.	PRICE	ENGINE CYL/CC	BHP/RPM	LB FT/RPM	WEIGHT	BHP/TON	0-60MPH	0-100MPH	MAX MPH	CO2 G/KM	EC MPG	EVO RATING	
Peugeot 308 GTI 270 by Peugeot Sport	229 R	£28,890	4/1598	266/6000	243/1900	1205kg	224	6.0	-	155	139	47.1	+ Thrilling and engaging on smooth roads - A real handful on bumpy ones	★★★★★
Peugeot 205 GTI 1.9	195 R	'88-'91	4/1905	130/6000	119/4750	910kg	145	7.9	-	124	-	36.7	+ Still scintillating after all these years - Brittle build quality	★★★★★
Peugeot 306 GTI 6	020 R	'93-'01	4/1998	167/6500	142/5500	1215kg	139	7.2	20.1	140	-	30.1	+ One of the great GTIs - They don't make them like this any more	★★★★★
Peugeot 306 Rallye	095 R	'98-'99	4/1998	167/6500	142/5500	1199kg	142	6.9	19.2	137	-	30.1	+ Essentially a GTI-6 for less dosh - Limited choice of colours	★★★★★
Renault Twingo GT	231 D	£13,755	3/898	109/5750	125/2000	1001kg	111	9.6	-	113	115	54.3	+ Nippy performance - Less fun than a rear-engined Renault Sport-fettled car should be	★★★★☆
Renaultsport Twingo 133	175 R	'08-'13	4/1598	131/6750	118/4400	1050kg	127	8.6	-	125	150	43.5	+ Renaultsport experience for pocket money - Optional Cup chassis gives bouncy ride	★★★★☆
Renaultsport Clio 200 Auto	184 R	'02, 445	4/1618	197/6000	171/1750	1204kg	166	6.9	17.9	143	144	44.8	+ Faster, more refined, easier to drive - We miss the revvy nat-asp engine and manual 'box	★★★★☆
Renaultsport Clio 220 Trophy	229 D	£22,425	4/1618	217/6050	206/2000	1204kg	183	6.6	-	146	135	47.9	+ Willing chassis - Awful paddleshift gearbox	★★★★☆
Renaultsport Clio 200 Cup	195 R	'09-'13	4/1998	197/7100	159/5400	1204kg	166	6.6	16.7	141	190	34.5	+ The hot Clio at its best - They don't make it anymore	★★★★☆
Renaultsport Clio 197 Cup	115 R	'07-'09	4/1998	194/7250	158/5550	1240kg	161	6.9	-	134	-	33.6	+ Quick, polished and capable - Not as much sheer fun as 182 Cup	★★★★☆
Renaultsport Clio 182	066 R	'04-'06	4/1998	180/6500	148/5250	1110kg	165	6.6	17.5	139	-	34.9	+ Took hot hatches to a new level - Flawed driving position	★★★★☆
Renaultsport Clio 182 Cup	187 R	'04-'06	4/1998	180/6500	148/5250	1090kg	168	6.5	-	139	-	34.9	+ Full of beans, fantastic value - Sunday-market upholstery	★★★★☆
Renaultsport Clio Trophy	231 R	'05-'06	4/1998	180/6500	148/5250	1090kg	168	6.6	17.3	140	-	34.9	+ The most fun you can have on three (sometimes two) wheels - Just 500 were built	★★★★☆
Renaultsport Clio 172 Cup	048 R	'02-'04	4/1998	170/6250	147/5000	1011kg	171	6.5	17.7	138	-	-	+ Bargain old-school hot hatch - Nervous in the wet, no ABS	★★★★☆
Renaultsport Clio V6 255	231 R	'03-'05	6/2946	251/7150	221/4650	1400kg	182	5.8	-	153	-	23.0	+ Supercar drama without the original's edgy handling - Uninspired interior	★★★★☆
Renaultsport Clio V6	029 R	'99-'02	6/2946	227/6000	221/3750	1353kg	173	5.8	17.0	145	-	23.0	+ Pocket supercar - Mid-engined handling can be tricky	★★★★☆
Renault Clio Williams	195 R	'93-'96	4/1988	148/6100	126/4500	981kg	153	7.6	20.8	134	-	26.0	+ One of the best hot hatches ever - Can be fragile	★★★★☆
Renault 5 GT Turbo	195 R	'87-'91	4/1397	118/5750	122/3000	855kg	140	7.3	-	120	-	28.4	+ Clio Williams' grand-daddy - Few unmodified ones left	★★★★☆
Renaultsport Mégane 275 Cup-S	223 D	'16	4/1998	271/5500	265/3000	1394kg	198	5.8	-	158	174	37.7	+ Cup chassis, LSD, the same engine as the Trophy-R - Could be too hardcore for some	★★★★☆
Renaultsport Mégane Nav 275	-	'16	4/1998	271/5500	265/3000	1394kg	198	5.8	-	158	174	37.7	+ A more luxurious 275 - Cup chassis is an option	★★★★☆
Renaultsport Mégane 265 Cup	195 R	'12-'15	4/1998	261/5500	265/3000	1387kg	191	6.4	14.8	158	174	37.7	+ A hot hatch benchmark - Cupholder could be better positioned	★★★★☆
Renaultsport Mégane 275 Trophy	212 R	'14-'15	4/1998	271/5500	265/3000	1376kg	200	5.8	-	159	174	37.7	+ Another cracking Trophy model - Stripped-out Trophy-R is even more thrilling	★★★★☆
Renaultsport Mégane 275 Trophy-R	231 R	'14-'15	4/1998	271/5500	265/3000	1297kg	212	5.8	-	158	174	37.7	+ As absorbing as a 911 GT3 RS on the right road - Too uncompromising for some; pricey	★★★★☆
Renaultsport Mégane 250 Cup	139 R	'09-'12	4/1998	247/5500	251/3000	1387kg	181	6.1	14.6	156	190	34.4	+ Fantastic chassis... - ...partially obscured by new-found maturity	★★★★☆
Renaultsport Mégane dCi 175 Cup	119 R	'07-'09	4/1995	173/3750	265/2000	1470kg	119	8.3	23.5	137	-	43.5	+ A diesel with a genuinely sporty chassis - Could take more power	★★★★☆
Renaultsport Mégane 230 FI Team R26	195 R	'07-'09	4/1998	227/5500	229/3000	1345kg	171	6.2	16.0	147	-	-	+ The car the R26.R is based on - FI Team stickers in dubious taste	★★★★☆
Renaultsport Mégane R26.R	231 R	'08-'09	4/1998	227/5500	229/3000	1220kg	189	5.8	15.1	147	-	-	+ One of the true hot hatch heroes - Two seats, plastic rear windows	★★★★☆
SEAT Ibiza Cupra	225 R	£18,100	4/1798	189/4300	236/1450	1185kg	162	6.7	-	146	145	45.6	+ 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	139	47.9	+ Punchy engine, unflappable DSG - Lacks engagement, DSG only	★★★★☆
SEAT Leon Cupra 290	227 R	£28,380	4/1984	286/5900	258/1700	1300kg	224	6.4	13.4	155	156	42.2	+ As below, but with another 10bhp - As below	★★★★☆
SEAT Leon Cupra 280	220 R	'14-'15	4/1984	276/5600	258/1750	1300kg	216	5.8	-	155	149	44.1	+ Serious pace and agility for Golf GTI money - The Mk7 Golf R	★★★★☆
SEAT Leon Cupra	105 R	'07-'11	4/1984	237/5700	221/2200	1375kg	175	6.3	-	153	190	34.0	+ Great engine, composure - Doesn't have adjustability of old Cupra R	★★★★☆
SEAT Leon Cupra R	139 R	'10-'12	4/1984	261/6000	258/2500	1375kg	193	6.1	14.0	155	190	34.9	+ Bold car, blinding engine - Lacks the character of its rival mega-hatches	★★★★☆
SEAT Leon Cupra R 225	067 R	'03-'06	4/1781	222/5900	206/2200	1376kg	164	6.9	-	150	-	32.1	+ Cross-country pace, practicality, value - Not as thrilling as some	★★★★☆
Skoda Fabia vRS (Mk2)	146 D	'10-'14	4/1390	178/6200	184/2000	1218kg	148	7.3	-	139	148	45.6	+ Well priced, well made, with great engine and DSG 'box - Dull steering	★★★★☆
Skoda Fabia vRS (Mk1)	077 R	'04-'07	4/1996	130/4000	229/1900	135kg	100	9.6	-	127	-	55.4	+ Fascinatingly fun and frugal hot hatch - A little short on steering feel	★★★★☆
Skoda Octavia vRS (Mk3)	187 D	£24,230	4/1984	217/4500	258/1500	1345kg	164	6.8	-	154	142	45.6	+ Quick, agile, roomier than a Golf - Ride is harsh for what could be a family car	★★★★☆
Skoda Octavia vRS 230 (Mk3)	215 D	£26,350	4/1984	227/4700	258/1500	1345kg	171	6.7	-	155	142	45.6	+ Limited-slip diff makes for a sharper steer - It could handle more than the extra 10bhp	★★★★☆
Skoda Octavia vRS TDI 4x4 (Mk3)	223 D	£27,590	4/1968	181/3500	206/1750	1475kg	125	7.6	-	142	129	57.7	+ Four-wheel drive tightens the vRS chassis - Diesel and DSG only	★★★★☆
Skoda Octavia vRS (Mk2)	163 R	'05-'13	4/1998	197/5100	206/1700	1395kg	143	7.3	-	149	175	37.7	+ Drives like a GTI but costs much less - Green brake calipers?	★★★★☆
Subaru Impreza STI 330S	124 R	'08-'10	4/2457	325/5400	347/3400	1505kg	219	4.4	-	155	-	-	+ A bit quicker than the STI... - ...but not better	★★★★☆
Suzuki Swift Sport (Mk2)	175 R	£13,999	4/1586	134/6900	118/4400	1045kg	130	8.7	-	121	147	44.1	+ The Swift's still a great pocket rocket - But it's lost a little adjustability	★★★★☆
Suzuki Swift Sport (Mk1)	132 R	'05-'11	4/1586	123/6800	109/4800	1030kg	121	8.9	-	124	165	39.8	+ Entertaining handling, well built - Lacking in steering feedback	★★★★☆
Vauxhall Corsa VXR	211 R	£18,125	4/1598	202/5800	206/1900	1278kg	161	6.5	-	143	174	37.7	+ Begs to be wrung out - You'll need the £2400 Performance Pack	★★★★☆
Vauxhall Corsa VXR	154 R	'07-'14	4/1598	189/5850	192/1980	1166kg	165	6.8	-	140	172	38.7	+ Looks snazzy, punchy engine - Lacks feel, uncouth compared with rivals	★★★★☆
Vauxhall Corsa VXR N'ring/Clubsport	164 R	'11-'13/'14	4/1598	202/5750	206/2250	1166kg	176	6.5	-	143	178	-	+ VXR gets more power and a limited-slip diff - But they come at a price	★★★★☆
Vauxhall Astra VXR (Mk2)	207 R	£27,850	4/1998	276/5500	295/2500	1475kg	190	5.9	-	155	184	34.9	+ Better than the car it replaces; loony turbo pace - Lacks RS Mégane's precision	★★★★☆
Vauxhall Astra VXR (Mk1)	102 R	'05-'11	4/1998	237/5600	236/2400	1393kg	173	6.7	16.7	152	221	30.7	+ Fast and furious - Lacks a little composure and precision	★★★★☆
VW Up/SEAT Mii/Skoda Citigo	171 R	£8275+	3/999	59/5000	70/3000	854kg	70	14.1	-	99	105	62.8	+ Accomplished city car is dynamically sound... - ...but predictably slow	★★★★☆
VW Polo GTI	211 R	£19,125	4/1798	189/4200	236/1450	1197kg	160	6.7	-	146	139	47.1	+ Smooth and brawny - Fiesta ST is more engaging	★★★★☆
VW Polo GTI	154 R	'10-'14	4/1390	178/6200	184/2000	1184kg	153	6.8	-	142	139	47.9	+ Modern-day mk1 Golf GTI gets twin-clutch DSG - It's a little bit bland	★★★★☆
VW Golf GTD (Mk7)	200 D	£26,955	4/1968	181/3500	280/1750	1302kg	141	7.5	-	143	114	64.2	+ Pace, fuel economy, sounds good for a diesel - Lacks the extra edge of the GTI	★★★★☆
VW Golf GTI (Mk7)	229 R	£28,515	4/1984	217/4500	258/1500	1276kg	173	6.5	-	153	139	47.1	+ Brilliantly resolved - Lacks the punch of newer rivals	★★★★☆
VW Golf GTI Clubsport Edition 40 (Mk7)	230 D	£30,935	4/1984	286/5350	280/1700	1300kg	224	6.3	-	155	162	40.4	+ A faster, sharper, more entertaining GTI - Some rivals are more exciting on track	★★★★☆
VW Golf GTI Clubsport S (Mk7)	229 R	'16	4/1984	306/5800	280/1850	1285kg	242	5.8	12.8	165	172	38.2	+ Runner-up at Evo Car of the Year 2016 - Only 400 built	★★★★☆
VW Golf R (Mk7)	220 R	£31,685	4/1984	296/5500	280/1800	1401kg	215	5.2	12.4	155	165	39.8	+ A VW 'R' model you can take seriously - Mégane 275 just edges it as a pure drivers' car	★★★★☆
VW Golf GTI (Mk6)	172 R	'09-'13	4/1984	207/5300	217/1700	1318kg	160	6.4	16.5	148	170	38.7	+ Still a very accomplished hot hatch - 207bhp isn't a lot any more	★★★★☆
VW Golf R (Mk6)	140 D	'10-'13	4/1984	266/6000	258/2500	1446kg	187	5.7	-	155	199	33.2	+ Great engine, tremendous pace and poise - High price, adaptive dampers optional	★★★★☆
VW Golf GTI (Mk5)	195 R	'04-'09	4/1984	197/5100	207/1800	1336kg	150	6.7	17.9	145	192	35.2	+ Character and ability: the GTI's return to form - Lacking firepower?	★★★★☆
VW Golf R32 (Mk5)	087 R	'06-'09	6/3189	246/6300	236/2500	1466kg	170	5.8	15.2	155	257	26.4	+ Traction's great and you'll love the soundtrack - We'd still have a GTI	★★★★☆
VW Golf GTI 16v (Mk2)	195 R	'88-'92	4/1781	139/6100	124/4600	960kg	147	7.9	-	129	-	26.6	+ Still feels everyday useable - Very hard to find a standard one	★★★★☆
VW Golf GTI (Mk1, 1.8)	224 R	'82-'84	4/1781	112/5800	109/3500	840kg	135	8.1	-	112	-	36.0	+ The car that started it all - Tricky to find an unmolested one	★★★★☆
Volvo C30 T5 R-Design	122 R	'08-'12	5/2521	227/5000	236/1500	1347kg	165	6.6	16.9	149	203	32.5	+ Good-looking, desirable Volvo - Lacks edge of best hatches. Avoid auto	★★★★☆

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Head-to-head

911 Turbo S v 911 GT3 RS



Head-to-head

458 Speciale v 488 GTB



Review

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## 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

Mercedes-AMG's new E63 S 4Matic+ (pictured) has set the bar high for the next M5, while Porsche's Panamera Turbo feels good for its 7min 38sec Ring time. Move down a size and Mercedes-AMG's C63 S is a highly desirable package, although some may prefer the more focused feel of BMW's M3.

	ISSUE NO.	PRICE	ENGINE CYL/CC	BHP/RPM	LB FT/RPM	WEIGHT	BHP/TON	0-60MPH	0-100MPH	MAX MPH	CO2 G/KM	EC MPG	EVO RATING	
Alfa Romeo Giulia Quadrifoglio	229 R	£59,000	6/2891	503/6500	443/2500	1524kg	335	3.9	-	191	198	40.3	+ If Ferrari built a saloon (really) - Lacks the final polish of German rivals	★★★★★
Alpina D3 Biturbo (F30)	192 D	£47,950	6/2993	345/4000	516/1500	1585kg	221	4.6	-	173	139	53.3	+ 173mph from a 3-litre diesel! Brilliant chassis, too - Auto only	★★★★★
Alpina B3 Biturbo (F30)	188 D	£57,450	6/2979	404/5500	442/3000	1630kg	252	4.3	-	190	177	37.2	+ Understated appearance, monster performance - E90 M3 is better on the limit	★★★★★
Aston Martin Rapide S	201 D	£147,950	12/5935	552/6650	465/5500	1990kg	282	4.2	-	203	300	21.9	+ Oozes star quality; gearbox on 2015MY cars a big improvement - It's cosy in the back	★★★★★
Aston Martin Rapide	141 R	10-13	12/5935	470/6000	443/5000	1990kg	240	5.2	-	188	355	-	+ Better than its DB9 sibling - More a 2+2 than a proper four-seater	★★★★★
Audi S3 Saloon	192 D	£32,330	4/1984	296/5500	280/1800	1430kg	210	5.3	-	155	162	26.4	+ On paper a match for the original S4 - In reality much less interesting	★★★★★
Audi S4 (B9)	225 D	£44,000	6/2995	349/5400	369/1370	1630kg	218	4.7	-	155	166	38.7	+ 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	1705kg	195	4.9	-	155	190	34.9	+ Great supercharged powertrain, secure chassis - The RS4	★★★★★
Audi RS4 Avant (B8)	216 R	12-15	8/4163	444/8250	317/4000	1795kg	251	4.5	10.5	174	249	26.4	+ Looks and sounds the part, thunderously fast - Unnatural steering, dull dynamics	★★★★★
Audi RS4 (B7)	231 R	05-08	8/4163	414/7800	317/5500	1650kg	255	4.5	10.9	155	-	-	+ 414bhp at 7800rpm! And there's an estate version too - Busy under braking	★★★★★
Audi RS4 (B5)	192 R	00-02	6/2671	375/6100	325/2500	1620kg	236	4.8	12.1	170	-	17.0	+ Effortless pace - Not the last word in agility. Bends wheel rims	★★★★★
Audi RS2	214 R	94-95	5/2226	315/6500	302/3000	1595kg	201	4.8	13.1	162	-	18.0	+ Storming performance (thanks to Porsche) - Try finding one	★★★★★
Audi S6	091 D	06-11	10/5204	429/6800	398/3000	1910kg	228	5.2	-	155	299	22.4	+ Even faster, and discreet with it - Very muted V10	★★★★★
Audi RS6 Avant (C7)	203 R	£79,505	8/3993	552/5700	516/1750	1935kg	290	3.6	8.2	155	223	29.4	+ Performance, foolproof powertrain, beefy looks - Feels a bit one-dimensional	★★★★★
Audi RS6 Avant Performance (C7)	224 D	£86,420	8/3993	597/6100	553/2500	1950kg	311	3.7	-	155	223	29.4	+ As above, but with even more power - A stern test of self-control	★★★★★
Audi RS6 Avant (C6)	116 R	08-10	10/4991	572/6250	479/1500	2025kg	287	4.3	9.7	155	333	20.2	+ The world's most powerful estate - Power isn't everything	★★★★★
Audi RS6 Avant (C5)	052 R	02-04	8/4172	444/5700	413/1950	1865kg	242	4.8	11.6	155	-	19.3	+ The ultimate estate car? - Numb steering	★★★★★
Audi RS7 Sportback	208 R	£84,485	8/3993	552/5700	516/1750	1920kg	292	3.9	-	155	229	28.8	+ Stonking performance, great looks - Numb driving experience	★★★★★
Audi S7 Sportback	171 D	£64,380	8/3993	414/5000	406/1400	1945kg	216	4.6	-	155	225	-	+ Looks and drives better than S6 it's based on - Costs £8000 more	★★★★★
Audi S8 Plus	217 D	£98,395	8/3993	597/6100	553/2500	1990kg	305	3.8	-	155	229	28.2	+ Fantastic drivetrain, quality and refinement - Dynamic Steering feels artificial	★★★★★
Audi RS Q3	206 D	£46,120	5/2480	335/5300	332/1600	1655kg	206	4.8	-	155	203	32.1	+ Surprisingly characterful; better than many RSs - High centre of gravity	★★★★★
Bentley Flying Spur V8	200 D	£132,800	8/3993	500/6000	487/1700	2342kg	217	4.9	-	183	254	25.9	+ 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	4.6	-	190	254	25.9	+ 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	4.3	-	200	343	19.0	+ More power than old Flying Spur Speed - Feels its weight; engine sounds dull	★★★★★
Bentley Bentayga	217 D	£162,700	12/5950	600/5000	664/1350	2365kg	258	4.0	-	187	296	21.6	+ Sublime quality, ridiculous pace - Inert driving experience, SUV stigma	★★★★★
Bentley Mulsanne	178 F	£229,360	8/6752	505/4200	752/1750	2610kg	197	5.1	-	184	342	19.3	+ Drives like a modern Bentley should - Shame it doesn't look like one too	★★★★★
Bentley Mulsanne Speed	223 F	£252,000	8/6752	530/4200	811/1750	2610kg	206	4.8	-	190	342	19.3	+ Characterful; superb build quality - A bit pricey...	★★★★★
BMW 330d M Sport (F30)	180 D	£37,800	6/2993	254/4000	413/2000	1540kg	168	5.6	-	155	129	57.6	+ Great engine, fine handling, good value - Steering confuses weight with feel	★★★★★
BMW 340i M Sport Touring (F31)	228 D	£41,635	6/2998	321/5500	332/1380	1615kg	202	5.1	-	155	158	41.5	+ 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	5.8	-	155	149	44.8	+ New-age four-pot 328i is great all-rounder - We miss the six-cylinder soundtrack	★★★★★
BMW 435i Gran Coupe	203 D	£41,865	6/2979	302/5800	295/1200	1585kg	194	5.5	-	155	174	34.9	+ Superb straight-six, fine ride/handling balance - 335i saloon weighs and costs less	★★★★★
BMW M3 (F80)	211 R	£56,605	6/2979	425/5500	406/1850	1520kg	284	4.1	8.6	155	204	32.1	+ Looks, performance, practicality - Body control on rough roads; engine lacks character	★★★★★
BMW M3 (E90)	123 R	08-11	8/3999	414/8300	295/3900	1605kg	262	4.9	10.7	165	290	22.8	+ Every bit as good as the E92 M3 coupe - No carbon roof	★★★★★
BMW M3 CRT (E90)	179 R	11-12	8/4361	444/8300	324/3750	1580kg	285	4.4	-	180	295	-	+ Saloon chassis + weight savings + GTS engine = best E90 M3 - Just 67 were made	★★★★★
BMW M5 (F10M)	208 R	11-16	8/4395	552/6000	501/1500	1870kg	300	4.3	-	155	232	28.5	+ Twin-turbocharging suits M5 well - Can feel heavy at times	★★★★★
BMW M5 (E60)	129 R	04-10	10/4999	500/7750	384/6100	1755kg	289	4.7	10.4	155	-	19.6	+ Close to being the ultimate supersaloon - SMG gearbox feels old-tech	★★★★★
BMW M5 (E39)	110 R	99-03	8/4941	394/6600	369/3800	1795kg	223	4.9	11.5	155	-	-	+ Magnificent V8-engined supersaloon - We'd be nit-picking	★★★★★
BMW M5 (E34)	110 R	92-96	6/3795	340/6900	295/4750	1653kg	209	5.9	13.6	155	-	-	+ The Godfather of supersaloons - The family can come too	★★★★★
BMW M5 (E28)	182 R	86-88	6/3453	282/6500	251/4500	1431kg	200	6.2	-	151	-	-	+ The original storming saloon - Understated looks	★★★★★
BMW M6 Gran Coupe	190 D	£95,665	8/4395	552/6000	501/1500	1875kg	299	4.2	-	155	232	28.5	+ Enormous performance, stylish looks - Price tag looks silly next to rivals, M5 included	★★★★★
BMW X5 M50d	191 D	£65,240	6/2993	376/4000	546/2000	2190kg	155	5.3	-	155	173	42.8	+ Straight-line pace - Driving experience identical to standard X5, despite the M badge	★★★★★
BMW X6 M	212 D	£93,100	8/4395	567/6000	553/2200	2265kg	245	4.2	-	155	258	25.4	+ Big improvement on its predecessor - Coupe roofline still of questionable taste	★★★★★
BMW X6 M	134 D	09-15	8/4395	547/6000	502/1500	2305kg	241	4.7	-	171	325	20.3	+ Fast, refined and comfortable - But it definitely lacks the M factor	★★★★★
Brabus Bullit	119 R	£6330,000	12/6233	720/5100	811/2100	1850kg	395	3.8	-	217	-	-	+ Seven hundred and twenty bhp - Three hundred thousand pounds	★★★★★
Cadillac CTS-V	148 R	£67,030	8/6162	556/6100	551/3800	1928kg	293	3.9	-	191	365	18.1	+ It'll stand out among M-cars and AMGs - The novelty might wear off	★★★★★
Cadillac CT6	226 D	£69,990	6/2997	411/5700	409/2500	1950kg	214	5.7	-	149	223	28.2	+ Caddy's S-class rival scores on comfort - But not on driver involvement	★★★★★
Honda Accord Type R	012 R	98-03	4/2157	209/7200	158/6700	1306kg	163	6.1	17.4	142	-	29.4	+ One of the finest front-drivers of all time - Lack of image	★★★★★
Infiniti Q50S Hybrid	195 D	£39,995	6/3498	359/6800	402/5000	1750kg	208	5.1	-	155	144	45.6	+ Good powertrain, promising chassis - Lacklustre steering, strong rivals	★★★★★
Jaguar XE 2.0d AWD	227 D	£33,825	4/1999	178/4000	311/1750	1615kg	112	7.5	-	140	123	60.6	+ Great chassis gets more traction - Shame the engine isn't as polished	★★★★★
Jaguar XE S	213 D	£44,865	6/2995	335/6500	332/4500	1635kg	208	4.9	-	155	194	34.9	+ Neat handling, neat design - V6 loses appeal in the real world	★★★★★
Jaguar XF S	214 D	£49,945	6/2995	375/6500	332/4500	1710kg	223	5.0	-	155	198	34.0	+ Outstanding ride and handling balance - Engine lacks appeal	★★★★★
Jaguar XF S Diesel	219 D	£49,945	6/2993	296/4000	516/2000	1750kg	172	5.8	-	155	144	51.4	+ Great chassis, good looks, better engine than V6 petrol - It's still a diesel	★★★★★
Jaguar XFR	181 D	09-15	8/5000	503/6000	461/2500	1800kg	284	4.8	10.2	155	270	24.4	+ Brilliant blend of pace and refinement - Doesn't sound as special as it is	★★★★★
Jaguar XFR-S	208 R	13-15	8/5000	542/6500	501/2500	1800kg	306	4.4	-	186	270	24.4	+ XF gets turned up to 12 - Tyres aren't cheap	★★★★★
Jaguar XJ 3.0 V6 Diesel	148 D	£58,690	6/2993	271/4000	442/2000	1835kg	150	6.0	-	155	167	46.3	+ A great Jaguar - But not as great as the XJLR...	★★★★★
Jaguar XJR	191 D	£91,755	8/5000	542/6500	502/2500	1875kg	294	4.4	-	174	270	24.4	+ Hot-rod vibe, fine cabin - Opinion-dividing looks	★★★★★
Jaguar F-Pace 3.0 V6 Supercharged	222 D	£65,275	6/2995	375/6500	332/4500	1884kg	202	5.1	-	155	209	57.7	+ A match for Porsche's SUVs - Supercharged V6 needs to be worked hard	★★★★★
Land Rover Discovery Sport	205 D	£32,395	4/2179	187/3500	310/1750	1863kg	100	9.8	-	117	159	46.3	+ Style, packaging, refinement - We can think of sportier vehicles	★★★★★
Lexus GS F	221 D	£69,995	8/4969	470/7100	391/4800	1790kg	267	4.6	-	168	260	25.2	+ Superb engine, exploitable chassis - Gearbox is off the pace	★★★★★
Lexus IS F	151 R	07-12	8/4969	417/6600	372/5200	1714kg	247	4.7	10.9	173	270	24.4	+ Shockingly good Lexus - The M3's available as a (second hand) four-door too	★★★★★

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N13 EAR	£295	AI8 FMR	£295	P31 HLL	£295	P26 JMM	£295	P321 LAS	£295	X54 MGJ	£295	N600 NJB	£295
P28 EAM	£295	L80 FOR	£295	PI21 HLP	£295	R321 JMT	£295	AU04 LAU	£295	P333 MGR	£295	P333 NUH	£295
P66 EAS	£295	P25 FOS	£295	S963 HOB	£295	PI1 JNB	£295	PI21 LAU	£295	R31 MGS	£295	P28 NJM	£295
PI1 EAT	£295	P800 FOS	£295	GO HOD	£295	P23 JNS	£295	P24 LAY	£295	N777 MGS	£295	T99 NUR	£295
EAZ 588	£295	Y5 FPC	£295	JD56 HOG	£295	PI21 JOB	£295	R24 LAY	£295	TI1 MHB	£295	PI21 NUS	£295
TI1 ECB	£295	T333 FRA	£295	HRZ 787	£295	P26 JOD	£295	J4 LBC	£295	J9 MHE	£295	N1Z 909	£295
PI21 ECK	£295	B20 FRD	£295	HRZ 1700	£295	S400 JOR	£295	H8 LBM	£295	L11 MHP	£295	H5 NKH	£295
N60 ECM	£295	R123 FRY	£295	PI1 HSB	£295	P28 JPB	£295	LEZ 454	£295	N9 MHR	£295	R29 NKY	£295
ECZ 494	£295	FRZ 929	£295	P6 HSW	£295	ACSI JPC	£295	N9 LCI	£295	P13 MHW	£295	PI1 NMD	£295
PI1 EDB	£295	L3 FSB	£295	E8 HUB	£295	PI21 JPC	£295	P56 LCR	£295	PMZ 262	£295	S44 NMY	£295
P7 EDH	£295	TI1 FSH	£295	IXZ 383	£295	R11 JPF	£295	TI1 LCW	£295	Y90 MJA	£295	R121 NNY	£295
P54 EDP	£295	P6 FSR	£295	IOZ 363	£295	PI21 JPH	£295	LCZ 646	£295	R121 MJA	£295	N88 NOD	£295
P24 EDS	£295	Y800 FUN	£295	IEZ 1400	£295	P24 JPR	£295	S28 LDB	£295	P24 MJE	£295	R121 NOR	£295
R27 EDS	£295	FXZ 979	£295	IFZ 202	£295	P27 JRD	£295	M500 LOD	£295	MJ1 5610	£295	E20 NSC	£295
P23 EDW	£295	PI21 GAB	£295	IEZ 878	£295	P321 JRH	£295	S194 LEC	£295	OX05 MJS	£295	TI1 NSL	£295
K334 EDY	£295	MI11 GAC	£295	IXZ 949	£295	P29 JRM	£295	R25 LED	£295	P24 MJT	£295	AI8 NTP	£295
R11 EEE	£295	Y64 GAN	£295	IXZ 6406	£295	S222 JRP	£295	S999 LEG	£295	PI21 MJT	£295	NUI 848	£295
P25 EEL	£295	R23 GAW	£295	R23 JAA	£295	JRZ I829	£295	N777 LEM	£295	PI1 MKR	£295	N900 NUT	£295
K681 EEP	£295	A20 GBD	£295	AL02 JAB	£295	L60 JSA	£295	A20 LEP	£295	PI1 MMB	£295	L5 OAB	£295
PI1 EES	£295	A6 GBW	£295	P555 JAB	£295	N600 JSC	£295	Y121 LET	£295	R25 MKS	£295	AB09 OAB	£295
S9 EEF	£295	GBZ 656	£295	OX02 JAL	£295	R23 JSD	£295	LEZ 4571	£295	R31 MLB	£295	AM02 OAM	£295
EFZ 383	£295	H10 GCR	£295	P29 JAL	£295	P29 JSH	£295	H9 LFB	£295	P333 MLB	£295	OA2 454	£295
EFZ 838	£295	GCZ 686	£295	R26 JAP	£295	PI1 JSK	£295	LFZ 575	£295	P29 MLS	£295	R121 OBY	£295
N6 EGB	£295	GCZ 8683	£295	N562 JAT	£295	R27 JSN	£295	LI9 9720	£295	PI21 MLS	£295	OBZ 535	£295
P24 EGG	£295	R11 GDB	£295	Y4 JBG	£295	R300 JSR	£295	W9 LJK	£295	S57 MMA	£295	OCZ 979	£295
R11 EGS	£295	LI1 GDP	£295	PI21 JBM	£295	M22 JCT	£295	P26 LUP	£295	T700 MMA	£295	DB06 ODB	£295
EHZ 212	£295	PI1 GDR	£295	P23 JBS	£295	G8 JTD	£295	P26 LUP	£295	GB55 MMB	£295	ODZ 868	£295
ELI 2303	£295	AI0 GEM	£295	K50 JJC	£295	B20 JTM	£295	P26 LRJ	£295	HE MJM	£295	OEZ 343	£295
R11 EJC	£295	P28 GET	£295	PI21 JCG	£295	X002 JUD	£295	LKZ 383	£295	R26 MMM	£295	OFZ 818	£295
PI3 EJO	£295	H9 GFC	£295	P21 JCH	£295	R27 JUD	£295	R121 LLS	£295	P29 MMM	£295	OHZ 545	£295
S888 EIM	£295	GFZ 545	£295	S888 JCH	£295	N800 JUN	£295	S222 LLS	£295	S08 MMU	£295	OUI 262	£295
M12 EJP	£295	L15 GGB	£295	P231 JCK	£295	P9 JWA	£295	D15 LMG	£295	G5 MMW	£295	OIG 643	£295
P26 EJS	£295	N55 GGY	£295	P24 JCM	£295	R31 JWB	£295	P25 LMR	£295	PI1 MNR	£295	OUI 218	£295
P23 EJW	£295	R6 GHJ	£295	R231 JCM	£295	J7888 JWB	£295	N300 LMS	£295	LI1 MNW	£295	OUI 979	£295
E1Z 464	£295	GHZ 230	£295	R28 JCP	£295	P27 JWH	£295	P24 LMW	£295	T900 MOD	£295	OUI 575	£295
EKF 617	£295	G1Z 801Z	£295	P988 JCR	£295	JXZ 797	£295	T160 LUL	£295	P888 MOE	£295	P200 OLA	£295
R31 EKP	£295	R26 GJC	£295	P321 JCW	£295	JXZ 2083	£295	P24 L00	£295	R29 MOT	£295	P333 OLD	£295
AI1 EKV	£295	R333 GJH	£295	JCZ 565	£295	P25 JYM	£295	R26 LOT	£295	NI1 MPE	£295	R15 OLS	£295
T888 ELE	£295	NI11 GJH	£295	AB0Z JDB	£295	PI21 KAB	£295	PI21 LOV	£295	R121 MPD	£295	OLZ 292	£295
PI1 ELM	£295	P26 GJW	£295	PI31 JDH	£295	J20 KAG	£295	R11 LPB	£295	PI21 MPS	£295	R21 ONS	£295
PI1 EMR	£295	Q1Z 274	£295	PI21 JDH	£295	PI21 KAH	£295	SI1 LPC	£295	T77 MPW	£295	PI21 ORD	£295
OX07 EMS	£295	GKZ 242	£295	TI1 JDN	£295	PI21 KAN	£295	P9 LPO	£295	R28 MRB	£295	P26 OSH	£295
PI1 EMW	£295	J30 GLA	£295	T26 JDP	£295	S752 KAR	£295	P90 LPS	£295	PI21 MRD	£295	R21 OTT	£295
P23 EMY	£295	GLZ 626	£295	V28 JDR	£295	Y321 KAS	£295	TI1 LHR	£295	T200 MRG	£295	OUI 2856	£295
P23 ENA	£295	B18 GMA	£295	PI21 JDW	£295	R28 KAW	£295	SS LRW	£295	K00 MRM	£295	TE WOD	£295
K200 ENA	£295	M9 GME	£295	Y28 JEB	£295	SF04 KAZ	£295	R888 LSA	£295	R999 MRP	£295	S55 OWN	£295
H4 ENK	£295	C20 GMJ	£295	PI31 JEC	£295	KBZ 585	£295	S7 LSD	£295	T77 MRS	£295	X002 OXO	£295
P26 ENY	£295	R31 GMS	£295	PI31 JEC	£295	P8 KCD	£295	R11 LSH	£295	R26 MRT	£295	L900 PAD	£295
R11 EPS	£295	T333 GMS	£295	PH0Z JED	£295	M2 KCP	£295	S9 LSK	£295	R25 MRW	£295	TI1 PAE	£295
K5 ERP	£295	N9 GNR	£295	P31 JEH	£295	V4 KDG	£295	R31 LUV	£295	P29 MSB	£295	P222 PAF	£295
H4 ERL	£295	R321 GOR	£295	R121 JEH	£295	NI11 KDM	£295	A31 MAA	£295	P777 MSC	£295	N333 PAG	£295
V24 ERL	£295	PI3 GOT	£295	R28 JEL	£295	D7 KDW	£295	R321 MAJ	£295	P777 MSC	£295	PI2 PAK	£295

	ISSUE NO.	PRICE	ENGINE CYL/CC	BHP/RPM	LB FT/RPM	WEIGHT	BHP/TON	0-60MPH	0-100MPH	MAX MPH	CO2 G/KM	EC MPG	EVO RATING	
Lotus Carlton	170 R	'91-'93	6/3615	377/5200	419/4200	1658kg	231	<b>4.8</b>	<b>10.6</b>	176	-	17.0	+ The Millennium Falcon of saloon cars - Every drive a work-out	★★★★★
Maserati Ghibli	186 D	£52,615	6/2979	325/5000	406/1750	1810kg	182	5.6	-	163	223	29.4	+ Bursting with character; good value compared to Quattroporte - It's still a big car	★★★★★
Maserati Ghibli S	198 D	£63,760	6/2979	404/5500	406/4500	1810kg	227	5.0	-	177	242	27.2	+ Stands out from the crowd: sounds good too - Chassis lacks finesse, engine lacks reach	★★★★★
Maserati Quattroporte S	184 D	£80,115	6/2979	404/5500	406/1750	1860kg	221	5.1	-	177	242	27.2	+ Tempting alternative to V8 - Feel-free steering, ride lacks decorum	★★★★★
Maserati Quattroporte GTS	226 D	£110,405	8/3798	523/6800	479/2250	1900kg	280	4.7	-	193	250	26.4	+ Still pretty - Off the pace dynamically	★★★★★
Maserati Levante Diesel	221 D	£54,335	6/2897	271/4000	442/2000	2205kg	125	6.9	-	143	189	39.2	+ Impressive blend of ride and handling - Diesel performance is mild for a Maserati	★★★★★
Maserati Quattroporte S	137 R	'08-'12	8/4691	425/7000	361/4750	1990kg	216	<b>5.1</b>	<b>12.1</b>	174	365	18.0	+ A QP with the bhp it deserves - Grille is a bit Hannibal Lecter	★★★★★
Maserati Quattroporte Sport GTS	141 R	'08-'12	8/4691	433/7000	361/4750	1990kg	221	<b>5.1</b>	-	177	365	18.0	+ The most stylish supersaloon - Slightly wooden brakes, unforgiving ride	★★★★★
Maserati Quattroporte	085 R	'04-'08	8/4244	394/7000	333/4500	1930kg	207	5.1	-	171	-	17.9	+ Redefines big-car dynamics - Don't use auto mode	★★★★★
Mercedes-Benz 190E 2.5-16	185 F	'89-'92	4/2498	201/6750	177/5500	1360kg	147	7.2	-	142	-	24.4	+ M-B's M3 alternative - Not as nimble as the Beemer	★★★★★
Mercedes-Benz CLA45 AMG	186 D	£42,270	4/1991	355/6000	332/2250	1510kg	239	4.6	-	155	161	31.0	+ Strong performance, classy cabin - Pricey compared to A45 AMG hatchback	★★★★★
Mercedes-Benz GLA45 AMG	205 R	£44,595	4/1991	355/6000	332/2250	1510kg	239	4.8	-	155	175	31.7	+ An aggressive and focused sports crossover - Low on driver interaction	★★★★★
Mercedes-AMG C43 4Matic Estate	228 D	£45,250	8/2996	362/5500	383/2000	1660kg	222	4.7	-	155	181	35.8	+ Incredibly fast and composed - Difficult to engage with	★★★★★
Mercedes-AMG C63	209 D	£59,800	8/3982	469/5500	479/1750	1640kg	291	4.1	-	155	192	34.5	+ Fast and feelsome - Lacks the ultimate finesse and response of the C63 S	★★★★★
Mercedes-AMG C63 Estate	216 R	£61,260	8/3982	469/5500	479/1750	1710kg	279	4.2	-	155	196	33.6	+ Much more fun than it looks - Gearbox dim-witted at low speeds	★★★★★
Mercedes-AMG C63 S	211 R	£66,545	8/3982	503/5500	516/1750	1655kg	309	4.0	-	155	192	34.5	+ Tremendous twin-turbo V8 power - Not quite as focused as an M division car	★★★★★
Mercedes-Benz C63 AMG	151 R	'07-'14	8/6208	451/6800	442/5000	1655kg	277	<b>4.4</b>	<b>9.7</b>	160	280	23.5	+ Monstrous pace and extremely engaging - Same-era M3 is just a little better...	★★★★★
Mercedes-Benz C55 AMG	088 R	'04-'08	8/5439	367/5250	376/4000	1635kg	228	5.2	-	155	-	23.7	+ Furiously fast, commendably discreet - Overshadowed by M3 and RS4	★★★★★
Mercedes-AMG E63 S 4Matic+ (W213)	231 R	c£85,000	8/3982	603/5750	627/2500	1880kg	326	3.4	-	155	203	31.7	+ Fast, refined, effective and fun - At nearly two tons, it's not 911 nimble	★★★★★
Mercedes-AMG E63 S (W212)	208 R	'13-'16	8/5461	577/5500	590/1750	1795kg	327	4.1	-	155	229	28.8	+ Effortless power; intuitive and approachable - Dim-witted auto 'box	★★★★★
Mercedes-Benz E63 AMG (W212)	165 R	'11-'13	8/5461	518/5250	516/1750	1765kg	298	4.2	-	155	230	28.8	+ Turbo engine doesn't dilute 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	295	22.4	+ As below, but with an extra 11bhp and squarer headlights - Steering still vague	★★★★★
Mercedes-Benz E63 AMG (W211)	096 D	'06-'09	8/6208	507/6800	465/5200	1765kg	292	4.5	-	155	-	19.8	+ Brilliant engine, indulgent chassis - Vague steering, speed limits	★★★★★
Mercedes-Benz E55 AMG	052 R	'03-'06	8/5439	476/6100	516/2650	1760kg	271	<b>4.8</b>	<b>10.2</b>	155	-	21.9	+ M5-humbling grunt, cossetting ride - Speed limits	★★★★★
Mercedes-Benz E63 AMG L	191 D	£119,835	8/5461	577/5500	564/2250	1995kg	294	4.4	-	155	237	27.9	+ Monster pace - Average steering feel	★★★★★
Mercedes-Benz CLS63 AMG S	199 D	£86,500	8/5461	577/5500	590/1750	1795kg	327	4.1	-	155	231	28.5	+ Remains quick and characterful - Dated gearbox, no four-wheel drive option in the UK	★★★★★
Mercedes-Benz CLS63 AMG	178 R	'11-'14	8/5461	518/5250	516/1700	1795kg	293	4.2	-	155	231	28.5	+ Monster performance, 549bhp an option - Not as desirable as a Bentley or Aston	★★★★★
Mercedes-Benz CLS63 AMG	099 R	'06-'11	8/6208	507/6100	464/2650	1905kg	270	4.5	-	155	345	19.5	+ Beauty, comfort, awesome performance - M5 has the edge on B-roads	★★★★★
Mercedes-Benz GLE63 AMG S	218 D	£94,405	8/5461	577/5500	560/1750	2270kg	258	4.2	-	155	276	23.9	+ Stonking pace, extreme refinement - Feels remote	★★★★★
Mercedes-Benz GLE63 AMG S Coupe	213 D	£96,555	8/5461	577/5500	560/1750	2275kg	258	4.2	-	155	278	23.7	+ Subtler than an X6 M - More force than finesse	★★★★★
Mercedes-Benz ML63 AMG	176 R	£87,005	8/5461	518/5250	516/1750	2270kg	232	4.7	-	155	276	23.9	+ Great engine, surprisingly good dynamics - £85k buys a Boxster and an ML350...	★★★★★
Mercedes-Benz G63 AMG	172 D	£124,000	8/5461	537/5500	560/2000	2475kg	220	5.4	-	130	322	-	+ It exists; epic soundtrack - Ancient chassis, silly price	★★★★★
Mitsubishi Evo X FQ-300 SST	118 R	'08-'13	4/1998	290/6500	300/3500	1590kg	185	<b>5.2</b>	<b>13.9</b>	155	256	26.2	+ Evo gets twin-clutch transmission - Not as exciting as it used to be	★★★★★
Mitsubishi Evo X FQ-360	122 D	'08-'13	4/1998	354/6500	363/3500	1560kg	231	4.1	-	155	328	19.9	+ Ridiculously rapid new Evo - A five-speed gearbox?!	★★★★★
Mitsubishi Evo X FQ-330 SST	134 R	'08-'12	4/1998	324/6500	322/3500	1590kg	207	4.4	-	155	256	-	+ Great engine and gearbox combo - It still lives in the shadow of the Evo IX	★★★★★
Mitsubishi Evo X FQ-400	181 R	'09-'10	4/1998	403/6500	387/3500	1560kg	262	3.8	-	155	328	-	+ Most powerful factory Evo ever... - about X grand too much when new	★★★★★
Mitsubishi Evo IX FQ-340	088 R	'05-'07	4/1997	345/6800	321/4600	1400kg	250	<b>4.3</b>	<b>10.9</b>	157	-	-	+ Gives Porsche drivers nightmares - Points. Lots of	★★★★★
Mitsubishi Evo IX MR FQ-360	181 R	'05-'07	4/1997	366/6887	363/3200	1400kg	266	3.9	-	157	-	-	+ Well-executed engine upgrades - Prison food	★★★★★
Mitsubishi Evo VIII	055 R	'03-'04	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 R	'03-'05	4/1997	305/6800	289/3500	1400kg	221	4.8	-	157	-	20.5	+ Extra pace, extra attitude - Extra money	★★★★★
Mitsubishi Evo VII	031 R	'02-'03	4/1997	276/6500	282/3500	1360kg	206	<b>5.0</b>	<b>13.0</b>	140	-	20.4	+ Terrific all-rounder - You tell us	★★★★★
Mitsubishi Evo VI Tommi Makinen Edition	231 R	'00-'01	4/1997	276/6500	275/2750	1365kg	205	4.6	-	150	-	-	+ Our favourite Evo - Subtle it is not	★★★★★
Porsche Panamera Turbo	227 D	£113,975	8/3996	542/5750	568/1960	1995kg	276	3.6	-	190	212	30.4	+ Searing pace with body control that's a real step up; superb rear wing, too - Still very heavy	★★★★★
Porsche Panamera GTS	208 R	'11-'16	8/4806	434/6700	383/3500	1925kg	229	4.4	-	178	249	26.4	+ Vivacious V8, entertaining balance - Can feel light on performance next to turbo'd rivals	★★★★★
Porsche Panamera Turbo	137 R	'10-'16	8/4806	493/6000	516/2250	1970kg	254	<b>3.6</b>	<b>8.9</b>	188	270	24.6	+ 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	3.7	-	190	270	24.6	+ Pace, excellent ergonomics - Steering feel, ride	★★★★★
Porsche Macan S	205 R	£43,648	6/2997	335/5500	339/1450	1865kg	183	5.4	-	157	204	31.4	+ No less compelling than the Turbo - Although lacks its ultimate speed and agility	★★★★★
Porsche Macan GTS	217 D	£55,188	6/2997	355/6000	369/1650	1895kg	190	5.2	-	159	212	30.7	+ Handles like an SUV shouldn't - Still looks like an SUV	★★★★★
Porsche Macan Turbo	207 D	£59,648	6/3604	394/6000	406/1350	1925kg	208	<b>4.5</b>	<b>11.1</b>	165	208	30.7	+ Doesn't feel like an SUV - Not a match for a proper sports saloon	★★★★★
Porsche Cayenne GTS (Mk2, V6)	211 D	£72,523	6/3604	434/6000	442/1600	2110kg	209	5.2	-	163	228	28.3	+ 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	5.6	-	162	251	26.4	+ Dynamically the best SUV of its era - At two tons, it's still no sports car	★★★★★
Porsche Cayenne Turbo (Mk2)	212 D	£93,574	8/4806	513/6000	533/2250	2185kg	239	4.5	-	173	261	25.2	+ Remarkable performance, handling, completeness - Vague steering, dated engine	★★★★★
Porsche Cayenne Turbo S (Mk2)	184 D	£118,455	8/4806	562/6000	590/2500	2235kg	255	4.1	-	176	267	24.6	+ More power and torque than a Zonda S 7.3 - In an SUV	★★★★★
Range Rover Evoque Coupe Si4	160 D	£46,660	4/1999	237/6000	251/1900	1670kg	144	7.0	-	135	199	-	+ Striking looks, sporting dynamics - Hefty price, and petrol version is auto-only	★★★★★
Range Rover Sport SDV8	222 FF	£84,350	8/4367	334/3500	546/1750	2359kg	144	6.5	-	140	219	33.6	+ A brilliant long-distance machine - Doesn't live up to the 'Sport' branding	★★★★★
Range Rover Sport V8 Supercharged	186 D	£84,350	8/5000	503/6000	460/2500	2335kg	219	5.0	-	155	298	21.7	+ Deceptively quick and capable sports SUV - It's still got a weight problem	★★★★★
Range Rover Sport SVR	212 D	£95,150	8/5000	542/6000	501/3500	2335kg	236	4.5	-	162	298	21.7	+ Characterful drivetrain; genuine off-road ability - Not a match for its rivals on the road	★★★★★
Range Rover SDV8	180 D	£80,850	8/4367	334/3500	516/1750	2360kg	144	6.5	-	140	229	32.5	+ Lighter, more capable, even more luxurious - Diesel V6 model feels more alert	★★★★★
Rolls-Royce Ghost	186 D	£216,864	12/6592	563/5250	575/1500	2360kg	242	4.7	-	155	317	20.8	+ It's quicker than you think - It's more enjoyable driven slowly	★★★★★
Rolls-Royce Phantom	054 R	£310,200	12/6749	453/5350	531/3500	2560kg	180	5.7	-	149	377	18.0	+ Rolls reinvented for the 21st Century - The roads are barely big enough	★★★★★
Subaru WRX STI	201 R	£28,995	4/2457	296/6000	300/4000	1534kg	196	5.2	-	158	242	27.2	+ Fast Subaru saloon returns (again) - Without a power increase	★★★★★
Subaru WRX STI	151 D	'10-'13	4/2457	296/6000	300/4000	1505kg	200	5.1	-	158	243	26.9	+ Fast Subaru saloon returns - Without the blue paint and gold wheels	★★★★★
Subaru Impreza WRX GB270	109 D	'07	4/2457	266/5700	310/3000	1410kg	192	5.2	-	143	-	-	+ Fitting final fling for 'classic' Impreza - End of an era	★★★★★
Subaru Impreza STI	090 R	'05-'07	4/2457	276/6000	289/4000	1495kg	188	5.3	-	158	-	25.9	+ Stunning to drive - Not so stunning to look at	★★★★★
Subaru Impre														

## LOTUS EXIGE S (V6)

## Why would you?

Because moving the Exige to supercharged V6 power lifted it to another level, a mini-supercar to its four-cylinder predecessor's pocket road-racer. That it shared its 2012 *evo* Car of the Year win with the Pagani Huayra should tell you just how good it is.

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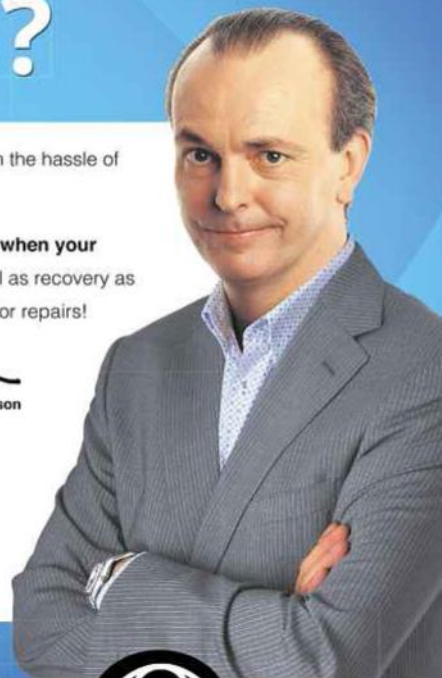
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## OUR CHOICE

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



## BEST OF THE REST

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

	ISSUE NO.	PRICE	ENGINE CYL/CC	BHP/RPM	LB FT/RPM	WEIGHT	BHP/TON	0-60MPH	0-100MPH	MAX MPH	CO2 G/KM	EC MPG	EVO RATING	
Abarth 124 Spider	225 D	£29,850	4/1368	168/5500	184/2500	1060kg	161	6.8	-	143	148	44.1	+ Predictable and fun rear end - Vague and lifeless front end	★★★★★
Alfa Romeo 4C Spider	223 R	£60,255	4/1742	237/6000	258/2200	940kg	256	4.5	-	160	161	40.9	+ Stunningly beautiful; better steering than coupe - Still has the coupe's other foibles	★★★★★
Alfa Romeo 8C Spider	161 R	£9,711	8/4691	450/7000	354/4750	1675kg	273	4.5	-	181	-	-	+ Beauty meets beast. They hit it off - Boot is useless for touring	★★★★★
Alpina D4 Biturbo Convertible	212 D	£54,950	6/2993	345/4000	516/1500	1815kg	193	5.0	-	171	156	47.9	+ As much torque as a 997 Turbo - A diesel convertible wouldn't be our choice of Alpina	★★★★★
Alpina B4 Biturbo Convertible	227 D	£62,950	6/2979	404/5500	442/3000	1840kg	223	4.5	-	187	186	35.3	+ A great GT - Not as exciting to drive as the numbers may suggest	★★★★★
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 R	£64,800	4/1998	350/8400	243/6100	550kg	647	2.6	-	155	-	-	+ Remarkable balance, poise and pace - Pricey	★★★★★
Ariel Atom 3 245	113 D	£8,122	4/1998	245/8200	155/5200	500kg	498	3.2	-	150	-	33.0	+ The Atom just got a little bit better - Can still be a bit draughty...	★★★★★
Ariel Atom 3 Supercharged	138 R	£9,122	4/1998	300/8200	162/7200	550kg	554	3.3	-	155	-	-	+ It's brilliant - It's mental	★★★★★
Ariel Atom Mugen	165 R	£12,132	4/1998	270/8300	188/6000	550kg	499	2.9	-	150	-	-	+ Perfect engine for the Atom's chassis - Only ten were made	★★★★★
Ariel Atom V8 500	165 R	£10,122	8/3000	475/10,500	284/7750	550kg	877	3.0	5.8	170	-	-	+ An experience unlike anything else on Planet Car - £150K for an Atom	★★★★★
Ariel Nomad	210 R	£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	130 R	£89,994	8/4735	420/7000	346/5750	1710kg	250	4.7	-	180	328	20.4	+ Sportiest, coolest drop-top Aston in years - Starting to feel its age	★★★★★
Aston Martin V8 Vantage S Roadster	161 R	£108,995	8/4735	430/7300	361/5000	1690kg	258	4.6	-	189	299	21.9	+ Sounds amazing, looks even better - Still not the best drop-top in its class	★★★★★
Aston Martin V12 Vantage S Roadster	212 R	£147,000	12/5935	565/6750	451/5750	1745kg	329	4.1	-	201	343	19.2	+ A brilliant two-seat roadster... - ...let down by a frustrating gearbox	★★★★★
Aston Martin V12 Vantage Roadster	175 R	£12,144	12/5935	510/6500	420/5750	1760kg	294	4.4	-	190	-	-	+ As good as the coupe, with amplified V12 rumble - Just a smidgen shakier	★★★★★
Aston Martin DB9 Volante	150 D	£95,125	12/5935	470/6000	443/5000	1815kg	263	4.6	-	190	368	18.2	+ Consummate cruiser and capable when pushed - Roof-up wind noise	★★★★★
Aston Martin DBS Volante	133 D	£99,122	12/5935	510/6500	420/5750	1810kg	286	4.3	-	191	388	17.3	+ A feelgood car par excellence - It's a bit of a heavyweight	★★★★★
Audi TTS Roadster	207 D	£41,085	4/1984	306/5800	280/1800	1450kg	214	5.2	-	155	169	38.7	+ A serious proposition, ranking close behind a Boxster S - Coupe still looks better	★★★★★
Audi TTS Roadster	122 D	£8,122	4/1984	268/6000	258/2500	1455kg	187	5.6	-	155	189	34.9	+ Effortlessly quick - Long-term appeal open to question	★★★★★
Audi TT RS Roadster	133 D	£99,144	5/2480	335/5400	332/1600	1510kg	225	4.7	-	155	212	31.0	+ Terrific engine... - ...is the best thing about it	★★★★★
Audi R8 V8 Spyder	186 D	£11,125	8/4163	424/7900	317/6000	1660kg	259	4.8	-	187	337	19.6	+ More delicate and subtle than the V10 - The V10 sounds even better	★★★★★
BAC Mono	189 R	£124,255	4/2261	280/7700	206/6000	540kg	527	2.8	-	170	-	-	+ The most single-minded track car available - That means no passengers...	★★★★★
Bentley Continental GT V8 Convertible	168 R	£150,200	8/3993	500/6000	487/1700	2395kg	212	4.7	-	187	254	25.9	+ One of the world's best topless GTs - Still no sports car	★★★★★
Bentley Continental GT V8 S Convertible	194 D	£160,500	8/3993	521/6000	502/1700	2395kg	221	4.5	-	191	258	25.4	+ A true drivers' Bentley - Excessively heavy; feels like it could give more	★★★★★
Bentley Continental GT Speed Convertible	187 D	£181,000	12/5998	626/6000	605/1700	2420kg	263	4.1	-	203	347	19.0	+ Effortless performance, style - Running costs a tad on the high side	★★★★★
BMW Z4 sDrive 35i M Sport (Mk2)	186 D	£43,005	6/2979	302/5800	295/1300	1505kg	204	5.2	-	155	219	30.1	+ Looks, hard-top versatility, drivetrain - Clumsy chassis is upset by ragged surfaces	★★★★★
BMW Z4 3.0si (Mk1)	094 D	£6,209	6/2996	265/6600	232/2750	1310kg	205	5.7	-	155	-	32.9	+ Terrific straight-six - Handling not as playful as we'd like	★★★★★
BMW Z4 M Roadster	091 R	£6,209	6/3246	338/7900	269/4900	1410kg	244	4.8	-	155	-	23.3	+ Exhilarating and characterful, that engine - Stiff suspension	★★★★★
BMW M Roadster	002 R	£8,122	6/3246	325/7400	258/4900	1375kg	240	5.3	-	155	-	25.4	+ Fresh-air M3, that motor, hunky looks - M Coupe drives better	★★★★★
BMW 435i Convertible	194 D	£45,680	6/2979	302/5800	295/1200	1740kg	176	5.6	-	155	190	34.8	+ Impressive chassis, smart looks, neat roof - Extra weight, not as composed as coupe	★★★★★
BMW M4 Convertible (F83)	202 D	£61,145	6/2979	425/5500	406/1850	1750kg	247	4.6	-	155	213	31.0	+ As good as fast four-seat drop-tops get... - ...but still not as good as a coupe or saloon	★★★★★
BMW Z8	026 R	£20,003	8/4941	400/6600	369/3800	1585kg	256	4.8	11.1	155	-	14.4	+ M5-powered super-sportster - M5's more fun to drive	★★★★★
Caterham Seven 160	205 R	£19,710	4/660	80/7000	79/3400	490kg	166	6.9	-	100	-	-	+ The fabulous Seven formula at its most basic - Gets pricey with options	★★★★★
Caterham Seven 270	219 R	£23,795	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 310R	227 D	£24,995	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 R	£27,795	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 R	£30,795	4/1999	210/7600	150/6300	560kg	381	4.0	10.3	136	-	-	+ It's the one we built for ourselves - Trickier on the limit than lesser-powered Sevens	★★★★★
Caterham Seven 620S	220 D	£44,995	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	187 R	£50,795	4/1999	310/7700	219/7350	572kg	551	2.8	-	155	-	-	+ Banzai on track, yet still relevant on the road - £50k for a Seven?	★★★★★
Caterham Seven CSR	094 R	£47,295	4/2261	256/7500	200/6200	565kg	460	3.8	-	155	-	-	+ Brilliant for high days, holidays and trackdays - Wet Wednesdays	★★★★★
Caterham Seven Roadsport 125	105 R	£7,124	4/1596	125/6100	120/5350	539kg	235	5.9	-	112	-	-	+ Great debut for new Ford-engined model - Bigger drivers need SV model	★★★★★
Caterham Seven Supersport	165 R	£11,124	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	£13,144	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 R	£9,122	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 R	£8,124	4/1999	263/8500	177/7200	506kg	528	2.9	-	150	-	-	+ Better power-to-weight ratio than a Veyron - Until you add the driver	★★★★★
Caterham Levante	131 R	£99,110	8/2398	550/10000	300/8500	520kg	1074	4.8	8.2	150	-	-	+ Twice the power-to-weight ratio of a Veyron! - Not easy to drive slowly	★★★★★
Caterham Seven R300	068 R	£2,006	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 R	£9,006	4/1796	230/8600	155/7200	460kg	510	3.6	8.8	146	-	-	+ The K-series Seven at its very best - No cup holders	★★★★★
Ferrari California T	229 D	£155,254	8/3855	553/7500	551/4750	1729kg	324	3.6	-	196	250	26.9	+ Turbocharged engine is a triumph - Still places daily useability above outright thrills	★★★★★
Ferrari California	171 D	£8,144	8/4297	483/7750	372/5000	1735kg	283	3.8	-	193	299	-	+ Revised with sharper performance and dynamics - We'd still take a 458 Spider	★★★★★
Fiat 124 Spider	228 R	£19,545	4/1368	138/5000	117/2250	1050kg	134	7.5	-	134	148	44.1	+ It's an affordable Italian(ish) sports car - Lacks Italian brio	★★★★★
Honda S2000	118 D	£99,009	4/1997	237/8300	153/7500	1260kg	191	6.2	-	150	-	28.2	+ An alternative and rev-happy roadster - The Boxster's better	★★★★★
Jaguar F-type Convertible	186 R	£56,260	6/2995	335/6500	332/3500	1587kg	214	5.5	-	161	234	28.8	+ Beautiful, enjoyable, responsive - Noticeably junior to the V6 S	★★★★★
Jaguar F-type S Convertible	183 R	£66,260	6/2995	375/6500	339/3500	1604kg	238	5.3	-	171	234	28.8	+ Better-damped and more rounded than the V8 S - A Boxster S is £20k cheaper	★★★★★
Jaguar F-type R Convertible	-	£92,310	8/5000	542/6500	501/3500	1665kg	331	4.0	-	186	255	26.4	+ Pace, characterful V8 - Costs £25k more than the S	★★★★★
Jaguar F-type SVR Convertible	230 D	£115,485	8/5000	567/6500	516/3500	1720kg	335	3.5	-	195	269	25.0	+ Huge performance - Unpleasant soundtrack; unsettled on bumpy roads	★★★★★
Jaguar F-type Project 7	212 R	£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 F-type V8 S Convertible	183 R	£13,124	8/5000	488/6500	461/2500	1665kg	298	4.3	-	186	259	25.5	+ Wilder than the V6 S - Could be too exuberant for some	★★★★★
Jaguar XKR Convertible	130 R	£99,124	8/5000	503/6000	461/2500	1725kg	296	4.6	-	155	292	23.0	+ Fantastic 5-litre V8 - Loses sporting ground to its main foes	★★★★★
Jaguar XKR-S Convertible	167 R	£11,124	8/5000	542/6500	502/2500	1725kg	319	4.2	-	186	292	23.0	+ 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	189	34.0	+ Extraordinary ability, now in a more road-friendly package - Price	★★★★★
KTM X-Bow R	165 R	£87,480	4/1984	296/5500	295/3300	818kg	368	3.6	-	144	-	-	+ Sharper handling, more power - Pity it's not even lighter, and cheaper	★★★★★
KTM X-Bow	138 R	£8,122	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	-	£35,880	4/1598	134/6800	118/4400	866kg	157	6.0	-	127	149	45.0	+ 1.6-litre Elise is light and fantastic - Smaller engine could put some off	★★★★★
Lotus Elise Sport 220	-	£43,800	4/1798	217/6800	184/4600	924kg	239	4.2	-	145	173	37.7	+ Epic grip and pace - £43k for an Elise?	★★★★★
Lotus Elise Cup 250	224 R	£45,600	4/1798	243/7200	184/3500	931kg	265	3.9	-	154	175	37.7	+ Quickest Elise yet - Prioritises grip over adjustability	★★★★★

## B ENGINEERING EDONIS

This 680bhp, rear-drive, 230mph Italian oddity rose briefly from the ashes of the Bugatti EB110. David Vivian was one of the few who drove it

Two things are immediately obvious. One, the Edonis steers like a Ferrari F40 - with almost sublime precision and beautifully judged feel. It installs instant confidence. And two, the 3.7-litre V12 behind my head is brutally, savagely turbocharged.

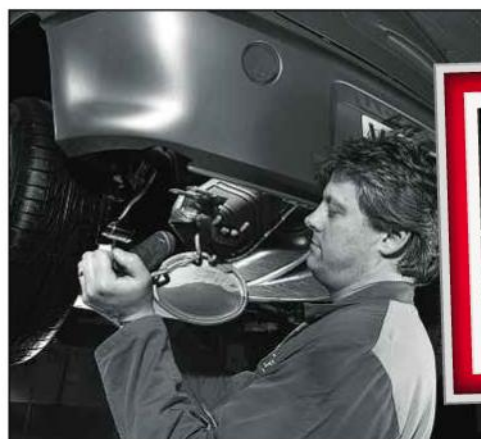
Lining up a tantalising straight,

I feed in the power slowly in third, feeling out the point at which the turbos hook up. They do. It's as if the Edonis has been spat down the road by a cannon. More throttle, more acceleration. Still I haven't got my toe down. Into fourth, and I stick it all the way.

The progression of accelerative

sensations moves swiftly from impressive to thrilling to vaguely unpleasant and swings rapidly into the panic zone and jams against the end stop.

'This car is a drug. Quite honestly I've never experienced anything like it - and that includes the McLaren F1.'



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	ISSUE NO.	PRICE	ENGINE CYL/CC	BHP/RPM	LB FT/RPM	WEIGHT	BHP/TON	0-60MPH	0-100MPH	MAX MPH	CO2 G/KM	EC MPG	EVO RATING	
Lotus Elise 1.6 Club Racer	183 R	11-15	4/1598	134/6800	118/4400	852kg	160	6.0	-	127	149	45.0	+ Even lighter, even more focused - Are you prepared to go this basic?	★★★★★
Lotus Elise S Club Racer	189 D	13-15	4/1798	217/6800	184/4600	905kg	244	4.2	-	145	175	37.5	+ Purist approach intensifies ability - Lightest, option-free spec requires commitment	★★★★★
Lotus Elise R	068 R	04-11	4/1796	189/7800	133/6800	860kg	223	5.6	13.9	150	196	34.4	+ Most thrilling Elise yet - Blaring engine note	★★★★★
Lotus Elise SC	131 R	08-11	4/1794	218/8000	156/5000	870kg	254	4.5	11.4	148	199	33.2	+ All the usual Elise magic - Supercharged engine lacks sparkle	★★★★★
Lotus Elise S 1.8	104 R	06-10	4/1794	134/6200	127/4200	860kg	158	6.3	18.7	127	-	37.2	+ Brilliant entry-level Elise - Precious little	★★★★★
Lotus Elise 111S	049 R	02-04	4/1796	156/7000	129/4650	860kg	197	5.1	-	131	-	40.9	+ A genuinely useable Elise - Air-con? In an Elise?	★★★★★
Lotus Elise Sport 135	040 D	03	4/1796	135/6200	129/4850	726kg	189	5.4	-	129	-	-	+ One of our fave S2 Elises - Brakes need more bite and pedal feel	★★★★★
Lotus Elise Sport 190	044 R	03	4/1796	190/7800	128/5000	710kg	272	4.7	12.1	135	-	-	+ Fabulous trackday tool - Pricey	★★★★★
Lotus Elise (S1)	126 R	96-01	4/1796	118/5500	122/3000	731kg	164	6.1	18.5	126	-	39.4	+ A modern classic - A tad impractical?	★★★★★
Lotus Exige Sport 350 Roadster	221 R	£55,900	6/3456	345/7000	295/4500	1125kg	312	3.7	-	145	235	28.0	+ An Exige with added sunny-day appeal - A Boxster would be more practical	★★★★★
Lotus Exige Sport 380 Roadster	231 R	£67,900	6/3456	375/6700	302/5000	1110kg	343	3.5	-	178	242	27.2	+ As above, but faster and even purer - As above	★★★★★
Lotus Exige S Roadster	186 R	13-15	6/3456	345/7000	295/4500	1166kg	301	3.8	-	145	235	28.0	+ Like the hard-top Exige S, but more road-friendly - 981 Boxster S is a better all-rounder	★★★★★
Lotus 3-Eleven	220 R	£82,500	6/3456	410/7000	302/3000	925kg	450	3.3	-	174	-	-	+ A fantastically exciting Lotus - If not exactly a groundbreaking one	★★★★★
Lotus 2-Eleven	126 R	07-11	4/1796	189/7800	133/6800	720kg	267	4.3	-	140	-	-	+ Not far off supercharged car's pace - Pricey once it's made road-legal	★★★★★
Lotus 2-Eleven Supercharged	123 R	07-11	4/1796	252/8000	179/7000	670kg	382	3.8	-	150	-	-	+ Impressive on road and track - Not hardcore enough for some	★★★★★
Lotus 2-Eleven GT4	138 R	09-11	4/1796	266/8200	179/7200	670kg	403	3.7	-	155	-	-	+ evo Track Car of the Year 2009 - It's a 76-grand Lotus with no roof	★★★★★
Lotus 340R	126 R	00	4/1796	190/7800	146/5000	658kg	293	4.5	12.5	126	-	-	+ Hardcore road-racer... ..that looks like a dune buggy from Mars	★★★★★
Lotus Elan SE	095 R	89-95	4/1588	165/6600	148/4200	1022kg	164	6.7	-	137	-	21.0	+ Awesome front-drive chassis - Rather uninvolved	★★★★★
Maserati GranCabrio	142 D	£98,940	8/4691	434/7000	332/4750	1980kg	223	5.2	-	177	337	19.5	+ As good to drive as it is to look at - Lacks the grunt of some rivals	★★★★★
Maserati GranCabrio Sport	161 D	£104,535	8/4691	444/7000	376/4750	1980kg	228	5.0	-	177	377	19.5	+ Looks, performance, cruising ability - Brakes could be sharper	★★★★★
Maserati GranCabrio MC	185 D	£112,370	8/4691	454/7000	383/4750	1973kg	234	4.9	-	179	337	19.5	+ Most powerful GranCabrio yet - The GranCabrio is starting to show its age	★★★★★
Mazda MX-5 1.5 (Mk4)	230 F	£18,495	4/1496	129/7000	111/4800	975kg	134	8.3	-	127	139	47.1	+ Lightest MX-5 since the Mk1 - Lacks intensity	★★★★★
Mazda MX-5 2.0 Sport Nav (Mk4)	228 R	£23,695	4/1998	158/6000	147/4600	1000kg	161	7.3	-	133	161	40.9	+ Brilliant basic recipe - The desire for stiffer suspension and more power	★★★★★
Mazda MX-5 2.0i Sport Tech (Mk3.5)	212 R	09-15	4/1999	158/7000	139/5000	1098kg	146	7.6	-	138	181	36.2	+ Handles brilliantly again; folding hard-top also available - Less than macho image	★★★★★
Mazda MX-5 1.8i (Mk3)	091 R	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 R	98-05	4/1839	146/7000	124/5000	1065kg	140	8.6	-	123	-	32.5	+ Affordable ragtops don't get much better - Cheap cabin	★★★★★
Mazda MX-5 1.6 (Mk1)	131 R	89-97	4/1597	115/6500	100/5500	971kg	120	9.0	-	114	-	-	+ The original and still (pretty much) the best - Less than rigid	★★★★★
Mercedes-AMG SLC43	222 D	£45,950	6/2996	362/5500	383/2000	1520kg	242	4.7	-	155	178	26.2	+ Twin-turbo V6 well-suited to baby roadster - But also highlights the chassis' age	★★★★★
Mercedes-Benz SLK 55 AMG	186 R	12-15	8/5461	416/6800	398/4500	1615kg	262	4.6	-	155	195	33.6	+ Quicker and more economical than ever - Needs to be sharper, too	★★★★★
Mercedes-Benz SLK 55 AMG	087 R	05-10	8/5439	355/5750	376/4000	1575kg	229	4.9	-	155	-	23.5	+ Superb engine, responsive chassis - No manual option, ESP spoils fun	★★★★★
Mercedes-Benz SLK 55 AMG Black Series	110 R	07-08	8/5439	394/5750	383/3750	1495kg	268	4.9	11.2	174	-	-	+ AMG gets serious - Dull-witted TG-Tronic auto box, uneven dynamics	★★★★★
Mercedes-AMG C63 S Cabriolet	226 D	£68,115	8/3982	503/5500	516/1750	1850kg	276	4.1	-	155	208	31.7	+ A born hooligan - Body flex takes away some control	★★★★★
Mercedes-AMG SL63	228 D	£114,115	8/5461	577/5500	664/2250	1770kg	331	4.1	-	155	234	28.0	+ Effortless performance - Needs more involvement to go with the pace	★★★★★
Mercedes-Benz SL500	169 D	12-16	8/4663	429/5250	516/1800	1710kg	255	4.6	-	155	212	31.0	+ Wafy 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	231	-	+ 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	270	24.4	+ 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	328	20.0	+ 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	4.1	-	155	-	-	+ Gob-smacking performance - Gob-smackingly pricey	★★★★★
Mercedes-Benz SLS AMG Roadster	167 R	12-14	8/6208	563/6800	479/4750	1660kg	345	3.7	-	197	308	21.4	+ Loses none of the coupe's talents - But (understandably) loses the gullwing doors	★★★★★
Morgan 3 Wheeler	198 R	£31,140	2/1976	82/5250	103/3250	525kg	159	6.0	-	115	215	30.3	+ Quirky, characterful, brilliant - Can become a two-wheeler if you push too hard	★★★★★
Morgan Plus 8 Speedster	202 R	£71,140	8/4799	362/6300	370/3600	1000kg	368	4.2	-	148	282	23.3	+ Fantastic old-school roadster experience - Gets unsettled by big bumps	★★★★★
Morgan Plus 8	171 R	£86,345	8/4799	362/6300	370/3600	1100kg	334	4.4	-	155	256	25.7	+ Hilarious mix of old looks and new mechanicals - Refinement is definitely old-school	★★★★★
Morgan Aero SuperSports	145 R	£128,045	8/4799	362/6300	370/3600	1180kg	312	4.2	-	170	-	-	+ As above, with a V8 and targa top - It's proper supercar money	★★★★★
Morgan Aero 8	105 R	02-08	8/4799	362/6300	361/3400	1100kg	334	4.5	-	170	-	25.2	+ Glorious sound, view over bonnet, dynamics - Awkward-looking rear	★★★★★
Nissan 370Z Roadster	143 R	10-14	6/3696	326/7000	269/5200	1554kg	213	5.5	-	155	262	25.2	+ The Zed's old-school character remains intact - Its purposeful looks don't	★★★★★
Porsche 718 Boxster	224 D	£41,739	4/1988	296/6500	280/1950	1335kg	225	5.1	-	170	168	38.2	+ Chassis as good as ever - Four-cylinder's tuneless din would be hard to live with	★★★★★
Porsche 718 Boxster S	222 R	£50,695	4/2497	345/6500	310/1900	1355kg	259	4.4	9.8	177	184	34.9	+ Still sensationally capable - Turbo four-cylinder engine lacks appeal of the old flat-six	★★★★★
Porsche Boxster (981)	172 R	12-16	6/2706	261/6700	206/4500	1310kg	202	5.4	-	164	192	34.5	+ Goes and looks better - Shame about the electric steering	★★★★★
Porsche Boxster S (981)	186 R	12-16	6/3436	311/6700	265/4500	1320kg	239	5.1	-	173	206	32.1	+ 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	211	31.4	+ Superb dynamics, fantastic engine, great looks - Sport suspension is very firm	★★★★★
Porsche Boxster Spyder (981)	2123 R	15-16	6/3800	370/6700	310/4750	1315kg	286	4.5	-	180	230	28.5	+ The fastest, most rewarding Boxster yet - Feedback trails the Cayman GT4's	★★★★★
Porsche Boxster S (987)	161 R	05-12	6/3436	306/6400	265/5500	1355kg	229	5.3	-	170	223	29.7	+ As above, but with more power - As above	★★★★★
Porsche Boxster Spyder (987)	188 R	10-12	6/3436	316/7200	273/4750	1275kg	252	5.0	-	166	221	29.1	+ Lighter, more driver-centric Boxster - Collapsed-brolly roof not the most practical	★★★★★
Porsche Boxster S (986)	070 R	99-04	6/3179	256/6200	229/4600	1320kg	200	5.5	-	164	-	26.9	+ Added power is seductive - As above	★★★★★
Radical SR3 SL	174 R	£69,840	4/2000	300/6000	265/4000	775kg	393	3.4	-	161	-	-	+ Our 2011 Track Car of the Year, and it's road-legal - You'll need to wrap up warm	★★★★★
Radical SR8LM	138 R	09-12	8/2800	460/10,500	260/8000	680kg	687	3.2	-	168	-	-	+ Fastest road car around the Nordschleife - Convincing people it's road legal	★★★★★
Renault Sport Spider	231 R	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	£250,000	12/6592	563/5250	575/1500	2560kg	223	4.9	-	155	330	20.0	+ Effortless driving experience - Driver involvement not a priority	★★★★★
Toyota MR2	187 R	00-06	4/1794	138/6400	125/4400	975kg	141	7.2	21.2	130	-	38.2	+ Tight lines, taut dynamics - Minimal luggage space	★★★★★
TVR Tamora	070 R	01-07	6/3605	350/7200	290/5500	1050kg	338	4.5	-	160	-	-	+ Well-sorted soft-top TVR - Awkward styling	★★★★★
TVR Tuscan Convertible	091 R	05-07	6/3996	365/6800	315/6000	1100kg	337	3.8	8.1	195+	-	-	+ Spirit of the Griff reborn - Over 195mph? Really?	★★★★★
TVR Chimaera 5.0	007 R	93-03	8/4988	320/5500	320/3750	1060kg	307	4.6	-	167	-	26.4	+ Gorgeous noise, tarmac-rippling grunt - Details	★★★★★
TVR Griffith 4.3	068 R	92-93	8/4280	280/5500	305/4000	1060kg	268	4.8	11.2	148	-	-	+ The car that made TVR. Cult status - Mere details	★★★★★
TVR Griffith 500	009 R	93-01	8/4988	320/5500	320/3750	1060kg	307	4.8	11.2	167	-	22.1	+ Gruff diamond - A few rough edges	★★★★★
Vauxhall VX220	023 R	03-04	4/2198	145/5800	150/4000	875kg	168	5.6	-	136	-	34.4	+ Absurdly good Vauxhall - The badge?	★★★★★
Vauxhall VX220 Turbo	066 R	03-05	4/1998	197/5500	184/1950	930kg	215	4.7	-	151	-	-	+ Nothing comes close for the money - Marginal everyday usability	★★★★★
Vuhl 05	220 R	£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	★★★★★

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## OUR CHOICE

**Porsche 911 R.** GT3 RS engine, manual gearbox, no wing and a lightweight build ethic. It sounded like the perfect 911 on paper, and in physical form it has proved to be just that – or very close to it – for many. Hence its win at eCoty 2016 against some particularly strong rivals. Pity about those premiums...



## BEST OF THE REST

Lower down the 911 range, the 991.2 Carrera and Carrera S haven't been ruined by the addition of turbos. Elsewhere, Jaguar's F-type R Coupe (left) is a real hoot, and we'd take a Mercedes-AMG C63 S Coupe over BMW M4, while Lotus's Exige and Evora continue to offer sublime handling in all guises.

	ISSUE NO.	PRICE	ENGINE CYL/CC	BHP/RPM	LB FT/RPM	WEIGHT	BHP/TON	0-60MPH	0-100MPH	MAX MPH	CO2 G/KM	EC MPG	EVO RATING
Alfa Romeo 4C	209 R	£51,500	4/1742	237/6000	258/2200	895kg	269	4.5	-	160	157	41.5	★ Carbonfibre tub, mini-supercar looks - Hot hatch engine, clunky gearbox ★★★★★
Alfa Romeo 8C Competizione	120 R	£7-09	8/4691	450/7000	354/4750	1585kg	288	4.1	-	181	-	-	★ Looks, exclusivity, noise, balance - They're all sold ★★★★★
Alpina D4 Biturbo	206 R	£50,950	6/2993	345/4000	516/1500	1585kg	221	4.6	-	173	139	53.3	★ Fifth-gear oversteer - Sounds like a diesel; fuel economy not as good as you might hope ★★★★★
Alpina B4 Biturbo	206 R	£58,950	6/2979	404/5500	442/3000	1615kg	254	4.2	-	188	177	37.2	★ More fluid than the M4; better traction, too - Not as precise as the M-car over the limit ★★★★★
Aston Martin V8 Vantage	169 D	£84,995	8/4735	420/7000	346/5750	1630kg	262	4.7	-	180	328	20.4	★ 2012 upgrades keep the V8 Vantage on song - Starting to feel a little dated, though ★★★★★
Aston Martin V8 Vantage N430	218 R	£89,995	8/4735	430/7300	361/5000	1610kg	271	4.5	-	189	321	20.5	★ Malleable, involving, can still hold its own - Never feels rampantly quick ★★★★★
Aston Martin V8 Vantage S	168 R	£94,995	8/4735	430/7300	361/5000	1610kg	271	4.5	-	189	299	21.9	★ Keener engine, V12 Vantage looks - Slightly sluggish auto only ★★★★★
Aston Martin Vantage GT8	229 R	£165,000	8/4735	440/7300	361/5000	1530kg	292	4.4	-	190	-	-	★ Enough drama to fill a Netflix mini-series - Just 150 being made ★★★★★
Aston Martin V12 Vantage S	224 D	£138,000	12/5935	565/6750	457/5750	1665kg	345	3.7	-	205	343	19.2	★ Amongst the best Astons ever made - Old-school automated 'box (so get the manual) ★★★★★
Aston Martin Vantage GT12	214 R	£250,000	12/5935	592/7000	461/5500	1565kg	384	3.5	-	185	-	-	★ The GT3-style Vantage we've been waiting for - Only 100 being made ★★★★★
Aston Martin V12 Vantage	146 R	£9-13	12/5935	510/6500	420/5750	1680kg	308	4.4	9.7	190	388	17.3	★ The car we hoped the V8 Vantage would be - Erm, a tad thirsty? ★★★★★
Aston Martin DB11	230 D	£154,900	12/5204	600/6500	516/1500	1770kg	344	3.9	-	200	333	19.8	★ An excellent GT - Suffers in outright handling terms as a result ★★★★★
Aston Martin DB9 GT	214 D	£140,000	12/5935	540/6750	457/5500	1785kg	307	4.5	-	183	333	19.8	★ More power; still has bags of character - Needs eight-speed auto 'box ★★★★★
Aston Martin DB9	178 R	£04-16	12/5935	510/6500	457/5500	1785kg	290	4.6	-	183	368	18.2	★ A great start to Gaydon-era Astons - Automatic gearbox could be quicker ★★★★★
Aston Martin DBS	142 R	£07-12	12/5935	510/6500	420/5750	1695kg	306	4.2	-	191	388	17.3	★ Stupendous engine, gearbox, brakes - Pricey. Can bite the unwary ★★★★★
Audi TT 2.0 TFSI (Mk3)	204 R	£29,915	4/1984	227/4500	273/1650	1230kg	188	6.0	-	155	137	47.9	★ Desirable, grippy and effortlessly quick - Still not the last word in interaction ★★★★★
Audi TT 2.0 TFSI quattro (Mk3)	203 D	£32,860	4/1984	227/4500	273/1600	1335kg	173	5.3	-	155	149	44.1	★ Looks, interior, decent performance and handling - Lacks ultimate involvement ★★★★★
Audi TTS (Mk3)	209 R	£38,790	4/1984	306/5800	280/1800	1365kg	228	4.9	-	155	168	38.7	★ Dynamically interesting (for a TT) - Still not as interactive as a Cayman ★★★★★
Audi TT RS (Mk3)	230 R	£51,800	4/2480	394/5850	354/1700	1440kg	278	3.4	-	155	187	34.4	★ Soundtrack; tremendous point-to-point pace - A bit one-dimensional in the long run ★★★★★
Audi TT RS (Mk2)	158 R	£09-14	5/2480	335/5400	332/1600	1450kg	235	4.4	11.1	155	209	31.4	★ Sublime 5-cylinder turbo engine - Rest of package can't quite match it ★★★★★
Audi TT RS Plus (Mk2)	185 D	£2-14	5/2480	355/5500	343/1650	1450kg	249	4.3	-	174	209	31.4	★ Stonkingly fast cross-country - Shockingly expensive for a TT ★★★★★
Audi S5	231 D	£47,000	6/2995	349/5400	369/1370	1615kg	220	4.7	-	155	170	38.2	★ Chassis rewards commitment... - ...but doesn't offer a challenge. Plain engine, too ★★★★★
Audi RS5	206 R	£59,870	8/4163	444/8250	317/4000	1715kg	263	4.5	-	155	246	26.9	★ Brilliant engine and improved chassis - Lack of suspension travel; inconsistent steering ★★★★★
Audi R8 V8	201 R	£07-15	8/4163	424/7900	317/4500	1560kg	276	4.1	9.9	188	332	19.9	★ A true 911 alternative - Exclusivity comes at a price ★★★★★
Bentley Continental GT V8	178 R	£140,300	8/3993	500/6000	487/1700	2220kg	229	4.6	-	188	246	27.0	★ A proper drivers' Bentley with decent economy - W12 suddenly seems pointless ★★★★★
Bentley Continental GT V8 S	204 F	£149,800	8/3993	521/6000	502/1700	2220kg	238	4.3	-	192	250	26.4	★ An even better drivers' Bentley - Vast weight makes its presence felt in harder driving ★★★★★
Bentley Continental GT	152 D	£150,500	12/5998	567/6000	516/1700	2245kg	257	4.3	-	197	338	19.5	★ 200mph in utter comfort - Weight, thirst ★★★★★
Bentley Continental GT Speed	230 D	£168,900	12/5998	633/5900	620/2000	2245kg	286	4.1	-	206	338	19.3	★ Desirability meets exclusivity and performance - We'd still have the V8 ★★★★★
Bentley Continental GT3-R	203 D	£237,500	8/3993	572/6000	518/1700	2120kg	274	3.6	-	170	295	22.2	★ The best-handling Continental ever - Expensive; it still weighs 2120kg ★★★★★
BMW 1-series M Coupe	188 R	£1-12	6/2979	335/5900	369/1500	1495kg	228	4.8	-	155	224	-	★ Character, turbo pace and great looks - Came and went too quick ★★★★★
BMW M240i Coupe	229 D	£35,090	6/2998	335/6800	369/1520	1470kg	232	4.8	-	155	179	36.2	★ Adjustable and plenty of fun - Lacks finesse and precision ★★★★★
BMW M235i Coupe	225 R	£14-16	6/2979	321/5800	332/1300	1455kg	224	5.2	12.7	155	189	34.9	★ Powertrain, chassis, looks, size - Limited-slip diff is an option, not standard ★★★★★
BMW M2	230 R	£44,080	6/2979	365/6500	369/1450	1495kg	248	4.5	-	155	199	33.2	★ More progressive chassis balance than the M4 - Feels unsettled on rough tarmac ★★★★★
BMW M4	218 R	£57,055	6/2979	425/5500	406/1850	1515kg	285	4.3	-	155	204	32.1	★ Ferociously fast - A handful on less-than-perfect or less-than-bone-dry roads ★★★★★
BMW M4 Competition Package	226 R	£60,065	6/2979	444/7000	406/1850	1515kg	298	4.3	-	155	204	32.1	★ Better tied-down than the regular M4 - Torque delivery still rather abrupt ★★★★★
BMW M4 GTS	232 R	£120,500	6/2979	493/6250	442/4000	1510kg	332	3.7	8.0	190	199	34.0	★ Vast improvement on lesser M4s - So it should be at this price ★★★★★
BMW M3 (E92)	196 R	£07-13	8/3999	414/8300	295/3900	1580kg	266	4.3	10.3	155	290	22.8	★ Fends off all of its rivals - ...except the cheaper 1-series M4 ★★★★★
BMW M3 GT3 (E92)	232 R	£10-11	8/4361	444/8300	324/3750	1530kg	295	4.3	-	190	295	-	★ Highly exclusive, one of the most focused M-cars ever - Good luck trying to find one ★★★★★
BMW M3 (E46)	066 R	£00-07	6/3246	338/7900	269/5000	1495kg	230	5.1	12.3	155	-	23.7	★ One of the best BMWs ever. Runner-up in eCoty 2001 - Slightly artificial steering feel ★★★★★
BMW M3 CSL (E46)	219 R	£05-07	6/3246	338/7900	269/5000	1495kg	230	5.1	-	155	-	23.7	★ CSL dynamics without CSL price - Looks like the standard car ★★★★★
BMW M3 CSL (E46)	200 R	£03-04	6/3246	355/7900	273/4900	1385kg	260	5.3	12.0	155	-	-	★ Still superb - Changes from the automated single-clutch 'box are... a bit... sluggish ★★★★★
BMW M3 Evolution (E36)	148 R	£96-98	6/3201	321/7400	258/3250	1515kg	215	5.4	12.8	158	-	25.7	★ Performance, image - Never quite as good as the E30 ★★★★★
BMW M3 (E30)	165 R	£86-90	4/2302	212/6750	170/4600	1165kg	185	6.7	17.8	147	-	20.3	★ Best M-car ever! Race-car dynamics for the road - Prices have got out of hand ★★★★★
BMW Z4 M Coupe	097 R	£06-09	6/3246	338/7900	269/4900	1420kg	242	5.0	-	155	-	23.3	★ A real drivers' car - You've got to be prepared to get stuck in ★★★★★
BMW M6 (F13)	218 R	£93,150	8/4395	552/6000	501/1500	1850kg	303	4.2	-	155	231	28.5	★ Mighty ability, pace, technology - You'll want the Competition Package upgrade too... ★★★★★
BMW M6 (E63)	106 R	£05-10	10/4999	500/7750	384/6100	1635kg	311	4.8	10.0	155	342	19.8	★ Awesome GT, awesome sports car - SMG gearbox now off the pace ★★★★★
BMW i8	210 R	£99,590	3/1499	357/5800	420/3700	1485kg	244	4.4	-	155	49	134.5	★ Brilliantly executed concept; sci-fi looks - Safe dynamic set-up ★★★★★
Chevrolet Camaro Z/28 *	220 R	£71,750	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 R	£62,470	8/6162	460/6000	465/4600	1496kg	312	4.4	9.4	180	279	23.5	★ Performance, chassis balance, supple ride - Body control could be better ★★★★★
Chevrolet Corvette Z06 (C7)	227 R	£89,620	8/6162	650/6000	650/3600	1598kg	413	3.7	-	196	291	23.1	★ Mind-boggling raw speed; surprisingly sophisticated - Edgy when really pushed ★★★★★
Ford Mustang 2.3 EcoBoost	222 D	£30,995	4/1261	313/5500	319/3000	1655kg	192	5.8	-	155	179	35.3	★ Ninety per cent as good as the V8 - Missing ten per cent is what makes the Mustang ★★★★★
Ford Mustang 5.0 V8 GT	225 R	£34,995	8/4951	410/6500	391/4250	1711kg	243	4.8	11.6	155	299	20.9	★ Looks, noise, performance, value, right-hand drive - Comes undone on rougher roads ★★★★★
Ginetta G40R	165 R	£35,940	4/1999	175/6700	140/5000	795kg	224	5.8	-	140	-	-	★ A race-compliant sports car for the road - Feels too soft to be a hardcore track toy ★★★★★
Honda Integra Type R (DC2)	200 R	£96-00	4/1797	187/8000	131/7300	1101kg	173	6.2	17.9	145	-	28.9	★ Arguably the greatest front-drive car ever - Too raw for some ★★★★★
Honda NSX (NA2)	188 R	£97-05	6/3179	276/7300	224/5300	1410kg	196	5.5	-	168	-	22.8	★ The useable supercar - 276bhp sounds a bit weedy today ★★★★★
Honda NSX-R (NA2) *	100 R	£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 ★★★★★
Infiniti Q60S	228 D	£42,990	6/2997	400/6400	500/1600	1799kg	226	5.0	-	155	208	31.0	★ Impressive tech - Electronic systems reduce feeling of involvement ★★★★★
Jaguar F-type Coupe	204 D	£51,260	6/2995	335/6500	332/3500	1567kg	217	5.5	-	161	234	28.8	★ Drop-dead looks, brilliant chassis, desirability - Engine lacks top-end fight ★★★★★
Jaguar F-type S Coupe	211 D	£60,260	6/2995	375/6500	339/3500	1584kg	241	5.3	-	171	234	28.8	★ Exquisite style, more rewarding (and affordable) than roadster - Scrappy on the limit ★★★★★
Jaguar F-type R Coupe	218 R	£85,010	8/5000	542/6500	501/3500	1650kg	334	4.0	-	186	255	26.4	★ Looks, presence, performance, soundtrack - Bumpy and boisterous ★★★★★
Jaguar F-type R Coupe AWD	227 D	£91,660	8/5000	542/6500	501/3500	1730kg	318	3.5	8.1	186	269	25.0	★ Better than the rear-drive R in the wet - Less involving in the dry ★★★★★
Jaguar F-type SVR Coupe	224 D	£110,000	8/5000	567/6500	516/3500	1705kg	338	3.5	-	200	269	25.0	★ A marginally better drive than the AWD R - Not by enough to justify the extra outlay ★★★★★
Jaguar XKR	168 R	£09-14	8/5000	503/6000	461/2500	1678kg	305	4.6	-	155	292	23.0	★ Fast and incredibly rewarding Jag - The kids will have to stay at home ★★★★★
Jaguar XKR-S	168 R	£11-14	8/5000	542/6000	502/2500	1678kg	328	4.2	-	186	292	23.0	★ Faster and wilder than regular XKR - The F-type R Coupe ★★★★★
Lexus RC200T F Sport	225 R	£36,495	4/1998	242/5800	258/1650	1675kg	147	7.5	-	143	168	39.2	★ Fluid ride - Lacks body control and outright grip ★★★★★
Lexus RC F	226 R	£59,995	8/4969	470/6400	391/4800	1765kg	271	4.5	-	168	251	26.5	★ Great steering, noise, sense of occasion - Too heavy to be truly exciting ★★★★★
Lexus LC500	231 D	£85,000	8/4969	470/7100	398/4800	1935kg	247	4.4	-	168	-	-	★ Glorious engine, rewarding chassis for a GT car - Numb steering, messy ergonomics ★★★★★



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## Why would you?

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## What to pay

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## What to look out for

The engine is tough, but it's vital not to miss the cambelt change at six years or 72,000 miles,

whichever comes first. Swivel-hub ball-joints are a costly weakness – around £500 per side to sort – so listen for knocks and clunks from the front of higher-mileage cars. Front discs are around £300 a pair to replace, including labour, so factor this in if they're past their best. (Full guide, evo 228.)

## SPECIFICATION (250 CUP)

**Years** 2009-2016  
**Engine** In-line 4-cyl, 1998cc, turbo  
**Power** 247bhp @ 5500rpm  
**Torque** 251lb ft @ 3000rpm  
**0-60mph** 6.1sec (tested)  
**Top speed** 155mph (claimed)  
**Rating** ★★★★★



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

	ISSUE NO.	PRICE	ENGINE CYL/CC	BHP/RPM	LB FT/RPM	WEIGHT	BHP/TON	0-60MPH	0-100MPH	MAX MPH	CO2 G/KM	EC MPG	EVO RATING
Lotus Exige Sport 350	221 R	\$55,900	6/3456	345/7000	295/4500	1125kg	312	3.7	-	170	235	28.0	+ Further honed Exige, with vastly improved gearshift - Still not easy to get into and out of
Lotus Exige Sport 380	231 R	\$67,900	6/3456	375/6700	302/5000	1100kg	343	3.5	-	178	242	27.2	+ Intense, absorbing and brilliantly capable - Perhaps not an everyday car
Lotus Exige S (V6)	209 R	12-15	6/3456	345/7000	295/4500	1176kg	298	3.8	-	170	235	28.0	+ Breathtaking road-racer; our joint 2012 Car of the Year - Gearshift not the sweetest
Lotus Exige S (S2)	105 R	06-11	4/1796	218/7800	158/5500	930kg	238	4.5	-	148	199	33.2	+ Lightweight with a hefty punch - Uninspiring soundtrack
Lotus Exige (S1)	200 R	00-01	4/1796	192/7800	146/5000	780kg	247	4.6	-	136	-	-	+ Looks and goes like Elise racer - A tad lacking in refinement
Lotus Evora 400	216 R	\$72,000	6/3456	400/7000	302/3500	1395kg	291	4.1	-	186	225	29.1	+ Evora excitement levels take a leap - Gearbox still not perfect; punchy pricing
Lotus Evora Sport 410	230 R	\$82,000	6/3456	410/7000	310/3500	1325kg	314	3.9	-	190	225	29.1	+ Even lighter and sharper Evora - Engine and gearbox behind the best at this price
Lotus Evora	138 R	09-15	6/3456	276/6400	258/4700	1382kg	203	5.6	13.6	162	217	30.3	+ Sublime ride and handling. Our 2009 Car of the Year - The Evora S
Lotus Evora S	168 R	10-15	6/3456	345/7000	295/4500	1430kg	245	4.6	-	172	229	28.7	+ A faster and better Evora - But one which spars with the Porsche 911...
Maserati GranTurismo	114 R	\$82,890	8/4244	399/7100	339/4750	1880kg	216	5.5	12.7	177	330	19.8	+ Striking, accomplished GT - Doesn't spike the pulse like an Aston or 911
Maserati GranTurismo Sport	188 R	\$91,420	8/4691	454/7000	383/4750	1880kg	245	4.8	-	185	331	19.7	+ The best everyday GranTurismo yet - Starting to get long in the tooth
Maserati GranTurismo MC Stradale	193 R	\$110,740	8/4691	454/7000	383/4750	1800kg	256	4.5	-	188	360	18.2	+ Brilliant blend of road racer and GT - Gearbox takes a little getting used to
Mercedes-AMG C43 4Matic Coupe	225 D	\$46,280	8/2996	362/5500	383/2000	1735kg	212	4.7	-	155	178	36.2	+ Fast and instilled with a real sense of quality - Not enough emphasis on fun
Mercedes-AMG C63 S Coupe	229 R	\$69,205	8/3982	503/5500	516/1750	1725kg	296	3.9	-	155	200	24.8	+ Mouth-watering mechanical package; better than an M4 - Light steering
Mercedes-Benz C63 AMG Coupe	162 R	11-14	8/6208	451/6800	442/5000	1655kg	277	4.4	10.3	186	280	23.5	+ A proper two-door M3 rival - C63 saloon looks better
Mercedes-Benz C63 AMG Black Series	171 R	12-13	8/6208	510/6800	457/5200	1635kg	317	4.2	-	186	286	-	+ The C63 turned up to 11 - Too heavy, not as fiery as Black Series cars of old
Mercedes-AMG S63 Coupe	205 D	\$125,595	8/5461	577/5500	664/2250	1995kg	294	4.2	-	155	237	28.0	+ Thunderously fast S-class built for drivers - Lacks badge appeal of a Continental GT
Mercedes-AMG S65 Coupe	209 D	\$183,075	12/5980	621/4800	737/2300	2110kg	299	4.1	-	186	279	23.7	+ Almighty power, fabulous luxury - Nearly £60k more than the S63!
Mercedes-AMG GT	227 D	\$98,195	8/3982	456/6000	442/1600	1540kg	301	4.0	-	189	216	30.4	+ A true sports car that also does luxury - Takes time to reveal its talents
Mercedes-AMG GT S	216 R	\$110,495	8/3982	503/6250	479/1750	1570kg	326	3.8	-	193	219	30.1	+ Fantastic chassis, huge grip - Artificial steering feel; downshifts could be quicker
Mercedes-AMG GT R	232 R	\$143,245	8/3982	577/6250	516/1900	1555kg	377	3.6	-	198	259	24.8	+ Fun and blisteringly fast; a true rival for the 911 GT3 - Could prove too stiff for UK roads
Nissan 370Z	204 R	\$27,445	6/3696	323/7000	268/5200	1496kg	219	5.3	-	155	248	26.7	+ Quicker, leaner, keener than 350Z - Not quite a Cayman-killer
Nissan 370Z Nismo	209 R	\$37,585	6/3696	339/7400	274/5200	1496kg	230	5.2	-	155	248	26.6	+ Sharper looks, improved ride, extra thrills - Engine lacks sparkle
Nissan GT-R (2017MY)	230 R	\$79,995	6/3799	562/6800	470/3600	1752kg	326	2.7	-	196	275	24.0	+ More refinement, much improved interior, still fast - Feels a touch less alert
Nissan GT-R Track Edition (2017MY)	229 D	\$91,995	6/3799	562/6800	470/3600	1745kg	327	2.7	-	196	275	24.0	+ GT-R regains its sharpness - Getting pricey these days
Nissan GT-R Nismo (2017MY)	232 R	\$149,995	6/3799	592/6800	481/3600	1725kg	349	2.7	-	196	275	24.0	+ Incredibly focused - Still too firm to be at its best on UK roads
Nissan GT-R (2012MY-2016MY)	218 R	12-16	6/3799	542/6400	466/3200	1740kg	316	3.2	7.5	196	275	24.0	+ GT-R is quicker and better than ever - But costs over £20K more than its launch price
Nissan GT-R Track Edition (2016MY)	223 R	15-16	6/3799	542/6400	466/3200	1740kg	316	3.4	7.7	196	275	24.0	+ Recreates much of the Nismo's ability, without the rock-hard ride - Interior feels dated
Nissan GT-R Nismo (2014MY)	205 R	14-16	6/3799	592/6800	481/3200	1720kg	350	2.6	-	196	275	24.0	+ Manages to make regular GT-R feel imprecise - Compromised by super-firm suspension
Nissan Skyline GT-R (R34)	196 R	99-02	6/2568	276/7000	289/4400	1560kg	180	4.7	12.5	165	-	20.1	+ Big, brutal, and great fun - Needs more than the standard 276bhp
Nissan Skyline GT-R (R33)	196 R	97-99	6/2568	276/6800	271/4400	1540kg	182	5.4	14.3	155	-	22.0	+ Proof that Japanese hi-tech can work (superbly) - Limited supply
Peugeot RCZ R	209 R	\$32,250	4/1958	266/6000	243/1900	1280kg	211	5.9	-	155	145	44.8	+ Rewarding and highly effective when fully lit - Dated cabin, steering lacks feel
Porsche 718 Cayman	229 D	\$39,878	4/1988	296/6500	280/1950	1335kg	225	5.1	-	170	168	47.1	+ Chassis remains a dream - Engine feels strangled and sounds horribly harsh
Porsche 718 Cayman S	230 R	\$48,843	4/2497	345/6500	310/1900	1355kg	259	4.4	-	177	184	26.4	+ Faster and better to drive than ever - Turbo four-cylinder is utterly charmless
Porsche Cayman S (981)	202 R	13-16	6/3436	321/7400	273/4500	1320kg	247	4.5	10.5	175	206	32.1	+ 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	211	31.4	+ Tweaks improve an already sublime package - Slightly 'aftermarket' looks
Porsche Cayman GT4 (981)	221 R	15-16	6/3800	380/7400	310/4750	1340kg	288	4.4	-	183	238	27.4	+ 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	223	29.7	+ Still want that 911? - Yeah, us too
Porsche Cayman R (987)	158 R	11-13	6/3436	325/7400	273/4750	1295kg	255	4.7	-	175	228	29.1	+ Total handling excellence - Styling additions not to all tastes
Porsche 911 Carrera (991.2)	218 R	\$76,412	6/2981	365/6500	332/1700	1430kg	259	4.6	-	183	190	34.0	+ Forced induction hasn't ruined the Carrera - Purists won't be happy
Porsche 911 Carrera S (991.2)	217 R	\$85,857	6/2981	414/6500	369/1700	1440kg	292	4.3	-	191	199	32.5	+ As above, but blindingly fast - You'll want the sports exhaust
Porsche 911 Carrera S (991.1)	201 R	12-15	6/3800	394/7400	324/5600	1415kg	283	4.3	9.5	188	223	29.7	+ A Carrera with supercar pace - Electric steering robs it of some tactility
Porsche 911 Carrera 4S (991.1)	179 R	13-15	6/3800	394/7400	324/5600	1465kg	273	4.5	-	185	233	28.5	+ More satisfying than rear-drive 991.1 Carreras - Choose your spec carefully
Porsche 911 Carrera 4 GTS (991.1)	208 D	15	6/3800	424/7500	324/5750	1470kg	293	4.4	-	189	233	28.5	+ The highlight of the 991.1 Carrera line-up - Pricey for a Carrera
Porsche 911 Carrera S (997.2)	121 R	08-11	6/3800	380/6500	310/4400	1425kg	271	4.7	-	188	242	27.4	+ Poise, precision, blinding pace - Feels a bit clinical
Porsche 911 Carrera S (997.1)	070 R	04-08	6/3824	350/6600	295/4600	1420kg	246	4.6	10.9	182	-	24.5	+ evo Car of the Year 2004; like a junior GT3 - Tech overload?
Porsche 911 GT3 (991)	206 R	\$100,540	6/3799	468/8250	324/6250	1430kg	333	3.5	-	196	289	23.0	+ evo Car of the Year 2013 - At its best at licence-troubling speeds
Porsche 911 GT3 RS (991)	223 R	\$131,296	6/3996	493/8250	339/6250	1420kg	353	3.0	7.1	193	296	22.2	+ Sensationally good to drive - They won't all be painted Ultra Violet
Porsche 911 R (991)	229 R	\$136,901	6/3996	493/8250	339/6250	1370kg	366	3.8	-	200	308	21.2	+ evo Car of the Year 2016 - Limited availability
Porsche 911 GT3 (997.2)	182 R	09-11	6/3797	429/7600	317/6250	1395kg	312	4.2	9.2	194	303	22.1	+ Even better than the car it replaced - Give us a minute...
Porsche 911 GT3 RS (3.8, 997.2)	200 R	10-11	6/3797	444/7900	317/6750	1370kg	329	4.0	-	193	314	-	+ Our favourite car from the first 200 issues of evo - For people like us, nothing
Porsche 911 GT3 RS 4.0 (997.2)	187 R	11-12	6/3996	493/8250	339/5750	1360kg	368	3.8	-	193	326	-	+ evo Car of the Year 2011 - Unforgiving on-road ride; crazy used prices
Porsche 911 GT3 (997.1)	182 R	07-09	6/3600	409/7600	298/5500	1395kg	298	4.3	9.4	192	-	-	+ Runner-up evo Car of the Year 2006 - Ferrari 599 GTBs
Porsche 911 GT3 RS (997.1)	105 R	07-09	6/3600	409/7600	298/5500	1375kg	302	4.2	-	193	-	-	+ evo Car of the Year 2007 - A chunk more money than the brilliant GT3
Porsche 911 GT3 (996.2)	221 R	03-05	6/3600	375/7400	284/5000	1380kg	272	4.3	9.2	190	-	-	+ evo Car of the Year 2003 - Chassis is a bit too track-focused for some roads
Porsche 911 GT3 RS (996.2)	068 R	03-05	6/3600	375/7400	284/5000	1330kg	286	4.2	9.2	190	-	-	+ Track-biased version of above - Limited supply
Porsche 911 GT3 (996.1)	182 R	99	6/3600	360/7200	273/5000	1350kg	271	4.5	10.3	187	-	21.9	+ evo Car of the Year 1999 - Porsche didn't build enough
Radical RXC	189 R	\$94,500	6/3700	350/6750	320/4250	900kg	395	2.8	-	175	-	-	+ A real trackday weapon - Can't match the insanity of a Caterham 620R
Radical RXC Turbo	205 R	\$129,000	6/3496	454/6000	500/3600	940kg	491	2.6	-	185	-	-	+ Eats GT3s for breakfast - Might not feel special enough at this price
Radical RXC Turbo 500	209 D	\$143,400	6/3496	530/6100	481/5000	1100kg	490	2.6	6.8	185	-	-	+ Huge performance, intuitive adjustability, track ability - Compromised for road use
Radical RXC Turbo 500R	227 D	\$201,000	6/3496	600/6700	465/4200	1070kg	561	2.8	-	185	-	-	+ Immense accessible performance - Fit, finish and detailing lacks finesse at this price
Rolls-Royce Wraith	205 D	\$229,128	12/6592	624/5600	590/1500	2360kg	260	4.6	-	155	327	20.2	+ Refinement, chassis, drivetrain - Shared componentry lets cabin down
Subaru BRZ	204 R	\$22,495	4/1998	197/7000	151/6400	1230kg	163	7.6	-	140	181	36.2	+ Fine chassis, great steering - Weak engine, not the slide-happy car they promised
Toyota GT86	223 R	\$22,495	4/1998	197/7000	151/6400	1240kg	161	6.9	16.5	140	181	36.2	+ More fun than its cousin (above) - Same lack of torque, poor interior quality
VW Scirocco GT 2.0 TSI	155 R	\$26,125	4/1984	217/4500	258/1500	1369kg	158	6.5	-	153	139	47.1	+ Golf GTI price and performance - Interior lacks flair
VW Scirocco R	200 D	\$32,580	4/1984	276/6000	258/2500	1426kg	187	5.7	-	155	187	35.3	+ Great engine, grown-up dynamics - Perhaps a little too grown-up for some

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\*Ford 2.3LT Eco Boost pictured

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Nissan GT-R + £10K Cash

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



## OUR CHOICE

**McLaren 675LT.** The 'long-tail' is the step forward we've been hoping for from McLaren's super-series cars, adding a real sense of involvement to the incredible pace that's been building since the 12C. In fact, the 675LT is so intense it might even make you question if you need a P1.



## BEST OF THE REST

The Ferrari 488 GTB (left) has a stunning turbocharged engine and the chassis to exploit it. Lamborghini's Aventador offers true supercar drama, especially in Superveloce form, while the Pagani Huayra rivals it for theatre (albeit at four times the price) and was our joint 2012 **evo** Car of the Year.

	ISSUE NO.	PRICE	ENGINE CYL/CC	BHP/RPM	LB FT/RPM	WEIGHT	BHP/TON	0-60MPH	0-100MPH	MAX MPH	CO2 G/KM	EC MPG	EVO RATING	
Aston Martin Vanquish (Mk2)	203 R	£192,995	12/5935	568/6650	465/5500	1739kg	332	3.6	-	201	298	22.1	+ Much better than the DBS it succeeds, especially in 2015MY form - It's no Ferrari F12	★★★★★
Aston Martin Vanquish S (Mk2)	231 D	£199,950	12/5935	595/7000	465/5500	1739kg	348	3.5	-	201	302	21.6	+ Noise, poise, drama and charm - Not as rounded as the DB11	★★★★★
Aston Martin Vanquish S (Mk1)	110 R	'05-'07	12/5935	520/7000	425/5800	1875kg	282	<b>4.9</b>	<b>10.1</b>	200	-	-	+ Vanquish joins supercar greats - A tad intimidating at the limit	★★★★★
Aston Martin One-77	179 R	'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	228 D	£119,520	10/5204	533/8250	398/6500	1595kg	340	3.5	-	198	272	24.8	+ All the R8 you really need - Some may hanker after a manual gearbox	★★★★★
Audi R8 V10 Plus	229 R	£134,520	10/5204	602/8250	413/6500	1555kg	393	3.2	-	205	287	23.0	+ Timeless drivetrain, huge performance - Needs to be driven hard to really engage	★★★★★
Audi R8 V10	181 D	'10-'15	10/5204	518/8000	391/6500	1620kg	325	<b>3.9</b>	<b>8.4</b>	194	346	19.0	+ Real supercar feel - The V8 is cheaper, and still superb	★★★★★
Audi R8 V10 Plus	190 R	'13-'15	10/5204	542/8000	398/6500	1570kg	351	3.8	-	198	346	19.0	+ 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 R	'15	10/5204	562/8000	398/6500	1595kg	358	3.4	-	198	299	21.9	+ More of everything that makes the R8 great - S-tronic transmission not perfect	★★★★★
Bugatti Veyron 16.4	134 R	'05-'11	16/7993	1000/6000	922/2200	1950kg	521	<b>2.8</b>	<b>5.8</b>	253	596	11.4	+ Superbly engineered 4WD quad-turbo rocket - Er, lacks luggage space?	★★★★★
Bugatti Veyron Super Sport	151 R	'10-'14	16/7993	1183/6400	1106/3000	1838kg	654	2.5	-	268	539	12.2	+ The world's fastest supercar - Limited to 258mph for us mere mortals	★★★★★
Bugatti EB110	078 R	'91-'95	12/3500	552/8000	451/3750	1566kg	358	3.4	-	212	-	-	+ Superbly engineered 4WD quad-turbo rocket - It just fizzled out	★★★★★
Chevrolet Corvette ZR1	133 R	'09-'13	8/6162	638/6500	603/3800	1528kg	424	<b>3.8</b>	<b>7.6</b>	205	355	18.8	+ Huge pace and character - Take plenty of brave pills if there's rain	★★★★☆
Ferrari 488 GTB	228 R	£183,964	8/3902	661/6500	561/3000	1475kg	455	3.0	-	205+	260	24.8	+ Staggeringly capable - Lacks a little of the 458's heart and excitement	★★★★★
Ferrari 488 Spider	216 D	£204,400	8/3902	661/6500	561/3000	1525kg	440	3.0	-	203+	260	24.8	+ As above, but with the wind in your hair - See left	★★★★★
Ferrari 458 Italia	221 R	'09-'15	8/4497	562/9000	398/6000	1485kg	384	<b>3.2</b>	<b>6.8</b>	202	307	20.6	+ An astounding achievement - Paddleshift only	★★★★★
Ferrari 458 Speciale	203 R	'14-'15	8/4497	597/9000	398/6000	1395kg	435	3.0	-	202+	275	23.9	+ <b>evo</b> Car of the Year 2014 - If you don't own a regular 458, nothing	★★★★★
Ferrari F430	163 R	'04-'10	8/4308	483/8500	343/5250	1449kg	339	4.0	-	196	-	18.6	+ Just brilliant - Didn't you read the plus point?	★★★★★
Ferrari 430 Scuderia	121 R	'07-'10	8/4308	503/8500	347/5250	1350kg	378	<b>3.5</b>	<b>7.7</b>	198	-	15.7	+ Successful F1 technology transplant - Likes to shout about it	★★★★★
Ferrari 360 Modena	163 R	'99-'04	8/3586	394/8500	275/4750	1390kg	288	4.5	9.0	183	-	17.0	+ Worthy successor to 355 - Not quite as involving as it should be	★★★★★
Ferrari 360 Challenge Stradale	068 R	'03-'04	8/3586	420/8500	275/4750	1280kg	333	4.1	-	186	-	-	+ Totally exhilarating road-racer. It's loud - It's very, very loud	★★★★★
Ferrari F12 Berlinetta	190 R	£241,053	12/6262	730/8250	509/6000	1630kg	455	3.1	-	211	350	18.8	+ 730bhp isn't too much power for the road - Super-quick steering is an acquired taste	★★★★★
Ferrari F12tdt	230 R	£339,000	12/6262	769/8500	520/6250	1520kg	514	2.9	-	211	360	18.3	+ Alarmingly fast - Doesn't flow like a 458 Speciale	★★★★★
Ferrari 599 GTB Fiorano	101 R	'06-'12	12/5999	611/7600	448/5600	1688kg	368	<b>3.5</b>	<b>7.4</b>	205	415	15.8	+ <b>evo</b> Car of the Year 2006 - Banks are getting harder to rob	★★★★★
Ferrari 599 GTO	161 R	'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 R	'02-'06	12/5748	508/7250	434/5250	1730kg	298	<b>4.2</b>	<b>9.6</b>	202	-	12.3	+ Fiorano pack makes 575 truly great - It should have been standard	★★★★★
Ferrari 550 Maranello	169 R	'97-'02	12/5474	485/7000	415/5000	1716kg	287	4.3	10.0	199	-	12.3	+ Everything - Nothing	★★★★★
Ferrari GTCA Lusso	225 D	£230,430	12/6262	680/8000	514/5750	1920kg	360	3.4	-	208	350	18.8	+ Rear-wheel steering increases agility - Not as engaging as other Ferraris	★★★★★
Ferrari FF	194 R	'11-'15	12/6262	651/8000	504/6000	1880kg	347	3.7	-	208	360	15.4	+ Four seats and 4WD, but a proper Ferrari - Looks divide opinion	★★★★★
Ferrari LaFerrari	203 R	'13-'15	12/6262	950/9000	664/6750	1255kg	769	3.0	-	217+	330	-	+ Perhaps the greatest Ferrari ever - Brakes lack a touch of precision on track	★★★★★
Ferrari Enzo	203 R	'02-'04	12/5999	651/7800	485/5500	1365kg	485	<b>3.5</b>	<b>6.7</b>	217+	545	-	+ Intoxicating, exploitable - Cabin detailing falls short of a Zonda or F1's	★★★★★
Ferrari F50	186 R	'96-'97	12/4699	513/8500	347/6500	1230kg	424	3.9	-	202	-	-	+ A better drivers' Ferrari than the 288, F40 or Enzo - Not better looking, though	★★★★★
Ferrari F40	222 R	'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	200 R	'04-'06	8/5409	550/6500	500/3750	1583kg	353	3.7	-	205	-	-	+ Our 2005 Car of the Year - Don't scalp yourself getting in	★★★★★
Hennessey Venom GT	180 R	£900,000	8/7000	1244/6500	1155/4000	1244kg	1016	2.5	-	270	-	-	+ 0-200mph in 14.5sec, and it handles too - Looks like an Exige	★★★★★
Honda NSX	229 R	£132,715	6/3493	573	476/2000	1776kg	328	2.9	-	191	228	28.2	+ Like a baby Porsche 918 - Lacks typical Japanese character	★★★★★
Jaguar XJ220	157 R	'92-'94	6/3498	542/7200	475/4500	1470kg	375	3.7	-	213	-	-	+ Britain's greatest supercar... - ...until McLaren built the F1	★★★★☆
Koenigsegg Agera R	180 R	c£109m	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 One:1	202 R	c£20.0m	8/5065	1341/7500	1011/6000	1360kg	1002	2.9	-	273	-	-	+ The most powerful car we've ever tested - It's sold out; we couldn't afford one anyway...	★★★★★
Lamborghini Huracán RWD Coupe	229 R	£155,400	10/5204	572/8000	397/6500	1389kg	418	3.4	-	199	278	23.7	+ More seductive than the 4WD Huracán - Feels like there's more to come	★★★★★
Lamborghini Huracán Coupe	209 D	£186,760	10/5204	602/8250	413/6500	1532kg	399	3.2	-	202+	290	22.6	+ Defies the numbers; incredible point-to-point pace - Takes work to find its sweet-spot	★★★★★
Lamborghini Gallardo LP560-4	180 D	'08-'13	10/5204	552/8000	398/6500	1410kg	398	3.7	-	202	325	16.0	+ Still a missile from A to B - Starting to show its age	★★★★★
Lamborghini Gallardo	094 R	'06-'08	10/4961	513/8000	376/4250	1520kg	343	<b>4.3</b>	<b>9.4</b>	196	-	-	+ On a full-bore start it spins all four wheels. Cool - Slightly clunky e-gear	★★★★★
Lamborghini Aventador Coupe	194 R	£260,040	12/6498	690/8250	509/5500	1575kg	445	2.9	-	217	370	17.7	+ Most important new Lambo since the Countach - Erm... expensive?	★★★★★
Lamborghini Aventador SV Coupe	216 R	£321,723	12/6498	740/8400	509/5500	1525kg	493	2.8	-	217+	370	17.7	+ More exciting than the standard Aventador - ISR gearbox inconsistent	★★★★★
Lamborghini Murciélago LP640	093 R	'06-'11	12/6496	631/8000	487/6000	1665kg	385	3.8	-	211	-	21.3	+ Compelling old-school supercar - You'd better be on your toes	★★★★★
Lamborghini Murciélago LP670-4 SV	200 R	'09-'11	12/6496	661/8000	487/6500	1565kg	429	<b>3.2</b>	<b>7.3</b>	212	-	-	+ A supercar in its truest, wildest sense - Be prepared for stares	★★★★★
Lamborghini Murciélago	089 D	'01-'06	12/6192	570/7500	479/5400	1605kg	351	4.0	-	205	-	-	+ Gorgeous, capable and incredibly friendly - V12 feels stressed	★★★★★
Lamborghini Diablo 6.0	019 R	'00-'02	12/5992	550/7100	457/5500	1625kg	343	3.8	-	200+	-	-	+ Best-built, best-looking Diablo of all - People's perceptions	★★★★★
Lexus LFA/LFA Nürburgring	200 R	'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 R	'04-'05	12/5998	621/7500	481/5500	1445kg	437	3.8	-	205	-	-	+ Rarer than an Enzo - The Ferrari's better	★★★★☆
McLaren 540C	228 R	£126,000	8/3799	533/7500	398/3500	1311kg	413	3.5	-	199	258	25.5	+ A very good junior supercar - The 570S is still better to drive	★★★★★
McLaren 570S	229 R	£143,250	8/3799	562/7500	443/5000	1440kg	397	3.1	-	204	249	26.6	+ A truly fun and engaging sports car - McLaren doesn't call it a supercar(!)	★★★★★
McLaren 570GT	228 R	£154,000	8/3799	562/7500	443/5000	1495kg	382	3.4	-	204	249	26.6	+ Blurs the line between grand tourer and supercar brilliantly - 570S is more involving	★★★★★
McLaren 650S	196 R	£195,250	8/3799	641/7250	500/6000	1428kg	456	3.0	-	207	275	24.2	+ Better brakes, balance and looks than 12C; more power too - Costs an extra £19k	★★★★★
McLaren 675LT	228 R	£259,500	8/3799	666/7100	516/5500	1328kg	510	2.9	-	205	275	24.2	+ Runner-up at eCoty 2015; asks questions of the P1 - Aventador price tag	★★★★★
McLaren 675LT Spider	222 D	£285,450	8/3799	666/7100	516/5500	1368kg	495	2.9	-	203	275	24.2	+ Spectacularly fast; involving, too - Might mess up your hair	★★★★★
McLaren 12C	228 R	'11-'14	8/3799	616/7500	442/3000	1434kg	435	3.1	-	207	279	24.2	+ Staggering performance, refinement - Engine noise can be grating	★★★★★
McLaren P1	228 R	'13-'15	8/3799	903/7500	664/4000	1490kg	616	2.8	-	217	194	34.0	+ Freakish breadth of ability - At its mind-bending best on track	★★★★★
McLaren F1	228 R	'94-'98	12/6064	627/7500	479/4000	1137kg	560	3.2	6.3	240+	-	19.0	+ Still the most single-minded supercar ever - There'll never be another	★★★★★
Mercedes-Benz SLS AMG	159 R	'10-'15	8/6208	563/6800	479/4750	1620kg	335	<b>4.1</b>	<b>8.4</b>	197	308	21.4	+ Great engine and chassis (gullwing doors too!) - Slightly tardy gearbox	★★★★★
Mercedes-Benz SLS AMG Black Series	204 R	'13-'15	8/6208	622/7400	468/5500	1550kg	408	3.6	-	196	321	20.6	+ Stunning engine, superb body control - Be careful on less-than-smooth roads...	★★★★★
Mercedes-Benz SLR McLaren	228 R	'03-'07	8/5439	617/6500	575/3250	169								

# TRACK TIMES

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

## ANGLESEY COASTAL CIRCUIT

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



Car	Lap time	issue no.	YouTube
BAC Mono 2.5 (fastest sports car)	1:07.7	229	Yes
Radical RXC Turbo 500 (fastest coupe)	1:10.5	-	Yes
McLaren P1 (on Pirelli P Zero Trofeo R tyres) (fastest supercar)	1:11.2	200	Yes
Porsche 918 Spyder	1:12.4	200	Yes
McLaren P1	1:12.6	200	Yes
Ferrari 488 GTB	1:12.8	228	Yes
McLaren 675LT	1:12.8	228	Yes
Porsche 911 GT3 RS (991.1)	1:13.6	-	Yes
Porsche 911 Turbo S (991)	1:13.6	-	Yes
Ferrari 458 Speciale	1:14.2	198	Yes
McLaren 570S	1:14.5	-	Yes
Porsche 911 Turbo (991.1)	1:15.2	210	Yes
Aston Martin Vantage GT12	1:16.0	214	Yes
Nissan GT-R (2014MY)	1:16.9	210	Yes
Mercedes-AMG GT S	1:17.0	210	Yes
Porsche 911 Carrera (991.1)	1:17.8	199	Yes
Porsche Cayman (981)	1:18.9	209	-
Aston Martin N430	1:19.1	210	-
Lotus Exige S (V6)	1:19.1	209	-
SEAT Leon Cupra 280 Sub8 (fastest hot hatch)	1:19.1	212	Yes
BMW M4	1:19.2	199	Yes
BMW i8	1:19.4	210	-
Honda Civic Type R (FK2)	1:19.5	212	-
Renaultsport Mégane Trophy 275	1:19.6	212	-
BMW M5 Competition Pack (F10M) (fastest saloon)	1:19.7	-	Yes
Audi TTS (Mk3)	1:19.9	209	-
Audi R8 V8 (Mk1)	1:20.1	201	-
BMW M135i	1:20.4	212	-
Nissan 370Z Nismo	1:20.5	209	-
VW Golf R (Mk7)	1:21.6	212	-

## BEDFORD AUTODROME WEST CIRCUIT

LOCATION Bedfordshire, UK  
GPS 52.235133, -0.474321  
LENGTH 1.8 miles (track reconfigured May 2015; earlier times not comparable)



SEAT Leon Cupra 280 Ultimate Sub8 (fastest hot hatch)	1:23.1	215	-
BMW M3 (F80) (fastest saloon)	1:23.3	211	Yes
Mercedes-AMG C63 S Saloon	1:24.0	211	Yes
VW Golf GTI Clubsport S	1:24.1	227	-
SEAT Leon Cupra 290 (on optional Michelin Pilot Sport Cup 2 tyres)	1:24.2	227	-
Ford Focus RS (Mk3, on optional Michelin Pilot Sport Cup 2 tyres)	1:24.6	227	-
Honda Civic Type R (FK2, on Michelin Pilot Sport Cup 2 tyres)	1:24.6	227	-
Renaultsport Mégane 275 Trophy-R	1:25.1	227	-
VW Golf R (Mk7)	1:26.1	-	Yes
Audi RS3 Sportback (2015MY)	1:26.6	-	Yes
Ford Fiesta ST Mountune	1:29.5	213	-
Mazda MX-5 2.0i Sport (Mk4) (fastest sports car)	1:29.8	-	Yes

## BLYTON PARK OUTER CIRCUIT

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



Ariel Atom 3.5R (fastest sports car)	0:58.9	205	-
Radical RXC Turbo (fastest coupe)	1:00.4	205	Yes
BAC Mono	1:01.4	189	-
Porsche 911 GT2 RS (997.2) (fastest supercar)	1:01.8	204	Yes
Porsche 911 GT3 (991)	1:01.9	205	Yes
Caterham Seven 620R	1:02.1	189	-
Nissan GT-R Nismo	1:02.1	205	Yes
Mercedes SLS AMG Black Series	1:02.5	204	Yes
Pagani Huayra	1:02.5	177	-
McLaren 12C	1:02.7	187	-
Radical RXC	1:02.9	189	-
Ariel Atom 3.5 310	1:03.4	189	-
Audi R8 V10 Plus (Mk1)	1:03.4	-	Yes
Porsche Cayman GT4	1:03.6	221	Yes
Lotus Exige S (V6)	1:04.4	177	-
Porsche 911 Carrera (991)	1:05.1	177	-
Chevrolet Camaro Z/28	1:05.1	220	Yes
Porsche 911 GT3 (997)	1:05.2	-	Yes
Porsche Boxster S (981)	1:05.5	177	-
Porsche Cayman GTS (981)	1:05.5	-	Yes
Porsche Cayman S (981)	1:05.5	189	-
Caterham Seven 420R	1:05.7	220	Yes
Jaguar F-type S Convertible	1:06.5	-	Yes
Vuhi 05	1:06.5	220	Yes
Zenos E10 S	1:06.6	214	-
Mercedes-Benz C63 AMG Black Series	1:06.9	177	-
Renaultsport Mégane 275 Trophy-R (fastest hot hatch)	1:07.3	205	Yes
SEAT Leon Cupra 280 Sub8	1:07.6	220	-
BMW M135i	1:07.7	177	-
Porsche Cayman (981)	1:07.7	-	Yes
BMW M235i	1:08.7	-	Yes
Mini John Cooper Works GP (R56)	1:08.7	181	-
Renaultsport Mégane R26.R	1:08.9	181	-
Ford Focus RS500	1:09.4	181	-
VW Golf GTI Performance Pack (Mk7)	1:10.3	192	-
Toyota GT86	1:12.8	177	-

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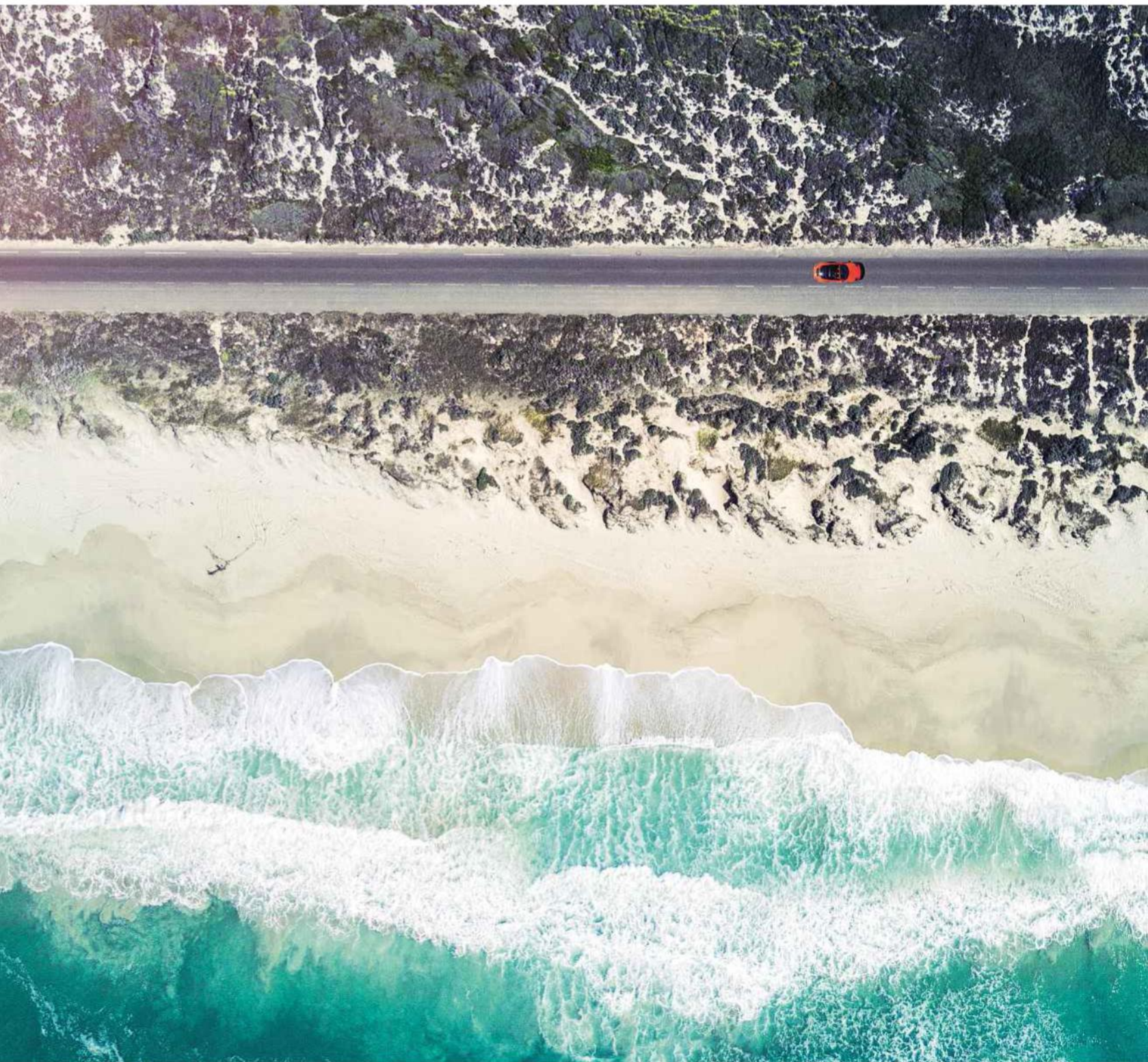


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# FINAL FRAME

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## Porsche 911 Targa 4 GTS

Wish you were here... A lone Porsche 911 Targa 4 GTS roars along an arrow-straight section of coastal highway in the Cape region of South Africa during the car's launch to the world's press. Review on page 28.



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Official fuel consumption for the SEAT Leon Range in mpg (litres per 100km); urban 31 (9.1) – 65.7 (4.3); extra-urban 46.3 (6.1) – 74.3 (3.8); combined 39.2 (7.2) – 68.9 (4.1). CO2 emissions 164 – 102 g/km. Standard EU Test figures for comparative purposes and may not reflect real driving results.

SEAT Leon 1.0 TSI Ecomotive 115 SE Technology winner of What Car? Best Family Car £18-20k. Car shown is a New SEAT Leon 5DR 1.4 TSI 125 PS FR Technology from £19,480 with optional metallic paint worth £575, Winter Pack worth £365, electric sunroof & LED interior illumination pack worth £790 and optional 18" 'Performance' machined alloy wheels worth £785.