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Ed speak

THE ART OF ROAD TESTING IS NOT ONE THAT EVO takes lightly. We cover thousands of miles on road and track to pull together the fairest and most thorough tests we can. On occasion, when a car goes pop (yes, it does still happen) or pulls a sickie halfway through a test, we'll wait until we can do the test again rather than fudge it with what we already have. And **evo** has never been one to try to figure a new car down a motorway slip-road during a launch event, just so we can be first with a half-hearted result. And we won't send someone to collect lunch in a car and then ask them to write a road test off the back of it, either.

This is why **evo's** new road test editor, James Disdale, has spent the last three months in a darkened room fine-tuning the road-testing strategy for our new Supertest format. The changes he's made are all in the detail and if his instructions have been followed correctly you should barely notice the difference between new and old. What you will notice is a more detailed, thorough and entertaining test delivering the strongest possible verdict.

One element we have eschewed is the rolling road. We wanted to use one, but a number of operators recommended we didn't go near that can of worms. With today's engine maps capable of detecting when a car is on rollers and adjusting power delivery accordingly, we'd need to ask each manufacturer to attend the rolling-road session to upload a specific map to allow the car to perform for the conditions and deliver exactly the results we'd all be expecting, i.e. what the manufacturer claims. In our eyes, this would make the process flawed ('manufacturer tunes car to perform as expected' shocker!) and therefore irrelevant.

Rest assured, too, that the **evo** Supertest won't be reserved for the higher echelons of the performance car world. From superminis to supercars, we will endeavour to deliver the only group-test results that matter. As we always have done. ☒

Stuart Gallagher, Editor ————— @stuartg917



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072

LAMBORGHINI AVENTADOR

David Vivian plays delivery driver for a £271,000 Aventador S. It needs driving from Lamborghini's Sant'Agata factory to the UK, and with a continent-crushing 730bhp from its naturally aspirated V12, that shouldn't be a problem. It's never that simple with Italian supercars, though, is it?

056

RS5 v M4 v C63 S

Three £60,000 supercoupes from Audi, BMW and Mercedes-AMG go up against each other on road and track in *evo*'s Supertest. The AMG is our current pick of the three, but the M division has recently revised its M4 – and this particular car has the Competition Package fitted. Audi's new RS5 is also lighter than before – and properly fast – so we could be in for a surprise

084

FUTURE OF MOTORSPORT

In the first of a series of pertinent articles, the *evo* team discusses what endurance racing needs to do to survive – and then thrive

090

MASERATI MC12 CORSE

A damp track and a £2million trackday Maserati evolved from a full-blown GT1 racer. Time for Dan Prosser to take a brave pill

096

ICON: PORSCHE 924 CARRERA GT

Porsche's homologation special enjoyed success at Le Mans, but how did this translate to the road?

104

BUYING A BUGATTI

Bugatti claims the Chiron doesn't need to be 'sold'. Nevertheless, *evo* visits the marque's London showroom to 'build' our own car

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017

BRIEFING

A new Bentley Continental GT is on its way (above), and it's a BMW double-whammy with a 4WD M5 and a concept Z4

033

LETTERS

One reader outlines his (really quite frightening) dystopian petrolhead future, plus why our tyre tests should use a RWD car

036

FIRST DRIVES

- 036 LOTUS EXIGE CUP 380
- 040 ASTON VANQUISH S VOLANTE
- 042 BBR MAZDA MX-5 TURBO
- 044 CATERHAM SEVEN DONINGTON
- 046 AUDI RS3 SPORTBACK
- 048 AC SCHNITZER M2

050

COLUMNS

Meaden, Porter and Kravitz

109

EVO MARKET

We examine the Skyline GT-R, from R32 to R34, plus a buying guide for the Lupo GTI and our £50k Ferrari recommendations

139

LONG-TERMERS

What we drive: VW Golf GTE, Lexus RC F, Mini JCW Challenge, Alfa Romeo Giulia Quadrifoglio and SEAT Leon Cupra 300

152

THE KNOWLEDGE

Essential data and an evo star rating for every performance car worth mentioning. Is your car listed?

170

FINAL FRAME

We pick a photograph that has given us pause to reflect this month, in this case a very hardcore Exige up in Yorkshire

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BMW Z4 & M5 • FERRARI PORTOFINO • BENTLEY CONTINENTAL GT

briefing

CONCEPT Z4 SHOWS WILDER SIDE

Could this finally be the sports car that BMW always promised us?
We take a close look at the thrillingly bold Concept Z4

by BOB HARPER *Photography by* ANTONY FRASER



‘WE WANTED TO MAKE THE car very agile, to design a car that was The Ultimate Driving Machine, with true BMW genetics – an ultimate, no-compromise, almost extroverted design.’ BMW’s head of concept design, Marc Girard, is talking us through the thinking behind the Concept Z4. Sitting under the lights of a studio on the outskirts of Munich, it certainly appears compact and aggressive. It also closely reflects how the production version will look when it makes its debut next year. What we have here is, according to Girard, 80 per cent of the eventual production car. It’s also the first fruit of BMW’s collaboration with Toyota, the Japanese firm using this platform to relaunch the Supra.

The Z4 is a model that’s often suffered with an identity problem – the original was touted as a Boxster-baiter but didn’t quite pull it off, while the outgoing version was a far softer machine that cited the Mercedes SLK and Audi TT as its main rivals. So will we see a real drivers’ Z4 with the next generation (internal code number G29) when it eventually hits the streets? ‘What

we wanted to convey with the car’s proportions is performance,’ continues Girard. ‘It’s a drivers’ car, a sports car; it’s super-agile, it’s light, it’s light-footed – and extremely dynamic.’ While he might be talking primarily about the way the Concept Z4 looks, Girard has an infectious enthusiasm that makes you believe this will be translated into dynamic ability, too.

With two BMW concepts seeing the light of day in such rapid succession – the other being the Concept 8-series (evo 237) – it should come as no surprise that there are similarities, but the 8-series’ luxury GT focus and the Z4’s sportier dynamic means they’re very different in style, even if their combined look does give us a strong indication as to the direction BMW styling will be taking. With the Z4, Girard has taken inspiration from previous BMW design icons and reinterpreted them. ‘We definitely want to reinvent everything,’ he says. ‘We’re not doing retro though, we always reinterpret key cues, such as the kidney grilles.’

And that’s certainly true of the Z4’s grilles, for not only are they significantly wider than

we’ve become used to, but they’re also missing the traditional slats, replaced with a mesh design that really accentuates the reinterpretation of the classic ‘shark-nosed’ styling of BMW icons from the ’70s and ’80s. The width of the grilles means the headlights have been pushed further to the extremities and are now staggered, one above the other, for a unique, BMW-esque look. ‘The icons are still there – the kidneys and the grilles, those boxes are ticked – but newly translated, keeping them alive, keeping the thread, but re-interpreting them,’ observes Girard. ‘It’s a very tight exercise because you could lose the thread if you go too far.’

The bonnet is a wide clamshell, with two simple but effective strakes on either side to aid cooling. Where its extremities meet the car’s flanks, it starts a strong swage-line that rises up the car as it travels from front to rear before meeting the delicate (but still recognisably BMW) LED rear light clusters. Along the Z4’s flanks, scalloped lines rise up from the large vent aft of the front wheels, enhancing the car’s stance and giving the Z4 some muscle. The car



by BOB HARPER

Below: rear is still recognisably BMW, but sculpted tail suggests a much more daring look for new Z4. **Right:** some typical concept-car touches, but new dash does contain clues to next-gen BMWs



sits on 20-inch alloys, another reinterpretation, this time of the classic BMW twin-spoke design. At the rear, there's a neat ducktail spoiler integrated into the bootlid, while dramatic ducts and a carbon rear diffuser complete the look.

A major talking point are the aluminium and carbon fairings behind the headrests, incorporating rollover protection, but Girard won't be drawn on whether they'll feature on the production version. We hope they do but, given the Concept doesn't feature a working hood, there's a strong chance that they'll be dropped for the production car. What we do know is that the new Z4 will have a fabric roof, which it's said will help it come in 150kg lighter than the old Z4 (which weighed around 1500kg in 35i M Sport form) with obvious dynamic benefits. With the doors open, you can see high and wide sills that should ensure excellent structural integrity, while in profile you can see a shortened wheelbase, which puts the driver in the centre of the car rather than towards the rear, as has been the case with previous Z4s.

Inside, the concept's Energetic Orange Matt paintwork is echoed on the passenger side, while

'Will there be a headlining M model? It's a mouth-watering prospect...'

the driver's immediate environment is trimmed in black, adding to the air of purpose. As with the Concept 8-series, the minor controls have been pared back slightly and are grouped in 'islands', so those devoted to the driving dynamics are all sited around the gearlever, the heating controls around the vents and so on. The dash-pod and iDrive monitor now blend into each other in a clear indication of how future BMW dash design will look, with a flow of information running from one to the other. Within the dash-pod, the instrumentation will no longer feature

traditional round dials, moving to a look more akin to the car's LED headlights.

While it's too early to say exactly what to expect in terms of the drivetrain, it doesn't take a huge leap to suggest that we're likely to see four- and six-cylinder engines from BMW's latest modular range. So expect turbocharged four-pots in the 20i and 30i, plus a 40i model as the range-topper powered by the familiar turbocharged 3-litre straight-six. We wouldn't bet against a hybrid 40e model, either. Will there be a headlining M model, though? It's a mouth-watering prospect, as the twin-turbo six from the M3 and M4 would definitely fit under the new Z4's somewhat truncated bonnet, but there wasn't an M version of the outgoing Z4, and, even with the original Z4, the M model was a late addition to the line-up that wasn't originally in BMW's product planning.

Perhaps more likely is an M Performance Z4 using a blend of M240i running gear, and that has the potential to be a tantalisingly good evostyle machine. If Girard's promise of agility and dynamism translate to the driving experience as well as the design, we could be in for a real treat.



Leaner, faster, 4WD M5

Sixth-gen supersaloon with groundbreaking all-wheel-drive finally shows its face

BMW HAS RELEASED ITS FIRST official images of its all-new M5, along with confirmed specification details, ahead of the car's debut at the Frankfurt motor show. Designated F90 and based on the latest G30 5-series, the sixth generation of the M5 goes on sale next year, priced from £89,640.

As we already know, and indeed have sampled for ourselves on track (*evo* 236), the F90 is the first M5 to feature all-wheel drive. However, in much the same way as the Mercedes-AMG E63 S, it can also be switched to purely rear-wheel drive, via the iDrive interface. BMW is calling the system M xDrive, and it essentially offers three modes. In the standard setting, the M5 is



at its most all-wheel driven, albeit with the front axle only coming into play when the rear tyres lose grip. The next stage is M Dynamic mode, which puts the drivetrain into '4WD Sport'. In this setting the electronics allow more slip from the rear axle before sending drive to the front.

Finally, there's '2WD', only available with all traction and stability systems switched off. BMW says it is designed 'for track use by experienced drivers'. With 592bhp and, perhaps more pertinently, 553lb ft of torque, '2WD' mode and a wet roundabout could certainly prove interesting...

BMW M has yet to confirm an official kerb weight, but engineers have told us that the new car should be slightly lighter than the outgoing F10M model – and that's despite the additional 60kg-or-so of four-wheel-drive hardware.



Top: a key change for the F90 is the switch from a dual-clutch gearbox to a torque-converter auto with manual override via paddles or the gear selector. **Above:** exterior detailing, including wing vents, revealed for the first time. **Above right:** cockpit is packed with latest tech, as you'd expect with a £90k price tag

“ The 0-62mph time of 3.4sec obliterates the old M5's 4.3sec. Thank the traction advantages of 4WD ”



The M department has adapted technology used in the M760i, utilising that car's transfer case with its electronically controlled clutch, along with the Active M Differential from between the rear wheels of the M3/M4. The centre diff can range from 100 per cent open (essentially rear-wheel drive) to a 50:50 split, and is said to be all but seamless in its operation.

The new M5 is powered by the same twin-turbo 4.4-litre V8 as before, although as you'd expect it has been given a thorough update. With revised turbos, increased direct-injection fuel pressure to 350bar and improved lubrication and cooling systems – the former including a variable pump designed for 'racetrack applications' – the new engine comfortably exceeds the 552bhp and 501lb ft of the old car and the 567bhp of the previous Competition Package model.

A significant change to the M5's drivetrain is the switch from a twin-clutch M DCT gearbox to an eight-speed 'M Steptronic with Drivelogic' torque converter. Its operation is governed, as with other aspects of the M5's behaviour, by modes – there are three, along with Efficient, Sport and Sport+ for the engine – and gears can be changed manually via paddles on the steering wheel or with the gear selector. BMW M engineers claim there is no loss of performance with the Steptronic 'box but an improvement in the sort of everyday comfort relevant to most M5 buyers. Certainly, the performance claims are suitably ballistic: 0-62mph in 3.4sec and 0-124mph in 11.1. That 0-62 time obliterates the old car's 4.3sec. Thank the traction advantages of four-wheel drive for that. Top speed is limited to 155mph.

So how does the new M5 compare with its most formidable rival, the E63 AMG S? At £88,490 the car from Affalterbach slightly undercuts its Munich rival. It also offers a little more power and considerably more torque from its twin-turbo 4-litre V8 (603bhp and 627lb ft). However, the BMW should be around 100kg lighter, thanks largely to its aluminium bonnet and front wings and its carbonfibre roof. Carbon-ceramic brakes are also an option, saving a further 23kg, though given the M department's recent improvement in the quality of its standard-fit braking systems, the regular six-pot calipers and iron discs should be more than up to the job.

Naturally, the chassis has been thoroughly upgraded, too, with stronger, stiffer suspension assemblies and firmer, bespoke springs, dampers and anti-roll

bars. There are Comfort, Sport and Sport+ settings for both the dampers and the steering, but, along with the modes for the engine and the three-stage control of the gearbox, these can all be saved as preferred settings using the M1 and M2 buttons on the steering wheel. The wheels are bi-colour cast-alloy 20in items, with 275/35 tyres on the front axle and 285/30s at the rear.

First road drives of the finished article should take place around November, at which point we'll know whether the F90 captures the spirit of some of the beloved M5s of yore. Perhaps only in the years to come will we be able to judge whether the F90 is simply another step on a relentless development quest for more power and acceleration, or whether it marks the tipping point for the near-two-ton, 600bhp super-saloon.





Ferrari shuns California for Portofino

New 199mph 2+2 roadster to replace underwhelming California T

BEING GENEROUS, YOU might say that the Ferrari California of 2008 onwards is far from our favourite product to have slipped through the gates at Maranello. To call it the modern-day equivalent of the Mondial would be a touch harsh, but even so it's never looked like a thoroughbred Italian supercar and the current 'T' version doesn't drive as well as its stablemates – or most of its rivals. There is hope, then, that its replacement, the Portofino, will be far more worthy of the badge so many pay so much for.

Certainly, first impressions are good. It actually looks like a Ferrari for one thing: there's a hint of F12

mixed with 488 GTB about its nose and a pair of tightly tucked-in hips ahead of the rear arches. Ferrari's design team has also managed to remove much of the bulk that blighted the California's back end with the roof down. With the roof (still a metal, folding affair) raised, there's more of a junior-F12 look about the car.

Being 2017 and Ferrari having an F1 team, aerodynamics make it into the press bumpf, which says 'the outside edge of the headlight hides an innovative air intake which vents into the front wheelarch and exits along the flank to reduce drag'.

Sitting on an all-new, lighter

chassis with a body-in-white Ferrari claims has been redesigned with weight reduction and torsional rigidity increases in mind – although no numbers to back this up have been released. The Portofino is also equipped with the company's latest chassis tech. This includes the E-Diff 3 electronically controlled rear limited-slip differential, which has been adopted with the firm's F1-Trac stability-control system. It's also the first Ferrari GT to be fitted with electrically assisted power steering, resulting in steering that's seven per cent quicker. The magnetorheological dampers have been updated, too, and now feature

Above right: interior will reflect the fact that this is a more laid-back Ferrari model, and gets new infotainment and highly adjustable seats. **Right:** Portofino shows elements of F12 in its aggressive front-end design; note the air intakes alongside the headlights, designed to help reduce drag

dual-coil technology to help reduce body roll.

Behind the new nose lies a further evolution of the twin-turbo V8 that's part of the same engine family as the 488 GTB's unit. Capacity remains at the same 3855cc as in the California T, but new pistons and conrods have been installed and there's also a new air intake and a new exhaust system to reduce losses and improve throttle response.

Variable boost management is still employed and has been further honed to deliver an optimised level of torque depending on the gear selected. Peak power of 592bhp along with 560lb ft of torque represent 39bhp and 3lb ft increases over the California T (both figures are generated only in seventh gear). A tenth has also been shaved from the old car's 3.6sec 0-62mph time, with maximum speed lifted 3mph to 199mph.

Being the least aggressive Ferrari you can buy, the interior refresh has focused on comfort. There's a new infotainment system and steering wheel, and 18-way adjustable front seats that include backrests designed to improve legroom for the rear '+2' seats.

Making its debut at this September's Frankfurt motor show, the Ferrari Portofino will go on sale later in 2017, but as *evo* went to press, no price had been confirmed.



“
Ferrari's design team has managed to remove much of the bulk that blighted the California's rear
 ”



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THE EVO TRACKDAY TEAM descended once more on the banked oval of Rockingham for our third track evening of the summer. As attendees gathered in the paddock the rain held off, and as the klaxon sounded, the pitlane was opened.

The obligatory plethora of Porsches, from old 911s to Cayman GT4s, were a welcome sight. So too was an Italian duo: evo's long-term Giulia Quadrifoglio and a GTV6 bookending the last 40 or so years of Alfa Romeo production.

The warm mid-evening temperatures provided pleasant respite for those roaming the paddock. On track, negotiating the seven-degree-banked Turn 1 – throttle pinned – was a riveting feat for many. Perfecting, or otherwise, the braking point for the tight Turn 2 often set the tone for the rest of the lap.

If you missed out, we return to the tricky infield at Rockingham for our final track evening of the year on Friday 29 September. evo's Fast Fleet cars will be there, as will GT Radial with a variety of cars shod in the company's tyres for you to test.

To book your place, head to evo.co.uk/evotrackdays



Continental GT: remastered



**New Bentley gets 626bhp, a 207mph top speed,
a different platform and an all-new cabin**

IN FOUR OR FIVE DECADES' time, long after new petrol vehicles have been consigned to the history books and remaining examples of the 2018 Bentley Continental GT are parked on lawns in Villa d'Este and Pebble Beach, curmudgeonly old millennials will peer through its slim side glazing to glean a taste of how GT cars used to be.

When they do, they won't be faced with the disappointing black mirror of a long-obsolete infotainment system, like they'd seen in the nearby McLarens and Aston Martins. Instead, they'll see three small analogue dials: one an outside air temperature gauge, another with its needle pointing to one of the cardinal directions, and the last a stopwatch.

Back in 2017, the owner of a

new Continental GT can choose to show either these dials, a 12.3-inch infotainment screen, or a simple veneered panel in the centre of the dash, rotating from one to the next with the tap of a button. It's the work of 40 moving components, and tolerances between this and its neighbouring dashboard panels are less than half a millimetre.

There's much more to the new Continental GT than that, of course, but the attention to detail present in this Toblerone-shaped surprise-and-delight feature is reflected throughout the car. It's in the beautiful crystal cut of the headlights, it's in the crisp pressings of the new bodywork, and it's in the unique diamond-pattern knurling of the traditional rotary switches used to control the heating and ventilation functions.

Stand back several paces and you can appreciate the attention Bentley has paid to the car's entire form, too, which is heavily inspired by 2015's Bentley EXP 10 Speed 6 concept and built around a modified Porsche Panamera platform. The dimensions have actually remained fairly similar to the old Continental GT's, but Bentley has pushed and pulled at the car's proportions so that it's altogether sleeker and appears longer and wider than before. The trick has been to extend the wheelbase by 135mm, most of that forward of the front doors, to increase what director of design Stefan Sielaff describes as the 'prestige mass'.

Is the new Conti GT beautiful? You can decide for yourself, but on the road, on its standard 21-inch

or optional 22-inch wheels, it'll command huge presence.

Bentley has trimmed 85kg from the old body (a 20 per cent saving) thanks to the use of aluminium exterior panels (bootlid aside, which is composite) and clever use of high-strength steel in the structure. There's also greater structural rigidity than before – important for refinement as well as handling. The W12 engine is 30kg lighter than before, too, helping to improve weight distribution to 55:45 from 58:42.

The W12 is a derivative of that used in the Bentayga. It now develops 7.5 per cent more power and a significant 25 per cent more torque than the old GT's unit, giving totals of 626bhp and 664lb ft – and this with greater efficiency, too. Low-pressure port and high-



“The W12 engine is 30kg lighter than before, helping to improve weight distribution to 55:45 from 58:42”



pressure direct fuel injection, twin-scroll turbochargers and a new engine management system and cylinder deactivation are the causes; 0-62mph in 3.7sec (down from 4.5sec) and a 207mph top speed (up from 198mph) are the remarkable effect. More remarkable still is the packaging: so tightly is everything squeezed into the engine bay that the front driveshafts pass through the sump – clearing the number six main bearing by just 1.5 millimetres...

Power is sent through a Panamera-sourced dual-clutch, eight-speed transmission. The top two gears are overdrives (top speed is achieved in sixth), while power is sent to all four wheels – mainly the rear pair in most conditions, with torque vectoring by braking

to distribute power as required. The front cast-iron brake discs are a mighty 420mm in diameter (up from 405mm) with ten-piston calipers, the rears 380mm (from 335mm) with four-piston calipers.

Crewe residents can blame Bentley for the state of the road outside the factory: so lousy is its surface that the company uses it to assess the ride quality of its products and has asked the local council not to resurface it. The GT uses three-chamber air springs to suspend the body, with double-wishbones up front and a multi-link rear. The springs displace 60 per cent more air volume than before and give the ability to switch between chambers, to the benefit of both body control and a cossetting ride. Bentley Dynamic

Ride – based around a 48-volt electrical system – can also adjust the torsion of the anti-roll bars. We drove a prototype version of the new Continental GT in *evo* 238 and found it much more responsive than the previous version – promising signs indeed.

And then there are the new car's myriad other features: a genuinely special-feeling and luxuriously appointed cabin, the extra luggage capacity, the digital instruments, the 92 ECUs, the slim elliptical tail lights, the optional 2200W, 18-speaker Naim sound system, and a near-endless list of other variables that will ensure few GTs will ever be alike.

Production begins later this year, with prices expected to start at around £155,000.

Far left and below:

new Conti has a much sleeker, less upright look.

Above left: interior is a clear step on from the old car's and has more bespoke switchgear. **Above:** centre panel in the dash can rotate between positions to suit the driver's mood or needs

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c£155,000
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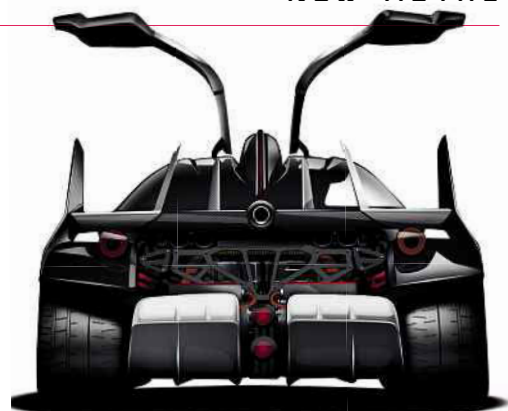
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Power 600bhp @ 6500rpm
Torque 516lb ft @
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Electric Ariel ups the ante

Somerset-based minnow to unleash 1180bhp all-electric 'HIPERCAR' in 2020
by Stuart Gallagher



HIGH PERFORMANCE CARBON Reduction, or in Ariel Motor Company speak: HIPERCAR. 1180bhp, 1330lb ft, 0-60mph in 2.4sec, 0-100mph in 3.8sec, 0-150mph in 7.8sec and 160mph of pure-electric, Somerset-built hypercar to take on the P1, LaFerrari, 918 Spyder and Rimac Concept One.

Scheduled for production in 2020 alongside Ariel's Atom, Nomad and Ace motorcycle, the HIPERCAR will be available with either two- or four-wheel drive. It will feature a single 295bhp, 332lb ft electric motor on each wheel, providing either 590bhp (2WD) or 1180bhp (4WD). Each motor will feature its own gearbox.

A cooperative of parties has joined forces for the project, from powertrain specialist GKN

(BMW i8 and Focus RS) to Delta Motorsport and Equipmake, the last of those being an electric-motor specialist based a stone's throw from Lotus's Hethel base. The overall consortium is steered by JCB and Alexander Dennis, the latter being the maker of buses and fire engines. It doesn't take a genius to work out where the technology for the HIPERCAR will also be put to use.

Built around a bonded-aluminium tub, the chassis will feature unequal-length double wishbones and adjustable Bilstein coilover suspension. Stopping power will come courtesy of six-piston calipers and 370mm discs on the front axle. Dymag carbon-hybrid wheels will be fitted with Michelin Pilot Sport Cup 2 tyres. Brave pills, meanwhile, will be optional.

WATCHES: INSPIRED BY INSTRUMENTS



Direnzo
DRZ Type 250F

Price: \$270 (c£210) **From:** direnzowatches.com

This first piece from Geneva-based newcomer Direnzo is inspired by the elegant dials of race cars of the 1940s and 1950s, and in particular the tachometer of the Maserati Type 250F, as driven by Juan Manuel Fangio. Powered by a Seiko automatic movement, the watch has a 40mm polished stainless steel case and is available in two colour schemes: cream with black markings or black with cream. Order early and you can save \$150 on the final \$420 retail price.



Junghans
Meister Driver Day Date

Price: £1275 **From:** junghans.de

We featured a chronograph model from the Junghans Meister Driver range back in **evo** 227. It has since been joined by this simpler three-hand version that even more closely resembles a vintage speedometer, with day and date windows mimicking the cut-outs for mileage readouts. The 40mm stainless steel case contains an automatic movement, while the dial is available in three different designs – two matched to leather straps, one a steel bracelet.



Reservoir
Supercharged Sport

Price: £3490 **From:** reservoir-watch.com

Reservoir's watches take the instrument theme a step further than most with minute markings in a speedo-like formation and a 'retrograde' minutes hand that moves around the dial from 0 to 60 then jumps back to 0 to start again. The hour is displayed separately as a digit inside a window, while a power reserve indicator for the automatic movement apes a car's fuel gauge. The case is polished stainless steel and measures 43mm in diameter.

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

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Hyundai high and low

After **evo** drove a prototype Hyundai i30 N a few months ago (issue 236) and detailed Albert Biermann's driver-led approach to the car's development, I was intrigued and excited. So when the latest issue of **evo** (239) arrived, I eschewed the Ferraris and other exotic gubbins and headed straight for the reveal of the Hyundai's final specs.

It was something of a roller-coaster. Why? Page 16: '...there's also a rev-matching system for downshifts.' Really? Let me be clear: rev-matching is, with the possible exception of automatic windscreen wipers, the most egregious trend to ever worm its filthy way into the firmament of automotive technology.



Then, joy of joys: 'Down by the gearlever is a button to turn off the rev-matching function.' I applaud Hyundai for this. One of the great joys of driving my old Boxster is judging revs on downshifts for myself. It is a low-speed, mechanical interaction that provides tremendous tactile satisfaction in what is actually quite a slow, but deliriously analogue, car.

Certain trends are created by marketing people; rev-matching appears to be one of these. But maybe someone somewhere, possibly called Albert, understands that some of us crave more mechanical interaction with our cars – and maybe those of us who do could do worse than set aside our prejudices and give the new i30 N a thorough appraisal before selecting our next hot hatch.

Ben Jackson

Ring tips

Having just returned from a trip to the Nürburgring – a school-holiday jaunt

with a new car and a son who has done more laps (on Xbox) than Ms Schmitz – I was particularly pleased to open **evo** 239 and discover the articles celebrating the circuit's 90th anniversary.

I can't recommend enough that all petrolheads should do the short trip (four to five hours from Calais) and experience the track in the flesh. However, there are a couple of things to be aware of.

First is the weather. If the idea of paying your euros (29 euros for the first lap, 25 euros thereafter) and giving it a go is dependant on sunshine and dry tarmac, be aware that even in late July the weather can change all day, every day. Don't bother looking at the forecast as it's all down to luck.

Another thing is timing. If you want a tourist lap, the track opens at 5.30pm and closes at 7.30 on weekdays (though check in advance that it's actually open for tourist runs). This means that you wait around all day with very little to do, which doesn't help the sweaty palms! There is a go-kart track in the GP complex, plus a couple of coffee shops and a museum, but once you've done these there's not a lot to do except head for the viewing areas to watch all manner of cars hacking it round testing.



Speaking of which, although I agree with much of Colin Goodwin's argument that a Ring time is far from necessary to develop a great road car, I can't help thinking that if manufacturers shut up shop and stopped testing there, the Ring would die for the likes of us, which would be a shame, as it's a simply epic place.

Nick Wright, London



LETTER OF THE MONTH

Electric nightmares

I KEEP HAVING THE SAME NIGHTMARE... I CAN'T recharge my all-electric Porsche 911 due to the rationing – the new series of power stations haven't come online yet as planning appeals prevented them being started in 2025. Instead I can only charge my car every other night.

Petrol is no longer available due to the fall in demand, so the only option is to use my old estate as this takes diesel – at £25 per litre because it is shared with tractors and trains. I will also have to cycle the last three miles to work due to the emissions exclusion zone around Cheltenham.

On the plus side, my new garden sculpture arrives at the weekend – a Ferrari 250 GTO, a bargain at £50k because the classic car market has hit rock bottom. Who wants cars that can't be driven or raced any more? If I can be bothered I could also watch the latest round of Formula 1 – sorry, I mean Formula E. I keep forgetting F1 stopped last year as it is illegal to buy new hybrid engines and the class-leading Honda motors have dried up on the second-hand market.

Hang on a minute... This isn't a nightmare. It's 2045!

Simon Hurlbatt

The Letter of the Month wins an Aviator watch

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



Peter Jackson
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INBOX



Fold school

I was interested to see if the first report on your Giulia Quadrifoglio long-termer (*evo* 239) would identify the major flaw in the car's design, namely that its rear seats do not fold flat!

The Giulia is a complete game-changer for Alfa and has the capability to upset the AMG and M division domination in its class. But what happens if on a Saturday afternoon you decide to pop to your local Argos to pick up a new washing line? Supersaloons by their very definition should be capable of mixing it with supercars whilst also maintaining an element of daily practicality. But this single oversight would stop many from buying the car. Folding seats are not even an option.

Why, Alfa?

Paul Guy

Rear-drive rubber

Once again your tyre test (*evo* 238) was conducted with a front-wheel-drive car. I have owned hot hatches with front- and four-wheel-drive and they were great, but I really needed an up-to-date tyre appraisal for my rear-drive AMG. Instead I had to read elsewhere for tests reflecting my kind of car.

I'm not saying front-wheel drive should be eliminated any more than *evo* is saying the majority of its readers prefer front-drive cars. All I am asking is, next time, please also show some support for us rear-drive and four-wheel-drive owners who want to know what behaviour we can expect.

Maya Ostrom, London

We have endeavoured to conduct our tyre tests on cars other than front-drive cars. The issue with rear-drive performance cars is that most have different sized front and rear tyres and these sizes may be unique to that

car, limiting the test's relevance. Many manufacturers have tyres specifically tuned to their cars, too: Porsche, Aston Martin, Mercedes and Jaguar do.

We used an MX-5 a few years ago but there were limited tyre brands in its size, and we generally select best-selling sizes for the greatest relevance. Also, many of the objective tests – wet and dry braking, aquaplaning, rolling resistance and weight – are independent of the vehicle. The subjective elements are more bound up with the vehicle, but how much different is understeer from oversteer? At heart, it's the tyre at the limit.

Tyre tests aren't perfect. It's a specific tyre and the results might not extrapolate, but it's the best source of independent info out there, which is why we invest in them. – JB

Left out

I've been a big supporter of British cars and British industry for years, so I was very pleased to see that Jaguar is set to build a serious M3/C63 rival in the form of the fabulous XE SV Project 8 [above].

However, reading about it in *evo* 238, I was dismayed to learn that this model will be available in left-hand drive only. I'm afraid I didn't find the 'chassis stiffness' reason very convincing.

I hope Jaguar will soon remember its very supportive home market.

Clayton Sampson

Old cogs, new trick

Yes, the gears in the 981-generation Porsche Boxster/Cayman's are too long ('New v Used', *evo* 238), but if you refer to the SharkWerks Cayman GT4 review in *evo* 234 you will find that if you head Stateside with enough dollars there is an expensive solution to this problem.

However, I have employed a much more cost-effective solution on my own



Cayman. Now the glorious 7800rpm red line of its flat-six equates to 43, 77 and 107mph in second, third and fourth gears respectively. How have I done this? By simply 'adding one' to the number displayed in the gear indicator in the rev counter!

Admittedly, this solution works much better with PDK than a manual – with the latter you have to imagine there's a first gear on a dog-leg – but otherwise it transforms the Cayman's overly long gearing, ensuring the engine's upper reaches can be experienced to the full on every occasion.

Mark Richardson

A new kind of sim

So Mr Meaden would like to see investment into simulators so that we can get our driving kicks, fearing that the real-world ability of today's fast cars is beyond what the real-world can handle (column, **evo** 237).

I propose a better solution. I want car manufacturers to invest in their switchable modes so that I can toggle between different 'favourite cars'. With connected dynamic systems controlling engine, transmission, steering and suspension, and with torque-rich, instant-responding hybrid power plants, we have all the ingredients in place already. Surely it is no leap of faith to move from today's Eco/Comfort/Sport/Race to, say, Lotus Cortina/Mk1 Golf GTI/E46 M3/F355?

Active suspension and steering systems will take care of the feel and handling, while the drivetrain mimics those of the chosen cars. Sound generators will have their part to play in the illusion as well. The result will be instant rewards at lower speeds – and we'll all get to beat the over-inflated classic market at the same time.

Mark J

Hard cell

I have to ask if the figures quoted in the end-of-term report on your long-term BMW i8 [above] (**evo** 238) are correct?

You state that the car has a range of 'up to 20 miles' on electric power, and that it cost £3 to recharge overnight on cheap-rate electricity. At current prices, £3 buys around 0.55 gallons of petrol, so if the car can only do 20 miles on £3 of electricity, in terms of cost per mile that's equivalent to just over 36mpg.

I thought the point of EVs was that they were supposed to be more economical than their petrol equivalents? Did no-one at BMW get that memo?

Simon Long, Cambridge

Our mistake. £3, or thereabouts, is the cost to fully charge the i8's batteries on a daytime rate. Charging overnight on a cheaper tariff brings the cost comfortably below 80p, which for a 20-mile range gives the equivalent of over 130mpg. – SG

Benefit of clergy

Ted Kravitz (column, **evo** 238) might find it refreshing to cadge a lift with some of my brothers and sisters in the clergy if he thinks that their utterances while behind the wheel would be fit for public broadcast. While they lack his fluency in matriarchal Yiddish expletives, their driving commentary can benefit not just from Anglo-Saxon, but also Hebrew, Greek, Latin, seventeenth-century English, and a smattering of classical quotations.

Saint Christopher is the patron of travellers, but some prefer to turn to Jehu, son of Nimshi, whom the Bible tells us drives like a maniac (2 Kings 9:20).

The Revd David Baverstock, Liverpool

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Lotus Exige Cup 380

The most extreme road-going Exige – the Sport 380 – just got leaner and faster. Say hello to the Cup 380, one of the best drivers' cars at any price

Photography by Aston Parrott





I HEAR THE EXIGE CUP 380 A FRACTION BEFORE I SEE IT: the resonant *whah-whah-whah* of the supercharged V6, just above idle and barely silenced, as it reverberates across an empty high street. First impressions count, and mine of this Lotus is that it has just turned left instead of right at Arnage corner to arrive at this rural part of Bedfordshire. Its shrunken Group C-esque form looks starkly low, compact and angry sandwiched amongst the typical vehicles and street furniture of an English village. It has red wheels, for heaven's sake.

Anticipation of this incongruous rendezvous with Hethel's most aggressive road car has been heightened in advance by Dickie Meaden's opinion of the 'standard' Exige Sport 380 (*evo* 231). He concluded his five-star review by saying: 'Drivers' cars don't come much better at any price.' Hmm. That good? Certainly, on looks alone the Cup 380 has me utterly under its spell already. In one sense its relatively small dimensions give it an unthreatening, lovable demeanour, but it's bigger and wider than the insect-like Exiges of old: it looks like it can handle itself in tough company. Knowing there's 375bhp amidsthips from the Toyota-sourced V6 helps, too.

The Cup takes the already finely honed Exige Sport 380 and applies parts from the track-only Race 380 to make a halfway house between a road and a track car, focusing on removing weight, improving aerodynamic performance and honing even further the car's dynamics via fully adjustable suspension.

Chief amongst the changes is the considerably greater use of carbonfibre, reducing the Cup's kerb weight to 1105kg from the Sport's 1110kg. Remember, too, that this is all based on a car that already takes saving grams seriously, let alone entire kilograms. The shiny composite material is used for a new front splitter, the front access panel, the bargeboards, the roof panel, the diffuser surround at the rear, the larger side intake pods (these save 500g, for instance) and a one-piece tailgate.

The massive carbonfibre rear wing is the most obvious of the aerodynamic enhancements. It's been made possible by an increase in downforce on the front axle courtesy of the louvres now incorporated in the front panel, which create negative pressure in the front wheelarches. All told, there's 200kg of the mysterious invisible force at the car's maximum velocity of 175mph – an increase of 43 per cent over the Sport. Sure, that may sound all rather academic, but Lotus promises it can be clearly felt once you're travelling at more than 60mph. Even the windscreen wiper now parks centrally to generate less drag.

The Sport's Bilstein dampers have been replaced by adjustable Nitrons, complemented by Eibach adjustable anti-roll bars. The dampers offer a range of 16 settings in compression and 20 in rebound, and Lotus recommends a 'road and track' setting to stop customers getting into a setup muddle. The Nitrons feature a bigger bore and corresponding piston and also have spherical metal attachments rather than rubber bushes. That means there's no wasted motion and they can cope with a much higher spring rate (up 60 per cent), which in turn is necessary with the



increased downforce. A wider rear Michelin Cup 2 tyre – a 285 section, up from the Sport’s 265 – improves grip and traction further still.

You’ll also find a small silver dial on the left-hand side of the steering column. This tailors the Cup’s multi-stage traction control, but the important point here is that this is not part of the Exige’s four-stage ESP system, which has its own Touring, Sport, Race and Off modes. It’s only when you choose the last of these that the traction control dial comes into play, allowing the driver to choose a target slip level of between one and 12 per cent (or simply ‘Off’). This is a motorsport-style traction-control system, too, cutting the spark and therefore the torque output of the engine when slip is detected, rather than applying individual brakes. The theory is that the car is not slowed by any artificial application of the brakes, however

Above: front diveplanes and louvres plus a bigger rear wing contribute to 200kg of downforce at the 175mph top speed, though Lotus says the effects can be felt at just 60mph. **Below:** cosy cabin uses reams of Alcantara; note the skeletonised gearshift mechanism and the carbonfibre sills



‘This Lotus provides more sheer enjoyment than most modern supercars combined’



Specification

Engine	Power	Torque	0-62mph	Top speed	Weight	Basic price
V6, 3456cc, supercharged	375bhp @ 6700rpm	302lb ft @ 5000rpm	3.6sec (claimed)	175mph (claimed)	1105kg (345bhp/ton)	£83,000

+ Rabidly fast, hugely characterful and an absolute riot to drive **-** It's sold out

evo rating ★★★★★

slight, while the percentage rating stems from the fact that after five per cent slip a tyre doesn't tend to generate any more grip, so this narrow range of adjustment covers any fine-tuning required on a circuit.

Something tells me that such considerations aren't going to come into it today, on a typical British B-road. And yet, Lotus claims the Cup is also a car to be used on the public road as much as around Oulton Park, which given its specification and hardcore focus is quite a bold claim. Initially, any in-depth dynamic observations are clouded in my struggling brain by the rabid acceleration and the deafening exhaust note of the V6, exhaling here through the optional titanium exhaust (saving another 10kg). This blue-tinged, centrally mounted

organ emits a kind of sonic warfare that turns heads on the roadside 500 yards in advance. The Cup's 0-62mph time of 3.6sec is all the more impressive because it retains three pedals and a gearlever, rather than any twin-clutch trickery. Make no mistake, wrung out to the red line, the Cup 380 is absolutely brutal.

That gearlever also plays its part in the Cup's appeal. Not only does the bare mechanism look fantastic and embody exactly what a Lotus should be, but at last Lotus has managed to fashion the six-speed manual shift into something befitting a pure, lightweight drivers' car. Flicking between the ratios is a joy, even if there's still something slightly odd about the initial response of the accelerator pedal and its relationship to that of the brake for heel-and-toe

changes. Overall, the Cup's interior is a delight, with terrific carbon seats, swathes of Alcantara and a blanking panel and cut-off switch where the radio is usually situated.

Dynamically, the Cup operates on a plain some way above what can be fully experienced on the public road. However, so engrossed are you in the driving experience that this Lotus provides more sheer enjoyment than most modern supercars combined. Most corners require no more than the thought of turning the wheel and a slight squeeze of pressure in the right direction. It's a firm-riding car, and over poor surfaces the dampers are obviously working hard and the steering tugs this way and that. The trick with the latter is to know when to release your grip and let the Cup get on with it, and when to grip

harder to keep it pointing straight.

It's fabulous fun, but then so it should be for £83,000. The cliché at this point is to say 'that's a lot of money for a Lotus', and granted, it is, but I can honestly say that this is the first time I've felt a product from Hethel can genuinely command that sort of money. From the finish of its carbonfibre to its detail design and construction, the Cup feels worth it.

So perhaps the worst thing about the Cup is Lotus's 'sold out' stamp at the end of the press presentation, a 'here's a brilliant new car you can't have' trick it seems to have adopted with glee from Porsche. That's a shame, because exactly like Dickie said of the Sport 380, this Cup 380 really is one of the best drivers' cars at any price. **✘**

Adam Towler (@AdamTowler)



Aston Martin Vanquish S Volante

The introduction of the Vanquish S coupe gave Aston's ageing super-GT a new lease of life, and this soft-top version is equally as desirable

Photography by Aston Parrott

YOU THOUGHT THE Vanquish was done with, didn't you? After all, the DB11 is rolling out of Gaydon in healthy numbers, we'll have driven a V8-engined variant by the time you read this, and the DB11 Volante will be along soon after. Surely two V12-engined GT cars is one too many for a firm the size of Aston?

It seems not. A replacement for the current Vanquish will be along eventually (there's a new V8 Vantage to hit the road first), but for now the car has entered its twilight years having been freshly invigorated in Vanquish S form, with one minor facelift left to go. And that's great

news, because the Vanquish S really is one very special Aston Martin. Or, rather, two very special Aston Martins, because the Vanquish S is now available in both coupe and soft-top Volante forms.

The Volante S follows the same recipe as the S coupe (**evo** 235), which means a raft of well-wrought changes to the engine, chassis and styling, the net result being a 595bhp, rear-wheel-drive V12-engined roadster that manages the rare achievement of looking as good with a canvas roof as it does with layers of aluminium and carbonfibre above the occupants' heads.

In a world of turbocharging, there

is something hopelessly romantic and hugely satisfying about being responsible for bringing 12 fuel-hungry naturally aspirated cylinders to life. From the split second of the first whir of the starter motor, through the moment the crank spins those dozen pistons into life, to the crackle from the exhaust, every detail suggests refined thuggery. And it's wonderful.

A freer-breathing air intake and a recalibrated management system are responsible for the 30bhp power increase, with the larger inlet manifolds allowing for greater volumes of air to be ingested and mixed with the V Power at higher

engine speeds. It's a genuine gem of an engine, melding old-school, big-lunged capacity with a 21st-century electric spark when asked to react to even the mildest of throttle inputs.

Truth be told, the first few thousand revs are enough for the eight-speed Touchtronic III auto to surge you forwards and the 5.9-litre V12 to wrap you in aural delights that few other cars can deliver with such authenticity. There's no more torque than in the previous, non-S Vanquish (465lb ft of the stuff), but more of it is available more of the time. Aston Martin claims 3.7sec to 62mph should you engage launch control, a

couple of tenths behind the coupe as a result of the 180kg added by body stiffening and the folding roof mechanism. The slightly inferior aerodynamics also knock a few mph off the top speed, down from 201mph to a measly 197mph.

As with the coupe, the S Volante has been subject to some mild chassis jiggery-pokery, with revisions to geometry, spring rates and anti-roll bars, but the Volante also gets its own adaptive damper rates, primarily to deal with the additional weight and the change in weight distribution.

Losing the roof naturally has an effect on the car's structural stiffness, but the Volante's charm distracts you from the lost nth-degree of precision compared with the coupe. Drop the roof and the interior mirror fidgets over poor B-roads while the steering wheel gives the odd wiggle and kick where a coupe's wouldn't, but you're talking single-digit degrees of change and with that majestic V12 and an English summer's evening playing out above you (it doesn't rain all the time over here, just most of the time) there are few finer places to be.

Push the S Volante hard and you're still part of a richly rewarding

‘With that V12, and an English summer evening playing out above you, there are few finer places to be’

experience in a car that masks its girth and weight, one that sprints across the surface with a controlled gait and a satisfying feeling of control and purpose. The fine-tuning has resulted in a super-GT car that's more reactive and enthralling than many will give it credit for.

The Vanquish S Volante is also more involving and bespoke than Mercedes-AMG's S65 Cabriolet and so far ahead of Ferrari's California T in pretty much every conceivable

area that its only direct rival is the outgoing Bentley Continental GT Convertible, a car it thoroughly out-drives, out-punches and out-poses, as has always been the case.

Two-plus-two convertibles aren't everyone's cup of tea, and you'll find few topping the must-own lists of those in the **evo** office but, should you have the desire, you might as well buy the best, which in this case will require a call to Gaydon. ✘

Stuart Gallagher (@stuartg917)

Specification

Engine	Power	Torque	0-62mph	Top speed	Weight	Price
V12, 5935cc	595bhp @ 7000rpm	465lb ft @ 5500rpm	3.7sec (claimed)	197mph (claimed)	1919kg (315bhp/ton)	£211,950

➤ All the better to hear and enjoy that magnificent V12 engine ➤ Inevitable weight penalty and slight loss of rigidity

evo rating ★★★★★☆



Left: V12 breathes more freely and responds more sharply than ever, thanks chiefly to new induction system



BBR Mazda MX-5 Stage 1 Turbo

Upgrade to 248bhp gives 2-litre version of likeable little roadster a welcome – and well judged – shot in the arm

Photography by Dean Smith



TWO-HUNDRED AND FIFTY horsepower isn't a lot in the modern autosphere, but it feels like plenty when directed through the rear tyres of a car as simple and slender as a Mazda MX-5. Particularly as Northamptonshire seems to be auditioning for the first leg of the Volvo Ocean Race and farm vehicles have left a thin sheen of various brown substances on the county's B-roads.

The MX-5 in question is Brackley-based BBR GT's first turbocharged take on the fourth-generation model, following naturally aspirated packages for the 1.5- and 2-litre cars. The conversion is based on the larger-engined MX-5 and centres around a twin-scroll hybrid turbo, a bespoke exhaust manifold and a stainless-steel exhaust downpipe. Gases are cooled by a front-mounted aluminium intercooler, while other modifications include stainless-steel oil and water lines, custom silicone turbo pipes, a K&N high-flow induction kit and StarChip EcuTek software.

BBR describes it as a 'Stage 1 Turbo' package, and the result is 248bhp at 7150rpm and 236lb ft from 3250rpm – increases of 90bhp and 89lb ft over Mazda's claims for the standard car. BBR also quotes a 0-60mph time of 5.0sec (against 7.3sec to 62mph for the unmodified



car) and a 155mph limited top speed (up from 133mph).

As we've come to expect from BBR, everything looks like it was assembled in the factory at Hiroshima, with only a custom carbonfibre turbocharger heat shield hinting that something might be out of the ordinary under the bonnet. Externally BBR's demonstrator also wears a Mazda body-styling kit, BBR-branded stripes and OZ Ultraleggera alloy wheels with Yokohama tyres, which collectively exude a level of menace not present in a showroom-fresh MX-5.

You'll pay more for touches like these, but everything required to lift the MX-5 to the advertised output will set you back £5274 if you intend to fit it yourself, or £5994 if you want BBR to do it for you.

Cleverly, the car doesn't feel transformed when you first thumb the starter button and fire up the boosted Skyactiv four-pot. Only the bassy note of this car's BBR



Supersport exhaust gives the game away, but the idle settles down to normal levels and prodding the standard clutch feels no different from doing so in any other MX-5.

If you're not familiar with the regular car, you probably won't notice the first subtle difference, either. With intake and exhaust gases now taking a slightly longer, more convoluted path, throttle response isn't quite as sharp as usual, so exploratory blips of the pedal take a little longer to elicit movements on the rev-counter.

Until you pass 3000rpm, that is. That's the point at which BBR's car diverges from the regular MX-5, gathering pace with increasing intensity and commotion towards the red line. The engine now offers its best between 3000 and 6000rpm, with the same linearity and driveability of the standard car garnished with an audible whoosh and considerably greater forward momentum.

'It gathers pace with increasing intensity and commotion'

Combined with a firmer suspension setup, that newfound output requires circumspection on wet, greasy roads. Mazda's standard traction control just about copes in a straight line, but around corners you'll spend plenty of time correcting amusing but rapid spikes of oversteer even before the stability control intervenes. You can turn it off, of course, but you'd best bring your car-control A-game if you do so.

That's not to besmirch BBR's conversion, because it's very well judged indeed. It's a perfect option for a used Mk4 MX-5, though even added to a brand new one (priced from £21,595, meaning a total of £27,589) it looks pretty reasonable given you'll have enough power to close the performance gap to almost any modern hot hatch, but in a smaller, lighter, more attractive, more involving and more entertainingly rear-driven package. **x**

Antony Ingram (@evoAntony)

Specification

Engine	Power	Torque	0-60mph	Top speed	Weight	Basic price
In-line 4-cyl, 1998cc, turbocharged	248bhp @ 7150rpm	236lb ft @ 3250rpm	5.0sec (claimed)	155mph (limited)	c975kg (c258bhp/ton)	See text

+ Good value for a significant performance boost **-** Needs care in the wet

evo rating ★★★★★



Inspired by the high-octane thrills and physics-defying engineering of the automotive world, the **C7 Rapide Chronograph Automatic** shares the same values of technical precision and innovative design, coupled with the highest quality materials used throughout. Bold in appearance and championing a Swiss-made automatic movement, this is a watch with horological horsepower.

 **Christopher Ward**

christopherward.co.uk



Caterham Seven 420R Donington Edition

This limited-edition Seven is designed to hit the circuit-driving sweet spot. So could it be the greatest trackday Seven ever built?

FORGET FOR A MOMENT that this year Caterham's Seven celebrates its 60th anniversary. What's more relevant, for this car at least, is that Donington Park circuit is celebrating 40 years since it was re-opened. To mark that event, Caterham dealer and trackday purveyor BookaTrack has used its experience with the Seven to create what it thinks is the ultimate Caterham.

The Donington Edition starts as a 420R, with its dry-sumped, 210bhp 2-litre Ford Duratec engine. However, for your £47,500 (a regular 420R starts at £35,490), there's also the carbonfibre dash from the range-topping, supercharged 620R as well as that car's nose-cone, with its extra intakes and bigger oil cooler. The Donington also has a host of trackday paraphernalia, including a full roll-cage from the 420R race car (previously known as the R300-S), an aero screen, aero front wishbones,

a rear-exit exhaust (to keep noise down) and sticky, 13-inch Avon ZZR tyres. There is only one option with the Donington and that's whether you have the regular S3 chassis or the wider, longer SV.

Mechanically, the big change over a road-going 420R is the Sadev six-speed sequential gearbox – the same found in the 620R and the 420R racer – which replaces a five-speed manual. Drive is sent through a clutch that's more aggressive than the one found in the 620R but not as savage as that of the race car.

It's the details that really set the Donington Edition apart from other Sevens, though. Not bound by the rules and regulations of a race series, Stuart Faulds, BookaTrack's chief engineer, was able to use whichever components he thought would make the Donington the best handling car it could be. His approach to setting up a fast, track-ready Seven differs slightly from Caterham's, too. He

has used a combination of dampers, anti-roll bar settings and bespoke springs (which aren't available on any other Caterham) to change the car's balance to suit hard track driving. The result, in the most basic of terms, is that the Donington Edition feels stiffer overall, and particularly much more so at the front, than a regular 420R.

Only ten Donington Editions will be made, each assembled in BookaTrack's workshop at Donington Park, which make this launch event at Spa-Francorchamps in Belgium all the more perplexing...

Whatever the circuit, the Donington Edition needs to be tested on a track. It is road-legal, but any car that you have to climb into through the top, like it's an adult jungle-gym, is clearly not destined to spend much time on the road. Once you're strapped in and wearing a helmet that restricts your vision to a horizontal slot, the latticework of

roll-cage doesn't make the car feel much more cramped than a regular Seven. Get geared-up in racing boots and the close pedals actually feel perfectly spaced, too.

To pull away you need to feed the clutch in yourself. There's not a lot of slip as it engages, but it isn't too difficult to ease the car away cleanly. Once moving, you only need the clutch for downchanges, as upshifts can be done with just a pull of the gearlever. An ignition cut means you don't even need to come off the accelerator as you climb the 'box, and the shifts feel best when you're determined and quick with the stick.

The gearbox's ratios are so closely stacked that when changing gear at 7500rpm the revs only drop by 500rpm. As you bang up through the gears with the engine continuously screaming, the building speed is such an addictive sensation that just going in a straight line is huge fun. Moving down the 'box, a slight jab

‘You know at every instant where the car is and exactly how it will react to inputs’



Top left: Donington Edition gets the carbonfibre dash from the 620R. **Above and left:** race-spec dampers and unique spring rates help to stabilise the chassis through aggressive direction changes and under heavy braking

of the clutch is all that's required for the gear to slot into place. It's a little smoother if you can heel-and-toe to match the revs, but the shifts are so rapid that it takes practice to time your blips exactly right. One of the added benefits of the sequential 'box is that there's no need to move your hand sideways while you're grasping the lever; when space is at a premium, as it is inside a Seven, that makes a huge difference.

As fun as it is in a straight line, it's

in the corners where the Donington Edition really shines. The first time you brake hard for a corner, you sense the difference Faulds' setup makes. There's less dive and all of the body's movements are a lot less exaggerated. The chassis supports the car under higher loads much more effectively, and this increases the overall grip significantly. It's easier to be precise, too – you know at every instant where the car is and exactly how it will react to inputs.

This gives you the confidence to drive it harder and harder, relishing in the masses of grip available.

The quick steering rack, typical of all Caterhams, feels less nervous in the Donington, too. It's just as direct as in other variants but neat transitions from corner to corner are easier and require the smallest of steering inputs.

What the Donington's spec hasn't done is eradicate the much-loved Caterham characteristics as you get

close to the limit. Although it takes more speed and more commitment to edge up to where the tyres want to give up, the way this car reacts is recognisably friendly-Seven behaviour. You're able to balance it right on the edge of grip, and a little bit over, while driving into a corner on the brakes and then continue this throughout the bend with the steering and throttle. The firmer front end does mean you have to be more cautious on turn-in, though. At track speeds, if you don't add some weight to the front tyres with the brakes, you can sense more understeer than in a regular 420R. Then again, if you're not driving in a committed fashion, you won't get the best from this car.

Not only is the Donington Edition more competent, faster and grippier than other Caterhams, it's also more predictable, too. It's one of the best Sevens we've driven. It's just a shame so few are to be built.

Will Beaumont (@WillBeaumont)

Specification

Engine	Power	Torque	0-60mph	Top speed	Weight	Price
In-line 4-cyl, 1999cc	210bhp @ 7600rpm	150lb ft @ 6300rpm	3.8sec (claimed)	136mph (claimed)	560kg (381bhp/ton)	£47,500

➤ Faster and grippier than the regular 420R, but still feels like a Caterham ➤ Only ten will be made

evo rating ★★★★★

Audi RS3 Sportback

The most potent hot hatch money can buy is equally at home on sunny days and in the sopping wet. Raw pace isn't everything, though

Photography by Dean Smith



B BLAME RS3 DRIVERS IF WE have a particularly wet and windy autumn. Each and every one of them will be praying for rain – perfect conditions in which to appreciate the capabilities of Audi's new super-hatch.

We've been here before, of course, having already driven the updated RS3, albeit in saloon form, on the ultra-smooth desert roads of Oman (evo 235), but there's nothing quite like a bumpy Bedfordshire back-road to unmask a new hot hatch.

And this latest RS3 is one of the hottest. Its refreshed 2.5-litre, five-cylinder TFSI engine produces 394bhp – up from 362bhp – in turn making this the most powerful car in its class. The 0-62mph claim of 4.1sec

is two-tenths quicker than before, a tenth quicker than a Mercedes-AMG A45's and a further tenth clear of a DCT-equipped BMW M2's.

That five-pot motor is now 26kg lighter, too, thanks largely to the use of an alloy crankcase, but also contributing is a hollow-bored crankshaft that cuts 1kg in rotating mass. However, the car's overall kerb weight is down just 10kg to 1510kg (the A45 is 1480kg, a DCT M2 1520kg).

Like the AMG but unlike the BMW, the Audi sends its power through an all-wheel-drive system, where up to 100 per cent of the engine's torque (and never less than 50 per cent) can be diverted to the rear axle. A seven-speed dual-clutch transmission handles the gearchanges.

Much is made about the quality of Audi's interiors and construction, but the RS3's real quality is most apparent when you start up the reworked powerplant: its gargling idle and cultured tone are not a million miles removed from a V10 R8's. And in truth, the RS3 is not all that far off in terms of performance, thundering off the line and howling to a spine-tingling red line in each gear with near-instant changes from ratio to ratio. That it'll do the same on a wet, greasy road is all part of the appeal.

In the past, incisive handling hasn't been part of that appeal, with joyless all-wheel-drive systems, nose-heaviness and numb steering conspiring to chip away at the car's desirability. In the new RS3, and in the wet specifically, those first two complaints have diminished significantly – this grown-up hot hatch dives into corners with conviction and remarkable grip, the rear axle slipping just enough to aid agility without making the chassis feel too nervous. It handles bumps well too, with an underlying firmness but not one that significantly undermines the car's comfort.

Get on the power early and the drivetrain diverts more torque to the rear wheels, firing you out the other side of the turn with ruthless ability and, just occasionally, the

'Its gargling idle is not a million miles removed from a V10 R8's'

need to unwind some steering lock to maintain your chosen line.

It's a satisfying sensation, but there are still problems. The RS3's steering remains as mute as ever, with decent weighting and applaudable accuracy but little indication as to whether the front wheels are clawing into the road surface or not. They almost always are, but you must operate on trust rather than feedback.

And impressive though the RS3 Sportback's abilities are, its lofty performance limits goad you into exploring speeds that make you nervous on public roads. Back off a little and you'll still be going very quickly indeed, but the fun factor quickly fizzles out.

Audi's weight-saving proves the old adage that less is more, but a little less still – weight, grip and speed – might have gone even further. ✖

Antony Ingram (@evoAntony)



Specification

Engine	Power	Torque	0-62mph	Top speed	Weight	Basic price
In-line 5-cyl, 2480cc, turbo	394bhp @ 5850-7000rpm	354lb ft @ 1700-5850rpm	4.1sec (claimed)	155mph (limited)	1510kg (265bhp/ton)	£44,300

+ Hugely quick point-to-point - Sometimes speed isn't the be-all and end-all

evo rating ★★★★★

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M5 F10/M6 (STAGE 2) » 730 BHP
F10 520D » 240 BHP
F10 530D » 305 BHP
335i/135i/X6 » 370+ BHP (+DE-LIMIT)
123D » 252 BHP

- 316D/216D/116D » 160 BHP
318D/218D/118D » 225 BHP
330D E90 » 296+ BHP
320D E90 » 215 BHP
420i/320i/220i/120i » 275+ BHP
435i/ F30 335i » 390 BHP
428i/328i » 295 BHP
535D / 335D / X5 SD » 355+ BHP
640D/335D/535D/435D » 390 BHP
730D » 305+ BHP
X5 4.0D / 740D » 370 BHP
X5 3.0D » 305 BHP
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C350/CLS350/E350/S350 » 315 BHP
E400 /C450 » 420+ BHP
C400 » 400 BHP
'63' 5.5 Bi-TURBO ALL MODELS » 690+BHP
'500' 4.7 Bi-TURBO ALL MODELS » 498+BHP
S65 (W222) » 780 BHP
SL65 BLACK » 720+ BHP (+DELIMIT)
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CAYMAN S » 342 BHP
MACAN 3.0D » 315 BHP
CAYENNE GTS » 440 BHP

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

- EXOTIC / MISC**
FERRARI CALIFORNIA » 487 BHP
FERRARI 599 » 647 BHP
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LP560 » 608+BHP
LP640 » 707 BHP
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MCLAREN 650S » 720 BHP
MURCIELAGO LP640 » 707 BHP
MASERATI GHIBLI 3.0S PETROL » 470 BHP
MASERATI GHIBLI 3.0 DIESEL » 400 BHP
MASERATI GHIBLI 3.0 DIESEL » 312 BHP
MASERATI GT/OPORT » 438 BHP
MASERATI GT S / MC » 479+ BHP
BENTLEY 4.0 T V8 » 690 BHP
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AC Schnitzer ACS2 Sport

Upgrade package for the M2 hones the chassis and offers more power, but only one of those is worth paying for

Photography by Adam Shorrock



IT'S ARGUABLE THAT THE BMW M2 is the best small M-car in a generation, yet German tuner AC Schnitzer believes there's still some room for improvement. As a result, it has developed this, the ACS2 Sport.

The package effectively massages the M2's engine and suspension, and looks for what is claimed to be a faster and more involving driving experience. Given the standard car sets the bar quite high, it's fair to say Schnitzer has its work cut out.

The ACS2 gets off to a good start, though, with its turbocharged 3-litre straight-six treated to a tickled ECU that delivers impressive headline figures of 414bhp and 428lb ft – gains of 49bhp and 59lb ft over the M2. The revised motor then plays a deeper tune through a quad-exit, AC-monogrammed sports exhaust.

For the chassis upgrade, Schnitzer has installed adjustable coilovers, enabling a ride height drop of 30 to 40mm, plus a set of 20-inch forged alloy wheels that just about squeeze into the arches. There are further cosmetic modifications in the form of a front splitter and rear diffuser, both finished in carbonfibre.

Do the sums and this little lot adds



up to a not inconsiderable £18,284 (that's £3804 for the engine tweaks, £2536 for the exhaust, £2478 for the suspension, £2503 for the carbon bits and an eye-watering £6963 for the wheels). Of course, you can pick and choose just the bits you want, but is it really worth spending such large wedges of cash on a car that's already excellent?

The first thing you notice about the ACS2 is just how well it rides. Look at those vast wheels and you'd expect it to deliver the sort of washboard ride that'd leave you with double vision, yet there's suppleness to its damping.

Up the pace and the car remains remarkably planted and composed. There's the same meaty steering weight as the regular car, but the Schnitzer flows down the road, rather than beating it into submission. Really

'The first thing you notice about the Schnitzer is how well it rides'

big undulations reveal the tiniest amount of float, but the movement is checked almost before it has started. The ACS2 feels remarkably friendly as you approach the limit, too, telegraphing its intentions more clearly and allowing you to push towards its various thresholds with greater confidence than in the occasionally spiky M2.

By contrast, the engine changes are harder to recommend. On paper the gains look fairly impressive, but on the road they don't offer any real subjective gains over the already rapid M2. You have to work harder to access the extra performance low down (peak torque arrives at 3500rpm, compared with 1450rpm as standard), yet maximum power is delivered at 5800rpm, which is 700rpm lower than in the BMW.

As a result, it's not as necessary to

access the straight-six's snarling top end. The overall performance gains are modest too, with just two tenths of a second shaved off the claimed 4.3sec 0-62mph of the regular DCT-equipped M2. And speaking of the gearbox, there are no changes to the seven-speed dual-clutch unit, so you get the same slightly lazy shifts in auto mode but much faster changes using the wheel-mounted paddles.

The new exhaust goes some way towards offsetting the upgraded engine's disguised extra pace. It emits a deep burble at idle and boasts a more baritone growl as the revs rise beyond 4000rpm. However, the downside is an irritating boom at around 70mph – it goes away either side of this speed, but it has the potential to make longer journeys tiresome.

Add all the kit to the price of a new DCT M2 and you'll end up forking out £66,959 – that's M4 Competition Package money, including some choice options, and the ACS2 is hard to recommend as an alternative to that car. However, if you've got a used M2 then mixing and matching some of these extras – the suspension in particular – makes far more sense. ❌

James Disdale

Specification

Engine	Power	Torque	0-62mph	Top speed	Weight	Basic price
Straight-six, 2979cc, turbocharged	414bhp @ 5800rpm	428lb ft @ 3500rpm	4.1sec (claimed)	155mph (limited)	1495kg (281bhp/ton)	See text

➕ Suspension upgrade brings a genuine improvement ➖ Benefits of the power hike are negligible

evo rating ★★★★★

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RICHARD MEADEN

We've all got our favourite corners. Meaden wants to hear yours in the hope that it could become part of something rather special

WHEN McLAREN REVEALED ITS recent fantasy for a grand prix through the mean streets of Woking, many will have scoffed, but I have to say it struck a chord with me. Not, I hasten to add, because I've long harboured the fantasy of hammering through McLaren's hometown, but because the notion of creating a track out of familiar roads is the stuff that rattles around in every petrolhead's mind.

Many years ago a creative friend of *evo's* suggested we commission a batch of *evo*-branded road markers (you know, the dayglo-yellow temporary catseyes you often see defining lanes through roadworks) so that readers could proudly – and secretly! – affix them to the asphalt as apex markers on their favourite corner.

It was a great idea. One we seriously considered, at least until the boring legal ramifications were pointed out to us. At which point the romantic notion of coming across a cracking corner in the middle of nowhere with a small rectangle of yellow plastic at which to aim your inside wheel evaporated.

Still, the fact remains: we all have our favourite corners. Some might be a simple, well-sighted 90-left or right that lets you kick the tail out or cock a rear wheel in the air without offending anyone. Even a quiet roundabout in the dead of night has its charm. Others could be an elegant constant-radius arc that rewards a clean, precise and well-timed turn-in. Get it right and once you've applied some lock you can steadfastly hold the wheel at that angle and watch as the apex spools beneath you as if by magic. The roads are a treasure trove of memorable turns if you're on the lookout.

I've had lots of favourites over the years. Some I drive almost every day, others I haven't driven for years, decades possibly. Yet I'm pretty certain one or two runs through and muscle memory would find the sweetest line. Of course, those from my dim and distant youth were taken with possibly a smidgeon more commitment than was strictly sensible, but such is life when you're exploring the roads and extent of your nerve and ability. I can't condone it, but neither can I condemn it. What can I say? It was the '90s.

I grew up on the roads that straddle Surrey and Hampshire. Not classic driving country, admittedly, but there were some decent stretches to enjoy. One of the nearest was what we referred to as

the Pirbright Bends. Its more of a prolonged sequence than one outstanding corner, but having just put the name into Google, it would appear to have retained its allure.

In the very early days – before I landed a job as a motoring journalist – I would relentlessly tear up and down this sinuous stretch of road in my souped-up 1380cc Mini. Often with my mate Tim in tow on his Honda CBR600 motorcycle. He'd get his knee down while I had the Mini on its door handles. We'd pick our moments so it wasn't busy, and neither of us ever fired ourselves into the undergrowth, but it still makes my hair curl thinking about what we used to get up to on that tree-lined snake of road.

Once I got a job road testing, my horizons were broadened, but it

became a bit of a ritual to take whatever I had up and down that piece of road, often with Tim in the passenger seat. Being a biker, he was notoriously hard to impress, but he was a useful part of my appraisal process, like an impartial organic VBOX. He kicked the two-wheel habit yonks ago, but the fact he quickly turned to Caterham ownership suggests those corners clearly left a lasting impression.

Returning to the fantasy racetrack theme, perhaps we should pool our favourite corners and persuade the creatives at Polyphony

Digital – makers of *Gran Turismo* – to create an ultimate *evo* reader road course? It's a long shot, but they might just go for it.

My contribution? Possibly not what you'd expect, in that it's not on some remote moor, but a slip road connecting the anticlockwise carriageway of the M25 with the northbound M11. Always taken as a reward after negotiating the homebound horrors of the Dartford Tunnel, this epic combination of corners makes Maggots-Becketts look like a walk in the park. You'd need something downforce-rich like the upcoming Aston Martin Valkyrie to realise its full potential, but there's something remarkable about the way the almost endless and apparently open right-hand element loops up, then down before turning back on itself, tighter, tighter, tighter like a tarmac tourniquet, before changing direction and releasing you onto the northbound M11 like a cork from a champagne bottle.

We'll worry about the pixel-perfect rendering later. For now, just send your suggestions to letters@evo.co.uk and we'll endeavour to put something together. In the meantime, continue to (responsibly) enjoy your favourite corners, wherever they may be. ✉

'The roads are a treasure trove of memorable turns if you're on the lookout'



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RICHARD PORTER

There's a stale attitude pervading the internet forums, and revitalised Jaguar is the victim. Porter takes aim at the naysayers

OLD FARTISM SNEAKS UP ON YOU. ONE day you're young and vibrant, the next you make a noise when you sit down. The transition happens fast, especially once you have kids. As soon as all your clothes are covered in snot smears and you find yourself referring to 'please' as 'the magic word', Old Fartism gains a hold from which you may never escape. Where once you went clubbing and enjoyed long, luxurious holidays, suddenly you find Radio 1 so banal it causes you to shout 'text it up your arse' in a sandwich shop.

You can, however, make a conscious effort to resist some of Old Fartism's most misanthropic excesses. Just because you think 'bae' is a defence and aerospace concern and believe everyone under 30 has ruined their jeans by falling over in the playground, it doesn't mean you need to develop a seething resentment of millennials. And, far more importantly, just because you've passed 40, it doesn't mean you have to think that Jaguar is the National Trust of car makers.

Yet I see this particular branch of Old Fartism a lot, most recently at the announcement of the new E-Pace SUV. To my mind, this is a handsome little thing. It seems to have an attractive spec and, while I don't particularly want one myself, I can see why it has come to exist. But take a dive into the comments sections online, where Old Fartism spreads like a harrumphing, self-righteous virus, and you'll discover a whole flotilla of bores who think Jaguar should only make the 1968 XJ6 saloon.

No doubt, this was a tremendous-looking car, and so were its descendants. I'd take a Series 3 with the V12, if you're asking. I like the way they look, and so, clearly, did the people who designed the mid-'90s XJ, which went back to the fluted bonnet and slender tail lights of the car from the '60s. I enjoyed this interpretation so much I bought one – in black with cream leather and a wonderful supercharged V8 at the front. To this day I have pangs of regret about selling it. But that doesn't mean I want the E-Pace stricken from the record, the F-Pace driven into the sea, and Jaguar's saloon-car range replaced with retro facsimiles of the '68 XJ.

Pish and posh splutter the Old Farts of the forums, that's what a 'proper' Jaguar looks like. Yeah, well I've got a thought for you

chaps: if you liked 'proper' Jags so much, why didn't you buy one? Because it's pretty clear from the sales figures that most of you didn't. Oh, everyone liked the *idea* of backward-looking Jags all flutey and chromey and slathered in hide, but the sales figures were lousy. It's what you might call VW Corrado syndrome. Everyone likes the idea and wails with sorrow when it gets taken away, but few slap down the cash when it matters. And that's how we end up with the E-Pace. Jaguar has to make cars that the market wants and in a contemporary style because, as it turns out, most people don't want retro Jags, they just want to bemoan their absence.

What's worse is that, in its day, the original XJ6 was not tweedy and safe, it was mind-bogglingly futuristic. So too the XJ-S – a little too much since it remained untainted by customers for much of its life and only the passage of time has made us realise it's actually quite excellent. I imagine Old Farts would have spent much of the period 1975-96 whinging about how it didn't look like a Series 1 E-type. All the best Jags, even the early, digi-dialled, rectangular-headlamped XJ40s were forward-looking cars. And now we have the E-Pace, which has the fashionable tech and is of the most fashionable genre of car. It's not futuristic, but it's certainly on the money. It's a car Jag has to make and, assuming it hits the mark on sales, it pays for the continued existence

of the snorty, naughty F-type, which is exactly the sort of caddishly wicked and dynamically amusing car we as **evo**-heads want to see. It's Jag's version of The Porsche Cayenne Equation.

I suspect this doesn't cut it with Old Farts. They want Jaguar to be pickled in aspic and perfectly preserved from a time when Harold Wilson was prime minister. Well it won't do. This moronic, misty-eyed, backward-looking belief that everything was better in the past will be the eventual ruination of Britain. Hankering after a mythical time when children were polite, policemen stood on street corners and every Jag had a plank for a dash is only preventing us from moving onwards.

I can and do moan about this stuff because I'm increasingly an Old Fart. But while I'll happily rage about apostrophe misuse and the baffling mystery of Snapchat, I can promise my children one thing: I only want new Jags to be modern. ✘

'They want Jaguar pickled and preserved from a time when Harold Wilson was prime minister'



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TED KRAVITZ

Formula 1's status as the vanguard of automotive innovation is ebbing away. Kravitz explores the challenges that lie ahead

FORMULA 1 HAS A LITTLE PROBLEM: it's quickly becoming completely irrelevant to the global car industry. It used to take pride in being a big research and development platform, where the red-hot time demands of weekly competition resulted in lateral thinking that produced innovations from transmissions to carbonfibre, aerodynamics to engines. Indeed, F1's 2014 switch to turbocharged hybrids was instigated to keep up this 'pinnacle of motorsport' tradition, the manufacturers happy and the boffins engaged. But a few years on, the tech is obsolete and the big brands have a new fancy.

It's the FIA Formula E championship for electric cars. Renault, Mahindra and Audi have been there since the start and have been joined by Citroën and Jaguar. Coming soon are BMW, Porsche, Mercedes and Fiat (as Alfa or Maserati). That means that, as far as road-relevance goes, the future of top-class motorsport isn't F1, it's FE.

Which is astonishing, for three key reasons, the first being that Formula E cars are really slow. You won't notice it too much on TV because the producers use clever camera angles to give a sense of high speed. It's also hard to see how slow they are in comparison to Formula 1, as Formula E doesn't race on circuits used by F1. Even when it's in a city that has a Grade 1 circuit, such as Montreal, Formula E builds a street track. The exception is Monaco, where you do notice how much slower the cars are.

The second reason is that Formula E had a very shaky formative season, in 2014-15, with unreliable technology and unsuitable tracks. The resulting embarrassment could have put manufacturers off, but with maturity has come stability and credibility.

Which leaves the racing. In the beginning it looked, to the average motorsport enthusiast, like the racing in Formula E was a bit staged. An exhibition. Like the demonstration of a series concept extended to the race itself. Overtaking manoeuvres were lined up and accepted largely without protest and the only crashing tended to be into the all-too-close concrete barriers. It was hard to get excited about on-track battles that looked more like something you see on a trackday safety-briefing video.

But while Formula E essentially remains an exhibition, a showcase to prove that race cars can be run on purely electric

motors, the racing has now grown up to the extent that overtaking matters and you get the feeling the drivers really care. In Sébastien Buemi's case, a little too much, judging from the aftermath of the recent 'ePrix' (ugh) in Canada, when he marched up the pitlane in an attempt to find whoever had driven into him so he could give them a bloody good talking to.

There is still a major limitation, in that the cars run out of battery mid-race, necessitating a pit stop where the driver jumps out of their soon-to-conk-out car and into a fully charged one. But credit to the rule-makers on this one – it takes balls to turn the biggest drawback of owning an EV into an entertaining mid-race event.

But even that changes for the 2018-19 season thanks to a 54kWh battery supplied by McLaren, which will last an entire race. And that's the wider point – competition is still pushing and improving the technology, but it's being done in Formula E, where it's road-relevant, and in not Formula 1.

It's logical to suggest that if you increasingly sell predominantly electric cars, there isn't much point spending marketing millions demonstrating how good your combustion-engine technology is in Formula 1. So, it's not alarmist to suggest that Mercedes, Renault and Honda will leave F1 because it won't help them sell their road cars. In this case, who supplies the engines? The answer, of course, is Cosworth and Ilmor, both of whom have been the canaries in the coal mine on this

issue, signalling the impending need for their services but warning that under the current complex regulations it's too expensive.

So how about returning to normally aspirated V8s? They already exist so are cheap and, crucially, their screams would bring the wow-factor back to Formula 1. The FIA doesn't like the idea but with no manufacturers supplying, they might not have a choice. F1's independent teams can see this coming, while Mercedes' F1 team are not pre-empting future board decisions.

F1 could evolve to become the exact opposite of what it once was. Formula E will be the R&D lab while Ferrari, McLaren, Williams, Red Bull and whoever else is left employ the best drivers to drive fast, loud cars that produce entertainingly close racing around the best circuits in the world. And when put like that, perhaps F1 doesn't have such a problem after all. ☒

'A return to screaming normally aspirated V8s would bring the wow-factor back to Formula 1'



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eVO Supertest

by JAMES DISDALE

PHOTOGRAPHY by ANDY MORGAN

RS5 v M4 Comp

BMW's M4 has been refreshed and there's a new Audi RS5 that does the numbers to put the frighteners on a full-blown supercar, but can either see off our favourite supercoupe, the Mercedes-AMG C63 S? We've put down 3000 miles on road and track to get the answer



Pack v C63 S



THE DRIVE

The three coupes head to Yorkshire for an in-depth on-road assessment



THIS IS SHAPING UP TO BE A BRUISING encounter. The new Audi RS5 has not long arrived in the UK (see Driven, **evo** 238) and already it's spoiling for a fight. Lighter, faster and more agile than before, it's got the recently revised BMW M4 Competition Package and hard-hitting Mercedes-AMG C63 S Coupe firmly in its sights.

The last RS5 was depressingly underwhelming. Its glorious naturally aspirated engine and elegantly enhanced shape promised much, but it was undermined by a chassis that delivered the sort of poise and grace you'd expect from an Ed Balls *Strictly Come Dancing* routine. Audi's riposte has been to shave 60kg from the new model with the help of the firm's scalable MLB architecture, while a heart transplant means a new, 444bhp twin-turbocharged 2.9-litre V6 replaces the V8. It's mated to an eight-speed automatic gearbox and a faster-reacting four-wheel-drive system.

The 2018 model-year BMW M4 looks much the same as before, with a body that's ripped with barely contained muscle and a stance that says 'come and have a go if you think you're hard enough'. There are reprofiled headlamps and new light signatures for the tail lights, but in all other respects this supercoupe's looks have been left well alone.

Our test car here has the £3000 Competition Package, which adds 19bhp to the familiar blown straight-six for an RS5-equalling 444bhp and also brings stiffened and lowered suspension, thicker anti-roll bars, adaptive dampers and an additional front splitter.

It's the Mercedes-AMG C63 S that exudes the confidence of being the current **evo** supercoupe choice. Bulging arches and an elbows-out wide track make it arguably the most intimidating of our trio when spied in a rear-view mirror – an impression that's reinforced when you run the numbers. Its 4-litre twin-turbo V8 has the upper hand when it comes to capacity and cylinders, while the headline figures of 503bhp and 516lb ft leave the Audi and BMW looking a little undernourished.

How, then, are we going to settle this heavyweight bout? The answer is with our first ever **evo** Supertest. The plan is fairly simple on paper, but it promises to be gruelling in practice. Deputy editor Adam Towler, contributing editor John Barker and I will first hit the road for a two-day tour of some of the most testing tarmac Yorkshire has to offer, then we'll visit Millbrook Proving Ground to run performance figures, before finally heading to Bedford Autodrome for some timed laps of the quick and challenging West Circuit. By the time we've finished, we'll have logged 1000 miles (almost exactly, as it'll turn out) in each car and have all the data we need to name a winner. And a loser.





Left: M4 offers an excellent driving position and superbly supportive seats; 19in wheels are a no-cost option, and yield a more composed ride than the standard 20s that we've also experienced; straight-six good for 444bhp in Competition Package spec

IT'S A 5AM ALARM CALL FOR DAY ONE AND WE set our satnavs for the North York Moors. First up for me is the C63; I want to reacquaint myself with the benchmark.

It's an instant-gratification machine, the Merc. The V8 barks into life with an angry flare of revs and settles to a *chug-chug* idle that's part canal boat and part American muscle car. Boot the throttle and the timbre turns rich and bassy. And loud – this is the car to drive if you want to get noticed.

Yet you don't have to work the engine particularly hard to make decent progress. In fact, you could use no more than 4000rpm and leave most traffic for dead. The seven-speed MCT transmission – essentially a conventional automatic but with a wet start-up clutch instead of a torque converter – shuffles ratios as smoothly as the Audi's torque-converter auto, while both of these automatics feel slicker when left to their own devices than the BMW's DCT 'box. However, there is a niggle with the Merc in that when the revs stray too close to the limiter there's an agonising pause before the next ratio engages.

The steering is direct with a reassuringly meaty weight to it, creating a sensation of being planted on the road from the outset; even at two-tenths you can feel this is a car that means business. In their softest setting the dampers still have a resolutely firm edge, with sharp ridges and broken tarmac sending shudders through the car's structure, but it's far from uncomfortable, and when you're simply mooching it's little more challenging than a C220d.

Yet there are concerns. While the cabin looks great, it doesn't feel as solidly screwed together as other models bearing the three-pointed star. As Barker remarks: 'Bloody hell, it squeaks and rattles like it's done 100k miles, not a couple of thousand.' It's not the first C63 (coupe and saloon) we've driven that's suffered from so many noises, so we can't just put it down as a characteristic of this example.

The contrast with the Audi couldn't be more stark. The RS5's exterior won't be to all tastes, with its fake vents beside the lights and its fussy (optional) alloy-wheel design detracting from an otherwise handsome profile, but inside, it is an exercise in premium perfection, with high-grade plastics, slick TFT screens and drum-tight construction – the BMW is equally solidly built, but its more traditional layout is starting to look a touch dated.

However, the Audi also lacks drama. There's a smattering of RS5 logos and some cossetting high-backed seats, but that's about it. The engine fuels the low-key feel, because apart from a showy bark from the exhausts on start-up, the Audi's V6 is a virtual mute compared with the bombastic Mercedes and snarling BMW powerplants. Even squeezing the throttle to its stop fails to turn up the aural excitement. You can select Dynamic mode for a deeper and rortier soundtrack, but it's still the most vocally timid of our trio.

My word it's fast, though. Maximum twist of 442lb ft is available from just 1900rpm, which in combination with four-wheel-drive traction means devastating point-to-point pace, as our figures at Millbrook will later prove.

**'The M4's straight-six
races towards the
red line with an almost
naturally aspirated zeal'**





Bottom: with 503bhp, the twin-turbo Mercedes monsters its rivals in this test for outright power; handily, this example is fitted with the optional carbon-ceramic brakes. **Below:** interior looks pretty but its build quality is open to question

Fully pin the throttle in third gear and the Audi's ability to meddle with your sense of space and time is addictive. Yet there's no sudden explosion of acceleration or a frenzy of revs; it's far more linear and controlled than that.

In its default mode, the steering is lighter and slower than both the BMW and Mercedes setups, plus there's little in the way of feedback, which is a worry for the Yorkshire switchbacks. Still, I revel in the supple ride and hushed cabin on the long haul north along the M1 after an early car swap – this is easily the quietest and most comfortable of our trio.

We arrive on the Moors to find that February has arrived early in North Yorkshire. The clouds have descended so low that you can barely see beyond the end of the bonnet, while rain is coming in horizontally. Photographer Andy Morgan is trying to look chipper, but this is bad. The four of us hunch over a road map and frantically consult weather apps, which are saying that west is best for sunshine today. With fingers crossed, we plot a route to Hawes, 80 miles away, where we can fuel and wash the cars before picking up the B6255, which snakes across the Dales and leads to the famous Ribbleshead rail viaduct. It's time to try the BMW, which despite its same-as-before looks promises to have ironed out the flaws that made the original such a frustrating device.

You feel instantly at home in the M4, thanks to its hugely supportive seats and – hallelujah! – a completely circular steering wheel. There's no flat-bottomed nonsense here.

Initially the M4 has more in common with the C63 than the RS5. There's the same tautness to the ride, even with the dampers dialled back to Comfort – although the BMW





does a better job of rounding off the more jagged road imperfections. This could be down to our car's 19-inch wheels – a smaller, no-cost option – because models we've sampled on 20-inch rims have a sharper low-speed ride.

That straight-six is also an ever-present companion, emitting a deep mechanical growl until 4000rpm, at which point it becomes even louder and angrier as it races towards the red line with an almost naturally aspirated zeal. More encouragingly, it sounds more authentic than before, evoking the snarling six of the E46 M3. Better still, the seven-speed DCT loses its clunkiness and delivers fast, crisp shifts when you take control via the paddles.

Off the main route and onto the twisting roads that duck and dive towards Hawes, upping the pace in the M4 reveals that the M division has worked overtime on the 2018MY car's chassis. You can tweak the suspension, transmission, engine and steering to the nth degree (there are Comfort, Sport and Sport+ modes to choose from, plus three gearshift settings), but a bit of fiddling finds the best compromise is Sport for the engine and Comfort for everything else. Set up like this, the revised M4 feels like a different car to the one it has replaced. The spiky power delivery and knife-edge balance between grip and slip have gone. Instead, you can really lean on the BMW on the exit of a corner and trust the messages you feel through the seat of your pants. 'It couldn't be more different to the old car,' raves Towler. 'I felt really comfortable driving around with the ESP switched off – just enjoying the challenge of measuring out the engine's delivery.'

Before you know it, you're properly dialled in to the BMW, revelling in its composure and marvelling at the newfound connection between car and driver. A significantly lower kerb weight than its rivals here and a near-perfect 53:47 weight distribution both play a part, helping give the car an agile and alert feel. Barker is a real fan, too. 'I still shiver slightly remembering my first go in the original turbocharged M4,' he says. 'There was a car with a power delivery that didn't match the handling... How different things are now. The BMW now manages that trick of being balanced enough to have consistent, containable oversteer.'

I swap to the the C63 S. Crikey it's rapid. (Fast starts give the traction control a thorough workout, though.) That twin-turbo V8 delivers a sledgehammer blow the moment you get into the throttle, particularly in the sharper Sport and Race modes, while outright pace is the same as the M4's, but you have to work that car harder to keep up with the Merc. Once you're rolling there's good traction, too, allowing you to use more of the engine's prodigious shove than you'd think possible. Yet unlike in the M4, the softest suspension setting is all at sea over these undulating roads, failing to keep the Merc's claimed 1725kg (the reality is a lot more) in check. 'You need to firm things up to go for it,' explains Barker. 'Sport firms up the dampers, ramps up the shift and throttle responses and loosens the stability control but doesn't turn it off – that's as far as you'd want to go on the road.'

Turning all the systems off in the Merc is only recommended on the track, because at the edge of its



‘The RS5 hunkers down and picks apart these tortuous roads with breathtaking poise and precision’

Top left: slimmed down twin-turbo V6 makes 442lb ft from just 1900rpm – something the other cars here can’t live with when exiting corners. **Left:** optional polished alloy wheels won’t be to all tastes. **Below:** Audi has the most luxurious interior here; build quality is rock-solid, too



performance envelope, the car's mass starts to tell. Once the rear end starts moving there's a sense you'll be grabbing heart-pounding armfuls of lock until you're well into the next county. The weight also shows over mid-corner crests, where the AMG's inertia causes a catch-your-breath hop sideways towards the white line, and occasionally beyond.

This behaviour makes you grateful for the £4285 carbon-ceramic front brakes with massive 390mm discs, which effortlessly slow the C63 with a pedal action that is firm and progressive and free of any of the snatching that can undermine similar setups.

Like the M4's, the AMG's steering is quick and well weighted, but there's little in the way of feedback. The rate of response is natural, however. And with so much front-end bite, it's easy to trust that the Merc won't wash wide as you commit to a corner. The C63 can't come close to matching the lighter BMW's agility, but take a slow-in and (very) fast-out approach and it simply demolishes roads like these.

So, can the all-wheel-drive Audi match these rear-driven entertainers? Guide the RS5 through the first few corners and you'd have to say the answer is 'no'. As Towler notes, 'The initial impression is that it's not much more than a go-faster S5; it sounds and feels similar. Obvious really, given the underpinnings, but if you're looking for an experience that immediately catches the imagination, there's a real danger you might be underwhelmed.'

The lighter, slower steering, muted engine, smooth ride and deceptively linear power delivery leave you thinking this is just another fast Audi that flatters to deceive. However, delve into the driver modes, push a little harder and the RS5 reveals it has a much more aggressive alter ego.

That lighter V6 in the nose means the Audi turns in with an alacrity that's as surprising as it is scalpel-sharp. And

'Like the M4's, the AMG's steering is quick and well weighted but there's little in the way of feedback'

with the front wheels on a seemingly laser-guided aim for the apex, the Sport rear differential can do its work more effectively, subtly overdriving the outside rear wheel to deliver both stinging acceleration out of the bend and a neutral balance. Out of slower corners, the RS5 easily pulls a car length on the pursuing Mercedes and BMW.

What leaves the biggest impression, though, is the car's damping. With Dynamic mode engaged, the RS5 hunkers down and picks apart these tortuous roads with breathtaking poise and precision. 'The agility is remarkable for an Audi,' says Barker. 'There is some magic in this car's chassis; in Comfort it rides well, in its most sporty mode it is well controlled and occasionally brilliant.'

The raciest driver setting also adds some extra noise to the twin-turbo V6's crushing straight-line speed, while the eight-speed 'box responds crisply to the paddles and rips through ratios. No, it can't match the BMW for immersive driving thrills or the Merc's drama, but the RS5's ability to up its game when necessary is a real eye-opener. As Towler notes, 'It doesn't matter what surface, undulation or camber you throw at the Audi, it can respond.'

We'll have to see whether the Audi has any other surprises up its sleeve at Millbrook.





THE DATA

To Millbrook for acceleration and braking tests – and a potentially embarrassing weigh-in



PETE GIBSON

PARKED AT THE START OF the Millbrook mile straight, the C63's engine is settled to a low, purposeful idle that hints heavily at the performance potential. Pull both aluminium gearshift paddles towards you to engage the launch mode, then tap the right one briefly to confirm you're ready. Plant your left foot on the brake and your right foot on the throttle and wait for the V8 to start bellowing and crackling at a preset 3500rpm before side-stepping the brake and letting the computers do the rest.

It sounds easy, but in reality getting the rear-wheel-drive Mercedes off the line takes practice. Selecting the traction control's half-way-house Sport setting and carefully feathering the throttle helps the C63 roar to 60mph in 4.3sec, which is a few tenths behind Merc's claim of 3.9sec to 62 but an impressive achievement when you consider the C63 tips our scales at a portly 1847kg.

The carbonfibre-roofed M4 is far trimmer, weighing in at just 1645kg. This helps explain why it's just a tenth slower to 60mph

than the C63, despite a 59bhp power deficit. That's about as big as the gap gets between these two, and remarkably they both flash past 150mph in 21.1sec. Launch control is standard, but as in the Mercedes it's tricky to get the BMW off the line. You can alter the starting revs up to a maximum of 4000rpm, but even then the M4 feels like it's bogging down on Millbrook's track surface, possibly explaining why that 0-60mph time is four tenths behind BMW's 0-62 claim.

No such worries for the Audi. Yes, it weighs a not insubstantial 1799kg, but four-wheel-drive traction and a gearbox that features eight closely stacked ratios allow it to erupt off the line without wasting a single horsepower. As in the M4 and C63 S, there's launch control, yet unlike in those two, the Audi's system is brutally effective. Out of the corner of my eye I can see Adam's head being flung back against his headrest as the RS5 catapults off the line like a fighter jet being fired down the deck of an aircraft carrier. The result is 60mph in a laugh-out-loud 3.6sec. Audi modestly claims 3.9sec to 62.

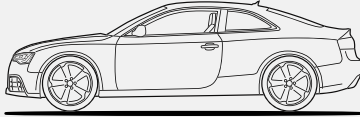
However, the Audi's mass and weaker top end tell eventually and beyond 100mph it starts to lose ground to the other two. By 150mph it's a full two seconds in arrears.

Our braking test features ten consecutive stops from 100mph, which is enough to put even high-performance setups under strain. The Merc's optional carbon-ceramics give the impression of refusing to wilt, the pedal action remaining resolutely firm. However, the data shows a 21.5-metre difference between the best and the worst stop – the largest spread here. The C63 also records the longest stopping distance, by over 5 metres.

The lighter BMW, on standard cast-iron brakes, stops in the shortest length, recording 86.5 metres early on – 1.6 metres better than the Merc's best. However, during the eighth stop the pedal begins to go long and wisps of smoke rise from the under-pressure pads. The Audi's brakes – also cast-iron – suffer the same symptoms at about the same time, but unlike the BMW, the RS5's pedal feel and brake bite are fully recovered by the time we hit the road again.

Audi RS5

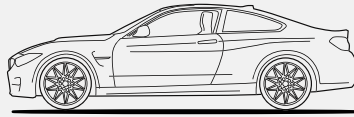
Length 4723mm Wheelbase 2766mm



Engine	V6, 2894cc, twin-turbo
Power	444bhp @ 5700-6700rpm
Torque	442 lb ft @ 1900-5000rpm
Transmission	Eight-speed auto, four-wheel drive, electronically controlled rear LSD
Tyres	275/30 R20 front, 275/30 R20 rear, Hankook Ventus SI Evo 2
Height/width	1360mm/1861mm
Weight	1799kg as tested (1655kg claimed)
Power-to-weight	251bhp/ton using test-car weight (273bhp/ton claimed)
0-60mph	3.6sec as tested (3.9 to 6.2 claimed)
Top speed	174mph (optional raised limiter)
evo mpg	19.6 (average over duration of test)
Basic price	£62,900
PCP monthly price	£833 (36 months, £8000 deposit, 10,000 miles per annum limit)

BMW M4 Competition Pack

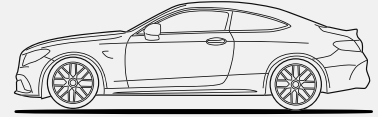
Length 4671mm Wheelbase 2812mm



Engine	Straight-six, 2979cc, twin-turbo
Power	444bhp @ 7000rpm
Torque	406 lb ft @ 1850-5000rpm
Transmission	Seven-speed dual-clutch (option), rear-wheel drive, LSD
Tyres	255/35 R19 front, 275/35 R19 rear, Michelin Pilot Super Sport
Height/width	1392mm/1870mm
Weight	1645kg as tested (1585kg claimed)
Power-to-weight	274bhp/ton using test-car weight (285bhp/ton claimed)
0-60mph	4.4sec as tested (4.0 to 6.2 claimed)
Top speed	155mph (limited)
evo mpg	21.2 (average over duration of test)
Basic Price	£62,080
PCP monthly price	£861 (36 months, £8000 deposit, 10,000 miles per annum limit)

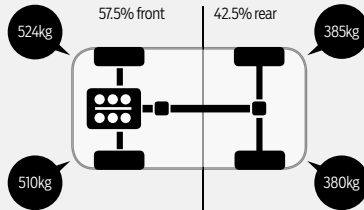
Mercedes-AMG C63 S

Length 4750mm Wheelbase 2840mm

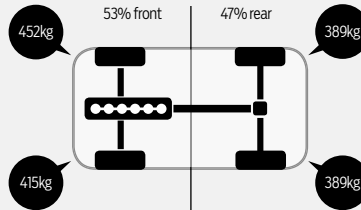


Engine	V8, 3982cc, twin-turbo
Power	503bhp @ 5500-6250rpm
Torque	516 lb ft @ 1750-4500rpm
Transmission	Seven-speed MCT auto, rear-wheel drive, electronically controlled LSD
Tyres	255/40 R19 front, 285/35 R20 rear, Michelin Pilot Super Sport
Height/width	1400mm/1877mm
Weight	1847kg as tested (1725kg claimed)
Power-to-weight	277bhp/ton using test-car weight (296bhp/ton claimed)
0-60mph	4.3sec as tested (3.9 to 6.2 claimed)
Top speed	155mph (limited)
evo mpg	16.5 (average over duration of test)
Basic Price	£70,385
PCP monthly price	£902 (36 months, £8000 deposit, 10,000 miles per annum limit)

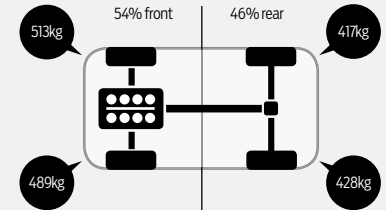
Weights & balance



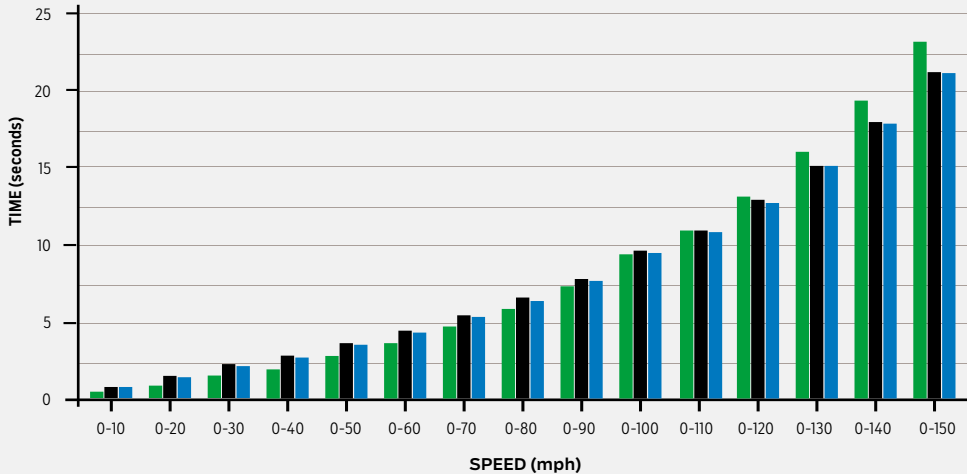
Weights & balance



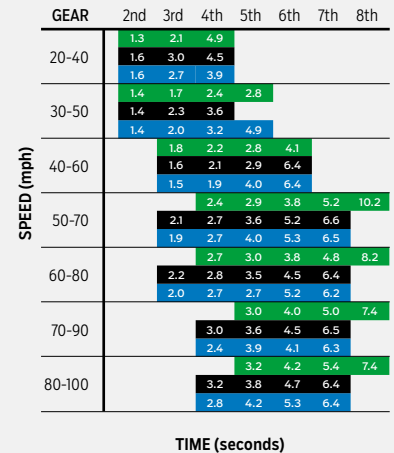
Weights & balance



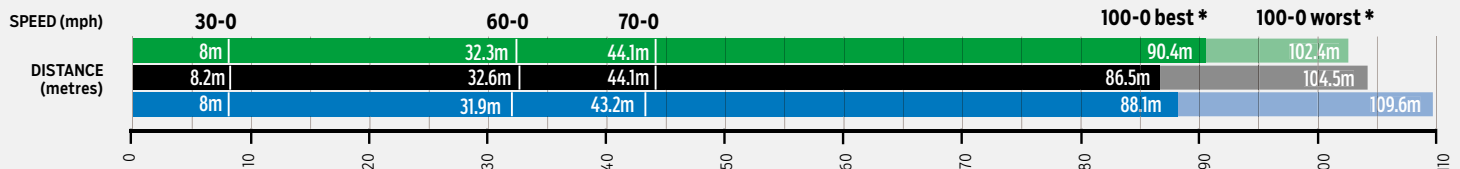
Acceleration from standing start



In-gear acceleration



Braking



* out of 10 runs



PETE GIBSON

ON TRACK

And finally to the Bedford Autodrome, to see how our contenders compare on a hot lap

FROM THE DRIVER'S SEAT IT feels like there might be a major upset... First up is the most powerful car, the Mercedes. The challenge with cars that have the potential for massive oversteer is that getting the speed out of them means treading a thin line, and slipping off it can turn very quickly into two fat black lines. This is annoying in the slower corners, when you just want to get on with things, and heart-pounding when it happens through the fastest corner on the lap...

Stability control was set to Sport for the warm-up lap and first flyer, allowing some slip and thus showing where traction is likely to be an issue, which is pretty much everywhere. It does a good job, keeping the tail in line without being too intrusive, but start to push more and there are sections where it feels the car is being held back too much. So, stability control is disabled and the challenge of walking the line begins.

There's little warning of when the rear

is about to break free, and when it does the swing is generous. Containing it takes patience and quick reactions but the speed does come, though in truth no lap feels completely clean. Each car gets three flying laps, and the C63's best is 1:25.6. To its credit, the car's optional hybrid carbon front/cast-iron rear brake setup lasts very well and the tyres look evenly scrubbed across the tread.

The BMW M4 is quite a contrast, firstly because its engine sounds so loud, even wearing a helmet. On the first flying lap it's obvious that, like the Merc, the BMW's slackened-off stability control is too restrictive. The car feels lighter and better balanced in the quick stuff but it has a little more initial understeer, so it feels like you have to slow it down more for the slower turns. It will kick its tail out early like the Merc but ease the throttle and it steadies quickly so you don't have to back out and wait. Neat is best, of course, and you can be. Shame the upshift lights in the rev-counter

are hard to see and that the brakes feel soft from the off, suggesting we'd had the best of them in the formal brake test. Still, 1:23.4 is an emphatic two seconds a lap faster than the Mercedes.

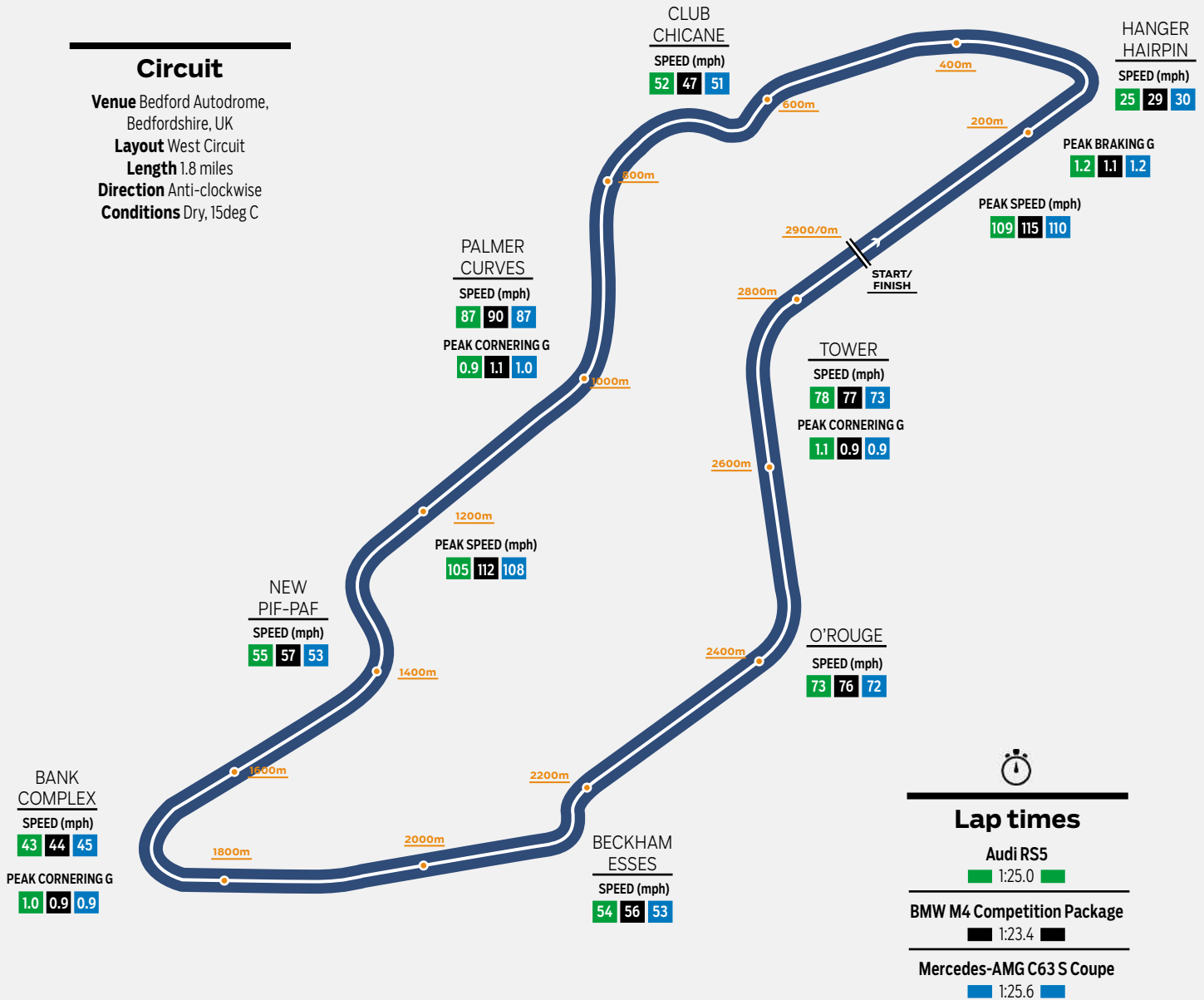
What a contrast the Audi is. The work rate it demands is dramatically lower but it feels very effective as well as easy to drive. Where in the BMW and Mercedes you're feathering the throttle, the Audi is nailed, backing off only to rein in understeer. It's not an inert all-wheel-drive car, either; stability control off, it feels almost like you're backing the car into the first hairpin and then hard on the throttle to sling-shot from the apex.

Throttle pick-up feels a bit slow – a bit soft at times, maybe – because you're mashing rather than feathering, but the car's eagerness to turn and its stupendous traction feel enough to deliver an upset. It's a slight disappointment that it only manages 1:25.0, splitting the M4 and C63.

John Barker

Circuit

Venue Bedford Autodrome, Bedfordshire, UK
Layout West Circuit
Length 1.8 miles
Direction Anti-clockwise
Conditions Dry, 15deg C



Lap times

Audi RS5	1:25.0
BMW M4 Competition Package	1:23.4
Mercedes-AMG C63 S Coupe	1:25.6

STUDY THE SPEEDS AND G RATINGS ON THE TRACK map above and you'll soon start to build a picture not only of each car's individual character, but where it gains and loses against its rivals.

The first thing you notice is just how much more speed the M4 carries through the faster corners and then builds upon once it's on the straights. The confidence that its weight distribution and balance brings is clear to see with the corner speeds it achieves.

More interesting is what the raw data betrays about the Audi's performance. In most of the corners, and particularly the tighter ones, it's on the power before the other two, proof of its fabulous traction and immense low-down grunt. But every time it's then surpassed along the following straight by the other pair, which while unable to get on the

power so soon can accelerate at a greater rate thereafter. The traction and positive turn-in of the RS5 is also evident in the speeds through Club Chicane, and neither is it a surprise that it's the fastest car through Tower: there are no high-speed oversteer worries to be felt in the Audi.

As for the Merc, it masks its weight and traction issues out of the tighter corners via the enormous torque of its V8, allowing it to quickly surpass the Audi – after the Palmer Curves, for instance – and keep the M4 at least partially in sight. But it's also no surprise that it's slowest through the quicker curves, where the mass begins to tell and its spiky over-the-limit behaviour preoccupies the mind. For evidence, look no further than the respective speeds through the fast right of Tower.

Adam Towler

AUDI RS5 v BMW M4 COMPETITION PACKAGE v MERCEDES-AMG C63 S



THE VERDICT

With many miles and almost as many numbers crunched, it's time to pick a winner

evo rating

Audi RS5	BMW M4 Competition Package	Mercedes-AMG C63 S
★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★



WE WERE EXPECTING THE arguments to rage for days over this one, but in the final reckoning, the finishing order proved to be easier to settle on than we ever imagined. That's not to say the end result wasn't surprising...

It's often difficult to shake off preconceptions when putting together tests like this, particularly when it comes to fast Audis, but the latest RS5 turned our expectations on their head. It's the RS5's wide bandwidth of abilities that's truly astonishing; at the touch of a button it can be turned from the GT car Audi claims it to be to a steely cored performance coupe.

'Slowly but surely, it becomes apparent that this is a serious car,' says Towler. 'Its performance is instant and savage, but it's the sophistication of its damping – the same quality that makes it such an easy car to live with – that is the key to its real-world pace.'

If there's a criticism, it's that the Audi lacks instant access to thrills. There's excitement there, but you have to dig a little deeper to find the qualities that make you appreciate it more. Does it do enough to topple the Mercedes-AMG C63 S? Yes, but by the narrowest of margins.

Make no mistake, we love the bombastic and entertaining C63 S, particularly its firecracker of an engine – the twin-turbo V8 is one of the best in the business. Yet while its instant-gratification fun is hard to resist, its abilities are a little uneven in this company, and its hefty kerb weight means it is the slowest at the track (and thirstiest at the pumps). Factor in its poor cabin build and a hefty £7485 premium over the next cheapest car here and its fate behind the Audi is sealed. Barker sums it up nicely: 'Overall, it doesn't feel as well resolved or as engaging as the other two. It has the most attention-grabbing exhaust note, but in this company Mercedes is selling the sizzle, not the sausage.' Quite.

So where does that leave the M4? Way out in front is the short answer. It's taken BMW a while, but this 2018MY Competition Package version is the car the M4 should have been from the start. From its near-perfect weight distribution to its pared-back kerb weight, the fast and fun BMW feels like a car that's been developed with the driver's best interests at heart.

'It has an authenticity to it that cuts through the challenge of the other two,' says Towler. 'It shines brightly pretty much all the time. Whatever the mood, whatever the journey, the M4 feels like an event, like a real performance car, like a car to covet and treasure.' Like a winner. ☒



SPECIAL DELIVERY

Collect a brand new Aventador S from Lamborghini in Italy and drive it back to the UK to join the press fleet. Those were our instructions. The resulting trip was suitably memorable, though not entirely for the right reasons...

by DAVID VIVIAN

PHOTOGRAPHY by STEPHEN HALL

A

SULTRY THURSDAY AFTERNOON IN

the south of France and, somewhere on a road snaking up the side of a mountain, the main event is toothache versus Aventador S. Willing 400mg of recently swallowed Ibuprofen to get a grip while 730 violently vocal horsepower chases the arc of a yellowing sun before it disappears behind the ragged skyline of the Col de Vence, it's a throb-off. And, if it weren't for the Aventador's unremitting intensity on this insanely twisted and, frankly, too narrow ascent, I'm pretty sure my previously dormant wisdom tooth's tectonic rumbling would be having the better of it.

I can't help thinking there's an entire Top Trumps Rolodex of cars more suited to having fun on this extraordinary road. A Lotus Elise Cup 250 with all the lightweight options would be an absolute riot. Hell, even an MX-5. The almost absurdly wide Aventador isn't the sort of car to sharpen your blade up here, much less choreograph a dance between positive and corrective lock. Gobsmaacking grip and go are its primary weapons, and forming a bond of trust with four-wheel steering that doesn't quite communicate the precision and iron resolve of the front end is taking some time.

Why are we chasing the sun? Photographer and ever-ready co-driver Stephen Hall knows a place on the far side of the summit where the horizon's fade to burnt orange will bag the beauty shot barely a day into our otherwise reasonably unpressured delivery drive. And the reason our timing is so perilously close to the edge? I'll come to that.

'Delivery drive' sounds a tad prosaic but, in essence, it's what it is – a simple train, plane and automobile to-do list commencing with a brisk morning suitcase drag to Whitstable railway station, a more leisurely walk to the taxi rank at Bologna airport, an early doors appointment at Via Modena, 12, 40019 Sant'Agata Bolognese BO next morning and, a thousand or so bug-smearred, superunleaded-glugging miles later, a finale in the dark just four paces from a Lambo-lit front door, the ground outside gently shaking, neighbours' curtains furtively twitching.

But it doesn't have to end there. Sticking to an extra scene in the script that I wrote myself, I'll hang out with the life-sized Hot Wheels hero for a couple of days, bashfully ducking all the attention and gently declining offers from young people who want to come and live in my house and sit by the window. Above all, though, my task is to keep the pearly painted, circa-£350k with options, 217mph bolide from Bologna safe until a bloke comes to decant the widest tyres around into the back of a lorry and unite them with those on the rest of Lamborghini UK's press fleet. Not any old car. An Aventador S. The fastest and finest Aventador



'The fastest and finest Aventador you can actually buy this side of the hardcore SV'

you can actually buy this side of the hardcore SV. You've got to wonder what Ferris Bueller would do. Best-laid plans and all that...

Back in the south of France, the pulsing pain I can feel in my jaw is slowly easing but, despite the distracting, adrenaline-piqued action behind the wheel, the dimming light of the day is outrunning a fabulous, echoing, naturally aspirated V12 in extremis that surely can be heard for miles around. Stephen, who mentioned the pencilled-in location over breakfast, is perhaps wondering why I'm not driving faster, but we've covered barely 250 miles since leaving Sant'Agata, and fallen shards of rock hiding in shadows have blown the breakneck schedules of too many exotically shod supercars into the middle of the following week. Besides, we've got

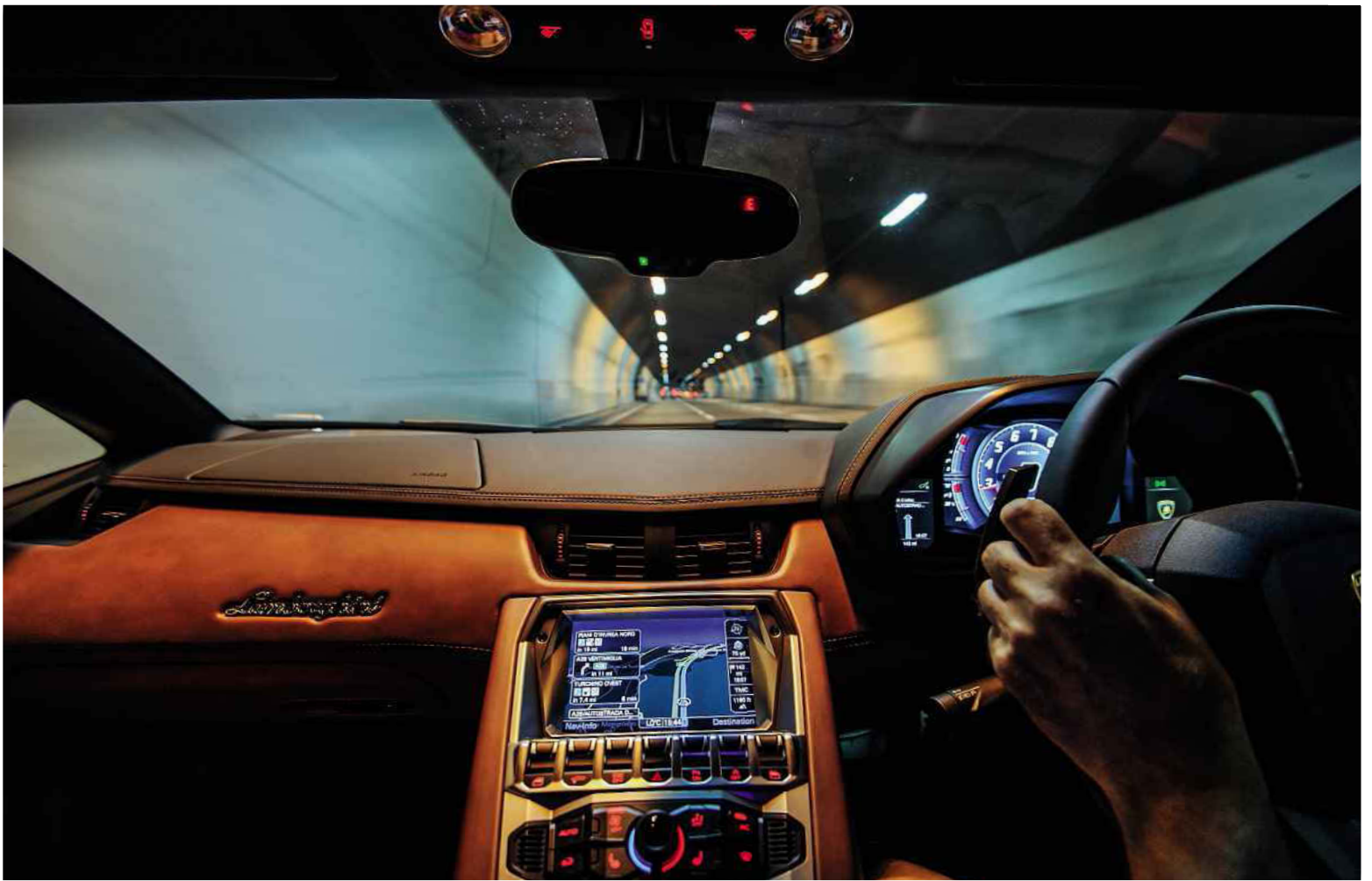


two more goes at a sunset and I rather fancy a beer under the waxy, softly suffused street lights of the first alfresco bar we come to in charming Castellane, an old Route Napoléon **evo** Car of the Year haunt, and bed for the night.

Optimism sagging, it soon becomes obvious nature's clock has defeated ours so I cool the pace and stand down the brutal, maximum-attack Corsa powertrain and chassis setting for the marginally more compliant and softer-voiced Sport mode. Searching for an alternative way to nab a few statics before pushing on to Castellane, we soon pull into a siding with a classic, 3D, pop-up book Col de Vence backdrop. Not what we were after, but it will have to do. Then, with just a hint of misty rain brushing our faces and Stephen slithering on his back in the middle of the road to drum up a little more

drama in his Nikon's viewfinder – as if the Aventador needed it – a rainbow slowly materialises in a perfect arc overhead and stays with us for ten minutes or so (see page 11). Not a sunset, then, but a colourful wrap all the same.

WE COULD HAVE MADE SUNDOWN ON THE COL with time to spare but for a tradition played out in the pages of car magazines over the generations. And it's this. No epic drive in an Italian mid-engined V12 supercar collected from the factory of its manufacture ever starts on time. There is always, without fail, a last-minute drama – in this case, the unmistakable smell of petrol after the early morning, pre-handover test drive. On inspection, and rather helpfully, there's a small puddle of the stuff under the car. By the time



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'The Aventador feels every inch as wide as it is. It isn't one of those cars that shrinks around you'

we arrive as requested at 9am sharp, our knee-wobblingly gorgeous pearl-white Aventador S has been wheeled out of the dazzling sunlight for the leak to be hunted down and fixed with all haste while we get to drink coffee and eat buns in the remarkably spacious and rarely seen Lamborghini workers' canteen. After that, relocated to the reception area with more coffee (but no buns) and given regular optimistic updates about when our car will be good to go, it's a bit like one of those old black-and-white films where the passing of time is expressed as the hands of a wall clock smoothly rotating away the hours.

It would have been a treat to have had access to the inner sanctum when, perhaps to no one's great surprise, they took the engine out. There can be few more inspiring sights than a Lambo V12 in the raw. In a way, it's the engine that encapsulates the history of the marque, recalling a bloodline that reaches all the way back to the early '60s and the extraordinary quad-cam 3.5-litre powerplant designed as a quasi-race unit by ex-Ferrari engineering wizard Giotto Bizzarrini. A clenched fist of an engine, taut with compression and explosive potential, it set the bar for everything that followed. By the time it appeared in the Miura in 1966 – sensationally slung sideways – it had grown to 4 litres and 350bhp. With twelve cylinders, four camshafts, six double-barrel carburettors and what must have seemed like a few miles of intestinal chains, it was an engine of some sonic significance. Emotionally, nothing much has changed. Statistically, it's 52 years later.

To put that in perspective, 730bhp at 8400rpm from 6.5 litres and a 0-62mph time of 2.9sec means the Aventador S has more than twice the power and takes half the time to cover the benchmark sprint – pretty much pole position for naturally aspirated supercars and, with a top speed of 217mph, the potential to be an annoyingly persistent, fang-grilled presence in the rear-view mirrors of any hybrid hypercar is equally impressive. I think Ferruccio Lamborghini would have approved.

Waiting in reception, the third reading of the spec blurb is just as enticing, if somewhat more frustrating, than the first. As it points out, the significance of the 'S' is tied up with the new electronic four-wheel-steering system teaming up with the rear-biased four-wheel drive and sympathetically retuned electronic dampers, the bespoke Pirelli rubber, the advanced aero incorporating an active rear wing that generates 130 per cent more downforce than before and a new fourth setting for the dynamic drive programme called Ego that allows you to mix and match the steering, powertrain and chassis setups to personal taste, whatever your mood or the road. So, quite a lot going on, but to ensure

all the systems mesh together and are reading from the same page, there's one 'central command' ECU to harmonise all the inputs with the driver's. A first for Lamborghini, says tech boss Maurizio Reggiani. For the time being, and having necked enough espressos to warrant a health warning, we're all ears. And wired.

ALMOST THREE HOURS TO THE MINUTE AFTER our arrival at Lamborghini HQ, an immaculate Aventador S, no longer smelling of petrol and leaving puddles on the ground, its pearlescent paintwork glinting sexily in the swelling midday heat, is finally ours. Although the delay requires quite a reset for our day, the rolling 'just another 20 minutes' tradition is intact, adding a frisson of tension and urgency to what follows. Mostly tunnels.

After folding ourselves and the boot overspill of camera gear under the swing-up doors and into a cabin of considerable *Top Gun* charm and need-for-speed functionality – the switchable TFT displays are ace, the missile-fire protect cap over the starter button a little silly – it's a bit disappointing to discover there's zero stowage space, save for the narrow, leather-clad corridor behind the seats, quickly occupied by a couple of sturdy metal tripods. But with only minor physical contortions and personal chattels jammed into every available nook and cranny, we fire up (that starter motor shriek and instant both-barrels combustion always a moment to savour), roll forwards and turn right out of the factory gates. And then realise we should have turned left.

The Aventador feels every inch as wide as it is. It isn't one of those cars that shrinks around you. Nor is it one you immediately feel in sync with. The extreme rake of the windscreen gives a letterbox aspect to the view ahead, rear visibility wouldn't pass the Trades Descriptions Act and the slightly rough cut of a warming 6.5-litre V12 combined with the dozy, drawn-out and slightly shunty auto-mode shifts of the paddle-operated, single-clutch seven-speed transmission conspire to make everything feel the opposite of slick. Or perhaps it's just the opposite of a McLaren 720S, and deliberately so. No magic-carpet ride, no seamless,

Below left: big roads and big scenery provide a suitably epic backdrop for the vast – and stupendously rapid – Aventador S. **Below:** rediscovering nothing, but nothing, attracts attention like a pearlescent white Lambo





lickety-split gearchanges, no easy-peasy. Old-school rough edges you have to finesse yourself are part of the big Lambo's dynamic personality and just as evident trundling along in traffic as they are when a flat-throttle, peak-revs, Corsa-calibrated second-to-third shift threatens whiplash.

Yet warmed, settled and with the leash loosened, it all comes together like a gathering storm, and on the autostrada heading for Genoa and the French border I can't really think of a car I'd rather be in. It isn't just the sinuous course of the road through the ceaseless, mountain-traversing tunnels but also the way the Aventador effortlessly bosses this high-velocity environment, which can sometimes seem like a German-sponsored cage fight between Mercedes Sprinter vans, VW Passats and, perhaps most alarmingly of all, Audi A6s travelling so rapidly they might as well have a brick lashed to the accelerator pedal.

The Aventador S moves through the mayhem like Moses parting the Red Sea and without having to try much at all, shrugging off smartphone paparazzi with a sonorous bellow, flowing through successive sweeps at a lick even the most adventurous Audi pilots won't attempt, blasting cobwebs out of the tunnels with the kind of sonic warfare only a high-revving, naturally aspirated V12 can deliver. Mile after glorious mile. Which makes me a little worried when, at the toll area that hands over from Italy to France, a policeman points at the Aventador and gestures it to join his colleagues off to the right, some of whom are holding machine guns. Papers, of course. Chin stroking, naturally.

Questions, inevitably. Now, guys, stand in front of the car and have your picture taken.

Later that night, as we sup beer in Castellane, we count that as a win to balance against the handicap of our three-hour delay in Sant'Agata. But there's still much to do, miles to drive, photos to take and one road in particular, the D996, that should give the Lambo a proper shakedown – especially the part between Saussy and Saint-Broing-les-Moines, which, come to think of it, is most of it. We mark it down as our key Friday waypoint destination and reward for the slow bits around Grenoble and Lyon.

CASTELLANE IN THE MORNING IS A FEEL-GOOD

place, all misty mountain tops at the ends of streets and laid-back, carefree bustle. Encouragingly, the Aventador is still where we parked it in the pretty town square, unscathed and understandably attracting less interest now than when we all too conspicuously rolled up the previous evening. Taking in the D996, we'll do more miles today, more than 300, ending up at the wonderfully named House of Custard in Montreal, though, for the sake of local harmony, it says Maison Crème Anglaise on the door.

Time for Stephen – no mean pedaller and a self-confessed drift obsessive in cars more suited to that style of self-expression – to do some driving. Not drifting. As our northern sojourn resumes on the N85 towards Sisteron, his initial impressions align with mine, especially over the steering, which has so little real feel it's left to the seat of

Top left: leaving the factory. **Above left:** police at tollbooths only interested in a photo-op. **Above right:** standard Eurotunnel carriages a tight squeeze in a two-metre-wide Lambo



Lamborghini
Aventador S

Engine V12, 6498cc

Power 730bhp @ 8400rpm

Torque 509lb ft @ 5500rpm

Transmission Seven-speed ISR automated manual, four-wheel drive, limited-slip diff, 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

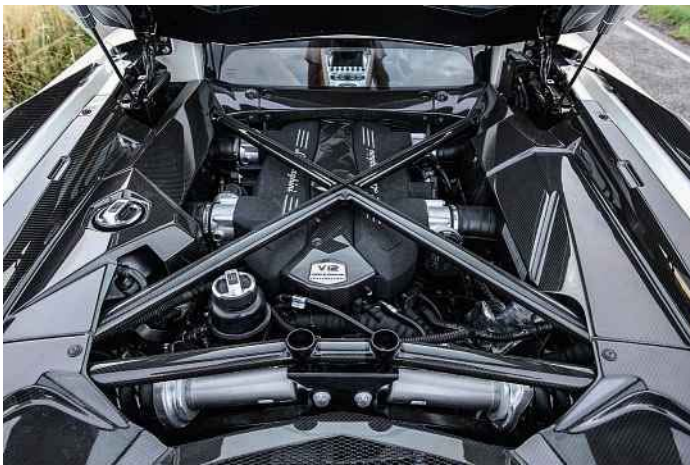
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evo rating ★★★★★





Left: TFT display changes colour to correspond with the selected driving mode (in Corsa it glows red). **Below left:** 6.5-litre 730bhp V12 surely one of the last great naturally aspirated engines



your pants and blind faith to gauge how much grip is left in the tank. Having said that, he acknowledges that there's always masses, so it's largely a communication thing, and one that you probably get used to over time.

No one is immune to the way this car can deliver a flurry of sucker punches, though. Even by Lambo standards, it looks astonishing. All width, wedge and drama, and utterly beautiful. And if that's the stuff of dreams, the engine – maybe one of the last great naturally aspirated V12s – is a legend in the making. For sheer unhinged excitement, no turbo motor past or present, however powerful, can hold a candle to it. As the straights become longer on the A51 towards Grenoble and I take the wheel again, we ponder the proposition that acceleration ain't what it used to be, smaller and more efficient blown engines and seamless double-clutch transmissions morphing the sensation into a characterless, linear surge similar to that of an Airbus A320 taking off. Which gets you down the road but is a bit rubbish.

Shall we? At this point the blacktop is so straight and long it has a vanishing point buried in the rippling haze of the horizon. Traffic has simply ceased to exist. I select Corsa – with its enhanced soundtrack, dedicated blood-red TFT instrument display and hard-nut powertrain/suspension settings – paddle-click down into third and (some old-school parlance needed here) drop the hammer. What happens next is absolutely bloody fantastic – a rush so raw, so visceral, so violent it pushes the air from our lungs and, slamming through fourth and fifth with the delicacy of a hydraulic ram, all but rinses the moisture from our eyeballs. Over in just a few seconds, it's a stunning illustration of how the Aventador S can serve up a straight-line experience that embeds itself in the memory for good. Our peak speed is logged in the trip computer, vouchsafe never to be revealed. It's still some way short of the entry before it: 198mph, no doubt achieved by a fearless Lamborghini test driver. I wonder how he resisted that final 2mph...

Traffic (much of it annoyingly, sometimes dangerously, mesmerised by the Aventador's presence), coffee, comfort breaks, photographs, salad baguettes and salted caramel ice cream rule the next hundred or so miles as we close down the distance to the D996 and, to be fair, it slips by in quasi-GT style, inflicting no notable fatigue on driver or passenger, although actually sleeping (Stephen, not me) isn't easy.

IN PLACES SMOOTH AND FAST, IN OTHERS challengingly lumpy and curly, the D996 has more or less everything a supercar in search of validation could want. I've never been here before, and if I could choose a Lamborghini in which to feel out and immediately exploit



‘The way the nose spears towards any apex I point it at is mighty and unerring. You just have to trust it’

an unknown road like this, it would probably be a Huracán Performante, mostly because of its size, agility and remarkable tenacity. That said, the best stretches of the route aren't titchy and so the Aventador's size isn't such an issue. Its fundamental reserves and margins – power, grip, braking – are all so huge, the security blanket so impregnable and expansive, that exercising that fabulously ferocious engine and utterly locked-down chassis at speed with something approaching impunity is a hell of a supercar kick and overwhelms any desire I may have to sweat the small stuff. Yes, the steering's rather synthetic responses still grate, but the way the nose spears towards any apex I point it at is mighty and unerring. You just have to trust it.

How the car deals with the lumpier sections of the D996 is particularly impressive, too, but the Aventador S is very prescriptive in extremis, never feeling that it wants to indulge the driver and bend to your will, and lacking feedback. It's not a car you'd want to slide around and modulate on the throttle for the sheer hell of it. You get the feeling that it'd just get away from you, and you'd become part of the scenery.

After a splendid evening at the fine Maison Crème Anglaise B&B, we effectively do just that and, with no great enthusiasm, hit the grey-green blur of the A6 to Paris and Calais beyond,



Stephen relieved that he finally nailed his sunset shot in the fields behind Montreal's medieval fortified houses, me glad that he did. My wisdom tooth has resumed another dormant phase and, despite a certain regret that our delivery duties are coming to an end, all is well with the world.

Stopping on a lonely Essex side-road for Stephen to rattle off a final few detail shots before dropping him home, a Mk1 Ford Focus pulls up and, scrambling out of the back seat, there really is the kid who wants to live in my house and sit by the window. Later, driving along an uncharacteristically active Whitstable High Street close to midnight – and as inconspicuously as I can – a young female partygoer a little the worse for wear shouts, at the top of her voice: 'IT'S A F**KING LAMBORGHINI!'

So much for that. ☒

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LE MANS

Does it have a future?

*In the first instalment of a new series that scrutinises the prospects of motorsport, the **evo** team attempts to find a solution to the problem that is the World Endurance Championship*

by STUART GALLAGHER

100

A S A MOTORSPORT FAN, YOU MAY BE ASKING WHAT in the name of Nelson Piquet Jr is going on with your sport. Manufacturers are jumping ships and joining bandwagons quicker than NPJ could react to a radio message during a night race. And once-headline motorsport series are now staring at vast empty spaces in the paddock where the corporate hospitality units of the world's biggest car makers previously stood.

Formula E would appear, on the face of it, to be the biggest benefactor of this shake-up. Recently Audi, BMW, Mercedes and Porsche all confirmed their switch to the all-electric single-seater series with full works teams, and within days of each other. Merc ditched Germany's DTM touring car series to fund the switch, while Porsche will end its World Endurance Championship programme two years early to focus on its first single-seater campaign since its disastrous Footwork tie-up in F1 back in 1991.

With Audi looking for somewhere to spend its euros after withdrawing from WEC last year and BMW having danced around the periphery of



Top: WEC isn't immune to imploding; in 1993 technology killed off Group C racing. **Above left:** Porsche 911 GT3 Hybrid R showed the appetite manufacturers have for technology in racing. **Above right:** Aston Martin is one of the few to shun the top categories to flourish in GT ranks. **Opposite page:** Porsche 919 Hybrid heralded Porsche's successful return to the top class of endurance racing in 2014; it was hideously sophisticated – and expensive



‘Spectators are lost as to what they are meant to be watching and in which sport they should invest time’

top-line motorsport with a presence in DTM and also IMSA GT racing in the USA in recent years, both will now field factory teams in Formula E. BMW is also returning to the FIA World Endurance Championship – in the GTE class, with its new M8, from 2018.

Manufacturers have always been key to motorsport and its success – although not always for the right reasons. And now some of the series and their promoters – who scoffed at the manufacturer top tables – find themselves at a lunch buffet with nothing more than a few overcooked parsnips and limp cabbage to shove around their plates.

Formula 1 knows this scenario only too well: it has courted boardroom millions more than any other series, only to lose it all again. In fact, every headline motorsport category does this, but it feels – and looks – like more are suffering than ever before and going through a period of huge transition. It’s leaving the spectators lost as to what they are meant to be watching,

who they should support and which sport they should invest their time and money in.

We feel the same in the *evo* office. What’s happened to the motorsport we know and love? Is it a case of our rose-tinted glasses getting darker with each new race we watch? Are our memories playing tricks on us, making us think it was all better back in the day? Or should we accept that change is happening, whether we like it or not, and embrace what we have?

It’s a tricky one, because motorsport to many of us means so much more than what happens on track for a couple of laps or hours on a Sunday afternoon. It’s the cars motorsport inspires that excite just as much, from iconic single-seaters such as a Gordon Murray-designed McLaren to the legends of endurance racing, from Jaguar’s XJR behemoths to Porsche’s all-conquering 956/962s. And the Group A, B and even N vehicles that created rivalries that were as fierce in the car parks as they were on track or on the rally stage. And, of course, the venues.

Motorsport was about the ultimate test, but is it still so? Has appealing to a wider audience that has less appetite to diligently follow a sport than it has a desire to be able to say ‘I’ve been there, done that and here’s the selfie to prove it’ done more harm than good?

What’s the answer? Is there a solution? In a bid to find one, or at least come up with a number of suggestions, *evo* is sitting around a table – and will again in the future – cracking open the biscuits and discussing the future motorsport over a cup of tea.

The key categories up for discussion over the coming months will be Formula 1, the World Endurance Championship, the World Rally Championship, touring cars (including BTCC, DTM, TCR and Australian Supercars), Formula E and Rallycross. The ‘experts’ are *evo*’s deputy editor Adam Towler, road test editor James Disdale, contributing editors Richard Meaden, John Barker and Colin Goodwin, and staff writer Antony Ingram.



'The sport has always been at its best when privateers can compete at the front of the grid'

This month we're looking at the World Endurance Championship – and oh how the mighty have fallen in this particular series. One minute it's the envy of many a race-series promoter around the globe, then it's left with a headline category (LMP1) that's buried itself so deep in the gravel trap that there's no plant machinery strong enough to extract it. The World Endurance Championship has seemingly been black-flagged just as it was heading for certain victory.

Audi's departure last year and Porsche's this have decimated the LMP1 category, and while we all enjoyed the ferocious pace of the R18 e-tron and 919 Hybrid and their jet-fighter-style approach to weaving through traffic in the dead of night, secretly we all knew it wasn't sustainable and sooner or later sportscar racing would eat itself. Again.

'Sadly, sportscar racing has gone down one of its periodic blind alleys,' says Towler. 'It's a cyclical thing – not a reason to panic, just to have a rethink. The LMP1 cars are too complex, too expensive, too fast and not identifiable as genuine sports cars.'

It's a sentiment shared by all of us. 'The recent decade of LMP1 racing has been absolutely fascinating and has turned out some of the most advanced cars ever made,' adds Ingram. 'But the rapidly escalating expense and increasing irrelevance for road cars was always going to lead to it burning out. There's also a disconnect here between how great people say this series is and their desire to actually watch it.'

In the past, sportscar racing appealed to the enthusiast, the die-hard and a collective who would think nothing about catching a flight to Sebring in the USA to watch a packed grid race

Above: a revived GT1 class in endurance racing would give cars such as the McLaren P1 GTR a home in top-tier competition. **Right:** Audi's abrupt departure from LMP1 was followed by the even more abrupt loss of Porsche. Without them, the only hybrid LMP1 contender will be Toyota

around an old bomber base. It still does today, but is that the audience the manufacturers in LMP1 are looking to appeal to? Unlikely.

So what's the fix? WEC is in the fortunate position of offering multiple classes, and while the top category has run its batteries dry, there are three more to pick up the pieces. 'I love the GTE cars,' says Meaden. 'The competition is especially fierce at the moment. It feels like WEC needs a prototype class, but the GTE cars are the ones that resonate most with fans.'

Towler – actually, all of us – are in agreement with Dickie when it comes to the GTE category, but *evo*'s deputy editor would go a step further. 'The prototype classes need to go,' explains Towler. 'The WEC should be GT1, GT2, GT3 and GT4. The return to GT1 would cover cars such as the next McLaren P1 and LaFerrari.'

'The existing GTE class would become the new GT2, with perhaps a little more power allowed – say 600 to 650bhp. The current GT3 cars racing in the likes of the Blancpain GT Series and Germany's VLN Endurance Championship would be allowed in, opening up the series to vastly more manufacturers, teams and drivers. And GT4 should be the entry point, because races such as Le Mans should have

minnows in them – Porsche Caymans and Lotus Exiges battling at the foot of the field.'

Colin Goodwin is in agreement but fears for the sport at a national level: 'I flew over Silverstone recently and thought there was a trackday taking place on a Sunday. It was only when I got home that I discovered it was a round of the British GT Championship. No one is attending the races that were once regarded as must-visit events and that's a big problem.'

But is the issue only the cars? There is also the argument that too many people are trying to have the same sized slice from the same diminishing pie and all they are left with is a handful of crumbs. WEC, ELMS, Blancpain, IMSA and VLN are all chasing the same teams and budgets to race similar cars. And then there are the venues. WEC, with its manufacturer millions, has been pushed to far-flung locations where there is no audience, interest or relevance for endurance racing. A marketing presence in Shanghai may help shift Q7s or Cayennes, but that region's audience would undoubtedly be better served by throwing a few thousand quid at a local social-media star than spending a couple of million euros at a race the locals have no appetite for. Motorsport's obsession with

conquering new territories around the world is its downfall.

As mentioned, sportscar racing has had a cyclical habit for generations, and most of the dead-ends it has found itself racing into have come about when the manufacturers have become more interested in competing in a costly technology battle rather than a motor race. The sport has also been at its best – and one of its biggest appeals has always been – when privateer and independent teams have been able to compete at the front of the grid and for overall victory with a car they have bought from, and is supported by, the manufacturers (as in the lower GT categories). Some of the most memorable sportscar victories have been at the hands of the privateers and independent teams, and perhaps now is a good time to hand back control to allow the World Endurance Championship to shine again at the hands of those who have made memories in the past.

Manufacturers have much to gain from supporting a series such as WEC, but we believe this support is best provided when they act as a supplier rather than factory teams. ✕

What do you think? Email letters@evo.co.uk



by DAN PROSSER

PHOTOGRAPHY by ASTON PARROTT

CORSE POWER

Could yesterday's GT1 heroes provide inspiration for tomorrow's brave new world of sportscar racing? We drive the 745bhp, Enzo-based Maserati MC12 Versione Corse to find out

THE SEATING POSITION IS SO HEAVILY reclined, you feel less like the driver of a car and more like an astronaut ready for launch. The steering wheel, ugly to look at with its chunky, tacked-on digital display but so perfect to hold, reaches to within a hand's span of your sternum. Strapped tightly into the bucket seat with your feet stretched way out ahead, you peer through the letter-box windscreen, the gap between the thick black sun-strip above and the blue-trimmed dash below scarcely more than a few inches. It looks vast, fearsome and daunting from the outside but, within the cabin, the Maserati MC12 Versione Corse feels so very right.

How we scoffed when Ferrari first announced its FXX programme back in 2005. The idea that anyone could be both rich enough and dumb enough to hand over a seven-figure sum for a car they couldn't drive on the road, or race, or take home with them, or even wheel out as and when they wanted to... it was absurd. Ferrari, we all agreed, had finally lost its marbles.

Just over a decade later, the trackday hypercar sector has proven to be so successful that it's grown into a small industry in its own right. Maranello wrote the rulebook with its Corse



MASERATI MC12 VERSIONE CORSE



Right: Prosser gets comfy behind the wheel of one of just 12 Versione Corse. Note how the black sun-strip reduces forward vision. **Left:** less than ideal conditions for a first date with a £2m-plus hypercar on race tyres



'Turn in. The steering is light, direct and dripping with feel, the front end immediately responsive'

Clienti programme and it still plays the game today, selling the £2million, LaFerrari-based FXX K to its wealthiest handpicked customers. McLaren and Aston Martin have also got in on the action with the P1 GTR and Vulcan respectively, but in the next couple of years the sector will be elevated to new, Formula 1-derived heights.

Mercedes-AMG has announced Project One, a carbonfibre warhead that borrows its drivetrain from Lewis Hamilton's F1 car, while Aston has teamed up with Red Bull and aerodynamic hyperbrain Adrian Newey – the finest racing car designer of his generation, perhaps of all time – to produce the Valkyrie. Both cars, incidentally, will be homologated for the road, but the track will be where they really belong.

Having seemed so unlikely a decade ago, the sector has lifted off like a Saturn V rocket in recent years. Manufacturers have realised that the world's billionaire petrolheads will readily stump up well over £2million for a track car, just as long as there's some sort of thou-shall-not-surpass überbrag attached to it. 'That Newey fella designed my car.' 'Mine's got Hamilton's motor in it.' And so forth.

Maserati isn't involved in the supercar game these days, never mind the trackday hypercar business, but back in 2006 it was right in at the ground floor, along with its

sister marque, Ferrari. The MC12 Versione Corse was built to celebrate the company's FIA GT Manufacturers' Cup success in 2005. That was the official line, at least; the opportunity to flog a handful of cars for a million nicker apiece might also have had something to do with it.

The Versione Corse was based on the MC12 road car but used the drivetrain and suspension from the GT1 racer. Only 12 were built. Maserati stored, maintained and transported the cars itself to begin with, but over the years most have found their way into private collections. Maserati admits it doesn't know exactly where each of the 12 cars is today, but it reckons four are in the US with the rest dotted around Europe.

'We let the customers keep their cars, not like our friends at Ferrari,' says Maserati motorsport sales and marketing manager Roberto Bozzi, who worked on the Versione Corse programme in 2006. 'We leave them free to use it how they want, to keep it in their garage, or in their living room...'

The MC12 was derived from the Ferrari Enzo, which means the Versione Corse is also a close relation of the original Ferrari FXX. It's based around a carbonfibre tub with inboard suspension, carbonfibre bodywork and Brembo carbon-ceramic brakes.

The 6-litre V12 was upgraded to race-spec to produce a mighty 745bhp at 8000rpm.

That's 124bhp more than the road car and more still than the GT1 racing car, which was fitted with an intake restrictor. The gearbox is a six-speed sequential, the car has no traction or stability control, or even any ABS, and with a dry weight of just 1150kg it has a similar power-to-weight ratio to the McLaren P1 GTR. Most were painted Blue Victory, including this one, and values today are in excess of £2million. Bozzi reckons three have been converted for road use.

Maserati doesn't like to unwrap its own Versione Corse very often, so it's a privilege to get any sort of access, let alone to actually drive it. We're at the Fiat Group's Balocco test facility, halfway between Milan and Turin, using a track that's made up of long banked sweepers, endless straights and a wiggly infield section. There's plenty to hit.

I don't have good enough karma that I should get to drive a true unicorn car and have decent weather all at the same time, so it's raining. Not heavily, but it hasn't stopped all morning and the track is sodden. Maserati has provided a GranTurismo GT4 car for me to learn the circuit in, but even on wet-weather racing tyres there's almost no grip out there. The car doesn't want to turn in; a lack of steering feel leaves me wondering if the column has been sheared in half. It doesn't have much traction, either, and there's so little feel through the brake pedal that I only know the wheels are locking up because I sail hopelessly past just about every turn-in point.

I slip and slide around like this for a few laps, concentrating mostly on not spinning the GT4 into a field or backing it into a bridge support, all the while learning precious little about the circuit itself. Soon enough it's time to exit the GranTurismo,



'It's only when I really start digging deep that I start to find the limit – a flick of oversteer, a flare of wheelspin'

contort myself through the Versione Corse's tiny door and fire up an engine that has just about twice the horsepower. Oh well. It'll be quite a way to go.

The big V12 fires up behind me and the whole car fizzes with energy. As with the GT4, the MC12 has a centrifugal clutch, which means pulling away is simply a case of selecting first with the steering-wheel paddle and squeezing the throttle pedal. I potter away from the holding area and accelerate gently onto the banked left-hander, pulling for the next gear, then the next. My right foot is flat now, engine starting to howl, up through fourth and fifth, then onto the long straight. Holy hell, this thing is completely planted! Where the GT4 was spinning its wheels up and jinking this way and that, the Versione Corse is glued to the track surface.

Brake hard for the chicane at the end of the straight. The MC12 doesn't have ABS but I can hit the brake pedal with as much force as my leg can muster and the car just hauls itself down to crawling speed, no locking or snatching whatsoever. Turn in. The steering is light, direct and dripping with feel, the front end immediately responsive, with good grip and no push.

The car feels stable and settled mid-corner, then once on the power I can open the throttle all the way in second gear without a trace of wheelspin. It just picks up and goes, engine revving out to 8000rpm gear after gear. Like the GT4, the MC12 is on

rain tyres, but were it not for the spray, the shiny tarmac and the wiper dashing back and forth across the screen in front of me, I'd swear the track was dry.

With its GT1-derived chassis, the Corse is a proper competition machine, not just a road car that's been modified for the circuit. In these soggy conditions the difference between the two is enormous. One fills you with terror, the other with confidence.

I head back to the garage, shut the car down and climb out for a breather. Where before I was nervous and uptight, I now feel relieved and relaxed. I gather my thoughts, pull my helmet back on and drop in for another go. Time to have a bit of a push.

A banked left-hand bend feeds onto a one-kilometre straight. The conditions are so dank and misty that I can't see the brakeboards until I'm almost upon them, but with so much grip under deceleration and such rock-solid stability, I'd have to have my eyes shut to out-brake myself. I dare to brake later into each corner, to carry more speed in and get on the power sooner at each exit. The car just takes it all, completely unfazed. In the high-speed sweepers, the massive aerodynamic downforce presses it into the surface, making it feel secure and sure-footed, and in the tighter corners it feels balanced and composed, more nimble than its vast proportions would suggest. It's only when I really start digging deep that I start to find the limit – a flick of oversteer, a flare

of wheelspin. Even in these conditions, the car's abilities far outreach my own.

Like all these track-focused customer cars, the Versione Corse was designed to be driven by amateurs, not professional racing drivers, so it's really no effort to pedal and not even particularly intimidating. It isn't poised on a knife-edge, one misjudged throttle input away from snapping into a spin. Instead it feels benign. It's only when you try to extract every drop of performance from it that you really have to up your game.

Whether you pootle about timidly or grab it by the scruff, though, there's always one thing to enjoy about the Corse: its feral, fearsome, wailing, unreconstituted bores-through-your-helmet monster of an engine. From the outside it sounds just like an old Formula 1 V12. Even with my Arai on, the noise of the thing is completely wild, a razor-sharp wail that builds unbearably through the rev-range and reverberates around the small cabin. At 6000rpm, the sound is so intense I have to strain not to flick the paddle to shift up a gear. The shift-lights that run across the top of the steering wheel don't even begin to light up until 7000rpm and, as they illuminate one after the other and the engine spins harder and harder, it feels like my head is going to burst. At 8000rpm, the final red light flashes brightly and I shift up. It feels more like 12,000rpm.

I've been fortunate enough to experience many very fast cars at full acceleration, from heavily turbocharged, torque-rich road cars such as the Porsche 911 Turbo S to 1000bhp all-electric spaceships. There's a lot to be said for the everything-at-once whack in the back a Turbo S gives you or for the building, uninterrupted pull of an electric car, but nothing compares to a light car with a very powerful, high-revving, naturally aspirated V12 pulling through relatively long ratios. It's just completely intoxicating, a surge that builds and builds in force as the soundtrack becomes ever more intense, the scenery blurs and the shift-lights flash rudely in your face. Wow. A drink of water, please. I don't ever want to drive another turbocharged car.

This has to be the most accommodating scary car I've ever driven, but, before I can really start to chase it around Balocco, my time is up. Little wonder the concept of the trackday hypercar has become so popular among the one per cent, I think to myself as I climb out of the cockpit. The Maserati MC12 Versione Corse is probably the most amazing car I'll ever be lucky enough to drive.

Now picture this concept re-imagined for 2020 and beyond, with a grid of GT1 cars based on tomorrow's hypercars. Over to you, FIA. ❌



Maserati MC12 Versione Corse

Engine V12, 5998cc **Power** 745bhp @ 8000rpm **Torque** 546lb ft @ 5500rpm **Transmission** Six-speed sequential manual, rear-wheel drive **Suspension, front and rear** Double wishbones, pushrod links, coil springs over horizontal gas dampers **Brakes** Ventilated carbon-ceramic discs **Wheels** 19in front and rear **Weight (dry)** 1150kg **Power-to-weight (dry)** 658bhp/ton **0-62mph** 3.3sec (claimed) **Top speed** 205mph (claimed)

Price new c£1 million **Value today** c£2 million-plus

evo rating ★★★★★



ICON

PORSCHE 924 CARRERA GT



Built to qualify the baby Porsche for sportscar racing, including Le Mans in the early 1980s, the Carrera GT is the ultimate 924

by ADAM TOWLER

PHOTOGRAPHY by ASTON PARROTT

A **2-LITRE, FOUR-CYLINDER** Porsche in the showroom; a 2-litre, four-cylinder Porsche racing in the Le Mans 24 Hours. How very 2017.

Or not. This little red coupe doesn't look contemporary in the slightest: it's as redolent of late-'70s Germany as a free-flowing autobahn or the crisp analogue bleeps and squelches of a Kraftwerk album. It actually smells of period West German industrial thoroughness, an aroma that probably boasts a terrifyingly long compound noun all of its own.

Porsche loved to link the current flat-four 718 Boxster/Cayman and the soon-to-be-defunct V4-powered 919 LMP1 programme, but back in the early '80s it had a much more traditional homologation car, one that did indeed win at Le Mans, albeit in this case a class victory.

Its basis was the 924 Turbo, a 168bhp high-performance version of the little 924, itself the bottom rung of Porsche's road car range. Originally a sports car project engineered for Volkswagen and designated EA425, it was canned by VW in the mid-'70s when it had a change of senior management, which left Porsche with a particularly acute headache. Eventually it bought the entire programme for a million Deutschmarks, including the use of the 2-litre Audi engine (often rather cruelly

dubbed 'a VW van engine') and an agreement to build the car in Audi's Neckarsulm factory. The resolutely logical, front-engined, water-cooled, 123bhp 924 and its big brother, the V8-powered 928, were the machines that then-Porsche-boss Ernst Fuhrmann intended to use to bury that smelly, noisy, rather weird car, the 911, once and for all – by 1980, in fact. Of course, it didn't quite work out like that.

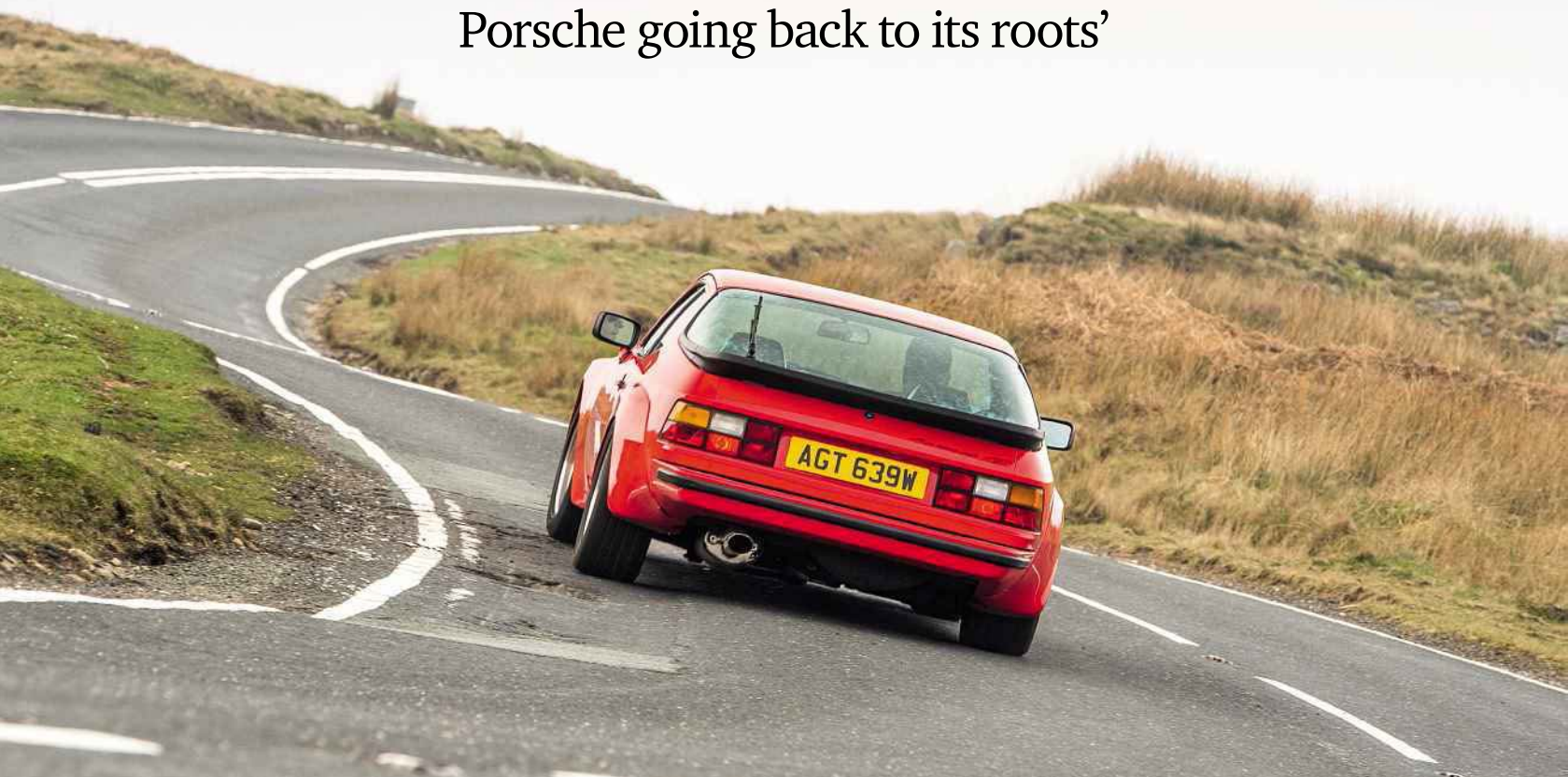
In 1979, four years into 924 production, visitors to the Frankfurt motor show were confronted with a rather special, pearl-white 924 on the Porsche stand, the new car adorned with the revered Carrera badge. In this era, 'Carrera' was still reserved strictly for high-performance derivatives, not applied as a 'given' to even the most basic 911, as it was from 1983 onwards.

This concept car gave a very clear indication of the forthcoming Carrera GT production car, save for a curious bonnet intake that looked like an anteater's snout, replaced by a boxier one for production. The garish tomato-red interior didn't make it either – thankfully – but the idea of a real driver's 924, for use in amateur motorsport as well as fast road driving, was widely welcomed. As it is today with the Cayman GT4 Clubsport.

This was Porsche going back to its roots and its early days with flat-fours. What's more, there



‘A real driver’s 924, for use in motorsport as well as fast road driving... This was Porsche going back to its roots’



was a surprise announcement: the factory motorsport team would run the car at Le Mans. After a decade of success in the world's greatest 24-hour race, this would be no outright bid for glory, but there would be three of the 2-litre coupes on the entry list. Porsche's head of R&D, Helmuth Bott, was reported to have remarked: 'If I wanted to make a Black Forest Gateau, I wouldn't start with a bucket of sand and a bucket of water.' Clearly not everyone had read the company's pre-show internal PR memo...

Four hundred examples of the wide-arched Carrera GT would need to be made to qualify the car for competition. Power was raised to 207bhp with the aid of an intercooler mounted on top of the engine (and fed by that scoop), a higher compression ratio and – for the first time on a production Porsche – digital ignition. Glassfibre was used for the arch extensions and sills, and the car was lowered 10mm at the front and 15mm at the rear compared with the standard Turbo, although that car's 'luxury' interior was carried over. They came in either silver, black or red, with just 75 made in right-hand drive for the UK, all pre-sold.

There were also 59 Carrera GTS road cars, all left-hand drive and red, featuring fixed

headlamps under Perspex covers (instead of the GT's evocative 'pop up' lamps) and running more boost (1bar instead of 0.75) to make 242bhp with 247lb ft of torque (up from the GT's 207lb ft). Weight was reduced in the GTS by 59kg, dropping the overall kerb weight from an already fairly lithe 1180kg to 1121kg. Of those 59 cars, 15 were finished to Clubsport specification, which meant they were lighter

still (1060kg), had a roll-cage fitted and ran even more boost for 266bhp. Finally, there were the 19 race versions, known as the GTRs, weighing around 930kg, and with the little four-pot tuned to 320bhp. You'll never mistake the 180mph-plus GTR: its bespoke wide panelwork entirely belies the size and humble nature of the engine beneath: it's a monster.

So the 924 Carrera GT is very much the real



Left: cabin retained the plush, pin-striped velour seats of the regular 924 Turbo from which the CGT was derived. **Above:** transaxle layout benefits the cornering balance

deal in the grand history of the homologation special, and parked in front of me today it exudes a confidence typically born from those credentials. The red Fuchs alloy wheels, those oversized, bold graphics, the swollen but purely functional arches... I am fairly hopping from one foot to the other with excitement.

Inside it's very, very dark. There are two chunky sports seats, covered in a pin-striped velour that has a particularly ripe, 36-year-old smell. Squidgy under the posterior, they're actually very supportive. The switchgear is resolutely, almost fanatically simple in the best Teutonic style. And while the gaps between the sections of interior trim are cavernous in places, and the whole car chirps away like a cage full of budgies at speed, the plastic used has a solidity that needs to be touched to be understood. It feels as though nothing could wear this car out.

The first challenge is finding a comfortable driving position. As anyone who's driven a 924 or an original 944 can attest, the steering column exits the dash on a curiously low trajectory. Coupled with a driver's seat that would ideally adjust lower, the result is a steering wheel deposited right in my lap.

Solution number one involves sliding the seat a long way aft, allowing my feet to find the pedals at a reasonable angle, but with the drawback that my arms are almost straight to reach the wheel. Option two is to move nearer but have both legs contorted around the wheel in a really awkward fashion. Given my knees aren't double-jointed, any heel-and-toe action will be physically impossible. It's a shame, and something that Porsche only sorted with the advent of the Series 2 944 in 1985.

Still, it's a Carrera GT, and I'm not allowed to let a bit of knee and shoulder ache spoil the moment. The second significant revelation about the CGT is the disarmingly uncouth nature of the engine. It chunters into life and then idles with all the sophistication of a machine found in a civil engineering plant yard. It's not just an aural thing, although it would be exceedingly charitable to call it anything more than gravelly and workmanlike; it's also the way it sends tremors through the bodyshell. 'Rough' would be harsh, but probably fair.

Further confirmation of the car's nonsense homologation ethos is provided by the dog-leg gearbox, which requires quite some

force to work around the ratios. I also make a mental note to remember the pattern of the gate, particularly when moving off from rest.

Let the clutch out in a sympathetic fashion and depress the accelerator at low revs and the car feels as though the handbrake has been left on. So you squeeze the throttle with more determination, and still there's nothing: this is turbo lag of a magnitude completely alien to a younger generation.

Finally, as the needle sweeps past 3000rpm, then 4000rpm, a whistling sound heralds the arrival of boost and the whole car seems to lighten, as if unchained from a great weight that it's been dragging along behind it, gouging a furrow in the asphalt. To be perfectly honest, it's not a massive kick in the back, but suddenly the Carrera GT feels fast and keen. While the 2-litre eight-valve motor predictably gets very coarse once past 5500rpm, it is undeniably enthusiastic to get to work.

Armed with the knowledge that it might be better walking than driving the CGT in a half-hearted fashion, I try to summon as much commitment and forward anticipation as I possibly can to keep the engine spinning

'Finally, as the needle sweeps past 3000rpm, then 4000rpm, a whistling sound heralds the arrival of boost and the whole car seems to lighten'





Above: add-on arches allowed the race cars to run wider rubber. **Right:** addition of intercooler helped wring up to 320bhp from 2 litres, though standard CGT had 207bhp





above 4000rpm at all times. The little Porsche seems to love it: it's a beautiful, highly original example, owned by a knowledgeable Porsche collector, and after some recent restorative work feels as though it needs a few miles to shake off the storage blues. I swear that by the end of the day it's a much happier car.

The Carrera GT on song feels fast – certainly properly fast by the standards of 1981, where it must have surged past columns of slower-moving traffic in punctuated gusts of boost. It's also clearly a car that wants to be enjoyed in the corners as much as on the straights, partly through the innate balance of the transaxle layout. In essence, driving this Porsche rapidly down a twisting road is like painstakingly piecing together a three-dimensional puzzle. It's not enough just to think about cornering lines, braking points and suchlike; revs, gear choice and making a clean shift are all absolutely critical if it's to come together, otherwise the car bogs down, progress is squandered, and you're left feeling ham-fisted.

Trouble is, without being able to work the pedals properly, I just can't seem to get a proper grip on manipulating the CGT to be in the right state at exactly the right time. The unassisted steering is very heavy at low speeds, and, while it does lighten once we're properly on the move, it weights up strongly once a significant turn is made, possibly exacerbated by incorrect geometry, which remains on the owner's to-do list. The odds look long on being able to

Porsche 924 Carrera GT

Engine In-line 4-cyl, 1984cc, turbo

Power 207bhp @ 6000rpm

Torque 207lb ft @ 3500rpm

Transmission Five-speed manual, rear-wheel drive

Front suspension MacPherson struts, coil springs, dampers

Rear suspension Trailing arms, coil springs, dampers

Brakes 290mm ventilated discs front and rear

Wheels 7 x 15in front, 8 x 16in rear (option)

Tyres 215/60 VR15 front, 225/50 VR16 rear

Weight 1180kg

Power-to-weight 178bhp/ton

0-62mph 6.9sec (claimed)

Top speed 150mph (claimed)

Price when new £19,210 (1980)

Value now £35,000-55,000

evo rating ★★★★★

catch any slide should the tail lose traction. Unsurprisingly, it's softly sprung, but the initial body roll is kept largely in check. In short, the potential is abundantly clear – I just don't feel I've been able to make the most of it. Driving a well-set-up Carrera GTS a few years ago – with period bucket seats for a lower driving position – proved just how enjoyable these cars can be.

There was no way Porsche could build the necessary number of cars to qualify the 924 Carrera GTR for homologation approval in time for Le Mans in 1980, so the cars ran as GTP models. Three were entered by the factory: a 'German' car, a 'USA' car, and a 'British' car, the latter driven by touring car legend Andy

Rouse and journalist and racer Tony Dron, a formidable pairing.

All three cars gained places in the race, but the British car completed the final six hours on just three cylinders to finish 13th. The American 924 was 12th, while the German car, running a richer fuel mixture and untroubled, finished sixth. Dron and Rouse had been wary of engine problems after losing an engine in testing and considered easing off on the straights, only to be reassured by the team that the issue had been solved. If they'd followed their intuition, Dron believes a fourth-place finish was on the cards, which would have been an incredible result given the 200mph-plus competition.

In many ways the 924 Carrera GT remains an enigma. Launched at the peak of what would eventually turn into a product cul-de-sac for the company, it achieved largely what it was designed to do in motorsport before quickly being superseded by the new Group C regulations for the 1980s. It also bequeathed a design that was refined into the hugely successful 944, but for years it was viewed as an oddity in the company's history and valued accordingly. Predictably, in these boom years of classic car values, that's no longer the case, and while it's an acquired taste in driving terms, it's as authentic a Porsche motorsport product as anything air-cooled and rear-engined. It's a genuine, if less well known, icon. ✘

With thanks to the car's owner and Autofarm



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THE CHIRON THAT EVO BUILT

Just how do you go about buying a hypercar? We visit Bugatti's London showroom to spec a Chiron of our own



by STUART GALLAGHER

PHOTOGRAPHY by MALCOLM GRIFFITHS

YOU KNOW THE SCORE WITH BUYING THE latest must-have high-performance car. You either need to be a blood relative of the company CEO or be prepared to allow the dealer's sales director to drink your wine collection and hang your art in his smallest room. Oh, and if his kid is looking for a prom date, he can take one of your offspring – and you'll have to pick up the bill for the chopper so they can arrive in style, too. Then and only then will he instruct the receptionist to allow you beyond the coffee machine and the copies of *Vogue* to sit outside his office, feeling like a fifth-former who has been spotted challenging the geography teacher to a round of Jägerbombs.



Even if you make it this far, chances are you'll be told you still can't have the car you've saved for, lusted over and promised yourself because, despite all the hoops you've jumped through, you aren't deemed a special customer. Not that anyone knows what the criteria is to become a special customer these days, but it's probably easier to become a Freemason than it is to become someone considered worthy enough to buy the same new car as a YouTube vlogger. They will, of course, sell you a used example at a premium...

And how much harder must it be to acquire an example of one of the most expensive, most powerful and fastest production cars currently on sale? There must surely be a surgeon on hand to remove the required limbs simply to gain access to the showroom...

Not quite. You do have to ring a doorbell at Bugatti's Mayfair showroom, but all it takes is a quick press and a moment or two before the receptionist opens the door and welcomes you in. No appointment, no pre-arranged qualifying interview. No organs left at the door or offspring offered to the staff. Simply ring the bell and be welcomed into the surreal world where £2million-plus

hypercars are sold. And don't fret that you'll be in the way, for the Bruton Street showroom welcomes as many as 500 walk-ins every month.

'It's a cliché, but we don't need to "sell" a Bugatti,' says Anita Krizsan, Bugatti brand director in the UK. 'When a customer walks in, they have already bought the car in their mind. They have come to us to help them make it a reality.' With 500 Chirons set to be built and the list price starting at £2.1million plus taxes, you'd expect there to be a bit of sales job to do, but seemingly not.

'Fifty per cent of the customers we've taken orders for in Europe are new customers to Bugatti,' Krizsan continues. 'When the Veyron was launched, they weren't in the market for that kind of car, for various reasons. Now they can have a Chiron and, while they're waiting for their car to be built and delivered, they will buy a used Veyron.' As you do.

Then there are the customers, six of them so far, who have ordered a Chiron to a relatively 'standard' specification that allows for quick delivery and have then returned to spend rather longer on the configurator to order a car more closely aligned to their desired spec. And not forgetting the customer who took delivery of a

Below and right: the problem with letting the editor spec a car is that he has no imagination. If it's not grey with a black interior, it's British Racing Green with a tan interior. Which is exactly what he went for when ordering a Chiron. **Bottom:** brand co-ordinator Art Katallozi takes Gallagher through the configuration process





Chiron on a Friday and ordered another first thing Monday morning.

So what's the process to ordering a Chiron? What goes through the mind of a typical customer? And what happens when you let a car hack go through the steps?

'It's very different for every customer,' explains Krizsan. 'Some will take an hour to choose their specification and it will be very personal to them; others will take six months and the whole family will be involved.' It took me all of 30 minutes, but then I'm a simple man lacking in imagination.

'Some customers like to have their car very similar or as close as possible to the specification the car was launched in. Others will want bespoke colours and trim throughout, which we can do, though any unique materials requested have to go to the factory to be tested just like any other part fitted to the car. If you want us to paint the car in a colour that's unique to you, we can, but it will add to the build time while the factory finds a suitable supplier and it passes all of our quality control tests.'

I suspect that most of you will have played with the configurator on Bugatti's website, scrolling through the colours on offer. If you're a customer sitting on one of the leather chairs in the showroom, you get to do the same, but on a configurator offering much greater detail and one that you'll have access to from anywhere in the world once you've started the order process.

'Many customers have a clear idea of how they would like their Chiron to look,' says Art Katallozi, brand co-ordinator at Bugatti in London, 'and I'm here to show them their ideas on the configurator and help them realise their goals.'

'Sometimes a customer may be in two minds about a body colour, or which contrasting colour goes with their main colour. Or should it be two-tone at all?' Apparently, 95 per cent of Veyrons were finished with two-tone paint, but a similar proportion of Chirons are being finished in a single colour.

'Or it could be a wheel finish, interior colour for the seats or the carpets, or maybe the stitching in the steering wheel they are undecided on,' continues Katallozi. 'We are able to show them every opportunity. Sometimes a customer will revert back to their original specification; others will leave having ordered a Chiron in a specification they had never considered, and perhaps never would.'

Once you're in the ordering process, which does involve the grubby subject of money – unavoidable even at this level, it would seem – there are factory visits for every customer (and their family) and, of course, the test drive. Well, you'd want to experience a 1479bhp car before you took delivery, wouldn't you? As you'd imagine, it's no ordinary demo, with factory test driver Loris Bionchi or one of his colleagues, perhaps Le Mans winner Andy Wallace, demonstrating exactly what such power feels like before handing over to the customer.

Then you wait. If you ordered today, you could expect delivery around this time in 2019, with a Chiron currently taking six to nine months to build, depending on the spec. And then all that's left to decide is whether to have your latest hypercar delivered to your home for a very private handover, or whether you'd prefer to press the showroom's doorbell once more. ❌

'Some customers take six months to choose their spec and the whole family will be involved'





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Market

DEEP DIVE NISSAN SKYLINE GT-R R32, R33 & R34

Few performance cars have a line-up of variants as confusing as this run of Skylines. So how do you tell your V-spec IIs from your Z-tunes?

by Bob Harper

THE R32 GENERATION Skyline GT-R was conceived for one reason: to succeed in Group A racing in Japan. It was staggeringly successful, too, winning 29 races from 29 starts. At the car's heart was an RB26DETT 2.6-litre DOHC twin-turbo engine that, while rated at 276bhp, had huge tuning potential.

This was linked to a four-wheel-drive system called ATTESA E-TS – Advanced Total Traction Engineering System for All-Terrain with Electronic Torque Split. Channelling all the power to the rear wheels in normal conditions, it could shuffle up to 50 per cent to the fronts if required. There was even rear-wheel steering, or HICAS – High Capacity Actively Controlled Steering.

Homologation required the release of a Nismo R32 in 1990 and 560 examples were produced – 500 for the road, the rest for racing teams – with extra aero, some lightweight panels and steel turbos. ABS and the rear wiper were deleted, and the cars were all painted Gun Grey metallic.

To celebrate the car's on-track success, a V-spec ('V' for victory) R32 was introduced in 1993. The main changes were the fitment of Brembo brakes, 17-inch BBS wheels and a retuned ATTESA setup. A second V-spec machine, the V-spec II, arrived in 1994 but the only change was the adoption of wider rubber.

It was also possible to order an 'N1' model designed for home-market Group N1 racing, and this could →





be based on either the standard GT-R or the V-spec/V-spec II. Just 245 were made and all were painted Crystal White and featured an uprated engine with steel-wheeled turbos and elements of the Nismo's aero kit. ABS, the stereo, the rear wiper and the air con were deleted.

Given the success of the R32 GT-R, a performance version of the Skyline was continued into the R33 generation and it arrived in 1995 using much of the R32's hardware. The engine was virtually identical but the GT-R had grown and now tipped the scales at 1540kg (up from 1430kg). From launch a V-spec model was available. It had uprated suspension and a 'Pro' version of

the ATTESA 4WD that included an active limited-slip differential. There was also another N1 version for domestic racing.

In 1996 the LM Limited arrived to commemorate the GT-R coming home tenth overall at Le Mans in 1995 – all were painted Champion Blue and featured the N1's bonnet and front bumper ducts along with a carbonfibre rear spoiler.

In 1997, 100 V-spec cars were modified by Middlehurst Nissan in the UK and sold by Nissan under SVA rules. Changes included a 180mph speedo, UK-spec bumpers, and additional coolers for the gearbox, rear differential and transfer box.

The ultimate R33, bar the one-

Above and previous page: R32 (the grey car) revived the 'Skyline GT-R' name in 1989 after 16 years of dormancy; its R33 successor (black) was heavier but no less impressive. **Below:** twin-turbo straight-six was designed to handle huge power increases



NISSAN SKYLINE GT-R TIMELINE



August 1989
R32 GT-R



January 1990
R32 GT-R Nismo



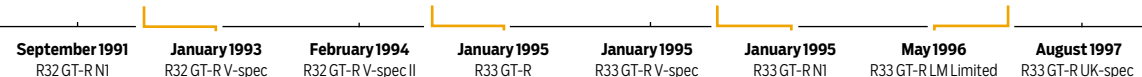
February 1994
R32 GT-R V-spec II



January 1995
R33 GT-R



May 1996
R33 GT-R LM Limited



January 1995
R33 GT-R V-spec

January 1995
R33 GT-R N1

August 1997
R33 GT-R UK-spec



off homologation GT-R LM, was the Nismo 400R. It had extensively revised bodywork, LM-GT1 alloys, Bilstein suspension, a titanium exhaust and a 2.8-litre RB-X GT2 engine rated at 395bhp and 346lb ft. Just 44 were produced.

In 1999 the R34 arrived. Again, three models were in the launch line-up – regular, V-spec and N1 – and again the V-spec was the more hardcore offering, with the Pro version of ATTESA, an active LSD, firmer suspension and a carbon diffuser. Some 80 V-specs were officially imported to the UK, with changes including additional oil coolers and the removal of the Japanese 112mph speed limiter.

In October 2000, the V-spec II made an appearance with even stiffer suspension, larger rear brake discs and a carbon bonnet with a NACA duct. May 2001 saw the arrival of the M-spec, the M representing Kazutoshi Mizuno, Nissan's chief engineer. This variant had 'Ripple Control' dampers (said to absorb the smallest road

undulations), a stiffer rear anti-roll bar and revised suspension geometry.

The final two production models, the V-spec II Nür and M-spec Nür, were released in 2002, the 'Nür', of course, standing for Nürburgring. They featured an uprated RB26DETT straight-six using N1 racing components and larger turbos with steel blades. Officially rated at 276bhp, they had over 330bhp when they rolled out of the factory.

That should have been the end of the R34 GT-R, but to celebrate Nismo's 20th anniversary, Nissan sanctioned the Nismo Z-tune – a limited run of ballistic R34s. Nissan purchased used R34 GT-Rs from owners and comprehensively rebuilt them, adding a bodykit that is an acquired taste and spraying all but one in Z-tune silver. The engine was enlarged to 2.8 litres, and with massively uprated internals and IHI turbochargers it delivered 493bhp and 398lb ft. It was a glorious swansong for the Skyline name – when the R35 GT-R arrived in 2007, the iconic moniker was dropped.



Above and above left: R34 officially limited to 276bhp – like the R32 and R33 – but most are thought to have made a little bit more than that; the technology at the driver's fingertips was also astonishingly advanced for the time. **Left:** bold circular tail lights are a GT-R hallmark

FIRST AND LAST

R32 SKYLINE GT-R

Engine	In-line 6-cyl, 2568cc, twin-turbo
Max power	276bhp @ 6800rpm
Max torque	260lb ft @ 4400rpm
Weight	1430kg
Power-to-weight	196bhp/ton
0-62mph	5.6sec (claimed)
Top speed	156mph (claimed)
On sale	1989-1993
Price new	£242,500 (1991)

R34 SKYLINE GT-R

Engine	In-line 6-cyl, 2568cc, twin-turbo
Max power	276bhp @ 7000rpm
Max torque	289lb ft @ 4400rpm
Weight	1560kg
Power-to-weight	180bhp/ton
0-62mph	4.8sec (claimed)
Top speed	165mph (claimed)
On sale	1999-2002
Price new	£54,000 (1999)



November 1997
R33 GT-R Nismo 400R



January 1999
R34 GT-R



January 1999
R34 GT-R V-spec



January 1999
R34 GT-R N1



October 1999
R34 GT-R V-spec UK



October 2000
R34 GT-R V-spec II



May 2001
R34 GT-R M-spec



February 2002
R34 GT-R Nür



December 2004
R34 GT-R Nismo Z-tune



THE RS6 HAS ONE MAJOR PROBLEM. FINDING SOMEONE WHO UNDERSTANDS IT.

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ALL YOU NEED TO KNOW ABOUT... CAR POLISH

There has been an explosion of new car polishes on the market in recent years.

Here's a guide to what they are for and how to use them

by Bob Harper

POLISH, WHAT IS IT?

Many people don't realise that polish is abrasive and its purpose is to remove defects. With modern cars, you're not touching the paint at all. In fact, the polishing process removes a very small amount of the clearcoat, because it's the clearcoat that gets damaged. A polish is designed to remove that damage, whether it be in the form of water marks, acid-rain etch, fine scratches or swirl marks.

HOW CLEAN DOES THE CAR HAVE TO BE BEFORE POLISHING?

Ideally the car should be *clinically* clean. That means decontamination to remove tar, bug-squash and brake-dust build-up, then degreasing and then a pre-wash. These are all processes that will aid polishing and enhance the finish.

DO I NEED TO DO ANYTHING AFTER I'VE USED THE POLISH?

Polishing is not a final process; you should not leave it at that because then the paint remains unprotected. Polishing is typically a preparation stage before applying either a carnauba wax or a ceramic-type sealant.

WHAT'S THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN A WAX AND A POLISH?

Because it is abrasive, a polish shouldn't be used on a regular basis, only when you want to remove imperfections and in turn improve the clarity of the paint and the depth of shine. A wax, meanwhile, adds a layer of protection to maintain that gloss by preventing the likes of UV and natural contaminants from damaging the clearcoat.

HOW LONG DO THE RESULTS OF POLISHING LAST?

It depends on what protective coating is used. For a carnauba wax you're probably looking at two to three months depending on environmental



'You need to be more careful on a classic that doesn't have a clearcoat. The paint will be a lot softer, so caution is key'

conditions, ownership and wash routines. If you go for the expense of a ceramic sealant, that timeframe is significantly increased.

ARE THERE ANY POLISHES TO AVOID?

We'd advise against the lower end of the market as some polishes contain fillers, typically chalk-based, so what you're actually doing is filling in the problem, not correcting it.

DO YOU NEED A MACHINE POLISHER?

For certain defects you don't have to use a machine polisher – it's an add-on to the process – but by using one you will get better results, and much faster!

ARE THERE DIFFERENT POLISHES FOR MACHINE AND HAND APPLICATION?

A lot of the better and more refined hand polishes can also be used with a machine. However, some polishes are designed specifically to be used with a machine only. The principle behind this is that the

action of the machine breaks down the abrasives into finer and finer particles. As such, they would not be suitable for hand polishing.

WHAT ABOUT POLISHING CLASSICS?

You need to be more careful on a classic car that doesn't have a clearcoat. The paint will be a lot softer, so extra caution is key.

ANY LAST WORDS OF WARNING?

Watch out for SMART repairs – if they've not been carried out to a high standard, polishing could remove the paint. You should also be aware that there are limitations to what a polish can do – if the damage has gone through the clearcoat and the paint, you'll need a respray.

USEFUL CONTACTS

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autoglym.com

bilthamber.com

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Buying guide



4STARCLASSICS

VOLKSWAGEN LUPO GTI (2000-2005)

Compact, feisty and well-built, the hottest Lupo has a cult following for a good reason. And you could find out why for as little as £2500

by Peter Tomalin

WHEN THE LUPO GTI WAS launched at the end of 2000, a number of road testers – including our very own Mr Meaden – likened it to the Mk1 Golf GTI. And you could see their point. As with the classic Golf, the Lupo was small, light and bags of fun. With cars growing inexorably bigger and heavier, that was something to celebrate. And now, like those early Golfs, the Lupo GTI is emerging as a modern classic with a strong following all of its own.

In fact, looking at the stats, little wolfe (Lupo meaning wolf, a nod to VW's Wolfsburg HQ) had quite a bit more bite than its great-grandad. Whereas both (initially at least, in the case of the Golf) had 1.6-litre fuel-injected four-pots driving the front wheels, the Lupo's 123bhp easily outgunned the Golf's 108bhp, and the performance figures bore that out: 0-60mph in 8.2sec and a 127mph maximum were a whole chunk quicker than the Golf's 9sec and 113mph. That's progress for you.

The Lupo GTI was certainly a serious little hatch. It used the same engine as the Polo GTI but weighed in at just 1038kg, thanks in part to its

aluminium bonnet, front wings and doors. Visually, it had a deep, jutting chin, gaping air vents, flared wheelarches over a wider track, chunky 15in alloys, a subtle tailgate spoiler and – best of all – twin central tailpipes. Underneath, there were uprated springs and dampers, a 20mm reduction in ride height, and disc brakes all-round. Inside was plain but businesslike: the only slight disappointment was the seats, which weren't the most supportive. Otherwise it was a little corker, though on the pricey side at £13k before options, which included air con, leather, a CD player and an electric sunroof.

It got even better, too, when a six-speed gearbox replaced the original five-speeder in late 2001. With tightly stacked ratios, the new 'box really invigorated the Lupo and, though it meant you were busier as the driver, that just added to the fun.

Despite all this, only around 950 Lupo GTIs were sold in the UK and a couple of hundred of those have been lost in the intervening years, so it's a rare wee beast today. Owners also tend to hang on to them – and you can see why. If you'd like to join them, here's what else you need to know. →



CHECKPOINTS

ENGINE

We're indebted to the experts at the excellent ClubLupo.co.uk, in particular Pete Russell, Jon Nixon and Martin Wright, for their input here. All agree the Lupo GTI is fundamentally well-built and generally reliable, but it's not without issues. The main thing to check for is whether the engine is burning oil. Higher mileage cars (usually 110,000-plus) have seen piston ring failures leading to scratched bores; others have blown valve-stem seals, so beware oil specks on the tailgate and any blue smoke on the overrun.

The engine should warm up to 90deg C and stay there; if it doesn't, it almost certainly needs a thermostat and/or temperature sender: a common fault, though not an expensive one to fix. Ditto any misfiring or fluffy idling, which usually points to coil packs and HT leads needing replacement.

TRANSMISSION

Both five- and six-speeder are stronger than the notoriously weak 'box in the Polo GTI, though

some five-speeders do suffer shaft and synchro failures, which will eventually lead to jumping out of gear, so if you're looking at an early car pay special attention to the 'box. If the shift itself is difficult, it's probably the turret on top of the box that needs lubrication. The general view is the six-speed is the one to have.

SUSPENSION, STEERING, BRAKES

Being a light car, the Lupo is quite easy on its suspension and brakes. Any knocking is almost certainly the anti-roll bar bushes. Aftermarket coilovers are a common mod and shouldn't give any issues provided the car hasn't been drastically lowered. Just check they're good quality ones. For future value, though, original is best.

BODY, INTERIOR, ELECTRICS

Originality is key here. Use a magnet wrapped in thin cloth to check the car still has the aluminium doors, front wings and bonnet. If it's been crashed, these may have been replaced with steel items (the

original bonnet is no longer available; the other aluminium panels are expensive).

Some cars rust on the roof, around the gutter rails. Also check the front wings for bubbling at the bottom and edges. The wheelarch liners should be removed regularly and the inner wing and sill cleaned out – it's a water and dirt trap that leads to corrosion in the sills.

Check the third brake-light works and look for bubbling on the spoiler around it (both common issues). In the boot, lift the trim and examine the battery tray for corrosion. And while you're round the back, check the condition of the exhaust if original – a new backbox from VW is nearly £600.

At the front, get someone to turn the headlights on and check the bi-xenons come on together and have matching intensity – they're pricey to replace. Also check the car still has the thinner (i.e lighter) Sekurit-branded glass (apart from the heated rear screen, which is the same as on a normal Lupo).

Ensure that the central locking works on all the locks, and that the electric windows both work.



Above left: bonnet, front wings and doors were aluminium – ensure that they still are. **Above:** engine is pretty tough, but check it doesn't smoke. **Right:** examine the exhaust – a new VW backbox is almost £600



WHAT TO PAY

Low build numbers mean there's generally no more than a dozen Lupo GTIs for sale at any given time, so you might have to be patient to find the right car at the right price. At the lower end, high-mileage but presentable cars start at around £2500. Better examples tend to sit in the £3500-5000 bracket, though some dealers are asking bigger money – £7500 or even more for immaculate, low-milers. Six-speeds are more sought-after, while desirable options include leather, air con and the upgraded hi-fi. There are lots of modified cars and high-milers out there, but it's the low-mileage, unmolested ones that will pile on pounds in years to come.



INFORMATION

SPECIFICATION

LUPO GTI SIX-SPEED

Engine	In-line 4-cyl, 1598cc
Max power	123bhp @ 6500rpm
Max torque	112lb ft @ 3000rpm
Transmission	Six-speed manual, front-wheel drive
Weight (dry)	1038kg
Power-to-weight (dry)	120bhp/ton
0-62mph	8.2sec [claimed]
Top speed	127mph [claimed]
Price new	£12,995 (2001)

PARTS PRICES

Prices from driftbridge.co.uk/volkswagen. Tyre price from blackcircles.com. All prices include VAT but exclude fitting charges.

Tyres (each)	£62.94 (Toyo Proxes T1-R)
Front pads	£57.84 (set)
Front discs	£129.52 (pair)
Damper	£95.70 (single, front)
Clutch kit	£275.65 (including release bearing)
Exhaust catalyst	£675.19
Spark plugs	£31.88 (set)

SERVICING

Prices from driftbridge.co.uk/volkswagen, including VAT. Servicing at 10,000 miles or annually, whichever is sooner.

Minor service	£164
Major service	£329
Cambelt	£484 (including water pump)

USEFUL CONTACTS

FORUMS, ADVICE, EVENTS

forums.clublupo.co.uk

clubgti.com

INDEPENDENT SPECIALISTS

awesomegti.com

vagtech.co.uk

CARS FOR SALE

pistonheads.com

classicandperformancecar.com



WHAT WE SAID



FIRST DRIVE

'Give it the gun and you are immediately struck by the Lupo's lusty mid-range response. A peak torque figure of 112lb ft doesn't sound much, but when it arrives at 3000rpm it endows VW's tiddler with surging low-rev flexibility that melds cleanly with the zing of top-end power. Sadly the 16-valve motor is somewhat charmless – not that the Lupo's B-road pace seems to suffer.

'No matter how twisty the road, the Lupo GTI hits 80mph in no time and parries awkward bumps, dips and crests with aplomb. There's more body-roll than you might expect, but the tenacious way it resists understeer is admirable. And even if you do overcook things, it won't bite you with an armful of lift-off oversteer. Strong wet-road traction is final confirmation that the chassis is a good 'un.

'The Lupo GTI is a very strong, highly desirable contender within the baby hot hatch sector. It also wears the GTI badge more convincingly than any VW hatchback since the Mk2 Golf. High praise indeed.' – Driven, *evo* 028

RIVALS

MINI COOPER

Closest to the Lupo for combining a quality feel with a fun drive in a compact package. £4000-5000 gets you a vast selection of naturally aspirated R56 Coopers or blown S models.

PEUGEOT 106 GTI/RALLYE

Even more involving to drive and increasingly collectable (especially the original 1.3-litre Rallye), with good cars starting from around £3500. The Saxo VTS is a cheaper relative.

SUZUKI SWIFT SPORT

Another *evo* favourite, the Swift Sport is nippy, practical and plenty of fun, if lacking a little cachet. Well-maintained first-generation cars with 123bhp are priced from £3500 to £5000.

'I BOUGHT ONE'

MARTIN WRIGHT

'I bought my car in 2004 – it was the demonstrator at the VW dealership where I work. I'd had a couple of hatchbacks – I was driving a 6N [third-gen] Polo at the time – but as soon as I had a test drive in the Lupo GTI, that was it, I just fell in love. It was up for £11,500. With the spec it had, which included leather and the CD player, it would have been about £15,000 new, and I managed to get it for £10k.

'It was six months old then, with 7000 miles on the clock. It's now done 165,500! It was my daily driver for a long time, but I've now got an Up as well, so the Lupo's semi-retired, though I do try to drive it for at least a week every month.

'The only major issue I had

was the engine started using oil and I was getting lots of little black spots on the tailgate. When I had the head taken off it turned out the number three piston ring was worn. I was lucky that it hadn't damaged the bore, so they rehone it and put a new set of rings in. That was at around 115,000 miles and it's been absolutely fine ever since. It doesn't use a drop of oil. Also the gearbox was getting a bit whiny, so I replaced that.

'I've done a few mods – at about 85,000 miles the suspension felt tired so I replaced it with AP coilovers, so it rides slightly lower, and it's got a Janspeed exhaust and a K&N filter, so it makes a good noise. Around town or driving it

enthusiastically, I get mid-30s mpg. On long runs I get over 40 to the gallon.

'It still makes me smile every time I drive it. It's nippy, it handles well, and one of the other things I love about it is that it's so rare. You never see them. People really notice it and want to know what it is.

'When the mileage started to creep up, I did think about selling it, but I couldn't bear to part with it. I'm going to be buried in that car!'



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£3489

129,000 miles, metallic silver/black cloth, air con, full service history, 5+ owners, CD player

motor-hub.co.uk



2005 LUPO GTI 6-SPEED
£5995

64,000 miles, metallic black/black cloth, air con, full service history, one previous owner, JVC hi-fi with CD

gmscars.co.uk



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£7995

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4starclassics.com

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BUYING JOURNEY

evo reader Charles Moseley's star-spangled buying history

THE CARS

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- Mercury Eight**
- Chrysler Laser Turbo**
- Land Rover 88in (Series II)**
- Ford Taurus SHO**
- Chevrolet Suburban**
- Audi A4 (B5)**
- Pontiac GTO Convertible**
- Chevrolet Tahoe**
- BMW M Coupe**
- Subaru Impreza WRX STI**
- Cadillac CTS-V**
- Dodge Coronet 440 R/T**
- Ford Mustang Shelby GT500**
- Chrysler Aspen**
- Subaru WRX STI**
- Aston Martin V8 Vantage**

WHAT NEXT?

'I recently drove a Mustang GT350R – the even more focused version of Shelby's hotted-up Mustang – and that will be the next car I buy. I'd also like a new Alpine A110, although I couldn't import it to the US.'

Email your buying journey with a selection of images to eds@evo.co.uk

HAILING FROM AMERICA, CHARLES started out with cars that couldn't be more different from the small hatchbacks that most Europeans begin with. Instead he drove cars so huge that their 'hoods' were measured in acres. This was mostly thanks to his mother, who would only help him buy a car if it was 'big enough to keep him safe'. This meant he owned some true Americana, including a Mercury Eight.

As soon as he could, though, Charles got himself into some smaller performance cars, starting with a Chrysler Laser Turbo (has a car ever sounded so '80s?) and a Ford

Taurus SHO (for 'Super High Output'). Charles would have kept the SHO, with its revvy, Yamaha-built V6 and manual gearbox, had his wife not crashed it into a wall.

But Charles hasn't restricted himself to US domestic cars and has owned machinery more familiar to evo. He has a penchant for performance Subaru, something we sympathise with, and now owns two. He's also counterbalanced the SUVs in his collection with two-seater, rear-wheel-drive coupes in the form of a 'breadvan' BMW M Coupe and a 2015 Aston Martin V8 Vantage.

Chrysler Laser Turbo

'When I got my first "real" job, I found I was being paid more than I had expected, so I decided to buy my first new car. I hate to say it, but it was terrible; 1986 was in the very early days of ECUs and, occasionally, the Laser would randomly select an engine speed and stick to it no matter what. I'd find myself at a stop light when suddenly the car would rev to 5000rpm! There was nothing you could do except shut the engine off.'



Subaru Impreza WRX STI

'All of my friends involved in racing kept telling me I had to buy an STI. I actually saw this car being delivered to the Subaru dealership from the factory and went in a few days later to discuss buying it. It was a small dealership and the salesman didn't understand the car at all – he told me he was happy to get rid of it as other Subaru buyers were annoyed by the sound of its exhaust. It's one of the best-driving cars I've ever had and, despite it having to have a new engine, I won't ever sell it.'

Aston Martin V8 Vantage

'After some luck on the stock market, I was able to fund a promise I had made many years before. When I was eight, one of my childhood friends and I had discussed what our dream garage would look like. The only car we had agreed on was an Aston Martin – a DB6 at that time. We swore that one day we would both buy Astons and race them against each other. My friend hasn't bought his yet. He still hopes to and complains that I'm getting far too much practice.'



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I WANT TO BUY A... £50,000 FERRARI

by Bob Harper



A FERRARI FOR THE PRICE OF A NEW BMW 540i? It's possible, but at this level a purchase is fraught with danger. Fortunately, *evo*'s John Barker, Richard Meaden, Adam Towler and James Disdale are here to offer words of wisdom.

JB: What an exciting – and terrifying – prospect! Mondial? No thanks, I'm not a fan of the looks and I drove one new and it wasn't fast even then. The 456? A V12 would be intoxicating but it could be potentially ruinous. For me, it has to be a new-ish V8, something that hopefully will only need servicing and consumables. I could be tempted by a 355 but I like the idea of a 360 (above) that's been a Cat D write-off – an uneconomic repair – or is left-hand drive or rather leggy. In that order, too. Cars can be written off due to remarkably light, often cosmetic damage. And leggy can mean kept fit and used regularly, which can be a good thing.

RM: You'd have to be extremely brave or really daft to spend your full £50k on the car, as any Ferrari

needs a sizeable contingency budget. 348s got a bad reputation in their day, but the few I've driven since have been fun with tons of old-school Ferrari charm. It's hard not to be seduced by a 456 GT, but the bills would be eye-watering. This is probably cheating, but I'd be tempted to find a Lancia Thema 8.32 (below). It's got a Ferrari V8, cult appeal and asking prices are low enough to leave a decent and doubtless soon-spent disaster fund.

AT: While it would be ludicrous to recommend you spend 'just' £50,000 on an F355 (below left), it's an F355, so that's exactly what I'm about to do. The potential for grief is enormous, and it would need to be higher mileage and left-hand drive. I'd probably not be able to sleep at night for worrying about dodgy history, accident damage, corrosion and something going clunk in that screamer of a V8, but I don't care if my F355 – a manual coupe, obviously – is a bit battle-scarred; all the better in some ways. It would need a lot of searching, but an essentially honest, mechanically fit left-hooker at the right price makes me grin just thinking about it.

'You'd have to be extremely brave or really daft to spend your full £50,000 on the car, as any Ferrari needs a sizeable contingency budget'

JD: It's not often you get a 'forgotten' Ferrari, yet the 456 GT (below) is arguably just that – although this won't last forever. This V12 express kick-started Ferrari's renaissance in the early '90s, ditching the Fiat switchgear and He-Man handling of earlier models. The Pininfarina lines tread between bulbous and beautiful, but the engine is a work of art – 436bhp with an operatic soundtrack. This budget represents the lowest entry to the 456 club, which means four-speed auto UK cars or a left-hooker if you want the open-gate manual. Buy now before the speculators get wind of this cruelly overlooked car.



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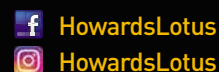


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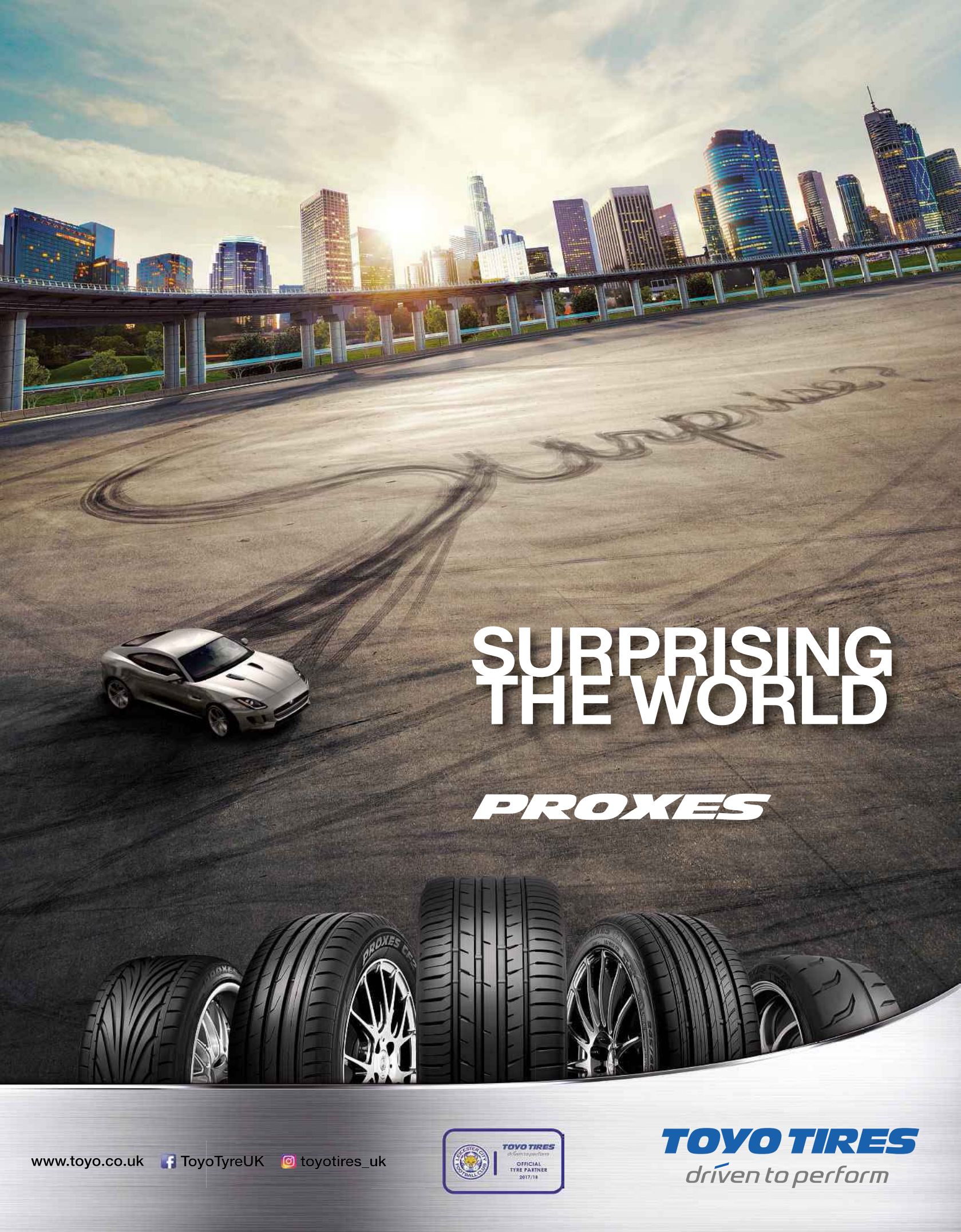
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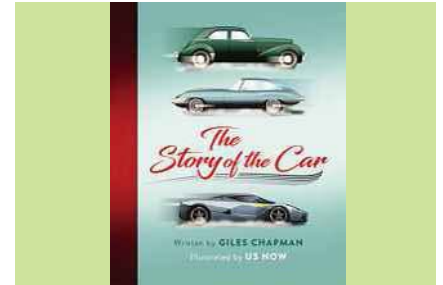
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Fast Fleet

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VOLKSWAGEN GOLF GTE // LEXUS RC F // DS 3 PERFORMANCE //
ALFA ROMEO GIULIA QUADRIFOGLIO // **SECRET SUPERCAR OWNER** //
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NEW ARRIVALS

Lexus RC F & VW Golf GTE

One is the future and the other an anachronism, but which will fare better on *evo*'s Fast Fleet?



'VW claims 166.2mpg combined. So can it really be fun *and* frugal?'



I T SEEMS FITTING THAT the Golf GTE arrived in our car park at more or less exactly the same time as the Lexus RC F. One car represents a vision of the future for performance cars, downsized and electrically assisted, the other the last of a dying breed, a big-chested relic.

Now, the Golf isn't **evo's** first plug-in hybrid – the BMW i8 holds that honour – but it is the more relevant. With an overall output of 201bhp and a basic price of £30,635 (£32,135 for our flagship 'Advance' model), the GTE is pitched at the heart of the hot hatch class. And with the government's plans to ban pure petrol/diesel vehicle sales in 2040 fresh in the mind, its arrival on Fast Fleet couldn't be better timed.

Unlike BMW's avant-garde i8 and i3, there's no real clue to the Golf's hybrid underpinnings. In fact, apart from the blue exterior trim inserts and C-shaped LED daytime running lights, the GTE apes the

subtly muscular look of the GTI. I challenge you to find the socket for the charging cable. Give up? It's hidden in the grille behind the VW badge, which hinges open for when you need to top up the battery. This, then, is a car that's keen to be seen as normal rather than new-age.

It's a similar story inside, where it's pure GTI, only with blue stitching instead of red. It's all flawlessly laid out, beautifully finished and there's an excellent driving position. Our car's cabin is enhanced further by £1750 leather seat trim and the slick, £2090 Discover Navigation Pro infotainment with gesture control.

Those aren't the only options. Self parking (£595) and a host of driver aids including lane-assist and traffic-sign recognition (£630) ramp the price up to a hefty £38,185 – although if you're a private punter you'll get a £2500 government grant.

There are other numbers to grab the attention, too, because the GTE can crack 0-62mph in a brisk 7.6sec

(around a second behind a GTI) and yet return a claimed 166.2mpg combined. So can it really be fun *and* frugal? Well, to be honest, so far I've spent most of my time enjoying the novelty of pure-electric progress whenever I can – VW claims 31 miles of zero-emissions running, but the best predicted range I've seen is 26 miles, which works out at about 22 miles in the real world. Nevertheless, by toggling between the 'E' and 'Hybrid' modes, I've managed 71mpg on my 50-mile run to the office.

Prod the 'GTE' button, though, and this Golf is transformed. Internal combustion and lithium-ion combine to deliver a respectable turn of speed. It's not GTI fast, but it'll certainly show a GTD a clean pair of heels. What's more, the handling is crisp and the ride controlled and compliant. It's early days, but the GTE is already shaping up to be an intriguing proposition, although one that has a tough task ahead of it. **✉**

James Disdale



Date acquired	August 2017
Total mileage	3319
Mileage this month	659
Costs this month	£0
mpg this month	54.7

'This car is interesting. I don't know what it will be like to live with.'



I I'VE NEVER SPENT MUCH time in a Lexus. To be fair, apart from the LFA, I've never felt the urge to spend much time in a Lexus. At least this was the case until I tried an RC F a year or so ago, when my interest was piqued.

There's something rather compelling about what Lexus has done in recent years. Especially with the styling of its cars. The new LC500 (Driven, **evo** 231) is spectacular, and while the RC F doesn't possess that car's jaw-slackening drama, I think it really looks the part. Sufficiently beefy, but original and interesting.

And that's the point of this car. It's interesting. I don't know what it will be like to live with. I don't know what it will be like to drive day-to-day. I don't know how people will react to it. Had this been one of the German coupes, I'd have been pleased to spend six months with it, but it may have felt like going over old ground. They are known quantities.

So what is it? Well, in bald stats it's a £61,310 coupe powered by a naturally aspirated 5-litre V8 good for 470bhp and 391lb ft. Top speed is just shy of 170mph and it'll hit 62mph in 4.5sec. That acceleration figure is far from shabby, but not quite a match for the RS5, M4 or C63 you can read about elsewhere in this issue. Then again, the Lexus weighs a chunky 1765kg. Without the torque of a turbocharged motor that's a lot of mass to get moving. Whether this dents its abilities or limits its driving appeal on the road is something I'm looking forward to finding out.

First impressions are very favourable. Admittedly much of this is due to the novelty of a fresh driving environment, but there's also a deep sense of quality. It really does feel hewn rather than assembled, so while the kerb weight is hefty, you do get a tangible uplift in solidity.

At the time of writing, I've only driven home from the **evo** office, but in that time I quickly came to

appreciate the maturity of the RC F's delivery. This all sounds a bit grown-up, but fear not, for there's a raft of dynamic modes, from Eco through Normal to Sport and Sport S+.

I don't know which of these offers the sweet spot, but I do know the RC F's V8 engine really finds its voice in the more aggressive modes. It's also nice to have a motor you need to work a little to release its performance, rather than the twin-turbocharged offerings from Audi, BMW and Mercedes, which give so much so soon you rarely need to extend them.

Will the RC F's different take on a familiar recipe prove a match for the usual German suspects? Or will the novelty of this Japanese bruiser wear off as familiarity grows? I honestly don't know. That's why the next six months promise to be a fascinating Fast Fleet test and a true voyage of discovery. ✕

Richard Meaden
(@DickieMeaden)



Date acquired	August 2017
Total mileage	1803
Mileage this month	Very little...
Costs this month	£0
mpg this month	n/a

Alfa Romeo Giulia Quadrifoglio

We know the car's good, but what of Alfa's infamous customer service?

THERE IS A GIULIA-SHAPED hole on my drive as I write. No, the Quadrifoglio hasn't been dismissed back to Alfa UK for unacceptable behaviour, rather it's gone for a service. It's refreshing that, in 2017, a car with 503bhp requires a once-over every 9000 miles, as the Alfa does. I've long been suspicious about service intervals that are more than double the UK average yearly mileage. Is this really any good for a performance car? Or any car, for that matter? I would much prefer – and welcome – more frequent check-ups, especially for a car with enough performance to circulate a certain German racetrack in under eight minutes.

In a previous life, when I was working for a Porsche-focused publication, many of the specialists put the reliability woes experienced

with Boxsters, 996s and early 997s down to their extended service intervals. It meant any problems could worsen over time, rather than being nipped in the bud. I never did see the appeal of running a 911 for 20,000 miles without checking the condition of its flat-six's oil. I wonder how many intermediate shafts could have been saved if a service was required every 10,000 miles?

Back to RJ66 KZB. For all the praise that has been bestowed upon the Giulia since its launch, the commentators of this world – predominately those on social media but also a few of us in good old-fashioned print – have added something along the lines of 'let's hope the dealers don't screw it up' to any comment piece. Quite.

Happily, my local Alfa emporium, County Motor Works in Chelmsford,

couldn't have been more on the ball. A call on a Thursday was met with the offer of a service appointment the following Monday, although if I needed a courtesy car I'd have to wait another seven days. I could do without a set of wheels for the day, so went for the earlier slot. As well as the service, I asked them to investigate a clicking sound from the front suspension when the car was on full lock at parking speeds. It had materialised after a replacement set of tyres were fitted last month by Alfa UK.

It turns out that Giulias – and particularly Quadrifoglios – are rare in my neck of the woods. More so examples with any issues to report, so a memo was sent to Italy with the diagnostics of the problem. They promptly told Alfa UK to dispatch a technician to inspect

'I asked them to investigate a clicking sound from the front suspension when the car was on full lock'



DS 3 Performance

Small but packing a proper punch, our DS makes light work of the city

FOUR MONTHS IN AND I THINK I'VE cracked it. A car with so many 'luxury' trappings may not be the most confidence-inspiring hatch on a rough country lane, but I've found the DS rather enjoyable on London's city streets. It's fast, it's fun and, parked amongst the capital's supercar elite, also far more infrequent a sight than something like a 488 GTB, albeit not quite as special (sorry DS).

For those of you lucky enough to enjoy some of Britain's best B-roads on a daily basis, I look on with envy, but for people like me, who live in a big city and have a passion for cars, the urban environment becomes something of a playground. And what better way to enjoy the narrow, twisty streets than in an infinitely accessible hot hatch?

This probably sounds ridiculous given that 'the thrill of driving' doesn't exactly conjure up images of traffic lights, congestion zones and parallel parking, but there are many more moments of quiet satisfaction than you might expect. When you get into a rhythm with the DS 3 Performance, the experience can be genuinely fulfilling. This car is quick – too quick for London, of course, but that sense of urgency, facilitated by eager throttle response from a torquy engine and backed up by grippy Michelin Super Sport tyres, just seems very well suited to the urban realm.

You could easily make the case that the DS 3 Performance is massively overqualified for city



streets. After all, a limited-slip diff does little to improve the experience of turning left at 8mph, but it's still pleasing to be in something focused for those gloomy commutes: the outside lane opens up on Park Lane and you drop into second gear and launch from 20 to 40mph with an aggressive lunge that an 'ordinary' car couldn't replicate... OK, who am I kidding? I need to get back to the B660.

Like all hot hatches, this DS is a car to be taken seriously, but it can also be enjoyed in any scenario. Even the worst place to drive in the UK. ☒

Louis Shaw (@L_Shaw_)

Date acquired	May 2017
Total mileage	3531
Mileage this month	175
Costs this month	£0
mpg this month	38.1

our Giulia, although this meant I wouldn't get it back the same day.

On Wednesday I got a call to say I could collect KZB, the message arriving a few hours after Alfa UK had delivered a courtesy car on behalf of the dealer – a car I was expecting a day earlier... Good job I had planned to work from home that week.

The problem? When the car was with Alfa for new tyres, it also got a new set of ceramic brake discs, and one of the backing plates was catching under full lock. Problem solved, and this Alfa dealer passed the first test. ☒

Stuart Gallagher (@stuartg917)

Date acquired	May 2017
Total mileage	9925
Mileage this month	523
Costs this month	£279 service
mpg this month	23.4





END OF TERM

Secret Supercar Owner

Looking back at the highs and lows of supercar ownership – and to the future

I IT'S BEEN MORE THAN FIVE years since I first wrote an **evo** Fast Fleet report, and if there has been a theme for the last half-decade, it has been 'change'.

When I started off – initially on **evo.co.uk**, then in the magazine soon after – my garage in Surrey contained a Ferrari F40, an F50, a Koenigsegg CCR, a Mosler MT900S and a Jaguar XJR-15. Today the garage is in Texas and only the F40 remains from that original fleet. Now the other members are three McLarens – a P1, a 675LT Spider and a 650S Spider – plus a Ferrari 599 GTB HGTE and a Maserati GranCabrio. In the interim, three McLaren 12Cs have come and gone, as have three more Ferraris: a 612, a 430 Scuderia and a Scuderia Spider 16M. The shift from a Ferrari-

dominated garage to a McLaren-fest will likely continue, although the two cars that are definitely keepers are the F40 and the 675LT Spider.

I often get asked which are my favourite cars that I have owned. Well, those two would definitely be in my top five, and joining them would be the P1, the F50 and the 365 GTB/4 Daytona. All are wonderful, engaging drivers' cars that leave you fulfilled and impressed after each outing.

The bottom three would be the Ferrari 456, the Porsche 993 Turbo, and the Maserati GranSport. The 456 would develop mechanical issues every time you looked at it, the Turbo had a nasty habit of going light at high speeds, and the GranSport was just very poorly put together.

Both the Koenigsegg and the Jaguar deserve special mentions and

I still have fond memories of both. The CCR was wild and engaging, requiring complete concentration and commitment to drive well. The driver's seat was a very special place to be and emerging from a spirited drive intact always gave me a sense of accomplishment. The race-bred XJR-15, meanwhile, was simply unique in its rawness.

I've been fortunate to have driven at highly memorable locations in many of the aforementioned cars, too. The Swiss Alpine passes in the Ferrari F40, north-west Scotland in the 430 Scuderia, central and south-west Scotland in the 12C Spider, the country roads of Vermont in the McLaren 675LT Spider, and Wales in the Daytona. For Mrs SSO and me, nothing tops a great car on great roads as the perfect vacation.

The supercars I own are never treated as museum pieces. Several have served as daily transport, including a Ferrari 575. It's the McLaren 650S that gets the nod as the most accomplished daily-driver, though. With the vast improvements in reliability and useability of modern supercars, this is not the stressful gauge-watching exercise of old. Trust me on this – I've also pressed a Ferrari 308 GTB and the Daytona into daily duty for limited periods and it was not relaxing.

What does the future hold for the SSO fleet? Well, inspired by **evo** rating it as the best car it has ever tested, I've recently taken delivery of a 997.2 GT3 RS. It's been nine years since I last had a 911 in the garage. Hopefully I will bond better with this one than I did with the 993 Turbo.

Above: an early incarnation of the SSO's Fast Fleet garage: XJR-15, 430 Scuderia, F50 and F40. **Clockwise from above right:** 12C Spider, P1, GranCabrio, XJR-15, 675LT Spider and 599 have all appeared in these pages



The next major move will be the Ferrari F40 finally making its way across the Atlantic, now that it is 25 years old and can be legally driven in the US. Despite it getting some much-needed road-time during its tenure in storage, I am concerned that the extended slumber will not have been good for the car.

Looking a little further down the road, I have already requested build slots on a couple of future McLaren models. Each new McLaren has moved the game on significantly, so the future here looks very bright.

On the Ferrari front, it's Maranello's back-catalogue that holds more interest for me these

days. I still regret selling the Daytona, so another one will likely be on the cards at some point. If F50 prices ever return to earth, this is another car I would buy again without a second thought.

Also, if the right Porsche Carrera GT appears at the right price...

One final change is that I have

decided to spend a little less time writing about supercars and – hopefully! – even more time driving them, so this is my final Fast Fleet report. It's been a pleasure and an honour to share my experiences with you for so long. Enjoy the drive. ✖

Secret Supercar Owner
 (@SupercarOwner)



Mazda MX-5 Mk1

A weigh-in confirms our classic MX-5 really is a sub-ton car

A ALMOST EVERY CAR I'VE ever owned has had a quoted kerb weight of under 1000kg. In my early years of driving, this was somewhat budgetary; cheap, economical cars also tend to be fairly light. But these days it's because I enjoy the driving experience of a lightweight car – the lack of inertia to every movement, be it through a series of twists on the road or in a punishing braking zone at the Bedford Autodrome.

But I've never known precisely how much any of my cars have weighed. Instead I've relied on the official figures, but just like mpg, power or performance numbers, these can vary significantly in the real world.

I've always erred on the side of pessimism and assumed my MX-5 was on the wrong side of one metric ton, rather than the 971kg claimed by Mazda. But as it currently lacks a passenger seat, spare wheel and

radio, I also hoped that maybe this would drop it back below 1000kg.

The true figure on *evo's* scales? 959kg, with around three-quarters of a tank of fuel. I'm quite chuffed with that, and also with the weight distribution: only 2kg difference across the rear axle, and with the front only 55kg heavier than the rear, a front-to-rear ratio of 53:47.

Throw in the passenger seat and spare wheel and it'd probably be closer still to 50:50. But more importantly, I now know I can install a roll bar and some extra chassis stiffening and still have wiggle room before breaking that psychological one-ton barrier. ☒

Antony Ingram (@evoAntony)

Date acquired	February 2015
Total mileage	96,424
Mileage this month	264
Costs this month	£0
mpg this month	35.2

'Like power and mpg numbers, official weight figures can vary significantly in the real world'



Mini JCW Challenge

The saga of the Challenge's out-of-sorts ride rumbles on, but a new solution is in sight



A 'A CAR THAT MUST BE useable day-to-day.' Much to the disbelief of almost everyone here now, that was one of the goals that former **evo** writers Dan Prosser and Jethro Bovingdon were aiming for when they fine-tuned the Challenge's chassis and tyre combo. Anyone who's been in it since would never describe it as 'useable'. If they were being kind, they might call it 'track focused'.

Now, don't get me wrong, I love this car and I am totally happy using it every day. But that's because ride quality and NVH aren't really things I worry about in my own cars. If a car drives well and is engaging and thrilling, I'll easily forgive a bumpy ride and some slight vibrations. But even I will admit there's been something not quite right with this Mini. Now, finally, I think we're getting to the bottom of it.

You may recall that we suspected

the car's Nitron dampers might need a rebuild, but they have recently been checked out by Mini, who declared them fighting fit. (The tyres less so, so a new set of Michelin Pilot Sport Cup 2s were fitted, which should see us through this year's remaining **evo** track evenings.)

What now looks like the cause of the problem is that the dampers aren't exactly what we thought they were. The original road settings that we decided upon when we tested the prototype cars (**evo** 223) were 10 clicks on the front and 15 at the rear, while for the track we chose 15 clicks on the front and 25 – i.e. fully hard – for the rear. But at a recent track evening, I went to wind the rear dampers up to 25 clicks and found that they stopped at 20...

It transpires that on an earlier occasion when our Challenge returned to Mini – last year, to investigate an unsettling knocking

noise from the front suspension – unbeknownst to us the rear dampers were swapped to new units matching those fitted to the final customer cars, and these units have fewer clicks. The softest and hardest settings are the same as on the early dampers, but the different number of increments has meant that when we dialled in 15 clicks, thinking they were only a little over halfway to fully hard, we'd actually been closer to fully stiff. Also, the front dampers were still the development items with 25 increments, so the suspension has been totally out of sync front to rear.

Mini actually recommends that you wind the dampers back to fully soft, front and rear, when using the car on the road, but I tried that and found the car lacked the sense of fun and adjustability you get when the rear is a little firmer. It still has incredible amounts of grip, but there

was a playfulness to the Challenge when I first drove it last summer that I've just not felt since.

Now I'm in possession of all the facts and know exactly what I'm working with, I'll adjust the damper settings accordingly, and maybe the ride height too, to try to find that original chassis balance. Hopefully, once we've got the car feeling more mischievous – like a Mini should feel – the settings will have introduced a little more compliancy and the rest of the team will be happier to drive it. Or, like me, they'll find it so much fun they'll forget about being comfortable. ☒

Will Beaumont
(@WillBeaumont)

Date acquired	July 2016
Total mileage	11,989
Mileage this month	1021
Costs this month	£563 tyres
mpg this month	32.1



‘The car becomes so unresponsive to the throttle it seems almost bored, and the gain in fuel economy is small’

SEAT Leon ST Cupra 300 4Drive

Is it possible for a near-300bhp estate to be a tad *too* versatile? When it comes to our Cupra’s plethora of settings, perhaps it is

HAVING DISCOVERED LAST month that it is possible to have the feistiest engine setting without the feistiest auto gearbox response, I have now settled on my favourite everyday ‘Drive Profile’. Press the Cupra button on the dash and four options are offered – Comfort, Sport, Cupra and Individual. Comfort really takes the edge off things – perfect when I’ve got my mum in the car. Cupra is a bit too much for daily driving – the engine’s too loud and I don’t like the heaviness of the steering. In theory, Sport should be the ‘Goldilocks’ setting but the steering is the same and the suspension control is just not resolved.

So, here’s my ideal recipe: Normal steering, Sport engine and Cupra DCC (Dynamic Chassis Control). The Cupra suspension works because, although it’s tightly controlled, it rounds off bumps and ridges, and also because it’s in tune with the engine response. Part of me likes having the option to fiddle and

tweak, another thinks that the engineers should have just got it right in the first place and kept it how they wanted it, with adaptive control for speed/corner-load. Heck, it’s only taken me 4000 miles to be happy with the setup. That said, this being an estate car that will see lots of different loadings, there’s more justification for being able to choose the chassis settings. I’m still not sure why it’s possible to adjust ACC (Adaptive Cruise Control) as part of the Individual profile, but I very rarely use it anyhow.

It also seems odd that you can set the air conditioning to Eco mode on this profile-setting page. It’s good that you can reduce the energy-drain, but it feels like it should be part of the air-con settings. I’ve tried the engine in its Eco mode a few times, too, just to see what the

best mpg figure (and thus range) is that the 296bhp Cupra can manage. About 38mpg (and 400 miles) seems to be the peak. It’s interesting to see where the energy-saving occurs; a chunk is in the initial throttle response, a little in the general response and a bit more in flat-road cruising, where if you back

off the revs drop to idle – what’s known as ‘sailing’. The car becomes so unresponsive to the throttle it seems almost bored and, to be honest, the gain in fuel economy is small compared with the huge lack of interest it induces.

One cool touch I’ve discovered is that at night there is a bit of ‘mood’ cockpit lighting in the door casings. It’s a light-strip tucked under the top-roll that glows a pale white and looks to me just like moonlight. It’d be good to have a little more of it in ‘the fireplace’ – that cubby-hole ahead of the gearlever – where the USB connections are very well hidden at night. **✉**

John Barker (@evoJB)

Date acquired	May 2017
Total mileage	6111
Mileage this month	583
Costs this month	£0
mpg this month	31.8

Right: Barker’s a fan of the mood lighting in the door cards, less so the Cupra’s endless configuration modes (above), which distract from the business of driving the car



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evo (USPS 024-183) is published monthly by Dennis Publishing Ltd, 31-32 Alfred Place, London, WC1E 7DP, United Kingdom. For subscriptions in the USA and Canada, visit www.imsnews.com, phone 1-800-428-3003, fax 1-757-428-6253, or email cs@imsnews.com. U.S. Agent Pitney Bowes International Mailing Services, 158 Mt Olivet Avenue, Newark NJ 07114-2114. Periodicals postage is paid at Paterson NJ and additional mailing offices. US POSTMASTER: Please send address changes to Pitney Bowes International Mailing Services, 158 Mt Olivet Avenue, Newark NJ 07114-2114. Subscription records are maintained by Dennis Publishing Ltd, 31-32 Alfred Place, London, WC1E 7DP, United Kingdom. Subscription prices: UK £47.99, Europe €58.20, Rest of World \$88.40, USA \$115. All for 12 issues.

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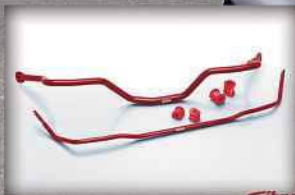


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Mercedes-AMG E63 S 4Matic+. With 603bhp and 627lb ft of torque, of course it's relentlessly rampant. But it's not all about straight-line speed – there's finesse here, too, with pin-sharp steering and a four-wheel drive chassis set up to provide an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




BEST OF THE REST

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

MAKE & MODEL	ISSUE NO.	PRICE	ENGINE CYL/CC	BHP/RPM	LB FT/RPM	WEIGHT	BHP/TON	0-60MPH (s)	0-100MPH (s)	0-100MPH (0-100)	MAX MPH	EVO RATING
Alfa Romeo Giulia 2.0 Turbo Super	234 D	£31,180	4/1995	197/5000	243/1750	1429kg	14.0	6.6	-	-	146	+ Keen engine, enjoyable handling - Firm low-speed ride ★★★★★
Alfa Romeo Giulia Quadrifoglio	237 F	£61,300	6/2891	503/6500	443/2500	1620kg	315	3.9	-	-	191	+ If Ferrari built a saloon (really) - Lacks the final polish of German rivals ★★★★★
Alfa Romeo Stelvio	234 D	£35,000	4/1995	276/5250	295/1750	1660kg	169	5.7	-	-	143	+ Agile feel, quick steering, attractive cabin - Engine not truly inspiring ★★★★★
Alpina B3 Biturbo (F30)	192 D	£47,950	6/2993	345/4000	516/1500	1585kg	221	4.6	-	-	173	+ 173mph from a 3-litre diesel! Brilliant chassis, too - Auto only ★★★★★
Alpina B3 Biturbo (F30)	188 D	13-16	6/2979	404/5500	442/3000	1630kg	252	4.3	-	-	190	+ 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	4.4	-	-	203	+ Oozes star quality; gearbox on 2015MY cars a big improvement - It's cosy in the back ★★★★★
Aston Martin Rapide	141 F	10-13	12/5935	470/6000	443/5000	1990kg	240	5.3	-	-	188	+ Better than its DB9 sibling - More of a 2+2 than a proper four-seater ★★★★★
Audi S3 Saloon	192 D	£35,405	4/1984	306/5500	280/1800	1430kg	210	5.3	-	-	155	+ On paper a match for the original S4 - In reality much less interesting ★★★★★
Audi RS3 Saloon	235 F	£45,250	5/2480	394/5850	354/1700	1515kg	264	4.1	-	-	155	+ Mini RS4 looks; stonking pace - Not the most involving driving experience ★★★★★
Audi S4 (B9)	225 D	£44,600	6/2995	349/5400	369/1370	1630kg	218	4.7	-	-	155	+ Strong response and delivery from turbo engine - Chassis feels softer than before ★★★★★
Audi S4 (B8)	166 D	08-16	6/2995	328/5500	324/2900	1650kg	202	5.0	-	-	155	+ Great supercharged powertrain, secure chassis - The RS4 ★★★★★
Audi RS4 Avant (B8)	216 F	12-15	8/4163	444/8250	317/4000	1795kg	251	4.7	4.5	10.5	174	+ Looks and sounds the part, thunderously fast - Unnatural steering, dull dynamics ★★★★★
Audi RS4 (B7)	231 D	05-08	8/4163	444/7800	317/5500	1650kg	255	4.7	4.5	10.5	155	+ 414bhp at 7800rpm! And there's an estate version too - Busy under braking ★★★★★
Audi RS4 (B5)	192 F	00-02	6/2671	375/6100	325/2500	1620kg	236	4.9	4.8	12.1	170	+ Effortless pace - Not the last word in agility; bends wheel rims ★★★★★
Audi RS2	214 F	94-95	5/2226	315/6500	302/3000	1595kg	201	4.8	4.8	13.1	162	+ Storming performance (thanks to Porsche) - Try finding one ★★★★★
Audi S5 Sportback	233 D	£44,000	6/2995	349/5400	369/1370	1660kg	214	4.7	-	-	155	+ More capable than you think; strong V6 engine - Gearbox frustrating in auto mode ★★★★★
Audi S6	091 D	06-11	10/5204	429/6800	398/3000	1910kg	228	5.5	-	-	155	+ Fast, and discreet with it - Very muted V10 ★★★★★
Audi RS6 Avant (C7)	203 F	£81,355	8/3993	552/5700	516/1750	1935kg	290	3.9	3.6	8.2	155	+ Performance, foolproof powertrain, beefy looks - Feels a bit one-dimensional ★★★★★
Audi RS6 Avant Performance (C7)	224 D	£88,270	8/3993	597/6100	553/2500	1950kg	311	3.7	-	-	155	+ The extra power is no hassle for the chassis - But it is a stern test of your self-control ★★★★★
Audi RS6 Avant (C6)	116 F	08-10	10/4991	572/6250	479/1500	1985kg	293	4.5	4.3	9.7	155	+ Was the world's most powerful estate - Power isn't everything ★★★★★
Audi RS6 Avant (C5)	052 F	02-04	8/4172	444/5700	413/1900	1865kg	242	4.6	4.8	11.6	155	+ The ultimate estate car? - Numb steering ★★★★★
Audi S7 Sportback	171 D	£65,950	8/3993	414/5000	406/1400	1945kg	216	4.6	-	-	155	+ Looks and drives better than the S6 it's based on - Costs several thousands more ★★★★★
Audi RS7 Sportback	208 F	£86,985	8/3993	552/5700	516/1750	1930kg	291	3.9	-	-	155	+ Stonking performance, great looks - Numb driving experience ★★★★★
Audi S8 Plus	217 D	£100,510	8/3993	597/6100	553/2500	1990kg	305	3.8	-	-	155	+ Fantastic drivetrain, quality and refinement - Dynamic Steering feels artificial ★★★★★
Audi RS Q3	206 D	13-16	5/2480	335/5300	332/1600	1655kg	206	4.8	-	-	155	+ Surprisingly characterful; better than many RS - High centre of gravity ★★★★★
Audi SQ5	237 D	£51,200	6/2995	349/5400	369/1370	1870kg	190	5.4	-	-	155	+ Fine chassis; deceptive pace - Lacks excitement ★★★★★
Bentley Flying Spur V8	200 D	£132,800	8/3993	500/6000	487/1700	2342kg	217	5.2	-	-	183	+ Effortless performance with real top-end kick - Determinedly unapologetic ★★★★★
Bentley Flying Spur V8 S	230 D	£142,800	8/3993	521/6000	502/1700	2342kg	226	4.9	-	-	190	+ Old-school approach to comfort and luxury - Old-school tech ★★★★★
Bentley Flying Spur	185 D	£154,900	12/5998	616/6000	590/1600	2400kg	261	4.6	-	-	199	+ For those who still want their Flying Spur with a W12 - Car feels its weight; engine sounds dull ★★★★★
Bentley Bentayga	217 D	£162,700	12/5950	600/5000	664/1350	2365kg	258	4.1	-	-	187	+ Sublime quality, ridiculous pace - Inert driving experience, SUV stigma ★★★★★
Bentley Mulsanne	178 F	£229,360	8/6752	505/4200	752/1750	2610kg	197	5.3	-	-	184	+ Drives like a modern Bentley should - Shame it doesn't look like one too ★★★★★
Bentley Mulsanne Speed	235 D	£252,000	8/6752	530/4000	811/1750	2610kg	206	4.9	-	-	190	+ Extravagant; effortless performance - Passengers have more fun than you do ★★★★★
BMW 330d M Sport (F30)	180 D	£38,590	6/2993	254/4000	413/2000	1540kg	168	5.6	-	-	155	+ Great engine, fine handling, good value - Steering confuses weight with feel ★★★★★
BMW 340i M Sport Touring (F31)	228 D	£42,055	6/2998	321/5500	332/1380	1615kg	202	5.5	-	-	155	+ Feel some rear-drive chassis - Easy to drive it beyond its comfort zone ★★★★★
BMW 328i (F30)	165 D	11-15	4/1997	242/5000	258/1250	1430kg	172	6.1	-	-	155	+ New-age four-pot 328i is great all-rounder - We miss the six-cylinder soundtrack ★★★★★
BMW 435i Gran Coupe	203 D	14-16	6/2979	302/5800	295/1200	1585kg	194	5.5	-	-	155	+ Superb straight-six, fine ride/handling balance - 335i saloon weighs and costs less ★★★★★
BMW M3 (F80)	211 F	£57,355	6/2979	425/5500	406/1850	1535kg	281	4.3	4.1	8.6	155	+ Looks, performance, practicality - Body control on rough roads; engine lacks character ★★★★★
BMW M3 Competition Package (F80)	237 F	£59,595	6/2979	444/7000	406/1850	1535kg	299	4.2	-	-	155	+ The car the F80 M3 should have been from the start - Less refined than standard car at low speeds ★★★★★
BMW M3 (F80)	123 F	08-11	8/3999	414/8300	295/3900	1605kg	262	4.9	4.9	10.7	165	+ Every bit as good as the E92 M3 coupe - No carbon roof ★★★★★
BMW M3 CRT (E90)	179 F	11-12	8/4361	444/8300	324/3750	1580kg	285	4.4	-	-	180	+ Saloon chassis + weight savings + GTS engine = best E90 M3 - Just 67 were made ★★★★★
BMW M5 (F10M)	208 F	11-16	8/4395	552/6000	501/1500	1870kg	300	4.4	-	-	155	+ Twin-turbocharging suits M5 well - Can feel heavy at times ★★★★★
BMW M5 (E60)	129 F	04-10	10/4999	500/7750	384/6100	1755kg	289	4.7	-	-	155	+ Close to being the ultimate supersaloon - SMG gearbox feels old-tech ★★★★★
BMW M5 (E39)	110 F	99-03	8/4941	394/6600	369/3800	1795kg	223	5.3	4.9	11.5	155	+ Magnificent V8-engined supersaloon - We'd be nipping ★★★★★
BMW M5 (E34)	110 F	92-96	6/3795	335/6900	295/4750	1725kg	197	5.8	4.9	13.6	155	+ The Godfather of supersaloons - The family can come too ★★★★★
BMW M5 (E28)	182 F	86-88	6/3453	282/6500	251/4500	1431kg	200	6.1	-	-	156	+ The original storming saloon - Understated looks ★★★★★
BMW M6 Gran Coupe	190 D	£95,665	8/4395	552/6000	501/1500	1875kg	299	4.2	-	-	155	+ Enormous performance, stylish looks - Price looks silly next to rivals, M5 included ★★★★★
BMW M760Li xDrive	233 D	£132,310	12/6592	602/5500	590/1550	2180kg	281	3.7	-	-	155	+ More capable than you'd think; strong engine - Too much of a limo to be genuinely exciting ★★★★★
BMW X5 M50d	191 D	£67,220	6/2993	376/4000	546/2000	2190kg	174	5.3	-	-	155	+ Straight-line pace - Driving experience identical to standard X5, despite the M badge ★★★★★
BMW X6 M	212 D	£95,430	8/4395	567/6000	553/2200	2265kg	254	4.2	-	-	155	+ Big improvement on its predecessor - Coupe roofline still of questionable taste ★★★★★
BMW X6 M	134 D	09-15	8/4395	547/6000	502/1700	2305kg	241	4.7	-	-	171	+ Fast, refined and comfortable - But it definitely lacks the M factor ★★★★★
Cadillac CTS-V	148 F	08-15	8/6162	556/6100	551/3800	1928kg	293	3.9	-	-	191	+ Stands out among M-cars and AMGs - The novelty might wear off ★★★★★
Cadillac CTS-V	226 D	£69,990	6/2997	411/5700	409/2500	1950kg	214	5.7	-	-	149	+ Caddy's S-class rival scores on comfort - But not on driver involvement ★★★★★
Honda Accord Type R	012 F	98-03	4/2157	209/7200	158/6700	1306kg	163	7.2	6.1	17.4	142	+ One of the finest front-drivers of all time - Convincing your friends of that ★★★★★
Infiniti Q50S Hybrid	195 D	£41,450	6/3498	359/6800	402/5000	1762kg	207	5.4	-	-	155	+ Good powertrain, promising chassis - Lacklustre steering, strong rivals ★★★★★
Jaguar XE 2.0d AWD	227 D	£35,335	4/1999	178/4000	317/1750	1615kg	112	7.9	-	-	140	+ Great chassis gets more traction - Shame the engine isn't as polished ★★★★★
Jaguar XE S	237 D	£48,045	6/2995	375/6500	332/3500	1655kg	230	5.0	-	-	155	+ AMG-beating power; engaging handling - Expensive; cabin quality and space lags behind rivals' ★★★★★
Jaguar XE S	213 D	15-17	6/2995	335/6500	332/4500	1635kg	208	5.1	-	-	155	+ Neat handling, neat design - V6 loses appeal in the real world ★★★★★
Jaguar XF S	214 D	£51,100	6/2995	375/6500	332/4500	1710kg	223	5.3	-	-	155	+ Outstanding ride and handling balance - Engine lacks appeal ★★★★★
Jaguar XF S Diesel	219 D	£50,100	6/2993	296/4000	516/2000	1750kg	172	6.2	-	-	155	+ Great chassis, good looks, better engine than V6 petrol - It's still a diesel ★★★★★
Jaguar XFR	181 D	09-15	8/5000	503/6000	461/2500	1800kg	284	4.7	4.8	10.2	155	+ Brilliant blend of pace and refinement - Doesn't sound as special as it is ★★★★★
Jaguar XFR-S	208 F	13-15	8/5000	542/6500	501/2500	1800kg	306	4.6	-	-	186	+ XF turned up to 12 - Tyres aren't cheap ★★★★★
Jaguar XJR	191 D	£91,755	8/5000	542/6500	502/2500	1875kg	294	4.6	-	-	174	+ Hot-rod vibe, fine cabin - Opinion-dividing looks ★★★★★
Jaguar XJ 3.0 V6 Diesel	148 D	10-16	6/2993	271/4000	442/2000	1835kg	150	6.6	-	-	155	+ A great Jaguar - But not as great as the XJR... ★★★★★
Jaguar F-Pace S	222 D	£53,365	6/2995	375/6500	332/4500	1884kg	202	5.5	-	-	155	+ A match for Porsche's SUVs - Supercharged V6 needs to be worked hard ★★★★★
Lexus GS F	221 D	£72,495	8/4969	470/7100	391/4800	1790kg	267	4.6	-	-	168	+ Superb engine, exploitable chassis - Gearbox is off the pace ★★★★★
Lexus IS F	151 F	07-12	8/4696	417/6600	372/5200	1744kg	247	5.2	4.7	10.9	173	+ Shockingly good Lexus - The M3's available as a four-door too ★★★★★
Lotus Carlton	170 F	91-93	6/3615	377/5200	419/4200	1658kg	231	5.4	4.8	10.6	176	+ The Millenium Falcon of saloon cars - Every drive a work-out ★★★★★
Maserati Ghibli	186 D	£53,590	6/2979	325/5000	406/1750	1810kg	182	5.6	-	-	163	+ Bursting with character; good value compared to Quattroporte - It's still a big car ★★★★★
Maserati Ghibli S	198 D	£64,510	6/2979	404/5500	406/4500	1810kg	227	5.0	-	-	177	+ Stands out from the crowd; sounds good too - Chassis lacks finesse, engine lacks reach ★★★★★
Maserati Quattroporte S	184 D	£82,750	6/2979	404/5500	406/1750	1860kg	221	5.1	-	-	177	+ Tempting alternative to V8 - Feel-free steering, ride lacks decorum ★★★★★
Maserati Quattroporte GTS	226 D	£115,980	8/3798	523/6800	479/2250	1900kg	280	4.7	-	-	193	+ Still pretty - Off the pace dynamically ★★★★★
Maserati Quattroporte	085 F	04-08	8/4244	394/7000	333/4500	1930kg	207	5.6	-	-	171	+ Redefined big-car dynamics - Don't use auto mode ★★★★★
Maserati Quattroporte S	137 F	08-12	8/4691	425/7000	361/4750	1990kg	216	5.4	5.1	12.1	174	+ A QP with the bhp it deserves - Grille is a bit Hannibal Lector ★★★★★
Maserati Quattroporte Sport GTS	141 F	08-12	8/4691	433/7000	361/4750	1990kg	221	5.1	-	-	177	+ The most stylish of supersaloons - Slightly wooden brakes, unforgiving ride ★★★★★
Maserati Levante Diesel	221 D	£54,335										

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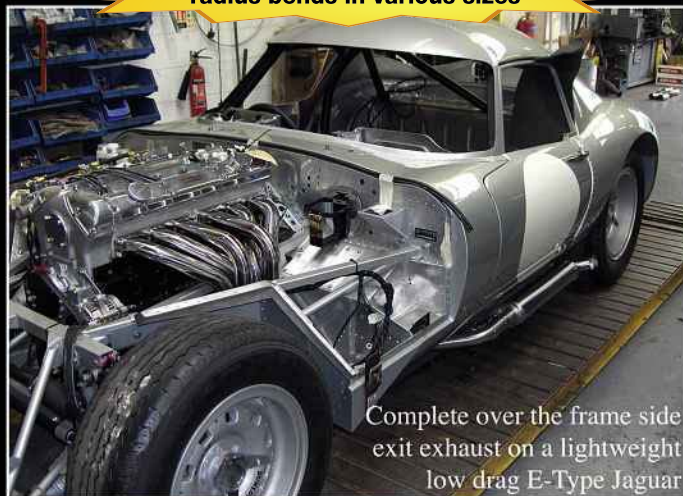
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MAKE & MODEL	ISSUE NO.	PRICE	ENGINE CYL/CAP	BHP/RPM	LB FT/RPM	WEIGHT	BHP/TON	0-62MPH (S/AMIB)	0-62MPH (DRIVER)	0-100MPH (DRIVER)	MAX MPH	EVO RATING
Mercedes-AMG C63 Estate (W205)	216 F	£63,380	8/3982	469/5500	479/1750	1710kg	279	4.2	-	-	155	+ Much more fun than it looks - Gearbox dim-witted at low speeds ★★★★★
Mercedes-AMG C63 S (W205)	211 F	£68,930	8/3982	503/5500	516/1750	1655kg	309	4.0	-	-	155	+ Tremendous twin-turbo V8 power - Not quite as focused as an M division car ★★★★★
Mercedes-Benz C63 AMG (W204)	151 F	'08-'14	8/6208	451/6800	442/5000	1655kg	277	4.5	4.4	9.7	155	+ Monstrous pace and extremely engaging - Same-era M3 is just a little better... ★★★★★
Mercedes-Benz C55 AMG (W203)	088 F	'04-'08	8/5439	367/5250	376/4000	1635kg	228	5.2	-	-	155	+ Furiously fast, commendably discreet - Overshadowed by M3 and RS4 ★★★★★
Mercedes-Benz 190E 2.5-16	185 F	'89-'92	4/2498	204/6750	177/5500	1300kg	159	7.5	-	-	146	+ M-B's M3 alternative - Not as nimble as the Beemer ★★★★★
Mercedes-AMG E63 4Matic (W213)	236 D	£57,275	6/2996	395/6100	383/2500	1765kg	227	4.6	-	-	155	+ Some of the E63's looks and performance - Not enough of its performance ★★★★★
Mercedes-AMG E63 S 4Matic+ (W213)	237 F	£88,295	8/3982	603/5750	627/2500	1880kg	326	3.4	3.4	7.4	155	+ Fast, refined, effective and fun - At nearly two tons, it's not 911 nimble ★★★★★
Mercedes-Benz E63 AMG (W212)	187 D	'13-'16	8/5461	549/5500	531/1750	1770kg	315	4.2	-	-	155	+ Power, response and accuracy in spades - A little lacking in originality ★★★★★
Mercedes-Benz E63 AMG S (W212)	208 F	'13-'16	8/5461	577/5500	590/1750	1795kg	327	4.1	-	-	155	+ Effortless power, intuitive and approachable - Sluggish auto box ★★★★★
Mercedes-Benz E63 AMG (W212)	165 F	'11-'13	8/5461	518/5250	516/1750	1765kg	298	4.4	-	-	155	+ Turbo engine didn't dilute the E63 experience - Sometimes struggles for traction... ★★★★★
Mercedes-Benz E63 AMG (W212)	134 D	'09-'11	8/6208	518/6800	465/5200	1765kg	298	4.5	-	-	155	+ Indulgent chassis, brilliant engine - Steering still vague ★★★★★
Mercedes-Benz E63 AMG (W211)	096 D	'06-'09	8/6208	507/6800	465/5200	1765kg	292	4.5	-	-	155	+ Brilliant engine, indulgent chassis - Vague steering, speed limits ★★★★★
Mercedes-Benz E55 AMG	052 F	'03-'06	8/5439	469/6100	516/2650	1760kg	271	4.7	4.8	10.2	155	+ M5-humbling grunt, cossetting ride - Speed limits ★★★★★
Mercedes-Benz S63 AMG L	191 D	£124,910	8/5461	577/5500	664/2250	1995kg	294	4.4	-	-	155	+ Monster pace - Average steering feel ★★★★★
Mercedes-Benz SLS63 AMG S	199 D	£89,130	8/5461	577/5500	590/1750	1795kg	327	4.1	-	-	155	+ Quick and characterful - Dated gearbox, no four-wheel-drive option in the UK ★★★★★
Mercedes-Benz CLS63 AMG	178 F	'11-'14	8/5461	518/5250	516/1700	1795kg	293	4.4	-	-	155	+ Monster performance, 549bhp an option - Not as desirable as a Bentley or Aston ★★★★★
Mercedes-Benz CLS63 AMG	099 F	'06-'11	8/6208	507/6100	464/2650	1800kg	281	4.5	-	-	155	+ Beauty, comfort, awesome performance - M5 has the edge on B-roads ★★★★★
Mercedes-Benz GL63 AMG S	218 D	£96,950	8/5461	577/5500	560/1750	2270kg	258	4.2	-	-	155	+ Stonking pace, extreme refinement - Feels remote ★★★★★
Mercedes-Benz GL63 AMG S Coupe	213 D	£96,575	8/5461	577/5500	560/1750	2275kg	258	4.2	-	-	155	+ Subtler than an X6 M - More force than finesse ★★★★★
Mercedes-Benz ML63 AMG	176 F	'12-'15	8/5461	518/5250	516/1750	2270kg	232	4.7	-	-	155	+ Great engine, surprisingly good dynamics - Same money buys a Boxster and an ML350... ★★★★★
Mercedes-Benz GL63 AMG	172 D	£135,025	8/5461	537/5500	560/2000	2475kg	220	5.4	-	-	130	+ It exists; epic soundtrack - Ancient chassis, silly price ★★★★★
Mitsubishi Evo X FQ-300 SST	118 F	'08-'14	4/1998	290/6500	300/3350	1590kg	185	4.5	5.2	13.9	155	+ First Evo with a twin-clutch transmission - Not as exciting as its predecessors ★★★★★
Mitsubishi Evo X FQ-330 SST	134 F	'08-'14	4/1998	324/6500	322/3350	1590kg	207	4.4	-	-	155	+ Great engine and gearbox combo - It still lives in the shadow of the Evo IX ★★★★★
Mitsubishi Evo X FQ-360	122 D	'08-'14	4/1998	354/6500	363/3500	1560kg	231	4.0	-	-	155	+ Ridiculously rapid Evo - A five-speed gearbox?! ★★★★★
Mitsubishi Evo X FQ-400	181 F	'09-'10	4/1998	403/6500	387/3500	1560kg	262	3.8	-	-	155	+ Most powerful factory Evo ever... - ...about X grand too much when new ★★★★★
Mitsubishi Evo IX FQ-340	088 F	'05-'08	4/1997	345/6800	321/4600	1400kg	250	4.2	4.3	10.9	157	+ Gives Porsche drivers nightmares - Points, Lots of ★★★★★
Mitsubishi Evo IX MR FQ-360	181 F	'05-'08	4/1997	366/6887	363/3200	1400kg	266	4.0	-	-	157	+ Well-executed engine upgrades - Prison food ★★★★★
Mitsubishi Evo VIII	055 F	'03-'05	4/1997	276/6500	289/3350	1410kg	199	5.1	-	-	157	+ The Evo grows up - Brakes need beefing up ★★★★★
Mitsubishi Evo VIII MR FQ-300	057 F	'03-'05	4/1997	305/6800	289/3350	1400kg	221	4.9	-	-	157	+ Extra pace, extra attitude - Extra money ★★★★★
Mitsubishi Evo VII	031 F	'02-'03	4/1997	276/6500	282/3350	1360kg	206	5.1	5.0	13.0	140	+ Terrific all-rounder - You tell us ★★★★★
Mitsubishi Evo VI Tommi Mäkinen Edition	231 F	'00-'01	4/1997	276/6500	275/2750	1365kg	205	4.6	-	-	150	+ Our favourite Evo - Subtle it is not ★★★★★
Porsche Panamera 4S Diesel	232 D	£91,788	8/3956	416/3500	627/1000	2050kg	206	4.3	-	-	177	+ Sharp chassis, impressive tech - Performance doesn't meet expectations ★★★★★
Porsche Panamera Turbo	237 F	£115,100	8/3996	542/5750	568/1960	1995kg	276	3.4	8.3	190	188	+ Searing pace with body control that's a real step up; superb rear wing, too - Still very heavy ★★★★★
Porsche Panamera Turbo Sport Turismo	239 D	£118,828	8/3996	542/5750	568/1960	2050kg	271	3.8	-	-	188	+ Looks great; drives better than its weight would suggest - Not exactly a load-lugger ★★★★★
Porsche Panamera GT5	208 F	'11-'16	8/4806	434/6700	383/3350	1925kg	229	4.4	-	-	178	+ Vivacious V8, entertaining balance - Can feel light on performance next to turbocharged rivals ★★★★★
Porsche Panamera Turbo	137 F	'10-'16	8/4806	493/6000	516/2250	1970kg	254	4.2	3.6	8.9	188	+ Fast, refined and dynamically sound - It still leaves us cold ★★★★★
Porsche Panamera Turbo S	159 D	'11-'13	8/4806	542/6000	590/2250	1995kg	276	3.8	-	-	190	+ Pace, excellent ergonomics - Steering feel, ride ★★★★★
Porsche Macan S	205 F	£48,287	6/2997	335/5500	339/1450	1865kg	183	5.4	-	-	157	+ No less compelling than the Macan Turbo - Although lacks its ultimate speed and agility ★★★★★
Porsche Macan GT5	217 D	£55,158	6/2997	355/6000	369/1650	1895kg	190	5.2	-	-	159	+ Handles like an SUV shouldn't - Still looks like an SUV ★★★★★
Porsche Macan Turbo	207 D	£63,981	6/3604	394/6000	406/1350	1925kg	208	4.8	4.5	11.1	165	+ Doesn't feel like an SUV - Not a match for a proper sports saloon ★★★★★
Porsche Macan Turbo Performance Package	236 D	£69,505	6/3604	434/6000	442/1500	1925kg	229	4.4	-	-	-	+ Staggering look and hugely capable - Do you really need this much power? ★★★★★
Porsche Cayenne GT5 (Mk2, V6)	211 D	£76,430	6/3604	434/6000	442/1600	2110kg	209	5.2	-	-	163	+ The driver's Cayenne... - ...but why would a driver want an SUV? ★★★★★
Porsche Cayenne GT5 (Mk2, V8)	173 D	'12-'15	8/4806	414/6500	380/3350	2085kg	202	5.7	-	-	162	+ Dynamically the best SUV of its era - At two tons, it's still no sports car ★★★★★
Porsche Cayenne Turbo (Mk2)	212 D	£96,193	8/4806	513/6000	533/2250	2185kg	239	4.5	-	-	173	+ Remarkable performance, handling, completeness - Vague steering, dated engine ★★★★★
Porsche Cayenne Turbo S (Mk2)	184 D	£121,550	8/4806	562/6000	590/2500	2235kg	255	4.1	-	-	176	+ More power and torque than a Zonda S 7.3 - In an SUV ★★★★★
Range Rover Evoque Coupe Si4	160 D	£44,545	4/1999	237/6000	251/1900	1670kg	144	7.0	-	-	135	+ Striking looks, sporting dynamics - Hefty price, and petrol version is auto-only ★★★★★
Range Rover Velar P380	239 D	£70,210	6/2995	375/6500	332/3500	1884kg	202	5.7	-	-	155	+ A more advanced, opulent alternative to an F-Pace - Its weight ultimately limits its agility ★★★★★
Range Rover Sport V8 Supercharged	186 D	£87,680	8/5000	503/6000	460/2500	2335kg	219	5.0	-	-	155	+ Deceptively quick and capable sports SUV - It's still got a weight problem ★★★★★
Range Rover Sport SVR	212 D	£97,780	8/5000	542/6000	501/3500	2335kg	236	4.5	-	-	162	+ Characterful drivetrain; genuine off-road ability - Not a match for its rivals on the road ★★★★★
Range Rover SDV8	180 D	£83,900	8/4367	334/3500	516/1750	2360kg	144	6.5	-	-	140	+ Lighter and more capable than before, even more luxurious - Diesel V6 model feels more alert ★★★★★
Rolls-Royce Ghost	186 D	£223,368	12/6592	563/5250	575/1500	2360kg	242	4.7	-	-	155	+ It's quicker than you think - It's more enjoyable driven slowly ★★★★★
Rolls-Royce Phantom	054 F	£318,120	12/6749	453/5350	531/3500	2560kg	180	5.7	-	-	149	+ Rolls reinvented for the 21st century - The roads are barely big enough ★★★★★
Subaru WRX STI	201 F	£31,995	4/2457	296/6000	300/4000	1534kg	196	5.2	-	-	158	+ Fast Subaru saloon soldiers on - Without a power increase ★★★★★
Subaru WRX STI	151 D	'10-'13	4/2457	296/6000	300/4000	1505kg	200	5.2	-	-	158	+ Fast Subaru back as a saloon - Without the blue paint and gold wheels ★★★★★
Subaru Impreza STI ('Hawkeye')	090 F	'05-'07	4/2457	276/6000	289/4000	1495kg	188	5.3	-	-	158	+ Stunning to drive - Not so stunning to look at ★★★★★
Subaru Impreza WRX GB270	109 D	'07	4/2457	266/5700	310/3000	1410kg	192	5.2	-	-	143	+ Fitting final fling for the Impreza badge on a fast Subaru - End of an era ★★★★★
Subaru Impreza RB320	105 F	'07	4/2457	316/6000	332/3750	1495kg	215	4.8	-	-	155	+ Fitting tribute to a rallying legend - Too hardcore for some? ★★★★★
Subaru Impreza WRX STI P1PP ('Blobeys')	073 F	'03-'05	4/1994	300/6000	299/4000	1470kg	207	5.4	5.2	12.9	148	+ A Subaru with real edge - Bit too edgy in the wet ★★★★★
Subaru Impreza Turbo ('Classic')	011 F	'98-'00	4/1994	215/5600	214/4000	1235kg	177	5.8	5.4	14.6	144	+ Destined for classic status - Thirsty ★★★★★
Subaru Impreza RB5	187 F	'99	4/1994	237/6000	258/3500	1235kg	195	6.1	5.0	14.1	144	+ Perfect blend of poise and power - Limited numbers ★★★★★
Subaru Impreza PI	200 F	'00-'01	4/1994	276/6500	260/4000	1283kg	219	4.7	4.9	13.3	150	+ One of our favourite Imprezas - Doesn't come cheap ★★★★★
Subaru Impreza 22B	188 F	'98-'99	4/2212	276/6000	265/3200	1270kg	220	5.3	5.0	13.1	150	+ The ultimate Impreza - Prices reflect this ★★★★★
Tesla Model S P100D	235 F	£129,400	-	595	713	2108kg	287	2.4	2.9	7.7	155	+ Killer RWYB performance - Can take as long as 30 minutes to warm up for a Ludicrous+ launch ★★★★★
Tesla Model S P85D	208 D	'15-'16	-	457	687	2239kg	314	3.2	-	-	155	+ Dual motors and 4WD equals extraordinary acceleration - Lack of charging points ★★★★★
Vauxhall Insignia Grand Sport 2.0T 4x4	237 D	£27,710	4/1998	257/5300	295/2500	1649kg	158	6.9	-	-	155	+ A more spacious and stylish Insignia - Still lacking the performance gene ★★★★★
Vauxhall Insignia VXR SuperSport	189 D	'13-'17	6/2792	321/5250	321/5250	1825kg	179	5.6	-	-	170	+ A 170mph Vauxhall - Should be a more engaging steer ★★★★★
Vauxhall Vectra VXR	102 D	'06-'09	6/2792	276/5500	262/1800	1580kg	177	6.1	-	-	161	+ Great engine, effortless pace, good value - Numb steering, lumpy ride ★★★★★
Vauxhall VXR8 GTS	215 D	£56,380	8/6162	576/6150	545/3850	1834kg	319	4.2	-	-	155	+ Monster engine; engaging driving experience - Woeful interior ★★★★★
Volvo V60 Polestar	222 D	£49,665	4/1969	362/6000	347/3100	1721kg	214	4.8	-	-	155	+ Subtle, well-executed performance car - Plays a little too safe ★★★★★

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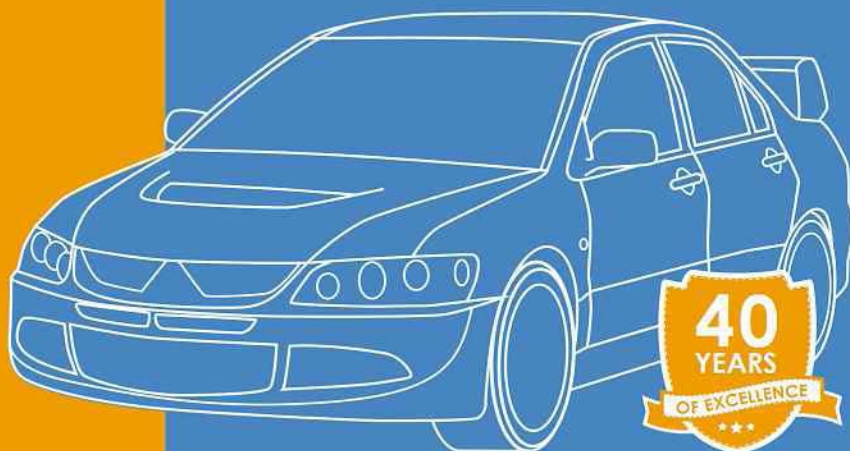
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OUR CHOICE

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



BEST OF THE REST

The **Abarth 124 Spider** (left) is capable of putting a big smile on your face at sane speeds, while at the opposite end of the spectrum we'd defy anyone not to be charmed by an **Aston Martin Vantage S Roadster**, in V8 or V12 form. Unsurprisingly, you won't find a duffer in the **Lotus Elise** and **Exige Roadster** ranges, and the same goes for the **Caterham Seven**.

MAKE & MODEL	ISSUE NO.	PRICE	ENGINE BHP/CC	BHP/RPM	LB FT/RPM	WEIGHT	BHP/TON	0-62MPH (CLAMPER)	0-100MPH (CLAMPER)	0-100MPH (OVER 200)	MAX MPH	EVO RATING
Abarth 124 Spider	238 F	£26,920	4/1368	168/5500	184/2500	1060kg	161 6.8	-	-	-	143	+ A little car with a big soul - Vague and lifeless front end
Alfa Romeo 4C Spider	223 F	£59,505	4/1742	237/6000	258/2200	940kg*	256 4.5	-	-	-	160	+ Stunningly beautiful; better steering than the coupe version - Still has the coupe's other foibles
Alfa Romeo 8C Spider	161 F	09-'11	8/4691	450/7000	354/4750	1675kg	273 4.4	-	-	-	181	+ Beauty meets beast. They hit it off - Boot is useless for touring
Alpina B4 Biturbo Convertible	212 D	£56,000	6/2993	345/4000	516/1500	1815kg	193 5.0	-	-	-	171	+ As much torque as a 997 Turbo - A diesel convertible wouldn't be our choice of Alpina
Alpina B4 Biturbo Convertible	227 D	'16	6/2979	404/5500	442/3000	1840kg	223 4.5	-	-	-	187	+ A great GT - Not as exciting to drive as the numbers may suggest
Ariel Atom 3 245	113 D	£30,573	4/1998	245/8600	1171/7200	520kg*	479 3.1	-	-	-	145	+ Even better than its predecessors - Can still be a bit draughty
Ariel Atom 3.5 Supercharged	180 D	£38,000	4/1998	310/8400	169/7200	550kg*	573 2.7	-	-	-	155	+ As mad as ever - Rain
Ariel Atom 3.5R	205 F	£64,800	4/1998	350/8400	243/6100	550kg*	647 2.6	-	-	-	155	+ Remarkable balance, poise and pace - Pricey
Ariel Atom 3 Supercharged	138 F	09-'12	4/1998	300/8200	162/7200	550kg*	554 3.3	-	-	-	155	+ It's brilliant - It's mental
Ariel Atom Mugen	165 F	'12-'13	4/1998	270/8300	188/6000	550kg*	499 2.9	-	-	-	150	+ Perfect engine for the Atom's chassis - Only ten were made
Ariel Atom V8 500	165 F	'10-'12	8/3000	475/10500	284/7750	550kg*	877 2.3	3.0	5.8	170	+ An experience unlike anything else on Planet Car - It cost £150k when new	
Ariel Nomad	220 F	£33,000	4/2354	235/7200	221/4300	670kg*	365 3.4	-	-	-	134	+ Off-road capabilities make for a super plaything - No Bluetooth
Aston Martin V8 Vantage S Roadster	161 F	£103,995	8/4735	430/7300	361/5000	1690kg	258 4.8	-	-	-	189	+ Sounds amazing, looks even better - Still not the best drop-top in its class
Aston Martin V12 Vantage S Roadster	212 F	£147,000	12/5935	565/6750	457/5750	1450kg	329 4.1	-	-	-	201	+ A brilliant two-seat roadster... - ...let down by a frustrating automated manual gearbox
Aston Martin V8 Vantage Roadster	130 F	09-'16	8/4735	420/7000	346/5750	1710kg	250 4.8	-	-	-	180	+ Sportiest, coolest drop-top Aston in years - Feels a bit dated compared with its contemporaries
Aston Martin V12 Vantage Roadster	175 F	'12-'14	12/5935	510/6500	420/5750	1760kg	294 4.5	-	-	-	190	+ As good as the coupe, with amplified V12 rumble - Just a smidgen shakier
Aston Martin V8 Vantage Roadster	105 F	07-'09	8/4280	380/7000	302/5000	1710kg	226 5.0	-	-	-	174	+ Still looks and sounds fabulous; drives great too - You'll want the later 4.7-litre engine
Aston Martin DB9 Volante	150 D	'04-'15	12/5935	510/6500	457/5500	1890kg	274 4.5	-	-	-	183	+ Consummate cruiser and capable when pushed - Roof-up wind noise
Audi TT S Roadster	207 D	£42,565	4/1984	306/5800	280/1800	1450kg	214 5.2	-	-	-	155	+ A serious proposition, ranking close behind a Boxster S - Coupe still looks better
Audi TT S Roadster	122 D	'08-'14	4/1984	268/6000	258/2500	1455kg	187 5.6	-	-	-	155	+ Effortlessly quick - Long-term appeal open to question
Audi TT RS Roadster	133 D	'09-'14	5/2480	335/5400	332/1600	1510kg	225 4.7	-	-	-	155	+ Terrific engine... - ...is the best thing about it
Audi R8 V8 Spyder	186 D	'11-'15	8/4163	424/7900	317/6000	1660kg	259 4.8	-	-	-	187	+ More delicate and subtle than the V10 - The V10 sounds even better
BAC Mono	189 F	£165,125	4/2261	305/7700	206/6000	580kg*	534 2.8	-	-	-	170	+ The most single-minded track car available - That means no passengers...
BMW Z4 Drive 35i M Sport (Mk2)	186 D	'13-'17	6/2979	302/5800	295/1300	1505kg	204 5.2	-	-	-	155	+ Looks, hard-top versatility, drivetrain - Clumsy when pushed with ragged surfaces
BMW Z4 3.0si (Mk1)	094 D	'06-'09	6/2996	265/6600	232/2750	1310kg	205 5.7	-	-	-	155	+ Terrific straight-six - Handling not as playful as we'd like
BMW Z4 M Roadster	091 F	'06-'09	6/3246	338/7900	269/4900	1410kg	244 5.0	-	-	-	155	+ Exhilarating and characterful; that engine - Stiff suspension
BMW M Roadster	002 F	'98-'02	6/3246	325/7400	258/4900	1375kg	240 5.1	-	-	-	155	+ M3 motor; hunky looks - M Coupe drives better
BMW Z8	026 F	'00-'03	8/4941	400/6600	369/3800	1585kg	256 4.7	4.8	11.1	155	+ M5-powered super-sportster - M5's more fun to drive	
Caterham Seven 160	239 F	£19,495	4/660	80/7000	79/3400	490kg*	166 6.9	-	-	-	100	+ The fabulous Seven formula at its most basic - Gets pricey with options
Caterham Seven 270	219 F	£23,995	4/1596	135/6800	122/4100	540kg*	254 5.0	-	-	-	122	+ Feisty engine, sweetly balanced, manic and exciting - The temptation of more power
Caterham Seven 310	227 D	£25,495	4/1596	152/7000	124/5600	540kg*	286 4.8	-	-	-	126	+ Intense and exciting - Sticky tyres limit the amount of throttle adjustability
Caterham Seven 360	209 F	£27,495	4/1999	180/7300	143/6100	560kg*	327 4.8	-	-	-	130	+ Extra power is welcome - You'll need the six-speed gearbox to make the most of it
Caterham Seven 420	223 F	£30,495	4/1999	210/7600	150/6300	560kg*	381 3.8	4.0	10.3	136	+ It's the one we built for ourselves - Tricker on the limit than lesser-powered Sevens	
Caterham Seven CSR	094 F	£46,495	4/2261	256/7500	200/6200	565kg*	460 3.1	3.8	-	-	155	+ Brilliant for high days, holidays and trackdays - Wet Wednesdays
Caterham Seven 620S	220 D	£45,495	4/1999	310/7700	219/7350	610kg*	516 3.4	-	-	-	155	+ Ludicrous, near-620R pace, with added habitability - Well, 'habitable' to a Seven...
Caterham Seven 620R	239 F	£50,490	4/1999	310/7700	219/7350	572kg*	551 2.8	-	-	-	155	+ Banzai on track, yet still relevant on the road - £50k for a Seven?
Caterham Seven Roadsport 125	105 F	'07-'14	4/1596	125/6100	120/5350	539kg*	235 5.9	-	-	-	112	+ Great debut for Ford-engined model - Bigger drivers need SV model
Caterham Seven Supersport	165 F	'11-'14	4/1596	140/6900	120/5790	520kg*	373 4.9	-	-	-	120	+ One of the best Caterhams is also one of the cheapest of its era - It's quite minimalist
Caterham Seven Supersport R	180 D	'13-'14	4/1999	180/7300	143/6100	535kg*	242 4.8	-	-	-	130	+ One of the best road-and-track Sevens - Impractical, noisy, uncomfortable
Caterham Seven Superlight R300	150 F	'09-'12	4/1999	175/7000	139/6000	515kg*	345 4.5	-	-	-	140	+ Possibly all the Caterham you need - They're not cheap
Caterham Seven Superlight R500	123 F	'08-'14	4/1999	263/8500	177/7200	506kg*	528 2.9	-	-	-	150	+ Better power-to-weight ratio than a Veyron - Until you add the driver
Caterham Levante	131 F	'09-'10	8/2398	550/10000	300/8500	520kg*	1074 3.0	4.8	8.2	150	+ Twice the power-to-weight ratio of a Veyron! - Not easy to drive slowly	
Caterham Seven R300	068 F	'02-'06	4/1796	160/7000	130/5000	500kg*	325 4.7	-	-	-	130	+ Our 2002 Trackday Car of the Year - Not for wimps
Caterham Seven R500	200 F	'99-'06	4/1796	230/8600	155/7200	460kg*	510 3.4	3.6	8.8	146	+ The K-series Seven at its very best - No cup holders	
Elemental Rpl	238 D	£98,700	4/1999	320/ n/a	332/2000	630kg	516 2.7	-	-	-	165	+ Sensational, explosive, captivating and exploitable - Price will test your level of commitment
Ferrari California T	229 D	£155,254	8/3855	553/7500	557/4750	1729kg	324 3.6	-	-	-	196	+ Turbocharged engine is a triumph - Still places daily useability above outright thrills
Fiat 124 Spider	228 F	£21,050	4/1368	138/5000	117/2250	1050kg	134 7.5	-	-	-	134	+ It's an affordable Italian(ish) sports car - Lacks Italian brio
Honda S2000	118 D	'99-'09	4/1997	237/8300	153/7500	1260kg*	191 6.2	-	-	-	150	+ An alternative and rev-happy roadster - The Boxster's better
Jaguar F-type Convertible 3.0 V6 340PS	186 F	£57,750	6/2995	335/6500	332/3500	1587kg	214 5.7	-	-	-	161	+ Beautiful, enjoyable, responsive - Noticeably the junior F-type
Jaguar F-type Convertible 3.0 V6 380PS	183 F	£68,500	6/2995	375/6500	339/3500	1604kg	238 5.5	-	-	-	171	+ A more rounded F-type than the V8s - We like V8s
Jaguar F-type R Convertible	-	£92,345	8/2500	542/6500	501/3500	1665kg	331 4.1	-	-	-	186	+ Pace, characterful engine - Costs nearly £25k more than the hot V6
Jaguar F-type SVR Convertible	230 D	£115,485	8/5000	567/6500	516/3500	1720kg	335 3.7	-	-	-	195	+ Huge performance - Unpleasant soundtrack; unsettled on bumpy roads
Jaguar F-type S Convertible	183 F	'13-'17	6/2995	375/6500	339/3500	1604kg	238 5.5	-	-	-	171	+ Better-damped and more rounded than the V8 S - A Boxster S is cheaper
Jaguar F-type V8 S Convertible	183 F	'13-'14	8/5000	488/6500	461/2500	1665kg	298 4.3	-	-	-	186	+ Wilder than the V6 S - Could be too exuberant for some
Jaguar F-type Project 7	212 F	'15	8/5000	567/6500	501/2500	1585kg	363 3.9	-	-	-	186	+ Noise, performance, adjustability - Expensive, and not the GT3 rival we would have liked
Jaguar XKR Convertible	130 F	'09-'14	8/5000	503/6000	461/2500	1725kg	296 4.8	-	-	-	155	+ Fantastic 5-litre V8 - Loses sporting ground to its main foes
Jaguar XKR-S Convertible	167 F	'11-'14	8/5000	542/6500	502/2500	1725kg	319 4.4	-	-	-	186	+ Loud and mad; most exciting Jag in years - It was also the most expensive in years
KTM X-Bow GT	183 D	£95,880	4/1984	281/6400	310/3200	875kg	326 4.1	-	-	-	144	+ Extraordinary ability, now in a more road-friendly package - Price
KTM X-Bow R	165 F	£87,480	4/1984	296/6300	295/3300	816kg	369 3.9	-	-	-	144	+ Sharper handling, more power - Pity it's not even lighter, and cheaper
KTM X-Bow	138 F	'08-'12	4/1984	237/5500	229/2000	818kg	294 3.8	-	-	-	137	+ Mad looks; real quality feel - Heavier and pricier than you'd hope
Lotus Elise Sport	-	£32,300	4/1598	134/6800	118/4400	856kg	159 6.5	-	-	-	127	+ 1.6-litre Elise is light and fantastic - Smaller engine could put some off
Lotus Elise Sprint	-	£37,300	4/1598	134/6800	118/4400	830kg	164 6.2	-	-	-	127	+ Even lighter version of the 1.6 Elise - It'll cost you nearly £200 per kilo saved
Lotus Elise Sport 220	-	£39,300	4/1798	217/6800	184/4600	904kg	244 4.6	-	-	-	145	+ Epic grip and pace - A bit short on creature comforts
Lotus Elise Sprint 220	236 D	£44,300	4/1798	217/6800	184/4600	878kg	251 4.5	-	-	-	145	+ Makes the most of its lightness - Heavyweight price
Lotus Elise Cup 250	238 D	£47,400	4/1798	243/7200	184/3500	917kg	269 4.3	-	-	-	154	+ Quickest Elise yet - Prioritises grip over adjustability
Lotus Elise Club Racer	183 F	'11-'15	4/1598	134/6800	118/4400	852kg	160 6.5	-	-	-	127	+ Even lighter, even more focused than a standard 1.6 Elise - Are you prepared to go this basic?
Lotus Elise S Club Racer	189 D	'13-'15	4/1798	217/6800	184/4600	905kg	244 4.6	-	-	-	145	+ Purist approach intensifies ability - Lightest, option-free spec requires commitment
Lotus Elise R	068 F	'04-'11	4/1798	189/7800	133/6800	860kg	223 5.4	5.6	13.9	138	+ A most thrilling Elise - Blaring engine note	
Lotus Elise SC	131 F	'08-'11	4/1794	218/8000	156/5000	870kg	254 4.6	4.5	11.4	145	+ All the usual Elise magic - Supercharged engine lacks sparkle	
Lotus Elise S	104 F	'06-'10	4/1794	134/6200	127/4200	860kg	158 6.1	6.3	18.7	127	+ Brilliant entry-level Elise - Precious little	
Lotus Elise IIS	049 F	'02-'04	4/1796	156/7000	129/4650	860kg	197 5.1	-	-	-	131	+ A genuinely useable Elise - Air-con? In an Elise?
Lotus Elise Sport 135	040 D	'03	4/1796	135/6200	129/4850	726kg	189 5.4	-	-	-	129	+ One of our fav S2 Elises - Brakes need more bite and pedal feel
Lotus Elise Sport 190	044 F	'03	4/1796	190/7800	128/5000	710kg	272 4.5	4.7	12.1	135	+ Fabulous trackday tool - Pricey	
Lotus Elise (S1)	235 F	'96-'01	4/1796	118/5500	122/3000	731kg	164 5.9	6.1	18.5	126	+ A modern classic - A tad impractical?	
Lotus Elise Sport 350 Roadster	221 F	£55,900	6/3456	345/7000	295/4500	1125kg	312 3.9	-	-	-	145	+ An Exige with added sunny-day appeal - A Boxster would be more practical
Lotus Exige Sport 380 Roadster	231 F	£67,900	6/3456	375/6700	302/5000	1101kg	343 3.7	-				

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Table with columns: MAKE & MODEL, ISSUE NO., PRICE, ENGINE, BHP/RPM, LB FT/RPM, WEIGHT, BHP/TON, 0-62MPH, 0-60MPH, 0-100MPH, MAX MPH, and EVO RATING. Includes models like Lotus 2-Eleven, Mercedes-AMG GT Roadster, Porsche 911 Carrera S, etc.

COUPES / GTs

OUR CHOICE

Porsche 911 Carrera GTS. Adjustable, playful, communicative and with top-class body control and damping, the 991.2-generation Carrera GTS is everything a 911 should be.

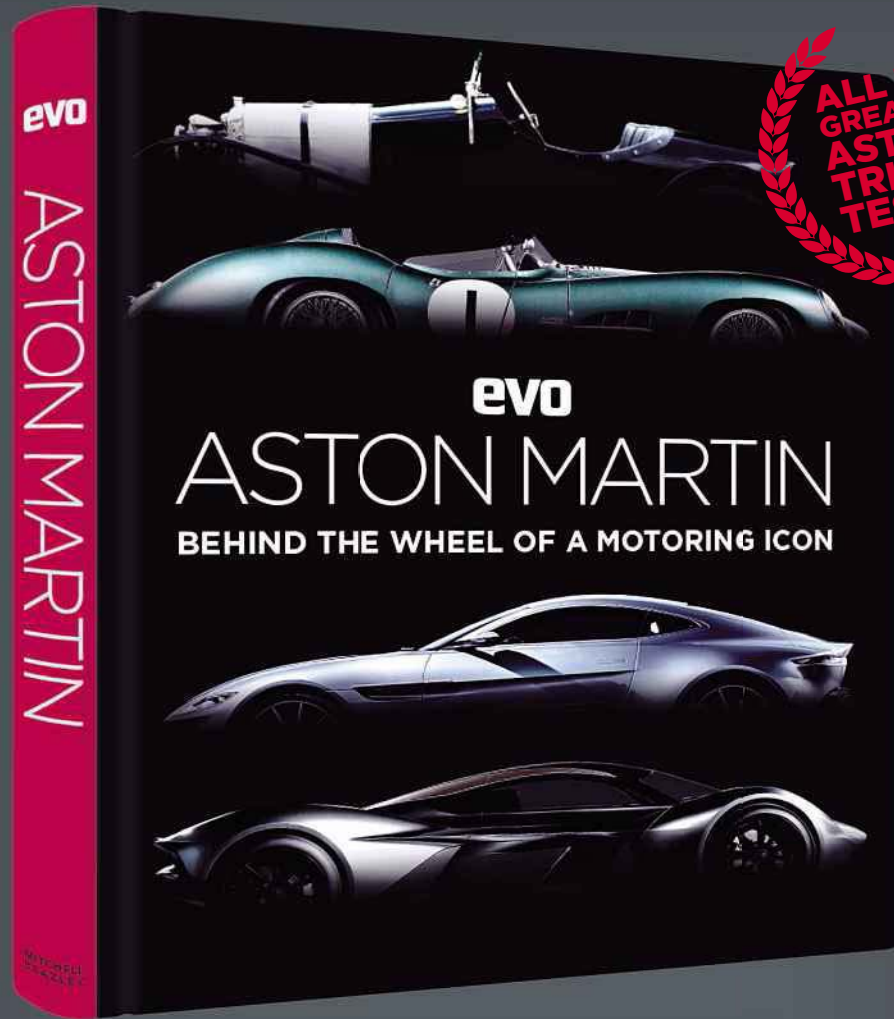
BEST OF THE REST

Lower down the 991.2 range, the Porsche 911 Carrera and Carrera S haven't been ruined by the addition of turbos, while among their rivals we'd take a BMW M4 Competition Package over an Audi RS5 or a Mercedes-AMG C63 S Coupe.



Table listing various cars with columns for Make & Model, Issue No., Price, Engine, BHP/RPM, LB FT/RPM, Weight, BHP/Ton, 0-62MPH, 0-60MPH, 0-100MPH, Max MPH, and Evo Rating. Models include Alfa Romeo 4C, Aston Martin V8 Vantage S, etc.

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MAKE & MODEL	ISSUE NO.	PRICE	ENGINE Cyl./CC	HP/PS	LB FT/HPM	WEIGHT	HP/TON	0-50MPH (s)	0-100MPH (s)	0-100MPH (0.1s)	MAX MPH	EVO RATING
Audi TT RS Plus (Mk2)	185 D	12-14	5/2480	355/5500	34.3/1650	1450kg	249	4.3	-	-	174	+ Stonkingly fast cross-country - Shockingly expensive for a TT ★★★★★
Audi TT Sport (Mk1)	081 D	05-06	4/1781	237/5700	236/2300	1390kg	173	5.7	-	-	155	+ Deliciously purposeful interior, crisp chassis - Numb steering ★★★★★
Audi S5	233 F	£47,875	6/2995	349/5400	369/1370	1615kg	220	4.7	-	-	155	+ Chassis rewards commitment... - ..but doesn't offer a challenge. Plain engine, too ★★★★★
Audi RS5	238 D	£62,900	6/2894	444/5700	442/1900	1655kg	273	3.9	-	-	155	+ Lighter and quicker, makes green paint look good - Twin-turbo V6 lacks the character of the old V8 ★★★★★
Audi RS5	206 F	70-16	8/4163	444/8250	3174/4000	175kg	263	4.5	-	-	155	+ Brilliant engine and improved chassis - Lack of suspension travel, inconsistent steering ★★★★★
Audi R8 V8	201 F	07-15	8/4163	424/7900	3174/500	1560kg	276	4.6	4.1	9.9	188	+ A true 911 alternative - Exclusivity comes at a price ★★★★★
Bentley Continental GT V8	178 F	£140,300	8/3993	500/6000	487/1700	2220kg	229	4.8	-	-	188	+ A proper drivers' Bentley with decent economy - W12 suddenly seems pointless ★★★★★
Bentley Continental GT V8 S	204 F	£149,800	8/3993	521/6000	502/1700	2220kg	238	4.5	-	-	192	+ An even better drivers' Bentley - Vast weight makes its presence felt in harder driving ★★★★★
Bentley Continental GT	152 D	£150,500	12/5998	567/6000	516/1700	2245kg	257	4.5	-	-	198	+ Near 200mph in utter comfort - Weight, W12's thirst ★★★★★
Bentley Continental GT Speed	230 D	£168,900	12/5998	633/5900	620/2000	2245kg	286	4.1	-	-	206	+ Desirability meets exclusivity and performance - We'd still have the V8 ★★★★★
Bentley Continental Supersports	234 D	£212,500	12/5998	700/6000	750/2000	2205kg	323	3.5	-	-	209	+ Massive performance, surprisingly agile - Styling and soundtrack far from desecret ★★★★★
Bentley Continental GT3-R	203 D	£237,500	8/3993	572/6000	518/1700	2120kg	274	3.8	-	-	170	+ The best-handling Continental ever - Expensive; it still weighs 2120kg ★★★★★
BMW 1-series M Coupe	188 F	71-12	6/2979	335/5900	369/1500	1495kg	228	4.9	-	-	155	+ Character, turbo pace and great looks - Came and went too quick ★★★★★
BMW M240i Coupe	229 D	£35,865	6/2998	335/6800	369/1520	1470kg	232	4.8	-	-	155	+ Adjustable and plenty of fun - Lacks finesse and precision ★★★★★
BMW M235i Coupe	225 F	74-16	6/2979	321/5800	332/1300	1455kg	224	5.0	5.2	12.7	155	+ Powertrain, chassis, looks, size - Limited-slip diff is an option, not standard ★★★★★
BMW M2	230 F	£45,750	6/2979	365/6500	369/1450	1495kg	248	4.5	4.5	-	155	+ More progressive chassis balance than the M4 - Feels unsettled on rough tarmac ★★★★★
BMW 440i M Sport Coupe	233 F	£43,430	6/2998	321/5500	332/1380	1540kg	212	5.2	-	-	155	+ Almost-too-powerful engine - Doesn't feel special enough to drive ★★★★★
BMW M4	218 F	£58,365	6/2979	425/5500	406/1850	1515kg	285	4.3	-	-	155	+ Ferociously fast - A handful on less-than-perfect or less-than-bone-dry roads ★★★★★
BMW M4 Competition Package	238 F	£61,365	6/2979	444/7000	406/1850	1515kg	298	4.2	-	-	155	+ Better tied-down than the regular M4 - Torque delivery still rather abrupt ★★★★★
BMW M4 CS	237 D	£89,130	6/2979	454/6250	442/4000	1505kg	307	3.9	-	-	174	+ Finally, an M4 you can enjoy on any road, in any conditions - It ain't cheap ★★★★★
BMW M4 GTS	237 F	76	6/2979	493/6250	442/4000	1510kg	332	3.8	3.7	8.0	190	+ Vast improvement on lesser M4s - So it should be, given its price ★★★★★
BMW M3 (E92)	196 F	07-13	8/3999	414/8300	295/3900	1580kg	266	4.8	4.3	10.3	155	+ Fends off all of its rivals... - ..except the cheaper 1-series M Coupe ★★★★★
BMW M3 GT3 (E92)	232 F	70-71	8/4361	444/8300	324/3750	1530kg	295	4.4	-	-	190	+ Highly exclusive; one of the most focused M-cars ever - Good luck trying to find one ★★★★★
BMW M3 (E46)	066 F	00-07	6/3246	338/7900	269/5000	1495kg	230	5.2	5.1	12.3	155	+ One of the best BMW's ever. Runner-up in eCoty 2001 - Slightly artificial steering feel ★★★★★
BMW M3 CS (E46)	219 F	05-07	6/3246	338/7900	269/5000	1495kg	230	5.2	-	-	155	+ CSL dynamics without CSL price - Looks like the standard car ★★★★★
BMW M3 CSL (E46)	200 F	03-04	6/3246	355/7900	273/4900	1385kg	260	4.9	5.3	12.0	155	+ Still superb - Changes from the automated single-clutch 'box aer... a... bit... sluggish ★★★★★
BMW M3 Evolution (E36)	148 F	96-98	6/3201	317/7400	258/3250	1515kg	215	5.5	5.4	12.8	158	+ Performance, image - Never quite as good as the E30 ★★★★★
BMW M3 (E30)	165 F	89-90	4/2302	212/6750	170/4600	165kg	185	6.7	6.7	18.9	147	+ The best M-car ever - Prices have got out of hand ★★★★★
BMW Z4 M Coupe	097 F	06-09	6/3246	338/7900	269/4900	1420kg	242	5.0	-	-	155	+ A real drivers' car - You've got to be prepared to get stuck in ★★★★★
BMW M Coupe	005 F	98-03	6/3246	321/7400	261/4900	1375kg	237	5.3	-	-	155	+ Quick and characterful - Lacks finesse ★★★★★
BMW M6 (F13)	218 F	£95,580	8/4395	552/6000	501/1500	1850kg	303	4.2	-	-	155	+ Mighty ability, pace, technology - You'll want the Competition Package upgrade, too ★★★★★
BMW M6 (E63)	106 F	05-10	10/4999	500/7750	384/6100	1635kg	311	4.2	4.8	10.0	155	+ Awesome GT, awesome sports car - SMG gearbox now off the pace ★★★★★
BMW i8	210 F	£106,310	3/1499	357/5800	420/3750	1584kg	244	4.4	-	-	155	+ Brilliantly executed concept; sci-fi looks - Safe dynamic set-up ★★★★★
Chevrolet Camaro Z/28	220 F	74-76	8/7008	505/6100	481/4800	1732kg	296	4.2	-	-	175	+ Scalpel-sharp engine, great chassis (really) - Feels very stiff on UK roads ★★★★★
Chevrolet Corvette Stingray (C7)	197 F	£63,295	8/6162	460/6000	465/4600	1496kg	312	4.2	4.4	9.4	180	+ Performance, chassis balance, supple ride - Body control could be better ★★★★★
Chevrolet Corvette Z06 (C7)	227 F	£90,445	8/6162	650/6000	650/3600	1598kg	413	3.7	-	-	196	+ Mind-boggling raw speed, surprisingly sophisticated - Edgy when really pushed ★★★★★
Ford Mustang 2.3 EcoBoost	222 D	£33,645	4/2261	313/5500	319/3000	1655kg	192	5.8	-	-	155	+ Ninety per cent as good as the V8 - Missing ten per cent is what makes the Mustang ★★★★★
Ford Mustang 5.0 V8 GT	225 F	£38,095	8/4951	410/6500	391/4250	171kg	243	4.8	4.8	11.6	155	+ Looks, noise, performance, value, right-hand drive - Comes undone on rougher roads ★★★★★
Honda Integra Type R (DC2)	200 F	96-00	4/1797	187/8000	131/7300	1101kg	173	6.7	6.2	17.9	145	+ Arguably the greatest front-drive car ever - Too raw for some ★★★★★
Infiniti Q60S Sport 3.0T	228 D	£43,535	6/2997	400/6400	350/1600	1799kg	226	5.0	-	-	155	+ Impressive tech - Electronic systems reduce feeling of involvement ★★★★★
Jaguar F-type Coupe 2.0 i4 300PS	239 D	£49,900	4/1997	296/5500	295/1500	1525kg	197	5.7	-	-	155	+ Turbo four-cylinder engine sounds good - But it lacks top-end verve ★★★★★
Jaguar F-type Coupe 3.0 V6 340PS	204 D	£52,265	6/2995	335/6500	332/3500	1567kg	217	5.7	-	-	161	+ Drop-dead looks, brilliant chassis, desirability - Engine lacks top-end fight ★★★★★
Jaguar F-type Coupe 3.0 V6 380PS	211 D	£63,015	6/2995	375/6500	339/3500	1584kg	241	5.5	-	-	171	+ Exquisite style, more rewarding (and affordable) than roadster - Scrappy on the limit ★★★★★
Jaguar F-type R Coupe AWD	227 D	£90,860	8/5000	542/6500	501/3500	1730kg	318	4.1	3.5	8.1	186	+ Better than the rear-drive R in the wet - Less involving in the dry ★★★★★
Jaguar F-type SVR Coupe	224 D	£110,880	8/5000	567/6500	516/3500	1705kg	338	3.7	-	-	200	+ A marginally better drive than the AWD R - Not by enough to justify the extra outlay ★★★★★
Jaguar F-type R Coupe (RWD)	218 F	74-17	8/5000	542/6500	501/3500	1650kg	334	4.2	-	-	186	+ Looks, presence, performance, soundtrack - Bumpy and boisterous ★★★★★
Jaguar XKR	168 F	09-14	8/5000	503/6000	461/2500	1753kg	292	4.8	-	-	155	+ Fast and incredibly rewarding Jag - The kids will have to stay at home ★★★★★
Jaguar XKR-S	168 F	71-74	8/5000	542/6000	502/2500	1753kg	314	4.4	-	-	186	+ Faster and wilder than regular XKR - The F-type R Coupe ★★★★★
Lexus RC200t F Sport	225 F	£38,695	4/1998	242/5800	258/1650	1675kg	147	7.5	-	-	143	+ Fluid ride - Lacks body control and outright grip ★★★★★
Lexus RC F	226 F	£61,310	8/4969	470/6400	391/4800	1795kg	271	4.5	-	-	168	+ Great steering, noise, sense of occasion - Too heavy to be truly exciting ★★★★★
Lexus LC500	231 D	£76,565	8/4969	470/7100	398/4800	1935kg	247	4.4	-	-	168	+ Glorious engine, rewarding chassis for a GT car - Numb steering, messy ergonomics ★★★★★
Lotus Exige Sport 350	221 F	£55,900	6/3456	345/7000	295/4500	1125kg	312	3.9	-	-	170	+ Further honed Exige, with vastly improved gearshift - Still not easy to get into and out of ★★★★★
Lotus Exige Sport 380	231 F	£67,900	6/3456	375/7000	302/5000	1100kg	343	3.7	-	-	178	+ Intense, absorbing and brilliantly capable - Perhaps not an everyday car ★★★★★
Lotus Exige S (V6)	209 F	12-15	6/3456	345/7000	295/4500	1176kg	298	3.8	-	-	170	+ Breathtaking road-racer, our joint 2012 Car of the Year - Gearshift not the sweetest ★★★★★
Lotus Exige S (S2)	105 F	06-11	4/1796	218/7800	158/5500	930kg	238	4.3	-	-	148	+ Lightweight with a hefty punch - Uninspiring soundtrack ★★★★★
Lotus Exige (S1)	200 F	00-01	4/1796	192/7800	146/5000	780kg	247	4.6	-	-	136	+ Looks and goes like an Elise racer - A tad lacking in refinement ★★★★★
Lotus Evora 400	216 F	£72,000	6/3456	400/7000	302/3500	1395kg	291	4.2	-	-	186	+ Evora excitement levels take a leap - Gearbox still not perfect; punchy pricing ★★★★★
Lotus Evora Sport 410	230 F	£82,000	6/3456	410/7000	310/3500	1325kg	314	4.2	-	-	190	+ Even lighter and sharper Evora - Engine and gearbox behind the best at this price ★★★★★
Lotus Evora	138 F	09-15	6/3456	276/6400	258/4700	1382kg	203	5.1	5.6	13.6	162	+ Sublime ride and handling. Our 2009 Car of the Year - The Evora S ★★★★★
Lotus Evora S	168 F	70-15	6/3456	345/7000	295/4500	1430kg	245	4.8	-	-	172	+ A faster and better Evora - But one which spars with the Porsche 911 ★★★★★
Maserati GranTurismo Sport	188 F	£93,145	8/4691	454/7000	383/4750	1880kg	245	4.8	-	-	186	+ A real sense of occasion to drive; wonderful engine - Rather long in the tooth ★★★★★
Maserati GranTurismo MC	239 D	£109,740	8/4691	454/7000	383/4750	1873kg	246	4.7	-	-	187	+ As above but with knobs on - Those knobs don't make it feel any younger ★★★★★
Maserati GranTurismo	114 F	07-17	8/4244	399/7100	339/4750	1880kg	216	5.2	5.5	12.7	177	+ Striking, accomplished GT - Doesn't spike the pulse like an Aston or 911 ★★★★★
Maserati GranTurismo MC Stradale	193 F	71-17	8/4691	454/7000	383/4750	1800kg	256	4.5	-	-	188	+ Brilliant blend of road racer and GT - Gearbox takes a little getting used to ★★★★★
Mazda RX-8	122 F	03-11	2R/1308	228/8200	156/5500	1429kg	162	6.4	6.5	16.4	146	+ Never mind the quirks, it's a great drive - Water-thin torque output; thirsty (for petrol and oil) ★★★★★
Mercedes-AMG C43 4Matic Coupe	233 F	£47,605	6/2996	362/5500	383/2000	1660kg	222	4.7	-	-	155	+ Fast and instilled with a real sense of quality - Not enough emphasis on fun ★★★★★
Mercedes-AMG C63 S Coupe (W205)	229 F	£70,385	8/3982	503/5500	516/1750	1725kg	296	3.9	4.3	100	155	+ Mouth-watering mechanical package - Light steering; hefty kerb weight ★★★★★
Mercedes-Benz C63 AMG Coupe (W204)	162 F	71-14	8/6208	451/6800	442/5000	1655kg	277	4.5	4.4	10.3	155	+ A proper two-door M3 rival - C63 saloon looks better ★★★★★

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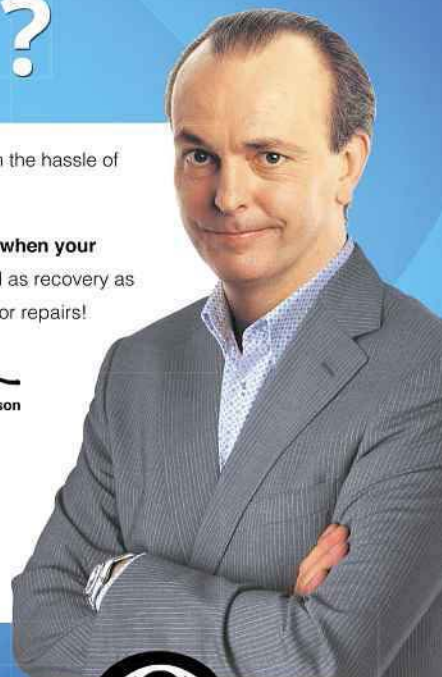
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MAKE & MODEL	ISSUE NO.	PRICE	ENGINE CYL/CC	BRP/RPM	LB FT/HPM	WEIGHT	BRP/TON	0-62MPH (S/CLAMP)	0-60MPH (EST/EST)	0-100MPH (EST/EST)	MAX MPH	EVO RATING	
Mercedes-Benz C63 AMG Black Series (W204)	171 F	£2-13	8/6208	510/6800	457/5200	1635kg	317	4.2	-	-	186	+ The C63 turned up to 11 - Too heavy; not as fiery as Black Series cars of old	★★★★★
Mercedes-Benz CLK63 AMG Black Series	106 F	07-09	8/6208	500/6800	464/5250	1760kg	289	4.2	-	-	186	+ AMG goes Porsche-hunting - Dull-witted gearshift spoils the party	★★★★★
Mercedes-Benz E400 4Matic Coupe	234 D	£50,775	6/2996	328/5200	354/1600	1770kg	188	5.3	-	-	155	+ Good looks, classy cabin, relaxed performance - Not much here in the way of real thrills	★★★★☆
Mercedes-AMG S63 Coupe	205 D	£130,680	8/5461	571/5500	664/2250	1995kg	294	4.2	-	-	155	+ Thunderously fast S-class built for drivers - Lacks badge appeal of a Continental GT	★★★★★
Mercedes-AMG S65 Coupe	209 D	£188,550	12/5980	621/4800	737/2300	2110kg	299	4.1	-	-	186	+ Almighty power, fabulous luxury - Nearly £60k more than the S63!	★★★★★
Mercedes-AMG GT	227 D	£98,760	8/3982	456/6000	442/1600	1540kg	301	4.0	-	-	189	+ A true sports coupe that also does luxury - Takes time to reveal its talents	★★★★★
Mercedes-AMG GT S	216 F	£112,060	8/3982	503/6250	479/1750	1570kg	326	3.8	-	-	193	+ Fantastic chassis, huge grip - Artificial steering feel; downshifts could be quicker	★★★★★
Nissan 370Z	204 F	£29,180	6/3696	323/7000	268/5200	1496kg	219	5.3	-	-	155	+ Quicker, leaner, keener than 350Z - Not quite a Cayman-killer	★★★★★
Nissan 370Z Nismo	209 F	£39,375	6/3696	339/7400	274/5200	1496kg	230	5.2	-	-	155	+ Sharper looks, improved ride, extra thrills - Engine lacks sparkle	★★★★★
Nissan 350Z	107 F	03-09	6/3498	309/6800	264/4800	1532kg	205	5.6	5.5	13.0	155	+ Huge fun, and great value too - Muscle-car vibe not for everyone	★★★★★
Nissan GT-R (2017MY)	230 F	£81,875	6/3799	562/6800	470/3600	1752kg	326	2.7	-	-	196	+ More refinement, much improved interior, still fast - Feels a touch less alert	★★★★★
Nissan GT-R Track Edition (2017MY)	229 D	£93,875	6/3799	562/6800	470/3600	1725kg	327	2.7	-	-	196	+ GT-R regains its sharpness - Getting pricey these days	★★★★★
Nissan GT-R Nismo (2017MY)	232 F	£150,875	6/3799	592/6800	481/3600	1725kg	349	2.7	-	-	196	+ Incredibly focused - Still too firm to be at its best on UK roads	★★★★★
Nissan GT-R (2012MY-2016MY)	238 F	£12-16	6/3799	542/6400	466/3200	1740kg	316	2.7	3.2	7.5	196	+ Even quicker and better than before - Stopping your Porsche-owning friends calling it a Datsun	★★★★★
Nissan GT-R Track Edition (2016MY)	223 F	£15-16	6/3799	542/6400	466/3200	1740kg	316	2.7	3.4	7.7	196	+ Recreates much of the Nismo's ability, without the rock-hard ride - Interior feels dated	★★★★★
Nissan GT-R Nismo (2014MY)	205 F	£10-16	6/3799	592/6800	481/3200	1720kg	350	2.6	-	-	196	+ Manages to make regular GT-R feel imprecise - Compromised by super-firm suspension	★★★★★
Nissan GT-R (2010MY)	152 F	£12-12	6/3799	523/6400	451/3200	1740kg	305	3.0	-	-	194	+ More powerful version of the original - But they're not worlds apart to drive	★★★★★
Nissan GT-R (2008MY)	125 F	£8-10	6/3799	473/6400	434/3200	1740kg	276	3.8	-	-	193	+ Our 2008 Car of the Year - You won't see 20mpg often	★★★★★
Nissan Skyline GT-R (R34)	196 F	99-02	6/2568	276/7000	289/4400	1560kg	180	4.8	4.7	12.5	165	+ Big, brutal, and great fun - Needs more than the standard 276bhp	★★★★★
Nissan Skyline GT-R (R33)	196 F	97-99	6/2568	276/6800	271/4400	1540kg	182	4.9	5.4	14.3	155	+ Early proof that Japanese high-tech could work (superbly) - Limited supply	★★★★★
Peugeot RCZ 1.6 THP 200	155 F	09-15	4/1598	197/5500	202/1700	1421kg	141	7.6	7.3	18.1	147	+ Distinctive looks, highly capable handling - Could be a bit more exciting	★★★★★
Peugeot RCZ R	209 F	74-15	4/1598	266/6000	243/1900	1280kg	211	5.9	-	-	155	+ Rewarding and highly effective when fully lit - Dated cabin, steering lacks feel	★★★★★
Porsche 718 Cayman	229 D	£42,897	4/1988	296/6500	280/1950	1335kg	225	5.1	-	-	170	+ Chassis remains a dream - Sounds like a Toyota GT86	★★★★★
Porsche 718 Cayman S	230 F	£51,853	4/2497	345/6500	310/1900	1355kg	259	4.6	4.4	-	177	+ Faster and better to drive than ever - Bring earplugs	★★★★★
Porsche Cayman S (981)	202 F	13-16	6/3436	321/7400	273/4500	1320kg	247	5.0	4.5	10.5	175	+ The Cayman comes of age - Erm...	★★★★★
Porsche Cayman GTS (981)	219 F	14-16	6/3436	335/7400	280/4750	1345kg	253	4.9	-	-	177	+ Tweaks improve an already sublime package - Slightly 'aftermarket' looks	★★★★★
Porsche Cayman GT4 (981)	221 F	15-16	6/3800	380/7400	310/4750	1340kg	288	4.4	-	-	183	+ Evo Car of the Year 2015 (even though the 991 GT3 RS was there!) - Second-hand prices	★★★★★
Porsche Cayman S (987)	231 F	06-13	6/3436	316/7200	273/4750	1350kg	237	5.2	-	-	172	+ Still want that 911? - Yeah, us too	★★★★★
Porsche Cayman R (987)	158 F	11-13	6/3436	325/7400	273/4750	1295kg	255	5.0	-	-	175	+ Total handling excellence - Styling additions not to all tastes	★★★★★
Porsche 911 Carrera (991.2)	218 F	£77,891	6/2981	365/6500	332/1700	1430kg	259	4.6	-	-	183	+ Forced induction hasn't ruined the Carrera - Purists won't be happy	★★★★★
Porsche 911 Carrera S (991.2)	217 F	£87,335	6/2981	414/6500	369/1700	1440kg	292	4.3	-	-	191	+ Blindingly fast - You'll want the sports exhaust	★★★★★
Porsche 911 Carrera GTS (991.2)	238 F	£95,795	6/2981	444/6500	406/2150	1450kg	311	4.1	-	-	193	+ In rear-drive coupe format, it's everything a 911 should be - Not all GTs are rear-drive coupes	★★★★★
Porsche 911 Carrera S (991.1)	201 F	12-15	6/3800	394/7400	324/5600	1415kg	283	4.5	4.3	9.5	188	+ A Carrera with supercar pace - Electric steering robs it of some tactility	★★★★★
Porsche 911 Carrera 4S (991.1)	179 F	13-15	6/3800	394/7400	324/5600	1465kg	273	4.5	-	-	185	+ More satisfying than rear-drive 991.1 Carreras - Choose your spec carefully	★★★★★
Porsche 911 Carrera 4 GTS (991.1)	208 D	15	6/3800	424/7500	324/5750	1470kg	293	4.4	-	-	189	+ The highlight of the 991.1 Carrera lineup - Pricey for a Carrera	★★★★★
Porsche 911 Carrera S (997.2)	121 F	08-11	6/3800	380/6500	310/4400	1425kg	271	4.7	-	-	188	+ Poise, precision, blinding pace - Feels a bit clinical	★★★★★
Porsche 911 Carrera S (997.1)	070 F	04-08	6/3824	350/6600	295/4600	1420kg	246	4.6	-	-	182	+ Evo Car of the Year 2004 - Tech overload?	★★★★★
Porsche 911 Carrera (996, 3.4)	008 F	98-01	6/3387	300/6800	258/4600	1320kg	231	5.2	-	-	174	+ Evo Car of the Year 1998; beautifully polished - Some like a bit of rough	★★★★★
Radical RXC	227 D	16	6/3496	600/7600	465/4200	1070kg*	561	2.8	-	-	185	+ Immense accessible performance - Fit, finish and detailing lack finesse	★★★★★
Radical RXC Turbo 500R	209 D	15	6/3496	530/6100	481/5000	1100kg*	490	2.6	-	-	185	+ Huge performance, intuitive adjustability, track ability - Compromised for road use	★★★★★
Radical RXC Turbo	205 F	14	6/3496	454/6000	500/3600	940kg*	491	2.6	-	-	185	+ Eats GT3s for breakfast - Might not feel special enough for its price	★★★★★
Radical RXC	189 F	13	6/3700	350/6750	320/4250	900kg*	395	2.8	-	-	175	+ A real trackday weapon - Can't match the insanity of a Caterham 620R	★★★★★
Rolls-Royce Wraith	205 D	£240,768	12/6592	624/5600	590/1500	2360kg	260	4.6	-	-	155	+ Refinement, chassis, drivetrain - Shared compermentry lets cabin down	★★★★★
Subaru BRZ	204 F	£22,495	4/1998	197/7000	151/6400	1230kg	163	7.6	-	-	140	+ Fine chassis, great steering - Weak engine, not the slide-happy car they promised	★★★★★
Toyota GT86	234 F	£26,410	4/1998	197/7000	151/6400	1240kg	161	7.6	6.9	16.5	140	+ More fun than its Subaru BRZ cousin - Same lack of torque, poor interior quality	★★★★★
Toyota MR2 (Mk1)	237 F	84-89	4/1587	122/6600	105/5000	977kg	127	8.2	-	-	124	+ Mid-engined fun comes no more affordable - Finding a good one will take time	★★★★★
TVR T350C	057 F	03-07	6/3605	350/7200	290/5500	1187kg	300	4.5	4.7	10.0	175	+ Looks, engine - Unsupoport seats; chassis lacks ultimate polish	★★★★★
TVR Sagaris	097 F	05-07	6/3996	406/7500	349/5000	1078kg	383	3.7	-	-	185	+ Looks outrageous - 406bhp feels a touch optimistic	★★★★★
TVR Tuscan S (Mk2)	076 F	05-07	6/3996	400/7000	315/5250	1100kg	369	4.0	-	-	185	+ Possibly TVR's best ever car - Aerodynamic 'enhancements'	★★★★★
TVR Cerbera Speed Six	004 F	98-04	6/3996	350/6800	330/5000	1130kg	315	4.4	5.0	11.4	160+	+ Accomplished and desirable - Check chassis for corrosion	★★★★★
VW Scirocco GT 2.0 TSI / GTS	155 F	£26,050	4/1984	217/4500	258/1500	1369kg	158	6.5	-	-	153	+ Golf GTI price and performance - Interior lacks flair	★★★★★
VW Scirocco R	200 D	£30,690	4/1984	276/6000	258/2500	1426kg	187	5.7	-	-	155	+ Great engine, grown-up dynamics - Perhaps a little too grown-up for some	★★★★★

SUPERCARS

OUR CHOICE

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

BEST OF THE REST

The **Lamborghini Huracán Performante** (left) makes an appealing alternative to the 488, or maybe you'd prefer the mind-bogglingly fast **McLaren 720S**. The **Audi R8 V10** remains a corking entry-level supercar, while the latest **Porsche 911 GT3** is another Porsche Motorsport car that's sublime to drive - if you can get your hands on one, that is.

Aston Martin Vanquish (Mk2)	203 F	£192,995	12/5935	568/6650	465/5500	1739kg	332	3.8	-	-	201	+ Much better than the DBS it succeeds, especially in 2015MY form - It's no Ferrari F12	★★★★★
Aston Martin Vanquish S (Mk2)	235 F	£199,950	12/5935	595/7000	465/5500	1739kg	348	3.5	3.9	8.3	201	+ Noise, poise, drama and charm - Not as rounded as the DB11	★★★★★
Aston Martin Vanquish S (Mk1)	110 F	05-07	12/5935	520/7000	425/5800	1875kg	282	4.8	4.9	10.1	200	+ Vanquish joins the supercar greats - A tad intimidating at the limit	★★★★★
Aston Martin One-77	179 F	10-12	12/7312	750/6000	553/7600	1740kg	438	3.7	-	-	220+	+ The engine, the looks, the drama - Gearbox hates manoeuvring; only 77 were made	★★★★★
Audi R8 V10	234 F	£123,330	10/5204	533/7800	398/6500	1595kg	340	3.5	-	-	198	+ All the R8 you really need - Some may hanker after a manual gearbox	★★★★★
Audi R8 Spyder V10	239 F	£132,020	10/5204	533/7800	398/6500	1720kg	315	3.6	3.2	7.2	197	+ Open top even better for enjoying that V10 - Being mistaken for a poser; cramped seating	★★★★★
Audi R8 V10 Plus	229 F	£138,330	10/5204	602/8250	413/6500	1555kg	393	3.2	-	-	205	+ Timeless drivetrain, huge performance - Needs to be driven hard to really engage	★★★★★
Audi R8 V10	181 D	10-15	10/5204	518/8000	391/6500	1620kg	325	4.1	3.9	8.4	194	+ Real supercar feel - The V8 is cheaper, and still superb	★★★★★
Audi R8 V10 Plus	190 F	13-15	10/5204	542/8000	398/6500	1570kg	351	3.8	-	-	198	+ An R8 fit to take on the 458 and 12C - Firm ride may be too much for some	★★★★★
Audi R8 GT	169 F	10-12	10/5204	552/8000	398/6500	1520kg	369	3.6	-	-	199	+ Everything we love about the R8 - Not as hardcore as we wanted	★★★★★
Audi R8 LMX	208 F	15	10/5204	562/8000	398/6500	1595kg	358	3.4	-	-	198	+ More of everything that makes the R8 great - S-tronic transmission not perfect	★★★★★
BMW M1	110 F	78-81	6/3500	277/6500	239/5000	1303kg	216	5.9	-	-	161	+ Early supercar icon - A bit under-endowed these days	★★★★★
Bugatti Chiron	235 F	c£2.5m	16/7993	1479/6700	1180/2000	1995kg	753	2.5	-	-	261	+ Backs up the numbers with feel and emotion - Limited top speed(!)	★★★★★
Bugatti Veyron 16.4	134 F	05-11	16/7993	987/6000	922/2200	1888kg	531	2.5	2.8	5.8	253	+ Superbly engineered four-wheel-drive quad-turbo rocket - Er, lacks luggage space?	★★★★★
Bugatti Veyron Grand Sport	133 F	09-15	16/7993	987/6000	922/2200	1990kg	504	2.7	-	-	253	+ Warp speed and ferocious noise sans-roof - Ridiculous broly/roof thing	★★★★★
Bugatti Veyron 16.4 Super Sport	151 F	10-11	16/7993	1183/6400	1106/3000	1838kg	654	2.5	-	-	258	+ Was once the world's fastest supercar - Limited to 258mph for us mere mortals	★★★★★
Bugatti Veyron Grand Sport Vitesse	185 F	11-15	16/7993	1183/6400	1106/3000	1990kg	604	2.6	-	-	255	+ Was the world's fastest convertible - Limited to 258mph for us mere mortals	★★★★★
Bugatti EB110	078 F	91-95	12/3500	552/8000	451/3750	1618kg	347	3.6	-	-	213	+ Superbly engineered four-wheel-drive quad-turbo rocket - It just fizzled out	★★★★★
Chevrolet Corvette ZR1	133 F	09-13	8/6162	638/6500	604/3800	1528							

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MAKE & MODEL	ISSUE NO.	PRICE	ENGINE Cyl./CC	BRP/PPM	LB FT/PPM	WEIGHT	BRP/TON	0-62MPH CLAIMED	0-60MPH TESTED	0-100MPH TESTED	MAX MPH	EVO RATING	
Ferrari 458 Speciale	203 F	14-15	8/4497	597/9000	398/6000	1395kg	435 3.0	-	-	-	202+	+ <i>evo Car of the Year 2014 - If you don't own a regular 458, nothing</i>	★★★★★
Ferrari F430	163 F	04-10	8/4308	483/8500	343/5250	1449kg	339 4.0	-	-	-	196+	+ <i>Just brilliant - Didn't you read the plus point?</i>	★★★★★
Ferrari 430 Scuderia	121 F	07-10	8/4308	503/8500	347/5250	1350kg	378 3.6	3.5	7.7	198	+ <i>Successful F1 technology transplant - Likes to shout about it</i>	★★★★★	
Ferrari 360 Modena	163 F	99-04	8/3586	394/8500	275/4750	1390kg	288 4.5	-	-	-	183+	+ <i>Worthy successor to 355 - Not quite as involving as it should be</i>	★★★★★
Ferrari 360 Challenge Stradale	068 F	03-04	8/3586	420/8500	275/4750	1280kg	333 4.1	-	-	-	186	+ <i>Totally exhilarating road-racer. It's loud - It's very, very loud</i>	★★★★★
Ferrari F355 Berlinetta	231 F	94-99	8/3496	374/8250	268/6000	1350kg*	281 4.7	-	-	-	183	+ <i>Looks terrific, sounds even better - Are you kidding?</i>	★★★★★
Ferrari 812 Superfast	238 F	£253,004	12/6496	789/8500	529/7000	1630kg	492 2.9	-	-	-	211	+ <i>Over-delivers on your expectations in just about every department - Not a classic beauty</i>	★★★★★
Ferrari F12 Berlinetta	190 F	12-17	12/6262	730/8250	509/6000	1630kg	455 3.1	-	-	-	211+	+ <i>730bhp isn't too much power for the road - Super-quick steering is an acquired taste</i>	★★★★★
Ferrari F12tdf	230 F	£340,051	12/6262	769/8500	520/6250	1520kg	514 2.9	-	-	-	211+	+ <i>Alarmingly fast - Doesn't flow like a 458 Speciale</i>	★★★★★
Ferrari 599 GTB Fiorano	101 F	06-12	12/5999	611/7600	448/5600	1690kg	368 3.7	3.5	7.4	205	+ <i>evo Car of the Year 2006 - Banks are getting harder to rob</i>	★★★★★	
Ferrari 599 GTO	161 F	11-12	12/5999	661/8250	457/6500	1605kg	418 3.4	-	-	-	208+	+ <i>One of the truly great Ferraris - Erm, the air con isn't very good</i>	★★★★★
Ferrari 575M Fiorano Handling Pack	200 F	02-06	12/5748	508/7250	434/5250	1688kg	298 3.7	4.2	9.6	205+	+ <i>Fiorano pack makes 575 truly great - It should have been standard</i>	★★★★★	
Ferrari 550 Maranello	169 F	96-02	12/5474	478/7000	420/5000	1690kg	287 4.4	-	-	-	199	+ <i>Everything - Nothing</i>	★★★★★
Ferrari GT4 Lusso	225 D	£230,430	12/6262	680/8000	514/5750	1920kg	360 3.4	-	-	-	208	+ <i>Rear-wheel steering increases agility - Not as engaging as other Ferraris</i>	★★★★★
Ferrari FF	194 F	11-15	12/6262	651/8000	504/6000	1880kg	347 3.7	-	-	-	208	+ <i>Four seats and 4WD, but a proper Ferrari - Looks divide opinion</i>	★★★★★
Ferrari 612 Scaglietti	090 F	04-11	12/5748	533/7250	434/5250	1880kg*	289 4.0	4.3	9.8	199	+ <i>Awsomely capable grand tourer - See above</i>	★★★★★	
Ferrari LaFerrari	203 F	13-15	12/6262	950/9000	664/6750	1574kg	613 3.0	-	-	-	217+	+ <i>Perhaps the greatest Ferrari ever - Brakes lack a touch of precision on track</i>	★★★★★
Ferrari Enzo	203 F	02-04	12/5999	651/7800	485/5500	1365kg	485 3.7	3.5	6.7	217+	+ <i>Intoxicating, exploitable - Cabin detailing falls short of a Zonda or F1's</i>	★★★★★	
Ferrari F50	186 F	95-97	12/4699	513/8500	347/6500	1230kg*	424 3.9	-	-	-	202	+ <i>A better drivers' Ferrari than the 288, F40 or Enzo - Not better looking, though</i>	★★★★★
Ferrari F40	222 F	87-92	8/2936	471/7000	426/4000	1100kg*	437 4.1	-	-	-	201	+ <i>Brutally fast - It's in the dictionary under 'turbo lag'</i>	★★★★★
Ford GT	236 F	\$450,000	6/3497	471/7000	550/5900	1385kg*	475 2.8	-	-	-	216	+ <i>Everything it does on track - Too many of the things it does on the road</i>	★★★★★
Ford GT	200 F	04-06	8/5409	550/6500	500/3750	1583kg	353 3.9	-	-	-	205	+ <i>Our 2005 Car of the Year - Don't scalp yourself getting in</i>	★★★★★
Hennessey Venom GT	180 F	11-17	8/7000	1244/6500	1155/4000	1244kg	1016 2.5	-	-	-	270	+ <i>0-200mph in 14.5sec. and it handles too - Looks like an Exige</i>	★★★★★
Honda NSX	233 F	£144,765	6/3493	573	476/2000	1176kg	328 2.9	3.0	6.9	191	+ <i>Blisteringly quick and brilliantly engineered - Limited range on a full tank</i>	★★★★★	
Honda NSX (NAZ)	188 F	97-05	6/3179	276/7300	224/5300	1410kg	196 5.7	-	-	-	168	+ <i>The useable supercar - 276bhp sounds a bit weirdly today</i>	★★★★★
Honda NSX-R (M2)	100 F	02-03	6/3179	276/7300	224/5300	1270kg	221 4.4	-	-	-	168	+ <i>evo Car of the Year 2002 - Hard to find in the UK</i>	★★★★★
Jaguar XJ220	157 F	92-94	6/3498	542/7200	475/4500	1470kg	375 3.7	-	-	-	213	+ <i>Britain's greatest supercar... - ...until McLaren built the F1</i>	★★★★★
Koenigsegg One1	202 F	£215,000	8/5065	1341/7500	1011/6000	1360kg	1002 2.9	-	-	-	273	+ <i>One of the most powerful cars we've tested - It's sold out, not that we couldn't afford one anyway</i>	★★★★★
Koenigsegg Agera R	180 F	11-14	8/5032	1124/7100	885/2700	1435kg	796 2.8	-	-	-	273	+ <i>As fast and exciting as your body can handle - It's Veyron money</i>	★★★★★
Koenigsegg CCRX Edition	118 F	08-10	8/4800	1004/7000	796/5600	1280kg*	797 2.9	-	-	-	250+	+ <i>One of the world's fastest cars - Spiky power delivery</i>	★★★★★
Lamborghini Huracán RWD	229 F	£155,400	10/5204	572/8000	397/6500	1389kg*	385 3.4	-	-	-	199	+ <i>More seductive than the 4WD Huracán - Feels like there's more to come</i>	★★★★★
Lamborghini Huracán	209 D	£186,760	10/5204	602/8250	443/6500	1422kg*	430 3.2	-	-	-	201+	+ <i>Defies the numbers; incredible point-to-point pace - Takes work to find its sweet-spot</i>	★★★★★
Lamborghini Huracán Performante	237 F	£215,000	10/5204	631/8000	412/6500	1382kg*	464 2.9	-	-	-	201+	+ <i>The realisation of the Huracán's seemingly ever elusive potential - Kitchen-worktop carbonfibre</i>	★★★★★
Lamborghini Gallardo LP560-4	180 D	08-13	10/5204	552/8000	398/6500	1410kg*	398 3.7	-	-	-	202	+ <i>Still a missile from A to B - Feels a little dated next to some rivals</i>	★★★★★
Lamborghini Gallardo LP550-2 Balboni	138 F	09-10	10/5204	542/8000	398/6500	1380kg*	399 3.9	-	-	-	199	+ <i>Mad, rear-wheel-drive Lambo - Limited numbers</i>	★★★★★
Lamborghini LP570-4 Superleggera	152 F	10-13	10/5204	562/8000	398/6500	1340kg*	426 3.4	3.5	-	-	202	+ <i>Less weight and more power than original Superleggera - LP560-4 runs it very close</i>	★★★★★
Lamborghini Gallardo	094 F	03-08	10/4961	513/8000	376/4250	1430kg*	364 4.0	4.3	9.4	196	+ <i>On a full-bore start it spins all four wheels. Cool - Slightly clunky e-gear</i>	★★★★★	
Lamborghini Gallardo Superleggera	104 F	07-08	10/4961	522/8000	376/4250	1420kg*	373 3.8	-	-	-	196	+ <i>Lighter, more agile - Grabby carbon brakes, clunky e-gear</i>	★★★★★
Lamborghini Aventador	194 F	£260,040	12/6498	690/8250	509/5500	1575kg*	445 2.9	-	-	-	217	+ <i>Most important new Lambo since the Countach - Can feel a little clumsy</i>	★★★★★
Lamborghini Aventador S	233 F	£271,146	12/6498	730/8400	509/5500	1575kg*	471 2.9	-	-	-	217	+ <i>A more agile, more connected Aventador - Synthetic steering</i>	★★★★★
Lamborghini Aventador SV	216 F	£321,723	12/6498	740/8400	509/5500	1525kg*	493 2.8	-	-	-	217+	+ <i>More exciting than the standard Aventador - ISR gearbox inconsistent</i>	★★★★★
Lamborghini Murciélago LP640	093 F	06-11	12/6496	631/8000	487/6000	1665kg*	385 3.8	-	-	-	211	+ <i>Compelling old-school supercar - You'd better be on your toes</i>	★★★★★
Lamborghini Murciélago LP670-4 SV	200 F	09-11	12/6496	661/8000	487/6000	1565kg*	429 3.3	3.2	7.3	212	+ <i>A supercar in its truest, wildest sense - Be prepared for stares</i>	★★★★★	
Lamborghini Murciélago	089 D	01-06	12/6192	572/7500	479/5400	1650kg*	351 4.0	-	-	-	206	+ <i>Gorgeous, capable and incredibly friendly - V12 feels stressed</i>	★★★★★
Lamborghini Diabolo VT 6.0	019 F	00-02	12/5992	543/7100	457/5000	1625kg*	343 3.9	-	-	-	208	+ <i>Best-built, best-looking Diabolo of all - People's perceptions</i>	★★★★★
Lexus LFA/LFA Nürburgring	200 F	10-12	10/4805	552/8700	354/6800	1480kg	379 3.7	-	-	-	202	+ <i>Absurd and compelling supercar - Badge and price don't quite match</i>	★★★★★
Maserati MC12	079 F	04-05	12/5998	621/7500	481/5500	1445kg	437 3.8	-	-	-	205	+ <i>Rarer than an Enzo - The Ferrari's better</i>	★★★★★
McLaren 540C	234 F	£126,000	8/3799	533/7500	398/3500	1311kg*	413 3.5	-	-	-	199	+ <i>An excellent junior supercar - The 570S is still better to drive</i>	★★★★★
McLaren 570S	229 F	£145,305	8/3799	562/7500	443/5000	1440kg	397 3.2	-	-	-	204	+ <i>A truly fun and engaging sports car - McLaren doesn't call it a supercar!</i>	★★★★★
McLaren 570S Track Pack	235 D	£159,750	8/3799	562/7500	443/5000	1415kg	404 3.2	-	-	-	204	+ <i>Feels like a 675LT that's been dialled down a couple of notches - Engine response lacks edge</i>	★★★★★
McLaren 570S Spider	239 F	£164,750	8/3799	562/7500	443/5000	1498kg	381 3.2	-	-	-	204	+ <i>Even more fun and engagement than hard-top 570S - Industrial engine note</i>	★★★★★
McLaren 570GT	228 F	£154,000	8/3799	562/7500	443/5000	1495kg	382 3.4	-	-	-	204	+ <i>Blurs the line between grand tourer and supercar brilliantly - 570S is more involving</i>	★★★★★
McLaren 720S	236 F	£208,600	8/3994	710/7250	568/5500	1283kg*	562 2.9	-	-	-	212	+ <i>Astonishingly, effortlessly fast - Oddly exciting</i>	★★★★★
McLaren 650S	196 F	14-17	8/3799	641/7250	500/6000	1428kg	456 3.0	-	-	-	207	+ <i>Better brakes, balance and looks than 12C; more power too - Which all comes at a price</i>	★★★★★
McLaren 675LT	228 F	15-17	8/3799	666/7100	516/5500	1328kg	510 2.9	-	-	-	205	+ <i>Runner-up at eCoty 2015; asks questions of the P1 - Aventador price tag</i>	★★★★★
McLaren 675LT Spider	222 D	16-17	8/3799	666/7100	516/5500	1368kg	495 2.9	-	-	-	203	+ <i>Spectacularly fast; involving, too - Might mess up your hair</i>	★★★★★
McLaren 12C	228 F	11-14	8/3799	616/7500	442/3000	1434kg	435 3.3	-	-	-	207	+ <i>Staggering performance, refinement - Engine noise can be grating</i>	★★★★★
McLaren P1	228 F	13-15	8/3799	903/7500	664/4000	1490kg	616 2.8	-	-	-	217	+ <i>Freakish breadth of ability - At its mind-bending best on track</i>	★★★★★
McLaren AM	228 F	94-98	12/6064	627/7500	479/4000	1138kg	560 3.2	-	-	-	240	+ <i>Still the most single-minded supercar ever - There'll never be another</i>	★★★★★
Mercedes-F1 GT R	236 F	£143,260	8/3982	577/6250	516/1900	1555kg	377 3.6	3.3	7.1	198	+ <i>Fun and blisteringly fast; a true rival for the 911 GT3 - A touch showy, perhaps</i>	★★★★★	
Mercedes-Benz SLS AMG	159 F	10-15	8/6208	563/6800	479/4750	1620kg	335 3.9	4.1	8.4	197	+ <i>Great engine and chassis (gutting doors too!) - Slightly tardy gearbox</i>	★★★★★	
Mercedes-Benz SLS AMG Black Series	204 F	13-15	8/6208	622/7400	468/3500	1550kg	408 3.6	-	-	-	196	+ <i>Stunning engine, superb body control - Be careful on less-than-smooth roads...</i>	★★★★★
Mercedes-Benz SLR McLaren	228 F	03-07	8/5439	617/6500	575/3250	1693kg	370 3.8	-	-	-	208	+ <i>Zonda-pace, 575-style drivability - Dreadful brake feel</i>	★★★★★
Noble M600	186 F	c£200,000	8/4439	650/6800	604/3800	1198kg*	551 3.5	3.8	7.7	225	+ <i>Spiritual successor to the Ferrari F40 - It's a bit pricey</i>	★★★★★	
Pagani Huayra	185 F	c£11,800	12/5980	720/5800	371/2250	1350kg*	542 3.3	-	-	-	224	+ <i>Our joint 2012 Car of the Year - Engine isn't as nape-prickling as the Zonda's</i>	★★★★★
Pagani Zonda 760RS	170 F	£15m	12/7291	750/3500	575/4500	1210kg*	630 3.3	-	-	-	217+	+ <i>One of the most extreme Zondas ever - One of the last Zondas ever (probably)</i>	★★★★★
Pagani Zonda S 7.3	096 F	02-05	12/7291	555/5900	553/4050	1280kg*	441 3.7	-	-	-	220	+ <i>evo Car of the Year 2001 (in earlier 7.0 form) - Values have gone up a fair bit since then</i>	★★★★★
Pagani Zonda F	186 F	05-06	12/7291	602/6150	575/4000	1230kg*	497 3.6	-	-	-	214+	+ <i>Everything an Italian supercar ought to be - Looks a bit blingy next to a Carrera GT</i>	★★★★★
Pagani Zonda Cinque Roadster	147 D	09-10	12/7291	669/6200	575/4000	1210kg*	562 3.4	-	-	-	217+	+ <i>The best Zonda ever - Doesn't come up in the classifieds often</i>	★★★★★
Porsche 911 GT3 (991.2)	236 F	£111,802	6/3996	493/8250	339/6000	1413kg	355 3.9	-	-	-	198	+ <i>Almost impossible to criticise - Not the easiest car to place an order for</i>	★★★★★
Porsche 911 GT3 (991.1)	206 F	16-16	6/3799	468/8250	324/6250	1430kg	333 3.5	-	-	-	196	+ <i>evo Car of the Year 2013 - PDK only</i>	★★★★★
Porsche 911 GT3 RS (991.1)	223 F	15-16	6/3996	493/8250	339/6250	1420kg	353 3.3	3.0	7.1	193	+ <i>Sensationally good to drive - The</i>		

Track times

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



ANGLESEY COASTAL CIRCUIT

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 (991.2)	1:13.4	236	Yes
Porsche 911 GT3 RS (991.1)	1:13.6	-	Yes
Porsche 911 Turbo S (991.1)	1:13.6	-	Yes
Ferrari 458 Speciale	1:14.2	198	Yes
McLaren 570S	1:14.5	-	Yes
Porsche 911 Turbo (991.1)	1:15.2	210	Yes
Aston Martin Vantage GT12	1:16.0	214	Yes
Nissan GT-R (2014MY)	1:16.9	210	Yes
Mercedes-AMG GT S	1:17.0	210	Yes
Porsche 911 Carrera (991.1)	1:17.8	199	Yes
Porsche Cayman (981)	1:18.9	209	-
Aston Martin N430	1:19.1	210	-
Lotus Evija S (V6)	1:19.1	209	-
SEAT Leon Cupra 280 Sub8 (fastest hot hatch)	1:19.1	212	Yes
BMW M4	1:19.2	199	Yes
BMW i8	1:19.4	210	-
Honda Civic Type R (FK2)	1:19.5	212	-
Renaultsport Mégane Trophy 275	1:19.6	212	-
BMW M5 Competition Pack (F10M) (fastest saloon)	1:19.7	-	Yes
Audi 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	-



BEDFORD AUTODROME WEST CIRCUIT

LENGTH 1.8 miles (reconfigured May 2015; earlier times not comparable)

SEAT Leon Cupra 280 Ultimate Sub8 (fastest hot hatch)	1:23.1	215	-
⊕ BMW M4 Competition Package (F82, 2017MY) (fastest coupe)	1:23.4	240	-
Renaultsport Mégane 275 Trophy-R	1:23.6	215	Yes
Alfa Romeo Giulia Quadrifoglio (fastest saloon)	1:23.6	237	-
VW Golf GTI Clubsport S	1:24.1	227	-
SEAT Leon Cupra 290 (on optional Michelin Pilot Sport Cup 2 tyres)	1:24.2	227	-
Ford Focus RS (Mk3, on optional Michelin Pilot Sport Cup 2 tyres)	1:24.6	227	-
Honda Civic Type R (FK2, on Michelin Pilot Sport Cup 2 tyres)	1:24.6	227	-
BMW M3 Competition Package (F80, 2016MY)	1:24.7	237	-
⊕ Audi RS5 (F5)	1:25.0	240	-
⊕ Mercedes-AMG C63 S Coupe (W205)	1:25.6	240	-
VW Golf R (Mk7)	1:26.1	-	Yes
Ford Fiesta ST Mountune	1:29.5	213	-
Mazda MX-5 2.0i Sport (Mk4) (fastest sports car)	1:29.8	-	Yes



BLINTON PARK OUTER CIRCUIT

LENGTH 1.6 miles

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

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FINAL FRAME



LOTUS EXIGE CUP 380

The Exige Cup 380 – tested on page 36 – is the latest road-and-track special from Hethel. Photographed here by Aston Parrott after a day of testing on the North York Moors, it's not hard to see why it's already sold out.

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