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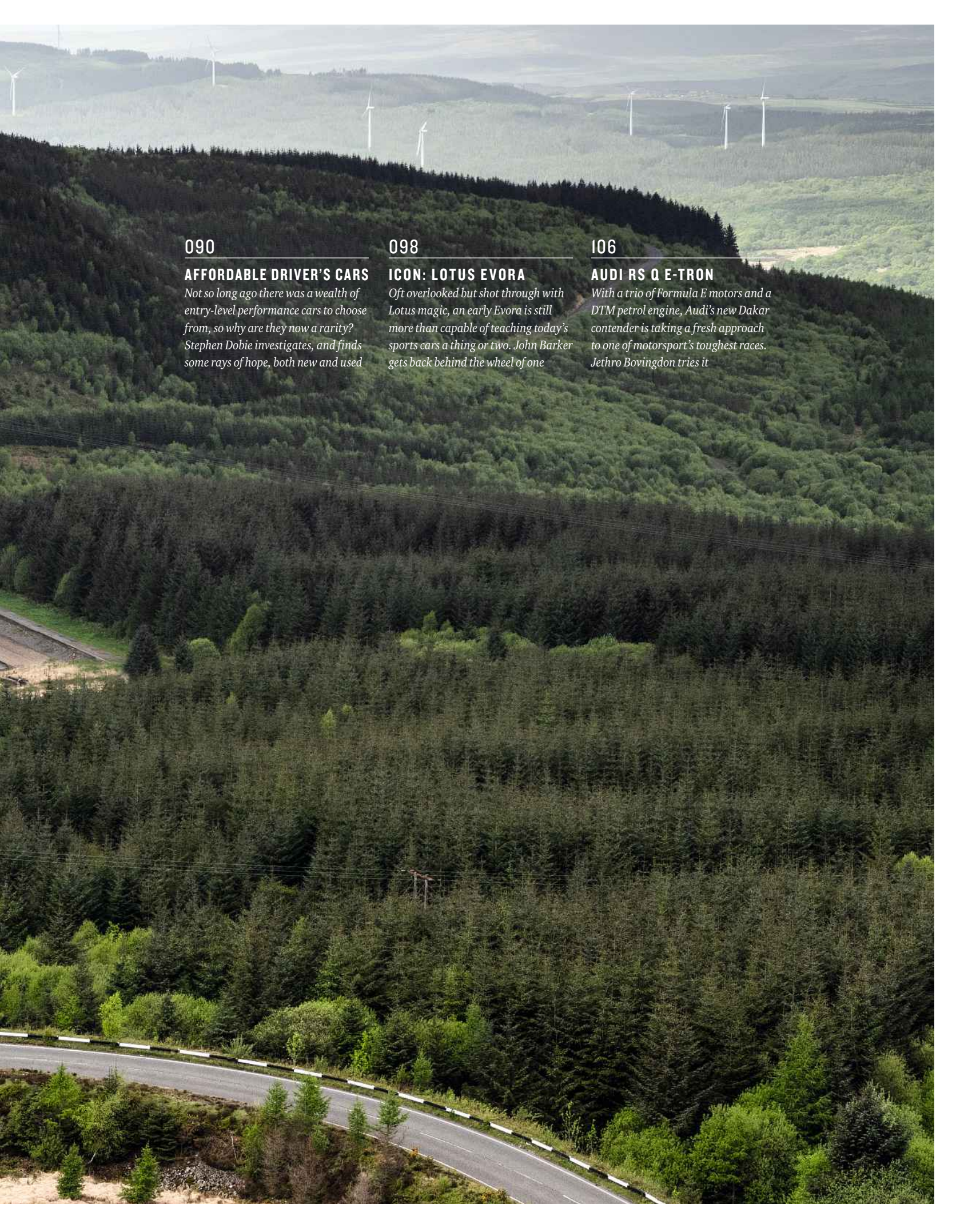
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Ed speak



WHERE HAVE ALL THE AFFORDABLE NEW driver's cars gone? It's the question we've posed this month and one that Stephen Dobie has endeavoured to answer. The findings are rather bleak, the gulf between those that wear a badge suggesting goodness – Audi's £38,000 S3 for example – and those that can actually deliver – the £52,000 RS3 – growing bigger by the month.

There is still some new-car fun to be had by those who understand that variety is what makes the world go round. Hyundai Ns, Toyota GRs, Fiesta STs, MX-5s

and the new Civic Type R are the obvious candidates. Then there are Abarth 500s, Golf GTIs and AMG A35s skirting around the periphery, joined by the odd non-full-fat BMW M (M240 and 340i respectively) and John Cooper Works Minis, which are still worth a shout. And lest we forget, you can still buy a new Porsche Boxster or Cayman for under £50,000, which one day might get you on a GT3 list somewhere. The forthcoming AMG-engined Emira from Lotus will tick many boxes for many drivers, too, just as the Alpine A110 already does.

But the pickings are getting slimmer as models disappear and prices inflate, more so now manufacturers have rowed back from subsidised leases and PCP offers. Even an i20 N costs over £300 a month with a sizable deposit.

You can always expect some natural wastage, and in our world that means no more Cupras punching way above their weight, Renault Sport Clios and Méganes writing their entries in the greatest driver's cars history books or Peugeot Sport appearing out of nowhere with 208s and 308s blinding with their brilliance having previously dulled with their mediocrity. Even Vauxhall could hit the spot with VXR Corsas and Astras more often than not, but alas no more.

Those who lay down deposits for seven-figure track-only hypercars or have six-figure sums held on accounts at main dealers all started somewhere, with something a little ratty but nonetheless special. It triggered something from within and, more likely than not, at some point was followed up by buying their first brand-new driver's car; that dream moment, one saved tirelessly for and one that will never be forgotten. But if the industry isn't careful, that first new-car buying experience of something truly desirable will soon be lost to many, and that's something manufacturers simply can't afford to let happen.

Stuart Gallagher, Editor @stuartg917

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Driven




THE BAC MONO IS AN EXQUISITE creation, designed by the Briggs brothers, Ian and Neill from Liverpool, purely for the purpose of maximum driver engagement. This makes it a car many of us at **evo** are rather fond of, not least because of what it can do but also because of what it stands for.

To our knowledge, it's still the only single-seat road car that's ever been made in regular production numbers, i.e. not by some nutcase who's managed to road legalise a Formula 3000 car as a one-off. As a result, and despite it being over a decade old now, the Mono is still arguably the most focused road car money can buy.

It's also very, very quick. In simple terms

it's the fastest car we've ever timed around Anglesey Circuit – by over two seconds – our own Dickie Meaden setting a somewhat surreal time of 1:07.7 in the 2.5-litre version in 2016 (see issue 229 or visit youtube.com/evo). The next fastest road car we've timed around the coastal circuit is the near 1000 horsepower, four-wheel-drive, hybrid-propelled Ferrari SF90 Assetto Fiorano, which clocked a 1:10.0 lap just recently.

Not even a McLaren P1 GTR on slicks has got within a second of the Mono's time, so in road car terms it really is king of the hill when it comes to pure track speed. You'd need nothing less than a Formula 3 car to beat it around a circuit like Anglesey. And now BAC has made a new version



by STEVE SUTCLIFFE PHOTOGRAPHY by DEAN SMITH

BAC Mono R

The Mono was already one of the fastest road cars we've ever driven on track. Now it's just got faster still with the 90 per cent new, limited-edition R

Driven

– the Mono R – which, according to its chief designer Ian Briggs, is ‘over 90 per cent new’ in its thinking and construction and is lighter, more powerful and even quicker than its predecessor.

Its Mountune-developed, dry-sump 2.5-litre four-cylinder engine has been heavily revised internally so that it breathes better and revs higher. It now ingests air predominantly through a huge new F3-style airbox that sits on the left of the rear bodywork, although the big central nostril above the driver’s head also provides an additional ‘ram-air’ effect to the engine at speed. Thanks to a combination of this, plus slightly bigger bores (and a fractionally reduced stroke to give the same swept capacity), the

engine now revs to an ear-splitting 9000rpm and develops 342bhp and 243lb ft. The regular Mono revs to 8000rpm and produces 305bhp and 227lb ft.

The six-speed gearbox is still a Hewland FTR sequential that’s been lifted all but unmodified from a Formula 3 car, and it’s still a fully stressed member of the chassis, which as before features steel wishbones for its suspension all round. But while the fundamentals of the Mono R’s design remain familiar, the materials used to construct it are almost entirely new throughout, and most of them are lighter and a fair bit more exotic than before. This helps explain why the R weighs ‘at least’ 25kg less

than the standard Mono, which is itself pared back to within a gram of its life. The R weighs 555kg dry to give a power-to-dry-weight ratio of 626bhp per ton. Even with fluids – our preferred standard for kerb weights – the R still falls below 600kg all-in, resulting in somewhere in the region of 580bhp per ton.

BAC has also added a quartet of lighter but more powerful carbon-ceramic brake discs to the mixture – the standard car also uses carbon rotors but its are a shade heavier. The body parts are all-new too, and are made from a lightweight, super-strong carbon-composite material called graphene, while every micron of the chassis’ construction has been revisited



‘Pretty much whatever is behind you on track won’t be able to keep up’



with the purpose of removing weight and adding speed. It takes the original Colin Chapman mantra of ‘simplify, then add lightness’ to a whole new level as far as the production of a mere road car is concerned.

Except the Mono R is rather more than just a mere road car. For starters there will be just 40 examples built over the next few years, each with a basic price of £218,000. You can’t add a vast amount to this from the relatively short and simple options list, true, but there are enough boxes to tick to ensure that each of the 40 cars will be unique. You want pink body panels? BAC will do this for you, no problem. Indeed, it’s already done so for an existing customer who’s on their second Mono, having had one of the very first 2.3-litre versions built for her in 2013.

It’s an intense experience just climbing into the Mono R, let alone driving it. But then that’s the whole point of this car in the first place. Everything you do in it means something and therefore has significance. Every millimetre

you travel in it has a purpose. It’s actually a very efficient car from this point of view because nothing you do in it goes to waste. Everything, even just starting it up, requires an understanding and a certain appreciation of which bit does what and why.

So merely to climb into it you first have to work out where to put your hands and feet, having assessed which bits of expensive graphene bodywork you can lean on, and which bits you can’t. You soon work out that the best way to insert yourself into the cockpit is to climb over the side panel then simply stand on the seat, before lowering your entire torso down into the nosecone, momentarily taking your whole weight on your elbows on either side. It’s a bit like climbing into a favourite armchair, only the technique required is a bit more physical.

Once ensconced, your feet find the three

Left: pushrod suspension features two-way adjustable Öhlins dampers and race-spec Eibach springs – all visible through the cutouts in the front bodywork

pedals instantly and naturally, but then your instinct is to try to straighten your neck and lift yourself up in the otherwise perfectly fitting seat, simply because you’re so damn low in the car. The tops of the front wheelarches are pretty much all you can see to either side, so inevitably you want to look over them to begin with, even though they only contain a pair of relatively tiny 205/45 17-inch P Zero Trofeo R tyres.

But you soon relax down into it once you realise that the all-round vision in a Mono is probably better than you get in any other road car – so long as you focus on what’s in front of you. Clocking what’s behind is a tad more difficult. But then on a racetrack you’re never going to be all that fussed about what’s behind you in a Mono R, because pretty much whatever it is won’t be able to keep up. As Franco said to his passenger in the movie *Gumball Rally* before tearing the rear-view mirror off his Daytona Spider: what is behind is not important.

Driving the Mono is a bit more cerebral than that, of course. For starters, you need to

‘Although it feels wilder and goes faster on slicks, it also seems friendlier and sweeter somehow’





work out what the 13 different buttons on the steering wheel do, and which of the various screen menus that appear on the square-jawed wheel are important, and which ones aren't. The most vital button sits in the middle of the wheel and has a big 'M' on it, for Mono, with the word 'power' written beneath. Press this, and after a couple of seconds of digitised whirring and fizzing the starter motor turns and the engine catches almost immediately.

It doesn't explode into life dramatically like a Lamborghini V10 or V12, instead the four-cylinder just sort of begins running, and although it doesn't make an especially delicious noise and there is maybe just the mildest sense of anti-climax when it fires, it's still obvious that an awful lot of energy has been ignited. The whole car oscillates if you blip the throttle, and you can feel the crank rotating through the backs of your lungs when the engine exhales.

To get the Mono R moving is a doddle. You depress the clutch, hold the green neutral button down on the steering wheel, select first on the right-hand paddle at the same time, then release the clutch gradually and you're away. You can pull away at idle almost, it's that friendly; this is a road car remember. From there on you don't really need to use the clutch, although at low revs it's kinder on the transmission and smoother to do so.

The moment you start to move at any kind of speed in the Mono R you become aware of several things, pretty much all at once. How soothing the ride is, how heavy but also how direct the steering is, how relatively gentle the throttle response seems, how normal and 'unjumpy' the carbon brakes feel and how smoothly the gearbox upshifts. All of which are excellent and surprising qualities to discover in the first few hundred yards.

And then you open it up a little bit for the very first time in, say, second gear, and from that moment onwards it never leaves you: the sheer severity with which the Mono R fires itself at the horizon when you leave your foot buried for a good few seconds, just to see what happens. The sound it makes while doing so might not be all that beautiful to listen to in a traditional sense, and the vibrations that constantly tickle your spine at full beans may also be a less than lovely thing to experience, but the pure thump in the back the R can deliver between zero and anything up to about 150mph – when its gearing and aero begin to hold it back – really is something else. It is outrageously fast in a straight line, to a point where it makes you feel physically uncomfortable to begin with, like only the seriously quick stuff ever does. And the way the gearbox auto upshifts at the 8800rpm 'soft cut' with such mechanical

Driven



Opposite page, middle left: quick-release steering wheel adds to the race car vibe with its carbonfibre rim, integrated colour display and multitude of buttons

purity and precision merely adds to the sense of bewilderment.

But straight-line performance is actually just the Mono R's warm-up act. And it is nothing, nada, zilchorama, compared with what it can do around corners. And under braking. Especially with a set of Pirelli slicks fitted, which is what BAC are keen for me to try it on most. Why slicks and not the new Trofeo Rs, which is what the R comes on as standard?

Although the Trofeos work perfectly well on the road, they aren't as grippy on a track as the no-longer-available Kumho Ecstas were, apparently, because unlike the Kumhos they haven't been engineered to work on a car as light as the sub-600kg Mono R. So for circuit work (and for the setting of lap records especially) slicks are the only way to go.

However, over a few laps of Anglesey on the Trofeo Rs, the Mono R doesn't exactly feel like it's lacking in grip or basic performance. Once BAC has set the six-way adjustable traction control just right and wound the brake bias back towards the rear by a few rotations, the Mono R feels insanely fast, yes, but nicely dialled in to the

'The Mono R is not a car that's purely concerned with speed, even though it is unbelievably quick'

Coastal Circuit, so actually not that terrifying, albeit in a hold-on-tight kind of way. I still think the steering is a touch heavy and slightly clumsy if you go anywhere near a kerb, but the turn-in bite and grip mid-corner is extraordinary, as is the traction, even compared with the most glued-down all-wheel-drive hypercars. And down the straights and on the brakes it's in a totally different league from any other car you'll drive that wears plates. It feels, to all intents, like a single-seater racing car. A very fast and extremely well-sorted single-seater racing car at that.

And with a nicely toasted set of slicks fitted, it goes to another level again. Thus equipped, the R's carbon brakes feel even sharper, and a fair bit more powerful. The traction goes from incredible to incredulous, and the pure grip the R generates on turn-in and mid-corner is a little bit ridiculous. But also very lovely indeed.

It's funny though, because although it feels wilder and goes faster on slicks, it also seems friendlier and sweeter somehow. The extra grip it has appears to crystallise the entire driving experience. It feels like this is what the Mono R has been truly designed to be, whereas on the Trofeos not everything seemed quite so well aligned.

The stopwatch proves it to a certain extent, although to be fair the Mono R is not a car that's purely concerned with speed, even though it is unbelievably quick. After a couple of runs it does a 1:06.9 lap, with a best theoretical of 1:06.5 if you eradicate my numerous mistakes and stitch the three best sector times together. On the Trofeos, although I definitely wasn't trying as hard, it was well over a second shy of that.

Either way, that makes it easily the fastest road car we've ever timed around Anglesey. And all this from just 342bhp and 555kg. There's a lesson in here somewhere, that's for sure. ✉

Engine In-line 4-cyl, 2488cc

Power 342bhp @ 8800rpm **Torque** 243lb ft @ 9000rpm

Weight (dry) 555kg (626bhp/ton) **0-62mph** 2.5sec

Top speed 170mph **Basic price** £218,000

➕ Astonishing pace, excellent drivability

➖ Needs slicks to be at its best; only 40 being made

evo rating ★★★★★



by STUART GALLAGHER

Paul Stephens Autoart 993R

Combining a meticulously upgraded engine and chassis with a 150kg weight loss, this could be the ultimate road-going 993-generation 911

IT WILL REV TO OVER EIGHT-THOUSAND, 8-6 if we tune it for purely track work, but for the road we've given it a 7-6 red line. It's plenty for what we wanted to create.'

Seven thousand six hundred revolutions per minute from a naturally aspirated flat-six might sound a bit 'so what?' when Porsche's latest engine will buzz to over eight grand all day long, but from a near 30-year-old car with an engine that can trace its roots back further still? There's a good reason why Paul Stephens' grin is as wide as it is when he hands over the key to his latest project.

This engine, this 3.8 litres of air-cooled alchemy, might be the attention grabber when you're throwing gears at it as you reel in the vanishing point, but it's only part of the story – a core component of a car that has been created for an

individual but could result in a limited run should the interest be there. Which it will be from anyone who tries it.

Its official name is the Autoart 993R. A cheeky name perhaps, but like Porsche's 2016 eCoty-winning 991.1 run-out model, Stephens' R melds the past with the present: 'We wanted to create a 911 that, if Porsche was building the last 993 RS today and knew what it was doing for the first 996 RS and wanted to give a flavour of what was to come, the 993R would be it.' So what is it?

As the needle sweeps around the oxblood red central dial it's a modern-classic 911 with such a modern twist your head becomes a little frazzled trying to process it all. Your eyes and ears are telling you this is pure air-cooled 911, because at its core that's what it is: a manual Carrera 2.

'Losing weight was important, so too improving





the fit and finish,' explains Stephens, a Porsche specialist for more decades than he cares to remember, a capable racer and someone not new to the Porsche backdating and updating scene. 'The client had a very clear idea of what he wanted – a 911 he could drive across Europe to race meetings in, but one that was more than up to the task of entertaining him away from the autoroutes. A 993 but 25 per cent better.

'But he didn't want a track car: it had to be useable, comfortable, almost daily-driver level. But it also had to be bespoke and show a level of attention to detail that only these projects offer.' Quite. What's the point in pulling a car apart if you're just going to put the bits that weren't up to scratch the first time around back in?

Refreshingly it's a narrow-bodied, slim-hipped car. With the rain gutters removed from the roof it looks delicate yet precise. The slim appearance is enhanced by 1990s-style Cup mirrors, while the lack of flicks and splitters and protruding aero devices add to the aesthetic. There's a rear spoiler, an update on the ducktail not too dissimilar to the one on the new Sport Classic, complete with an opening at its base to feed air to that motor. It has been designed so its leading edge is at the same height as the Carrera's





Left: lightened interior features new composite panels, carbonfibre Recaro buckets and a Momo steering wheel (so no airbag weight), while the audio system, electric windows, central locking and more have all been deleted

original active spoiler when fully extended. Below the rear bumper is the most subtle of diffusers and a pair of round exhaust pipes to keep a factory appearance. At the front there's a reprofiled front bumper to feed the bespoke air-conditioning system – which is both smaller and lighter than the factory equivalent – and the engine oil coolers and the brakes.

It's what those coolers keep cool that you can't escape, however. The engine is a masterpiece and the result of imagination and a willingness to ask 'what if?' Such as, what if we used period Porsche Motorsport parts combined with those from later 911 GT road cars? So they did, and the results are quite simply spectacular. It retains the distinct tone and beat of an air-cooled six, a metallic edge that plays out over a deep thrum, but it sounds more precise, tuned to a higher level of detail. There are no lumps in its idle, no hunting for a tickover, only a smooth consistency that reflects the quality of the craftsmanship and materials used within.

Those materials include the crank, bearings and oil pump from the 997 GT3, engine cases that have been boat-tailed and stress relieved, pistons from the 993 RSR and lighter con rods by Pauter. Porsche Motorsport's solid lifters and adjustable rockers are fitted, so too camshafts machined to Stephens' own specification. Individual throttle bodies are also used, manufactured by Jenvey and again tailored to suit this engine. It exhales through a modified Cargraphic exhaust and sounds like your favourite piece of music exquisitely played at your dream venue.

It's also what accompanies this sound that enthral and excites and leaves you speechless and a bit of an incoherent fool, because the sound is a by-product of the main event, which is 330bhp arriving at a 7400rpm peak, with 265lb ft of torque at 6100rpm (up 58bhp and 22lb ft respectively). Although it's not all about the peaks, because this engine also has a low-down tractability some turbo engines would be proud to display, pulling smoothly from just above 1500rpm, with each 500rpm increment delivering a further layer of intoxicating sound blended with a shot of speed that prevents your eyelids from closing.

Each time you take a higher gear you're reminded of Stephens' encouragement to enjoy

this engine at its 7-6 max, but every time you find yourself changing up early. With time five-thou becomes five and half. Then you squeeze another five hundred and grab the next gear as the needle sings to 6000. You tell yourself that next time you'll be brave and wait until 7000, but you can't – at six-five your bottle goes. Eventually you find whatever it is within yourself, along with a suitable road, to let this engine sing to its limit. And then it happens. You're consumed by a wall of noise and that sense that few things come close to the sensation of being in command of an internal combustion engine being allowed to do exactly what it was designed to do.

When said engine is connected to a car that's had every area attended to with the same level of detail, the experience from behind the Momo wheel becomes even more all-encompassing. More engaging. More thrilling. Because not only has every last gram that wasn't deemed necessary been removed, resulting in a 1220kg wet weight – 150kg lighter than the car it's based on – but at each corner is a Tractive adjustable damper, with every bush upgraded to match.

'It took a bit of effort to get the dampers where we wanted them,' explains Paul. 'There's a perception that you can simply bolt them



'It's a car you want to drive. And drive. And then drive some more'



on and plug them in and away you go, but we actually spent a week with Center Gravity to set the car up and develop the five settings to where we wanted them.'

Those requirements were essentially for a fast-road set-up, but one that works across multiple surfaces so the driver doesn't have to constantly switch settings (which is done via a neat switch positioned at the base of the A-pillar in the footwell). And like the engine there's a smoothness and sense of togetherness from the chassis. It flows over poor surfaces with a confidence totally unexpected of a car this age, compliant and breathing with the road. And once you feel and understand that there's such a wide operating window you begin to push harder, build a rhythm and lean on the grip of the Michelin Pilot Sport 4 S tyres.

There's still that 911-looseness and light touch in the very early stages of turn-in, but then the weight builds as the nose hunts for the tightest line, you feel your hips rotate with the centre of the car and the rear glide round ready to deliver as much power and torque as you wish to the tarmac. Its responses are Lotus-like, deft and delicate but flooded with feel and interaction. How the Wavetrac diff manages the load is seamless, precise in its execution so as not to unsettle the car or distract you, adding to the synchronicity that flows through the R. It's a car

you want to drive. And drive. And then drive some more. And carry on driving until the owner calls and asks for it back.

When you're not driving it you're poring over the details, the obsessive work that went into putting the car back together once the shell had been seam welded, the sunroof removed and filled and the bonnet replaced with a Porsche Motorsport aluminium item, saving eight kilos.

'Look at a 993 interior; it's solid but the panel gaps are a bit of a joke and it weighs so much,' explains Stephens. Which is why every interior panel is new, made to the same design as the originals but in a composite material that means they are not only lighter but the fit and panel gaps are fingernail tight. Aluminium is used for the controls, from the switches to the stalks, and the instrument cluster has been tidied up, with the afterthought switches Porsche had fitted during generation updates all ditched.

The wiring loom was also stripped to its bare essentials, with even the interior lights in the headliner removed to allow for no wiring to run higher than necessary in the car. There's no glovebox lid, or centre console – a nod to the original Carrera 2.7 RS – and the carpet is thinner and covers less sound-deadening material. The electric windows and central locking have also been removed, so too the interior door handles, replaced by a loop of seat-belt strap to open

Above: body is seam welded; side and rear windows use lighter Porsche Motorsport glass. **Right:** engine has been enlarged from 3.6 to 3.8 litres and features a host of upgrades to increase power while retaining drivability

the door and a handle modelled on an S1 Elise's to pull it closed.

The attention to detail is fastidious, in this case even down to the rear seats being replaced with shaped storage areas perfectly sized to hold a crash helmet on each side, and the front luggage compartment being redesigned and repackaged using lighter materials.

Surely there must be something to sit in the negative column? I'm not a fan of the 996 GT3 RS 18-inch wheels, but as Stephens points out, the customer is and he's paying, and if I was picking up the bill I could select something else, a nice BBS split-rim perhaps.

So how much, then? Restomods don't come





cheap and rarely with a fixed price due to their bespoke nature. They often look expensive next to examples of the models they are inspired by too, and the 993R is no different. A 993 Carrera RS commands at least £250,000 today, while to create a car like the one you see here you'll need a good 993 Carrera 2 manual, which will cost north of £70,000, on top of which you can expect to pay a minimum of £100,000 to turn it into an R. Yet spend a day with it and it's hard to see why you wouldn't commission one if you have the means to do so. ☒

Engine Flat-six, 3.8 litres

Power 330bhp @ 7400rpm **Torque** 272lb ft @ 6100rpm

Weight 1220kg (275bhp/ton) **0-62mph** c4.5sec (est)

Top speed 175mph+ (est) **Conversion price** £100,000+

➕ Engine, chassis and attention to detail

➖ It might be a one-off

evo rating ★★★★★

by RICHARD MEADEN PHOTOGRAPHY by ASTON PARROTT

Hennessey Venom F5

Its sights firmly set on the far side of 300mph, we get an early drive in the sensational, 1817bhp Venom F5. Deep breath...

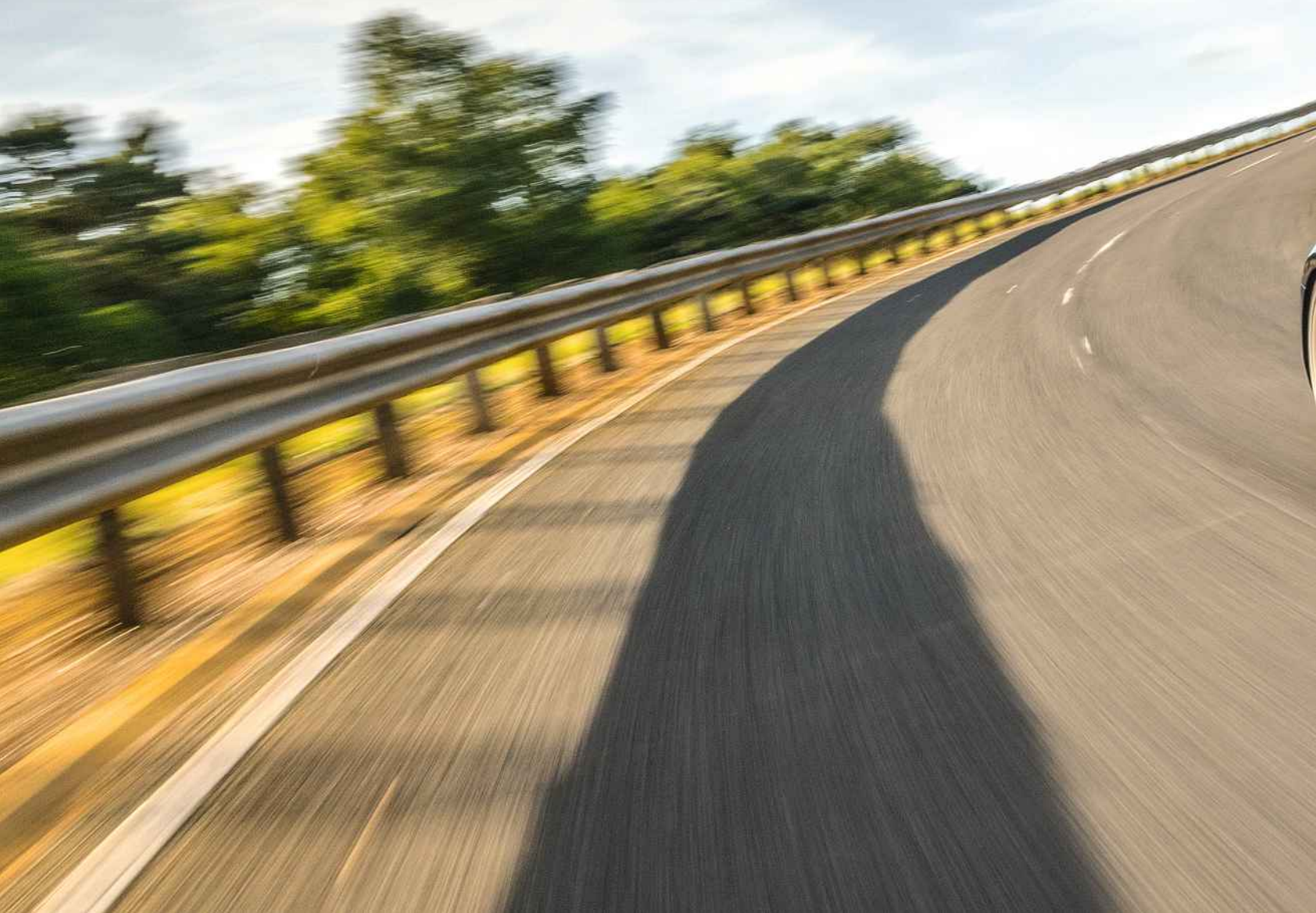
YOU'LL BE FAMILIAR WITH THE HENNESSEY Venom F5. Conceived to crack 300mph, this sequel to the ballistic Venom GT is Texas tuning mogul John Hennessey's ultimate statement on extreme speed.

Five miles a minute might seem the most trivial of pursuits, but just as the magic milestones of 100 and 200mph motivated engineers and fascinated drivers in the distant and more recent past, so 300mph is today's supercar Shangri-La. It's this rarefied realm that the F5 has been built to explore.

When you're offered the unexpected chance to get close to a bona fide 300mph challenger, you

jump at it, even if it's billed as little more than a shakedown. Which is how we find ourselves not at some shimmering NASA facility in Texas or Florida, but at the Millbrook Proving Ground in Bedfordshire, England, where Hennessey's F5 development prototype is being run ahead of its dynamic debut at the Goodwood Festival of Speed.

Full-speed runs aren't on the agenda, not least because Millbrook simply isn't big enough, but John Hennessey has promised we can give it the beans on the Mile Straight and drive it on the Alpine Route. It's the type of opportunity that simultaneously parches your mouth and moistens your palms.





Driven

There's something about targeting monster speeds that lends this unique breed of car a special kind of charisma. No matter how jaded you might think you are about cars that are ridiculously rapid and cost several million dollars, I guarantee you would be pulled towards the F5 as if by some sort of tractor beam. The shape is super-subtle, every surface smoothed and curve elongated to present as little resistance to the air as possible. With a generous wheelbase and ride height set low for stability and efficiency, it has arrow-like form and function.

Idling on one of Millbrook's large tarmac aprons, the Venom pulses with an uneven, semi-seismic exhaust note. A sweet waft of burnt alcohol drifts on the breeze, olfactory evidence that the crew have filled the F5 with ethanol-rich E85 to extract maximum power from the Hennessey-built 6.6-litre twin-turbo 'Fury' V8. Even at tickover the turbos sound like they're gently simmering, their soft turbine whistle adding texture to the ballsy burble that flows from the pair of side-by-side exhaust stubs poking from the rear end. It's a spectacular slice of The Right Stuff in the heart of England.

To understand the genesis of the Venom F5 it helps to be familiar with the Venom GT that

preceded it. Like all these ultra-fast machines, the GT was something of an enigma but a car with which we're intimately acquainted, having visited Hennessey's homeland back in 2013 to drive the GT Spyder. To this day it's the only car I've ever tested where I'd topped 200mph within the first mile of driving it. It helped that we had the run of a NASA-grade runway, but it's an indication of just how outrageously fast such cars are that 200 felt no more eventful than stroking up to 120 in a 911 Turbo.

No offence to John Hennessey, but I can remember flying out to Dallas wondering what in hell I was about to drive. A few days later, having also explored the roads that criss-cross the endless Texas ranchland, I flew home wondering how in hell they'd managed to create such a polished and convincing road car that could achieve such an absurd top speed. To this day it's one of the most memorable and enjoyable supercars cars I've ever driven.

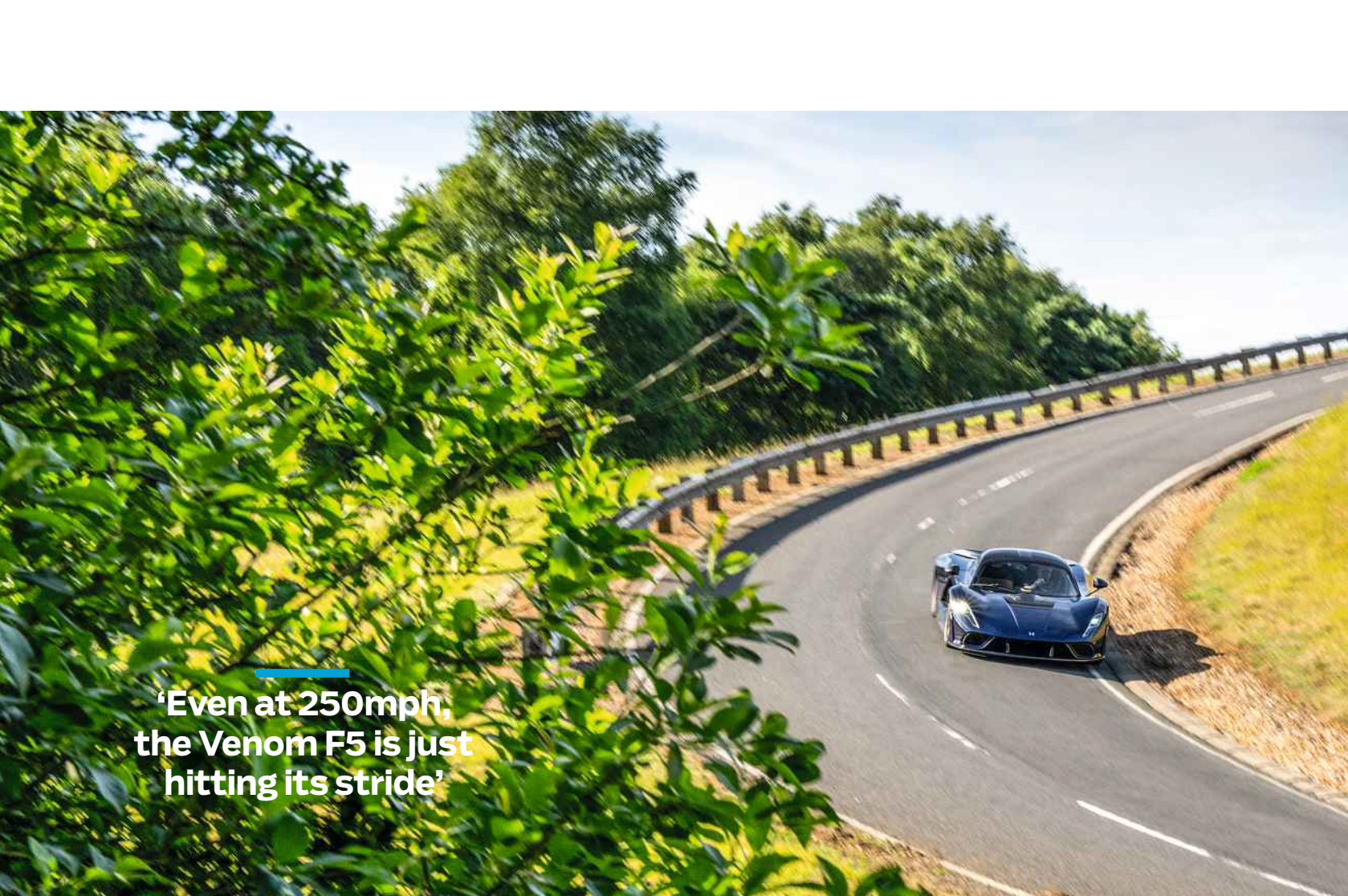
The Venom GT was a breakthrough. One that turned a profit (never a given with such projects) and enabled John Hennessey to revel in riling aristocratic Bugatti in typically rootin' tootin' style. More importantly it demonstrated a scope of capability and a deep-seated desire to

continue the journey beyond the world of tuner cars. Predictably it failed to convince those who couldn't see beyond the heavily modified Lotus Elise tub and cartoonishly augmented bodywork, but the sniping provided further impetus for Hennessey to commit to a clean-sheet successor: the Venom F5.

Having hit 270 with the Venom GT, the obvious target for the F5 was 300mph. It's an absurd speed. One that until recently was the preserve of Top Fuel dragsters and jet-powered Land Speed Record cars. That we now have multiple road car projects aiming at the triple-ton shows just how far the arts of aerodynamics, engine building and tyre technology have come. And, of course, how such cars remain irresistible to those with a few (million) quid to spend.

For John Hennessey there was clearly an element of unfinished business with the Venom GT. 'It bothered me that despite beating Bugatti with our one-way run at 270mph back in 2014, the internet and people on social media said: "It's just a modified Elise." I probably should have ignored them, but knowing how much of that car was bespoke, I felt we deserved more credit. On the plus side it motivated me to decide we were ready to do our own car from the ground up.'





**‘Even at 250mph,
the Venom F5 is just
hitting its stride’**

It would be three years before the F5 programme gained traction, but from that point on things happened fast: ‘We reached a kind of critical mass in 2017 when we hired a design team and built a full-scale model, which we introduced at the SEMA show. At this stage we didn’t have the budget or a detailed plan of how we were actually going to build it, but within a month of SEMA we had six orders.

‘That gave us the green light to go for it with the F5, and further validated what we’d achieved with the GT. By 2018 we started on the CFD (Computational Fluid Dynamics) using the Venom GT as our baseline. Everything was led by our in-house design team in Texas, who then worked closely with some great experts, many of whom are based in the UK.

‘We started with TotalSim, who really did an awesome job in defining the aerodynamics. We continued our relationship with Delta Motorsport [another Silverstone-based specialist] who we’d worked with on the GT. I hired John Heinrich [former head of GM’s Performance Division and late-phase consultant on the Venom GT] as chief engineer so that he could have more influence over the project. We worked with AP Racing and Brembo on the brakes, Cima on the transmission,

Motec on our management systems, Bosch on the ABS and traction control and Penske on the suspension, plus long-time partners Shell and Penzoil on our fuel and lubricants.’

If this sounds like a 300mph jigsaw puzzle then you’d be correct, but that’s the nature of so many modern hypercar projects. Bugatti uses Dallara for the Chiron chassis. Mercedes is relying upon Multimatic to deliver the Project One and Aston Martin famously outsourced the Valkyrie engine to Cosworth and the aero to Red Bull and Adrian Newey. In defining the F5 concept in-house and then collaborating closely with expert technical partners in order to create it, Hennessey is in very good company.

The scale of such a project is immense, with some 700 individual pieces of tooling and 3000 new parts. According to Hennessey ‘there’s nothing in the F5 that’s come from anything else’. Just 24 F5 Coupes will be built (all are sold) plus a run of the recently announced F5 Roadster. Cars are assembled at Hennessey’s facility in Sealy, Texas. Car no.7 is currently in-

Left and above: Millbrook’s Mile Straight provides a chance to find out what 1817bhp and 1198lb ft feel like; laps of Alpine Route suggest F5 is no one-trick pony

build, with subsequent cars being finished at the rate of roughly one per month.

Naturally the engine is the heart of the F5, and though it owes its pushrod architecture to the Chevy LS, it’s so highly evolved as to be unrecognisable from the motor you’d find in any stock GM model, with everything from the all-new block upwards built to Hennessey’s requirements. Displacing 6.6 litres, the handbuilt ‘Fury’ cross-plane-crank 90-deg V8 features an iron block, alloy heads and twin turbos. The on-paper results are jaw-dropping: running on E85 fuel it develops 1817bhp at 8000rpm, with peak torque of 1198lb ft at 5000rpm. Fill it with 98 octane superunleaded and it develops a little under 1600bhp.

The car we’ll be driving has done the bulk of high-speed testing. To date that’s more than 40 runs at over 250mph on a runway in Florida. Even at this speed the F5 is just hitting its stride. By the end of this year Hennessey is hoping to have discovered just how fast it can go: ‘Our engineers believe that with our power figure, drag coefficient and frontal area the theoretical top speed is 328mph. I’m not aiming at that figure, but if we could maybe do a one-way run at 500kph (a fraction under 311mph) and achieve

Driven



'I've driven some very fast cars in my time, but this truly is a whole new level of speed'

a two-way average of comfortably more than 300mph, then great. We know from past experience with the GT, and Bugatti hitting 304 one-way with the Chiron Super Sport, that people will throw rocks at you if you don't post a two-way average. Whatever you claim, it has to be irrefutable, whether that's with Guinness overseeing things, or VBOX validating your speeds.'

One other area of contention is homologation. Ironically, given Hennessey's homeland, the US is by far the toughest territory in which to gain full Federal approval. The F5 will be homologated for road use in every country it is sold, but US owners have to register the car for so-called Show & Display use, which restricts their annual mileage. The same is true of many exotic hypercars, including the Lotus Evija, McLaren Speedtail, GMA T.50 and even the Bugatti Divo. The media tend to get hung up on homologation, but on the evidence of Hennessey's order book it doesn't seem to be a barrier for high-end customers. We're about to find out why...

Millbrook's Mile Straight is the perfect facility to get a taste of the Venom. Such is the scope of its performance we'll only be able to sample a fraction of its ultimate pace, but running in full-fat 'F5' mode we will have the opportunity to feel its full fury. At least until the tight, steeply banked corner looms like a mirage through the heat shimmer at the far end of the straight.

With a paddleshift gearbox and Bosch traction control there's little in the way of ritual or warm-up. Indeed, the only thing Hennessey asks is that we punch it from a rolling start to preserve the clutch and transmission ahead of the all-important debut at Goodwood. In many ways the granny start makes what happens next all the more crazy.

Having short-shifted into 2nd gear, the rate at which the F5 punches forwards under full-throttle acceleration is genuinely befuddling. It's a full-on sensory assault. One that leaves you shellshocked as your body struggles to compute what's just happened. Traction is almost unshakable, with just the slightest sensation of the rear wheels over-speeding as the hammer blow of boost hits home. It's all you can do to maintain the presence of mind to keep pulling the right-hand paddle, as each gear is devoured with the kind of ferocity that should strip teeth from the ratios.

Such is the speed at which we're accelerating that the Mile Straight's road furniture genuinely blurs into a tunnel of grey galvanised Armco and dayglo orange marker cones. Somewhere around halfway down the straight, the digital display passes 200mph. It's all happened so quickly it feels like I left my brain back at the start. I certainly haven't breathed since flooring the throttle. Enough!

A split second after coming off the throttle, I'm hit by a ridiculously intense adrenaline rush. One that has my hands shaking and my whole body supercharged with stimulant. Only when I'm on the slow return road does the realisation dawn that I've explored less than two-thirds of the F5's projected performance. I've driven some very fast cars in my time, but this truly is a whole new level of speed.

Even away from the singular challenge of the Mile Straight,

Left and above: carbonfibre body was shaped to achieve the lowest possible drag while maintaining stability at 300mph+. Engineers have calculated a theoretical top speed of 328mph







the F5 is never less than intense. There's plenty of mechanical noise, likewise significant road noise transmitted through the carbonfibre structure. Stones picked up by the wide, sticky tyres clatter in the arches. Where a Chiron isolates and insulates you to the point of sensory deprivation, you feel right in the midst of things in the F5. It's not uncomfortable, but cossetting its occupants was clearly low on the list of project objectives.

Given the tight, sub-3000lb (1360kg) weight target, that's hardly a surprise. Doubtless a few hundred kilos of sound-deadening material would make it feel more habitable, but the F5 is a single-minded project. One that Hennessey knew it was vital to retain on a tight leash in order to keep the project on budget, on time and on target to achieve its all-important performance objectives.

What's surprising about the F5 is it's actually very easy to drive slowly. Final-stage fine-tuning of the transmission calibration will iron out the remaining rough edges, but in general it's super-impressive how this ferocious 1800bhp machine happily copes with the low-speed demands of photo shoots. Trundling around Millbrook's twisty Alpine Route doing car-to-car photography almost feels like an insult for a car aiming at the far side of 300mph, but not only does the powertrain feel happy to dawdle, but oil

Top left: twin-turbo V8 began life as a Chevy LS. It's rather different now. Peak power is produced on E85 fuel, but even on superunleaded it makes c1600bhp

'Where a Chiron isolates you, you feel right in the midst of things in the F5'

and water temperatures remain entirely unflustered in the unusually high ambient temperatures experienced during our test.

We run in Sport mode. It's plenty, believe me. There's less immediately explosive response, but the way the boost and therefore propulsion builds is impressive in a different way. It's almost more impressive because your brain has a chance to predict what's coming, so you get the anticipation, quickly followed by the rapid and inexorable build in longitudinal G before the full headlong rush arrives.

One common challenge these ultra-fast machines battle with is the paradox between needing to steer and handle with the calmness necessary for running at 250mph and beyond, but not being so inert as to be one-dimensional. Bugatti suffered criticism for the mild manner in which the Veyron delivered its performance, and consequently put more effort into spicing up the Chiron. It is a more engaging machine as a result, yet compared with the F5 it's a limousine.

It's hard not to regard any of these 300mph

challengers as one-trick ponies, but on the evidence of our drive on the Alpine Route the Venom F5 will be an engaging and tactile machine to drive on the road. It steers with precision, communicates clearly and deploys its performance in a manner that's very easy to modulate. Of course, the knowledge that you can barely dip your toe in the water will mean exercising monastic levels of self-control, but knowing what you have in reserve will bring its own satisfaction. And let's be honest, if you were to momentarily yield to temptation it's not like you'd need much time or space to feel the intoxicating embrace of 1200lb ft squeezing the breath from your lungs.

It's a feeling we hope to experience first-hand when Hennessey takes the F5 for its V-max validating runs later this year, either on a runway in Florida or – tantalisingly – a new stretch of Interstate Highway being built near Hennessey's Texas HQ.

In all honesty, as I sit at my laptop, I'm not sure how I'd feel about driving at 300-plus mph in any car on any stretch of tarmac. And yet deep down I know it's an utterly enthralling prospect. The chance to embark on the last great automotive adventure is surely impossible to resist. ✉

Engine V8, 6555cc, twin-turbo **Power** 1817bhp @ 8000rpm
Torque 1198lb ft @ 5000rpm **Weight** 1360kg (1357bhp/ton)
0-60mph 2.6sec **Top speed** 311mph (est) **Price** c£1,500,000

➕ Ballistic performance; surprising drivability

➖ They're all sold

evo rating ★★★★★

IGNITION

NEWS, INTERVIEWS, TECH AND EVERY NEW CAR THAT MATTERS

The art of speed

A Swiss-built carbon-tubbed supercar with aspirations on both road and track, the Picasso 660 LMS is shaping up well

by STUART GALLAGHER

LE MANS PROTOTYPES HAVE A LOT to answer for. The genre has inspired a succession of new, low-volume, carbonfibre-tubbed, mid-engined supercars, of which this is the latest. The Picasso Automotive 660 LMS is a twin-turbo V6-engined, 651bhp projectile, designed for both road and track and built in the most unlikely of places, Switzerland.

Picasso Automotive was founded in 2020 by 35-year-old Stefano Picasso, a former professional water polo player and sailor, and the 660 LMS is its first car, designed in-house at the firm's Swiss base with key components and manufacturing outsourced to suppliers in Italy. The 660 in its name refers to the engine's power in PS, while LM references the Le Mans cars that inspired it, and S stands for street.

Its bonded monocoque tub and rear subframe

are both 100 per cent carbonfibre, with the former weighing less than 200kg and the latter just 48kg. Each element of the carbon body is bonded to the tub, including the two curved side panels, which at 3.24 metres are the longest individual carbon panels yet produced for a car.

It's a compact machine, measuring 4.3 metres long, less than 2 metres wide and under 1.3 metres tall, which makes it Porsche Cayman-sized, there or thereabouts. Where it differs is that it's considerably lighter, more powerful and, of course, more expensive: €820,000 expensive.

CFD simulations and time in the wind tunnel led to what Picasso describes as a balanced aero performance, with 960kg of downforce delivered at the car's 196mph maximum. The car features a fixed front splitter, adjustable rear wing and a flat floor





Above and right: 600 LMS is undergoing a comprehensive development programme, with the first deliveries due in the second half of 2023. Titanium exhaust system just one of the many bespoke elements specially built for Picasso

leading to a rear diffuser, tuned to deliver consistency over a wide range of speeds, says the company.

All-round double wishbones are machined from billet aluminium, with the front and rear anti-roll bars, spacers and hubs all manufactured to Picasso's own design. Off the shelf wasn't an option. With plans to compete in GT racing and at Le Mans specifically, the chassis is as adjustable and configurable as a race car's, with owners able to tailor their 660 LMS to their individual requirements and skill sets.

Brembo has supplied the calipers (six- and four-piston units front to rear), with Galt manufacturing the discs (350mm at the front, 355mm at the rear) and pads, the latter including sensors to provide real-time temperatures to the driver. The brakes sit behind 19 and 20-inch (front and rear respectively) forged aluminium wheels with centre locks, Pirelli supplying the 245/35 and 315/30 Trofeo R rubber.

The 3-litre twin-turbo V6 revs to 8000rpm and produces 651bhp and 531lb ft of torque. It's built by Italian engine specialists Autotecnica Motori, which designs and builds engines for the World Touring Car and European Rally championships, as well as the FIA Grand Touring series, Formula 2 and 3, and VLN teams. The titanium exhaust is manufactured by

SC-Project to Picasso's requirements, and drive is to the rear axle via a six-speed sequential gearbox supplied by Sadev. A system called EasyRain DAI is linked to the car's electronics, detecting changes in grip levels and aquaplaning and adjusting the driver and traction modes accordingly.

Inside is pure motorsport with Sabelt seats and six-point harnesses, a carbonfibre steering wheel, 7-inch screen displaying the car's vital statistics, and a digital camera system replacing rear-view mirrors.

Despite being a new entrant to the supercar league, Picasso has high ambitions to establish itself in the rarefied world of high-end performance cars. The team assembled to design, develop and deliver the 660 LMS come with impressive CVs. Technical officer Filippo Pagnani has worked at Pagani, Dallara and Maserati; technical supervisor Matteo Cavedoni has over 30 years of motorsport experience covering race engineer, sporting director and team manager roles in Formula, GT and sportscar racing. Umberto Vaglio, heading up marketing and sales, was instrumental at his previous employers Alfa Romeo and Maserati in delivering the Giulia Quadrifoglio and MC20 respectively. Test driver Luca Filippi is an ex-GP2, Indy Car, GT and Touring Car racer.

'The whole car has been engineered to maximise performance on the road and on the track,' says CEO Stefano Picasso, 'with aerodynamics carefully studied in every detail, the extensive use of carbonfibre and composite materials, powered by a state-of-the-art engine. We wanted a sensational, responsive and at the same time technical drive, which can be appreciated both by professionals and amateurs.' Customers will be able to confirm – or not – whether the Swiss start-up has reached its objectives in the second half of 2023 when the first of the 21 examples of the 660 LMS that are to be built are expected to be delivered.

Beyond its road-car ambitions, Picasso has its sights set firmly on motorsport and competing at Le Mans, not only in a car that it will have designed and built itself but one running on the synthetic fuels that it also plans to develop.

New supercar companies are nothing unusual, but new supercar companies succeeding are. There are signs Picasso has set about its journey in a measured manner rather than in a blaze of PR and promises. There is already a running prototype that's working through a comprehensive development programme, and crucially there's a factory to build it and future projects in, with funding provided by a serial entrepreneur and car collector, Robert Wild. A 21st-century Picasso masterpiece? Could just be. ✕



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Lord of the Wings

The new, 992-gen 911 GT3 RS is the most extreme yet, so why not just buy an old racing 911 for your trackday kicks? Henry Catchpole explains why not

IT DOESN'T LOOK LIKE IT'S GOT A SENSE of humour, but it has. It just hides it well. Static and silent – you might almost say brooding – in a garage deep in the heart of Porsche's Weissach wonderland, the new GT3 RS strikes a pose that's as serious as an off-duty comedian. This is a car that is overtly tooled-up. It doesn't wear its 860kg of downforce lightly. It's as clearly destined for a pitlane as a new Range Rover is obviously homing in on the nearest Waitrose.

But it can also crack a joke. Walk around the back, admiring the monstrous 13-inch-wide rear wheels wrapped in 335-section rubber as you go, then crouch down. See that little vent? Not the big vane immediately behind the rear tyre, but just aft of that. Where the painted bodywork wraps down over the rear red reflector. That vent. It's fake.

I know, what happened to 'form follows function'? But that's not the funny bit. Look closer. Moulded into the plastic infill are two words: 'No vent'. Yup, Porsche and GT department head Andreas Preuninger preempted the possible purist backlash. Beat everyone to the punch with a punchline.

But enough of the silly stuff, let's consider the vents and vanes that are real, starting with the nostrils in the bonnet. These are not simply larger versions of the pressure-relieving apertures seen on a GT3, but denote wholesale restructuring in the front of the car. There is now a new, central radiator that saves 7kg but doesn't improve cooling and removes the frunk. The upside to the rejig is that it frees up the channels low down in the sides of the nose for active aerodynamics to be added. Peer into the depths or lie on the floor and look in front of the tyres and you can see flaps that are controlled by electric motors. Reminds me of the McLaren Senna.

While you're around the front wheelarches, it's worth turning the wheels onto full lock and having a look at the suspension, because the wishbones have been redesigned with aerodynamic teardrop profiles that are said to add up to 40kg of downforce to the front end. It all looks rather attractive, too.

But back to the nostrils that vent the new radiator. Preuninger tells me that originally the openings in the carbon bonnet were unadorned, but it was found that the L-shape additions were needed to guide the hot exit air towards the sides of the car. The new fins on the rear of the roof then help to keep the balmy breeze tracking down the flanks. Without these aero additions the warm air would stream over the roof and then be swallowed by the engine intakes (which are positioned directly above the flat-six and not in the rear arches – those openings are now reassigned to help aerodynamic airflow), which would obviously be undesirable.

The front wheelarches have the now-normal gills in their crown, but they have also been drastically cut away at the rear to help relieve pressure. What's not immediately obvious (unless you pay particular attention to door handles) is that the doors are now made from carbonfibre and have also changed shape compared with every other 992 in order to help this extraction of air from the front wheel wells.

What you can't miss is the new rear wing. It's every bit as impressive in real life as it is in pictures, sitting just slightly above the roof line. But it's not just big, it's clever. Nestled in the tops of the swan-neck struts are the electro-hydraulic actuators for the movable upper portion of the wing. At the opposite extremes of its movement it has a DRS function or acts as an air brake. However, it is also continuously variable between these extremes and works with the new flaps in the front to maximise performance and keep the car balanced. Porsche has redesigned the front suspension geometry, with the ball joint on the lower trailing arm repositioned to give the nose more support under braking and prevent diving so as not to upset the aero distribution of 30 per cent front/70 per cent rear.

Add in 14 different vanes under the car and the result of all this is 409kg of downforce at 124mph and 860kg at 177mph – enough to require a 50 per cent higher spring rate than on the GT3. Combine this aero with tyres that have widened by 20mm



to 275/35 R20 at the front and 335/30 R21 at the rear and you have a car capable of extraordinary performance in the corners. According to Preuninger, this new GT3 RS on Michelin Cup 2 R road tyres has higher cornering speeds than a 911 Cup car on slicks. That made me laugh even more than 'no vent' when I first heard it.

In a straight line the gains over the normal GT3 are not quite so stark, but that has been the case in previous generations as well. There were all sorts of rumours flying around internet forums about a possible rise in displacement for the RS but the flat-six has remained at 3996cc. There are, however, hotter, reprofiled cams, the intake system has been rerouted and the head has also been redesigned slightly to reduce the amount of oil flow and help the engine cope with higher G-forces. The result is that the flat-six is said to rev even more eagerly from 6000rpm to its red line at 9000rpm. Power has also risen slightly, by 15bhp to 518bhp at 8500rpm, but peak torque has actually dropped a tiny bit from 347lb ft at 6100rpm to 343lb ft at 6300rpm.

The seven-speed PDK gearbox remains almost identical but the final drive has been shortened slightly to compensate for the larger wheels and keep the effective gearing the same as the standard GT3's. Nonetheless, the RS's claimed 0-62mph time of 3.2 seconds is 0.2 seconds quicker than a GT3 with PDK. The top speed, understandably given all the extra downforce, has come down from 198mph to 184mph.

Wiping off all that speed are new iron brake discs at the front, which have grown very slightly from 34mm to 36mm in thickness. The pistons in the six-piston calipers have also grown by a couple of millimetres from 32mm to 34mm in diameter.

Carbon-ceramic brakes obviously remain an option, while the new air brake function also plays a significant role in RS retardation, reducing the stopping distance from 124mph by 2.5m.

With all the additional hardware and things like bigger wheels, the weight of the RS has gone up by 15kg over a standard GT3 with a PDK 'box, taking it to 1450kg. That weight is calculated with all the fluids, including a full tank of fuel, but also with all the lightweight options, like the carbon-ceramic brakes, magnesium wheels and the Weissach package, which swaps the anti-roll bars, rear coupling rods and shear panel to carbonfibre. With the WP, you can also specify a carbonfibre roll-cage instead of the steel one, which saves 6kg and also gives you a rather better view out of the back, thanks to the way the tubing runs.

No Nürburgring lap time has been set yet. It's been too hot, apparently. Could it beat the 6min 43.3sec set by the significantly more powerful Manthey Racing GT2 RS? Could it even dip into the 6:30s? Do people really care? I think some people do, yes. What excites me more are the opportunities Porsche has provided to potentially completely mess up the handling and make you slower around a track.

You see, on the RS's steering wheel are four rotary switches with buttons in the middle. These are colour-coded to graphics on the dash and in Track mode you can adjust the dampers, for both bump and rebound, front and rear. You can also vary the intervention of the ESC and TC, but more unusually you can play with the diff settings both under power and while coasting.

I've driven a car with a Tractive suspension system that was variable for all sorts of parameters and thoroughly enjoyed tinkering,

but this system not only adds elements but also makes the whole process more intuitive. It looks like a Fisher-Price My First Chassis Set-up kit, and I mean that as a compliment. If it was all hidden away in an infuriating touchscreen menu it would be far less appealing, but knowing you can easily fiddle on the fly – and also reset it all to zero without any fuss – makes it feel fun.

I've seen quite a lot of comments since the RS was revealed saying that it is now too extreme and anyone thinking of buying one (£178,000 for the lucky few) should simply purchase a race car instead. After all, when Preuninger himself says this shouldn't be bought purely as a road car for Sunday morning blasts in the mountains (buy a GT4 RS for that), perhaps an old race car would be a better option for some trackday entertainment?

But I think there are some very compelling arguments in favour of a new RS over a race car, principal among them being approachability and ease of use. For all that it looks scary compared to a base Carrera, you know that the RS is still going to be a piece of cake to get in, start up and drive. Far less intimidating than most race cars anyway. And now, with the ability to change damper and diff settings so quickly and intuitively, it takes the RS to another level. We have yet to see just how much effect twiddling the knobs has, but almost as long as it is noticeable it doesn't matter.

And while it might not be an ideal road car, I like that it can be driven on the road. I love the notion of it being parked up outside a pub or popping to the supermarket and leaving it next to that Range Rover. Out of its intended environment it will look even more purposeful and preposterous and impractical and wild and, well, humorous. And we could all do with a laugh now and again. ☒





Turn it all the way up to, er, ten

As the world adapts to an electric future, McLaren and Rodin both reveal new V10 track cars

YOU CAN TELL WHEN THE WORLD IS teetering on the edge of financial Armageddon, because the gaps between new hypercar announcements can be measured in weeks rather than years. After Red Bull confirmed it's unleashing Adrian Newey (again) to build the ultimate track-only hypercar, the RB17, two more of the same breed can now be added to the list.

One is from a familiar source, the other from a small company taking large steps in the motorsport and track-car arenas. Both feature bespoke V10 engines, both have single-seater closed cockpits and both drip with motorsport-inspired, and proven, DNA.

McLaren and hypercars are nothing new – they live and breathe them in Woking. But the cars also follow a strict formula, or rather they did until the cover was pulled from the Solus GT at Monterey Car Week in August. This time there is no MonoCell tub. There is no Ricardo-developed and built twin-turbo V8 or hybrid V6. There's no SSG seven-speed gearbox, either. There is, however, what originally appeared in 2017 as a concept to race in that year's *Gran Turismo* videogame and is now a production reality.

'We started about two years ago,' says Andrew Palmer, McLaren's vehicle line director, 'and it was an idea conceived by McLaren and a handful of

customers wanting us to build something special.' Customers who clearly consider the Senna, Speedtail and Elva as a bit run of the mill...

Underpinning the Solus GT is a carbonfibre tub with roots firmly entwined in the world of Le Mans Prototypes, including using both the engine and gearbox as stressed members. Suspension is inboard push-rods at the front, pull-rod activated torsion bars at the rear. Four-way manually adjustable dampers are fitted, as well as adjustable anti-roll bars and adjustable ride-height springs. The rear suspension is mounted to the aluminium casing of the motorsport-spec seven-speed sequential gearbox.

Aerodynamics are crucial to the Solus's performance, generating 1200kg of downforce to push the sub-1000kg car into the track surface. There's no active aero, rather there is a stepped splitter at the front, while at the rear a wing is mounted to the impact structure, which is also bolted to the gearbox.

Oh how we've rolled our eyes at McLaren rolling out another V8 mid-engined car and oh how our jaws dropped when it said it was putting a naturally aspirated V10 in its new track car. The motor is from Judd and originally found success



in the Pescarolo 01 Le Mans car in 2006. 'We considered the V8, but to meet the weight target and packaging requirements of the car would have required too many changes to our design and the philosophy of the car,' explains Palmer. 'And the V10 is about 70kg lighter than the V8,' he adds.

The V10 has a 70-degree V-angle, four valves per cylinder and a dry sump. To this, Judd has designed and produced a bespoke crank, air intake and exhaust, including a manifold that needed to be recessed to improve packaging, plus camshafts and barrel throttles also to McLaren's specification. They even increased the capacity to 5.2 litres. It produces 828bhp at 10,000rpm, 479lb ft of torque, and will ensure the Solus is good for 200mph.

The car's canopy isn't there purely for drama, it's integral to the car's aero (an open cockpit would require a redesign of the car) and was inspired by the Lightning jet. However, plans to have the canopy open by tilting upwards, as per a fighter jet, meant there could be space issues in some pit boxes around the world, so McLaren came up with a mechanical system that allows it to slide forward.

Inside is a cockpit that has had input from Lando Norris and features an adjustable pedal box and fixed seat (each driver gets a seat fitting). The steering wheel is as per any modern single-seater or LMP car, with every customer receiving driver coaching on how to get the best from all the tech.

Testing of the Solus GT is already underway, with first deliveries due in 2023 for the 25 customers who have each handed McLaren £3million plus taxes for one.

IF YOU MISSED OUT ON BUYING A SOLUS THERE IS a second all-new V10-engined track-only hypercar for your consideration: the Rodin FZero.

Like McLaren, Rodin has strong links to New Zealand, the company being based near Christchurch on the south island. It is headed by Australian tech entrepreneur David Dicker and has quickly established itself as a motorsport and track car specialist: along with supporting and nurturing young racing talent, Rodin has also taken the ex-Caterham F1 cars and turned them into workable track cars, built its own factory and test track, and has now announced details of its first bespoke car: the FZero.

It's a ground-up design led by Dicker, who has had input into every area of the car, his no-compromise approach resulting in a 1160bhp closed-canopy, carbon-monoque, carbon-bodied machine.


Unlike McLaren, Rodin has designed its V10 from scratch. Built by Neil Brown Engineering in the UK, it has a 4-litre capacity and is equipped with a pair of turbochargers complete with 3D-printed titanium manifolds. On its own it produces 986bhp at 9000rpm and 671lb ft of torque, but also unlike the McLaren the FZero features an electric motor, a 130kW unit that boosts peak outputs to 1160bhp and 1057lb ft. This powerplant is mated to an eight-speed gearbox made by Ricardo.

Weight is a bugbear of Dicker's, so the FZero tips the scales at just 698kg (with fluids), which explains the obsessive attention to detail the company is going to in designing, manufacturing and building the car itself. The V10 weighs 132kg ready to run, the



gearbox 65.8kg, the exhaust system less than 10kg.

OZ Racing will manufacture the 18-inch forged rims, Avon the slick tyres they will wear, and the 380mm carbon-carbon brakes by PFC will slow it all down with the aid of ABS.

Thirty FZeros will be built, destined for the track but not motorsport – 'Too many rules, too many compromises,' says Dicker – and deliveries will start next year. The price? £1.8million. 





Postcard from Monterey

All the hot new metal from the famous concours d'elegance

7



1



2

IT'S BILLED AS CALIFORNIA'S EQUIVALENT to the Goodwood Festival of Speed. However, with more cars parked up to be admired over a glass of local chardonnay than burning Castrol R on a hill climb, Monterey Car Week has quickly become the show of choice for manufacturers wishing to present their very expensive, very limited-edition showcases. Such as these.

1 Ruf Bergmeister

One wag christened Monterey Car Week '911 Restomod Week' due to the number of such cars being revealed there. While all were inspiring, brave and unique, the grandfather of the Porsche backdating scene, Alois Ruf, really turned heads with his latest creation. An homage to Porsche's own 1960s hill-climbers, it's

based on a 993, has a carbon body over a steel chassis and a 450bhp 3.6-litre turbocharged motor driving the rear wheels through a six-speed manual 'box.

2 Tuthill Porsche 911K

850kg wet, that's 'the' number. That's the headline that caused the champagne to be spat across the Californian lawn. With good reason, because even for an oldie, a 911 that weighs less than an SI Elise is a mighty achievement.

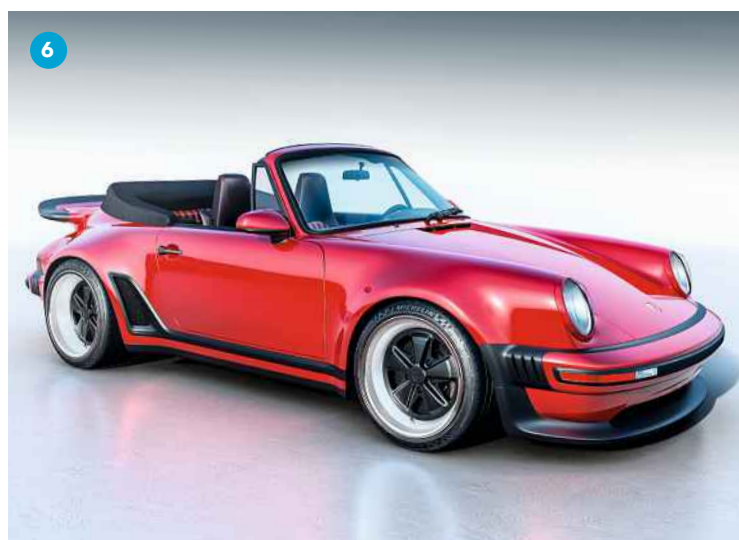
Carbonfibre and titanium are responsible for the weight loss, with the steel chassis clothed in a body fabricated entirely from the former, and the latter used for many of the mechanical components, including the suspension and roll-cage. Beneath the body is a 3.1-litre, short-stroke flat-six with a

four-valve head and the ability to rev to 11,000rpm. On second thoughts, maybe that's 'the' number.

3 Bugatti W16 Mistral

This is it then, the final W16-engined Bugatti. Costing £4.2m the Mistral is a 1577bhp roadster that shares its engine with the Chiron Super Sport 300+ and is built on a modified carbonfibre monocoque to suit its open-roof design and more rounded silhouette, which has a hint of the one-off La Voiture Noire about it.

This first open-top Chiron will bring to an end an 18-year run for the quad-turbo, 16-cylinder behemoth of an engine that debuted in the Veyron. Its replacement is expected to feature a hybrid element before the first all-electric Bugatti, developed with Rimac, arrives.



4 Koenigsegg CC850

Is it really 20 years since Christian von Koenigsegg unleashed his wild imagination and desire to achieve the impossible in the automotive world? It certainly is, hence this 1385kg, 1366bhp (depending on fuel) CC850 special. Limited to 50 units initially, with another 20 added when they sold out, and priced at around £2m each, it features the company's own twin-turbo 5-litre flat-plane-crank V8 and 'Light Speed Transmission' nine-speed multi-clutch 'box.

5 Aston Martin DBR22 concept

No, this is not last year's Aston Martin V12 Speedster, this is the DBR22, an altogether different, 705bhp (up 15bhp) V12-engined Speedster. Honest.

Inspired by the 1959 Le Mans-winning DBR1, the DBR22 is said to provide a tantalising hint of what is to come from Aston's new range of GT and supercars due next year, with a design language led by Miles Nurnberger, who has returned to Gaydon following his dalliance with Dacia.

6 Singer 930 Turbo Study convertible

Remember the Singer 930 Turbo Study revealed at Goodwood this summer? This is the convertible version that pays homage to the even rarer 930 Turbo Cabriolet.

With 510bhp and the option of either rear- or four-wheel drive, it's based on the 964, drips with the kind of details that Singer is renowned for and is designed,

like its coupe sibling, as a grand tourer rather than being more track-focused like the firm's DLS.

7 Bentley Batur

For those who missed out on the Bacalar, Bentley's limited-run open-top Continental GT given a very exclusive makeover by the company's Mulliner division, there is now the Batur, its coupe brother.

As per the Bacalar, it's based on a Continental GT Speed, but now features the most powerful W12 engine Bentley has produced, rated at 730bhp. It also has a more contemporary appearance, as design director Andreas Mindt has used the opportunity to showcase what a Bentley EV could look like.

Eighteen examples will be produced, priced at £1.6m, and they're already sold out. ❌



An Inside Job

Increasingly, tyre manufacturers are heading indoors to speed up development. We take a look at the facilities they use

THE DOOR-SIZED ROLLER SHUTTER raises double quick, as if impatient, and I step through. Snow crunches beneath my feet, the chill hits my face and I grin. I'm standing in a space about the size of a decent supermarket, its surface carpeted in snow. Nearby are a couple of cars and I can see a circuit marked out around the perimeter with thin orange poles. It's -10deg C in here. The crazy thing is that just a few minutes earlier I was outside, gently baking in 20-degree June sunshine.

We are in northern Sweden, close to the Arctic Circle, at a test facility owned by a company called Arctic Falls. The northern reaches of Scandinavia are the go-to winter-testing destination for European tyre makers and car manufacturers. In

2017 Pirelli opened its own, extensive, 130-hectare proving ground just down the road at Flurheden, but it has helped in the creation of this indoor facility by committing to a certain amount of annual usage.

Increasingly, tyre manufacturers are heading indoors in efforts to speed up development, and the key reason is the consistency offered by a controlled environment. The winter test season in Scandinavia runs from November to March, sometimes April, yet even this far north large temperature fluctuations are possible in a single day. As spring approaches, sunshine can play havoc with ice test surfaces; graded snow can maintain its condition but the surface of ice can melt very rapidly, halting testing. The stability of indoor test



tracks can help accelerate development.

At the Arctic Falls facility there are 400m-long ice and snow lanes that can be connected to the indoor 'flex' space. These allow development to continue during the summer months, which is especially useful in the development of 'all-season' tyres. Pirelli's test track has summer test tracks too, so comparison of an all-season tyre's performance in all relevant conditions – snow and ice, warm and cold wet and warm and cold dry – is possible in mid-summer in pretty much the same location on the same day.

The flexible space at Arctic Falls can be configured as required and adds the ability to assess cornering performance. Initially the space was filled with snow from outside but it's been discovered that the snow makers installed in the roof deliver a more consistent surface. Driving around is an odd sensation, like being in a two-dimensional snow dome. Speeds of up to around 50mph are possible, allowing some useful assessment of traction and stability control interventions, and braking and accelerating while turning. It's odd to see a piste basher parked up but it was even more odd at one point to realise that it was snowing indoors. The space can be kept at -10deg C even when it's up to 24deg C outside.

Such a space can be useful to car makers, though it doesn't offer enough challenges for complete vehicle sign-off because that requires gradients and higher-speed handling. In time a solution to this may come because the consequences of a European car maker not



Left: UTAC's test centre in Finland was the first indoor snow handling facility. **Top and above:** Arctic Falls in Sweden is the latest. **Above right:** Continental's AIBA in Germany is used for braking tests in various conditions

completing sign-off before spring arrives are expensive: either delay the programme and wait another year, or ship cars and engineers to New Zealand. Even if a car maker commits budget and resource to the latter, there's an inconsistency to cope with: snow in the southern hemisphere is slightly different...

The first indoor snow handling facility opened in Ivalo, Finland, in 2019 and offers similar testing opportunities to Arctic Falls despite being different in concept. It is run by UTAC, the company that now owns and runs the Millbrook Proving Ground near Bedford in the UK. It's a 350m long, kidney-shaped, fixed loop built in a 9m-wide tunnel.

One of the first indoor test facilities was created by Continental to test the most significant aspect



of tyre performance: wet braking. It opened its Automated Indoor Braking Analyzer (AIBA) in 2012 at its main site in Hannover, Germany. Inside this 300m-long hall, conditions can be created for wet, dry and even icy braking tests, and the tests are carried out using fully automated, driverless cars that can be accelerated up to 70mph and braked, consistently. The actual braking surface can even be changed, with one huge slab of road being swapped for another hydraulically, like a child's sliding-square puzzle.

The AIBA can carry out up to 100,000, highly accurate brake tests per year, but the process of tyre development is far from becoming automated. Continental is planning to build a second, identical wet-handling circuit at Hannover, not to test even more tyres but simply to ease the pressure on the heavily used current track – another indication that when it comes to providing predictable, consistent test conditions, indoor tracks are becoming increasingly valuable. ✕



Richard Usher

CEO, Great British Car Journey

From selling windscreens to building Blyton Park, Richard Usher shares the story of his truly unique career with cars

by JOHN BARKER

A LIST OF THE CARS THAT RICHARD USHER owns would fill a fair chunk of this article. The 65 year old runs the Great British Car Journey, which tells the story of the British car industry, and its protagonists, through ordinary cars, the ones built in volume. There are currently around 150 cars in the collection and Usher owns 'fewer than half of them'.

The car that sowed the idea of the museum was a wonderfully preserved, base-spec Austin Maestro, a car that managed to pull together a number of threads woven into Usher's life. That was about ten years ago, when he was running Blyton Park, the circuit he'd created near Gainsborough in Lincolnshire.

'There was this dear old boy in the village who used to come up every day and he made the mistake of telling me about his Maestro,' recalls Usher. To most people this would be a mildly interesting aside, but to Usher, who had been sales and marketing director of Auto Windscreens, it tripped a memory.

'The Maestro was one of the first volume cars with a glued-in screen, which was a complete game changer; we had to completely reinvent the business around this new mode of fitting. And it got me thinking: when was the last time I saw a Maestro? It started this fascination with the industry. I did history at Oxford and the historian in me that had been latent for 40 years came back.'

Usher was born in 1957 and cars were a feature in his life from the start. 'Dad was a terrific car enthusiast, drove my mother absolutely crackers.' They were saving for a house when his father spent £100 on a vintage Bentley. 'He continued to buy totally unsuitable cars for the rest of his life.'

The family business, in Birmingham, was originally jewellery but after the First World War switched to being an early motor factoring business called

Electric Service. 'In the late '20s if you had a radio at home, chances are it was powered by a car battery. Electric Service did a sort of milk round, replacing flat batteries weekly. They were into car component distribution too.'

Usher didn't get the car bug until he was 10 or 11. 'I suddenly got terribly interested in cars. It sort of hit me like a religion. I remember the 1970 Formula 1 season very well because I was very into Lotus. I was on a school trip and knew it was Monza that weekend. I went to buy a Sunday paper and there was a headline: "Rindt death inquiry". I literally didn't speak to anybody for a week.'

Usher failed his driving test twice. 'I was mortified. I think I was a bit too relaxed because I'd done 1000s of miles on L-plates: my History master was a terrible driver and whenever we went on a trip he'd ask me to drive.' His first car was a Mini Clubman Estate and it prompted him to immediately join the Oxford University Motor Club, which he became secretary of. The Mini was soon replaced by a 1275 Sprite: 'Terrible car, registration ROP 651G, so it was immediately nicknamed Ropey. On the A5, a front shock absorber pulled completely out of its mount and the front wheel folded under the car.'

An equally dreadful Jensen Healey money pit followed. Usher's first decent car came a few years after leaving university, when he was working for the family business, which by that time was exclusively windscreens. 'I somehow persuaded my older brother that I should have something Lotus. So I went to Castles at Leicester and bought DAC 55Y, a Talbot Lotus Sunbeam that was about a year old.'

'As part of the motor factors we'd inherited a windscreen company called Birmingham Safety Glass. The windscreen business didn't really take off until the late '60s, when motorways started to get built, then all of a sudden the phone started to ring constantly. They were all toughened glass back







then, so if a stone hit your screen it shattered and ended up in your lap. You needed instant service.

'The penny dropped and my older brother picked up this ball. We ended up having fitting centres all over the motorway network. We had about ten of our own but our main business was wholesaling windscreens in vast quantities to Auto Windscreens.'

Auto Windscreens got bought out and not long after, in '89, the same PLC acquired Birmingham Safety Glass. Usher survived the merging of the two boards, making himself useful in marketing and PR, and in time became sales and marketing director of Auto Windscreens. He discovered that Brian Holmes, the company founder, was into motorsport and that the company had hospitality suites at the major UK circuits. It also sponsored some drivers, which Usher already had experience of.

'In '87 my brother was doing the Formula First championship,' he recalls. 'There were a lot of very big accidents that year and my brother had most of them, earning him the nickname Crusher Usher. The battle was between Ben Edwards, who was fully funded, and Eugene O'Brien. I've always been amused by the quirky, and Eugene's race transporter was an old laundry van with "Lacy Linens" still on the side. The only way they could get the car in was for Eugene to sit in it whilst it was being transported, so this van would arrive and the car would roll out with Eugene in it from wherever it had travelled!'

'It was very obvious that he had some talent but absolutely no money. With about three or four races to go I gave him two Motor Glass stickers and said, "Stick these on the side of the car and I'll give you 500 quid." He nearly bit my hand off!' O'Brien just missed out on the title.

A couple of years later, flush from having sold the business, Usher put a package together for O'Brien to race in Formula Vauxhall Lotus. 'We turned up at the first race with a transit van, a trailer and a caravan... and parked next to Derek Bell Racing's 40-foot artic with six Lotuses in for his son Justin and a load of pay drivers...' Usher felt he'd bitten off too much, but O'Brien qualified on the front row and was in contention right through the season. 'We would have won the championship if not for a mistake at the Grand Prix support round. We lost the championship by two points.'

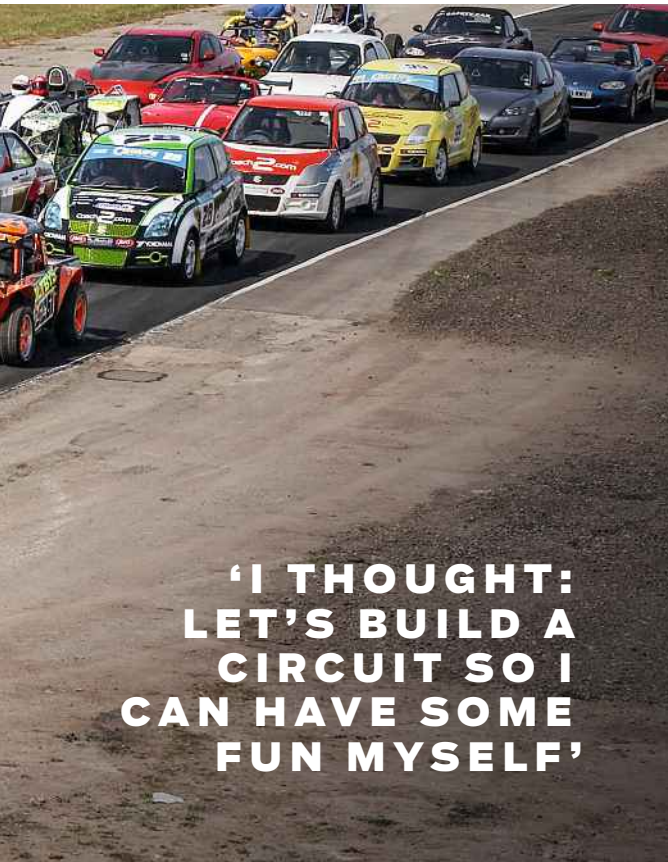
Usher had always had a thing about Lamborghinis but discovered that even second-hand Countaches were £100k. 'Even with my bad record of buying cars I didn't want one for that sort of money, so I went to see Dick Puxty at Emilia Concessionaires at Silverstone and he sold me a brand new Pantera, built to my spec, for £42k. It was a fun car. I did 25,000 miles in it.'

Clockwise from above: at the launch of Blyton Park in 2011, with an Usher favourite – an Austin Seven – in the front row; Diablo VT 6.0 and a De Tomaso Pantera have been ownership highlights, Usher covering around 25,000 miles in each car

In '93, in his role at Auto Windscreens, Usher did a deal with Peugeot that got O'Brien into the BTCC. 'It wasn't much money, about £140k. Eugene had quite a good year, racing with Robb Gravett, but the next year they signed Patrick Watts, who was really good in saloon cars. Eugene had a really big shunt at the first round and his season never got going.'

Looking for corporate hospitality opportunities, Usher got Auto Windscreens onto a Callaway Corvette at Le Mans in '95, the year when there were no prototypes, it rained a lot and the McLaren F1 won. O'Brien shared a car with Robin Donovan and Riccardo Augusta, the latter the playboy heir to the MV Augusta company, and they finished 11th. 'It was great,' remembers Usher. 'We took a load of insurers and really big customers, stayed in a fantastic hotel and gave them dinner in the restaurant halfway down the straight.'

Through Mike O'Brien, Eugene's older brother, Usher was introduced to Darren Manning, a young driver big on talent but short on backing. Usher helped him into F3: 'Darren did well enough to get a Formula 3000 drive with Christian Horner. It wasn't a huge amount because Darren was a pretty good driver and his Russian teammate brought plenty of oil money. The deal was a little convoluted though,



**'I THOUGHT:
LET'S BUILD A
CIRCUIT SO I
CAN HAVE SOME
FUN MYSELF'**



because Christian's uncle did a lot of work for our arch rival, Autoglass!

'Darren had a couple of OK seasons and that sort of petered out, so Mike and I wondered what to do next when Rockingham came along. They'd launched this ASCAR thing and they were desperate to have some drivers with profile. So we did a very cheap deal and Darren did really well. He wasn't frightened by the oval.'

At this time, Usher finally had himself a Lamborghini, a Diablo VT 6.0. 'I had it for about ten years, did about 25,000 miles in it, like the Pantera. It was driven quite hard. I drove around the Rockingham oval after hours, got up to about 130mph and thought: "Hell, this is scary!"'

Then the American Champ Car series visited Rockingham and Darren got a drive to add some local driver interest. A clutch issue meant he started at the back, but he climbed through and at one point was leading. 'After the race one of the team bosses, Derrick Walker, came up and said, "I don't know who this Darren Manning is but I've got a wealthy Mexican driving my car next year and if you can find \$150k I'll run Darren in the second car." We'd just sold Auto Windscreens to the RAC so I did the deal there and then, and that got us over to America.'

'Despite running a Reynard when the car to have was a Lola, Darren finished seventh and that really woke everyone up.' Chip Ganassi tested him for IndyCar and he was signed alongside Scott Dixon.

'At that point, I'm kinda pinching myself! It wasn't a great couple of seasons; they had the Toyota engine when the Honda was the one and we thought, well, we've not made much but we've had a lot of fun.'

It wasn't quite over, though. 'Darren got a call: "That Manning? I always thought you were useful." It was AJ Foyt!' Manning joined Foyt's IndyCar team for 2007. 'He got some great finishes and no one who drove that car after him got comparable results, but that was the end of racing for me. That's when I thought: let's build a circuit so I can have some fun myself!'

Years earlier, Usher had got to know the *Top Gear* team through Auto Windscreens' sponsoring of the Top Gear Live show. 'They'd got planning permission to build a studio on Enstone airfield [in Oxfordshire] and I said if you build the studio, I'll build the track.' It would prove another steep learning curve. 'The airfield is a rough old place. And it's all a bit mixed up in terms of who owns what bits. And it's right on the edge of a very pretty little village called Enstone.'

Usher spent a lot of time, effort and money trying to get planning consent before realising that it wasn't going to happen, and looked at many other airfields before giving up on the idea. Then, somewhat randomly, he found himself at Blyton, helping judge a driving competition Auto Windscreens was sponsoring. Usher saw the potential.

'The unusual thing about Blyton was that the Americans had laid asphalt after the war. If you're

only reinstating, rather than laying asphalt on concrete, that's much easier. It also helped that there was this long history of ad hoc motorsport there – rallycross, grasstrack and the like – that the council allowed and the locals didn't complain about.' Usher did the deal, reinstated a very specific, circuit-shaped amount of asphalt and the track opened in 2011.

'I always thought it was going to be a little sort of trackday place and we'd see the odd interesting car, but actually so many amazing cars ran there. We even had a Jochen Rindt car, Lotus 72 chassis number one. I sat in that and had a real goosebump moment.'

'I sold Blyton in 2017 because I'd had lots of fun and made a reasonable amount of money. And I'd got to 60 and thought: I love Derbyshire, I don't really want to be trogging over to Lincolnshire any longer. Also, the Maestro had started this fascination with the motor industry and I sold the idea of Great British Car Journey to a lot of people I've known for a long time. Covid hasn't been a great time to start stuff, so it hasn't been easy, but we are fine.'

Usher's current passion in cars aligns with the museum. His daily is a Rover 600: once common, now rare and really quite good, but the car he loves is the Austin Seven: 'I find driving the Seven therapeutic because you have to concentrate. I never thought I would love a car with 16 horsepower but I do absolutely love it and I'm looking forward to driving it home tonight!' ✕



DOA: ALFA ROMEO ALFASUD SPRINT 6C

This mid-engined, six-cylinder special could have been Alfa's Group B contender – but for a lack of cash

IN OCTOBER 1980, WHILE THE FIA WAS announcing the finalised rules for its new Group B rally class, representatives from Alfa Romeo were in Tokyo signing a joint-venture deal with Nissan for a new small hatchback. Soon afterwards the former started to seem like an interesting opportunity for the latter, what with Group B coming into effect in 1982 and the new Datsun-based hatchback scheduled to go on sale soon afterwards. The timing was excellent. The car, however, was not, because it was the eternally underwhelming Arna, a model which Alfa engineers swiftly decided was not suitable for motorsport. Still determined to go rallying, they instead hatched a Group B plan B, based around the ageing Alfasud Sprint.

At the Paris motor show in October 1982 the new rally machine made its debut. It wore the freshened-up nose and tail lights of the upcoming Sprint facelift, rescuing some marketing capital from the decision not to rally the Arna, but the really interesting stuff was everything in between. As the name implied, the 6C had ditched the Sprint's usual front-mounted four-cylinder boxer engine in favour of a V6 that sat behind the front seats, driving the rear wheels through the same five-speed ZF 'box found in the Lancia 037.

To reflect the uptick in grunt there were fat Pirelli P7s contained within butch box arches and, at the

back, a slatted cover where the rear window used to be, all the better to keep that 2.5-litre V6 at a comfortable temperature. Inside, Alfa had given the car richly upholstered black leather seats, a smart Momo steering wheel, and carpets to match the racing red paintwork. It looked every inch the 200-off homologation special.

There were, however, a couple of issues that loomed over the Sprint 6C. First of all, the engine. As announced, the 'Stradale' version made 160 horsepower, giving it a brisk but not blistering 0-62 time of 7.3 seconds and a top speed of 133mph. Alfa's competitions arm, Autodelta, had been running the same engine in GTV6 touring cars and knew it could be tuned up to 230 horsepower for racing, but even that wouldn't be enough for Group B. That's why they cannily increased the

capacity a fraction, from 2480cc to 2503cc, nudging the car into the 2500-2999cc sub-class so there was headroom to develop a 3-litre version of the same V6 with the hope of getting a slug more power in the future.

The second issue with the rally Sprint was four-wheel drive, or rather the lack of it. Mindful of this problem, Alfa quickly revealed a second 6C prototype with additional cooling slots, more aggressive aero, and a less luxurious interior featuring race seats, harnesses, and a gearlever that sat closer to the driver on a higher central tunnel. This was not done purely to enable faster changes at slithering speed on a special stage; the tunnel had been raised to make room for a propshaft. This car ran an AWD-compatible Hewland gearbox too, but the second prototype was still rear-drive because cash-strapped Alfa Romeo couldn't afford to engineer a system to send power to all four Pirellis. In fact, given the company's impending financial ruin, it couldn't afford to build the 6C at all and in 1983 the project was cancelled.

Today the first prototype (the car pictured here) lurks in a dark corner of the storage bunker under the Alfa Romeo museum, while the second has been restored and is on display upstairs as a reminder of Alfa's broken Group B dreams. Still, at least it's not an Arna.





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PARTNERS



Happy returns

I've just finished reading the cover story in **evo** 301. What a great piece!

I love Jethro Bovingdon's writing, and to have both him and John Barker testing the Cayman GT4 RS, Huracán STO, 458 Speciale and NSX-R among the stunning scenery of the south of France – all perfectly captured by Aston Parrott's camera – well, there's no better recipe.

Those with a family will know that to read a long feature in one sitting is a rare achievement. It took me four attempts, but that made it even better, as each time I looked forward to picking back up where I'd left off. It's a sign of great writing if the story can keep me coming back.

This was classic **evo**. The only disappointment? We never got John's take on the Skoda Kodiaq...

Karl Sumner

You can find out more about how our Kodiaq vRS fared as photography car on this test in this month's Fast Fleet.

Mac factor

I've just read Richard Meaden's column on the McMurtry Spéirling (**evo** 301). Having had the privilege of seeing the vehicle at the recent Heveningham Concours, I can truly say that even standing still it is an awesome looking car.

I'm not a big lover of EVs and was prepared to hate it when I saw it in the 'flesh' [above right], but it had a presence about it that was truly impressive. Even more impressive (and infectious) was the enthusiasm of all the people involved in the project. It was really inspiring.

Good luck to the people at McMurtry: I hope your enthusiasm brings you the success you deserve.

David Andrews



Width restriction

Never Mind the Quality, Feel the Width. I watched an old episode of that recently, British slapstick at its awful best. But it wasn't the slapstick element that sparked me into writing, it was the title and the article by Peter Stevens in **evo** 300: 'Big cars, little cars'.

I'm a wildlife photographer (and ex police advanced driving instructor, so I enjoy 'making good progress', as it used to say in *Roadcraft*), so 90 per cent of my driving is down narrow lanes with grass growing up the crown, or B-roads where two Morris Oxfords could comfortably pass, but two Range Rovers most definitely can't without creeping by, mirrors folded in, nerves frayed.

Where is the progress in that? I use a Toyota Yaris Hybrid, and even that is 50mm wider than a Morris Oxford! It flicks to silent mode as a feathered target approaches and has the 400-mile range I need (no EV charging where I go), but I could do with four inches more ground clearance, four-wheel drive and it being 100mm narrower. Full vinyl interior too, please.

A Lada Niva Hybrid would hit the spot, but is about as likely as a manual Rolls-Royce. Peter Stevens bemoaned length and weight, and I agree, but for me (and surely for everyone who lives in Anglesey) it's width that needs to be addressed as the biggest impediment to The Thrill of Driving.

Paul Scott

Noise annoys

Rightly or wrongly we are living in the period that will see the dying throes of the internal combustion engine, but why do we have to mark



LETTER OF THE MONTH

Simple treasures

RICHARD PORTER'S COLUMN ON HIS AGA (EVO 300) WAS interesting. I'm a techy guy and a lover of food, so I like to potter in the kitchen and trial lots of different recipes using a variety of modern cooking appliances – air fryer, slow cooker, sous vide machine, etc. I've had some success with my amateurish creations, and many failures, but I've yet to cook a single roast that tastes as tender and succulent as the ones my parents used to do in their Aga. Something about the slow and constant radiant heat delivery makes it the consummate means of perfecting that beef joint or Christmas turkey, despite its lack of apparent technical sophistication or features.

There is an overly obvious analogy here with the automotive world – the technical abilities, refinement and enhanced driving aids of contemporary cars versus the simpler but alluring analogue charms of older and creakier automobiles. Sometimes the car makers get it right and manage to digitally recreate those sensations we seek from years gone by, but more often than not the modern delivery feels synthetic. It's fun that's been filtered.

We can't halt the march of progress of course, but as driving enthusiasts we should strive to grab those moments of simple, pure joy with older vehicles as often as we can, because they won't be around forever. And with that same reasoning, I urge Mr Porter to try a Sunday roast in his Aga before he offloads it in favour of a Bluetooth-equipped, touchscreen-operated iOven 5000.

Gary Reilly

The Letter of the Month wins a Straton watch

The writer of this month's star letter receives a Straton Yacht Racer Quartz watch worth £260. Designed to be a fun everyday chronograph that doesn't break the bank, it offers 10ATM water resistance and is available in six different colour schemes.

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INBOX



this period with fireworks? I am, of course, referring to the current trend of anti-social, backfiring exhausts.

While they may be appropriate and a consequence of the highly tuned nature of supercars, why does every wannabe model with sporting pretensions deem it necessary to herald a closed throttle with a cacophony of artificial, obnoxious explosions? Will this not just hasten the demise of the performance car by swaying public opinion against them?

Personally I love the NASCAR-like roar of an AMG-fettled V8 or the rasp of a fully lit Mezger flat-six, which are probably easier to tolerate for the general public due to the exotic nature and rarity of the cars they reside within, but when a Fiat 500-based Abarth sounds like a '70s rally car with badly set up Weber carbs, while doing nothing more exciting than negotiating rush-hour traffic at 7am, things may have gotten a little silly.

Yes, I know, I am officially old...

Mark McIver

Manual up

For years I have read *evo's* road testers lamenting the loss of manual gearboxes in driver's cars. It is for this reason I am disappointed by the criticism directed towards the new Lotus Emira (issue 299).

The complaint is the imperfections of the gearbox in comparison with the Teutonic and almost perfect Porsche manual gearbox.

Isn't that the point? If you want flawless gearshifts, order your Emira with the dual-clutch transmission. If you want mastery over the machine with the combination of hands and feet deftly conducting a mechanical orchestra, buy the manual.

I drive a manual Elise and a double-clutch M3. I know which is most

efficient and I know which is the most satisfying, and that's the Thrill of Driving.

I also have a manual Emira on order. For the drivers.

Graham Libreri, Australia

Stars in his eyes

I'm a young reader of *evo* (I'll be 10 on December 22nd) and I think maybe The Knowledge has been misprinted. I'll give you a couple of reasons.

1. I have noticed that the Audi SQ2 and the Mitsubishi 3000GT are the lowest rated cars. That's all fine, but could their ratings be the wrong way round? The SQ2 has 2 stars out of 5, yet what you say about it is: '+ Nothing - Everything'. So it should have 1 out of 5. The Mitsubishi 3000GT has 1 out of 5, despite it having a plus point that isn't 'nothing'. Maybe you could do a twin test between the two? You never know, you might have a zero-star Audi!

2. The Jaguar I-Pace. It's your highest-rated EV and obviously you haven't checked on it in a long time (four years, in fact). You say it gives you 'range anxiety'. That could be the case for older models, but the newer one can do 292 miles on one charge (official range). Yes, that is still behind the best out there, but it's a decent range that could get you from Saint-Tropez to Milan. Again, maybe a twin test with it and the Lotus electric sports SUV could change your mind!
Sam Bannister, Lewes, East Sussex

*Thanks for your suggestions, Sam. We'll definitely consider retesting the Jaguar I-Pace when Lotus's SUV arrives, but unfortunately a twin test between the Audi SQ2 and Mitsubishi 3000GT won't be possible, because nobody on the *evo* team ever wants to drive either car again...*

Watches

This month: a trio of blue-hued chronographs



Bulova Parking Meter

£449 bulova.com

Bulova's been rummaging through its back catalogue again and has emerged with this: a recreation of the classic 1973 'Parking Meter' chronograph. It now officially adopts the nickname bestowed upon the original due to its distinctive looks, but this time around uses a quartz (rather than mechanical) movement to keep the price down. Just 5000 will be made.



TAG Heuer Connected X Porsche Edition

£2300 tagheuer.com

If you own a recent Porsche, this new smartwatch from Tag Heuer can connect to it to retrieve mileage, battery charge and petrol/electric range data. It also enables the wearer to control their car's heating and air con. The blue highlights seen across the watch are Frozen Blue Metallic, which is also an exterior paint colour offered on the Taycan.



Seiko Prospex Speedtimer SRQ043

£2740 seikoboutique.co.uk

Seiko is building upon last year's revival of its Speedtimer brand with this new addition to its high-end chronograph line. The blue and red colour scheme is inspired by that of a 1969 Seiko model believed to be the first automatically winding chronograph sold to the public, but if you'd prefer a more *en vogue* dial colour, a vibrant mid-blue version has also just landed (SRQ039).



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RICHARD MEADEN

Meaden rediscovers the eternal pleasures of an old-fashioned road trip

IS THE ROAD TRIP MAKING A COMEBACK? Some of you will say it never went away. On an emotional and aspirational level you'd be right, but on a practical level I think we all know that the advent of cheap short-haul flights lured us away from our cars as the promise of quick, convenient, affordable forays into Europe became a reality. Even the pain of Ryanair was worth it if you could get to Milan for £20.

Flying has never been the same since 9/11, but thanks to Covid and spiralling fuel costs, air travel is now a hateful process from beginning to end. Expensive tickets, understaffed airports, ridiculous three-hour check-in times, the joy of sitting in close proximity to several hundred mouth-breathing passengers or the spectre of cancelled flights are traumas we can all do without.

This was highlighted to me when planning a short four-night stay in Switzerland to visit my in-laws. In the past, Mrs M and I would have booked EasyJet flights to Geneva and then jumped on the train for a two-hour journey to Sion (the closest city to our final destination in the mountains). This time I decided to compare the cost and journey time of making the same trip by car.

Okay, so there was an ulterior motive – I really wanted to complete a long drive in my long-term-test F-type before it goes back to Jaguar. But whereas in the past it would have been hard to justify the extra time and expense of driving, this time around not only was it marginally cheaper (even allowing for a Flexiplus tunnel ticket to try and avoid potential delays), but the call of the road felt infinitely more appealing.

What is it about a road trip that's so pleasing? Normally I hate packing to go away, but when you're heading off in the car it's part of the enjoyment. Especially if you're in a car with limited luggage space. Likewise making sure the car is fuelled, fresh and clean inside and out the night before you leave. It's the same with an early start. Setting your alarm for ohmigawd o'clock is something to resent if all it does is give you a fighting chance of checking in with more than 30 seconds to spare, but when you're hitting the road to make good early progress at the start of a full day's driving I'm almost glad to hear the alarm go off.

The 700-mile run to and from Switzerland was perfect. Almost exactly 12 hours door-to-door, including time spent waiting for

and riding on the Eurotunnel and with two brief stops each way to fill up with fuel and grab a handful of road snacks. Our round-trip stats were pretty remarkable, a total of 1537 miles covered at an average speed of 73mph and 32.2mpg. Not bad for a supercharged 5-litre 450bhp V8.

It was as effortless and enjoyable as we could have wished. I always take a few hours to really settle into a long drive, the kilometres dragging until something clicks and the cadence of your internal trip meter shifts from measuring everything in blocks of five or ten miles to 50 or even 100 miles. Having been largely confined to the UK for years, seeing signs pointing to destinations in France, Switzerland and Italy seemed impossibly exotic, to the point where it was tempting to just keep going as tendrils of wanderlust began to take hold.

Just as it's rewarding to make such imperious progress, so there's something enormously satisfying about seeing the scenery slowly morph as the miles pile on. As the autoroute began to cling to the mountains and Lake Geneva shimmered below us, there was no way I would have traded my place for a seat on any plane. Feeling your mind dial out the white noise that pollutes our daily lives is deeply therapeutic and offers further proof – if any were needed – that driving connects you to your journey while flying feels like an awkward stasis

'Driving connects you to your journey. Flying feels like an awkward stasis to be endured'

to be endured rather than enjoyed.

Given my profession, I feel embarrassed and slightly ashamed of all those times I opted to fly to places instead of drive. In hindsight how could it have ever been sustainable to have millions of people using airliners like buses, often paying less to fly to Prague than catch the Number 47 into your local town? Bluntly, just because we could doesn't mean we should.

Still I'd be lying if I said some of those quick and dirty flights didn't take me on memorable trips, but the good bits unfailingly happened on terra firma while those hours in the air were all instantly forgettable; at best something to sleep through. When you drive somewhere, every mile contributes towards the overall experience and a boundless sense of freedom. Despite the doom-mongering and anti-car media agenda, when you put a car to good use (ideally one powered by an internal combustion engine) there is no better way to travel. All of which reaffirms my belief that if a long journey's worth doing, it's worth doing by car.

@DickieMeaden

Richard is a contributing editor to **evo** and one of the magazine's founding team



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RICHARD PORTER

Porter eavesdrops on a committee discussing a Matter of Great Importance

THE CHAIRMAN LEANT FORWARD, PLACED his elbows on the dark wood table and let his splayed fingers meet in front of his face. ‘Winter is coming,’ he said in the slow and deliberate manner he used when he wanted to sound portentous. ‘Our people need to know that we know this.’

Further round the U-shaped table to The Chairman’s left, a neat man with gimlet eyes and a tidy beard elevated himself in his seat like a precisely parted meerkat. ‘I think they would know that we know that, Mr Chairman,’ he said crisply.

The Chairman collapsed the spire formed by his fingers into a pair of fists and turned to fire a look of contempt at the man undermining his supreme authority. ‘Thank you, Mr Secretary. I’m well aware that they would know that we know that,’ he growled. ‘My point is to let them know not only that we know that but also, more importantly, that they know we know and will take steps this winter.’

Three seats away, a slim-faced man in glasses looked up from the large ledger in front of him and made a thin staccato sound, as if attempting to dislodge a solitary grain of sand from his throat. Aware that the other 13 members of The Committee were now looking at him, the thin-faced man twitched and began to speak. ‘Are you, erm, saying, Mr, erm, Chairman, that we resume work on the, erm, Winter Project of last year?’

‘That’s exactly what I’m saying, Mr Treasurer,’ The Chairman replied firmly. ‘We have to help our people to protect...’ The Chairman paused for a moment as if searching for words with the appropriate gravitas, ‘...our most precious assets.’

The Treasurer twitched again. ‘But, erm, last year I think we agreed that The Project would be too expensive and, erm, that’s why we didn’t go through with, erm, with it.’ The Chairman fired a sigh down his nose and was about to speak again when a bright, strident voice piped up from the other end of the table. ‘Would it be, as it were, erroneous of me to recall from the previous year that the lack of feasibility, so to speak, was beyond purely fiscal?’

Give me strength, The Chairman thought, it’s the bloody Secretary For Events. Of all the people on this damn Committee no one caused him to grind his teeth like the bloody Secretary For Events, the fat-headed, jaunty-voiced idiot.

‘For it is coming to mind, if you follow me, that there were various other fundamental issues, so to speak...’

‘There were some aspects to be agreed,’ said The Chairman, abruptly. ‘I would not call them fundamental issues. Fundamental issues would be matters such as poorly worded instructions or inadequate catering provision for all members of The Organisation during an activity...’

The Secretary For Events spluttered. He was a jowly man with rubbery lips and spluttering was something he excelled at. ‘Are you making some form of insinuation, Mr Chairman?’ he demanded, sweat beading on the ham-like expanses of his head.

‘It’s not an insinuation,’ The Chairman grunted. ‘But I think we all recall the difficulties of Haverton Bridge last summer.’

‘I have very much explained what happened,’ hissed The Secretary For Events, defensively, ‘and I have assured The Committee there will not be a repeat of those issues, as it were. However, I must raise the troubles, so to speak, around this Winter Project of yours, Mr Chairman, and ask if there are alternatives. For example, my wife was suggesting...’

‘Your wife is not, and has never been, a member of The Committee,’ snarled The Chairman, slapping his hands on the table.

‘Now listen to me. This is not a time for playing politics, it is a time for taking early action for the greater good of The Organisation. I would remind you that I am your Chairman, as voted by the members of The Committee, and I would like my words to be heeded. The Winter Protection Project shall be investigated further. Do I make myself clear?’

A series of vaguely positive sounds floated from members of The Committee as The Chairman cast around the room with narrow eyes. ‘Good,’ he huffed. ‘I would like it committed to the record that The Project will be investigated further with all speed,’ he added, addressing his remarks to a large lady in a flowery dress at a small table in the corner.

‘How shall I write it in the minutes?’ she asked, breezily.

‘Just put “Committee to look at selling car covers with club logo on them”,’ he muttered. ‘Will do, Peter,’ trilled the lady.

‘Good,’ purred The Chairman. ‘Well, that concludes this meeting of the Batley and District MGB Owners’ Club. Can someone tell the barmaid we’re ready for our Thai feast?’

‘The Chairman fired a look of contempt at the man undermining his authority’

@sniffpetrol

Richard is an author, broadcaster and award-winning writer of short autobiographies

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JETHRO BOVINGDON

Jethro is celebrating the shift back to manual gearboxes – with one proviso

I THINK IT'S NOW SAFE TO SAY THAT MANUAL gearboxes are back. The new car market is catching up with what the used market has known for years. Simply put, manuals are more fun than paddleshift 'boxes. You might even say that the manual gearbox is absolutely central to all the very greatest driving experiences. If you want a car that enthrals and involves, it just has to have a stick and a clutch pedal. Undeniably, there's something magical about a great manual 'box. Timeless, simple to operate yet impossible to truly master, mechanical, physical, tactile. They pretty much encompass all the things that we celebrate here at **evo** in a glorious little microcosm.

How else do you explain the clamour for cars like the 911 R or a GT3 with a stick and a third pedal? The gaping chasm in price between a used 575 Maranello with a gated shifter versus an F1 system? The fact that Pagani is developing a new manual 'box for its next supercar? The amazing engineering lengths that Koenigsegg has gone to in order to create a 'box that mimics a six-speed manual (although I can't help thinking just sticking a six-speed manual in the CC850 would have done the trick)? Manuals rule and any car without one is a poorer experience as a result. Fact.

Driving the Porsche Cayman GT4 RS for last month's cover story only reinforced this position. Its PDK 'box is a very good dual-clutch system. Coupled to a lightweight flywheel, that amazing 4-litre flat-six and super-short ratios, it has unbelievable response, incredible shift times and creates its own sense of character as it chunters around at low speeds, too. There's the genuine edge and sharpness of a full racing 'box. I missed the wonderful six-speed manual available in the standard GT4 in about seven minutes. I would happily be a few tenths slower around a lap or much slower on a road full of unknown corners, humps, dips and flicks just to have that extra interaction. To be fully in control. And to enjoy the reach of its engine on my own terms instead of being goaded into living in the final 1500rpm just because it's so easy.

The Honda NSX-R added even greater credence to the theory that manual will always beat paddles. Flicking its beautiful titanium-topped lever between ratios was joyous and unforgettable. I can still feel it, physically feel the weight and the precise action weeks later. And, I'd wager, ten years from now.

The Ferrari 458 Speciale and Lamborghini Huracán STO – the other two contenders on that test – also feature dual-clutch 'boxes. Which is where blind devotion to manual gearboxes comes unstuck. Unlike in the GT4 RS, you never think about how you'd love a manual 'box to really bring the package to life. Not even for a millisecond. The satisfying scrape and clack of a traditional Ferrari manual? Who cares? Once you've felt the full might of a Speciale, ripped through a few upshifts and felt the raw aggression of downshifts, you'll quickly decide there is no gearbox more fitting nor more exciting. The Lambo's, shockingly, is even better. The paddleshift transmission is as defining an ingredient in these cars as the six-speed manual is in the Honda NSX-R. Intense, exciting, deeply physical, endlessly exciting.

This is the great conundrum when it comes to paddleshift versus manual. There is no right or wrong answer. Actually, that's not true. There is a right and wrong answer, but it changes depending on the car being discussed. Do I crave manual Porsches? Absolutely. Despite the brilliance of PDK they always leave me wanting. Porsches are about feedback and tactility. They deserve a great manual. But, say, a Nissan GT-R? No way. The big, brutish, manic experience of Nissan's (formerly) blue-collar supercar needs that industrial, heavy-hitting paddleshift 'box. I

would love an Aventador manual. That would be fantastic. But the Huracán wouldn't be the same without its hypnotically accurate dual clutch. Surely a Ferrari 812 Superfast – that most noble of front-engined hyper-GTs – needs a gated manual? Nope. Not one bit. I'd sell family members for an Aston DBS Superleggera equipped with a manual transmission, though. Illogical on the face of it, but if you drove them you'd understand instantly.

Manual gearboxes remain something to celebrate. I am delighted that the comeback is seemingly in full swing. I'm fascinated, too, by the clutchless systems developed by Hyundai and, apparently, the likes of Ford. Simple H-pattern gearboxes with no clutch pedal to negotiate. Who knew Sportomatic would ever make a glorious return? However, even as we celebrate cars like the Toyota GR86 and fetishise the next GT3 Touring, it's important not to fall into lazy clichés that only a manual will do. From the Alpine A110 to the latest Ford Mustang GT500 to the Bugatti Chiron, some cars just wouldn't be the same without those funny looking things sprouting from behind the steering wheel.

'Porsches are about feedback and tactility. They deserve a great manual 'box'

@JethroBovingdon

Jethro has been writing for **evo** for more than two decades and is a host on *Top Gear America*

GLORIOUS



S T W E L V E

Inspired by the glory days
of sports prototype racing, the
Ferrari Daytona SP3 is a stunning
homage with pure V12 power.
Prepare to be intoxicated

by ADAM TOWLER

PHOTOGRAPHY by ASTON PARROTT





F

FERRARI'S ICONA RANGE IS ALWAYS AN INTERESTING topic of conversation amongst those of an *evo* persuasion. The first two offspring of this emergent product lineage were 2018's Monza SP1 and SP2, those windscreen-free, chop-top 812 Superfasts that set out to ape Maranello's sports-racing cars of the 1950s. A wildly exciting way to enjoy a Sunday morning drive? Or a bit self-conscious, perhaps? Certainly it's fair to say you'd need to be a particularly confident soul to tool around in one.

Shudderingly expensive, in a world where you're asked if you want to buy one and not the other way around, the price is essentially meaningless and removed from any sort of traditional logical comparison with cars of equivalent performance or content; you want one, this is what it costs, you pay. Soon Aston Martin and McLaren tried something very similar, with varying degrees of commercial success it must be said, making this bizarre sub-niche one of the most curious motoring diversions of recent years.

Icona, though, is here to stay, positioned alongside the firm's occasional hypercars within the uppermost canopy of the Maranello tree, and if the first two cars took their inspiration from swashbuckling duels on closed public roads featuring Hawthorn, Collins and Castelletti, then SP3 takes its inspiration from a different decade. Now we're into the 1960s and Ferrari's titanic battles with first Ford then Porsche, from the 250P of 1963 right through to the 312PB of 1973 (as described after this test). Most of all, we're talking about arguably its most voluptuous and meaningful winner of all: the virtually priceless P4.

It was the P4 that defeated the massed ranks of Ford GT40s on home soil at the 24 Hours of Daytona in 1967, making amends in part for Ford's massacre of Ferrari at Le Mans in 1966, a defeat made all the more bitter after the needle between the two following the failed takeover. 'Daytona' had such a great ring to it that it was applied to the 365 GTB/4, the ultimate front-engined Ferrari supercar of the pre-mid-engined era, and so it's a logical fit for the SP3, a car that channels the aesthetics and vibe of the P4 into a contemporary creation.

This is the fundamental remit of the SP3, but having chatted to the engineers and designers the evening before, it feels like there are additional angles in play. This is a car that has been developed by a group of talented car enthusiasts – people that you'd probably have much in common with – to be fun,

Right: SP3 is based on the carbon tub of the LaFerrari Aperta, with a lift-out roof panel to turn it into a spider; slatted rear bodywork removes heat from engine bay



emotive, involving, engaging, even if it's at the expense of a lap time or a game of Top Trumps. Most of all, in 2022 it's your only route to a new mid-engined Ferrari with a huge internal-combustion V12 and not a battery cell in sight, bar the one that turns the crankshaft on start-up. Suddenly, when viewed through this lens, Icona looks like being the best thing since pre-cut ciabatta...

The core of the SP3 is the fusion of a LaFerrari carbonfibre chassis and Ferrari's thoroughbred F140-series V12. To be more precise, it's the meeting of a heavily redeveloped LaFerrari Aperta tub with the firm's most powerful V12, a revised version of the 'HB' variant seen in the 812 Competizione now christened 'HC'. Now that's the sort of platform and component sharing I can really get behind.


This new version of the 6.5-litre, 65-degree V12 features titanium rods and completely new intake and exhaust systems, the more compact inlet tract liberating more power while torque is maintained by the variable geometry of the system. The big number is 828bhp (at 9250rpm!), backed up by 514lb ft at a heady 7250. Those figures alone should tell you plenty about the character of this Ferrari.

It's nearly a decade since the debut of the LaFerrari, so while using its chassis is an entirely logical move when creating a low volume 'special' such as this one, it has also required much work to meet current crash legislation, to the point where virtually no parts are interchangeable. Why use the Aperta? Because in the SP3 the carbonfibre roof panel lifts out, creating a Spider configuration that echoes the way some P4s were raced in-period.

My eye casts down the spec sheet until I see the dry weight of 1485kg, a figure that doesn't feel quite as low as one might expect of a carbon-chassis'd, £2million super-sports car. Add the necessary fluids and it seems reasonable that we're talking somewhere in the region of 1600kg. Yet we know a LaFerrari weighs around 1574kg with fluids in fixed-roof form, and Ferrari has claimed the Aperta is no heavier, and they are cars with 160kg-odd of hybrid gubbins on board. Ferrari's explanation for the SP3's weight is that some of its extreme design elements aren't the last word in weight efficiency and that the ethos of the car is more about driving fun than ultimate, fanatical performance and weight saving.

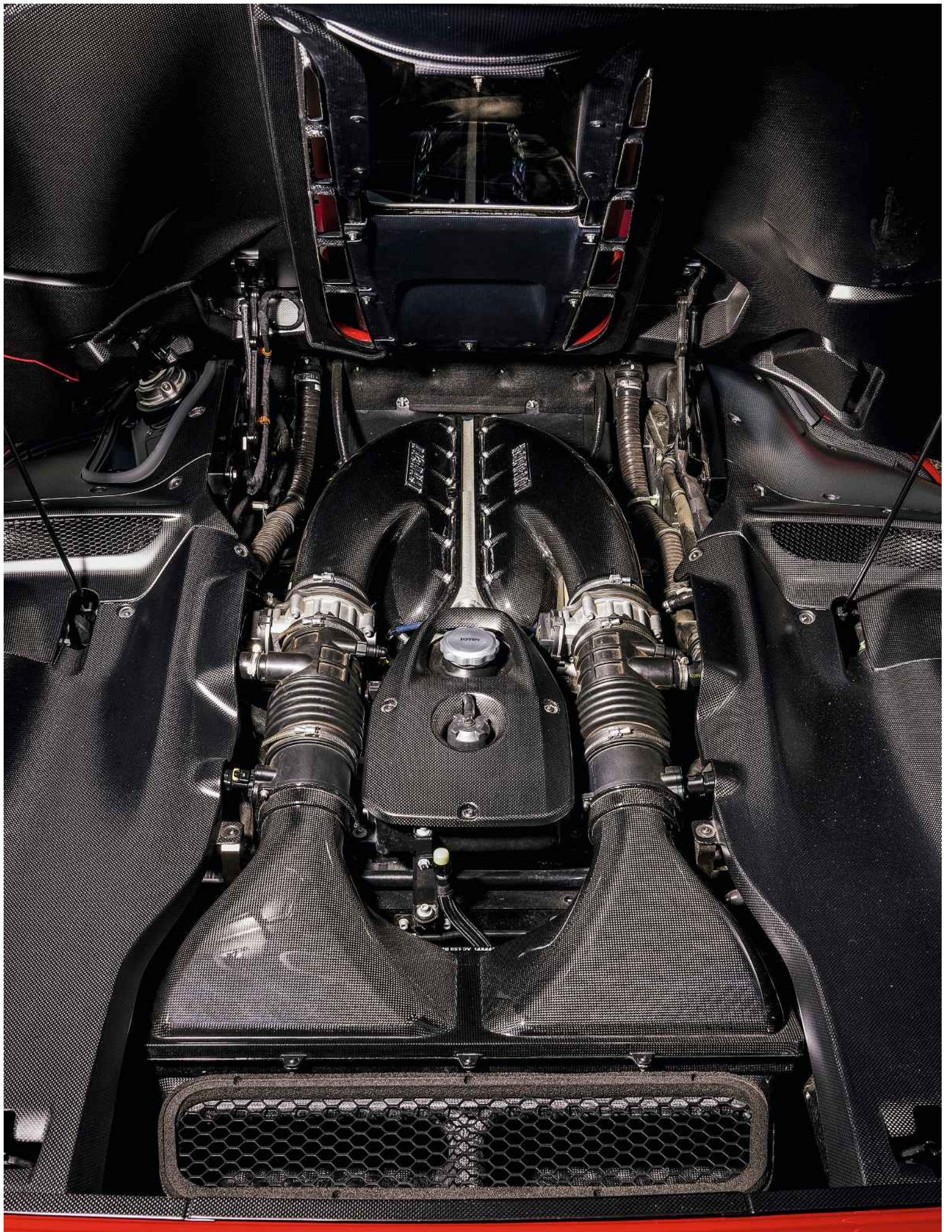
Sadly, your two million English pounds wasn't enough to convince Ferrari to develop a new manual transmission for a true retro vibe (complete with open gate and little metal reverse gear lock-out – just imagine it!) but then again, having both hands on the wheel in a car bursting with this much power and revs may be a good solution after all. I do ask 'the manual' question, naturally, and am told that the last Ferrari manual 'box prototyped was for the California T, and that never got made either...

So you can choose either to be wowed by the Daytona's design and ethos or remain resolutely cynical, but I must admit, as I stand next to 'my' Daytona early on the morning of our drive, it's hard not to let the excitement really run away. Up close, the car seems impossibly massive, great swathes of carbon body receding into the distance from my vantage point next to the door. Its low, swoopy form, intricate details and sheer size are more than a little mind-blowing. For what it's worth, I happen to think it looks



**'I DON'T THINK
I'VE EVER DRIVEN
ANYTHING WITH
QUITE THE STAR
APPEAL OF A
DAYTONA SP3'**





spectacularly beautiful from certain angles, slightly more 'challenging' in proportions from others, yet it could be made of toffee and glued-together toilet rolls and it would still possess a magnetism like almost nothing else on four wheels. You may scoff at this, and you will surely think what you will about the SP3's design, but what you actually feel in the pit of your stomach when you stand next to it (especially with the delicate metallic slab of a 'key' in your palm) is more like flapping pterodactyls than mere butterflies.

Lift the door up and outwards and the SP3's pod-like cockpit is revealed, the most eye-catching feature being the royal blue seat fabric draped directly over the carbon tub, creating hammock-like seats joined in the middle, apeing the look and feel of a '60s prototype racer. It's a wonderfully effective design motif, at a stroke transforming the modern, hard structure of the LaFerrari into something much warmer and more retro. As a result, the 'seats' are fixed, and the driving position adjustment is via the pedal box and steering wheel, the former made mobile by pulling a cord located at the front of the seat between your legs. It's all wonderful in theory, although for me the execution just falls slightly short as sitting against the bulkhead is almost too upright and I'd prefer to be slightly lower too, as the top of my head is uncomfortably close to popping above the top of the windscreen. Not cool.

The rest of the interior could be described as fairly minimalist, with most of the displays and switchgear (if we can term the haptic set-up thus) being borrowed from the 296 GTB. I'm not a fan of it in that car and it's no different here, so I resolve to try to use it as little as is humanly possible.

Happily, a distraction materialises in the form of a forceful and expensively complex roar as the V12 spins into life. Rarely has such an expression of latent power been so blatant; while I can't see the big twelve behind my shoulders due to the solid bulkhead, I can almost sense its ferocious appetite for air and superunleaded, and more than ever I know that the next few hours behind the wheel are going to be something extraordinary.

In simple terms, the SP3 drives like a modern Ferrari. If you've had the pleasure of driving any of Maranello's cars of recent times, you'll recognise the traits. As I carefully edge it out of the confines of a small Dutch town and head in the direction of the German autobahn, it's like the proverbial supermodel walking across a muddy farmer's field in handmade stilettos – a completely out of place glamour puss amongst a sea of dreary crossovers and sensible VW Golfs. Consequently, the shockwave it creates amongst onlookers is very amusing. There's a comedic delayed reaction that seems momentarily to suspend the viewer in disbelief until the car has passed, followed by a sudden lurch around, mouth agape. I don't think I've ever driven anything with quite the star appeal of a Daytona SP3.

A small roundabout, leading to an uphill slip-road onto the Dutch motorway. The gentlest squeeze of the throttle and the tail is on the move, my corrective snap of the wrists partly unnecessary due to the layer of ESP still active in Race mode. Hello! I think I'm falling for the Daytona already because



Left: naturally aspirated 6.5-litre V12 is an evolution of the unit found in the 812 Competizione, with an extra 9bhp taking the total to 828bhp.

Right: hammock-like seats are draped over the carbonfibre tub


it's pretty clear that it's one of those cars where the motor has the forcefulness of character to unstick the rears pretty much wherever and whenever you deem it appropriate.

Where I don't deem it appropriate is about 45 minutes later, on a lightly wetted autobahn, at 110mph, when the car in front moves aside to the middle lane and I gently open the throttle to accelerate past. Again, the software catches it, but my heart-rate soars instantly and my mind is consumed by visions of two million quid's worth of Ferrari pirouetting endlessly down the fast lane as extravagant carbonfibre bodywork is shed in all directions like a naturist finally reaching the appropriate beach.

The V12 is quite something. The extra horses are very much at the top end, and the mapping deliberately chases a definite, old-fashioned power curve, urging you to use all the revs as much of the time as possible. As it stands, using all those revs on the public road is not something to be taken lightly. In second gear, the rev-counter needle seems to just keep sweeping around endlessly, but this is all peripheral-vision stuff because the rate of acceleration is so blisteringly fierce there's no chance of focusing on anything other than the ultimate vanishing point. In this regard the SP3 is unmatched by almost anything else of my experience: it's a frenzied storm of acceleration, be in no doubt. The engine sounds complex, expensive, free-spirited and theatrical, if – to my ears at least – not quite as multi-timbral and musical as you might have experienced in a P4 or 512S.

The light rain curtails my enthusiasm on the autobahn, but by the time the Ferrari's low nose is sniffing out the dry minor routes near the Nürburgring I'm just itching to really see how the SP3 responds when you push it that bit harder. The roads that snake their way through the dense forests and over the gently rolling fields are impossibly smooth, so there's no issue with leaving the Daytona in its stiffer damper setting, although there is Ferrari's ever-useful bumpy road mode available if you require it.

Once you've put aside any trepidation caused by the Daytona's cost and performance potential, it soon becomes apparent that this is a car that's on your side. As fanciful as it sounds, it really does appear to shrink around you, its width becoming much less of a consideration. There's a sense of each corner of the car being beautifully supported in a firm but supple manner, but also one of delicacy, helped by the unearthly throttle response of the V12; it's a car that feels very throttle-adjustable, right down to minute variations mid-corner. Whatever you do, the car responds in turn. A small degree of body roll and pitch communicates the weight transfer beautifully, and as the miles tick by so my own confidence begins to grow – now I'm hustling it a bit, tucking its nose into tighter apexes and feeling its positive attitude to an energetic turn-in. The steering is hydraulically assisted (with an electric pump); light and fast in the usual Ferrari style, you learn to read its subtle interactions as familiarity grows. There's SSC6.1 (Side Slip Control) to allow you to move it around while keeping an invisible protective hand over proceedings, and in truth there's rarely any need to go beyond that stage given the stakes in question. But if you do, particularly when an Aston Parrott-type has suggested it may be time for some



**'THE GIANT MOTOR
OVERWHELMS THE
REAR AT WILL.
IN THE WET? YOU'D
NEED TO BE VERY
CIRCUMSPECT
INDEED'**



'sideways' for the camera, the SP3 is nothing like as intimidating as you might – quite understandably – have initially suspected.

It helps that it takes so little to break the traction of the bespoke Pirelli P Zero Corsas, and now you're tapping into what those Ferrari engineers have tried so hard to achieve – to make a car that's fun to drive. When it does slide, it's malleable, predictable and, most of all, fun. The way it comes back into line is entirely progressive – as long as you're really confident with your throttle applications. In the dry, at least, it's not unreasonable to start driving

around with a few degrees of attitude here and there on a regular basis, feeling the giant motor overwhelming the rears at will. In the wet? I think you'd need to be very, very circumspect indeed.

By the time we arrive at the Nürburgring, *evo's* new Fast Fleet F-Pace SVR growling and ticking with the exertion of gallantly trying to keep up, I think I have a very clear impression of the sort of car the SP3 is. But now I'm in for perhaps my toughest ever drive. No, not repeated laps of the Nordschleife in an 828bhp Ferrari – that would surely be some kind of heaven, particularly given that a) Ferrari



has booked and paid for the entire northern loop exclusively and b) it's sizzling hot today. Instead, the waking nightmare is strictly enforced speed limits, for Ferrari's insurance and because the three Daytonas it has brought along for the event are actually pre-sold customer cars.

Never has my right foot twitched so much with temptation, the deserted run down to the Foxhole, the climb after Bergwerk, the sweeping downhill toboggan runs of Wippermann and Brünchen, all completed in a slo-mo trance with my fingernails compressing the rim of the steering wheel and my molars grinding themselves to oblivion. I genuinely consider dropping

the hammer, Cole Trickle-style, even if it would surely be my last Ferrari gig, and possibly a P45 moment. Resistance is very hard to achieve.

In a way, it's a nice parallel with the SP3 story. Many of the 599 to be made will exist in cocoons with delivery mileage, kept as an art-piece and/or an investment. Some, however, like the SP1s and 2s that appear on social media reels being enjoyed, will be driven in anger. Those owners who prefer to park up will be missing out, because automotive art always works best on the move, and the real beauty of the Daytona is when it's closing on 9500rpm and those Pirellis are smoking. ❌

Ferrari Daytona SP3

Engine V12, 6496cc **Power** 828bhp @ 9250rpm

Torque 514lb ft @ 7250rpm **Weight** 1485kg (dry)

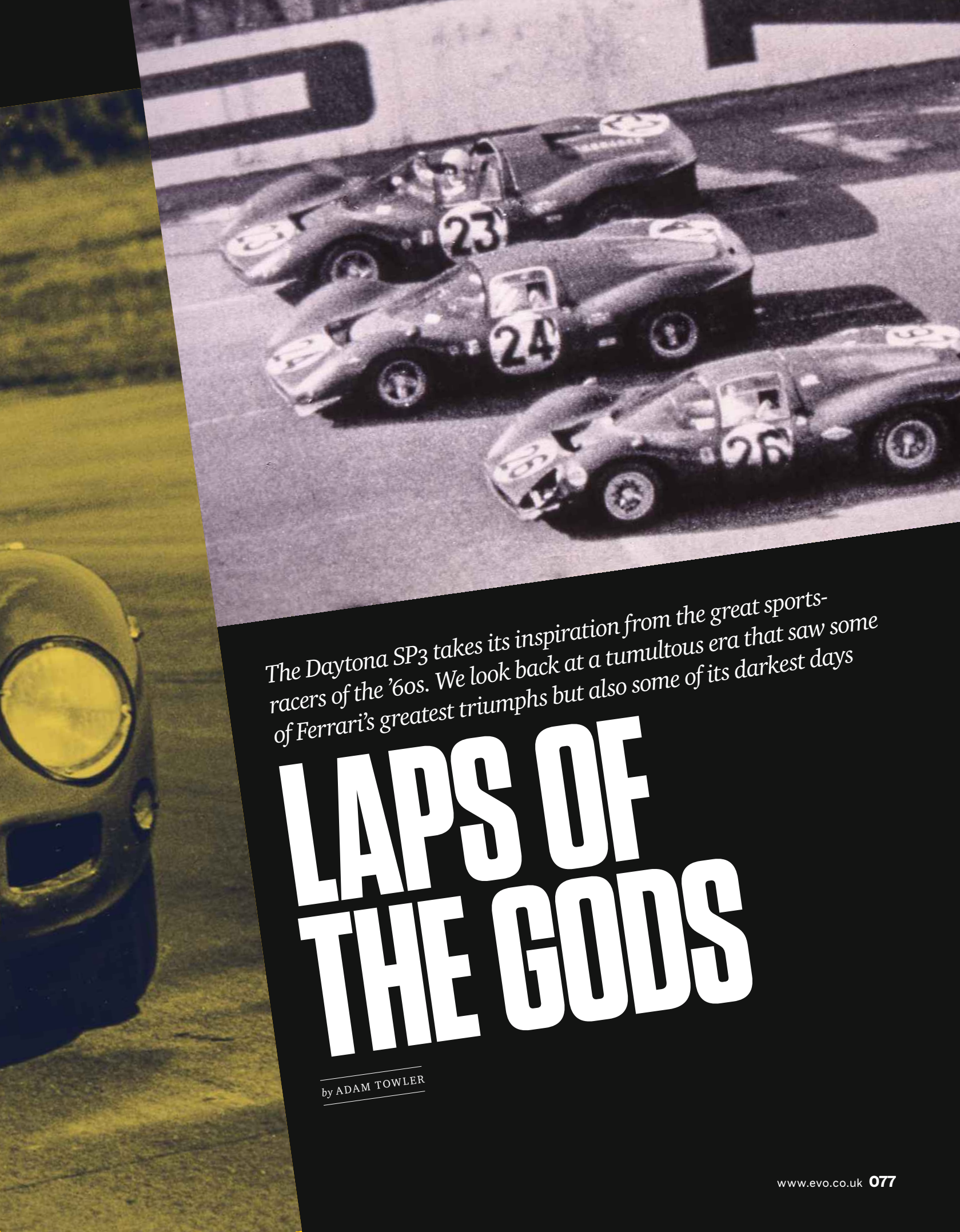
Power-to-weight 566bhp/ton (dry) **0-62mph** 2.85sec

Top speed 211mph **Basic price** £1.7million plus taxes

evo rating ★★★★★







The Daytona SP3 takes its inspiration from the great sports-racers of the '60s. We look back at a tumultuous era that saw some of Ferrari's greatest triumphs but also some of its darkest days

LAPS OF THE GODS

by ADAM TOWLER

WHILE FERRARI REMAINS A GIANT IN THE worlds of both high-performance road cars and motorsport, in the early 1960s it was arguably even more of a dominant presence. Consider that it won the 1958, 1961 and 1964 F1 drivers' titles, and that at Le Mans, the race where its name had really been put on the map when it won the first 24 Hours to take place after the Second World War in 1949, it would win seven times between 1958 and 1965. Its road cars had the performance and the glamour, and much of that was bequeathed from the marque's successes on the racing circuits of the world.

The story of Ferrari in sportscar racing in the 1960s is one of triumph and tragedy, and of a superpower in slow, albeit often glorious, decline. When the flat-12s fell silent at the end of the 1973 season it truly marked the end of an era, for Ferrari would never again compete at the top level of endurance racing. Sure, there were Daytonas and Boxers subsequently in the GT class, Ferrari-engined Lancias in the Group C era of the 1980s, and in more recent years class successes with the 550/575 and the V8 mid-engined cars, but never an outright factory assault for the overall race win. That is until 2023, potentially, when the firm's new Le Mans Hypercar contender is due to make its race debut.

At the turn of the '60s, the Maranello workshops were a busy place, packed with all sorts of delectable sports racers as the company transitioned in part from front- to mid-engined racing machinery. At the 1962 Le Mans 24 Hours it won both the overall race with a front-engined, V12-powered 330 TR (Testa Rossa), and the GT class with the 250 GTO. The latter was a landmark car, picking up where the 250 GT SWB had left off but stretching the boundaries of the 'homologation special'; in effect it was a reworked SWB with a more aerodynamic body, chassis modifications and a Testa Rossa V12 under its shapely bonnet. Ferrari had offered Stradale and Competizione versions of the SWB, the latter featuring an aluminium body and hotter engine, but the GTO was something altogether different and the 36 made got nowhere near the necessary 100 units for homologation. Ferrari got away with it as it claimed they were part of the 250 family, but GT class rivals such as Shelby, Aston Martin and Jaguar were not impressed, and neither were many within the FIA. In time, Ferrari would be made to pay for such rule 'interpretation'.

For 1963, genius engineer Mauro Forghieri would design a new entry for the emergent prototype class that would become the first in a legendary series of cars: the 250 P. This essentially took the mid-engined 'SP' chassis of the Dino racers (V6- and V8-engined cars that had been competing alongside the TRs) and placed the V12 behind the driver, the first time it had been sited thus. The 250 P would win at Le Mans and in other major races such as the Nürburgring 1000km, but this was just the beginning.

In '64, the 250 P was updated and became two distinct models: the 275 P powered by a 3.3-litre version of the Testa Rossa V12, and the 330 P powered by a 4-litre 'Colombo' V12, the latter offering more power but increased weight. The Ferrari steamroller continued, with the first three places at Le Mans falling to Ferrari prototypes. A 250 GTO also won the 3-litre GT class, but storm clouds were forming on the horizon in the form of Ford with the GT40 and tough competition from Shelby in the GT class. As Ferrari's finances began to be stretched, its American rivals formed a massive onslaught, and things were moving apace at Porsche, too.

Meanwhile, the other part of Enzo's masterplan had rather gone off the rails. Sensing the days of GT racers based on traditional road cars were past, Ferrari tried to replace the GTO with the mid-engined 250 LM, essentially a closed-roof 250 P with a 3.3-litre version of





**'THE 250 GTO STRETCHED
THE BOUNDARIES OF THE
HOMOLOGATION SPECIAL'**



Previous pages: Graham Hill on his way to winning the 1964 Goodwood Tourist Trophy in his 330 P; the famous 1-2-3 finish at the 1967 Daytona 24 Hours. **These pages, clockwise from above:** the immortal 250 GTO – here seen wearing Maranello Concessionaires colours – was a multiple race-winner and the pinnacle of the front-engined GT line; Stirling Moss driving to victory in a 250 GT SWB; Enzo himself was very much at the heart of the racing effort





Left: the mid-engined 250 LM was thrown out of the GT class but became a multiple winner as a prototype in privateer hands.

Below left: the factory entry for the 1967 Daytona 24 Hours, 330 P4s in barchetta (open) and berlinetta (closed) forms, the open version also far left, howling around the Daytona Speedway



‘THE P4 IS OFTEN DESCRIBED AS THE MOST BEAUTIFUL RACING CAR OF ALL TIME’

the GTO's engine squeezed into the middle to make one of the most exciting 'road cars' ever made. Unfortunately for Ferrari, this time no one was buying his claims that his latest car met the homologation requirements, and by July it had been thrown out of the GT class. Ferrari indignantly pulled his official F1 entry for the remaining two races in the Americas (hence why John Surtees won the F1 title driving a blue and white Ferrari), but the LM never did achieve GT status, becoming a successful privateer prototype all the same.

Enzo's riposte was another evolution of the P-series, appropriately known as the P2. Once more available in 275 and 330 form, it featured a heavily revised chassis, DOHC engines and a new gearbox. Ford was in the midst of disastrous unreliability with its GT40, but while the P2 scored a number of major race wins, Le Mans eluded it, the '65 victory instead going to Enzo's problem child, the 250 LM, in customer hands – Ferrari's last outright victory in the 24 Hours to date.

Ferrari certainly did not rest on its laurels for 1966, the season immortalised by the recent Hollywood film, unveiling the biggest evolution of the P-series so far, the simply gorgeous P3. A new, indecently voluptuous body, in both barchetta and berlinetta guises, took more notice of aerodynamics and clothed a 4-litre DOHC V12 that now had Lucas fuel injection instead of the traditional carburettor set-up. Power stood at 420bhp, with a dry weight claimed of just over 700kg. Alas, Ferrari's reliability took a dip just as Ford finally got its sorted, and when the lead P3 was taken out of the race at Le Mans in someone else's accident it became a Ford 1-2-3 and a crushing blow for Maranello.

The balance of power had shifted and, with finances tight, Ferrari mustered everything it had to evolve the P3 into a race winner. Although the P4 looked very similar, underneath the skin Forghieri developed a lighter, wider version of the tubular-frame chassis, strengthened by alloy sheet and glassfibre panels, while a new gearbox removed at a stroke the P3's Achilles' heel. The V12 now featured three-valve heads, taken from the firm's F1 engines, and the fuel injection was heavily revised. The weight rose slightly, but the P4 was good for 450bhp and a near 200mph top speed. Often described as the most beautiful racing car of all time, the P4 sealed its place in the sport's history by finishing 1-2-3 at the 1967 Daytona 24 Hours (the third-place car actually a 412P – a customer version that featured a carb-fed engine to maintain a gap to the works cars).

It was a spectacular season, perhaps one of the greatest known in the sport, with Ferrari, Ford, Porsche and Chaparral battling for honours, F1 stars amongst the driver squads and tracks as diverse as Le Mans, Spa, the Nürburgring Nordschleife, the Targa Florio road race, the Daytona speedway and the old airport at Sebring. Porsche took the Targa (a sign of things to come) and after a titanic struggle at Le Mans, Ford finished first and fourth to Ferrari's second and third places – the Scuderia had lost, but could hold its head up high this time. Winning the championship at the end of the season by two points from Porsche capped the end of an era.

For 1968 the FIA decided that the big prototypes had become too fast, and capped Group 6 at 3 litres. The sport went into one of its periodic downturns, and Ferrari withdrew in protest, meanwhile securing much-needed finance when Fiat took a 49 per cent stake. For 1969 there was the 312 P, a very light Group 6 contender that used the V12 from the F1 cars: it was fast, on occasion, but essentially outclassed by a new kind of endurance racer. The new car was the Porsche 917, and it exploited a loophole whereby the governing body had reduced the number of cars required to be built in the Group 5 sports car class from 50 to 25, effective from 1969 to 1971. This class had a displacement limit of 5 litres, and against all expectation Porsche had made a huge investment to build 25 identical, flat-12-powered 917s, ready for inspection. Flush with Fiat money, Enzo did the same, building the 512S, igniting another intoxicating era... ✘

by STUART GALLAGHER PHOTOGRAPHY by GUS GREGORY

FRENCH CONNECTION

The 296 GTB will form the basis of Ferrari's GT effort at Le Mans next year. Cue a road trip to La Sarthe





A

FAST BLAST TO LE MANS IS A MEMORY

for those of a certain age. Deserted autoroutes, quiet N-roads, gendarmes without the means to record your speed and present a chip-and-pin machine for you to insert your debit card... How different it is today. A cynic would suggest they need the fines to pay for the fuel being burnt by their helicopter keeping an eagle eye on the travelling Brits. Not that speeding should ever be glamorised, but there are more than a few moments on the way to La Sarthe that would create some wonderful

new memories if only we were able to let the 296 GTB off its leash and cut a 200mph wedge through the warm French evening air. But expenses limits aren't what they used to be and car manufacturers take a dim view of their press cars being impounded.

So a cruise it is, but cross-country and away from the stifling boredom of an autoroute. First to Rouen, because if you're going to sit in a traffic jam you might as well do so on the same piece of tarmac that Maurice Trintignant took the triple crown (pole, fastest lap, race win) at the 1954 Grand Prix in a Ferrari 625. Then on to Le Mans, where Ferrari has troubled the scorers more frequently over the years, with nine overall victories – the last in 1965 with the elegant 250 LM – and 35 class wins, the most recent in 2021. From 2023 it plans to be competing for the outright win once again with its new hypercar, while continuing its GT success with a new 296 GT3 car. For this year, though, there's the small matter of the current 488 GTE Evo's Le Mans swansong.

It's seven years since the 488 was first presented in race form (called LM and GT3 back then) and six since it made its race debut. Over the intervening half-dozen seasons the 488 GTE and GTE Evo, the latter introduced in 2017, have not only been regular visitors to the podium but multiple championship winners, too. In the 80 races the 488 GTE has contested in the World Endurance Championship, it has won 45 and claimed 24 pole positions, two teams' championships for Ferrari satellite AF Corse (2017, 2021) and three constructors' titles (2016, 2017, 2021). This year Ferrari trails Porsche in the constructors' table, but its *pilotes* Alessandro Pier Guidi and James Calado lead the drivers' standings.

Calado and Co won't have the 296 GTB's full 819bhp available to them in '23, not only because the technical regulations cap the engine output to circa 600bhp, but because the road car's 165bhp electric motor and hybrid system are excluded from the new race car. While leaving such complex systems out of its competition machines allows manufacturers to sell them to other teams, it does leave that uncomfortable notion that the car the tifosi drives to the circuit is more powerful than the one their heroes will be racing. Then again, Porsche races a mid-engined 911...

Calado says he'll miss the 488 Evo. 'It's had everything we [the drivers] ask for in a race car: it's been consistently quick, it's strong and it's reliable. BOP [balance of performance] can sometimes make these cars look inconsistent – we can be ahead of the field and cleaning

Right: 296 GTB devours distance but also delivers big thrills on a par with any recent supercar thanks to its combined 819bhp; rather more than race versions will have



**'A FULL-BLOWN LAUNCH
IN A 296 IS UP THERE WITH
THE VERY BEST
QUICK-CAR GETAWAYS'**

up one race and at the next track it looks like we're in a different class. That's nothing to do with the car, the team or the drivers, it's just the regs. We all have to live with them.'

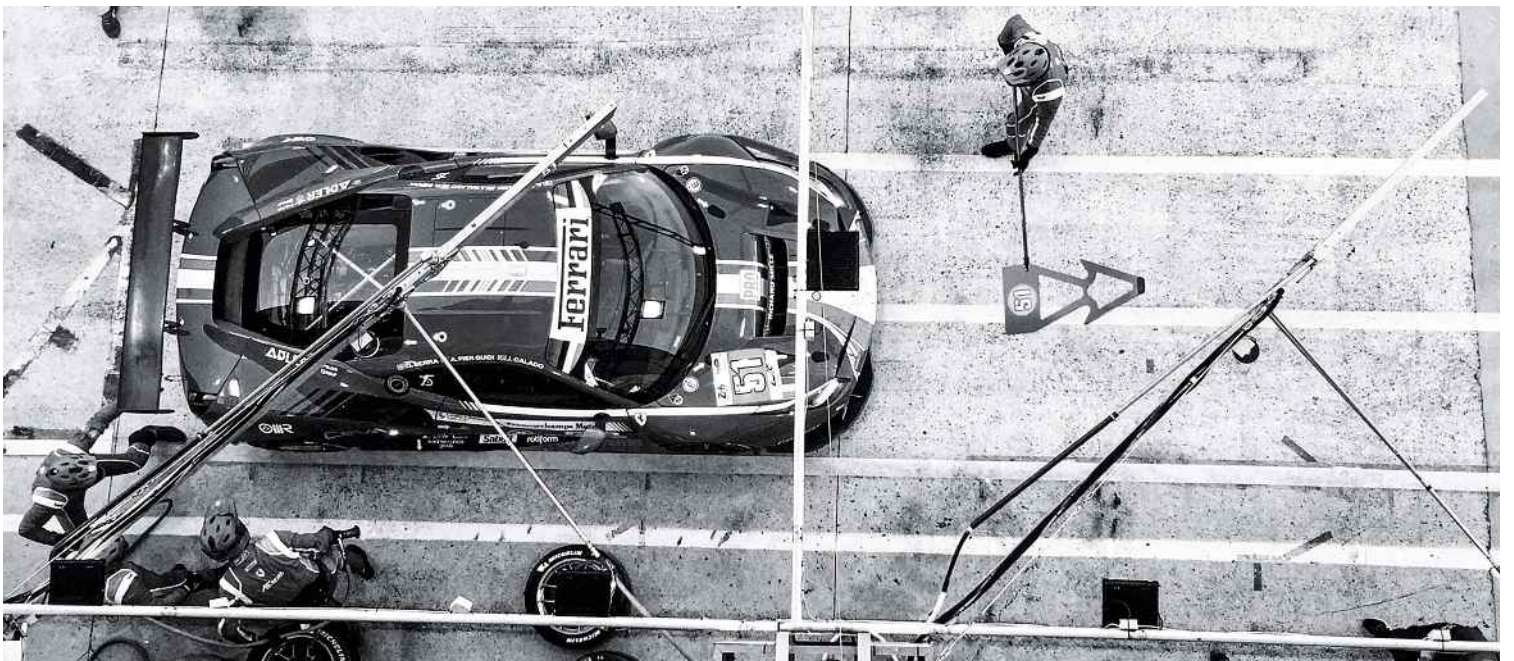
BOP has its critics, everyone in and outside of the paddock has an opinion on it, but it has resulted in races that have gone down to the last corner of a multi-hour event to determine a result. 'We race flat-out from light to flag,' says Calado, the 2017 World Champion and two times Le Mans winner. 'The pace we can maintain throughout still surprises some people, but GTE is so competitive it's the only way you can race.'

'The challenge is still the same whether we're racing for six, 12 or 24 hours. Just because the pace is like a sprint race we still have to look after the car. Kerbs are still killers, punctures are always in the back of your mind and the team has a strategy we all need to run to. Having a car you can trust removes a lot of pressure.' And this is all on top of keeping out of the way of the leading LMP cars and managing the LMP2 traffic, some of which the quickest GTE cars can match for pace at certain circuits if the conditions are right.

Thoughts of the 296 being a complex road car pale against the 488 Evo. On the road there's little you need to do, it's so competent and within itself. Yes, you can tie yourself in knots with the driver settings, switching the manettino to suit your traction needs, thumbing the driver modes to determine how quickly you want to fry your senses when you provoke the V6 and its electrified partner. And it would leave the 600-plus bhp turbocharged V8 powered GTE trailing behind if both were to line up at the exit of Tertre Rouge and launch themselves along the world's most famous straight from a standing start, its power and torque surplus and that electric kick covering any turbo lag to provide the advantage.

Then at some point you'd need to brake, and turn, and maintain momentum through an apex, and then you'd remember that road cars are never as quick as their racing counterparts. That said, a







'296 HAS PROVED A GAME-CHANGER ON THE ROAD. ON THE TRACK, FERRARI HAS A REPUTATION TO UPHOLD'

full-blown launch in a 296 is an experience up there with the very best quick-car getaways. There's a cacophony of noise, but not from one single source. There's rubber fighting for grip against the road surface, a hungry V6 gulping for air, an exhaust system stuffed with hydrocarbons burning at furnace-like temperatures, the rush of wind as air is directed through, under and over the GTB's body – a body that has more than a passing resemblance to the beauty that was Ferrari's last Le Mans winner. The final sound comes from within the cockpit and it's the 'clack' of the paddle as you climb through another gear, although even the Mulsanne is unlikely to be long enough for you to need seventh or eighth. It would be nice to find out, though...

Racers of next year's 296 GT3 won't need to worry about seventh or eighth gear, because its sequential gearbox will stop at six ratios, a gearbox – designed and built by Xtrac using a magnesium casing – that will be positioned within a car whose wheelbase will have grown by 60mm. Double-wishbone front and rear suspension will hang from each corner, the active dampers of the road car replaced with five-way adjustable items. Positioned on top of the longer aluminium chassis will be a body that generates 20 per cent more downforce than the outgoing car from its fixed splitters and wings.

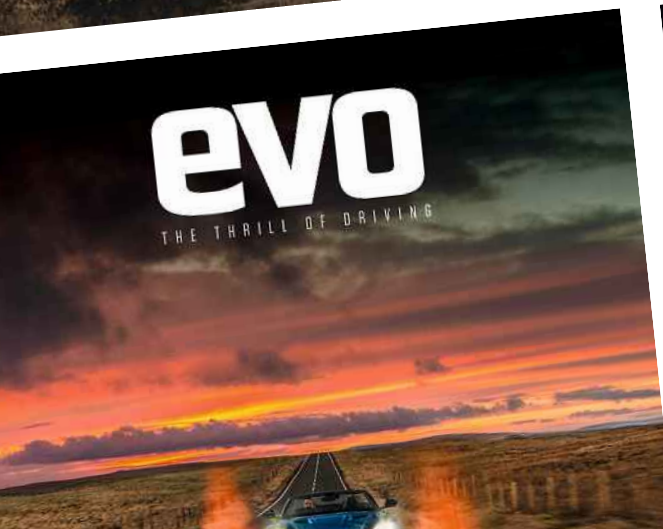
Ferrari is going early with its new GT3 race car, the regulations not dictating a compulsory switch for manufacturers wishing to compete in WEC or at Le Mans until the 2024 season. With the US IMSA series already running to GT3-type regulations, it makes sense to get in early to court such a large market, and having a year on your rivals this side of the pond is handy, too. But Ferrari will also be entering the Hypercar class in 2023, these complex machines also to be run by AF Corse. 'We have the capacity, the know-how and the experience to deliver both programmes,' says Antonello Coletta, head of Competizioni GT for Ferrari. 'There is a lot of racing experience at Ferrari and AF Corse; bringing two new cars in one year won't be a problem.' This may be so, but I still might buy shares in the company that supplies Maranello its espresso.

The 488 GTE Evo missed out on a final Le Mans victory by 42.684 seconds, Calado, Pier Guidi and Daniel Serra finishing behind the victorious Porsche (what else?) of Giani Bruni, Richard Lietz and Fred Makowiecki and ahead of AF Corse teammates Miguel Molina, Antonio Fuoco and Davide Rigon.

Next year will be a sizeable challenge. The 296 has proven itself to be a game-changing supercar on the road, bridging the gap between today's demands and tomorrow's needs with ease. On the track, Ferrari has a reputation to uphold like few others and in long-distance racing faces the fiercest competition in the harshest and toughest environments. If 2023 is going to be one hell of a year for endurance racing, Ferrari is going to be in the thick of it, and it wouldn't have it any other way. ❌

Opposite page: 488 GTE's Le Mans swansong. Relaxed scenes mask steely determination of AF Corse crew; lead drivers Calado and Pier Guidi take a pitlane stroll







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WHERE HAVE ALL THE AFFORDABLE DRIVER'S CARS GONE?

Affordable performance cars seem to be a dying breed. We look back at a recent golden age - and highlight where cheap thrills can still be found, new and second-hand

by STEPHEN DOBIE *PHOTOGRAPHY by* VARIOUS





TIME FOR A TRIP DOWN MEMORY LANE. Not several decades back, to witness Group B rallying in its pomp or the rise of the '70s supercar wedge. Nope, we're more modestly rewinding 14 years. You join me for a plodge across Porthmadog Beach at the start of eCoty 2008. There's no six-figure exotica to be seen, for this is the first leg, where a bunch of real-world contenders are being whittled down to one cut-price hero that'll attempt to embarrass a 997 GT2 and Nissan GT-R in southern France. Oh, and unleaded is less than a quid a litre. Happy days.

The cast is strong. There's a sub-£50k BMW M3 with a proper gearstick in the middle and a Lexus IS F to give it a decent scrap. We've two brand new Renault Sports, neither wearing a Clio badge just to prove the breadth of the firm's hot hatchback range. Nearby is an Impreza special with 325bhp, like it's still the really early days of *evo*, not to mention a delectable little Alfa Romeo coupe with a Prodrive chassis alongside the recently relaunched VW Scirocco. The real world looks awfully fun indeed.

Especially in the context of 2022's performance car landscape. Now that the M3 has soared into luxury car territory and Renault Sport production has ceased entirely, none of those aforementioned cars exist in today's market. Only the Mini JCW, Caterham R500 and Abarth 500 have

Clockwise from above: group shot at eCoty 2008 shows the wealth of affordable options we enjoyed not so very long ago; M3 was still a sub-£50k car (the £43k M240i covers this base today); Renault Sport Twingo 133 Cup a good deal of fun for not a lot of money, while Clio 182 Trophy is simply one of the all-time greats

soldiered on from that autumn 2008 shoot, albeit in slightly different forms. Quick Minis haven't fully grabbed our attention for a while now and while Abarth's commitment to stiffly sprung Fiats with overwrought names deserves a hearty salute, we can't imagine buying one new. We still adore a quick Seven, but true attainability evades it on account of a Caterham surely only ever being a second (or third) car.

A visit to sodden Welsh climes might seem like a misuse of your time machine token, but if you're looking for a vignette of the decline of the affordable performance car, that sandy group shot could be it. A huge financial crash lay just around the corner, for starters. Almost at the exact moment Stuart Collins was collapsing his tripod, Lehman Brothers collapsed too, the car industry soon feeling the aftershocks as manufacturers pulled the plug on less profitable projects.

Perhaps the following 'credit crunch' can be blamed for Renault selling barely half its UK allocation of the car that headed victoriously from Welsh mountains to French ones, the mighty Mégane R26.R. Its now bafflingly modest £23,815 RRP simply wasn't something us Brits wanted to swap for a two-seat hatchback with plastic rear windows. Luckily the folks in Dieppe ignored our idiocy and created two further, yet more extreme iterations of the same idea. The brand, though, has since been swallowed by Alpine, who'll soon be electric-only.

Renault ditching hot hatches ought not to have been





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**'HYUNDAI IS A
GOOD NEWS STORY IN
OUR LITTLE CORNER
OF THE WORLD'**



a surprise, given that Citroën and Peugeot had recently followed similar paths. The dinky little Twingo 133 Cup from eCoty 2008 was replaced by a lame and short-lived Twingo GT, the formerly heroic Clio departed with a hint of ignominy when it went paddleshift-only, while the Mégane only recently left showrooms, its head held a little higher in retirement than its smaller siblings but with any future version sourcing its power only from a socket.

Happily, Hyundai's fledgling N division has demonstrated rich form so far, the i30 N channelling a lot of the old Mégane's gnarly character, just with a bit more interior vim and a longer warranty. There's more than a hint of the 2009 Clio 200 Cup in the littler i20 N, too, the pair sharing spookily similar power, weight and dimensions. Both provide good news stories in our little corner of the world, but there's just no escaping that N's future intent is also zero tailpipe emissions.

You'd be forgiven if the little Twingo had left your memory bank entirely, but it offers a particularly interesting snapshot in time, not least because it had its own, rather curious convertible spin-off in the shape of the Renault Wind. Not to mention Gordini versions with plusher interior trim to take on the dynamically inferior but more arresting Abarth 500. What now feels alien is just what a wealth of rivals this car had, with two **evo** group tests (issues 132 and 167) seeing a seven-strong supermini contingent battle it out. The Fiat Panda 100HP was among the stars first time around, and these remain a hilarious bargain (starting at around £2.5k) if you can buy with a stroke of luck and avoid some typically Italian maintenance bills. The second test saw the second-gen Suzuki Swift Sport narrowly edge the now slightly ageing Twingo; while the Sport remains on sale, it does so only in severely neutered and oddly expensive Hybrid form, Suzuki's need to market an all-electrified range robbing a once fabulously simple hot hatchback of its honesty. By the time Volkswagen finally made an Up GTI, there wasn't much for it to be beat.

The Swift's unexpected costume change segues us to another of the reasons the affordable performance car is struggling to keep its head above water: fleet CO2 targets. Manufacturers selling cars in Europe simply have to act to avoid crippling fines, and Nissan's refusal to bring its latest Z-car here is the tip of one iceberg proving resilient to climate change. Car makers must limit the quantity of quicker, higher-polluting models they bring here, or refuse us model lines entirely. This issue has coincided with the recent chip shortages that have so skewed the course of the new car market, and one of the great **evo** icons of recent years sits right amidst the maelstrom.

The Ford Fiesta ST has just received a minor facelift, the big headline being that it's now five-door only. We won't lose too much sleep over that; it's sad that hot hatches have been losing their muscular little bodyshells and bespoke design language – Ian Callum penned the Escort Cosworth, don't forget – but it's easy to see how slicing this portion of their development costs is a bit of a no-brainer for the manufacturer. What's more notable is that Ford has reprioritised its production in an ongoing parts shortage and directed the majority of its resources at the Puma, Kuga and Mustang Mach-E. SUVs, in other words. The ST remains terrific; a slick little six-speed manual is your only gearbox option, and a truly rapsallion character courses through the chassis. It's just now outsold by something a little heavier. And whatever you think of crossovers, Ford has done an admirable job of distilling the Fiesta's character into the Puma ST, with even more comic lift-off oversteer possible with its higher, more pronounced centre of gravity.

Yep, we've stumbled across another of the nails in the



small, cheap sports car coffin. The performance SUV was still in its infancy back in autumn 2008. 'Come on, what's the point?' we said as the ginormous BMW X6, Audi Q7 and Porsche Cayenne all claimed joint honours in the acerbic Not Car of the Year awards. 'These two-ton-plus edifices have allowed a few chassis engineers to prove how smart they are but, now more than ever, the role of these over-powered bully boys' "cars" appears to be to give future generations something to mock.' And yet they've kept coming, with even Alpine about to give in to the trend. While the Puma ST is a long way from the OTT power, weight and general willy-waving of peak SUV, the metamorphosis of the Puma nameplate is something we have to observe when lamenting the changing performance car market. When **evo** launched, the original Puma was right at the heart of the cars it championed. And owned, during its first few years of publication.

Another Callum design, it had a whiff of DB7 and matched a unique Yamaha 1.7-litre that adored revs with mischievous handling and a cool ad campaign. Were it not for the fact that its rear arches dissolve like candyfloss in water, the original Puma might be a perfect car. Which is probably why there was some consternation when the name was recycled in 2019 for a podgy little SUV that belatedly joined the Nissan Juke class, albeit with typically smart Ford dynamics and a boot floor that swallows an absurd amount of beer. The fact that the new-school Puma's sales outstripped the original's little over a year into its life only vindicated the decision to move the badge onto a more zeitgeisty model. If you really want to feel mournful, then know that the Mazda CX-5 crossover clocked a million sales in a mite over three years when the MX-5 took a quarter of a century to do the same...

Japan's been a fine source of affordable icons over the decades, of course – the first few years of **evo** were awash with increasingly suffix-laden Imprezas and Lancers – and none has proved more resilient than the MX-5. I can't really add anything to the likely hundreds of thousands of words this magazine has published on the car since 1998; perhaps most telling is just how many rivals have waved the white flag after attempting to match it, the Abarth and Fiat 124 Spiders – built in Mazda's Hiroshima factory on the same platform, and now used bargains (£15k gets you in one) – among the more intriguing attempts to apply CPR to the cheap roadster market.

The Honda S2000 and Mazda RX-8 both left our market not long after the Lehmann Brothers crash, both without replacement, though it might be a stretch to say we truly miss

Clockwise from above: Puma a thing of great delicacy (including the wheelarches); i20 N and Fiesta ST offer old-school hot hatch thrills; Panda 100HP another blast from the recent past



either car more than the ethos it represented. Flamboyant over-engineering and esoteric powertrains have arguably been both a gift and curse of Japanese performance cars at all price points and the MX-5's joyous simplicity is surely the secret to its 30-plus-year life. That same simplicity also courses through the Toyota GT86 – yours for sub-£10k – and its fabulous GR86 replacement, though the latter's life will be puzzlingly short owing to impending crash structure regulations that its low-slung bonnet isn't allowed to limbo under. Shame.

We've the GR Yaris to dry our tears, of course, and there's no doubt it's a minor hero all of its own, the latest in a long line of £30k/£300 a month hot hatches that the British buying public can't get enough of. The F20-gen BMW M135i, Mk7 Golf R and Mk3 Focus RS all launched at similarly tantalising prices and larger, more complex breeds of hot hatchback remain pretty strong in population – albeit with hybridisation and crossover spin-offs nibbling away at their purity. At least the latest FL5 Honda Civic Type R is happily digging in its heels with its expensive bespoke bodywork, manual-only transmission and a flagrant lack of electrification. The last of its breed? Almost certainly, and we should lap it up while we can. Not least because it's the spiritual successor to one of the **evo** greats.

Just about any 'greatest driver's car' list we've ever compiled has contained surely the two greatest affordable performance cars of all time, a pair that's inevitably rising in stock on the

Clockwise from above: they really don't make them quite like the Integra Type R anymore; GT86 an affordable rear-drive coupe rarity; Swift Sport has become an expensive hybrid; GR Yaris today's iconic hatch in the making

second-hand market. The Honda Integra Type R and Renault Sport Clio 182 Trophy have graced numerous covers, the latter most famously under the line 'Giant Killer'. You can still (just about) get an example of either for ten grand, but you can easily pay three times as much with a twitchy auction hand.

Look elsewhere and there are still bargains to be had. Twingos and Swifts can be bought for under £5000 if you want something with a touch of the disposable about it. You'll pay the same for a well looked-after Puma, significantly less for something rust-bitten. Just keep the number of a friendly welder handy. The MX-5 is a stalwart of the used car scene, with able tuners like BBR ready and willing to dramatically up your car's power and focus if you want something to keep more modern machinery honest on a local track evening. The Mégane R26.R hasn't yet truly soared to icon money – though it's headed there – while as little as £10,000 can secure you an example of Renault's brilliant follow-up act, the Mégane 250 Cup. Or one of its seemingly infinite updates.

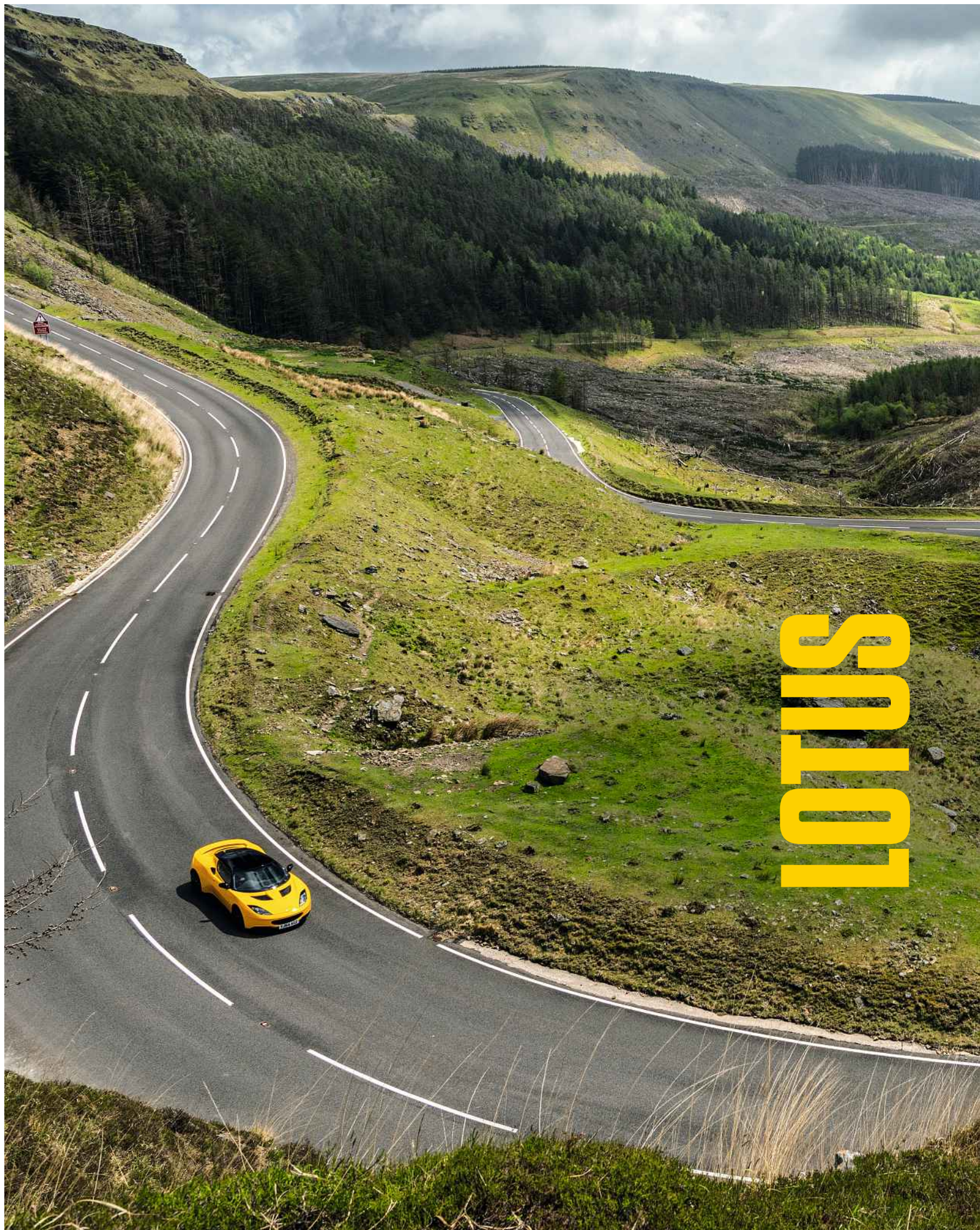
If you'd prefer one of the subtler heroes of that mighty eCoty 2008 line-up, a V8 M3 still sneaks under £20,000 if you're feeling especially brave and reckon a really attainable performance car still needs to ably serve family duties. The number of brand-new real-world sports cars may appear to be shrinking, but there's still plenty of opportunity to immerse yourself in the genre's wonderfully rich recent past. ❌



**'THE MX-5'S
JOYOUS SIMPLICITY
ALSO COURSES
THROUGH THE
GT86'**



The new Swift



LOTUS



ICON

EVORA

It may not have sold in the numbers Lotus hoped for, but the original Evora was an eCoty winner and - as we're about to discover - remains a dynamic paragon to this day

by JOHN BARKER

PHOTOGRAPHY by ASTON PARROTT

T

HIS ROAD IN SOUTH WALES IS AS LUMPY AS A sack of spuds, but not much of that turmoil is reaching us through the seats. 'My car was terrible when I came down here for a recce earlier,' says photographer Aston Parrott, slightly bemused. The Evora feels astonishingly good, as if the road has been resurfaced in the last couple of hours. Still got it, then.

The Evora's ride is still outstanding because, along with power-to-weight ratio and torque-to-grip, it's one of those characteristics that doesn't age. In fact, the general trend towards firmer cars means that in 2022 the Evora feels even more supple than when it was launched in 2009.

It's almost a lost art. The Alpine A110 is the only modern sports car that shares the Lotus approach to lightweight build and an absorbent ride, but there's a key Lotus characteristic Alpine hasn't yet delivered: connected, talkative, engaging steering. The Evora had great steering right from the start. I remember on the launch leaving the hotel and being struck by its quality before I'd got to the end of the driveway. It's another feature that's more impressive now because it's hydraulically assisted, a rarity today. Electrically assisted systems have made great strides but there's still something more natural and nuanced about a hydraulic system. It's why McLaren uses hydraulic and why it's been retained for the Emira.

With that memory of delicacy and subtlety in my mind, I was a bit surprised to discover that the steering of this beautiful Evora is pretty heavy initially. It's a 2014 car, one of the last naturally aspirated versions: a Sports Racer model, with wheels an inch bigger than the original – 18-inch front, 19-inch rear – shod with appropriately upsized tyres. Maybe that explains the low-speed heft, though it's great to discover that as soon as the speed picks up, the steering is as bright and biddable as the original's.

Owner Martin Taylor, who also has an S1 Elise, bought this Evora two and a half years ago. It's covered just 10,600 miles and is as tight as a drum. You have to say Lotus nailed the build quality; it's solid and rattle-free and almost every interior surface is neatly trimmed in Alcantara or leather. Sports Racer models were loaded with options as standard and this one's got cruise control, air conditioning, heated seats and an Alpine head unit with reversing camera and satnav. It also has rear seats.

A big deal was made of the Evora's 2-plus-2 layout. Lotus wanted the Evora to be seen as a useable, everyday car, just like the Porsche 911. Tony Shute, head of Evora development, reckoned that, besides being an excellent sports car, it was one of the reasons the 911 had stayed relevant all these years. So the Evora joined a very short list of mid-engined 2-plus-2s, Ferrari claiming both the







**'IT'S SUCH A
SATISFYING CAR
FOR SUCH A LOT
OF THE TIME'**

most and least handsome of them, with the Bertone Dino 308 GT4 and Pininfarina Mondial.

Steve Crijns, whose back catalogue includes the S2 Elise, did the exterior under the direction of Russell Carr. The development team was aware that the 'plus-2' aspect shouldn't exert too much influence over the essential design – there was a plus-zero option – and the resulting shape is well proportioned, neatly detailed, and avoided the over-long, awkward profile of the Mondial. For me, the nose of the original is a little long and bland and the overall look was improved greatly by the more aggressive front treatment of the later Evora 400.

There's still a bit of a sill to get over, though it's not as obvious as in the Elise and its derivatives, and inside it's compact enough to warrant sliding the seat back to ease ingress and egress. All around are aluminium details, referencing the VVA (Versatile Vehicle Architecture) beneath, including neat, skeletal extrusions for the engine-cover hinges and glovebox lid. The view in the mirror isn't great, like peering under a railway arch, and over-the-shoulder vision is even less good.

The pedals are slightly offset and the seat a little flat, but after a few miles you've forgotten those things because the chassis, deft and supple, is already working its magic. The 3.5-litre Toyota V6 is pretty good, too. This Sport Racer has the same 276bhp as the original but crucially has the optional Sport button. A press of this at idle picks up the revs and opens the exhaust valves, giving the V6 a richer, deeper-chested sound. It helps that it's married to the Sports Ratio set too.

Like the Elise S2's 1.8-litre in-line four, the V6 was a fruit of Lotus's good relationship with Toyota. The all-aluminium, 24-valve V6 '2GR-FE' came from the US-market RAV-4, for the favourable position of its engine mounts, and gained a Lotus-designed intake and Lotus 'T6' ECU so that it would interface with the Lotus instruments, stability controls, immobiliser and the like. There was a physical issue to overcome too: despite its many applications within the Toyota group, not one mated the V6 to a manual gearbox.

After a trawl through the Toyota range, Lotus selected the six-speed 'box from the Avensis diesel for its high torque capacity and then adapted it to fit the V6, adding an AP clutch and flywheel. However, being designed for a low-rev diesel, the inherited gearing was quite long, so with Toyota's blessing Lotus made some new gears, creating the Sports Ratio option. First and second were retained but the other gears were shortened, culminating in a sixth giving 27mph per 1000rpm versus the original's leggy 36.4mph.

The gearshift on this car is tight and sweet-shifting with a lovely clackety, Elise-like, metal-on-metal report, while perfect pedal spacing for heel and toe encourages you to finesse your downshifts. It's hard to imagine the Evora without these bespoke ratios. Even with them, every now and again there's a corner that makes the gap between second and third feel a fraction big, a corner where second would interrupt the flow with a burst of high revs but third gear would have the V6 digging a fraction deep.

In much the same way, the bit of extra character, the bit of spice that the Sport button adds is crucial to getting the performance feel over the line. You're encouraged to venture to the red line by the aural crescendo, even though you can tell that the V6 is not a pure sports car engine because the delivery is already fading away.





Above: six-speed manual gearbox was available with a Sports Ratios option; Sport Racer model, as here, gained wheels an inch bigger, but ride remains brilliantly supple

The flat-plane-crank V8 that Lotus had designed and developed for the Esprit was ruled out for the Evora because of emissions and also because it was felt that the natural engine for this part of the market was a six-cylinder. It also had to be an off-the-shelf engine; the total budget to make the Evora was said to be a tenth of what a large car maker would have spent. The time scale demanded it too.

Once Mike Kimberley, Lotus CEO at the time, had been given the go-ahead by then owners Proton, the project, codenamed Eagle, was directed with great skill by vehicle engineering director and long-serving Lotus employee Roger Becker. He knew the best people for each role in the creation of Lotus's first new car since the Elise more than a decade earlier.

Yes, it got off to a good start because some of the groundwork had already been done on the new Esprit, which was started in 2004 but stalled for lack of a suitable engine, but even so, to go from sketches in August '06 to the first running EPs (engineering prototypes) in early '08, an unveiling at the London Motor Show in July '08, to first build in December and a press launch in March '09 was quite incredible. Just 27 months, a timeframe that would be ambitious today.

Originally the launch was going to be in the south of

France, but it was switched to Scotland as the global recession started to bite. We turned up for it with what we considered the appropriate competitors: the Cayman S and Farbio GTS350 (remember that?). We loved the Porsche but found the Evora refreshingly light and delicate in comparison, taking some of the appealing character of the Elise and adding refinement and practicality. It took the win, and did so again at our Car of the Year, also on difficult Scottish roads, pipping the 997.2 GT3. The Porsche's thrilling, potent and charismatic flat-six exposed the Evora's drivetrain for the ordinary fare it was, but the 911 didn't meld with the roads of Skye, beaten up by surfaces that the Lotus sailed over.

One of the secrets of the Evora's success was its bonded and riveted aluminium chassis which, with the added strength of a roof, bonded-in screen and extra bulkheads, was 2.5 times stiffer than the Elise's. This gave an excellent platform for the suspension to work from and the suspension hardware itself played its part. Lotus had invested in forged aluminium wishbones, intending to use them first for the new Esprit. Sadly, the closest they got to that was when early Evora prototypes began winter testing in Arjeplog disguised in old Esprit bodies.

Another Becker was significant in the Evora's development. Matt Becker, son of Roger and now head

of dynamics at JLR, led the vehicle dynamics team, delivering the required ability and the easily recognised and admired blend of Lotus attributes that had been established by the Elise and Exige.

The Evora is one of those rare cars that seems to enjoy all types of road, and there's a wide selection here in south Wales. You can place it perfectly on a smooth road but it can also declaw a really difficult surface. Its steering is the same, in that its stream of feedback lets you know what's going on at the wheels but precision is unaffected. It does feel very Elise-like in character, going from being quite heavy initially, to quickly right once the speed picks up, to becoming chattery on a bumpy road, while the feedback and connection allow you to put the Evora just where you want it.

It's such a satisfying car for such a lot of the time. You can relax into it, stroke the V6 along, short-shifting, or you can pick up the pace, lean into the steering and work the grip and the engine. Either way, the Evora feels poised and polished. The pace really doesn't matter.

In the dry, the chassis doesn't want to do anything heroic. You might sense the front just starting to slip but there isn't an excess of power and torque, so even with the traction control off, the back end isn't going anywhere without severe provocation. Especially not this one, which is wearing Michelin Pilot Sport 4 Ss rather than the original Pirellis.

You're not going to run out of brakes, either. The four-disc AP set-up was future-proofed for another 150bhp. In 2010, Lotus added a supercharger and created the 345bhp Evora S, and ever-more potent and sporty versions followed, culminating with the 430bhp GT430. And yet the original formula is just as compelling and arguably more rounded than any of them.

It's a shame that the Evora didn't sell in greater volumes. It was supposed to be the first of three new models in a five-year plan that Lotus hoped would boost sales to 6000-7000 cars per year. Sadly the sister models, including the new Esprit, never made it off the drawing board. In fact, the only car spun off the platform is the Emira, which uses a revised version of the VVA chassis and has launched with the same Toyota V6. It's a much better looking car, though it is a pure two-seater. However, for clarity of steering, suppleness of ride and dynamic agility and precision, this 2014 Evora beats it. I didn't expect that. ☒

Lotus Evora

Engine V6, 3456cc **Power** 276bhp @ 6400rpm **Torque** 258lb ft @ 4700rpm **Weight** 1382kg **Power-to-weight** 203bhp/ton
0-62mph 5.1sec **Top speed** 162mph

Price when new £47,500 (2009) **Value today** £30,500-£43,000

evo rating ★★★★★



by JETHRO BOVINGDON PHOTOGRAPHY by ASTON PARROTT

POWER





UP!

Audi's monster Dakar desert racer combines electric motors from Formula E with a detuned DTM petrol engine in one extraordinary package. Hold on tight as we put it through its paces

IT MUST BE SOME TIME IN THE LATE '80s. 'The Ride of the Valkyries' is ringing out of a cathode-ray TV pushed into the corner of the living room at my parents' house. I'm pretty much mesmerised as cars float over the desert floor, motorbikes elegantly glide from one ascent to the next and, as the music reaches its zenith, a huge racing truck flies from atop a colossal dune in slow motion, sand cascading from the treads of its tyres. It's like the world has been whipped from beneath its wheels and a wide-eyed young Bovingdon feels like the rug has been pulled from everything I know, too. What is this magnificence unfolding in front of me?

The footage is a promo piece on Eurosport for the upcoming Paris-Dakar and it is balletic, exotic and deeply enthralling. Over the next couple of weeks I'm obsessed: consuming the daily highlights packages voraciously, reeling at the thought of a 10,000-kilometre race, falling under the spell of the giant support trucks that race alongside the cars and seem just about as fast. There are tragic deaths, tales of bandits, crashes that leave the landscape littered with debris, and drivers and riders who look broken, elated, dazed and, mostly, out of their minds. The Paris-Dakar seemed like a fable that Marco Polo would dream up. Rally Raid. Even the name had a fairytale quality to it.

My love affair with the idea of the Dakar has never ended but, strangely, I've never really followed it closely since. Instead, I've wanted to hold on to the sense of mystery and myth that shrouds this epic, other-worldly race. Even now, in a time when access to coverage is so much easier, I tend to look on from afar at the Dakar. Like it exists in another universe. Untouchable, unknowable.

Maybe that was better. On a freezing morning, high up in the hills of Sardinia, my world and the world of the Dakar have collided. And it doesn't sound enticing. At all. And that's despite the dusty, narrow, bumpy rally stage and the team of engineers and mechanics buzzing around the outrageously proportioned Audi RS Q e-tron that I will be driving very, very soon. This should be the dream. And it is. Until a serious-looking man from Germany begins his driver briefing.

Mostly it's the usual stuff. Be cautious at first, build up your pace, don't crash. But the e-tron requires new information, too. 'If there's a problem with the car and it stops on the stage, stay in the vehicle. Even if the light is green. We will come and assess things and give instructions.' The e-tron is an EV. Of sorts. It has a light system to inform driver, co-driver and anybody assisting during a breakdown or in the event of a crash when the car is safe to touch. He continues, now in an even more forceful tone. 'Unless it's on fire. If there's fire get out immediately. Inhaling the smoke from a battery fire will create life-long health issues.' There's a nervous laugh from the assembled journalists. The German man is not laughing. Or smiling.

I'll admit that the safety briefing knocks me from my stride just a bit. Although, to be honest, there was something vaguely surreal about this trip and this vehicle from the outset. The RS Q e-tron didn't win the Dakar. This isn't a media victory lap. Audi's all-star driver line-up of Carlos Sainz (three-time Dakar winner), Stéphane Peterhansel (six-time winner on two wheels, eight-time winner on four) and blisteringly quick Dakar rookie Mattias Ekstrom (two-time DTM champion, World Rallycross champion) won four legs of the 2022 event, which is now held in Saudi Arabia. However,

Right: rally stage in the mountains of Sardinia provides a tiny taste of what the crews had to endure on this year's Dakar. Our man Bovingdon (far right with co-driver Edouard Boulanger) learns how to get the best from the e-tron

despite flashes of real speed, Ekstrom just squeaked into the top ten to finish ninth overall, Sainz was 12th and Peterhansel way down in 59th. This is not the sort of result Audi would usually crow about. Audi wins. Always.

So what's going on here? The clue is in the name – e-tron. Can you imagine the ingenuity, the effort and the engineering mastery required to complete the Dakar with an EV? What a story! This is why Audi has brought us to Sardinia and is happy to let one of its extremely precious, spectacularly tough and simply huge RS Q e-trons out to play in a giant sand pit. As I roll out from under the technical area and towards the course, the thump of my heart is drowned out by the piercing, high-pitched electric motors located on each axle. The steering is freakishly light and conveys zero information about what those huge tyres are biting into, but I squeeze the throttle anyway. About halfway through its arc, an internal combustion engine booms to life behind me – and sits steady at 6000rpm no matter what my right foot does.

So, this is the curious case of an 'e-tron' fitted with a 2-litre, turbocharged four-cylinder engine from Audi's previous DTM programme. A heinously complex vehicle developed in partnership with Q Motorsport, a Rally Raid specialist outfit run by Sven Quandt. Yes, that's Quandt as in the family who own the majority stake in BMW. I told you it was a curious case...

In essence, that repurposed DTM engine is a range-extender. Power is reduced from over 650bhp to around 270bhp. It powers an electric motor that in turn charges a 52 kWh battery, which then powers an electric motor on each axle. The motors themselves are







Below left: remote reservoir dampers and massive underbody protection take the pain out of heavy landings; cockpit is pure rally car, with the handbrake just a short stretch away

taken from Audi's Formula E programme. The fact that the internal combustion engine has no direct connection to the wheels is why it runs at steady revs. The battery could provide up to 671bhp but due to regulations the output is limited to 387bhp and top speed pegged at 112mph. There's no centre differential but instead a 'virtual' diff that alters the torque split depending on conditions and driver preference (Sainz likes a more rearward bias than Peterhansel). The RS Q e-tron carries 300 litres of fuel as well as that 370kg battery pack around.

Inside, once you've threaded yourself through the complex roll-cage, there's a strange mix of modern race car and elevated, almost SUV-style driving position. A kind of GT3-spec Porsche Cayenne, if you like. The seats, the sense of claustrophobia, the bracing and various control panels are pure race car. However, the RS Q has additional screens for the co-driver and although the steering wheel features various buttons and acts as a control centre as you might expect, the size of it and its roundness are a world away from the wheel in a modern circuit racer. Oh, and there's a hydraulic handbrake just where you'd want it. Maybe a Q8 WRC is a more accurate description.

The chassis is tubular steel, reinforced with carbonfibre panels and tear-resistant Zylon in places, too. The battery is located beneath the seat and under-leg area of driver and co-driver and benefits from a multi-material protection cell designed to withstand jumps, rock intrusion and all the stuff that only the Dakar serves up. The underside, for example, is shrouded in a 54mm thick structure consisting of a layer of carbonfibre for intrusion protection, absorption foam for dissipating the energy of rock strikes or extreme landings, and finally an aluminium plate to handle the initial impacts. The whole piece can be swapped in the bivouac when necessary, but even under the duress of the Dakar none of the vehicles required such maintenance. Today's tight, technical course holds no such fears. Maybe that's why Peterhansel's co-driver, Edouard Boulanger, seems so content in the passenger seat. 'You'll understand the car soon enough,' he chirps over the headset. 'It's very simple to drive.'

He's absolutely right. The RS Q e-tron requires so little physical effort to hustle, it soaks up wickedly testing terrain, and despite weighing well over two tons you never get the sense that its momentum could get away from you. There's just an incredible sense of freedom. It really is as if everything I know is wrong. Rather than connecting you to the surface, Audi's Dakar machine almost seems to remove it from the equation. Just concentrate on your line, on nailing those braking points and

getting on the power as early as possible. The clever virtual diff and the stupefying Reiger remote reservoir dampers will do the rest. From the outside it's all churning dust trails, extreme lean angles and dramatic oversteer. It looks heroic yet feels oddly calm. The Dakar is about endurance and consistency. Speed is a factor too, of course, but the RS Q e-tron's raw pace is a by-product of its drivability.

Peterhansel had told me how easy the car is to drive, but it's quite amazing to feel so comfortable so quickly. 'The way the electric motors deliver their power is so predictable,' he said. 'This creates confidence and then... precision. No gears to worry about, no lag, just where you're going and the very best line to get there. We are too heavy, but otherwise the car is fantastic.' The minimum weight is 2000kg for this class but the e-tron is more like 2250kg without the crew aboard. You feel the weight in the way the nose dives under braking and the roll and pronounced squat as the corners open out. But whilst the sheer mass is tangible and affects the e-tron's gait, there's always a sense that the weight is being manipulated and controlled. Everything is checked at a certain point, just when you need and demand immediate response. It really is oddly precise and wonderfully fluid.

Seat-time in the RS Q e-tron is predictably brief and most of it is spent trying to master the hydraulic handbrake and the way the car distributes its power through the tight, technical turns. The balance is closer to, say, an Impreza than something like a GT-R. Try to drive it without the handbrake and it tends to wash into understeer and then, should you have the space, drive into oversteer when you commit to the throttle. So, it's best to arrive already pointing at the apex (a quick tug of the handbrake does the trick) and then flatten the accelerator to haul the car straight. I maybe get two corners absolutely nailed in the entire run. But they'll live long in the memory.

Against expectations, almost none of my time is spent thinking about the odd hybrid drivetrain. The noise is dominated by electric whine to such an extent that the internal combustion engine becomes a distant, background thrum. The cynic in me thinks the e-tron label is a bit of a misnomer, marketing rather than engineering-led. However, it doesn't lessen the achievement of making three Formula E motors and a DTM engine work in the most inhospitable conditions, nor reduce the fuel saved over a race distance. The RS Q e-tron is a hugely capable, deeply intriguing and slightly absurd monster of a Rally Raid machine. The glorious, bizarre, hypnotic and plain brilliant Dakar rally deserves nothing less. ❌

Audi RS Q e-tron

Powertrain Three electric motors, plus 2-litre petrol engine (generator) **Power** 387bhp (Dakar spec)
Weight 2250kg **Power-to-weight** 17.6bhp/ton
0-62mph <4.5sec **Top speed** 112mph (limited)

evo rating ★★★★★



THE POWER TO SURPRISE

If Formula E leaves you cold, try Extreme E. A sceptical Colin Goodwin is won over

MY PRE-DRIVE VIEWING OF THE YOUTUBE FOOTAGE OF the Extreme E round in Saudi Arabia earlier this year provided a couple of insights. Firstly, this electric off-road series is actually very entertaining to watch and interesting in its format, and second, it appeared to be extremely easy to roll the car.

We're at an off-road track near Narbonne in France that's used by a number of manufacturers to test WRC cars. France's answer to Wales's Sweet Lamb but with more dust and the heat turned up. Veloce, the Extreme E team run by Daniel Bailey, son of F1/Tyrrell driver Julian, is here with the team's only car. Rolling it would be a significant inconvenience for them. Also here are drivers Lance Woolridge from South Africa and Christine GZ, who is half Italian and half Spanish (full name Christine Giampaoli Zonca).

Woolridge is going to take me around the course and explain how to drive the Extreme E car (full name Odyssey 21) without putting it on its roof or worse. The car is built in France by Spark Racing Technology, which also builds Formula E cars. Veloce's car is run by French rallying experts ART (think Cockermouth's own M-Sport) but from thereon in it's Union Jack waving time with batteries supplied by Williams Advanced Engineering, electronic controls and ECUs by McLaren and the digital dashboard and controls by Cosworth.

The Odyssey 21 weighs a few bags of sugar under 1800kg, is 4.4m long and 2.3m wide. Ground clearance is a generous 450mm. There are two 240kW e-motors, one at each end, and the batteries have a useable 40kWh capacity. Plenty for Extreme E's short sprint races. Total power in pistons and con-rod terms is 550bhp. Not surprisingly, there are plenty of options for apportioning power axle-to-axle and also settings to reduce overall power. This is a very good thing from Woolridge's point of view as he will be sitting next to me when I drive it.

I am also keen to not roll the car into a ball as getting into the thing is hard enough but extracting oneself from it in a state of agitation

halfway up a tree would be even harder. It feels like I have been shrunk and inserted into a Tamiya model. It's left-hand drive with the steering wheel close to the chest even though the steering is power-assisted. Two pedals, obviously, and a large handbrake lever to my right. Woolridge has already demonstrated how the use of this is essential in tight turns.

With power turned up full, the Odyssey will hit 62mph from rest in 4.5sec. Woolridge reckons he's wound it down to 400bhp for my drive. It feels quick, but not ridiculously so, though acceleration is almost irrelevant here. For an amateur it's all about trying to read the surface, anticipate bumps and steer the car in roughly the right direction. In the first year the cars had only two dampers at the back but they've been doubled up to control rebound and to cure the car's habit of pitching forwards. Huge 37-inch Continental tyres on 17-inch rims do as much to soak up the bumps as the 350mm of suspension travel.

I once drove a Peugeot 206 WRC car for an *evo* feature and you could really feel all the sophisticated systems apportioning torque and quite literally getting you out of trouble. This car feels very different. Because it is heavy and tall you have to really work at driving it. The handbrake is essential in tight corners and in faster corners the car is less responsive than a rally car – a quick lift off the throttle doesn't neatly tuck the nose in and remove understeer. I found using the terrain's ruts and berms could help keep the Odyssey 21 on track.

The lack of internal combustion engine? Never thought about it. It could just be that the off-road environment is the perfect arena for EV motorsport. As any of you who have ridden an electric mountain bike or trials bike will have already discovered, the lack of a piston engine makes little difference to the enjoyment or challenge. Formula E bores me to death and holds no fascination. Driving this Extreme E racer has opened my mind to the concept that electric rally cars might also be exciting to drive – and to watch. ☒

Spark Odyssey 21

Powertrain Two electric motors (240kW each)

Power 550bhp **Torque** 678lb ft

Weight 1780kg **Power-to-weight** 314bhp/ton

0-62mph 4.5sec **Top speed** 124mph

evo rating ★★★★★





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FAST FLEET



NEW ARRIVAL

BMW M240i xDrive Coupé

Our first drive left us wanting more. Now a stretch on the ev Fast Fleet for the new M240i should satisfy that craving - and give it the opportunity to reveal everything it has to offer



MY PREVIOUS LONG-TERMER, a rather lovely and extremely hard-worked Audi RS3 Saloon, really did grow in stature as the miles accrued. As you can read on page 124, it was perhaps not the most consistent car from a dynamic point of view, but it made up for it with moments of real magic. As an all-weather, real-world (vaguely), family-capable and searingly fast everyday car the RS3 is some act to follow. On paper, BMW's new M240i xDrive should have all the tools to match it and at a considerably lower price, too. It's not quite as practical as the Audi but it has a honey-smooth straight-six with 369bhp, a genuine rear-

biased four-wheel-drive system and costs from £43,995. And who better to run it than the former keeper of an RS3?

So, once Adam Towler had done a few miles and rejected the M240, logic prevailed and it arrived into my life. I'm joking, of course! Adam's reputation for changing long-termers like most people change their pants is entirely unfounded. Anyway, once I'd emptied out and returned a few of Adam's personal belongings to him, the M240i xDrive was officially mine. In all its 'Thundernight' glory. Loaded with the Technology Pack including head-up display and wireless charging (£1250), Comfort Pack (£500), Aluminium Tetragon



p117 Panamera 4S E-Hybrid



p118 Peugeot 208 GTi by PS



p121 Jaguar F-type P450 RWD



p124 Audi RS3 Saloon



trim (£150) and the Harman Kardon surround sound system (£750), and finished in that purple paint (£595), our car comes in at £48,065.

It's a strange-looking thing, isn't it? To me the oddly proportioned, slightly lumpy shape looks like the Lego version of a previous 2-series Coupé. It's almost right but not quite there. And where the RS3 always looked relatively compact, the 'little' BMW seems huge. In fact, it is 6mm longer than the four-door Audi. More concerning is that it's heavier, too.

The new 2-series coupé is spun off the same platform as the 3- and 4-series. Imperative to keep that rear-drive heritage and balance, great in terms of quality, but you really do pay for it in sheer mass. The M240i xDrive weighs 1690kg. That's 115kg more than the RS3. It's not far off a Nissan GT-R. That's the bad news. The good news is that the turbocharged straight-six is

effortlessly muscular and wonderfully cultured. With 369lb ft from 1900rpm it makes accelerating all that weight seem very easy indeed.

The engine in particular makes the M240i feel special, but it's an impression that's cultivated in every way. The interior is fantastic, for example. You sit low, legs outstretched, the design and materials around you helping to build a picture of quality. Where the RS3 cabin felt rooted in a fairly humble architecture, the M240i feels bespoke and has a bright, cutting-edge feel.

It's pretty easy to settle in and feel very content indeed behind the wheel. Yet little niggles arrive early on. Why is the ride so unsettled? Hmm, is it me or is the steering extremely vague for the first few degrees of lock? Why can't I get this thing to flow? The engine is creamy and yet has a deliciously savage twist at the top end, and the eight-speed auto 'box hits really decisively, but

the car doesn't feel like it's working with the road surface. You're always waiting for it to hit its stride.

It's still early days, so I've yet to seek out a good road on which to try to configure the car perfectly. That will come in time, I hope, but already I've seen some flashes of brilliance. The M240i is very clearly four-wheel drive on corner exit, but the way any oversteer is neutralised with such a deft touch is remarkable and very addictive. Oh, and you can easily turn off all the lane-assist stuff and disable the radar function for the cruise control. Praise the Lord. This alone makes it entirely possible that I'm going to get along just fine with the M240i.

Jethro Bovington (@JethroBovington)

Date acquired June 2022 **Total mileage** 1401 **Mileage this month** 411 **Costs this month** £0 **mpg this month** 32.1

Porsche Panamera 4S E-Hybrid

It may not be a sports car, but it's still a Porsche through and through

I DON'T KNOW ABOUT YOU, BUT I FIND there's always a period before the arrival of a new car (new or used) when I don't see another example on the road. No matter where I travel, which route I take or what time of day it is, I won't see a single example of the car I'm awaiting delivery of. The Panamera was no different.

It wasn't simply the Sport Turismo versions that I hadn't seen prowling the highways and byways: I couldn't remember seeing any shape of Panamera for months. Perhaps the plethora of Taycans had induced some kind of Porsche sports saloon blindness that meant I was only registering the VW Group's answer to the ubiquitous Tesla Model S.

Now the roads appear to be swamped with Panameras. Early examples (the Turbo and 4S most common) and current GTS and 4S E-Hybrids in both body styles appear to be more prevalent on our roads than Mk8 Golfs. Although none has been pumpkin orange; instead blacks and greys are the hues of

choice for those who actually pay for their cars.

For a car that's been on sale since 2009, the big Porsche still attracts plenty of questions, specifically around what it's like to drive and whether it feels like a proper Porsche. The answers to both questions are intrinsically linked, because it's a very good car when it comes to the purpose for which it was designed, and that is down to the elements that Porsche nails with all its cars.

Areas such as body control and ride. The three-chamber air suspension is possibly overkill for a car in this sector (Bentley wanted it for its current Conti GT and Flying Spur that share the Panamera's platform, so the Porsche got it too) but it provides unflappable body control and an ability to smother the surface beneath you. So much so that when you can't avoid the crater in the road's surface the shock that makes its way through the body comes as a surprise, because you've been isolated from every other imperfection leading up to that moment.

Then there's the damping. In times past you would leave Porsche's PASM in its default Normal setting, so uncompromising were the modes with Sport in their name. Not so now, to the extent that I find myself selecting Sport when on a road with interesting undulations or apices; the firmer setting increases body stability and reduces pitch and roll but without adding a layer of brittleness to the ride. With a softer or taller tyre sidewall it could be the standard setting.

There isn't the feel and feedback in the steering (our car has the optional Power Steering Plus) that the company's sports cars offer, but it's precise, well weighted and, linked to the optional rear-wheel steering, is well suited to the Panamera's size. It also results in it being an incredibly calming car to be in. Not by a long way is it 911-exciting when pushed, but it's the closest Porsche makes to a traditional GT car – and a very good one it is, too.

Stuart Gallagher (@stuartg917)

Date acquired June 2022 **Total mileage** 10,534 **Mileage this month** 2953 **Costs this month** £0 **mpg this month** 38.8





Peugeot 208 GTI by Peugeot Sport

An intended light refresh for the 208's suspension quickly turns into a more expensive upgrade

B EING A CAR PERSON CAN PROVE A BIT OF a bind sometimes. It certainly felt that way when I was shopping for my 208, where the paucity of Peugeot Sport editions for sale was rivalled only by the remoteness of their locations.

Once I finally found one that ticked all the boxes and snuck in under budget? Well, I drove it away on that first afternoon not quite wrapped up in the mystical 'new car feeling' people witter on about, instead wondering why it wasn't riding quite as well as I remembered, the abrupt reactions of its front dampers reverberating through the rattles and squeaks its six-year-old interior had inevitably accrued. Honestly, I can see why non-car people just lob 200-odd quid a month at a fully warrantied Juke and get on with the rest of their lives oblivious to the steering feel they're missing out on. I envy them.

It's this affliction that led me to PuglOff in Brackley, a Peugeot specialist that's previously graced the pages of *evo* with its tuned 205 GTIs. I wasn't there to start

upgrading my 208, you understand, merely to get some expert eyes on it in order to spruce it up a bit. Job 1 was to locate the horrendous squeak emanating from the rear-left corner that sounded like an exotic bird was trying to escape the wheelarch. A loose screw was identified as causing a wobbly bumper, and tightening it fixed the fault and saved my sanity in one fell swoop.

For Job 2, I asked them to look at the suspension. With under 40,000 miles on the GTI's digital gauge I wasn't planning an overhaul, rather a refresh of some components to solve its slightly clumsy reactions on particularly beaten-up roads. In short, I wasn't expecting to approve the fitment of a full set of Bilsteins while sitting in one of Brackley's quaint coffee shops. But such is the curse of being a car person.

PuglOff's Matthew Jobling explained that the standard Peugeot dampers simply don't have the suppleness or longevity of the fixed Bilstein B6 front/B8 rear set-up that he recommends for those keeping standard springs and ride height on

their 208. I took a gulp of my flat white and said yes.

My drive home that day vindicated a larger spend than I'd planned. Honestly, it's the car I'd hoped I was buying in the first place. Probably better. It now tackles the uncommonly aggressive speed bumps near my home with a panache rarely seen outside a Mulsanne EWB (well, maybe). And then there's that horrid concrete section of the M25 in Surrey, capable of untying even an expertly developed chassis and a pain in both the bum and ears in a heap of performance cars. Not my expensively damped Peugeot, though. But perhaps of most importance, it's now a much more precise tool on the roads that really matter in a hardcore little hatch.

Stephen Dobie (@stephen_dobie)

Date acquired April 2022 **Total mileage** 37,854 **Mileage this month** 1382 **Costs this month** £963.60 **mpg this month** 42.7

Aston Martin V8 Vantage

A long-anticipated road trip sees the Vantage in its element

EVER SINCE I BOUGHT THE VANTAGE I'VE promised myself a modest road trip, and this summer it was finally going to happen. So where to go? Before petrol prices went nuts, the North Coast 500 was an obvious contender, but by early summer I'd calculated that the cost of fuel alone, including getting from Cambridgeshire to Scotland and back, would be a thumping six hundred quid. Oof.

For roughly a third of that, either North Wales or the North York Moors would be suitable stand-ins, but which to choose? Both offered the kind of roads and scenery that would make for a memorable trip. Then a text landed from ace photographer and all-round good bloke Drew Gibson to say he was organising a rendezvous for a bunch of writers and snappers on the Moors. I figured that if I turned it into a three-day trip, then Mrs T would come along and we could also explore the rather lovely coastline that runs from Scarborough to Staithes.

And so in early August, just on the cusp of a heat-wave, off we headed up the A1, a couple of

squashy bags swallowed with ease by the Aston's very decent boot. And as the dual-carriageway miles ticked by, I was struck anew by the V8 Vantage's grand touring qualities: the ride is certainly firm but rarely jarring; the road noise subdued on anything bar the coarsest surfaces; the air-con keeps the cabin chilled even when the thermometer hits the high-30s, and the first-generation seats, while not quite as supportive as the later items, are perfectly comfortable for a couple of hours at a time.

All of that said, it was a release to turn off the A1 and head for the Moors via the A64, peeling onto the A169 at Malton and aiming for Whitby. The run across the top, past banks of purple heather and the radar station at RAF Fylingdales, is one I know well from numerous *evo* group tests. It's a cracking road, rapid and well-sighted, and it was great to find the Aston feeling so at home here.

Even better was to come the following day when the gang met at the NY500 – a car and biked-themed café just outside Pickering – before heading

in loose convoy towards Castleton. This road, Blakey Ridge, like many others in the area, is a wonderful test of a car's balance and composure, the tarmac bucking and compressing as it twists over the landscape. Again, the Vantage wasn't found wanting. It finds plenty of bite from its Pilot Sport 5s, spreading the work evenly between axles, with enough feedback from both ends of the car to keep you fully immersed in its progress and know that you're edging towards its limits.

The only area where it felt wanting when pushed as hard as this was in the braking, with a rather wooden feel through the pedal and quite high pressures required to bring it down from high speed repeatedly. That said, both discs and pads are getting towards the end of their useful life, so replacements – and possibly upgrades – are probably overdue.

It didn't detract from three thoroughly enjoyable days. As the Aston and I both took a breather on top of the moors, the Vantage's all-round appeal shone brighter than ever.

Peter Tomalin

Date acquired March 2021 **Total mileage** 45,012 **Mileage this month** 675 **Costs this month** £0 **mpg this month** 20.8





END OF TERM

Toyota GR Supra 2.0

Our 2-litre Supra has gone, and it's left behind a stronger impression than we anticipated

IT'S A UNIQUELY HORRIBLE SOUND, AND the moment you hear it you think: 'Oh pants. Not that. Not here. Not *right now*.'

But then there's rarely a convenient time to hear the ominous *click-click-click* of metal stuck in the tread of your tyre. Instead you realise you're either going to be very late indeed to wherever you are heading, or that you won't get there at all if the bloke at the tyre dealer (which you may or may not reach) does the full teeth-sucking routine and says, 'Sorry, gov. Can't plug that. You need a new tyre and we don't have any of those in stock.'

Anyway, in this case the bloke at Kwik Fit confounded all my expectations and did the exact opposite. Once I'd limped the Supra onto his forecourt he took one look at the bolt head sticking out of its right-rear tyre and said, 'No problem, my friend. Just stick it in front of the ramp over there and I'll sort it.' He had the Supra's 18-inch Michelin Pilot Sport tyre off its rim within five minutes of me

turning up. And no more than ten minutes after that I was on my way again, bolt head removed, puncture all nicely plugged, and me a mere tenner less well off.

On my way home it occurred to me that you really do learn to appreciate something so much more if you're faced with the prospect of being without it, even for the most fleeting of moments. Which maybe explains why my affection for the Supra increased palpably in the hours after its run-in with the bolt head, and during the subsequent days before it went back to Toyota GB.

To be honest I didn't quite gel with the GR Supra 2.0 to begin with. I found its absence of grunt unentertaining for quite some time. I wanted the 254bhp four-cylinder engine to sound better than it did, too. I also struggled to get on with the cabin, which I found intimate to the point of mild claustrophobia on occasions, especially at dusk, and even more so if it was

raining. I thought the ride was good in Normal mode but way too busy in Sport, and I found its eight-speed automatic gearbox frustrating for much of the time due to its lack of any real zip.

Yet now it's gone I miss the Supra much more than I thought I was going to. I miss the way it looks from the rear three-quarters and especially dead-on from the rear, an angle from which I think it looks very tasty indeed. I miss its sharp but easy-going steering responses. And with fuel costing what it does right now, I most definitely miss its ability to effortlessly

'I miss the way it looks and I miss its sharp but easy-going steering responses'



Jaguar F-type P450 RWD

Our F-type becomes this month's second victim of stray fixings

THERE WAS A TIME WHEN FAST FLEET reports included servicing and maintenance, but as service intervals have stretched and average long-term loan periods have shrunk, housekeeping updates only tend to extend to fuel economy and, if trackdays figure in the equation, the odd set of tyres.

Unusually, it's looking like our F-type may need a service during its time with us, but I'm not anticipating any unscheduled dealer visits before then, as right now it's running like a dream. In fact at the rate it's not using oil I won't even need to top it up. Being of a certain age I'd prefer being able to check via a dipstick (yes, I searched in vain beneath the bonnet to find one) rather than trust in the car's information system to give me an oil level reading, but that's probably just me.

One thing I do like is the tyre pressure monitoring system. I've had a few problems with past long-termers' systems giving me false alarms, but the Jag's works well. Which is fortunate, as it told me the left-front was down to 25 psi, some 12 psi lower than the recommended cold pressure.

It's hard to spot slow punctures on stiff-sidewalled low-profile tyres, so I hadn't noticed anything was amiss when I'd walked up to the car, but sure enough when I crouched down to inspect it, the tyre in question had a screw embedded in an outer treadblock.

I'm hoping it's repairable as the tyres are still looking pretty fresh. Then again, maybe I should get a new set lined up and give these a suitably smoky send-off at an *evo* trackday...

Richard Meaden (@DickieMeaden)

Date acquired February 2022 **Total mileage** 10,053 **Miles this month** 1411 **Costs this month** £0 **mpg this month** 24.6

travel 35 miles or more on just one gallon of fuel.

Even the engine and gearbox I got used to and learned to like, as you tend to do with most cars. I learned that to get the best out of it I needed to customise the settings in the Individual mode so that the steering, engine and transmission were all in Sport while the damping was in Normal. This kept the ride nicely intact while switching the engine and gearbox to notably more aggressive maps and putting the exhaust into its Sport setting.

And that's how I drove it pretty much everywhere, although if a really good road appeared in the windscreen and there was no one else about I would sometimes override the Individual mode and whack everything, including the dampers, into Sport. This would sharpen up the body control a touch but also put a big dent in the ride quality. So invariably I'd switch the dampers back to Normal after a few minutes anyway.

Nothing fell off or broke or stopped working on

the Supra – it ran like clockwork. But then you expect that from a Toyota; it's part of its appeal. In fact the only genuine problem I had during our 5200 miles together was the aforementioned one with the tyre, but that very much comes under the sh*t happens chapter of life and wasn't in any way the car's fault.

Overall, the GR Supra 2.0 was a good but not earth-moving experience. That's damning it with faint praise, I'm well aware, but in the end it was a bit better than just averagely OK. Yet I miss it more than I should, damn it, even if it does desperately need a more memorable powertrain.

Steve Sutcliffe

Date acquired December 2021 **Duration of test** 6 months **Total test mileage** 5218 **Total costs** £10 **Overall mpg** 31.1 **Purchase price** £46,630 **Value today** £41,360

NEW ARRIVAL

Jaguar F-Pace SVR

Run a second Jag with a supercharged V8? Don't mind if we do...



TWO JAGS? MAKES YOU THINK OF A politician, if you're of a certain age, but it's true: **evo** really is running two Jaguars on the Fast Fleet. Let me introduce you to the second of those, our 'new' F-Pace SVR in Ultra Blue Metallic.

The irony of such a situation isn't lost on us, given Jaguars have been largely absent from **evo**'s pages for quite a few years. There are a number of reasons, obvious and less so, for that, but what I'm realising – as I believe my learned colleague Mr Meaden is also finding with his F-type – is that a good Jaguar is something to be cherished, and the fact there are very few of them left on sale as the firm commits early and wholeheartedly to electrification, is a great pity.

This is not what I thought I'd think about the F-Pace. I am not, I must say, an 'SUV person'. Or more to the point, not a great one for performance SUVs. If there was a saloon or, even better, an estate version of the SVR package then I wouldn't choose the SUV even one time out of a hundred. But there isn't – at

least not any more, the days of XFRs and XFR-Ss long gone. So the F-Pace it is, and already I happen to think it's really quite wonderful. But before we get into that, here are some details on the car.

Unlike our F-type, this 21-plate F-Pace equates to running a used car, which is highly unusual with a manufacturer-supplied long-termer. But like many firms, Jaguar has been hit hard with Covid-related supply-chain and chip issues, and new stock that is available is being channelled towards satisfying customer demand. Nevertheless, Jaguar wanted us to run an F-Pace and had 'GJX', which had already seen service on the company's fleet to the tune of over 20,000 miles. So rather than being deflected it has found a new home with **evo**. It'll be interesting to see how well screwed together it feels as the miles rise further still.

The SVR's basic retail price shows as £77,595 on the road, but ours listed at £81,565 when new thanks to £415 of privacy glass, a £1275 fixed

panoramic glass roof, the £420 Meridian surround sound system and £1300 for 'Pixel' LED headlights. A lockable cooled glovebox was a further £60 (why not just make it standard?), an air quality sensor £60 (ditto), cabin air ionisation and filters £140, and a wireless phone charging tray £300. Today the value is around £70,000.

In true **evo** tradition the big blue Jag and I have hit the ground running – nearly 1500 miles in the first week to be exact. Many of those were heading to the Ring and back with photographer Aston Parrott for this issue's Ferrari Daytona SP3 feature, and if the SVR had already made a fine first impression then it really proved its mettle on this trip, neatly encapsulating what makes this car so appealing. In Comfort mode it is exactly that: a car with that smooth, effortless, entirely predictable steering response, beautifully judged throttle actuation and relaxed ride that mark out the best Jags. It swallows long distances whole, and there's



Skoda Kodiaq vRS

The vRS goes supercar chasing

LAST MONTH THE KODIAQ vRS FINALLY got the chance to cover some serious miles, heading down to the Route Napoléon for issue 301's cover story with the GT4 RS, Huracán STO, 458 Speciale and NSX-R.

John Barker and I chose to drive to the south of France because of the flight problems in the UK. The 15-hour journey seemed never-ending, but podcasts and caffeine kept us going while the cruise control held us at a steady 130kph.

The following day there was another early start to get to some of our favourite locations. The journalists and the owners of our test cars were obviously eager to have a proper drive, so not wanting to hold up the convoy I stayed at the back and did my best to keep in touch.

On twisty uphill roads, the Kodiaq quickly found itself out of its depth, lacking in both poise and power compared with other performance SUVs (its petrol four-cylinder has just 242bhp with which to haul 1776kg). Downhill it was even worse, brake fade setting in quickly and the steering making an unhappy whirring noise, maybe due to the strain or possibly just the hot weather.

I couldn't help but think that our new F-Pace SVR long-termer would have been a far more enjoyable SUV on those fabulous roads. It wouldn't have been substantially less economical on the run down either, the Skoda having averaged 35mpg where the V8 Jag can achieve 30mpg on a similar run (see left). By the end of our first day on location, Barker found it highly amusing that the vRS was reporting an average of just 11mpg...

So with an inability to entertain on good roads and unexceptional fuel economy on boring ones, I'm starting to wonder exactly what advantage the vRS offers over a regular Kodiaq.

Aston Parrott (@AstonParrott)

Date acquired February 2022 **Total mileage** 6120 **Mileage this month** 2311 **Costs this month** £0 **mpg this month** 33.1



always that cultured, woofling V8 backbeat. I've never been the biggest fan of the AJ-series V8s, but the integration here is so good and it has so much sheer grunt at all times, effortlessly accelerating into gaps or gaining speed on a motorway. Perhaps because big V8s are largely a thing of the past now it stands out even more, but it's worth the purchase price alone.

Then you can switch to Dynamic when the road turns twisty and you really feel and hear the full 542bhp. True, the SVR might not ultimately be quite as athletic as a Macan Turbo, but honestly, with two simple driver modes and such a broad bandwidth of ability it's perfectly judged. And unlike the obvious German rivals, it's warm and cosseting on the inside and somehow less... um, obnoxious on the outside. So good was it that I wondered whether I was going to

be able to prise the key out of Aston's hand at the end of our road trip...

Fuel consumption? Well, when it arrived someone had clearly been having fun as the trip was showing 20.5mpg. I have to say I gulped pretty hard at that point, what with the current outrageous fuel prices, but with a genuine mix of real-world driving it has settled on 25-26mpg and on the long cruise across Europe it was managing 30mpg. Not amazing, but far from tragic for an SUV with a supercharged V8.

So, early days, then, but maybe Baron John Leslie Prescott had the right idea.

Adam Towler (@AdamTowler)

Date acquired July 2022 **Total mileage** 22,050 **Mileage this month** 1455 **Costs this month** £0 **mpg this month** 25.6

END OF TERM

Audi RS3 Saloon

Its wheels rarely stopped turning and its appeal grew with every mile, but now it's time to say goodbye

THE RS3 HAS GONE. IT LEFT WITH NEARLY 17,000 miles covered, including two trips to Spa and another to the Nürburgring. During our time together it was the star of a group test (**evo** 295) and a further big track-focused feature (299) and, as the miles accrued, it gained that reassuring feeling that a car exudes when it becomes a part of the family. I can't remember such a hard-worked long-term test car.

Things didn't start brilliantly. Against the might of the BMW M4 Competition xDrive on a filthy, bitterly cold test up on the Scottish Borders, the RS3 felt like it was trying too hard and the trick clutch-actuated torque-vectoring rear diff created extreme agility but not as much confidence as

we expected. It's a stunningly powerful tool in reducing understeer but seemed to make the RS3 inconsistent on roads streaming with water, mulch and mud. The price of entry (£55,405 basic, almost £69,000 as tested) cast a shadow from which the RS3 struggled to emerge.

Yet over time, Audi's wild little saloon wormed its way into our affections. So much of what it represents is right. It's compact in a world of bloaters; the 2.5-litre five-cylinder engine has character in abundance; the chassis is supple even over nasty surfaces and there's a sense of durability and enthusiasm in everything that it does. Unlike so many cars, the RS3 feels special even at low speeds. And – my favourite bit of all

– on every single journey it conjures up a moment or two of real joy. The RS3 might not be a natural group-test winner, but it's a pretty compelling package on a day-to-day basis.

So the good stuff is very good and even the 'faults' can make for entertainment, too. The engine, for example, doesn't have the ultra-responsive feel of, say, the four-cylinder motor in the Golf R. Yet it's so much more dramatic once on boost and feels bigger, angrier and more bespoke. It really is the heart of the car. Nearly 400bhp works the chassis hard, too.

Dynamically the RS3 really is an interesting car to drive. The big surprise is the unbelievable resistance to understeer. Open the bonnet and you can see



'There's a sense of durability and enthusiasm in everything that the RS3 does'



the engine is slung out ahead of the front wheels, but you'd never know it. Like many Audis of old the front-to-rear torque split will only go to 50:50, but the RS Torque Splitter differential can send all of the rear axle's share to the outside-rear wheel, giving a much more neutral balance and the illusion that the bias is much more rearward. The result is pinpoint agility and an almost rear-drive balance at times, but married to supreme traction. The RS3 really bites into the road.

So the RS3 turns in hard and as you apply the throttle the car will start to oversteer. However, such is the grip and the peculiarities of the torque split and active rear differential, what happens next can feel very frantic indeed. Essentially the rear axle is trying to create a yaw angle, whilst the front wheels are pulling the car

rapidly straight. Add to this a high level of grip and the transition from grip to slip and back to grip can feel extremely abrupt. Funnily enough, this makes the RS3 quite an edgy experience when driven hard on the road. Then throw in the rear diff's changeable behaviour at different speeds and the RS3 can feel magical one minute and frantic the next. You could never accuse it of being dull...

One big option worth discussion is the fitment of ceramic brakes (part of the RS Dynamic Pack). I love the absurdity of having a small performance saloon car with ceramics but, on balance, I don't think they're a great fit for the car. Or perhaps the application is just flawed. Firstly, I found them slightly unnerving on motorway drives in the wet, where long periods of inactivity would be followed by a momentary delay in response as the discs dried but didn't actually do much in the way of

'Our RS3 proved to be intriguing, characterful, useable and, at times, mind-bendingly ballistic'

stopping. We're talking a heartbeat of delay, but at motorway speeds that's enough to induce a moment of runaway panic.

Conversely, in more dynamic road driving the ceramics are strong and completely tireless but the initial bite is too grabby. In a car that can struggle to truly flow for the reasons outlined previously, this is a further challenge for the driver. Also, my learned colleague Adam Towler returned the car to me after his Spa adventure with glazed pads and a squeal that could still be heard back in Belgium all the way from Northamptonshire.

Adam loved the car. Despite having not bonded with it at all on the aforementioned group test. Later, Jordan Katsianis also borrowed the RS3 for a trip to the Nürburgring 24-hour race and came back with nothing but good things to say. For road trips the combination of superb comfort, easy-going performance, pretty amazing economy (up to 38mpg at a steady cruise; not bad for a car capable of 7:40 at the Ring) and intuitive controls, the RS3 really is an appealing thing. Just as it is for everyday use.

Is it truly special? Perhaps not. It really is prodigiously fast, I enjoyed experimenting with and settling on my preferred settings for suspension, steering and the diff, and the RS Torque Rear mode is pretty amusing (it's a kind of drift mode) when the mood strikes. For me the endless external black plastic goes beyond 'aggressive' and lands heavily in the 'badly modified' camp, but I do like the sharp shape and the gorgeous alloys. If only they were silver!

Ultimately, the RS3 does feel a little too artificial when pushed and the inconsistency of response makes it a hard car to feel fully comfortable with. But it's intriguing, characterful, useable and, at times, mind-bendingly ballistic. And on the Pirelli P Zero Trofeo that we fitted towards the end of our loan it sniffs around when cold like a proper trackday monster. I quite like that. The RS3, against expectations, is an easy car to love and gets better and better the longer you drive it. One thing's for sure, I won't forget it in a hurry.

Jethro Bovingdon (@JethroBovingdon)

Date acquired December 2021 **Duration of test** 6 months **Total test mileage** 12,041 **Total costs** £12 (oil), £832 (four tyres), £1300 (two wheels) **Overall mpg** 30.1 **Purchase price** £68,900 **Value today** £62,000



BMW M2 Competition

The modifications continue with new seats and big weight savings

THE DRIVING POSITION IN THE M2 IS not ideal for taller drivers, and the standard seats, which do a good enough job on the road, aren't great on track – especially on a car with a few handling upgrades.

After much research and talking to a few fellow lanky-framed trackday-goers, it seemed that Recaro Profi SPG XL buckets (c£900 each) were what I needed. To get them as low as possible I also chose some VAC floor mount adaptors (£239 per seat). Of course, bucket seats work best with harnesses, and harnesses need something secure to attach them to. Like a roll-cage. You can see where this is going...

Back in the workshop at Swift Performance we set to work by removing much of the M2's interior: seats front and back, boot lining, steering wheel and column, the centre console and even the gearlever, which meant removing the exhaust and disconnecting the gear linkage. This allowed one of Swift's own custom-built half cages (£1380) to be carefully squeezed in through the driver's door – a three-man job. The fit was millimetre perfect and 14 substantial bolts secured it in place to existing mountings. Then some Schroth six-point harnesses could be installed, along with VAC mounting brackets beneath the seats for the anti-sub straps.

Next the steering column's reach was extended by two inches using a spacer, and

the minimum rake adjusted so the wheel can sit about an inch lower. To complement this, we fitted a PS Designs gearshifter and custom linkage (£471), which allowed me to get the perfect driving position with the new seats.

Removing the front seats, rear bench, belts, etc saved 82kg, but adding the buckets, various brackets and harnesses added 32kg. The cage was a further 18kg, resulting in an impressive net saving of 32kg. But it didn't stop there. I also replaced the four Remus stainless steel exhaust tips with their titanium/carbon ones – another 2.5kg cut. But the most incredible saving came from replacing the standard 23kg battery with a Deadweight Industries lithium-ion item. They offer a 4kg version for track work, but I went with the 6kg option (£690) that matches the capacity of the OE battery but saves a ridiculous 17kg. So that took the total saving to 52kg!

How does it drive? No idea. As I write, the work has only just been finished, Defined Coding having remotely coded out the warnings for items like the rear seatbelts and side airbags. I'll update you on the results next month.

Joe Achilles (@JoeAchilles)

Date acquired November 2019 **Total mileage** 9375 **Mileage this month** 125 **Costs this month** £7720 **mpg this month** 26.0

NEXT MONTH IN

evo

Anatomy of Senna's McLaren MP4/5B



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Please contact Mike Wheeler for further details and to arrange viewing

Mike Wheeler



2001 Ferrari 360 F1 Modena - One of 23

Metallic dark blue (Tour de France) with beige hide and blue Alcantara inserts on the optional factory sports seats. Factory optioned with Xenon headlamps with power wash, leather headlining, road legal (non-intrusive) roll bar and battery charger. One of 323 360 F1 Modena's that are taxed or SORN'd in the UK, with just 23 in a shade of dark blue. Detailed service history (22 stamps) document the 31,100 miles, along with factory original books, past invoices and MOT's. All original keys, immobilisers, even the Maglite torch! NOVITEC sports exhaust, front and rear parking sensors and the registration number F360 XXX. Just fully serviced with new cam belts.

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Birds

"M2 performance with newfound precision and control."

- EVO Magazine ★★★★★

"It's so much more composed with the springs and dampers combining beautifully to deal with everything that's thrown at them."

- BMWCar Magazine ★★★★★

"The result is a car damn near as quick and exciting as the M2 Competition and, whisper it, more balletic on the road."

- Autocar ★★★★★



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The Knowledge

RATINGS

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

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

SUPERMINIS / HOT HATCHES



OUR CHOICE

Hyundai i30 N. Clearly developed by a team that knows what makes a great driver's car, the i30 N has edged ahead of the traditional middleweight hot hatch favourites thanks to a refreshing honesty and simplicity that makes it more engaging than the competition at any speed.



BEST OF THE REST

The **Toyota GR Yaris** (left) is just the kind of performance car we've been praying would get made, while the **Hyundai i20 N** and **Ford Fiesta ST** serve up supermini fun at a more affordable price level. The latest **Audi RS3 Sportback** finally offers more than just impressive stats, and the **Mercedes-AMG A45 S** delivers big numbers and involvement.

MAKE & MODEL	ISSUE NO.	PRICE (ON ROAD)	ENGINE (CV/C)	BHP/RPM	LB FT/RPM	WEIGHT	BHP/TON	0-62MPH (CLAIMED)	0-60MPH (TESTED)	0-100MPH (TESTED)	MAX MPH	EVO RATING	
Abarth 595 Competizione	256 T	£21,985	4/1368	178/5500	184/3000	1035kg	175	6.7	-	-	140	+ Spirited engine; still looks great - Favours fun over finesse	★★★★★
Abarth 595 Esseesse	264 D	£25,295	4/1368	178/5500	184/3000	1044kg	173	6.7	-	-	140	+ A bundle of fun if you're in the mood for it - Dynamically dated; expensive	★★★★★
Abarth 695 Biposto	205 F	'14-'18	4/1369	187/5500	184/3000	997kg*	191	5.9	-	-	143	+ Engineered like a true Abarth product - Expensive for a city car	★★★★★
Alfa Romeo 147 GTA	187 F	'03-'06	6/3179	247/6200	221/4800	1360kg	185	6.3	6.0	15.5	153	+ Mk1 Focus RS pace without the histrionics - Slightly nose-heavy	★★★★★
Audi A1 40 TFSI	256 D	£24,470	4/1984	197/6000	236/1500	1260kg	159	6.5	-	-	155	+ Capable - It's no S1 replacement	★★★★★
Audi S1	246 F	'14-'18	4/1984	228/6000	273/1600	1315kg	176	5.8	-	-	155	+ Compliant and engaging chassis; quick, too - Looks dull without options	★★★★★
Audi A1 quattro	264 F	'13	4/1984	253/6000	258/2500	1420kg	181	5.7	-	-	152	+ Polished 253bhp all-wheel-drive A1 - Just 19 came to the UK, with a Porsche Cayman price	★★★★★
Audi S3 Sportback	279 D	£38,475	4/1984	306/5450	295/2000	1500kg	207	4.8	-	-	155	+ Less one-dimensional than its predecessor - Breaks little new ground	★★★★★
Audi S3	188 F	'13-'20	4/1984	296/5500	280/1800	1395kg	216	5.2	5.4	12.5	155	+ Lots of grip and one of the best-sounding four-pot turbos - Still a little too clinical	★★★★★
Audi RS3 Sportback	292 D	£50,900	5/2480	394/5600	369/2250	1570kg	255	3.8	-	-	155	+ Improved chassis makes the RS3 a contender at last - Engine and gearbox hold it back	★★★★★
Audi RS3 Sportback	256 F	'17-'21	5/2480	394/5850	354/1700	1510kg	265	4.1	-	-	155	+ Hugely quick point-to-point - Sometimes speed isn't the be-all and end-all	★★★★★
Audi RS3 Sportback	221 F	'15-'16	5/2480	362/5500	343/1625	1520kg	242	4.3	3.6	-	155	+ Addictive five-cylinder noise; monster pace - Chassis not exactly playful	★★★★★
BMW 128ti	290 F	£33,885	4/1998	261/4750	295/1750	1445kg	184	6.1	-	-	155	+ Strong showroom appeal - Lacks precision	★★★★★
BMW M135i xDrive	271 F	£38,440	4/1998	302/5000	332/1800	1525kg	201	4.8	-	-	155	+ Strong performance, monster 4WD traction - Engine lacks character	★★★★★
BMW M235i xDrive Gran Coupé	274 D	£39,315	4/1998	302/5000	332/1800	1570kg	195	4.8	-	-	155	+ Quick, with an able chassis and quality cabin - Just not that exciting	★★★★★
BMW M135i	212 F	'12-'15	6/2979	321/5800	332/1300	1430kg	228	5.1	5.2	-	155	+ Powertrain, noise, chassis - M235i looks nicer, and has an LSD option	★★★★★
Citroën DS3 1.6 THP	142 F	'10-'15	4/1598	154/6000	177/1400	1240kg	126	7.3	-	-	133	+ A proper French hot hatch - Petrolheads might find it too 'designed'	★★★★★
Citroën DS3 Racing	153 D	'11-'12	4/1598	204/6000	203/2000	1240kg	167	6.5	-	-	146	+ A faster, feistier DS3 - Not as hardcore as its 'Racing' tag suggests	★★★★★
Citroën AX GT	195 F	'87-'92	4/1360	85/6400	86/4000	722kg	120	9.2	-	-	110	+ Makes terrific use of 85bhp - Feels like it's made from paper	★★★★★
Cupra Leon e-Hybrid	280 D	£34,495	4/1395	242	295	1596kg	154	6.7	-	-	140	+ Steers and handles neatly; tax-friendly - Can't decide if it's a hot hatch or a Prius rival	★★★★★
Cupra Leon 300	290 F	£35,575	4/1984	296/5300	295/2000	1415kg	213	5.7	-	-	155	+ More agile than a Mk8 Golf Clubsport - Not as confidence-inspiring, forgettable looks, too	★★★★★
DS 3 Performance	222 D	'16-'18	4/1598	205/6000	221/3000	1175kg	177	6.5	-	-	143	+ All the right ingredients - Undercooked	★★★★★
Fiat Panda 100HP	273 F	'06-'11	4/1368	99/6000	97/4250	975kg	103	9.5	-	-	115	+ About as fun as small cars get - Unmodified ESP can't be turned off	★★★★★
Ford Fiesta ST-Line 140	251 F	£18,440	3/998	138/6000	133/1500	1144kg	123	9.0	9.2	26.4	125	+ Quality chassis makes for a born entertainer - Tall gearing and dull engine can spoil the fun	★★★★★
Ford Fiesta ST	259 F	£21,655	3/1497	197/6000	214/1600	1187kg	169	6.5	-	-	144	+ Highly talented, with real depth to its character - Can get wrong-footed on bad tarmac	★★★★★
Ford Fiesta ST Edition / Performance Edition	292 F	£28,770	3/1497	197/6000	214/1600	1187kg	169	6.5	-	-	144	+ All the good things about the regular Fiesta ST, but with added composure - How much?!	★★★★★
Ford Fiesta ST	207 F	'13-'17	4/1596	197/5700	214/2500	1088kg	184	6.9	7.4	18.4	137	+ Chassis, price, punchy performance - Have you heard of Mountune?	★★★★★
Ford Fiesta ST200	253 F	'16	4/1596	212/6000	236/2500	1088kg	198	6.7	-	-	143	+ Massive fun - They only made 400	★★★★★
Ford Fiesta Zetec S	123 D	'08-'13	4/1596	118/6000	112/4050	1045kg	115	9.9	-	-	120	+ Genuinely entertaining supermini - Renault Sport Twingo and Suzuki Swift are even more fun	★★★★★
Ford Fiesta ST	075 D	'05-'08	4/1999	148/6000	140/4500	1137kg	132	7.9	-	-	129	+ Great looks, decent brakes - Disappointing chassis, gutless engine	★★★★★
Ford Focus ST (Mk4)	267 F	£31,995	4/2261	276/5500	310/3000	1433kg	196	5.7	-	-	155	+ A return to form - Lacks the poise and precision of the very best	★★★★★
Ford Focus ST Edition (Mk4)	294 D	£35,785	4/2261	276/5500	310/3000	1433kg	196	5.7	-	-	155	+ Elevates the Focus ST from its underdog status - Needs a better engine and steering	★★★★★
Ford Focus ST (Mk3)	207 F	'15-'18	4/1999	247/5500	265/2000	1362kg	184	6.5	-	-	154	+ Excellent engine - Scrappy when pushed	★★★★★
Ford Focus ST (Mk2)	119 F	'05-'10	5/2522	222/6000	236/1600	1392kg	162	6.8	6.7	16.8	150	+ Value, performance, integrity - Big engine compromises handling	★★★★★
Ford Focus RS (Mk3)	246 F	'15-'18	4/2261	345/6000	347/2000	1547kg	227	4.7	4.9	12.6	166	+ Torque-vectoring 4WD brings new sensations to hot hatch sector - Needs to be driven hard	★★★★★
Ford Focus RS Edition (Mk3)	246 D	'18	4/2261	345/6000	347/2000	1547kg	227	4.7	-	-	166	+ Front limited-slip differential brings more precise handling - Pricey and still heavy	★★★★★
Ford Focus RS (Mk2)	195 F	'09-'11	5/2522	300/6500	324/2300	1467kg	208	5.9	5.9	14.2	163	+ Huge performance, highly capable FWD chassis - Body control is occasionally clumsy	★★★★★
Ford Focus RS500 (Mk2)	256 F	'10-'11	5/2522	345/6000	339/2500	1467kg	239	5.6	5.6	12.7	165	+ More power and presence than regular Mk2 RS - Pricey	★★★★★
Ford Focus RS (Mk1)	207 F	'02-'03	4/1998	212/5500	229/3500	1278kg	169	6.7	5.9	14.9	143	+ Some are great - Some are awful (so make sure you drive plenty)	★★★★★
Ford Escort RS Cosworth	271 F	'92-'96	4/1993	224/6250	224/3500	1275kg	179	6.2	-	-	137	+ The ultimate Essex hot hatch - Can be punishing on less-than-smooth roads	★★★★★
Ford Puma 1.7	095 F	'97-'02	4/1679	123/6300	116/4500	1041kg	120	9.2	8.6	27.6	122	+ Revvy engine, sparkling chassis, bargain used prices - Rusty rear arches	★★★★★
Ford Racing Puma	262 F	'00-'01	4/1679	153/7000	119/4500	1174kg	132	7.9	7.8	23.2	137	+ An affordable exotic - Corroding rear arches	★★★★★
Honda Civic Type R (FK8)	288 F	'17-'21	4/1996	316/6500	295/2500	1380kg	233	5.8	5.9	12.6	168	+ One of the greatest hot hatches ever - Its looks are challenging for some	★★★★★
Honda Civic Type R Limited Edition (FK8)	293 F	'21	4/1996	316/6500	295/2500	1333kg	241	5.8	-	-	168	+ Terrifically capable, blisteringly quick, still practical - Standard FK8 is a better road car	★★★★★
Honda Civic Type R (FK2)	227 F	'15-'17	4/1996	306/6500	295/2500	1378kg	226	5.7	5.4	12.4	167	+ Great on smooth roads - Can be punishing on less-than-smooth roads	★★★★★
Honda Civic Type R (FN2)	102 F	'07-'11	4/1998	198/7800	142/5600	1267kg	158	6.6	6.8	17.5	146	+ Looks great, VTEC more accessible - Steering lacks feel, inert balance	★★★★★
Honda Civic Type R Mugen (FN2)	248 F	'09-'11	4/1998	237/8300	157/6250	1233kg	195	5.9	-	-	155	+ Fantastic on road and track - Only 20 were made, and they're a tad pricey...	★★★★★
Honda Civic Type R (EP3)	287 F	'01-'05	4/1998	197/7400	145/5900	1204kg	166	6.8	6.8	16.9	146	+ Potent and great value - Duff steering	★★★★★
Honda Civic Type R (EK9)	210 F	'97-'00	4/1595	182/8200	118/7500	1040kg	178	6.8	-	-	135	+ Sublime early incarnation of the Type R recipe - Good ones are thin on the ground	★★★★★
Hyundai i20 N	293 F	£24,995	4/1591	201/5500	203/1750	1190kg	172	6.7	-	-	143	+ A serious threat to the Fiesta ST - Ride can be a bit thumpy	★★★★★
Hyundai i30 N	292 F	£33,745	4/1998	276/6000	289/1950	1419kg	198	5.9	-	-	155	+ A brilliant, thoroughly developed hot hatch - Its engine isn't the most charismatic	★★★★★
Hyundai i30 Fastback N Performance	269 F	£29,995	4/1998	271/6000	279/1750	1441kg	191	6.1	-	-	155	+ As above, but with a fractionally more mature ride and soundtrack - As above	★★★★★
Hyundai Kona N	291 D	£35,395	4/1998	276/5500	289/2100	1510kg	186	5.5	-	-	149	+ Unexpectedly tight chassis - Worthwhile of a better engine	★★★★★
Kia Ceed GT	267 F	£25,850	4/1591	201/6000	195/1500	1386kg	147	7.2	-	-	143	+ Feels like a detuned i30 N - Lacks personality	★★★★★
Kia ProCeed GT	259 D	£28,135	4/1591	201/6000	195/1500	1438kg	142	7.2	-	-	140	+ Flexible engine, handsome shooting brake body - It's warm rather than hot	★★★★★

MAKE & MODEL	ISSUE NO.	PRICE (000 YEARS OR MORE)	ENGINE CYL/CC	BHP/RPM	LG FT/RPM	WEIGHT	BHP/TON	0-62MPH (S.E.MED)	0-60MPH (S.E.MED)	0-100MPH (S.E.MED)	MAX MPH	EVO RATING
Lancia Delta HF Integrale Evoluzione II	271 F	'93-'94	4/1995	212/5750	232/2500	1340kg	161	5.7	-	-	137	+ One of the finest cars ever built - Demands love, LHD only
Mercedes-AMG A35	267 F	£35,970	4/1991	302/5800	295/3000	1480kg	207	4.7	-	-	155	+ A formidable A-to-B device - Some front-drive rivals are more fun
Mercedes-AMG A45 S	288 F	£51,235	4/1991	415/6750	369/5000	1550kg	272	3.9	-	-	167	+ A 21st-century reincarnation of late-'90s imprezas and Evos - It costs £50k
Mercedes-AMG A45	221 F	'15-'18	4/1991	376/6000	350/2250	1480kg	258	4.2	3.9	-	155	+ Tremendously fast - But not a true great
Mercedes-Benz A45 AMG	194 F	'12-'15	4/1991	355/6000	332/2250	1480kg	244	4.6	4.3	10.6	155	+ Blisteringly quick everywhere - Not as rewarding as some slower rivals
Mini Cooper (F56)	254 T	£17,635	3/1499	134/4500	162/1250	1085kg	125	7.9	-	-	130	+ Driving a slow car fast - Driving a car with Union Jack tail lights
Mini Cooper S (F56)	268 F	£20,925	4/1998	189/4700	221/1250	1195kg	161	6.8	-	-	146	+ Feels darty and alive at moderate speeds - Loses its composure when you push harder
Mini John Cooper Works (F56)	211 F	£25,950	4/1998	228/5200	236/1250	1200kg	193	6.3	-	-	153	+ Fast, agile, nimble - Chassis lacks sparkle found in previous JCWs
Mini John Cooper Works GP (F56)	280 F	£33,895	4/1998	302/1750	332/1750	1255kg	244	5.2	-	-	164	+ Street-fighter looks, illustrious predecessors - Better at style than it is substance
Mini John Cooper Works Challenge (F56)	237 F	'16-'17	4/1998	228/5200	236/1250	1215kg	191	6.3	-	-	152	+ A more hardcore JCW - The ride could be considered a little too hardcore
Mini Cooper (R56)	185 F	'09-'14	4/1598	120/6000	118/4250	1075kg	113	9.1	-	-	126	+ Brilliant ride and composure; could be all the Mini you need - You'll still buy the 'S'
Mini Cooper S (R56)	149 F	'06-'14	4/1598	181/5500	177/1600	1140kg	161	7.0	7.0	-	142	+ Like the Cooper, but with added shove - Google 'Mini death rattle'
Mini John Cooper Works (R56)	184 F	'08-'14	4/1598	208/6000	206/2000	1160kg	182	6.9	7.2	16.7	148	+ A seriously rapid Mini - Occasionally just a little unruly
Mini John Cooper Works GP (R56)	231 F	'13-'14	4/1598	215/6000	206/2000	1160kg	188	6.3	-	-	150	+ Brazenly hyperactive - Too much for some roads and some tastes
Mini John Cooper Works Coupé (R58)	164 F	'11-'15	4/1598	208/6000	206/2000	1175kg	180	6.3	-	-	149	+ The usual raucous Mini JCW experience - But wearing a backwards baseball cap
Mini Cooper S (R53)	077 F	'02-'06	4/1598	168/6000	155/4000	1140kg	143	7.2	7.8	19.9	135	+ Strong performance, quality feel - Over-long gearing
Mini Cooper S Works GP (R53)	262 F	'06	4/1598	215/7100	184/4600	1090kg	200	6.5	-	-	149	+ Storming engine, agility - Almost too mannered for a road racer
Nissan Juke Nismo RS	208 D	'15-'17	4/1618	215/6000	206/3600	1315kg	166	7.0	-	-	137	+ Quirky character and bold styling - Not a match for a pukka hot hatch
Peugeot 106 Rallye (Series 2)	273 F	'97-'98	4/1587	103/6200	97/3500	865kg	121	8.8	-	-	121	+ Bargain no-frills thrills - Not as much fizz as original 1.3
Peugeot 106 Rallye (Series 1)	095 F	'94-'96	4/1294	100/7200	80/5400	826kg	123	10.6	-	-	118	+ Frantic, thrashy fun - Needs canvas to extract full potential
Peugeot 106 GTI 16v	034 F	'97-'04	4/1587	120/6600	107/5200	950kg	128	7.4	-	-	127	+ Fine handling supermini - Looks its age
Peugeot 208 GTI by Peugeot Sport	254 F	'15-'18	4/1598	205/6000	221/3000	1160kg	180	6.5	-	-	143	+ A brilliantly focused small hatch - Obscured dials
Peugeot 208 GTI	184 F	'12-'16	4/1598	197/5800	203/1700	1160kg	173	6.8	6.8	17.9	143	+ Agile chassis works well on tough roads - Could be more involving
Peugeot 205 GTI 11.9	195 F	'88-'91	4/1905	130/6000	119/4750	910kg	145	7.6	-	-	124	+ Still scintillating after all these years - Brittle build quality
Peugeot 306 GTI 6	020 F	'93-'01	4/1998	167/6500	142/5500	1214kg	140	7.9	7.2	20.1	140	+ One of the great GTIs - They don't make them like this any more
Peugeot 306 Rallye	095 F	'98-'99	4/1998	167/6500	142/5500	1163kg	146	7.8	6.9	19.2	137	+ Essentially a GTI 6 for less dosh - Limited choice of colours
Renault Sport Twingo 133	175 F	'08-'13	4/1598	131/6750	118/4400	1050kg	127	8.7	-	-	125	+ Renault Sport experience for pocket money - Optional Cup chassis gives bouncy ride
Renault Sport Clio 200 Auto	184 F	'13-'18	4/1618	197/6000	171/1750	1204kg	166	6.7	6.9	17.9	143	+ Faster, more refined, easier to drive - We miss the revvy NA engine and manual 'box
Renault Sport Clio 220 Trophy	229 D	'16-'18	4/1618	217/6050	206/2000	1204kg	183	6.6	-	-	146	+ Willing chassis - Awful paddleshift gearbox
Renault Sport Clio 200 Cup	247 F	'09-'13	4/1998	197/1700	159/5400	1204kg	166	6.9	6.6	16.7	141	+ The hot Clio at its best - They don't make them like this anymore
Renault Sport Clio 197 Cup	115 F	'07-'09	4/1998	194/7250	158/5550	1240kg	161	6.9	-	-	134	+ Quick, polished and capable - Not as much sheer fun as 182 Cup
Renault Sport Clio 182	066 F	'04-'05	4/1998	180/6500	148/5250	1110kg	165	7.1	6.6	17.5	139	+ Took hot hatches to a new level - Flawed driving position
Renault Sport Clio 182 Cup	187 F	'04-'05	4/1998	180/6500	148/5250	1090kg	168	6.9	-	-	139	+ Full of beans, fantastic value - Sunday-market upholstery
Renault Sport Clio Trophy	262 F	'05-'06	4/1998	180/6500	148/5250	1090kg	168	6.9	6.6	17.3	140	+ The most fun you can have on three (sometimes two) wheels - Only 500 were built
Renault Sport Clio 172 (Phase 2)	034 F	'01-'03	4/1998	170/6250	147/5400	1110kg	156	7.2	7.1	20.0	138	+ Poised, predictable, fast - Lacks aggressive edge
Renault Sport Clio 172 Cup	048 F	'02-'03	4/1998	170/6250	147/5400	1011kg	171	6.9	6.5	17.7	138	+ Bargain old-school hot hatch - Nervous in the wet, no ABS
Renault Sport Clio 172 (Phase 1)	146 F	'00-'01	4/1998	170/6250	147/5400	1035kg	167	7.2	6.6	18.2	138	+ Brilliantly accomplished - Imperfect driving position
Renault Clio Williams	233 F	'93-'96	4/1988	148/6100	126/4500	981kg	153	7.8	7.6	20.8	134	+ One of the best hot hatches ever - Can be fragile
Renault 5 GT Turbo	255 F	'87-'91	4/1397	118/5750	122/3000	855kg	140	7.3	-	-	120	+ Clio Williams' grand-daddy - Few unmodified ones left
Renault Sport Clio V6 255	294 F	'03-'05	6/2946	251/7150	221/4650	1400kg	182	5.8	-	-	153	+ Supercar drama without the original's edgy handling - Uninspired interior
Renault Sport Clio V6	029 F	'99-'02	6/2946	227/6000	221/3750	1410kg	164	6.6	5.8	17.0	145	+ Pocket supercar - Mid-engine handling can be tricky
Renault Mégane RS (280)	267 F	'18-'20	4/1798	276/6000	288/2400	1407kg	199	5.8	6.3	14.6	158	+ Outrageous grip and agility - Cup chassis option doesn't do its composure any favours
Renault Mégane RS 300	298 F	'20-'21	4/1798	296/6000	310/4000	1443kg	209	5.7	-	-	158	+ Finally combined the Trophy's more potent engine with the softer chassis - Auto only
Renault Mégane RS Trophy	267 F	'18-'21	4/1798	296/6000	310/4000	1443kg	209	5.7	-	-	158	+ An RS with knobs on - Unforgiving ride can make it feel ill at ease on trickier roads
Renault Mégane RS Trophy-R	280 F	'19-'21	4/1798	296/6000	295/2400	1306kg	230	5.4	-	-	163	+ An absolute beast on track - Too much of a beast on the road
Renault Sport Mégane 275 Cup-S/Nav 275	223 D	'16	4/1998	271/5500	265/3000	1394kg	198	5.8	-	-	158	+ The same engine as the Trophy-R - They don't make it anymore
Renault Sport Mégane 265 Cup	195 F	'12-'15	4/1998	261/5500	265/3000	1387kg	191	6.0	6.4	14.8	158	+ A hot hatch benchmark - Cupholder could be better positioned
Renault Sport Mégane 275 Trophy	212 F	'14-'15	4/1998	271/5500	265/3000	1376kg	200	5.8	-	-	159	+ Another cracking Trophy model - Stripped-out Trophy-R is even more thrilling
Renault Sport Mégane 275 Trophy-R	231 F	'14-'15	4/1998	271/5500	265/3000	1297kg	212	5.8	-	-	158	+ As absorbing as a 911 GT3 RS on the right-hand road - Too uncompromising for some, pricey
Renault Sport Mégane 250 Cup	139 F	'09-'12	4/1998	247/5500	251/3000	1387kg	181	6.1	6.1	14.6	156	+ Fantastic chassis... partially obscured by new-found maturity
Renault Sport Mégane dCi 175 Cup	119 F	'07-'09	4/1995	173/3750	265/2000	1470kg	119	8.3	8.3	23.5	137	+ A diesel with a genuinely sporty chassis - Could take more power
Renault Sport Mégane 230 FI Team R26	195 F	'07-'09	4/1998	227/5500	229/3000	1345kg	171	6.5	6.2	16.0	147	+ The car the R26.R is based on - FI Team stickers in dubious taste
Renault Sport Mégane R26.R	276 F	'08-'09	4/1998	227/5500	229/3000	1220kg	189	6.0	5.8	15.1	147	+ A true hot hatch great - Two seats, plastic rear windows
SEAT Ibiza Cupra	225 F	'16-'18	4/1798	189/4300	236/1450	1185kg	162	6.7	-	-	146	+ Quick, competent, refined, and manual only - Not exciting enough
SEAT Ibiza Cupra	183 D	'10-'15	4/1390	178/6200	184/2000	1259kg	144	6.9	-	-	142	+ Punchy engine, unflappable DSG - Lacks engagement, DSG only
SEAT Leon Cupra 290	267 F	'16-'20	4/1984	286/5400	280/1950	1356kg	214	6.0	-	-	155	+ Agile, transparent and easily exploited - Can feel rather plain
SEAT Leon Cupra R	244 D	'18	4/1984	306/5800	280/1800	1378kg	226	5.8	-	-	155	+ Sharper handling and better body control - High price and limited availability
SEAT Leon Cupra	105 F	'07-'11	4/1984	237/5700	221/2200	1375kg	175	6.4	-	-	153	+ Great engine, composure - Doesn't have the adjustability of the old Cupra R
Skoda Fabia vRS (Mk2)	146 D	'10-'14	4/1390	178/6200	184/2000	1218kg	148	7.3	-	-	139	+ Clever twincharged engine and DSG 'box - Do your homework on the reliability of the engine
Skoda Fabia vRS (Mk1)	077 F	'03-'07	4/1896	130/4000	229/1900	1315kg	100	9.6	-	-	127	+ Fun and frugal hot hatch - A little short on steering feel
Skoda Octavia vRS (Mk4)	281 D	£29,815	4/1984	242/5000	273/1600	1445kg	170	6.7	-	-	155	+ A capable Q-car for the masses - Engine lacks character
Skoda Octavia vRS (Mk3)	187 D	'13-'17	4/1984	217/4500	258/1500	1345kg	164	6.8	-	-	154	+ Quick, agile, roomier than a Golf - Ride is harsh for what could be a family car
Skoda Octavia vRS 245 (Mk3)	250 F	'17-'20	4/1984	242/5000	258/1600	1370kg	179	6.6	-	-	155	+ A credible, entertaining performer - You won't get out of bed at 4am to drive it
Suzuki Swift Sport (Mk3)	239 D	£17,249	4/1373	138/5500	170/2500	975kg	144	8.1	7.6	20.1	130	+ Composed and brisk - Adjustability and character have been diluted
Suzuki Swift Sport (Mk2)	175 F	'12-'17	4/1586	134/6900	118/4400	1045kg	130	8.7	-	-	121	+ Still a great pocket rocket - Not quite as adjustable as the original
Suzuki Swift Sport (Mk1)	132 F	'05-'11	4/1586	123/6800	109/4800	1030kg	121	8.9	-	-	124	+ Entertaining handling, well built - Lacking in steering feedback
Toyota GR Yaris	299 F	£30,020	3/1618	257/6500	265/3000	1280kg	204	5.5	-	-	142	+ A proper homologation special - More Subaru Impreza than Mitsubishi Evo
Toyota Yaris GRMN	254 F	'18	4/1798	209/6800	184/5000	1135kg	187	6.3	-	-	143	+ Appealingly feisty supercharged supermini - Artificial steering; they only made 400
Vauxhall Corsa VXR	211 F	'14-'18	4/1598	202/5800	206/1900	1278kg	161	6.8	-	-	143	+ Begg to be wrung out - You'll need the £2400 Performance Pack
Vauxhall Corsa VXR	154 F	'07-'14	4/1598	189/5850	192/1980	1166kg	165	7.2	-	-	140	+ Looks snazzy, punchy engine - Lacks feel, uncouth compared with rivals
Vauxhall Corsa VXR Nürburgring/Clubsport	164 F	'11-'13/'14	4/1598	202/5750	206/2250	1166kg	176	6.8	-	-	143	+ VXR gets more power and a limited-slip diff - But they come at a price
Vauxhall Astra/GTC VXR (Mk2)	207 F	'12-'18	4/1998	276/5500	295/2500	1475kg	190	6.0	-	-	155	+ Loony turbo pace - Lacks the Renault Sport Mégane's precision
Vauxhall Astra VXR (Mk1)	102 F	'05-'11	4/1998	237/5600	236/2400	1393kg	173	6.4	6.7	16.7	152	+ Fast and furious - Lacks a little composure and precision
Volkswagen Up GTI	273 F	£16,320	3/999	113/5000	147/2000	995kg	115	8.8	-	-	122	+ Infectious appetite for fun - City car roots are still there
Volkswagen Lupo GTI	034 F	'01-'04	4/1598	123/6500	112/3000	1038kg	120	8.2	8.9	30.1	127	+ Looks, performance, chassis - Lacks the fizz of the 106 GTI
Volkswagen Polo GTI	244 D	£22,005	4/1984	197/4400	236/1500	1272kg	157	6.7	-	-	147	+ Decent performance, mature ride and handling - Lacks driver involvement
Volkswagen Polo GTI	211 F	'15-'17	4/1798	189/4200	236/1450	1197kg	160	6.7	-	-	146	+ Smooth and brawny - Fiesta ST is its more engaging
Volkswagen Polo GTI	154 F	'10-'14	4/1390	178/6200	184/2000	1184kg	153	7.4	-	-	142	+ Modern-day Mk1 Golf GTI gets twin-clutch DSG - It's a little bit

MAKE & MODEL

Volkswagen Golf R32 (Mk5)
 Volkswagen Golf R32 (Mk4)
 Volkswagen Golf GTI 16v (Mk2)
 Volkswagen Golf GTI (Mk1, 1.8)

ISSUE NO.	PRICE (ON ROAD IN UK)	ENGINE (CVL/CC)	BHP/RPM	LB FT/RPM	WEIGHT	BHP/TON	0-62MPH (S)	0-100MPH (S)	0-100MPH (ESTD)	MAX MPH
087 F	'06-'09	6/3189	246/6300	236/2500	1466kg	170	6.5	5.8	15.2	155
053 F	'02-'04	6/3189	237/6250	236/2800	1477kg	163	6.6	6.4	16.3	154
195 F	'88-'92	4/1781	139/6100	123/4600	960kg	147	7.9	-	-	129
224 F	'82-'84	4/1781	112/5800	109/3500	860kg	132	8.2	-	-	114

EVO RATING

+ The traction's great and you'll love the soundtrack - We'd still have a GTI ★★★★★
 + Charismatic - Boomy engine can be tiresome ★★★★★
 + Still feels everyday useable - Too many have been modified ★★★★★
 + The car that started it all - Tricky to find an unmolested one ★★★★★

SALOONS / ESTATES / SUVs

OUR CHOICE

BMW M5 CS. The M5 may seem like an unlikely candidate for the CS treatment, but its chassis changes result in a precise, immediate and supremely composed machine that shrinks on the road. Our 2021 Car of the Year and quite possibly the greatest supersaloon ever.



BEST OF THE REST

The **Alfa Romeo Giulia Quadrifoglio** (left) is the sports saloon your heart would choose, while your head may prefer the **BMW M3 Competition**. If it's something a size larger you're looking for, the **Audi RS6 Avant**, **BMW M5 Competition** and **Mercedes-AMG E63 S** (saloon or estate) provide a trio of strong options.

MAKE & MODEL	ISSUE NO.	PRICE (ON ROAD IN UK)	ENGINE (CVL/CC)	BHP/RPM	LB FT/RPM	WEIGHT	BHP/TON	0-62MPH (S)	0-100MPH (S)	0-100MPH (ESTD)	MAX MPH	COMMENTS	EVO RATING
Alfa Romeo Giulia Veloce	244 F	£40,595	4/1995	276/5250	295/2250	1429kg	196	5.7	-	-	149	+ Supple and satisfying - Engine reluctant to rev	★★★★★
Alfa Romeo Giulia Quadrifoglio	287 F	£67,030	6/2891	503/6500	442/2500	1620kg	315	3.9	-	-	191	+ If Ferrari built a saloon (really) - Lacks the final polish of German rivals	★★★★★
Alfa Romeo Giulia GTAm	286 F	'21	6/2891	533/6500	442/2500	1580kg	343	3.6	-	-	186	+ A sensational saloon car with a truly infectious character - It's a bit pricey	★★★★★
Alfa Romeo Stelvio Speciale AWD	234 D	£43,705	4/1995	276/5250	295/1750	1660kg	169	5.7	-	-	143	+ Agile feel, quick steering, attractive cabin - Engine not truly inspiring	★★★★★
Alfa Romeo Stelvio Quadrifoglio	244 D	£74,949	6/2891	503/6500	442/2500	1830kg	279	3.8	-	-	176	+ Rivals the Macan GTS - Needs optional P Zero Corsa tyres to give its very best	★★★★★
Alpina D3 S Touring	286 D	£55,950	6/2993	350/5500	538/2500	1935kg	184	4.8	-	-	167	+ The best fast diesel you can buy - The B3	★★★★★
Alpina B3 Touring	281 D	£67,950	6/2993	456/5500	516/2500	1865kg	248	3.9	-	-	186	+ A richer, smoother drive than an M-car - Little different to an M340i at low speeds	★★★★★
Aston Martin Rapide	141 F	'10-'13	12/5935	470/6000	443/5000	1990kg	240	5.3	-	-	188	+ Better than its DB9 sibling - More of a 2+2 than a proper four-seater	★★★★★
Aston Martin Rapide S	201 D	'13-'19	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 AMR	261 D	'19-'20	12/5935	595/6650	465/5500	1990kg	304	4.4	-	-	205	+ Powertrain, performance, personality - When it goes off sale, so does Aston's 5.9 V12	★★★★★
Aston Martin DBX	277 D	£161,500	8/3982	542/6500	516/2200	2245kg	245	4.5	-	-	181	+ Drives nothing like an SUV - Still heavy and thirsty like an SUV	★★★★★
Aston Martin DBX707	297 F	£189,000	8/3982	697/6000	663/2600	2245kg	315	3.3	-	-	193	+ Monster power, but a rounded performer too - It still weighs 2.2 tons	★★★★★
Audi RS3 Saloon	299 F	£51,900	5/2480	394/5600	369/2250	1575kg	254	3.8	-	-	155	+ Improved chassis makes the RS3 a contender at last - Engine and gearbox hold it back	★★★★★
Audi RS3 Saloon	243 F	'17-'21	5/2480	394/5850	354/1700	1515kg	264	4.1	3.6	8.8	155	+ Mini RS4 looks; stonking pace - Not the most involving driving experience	★★★★★
Audi S4 Avant (B9, diesel)	266 D	£50,910	6/2967	342/3850	516/2500	1825kg	190	4.9	-	-	155	+ Effortless performance, well-judged chassis - Diesel power won't be to everyone's taste	★★★★★
Audi S4 (B9, petrol)	225 D	'17-'19	6/2995	349/5400	369/1370	1630kg	218	4.7	-	-	155	+ Strong response and delivery - Chassis feels softer than before	★★★★★
Audi RS4 Avant (B9)	282 F	£66,945	6/2894	444/5700	442/1900	1745kg	259	4.1	-	-	155	+ Very 'real world' fast - Some may feel it lacks character and drama	★★★★★
Audi RS4 Avant (B8)	216 F	'12-'15	8/4163	444/8250	317/4000	1795kg	251	4.7	4.5	10.5	174	+ Looks and sounds the part, thunderously fast - Unnatural steering, dull dynamics	★★★★★
Audi RS4 (B7)	250 F	'05-'08	8/4163	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	'17-'19	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 RS5 Sportback	264 D	£72,095	6/2894	444/5700	442/1900	1720kg	262	3.9	-	-	155	+ High-speed composure - Flat-footed on more technical roads	★★★★★
Audi S6 Avant (C8)	263 D	£65,250	6/2967	344/3850	516/2500	2020kg	173	5.1	-	-	155	+ Diesel suits the S6 ethos - Poor low-end engine response	★★★★★
Audi RS6 Avant (C8)	272 F	£98,280	8/3996	592/6000	590/2050	2075kg	290	3.6	-	-	155	+ Power, poise, build - Needs Dynamic Ride Control suspension to be at its best	★★★★★
Audi RS6 Avant (C7)	203 F	'13-'18	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	'15-'19	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)	258 F	'02-'04	8/4172	444/5700	413/1950	1865kg	242	4.6	4.8	11.6	155	+ The ultimate estate car? - Numb steering	★★★★★
Audi RS7 Sportback	268 D	£100,055	8/3996	592/6000	590/2050	2065kg	291	3.6	-	-	155	+ Surprisingly agile and involving - Sometimes feels its weight	★★★★★
Audi RS e-tron GT	284 D	£113,915	495kW	637	612	2347kg	276	3.3	-	-	155	+ A fine GT - Range not up to touring	★★★★★
Bentley Flying Spur V8	283 D	£160,200	8/3996	542/6000	568/2000	2330kg	236	4.1	-	-	198	+ The best limo for those who enjoy driving - 2330kg and 5.3 metres	★★★★★
Bentley Flying Spur Hybrid	295 D	£168,000	6/2894	536	553	2505kg	217	4.3	-	-	177	+ Silent refinement at its best - V6 not as refined as you'd expect	★★★★★
Bentley Flying Spur	272 D	£177,800	12/5950	626/6000	664/1350	2437kg	261	3.8	-	-	207	+ A limo for those who enjoy driving - Needs to lose a few hundred kilos	★★★★★
Bentley Flying Spur V8 S	230 D	'16-'19	8/3993	521/6000	502/1700	2417kg	219	4.9	-	-	190	+ Old-school approach to comfort and luxury - Old-school tech	★★★★★
Bentley Flying Spur	185 D	'13-'18	12/5998	616/6000	590/1600	2475kg	253	4.6	-	-	199	+ For those who still want their Flying Spur with a W12 - Car feels its weight; engine sounds dull	★★★★★
Bentley Bentayga V8	247 D	£179,600	8/3996	542/6000	568/1900	2388kg	231	4.5	-	-	180	+ More enjoyable than the W12 - A top-end Range Rover is still more polished	★★★★★
Bentley Bentayga S	301 D	£187,800	8/3996	542/6000	568/2000	2416kg	228	4.5	-	-	180	+ The best Bentayga to drive - Far from the most elegant Bentley	★★★★★
Bentley Mulsanne Speed	279 F	'14-'20	8/6752	530/4000	811/1750	2685kg	201	4.9	-	-	190	+ The last Bentley with the 'six-and-three-quarter' - We won't see its kind again	★★★★★
BMW 320d xDrive M Sport (G20)	262 D	£41,255	4/1995	187/4000	295/1750	1540kg	123	6.9	-	-	145	+ Brilliant mix of performance and economy - Lacks a degree of dynamic finesse	★★★★★
BMW 330i M Sport (G20)	257 D	£40,645	4/1998	254/5000	295/1550	1470kg	176	5.8	-	-	155	+ Feels like a 3-series once more - Harsh and unsettled ride	★★★★★
BMW M340i xDrive	270 F	£40,900	6/2998	369/5500	369/1850	1670kg	225	4.4	-	-	155	+ Very fast and refined - Limited driver appeal	★★★★★
BMW i4 M50	296 D	£63,905	400kW	536	586	2215kg	249	3.9	-	-	139	+ A compelling daily EV - Heavy and expensive compared to an M340i	★★★★★
BMW M3 Competition (G80)	293 F	£76,115	6/2993	503/6250	479/2750	1730kg	295	3.9	-	-	155	+ As quick and capable as you'd want - Bigger and heavier than you'd like	★★★★★
BMW M3 Competition xDrive (G80)	292 D	£78,425	6/2993	503/6250	479/2750	1780kg	287	3.5	-	-	155	+ Four-wheel drive doesn't spoil the fun - There's a slight weight penalty	★★★★★
BMW M3 (F80)	266 F	'14-'20	6/2979	425/5500	406/1850	1560kg	277	4.3	4.1	8.6	155	+ Looks, performance, practicality - Body control on rough roads; engine lacks character	★★★★★
BMW M3 Competition Package (F80)	237 F	'16-'19	6/2979	444/7000	406/1850	1560kg	289	4.2	-	-	155	+ The car the F80 M3 should have been from the start - Less refined at low speeds	★★★★★
BMW M3 CS (F80)	250 D	'18-'19	6/2979	454/6250	442/4000	1585kg	291	3.9	-	-	174	+ Improved chassis and mid-range urge - Cost over £20k more than an M3 Comp Pack	★★★★★
BMW M3 (E90)	123 F	'08-'11	8/3999	414/8300	295/3900	1605kg	262	4.9	4.9	10.7	165	+ Every bit as good as the E92 M3 coupe - No carbon roof	★★★★★
BMW M5 (F90)	244 F	'17-'20	8/4395	592/5600	553/1800	1855kg	324	3.4	-	-	155	+ Fun in two- or four-wheel drive - Insufficient steering connection and engine character	★★★★★
BMW M5 Competition (F90)	282 F	£102,385	8/4395	616/6000	553/1800	1895kg	330	3.3	-	-	155	+ Incredible performance, sharper handling - It's still a big old bus	★★★★★
BMW M5 CS (F90)	297 F	£140,780	8/4395	626/6000	553/1800	1825kg	349	3.0	-	-	189	+ Evo Car of the Year 2021 - Erm, there's only two rear seats?	★★★★★
BMW M5 (F10)	208 F	'11-'16	8/4395	552/6000	501/1500	1870kg	300	4.4	-	-	155	+ Twin-turbocharging suits M5 well - Can feel heavy at times	★★★★★
BMW M5 (E60)	129 F	'04-'10	10/4999	500/7750	384/6100	1755kg	289	4.7	-	-	155	+ Close to being the ultimate supersaloon - SMG gearbox feels old-tech	★★★★★
BMW M5 (E39)	268 F	'98-'03	8/4941	394/6600	369/3800	1795kg	223	5.3	4.9	11.5	155	+ Magnificent V8-engined supersaloon - We'd be nitpicking	★★★★★
BMW M5 (E34)	110 F	'88-'95	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)	258 F	'84-'88	6/3453	282/6500	251/4500	1431kg	200	6.1	-	-	156	+ The original storming saloon - Understated looks	★★★★★
BMW M6 Gran Coupé	190 D	'13-'18	8/4395	552/6000	501/1500	1875kg	299	4.2	-	-	155	+ Enormous performance, stylish looks - Looks overpriced next to rivals, M5 included	★★★★★
BMW M760Li xDrive	233 D	'17-'20	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	★★★★★
Genesis G70 Shooting Brake 2.0T Plus	265 D	£40,700	4/1998	241/6200	260/1450	1717kg	143	6.4	-	-	146	+ Striking looks, quality interior - Lacklustre engine; dull and unresolved handling	★★★★★
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	★★★★★
Jaguar XE P300 AWD	262 D	£40,180	4/1997	296/5500	295/1500	1690kg	178	5.7	-	-	155	+ Fluent handling; 4WD grip and security - Auto 'box saps sportiness	★★★★★
Jaguar XE SV Project 8	269 F	'18-'20	8/5000	592/6500	516/3500	1745kg	345	3.7	3.5	7.8	200	+ Beautifully controlled and amazingly agile - They only made 15 in Touring spec	★★★★★
Jaguar XFR	181 D	'09-'15	8/5000	503/6000	461/2500	1800kg	284	4.7	4.8	10.2	155	+ Brilliant blend of pace and refinement - Doesn't sound as special as it is	★★★★★
Jaguar XFR-S	208 F	'13-'15	8/5000	542/6500	501/2500	1800kg	306	4.6	-	-	186	+ XF turned up to 12 - Tyres aren't cheap	★★★★★
Jaguar XJR	191 D	'14-'17	8/5000	542/6500	502/2500	1875kg	294	4.6	-	-	174	+ Hot-rod vibe, fine cabin - Opinion-dividing looks	★★★★★

MAKE & MODEL	ISSUE NO.	PRICE (ON ROAD)	ENGINE CVT/CC	BHP/RPM	LB FT/RPM	WEIGHT	BHP/TON	0-62MPH (s)	0-60MPH (0-100)	0-100MPH (s)	MAX MPH	EVO RATING
Lexus IS F	151 F	'07-'12	8/4969	417/6600	372/5200	1714kg	247	5.2	4.7	10.9	173	+ Shockingly good Lexus - The M3's available as a four-door too
Lotus Carlton	292 F	'90-'93	6/3615	377/5200	419/4200	1658kg	231	5.4	4.8	10.6	177	+ The Millennium Falcon of saloon cars - Every drive is a work-out
Lucid Air Dream Edition P	298 D	\$170,500	1000kW	1111	1025	2360kg	478	2.5	-	-	168	+ An EV that engages the driver - Sacrifices ultimate handling for a longer range
Maserati Ghibli	186 D	\$76,185	6/2979	345/5000	406/1750	1810kg	194	5.5	-	-	166	+ Bursting with character; good value compared to Quattroporte - It's still a big car
Maserati Ghibli Trofeo	290 D	\$110,905	8/3799	572/6750	538/2250	1969kg	295	4.3	-	-	202	+ Subtle performance elegantly delivered - It's quite expensive
Maserati Quattroporte S	184 D	'13-'18	6/2979	404/5500	406/1750	1860kg	221	5.1	-	-	177	+ Tempting alternative to V8 - Feel-free steering, ride lacks decorum
Maserati Quattroporte GTS	226 D	'16-'18	8/3798	523/6800	479/2250	1900kg	280	4.7	-	-	193	+ Still pretty - Off the pace dynamically
Maserati Quattroporte Trofeo	287 D	£134,285	8/3799	572/6750	538/2250	2000kg	291	4.5	-	-	203	+ An alluring alternative to the German defaults - How much?!
Maserati Quattroporte S	137 F	'08-'12	8/4691	425/7000	361/4750	1990kg	216	5.4	5.1	12.1	174	+ A QP with the bhp it deserves - Grille is a bit Hannibal Lecter
Maserati Quattroporte Sport GTS	141 F	'08-'12	8/4691	433/7000	361/4750	1990kg	221	5.1	-	-	177	+ The most stylish of supersaloons - Slightly wooden brakes, unforgiving ride
Maserati Levante Diesel	221 D	'16-'20	6/2897	271/4000	442/2000	2205kg	125	6.9	-	-	143	+ Impressive blend of ride and handling - Performance is mild for a Maserati
Mercedes-AMG A35 Saloon	271 F	£41,660	4/1991	302/5500	295/3000	1495kg	205	4.8	-	-	155	+ Fun when you want it to be, secure when the heavens open - Others are even more fun
Mercedes-AMG CLA 45 S Coupé	273 D	£60,965	4/1991	415/6750	369/5000	1600kg	264	4.0	-	-	167	+ Speed, ability and involvement - CLA35 offers a similar experience for less outlay
Mercedes-AMG E63 S Saloon (W205)	278 D	£61,965	4/1991	415/6750	369/5000	1630kg	259	4.0	-	-	155	+ Same stellar performance and involvement as the A45 - See above
Mercedes-AMG C43 Saloon (W206)	301 D	£64,110	4/1991	402/6750	369/5000	1690kg	242	4.6	-	-	155	+ Hugely accessible performance - Sterile steering, some transmission jerkiness
Mercedes-AMG C43 Estate (W205)	228 D	'17-'21	6/2996	362/5500	383/2000	1660kg	222	4.7	-	-	155	+ Incredibly fast and composed - Difficult to engage with
Mercedes-AMG G63 Saloon (W205)	209 D	'15-'20	8/3982	469/5500	479/1750	1640kg	291	4.1	-	-	155	+ Fast and feelsome - Lacks the ultimate finesse and response of the C63 S
Mercedes-AMG C63 Estate (S205)	216 F	'15-'20	8/3982	469/5500	479/1750	170kg	279	4.2	-	-	155	+ Much more fun than it looks - Gearbox dim-witted at low speeds
Mercedes-AMG C63 S Saloon (W205)	258 T	'15-'21	8/3982	503/5500	516/1750	1655kg	309	4.0	-	-	155	+ Tremendous twin-turbo V8 power - Not quite as focused as an M division car
Mercedes-AMG C63 S Estate (S205)	282 F	'15-'21	8/3982	503/5500	516/2000	1670kg	306	4.1	-	-	180	+ One of the finest all-round compact performance cars - Baffling array of driver settings
Mercedes-AMG C63 AMG (W204)	288 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-Benz E63 (W213)	242 D	'18-'20	8/3982	563/5750	553/2250	1875kg	305	3.5	-	-	145	+ More rounded than the E63 S - Could be a little too discreet for some tastes
Mercedes-AMG E63 S (W213)	286 F	£116,995	8/3982	604/5750	627/2500	1935kg	317	3.4	3.4	7.4	186	+ Fast, refined, effective and fun - At nearly two tons, it's not 911 nimble
Mercedes-AMG E63 S Estate (S213)	272 F	£118,995	8/3982	604/5750	627/2500	1995kg	308	3.5	-	-	180	+ As above - It's even heavier than the saloon, and five metres long
Mercedes-AMG GT63 4-Door Coupé	274 F	'19-'20	8/3982	577/5500	590/2500	2025kg	290	3.4	-	-	193	+ Does the same as the S for less - Takes up plenty of road
Mercedes-AMG GT63 54-Door Coupé	269 F	£150,440	8/3982	630/5500	664/2500	2045kg	313	3.2	-	-	196	+ Agile and immensely quick - Lacks the coupe GT's drama
Mercedes-Benz E63 AMG (W212)	187 D	'13-'16	8/5461	549/5500	531/1750	1770kg	315	4.2	-	-	155	+ Power, response and accuracy in spades - A little lacking in originality
Mercedes-Benz E63 AMG S (W212)	208 F	'13-'16	8/5461	577/5500	590/1750	1795kg	327	4.1	-	-	155	+ Effortless power; intuitive and approachable - Sluggish auto 'box
Mercedes-Benz E63 AMG (W212)	165 F	'11-'13	8/5461	518/5250	516/1750	1765kg	298	4.4	-	-	155	+ Turbo engine didn't dilute the E63 experience - Sometimes struggles for traction...
Mercedes-Benz E63 AMG (W212)	134 D	'09-'11	8/6208	518/6800	465/5200	1765kg	298	4.5	-	-	155	+ Indulgent chassis, brilliant engine - Steering still vague
Mercedes-Benz E63 AMG (W211)	096 D	'06-'09	8/6208	507/6800	465/5200	1765kg	292	4.5	-	-	155	+ Brilliant engine, indulgent chassis - Vague steering, speed limits
Mercedes-Benz E55 AMG	052 F	'03-'06	8/5439	469/6100	516/2650	1760kg	271	4.7	4.8	10.2	155	+ M5-humbling grunt, cossetting ride - Speed limits
Mercedes-AMG S63 (W222)	246 D	'13-'20	8/3982	604/5500	664/2750	1940kg	316	4.3	-	-	155	+ Performance doesn't come at the expense of luxury - But pure driving thrills do
Mercedes-AMG EQS 53	299 D	£157,160	-	649	700	2605kg	253	3.8	-	-	155	+ Refinement - The non-EV S-class
Mercedes-AMG CLS 53	247 D	£76,600	6/2999	451/6100	567/1800	1905kg	302	4.5	-	-	155	+ Impressive chassis and hybrid powertrain - Four-wheel drive only, and heavy, too
Mercedes-Benz CLS 63 AMG S	199 D	'14-'17	8/5461	577/5500	590/1750	1795kg	327	4.1	-	-	155	+ Quick and characterful - Dated gearbox, no four-wheel-drive option in the UK
Mercedes-AMG GLE 63 S Coupé	253 D	£94,270	8/3982	503/5500	516/1750	1945kg	263	3.8	-	-	174	+ Unquestionable performance - Lacks adjustability and engagement
Mercedes-AMG GLE 63 S	218 D	£120,725	8/5461	577/5500	560/1750	2270kg	258	4.2	-	-	155	+ Stonking pace, extreme refinement - Feels remote
Mercedes-AMG GLE 63 S Coupé	213 D	£130,000	8/5461	577/5500	560/1750	2275kg	258	4.2	-	-	155	+ Subtler than an X6 M - More force than finesse
Mercedes-AMG G63	250 D	£164,550	8/3982	577/6000	627/2500	2485kg	326	4.5	-	-	137	+ Vastly improved chassis, fabulous engine - Dynamic ability still limited
Mitsubishi Evo X FQ-300 SST	118 F	'08-'14	4/1998	290/6500	300/3500	1590kg	185	4.5	5.2	13.9	155	+ First Evo with a twin-clutch transmission - Not as exciting as its predecessors
Mitsubishi Evo X FQ-330 SST	134 F	'08-'14	4/1998	324/6500	322/3500	1590kg	207	4.4	-	-	155	+ Great engine and gearbox combo - It still lives in the shadow of the Evo IX
Mitsubishi Evo X FQ-360	122 D	'08-'14	4/1998	354/6500	363/3500	1560kg	231	4.0	-	-	155	+ Ridiculously rapid Evo - A five-speed gearbox?!
Mitsubishi Evo X FQ-400	181 F	'09-'10	4/1998	403/6500	387/3500	1560kg	262	3.8	-	-	155	+ Most powerful factory Evo ever... about X grand too much when new
Mitsubishi Evo IX FQ-340	088 F	'05-'08	4/1997	345/6800	321/4600	1400kg	250	4.2	4.3	10.9	157	+ Gives Porsche drivers nightmares - Points. Lots of
Mitsubishi Evo IX MR FQ-360	181 F	'05-'08	4/1997	366/6887	363/3200	1400kg	266	4.0	-	-	157	+ Well-executed engine upgrades - Prison food
Mitsubishi Evo VIII	055 F	'03-'05	4/1997	276/6500	289/3500	1410kg	199	5.1	-	-	157	+ The Evo grows up - Brakes need beefing up
Mitsubishi Evo VIII MR FQ-300	057 F	'03-'05	4/1997	305/6800	289/3500	1400kg	221	4.9	-	-	157	+ Extra pace, extra attitude - Extra money
Mitsubishi Evo VII	031 F	'02-'03	4/1997	276/6500	282/3500	1360kg	206	5.1	5.0	13.0	140	+ Terrific all-rounder - You tell us
Mitsubishi Evo VI Tommi Mäkinen Edition	271 F	'00-'01	4/1997	276/6500	275/2750	1365kg	205	4.6	-	-	150	+ Our favourite Evo - Subtle it is not
Peugeot 508 SW PSE	286 D	£56,465	4/1598	355	383	1817kg	192	5.2	-	-	155	+ A hybrid worth considering - But only if someone else is paying
Polestar 2	280 D	£43,150	300kW	402	487	2048kg	199	4.7	-	-	127	+ A credible Tesla alternative - Avoid the super-hard-riding Performance upgrade
Porsche Panamera GTS	279 D	£108,810	8/3996	473/6500	457/1800	2040kg	236	3.9	-	-	181	+ The most engaging Panamera - Still a heavy old thing
Porsche Panamera 4S E-Hybrid Sport Turismo	298 D	£105,830	6/2894	552	553	2240kg	250	3.7	-	-	182	+ Retains Porsche's core DNA - The Panamera GTS and Taycan also exist
Porsche Panamera Turbo S E-Hybrid Sport T.	272 D	£146,340	8/3996	671	627	2325kg	293	3.4	-	-	192	+ Shows some Stuttgart magic in the corners - It weighs 2.3 tons!
Porsche Panamera GT3	208 F	'11-'16	8/4806	434/6700	383/3500	1925kg	229	4.4	-	-	178	+ Vivacious V8, entertaining balance - Can feel light on performance next to turbocharged rivals
Porsche Panamera Turbo	137 F	'10-'16	8/4806	493/6000	516/2250	1970kg	254	4.2	3.6	8.9	188	+ Fast, refined and dynamically sound - It still leaves us cold
Porsche Panamera Turbo S	159 D	'11-'13	8/4806	542/6000	590/2250	1995kg	276	3.8	-	-	190	+ Pace, excellent ergonomics - Steering feel, ride
Porsche Taycan (Performance Battery Plus)	283 D	£78,049	350kW	375	-	2130kg	179	5.4	-	-	143	+ Half the price of a Taycan Turbo S - Less is less
Porsche Taycan GT3 Sport Turismo	294 D	£105,500	380kW	510	-	2310kg	224	3.7	-	-	224	+ One of the best performance EVs yet - Charge anxiety
Porsche Taycan Turbo Cross Turismo	287 D	£118,500	460kW	616	-	2320kg	270	3.3	-	-	155	+ A convincing and crushingly capable crossover - Needs big roads
Porsche Taycan Turbo S	267 D	£140,000	460kW	616	-	2295kg	273	2.8	-	-	161	+ Straight-line oomph will leave you in awe - Inadequate EV infrastructure
Porsche Macan	259 D	£50,800	4/1984	242/5000	273/1600	1795kg	137	6.7	-	-	139	+ Lighter engine makes for sharper handling - The Golf R Estate
Porsche Macan S	257 T	£56,800	6/2997	349/5400	354/1360	1865kg	190	5.3	-	-	157	+ Great for an SUV - Every positive still needs to be suffixed with 'for an SUV'
Porsche Macan GTS	244 F	'16-'18	6/2997	355/6000	369/1650	1895kg	190	5.2	-	-	159	+ Handles like an SUV shouldn't - Still looks like an SUV
Porsche Cayenne S (Mk3)	253 T	£75,800	6/2894	434/5700	406/1800	2020kg	218	5.2	-	-	164	+ Impressive surface-coated brake tech - We'd rather have it on a sports car
Porsche Cayenne Turbo (Mk3)	243 D	£110,240	8/3996	542/5750	568/1960	2175kg	254	4.1	-	-	177	+ Huge performance, surprising agility - It's still a two-ton-plus SUV
Porsche Cayenne Turbo Coupé	263 D	£112,970	8/3996	542/5750	568/2000	2200kg	250	3.9	-	-	177	+ As good to drive as the non-coupe Cayenne - Swoopier roof adds thousands to the price
Porsche Cayenne Turbo GT	290 D	£147,510	8/3996	631/6000	627/2300	2220kg	289	3.3	-	-	186	+ A car this big and heavy shouldn't drive this well - It's still big and heavy
Porsche Cayenne GTS (Mk2, V6)	211 D	'15-'17	6/3604	434/6000	442/1600	210kg	209	5.2	-	-	163	+ The driver's Cayenne... but why would a driver want an SUV?
Porsche Cayenne GTS (Mk2, V8)	173 D	'12-'15	8/4806	414/6500	380/3500	2085kg	202	5.7	-	-	162	+ Dynamically the best SUV of its era - At two tons, it's still no sports car
Porsche Cayenne Turbo (Mk2)	212 D	'10-'17	8/4806	513/6000	533/2250	2185kg	239	4.5	-	-	173	+ Remarkable performance, handling, completeness - Vague steering, dated engine
Porsche Cayenne Turbo S (Mk2)	184 D	'10-'17	8/4806	562/6000	590/2500	2235kg	255	4.1	-	-	176	+ More power and torque than a Zonda S 7.3 - In an SUV
Range Rover Evoque P250	261 D	£45,185	6/2995	246/5500	269/1300	1818kg	137	7.0	-	-	143	+ As good on road as it is off - Engines still a long way short of being competitive
Range Rover Sport SVR	260 D	£101,850	8/5000	567/6000	516/3500	2302kg	250	4.5	-	-	176	+ Loud and proud - More blunderbuss than Exocet
Range Rover P530 Autobiography	298 D	£134,875	8/4395	523/5500	551/1800	2585kg	206	4.6	-	-	155	+ Quieter and more capable - Heavier and more expensive
Rolls-Royce Ghost	280 D	£265,420	12/6749	563/5000	627/1600	2490kg	230	4.8	-	-	155	

MAKE & MODEL

Vauxhall Insignia VXR Super Sport
Vauxhall VXR8 GTS
Vauxhall VXR8 GTS-R
Volkswagen Arteon R Shooting Brake

ISSUE NO.	PRICE (ON ROAD IN UK)	ENGINE (CV/L/CC)	BHP/RPM	LF FT/RPM	WEIGHT	BHP/TON	0-62MPH (S/MI)	0-100MPH (S/MI)	0-100MPH (EST/MI)	MAX MPH
189 D	13-17	6/2792	321/5250	321/5250	1825kg	179	5.6	-	-	170
215 D	15-17	8/6162	576/6150	546/3850	1834kg	319	4.2	-	-	155
272 F	17	8/6162	587/6150	546/3850	1880kg	317	4.2	-	-	155
289 D	£56,085	4/1984	316/5350	310/2000	1793kg	179	4.9	-	-	155

EVO RATING

+ A 170mph Vauxhall - Should be a more engaging steer	★★★★☆
+ Monster engine; engaging driving experience - Woeful interior	★★★★☆
+ Blistering performance; bursting with character - The end of an era	★★★★☆
+ Sleek looks, spacious interior, decent handling - The BMW M340i Touring	★★★★☆

ROADSTERS / CONVERTIBLES



OUR CHOICE

Porsche 718 Spyder. Effectively a drop-top version of the eCoty-winning 718 Cayman GT4, the Spyder shares its naturally aspirated flat-six, slick manual 'box (PDK is an option) and even its 1420kg kerb weight with its coupe counterpart, but adds the ability to enjoy it all with the wind in your hair. What's not to love?



BEST OF THE REST

The **Aston Martin Vantage Roadster** (left) bests the 911 Cabriolet for character, the **Porsche 718 Boxster GTS 4.0** is essentially a cut-price 718 Spyder, the **Caterham Seven** remains an exemplar of sports car purity across the range, while the **Ariel Atom** strips what you need for driving thrills to the bare minimum.

MAKE & MODEL	ISSUE NO.	PRICE (ON ROAD IN UK)	ENGINE (CV/L/CC)	BHP/RPM	LF FT/RPM	WEIGHT	BHP/TON	0-62MPH (S/MI)	0-100MPH (S/MI)	0-100MPH (EST/MI)	MAX MPH	EVO RATING
Abarth 124 Spider	256 F	16-19	4/1368	168/5500	184/2500	1060kg	161	6.8	-	-	143	★★★★☆
Alfa Romeo 4C Spider	223 F	15-19	4/1742	237/6000	258/2200	940kg*	256	4.5	-	-	160	★★★★☆
Alfa Romeo 8C Spider	161 F	09-11	8/4691	450/7000	354/4750	1675kg	273	4.4	-	-	181	★★★★☆
BMW Atom 4	273 F	£39,975	4/1996	320/6500	310/3000	595kg	546	2.8	-	-	162	★★★★☆
Ariel Atom 3.245	248 F	18-12	4/1998	245/8600	177/7200	520kg	479	3.1	-	-	145	★★★★☆
Ariel Atom 3.5 Supercharged	180 D	13-18	4/1998	310/8400	169/7200	550kg	573	2.7	-	-	155	★★★★☆
Ariel Atom 3.5R	255 F	14-18	4/1998	350/8400	243/6100	550kg	647	2.6	-	-	155	★★★★☆
Ariel Nomad	294 F	£33,000	4/2354	235/7200	221/4300	670kg*	365	3.4	-	-	134	★★★★☆
Ariel Nomad R	278 F	£77,400	4/1998	335/7200	243/4300	670kg*	c486	2.9	-	-	134	★★★★☆
Aston Martin Vantage Roadster	279 D	£126,950	8/3982	503/6000	505/2000	1745kg	293	3.8	-	-	190	★★★★☆
Aston Martin V8 Vantage Roadster (4.7)	130 F	09-16	8/4735	420/7000	346/5750	1710kg	250	4.8	-	-	180	★★★★☆
Aston Martin V8 Vantage S Roadster	161 F	11-17	8/4735	430/7300	361/5000	1690kg	258	4.8	-	-	189	★★★★☆
Aston Martin V12 Vantage Roadster	175 F	12-14	12/5935	510/6500	420/5750	1760kg	294	4.5	-	-	190	★★★★☆
Aston Martin V12 Vantage S Roadster	212 F	14-17	12/5935	565/6750	457/5750	1745kg	329	4.1	-	-	201	★★★★☆
Aston Martin DB11 Volante	258 T	£159,900	8/3982	503/6000	498/2000	1795kg	285	4.1	-	-	187	★★★★☆
Audi TT S Roadster (Mk3)	207 D	£46,360	4/1984	302/5400	295/2000	1495kg	205	4.8	-	-	155	★★★★☆
Audi TT RS Roadster (Mk3)	250 T	£55,655	5/2480	394/5850	354/1700	1530kg	262	3.9	-	-	155	★★★★☆
BAC Mono 2.5	229 F	£167,940	4/2488	305/8000	227/5500	580kg*	534	2.8	-	-	170	★★★★☆
Bentley Continental GT Speed Convertible	291 D	£230,900	12/5950	650/5000	664/1950	2436kg	271	3.7	-	-	208	★★★★☆
Bentley Mulliner Bacalar	286 F	£1.5m	12/5950	650/5000	664/1950	2384kg	277	<3.8	-	-	200	★★★★☆
BMW Z4 M40i	256 D	£49,050	6/2998	335/5000	369/1600	1535kg	222	4.6	-	-	155	★★★★☆
BMW i8 Roadster	258 F	19-20	3/1499	369/5800	420/3700	1595kg	235	4.6	-	-	155	★★★★☆
BMW Z8	026 F	00-03	8/4941	400/6600	369/3900	1585kg	256	4.7	4.8	11.1	155	★★★★☆
Caterham Seven 170R	291 F	£26,385	3/660	84/6500	86/4000	440kg*	194	6.9	-	-	105	★★★★☆
Caterham Seven 360	209 F	£33,385	4/1999	180/7300	143/6100	560kg*	327	4.8	-	-	130	★★★★☆
Caterham Seven 420	223 F	£36,385	4/1999	210/7600	150/6300	560kg*	381	3.8	4.0	10.3	136	★★★★☆
Caterham Seven 420 Cup	299 F	£54,990	4/1999	210/7600	150/6300	578kg	369	3.6	-	-	136	★★★★☆
Caterham Seven 620S	220 D	£48,890	4/1999	310/7700	219/7350	610kg*	516	3.4	-	-	155	★★★★☆
Caterham Seven 620R	255 F	£53,885	4/1999	310/7700	219/7350	572kg*	551	2.8	-	-	155	★★★★☆
Caterham Seven 160	239 F	13-17	3/660	80/7000	79/3400	490kg*	166	6.9	-	-	100	★★★★☆
Caterham Seven Roadsport 125	105 F	07-14	4/1596	125/6100	120/5350	539kg*	235	5.9	-	-	112	★★★★☆
Caterham Seven Supersport	165 F	11-14	4/1596	140/6900	120/5790	520kg*	273	4.9	-	-	120	★★★★☆
Caterham Seven Supersport R	180 D	13-14	4/1999	180/7300	143/6100	535kg*	342	4.8	-	-	130	★★★★☆
Caterham Seven Superlight R300	150 F	09-12	4/1999	175/7000	139/6000	515kg*	345	4.5	-	-	140	★★★★☆
Caterham Seven CSR 260	094 F	06-17	4/2261	256/7500	200/6200	565kg*	460	3.1	3.8	-	155	★★★★☆
Caterham Seven Superlight R500	123 F	08-14	4/1999	263/8500	177/7200	506kg*	528	2.9	-	-	150	★★★★☆
Caterham Seven R500	200 F	99-06	4/1796	230/8600	155/7200	460kg*	510	3.4	3.6	8.8	146	★★★★☆
Chevrolet Corvette Stingray Convertible (C8)	292 D	£82,200	8/6162	475/6450	452/4500	1292kg	285	3.5	-	-	184	★★★★☆
Dallara Stradale	267 F	c£162,000	4/2300	394/6200	369/3000	855kg*	468	3.3	-	-	174	★★★★☆
Elemental Rpl (2.3)	255 F	£139,800	4/2261	320	354	620kg*	557	2.6	-	-	165	★★★★☆
Honda S2000	243 F	99-09	4/1997	237/8300	153/7500	1260kg	191	6.2	-	-	150	★★★★☆
Jaguar F-type Convertible P450 RWD	271 D	£77,460	8/5000	444/6000	428/2500	1660kg	272	4.6	-	-	177	★★★★☆
Jaguar F-type Project 7	212 F	15	8/5000	567/6500	501/2500	1585kg	363	3.9	-	-	186	★★★★☆
KTM X-Bow GT	183 D	£95,880	4/1984	281/6400	310/3200	875kg	326	4.1	-	-	144	★★★★☆
KTM X-Bow R	165 F	£87,480	4/1984	296/6300	295/3300	816kg	369	3.9	-	-	144	★★★★☆
Lotus Elise Club Racer (S3)	183 F	11-15	4/1598	134/6800	118/4400	852kg	160	6.5	-	-	127	★★★★☆
Lotus Elise Sport 220 (S3)	244 F	17-20	4/1798	217/6800	184/4600	904kg	244	4.6	-	-	145	★★★★☆
Lotus Elise Sport 220 (S3)	254 F	18-19	4/1798	217/6800	184/4600	878kg	251	4.5	-	-	145	★★★★☆
Lotus Elise Sport 240 Final Edition (S3)	285 F	21	4/1798	237/7200	181/3000	922kg	261	4.1	-	-	147	★★★★☆
Lotus Elise Cup 250 (S3)	279 F	16-21	4/1798	245/7200	184/3500	931kg	267	3.9	-	-	154	★★★★☆
Lotus Elise Cup 260 (S3)	243 F	18-19	4/1798	250/7200	195/5500	902kg	282	4.2	-	-	151	★★★★☆
Lotus Elise Sport 135 (S2)	040 D	03	4/1796	135/6200	129/4850	726kg	189	5.4	-	-	129	★★★★☆
Lotus Elise S (S2)	104 F	06-10	4/1794	134/6200	127/4200	860kg	158	6.1	6.3	18.7	127	★★★★☆
Lotus Elise III S (S2)	049 F	02-04	4/1796	156/7000	129/4650	860kg	197	5.1	-	-	131	★★★★☆
Lotus Elise SC (S2)	131 F	08-11	4/1794	218/8000	156/5000	870kg	254	4.6	4.5	11.4	145	★★★★☆
Lotus Elise (S1)	235 F	96-01	4/1796	118/5500	122/3000	731kg	164	5.9	6.1	18.5	126	★★★★☆
Lotus 3-Eleven	220 F	16-17	6/3456	410/7000	302/3000	925kg*	450	3.4	-	-	174	★★★★☆
Lotus 3-Eleven 430	248 F	17-19	6/3456	430/7000	325/4500	925kg*	475	3.2	-	-	180	★★★★☆
Lotus 2-Eleven	126 F	07-11	4/1796	189/7800	133/6800	720kg	267	4.5	-	-	140	★★★★☆
Lotus 2-Eleven Supercharged	123 F	07-11	4/1796	252/8000	179/7000	745kg	344	4.0	-	-	150	★★★★☆
Lotus 340R	126 F	00	4/1796	190/7800	146/5000	701kg	275	4.5	4.5	12.5	126	★★★★☆
Mazda MX-5 1.5 (Mk4)	230 F	£23,795	4/1496	129/7000	111/4800	975kg	134	8.3	-	-	127	★★★★☆
Mazda MX-5 2.0 (Mk4, 184PS)	299 F	£28,395	4/1998	181/7000	151/4000	1030kg	178	6.5	-	-	136	★★★★☆
Mazda MX-5 2.0 (Mk4, 184PS)	256 F	£30,295	4/1998	181/7000	151/4000	1073kg	171	6.8	-	-	137	★★★★☆
Mazda MX-5 2.0 (Mk4)	228 F	15-18	4/1998	158/6000	147/4600	1000kg	161	7.3	-	-	133	★★★★☆
Mazda MX-5 2.0i Sport Tech (Mk3.5)	212 F	09-15	4/1999	158/7000	139/5000	1098kg	146	7.6	-	-	138	★★★★☆
Mazda MX-5 1.8i (Mk3)	091 F	05-09	4/1798	124/6500	123/4500	1080kg	108	9.3	-	-	122	★★★★☆
Mazda MX-5 1.8i (Mk2)	017 F	98-05	4/1839	146/7000	124/5000	1065kg	140	8.5	-	-	123	★★★★☆
Mazda MX-5 1.6 (Mk1)	268 F	89-97	4/1597	115/6500	100/5500	971kg	120	8.8	-	-	114	★★★★☆
Mercedes-AMG SL 43	222 D	£47,600	6/2996	362/5500	383/2000	1520kg	242	4.7	-	-	155	★★★★☆
Mercedes-AMG SL 63	228 D	£116,430	8/5461	571/5500	664/2250	1770kg	331	4.1	-	-	155	★★★★☆
Mercedes-AMG GT Roadster	239 F	17-19	8/3982	469/6000	465/1700	1595kg	299	4.0	-	-	188	★★★★☆

MAKE & MODEL	ISSUE NO.	PRICE (BY YEAR OR RANGE)	ENGINE CYL/CC	BHP/RPM	LB FT/RPM	WEIGHT	BHP/TON	0-60MPH (UNFILTERED)	0-100MPH (FILTERED)	0-100MPH (UNFILTERED)	MAX MPH	EVO RATING
Mercedes-AMG GTC Roadster	235 D	'17-'19	8/3982	549/5750	501/1900	1660kg	336	3.7	-	-	196	+ As above but with more shove - Road noise can get wearing on long journeys
Mercedes-AMG GT R Roadster	271 D	'20	8/3982	577/6250	516/2100	1635kg	359	3.6	-	-	197	+ Spectacular engine, engaging dynamics - Structural compromise of Roadster body
Morgan Super 3	300 F	£43,165	3/1432	118/6500	110/4500	635kg*	189	7.0	-	-	130	+ The three-wheeler gets modernised - Driving experience is still vintage
Morgan 3 Wheeler	198 F	'12-'21	2/1976	82/5250	103/3250	525kg*	159	6.0	-	-	115	+ Quirky, characterful, brilliant - Can become a two-wheeler if you push too hard
Morgan Plus Four	279 F	£62,995	4/1998	255/5500	258/1000	1013kg*	256	5.2	-	-	149	+ Compelling blend of old and new - Busy, almost old-fashioned ride on bumper roads
Morgan Plus Four CX-T	294 F	£204,000	4/1998	255/5500	258/1000	1213kg*	214	c6.0	-	-	c140	+ Absurd but fun way to outrun the zombies - Expensive
Morgan Plus Six	269 F	£77,995	6/2998	335/6500	369	1075kg*	317	4.2	-	-	166	+ Rapid, exciting, and a bit of a hooligan - Interior could feel more special
Morgan Plus 8 50th Anniversary Edition	253 D	'18-'19	8/4799	367/6300	370/3600	1100kg*	339	4.5	-	-	155	+ V8 performance and sound, driver involvement - Getting files in your teeth
Morgan Aero 8	105 F	'01-'10	8/4799	362/6300	361/3400	1180kg*	312	4.5	-	-	170	+ Glorious sound, view over bonnet, dynamics - Awkward-looking rear
Morgan Aero GT	255 F	'18	8/4799	367/6300	370/3400	1180kg*	316	4.5	-	-	170	+ The ultimate Aero - The last with the naturally aspirated BMW V8
Porsche 718 Boxster	224 D	£48,400	4/1988	296/6500	280/1950	1335kg	225	5.1	-	-	170	+ Chassis as good as ever - Four-cylinder's tuneless din would be hard to live with
Porsche 718 Boxster S	222 F	£58,160	4/2497	345/6500	310/1900	1355kg	259	4.6	4.4	9.8	177	+ Still sensationally capable - Turbo four-cylinder engine lacks appeal of the old flat-six
Porsche 718 Boxster GTS	249 T	'18-'19	4/2497	360/6500	310/1900	1375kg	266	4.6	-	-	180	+ The best four-pot Boxster spec - Doesn't come cheap
Porsche 718 Boxster GTS 4.0	286 D	£68,560	6/3995	394/7000	310/5000	1405kg	285	4.5	-	-	182	+ It's got the Cayman GT4 six-cylinder, minus 200rpm - Gearshift not as crisp as the GT4's
Porsche 718 Spyder	272 F	£77,110	6/3995	414/7600	310/5000	1420kg	296	4.4	-	-	187	+ Essentially a drop-top Cayman GT4 - Including its long gearing
Porsche Boxster (981)	238 F	'12-'16	6/2706	261/6700	206/4500	1310kg	202	5.8	-	-	164	+ Goes and looks better than the 987 Boxster - Shame about the electric steering
Porsche Boxster S (981)	186 F	'12-'16	6/3436	311/6700	265/4500	1320kg	239	5.1	-	-	173	+ Boxster steps out of 911's shadow - But gets 911's less appealing electric steering
Porsche Boxster GTS (981)	203 D	'14-'16	6/3436	325/6700	273/4500	1345kg	246	5.0	-	-	174	+ Superb dynamics, fantastic engine, great looks - Sport suspension is very firm
Porsche Boxster Spyder (981)	223 F	'15-'16	6/3800	370/6700	310/4750	1315kg	286	4.5	-	-	180	+ An even faster, even more rewarding Boxster - Feedback trails the Cayman GT4's
Porsche Boxster S (987)	161 F	'05-'12	6/3436	306/6400	266/5500	1355kg	229	5.3	-	-	170	+ Second-gen Boxster's as brilliant as ever - It's a typically Porsche redesign
Porsche Boxster Spyder (987)	277 F	'10-'12	6/3436	316/7200	273/4750	1275kg	252	4.9	-	-	166	+ Lighter, more driver-centric Boxster - Collapsed-broly roof not the most practical
Porsche Boxster S (986)	070 F	'99-'04	6/3179	256/6200	229/4600	1320kg	200	5.7	-	-	164	+ Added power over the non-S Boxster is seductive - Very little
Porsche 911 Carrera 4S Cabriolet (992)	262 D	£109,725	6/2981	444/6500	391/2300	1600kg	282	4.4	-	-	188	+ Performance, handling, useability - It's no lightweight; body not as stiff as the coupe's
Porsche 911 Targa 4S (992)	277 D	£109,725	6/2981	444/6500	391/2300	1640kg	275	4.4	-	-	189	+ Distinctive; driving experience is barely touched - You can't get a rear-drive Targa
Radical Rapture	274 F	£108,000	4/2261	360/6000	360/3500	765kg*	478	3.0	-	-	165	+ Unfiltered and utterly addictive - It's more at home on the track than the road
Renault Sport Spider	231 F	'96-'99	4/1998	148/6000	136/4500	930kg	157	6.5	-	-	131	+ Rarity; unassisted steering - Heavier than you'd hope; disappointing engine
Rolls-Royce Dawn	222 D	£264,000	12/6592	563/5250	575/1500	2560kg	223	4.9	-	-	155	+ Effortless driving experience - Driver involvement not a priority
Toyota MR2 (Mk3)	258 F	'00-'06	4/1794	138/6400	125/4400	975kg	141	8.0	7.2	21.2	131	+ Tight lines, taut dynamics - Minimal luggage space
TVR Tamora	070 F	'01-'07	6/3605	350/7200	290/5500	1060kg	335	4.2	-	-	167	+ Well-sorted soft-top TVR - Awkward styling
TVR Chimaera 5.0	258 F	'93-'03	8/4997	320/5500	320/3750	1060kg	307	4.4	-	-	175	+ Gorgeous noise, tarmac-ripping grin - Details
TVR Griffith 4.3	068 F	'92-'93	8/4280	280/5500	305/4000	1040kg	274	4.4	4.8	11.2	155	+ The car that made TVR, Cult status - Mere details
TVR Griffith 500	009 F	'93-'01	8/4997	320/5500	320/4000	1060kg	307	4.1	-	-	167	+ Gruff diamond - A few rough edges
Vauxhall VX220	023 F	'00-'04	4/2198	145/5800	150/4000	875kg	168	5.9	-	-	136	+ Absurdly good Vauxhall - The badge?
Vauxhall VX220 Turbo	066 F	'03-'05	4/1998	197/5500	184/1950	930kg	215	4.9	-	-	151	+ Nothing comes close for the money - Marginal everyday usability

COUPES / GTs



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Porsche 718 Cayman GT4. With a naturally aspirated flat-six, a manual gearbox, extraordinary damping and fulsome feedback, the second GT4 is even better than the original and laughs in the face of turbocharged engines, automatic transmissions and monster power outputs.



BEST OF THE REST

The **Alpine A110** (left) gives the four-cylinder 718 Cayman a true rival to worry about, while the **Aston Martin Vantage** is a genuine 911 beater. The C8-generation **Chevrolet Corvette Stingray** is a lot of mid-engined V8 coupe for the money and the **Bentley Continental GT Speed** combines high-end GT refinement with highly polished handling.

Alfa Romeo 4C	209 F	'13-'19	4/1742	237/6000	258/2200	895kg*	269	4.5	-	-	160	+ Carbonfibre tub, mini-supercar looks - Hot hatch engine, clunky gearbox
Alfa Romeo 8C Competizione	120 F	'07-'09	8/4691	450/7000	354/4750	1585kg	288	4.2	-	-	181	+ Looks, exclusivity, noise, balance - Cost more now than they did new
Alpine A110	285 F	£48,140	4/1798	249/6000	236/2000	1103kg	229	4.5	4.6	10.8	155	+ Fast, fun and genuinely different - If only it had a manual gearbox
Alpine A110 S	268 D	£57,140	4/1798	288/6400	236/2000	1144kg	263	4.4	-	-	161	+ Firmer and faster - But not necessarily better
Aston Martin Vantage	280 F	£124,400	8/3982	503/6000	505/2000	1685kg	303	3.6	4.5	9.1	195	+ Performance that's a huge leap forward - Chassis struggles when really pushed
Aston Martin Vantage F1 Edition	293 F	£142,000	8/3982	527/6000	505/2000	1570kg*	341	3.6	-	-	195	+ Hones the Vantage recipe - Not the trackday refugee the stickers and spoilers suggest
Aston Martin V12 Vantage	298 F	£265,000	12/5204	690/6500	555/5000	1795kg	391	3.5	-	-	200	+ The last of its kind - Hobbled by ham-fisted handling
Aston Martin V8 Vantage (4.3)	288 F	'05-'07	8/4280	380/7000	302/5000	1630kg	237	5.0	5.2	12.0	175	+ Gorgeous, awesome soundtrack - Can't quite match a 911 dynamically
Aston Martin V8 Vantage (4.7)	169 D	'08-'16	8/4735	420/7000	346/5750	1630kg	262	4.8	-	-	180	+ Still feels special - But also a little dated
Aston Martin V8 Vantage S	168 F	'11-'17	8/4735	430/7300	361/5000	1610kg	271	4.8	-	-	190	+ Keener engine, V12 Vantage looks - Slightly sluggish auto only
Aston Martin V8 Vantage N430	218 F	'14-'16	8/4735	430/7300	361/5000	1610kg	271	4.8	-	-	189	+ Malleable, involving - Never feels rampantly quick
Aston Martin Vantage GT8	274 F	'16-'17	8/4735	440/7300	361/5000	1530kg	292	4.4	-	-	190	+ Enough drama to fill a Netflix mini-series - Just 150 made
Aston Martin V12 Vantage	264 F	'09-'13	12/5935	510/6500	420/5750	1680kg	308	4.2	4.4	9.7	190	+ The car we hoped the V8 Vantage would be - Erm, a tad thirsty?
Aston Martin V12 Vantage S	285 F	'13-'17	12/5935	563/6650	457/5500	1665kg	344	3.9	-	-	205	+ Amongst the best Astons ever made - Old-school automated 'box (so get the manual)
Aston Martin Vantage GT12	214 F	'15-'16	12/5935	592/7000	461/5500	1565kg	384	3.5	-	-	185	+ The GT3-style Vantage we waited so long for - Only 100 made
Aston Martin DB11	235 T	£144,900	8/3982	503/6000	498/2000	1685kg	303	4.0	-	-	187	+ Potent and characterful engine; sharper chassis than V12 - Do we still need the V12?
Aston Martin DB11	253 F	'17-'18	12/5204	600/6500	516/1500	1800kg	339	3.9	4.0	8.1	200	+ A great GT - Suffers in outright handling terms as a result
Aston Martin DB11 AMR	290 F	£174,995	12/5204	630/6500	516/1500	1795kg	357	3.7	-	-	208	+ A more potent, better controlled V12 DB11 - Still at its best when it isn't trying too hard
Aston Martin DB9 GT	214 D	'15-'17	12/5935	540/6750	457/5500	1785kg	307	4.5	-	-	183	+ More power; still has bags of character - Needs an eight-speed auto 'box
Aston Martin DB9	178 F	'04-'16	12/5935	510/6500	457/5500	1785kg	290	4.6	-	-	183	+ A great start to Gaydon-era Astons - Automatic gearbox could be quicker
Audi TTS (Mk3)	142 F	'07-'12	12/5935	510/6500	420/5750	1695kg	306	4.3	-	-	191	+ Stupendous engine, gearbox, brakes - Pricey; can bite the unwary
Audi TTS (Mk3)	261 D	£44,610	4/1984	302/5400	295/2000	1405kg	218	4.5	-	-	155	+ Exceptional grip and traction - Excitement fades after the first few corners
Audi TTS (Mk3)	249 F	£53,905	5/2480	394/5850	354/1700	1450kg	276	3.7	3.5	8.7	155	+ Soundtrack; tremendous point-to-point pace - A bit one-dimensional in the long run
Audi TTS (Mk2)	193 F	'08-'14	4/1984	268/6000	258/2500	1395kg	195	5.4	-	-	155	+ A fully quicker TT, with a great drivetrain - Still steers like a computer game
Audi TTS RS (Mk2)	158 F	'09-'14	5/2480	335/5400	332/1600	1450kg	235	4.7	4.4	11.1	155	+ Sublime five-cylinder turbo engine - Rest of package can't quite match it
Audi TT RS Plus (Mk2)	185 D	'12-'14	5/2480	355/5500	343/1650	1450kg	249	4.3	-	-	174	+ Stonkingly fast cross-country - Shockingly expensive for a TT
Audi S5	252 F	'17-'19	6/2995	349/5400	369/1370	1615kg	220	4.7	-	-	155	+ Chassis rewards commitment... - ...but doesn't offer a challenge. Plain engine, too
Audi RS5	240 F	£68,985	6/2894	444/5700	442/1900	1655kg	273	3.9	3.6	9.0	155	+ Lighter, quicker; makes green paint look good - Lacks the character of the old V8
Audi RS5	206 F	'10-'16	8/4163	444/8250	317/4000	1715kg	263	4.5	4.3	-	155	+ Brilliant engine and improved chassis - Lack of suspension travel; inconsistent steering
Audi R8 V8	284 F	'07-'15	8/4163	424/7900	317/4500	1560kg	276	4.6	4.1	9.9	188	+ A true 911 alternative - The V8 engine got dropped too soon
Bentley Continental GT V8	290 F	£166,200	8/3993	542/6000	568/2000	2165kg	254	4.0	-	-	198	+ Pace, quality, polish - A bit one-dimensional
Bentley Continental GT	255 F	'18-'21	12/5950	626/5000	664/1350	2244kg	283	3.7	-	-	207	+ Astonishing agility for such a big, heavy car - Thrust
Bentley Continental GT Speed	296 F	£209,900	12/5950	650/5000	664/1500	2273kg	291	3.6	-	-	208	+ Dynamically Bentley's best - A V8 Speed would be better still
Bentley Continental GT V8	178 F	'12-'17	8/3993	500/6000	487/1700	2220kg	229	4.8	-	-	188	+ A proper driver's Bentley with decent economy - Makes the W12 seem pointless
Bentley Continental GT V8 S	204 F	'13-'17	8/3993	521/6000	502/1700	2220kg	238	4.5	-	-	192	+ An even better driver's Bentley - Vast weight makes its presence felt in harder driving
Bentley Continental GT	152 D	'03-'17	12/5998	567/6000	516/1700	2245kg	257	4.5	-	-	198	+ Near 200mph in utter comfort - Weight; W12's thirst
Bentley Continental Supersports	234 D	'17	12/5998	700/6000	750/2050	2205kg	323	3.5	-	-	209	+ Massive performance, surprisingly agile - Styling and soundtrack far from discreet
Bentley Continental GT3-R	203 D	'14-'17	8/3993	572/6000	518/1700	2120kg	274	3.8	-	-	170	+ The best-handling Continental of its generation - Expensive; it still weighs 2120kg
BMW 1-series M Coupé	277 F	'11-'12	6/2979	335/5900	369/1500	1495kg	228	4.9	-	-	155	+ Character, turbo pace and great looks - Came and went too quick
BMW M240i xDrive Coupé	297 D	£45,795	6/2998	369/5500	369/1900	1690kg	222	4.3	-	-	155	+ A pocket GT with bulging muscles - You might balk at the bulk
BMW M240i Coupé	229 D	'16-'21	6/2998	335/6800	369/1520	1470kg	232	4.8	-	-	155	+ Adjustable and plenty of fun - Lacks finesse and precision
BMW M2	243 F	'16-'18	6/2979	365/6500	369/1450							



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BMW M2 Competition	265 F	'18-'21	6/2979	404/5250	406/2350	1550kg	265	4.4	-	155
BMW M2 CS	285 F	'20-'21	6/2979	444/6250	406/2350	1550kg	291	4.2	-	155
BMW M440i xDrive	282 D	'14-'19	6/2998	425/5500	406/1850	1570kg	275	4.3	-	155
BMW M4 Competition (G82)	292 F	'17-'19	6/2993	503/6250	479/2750	1725kg	296	3.9	-	155
BMW M4 Competition xDrive (G82)	295 F	'17-'19	6/2993	503/6250	479/2750	1775kg	288	3.5	-	155
BMW M4 (F82)	218 F	'14-'19	6/2979	425/5500	406/1850	1570kg	275	4.3	-	155
BMW M4 Competition (F82)	262 F	'16-'20	6/2979	444/7000	406/1850	1570kg	287	4.3	4.4	9.2
BMW M4 CS (F82)	254 F	'17-'19	6/2979	454/6250	442/4000	1580kg	292	3.9	-	174
BMW M4 GTS (F82)	237 F	'16	6/2979	493/6250	442/4000	1510kg	332	3.8	3.7	8.0
BMW M3 (E92)	266 F	'07-'13	8/3999	414/8300	295/3900	1580kg	266	4.8	4.3	10.3
BMW M3 GTS (E92)	262 F	'10-'11	8/4361	444/8300	324/3750	1530kg	295	4.4	-	190
BMW M3 (E46)	266 F	'00-'07	6/3246	338/7900	269/5000	1495kg	230	5.2	5.1	12.3
BMW M3 CS (E46)	219 F	'05-'07	6/3246	338/7900	269/5000	1495kg	230	5.2	-	155
BMW M3 CSL (E46)	279 F	'03-'04	6/3246	355/7900	273/4900	1385kg	260	4.9	5.3	12.0
BMW M3 Evolution (E36)	148 F	'96-'98	6/3201	317/7400	258/3250	1515kg	215	5.5	5.4	12.8
BMW M3 (E30)	279 F	'89-'90	4/2302	212/6750	170/4600	1165kg	185	6.7	6.7	17.8
BMW Z4 M Coupé	097 F	'06-'09	6/3246	338/7900	269/4900	1420kg	242	5.0	-	155
BMW M Coupé (Z3)	263 F	'98-'02	6/3246	321/7400	261/4900	1375kg	237	5.3	-	155
BMW M840i xDrive	260 D	'06-'10	6/2993	316/4400	501/1750	1830kg	175	4.9	-	155
BMW M850i xDrive	256 F	'09-'15	8/4395	523/5500	553/1500	1890kg	281	3.7	-	155
BMW M8 Competition	272 D	'12-'18	8/4395	616/6000	553/1800	1885kg	332	3.2	-	155
BMW M6 (F13)	218 F	'12-'18	8/4395	552/6000	501/1500	1850kg	303	4.2	-	155
BMW M6 (E23)	106 F	'05-'10	10/4999	500/7750	384/6100	1635kg	311	4.2	4.8	10.0
BMW i8	210 F	'14-'20	3/1499	369/5800	420/3700	1535kg	244	4.4	-	155
Chevrolet Camaro Z/28	220 F	'14-'16	8/7008	505/6100	481/4800	1732kg	296	4.2	-	175
Chevrolet Corvette Stingray (C7)	197 F	'13-'19	8/6162	460/6000	465/4600	1496kg	312	4.2	4.4	9.4
Chevrolet Corvette Z06 (C7)	227 F	'15-'19	8/6162	650/6000	650/3600	1598kg	413	3.7	-	196
Chevrolet Corvette Stingray (C8)	270 F	'17-'20	8/6162	475/6450	452/5150	1655kg	292	3.5	-	184
Ford Mustang 5.0 V8 GT	266 F	'14-'13	8/4951	444/7000	393/4600	1743kg	259	4.9	-	155
Ford Mustang Mach 1	295 F	'05-'09	8/4951	454/7250	390/4900	1754kg	263	4.8	-	166
Ford Mustang Shelby GT500	292 F	'06-'10	8/5163	760/7300	625/5000	1897kg	407	3.3	-	180
Honda Integra Type R (DC2)	259 F	'96-'00	4/1797	187/8000	131/7300	1101kg	173	6.7	6.2	17.9
Jaguar F-Type P300 RWD	271 D	'14-'19	8/5000	444/6000	428/2500	1660kg	272	4.6	-	177
Jaguar F-Type P450 RWD	-	'14-'17	8/5000	542/6500	501/3500	1650kg	334	4.2	-	186
Jaguar F-Type R (RWD)	218 F	'14-'17	8/5000	542/6500	501/3500	1650kg	334	4.2	-	186
Jaguar F-Type R (P575 AWD)	271 D	'16-'19	8/5000	567/6500	516/3500	1743kg	331	3.5	-	186
Jaguar F-Type SVR	224 D	'16-'19	8/5000	567/6500	516/3500	1705kg	338	3.7	-	200
Jaguar XKR-S	168 F	'11-'14	8/5000	542/6000	502/2500	1753kg	314	4.4	-	186
Jannarely Design-I	279 F	'06-'10	6/3498	321	274	950kg	343	3.9	-	135
Lexus RC F	295 F	'16-'19	8/4969	470/6400	391/4800	1765kg	271	4.3	-	168
Lexus LC 500h	241 D	'16-'19	6/3456	354	-	1985kg	181	5.0	-	168
Lexus LC 500	290 F	'16-'19	8/4969	470/7100	398/4800	1935kg	247	4.7	-	168
Lister Thunder	247 D	'13-'15	8/5000	666/6000	720/5940	1650kg	410	3.2	-	208
Lotus Exige S (V6)	209 F	'12-'15	6/3456	345/7000	295/4500	1176kg	298	3.8	-	170
Lotus Exige Sport 350	221 F	'16-'21	6/3456	345/7000	295/4500	125kg	312	3.9	-	170
Lotus Exige Sport 380	231 F	'16-'18	6/3456	375/6700	302/5000	110kg	343	3.7	-	178
Lotus Exige Cup 380	240 D	'17	6/3456	375/6700	302/5000	1105kg	345	3.6	-	175
Lotus Exige Sport 410	283 F	'18-'21	6/3456	410/7000	310/3500	110kg	375	3.4	-	180
Lotus Exige Cup 430	253 F	'18-'21	6/3456	430/7000	325/2600	1093kg	400	3.3	-	180
Lotus Exige S (S2)	253 F	'06-'11	4/1796	218/7800	158/5500	930kg	238	4.3	-	148
Lotus Exige (S1)	200 F	'00-'01	4/1796	192/7800	146/5000	780kg	247	4.6	-	136
Lotus Evora	257 F	'09-'15	6/3456	276/6400	258/4700	1382kg	203	5.1	5.6	13.6
Lotus Evora S	268 F	'10-'15	6/3456	345/7000	295/4500	1430kg	245	4.8	-	172
Lotus Evora 400	116 F	'15-'18	6/3456	400/7000	302/3500	1395kg	291	4.2	-	186
Lotus Evora Sport 410	230 F	'17	6/3456	410/7000	310/3500	1325kg	314	4.2	-	190
Lotus Evora GT410	278 F	'20-'21	6/3456	410/7000	295/3500	136kg	306	4.2	-	186
Lotus Evora GT430	246 F	'18	6/3456	430/7000	325/4500	1299kg	336	3.8	-	190
Lotus Emira First Edition	299 F	'19-'21	6/3456	394/6000	310/3500	1482kg	270	4.3	-	180
Maserati GranTurismo Sport	188 F	'09-'15	8/4691	454/7000	383/4750	1880kg	245	4.8	-	186
Maserati GranTurismo MC	239 D	'10-'17	8/4691	454/7000	383/4750	1873kg	246	4.7	-	187
Maserati GranTurismo MC Stradale	193 F	'11-'17	8/4691	454/7000	383/4750	1800kg	256	4.5	-	188
Mercedes-AMG C63 S Coupé (W205)	262 F	'14-'19	8/3982	503/5500	516/2000	1745kg	293	3.9	-	180
Mercedes-Benz C63 AMG Coupé (W204)	162 F	'11-'14	8/6208	451/6800	442/5000	1655kg	277	4.5	4.4	10.3
Mercedes-Benz C63 AMG Black Series (W204)	171 F	'12-'13	8/6208	510/6800	457/5200	1635kg	317	4.2	-	186
Mercedes-Benz CLK63 AMG Black Series	277 F	'07-'09	8/6208	500/6800	464/5250	1760kg	289	4.2	-	186
Mercedes-AMG S63 Coupé	251 D	'12-'15	8/3982	604/5500	664/2750	1990kg	308	4.2	-	155
Mercedes-AMG S65 Coupé	209 D	'12-'15	12/5980	621/4800	737/2300	210kg	299	4.1	-	186
Mercedes-AMG GT	227 D	'16-'19	8/3982	469/6000	465/1700	1540kg	309	4.0	-	189
Mercedes-AMG GT S	216 F	'15-'19	8/3982	515/6250	494/1800	1570kg	333	3.8	-	193
Mercedes-AMG GT C	241 D	'17-'19	8/3982	549/5750	501/1900	1625kg	343	3.7	-	196
Mitsubishi 3000GT	-	'90-'99	6/2972	282/6000	300/3000	1779kg	167	5.8	-	159
Nissan 370Z	204 F	'09-'20	6/3696	323/7000	268/5200	1496kg	219	5.3	-	155
Nissan 370Z Nismo	209 F	'14-'20	6/3696	339/7400	274/5200	1496kg	230	5.2	-	155
Nissan 350Z	107 F	'03-'09	6/3498	309/6800	264/4800	1532kg	205	5.6	5.5	13.0
Nissan GT-R (2017MY)	242 F	'17-'22	6/3799	562/6800	470/3600	1752kg	326	2.7	-	196
Nissan GT-R Track Edition (2017MY)	229 D	'17-'22	6/3799	562/6800	470/3600	1745kg	327	2.7	-	196
Nissan GT-R Nismo (2020MY)	298 F	'20-'22	6/3799	592/6800	481/3600	1703kg	353	2.8	-	196
Nissan GT-R (2012MY-2016MY)	238 F	'12-'16	6/3799	542/6400	466/3200	1740kg	316	2.7	3.2	7.5
Nissan GT-R (2010MY)	252 F	'10-'12	6/3799	523/6400	451/3200	1740kg	305	3.0	-	194
Nissan GT-R (2008MY)	257 F	'08-'10	6/3799	473/6400	434/3200	1740kg	276	3.8	-	193
Nissan Skyline GT-R (R34)	265 F	'99-'02	6/2568	276/7000	289/4400	1560kg	180	4.8	4.7	12.5
Nissan Skyline GT-R (R33)	196 F	'97-'99	6/2568	276/6800	271/4400	1540kg	182	4.9	5.4	14.3
Noble M400	297 F	'04-'06	6/2968	425/6500	390/5000	1060kg	407	3.5	-	185
Polestar 1	269 D	'13-'16	4/1969	592/6000	737	2350kg	256	4.2	-	155
Porsche 718 Cayman	287 F	'14-'18	4/1988	296/6500	280/2150	1335kg	225	5.1	-	170
Porsche 718 Cayman T	270 F	'14-'18	4/1988	296/6500	280/2150	1350kg	223	5.1	-	170
Porsche 718 Cayman S	249 F	'14-'18	4/2497	345/6500	310/2100	1355kg	259	4.6	3.9	9.3
Porsche 718 Cayman GTS 4.0	283 F	'16-'19	6/3995	394/7000	310/5000	1405kg	285	4.5	-	182
Porsche 718 Cayman GT4	299 F	'16-'19	6/3995	414/7600	310/5000	1420kg	296	4.4	-	188
Porsche 718 Cayman GT4 RS	301 F	'16-'19	6/3996	493/8400	332/6750	1415kg	354	3.4	-	196
Porsche Cayman S (981)	202 F	'13-'16	6/3436	321/7400	273/4500	1320kg	247	5.0	4.5	10.5

EVO RATING

+ A more capable and involving M2 - More expensive and heavier, too	★★★★★
+ Evo Car of the Year 2020 - Such quality comes at a price	★★★★★
+ Punchy drivetrain with a chassis to match - That grille	★★★★★
+ Accomplished and fun - Weight gain and auto gearbox look questionable	★★★★★
+ Preferable to the already excellent rear-drive M4 - 4WD adds another 50kg	★★★★★
+ Ferociously fast - A handful on less-than-perfect or less-than-dry roads	★★★★★
+ The car the M4 always should have been - Shame everyone specs DCT	★★★★★
+ A further-honed M4 - It ain't cheap	★★★★★
+ Vast improvement on lesser M4s - So it should be given its price	★★★★★
+ Fends off all of its rivals... -...except the cheaper 1-series M Coupé	★★★★★
+ One of the most focused M-cars ever - Good luck trying to find one	★★★★★
+ One of the best BMWs ever. Runner-up in eCoty 2011 - Slightly artificial steering feel	★★★★★
+ CSL dynamics without CSL price - Looks like the standard car	★★★★★
+ Scall superb - Changes from the automated single-clutch 'box are... a... bit... sluggish	★★★★★
+ Performance, image - Never quite as good as the E30	★★★★★

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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)	265 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 S (992)	287 F	'16-'18	6/2981	380/6500	332/1950	1505kg	257	4.2	-	-	182	+ Fast, composed and comfortable - Misses the power and tech of more expensive 911s
Porsche 911 Carrera S (992)	285 F	'16-'18	6/2981	444/6500	391/1700	1480kg	305	4.2	-	-	191	+ An immaculately polished machine - Lacks character unless wrung out
Porsche 911 Carrera 4S (992)	285 F	'16-'18	6/2981	444/6500	391/1700	1530kg	295	4.2	-	-	190	+ Terrifically exciting when driven hard - You'll reach some big numbers when doing so
Porsche 911 Carrera GTS (992)	296 D	'11-13	6/2981	473/6500	420/2300	1510kg	318	4.1	-	-	193	+ Adds the missing final layer of 911 polish to the 992 - 911s have lost their affordability
Porsche 911 Carrera 4 GTS (992)	291 D	'11-13	6/2981	473/6500	420/2300	1560kg	308	4.1	-	-	192	+ Think Turbo-lite, with a touch of GT3 - Misses some of the subtler aspects of 911-ness
Porsche 911 Carrera (991.2)	218 F	'16-'18	6/2981	365/6500	332/1700	1430kg	259	4.6	-	-	183	+ Forced induction didn't ruin the Carrera - Purists won't be happy
Porsche 911 Carrera T (991.2)	264 F	'17-'18	6/2981	365/6500	332/1700	1425kg	260	4.5	-	-	182	+ Lightweight windows, no rear seats, an LSD... - Only 5kg lighter than a basic Carrera
Porsche 911 Carrera S (991.2)	217 F	'16-'18	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	'17-'19	6/2981	444/6500	406/2150	1450kg	311	4.1	-	-	193	+ Everything a 911 Carrera should be - Costs nearly £20k more than a basic Carrera
Porsche 911 Carrera 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 S (997.2)	121 F	'08-'11	6/3800	380/6500	310/4400	1425kg	271	4.7	-	-	188	+ Poise, precision, blinding pace - Feels a bit clinical
Porsche 911 Carrera S (997.1)	249 F	'04-'08	6/3824	350/6600	295/4600	1420kg	246	4.6	-	-	182	+evo Car of the Year 2004 - Do your homework on potential engine issues
Porsche 911 Carrera S (996, 3.4)	249 F	'98-'01	6/3387	300/6800	298/4600	1320kg	231	5.2	-	-	174	+ The first evo Car of the Year, and it still stacks up today - Might feel a smidge dated
Rolls-Royce Wraith	205 D	'12/6592	624/5600	590/1500	2360kg	260	4.6	-	-	-	155	+ Refinement, chassis, drivetrain - Shared componentry lets cabin down
Subaru BRZ	24.8 F	'12-'20	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 GR86	300 F	'19-'21	4/2387	231/7000	184/3700	1276kg	183	6.3	-	-	140	+ The car the GR86 always wanted to be - Sold out in 90 minutes
Toyota GT86	286 F	'12-'20	4/1998	197/7000	151/6400	1240kg	161	7.6	6.9	16.5	140	+ Puts playfulness ahead of outright performance - Feels strategically hobbled
Toyota GR Supra 2.0	287 F	'19-'21	4/1998	254/5000	295/1550	1395kg	185	5.2	-	-	155	+ Avoids the edginess of the 3-litre Supra - Lacks feel, feedback and bite
Toyota GR Supra	300 D	'19-'21	4/1998	335/5000	369/1600	1502kg	227	4.6	-	-	155	+ Better than his BMW Z4 cousin, especially with a manual - Not better than an M2 Comp
Toyota MR2 (Mk1)	237 F	'84-'89	4/1587	122/6600	105/5000	977kg	127	8.2	-	-	124	+ Mid-engined fun comes no more affordable - Finding a good one will take time
TVR Sagaris	265 F	'05-'07	6/3996	406/7000	349/5000	1078kg	383	3.7	-	-	185	+ Looks outrageous - 406bhp feels a touch optimistic
TVR Tuscan S (Mk2)	076 F	'05-'07	6/3996	400/7000	315/5250	1100kg	369	4.0	-	-	185	+ Possibly TVR's best ever car - Aerodynamic 'enhancements'
TVR Cerbera Speed Six	004 F	'98-'04	6/3996	350/6800	330/5000	1130kg	315	4.4	5.0	11.4	160+	+ Accomplished and desirable - When it's running

SUPERCARS / HYPERCARS



OUR CHOICE

McLaren 765LT. Runner-up at evo Car of the Year 2020, where it finished ahead of the Lamborghini Huracán Evo RWD and Ferrari F8 Tributo, the 765 melds mind-boggling pace with a remarkably talented chassis and sublime steering to deliver another unforgettable Longtail experience.



BEST OF THE REST

The **Lamborghini Huracán STO** (left) and **Tecnica** finally show the full potential of Sant'Agata's V10 model, the **Ferrari F8 Tributo** takes Maranello's mid-engined V8 line to a new state of the art, the latest **Porsche 911 GT3** improves upon an already brilliant model, and the **Maserati MC20** is a refreshing new addition to the supercar class.

Aston Martin DBS Superleggera	264 F	£225,000	12/5204	715/6500	664/1800	1770kg	410	3.4	-	-	211	+ Broad spread of talents - It's not really 'Superlight'
Aston Martin DBS Superleggera Volante	273 F	£247,500	12/5204	715/6500	664/1800	1863kg*	390	3.6	-	-	211	+ Dazzling looks, immense performance - Width and weight bring compromises
Aston Martin Vanquish S (Mk2)	260 F	'17-'18	12/5935	595/7000	465/5500	1739kg	348	3.5	3.9	8.3	201	+ Noise, poise, drama and charm - Not as rounded as the DB11
Aston Martin Vanquish S (Mk1)	110 F	'05-'07	12/5935	520/7000	425/5800	1875kg	282	4.8	4.9	10.1	200	+ Vanquish joins the supercar greats - A tad intimidating at the limit
Aston Martin V12 Speedster	287 F	'21-'22	12/5204	690/6500	555/5000	1700kg	410	3.4	-	-	298	+ Amusing to drive; genuine depth to its development - It's not the last word in anything
Aston Martin One-77	197 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 Performance RWD	297 D	'13-12	10/5204	562/7800	406/6400	1595kg	358	3.7	-	-	204	+ Magnificent V10 engine - Rear-drive chassis lacks the sparkle of the quattro's
Audi R8 V10 quattro	261 F	'20-'21	10/5204	562/8100	413/6300	1660kg	344	3.4	-	-	201	+ Beats the 992 Carrera - Could be the last of its kind
Audi R8 V10 Performance quattro	256 D	'15-19	10/5204	611/8250	428/6500	1595kg	389	3.1	-	-	205	+ Stunning V10; approachable performance - Optional Dynamic steering feels unnatural
Audi R8 V10 RWS (Mk2)	254 F	'17-19	10/5204	533/7800	398/6500	1590kg	341	3.7	-	-	199	+ The first rear-wheel-drive Audi for 40 years - Drives largely like its 4WD counterpart
Audi R8 V10 (Mk2)	234 F	'15-'19	10/5204	533/7800	398/6500	1640kg	330	3.5	-	-	198	+ All the R8 you really need - You can't get a manual gearbox
Audi R8 V10 (Mk1)	254 F	'09-'15	10/5204	518/8000	391/6500	1620kg	325	4.1	3.9	8.4	194	+ Real supercar feel - The V8 is cheaper, and still superb
Bugatti Chiron	244 F	'16-'22	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	'10-'11	16/7993	987/6000	922/2200	1888kg	531	2.5	2.8	5.8	253	+ Superbly engineered four-wheel-drive quad-turbo rocket - Er, lacks luggage space?
Bugatti Veyron 16.4 Super Sport	151 F	'10-'11	16/7993	1183/6400	1106/3000	1838kg	654	2.5	-	-	258	+ Was once the world's fastest supercar - Limited to 258mph for us mere mortals
Bugatti EB110	078 F	'91-'95	12/3500	552/8000	451/3750	1618kg	347	3.6	-	-	213	+ Superbly engineered four-wheel-drive quad-turbo rocket - It just fizzled out
Ferrari Roma	290 F	£170,720	8/3855	611/5750	560/3000	1570kg	395	3.4	-	-	199+	+ Not far off being a front-engined F8 - Choosing between a Roma and an F8
Ferrari Portofino M	288 D	£175,345	8/3855	611/5750	560/3000	1664kg	373	3.5	-	-	199	+ Matches usability to supercar performance - Lacks the passion of the best Ferraris
Ferrari F8 Tributo	281 F	£203,476	8/3902	710/8000	568/3250	1435kg	503	2.9	-	-	211	+ Ferrari's best series-production V8 ever - The hybrids are coming
Ferrari F8 Spider	276 D	£225,897	8/3902	710/8000	568/3250	1400kg*	515	2.9	-	-	211	+ As above, with a folding hard-top - Some may prefer McLaren's 720S Spider
Ferrari 488 GTB	228 F	'15-'19	8/3902	661/6500	561/3000	1475kg	455	3.0	-	-	205+	+ Staggeringly capable - Lacks a little of the 458's heart and excitement
Ferrari 488 Pista	262 F	'18-'20	8/3902	710/8000	568/3000	1385kg	521	2.9	-	-	211+	+ Searingly fast and effortlessly capable - Takes a while to fully appreciate it
Ferrari 458 Italia	288 F	'09-'15	8/4497	562/9000	398/6000	1485kg	384	3.4	3.2	6.8	202+	+ An astounding achievement - Paddleshift only
Ferrari 458 Speciale	301 F	'13-'15	8/4497	597/9000	398/6000	1395kg	435	3.0	-	-	202+	+evo Car of the Year 2014 - If you don't own a regular 458, nothing
Ferrari F430	254 F	'04-'10	8/4308	483/8500	343/5250	1449kg	339	4.0	-	-	196+	+ Just brilliant - Didn't you read the plus point?
Ferrari 430 Scuderia	274 F	'07-'10	8/4308	503/8500	347/5250	1350kg	378	3.6	3.5	7.7	198	+ Successful F1 technology transplant - Likes to shout about it
Ferrari 360 Modena	163 F	'99-'04	8/3586	394/8500	275/4750	1390kg	288	4.5	-	-	183+	+ Worthly successor to 355 - Not quite as involving as it should be
Ferrari 360 Challenge Stradale	274 F	'03-'04	8/3586	420/8500	275/4750	1280kg	333	4.1	-	-	186	+ Totally exhilarating road-racer - Automated single-clutch 'box dates it
Ferrari F355 Berlinetta	231 F	'94-'99	8/3496	374/8250	268/6000	1350kg*	281	4.7	-	-	183	+ Looks terrific, sounds even better - Are you kidding?
Ferrari 348 GT Competizione	274 F	'93	8/3404	316/7200	239/5000	1180kg*	276	5.0	-	-	175	+ Utterly absorbing, with exceptional dynamics - Steering a little woolly
Ferrari 296 GTB	296 F	£245,000	6/2992	819/8000	546/6250	1470kg*	566	2.9	-	-	205	+ Indulgently powerful, responsive, makes a success of hybrid tech - It's rather pricey
Ferrari 812 Superfast	275 F	£262,963	12/6496	789/8500	529/7000	1630kg	492	2.9	3.1	6.2	211	+ Incredible engine - Finding opportunities to exploit it
Ferrari 812 GTS	280 F	£293,150	12/6496	789/8500	529/7000	1645kg*	487	3.0	-	-	211+	+ A brilliant return for the front-engined V12 Ferrari Spider - There won't be many more
Ferrari 812 Competizione	292 F	£446,970	12/6496	819/9250	510/7000	1487kg*	560	2.9	-	-	211+	+ Phenomenally exciting - Requires plenty of respect at all times
Ferrari F12 Berlinetta	275 F	'12-'17	12/6262	730/8250	509/6000	1630kg	455	3.1	-	-	211+	+ 730bhp isn't too much power for the road - Super-quick steering is an acquired taste
Ferrari F12tdf	230 F	'17	12/6262	769/8500	342/5250	1520kg	514	2.9	-	-	211+	+ Alarmingly fast - Doesn't flow like a 458 Speciale
Ferrari 599 GTB Fiorano	275 F	'06-'12	12/5999	611/7600	448/5600	1690kg	368	3.7	3.5	7.4	205	+evo Car of the Year 2006 - Banks are getting harder to rob
Ferrari 599 GTO	161 F	'11-'12	12/5999	661/8250	457/6500	1605kg	418	3.4	-	-	208+	+ One of the truly great Ferraris - Erm, the air con isn't very good
Ferrari 575M Fiorano Handling Pack	200 F	'02-'06	12/5748	508/7250	434/5250	1688kg	298	3.7	4.2	9.6	205+	+ Fiorano pack makes 575 truly great - It should have been standard
Ferrari 550 Maranello	275 F	'96-'02	12/5474	478/7000	420/5000	1690kg	287	4.4	-	-	199	+ Everything - Nothing
Ferrari GT4 Lusso T	246 D	'17-'20	8/3855	602/7500	560/3000	1865kg	328	3.5	-	-	199	+ Effortless, comfortable GT - Misses the richer soundtrack of the V12
Ferrari GT4 Lusso	264 F	'16-'20	12/6262	680/8000	514/5750	1920kg	360	3.4	-	-	208	+ Rear-wheel steering increases agility - Not as engaging as other Ferraris
Ferrari FF	194 F	'11-'15	12/6262	651/8000	504/6000	1880kg	347	3.7	-	-	208	+ Four seats and 4WD, but a proper Ferrari - Not looking as dated opinion
Ferrari 612 Scaglietti	090 F	'04-'11	12/5748	533/7250	434/5250	1875kg	289	4.0	4.3	9.8	199	+ Awesomely capable grand tourer - See above
Ferrari SF90 Stradale	299 F	£376,048	8/3990	986/7500	-	1570kg*	638	2.5	-	-	211	+ Hugely fast hybrid-hypercar - Can feel clumsy when hustled
Ferrari SF90 Spider	300 D	£418,233	8/3990	986/7500	-	1670kg*	600	2.5	-	-	211	+ Mesmerising V8 with expertly integrated hybrid system - You need to pack light
Ferrari LaFerrari	203 F	'13-'15	12/6262	950/9000	664/6750	1574kg	613	3.0	-	-	217+	+ Perhaps the greatest Ferrari ever - Brakes lack a touch of precision on track
Ferrari Enzo	275 F	'02-'04	12/5999									

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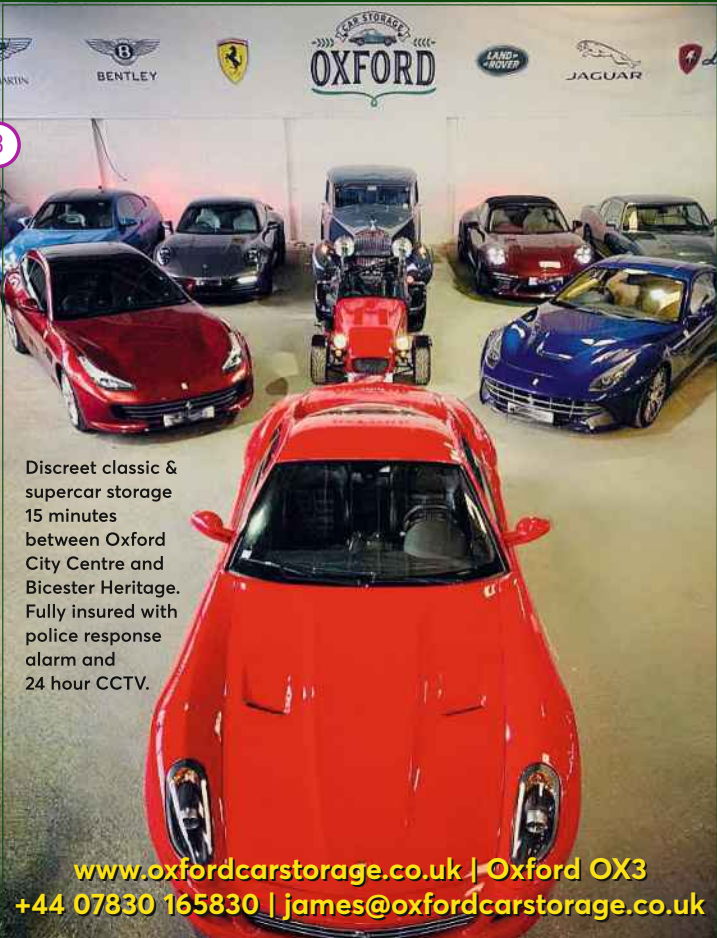
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MAKE & MODEL	ISSUE NO.	PRICE (ON THE ROAD IN UK)	ENGINE CV/L/CC	BHP/RPM	LB FT/RPM	WEIGHT	BHP/TON	0-60MPH (s)	0-100MPH (s)	0-150MPH (s)	MAX MPH	EVO RATING
Ferrari F40	275 F	'87-'92	8/2936	471/7000	426/4000	1100kg*	437	4.1	-	-	201	+ Brutally fast - It's in the dictionary under 'turbo lag'
Ford GT	253 F	\$450,000	6/3497	647/6250	550/5900	1385kg*	475	2.8	-	-	216	+ Everything it does on track - Too many of the things it does on the road
Ford GT	200 F	'04-'06	8/5409	550/6500	500/3750	1583kg	353	3.9	-	-	205	+ evo Car of the Year 2005 - Don't scalp yourself getting in
Honda NSX	270 F	£144,765	6/3493	573	476/2000	1776kg	328	2.9	3.0	6.9	191	+ Blisteringly quick and brilliantly engineered - Limited range on a full tank
Honda NSX (NA2)	188 F	'97-'05	6/3179	276/7300	224/5300	1410kg	196	5.7	-	-	168	+ The original useable supercar - 276bhp sounds a bit weedy today
Honda NSX-R (NA2)	301 F	'02-'03	6/3179	276/7300	224/5300	1270kg	221	4.4	-	-	168	+ evo Car of the Year 2002 - Hard to find
Jaguar XJ220	157 F	'92-'94	6/3498	542/7200	475/4500	1470kg	375	3.7	-	-	213	+ Britain's greatest supercar... -...until McLaren built the F1
Koenigsegg One:1	202 F	'14-'15	8/5065	1341/7500	1011/6000	1360kg	1002	2.9	-	-	273	+ One of the most powerful cars we've tested - We couldn't afford one
Koenigsegg Agera R	180 F	'11-'14	8/5032	1124/7100	885/2700	1435kg	796	2.8	-	-	273	+ As fast and exciting as your body can handle - It's Veyron money
Koenigsegg CCRX Edition	118 F	'08-'10	8/4800	1004/7000	796/5600	1280kg*	797	2.9	-	-	250+	+ One of the world's fastest cars - Spiky power delivery
Lamborghini Huracán	209 D	'14-'19	10/5204	602/8250	413/6500	1422kg*	430	3.2	-	-	201+	+ Defies the numbers; incredible point-to-point pace - Takes work to find its sweet-spot
Lamborghini Huracán Evo RWD	281 F	£164,400	10/5204	602/8000	413/6500	1389kg*	440	3.3	-	-	202	+ The most complete Huracán yet - Prescriptive driver modes still frustrate
Lamborghini Huracán Evo	264 F	£198,307	10/5204	631/8000	442/6500	1422kg*	451	2.9	-	-	202+	+ Performante engine, trick chassis - Badly needs an 'Ego' mode for road driving
Lamborghini Huracán Evo Spyder	269 F	£218,137	10/5204	631/8000	442/6500	1542kg*	416	3.1	-	-	202	+ Drop-top driving enhances that epic V10 - Being mistaken for a King's Road poser
Lamborghini Huracán Performante	242 F	'17-'19	10/5204	631/8000	442/6500	1382kg*	464	2.9	-	-	201+	+ The realisation of the Huracán's ever elusive potential - Kitchen-worktop carbonfibre
Lamborghini Huracán Tecnica	301 D	£212,000	10/5204	631/8000	417/6500	1379kg*	450	3.2	-	-	202	+ The Huracán bows out on an all-time high - We won't see its like again
Lamborghini Huracán STO	301 F	£260,012	10/5204	631/8000	417/6500	1339kg*	479	3.0	-	-	193	+ The Huracán's full potential finally unleashed - A touch showy, perhaps?
Lamborghini Gallardo LP550-2 Balboni	138 F	'09-'10	10/5204	542/8000	398/6500	1380kg*	399	3.9	-	-	199	+ Mad, rear-wheel-drive Lambo - Limited numbers
Lamborghini Gallardo LP560-4	180 D	'08-'13	10/5204	552/8000	398/6500	1410kg*	398	3.7	-	-	202	+ Still a missile from A to B - Feels a little dated next to some rivals
Lamborghini Gallardo LP570-4 Superleggera	152 F	'10-'13	10/5204	562/8000	398/6500	1340kg*	426	3.4	3.5	-	202	+ Less weight and more power than original Superleggera - LP560-4 runs it very close
Lamborghini Gallardo	094 F	'03-'08	10/4961	513/8000	376/4250	1430kg*	364	4.0	4.3	9.4	196	+ On a full-bore start it spins all four wheels. Cool - Slightly clunky e-gear
Lamborghini Aventador	194 F	'11-'17	12/6498	690/8250	509/5500	1575kg*	445	2.9	-	-	217	+ Most important new Lambo since the Countach - Can feel a little clumsy
Lamborghini Aventador S	246 F	'16-'21	12/6498	730/8400	509/5500	1575kg*	471	2.9	-	-	217	+ A more agile, more connected Aventador - Synthetic steering
Lamborghini Aventador SV	216 F	'15-'17	12/6498	740/8400	509/5500	1525kg*	493	2.8	-	-	217+	+ More exciting than the standard Aventador - ISR gearbox inconsistent
Lamborghini Aventador SVJ	282 F	£360,000	12/6498	759/8500	531/6750	1525kg*	506	2.8	-	-	218	+ A significant step on from the SV - Have we mentioned the gearbox?
Lamborghini Aventador SVJ Roadster	268 D	£387,987	12/6498	759/8500	531/6750	1575kg*	490	2.9	-	-	217+	+ Increased exposure to that V12 - Next time it'll have electric assistance
Lamborghini Aventador LP780-4 Ultimae	300 F	£324,000	12/6498	769/8500	531/6750	1550kg*	504	2.8	-	-	221	+ The final traditional V12 Lambo - We'll never see its kind again
Lamborghini Sián FKP 37	284 F	£3120,000	12/6498	808/8500	531/6750	1595kg*	515	<2.8	-	-	220	+ Our kind of hybrid - Ferociously expensive
Lamborghini Countach LP1 800-4	300 F	£2,000,000	12/6498	802/8500	531/6750	1595kg*	511	2.8	-	-	221	+ Retro looks, Sián supercapacitor tech - An Ultimae is a sixth of the price
Lamborghini Murciélago	089 D	'01-'06	12/6192	572/7500	479/5400	1650kg*	351	4.0	-	-	206	+ Gorgeous, capable and incredibly friendly - V12 feels stressed
Lamborghini Murciélago LP640	275 F	'06-'11	12/6496	631/8000	487/6000	1665kg*	385	3.8	-	-	211	+ Compelling old-school supercar - You'd better be on your toes
Lamborghini Murciélago LP670-4 SV	200 F	'09-'11	12/6496	661/8000	487/6500	1565kg*	429	3.3	3.2	7.3	212	+ A supercar in its truest, wildest sense - Be prepared for stares
Lamborghini Diablo VT 6.0	275 F	'00-'02	12/5992	543/7100	451/5500	1625kg*	343	3.9	-	-	208	+ Best-built, best-looking Diablo of all - People's perceptions
Lexus LFA/LFA Nürburgring	200 F	'10-'12	10/4805	552/8700	354/6800	1480kg	379	3.7	-	-	202	+ Absurd and compelling supercar - Badge and price don't quite match
Lotus Esprit Sport 350	171 F	'99-'01	8/3506	349/6500	295/4250	1299kg	274	4.3	-	-	175	+ Lotus'sukka V8-powered supercar - Weight of that V8 makes it more intimidating
Maserati MC20	294 F	£190,275	6/2992	621/7500	538/3000	1475kg	428	2.9	-	-	203	+ A triumphant return to form for Maserati - Rorty engine is at odds with rest of the car
McLaren 570S	229 F	'15-'19	8/3799	562/7500	443/5000	1452kg	393	3.2	-	-	204	+ A truly fun and engaging sports car - McLaren doesn't call it a supercar!
McLaren 570GT	261 F	'16-'18	8/3799	562/7500	443/5000	1498kg	381	3.4	-	-	204	+ Blurs the line between grand tourer and supercar brilliantly - 570S is more involving
McLaren 600LT	257 F	'18-'21	8/3799	592/7500	457/5500	1356kg	444	2.9	-	-	204	+ evo Car of the Year 2018 - There's no glovebox
McLaren 620R	268 F	'20-'21	8/3799	611/7500	457/5500	1386kg	448	2.9	-	-	200	+ A true 911 GT3 RS rival - The GT3 RS has a more scintillating engine
McLaren GT	296 F	£165,230	8/3994	612/7500	465/5500	1530kg	406	3.2	-	-	203	+ Fiery performance; refinement - Don't expect a 720S to emerge on a great road
McLaren Artura	300 F	£189,200	6/2993	671/7500	530/2250	1498kg	455	3.0	-	-	205	+ Surreal performance and total precision - Only feels truly alive on track
McLaren 720S	262 F	£208,600	8/3994	710/7250	568/5500	1419kg	508	2.9	2.9	5.6	212	+ evo Car of the Year 2017 - Favours precision over emotion
McLaren 720S Spider	288 F	£242,000	8/3994	710/7250	568/5500	1468kg	491	2.9	-	-	212	+ Every bit as ballistic as the coupe - But a fraction less precise
McLaren 765LT	281 F	£280,000	8/3994	754/7500	590/5500	1339kg	572	2.8	-	-	205	+ Intense, extreme, insane - How much do you value your driving licence?
McLaren 765LT Spider	293 D	£310,500	8/3994	754/7500	590/5500	1388kg	553	2.8	-	-	205	+ Everything the 765LT coupe is and more - Ferociously expensive, especially with options
McLaren 650S	196 F	'14-'17	8/3799	641/7250	500/6000	1428kg	456	3.0	-	-	207	+ Better brakes, balance and looks than 12C; more power too - Which all comes at a price
McLaren 675LT	248 F	'15-'17	8/3799	666/7100	516/5500	1328kg	510	2.9	-	-	205	+ Runner-up at eCoty 2015; asks questions of the P1 - Aventador price tag
McLaren 12C	264 F	'11-'14	8/3799	616/7500	442/3000	1434kg	435	3.3	-	-	207	+ Staggering performance, refinement - Engine noise can be grating
McLaren Senna	252 F	£750,000	8/3999	789/7250	590/5500	1198kg*	669	2.8	-	-	211	+ Astounding performance, stellar presence - Only 500 being made
McLaren Elva	294 D	£1,425,000	8/3994	804/7500	590/5500	1269kg	644	2.8	-	-	203	+ Stupendous performance - Lacks the connection of the 765LT
McLaren P1	276 F	'13-'15	8/3799	903/7500	664/4000	1490kg	616	2.8	-	-	217	+ Freakish breadth of ability - At its mind-bending best on track
McLaren F1	228 F	'94-'98	12/6064	627/7500	479/4000	1138kg	560	3.2	-	-	240	+ Still the most single-minded supercar ever - The air con was a bit weak
Mercedes-AMG GT R	261 D	£158,285	8/3982	571/6250	516/2100	1575kg	372	3.6	3.3	7.1	198	+ Fun and blisteringly fast; a true rival for the 911 GT3 - A touch showy, perhaps
Mercedes-AMG GT R Pro	269 F	'19-'20	8/3982	577/6250	516/2100	1561kg	376	3.6	-	-	198	+ A GT R fine-tuned for the track - A 911 GT3 RS has the edge
Mercedes-AMG GT Black Series	283 F	£335,000	8/3982	720/6100	590/2000	1520kg	480	3.2	-	-	202	+ Terrifyingly fast and capable - Subtle it ain't
Mercedes-Benz SLS AMG	264 F	'10-'15	8/6208	563/6800	479/4750	1620kg	335	3.9	4.1	8.4	197	+ Great engine and chassis (gullwing doors too!) - Slightly tardy gearbox
Mercedes-Benz SLS AMG Black Series	204 F	'13-'15	8/6208	622/7400	468/5500	1550kg	408	3.6	-	-	196	+ Stunning engine, superb body control - Be careful on less-than-smooth roads...
Mercedes-Benz SLR McLaren	228 F	'03-'07	8/5439	617/6500	575/3250	1693kg	370	3.8	-	-	208	+ Zonda-pace, 575-style drivability - Dreadful brake feel
Noble M600	186 F	'09-'18	8/4439	650/6800	604/3800	1198kg*	551	3.5	3.8	7.7	225	+ Spiritual successor to the Ferrari F40 - Quite a lot rarer
Pagani Huayra	185 F	c£1m	12/5980	720/5800	731/2250	1350kg*	542	3.3	-	-	224	+ Joint evo Car of the Year 2012 - Engine isn't as nape-pricking as the Zonda's
Pagani Zonda S (7.3)	096 F	'02-'05	12/7291	547/5900	553/4050	1280kg*	434	3.7	-	-	197	+ evo Car of the Year 2001 (in earlier 7.0 form) - Values have gone up a fair bit since then
Pagani Zonda F	295 F	'05-'06	12/7291	594/6150	560/4000	1230kg*	491	3.6	-	-	214+	+ Everything an Italian supercar ought to be - Looks a bit blingy next to a Carrera GT
Porsche 911 GT3 (992)	299 F	£127,820	6/3996	503/8400	347/6100	1418kg	360	3.9	-	-	199	+ Agile, sharp and hugely desirable - Deciding if you want standard or Touring spec
Porsche 911 GT3 (991.2)	256 F	'17-'19	6/3996	493/8250	339/6000	1413kg	355	3.9	-	-	198	+ Almost impossible to criticise - Wasn't the easiest car to place an order for
Porsche 911 GT3 RS (991.2)	278 F	'18-'20	6/3996	513/8250	347/6000	1430kg	364	3.2	-	-	193	+ Even better than the 991.1 RS - Demand exceeded supply
Porsche 911 GT2 RS (991.2)	257 F	'18-'19	6/3800	690/7000	553/2500	1470kg	477	2.8	-	-	211	+ A proper, angry turbocharged Porsche - Limited availability
Porsche 911 GT3 (991.1)	206 F	'13-'16	6/3799	468/8250	324/6250	1430kg	333	3.5	-	-	196	+ evo Car of the Year 2013 - PDK only
Porsche 911 GT3 RS (991.1)	223 F	'15-'16	6/3996	493/8250	339/6250	1420kg	353	3.3	3.0	7.1	193	+ Sensationally good to drive - The Cayman GT4 is even better
Porsche 911 R (991.1)	229 F	'16	6/3996	493/8250	339/6250	1370kg	366	3.8	-	-	200	+ evo Car of the Year 2016 - Limited availability
Porsche 911 GT3 (997.2)	182 F	'09-'11	6/3797	429/7600	317/6250	1395kg	312	4.1	4.2	9.2	194	+ Even better than the car it replaced - Give us a minute...
Porsche 911 GT3 RS (3.8, 997.2)	248 F	'10-'11	6/3797	444/7900	317/6750	1370kg	329	4.0	-	-	193	+ We named it our favourite car from the first 200 issues of evo - For people like us, nothing
Porsche 911 GT3 RS 4.0 (997.2)	274 F	'11-'12	6/3996	493/8250	339/5750	1360kg	368	3.8	-	-	193	+ evo Car of the Year 2011 - Unforgiving on-road ride; crazy used prices
Porsche 911 GT2 RS (997.2)	204 F	'10-'13	6/3600	611/6500	516/2250	1370kg	453	3.5	-	-	205	+ More powerful than a Carrera GT. Handles, too - Erm...
Porsche 911 GT3 (997.1)	182 F	'07-'09	6/3600	409/7600	298/5500	1395kg	298	4.3	4.3	9.4	192	+ Runner-up at evo Car of the Year 2006 - Ferrari 599 GTBs
Porsche 911 GT3 RS (997.1)	112 F	'07-'09	6/3600	409/7600	298/5500	1375kg	302	4.2	-	-	193	+ evo Car of the Year 2007 - A chunk more money than the already brilliant GT3
Porsche 911 GT3 (996.2)	221 F	'03-'05	6/3600	375/7400	284/5000	1390kg	272	4.5	4.3	9.2	190	+ evo Car of the Year 2003 - Chassis a bit too track-focused for some roads
Porsche 911 GT3 RS (996.2)	068 F											



Getting the RS in

How a chance encounter saw a 911 Carrera upgraded to a 2.7 RS for this milestone-marking evo gathering

WITH THIS MONTH'S LAUNCH OF A NEW Porsche RS model, fifty years after the first, it seemed appropriate to go back to issue 013, because tucked away at the back of the group of cars on the cover is a distinctive ducktail. But it should have been a rather different wing.

The 'Perfect 10' test was devised partly as a celebration of *evo* being a year old and partly to mark the end of the millennium.

'I think,' recalls Stuart Gallagher, who was then only a slightly more fresh-faced staff writer, 'that Dickie Meaden had the idea. Or it could have been Peter Tomalin. Most likely it was a hybrid idea between the pair of them, but it was based around the feared millennium bug that was threatening to bring all civilisation to halt. If we really were going to go back to the Dark Ages, where mobile phones wouldn't work, planes would fall from the sky and petrol pumps wouldn't dispense a millilitre of fuel and our lives would grind to a halt, what would we pour our last gallon of petrol into?'

So presumably everyone then downed tools and spent the rest of the day sitting around drinking tea, eating Bourbon biscuits, drinking more tea, ordering McDonald's and cogitating what to choose?

'Spot on. Peter picked a...'

Peck of pickled peppers?

'No, a Le Mans winning C-type. And then, not to be outdone, Dickie went for a 250 SWB. But not any old SWB, Stirling Moss's SWB. An F40 appeared on the list, Harry plumped for a Bugatti Type 51, a Light Car Company Rocket came out of nowhere followed by Gordon Murray's other car, the McLaren F1, which was favoured by John Barker. One Ferrari wouldn't do, of course, and Jeff Daniels cast his vote for the Daytona. Roger Green went for the Countach, because why not? Although he did look a little crestfallen to discover it didn't come with Farrah Fawcett in the passenger seat. And, this being *evo*, of course we had a road-going rally rep in the shape of a 22B, thanks to the late, great Russell Bulgin. You can spot what's missing though, can't you?'

So you picked the greatest 911, ever?

'Well, not exactly. In fact not at all. The car I wanted to select was new and it felt a bit of a cop-out, but I really wanted to pour my £2.81 gallon of unleaded into a 996.1 GT3. I was still new to 911s – the 996 Carrera was the first I'd ever driven – and the GT3 had blown my mind when I'd driven it earlier in the year.'

Fair enough. The GT3 is still incredible. So how did you turn it into a 2.7 RS?

'Well, things got worse before they got better. Porsche's GT3 wasn't available on the day of the gathering at Goodwood, but they did have a Carrera 2 with the Aerokit, so it looked like a GT3 if you squinted...'

I really hope Jethro doesn't read this.

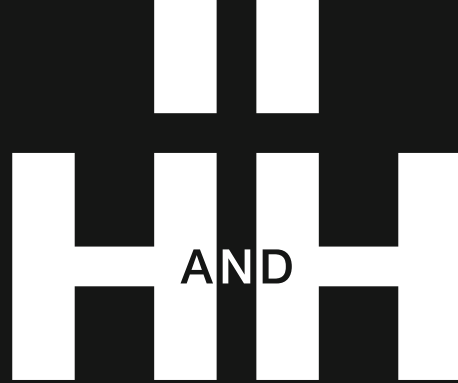
'Anyway, when we arrived at Goodwood, we parked up near the cricket pitch in front of the house, whereupon a gentleman in his cricket whites strolled over, politely asking what we were doing. After the plan was

explained, the cars introduced and reasoning given for their inclusion, he politely suggested that instead of using today's 911 we really should use his 911, which we were most welcome to avail ourselves of while he went to have tea.

'And that's how I got to drive Viscount Linley's Carrera 2.7 RS for issue 13, which very much was the correct 911 into which to pour your last gallon of fuel.

'I took the 996 home, though, which was fortuitous because someone used it as a brake when I was stationary at a set of traffic lights.'





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