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**ANALYSIS**

*£44k BMW M2*

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# Ed Speak



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**P**ICTURE THE PERFECT road. I daydream about it quite often – a fantasy scenario that involves stitching together all the great roads I've been lucky enough to experience into one long, epic route. It goes something like this...

I'd start on my local Cambridgeshire roads just to ease myself in. There's a great stretch of the B660 near Glatton: green fields, good visibility, some long corners to feel the forces build on the tyres. I'd then take an immediate left onto the California State Route 75 at Palm Desert and drive the craggy splendour that is the Pines to Palms Highway. At Carrizo Creek I'd turn around and do the route again, just for the hell of it.

Next, I'd take the exit to Hatta, east of Dubai. Here you spend most of your journey looking out of the side window as the magnificent Hajar Mountains loom in the distance. Then, having taken deep gulps of the mountain air, I'd sweep through the valleys of Lombardy, grab a cappuccino in Bormio, and then continue to cruise along the SP29 to Ponte di Legno. This would take me through the Stelvio, which is a nice thing to do, but I've always preferred the stretches either side of the hairpins to the sharp corners themselves.

With the roads opening up and the pace quickening, I'd enjoy that wonderful feeling of locomotion a little longer and cling to the edge of Ranfjord in Norway, and specifically the E6 from Korgen to Mo i Rana. The allure of Nordkapp would overwhelm me here, so I'd keep going. And going. And going. To the Arctic Circle Raceway, for a quick lap or two (it's summer), then to the Saltfjället-Svartisen National Park, where I'd stop

*'Imagine stitching all the great roads together in one long, epic route'*

the car and spend a few moments trying to take in the majesty of the landscape.

I'd be looking for an adrenalin hit after this, so time to tackle Route 318 in Nevada, from Lund in White Pine County to Hiko in Lincoln County. Conveniently, it always seems to be Silver State Classic Challenge race day when I drive the 318 in my daydreams, so I push on...

I'd need a rest after this, so I'd take a relaxing drive to Pendennis Head in Falmouth, park the car and take in the view across the Channel. Then I'd head west across the Lizard Peninsula to the most beautiful beach in the world, Kynance Cove.

Halfway through this year's incredible *evo* Car of the Year test I realised that I was experiencing my daydream – actually living and breathing my fantasy drive on the North Coast 500 route. This extraordinary loop around the Highlands has everything: craggy mountains, epic valleys, wide-open roads, white-sand beaches, views, hairpins and lakes, lochs and ocean. It's been nicknamed 'Britain's Route 66', but it's so much more than that. How much more? Put it this way, I'm struggling to think of a better place anywhere in the world to enjoy the thrill of driving.

To the North Highland Initiative and the North Coast 500, to the staff, to the fantastically friendly people along the route, and to Prince Charles for supporting it, I salute you. ☒

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# CONTENTS

ISSUE 216 CAR OF THE YEAR 2015

## FEATURES

- |                                                                                           |                                                                                         |
|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 060                                                                                       | 112                                                                                     |
| <b>CAR OF THE YEAR</b>                                                                    | <b>FAST ESTATES</b>                                                                     |
| <i>Eleven cars in the spectacular Scottish Highlands but only one winner</i>              | <i>Who doesn't love 'em? Mercedes-AMG C63 takes on the naturally aspirated Audi RS4</i> |
| 098                                                                                       | 118                                                                                     |
| <b>ICON: SKYLINE 400R</b>                                                                 | <b>McLAREN 570S</b>                                                                     |
| <i>Road-legal but highly modified, the 400R was the most extreme of the R33 Skylines</i>  | <i>Woking's hotly anticipated entry-level sports car has finally hit the road</i>       |
| 106                                                                                       | 126                                                                                     |
| <b>DRIVER: NICK TANDY</b>                                                                 | <b>RENAULT RACERS</b>                                                                   |
| <i>The Le Mans-winning Porsche factory driver at the top of his game. He talks to evo</i> | <i>Hardcore Renault 5 GT Turbo takes on three Clio Cups. What could go wrong?</i>       |

## REGULARS

- |                                                                               |                                                                                         |
|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 011                                                                           | 135                                                                                     |
| <b>NEWS</b>                                                                   | <b>LONG-TERM TESTS</b>                                                                  |
| <i>BMW's M2 arrives along with the most potent front-engined Ferrari ever</i> | <i>Hello Golf R, a Mégane Trophy report, plus a Focus ST Diesel road trip</i>           |
| 051                                                                           | 151                                                                                     |
| <b>COLUMNS</b>                                                                | <b>EVO MARKET</b>                                                                       |
| <i>Richard Meaden, Richard Porter and Dario Franchitti</i>                    | <i>Your first supercar, three £10k rivals plus a BMW M135i buying guide</i>             |
| 057                                                                           | 194                                                                                     |
| <b>LETTERS</b>                                                                | <b>ART OF SPEED</b>                                                                     |
| <i>Drop the sycophancy, guys, the new MX-5 just isn't fast enough to buy</i>  | <i>More a metaphorical shark's fin than a duck's tail, it's the Integrale's spoiler</i> |

## DRIVEN

- |                                  |                      |
|----------------------------------|----------------------|
| 038                              | 046                  |
| <b>Ferrari 488 Spider</b>        | <b>DMS M5</b>        |
| 042                              | 048                  |
| <b>Nissan GT-R Track Edition</b> | <b>Audi A4 Avant</b> |
| 044                              |                      |
| <b>DS 4 210 THP</b>              |                      |



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Official fuel consumption for the Volvo V40 T2 R-Design (manual) in MPG (l/100km): Urban 38.7 (7.3), Extra Urban 62.8 (4.5), Combined 51.4 (5.5). CO<sub>2</sub> Emissions sales only. \*Subject to availability at participating dealers only on vehicles registered between 01/10/15 and 31/12/15. At the end of the agreement there are 3 options: (i) Renew: Part exchange the vehicle. (ii) Retain: Pay Indemnity may be required. Volvo Car Credit RH1 1SR. **You will not own the vehicle until all payments are made.** The service offer is only applicable when purchasing on Volvo Advantage Personal Contract Purchase on





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Interest charges	£2,718.50
Total amount payable	£22,581
Optional final payment	£8,650
Duration of agreement (months)	49
Fixed rate of interest p.a.	2.52%
Mileage per annum	8,000
Excess mileage charge	14.9p per mile

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Solutions Personal Contract Plan\* representative example for Bentley Continental GT V8 S Coupé 4.0 subject to a 25 month, 5,000 mile per annum agreement

Duration	25 Months	Cost of Options (included in cash price of vehicle)	£6,140.00	Total amount of credit	£94,654.57
Deposit	£42,210.51	Acceptance fee**	£0.00	Representative APR	6.60% APR
Deposit Contribution	£20,000.00	Optional final payment	£85,120.00	Rate of interest	6.61% fixed
Total Deposit	£62,210.51	Option to purchase fee***	£10.00	Excess mileage charge	72p per mile
24 Monthly Payments of	£899.00	Total amount payable	£168,916.51		
Cash Price of Vehicle	£156,865.00	Total amount payable by customer	£148,916.51		

Continental GT V8 S fuel consumption in mpg (EU Drive Cycle): Urban 18; Extra Urban 36.2; Combined 26.4. CO<sub>2</sub> Emissions 250 g/km.

\*At the end of the agreement there are three options: i) own the vehicle: pay the optional final payment; ii) return the vehicle: subject to fair wear and tear, charges may apply; or iii) replace: part exchange the vehicle.

Available on Solutions Personal Contract Plan. \*\*Payable with first payment. \*\*\*Payable with optional final payment. 18s and over. Subject to availability. Finance subject to status. Terms and conditions apply. Offer available when registered by 30th November 2015 from participating Dealers. Offers are not available in conjunction with any other offer and may be varied or withdrawn at any time. Accurate at time of publication November 2015. Freeport Bentley Financial Services.

# RADAR

Ferrari  
F12TDF

Toyota  
S-FR

Ambition  
HASEGAWA

Explore  
HILL CLIMBING

Tech  
EPAS

## BMW M2

by ANTONY INGRAM

**B**MW IS KEEN TO PUSH THE MESSAGE that the new M2 is a true drivers' car. Stung by criticism of the current BMW M3 and M4, in both the press and from some owners, the M division's number-one priority for its latest coupe has been to focus on the car's dynamics.

Then there's the M2's heritage. While the fast-coupe lineage of the M3 continues, albeit now wearing an M4 badge, the M2 is better aligned dimensionally with the firm's history of compact performance coupes: think 1M Coupe, the original M3 and even the 2002 Turbo.

Its similarity to the 1M Coupe is clearest. Like that car, the M2 features distended bodywork with an aggressive front bumper design that employs trapezoidal blades and air curtains in the outer air intakes. At the rear, the new car touts a quartet of tailpipes, a diffuser element in the rear apron, and the smallest of lip spoilers perched on the trailing edge of the bootlid.

Wide, 19-inch alloy wheels fill the front and rear arches, wrapped in bespoke Michelin Pilot Super Sport tyres. Xenon headlights are standard, while paintwork extends to four choices: Alpine White,



Black Sapphire, Mineral Grey and Long Beach Blue (pictured here).

After the combative exterior, the M2's interior is borderline disappointing. There's a steering wheel lifted from the M3 and M4 and the characteristic M shifter, plus contrasting blue stitching on the black leather seats, but otherwise, little differentiates the M2 from humbler 2-series variants.

The clues to its potential are subtle – a speedometer scale pegged at 300kph (186mph) and a rev counter that winds round to 8000rpm.

They hint at the latest iteration of BMW's 3-litre straight-six, which features TwinPower turbocharging technology and turns out an extra 44bhp over the M235i. Gains stem from a new twin-scroll turbocharger, high-precision injection, Double-Vanos variable camshaft timing and Valvetronic variable valve control. The turbocharger is integrated into the exhaust manifold to the benefit of the warm-up phase – vital to reduce internal friction – and fuel efficiency.

The M3/M4 lends some performance parts, including its

pistons and crankshaft main bearing shells, and the M2's lubrication system has been uprated to reduce the chances of oil starvation during high-speed cornering. BMW's Active M Differential splits torque at the rear, locking in as little as 0.15sec.

Two gearbox options will be available on the M2 – a six-speed manual and a seven-speed M DCT. While the M2 isn't the only car in the current M range available with a manual transmission, BMW expects it to be a particularly popular choice on this car – in the UK, as many as

“ Like the 1M, numbers will be limited ”

<h1>365</h1> <p>bhp</p> <p><i>The M2 is 44bhp more powerful than the M235i</i></p>	<h1>369</h1> <p>lb ft</p> <p><i>Peak torque, including a 26lb ft overboost</i></p>	<h1>50</h1> <p>per cent</p> <p><i>BMW expects half of M2s sold to be manual</i></p>
------------------------------------------------------------------------------------	------------------------------------------------------------------------------------	-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------

**RIVAL**  
Audi RS3 Sportback



The M2 has no direct rivals – save perhaps BMW's own M4 – but in terms of pricing, performance and badge appeal, it's closest to Audi's RS3 and the Mercedes-AMG CLA45. The Audi edges AMG's saloon for driver appeal, but may have a tougher fight on its hands with the M2.

Engine	In-line 5-cyl, 2480cc, turbo
Power	362bhp @ 5500-6800rpm
Torque	343lb ft @ 1625-5500rpm
0-62mph	4.3sec (claimed)
Top speed	155mph (limited)
Weight	1520kg
Power to weight	242bhp/ton
Basic price	£39,995

*The M2's 0-62mph time with a DCT 'box is the same as a manual M4's*



## IN DEPTH

**1 ENGINE**

Like the 1M Coupe before it, the M2 uses a 3-litre straight-six and turbocharging to attain its peak outputs. Its twin-scroll turbocharger is integrated into the exhaust manifold, while the pistons and crankshaft main bearing shells are from the M3/M4. There's also an oil cooler and a modified lubrication system.

**2 SUSPENSION**

BMW has raided the M3 and M4 parts bin for the M2's underpinnings. Control arms, wheel carriers, axle subframes and the front axle's stiffening plate are all aluminium, saving 5kg compared with the equivalent steel setup. The rear control arms and wheel carriers are also aluminium, while the rear axle subframe is rigidly mounted.

**3 WHEELS AND TYRES**

A Michelin Pilot Super Sport tyre has been specially made for the M2. On the front axle 245/35 ZR19 tyres wrap 9 x 19in forged aluminium wheels, while the rear 10 x 19-inchers roll on 265/35 ZR19 rubber. As ever, M division has eschewed runflats to improve ride and handling.

**4 BRAKES**

Cast-iron 'M compound' brakes are fitted as standard, just as they are on the M2's larger brethren. Stopping power at the front is handled by 380mm discs grasped by metallic blue four-piston calipers. At the back there's a set of 370mm discs and two-piston calipers.

**5 BODYKIT**

The M2's distinctive visage is defined by a pair of trapezoidal blade elements to either side of the lower centre grille and front arches 55mm wider than standard. At the rear they're 80mm wider, flanking a diffuser element and subtle lip spoiler. BMW claims a 35 per cent reduction in lift.



## SPECIFICATION

<b>Engine</b>	Straight-six, 2979cc, turbo
<b>Power</b>	365bhp @ 6500rpm
<b>Torque</b>	369lb ft @ 1450-4750rpm
<b>0-62mph</b>	4.5sec (claimed, manual)
<b>Top speed</b>	155mph (limited)
<b>Weight</b>	1495kg
<b>Power-to-weight</b>	248bhp/ton
<b>Basic price</b>	£44,070
<b>On sale</b>	April 2016

half of M2 buyers could opt for three-pedals. It's a sophisticated 'box too, with automatic throttle blipping on downshifts and a function to lower engine revs on upshifts.

The dual-clutch option is also feature-packed, with Comfort, Sport and Sport+ modes, launch control, Stability Clutch Control (which can disengage the clutch for extra stability in cornering to prevent oversteer) and a gleefully descriptive 'Smokey Burnout' function. The dual-clutch car is the faster of the pair, with a manual M4-matching 4.3sec 0-62mph time. The manual M2 breaches 62mph two tenths later.

If all seems well with the world after reading the M2's specifications, there is one caveat: like the 1M Coupe, numbers will be limited. There's no dedicated production line for the car, which means BMW M must take 2-series coupe bodysells from the Leipzig line and fit the M components in a separate workshop. 'We'll be lucky if we can get 400 to 500 cars,' BMW UK told *evo*.

Those buyers will get a bargain, though – M2 pricing begins at £44,070, undercutting the M4 by £13,000. If it drives better than its bigger brother, the case for buying an M4 may just have become very slim.



## THINGS CAN ONLY GET BETTER?

**3300**  
rpm

The range of the M2's peak torque band

**35%**

reduction in lift from the M2's aero kit

*evo* hasn't warmed to the current BMW M3 and M4 models like we thought we might. The M3 narrowly avoided a last-place finish at *evo* Car of the Year 2014, while the M4 won our coupe test in *evo* 206 largely because of weak competition.

While brutally fast on flat, dry roads and devilishly handsome, these cars are spiky on anything less than a perfect surface – something that's exacerbated by turbocharging

– and struggle to convey useful information to your fingertips.

That BMW has apparently taken feedback on board for the M2 is encouraging. With a lower weight and less power, it's sure to be a friendlier car, while promising to deliver some of the outright thrills missing from the less focused M235i. At little over £44,000, it's good value too. We can't wait to drive it.

**Antony Ingram**





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The official fuel consumption figures in mpg (l/100km) for the Renault Clio Renaultsport 220 Trophy are: Urban 37.2 (7.6); Extra Urban 55.4 (5.1); Combined 47.9 (5.9). The official CO<sub>2</sub> emissions are 135g/km. EU Directive and Regulation 692/2008 test environment figures. Fuel consumption and CO<sub>2</sub> may vary with driving styles, road conditions and other factors.

*Take a little look for yourself.*



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[ford.co.uk/NewC-MAX](http://ford.co.uk/NewC-MAX)

Official fuel consumption figures in mpg (l/100km) for the New Ford C-MAX range: urban 33.6-60.1 (8.4-4.7), extra urban 54.3-76.4 (5.2-3.7), combined 44.1-68.9 (6.4-4.1). Official CO<sub>2</sub> emissions 149-105g/km. The mpg figures quoted are sourced from official EU-regulated test results (EU Directive and Regulation 692/2008), are provided for comparability purposes and may not reflect your actual driving experience. Model shown differs from UK specifications.



**Go Further**



# Faster Ferrari F12 ready for the track

Race-inspired  
F12tdf gets 39bhp  
power hike and a  
carbonfibre diet

**F**ERRARI HAS REVEALED details of a more hardcore version of its F12 supercar. Called the F12tdf, the new model pays homage to Ferrari's success in the Tour de France endurance road races of the 1950s and '60s, in which the F12's spiritual predecessor, the 1956 250 GT Berlinetta, took four straight victories.

There are no such racing plans for the F12tdf, but a 769bhp version of the 6262cc V12 makes it the most powerful front-engined Ferrari road car to date. It's an increase of 39bhp over the F12 Berlinetta, with a rise in torque from 509lb ft at 6000rpm to 520lb ft at 6750rpm. The engine will rev to an 8900rpm red line.

Power gains have been realised through race-derived mechanical tappets and F1-inspired variable-geometry intake trumpets. Ferrari

has worked on the F1 DCT gearbox too, shortening its ratios by six per cent and reducing shift times by 30 per cent on upshifts and 40 per cent on downshifts.

Lightweight wheels and the widespread use of carbonfibre, from aggressive aerodynamic elements to new single-piece door panels, have helped cut 110kg from the weight of the F12, meaning the F12tdf weighs just 1520kg. The combined effect of the power increase, gearbox recalibration and weight savings slices two-tenths from the Berlinetta's 3.1sec 0-62mph time. Top speed is quoted as being in excess of 211mph.

Ferrari describes the F12tdf as 'an extreme road car that is equally at home on the track'. To that end, the car has significantly different aerodynamic properties to the F12 Berlinetta. There's a new front splitter

along with dive planes and louvres. The rear spoiler is 60mm longer and 30mm higher, the rear screen is more vertical and the rear diffuser has been redesigned. At 124mph there is now 230kg of downforce (up from 123kg).

The F12tdf is broader, too, with wider tracks and 275-section front tyres (up from 255). The wider front rubber had the potential to make the handling snappy at the limit of grip, so Ferrari has introduced 'Virtual Short Wheelbase' – active rear-wheel steering to improve agility at low speeds and aid stability at higher velocities. Single-piece brake calipers lifted from the LaFerrari bring proceedings to a halt.

Deliveries are scheduled to start next year, with just 799 examples planned. Ferrari has yet to confirm a price for the car, which makes its debut at Mugello on November 8.



## 769<sub>bhp</sub>

That's 39bhp more than the ballistic F12 Berlinetta

## 87%

The increase in downforce over a 'regular' F12

## -110<sub>kg</sub>

Abundant carbonfibre has helped with weight saving

## 2.9<sub>sec</sub>

The F12tdf's 0-62mph time – an improvement of 0.2sec

## 1m 21<sub>s</sub>

Two seconds faster than a 488 GTB around Fiorano



## Toyota S-FR concept

Pure drivers' coupe would sit below the GT86 in Toyota's sports-car line-up

ONE OF THE MOST exciting cars at this year's Tokyo motor show could also be one of the most affordable. Called the S-FR (for Small, Front-engined, Rear-wheel drive), Toyota's vibrant concept is billed as an entry-level sports car, sitting below the GT86 and a future Supra successor.

The S-FR's bulbous but benign styling boasts classic long-nose, short-tail proportions and somehow hides a 2+2 seating layout within a 2480mm wheelbase – a scant 165mm longer than that of the latest Mazda MX-5.

Its other dimensions are even closer to the Mazda's, the S-FR being just 75mm longer, 40mm narrower and 95mm taller. Unlike the MX-5, the S-FR features a fixed roof, its glass panel and contrasting black surround evoking Toyota's first compact sports car, the Sports 800 of 1965.

The concept wears 16-inch, eight-spoke alloys wrapped in 195/50 R16 Bridgestone Potenza tyres – identical in size to those used by the 1.5-litre MX-5 – while Toyota promises an 'incredibly' light weight.

Independent suspension all-round,

'optimal' weight distribution and a six-speed manual gearbox give it further credentials as a drivers' car, while Toyota says the project was conceptualised to attract a 'diehard fan base' of owners who drive and customise their vehicles.

Earlier this year, GT86 chief engineer Tetsuya Tada confirmed the company is working on an entry-level sports car, and the S-FR concept suggests it isn't far from being production-ready. Whether it will reach the UK – and how it'll be priced if it does – remains to be seen.

### TOYOTA'S FUN-CAR HERITAGE



1965 SPORTS 800

Toyota's first production sports car. A twin-carb 790cc flat-twin yielded 44bhp. Lift-out aluminium roof predated Porsche's Targa.



1983 COROLLA AE86

Lightweight, rear-drive, a solid rear axle and a revvy engine in a wedgy '80s form. Successful in the BTCC, legendary in drifting.



1984 MR2

Mid-engined coupe transformed Toyota's staid 1980s image. Power came from a 122bhp twin-cam four; handling was ultra-precise.



1999 MR2

Third-generation MR2 returned to the ethos of the first car, albeit in full convertible form. Sharper than the contemporary Mazda MX-5.

## Mazda concept hints at a return for the Wankel

Mazda also unveiled a new sports car concept at the Tokyo show, and this sleek coupe could be even more exciting than Toyota's budget option.

Details of the car were unavailable before *evo* went to press, but this could be the model that brings the rotary engine back. If every rotary rumour

from the last few years had been true, the brand's RX nomenclature would be into double digits by now, but Mazda says its latest concept condenses the marque's sports car history 'to as great a degree as possible'. Beyond the MX-5, that sports car history has been almost exclusively Wankel-powered, from the

original Cosmo 110S of 1967 to the RX-8, which left us in 2012.

An example of the original Cosmo joined the new concept in Tokyo, along with the latest MX-5 and a sporty new crossover concept, the Koeru.

Head to [evo.co.uk](http://evo.co.uk) to get the full details on the sports car concept.



# NEW PEUGEOT 308 GTi

BY PEUGEOT SPORT

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## NEW PEUGEOT 308 GTi

MOTION & EMOTION



PEUGEOT

by STUART GALLAGHER



## Macan given GTS treatment

Porsche has extended its line of GTS models to the Macan crossover. The new Macan GTS features the latest version of the firm's 3-litre, twin-turbo petrol V6, plus a raft of revisions to the chassis, brakes and styling.

In its latest home, the V6 develops 355bhp, which places the GTS between the 335bhp S and 395bhp Turbo in the Macan hierarchy. A seven-speed PDK dual-clutch transmission is the only shifting option, while power is sent to all four wheels via Porsche Traction Management.

The standard Macan is no dynamic slouch, but the Macan GTS

justifies its billing with a lower ride height, 20in matt-black alloy wheels, and PASM – Porsche's electronically adjustable damper system – as standard.

A sports exhaust should herald the car's arrival before its familiar shape hoves into view, now replete with black exterior accents – gloss above the waistline and matt below. Porsche has colour-coded its Sport Design package in a way unique to the GTS, and LED headlights are now an option. Inside are new GTS sports seats and an updated infotainment system. The Macan GTS is on sale now, priced from £55,188.

## Aston expects RapideE developments



Aston Martin could produce an all-electric Rapide S within two years. With funding from investor ChinaEquity, it's hoped the recently unveiled RapideE concept will lead to an engineering study then a full production model, to be built at Gaydon from 2017.

No performance figures have been mentioned, though Aston has confirmed that the RapideE produces similar numbers to the current V12 Rapide S – so that's a power output of about 550bhp. But a future production model could utilise four electric motors – one for each

wheel – enabling proper torque-vectoring and a combined output of up to 1000bhp.

CEO Dr Andy Palmer commented: 'The RapideE tangibly demonstrates the capability and ambition of Aston Martin towards developing low- and zero-emission sports cars.'

**£280**

The cost of fuel to drive the eCoty Aventador SV the 700 miles from Wick, Caithness, to Essex.

**10%**

The fall in Tesla's share price after US Consumer Reports downgraded its models' reliability to 'worse-than-average'.

**3rd**

Where the 2016 Porsche 911 GT3 R finished on its debut in VLN 9.

**0.7sec**

The difference in lap time between Radical's RXC Turbo 500 and McLaren's P1 at Anglesey. See [youtube.com/evo](http://youtube.com/evo)



## RS6/RS7 get Performance boost

If you've ever thought your RS6 Avant or RS7 Sportback could do with a touch more power and a slug more torque, Audi has the answer to your cravings. You can now order RS6 and RS7 Performance models, both of which deliver more power and torque than the existing variants.

A remapped ECU and an increase in boost pressure extract an extra 44bhp and 37lb ft from the 4-litre twin-turbo TFSI V8, resulting in new peak figures of 597bhp and up to 553lb ft available on overboost.

Performance improves across the board, with the 0-62mph time for both models dropping

by 0.2sec to 3.7sec, the 0-124mph time shrinking by 1.4sec to 12.1sec, while with the optional Dynamic Package Plus fitted, the top speed can be increased from 155mph to 189mph.

The RS6 Performance costs £86,000, its RS7 sibling £91,000, increases of £6915 and £6575 respectively.



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MPG figures are obtained from laboratory testing and intended for comparisons between vehicles and may not reflect real driving results. Published MPG figures and performance results are intended for comparisons between vehicles only. Verification of performance results should not be attempted on public roads. Lotus recommends that all local speed and safety laws must be obeyed and safety belts worn at all times.

A portrait of Masaru Hasegawa, a man with short dark hair, wearing a grey textured jacket. He is leaning forward with his chin resting on his hand, looking thoughtfully to the right. The background is dark with blurred red and white lights.

# Masaru Hasegawa

Honda is on the verge of its most exciting model line-up since the days of the original NSX and Integra Type R. And the man who designed the latest Civic Type R wants even more

**HASEGAWA'S AMBITIONS**



To help Honda be a stronger brand that embraces an exciting lifestyle and supports other pursuits apart from transport



To preserve and nurture Honda's sporting heritage, especially in Europe, which will help it spread to the rest of the world



To give current Accord drivers more options within a bigger mid-range model line-up



To make Honda's mainstream models, especially the Jazz and Accord, appeal to a younger generation



To develop model lines with a longer, recognisably evolved lineage like, say, the Mazda MX-5

**‘W**HEN I WAS MUCH younger, about the age my son is now, my ambition was to become a car designer. I loved concept cars. Giugiaro was my favourite car designer. I've owned an Isuzu 117 Coupe, which he designed in 1966. I also really liked the Alfa Romeo Giulia from the same era. I think he was perhaps the most influential car designer of all time.

I started at Honda 22 years ago, straight from design college in California. My first project was working on the final-generation Prelude, and I was also on the team that did the SSM show car. The first model I was in charge of was the FCX Clarity – mainly for the US market; you don't see many over here. And then the Honda N Box, which was the last car I worked on before moving to Swindon.

I was always interested in Europe in terms of car design and technology. And I always wanted Honda to be more recognised in Europe because we share such a great heritage of innovation. Honda came to the [Isle of Man] TT and won the race, we came to Formula 1 and won the race. We were the first ones to bring hybrid production cars.

‘Having done all that, up until last year we had a very small line-up with nothing very exciting. F1 hasn't been very good for us this year but, hopefully, with new models and Formula 1 we'll do better in the coming years. We'd like to bring some excitement back to the brand and keep our heritage alive.

‘The Civic, our longest-running model line, is a good example. We had to do something to alter the rather staid image the car had acquired. We achieved that with the previous-generation car and it was very successful. It's still one of my favourite Honda designs – very clean, strong and simple. And completely different from everything else. So I think that's why it did much better than the previous-generation models. I think the current five-door Civic is not as futuristic-looking as the previous model but still quite innovative. The Civic Tourer perhaps even more so. I think it's a shame more people don't know that the Tourer is the first car we designed and developed in Europe. We need to improve brand presence. I did the bicycle [storage] concept [for the Tourer] for the Frankfurt

show for the same reason.

‘In the past, the Civic Type R has been a little understated: lighter weight, some tuning of the engine. This time the engine is different, the first time with a turbo, so we wanted to make a big statement. It's not just for looks, it's all functional. I worked very closely with the

some people who are really enthusiastic about these cars. I'm a member of the owners' club. It's an old car, 50 years old, but it's surprisingly comfortable – maybe a little bit rough on the rear suspension – but fine. It feels quite roomy inside and, of course, the 800cc engine is just great. It revs up to almost 9000rpm. It's good fun.

*“It's a shame we didn't keep the momentum of the original NSX going. We should always offer something like that”*

development team in Japan. They were doing a lot of testing in Europe, and also in Japan. So a lot of feedback strands, especially with the aerodynamics. Yes, here and there, we changed things to look more interesting, more futuristic. Not everything went into production from the concept but I think many elements that were purely functional remained.

‘The concept did split opinion. We had lots of feedback saying that it was great, just right. But we also had many people say it was too much. There was no fall-back position, no option to have a smaller rear wing. But I think it turned out okay. It created a lot of discussions about how it should be and this just shows that people were very interested in the car.

I think the next few years for Honda are going to be really positive with the introduction of other new models. In one way we'll show what we can do with practical, everyday cars and, on the other hand, we'll also have some very sporty cars. Hondas have a reputation for being well built. They're very strong cars. But I think what we need is more excitement and, obviously, that starts with the Civic Type R and the NSX.

‘But the car I drove here today is the Honda S800 I now own. I bought it three years ago. I thought it would be really nice, in this country, to have a classic car and go to events. Also, it's much cheaper to run. I decided, at least while I'm here, I can enjoy this and maybe get to know

‘And significant. Remember it's one of the first cars Honda ever built. We didn't start with the ordinary, we sprung a big surprise. I think it's a shame we haven't kept building sports cars, kept the momentum of the original NSX and S2000 going. You know the Honda S660? Only for Japan, but I think we should always be offering something like this, something that's fun and unusual and exciting.’

**BRAND REJUVENATION**

You only have to look at the Civic Type R (choose your angle) to know that Masaru Hasegawa is a man straining at the leash to put some uncompromising hardcore excitement back into Honda. Too aggressive? Tough, because there's no softer option. His choice of daily driver, the 1967 S800 – nearly 50 years old but a concept that would sell well today – also points to a strong affinity with Honda's innovative roots. I sensed some frustration when I mentioned Honda's 'older demographic' problem, an image he clearly doesn't care for despite the revenue it currently provides. Hasegawa's focus is getting Honda noticed for what it does best. If the company needs the younger vote, as he believes it does, he knows how to get it.

**David Vivian**

## ASK GOODWIN

## Who would you like to have met?

Michaela Wright,  
Plymouth



Several colleagues got the chance to interview Enzo Ferrari, but reading Brock Yates's fantastic biography of the man leads me to believe that he wasn't particularly pleasant, so he's not at the top of my list.

That position is held by Soichiro Honda (above). I don't know anyone who met Honda personally, even the late LJK Setright, legendary motoring journalist and Honda disciple. I admire Honda's vision and his imagination. A chat over dinner about Honda's stunning racing bikes in the 1960s and its F1 programme would have been fascinating. A five-cylinder 125cc racing engine that revved to over 20,000rpm and an air-cooled 3-litre V8 F1 engine; think of the confidence required to build those engines.

I'd also liked to have met Colin Chapman, but he died just as I was starting out in this game. Possibly a tricky character, but so revolutionary and interested in so many fields. He must be turning in his grave today at the weight of so many sports cars.

My greatest hero is Mike Hailwood. I saw him at a motorcycle show a year before he was killed, but didn't have the guts to talk to him. Were he around today I could have asked him about a contemporary or how he found F1 ('too snobbish', he'd have answered). From what I hear, he was too modest to talk about himself.

I could go on, but I'll stick with Soichiro Honda. The son of a blacksmith who until the end of his life was fascinated by machines and who founded a company that produced an engine with oval pistons.

For more 'Ask Goodwin' columns, visit [evo.co.uk](http://evo.co.uk)



# FIA European Hill Climb Championship

The short but intoxicatingly intense rounds of this under-appreciated form of motorsport are spread all over Europe



**L**AST MONTH I SENT YOU off to the Baja 1000 desert race in Mexico at very short notice. This month's suggestion is an equally exciting prospect but far easier and cheaper to attend if you live in Europe. And it's an event in the plural. Welcome to the high-speed and crazy world of the FIA European Hill Climb Championship.

The series has been around since 1930, which makes it the longest-running FIA championship, beating F1 by 20 years. And there are several very good reasons why we're featuring it in *evo*. Firstly, alongside the championship for contemporary machinery there is a parallel championship for classic racers, which is also run by the FIA. The second reason is the events themselves and where they're held. As much as I love a weekend at Prescott or Shelsley Walsh, these British hill climbs are over very short courses (Shelsley is only 1000

**Above left:** ever seen an Opel Kadett like it? Us neither. **Above:** a Renault Laguna BTCC touring car competing in the 'E1 2000' class

yards long) whereas the European courses are considerably longer. For example, the Trento-Bondone event in Italy is held on a course that runs for over 10 miles.

The calendar for 2016 hasn't been published yet but each season tends to follow the same pattern, with twelve rounds, starting in April and finishing in September, with the season opener on the

Col Saint-Pierre in Alès, France. The championship moves around Europe, visiting hills in Germany, Switzerland, the Czech Republic, Slovakia, Portugal and a few others. Who knows, with the relaxation of the rules and regulations for motorsport on public roads in the UK, perhaps one day there could be a British round of the championship over a proper, European-like long course?

Look over the history of the European Hill Climb Championship and the list of winners, particularly from the 1960s, and you'll see some recognisable names. Edgar Barth, father of Jürgen Barth, the now retired Porsche motorsport boss who won Le Mans in 1977,





was champion in 1963 and '64 in Porsches. Wolfgang von Trips lifted the cup in 1958 in a Porsche RSK and Ludovico Scarfiotti was champ in 1962 in a Ferrari Dino 196SP. Jim Clark, Jo Siffert and other F1 drivers have also taken part in individual rounds. The championship was taken very seriously by manufacturers, especially Porsche, which designed its ultra-lightweight Bergspyders especially for hill climbing. Imagine Mark Webber competing in a bespoke works Porsche today; a lightweight version of the 918 Spyder, perhaps.

The current big name in European hill climbing is Simone Faggioli, who as an eight-time champion (including 2015) is probably the

most successful racing driver that you've never heard of. Faggioli has had most of his success at the wheel of an Osella PA30. It's well worth visiting YouTube and watching one of the many videos of him and his sports car in action.

Aside from Faggioli's purpose-built sports racer, there's a host of machinery that'll get an evo reader's pulse racing. Heavily modified R8s, M3s and Integrales, hairy single-seaters, pumped-up Golfs and more. Then there's the classic stuff, such as Fiat Abarths, Alfa GTVs, BMW CSLs and bespoke sports cars from the '70s, such as Lolas and Chevrons.

Of the events themselves, the Trento-Bondone hill climb in Italy

stands out as a favourite. Not just because the 10.75-mile course is a fantastic mixture of open fields, mountain passes and tight hairpins, but because of its location. Trento itself is a small town just to the south of the Dolomites in northern Italy. It's a staggeringly beautiful area, and the best choice of airport is Venice. Milan is a similar distance from Trento but the drive from Venice in your rental car will be more scenic and, of course, you could have a couple of days there after the event.

But flying to Italy would deprive you of what would be a brilliant road trip. Plan it well and you would have a fantastic drive across the Alps and down into Trento.

The Großer Bergpreis von Österreich, the grand name of Austria's round, takes place in Reckberg and is another hill climb that is steeped in history and would be a great event to drive to. Expect loads of hot-rodded Porsche 911s, both old and new.

Since the events host not only rounds of the FIA's championship, but also local championships, you get to see a wide variety of cars, not just the same ones at each event. What do the locals drive in the Slovakian round, for example?

You'll find the calendar for next year's championship when it's published on the FIA's website. One thing you can be sure of is that I'll visit at least one round myself.

# REVIVAL OF A LEGEND

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FOCUS

# ELECTRIC POWER STEERING SYSTEMS

**R**EMEMBER WHEN A parking manoeuvre required a full upper-body workout? For years now we have taken power steering largely for granted, but our attention has been drawn to it again by electric power-assisted steering (EPAS) replacing the hydraulic systems that have dominated the market in the past. The consensus among car journalists is that the new technology doesn't transfer the same level of steering feel, but why is this the case?

Hydraulic systems use a pump to multiply steering force. However, this pump is connected to the engine via a belt and is a constant drain on the engine's power. Electric systems use a small motor to help you turn; this only needs power when it's working the rack, so is more efficient – hence their popularity. There are three types of EPAS installation: column-mounted, pinion-mounted and 'paraxial'.

Column-mounted systems use a combined torque sensor and motor unit bolted onto the steering column behind the steering wheel.

Best suited to smaller cars, these systems are compact but are generally considered to lack feel. The 'disconnection' between the driver's hands and what's happening on the ground is due to the damping effect from the unit.

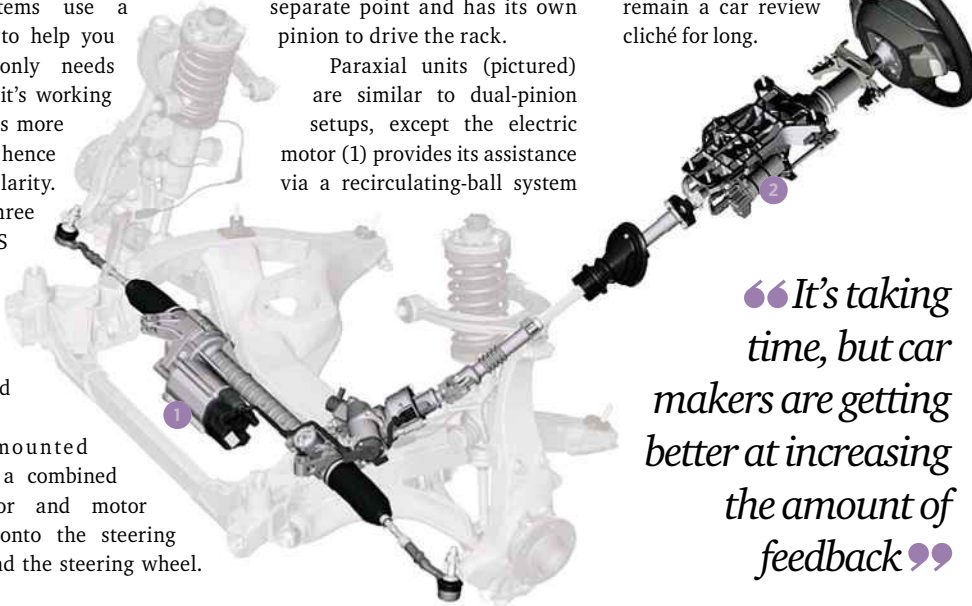
In theory, pinion-mounted EPAS systems yield more steering feel, especially 'dual pinion' units. These have a standard rack-and-pinion steering setup, giving a direct connection from the rack to the steering wheel without a unit in between damping out subtle movements from the wheels on the ground. The steering sensor is on the input pinion, but the assistance comes from a motor that is connected to the rack at a separate point and has its own pinion to drive the rack.

Paraxial units (pictured) are similar to dual-pinion setups, except the electric motor (1) provides its assistance via a recirculating-ball system

rather than a pinion. This makes less noise, so the rack can be mounted with stiffer bushings, which increases the steering feel for the driver.

Variable-speed steering can be added to these last two systems by including a motor (2) between the steering wheel and the rack to alter the gearing between the two, although in *evo*'s experience this is not necessarily a good thing – think Lamborghini Huracán.

The main issue with EPAS systems lies in their setup. The return of the wheel to centre and the reaction of the electric motor to movements of the rack all require careful programming. It's taking time, but car makers are getting better at increasing the amount of feedback. The EPAS in Porsche's 991 GT3 RS is almost as good as the hydraulic setup in its predecessor, and proof that 'lack of steering feel due to electric power steering' may not remain a car review cliché for long.



“It's taking time, but car makers are getting better at increasing the amount of feedback”



ASK MIKE

Your tech questions answered

**Q** Why are F1 engines capable of revving to 15,000rpm when my road car can only manage a paltry 7000rpm? – John Partridge

**A** It's all to do with reliability and purpose. Your road car may well be a performance car, but its mechanical parts still need to last several hundred thousand miles. Formula 1 engines, meanwhile, are constructed to develop maximum power over a much shorter lifespan, so the added stress of a fast-spinning crank isn't an issue. F1 engines also use very expensive (usually lightweight yet strong) materials that certainly wouldn't suit a road-car development budget.

Send your question to [experts@evo.co.uk](mailto:experts@evo.co.uk)



TECH GAME-CHANGERS

OVERHEAD CAMSHAFT

First application: Maudslay Motor Co **When:** 1902



Overhead camshaft (OHC) engines have been around for well over a century now and are commonplace in European and Japanese cars. In the US, however, brand-new cars are still being built with 'pushrod' engines, the basic

design of which predates OHCs.

In a pushrod engine the camshaft is mounted low down (close to the crankshaft) and moves pushrods that are connected to rocker arms that operate the valves. This arrangement is

complex and can't operate very fast, which is why US V8s only rev to around 6500rpm.

OHC engines relocate the cam above the pistons so it has a more direct connection to the valves. This simplifies the system and means

that the crankshaft can be rotated at much higher speeds. The Ferrari 458's OHC V8 redlines at 9000rpm, for example.

Pushrod engines still offer a benefit in the form of packaging: the V8 in the Corvette Z06 is compact enough

to have a 1.7-litre supercharger mounted on top. A drawback of pushrods is that fitting variable valve timing is more complicated, but the Z06's 650bhp and 650lb ft show that pushrod engines still have their place.



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## FIRST TEST COOPER ZEON 4XS SPORT

**H**IGH PERFORMANCE SUVs. You either love them or you hate them – and, since you're reading this magazine, there's a good chance you're leaning towards the latter. But while a two-ton off-roader on stiff suspension and low-profile tyres appears completely at odds with itself, there's no denying today's top crop of super-SUVs are remarkably capable machines.

They also provide tyre-makers with a unique set of challenges, and Cooper Tires believes its new Zeon 4XS Sport is able to effectively meet them all. To test those claims, we headed over to the Red Bull Ring, home of the Austrian GP, to sample a Cooper-shod SUV.

Our Mercedes ML63 AMG test car couldn't have looked much further from home than it did parked in the pits of a Grand Prix circuit (the big SUV stands 1.8 metres tall), and it only served to emphasise how tricky a job the tyres faced – they'd soon be juggling 518bhp and 516lb ft of torque between them, with a hefty 2270kg to make matters significantly harder. That's a serious workout on the road, let alone on a track...

A two-ply Rayon casing and extra layers of sidewall reinforcement are key ingredients that Cooper claims

give the Zeon 4XS Sports enough strength to cope with such an ordeal, and their effects are immediately noticeable as turn one is dispatched without any of that wallowy feeling conventional SUV tyres give under hard driving. It's also pretty clear that Cooper's new rubber has no intention of ever venturing off-road, but no off-road claims are made for the tyre.

The Zeon 4XS Sports were also able to effectively manage a car that, to put it bluntly, struggled to contain its own mass. The body ducked, dived and leaned through corners, while hard braking sent a worrying, slow-motion wobble through the whole car as the suspension fought to keep the body flat. But, even in these conditions, the car braked straight and true, with no intervention from the ESP to keep things pointing ahead.

A morning of hard laps on track not only confirmed that these tyres offered consistent, dependable grip, they were also proving very durable, with minimal signs of wear on all four corners.

Admittedly, this durability did appear to be slightly at the expense of ultimate grip, as the tyre's adhesion to the asphalt was more comparable with a regular summer tyre than the stickiest of ultra-high-performance products. But this sort of compromise makes sense in the performance SUV sector – the vast majority of Porsche Cayenne, Range Rover Sport SVR and Mercedes-AMG GLE 63 (the ML63 AMG's successor) owners will never venture on track, so a tyre with consistent and dependable grip will likely appeal over one that chases the ultimate lap-time.

Though we weren't able to test it during our dry session, Cooper also claims that the tyre's silica-rich tread helps it achieve a Grade A for wet grip, emphasising the security 4XSs could provide. With all of this in mind, if you must own a high-powered SUV, a set of Cooper Zeon 4XS Sports deserves a place on your replacement tyre short-list. Sizes range from 215/70/R16 to 295/35/R21; pricing will be confirmed in the coming weeks.

### LOAD RATING

**825**  
kg

*Enough for all 2347kg  
of Bentley's Bentayga...*

### SPEED RATING

**186**  
mph

*...though just short of  
its 187mph top speed*



## HANKOOK EVO2 WINTER TYRE

Back in the day, when you jumped into a performance car on winter tyres there'd be a speed limit warning stuck on the speedo. But technology has moved on and the latest UHP winter tyre from Hankook comes with a W speed rating (up to 168mph) – a first for the Korean producer.

The i\*cept evo2 is designed not just for snow but also slush and wet roads, so it should cope well with our changeable winter weather. The asymmetric tread has 3D sipes, which lock together to improve block stability and increase grip. It also has 30 per cent bigger channels to shift water compared with the current tyre. A reinforced sidewall and bead area are said to improve steering response and dry handling.

Driving was limited on the strictly policed roads around the Ivalo, Finland launch, but it was enough to feel the usual winter-tyre softness just off the straight-ahead, although this diminished as the cornering load increased.

The evo2 comes in 16-20in sizes with 35 to 60 profiles. There's an SUV version, too, that goes up to 21in rims.

Hankook also launched the i\*cept RS2 for mid-sized cars, which has an H rating (up to 130mph) and fits 14-17in rims. Its final newcomer is an all-season tyre, the Kinergy 4S, which is already original equipment on Audi's new TT and covers 14-18in rims.

**Kim Adams**



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# NEW ABARTH 595 YAMAHA FACTORY RACING. ONLY PERFORMANCE MATTERS.



**IF YOU THOUGHT YOU KNEW EVERYTHING  
ABOUT PERFORMANCE, THEN EXPERIENCE  
THE NEW ABARTH 595 YAMAHA FACTORY RACING.**

**BASED ON THE ABARTH 595 1.4 T-JET,  
THE 'YAMAHA FACTORY RACING' UPGRADE PACK INCLUDES:**

- LOWERED SUSPENSION WITH KONI SHOCK ABSORBERS & EIBACH SPRINGS**
- POWER INCREASE FROM 140 HP TO 160 HP**
- RECORD MONZA EXHAUST**
- 17" FORMULA MATT BLACK ALLOY WHEELS**



ABARTH WITH

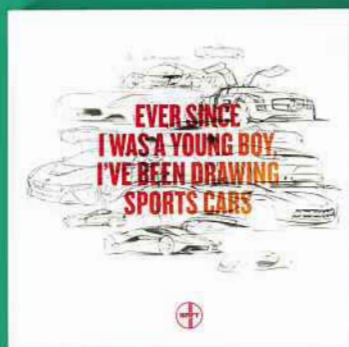


The New Abarth 595 Yamaha Factory Racing starts from £17,420 OTR. Official fuel consumption figures for Abarth 595 Yamaha Factory Racing: mpg (l/100km): Combined 47.1 (6.0), Urban 35.8 (7.9), Extra urban 57.6 (4.9), CO<sub>2</sub> Emissions: 139 g/km. Fuel consumption and CO<sub>2</sub> figures are obtained for comparative purposes in accordance with EC directives/regulations and may not be representative of real-life driving conditions. Model shown is the Abarth 595 Yamaha Factory Racing 1.4 T-Jet 160 HP at £17,890 OTR including Gara White paint at £300 and optional Side Stripe and Mirror covers at £170. Abarth UK is a trading style of Fiat Chrysler Automobiles UK Ltd.



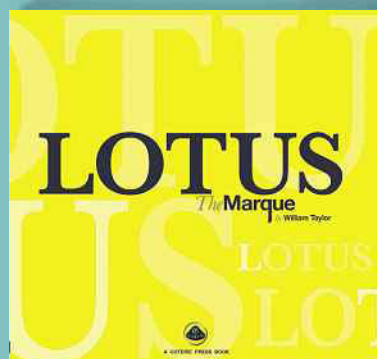
## BOOKSHELF MUST-READS

Inclement weather spoiled your plans for a weekend blast? These five books are a good reason to stay indoors



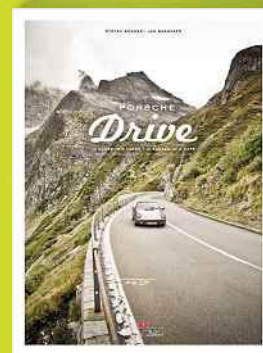
**EVER SINCE I WAS A YOUNG BOY I'VE BEEN DRAWING SPORTS CARS** by BART LENAERTS  
€60.00

If you're fascinated by cars, design has probably played a part in that fascination at some point. The title may not be catchy but this book tells the designers' own stories (and reveals never-before-seen sketches) behind cars such as the 911 and R8.



**LOTUS THE MARQUE – LIMITED EDITION** by WILLIAM TAYLOR  
£75

William Taylor's first Lotus book was already comprehensive, but since its last revision in 2004 the Hethel marque has produced several more significant vehicles. This all-new title covers every model from the 1948 Mark I to the 2013 Elise S Club Racer. The Limited Edition version is signed and numbered, and features a cloth-covered slipcase.



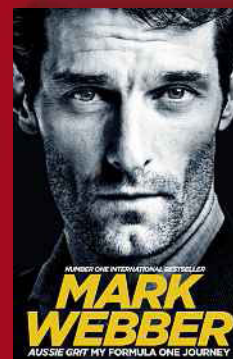
**PORSCHE DRIVE** by STEFAN BOGNER AND JAN BAEDEKER  
£30.47

Stefan Bogner seems to lead the ideal *evo* lifestyle, taking fast cars to some of Europe's greatest driving roads. In his 'Curves' series, he concentrates on roads, but in this instance it's as much about the cars – from his own air-cooled 911 to a 918 Spyder – and taking them through some of the best mountain passes Europe has to offer.



**GREAT CARS: FERRARI 250 GT** by DOUG NYE  
£60.00

Each 'Great Cars' book covers not just a model series but a specific car and its history. This particular 250 GT, chassis number 2119, was driven to victory at the RAC TT at Goodwood in 1960 (and by our own Richard Meaden, near Goodwood, in 1999 – see *evo* 013). It's now owned by Ross Brawn.



**AUSSIE GRIT: MY FORMULA ONE JOURNEY** by MARK WEBBER  
£20.00

Mark Webber may have failed to win a Formula 1 title, but F1's loss is endurance racing's gain, and Webber remains as popular as ever with fans. It's his battles – on track and off – with teammate Sebastian Vettel that make this autobiography a must-read, however. What was life really like inside Red Bull Racing?

# Factory-fit or aftermarket?

Should you spec a manufacturer's infotainment system or buy separately? Here's how they compare

**E**NTERTAINMENT AND connectivity, possibly more so than ride and handling, are what customers in this segment now prioritise.' So said Audi at the UK launch of the new A4.

Read into that what you will – basic A4s have never really troubled the list of our favourite drivers' cars – but it's indicative of the importance major brands now place on offering high levels of in-car technology. Virtually every new car on sale today has

some form of connected technology, whether it's as simple as an audio system into which your smartphone can be plugged, or full satnav systems, internet, external assistance and – in the case of Tesla's Model S – the scope to change the way the car drives via wireless downloads.

Less clear is how much of this technology is really beneficial to us, and whether the expense of ticking every infotainment and navigation box at the time of purchase is

## THE BUDGET OPTION

Fully integrated digital radio, satellite navigation and other connected services haven't yet become standard in the cheapest cars on the market, yet the alternative solutions offered by brands such as Renault, Smart and Volkswagen can be as useable as those in much more expensive cars.



### VOLKSWAGEN

Optional 'Maps & More' (£275) for the Up mounts a removable Garmin touchscreen device on the top of the dashboard. Navigation data can be updated at home, and the system also lets drivers view car data and operate entertainment functions.



### SMART

The 'cross connect' app (free) for the Fortwo and Forfour can be downloaded for iOS and Android. A cradle on the dash holds your phone, which then becomes your satnav and infotainment centre, with car details, voice control, traffic and more.



### RENAULT

The Parrot MKi9100 Bluetooth kit (£250) adds music functions and voice control from your phone to the minuscule Twizy electric car (or, strictly speaking, 'light quadricycle'). Not pretty, but no less functional than other Bluetooth systems.

## THE FUTURE? NISSAN 'TEATRO FOR DAYZ' CONCEPT



### 1 'CANVAS'

Bumpers, dash and seats are a 'canvas for inspiration'. Their LED graphics can be instantly changed, like a smartphone's wallpaper.

### 2 INSTRUMENTS

Gauges and navigation information can be moved around, increased or decreased in size, or hidden altogether.

### 3 ENGINE

Well, an electric motor, because plugging in devices is simply a part of life for the tech-savvy people a car like this would target.

## FEATURES COMPARISON

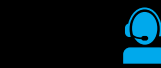
### BUILT-IN v AFTERMARKET NAVIGATION

BMW's media package shows how far built-in infotainment systems have come, and the accompanying smartphone app and concierge services go beyond the functions of aftermarket satnavs. But for a third of the price you can buy a top-end portable satnav with free updates and considerable versatility. If nav is all you need, it's an easy way to save money compared to a built-in system.

**'BMW PROFESSIONAL' MEDIA PACKAGE FOR 1-SERIES**  
£900



'My BMW Remote App' can unlock the car, send navigation data or show your vehicle's location if it's within 1500m



Connection to call-centre 'concierge'



Real-time traffic info



Nav is operated via iDrive and offers satellite views. Free updates for three years



Online services include news, weather and other apps. Access for three years included



5.7-inch TFT display in the instrument cluster supports the main 8.8-inch screen in the centre of the dash

**TOMTOM GO 6100**  
£299.99



As portable as any aftermarket navigation option – not tied to one car



Unlimited data at home and abroad



Real-time traffic info



Navigation responds to pinch, zoom and swipe functions, like a smartphone



Free speed-camera, worldwide map and traffic updates for the life of the product



Six-inch touchscreen, fixed to a magnetic vehicle mount

prudent when the aftermarket – your smartphone, for instance – is capable of providing many of these functions already.

There's also the issue of resale. While we'd never advocate buying a car solely based on low depreciation and high resale values, options that look and seem desirable today – such as DAB radio or satnav – may not be so hot five years down the line when features have been superseded, the control interface

seems clunky and the mapping technology is out of date. A bells-and-whistles infotainment system is unlikely to have the same value on the used market as that optional set of Recaro seats or a carefully considered exterior colour.

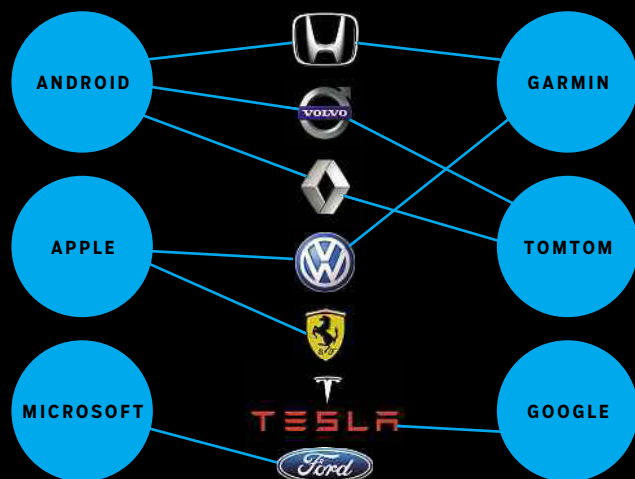
At the same time, some vehicles have advanced to the stage where you're offered little choice, while major car functions are controlled through the same interface as connected functions.

This is seen as the way forward by many manufacturers, but will the difficulty of updating such layouts make these cars undesirable far before their design becomes unfashionable?

We've taken a look at the connected technology currently on the market. Firstly, to see what's actually available, and secondly, to see where connected technology and infotainment might head in the future.

## THIRD PARTIES

The days of manufacturers developing their own infotainment and nav systems are (thankfully) coming to an end. Several makers now look to dedicated technology and navigation firms for their in-car systems.



## AUDI VIRTUAL COCKPIT



The 12.3in Virtual Cockpit takes integrated, connected functions far beyond those of the optional systems of the past.

**Navigation, telephone, media and Audi's MMI system are all standard on the TT and R8.**

**Less dashboard real estate is devoted to a distracting, centrally mounted touchscreen.**

**MMI recognises smartphone-style scrolling and zooming actions; voice control is also included.**

## CONCLUSION

The good news is that virtually every manufacturer seems to be getting to grips with in-car tech and most cars can now be specified with something slick and useable that, for the most part, delivers a positive user experience. While the car is relatively new, anyway...

For a vehicle's first and maybe second owner, a fully integrated system is a desirable option. But once its maps are five years out of date and the graphics two generations behind, the appeal dwindles. JLR's 2015 systems aren't great to use today, so would their 2007 equivalent really sway your decision to buy a used XF?

Ironically, it's the less sophisticated vehicles on the market that could prove useful and

useable for a longer period when it comes to in-car tech. Models such as the Lotus Evora and Toyota GT86 are criticised for the ungainly double-DIN aftermarket systems dropped unceremoniously into their dashboards, yet down the line, when the more aesthetically pleasing setups in competitor vehicles have become old, replacing the system in a GT86 or Evora for something at the leading edge of technology will be as simple as plugging in a new head unit. However unsophisticated the original equipment, you're never more than a few hundred pounds away from something with Apple CarPlay, voice control, the latest mapping technology, and so on.

The case for the aftermarket

has become even stronger now that popular satnav suppliers have started to offer free updates. A £60 map update on a £100 unit never made much sense, but some firms now offer free lifetime updates – and you don't need to visit a dealership to get them.

But perhaps the best system of all is the one that's possibly in your pocket right now. Smartphones will continue to lead the way for both innovation and user experience. Some apps already let you set your car's climate control from the comfort of your home, for example. Compared with a smartphone's accurate mapping, countless apps and frequent updates, built-in infotainment systems will always be one step behind.

## NOW & THEN

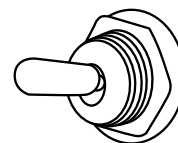
### Keyless entry



'Where you keep your key is up to you' is the tagline of Ford's current advert for its keyless-entry system. We wouldn't like to guess in which region of his swimming trunks the protagonist has stashed the key to his EcoSport SUV, but it's a neat way of promoting a technology that's now at all levels of the market.

Like many technologies, keyless entry started at the top. Mercedes was first to debut such a system, on the W220 S-class of 1998 (pictured above). Dubbed 'Keyless Go', it unlocked the car as you walked up to it. Renault quickly followed, with a card-like 'key' and a starter button on the Laguna in 2000, and the French firm has persisted with the same system to this day.

In the interests of security, it's now more common for a keyless-entry car to unlock in response to the touch of a sensor on the door handle. The door handles on Tesla's Model S (below) even extend when you walk up to the car, before you climb inside to find it is already 'on'.



**ON  
OR  
OFF?**

### Door mirror dip when parking

Designed to help you see the kerb when parallel parking, it's of little help when bay parking, reckons **evo** Facebook follower Kevin Day. 'I want to see the car I'm parking next to,' he says, 'not the floor!'



## 1970 45 YEARS OF CONTINUOUS INSPIRATION IN THE PURSUIT OF PRECISION

A blend of vintage design and contemporary precision, the sporty and ingenious TUDOR Heritage Chrono line symbolises the marriage of design and mechanical performance. In 1970, the TUDOR Oysterdate chronograph set a track record in watch-making.

### TUDOR HERITAGE CHRONO

Self-winding mechanical movement, waterproof to 150 m, steel case 42 mm.  
Visit [tudorwatch.com](http://tudorwatch.com) and explore more.



**TUDOR**  
WATCH YOUR STYLE

WATCH TECH

Vacheron Constantin anniversary pocket watch



Vacheron Constantin is the world's oldest watch house to have maintained continuous production. To mark its 260th anniversary, it has created the most complicated watch in existence at the behest of an ultra-wealthy collector.

The reference 57260 took three watch makers eight years to complete and incorporates a remarkable 57 complications, many of which are horological firsts. Made from 18-carat white gold, it weighs more than two pounds, has dials on both sides and measures a massive 98mm in diameter.

Functions include a flyback chronograph, Westminster chimes, a world time display, multiple alarms and two perpetual calendars (which always show the correct date, without the need for adjustment) – one based on the Gregorian system, the other a Hebraic calendar that operates on a 19-year cycle. The watch also features a star chart showing the night sky as seen from the owner's home city.



THIS MONTH

Halda Race Pilot Nürburgring Limited Edition

Price: €14,850  
From: haldasweden.com

Swedish brand Halda chose September's DTM race at the Nürburgring to unveil a 20-piece special edition of its nifty Race Pilot watch. Dedicated to the Nordschleife, it comprises a regular mechanical watch powered by a top quality Zenith movement, plus a separate, electronic module. The two units are designed to fit in the same case band and are quickly interchangeable. The electronic module incorporates a stopwatch, G-force meter, lap timers and other features, and is engraved with an outline of the legendary German circuit.



BRM V12-44 10th Anniversary Edition

Price: €10,000  
From: brm-manufacture.com

BRM (Bernard Richards Manufacture) launched its 44mm 'V12' chronograph back in 2005, and it has remained the company's top selling model ever since. The standard watch is available in more than 20 basic variations, all of which can be customised to order with a range of colours and finishes that offer a potential 12,000 alternative designs. But this limited edition, which has been created to mark a decade of V12-44 production, is largely black and white with just a hint of red detailing to the dial and chronograph hands. Just 10 examples will be available.



Blancpain L-evolution Split Seconds Chronograph

Price: £38,670  
From: blancpain.com

Blancpain's backing of endurance and sprint racing has led to the creation of several high-end drivers' watches. This latest has a carbonfibre bezel, caseback and dial, but the hefty price is more to do with its 409-part movement. It offers a 'split seconds' feature, where two chronograph second hands run together – one superimposed over the other – but one can be stopped independently to allow a time difference to be measured. Plus there's a 'flyback' function, which stops, resets and restarts both hands with a single push of a button.

BREMONT NORTON

As worn by Ian Callum, Jaguar Cars director of design



'The watch I wear most is my Bremont Norton chronograph, which I never tire of looking at. I bought it partly because it is made in Britain and harks back to some of the more traditional values of British design, which is something I'm passionate about. But it's the association with

Norton that made me want to own it – the black and gold detailing and the wonderful Norton logo instantly remind me of the era in which I grew up, when British motorcycles ruled the roads.

'Jaguar has an association with Bremont, and I recently

helped to design the "MKI" and "MKII" watches that pay tribute to the E-type. We're really pleased with them because they look absolutely right when you wear them in the driving seat – almost as if they had been designed alongside the car back in the '60s.'



EVERY NEW EVO CAR THAT MATTERS,  
REVIEWED AND RATED

FERRARI 488 SPIDER // NISSAN GT-R TRACK EDITION  
DS 4 THP 210 // DMS M5 // AUDI A4 AVANT

# Driven



**Test location:** Forlì, Emilia-Romagna, Italy **GPS:** 44.20503, 11.89544  
**Photography:** Nathan Morgan

## Ferrari 488 Spider

With the 488 GTB, Ferrari let character take a back seat to performance and efficiency. Does the Spider restore order?

**A**FTER DECADES OF naturally aspirated V8s belting out their flamboyant arias, the adoption of turbochargers for Ferrari's 'junior' supercars had enthusiasts suspended in nervous apprehension. Surely it just wouldn't be the same with the smothering influence and apathy-inducing low-down torque of forced induction?

Yet while achieving the reduced fuel consumption and emissions that necessitated the turbos in the first place, Ferrari has taken its V8 off on an entirely new tangent. The

488's 3.9-litre twin-turbo engine doesn't so much as boast reduced turbo lag; it's virtually non-existent. It would be the most memorable facet of the new engine, if not for the 661bhp haymaker that threatens the onset of vertigo.

This new Spider version presents another watershed moment. Talk to anyone who has ever ordered a drop-top V8 Ferrari and the ticket to a front-row audience with the engine is usually paramount in their purchasing decision. The 3.9 may well have some serious engineering alchemy, but even Ferrari admits



## The team

Ferrari's V8 has gone turbocharged, but we asked the **evo** road test team to name their favourite naturally aspirated engine.



**NICK TROTT**  
Editor

'Impossible ask! Top three, in no particular order: BMW (McLaren) F1 V12, Ferrari F50 V12, Lexus LFA V10'



**STUART GALLAGHER**  
Managing editor

'Carrera GT 5.7-litre V10. Magical to listen to, mind-blowing to drive'



**HENRY CATCHPOLE**  
Features editor

'It seems crushingly obvious to pick the McLaren F1's V12 yet almost irresponsible to choose anything else'



**DAN PROSSER**  
Road test editor

'I've never driven a Lexus LFA, but every time I hear one fully lit I want to explode'



**JETHRO BOVINGTON**  
Contributing editor

'Predictable, but one stands above them all. It's a 6.1-litre V12 and you'll find it in the back of a McLaren F1'



**RICHARD MEADEN**  
Contributing editor

'V10 in the back of Schumi's 1998 Ferrari. 17,000rpm, 267bhp per litre. Indescribable, unforgettable'



**DAVID VIVIAN**  
Contributing editor

'Bit V8-light here so I nominate the 7.4-litre Chevy in the nose of James Tiller's Allard J2. In a word: brutal'



**ADAM TOWLER**  
Contributing road tester

'NSX-R Mk2 V6. That noise, that throttle response... Thought it would burst before the change-up point'

that it offers a different sonic experience, and one that, if you were a fan of the 'good old days', can't match the howl of a motor closing in on 9000rpm.

As on the 458 Spider before, the 488 Spider uses a retractable hard-roof solution for open-air motoring. With a one-touch operation, after 14 seconds it has stored itself directly behind the cabin's rear bulkhead, partially covering the V8's cylinder heads. That means the sloping glass window of the GTB coupe is absent, replaced by a solid, flat deck area with a flying buttress to either

side. This has also required some careful aero finessing to maintain the effectiveness of the blown rear spoiler.

Underneath the handsome aluminium skin, the multi-metal tub has been strengthened at both the front and rear to compensate for the loss of a fixed roof. That Ferrari has succeeded in maintaining the same values for torsional rigidity bodes well for the Spider's dynamics, although this additional bracing and the workings of the roof add 50kg over the weight of the GTB, taking the total to 1525kg.

The mechanicals of the Spider are otherwise the same. The twin-scroll turbocharging system features titanium-alloy compressor wheels amongst all manner of developments to reduce lag; Ferrari's own figures suggest the turbocharged V8's response to an application of throttle is just 0.1 seconds behind that of the old 4.5-litre naturally aspirated V8. The new engine is hooked up to the usual seven-speed dual-clutch gearbox, where up- and downshifts are far quicker than the human hand-and-foot combo could ever aspire to,

and the fully automatic mode is never befuddled.

Peak power is reached at 6500rpm and then held constant for the final 1500rpm. Naturally, the torque curve is considerably plumper than the 458's, but it also has a surprising linearity thanks to the Variable Torque Management system. On paper, this sounds like the sort of electronic meddling that has purists snorting with derision, but we already know that it offers not just the ability to surf the colossal surge of torque (only fully unleashed in seventh gear) but



**Left:** 488 uses a host of stability-control software, and the level of intervention is based on what the car thinks of your driving, the road type and the conditions



## ‘If it behaves differently to the GTB, you’d need a back-to-back drive to really notice it’

also the encouragement to utilise all the revs.

Italy has blessed us with a warm, sunny, autumnal day, and the roof is lowered and kept there, bar for a short stretch of autostrada to confirm that, yes, the Spider is as refined as the GTB with it in place. The electric rear window can be raised to act as a wind break when the roof is down or lowered to create a turbulence-free hearing trumpet for the V8 when the roof is up.

How does that engine sound? Well, you will definitely recognise the hard, hollow timbre from Ferraris past, but with additional revs it’s



as though the higher frequencies have been turned down on a graphic equaliser. In the GTB, the turbos announce their presence with every brush of the throttle, hissing like an antagonised snake, but the prominence of the burping valve-flap exhaust in the Spider drowns most of this out.

Both the springs and the magnetic dampers are exactly the same for the Spider as they are on the GTB, as the algorithms of the software are so complex that the system can adjust accordingly to compensate for the Spider’s additional weight. It’s clever stuff, and it gives the car

an astonishingly good ride quality, particularly in Bumpy Road mode. Configured in Sport, the Spider is an entirely civilised and comfortable way to commute or cruise. Switch the manettino to Race, however, and the Spider bristles with expectant energy. The steering ratio is very fast and the effort required slight, but the Spider’s responses soon become second nature.

The acceleration is utterly savage, almost regardless of the gear selected; fifth can often feel like fourth, even third. If the Spider does drive differently to the GTB then it would take a back-to-back drive to

really notice it. Over wildly cambered and blatantly broken asphalt there is the slightest suggestion of a tremor from the rear-view mirror, but it’s something seen more than felt.

The question, then, becomes one of a more cerebral nature, and part of a larger debate: does the 488 make going unfeasibly, anti-socially fast all too easy, with too little given back in return at sane speeds?

A partial antidote is to switch the traction and stability systems off. The 488 has so much more torque compared to the 458 that it can leave two black lines out of a corner almost on demand. It takes time to build the necessary confidence, but it progressively dawns that this is as friendly as 661bhp ever can be: every slide under power, or twitch over a crest, is performed with a balletic grace and a fluidity that’s sheer magic to experience. These are the moments you’ll cherish forever in the Spider: when you and it are working as one. In those moments, with blue sky above and fresh air swirling around the cabin, the Spider makes an enthralling case for itself. **X**

**Adam Towler** (@AdamTowler)

**Specification** + Brilliant folding-roof integration; immense performance; surprising useability - High-rev theatrics of the 458 are no more

Engine	CO2	Power	Torque	0-62mph	Top speed	evo rating	Weight	Basic price
V8, 3902cc, twin-turbo	260g/km	661bhp @ 6500-8000rpm	561lb ft @ 3000rpm	3.0sec (claimed)	203mph+ (claimed)	★★★★★	1525kg (440bhp/ton)	£204,400





Performance  
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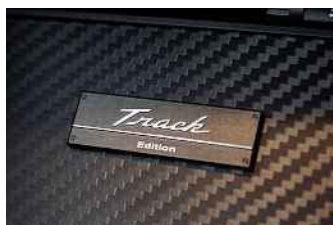
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**Above:** 20in Rays alloys come complete with knurling to prevent the tyres from slipping around the wheels during heavy braking or acceleration

# Nissan GT-R Track Edition

**Test location:** Millbrook Proving Ground, Bedfordshire **GPS:** 52.04008, -0.52926  
**Photography:** Aston Parrott

Sprinkled with the magic of Nismo but tuned for everyday driving, is this the perfect GT-R package?

**A**ND STILL THEY chip, chip away at the GT-R, tweaking spring rates, shaving unsprung mass and seeking out even more performance, stability, agility and excitement. It's a relentless process, and although it might befuddle those of us who aren't living in the GT-R bubble, you've got to admire the obsessive desire to make this extraordinary car even more so year on year, sometimes even month on month.

This is the latest fruit of that obsession, the GT-R 'Track Edition Engineered by Nismo'. It slots in between the standard GT-R and the Nismo in terms of philosophy and price. At £88,560 it's £10,530 more than a regular GT-R but £36,440 less than the full-on Nismo.

The drivetrain remains unchanged from the standard car's, the 3.8-litre twin-turbo V6 producing 542bhp at 6400rpm and 466lb ft at 3200-5800rpm and driving through a six-speed dual-clutch transmission. Performance is the same too, with the claimed 0-62mph time still an incredible 2.7sec and the top speed 196mph. We've become blasé about such figures but just think about them for a second. The GT-R remains a crazily fast car.

The 'Engineered by Nismo' stuff is what's really interesting here, of course. There are new spring rates and the Bilstein DampTronic



**'This big car actually feels quite light, snapping into corners with no delay'**



setup is revised across the three modes of Comfort, Normal and Race. The lightweight forged Rays alloys are lifted from the Nismo, as are the bespoke Dunlop tyres. Delve deeper and the detail work is comprehensive. Like the Nismo, the Track Edition has increased rigidity thanks to adhesive bonding as well as spot-welding in certain areas of the structure. High-rigidity bolts are utilised to increase the stiffness of the wheel-hub attachments, the front wishbones feature new links to increase castor for more consistent response under high lateral loads and there's a hollow rear anti-roll bar borrowed from the Nismo GT-R to increase agility and roll-stiffness whilst reducing weight. The concept is to create a car with the usability and road capability of the standard



## Specification

+ Recreates much of the Nismo's agility without the rock-like ride - Interior feeling old; requires immense self-control

Engine	CO2	Power	Torque	0-62mph	Top speed	Weight	Basic price
V6, 3799cc, twin-turbo	275g/km	542bhp @ 6400rpm	466lb ft @ 3200-5800rpm	2.7sec (claimed)	196mph (claimed)	1740kg (316bhp/ton)	£88,560

## evo rating



GT-R but to infuse it with the much greater turn-in agility and body control of the Nismo model. So is it a compromised halfway house or the perfect GT-R for every situation?

The first thing you do once you've started up the Track Edition is select the Comfort damper setting. It is a very firm car. However, where the Nismo feels absolutely rigid at times and unsuitable for all but the very smoothest of surfaces, the Track Edition has just enough compliance to make low-speed driving acceptable. It still hates speed bumps or really lumpy tarmac, but the physical, heavyweight feel of the GT-R is well in tune with the busy ride. If it floated like a Lotus Evora it somehow wouldn't be right.

No, as ever, the GT-R requires an acceptance that it's not built for

sliding gently around town. The rear diff chunters and judders just as it always has and that's all part of the GT-R experience – a characteristic rather than a fault – and it's quite nice to be in a car that isn't trying to be all things to all men. While everybody else chases that awful term 'bandwidth', the GT-R remains absolutely focused.

The changes over the standard GT-R are immediately apparent. Whilst it doesn't have the same startling pointiness of the Nismo, there's definitely greater turn-in response. This big car actually feels quite light, snapping into corners with no delay between steering input and action. It's superb mid-corner too, the body exhibiting less roll and the front-end staying perfectly on your chosen line. There

are those who genuinely talk about 'understeer' in the context of the GT-R, but at road speeds that is utter nonsense. Yep, on track the weight of the car through a long corner can result in the front tyres losing grip, but on the road? Please. The Track Edition just bites, stays neutral and then exits under power with a little wiggle of oversteer.

When you break down the cornering style of the GT-R like that, it sounds almost easy, clinical. Again, confounding expectations, it's anything but. The steering has lovely coarse feedback and the car provides so much information as to what it's doing and how you might affect it. And such is the speed at which corners unravel that there's a breathless, frenzied edge that's incredibly enjoyable and still, after all

these years, slightly stupefying.

The GT-R isn't for everyone: the interior is feeling a bit crummy these days and it's probably a size too big for anything short of the Route Napoléon, but as a unique, manic, omnipotent driving experience it remains a thing of real joy. So controlled even in extremes is the Track Edition that after leaping it (perfectly composed, not so much as a scuffed splitter) over Millbrook Proving Ground's yump for the shot you can see on this month's Contents pages, I have to check with photographer Aston Parrott that it's getting enough air. He just raises his eyebrows and says, 'Oh yeah, I couldn't believe what I was seeing.' That sums up the GT-R nicely. ☒

**Jethro Bovington**  
(@JethroBovington)

# DS 4 Prestige THP 210

**Test location:** Angers, France  
**GPS:** 47.2025, -0.3315

The French hatch has a new look and detail changes under the skin. Just don't call it a Citroën



**C** CONTRARY TO WHAT your eyes are telling you, this is not an updated Citroën DS4. It may look like said model has been given a mid-life nip and tuck, but I am here to tell you that it is emphatically not a facelifted Citroën.

What it is, is a facelifted DS 4. The differences are new front and rear bumpers, new LED headlights and a new badge. Oh, and the fact that Citroën has now separated its premium DS brand from its mainstream range of French hatches to allow the former to stand on its own four wheels in the premium hatchback sector. So unless you start pulling pipes off the engine, you're unlikely to find a double-chevron Citroën badge anywhere.

This revamped DS 4 is the second standalone product since the DS brand was released from the Citroën motherhip last year and the revised DS 5 first appeared. But, unlike the DS 5, the DS 4 isn't a unique car, rather it's a Citroën C4 that's been through the DS comfort, technology and design mill.



To these eyes, the results aren't that convincing. The new front-end design language has zero identity. If I was being cruel, I'd argue that a Korean hatchback of a generation ago had more design flair; Kia's design language today is certainly stronger and more distinctive than that of DS. The rear three-quarter view is best, where the DS 4's low-slung roofline separates it from the norm. What it's not, though, is a classic piece of French design.

Being a premium brand, DS has slaughtered a whole field of *vache* for the interior, with every surface wrapped in the stuff, and in the Prestige trim level of our test car it has done a very good job of lifting the ambience of lower level DS 4s, where contrasting plastic finishes jar. It's

now at a level you'd have to pay a hefty premium for in a German rival. But while the finish of our test car is hard to fault, it's hard to escape the feeling that it's still a mask for what is a rather mediocre and uninspiring cabin underneath.

The top-level DS 4 driven here is powered by a 1.6-litre turbocharged petrol four producing 208bhp at 6000rpm and 210lb ft from 1750rpm. That's previous-generation Mini JCW or Mk6 Golf GTi levels of output in a car that weighs 1313kg, 5kg less than the VW, though the 7.8sec 0-62mph time is some way off the sprinting abilities of both those cars.

The fact that a six-speed manual gearbox is the only transmission on offer sounds promising, but a quick look at the chassis details (MacPherson struts at the front, torsion beam at the rear) and the hope of a French fancy under a frumpy dress quickly fade.

The expectation quickly fades on the road, too. There's a strong initial surge from the turbo four from low revs, but then at 3500rpm the power delivery feels like it's plateaued

before picking up for a final 1000rpm dash to the red line. At no point does it feel hot hatch quick, not even luke-warm hatch quick. It's all a bit tepid. Keep it up in the higher reaches of the rev-range, have some confidence that the front wheels will do what you ask of them (there's no feel to search for) and the DS 4 will cover ground at a quickish pace, but there's no real challenge or reward.

One of the biggest complaints about the original (Citroën) DS4 was its poor ride, something that has been answered with this latest model. It's still not liquid-smooth, but on French back-roads it absorbs undulations with reasonable aplomb, although strangely the apparently smooth tarmac of the autoroute finds it fidgeting around like a toddler with a full bladder.

On interior quality the DS 4 delivers the premium effect DS is striving for, but for everything else it's all a bit forgettable, and for a car maker with eight World Rally titles to its name, that's unforgivable. ❌

**Stuart Gallagher**  
(@stuartg917)

## Specification

Engine	CO2	Power	Torque	0-62mph	Top speed	Weight	Basic price
In-line 4-cyl, 1598cc, turbo	138g/km	208bhp @ 6000rpm	210lb ft @ 1750-4000rpm	7.8sec (claimed)	146mph (claimed)	1313kg (161bhp/ton)	£22,995

+ Quality of interior trim - Engine lacks punch; uninspiring drive

**evo rating**

★★★★☆

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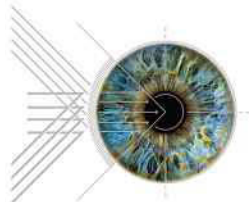
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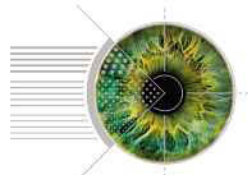
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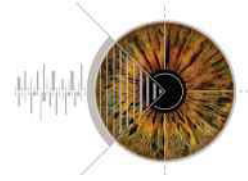
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# DMS BMW M5

**Test location:** Bruntingthorpe, Leicestershire **GPS:** 52.490427, -1.133649  
**Photography:** Aston Parrott

**T**HERE ARE A NUMBER of members of the **evo** editorial team who cannot hear mention of the E60 BMW M5 without immediately jabbering incoherently about its V10 engine. The 5-litre, 500bhp S85 unit will almost certainly go down in the history books as the single most outrageous engine ever to be fitted to a saloon or estate car.

It revved to 8000rpm, it was dripping with exotic materials and motorsport-derived technologies and it sounded terrifying at full tilt. It was a bona fide supercar power unit, wedged into a sober-suited, mid-sized BMW. It was the E60 M5's centrepiece.

When that model was replaced by the F10 in 2011, it was crashingly inevitable that the motoring press would bemoan the loss of the S85. The new model had more power and torque, but the 4.4-litre twin-turbo V8 was nothing like as exciting as the old V10. To this day the current M5's

engine, effective though it is, feels like a poor relation.

So how do you make the M5's engine its centrepiece again? Giving it 730bhp might just be the answer. Southampton-based DMS offers a number of tuning options for the M5, starting with the 680bhp Stage 1 upgrade. It costs £1980 plus fitting (around three to four hours). The Stage 2 kit costs £3000, again plus fitting (approx one day), and unleashes 732bhp. If you want yet more, DMS will replace the exhaust system, which liberates another 10bhp plus a great deal of noise.

Torque is electronically limited to 664lb ft at Stage 2, which company founder Rob Young describes as a 'safe limit' for the transmission. When upgrading the software, the factory speed limiter is removed, after which the car will find its way past 200mph if you can find the space... and the nerve.

DMS has tested its upgrades on Rob's own M5 over thousands

Standard M5 lacking a certain something? DMS Automotive turns it into a 730bhp, 200mph-plus, tyre-shredding monster



of miles without any unforeseen issues and, should a BMW dealer unwittingly flash away your upgrade during a service, DMS will reinstall the latest version free of charge. 'Every M5 we've had in has made 600bhp in standard trim, not the 560bhp BMW quotes,' notes Rob.

Bruntingthorpe's two-mile runway seems like an appropriate place to test a 730bhp M5. While the standard car feels rampantly quick as it is, this upgraded one feels furiously rapid in an almost uncontrollable, this-cannot-be-right kind of way. It's terrifically exciting. Low-down response is still very good, but from the mid-range the hit in the

back is ferocious and the run to the rev-limiter is completely unhinged.

This car will spin its rear wheels in fourth gear. It's a quantity of power and torque that you have to deploy with real care and forethought if the stability systems are switched off. Stand on the throttle pedal abruptly and you will get bitten. Whereas most high-performance cars will eventually right themselves and straighten up at the end of long powerslide, even if you do keep your right foot in, this car will continue to defeat traction all the way down the following straight.

Of course, the standard stability control will rein-in the grunt when left switched on, if a little clumsily, so the DMS car hasn't suddenly become some sort of unuseable monster. It has rediscovered a touch of the rawness and character of the previous M5, though, and the engine is once again the overriding, all-consuming heart of the car. **✘**

**Dan Prosser** (@TheDanProsser)

## Specification

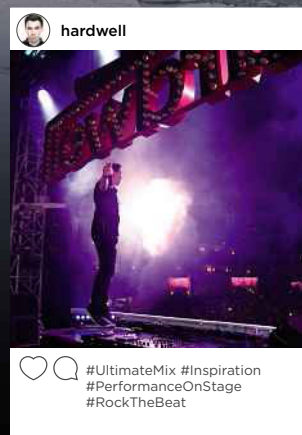
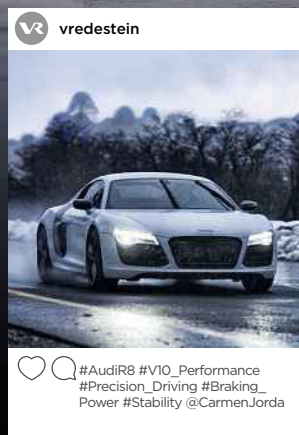
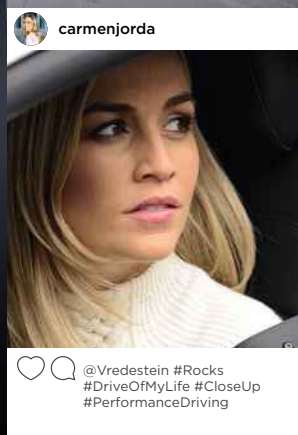
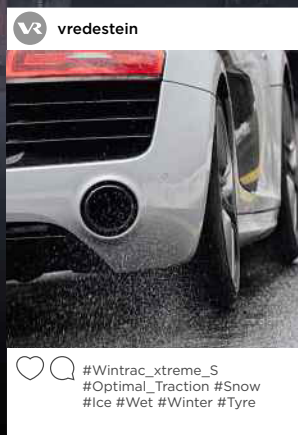
**+** Upgrade makes the M5's engine a real centrepiece again **-** Costly for an ECU upgrade

Engine	CO2	Power (Stage 2)	Torque (Stage 2)	0-62mph	Top speed	evo rating	Weight	Basic price
V8, 4395cc, twin-turbo	n/a	732bhp @ 7400rpm	664lb ft @ 4800rpm	3.6sec (claimed)	203mph+ (claimed)	★★★★★	1870kg (397bhp/ton)	See text



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# Audi A4 Avant 2.0 TFSI

**Test location:** D943, Le Puy-Saint Réparate, France **GPS:** 43.979131, 5.344757

Lighter, more agile, with better steering and keen new petrol engines... the new A4 is surprisingly good



**T**HE SMALL, PREMIUM German estate car goes by many names: Touring, Estate, and by Audi's chosen nomenclature, Avant. This is the fifth iteration of the A4 Avant in a 20-year lifespan, which means the boys and girls at Ingolstadt are getting something right (ignoring meeting emission targets of course) when it comes to such a hotly contested sector.

For the new A4 Avant, which reaches UK showrooms in January 2016, Audi will offer an exhaustive range of variants that amounts to a frankly ridiculous 27 permutations of petrol and diesel, four- and six-cylinder engines, front- and four-wheel drive and manual, DSG and auto gearboxes. If you can't find an A4 Avant to suit your needs, it's probably not the car for you.

In order to help you whittle down your options, we plucked a petrol-fuelled, 187bhp 2-litre TFSI with a seven-speed S-tronic gearbox and front-wheel drive, and headed to the hills above Aix-en-Provence. Our test car was also fitted with Audi's optional Drive Select system. Three



petrol engines are initially offered with the A4 Avant; there are also 148bhp and 249bhp variants, with the latter only available with quattro four-wheel drive and S-tronic.

In 187bhp tune, the four-cylinder engine has been as thoroughly reworked as the rest of the car. The Avant has shed up to 110kg, depending on which model you go for, and is now underpinned by a completely new platform, its handling dynamics and ride qualities re-evaluated, according to Audi.

The engines have been similarly revamped, this 187bhp motor in particular. A new combustion process has been developed, the result of which is as little as 121g/km of CO2 ('box dependent) and the promise of optimal throttle response across the rev-range.

It's certainly an eager motor, one that likes to rev and is keen to react in an instant to throttle inputs. It sounds a little coarse as the revs build, but there are no flat-spots to its delivery and the 236lb ft that's available from 1450rpm right through to 4200rpm contributes to the engine's enthusiasm.

The ratios in the seven-speed S-tronic gearbox are well matched to the engine's power and torque delivery. In Sport mode, the 'box hangs on to the gear if you wring it out to the end of a straight and resists shifting up the second you lift off the throttle to stand on the brakes. (These are a bit dead initially on travel, but become progressive as the pressure increases.) It feels a bit knobby to use paddles to shift gears in a family wagon, but they do get the best from the drivetrain and, being attached to the back of the steering wheel, are intuitive to use.

With Drive Select left in Auto, the body control firms up when you need it to, the damping is well-judged and matched to the car's performance potential and through quick, sweeping turns it remains composed

and doesn't deliver any surprises. Unless you lift mid-corner, then the nose tucks in much more sharply than you might expect and the rear axle pokes its head round to see what's going on. Lift-off oversteer in an Audi estate? That's a new one on me. It does mean you can trim the Avant's nose accordingly when it runs wide in tighter turns without losing too much momentum, and in the quicker stuff there's a little more balance to play with. It's no R8 by even the furthest stretch of the imagination, and a 3-series Touring is better balanced and has a sharper dynamic edge to it, but the A4 Avant does make you rethink your view on non-S and RS Audis.

The only fly in the ointment is that the man responsible for this lighter, more agile, better-steering, cleaner-riding and more responsive A4 Avant was one of the headline figures fired from the company following the emissions scandal. If Audi wants to continue the good work it has done with its new A4, it'll need a strong replacement for Dr Hackenberg. ❌

**Stuart Gallagher**  
(@stuartg917)

## Specification

➕ Lightweight construction, class-leading tech ❌ Still not the most involving drive

Engine	CO2	Power	Torque	0-62mph	Top speed	evo rating	Weight	Basic price
In-line 4-cyl. 1984cc, turbo	129g/km	187bhp @ 4200-6000rpm	236lb ft @ 1450-4200rpm	7.5sec (claimed)	146mph (claimed)	★★★★☆	1505kg (126bhp/ton)	£31,580





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# Outside Line

by RICHARD MEADEN



Host a Car of the Year feature when your mag's just three months old? Why not, says Meaden, as he looks back at the highs and lows of eCoty's past

**W** **WE HELD THE FIRST ECOTY BACK IN** 1998, just two issues after **evo** was launched. It was a big test in more ways than one. Three months into our independently launched magazine adventure, we carried some precious momentum and goodwill from our previous steed – the euthanised *Performance Car* magazine (god rest its saddle-stitched soul) – yet requesting ten of the most significant cars of the year was the moment we really put the industry's depth of support to the test.

So you can imagine the relief, pride and excitement we all felt on mustering at eCoty HQ – a massive, self-catering farmhouse on Anglesey – knowing we'd pulled all the components of the test together. Ferrari, Porsche, Jaguar, Lotus, Caterham, Audi, Alfa, BMW, Subaru and Mazda. Though we didn't know it at the time, that inaugural eCoty issue would prove pivotal in **evo**'s thus far short and precarious history.

Creating an annual event was bullish, for it suggested we intended to stick around – no bad statement of intent for a fledgling title. Getting the right cars proved we had a bit of clout. Most importantly, it made for a cracking cover shot – taken on Black Rock Sands near Porthmadog in north Wales – and thanks to Peter Tomalin's expertly crafted words, a fine yarn, too. One in which Porsche's then-new 996-gen 911 was eventually proclaimed the winner. Gratifyingly, the issue yielded a modest but critical uplift in sales sufficient to give Harry Metcalfe the heart to dig a little deeper and keep the lights on until 1999. Though not before delivering his now legendary doom-laden pre-Christmas message. To this day I regard eCoty as a talisman for the thrill of surviving as much as driving.

It's hard to believe 2015 is the eighteenth eCoty. There have been some cracking gatherings over the years, but few, if any, have topped this year's foray to the Highlands of Scotland. It really was extraordinary, but then I'm sure it was the first story you turned to in this issue, so you already know that. If it was then bravo, for in so doing you rather confounded the belief amongst publishing sorts that magazine readers have for some time been suffering 'Car of the Year fatigue'. There's certainly no shortage of annual extravaganzas, it's true, but I like to think there's still something special about eCoty that separates it from the rest.

Perhaps it's because of **evo**'s somewhat homespun origins, but we've also never tried to make eCoty into some bloated industry schmoozefest. If we did, we'd have to contrive to create separate awards for every conceivable sector of the high-performance market, from hot hatches to hypercars, no doubt with particular emphasis on commercially lucrative things such as SUVs. Then we'd invite all the major brands to pay a ton of money for tables

at our awards evening, hand-out a few pots, get everyone drunk and wait for the advertising revenue to roll in.

Instead, we do what we've always done: sit in a room and compile a list of the year's most exciting or surprising cars. We then fight and argue until we've got the list to a more manageable length, condensed to the best of the best. In years gone by, if that shortlist included a Ferrari we'd dispatch good old Harry Metcalfe to Maranello, where he'd engage the incumbent PR man in protracted negotiations to secure the car. Some months later, if said Ferrari didn't win, we'd dispatch good old Harry back to Maranello in order to offer profuse apologies to the incumbent (and most likely, incandescent) PR man, and engage in further protracted negotiations to ensure the Wollaston offices weren't

## 'Thankfully **evo** Italia's editor talked us out of prison...'

stormed by scarlet-clad ninjas. Those were the days.

Every eCoty is special in its own way, but some live longer in the memory. The first of the new millennium was jinxed by appalling weather and worse luck. Having suffered a gearbox failure in the Alfa 147 Selespeed, hapless Harry Metcalfe was 'rescued' by David Vivian, who then proceeded to drive them through a dry-stone wall in the TVR Tuscan. The next day a Lotus 340R got stuffed into a ditch. I think a 911 won.

In 2003 we clearly didn't spend long enough locked in the meeting room, for we emerged with a two-stage test. Part One required us to drive our 'Real World' contenders to the Scottish Highlands (no mean feat in itself), while Part Two had us turn around and drive the top three finishers (along with our group of 'Surreal World' big hitters) all the way to Genoa in Italy.

It was an expedition Sir Ranulph Fiennes would have thought twice about, but we did it anyway. Two weeks, several speeding fines and thousands of gallons of petrol later, another eCoty was concluded. But not before the Italian police threatened to arrest us and confiscate all the cars. Thankfully **evo** Italia's editor, Marco Della Monica, talked us out of prison. We celebrated by proclaiming a 911 as our shock winner. At the risk of paying homage to that other great eCoty tradition, the John Barker spoiler, some things about this test never change. Or do they? ❧

**e** @DickieMeaden

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



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# Petrolhead

by RICHARD PORTER



Porter speculates on what the Volkswagen emissions scandal could mean for the kind of cars that might once have appeared on *Top Gear*

**I**T'S A TURBULENT TIME IN THE WORLD of cars and motorsport. So much so, it's hard to know where to start. Formula 1 seems as good a place as any and specifically the rumour, current at the time of writing, that the entire sport is to be sold. Is this a genuine possibility or simply Bernie making mischief? It's hard to know if F1 truly is up for grabs. Something that definitely is for sale, however, is my new book *And On That Bombshell – Inside the Madness and Genius of Top Gear*, which is in all good bookshops now.

Since we're on F1, it's worth noting the surprise news that Jenson Button will remain at McLaren for the 2016 season, a decision that shocked many who thought his frustration with an underperforming car would steer him towards an untimely retirement once the current season comes to a close. Button was once a guest on *Top Gear*, of course, and turned down the offer of a chauffeured car to the studio in favour of driving himself, something we took as a sign of a true enthusiast and a portent of the un-starry behaviour that would make him a delight to deal with. This, and many other behind-the-scenes stories, can be found in my new book, *And On That Bombshell – Inside the Madness and Genius of Top Gear*, which is also available as an e-book from many reputable online sources.

The shock headlines in the car world aren't confined to motorsport, of course, and there's no bigger story at the moment than that of Volkswagen and its so-called 'defeat device', which sought to fudge diesel emissions under laboratory testing conditions. This controversy is sure to have serious repercussions for the German company's bottom line and that, in turn, could have a grave effect on some of the component parts of the vast VW Group monolith. What will happen to Bugatti, for example? Already rumours are swirling that a vast recall bill will pull cash away from the project to build a Veyron replacement, forever damning that mouth-watering prospect to the back burner. This is surely bad news for anyone with fond memories of Bugatti's last hypercar, not least those of us on *Top Gear* who saw it take part in an epic cross-Europe battle against a light aircraft. Such races were often accused of being faked, a damning accusation I'm happy to address in my new book *And On That Bombshell – Inside the Madness and Genius of Top Gear*, which would make an ideal Christmas gift for any fan of the world's biggest car show.

Sadly, VW's troubles won't end with Bugatti, because let's not forget that Porsche is part of the same group and its bosses must be praying that they can continue to generate income from profitable SUVs in order to self-finance an ambitious expansion into electric

cars, as previewed by the fascinating Mission E concept. If they can't, it wouldn't be the first occasion the Stuttgart concern has experienced troubles, such as the lean days of the late 1980s, or the time they loaned *Top Gear* a 911 that later popped a piston through the side of its block after an over-exuberant filming session on a beach got some sand into the engine. This is the kind of never-heard story you can read in my new book *And On That Bombshell – Inside the Madness and Genius of Top Gear*, which gives an exclusive insight into some of the disasters that happened during the production of the top-rated BBC Two motoring show.

Since we're talking about the infamous diesel emissions controversy, we can't forget the potential effect on Volkswagen itself and how that might impact some of our favourite cars with

**'All focus will be on the core business, to the exclusion of tasty treats such as the next-gen Golf R'**

a VW badge on the back. It's not beyond the bounds of possibility to think that, with purse strings being tightened to offset the catastrophic damage of so-called dieselgate, all focus will be on the core business, to the exclusion of tasty treats for car fans, such as the next generation of the Golf R. At this stage, such talk is nothing more than speculation and we can only hope that the Mk8 Golf can justify an R version, given the global popularity of the current iteration. Something else that experienced popularity around the world is the television programme *Top Gear*, and in my new book, *And On That Bombshell – Inside the Madness and Genius of Top Gear*, I try to explain a little of how that continent-crossing appeal came about and what effect it had on the show, as well as explaining how ideas were formulated, scripts were written, and what it was like to spend 13 years working with Jeremy Clarkson, Richard Hammond and James May.

What does the future hold for the top level of motorsport and for one of the world's biggest car makers? At this stage, it's pretty much impossible to say for certain. All I know is that my new book, *And On That Bombshell – Inside the Madness and Genius of Top Gear*, is on sale now. I don't know if you were aware of this. I might have mentioned it once or twice. ❧

✉ @sniffpetrol

Richard is *evo*'s longest-serving columnist and is the keyboard behind sniffpetrol.com

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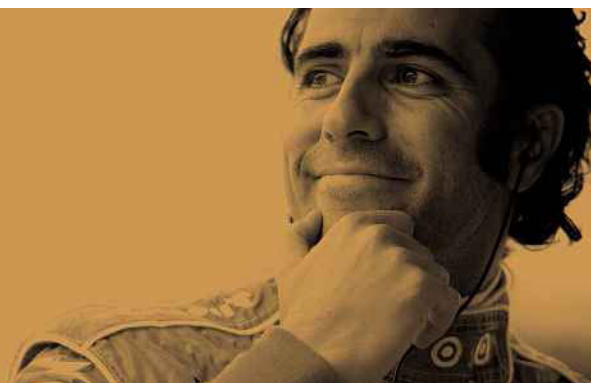


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# Champ

by DARIO FRANCHITTI



If we wanted to be airborne all the time we'd spend our hard-earned on pilots' licences, says a frustrated Dario

**E**VEN BY EVO CAR OF THE YEAR standards, this year's arsenal was extraordinary. The format is wonderful too, because where else can a Peugeot square up to a McLaren and have a fair chance of coming out on top? And for the battleground to be arguably the greatest driving roads in Europe, rather than an inert facility such as Mira? Aye, the public road. A place where confidence counts for so much and the landscape plays as much of a part in the experience as the cylinders at your disposal or the speed of the steering rack.

If you think there's a better, more relevant way of evaluating performance cars for public consumption, I'd like to know about it. Yes, it's a weird thing to try to compare a supercar that costs £320,000 with a SEAT Leon, and you've got to leave your snobbery at the door if that door isn't of the scissor, gullwing or butterfly variety, but anyone doubting the integrity or passion of the testers should have witnessed one particular fuel stop we made. I was in the Aventador, Marino was in the McLaren 675LT and Dickie and Nick were in equally fantabulous machinery when a lady arrived in a 205 GTI. It was *mint*, and we were duly jumping around that little hatchback as if it were the most exclusive supercar on the planet.

I'm lucky enough to drive a decent cross-section of *evo*-type cars often, but I don't have anything like the same hot-off-the-press access to new metal as the road test team does. So, as well as the nitty-gritty of helping find a winner, *eCoty* was also a rare chance for me to find out where we're at with fast cars in general.

Perhaps the key point, or revelation, was that performance cars are now so technically able that the small things really do matter. The hatchbacks illustrated this; these cars can absolutely entertain on the same level as a mid-engined supercar, but to me elements such as over-servoed brakes and poor chairs on the SEAT, and the placement of the instruments on the Peugeot, were irritating examples of a lack of attention to detail. They were also a reminder of how decades of racing pedigree can't protect companies from screwing up the basics. And you can't assume they won't, despite marketing and advertising telling you otherwise.

Indeed, some of the mistakes car makers are still falling prey to astonishes me. Driving positions seem to be a problem. The Aventador: *what* a car, but the seats? Terrible – worse than what you'd get in a £7995 econo-hatch. Even the McLaren boys have got a way to go with that, and they're highly regarded for solid ergonomics. Both cars use exotic one-piece buckets, so perhaps these are just teething problems, but you've got to question a

process that leads to the driver of a potentially very dangerous car feeling awkward.

Then there's the Lamborghini's ISR gearbox. You've either got treacle speed or it's going to snap your neck. Jethro suggested that shifting at the limiter would smooth things out, and he was right, but at that point you're going at such a lick... You do wonder how these manufacturers can make such fantastic cars but with elementary failings. I just don't get it, and if you want to know why Porsches win so many awards, it's because those guys make fewer mistakes with the details.

That said, Lamborghini is breaking new ground. Traditionally, big bulls fall apart when pushed past seven tenths, but the SV

**'You've got to question a process that leads to the driver of a potentially dangerous car feeling awkward'**

doesn't come alive until you're at eight. It's a brute, but it's also a drivers' car, if you can find a road to match. And a HANS device.

Indeed, what encouraged me was the bond many of the highly sophisticated cars at *eCoty* were able to forge with the driver. Performance at the expense of involvement is high on the list of petrolhead concerns at the moment, but the McLaren, Civic and Cayman GT4 (in which I enjoyed one of the greatest drives of my life), to name but three, were proof that certain car makers know how to balance the two. It's an impressive feat, and sadly one I personally don't think Ferrari has pulled off with the 488.

There is, of course, another danger that stems from focusing on downforce and lap times. The bumps and yumps on the many brilliant roads that made up the *eCoty* 2015 test routes – the North Coast 500 – meant that some of these cars were becoming airborne quite a lot because of a lack of suspension travel. It's an issue that has affected supercars back to the F40. On a circuit a stiff setup makes complete sense, but these are *street* cars, so we've got to be careful that their performance remains useable on the road, and I'm not simply talking about too much pure speed here. As a buyer of such cars, to the manufacturers I say this: nail the basics and never jeopardise driveability. ☒

✉ @dariofranchitti

Dario is a three-time Indy 500 winner and four-time IndyCar champ

# UPGRADE TO ÖHLINS

*What can Öhlins Road & Track suspension do for the handling of your car? That's what we're challenging one *evo* reader to find out as we upgrade his M3, then ask him to put it to the test*



**T**HE DECISION TO UPGRADE YOUR car's suspension is not one to be taken lightly. The benefits are clear in your mind – improved grip and handling for the road and occasional trackday fun – but so too are the pitfalls, such as the potential to upset day-to-day ride comfort. Likewise, you need to be sure the quality and durability of the new suspension is more than a match for the old, and confident the technicians who carry out the installation and setup work are the best around.

If this scenario sounds familiar you'll identify with Mark Reeves. *evo* reader, keen driver, occasional trackday goer and the owner of a rather fine E92 BMW M3, Reeves has agreed to take part in a unique test in which we upgrade his car's standard suspension with Öhlins Road & Track coilovers. Once fitted, Mark will head to north Wales, where he'll drive his car on the famous *evo* Triangle road-test route to experience the difference Öhlins' Road & Track makes on one of the most demanding drivers' roads in the country. Using Öhlins' unique one-click compression and rebound adjustment to arrive at his ideal balance of ride and handling, he'll then head to the nearby Anglesey Circuit to explore the M3's limits and try some more extreme suspension settings, as recommended by Öhlins' experts.

You can read about his road and track experiences over the coming months, but before he can do that he needs to get that

suspension swapped. Step forward award-winning authorised Öhlins distributor Mick Gardner Racing. While they remove the M3's standard suspension, replace it with new Öhlins Road & Track kit and complete a full geometry check, we take the opportunity to get to know Mark, chatting about his car history, his driving experience and his hopes for how his M3 will feel on its new Öhlins suspension.

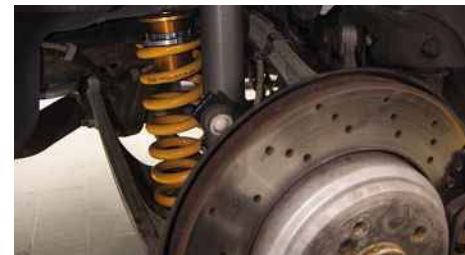
'I was into motocross from an early age, so I knew all about Öhlins,' he says. 'They really have a great reputation. I stopped the bikes after I had a big accident, but that got me into cars. I've had the M3 just under a year now. I had a Clio Renaultsport 200 before that, but I'd been hankering for a V8 since I was a kid. It's a bit of a dream to have one, especially one as good as the BMW.'

'I love the M3 and think it's an amazing all-rounder, but like anything, you always want some things to be better. My car has the EDC suspension, though to be honest I only ever use

the Comfort or Sport modes – the Normal option doesn't really offer enough of a difference compared to Comfort. What I'm after is slightly sharper turn-in and for the body control to be a bit tighter, but without making it too stiff. I think this would give me more confidence. It's my first rear-drive car, and while I've learned a lot and feel much more comfortable with it than I did at the beginning, a bit more control and sense of connection can only help, can't it?'

'I had worried swapping the suspension would mean I'd have to put up with a few warning lights, but the Öhlins kit overrides the EDC error messages. It's too good a car to have warning lights flashing, so that's a nice touch. I really can't wait to head to north Wales and try the roads up there, and of course to drive on track at Anglesey. I'm sure there's a lot to learn about finding the best settings for the suspension, but that's all part of the fun.'

*Next month: driving the *evo* Triangle*





# Inbox

## What's cheated your emissions test this month?



**Letter of the Month**

## More 2&4

The Honda Project 2&4 concept at this year's Frankfurt motor show (Radar, *evo* 215) definitely shows the right direction for these big Japanese car companies. Japanese sports cars so often get the engineering right but fall short when it comes to design. So why not maximise the engineering and minimise the design?

If tiny car companies like Caterham and Ariel can build amazing trackday sports cars that are also road legal for the same price as a mid-range German saloon, imagine what a huge Japanese company like Toyota could build.

A Toyota-badged BAC Mono for a fraction of the price? Where do I sign?

**KLi**

### The Letter of the Month wins a Christopher Ward watch

The writer of this month's star letter receives a Christopher Ward C70 Italian GP 1921 Chronometer (pictured), worth £599. With a dial sporting the colours of the Italian Tricolore, it celebrates the country's first Grand Prix, held in Brescia 94 years ago. One of a limited edition of 500 pieces, it has a 42mm case and a Swiss-made quartz movement.



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### We get it

Oh how I sighed and hung my head at issue 215's letter of the month regarding the 'misunderstood' new MX-5, when only weeks beforehand I had been nodding at a feature criticising the same car. Mazda has pushed this 'modest power to suit the chassis' thing far enough now. To the point of boredom, in fact.

Think about 90 per cent of the people you see driving MX-5s. They're 75 years old. (OK, maybe a slight exaggeration!) A young(er) person will ignore a car with so little power nowadays, and this is where Mazda is going to get left behind, especially now a 'warm' hatch gives nearly 200bhp.

So, Mr Berridge of Letter of the Month fame, the condescending view of other people 'just not getting it' needs to end. We get it. It's a Sunday cruising car that is somehow still being called a 'sports car'. Come on, Mazda. You're capable of so much more.

**Matt Hill**

### Kindred spirit

After agreeing on the joys of driving in the wet (Inbox, *evo* 214), I find myself having an increasing amount in common with Richard Meaden (Outside Line, issue 215). I too have just built my dream garage after a multi-year restoration of our house and have recently lost 30lb in weight after years of spending half my life in hotels and eating more than my own body mass in fish and chips.

I had an existing two-bay garage housing a '65 E-type, '65 Mini Cooper (squeezed in sideways at the back) and F355 Berlinetta. That left my V8 Vantage outside for a few years and a base '63 Mini in a tent. I sold the Vantage and funded the dream three-bayer with the proceeds. With plenty of head height for future-proofing (I

may need a four-poster ramp or three one day), it's painted white with a polished concrete floor, and has its walls covered in some old Pininfarina drawings I bought at auction years ago and saved for my man cave.

The good news is that the garage has 'added value' to the house and I now have space and funds for another Aston – a DBS or V12 Vantage. As you may have guessed, I'm also a *Vantage* reader as well as an *evo* fan.

Keep up the good work, Dickie.

**Richard Carter**

### You're not alone

Richard Porter may like to know that overtaking isn't frowned upon only in Great Britain (Petrolhead, *evo* 215). I live in Germany, close to a small city named Hameln, and the situations described sound very familiar.

For many German drivers, being overtaken, even within speed limits, is reason enough to get angry. They show funny hand signs and flash their lights, I suppose because, for them, overtaking is rude, shows disrespect and most of all is dangerous.

The situation has become worse in recent years. One of the reasons might be that mainstream media and politicians are leading public opinion towards this: driving fast will immediately result in a crash and all passengers will most likely die.

**Jan Menke, Germany**

### ET go home

Where is the real Richard Porter? 'Go on, name a great V6 engine,' he said (Petrolhead, *evo* 214). All I need to say is 'NSX' and everyone will know that the real Porter has been abducted by aliens. Go on, Fake Richard, name one article written on the NSX that refers to its 'unlovable', 'low achieving' V6.

**Howard Mecklenburgh**



**Above:** it's not only in the UK where overtaking is unpopular, says Jan Menke



**Above:** Honda NSX is one exception to the 'all V6s are rubbish' rule (see 'ET go home')

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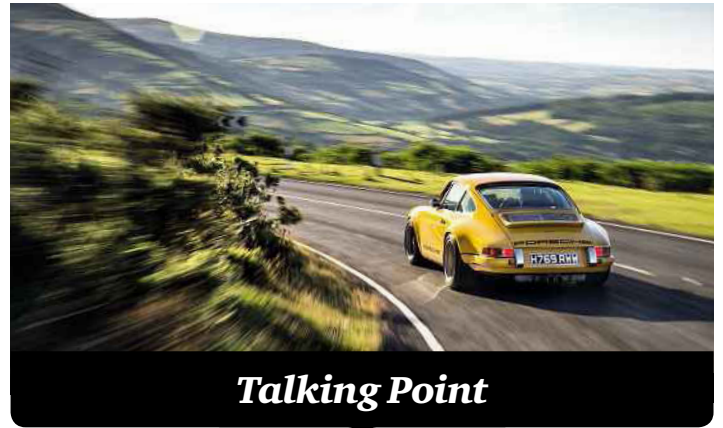
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### Talking Point

## Your Car of the Year

This month we've chosen our favourite new car of 2015.  
But what's yours? Here's what you said...

2015 has been an excellent year for cars. The 675LT made McLaren look cool, Porsche did their usual Porsche gig, Ferrari 488 came out of nowhere... But my gold star goes to the Aventador SV. Goes to the Ring, posts a hypercar lap time and keeps the flag flying for full-fat naturally aspirated V12 engines. Supercar!  
**27Gilles**

Evora 400. Good to see somebody is still making awesomely nuts cars.  
**Gavin Winchester**

Civic Type R. A purist, no-nonsense sports car that is affordable to most.  
**Jotaro**

The McLaren 675LT got my total appreciation. From a technical to a design point of view it's a great car.  
**SkiddingMouse**

The Porsche 911 (991) GT3 RS is the ultimate driving machine. End of story.  
**Eric Kanavathi**

GT4. First time a 911 engine has made it into a Cayman. And manual too.  
**David Noble**

I always tend to vote for the Singer 911 [pictured] as my car of the year, every single year. Can't help it. On a more serious note, I'm hesitating between the Cayman GT4 and the 675LT. If I had to pick or die, the GT4 has won over my heart this year.  
**Jon Resk**

MX-5, GT3 RS, Cayman GT4 and 675LT are all correct answers. Very evo cars.  
**Michael Hawkins**

For me the Aston Martin N430 is absolutely brilliant. I love the video Henry did with it up in Scotland. I know the Vantage is an old car, but it just does it for me. My absolute dream car  
**R.Swann**

Easy: Golf R Estate. I can carry the dogs, kids and my mountain bike everywhere at speed while having fun. Performance, practicality and price. Need I say more?!

First: GT4. Honourable mention: DB10  
**Alex\_**

Lambo SV. Looks, V12, noise, performance, madness, crazyness, little flaws – all present!  
**tazsura**

The Cayman GT4 has my vote. It seems to be everything we were all hoping for, and the fact Walter Röhrl is reported to prefer it over a GT3 hammers the point home for me. Engaging cars are reducing in numbers and I'm happy that Porsche hasn't forgotten that lap times are not the only measure of a great car.  
**Steve Crowe**

There is only one solution to this. A joint first for the 488 and either of the Porsches. Probably the GT3 RS...  
**Ofir**

X6 M50d. Outrageous, arrogant and sublime.  
**ShockDiamonds**

Clio RS 220 Trophy.  
**LS**

### Join the discussion

Keep an eye on [evo.co.uk](http://evo.co.uk) or follow us on Facebook ([facebook.com/evomagazine](https://www.facebook.com/evomagazine)) to participate in our regular Talking Point debates. The best comments will be published here each month

## Thread of the Month

Holley

# Your last petrol engine

Speaking with my neighbour about Teslas and autonomous cars, he's seriously considering buying an RS6 as a last hurrah as he's never owned a V8 and wants one before they get banned or they stop making them. What engine configuration have you yet to own, and really must own before it's too late?

I've had a V8, but I've not yet had a proper V8 on open pipes with a 6-71 belt-driven blower strapped to it. I also want a naturally aspirated, three-rotor, peripheral-port Wankel.

**NotoriousREV**

I'd quite like a V12. I'm always looking at old V12 Jags, Mercs and BMWs in the classified. Never built up the courage to buy one, though...

**zedleg**

I've considered a 650i (V8) before now. Would still do so, even, but in reality it would probably be a 550. I'd also consider a 760 for a bit of V12 action.

**Swervin\_Mervin**

With regard to V8s, unless it's a Yankee chassis-bending weapon, I'm not that fussed. I want to own a V10 (M5 is on my radar) and a V12, but again it needs to be a proper V12, not a CL600 one.

**clio200**

I really want to own and experience the flat-six in the current Cayman GTS

before all models are turbocharged in the future. Shame I can't afford one.

**Alex\_**

A Porsche flat-six or a Rover V8 in TVR Griffith guise are both achievable targets that sound the dog's bollocks. Obviously a Ferrari V12/flat-12 and a Lambo V12 are very much 'wow', but they seem like a distant dream.

**duncs500**

I can't believe no one is even tempted by a BMW 850 [pictured]. I think they're really cool. I mean, yes, a Ferrari or Lambo would be better, but I can't afford a Ferrari or Lambo and could possibly stretch to an 850. Before bankrupting myself running it.

**zedleg**

No one's thrown an Alfa V6 into the ring?

**carlos**

Well, there are no good V6s. Everyone knows that.

**JL**

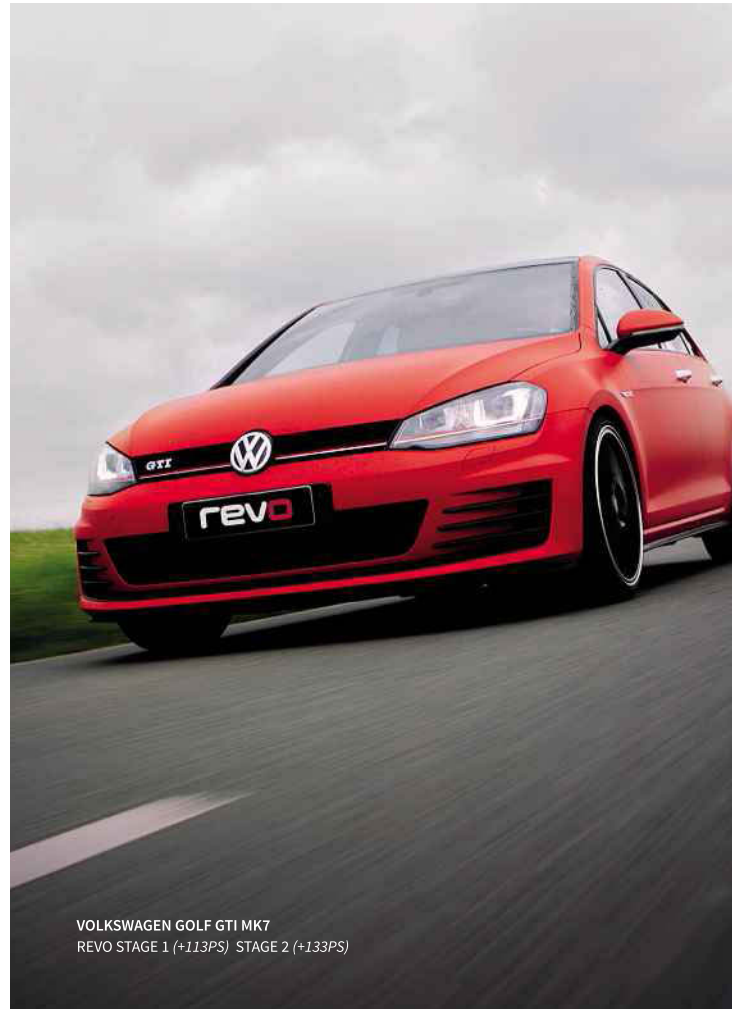


Thread of the Month wins a Road Angel safety camera & blackspot alert device worth £159.99



The originator of the best **evo** forum thread wins a Road Angel Gem+. The Gem+ automatically updates its camera database as you drive and allows users to share the locations of 'live' camera vans.

**ROAD ANGEL™**



VOLKSWAGEN GOLF GTI MK7  
REVO STAGE 1 (+113PS) STAGE 2 (+133PS)

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# D R I V I N G

*The biggest test of the best new performance cars of 2015 demands an epic test route. And we've found it. But which of our 11 contenders will leave with the coveted title of evo Car of the Year? Place your bets...*

# H E A V E N

PHOTOGRAPHY by ASTON PARROTT & DEAN SMITH

in association with





## What is *evo* Car of the Year, and why does it remain so important after 15 years? Editor Nick Trott explains

**THIS IS NOT A TEST THAT SHOULD BE OVERCOMPLICATED. THERE'S** enough of that in the planning (think herding cats, or rather herding hungry wildcats on speed). eCoty is a pure, honest and simple test – the best new drivers' cars on the best roads. It's never needed anything else because it has The Thrill of Driving at its core.

Nothing else matters on eCoty. Extraneous details, objective reasoning, data analysis, price, carbon dioxide, fuel economy, even power output – they don't matter. The judges are asked to eradicate everything except that which conspires to deliver The Thrill of Driving. It's how a Peugeot 208 GTi can be thrown into a test with a McLaren 675LT, and it's the unifying force that allows SEAT to take on Ferrari.

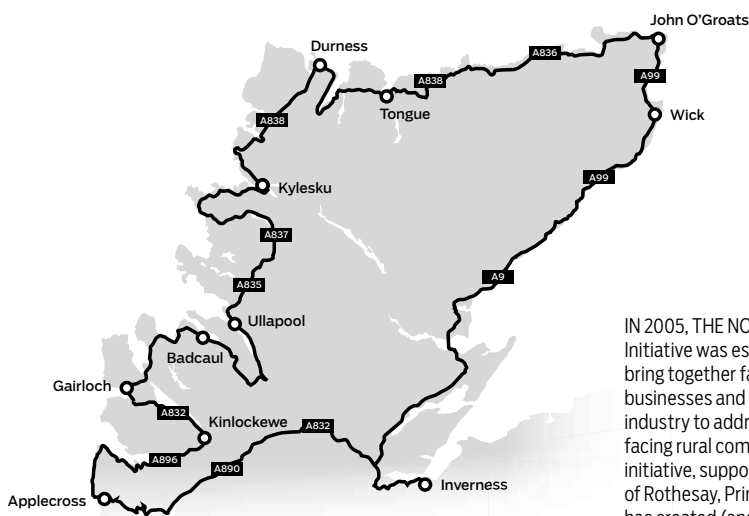
Every car in eCoty is a contender – with very rare exceptions, we only pick those cars that have already proven a winner in some way or another, either with a five-star road-test verdict or a group-test victory – and the result is impossible to predict. Well, that is unless there's a 911 in the field, as history relates...

This year was spectacular. We left Scotland tired and sunburnt (yes, really), but mostly we left optimistic. Why? Because the performance car is in a very good place. On the evidence of this year, The Thrill of Driving remains as important to car manufacturers as it is to us.

Thank you as ever for reading. We've boosted eCoty to nearly 40 pages this year, for reasons that I hope will soon become obvious.

## THE LOCATION

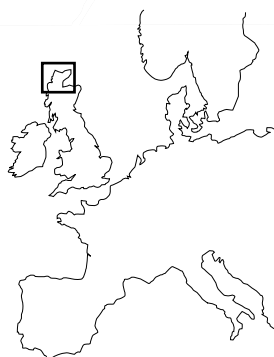
The best roads in the north Highlands of Scotland will prove a real challenge for this year's contenders



IN 2005, THE NORTH HIGHLAND Initiative was established to bring together farmers, local businesses and the tourism industry to address the challenges facing rural communities. The initiative, supported by the Duke of Rothesay, Prince Charles, has created (and manages) a marketable regional identity, of which the North Coast 500 tourist route is a clear example.

The NC500 covers over 500 miles of the best roads in the north Highlands. We started in Inverness, went west to Applecross then up the west coast, and returned via the sensational roads of the north coast. The roads have everything, from tight turns to open straights, from smooth surfaces to damper-punishing tarmac. There are few, if any, better roads on which to test and enjoy performance cars.

 **Test location:**  
the Highlands, Scotland  
GPS: 57.477047, -4.228747



## THE JUDGES

Combining over a century of road-testing and racing expertise, meet the test team



EDITOR

**NICK TROTT**

*Not just brought along for his credit card, Nick has a keen eye for detail. Can find a flaw many miss in a car*



CONTRIBUTING EDITOR

**RICHARD MEADEN**

*His achievements tower over most here. No longer powered by biscuits, but he's lost none of his fearsome pace*



CONTRIBUTING EDITOR

**JETHRO BOVINGTON**

*The fastest driver ever. Seriously. Especially when he's got an upset tummy and is searching for a loo*



ROAD TEST EDITOR

**DAN PROSSER**

*Dan's second eCoty and his first as road test editor. So we really should stop teasing him about his hairdryer*



MANAGING EDITOR

**STUART GALLAGHER**

*Thrives on problems. GT3 RS has a puncture, you say? In the wilds of Scotland? Stu will sort it...*



ROAD TESTER

**ADAM TOWLER**

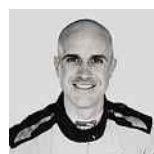
*evo's stato and resident 205 GTI owner. On his first eCoty, which means he's willing to clean cars*



CONTRIBUTING EDITOR

**COLIN GOODWIN**

*Col's been there, done that, drunk our beer. So it's remarkable he accepted another invitation to eCoty*



RACER

**MARINO FRANCHITTI**

*Won Sebring and the ALMS. Neither match the achievement of fitting in the back seat of an Evora 400*

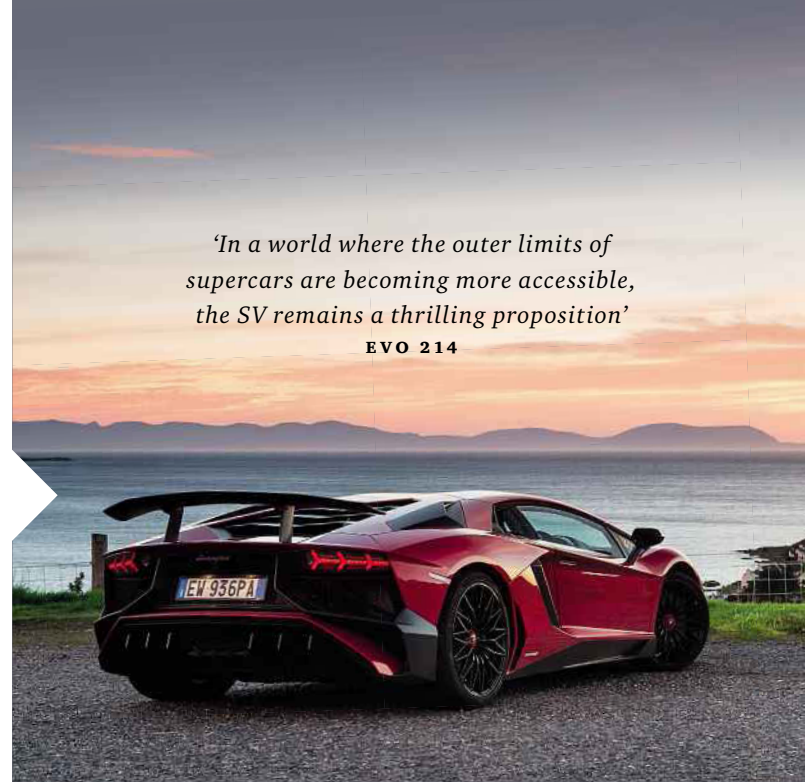
## THE CARS

What a collection – even by *evo* Car of the Year standards. Here purely on merit and from all corners of the performance car world, this is how they made the grade

### LAMBORGHINI AVENTADOR LP750-4 SV

Arguably the best current Lamborghini. It takes time to confidently approach the SV's limits of grip, traction and acceleration, but there's a level of feel and adjustability in its chassis absent from its Superveloce forebears. Consider also the fact that it will lap the Nürburgring within a few seconds of a Porsche 918 Spyder...

**Engine** V12, 6498cc  
**Power** 740bhp @ 8400rpm  
**Torque** 509lb ft @ 5500rpm  
**Tyres** Pirelli P Zero, 255/30 ZR20 front, 355/25 ZR21 rear  
**Weight (dry)** 1525kg (493bhp/ton)  
**0-62mph** 2.8sec (claimed)  
**Top speed** 217mph+ (claimed)  
**Basic price** £321,723

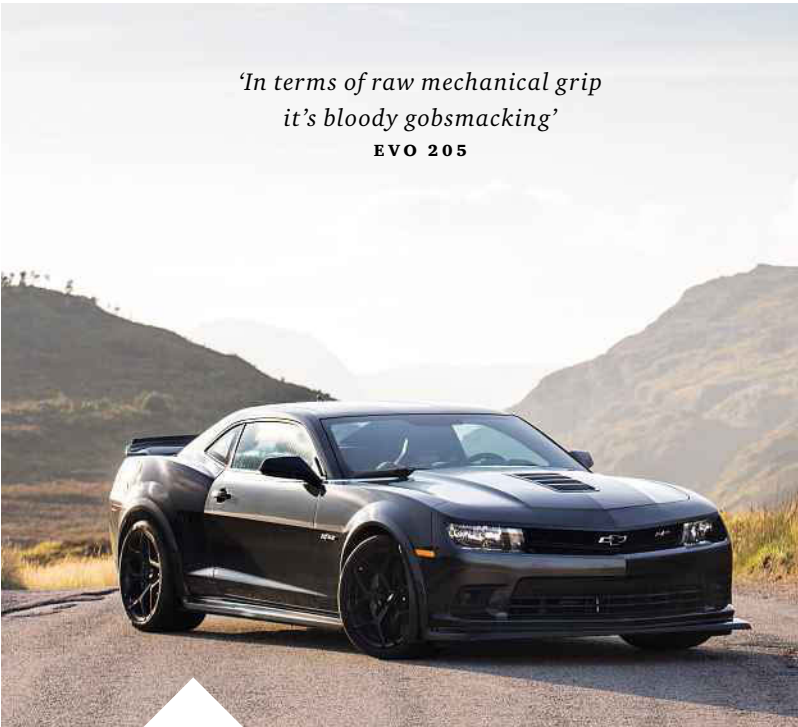


*'In a world where the outer limits of supercars are becoming more accessible, the SV remains a thrilling proposition'*

EVO 214

*'In terms of raw mechanical grip it's bloody gobsmacking'*

EVO 205



### CHEVROLET CAMARO Z/28

Surprised? Don't be. A first drive in *evo* 205 revealed this track-biased muscle car to be firmly suspended but with excellent body control and savage turn-in. Carbon-ceramic brakes? Lightweight glass? Super-sticky (and super-wide) semi-slick rubber? It has them all. America's answer to a certain hardcore 911 could make a big splash.

**Engine** V8, 7008cc  
**Power** 505bhp @ 6100rpm  
**Torque** 481lb ft @ 4800rpm  
**Weight** 1732kg (296bhp/ton)  
**Tyres** Pirelli P Zero Trofeo R, 305/30 ZR19 front and rear  
**0-60mph** 4.2sec (claimed)  
**Top speed** 175mph (claimed)  
**Basic price** \$72,305

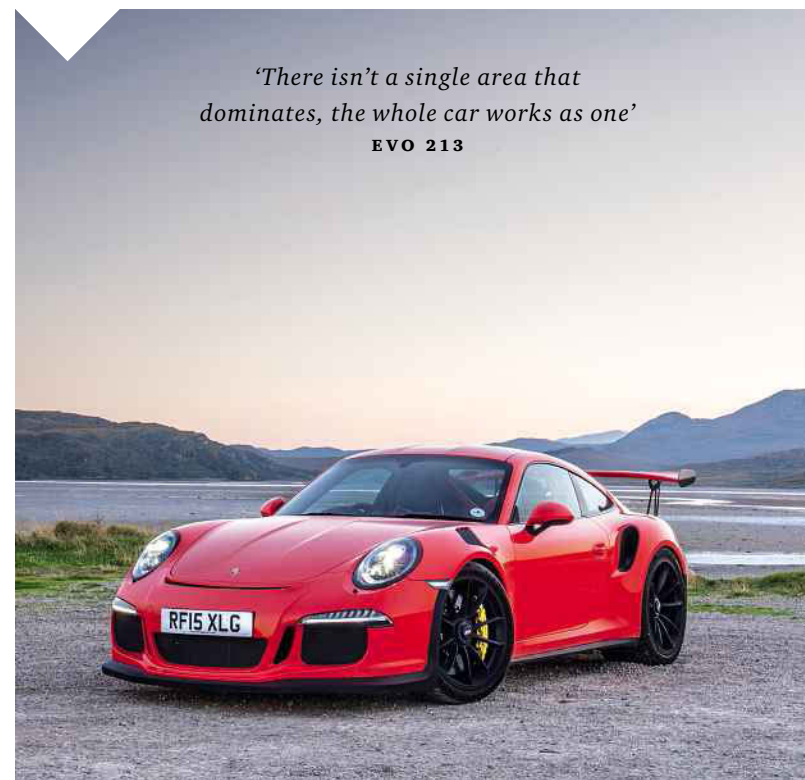
### PORSCHE 911 GT3 RS

The first RS without a manual gearbox is also the first of its line to feature such technology as four-wheel steering and torque vectoring. There's also extensive carbonfibre, far greater downforce and, yes, a naturally aspirated flat-six. We know GT3 RSs have a habit of winning eCoty, but is this one good enough to follow suit in this company?

**Engine** Flat-six, 3996cc  
**Power** 493bhp @ 8250rpm  
**Torque** 339lb ft @ 6250rpm  
**Tyres** Michelin Pilot Sport Cup 2, 265/35 ZR20 front, 325/30 ZR21 rear  
**Weight** 1420kg (353bhp/ton)  
**0-62mph** 3.3sec (claimed)  
**Top speed** 193mph (claimed)  
**Basic price** £131,296

*'There isn't a single area that dominates, the whole car works as one'*

EVO 213



in association with





## PORSCHE CAYMAN GT4

For so very long a concept Stuttgart aren't realise lest it show up more expensive (and profitable) models, a Cayman by Porsche Motorsport is finally here. With a front axle taken directly from the GT3, aerodynamic bodywork and one of the best manual transmissions on sale, this is the car we all demanded, and this will be by far its toughest test.

**Engine** Flat-six, 3800cc  
**Power** 380bhp @ 7400rpm  
**Torque** 310lb ft @ 4750-6000rpm  
**Weight** 1340kg (288bhp/ton)  
**Tyres** Michelin Pilot Sport Cup 2, 245/35 ZR20 front, 295/30 ZR20 rear  
**0-62mph** 4.4sec (claimed)  
**Top speed** 183mph (claimed)  
**Basic price** £64,451



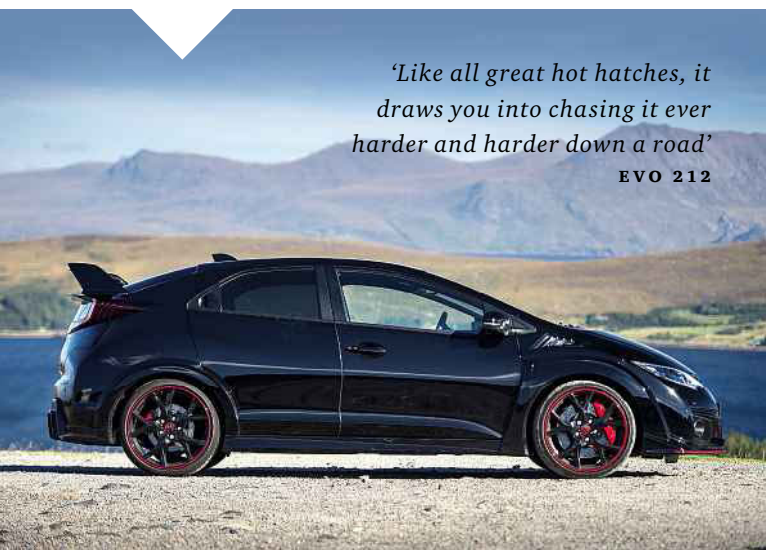
*'It deliberately puts driver enjoyment above the pursuit of raw performance'*

EVO 208

## HONDA CIVIC TYPE R

What the latest Civic Type R loses in character (goodbye VTEC as we knew it), it makes up for in sheer performance (hello turbocharging). The Honda retains its superb driving position and gains fat tyres and aerodynamic flicks that lend a Touring Car vibe to proceedings. It's an outside bet for the overall win, but it certainly won't be upstaged.

**Engine** In-line 4-cyl, 1996cc, turbo  
**Power** 306bhp @ 6500rpm  
**Torque** 295lb ft @ 2500-4500rpm  
**Weight** 1378kg (226bhp/ton)  
**Tyres** Continental SportContact 6, 235/35 R19 front and rear  
**0-62mph** 5.7sec (claimed)  
**Top speed** 167mph (claimed)  
**Basic price** £29,995



*'Like all great hot hatches, it draws you into chasing it ever harder and harder down a road'*

EVO 212

*'Objectively, this is a better car than the Porsche 911 GT3 RS'*

EVO 213



## McLAREN 675LT

McLaren would never admit it, but the 675LT is closer in terms of pace to the hybrid P1 hypercar than the firm would have liked. In fact it's probably the quickest point-to-point car at this year's eCoty. But speed alone counts for very little when the field is chock full of cars that ooze feeling and excitement. So, has modern McLaren got soul?

**Engine** V8, 3799cc, twin-turbo  
**Power** 666bhp @ 7100rpm  
**Torque** 516lb ft @ 5500-6500rpm  
**Weight** 1328kg (510bhp/ton)  
**Tyres** Pirelli P Zero Trofeo R, 235/35 ZR19 front, 305/35 ZR20 rear  
**0-62mph** 2.9sec (claimed)  
**Top speed** 205mph (claimed)  
**Basic price** £259,500



*'If you're looking for a narrow band of supreme ability, the Pug nails it'* EVO 211

## PEUGEOT 208 GTI BY PEUGEOT SPORT

Not a name you will have seen in **evo** before, but you know the car: essentially this is the 208 GTi 30th Anniversary continued in non-limited-edition form. This 208 is light, skittish and needs to be driven precisely to get the best out of it, but with a tightly wound limited-slip differential and a punchy mid-range, it's a real contender.

**Engine** In-line 4-cyl, 1598cc, turbo  
**Power** 205bhp @ 5800rpm  
**Torque** 221lb ft @ 1750rpm  
**Weight** 1185kg (176bhp/ton)  
**Tyres** Michelin Pilot Super Sport, 205/40 ZR18 front and rear  
**0-62mph** 6.5sec (claimed)  
**Top speed** 143mph (claimed)  
**Basic price** £21,995



## FERRARI 488 GTB

Not quite as characterful as the 458 it replaces? Maybe, but the 488 GTB will run rings around its predecessor. Ferrari has done a spectacular job of turbocharging its new V8 supercar and a flood of torque is now only a moment away at all times. Revised chassis electronics also allow the 488 to be driven closer to the limit, and the grip is simply staggering.

**Engine** V8, 3902cc, twin-turbo  
**Power** 661bhp @ 6500-8000rpm  
**Torque** 560lb ft @ 3000rpm  
**Weight** 1475kg (455bhp/ton)  
**Tyres** Michelin Pilot Super Sport, 245/35 ZR20 front, 305/30 ZR20 rear  
**0-62mph** 3.0sec (claimed)  
**Top speed** 205mph+ (claimed)  
**Basic price** £181,849

*'There are moments of pure genius – the steering and chassis are simply fabulous'*

EVO 211



## MERCEDES-AMG GT S

The Mercedes is here because it won a group test in which it squared up to – wait for it – the Aston Martin V8 Vantage N430, BMW i8, Nissan GT-R and Porsche 911 Turbo. Its twin-turbo engine is hugely powerful and has character, its dual-clutch gearbox is on the money, and it changes direction on a whim. It's a remarkable, fully rounded car.

**Engine** V8, 3982cc, twin-turbo  
**Power** 503bhp @ 6250rpm  
**Torque** 479lb ft @ 1750-4750rpm  
**Weight** 1570kg (326bhp/ton)  
**Tyres** Michelin Pilot Sport Cup 2, 265/35 ZR19 front, 295/30 ZR20 rear  
**0-62mph** 3.8sec (claimed)  
**Top speed** 193mph (claimed)  
**Basic price** £110,495

*'The AMG feels special at a standstill and is even more enjoyable on a charge'*

EVO 210



*'The SEAT's performance puts it in a different league to other hatchbacks'*

EVO 215



## SEAT LEON CUPRA ULTIMATE SUB8

SEAT's answer to the very hottest Renaultsport Mégane models is, quite simply, the fastest front-wheel-drive production car we've ever driven round a track. It shines on the road too. A clever locking diff and modest weight mean the engine's generous power can make itself known, while the brakes seem to operate in a parallel universe.

**Engine** In-line 4-cyl, 1984cc, turbo  
**Power** 276bhp @ 6000rpm  
**Torque** 258lb ft @ 1750-5300rpm  
**Weight** 1300kg (216bhp/ton)  
**Tyres** Michelin Pilot Sport Cup 2, 235/35 R19 front and rear  
**0-62mph** 5.8sec (claimed)  
**Top speed** 155mph (limited)  
**Basic price** £31,410

*'The Evora remains a car that pours feedback the driver's way'*

EVO 213



## LOTUS EVORA 400

Consider that the Lotus Evora S is a five-star **evo** car. Now consider that the new Evora 400 boasts more power, better grip, greater practicality and the same wonderful chassis only with a little more edge. The design might be getting on a bit but the mechanical package is alive and something truly special. Victory over the Cayman GT4 would be huge.

**Engine** V6, 3456cc, supercharged  
**Power** 400bhp @ 7000rpm  
**Torque** 302lb ft @ 3500-6500rpm  
**Weight** 1395kg (291bhp/ton)  
**Tyres** Michelin Pilot Super Sport, 235/35 R19 front, 285/30 R20 rear  
**0-62mph** 4.2sec (claimed)  
**Top speed** 186mph (claimed)  
**Basic price** £72,000

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## THE GATHERING

by NICK TROTT

**THE FIRST DAWN CHORUS OF ECOTY** is a special moment. Always is. It signals the beginning of the most important test of the year, and that moment when we can stop planning and cajoling and get on with driving – just driving.

The sound of the cars starting up, one after the other, gives you a flavour of what's to come. For me, nothing can beat the first morning on eCoty 2013, when an SLS Black Series was cutting heads with a Ferrari F12, with a Porsche GT3 dialling up the decibels to get involved. This year when the cars fire into life, outside a hotel in Inverness, the hairs rise, the smiles form and the anticipation builds. If the noise of these 74 cylinders and nine turbos is anything to go by, this eCoty could top them all.

The crisp morning air is viciously sliced by the sound of our contenders waking up. The SEAT, Peugeot and Honda *thrap* then settle into a quiet idle. The busy engine note of the Cayman adds a metallic rasp to the mix, the AMG emits an indifferent growl, and the Aventador SV reminds everyone of its provenance with a shriek. Think of the Cat in *Red Dwarf*, through a Marshall stack, and you've got it. To a man, we giggle mischievously.

Hotel guests emerge from their rooms with cameraphones, surprisingly cheerful given they've been woken early this Monday morning. Shots are taken, kit loaded, and then we crawl onwards to our first location at Loch Ness. 'This is eCoty,' Dickie Meaden will say later in the day. 'Looking ahead, and behind in your mirrors, seeing the cars in convoy, the shapes, sizes and colours.'

The convoy is short-lived, our location just down the road. A couple of roundabouts and dual carriageway stretches conspire to create a rather melancholy start to the North

in association with





Coast 500, but then we ease off the B862 and head downwards to the loch and the magnificent Aldourie Castle estate (p66).

Photographers Aston Parrott and Dean Smith have arrived early, even the pros (or insomniacs, I'll never know), but the early setup here means we'll have more time for our journey west. We'd love to stay longer (like a couple of weeks) at Aldourie, but the NC500 and eCoty wait for no man. However, despite the brief stop, conversation is rich and thoughts flow.

Jethro Bovingdon, as always, can't contain his inner schoolkid. He's visibly excited, walking between the cars, laughing at the sheer variety in this sensational £1.2million group. Friends of *evo* Jim Cameron and John Barker are already on their third 'oversteer hands' mime of the day, while managing editor Stuart Gallagher wonders aloud what the hell is going to win.

Last year, truth be told, the 458 Speciale had won after five minutes. This year, even

with a GT3 RS in the mix, we just don't know. I step from the McLaren and jokingly check the badge. It doesn't say 'RS', but it might as well – the 675LT feels perfectly honed, lightweight, focused and wildly exciting. And the others? The Aventador SV is typically seductive, the Ferrari 488 extraordinarily capable and the SEAT feels a giant killer. Wouldn't that be something?

Road test editor Dan Prosser watches on, contemplative and quiet, no doubt creating neat files in his mind for each car. Or wondering if the hotels we've booked en route have hairdryers.

Me? I'm just pleased we've pulled it off. This could be the greatest eCoty ever, particularly if the forecast is accurate. High pressure is building to the west, bringing warm and dry weather. Tom Campbell, CEO of the North Highland Initiative, has been extraordinarily helpful with the planning for eCoty 2015, but I had no idea he could arrange the weather...

With the shot taken, we're off on our first leg – west on the A832 to Achnasheen and an abandoned petrol station where we have the first of many 'can you believe this landscape?' conversations. Colin Goodwin takes it further: 'We should buy a house up here, or a shed, or a lodge – it doesn't really matter. Just somewhere where we can keep a car, then fly up a few times a year to remind ourselves of the thrill of driving.' At regular stops throughout the week we'll all continue the conversation – and try to think of the perfect car to keep at the 'NC500 *evo* lodge'. A Lotus Elise or an original Elan will soon be identified as being ideal, until four-time IndyCar champ Dario Franchitti turns up in his 3.7-litre 911 hot-rod...

But I'm getting ahead of myself. It's still early on day one and we have a lot of distance to cover. From the abandoned fuel station, Dean takes some of the supercars to Loch a'Chroisg. Here the road feels almost on the same level as the loch, and in the McLaren



**Above:** the foot of the Applecross Pass. One for the test's smaller, nimbler cars. **Left:** the Honda clings on in the corners, but it's about to get dropped...

***'The SEAT has extraordinary stopping power but oversharpservoing, while the Lotus seems to have dampers filled with anti-gravity'***

anti-gravity, and the Cayman GT4 is just sublime. I also make a bet that the Honda's '+R' button will get little use over the next four days, such is the bump-hop-oh-I'm-in-a-loch elevation in stiffness it triggers.

We're also beginning to enjoy some of those unforgettable David and Goliath moments that eCoty always seems to create. For instance, no matter what car (or jet plane, time machine or spaceship) you're steering, the Civic Type R and the SEAT are unshakeable. In fact, that's a good name for the pair of them: 'The Unshakeables'.

The 208 GTi by Peugeot Sport hasn't given us that moment yet, but the way it lifts a hind leg into the Applecross's hairpins is every bit as enjoyable as the Cayman GT4 is when transitioning into oversteer on the exits.

I jump from Cayman to Evora and back again, thinking how two of the best chassis development teams on the planet have executed two very different driving experiences. Here on Applecross, the Lotus is bossing the roads, and never feels compromised or confused by the surfaces. But the car I choose to take back to the hotel as the sun lays a blanket of golden light over the peninsula? The GT4.

Dan takes the Civic and heads north-west to Gairloch while I go north-east. It'd be fun dicing with Dan, but I need some alone time in the GT4. It turns out to be a good call, as an hour later I'm telling anyone who will listen how I've just had one of the best drives of my life. Just me, the Cayman, extraordinary roads, and a manual gearshift.

and Ferrari it feels less like driving and more like powerboating. With Dean snapping the supers, I head a convoy of hot hatches, plus the Lotus and the Cayman, to the famous Applecross Pass.

How to describe the Applecross? An almost impossible job, but I'll give it a go. A road that clings to a peninsula, carving up, down, around and over giant blocks of granite, occasionally opening up to views that only exist in one other place – on God's Instagram. It's a curious road too, as there doesn't seem to be any reason for its existence other than to take you to places where you can witness/gawp/choke on the full majesty of the north-west coast of Scotland.

Here the cars are worked hard until sunset. It's too early to dive into much dynamic analysis (Dan has his road tester's notebook at the ready in the next chapter), but we learn that the SEAT has extraordinary stopping power but oversharpservoing, the Lotus seems to have dampers filled with





# THE TEST

by DAN PROSSER

## I'M GETTING RESTLESS. THE SUN HAS

almost set, though, and once the burnished orange smudge above the horizon has faded, the cameras will be packed away and we can get on with the serious business of testing cars. Our hotel is in Gairloch, 55 miles from here, and by hugging the coastline around the Applecross Peninsula rather than pointing ourselves inland, we can add a few miles to the drive and watch the last of the light fade over the sea to the west.

I choose the Honda Civic Type R. Its styling isn't to all tastes, but the car does have a distinct and unmistakable character, which is a trait it shares with some of the most desirable cars on this test. The road around the peninsula is single-width for the most part, but in this dusky half hour it's easy to see when a car is heading our way by its headlights. I switch the 306bhp Honda into its +R mode, drive for 15 seconds and switch back. That mode simply takes all pliancy out of the damping and on this pitted tarmac the car skips and bounces. Left in its default setting, though, the Civic's damping is sublime. This road is littered with unseen bumps and mean little compressions, but the Type R soaks it all up with real class. It's like slamming shut the door of a soft-close cupboard; you expect it to crash loudly, but it simply absorbs the impact without any fuss.

The Civic cleverly combines its fluid damping with taut body control, meaning it's composed in corners and over crests rather than being wallowy or floaty. That depth of dynamic ability is a real hallmark of a great performance car, and we'll see it mirrored in several of the much more expensive cars here. It's only when the dampers have to contend with repetitive vertical inputs that the Honda begins to lose its composure, which shows up the limitations of its torsion-beam rear axle. Its steering, meanwhile, is direct and sharp with a predictable rate of response.

There's just enough adjustability in the chassis to allow you to tweak your line or respond to a tightening radius, so I soon get into a focused, flowing rhythm in the Type R. The gearshift is sweet and straight-line performance is strong, but I do find myself wishing for sharper throttle response every time I drive away from a tight bend.

It's the first really enlightening drive of the test. Halfway back to Gairloch I pull over, flag





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down the SEAT Leon Cupra Ultimate Sub8 and switch seats. Dusk has faded into night and the roads are unlit, but the Cupra's bright headlights pick out the 'passing place' signs that dot the road every few hundred metres to trace its path.

Within the first few hundred metres, the Leon feels more potent than the Civic, pulling with an intensity I've never experienced in any other front-driven car. In fact, the Cupra 280 (276bhp, really) hauls itself so hard in a straight line that we soon christen it the Cupra 820.

The Leon has two more aces to play. As the corners come thick and fast along this dark, cresting road, it occurs to me that braking in a Sub8 is more-or-less optional. Big, sticky tyres give it such grip that you can pretty much choose your entry speed and be certain the car will

make it through. When you do eventually have to brake, however, you'll stand the car on its nose so abruptly that the chasing pack will need to be paying attention. For one thing, the Sub8's brake pedal is over-servoed – some things never change at the VW Group – but this car's brakes are also hugely over-specified. They use 370mm front discs and four-piston Brembo calipers. With so much performance, unimpeachable grip and massive stopping ability, this Leon is spectacularly quick along a road.

It also soaks up the bumps and compressions well, but it doesn't quite have the same strapped-down body control as the Type R and its steering is a little looser and more remote. As we pull into the hotel car park in Gairloch, I realise that everybody will come away from this

week with a tale of being humbled by the Leon while driving a much more powerful machine. I wonder how forthcoming those tales will be.

Despite the Cupra being the faster of the two, I reckon the Honda is actually more fun, although not everybody agrees. 'The Civic feels more special than the Sub8 initially,' comments Jethro over dinner, 'but I love how hard the Leon allows you to push. It just keeps getting better as you up your commitment and when you do reach the limit it doesn't do anything nasty. It's also fast enough to stay in touch with anything here.' The Civic and Leon may be two of the cheapest cars in eCoty, but they've set a very high benchmark. I offer this thought to the table, but, curiously, it gets lost among breathless anecdotes about the Camaro...





**THE NEXT MORNING WE RISE EARLY.**

The Peugeot 208 and I get left behind at the hotel in the madness of the exodus, so with my colleagues pressing on ahead in much faster cars, heading south towards the full-width roads inland of Applecross, I've no choice but to give the GTi the full Ari Vatanen. Or the best impression I can muster, anyway.

The roads around this part of the country have been weathered by decades of Highland winters. The abrasive, concrete-like surface crumbles in places and is perpetually corrugated like a draining board. The Civic and Leon dealt with that challenge remarkably well last night, but right now the GTi is falling short. With the chassis loaded up through long corners, it has nothing left in reserve, so

when you do hit a bump the punch-through is pronounced and the car gets deflected. The damping feels brittle, like hard toffee when you want soft fudge.

When I turn off the main highway and onto a tighter road, the 208 begins to come into its own. The short wheelbase and stiff chassis give a bouncy and unsettled ride, but the front axle has truly tremendous turn-in bite. With so much agility dialled into the chassis balance – almost to the point of instability – it carries huge speed down a road while keeping me on my toes. The 205bhp engine is flat and lifeless, but the limited-slip differential helps the 208 to scamper quickly away from corners.

The rest of the group has arrived at our base for the day – a charming little cafe at the bottom

*‘With so much agility dialled into the chassis balance, the Peugeot carries huge speed down a road while keeping you on your toes’*

**Left:** the common theme? Turbocharging, amazingly. Expected on a McLaren but unthinkable for Ferrari and Honda not long ago. **Below:** good luck trying this in an Aventador SV...



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**Right:** hard to imagine a more diverse convoy of performance cars, but this is eCoty, and anything can win. **Below:** 488 GTB outguns the similarly mid-engined Lotus 400 by 261bhp



of the Applecross Pass – before I manage to catch up. I steer the discussion towards the Peugeot. ‘It gets off on the wrong foot with me,’ says John Barker, ‘with pedals and a gearshift that are a little too light, but steering that’s unnecessarily hefty. It also feels a bit tall and teetery, but it’s still capable of impressive pace with an ever-faithful front end.’

‘It can feel a bit outclassed in this company, but there’s no doubting its pace. This is easily the best hot hatch from Peugeot in 15 years,’ adds Adam Towler, before fixing a middle-distance stare and muttering something under his breath. All I catch is ‘Zed 28’...

Since I first set eyes upon its wind-sculpted bodywork on Sunday evening, the 488 GTB hasn’t been far from my thoughts. I commandeer the Ferrari for the afternoon’s photography duties, carefully forgetting to give it up for the



*‘The way the 488 lunges forward in the lower gears, as though it’s trying to leave its driver behind, is astonishing’*



rest of the day. Its cabin is immediately familiar from the 458 Speciale that so comprehensively triumphed on last year's test, albeit here with the addition of a stereo and some sound deadening. You sit low, with your legs stretched out in front and the weight of the car behind you.

Apply full throttle from 3000rpm in fifth gear and you just know, beyond all doubt, that this engine breaks new ground for turbocharging. It hauls without hesitation, needing no time whatsoever to awaken its blowers and deliver drive to the rear wheels. I've never experienced anything like it. The manner in which the 488 lunges forward in the lower gears, as though it's trying to leave me behind, is astonishing. There's a level of straight-line performance here that can only be tapped into in short bursts, but when I do pin the throttle for a few seconds the 661bhp berlinetta delivers a rampant charge for

the horizon. The exhaust note is disappointing after generations of spine-tingling howls and wails, but every time I feel that thrust I grow more convinced that I just don't care.

The steering still has that hyperactivity that marks out all modern Ferraris, but it feels more settled than the Speciale's and takes less time to adjust to. Feeling the front axle dive for an apex for the first time is almost as eye-widening as the twin-turbo V8's punch, and although you can feel the mass behind you, it doesn't ever feel as though it'll rotate the car. The 488 feels effortlessly agile, but also poised and composed.

'Bumpy Road' mode, which relaxes the dampers like a deep sigh relieves tension, is a godsend on my run back to Gairloch. It's a secret weapon you deploy in desperate situations. No matter how thick and fast the bumps come, the suspension just soaks it all up, as though the car

is riding on a pocket of air. It calls to mind the pliant damping of the Civic Type R and it means you can focus on the heading of the road rather than its shape or surface. Remarkably, the car never feels loosely controlled in this mode.

By the time I get back to the hotel I'm wondering if anything will impress me more than the Ferrari this week. 'It's got one hell of an engine,' says Stuart at the bar. 'The throttle response defies logic and the Bumpy Road mode is some kind of witchcraft.'

Barker, who moved on from *evo* to work as a chassis engineer, is just as impressed by the 488. 'The interplay of ride damping against torque loading and the overlay of both with traction and stability control is quite an achievement,' he says, just as we were all thinking it.

Jethro, however, has misgivings about the new turbo engine. 'It's a complete spaceship of



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*‘The Camaro’s spring rates are so extreme that a big bump can easily send you flying out of the soft seats’*



**Above right:** with 13.5 litres of combined displacement, the SV and Z/28 are two very different ways of building an extreme road car.  
**Above left:** Leon’s pace is mighty, but the Cayman GT4’s is on another level



a car,' he reckons, 'but as the miles roll past the shock and awe start to wane. You realise you're short-shifting all the time and using not much more than 4500rpm, that you're covering ground at astonishing speed but don't feel particularly hooked into the experience. For me, the rabid excitement of Ferraris of old has been eroded. That Camaro, though...'

**WEDNESDAY MORNING BREAKS DRY** and clear, just as the previous two did. As with any **evo** Car of the Year test, there are a number of natural pairings here that cry out for special attention, none more so than the Lotus Evora 400 and Porsche Cayman GT4.

The plan is to head north from Gairloch as a group, basing ourselves in a car park that looks

out over Little Loch Broom, close to Badcaul. It's a 25-mile drive from Gairloch across one of the best roads in the area, which begins its irresistible duck and weave within a few hundred metres of the hotel.

Jethro is right ahead of me in the Cayman. There are a couple of negative first impressions in the Lotus that I'm trying to put to one side, but the seat really is set too high and the engine really is quite industrial. Soon enough, though, the Evora starts to work its magic. I've got my eyes trained on the GT4's high-rise spoiler, relying on Jethro's lines and braking points to squeeze as much pace as I can from the Evora and this wonderful road. Jethro starts pushing a little harder and we get so wrapped up in the drive that we both overshoot the meeting

point. We stand on the brakes and sheepishly reverse our way back up the road and into the car park.

With the scent of the Evora still sharp in my mind, I jump straight into the GT4 and retrace my tyre tracks, this time alone. Within five miles I've worked out my preference between the two sports cars. Within ten miles, I'm wondering if I've found my winner.

The Cayman's seating position is absolutely on the money, the control weightings are perfectly matched to one another and the fit and finish of its cabin is streets ahead of the Evora's. Despite the GT4 being a derivative of a more mainstream car, it even takes care of the Lotus for sense of occasion.

The stringiness of the original Evora's

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manual gearshift has been replaced by a much more mechanical throw, but the Cayman's almost organic shift action is more satisfying still. Similarly, its rev-hungry, 380bhp flat-six, which pulls with real muscle from the mid-range before building to an intense crescendo, makes the Evora's 400bhp supercharged V6 feel workmanlike and utilitarian, somewhat like the 208 GTI's turbo four-pot. Frustratingly, the Lotus's exhaust note from *outside* the cabin is actually one of the best here.

Were it not for the GT4's overly long gear ratios, its drivetrain would be beyond objective criticism. The extra 37lb ft of the 3.8 over the Cayman S's 3.4 does disguise the issue to some degree, however, and over this meandering stretch of road you soon realise that you can actually leave it in third and rely on the motor's mix of low-down torque and top-end reach.

Where the Lotus excels, of course, is in its

blend of ride and handling. It seems to flatten the road surface while staying perfectly keyed into it, rather like the Ferrari in its Bumpy Road mode but with even more polish. It's such an impressive thing to experience and you're never once slowed by the quality of the surface or the shape of the road. The steering, meanwhile, feels a touch light and lifeless at first, lacking the constant patter of an Elise's unassisted rack, but within a few miles you tune into the messages that come streaming through. Soon enough the connection between your fingertips and the front tyres becomes a direct and unfiltered one, so you steer through corners on intuition.

The Cayman also rides with a plushness to its damping, but there's a firmer edge and even tauter body control. I love the way it sits down when loaded up in corners, working both axles equally hard and feeling perfectly

balanced. I imagine its what an expert carve turn in skiing must feel like. The GT4's steering is also meatier with a more immediate sense of connection to the front axle. In combination with its more engaging drivetrain, the GT4 is a car that begs to be driven at full attack, whereas the Evora feels at its best when stroked along. For me, that extra edge makes the Cayman a car I can fall for, whereas the Evora is a car I can only respect.

'I'm chuffed the Evora is here,' says Dickie Meaden when I get back to the car park. 'I'm not a fan of the 400's looks, but I do enjoy the way it goes down the road. Whereas many of these cars get tangled up on the trickiest stretches of tarmac, and some get tied in knots completely, the Evora manages to make sense of it all. But the GT4 really is a scintillating car.'

'The feel from the Cayman's chassis is very transparent,' adds Nick Trott, 'especially when



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fully loaded in a corner. It doesn't allow feel to bleed away when you need it most.'

The Mercedes-AMG GT S has already seen off the likes of the Porsche 911 Turbo and Aston Martin Vantage N430 in these pages, but this week, in the company of the very best cars of 2015, it faces an entirely different challenge. Throughout the history of *evo* Car of the Year it has been the more focused, more intense cars that have stood out, and capable though the AMG is, it hasn't the singularity of purpose of a Cayman GT4 or McLaren 675LT. Nonetheless, its long bonnet and low-slung seating position set the right tone immediately. The 503bhp twin-turbocharged V8 is shaded only by the Ferrari's for forced-induction throttle response – not just here, but in overall terms – and it really slings the car along at a mighty rate. With the exhaust in its loud mode it sounds fantastic, too, with a baritone rumble under load offset by violent crackles on the overrun.

What impressed us most when we group-tested the GT S back in issue 210 was its taut control and the immediacy of its chassis, particularly for a car with grand-tourer aspirations. I get so wrapped up in pouring the long nose into corners and feeling the chassis settle and hook up that I almost drive all the way back to Gairloch. Despite the enormous torque – 479lb ft – that those rear tyres are tasked with deploying, the chassis finds tremendous traction, too, so you can pin the throttle in the lower gears at corner exit and

be sure the car will drive neatly away.

Rather like the Ferrari and the Lotus, you need to take time to tune into the AMG's steering, for it's light and vague around the straight-ahead, with an artificial rate of response. Some can't forgive the Mercedes for that – Nick says the vague steering prevents the GT S from feeling like a sports car to him – but after a short run I feel like I can trust it, particularly when it's loaded up mid-corner.

Over lunch in the unseasonably warm sunshine, Dario is talking animatedly about the Aventador SV. 'There's no excuse for a seat that bad,' he says, 'and the gearbox only works right at the limiter in Corsa mode. I only found that out thanks to Jethro – I was too scared to venture up there before our chat! Short of the limiter it's neck-snapping in Corsa mode or slow and treacly in Sport.'

'The staggering thing about the SV is how easy it is to drive at speed,' adds Colin. 'I've driven all Lamborghinis since the Miura and, believe me, this one is a pussy cat. It hops about a bit and you still have to remember that it's a big, heavy car, but it's not intimidating.'

With some degree of inevitability the conversation soon turns to the Camaro, underscored by nervous laughter. I suppose I'm going to have to drive it at some point...

But I decide to leave the Z/28 until the final drive of the day and head for the much less terrifying Lamborghini. The seats and gearbox *are* frustrating, and though there are moments



**Left:** Prosser enjoying the AMG's near-perfect driving position. Like the Ferrari, it's a car that shows that, done well, turbos are a good thing





when I can put those issues aside, they do taint my opinion of the car. It's never anything short of an event, though. The Dynamic Steering system has now been refined to a point where it feels natural and chatty, and that really helps you to thread this broad-shouldered monster between grass verge and dotted white line.

There's reasonable pliancy in the chassis and tight body control, which gives you faith in the car despite its size and the violence of the 740bhp V12 under load. Soon enough, you find yourself leaning on the front axle and getting back on the power early to make the most of the total traction, but you never take it by the scruff like you do the Cayman GT4 or even the 488 GTB. You can make the SV sing, but it's not a car that can be persuaded to dance.

The AMG GT S has been splitting opinion all week, so I drop into its seat for another run to try and work out what others have noticed

that I've missed. It's only when I drive it along a faster road with a rippled surface that I find its limitations. I switch endlessly between the three damper settings, but I can't persuade the car to stop bouncing vertically. Ultimately, as Dickie says, it isn't focused enough to really stand out in this company: 'Prior to this week I'd thought of the GT S as a hardcore sports car, but compared to the 675LT or the GT3 RS, the AMG lacks connection and clarity.'

There's no putting it off any further. I don't have any particular misgivings about the Chevrolet Camaro Z/28 – I've never driven one, after all – but the slightly manic stories I've heard told of it and the shocked expressions I've seen it elicit have made me wary. I sink into its soft seat for the run back to Gairloch, hoping to sneak off so I can settle gradually into the car. Then Marino Franchitti pulls out of the car park behind me in the AMG. I'll have no such

***'You can make the Aventador SV sing, but it's not a car that can be persuaded to dance'***

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luxury. I don't want to hold him up, yet if I wave him through I'll never live the ignominy down.

The Z/28's cabin plastics may be rather scratchy, but everything you touch as the driver is trimmed in Alcantara. The woofing, 505bhp Corvette V8 is also full of character and muscle, while the manual gearbox is hefty and bulky but with a well-oiled and precise action.

I'm using as much of the throttle as I dare, but the chassis is so busy that I find myself lifting off involuntarily. For one thing, the spring rates are so extreme that every bump makes its way through to the car's body, with the big ones enough to send me flying out of the seat. For another, the enormous, lightly treaded 305-section front tyres sniff out every rut and camber, dragging the car across the road.

The sheer grip is staggering, though, and on the smoother sections it starts to come together. The steering is intuitive and the ceramic brakes are feelsome and immensely strong, so I start to lean on the car ever harder. That's when it

feels sweetly balanced, agile and biddable, but soon enough the road turns lumpy again, I find myself in third gear when I need fourth, and I'm too scared to take my hand off the wheel.

I'm not sure I've ever driven a car that engages you with the process of reading a road quite so much, and for two-thirds of the drive back to Gairloch I'm laughing manically. I spend the other third wanting to get out and walk, though. Like the little Peugeot, the vast Camaro only really works on a very particular type of road, and I suspect that limited, single-layer ability will prevent it from troubling the top three in the final reckoning.

'It felt horrible the first time I drove it,' says Nick, clocking my relief when I get back to the hotel, 'like it needed breaking in. But you have to be in control. You can't expect it to do what you say unless you're absolutely on top of it. That makes for a tremendously exciting experience. It's the best muscle car I've ever driven.'

'There's nothing I don't love about the Z/28,'

adds Jim. 'It has more rear-view presence than anything else I've ever experienced. You can see the exact moment that a driver in front notices it – there's a double-take, normally followed by a sudden lunge out of its way!'

#### THE LAST DAY OF THE TEST DAWNS

foggy and grey. At least the roads are dry. There are two cars that I'm yet to drive, so I grab the McLaren's key and position myself directly behind the Porsche 911 GT3 RS. I catch Marino's broad grin in its rear-view mirror. I reckon a Franchitti in an RS is likely to be a fast-moving thing, so I steel myself for the quickest run of the week so far.

We're following the North Coast 500 all the way to Wick on the east coast today, which means retracing the same road we were using all day yesterday before continuing onwards. That familiarity should give me a chance to stay in touch. The 675LT is intimidating at first – not least because it has 666bhp – but I just love the

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driving environment. The Alcantara-wrapped dash looks the part and, in contrast to some of the other judges, I find the seating position to be perfect. I'm sitting right at the front of the car with an expansive view forwards. It feels hugely exciting, even at low speeds.

Marino doesn't maintain those low speeds for long. I watch the rear of the 911 sit down then hear the exhaust note crash against the McLaren's huge windscreen. I stand on the long-travel throttle pedal in second gear, sense the boost gather for a split second, then feel the most rampantly violent acceleration I can recall experiencing in a road car. I watch the traction-control light flicker through third and fourth, but I don't feel any intervention. The 675LT's turbo engine may lack the Ferrari's immediacy south of 4000rpm, but once on boost it launches the car down the road at a phenomenal rate.

Chasing is easier than leading and I've got more performance, so I can keep Marino in sight. With every full-throttle upshift in Sport mode the McLaren's exhaust fires out a crisp, wicked snap, swapping cogs almost without hesitation. I feel *so* in tune with the car, the

steering giving a constant stream of feedback and its response perfectly matching the grip across the front axle. The optional trackday-spec tyres dig in so hard, too. It's redolent of the Cupra Sub8, only multiplied by a factor of ten.

This chassis is so alert and responsive. I watch Marino hit a bump and see the rear of the RS rise into the air. I brace myself for the same, yet while the McLaren skips at the rear axle it never tries to get away from me. The underside does *skrrrtch* into the road surface over the biggest compressions, but again the car doesn't lose composure. The 675LT feels like an amplified Cayman GT4 in corners; tougher and less pliant but with the same exacting balance, that same sense of the centre of gravity being on the floor.

With greater support at each corner than the 488 GTB, this McLaren is more alive and intense. The Ferrari squats down a little in hard cornering and pauses before it returns to level; the McLaren is back with you in an instant. It's pitched as a more hardcore machine than the Ferrari, and it's more thrilling as a result.

The route opens up onto some wider, better-sighted roads. Marino presses on, the McLaren

***'For all its grip and composure, the GT3 RS is actually quite playful, and you can swing the pendulous rear axle around in corners'***

**Above:** terrific grip *can* be overcome in the 911, but it's not for the faint of heart. **Right:** the route of the North Coast 500 takes in some of the most spectacular scenery we've seen on an eCoty

responding to every punch the Porsche throws. Eventually we reach a main road, slow the pace down and *breathe*. We pull into a petrol station, clamber out and burst into laughter. Just as I'm thinking the same, Marino shouts out, 'Oh man, that was the best drive of my life!'

It's a definitive eCoty moment, one that will live with me forever. I feel too giddy to string together a sentence, but Marino proceeds to tell me all about the RS. 'What a car!' he exclaims. 'It almost has too much grip for road driving, though. I never even turned the systems off. It's on such a knife-edge I was worried what might happen beyond the limit.'

'The rear lacks support on the softer damper setting, but it works really well on the stiffer one. It's a bit harsher over the bumps, but it controls the mass of the rear end much better.'

I continue in the McLaren for a while longer, but stroke it along rather than hang it over the edge. It still feels special. The group convenes at Kylesku Bridge, where we prep for a group shot. Jethro, having been holed up in his hotel room with food poisoning this morning, arrives an hour later. I point towards the LT. 'It's such an intense car,' he says, grinning. 'It out-excites the Ferrari and leaves you laughing and whooping with joy. The steering does occasionally kick back viciously, but it's dripping with detail.'

Throughout the week the design and photography teams have been referring to the GT3 RS as 'the winner'. Certainly, past form suggests it's one of the favourites. I hop in and within half a mile its 4-litre flat-six reminds me what's missing from the Cayman GT4's 3.8. In isolation that feels a raw, exciting engine,



but in comparison with the RS's 493bhp unit it's nowhere. The serrated bark from medium engine speeds is almost painful within the cabin and the run to the red line is furious.

The PDK gearbox is extraordinary, too, and the ceramic brakes give enormous stopping power. The steering is detailed and intuitive, more so even than the GT4's. The RS has been deposited further along the ride/handling continuum than the Cayman, so it feels tougher over the road, but it also soaks up bumps and compressions with real control.

Despite its rearward weight distribution, the RS snaps into an apex with as much urgency as anything else here, as long as you bleed into the corner on the brakes. For all its grip

and composure, it's actually quite playful, so you can swing the pendulous rear around in corners and exit on a half-turn of corrective lock. For something as hard-edged as this to be so malleable is nothing short of extraordinary.

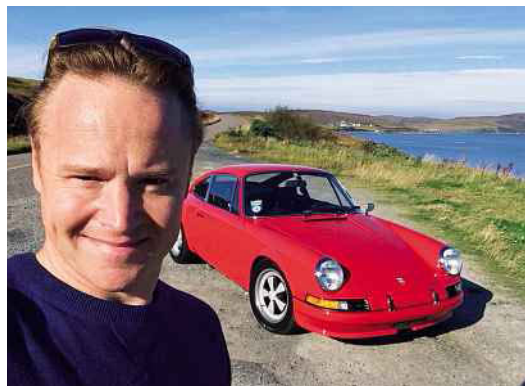
'It's a proper, no-messing road-racer,' says Dickie when I return. 'When you unleash this car it's an inspirational experience, but one laced with the knowledge you're straying into territory best steered clear of on public roads.'

It's a poignant comment, one that provokes a thoughtful lull. We continue on around the North Coast 500 towards Wick, swapping cars along the way to confirm our impressions. We get to the hotel at 8pm, sit down around a large table and settle in for an argument.



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# BEHIND THE SCENES

by COLIN GOODWIN

**FOR ME IT WAS EASY. AN EMAIL ARRIVED** containing an easyJet boarding pass and the address of a hotel near Inverness airport. All I had to do was get to Gatwick, get on the flight and get a taxi at the other end to the hotel. For road test editor Dan Prosser and the **evo** staffers, the organising of eCoty is rather more complicated. Cars have to be booked, and the sort of cars that make the cut for *our* Car of the Year extravaganza tend to not be easy to borrow, especially in the same week. The process will have started many months beforehand and will have without doubt taken a few years off Prosser's life.

I arrive at the hotel late Sunday night to see a car park full of machinery not usually seen outside a Premier Inn. Every one of us here is a veteran of this type of exercise. Barker, Meaden and Bovingdon have attended nearly all of the eCotys and I have done my share. (Catchpole is off getting married, and if that isn't the *worst* wedding planning ever...) Each of us has his own approach: some more scientific than others; some prodigious note-takers, others (like your friend) rarely seen with pen in hand.

The temptation is to grab the keys for the most exciting car that you have not yet driven, which for me is the Ferrari 488 GTB. But my gameplan is to always start with the most modest machine. Put 661bhp under your foot from the off and the less powerful cars can seem a colossal disappointment afterwards. I've always worked my way up. Besides, we are in Scotland for five days so there will be plenty of opportunity to cover decent ground in all 11 cars. Five days. This length of time to assess cars is virtually unheard of in these days of the web and instant publishing. But it is the only way to do it, even if it is the old way.

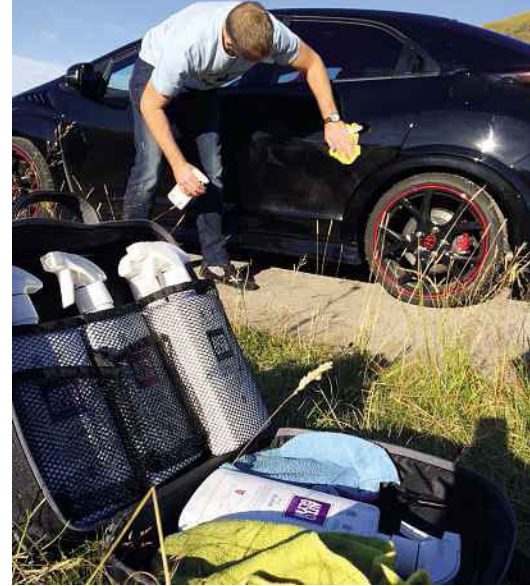
With any test like this, one of the hard parts is setting the context and parameters. Do we factor in price and value? Practicality? Resale value? With **evo** it has always been a straightforward task because in times of doubt and uncertainty we can always refer to the line on every cover of the magazine: The Thrill of Driving. For me it's that simple. Does the car thrill and excite? Will I have to shoot grandmother to own one?

We are looking for an overall winner as well as a final order. Over the first couple of days your thoughts are all over the place as you step from one car to another, but after



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a time a pattern begins to emerge. Although it's each car for itself, mentally one groups them in types. We have three hot hatches, so it makes sense to judge them against each other to help position them between themselves. Porsche Cayman GT4 and Lotus Evora 400 is a natural pair; so is McLaren and Ferrari. The Lamborghini Aventador SV is slightly on its own, as is the Camaro Z/28. Once I've worked out the order within the groups, I start to feed each one into the big mix.

On the second day Dario and Marino Franchitti join us, arriving in Dario's hot-rod classic 911. Having the supersonic Scots on the job is a great safety factor. If you are driving a McLaren 675LT and a triple Indy 500 winner is ahead of you in a 488 GTB, you do not even *think* of trying to keep up. Actually, I'm old enough and wise enough to know that keeping up with Barker and Meaden is not a good idea either. I've been trying to keep up with them for the last 20 years and have the grey hair to show for it.

We talk a lot. In car parks waiting for photographers to get their apertures correct and for the light to be right (it never bloody is), over beers at night, at any opportunity. All road testing and judging cars requires self-confidence and experience. Confidence in your own thoughts and opinions. Yes, the opinion and observations of the others are very useful, but when it comes to the crunch you have to make your own decision and back it up with evidence that you've collected.

It is a fascinating process; almost as much fun as driving the cars themselves. The real trick, and this goes back to the importance of having plenty of time, is to keep going back to the car, even for five minutes, to keep assessing, often focusing on one small detail and comparing it with its rivals. Being driven in a car as a passenger can be extremely useful. You don't have the distraction of trying to keep the thing on the road so your brain is free to take in the details. I passenger Barker in the 488 for a very committed return to our hotel. I learn how brave I still am at 53 and many things about the 488's astonishing electronics.

As the end of the week draws near, opinions are setting like Araldite and everybody has an order forming. Rarely if ever do you hear someone declaring his hand. It's better that way, rather than nervously pronouncing your order. Besides, by this stage you have a pretty good idea what everyone thinks. We have, after all, spent a lot of time talking about these cars, about driving and about these amazing Highland roads.

I fancy Ireland next year: the roads running down the west coast. A complicated one for Dan Prosser and his colleagues to organise, but I'm ready and waiting. There have been many different 'Best Car of the Year' contests over the years but few have put the time and effort into doing it the comprehensive and time-consuming eCoty way. I know because I've been involved in many of them. Five days of constantly driving, discussing and re-appraising the cars is the only way to do the job properly. Naturally, for those who take part it's not exactly a hardship.



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# THE RECKONING

by STUART GALLAGHER



**THE RESULT OF EVO'S GRANDEST** test of the year, the one that asks the biggest question, is to be formulated in a bar on what is officially the world's shortest street: Ebenezer Place, Wick. At 2.06 metres, it's only 6cm longer than the Aventador's rear wing is wide. Fittingly, it will be a squeeze for the eight judges to flex their opinions in, but we need a winner and preferably before daybreak so I can get on with the 700-mile drive home.

Just being here is an achievement for our eleven finalists: 2015 has been an almighty year for the performance car and whittling our initial list of contenders down to so few was as tough a task as the voting that lies ahead. So, without further ado...

Something has to start the countdown and this year it's the Peugeot 208 GTi by Peugeot Sport. Adam Towler sums it up best: 'It doesn't feel special enough... It's about depth of ability. The engine is all but inaudible, the gearshift quick but sloppy. It's well on the way to being a great hot hatch but just falls a bit short.' The best hot hatch Peugeot has built for a generation is left wanting in this company, then.

The second of our trio of hot hatches finishes tenth. Honda's Civic Type R was one of the most eagerly anticipated cars of the year, beginning

what we hoped would be a shot in the arm for a Japanese manufacturer that has been gorging on pensioner carriers far too long. Ignore the looks (if only you actually could) and the Type R has plenty going for it, Jethro concludes: 'The manual 'box and the coarse engine feel well up for a bit of a hard time. The steering also seems more lucid, a bit more connected to the surface compared with those of the other two hot hatches here. But for me it's let down by a poor ride and on these roads its chassis is quickly unravelled.'

A few of us knew the Mercedes-AMG GT S would produce a shock result, but we didn't think that shock would be it finishing ninth. Editor Nick Trott gets to the root of the AMG's issues: 'I tried so hard, with numerous settings, to find the sports car in the AMG, but only found something that was pretending to be one. After so many authentic experiences on eCoty, the GT S just felt contrived.'

The third of our hot hatches, the SEAT Leon Cupra Sub8, finishes eighth. 'When you're really on it, the Leon is very special indeed,' says Dickie, 'but it doesn't have the detailed feel and measured physicality to leave a lasting impression amongst this rarefied group.' Considering the metal and carbonfibre that





finishes above it, the Spanish flyer can be proud of its achievements.

If such awards existed, David Price would be *evo*'s Man of the Year. Why? Because he shipped his Camaro Z/28 over from the US in order for it to partake in this test. And we are grateful that he did. The Z/28 is the car that produced the biggest smiles – every time a driver stepped out of it. Nick says it's the only modern muscle car he's wanted to own and Goodwin proclaims: 'It's as eccentric as hell and a lot of fun and games in a jaw-dropping package.' But Adam believes it was out of its comfort zone in the Highlands, while Jethro, like many others, thinks that its spring and damper rates are too stiff for the UK. 'Could it be my only performance car?' he asks. 'Not in the UK. But one of three or four? Yes please.'

A point separates the Lotus Evora 400 and the Lamborghini Aventador SV. Lotus will be disappointed its first new car under Jean-Marc Gales' stewardship didn't finish higher, but it shouldn't be. 'On the right road, it shows just about every car present how a set of dampers should be tuned. Even when the GT4 got ragged, the Evora gave a shimmy and just dealt with it.' Pretty much everyone agrees with Adam's summary.

The Aventador splits opinion. Nick places it fourth: 'It offers real excitement and feedback. Like the 675LT – an experience you simply can't get anywhere else.' Dickie, however, is at the other end of the spectrum: 'I just couldn't gel with it. The steering lacks consistency of feel and response; the transmission feels clumsy and cack-handed. The car feels like the Germans trying to do what they think a true Lamborghini should be, rather than just doing it instinctively.'

'The best turbocharged engine and gearbox I've ever tried. Just wow,' is Nick's assessment of Ferrari's 488 GTB. 'A new Ferrari is always something to savour,' says Dickie. 'The

***'Just being here is an achievement for our eleven finalists: 2015 has been an almighty year for the performance car'***

458 is the toughest act to follow, especially the Speciale, but I found the 488 GTB immediately impressive.'

To a man, the Ferrari 488 GTB's engine has left us in awe, while the chassis makes the performance so accessible. The Ferrari's perhaps surprisingly low ranking isn't down to a flaw in the car (although Jethro feels that it has been held back in order to leave more for a 'Speciale' version) but rather the strength of the competition. Indeed, the competition the 488 finds itself up against is arguably of the highest order we've ever seen.



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**THIS WAS THE WALK-IT WINNER,** wasn't it? Did we really need to complete the North Coast 500 to declare Porsche's 911 GT3 RS winner? Yes we did, and for good reason, not least because this year a Porsche 911 *hasn't* won eCoty.

'There are moments when the RS wins. It has to win,' says Jethro. 'The RS seemed a dead cert for another 911 eCoty victory,' adds Adam. 'What's not to like?' proffers Dickie, thoughtfully sipping his diet water. This is by-and-large the sentiment of all as we discuss the odds-on favourite.

So why do we all, without exception, place it third? Goodwin says: 'It's just a bit *too* competent and makes you drive faster and faster until some of the enjoyment goes with it.' The editor has a similar view: '911s should make you feel connected at all speeds, but the GT3 RS only seems to do it when you're really pushing it.'

The consensus is that the GT3 RS is the most compelling, engaging and enthralling car here. Its flat-six is mesmerising, hooking you into its manic mid and top end as only a normally aspirated engine can.

'Do the other judges really miss the old Mezger engine?' asks road test editor Dan

Prosser. 'I think this 4-litre is incredible – torquey, characterful and with a razor-sharp top end. It's the most intoxicating engine here by a long way. Every time I accelerated hard away from low and medium speeds it gave me a small fright.'

'The RS's chassis mixes colossal grip from its 21-inch tyres with incredible composure, pinpoint accuracy and a dreamy balance, with extreme turn-in married to easy, super-progressive oversteer on corner exit,' is Jethro's verdict.

For all of us, however, the underlying feeling is that, to reach the RS's star-high talents, you have to be travelling at speeds that make even a 12 Hours of Sebring winner question his sanity.

The 911 GT3 RS is a phenomenal car, one of 2015's greatest. But it's also the closest Porsche has come to building a genuine race car for the road in many years, and ultimately that is its downfall. When you can only enjoy and exploit a car's capabilities when you're travelling at speeds best kept for the circuit, a road car starts to fail in its task. And it's why the RS goes no further than the bottom step of the podium.



**IN ISSUE 213, SPLITTING PORSCHE'S** latest GT3 RS from McLaren's new 675LT came down to whether you preferred sausages to bratwurst. It was so close we couldn't call it, but a week on the North Coast 500 gives us the answer we've been searching so hard for.

There are a number of reasons for the LT's triumph over its Weissach nemesis, chief among them the leap the 'Longtail' makes over previous McLaren road cars. 'It's an incredible step forward by McLaren,' says Marino. 'It's a car I just wanted to keep driving. It has that sense of occasion and connection with the driver so that, even when you're not at 100 per cent, it's still a blast and a challenge.'

Being a Woking boy, Goodwin wants to place the McLaren higher than the fourth he gives it (for everyone else it's a first- or second-place car): 'This is probably one of the fastest cars that I've ever driven. I can't remember many that have had this car's phenomenal acceleration.' It was Dan's number-one choice, though: 'This is the first time I've ever really connected with a McLaren road car. It felt so sweet and immediate at medium speeds, but every time I had a proper thrash in it I

stepped out shaking with adrenalin. No other car did that for me and that's why I've chosen it as my winner.' Jethro also puts it top: 'Because it gave me one of those unforgettable drives. The McLaren leaves nothing on the table. What an intense car. It's like a racer on slicks: it gives you confidence to lean on the front end. The understeer from the 650S is gone and now it's super-agile and accurate.'

It's also the top car for Nick: 'The 675LT is everything you sensed lay latent in the 12C. You get an incredible connection with the front end. Then you wake up to the brilliance in the suspension and drivetrain.'

Like others, though, Adam has concerns with the car's wayward rear over bumps. 'It *does* get excited at speed, and the frequency of that little light flashing on the dash betrays the electronics working overtime.' Dickie isn't keen on the steering, voicing concerns about 'something funny' with the response either side of the straight-ahead, but, like the rest of us, the gains that McLaren has made in such a short space of time leave him gushing. 'If this car is a road map for McLaren's future direction, we can look forward to some truly stunning cars.'



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*'No matter who stepped out of the Cayman GT4, the opinion was the same: Porsche has created a masterpiece'*

**WE WONDERED WHICH GLOVEBOX**

Porsche would leave the envelope of cash in this year, and after a fruitless search in the GT3 RS, we found it in the Cayman GT4... And for those of you wise enough to dismiss internet conspiracies, here are the reasons why the Cayman is placed either first or second by every eCoty 2015 judge.

'Just sublime. And at no point in the test did I feel like a better driver than when I was driving the GT4,' explains Nick before hastily retrieving his credit card from behind the bar and calling last orders. Marino, like Nick, places the GT4 second behind the McLaren, but was no less impressed by the Cayman: 'It probably made me smile more than any other car here and it gave me thrills at all speeds.'

Jethro, another who put it behind the 675, is equally gushing with praise: 'Physical, exciting, beautifully balanced, shot-through with class

and control, the GT4 is everything you could ever hope a Motorsport-department Cayman to be. It's perhaps the most involving car here.' It's second for Dan, too, who adds: 'The Cayman has a really small window of understeer – more like a porthole – on initial turn-in, but you can so readily neutralise that on the throttle. That's just one of the many ways in which it's so engaging and responsive down a road. I don't think I'd ever need more sports car than this.'

As for those of us who put the GT4 top, Goodwin says: 'Almost perfect seating position, pedal weights and positioning. The gearshift is excellent and the GT4's extra power makes the Cayman's annoying gear ratios less of a problem.' Dickie goes further, saying: 'That steely precision and control so characteristic of Preuninger-era Porsche puts it way above any previous Cayman, but the way it feels alive and entertaining at all

times means it gives you more, more of the time. It can't live with the GT3 RS or 675LT for sheer pace, but it's this greater accessibility and generosity that means it just nicks it for me.'

Adam Towler is no less forthcoming: 'Every so often, a car comes along that feels intrinsically *right*. The GT4 is one such car. It's inspiring to drive – that much is obvious in the first 250 metres. It's the car here that best fits what I think an *evo* car should be like.'

Me? I think it's simply brilliant. It gave me the best drive of the year, of the last decade and possibly of my life. No, really, it's that good. Why? Because while the RS, LT, GTB and SV thrill and excite in their unique ways, it is the performance of their engines that ultimately dominates and dictates proceedings, be it the ferocious turbocharged thrust of the McLaren or Ferrari, the feral roar of the Lambo's V12 or the thoroughbred howl of the RS's flat-six.

However, in the Cayman GT4, any straight-line performance disadvantage is negligible. Its GT3-lite chassis is so adjustable, forgiving and precise that it doesn't so much enter a corner tailing the bigger boys as edge its splitter out an inch or two, looking for a way past at every opportunity. You really need to be on your game in the more powerful cars to shake the less expensive car off, but you never feel you're overstretching yourself in the GT4.

No matter who stepped out of the GT4, the opinion was the same: Porsche has created a masterpiece. It may not be the top choice for all of us, but every judge is in agreement that in 2015, this magazine's mantra is best represented by the Porsche Cayman GT4, *evo* Car of the Year.

	AT	CG	DP	JB	MF	NT	RM	SG	Total
<b>PORSCHE CAYMAN GT4</b>	1st	1st	2nd	2nd	2nd	2nd	1st	1st	84
<b>McLAREN 675LT</b>	2nd	4th	1st	1st	1st	1st	2nd	2nd	82
<b>PORSCHE 911 GT3 RS</b>	3rd	3rd	3rd	3rd	3rd	3rd	3rd	3rd	72
<b>FERRARI 488 GTB</b>	4th	2nd	4th	4th	4th	5th	4th	4th	65
<b>LAMBORGHINI AVENTADOR SV</b>	6th	6th	7th	5th	6th	4th	9th	8th	45
<b>LOTUS EVORA 400</b>	5th	5th	6th	6th	10th	7th	8th	5th	44
<b>CHEVROLET CAMARO Z/28</b>	9th	8th	10th	9th	5th	6th	7th	7th	35
<b>SEAT LEON CUPRA SUB8</b>	7th	9th	9th	7th	9th	10th	5th	6th	34
<b>MERCEDES-AMG GT S</b>	11th	11th	5th	8th	8th	9th	6th	9th	29
<b>HONDA CIVIC TYPE R</b>	8th	7th	8th	10th	7th	8th	10th	11th	27
<b>PEUGEOT 208 GTI BY PS</b>	10th	10th	11th	11th	11th	11th	11th	10th	11

**Left:** how the judges voted. A first place earned 11 points, a second place 10 points, and so on down to a single point for a last place



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# NOW DRIVE IT!

by NICK TROTT

**TROPICAL-LOOKING BEACHES, HAUNTING castles, stunning mountains and extraordinary roads. The North Coast 500 is incredible.**

We kicked off in Inverness (1), the capital of the Highlands. With a little more time, we'd have visited the castle (2), the Culloden Battlefield (3), and taken a Jacobite Cruise on Loch Ness (4). Taming our own prehistoric monster (the Z/28) proved exciting on the run down to the loch...

We then headed southwest to Aldourie Castle (5) – a private-hire estate. After a quick group shot (p66) we headed for a rendezvous at an abandoned petrol station at Achnasheen (6). It's here you really start to sense the scale of the west Highlands.

We then headed to the Applecross Peninsula and gawped at the scenery at Bealach na Bà (7). We fuelled a few cars at the not-for-profit community filling station at Applecross, then went around the peninsula at dusk towards Torridon (8). From here we skirted Loch Maree (9) en route to the Myrtle Bank Hotel in Gairloch (10). Typically, a couple of days after our stay in Gairloch the Northern Lights put on a display outside the hotel (11).

The next two days were spent driving the A832 from Gairloch to Kinlochewe, then further north past Laide (12) and onwards to Braemore (13). It's here that you can find Corrieshalloch Gorge (14) – a series of spectacular waterfalls. If you're spending some time in the Little Loch Broom area (15), visit the beautiful Mellon Udrigle beach (16) and Maggie's Tea Room in Camusnagaul (17).

Driving north through Ullapool (18), we then took the A835 to Ledmore, the A837 to Ardvreck Castle, and then the A894 to the bridge at Kylesku (19), where we took our cover shot. At Durness we soaked up the splendour of Ceannabeinne Beach (20). The A838 from Scourie to Durness is mostly single-track, but don't be put off. Look east towards Cranstackie mountain (21) and you're likely to see clouds burning in vortices over the peak.

Onwards east, we stopped for a sunset shot on the causeway at the Kyle of Tongue (22), followed by a sprint to Strath and Thurso (23). We'd recommend a trip to the Castle of Mey (24) – the northernmost inhabited castle on the British mainland. From here it was beer, dinner and sleep in Wick at MacKays Hotel (25), then a run down the A9 past Dunrobin Castle (26), the Glenmorangie distillery (27) and back over the Cromarty Firth (28) to Inverness.

With multiple runs over Applecross and by Little Loch Broom, each car covered over 750 miles.



# Midnight express



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by JETHRO BOVINGDON  
PHOTOGRAPHY by DEAN SMITH

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*A Nismo 400R in Midnight Purple: the ultimate Skyline icon in classic battledress. But can the driving live up to the legend?*

ICON: NISMO 400R





**THE THUD OF A CLOSING DOOR,** A sliver of slim, cool metal between my fingers and absolute silence as I look around and take in just where I am, just what I'm about to drive. It's been a while since I felt like this. It's one of those experiences I never thought would come around, and I want to savour every single second.

Some people might struggle to understand. This isn't some precious Ferrari or a gnarly old racing RSR, but to me it's just as spectacular. I've loved Japanese performance cars since the early days of this magazine when I used to devour stories about the latest and maddest STIs and Evos. Later, when I was lucky enough to drive them, the pull of their unique, almost savage focus on grip and agility grew stronger. The Mitsubishi Evo in particular became my sweetheart.

However, one car stood above even my beloved Mitsubishi Evo. The Nissan Skyline GT-R. Bigger, heavier and wilfully complex, in some respects it's the very opposite of the rabid, supernaturally agile Mitsubishi, but something about its weird chassis acronyms, bruising styling and massive

tuning potential meant that, for me at least, it was always the ultimate exponent of the art. The R33-generation Nismo 400R? Short of a full Group A R32 at Bathurst, it's the Holy Grail.

We're not at Bathurst, nor Tokyo in the dead of night. Thanks to the generosity of new owner Johan Bonnier we're about to experience a 400R in the UK, on the fine roads that skim over Exmoor. In fact the car has only recently landed from Japan, having been sourced and then registered here by specialists Torque GT, based in Ashburton, Devon. Just 44 examples of the 400R were hand-built at Nismo's Omori factory, so the search was long and at times frustrating, but in the end they turned up an absolute peach. This car has covered just 42,000km and it's finished in perfect 'LP2' or Midnight Purple. Aside from Nismo's own and unique yellow 400R as immortalised in the *Gran Turismo* game series, this is *the* Skyline colour. It just had to be Midnight Purple.

I think it's only right and proper to declare my deep lust for this car from the outset. In fact, I'm pretty nervous about the whole thing. I mean,



**‘Forget a little bit of extra boost and stiffer dampers; the 400R went much, much further’**

what if it’s terrible? Or, even worse, just a bit, well, ‘so what?’. I think I could cope with it being absurdly stiff, threatening to bounce me from the road, or some mighty, comedy turbo lag and spiky, heart-in-mouth handling. But if it’s a bit flat, a bit slow, a bit imprecise... that would be awful. Too awful even for the carbonfibre bonnet, those achingly cool LM-GT1 white-faced split-rim alloys and the magnificent graphics to overcome.

I twist the elegant key and, before the big straight-six booms into life, a young female Japanese voice chirps something enthusiastically from a small and rather mysterious rectangular box attached to the underside of the dash above my left leg. I don’t know what the hell it means, but it makes me smile and the nerves disappear. This is going to be awesome.

So what exactly is this car? Stripped-out road-racer? Homologation special? Well, not quite either of those things, but with elements of both. The Nismo 400R was launched in November 1997, inspired by the Skyline GT-R LM that had raced at Le Mans in 1995 and 1996. Rather unfortunately,

this production-based racer was facing the likes of the McLaren F1 GTR in the GT1 class so could do no better than 10th overall (5th in class) in its first year and 15th overall (10th in class) in ’96, despite returning with a bigger version of its legendary straight-six engine, now displacing 2.8 litres.

As an illustration of the arms race in the GT1 category, Nismo returned to Le Mans in 1997 not with a Skyline-based car but the incredible R390 GT1, complete with a carbonfibre monocoque and 3.5-litre twin-turbocharged V8. Just two road versions were built and only one was actually sold to a customer. They paid around £650,000.

The 400R is no GT1, then. But it is a comprehensive reworking of the already pretty extraordinary R33 GT-R. Nismo left no stone unturned in its quest to build the ultimate road-going Skyline. Forget a little bit of extra boost and some stiffer dampers; the 400R went much, much further. Out went the iconic RB26DETT engine and in its place came the Le Mans-proven RB-X GT2 unit engineered by Reinik, the motorsport department of Nissan Kohki (itself the in-house

powertrain division at Nissan). Reinik has impeccable pedigree, having created the engines for the all-conquering Group A Skylines back in the glory days, along with motors for F3, the Dakar and, of course, Le Mans. The RB-X GT2 utilised a reinforced block that was bored and stroked (87 x 77.7mm) to make 2771cc. It also featured N1-spec turbos with steel internals, a forged crankshaft and connecting rods, a new engine management system, optimised cylinder heads, revised intake and exhaust systems (titanium from the cats back), an air-cooled oil cooler and a new intercooler system. The RB-X GT2 (what a name!) produces 395bhp at 6800rpm and 347lb ft at 4400rpm.

The solutions throughout the car were no less radical, from the 50 per cent lighter carbonfibre driveshaft to the titanium front strut-brace, carbonfibre bonnet, double-element adjustable carbonfibre rear wing, forged three-piece wheels with 275/35 ZR18 tyres, the new front bumper scooped out with various cooling channels and widened to accommodate the 50mm increase in track... the list goes on. The suspension was also retuned with much stiffer bushes, new Bilstein dampers and aggressive spring rates with a 30mm drop in height. The 400R still features that unique ATTESA ET-S PRO four-wheel-drive system with an 'Active LSD' at the rear (as seen in the contemporary Skyline GT-R V-Spec). These days a manufacturer would call that torque-vectoring and get very excited about it. It also features the Super HICAS four-wheel-steering system.

Inside you can't see all of that technology. In fact the 400R feels simple. Maybe even ordinary. The black plastic dash is not a thing of beauty, for example. But the little details reveal snippets about the Skyline GT-R in general and the 400R in particular. The seats, trimmed in an odd velour-type material, feel fantastically grippy and supportive. You sit low, legs out quite straight, and the pedals have a real heft and precision to them. Gone is the ugly four-spoke airbagged steering wheel of other Skylines and in its place a gorgeous 360mm Nismo item with a carbonfibre horn push emblazoned with the 400R logo.

The slim, cylindrical gearknob looks a bit aftermarket but is in fact titanium. Of course. The unique instrument cluster has a speedo reading to 320kph (199mph) and the rev-counter goes yellow at 8, red at 9 and doesn't stop until 11. Even the three little auxiliary gauges on the centre console are unique: from left to right they still display the amount of power sent to the front wheels, oil temp and boost pressure respectively, but they show finer graduation for more detailed information, while the boost gauge reads up to 1.4bar. And you can see that heavily sculpted bonnet ahead, the plank of carbonfibre behind and the blistered arches when your eyes flick to the door mirrors.

The engine churns slowly at first and then booms into a heavy, tuneless idle. The sound

is deep, powerful, the sort of noise that isn't piercingly loud but jangles your bones.

Like the current GT-R, the Skyline has a feel of engineered heft to everything it does. And a real sense of raw feedback. The steering is heavy but quite quick, perhaps on account of the rear-wheel steering, and despite the weight there's a really smooth, clean feel to the rack. The drivetrain somehow imparts a sense of inertia but also energetic response, too. The 400R is 1550kg and it feels it, but there's an athleticism bubbling away under the surface. I'd expected a hellishly hard ride, but although the 400R jiggles and fidgets at lower speeds, it doesn't take long before the dampers start to find their range even on these lumpy, jagged roads. It's a hell of a lot more pliant than the new GT-R Nismo, that's for sure.

What it doesn't have, not right away anyway, is the immediacy of a new GT-R. It doesn't assault you with terrifying performance nor hurl itself into corners with such startling speed. I'm sure back in '97 its pace across the ground would have been just as shocking as a GT-R or 911 Turbo is today, but it can't compress each corner nor the following straights with that relentless, almost frantic surge that's come to be the norm. Of course, you're still travelling at a serious lick and the beauty of every bit of road unfurling just that bit slower is that you can enjoy the process, swept up in the feeling of it all, rather than agog at the physics.

The RBX-GT2 is a gritty, industrial wonder. The lesser 2.6-litre straight-sixes found in normal Skylines have a real off-boost lethargy and in standard form they still feel held back even when the turbos are blowing hard. If ever an engine needed to be tuned with freer breathing and a tickle more boost, it's the RB26DETT. The 400R's six is different. It still feels like a big, heavy engine but the throttle response is cleaner even when the turbos are only just waking up, and from around 3500rpm to over 8000rpm it chomps through each gear with a delicious roar overlaid with the hissing of the big cold-air intake system and the whistle and chirrups of the turbocharger plumbing. It sounds like a living, breathing monster of an engine and creates a character at odds with the technofest you might expect. The chunky five-speed 'box just adds to the physical drama of extracting the 400R's performance.

The chassis has the same physicality but does feel less intuitive. The ATTESA ET-S PRO system sends 100 per cent of torque to the rear wheels on corner entry and then uses ABS sensors, lateral and longitudinal G sensors and throttle opening information to determine when to apportion power to the front wheels. Up to 50 per cent of drive can be sent forwards. The Super HICAS rear-wheel-steering system steers in the opposite direction to the front wheels initially to create agility, then switches to steering in harmony with the fronts to control the rate of yaw. That's the



**Above:** forged three-piece wheels frame massively uprated brakes. **Top right:** gorgeous Nismo wheel carries 400R logo. **Middle right:** RB-X GT2 a completely different animal to the usual Skyline six, with a fierce 395bhp



**‘It chomps  
through each  
gear... a living,  
breathing  
monster of  
an engine’**





theory at least. The reality is that the 400R can at first feel slightly wayward and always requires space and a dose of bravery to really explore.

So the 400R turns in with real assurance, the rear-wheel-steer system effectively shortening the wheelbase. Body control is good, the car turning and settling in one clean action. But from mid-corner things get a bit spooky. Instead of keeping that lovely neutral feeling, the 400R drives through that phase and quickly into something approximating oversteer. I say that because the rear tyres aren't necessarily sliding, it's just that the steering system seems to push the rear of the car wider and wider. That means no understeer but a slightly unnerving, slightly unnatural yaw moment. This sensation takes time to grow used to and even longer to start to exploit.

However, the 400R never snaps into oversteer and with patience you can tune into its balance and gradually start to pick up the pace until you're throwing everything at it. This car has uprated AP Racing brakes and they're sensational – the pedal with that solid, heavyweight feel of a good racing setup – so you can brake right into turns, feel the rear axle drive the front tyres into the corner, and then unleash the howling RB-X GT2 engine. The 400R needs a bit of aggression to really start to make sense, and driven with this degree of

commitment everything feels more natural and less disjointed. It actually starts to seem small and light, so much so that you find yourself flinging it around like a hot hatch rather than treating it as a big rear-wheel-drive coupe.

On one final drive across the moor, everything clicks. It's a cool evening and the engine seems hungrier than ever for the dense air, the steering shimmies and wriggles over the worst bumps but is full of feel, and I manage to get the 400R in that sweet spot where it locks into corners on entry but floats out of them just on the edge of oversteer without tipping over into a clumsy slide.

It feels sensational, a compelling mix of heavyweight engineering and lithe responses with a unique soundtrack and a setup that requires work to understand but then offers rich reward. Later I find myself daydreaming about taking it on a road trip to Spa or maybe down to the Route Napoléon.

Tokyo, Bathurst, the south of France, Exmoor... It's all immaterial really. What matters is being in the 400R. I still love this car.

Thanks, Johan. You're a lucky man.

*Thanks also to Torque GT, experts in finding rare, well-preserved cars in Japan for customers worldwide. Visit [torque-gt.co.uk](http://torque-gt.co.uk) for more info.*

## NISSAN SKYLINE GT-R NISMO 400R

**Engine** In-line 6-cyl, 2771cc, twin-turbo

**Power** 395bhp @ 6800rpm

**Torque** 347lb ft @ 4400rpm

**Transmission** Five-speed manual gearbox, ATTESA ET-S PRO four-wheel drive with 'active' rear limited-slip differential

**Suspension** Multi-link, coil springs and anti-roll bar front and rear. Super-HICAS four-wheel steering system

**Brakes** Ventilated discs front and rear. ABS

**Wheels** 18in front and rear

**Tyres** 275/35 ZR18 front and rear

**Weight** 1550kg

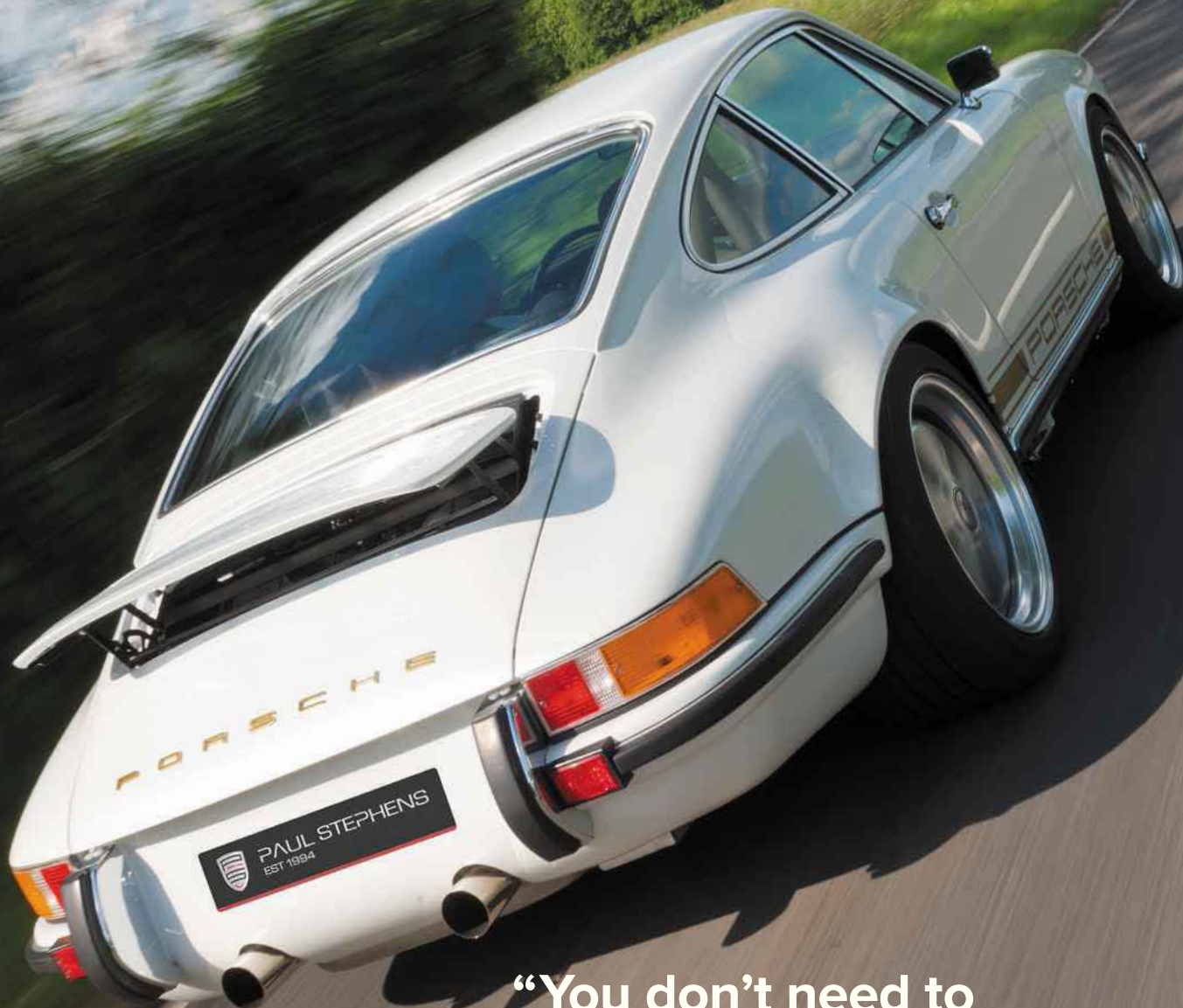
**Power-to-weight** 259bhp/ton

**0-60mph** 4.0sec (claimed)

**Top speed** 186mph (claimed)

**evo rating:** ★★★★★





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# WHERE DID PORSCHE'S LE MANS WINNER GO NEXT?

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by JETHRO BOVINGDON

PHOTOGRAPHY by ASTON PARROTT

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*After his brilliant and unexpected triumph at Le Mans, Nick Tandy has just kept on winning – including outright victory in the Petit Le Mans, a first for Porsche. Here the British ace tells us what challenges lie ahead – and why he's never happier than when racing old vans around a field*



**THAT DECISIVE MOMENT WHEN YOU'RE IN**

a busy supermarket and have to choose which queue to join for the checkout. Hmmm, that older couple will probably pay with cash and fancy a chat. So that's a no. The harassed parents with three kids in tow will be distracted and probably have to run off to retrieve an errant child. That won't do. These are the split-second decisions that can save, ooh, maybe three minutes of your life. Always feels important at the time though, doesn't it? Well, I have a new rule about such things, including passport queues, which petrol pump will free-up first and lottery numbers: look for Nick Tandy and slot right in behind him. Copy his lottery numbers. Do as he does. Just don't follow him when he walks calmly across open water...

Okay, that last part was an exaggeration, but Porsche factory driver Nick Tandy can seemingly do no wrong right now. In June, the 30-year-old Brit, together with Earl Bamber and Nico Hulkenberg, won Le Mans in 'the third' 919 Hybrid, confounding almost all expectations. It was a victory won largely by Tandy's relentless quadruple stint through the night, when he took around a minute out of the other 919s and the Audis.

Since then he's won pretty much every race he's started, be it in the 911 RSR or with KCMG in the LMP2 class of the WEC series. The culmination of an extraordinary year was overall victory at Petit Le Mans in the RSR. Weather conditions were horrendous at Road Atlanta and the race cut short, but Tandy and teammates Patrick Pilet and Richard Lietz (who never got to drive the car) had the pace to beat not only all the other GTs but the prototypes, too. Porsche had never won Petit Le Mans before.

So what could possibly worry Tandy these days? 'It's harder and harder to get scrap cars, that's the trouble...' Eh? He's responding to my question about what he'd choose to do in a car just for fun with his mates. I'd expected him to suggest a gaggle of RSRs and the Nürburgring, or identical 919s at Le Mans in the black of night. But no. 'Simple,' he smiles. 'I'd get three old cars, rear-wheel drive, preferably pickup trucks or vans, and we'd go banger racing on the fields at the farm at home. Pickups are great, they take a lot of abuse.'

Tandy's not saying this for effect, to be 'just a normal guy'. He didn't grow up karting with loads of precocious little shi... sorry, I mean aspiring racing drivers. Tandy was schooled in the rough and ready world of Ministox, sliding around short oval tracks like his local and brilliantly named Northampton International Raceway. He still describes it as 'the purest form of racing'.

I'm not about to deify Tandy, as motoring magazines and motorsport journalists tend to do with any driver who achieves great things. What I will say is that Tandy

is genuinely a lovely guy – funny, sharp, enthusiastic and with his feet absolutely on terra firma. When he's not walking on water, obviously. I think he's still as wide-eyed about his Le Mans victory as the rest of the paddock seemed to be, but there's no question he's got that innate belief in his own abilities that's shared by all top-level drivers. You can see and hear it when he talks about the whole 919 Hybrid programme.

'When I heard about the plan to run a third car – well, I was a little disappointed that they hadn't even spoken to some of us [GT drivers] when the programme started,' says Tandy. 'So when I heard about the third car, I wrote to Andreas Seidl [team principal] and then saw him in Austin. He said: "Yep, come and have a test." So a few of us were invited and the first test at Motorland Aragon went really well. And after that I had a strong inkling... Then

## 'TANDY IS GENUINELY A LOVELY GUY – FUNNY, SHARP, ENTHUSIASTIC AND WITH HIS FEET ABSOLUTELY ON TERRA FIRMA'

me, Michael [Christensen] and Fred [Makowiecki] tested again and I kind of knew after the Christmas party – the Night of Champions – that I'd be in one of the seats. I was told that I shouldn't worry about next year...'

Can you imagine the pressure? Come and jump in a 919 Hybrid and show us what you can do. 'That is the highest pressure thing you will ever do in motorsport,' grins Tandy, who obviously relished the challenge. 'On the lead up to it I'd done all my research on the car and the team, watched all the videos, spoken to people and even done some cheeky F3 testing again beforehand to get used to it [high downforce]. So I went fully prepared and confident...' Did he ease himself in gently? You might be able to guess the answer. 'I've always thought it's better to come away having made a mistake but tried your best rather than being too cautious. I was pretty much flat-out from the moment I got in the car... and luckily I didn't make a mistake.'

The test was a sign of things to come in the biggest race of his life. In 'the third car'. Tandy, Bamber and Hulkenberg never saw it like that, of course. 'I think between our car crew we thought we had just as much chance. I knew that Porsche would put all three cars in exactly the same spec –





# AFTER LE MANS

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14-15 June 2015  
FIA WEC  
Le Mans 24 Hours  
1st overall/1st LMP1  
919 Hybrid

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28 June 2015  
Tudor USCC  
Watkins Glen  
2nd GTLM  
911 RSR

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10 July 2015  
Tudor USCC  
Ontario  
1st GTLM  
911 RSR

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9 August 2015  
Tudor USCC  
Road America  
1st GTLM  
911 RSR

---

19 August 2015  
Tudor USCC  
Circuit of Americas  
1st GTLM  
911 RSR

---

30 August 2015  
FIA WEC  
Nürburgring 6 Hours  
2nd LMP2  
Oreca 05 Nissan

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3 October 2015  
Tudor USCC  
Petit Le Mans  
1st overall/1st GTLM  
911 RSR

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11 October 2015  
FIA WEC  
Fuji 6 Hours  
DNF LMP2  
Oreca 05 Nissan

the maximum that they could give – and I knew that because of how the points system works there was no favourite car... Unlike at Spa where the two championship cars should be scoring the points. At Le Mans it's two of any three, so yeah, I went there thinking that if the car is the quickest car then we will probably win the race. Genuinely. I've got trust in what I can do and what my teammates can do, and if you think you're going to lose before you go, then you're kind of wasting your time a bit, I guess.'

Tandy and co weren't wasting their time. They completed 395 laps in car 19 to take a historic win, a lap ahead of the sister car 17 and two laps clear of the number 7 Audi R18 e-tron quattro. Since then it's been win after win after win for Tandy. You sense he doesn't want 2015 to ever end. 'At Le Mans I found a groove and it became easy,' he says. 'I knew that the gap was growing from the pit-board. I took about a minute out of them over a quadruple stint: that's 3 hours 15 in the car. The Michelins were on the car for the whole four stints, too. The drop-off in tyre performance is probably about half a second at Le Mans over that time. It's nothing.' For those of used to watching F1 that seems extraordinary, doesn't it? 'On your last stint when the tyres have done 2.5 hours already you'll be flat-out, pushing them for all they've got, but the first time you use them, especially the first ten laps or so, you do have to manage them knowing you've got to do another 40 laps or so. It's driving at 99 per cent.'

That amazing groove, the sense of everything coming easily, has continued. 'Looking back now, I guess when you're in the early part of your career you're always trying to prove something, always trying to show what you can do. I think – and I think I saw it in Earl as well – after Le

Mans there's nothing left for us to prove to anyone as drivers. It takes a bit of pressure off.'

The next historic moment was at Petit Le Mans, but this time the pressure was very different. 'I don't think it stopped raining all day,' Tandy explains. 'It ranged from very difficult conditions to almost undrivable. For 50 per cent of the time that the race was green it was heavy, heavy rain and at that point you are literally trying not to crash more than you're trying to go fast. The last stint that I did [Tandy took the chequered flag], it was the hardest time I've ever had in a race car to try to keep concentration. Even along the straights the car was always moving. At no point could you relax.'

Can he relax now that the season is drawing to a close, and what's to come in 2016? Well, first and foremost a new company car: a white 991 GT3 RS. Nick describes himself as a huge car enthusiast and spends hours searching the classifieds, just like many of us do. He even 'watches your stupid bloody videos. I love all that stuff.' Which is nice.

As for the racing, Tandy is grappling with how to top 2015. 'How many people have won Le Mans? Not many.' He can't resist a wide grin at this point and I can hardly blame him. 'How many people have won Le Mans and another huge race in the same season? Less still. And to have wins in four different categories and four different cars across the globe, plus getting to race in the two best championships in the world, WEC and United Sportscars in the US... How do you get any better? I guess to win a world championship alongside those things. So I've still got something to aim for – to win a world championship with a Le Mans win in the same season.' And, of course, easy access to scrap cars for larking about in a field. ✉



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# King of the load?

*Mercedes-AMG's new C63 Estate delivers huge performance in an understated package, but can it outclass Audi's RS4 Avant?*

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*by* DAN PROSSER

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PHOTOGRAPHY *by*  
ASTON PARROTT

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**T**HE PREVIOUS-GENERATION Mercedes C63 AMG, with that rather wonderful normally aspirated 6.2-litre V8, was a sales phenomenon in AMG terms. In a seven-year lifespan, some 40,000 units were sold, making it Mercedes' most successful ever performance car by a clear margin. The saloon derivative was the most popular version, closely followed by the coupe. The estate model, however, accounted for only ten per cent of W204 C63 sales, which by any measure makes it a pretty niche product.

This latest version, based on the fourth-generation C-class and powered by a 4-litre twin-turbo V8 rather than the old 6.2, will also find far fewer homes than the saloon and coupe derivatives, but somehow its intrinsic appeal far outstrips its share of the sales. The less popular relation they may be, but fast estate cars are cool. Perhaps that's a direct result of their rarity; or maybe the whiff of utilitarianism punctures any suggestion that the driver is overly concerned with image. If you want to turn heads, after all, you wouldn't think twice about the estate model.

So the £60,000 high-performance estate car is a pretty compelling machine, but that lack of volume means examples of the breed are few and far

between. In fact, if you're in the market right now, these are your only options. The Mercedes-AMG C63 Estate arrived on our shores in the summer, just as the Audi RS4 Avant was being discontinued. Audi dealers are not at all short of delivery-mileage examples at full list price, though, so the C63 doesn't yet have the sector to itself.

For the punch it packs divided by the number of heads it turns on a given high street, this particular flat-white C63, with its 18-inch wheels, could be in a league of one. No other car on sale today disguises its accelerative potential as cunningly as this, which begs two questions. One, is the estate version the pick of the new C63 range, and two, is it a better car than the RS4 Avant?

That twin-turbo V8 is very closely related to the engine that powers the AMG GT coupe, which we know to be one of the finest modern turbocharged performance engines anywhere. It's good for 469bhp at 5500rpm and 479lb ft of torque all the way from 1750 to 4500rpm. It drives the rear wheels via a seven-speed automatic transmission – not the twin-clutch 'box that the GT uses – with a mechanical locking differential employed to prevent that huge slug of torque from conflagrating the inside tyre at every corner exit.

The C63 Estate weighs 1710kg, which is 70kg

# ‘The RS4 could be the last of the normally aspirated 8500rpm V8s’

more than the four-door model. The acceleration figures are staggering: 0-62mph in 4.2 seconds is quite silly for such a weighty, two-wheel-drive car. At £61,260 this model undercuts the S version by £6750. That premium buys an extra 34bhp, an electronically controlled locking differential – which responds faster than the purely mechanical item – and a slightly sportier chassis tune, as well as bigger wheels and a much more overtly sporting exterior.

If you’ll allow me to disappear up a side track for a moment, there are two schools of thought on the matter of S versus non-S: some love the idea of the cheaper model’s car park camouflage styling while others find it terribly boring to look at, particularly for a machine with such stupendous levels of performance. Whichever camp you fall into, you’ll surely agree that packing a punch as big as this and making such little fuss about it is quite cool.

Anyway, of these two cars, the B8 RS4 is certainly more extrovert in design terms. In fact I reckon it’ll be remembered as a high watermark in performance estate car design, not least because it so elegantly incorporates flared box arches into an already handsome shape.

Having arrived in 2012, this generation of RS4 just about predated the sudden and across-the-board adoption of downsizing and turbocharging, which means it uses what could be the last of the normally aspirated, 8500rpm V8s. It’s amazing how quickly the notion of a high-revving ‘vee’ engine has become so romantic, such a cause for celebration. On the flip side, though, it does mean the C63 absolutely murders the RS4 for torque output: with 317lb ft at 4000rpm the Audi concedes 162lb ft to the Mercedes, which offers maximum twist 2250rpm sooner. The All Blacks’ rugby forwards would have a tougher time scrummaging against the Eastbourne branch of the Womens’ Institute. At least with 444bhp the Audi only gives up 25bhp to the Mercedes.

The four-wheel-drive RS4 is half a second slower to 62mph than the rear-driven C63. It does, however, use a twin-clutch transmission, and that, as we’ll



**MERCEDES-AMG C63 ESTATE**

**Engine** V8, 3982cc, twin-turbo  
**Power** 469bhp @ 5500rpm  
**Torque** 479lb ft @ 1750-4500rpm  
**Transmission** Seven-speed MCT, rear-wheel drive, limited-slip differential  
**Front suspension** Four-link, coil springs, adaptive dampers, anti-roll bar  
**Rear suspension** Multi-link, coil springs, adaptive dampers, anti-roll bar  
**Brakes** Ventilated 360mm discs front and rear, ABS, EBD  
**Wheels** 8.5 x 18in front, 9.5 x 18in rear  
**Tyres** 245/40 ZR18 front, 265/40 ZR18 rear  
**Weight** 1710kg  
**Power-to-weight** 279bhp/ton  
**0-62mph** 4.2sec (claimed)  
**Top speed** 155mph (limited)  
**Basic price** £61,260

**EVO rating:** ★★★★★**AUDI RS4 AVANT**

**Engine** V8, 4163cc  
**Power** 444bhp @ 8250rpm  
**Torque** 317lb ft @ 4000-6000rpm  
**Transmission** Seven-speed DCT, four-wheel drive, rear limited-slip differential  
**Front suspension** Five-link, coil springs, adaptive dampers, anti-roll bar  
**Rear suspension** Trapezoidal link, coil springs, adaptive dampers, anti-roll bar  
**Brakes** Ventilated discs, 365mm front, 324mm rear, ABS, EBD  
**Wheels** 9 x 19in front and rear  
**Tyres** 265/35 R19 front and rear  
**Weight** 1795kg  
**Power-to-weight** 251bhp/ton  
**0-62mph** 4.7sec (claimed)  
**Top speed** 155mph (limited)  
**Basic price** £56,545

**EVO rating:** ★★★★★

see, makes quite a difference on the road. The RS4's Sport Differential also promises to enliven the car's driving dynamics by actively apportioning torque between the rear wheels.

The Audi's cabin is so familiar now that it's easy to forget just what a fine interior it really is. The architecture may be a touch functional, but the quality of the materials and fit and finish are very impressive and the Multi Media Interface system is intuitive to operate.

Time has been kind to this car. Much like the RS5 that impressed and surprised us when we put it up against the BMW M4 and Lexus RC F in issue 206, this RS4 is a better car now than it's ever been. It's quite clear that during its time in production Audi has knocked back the spring rates a touch, because whereas the early cars rode almost unforgivably harshly, this example is actually quite fluid and relaxed. It's only over bigger potholes and ridges that it begins to feel crashy.

The engine is also more enjoyable now than ever. In the company of the old Mercedes 6.2-litre V8, this 4.2 did feel a little limp, but today it really is an exciting and soulful engine with a dramatic crescendo. It certainly doesn't have the effortless, any-gear thrust of the latest turbocharged engines, but it still gives the RS4 a turn of speed that most sports cars should be mindful of. The gearbox, meanwhile, is quick-witted and sharp in its manual mode and refined around town.

What hasn't improved over the years is the car's steering system. In much the same way that ancient human remains can be carbon-dated, it's actually possible to accurately predict an Audi model year by the way it steers. Unfortunately, this RS4 is from the 'vague and rubbery' age rather than the more recent 'crisp and direct' era.

In dynamic terms the RS4 majors on outright grip and taut control, which means it'll carry tremendous speed down a road. It'll do so in all weathers, too, but what the RS4 never really does is entertain its driver. There's no real adjustability in the chassis, no way of tucking the nose in mid-corner to take a tighter line and no sense of the chassis getting up onto its toes as you approach the limit of grip. It's just completely locked down, until it starts understeering. That Sport Differential occasionally gives an impression of the car being driven from the rear, but never to the point – on the road at least – where you find yourself instinctively opening up the steering as the car drifts gently away from a corner. That sort of two-way engagement is well beyond this car's remit.

In design terms the Mercedes' cabin is evidently a lot newer, but for outright quality and fit and finish it doesn't teach the Audi a great deal, if anything. The driver's seat feels rather high-set, too, which makes you feel as though you're perched on top of the car. The last of the day-to-day frustrations pertains to the gearbox, which can be irritatingly dim-witted when manoeuvring at low speed.

Once up to speed, the gearbox is very smooth in automatic mode, but it never gives the same immediacy or control when you're pressing on in manual mode as the RS4's S-tronic. It's only in back-to-back comparisons that the C63 really loses out here, though, because in isolation its shift speeds are rapid enough.

'Rapid enough' is not the phrase you'd choose to describe the C63's straight-line performance. It really is thunderously quick. Even when you're familiar with both this 'entry-level' model and the more powerful S version, you don't ever crave more raw performance, while throttle response throughout the rev-range is very good. The exhaust note is suitably potent and the engine's top end is rampant, too, which means you'll find yourself holding on tightly as the rev-counter needle swings around to 6000rpm.

The C63 steers more intuitively and crisply than the RS4 – it has a less artificially manic rate of response at the front axle, too – but when accelerating hard the car's weight shifts rearwards so forcefully that the front end becomes very light, at which point the steering can feel as though it's become completely disconnected from the wheels.

It's a curious sensation – not to mention disconcerting on a very narrow road – and it's likely to do with the way the car manages body movements when left in its default drive mode. By rotating the little wheel on the transmission tunnel you can switch the car through its AMG Drive Select modes, which adjusts its drivetrain and chassis parameters. Left alone, the car feels quite under-supported at each corner, so body movements in response to cornering or accelerative and decelerative forces are very pronounced. In fact, in the default mode the chassis feels about as sporty as the exterior looks!

The trade-off is a very fluid ride quality at higher speeds – although at low speeds the ride does feel very firm – but, naturally, when you switch to a more focused setting the car responds brilliantly. It now offers enough support to control body movements and allows you to make the most of the tidal-wave performance. What is lacking, however, is pliancy over bumps, which means you're forced to leave the mode wheel well alone on the very bumpiest roads.

On smooth roads, though, the C63 is terrifically good fun and the mechanical differential distributes drive so cleanly, and throttle response is so crisp, that you can provoke the rear axle at will.

Therein lies the innate appeal of a fast estate car. They're untaxing in daily use, they'll swallow a family's holiday kit and they can be entertaining when it's just you, the car and a good road. It's the latter point that makes the Mercedes the pick of these two cars. And unless you really do want everybody to know just how powerful and expensive your C63 is, this entry-level AMG estate is the pick of the range. ❌



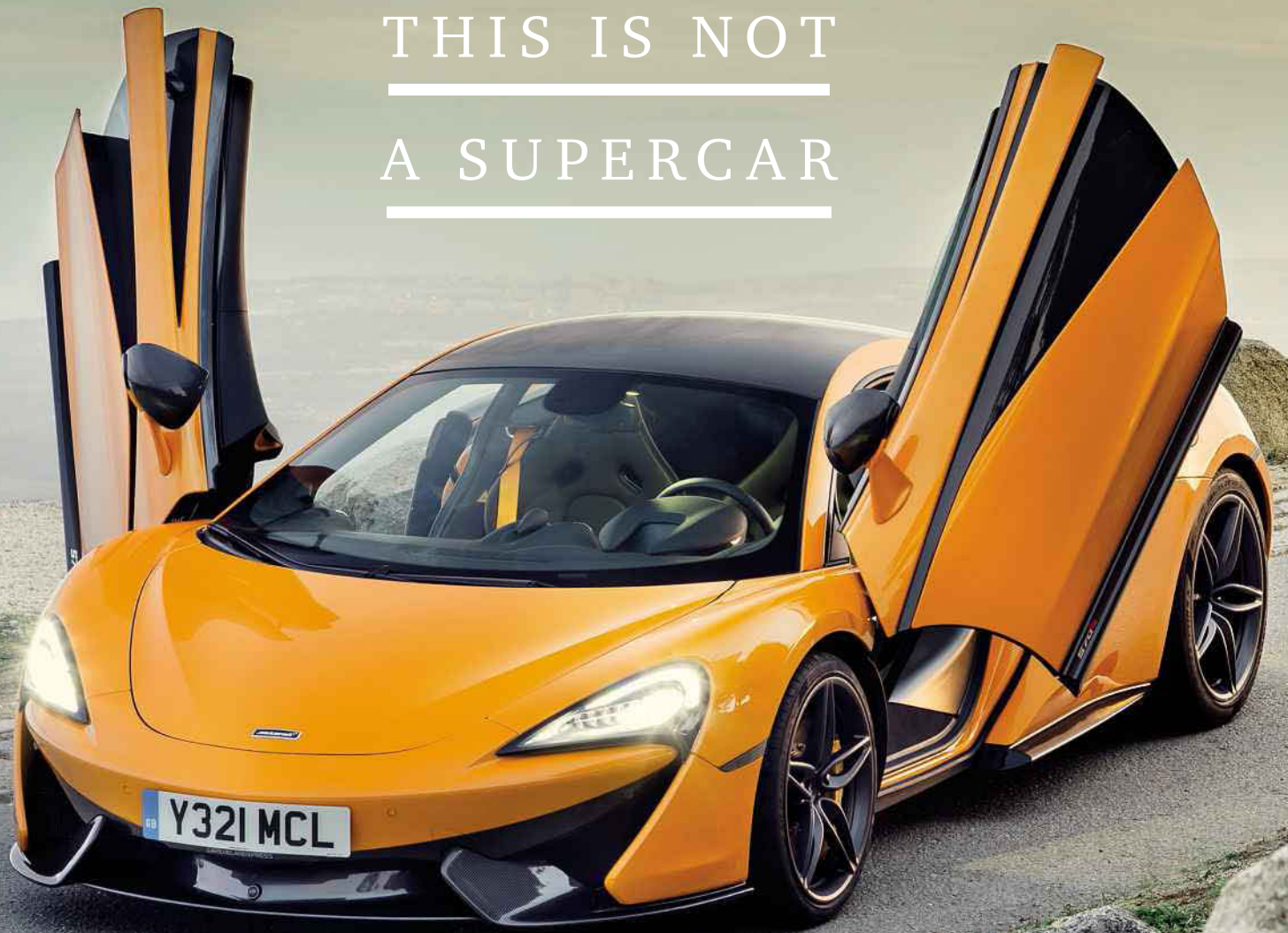
‘Throttle response is so crisp that you can provoke the rear axle at will’

THIS IS NOT  

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A SUPERCAR  

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by DAN PROSSER

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*According to McLaren, its new 'entry level' model is a sports car, not a supercar. It's also more 'useable'. What's going on?*





**W**HEN **McLAREN** Automotive originally launched the MP4-12C back in 2011, we were quite happy to allow it a grace period. To all intents and purposes this was a brand new company taking on the established players in the supercar industry. It was inevitable there would be a period of refinement and improvement at Woking, a number of years during which design and manufacturing practices would be moulded into shape. It was the exact same process Ferrari, Porsche, Lamborghini and the others had been through many decades earlier. And on the strength of the MP4-12C's replacement, the 650S – and more recently the sensational 675LT – McLaren is now up to speed.

This 570S is the first model in McLaren's new Sports Series range, which will eventually grow into a broad and expansive lineup. The Sports Series is tasked with more than doubling

McLaren's road car output, which means it's pivotal to the McLaren Automotive business plan. For that very reason, Woking has to get the 570S right from day one. There can be no grace period this time.

The new model uses a revised version of the carbonfibre monocoque that also forms the basis of every other McLaren, right up to the £1.98m Ultimate Series P1 GTR. Called MonoCell II, the tub has been lightened by five kilograms to 75kg and the sills have been lowered by 80mm to improve access into the cabin. The 570S also shares its 3.8-litre twin-turbo V8 with the rest of the McLaren lineup, although compared with the Super Series 650S some 30 per cent of parts are different, mostly relating to the cylinder head.

The fundamentals of the 570S's technical specification are very familiar, then, but there is one crucial difference. Whereas all modern McLaren models until now have used an interconnected hydraulic suspension system called ProActive Chassis Control, this latest addition to the range instead uses a more conventional anti-roll bar setup (but still with





double wishbones all-round). According to head of vehicle engineering Darren Goddard, that decision was taken ‘as part of the differentiation from Super Series’.

‘The whole dynamics brief for this car,’ he continues, ‘was around making it more engaging at lower speeds. So it’s not all about lots of downforce on the track; it’s not all about how fast a lap time can be. It’s about making the car more useable and more fun. So we still have independently adaptive dampers, [but] we decided to move away from ProActive Chassis Control.’

With 562bhp and a claimed 204mph top speed, the 570S easily satisfies our definition of a supercar, but McLaren chooses to refer to it as a sports car. At £143,250, it’s much cheaper than the previous entry point to the brand, the 650S. In fact, it undercuts that model by more than £50,000, which opens up McLaren to a whole new audience.

Consequently, the Sports Series’ sales potential is, in relative terms, enormous. McLaren shifted 1649 units last year between the Super and Ultimate series lines, but once



Sports Series production is up to full speed the factory hopes to sell 4300 units per year.

That all sounds very promising, but, by entering into the sports car market, McLaren does take on some very capable models from some very experienced manufacturers. The 570S is pitched squarely at the likes of the Porsche 911 Turbo S, Audi R8 V10 Plus and Aston Martin V12 Vantage S, while similarly powerful alternatives from Mercedes and Jaguar – namely the AMG GT S and F-type R Coupe – are significantly more affordable. So while the 570S arrives on the sports car scene with a mouth-watering technical specification and the most exclusive badge in the class, in tackling this sheer breadth of competition, McLaren is venturing on new ground.

The V8 engine – dry-sumped and with a flat-plane crank – delivers peak power at 7500rpm, while its 443lb ft of torque arrives at 5000rpm. We’re used to turbocharged engines serving up peak torque from just over idle these days, but the M838T has always been a high-revving, power-oriented unit. The red line is set at 8500rpm, which is far beyond the reach



of the 911 Turbo S's flat-six and just 500rpm shy of the R8's normally aspirated V10 at full speed.

Driving the rear wheels through a twin-clutch, seven-speed gearbox, the 570S clocks a 3.2sec 0-62mph dash and registers 124mph in 9.5sec, according to McLaren. The four-wheel-drive 911 Turbo S edges it to 62mph by a tenth, but by 124mph the McLaren is close to a second ahead.

Unlike the Porsche, the 570S bucks the current trend for active aerodynamics, although the front bumper and bonnet have been shaped to direct cooling air to where it's needed most and to reduce turbulence over the rest of the bodywork. The flying buttresses, meanwhile, encourage airflow to the fixed rear wing to improve downforce.

What this car really has on its side, though, is lightness. That carbonfibre tub, plus the use of aluminium body panels, contributes to a dry weight of just 1313kg. With fluids, the 570S will undercut the R8 V10 Plus by around 150kg and the 911 Turbo S by approximately 200kg.

With less power and a more affordable price tag than the 650S, it's tempting to label the 570S the 'small McLaren', but it's actually fractionally longer, wider and taller than the Super Series model. Being a daily sports car rather than an occasional-use supercar, which is how McLaren defines the

Sports and Super Series respectively, practicality is much higher up the 570S's agenda. It therefore offers more cabin and stowage space than the 650S.

To that same end, the 570S has been engineered to be less taxing to drive around town, which goes some way to explaining the extraordinary ride quality. At both low and motorway speeds the chassis, when left in Normal mode, is much more settled than you might expect of a car with this level of dynamic ability. Similarly, the gearbox is well mannered in automatic mode, the engine is muted around town and visibility is very good both forward and back. Despite the lowered sills, the cabin is still a little tricky to access, but, that aside, this car would be just as amenable in daily use as any of its rivals.

The cabin itself, which can be specified in either Sport or Luxury trim, feels very tightly screwed together and the materials are of a high quality, although during our drive the satnav will confuse itself more often than it should (the car we're driving is a pre-production model so we'll defer judgement on the finer quality-control details for the time being). The optional sports seats (£4910) deserve a brief mention because they are not only supportive and perfectly located, they are also very comfortable over a long journey,



which is all too rarely the case with fixed-back bucket seats.

We fly into Portugal for the launch, but evidently we've brought the British weather with us. Frustrating though it is, the conditions do at least highlight the 570S's useability in adverse weather. The four-wheel-drive-equipped 911 Turbo S and R8 V10 Plus would certainly leave the McLaren in their spray in the sodden mountain roads that make up the launch route on the first day, but aside from slightly remote steering the 570S does feel sure-footed and secure.

Thankfully, the second day of the launch dawns bright and clear. Across those same mountain roads, with the chassis switched into its Sport setting, that relaxed ride quality translates to fine pliancy and fluid bump-absorption over the more uneven sections of tarmac. Rather than skipping around and getting tied in knots by a rough and lumpen road, the 570S is serene and unflustered.

As an indicator of this car's breadth of ability, however, its body is always very tautly controlled. It doesn't lean heavily in corners, go light and floaty over crests or heave lazily in direction changes. That control, combined with its pliancy over bumps, gives you the immediate confidence to fling the 570S down an inviting stretch of road without fearing that it may bite or become wayward at any minute.

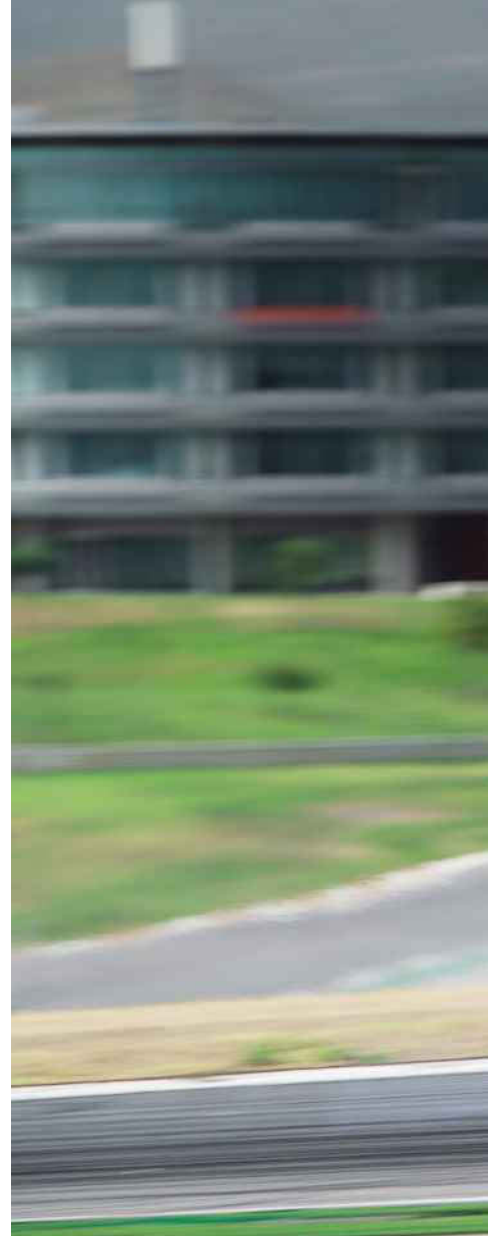
The steering, which is light on feedback in wet conditions, comes into its own on a dry surface. While it would be unfair to say it patters and tugs deliciously in the manner of a pre-2011 Porsche 911, for instance, it is direct and crisp with a very natural weight and rate of response. With the chassis loaded mid-corner, the hydraulically assisted rack begins to stream back messages through the rim of the steering wheel.

So the 570S steers intuitively, it rides the bumps well and it controls its mass very effectively. On the way into a corner the front axle finds tremendous turn-in bite, too, which gives



*'THE STEERING, LIGHT ON FEEDBACK ON WET ROADS, COMES INTO ITS OWN ON A DRY SURFACE'*





*‘THE 570S IS PRECISELY  
THROTTLE-ADJUSTABLE  
AT CORNER EXIT, WHICH  
ALLOWS YOU TO ENJOY  
ITS SWEET BALANCE’*

a sense of immediacy and agility that the 911 Turbo S and R8 V10 Plus don't quite deliver. Mid-corner grip is very strong as well, as is traction away from the bend.

In keeping with its dynamic brief – to be more engaging at lower speeds and less critical in its transition into slip – the 570S is precisely throttle-adjustable at corner exit, which allows you to enjoy the sweet balance of the rear-wheel-drive chassis. It's one of the car's biggest dynamic advantages over its four-wheel-drive rivals as well as, it must be said, the less expressive 650S.

McLaren still chooses to work without a limited-slip differential, preferring the better turn-in characteristics of an open diff. The rear brakes are activated under power to

mimic the effects of a locking differential, though, and given the progressive adjustability of the rear axle under power, it's difficult to argue against McLaren's logic.

That window of on-throttle adjustability is best appreciated in the electronic stability control's Dynamic setting, which allows a degree of slip before cutting in. Actually, the system remains dormant until a fairly exaggerated yaw angle is achieved on the road, which means you do still have to be right on your game.

The standard-fit carbon ceramic brakes – with 394mm discs and six-piston calipers across the front axle – return very forceful retardation, though the brake pedal itself remains defiantly lifeless until you apply full pressure.

That 562bhp has a very predictable effect on 1400kg of McLaren: this is a very fast car. What the 570S never quite manages to deliver, though, is that breathtaking hit of a 650S. It also doesn't quite match the industrial slingshot effect of the much torquier 911 Turbo S, but few things do. The 8500rpm red line gives the engine a crescendo that we don't normally anticipate from turbocharged cars, which seems like reasonable payback for the slightly dull throttle response below 3500rpm. That's only really an issue when exiting very tight corners – it's frustrating to feel that lag when you want to balance the car under power at corner exit – because from



halfway around the rev-counter onwards, throttle response is very sharp. Fitted with the optional sports exhaust (£3180), the test car does sound pretty potent from the outside, but from within the cabin the note is rather uninspiring.

The familiar Seamless Shift Gearbox, meanwhile, may not be the leader of the pack for outright shift-times these days, but it'd be a tough taskmaster who demands more response and immediacy between the ratios.

Unfortunately, by the time we reach Portimão circuit, the previous day's miserable weather has returned in anger. On the few vaguely grippy sections of track, though, it becomes clear that there's a fun and playful chassis underpinning this car, while the steering – a touch wooden in the wet at road speeds – does serve up more feel with the greater chassis loadings that are part and parcel of circuit driving.

McLaren has been criticised in the past, not least by this magazine, for building spectacularly fast cars that reduce the part of the driver to a minor role. The 570S addresses those criticisms in emphatic style; it's truly a fun and engaging sports car with a rewarding chassis and an effective powertrain. It remains to be seen if McLaren has built a car that can outpoint its rivals from Porsche, Audi and the rest, but what is abundantly clear is that the 570S is fit to stand toe-to-toe with the world's best sports cars from day one. ❏

## McLAREN 570S

**Engine** V8, 3799cc, twin-turbo

**CO2** 258g/km

**Power** 562bhp @ 7500rpm

**Torque** 443lb ft @ 5000-6500rpm

**Transmission** Seven-speed dual-clutch, rear-wheel drive, torque vectoring by braking

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

**Rear suspension** Double wishbones, coil springs, adaptive dampers, anti-roll bar

**Brakes** Carbon-ceramic discs, 394mm front, 380mm rear, ABS, EBD

**Wheels** 8 x 19in front, 10 x 20in rear

**Tyres** 225/35 R19 front, 285/35 R20

**Weight (dry)** 1313kg

**Power-to-weight (dry)** 435bhp/ton

**0-62mph** 3.2sec (claimed)

**Top speed** 204mph (claimed)

**Basic price** £143,250

**evo rating:** ★★★★★

CLIO

CUP



# KEEP ON REN -ING

by RICHARD MEADEN

PHOTOGRAPHY by ASTON PARROTT

*Renault has been running one-make race series in the UK for more than 40 years. How to celebrate? With a race, of course*





**Above:** Meaden jumped into current Clio Cup after the lovely 5 TS (right) sadly suffered fuelling issues. **Below:** Bovingdon chose 5 GT Turbo, Wallace the early Clio. Franchitti happy with Phase 2 Clio, complete with sequential gearshift

**IT'S LIKE A SCENE FROM *DAYS OF Thunder*.** Only with 100 per cent less Scientology and 100 per cent more Frenchness. Ahead of me in the far distance, a trio of small Renault hatchbacks is shaping-up to go three-abreast through Turn 1 of Rockingham Motor Speedway's International Circuit. And as anyone who knows their Rusty Wallace from their Dick Trickle could tell you, this kind of manoeuvre is officially Not A Good Idea.

Raising an ominous cloud of dust on the outside of the track is Jethro Bovingdon, his boxy Renault 5 GT Turbo being hung out to dry by the wily duo of Andy Wallace and Marino Franchitti in a brace of blue Clio Cups. As all three disappear out of sight, I'm not expecting things to end well for any of them. Perfect!

In case you were wondering what's going on, I've dropped you into the midst of the second in an occasional series of races in which **evo** pays homage to cult Japanese video phenomenon *Best Motoring* by pitting four members of the magazine team against one another in a mildly scientific (but mostly chaotic) pursuit race and a smorgasbord of racing driver excuses.

Last time we did battle in an assortment of Minis, mixing the super-hot GP and GP2 road cars with a pair of first- and second-generation Mini Challenge race cars (**evo** 206). The result was predictably controversial and completely hilarious. Oh, and a glorious victory for yours truly. Search '**evo** Best Motoring' on YouTube and take a look. But I digress.

This time round, we've elected to slug it out in a rather wonderful array of Renaults to celebrate no fewer than 40 years of continuous one-make racing by the French marque in the UK. That's quite a landmark – and an awful lot of revenue in spare parts – but the true scale of it only hits home when we saunter into Rockingham's paddock to see the assortment of race-prepped Renault 5s and Clios being readied and warmed-up for us.

From a 5 TS stretching back to 1976 to the very latest 2015 Clio Cup, via a 1985 5 GT Turbo and a pair of earlier Clio Cups dating from 1991 and 1999, these terrific little cars represent a commitment to paint-trading, door-handle-scraping, talent-nurturing, one-make rough-and-tumble that's second to none.

If you're a hot hatch fan, it's a sight from your wildest dreams. Seeing them all lined up reminds me of that image depicting the seven ages of man, the evolution from early 5 to current Clio graphically depicted before our eyes, each successive generation larger and more powerful than the last.

I don't know which one you'd pick, but I'm desperate to race the 5 TS. It just looks so cool and unassuming, yet hard as nails, its upright body





# 'AT ROCKINGHAM, THE FASTER THE CORNER, THE GREATER THE PUCKER FACTOR'

slammed to the deck and sporting steel wheels shod with generous rubber.

Just along the pitlane are Team Dynamics, shooting a video for Honda. The be-winged Civic Type R might be the hot hatch of the moment, but this elderly Renault 5 effortlessly outpoints it with a perfect combination of stance and no-nonsense simplicity. I'd love one with this mechanical spec, but road-legal with a proper interior.

This particular car was still racing – and winning – in the mid-'80s, but it goes right back to the root of Renault's enduring obsession with one-make racing. It takes a few laps to know I've made the right choice. The 5 has a hair-raising propensity for three-wheeling and mouth-parching lift-off oversteer, but it's massively entertaining and quicker than a 40-year-old hatchback with 90bhp has any right to be. Unfortunately it takes just a few more laps to dislodge some ancient piece of crud in the fuel system, the ailing 5 TS eventually backfiring in protest before spluttering to a halt. It's a great shame, but goes with the territory with old and now infrequently driven race cars.

Our original plan had been to race the four classic racers, then benchmark the current car's performance against them just for fun, but now the 2015 Clio Cup will be pressed into service as yours truly's car for the race itself. This leaves Bovingdon, Wallace and Franchitti to squabble over the remaining Clios and 5 GT Turbo.

Bov is drawn to the boxy Turbo, while Wallace picks the Phase 1 Clio Cup (based on the pre-Williams 16v). This leaves Franchitti with the feisty 1999 Cup, complete with push-pull

sequential transmission and a gloriously revvy naturally aspirated 2-litre motor.

Qualifying is restricted to a handful of laps (OK, maybe a few more for me, but I had slicks to try to get warm...) and proves to be a voyage of discovery for all of us, not least finding out how scary banked corners can be in front-wheel-drive cars on cold tyres. Wallace (winner of the Daytona 24 Hours in a Group C Jaguar, don't forget) confesses to 'a few heart-in-mouth moments' and a close shave with the concrete wall. I'm the only one running slicks, which is my early excuse for taking a few laps to build-up to going through Turn 1 flat-out. It's a rush, but never less than scary. How Tony Kanaan averaged 215mph around Rockingham's fearsome Oval in 2001 I have no idea.

Having recorded our best times (1:47.8 for JB, 1:45.8 for AW, 1:39.4 for MF and 1:33.2 for me), or at least our best efforts at sandbagging (ahem, Mr Franchitti), editor Nick Trott calculates our handicap for the three-lap race – essentially three times our one-lap advantage, minus a bit of a fudge factor to allow for the standing start. The upshot is Bov starts first, roaring away in the boosty, deep-voiced GT Turbo. After a six-second gap, Wallace yelps the original Clio Cup off the line, followed by Franchitti 20-odd seconds later in his Clio. That leaves me twiddling my thumbs for another 20 seconds or so. It's so long that the others are out of sight and my slicks are now stone cold...

For the first lap it feels like an utterly fruitless chase. It also feels as if I'm going to crash at every turn, the faster the corner the greater the Pucker Factor, until finally talent yields to chilly rear-





**Above:** handicapping the faster cars made for close racing (and inevitable accusations of sandbagging). **Left:** Franchitti celebrates as Meaden prepares some more excuses

tyre temp and I have the mother-and-father of slides through Chapman Curve. By the time I stop laughing (I have a tendency to do this during *and* after a near-miss) Franchitti & co are even further down the road.

For two lonely laps I'm convinced the handicap was way too severe, but then I see the three stooges going all NASCAR into Turn 1. Poor old Jethro gets hustled up into the dirty margin of the banking and the gnarly old pros slide beneath him. It still seems like I'm set for dead last, but Bov's scare has lost him momentum, and with my slicks sweetly up to temperature I'm soon past him and have Wallace in my sights. AW spots me in his mirrors, but before he has a chance to act upon what's so clearly in his mind (don't play poker, Andy!) I manage to mug him, too, and continue the chase to Franchitti.

Marino is clearly going to be a tougher nut to crack. If he hadn't sandbagged quite so blatantly (sorry, 'found a lot of time between my first and second drives of the car') I'd have had another half-lap to pick him off, but as it stands I've got just a handful of corners to try to get by. Cue some distinctly BTCC-inspired grassy cuts,

accompanied by some increasingly powerful urges to nudge him into a spin.

The hairpin offers my best hope. He blocks me mercilessly under braking, but I'm hoping I can out-sprint him towards the tight chicane that feeds us out onto the start/finish straight. I'm right on his tail, but the older Clio has great traction and just enough grunt to hold me off. It would be so easy to offer him a helping bumper, but apparently that's not allowed, so it's the same story as we nail it towards the chequered flag. I was robbed, etc.

Motor-racing might be all about the winning, not the taking part, but this has been a hoot. To see and experience so many generations of Renault one-make racers going at it – possibly a little harder than Renault and the generous owner of the '99 Clio Cup might have expected – has been truly unique. As cars to drive for fun, they're hard to beat. As cars to showcase your talent and pursue your dreams of becoming British Touring Car Champion – just as Colin Turkington and Andrew Jordan have done in recent years – they're second to none. Renault, we salute you! ☒

*Keep an eye on [YouTube.com/evo](https://www.youtube.com/evo) for the video*

## FOUR DECADES OF FAST FRENCH FUN

No manufacturer has supported one-make motorsport for as long or with the same enthusiasm as Renault. In the UK it all began in 1974 at Brands Hatch, with the first-ever Renault 5 TL race. The success of this series, which ran between '74 and '76, laid the foundations for the 5 TS Championship, which continued right the way through to 1985!

The venerable TS then made way for the 5 GT Turbo Championship, which ran until 1990 and upheld Renault's honour for big grids, spectacular racing and providing a springboard from which talented racers could forge a career. The following year saw the new Clio Cup form the basis for Renault's next one-make adventure. This ran with great success until 1996, when the radical Renault Sport Spider temporarily shifted the focus away from hot hatchbacks.

In 2000, the Clio Cup returned with an all-new car and high-profile billing as part of the prestigious TOCA Tour as a support race for the British Touring Car Championship. It's a success story that continues with the present generation of Clio Cup.



**RENAULT 5 TS** (1976)  
1.3-litre, 4-cyl, naturally aspirated  
90bhp, 750kg



**RENAULT 5 GT TURBO** (1985)  
1.4-litre, 4-cyl, turbocharged  
120bhp, 785kg



**RENAULT CLIO CUP** (1991)  
1.8-litre, 4-cyl, naturally aspirated  
140bhp, 885kg



**RENAULT CLIO CUP** (1999)  
2-litre, 4-cyl, naturally aspirated  
180bhp, 920kg



**RENAULT CLIO CUP** (2015)  
1.6-litre, 4-cyl, turbocharged  
220bhp, 1080kg (dry)

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# Fast Fleet

## THIS MONTH

VW GOLF R // FORD FOCUS ST DIESEL // MINI JCW // RENAULTSPORT MÉGANE 275 TROPHY // PORSCHE 996 CARRERA // PORSCHE 996 GT2 // FORD FOCUS RS // VAUXHALL CORSA VXR // SEAT LEON ST CUPRA // MAZDA MX-5 Mk1 // MASERATI GRANCABRIO // RENAULT CLIO 182

### NEW ARRIVAL

## VW Golf R

Why the steady colour and small wheels? Prosser makes his excuses

**I** IF YOU THINK A DARK blue Volkswagen Golf R with five doors and small wheels is a bit 'old man', please direct your concerns towards **evo** managing editor Stuart Gallagher. The original plan was for him to run this car, so he specced it in accordance with his own tastes, taking inspiration, I think, from his favourite knitted jumper.

That was six months ago and since then the plan changed. The 296bhp, four-wheel-drive hot hatch would instead come to me, which was very good news indeed given that it's a superb car, but Gallagher's spec would remain. I was conflicted.

But then I watched KX65 LJJ pull into the office car park and was immediately sold on the way it looks. And those Marks & Spencer jumpers really are terrific value.

Truth be told, I'd probably have chosen a different colour. Tornado Red and Lapiz Blue are too obvious, but Reflex Silver looks fantastic. I haven't actually seen a silver R on the road, but judging by the pictures, the car's sharp lines are at their best in that metallic hue. Night Blue it is, though, and I actually think it works really well. Subtle, yes, but in the right light it makes the car look really sinister.

I don't tend to carry back-seat

passengers in day-to-day use, so I might have specced three doors rather than five, but Stu was right to go for the 18-inch wheels. It isn't a matter of ride quality, but one of aesthetics. The spindly design of the 19-inch alloys puts the R's slightly puny brake setup in plain sight and to my mind that completely undermines the rest of the car's aggressive, muscular design. It's like seeing a bulging bodybuilder at the gym who has never bothered with leg day.

Our car has a manual gearbox rather than the optional twin-clutch unit, but we did upgrade to leather upholstery for £1720. We also added





## 'The Golf R is probably the most broadly talented car at this price'

the Discover Pro satnav (£1765), rear side airbags (£275), heated seats (£250), advanced telephone connection (£320) and the thumping Dynaudio sound system (£535). We decided against Dynamic Chassis Control adaptive damping because, in our experience, you don't really need it with the 18-inch wheels. The total cost was £36,880.

As I type I've only had the R for ten days, but I've already covered more than 1000 miles. It was just about run-in when it arrived so I've been able to 'give it death' from day one. Sure, it has none of the intensity of a Renaultsport Mégane 275 or a SEAT Leon Cupra 280, but it expertly pulls off that elusive trick of being refined and grown-up when I want it to be but truly fun and engaging on a charge.

Throw the styling, badge appeal and cabin quality into the mix and it's no surprise the Golf R has proven such a hit with buyers and this magazine alike. It's probably the most broadly talented car at this price, but if it does have any major shortcomings, a year on the Fast Fleet will weed them out. ✕

**Dan Prosser** (@TheDanProsser)

<b>Date acquired</b>	September 2015
<b>Total mileage</b>	2158
<b>Mileage this month</b>	1123
<b>Costs this month</b>	£0
<b>mpg this month</b>	29.5



## Mini John Cooper Works

A worrying noise emanating from beneath the JCW prompts Eveleigh to dive into a dealership

**T**HE TIMING COULDN'T have been better. It was Friday afternoon and the ever-helpful Tyres Northampton had just replaced the Mini's original and not-very-grippy Pirelli P7 Cinturatos with a new set of Dunlop Sport Maxxes. The next day I was due to take the Mini away on holiday, where I'd be able to put the tyres to the test on one of my favourite roads. Perfect.

Except... What exactly was that knocking noise? It had been there for a few weeks, faint and very occasional. I'd put it down to the exhaust tapping against something and needing its position adjusting, but during the previous couple of days it had become louder and more persistent, and was now particularly noticeable

over imperfections at 20-30mph. Worryingly, it was also now clear that it was coming from the front-right corner of the car, so was clearly not exhaust-related. I was passing right by Wollaston Mini in Northampton, so decided to stop in for some advice.

Despite a busy showroom, our JCW was road-tested then taken into the workshop within minutes. The diagnosis? Play in the top mount. The cure? A new top mount and damper. The result? I wouldn't be taking the Mini on holiday.

In the end, Mini's press office opted to fix the car in its own workshop (they agreed with Wollaston's diagnosis). Hopefully our problem was a bad-luck one-off and not the first sign of a weakness with the new JCW. I

enjoyed a faultless 12,000 miles in the R56-generation Mini GP I ran in 2013-14, but I must admit my confidence in Mini durability has been knocked somewhat by the number of bills my wife's 50,000-mile R56 Cooper S has racked up of late. (Great car when it's working, but have a good read of our buying guide in issue 210 if you're considering picking one up.)

Still, our JCW is back now, meaning I can finally try out those new tyres. I'll give my verdict on them next time. ✕

**Ian Eveleigh**

<b>Date acquired</b>	May 2015
<b>Total mileage</b>	7706
<b>Mileage this month</b>	659
<b>Costs this month</b>	£660.40 tyres
<b>mpg this month</b>	32.8



## Ford Focus ST Diesel

Diesel's getting a bad rap; does a trip to the Alps offer redemption?

**M** MID-SEPTEMBER marked my one-year anniversary at *evo*. Naturally, I celebrated this by nabbing the keys to our Focus ST estate, slinking out of the office and pointing the car's nose towards France while the ink was still drying on last month's Frankfurt motor show Radar stories.

It's hard to think of a more appropriate car on the Fast Fleet for a European jaunt. My Eunos? Fun, but it still needs new brakes (see page 143). Our Leon ST Cupra 280 is fast and practical, but its low-30s

fuel economy is a budget-killer. The editor's Range Rover Sport? Its long-distance virtues have been extolled by both Dan Prosser (*evo* 210) and Nick Trott (215), but its weight would soon wear thin on Alpine twists. So is the Focus worthy of such a trip?

On many counts, resoundingly so. 'Diesel' is a dirtier word than usual at the moment and 47mpg won't rewrite any headlines, but it's enough to keep costs down on a driving holiday. The 182bhp, 295lb ft 2-litre turbo also feels strong at cruising speeds. It doesn't have the sustained punch of an equivalent petrol hot hatch engine, so the scrabble out of mountain hairpins isn't quite as exciting, but it's commendably responsive over 1500rpm and there's a prominent growl to the exhaust rather than a diesely clatter.

I'm not a fan of the current Focus exterior, or its interior, but in battleship-grey estate form this one looks great, while the cabin benefits

hugely from a set of thorax-hugging Recaro electric seats.

Not so great is the way our car chews through fuses for the driver's seat. I had to replace one before the trip, and another blew in the Swiss Alps. The infotainment screen was a more persistent bugbear. It requires firm, deliberate, patient prods to operate, its traffic updates constantly cry wolf, and the satnav system seems unaware that some shortcuts are simply not appropriate for cars, in width or surface.

But those were minor niggles on an otherwise fantastic trip. Where the petrol ST hatch disappoints among more entertaining peers, the ST TDCi estate has a breadth of abilities that's quite endearing. ✘

**Antony Ingram** (@evoAntony)

<b>Date acquired</b>	August 2015
<b>Total mileage</b>	5563
<b>Mileage this month</b>	3598
<b>Costs this month</b>	£0
<b>mpg this month</b>	47.2

Mini John Cooper Works



# Porsche 996 Carrera

There are mixed results as Bovington toys with the Porsche's dynamics



**I** USED TO SPEND A LOT of time looking at 996s on various classified sites. A lot of time. That's all changed now. Instead I spend hours looking at adjustable suspension arms, brake upgrades and god only knows what else for my own 996. It's an addiction, and if I had the funds it could become ridiculously expensive. I love the car as it is but resisting shiny new anodised bits for the suspension is very difficult indeed. And who wouldn't want a set of Alcon ceramics on their Carrera? Or some gorgeous adjustable top mounts or maybe a third radiator upgrade to aid cooling? (The car has never got hot but, y'know, it might happen.)

I'm sure I'll get around to all of that stuff (maybe not the ceramics), but just keeping on top of the maintenance can be quite costly. The car recently went to RPM Technik for a major service, new brake lines, Performance Friction

brake fluid, new coil packs and also to have RSS Tarmac Series semi-solid engine mounts fitted. I'd been put on to the mounts by the guys at Sharkwerks in the US whilst driving their amazing 997 GT3 RS 4.1 (*evo* 209). They said the RSS pieces really ramped up control and precision but without transmitting too much harshness. At £318 for the pair, it seemed like a nice way to inject a bit of gravelly GT3 character into my car. The total from RPM came to £1421.86 on top of that, so it's been an expensive month! However, the 996 deserved a treat and has been feeling a bit neglected since I bought another car (a 1972 Citroën DS; not very *evo* but utterly beautiful).

On the way back from the service, all was well with the world. The mounts are immediately noticeable, the engine's vibrations shimmying through the seat with a bit more intensity, road noise from the rear increased by maybe 15 per cent. The trade-off is a tangible increase



in control during direction changes and more stability at the rear. That wouldn't necessarily be a good thing for me, but the car's inherent balance remains the same. There's a little understeer but a sharp lift sets the rear moving and then it stays flat and composed if you choose to give it a bootful of throttle and ride out a neat little slide. In fact, it's easier to control at the limit now, even if that limit has crept up a few per cent. At a more sedate pace the mounts do add a bit more sense of occasion to

the experience – that injection of GT3-ness I was hoping to discover.

Disappointments? Even with the new lines and fluids the brake pedal is still too long for my liking and the brakes just aren't quite where they should be. More investigation required, I think. The accelerator pedal has also come loose (a common 996 problem), so I'm looking at new pedals with a fully adjustable throttle setup from Rennline in the US. However, next on the list is to 'sort' the



**Left:** upgraded engine mounts have brought increased control and a more GT3-like edge to Bovingdon's 996

<b>Date acquired</b>	May 2013
<b>Total mileage</b>	143,749
<b>Mileage this month</b>	435
<b>Costs this month</b>	£1739.86
<b>mpg this month</b>	28.4

suspension. There's actually not much wrong with it but I'm going to get Powerflex Black Series bushes all round, the Bilstein adjustable dampers refurbished and then set it to GT3 ride-height... I have to say, it feels pretty good making the 996 absolutely my own when the rest of the 911 world seems transfixed on originality over enjoyment. ☒

**Jethro Bovingdon**  
(@JethroBovingdon)

## Renaultsport Mégane 275 Trophy

Meaden ponders whether the Trophy's optional tyres are worthwhile

**I** IT WAS FITTING THAT THE Mégane's odometer clicked over to 15,000 miles while the car was being driven flat-out around Anglesey Circuit. Whether it's on a group test, attending a trackday or, in this instance, starring in an advertorial for Öhlins suspension, the Meg's appetite for hard, fast miles is insatiable.

Almost as I'd finished writing last month's Fast Fleet update, the Trophy went away for its first service (£214.24) and another fresh quartet of Michelin Pilot Sport Cup 2s – its second replacement set in ten months. At £180 per corner, that's a fierce consumables cost, but also an indication of the car's workload and the amount of fun I've been having.

I won't bore you with the minutiae of the Öhlins project, but suffice to say it required me to spend two days driving 'my' Trophy back-to-back with a non-Öhlins-equipped Trophy, both on road and track. To ensure the only difference between the pair was their suspension, our long-termer was temporarily put onto the Bridgestone tyre Renault fits as standard (the Michelins are an option). This, then, was the first time I'd driven a regular Trophy and also the first time I'd experienced one on anything other than Cup 2s. It proved to be a fascinating few days.

As you might expect, the Michelins were sorely missed on the track, but when out on familiar roads in north Wales, the less extreme Bridgestones made both the standard and Öhlins-equipped cars less fighty across rougher surfaces and awkward cambers. They still had sufficient reserves of grip to carry dazzling speed, and while not offering quite the same level of steering rquote, enough of Renaultsport's trademark precision remained for the cars to feel very special indeed. At road speeds the Bridgestones gave more feel, too,

'This was the first time I'd experienced the Trophy on anything other than Michelin Cup 2s'

which I wasn't expecting, and they reduced the Trophy's tendency to tramline. The ride was noticeably more compliant, too.

Are the Cup 2s worth the cost and compromises? Given the amount of circuit work the Trophy and I have done, yes, I think they are. But if track driving featured less heavily, I'd have to park the machismo and go with the road-biased Bridgestones. I must be getting old. ☒

**Richard Meaden**  
(@DickieMeaden)

<b>Date acquired</b>	November 2014
<b>Total mileage</b>	15,847
<b>Mileage this month</b>	1925
<b>Costs this month</b>	£934.24
<b>mpg this month</b>	21.4





## Porsche 996 GT2

Trott discovers his Porsche's security system is out-of-date

**I** I'VE INCREASED THE replacement value on the GT2's insurance a couple of times recently, what with prices of similar cars having climbed over the last few months. Sky Insurance dealt with it all very efficiently but the second time they told me that a Tracker was now required. That's OK, I thought, the car has one. So I called Tracker with the ID and they told me that the system was out of date (it was fitted in 2002) and would need to be replaced.

You're probably aware of what Tracker is, and what it does, but to

recap it's a security system with nationwide police support that enables the authorities to monitor your car's movements should it be stolen. The device is hidden in the car and sends a signal to the police if the car is taken. European coverage is an option, and with car thieves getting more sophisticated, Tracker's systems don't rely solely on GPS signals and have workarounds for signal scramblers.

In terms of raw stats, more than 23,000 cars – together worth nearly £500million – fitted with Trackers have been recovered. In August alone 44 cars were recovered, including a £100,000 Range Rover.

I had a 'Locate' system fitted, which via the 'My Tracker' page on the Tracker website provides the opportunity to view journey reports. Start and stop locations are recorded, including date and time, distance travelled, fuel used and carbon dioxide emissions. I've also set up a security-breach alert

'I've set up a security-breach alert that will tell me if the car is moved between certain dates'

that will tell me if the car is moved between certain dates, and a 'geofence', which will notify me if the car enters or leaves a defined area. The latter was put to use during a recent holiday, when I set the system to notify me if the car moved from its storage location.

Of course, the phone call you never want to receive is one that starts with 'Hello, this is Tracker', which is exactly what happened during my recent holiday! My heart immediately skipped a beat, but very swiftly the voice at the end of the phone said that the car was fine but a battery alert had shown up on their system. Basically, the Tracker's own backup battery had kicked in and notified Tracker, which meant the GT2's main battery was losing charge. I called the storage garage and asked them to put it on trickle charge. Since then I've not had – and hope never to have – another call from Tracker. ☒

**Nick Trott** (@evoNickTrott)

<b>Date acquired</b>	June 2015
<b>Total mileage</b>	26,833
<b>Mileage this month</b>	589
<b>Costs this month</b>	£462 (Tracker) £189 (one-year subscription)
<b>mpg this month</b>	23.2

## Ford Focus RS

Our RS feels tighter, and not because of the suspension

**E** ENGINE, STEERING, THEN brakes, then chassis. After ten months of ownership, that, in order of increasing virtue, is how I rate this car's facets.

The 212bhp 2-litre engine is strong and, kept on boost, something of a weapon. I was a little underwhelmed by the steering at first, but I've come to appreciate that by modern standards it is a real chatterbox. It's also so direct that you don't so much turn the car into a corner as quickly fold it over an apex with your outside hand. What makes that possible is the chassis, which operates with so little inertia at the front axle that it literally excites me just thinking about it. The damping, which was commissioned by Ford from Sachs Racing at great expense, is also a marvel, and I haven't a clue why anyone would think that KW, Weitec et al might improve upon it, outstanding though the work of those companies can be.

That leaves the brakes. In *evo*

214 I outlined my reasons for a change to EBC's bladed BSD discs and Yellowstuff pads, but briefly, the performance of the standard Brembo setup went west during a fairly easy-going track outing and, if nothing else, EBC's discs look sharp. The original four-pot calipers remain.

Now they are bedded in, I can say that these brakes are not at first as easy to modulate as the Brembos, but, while quite dusty, they have a wonderfully firm texture (in part down to new braided lines, also from EBC). The range of useable pedal travel has contracted, so your initial jab has to hit the mark. Push too hard and you might be marooned short of the corner, so powerfully do the brakes bite. Dither, meanwhile, and you can be forced to panic-lunge further into the pedal as your dreams of a perfectly rev-matched shift and laser-guided turn-in sequence evaporate.

That all sounds severe, but it isn't really. I'm not talking race-car levels

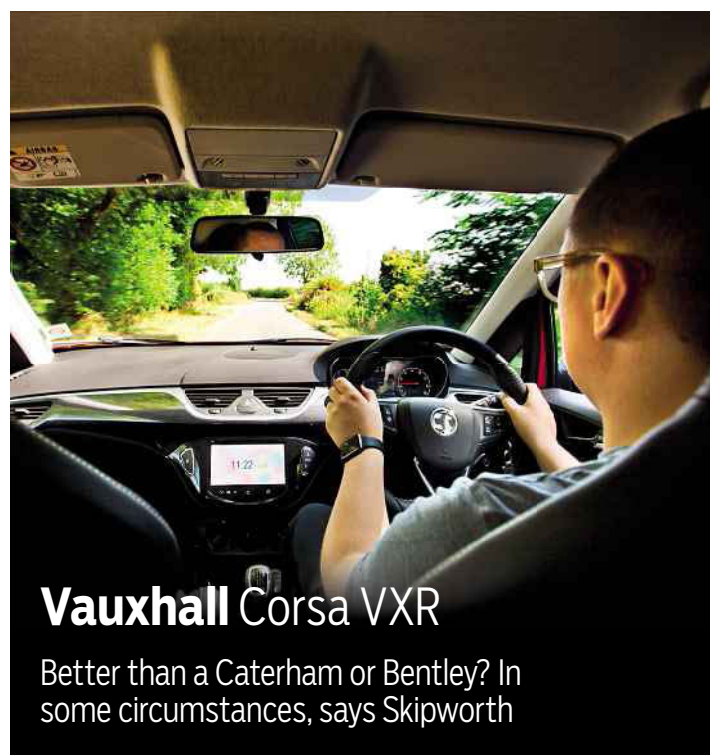


<b>Date acquired</b>	January 2015
<b>Total mileage</b>	72,158
<b>Mileage this month</b>	577
<b>Costs this month</b>	£22 (headlight bulbs)
<b>mpg this month</b>	28.9

of sensitivity here – nothing like – or a step-change in braking attributes. The differences are subtle, but that greater economy of movement has imbued the car with a wonderful feeling of precision and rigour.

I'm not sure there's anyone who wouldn't like that. **x**

**Richard Lane** (@\_rlane\_)



## Vauxhall Corsa VXR

Better than a Caterham or Bentley? In some circumstances, says Skipworth

**A** AFTER SPENDING SOME time jumping between cars ranging from our Caterham 420R to a Bentley Mulsanne Speed, it was nice to be back in the VXR's snug Recaro. I sometimes find myself being quite disparaging of the Corsa when I haven't driven it for a few days, but within a couple of miles it always feels good.

There is also the small matter of living in London, where neither the Caterham nor the Bentley (unless you're being driven in it) feel particularly comfortable, but the Corsa's size really is a bonus here. What definitely isn't a bonus is the bone-shaking ride on the capital's pockmarked roads. As I mentioned last month, the Koni dampers that form part of the Performance Pack seem to have constant battles with poor surfaces, rather than working on a compromise.

I've had to be conscious of how the Drexler diff performs on poor

surfaces, too. It really gets the car hooked up out on the B-roads around *evo* Towers, but in town if you're too eager the VXR skits across the road, sniffing out cambers and finding every rut it can. You have to carefully feed in the power.

Time in London has also allowed me to get my head around the Corsa's tech package. The verdict? It's hit and miss at best, with the sound system, Bluetooth streaming and DAB radio being impressive but problems arising with the satnav system, which requires you to have a subscription to the 'BringGo' app on your iPhone. Why not just have something already built in? **x**

**Hunter Skipworth**  
(@HunterSkipworth)

<b>Date acquired</b>	July 2015
<b>Total mileage</b>	6122
<b>Mileage this month</b>	245
<b>Costs this month</b>	£0
<b>mpg this month</b>	29.9

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Lee Marshall

## Mazda MX-5

Ingram's newfound trackday fever demands better hardware

**B** BELIEVE IT OR NOT, UNTIL recently I had never taken one of my own cars on track. Granted, I've only ever owned three vehicles that wouldn't be completely embarrassing at a trackday, and two of those have been MX-5s, but in nearly 13 years

of driving, the prospect of 'tracking' one never really surfaced.

**evo's** penultimate track evening of the year gave me a chance to rectify the situation. I'd wanted to test the MX-5's new Dunlop Sport BluResponse tyres in a more taxing arena than my 14-mile commute, and the fast sweepers of Bedford Autodrome were ripe for the task.

At this point I have to make a chronology apology: the Garage Star door bushings mentioned in **evo** 214 hadn't been fitted before the track evening. As such, I'm unable to tell you whether they're as effective on track as they are on the road.

Thankfully, the Autodrome is a great deal smoother than the roads around it, but it transpired that I had plenty of other things to concentrate on. The first was the alarming rate at which the middle pedal lengthened during the evening. The South West layout has a couple of heavy stops, and it was clear that the Mazda's anchors weren't quite up to the task of dragging its modest weight down from yet more modest velocities. New brakes from EBC are incoming.

The second pressing issue was how little support the leather-trimmed pews offered during anything more than gentle cornering. As the standard MX-5 seats also have quite a 'perched' feeling, a pair of low-slung buckets is now high on my shopping list.

Issue three didn't present itself until the drive home, when I realised just how mushy the clutch had become. I've got an OEM replacement on order from Exedy.

And the Dunlops? I've certainly got more traction and grip than I have power or brakes right now, and the roadster's inherent balance meant wear was even across the axles at Bedford Autodrome. It won't be the last time I test them on track, and given how much fun it was, I certainly plan to make up for those last 13 years. ✕

**Antony Ingram** (@evoAntony)

<b>Date acquired</b>	February 2015
<b>Total mileage</b>	93,097
<b>Mileage this month</b>	128
<b>Costs this month</b>	£0
<b>mpg this month</b>	28.6

## SEAT Leon ST Cupra 280

Absence makes the heart grow fonder for Parrott and his indecently quick Spanish estate

**R** RECENTLY MY ALOR Blue Leon ST Cupra was temporarily replaced with a Nevada White example of lesser spec. Why? Well, the guilty party shall remain nameless for now, but let's just say one member of the **evo** team found a rather large kerb in a supermarket car park...

While the repair work was being carried out, I decided to jump into our new diesel Ford Focus ST estate long-term. It's a great-looking car with stealthy paintwork and an aggressive bodykit, and heading off for a weekend away, I realised just how relaxing the driving experience can be in Ford's fast load-lugger.

The huge Recaro seats were comfortable and supportive and the economy of the 2-litre turbodiesel

four really was impressive. Sadly this all became irrelevant when I tried to push the Focus a little harder on winding roads. I was surprised by how little feel there was through the steering wheel, and the torque-steer created by the torque vectoring system soon became annoying.

Back in the office on Monday morning, I exchanged keys and switched into the white Leon ST. Compared to the Focus it felt uncompromised: simple in design but strong, with ferocious power and great feedback.

I forget sometimes that this estate can get to 62mph in just 6.1sec (with a manual gearbox) and tops out at 155mph. The true gem in terms of spec is its amazing mechanical locking diff (which is



also found on Performance Pack-equipped Golf GTIs). The way this front-wheel-drive estate explodes in a straight line is astonishing and owes a lot to that diff, which provides huge levels of traction. But sadly it doesn't help you avoid high kerbs in supermarket car parks. ✕

**Aston Parrott** (@AstonParrott)

**Above:** white Cupra estate stood in for Parrott's snazzier blue example this month

<b>Date acquired</b>	May 2015
<b>Total mileage</b>	10,033
<b>Mileage this month</b>	99
<b>Costs this month</b>	£0
<b>mpg this month</b>	n/a

## Maserati GranCabrio Sport

Dark skies overhead? Choose your spot in the drop-top Italian GT wisely...

**T**HE GRAN CABRIO SPORT has been with us a year. During that time it has covered a rather modest 1005 miles – mostly city and weekend duties. As it belongs to my far better and fairer half, it is her hectic travel schedule that has been mostly responsible for the limited mileage.

Other than adding 2 psi of air to each tyre, we have not had to do a thing to the car except add petrol and wash it. Indeed, the Maserati has been 100 per cent reliable. We haven't even had the Ferrari-esque warning lights that appear and then, just as mysteriously, disappear. In fact, the only negative has been a minor ding on the driver's door, picked up in a car park.

Despite the meagre mileage,

the Maserati recently provided a great lesson in aerodynamic drag and airflow. We were coming back from lunch, with two friends sitting comfortably in the back seats. As it had been sunny, the roof was down and we were cruising back to the city on the highway. Then with little warning the heavens opened and the sunshine became quite... liquidy.

Initially I slowed and we started to get a bit wet. Then I remembered a similar experience in my Ferrari F50 years ago, where I sped up and used the windscreen as a moving umbrella. For the front-seat passengers in the Maserati, this same approach worked well and we stayed mostly dry. For those in the back? Not so much. They were drenched from the shoulders up.



To drive, the Maserati remains a thing of beauty, with just the right balance of elegance and performance. Indeed, it's the GranCabrio that normally gets the call to provide transport for more formal events and evenings out. The only downside so far has been the diminutive boot. If it were a bit larger, the car would be used for all the airport runs. Nonetheless, given its

performance to date, the Maserati GranCabrio will be with us for quite some time. **X**

**Secret Supercar Owner**

(@SupercarOwner)

<b>Date acquired</b>	November 2014
<b>Total mileage</b>	1005
<b>Mileage this month</b>	45
<b>Costs this month</b>	£0
<b>mpg this month</b>	15.0

## Renaultsport Clio 182

Our staff writer's hunt for the perfect hot-hatch driving position ends in a bucket



**R**EMEMBER THE PAIR OF Sparco R100 sports seats I bought in *evo* 213? Well, I've already sold the driver's side one because, lovely as it was, when combined with the OMP subframes I'd also bought it was still mounted too high. It was as if I'd switched a bar stool for a desk chair, when what I wanted was a proper Clio Cup race car experience. Time for a bucket.

Demon Tweaks confirmed that a Sparco Sprint bucket seat would be perfect for my needs – and is a similar size to the R100, so I don't need to change the passenger seat again. Meanwhile, a search on *cliosport.net* led me to the lowest Mk2 Clio seat subframes available ('VBD X-Low', if you're interested).

Fast-forward through delivery and fitting, and finally my eyeline is where I want it to be – just over the steering wheel and along the bonnet. I now feel like I'm sitting *in* the car rather than *on* it, and the effects are remarkable. Suddenly I can feel what the car is doing as much through

my backside as my fingertips, so I'm better equipped to predict any movements rather than just reacting to them. Plus, I can now engage third gear without leaning forward, and it just feels so much more natural to work an upright steering wheel rather than one tilted at 40 degrees (raising the wheel also flattens it).

Admittedly, it's not completely perfect – my legs are ever-so-slightly more cramped – but overall things are much improved. And for anyone wondering how I solved the issue of mounting my standard seatbelt clips onto the subframe, search eBay for a 'classic car seatbelt buckle bracket'. **X**

**Sam Sheehan**

(@evoSamSheehan)

<b>Date acquired</b>	May 2011
<b>Total mileage</b>	115,122
<b>Mileage this month</b>	499
<b>Costs this month</b>	£160.20 seat, £35 seat mounts, £130 subframes
<b>mpg this month</b>	32.6



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## Range Rover Sport SDV8

Five thousand miles in a month are shrugged off

**T** HE RANGE ROVER continues to be an extraordinary, all-weather, all-condition luxury load-lugger for me and the *evo* crew. This month it took on eCoty – chasing all manner of performance cars around Scotland, loaded to the brim with photographic kit and people. And did it miss a beat, trip up or prove

anything other than brilliant at the job? Nope. The Sport just gets on with it, quite magnificently.

The suspension certainly got a hammering on some extremely challenging roads. The Sport is fitted with four-corner air suspension and 'Adaptive Dynamics', which monitors damping pressure (500 times a second if you really want to know) and adapts accordingly. In practice, the Sport stays impressively composed and flat, even when stuffed with 300kg of passengers and camera kit. Switching to Dynamic mode and selecting manual shift gives you a little more information from the chassis, but crucially doesn't turn the car into a

two-ton skateboard that wants to bounce you into a loch.

Inevitably, the brakes will need to be checked soon. The Sport's four-piston opposed-caliper front discs rarely grumble – but I think we've treated them to about three years' worth of stopping in just 11 months, so for peace of mind I'm going to take it to Guy Salmon Land Rover in Northampton for a check-up soon.

The Sport wasn't entirely unscathed by its eCoty exploits. A cut was found in the sidewall of the right front tyre on its return from Scotland, similar to one we found after a trip to north Wales recently. I have a suspicion that drivers get lulled into a false sense of

security and treat the Continental CrossContact tyres like off-road rubber, driving up kerbs and rocks too quickly. They are a relatively shallow (for an SUV tyre) 40 profile, which makes me think they are getting pinched between the wheel and kerbs/rocks if you don't take care over your approach angle.

One last thing to report this month – fuel consumption has increased. Leadfoot photographer Dean Smith has left the average reading on 28, down from my usual 30mpg. Still impressive, considering the V8 diesel's torque and pace, and the wide throttle openings it was treated to on eCoty. ✕

**Nick Trott** (@evoNickTrott)



Date acquired	June 2015
Total mileage	26,055
Mileage this month	4,928
Costs this month	£0
mpg this month	28.0



## Volkswagen Amarok

A month of highs and lows for the big truck, with another epic road trip and a mysterious break-in

**A** NOTHER MONTH OF long road trips for the 'Rok and another journey into the Continent. First stop... Paris, for a wedding, where the faithful pickup was used to ferry guests back and forth to the reception. I was a little concerned that the massive truck would struggle in the tiny streets of Paris, but not at all. In fact we didn't even have trouble parking.

After the wedding we headed to Amsterdam for a couple of days, the Amarok performing brilliantly on the long, boring motorways across France, Belgium and into the Netherlands. And after a fun-filled weekend it was back to the UK via

the Eurotunnel. All very impressive.

It's not all good news, though. Back in London I returned to the pickup to find that someone had smashed the rear driver's side window. Thankfully I hadn't left anything in there worth stealing. My suit from the wedding was still on the back seats, covered in glass: obviously not worth nicking unless they were fans of skinny trousers.

I was pretty upset that a stranger could quite casually ruin someone's day by smashing a car window for what seemed like no purpose at all. I did the whole cardboard-box-and-gaffer-tape fix to save me from a wind-buffeting nightmare of a



**Left:** improvised repairs after a baffling break-in

journey to the office. It worked really well, if I say so myself.

It was only when the 'Rok went back to VW for repair that it became apparent that the criminals had another motive for breaking in. The nice chap at VW rang to inform me the spare wheel was missing from the underside of the truck. It turns out that the toolkit is located beneath the seat next to the driver's side rear window, and they would have needed the tools to get the spare wheel off. So these

were proper criminals and not just drunkards smashing cars up after a night out. I can only think that my wheel is rolling around on another Amarok, which makes me sad, but at least the crime is solved. ✕

**Sam Riley** (@samriley)

Date acquired	March 2015
Total mileage	11,433
Mileage this month	2101
Costs this month	£109.30 window, £374 spare wheel
mpg this month	31.1

# Tried & Tested



## LONGACRE INFRARED LASER DIGITAL PYROMETER

£52 [gprdirect.com](http://gprdirect.com)

Infrared pyrometers are among the fastest ways to take surface temperature readings. The best systems are perfect for measuring brake-disc temps, and that's exactly what we used this Longacre item for during our carbon-ceramic versus cast-iron brake test in *evo* 206.

Rather than risk burnt figures, the digital pyrometer enabled us to simply point and shoot the laser at smoking-

hot brake discs. A temperature reading (shown in either degrees Celsius or Fahrenheit) displayed immediately.

To our surprise, the carbon-ceramic discs proved too hot for the Longacre to read – this system can only measure up to 600C – but outside the world of carbon brake testing, Longacre's pyrometer is ideally suited to monitoring component temperatures.

**Sam Sheehan** (@evoSamSheehan)

## STEVE McQUEEN: THE MAN & LE MANS

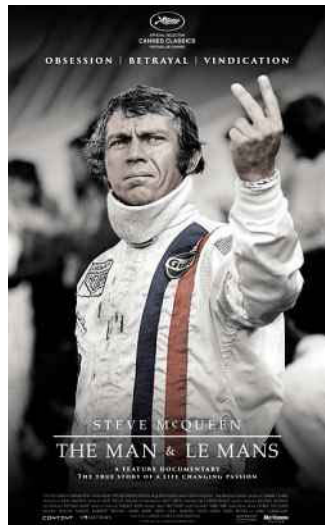
£ varies In cinemas 20 November

The 1971 film *Le Mans* was, and still is, probably the most accurate depiction of the experiences of a '70s Le Mans racing driver. But while the movie has become an enthusiast's favourite, it does little to reveal the immense strain the production had on the personal life of its star, Steve McQueen.

Packed with original clips, previously unseen archive footage and commentary from McQueen's closest family and friends, *Steve McQueen: The Man & Le Mans* takes us for a behind-the-scenes look at the movie McQueen sacrificed almost everything for – one he cared about more than any other.

While *Le Mans* failed to capture the imagination of audiences in the '70s, we expect this revealing feature-documentary to ignite passion in both motorsport and film lovers of 2015. One not to miss out on.

SS



The best motoring products, put through their paces by the *evo* team

## STIRLING MOSS: MY RACING LIFE

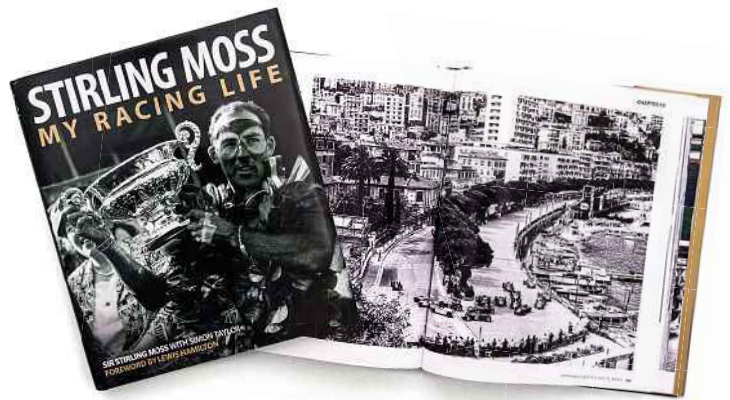
£50 [evropublishing.com](http://evropublishing.com)

Sir Stirling Moss's *My Racing Life* looks back on an unforgettable 14 years of racing filled with dominance, danger and drama. With 325 photographs – some previously unpublished – there are few better ways to remember the natural speed, intelligence and passion of one of Britain's best-ever racers.

Moss's comments for each image provide an insightful narrative. He vividly recalls the details of classic races and rivalries, as well as friendships with the likes of Fangio and Mike Hawthorn.

This hardback book is a stunning work of art and a must-have for diehard 20th-century motorsport fans.

SS



## FRANCE: THE ESSENTIAL GUIDE FOR CAR ENTHUSIASTS

£14.99 [veloce.co.uk](http://veloce.co.uk)



Behind the legions of diesel-powered superminis, Braille-based parking techniques and endless autoroutes, the French hide a passion for cars to match any other nation in Europe.

This guide, by Julian Parish, is the best way to find it. Inside are details of dozens of car museums, shows, circuits and races. I visited several museums mentioned in the book on my recent holiday – including

the 400-strong car collection at Mulhouse and Peugeot's quaint museum at Sochaux – that I'd never have known about otherwise.

There are addresses, contact details, opening times and a description for each entry. Well worth stashing in your glovebox, whether you're on a road trip or simply wish to add activities to a family holiday.

**Antony Ingram** (@evoAntony)

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# Market

WANT IT. BUY IT. OWN IT. LOVE IT.

Analysis.....	151	Buying Guide .....	158
Used Rivals .....	155	Model Focus .....	162
Buying Journey .....	156	Upgrades .....	165

Live the dream for the price of a new BMW M3, but beware expensive pitfalls

by Adam Towler

## ANALYSIS: YOUR FIRST SUPERCAR

**T**HERE'S NO MISTAKING A GENUINE SUPERCAR. You'll know it from the volatile cocktail of adrenalin and anxiety fizzing around your body when you're about to purchase your first one. But before enthusiasm blinds you completely to rational advice, what car should you buy, from whom, and how?

Let's take a cross-section of typical 'junior' supercars up to 15 years old. Older examples might be the Aston Martin Vanquish and Ferrari 360 Modena, then moving on to the Lamborghini Gallardo and Porsche 997.1 Turbo. A bit newer still and there's Audi's sublime R8 and the Mercedes SLS AMG to consider. All great cars, with differing appeal: the Aston is a potentially temperamental but classic GT, the Italians the archetypal supercars, the hardy but ferocious Porsche is more useable and the Audi and SLS combine elements of them all.



One man used to setting people on the path to supercar ownership is John Graeme at Redline Specialist Cars. 'For me, the R8 is the one – it's the best "first supercar",' he says. 'People have confidence in it because it's an Audi. They're easy to run, and easy to sell, whether a £40,000 V8 or a £70,000 V10 Spyder. Typically, customers look at mainstream supercars from 2008-2010, and often look to buy with financing: £25,000 down with £40,000 on a balloon deal [i.e. with a larger payment at the end of the loan period] and £1000 a month. The Ferrari F430 is probably the best investment, and apart from two or three things that

can go wrong, they're bulletproof. Colour, mileage and provenance – all these things are relevant now. A dealer should be asking you the right questions, and answering yours. Are they interested in what you'll use the car for, and would they buy the car back from you down the line?

Buckinghamshire-based BHP Motorsport also retails a broad range of used supercars, and services them too. Neil Panniker remarks: 'If you've never had a supercar, I'd go for something German – especially if you're going to use it every day: an Audi R8 or 911 Turbo. However, many inevitably go on to a Lamborghini or Ferrari. Ask yourself

**'With the Italians, put £5000 a year aside for maintenance, just in case'**

first what you want the car for: is it the attention, a weekend blast, or the social side of ownership?

'With the Italians, I'd put £5000 a year aside for "just in case" maintenance. Don't try and save a few grand on the purchase price: usually those cars end up costing four times that to put right. Any supercar out of warranty can be very expensive to run at a main dealer, so where we find things that are ridiculously expensive, we manufacture our own, such as wishbones for Lamborghinis. We find half of buyers are using finance, but the affordability tests are much harder than they were. We've been through all the warranty companies and I have to say they're not worth it, so we offer our own after a thorough check-over and report.'

'Buy something you love, not something to make money,' says Rob Johnson at Classic and Sports Finance, which funded £32million of cars last year. 'Be wary of advice on investment potential, and buy the best car you can from a reputable specialist – they're not always the most expensive. Lots of people are buying poor-quality cars at the moment, or left-hand drive, and they can vary massively in quality and price. From a financial perspective, you've got to go into it already thinking about your exit. You can borrow up to five years, straight repayment or balloon; lenders love it as the cars tend not to depreciate and the borrowers are good people – in their 40s, the kids have left, and they



## NOW BUY ONE

### FERRARI 360 MODENA F1 £59,995

A classy 360 first registered in 2000, finished in Argento Nürburgring rather than the ubiquitous red. It's a paddleshift car (most were) with a black leather interior, the 'Challenge' grille at the rear and 17,800 miles on the clock.

[classicandperformancecar.com](http://classicandperformancecar.com)  
01629 56999



### LAMBORGHINI GALLARDO E-GEAR £79,950

No doubt about it, silver shows off the lines of the original Gallardo to supreme effect. This 2007 e-gear coupe has travelled just 6000 miles under one owner. Spec includes satnav, heated seats and a transparent engine cover for the V10.

[classicandperformancecar.com](http://classicandperformancecar.com)  
01283 762762



### AUDI R8 4.2 V8 £46,900

A beautiful early R8 from 2007, in dark grey metallic and with a black leather interior. Its 33,600 miles should be no sweat for an R8, and the exposed gate betrays the fact that this car is a desirable manual example. At this price, massively tempting.

[classicandperformancecar.com](http://classicandperformancecar.com)  
01933 354144



### PORSCHE 997.1 TURBO £49,990

The archetypal 997 Turbo: Basalt Black with black leather inside. Thankfully, this one is manual, which is vastly preferable to the Tiptronic auto. This 2007 car features the Sport Chrono option, which increases the available torque on overboost.

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look after the cars. It's easy to do, but make sure you get the right advice.'

An ideal case study is our featured 'I bought one' owner, Richard Danby (right). His story starts like many: 'I've always loved cars, and thought the time was right. I had a spare £1500-or-so a month. Would that get me a car? Could I afford to run it?'

Richard settled on a Gallardo having carefully considered his options. 'I saved up a deposit of £25,000, partly by selling my Range Rover. I borrowed £50,000 over five years, which works out at £1000 per month, of which £200 is interest. I then looked at the servicing, and somewhere like BHP does a lot of preventative maintenance to make it reliable. Authorised Lamborghini servicing outfits are half the price of main dealers, with £500 and £1000 for a minor and major service respectively. My insurance is £800 for the year, for 4000 miles.

'I decided I need to keep the car for a minimum of two years; my interest payments will be £4800 for that period and I reckon the car will cost me £12,000 for the two years. That's less than the depreciation on something like a new Audi A6!

'I've factored in the dealer's margin when I come to sell, but given the previous owner lost £60,000 in depreciation alone, it's comforting that it won't lose any more money during this time.

'I wouldn't class myself as rich: I could just spare the £1500 a month and had the deposit. The longer I keep the car, the more cost effective it'll be.'

## SUMMARY

Pick the right car, distance yourself from depreciation and, with an appropriate finance deal, a modern-era supercar can be within reach. It's clear that those who do their homework emerge as winners, and those who don't face alarming pitfalls. If finance is essential, go to someone who really knows the market: it's easy to be sucked in by empty promises and quickly find yourself with too many refusals on your credit history. Research the car you want and buy from a reputable specialist: it's in their interest to keep you happy for repeat business.

## Expert view



**JOHN GREATOREX**

GT CARS

As a performance car specialist who services and restores cars, John is ideally placed to give an overview on the reality of supercar ownership.

Perhaps surprisingly, he's a big Ferrari 360 Modena fan, but slightly wary of the R8 and Lambo: 'Go on Eurospares' website and compare the parts prices – you'll be amazed! A clutch is £1000 for a 360, and the release bearing £350; for a Gallardo they're both £2000. It only costs £400 to change the belts on a 360, and the engine doesn't even need to come out. And don't worry about miles on a Ferrari if you want to drive it. I'd rather have a sorted high-miler than one that doesn't get used;

[gtcarslimited.co.uk](http://gtcarslimited.co.uk) 01925 262800

## OPINION

### 'I BOUGHT ONE'

RICHARD DANBY

#### Lamborghini Gallardo Spyder

'I looked at R8s, which were half the price, but for me they're not *quite* a supercar and are still depreciating. At £75k, I think this Gallardo is at the bottom of its depreciation curve. I can't help laughing every time I drive it and I'm getting used to the attention – even a policeman gave me the thumbs up.'

### THE SPECIALIST

JOHN GRAEME

#### Redline Specialist Cars

'Buyers tend to spend £50,000 to £70,000 on their first supercar. I'd say the 360 Modena is a bit old; go for the F430. I'd add the Maserati GranTurismo to the list, and while the old Vanquish is more of a classic, I'd consider the DB9 and DBS. At the top of the market, the 991 Turbo S is really hot.'

### EVO ROAD TESTER

STUART GALLAGHER

As tempting as it is to have the keys to a 355 or Gallardo, it's Audi's R8 that would get my money. Its usability holds big appeal, but so too does its looks (subjective, I know), rev-hungry V8, manual 'box and mid-engined balance, and the fact that it's a supercar that doesn't appear to attract unwanted attention.

they're usually the better cars.

'The SLS is bulletproof, the AMG engine and 'box rarely give problems. Watch for leaves and debris rotting out the front radiators in the nose of a 911 – when we replace them we fit mesh to stop it happening again. Coil packs can fail on them, too. Any of these cars should be checked over by a specialist before buying. It might cost £500 but it could save you thousands in the long run.'

John raises other interesting points: 'You've got to be conscious of the attention you'll get with a supercar like a Lamborghini. You'll also need to plan your route and consider where you're going to park.'



## NEW BUYING REGULATIONS HELP CONSUMERS

The new Consumer Rights Act, which came into force on October 1, replaces the Sale of Goods Act and tightens up the rights for buyers of second-hand cars. It means that if a fault arises after buying a used car from a dealer, you now have 30 days to reject it for a repair, replacement of full refund.



## GOLF STAYS ON TOP

Despite the ongoing diesel crisis at Volkswagen, the Golf remained top of the new-car sales charts in Europe for September. The full effects of the emissions scandal are yet to be seen, but a falling share price, the potential for huge fines and a recall affecting over 8.5m cars in Europe alone mean that the world's largest car manufacturer faces a tough recovery.



## FERRARI FLOATS ON THE STOCK MARKET

Ferrari's healthy share price of \$52 put the company's value at around \$9.8 billion ahead of its debut on the New York Stock Exchange. During its first day a spike in interest briefly pushed the share price to around \$60. Parent company Fiat has sold around 10 per cent of its stake in Ferrari to raise money for a new five-year growth plan.

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# USED RIVALS: SUB-£10,000 DRIVERS' CARS

by Adam Towler



## MINI COOPER S (R56)

Engine	In-line 4-cyl, 1598cc, turbocharged
Power	181bhp @ 5500rpm
Torque	192lb ft @ 1700rpm
Weight	1205kg
0-62mph	6.9sec (claimed)
Top speed	142mph (claimed)
evo rating	★★★★★

### 'I BOUGHT ONE'

'My Cooper S had an appalling dual-mass flywheel and the clutch went after 12,000 miles. It cost £1600 to put right. The leather on the seats was very poor, too. However, it was awesome to drive – it didn't kick and bounce like the R53, and was more neutral. The instant power was another plus.' **David Young**

### EXAMPLES



**2009 £9650**  
**Sytner Mini, Coventry**  
A 46,000-mile Cooper S in a stealthy all-black colour scheme. With 17in 'Flame' alloys and the Chili Pack.

### RUNNING COSTS

'Carbon build-up on the back of the inlet valves leads to rough idling and lack of power. It's the DFI system not cleaning them, and can be made worse by short journeys and overfilling the engine with oil. The head has to come off and the valves replaced, which is expensive – £1200. There was also a big recall with rattling timing chains on cold-start and watch out for high-pressure fuel pumps failing.'

**James Sutton, minispeed.co.uk**



## MAZDA MX-5 Mk3

Engine	In-line 4-cyl, 1999cc
Power	158bhp @ 6700rpm
Torque	139lb ft @ 5000rpm
Weight	1098kg
0-62mph	7.9sec (claimed)
Top speed	138mph (claimed)
evo rating	★★★★★

'I'd had MGBs, but then drove a friend's MX-5 and loved it. I bought an ex-demo Roadster Coupe with 3000 miles and I'm struggling to find any reason for complaint. I've fitted a Larini exhaust and remapped it: now there's more torque low down and it drives superbly on Gaz suspension.' **Brian Adams**



**2009 £9500**  
**McCarthy Cars, London**  
An early 'Mk3.5' model, this Roadster Coupe is finished in metallic silver and has a FSH with one owner since new.

'Both the 1.8 and 2-litre engines tend to burn oil, and people run them out because they don't check the level – we're rebuilding one now. Rust-wise they're generally good, with a lot less corrosion than the Mk2 models. Anti-roll bars and coil springs can break, and make sure the drain holes by the rear wheels don't block, or the cabin will fill up with water.'

**Mark Fryer, freelancemazda.co.uk**



## SUBARU WRX STI UK 2.5

Engine	Flat-four, 2457cc, turbocharged
Power	276bhp @ 6000rpm
Torque	289lb ft @ 4000rpm
Weight	1495kg
0-62mph	5.3sec
Top speed	158mph
evo rating	★★★★★

'I've had my "wide-track" Type UK for seven months and I absolutely love it. I get 17-18mpg, but then mine does have 386bhp... The suspension has a tendency to go out of alignment, and it chews through rear tyres. You can't be reluctant to spend money on it, and I change the oil every month.' **Ben Gluyas**



**2006 £8995**  
**Tom Harvey Sports Cars**  
A 2006 STI in silver-grey with an engine rebuild that has included strengthening. Mileage is 79,000.

'The 2.5-litre engines have an issue with their pistons: they're hypereutectic and if the car isn't run on superunleaded fuel the ringlands can break, letting the oil go and taking the crank with them. The engines suffer from head-gasket failures, too, if not properly maintained. However, the six-speed 'boxes are bombproof. The dampers can knock, but we have a fix, and the brakes are the usual Brembo.'

**Kevin Knight, scoobyclinic.com**

### EVO CHOICE

All three choices are **evo** favourites, and at some point an example of each has been run on the magazine's Fast Fleet. Which would we go for as a used example? There have been better Impreza Turbos, but this generation of Scooby has big appeal. Its 2.5-litre motor isn't as charismatic or

strong as its smaller 2-litre predecessor, but it still punches the WRX out of corners and down straights like few others for the money. It's the most focused car and our choice. The Mini is a great entry point into **evo** car ownership. Its front-drive chassis is predictable without being boring, the turbocharged

engine delivers strong performance (and is ripe for tuning) and there's a strong aftercare and aftermarket network. It's a similar story for the MX-5. It's the least exciting of this trio, but like its competitors here it responds well to the aftermarket tuning options available.



# BUYING JOURNEY

From Dolomite to Elise, an **evo** reader lays out an ownership history chock-full of character



**JOHN DAY LINCOLN**



**10th VW Mk7 Golf R**

Now with an Elise as his weekend car (see right), John has still had some impressive daily drivers, the latest a Golf R. 'A fantastic car – positively ballistic,' he says.

**9th Audi A3 3.2 V6**

**8th Subaru Impreza Turbo**

**7th Lotus Elise S2**

'In 2009 I decided to buy a weekend toy – a great decision! Such a pure driving experience, I'd never had a car that made me laugh out loud. Still got it.'

## What's next?

'My immediate plan is to get to know the R. I've just taken early retirement, so I'm looking forward to doing more miles in the Elise, too. Money no object, I'd get a Lamborghini. I drove a Gallardo on track once and it was an awesome experience, and I had a poster of a Miura on my wall as a kid.'

## Tip

Getting itchy feet with the Lotus yet, John? How about a Porsche Boxster Spyder?

**1st Triumph Dolomite 1500HL**

'Not my first car, but my first **evo** car. Not that the phrase had been coined back then. Looked like a Sprint; wasn't.'



**2nd Renault 5 Gordini**

'Bought in 1984. Great alloy wheels, a five-speed gearbox and 92bhp!'



**6th Fiat Coupe 16v Turbo**

'In 1996 I bought the Fiat. The Pininfarina styling was stunning, and with almost 200bhp and front-wheel drive, the tyres had a short but happy life.'

**5th Renault 19 16v**

**4th Renault 5 GT Turbo (Ph2)**

**3rd Renault 5 GT Turbo (Ph1)**



## evo view

A long-term reader of **evo** and also of its spiritual predecessor, *Performance Car*, John has owned some cracking performance cars. His journey to his current stable of Elise and Golf R began, as for many of us, with optimism and inventiveness: the 1500cc Dolly was fitted out with a twin-carb Spitfire engine (Triumph, not Merlin, obviously) for more rort and rumbustiousness.

Things really got interesting when he commenced his relationship with Renault, starting with the great-grandfather of Renaultsport Clio's, the 5 Gordini. Phase 1 and 2 Renault 5 GT Turbos followed during the golden era of the

hot hatch, with John happy to admit he became addicted to their turbocharged shove. The second 5 arrived in 1989, as the market reached its zenith, but like a lot of buyers by the mid-'90s, John had migrated to the coupe market, and joined those flocking to Fiat's glamorous coupe. Although best remembered today for the warbling five-cylinder derivative, the earlier, 2-litre four-pot car was still a rapid machine.

The purchase of one of the last 'classic' Impreza Turbos in 2001 also boosts John's **evo** credentials, while his Golf R now combines the pace of the Impreza with the interior build-quality of his previous Audi A3 V6.



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# BUYING GUIDE: BMW M135i 2012-PRESENT

It captures the essence of the original M3 and prices now start below £20k

by Peter Tomalin



ONCE UPON A TIME, WHEN LIFE WAS simpler, the letter M was reserved for a handful of very special cars: the products of BMW's hallowed Motorsport division. These days you could be forgiven for thinking that M stands for marketing. You can even get an M logo on a set of floor mats. So where does that leave the M135i? Not a full-blown M-car like the M3, 4, 5 or 6 (or, for that matter, the 1M Coupe that it effectively replaced), it was launched under the umbrella of 'M Performance'. Yet it had more than enough M magic and all-round ability to win rave notices, and with the earliest examples now around three years old, it's a good time to assess this versatile and rapid hatch as a used buy.

Based on the second-generation (F20) 1-series,

the M135i arrived in 2012. It came with a 316bhp version of the new 'N55' 3-litre turbocharged straight-six. This had a single twin-scroll turbo where its predecessor, the N54, used twin blowers. It also introduced Bosch solenoid-type direct injection and Valvetronic variable valve lift. In the M135i it drove the rear wheels via a conventional six-speed manual or an eight-speed auto with paddleshift, the latter soon proving the more popular option since it offered greater performance and economy, as well as snappier changes.

Effective stability control meant the M135i could be as secure or (in Sport Plus mode) as playful as you chose. There was no limited-slip diff, but the suspension was tuned by M division – among the options were adaptive dampers for an

extra £515 – while unique twin-spoke 18in alloys were standard. It was a fine all-rounder. If it lacked a little of the challenge and reward of the very best M-cars, it was quick, accomplished, practical, and – at a whisker under £30,000 for a basic three-door manual – a bit of a bargain too.

In spring 2015 there was a mild facelift to sharpen the looks. At the same time peak power rose slightly to 321bhp and, among a number of detail improvements, both gearboxes were further fettled to good effect. The basic price was now up to £31,325 but the car was still fine value (in reality many cars were highly specced and often topped £40,000). Today you can pick up an early M135i with plenty of toys for as little as £20,000. Here's what you need to know.

## CHECKPOINTS

### ENGINE & TRANSMISSION

Jason Barker of BMW specialist Birds Garage is our guide to the M135i and can't speak too highly of it. 'The previous, N54 twin-turbo straight-six suffers a number of issues – fuel pumps, coil packs, spark plugs, rattly wastegates,' he says. 'The N55 in the M135i, with the twin-scroll turbo, is a complete contrast. In

our experience, and it is still early days, they've been utterly bombproof. We've seen them with up to 40,000 miles and we haven't had a single mechanical problem with them.' Practically all M135is were also purchased new with BMW's five-year/60,000-mile service package, which is transferrable, so that's worth checking for.

Both the eight-speed ZF auto and

six-speed Getrag manual are well-proven and extremely robust units. Don't be alarmed if the manual shift is slightly baulky – it has never been the lightest or smoothest-shifting gearbox, which is one reason why most M135i buyers opt for the auto. There was no limited-slip diff option from BMW, but aftermarket conversions are available. Birds Auto will fit a Quaife unit for around £2000. This

is worth considering, especially if you plan to attend the odd trackday.

### SUSPENSION, STEERING & BRAKES

'They're all on 18-inch alloys, which is good,' says Jason. 'None of this 20-inch nonsense with ultra-low-profile tyres! That said, we find a lot of wheels have to be straightened when they go for a

refurb. Perhaps it's our roads, but the M135i does seem to suffer a bit from bent wheels. Any vibration is likely to be a slightly bent rim.

'Driven enthusiastically, they waltz through tyres, so check how much meat is left, and not just the rears – without a diff and with the traction control on, they're set up to understeer, so the fronts are just as likely to wear. There are two tyre options

from the factory. The Bridgestone S001 runflat is much better than the old RE050A, which was epically bad, but try and find one with Michelin Pilot Super Sports. From a performance-driving point of view they're the one to go for.

'The adaptive suspension option has just two positions on the M135i and I don't think it makes a lot of difference. Far better to get the car on the



**Left:** rear-drive makes M135i unique in the hot hatch segment. **Above:** 'N55' engine has shaken off the problems of its twin-turbo predecessor



standard setup. Normal suspension and Super Sports is the way to go. And check the brakes front and rear – without a diff, the stability control uses a lot of rear braking.'

## BODY, INTERIOR & ELECTRICS

It's far too early for any problems with corrosion, so you're checking for signs of accident repairs such as uneven panel gaps and

evidence of resprays. Also check that the dates on the headlights correspond with the V5C vehicle registration certificate.

'The biggest problem with the M135i,' concludes Jason, 'is the rear wiper blade. Nearly every one that we've had with more than 12,000 miles on the clock has had a split rear wiper blade. The cost to replace is 17 quid.' You have been warned.

## RIVALS

### VOLKSWAGEN GOLF R (Mk7)

A searing 296bhp from a four-pot 2-litre turbo, 0-62mph in 5.1sec, and a chassis to match. Early cars are just starting to edge down to around £25k.

### MERCEDES-BENZ A45 AMG

If you want even more power in a hatch, the mighty Merc is for you: 355bhp and 0-62mph in 4.3sec are serious figures, but you won't find many for less than £30k.

### RENAULTSPORT MÉGANE

There are various hot Méganes for around £20k, including the brilliant 265 Cup and 275 Trophy. The Trophy-R is the GT3 RS of hatches, but a little uncompromising (and expensive) for some.

## INFORMATION



### BMW M135i

Engine	In-line 6-cyl, 2979cc, turbo
Max power	316bhp @ 5800rpm
Max torque	332lb ft @ 1400-4500rpm
Transmission	Six-speed manual, rear-wheel drive
Weight	1425kg
Power-to-weight	225bhp/ton
0-62mph	5.1sec (claimed)
Top speed	155mph (limited)
Price new	£29,995 (2012)

## PARTS PRICES

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

Tyres (each)	£108.04 front, £137.31 rear (Michelin Pilot Super Sport)
Front pads (set)	£159.56
Wear sensors	£25.16
Front discs (pair)	£376
Alloy wheel (front, 18in)	£413
Clutch kit	£428.26
Damper	£152.48

## SERVICING

(Prices from [elmscambridgebmw.co.uk](http://elmscambridgebmw.co.uk), including VAT. However, note that M135i servicing up to five years/60,000 miles is typically covered by BMW's transferrable 'Service Inclusive' package)

Recommended intervals	Condition-based servicing
Large oil service	£632
Oil and microfilter	£288
Brake fluid	£89.89



## USEFUL CONTACTS

### FORUMS, ADVICE, EVENTS

[babybmw.net](http://babybmw.net)  
[bmwcarclubgb.uk](http://bmwcarclubgb.uk)

### SALES, SERVICING

[birdsgarage.co.uk](http://birdsgarage.co.uk)  
[munichlegends.co.uk](http://munichlegends.co.uk)

### SERVICING, TUNING

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

### CARS FOR SALE

[usedcars.bmw.co.uk](http://usedcars.bmw.co.uk)  
[classicandperformancecar.com](http://classicandperformancecar.com)



## 'I BOUGHT ONE'

**PETE OSBORNE**

'I've had a number of M-cars, including an E34 M5, E36 M3 and an E46 M3, and I currently own an E92 M3, which gets well used in my role with petrolhead.tours. I've also had a couple of 130is, and the M135i seemed a natural progression.

'I bought mine about seven months ago: a five-door on a 63 plate. Having driven both the manual and the auto, I felt that while the manual was good, the auto really moved the game on. My M3 has the DCT 'box, which is rubbish at being an auto. The M135i's ZF eight-speed, however, is great as an auto and just as good at manual paddleshifting as the DCT.

'It's a great engine. You get that six-cylinder smoothness

and totally linear delivery from the twin-scroll turbo. I usually get around 30mpg, and up to 38mpg on a motorway run, which for a 3-litre petrol turbo is remarkable.

'Mine had done about 6000 miles when I bought it, and I've added another 4000. We use it for all sorts of journeys. It's very good around town because it's quite small. The boot isn't large, but you can squeeze in a week's shopping. Likewise, the rear seats are a pinch for three adults, but OK for getting to a restaurant 20 minutes away.

'It's a good compromise of ride and handling. Mine doesn't have the adaptive dampers, but I don't feel I'm missing out. The traction control does a pretty

good job of hiding the fact that there isn't a limited-slip diff.

'Is it a proper M-car? That's a tricky one. I'd say probably not, but I haven't driven a new M3 or M4, and the criticisms I've read of them could also apply to the M135i, so perhaps this is just the way M-cars are going – more refined, a little less tactile. In reality, the M135i is every bit as fast as the E92 M3, and it's quiet and comfortable. As an all-rounder it's a brilliant compromise.'



## WHAT WE SAID



### FIRST DRIVE

'Think of a car that reprises the E30 M3's dynamic template – compact, light, nimble, rear-drive – but propelled by a sublime 3-litre turbo straight-six that sounds as good, if not better, than any naturally aspirated six the M division has made in 40 years. With 316bhp, it's just 19bhp down on the 1M Coupe, and when teamed with ZF's frankly astonishing eight-speed auto, the 0-62 time of 4.9sec exactly matches the 1M's.

'OK, the M135i is no beauty, but the M-flavoured aesthetic touches make the best of a rather odd shape and plain interior. And, externally, they're almost Q-car subtle, which makes for an amusing 20 minutes on the Autobahn as, time after time, the car rushes to its 155mph speed limiter once other fast-moving (but somewhat bemused) traffic has been persuaded to move over.

'The best thing about the BMW M135i, though, is the grin it puts on your face on a twisty road. Dripping with feel the electro-hydraulic steering is not but, at two turns between locks, it's direct and accurate and acquires a helpful meatiness with speed. With stiffer springs, dampers and bushes and a lower ride height, the M tweaks work a little magic, imbuing the chassis with alert responses and fine grip without taking too much off the ride.' – evo 173 (September 2012)



## IN THE CLASSIFIEDS

### 2013 M135i 5dr AUTO £20,990

56,000 miles // Alpine White with black Dakota leather // Professional media pack // enhanced Bluetooth // warranty to June 2016

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



### 2012 M135i 3dr AUTO £21,950

33,200 miles // Blue with black Dakota leather // Professional media pack // adaptive suspension // Harman Kardon speakers

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



### 2013 M135i 3dr AUTO £23,663

11,630 miles // Black Sapphire with black Dakota leather // Professional media pack // driver comfort pack // heated seats // Bluetooth

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



## WHAT TO PAY

**£?**  
£18k-23k

The cheapest examples are early cars advertised privately, sometimes for as little as £18,500. Dealer cars start at around £20k, and £20k-23k gives an excellent choice of 2012/13 cars.

Jason Barker says: 'You can get a two-year-old car that was £37k new for around £23k. That's fantastic value for money. There's also a lot on the market, so take your time to find your ideal spec. From a resale point of view, look for cars with the auto 'box, Professional satnav and heated seats.'





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**1968 'Italian Job' Miura**  
Price: POA | Mileage: 11,800

This stunning Miura is now acknowledged to be the actual car used in the iconic opening sequence of the 'The Italian Job' – and has recently been featured extensively in the media, including Octane. Fantastically original and in show condition throughout.



**1957 Mercedes 300SL Roadster**  
Price: £949,995 | Mileage: 53,300

This matching numbers early production 300SL is in genuinely superb condition throughout, with mirror-like paintwork and chrome. Restored to concours standards by specialists, stunning from every angle and great to drive.



**1968 Aston Martin DB6 Volante**  
Price: £749,995 | Mileage: 106,300

This stunning DB6 Volante was originally supplied in the UK and has extensive and interesting history. Converted to LHD in 2003 but could be converted back to original configuration for a nominal cost. In excellent condition throughout and ready to enjoy.



**1989 Lamborghini Countach 25th Anniversary**  
Price: £269,995 | Mileage: 17,702

By far the most refined and driveable of the Countach series, this 25th Anniversary edition has had only one fastidious owner from new. In un-restored original showroom condition throughout, with an excellent service history. A rare find.



**2005 Ferrari 575M F1 HGTC**  
Price: £184,995 | Mileage: 12,000

A stunning example of Ferrari's ultra-rare 575M HGTC, this sensational LHD thoroughbred has had one Italian owner from new and is utterly immaculate throughout. Full Ferrari service history and complete with all of its original books and tools.



**2012 Audi R8 GT Spyder Special Edition**  
Price: £124,995 | Mileage: 4,100

This stunning R8 was initially used as an Audi demonstrator and has had only one private owner since. One of only a handful of cars finished in satin effect Suzuka Grey (a high cost option) this fully loaded Special Edition has genuinely low mileage and full service history.



**1968 Fiat Dino Spyder**  
Price: £109,995 | Mileage: 11,411

The Dino Spyder is becoming increasingly collectable. This lovely example was imported to the UK in 1988, has benefited from a recent specialist engine overhaul and has been extremely well maintained. In excellent condition and driving beautifully.



**1995 Ferrari F355 Spider LHD**  
Price: £74,950 | Mileage: 65,000

This desirable manual one owner LHD F335 is attractively finished in black with black interior, a colour scheme which suits the Spider's crisp lines particularly well. The car drives exactly as it should and will be sold with a fresh cambelt service.



**2001 Aston Martin Vanquish**  
Price: £64,995 | Mileage: 59,258

An extremely well presented and well maintained V12 Vanquish. Stunning in Grigio Titanium with Charcoal and Light Grey interior. Recently benefiting from a high quality respray and a full service from the Aston Workshop. A great driving investment.

# MODEL FOCUS: RENAULTSPORT CLIO

The French hatches that reward commitment

by Adam Towler

**W**E ARE IN A GOLDEN ERA FOR second-hand four-cylinder Renaultsport Clios, with prices starting from next to nothing and loads of choice. Many of these cars have ranked amongst *evo*'s favourite hot hatches over the years, and the best news is that some are as tough as they come. Moreover, pick the right one and it might even make money in the long run.

Both our sales experts, Steve Murr (see 'Expert view') and Mick Pittman (at servicing specialist Diamond Motors), extol the hardiness of RS Clios.

'The X65 Clios [172 and 182] are the best – reliable and simple to fix,' says Mick. 'The cambelt change is critical: watch for non-genuine parts and check that all the elements are done. We charge £550 all-in. The suspension usually needs replacing

at 80,000 miles, but that's just about it. However, the X85 models [197 and 200] have gremlins that can cost. The TL4 gearbox gives issues, and while 200s are better, they're not perfect. A gearbox rebuild is £650 plus removal and refitting. The brakes suffer from seized pads, so we recommend stripping and cleaning once a year. The steering rack and ball joints wear, exhaust manifolds crack, and water can create havoc if the drainage holes by the windscreen wiper are blocked.'

Both Steve and Mick cite the 172 Cup as being one to watch, with the 182 Trophy already appreciating. Colour and spec is particularly important on Clios: avoid red, and while basic Cup models are great for trackdays they are less attractive on the used market.

## Expert view

STEVE MURR, R.SPORT CARS

'Phase 1 Clio 172s are getting old now, with high mileages, and many feel tired. You'll pay just £500 for an average high-miler and up to £2000 for something nice. Prices are the same for both phases of 172, but like-for-like the early cars sell more easily. The exception is the 172 Cup – people still want these and sub-70k-miles with a good history they'll sell for £2000-3000.

'With the 182, there's a big variation in price, with values from £1000 to £4500. The 182 Cup [which had a stripped-back spec – no xenons, climate control or leather] is less appealing than a "full-fat" 182 with both Cup packs [suspension and spoilers] added. Colour is important, too. As ever, Liquid Yellow and the blues are most desirable.

'The 182 Trophy is in strong demand. Buy one with less than 45,000 miles and evidence of a suspension rebuild. These cars range from £4500 up to £9000 for the very best.

'The early Clio 197 hasn't done very well. The gear ratios were poor and many 'boxes have been replaced. High-milers are £3000 now, but the exception is the R27 model with the Cup chassis and Recaros – you can pay more than £6000 for these. The 200s have fared better. Recaro seats and Speedline wheels are the key options.'



## SERIAL BUYER

JULIAN PRING

Julian Pring has owned a V8 BMW M3, a Porsche 996 GT3 RS and a 997 GT3 among other performance cars, but it speaks volumes about Renaultsport products that his old Clio 200 and current Mégane 275 Trophy-R are amongst his favourites.

'I got chatting to a guy who was sprinting in a Clio 197, and then went straight to test drive a 200, which I bought soon after,' he says.

'I had it stripped out, added a cage and upgraded the brakes, and then did trackdays all over Europe in it. In many ways it reminded me of my 997 GT3 – on the right road it had that real motorsport feel, but in a useable package.

'I ended up selling the Clio 200 – but only on the basis that I could buy it back – and got a Mégane Trophy-R; again, new. It has a focus more like the old 996 GT3 RS and a nervousness when you're going quickly that I like. There's a really mechanical feel to it, yet being a hatchback it's at a price point where you're not afraid to use it.

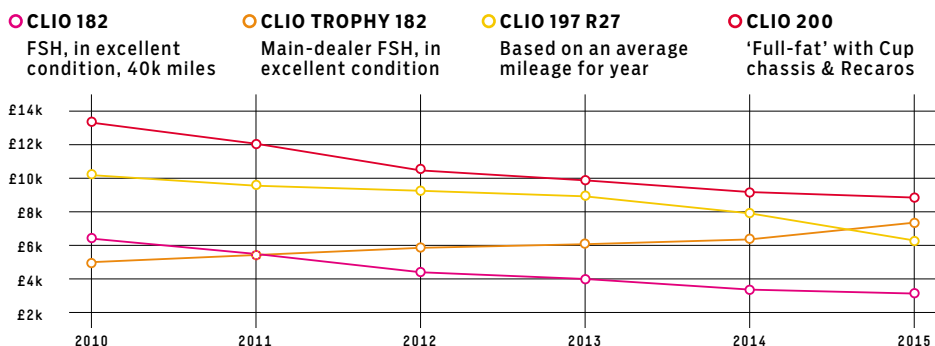
'The Mégane is dramatically quicker than the Clio was, but I loved the way you could drive the Clio flat-out at times and always felt in control.'



## Trends

### How Renaultsport Clio prices have been performing

Data supplied by Steve Murr at R.Sport Cars



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**BMW M4 3.0 M DCT  
2dr (start/stop)  
HIGH SPEC & RARE COLOUR**  
Mileage: 3,000, Year/Reg: 2015(15)  
£57,995



**Renault Megane 2.0  
Renaultsport 2dr  
LEATHER RECAROS & SAT NAV**  
Mileage: 22,000, Year/Reg: 2012(62)  
£16,295



**Renault Megane 2.0  
Renaultsport 3dr  
FULL LEATHER RECARO INTERIOR**  
Mileage: 52,000, Year/Reg: 2010(10)  
£12,795



**Renault Clio 2.0 VVT  
Renaultsport Raider 3dr  
LIMITED EDITION MODEL**  
Mileage: 33,000, Year/Reg: 2011(61)  
£11,995



**Renault Megane 2.0  
Renaultsport Cup 3dr  
CUP CHASSIS**  
Mileage: 49,000, Year/Reg: 2010(60)  
£11,395



**Renault Clio 2.0 VVT  
Renaultsport Cup 3dr  
RECARO SEATS & KTR UPGRADES**  
Mileage: 31,000, Year/Reg: 2009(59)  
£9,495



**Renault Megane 2.0  
Renaultsport 3dr  
FULL LEATHER INTERIOR**  
Mileage: 25,000, Year/Reg: 2012(12)  
£14,895



**Renault Megane 2.0  
Renaultsport Cup 3dr  
UNIQUE LEATHER INTERIOR**  
Mileage: 13,000, Year/Reg: 2010(10)  
£14,295



**Renault-Renaultsport-Megane-  
Renaultsport-Cup-S1914915-1 (2)  
WANTED MEGANE RS,  
CLIO RS & TWINGO RS**




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	460 AJD £3,250	60 5 £44,500	JON 99 £21,000	NAT 11 £19,500	OUI 1 £17,500
	AMY 60 £3,750	90 60 £12,500	JPS 14 £90A	NAT 7Y £12,500	777 OW £8,500
	36 ANN £10,850	H3 AVY £25,000	JS 4994 £4,499	NAT 7S £9,500	PCG 7 £7,500
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	ATC 1 £45,500	2 HN £19,000	JVG 49 £1,699	7 NJ £18,500	1 PF £130,000
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	BHW 1 £37,500	HR 99 £17,500	KF 8 £28,500	NMS 857 £1,450	9 R £TBC
	BEN 1F £5,950				RB 17 £17,500
	24 BK £4,750				RD 222 £5,500
	190 BMW £2,800				REJ 3 £8,800
	V8 800 £2,800				RES 19 £5,450
	BOX 573R £4,995				RFT 1 £19,995
<b>C+D</b>	CAT 1 £180,000				RHL 51 £3,400
	CAT 1R £4,995				RJC 8 £13,500
	CAX 70N £2,995				7 RJ £8,995
	CH LOC £POA				9 RJT £4,995
	CH 7 £85,000				RLW 831 £1,999
	CHR IIE £22,750				ROB 20 £18,500
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	1 CTE £14,995				777 RS £15,000
	DD 1 £149,000				RSA 83 £3,600
	581 DFM £1,550				RTG 74 £4,400
	DHE 35 £3,750				1 RV £95,000
	DL 77 £14,750				4 RWG £3,900
	DMN 1 £49,950				SCW 8 POA
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	2 DGG £23,500				SER 39 £3,700
	222 DP £8,500				SNM 45 £2,800
	44 DS £17,250				SNT 200 £3,500
<b>E+F</b>	4 EAP £4,995				SPO7 TED £1,950
	58 EG £3,750				90 SR £12,900
	1 EP £149,000				SSJ 8 £8,250
	911 ER £8,500				<b>T+U</b>
	FAYE £11,000				1 TEE £49,000
	FAYES £19,500				TH 8 £79,000
	FEB 1 £18,500				5 TJM £7,500
	5 FGB £4,400				TMW 1 £29,500
	F1 YER £34,500				TOT 44L £4,500
	FP 3 £26,500				TUC 7 £8,500
	2 FT £37,500				TV 2 £24,500
	1 FY £69,000				<b>V+W+Y</b>
<b>G+H</b>	GA 6 £28,500				VKY 7 £8,800
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# SHOULD YOU KEEP IT?

Nissan 370Z



If you can't face selling your car, take a look at the latest options to upgrade and improve it instead **by Antony Ingram**

**T**RADITIONAL, REAR-WHEEL-DRIVE sports cars are a hard sell these days, and the Nissan Gripz crossover concept presented at the Frankfurt motor show in September suggested that Nissan could take its Z-car philosophy in a whole new direction.

If that's given you the impetus to hang on to your own Z, the platform is ripe for improvement. We'd start with the breathing: the 370Z doesn't want for performance, but the V6 always feels (and sounds)

a little strained. Owners rate Stillen's exhaust system highly (£1495 from [tarmacportz.co.uk](http://tarmacportz.co.uk)) – it's tuneful, not obnoxiously loud, and Stillen claims an 18bhp boost at the wheels. Stillen also produces an intake kit that draws cool air from near the radiator for a 17.5bhp gain at the wheels; it's £495, also from [tarmacportz.co.uk](http://tarmacportz.co.uk).

And with raised performance, improving your skills might also be useful. One-to-one road and track tuition from CAT Driver Training costs £900.

## Aftermarket news



### ZENDER 4C

The Alfa Romeo 4C has disappointed us on road and track. Zender's tuning concept doesn't address the car's handling, but it looks fantastic and offers more performance. A remap boosts power to 271bhp (from 237bhp) and torque to 295lb ft, for 0-62mph in 4.3sec. An aggressive bodykit completes the look.



### FORD FOCUS ST MOUNTUNE

We've failed to warm to the Ford Focus ST, with its unruly front axle and busy ride. The 2-litre engine is a cracker, though, and that's the part Mountune has enhanced further – £1195 buys a larger intercooler, dual-entry air filter and remap to 271bhp (24bhp up on standard). We reviewed it in *evo* 215.



### BRABUS 850 BITURBO 4x4 COUPE

Whatever you think of the Mercedes-AMG GLE63 S Coupe, its 560lb ft, twin-turbocharged V8 makes for serene, effortless progress. Effortless doesn't even begin to hint at Brabus's 1069lb ft interpretation, however. There's also 838bhp, for 0-62mph in 3.8sec and 200mph (limited!).



### MAZDA GLOBAL MX-5 CUP PRICED

US customers will pay \$53,000 to get behind the wheel of the new Mazda Global MX-5 Cup racer, ready for the 2016 Global MX-5 Cup series. The 2-litre model is fully race-prepared, with a roll-cage, race-ready wheels, tyres and brakes. Overall weight is 952kg – nearly 100kg less than the road car's.

## NEXT MONTH

### ANALYSIS

Fast Fords: with a new Focus RS around the corner, we look at which Ford legends to buy now.

### USED RIVALS

Audi RS4, BMW E46 M3, Mercedes C55 AMG – three supersaloon icons, but which is our pick?

### BUYING GUIDE

Skoda Octavia vRS: the oft-forgotten performance gem of the Volkswagen Group stable.

### MODEL FOCUS

Gallardo: a striking Lamborghini design and a searing V10 engine. What's not to like?

## 'Why I kept it'

OLIVER COOKE

### 2009 ASTON MARTIN V8 VANTAGE ROADSTER

I took advantage of the credit crisis when I bought the Vantage – it was sat in a main dealer's showroom in 2010, having been registered the year before. The original buyer backed out, so it was used as a demo, then sold to a customer who owned it for less than six months, then it returned to the showroom for another three months. I didn't have to work too hard to chip a bit more off the price.

Initially I thought I'd run the car through the spring and summer, take a bit of a hit on its value, then move it on in the autumn. That was five years ago...

It's not the quickest car, but it sounds great. It's not the newest-looking car by today's standards, either, but it still looks good to me – my car is silver with a red interior and red roof – and on the right day on the right road it makes you feel incredibly special.

Being a 2009 car, it has the larger, more powerful 4.7-litre engine, and thankfully the chap who originally ordered it specified the six-speed manual gearbox.

One of the reasons I've hung on to the Aston is because it's been so reliable. Servicing isn't too bad – a mate had a DBS when I got the V8 and suggested I should budget £100 per cylinder at each service, and that's proved a good yardstick so far.

Why do I still have it? It's not given me any reason to sell it. Each year I think about it, then start driving it more as the sun comes out and forget any notion I had of getting rid of it. I came close this summer when I went halves with my brother on a Ferrari F355 that needed some TLC – a lot of TLC, as it turned out – but so far the Roadster is safe. Maybe next summer I'll sell it...

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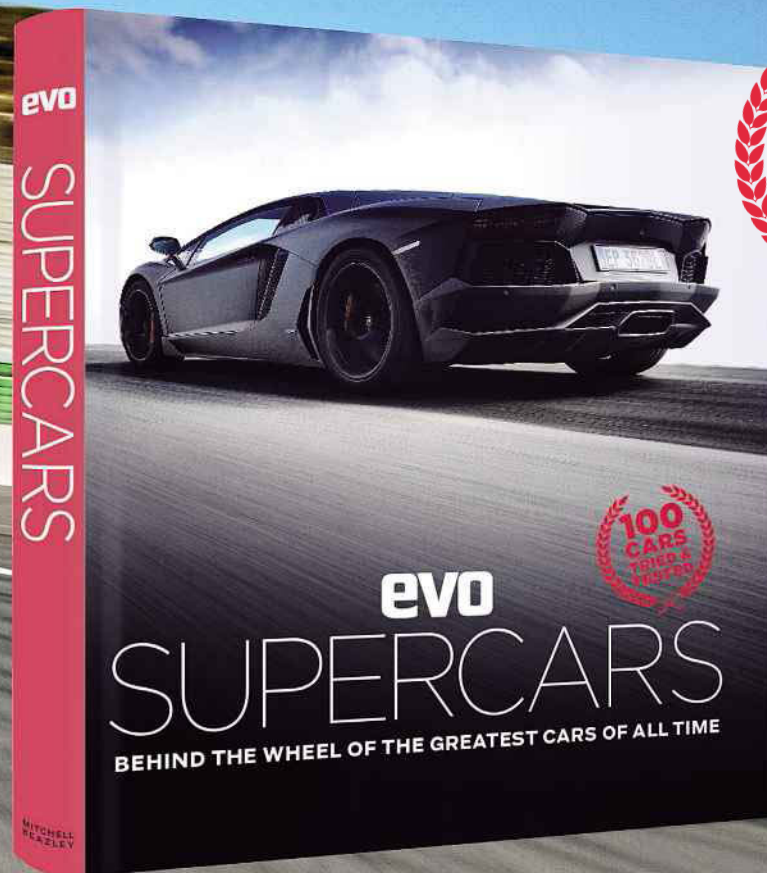
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**Key**   = new entry this month. \* = grey import. Entries in italics are for cars no longer on sale. **Issue no.** is for our most recent major test of the car (D = Driven, R = Road test or group test, F = Feature). Call 0844 844 0039 to order a back issue. **Price** is on-the-road including VAT and delivery charges. **Engine** is the car's main motor only – additional hybrid tech isn't shown. **Weight** is the car's kerb weight as quoted by the manufacturer. **bhp/ton** is the power-to-weight ratio based on manufacturer's kerb weight. **0-60mph** and **0-100mph** figures in bold are independently recorded, all other performance figures are manufacturers' claims. **CO2 g/km** is the official EC figure and **EC mpg** is the official 'Combined' figure or equivalent.

## Knowledge

## Superminis / Hot Hatches

	Issue no.	Price	Engine cyl/cc	bhp/rpm	lb ft/rpm	Weight	bhp/ton	0-60mph	0-100mph	Max mph	CO2 g/km	EC mpg	EVO rating	
Abarth 595 Competizione	196 D	£18,960	4/1368	158/5500	170/3000	1035kg	155	7.4	-	130	155	43.5	+ Spirited engine, still looks great - Favours fun over finesse	★★★★☆
Abarth 695 Biposto	205 R	£32,990	4/1369	187/5500	184/3000	997kg	191	5.9	-	143	-	-	+ Engineered like a true Abarth product - Desirable extras make this a £50k city car	★★★★☆
Alfa Romeo Mito Cloverleaf	149 R	£18,870	4/1368	168/5500	184/2500	1145kg	149	7.5	-	136	139	47.1	+ Great MultiAir engine, impressive ride - Not as feisty as we hoped	★★★★☆
Alfa Romeo Giulietta QV	199 D	£28,120	4/1742	231/5500	251/2000	1320kg	182	6.0	-	151	162	40.3	+ Still looks good, and now it's got the 4C's engine - Pricey, and it has more rewarding rivals	★★★★☆
Alfa Romeo Giulietta Cloverleaf	144 D	10'-14	4/1742	232/5500	251/1900	1320kg	179	6.8	-	150	177	37.2	+ Shows signs of deep talent... - but should be more exciting	★★★★☆
Alfa Romeo 147 GTA	187 R	03'-06	6/3179	247/6200	221/4800	1360kg	185	6.0	<b>15.5</b>	153	-	23.3	+ Mki Focus RS pace without the histrionics - Slightly nose-heavy	★★★★☆
Audi S1	211 R	£24,900	4/1984	228/6000	213/1600	1315kg	176	5.8	-	155	162	40.4	+ Compliant and engaging chassis; quick, too - Looks dull without options	★★★★☆
Audi A1 quattro	181 R	73	4/1984	253/6000	258/2500	1420kg	181	5.7	-	152	199	32.8	+ Polished 253bhp all-wheel-drive A1 - Just 19 for UK, Porsche Cayman price	★★★★☆
Audi S3	188 R	£30,640	4/1984	296/5500	280/1800	1395kg	216	5.4	<b>12.5</b>	155	162	40.4	+ Lots of grip and one of the best-sounding four-pot turbos - Still a little too clinical	★★★★☆
Audi RS3	210 D	£39,950	5/2480	362/5500	343/1625	1520kg	242	4.3	-	155	189	34.9	+ Addictive noise, lighter on its feet than its predecessor - Still a shade sensible	★★★★☆
Audi S3	106 R	06'-12	4/1984	261/6000	1455kg	1455kg	183	5.6	<b>13.6</b>	155	198	33.2	+ Very fast, very effective, very... err, quality - A little too clinical	★★★★☆
Audi RS3 Sportback	156 R	11'-12	5/2480	335/5400	332/1600	1575kg	216	4.5	-	155	212	31.0	+ Above, with added five-pot character - Again, see above...	★★★★☆
BMW 125i M Sport	176 D	£26,020	4/1997	218/5000	228/1350	1420kg	156	6.4	-	155	154	42.8	+ Performance, price, running costs - Dull four-pot soundtrack	★★★★☆
BMW M135i	212 R	£31,325	6/2979	321/5800	332/1300	1430kg	228	5.1	-	155	188	35.3	+ Powertrain, noise, chassis, price - M235i looks nicer, and has an LSD on its options list	★★★★☆
BMW 130i M Sport	106 R	05'-10	6/2996	261/6650	232/2750	1450kg	183	6.1	<b>15.3</b>	155	-	34.0	+ Fantastic engine - Suspension can still get a little boingy	★★★★☆
Citroën C1/Peugeot 107/Toyota Aygo	126 R	£8095+	3/998	68/6000	68/3600	790kg	87	14.2	-	98	103	61.4	+ Full of character and insurance-friendly - Insurance friendly power	★★★★☆
Citroën Saxo VTS	020 R	97'-03	4/1587	120/6600	107/5200	935kg	130	7.6	<b>22.6</b>	127	-	34.9	+ Chunky, chuckable charger - Can catch out the unwary	★★★★☆
Citroën AX GT	195 R	87'-92	4/1360	85/6400	86/4000	722kg	120	9.2	-	110	-	-	+ Makes terrific use of 85bhp - Feels like it's made from paper	★★★★☆
Citroën DS3 1.6 THP	142 R	£17,475	4/1598	154/6000	117/1400	1240kg	126	7.2	-	133	155	42.2	+ A proper French hot hatch - Petrolheads might find it too 'designed'	★★★★☆
Citroën DS3 Racing	153 D	11'-12	4/1598	204/6000	203/2000	1240kg	167	6.5	-	146	149	-	+ Faster, feistier version of above - Not as hardcore as its 'Racing' tag suggests	★★★★☆
Fiat Panda 100HP	132 R	06'-11	4/1368	99/6000	97/4200	1080kg	130	7.9	-	120	134	48.7	+ As above, with a fantastically loud exhaust... - if you're 12 years old	★★★★☆
Fiat Punto Evo Sporting	141 D	£13,355	4/1368	133/5000	152/1750	1155kg	117	8.5	-	127	129	50.4	+ Great engine, smart styling - Dynamics don't live up to the Evo name	★★★★☆
Ford Fiesta ST	207 R	£17,545	4/1596	179/5700	214/1600	1088kg	167	7.4	<b>18.4</b>	137	138	47.9	+ Chassis, price, punchy performance - Not as powerful as key rivals	★★★★☆
Ford Fiesta ST Mountune	213 R	£18,144	4/1596	212/6000	236/1750	1088kg	198	6.4	-	140	138	-	+ One of the best mid-sized hatches made even better - Badge snobbery	★★★★☆
Ford Fiesta Zetec S	123 D	08'-13	4/1596	118/6000	112/4050	1045kg	115	9.9	-	120	134	48.7	+ Genuinely entertaining supermini - Growth up compared to Twingo/Swift	★★★★☆
Ford Fiesta Zetec S Mountune	132 R	08'-13	4/1596	138/6750	129/2500	1080kg	130	7.9	-	120	134	48.7	+ As above, with a fantastically loud exhaust... - if you're 12 years old	★★★★☆
Ford Fiesta ST	075 D	05'-08	4/1999	148/6000	140/4500	1137kg	132	7.9	-	129	-	38.2	+ Great looks, decent brakes - Disappointing chassis, gutless engine	★★★★☆
Ford Fiesta ST185 Mountune	115 R	08	4/1999	185/6700	147/3500	1137kg	165	6.9	-	129	-	-	+ Fiesta ST gets the power it always needed - OTT exhaust note	★★★★☆
Ford Focus ST TDCI Estate	206 D	£23,295	4/1997	182/3500	295/2000	1488kg	124	8.3	-	135	110	67.3	+ Performance not sacrificed at the alter of economy - Interior design still jars slightly	★★★★☆
Ford Focus ST	207 R	£22,195	4/1999	247/5500	265/2000	1362kg	184	6.5	-	154	159	41.5	+ Excellent engine - Scrapy when pushed	★★★★☆
Ford Focus ST Mountune	187 D	£23,220	4/1999	271/5500	295/2750	1362kg	202	5.7	-	154+	169	-	+ Great value upgrade - Steering still not as feelsome as that of some rivals	★★★★☆
Ford Focus ST	119 R	05'-10	5/2522	222/6000	236/1600	1392kg	162	6.7	<b>16.8</b>	150	224	30.4	+ Value, performance, integrity - Big engine compromises handling	★★★★☆
Ford Focus ST Mountune	137 R	08'-11	5/2522	256/5500	295/2500	1392kg	187	5.8	<b>14.3</b>	155	224	-	+ ST takes extra power in its stride - You probably still want an RS	★★★★☆
Ford Focus RS (Mk2)	195 R	09'-11	5/2522	300/6500	324/2300	1467kg	208	5.9	<b>14.2</b>	163	225	30.5	+ Huge performance, highly capable FWD chassis - Body control is occasionally clumsy	★★★★☆
Ford Focus RS500	181 R	10'-11	5/2522	345/6000	339/2500	1467kg	239	5.6	<b>12.7</b>	165	225	-	+ More power and presence than regular RS - Pricey	★★★★☆
Ford Focus RS (Mk1)	207 R	02'-03	4/1998	212/5500	229/3500	1278kg	169	5.9	<b>14.9</b>	143	-	-	+ Some are great - Some are awful (so make sure you drive plenty)	★★★★☆
Ford Escort RS Cosworth	157 R	92'-96	4/1993	224/6250	224/3500	1275kg	179	6.2	-	137	-	-	+ The ultimate Essex hot hatch - Unmodified ones are rare... and getting pricey...	★★★★☆
Ford Puma 1.7	095 R	97'-02	4/1679	123/6300	116/4500	1041kg	120	8.6	<b>27.6</b>	122	-	38.2	+ Everything - Nothing. The 1.4 is worth a look too	★★★★☆
Ford Racing Puma	128 R	00'-01	4/1679	153/7000	119/4500	1174kg	132	7.8	<b>23.2</b>	137	-	34.7	+ Exclusivity - The standard Puma does it so well	★★★★☆
Honda Civic Type R	215 R	£29,995	4/1996	306/6500	295/2500	1378kg	226	5.7	-	167	170	38.7	+ Great on smooth roads - Turbo engine not as special as old NA units; styling a bit 'busy'	★★★★☆
Honda Civic Type R (FN2)	102 R	07'-11	4/1998	198/7800	142/5600	1267kg	158	6.8	<b>17.5</b>	146	215	31.0	+ Looks great, VTEC more accessible - Steering lacks feel, inert balance	★★★★☆
Honda Civic Type R Championship White	126 D	09'-10	4/1998	198/7800	142/5600	1267kg	158	6.6	-	146	-	31.0	+ Limited-slip diff a welcome addition - It's not available on the standard car	★★★★☆
Honda Civic Type R Mugen	195 R	09'-11	4/1998	237/8300	157/6250	1233kg	195	5.9	-	155	-	-	+ Fantastic on road and track - There's only 20, and they're a tad pricey...	★★★★☆
Honda Civic Type R (EP3)	075 R	01'-05	4/1998	197/7400	145/5900	1204kg	166	6.8	<b>16.9</b>	146	-	31.7	+ Potent and great value - 'Breadvan' looks divide opinion, duff steering	★★★★☆
Kia Proceed GT	207 R	£20,200	4/1591	201/6000	195/1750	1448kg	143	7.4	-	143	171	38.2	+ Fun and appealing package - Lacks sharpness and control at its outer edges	★★★★☆
Lancia Delta Integrale	194 R	88'-93	4/1995	207/5750	220/3500	1300kg	162	5.7	-	137	-	23.9	+ One of the finest cars ever built - Demands love, LHD only	★★★★☆
Mazda 2.1.5 Sport	132 R	£13,495	4/1498	102/6000	101/4000	1030kg	107	10.4	-	117	135	48.7	+ Fun and funky - Feels tinny after a Mini	★★★★☆
Mazda 3 MPS	137 R	06'-13	4/2261	256/5500	280/3000	1385kg	188	6.3	<b>14.5</b>	155	224	29.4	+ Quick, eager and very good value - The steering's iffy	★★★★☆
Mercedes-Benz A45 AMG	194 R	£37,845	4/1991	355/6000	332/2250	1480kg	244	4.3	<b>10.6</b>	155	161	40.9	+ Blisteringly quick everywhere - Not as rewarding as some slower rivals	★★★★☆
MG3 Style	190 D	£9999	4/1498	104/6000	101/4750	1155kg	91	10.4	-	108	136	48.7	+ Decent chassis, performance and price - Thrashy engine, cheap cabin	★★★★☆
Mini Cooper (F56)	194 D	£15,300	3/1499	134/4500	162/1250	1085kg	125	7.9	-	130	105	62.8	+ Punchy three-cylinder engine, good chassis - Tubby styling	★★★★☆
Mini Cooper S (F56)	196 D	£18,665	4/1998	189/4700	206/1250	1160kg	166	6.8	-	146	133	49.6	+ Still has that Mini DNA - Expensive with options; naff dash displays	★★★★☆
Mini John Cooper Works (F56)	211 R	£23,050	4/1998	228/5200	236/1250	1200kg	193	6.3	-	153	155	42.2	+ Fast, agile, super-nimble - OE tyres lack outright grip	★★★★☆
Mini John Cooper Works Coupe (R58)	164 R	£23,805	4/1598	208/6000	206/2000	1175kg	180	6.3	-	149	165	39.8	+ The usual raucous Mini JCW experience - But with a questionable 'helmet' roof...	★★★★☆
Mini Cooper (R56)	185 F	09'-14	4/1598	120/6000	118/4250	1075kg	113	9.1	-	126	127	52.3	+ Brilliant ride and composure; could be all the Mini you need - You'll still buy the 'S'	★★★★☆
Mini Cooper S (R56)	149 R	06'-14	4/1598	181/5500	171/1600	1140kg	161	7.0	-	142	136	48.7	+ New engine, Mini quality - Front end not quite as direct as the old car's	★★★★☆
Mini Cooper SD (R56)	158 D	11'-14	4/1995	141/4000	225/1750	1150kg	125	8.0	-	134	114	65.7	+ A quick diesel Mini with impressive mpg - But no Cooper S alternative	★★★★☆
Mini John Cooper Works (R56)	184 R	08'-14	4/1598	208/6000	206/2000	1160kg	182	7.2	<b>16.7</b>	148	165	39.8	+ A seriously rapid Mini - Occasionally just a little unruly	★★★★☆
Mini John Cooper Works GP (R56)	195 R	13'-14	4/1598	215/6000	206/2000	1160kg	188	6.3	-	150	165	39.8	+ Brazenly hyperactive - Too much for some roads and some tastes	★★★★☆
Mini Cooper S (R50)	077 R	02'-06	4/1598	168/6000	155/4000	1140kg	143	7.8	<b>19.9</b>	135	-	33.6	+ Strong performance, quality feel - Over-long gearing	★★★★☆
Mini Cooper S Works GP (R50)	144 R	06	4/1598	215/7100	184/4600	1090kg	200	6.5	-	149	-	32.8	+ Storming engine, agility - Tacky styling 'enhancements'	★★★★☆
Nissan Juke Nismo RS	208 D	£21,650	4/1618	215/6000	206/3600	1315kg	166	7.0	-	137	165	39.2	+ Quirky character and bold styling - Not a match for a pukka hot hatch	★★★★☆
Peugeot 106 Rallye (Series 2)		97'-98	4/1587	103/6200	97/3500	865kg	121	8.8	-	121	-	34.0	+ Bargain no-frills thrills - Not as much fizz as original 1.3	★★★★☆



Official fuel consumption for the Volvo V40 T2 R-Design (manual) in MPG (l/100km): Urban 38.7 (7.3), Extra Urban 62.8 (4.5), Combined 51.4 (5.5). CO2 Emissions 127g/km. MPG figures are obtained from laboratory testing intended for comparisons between vehicles and may not reflect real driving results.



Ratings

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



Our Choice

Renaultsport Mégane 275 Trophy. This generation of Mégane has got better and better with every update, and the 275 is simply sublime. Optional Ohlins dampers and Cup 2 rubber (taken from the Trophy-R) aren't essential, but improve things even further.



Best of the Rest

The Golf R provides a more grown-up but still hugely entertaining alternative to the Mégane, while its relative, the SEAT Leon Cupra 280, is a real buzz, especially with the Sub8 pack (left) and sticky tyres. The Fiesta ST Mountune is our pick of the smaller hatches.

Superminis / Hot Hatches

Table with 16 columns: Car, Issue no., Price, Engine (bhp/rpm), Weight, 0-60mph, 0-100mph, Max mph, CO2 g/km, EC mpg, and EVO rating. Rows include various hatchback models like Peugeot 106 Rallye, Renaultsport Mégane 275 Trophy, SEAT Ibiza FR, and Volvo C30 T5 R-Design.

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Table with 2 columns: Payment type and Amount. Rows include 48 Monthly payments (£269), Customer deposit (£269), Finance deposit contribution (£750), Representative APR (4.9% APR), On the road price\* (£19,862.50), Total amount of credit (£18,843.50), Interest charges (£2,718.50), Total amount payable (£22,561), Optional final payment (£8,650), Duration of agreement (months) (49), Fixed rate of interest p.a. (2.52%), Mileage per annum (8,000), Excess mileage charge (14.9p per mile).

Finance subject to status. Retail sales only. \*Subject to availability at participating dealers only on vehicles registered between 01/10/15 and 31/12/15. At the end of the agreement there are 3 options: (i) Renew; Part exchange the vehicle. (ii) Retain; Pay the Optional Final Payment to own the vehicle or (iii) Return the vehicle. Further charges may be made subject to the condition or mileage of the vehicle. Terms and conditions apply. Applicants must be 18 or over. Guarantee/Indemnity may be required. Volvo Car Credit RH1 1SR. You will not own the vehicle until all payments are made. The service offer is only applicable when purchasing on Volvo Advantage Personal Contract Purchase on vehicles ordered between 01/10/15 and 31/12/15. Services must be carried out at a Volvo Authorised Repairer. Retail offer only. Excludes fleet operators and business users. See volvocars.co.uk for full terms and conditions.

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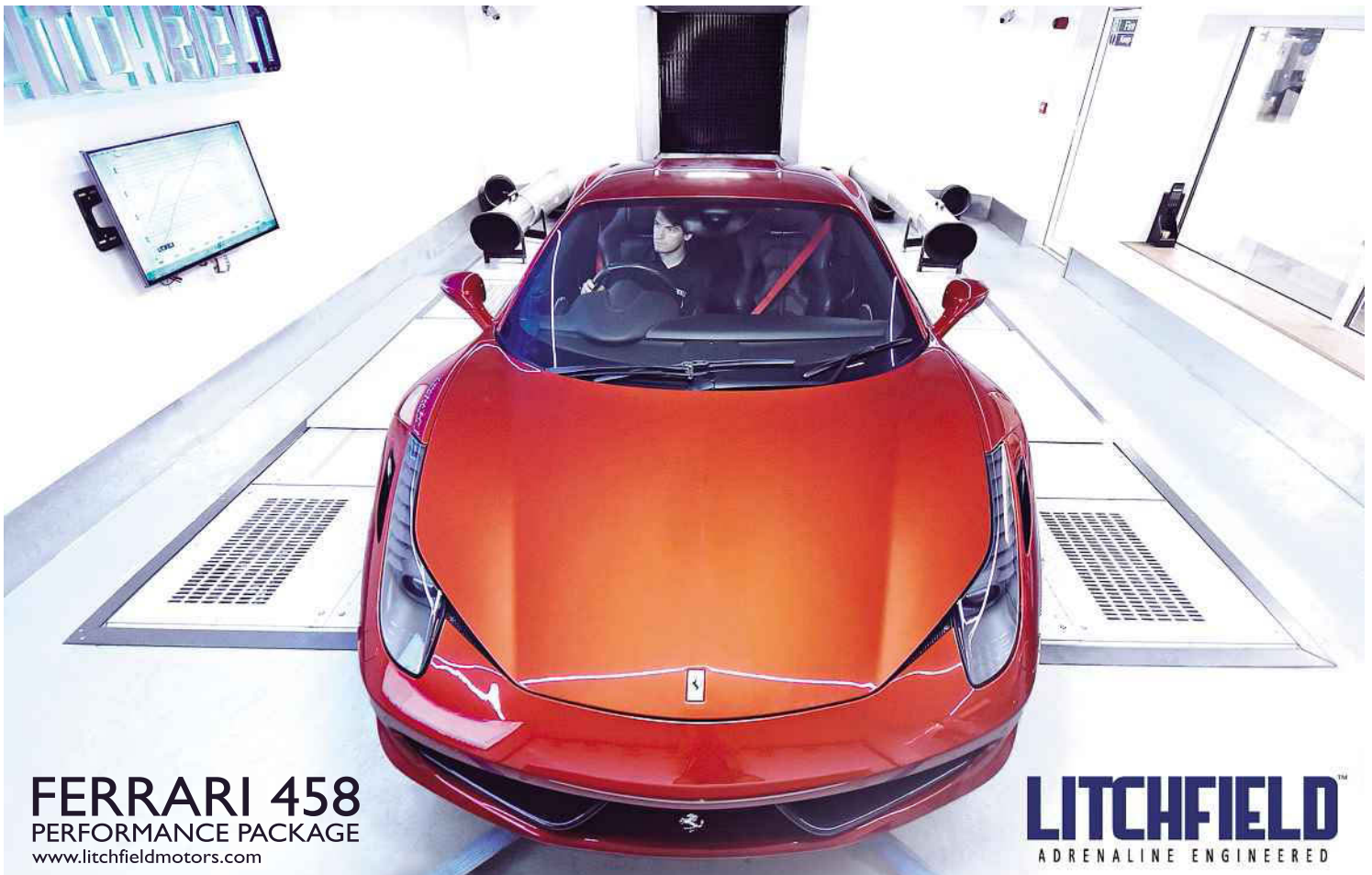
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### Our Choice

**BMW M5.** The turbocharging of BMW's M-cars met with scepticism, but the current M5's 4.4-litre twin-turbo V8 feels a perfect fit. It's a brutally fast car, and there are clever (and useable) adjustable driving modes. The '30 Jahre' special edition, which has an extra 40bhp, is especially worth a look.



### Best of the Rest

Mercedes' E63 AMG offers intoxicating performance, especially with the S upgrade (pictured). BMW's M3 is an appealing all-round package, but its C63 AMG rival has more approachable limits. If you must have an SUV, take a look at BMW's X6 M or Porsche's Macan Turbo or Cayenne GTS.

## Saloons / Estates / 4x4s

Car	Issue no.	Price	Engine cyl/cc	bhp/rpm	lb ft/rpm	Weight	bhp/ton	0-60mph	0-100mph	Max mph	CO2 g/km	EC mpg	EVO rating	
Alpina D3 Biturbo (F30)	192 D	£46,950	6/2993	345/4000	516/1500	1585kg	221	4.6	-	173	139	53.3	+173mph from a 3-litre diesel! Brilliant chassis, too - Auto only	★★★★★
Alpina B3 Biturbo (F30)	188 D	£54,950	6/2979	404/5500	442/3000	1610kg	255	4.2	-	190	177	37.2	+ Understated appearance, monster performance - E90 M3 is better on the limit	★★★★★
Alpina D3 (E90)	120 R	'08-'12	4/1995	211/4000	332/2000	1495kg	143	6.9	-	152	-	52.3	+ Excellent chassis, turbodiesel oomph - Rather narrow powerband	★★★★★
Alpina B5 Biturbo	149 D	£75,150	8/4395	533/5200	538/2800	1920kg	282	4.5	-	198	244	26.9	+ Big performance and top-line luxury - Driver not really involved	★★★★★
Alpina B7 Biturbo	134 D	£98,800	8/4395	533/5200	538/2800	2040kg	265	4.6	-	194	230	28.5	+ Massive performance and top-line luxury - Feels its weight when hustled	★★★★★
Aston Martin Rapide S	201 D	£147,950	12/5935	552/6650	465/5500	1990kg	282	4.2	-	203	300	21.9	+ Oozes star quality; gearbox on 2015MY cars a big improvement - It's cosy in the back	★★★★★
Aston Martin Rapide	141 R	'10-'13	12/5935	470/6000	443/5000	1990kg	240	5.2	-	188	355	-	+ Better than its DB9 sibling - More a 2+2 than a proper four-seater	★★★★★
Audi S3 Saloon	192 D	£33,540	4/1984	296/5500	280/1800	1430kg	210	5.3	-	155	162	26.4	+ On paper a match for the original S4 - In reality much less interesting	★★★★★
Audi S4 (B8)	166 D	£39,610	6/2995	328/5500	324/2900	1685kg	198	4.9	-	155	190	34.9	+ Great powertrain, secure chassis - The RS4	★★★★★
Audi S4 (B7)	073 D	'05-'08	8/4163	339/7000	302/3500	1700kg	206	5.4	-	155	-	-	+ Effortless V8, agile handling - Lacks ultimate finesse of class leaders	★★★★★
Audi RS4 Avant (B8)	192 R	£56,545	8/4163	444/8250	317/4000	1795kg	251	4.5	10.5	174	249	26.4	+ Looks and sounds the part, thunderously fast - Harsh ride, unnatural braking	★★★★★
Audi RS4 (B7)	088 R	'05-'08	8/4163	414/7800	317/5500	1650kg	255	4.5	10.9	155	-	-	+ 414bhp at 7800rpm! And there's an estate version too - Busy under braking	★★★★★
Audi RS4 (B5)	192 R	'00-'02	6/2671	375/6100	325/2500	1620kg	236	4.8	12.1	170	-	17.0	+ Effortless pace - Not the last word in agility. Bends wheel rims	★★★★★
Audi S6	214 R	'94-'95	5/2226	315/6500	302/3000	1595kg	201	4.8	13.1	162	-	18.0	+ Storming performance (thanks to Porsche) - Try finding one	★★★★★
Audi S6	091 D	'06-'11	10/5204	429/6800	398/3000	1910kg	228	5.2	-	155	299	22.4	+ Even faster, and discreet with it - Very muted V10	★★★★★
Audi RS6 Avant (C7)	203 R	£77,995	8/3993	552/5700	516/1750	1935kg	290	3.6	8.2	155	229	28.8	+ Performance, foolproof powertrain, looks - Feels a bit one-dimensional	★★★★★
Audi RS6 Avant (C6)	116 R	'08-'10	10/4991	572/6250	479/1500	2025kg	287	4.3	9.7	155	333	20.2	+ The world's most powerful estate - Power isn't everything	★★★★★
Audi RS6 Avant (C5)	052 R	'02-'04	8/4172	444/5700	413/1950	1865kg	242	4.8	11.6	155	-	19.3	+ The ultimate estate car? - Numb steering	★★★★★
Audi RS7	208 R	£84,480	8/3993	552/5700	516/1750	1920kg	292	3.9	-	155	229	28.8	+ Stonking performance, great looks - Numb driving experience	★★★★★
Audi S7	171 D	£63,375	8/3993	414/5000	406/1400	1945kg	216	4.6	-	155	225	-	+ Looks and drives better than S6 it's based on - Costs £8000 more	★★★★★
Audi S8	164 D	£80,690	8/3993	513/5800	479/1700	1975kg	264	4.1	-	155	237	27.7	+ Quicker and much more economical than before - But still underwhelming to drive	★★★★★
Audi RS Q3	206 D	£45,495	5/2480	335/5300	332/1600	1655kg	206	4.8	-	155	203	32.1	+ Surprisingly characterful; better than many RSs - High centre of gravity	★★★★★
Bentley Flying Spur V8	200 D	£142,800	8/3997	500/6000	487/1700	2342kg	217	4.9	-	183	254	25.9	+ Effortless performance with real top-end kick - Determinedly unsporting	★★★★★
Bentley Flying Spur	185 D	£153,300	12/5998	616/6000	590/1600	2400kg	261	4.3	-	200	343	19.0	+ More power than old Flying Spur - Feels its weight; engine sounds dull	★★★★★
Bentley Mulsanne	178 F	£229,360	8/6752	505/4200	752/1750	2610kg	197	5.1	-	184	342	19.3	+ Drives like a modern Bentley should - Shame it doesn't look like one too	★★★★★
Bentley Mulsanne Speed	210 D	£252,000	8/6752	530/4200	811/1750	2610kg	206	4.8	-	190	342	19.3	+ Characterful; superb build quality - A bit pricey...	★★★★★
BMW 320d (F30)	168 R	£29,475	4/1995	181/4000	280/1750	1495kg	123	7.4	-	146	120	61.4	+ Fleet-friendly new Three is economical yet entertaining - It's a tad noisy	★★★★★
BMW 328i (F30)	165 D	£30,470	4/1997	242/5000	258/1250	1430kg	172	5.8	-	155	149	44.8	+ New-age four-pot 328i is great all-rounder - We miss the six-cylinder soundtrack	★★★★★
BMW 330d M Sport (F30)	180 D	£36,975	6/2993	254/4000	413/2000	1540kg	168	5.6	-	155	129	57.6	+ Great engine, fine handling, good value - Steering confuses weight with feel	★★★★★
BMW 435i Gran Coupe	203 D	£41,865	6/2979	302/5800	295/1200	1685kg	194	5.5	-	155	174	34.9	+ Superb straight-six, fine ride/handling balance - 335i saloon weighs and costs less	★★★★★
BMW M3 (F80)	211 R	£56,590	6/2979	425/5500	406/1850	1520kg	284	4.1	8.6	155	204	32.1	+ Looks, performance, practicality - Body control on rough roads; engine lacks character	★★★★★
BMW M3 (E90)	123 R	'08-'11	8/3999	414/8300	295/3900	1605kg	262	4.9	10.7	165	290	22.8	+ Every bit as good as the E92 M3 coupe - No carbon roof	★★★★★
BMW M3 CRT (E90)	179 R	'11-'12	8/4361	444/8300	324/3750	1580kg	285	4.4	-	180	295	-	+ Saloon chassis + weight savings + GTS engine = best E90 M3 - Just 67 were made	★★★★★
BMW 528i (F10)	164 D	£36,570	4/1997	242/5000	258/1250	1710kg	144	6.2	-	155	152	41.5	+ Four-pot 528i is downsizing near its best - You'll miss the straight-six sound effects	★★★★★
BMW 535i (F10)	141 D	£44,560	6/2979	302/5800	295/1200	1685kg	182	6.1	-	155	185	34.9	+ New 5-series impresses... - But only with all the chassis options ticked	★★★★★
BMW M5 (F10M)	208 R	£73,960	8/4395	552/6000	501/1500	1870kg	300	4.3	-	155	232	28.5	+ Twin-turbocharging suits all-new M5 well - Can feel heavy at times	★★★★★
BMW M5 (E60)	129 R	'04-'10	10/4999	500/7750	384/6100	1755kg	289	4.7	10.4	155	-	19.6	+ Close to being the ultimate supersaloon - SMG gearbox feels old-tech	★★★★★
BMW M5 (E39)	110 R	'99-'03	8/4941	394/6600	369/3800	1795kg	223	4.9	11.5	155	-	-	+ Magnificent V8-engined supersaloon - We'd be nit-picking	★★★★★
BMW M5 (E34)	110 R	'92-'96	6/3795	340/6900	295/4750	1653kg	209	5.9	13.6	155	-	-	+ The Godfather of supersaloons - The family can come too	★★★★★
BMW M5 (E28)	182 R	'86-'88	6/3453	282/6500	251/4500	1431kg	200	6.2	-	151	-	-	+ The original storming saloon - Understated looks	★★★★★
BMW M6 Gran Coupe	190 D	£98,145	8/4395	552/6000	501/1500	1875kg	299	4.2	-	155	232	28.5	+ Enormous performance, stylish looks - Price tag looks silly next to rivals, M5 included	★★★★★
BMW X5 M50d	191 D	£64,525	6/2993	376/4000	546/2000	2190kg	155	5.3	-	155	173	42.8	+ Straight-line pace - Driving experience identical to standard X5, despite the M badge	★★★★★
BMW X6 M	132 D	£93,080	8/4395	567/6000	553/2200	2265kg	245	4.2	-	155	258	25.4	+ Big improvement on its predecessor - Coupe roofline still of questionable taste	★★★★★
BMW X6 M	214 D	'09-'15	8/4395	547/6000	502/1500	2305kg	241	4.7	-	171	325	20.3	+ Fast, refined and comfortable - But it definitely lacks the M factor	★★★★★
BMW 750i	174 D	£71,575	8/4395	449/5500	480/2000	2020kg	226	4.7	-	155	199	-	+ Well specced, impressively refined - Lags far behind the Mercedes S-class	★★★★★
Brabus Bullit	119 R	€330,000	12/6233	720/5100	811/2100	1850kg	395	3.8	-	217	-	-	+ Seven hundred and twenty bhp - Three hundred thousand pounds	★★★★★
Cadillac CTS-V	148 R	£67,030	8/6162	556/6100	551/3800	1928kg	293	3.9	-	191	365	18.1	+ It'll stand out among M-cars and AMGs - But the novelty might wear off	★★★★★
Ford Sierra RS Cosworth 4x4	141 R	'90-'93	4/1993	220/6250	214/3500	1305kg	159	6.6	-	144	-	24.4	+ Fast and furious - Try finding a straight one	★★★★★
Ford Sierra RS Cosworth	'86-'90	4/1993	204/6000	204/4500	1220kg	169	6.2	-	143	-	-	-	+ Road-going Group A racecar - Don't shout about the power output!	★★★★★
Honda Accord Type R	012 R	'98-'03	4/2157	209/7200	158/6700	1306kg	163	6.1	17.4	142	-	29.4	+ One of the finest front-drivers of all time - Lack of image	★★★★★
Infiniti Q50S Hybrid	195 D	£39,995	6/3498	359/6800	402/5000	1750kg	208	5.1	-	155	144	45.6	+ Good powertrain, promising chassis - Lacklustre steering, strong rivals	★★★★★
Jaguar XE S	213 D	£44,865	6/2995	335/6500	332/4500	1590kg	214	4.9	-	155	194	34.9	+ Great chassis, neat design - V6 loses appeal in the real world	★★★★★
Jaguar XF S (2015MY)	214 D	£49,945	6/2995	375/6500	332/4500	1635kg	233	5.0	-	155	198	34.0	+ Outstanding ride and handling balance - Engine lacks appeal	★★★★★
Jaguar XFR	181 D	£65,440	8/5000	503/6000	461/2500	1800kg	284	4.8	10.2	155	270	24.4	+ Brilliant blend of pace and refinement - Doesn't sound as special as it is	★★★★★
Jaguar XFR-S	208 R	£79,995	8/5000	542/6500	501/2500	1800kg	306	4.4	-	186	270	24.4	+ XF gets turned up to 12 - Starting to feel its age	★★★★★
Jaguar XFR-S Sportbrake	203 R	£82,495	8/5000	542/6500	501/2500	1892kg	291	4.6	-	186	297	22.2	+ Looks fantastic, huge performance, nice balance - Not as sharp as the saloon	★★★★★
Jaguar XJ 3.0 V6 Diesel	148 D	£56,870	6/2993	271/4000	442/2000	1700kg	162	6.0	-	155	167	46.3	+ A great Jaguar - But not as great as the XJR...	★★★★★
Jaguar XJR	191 D	£92,395	8/5000	542/6500	502/2500	1805kg	302	4.4	-	174	270	24.4	+ Hot-rod vibe, fine cabin - Opinion-dividing looks	★★★★★
Jaguar XJR	054 R	'03-'09	8/4196	400/6100	408/3500	1665kg	244	5.0	-	155	-	23.0	+ Genuine 7-series rival - 2007 facelift didn't help middle-aged image	★★★★★

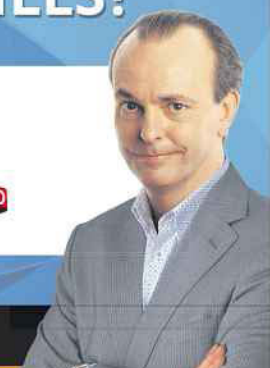
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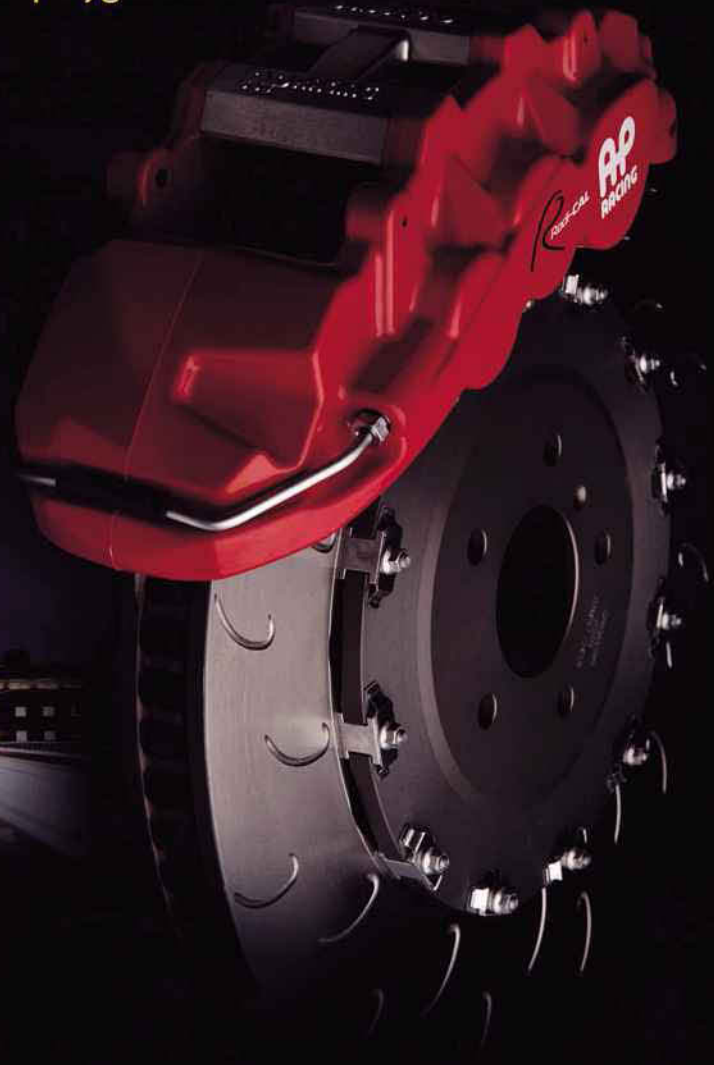
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Saloons / Estates / 4x4s

Car	Issue no.	Price	Engine cyl/cc	bhp/rpm	lb ft/rpm	Weight	bhp/ton	0-60mph	0-100mph	Max mph	CO2 g/km	EC mpg	EVO rating
Land Rover Discovery Sport	205 D	£32,395	4/2179	187/3500	310/1750	1863kg	100	9.8	-	117	159	46.3	★★★★★
Lexus IS F	151 R	'07-'12	8/4969	417/6600	372/5200	1714kg	247	<b>4.7</b>	<b>10.9</b>	173	270	24.4	★★★★★
Lotus Carlton	170 R	'91-'93	6/3615	377/5200	419/4200	1658kg	231	<b>4.8</b>	<b>10.6</b>	176	-	17.0	★★★★★
Maserati Ghibli	186 D	£52,615	6/2979	325/5000	406/1750	1810kg	182	5.6	-	163	223	29.4	★★★★★
Maserati Ghibli S	198 D	£63,760	6/2979	404/5500	406/4500	1810kg	227	5.0	-	177	242	27.2	★★★★★
Maserati Quattroporte S	184 D	£80,115	6/2979	404/5500	406/1750	1860kg	221	5.1	-	177	242	27.2	★★★★★
Maserati Quattroporte S	179 D	£108,185	8/3798	523/6800	479/2250	1900kg	280	4.7	-	190	274	23.9	★★★★★
Maserati Quattroporte S	137 R	'08-'12	8/4691	425/7000	361/4750	1990kg	216	<b>5.1</b>	<b>12.1</b>	174	365	18.0	★★★★★
Maserati Quattroporte Sport GTS	141 R	'08-'12	8/4691	433/7000	361/4750	1990kg	221	5.1	-	177	365	18.0	★★★★★
Maserati Quattroporte	085 R	'04-'08	8/4244	394/7000	333/4500	1930kg	207	5.1	-	171	-	17.9	★★★★★
Maserati Quattroporte Sport GTS	113 D	'07-'08	8/4244	396/7000	339/4250	1930kg	208	5.5	-	167	-	-	★★★★★
Mercedes-Benz 190E 2.5-16	185 F	'89-'92	4/2498	201/6750	177/5500	1360kg	147	7.2	-	142	-	24.4	★★★★★
Mercedes-Benz GLA45 AMG	186 D	£42,270	4/1991	355/6000	332/2250	1510kg	239	4.6	-	155	161	31.0	★★★★★
Mercedes-Benz GLA45 AMG	205 R	£44,595	4/1991	355/6000	332/2250	1510kg	239	4.8	-	155	175	37.7	★★★★★
Mercedes-AMG C63	219 D	£59,800	8/3982	469/5500	479/1750	1640kg	291	4.1	-	155	192	34.5	★★★★★
Mercedes-AMG C63 S	211 R	£66,545	8/3982	503/5500	516/1750	1655kg	309	4.0	-	155	192	34.5	★★★★★
Mercedes-Benz C63 AMG	151 R	'07-'14	8/6208	451/6800	442/5000	1655kg	277	<b>4.4</b>	<b>9.7</b>	160	280	23.5	★★★★★
Mercedes-Benz C55 AMG	088 R	'04-'08	8/5439	367/5250	376/4000	1635kg	228	5.2	-	155	-	23.7	★★★★★
Mercedes-AMG E63	187 D	£74,115	8/5461	549/5500	531/1750	1770kg	315	4.2	-	155	230	28.8	★★★★★
Mercedes-AMG E63 S	208 R	£84,710	8/5461	577/5500	590/1750	1795kg	327	4.1	-	155	229	28.8	★★★★★
Mercedes-Benz E63 AMG (W212)	165 R	'11-'13	8/5461	518/5250	516/1750	1765kg	298	4.2	-	155	230	28.8	★★★★★
Mercedes-Benz E63 AMG (W212)	134 D	'09-'11	8/6208	518/6800	465/5200	1765kg	298	4.5	-	155	295	22.4	★★★★★
Mercedes-Benz E63 AMG (W211)	099 R	'06-'09	8/6208	507/6800	465/5200	1765kg	292	4.5	-	155	-	19.8	★★★★★
Mercedes-Benz E55 AMG	052 R	'03-'06	8/5439	476/6100	516/2650	1760kg	271	<b>4.8</b>	<b>10.2</b>	155	-	21.9	★★★★★
Mercedes-Benz CLS63 AMG L	191 D	£119,835	8/5461	577/5500	664/2250	1995kg	294	4.4	-	155	237	27.9	★★★★★
Mercedes-Benz S63 AMG	148 D	'10-'13	8/5461	536/5500	590/2000	2040kg	267	4.5	-	155	244	26.9	★★★★★
Mercedes-Benz CLS63 AMG S	199 D	£86,500	8/5461	577/5500	590/1750	1795kg	327	4.1	-	155	231	28.5	★★★★★
Mercedes-Benz CLS63 AMG	178 R	'11-'14	8/5461	518/5250	516/1700	1795kg	297	4.2	-	155	231	28.5	★★★★★
Mercedes-Benz CLS63 AMG	099 R	'06-'11	8/6208	507/6100	464/2650	1905kg	270	4.5	-	155	345	19.5	★★★★★
Mercedes-Benz CLA45 AMG S Coupe	213 D	£96,555	8/5461	577/5500	560/1750	1725kg	258	4.2	-	155	278	23.7	★★★★★
Mercedes-Benz ML63 AMG	176 R	£87,005	8/5461	518/5250	516/1750	2270kg	232	4.7	-	155	276	23.9	★★★★★
Mercedes-Benz G63 AMG	172 D	£124,200	8/5461	537/5500	560/2000	2475kg	220	5.4	-	130	322	-	★★★★★
Mitsubishi Evo X FQ-300 SST	118 R	'08-'13	4/1998	290/6500	300/3500	1590kg	185	<b>5.2</b>	<b>13.9</b>	155	256	26.2	★★★★★
Mitsubishi Evo X FQ-360	122 D	'08-'12	4/1998	354/6500	363/3500	1560kg	231	4.1	-	155	328	19.9	★★★★★
Mitsubishi Evo X FQ-330 SST	134 R	'08-'12	4/1998	324/6500	322/3500	1590kg	207	4.4	-	155	256	-	★★★★★
Mitsubishi Evo X FQ-400	181 R	'09-'10	4/1998	403/6500	387/3500	1560kg	262	3.8	-	155	328	-	★★★★★
Mitsubishi Evo IX FQ-340	088 R	'05-'07	4/1997	345/6800	321/4600	1400kg	250	<b>4.3</b>	<b>10.9</b>	157	-	-	★★★★★
Mitsubishi Evo IX MR FQ-360	181 R	'05-'07	4/1997	366/6887	363/3200	1400kg	266	3.9	-	157	-	-	★★★★★
Mitsubishi Evo VIII	055 R	'03-'04	4/1997	276/6500	289/3500	1410kg	199	5.1	-	157	-	-	★★★★★
Mitsubishi Evo VIII MR FQ-300	057 R	'03-'05	4/1997	305/6800	289/3500	1400kg	221	4.8	-	157	-	20.5	★★★★★
Mitsubishi Evo VII	031 R	'02-'03	4/1997	276/6500	282/3500	1360kg	206	<b>5.0</b>	<b>13.0</b>	140	-	20.4	★★★★★
Mitsubishi Evo VII RS Sprint	041 D	'02-'03	4/1997	320/6500	327/6200	1260kg	258	4.4	-	150	-	-	★★★★★
Mitsubishi Evo VI Makinen Edition	200 R	'00-'01	4/1997	276/6500	275/2750	1365kg	205	4.6	-	150	-	-	★★★★★
Porsche Panamera 4S	186 D	£86,080	6/2997	414/6000	383/1750	1875kg	225	4.8	-	177	208	31.7	★★★★★
Porsche Panamera GTS	208 R	£93,391	8/4806	434/6700	383/3500	1925kg	229	4.4	-	178	249	26.4	★★★★★
Porsche Panamera Turbo	137 R	£108,006	8/4806	493/6000	516/2250	1970kg	254	<b>3.6</b>	<b>8.9</b>	188	270	24.6	★★★★★
Porsche Panamera Turbo S	159 D	'11-'13	8/4806	542/6000	590/2250	1995kg	276	3.7	-	190	270	24.6	★★★★★
Porsche Macan S	205 R	£43,648	6/2997	335/5500	339/1450	1865kg	183	5.4	-	157	204	31.4	★★★★★
Porsche Macan Turbo	207 D	£59,648	6/3604	394/6000	406/1350	1925kg	208	<b>4.5</b>	<b>11.1</b>	165	208	30.7	★★★★★
Porsche Cayenne GTS (Mk2, V6)	211 D	£72,523	6/3604	434/6000	442/1600	2110kg	209	5.2	-	163	228	28.3	★★★★★
Porsche Cayenne GTS (Mk2, V8)	173 D	'12-'15	8/4806	414/6500	380/3500	2085kg	202	5.6	-	162	251	26.4	★★★★★
Porsche Cayenne Turbo (Mk2)	212 D	£93,574	8/4806	513/6000	533/2250	2185kg	239	4.5	-	173	261	25.2	★★★★★
Porsche Cayenne Turbo S (Mk2)	184 D	£118,455	8/4806	562/6000	590/2500	2235kg	255	4.1	-	176	267	24.6	★★★★★
Range Rover Evoque Coupe Si4	160 D	£46,660	4/1999	237/6000	251/1900	1670kg	144	7.0	-	135	199	-	★★★★★
Range Rover Sport V8 Supercharged	186 D	£84,350	8/5000	503/6000	460/2500	2335kg	219	5.0	-	155	298	21.7	★★★★★
Range Rover Sport SVR	212 D	£95,150	8/5000	542/6000	501/3500	2335kg	236	4.5	-	162	298	21.7	★★★★★
Range Rover SDV8	180 D	£80,850	8/4367	334/3500	516/1750	2360kg	144	6.5	-	140	229	32.5	★★★★★
Rolls-Royce Ghost	186 D	£216,864	12/6592	563/5250	575/1500	2360kg	242	4.7	-	155	317	20.8	★★★★★
Rolls-Royce Phantom	054 R	£310,200	12/6749	453/5350	531/3500	2560kg	180	5.7	-	149	377	18.0	★★★★★
Subaru WRX STI	201 R	£28,995	4/2457	296/6000	300/4000	1534kg	196	5.2	-	158	242	27.2	★★★★★
Subaru WRX STI	151 D	'10-'13	4/2457	296/6000	300/4000	1505kg	200	5.1	-	158	243	26.9	★★★★★
Subaru Impreza WRX GB270	109 D	'07	4/2457	266/5700	310/3000	1410kg	192	5.2	-	143	-	-	★★★★★
Subaru Impreza STI	090 R	'05-'07	4/2457	276/6000	289/4000	1495kg	188	5.3	-	158	-	25.9	★★★★★
Subaru Impreza STI Spec C *	084 D	'05-'07	4/1994	320/6730	311/3500	1350kg	240	4.3	-	157	-	-	★★★★★
Subaru Impreza RB320	105 R	'07	4/2457	316/6000	332/3750	1495kg	215	4.8	-	155	-	-	★★★★★
Subaru Impreza WRX STI PPP	073 R	'03-'05	4/1994	300/6000	299/4000	1470kg	207	<b>5.2</b>	<b>12.9</b>	148	-	-	★★★★★
Subaru STI Type RA Spec C *	067 R	'03-'05	4/1994	335/7000	280/3750	1380kg	247	<b>4.3</b>	<b>11.1</b>	160	-	-	★★★★★
Subaru Impreza Turbo	011 R	'98-'00	4/1994	215/5600	214/4000	1235kg	177	<b>5.4</b>	<b>14.6</b>	144	-	27.2	★★★★★
Subaru Impreza PI	200 R	'00-'01	4/1994	276/6500	260/4000	1283kg	219	<b>4.9</b>	<b>13.3</b>	150	-	25.0	★★★★★
Subaru Impreza RB5 (PPP)	187 R	'99	4/1994	237/6000	258/3500	1235kg	195	<b>5.0</b>	<b>14.1</b>	143	-	-	★★★★★
Subaru Impreza 22B	188 R	'98-'99	4/2212	276/6000	265/3200	1270kg	220	<b>5.0</b>	<b>13.1</b>	150	-	-	★★★★★
Tesla Model S P85D	208 D	£79,080	515kW	691	687	2239kg	314	3.2	-	155	0	n/a	★★★★★
Tesla Model S Performance	196 R	'14	310kW	416	442	2100kg	201	4.2	-	130	0	n/a	★★★★★
Vauxhall Insignia VXR SuperSport	189 D	£29,824	6/2792	321/5250	321/5250	1825kg	179	5.6	-	170	249	26.6	★★★★★
Vauxhall Vectra VXR	102 D	'06-'09	6/2792	276/5500	262/1800	1580kg	177	6.1	-	161	-	27.4	★★★★★
Vauxhall VXR8 GTS	215 D	£54,499	8/6162	576/6150	545/3850	1834kg	319	4.2	-	155	363	18.5	★★★★★
Volvo V60 Polestar	197 D	£49,775	6/2953	345/5250	369/3000	1759kg	199	5.0	-	155	237	27.7	★★★★★

**POCKET buying guide**

**Jaguar XKR & XKR-S**

Years 2006-2014 **Engine** V8, 5000cc, supercharger **Power** 503bhp @ 6000-6500rpm **Torque** 461lb ft @ 2500-5500rpm **0-60mph** 4.6sec

**Top speed** 155mph (spec is for 5.0 KKR)



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### Our Choice

**Porsche Boxster Spyder.** The Boxster is the benchmark in its class for a good reason: it's simply a fabulous all-rounder. The new Spyder, which gets the 3.8-litre engine from the 911 Carrera S, would be our pick, but the 3.4-litre GT3 and S, and even the basic 2.7, are all true five-star cars, too.



### Best of the Rest

Lotus's Evija S Roadster counters the Boxster with a more focused driving experience, while the more-affordable Elise continues to defy its age. Jaguar's F-type also impresses in both V6 (left) and V8 forms, but for the ultimate thrills, get a Caterham 620R, Ariel Atom or Radical.

## Sports Cars / Convertibles

Table with columns: Car, Issue no., Price, Engine, bhp, lb ft, Weight, bhp/ton, 0-60mph, 0-100mph, Max mph, CO2 g/km, EC mpg, and EVO rating. Contains a list of sports cars and convertibles with their specifications and editorial ratings.



**The 172 followed in the tyre tracks of the legendary Clio Williams. Here's what Richard Meaden thought**

## Renaultsport Clio 172 Issue 016, February 2000

'The 2-litre engine is fabulous: always keen, always responsive, solid from 3000rpm and singing between 4500 and the limiter. Be in no doubt that this is a very strong 170bhp in a very small car.

'Despite its modest footprint, you can commit the Clio ambitiously into corners. The front end is utterly faithful and

predictable, and the tail can be made to slide a lot or a little by lifting off the throttle. Far from being savagely unforgiving, the 172 has just about the most finely adjustable front-drive chassis this side of an Integra Type R.

'The Clio 172 does a fine job of carrying Renault's proud hot hatch heritage into a new millennium.



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## Sports Cars / Convertibles

Car	Issue no.	Price	Engine cyl/cc	bhp/rpm	lb ft/rpm	Weight	bhp/ton	0-60mph	0-100mph	Max mph	CO2 g/km	EC mpg	EVO rating	
Lotus Elise 1.6 Club Racer	183 R	£30,900	4/1598	134/6800	118/4400	852kg	160	6.0	-	127	149	45.0	+ Even lighter, even more focused - A touch pricey for a stripped-out Elise	★★★★★
Lotus Elise S	172 R	£37,200	4/1798	217/6800	184/4600	924kg	239	4.2	-	145	175	37.5	+ New supercharged Elise boasts epic grip and pace - £37k before (pricey) options...	★★★★★
Lotus Elise S Club Racer	189 D	£37,200	4/1798	217/6800	184/4600	905kg	244	4.2	-	145	175	37.5	+ Purist approach intensifies ability - Lightest, option-free spec requires commitment	★★★★★
Lotus Elise S Cup	207 D	£43,500	4/1798	217/6800	184/4600	932kg	237	4.2	-	140	175	37.5	+ Rewards precision like no other Elise - You can't remove the roof	★★★★★
Lotus Exige S Roadster	186 R	£55,500	6/3456	345/7000	295/4500	1166kg	301	3.8	-	145	235	28.0	+ Like the hard-top Exige S, but more road-friendly - Boxster S is a better all-rounder	★★★★★
Lotus Elise R	068 R	'04-'11	4/1796	189/7800	133/6800	860kg	223	<b>5.6</b>	<b>13.9</b>	150	196	34.4	+ Most thrillsome Elise yet - Blaring engine note	★★★★★
Lotus Elise SC	131 R	'08-'11	4/1794	218/8000	156/5000	870kg	254	<b>4.5</b>	<b>11.4</b>	148	199	33.2	+ All the usual Elise magic - Supercharged engine lacks sparkle	★★★★★
Lotus Elise S 1.8	104 R	'06-'10	4/1794	134/6200	127/4200	860kg	158	<b>6.3</b>	<b>18.7</b>	127	-	37.2	+ Brilliant entry-level Elise - Precious little	★★★★★
Lotus Elise 111S	049 R	'02-'04	4/1796	156/7000	129/4650	860kg	197	5.1	-	131	-	40.9	+ A genuinely useable Elise - Air-con? In an Elise?	★★★★★
Lotus Elise Sport 135	040 D	'03	4/1796	135/6200	129/4650	726kg	189	5.4	-	129	-	-	+ One of our fave S2 Elises - Brakes need more bite and pedal feel	★★★★★
Lotus Elise Sport 190	044 R	'03	4/1796	190/7800	128/5000	710kg	272	<b>4.7</b>	<b>12.1</b>	135	-	-	+ Fabulous trackday tool - Pricey	★★★★★
Lotus Elise (S1)	126 R	'96-'01	4/1796	118/5500	122/3000	731kg	164	<b>6.1</b>	<b>18.5</b>	126	-	39.4	+ A modern classic - A tad impractical?	★★★★★
Lotus 2-Eleven Supercharged	126 R	'07-'11	4/1796	252/8000	199/7000	670kg	382	3.8	-	150	-	-	+ As good to drive as it is to look at - Lacks the grunt of some rivals	★★★★★
Lotus 2-Eleven GT4	138 R	'09-'11	4/1796	266/8200	179/7200	670kg	403	3.7	-	155	-	-	+ Evo Track Car of the Year 2009 - It's a 76-grand Lotus with no roof	★★★★★
Lotus 2-Eleven	126 R	'07-'11	4/1796	189/7800	133/6800	720kg	267	4.3	-	140	-	-	+ Not far off supercharged car's pace - Pricey once it's made road-legal	★★★★★
Lotus 340R	126 R	'00	4/1796	190/7800	146/5000	658kg	293	<b>4.5</b>	<b>12.5</b>	126	-	-	+ Hardcore road-racer... that looks like a dune buggy from Mars	★★★★★
Lotus Elan SE	095 R	'89-'95	4/1588	165/6600	148/4200	1022kg	164	6.7	-	137	-	21.0	+ Awesome front-drive chassis - Rather uninviting	★★★★★
Maserati GranCabrio	142 D	£98,940	8/4691	434/7000	332/4750	1980kg	223	5.2	-	177	337	19.5	+ As good to drive as it is to look at - Lacks the grunt of some rivals	★★★★★
Maserati GranCabrio Sport	161 D	£104,535	8/4691	444/7000	376/4750	1980kg	228	5.0	-	177	377	19.5	+ Looks, performance, cruising ability - Brakes could be sharper	★★★★★
Maserati GranCabrio MC	185 D	£112,370	8/4691	454/7000	383/4750	1973kg	234	4.9	-	179	337	19.5	+ Most powerful GranCabrio yet - The GranCabrio is starting to show its age	★★★★★
Mazda MX-5 2.0i Sport (Mk4)	212 R	£22,695	4/1998	158/6000	147/4600	1047kg	153	7.3	-	133	161	40.9	+ Lightest MX-5 since the Mk1 - Lacks intensity	★★★★★
Mazda MX-5 2.0i Sport Tech (Mk3.5)	212 R	'09-'15	4/1999	158/7000	139/5000	1098kg	146	7.6	-	138	181	36.2	+ Handles brilliantly again; folding hard-top also available - Less than macho image	★★★★★
Mazda MX-5 1.8i (Mk3)	091 R	'05-'09	4/1998	124/6500	123/4500	1080kg	108	9.3	-	122	-	-	+ Impressive on road and track - Not hardcore enough for some	★★★★★
Mazda MX-5 1.8i (Mk2)	017 R	'98-'05	4/1839	146/7000	124/5000	1065kg	140	8.6	-	123	-	32.5	+ Affordable ragtops don't get much better - Cheap cabin	★★★★★
Mazda MX-5 1.6 (Mk1)	131 R	'89-'97	4/1797	115/6500	100/5500	971kg	120	9.0	-	114	-	-	+ The original and still (pretty) much the best - Less than rigid	★★★★★
Mercedes-Benz SLK 350 Sport	161 R	£44,605	6/3498	302/6500	273/3500	1465kg	209	5.5	-	155	167	39.8	+ Best non-AMG SLK yet - Still no Boxster-beater	★★★★★
Mercedes-Benz SLK 55 AMG	186 R	£55,345	8/5461	416/6800	398/4500	1615kg	262	4.6	-	155	195	33.6	+ Quicker and more economical than ever - Needs to be sharper, too	★★★★★
Mercedes-Benz SLK 55 AMG	087 R	'05-'10	8/5439	355/5750	376/4000	1575kg	229	4.9	-	155	-	23.5	+ Superb engine, responsive chassis - No manual option, ESP spoils fun	★★★★★
Mercedes-Benz SLK 55 AMG Black Series	110 R	'07-'08	8/5439	394/5750	383/3750	1495kg	268	<b>4.9</b>	<b>11.2</b>	174	-	-	+ AMG gets serious - Dull-witted GT-Ronic auto box, uneven dynamics	★★★★★
Mercedes-Benz SL500	169 D	£81,915	8/4663	429/5250	516/1800	1710kg	255	4.6	-	155	212	31.0	+ Wafly performance, beautifully engineered - Lacks ultimate sports car feel	★★★★★
Mercedes-Benz SL63 AMG	171 D	£112,510	8/5461	530/5500	590/2000	1770kg	304	4.3	-	155	231	-	+ Monster performance, lighter than before - Still heavy, steering lacks consistency	★★★★★
Mercedes-Benz SL65 AMG	183 D	£170,815	12/5980	621/4800	737/2300	1875kg	336	4.0	-	155	270	24.4	+ Chassis just about deals with the power - Speed limits	★★★★★
Mercedes-Benz SL63 AMG	117 D	'08-'13	8/6208	518/6800	464/5200	1970kg	278	4.6	-	155	328	20.0	+ More focused than old SL55 AMG - Lost some of its all-round appeal	★★★★★
Mercedes-Benz SL55 AMG	070 R	'02-'07	8/5439	493/6100	516/2650	1955kg	256	<b>4.6</b>	<b>10.2</b>	155	-	-	+ As fast as a Murciélago - Not as much fun	★★★★★
Mercedes-Benz SL65 AMG	071 D	'04-'10	12/5980	604/4800	737/2000	2035kg	302	4.1	-	155	-	-	+ Gob-smacking performance - Gob-smacking pricey	★★★★★
Mercedes-Benz SL63 AMG Roadster	167 R	'12-'14	8/6208	563/6800	479/4750	1660kg	345	3.7	-	197	308	21.4	+ Loses none of the coupe's talents - But (understandably) loses the gullwing doors	★★★★★
Morgan 3 Wheeler	198 R	£25,950	2/1976	82/6200	269/5200	525kg	159	6.0	-	115	215	30.3	+ Quirky, characterful, brilliant - Can become a two-wheeler if you push too hard	★★★★★
Morgan Plus 8 Speedster	202 R	£71,140	8/4799	362/6300	370/3600	1000kg	368	4.2	-	148	282	23.3	+ Fantastic old-school roadster experience - Gets unsettled by big bumps	★★★★★
Morgan Plus 8	171 R	£86,345	8/4799	362/6300	370/3600	1100kg	334	4.4	-	155	256	25.7	+ Hilarious mix of old looks and new mechanicals - Refinement is definitely old-school	★★★★★
Morgan Aero SuperSports	145 R	£128,045	8/4799	362/6300	370/3600	1180kg	312	4.2	-	170	-	-	+ As above, with a V8 and targa top - It's proper supercar money	★★★★★
Morgan Aero 8	105 R	'02-'08	8/4799	362/6300	361/3400	1100kg	334	4.5	-	170	-	25.2	+ Glorious sound, view over bonnet, dynamics - Awkward-looking rear	★★★★★
Nissan 370Z Roadster	143 R	'10-'14	6/3696	326/7000	269/5200	1554kg	213	5.5	-	155	262	25.2	+ The Zed's old-school character remains intact - Its purposeful looks don't	★★★★★
Porsche Boxster (981)	172 R	£38,810	6/2706	261/6700	206/4500	1310kg	202	5.4	-	164	192	34.5	+ Goes and looks better; cleanest Boxster ever - Steering now electric to help cut CO2	★★★★★
Porsche Boxster S (981)	186 R	£47,035	6/3436	311/6700	265/4500	1320kg	239	5.1	-	173	206	32.1	+ Boxster steps out of 911's shadow - But gets 911's less appealing electric steering	★★★★★
Porsche Boxster GTS (981)	203 D	£52,879	6/3436	325/6700	273/4500	1345kg	246	5.0	-	174	211	31.4	+ Superb dynamics, fantastic engine, great looks - Sport suspension is very firm	★★★★★
Porsche Boxster Spyder (981)	215 F	£60,459	6/3800	370/6700	310/4750	1315kg	286	4.5	-	180	230	28.5	+ The fastest, most rewarding Boxster yet - Feedback trails the Cayman GT4s	★★★★★
Porsche Boxster (987)	105-12	'05-'12	6/2893	252/6400	214/4400	1335kg	192	5.9	-	163	221	30.0	+ Second-gen Boxster's as brilliant as ever - It's a typically Porsche redesign	★★★★★
Porsche Boxster S (987)	161 R	'05-'12	6/3436	306/6400	265/5500	1355kg	229	5.3	-	170	223	29.7	+ As above, but with more power - Lighter steering than before	★★★★★
Porsche Boxster Spyder (987)	188 R	'10-'12	6/3436	316/7200	273/4750	1275kg	252	5.0	-	166	221	29.1	+ Lighter, more driver-centric Boxster - Collapsed-brolly roof not the most practical	★★★★★
Porsche Boxster (986 2.7)	049 R	'99-'04	6/2687	228/6300	192/4700	1275kg	182	6.3	-	155	-	29.1	+ Still an impeccable sports car - Very little	★★★★★
Porsche Boxster S (986)	070 R	'99-'04	6/3179	260/6200	228/4700	1320kg	200	5.5	-	164	-	26.9	+ Added power is seductive - As above	★★★★★
Porsche 911 Carrera Cabriolet (991)	183 R	£82,169	6/3436	345/7400	288/5600	1470kg	238	5.0	-	177	216	30.7	+ Brilliant engine - Doesn't quite have the 'magic at any speed' character of previous 911s	★★★★★
Porsche 911 Carrera S Cabriolet (991)	171 R	£92,204	6/3800	394/7400	324/5600	1485kg	270	4.7	-	187	228	29.1	+ All-new open 911 drives just like the coupe - Which means the same artificial steering	★★★★★
Porsche 911 Turbo Cabriolet (997)	139 D	'07-'12	6/3800	493/6000	479/1950	1645kg	305	3.8	-	194	275	24.1	+ Absurdly quick and capable drop-top - We'd still take the coupe	★★★★★
Radical SR3 SL	174 R	£81,300	4/2000	300/6000	265/4000	795kg	383	3.0	-	161	-	-	+ Our 2011 Track Car of the Year, and it's road-legal - You'll need to wrap up warm	★★★★★
Radical RXC Turbo 500	209 D	£143,400	6/3496	530/6100	481/5000	1100kg	490	2.6	-	185	-	-	+ Huge performance, intuitive adjustability, track ability - Compromised for road use	★★★★★
Renault Sport Spider	183 R	'96-'99	4/1998	148/6000	136/4500	930kg	157	6.5	-	131	-	-	+ Rarity, fabulous unassisted steering feel - Heavier than you'd hope	★★★★★
Toyota MR2	187 R	'00-'06	4/1794	138/6400	125/4400	975kg	141	<b>7.2</b>	<b>21.2</b>	130	-	38.2	+ Tight lines, taut dynamics - Minimal luggage space	★★★★★
TVR Tamora	070 R	'01-'07	6/3605	350/7200	290/5500	1050kg	338	4.5	-	160	-	-	+ Well-sorted soft-top TVR - Awkward styling	★★★★★
TVR Tuscan Convertible	091 R	'05-'07	6/3996	365/6800	315/6000	1100kg	337	3.8	8.1	195+	-	-	+ Spirit of the Griff reborn - Over 195mph? Really?	★★★★★
TVR Chimaera 5.0	007 R	'93-'03	8/4988	320/5500	320/3750	1060kg	307	4.6	-	167	-	26.4	+ Gorgeous noise, tarmac-rippling grunt - Details	★★★★★
TVR Griffith 4.3	068 R	'82-'93	8/4280	280/5500	305/4000	1060kg	268	<b>4.8</b>	<b>11.2</b>	148	-	-	+ The car that made TVR. Cult status - Mere details	★★★★★
TVR Griffith 500	009 R	'93-'01	8/4988	320/5500	320/3750	1060kg	307	<b>4.8</b>	<b>11.2</b>	167	-	22.1	+ Griff diamond - A few rough edges	★★★★★
Vauxhall VX220	023 R	'00-'04	4/2198	145/5800	150/4000	875kg	168	5.6	-	136	-	34.4	+ Absurdly good Vauxhall - The badge?	★★★★★
Vauxhall VX220 Turbo	066 R	'03-'05	4/1998	197/5500	184/1950	930kg	215	4.7	-	151	-	-	+ Nothing comes close for the money - Marginal everyday usability	★★★★★
Vuhi 05	215 D	£59,995	4/2000	285/5600	310/3000	725kg	405	3.7	-	152	-	-	+ Impressive pace and quality - You can get a more thrills from a Caterham at half the price	★★★★★
Zenos E10 S	214 R	£30,595	4/1999	250/7000	295/2500	725kg	350	<b>4.2</b>	-	145	-	-	+ Neutral and exploitable - Prescriptive balance	★★★★★



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Car	Lap time	Peak mph	Issue no.	Conditions
<b>Radical SR8LM (fastest car)</b>	<b>1:13.6</b>	<b>127.8</b>	<b>138</b>	<b>Dry</b>
<b>Caparo T1 (fastest supercar)</b>	<b>1:14.8</b>	<b>130.9</b>	<b>131</b>	<b>Dry</b>
Ferrari 458 Italia	1:19.3	120.0	159	Dry
Gumpert Apollo S	1:19.4	120.4	119	Dry
McLaren MP4-12C (Corsa tyres)	1:19.6	121.2	159	Dry
Caterham Levante V8	1:19.6	118.6	131	Dry
Porsche 997 GT2 RS	1:19.9	122.3	158	Dry
Lotus 2-Eleven GT4	1:20.1	113.2	138	Dry
Caterham Superlight R500	1:20.2	115.7	119	Dry
McLaren MP4-12C	1:20.6	120.9	159	Dry
Noble M600	1:20.8	121.8	159	Dry
<b>Porsche 997 GT3 RS 4.0 (fastest coupe)</b>	<b>1:21.0</b>	<b>118.2</b>	<b>160</b>	<b>Dry</b>
Lamborghini Murciélago LP670-4 SV	1:21.3	121.1	134	Dry
Ariel Atom 3 Supercharged	1:21.5	113.6	119	Dry
KTM X-Bow (300bhp)	1:21.5	112.7	138	Dry
Ferrari 430 Scuderia	1:21.7	117.2	121	Dry
Porsche 997.2 GT3 RS (3.8)	1:21.9	116.8	150	Dry
Lamborghini Gallardo LP560-4	1:22.5	119.1	122	Dry
Brooke Double R	1:22.5	113.2	119	Dry
Lamborghini Murciélago LP640	1:22.9	116.7	143	Dry
Porsche Carrera GT	1:23.3	115.2	119	Dry
Porsche 997.2 GT3	1:23.3	114.5	138	Dry
Porsche 997 Turbo S	1:23.5	117.5	146	Dry
Porsche 997 GT2	1:23.5	115.1	119	Dry
Nissan GT-R (2008MY)	1:23.6	113.1	119	Dry
Porsche 991 Carrera	1:23.6	112.5	182	Dry
Porsche 991 Carrera Cabriolet	1:23.9	112.3	183	Dry
Mercedes-Benz SL63 AMG	1:23.9	-	YouTube	Dry
Porsche 997 Turbo	1:24.1	113.5	136	Damp
Lotus 340R (190bhp)	1:24.2	110.0	135	Dry
Porsche Boxster S (981)	1:24.2	109.3	183	Dry
Caterham Superlight R300	1:24.3	101.5	138	Dry
Maserati GranTurismo MC Stradale	1:24.5	115.1	160	Dry
Porsche Cayman S (981)	1:24.5	109.2	202	Dry
Mercedes-Benz SLS AMG	1:24.6	115.7	146	Dry
Porsche Boxster Spyder (987)	1:24.7	107.7	167	Dry
Caterham 7 Supersport	1:24.8	101.6	YouTube	Dry
Ferrari California	1:25.0	111.8	134	Dry
KTM X-Bow	1:25.0	105.0	123	Dry
BMW E92 M3 Coupe	1:25.1	109.1	162	Dry
Mercedes-Benz SL65 AMG Black	1:25.2	108.6	131	Dry
Jaguar F-type V8 S	1:25.2	111.2	183	Dry
Audi RS5	1:25.4	108.8	162	Dry
Audi R8 Spyder V8	1:25.5	107.0	167	Dry
Porsche Cayman R	1:25.5	106.8	158	Dry
Aston Martin V8 Vantage Roadster	1:25.6	109.1	183	Dry
<b>BMW M5 (F10) (fastest saloon)</b>	<b>1:25.7</b>	<b>112.0</b>	<b>165</b>	<b>Dry</b>
Jaguar XKR-S	1:25.7	-	YouTube	Dry
Aston Martin V12 Vantage	1:25.8	110.9	146	Dry
Mitsubishi Evo X FQ-400	1:25.9	107.5	138	Dry
BMW 1-series M Coupe	1:25.9	106.4	158	Dry
Mitsubishi Evo X RS 360	1:26.1	106.6	153	Dry
<b>Renaultsport Mégane 265 Trophy (fastest hot hatch)</b>	<b>1:26.1</b>	<b>105.3</b>	<b>166</b>	<b>Dry</b>
Jaguar F-type S Coupe	1:26.2	106.3	202	Dry
Audi TTRS	1:26.3	107.2	149	Dry
Aston Martin DBS	1:26.4	109.5	143	Dry
Porsche Panamera Turbo	1:26.5	109.2	137	Dry
<b>Audi RS6 Avant (C7) (fastest estate)</b>	<b>1:26.5</b>	-	<b>YouTube</b>	<b>Dry</b>
BMW M135i	1:26.6	-	YouTube	Dry
Jaguar XJ220	1:26.7	111.7	131	Dry
<b>Porsche Cayenne Turbo S (fastest 4x4)</b>	<b>1:26.8</b>	<b>106.1</b>	<b>YouTube</b>	<b>Dry</b>
Mercedes-Benz E63 AMG	1:26.8	104.9	165	Dry
Porsche Cayenne Turbo	1:26.9	107.4	158	Dry
Mercedes-Benz GLA45 AMG	1:26.9	-	205	Dry
Lotus Evora	1:27.1	104.2	145	Dry
Nissan 370Z	1:27.1	104.0	158	Dry
Jaguar F-type V6 S	1:27.2	105.0	YouTube	Dry
Porsche Panamera S	1:27.3	102.4	165	Dry
Renaultsport Mégane 265 Cup	1:27.3	-	YouTube	Dry
Mercedes-Benz C63 AMG Coupe	1:27.7	111.0	162	Dry
Lotus Elise SC	1:27.7	104.6	131	Dry
Audi S3	1:27.7	-	YouTube	Dry
Vauxhall VX88 Bathurst S	1:27.8	106.1	131	Dry
BMW E46 M3 CSL	1:27.8	105.4	153	Dry
Renaultsport Mégane R26.R	1:27.8	103.3	-	-
Audi RS6 Avant (C6) (fastest estate)	1:27.9	111.0	121	Dry
Jaguar XFR	1:27.9	108.1	137	Dry
SEAT Leon Cupra 280	1:28.0	-	YouTube	Dry
Lexus IS-F	1:28.1	106.4	151	Dry
Porsche Boxster S (987)	1:28.1	105.4	120	Dry
Subaru WRX STI	1:28.3	101.6	157	Dry
Porsche Macan S	1:28.3	-	205	Dry
SEAT Leon Cupra R	1:28.7	102.4	162	Dry
Bentley Continental Supersports	1:29.2	105.8	149	Dry
Lotus Elise Club Racer	1:29.2	95.5	162	Dry
Renaultsport Mégane 250 Cup	1:29.9	101.4	156	Dry
Vauxhall VX88 Clubsport Tourer	1:29.9	-	YouTube	Dry
Honda NSX	1:30.1	101.3	145	Dry

## TRACK MAP



- Location Bedford Autodrome
- Length 1.85 miles (2.98 kilometres)
- Direction Anti-clockwise

Note: West Circuit reconfigured in May 2015. The above times are from before this date. Newer times are not comparable.

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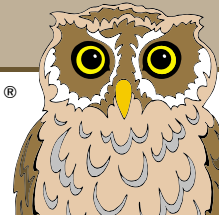
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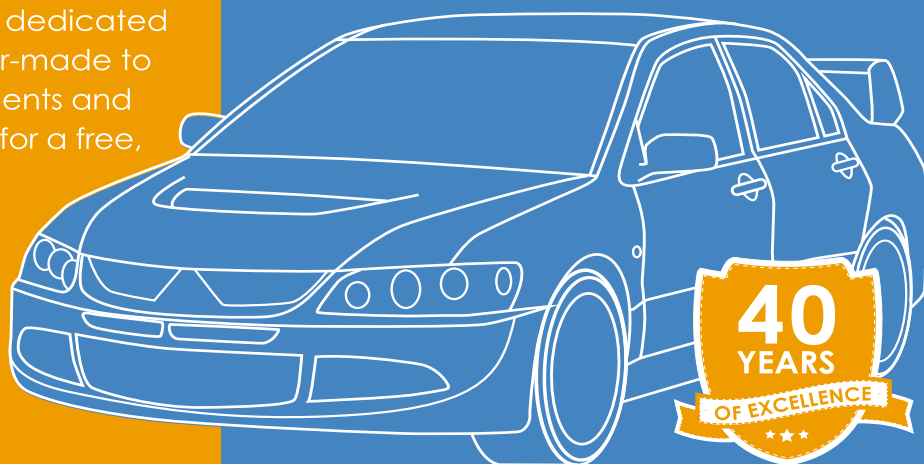
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# Art of speed



## Lancia Delta Integrale Evo rear spoiler

by RICHARD LANE | PHOTOGRAPHY by JAMES LIPMAN

**C** **CONSPICUOUS AERO ON HATCHBACKS.** It's a controversial subject, chiefly because if a Porsche GT3 RS 4.0 needs to devour roughly the length of football pitch per second to develop any meaningful downforce, what good is a sliver of plastic on the roof of an A-class?

Not a lot, apparently. Mark Webber once said he'd like to find a driver who could tell whether or not a second-gen Focus RS was wearing its wing 'in any situation, ever'. That from a man who worked with Adrian Newey.

So where, with its primitive spoiler, does this leave the no-nonsense Integrale? Not exactly on the brink of the frippery wormhole (down which lurks the Escort Cosworth), but perhaps too close for comfort.

Lancia made many changes to its homologated hatch for the 'Evo' version of '91, most backed by science, but the aluminium spoiler wasn't one of them. There were bulbous new arches for widened tracks, reworked sparks and injectors gave the 2-litre engine real flexibility, comparatively lightweight Speedline wheels usurped the pepper-pots, and a pig-eyed expression was adopted with smaller but more intense headlights. Yet while all these saw competition, at first the spoiler's only value was as a quick way of telling whether the 'Grale that just left your M3 for dead was

a hardcore Evo or just a garden model. (After all, both would do the job.)

Every car was born with its tail meekly flat. However, factory-supplied brackets meant owners could instigate a personality change by raising it through two angles of attack. And despite the lovely image above, no one went out half-cocked. You either had it bolt-upright and remortgaged the house to cover the fuel bills or kept it streamlined but risked your £23,000 hatchback-cum-supercar being mistaken for something more ordinary. If your spoiler just happened to have 'MARTINI RACING' scribed loud and proud along its length... well, the choice was made for you.

Eventually it did go racing. Already approved for the road, onto the rally cars it went during the '92 season, and in the hands of Kankkunen and Auriol proved effective in reducing lift. It took the skill of those men, driving flat-out, probably on a loose surface, steering from the rear, and of course with no fuel bills to worry about, to exploit any gains, but that was hardly the point. The spoiler now possessed the rarest commodity in the world of aerodynamic road-car addenda: credibility.

Even so, what owners really loved was that it gave their cars, which took on the nose-down-tail-up likeness of a beagle furiously tracking a scent, even more charisma. In fact the car was now full to bursting. ❧

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