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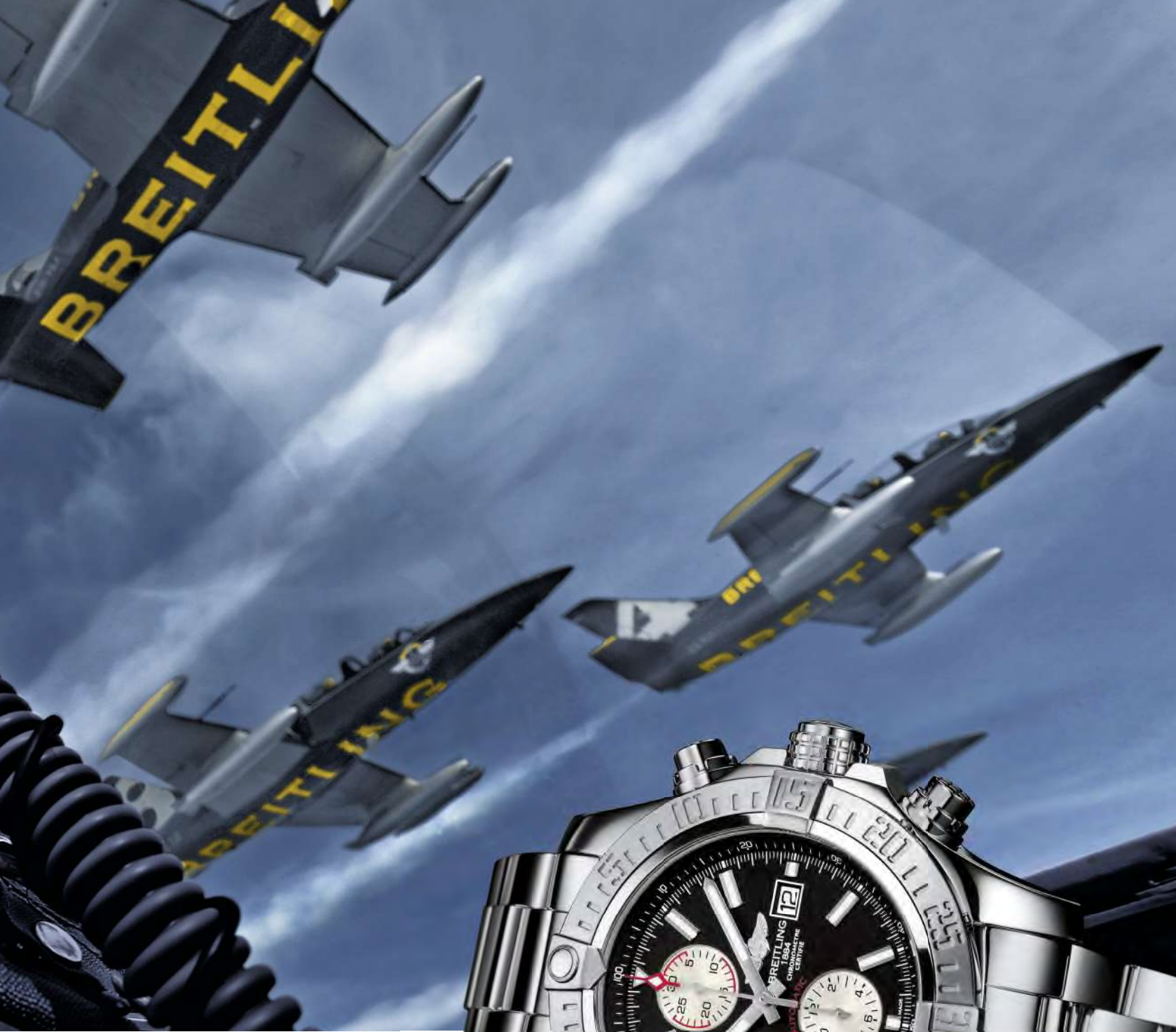
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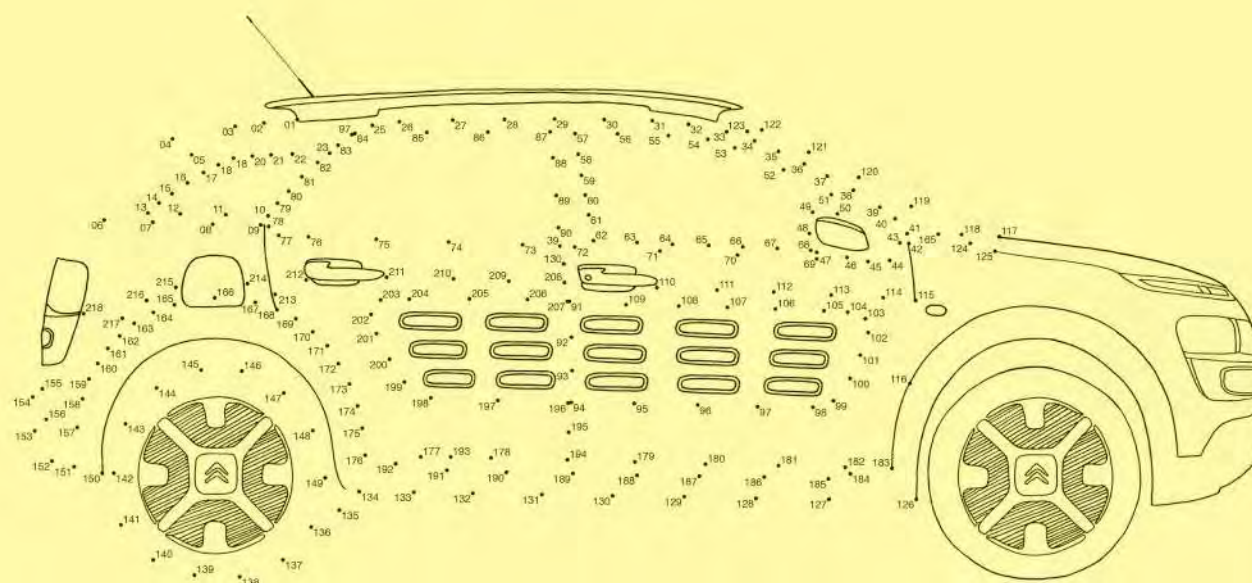
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CRÉATIVE TECHNOLOGIE



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Representative example

REPRESENTATIVE 3.9% APR

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Representative example

REPRESENTATIVE 9.5% APR



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DRIFT

NATURAL BORN THRILLER



There's 'advancement through technology' – of course – but the second-generation R8 is defined by its glorious, turbo-free 5.2-litre V10

WORDS: CJ Hubbard | PHOTOGRAPHY: Heinrich Hülser



A

UDI HAS CHOSEN the Ascari Race Resort near Ronda in Spain as the venue for our sneak preview of the second-generation R8.

There are presumably several reasons for this. It resonates with the millionaire playboy lifestyle that supercar ownership is supposed to represent – and the first-gen R8 certainly looked a million dollars, even if it didn't cost anything like that much. The circuit's twisting, undulating tarmac is a great place to show off the new car's performance. Yet Ascari is also very private, meaning that though your more ambitious spy snapper might get a long lens onto the outside, in all its camouflaged glory, they won't get a clear shot of the R8's interior, which is still a closely guarded secret ahead of its Geneva show debut. But this privacy serves another purpose, too: it prevents anyone from overhearing the gathered Audi personnel. And most of them are currently giggling.

Seriously, they're like a bunch of naughty schoolboys – an endearing exhibition from a group of Germans charged with the important business of bringing the successor to such a highly regarded model to market. The reason for this mischievous mirth is equally striking, however, and itself of the aural persuasion – being quite simply the astonishing noise emanating from the new R8 V10's optional sports



Audi R8



exhaust: part F1 car, part AK47, part rocket-propelled grenade. These guys have been at the circuit for days, on the project for years, and still they find it irrepressibly amusing. And, much like an assembly of errant school kids, they seem ever so pleased with their achievement.

Why shouldn't they? The new R8 launches in two guises: V10 (£119,500) and V10 Plus (£137,500), a statement of intent if ever there was one. Both are powered by uprated versions of the 5.2-litre unit from the previous car; the regular V10 jumps 15bhp from 518bhp to 533bhp, while the V10 Plus leaps 60bhp from 542bhp to 602bhp – matching the Lamborghini Huracan's variant of this engine. So there's pedigree. But the bigger point is that, while the rest of the supercar world is

charging towards a turbocharged future, the R8's V10 remains normally aspirated, with all the benefits to throttle response and mechanical orchestry this brings. The Performance steering wheel even boasts a dedicated exhaust button – a shot across the forced-induction bows of the Ferrari 488 GTB and McLaren 650S. *This* is what a supercar should sound like.

Audi has been refreshingly restrained with the artifice throughout. Yes, there's seven-stage stability control, variable-ratio steering, adjustable magnetic ride suspension, the manual gearbox is gone and the interior gets a 'Virtual Cockpit' digital instrument cluster like the latest Audi TT (and, um, Volkswagen Passat). But the magic steering and suspension are optional. The only piece of active aerodynamics is a modest, speed-sensitive spoiler on the trailing edge of the engine cover, which the V10 Plus ditches for a larger fixed appendage. The four-wheel-drive system is now constantly variable, able to send up to 100% torque to the front or the rear wheels, but the limited-slip differential also operating at the back is entirely mechanical. Instead of being some kind of new-fangled e-diff hero construct, it locks at a fixed 25 and 55%. The determination to avoid unnecessary complexity here slices through the acronym fog emanating from ever more electronically-assisted rivals like a ▶

◀ 'You're sporting a natty set of flameproof overalls – should I be worried?' 'Nein'

The noise emanating from the sports exhaust is astonishing: part F1 car, part AK47

lightsaber through a dairy solid. Yet R8 project leader Roland Schala promises the new car is both 'recognisably' faster and more comfortable. How the hell has Audi managed that?

Development of the road car has been run in parallel with the new R8 racing car this time around, with advantages to both. The not so secret sauce is the new structure – a carbonfibre reinforced aluminium spaceframe, shared with the Huracan. A full carbon tub was too expensive, so instead the carbonfibre transmission tunnel, B-pillars and firewall are bonded into an aluminium framework by hand. The car's core is 40% stiffer yet 50% lighter as a result, with the carbonfibre luggage storage area in the nose saving further weight. The changes bring the V10 Plus down from 1595kg to 1555kg wet, split 48:52 front/rear, while allowing the suspension to function more effectively. There's also a new front axle and steering set-up, but the 2650mm wheelbase is the same (and 30mm longer than the Huracan's).

We're not going to find out what this means for the driving experience from behind the wheel today – it's passenger laps only at Ascari. But as you can see from our exclusive studio shots, Audi has predictably circumvented that 'difficult second album' nonsense by avoiding radical visual change. Key identifiers such as the slightly cab-forward stance and side-blade air intakes carry over, although these last are now split in two, above and below the beltline that travels front to back. Despite the same track width and only a 40mm increase across the body, the car looks broader and somehow deeper, thanks in part to the vertical daytime running light signature front and rear, paying homage to Audi's Le Mans racers. High-power laser headlights are optional, all-LED units standard.

Still, everything on the outside of the R8 is now sharper, as if the rounded baby fat of the original has been trimmed away to reveal harder edges and greater focus. The new nose is longer, coming to more of a point around the pronounced,

Development of the road car and the new R8 racing car have run in parallel

FIXED WING

V10 Plus gets a substantial fixed wing; V10 makes do with a much more modest speed-sensitive effort

TRAD DIFF

You'll find no gimmicky e-diff here, just the wholly mechanical real thing; an LSD that locks at 25 and 55%. Four-wheel drive can punt 100% of the available torque to either axle

BLADE 2

The R8's defining styling motifs – its twin side blades – stay, though they're now split by a broad, prominent beltline



snout-like, single-frame grille – an imposing detail that will likely lose some impact once bisected by a number plate – and allowing for a four-litre increase in under-bonnet luggage capacity to 104 litres. Inside, a set of golf clubs will fit behind the solitary pair of seats. *Just.*

Many criticised the original's interior for sharing too many parts with the rest of the Audi range. Schala and team have listened, and the R8 is now much more bespoke. One of the reasons they aren't allowing photographs of the cabin at Ascari is that elements of it are still pre-production, so the quality of finish isn't quite up to spec. Among these are the paddleshifters, which are currently the same cheap-feeling and minuscule flappers you'll find on every other Audi. They jar particularly, given the sexy steering wheel. This features split spokes – like the Porsche 918 – infotainment switches and, on the Performance wheel found in the V10 Plus, four round controls that look like rocket thrusters. The two larger

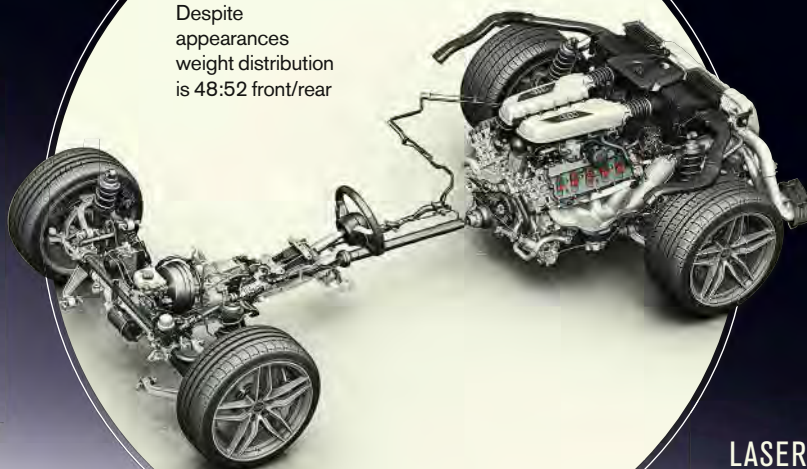
ones, which also feature on the regular wheel, are the Drive Select button on the left and a big red starter button on the right. Below the starter is the indulgent but most welcome exhaust button; press here for a reminder of why you didn't buy a car with turbochargers. Opposite is the Performance dial – poke and twist to optimise the car for maximum attack in the Dry, Wet or Snow. Yes, the new R8 has dedicated settings for high-speed driving in the snow.

This is in addition to the usual Audi Drive Select choices of Comfort, Auto, Dynamic and Individual, which allow you to tailor the throttle response, steering weight, gearbox and – where fitted – the magnetic ride variable suspension. Each also tweaks the behaviour of the four-wheel-drive system. There's a separate button on the centre console for deactivating the ESC entirely but, as with most modern systems, the fastest lap times are set with its assistance. Audi head of suspension characteristics, Victor Underberg, is ▶

BONDED TUB

Core structure is an aluminium spaceframe reinforced in key areas by carbonfibre structural elements glued in place – more stiffness, reduced weight

Despite appearances weight distribution is 48:52 front/rear



LASER GVDED

LED lamps are standard; lasers are optional. DRL graphics have been designed to echo those of the all-conquering Le Mans car (smeared Mulsanne bugs not supplied)





Virtual Cockpit
leaves the Actual
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Audi R8: evolution of the species

2003: Le Mans Quattro concept

Built to celebrate Audi's three successive wins at Le Mans. Engine was a 602bhp twin-turbo version of the Gallardo's mighty 5.0-litre V10

2004: RSQ

Will Smith's ride in *I, Robot*. The third generation R8 out of time?

2008: R8 4.2 V8

Announced in 2006 and in production two years later, complete with astonishing looks, four-wheel drive and a 414bhp dry-sumped 4.2-litre V8. Shockingly brilliant

2008: R8 V12 TDI Concept

Audi's diesel racers were rampant at Le Mans, hence this prototype R8 with a 6.0-litre V12 TDI. 493bhp and 738lb ft of torque. No production version

2009: R8 LMS racer

The first racing version of the R8, designed to comply with FIA GT3 regs. Powered by a 493bhp 5.0-litre V10 and rear-wheel drive only



ultimately responsible for the new R8's chassis, and explains that the car will detect if you're a nervous driver and intervene to 'calm you down', but that if you're in ESC Sport and all your inputs are constant, 'there is no need for the system to act'.

It's a little sad to be saying goodbye to conventional dials, but the digital screen that fills the instrument cluster in their stead is pretty slick. This Virtual Cockpit offers multiple viewing choices, from a full-width navigation map to the Classic two-dial speedo and tachometer set-up and the racier Sport, which has a central rev-counter and the option to display everything from tyre pressures to *g*-forces on either side. All of the infotainment takes place within the Virtual Cockpit, too, freeing the centre console to become a dedicated home to a few buttons and the climate control. This leaves the passenger with nothing to look at or fiddle with, but that's not a problem

at Ascari, because Audi racing and development driver Frank Stippler is at the wheel.

Audi says the new V10 Plus will do 0-62mph in 3.2sec and hit 124mph in 9.9. What this really means is that when Stippler gives it the beans leaving the pitlane, heading straight uphill and then immediately into a downhill off-camber left, you don't know whether to vomit or swear. The latter seems less offensive – since we've already shared a joke about his race suit matching the red and black interior of this particular prototype, adding some extra technicolour highlights probably wouldn't be appreciated. To be clear, a weak stomach is not usually a personal problem, but such is the speed we're carrying it takes about three corners for the internal organs to catch up. Whatever your position on the death of the manual gearbox, the seven-speed dual-clutch in the R8 is now 'so' ▶

▼ Sharper, more corporate and hardly ugly, but is it prettier than the first one?



2010: R8 5.2 V10

With 525bhp and 5.2 litres, the V10 launched Audi into supercar territory. 0-62mph in 3.9sec and 196mph. The first production car to feature all-LED headlights

2010: R8 5.2 V10 Spyder

The first topless R8 made its debut alongside Tony Stark in *Iron Man*. Heavier than the coupe, the Spyder redeemed itself on aural splendour

2011: R8 E-Tron prototype

All-electric R8 was the follow up to the earlier concept. Twin rear motors, 375bhp and a 130-mile range. No production green-light though

2011: R8 GT and GT Spyder

552bhp, a 100kg weight reduction and a limited production run. 0-62mph in 3.6sec and – frustratingly – a top speed of 199mph...

2012: R8 facelift

Mild visual update but more purposeful mechanical upgrade, including new seven-speed S tronic dual-clutch auto in place of the much-maligned six-speed R tronic

2012: R8 V10 Plus

As the name would imply, an R8 with more (and less): 542bhp, ceramic brakes, bucket seats, carbonfibre parts and re-calibrated suspension

2014: R8 LMX

The most powerful version to date (562bhp) and limited to 99 units. Laser lights from the R18 racer. Second-gen V10 Plus undercuts LMX's fierce £160k price





The R8 never feels snappy, a deliberate contrast to the Lamborghini Huracan – ‘a beast’ – at extremes

perfect’ (according to Schala) that it allows ‘full velocity changes’. No kidding. A similar experience at this circuit in a 650S felt no less intense.

Stomach and body reacquainted, time to take stock. The R8 is moving around a bit, both on the brakes and in the corners – and despite the optional 20-inch wheels with R8-specific Michelin Pilot Sport Cup 2 tyres – testament to just how hard Stippler is working the car. Hard enough that the standard carbon-ceramic brakes of the V10 Plus are on fire by the time we return to the pits. Actual stopping power is never in doubt, though, and actual corrective steering inputs are only minor, except where extended oversteer is deliberately provoked; on the cool-down lap Stippler reveals this car has the variable ratio steering, which helps, but even the regular rack is quicker than before. At no point does the R8 ever seem snappy, a deliberate contrast to the Huracan at extremes, which Schala repeatedly describes as ‘a beast’ (an ambiguously astute term, you suspect). Audi has its own calibration for



Fixed wing denotes V10 Plus. Camo denotes a history of substance abuse



everything from the four-wheel drive to the engine.

Helped by a 30mm lower seating position and reduced centre of gravity, the sheer structural stiffness of the new R8 allows for noticeably more sophisticated suspension tuning. This car is not using magnetic ride, which gives even greater variance between comfort and performance, but Stippler is jamming it over Ascari's 10cm kerbs with scarcely a ruffle, testament to its high-speed compliance. Yet the body motion during the transition into turns is lurch free and Stippler praises its poise. 'Back on the throttle in the middle of the corner. Once the car leans on the outside wheel at the rear, it gives you a lot more support.'

Add in that new four-wheel-drive system's ability to shove everything in the direction of either axle, and you've got an R8 that's faster yet easier to use. 'This was a big challenge,' Stippler explains, 'because the brief was not to make it more comfortable and as good as possible on the track. It was both: faster on the track – more driveable on the edge – and more

comfortable from Hamburg to Munich.' A journey that shouldn't take long – Schala, eyes alight with the mania of someone who's clearly been there, reckons the new car's extra downforce makes driving at its 205mph top speed 'no sweat!'

Talk of Ferraris and McLarens might seem rich in the context of an Audi, but when asked which rivals he was considering when plotting the R8's return, Roland Schala replies, 'All of them'. Then, perhaps in a moment of indulgence, he comes over all Steve McQueen and expounds further – 'In sports cars there is only one number one. Second is first loser.' The V10 crackles and whooshes in the background; Audi knows this big, characterful normally aspirated lump is its trump card. There may be R8s with smaller engines and turbochargers in the future, even a production version of the all-electric E-Tron, but the V10 is both the heart and the soul of this car, and Audi is as keen as us for it to stay. **car**

Follow me on Twitter @ir_427

▲ 20-inch wheels, R8-specific Michelins and four-wheel drive add up to gut-wrenching level of grip

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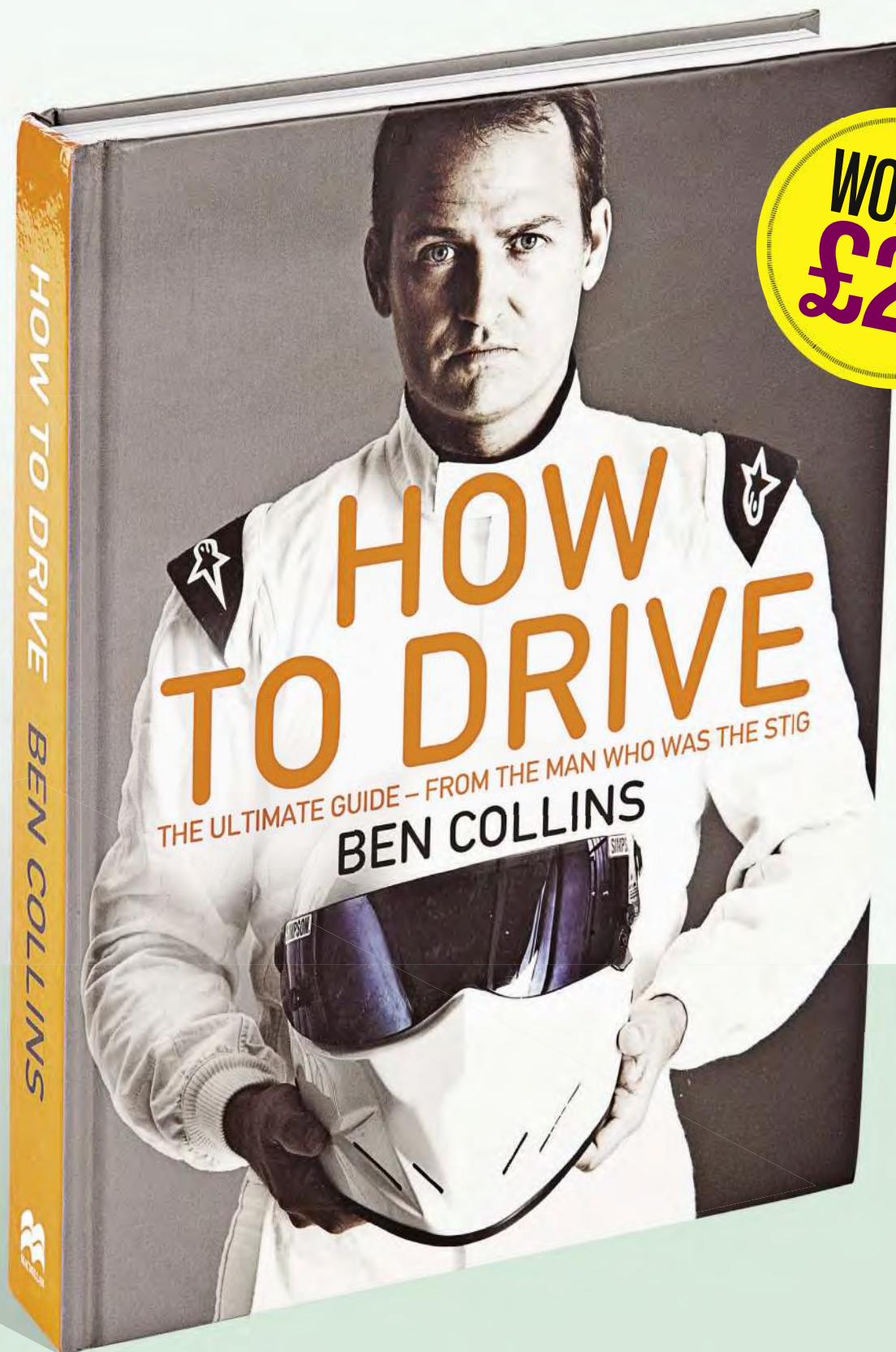
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EXCLUSIVE FIRST TEST

Porsche Cayman GT4



FAB 4

911 Carrera power, road-racer chassis, bargain price – on paper the Porsche Cayman GT4 has it all. Has 2015 already found its sports car of the year?

WORDS: Georg Kacher |
PHOTOGRAPHY: John Wycherley



Porsche Cayman GT4



ONLY THE
MOST hardcore
PORSCHES
TRADITIONALLY
WEAR THE GT
BADGE.

NO, NOT THE GTS moniker, which is at best 60% style and 40% substance. What really stirs the souls of Porsche enthusiasts is the classic combination of two letters and one number. Like GT1, the most awesome/fearsome 911 ever conceived in Stuttgart. Or GT2, the most potent rear-wheel-drive iteration of the breed. Then of course there are the GT3 and GT3 RS – cars which are, in essence, hot and super-hot street-legal track machines.

The latest addition to the wild and wonderful GT family is the Cayman GT4. Like its GT siblings this is a pure performer, not a puerile poseur. Developed by Jörg Jünger, senior GT4 project manager within Andreas Preuninger's recently installed, 100-strong Porsche GT road-car division, this very special Cayman is a thinly disguised circuit weapon. The basic silhouette may be familiar but the numerous GT-specific bolt-ons make it crystal clear, even at a glance, that this coupe means business. Indeed, its only understated facet is its price tag. At £64,451 the GT4 undercuts its closest in-house rival, the 911 GTS, by almost £27,000. Not a bad deal – and we haven't even fired up the engine yet.

When Porsche released the 911 GT3 last year, traditionalists frowned at the spec sheet. A GT3 with electric steering, an automatic transmission and all the mod cons? We now know that this mix works much better than



According to Georg the upper spoiler can seat 'a dozen buzzards' – handy



Perhaps the sports car of 2015, sunny yellow seatbelts... but still no smile?

expected, but the most desirable 911 doesn't make the more old-school Cayman GT4 any less attractive. After all, this model has dived deep into the GT3 parts pool, retrieving such items as the front axle and suspension, wheel bearings, ball-joint mounts, shock absorbers, steering, front tyres and optional carbon-ceramic brakes.

When you climb behind the wheel the optional lightweight bucket seats will – if you've had the pleasure – likely remind you of the 918. The remainder of the cabin is pure Cayman; clearly legible instruments but a crowded centre stack, no assistance systems, no head-up display and no PDK transmission. The only available gearbox is a six-speed manual, which is both quicker and slicker than that of the Cayman GTS. Clearly, this is a car with focus. Or as Preuninger puts it: 'The GT4 provides maximum driving pleasure, total involvement and riveting performance. To us, it is simply a highly desirable sports car. But don't let this make you think that every Tom, Dick, and Harry can hop in and take it to the limit.'

True or false? Today it's barely above freezing, the standard Cup tyres are stone-cold and the roads around Stuttgart are still coated with what was freezing rain only a couple of hours ago. It would be wrong to expect keyless hop-in-and-drive in a car like this, but those thinly-padded lightweight buckets don't even offer adjustable backrests ►





Front end is 911 GT3-derived. Trust in it – it will come through for you



GT4's unbelievable 7:40min 'Ring time entirely believable when you drive it



Ultra-low splitter set to become a nice little earner for Porsche parts



Porsche Cayman GT4

▼ Single-figure temperatures and still the GT4 sticks like dried porridge

or additional lumbar support. It's the typical one-size-fits-some approach, which works surprisingly well in all Porsche GT models. The three-spoke steering-wheel – hats off for not flattening the bottom – is of the mono-functional kind: steering. No buttons, no thumbwheels, no shift paddles. Thankfully, messrs Preuninger and Jünger have also spared us the busy seven-speed manual fitted to the base 911. More pleasingly still, the reinforced six-speeder has shed almost all the vices that haunted the 997 GT3 gearbox. It's still not quite as smooth and precise as the best Far Eastern cogworks, but its throws are conveniently short, effort and accuracy deserve an eight out of ten, and the gearing is pleasantly eager. Which helps explain why this featherweight 1415kg (down 5kg over the GTS) two-seater averages an eyebrow-raising 27.4mpg, more than any current 911, including the Turbo S. This test car returned 16.4mpg according to the on-board computer. Even with the 64-litre tank, regular pit stops are a necessary evil.

We're off at last, heading north on the A81. For 20 miles it's restricted to 75mph. The instant the ban lifts, I shift down into third and get my foot to the floor. The 3.8-litre flat-six picks up at 4000rpm, then delivers a big punch up to 6000rpm. Fourth gear feels appropriate shortly thereafter. This time I push the quad-cam engine all the way to the 7800rpm redline. No turbos, just revs aplenty – the sweet stuff of goose pimples and cold sweat. At 145 or 150mph, traffic starts clogging our flightpath, and soon after the next speed limit is enforced with radar-eyed vigour. On an empty, dry and reasonably straight stretch of road, the Cayman GT4 can top 183mph. True, the Carrera GTS is 7mph faster overall, but its mid-engined stablemate has the edge when it

comes to aerodynamic stability and downforce. The GT4 is rock solid, truly confidence-inspiring and barely irritated by washed out tarmac, yawning expansion joints and impromptu surface variations. 'This car is not only huge fun on the track – it is also deeply rewarding on the way there and back,' says Preuninger. 'Despite the low-profile tyres and extra-wide 20in rims, compliance remains an asset.'

The active PASM dampers know only two settings: Normal, which means tailor-made for the Nordschleife, and Sport which is just fine for a smooth GP circuit. Since the GT4 is almost Chapman-esque in its eschewal of unnecessary complexity, there is no swooshy Comfort mode and no please-number-your-bones Sport Plus calibration. True, the yellow streak doesn't exactly love manhole covers, sleeping policemen or cobblestones, but between 30 and 150mph this is by no means a solidly-sprung sado-sled liable to shake loose false teeth, glasses and hairpieces. Unlike some rivals, which permit too much vertical body movement, the Porsche remains poised and composed, soaking up the rough stuff with real efficiency. Even over topsy-turvy camber changes the steering keeps its cool, tugging only ever so slightly to one side and then to the other. R&D opted for a constant-rate, constant-effort set-up, which is exactly the right choice. There is a reassuring meatiness around the straight-ahead, minimal damping, a nicely understated servo effect, a pronounced eagerness to turn in, swift action even when on lock, unambiguous response and a feeling of being in total control at any speed.

The country roads in the Stuttgart-Heilbronn-Karlsruhe triangle are the natural habitat for pure driving machines such as the GT4. By midday the temperature has climbed to a balmy 6degC, and the tarmac is now dry in places. At last, the properly warmed front tyres bite and hang on as you flick the wheel, and with every slide the rear tyres morph progressively from work-to-rule grip to liquorice-like ►





Six-speed manual
the only gearbox
option. Speaks
volumes

stickiness. Deactivating traction control alone no longer summons grins. To provoke the trademark cornering attitude, this is the time to also switch off stability control. And while you are at it, you may want to hit the Sport and exhaust buttons, too. Now the twin tailpipes speak up like the Marlboro man, and the black box blips the throttle prior to downshifts. Ready to scare the locals? Then select second gear, start to feed in the torque well before the apex so that understeer is never an issue, tighten the line... and boot it.

What follows is an intriguing blend of fast forward and slow motion. With adorable creaminess the Cayman's tail swings wide progressively and emphatically before carving through in a grand arc, squatting down low and until the tail steps back in line. A BMW M4 may be more lurid, and a 911 GT3 is more dramatic overall, but the Cayman GT4 beats both for the prompt and fuss-free manner in which it puts the power down, gains ground rapidly and retains its delicate balance – testament to the car's sweetly judged mix of mechanical diff lock and electronically controlled, brake-activated torque vectoring. The GT4's Nürburgring time – a best-in-class 7:40min – is irrefutable evidence of its uncompromising dynamic efficiency.

It looks special too, at rest and at speed. The tray-shaped front splitter flies low enough to decapitate fist-size mammals, the enlarged nasal air intakes will catch almost as many flies as the windscreen, and the upper rear spoiler easily seats a dozen buzzards abreast. Other drag-cutting addenda include the more slippery door mirrors, the flared side scoops wearing embossed GT4 logos and the rear diffuser. All in all, the sportiest Cayman produces 100kg of downforce at speed, matching the 911 GT3.

A glance at the chassis specification tells you all you need to know about the GT4's focus. The car is 34mm longer, up to 13mm wider and 18mm lower than the Cayman GTS. That lipped front end hates dips, ramps and kerbs 'but the replacement part has a customer-friendly price' remarks Jörg Jünger with a broad smile... The rear suspension – all-new and comprising double wishbones in forged aluminium – boasts so-called helper springs, to pre-load the main springs under full rebound. Rear-wheel steering was deemed superfluous given the GT4's mid-engined layout. The tyre pressure monitor includes a track mode, which supervises wear and tear in extreme conditions. Also new are the matt-grey ten-spoke 20in alloys shod with Michelin Pilot Sport Cup 2 tyres. Up front, Porsche has opted for 245/35 rubber, while the rears are broader still at 295/30.

Refreshingly, the list of performance-related options is pleasantly short. 'For one very simple reason,' explains Preuninger. 'We spent 24 months defining the optimum DNA – it makes no sense at all to let the customer tweak it. In addition, it would be counter-productive to permit additional complexity. We simply could not afford to adapt PDK as an alternative to the manual gearbox. After all, GT4 production is limited to only 2500 pieces.'

That said you have been deemed capable of deciding ▶

**The GT4 Cayman's
tail swings wide
progressively and with
an adorable creaminess**



Cayman GT4's
mechanical rear
grip, nil; Georg's
right foot, one



Stunning wheel
design; equally
gorgeous ride/
handling balance

EXCLUSIVE FIRST TEST
Porsche Cayman GT4



Suspension wizardry means the GT4 takes the rough with the smooth



Wheel is both the future (it's 918 inspired) and the past (it is completely devoid of any secondary controls or functions). Bucket seats are dictatorial but effective

4 other ways to spend £60k



LOTUS EXIGE V6 CUP, £62,995

Cayman GT4 not quite raw enough, you animal? Then try the track-focused (very) but road-going (ish) 345bhp Cup version of the Exige V6, which weighs just 1176kg.



CORVETTE STINGRAY, £61,520

The Porsche's flat-six sounds good but the latest Corvette's 6.2-litre V8 is a sonic masterpiece. Left-hand drive only but surprisingly capable and it sings to the tune of 460bhp...



USED ASTON MARTON V8 VANTAGE N420, FROM £65,000

£65k buys you a used Aston Martin V8 Vantage with less than 10,000 miles on the clock. Hardcore N420 is lighter, stiffer and gets a tuned V8.



USED PORSCHE 911 997 GT3, FROM £65,000

For this money you'll be looking at relatively high-mileage cars (40,000 miles or so), but you can find a 997 GT3 for the same money as a GT4.

whether or not you'd like the carbon-ceramic brakes, a pair of 18-way power-operated seats, the Sport Chrono pack (with a race-inspired laptrigger, a performance readout on the centre touchscreen and a so-called Track Precision App, capable of recording and storing those hard-won sector and lap times), Porsche Dynamic Light System, automatic air conditioning, sat-nav, and of course the Clubsport kit, which includes a rear roll cage. Fancy a touch of frivolity, like black leather and alcantara mix garnished with yellow stitching as fitted to this test car? Then be prepared to shell out more than £2000. Highway robbery...

Although the car has not even gone on sale yet, obtaining a specimen will, in all likelihood, be at least as difficult as securing one of 4000 now sold-out 911 GT3s, let alone the upcoming GT3 RS, of which only 2000 will be made (see p89). Those who missed out on all three might want to put their name down for the 2016 Boxster Spyder. It gets a 375bhp engine and a manual transmission but none of the chassis parts which make the GT4 so special.

A few months from now Porsche will release a new twin-turbo six-cylinder, which is bound to up the ante in terms of power, torque and frugality. But will it sound as good as this normally aspirated 3.8? Does it rev as eagerly and freely to such a lofty height? Is it – at the end of the day – as emotionally appealing? Only time will tell, but if you forgot to snatch up one of the last air-cooled 993s, you may now want to consider this minimalist 380bhp Cayman, which is a similarly persuasive exponent of the art of the naturally aspirated six-cylinder boxer engine. Just for reference, it is worth noting that the GT4 develops 310lb ft of torque, which compares quite favourably to the 325lb ft dished up by the



476bhp 911 GT3. Although maximum twist is available between 4750 and 6000rpm, the torque curve looks more like Ben Nevis than the Matterhorn. You can actually watch the *oomph* build via a display in the dash.

The late afternoon blast back from the Black Forest foothills to the Zuffenhausen HQ was one of those truly memorable experiences you only discuss with close friends, for legal reasons. It really is quite a special animal, this GT4. The engine never seems to run out of revs. When it eventually does, chances are you are about to run out of road. The impatient mid- to high-end urge is vaguely reminiscent of a big-bore V8, but thankfully the soundtrack is pure flat-six. All the controls are perfectly weighted, be it solo or in concert. Never too light nor too heavy, the clutch, gearbox, steering and brakes simply feel right. Especially the brakes, when allied to Cup tyres brought up to temperature. The carbon-ceramic rotors aren't cheap but because they let you drop the hammer so ridiculously late, their incredible stopping power must be worth at least 50bhp. At times they may even prove priceless. Measuring 410 and 390mm in diameter (a large pizza is 320mm), the drilled, inner-ventilated discs and the fat calipers that ride them threaten to pluck your eyes from their sockets under full deceleration.

The Cayman GT4 is a rare combination of talents. Its intuitive handling, tenacious roadholding, unimpeachable traction, relentless forward thrust and out-of-this-world brakes make the GT4 a remarkable drive, even by Porsche standards. In contrast to so many over-engineered, over-sexed and overpriced high-performance competitors, this very special Cayman is a new kind of sports car: accessible in every sense and sensationally capable. I want one. **car**

**PORSCHE
CAYMAN GT4**

Price £64,451
Engine 3800cc 34v
flat-six, 380bhp @
7400rpm, 310lb ft @
4750-6000rpm

Transmission Six-
speed manual, rear-
wheel drive with
mechanical LSD

Performance 4.4sec
0-62mph, 183mph,
27.4mpg, 238g/km
CO2

Suspension
McPherson strut front,
double-wishbone rear

Weight/made from
1415kg/steel

Rating: ★★★★★

**The GT4 is a new
kind of sports car:
accessible and
sensationally capable**



GT3 FEVER!

Vantage GT3 & 911 GT3 RS

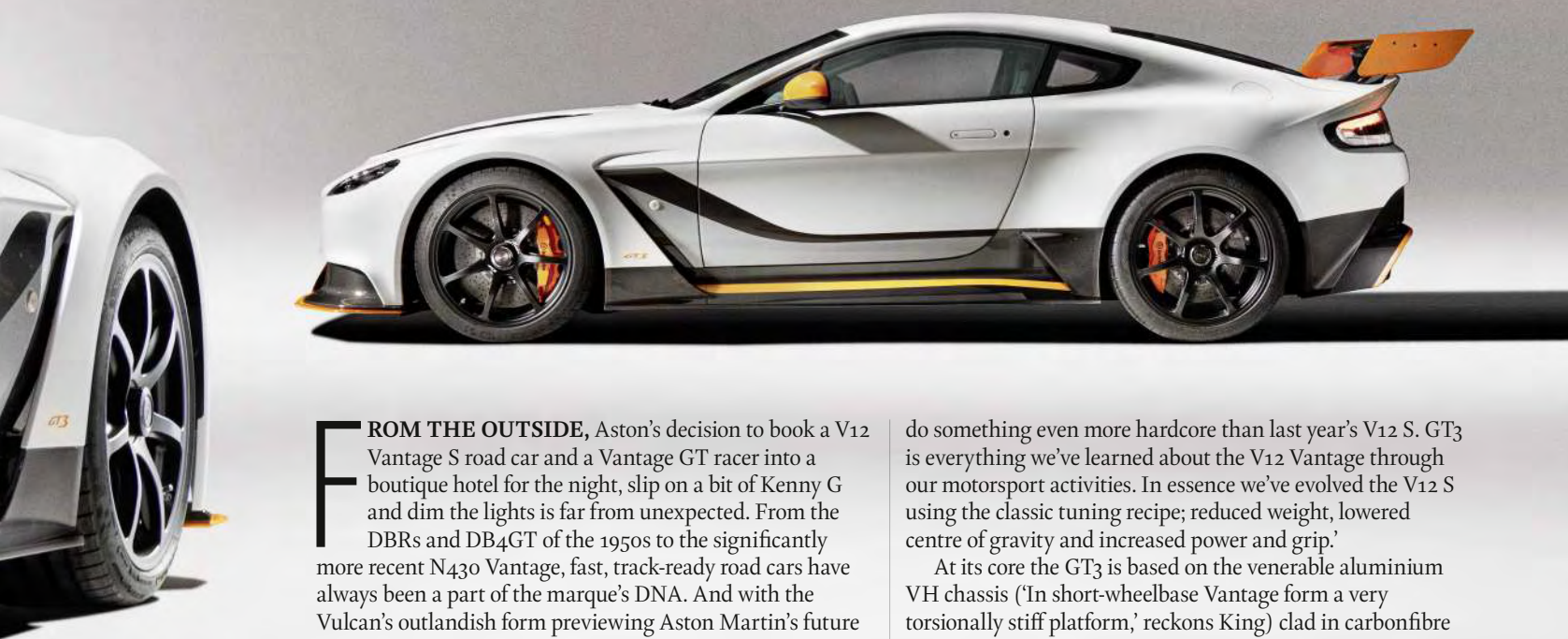
'GT3 IS EVERY



THING WE'VE LEARNED'

The secret of eternal youth? According to Aston Martin it's simple – a race-developed skunkworks Vantage with speed and style to spare

WORDS: Ben Miller | PHOTOGRAPHY: John Wycherley



FROM THE OUTSIDE, Aston's decision to book a V12 Vantage S road car and a Vantage GT racer into a boutique hotel for the night, slip on a bit of Kenny G and dim the lights is far from unexpected. From the DBRs and DB4GT of the 1950s to the significantly more recent N430 Vantage, fast, track-ready road cars have always been a part of the marque's DNA. And with the Vulcan's outlandish form previewing Aston Martin's future design direction, albeit turned up to 11, the timing of this ultimate Vantage is immaculate. The final piece in the GT3 puzzle is a desire that's burned within Aston for years – to build a hard-charging V12 Vantage for the trackday driver for whom a dog-eared E36 328i is simply too uncouth. The green light came some 14 months ago, with Ulrich Bez's departure in late 2013, and so here it is – the tuned, lightened, lowered, widened, aero-enhanced and fiscally inflated (£250,000) Vantage GT3.

'I've been itching to do a road car like this for years,' explains David King, director of Aston special projects, whose team is currently working on the GT3's final calibration. 'It's the culmination of years of pent-up desire to

do something even more hardcore than last year's V12 S. GT3 is everything we've learned about the V12 Vantage through our motorsport activities. In essence we've evolved the V12 S using the classic tuning recipe; reduced weight, lowered centre of gravity and increased power and grip.'

At its core the GT3 is based on the venerable aluminium VH chassis ('In short-wheelbase Vantage form a very torsionally stiff platform,' reckons King) clad in carbonfibre bodywork; wings, door casings, front and rear bumpers, bonnet and – should you tick the box – the roof. 'There are no interchangeable panels with any the Vantage race cars,' says Aston Martin design director Marek Reichman. 'The GT3 Vantage is a more subtle than simply a road-going adaptation of the racer. This project was about creating the visual drama and aero performance of the racers in a road car. And although the GT3 is wider than the V12 Vantage S [track is up 35mm at the front; 45mm at the rear], it's not as wide as the GT3 racer.'

This lower, wider platform mounts re-tuned suspension (tweaked geometry and spring rates, modified dampers and a recalibrated Adaptive Damping System with 'much ▶



▲ Rear aspect verges on the industrial; evil-looking full-width diffuser, the unadorned maws of the GT3's weight-saving, power-boosting titanium exhausts, acres of flawless carbonfibre

▲ Those committed to the cause can opt for a carbonfibre roof and polycarbonate rear windows and screen. Just don't then undo all your good work with a five-course lunch and a big tin of sweets

▼ Hardly a carbon torture chamber – GT3 retains most 21st century comforts

➤ Striking graphics apparently echo the the carefully managed airflow. They're also not stickers but paint, lovingly hand-finished for a seamless edge between colours



Vantage GT3 & 911 GT3 RS



▼ Significantly broader track evident in the comely flare of the front and rear arches. Centre-lock magnesium wheels are an option but you'd be mad not to. Wheels are 19 x 9.5 at the front, 19 x 11.5 at the rear

more extreme' Sport and Track settings according to King), carbon-ceramic brakes (398mm discs and six-piston calipers up front; 360mm discs and four-piston calipers at the rear) and a tuned version of the mighty quad-cam V12

'We've been tuning the V12 for a while now,' says King. 'Again, it's classic performance tuning – better airflow in and out of the combustion chambers. The GT3 uses a revised inlet manifold in magnesium, with shorter runners to help the engine rev and make power all the way to redline. Together with reduced back-pressure in the titanium exhaust, which lets us run a bit more ignition advance, we're looking at a 30bhp power increase and more torque through the rev range. That additional urge [Aston is claiming a work-in-progress 592bhp at 7000rpm and 461lb ft at 5500rpm], together with a 100kg weight reduction, means that wherever you drive this car it's going to feel alive.'

The engine drives the rear mid-mounted seven-speed Sportshift 'box and limited-slip differential via a carbonfibre propshaft running in a titanium torque tube, key players in that new, lower kerb weight – 1565kg. Find a suitable gap in the trackday traffic and Aston claims you'll see 60mph in 3.5 seconds from a standing start, 0.2sec faster than the V12 S. Top speed is likely to be 185mph-ish (possibly at Spa; out of the question at poky Mallory), marginally down on the 205mph V12 S thanks to increased drag.

The car's extensive use of carbonfibre bodywork (with, on Reichman's insistence, a perfectly symmetrical herringbone

weave...) is the most obvious weight-saving measure, but look closely and there's evidence of an aversion to unnecessary mass all over car; manual adjustment on the carbonfibre seats, a fixed sat-nav screen (that mechanism must be wrought in granite and lead), a featherlight lithium ion battery and the option to replace the rear window and screen glass with polycarbonate. But just as the engineers were hell-bent on tempering the car's track ability with some road manners, so the design team were adamant that the GT3 shouldn't be some stripped-out masochist's daydream, all rough carbon, duct tape and exposed cabling.

'You've bought this car as someone in love with the way it drives; the last thing I wanted was for you to then be disappointed when you sat in something too bare and too basic,' says Reichman. 'We call it race-crafted – a stripped-down, functional race element but with luxury craftsmanship too. Performance materials like titanium and carbonfibre tend to be beautiful but they're pure race, so you add a material like our finest Scottish saddle leather, as we've done with the door handle loops, and you get this striking ▶

At Reichman's insistence the carbonfibre bodywork sports a symmetrical herringbone weave

Vantage GT3 & 911 GT3 RS

The churlish can take their Vantage GT3 without the rear wing



Horseshoe engine venting an evolution of V12 S's hacked-about bonnet



The din from these will need calming ahead of deliveries in late summer



blend of craft and race technology. That's who we are. We're probably the only marque that goes racing with a real enamel badge on the front of our car – we don't replace it with a sticker. This is a GT3 car with a beauty to it.'

Indeed it is. The Vantage shape may be a decade old but the GT3's subtle but striking aero-informed assimilation of road and race car forms is a masterclass in time-cheating makeovers. 'Good aero doesn't often look good – the engineered solution has been refined by a designer's eye,' continues Reichman. 'We wanted solutions that combined aero effect with real beauty, and we were able to do that thanks to the close link between the aero engineers and the designers. We shaped surfaces together, and tested them in CAD before committing to them.'

'I love the horseshoe-shaped venting to the bonnet. It looks good, it's unique to this car and it's functional, drawing hot air from the engine bay and helping accelerate it up over the A-pillars. And as individual pieces I'm very happy with the rear wing stays and the additional front splitter, which together comprise the aerodynamics pack. The stays are an aerofoil shape – we didn't just take a flat sheet of aluminium and machine it. They're beautiful objects in their own right, and it's the same story with the more extreme optional splitter. It's just as wonderful as a piece of sculpture.'

The net result of all of this airflow management is, according to Aston, significant downforce at speed – twice that of the Vantage GT4 racer, according to David King – for increased grip and stability when you're extending that 5935cc quad-cam V12. But it is perhaps the car's sheer visual drama that's more likely to seduce buyers and bystanders alike, from the aforementioned wings to the elegant 19-inch forged magnesium wheels. Developed in conjunction with Italian firm App Tech, Aston is hoping you'll ignore the lesser wheel options for these optional seven-spoke, satin black centre-lock masterpieces in magnesium. Each wheel is some 2.5kg lighter than its aluminium equivalent, yet Aston is confident you can run them on the road without fear of terminal dings.

All of which brings us to the driving experience – what kind of animal will the Vantage GT3 be? 'Blindingly quick, with huge amounts of grip – great fun, essentially,' explains King, categorically failing to keep a tremor of excitement from his voice. 'The task now is fine-tuning the engine, transmission and the chassis – the work that will make the difference between a good car and a really great car, and to that end we're bringing in Darren Turner from the race team. For me the really important thing is that the car works on the road and the track. It would have been easy just to strip it out, tune it for the track and make it impossible to live with on the road. The GT3 will work on the road, but it'll also have a sense of pent-up potential that'll give it an edge and make it feel special.'

With only 100 examples in existence, near-600bhp performance, an exhaust cacophony King admits may prove 'quite tricky' to dampen to legal levels and arguably the ultimate expression of the still-bewitching Vantage form, the chances of the Vantage GT3 not feeling special are very slim indeed.

ASTON MARTIN VANTAGE GT3

Price £250,000
Engine 5935cc, 48v V12, 592bhp @ 7000rpm, 461lb ft @ 5500rpm, 19mpg (est)
Transmission Seven-speed automated manual, rear-drive
Performance 3.5sec 0-60mph, 185mph
Suspension double-wishbone front and rear
Weight/made from 1565kg/aluminium, carbonfibre
On sale now



'YOU THINK RS IS AN EVOLUTION OF GT3? THINK AGAIN'

Track prowess compromised by polite road manners? Not here, says Porsche. Meet the most extreme 911 GT3 RS yet

ASTON'S NEW VANTAGE GT3, while undeniably spectacular, has the feel of a car reaching its potential. It's the apparently immortal Vantage evolved yet again, and possibly into its ultimate iteration – after all, how much more can it give?

By contrast the new Porsche 911 GT3 RS – for years a rich source of frenzied, fanciful speculation, and unveiled at the recent Geneva motor show – is a very different animal. Its 4.0-litre engine, with direct injection and a trick crankshaft that borrows 919 Le Mans racer technology, marks the demise of the Mezger motor in Porsche's 911 race cars and the ushering in of a new competition flat-six dynasty, while the rest of the car is a high-performance adaptation of the relatively youthful 991 platform (unveiled in 2011).

Equally, there are similarities between the Porsche and the Aston. At their core both machines are series-production

sports cars elevated to a level closer to that of an off-the-shelf GT racer by passionate, enthusiast engineers. Both, evidently, are labours of love. The Aston has its finely wrought carbonfibre body and free-breathing V12; the 911 GT3 RS its bespoke front suspension and magnesium roof (a 1kg weight saving over the carbonfibre equivalent, but at what price?). In both cases the results promise to be spectacular, not least because of their unapologetic focus on track performance.

In the case of the 911, it's difficult to imagine a car more special – more engaging, more nuanced and more exhilarating – than the outgoing 997-based GT3 RS or the existing 991 GT3, but that, apparently, is exactly what those of us without the requisite £131,000 must do. 'RS is the most extreme Porsche, and the new RS is even more extreme than its predecessor – by quite some margin,' explains Andreas Preuninger, head of Porsche's GT road-car division. 'You think the RS is an evolution of the GT3? Think again. This time it's almost a quantum leap. We have re-positioned it. The new RS is its own kind of supercar. And yet the price is about on par with the Turbo.'

The basics. The bodyshell is the widest on offer in the 991 family, shared with the Turbo (the GT3 uses the Carrera 4 shell). The carbonfibre engine and luggage compartment covers, that magnesium roof and plexiglass in the rear windows and rear screen contribute to a 10kg weight advantage over the GT3. The Michelin Pilot Sport Cup 2 tyres are the widest ever fitted to a 911 and the rear wheels are 21 inches in diameter, despite the associated hassle. (The body-in-white required judicious trimming to achieve the ▶

required clearance, and expensive alterations where required to the production line in order to be able to deal with the bigger rims). The 21-inch rear wheels bring an obvious grip advantage but also introduce an element of rake to the car, lifting the rear and dropping the front.

The air intakes just ahead of the rear wheels, inherited with the Turbo bodyshell, feed the engine via purpose-built ducts. Preuninger claims that, given their proximity to your head should you drop the side window, you risk losing loosely-worn headgear to the engine's raging inlet ducts. [Preuninger also laughs at the rumours, prompted by the appearance of the Turbo's vents in RS spy shots, that this car was a turbocharged GT2]. The GTR RS's already trademark front arch vents help reduce pressure in the wheel wells and quell lift at the front axle. The bespoke suspension, torque-

vectoring, generous front and rear track, rear-wheel steering, limited-slip diff and crushing levels of mechanical grip – 20% up on the GT3 – promise unearthly corner speeds. Usable on the road? For the brave and the earplug-equipped, possibly, but Preuninger is unrepentant on the matter of the car's unerring focus: 'This is definitely not a 24/7 car. You don't really want to drive it that much on public roads. We spent a lot of research and development effort making this car shine on the track. That's where the GT3 RS belongs.'

If you're at all disappointed in the RS's engine outputs – at 494bhp and 354lb ft, it's only marginally up on the 997 GT3 RS 4.0 – console yourself with the fact that, around any loop of tarmac you care to mention, the new car promises to be substantially quicker, thanks to its aero package. The vast rear wing and tarmac-planing front splitter look the

▼ Sport Chrono pack brings a lap timer and Porsche's Track Precision app, which logs lap times and telemetry data for subsequent analysis on your phone

▼ Recessed central band to luggage compartment cover and roof a nod to 911s past. Performance, meanwhile, looks to the future

▲ Did you like the 918's interior? Porsche hopes so – the seats and wheel both crib from Weissach's hybrid hypercar

► Where a six-speed manual was deemed appropriate for the GT4 Cayman, the RS is PDK only

▲ Tin snips and an angle grinder helped modify the Turbo's rear arches to take the RS's 21-inch rear wheels (the Turbo S uses 20-inch wheels)

Vantage GT3 & 911 GT3 RS

PORSCHE 911 GT3 RS

Price £131,296
Engine 3996cc, 24v flat-six, 494bhp @ 8000rpm (revs est), 354lb ft @ 6000rpm (revs est), 22.2mpg
Transmission Seven-speed twin-clutch auto, rear-drive
Performance 3.3sec 0-62mph, 190mph (est)
Suspension McPherson strut front, multi-link rear
Weight/made from 1495kg/aluminium, steel, carbon, magnesium
On sale now

business, and Preuninger claims 'two and a half times the downforce of the 997 GT3 RS – a full 370kg at full song – without ruining the drag coefficient'. Besides, straight-line performance is hardly wanting: 0-62mph in 3.3 seconds, on to 124mph in 10.9 seconds and enough grunt to lap the Nürburgring – a power circuit if ever there was one, thanks to the long start-finish straight and the steep uphill drag to the *Karussell* – in 7 minutes 20 seconds, nine seconds faster than the Carrera GT supercar.

The engine internals are unique, including the aforementioned 919-inspired crankshaft, with the 4.0-litre capacity – up from the GT3's 3799cc – coming courtesy of a longer stroke. As a result the RS's rev ceiling is 200rpm lower than that of the GT3, but Preuninger is quick to quell any disappointment: 'If you take the engine to its redline with

your eyes closed – which I don't recommend you do – you won't feel let down.' The sole transmission option is a tweaked PDK unit. In the circuit-obsessed, performance-above-all-else realm the RS occupies, there's clearly no place for the sentimentality that lets in a slow-shifting manual.

Inside you'll find 918-inspired bucket seats, alcantara, the familiar 991 infotainment unit and the Club Sport Package with its bolted-in rollcage, fire extinguisher and optional six-point harness. In for a penny, in for a pound.

Orders are being taken now, but at the time of writing the production run of 2000 units was almost sold out. At £131,296 the price premium over the GT3 has grown with the gap in performance, but given its specification, style and almost intimidating potential, somehow the 911 GT3 RS manages to look like something of a bargain nonetheless. **CAR**

In the performance-above-all-else realm the RS occupies, there's clearly no place for the sentimentality that lets in a slow-shifting manual



◀ Club Sport Package brings the cage, fire extinguisher and battery cut-out switch preparation, though an incident that would require using them doesn't bear thinking about

RENAULT MEGANE RENAULTSPORT

THE ROAD PROVIDES ITS DESTINY,
THE TRACK ITS DNA.



After 115 years in motorsport, our name is synonymous with some of the fastest cars on the track: just look at the performance of our partners at Red Bull Racing. Having dedicated this much time to tuning and tweaking F1 and Formula Renault cars, it's no surprise our road cars are so thrilling to drive; the racetrack is in their blood.

DRIVE THE CHANGE



Model shown is Renault Mégane Renaultsport 275 Trophy. The official consumption figures in mpg (l/100km) for the model shown are: Urban 28.8 (9.8); Extra Urban 45.6 (6.2); Combined 37.7 (7.5). The official CO₂ emissions for the range are 174g/km. EU Directive and Regulation 692/2008 test environment figures. Fuel consumption and CO₂ may vary according to driving styles, road conditions and other factors.

The **car** F1 2015 season guide

THE **8** REAL BATTLES OF F1 2015

WORDS:
Tom Clarkson

PHOTOGRAPHY:
Darren Heath



PLUS
THE
2015
RACE
CALENDAR

& CAR'S
VERDICT
ON ALL
THE
TEAMS

1

Mercedes vs itself

They blew all rivals away in 2014, yet their cars still failed to finish six races. Are tantrums, car failures and mistakes their only threat?

THE BEST JUST got better. The team that produced last year's all-conquering W05 has made an ever better car this year, which means we're staring down the barrel of *Lewis vs Nico Part II*.

The team kept its powder dry throughout most of winter testing, until it could contain itself no more. On what was Nico Rosberg's penultimate day in the car, the team strapped on a set of soft-compound tyres and asked him to see what she'd do. And she destroyed the opposition, lapping Barcelona 1.2sec faster than anyone else.

The look of disappointment on rivals' faces was all-too-evident. 'We knew they were quick,' said Williams star Valtteri Bottas. 'But *that* is very quick.' Sebastian Vettel and Romain Grosjean echoed his sentiments as they all came to terms with fighting for the accolade of 'best of the rest' for the next nine months.

Worse still, the car is much more reliable than last year's W05. Technical problems forced Hamilton and Rosberg to retire three times each last year, but the W06 has been reliable from the

get-go. Rosberg set an all-time record for a new car when he completed 432 miles on day one of winter testing at Jerez – a trend that the team repeated in Barcelona.

What will happen next is the team will sandbag; they will try to give rivals hope, as they did last year, when Nico Rosberg won the season-opener in Melbourne by 26sec. 'I could have lapped the entire field,' he admitted later in the year.

So it looks like Mercedes' main rival is going to be itself. If it's to win the world title in 2015, it has to fill in some of the tiny operational holes in its armoury from last year. Increased competition means it can no longer afford the sort of freak electrical problem that prevented Rosberg from completing a lap of the Singapore Grand Prix; it cannot make the strategic blunders that cost the team victory in the Hungarian Grand Prix and it cannot allow one of its cars to bail out of Q3 when track conditions are clearly improving, as was the case with Lewis Hamilton at Silverstone. The team needs to complete as close

► Nico seemed to have the psychological upper hand over Lewis in 2014, but lost out. Business very unfinished indeed...

to the perfect season as possible.

And strong though it may be right now, Mercedes cannot rest on their laurels. Ferrari look much improved from last year and McLaren's MP4-30 looks like a fast racing car, if only the team can make it reliable. McLaren team principal Eric Boullier talks of 'wanting to give Mercedes a few headaches come the start of the European season', and should that happen it might create problems for Mercedes that they're not used to.

Some pressure from outside would focus the minds of the pit crew. The likelihood of a Mercedes victory was never threatened last year by an extra second or two spent in the pits; this time around the penalty for a botched stop could be much more severe. Mindful of this, the team practised 'live' pitstops during winter testing before anyone else.

'That was almost more scary than the amount of laps that they were doing,' says Boullier. 'They are honing every aspect of their team while everyone else is still focusing on reliability.' ►

A photograph of two Mercedes Formula 1 drivers, Nico Rosberg and Lewis Hamilton, sitting on the rear of their cars during a race weekend. They are wearing white racing suits with green accents and are looking towards the right. The background is dark and out of focus, showing a crowd of spectators and some blurred lights. The text is overlaid on the right side of the image.

The look of disappointment on rivals' faces was all too evident. 'We knew they were quick,' said Bottas. 'But *that* is very quick'



▲ Lewis in action during pre-season testing. Probably best not to mention his girlfriend

As for the drivers, the intra-team battle between Rosberg and Hamilton will be a central theme of the season. Mercedes boss Toto Wolff has reiterated his desire to let them race this year and the extent of the psychological warfare between the drivers will depend on the threat that Rosberg gives to Hamilton. The reigning champion is the more fiery character and if Nico challenges him from the outset, expect the fall-out to come quickly; if Hamilton can build a healthy lead during the early races, expect more cordial relations.

Hamilton, we know, can perform at a high level every year – such is his peerless level of natural ability. He has the complication of being without the experience of engineer Jock Clear on his side of the garage. Jock's off to Ferrari, leaving Lewis's regular race engineer Pete Bonnington to pick up

the pieces. Perhaps more significant is Lewis's split from long-term girlfriend Nicole Scherzinger. The only time in his career that his form has suffered has been when the pair has split up, most notably in the latter stages of 2011, and they split yet again in February.

Rosberg, who is expecting his first child in August, will be hoping Hamilton's form suffers, while he tries to continue the form he showed in 2014. There are reasons to believe he can put together a convincing title challenge, not least of which is the fact that his rate of improvement has been fairly linear since he won his first race in 2013.

Prior to that win, Rosberg lacked confidence. He might be the son of a world champion, who grew up in Monaco and wanted for nothing as a child karter, but he's always had to work at his driving and self-doubt crept in when people accused him of getting into F1 only on the back of his name.

After a lengthy bedding-in process at Williams, his performances improved as soon as he won his first race for Mercedes in 2013. Overnight he became more self-assured and he

grew as a driver. That manifested itself in two ways: speed (he out-qualified Hamilton 11-7 in 2014) and technical feedback. He talks like an engineer when describing the handling of a car and, unsurprisingly, he's the one who steers the development direction.

What Rosberg needs to do now is race Hamilton and beat him. Every time they went wheel-to-wheel last year, Rosberg came off the worse; either he got beaten (Bahrain), or it ended in tears (Belgium) with a coming together. To out-race Hamilton is easier said than done, but that's his only title chance.

'I think the title fight will be between Lewis and myself,' says Rosberg. 'I know Lewis well and I know what I need to do to beat him. I learnt a lot last year and I've come back stronger.'

If Rosberg's confidence is genuine, the outlook for Mercedes is bright. They have the car, and despite some bad moments in 2014, they're still a superb racing team. It's theirs to lose.

CAR VERDICT: Will reliability, errors and Lewis strops undo Merc's title hopes? No, and Lewis will pinch it again, this time from under Nico's nose.

'I know what I need to do to beat Lewis. I learnt a lot. I've come back stronger'

2

Alonso vs Ron

Last time it ended in £40m worth of tears. Is that hatchet truly buried?

WALKING INTO the McLaren motorhome on the Thursday before the 2007 Belgian Grand Prix, visitors were greeted by the sight of Fernando Alonso sitting at the nearest table to the door; he had his feet on the table and was wearing shades. The wretched look on his face said it all. He was waiting for his boss Ron Dennis to walk in, and we can only imagine the fireworks that followed.

This incident occurred in the middle of the McLaren-Ferrari spy controversy, in which Alonso was a central character. He was furious with Ron Dennis for what he believed to be the renegeing of his number one status and he effectively held the team to ransom with the FIA. At the end of some furious politicking, McLaren were fined £40million and excluded from the 2007 constructors' championship. Alonso quit the team at the end of the season.

To say it was a bitter dispute would be a huge understatement. Alonso and Dennis loathed each other, and to think that they're working together again seems ludicrous. But it's happened; they're back together and steering Honda's return to F1.

At the unveiling of McLaren's driver line-up before Christmas, neither Alonso nor Dennis avoided the subject of 2007, and the team even used the

hashtag #friendsreunited on Twitter. They answered questions about what went wrong and how they will ensure cordial relations going forward.

'We've both matured since then,' said Dennis. 'I'm not proud of what happened, but we've talked about it and it's in the past. Fernando is one of the best drivers in the world and I'm very happy to have him back at McLaren.'

Alonso, sporting a beard (one of Dennis's pet hates), talked of unfinished business at the team. You sensed in the Spaniard a desire to right the wrongs of the past, and he stated his commitment to the cause. 'I think about F1 all the time,' he said. 'I constantly want to find ways to improve myself and the car.'

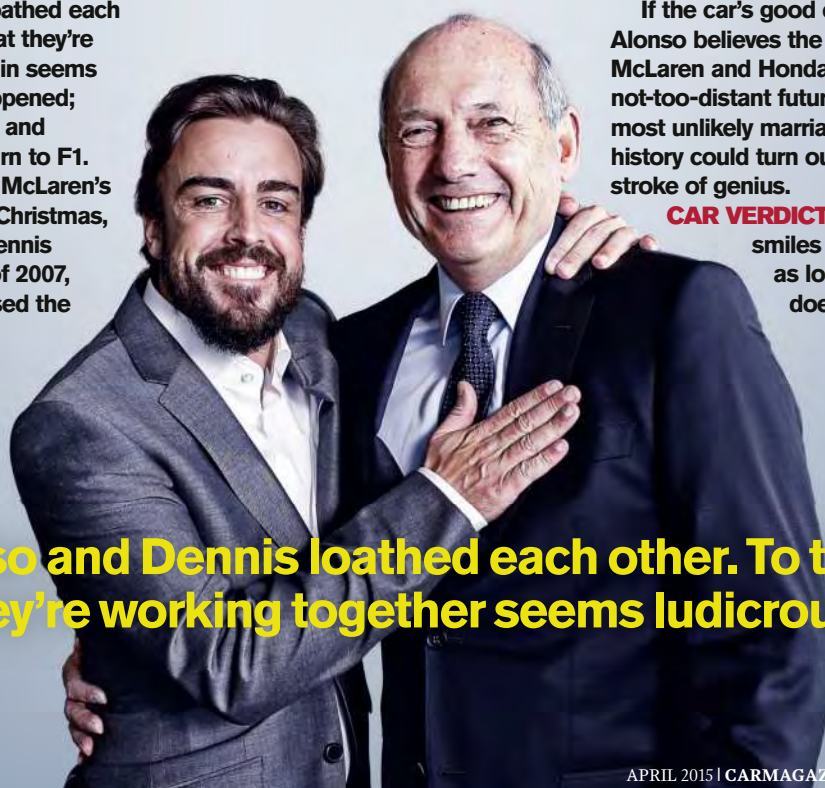
During winter testing McLaren team principal Eric Boullier was quick to highlight the pressure that Alonso has placed on the people around him. But he qualified that observation by saying it was a 'healthy pressure, one that should bring the best out of people'.

Rivals will no doubt look for cracks in Alonso's relationship with McLaren, and Dennis in particular, and should there be the slightest hint of tension, expect them to exploit it in the media. Alonso's mood is unlikely to be improved by the pace of the Ferrari. He had two years to run on his Ferrari contract, but sought an early release in order to join McLaren at a time when the Scuderia has produced its best car for five years.

So, either Alonso is making a habit of being in the right team at the wrong time, or he knows something about McLaren's potential we don't. We certainly haven't seen it yet because testing has been a torrid affair, blighted by unreliability and ending in a hefty crash for Alonso at Barcelona, which kept him from racing at Melbourne. But we're told that the MP4-30 looks aerodynamically solid; the rear bodywork is sculpted elegantly around the power unit and the car is much lighter than last year's MP4-29. Honda have the power; all they need is reliability.

If the car's good enough, and Alonso believes the combination of McLaren and Honda will win 'in the not-too-distant future', one of the most unlikely marriages in F1 history could turn out to be a stroke of genius.

CAR VERDICT: The toothy smiles will last exactly as long as the car does.



Alonso and Dennis loathed each other. To think they're working together seems ludicrous



'There's a good atmosphere in the team. I saw Kimi smile the other day so I asked him if he was okay'

PIC: FERRARI

6 Arrivabene vs Bernie

To succeed as Ferrari boss you need guts, talent and Bernie's ear

FOR THE FIRST time in the 65-year history of Scuderia Ferrari, the unveiling of the team's new F1 car wasn't open to the media in 2015. It was an on-line launch, filmed in the sterile environs of the team's logistics department. No prawn sandwiches or Chianti, no journalists, and no need to answer difficult questions about recent staff changes or years of failure.

The idea of the virtual launch came from new team principal Maurizio Arrivabene. He's a marketing man by trade, having fronted Philip Morris's marketing department prior to taking the top job at the Scuderia in November, and he rightly believed that Ferrari would dominate the following day's back pages without any of the hassle of a live launch.

'I will be satisfied if we score two victories this year,' he said. Boom! After the team's most chaotic 12 months in recent memory, in which it failed to win a race and lost its star driver, he'd immediately set an ambitious target. The Italian media duly sharpened their knives.

But Arrivabene isn't afraid to do things differently. He turned up for the pre-season photoshoot without a tie, something that no previous team principal had dared do, and when all of the team management were standing in line behind the SF15T he grabbed his crotch and declared: 'Let's get started!'

While he's a flamboyant character, Arrivabene appears to achieve the delicate balance of being fun and charismatic, while also getting things done. He isn't afraid to have difficult conversations: within weeks of arriving at the team he'd fired some senior engineers, including Briton Pat Fry. People inside the team weren't afraid of him, but he certainly had their attention.

As important as the changes taking place in Maranello is Arrivabene's relationship with Bernie Ecclestone. They got to know each other while Arrivabene represented the sport's sponsors on the F1 Commission and they became as friendly as F1's tsar is with anyone in the sport. It's understood that Bernie encouraged new Ferrari president Sergio Marchionne to employ Arrivabene as team boss.

The special relationship between Ferrari and Ecclestone goes back to the team's founder, Enzo Ferrari. Bernie has

always understood the importance of Ferrari to F1, hence the millions of dollars he pays the team every year under the heading of 'historical importance.'

Arrivabene has worked with Ferrari in F1 since he joined Philip Morris in 1997. 'Formula One is nothing without Ferrari,' he says. Given his view, the team can be confident that he will fight their corner.

Arrivabene will have to earn the confidence of people in the team, but the drivers appear to be the least of his worries. He knows Kimi Räikkönen already from his time at Philip Morris and he's forging a good relationship with Sebastian Vettel, who is relishing the quick-witted banter of his new boss. 'There's a good atmosphere in the team,' says Arrivabene. 'I saw Kimi smile the other day, so I asked him if he was okay.'

It's easier to have a good atmosphere when you have a good car, and the SF15T has been quick and consistent during testing. According to Räikkönen, the 2014 weaknesses have been ironed out, and the trackside team is about to be boosted by Jock Clear from Mercedes.

It's too early to talk about a Ferrari revival, but the future looks better. That's what happens when you get the right man in the right job.

CAR VERDICT: When Ferrari win the title in 2018, we'll look back on 2015 as the turning point.

▲ Former Marlboro man Maurizio Arrivabene. It's probably okay to smoke

► With Bernie. They go way back

2015's RUNNERS & RIDERS



Mercedes AMG Petronas

They won 16 of the 19 races in 2014, often seconds ahead of the pack, and a new, improved power unit makes them still

the team to beat. Hamilton's ability we know about; all eyes are on Rosberg to see how he bounces back from last year's defeat.



44 Lewis Hamilton

F1's biggest talent vs its most fragile mentality? The winner of that battle holds the key to 2015



6 Nico Rosberg

He's ticked the last but one box on his CV. The last one? Can he beat Lewis wheel-to-wheel?



Infiniti Red Bull Racing

Despite stories to the contrary, aero genius Adrian Newey has been involved in the design of the RB11. So aerodynamically the

car is strong, and Dan Ricciardo sure knows how to hustle it. But will Renault let the side down? And will rookie Russian step up?



3 Daniel Ricciardo

He did for Vettel in 2014 and was the only non-Merc race winner. Do not rule him out



26 Daniil Kvyat

He replaced Ricciardo at Toro Rosso, and now follows him to Red Bull. Still only 20



Williams Martini Racing

After a stupendous season in 2014, in which the team bounced up to third in the constructors' championship, can

Sir Frank's history-steeped outfit repeat the feat this year? The drivers say the FW37 is better, but is it good enough?



19 Felipe Massa

Is it a swansong season for the nearly man who came within two corners of the title in 2008?



77 Valtteri Bottas

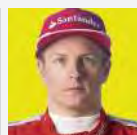
F1's hottest new boy took the grid by surprise in 2014. Ominously, he's now 'ready to win'. May do it!



Scuderia Ferrari

After its first win-less season since the pre-Schumacher days of 1993, this year is about consolidation. They need to get the best

out of Räikkönen, and help Vettel to bed into his new team quickly. If Seb's to build a Schumi-style dynasty, it needs to start soon.



7 Kimi Räikkönen

Spent 2014 understeering quietly at the back of the top 10. This is his last chance



5 Sebastian Vettel

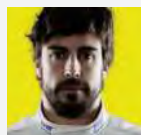
Four-time world champ jumps from humiliating 2014 frying pan into Ferrari hot-seat fire



McLaren Honda

It's been a sticky start with Honda. Testing couldn't really have gone worse: a lack of reliability and a hefty shunt at Barcelona

for Alonso summed up their troubles. But few people doubt the potential of the package – in the long term.



14 Fernando Alonso

Left McLaren in a huff (2007), left Ferrari in a huff (2014), now back at McLaren. Huff 3, or hero?



22 Jenson Button

Victim of epic Ron dither at back end of '14, but experience told. Will quietly annoy Alonso



Sahara Force India

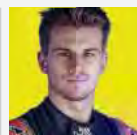
The new car didn't appear until the final test, leaving the team on the back foot. They arrive in Melbourne with even fewer miles on

the clock than McLaren – and that's saying something. But they have Mercedes power and two strong drivers. You never know.



11 Sergio Perez

A hero in Mexico, he'll be chomping to race at the born-again Mexico GP. Fast but impetuous



27 Nico Hulkenberg

In danger of becoming one of F1's wasted talents, he needs to kick arse in 2015



Scuderia Toro Rosso

The car looks a handful, so the last thing the team needs is two rookie drivers. But that's what they've got – including the

youngest driver in the history of the sport. Their goal is to finish fifth in the constructors' battle. Fat chance.



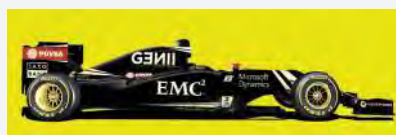
33 Max Verstappen

New regs mean he'd be too young to join F1 in 2016. If he's slow he'll be sent to his room



55 Carlos Sainz Jr.

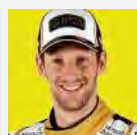
Being the son of a rally legend not an automatic plus. Hope dad didn't tell him to go sideways



Lotus

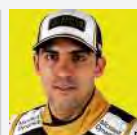
After a disastrous 2014, the team looks in better shape this year. The Mercedes power unit is a big step forward from the

Renault of last year and the E23 looks much tidier aerodynamically. Hopefully, it'll allow Grosjean to repeat his impressive 2013 form.



8 Romain Grosjean

Has gone from crash magnet to title prospect to also ran. But this is a good car. Redemption time!



13 Pastor Maldonado

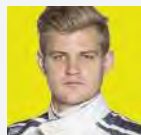
Big talent so far obscured by poor judgement. He's a race winner, but risks us forgetting that



Sauber

This is the team that fought for the world championship in 2008 as BMW-Sauber. Yet they failed to score a single point in 2014.

Admitting they're strapped for cash they've unsurprisingly hired two pay drivers this year; it's a long road back from here.



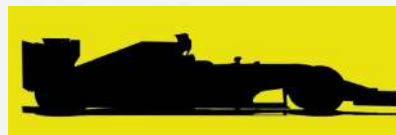
9 Marcus Ericsson

Did okay for Caterham in 2014, but the story here is his \$18m sponsor package



12 Felipe Nasr

A pot of cash from personal sponsor Banco do Brasil won the Brazilian rookie his seat



Manor Marussia

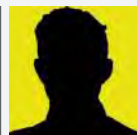
As we went to press, Manor (nee Marussia) were still battling to get to Melbourne. Since exiting administration in February, the team

has been recruiting like mad, while updating their 2014 car to meet '15 regs. A race against time as much as a battle for survival.



46 Will Stevens

Finished 23rd for Caterham at Abu Dhabi 2014. Must improve – there are only 20 cars



? TBA

No news as we went to press, but last year's driver Max Chilton will be racing at Le Mans

IT HAS TO BE one of two scenarios: either Max Verstappen is one of the most talented drivers ever to drive a Formula One car, or F1 cars have become too easy to drive. Otherwise, how is it possible for a 17-year-old, with only one season of car racing under his belt, to race at the top echelon of motorsport?

The argument for him being an enormous talent is compelling. He was a brilliant kart racer, winning multiple championships, and he stepped straight from karts into European Formula 3 in 2014, finishing third in the final standings. More significant than his championship position was the way in which he improved during the year; he had a very strong second half of the season, winning 10 races.

Out of the car, Max's father Jos manages his affairs. Jos is a former racing driver – known as 'Jos The Boss' during his F1 career – and he's instilled in his son a racer's mentality from a very young age. Not only that, Jos was another driver who was fast-tracked from F3 straight into F1. Back in 1994, when he made his F1 debut, there were mutterings of him being faced with too much too soon, but there's a major difference between the predicament he faced and the one in front of Max.

Jos was at Benetton, alongside Michael Schumacher – one of the best

▼ **Verstappen tests the 2015 Toro Rosso. Territory has rarely been this uncharted**

drivers in the history of the sport; Max is up against Carlos Sainz Jr, a good peddler, but there's nothing about the Spaniard that screams 'legend in the making'. Jos's career never recovered from the pasting he received at the hands of Schumacher and Max stands a much better chance of coming out of this experiment well.

It's an experiment because no-one else in history has tried to race an F1 car at such a young age. Prior to Max, the youngest driver of all time was Jaime Alguersuari, who raced for Toro Rosso at the Hungarian Grand Prix of 2009 aged just 19 years and 125 days. He qualified last and finished 15th on his debut, and despite several points finishes over the next couple of years he was dropped by Toro Rosso at the end of 2011. Aged just 21.

When Max lines up on the grid for Toro Rosso at Melbourne, he will be 17 years and 166 days. That's uncharted territory for F1 by nearly two years and if he's the catalyst for a first-corner pile-up, questions will be asked. The FIA is already taking avoiding action, decreeing that from the start of 2016 no driver under the age of 18 will be granted a super licence, but that won't silence the naysayers should something go wrong.

'Age doesn't count anymore,' says Toro Rosso team boss Franz Tost. 'I don't expect any problems for Max; he

will be well prepared for Melbourne. I'm convinced that if we provide him with a good car, he will immediately score points.'

Thus far Verstappen's star has shone the brightest of the two Toro Rosso drivers. He ended the first winter test at Jerez with a lap time that was 0.6sec faster than Sainz's best effort and he was visibly hustling the car more than the Spaniard. However, it's worth noting that Max had a handful of Friday practice sessions at the end of last year, whereas Sainz didn't.

That Verstappen was able to complete 550 miles over two days at Jerez, with only a couple of minor 'offs', was great news for Toro Rosso. The car looked a handful under braking, but he quickly got to within 90% of the car's potential. How good he becomes will be down to how he maximises car set-up and translates the reams of data available to him – two things that Danny Kvyat was very good at during his rookie season last year.

To do what he's done thus far, Verstappen is clearly good; give it six months and we'll know if he's a future champion rather than a contender for the scrapheap before he's even had his coming-of-age party.

CAR VERDICT: The biggest threat to Max's chances is that the Renault-powered STR10 looks well off the pace.

4

Max Verstappen vs history

At 17 he's the youngest F1 driver ever, and the previous youngest was on the scrapheap aged just 21. Next season you'll have to be 18 to get in, so this is Max's unique moment. Chances?

Dad Jos never recovered from the pasting he received from Michael Schumacher. Max stands a better chance



Ratings war: the BBC's David Coulthard jousts with Sky front men Simon Lazenby (left) and Martin Brundle

5

Sky vs BBC

The free Beeb gets four times the audience of Sky.
Is Bernie's pay-per-view model working?

AS HAS BEEN the case for the last three years, the BBC and Sky will share the rights to Formula One this year. The Beeb will show 10 races live and the remainder as highlights, and Sky will serve up every race live.

While British audiences are used to the idea of a terrestrial versus pay-per-view split, the rest of the world seems to be struggling with the concept. Audience numbers have held up in the UK (the Beeb attracts 3.5m-4.5m viewers per race, Sky pulls in 800,000-1m), but they've dropped dramatically elsewhere.

Germany blames Michael Schumacher's retirement for its falling numbers. 'The German public fell in love with Schumacher, not F1,' says Kai Ebel, the anchor for RTL. 'When he retired a lot of people switched off and Vettel doesn't have the same appeal, so our numbers have dropped.'

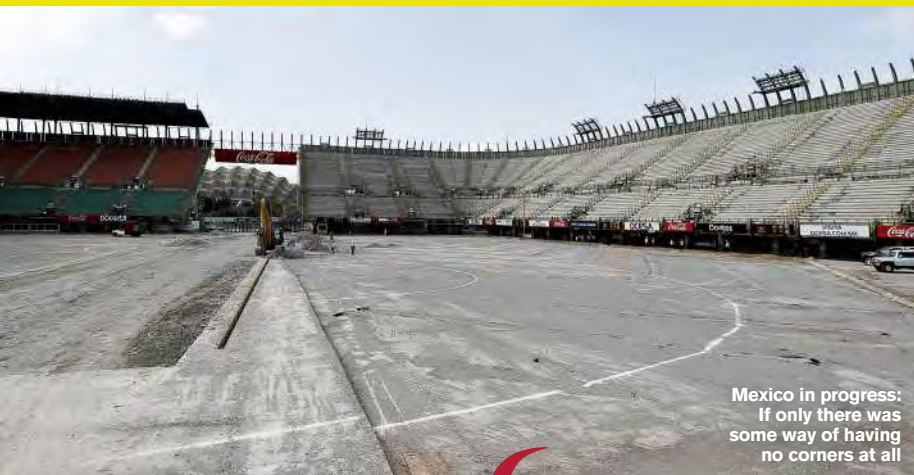
The numbers in France and Italy have dropped since they split the rights a couple of years ago. Bernie Ecclestone will try to convince you that Italy's numbers

have always fluctuated according to Ferrari's fortunes, but the drop has been so severe – 2m down – that there must be a reluctance to watch highlights and/or pay for live races.

Australia's pay/terrestrial split becomes a reality in 2015 for the first time, and the 10-race highlights package could actually help Network TEN's F1 audience. More than 1.5m people watch its live coverage of the Australian Grand Prix, proving that there's an appetite for F1 in the country, and highlights of races in the Americas will now be broadcast at a more civilised time of day, so they could well see a boost in audience numbers this year.

But the question remains: is pay-per-view the right direction for F1? The likes of Sky and Fox bolster Bernie's coffers, but he needs to be careful because the audience is dropping in every country where there's a split, except in the UK.

Without the audience, F1 is nothing. Be very careful, Mr E... **CAR VERDICT:** One thing we do know, if Mercedes walks it again, the audience will drift away.



Mexico in progress:
If only there was
some way of having
no corners at all

Hermann Tilke vs Mexico City

Why did F1's track designer delete one of the greatest corners in history from 2015's new circuit?

REMEMBER NIGEL Mansell's epic overtaking move around the outside of Gerhard Berger at Peralta in 1990? Or the moment Ayrton Senna got it wrong under braking and flipped his McLaren in '91, on the same corner? Two iconic memories of the Mexican Grand Prix, although drivers will tell you that every lap through the banked, 180-degree, balls-to-the-wall Peralta was memorable.

Well, this corner – one of the greatest in the world – has been excluded from the revised layout of the *Autodromo Hermanos Rodríguez* in Mexico City. When F1 cars return to the track in November following a 23-year absence, the cars will negotiate a mickey-mouse infield section before joining the original track halfway around Peralta in second gear. It's emasculation gone mad; it's the equivalent of racing at Spa without Eau Rouge or Silverstone without Copse.

The organisers will tell you that they can't create enough run-off for the 180mph corner, due to the proximity of houses and a dual carriageway. But there's nothing to stop them pulling the whole corner 50m forward and creating a carbon copy of it there. And it certainly doesn't have anything to do with money because the race has a budget of \$350m at its disposal over five years.

But Peralta isn't the only corner to suffer at the hands of Hermann Tilke's designers. The Esses are tighter than

they used to be; Turn 1 is also tighter and the kerbs are flatter. The whole layout has become stop-start and what you're left with is a long start-finish straight and a bunch of tight corners taking you back to the start of the lap.

That all sounds negative, but this isn't the first time we've been disappointed by a Hermann Tilke design. Bahrain and Abu Dhabi are two examples of tracks that could have been more challenging.

There are reasons to feel good about the return of Mexico to the F1 calendar. Another race on t'other side of the pond is good for business and there's definitely an appetite for F1 in Mexico City, thanks to the contribution of Sergio Perez. When Force India launched their 2015 livery there in January, fans were queuing outside the venue at 5am in the hope of catching a glimpse of their hero.

There's also a healthy flow of Mexican pesos into the sport, on top of the race fee that Bernie will receive from the promoters. Telcel and its telecom offshoots – all owned by the richest man in the world, Carlos Slim – adorn the sides of the Force India and Ferrari this year, the latter courtesy of third driver Esteban Gutierrez and more Mexicans are travelling to races all around the world.

'We are expecting 120,000 people at the race,' says Slim. 'It's going to be huge.' It's just a pity that those fans won't have a thrilling race to watch.

CAR VERDICT: Might be saved by being a possible title-decider.

2015 CALENDAR

MARCH

15th **Australian Grand Prix 05:00**

In 2014: Nico wins, Lewis retires, Ricciardo disqualified

29th **Malaysia Grand Prix 08:00**

In 2014: Hamilton on pole, leads every lap, wins from Rosberg

APRIL

12th **Chinese Grand Prix 07:00**

In 2014: Lewis shown chequered flag a lap early!

19th **Bahrain Grand Prix 16:00**

In 2014: Epic race-long battle between the Mercs. Lewis takes lead at start and wins by a second

MAY

10th **Spanish Grand Prix 13:00**

In 2014: Lewis holds off Nico for fourth straight win

24th **Monaco Grand Prix 13:00**

In 2014: Nico's 'deliberate' qualifying off stops Lewis's charge and wins Rosberg the race

JUNE

7th **Canadian Grand Prix 19:00**

In 2014: Both Mercs suffer identical power problem. Lewis retires, Nico gets second, Ricciardo wins

21st **Austrian Grand Prix 13:00**

In 2014: Lewis screws up in qualifying, Rosberg wins

JULY

5th **British Grand Prix 13:00**

In 2014: Lewis wins from sixth after Rosberg retires

19th **German Grand Prix 13:00**

In 2014: Lewis quali crash hands Rosberg victory

26th **Hungarian Grand Prix 13:00**

In 2014: Lewis refuses to yield to Nico. Beats him to third

AUGUST

SUMMER BREAK

23rd **Belgian Grand Prix 13:00**

In 2014: The one where Nico takes Lewis out. Oh dear

SEPTEMBER

6th **Italian Grand Prix 13:00**

In 2014: Lewis wins as Nico suspiciously misses chicane

20th **Singapore Grand Prix 13:00**

In 2014: Rosberg retires early, Hamilton cruises to win

27th **Japanese Grand Prix 06:00**

In 2014: Lewis wins in the rain, Bianchi has horror crash

OCTOBER

11th **Russian Grand Prix 11:00**

In 2014: Hamilton leads every lap and wins. Bernie cuddles Putin. Everybody else yawns

25th **United States Grand Prix 19:00**

In 2014: Only 18 cars race, Lewis takes his 10th win

NOVEMBER

1st **Mexican Grand Prix 19:00**

In 1992: Mansell wins from Patrese, Schumacher third

15th **Brazilian Grand Prix 16:00**

In 2014: Nico wins from pole, Lewis second. To the wire!

29th **Abu Dhabi Grand Prix 13:00**

In 2014: Nico's car falters, Lewis wins race and title

ALL START TIMES IN GMT

YOU CAN TELL that Ferrari has a marketing man at the helm these days. At the end of February the team issued pictures of a concept car, under the heading 'how F1 cars could look in the future'. It gave their sponsors the oxygen of publicity and got Formula One's design boffins thinking about the future of the sport in general terms.

There's a common desire to make F1 faster and noisier in the future, but, as yet, no agreement about how best to achieve those goals. Ferrari want a return to twin-turbo V6s that produce 1000bhp (Enzo always believed F1 was an engine formula), while wind-tunnel king Adrian Newey wants aerodynamics to play more of a central role. Mercedes want to keep the status quo – funny that.

The desire for more speed and sound follows the negativity that surrounded the new cars last

season. Fans and race promoters expressed their disappointment and this is F1's answer, even if they've yet to agree how to do it. 'F1 cars must remain comfortably the fastest in the world around a traditional race circuit,' says Christian Horner, whose Red Bull team have also offered up an F1 concept car. 'As soon as that position is threatened, as it was last year when the pole-sitter for GP2 would have invariably qualified halfway up the F1 grid, the business model goes out the window.'

What Horner's saying is this: why spend €80m to be back of the grid in F1, when you can spend €3m in GP2 and go pretty much the same speed?

But horsepower or aero, that's the question, and there appears to be more of a leaning towards horsepower, with fatter tyres and wider cars. Excess grunt looks spectacular at corner-exit and it makes the cars harder to drive; aerodynamic grip, by contrast,

ensures the cars move around less and if the grip is generated by wings it actually makes overtaking harder because downforce becomes inconsistent when following in the slipstream of another car.

'Formula One needs to be more spectacular,' says Ferrari team principal Maurizio Arrivabene. 'The cars need to be aesthetically more appealing and make noise akin to a heavy metal band. A real revolution is called for, with significant and radical changes.'

In typical F1 fashion, the teams don't look like being capable of agreeing a technical direction for the future. It will be left to the FIA to stipulate what will happen and rather than being afraid of the decision, president Jean Todt should relish the opportunity to leave a lasting legacy on the sport.

CAR VERDICT: Power will beat aero, because F1 has to be a spectacle, not a science lesson.

7

Power vs downforce

More power or less, wider tyres or not, more aerodynamic aids or purer race cars? Ferrari want one thing, Red Bull another. Who'll decide?

▼ Flow visualisation paint shows the aerodynamics working. Sod that, what does the engine sound like?



8

Williams vs Valtteri Bottas

The young Finn won't forget the faith Williams showed in him. But it's win or leave in 2015

NOTHING QUITE beats the excitement of a new talent arriving on the scene in Formula One. Whether it's Gilles Villeneuve spinning repeatedly en route to 11th place on his debut at Silverstone in 1977, or Ayrton Senna catching Alain Prost in the rain at Monaco in '84, these are defining moments in the history of the sport.

The grid is bulging with fresh talent in 2015. Daniel Ricciardo needs no introduction here and Valtteri Bottas, Williams' new superstar, has had praise heaped upon him after bagging fourth place in the drivers' standings. But while Ricciardo's arrival at F1's top table can be linked to his wins in Canada, Hungary and Belgium last year, Bottas's stand-out performance is less easy to spot.

Let me take you back to last year's Austrian Grand Prix. It was the only race of the entire season at which a car other than a Mercedes started on pole position. The front row was a Williams lock-out, but it was Felipe Massa on pole and not the highly regarded Bottas. Hardly anything for the Finn to write home about, but here's the thing: he didn't have a fully functioning FW36 during qualifying.

The 0.087sec with which Massa out-qualified him would have been handsomely reversed had the fuel-flow sensor on his car been functioning properly. As it was, he lost 0.2sec per lap and he had to drive the lap of his life to get so close to Massa. When the team asked him not to reveal the problem to the world's media, he respected their wishes despite it looking as if he under-performed. It spoke volumes about him as a driver and as a person. For the record, he finished third in the race – his first F1 podium – and 9sec ahead of Massa.

Bottas scored a total of six podiums in 2014, four of them during a five-race purple patch. That included a very determined drive from 14th to second at Silverstone, after which he committed to the team for 2015. But

Bottas has made it clear that second is no longer enough.

'Winning is the next thing,' he says. 'I finished second on two occasions last year, so it's only natural that I now want to win. That's the next step. We've made a lot of progress at Williams over the past year and I believe that I can win with this team.'

If Bottas doesn't win a race this year, his management wouldn't be doing its job if it didn't look around for better opportunities. Drivers are only in vogue for a limited period; if they stagnate, they get forgotten. Look at Nico Hulkenberg: a couple of years ago he was very highly regarded, but he never got the top drive and his star has now been superseded by the likes of Bottas and Ricciardo.

Bottas needs to keep the momentum going and, luckily for him, some top seats might become available at the end of the year. Räikkönen (Ferrari), Hamilton (Mercedes) and Button (McLaren) are all potentially out of contract and all three of their current teams have deeper pockets than Williams.

Drivers are only in vogue for a limited period; if they stagnate they get forgotten

'We want to re-sign Lewis,' said Mercedes boss Toto Wolff at the end of last year. 'If that doesn't work out we'd look to replace him with Alonso and if we can't get him, Bottas. We think Valtteri is very quick, very talented.'

Never has Williams needed to win a race more than this year. They need it to keep up the momentum of last year and they need it to keep hold of Bottas beyond the end of the season.

CAR VERDICT: Williams may get that win, but Bottas will be driving for McLaren in 2016. **CAR**

Follow me on Twitter @TomClarksonF1

▼ Valtteri Bottas:
'I finished second
on two occasions.
Now I want to win'



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THE CAR ADVENTURE

Bentley GT3-R: Cannes to Pall Mall





THE *Bentley* *Boys* INITIATION TEST

It was an infamous wager made in 1930: drive from Cannes to London quicker than the Blue Train could make it from Cannes to Calais. The feat cemented the legend of the Bentley Boys. Today, in a new GT3-R, we try to top it

WORDS: Steve Moody | PHOTOGRAPHY: Richard Pardon



It turns out that English ruffian isn't the valet parking attendant after all

THE CHALLENGE CAME about over dinner at the Carlton Hotel in Cannes in 1930, where then Bentley chairman, racer and diamond-mine heir Woolf Barnato poured scorn on Rover's and Alvis's much-heralded beating of the Blue Train from Cannes to Calais.

A trifle, he reckoned. Anyone could do that. In the same time, 21 and a half hours, he reckoned he could steer his Bentley from the Carlton to his dinner companion (and soon to be co-driver) Dale Bourn's club, the Conservative, just off Pall Mall, and pocket a £100 wager as well.

Now that's a contest worthy of a Bentley Boy. It must have seemed a sticky trial 85 years ago, even for somebody such as Barnato who had never lost at Le Mans, because

it still feels pretty testing today, sitting in the golden glow of a winter morning, downing as much coffee as the Carlton can brew, eyeing the Bentley GT3-R sitting malevolently on the start line.

'It can't be done,' some naysayers in the *CAR* office reckon. 'Certainly not in less than a day with any half-usable pictures taken too.'

Photographer Rich and I, pepped on tales of Birkin, Duff and Benjafield and wide-eyed races against impossible odds, reckon otherwise. I hope we are not about to make rotten asses of ourselves.

An evocative steam train, its first-class-only sleeper cabins loaded with the great and the glamorous from Churchill to Chaplin, the Blue Train can't be physically raced anymore because it doesn't exist, the luxury version having reached its final terminus in 1962. So we have just the Breitling clock on our dash as a rival. Still, we've got a fast car to race the ghost train in – the £237,500 GT3-R, one of only 300 hand-built examples, with a top speed of 170mph (surprisingly low due to eight shortened gear ratios), but 578bhp from the twin-turbo 4.0-litre V8. Should suffice.

Barnato downed his drink in the Carlton bar and coolly swept off down the road in his 6.5-litre Speed Six Mulliner saloon (not the Gurney Nutting fastback now called the Blue Train car), but *our* start is an ignominious one, getting lost in the one-way warren of Cannes. Once out and heading for the hills I discover a good thing: bloody hell, it accelerates viciously hard.

The noise builds with a shriek of the new high-boost turbos spinning up followed by a thunderous bellow as the eight cylinders go potty, with a hard crackle marching through the lightweight Akropovic titanium exhausts.

Imagine all your favourite noisy car noises, served in one gluttonous banquet, and you have an inkling. But while wondering how the devil it sounds heart-flutteringly heavenly and bowel-grippingly satanic at the same time ►

HOW TO BE A BENTLEY BOY

1

Buy a racing car

£10m bags you 'Old Number One', the Bentley Speed Six which won Le Mans in '29 and '30. If its US owner would sell it...

£368k buys a Conti GT3, a stripped out 500bhp GT.

£250 makes you a member of Brookspeed Bentley Racing Club, where you can be in the garage on race days. £1k buys part-ownership of their GT3 racer.

£39.99 enters you in the Living Room 24hrs in a Scalextric Bentley GT3 (1:32 scale Krug bottles not included).

Bentley GT3-R: Cannes to Pall Mall



Not the first Bentley to roll out of Cannes at the start of a heroic road-trip challenge



To breakfast! Steve Moody hastens to the dining room in 2015



To glory! Woolf Barnato with his Speed Six Mulliner in 1930



you'll already be past the ton and heading for real trouble. The GT3-R is mesmerisingly, brutally quick, but the delivery of extreme speed is an unalloyed joy, devoid of the nagging doubt that it's milliseconds from ruination.

Its weight and four-wheel drive bring the surefootedness of a veteran steeplechaser and through the rocks of the *Col de Vence* and *Greolieres* the drive becomes a thing of quite majestic proportions. In the icily sharp winter air, the blastwave the GT3-R produces must be spilling over the edges and down into the valley, rumbling the breakfast crockery. What a splendid way to wake the locals up. France starts looking a piffingly small place with this much pace available.

WO's attitude was that racing sold cars, so he would have liked the GT3-R. Its white paint (the only colour choice) wide carbon wing, green streaks and Union Jacks look very like the Blancpain endurance racer.

But it is not the most chic Bentley: more *Max Power* for millionaires. Ideal for the moneyed types of the *Cote D'Azur* it seems. We'd arrived the night before, and as our Bentley parked on the mosaic-clad porch, an expensively constructed collection of Euro-milfs tottered into the bar cooing appreciatively.

You might think real Bentley Boys would follow, order magnums of Pol Roger and spend the evening wooing with talk of derring-do and heroic victories. But I stunk of stale Red Bull and had melted chocolate on my jumper, while Rich plainly would rather fiddle with his exposure settings than the clasps on a Roberto Cavalli shift dress.

But the Bentley Boys were not quite the party animals many assume, when there was work to be done. The drivers did not drink in the run-up to races, WO banned girlfriends from the pits, while everything was planned and practiced with meticulous precision. As for racing, the idea was to go only just fast enough to win.

Finally, we crest the formations and follow wider tree-lined hairpins as they sashay their way down the last whimpers of the *Alpes Maritime*, where the remarkable braking of the Bentley is shown to its best effect. Downhill

HOW TO BE A BENTLEY BOY

2

Play hard

WO said of his charges: 'The public liked to imagine them living with several mistresses and several very fast Bentleys, drinking champagne in night clubs, playing the horses, and beating furiously around racing tracks at the weekend.

When they were not yachting in the Med, skiing in Switzerland, or playing in Cannes, the parties were often held in Grosvenor Square, the south-east side of which was known as Bentley Corner.'

3

Drink!

Barnato was said to be able to drink two bottles of Champagne 'to no visible effect'. One of the drinks of choice was the vicious Bentley cocktail – one part Dubonnet, one part Calvados – which was dreamt up at a party in Grosvenor Square when the other drinks ran out.

with nearly three tonnes of momentum, I brake late and each time find I have to release pressure on the pedal or these vast unfading carbon silicon carbide brakes will anchor us at a mooring yards short of the turn.

THE GT3-R ISN'T a full-on sports car though, even with the torque vectoring system subtly acting on the rear wheels pulling us remarkably tight through a corner as though the car is being trussed in a corset, because the steering ratio is still GT-weighted and on some bends you can't just plait your arms through 180 degrees and spear off after the apex.

That also makes the paddleshift harder to use, because the levers stay where they are while your hands are doing the Charleston. Usually these shifters are just an affectation, but the GT3-R feels more like a sequential system than an electronic parlour game.

Hit the limiter before pulling for the next one and the car will buck angrily, while shifting down meekly without enough engine speed results in the odd sensation of speeding up as the engine revs to match the ratio. Basically, it's all-out or nothing, with no horses to be spared as each gear bangs into place. Tremendous fun.

Then it's onto the flat wide plains beyond. Our plan is to follow the approach Nelson took, and 'go straight at 'em', so that means pointing north-west to Calais on *Route Nationales*, just as Barnato did. But in his day there were barely any cars and while the roads were rough, at least they were empty and he could keep up his 75mph lope.

In my mind we would roll down tree-lined avenues, punctuated by stops at shuttered cafes for revitalising espressos. But the *Route Nationales* are clogged with lorries, caravans and toll dodgers in battered Citroëns, lined not with plane trees but Super U supermarkets, tyre fitters, pizza outlets and out-of-order toilets (what is it with French plumbing?). It's slow going, and even with the ballistic acceleration of the Bentley, picking off this endless train of snails is hard work, averaging barely 40mph. That means France could take 19 hours, discounting fuelling, food and finding working urinals. Not a chance. ▶

Only 300 GT3-Rs are to be built, each by hand, each painted white with green detailing



Bentley GT3-R: Cannes to Pall Mall



Alcantara sports seats and dash finished in eye-hurting metallic Kermit

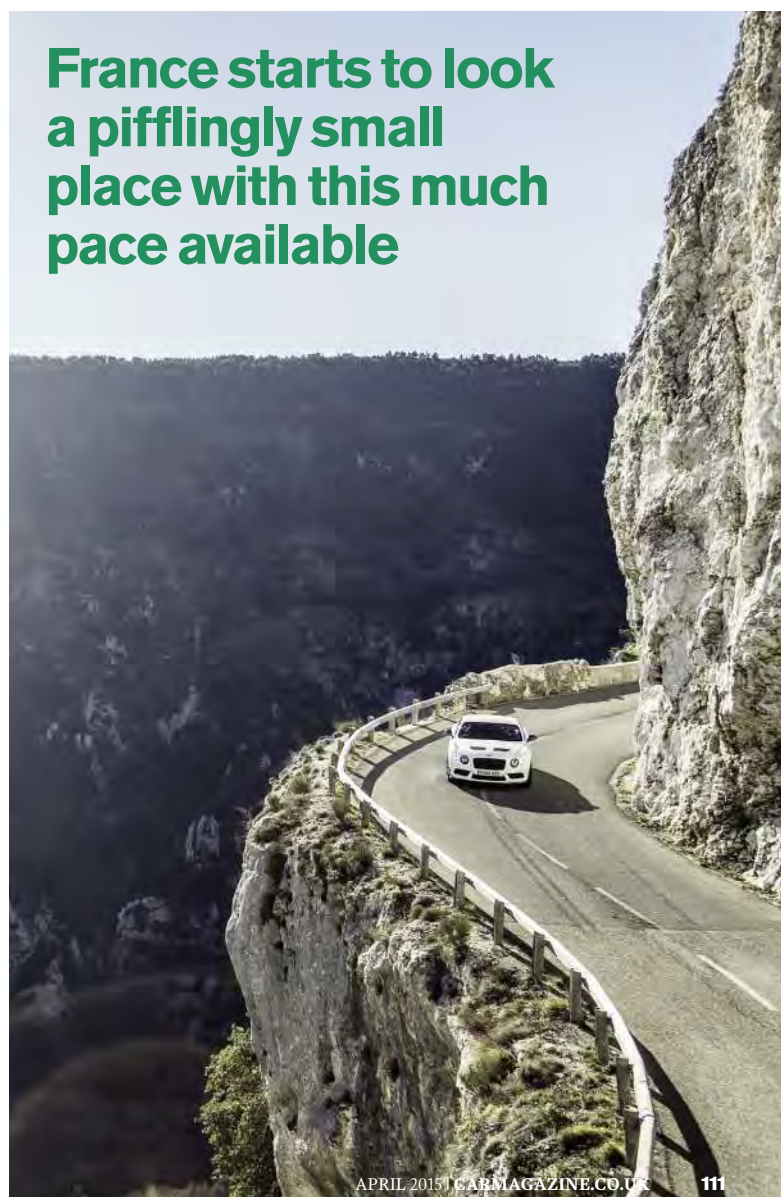


Everything that's great about Britain (don't mention that the Germans own Bentley)

France starts to look a piffingly small place with this much pace available



This man has been spotted at every filling station in France





Sunset on Route Nationales. Still a long, long way to Pall Mall



WO Bentley once said: 'We were not in it for glory and heroics, we were in it for business'

Bentley GT3-R: Cannes to Pall Mall



Back in Blighty, fuelling up for the big final push into the heart of London

HOW TO BE A BENTLEY BOY

4

Win at all cost

Despite the playboy antics, a cold, hard winning mentality is at the core of the Bentley Boy ethos. That means destroying rivals, as Barnato did in 1930 at Le Mans, harrying the faster Mercedes early in the race and forcing the great Rudolf Caracciola to use the car's supercharger until it blew a gasket.

WO wasn't interested in the glory, just the PR that came from winning. He said: 'I would have been perfectly content to see our cars circulating round Le Mans in inglorious solitude so long as the *Daily Mail* gave us their front page on Monday morning!'

After hours of irritations though, the roads start to clear as everyone heads home for long dinners, and we snake through the Rhone valley, with the sun dipping behind steep-sided hills, the wintering vines throwing shapes of tortured spidery claws. The GT3-R is magnificent at this sort of pacy gallop, with a smooth consistency, plush damping, and the deep bark of the exhausts thumping out a steady rhythm.

By the time we reach Burgundy it's pitch black, but along the flat road of the *Routes des Grand Crus* skirting the Beaune ridge, we're making great progress as we flash past vineyards and through tree-lined tunnels floodlit by the brilliant white glare of the Bentley's LED headlights. I could drive all night. But we are still hundreds of miles from home, and with the stopping for photography added in, hours behind schedule. Just as well the cabin is set up for a long run, with deep, firm alcantara sports seats trimmed in a jarring green leather, beautifully finished carbonfibre panels steeping from the floor and a weight-saving banquette in the back where seats would be a useful bench for cameras and rubbish.

Heading into Champagne we switch to the autoroute to stand any chance of seeing the coast by dawn, but I qualify that strategic change by the fact WO would have done the same – it was all about the winning, not the taking part. He once said: 'We were not in it for glory and heroics, we were in it for business.'

BECAUSE OF THAT, WO rated Barnato his best driver; on board he was the antithesis of the playboy persona that sold so many cars. Unlike the more erratic Tim Birkin, Barnato was mechanically sympathetic, drove strictly to

team orders, and never made mistakes.

On the near-empty motorways I am careful that our behaviour should remain gentlemanly and the toll-station-getways aren't all pomp and circumstance, trailing a 24 gun salute in our wake, no matter what the temptation. Post-*Charlie Hebdo* France is in a rather delicate, jumpy state, and antagonising already edgy *Gendarmes* with needless buffoonery just doesn't seem the done thing. Lucky that, I think, as we crawl up to a gate at Reims to be confronted with what seemed like half the Foreign Legion and a platoon of customs officials. A gruff chap in an important-looking jacket aims a flashlight while men with automatic weapons circle. He quizzes us and concludes we aren't the renegades they are looking for.

'Now you go,' he says. 'But you go very fast, and very loud from here, yes?'

Well, when an official backed up by an arsenal that would have made Wellington think twice about sounding the bugle tells me to give it the full beans, who am I to argue...?

Gales and heavy rain sweep across wide, flat expanses of northern France, while bringing inevitable fog banks, often suddenly enveloping us as we drop into shallow valleys, and even the steadfast Benters needs a careful hand. These are the conditions Barnato encountered, although no major surprise seeing as this is the default climate setting of the miserable Somme region.

But 16 hours in, starting to feel a bit bleary-eyed, I find that corrective inputs at the wheel aren't quite as accurate as intended. Coming over melancholic about the challenge ahead, I manage to snap out of it with some mental self-flagellation: imagine rattling along on barely paved roads, engine roaring away, skinny radial tyres skipping across ►



Several times during the night Steve swears he saw the ghostly tail lamps of a 1930s Gurney Nutting fastback



Back in 1930 they weren't under the Channel but on top of it, chugging wheezily towards Folkestone



London, Monday. Our quest for glory saved by Ken Livingstone. He's not such a 'bloody leftie' now, eh?

Bentley GT3-R: Cannes to Pall Mall

BLUE TRAIN RACE: 1930 vs 2015



1930
Cannes, Aix-en-Provence,
Lyon, Auxerre, Paris, Calais
CAR BENTLEY
MULLINER SPEED SIX
SALOON (PROBABLY)

Engine 6 cylinders in line
180bhp @ 3500rpm
Performance 90mph (approx)
max speed, 15mpg
Price £1800 (approx)
Miles Unknown
Time 21hrs 36 minutes
Average speed 43mph
Money won £100
Fines £200 by Automotive Club de
France for racing on the roads

2015
Cannes, Valences, Lyons,
Reims, Calais
CAR BENTLEY
CONTINENTAL GT3-R

Engine V8 twin-turbo
580bhp @ 6000rpm
Performance 170mph max speed,
22.2mpg
Price £237,500
Miles 838
Time 21hrs, 28 minutes
Average speed 39mph (with
photography!)
Money won £0
Fines None have appeared so far

standing water, draughts swirling, screens fogging, and suspension crashing with 150 miles to do before croissants and coffee. Barnato wouldn't have allowed the upper lip to vacillate. He'd have hunkered behind the wheel and dug in for a long innings. Pull yourself together, you cosseted, 21st century blitherer.

One of the myriad advantages we have is that we can use the splendiferous Channel Tunnel to claw back on our ghostly competitors. Barnato reached Boulogne in time for a hearty breakfast, and had to wait a couple of hours while the Speed Six was winched aboard the cross-channel steamer bound for Folkestone. We are parked on the next train at 4.15am, sped under the sea without a hitch and so effectively reach Blighty's ragged road network before we left.

Now, at this point you could rest on your laurels and start dreaming of champagne corks arcing into the air and pretty girls kissing soot-stained cheeks on Pall Mall, but Monday morning rush-hour into London is not a beast that tames easily and many a grand excursion has nearly gone belly-up in the capital with the finish line at its mercy, as Phileas Fogg would testify.

Even at half five in the morning, with an hour left on our deadline, the traffic is crawling up the A2, and as we enter central London the clutter and dirt after the glories of France is a shock to a frazzled system. As we get closer we're actually in danger of being late, as each mile becomes more gloopy with traffic. Nine hundred miles, only to have the last four bugger it.

Then, as we enter the posh congestion-charged bit of London after Westminster Bridge, the roads clear. Ken Livingstone, I could kiss you. We've time for a victory roll around Piccadilly and down St James to our spiritual destination at the Conservative Club, where old Tories *harred* their last few port-soaked *umphs* but is now, rather aptly, a bank, and then round the corner to the RAC Club with barely 10 minutes to spare. Barnato dashed through the very same doors to sign in officially, four minutes before the Blue Train pulled into Calais. Having managed it in the same time he did, but with none of the deprivations, I have huge respect for his feat.

Quarter of a million quid might seem a lot of cash for



After all that, there's nobody in at the former Conservative Club. Je Suis (a right) Charlie

HOW TO BE A BENTLEY BOY

5

Have massive parties

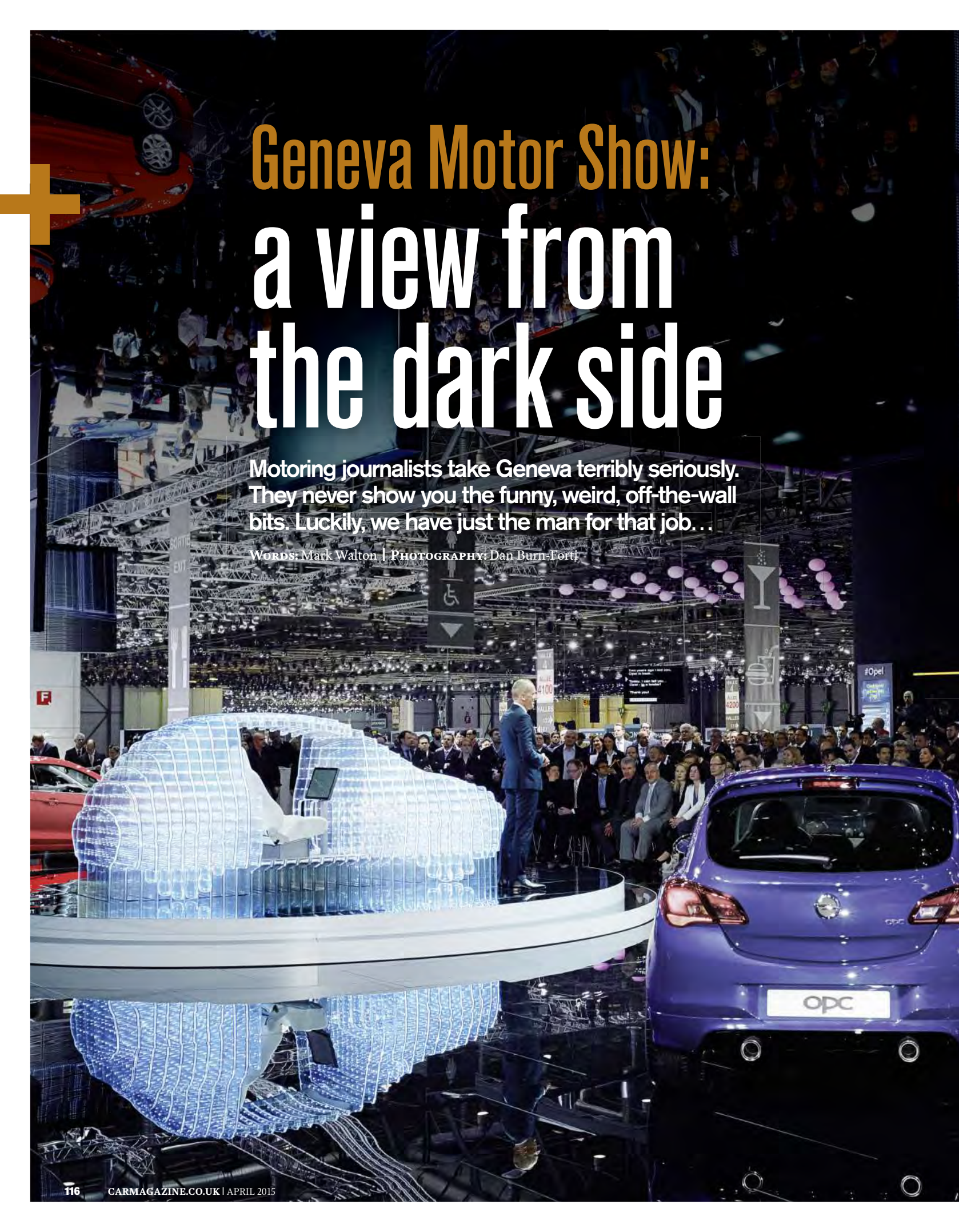
After the 1929 Le Mans win, Woolf Barnato held a huge party at his Arderun mansion in Surrey, in which the drive was turned into a racetrack, bars were built as pitstops, and at 6am the prettiest girl there was judged, with the prize a blast in the winning car with 'Driver: Barnato or Birkin - *au choix*'.

what appears a breathed-on Continental GT V8 S, but I'd come to the conclusion this is a unique car. A McLaren or Ferrari at this price is a very different animal – there's nothing else like this marvellous blunderbuss of a thing, a modern evocation of the blisteringly fast 'lorries' WO built that Ettore Bugatti was so disparaging of, and beaten by.

In the darkness of a wet and wintry London morning, the GT3-R sits like a gleaming beacon among grimy delivery lorries disgorging their day's goods, and I want to tell everyone about the magnitude of what we've just done, but nobody seems the slightest bit bothered. I wanted to scream and shout, to strike up the brass band and wear a sash: look at what we've seen and where we've come from, hear how we've raced legends and beaten ghosts across a country. And how odd do I smell?

Dying for a wee I hobble into the RAC Club's toilets and find a urinal (all in working order – we are back in England, remember) above which is a picture of WO Bentley. I like to think the old boy would have approved of our dash: we are Bentley Boys after all.

Follow me on Twitter @Sjmoody37



Geneva Motor Show: a view from the dark side

Motoring journalists take Geneva terribly seriously. They never show you the funny, weird, off-the-wall bits. Luckily, we have just the man for that job...

WORDS: Mark Walton | PHOTOGRAPHY: Dan Burn-Fort



THE 76-YEAR-OLD Franco Sbarro leans forward with a twinkle in his eye, and says with a smile and a heavy Italian accent: 'My first time, Geneva, as a constructor, was 1973 – 1973 to now, every year for 43 years!' And I smile back, indulging this sweet, bespectacled little grandpa, all the while thinking to myself: 'How? How do you do it? I don't understand! How does it all stack up? Forty three years, building *this stuff*? Who buys it? What happens when the show's finished? WHAT THE HELL DOES SBARRO DO THE REST OF THE YEAR?'

I often have these thoughts when I walk round the Geneva Motor Show. A kind of disbelief. You see, while the big manufacturers launch their latest supercars and dominate the headlines, the annual Swiss 'Auto Salon' is also a magnet for the bizarre and the left field, for visionaries and crackpots, for obscure automotive dreamers who catch your eye with something freakish or grotesque. One minute you're looking at a run-of-the-mill Honda or Fiat, then suddenly you're staring at a wedge-shaped hovercar and a girl in a revealing catsuit.

None of these ideas catch on. Many of these six-wheeled bubble-car concepts are just a plastic shell with no working parts – few, if any, go into production. Yet ▶

◀ **Weirdness is everywhere at the Geneva show. Here, a plastic igloo fitted with two car seats is used to launch Opel's OnStar wi-fi hotspot service, available in the new Vauxhall Viva. Strange...**

▲ **Walton examines the underside of the Mercedes G500 4x4. Shortly after this photo was taken, an unknown foreign journalist dragged him out by the ankles, chuckling 'Wery wery original! Bizarre...**

▼ Walton reflects on the Sbarro Memory, a GTO lookalike built on a Ferrari 400



many of these companies are back every year, taking up the same space in the same hall of the same gigantic Palexpo exhibition centre. With their mysterious names, like FAB, Phiaro, Zenvo and ED, they seem to exist in a Geneva bubble, disconnected from the real world.

And when I say they take up the same space, I mean *exactly* the same spot, year after year. It's something many people don't realise about the show, until you've been a few times – there's the Renault stand at the bottom of the stairs, Nissan tucked in the corner, and Mercedes, down the back of Hall 6. The manufacturers each have their 'turf', and the traditions of the show are built up, year after year, like varnish. The eccentric weirdos are a part of that: so Sbarro has been coming since 1973; Rinspeed – another specialist in silliness – has been coming since 1979; EDAG has been showing concepts since 1999. You always know where to find them. The big Italian styling houses used to show their stuff at the once-famous Turin Auto Show, until that died in 2000, so now you'll find Pininfarina and Giugiaro here at Geneva too, often with a small, single-car stand. It's strange, how their concepts seem bang up-to-date – all hybrid power and wi-fi connectivity – yet at the same time their efforts feel like a throwback to the 1970s, with the outrageous styling, the

posing models in plastic dresses, and the hopeless, sci-fi optimism. For car enthusiasts of my generation, it's hard to get the *Top Trumps Prototypes* cards out of your head.

And then there are the tuners and modifiers: German companies like RUF and Carlsson and AC Schnitzer, all displaying their wide-bodied, carbon-crusted Mercs and BMWs, on 30-inch polished alloys and trimmed with 24-carat leopard's teeth. One must-see stand at Geneva these days is Mansory. Created by the (slightly mysterious) Iranian-born Kourosh Mansory, the company started as a supplier to the auto industry back in 1989, but for the last ten years it's been creating its own extreme, re-styled supercars for the super-wealthy. We're talking customised Aventadors, Rolls-Royce Phantoms, McLarens and Astons, all tarted up and blinged-out to the max. This year there was a white and green Bentley Continental GT on the stand, tuned to 725bhp and completely reskinned in carbon, yours for half a million euros; and the new Mercedes G-Wagen 'Sahara' Edition, with camo paint, 828bhp and an interior inspired by falcon wings. Nice.

Mansory may be a relative newcomer, but it continues that great Geneva tradition of the extravagant, the absurd, and those three words left hanging in the air: 'What. The. Hell.'



▲ The Dacia Duster... being dusted. Geddit? Photographer Dan laughed and laughed for the rest of the day

► The ED Torq concept rejected the tired convention of a windscreen. The model rejected the worn-out formality of wearing underpants



Geneva uncovered



The Yazuma GT looks like a prop from a Batman movie. Its creator, Ludovic Lazareth, describes himself as a former student and 'disciple' of Franco Sbarro



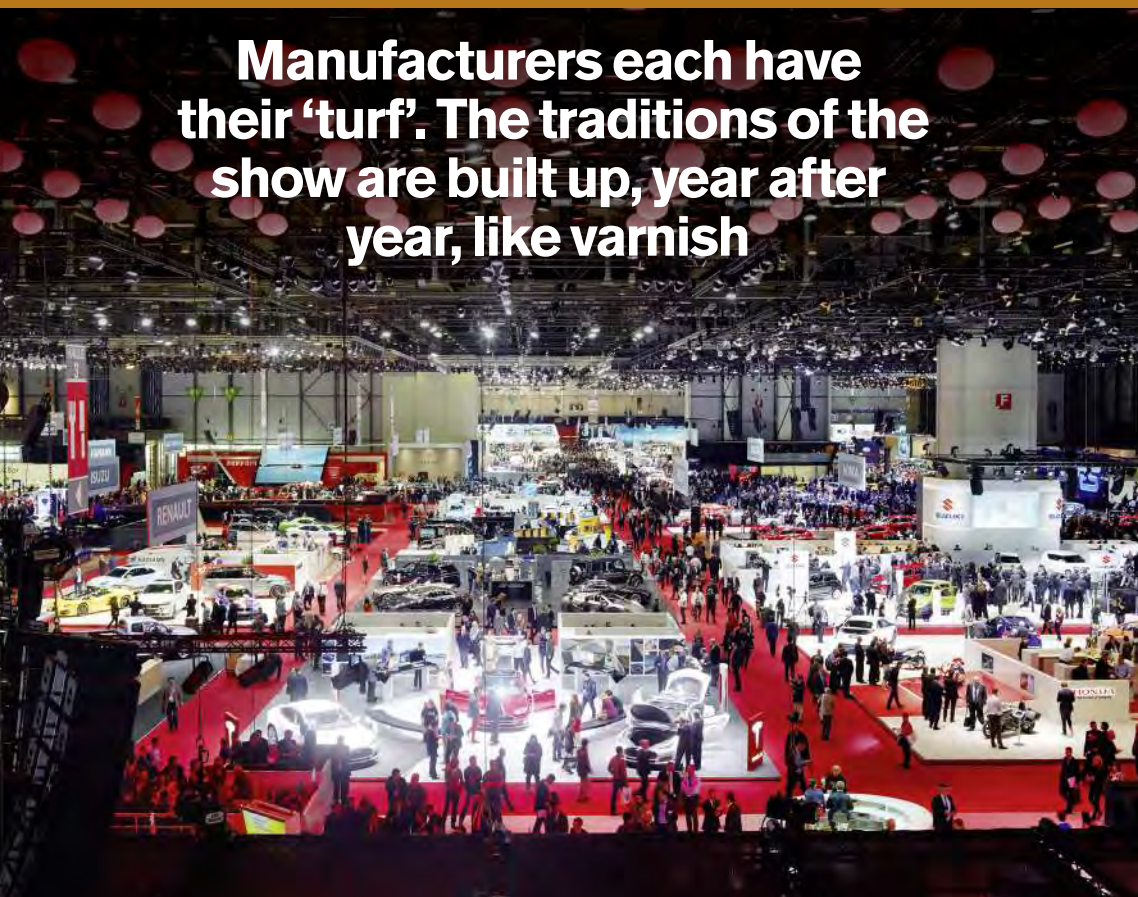
On press day, the media moves around the show in a pack, herded from one unveiling to the next every 15 minutes



Give her a break, she's been standing in those heels for five hours, being harassed by pervy old photographers. This shot was taken by Dan Burn-Forti

Inspired by the elegant wings of the falcon, the luxuriously embroidered interior of the Mansory Sahara evokes the awesome majesty of the desert

Manufacturers each have their 'turf'. The traditions of the show are built up, year after year, like varnish



➤ Sbarro's 2015 Geneva Show car was the Triple – with a mid-mounted 7.7-litre GM V8, three seats and a wheelbase longer than holiday coach, it was a barmy classic. Franco said he hoped to sell a handful of cars to race circuits, who could provide F1-style thrills to paying customers. Can't fail!

▼ Eurosnacks on offer on the Volkswagen stand



▲ Our man Walton chats to Franco Sbarro, Geneva legend since 1973

The concepts feel bang up-to-date, but at the same time like a throwback to the '70s



◀ The interior of the Rinspeed Budii featured a steering wheel on a folding robot arm. Like many Geneva concepts, don't hold your breath for the production model

Geneva uncovered

Kourosh Mansory, the Iranian founder of the Mansory tuning company, stands in front of his new G-Wagen Sahara. The price is P.O.A., and probably I.Y.H.T.A. (If You Have To Ask...)



▼ '70s-style posing girls are everywhere. The Volvo stand was relatively restrained



▼ Every muppet is a pro snapper, especially during Porsche RS unveil



Chinese newcomer DFSK sounds like a furniture showroom and makes cars with the aerodynamic properties of a furniture showroom



◀ Star of the show for Walton was the SCG 003, the crazy but beautiful pet project of billionaire car nut Jim Glickenhaus. It's a bespoke road-going GT3 racer that looks like an LMP1 car

▲ Rumour has it that the Lamborghini show girls are personally vetted by CEO Stephan Winkelmann. He has an eye for detail, apparently





GERMAN C POWER

A V8-powered sports saloon based on the best C-class ever surely gives Mercedes its best shot at dethroning BMW's legend. We shall see...

WORDS: Georg Kacher | PHOTOGRAPHY: Steffen Jahn

HEAD-TO-HEAD

Merc C63 AMG vs BMW M3



The AMG brand typically focuses on fast grand tourers. Not surprisingly then, the new C63 is exactly that





At a junction and heading in different directions? Surely there's a portentous caption opportunity here?



M

M3 OWNS THIS territory, but it has a real fight on its hands now. The new C-class has picked up a bunch of fresh virtues. It steers with more enthusiasm, it brakes with more bite, it puts the power down with more determination and, most importantly, it handles with a delicate sweetness none of its nose-heavy, tail-happy predecessors ever came close to. And now it's got a twin-turbo V8 and an AMG badge too. Gulp.

It's not as if the M3 is at its most confident right now. The only reason it even still exists is on the strength of its badge – otherwise it would have been dinked for the more dynamic looking and more profitable Gran Coupe – and its whiny, downsized six-pot turbo engine isn't exactly Ant & Dec in the personality stakes.

The C63 also has the advantage of a much more linear, less schizophrenic bloodline than the M3. This Merc can trace its roots to the C36 launched in 1993 or, with a nostalgic wink, to the 190E 2.3-16. While most M3 generations tended to be street-legal competition cars – think Sport Evo, GT, CSL, GTR and GTS – it was exactly the other way round with the likes of C32, C43, C55 and, ultimately, C63. If you discount a few late counter-attacks (Black Series, CLK DTM, edition 507), this side of the SLS and the GT the AMG brand typically focuses on fast grand tourers.

Not surprisingly then, the new C63 is exactly that.

In the last six months BMW and Mercedes launched M3 and C63 on the same racetrack, the *Autodromo do Algarve* in Portimao. Here, both cars charm you with a subtle handling balance much more figure skater than ice-hockey defenseman. It's this near-perfect flow which makes the difference, the readily accessible fusion of dynamic attitudes, the reduced input required to set up the car for the next bend. Press on, and it's the BMW that first rolls up its sleeves. After all, the M3 is not just about time-warping itself from corner to corner, it's also about grand gestures, loud behaviour, an extrovert stance. By contrast, the C63 epitomises composure and civilised behaviour.

But this comparison is not about track-day suitability, it's about early Sunday mornings when you leave the house with itchy palms, a dry mouth and a thumping heart, ready to reel in that favourite stretch of country road. In that mood I find in my garage this morning a baby blue metallic M3 and a silver C63 AMG. And boy does the Merc look the business. The AMG designers love a generous touch of bling, and the C63 delivers. Its go-faster make-up includes additional brightwork, larger air intakes, more sculptured bumpers, air deflectors front and rear, 19in wheels and trademark quad tailpipes. To make room for the V8 engine, the nose of the car had to be lengthened by 71mm which required several modifications, among them bespoke front wings. Depending on personal preference, you can specify a sumptuous cabin trim or a pseudo-racing ▶

Merc C63 AMG vs BMW M3

ambience with high-back bucket seats, red belts and carbonfibre accents. Sadly, there is no way to get rid of the column-mounted gear selector, which kind of lets the car down, but take solace from the top-notch materials, impeccable fit and finish and compelling extras such as variable-intensity LED headlamps.

In terms of perceived quality, the M3 lags behind. The instrument panel is a mix of classy and not so classy surfaces, some of the plastics and rubber seals are positively low-rent, the ergonomics are ho-hum in places (gear selector, secondary controls, main dials), and you don't expect such cheap boot trim or a bonnet painted only on the outside. Admittedly, our test car provided by a local dealer was not a prime specimen. The brakes had seen better days and the aftermarket Michelins were not the softer compound tyres fitted by the factory. The only fault we could find with the C63 was a rattling front suspension noise triggered by really rough roads.

While Mercedes won't charge you for the Speedshift automatic gearbox or for the adjustable Ride Control dampers, the adaptive M suspension and the dual-clutch transmission offered for the M3 cost extra. Which brings the grand total for both cars very close to an identical £59,000. That's a lot of money, but the only serious rival – the ageing 450bhp Audi RS5 – is even more expensive.

Performance-wise, these two compact supersaloons celebrate the high art of the dead heat. Acceleration? 0-62mph in 4.1sec. Top speed? Governed at 156mph; or 175mph (M3) and 181mph (C63) with the Driver's Package box ticked. Fuel consumption? On paper, the BMW edges the Mercedes by 34mpg against 33.6. In real life, the gap widened to 17mpg against 14.8. No, we

spent no time on the track, but 50 miles on the *autopista a grande velocidade* and half a day on winding roads in the hilly hinterland of Faro. For one life cycle only, BMW did replace the straight-six with a V8, but for this fifth-generation M3 they've ruefully returned to the classic formula, for the first time in conjunction with a couple of turbochargers. The brand-new 3.0-litre engine develops 431bhp from 5500 to 7300rpm. The Merc's 4.0-litre unit delivers 476bhp between 5500 and 6250rpm. Redlined at 7000rpm, the 32-valve cannot quite match the 7600rpm which marks the Game Over limit of the M3. Having said that, the V8's torque delivery flatlines from 1750 to 4500rpm, whipping up a mighty 479lb ft – 74lb ft more than the peak twist action generated by the M3, which spreads its oomph summit over an even wider 1850 to 5500rpm range. So why does the more potent Mercedes not outsprint the BMW? Because at 1640kg, it's 45kg heavier. And because its transmission – a blend of wet take-off clutch and seven-speed automatic – does not shift quite as energetically as the M3's seven-speed DCT.

So far, blue and silver are pretty evenly matched. The first clear distinction is brought about by the drivetrains. For a start, the 1000cc difference in displacement swings the pushing power pendulum in the direction of the Benz. Although the extra torque works wonders for the in-gear acceleration, it's not so much the initial impact that does the trick but the brute force that follows. The gear ratios are quite similar, and both cars invite you to adjust the shift speed from pursed-cogs-lissom to kick-in-the-butt-radical. To change the set-up, the BMW driver must hit a knob below the joystick. In the Benz, Dynamic ▶

In terms of perceived quality the M3 lags behind. But both cars cost very close to an identical £59,000



For the same thrills at a £50k saving, why not try the past?

MERCEDES W203 C55 AMG (2005-2007)

After a brief flirtation with a supercharged V6 in the C32, AMG returned to V8 power in 2005 with the C55. 5.4 litres meant an extra 80mm was added to the front end, worth it for the 363bhp that outgunned all rivals. Less sharp but more comfy than E46 M3.



BUY USED FROM £38k

VS

BMW E46 M3 (2000-2006)



BUY USED FROM £38k

After poor sales of the preceding E36 M3 saloon, the E46 came only as a coupe or convertible – but it's worth the practicality sacrifice. The 338bhp 3.2-litre straight-six is still regarded as one of best M engines ever; optional SMG 'box can spell trouble.

MERCEDES W205 C63 AMG (2007-2014)

You can keep your turbos – nothing beats a 6.2-litre V8 in a car the size of a C-class for drama. Standard power was 451bhp but versions with up to 500bhp were offered. Bespoke AMG suspension made it handle, too. We'll never see its like again.



BUY USED FROM £21k

VS

BMW E90 M3 (2007-2011)



BUY USED FROM £19k

The M3 saloon returns, this time with a high-revving 4.0-litre V8 and 414bhp. It missed out on the carbonfibre roof of the E92 M3 coupe, but cost less and only weighed 10kg more. Awesome to drive – if you can find the space to properly extend that engine.



Merc C63 AMG vs BMW M3



Extra sporty bits added to C-class's already supreme cabin. Column shifter still grates though

Select can be locked in Comfort (coasting under lift-off, active stop/start) Sport, Sport+ or Individual. In addition to masterminding the gearbox, the drive mode selectors will psych up the engine, shock absorbers, steering, ESP and the exhaust note. The helm of the M3 incorporates two buttons labelled M1 and M2 which store and summon your favourite vehicle attitudes. In both cars, key functions can also be accessed directly via separate controls in the centre console.

The V8 wins the torque duel, but it's the six-cylinder that manages a seamless transition from peak torque to peak power which merge at 5500rpm. At this point, you still have 1800rpm to play with, which keeps the adrenaline flowing and treats the ears to a beautiful noise. But while its powerband is broader and more explosive at the bottom end of the rpm range, the BMW gains zero ground over the smoother-shifting Mercedes. Although both units have melodic talent, the sound engineers dialled in rather too much computer-generated background music. There's fake heeling-and-toeing, fake *blat-blat* on override, fake upshift *ka-chumm*, fake idle speed thud. For the AMG car one can specify an even more hooliganesque triple-flap exhaust which sounds positively puerile. The Mercedes has a subjective acceleration advantage between 60 and 100mph when the extra grunt seems to give it marginally stronger and longer legs. We also liked the short-term M mode which freezes the transmission in manual for as long as you keep using the shift paddles. Another plus point goes to the extra-fast downshift function which selects the lowest possible gear when the left paddle is pulled and held.

Even in Comfort mode, the M3 simply hates uneven surfaces. How do we substantiate this criticism? By no longer counting the number of times the ESP warning light comes on when you give this thing stick. One does want ESP to be active on slippery stuff and through bad surprise corners, but not at 130mph on an admittedly quite undulated motorway, or over a series of tall transverse ridges taken at speed. At the end of the day, it's insufficient compliance that keeps alerting the ESP chips. To blame for this are the extremely rigid chassis, suspension and driveline mounts. This rigidity makes the

BMW shine on the track and on smooth A-roads, but it backfires as soon as the going gets tough. The C63 can pull out a small lead here, but it, too, has its flaws. The low-speed ride is disappointingly brittle, body roll is occasionally an issue, and when it comes to the crunch the C63 AMG will try to ever-so-slightly understeer out of trouble. Through the same series of corners taken at comparable velocity, the nose of the M3 bites, turns in and holds the line. I'll tell you what happens to the rear end in a minute...

The Mercedes is nearly invincible in two areas: traction and deceleration. Even with stability control in Sport, you can floor the throttle ridiculously early, often well before the apex, often before opening up the steering. Although ESP will eventually step in and adjust the trajectory, it's the mechanical rear diff that performs magic by feeding exactly the right amount of torque to the rear wheels at exactly the right time. The M3 is, in contrast, ragged and uncouth, but is also more entertaining. The active M diff whips the car through tight corners in zig-zag, grip-no-grip fashion. This isn't a prevailing trait, but it's an evident ►

▼ Load it up as much as you like, but the C63 won't play hooligan unless you do





BMW for once left looking dowdy, slightly shy on quality and ergonomically offkey

SECOND OPINION

NO-ONE HAS this downsizing and turbocharging thing licked quite like AMG – not Ferrari, not BMW, no-one. So when you turn the C63's ignition key, the V8 explodes like a Doberman with a 40-a-day habit, instantly walloping the M3's hooter. All that character you feared died with the old C63's 6.2 V8? Somehow, it lives on. Perhaps it's because AMGs have always been torque monsters, so the transition to forced induction is more natural for Affalterbach than it is for high-revving M Division, but the character, the delivery, all of it scores over the M3's turbodiesel rumblings and excess of mid-range oomph.

But this is not a walkover for the C63.

The M3 has superior traction, a sharper front end – there are two fewer cylinders over the front axle, remember – and a significantly keener transmission. The BMW feels like a lighter, nimbler, more precise car.

The two characters of these high-performance saloonigans are quite different, and my perfect spec would blend the C63's engine with the M3's chassis and gearbox. I shan't sit on the fence, though. Character is so important, and the C63 has a positively James Hunt-like surplus of the stuff, where the M3's smaller victories can't claw back the deficit.

As a dedicated M3 fan, I would put my money in a C63 AMG.

BEN BARRY



Merc C63 AMG vs BMW M3



Mercedes V8 (top)
vs BMW straight-
six. Different
character, similar
performance.



BMW M3

Price £59,085 **On sale** Now **Engine** 2979cc 24v twin-turbo 6-cyl, 425bhp @ 5500-7300rpm, 406lb ft @ 1850-5500rpm
Transmission Seven-speed twin-clutch auto, rear-wheel drive with electronic LSD **Performance** 4.1sec 0-62mph, 155/175mph,
 34.0mpg, 194g/km CO2 **Suspension** Double-joint spring strut front, five-link rear **Weight/made from** 1595kg/aluminium and
 steel **Length/width/height** 4671/1877/1424mm **Rating** ★★★★★



let-down compared to the unruffled C63. Luckily you can dial it out by pushing the ESP button for more than five seconds.

Brakes? Our BMW could do with fresh pads, but it does feature the optional carbon ceramic discs, so we expect more bite, more instant action, more feedback. Although fitted with conventional steel rotors, the C63 has all that. Its brakes operate with in-your-face urge, and it remains sure-footed no matter how late you drop the anchor. The brakes are also an integral element of the flow. At the end of a 23-mile sickbag stretch driven with a knife between the teeth, the left pedal feels a little soft in the Merc, and it needs a more determined hoof. But all in all, this stopping apparatus deserves five stars out of five. Still, I love the M3's manual handbrake – it may be an anachronism but it's priceless fun on the approach to a snow-covered hairpin.

The days of hydraulic steering are history. In the BMW, the M Sport steering adjusts the effort as well as the ratio. There are three calibrations, and even in Comfort mode there's a reassuring stiffness which follows your hands as they apply more lock. Self-centering is quite subtle, damping is reduced to the minimum, accuracy is a main asset, the gearing is perfect for quick flicks. On the road, it feels initially a little syrupy, and it takes a while to appreciate the complex interaction between weight and effort and response. Predictably, the variable-rate steering of the Mercedes is lighter, more forthcoming and more linear. It is tuned for positive and fuss-free changes of direction, an approach which is totally in line with the more laid-back character of the car.

Both cars were shod with optional 19in rims, and as far as grip, traction and roadholding go, the winner wears a three-pointed star. As far as smiles per mile go, it's a much closer shave.



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at the Apple
Newsstand!

The M3 provides more old-fashioned fun. It turns in with the agility of a chameleon tongue, and it hangs on like a lizard to a vertical wall – until it will eventually wag its tail like an angry croc. While the BMW almost always lets go first at the rear, the C63 will in all likelihood not let go at all. It blends tenacious grip with strong stability, and it handles in a reassuringly neutral fashion. When I say neutral, I don't mean boring. Just as you can induce a trace of understeer, you can coax the Benz into a mild drift which is liable to become loud and lurid with ESP deactivated. Cornering is a more subtle experience in the AMG, but in no way less rewarding. Quite the contrary: while pressing on in the M3 results in increasingly grander gestures, the C63 impresses with inspiring modularity.

Seldom has it been more difficult to crown a winner. Although the two contenders were born on different planets, and despite the fact that they field diverse talents, they both reach similar heights. The M3 is sportier, rawer, more challenging and more black-and-white in character. The C63 AMG is the more complete all-rounder, less fuel-efficient but dynamically just as awesome, a quality piece of kit, punchy yet benign, homogenous but in no way lacklustre. If combining the best worlds is what you're after, the Mercedes is the car to reach out for. **car**

While the BMW almost always lets go first at the rear, the C63 will in all likelihood not let go at all

MERCEDES C63 AMG

Price \$59,795 **On sale** Now **Engine** 3982cc 32v twin-turbo V8, 469bhp @ 5500-6250rpm, 479lb ft @ 1750-4000rpm
Transmission Seven-speed auto, rear-wheel drive with mechanical LSD **Performance** 4.1sec 0-62mph, 155/180mph, 34.5mpg,
192g/km CO2 **Suspension** Four-link front, multi-link independent rear **Weight/made from** 1640kg/aluminium and steel
Length/width/height 4756/1839/1426mm **Rating** ★★★★★



Our Cars

STARRING

CITROEN C4 CACTUS
PEUGEOT RCZ R
BMW M3
AUDI S1 SPORTBACK
HYUNDAI SANTA FE
NISSAN QASHQAI
PORSCHE 911 CARRERA
SEAT LEON CUPRA
VW GOLF GTI
MERCEDES S500 PHEV
CITROEN C4 PICASSO
VOLVO V60
MINI COOPER 5DR
CATERHAM SEVEN 160
RANGE ROVER SPORT





Citroën C4 Cactus

by Anthony ffrench-Constant



Month 1

HELLO



Ups Man-made object visible from outer space
Downs Innovation, or just quirkiness?

QUITE THE FINEST example of perambulatory self-promotion I've ever witnessed was meticulously sign-written onto the tailgate of a builder's lorry in Bantry, southern Ireland. 'THERE' it bellowed 'GOES O'SHEA'.

Here presented in a hue against which traffic wardens instantly mutate into mysterious self-propelled trousers, the Cactus does exactly the same job for the missus without recourse to calligraphy. And she is livid. 'Men, women, children... even gum-chewing teenage girls who wouldn't bat a lash at a Ferrari gawp at it,' she growls. 'I have NO anonymity. Imagine trying to have an affair owning THIS...'

Naturally, the hooligans christened it Spongebob the instant it landed. And the missus concurs. Not, though because of its appearance, but because 'Everything about it is spongy; the doors, the seat, the gearchange...' Hmmm. Having had consistently little to say about the largely nondescript and recently repatriated Nissan Qashqai, I have a sneaking suspicion she may prove a somewhat pricklier customer when it comes to the Citroën.

The Cactus is rather more striking on first appearance than I had remembered; leaner and more svelte than a bodyshell boasting only one concave surface throughout (pedestrian impact legislation forcing Mark Lloyd's hand atop the front wheelarch) has any right to appear.

In truth, however, though couture inspired by watching ramming-speed Parisians park at each other is an interesting conceit, the fact that the door panels constitute the only exterior finish to boast genuine bubble-wrap status does somewhat relegate the idea to just that.

A Cactus may be yours for about 13 grand. Armed with a 1560cc, 99bhp, 187lb ft turbodiesel mated to a five-speed manual transmission, however, this one will set you back £17,990, the price rising to £19,330 with the addition of such tit-bits as a panoramic sunroof, a trim upgrade and self-parking proclivities.

Within a thesis-worthy interior – the forensics of which we'll gleefully fall upon next time – standard equipment levels at 'Flair' grade are respectably high. Knobs and knockers are in short supply, though, because a 7in touchscreen interface accesses everything from automatic air conditioning and satellite navigation to DAB radio and Bluetooth phone connectivity. However, if it does not wish to be wrenched from its mounting and lobbed disdainfully under the wheels of a passing artic, the latter had better buck up its ideas and connect the missus's phone, pronto.

In size terms, I'm not sure the Cactus merits C4 status; C3.5 would, perhaps, be more apposite. But the hooligans have been so busy complaining about the lack of properly opening rear windows in a four-door car that they have yet to adjudicate on anything else. The evil-smelling dog will, however, assuredly prove something of a tight fit.

The Citroën counteracts what I feel is a slightly stiff asking price with a kerb weight of only 1225kg. This might just allow the sub-100bhp powerplant to shift it at velocities greater than those requiring painstaking scientific techniques to measure. It should also prove a boon to fuel consumption, though – same as it ever was – the average is currently reading 30mpg less than that quoted.

I'm rather looking forward to the next six months. The Cactus is a sufficiently interesting proposition that I suspect even the dog will find something to say about it. Whether what we have here represents genuine innovation or mere appliqué quirkiness, however, remains to be seen.

LOGBOOK CITROËN C4 CACTUS BLUE HDI 100 MANUAL FLAIR

Price £17,990
As tested £19,330
Miles this month 146
Total miles 1974
Our mpg 50.3
Official mpg 83.1
Costs None
Fuel this month £Not Yet

◀ **It's important to work out the exact angle at which a glancing blow will leave both cyclist and car scratch-free**

They called it Spongebob, because everything about it is spongy

STUART COLLINS



If Peugeot hoped these cars would stop us banging on about the 205 GTi they were wrong. But not by much

Peugeot RCZ R by CJ Hubbard



Month 5



Ups Still the best Peugeot (Sport) ever, I reckon
Downs If you could update the infotainment

COULD THE RCZ R be the best car Peugeot has ever made? Depends on how you define 'best', I suppose, and I'm saddened to admit I've never driven a 205 GTi. But a special edition version of the 208 GTi, built to celebrate 30 years of that previous French fancy, has recently crossed my path. Looks a little bit cake-like itself, with that two-tone 'Coupe Franche' paint job.

The 208 GTi 30th and the RCZ R are currently the only road-going Peugeots to advertise the involvement of the Peugeot Sport race department. And by advertise, I mean the words 'Peugeot Sport' are actually written on the door sill scuff protectors and the front brake calipers (though these are, in fact, made by Brembo). As a current RCZ R custodian, I was really intrigued to see how the two would compare. Especially given the homage to legend of the smaller car. If anything is going to unseat the R as the Peugeot of the moment, it's surely this jumped-up little shopping cart.

A quick blat round the local B-roads didn't seem quite the ticket, and with the American adventure at the end of last year (CAR, February 2015) having left me with a habitual hankering for roadside burgers in sympathetic places, thoughts turned to London's Ace Cafe and its nocturnal gearhead proclivities. And what do you know, the 208's week-long visit just happened to

coincide with the monthly French Classic and Performance night. No brainer, right? Our James had never been to the Ace before, so he volunteered as second driver and I handed him the keys to the RCZ for the trip down from Peterborough to London's old North Circular, where the Ace has been situated – in various guises – since 1938.

Immediate impressions of the 208 aren't so good. Compared to the low-slung, c-o-g depth charge that is Peugeot's funky cab-forward coupe, the GTi feels too tall and roly-poly – despite the beefed-up suspension and widened track of the 30th. The steering and, in particular, the gearshift also seem fragile and flimsy in the supermini, a surprise given how meaty and mechanical they are in the R. Please don't tell me Peugeot has fluffed this

LOGBOOK PEUGEOT RCZ R

Price £32,000
As tested £33,880
Miles this month 869
Total miles 3992
Our mpg 31.8
Official mpg 44.8
Costs None
Fuel this month £150.38

▼ **Mixing it with Renault 5 turbos and the like at the Ace Cafe**



up. I remind myself the two cars are not only very different pieces of machinery, they are also some £10,000 and 61bhp apart. And, as ever, that it's best not to jump straight to conclusions.

Yes, the 208 feels tall and, yes, it is most definitely daft to look at, but once you've adjusted the little grey cells for that it begins to show more of the R's fighting spirit. Leading the way is the 30th's proper limited-slip differential, the exact same torque-sensing Torsen unit that's fitted to the front axle of the RCZ. Add in the darty directness of the tiny steering wheel, and corners are playtime. Even if those corners are roundabouts in rush hour. The cut and thrust of London traffic means you miss the RCZ's extra oomph less, too, as the 205bhp 1.6 THP in the 208 is still mighty in the mid-range.

After grabbing a burger and admiring some gnarly old Clios (there wasn't a massive turn out, to be honest), James drives it back, and declares it everything he'd hoped the standard 208 GTi would be. I'm not quite so smitten, but it's hard to ignore the much-improved infotainment system and just how well Peugeot Sport has judged the 208's ride – firm but far more forgiving than the RCZ's, it deals with torn-up tarmac very capably. But somehow it still feels like a toy, while the R has the air of a true future classic.

Follow me on Twitter @ir_427

BMW M3 by Ben Miller

Month 3

Ups Road-clearing overtaking potential
Downs The ceramic brakes' allergy to water



I'M ALL FOR the purity of fine handling over prodigious power. Having logged plenty of flying time at the controls of 205 XS Peugeots (the purist's 205 etc.), Mercedes Sprinter vans (delicious balance, real malleability at the limit etc.) and 4bhp 1950s motorcycles (I'm better now), I'm acutely aware of the fun you can have coaxing pace from a vehicle that goes without the option of hammering between corners to keep up its average speed. It's underdog stuff; the reason why, in those Mini-versus-Ford-Galaxie scraps the Goodwood Revival does so well, the crowd only deigns to put down its luncheon meat and get to its feet for a round-the-outside comeback from the Mini.

But there's a problem – everyone else. The UK road network is, as you'll know only too well if you live anywhere more built-up than Orkney, a little clogged these days. A clear run at a decent stretch of road comes along about as often as a sequel to *To Kill a Mockingbird*. More often than not there's other traffic to negotiate, which is where the case for a hot-handling but firepower-bereft car comes apart. Without the pace to slip past, all that cornering proficiency goes to waste as you trundle through Northamptonshire's most spectacular multi-apex complex at a stout 38mph, all over the Yaris 'pace car' ahead like a second coat of paint.

The M3 is not like this. With its turbocharged torque (406lb ft from less than 2000rpm) the F80 unlocks even sinuous roads, its prodigious acceleration peppering them with effortless and often hitherto unseen M3-specific overtaking opportunities. It's a useful

> Ben and M3
unlock a rare gap in rush-hour traffic... in Kirkwall



MARK RICCIONI

LOGBOOK

BMW M3

Price £54,775
As tested £66,785
Miles this month 1708
Total miles 8417
Our mpg 26.8
Official mpg 32.1
Costs None
Fuel this month £414.45

attribute, whether you're hurrying home over hundreds of miles of A-road or, in the interests of keeping the Yas Marina blue paint clean, trying to avoid following in everyone else's filthy-wet wake.

Talking of wet, the first time the carbon-ceramic brakes take on any real water, the reduction in braking performance is marked and – depending on your approach speed when you go for the pedal – potentially alarming. A numb pedal after a good jet-wash you expect, but a couple of puddles can be enough to take almost all the power out of the otherwise extraordinary brakes, at least for a second or two.

Audi S1 Sportback by James Taylor

Month 7

Ups S1 has plenty of go
Downs But does it need a bit more show?



AFTER RUBBING shoulders with the rare and raw A1 Quattro in the February issue, the S1's met another quattro-badged cousin: an all-but-identical S1 kitted out with the optional 'quattro styling' packs. Audi offers two of these, one for the interior, one for the exterior. Why? Well, apart from those tell-tale quad exhausts the S1 is something of a Q-car, easily mistaken at a glance for a regular A1. I like its inherent stealthiness but Audi reasons some buyers might like their car to shout a bit louder. And shout the quattro packs do.

The interior one in particular. Among other bits and pieces, there's glossy plastic cladding for the lower part of the centre console (in black, yellow or red – our test car had the latter, making it look like a Ducati's fuel tank) and leather seats with the same high-gloss treatment across their backs. They don't half look a bit sudden in red. Our long-term car actually has the same seats fitted as part of a separate option, but with a slightly less alarming gloss black finish.



Quattro styling pack on the right. Two grand premium

Exterior highlights: red slivers of plastic inside the headlights (quite neat, like the flick of a red marker pen on a design sketch), '80s-style quattro stickers along the car's flanks, a slightly more extravagant roof spoiler and 18-inch wheels – again, the same ones coincidentally fitted to our S1.

Audi being Audi, both packages are hilariously expensive. The interior pack will set you back £1695 and the exterior £1245. Adding a bit of extra show to match the S1's go doesn't come cheap. Stickers must be getting more expensive to manufacture.

[Follow me on Twitter @JamesTaylor_5](#)



▲ Red seats? Indeed.

MARK RICCIONI

LOGBOOK

AUDI S1 SPORTBACK

Price £25,630
As tested £33,480
Miles this month 855
Total miles 8399
Our mpg 31.7
Official mpg 39.8
Costs None
Fuel this month £163.65

Hyundai Santa Fe by Greg Fountain

Month 4

◆ **Ups** Cayenne beater
Downs Okay, not really



HYUNDAI VS PORSCHE. That's a match-up to set stuffy road-testers steaming with indignation. 'Harrumph!' they'll say. 'You can't compare apples with oranges!' But you can, you see – they're both fruits, after all, and the Santa Fe and Porsche's Cayenne are both built to do the same job. So we suspend disbelief, forget the 64bhp/116lb ft/£17k discrepancy between the two, and honestly consider this question: when you peel away the Porsche badge, how big is the gulf?

What's great about the Santa Fe is that it's fit for purpose. They didn't try to make it a sort of sports car, but instead gave it exceptionally compliant ride wedded to confident body control, steering that doesn't inexplicably weight up to muscle-tearing levels as you turn into your street, and an interior made of wipe-clean plastic rather than quick-ruin leather.

To drive the Cayenne, of course, is to experience that strange alchemy only Porsche seems to be able to achieve, by which a tall, rut-ready SUV can steer and corner and accelerate without adhering to the laws of physics. Damn them. The Santa Fe gives it a good go, but can't quite achieve that sense of plantedness when pressing on,



and its engine does start to complain when you forget yourself and try to keep up with the more refined, more gutsy German.

But this is no walkover. When both cars are pristine the Porsche feels way nicer, but grub them up a bit, fill them with kids, grass cuttings and bicycles, and suddenly the Hyundai is the one for the job. Look, I'm not seriously saying I'd rather have the Korean than the German, but I *would* rather be richer, calmer and less hated by other road users, and to this end the Santa Fe wins hands down.

Follow me on Twitter @GregFountain1

LOGBOOK HYUNDAI SANTA FE PREMIUM 2.2 CRDI

Price £31,730
As tested £32,315
Miles this month 1254
Total miles 4256
Our mpg 32.7
Official mpg 41.5
Costs None
Fuel this month £188.81

Nissan Qashqai by Anthony French-Constant

Month 6

◆ **Ups** A rare glimpse of the original colour
Downs Numerous groans and rattles when cold



THE ROLLING GREENSWARD and honey-hued architecture of Mudfordshire might well prove an irresistible summer lure to those who favour the machinations of the Thetford Cassette over properly plumbed-in variants of Thomas Crapper's throne of tranquillity, but, for those of us that actually live here, the state of the roads for the remaining nine months of the year is of far greater import. Never mind the potholes; it's astonishing how much mud a tractor 'n' trailer combo can transport from field to carriageway. There's sufficient depth of topsoil to establish a decent crop of winter wheat.

All of which means that the ostensibly Quink-coutured Qashqai spends most of the time looking more like something the average zoo keeper would instinctively chase down with a sizeable shovel. And I mention this because I've always harboured the sneaking suspicion that a car goes better when it's clean.

Rent key fob now irreparable after three attacks of Superglue aside, the clattering



equivalent of a tin can tied to a tom cat's tail emanating from the front end on start-up allied to intermittent power-steering noises reminiscent of a frayed wire drawn over an unlubricated pulley might suggest a slightly baggy approach to build quality in a car not yet 7000 miles old.

So, armed with notably bad grace and the dozen-odd pound coins demanded by the jet-wash to mine the metal from the mud, I cleaned the thing. And, blow me, I've just been for one of the most pleasant, rattle-free drives I can remember having in this machine. Go – as our American cousins would have it – figure.

◀ Rattle and hum, where the streets have no cleaners, bullet the blue Nissan etc (caption courtesy Bono)

LOGBOOK NISSAN QASHQAI TEKNA DCI 110

Price £25,330
As tested £25,330
Miles this month 1480
Total miles 6617
Our mpg 47.1
Official mpg 74.3
Costs None
Fuel this month £175.84



Porsche 911 (997)

Month 8

by Tim Pollard

IT WAS TOO good an opportunity to pass up on. We sometimes swap ownership of our long-term test cars to ensure multiple perspectives on the vehicles we live with and drive 24/7. And when the chance arose to snaffle the keys to Ben Oliver's used 911 for the second half of our test, my hand shot up faster than a class swot's.

It's a great chance to plug a five-year-old 997 into my life and understand why this sports car is for many the definitive My First Supercar. No, it has no warbling V8 or V12, the engine's not in the correct place and it's clearly too common to be a *real* supercar, but isn't the Porsche a good first step up the ladder?

Transfer from Chez Oliver on the south coast to CAR HQ in Peterborough coincided with the onset of winter, so the first month has been spent pussyfooting around getting to know each other. Happily, handling has been remarkably surefooted even in light snow and ice, and I've been impressed by the 911's pert dimensions, start-first-time reliability and toasty heated seats that take the chilly edge off the cabin at réveil.

A few colleagues report that demisting takes longer than it should, but I've yet to notice. I'm too busy enjoying the classic 911 motifs, evolved at a glacial pace but looking all the better for a light smear of wintry muck.

Follow me on Twitter @TimPollardCars

◆ **Ups** Nabbing such an iconic car
Downs Winter spoils the fun



▲ The rest is just the icing on the 911

LOGBOOK PORSCHE 911 (997) CARRERA

Price £43,850 As tested £69,538 Miles this month 1116 Total miles 33,936 Our mpg 22.5 Official mpg 28.8 Costs None Fuel this month £274.46



Seat Leon Cupra by Ben Barry

Month 6

Ups One of the fastest front-drive cars on sale
Downs Fast front-drive cars eat front tyres fast



NO SURPRISES HERE, the Leon Cupra R is one of the fastest front-drive cars ever, and fast front-drivers munch front tyres. The recent Rockingham trackday effectively did for the standard 19-inch Bridgestone Potenzas – I drove for two 20-minute sessions, maybe half of that at full speed, but the damage was done.

The tyres weren't illegal, so I stuck with them. But as the weather deteriorated with winter and the wear-markers edged closer, so I found myself able to access only a fraction of the Cupra's performance. The tyres would spin up as the R's torque-bomb detonated in a straight line, and I always felt slightly fearful leaning on them through quick, damp corners; when the understeer did strike, it made me yelp in that panicky way only understeer can.

I reckon I could've stretched the original tyres another two- or three-thousand miles, but you just need a good set of boots on cars like this, or much of their performance – and your enjoyment of it – is wasted. So I called Steve Bell at Airtek, who's spent the last 12 years as a mobile tyre-fitter but has now put down roots with a shiny new premises in Stamford, Lincolnshire.

Airtek quoted £167.59 per Michelin Pilot



▲ New tyres, and £335.18 lighter

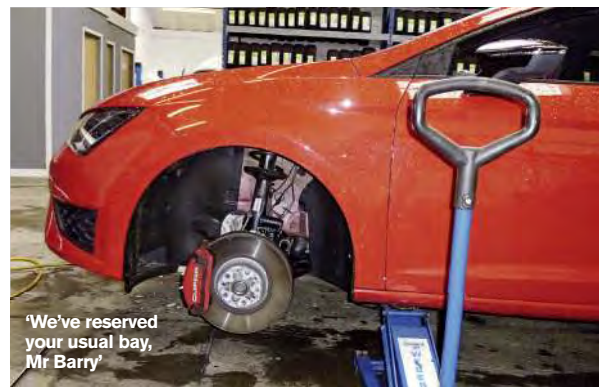
Super Sport in 235/35 R19, with fitting, balancing and VAT. So I got the car booked in on a convenient Saturday and went easy on the throttle in the meantime.

Come the big day, Airtek had the tyres fitted in under an hour, and then it was time to head back onto the road to see the difference. The transformation is *huge*: the tyres now bite hard under heavy acceleration, so the thump and scrabble that'd often accompanied generous throttle in first, second and third is gone; it makes the Leon a far more civilised and enjoyable thing to drive, even when you're not 'on' it. But when you are, it's through the corners that you really appreciate the new tyres' extra purchase. Michelin describes how

LOGBOOK SEAT LEON CUPRA 280

Price £27,245
As tested £29,255
Miles this month 1029
Total miles 8657
Our mpg 32.8
Official mpg 42.2
Costs £335.18
Fuel this month £183.90

the Pilot Super Sport's contact patch is designed to shift about under load, while also ensuring the same amount of rubber always stays in touch with the road. There's certainly a confidence-inspiring definition and consistency to the grip when you really lean on it, which is welcome after the will it/won't it slip of the worn old boots; I particularly like how the tyres bite into the surface when you accelerate hard after the apex, where before the Cupra was limited by frustrating understeer. The Cupra R's back to its best, then. When's the next trackday?



'We've reserved your usual bay, Mr Barry'

Even when the GTI reaches 100, I still think this Mk7 will stand as a high point in its history



Volkswagen Golf GTI by Mark Walton

What it's worth

Price new £32,580
(inc £4805 of options)
Dealer price £26,324
Private sale £26,194
Part-exchange £23,449
Cost per mile 19.7p
(83.6p including depreciation)

Month 11

GOODBYE



Ups It's an absolutely brilliant car

Downs That's an absolutely predictable verdict

ROAD TESTERS ARE supposed to have sophisticated taste. I'm often asked which is my favourite car and I like to reply 'oh, the Saoutchik Hispano-Suiza H6C Dubonnet Xenia Streamliner'. Not because it's true, but because there isn't a more impressive sounding car name on the planet. In fact, the Xenia looks like a 1930s Zeppelin with a droopy sad-face, but I can't tell the truth – I can't say 'actually, I'd like to drive a Golf every day'. That's like being an interior decorator and painting your entire house magnolia. Or being a wine connoisseur and choosing the house red.

Actually, I do want to drive a Golf every day – this Golf. Because over the last 12 months our long-term GTI has proved itself a great family car, a commuter car, a long-distance car, and yes, a sports car too. The most damning thing I can think to say about it is that the Golf R is a bit better.

It's a Goldilocks car. Supercars can be a hassle – they're amazing when you focus on

them, but driving them to work, in a rush and distracted... trust me, you start to yearn for a bit of normality. At the other end of the scale, the average family cold porridge is no good if – like me – you want to turn the radio off every once in a while and drive home like a twit.

The Golf GTI just fits every category. It's the epitome of the practical five-door hatch – boxy and spacious. Over the last 12 months it's frequently been rammed to the ceiling with baggage for family holidays or trips to the rubbish tip. As a commuter car it's well equipped, it's comfortable on long journeys, and it's full of connective tech. On cold mornings I get in, turn on the (optional) heated seat and the radio, my phone automatically connects to the Bluetooth and I tap my destination postcode into the (optional) 8in touchscreen sat-nav. And it's not just that this car is new – I recently borrowed the latest Renault Scenic, and hated the software and ergonomics. No, the Golf just feels brilliantly designed, engineered



▲ Scotsmen make skirts out of it, Americans trousers, VW designers car upholstery. Tartan cloth cannot possibly be cool, and yet, and yet...

LOGBOOK VOLKSWAGEN GOLF GTI

Price £27,775 (inc Performance Pack) **As tested** £32,580 **Miles this month** 1395 **Total miles** 14,299 **Our mpg** 28.9 **Official mpg** 47.1 **Costs** £15 oil; £150 bumper repair; £752 winter tyres **Fuel this month** £289

Merc S500 PHEV

by Georg Kacher



Month 2

Ups The best seats in the world?
Downs Ho-hum traction in the snow

THE GEORGEHOF SITS high up on a hill overlooking the Ammersee. It's a beautiful spot, but to get there you must first master a steep climb which is notoriously slippery in winter. To access home 24/7, four-wheel drive is therefore a big bonus. The S500 PHEV fares better on Our Hill than most rear-wheel-drive cars, but even on brand-new tyres and with that battery pack resting heavily on top of the axle, ice and deep snow can be insurmountable. So I was forced to leave the S500 down in the village for a bit and drive home in our 5-series Touring – with xDrive.

The long-wheelbase S-class is exactly that: long. 5290mm long, to be precise. Which makes it everyone's favourite choice whenever one of the boys comes home with the girlfriend. Even when the driver's seat is pushed back almost all the way, there remains enough rear legroom to swing a tiger or two. The front passenger can watch TV or a DVD on the large split-screen display, and there are two colour monitors for the enjoyment of the back-benchers, who can rest their heads on soft Maybach-style leather cushions. The power-operated rear seats, which are separated by a wide centre console, slide forward and recline, and with the front passenger seat in the forwardmost position the chair behind can be converted into a super-comfortable makeshift bed.

Predictably, the car's considerable length and girth take some getting used to in town and when manoeuvring in confined spaces. To protect its shiny obsidian black livery, our car is fitted with more surveillance cameras than Trafalgar Square, these offering bird view, rear view, front view, and front and rear side views. There are also amber and red warning lights, plus a pair of proximity beepers. Still afraid of threading the mighty Merc into that bonsai gap? Then simply push the P button and it will park itself.

Another welcome extra is the heated steering-wheel – at least in theory. In reality, the optional wood-and-leather helm (typically ice-cold in winter and red hot in summer) warms only the timberless bottom section which contributes less than a third to the total circumference. So be careful when ticking those boxes.



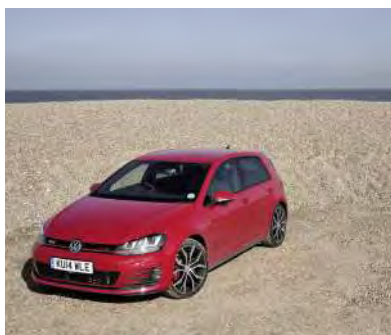
TOM SALT

▲ That's our Georg, packing more cameras than a paparazzi scum and more batteries than a Duracell bunny warehouse

LOGBOOK

MERCEDES S500 PHEV

Price €108,945 As tested €154,890 Miles this month 1001
Total miles 2008 Our mpg 32.0 Official mpg 100 Costs None
Fuel this month €177 (£129)



◀ Another poor turnout at the Saoutchik Hispano-Suiza Owners Club



◀ The biggest challenge is finding new superlatives to describe the fantabulously inspraginous driving

▶ Performance Pack adds limited-slip diff. After which it grips like a velcro vice



and executed in the German style, and over the last year I haven't found a single niggle or fault with the interior.

The only glitch I did encounter was with the electric handbrake – it kept applying itself, unexpectedly, in reverse. Turns out it was because I have this absent-minded habit of popping my seatbelt off to look over my shoulder – the car notices, and thinks it's dangerous. But more than anything, I've enjoyed my GTI as a sports car. The 227bhp 2.0-litre turbo (my car's fitted with the optional Performance Pack) is sharp like a diamond-tipped blade, punching with torque from low revs and singing to the redline as sweetly as a race car. It's proper fast – the official 0-62mph time of 6.4 seconds can't convey the satisfaction of a second- or third-gear burst between corners, or the swiftness of an overtaking move. And unlike other hot hatches, this front-drive chassis feels comfortable with the power. As well as the extra 10bhp, that £995 Performance

Pack also brings a fancy limited-slip diff, which gives the Golf a wonderful precise feeling in all but the slicdiest conditions. I love the steering (speed sensitive, but you never notice) and the leather-bound wheel too.

Another option we have is Adaptive Chassis Control, which allows you to choose between Sport, Comfort and Normal suspension settings. It costs £815, but to be honest, I haven't used it much – Comfort's a bit soft, I occasionally tried Sport when I was giving it beans; there's an Economy mode too, which I tried for about an hour; but mostly it was left in Normal. If you're mulling over the online configurator, and you have £1000 to spend, choose the Performance Pack.

Altogether then, this is a five-star car. After 40 years, a verdict that says 'the Golf GTI is good' is hardly news, but this car has colossal appeal, and even when the GTI reaches 100, I think this Mk7 will still stand as a high point in its history. If you already own one, I'm jealous.



Citroën C4 Grand Picasso by Stephen Worthy



Month 12

GOODBYE

Ups Smart, individual-looking, spacious and airy family wagon
Downs Overly minimal infotainment/climate controls, diesel additive issues

THERE'S AN INEXACT science when it comes to deciding on what long-termers *CAR* staff have thrust upon them. The equation is something like age of driver + length of commute ÷ number of offspring. The figure is then forced through the complex Pulmonian algorithm, named after our former road test editor, which governs how frequently the recipient of the vehicle will want to get it sideways.

Which is why I've generally ended up running MPVs and soft-roaders for the past six years. Having driven the Grand Picasso for the best part of 12 months, I've had ample time to decide that, while it's not a vehicle that causes anticipatory beads of sweat to develop and it doesn't elicit second glances from the back row of school coaches, it's up there with my favourite long-termers. I thought my Seat Alhambra of 2012 had the large MPV sector licked, but the Grand Picasso is every bit its equal... and doesn't look like Postman Pat's daily whip either.

For starters, the Grand Picasso's elegant nose and razor-sharp running lights lend it an air of Evoque. That thoughtfulness of design continues inside and while I prefer the champagney amber interior I've seen it clad in to our slate grey, Citroën pulls every last lumen of light into the car. Slide the adjustable sun visors back and there's virtually uninterrupted glass from stern of bonnet to rear of roof. If there's a more airy

cabin on the market then it's a convertible.

Its minus points aren't deal breakers. I'd happily do without Park Assist in a trade for wipeable, kid-proof full-leather seats (which are also the only option if you want a heated backside in the winter, unlike the cloth/hide mix of our vehicle). The steering lacks feedback – but that's a common trait in this sector – while its 'naked' design purges the dashboard of most of its buttons, which isn't helpful if your touchscreen is slow, clunky and distracting to negotiate while driving. Take hints from the Germans on the model revision please, Citroën. While you are at it, move the handbrake lever away from the central storage unit to avoid inadvertent braking at high speed.

Thankfully, the Grand Picasso does big ticket things well. Flexible seating arrangements and enough second row legroom to have kept Robert Wadlow happy meant long family trips involved chucking



LOGBOOK CITROËN GRAND C4 PICASSO + BLUE HDI 150

Price £26,855
As tested £28,875
Miles this month 2290
Total miles 25,824
Our mpg 44.9
Official mpg 65.7
Costs None
Fuel this month £294.51

What it's worth

Price new £28,755
 (inc. £2020 of options)
Dealer price £17,400
Private sale £16,320
Part-exchange £14,995
 Cost per mile 13.9p
 (71.5p including depreciation)

◀ **Is it a van? Is it a commuter? Is it a family wagon? Yes, and pretty damn good at all of them**

both bags and kids in and leaving them where they settled. And while Ben Whitworth felt ride and body control 'loose and baggy' (a description you'd never use about Ben himself), it was chiefly driven on motorways for much of its life with me so this seemed less of an issue. Considering its proportions, it handles rather tidily.

Having stepped into the Grand Picasso from the Lexus IS300h I took time adjusting my deployment of the throttle to suit the driving that Citroën's 2.0-litre diesel demands, but the fuel price slide in late 2014 combined with mid-40s fuel economy meant that it was competitive on running costs.

That said, if you're a high-mileage user, put something aside to pay for visits to the dealership to replenish your diesel additive. A week before I was due to hand back the keys, the warnings began again, threatening carnageddon if ignored. Two occurrences within 10,000 miles seems rather too frequent.

Yet the odd foible aside doesn't detract from a car that makes an effort to look different both inside and out and satisfies that holy trinity of being competent on the daily commute, versatile family transport and possessing the ability to morph into a van when drafted into garden/house-clearing duties. It's a serious contender for best family car on the market.



Volvo V60

by Phil McNamara

Month 4

TROUBLE: DEBRIS STREWN across the Black Cat roundabout. Despite determined jinking, the front right tyre clipped some, and within five miles the wheel was vibrating like an Ann Summers party. So I pulled into Southoe Hand Car Wash; the smoking tyre had a cavity like a bludgeoned boiled egg. The V60 hybrid's boot doesn't even have space for a can of sealant, given it's packed with batteries and the e-motor spinning the rear axle, so I called Volvo Assistance. Megan took my details and said she'd scramble recovery within 90 minutes, to Marshall Volvo in Peterborough. Sure enough, the chirpy Graham from Edan Recovery arrived 92 minutes later. Which had left sufficient time for the hand wash chaps to clean the car, and for me to call ahead check Marshall had a Bridgestone Potenza 235/45 R18. They didn't, but super-concierge James ordered one for afternoon delivery, checked to see if the lease company would authorise the £165 ex-VAT payment, and planned my onward transport to the office. All told I lost two-and-a-half hours: not too bad given the circumstances, and soothed by great customer service all round. And I didn't waste any further time, as Marshall's James brought the reshod V60 back to the office – just in time for me to head home again.

◆ **Ups** Great customer service...
◆ **Downs** ...after flat tyre



▲ **Yep.** That's definitely flat. Still, at least the car is clean now. Silver linings...

LOGBOOK VOLVO V60 D6 R-DESIGN LUX

Price £51,675 **As tested** £53,150 **Miles this month** 2020 **Total miles** 11,505 **Our mpg** 44.1 **Official mpg** 148.7 **Costs** £198 new tyre **Fuel this month** £240.84



Mini Cooper 5dr

by Ben Pulman

Month 4

ITHINK SIR Alec Issigonis might have objected to the circular central speedo from his original Mini being beset in the 21st century with a rectangular sat-nav screen – but it is at least connected to BMW's brilliant iDrive system. Yes, you do occasionally have to look at the screen, but with the top of the intuitive twist/tilt/prod controller also able to be used as a touchpad, the set-up is nothing like as distracting as a full touchscreen. In short, it's brilliant.

Alas the location of the controller itself isn't. The narrow confines of the Mini mean it's buried down on the transmission tunnel, squeezed in alongside the handbrake. That shouldn't be an issue, but my Mini has the optional centre armrest. Use said armrest as intended, and not only is it impossible to change gear, but you need a fairground-style claw crane to drop down the thin gap to access the iDrive controller.

Flip the armrest up you say? Tried that, but with every use of the iDrive controller – and every shift into an even-numbered gear – you'll bang your elbow into the underside of the armrest. This wouldn't have happened with Mr Issigonis in charge.

Follow me on Twitter @thebenpulman

◆ **Ups** Brilliant BMW sat-nav system
◆ **Downs** Sore elbow



▲ **Elbow** may be a great band, but there's no room for them in a Mini

LOGBOOK MINI COOPER 5DR 1.5

Price £215,855 **As tested** £21,250 **Miles this month** 353 **Total miles** 2113 **Our mpg** 40.6 **Official mpg** 60.1 **Costs** None **Fuel this month** £42.54



Caterham Seven 160

by Ben Whitworth

Month 9

ACEPTANCE. There's a lot of it to be done when you drive a Caterham every day. Much like you have to accept that a ForTwo is going to be short on luggage space and big on urban agility, you have to accept the Caterham for being immense on driving pleasure but a little short in other areas. It's quite a list. Roof-up entry and exit calls for the complete abandonment of dignity. You need to wear narrow racing booties when driving and remember to remove them the moment you inelegantly get out for fear of looking like a twunt. You have to bundle up against the cold. Luggage space is laughable. Apart from the screams of terror from your passenger, there is no in-car entertainment whatsoever. It has the turning circle of an artic. Only your driving smarts separate you from becoming a crumpled ball in a field. The headlamps of other cars seem perfectly positioned to blind you. And at speed, the cabin is like a thrash metal concert, but louder. But to bash the Seven for any of these is to miss its point. This car dishes up such an intense, pared-back driving experience that everything else feels utterly inert and leaden. Which is why I'm happy to accept the Caterham – and all it entails – in its entirety.

Follow me on Twitter @benwhitworth

◆ **Ups** Automotive speedballing
◆ **Downs** Never less than full-on



▲ **Sounds and looks** like a flyweight, but punches like Ali in his pomp

LOGBOOK CATERHAM SEVEN 160

Price £17,995 **As tested** £22,355 **Miles this month** 433 **Total miles** 8032 **Our mpg** 45.2 **Official mpg** 57.6 **Costs** None **Fuel this month** £47.89



Range Rover Sport

by Ben Oliver

Month 2

BY SOME MIRACLE, my Range Rover Sport's first photoshoot coincided with some rare winter sun. Clean (for once) and in the sunshine, the Havana paint looked sensational. Its ability to echo the colours around it reminds me of the 'invisibility' paint on 007's Vanquish. Photographer Richard Pardon followed me through Brighton and reported that heads turned. The car looked 'special'.

And the Sport proved brilliant on a series of sub-zero mornings. If there wasn't room to put it away overnight the heated screen cleared the frost quickly and without foul chemicals. I was previously cynical about heated steering wheels: perhaps like you, considering them a luxury too far. Now I'm a convert, and engineers will tell you that the most energy-efficient way to warm people up is by contact, rather than by heating the air around them.

You can't drive in gloves if you want to use the touchscreen. And I do: I exit my drive unsighted onto a fast lane, and the nose-cams that let me look up and down the road before entering it are a genuinely useful option. I'm warming to this car fast, in every sense.

Follow me on Twitter @thebenoliver

◆ **Ups** Warm hands
◆ **Downs** Touchscreen slow if cold



▲ **Temperature display** reads -4degC. So touchscreen will be sluggish

LOGBOOK RANGE ROVER SPORT 3.0

Price £66,250 **As tested** £75,607 **Miles this month** 352 **Total miles** 1409 **Our mpg** 23.6 **Official mpg** 37.7 **Costs** None **Fuel this month** £77.88

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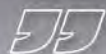
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997 CARRERA S » 376+ BHP
997 CARRERA PDK » 368 BHP
997 CARRERA GTS » 435 BHP
997 GT3 UP » 436 BHP
BOXSTER 3.4S » 336+ BHP
CAYMAN S » 342 BHP
CAYENNE GTS » 440 BHP
CAYENNE TURBO 4.5 » 565+ BHP
CAYENNE TURBO 4.8 » 578+ BHP
CAYENNE TURBO S 4.8 » 600+ BHP
CAYENNE 4.2 DIESEL » 450+ BHP
CAYENNE DIESEL » 300+ BHP
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PANAMERA DIESEL » 305+ BHP

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'55' AMG KOMPRESSOR » 580+BHP
C63 AMG » 530+BHP (+DE-LIMIT)
SL63 AMG » 560+BHP (+DE-LIMIT,
RE-MAP & LOWER ABC SUSPENSION)
CL600 Bi-TURBO » 580+ BHP
SLK55 AMG » 389 BHP (+DELIMIT)
SLK 350 » 328 BHP
220 CDI ALL MODELS » 210+ BHP
250 CDI ALL MODELS » 259+ BHP
320 CDI V6 » 274 BHP
350 CDI V6 » 312 BHP
420 /450 CDI V8 » 358 BHP

BMW

M5/M6 F10 » 620+ BHP
M5 V10 » 548+ BHP (205 MPH)
X5M / X6M » 618 BHP
1M » 411+ BHP
M3 E90/92 » 445 BHP (+DE-LIMIT)
M3 E46 » 370 BHP (+DE-LIMIT)
F10 520D » 221 BHP
F10 530D » 296 BHP
F10 535D » 358 BHP
335i/135i/X6 » 370+ BHP (+DE-LIMIT)
123D » 252 BHP
330D E90 » 296+ BHP
320D E90 » 215 BHP
730D » 290+ BHP
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ALFA ROMEO

MITO

Alf's alternative to a Mini is uglier and worse to drive thanks to old Punto platform

	PRICE	0-62	MPH	BHP	LB FT	MPG	CO2	RATING
0.9 TwinAir	£14,870	11.4	114	104	107	67.2	99	☆☆☆☆☆
1.4 MultiAir	£17,620	8.1	130	138	170	52.3	124	☆☆☆☆☆
1.4 Quadrifoglio	£20,210	7.3	136	167	184	52.3	124	☆☆☆☆☆
1.3 JTDM	£15,415	12.9	108	84	148	80.7	90	☆☆☆☆☆
1.6 JTDM	£17,820	9.9	123	118	236	65.7	112	☆☆☆☆☆

GIULIETTA

Fine Golf alternative is stylish and grippy. Best enjoyed with fast, frugal 1.4 Multiair motor

	PRICE	0-62	MPH	BHP	LB FT	MPG	CO2	RATING
1.4 TB	£18,240	9.4	121	120	159	44.1	149	☆☆☆☆☆
1.4 TB MultiAir	£20,990	7.6	135	170	184	49.6	131	☆☆☆☆☆
1.6 JTDM-2	£19,170	11.3	115	105	236	70.6	104	☆☆☆☆☆
2.0 JTDM-2	£21,720	8.8	130	150	280	67.3	110	☆☆☆☆☆
2.0 JTDM-2 TCT	£25,630	7.8	136	175	258	64.2	116	☆☆☆☆☆

ASTON MARTIN

VANTAGE

Ageing Vantage still raucous and beautiful: hardcore V8 S and new V12 S the best ones yet

	PRICE	0-62	MPH	BHP	LB FT	MPG	CO2	RATING
V8	£86,080	4.8	180	420	346	20.4	328	☆☆☆☆☆
V8 S	£96,080	4.5	189	430	362	21.9	299	☆☆☆☆☆

DB9

DB9 facelifted and pumped up to old Virage specs. Off the pace but still charming all the same

	PRICE	0-62	MPH	BHP	LB FT	MPG	CO2	RATING
DB9 V12	£133,080	4.6	183	510	457	18.2	368	☆☆☆☆☆

VANQUISH

We don't like the crass carbon front splitter. We do like the chassis, roomier cabin and lovely V12 noise

	PRICE	0-62	MPH	BHP	LB FT	MPG	CO2	RATING
V12	£191,080	4.1	183	565	457	19.6	335	☆☆☆☆☆

RAPIDE

Take a look Porsche - this is how to do a four-door. Tight in the back but you'll be driving anyway

	PRICE	0-62	MPH	BHP	LB FT	MPG	CO2	RATING
S	£146,035	4.9	190	550	457	19.9	332	☆☆☆☆☆

AUDI

A1

Is Mini's novelty factor waning? Number of A1s on road says yes. Shame it plays the tech so straight

	PRICE	0-62	MPH	BHP	LB FT	MPG	CO2	RATING
1.2 TFSI SE	£13,965	11.7	112	85	118	55.4	118	☆☆☆☆☆
1.4 TFSI Sport	£16,215	8.9	126	120	147	53.3	124	☆☆☆☆☆
1.4 TFSI S-line	£17,610	6.9	141	182	184	47.9	139	☆☆☆☆☆
1.6 TDI SE	£18,410	10.5	118	104	184	74.3	99	☆☆☆☆☆
2.0 TDI Sport	£18,490	8.2	135	141	236	68.9	108	☆☆☆☆☆

A3

One of the best interiors on sale, plus it's lighter than before, though still dull to drive.

	PRICE	0-62	MPH	BHP	LB FT	MPG	CO2	RATING
1.2 TFSI	£17,905	10.3	n/a	104	129	57.6	114	☆☆☆☆☆
1.4 TFSI	£19,205	9.3	126	120	147	54.3	120	☆☆☆☆☆
1.8 TFSI	£24,410	7.2	144	178	184	50.4	134	☆☆☆☆☆
1.6 TDI	£20,155	10.7	121	104	184	74.3	99	☆☆☆☆☆
2.0 TDI	£20,505	8.6	134	148	236	68.9	106	☆☆☆☆☆

A4

Smart saloon with an iffy ride that's upstaged by its sexier A5 sportback cousin. Punchy S4 superb

	PRICE	0-62	MPH	BHP	LB FT	MPG	CO2	RATING
1.8 TFSI SE	£23,960	10.5	129	118	170	43.5	151	☆☆☆☆☆
1.8 TFSI SE	£25,310	8.1	143	168	236	49.6	134	☆☆☆☆☆
2.0 TFSI SE	£30,805	6.5	153	208	258	41.5	159	☆☆☆☆☆
S4	£39,020	5.0	155	328	325	34.9	190	☆☆☆☆☆
2.0 TDI SE	£26,880	9.3	134	134	236	65.7	112	☆☆☆☆☆
2.0 TDI SE	£28,435	9.1	134	141	236	62.8	119	☆☆☆☆☆
2.0 TDI SE	£28,505	8.4	140	161	280	64.2	115	☆☆☆☆☆
2.0 TDI SE	£29,535	8.2	143	175	280	61.4	120	☆☆☆☆☆
3.0 TDI SE	£37,490	5.9	155	242	368	49.6	149	☆☆☆☆☆

A5 SPORTBACK

Styling changes as below, but 'four-door coupe' remains more appealing than mundane A4

	PRICE	0-62	MPH	BHP	LB FT	MPG	CO2	RATING
1.8 TFSI SE	£26,425	8.2	143	168	236	48.7	136	☆☆☆☆☆
2.0 TFSI SE	£32,905	7.2	145	208	258	45.6	144	☆☆☆☆☆
S5	£41,475	5.1	155	328	325	34.9	190	☆☆☆☆☆
2.0 TDI SE	£30,470	8.5	142	175	280	60.1	120	☆☆☆☆☆
3.0 TDI SE	£36,370	5.9	155	242	368	49.6	149	☆☆☆☆☆

A5

Corporate re-nose makes A5 slightly less sexy. S5 Coupe loses n/a V8 for supercharged 3.0 V6

	PRICE	0-62	MPH	BHP	LB FT	MPG	CO2	RATING
1.8 TFSI SE	£28,845	7.9	143	168	236	49.6	134	☆☆☆☆☆
2.0 TFSI SE	£33,555	7.8	140	180	236	44.1	149	☆☆☆☆☆
S5	£42,790	4.9	155	328	325	34.9	190	☆☆☆☆☆
RS5	£59,350	4.6	155	450	317	26.2	252	☆☆☆☆☆
2.0 TDI SE	£31,120	8.2	143	175	280	60.1	120	☆☆☆☆☆
3.0 TDI SE	£41,215	5.8	155	242	368	49.6	149	☆☆☆☆☆

A6

An A7 without the party clothes but no less capable on the road. Loads of tech, but little buzz

	PRICE	0-62	MPH	BHP	LB FT	MPG	CO2	RATING
S6	£54,310	4.6	155	414	406	29.4	225	☆☆☆☆☆
2.0 TDI	£30,985	8.7	141	177	280	57.6	129	☆☆☆☆☆
3.0 TDI	£35,210	7.2	149	204	295	55.4	133	☆☆☆☆☆
3.0 TDI	£39,960	6.1	155	245	368	47.9	156	☆☆☆☆☆
3.0 BITDI SE	£47,020	5.3	155	309	479	44.1	169	☆☆☆☆☆

A7 SPORTBACK

Merc CLS rival riffs on classic 100 coupe though it's all sensible A6 underneath. But £10k extra?

	PRICE	0-62	MPH	BHP	LB FT	MPG	CO2	RATING
3.0 TFSI	£49,110	5.6	155	300	324	34.4	190	☆☆☆☆☆
S7	£62,310	4.7	155	414	406	29.4	225	☆☆☆☆☆
3.0 TDI	£44,760	7.4	146	204	295	55.4	135	☆☆☆☆☆
3.0 TDI	£49,010	6.3	155	245	368	47.9	156	☆☆☆☆☆
3.0 BITDI SE	£54,445	5.3	155	309	479	44.1	169	☆☆☆☆☆

A8

Packed with technology but premium pretensions crippled by looking identical to a £25k rep's A4

	PRICE	0-62	MPH	BHP	LB FT	MPG	CO2	RATING
3.0 TFSI	£59,870	6.1	155	290	309	31.0	213	☆☆☆☆☆
S8	£77,900	4.2	155	513	479	27.7	235	☆☆☆☆☆
3.0 TDI	£56,930	6.1	155	250	405	42.8	174	☆☆☆☆☆
4.2 TDI	£68,800	5.5	155	350	590	37.2	199	☆☆☆☆☆
Hybrid	£61,585	7.7	146	261	258	44.8	147	☆☆☆☆☆

Q3

Soft-roader undercuts Range Rover Evoque on price but Brit has it licked for style

	PRICE	0-62	MPH	BHP	LB FT	MPG	CO2	RATING
2.0 TFSI	£26,410	8.2	132	168	206	38.7	174	☆☆☆☆☆
2.0 TFSI	£29,330	6.9	143	208	221	36.7	179	☆☆☆☆☆
2.0 TDI	£25,270	9.9	126	138	236	54.3	138	☆☆☆☆☆
2.0 TDI	£32,080	8.2	132	175	280	47.9	156	☆☆☆☆☆

Q5

Benchmarked against Freelander, runs rings around X3. Based on an A4 floorpan

	PRICE	0-62	MPH	BHP	LB FT	MPG	CO2	RATING
2.0 TFSI	£30,365	8.5	130	178	236	34.9	188	☆☆☆☆☆
2.0 TFSI	£31,985	7.6	138	208	258	34.9	188	☆☆☆☆☆
2.0 TDI	£28,025	11.4	118	143	236	45.6	162	☆☆☆☆☆
2.0 TDI	£30,380	9.9	126	168	258	45.6	163	☆☆☆☆☆
3.0 TDI	£40,035	6.5	139	237	368	37.6	199	☆☆☆☆☆
SQ5	£43,870	5.1	155	309	479	39.2	187	☆☆☆☆☆

Q7

Gargantuan SUV makes all rivals look puny, but can't out-shimmy an X5. Beware width restrictors

	PRICE	0-62	MPH	BHP	LB FT	MPG	CO2	RATING
3.0 TDI	£43,660	7.8	135	245	405	38.2	195	☆☆☆☆☆
4.2 TDI	£56,375	6.4	150	340	589	30.7	242	☆☆☆☆☆

TT

Far more than a Golf in drag this time. S is good, RS blunt. Best of lot is basic £27k 2.0 coupe

	PRICE	0-62	MPH	BHP	LB FT	MPG	CO2	RATING
1.8 TFSI cabrio	£26,505	7.4	139	158	184	43.5	152	☆☆☆☆☆
2.0 TFSI	£27,560	6.2	152	208	258	42.8	154	☆☆☆☆☆
TT S	£35,905	5.4	155	268	258	35.8	184	☆☆☆☆☆
TT RS	£46,160	4.5	155	335	332	31.4	209	☆☆☆☆☆
2.0 TDI	£28,720	7.5	140	168	258	53.3	139	☆☆☆☆☆

R8

More exploitable than a G11, more usable than a Lambo. V8 good; V10 better. Avoid ceramic brakes

	PRICE	0-62	MPH	BHP	LB FT	MPG	CO2	RATING
V8	£92,710	4.6	187	424	317	19.9	332	☆☆☆☆☆
V10	£113,810	3.9	197	518	391	19.0	346	☆☆☆☆☆
V10 Plus	£125,810	3.5	197	542	398	21.9	299	☆☆☆☆☆

BENTLEY >>>> HYUNDAI

BENTLEY



CONTINENTAL GT/FLYING SPUR

Coupe + cab's same-again looks hide big changes. Negotiate a discount on W12 rather than going for V8



	PRICE	0-62	MPH	BHP	LB FT	MPG	CO2	RATING
GT V8	£130,000	4.8	188	500	487	26.7	246	★★★★★
GTC V8	£143,000	5.0	187	500	487	25.9	254	★★★★★
GT W12	£139,700	4.6	198	567	516	17.1	384	★★★★★
GTC W12	£153,500	4.8	195	567	516	17.1	384	★★★★★
GT Speed	£156,700	4.2	205	616	590	19.3	338	★★★★★
Flying Spur V8	£136,000	5.2	194	552	479	16.6	396	★★★★★
Flying Spur W12	£146,000	4.8	200	600	553	16.6	396	★★★★★

MULSANNE

Charming Arnage replacement's variable engine displacement cuts consumption... to 16.7mpg!



	PRICE	0-62	MPH	BHP	LB FT	MPG	CO2	RATING
Mulsanne	£229,360	5.3	184	505	752	16.7	393	★★★★★

B M W

1 SERIES

And you thought the first one was ugly. New model gets brilliant petrol engines and more cabin space



	PRICE	0-62	MPH	BHP	LB FT	MPG	CO2	RATING
114i	£17,300	11.2	N/A	102	N/A	49.6	132	★★★★★
116i	£18,850	9.8	127	122	136	46.3	143	★★★★★
118i	£21,460	8.7	130	143	140	46.3	143	★★★★★
116d	£20,355	10.2	124	116	192	62.8	118	★★★★★
118d	£21,500	8.9	130	143	221	62.8	119	★★★★★
120d	£22,950	7.5	142	177	258	60.1	125	★★★★★

3-SERIES SALOON

New Three is like Lionel Messi: by far the best on the planet. Poor Audi and Mercedes



	PRICE	0-62	MPH	BHP	LB FT	MPG	CO2	RATING
316d ES	£24,880	10.9	126	114	192	-	119	★★★★★
318d SE	£26,980	9.1	130	141	236	-	119	★★★★★
320d Sport	£29,080	7.5	146	181	280	61.4	120	★★★★★
320d ED	£28,080	8.0	143	161	280	68.9	109	★★★★★
320i Sport	£26,860	7.3	146	181	199	-	147	★★★★★
328i Modern	£30,060	5.9	155	241	258	44.1	149	★★★★★
335i Modern	£35,525	5.5	155	302	295	35.8	186	★★★★★

4-SERIES

Replacement for the 3-series coupe/cabrio is a fine drive but lacks excitement and styling verve



	PRICE	0-62	MPH	BHP	LB FT	MPG	CO2	RATING
420i SE	£29,420	7.3	147	184	199	46.3	144	★★★★★
428i SE	£32,815	5.9	155	245	258	42.8	154	★★★★★
435i SE	£41,015	5.4	155	306	295	35.8	185	★★★★★
420d SE	£31,795	7.5	149	184	280	60.1	124	★★★★★
430d Luxury	£39,615	5.5	155	258	413	57.6	129	★★★★★
435d xDrive Luxury	£44,540	4.7	155	309	464	50.4	146	★★★★★

5-SERIES

Still the definitive exec. Brilliant 520d takes 90% of sales. New twin-turbo M5 V8 brilliant



	PRICE	0-62	MPH	BHP	LB FT	MPG	CO2	RATING
520i SE	£31,995	7.9	141	184	199	41.5	157	★★★★★
528i SE	£33,615	6.6	155	258	328	36.2	182	★★★★★
530i SE	£35,405	6.5	155	272	228	37.2	177	★★★★★
535i SE	£38,915	6.0	155	306	295	33.2	199	★★★★★
ActiveHybrid 5	£46,680	5.9	155	335	332	44.1	149	★★★★★
550i SE	£53,105	5.0	155	407	442	27.2	243	★★★★★
M5	£73,065	4.4	155	552	502	28.5	232	★★★★★
520d SE	£30,030	8.1	141	184	280	57.6	129	★★★★★
520d EfficientDynamics	£30,435	8.2	144	181	280	62.8	119	★★★★★
525d SE	£35,140	7.2	147	204	332	45.6	162	★★★★★
530d SE	£38,785	6.3	155	245	398	44.8	166	★★★★★
535d SE	£44,295	5.7	155	299	442	46.3	162	★★★★★

6-SERIES

Still a whiff of Judith Chalmers about new BMW 6. Cabrio is £6k more, GranCoupe £2k extra



	PRICE	0-62	MPH	BHP	LB FT	MPG	CO2	RATING
640i	£59,645	5.4	155	320	332	36.2	181	★★★★★
650i	£67,970	4.9	155	407	442	26.6	242	★★★★★
640d M Sport	£66,820	5.5	155	309	467	51.4	145	★★★★★
M6	£93,820	4.2	155	552	501	28.5	232	★★★★★

7-SERIES

Good drive but boxer's nose and iffy ride comfort count against it. Long wheelbase models £3k extra



	PRICE	0-62	MPH	BHP	LB FT	MPG	CO2	RATING
740i	£61,505	5.9	155	326	332	28.5	232	★★★★★
750i	£71,340	5.2	155	407	442	24.8	266	★★★★★
760Li	£101,805	4.6	155	544	553	21.7	303	★★★★★
730d	£58,115	7.2	153	245	398	41.5	178	★★★★★
740d	£65,305	6.3	155	306	442	40.9	181	★★★★★

i3

Carbonfibre city slicker is the first mainstream electric car you'll actually find yourself lusting after



	PRICE	0-62	MPH	BHP	LB FT	MPG	CO2	RATING
i3	£30,680	7.2	93	170	184	n/a	0	★★★★★
i3 Range Extender	£33,830	7.9	93	170	184	470.8	13	★★★★★

i8

BMW's first crack at a supercar in three decades is a 110mpg eco-crusader with M3-rivalling punch



	PRICE	0-62	MPH	BHP	LB FT	MPG	CO2	RATING
i8	£99,895	4.4	155	357	420	113	59	★★★★★

X1

Chromosomal disorder styling, but 3-series-based small SUV is a good drive. S cars 2wd, Xs are 4wd



	PRICE	0-62	MPH	BHP	LB FT	MPG	CO2	RATING
SDrive 18d	£24,660	9.6	124	143	236	54.3	136	★★★★★
SDrive 20d	£26,030	8.1	127	177	258	53.3	139	★★★★★
SDrive 20d ED	£26,090	8.3	124	161	280	62.8	119	★★★★★
XDrive 25d	£31,860	7.3	127	204	295	47.1	158	★★★★★

X3

Ugly but fine-driving family SUV is a real class act. Could do with more zest on the inside



	PRICE	0-62	MPH	BHP	LB FT	MPG	CO2	RATING
SDrive 18d	£28,580	9.9	121	143	265	55.4	135	★★★★★
XDrive 20d	£31,485	8.5	130	184	280	50.4	149	★★★★★
XDrive 30d	£37,900	6.2	130	258	413	47.1	159	★★★★★

X5

Cabin of new X5 is much improved, and it's still a decent steer. Hardly a looker though



	PRICE	0-62	MPH	BHP	LB FT	MPG	CO2	RATING
XDrive 50i	£56,470	5.5	149	408	442	22.6	292	★★★★★
X5M	£83,290	4.7	155	555	501	20.3	325	★★★★★
XDrive 30d	£45,070	7.6	130	245	398	38.2	195	★★★★★
XDrive 40d SE	£47,455	6.6	147	306	442	37.7	198	★★★★★
XDrive M50d	£60,340	5.4	155	381	545	37.7	199	★★★★★

X6

We're annoyed that it exists, but one drive and you're smitten. Prepare never to be let into traffic



	PRICE	0-62	MPH	BHP	LB FT	MPG	CO2	RATING
XDrive 35i	£47,130	6.7	149	306	295	28.0	236	★★★★★
XDrive 50i	£57,430	5.4	155	408	442	22.6	292	★★★★★
X6M	£82,190	4.7	155	555	501	20.3	325	★★★★★
XDrive 30d	£46,385	7.5	138	245	398	38.2	195	★★★★★
XDRIVE 40D	£48,915	6.5	147	306	442	37.7	198	★★★★★
XDrive M50d	£62,280	5.3	155	381	545	36.7	204	★★★★★

Z4

Got a nice lemon-yellow two-piece trouser suit and a bag full of HRT pills? You'll love it



	PRICE	0-62	MPH	BHP	LB FT	MPG	CO2	RATING
sDrive18i	£27,610	7.9	137	156	n/a	41.5	159	★★★★★
sDrive20i	£29,480	6.9	146	181	199	41.5	159	★★★★★
sDrive28i	£33,645	5.7	155	242	258	41.5	159	★★★★★
SDrive 35i	£39,430	5.2	155	306	295	30.1	219	★★★★★
SDrive 35iS	£45,310	4.8	155	340	332	31.4	210	★★★★★

CATERHAM

SEVEN 160

Entry-level Seven uses Suzuki bike engine, live axle, and skinny tyres for big fun



	PRICE	0-62	MPH	BHP	LB FT	MPG	CO2	RATING
160	£14,995	6.5	100	80	75	n/a	n/a	★★★★★

620 R

Mentalist supercharged version offers a Veyron's power-to-weight ratio. But £50k for a Seven?



	PRICE	0-62	MPH	BHP	LB FT	MPG	CO2	RATING
620R	£49,995	2.8	155	320	219	n/a	n/a	★★★★★

CITROËN

C1

'New' C1 has more grown up look, but is still cheap inside. Roll-back roof £650 extra.



	PRICE	0-62	MPH	BHP	LB FT	MPG	CO2	RATING
1.0	£8245	14.3	98	68	70	68.9	95	★★★★★
1.2	£10,535	11.0	106	81	86	65.7	99	★★★★★

C3

Big-car feel with cushy ride and smart cabin. But a Polo is better built and Fiesta miles better to drive



	PRICE	0-62	MPH	BHP	LB FT	MPG	CO2	RATING
1.1	£11390	16.5	96	61	70	47.9	137	★★★★★
1.4 75	£13,490	14.2	101	75	87	47.1	139	★★★★★
1.4 95	£14,390	10.6	114	95	100	47.9	136	★★★★★
1.6 120	£15,290	8.9	118	120	118	47.9	136	★★★★★
1.4 HDI	£14,590	13.7	101	70	118	74.3	99	★★★★★
1.6 e-HDi	£16,920	12.5	113	92	170	78.5	93	★★★★★
1.6 HDI	£15,390	11.5	113	90	170	74.3	99	★★★★★

C3 PICASSO

Citroën at its best. Baby Picasso is quirky-cool with a '70s Cadillac lope and acres of glass



	PRICE	0-62	MPH	BHP	LB FT	MPG	CO2	RATING
1.4	£12,995	12.2	111	95	100	44.1	149	★★★★★
1.6	£16,130	10.9	117	120	118	40.9	149	★★★★★
1.6 HDI	£15,575	13.5	108	90	169	61.4	119	★★★★★
1.6 HDI 110	£17,475	11.2	114	110	199	58.8	119	★★★★★

DS3

Citroën's Mini-wannabe is surprisingly fun to drive, but we'd rather have the real thing thanks



	PRICE	0-62	MPH	BHP	LB FT	MPG	CO2	RATING
1.2	£12,850	14.2	108	82	87	61.4	104	★★★★☆
1.6	£14,850	8.9	118	120	118	47.9	136	★★★★☆
1.6 150	£17,050	7.3	133	150	177	42.2	155	★★★★☆
1.6 HDi 90	£15,770	12.5	113	90	169	78.5	95	★★★★★
1.6 HDi 110	£18,345	9.8	118	110	199	62.8	109	★★★★★

FERRARI



458

Reigning supercar champ beat McLaren with soaring V8 soundtrack... and working suspension

	PRICE	0-62	MPH	BHP	LB FT	MPG	CO2	RATING
Spider	£198,997	3.4	199	562	398	21.2	275	★★★★★
Italia	£178,551	3.4	202	562	398	21.2	275	★★★★★
Speciale	£208,090	3.0	202	598	398	21.2	275	★★★★★

CALIFORNIA T



Ferrari's first turbo engine since the F40 turns Cali into much more serious proposition. Prettier, too.

	PRICE	0-62	MPH	BHP	LB FT	MPG	CO2	RATING
V8 Twin Turbo	£154,490	3.6	196	552	557	26.9	250	★★★★★

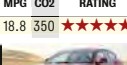
F12



Smaller than old 599, yet roomier and puts down 730bhp with ease. Gorgeous aero details, too

	PRICE	0-62	MPH	BHP	LB FT	MPG	CO2	RATING
V12	£239,736	3.1	211	730	509	18.8	350	★★★★★

FF



612 replacement is a much better GT with roomy M-Coupe rear end and trick four-wheel drive

	PRICE	0-62	MPH	BHP	LB FT	MPG	CO2	RATING
V12	£227,077	3.7	208	650	503	15.4	360	★★★★★

LaFERRARI



'The most outrageous front-end response this side of a pitwall.' Makes McLaren P1 feel almost ordinary

	PRICE	0-62	MPH	BHP	LB FT	MPG	CO2	RATING
LaFerrari	£999,999	>3.0	219	963	516	n/a	330	★★★★★

FIAT



500

Re-clothed previous-gen Panda no Mini beater but frugal TwinAir engine makes great urban package

	PRICE	0-62	MPH	BHP	LB FT	MPG	CO2	RATING
1.2	£9960	12.9	99	69	75	58.9	113	★★★★★
0.9 TwinAir	£11,960	11	108	85	107	68.9	95	★★★★★
1.4	£13,975	10.5	113	100	96	48.7	135	★★★★★
Abarth	£15,275	7.9	128	135	152	43.4	155	★★★★★
1.3 MultiJet	£13,760	10.7	112	95	148	72.4	104	★★★★★

PANDA



Fun to drive, practical, cheap to run. Fiat's heartland reclaimed. TwinAir an absolute hoot

	PRICE	0-62	MPH	BHP	LB FT	MPG	CO2	RATING
1.2	£8900	14.2	103	68	75	54.3	120	★★★★★
0.9 TwinAir	£10,750	11.2	111	84	107	67.3	99	★★★★★
1.3 MultiJet	£11,000	12.8	105	74	140	72.4	104	★★★★★

PUNTO



You can always rely on Fiat to make an absolute dog's dinner of a facelift. Punto still clinging on

	PRICE	0-62	MPH	BHP	LB FT	MPG	CO2	RATING
1.2	£10,775	14.4	97	68	75	52.3	126	★★★★★
1.4	£12,285	13.2	103	76	85	49.6	132	★★★★★
1.3 MultiJet	£14,375	13.1	107	74	147	80.7	90	★★★★★

FORD



KA

Doesn't drive or feel much like a Ford. Why? It's a rebodied Fiat 500 without the cheeky retro appeal

	PRICE	0-62	MPH	BHP	LB FT	MPG	CO2	RATING
1.2	£8725	13.4	99	69	76	57.7	115	★★★★★
1.3 TDCi	£11,475	13.6	99	75	107	68.9	109	★★★★★

FIESTA



Popular Ford supermini is still great to drive. Shame about plasticity cabin and gopping facelift

	PRICE	0-62	MPH	BHP	LB FT	MPG	CO2	RATING
1.0 EcoBoost	£15,395	9.4	122	123	125	65.7	99	★★★★★
1.25 60	£9795	16.9	94	59	80	51.4	127	★★★★★
1.25 80	£11,295	13.3	104	81	80	50.4	129	★★★★★
1.4 95	£11,895	12.2	109	95	80	48.7	133	★★★★★
1.4 120	£14,395	9.9	120	118	80	48.7	134	★★★★★
1.4 TDCi	£11,445	14.9	101	69	80	68.9	107	★★★★★
1.6 TDCi Econetic	£15,195	12.3	111	94	80	76.3	95	★★★★★

B-MAX



No central pillar makes kid-loading a doddle. Don't let gormless face and fussy dash put you off

	PRICE	0-62	MPH	BHP	LB FT	MPG	CO2	RATING
1.0 EcoBoost	£16,195	13.2	109	99	125	55.4	119	★★★★★
1.0 EcoBoost	£18,195	11.2	117	118	147	57.7	114	★★★★★
1.4 Duratec	£15,600	13.8	106	89	94	47.1	139	★★★★★
1.6 Duratec	£17,255	12.1	112	104	111	44.1	149	★★★★★
1.5 TDCi	£16,995	16.5	98	74	140	68.9	109	★★★★★
1.6 TDCi	£18,895	13.9	108	94	158	70.6	104	★★★★★

FOCUS



Like: handling, equipment, ride. Don't like: fussy cabin, Dodge Caliber styling. Estate £1k extra

	PRICE	0-62	MPH	BHP	LB FT	MPG	CO2	RATING
1.0 EcoBoost	£16,445	11.3	120	123	125	56.5	114	★★★★★
1.6 105	£16,000	12.3	116	104	111	47.9	136	★★★★★
1.6 125	£17,500	10.9	122	123	117	47.9	136	★★★★★
1.6 EcoBoost	£19,750	8.6	130	148	162	47.1	139	★★★★★
1.6 TDCi 95	£16,995	12.5	112	94	170	67.3	109	★★★★★
1.6 Zetec-S	£20,495	7.9	138	179	177	47.1	139	★★★★★
ST	£25,495	6.5	154	247	250	39.2	169	★★★★★
1.6 TDCi 115	£17,495	10.9	120	113	199	67.3	109	★★★★★
2.0 TDCi 140	£19,495	8.9	129	138	236	56.5	129	★★★★★
2.0 TDCi 163	£22,745	8.6	135	161	251	56.5	129	★★★★★

KUGA



Slick second-generation soft-roader gives Tiguana a real run for its money. Worth a look

	PRICE	0-62	MPH	BHP	LB FT	MPG	CO2	RATING
1.5T FWD	£20,995	9.7	121	148	177	45.6	143	★★★★★
1.5T AWD	£25,145	10.1	124	180	177	38.2	171	★★★★★
2.0 TDCi FWD	£22,695	10.1	121	148	273	60.1	122	★★★★★
2.0 TDCi AWD	£26,345	9.2	126	178	295	54.3	135	★★★★★

MONDEO



Voluminous Ford is still the Blue Oval's best car. Huge cabin, top-drawer quality, great engines

	PRICE	0-62	MPH	BHP	LB FT	MPG	CO2	RATING
1.6 EcoBoost	£20,895	9.3	134	158	177	44.1	149	★★★★★
2.0 TDCi 140	£21,895	9.5	130	138	236	53.3	139	★★★★★
2.0 TDCi 163	£25,495	8.9	137	161	251	53.3	139	★★★★★

C-MAX



Bigger, uglier semi-MPV version of Focus. 5-seat plays it straight; 7-seat Grand gets sliding doors

	PRICE	0-62	MPH	BHP	LB FT	MPG	CO2	RATING
1.6 105	£17,695	12.6	112	104	110	42.8	154	★★★★★
1.6 125	£18,695	11.5	117	123	118	42.8	154	★★★★★
1.6 EcoBoost	£20,895	9.4	127	148	177	42.8	149	★★★★★
1.6 TDCi	£20,695	11.3	114	113	199	61.4	119	★★★★★
2.0 TDCi	£21,245	9.6	125	138	236	55.4	134	★★★★★

S-MAX



Sharp-suited 7-seater almost as good to drive as a Mondeo. Closest thing to an MPV for car nuts

	PRICE	0-62	MPH	BHP	LB FT	MPG	CO2	RATING
2.0 145	£26,110	10.5	122	143	136	34.5	189	★★★★★
1.6 EcoBoost	£22,800	9.8	127	158	177	40.4	159	★★★★★
2.0 EcoBoost 240	£30,960	7.9	146	237	251	34	194	★★★★★
1.6 TDCi 115	£23,095	12.6	112	113	214	54	139	★★★★★
2.0 TDCi 140	£23,345	10.2	127	138	236	49.6	152	★★★★★
2.0 TDCi 163	£25,695	9.5	127	161	251	49.6	152	★★★★★

GALAXY



Full-scale MPV that can still give you a chuckle on the way to work. Like a Luton Transit next to S-Max

	PRICE	0-62	MPH	BHP	LB FT	MPG	CO2	RATING
1.6 EcoBoost	£25,155	9.9	124	158	177	39.2	148	★★★★★
2.0 EcoBoost	£28,170	8.5	135	200	221	34.9	148	★★★★★
1.6 TDCi	£27,850	13.0	111	113	214	54.0	139	★★★★★
2.0 TDCi 140	£25,695	10.1	120	138	236	47.1	152	★★★★★
2.0 TDCi 163	£29,950	9.5	126	161	251	49.6	152	★★★★★
2.2 TDCi 200	£29,855	8.5	134	197	310	41.0	179	★★★★★

HONDA



JAZZ



Still the supermini master when it comes to versatility. There's even a hybrid version to avoid

	PRICE	0-62	MPH	BHP	LB FT	MPG	CO2	RATING
1.2 S	£11,605	12.5	110	89	84	53.3	123	★★★★★
1.4 ES	£13,750	11.5	113	98	94	51.4	126	★★★★★
Hybrid	£16,300	12.1	109	87	89	62.8	104	★★★★★

CIVIC



Rakish good looks have gone, quality is up, but the rest of the package can't compete with class best

	PRICE	0-62	MPH	BHP	LB FT	MPG	CO2	RATING
1.4 i-VTEC SE	£16,855	13.4	116	98	125	52.3	129	★★★★★
1.8 i-VTEC ES	£18,070	9.1	134	140	128	47.1	143	★★★★★
2.2 i-DTEC ES	£20,200	8.5	135	150	258	67.3	110	★★★★★

ACCORD



Competent but ugly repmobile that desperately wants to be taken premiumly. Or even seriously

	PRICE	0-62	MPH	BHP	LB FT	MPG	CO2	RATING
2.0 154	£21,365	9.3	134	154	142	38.7	168	★★★★★
2.4 198	£26,550	7.8	141	198	170	32.5	202	★★★★★
2.2 DTEC 148	£24,225	9.6	132	148	150	50.4	147	★★★★★
2.2 DTEC 180	£29,950	8.8	137	178	280	48.7	154	★★★★★

INSIGHT



Cool-looking Prius rival spoiled by washboard ride and too little insulation from droney hybrid engine

	PRICE	0-62	MPH	BHP	LB FT	MPG	CO2	RATING
SE	£19,435	12.5	113	87	89	64.2	101	★★★★★

CR-V



Easy-going soft roader with a great diesel engine. Try a Ford Kuga before handing any money over

	PRICE	0-62	MPH	BHP	LB FT	MPG	CO2	RATING
2.0 SE	£21,935	10.2	118	148	142	34.3	190	★★★★★
2.2 DTEC SE	£23,855	9.6	1					

HYUNDAI >>> MERCEDES-BENZ

SANTA FE

Big, bland off-roader offers Touareg room for RAV4 money. Seats seven but seriously unthrilling to drive



	PRICE	0-62	MPH	BHP	LB FT	MPG	CO2	RATING
2.5 CRDI	£25,495	9.4	118	194	311	47.9	155	★★★★☆

INFINITI

Q70

Abysmal-looking, superbly-built 5-series rival: small, rides badly, no estate; hybrid surprisingly rapid



	PRICE	0-62	MPH	BHP	LB FT	MPG	CO2	RATING
M37 GT	£38,580	6.2	155	315	265	27.7	235	★★★★☆
M35h	£46,840	5.5	155	302	258	40.4	162	★★★★☆
M30d	£40,190	6.9	155	235	405	37.7	199	★★★★☆

QX50

Interesting coupe-styled crossover packed with kit but you'd best steer clear of any actual mud



	PRICE	0-62	MPH	BHP	LB FT	MPG	CO2	RATING
EX37	£41,930	6.4	149	315	265	25	265	★★★★☆
EX30d	£37,130	7.9	137	235	405	33.2	224	★★★★☆

QX70

Hollywood SUV has more muscles than an '80s action hero. Cramped inside but a great X5 rival



	PRICE	0-62	MPH	BHP	LB FT	MPG	CO2	RATING
FX37 GT	£46,750	6.8	145	315	265	23.4	282	★★★★☆
FX50 S	£58,250	5.8	155	385	368	21.6	307	★★★★☆
FX30d GT	£46,840	8.3	132	235	405	31.4	238	★★★★☆

JAGUAR

XF

Facelift and fleet-savvy 2.2d four-pot boost appeal. Superb to drive but roomier 5-series a better buy



	PRICE	0-62	MPH	BHP	LB FT	MPG	CO2	RATING
XFR	£65,350	4.9	155	510	461	22.5	292	★★★★☆
2.2 Diesel SE	£29,950	10.5	130	161	295	52.3	149	★★★★☆
2.2 Diesel	£30,950	8.5	140	190	332	52.3	149	★★★★☆
3.0 Diesel	£36,950	7.1	149	240	368	44.8	169	★★★★☆
3.0 Diesel S	£42,950	6.4	155	275	442	44.8	169	★★★★☆

XJ

Bravely-styled Jag limo features Bentley-esque cabin. XFR-engined Supersports ludicrously fast



	PRICE	0-62	MPH	BHP	LB FT	MPG	CO2	RATING
5.0 V8	£67,050	5.7	155	385	380	24.9	264	★★★★☆
5.0 Supersports	£91,050	4.9	155	510	461	23.4	289	★★★★☆
3.0 Diesel	£55,515	6.4	155	275	442	40.1	184	★★★★☆

F-TYPE

Stunning-looking sports car with bellowing engines and a livewire chassis. But why so damn heavy?



	PRICE	0-62	MPH	BHP	LB FT	MPG	CO2	RATING
5.0	£65,000	5.5	155	385	380	25.2	264	★★★★☆
XKR	£78,550	4.6	155	510	461	23.0	292	★★★★☆
XKR-S	£97,000	4.4	186	550	501	23.0	292	★★★★☆

XX

New nose keeps Jag's Aston rip-off fresh but cabin is dated, rear seats are a joke and why no diesels?



	PRICE	0-62	MPH	BHP	LB FT	MPG	CO2	RATING
5.0	£65,000	5.5	155	385	380	25.2	264	★★★★☆
XKR	£78,550	4.6	155	510	461	23.0	292	★★★★☆
XKR-S	£97,000	4.4	186	550	501	23.0	292	★★★★☆

Jeep

WRANGLER

America's answer to Landie Defender is roomier, more refined and even pretty good on Tarmac



	PRICE	0-62	MPH	BHP	LB FT	MPG	CO2	RATING
2.8 CRD Sport	£22,995	11.2	107	197	302	39.8	187	★★★★☆

COMPASS

Crossover with a duff driving position can be had with fwd. Rommel would have kicked its arse



	PRICE	0-62	MPH	BHP	LB FT	MPG	CO2	RATING
2.0 2wd	£16,995	10.6	115	154	140	37.2	175	★★★★☆
2.2 CRD 4x4	£23,595	9.8	125	161	236	42.8	172	★★★★☆

GRAND CHEROKEE

Much improved new Grand Chezza uses next Merc ML platform. Feels as premium as a Styrofoam cup



	PRICE	0-62	MPH	BHP	LB FT	MPG	CO2	RATING
3.0 CRD V6	£36,795	8.2	126	237	405	39.2	218	★★★★☆

KIA

PICANTO

Roomy, fun to drive and well built, this big-chinned re-skinned Hyundai is a sound city buy



	PRICE	0-62	MPH	BHP	LB FT	MPG	CO2	RATING
1.0	£7,995	13.9	95	68	70	67.3	99	★★★★☆
1.2 Ecodynamics	£10,195	11.0	106	84	89	65.7	100	★★★★☆

RIO

Most buyers likely to expire long before seven-year warranty does. New model firmly unrubbish



	PRICE	0-62	MPH	BHP	LB FT	MPG	CO2	RATING
1.4	£8,545	12.3	108	96	92	47.9	139	★★★★☆
1.5 CRDI	£9,665	11.5	109	109	173	62.8	119	★★★★☆

VENGA

Honest little MPV cooler than Hyundai iX twin. Gearbox notchy and diesel noisy



	PRICE	0-62	MPH	BHP	LB FT	MPG	CO2	RATING
1.4	£11,995	12.4	104	89	101	45.6	147	★★★★☆
1.4 CRDI	£13,295	14.0	103	89	162	62.8	117	★★★★☆

SOUL

Handles well but ride is nuggety, especially on bigger rims. Max Power graphics only for the brave



	PRICE	0-62	MPH	BHP	LB FT	MPG	CO2	RATING
1.6	£12,130	10.6	110	124	115	43.5	153	★★★★☆
1.6 CRDI	£14,320	10.9	113	126	192	54.3	137	★★★★☆

CEED

Second-generation Ceed ends all our jokes about Korean cars. It's a true contender



	PRICE	0-62	MPH	BHP	LB FT	MPG	CO2	RATING
1.4	£14,220	12.4	113	98	101	139	47.1	★★★★☆
1.6 GDI	£17,140	9.8	118	133	121	124	52.3	★★★★☆
1.4 CRDI	£15,640	13.0	106	89	162	68.9	109	★★★★☆
1.6 CRDI	£16,840	11.5	122	126	192	76.3	97	★★★★☆

OPTIMA

Like the Hyundai i40, only with a Kia badge on the back and a bit more bling on the front



	PRICE	0-62	MPH	BHP	LB FT	MPG	CO2	RATING
1.7 CRDI	£19,595	10.2	125	134	240	57.6	128	★★★★☆

CARENS

Final Kia to get the 'tiger nose' face and better quality. The Korean metamorphosis is complete



	PRICE	0-62	MPH	BHP	LB FT	MPG	CO2	RATING
1.6	£14,695	11.6	110	130	116	39.2	174	★★★★☆
1.6 CRDI	£15,995	12.1	112	126	192	45.6	149	★★★★☆

SPORTAGE

Sharp-looking mid-range SUV is a brilliant Qashqai rival. Go for front drive with the little 1.7 diesel



	PRICE	0-62	MPH	BHP	LB FT	MPG	CO2	RATING
1.6 GDI	£17,295	10.7	111	133	122	44.1	149	★★★★☆
2.0 GDI	£21,525	10.3	113	161	143	37.2	181	★★★★☆
1.7 CRDI	£18,695	11.9	107	114	192	54.3	135	★★★★☆
2.0 CRDI	£23,025	10.9	112	134	236	34.4	195	★★★★☆

SORRENTO

Seven seats, cool design but diesels noisier than a Vegas stag-do and handling as fun as the hangover



	PRICE	0-62	MPH	BHP	LB FT	MPG	CO2	RATING
2.0 CRDI	£23,095	10.9	113	147	282	44.1	169	★★★★☆
2.2 CRDI	£23,995	9.5	118	194	311	43.5	171	★★★★☆

LAMBORGHINI

HURACAN

Replacement for aging but successful Gallardo has plenty of power - but is it a bit too Audi?



	PRICE	0-62	MPH	BHP	LB FT	MPG	CO2	RATING
LP610-4	£180,720	3.2	202	602	413	22.6	290	★★★★☆

AVENTADOR

Murcielago follow-up is vastly better in almost every way, but lacks the old car's scare factor



	PRICE	0-62	MPH	BHP	LB FT	MPG	CO2	RATING
V12	£253,200	2.9	217	700	508	17.2	398	★★★★☆

LAND ROVER

DEFENDER

Cramped, crude, charming Brit jeep way past its sell-by date but LR doesn't know how to replace it



	PRICE	0-62	MPH	BHP	LB FT	MPG	CO2	RATING
90	£23,795	15.8	90	120	266	27.7	269	★★★★☆

FREELANDER

Feeling a whole lot less desirable in face of Audi Q3 and Q5, BMW X3 and LR's own sexy new Evoque



	PRICE	0-62	MPH	BHP	LB FT	MPG	CO2	RATING
2.2 eD4	£22,005	11.7	112	150	309	47.1	158	★★★★☆
2.2 SD4	£28,260	9.5	118	190	309	40.4	185	★★★★☆

DISCOVERY

An SUV without sporting pretensions and all the better for it. Refined, roomy, mega on and off road



	PRICE	0-62	MPH	BHP	LB FT	MPG	CO2	RATING
3.0 SDV6	£37,995	9.3	112	252	443	32.1	230	★★★★☆



Official fuel consumption for the Volvo V40 T2 R-Design (manual) in MPG (l/100km): Urban 41.5 (6.8), Extra Urban 62.8 (4.5), Combined 53.3 (5.3). CO2 Emissions 124g/km. MPG figures are obtained from laboratory testing intended for comparisons between vehicles and may not reflect real driving results.

EVOQUE

Pricy premium SUV just like the original concept. Drives like a hot hatch but can still do the dirty



	PRICE	0-62	MPH	BHP	LB FT	MPG	CO2	RATING
SI4	£38,995	7.6	135	240	251	33.6	199	★★★★★
ED4	£27,955	11.2	112	150	280	56.3	133	★★★★★
SD4	£29,705	9.5	124	190	309	50.2	149	★★★★★

RANGE SPORT

Lighter and even more capable than its predecessor, but the Cayenne remains our choice



	PRICE	0-62	MPH	BHP	LB FT	MPG	CO2	RATING
3.0 SDV6	£48,795	8.9	124	252	443	32.1	230	★★★★★
5.0 V8	£67,295	6.2	140	503	461	23.2	348	★★★★★

RANGE ROVER

Any remnants of utilitarian brief now smothered by luxury, but still a king off-road. A real Bentley-beater



	PRICE	0-62	MPH	BHP	LB FT	MPG	CO2	RATING
TDV6	£71,295	7.9	136	255	442	37.7	196	★★★★★
TDV8	£84,320	6.9	135	313	516	30.1	253	★★★★★
5.0 V8	£98,395	5.4	140	503	461	20.5	322	★★★★★

LEXUS



CT-200h

Look past this posh Prius's poor ride, foul styling and flat performance and the other 1% is, er, good



	PRICE	0-62	MPH	BHP	LB FT	MPG	CO2	RATING
SE-I	£23,485	10.3	112	98	105	68.9	94	★★★★★

IS

Crazy styling and premium cabin let down by off-the-pace drivetrains. No diesel kills it for UK



	PRICE	0-62	MPH	BHP	LB FT	MPG	CO2	RATING
250 2.5	£30,450	8.5	140	205	186	32.8	199	★★★★★
300h	£33,495	8.3	125	319	384	60.1	109	★★★★★

GS

New GS now has 2.5 V6 to complement expensive hybrid. Still no diesel



	PRICE	0-62	MPH	BHP	LB FT	MPG	CO2	RATING
250	£32,995	8.6	143	207	187	31.7	207	★★★★★
450h hybrid	£44,995	5.9	155	338	254	47.9	137	★★★★★

LS

Bank-vault-build S-class clone more refined than Asda white bread and about as interesting



	PRICE	0-62	MPH	BHP	LB FT	MPG	CO2	RATING
460	£71,995	5.7	155	439	383	32.8	199	★★★★★
600h L	£99,495	6.1	155	439	383	32.8	279	★★★★★

RX

Dull drive but hybrid-only second gen RX's 145g/km CO2 figure makes it a company car no-brainer



	PRICE	0-62	MPH	BHP	LB FT	MPG	CO2	RATING
450h SE	£44,530	7.8	124	295	234	44.8	145	★★★★★

LOTUS



ELISE

Still looks fresh, still a tonic to drive, and still expensive for a toy. Supercharged models are best



	PRICE	0-62	MPH	BHP	LB FT	MPG	CO2	RATING
1.6	£28,100	6.5	127	134	118	45.0	149	★★★★★

EVORA

Incredible ride and handling; supercharged S version has pace to match



	PRICE	0-62	MPH	BHP	LB FT	MPG	CO2	RATING
V6	£51,550	5.1	162	276	258	33.2	199	★★★★★
V6 S	£60,550	4.8	172	345	295	27.7	239	★★★★★

EXIGE S

Elise meets Evora S, but it's no parts-bin special, rather the best car Lotus currently makes



	PRICE	0-62	MPH	BHP	LB FT	MPG	CO2	RATING
Exige S	£52,900	3.8	170	345	295	28.0	236	★★★★★

MASERATI



GHIBLI

Critical element of the Maserati masterplan to quadruple sales. Sexy looks and a sporty drive



	PRICE	0-62	MPH	BHP	LB FT	MPG	CO2	RATING
V6	£81,225	5.6	163	323	368	29.4	223	★★★★★
V6 S	£87,350	5.0	177	404	406	27.2	242	★★★★★
Diesel	£94,300	6.3	152	271	420	47.0	158	★★★★★

QUATTROPORTE

Nothing says Mafia boss better than parking a black QP outside your Sicilian holiday home



	PRICE	0-62	MPH	BHP	LB FT	MPG	CO2	RATING
V8	£81,225	5.6	167	395	339	19.2	340	★★★★★
V8 S	£87,350	5.4	174	424	361	18.0	365	★★★★★
Sport GT	£94,300	5.1	177	434	361	18.0	365	★★★★★

GRANTURISMO

Proper four-seat GT, either mild or wild depending on spec. Caged-up Stradale a superb GT3 rival



	PRICE	0-62	MPH	BHP	LB FT	MPG	CO2	RATING
V8	£80,450	5.2	177	405	339	19.8	330	★★★★★
V8 S	£88,450	5.0	183	434	362	18.6	354	★★★★★
MC Stradale	£109,995	4.6	187	442	376	19.6	337	★★★★★

MAZDA



2

Flyweight supermini looks good and drives well – shame there's no hot version. Feels cheap inside



	PRICE	0-62	MPH	BHP	LB FT	MPG	CO2	RATING
1.3 75	£11,195	14.9	104	74	88	56.5	115	★★★★★
1.3 84	£12,295	13.6	106	83	89	56.5	115	★★★★★
1.5 automatic	£13,495	11.9	117	101	98	44.8	145	★★★★★

3

Good-looking, well-equipped, keenly priced, and great to drive. Put it on your test-drive list



	PRICE	0-62	MPH	BHP	LB FT	MPG	CO2	RATING
1.5	£16,995	10.8	113	100	111	55.4	119	★★★★★
2.0 120	£17,295	8.9	121	119	155	55.4	119	★★★★★
2.0 120 automatic	£18,495	10.4	121	119	155	50.4	129	★★★★★
2.0 165	£21,920	8.2	130	163	155	48.7	135	★★★★★
2.2d	£19,645	8.1	130	148	280	68.9	107	★★★★★
2.2d automatic	£22,345	9.7	125	148	280	58.9	127	★★★★★

5

Sliding-door, 7-seat MPV with bizarre design motif making it look like it's been side-swiped in a car park



	PRICE	0-62	MPH	BHP	LB FT	MPG	CO2	RATING
2.0	£20,495	11.2	120	148	141	40.9	159	★★★★★
1.6d	£21,895	13.7	112	113	199	54.3	138	★★★★★

6

New 6 wraps up 5-series space in a stunning body, and it's a fine steer. Mazda's great form continues



	PRICE	0-62	MPH	BHP	LB FT	MPG	CO2	RATING
2.0 145	£19,595	9.5	129	143	155	51.4	129	★★★★★
2.0 145 automatic	£21,695	10.5	128	143	155	47.9	136	★★★★★
2.0 165	£24,095	9.1	134	163	155	47.9	135	★★★★★
2.2d 150	£22,095	9.0	131	148	280	67.3	104	★★★★★
2.2d 150 automatic	£24,095	9.8	126	148	280	58.9	127	★★★★★
2.2d 175	£26,295	7.8	138	173	310	62.8	119	★★★★★
2.2d 175 automatic	£27,495	8.4	134	173	310	58.9	127	★★★★★

CX-5

Literally everything is new, but CX-5 is less sporty than rest of range. Majors on comfort but isn't class-leading



	PRICE	0-62	MPH	BHP	LB FT	MPG	CO2	RATING
2.0	£21,895	9.2	124	163	155	47.1	139	★★★★★
2.2d 150	£23,695	9.2	126	148	280	61.4	119	★★★★★
2.2d 175	£28,695	8.8	129	173	310	54.3	136	★★★★★

MX-5

World's best-selling sports car let down by coarse naturally aspirated engines. Mk4 due in 2015



	PRICE	0-62	MPH	BHP	LB FT	MPG	CO2	RATING
1.8 Soft Top	£18,495	9.9	121	124	123	39.8	167	★★★★★
2.0 Roadster Coupe	£23,095	7.9	136	158	138	36.2	181	★★★★★

MCLAREN



650S

Tech tour de force with brilliant chassis now revised with P1-inspired looks. 458 still more fun.



	PRICE	0-62	MPH	BHP	LB FT	MPG	CO2	RATING
Coupe	£195,250	3.0	207	641	500	24.1	275	★★★★★
Spider	£215,250	3.0	204	641	500	24.1	275	★★★★★

P1

Staggering pace, astounding looks, as easy to drive as the 650S. Nearly, but not quite, a LaFerrari beater



	PRICE	0-62	MPH	BHP	LB FT	MPG	CO2	RATING
P1	£866,000	2.8	217	903	664	34.9	8190	★★★★★

MERCEDES-BENZ



A-CLASS

Baby Merc goes conventional. Stiff ride, small inside, but way cooler than dumpy 1-series



	PRICE	0-62	MPH	BHP	LB FT	MPG	CO2	RATING
A180	£20,715	9.2	126	120	147	51.4	128	★★★★★
A200	£23,365	8.4	139	154	184	51.4	134	★★★★★
A250 4matic	£28,140	6.6	149	208	258	42.8	154	★★★★★
A45 AMG 4matic	£38,195	4.6	155	355	332	40.9	161	★★★★★
A180 CDI Eco	£21,965	11.3	118	108	191	74.3	92	★★★★★
A200 CDI	£23,860	9.3	130	135	221	64.2	114	★★★★★
A220 CDI	£27,760	8.2	137	168	258	67.3	109	★★★★★

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Interest charges	£3,692
Total amount payable	£23,386
Optional final payment	£8,725
Duration of agreement (months)	49
Fixed rate of interest p.a.	3.55%
Mileage per annum	8,000
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Finance subject to status. Retail sales only. *Subject to availability at participating dealers only on vehicles registered by 31st March 2015. 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

MERCEDES-BENZ >>>>SEAT

CLA

Like a baby CLS but without the charisma. Being based on the A-class probably doesn't help



	PRICE	0-62	MPH	BHP	LB FT	MPG	CO2	RATING
CLA180	£24,775	9.3	130	120	148	50.4	130	★★★★☆
CLA250 4MATIC	£33,440	6.6	149	208	258	42.8	154	★★★★☆
CLA45 AMG	£42,270	4.6	155	355	332	39.8	165	★★★★☆
CLA200 CDI	£26,925	9.4	137	134	221	64.2	117	★★★★☆
CLA220 CDI	£29,775	8.2	143	168	258	64.2	117	★★★★☆

GLA

A-class based crossover offers more room but still doesn't ride well. Avoid hopeless AMG version



	PRICE	0-62	MPH	BHP	LB FT	MPG	CO2	RATING
GLA250 4MATIC	£29,915	7.1	143	208	258	42.8	154	★★★★☆
GLA45 AMG	£44,595	4.8	155	355	332	37.7	175	★★★★☆
GLA200 CDI	£26,850	10.0	127	134	221	62.8	119	★★★★☆
GLA220 CDI	£30,035	8.3	134	168	258	55.4	132	★★★★☆

B-CLASS

Polishes the Mk1's family van template, adding high quality cabin with iPad-style infotainment screen



	PRICE	0-62	MPH	BHP	LB FT	MPG	CO2	RATING
B180	£22,020	10.4	118	120	148	47.9	137	★★★★☆
B200	£22,575	8.6	138	154	184	47.9	138	★★★★☆
B180 CDI	£22,775	11.6	118	108	192	68.9	108	★★★★☆
B200 CDI	£24,125	9.5	130	134	221	64.2	111	★★★★☆

C-CLASS

Mini S-class looks, and with almost all the same tech available, too. Still no 3-series beater to drive.



	PRICE	0-62	MPH	BHP	LB FT	MPG	CO2	RATING
C200	£26,855	7.5	147	181	221	53.3	123	★★★★☆
C200 BlueTEC	£28,570	9.7	135	134	236	72.4	102	★★★★☆
C220 BlueTEC	£29,365	7.7	145	168	295	70.6	103	★★★★☆
C250 BlueTEC	£32,020	6.6	153	201	369	65.7	109	★★★★☆
C300 BlueTEC Hybrid	£34,630	6.4	152	201	369	78.5	94	★★★★☆

C-CLASS COUPE

Still based on old C-class, good to drive if dumper than a farmer's wife after plopping out 10 kids



	PRICE	0-62	MPH	BHP	LB FT	MPG	CO2	RATING
C180	£29,965	8.5	140	154	184	44.1	149	★★★★☆
C63 AMG	£58,500	4.4	155	451	442	23.5	280	★★★★☆
C63 AMG Edition 507	£68,495	4.2	174	500	450	23.5	280	★★★★☆
C220 CDI	£31,130	8.4	144	168	295	68.9	109	★★★★☆
C250 CDI	£33,515	7.0	149	201	369	62.3	143	★★★★☆

E-CLASS

Solid, unassuming and very dull besides CLS spinoff. Munich taxi drivers are going to love them



	PRICE	0-62	MPH	BHP	LB FT	MPG	CO2	RATING
E200 CGI	£29,485	8.5	144	181	199	38.7	169	★★★★☆
E250 CGI	£32,035	7.5	150	201	228	42.8	154	★★★★☆
E350	£39,655	6.8	155	288	269	32.8	201	★★★★☆
E500	£49,260	5.2	155	382	391	26.2	253	★★★★☆
E63 AMG	£73,465	4.5	155	518	464	22.4	295	★★★★☆
E200 CDI	£28,920	10.2	130	134	266	55.4	134	★★★★☆
E220 CDI	£30,010	8.7	143	168	295	53.3	139	★★★★☆
E250 CDI	£31,630	7.7	149	201	368	53.3	139	★★★★☆
E350 CDI	£37,515	6.2	155	261	457	45.6	162	★★★★☆

E-CLASS COUPE & CABRIO

Okay it's an E-class, but there's a bit of C in here too. Good all the same. Pay £3k more for cabrio



	PRICE	0-62	MPH	BHP	LB FT	MPG	CO2	RATING
E200 CGI	£31,315	8.5	149	181	199	38.7	168	★★★★☆
E250 CGI	£34,015	7.4	155	201	228	36.2	180	★★★★☆
E350 CGI	£38,805	6.3	155	288	269	32.8	200	★★★★☆
E500	£52,665	5.2	155	382	391	25.9	254	★★★★☆
E220 CDI	£31,840	8.5	146	168	295	53.3	139	★★★★☆
E250 CDI	£33,475	7.4	155	201	368	52.3	143	★★★★☆
E350 CDI	£36,745	6.7	155	228	398	41.5	179	★★★★☆

CLS

Mk2 E-class banana looks great, goes even better, particularly in AMG form with new twin-turbo V8



	PRICE	0-62	MPH	BHP	LB FT	MPG	CO2	RATING
CLS250 CDI	£46,680	7.5	150	201	368	54.3	135	★★★★☆
CLS350	£48,998	6.1	155	302	273	40.9	161	★★★★☆
CLS500	£61,820	5.2	155	402	442	31.4	209	★★★★☆
CLS63 AMG	£80,645	4.4	155	518	516	28.5	231	★★★★☆
CLS250 CDI	£46,360	7.5	150	201	368	54.3	135	★★★★☆
CLS350 CDI	£52,993	6.2	155	261	457	46.3	160	★★★★☆

S-CLASS

Amazing new benchmark for tech, safety, and comfort. Mercedes just bombed the goalposts



	PRICE	0-62	MPH	BHP	LB FT	MPG	CO2	RATING
S350	£61,680	6.9	155	302	273	36.7	179	★★★★☆
S500	£81,940	5.0	155	302	516	30.1	219	★★★★☆
S600	£114,125	4.6	155	510	612	20.0	329	★★★★☆
S63	£112,290	4.5	155	537	589	26.9	244	★★★★☆
S65	£163,630	4.4	155	621	737	19.8	334	★★★★☆
S350 CDI BlueTec	£60,005	7.1	155	254	457	45.6	164	★★★★☆

S-CLASS COUPE

All the tech of an S-class saloon but in an immense two-door coupe. Stunning but slightly soulless



	PRICE	0-62	MPH	BHP	LB FT	MPG	CO2	RATING
S500	£96,565	4.9	155	449	516	30.1	219	★★★★☆
S63 AMG	£125,595	4.2	155	577	664	27.9	237	★★★★☆
S65 AMG	£161,595	4.0	155	621	737	25.0	279	★★★★☆

M-CLASS

Cayenne's better on road and Disco off it. Small four-pot engine option hardly makes it essential



	PRICE	0-62	MPH	BHP	LB FT	MPG	CO2	RATING
ML250 CDI	£45,375	9.0	130	201	368	44.8	165	★★★★☆
ML350 CDI	£48,475	7.4	139	254	457	39.2	189	★★★★☆
ML63 AMG	£82,995	4.8	155	518	516	23.9	276	★★★★☆

G-CLASS

Used to be called the G-wagen. Amusing in AMG form, but why spend £120k on a Defender?



	PRICE	0-62	MPH	BHP	LB FT	MPG	CO2	RATING
G350 Blue Tec	£81,715	9.1	108	207	398	25.2	295	★★★★☆
G63 AMG	£123,115	5.4	130	537	560	20.5	322	★★★★☆

GL-CLASS

Gargantuan seven-seater wants to be Merc's Range Rover, but you're better off in the real thing



	PRICE	0-62	MPH	BHP	LB FT	MPG	CO2	RATING
GL350 CDI	£58,395	7.9	140	261	457	30.7	242	★★★★☆
GL500	£73,155	6.5	149	381	391	20.8	317	★★★★☆

SLK

All new SLK gets parsimonious petrols, mini-SL styling and its arse kicked by a Boxster



	PRICE	0-62	MPH	BHP	LB FT	MPG	CO2	RATING
SLK200	£29,980	7.3	149	181	184	41.5	158	★★★★☆
SLK250	£35,720	6.6	151	201	228	42.8	153	★★★★☆
SLK350	£44,225	5.6	155	302	273	39.8	167	★★★★☆
SLK55 AMG	£54,950	4.6	155	415	398	33.6	195	★★★★☆
SLK250 CDI	£32,250	6.7	151	201	368	56.5	132	★★★★☆

SL

Excellent folding hard-top all rounder great as entry-level V6 or ballistic AMG. Pity about the looks



	PRICE	0-62	MPH	BHP	LB FT	MPG	CO2	RATING
SL350	£72,495	5.9	155	302	273	37.7	176	★★★★☆
SL500	£83,455	4.6	155	429	516	30.7	214	★★★★☆
SL63 AMG	£110,735	4.3	155	530	589	28.5	231	★★★★☆
SL65AMG	£168,225	4.0	155	621	737	24.4	270	★★★★☆

SLS

Brilliant gullwing-doored coupe sounds like a Bonneville hot rod. Roadster loses retro doors



	PRICE	0-62	MPH	BHP	LB FT	MPG	CO2	RATING
SLS	£168,395	3.8	197	563	479	21.4	308	★★★★☆
SLS Roadster	£180,000	3.8	197	563	479	21.4	314	★★★★☆

MINI

Third-gen Mini is bigger but still ace to drive. Shock five-door version ideal for avoiding Countryman



	PRICE	0-62	MPH	BHP	LB FT	MPG	CO2	RATING
One	£13,750	9.9	121	101	133	61.4	108	★★★★☆
Cooper	£15,300	7.9	130	134	170	62.8	105	★★★★☆
Cooper S	£18,655	6.8	146	189	221	49.6	133	★★★★☆
One D	£14,890	11.0	118	94	162	83.1	89	★★★★☆
Cooper D	£16,450	9.2	127	114	199	80.7	92	★★★★☆

COUPE

Squashed-roof Mini hatch sacrifices back seats for style and promises extra handling brio too



	PRICE	0-62	MPH	BHP	LB FT	MPG	CO2	RATING
Cooper	£16,640	9.0	127	122	118	52.3	127	★★★★☆
Cooper S	£19,775	6.9	143	184	177	48.7	136	★★★★☆
John Cooper Works	£23,795	6.4	149	211	192	39.8	165	★★★★☆
Cooper SD	£20,510	7.9	134	143	225	65.7	114	★★★★☆

COUNTRYMAN

Bloppy Mini soft roader comes in 2wd or 4wd versions. Still fun but really needs more poke



	PRICE	0-62	MPH	BHP	LB FT	MPG	CO2	RATING
One	£16,345	11.9	107	98	113	47.1	139	★★★★☆
Cooper	£17,865	10.5	118	122	118	47.1	140	★★★★☆
Cooper S	£21,250	7.6	134	184	177	46.3	143	★★★★☆
One D	£17,360	12.9	106	90	158	64.2	115	★★★★☆
Cooper D	£19,210	6.5	115	112	199	64.2	115	★★★★☆
Cooper SD	£ 21,970	9.3	123	143	225	61.4	122	★★★★☆

ROADSTER

More composed than the Coupe, more together than the Convertible. Yet not a great convertible



	PRICE	0-62	MPH	BHP	LB FT	MPG	CO2	RATING
Cooper	£18,15	9.2	124	121	118	49.6	133	★★★★☆
Cooper S	£20,900	7.0	141	181	177	47.1	139	★★★★☆
John Cooper Works	£24,850	6.5	147	208	192	38.7	169	★★★★☆
Cooper SD	£21,630	8.1	132	141	225	62.8	118	★★★★☆

NISSAN

MICRA

Last Micra had Fiat 500 style and great chassis. New one has neither and it's not built in UK either



	PRICE	0-62	MPH	BHP	LB FT	MPG	CO2	RATING
1.2	£9650	13.7	106	79	81	56.5	115	★★★★☆

NOTE

Probably an F sharp. Practical and surprisingly good to drive but deeply, sonorously uncool



	PRICE	0-62	MPH	BHP	LB FT	MPG	CO2	RATING
1.0	£8245	14.3	98	68	70	68.9	95	★★★★★
1.2	£10,995	11.0	106	81	86	65.7	99	★★★★★

208

Crucial new supermini has chic design touches, tiny steering wheel and is way lighter than 207



	PRICE	0-62	MPH	BHP	LB FT	MPG	CO2	RATING
1.0	£9995	15.9	101	68	70	65.7	99	★★★★★
1.2	£11,345	14.0	109	82	87	62.8	104	★★★★★
1.4	£12,195	11.7	114	95	100	50.4	129	★★★★★
1.6	£14,645	10.9	118	120	118	74.3	98	★★★★★
1.6	£16,895	8.1	134	156	192	48.7	135	★★★★★

207CC

Looks good, handles okay, but driving position abysmal and it's even worse in the back



	PRICE	0-62	MPH	BHP	LB FT	MPG	CO2	RATING
1.6 VTI	£16,545	10.7	124	120	120	44.1	149	★★★★★
1.6 THP	£19,095	8.6	130	156	180	38.2	170	★★★★★
1.6 HDI	£17,995	10.9	119	112	180	58.9	125	★★★★★

308

New 308 wears smart suit and boasts a stunning cabin design. Mushy dynamics let it down



	PRICE	0-62	MPH	BHP	LB FT	MPG	CO2	RATING
1.4 VTI	£15,245	12.7	113	98	100	44.8	144	★★★★★
1.6 VTI	£15,895	10.8	121	120	118	44.1	147	★★★★★
1.6 THP 156	£17,645	8.8	133	156	177	42.2	155	★★★★★
1.6 THP GT 200	£21,645	7.7	147	200	203	40.9	159	★★★★★
1.6 HDI	£16,745	12.4	113	92	169	67.3	110	★★★★★
1.6 e-HDI EGC	£17,665	11.4	118	112	199	67.3	118	★★★★★
2.0 HDI	£19,295	8.8	127	150	251	55.4	134	★★★★★

3008

Mini-MPV saved from genuine brilliance by horrific guinea-pig-inspired styling



	PRICE	0-62	MPH	BHP	LB FT	MPG	CO2	RATING
1.6 VTI	£17,045	11.8	115	120	118	40.1	159	★★★★★
1.6 THP	£19,395	8.9	125	156	177	39.7	167	★★★★★
1.6 HDI	£18,895	13.6	112	112	199	55.6	135	★★★★★
2.0 HDI	£21,145	9.7	121	150	250	50.4	146	★★★★★

508

Impressive assault on the Mondeo has great cabin and soothing long-distance refinement



	PRICE	0-62	MPH	BHP	LB FT	MPG	CO2	RATING
1.6 VTI	£18,150	11.5	126	120	118	45.6	144	★★★★★
1.6 THP	£20,650	8.6	139	156	177	44.1	149	★★★★★
1.6 e-HDI	£19,050	11.9	122	112	199	64.2	109	★★★★★
2.0 HDI 140	£21,095	9.6	140	163	251	57.6	129	★★★★★
2.2 HDI 200	£28,750	8.2	139	204	332	49.6	150	★★★★★
RXH	£33,695	9.5	132	197	332	68.9	107	★★★★★

5008

Full-size MPV gets tasty cabin and plenty of room, which is what you'll give it if you've tried an S-Max



	PRICE	0-62	MPH	BHP	LB FT	MPG	CO2	RATING
1.6 VTI	£17,945	12.3	116	120	118	40.9	159	★★★★★
1.6 THP	£20,445	9.7	121	156	177	39.8	167	★★★★★
1.6 HDI	£19,745	12.9	114	112	177	53.3	139	★★★★★
2.0 HDI	£22,195	10.0	121	150	250	49.6	149	★★★★★

RCZ

Wild-looking coupe makes TT look tame and expensive. 266bhp R variant ballistic to drive



	PRICE	0-62	MPH	BHP	LB FT	MPG	CO2	RATING
1.6 THP 156	£22,100	8.3	133	154	177	44.1	149	★★★★★
1.6 THP 1200	£26,900	7.6	146	197	203	42.2	155	★★★★★
1.6 THP 270 R	£32,000	5.9	155	266	243	44.8	145	★★★★★
2.0 HDI	£23,950	8.7	137	161	236	53.3	139	★★★★★

PORSCHE BOXSTER

Utterly brilliant, and S version is better than £80k 911 Cabriolet. GTS even more so. Buy, buy, buy



	PRICE	0-62	MPH	BHP	LB FT	MPG	CO2	RATING
2.7	£38,810	5.8	164	261	207	34.4	192	★★★★★
3.4 S	£47,035	5.1	173	311	266	32.1	206	★★★★★
3.4 GTS	£52,879	5.0	175	325	266	31.4	211	★★★★★

CAYMAN

Now has desirable looks to match world-class handling. Candidate for world's best sports car



	PRICE	0-62	MPH	BHP	LB FT	MPG	CO2	RATING
2.7	£39,694	5.7	165	271	214	34.4	192	★★★★★
3.4 S	£48,783	5.0	176	321	273	32.1	206	★★★★★
3.4 GTS	£55,379	4.9	177	335	280	31.4	211	★★★★★

911

More refined than ever, but still the benchmark sports car. GT3 and Turbo now top the range



	PRICE	0-62	MPH	BHP	LB FT	MPG	CO2	RATING
3.4 Carrera	£73,413	4.8	180	345	288	31.4	212	★★★★★
3.8 Carrera S	£83,545	4.5	189	395	325	29.7	224	★★★★★
3.8 GT3	£100,540	3.5	196	470	325	22.8	289	★★★★★
3.8 Turbo	£120,598	3.4	196	513	524	29.1	227	★★★★★
3.8 Turbo S	£142,120	3.1	198	552	553	29.1	227	★★★★★

MACAN

It's a sports car not an SUV, says Porsche. Incredibly, we agree. Excellent to drive



	PRICE	0-62	MPH	BHP	LB FT	MPG	CO2	RATING
2.0	£40,276	6.9	139	234	258	37.7	175	★★★★★
S	£43,300	5.4	158	335	339	31.4	212	★★★★★
Turbo	£59,300	4.8	165	395	406	30.7	216	★★★★★
S Diesel	£43,300	6.3	143	255	428	44.8	164	★★★★★

PANAMERA

Imagine an S-class with a Corvette beak and 911's arse. Fab to drive, if not to look at. GTS is our pick



	PRICE	0-62	MPH	BHP	LB FT	MPG	CO2	RATING
3.6	£63,913	6.3	161	306	295	33.6	196	★★★★★
S	£82,439	5.1	178	414	384	32.5	204	★★★★★
GTS	£93,391	5.6	179	434	384	26.4	288	★★★★★
Turbo	£108,006	4.1	190	513	516	27.7	239	★★★★★
Turbo S	£131,152	3.8	192	562	590	27.7	239	★★★★★
S E-Hybrid	£89,327	5.5	168	410	435	91.1	71	★★★★★
Diesel	£65,289	6.0	161	296	479	44.1	169	★★★★★

CAYENNE

Who's laughing now? Lighter, greener latest Cayenne is brilliant to drive, and even looks good



	PRICE	0-62	MPH	BHP	LB FT	MPG	CO2	RATING
3.6	£42,990	7.5	143	296	295	25.2	263	★★★★★
S	£60,218	5.5	161	414	406	29.7	223	★★★★★
GTS	£68,117	5.7	162	414	380	26.4	261	★★★★★
Turbo	£93,763	4.5	173	513	553	25.2	261	★★★★★
S E-Hybrid	£61,474	5.9	151	410	435	83.1	79	★★★★★
Diesel	£49,902	7.3	137	258	427	42.8	173	★★★★★
S Diesel	£61,474	5.4	156	380	627	35.3	209	★★★★★

918 SPYDER

Hybrid supercar was the first road car ever to lap the Nürburgring in less than seven minutes. Epic!



	PRICE	0-62	MPH	BHP	LB FT	MPG	CO2	RATING
Spyder	£666,000	2.8	211	875	940	85.6	79	★★★★★

RENAULT TWIZY

Crack-pipe crazy twin-seat quad bike runs on electric power. Fun in the sun.



	PRICE	0-62	MPH	BHP	LB FT	MPG	CO2	RATING
Urban	£6690	n/a	50	17	42	n/a	0	★★★★★

ZOE

All-electric alternative to the Clio. Looks good, but battery rental scheme and range limiting



	PRICE	0-62	MPH	BHP	LB FT	MPG	CO2	RATING
Expression	£18,443	13.5	84	87	184	n/a	0	★★★★★

TWINGO

Radical rethink sees Twingo adopt rear-engined rear-wheel drive platform. Non-turbo S-Ce best



	PRICE	0-62	MPH	BHP	LB FT	MPG	CO2	RATING
1.0 S-Ce	£9495	14.5	94	69	67	62.8	105	★★★★★
0.9 TCe	£11,695	10.8	103	89	100	65.7	99	★★★★★

CLIO

New Clio looks, drives, and is built better than before. Auto-only RS Turbo is controversial.



	PRICE	0-62	MPH	BHP	LB FT	MPG	CO2	RATING
1.2	£10,795	14.5	104	74	79	51.4	127	★★★★★
0.9 TCe	£13,195	12.2	113	89	100	62.8	104	★★★★★
1.2 TCe EDC	£17,395	9.9	121	118	140	54.3	120	★★★★★
1.6 Turbo EDC RS	£18,995	6.7	143	197	177	44.8	144	★★★★★
1.5 DCI	£14,295	11.9	112	89	162	83.1	90	★★★★★

CAPTUR

Clio on stilts goes up against Juke. Wins the beauty contest, but loses the dynamic duel



	PRICE	0-62	MPH	BHP	LB FT	MPG	CO2	RATING
0.9 TCe	£14,195	13.0	106	89	100	56.5	115	★★★★★
1.2 TCe EDC	£17,395	10.9	119	118	140	52.3	125	★★★★★
1.5 DCI	£15,595	12.6	106	89	162	76.3	95	★★★★★

MEGANE

Rubbish Golf rival is nothing special to drive and tiny in the back. RS is only one worth looking at



	PRICE	0-62	MPH	BHP	LB FT	MPG	CO2	RATING
1.6	£16,750	10.5	118	109	111	40.9	159	★★★★★
1.2 TCe	£17,570	10.9	118	113	140	53.3	119	★★★★★
1.4 TCe	£19,745	9.8	124	128	236	70.6	104	★★★★★
RenaultSport 275	£28,930	6.0	158	271	266	37.7	174	★★★★★
1.5 DCI	£18,245	12.1	118	109	192	80.7	90	★★★★★
1.6 DCI	£19,745	9.8	124	128	236	70.6	104	★★★★★

SCENIC

The car that kick-started the mini-MPV craze is still vying for class honours. C-Max gets our cash



	PRICE	0-62	MPH	BHP	LB FT	MPG	CO2	RATING
1.6	£19,360	11.7	118	109	111	38.2	174	★★★★★
1.2 TCE	£20,455	11.7	112	113	140	47.9	135	★★★★★
1.4 TCE	£20,805	11.4	118	128	151	45.6	140	★★★★★
1.5 DCI	£21,295	12.5	112	109	192	68.9	105	★★★★★
1.6 DCI	£22,395	10.3	121	128	236	64.2	114	★★★★★

ROLLS-ROYCE GHOST

A 7-series in its Sunday best but there's nothing BMW-like about the price of this baby Rolls



	PRICE	0-62	MPH	BHP	LB FT	MPG	CO2	RATING
Ghost	£170,250	4.9	155	563	575	20.8	317	★★★★★

WRAITH

Hugely powerful Ghost coupe is a surprisingly engaging drive, and worthy of the Spirit of Ecstasy



	PRICE	0-62	MPH	BHP	LB FT	MPG	CO2	RATING
Phantom	\$276,275	5.7	149	453	531	18.0	377	★★★★★
Phantom Coupe	\$253,125	5.8	155	453	531	18.0	377	★★★★★
Phantom Drophead	\$292,600	5.8	149	453	531	19.1	347	★★★★★

SEAT >>>> VOLVO

ALTEA

Bigger Leon for dads desperate to pretend they're not driving an MPV. Buy a C-Max



	PRICE	0-62	MPH	BHP	LB FT	MPG	CO2	RATING
1.4	£14,875	15.0	105	84	97	43.5	152	★★★★★
1.2 TSI	£16,025	11.3	114	104	129	49.6	132	★★★★★
1.4 TSI	£17,445	10.3	121	123	148	43.5	152	★★★★★
2.0 TDI	£19,450	9.7	125	138	236	57.6	129	★★★★★

ALHAMBRA

Auto emocion? Fine new Seat MPV displays as much emotion as an Edwardian family portrait



	PRICE	0-62	MPH	BHP	LB FT	MPG	CO2	RATING
1.4 TSI	£23,045	10.7	122	148	177	39.2	167	★★★★★
2.0 TDI 115	£23,535	12.6	114	113	207	50.4	146	★★★★★
2.0 TDI 140	£24,300	10.9	120	138	236	50.4	146	★★★★★

SKODA CITIGO

Beats its VW and Seat brother on price. You'd have to be a real badge snob to pick the others



	PRICE	0-62	MPH	BHP	LB FT	MPG	CO2	RATING
S 1.0	£7360	14.4	99	59	70	62.8	105	★★★★★
1.0 GreenTech	£10,020	13.2	96	74	70	68.9	96	★★★★★

FABIA

Sound supermini but 60bhp 1.2 is slower than a one-legged tortoise and twin-charge vRS rough



	PRICE	0-62	MPH	BHP	LB FT	MPG	CO2	RATING
1.2 60	£9,880	16.5	96	59	80	49.6	132	★★★★★
1.2 70	£10,420	14.9	101	68	82	51.4	128	★★★★★
1.2 TSI 86	£11,970	11.7	110	86	118	54.3	121	★★★★★
1.2 TSI 105	£12,410	10.2	117	104	129	53.3	124	★★★★★
1.4 TSI vRS	£16,415	7.3	139	178	184	45.6	148	★★★★★
1.6 TDI	£12,440	12.6	109	89	169	67.3	109	★★★★★

ROOMSTER

Three feet higher and it's a ready-made Popewagon. Slow but useful, like a half-wit slave



	PRICE	0-62	MPH	BHP	LB FT	MPG	CO2	RATING
1.2	£11,775	15.9	99	68	82	45.6	143	★★★★★
1.2 TSI 86	£12,420	12.6	107	85	118	49.6	134	★★★★★
1.2 TSI 105	£13,810	11.0	114	104	129	49.6	134	★★★★★
1.2 TDI	£16,120	15.4	103	74	133	67.3	103	★★★★★
1.6 TDI	£15,100	13.3	106	89	169	60.1	124	★★★★★

YETI

Brilliant but pricey VW parts-bin crossover not remotely abominable. Go for bigger engines



	PRICE	0-62	MPH	BHP	LB FT	MPG	CO2	RATING
1.2 TSI	£14,830	11.8	109	104	129	44.1	149	★★★★★
1.4 TSI	£16,230	10.5	115	120	148	41.5	159	★★★★★
1.8 TSI	£20,485	8.4	124	158	184	35.3	189	★★★★★
1.6 TDI	£17,045	12.1	109	104	184	61.4	119	★★★★★
2.0 TDI 110	£16,170	11.6	110	108	184	52.3	140	★★★★★
2.0 TDI 140	£20,805	9.9	118	138	236	47.1	157	★★★★★
2.0 TDI 170	£22,340	8.4	125	168	258	47.9	155	★★★★★

OCTAVIA

Built on same platform as new Golf and A3, so it's light, sharp to drive, and refined. Nice interior too



	PRICE	0-62	MPH	BHP	LB FT	MPG	CO2	RATING
1.4	£13,280	14.3	108	79	98	44.1	149	★★★★★
1.2 TSI	£14,030	10.8	119	104	129	49.6	134	★★★★★
1.4 TSI	£14,565	9.7	126	120	148	44.8	148	★★★★★
1.8 TSI	£17,120	7.8	135	150	184	40.9	158	★★★★★
2.0 TFSI vRS	£20,330	7.2	150	197	206	37.7	175	★★★★★
1.6 TDI	£16,400	11.8	118	104	184	62.8	119	★★★★★
2.0 TDI 110	£18,885	11.0	121	108	206	58.9	126	★★★★★
2.0 TDI 140	£18,650	9.5	131	138	236	58.9	126	★★★★★
2.0 TDI 170 vRS	£21,155	8.3	140	168	258	49.6	149	★★★★★

SUPERB

Outstanding big Skoda such good value it's almost philanthropic. Saloon looks foul – go for estate



	PRICE	0-62	MPH	BHP	LB FT	MPG	CO2	RATING
1.4 TSI	£17,675	10.5	125	123	148	41.5	157	★★★★★
1.8 TSI	£18,865	8.6	137	158	184	39.2	169	★★★★★
2.0 TFSI	£26,060	7.8	147	197	206	35.8	178	★★★★★
3.6 V6	£29,495	6.5	155	256	258	28.0	235	★★★★★
1.6 TDI	£18,495	12.5	117	104	184	56.5	130	★★★★★
2.0 TDI 140	£19,240	10.1	129	138	236	52.3	143	★★★★★
2.0 TDI 170	£22,190	8.8	138	168	258	49.6	149	★★★★★

SMART FORTWO

Like riots, a peculiarly city-centric phenomenon. Like rioters, you'll be sorry in the morning



	PRICE	0-62	MPH	BHP	LB FT	MPG	CO2	RATING
54bhp CDI	£10,650	16.8	84	54	96	85.6	86	★★★★★
71bhp	£9450	13.7	90	71	68	67.3	97	★★★★★
84bhp	£9950	10.7	90	84	88	57.6	115	★★★★★
Brabus	£15,520	8.9	96	102	108	54.3	119	★★★★★

SUBARU BRZ

Ditches Subaru hallmarks of all-wheel drive and turbocharging, yet is the company's best car in years



	PRICE	0-62	MPH	BHP	LB FT	MPG	CO2	RATING
2.0 SE	£24,995	7.6	141	197	151	36.2	181	★★★★★

LEGACY

Wagon-only Legacy offers Audi A6 Avant space for A4 money. We give it a zero for desirability



	PRICE	0-62	MPH	BHP	LB FT	MPG	CO2	RATING
2.0	£21,995	9.8	120	148	145	32.8	199	★★★★★
2.5i	£27,075	10.3	120	165	169	33.6	196	★★★★★
2.0d	£24,865	9.6	120	148	258	46.3	161	★★★★★

OUTBACK

Allroad Legacy gets pumped up suspension and bodywork. Like Legacy it's pure white goods



	PRICE	0-62	MPH	BHP	LB FT	MPG	CO2	RATING
2.5	£26,875	10.4	120	165	169	33.6	194	★★★★★
3.6R	£35,895	7.5	140	256	258	28.2	232	★★★★★
2.0d	£26,870	9.7	120	148	258	44.1	167	★★★★★

FORESTER

Farmers' favourite best enjoyed (if that's the right word) with smooth boxer diesel



	PRICE	0-62	MPH	BHP	LB FT	MPG	CO2	RATING
2.0	£21,370	10.7	115	148	146	37.7	173	★★★★★
2.0d	£23,070	10.4	116	145	258	47.9	155	★★★★★

XV

Pricy. Not very good really. No seriously. It really isn't very good. But it is pricey



	PRICE	0-62	MPH	BHP	LB FT	MPG	CO2	RATING
1.6i S	£21,295	13.1	111	112	111	43.5	151	★★★★★
2.0i SE	£24,295	10.5	116	148	145	40.9	160	★★★★★
2.0D SE	£26,295	9.3	120	145	258	50.4	146	★★★★★

SUZUKI ALTO

Suzuki's crack at an Aygo – an Indian-built midget with an Audi grille. Cheap – and feels it



	PRICE	0-62	MPH	BHP	LB FT	MPG	CO2	RATING
1.0	£7820	13.5	96	67	66	64.2	103	★★★★★

SPLASH

Same car as Vauxhall's Agila. More kit, but that means a higher starting price



	PRICE	0-62	MPH	BHP	LB FT	MPG	CO2	RATING
1.0	£9495	14.7	99	67	66	55.4	119	★★★★★

SWIFT

New car looks same as old. Sport version a brilliant warm hatch bargain. All models still a decent steer



	PRICE	0-62	MPH	BHP	LB FT	MPG	CO2	RATING
1.2 SZ2	£10,210	12.3	103	95	87	56.5	116	★★★★★
1.3d SZ3	£12,890	12.7	103	74	140	67.3	109	★★★★★
Swift Sport	£13,499	8.7	121	134	118	44.1	147	★★★★★

SX4 S-CROSS

Dumpy crossover no real challenge to Qashqai but efficient range of engines offer some saving grace



	PRICE	0-62	MPH	BHP	LB FT	MPG	CO2	RATING
1.6	£15,495	11.0	111	118	115	51.4	127	★★★★★
1.6d	£16,470	12.0	111	118	236	67.3	110	★★★★★

JIMNY

Cramped, crude and slow, but staggeringly good off road. Selectable rwd for icy road highjinks too!



	PRICE	0-62	MPH	BHP	LB FT	MPG	CO2	RATING
1.3	£11,905	14.1	87	84	81	39.8	162	★★★★★

GRAND VITARA

Make the old humping rhinos spare-wheel cover standard and we'll award another star



	PRICE	0-62	MPH	BHP	LB FT	MPG	CO2	RATING
1.6	£15,995	14.4	99	105	107	34.5	195	★★★★★
2.4	£17,310	11.2	112	164	166	32.1	205	★★★★★

TOYOTA iQ

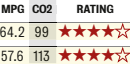
Your chance to own an Aston Martin for less than £15k. Turning circle like a London taxi



	PRICE	0-62	MPH	BHP	LB FT	MPG	CO2	RATING
1.0	£10,445	14.7	93	66	67	64.2	99	★★★★★
1.3	£12,515	11.8	106	96	92	57.6	113	★★★★★

AYGO

Latest Aygo stuns world by having more interesting styling than 108 and C1. 1.0-litre engine only



	PRICE	0-62	MPH	BHP	LB FT	MPG	CO2	RATING
1.0	£8595	14.2	98	68	70	65.7	95	★★★★★

YARIS

Interior of new Yaris a huge improvement. Dreadful TV ads though, and you'd still prefer a Fiesta



	PRICE	0-62	MPH	BHP	LB FT	MPG	CO2	RATING
T2 1.0 VVT-i	£10,695	15.3	96	68	68	58.9	111	★★★★★
TR 1.33 VVT-i	£12,970	11.7	109	98	92	62.3	123	★★★★★
TR 1.4 D-4D	£14,470	10.8	109	89	151	72.4	104	★★★★★

AURIS

Now at least looks sharper, but the cabin feels a generation behind the new Golf. Staid to drive



	PRICE	0-62	MPH	BHP	LB FT	MPG	CO2	RATING
1.3	£15,225	13.1	109	100	97	47.9	136	★★★★★
1.6	£16,935	10.0	121	130	118	42.8	153	★★★★★
1.4d	£18,025	11.9	109	89	152	58.9	128	★★★★★
Hybrid	£19,895	11.4	112	98	105	73.4	89	★★★★★

PRIUS

Prius 3 the best affordable hybrid. Roomy, refined, but still zero fun to drive



	PRICE	0-62	MPH	BHP	LB FT</
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CORSA

Feeling the heat from the sassier, chassier Fiesta. VXR is a pricey, diffed-up, hardcore ST rival



	PRICE	0-62	MPH	BHP	LB FT	MPG	CO2	RATING
1.0	£9,495	18.2	96	64	66	56.5	117	★★★★☆
1.2	£11,970	13.6	107	84	65	53.3	124	★★★★☆
1.4	£13,580	11.9	112	99	96	51.4	129	★★★★☆
VXR	£18,910	6.8	140	189	170	38.0	172	★★★★☆
1.3d	£13,570	14.9	101	74	140	67.3	110	★★★★☆
1.3d 95	£14,340	12.3	110	94	140	80.7	94	★★★★☆
1.7d	£17,020	9.5	124	128	221	62.8	118	★★★★☆

MERIVA

Suicide often comes to mind when asked about mini MPVs. Here, it's merely down to the doors



	PRICE	0-62	MPH	BHP	LB FT	MPG	CO2	RATING
1.4	£12,500	13.9	110	99	96	46.3	144	★★★★☆
1.4T 120	£18,115	11.5	117	118	129	46.3	143	★★★★☆
1.4T 140	£18,945	10.3	122	138	147	42.2	156	★★★★☆
1.3d	£17,610	16.9	99	74	133	57.6	129	★★★★☆
1.3d 95	£18,320	13.8	104	94	133	62.8	119	★★★★☆
1.7d	£18,985	9.9	122	128	221	54.3	138	★★★★☆

ASTRA

Competent hatch can't cut it with Focus and Golf, but GTC coupe can – it's the best Vauxhall in years



	PRICE	0-62	MPH	BHP	LB FT	MPG	CO2	RATING
1.4 87	£12,995	14.0	105	86	96	51.4	129	★★★★☆
1.4 100	£16,135	12.9	111	99	96	51.4	129	★★★★☆
1.6	£17,810	10.9	118	113	114	44.8	147	★★★★☆
1.4T	£20,090	9.0	126	138	147	47.9	138	★★★★☆
1.6T	£19,035	7.9	138	178	169	41.5	159	★★★★☆
VXR	£26,995	5.9	15	276	295	34.9	189	★★★★☆
1.3d	£17,980	13.8	109	94	140	68.9	109	★★★★☆
1.7d 110	£18,385	11.8	113	108	192	62.8	119	★★★★☆
1.7d 125	£19,845	10.7	122	123	206	62.8	119	★★★★☆
2.0d	£22,725	8.5	134	163	258	62.8	119	★★★★☆

INSIGNIA

Still looking smart, and button-fest cabin was much-improved in 2013 facelift. VXR is numb



	PRICE	0-62	MPH	BHP	LB FT	MPG	CO2	RATING
1.8	£17,970	10.8	129	138	129	37.2	179	★★★★☆
1.4 T	£18,680	na	na	138	147	51.4	129	★★★★☆
1.6 T	£23,350	8.4	140	178	170	36.0	169	★★★★☆
2.0 T	£25,195	7.2	150	217	258	33.0	179	★★★★☆
2.8 T	£34,350	6.9	153	256	258	25.7	258	★★★★☆
VXR	£33,480	5.6	155	321	321	26.6	249	★★★★☆
2.0d 130	£19,510	10.4	127	128	221	60.0	124	★★★★☆
2.0d 160	£21,990	8.9	135	158	258	55.0	134	★★★★☆

ZAFIRA TOURER

Vauxhall's attempt at an S-Max. Not to be confused with the rattly old stage without the Tourer bit



	PRICE	0-62	MPH	BHP	LB FT	MPG	CO2	RATING
1.8	£21,410	10.9	121	138	129	39.2	169	★★★★☆
1.4T	£22,725	9.9	124	138	148	42.8	154	★★★★☆
2.0 CDTi 130	£23,115	10.6	119	128	221	55.4	134	★★★★☆
1.6 CDTi	£25,540	11.2	120	134	236	68.9	109	★★★★☆
2.0 CDTi 165	£26,025	9.1	127	162	258	48.7	150	★★★★☆

MOKKA

Chunky styling and big warranty appeal. Button-fest cabin and rubbish diesel engine do not



	PRICE	0-62	MPH	BHP	LB FT	MPG	CO2	RATING
1.8 ES	£21,000	10.9	121	138	129	39.2	169	★★★★☆
1.4T Exclusiv	£22,315	9.9	124	138	148	42.2	158	★★★★☆

ANTARA

Vauxhall's version of the Chevy Captiva. Well equipped. Now with faint praise



	PRICE	0-62	MPH	BHP	LB FT	MPG	CO2	RATING
2.2d 163	£19,995	9.9	117	161	258	44.8	167	★★★★☆
2.2d 184	£25,470	9.6	124	181	295	42.8	175	★★★★☆

VOLKSWAGEN UP

After all the hype it's basically just a replacement for the unlamented Fox. Top-notch quality though



	PRICE	0-62	MPH	BHP	LB FT	MPG	CO2	RATING
1.0	£7,995	14.4	99	58	70	62.7	105	★★★★☆
1.0	£10,390	13.2	106	74	70	60.1	108	★★★★☆

POLO

Spinster of the supermini set is tight on space, tighter on style, but built like a bank vault



	PRICE	0-62	MPH	BHP	LB FT	MPG	CO2	RATING
1.2 60	£9,995	16.1	98	59	80	51.4	128	★★★★☆
1.2 70	£10,770	14.1	103	69	83	51.4	128	★★★★☆
1.4	£12,605	11.9	110	84	97	47.9	139	★★★★☆
1.2T	£15,165	9.7	118	104	129	53.3	124	★★★★☆
GTI	£18,795	6.9	142	178	184	47.9	139	★★★★☆
1.2d	£13,520	13.9	105	74	133	72.4	102	★★★★☆
1.6d	£15,610	11.5	112	89	170	65.7	112	★★★★☆

GOLF

Phaeton-spec cabin trim, super-refined and good to drive. Surprise surprise, it's top of the class



	PRICE	0-62	MPH	BHP	LB FT	MPG	CO2	RATING
1.2 TSI 85	£15,850	12.3	111	84	118	51.4	129	★★★★☆
1.2 TSI 105	£16,715	10.6	118	104	129	49.6	134	★★★★☆
1.4 TSI	£21,170	8.0	137	158	177	44.8	145	★★★★☆
GTI	£25,305	6.9	149	207	206	38.7	170	★★★★☆
R	£29,990	5.3	155	296	280	39.8	165	★★★★☆
1.6d 105	£18,010	11.3	117	104	185	62.8	119	★★★★☆
2.0d 140	£20,505	9.3	130	138	236	58.9	126	★★★★☆
2.0d 170	£24,635	8.1	138	168	258	55.4	134	★★★★☆

SCIROCCO

Fast, forging and fun, fun, fun. And unlike a TT the back seats aren't just for show



	PRICE	0-62	MPH	BHP	LB FT	MPG	CO2	RATING
1.4 TSI	£19,845	9.7	124	120	148	44.1	149	★★★★☆
2.0 TSI	£24,705	6.9	149	207	206	38.2	172	★★★★☆
R	£29,745	6.0	155	261	258	34.9	189	★★★★☆
2.0 TDI 140	£22,435	9.3	129	138	236	62.8	112	★★★★☆
2.0 TDI 170	£24,520	8.1	138	168	258	55.4	134	★★★★☆

EOS

A cut above the usual family coupe-cabrio dross. Neat looks, strong engines, decent handling



	PRICE	0-62	MPH	BHP	LB FT	MPG	CO2	RATING
1.4 TSI 122	£23,130	10.9	123	120	148	45.6	144	★★★★☆
1.4 TSI 160	£24,210	8.8	135	158	177	41.5	157	★★★★☆
2.0 TSI	£27,510	7.8	148	207	206	39.8	165	★★★★☆
2.0 TDI	£24,800	10.3	129	138	236	58.9	125	★★★★☆

JETTA

Pointless booted Golf for junior salesmen whose company car list doesn't stretch to a 320d



	PRICE	0-62	MPH	BHP	LB FT	MPG	CO2	RATING
1.6 TDI	£18,410	11.7	118	104	185	67.3	109	★★★★☆
2.0 TDI	£20,210	9.5	130	138	236	58.9	126	★★★★☆

PASSAT

Mondeo is roomier and better to drive, Insignia better looking, but Passat is a solid all-rounder



	PRICE	0-62	MPH	BHP	LB FT	MPG	CO2	RATING
1.4 TSI	£19,290	10.3	127	120	148	47.9	138	★★★★☆
1.8 TSI	£20,375	8.5	137	158	185	40.9	160	★★★★☆
2.0 TSI	£24,475	7.6	148	207	206	39.2	169	★★★★☆
1.6 TDI	£20,065	12.2	121	104	185	65.7	114	★★★★☆
2.0 TDI 140	£21,355	9.8	131	138	236	61.4	119	★★★★☆
2.0 TDI 170	£24,855	8.6	141	168	258	61.4	120	★★★★☆

CC

Blatant Merc CLS rip-off is the coolest saloon, we mean coupe, sensible money can buy



	PRICE	0-62	MPH	BHP	LB FT	MPG	CO2	RATING
1.8 TSI	£24,395	8.5	139	158	185	39.8	164	★★★★☆
2.0 TSI	£28,485	7.3	150	208	206	38.7	169	★★★★☆
2.0 TDI 140	£25,535	9.8	133	138	236	61.4	120	★★★★☆
2.0 TDI 170	£28,810	8.6	141	168	258	58.9	125	★★★★☆

PHAETON

Bentley Continental disguised as a Passat. Decent car with wrong badge and terrifying residuals



	PRICE	0-62	MPH	BHP	LB FT	MPG	CO2	RATING
3.0 TDI	£52,925	8.3	147	237	369	32.2	224	★★★★☆
3.0 TDI LWB	£55,485	8.3	147	237	369	32.2	224	★★★★☆

TIGUAN

Great compact SUV little changed by recent facelift – strong sales say it didn't need to be



	PRICE	0-62	MPH	BHP	LB FT	MPG	CO2	RATING
1.4 TSI	£21,085	8.9	126	158	177	42.2	156	★★★★☆
2.0 TSI 180	£25,185	8.3	126	178	206	33.2	199	★★★★☆
2.0 TSI 210	£26,530	7.8	134	207	206	33.2	199	★★★★☆
2.0 TDI 110	£21,730	11.9	109	108	206	53.3	139	★★★★☆
2.0 TDI 140	£22,280	10.2	120	138	236	53.3	139	★★★★☆
2.0 TDI 170	£26,325	8.9	125	168	258	47.1	158	★★★★☆

TOUAREG

Roomier Touareg II is brilliant on road and off. Our long-term 3.0 TDI Altitude was lovely



	PRICE	0-62	MPH	BHP	LB FT	MPG	CO2	RATING
3.0 TDI 204	£40,155	8.5	128	201	295	40.4	184	★★★★☆
3.0 TDI 245	£41,770	7.8	137	242	405	39.2	189	★★★★☆
4.2 V8 TDI	£59,580	5.8	150	335	590	31.0	239	★★★★☆
3.0 V6 Hybrid	£57,970	6.5	149	328	325	34.4	193	★★★★☆

TOURAN

Deadly dull seven-seat MPV box comprehensively outmanoeuvred by Focus Grand C-Max



	PRICE	0-62	MPH	BHP	LB FT	MPG	CO2	RATING
1.2 TSI	£18,175	11.9						

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Rolex Cosmograph Daytona from 1972. Ref. 6263

THE car Top 10

Bond girl cars (and vans and bikes. . .)

From Leylands to Ferraris, Bond's female acquaintances – friend and foe – have shared an eclectic taste in wheels. By **Chris Chilton**



1 FORD MUSTANG, *GOLDFINGER*

Conniving Bond waves Tilly Masterson's Mustang through on Switzerland's tortuous Furka Pass before using his DB5's knife-edged wheel spinners to slice through the Ford's flanks as if they were some flimsy cardboard facsimile bashed together in a shed at Pinewood studios.



2 LEYLAND SHERPA, *THE SPY WHO LOVED ME*

Agent Triple X struggles with the vagaries of the Sherpa's manual gearbox while Bond sits smugly in the passenger seat throwing in snarky one-liners that make him sound only marginally less misogynist than a Saudi lawmaker.



3 TOYOTA 2000GT, *YOU ONLY LIVE TWICE*

Japanese secret service agent Aki hogs the driving seat of one of the sexiest Bond cars of all time, proving that she's easily a match for Bond behind the wheel – and every bit as unconvincing in the green-screen shots as Connery and his Sunbeam Alpine were in *Dr No*.



4 MERCURY COUGAR, *ON HER MAJESTY'S SECRET SERVICE*

Diana Rigg swaps her four-cylinder Avengers Lotus Elan for a thumping 7.0-litre V8 Mercury Cougar as she takes on the role of Teresa di Vicenzo and dispatches a host of Minis and Ford Escorts so easily after gatecrashing an ice race, 007 knows he simply has to make her Mrs Bond.



5 MGB, *MAN WITH THE GOLDEN GUN*

Hottie halfwit Agent Goodnight drives a golden puke-coloured MGB in *The Man with the Golden Gun*, but at least had been paying enough attention to CAR's 1970s scoops to know to order her company car before Bs were blighted by ugly rubber bumpers.

6 BSA LIGHTNING, *THUNDERBALL*

Appropriately, Fiona Volpe, the baddest Bond girl of the lot, isn't a

After three hours flailing on the kickstart, Fiona took a breather



7 CITROËN 2CV, *FOR YOUR EYES ONLY*

After an over-zealous car alarm obliterates his Esprit, Bond is forced to ride shotgun with Melina Havelock in her bright yellow Citroën, fortified in this case by four-cylinder GS power for a better chance of escaping the villains' Peugeot 504s.

8 RENAULT 5 TURBO, *NEVER SAY NEVER AGAIN*

Barbara Carrera ought to be driving a 911 with a name like that, but instead battles Bond's scary Yamaha XJ650 Turbo in Renault's bargain alternative, the mid-engined, wide-body 5 Turbo



9 FERRARI F355 GTS, *GOLDENEYE*

Famke Janssen's hopeless-driver baddie could crush a man to death with her thighs, but struggled to squeeze past Bond's creaky DB5 in her then state-of-the-art Ferrari, wildly spinning out and almost ending up Onatopp at one point.

10 LAND ROVER DEFENDER, *SKYFALL*

It's hard to work out which is the most implausible: that MI6's Eve Moneypenny is able to keep pace with a modern Audi A5 in a Land Rover Defender, or that she manages to get through the whole chase without having to return to the dealer for a product recall. **EW**

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