

# car

SEPTEMBER  
2024  
ISSUE 746  
£6.25



**High voltage!**

**BALLISTIC NEW TESLA  
vs HYUNDAI IONIQ 5 N**

# 50 YEARS OF GOLF



**ALFA'S  
BACK!**  
STONKING JUNIOR  
VELOCE DRIVEN



**FROM THE ASHES OF BEETLE, HATCHBACK GENIUS**



**Return of the king?  
Hot new GTI tested**



**Inside the world's  
biggest car factory**



**Crisis! Despair! Golf!  
How it saved VW**



# SKODA

Model shown includes optional equipment and is not UK specification. Official fuel consumption WLTP in mpg (litres/100km): 66.2 (4.3)–50.5 (5.6). WLTP CO<sub>2</sub> combined emissions are 112–131 g/km.

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bends around  
the vehicle as a

mark of  
respect”

r/CarTalkUK

**You said it** and  
now there's a  
new Octavia to  
jump into



# car

ISSUE 746 | SEPTEMBER 2024

# 70

**More power and better tech, but is the latest GTI true to the spirit of Golf?**



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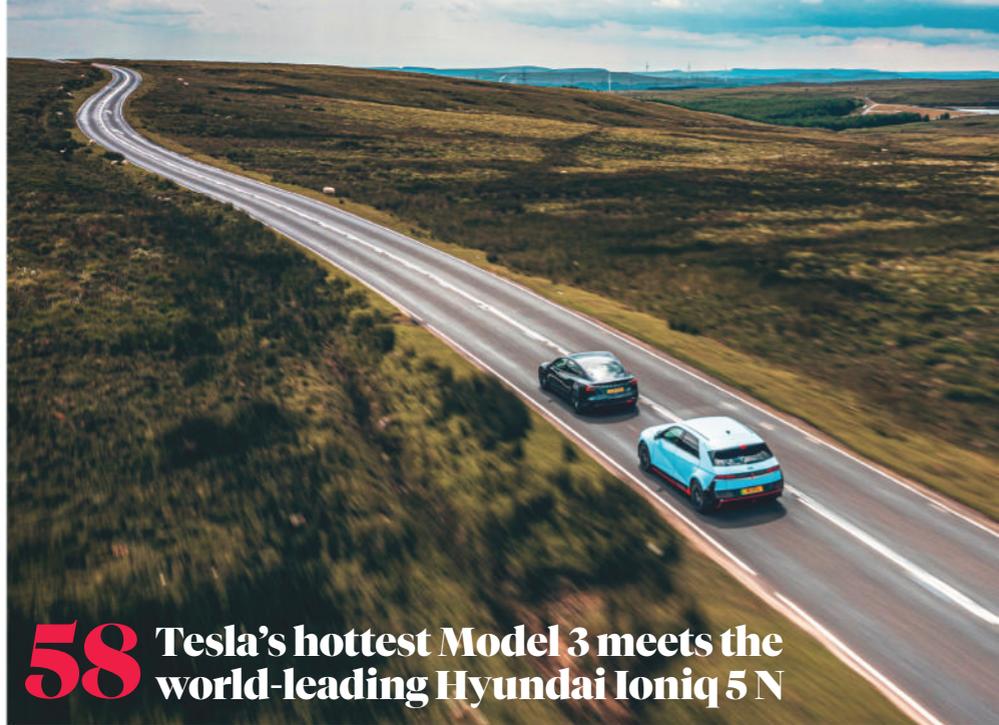
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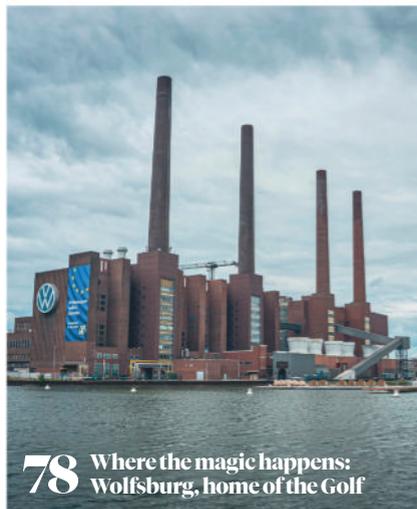
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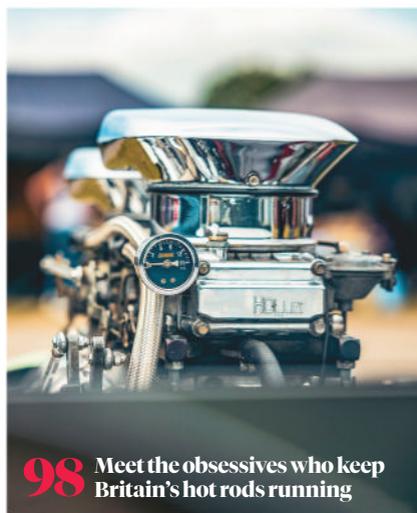
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# Welcome

## The Golf back on top would be a welcome return to normality

Did it start with Golf for you? It did for me. The first family car I can remember was a gold Ford Cortina estate with chrome dog bars. But we soon switched to a bread-van Polo (I've no idea how a family of five went on holiday in it, but I recall we were passed by cyclists on the 'hills' near Stonehenge) and from there to the relative space, power and luxury of a 1.3 Mk2 Golf.

Summer holidays, school runs – that car, with its purposeful Herbert Schäfer lines and metallic blue paint, is woven into the fabric of my childhood. Reassuringly sturdy, it felt like an armoured car and rode like a (very slow) Rolls-Royce.

I learned to drive in that Golf, its strong brakes (pre-ABS of course; the middle pedal could lay black lines on hot tarmac with impunity) and bombproof if woolly clutch helping me to a first-time pass. And for a year or so after that historic day (windows down, *Appetite for Destruction* on cassette tape, speeds in excess of 55mph...) it was my car, when it wasn't Mum's. Utterly dependable and somehow smart-looking even when it was filthy, it tolerated my ham-fisted voyages to its dynamic limits as an older dog tolerates a puppy hanging off its ears.

I learned to row its four-speed 'box like my life depended on it (looking back, it likely did on more than one occasion) and to counter the abundant understeer with energetic and ill-timed tweaks of the handbrake, once putting it nose-first into a six-foot earth bank in doing so. I climbed out

expecting to see the front stoved in, like a boxer's broken nose, but could find no trace of the impact whatsoever.

Later, my first Peugeot 205 XS underlined just how slow, numb and fun-free the Golf had been. But the French car couldn't touch the Mk2 for build quality, let alone the Mk4 Mum replaced it with. Still without a sense of humour, its refinement – after pulling 5000rpm in the biscuit-tin Peugeot for hours on end – was different gravy.

More recently, the Mk7.5 stands out as a compelling lesson in how it's done. I drove the GTIs, the R and the really rather good Clubsport, but it was the version with the 1.5 TSI Evo petrol engine that underlined that Golf's sheer class. Quick, spirited, aspirational and practical, it felt polished in a way very few cars I've driven since have come close to. The Veyron, perhaps. BMW's G30 5-series. That Golf really was in that league – another monarch in a bloodline that looked set to endure in perpetuity.

Back then, the sun rose and set each day and the Golf remained. A great writer, presenter and farmer once described car journalism as trying to persuade people not to just buy a Golf. But the disappointment on first contact with the Mk8 was real (with hindsight, we can see now VW was about to bungle two huge new cars, the ID. 3 and the then new Golf) and for years now our GBU section's placed BMW's Golf (the 1-series) ahead of Volkswagen's. As everything else on this planet slides into madness, the Golf back on top would be a welcome return to life as it should be.

Enjoy the issue.



**Ben Miller**  
Editor

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Perhaps news of the new Panda has you craving a proper one. Get into the app to re-live our epic Panda 4x4 adventure.



### Extra stories on your phone

VW celebrated the Golf's 50th with a big old shindig – and we were there. Join the party with this exclusive app-only story.

# Insider

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Who needs a badge when you can turn the side of the car into a big logo?

IN THE SPOTLIGHT

# BOXY CLEVER

Fiat's new Grande Panda heralds a modern family of vehicles while harking back to the very first Panda. By **Guy Bird**



Fiat's design chief Francois Leboine has form with this sort of thing. The Frenchman was head of concept cars at Renault when the new 5 was just an internal project. Unveiling it in January 2021, his former boss Laurens van den Acker gracefully gave Leboine credit for it, and the acclaimed 2024 production version remains very close to the original idea.

Since leaving Renault for Fiat, Leboine's been busy with what appears to be a similar job: reviving the Panda. This has involved a judicious amount of heritage mining of 1980's boxy first-generation model, but also tapping into the 2019 Centoventi concept, while adding fresh new design twists and technology.

'We tried to connect more with some elements that recall the very first Panda from Giorgetto Giugiaro,' Leboine explains, 'to find simple sur-

facing to which we added robust wheelarches. We made a different cocktail where you recognise this very typical attitude of the first Panda and the main lines, more or less – bottom line, belt line and roofline – and with this inclination, between the rear glass and the front glass that has the typical balance of the Panda. We started from this and then treated it in a different way.'

How so? 'We have a lot of tension in the surfacing but always finish with a smooth turn,' Leboine continues. 'There is this combination of tension and smoothness that is very modern. This is the translation to our time today.'

'Playing with different eras gives it a very strong element of modernity. Before you had big trends – round shapes, square shapes, flat and bio design. But now I think we're enter-

**Under the skin, parts are shared with the Citroën C3**

ing a completely different world in terms of design where you can play with different epochs and areas of design and combine them to create a story.

'This mix, this collaboration of different types of design – we will play more and more with this in the coming years, because maybe it's the best way to create things that will last longer that don't belong any more to one trend or time, but more from different trends or times.'

Elements of that difference can be seen in the deployment of the latest pixel headlamp technology, making the 2024 Grande Panda's face look altogether more futuristic than its 1980 forebear. The whole car is chunky and solid-looking, with lots of marque and model branding. This is most notable in the large, graphic word PANDA stamped right across ▶

**IT'S CHUNKY AND SOLID-LOOKING, WITH LOTS OF MARQUE AND MODEL BRANDING**



## THE FUTURE PANDA FAMILY

# Breeding in captivity

Bar the new Grande Panda, unveiled in its production form at Fiat's 125th birthday party in July, the rest of this new Panda family's public outings have been strictly digital. And, except for one conceptual cabin render, exterior only.

The potential five-strong Panda model line-up previewed in late February included the City Car concept, which we now know as the Grande Panda production model. There was also a camper, fastback, pick-up and SUV. All these concepts conveyed a family feel, united by chunky body proportions and a solid stance over their wheels, with graphically strong upright pixel lighting signatures at the front and rear, and near-horizontal clamshell bonnets.

Bold branding elements were everywhere, from the more obvious all-caps FIAT logos debossed into the bodywork or backlit within the rear brake light signatures, to the old four-diagonal-line logo seen on the first Panda, here found within the front light signature of the City Car concept and more subtly at

the top of the wheelarches of the other versions, perhaps alluding to their 4x4 capability.

Fiat has not divulged dimensions at this stage, and looking at digital renders on a screen makes relative size hard to judge, but design chief Francois Leboine admits the renders are in ratio with each other. On that visual evidence, don't expect future Fiat Pandas to be too bloated or suffer the ill-proportioned fate of larger versions of the previous-generation 500.

'The fact that Fiat is always smaller than average is its strength and we want to keep that alive,' Leboine says. 'The pick-ups we propose in Latin America are much smaller than average. Relative to the market, we are at the lower end.'

And despite the digital-first public approach, more real cars are well on the way: 'We've finished a couple and are still doing some of them. The Grande Panda was finished two years ago. There will be different wheelbases, depending on the vehicle, and some flexibility that we will play with.'

Camper, fastback, and SUV could wear Panda badge





**THE NEW PANDA EMBODIES THE ORIGINAL'S CHARM, WHILE ADDING NEW TECH AND STYLE**

the lower body sides and FIAT on the tailgate, but also more stealthily through a small 'Panda' badge rendered in three-dimensional relief, protruding from the black plastic horizontal bar towards the bottom of the rear hatch.

The interior offers a softer aesthetic dominated by an elongated lozenge-shape dashboard that Fiat claims was inspired by the old Lingotto factory rooftop test track. A 10-inch digital instrument display and 10.25-inch centre screen fit nicely within that housing to keep the overall look firmly 21st century, while a passenger-side, top-opening box clad in bamboo combines with bright yellow accents on the rectangular air vents to create a natural and smart cabin ambience.

There's practicality too, with plentiful storage space – Fiat claims 13 litres in the cabin and a 361-litre boot accessed through the rear hatch.

Just like with the new Renault 5, Leboine is keen on making the new Panda interior more physically cus-



## THE RIVAL

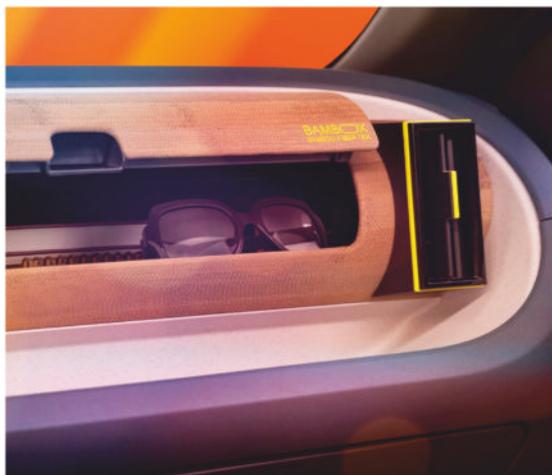
### Looks like it's 1980 again

**They were rivals back in the day, and they will be rivals again. The Renault 5 is a similar size to the Fiat Grande Panda and has embraced its heritage with the same gusto, featuring bold and emotionally appealing designs inside and out. The only major difference is Fiat hedging its bets by offering a hybrid powertrain as well as an all-electric version.**

tomisable and modular, not only to meet customer demand for personalisation but to assist with its longevity as well.

'From the same technical "hub" we have the possibility to plug in different technologies and parts,' he explains. 'This is the main concept and exactly the same idea as the International Space Station. We can make an affordable version or a more premium one by changing the parts and upgrading the technology, depending on the level of vehicle we want to obtain.'

He doesn't dismiss the idea of eventually dispensing with the currently ubiquitous touchscreens and their often under-performing software. 'You could imagine just a base screen or even no screen at all and interacting with your car via voice control. Customers can upgrade the technology depending on their means and over time. That's something that is important for us. We imagine this car can follow the evolution of technology and be changed



and upgraded and stay current after five years or 10 years because of its embedded technologies.

Based on the same platform as two Stellantis sister products, the Citroën C3 and Vauxhall Frontera, the Grande Panda will offer both a full-electric version with a 44kWh battery and a 195-mile range from £22,000 and a hybrid option starting at just below £20,000.

The global product goes on sale in continental Europe this autumn, with the UK market soon after, then the Middle East and Africa. Fiat has also gone on record to say a further three production cars from this new Panda family will launch at the rate of one vehicle every year until 2027.

Times have certainly moved on since Giugiaro's 1980 Mk1 – in both customers' physical size and their expectations – but the new 2024 Grande Panda has managed to embody the original Panda's charm, while adding new tech and style. A positive new chapter for stylish small Fiats looks to be ahead.

**Cabin is designed to be customisable to suit the owner's tastes and adapt to new technology**

BLOODLINE

# MINIMALISM FOR THE MASSES

The original idea was so good there's been no need to deviate



1980 Panda Mk1

Beloved of Italian farmers and architects alike, Giorgetto Giugiaro's original Panda is a classic case of great function matched with 'less is more' design.



2003 Panda Mk2

Longer, wider and taller, the Mk2 was designed in-house with a more complicated silhouette. Wider 4x4 and sportier 100hp versions expanded the range.



2011 Panda Mk3

Designed by Roberto Giolito (also behind the Multipla Mk1), the Mk3 was taller and more rounded affair. Spawned a jacked-up 4x4 plus mild-hybrid engine tech.

## THE SCOOP

# ALPINE'S EV SUV NEARS LAUNCH

Step two in Alpine's journey to an all-electric range is an Ioniq 5-rivalling SUV. By **Jake Groves**

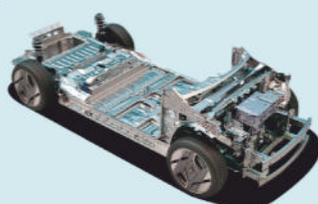
### FACTFILE

**POWERTRAIN**  
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twin e-motors, all-wheel  
drive  
**CHASSIS**  
Steel and aluminium  
monocoque  
**DUE**  
2025



### IT'S COMING

The wraps are close to coming off the next Alpine. Sovany Ang, product performance vice president, says the new SUV and the recently revealed A290 hatch are 'designed to give us a proposition to redefine the sportiness that we believe in at Alpine in EV. We are increasing the brand footprint beyond the two-seater coupe segment.'



### SHARED TECH

The new SUV will use parts from the Renault Group – most likely employing the CMF-EV platform used by the Renault Scenic and Nissan Ariya as a base. As it's done with the A290, expect Alpine to do plenty of fettling to make it feel different; Alpine aims to give all its cars an Alpine feel, no matter their size or shape.



### GOT THE LOOK

We'll see design cues that look unmistakably Alpine, including a new iteration of the brand's four-lamp light signature at the front and a relatively low and wide stance for a crossover. The 'Alpine swoosh' on the side 'is something that will come on all our products as a signature,' says design boss Antony Villain.



### THE NEXT STEP

This is just one part of Alpine's continuing expansion. Entering the world of the electric hot hatch was a start, and it's close to finalising its battery-electric A110 – an idea made real by the Eternité rolling test bed (above) two years ago. Alpine is going solo with its sports coupe, after an earlier collaboration with Lotus fell through.

Illustration: Lars Sälzler



Same DNA as A290, but transplanted into a bigger body



# Ignite your BLUE.



## **TOYO TIRES**

BEHIND THE HEADLINES

# THE ENGINE ISN'T DEAD YET

As demand for EVs slumps, hurriedly revised plans see car makers returning to combustion. By **Luke Wilkinson** and **Jake Groves**

Just two years ago, Audi announced its plan to become an electric-only car manufacturer by 2029 – and it said it wouldn't launch another dinosaur-burning model from 2026.

But there's been a change of heart. Demand for electric cars has dropped in many large markets. So much so that Audi is seriously considering closing its entire EV manufacturing plant in Brussels, threatening the Q8 e-Tron that's built there and jeopardising the jobs of around 3000 skilled workers.

The company is now poised to launch a range of new petrol and diesel cars, all of which it now expects to keep on sale until the European ban on combustion cars comes into force in 2035.

New electric cars will run on the Premium Platform Electric (PPE) architecture (already seen on Audi's Q6 e-Tron, as well as the electric Porsche Macan), while the new cars with engines will all run on Premium Platform Combustion (PPC) – an Audi-specific platform that will be used on all its combustion cars right up to the next-gen Q7.

Kerstin Enghardt, project leader for Audi's PPC architecture, tells CAR: 'We still have combustion engines because we are convinced that we also need them for the future, for some markets. At the moment, our plan is to end it by 2033.'

'But if we see in 2030 there's new regulations in the European Parliament that [postpones] when we need to get out completely from combustion engines and go over to electric,

we're also thinking about running our combustion platform [for] longer.'

Audi isn't the only one. Volkswagen has also eased off the throttle on its EV transformation due to dwindling demand. Mercedes-Benz, too, has had a tough time convincing people to buy its EVs. The EQE and EQS are proving hard sells, and suffer whopping depreciation, while the dismal EQC SUV has been taken off the UK new-car configurator.

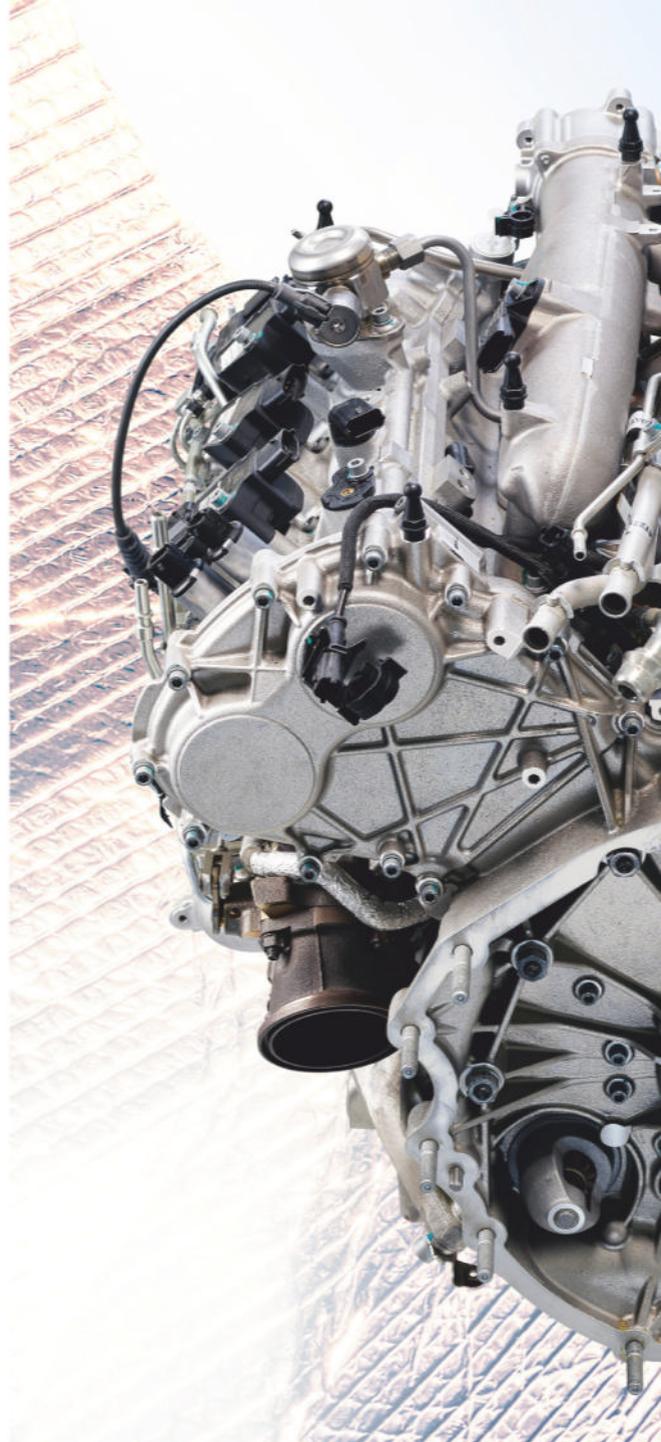
Mercedes has also shelved the electric-only MB.EA platform, drawing on know-how gained from the acclaimed EQXX project, and until recently touted it as the future. 'The pace of transformation is determined by market conditions and the needs of our customers,' Mercedes says in a statement, 'and into the

2030s we can flexibly offer vehicles with both a fully electric drivetrain or an electrified high-tech combustion engine.'

The shifting sands of demand for electric cars mean manufacturers are having to hedge their bets no matter what market they operate in. Chair-

man Lawrence Stroll tells CAR: 'Aston Martin has delayed its battery-electric platform, for example: 'We've just felt a real lack of consumer demand, and we've seen and listened and read and heard what all the other big OEMs are going through in terms of pulling back – that it's just not happening at this

**WHAT HAPPENS NOW? MORE CHOICE OVER THE NEXT DECADE THAN MANY EXPECTED**

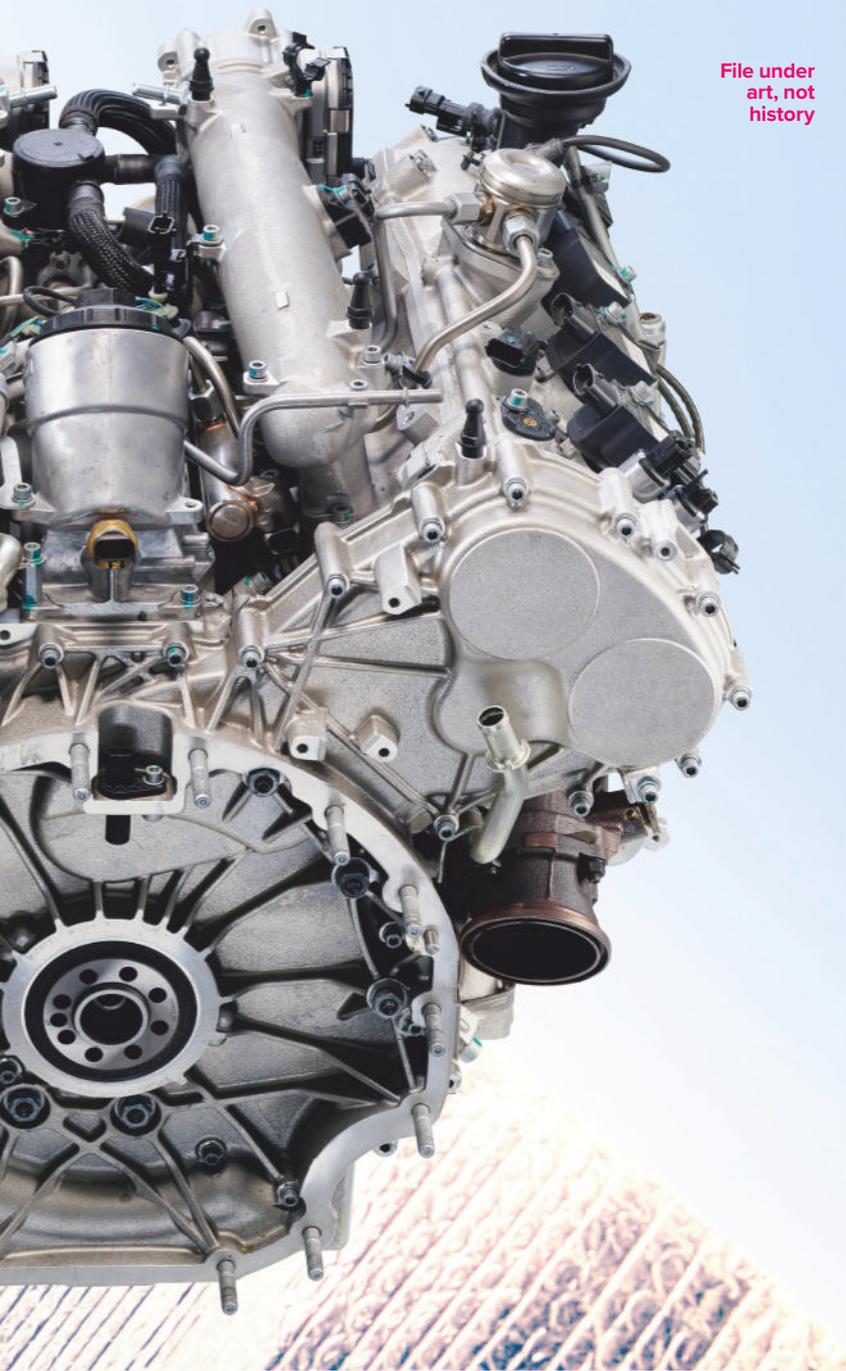


pace and time. Do I ultimately think we will get there? Yes. Do I think it's going to happen as initially planned? Most definitely not.'

Bugatti boss Mate Rimac admits his decision to make the Tourbillon a hybrid rather than a pure EV was in response to the public mood: 'Early on there was a lot of discussion, particularly with the management, with Porsche. They were insistent the car had to be electric. EV would have

**Even EV genius Mate Rimac's faith has been shaken**





File under  
art, not  
history

been the obvious and easy thing to do. But it was clear to me this was the wrong way for Bugatti, and I had to fight like hell to do another combustion engine.'

What happens now? There will be much more choice of combustion cars over the next decade than many expected. For Audi, that means a restructured model range, with odd-numbered badges (A5, Q7 etc) signifying combustion engines, while even-numbered models will be propelled by batteries and electric motors.

Detlef Harzer, technical project manager for the new A5, says: 'We're prepared for both columns. We'll also see some law-driven development because there will be regions

that can't switch so fast – and we want to be prepared for both sides. It will be such a sliding process. But if it's the last combustion car in the A5 model range, I couldn't say. I think it will run longer than it's planned to.'

At VW, the Polo will survive another generation, rather than being killed off when the ID. 2 arrives, as previously expected, and the ninth-generation Golf will launch with combustion versions as well as EVs – not originally the plan.

For Mercedes-Benz, the next-generation EQE and EQS, and other future EVs, will use updated versions of the EVA platform, while others including the next S-Class will get an upgrade of their current architecture, rather than go electric.



INKED IN

## My career in three sketches

DAVID HART  
EXTERIOR CREATIVE  
MANAGER, KIA



### FIRST CAR HYUNDAI HED-1

'I started my career with Hyundai and Kia, and this one was my first from the studio I worked at in Russelsheim, Germany, and that was around 20 years ago now.'



### MOST IMPORTANT CAR KIA EV3

'Definitely the most challenging and the most rewarding, because it was a case of being in the early days of finding this new identity for Kia.'



### FAVOURITE DESIGN DETAIL KIA EV3 PROFILE

'It's the proportions of it – we've been trying to find something different with extending the cabin for more room inside by pushing forward the front screen.'

# ODD ONES OUT

Four new arrivals, each with something very special. By **Jake Groves**



## SKUNKWORKS VIBES

How do you keep your engineers entertained in down time? Let them play with the formula. With Polestar's droptop 6 two years away from production, this one-off BST version is the car 'turned up to 11', according to boss Thomas Ingenlath. Shame it's not being sold, then.

### NEED TO KNOW

**What is it?** An in-house aftermarket Polestar 6 | **Tech specs** Swan-neck rear wing, forged alloys, race-spec aero | **Aimed at?** Giving us another look at the upcoming e-roadster | **When can I get one?** You can't – not in BST form, nor even the regular 6, as all have been sold



## A CONTENTIOUS NAME

The car that's made social media go nuclear. Let's just get this out of the way, shall we? This is the new Ford Capri. Yes, we know it's barely a coupe. Nor is it a two-door. Or powered by an engine. Or remotely desirable to look at. But that hasn't stopped Ford, and will it actually matter?

### NEED TO KNOW

**What is it?** Ford's latest electric crossover to go with the four others it'll have by 2025 | **Tech specs** VW's MEB electric architecture, interior from the Explorer | **Aimed at?** Making everyone cross | **When can I get one?** Now, priced from £48k for the Extended Range; Standard Range arrives later at £42k



## BUTTERFLY DOORS

Regardless of what MG says, this Cyber GTS 'concept' will absolutely go into production next year as a hardtop companion to the Cyberster, meaning MG will have likely beaten the likes of Porsche, Jaguar and Audi to making a premium, two-door electric GT. Tasty looks are a bonus.

### NEED TO KNOW

**What is it?** A Cyberster with a roof, and two extra seats | **Tech specs** Single- or twin-motor versions, fancy doors | **Aimed at?** Beating the establishment to the punch... again | **When can I get one?** MG says it's just a concept, but we expect it to launch in 2025, a neat 60 years after the MGB GT



## AN ENGINE RANGE

Formerly the A4, Audi's small exec becomes the A5 in a new strategy that gives even numbers to EVs and odd numbers to combustion cars. The A5 is offered as a saloon, estate and hatchback, or there's a V6-engined S5 with real tailpipes. Cutting-edge infotainment's from the Q6 e-Tron.

### NEED TO KNOW

**What is it?** Audi's smarter, slicker and engine-powered exec | **Tech specs** Advanced 'MHEV Plus' engine tech, AI-powered infotainment, permanently-animated lights | **Aimed at?** Offering an alternative to EV | **When can I get one?** From November; the saloon starts at £42k in the UK



# Did you know you can exchange your mobility allowance for a brand new Ford?

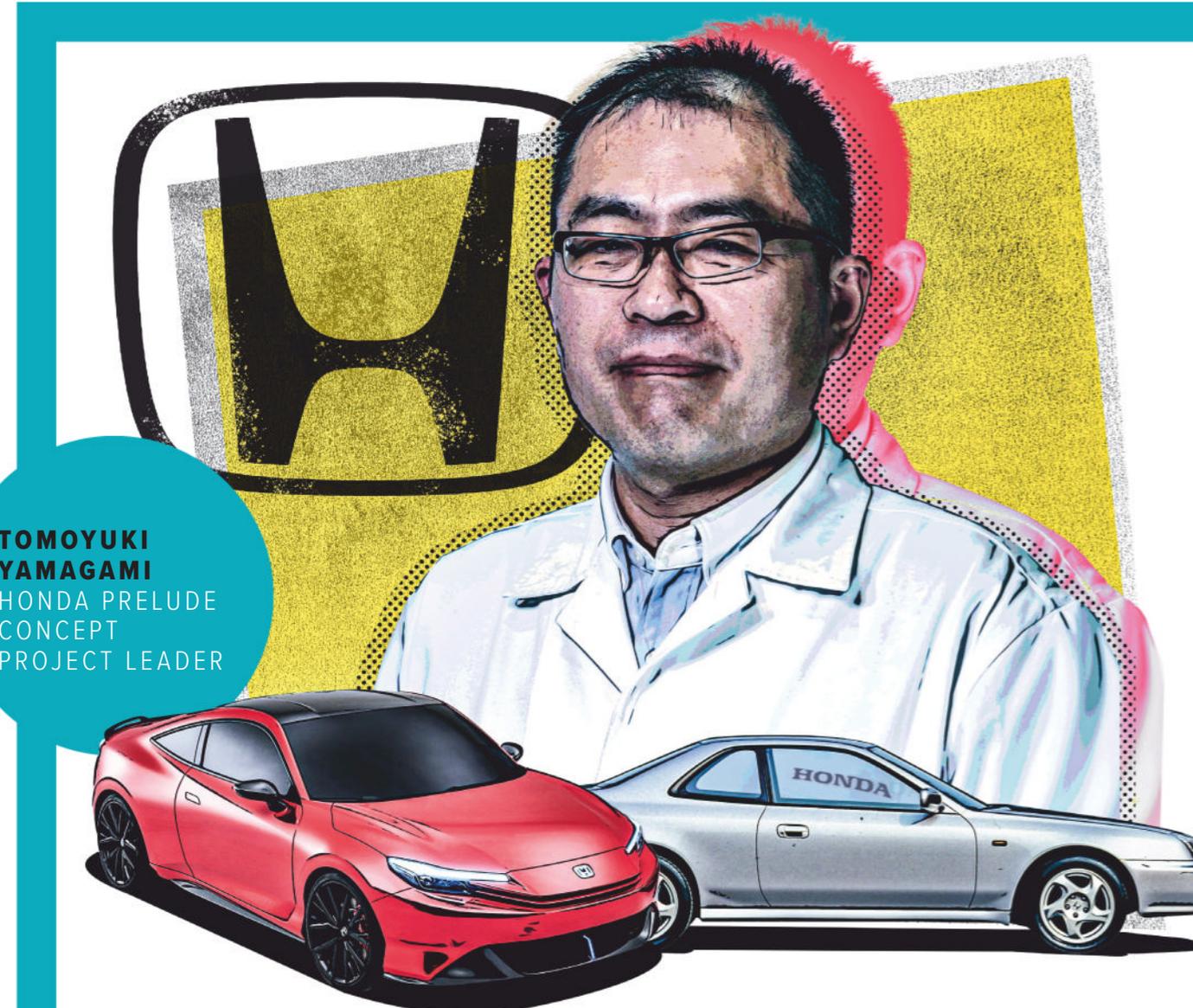
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THE CAR INQUISITION

## ‘HONDA DNA IN A SPORTY COUPE’

The Prelude was dead, but now it's back – with hybrid power. Why the change of heart? By **Jake Groves**

Prelude means a great deal to Honda. It's one of the company's longest-serving badges, gaining a lot of affection in the 46 years since its debut. It's always been sleek, sporty and technologically advanced. But it's a name that has remained dormant for more than 20 years.

So it was both a surprise and an honour when long-serving Honda engineer Tomoyuki Yamagami got the call to build a new one. Yamag-

ami has worked in Honda's R&D division since 1998, testing and engineering a wide variety of models before managing bigger projects like 2017's tenth-generation Accord and the current Civic.

'Being given the responsibility of developing such a car, I just thought to myself thank God I started working at Honda!' he smiles, as he guides me around the Prelude Concept. The production model that follows on from the concept will be Honda's next hybrid in Europe and is expected to launch in late 2025.

I meet Yamagami at July's Goodwood Festival of Speed, not long after the Prelude arrived in Europe for the first time. He's very much in his element here as a life-long car enthusiast – although that's not all he is. He owns a 993-generation Porsche 911

**'WE BELIEVE THERE ARE STILL PEOPLE WHO SEEK A SPORTY MODEL, NOT JUST FOR THE PERFORMANCE BUT ALSO THE LOOKS'**

and a super-rare Honda Accord Type R, and has a diverse array of hands-on hobbies, including model cars, DIY, sewing and car maintenance.

'It wasn't Honda's intention to make a successor to the Prelude,' says Yamagami, 'but we're moving to a more electrified, low-carbon society. As we do that, we're seeing more SUVs in the market because that's the easiest application that you can do with electrification.'

'However, we believe there are still people out there who seek a sporty model – not just for the performance but for the looks, too. That was our intention. In a time where everybody's talking about electrification and low carbon, we wanted to express Honda's DNA and provide a real joy of driving. What car can better express that than a sporty coupe?'

Much like previous generations of Prelude that have had DNA links to Civic and Accord, this new one is likely to draw heavily on today's hybrid Civic. That's in keeping with Honda's insistence that this will not be a hardcore sports car, contrary to some of the wild speculation triggered by the concept's unveiling at last autumn's Tokyo motor show.

Instead, the focus is on the car's shape and style. 'We were after a wide stance here,' Yamagami says. 'With the rear shoulders, we wanted a good silhouette you could see through your side mirrors.'

The Civic platform is a good basis for a car built for drivers rather than passengers, handling well regardless

of whether it's the thrifty hybrid or the hardcore Type R – and fitting Brembo brakes signals that Honda doesn't expect the new Prelude to be exactly slow.

Visually, there are elements of the Prelude Concept we can quibble about. There are shades of Toyota design at the front, especially the wing-like band that stretches the width of the nose. The curly 'Prelude' script at the rear might be a nod to 1991's Mk4 but looks at odds with the rest of the car.

But we can't argue with the simplicity purposefulness of the car's shape. It's a refreshing side-step from the rest of the Honda range. It's also and a welcome antidote to the SUV overload in today's car market.

'It's designed to be low and wide,' says Yamagami. 'We've been inspired by gliders, and we've made sure not to include many gimmicks in the design. Gimmicks disturb the balance and the silence of good design, so we've very much put the emphasis on the aesthetics of technology.'

'We're imagining a customer that uses the car not just for trackdays, but every day,' says Yamagami. It should appeal to a wide age range, spanning Generations X and Z.

'Developing a car is extremely difficult no matter what kind it is,' says Yamagami. 'You have so many different characters, so many different opinions and you need to unify them to make one car.'

'We have this thing called the "ground concept" when we make a car – it's something like the blueprint of development. I'm not sure it translates too well into English, but for this car the tagline is "ultimate glide". It's the idea that your possibilities are endless – you have the feeling that you want to drive as much as possible, can go anywhere or do anything with the car.'

**Swish concept meets cute, boxy Mk1**



## THE CAR CURVEBALLS

# Six questions only we would ask...

### Tell us about your first car...

'A Subaru Rex kei car that I got from my parents. It wasn't anything special, but it got me moving.'



### What achievement makes you most proud?

'My work with Prelude. The opportunity to be a large project leader of anything is only given to a very select number of people at Honda. I'm so grateful to have worked with all my colleagues – I feel lucky.'

### What's the best thing you've ever done in a car?

'The first car I bought myself was a Mazda MX-5, which I used to drive while dating my girlfriend at the time. She then became my wife, and I used it to drive to our wedding. We still drive out to the same location where we used to date.'



### Tell us about a time you've screwed up...

'Many times! If you think about it differently though, it's difficult to say whether or not something really has been a mistake – all of those "mistakes" have brought me to where I am today. And I am happy about where I am.'

### Supercar or classic?

'An air-cooled 911!'

### Company curveball: What was the Concentrated Target Meter on the original Prelude?

'A speedometer and tachometer combined.' [Correct!]

# Tech

THE INNOVATIONS TRANSFORMING OUR DRIVING WORLD



IN DETAIL

## ‘THIS HAS ALL THE GOOD STUFF F1 GOT RID OF’

Red Bull’s RB17 is a hypercar built to motorsport standards but without motorsport constraints. By **Jake Groves**

'This car is Adrian Newey off the lead,' says Red Bull Advanced Technologies CEO Christian Horner, introducing the new Red Bull RB17, designed by Adrian Newey, the Red Bull Racing F1 team's departing technical director. 'The car is just huge in its performance. It's all the stuff they got rid of [in Formula 1].'

Red Bull points out it has the means, money and engineering capacity to build the RB17 its own way, and Horner throws shade at Aston Martin's broadly similar Valkyrie, which Newey had a significant part in developing in. 'It nearly sunk Aston Martin, even if it did add a lot to their share price,' says Horner. He was determined that Red Bull should 'do it properly' - with the inevitable upshot that 'it's going to come with a price tag comparative with that technology.'

Newey says: 'Everything is in-house. We're using the same suppliers as we did in Formula 1, so it's the same build process we'd do if we were building an F1 car. That's the reason we're limited to 50 cars.'

At the heart of the RB17 is a naturally aspirated 4.5-litre V10 that revs to 15,000rpm, created with Cosworth, the Northampton-based engineers also behind the engines in the Bugatti Tourbillon and GMA T.50.

The RB17's V10 makes 986bhp, with a 200bhp electric motor lending a hand. All of the near-1200bhp is sent to the rear wheels via a carbonfibre transmission and through a hydraulic locking active diff. 'The initial specification was for a V8 twin-turbo, but then we looked at V6 twin-turbos,' says Newey. 'But the requirements were around 1000bhp and under 150kg and, basically, I wasn't

Newey at the RB17's Goodwood unveiling; aero has echoes of Aston Valkyrie



## RED BULL HAS THE MEANS, MONEY AND ENGINEERING CAPACITY TO BUILD THE RB17 ITS OWN WAY

### NO RACER, BUT WEC-COMPLIANT



Red Bull brags about the RB17's 'F1-adjacent' lap times, and the car has been built with an eye on Le Mans Hypercar regulations. But ultimately it's been conceived without limits. As CEO Christian Horner says: 'There are

no FIA constraints and therefore no cost cap.'

Might we see an RB17 compete in the Hypercar class? 'Never say never,' says Red Bull Advanced Technologies technical director Rob Gray (pictured), 'but there are absolutely no plans to do that. I just think the Balance of Performance isn't quite right in that sport right now.'

'We wanted to define our own rules with this car, but we leaned quite heavily on the Hypercar specifications. It's purely for safety, and we thought if it's good enough for racing at Le Mans, it's good enough for us.'



completely happy with the V6 turbo in that the sound simply isn't as good as a naturally aspirated engine.'

Red Bull's unconstrained approach means it includes some technology rarely found on road or track: full carbonfibre 18-inch wheels with Michelin slicks are included, with a 20-inch option using a treaded tyre. There's push-rod suspension with active ride-height control and adjustable dampers, the steering is hydraulically assisted and the brakes are carbon-reinforced carbon. While it's not road legal, Horner acknowledges that 'several conversion houses are capable of making it [road legal].'

Active aero elements in the front and rear wings and diffuser adjust to suit the conditions. 'It has two functions: a reduction in aero for high speeds, which is basically trying to stop the tyres blowing,' says technical director Rob Gray, 'but it's also designed to help the balance of the car.'

Horner says: 'These are designed to be run and driven, not sit in museums.' Accordingly, Red Bull has limited its client list to keen drivers, but some of those drivers will be humble enough to know they'd benefit from some expert coaching - which is why the car is a two-seater.

'If you take up a new sport like, say, golf, you'll go to a golf club, hit a few balls and they'll go everywhere,' says Newey. 'But if you enjoy it, then you'll carry on, maybe get a caddy to coach you and get better - that's the same philosophy I have by giving this car two seats. It's not just for having a friend or partner there, but have a coach there.'

'With this, you can go from a car that's benign to drive - it's not going to catch you out all of the time - and grow with the car and develop with it to whatever performance level you feel comfortable with.'

# IN-WHEEL E-MOTORS

Unsprung mass! Individual wheel control! The pros and cons of a much-discussed but rarely used technology explained. By **Jake Groves**



Instead of having electric motors that drive axles, what's so hard about getting them to spin wheels directly? Myriad benefits include much more direct control of individual wheels and faster torque responses.

Ferrari has filed a patent for its own in-wheel motor, and the McLaren Applied division is working with Slovenian-based Elaphe Propulsion Technologies to further develop them for use in production cars. 'The ability to control the drivetrain more sensitively enables you to start programming different characteristics into the drivetrain,' says Stephen Lambert, head of electrification at McLaren Applied. 'With this, we can introduce character that some might say is lacking from EVs.'

As well as performance cars, in-wheel motors allow for a greater degree of control and can limit slip when driving off-road. We've driven a 'Reborn Electric' classic Land Rover Defender that has been converted to use in-wheel motors from UK-based Protean Electric and its parent company BEDEO. As well as making an old Defender much less noisy, each wheel's independence means we experienced zero slip from any wheel when off-roading through boggy and uneven terrain. The improved acceleration and refinement were welcome bonuses.

So what's the hold-up? 'It can add a lot of complexity,' Dr Stefan Hartung, chairman of technology and engineering company Bosch, tells CAR. 'We'd have to go fully by-wire [throttle, braking and steering] to get rid of the mechanical complexity first, and I just don't know if we'll ever fully get rid of mechanical axles. We see them in the industry, but our focus is discreet motors with axles and that seems to be the mainstream of the industry.'

Unsprung weight is also a challenge. Adding an e-motor directly to the wheel would usually be detrimental to ride and handling. But Andrew Whitehead, CEO of Protean Electric, says it's just not that big a deal. 'We add typically about 35kg per corner,' Whitehead tells us, 'but what really matters is the ratio between sprung and unsprung mass. If you look at all the vehicles on sale today, the limits of the ratio are 5:1 to 9:1 – with most models between 6.0 and 8.0.'

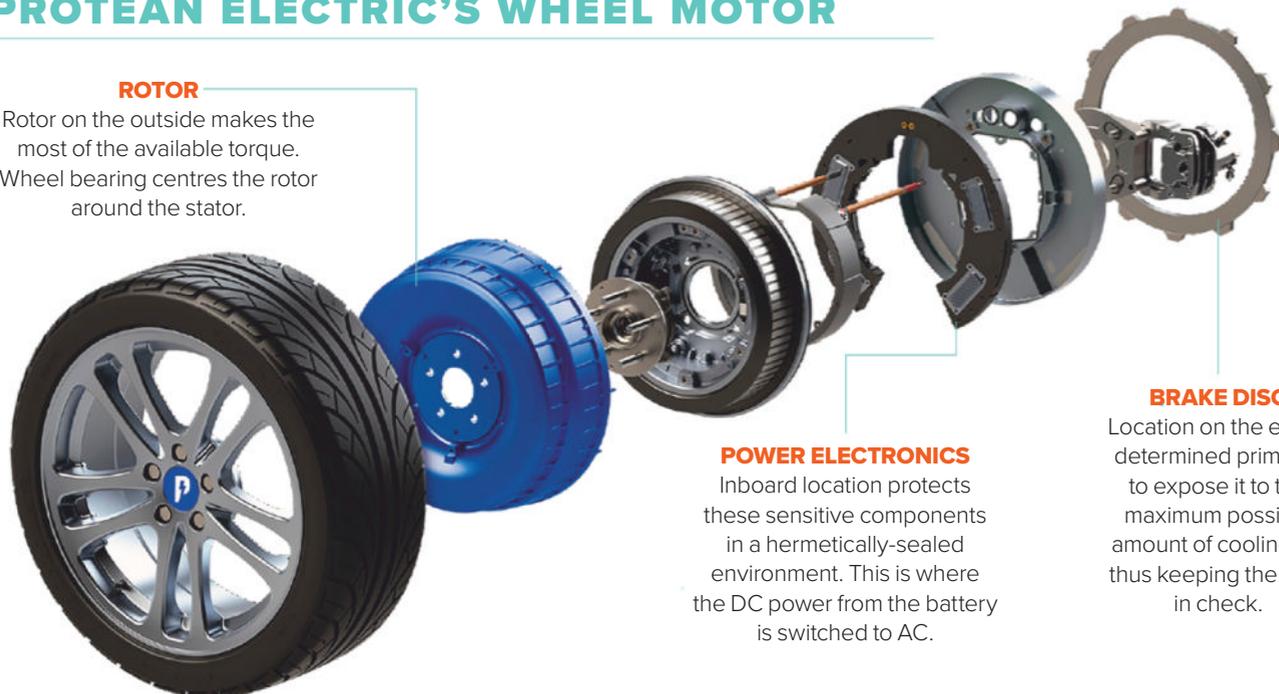
'Provided that when you add unsprung mass you keep it within that ratio limit, you can still make a vehicle perform how it should. When we add our motors to these vehicles, we might go from 7.8:1 to 6.7:1, and we're working on improving that.'

**This Defender has been converted to use in-wheel motors, and it really works**

## PROTEAN ELECTRIC'S WHEEL MOTOR

### ROTOR

Rotor on the outside makes the most of the available torque. Wheel bearing centres the rotor around the stator.



### POWER ELECTRONICS

Inboard location protects these sensitive components in a hermetically-sealed environment. This is where the DC power from the battery is switched to AC.

### BRAKE DISC

Location on the end is determined primarily to expose it to the maximum possible amount of cooling air, thus keeping the heat in check.



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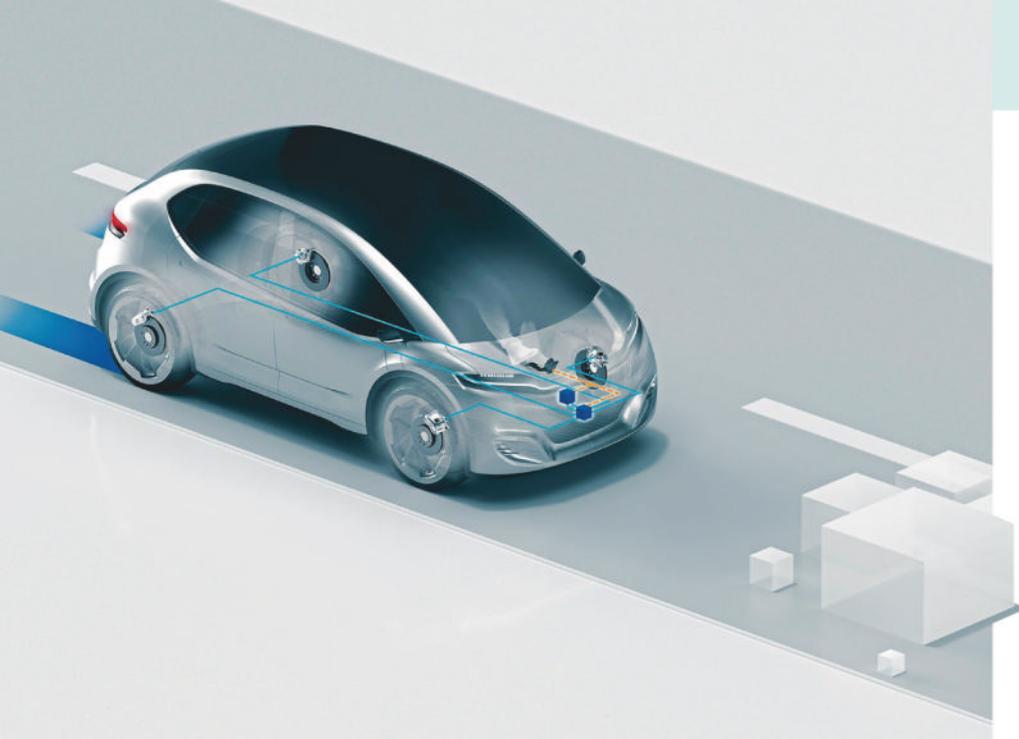
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## BY-WIRE BRAINPOWER

### HOW IT WORKS



#### NO CONNECTION

'By-wire' means no mechanical link between the brakes or steering rack and the wheels. Bosch claims it allows more customisation, better packaging and lower costs.



#### WIND ON THE LOCK

We test a steer-by-wire system that makes a Golf GTI a relaxed motorway cruiser or a go-kart around a circuit. It's impressive, and allows calibration on the fly.



#### UNDER PRESSURE

One of the two brake systems we try has a fixed pressure pad instead of a moving brake pedal on a Jaguar i-Pace. Bizarre at first, but it really works.

### DOES IT WORK?

# BOSCH'S BY-WIRE DRIVING TECH

Steering, braking and accelerating without mechanical linkages. Bosch says it's the future. Is it? By **Jake Groves**

The next big thing according to Bosch is the widespread adoption of 'by-wire' control technologies: steering, braking and acceleration systems that have no mechanical connection between the wheel or pedal operated by the driver and the function it controls.

The engineering giant has positioned itself at the forefront of this new wave of technology, working with Qualcomm to develop more tech for the 'software-defined vehicle' of the future. That future will, says Bosch, involve more functions being handled by fewer chips.

Bosch Mobility's head, Dr Markus Heyn, says: 'By 2030, the number of control units in a car could fall to fewer than 10. That means less installation space, fewer cables, less weight. In short: lower costs and greater flexibility.' Lower construction costs should mean cars get cheaper to buy even as they become more technologically advanced.

Bosch isn't the first to develop by-wire tech. Throttle-by-wire has been around for decades and is now very widespread.

Toyota and Lexus have a steer-by-wire system called One Motion Grip coming to Europe in 2025, and Tesla's Cybertruck has it as standard. Infiniti had it on the Q50 years ago.

Brake-by-wire is the least common of these systems, its roll-out hampered by concerns over the safety implications.

When we test some by-wire tech in development, it certainly feels perfectly safe. We try two brake-by-wire systems; one has a conventional brake pedal and the other a fixed pressure pad. Both can be adjusted instantly in terms of how much brake pressure you get when pressing the pedal. The version that uses a pressure pad offers other potential benefits, including better packaging of EVs.

Bosch's steer-by-wire system feels pretty much good to go, too. In a Golf GTI Clubsport, we hoon around a tight circuit marked by cones. It has three modes: normal, a languid 'comfort' setting that dials down the alertness, and a 'sport' option that makes the GTI feel like it has a much sharper turn-in than anything this side of a Ferrari. It's impressive.

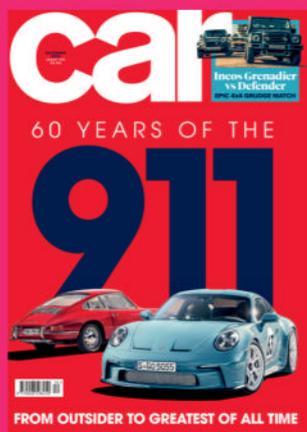
Will it go into production? It will, eventually. Bosch is still in the development phase, but engineers see some of this tech rolling out towards the end of the decade as more car makers design the next generation of models.

### DOES IT WORK?

**Yes. Bosch is cautiously continuing trials, but some of this feels ready to go. The aim is to make cars easier to drive in some cases, more fun in others. We'll be keeping an eye on developments.**

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# First drives

THE WORLD'S BEST WRITERS IN THE NEW CARS THAT MATTER



# The 300-mile test

NEW CAR MEETS REAL WORLD



MG CYBERSTER

## Rise of the beast

Somewhere between bold and bonkers, the Cyberster is the MG nobody expected or asked for. An inspired leap into wild new territory... or just confusing?

Words Ben Whitworth Photography Jordan Butters



Resemblance  
to old British  
MGs is fanciful.  
Nice, though



# T

his is hard to believe. For a car that seemed like a joke or dreadful misunderstanding when it was first announced, the MG Cyberster electric roadster is making a remarkably good job of blitzing the B974, the Old

Military Road in the southern Cairngorms.

An electric roadster from MG? Priced at more than £50,000? An electric roadster that seems to be named after a half-remembered *Transformers* character?

Park your thoughts about the sensible combustion and electric cars that make up the bulk of Chinese-owned MG's current line-up, and instead focus on the excellent MG 4 electric hot hatch, and the XPower version that didn't quite hit the spot, but showed some ambition. Viewed through that prism, and bearing in mind MG's desire to mark 100 years of MG-badged cars, some of them sporty roadsters, it perhaps just about makes sense.

The Polestar 6, next-gen Porsche Boxster and BMW Z4 are still a few years off, and the new Tesla Roadster seems to be a permanent Musk pipe dream. And when those rivals do whirl into showrooms, odds on they'll be significantly more expensive than the MG.

That it should exist at all is weird enough, especially given other mainstream manufacturers' reluctance to put electric two-seaters into production. That it's really good fun to drive is another level of unexpected.

A unique car deserves a special setting. The Cairngorm mountains are sometimes clogged with bikes, caravans and motor homes; they're sometimes chilly, damp and breezy; and sometimes they're all those things. But today they're deserted and basking in 25°C summer sunshine beneath big blue skies punctuated with candyfloss clouds. This should be a no-excuses opportunity for the Cyberster to shine: if it can't be a pleasure to drive in weather this good, on roads this tempting, then it falls well short.

The Cyberster is bigger than it looks, closer to a BMW Z4 than a Mazda MX-5, with a long wheelbase of 2690mm and stubby overhangs, underpinned by the same platform employed in the MG 4. Its has pleasingly traditional roadster proportions – low, with a long bonnet that looks like it could swallow a V8, a snug central cabin beneath a rakish screen, and truncated rear.

After a fairly protracted gestation period – initial sketches and modelling by MG's London-based design team started in 2017 – the Cyberster was given the green light and pushed into production to ensure the car went on sale in 2024, coinciding with MG's centenary. Hence the 100th Anniversary badging on the Cyberster's flanks.



The two-model UK range is refreshingly simple. Both use a 74.4kW (usable) battery with a 7kW onboard charger. Maximum charging capability is 144kW – nothing special by today's standards but good enough for a 10 to 80 per cent charge in 38 minutes on a fast charger, or over 10 hours on a domestic 7kW wallbox. The rear-wheel-drive Trophy costs £54,995 and is powered by a 335bhp/350lb ft motor driving the rear wheels. Performance is brisk – 5.0 seconds to 62mph and a 121mph top speed. It weighs 1885kg and its WLTP range is 316 miles.

You'll need just £5000 more to get into the all-wheel-drive flagship £59,995 GT – the most powerful production MG ever. I say 'just' because that modest step-up gives you an extra 161bhp and 295lb ft of torque from a second motor driving the front axle, and a massive hike in performance over the Trophy. Power and torque rocket to 496bhp and 535lb ft, the 0-62mph sprint drops to an eyeball-flattening 3.2sec, and top speed is 125mph. Downsides, cost aside? Kerbweight climbs 100kg to 1985kg and WLTP range ►

**No, Ben, not that sort of launch control. Those are doors, not wings**

## Pick-up: 0 miles



Dynamic Red with a black fabric roof is an Insta winner. Other colours: New English White, Camden Grey, Cosmic Silver and Inca Yellow.

## 42 miles



Electrically assisted scissor doors add a serious dollop of drama, as well as making it easier to get in and out.

## 48 miles



Balmoral, summer home to the royal family, is in the Cairngorms. In 1967 MG gifted an MGC GT to Prince (now King) Charles for his 18th birthday.

# The 300-mile test **MG Cyberster**



**Graphics and animation have been toned down for Europe**

drops to 276 miles. Some context – the 3.2 second time to 62mph matches the McLaren F1. Bonkers.

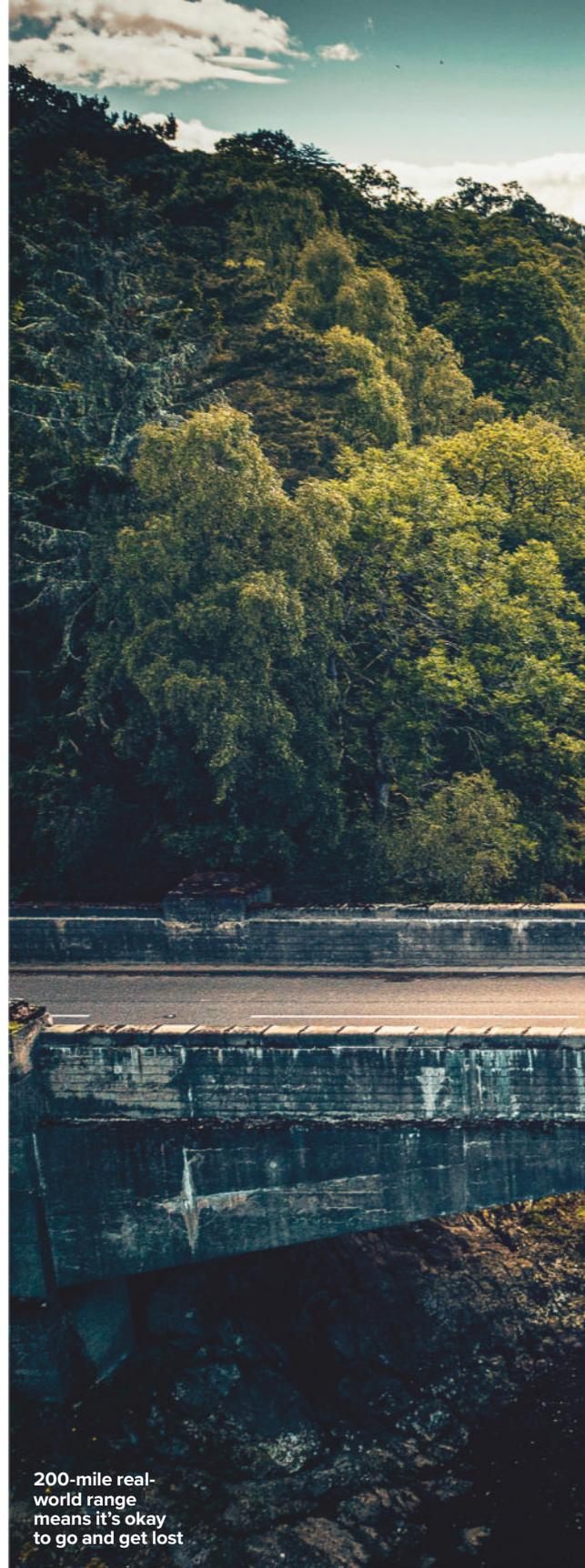
Wait for those scissor doors to glide up and open, drop the one-touch electric fabric roof, and we're off, threading our way through North Water Bridge and Fettercairn to pick up the B974, the Old Military Road.

Initial impressions are mixed. MG claims horizontally stacking its battery cells means the battery slab itself is a modest 110mm deep. Despite this the electrically-adjustable seats feel like they need to be a good two inches lower. The seat base is fixed and shorter than I would like – it feels too flatly horizontal and lacking in under-knee support. And that header rail is very close to my forehead.

These shortcomings are long-grassed by the surprisingly good – no, make that excellent – rolling refinement and ride quality. Roof down at low speeds and the Cyberster's cabin is all but silent, creating the sensation of watching a film with the volume way down. There's little wind buffeting, barely a murmur from the twin electric motors, the suspension glides smoothly over the acned roads, the cabin doesn't squeak or rattle, and the well-judged artificial exhaust noise is a barely audible background thrum.

As we point north towards Bridge of Dye and pick up the pace, the GT continues to impress. The GT breathes across the road in a beautifully controlled manner that Jaguar and Lotus owners will recognise. Body control at all speeds is excellent. It's only over really abrupt intrusions that you can sense the chassis flexing slightly.

When you add electric steering that's both quick and accurate, brakes that have instant bite, a 50:50 front-to-rear weight distribution, and more torque than a tractor rally, the result is a car with a flowing gait that makes ▶



**200-mile real-world range means it's okay to go and get lost**

## **99 miles**



Key fob nods to Phil Hill's Bonneville record-breaking MG EX181. Its tiny supercharged 1506cc engine made 300bhp and got it to 254.9mph.

## **132 miles**



Every Cyberster driver will look precisely this relaxed, thanks to the standard seven-year, 80,000-mile warranty.

## **144 miles**



Had to detour around this bridge after realising our combined weight – Cyberster at 1985kg plus two occupants – easily exceeded its limit.



The cabin is all but silent, like watching a film with the volume way down

**169 miles**



The poles that line many of the roads that cross the Cairngorms are there to mark them out for snowploughs. No such worries today.

**195 miles**



The charging network can take some of the fun out of even the best EV. Endless apps, faulty chargers, meagre availability etc.

**201 miles**



After more than 200 miles, I wish there were some extra padding – that centre console would make a good knee rest, except it's too hard.





Roof goes up and down with one push of a button



That's a lot of different types of control



## It feels 500kg lighter, encouraging you to revel in its ability to cover ground quickly

very pacey cruising across open and undulating roads a driver's pleasure. This is confounding my expectations – not only is the Cyberster the first to crack this niche, but it's done so with a head-turning car that has genuine dynamic chops. Kudos to MG UK's head of engineering Steve Garside and his Longbridge-based team of chassis fettlers.

We head west at Strachan and aim for Ballater, the Cyberster unperturbed by the B976's wide variety of surfaces, stringing together bends and corners with a rewarding fluidity and poise. Up to a point it hides that 1985kg kerbweight incredibly well, sometimes feeling 500kg lighter, encouraging you to revel in its ability to cover ground quickly in a relaxed and composed manner. Go beyond its natural comfort zone, though, and the laws of physics will laugh in the face of MG's engineering nous.

There's no real reward for rolling up your sleeves and pushing the Cyberster to extremes. That may work in an MX-5, Boxster S or Jaguar F-Type, but the MG is not that kind of car. It's a two-tonne, four-wheel-drive electric roadster, and while ever-faster cornering speeds are there for the taking, this is not a tyre-smoker that can be adjusted on the throttle. To avoid disappointment, better to think of the Cyberster as a grand tourer.

At Ballater we join the deserted A93 that follows the course of the River Dee through to Balmoral. It's a good opportunity to muck about with the MG's four drive modes – Comfort, Custom, Sport and Track – accessed by the right-hand paddle behind the steering wheel. These tweak the level of steering assistance, accelerator mapping, torque distribution between front and rear axles, and climate control. Comfort is exactly that – a more relaxed right pedal, Goldilocks steering assistance, and on-demand four-wheel drive. Sport mode sparks up the accelerator, gives less assistance for a heavier steer and engages full-time four-wheel drive. Custom lets you make your own selection, and the you'll-try-it-once Track mode dials everything up to 11.

Time to try the launch control. Sport mode selected, ESC deactivated. Left foot on the brakes, right foot pinning the long-travel accelerator to the floor, wait for the dinky blue space-rocket symbol to appear on the instrument screen and the speedometer to mimic *Star Wars* hyperspace, and then flick your left foot off the brakes.

There's an initial chirp from all four tyres and then the horizon is fast-forwarded into your lap. There's no let-up either, the MG spearing its way into three-figure speeds with a ferocity that's part party-trick hilarity and part queasy discomfort.

We try it once more. Same gut-churning combination of serenity and insanity. Bleuch. At least the Brembo brakes – 365 x 30mm discs gripped by four-piston calipers up front and 356 x 25mm rear units with single-pot calipers – bite with confidence-inspiring conviction. There's a pleasingly consistent feel when slowing from even oh-hell speeds, with no discernible step between electric regen and mechanical calipers.

We begin to explore further north of Ballater, picking up roads that ribbon their way across the Cairngorms National Park before doubling back on the Cairnwell Pass past the Glenshee ski centre. But I also pause to absorb the Cyberster's cabin. There's a lot going on. The instrument nacelle comprises three flat screens, and there's a fourth on the centre console. The smartphone crispness of the graphics is impressive, and once you've spent an hour or so investigating the system the swipe-and-pinch controls become equally intuitive. However, my left hand on the wheel obscures the sat-nav screen. And accessing my ►

### STILL A BIT BRITISH

It may be produced at SAIC's Fujian plant in China, but much of the Cyberster's development work was done by MG's team of 40 engineers at Longbridge – the same tight-knit outfit that played a key role in tuning the MG 4's dynamics to appeal to European drivers.

In 18 months they honed the springs and dampers of the double-wishbone front, multi-link rear suspension, recalibrated the electric steering and fitted updated anti-roll bars. They selected the Pirelli P Zero Elect tyres, reworked the regen system and introduced a one-pedal drive mode – a must-have for a big, comfortable roadster.

All the user electronics and connectivity – screens, graphics and user interfaces as well as the climate, audio and navigation systems – were revised for UK and European markets, as were all the safety systems.

A lot of time was spent testing the MG's charging performance across different domestic and commercial chargers. The engineering team also found the time to redesign the seats for greater support and long-distance comfort, add a wind-stop to reduce cabin buffeting, and redesign the 249-litre boot's interior layout so it can swallow a set of golf clubs.

201 miles



Time for some refreshment. Super Cuisine in Stonehaven makes a nice change from CAR's default, the ubiquitous Greggs.

261 miles



MG's octagonal badge was registered as a trademark by Morris Garages on 1 May 1924; Cyberster has 100th Anniversary badging on the sills.

289 miles



The UK's largest ski resort has 36 runs, serviced by 21 lifts that cover 2000 acres across four mountains and three valleys. In the summer, sheep.



## PLUS

Looks; pace; ride quality

## MINUS

Messy variety of controls; poor legroom for taller drivers

## ALTERNATIVES



**Jaguar F-Type 75**  
Old-school roadster  
a fine mix of brawn,  
refinement and  
engaging dynamics



**BMW Z4 M40i**  
More Saga cruiser  
than apex nailer,  
majoring on  
refinement and  
manners

emails and checking the weather forecast using the menus on the right-hand screen while driving seems entirely unnecessary.

It feels well made, with stitched seams that line-up accurately, pleasant materials used on most touchpoints, and a pleasing overall coherence. But there are some areas that jar. There's an odd mix of controls – the key climate-control buttons grouped usefully above the central screen are haptic units, but everything else on the centre console uses push-pull buttons. The handbrake lever is oddly positioned down by my right knee, along with an old-school headlamp levelling dial. I'm not overly keen on the black fingerprint-magnet finish on the door and roof buttons, and the PRND selectors are overwrought. The worst visual offender is the glinting material on the centre console. There's a useful netted area behind the seats for soft bags and jackets, but drivers over six foot would probably prefer a few more inches of legroom. The centre console slot for your mobile is a neat touch, though.

We've covered a little over 182 miles without the Cyberster giving any reason to worry about its range. A quick shuffle through the menu on the right-hand screen shows we've averaged 2.6 miles per kWh, a long way off the official figure of 3.7 but understandable given how much we've enjoyed the Cyberster's searing cross-country pace.

We head into picturesque Stonehaven, complete with children swimming in the harbour, the waft of fish and chips, and countless wheeling gulls. It's the birthplace of Robert Thomson, who in 1847 patented the pneumatic tyre. Using Zapmap we hunt down the only fast charger we can find – a 44kW unit operated by ChargePlace Scotland. Shouldn't have bothered.

After waiting ages to download its charging app and then entering my personal and banking details thrice before they are accepted, the app then crashes. Bloody brilliant. Electric grand touring starts to look less like a great idea. So it's south along the coast to Montrose to top up using a 160kW For:Ev charger (the names they choose...) before returning to the Cairngorms to chase the setting sun in a car that becomes more engaging and enjoyable with each mile. A successful day.

Cars arrive in dealerships in August. David Allison, MG's head of product and planning, is under no illusions about the upmarket push the roadster represents. 'It's a big step for us,' he tells me. 'Up to this point the most expensive MG on sale in the UK was the £36,495 MG 4 X Power. But the Cyberster is a true halo model for us.'

Its connection with old British-built MGs is a stretch, but the Cyberster is an excellent grand tourer. It's way better than it needs to be, a car that can confidently stand on its own. Yes, there are digital gimmicks and ergonomic quirks, but the engineering fundamentals of this car are impressively sound. It offers a grand touring experience that is unlike anything else currently available, and will do for some time to come. Hats off to MG. We're very glad the Cyberster exists. Even if it does sound like it's named after a villain in a Michael Bay blockbuster. **car**

## Next month:

**VOLVO EX90**

ALL-ELECTRIC FLAGSHIP SUV TESTED



**It's way better than it needs to be, a car that can confidently stand on its own**



	PRICE	POWERTRAIN	PERFORMANCE	WEIGHT	EFFICIENCY	ON SALE	RATING
Data	£59,995 (GT)	74.4kWh battery, twin electric motors, all-wheel drive	496bhp, 535lb ft, 3.2sec 0-62mph, 125mph	1985kg	3.7 miles per kWh (official; 2.6 tested), 276-mile range (official; 193 tested), 0g/km	Now	★★★★★

**The weight that  
keeps the Buzz  
stable at speed  
works against it  
in the corners**

---



VW ID. BUZZ GTX

# Lost in space

Volkswagen's sportier MPV is trying to be a lot of things at once

There's a reason the retro performance electric MPV is a class of one. It's a job description that asks a vehicle to be a lot of things at the same time: roomy, rapid, cool, comfortable, clean and ideally affordable.

The new ID. Buzz GTX is VW's attempt to answer this rarely-asked question. It's a partial success. When the price is announced just before UK deliveries commence this autumn, we might be pleasantly surprised and declare it to be a better package than we currently think, based on a day of driving in the Hannover area. But if it comes in at the anticipated £70,000 (and that's before you start adding extras) then we shall remain disappointed.

It arrives as part of an overhaul of the ID. Buzz range. There are various changes to infotainment and battery choices across the line-up. But the biggest differences are the arrival of a long-wheelbase option, and the addition of a sportier GTX version, available with either the long or short wheelbase.

The wheelbase increases by 250mm, which adds new possibilities for the cabin layout: regular five seats, or a six-seater involving three rows of two seats (and less bag space), or a long-wheelbase seven-seater.

The GTX in short-wheelbase form has a new 79kWh battery, while the long-wheelbase version gets 86kWh. All GTXs are all-wheel drive. There's also a new design of seat, and red flashes to remind you that there's a significant power upgrade.

The GTX is at its happiest on the motorway, where you enjoy the comfortable seats, the suspension doing a good job of isolating the cabin from road noise, and that enormous 413lb ft of torque ensuring there's loads in reserve for overtaking.

On pockmarked surfaces the chassis can get into an undulating rhythm, rocking between the front and rear axles as it tries to control the enormous heft of the battery pack. Corners can be a challenge too. VW has given the GTX more power, but it has the same slow steering rack as the standard



Red flashes and great seats are just for GTX

Buzz. This is great for making it feel composed at high speeds, but a little unnerving when you're threading it down a twisty B-road. You always need to work the steering wheel harder than seems natural.

The weight that helps keep the Buzz stable at high speeds works against it in the corners. Enter a bend at what would be a sensible velocity for a normal car, and the weight of the battery will throw itself onto the front tyres, making them howl.

The brakes aren't great, with a vague pedal action. That said, you hardly ever need to use the GTX's proper brakes. Because it has an extra motor on the front axle, VW has been able to dial up the regenerative braking – and that's now powerful enough to stop the Buzz on its own in most cases, just by lifting your foot off the accelerator.

Inside, the GTX is a step up visually, and the standard seats are more comfortable than those in the basic Buzz, but do choose your version carefully; the combination of three rows of seats and short wheelbase leaves you with very little luggage capacity. And if you don't want luggage capacity, why buy any Buzz?

LUKE WILKINSON

## First verdict

A missed opportunity, with some promising elements combining into a package that doesn't quite make sense

★★★★☆



### THE FIRST HOUR

**1 minutes**

Three rows of seats makes the boot too small for a family of six to use for a weekend away

**2 minutes**

Still feels quite vanilla in here, but the new seats are very comfortable

**16 minutes**

Autobahn. Foot down. And... it's not that fast, tailing off from about 60mph

**20 minutes**

It's quiet, though, cutting cleanly through the air for something so slabby in appearance

**56 minutes**

Much better on motorway than twisty roads (feels heavy) or in town (that vague brake pedal)

### PLUS

Faster than a standard Buzz; more comfortable seats; additional equipment

### MINUS

Doesn't handle as well as a Transit; three-row SWB models have small boots



Not just any old electric MPV, a sporty electric MPV

Data	PRICE	POWERTRAIN	PERFORMANCE	WEIGHT	EFFICIENCY	ON SALE
	£70,000 (est)	79kWh, twin electric motors, all-wheel drive	335bhp, 413lb ft, 6.1sec 0-62mph, 130mph	2495kg (est)	3.0 miles per kWh (est), range 250 miles (est), 0g/km CO2	Autumn

LAMBORGHINI URUS SE

# Urus meets ULEZ

Hybrid assistance makes the SE the most powerful Urus ever

Here's the figure that tells you what you need to know about the new plug-in hybrid version of the Urus: the Lamborghini SUV will reach 125mph from zero in 11.2sec, or 1.3sec faster than the Performante. The Performante, you'll recall, is the lower, firmer, wilder, track-friendly version of the Urus. So although the SE will soon be the only Urus available, as the Performante and S disappear from the range, the move to electrification is clearly not about Lamborghini going soft.

The other key statistic is not yet available, but the SE will end up with one of those WLTP combined fuel economy figures, along with a drastically reduced CO2 output, that puts the Lamborghini on the right side of various tax and emissions restrictions, even though figures obtained on our test drive in Lapland in a pre-production SE suggest that without frequent stops for recharging the battery the actual fuel economy will be as poor as it always is when you combine a twin-turbo 4.0-litre V8 with a heavy body.

The Urus SE has an electric motor in the housing of the eight-speed automatic transmission, and squeezed into the cavity above the rear axle is a 25.9kWh lithium-ion battery. In EV mode, the Urus SE can travel at up to 81mph; go slower and the maximum electric-only range is 37 miles.

The huge power – a combined 789bhp and 701lb ft at its peak – is distributed to the four wheels via a new centrally positioned, longitudinally mounted electronic differential. Despite a kerbweight of 2405kg, it can slam itself in a claimed 3.4sec from zero to 62mph, gaining one tenth over the S but losing one tenth to the Performante.

The switch to PHEV is not the only change, as the SE is also significantly facelifted. The bonnet now has a 'floating' look, plus new matrix LED headlights, bumper and grille. At the back there's a new diffuser and the number plate is mounted lower. The rear mesh is a nod to the Gallardo.

Rear downforce has increased by up to 35 per cent at high speed, and there's a 15 per



More tech telling you you're going very fast

cent increase (compared to the original Urus) in cooling air to the engine, and 30 per cent to the brakes.

Inside, the dashboard is busier and more colourful than before, with bigger screens and a quite complex driver interaction.

There's a more broadly calibrated and generally more versatile suspension set-up. The switchable anti-roll bars, the rear-wheel steering and the brake intervention work in a more progressive and better integrated manner. Especially on low-friction turf, the SE is more playful yet more controlled, more aggressive yet more forgiving.

The underlying sporty handling is at all times ensured by a subtle rear torque bias that becomes stronger as you flick through the 11 driving programmes. The self-levelling air suspension offers a wide span of settings, from a 75mm lift in off-road mode to a 15mm four-wheel drop in Corsa.

A price of £258,000 is a lot for an SUV that isn't that much faster than the top-of-the-line Cayenne or the Audi RS Q8. But even more so than its rivals, Lamborghini is selling values like prestige and, most of all, emotion.

GEORG KACHER

## First verdict

A wild tarmac peeler that stimulates all the senses, but the PHEV won't close the hole in the ozone layer

★★★★★



### THE FIRST HOUR

#### 5 minutes

Through the camo you can tell the facelift does a great job of refreshing a six-year-old car

#### 15 minutes

Overkill interior. Not everything in here is as intuitive as the drive mode selector

#### 25 minutes

Take in the noise (third gear, full throttle) and the smell (hot engine, melting Bridgestones, fuming Brembo brake pads)

#### 35 minutes

ESP off, Max Performance on. Wild yet not dangerous

#### 55 minutes

Sends out the odd wrong message, but is a seriously capable rival to the world's finest SUVs

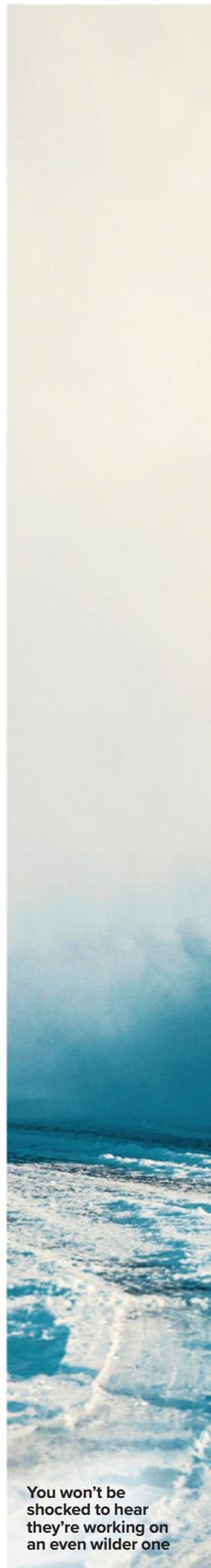
### PLUS

A soundtrack to die for; easy to drive fast; amazing presence

### MINUS

Super expensive; weighs too much; still thirsty; cluttered cockpit

Data	PRICE	POWERTRAIN	PERFORMANCE	WEIGHT	EFFICIENCY	ON SALE
	£258,000	25.9kWh battery, 3996cc twin-turbo 32v V8, PHEV, eight-speed auto, all-wheel drive	789bhp @ 6000rpm, 701lb ft @ 2250rpm, 3.4sec 0-62mph, 188mph	2405kg	n/a mpg, n/a g/km CO2, electric range 37 miles	Late 2024



You won't be shocked to hear they're working on an even wilder one

**It's more playful yet  
more controlled,  
more aggressive yet  
more forgiving**



ASTON MARTIN VALOUR

# Brutal truth

Limited-edition Aston Martin winds the clock back with a manual V12

'That's it. I want one.' We've gone all of 10 yards but just one cog swap in the Aston Martin Valour is all it takes to make everything feel right with the world.

It's the particular nature of the gearchange that's important. Because it's one manual cog swap, connected with actual metal to the rarity of a V12 engine, handily wrapped in a bespoke body and yours for the sum of £1.5m plus options. It's a welcome poke in the eye of logic: *Sense and Sensibility* be damned, *Leaving Las Vegas* here we come.

The Valour is Aston's 110th birthday present to itself, with a corresponding number being made and, as is often the way with these things, all sold out. Based on the previous Vantage, the Valour has the twin-turbo V12 from that car, and indeed the DBS, only this time with 15bhp more power thanks to some recalibration work.

The Valour sticks with rear-wheel drive but gets a new stainless-steel exhaust, with a 1mm wall thickness to make it sound sharper and save weight.

Other changes include a unique steering and damper tune, and there's extra torsional rigidity thanks to fuel-tank bracing and re-engineered shear panels front and rear. A lot of this has been learnt from the V12 Vantage but given a unique tweak for the Valour.

The interior has also been updated but the fundamentals remain old, meaning ancient infotainment systems and compromised packaging.

It's a reminder of how old-school this car is at heart, which Aston claims is deliberate. The way the controls respond to your inputs and the noise from the V12 combine to make the Valour quite a multi-sensory experience. It's not dominated by the V12. There's enough power to get it skipping about under full throttle but the guttural roar of the 12 cylinders doesn't become all-enveloping.

It's not a peaky engine. The turbos come on song from 2000rpm and get interesting from 3000rpm, so it's easy to slot it into sixth and let the torque do the work. There's



Carbonfibre's used everywhere in the cabin

no rev-matching on downshifts - instead, heel-and-toe is required, thankfully made easy by the pedal spacing.

And while 705bhp is a lot of push, these days many EVs offer similarly high outputs. What those electric performance cars can't match is the physicality of the Aston, the various parts combining to transcend the on-paper stats. Think Renaissance, not Silicon Valley.

It reminds me of historic racers, with a lovely roll around the hips as you turn in, giving a sense of movement without being alarming. It's balanced, with every system complementing the next. The gearbox has a longer throw than the fine manual in the Honda Civic Type R but that's no bad thing as it gives breathing space for the turbos to spool up before you want the next ratio.

The Valour isn't class-leading in any one area. The electrically assisted steering can't compete with a McLaren's feel and the suspension lacks the sophisticated balance between ride and handling that modern twin-valve dampers give. But the sum of the parts is quite sensational.

PIERS WARD

## First verdict

Brutal and brilliant. V12 manual Valour is a throwback to a previous generation of Astons and all the better for it

★★★★★



### THE FIRST HOUR

#### 1 minute

It's high summer in the Cotswolds and the tourists only have eyes for the Aston

#### 2 minutes

First gearshift feels gloriously slick, like a knife cutting through treacle

#### 5 minutes

The nose bites well into the first proper corner. Mechanical limited-slip diff not called for today

#### 30 minutes

Finally, a straight with zero traffic. Pace is good and turbo lag feels deliciously 2015

#### 55 minutes

Clutch pedal's surprisingly light. For all the car's visual muscularity, the controls are delicate

### PLUS

Involvement; well weighted controls

### MINUS

Infotainment's very 2005; looks aren't to all tastes

Data	PRICE	POWERTRAIN	PERFORMANCE	WEIGHT	EFFICIENCY	ON SALE
	From £1,500,000	5203cc 48v twin-turbo V12, six-speed manual, rear-wheel drive	705bhp @ 7000rpm, 555lb ft @ 1800rpm, 3.4sec 0-62mph, 207mph (est)	1780kg	18.7mpg, 340g/km CO2 (est)	Now (sold out)

Retro European muscle inspired the styling

**There's a great  
physicality, the  
parts combining  
to transcend the  
on-paper stats**



PORSCHE CAYENNE GTS

# This badge never lies

True to tradition, the new GTS is the best Cayenne to drive

You don't need a racetrack or an empty autobahn to make this Cayenne shine, but it helps. Where else might you relish the remarkable top speed of 171mph, which belies the vehicle's 2190kg kerbweight, marvel at the awesome full-throttle fifth- and sixth-gear punch, or accelerate from zero to 125mph in a stellar 16.7sec?

And yet maximum velocity and slingshot dynamics are not the overriding strengths of the new Porsche. After all, the 468bhp Cayenne S is merely 1mph less fast overall than the 494bhp GTS, and it only gets narrowly beaten to 62mph. The V6-engined 512bhp S E-Hybrid matches the GTS in the stopwatch duel, and the new range-topper is more expensive than either. It's thirsty too.

The Coupe version costs £1600 more than the SUV, but it is the wiser buy. It's better equipped, with a panoramic glass roof, and only this version can be had with a choice of three different lightweight packs which in total reduce the body fat by 25kg.

The 4.0-litre V8 of the 2025 GTS gains 40bhp and 30lb ft over the previous model. The twin-turbo layout is retained, but the twin-scroll chargers are replaced by a monoscroll design. Also new is two-phase intake valve lift, aimed at improved low-rpm efficiency and high-rpm performance. A cylinder-selective exhaust valve timing system, plus faster-responding wastegates, higher fuel injection pressure of 350bar and a step-up in maximum boost complete the powerplant upgrades. The transfer case is now water-cooled, to improve consistency of performance in gruelling conditions.

The GTS comes with dual-chamber adaptive air suspension and rear-biased torque vectoring, but you'll pay extra for the desirable rear-wheel steering, active anti-roll bars, the brutally effective carbon-ceramic brakes and the pretty, satin-finish 22in RS Spyder wheels. The one option we strongly recommend is the more supportive seats, because the standard kit is too short in the cushion and insufficiently



Wonderfully quick on just about any road

adjustable. Chassis changes include 10mm lower ride height, quicker steering calibration, anti-roll bars to match and front axle hubs that increase negative camber for a sharper turn-in and extra cornering grip.

The driving experience is guaranteed to put a smile on your face. True, the high-end Cayenne is quite a bit more expensive than rivals like the Audi SQ8 or the BMW X5 M60i, but it's more compelling on B-roads, and a more committed high-speed cruiser.

The roadholding is phenomenal, even in the wet. Controllability and playfulness forge a safe and entertaining pact, and extreme deceleration is so fierce it almost hurts. The snappy tip-in and awesome mid-to high-load punch open up a broader and more emotional speed band.

Like the GTS versions of 911 and Panamera, the Cayenne GTS neatly plugs the gap between S and Turbo. The steep asking price and the considerable thirst don't help its case, but as soon as you start that vocal V8 and push the stubby in-dash gear selector, emotion promptly beats reason, and you'll be hooked for good.

GEORG KACHER

## First verdict

Great to drive. But you can save a bundle by opting for the barely inferior S or the more frugal S E-Hybrid

★★★★★



### THE FIRST HOUR

**10 minutes**

Front seats with integrated headrests don't give the best shoulder and thigh support

**12 minutes**

Racetex, black leather, charcoal fabric and red stitching spell GTS. It still works

**20 minutes**

The smaller steering wheel, the accelerator and the brake pedal feel like natural, fully connected extensions of the human body

**31 minutes**

Long live the V8! This is great

**58 minutes**

As autobahn warrior, the GTS has no rival this side of a Lamborghini Urus. But that's not all it's good for

**PLUS**

Scalpel-sharp steering; velcro-strap roadholding; riveting brakes; astonishing ride comfort

**MINUS**

Expensive; needs extra-cost seats

Data	PRICE	POWERTRAIN	PERFORMANCE	WEIGHT	EFFICIENCY	ON SALE
	£107,700 (Coupe)	3996cc 32v twin-turbo V8, eight-speed auto, all-wheel drive	494bhp @ 6000rpm, 487lb ft @ 2100rpm, 4.4sec 0-62mph, 171mph	2190kg	21.2-22.4mpg, 287-303g/km CO2	Now



Coupe costs more but is the better package, unless you really need the boot space

**Like the GTS versions  
of the Panamera  
and 911, the Cayenne  
GTS plugs the gap  
between S and Turbo**



ALFA ROMEO JUNIOR

# Quick change artistry

After its last-minute name rethink, we get to drive Alfa's new hot EV

Too many manufacturers focus on acceleration times, but Alfa Romeo is chasing a different number: weight. The Junior's 1590kg kerbweight is 200kg less than some competitors, 90kg less than a Mini Cooper SE and not much more than a combustion hot hatch. That weight wouldn't have been possible with a twin-motor, all-wheel-drive set-up, so the Veloce has been kept delightfully simple: one motor, front-wheel drive.

It's a win all round, as the extra weight of a more complex car would inevitably have harmed its energy consumption and range, and probably not for any real gain.

The Junior, you'll recall, was originally going to be called Milano, until a political row prompted a change of name to something that didn't imply it was made in Italy. It's being referred to as Junior, but in fact it's called the Junior Elettrica, emphasising that it's only available as an EV. There are three versions: Elettrica, Elettrica Speciale and the car we're testing here, the range-topping Elettrica 280 Veloce.

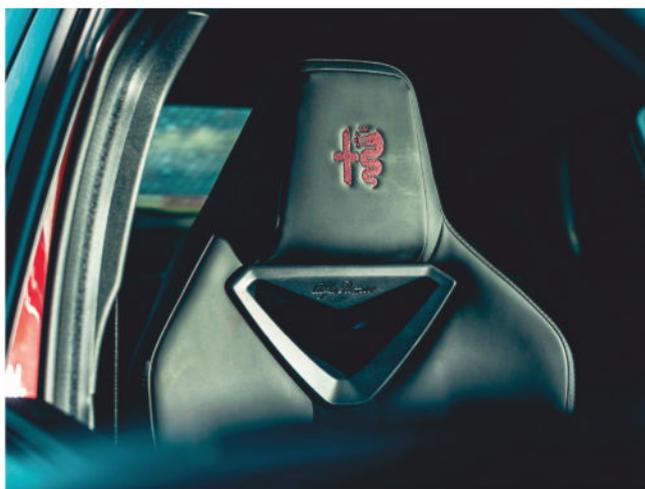
Its 52kWh battery pack is shared with other Junior Elettricas and other cars that use the Stellantis group's e-CMP platform. However, a new motor produces a chunky 276bhp that's channelled to the tarmac via a proper mechanical limited-slip differential. Track width is up, ride height down and it wears 20-inch alloys to cover bigger brakes with four-piston calipers up front.

There's more. A new steering box gives a much quicker ratio and there's a new torsion beam out back. All four corners get re-worked springs and dampers with hydraulic bumpstops, all dialled in by the team responsible for the Giulia Quadrifoglio and GTA. It shows.

Our test included time on the Langhe circuit at the Balocco proving ground. Don't think of this as a racetrack but as an intense compression of just about every type of road surface you'll come across. It's designed to reveal weaknesses and shortcomings, but here the Veloce shines.

The steering is refreshingly light, and at 2.6 turns lock-to-lock it reacts to inputs quickly but not nervously. Murmurs of the road's texture can be felt through the wheel, but the odd pothole is absorbed easily with some well-judged damping.

The Advanced Efficiency drive mode



Optional sports seats won't be appreciated by rear passengers

dulls throttle response and limits torque, so I'm soon back to Natural, which feels perkier but doesn't do anything to the regen, which isn't particularly strong unless you select B mode on the gear selector, and it's nowhere near one-pedal driving. Even so, you can feel it pulsing under foot when you're braking hard, but before the ABS triggers.

It's interesting to compare this with what happens when you're in Dynamic mode, where regen is switched off entirely, so you get a proper uncorrupted feel and none of that under-foot weirdness. It's a trait that can hopefully be engineered out with the last few bits of tuning needed on this late pre-production car.

Dynamic mode also fully uncorks the electric motor and puts the stability control in a less meddling mood. If you up the pace and start to work the brakes and differential a bit harder, the car can feel enjoyably lively for a few moments before the electronic support systems rein you back in. It's a chassis that's alive and fleet of foot. Entering a tight bend enthusiastically I feel the inside rear wheel lift momentarily before I get back on the power and experience the diff doing its thing: making the most of the available power and slinging you towards the inside of a corner. The relatively soft suspension allows moderate roll in the bends if you're making haste, but to a lesser degree than you'd experience in an alternative such as the Volvo EX30 or Smart #1.

We reach part of the test route designed ▶



THE FIRST HOUR

1 minute

Optional Sabelt buckets feel good, if a fraction too high

6 minutes

Controls all nicely responsive

15 minutes

I'm aiming at potholes to check the ride out. It copes well

46 minutes

Despite my best efforts, the brakes remain strong

52 minutes

A warm glow – unfamiliar in an electric crossover

PLUS

Good fun; feelsome brakes; comfort

MINUS

Limited range; cramped rear seats; interior quality not ideal



Impressively light by today's standards – and yes, you can feel it

**If you up the pace and start to work the brakes and differential, the car can feel enjoyably light**





Cornering  
ability  
untroubled by  
poor surfaces



Some materials  
that are good to  
the touch, some  
that aren't

Few relatively affordable EVs drive this well



## Yes, it's based on a shared Stellantis platform – but it's been set up for drivers who appreciate the Alfa way of doing things

to challenge ride comfort, including some unevenly paved sections and nasty ridges. I hear the rear suspension working away behind me, yet there's no jiggle or shake. Nasty knobbles are rounded off adroitly, which bodes well for how the Veloce should cope when it reaches UK roads later this year.

The brakes also give the driver confidence here. You soon realise you can leave your braking later and later, certain that the stoppers are going to slow you down powerfully and predictably.

Yes, the car is based on a shared Stellantis platform – but it's been set up for drivers who appreciate the Alfa way of doing things, and who want every journey to be a pleasure. Similarly, the cabin uses some recognisable Stellantis components (stalks, gear selector, drive mode selector), but lashings of Alfiness, too. The twin cowls over the digital instrument cluster are a nice nod to Alfa tradition, as is the liberal use of alcantara, and the way the whole cabin is subtly driver-orientated. The presence of actual toggle switches for temperature control is worth celebrating, too.

The 10.25-inch central touchscreen is impressively responsive, with sharp graphics and straightforward navigation. It's a huge

step on from the dated system found in the Giulia and Stelvio.

With the Junior range likely to start well below £30,000 it's inevitable that there are hard plastics, although they could have been hidden better. Crucially, the steering wheel feels good with its alcantara and leather coating, as do most other areas you interact with regularly. Space up front is fine, although our test car's optional Sabelt sports seats encroach into legroom for those in the back. There isn't a lot of headroom for adult rear-seat passengers, either.

The boot is a class-appropriate 400 litres, and you don't need to clutter it up with the charging cable that's provided as standard on the Veloce, as there's just about room un-

der the bonnet for it. The rear bench folds in a 60/40 split, which is useful.

So, all good? Cars on the e-CMP platform don't tend to offer a long range, and by upping power to 276bhp and wheel size to 20 inches the Veloce doesn't buck this trend. The official WLTP range is 207 miles, but expect to knock a fair chunk off that in the real world. Driving reasonably gently, I get a best of 3.6 miles per kWh, enough for a calculated 181 miles of range. Rapid charging is at a max of 100kW, fast enough for a 20 to 80 per cent time of just under 30 minutes.

The circus surrounding the change of name will surely soon be forgotten now that we've actually driven the car and discovered to our surprise that there's something far more interesting to talk about: how very good the Junior Veloce is. It's a car that relies on raw ingredients that appear elsewhere, but here they've been assembled with intelligence and flair, and finessed with a deep understanding of Alfa tradition.

We reckon there's something a bit special about how the Veloce drives, something that's been missing from so many performance-focused electric cars: delicacy.

ALAN TAYLOR-JONES

### First verdict

Proof you don't need a sub-4.0sec 0-62mph to make a thoroughly entertaining electric all-rounder

★★★★★



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# Opinion

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Letter  
of the  
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## If you have to ask, you can't afford it

I am sure that Ben Miller and James Dennison and your other road testers have absolutely spotless driving records (ha ha ha) but how does anyone get enough liability coverage in case something happens to your \$3.3 million Paganini (the Utopia was driven in the June issue by James Dennison, just three months after Piers Ward drove the Cotalunga in the March issue) or any of your other multi-million-dollar test cars?

Do all your testers have as part of their contracts an agreement to sell their organs on the black market in order to pay the deductible portion of the test vehicle insurance policy?

**Peter Egan**

Before anyone can join the CAR team, we have to spend five years in a monastery in the Himalayas, whipping ourselves with birch twigs and fasting, in order to store up some favours with the higher powers. It's worth it. CO



### A-Ford-able fun

What are you doing to us? After months of believing the magazine will soon be renamed *Electric Car* and I will be cancelling my subscription after 30-plus years, you come out with the July issue. Wow.

Aston Vantage, Ferrari vs McLaren and the performance Ford fest. Who doesn't love Fords of old? I certainly do, as 28 of my 35 years in the retail motor trade were spent with Ford.

Great memories of wonderful performance cars from the 3.0 Capri to the Escort Cosworth, but also the more mundane ones. I had one of the very first Fiestas on the road in March 1977, just like the one pictured but in Le Mans green.

I also spent quite a few years with Vauxhall and would love to see similar articles on SRi Astras, Cavaliers and Vectras as well as the Lotus Carlton and VX220. What about Vauxhall motorsport as well? Gerry Marshall and John Cleland stories could fill an issue.

Please let us petrolheads have more issues like the July one.

**Phil Darby**

### Van guard

As a long-time subscriber I have over the years read in this magazine the words of some great writers (Sebright, Barker, Llewellyn, Bulgin,

Kacher, Green, et al), and the present crop are pretty good, but in the July edition Stephen Bayley surpassed them with his treatise on – of all things – the Ford Transit.

What a great article. It brought back memories of being a young man on leave from the merchant navy, helping my dad's business by driving a Transit all over North Wales delivering white goods.

With the 'characterful' 2.0-litre V4 up front, our short-wheelbase Transit was a joy to hustle along some of that area's great roads when empty. A total revelation compared to the VW and BMC vans we had before. Boy that van could handle.

In 1982 some friends and I went to Spain for five weeks in a long-wheelbase twin-wheel-rear-axle V4 minibus that we kitted out ourselves. That one showed its utilitarian capabilities; in nearly 4000 miles it never missed a beat.

**Bryn Owen**

### The four ovals

About 15 years ago I worked briefly as a car salesman for a Ford dealership and had to visit the Henry Ford College periodically for training. On one visit we were informed that the Mondeo was now competing directly with Audi! Laughably, this was because nappa leather was now an op-



tion, so in Ford's eyes they were now the same.

In an attempt to convince us, the college had lined up a fleet of Mondeo's and Audi A4s for us to drive back to back. I was paired with what turned out to be a dyed-in-the-wool Ford salesman from another dealership who took great offence at my suggestion that Ford was completely out of its depth in believing it had an Audi alternative, even suggesting I was 'in the wrong job'. It took him just 200 yards of driving the Audi before he ruefully admitted that I did have a point after all.

That Ford thought it okay to still prop up the bonnet with a metal stick, compared to the gas struts of a prestige car, was evidence that they just didn't understand the prestige market. Ford never did manage to compete with Audi, or any other prestige car marque, and eventually dropped the Mondeo altogether.

And neither did they learn anything from the experience, if Ford CEO Jim Farley believes 'We can take on Porsche with Mustang' (interview, July 2024).

**Nick Burnham**

### Get real

I don't know whether to be bemused or annoyed by the opinions of Richard Whitton (Letters, May) regarding moves to increase use of BEVs.

Yes, climate change is real. Yes, we all do need to stop emitting CO<sub>2</sub> (and other greenhouse gases) as quickly as possible. Yes, Britain was a major contributor to the cumulative CO<sub>2</sub> levels in the atmosphere. As a result, yes, those countries which are now the biggest contributors to climate change do expect us to contribute to solving the problem.

And so, yes, we do need to transition to using little or no fossil fuels, asap. And, yes, democratically elected governments do have the right to



**It doesn't have to be the quickest or the lightest to be the most fun**

pass laws and regulations to achieve that goal.

And, as Colin Overland pointed out in a footnote to that letter, the experience of using BEVs is good. A bit different to combustion cars, and not perfect, but combustion cars are not perfect either, but fine.

Writing from Norway, where more than 80 per cent of new cars sold are now BEVs, we simply do not know what all the fuss is about. Just get on with it, and try to apply a coherent, consistent and pragmatic approach. Soon!

**John Cantrill**

### Swift vs Clio

In the past three issues of the magazine (May-July) you have reported on 24 cars in the First Drives section. Only three of those reviews have been of cars that cost less than £40k: the Suzuki Swift, Skoda Kodiaq and Dacia Duster.

While acknowledging this reflects the current state of the car market and not your editorial policy, this context explains why your test of eight superminis in the latest issue was so refreshing. Although its focus on fun sells the capability of the supermini short, it was a good read and a relief to see attention focused on the lower end of the new-car market.

It was also reassuring that your winner was the cheapest and second-slowest-accelerating of the cars on test, proving yet again that the fun factor bears little relation to price, power or outright speed.

It was also very interesting to find the Clio victorious given the Swift's weight advantage (16 per cent lighter than the Clio) and Suzuki's track record in building fun superminis.

More of this please!

**Thomas Chetwood**

### Falling short

It's not often that I take exception to a new car that I've never driven. But the Genesis GV70 that was until recently being run in Our Cars by Ben Oliver somehow rubbed me up the wrong way.

Maybe it's to do with the fake-old styling and detailing. That kind of unearned heritage feels like a lazy shortcut to credibility, but I suspect it fools no one. This from a company with some excellent design talent on the books.

Maybe it's the unremarkable performance. Its pace and its economy seem very so-so. From the people who brought you the i30 N.

It brings out the part of me that comes over all censorious. The same part that will listen to a radio station playing new music and I'll dismiss everything as either bland or derivative. Probably says much more about me and my age than about Genesis or the wider Hyundai group, but the frustration is that they clearly can do better.

**Willy Smith**

### Manual for the people

What on earth has Gavin Green got against learner drivers? Some time ago he wrongly suggested that the ►

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**Genesis: will it falter like Infiniti or boom like Cupra?**

driving test should be made even harder and now (column, July) he's suggesting that learners are lazy for switching to automatics for their driving test and abandoning the manual gearbox.

As a driving instructor with over 15 years' experience (teaching manual) I can tell you the reality is that many learners are ahead of the curve.

They have been told over the past decade of a golden electric future, in which you won't even be able to buy a fossil-fuelled car with a manual gearbox by 2030. So why learn to drive something that's going to be illegal in just over five years' time and is apparently less environmentally friendly than EVs?

Whether politicians will actually deliver that plan is another question. But please don't blame the learners for the shambles that awaits them.

**Mike Chandler**

**Surely learning to operate a manual would give a new driver a greater understanding of the relationship between car, driver and road, wouldn't it? Similarly, spending a year or two on a moped or scooter before taking to four wheels makes you keenly aware of the difference the road surface makes. Perhaps a licence needs to be earned? CO**

### Prints of wails

While on holiday I'm catching up with the last few months of your (always excellent) magazine and have just read the letter from Simon Stocks in your June issue relating to the lack of car brochures these days.

I come at this subject from two angles. Firstly, since I was about eight (I'm now in my late 50s) I have collected brochures from every brand, on every model, from any country and in any language. It was always a pleasure to go out and collect a pile of



**Forget manual. No gearlever means more room for your phone**

the latest literature, some of which would be a real challenge to find, or to receive a package from one of my many overseas 'swappers'.

I know this is not the reason manufacturers produce brochures, and I appreciate the expense, but they actually do a great job of showing the development of the automobile.

My second angle is that I am a sales manager at a multi-franchise new-car dealership. When we are asked for a brochure, a daily occurrence, some customers go into meltdown when we can only offer a PDF or link to a website. There is a genuine desire to take physical literature away to study, with many purchasers keeping their brochure as part of the document pack for their car, along with service history, MoT certificates etc.

It's also useful for us to refer back to the old brochures to remind ourselves of specs, technical data and colour names – not so easy online, when the old web pages are removed.

I understand the desire of manufacturers to be environmentally friendly, but many of them still insist on printing glossy 'lifestyle' magazines and accessory brochures, even though the internet would be far better suited to this.

**John Beckingham**

### Not 'our' cars, actually

While I usually enjoy the Our Cars feature, I have to say that I found the July issue's edition instructive, but perhaps not in the way you intended.

Maybe, after nearly 50 years of readership, I'm not typical of current CAR readers, but spending 'mid to high £20k' on a weekend car is not a realistic prospect for most of us.

A 542bhp Bentley is underpowered? The automotive equivalent of 'overheard in Waitrose'.

A £69k VW MPV is effectively a tall saloon that needed no unscheduled dealer visit in 11,000 miles? My 2017

Alfa Romeo Giulietta hasn't either in 102,000 miles, and can get me to the airport and back without stopping for charging, a delay that gets glibly described as a welcome Starbucks break far too often and easily. And that VW has lost almost 40 per cent of its value in six months!

An £80k Genesis seems to justify fears that it was always destined for Infiniti levels of success. An £86k Mercedes-Benz cannot do 200 miles without a recharge at premium rates. And a Vauxhall Astra underwhelms; any Astra at £43k is likely to underwhelm most people.

The only one I'm really looking forward to reading more of is the Clio – £17,995 of real value for a private buyer. If Renault can make money in this part of the market, why couldn't Ford with the Fiesta?

**Roger Carr**

### Don't go

I share Ben Whitworth's consternation, expressed elegantly in Our Cars in the last couple of issues, at the impending demise of the Jaguar F-Type.

I don't own one, and I suspect the steep cost of a new or approved-used example will rule it out, but I did once own one of its predecessors, an XK convertible, and loved it.

That had to go because it wasn't practical for my family circumstances at the time. I would have bought a five-door Jaguar to replace it if there



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**But where's the estate version of the F-Type, Jaguar?**





had been an appealing option on offer at the time, but there wasn't.

That's one of the many things Porsche has done so well, isn't it? Providing family-compatible cars that contain some of the spirit of their flagship sports cars.

**Jim Skinner**

**Indeed. The Panamera, Taycan, Cayenne and Macan all drive with some essence of Porsche-ness.**

**To be fair, the F-Pace remains an under-the-radar performer, even as it now dies to make way for Brave New Jaguar. BM**

**On the blink**

LED brake lights are so bright, you can hardly see the indicator flashing. Manufacturers already have technology that reduces the light from the headlight while the car is indicating. Similar thinking should be applied at the back.

**Neil Price**

**Dog wagging the tail**

That BMW i5 Touring seems to make a lot of sense. Yes, I wish it were cheaper, and I would be more comfortable with a longer electric range. But thank heavens one of the manufacturers I trust has come up with an estate car with the capability to carrying dogs in comfort and safety.

It's not the only factor I bear in mind when choosing a car, but it's al-

**There must be some indicators in there somewhere**

ways there. I can't conceive of a life without dogs, and I must rule out any car that doesn't have a suitable area for carrying them. And no, an SUV is not the same.

**Liam Green**

#### INSTANT REACTIONS VIA FACEBOOK

### Xpeng G6



Laugh now, envy later.

**GIOVANNI PACO**

Who would buy one of these and gamble on the company being around in three years' time?

**RICH BRATTON**

We once laughed at Japanese cars then Korean cars and now Chinese cars. Do we spot a pattern?

**DAVIE MAN**

They need to work on the names if they want to appeal to Western markets.

**TONY HALL**

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# ‘Once Europe’s biggest car maker, the UK is now an also-ran – but there are reasons to be cheerful’

**T**

he recent *FT* Future of the Car summit proved that there is a great deal of confusion about the future of the car. The most fascinating time in the history of the motor industry, in the 40 years I’ve been following it, is also now the most uncertain.

Long-term, the future is electric. Yet globally EV sales lag far behind car maker and government targets. Tesla has laid off 15,000 people and its market value has halved since 2021. Used EV values nosedive. Plug-in hybrids are suddenly back in fashion, in a major *volte-face*. Makers delay plans to phase out combustion cars.

Meanwhile mass makers, including UK market leader Ford, want to cut production volumes and move into the premium market. This is mostly delusional. Ford is historically a mass car maker with a mass maker’s mentality: earlier attempts to ‘go premium’ have been abject failures. It would also allow EV-dominant Chinese manufacturing to do to Europe’s car business what it has already done to the rest of its manufacturing industry.

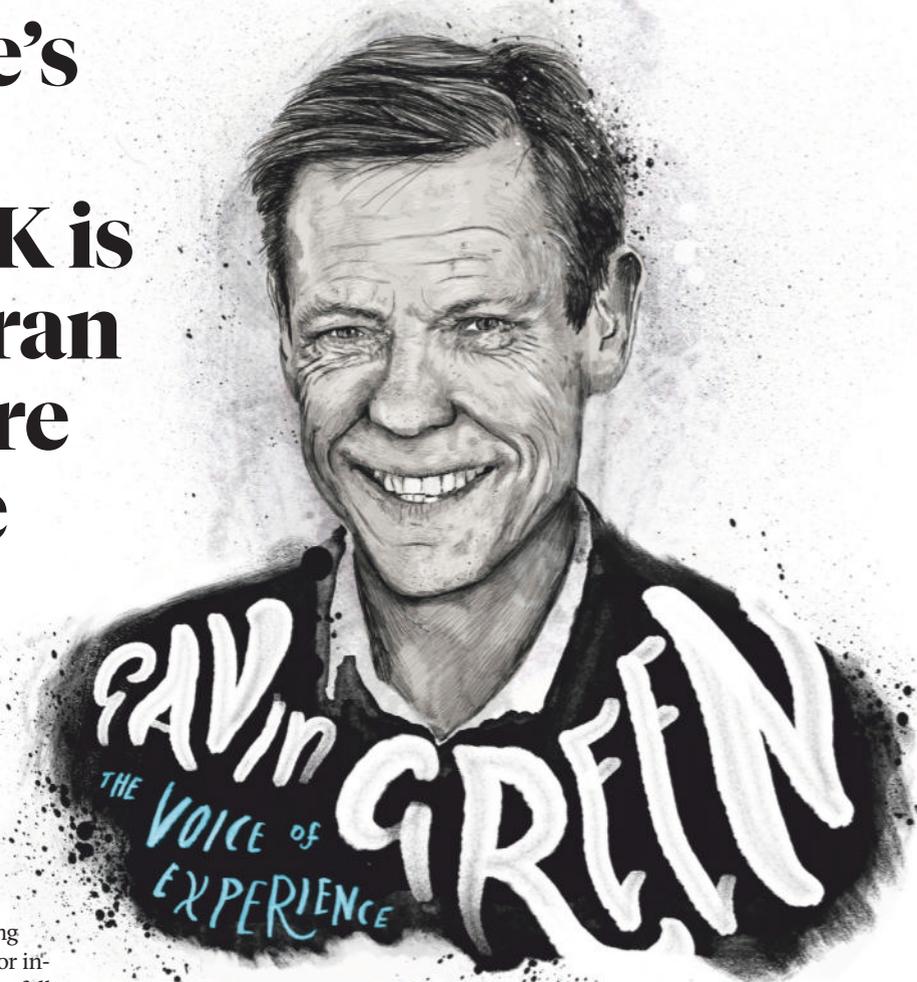
I have misgivings about the Chinese car industry, but it is already active here; it owns Lotus and the maker of London taxis, and does a good job. European governments court their investment.

What should Britain do? A new government is in place, so it’s a timely question to be thinking about.

First and most important, every major car maker still believes the future is electric. Our choice is either to ‘keep bugging on’ (to quote Churchill) or embrace EVs. As Andy Palmer, former CEO of Aston Martin and a driving force behind the world’s first modern EV (the Nissan Leaf), told me recently: ‘We have one lifeboat, and that lifeboat is electric cars.’ (Andy is not your usual EV nerd. When we caught up, he was racing his Caterham at Silverstone.)

As Palmer points out, action must be taken if the UK still wants to have a car industry in the years to come. It lags as the 18th largest car manufacturer in the world, behind the likes of Indonesia and Slovakia. Once Europe’s biggest car maker and the world’s biggest exporter of cars (in the ‘50s), the UK is a combustion also-ran.

But there are reasons to be cheerful. The UK has some of the world’s brightest engineers and best universities. Many are already



involved in EV technologies, including battery tech firm Brill Power, a start-up born in Oxford University’s engineering department.

The UK dominates the acme of automotive technology, Formula 1. F1 offshoots such as McLaren Applied and Williams Advanced Engineering are at the forefront of electrification. It has upmarket and innovative car makers, even if it lags in global production.

Britain’s tech industry is the biggest in Europe and world number three, behind only the US and China. The City of London, likely funder of start-ups, is the world’s second-biggest financial centre.

The UK has an unmatched record for innovation, from steam engines to the internet. Michael Faraday invented the electric motor. Michael Stanley Whittingham pioneered lithium-ion batteries, and UK universities were crucial in making them practical and affordable. Plus, Britain is a leader in decarbonising the electricity that powers EVs.

The UK also has form when it comes to attracting global investment. It pioneered the Japanese ‘transplants’ that boosted our car industry in the ‘80s. Nissan, Honda and Toyota came to the UK thanks to generous subsidies – and to its skilled workforce, universally understood language, quality of the education and, it’s said, the fine golf courses.

Here, again, there are reasons to be cheerful. As I write, the new British government still plans to phase out new combustion cars by 2030 – pleasingly ambitious, if possibly impractical. This makes the UK a more attractive country for foreign investment in EVs.

To gain access to EU markets, local content must be at least 55 per cent. This is good for UK suppliers, especially if batteries are produced locally. Who knows, MGs may even be made in Britain again.

**Gavin Green used to edit *CAR* magazine before the internet was a thing, and is now one of the world’s most respected motoring pundits**

Illustration: Peter Strain



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# 'One second you're in a car, the next you're in a NASA centrifuge, making gghnn noises'



**T**here's an old saying you may have encountered on a birthday card: 'Children are like pancakes – the first one is always a bit weird.' I can laugh because I'm the second-born.

Pancakes are also like cars – the last one is always the one to go for. The last pancake incorporates all the mistakes you've made, all the learnings on temperature and consistency, all the feedback you've received from your bleating, ungrateful kids who've been whinging at you from the table. 'Mine's got holes in it! Mine's too crispy!' Always make sure you keep the last one for yourself.

Cars are like pancakes. They say you should always buy the last-in-series Porsche 911, for example. The G Series lasted from 1973 until 1989, and the late-model Carrera 3.2, introduced in 1984, is the best pancake to go for because it benefited from decades of improvements. Likewise the 993, the last air-cooled 911 with its clever 'Weissach' rear axle that made it the best-handling pancake of the lot (before water-cooling changed the 911 forever). Ferrari's 458 was the last naturally-aspirated V8 and the 2013 Speciale version was famously called 'peak Ferrari' when it was tested in this magazine by a highly respected road tester (Mark Walton). See? That's three examples, and in journalism that's all you need to prove a point.

I thought about this 'last one is the best' theory this month, because I finally got to drive the McLaren 750S and my brain has been rewired. What a shocking, sensational, mind-blowing supercar. The 750S is the last in a long line of muscular turbo V8s before McLaren goes fully hybrid. It builds on the bloodline that dates back to the original 12C, through the 650S, 675LT, 720 and 765LT, all of them sharing the same basic architecture, each one being steadily refined and improved. I'm lucky enough to have driven all of those cars, and the latest, last-in-line 750S is now so good, so perfect, I would contend it's one of the greatest supercars of all time. Seriously.

First of all, it is distressingly, frighteningly fast. On the track its speed is diluted by the wide tarmac and the huge run-off areas, but on an ordinary B-road between hedges, it is hypercar-fast – a brief lunge down a short straight in third gear is nothing short of shocking. A couple of passengers who had never experienced a supercar before were traumatised when I took them out, subjected to the

neck-hurting, blood-draining full-body squeeze that makes you feel dizzy and a bit sick. It's as though one second you're in a car, everything's familiar, and the next you're teleported into one of those NASA centrifuges, struggling to keep your head upright and making 'gghnn' noises at the back of your nose.

But what makes the 750S so exceptional is how exploitable that violence is. The 750S is light (around 1300kg) and stiff (thanks to its carbon tub). It has this magic trick of somehow floating over a bumpy road – no, wait, not floating. That suggests you're disconnected. The Ferrari 296 kind of floats over bumps, and its steering feels like you're guiding a long-range missile over an ocean. The 750S, by comparison, is absolutely rooted down on the tarmac, jiggling and bobbing over the road surface, with the stiff (surprisingly stiff) hydraulic steering quivering and wagging in your hands.

Yet despite this intimate communication, the bump forces coming up through the wheels are rounded off and blunted, so the car feels stable and predictable, leaving you completely confident about your position and trajectory. It doesn't just feel light and agile, it feels chuckable. Ridiculous, I know; 750bhp and chuckable. It feels very rear-wheel drive, sometimes squirrelling as the rear tyres struggle to get the power down to shove you forwards, yet it always feels like the 750S is 'beneath' you like a 200bhp hot hatch.

So what I'm saying is, it's scary and not scary; wild yet also completely tamed; explosive like a failed SpaceX launch but somehow also subtly, precisely adjustable like a finely-engineered stunt plane. How the hell have they done it? Dunno, but the 750S has been almost 15 years in the making. If I had the money, I'd buy one, smother it with chocolate spread and eat it for breakfast every morning.

Despite resembling a regular human, editor-at-large Mark Walton has been known to find solace tinkering with old Land Rovers and tractors

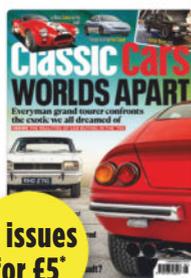
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# L I G H T N I N G



# T W I C E

# STRIKES



Tesla's new Model 3 Performance takes on our favourite hot EV, the Hyundai Ioniq 5 N. Can there really be two thrillingly good £60k-ish electric family cars?

Words Chris Chilton Photography Jordan Butters

# S

uck, squeeze, bang, blow. Unleash the full motherlode in one of 2024's obscenely fast EVs and that pithy description of a four-stroke combustion cycle feels like it's been repurposed for the electric age, except it's the driver doing the heavy breathing, not the car. It starts with a get-ready intake of breath and a here-goes-everything push on the right pedal, and ends with a dazed exhalation 200 metres down the road.

We all know that even some ordinary EVs have been able to embarrass supposedly rapid combustion-powered heroes away from the lights for years. But it's only recently that car makers have begun to market fully-formed electric performance cars for the enthusiast market. Cars like the Ioniq 5 N – the car that came out top of the 'EVs for Petrolheads' shootout in the June issue, which here takes on the latest version of Tesla's fastest small car, the Model 3 Performance.

This pair look like hatchbacks and accelerate like supercars, when they're neither. With the i20 N and i30 N being eased out of the European market, the £65,000 Ioniq 5 N crossover signals a new electric focus for Hyundai's performance sub-brand. And the Model 3 Performance is a £59,990 saloon that's twice as rapid as the base car.

There's been a 3 Performance on Tesla's books since 2018, but beyond its ability to turn your internal organs into minute steak it never felt different enough from the already fast and longer-legged dual-motor variants to justify the additional expense. While some buyers probably love the stealthy presentation, most drivers thinking of jumping ship from a BMW M car or AMG expect more than simply NASA launch-grade acceleration. More visual attitude, more ego stroking from the interior appointments, tangible handling benefits. Recognisable and kudos-earning performance branding.

The new Model 3 flagship goes some way to answering those complaints. It's still called Performance, rather than taking the Plaid name used by the naughtiest S and X models, meaning Tesla hasn't yet united its fast cars under a common brand. But this time there are some helpful visual telltales.

Like all new Highland-generation Model 3s, the 2024 Performance gets a pointier beak with slimmer headlights that make it look less cute and more cut-throat. But a bespoke front bumper with vents at each corner and a blacked-out lower section with a small splitter help distinguish it from the base and Long Range models.

Other clues include handsome 20-inch wheels with aero covers placed between the spokes rather than the 18s (and optional 19s) on the cheaper cars, bigger brakes with red calipers, and a confusingly Plaid-looking badge and neat little carbon lip spoiler on a bootlid that's still crying out to be a hatch, and still isn't.

Think of the Performance as a regular Model 3 viewed through one of those Snapchat filters that makes your skin subtly smoother and

cheekbones more chiselled, rather than one that makes you look like you just got back from a fortnight in Istanbul where the doctor signed you up for everything on the menu.

No, the Ioniq isn't subtle, the weird drain cover grille above the front bumper, trademark red N detail lines and in particular the huge and very shiny black plastic lower bumper section making it look like it was designed to appeal to six-year-olds.

But there's a real sense of fun about the shouty go-faster styling add-ons that even big kids can get behind. And real substance to back it up. Compared with the regular Ioniq 5's, the bodysell is welded and glued for extra strength, the suspension subframes reinforced, the wider-track suspension has new arms, springs, adaptive dampers and bushes, and the steering rack is faster and fastened more securely.

The non-N line-up starts with a single electric motor and a feeble 168bhp, which can be upped to 225bhp via a long-range battery or transformed into a 321bhp dual-motor EV that hits 62mph in under 5.0 seconds. Not bad, while not being bad-ass enough to cut it as a performance car these days, so the N gets more electric ponies. An entire western's worth.

A 223bhp front motor and 378bhp rear motor buddy-up to generate 601bhp, the kind of muscle that can snap your neck back hard when you floor the accelerator. And unlike less potent EVs, it maintains that push long after you think it'll fade. Come up behind a cyclist or dawdling tractor on a country road – the kind of situation when you need to explode from 10 mph to 50mph in an instant, but never can, even in the fastest combustion cars – and when you nail the throttle the N won't fail to win your over.

And we haven't even got to THE RED BUTTON yet. Extend your ►

## THE IDEA OF FAKE GEARS IN THE IONIQ SEEMS PERVERSE BUT IN FACT IT'S GENIUS





If Tesla was wrong-footed by the Ioniq 5 N, it's caught up again now



Gone are the days when you heard fast cars long before you saw them



Other Ioniq  
5s have been  
facelifted, but  
not the N



All Model 3s have  
the Highland facelift;  
Performance gets  
some unique details

right thumb to press the NGB (N Grin Boost) tab and you unlock an extra 40bhp for 10 seconds. There's absolutely no occasion when you need it, but plenty when you'll use it anyway, because it's so addictive it makes a crack habit feel like a take-it-or-leave-it social smoking hobby.

Deploy the lot from rest and you'll hit 62mph in only 3.4 seconds and the standing quarter mile in a hair over 11 seconds, a smidge of torque steer gently jiggling the wheel in your hands. That's damn near McLaren F1 pace. But it's still not enough to shake the Tesla off.

The mid-ranking dual-motor Model 3 stomps to 62mph in only 4.4sec, but the Performance drops the sprint time to 3.1 seconds with a powertrain that's rated at 453bhp here but 510bhp in the same spec in the US. It seems unfathomable that its Model S Plaid big brother is almost 50 per cent quicker again.

But despite the potential to shock, the Performance is entirely capable of mooching along like a regular Model 3, with only the slightly fidgety ride and pleasing hug of the not-a-Plaid-branded sports seats in the sterile cabin reminding you that you're not in a humble single-motor car. There's almost no indication from the driver's seat of what'll happen when you dip into the power until you do, and in Chill mode even maximum acceleration is modest.

But Insane mode really is that, to the point where this morning's breakfast starts making noises about planning to pull a U-turn. And that feeling of wanting to change direction really does follow through to the rest of the Tesla experience. It's incredibly eager to turn into corners, but that comes at the expense of a slightly nervous feel that probably isn't an issue on fast, smooth curves, but makes the 3 seem a little edgy on a bumpy B-road.

And it's not the only trait that might make you think twice about opening the taps on a road without plenty of visibility ahead. It's good

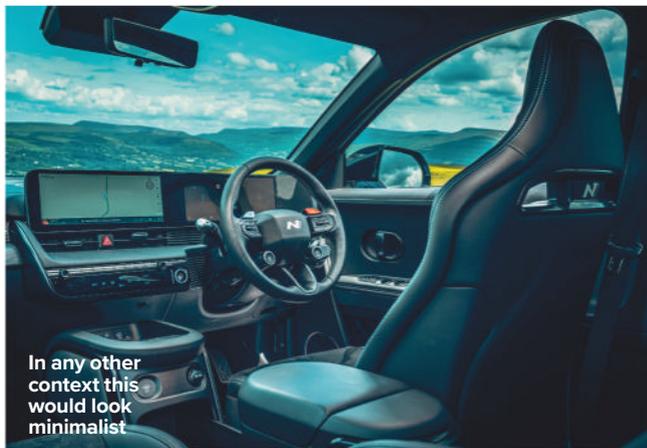
## THE IONIQ 5 N'S NEAR-MCLAREN F1 PACE IS NOT ENOUGH TO SHAKE THE TESLA OFF

to know that there's decent regenerative braking power available, because while the trad brakes can haul the 3 up from huge speeds without breaking sweat, the pedal needs a big shove, and the feel doesn't inspire confidence.

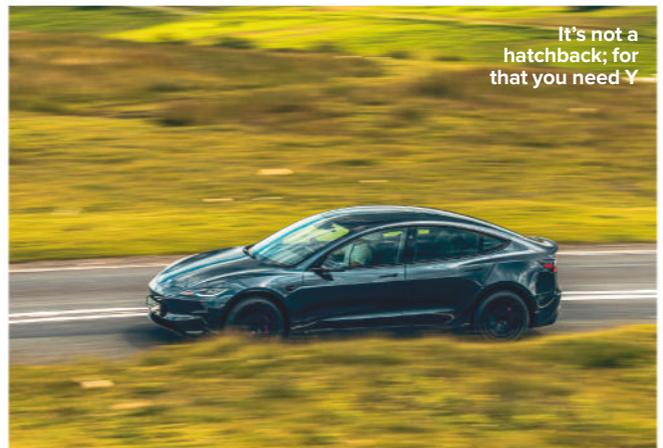
Iffy brake feel is nothing new in EVs and hybrids, which often struggle to blend the efforts of the motors and the old-fashioned friction-based stoppers. But the Hyundai nails it with brakes that have enough bite at a light push without feeling jumpy or inconsistent. They just feel right from the get-go.

And that's the N all over. It fills you with confidence the moment you start to lean on it. You know, the way the best petrol-powered hatches do. It has tremendous straight-line stability, so much that it's borderline inert at motorway speeds, but still manages to feel lively on twisty roads. Not as lively as the Tesla, but you're thankful for that when you're really exploring the right pedal's arc, never knowing exactly what's around the next corner that might force you to change your line.

Shame the steering doesn't involve you in the action a little more clearly. It's accurate and well weighted, and feels more natural than the Tesla's, but you never get the sense that you're keyed into the tarmac the way you do in the very best driver's cars. And on narrow B-roads you never forget that the Ioniq 5 is 63mm wider than the Model 3. Seen in isolation it might not be obviously an SUV, but the ►



In any other context this would look minimalist



It's not a hatchback; for that you need Y

### PRE-FLIGHT BRIEFING | HYUNDAI IONIQ 5 N

#### ► Why is it here?

Hyundai's transformation from worthy but dull to worth-BMW-money came into full bloom with the Ioniq 5, an electric crossover that looks like a supersized VW Golf and shares many of its underpinnings with the similarly impressive Kia EV6. The Giugiaro-esque styling, which nods to Hyundai's own '70s Pony, still looks fresh. Non-N cars have recently

been facelifted, but it's not a big deal. Interior space is vast and the N model has almost four times the muscle of the base car.

#### ► Any clever stuff?

All Ioniq 5s are capable of bi-directional charging and get 800-volt electrics for speedy 250kW fills. But the new N version's real party piece is its simulated manual transmission. You can either



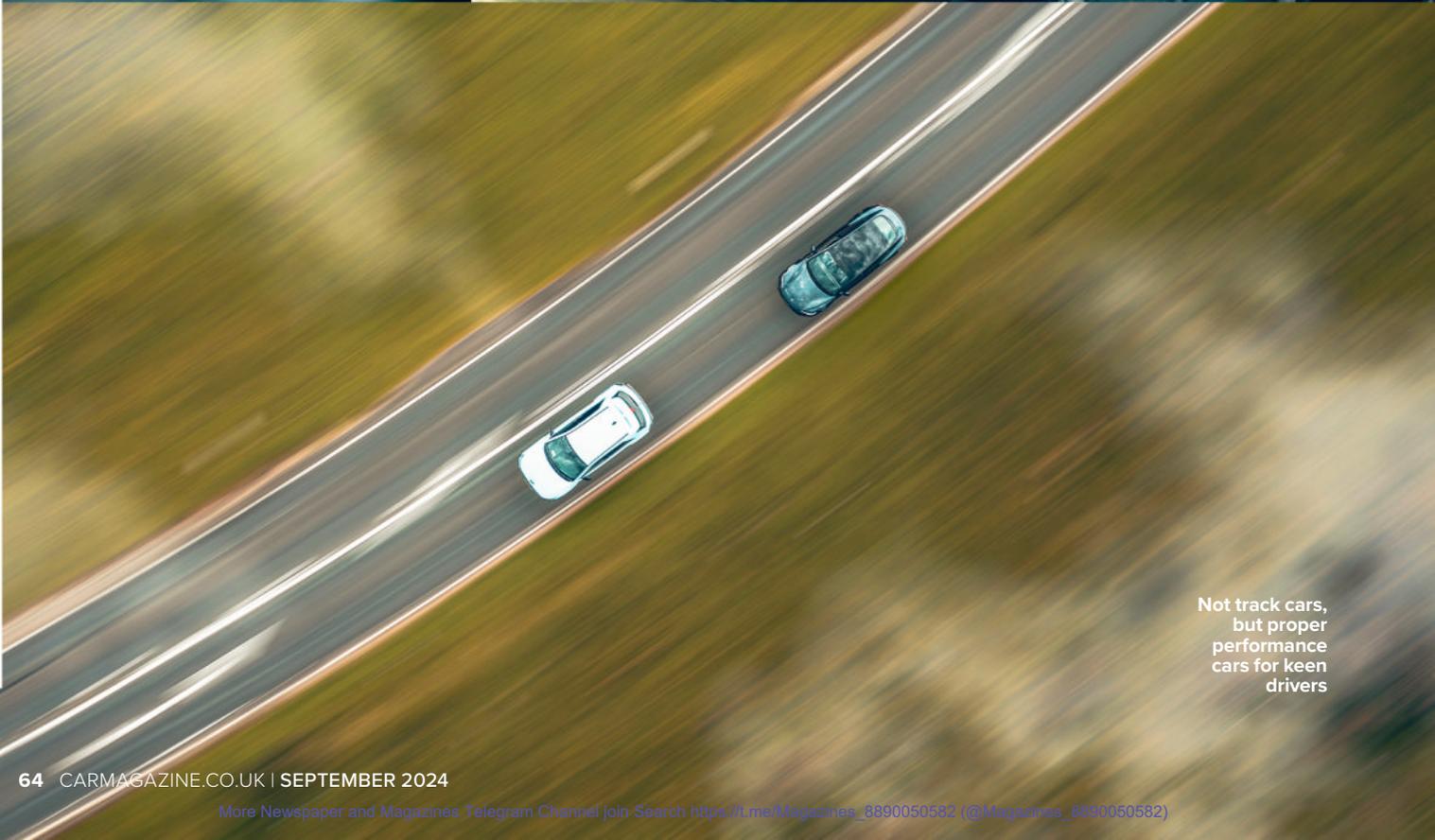
drive it like a conventional EV for maximum performance or use the paddles to shift between eight fake gears for maximum involvement.

#### ► Which version is this?

The regular Ioniq 5 line-up starts at £43k for a humble single-motor, rear-wheel-drive model and stretches to £58k for a fully-loaded 322bhp dual-motor Namsan Edition. The financial stretch from there to the £65,000 N isn't that big, but the performance gulf is huge thanks to a 641bhp powertrain that delivers 62mph in 3.4sec.



Boot is smaller than the Tesla's, and N has no frunk



Not track cars, but proper performance cars for keen drivers

## YOU'LL GET AT LEAST 250 REAL MILES OUT OF THE MODEL 3 BUT ONLY 200 OUT OF THE IONIQ

girth and the 2235kg kerbweight (almost 400kg heavier than the Model 3) ensure it is.

As on the Model 3 Performance, you can tweak the Ioniq's front-to-rear torque bias – though you never really shuffle the torque, only reduce it at one end to exaggerate the effect at the other – and the Hyundai lets you save your favourite powertrain and chassis configurations so that you can call them up whenever you want via a button on the lower left of the wheel.

That's nothing new, but the button's mirror image on the lower right of the wheel is. Press it and the Ioniq does its best impression of a petrol car, giving you eight pretend gears to play with, an imaginary 8000rpm revcounter and three different fake engine sounds to pick from, or the option to mute them altogether.

The idea of slogging up a hill in a pretend fourth gear, denying yourself the true push available, seems at first perverse – what next, an electronic choke lever for cold starts? – but it's genius. We found ourselves flicking between EV and fake-engine modes depending on our mood, and far more often than we toggle between two- and all-wheel drive in an xDrive BMW M car. You can even blip the throttle in traffic. Those cheesy sound effects need work, mind, so you might be thankful for the mute option. Because it's not only you that can hear them, but everyone outside, too. If we're playing pretend petrols, then why not give us some genuine soundtracks, Hyundai? Maybe we could even download new ones from an app store that's updated a few times a year.

But even ignoring the driver toys, the Ioniq's interior has plenty to offer. Much like the way the N moves down the road, there's a reassuring familiarity about the controls that you don't get in the Tesla. The 3 is blighted with terrible steering-wheel-mounted indicator controls (an enterprising third party already has a retrofit column stalk in development) and asks you to spend too much time looking at the centre screen, even simply to see how fast you're going – a handy thing to know in a car this quick.

The Hyundai's centre screen is, frustratingly, more of a stretch away, but the interface is well thought out, there are plenty of hard keys below and the already fine Ioniq's interior is peppered with smart N details, including a fantastic set of seats to remind you where your money went even when you're crawling through traffic.

Tall rear-seat passengers who find the reasonably roomy Tesla too tight will be delighted by the Hyundai – it's huge back there. Although



Hatchback proportions, SUV dimensions



Model 3 interior more sparse than ever, for better or worse

the Ioniq's hatch opening gives it an advantage over the Tesla's old-fashioned boot, the Model 3's cargo area is bigger than the Hyundai's, and the 5 N doesn't have a frunk, unlike the Tesla, and unlike the non-N Ioniq 5, with its single rear motor.

That's not the only practicality win the Tesla scores over its rival. The Performance has a 328-mile WLTP range, which is down from 390 miles for the £10k-cheaper bi-motor Long Range, but makes a mockery of the Hyundai's 278-mile rating. And those are make-believe official numbers, remember. You'll get at least 250 real miles out of the Model 3 but only 200 out of the Ioniq. And if you're only filling to 80 per cent, budget for plenty of stops on longer journeys. Both cars can handle 250kW of charge, meaning stops are at least brief, if you can find suitable chargers, which is often easier for Model 3 drivers, thanks to the Supercharger network. ▶

### PRE-FLIGHT BRIEFING | TESLA MODEL 3 PERFORMANCE

▶ **Why is it here?**

The Model 3 made small EVs both desirable and affordable when it launched in 2017, but a slew of rivals have jumped into the arena since then so Tesla introduced a facelifted version, dubbed Highland, in late 2023. A new nose, better quality interior materials and controversial indicator controls mounted on the spokes of the steering wheel are the headlines.

▶ **Any clever stuff?**

Rear-seat passengers get their own 8.0-inch display to control temperatures and watch Netflix, and drivers now have to shift between drive, reverse and neutral using an icon on the touchscreen (or the predictive shift feature). This range-topping Performance model gets a dedicated Track driving mode and drift option, giving drivers the



scope to increase the understeer or oversteer.

▶ **Which version is this?**

This is the most potent and

most expensive Model 3, the £59,990 Performance, that can hit 62mph in 3.1sec. A less powerful Long Range Model gets a similar bi-motor, all-wheel-drive set-up for £49,990 and can still reach 62mph in 4.2sec, or there's a single-motor, rear-drive version for £39,990. There's no similarly hot version of the Model Y – a car that's often described as a taller Model 3, but which lacks its agility.

## IONIQ 5 N vs MODEL 3 THE DETAILS

### HYUNDAI IONIQ 5 N



### TESLA MODEL 3 PERFORMANCE



#### AFFORDABILITY

##### WE SAY...

Ioniq is more expensive for cash buyers, cheaper with a PCP

**Price** £65,000 (£65,900 as tested)  
**Representative PCP** £839 per month (48 months, £10k deposit, 10k miles per year, 8.8% APR)  
**Typical approved-used value** n/a (too new)

**Price** £59,990 (£61,990 as tested)  
**Representative PCP** £878 per month (48 months, £24k deposit, 10k miles per year, 9.6% APR)  
**Typical approved-used value** £40k (2020 model, 20k miles)

#### POWERTRAIN

##### WE SAY...

Same concept, different feel

84kWh battery, dual e-motors, all-wheel drive

78kWh battery, dual e-motors, all-wheel drive

#### PERFORMANCE

##### WE SAY...

Closely tied but Tesla is even more explosive

**Power** 641bhp  
**Torque** 546lb ft  
**Top speed** 161mph  
**0-62mph** 3.4sec

**Power** 453bhp  
**Torque** n/a lb ft  
**Top speed** 163mph  
**0-62mph** 3.1sec

#### BODY/CHASSIS

##### WE SAY...

Fatboy Ioniq has more room for people, less for bags

**Structure** Steel  
**Weight** 2235kg  
**Suspension** MacPherson strut front, multi-link rear  
**Length/width/height** 4715/2152/1585mm  
**Boot capacity** 480 litres (no frunk)

**Structure** Steel  
**Weight** 1851kg  
**Suspension** MacPherson strut front, multi-link rear  
**Length/width/height** 4720/2089/1431mm  
**Boot capacity** 594 litres (plus 88-litre frunk)

#### EFFICIENCY

##### WE SAY...

Tesla makes the fun last longer between charges

**Official energy consumption** 2.9 miles per kWh  
**Tested consumption, gentle A-road** 2.7 miles per kWh  
**Tested consumption, rapid B-road** 1.9 miles per kWh  
**Official range** 278 miles  
**Tested range** 253 miles  
**Emissions** 0g/km CO2

**Official energy consumption** 3.7 miles per kWh  
**Tested consumption, gentle A-road** 3.3 miles per kWh  
**Tested consumption, rapid B-road** 2.5 miles per kWh  
**Official range** 328 miles  
**Tested range** 202 miles  
**Emissions** 0g/km CO2



## 1st

HYUNDAI IONIQ 5 N

The most fun you can have in an EV, but get used to opening that charging flap. Fun manual option builds on excellent dynamics

★★★★★

## 2nd

TESLA MODEL 3

Much-improved Performance gains speed and quality, but feels more skittish than Hyundai and lacks its sense of fun. If the Ioniq's range is a concern, this is your car

★★★★★



A winner, but not by much. Great to have a genuine choice

## THE FINAL RECKONING

# TOSS A COIN AND YOU WON'T BE WRONG

Imagine jumping back in time 20 years and telling your retro self that one of 2024's hottest performance cars is an electric Hyundai that costs as much as a proper six-cylinder, rear-wheel-drive coupe from BMW's M division (don't say M2, which will be confusing). And the other is named after some long-dead Serbian inventor. Young you would think old you had lost a few marbles in the Time Tunnel.

But here in the present, we no longer bat an eyelid at that kind of thing. Hyundai and Tesla both have enough brand credibility and engineering know-how to create fast EVs that are exciting enough to make even some die-hard petrol fans think about switching sides.

Those drivers might have considered Tesla's Model 3 Performance before, but the facelifted car is better in almost every way. It has more

power, which it didn't really need, and a better-quality interior and a stronger visual presence, which it did. Grip and body control are both tangibly better than before and Tesla has built in extra configurability of the handling and powertrain set-ups with additions including track and drift modes.

Realistically, you'll almost never use those, or the similar features in the Ioniq 5 N, but we guarantee you'll love the Hyundai's simulated manual transmission and probably find yourself engaging it regularly. Because it makes the N fun in a way most EVs aren't, which rely so heavily on their instant response to deliver thrills.

But even if you put the gadgety stuff to one side for a moment, the Ioniq 5 N still does the business. It's way roomier and the interior delivers a ton more of that feelgood factor performance cars need. We'd happily trade the Model 3's slight accelerative advantage for the Hyundai's simpler control interface and more welcoming driving environment.

And when it comes down to it, the Ioniq delivers where it matters. It does feel wide, but it masks its weight well and gives you the stability and brake feel to let you explore everything the bi-motor drivetrain can throw at you. If you still don't think EVs can cut it as rounded fast cars, this is the one that will change your mind.

There are at least three reasons why you might want to give the Tesla the nod. You might prefer its sleeper styling and you'll definitely prefer its £5k cheaper sticker price and much longer (but still not long enough) driving range. But we'll take the Hyundai, thanks – in black to dial down the styling, and paid for on a PCP, where it comes in cheaper than the Tesla. But we'll do it with the knowledge that there are going to be days when that lack of range will drive us mad. We think it'll be worth it. **car**

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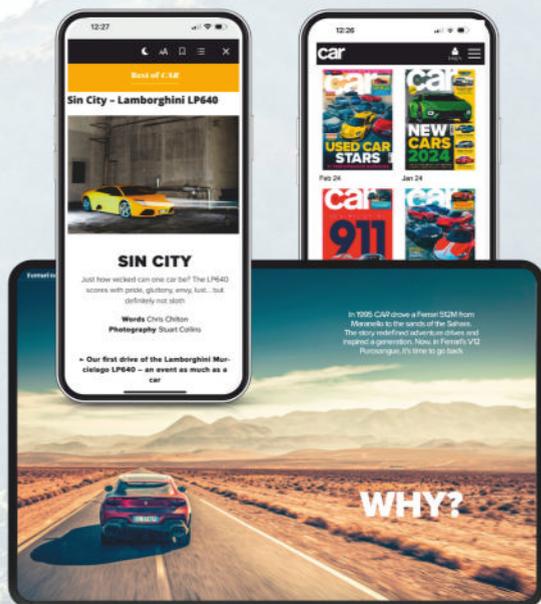
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# GTI SOS

The Mk8 Golf has proved hard to love. Is the new Mk8.5 GTI the car to put Golf back on top?

Words Georg Kacher Photography Tom Salt



Three letters, one meaning – in theory, anyway. GTI stands for the ultimate Golf: intense, intuitive, involving, inspiring. Not necessarily the fastest but always the most fun. A proper driver's car fused with a solid daily driver. Quick enough and always entertaining, relatively affordable to the present day (the word 'relatively' is doing a lot of heavy lifting here, granted) and a long-time B-road champion. But this reputation still draws largely on earlier vintage cars like the Mk1 GTI. That car was small, light and expertly balanced... and an awfully long time ago.

The best Mk2 GTI was the G60, complete with its unique zero-lag supercharger. The same concept was also featured in the very special Limited edition, of which only 71 units were made. The most remarkable go-faster Golf Mk3 was the VR6, which even beat the BMW 325i in our Giant Test. The sweetest Mk4 was arguably the R32, which threw in four-wheel drive for good measure. But after that? With a few notable exceptions the Golf GTI struggled to stand out as it endlessly tweaked the group's faithful 2.0-litre four and messed about with the time-honoured recipe, resulting in a car that broadly tasted right but failed to set your pants on fire.

The new 8.5 GTI doesn't deviate, but it does push things in the right direction. The engine's rated at 262bhp and 273lb ft. Still front-wheel drive, the latest GTI weighs 1454kg. Unfair though the



comparison is, that's a whopping 600kg more than the 1976 original. It can nonetheless go 0-62mph in an energetic 5.9sec (down from 6.2sec in its DSG-equipped predecessor) and on to 155mph. That's pretty decent performance for a car priced at £38,900. You'd pay more – a lot more in some cases – to get the perkier Audi S3 or Honda Civic Type R.

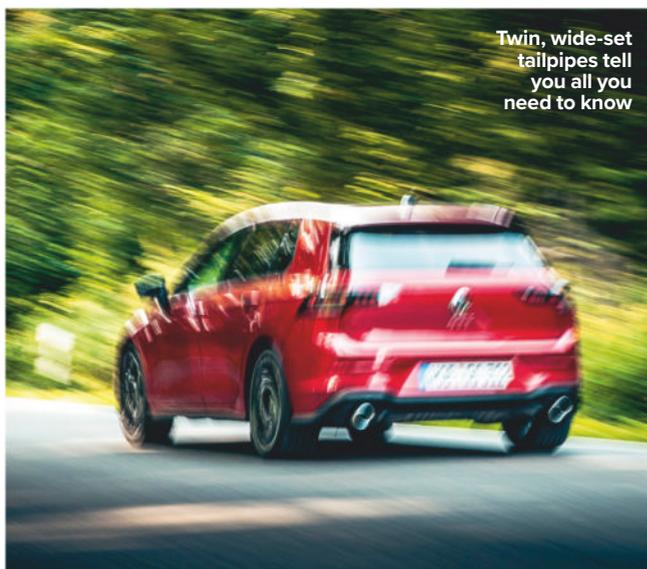
But is it, after its latest metamorphosis, also still a proper GTI? To find out, we're heading out on a two-day marathon from Wolfsburg to and through the Harz, a wooded mountain range that used to mark the westernmost corner of East Germany.

The drive kicks off on a 50-mile stretch of lightly trafficked two-lane autobahn. Here we instantly more than double the official thirst, showing 18.6mpg. (Just over 500 clicks later, the grand total will improve to 23.3mpg.) Okay, so it's endured a heavy right foot and had the transmission in Sport most of the time and, since radar traps are still not overly common in the former surveillance state, we generally have a blast.

Staying clear of the main tourist trails, we map out a diverse cross-country course which includes special sections like the revered hillclimb from Kelbra to Kyffhäuser, the picturesque Panorama Trail and the German Fairytale Route. Although many roads were widened and resurfaced in the wake of unification, the topography remains essentially the same, so you still drive along the bottom of deep, dark and rutted valleys, snake up and down wooded hillsides which appear a lot higher than they are, and dart across flat patches of farmland from one period timber-framed settlement to the next.

What makes a GTI a GTI? The badges, now bigger and bolder. A few red accents inside and out. That nostalgic neo-tartan cloth upholstery. Extra-cost wheels combining the traditional horseshoe and telephone-dial motifs. A spoiler here and there, more blacked-out body sections, a wider track and lowered sports suspension, plus a digital instrument panel with bespoke graphics. But to light a small fire in what starts life as a lukewarm hatch, the GTI team must bring out the best in its handling. This thing needs to put a smile on my face.

The new GTI is more refined, quieter, more comfortable, better equipped and, somehow, even more benign at the limit and nicely balanced – this is a precision tool that rarely puts a foot wrong. But don't for a moment mistake it for a Golf capable of taking on a Type R (we tried that a few years ago with the Mk8 GTI, and ended up with the world's most one-sided 'battle'), Toyota GR Yaris, BMW M135i or Hyundai i30 N. Those fights will be the business of the ►





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boss Andy  
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## ALL HELL BREAKS LOOSE WITH A BANG AND A JOLT. GUYS, YOU CAN DO BETTER

forthcoming Golf GTI Clubsport and the Golf R.

As before, the GTI features an electronically-controlled front axle difflock dubbed XDS+, which masterminds the torque flow via a wet multi-disc clutch. Also part of the package is the Driving Dynamics Manager, which coordinates the ESC, XDS+, ABS and DCC activities. DCC is short for Dynamic Chassis Control; tuning the adaptive dampers in sync with the acceleration, braking and steering inputs.

The four driving modes are labelled Eco, Comfort, Sport and Individual. The latter invites you to fine-tune steering, chassis and drivetrain in 15 steps from laid-back to full attack. That's the good news. The bad news is the absence of the even sharper Special calibration reserved for the Clubsport model, also known as the Nord-schleife program, which does a much better job tying the car down at speed when big bumps, high g-forces and unilateral undulations threaten to disturb the flight path.

Clausthal-Zellerfeld in the heart of the Harz is the starting point of two amazing driving roads. One takes us north to Goslar. The other, faster one, meanders south to Bad Sachsa and Nordhausen. Built in the late '50s by the GDR and still cobblestoned through some of the antique villages where time appears to have stopped, this challenging 70-mile stretch turns out to be a more complete proving ground for the GTI than any test-tube racetrack.

Redlined at 6500rpm, the fourth iteration of the long-running and effective but charmless EA888 four-cylinder engine develops 262bhp, 20bhp more than before. The unchanged maximum torque of 273lb ft is spread evenly from 1600 to 4500rpm. Since the six-speed manual transmission is no longer an option, the twist action is dispatched by a seven-speed DCT. Why no manual? VW simply fed the numbers into an equation of cost versus demand and out popped a definitive if disappointing answer. Even American buyers, nuts as they are for a manual, weren't enough to keep the DIY six-speeder from oblivion.

The DCT's a mixed bag. Let the ECU do the work and its hesitation can run to nearly two seconds when you put your foot down hard in fourth or fifth. For a long time nothing happens. Then all hell breaks loose with a bang and a jolt before the torque wave straightens again. Guys, you can do better than this.

Even with the transmission in Sport, this Golf doesn't feel very GTI. Activating manual mode helps, but why are the shift paddles so small and made of plastic, not metal? Although the 2.0-litre ►

## HOLE IN ONE! THE BEST GOLFS

### ► PRETTY MUCH ANY Mk1

Any rust-proofed Mk1 is worthy of your time – pretty, fun to drive, classy. Period colours preferred. GL had brown tinted glass, which might seal the deal for you.

### ► Mk1 CABRIOLET

Built by Karmann and a machine of uncommon joy. Drop the roof, drive and turn that frown upside down. A real time machine nicknamed 'strawberry basket'.

### ► GOLF RALLYE

Aggressive, E30 M3 looks paired with highly effective all-wheel drive. A collector's item, and for good reason.



### ► GOLF G60 LIMITED

Awesome. Supercharging made for zero lag (the G60 could teach the new GTI a thing or two about throttle response) and the soundtrack alone is worth the outlay.

### ► Mk5 GTI EDITION 30

The Mk5 GTI made the Golf great again, and the Edition 30 made it better still. Great to look at, sublime to drive and rare enough to make it a wise investment.



### ► THE ESTATE VERSIONS

Hard to believe estate cars are mega-out. An R Estate – or Variant as Europe calls it – is your low-key RS4 for the people.

### ► THE EARLY SYNCROS

Talking of the people, cars like the Mk2 Syncro delivered affordable four-wheel drive.

### ► THE e-GOLFS

Cast your mind back to a time before ID. 3, before the electric crossover onslaught, before the mass penetration of almost-affordable Teslas. Short on range they may have been, but where lots of pioneer EVs looked and drove like freaks, the e-Golf was a welcome shot of zero emissions without the weird.

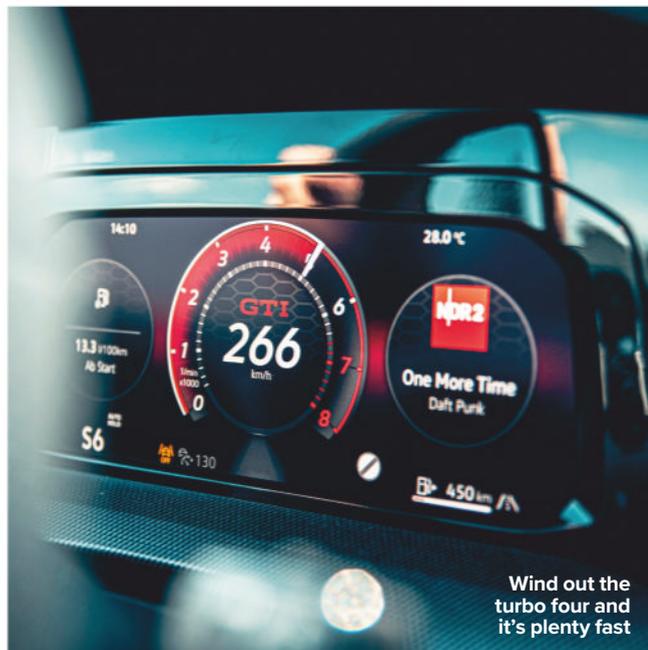


### ► Mk3 VR6

The narrow-angle V6 was a packaging miracle, and gave the slightly insipid Mk3 real firepower. Turbo four-cylinder Rs have since proved to be a smarter, less nose-heavy means to a similar end.

### ► NEW GTE

No all-wheel drive, but the new £39,750 GTE bundles together a combined 268bhp and 82 miles of electric-only range. Decent.



## LIFT-OFF OVERSTEER, AN EMPHATIC SPECIALITY OF MK1 GTI, IS NOW A RARITY

engine is less torquey than the competition from BMW, Ford and Hyundai, the perfect gearing and the quick upshifts keep up the momentum and maintain the urge. Sadly, the soundtrack disappoints. With the exception of a faint turbo hiss under load, the system emits more noise than music.

The base GTI may be quick enough to pull away from the shoal of ambitious diesels and the flock of unassuming S-line, M Performance and AMG-entry models, but the 296bhp Clubsport shaves the 0-62mph time to 5.6sec, is faster overall, and throws harder punches between 2000 and 5000rpm. Although the 262bhp version seldom feels underpowered, it isn't particularly snappy off the mark and nor does it really blow your socks off above 50mph. Why doesn't the GTI now have more than 300bhp, given the Civic Type R has comprehensively out-stripped it on straight-line speed for three generations now?

On dry tarmac, deactivating ESC adds a bit of drama, although XDS+ ensures the extra haptic excitement never comes close to an old-school steering fight. The revised progressive-rate steering may be a tad more precise and direct but it still isn't quite quick enough, and it requires too much effort even with the scalable assistance set at a minimum. As a result, the car feels bigger and heavier than it is, as well as less playful and not really chuckable. The weight, the pronounced on-centre stiffness and the large 12.0-metre turning circle all help make the 2025 GTI less nimble and agile than early variations of the breed. And on the unrestricted autobahn, where high-speed stability is essential, an odd give-and-take tension develops between the steering and the front axle.

One of the car's strongest points is the brakes. The system is spot-on in terms of response, effort

and staying power. It's also linear and easy to modulate. Although 18-inch rubber would give a cushier ride, the optional 19-inch Bridgestone S005 tyres pictured here (235/35s all-round) provide extra cornering grip and better traction. The adaptive dampers are a good thing, too, but while the drivetrain is best left in Sport and the steering in Comfort, the chassis is too harsh in Sport and too swooshy in Comfort. We settle for an in-between setting which feels more okay than brilliant. Lift-off oversteer, an emphatic speciality of the GTI Mk1, is now a rarity even with ESC disabled and a hooligan at the wheel. And of course the handbrake is a pushbutton job without fly-off capability.

While it's easy to appreciate the new GTI, falling in love with it is more difficult. Purists will miss the manual 'box, the lighter two-door body, the bigger 55-litre fuel tank and, most of all, the failsafe ergonomics conceived before the world lapsed into 24/7 touchscreens. The revised display is easier to use than the previous-generation screen but there are still too many distractions.

The days when the GTI was a pace-setting cult car that enthused and enraptured a generation are coming to an end. The GTI is no longer extreme nor advanced enough to rock anyone's world. Over the years it's moved from best-in-class to me-too; from breakthrough to merely competent.

This Golf GTI has four or five years to go before a new scalable platform takes over, and with it a new GTI. Perhaps that car will re-light the fire. Until then GTI aficionados should either buy what may well be the last-of-its-kind new Clubsport or search for a well-kept, rust-free Mk1, Mk2 or Mk7.5. Sadly, anyone looking for a Golf GTI that drives the way you know it should will, for now at least, find the past better equipped to deliver the goods than the present. **car**

### VW GOLF GTI

**PRICE** £38,900

**POWERTRAIN** 1984cc 16v turbo four-cylinder, seven-speed twin-clutch auto, front-wheel drive

**PERFORMANCE** 262bhp @ 5250rpm, 273lb ft @ 1600rpm, 5.9sec 0-62mph, 155mph

**WEIGHT** 1454kg

**EFFICIENCY** 39.6mpg (official), 23.3mpg (tested), 162g/km CO2

**ON SALE** Now

★★★★★



Handling is as neat as the styling. And that is neat



Resists cheap shot about obsolete powertrains



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Wolfsburg, home of VW and the Golf, is the biggest car factory in the world. We join design boss Andreas Mindt for an exclusive tour around the city built on the car that changed the world

Words Jake Groves Photography John Wycherley





Around 4000 Golfs are made every day



More robots than in 1938, but also 70,000 human workers



Our guide Mindt is a Golf fan through and through



here's a rhythmic pounding rumble that's gently but persistently shaking the ground around me. It starts not long after I enter the biggest factory building I've ever been in, and it's getting louder as I venture further in. It's ominous, bassy and regular like an amplified yet distant heartbeat – and gives the impression I'm exploring a place that's organic, rather than industrial.

I've been given exclusive access to Volkswagen's vast Wolfsburg facility as it celebrates the Golf's 50th anniversary. Wolfsburg isn't just Volkswagen's headquarters but its constant, its keystone and a near-indestructible core for a brand that's had to ride out considerable turbulence – plenty of it its own doing – over recent years. Diesel-gate-influenced strategies to electrify quickly have meant a lukewarm start for its ID range of cars and dwindling EV production; it's been beset in China by home-grown car makers toppling its number one sales position; management reshuffles have meant uncertainty in the brand's future direction and CEO Thomas Schäfer reportedly told senior management 'the roof is on fire' last summer. And yet the Wolfsburg facility remains, endures, thrives even.

This is and always has been the Golf's home, kicking off production in 1974 and never stopping – and plans are already in place to carry on well into the 2030s. Schäfer has previously confirmed to CAR that the ninth-generation Golf will launch in 2028, arriving with petrol engines and going electric – still badged Golf, without any ID branding. By then it will be running on the VW Group's Scalable Systems Platform (SSP) – an architecture that will be able to underpin anything from an EV city car right up to a super-powered performance grand tourer. GTI and R will electrify, too, with the first electric R product being the ninth-generation Golf's R version, which will also be built in Wolfsburg.

Nothing prepares you for the sheer scale of the operations here. To help get a handle on it all, I have the best tour guide you could ever ask for: Andreas Mindt. I'd argue few are more passionate about the Golf's past, present and future than Mindt, who just so happens to be VW's head of design (his previous post was Bentley, where he sculpted the new Continental GT) and the man responsible for the Golf's future direction.

And yet, spend time with Mindt and that pressure doesn't seem to manifest. He's warm, chatty, affable and extremely knowledgeable. And, as it turns out, a big fan of CAR: 'The Good, The Bad and The Ugly! Such a great signature, I always remember that,' he says. I ponder whether perhaps GBU is our Golf; an ever-evolving constant in a familiar brand.

Mindt has Wolfsburg and Volkswagen in his blood. 'I grew up in this city, and my father lived in Wolfsburg too,' he says. 'My father ►

**NOTHING PREPARES  
YOU FOR THE SHEER  
SCALE OF THE  
OPERATIONS HERE**



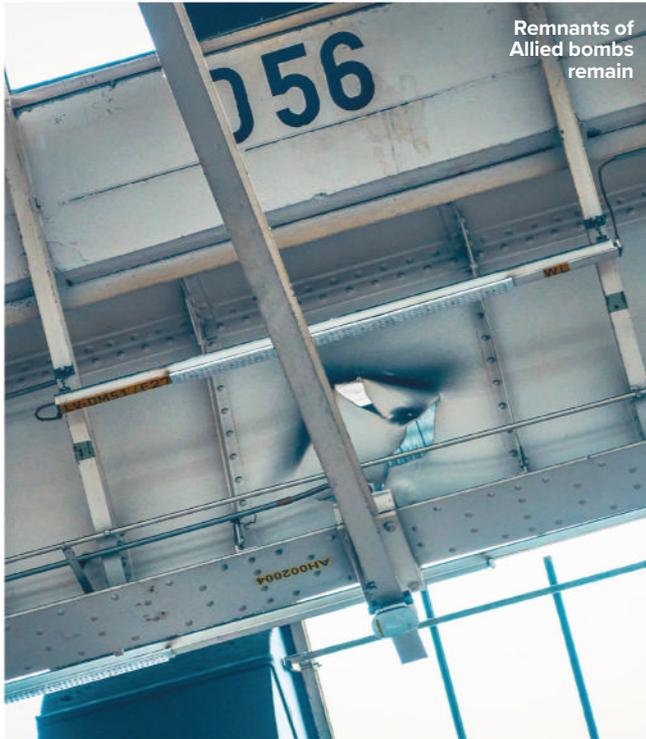
Lunchtime fun  
as workers take  
turns to slide  
VW logo up  
and down



These won't stay stored here long – work moves fast



Jake might need some overalls before his shift starts



Remnants of Allied bombs remain



Oldest steel press still works but only makes cups

## WOLFSBURG PROUDLY HOLDS THE TITLE OF LARGEST CAR FACTORY IN THE WORLD

moved from Opel to Volkswagen in 1974 – I was five years old then, and he took me to the cinema to see *Herbie*, which was the first time I had seen a movie in colour. After seeing that, I just wanted to draw Beetles all of the time, so coming back to Volkswagen... this role is just fantastic for me.'

'Back' to VW? Yes, before stints at Audi and Bentley, Mindt cut his teeth working on the Mk5 Golf with the likes of Marc Lichte (former Audi design director) and Peter Schreyer (designer extraordinaire who went on to spearhead an aesthetic transformation at Kia). The rear light design used for the production car was his own doing. Since then, he's been involved in elements of the Mk6 and Mk7.

But Mindt knows the task before him as head of design. The most recent iteration of Golf – the Mk8 – hasn't been as well received as its predecessor, mostly down to the user interface, but its odd looks won't have helped. 'Taking over this responsibility [for the Golf's design direction] is a big thing. I enjoy it, but I do feel it. We have to improve the design now and bring the Golf back to its former glory,' he says. As VW has focused on electrifying with its ID range, Mindt acknowledges the Golf has been neglected. 'We have to go back to it. It's like the Porsche 911 – it's the heart of the brand. We have to treat it better, give it the right stage. We're going into the next era with it now, and we need to transform it but keep those fundamentally approachable, likeable but strong characteristics.'

As I wander the factory halls, it's clear that this isn't just any old workforce assembling any old product. As well as those '50 Jahre' banners and signs, there are temporary mini-museums showing off all eight generations to the employees, allowing them to get a dose of the car's history during their breaks. There's passion here, even if the Golf is a resolutely sensible family car sold by the million and not some halo supercar that you might put a poster of on your bedroom wall. That doesn't matter to our tour host: 'For me, the Golf is a supercar but in conventional form.' And he notes that although the Golf is built in huge quantities, no car starts its journey through the factory without an order behind it.

Finally I find the source of that rhythmic, earth-shaking thunder. It's a metal pressing machine in the press shop – only this one is the size of a three-storey apartment block, busy punching out front wings for the Golf. As it presses out part after part, accompanied by that bassy drum beat, it's almost hypnotising to watch. Every working day in the press shop needs around 2600 tonnes of steel, and the pairs of casts needed to press certain parts (the lower is called the 'die' and the upper 'punch') weigh 50 tonnes a pair. And yet changing them takes just 10 minutes. Standing next to this behemoth of a machine while it's working is a brief taste of what goes on here day after day, week after week, all year round.

Wolfsburg proudly holds the title of the largest car factory in the world and has the stats to back it up. It takes up 2.6 square miles of land and manages to look like a city all on its own (despite being attached to one), features 47 miles of roads and 37 miles of railway lines, and it has its own internal bus network just for employees to get around – so much so that there are fantastic bus stop signs that show what factory buildings make what car. You can jump on at a Golf bus stop and be dropped off at the Tiguan line, for example.

Rolls of steel in the press shop – stacked two-up – are each taller than I am, and need the massive cranes you normally only see at shipping ports. Armies of buggies, carts towing trailers filled with components, individual workers zipping around on cycles and autonomous pods all dance around each other like a precisely choreographed industrial ballet. Robots on the production line are so large they'd defeat Thor in an arm-wrestling contest. There's a location where marriage between powertrain and bodyshell happens every few minutes.

Many end up at the Autostadt – the massive complex attached to the factory that houses museums, pavilions for all of the VW Group brands to show off their latest models and the two cylindrical towers that act as massive vending machines filled with customer cars awaiting delivery. Around 70,000 people work across the whole Wolfsburg facility – a number that even includes VfL Wolfsburg, ►

# EPICENTRE OF THE VW EMPIRE

## HEADQUARTERS

Where Wolfsburg plant boss Dr Rainer Fessel and most of the admin staff have their offices. It's a simple, tall and skinny office building that serves as a useful visual shorthand for VW whenever TV news shows want to talk about a corporate scandal. Those lucky enough to have an office on the upper floors are able to see over most of Wolfsburg.

## PRESS SHOP

Housed in one of the oldest parts of the factory, which is still peppered with shrapnel from Allied bombing during World War 2. Around 2600 tonnes of steel passes through the press shop, and almost all of it is pressed several times into body and chassis parts ready for the assembly line via a metal press so large you and your family could live in it.

## PAINT SHOP

Each car is sent through here to get five layers of to-order paint applied. The area is fastidiously clean, with brightly-lit inspection halls that use daylight bulbs for checking any missed areas or dents in the metalwork. Simultaneous lines work with Golf as well as Tiguan and (for a little while longer) Touran models all going through the same process.

## FINAL ASSEMBLY

Where your new car becomes, recognisably, a car. Interiors are fitted, electronics are wired and wheels are attached, as well as the marriage between the structure of the car and the powertrain. Batteries are charged, liquids are filled and engines are started for the first time, and each car rolls off to be tested around the factory's track.

## MITTELSTRASSE

Meaning, literally, middle road. It's the longest external road across the whole Wolfsburg facility at 1.5 miles long. There are several gates where employees get into the factory, including one across the canal from Wolfsburg train station. There's also a bus network that allows workers to hop on and off to travel between different production lines.



## FACTORY STACKS

Arguably the most iconic bit of the storied factory, and eye-popping to stand next to. The facility, and Volkswagen itself, was founded in 1938 to produce the original people's car, the Beetle. Wolfsburg has never skipped building a generation of Golf since its launch in 1974, and will be the home of the ninth-generation Golf that launches from 2028.

## AUTOSTADT

The hub of all public activity at the plant. This is where you can collect your car from one of the vending machine towers, visit Andreas Mindt's favourite coffee place – Erste Sahne – or take in a museum full of automotive firsts at the ZeitHaus. Each VW Group brand has a permanent pavilion here, showcasing the latest metal, and VW-spec currywurst is on the cafe menus.



Mindt wants to make the Golf feel like a real VW again

## VOLKSWAGEN AND ITS WOLFSBURG HOME WERE CREATED UNDER THE THIRD REICH IN THE RUN-UP TO WAR

the factory's own, currently in-form football team.

Volkswagen is more than happy to make a song and dance about you getting your new car. As well as collecting your new model straight out of the Autostadt towers, you're welcome to take a tour of the factory yourself. We're given the special treatment in a bespoke Touran that's had its roof carefully chopped off, and regular tours are done using ID. 3s towing carriages of people through the factory floors. Hell, VW will even give you a pack or two of its own-recipe currywurst for the road; the product coded 199 398 500 A is VW's most popular component, with 8.3 million produced in 2023.

It doesn't hide its history. Volkswagen and its Wolfsburg home were created under the Third Reich in the run-up to war and still, to this day, wear battle scars from the conflict. Look hard enough and you'll spot a few steel support structures (thankfully reinforced in other ways) peppered with shrapnel holes from Allied bombing runs all those years ago. There's even a steel press that went into service in 1939 that's still functional and stands proudly among the much more modern machinery.

Mindt and I spend some time in the ZeitHaus, – a modern structure in the Autostadt that acts as a museum not just for Volkswagen, but for notable firsts in the automotive industry – and here you can just wind Mindt up and watch him go. He rattles off fact after fact about the exhibits – Volkswagen or otherwise – but it's not some tour he's rehearsed, he just knows his stuff, and it's all fascinating. Here, the Golf's immense flexibility and usability are on show. There's a gorgeously retro Mk2 Country, for example, which Mindt claims was the first SUV – 'farmers and hunters bought them in Germany!' – and not far away is the mutant GTI W12 that leveraged the VW Group's flagship engine.

As we sit down for a drink at his favourite haunt in Wolfsburg – Erste Sahne in the Autostadt – I quickly realise he is as fascinated and enthusiastic about coffee as he is about cars. He tells of how Wolfsburg has quite a large Italian community that has influenced good coffee in the area, and that it's the best around. 'I also had a proper coffee machine when I used to work at Audi,' he says. That, I say, ►



Wolfsburg is so big it has its own internal bus network



Like the Golf, Mindt was raised in Wolfsburg

## THIS MK1 BACKS UP MINDT'S MANTRA ON GOLF DESIGN: TIMELESSNESS

must have been pretty noisy. He admits it was: 'Oh yeah, it was! I had this dream of offering it to guests but couldn't keep up with the effort – and the mess!'

Enjoying Erste Sahne's coffee and looking out of the window, we spot a father loading his kids into a heavily modified Mk7 GTI Clubsport S – almost perfectly timed to underline the point about the Golf's flexibility. 'He clearly has good taste,' smiles Mindt. 'That is the beauty of Golf. It's hands-on and approachable and yet can be really, really special every day.'

Mindt's enthusiasm comes to a head when we meet Torben Rühmann, a member of his design team who owns an immaculate Mk1 Golf Cabrio. It was originally a Quartett edition with a white interior, but it has been restored by Karmann and Cabriozentrum in Osnabrück with a sumptuous new caramel hue and matching roof. The paint and wheels are factory fresh, and the owner is besotted.

Now, seemingly, so is Mindt – I can see in his eyes that he'll be pondering the classifieds for one of his own after we're done here (he owns a Beetle and a Bentley Arnage, and a well-used Mk8 Golf GTI Clubsport as a company car). He loves these cars, and knows them inside out. When there's a brief hiccup starting the Cabrio, Mindt is quick with knowledge and advice, pointing out that models of that particular year of production sometimes had issues where air bubbles could develop in the fuel mixture when the car had been driven, turned off and restarted. Not every designer would know that about a car from their company's back catalogue.

Out on the road, the Golf is a bundle of joy. The Cabrio's four-cylinder engine gently thrums as we whizz past Autostadt buildings, seeing the site from a different perspective. Riding shotgun alongside

Mindt is a neat reminder of the Golf's place in the world. Despite this Mk1 example being more than 40 years old, elements of its interior feel like they still belong in Golfs three generations newer, which backs up Mindt's mantra regarding Golf design: timelessness. 'You have to remember, the Golf was following on from another timeless car,' Mindt points out. 'I'd say the first-generation Golf was really brave, moving on from a rear engine in the Beetle to a front engine. At that time, it was a crazy decision, but it needed doing. The Beetle was a golden cow; nobody wanted to slaughter it because it was still a success. But not changing something for so long, even if it's successful, can be a problem.'

Being at the wheel, you can tell the memories of younger days are flooding into Mindt's mind; he tells me of his time attending Coventry University's automotive design classes on an exchange programme, and says: 'I remember when these were new, and now they're a vintage car, does that mean I'm vintage now, too?!' He's laughing, but he has a serious point to make about the long afterlife of a successful car. 'Everybody has memories of the past, but what about the next ones? Who is taking care of the future memories? The young children in the back of that Clubsport? The guy with his restored Mk1 Cabrio? The Golf is a mass-production thing, but the aim is to make it individual to everybody.'

It's been a tumultuous few years for Volkswagen. But with the company committed to Golf for at least another generation at Wolfsburg, and with someone as passionate and Golf-literate as Andreas Mindt leading the model's future direction, it's a fair bet that car, company and factory will all keep steadily pounding away for years to come. **car**



Mindt's favourite factory haunt



Eerily quiet between shifts; but that won't last long



**‘WHAT’S  
IT LIKE?’**

**‘IT’S LIKE  
A GOLF’**

The car that shaped today’s  
automotive world is 50 years old.  
But it very nearly didn’t happen

Words Angus MacKenzie Images VW Archive



'Golf für  
Normalverbraucher'  
reads this advert:  
'Golf for ordinary  
consumers'

# T

he Volkswagen Golf. It's been with us for half a century now and has touched the lives of hundreds of millions of people. In an industry where style often matters more than substance, the original Golf was a paragon of product design, a car whose usefulness made it ubiquitous. And through eight generations it has remained the definitive compact hatchback, the car against which all comers in the segment, old and new, are invariably judged.

Today's Golf is of course bigger, heavier, more powerful and more complex than the original. But its DNA is unmistakable. As it has always been. 'What's it like?' a journalist asked Bernd Pischetsrieder when in 2003 he revealed he had been driving pre-production versions of the forthcoming Mk5 Golf. The question momentarily flummoxed the Volkswagen Group chairman. 'It's like a Golf,' he replied. There was nothing more that needed to be said.

More than 37 million Golfs have been built since 1974. Yes, Toyota has built more than 50 million Corollas, making it the most successful name plate in history. But unlike the Corolla, which was launched as a rear-wheel-drive small car in 1966 before switching to front-wheel drive in 1983, today's Golf is built to the same template as the original. Though compact SUVs are now the world's most popular vehicle format, the Golf still looms large in a segment that in 2022 accounted for almost 1.4 million sales worldwide.

It is tempting to regard the Golf as the inevitable follow-up to the Beetle, the car the entire Volkswagen enterprise was created to build, and whose own usefulness and ubiquity enabled it to defy industry convention for decades. But it's not that simple.

**BEFORE THE GOLF**, Volkswagen was a company trapped in its own history. 'What happens if the Americans stop being amused by the Beetle?' said West German finance minister Franz Josef Strauß in 1967, articulating Volkswagen's fatal flaw. Sales in Germany had slumped from 600,000 vehicles in 1965 to 370,000, and 40 per cent of all Beetles were being sold in the United States, where its combination of low price, solid durability and quirky personality made it a hit among newly minted middle-class suburban men who could afford a second car for their wives or their college-age kids. VW was being kept alive by the Beetle's success as a niche product in a single market.

Under Heinrich Nordhoff, the hard-nosed micromanager with a gift for self-promotion who had run the company since 1948, virtually all the prototypes Volkswagen developed as potential Beetle replacements had been little more than rebodied Beetles, right down to their rear-mounted, air-cooled, four-cylinder boxer engines; '50s and '60s riffs on a vehicle concept designed in the 1930s. Serious work on alternatives with water-cooled engines – front-engine/rear-wheel drive, ►



Wolfsburg MD Nordhoff struggled to see past the Beetle

**Ein Auto für breite Kreise.**

Der Golf ist eines der breitesten Autos im Kreis seiner Konkurrenten. Über ein Meter weit, von links nach rechts. Dementsprechend breit ist natürlich der Innenraum. Was besonders den Gemühten gefällt. Doch der Golf zieht weitere Kreise in seinen Bann. Den länger gefällt, daß sie ihre Beine von sich strecken können.

Den Sparstarken gefällt, daß man mit 30 PS die 100 Kilometer für 8 Liter Normbenzin bekommt (lt/100 km DIN).

Den Steuerstarken gefällt, daß sich das Finanzjahr alle Jahre einmal mit 1,57 Mark beim 1,1 Liter-Motor begünstigen muß.

Den Unkosten gefällt der 350 Liter bis 700 Liter große Ölpfännchen mit Packklappe genauso, wie er den Privatstarken schnell und bequem hilft, die Sonderabgabe von Lebensmittelböden nach Hause zu schaffen.

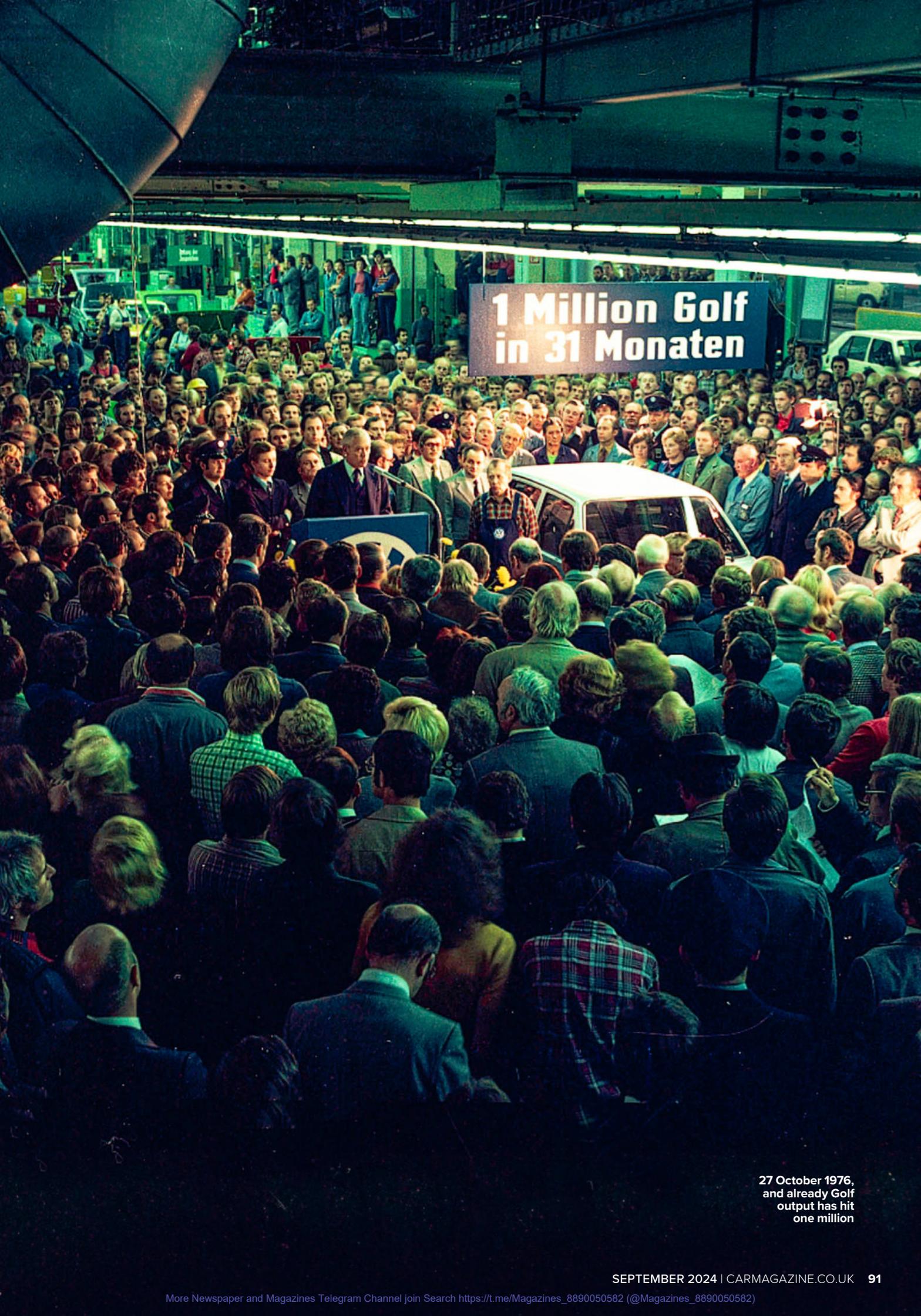
Und dem Kreis der Partizipationsbegeisterten gefällt, daß sich für ein dreißigjähriges Auto schnell ein Pfätzchen findet.

Ein Auto, das so vielen so viele Gefälligkeiten erweist, ist verständlicherweise in den breitesten Kreisen willkommen.

**Golf, der Kompakt-VW. Auto, Motor und Spaß.**

'A car for broad circles', code for 'oldies welcome here'

## DESIGNER GIORGETTO GIUGIARO WAS SHOWN A CAREFULLY DISMANTLED AND SECTIONED FIAT 128

A large crowd of people is gathered in a factory setting, likely for a car launch event. In the center, a man in a dark suit is speaking at a blue podium. To his right, a white car is partially visible. The background shows the factory floor with various equipment and workers. A large banner in the upper right corner reads "1 Million Golf in 31 Monaten".

**1 Million Golf  
in 31 Monaten**

**27 October 1976,  
and already Golf  
output has hit  
one million**



Giugiaro's genius  
clear for all to  
see on the Mk1  
production line



1981 ad claimed Golf had sold in 141 different countries

**Why Detroit's engineers are secretly praising Volkswagen's Rabbit.**

Happy days are here again.

One thing about the men of the engineering profession they give credit where credit is due. Which may explain all the nice letters and phone calls we've received from Detroit since our new Rabbit has been out. Why all the praise?

**93 miles per hour.**  
A Rabbit is very fast. And although we obviously don't recommend 93 mph (because they all speed limits), it is reassuring to know as you're about to get onto a hectic expressway, that a Rabbit has the power for great acceleration. From 0 to 50 in only 8.2 seconds. That's quicker than a Monza 2 + 2.

**38 miles per gallon.**  
A Rabbit is very thrifty. In the recent 1975-model Federal Environmental Protection Agency fuel economy tests, the Rabbit averaged 38 miles to the gallon on the highway. It averaged a nifty 24 in tougher stop-and-go city traffic.

**As big inside as some mid-size cars.**  
The Rabbit is a sub-compact sized car. That's on the outside. Open the door and it's a different story. 80% of the space in the car is devoted to functional room. There's actually more head and leg room inside than in some mid-size cars. You get the feeling of roominess immediately, as you stretch out behind the wheel and look out through the huge front windshield. Visibility is incredible.

The main engineering feat that makes all this room possible is our revolutionary transverse engine, or stated more simply, an engine that is mounted sideways. Besides adding space, placing the engine in this manner, and slanting it, has a lot to do with why the Rabbit gets such good gas mileage. For now you have a very low silhouette front end which means lower wind resistance, which means better gas mileage.

**varabbit**

\*Suggested retail price Rabbit 2-door Hatchback, P.O.E. Transportation, local taxes and other dealer delivery charges additional. © Volkswagen of America, Inc. \*See your dealer for more details.

The Rabbit comes only one way, as a Hatchback. And you don't pay a penny more for that extra door. In addition to the 2-door model shown, there is a 4-door available. Four doors plus a Hatchback. That's a lot of an and oles in one car.

**How we got it to handle so easily.**  
The best way to describe driving a Rabbit is that it just feels right. The rock-and-pinion steering, designed exclusively for the Rabbit, allows you to feel in complete control, especially on fast, tight turns.

Another VW exclusive, an independent stabilizer rear axle, means independent wheel travel for more riding comfort and added safety on rough roads.

As is true on only two Detroit cars, the Eldorado and Toronado, the Rabbit has front-wheel drive for road-hugging ability. The firm and sporty ride of the car is enhanced by rigid unitized body/chassis construction, controlled spring and shock rates and longer suspension travel.

**Owner's Security Blanket.**  
To make sure your Rabbit lives a lively and carefree life, it's backed by the most advanced car coverage plan in the automotive industry: The Volkswagen Owner's Security Blanket with exclusive Computer Analysis.

**All for \$2,999.\***  
Lately, a lot of automotive executives have been giving speeches on "the car of the future." They see it as being small, low-priced, but with increased interior dimensions and more economical performance.

Ladies and gentlemen of the automotive industry, your car of the future, our Rabbit, is here today.

And it will only cost you \$2,999 to try it out. Happy days here again.

Mk1 and Mk5 were called Rabbit in North America

## FRUGAL YET FUN TO DRIVE, THE MK1 GOLF EFFORTLESSLY SURFED THE ZEITGEIST OF THE LATE 1970S

front-engine/front-wheel drive and even with an engine mounted under the rear seat and driving the rear wheels – did not start until after Nordhoff died in 1968.

In the autumn of 1969, as engineers in Wolfsburg struggled to re-imagine a people's car for the space age, Nordhoff's successor, Kurt Lotz, and VW's Italian importer, Gerhard Gumpert, visited the Turin motor show. Comparing notes, they discovered that four of their six favourite cars had been designed by a 31-year-old who had established his own independent design business just 18 months earlier. His name was Giorgetto Giugiaro. Lotz invited the young Italian to Wolfsburg.

When Giugiaro arrived at the Volkswagen Research Centre on a frigid morning in January 1970, he was taken into a giant room. There, laid out on the floor, was a carefully dismantled and sectioned Fiat 128, the compact front-wheel-drive saloon launched just 10 months earlier. 'The 128 was the reference car,' Giugiaro confirmed in a 2002 interview with *la Repubblica* journalist Vincenzo Borgomeo. The Fiat defined the basic package and layout of what would become the Mk1 Golf.

Giugiaro's original Golf design had a shorter bonnet and a more raked windscreen. These were changed for the production car because of concerns over meeting US crash and interior-reflection regulations. It also had rectangular headlights, but these were switched to round units to cut costs. Giugiaro was not happy. 'I objected, I protested,' he told Borgomeo. 'I even said that [from the front] the Golf... looked too much like the Alfa Romeo Giulia GT. Do you know what they replied to me? "If it looks like an Alfa, it's better that way."'

**LAUNCHED IN MAY 1974**, the Golf proved an instant hit. It had taken Volkswagen nine years to produce and sell a million Beetles. Golf sales topped a million within two years. Propelled by the Golf, Volkswagen posted a staggering profit of DM1 billion in 1976, more than anyone in Wolfsburg could have imagined possible a few years earlier. Toni Schmücker, a former Ford executive who in 1974 had become the third person to head troubled VW in the six years since Nordhoff's death, described the turnaround as 'almost incredible'.

Compact yet roomy, frugal yet fun to drive, the Mk1 Golf effortlessly surfed the zeitgeist of the late 1970s. This unpretentious hatchback offered a quiet oasis of common sense in a world riven by oil crises, war and terrorism. It also provided the raw material for an idea that would reveal a hitherto unknown Volkswagen, a Volkswagen that could build real driver's cars.

In the autumn of 1974, Volkswagen's press office chief, Anton Konrad, and VW test engineer Alfons Löwenberg, came up with an idea they called the Sport Golf. 'The regular Golf had up to 85bhp, and my idea was to come up with a car with more power,' Konrad, who died earlier this year, recalled in a 2016 interview. 'We wanted a car to attract young people, and to make people more interested in motor racing. We wanted to give the car all the genes that are necessary in motorsports, but the car had to be used in the city, on the autobahn and for leisure.' VW marketer Horst-Dieter Schwittlinsky replaced the Sport Golf working title with a new name: Golf Grand Tourer Injection. The Golf GTI. And it was VW's chief designer Herbert Schäfer, a keen golfer, who attached a golf ball to the GTI's gearlever as the finishing touch.

The Golf GTI was shown to the VW board in early 1975 and was officially greenlit for production on 28 May. Even then, Volkswagen's still conservative senior management wasn't entirely convinced. 'The marketing department said we would only build 5000 examples, so set the price very high,' Konrad said. 'In the first year we sold 30,000, and by the end of the Mk1 we had sold 420,000. It was also a financial success. We were so happy we forgot to ask the bosses if we could each have one Deutsche Mark for each car sold!'

**AS THE MK8 REVEALED**, with its glitchy software and poorly thought-out switchgear, not all Golfs have been created equal. 'It was too slow, too average,' was Bernd Pischetsrieder's acerbic assessment of the Mk4 GTI when he spoke to *CAR* during the summer of 2004. ►

Made softer and flabbier than previous GTIs in a bid to broaden its appeal, the Mk4 also eschewed the red line graphic on the grille that had been a key GTI visual since the Mk1. 'It was not a proper GTI,' Pischetsrieder growled. 'It was marketing gone wrong.'

But for other reasons the Mk4 is a highly significant Golf. It was the first to bear the fingerprints of Ferdinand Piëch, the iconoclastic engineer who was now VW's autocratic and acquisitive CEO, and whose grandfather, Ferdinand Porsche, had designed the original Beetle. His grandfather's car had democratised mobility. Piëch's Golf democratised luxury, especially inside, with an interior whose surfaces, colours and materials looked as if they'd been cribbed from a high-end Audi.

In terms of the non-GTI models the Mk4 was indisputably a Golf, a compact hatchback that was well engineered and solidly built. But it was now also something else: it was premium. It stood apart from its mainstream rivals from Ford and Opel, Peugeot and Renault.

Engineer Ulrich Hackenberg oversaw the development of the Mk5, the Mk6, and the Mk7 Golfs. His cars are significant not so much for what you can see, but for what's under the skin: the Mk5 was built on VW Group's PQ35 platform, one of the key elements of Piëch's cleverly orchestrated platform-sharing strategy. In addition to underpinning the Mk5 Golf, PQ35 would become a VW Group workhorse, used for vehicles of wildly different purpose and personality, ranging from the Audi TT to the Seat Leon, the Skoda Yeti and the Volkswagen Caddy.

The Mk7 Golf launched in 2012 is even more significant, as this debuted Hackenberg's highly efficient and flexible modular vehicle 'toolkit' concept that is now used across all Volkswagen Group model lines, from Skoda to Bentley. Hackenberg describes the Mk7 Golf as his masterpiece. 'All of my knowledge went into the Mk7,' he says.

Because the 'toolkit' used to build the Mk7 – the Modularer Querbaukasten, aka MQB – comprised parts and components that could also see duty on models such as the Passat and various SUVs, the Mk7 was, in Hackenberg's opinion, the most over-engineered Golf in history. 'Instead of specifically engineering lower-cost parts for the Golf, it made sense to bring the cost of those parts down through higher volume,' he explains. Many of those parts, of course, have been carried over to the Golf Mk8 and Mk8.5.

'THE GOLF IS A CAR where you are not allowed to make big mistakes,' smiles Ulrich Hackenberg. He's no stranger to shouldering the burden of history that rides along with the development of every new Golf. But, he says, with the Golf the perfect need not be the enemy of the good: 'You want to be the best, but you need not be the best in all categories. You need to be the best in general.'

That is perhaps the key to the Golf's enduring appeal: it has never been anything less than a competent all-rounder, the rational choice in the segment. Ferdinand Porsche's Beetle was widely seen as a stunningly original creation, although in truth he had appropriated many of the car's innovative concepts from others, most notably the talented Josef Ganz, a Jewish engineer from Frankfurt who was forced to flee Germany in 1934, as well as Hungarian inventor and later Mercedes-Benz safety pioneer Béla Barényi, who in 1925 had filed technical drawings for a remarkably similar car.

The Golf, by contrast, broke no new ground when it was launched. Its overall size and engineering layout was heavily influenced by Fiat's 128, a car designed by the legendary Dante Giacosa, the man responsible for the tiny and brilliant Fiat 500. Even the decision to make the Golf a hatchback, 50 years on still the definitive compact-car format, wasn't entirely an a-ha! moment: the idea had been introduced to the mass market with the 1961 Renault 4, and first combined with a transverse front-engine layout like the Golf's in the 1967 Simca 1100. And it could be argued that the GTI, the seminal hot hatch, was simply a factory hot rod in the spirit of the original Mini Cooper and Cooper S.

Viewed dispassionately, the Volkswagen Golf is thus perhaps an ordinary thing. But there is excellence in doing ordinary things extraordinarily well. And that's why, after 50 years, the Golf is still with us. **car**



Management unconvinced by GTI, but happy to be wrong



Toni Schmücker: boss when the Mk1 changed everything

**THE GOLF WAS PREMIUM. IT STOOD APART FROM ITS MAINSTREAM RIVALS FROM FORD, PEUGEOT, OPEL AND RENAULT**

More innocent  
days, when VW  
was keen to  
push its diesels

# Mpg.



The Golf Diesel. 53mpg.  
MANUFACTURER'S FIGURES.

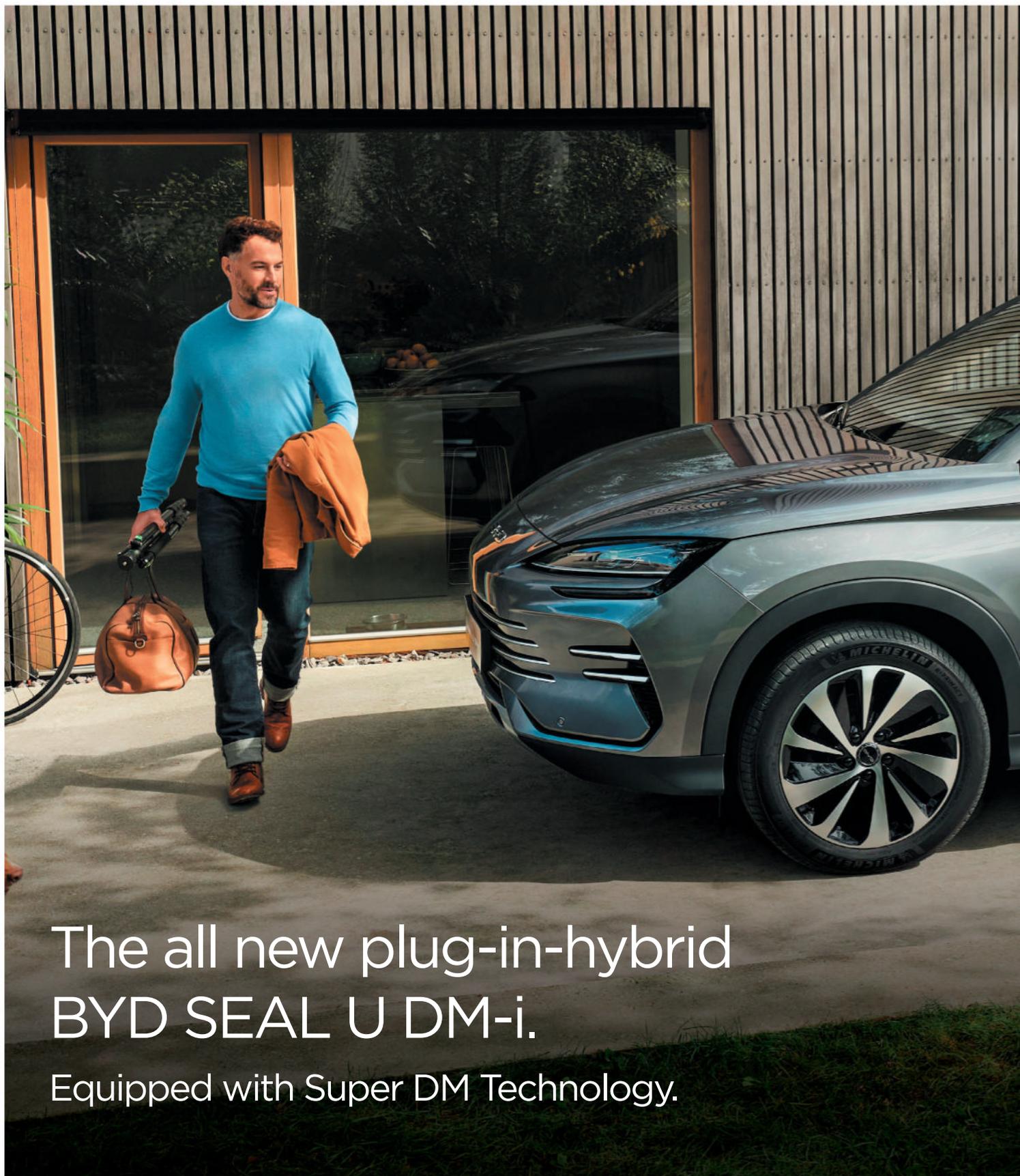
# Or mph.



The Golf GTI. 112mph.  
MANUFACTURER'S FIGURES.

IN BETWEEN THE DIESEL AND GTI ARE SEVEN OTHER GOLFS, INCLUDING TWO AUTOMATICS AND A CONVERTIBLE. BROCHURES FROM:  
SALES ENQUIRIES, V.A.G (UNITED KINGDOM) LIMITED, YEOMANS DRIVE, BLAKELANDS, MILTON KEYNES MK14 5AN. TEL: (0908) 679121. EXPORT AND FLEET SALES: 95 BAKER STREET, LONDON W1M 1FB. TEL: 01-486 8411.





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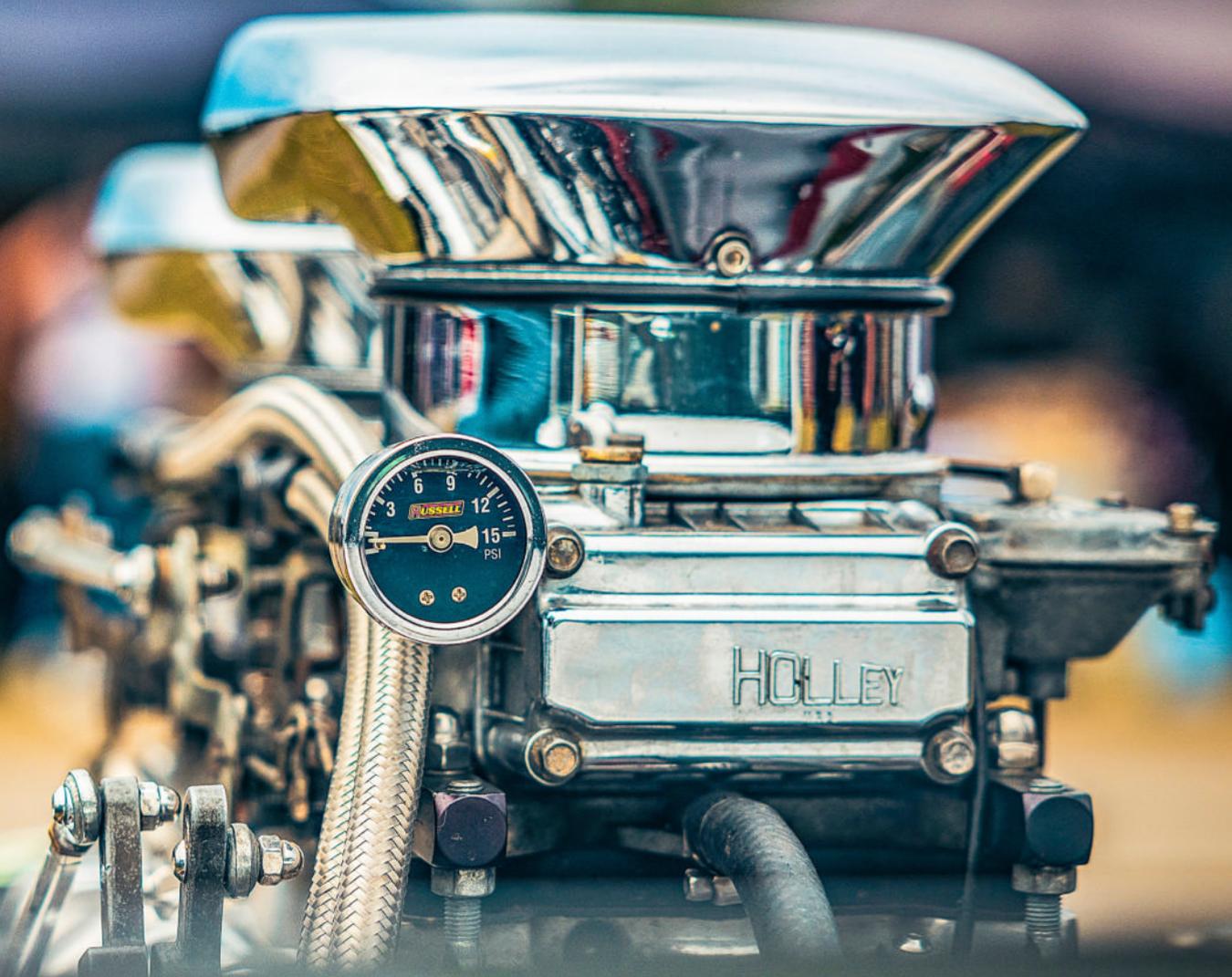




**BYD**



# Rods and mockers



Somewhere between *American Graffiti* and ZZ Top, the UK version of US hot rod culture is still full of creativity, passion... and a faint smell of Blu Tack

Words Mark Walton Photography Lee Brimble

# Hot rod heaven



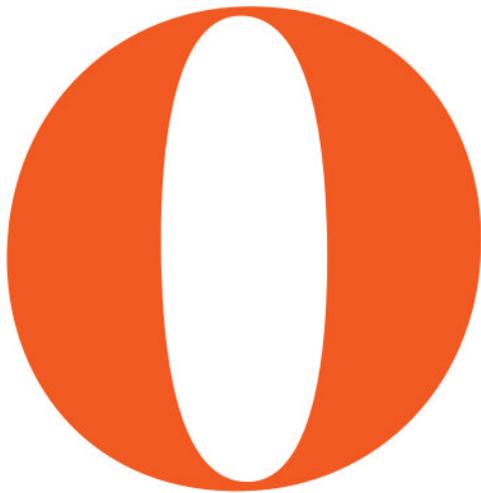
Hard to imagine the EV version of this



Need to check your quiff? Hubcaps to the rescue



Euro NCAP's worst nightmare



Walton transported back to his youth

h God, has it really come to this? I've come to the National Hot Rod and Custom Car Show at the Lincolnshire Showground for a trip down memory lane and I'm now standing in a field in the rain. There are about seven cars here, including a van covered in squirrels and a jacked-up Toyota Hilux called *Hellboy*. Rockabilly music is blasting from the big tent and there are families wandering around with pushchairs, making the best of it and wondering if it's too early for ice cream.

This is a shock. This is not how I remember things. The hot rod scene of my childhood seemed cool and subversive; it was reckless and a bit racy. It was all about glinting chrome engines, a sparkle of California sunshine, ZZ Top and Daisy Duke in her denim shorts.

But then, maybe my memory is playing tricks. My soft spot for hot rods dates way, way back – all the way back to my pre-teen childhood. In fact, all the way back... to the dinosaurs.

Dinosaurs were my first love, but by the time I was eight or nine I got drawn towards cars. It was inevitable – my dad was a car enthusiast and I grew up in a house which always had copies of *Motor Sport* and *Thoroughbred & Classic Cars* lying around. I'm not sure exactly when, but at some point I went into a newsagent and said to my dad, 'Please can I have that one?' – and he bought me a copy of *Hot Car*. Launched in 1968, *Hot Car* magazine capitalised on the craze for customising that flourished in the UK through the '70s. When I started reading it at the end of that decade, it would often have a centre spread of a Ford T-bucket or a metalflake Transit, which I would carefully extract by bending back the staples to stick on my wall. Blu Tack was invented in 1970, changing kids' bedroom walls forever.

In 1979 *Street Machine* was launched, which seemed more grown-up than *Hot Car*, with even wilder cars on dragster wheels and flaming paint jobs. And of course there was *Custom Car*, which had topless models in the centre spread, leaning on the cars with their fake-fur coats and leopard-print leotards. It was tawdry and vulgar and anyway I wasn't allowed to put *Custom Car* pictures on my wall.

Then in 1984 I discovered *CAR* magazine. Next thing, I'm reading about Gavin Green driving a Ferrari 288 GTO. Suddenly, no more flames or fur coats. But because I moved on so quickly – and so absolutely – my hot rod days ended up sealed off, like one of those time capsules you fill with photos and bury in the garden. It turned out that wanting to own a Ford Model A with Daisy Duke's face airbrushed on the side was just a phase.

But recently I've started remembering those cars again, getting all nostalgic about the candy paint colours, the pinstripe detailing and buttoned interiors. It got me wondering about the people and the scene – does British hot rodding still exist? And if so, are T-buckets still a thing? So off I went to the National Hot Rod, Custom & American Car Show to find out.

It's still raining at the Lincolnshire Showground so I wander into the large marquee tent where the National Street Rod Association (NSRA) has a display. There I find Rick Reynolds standing by his customised 1954 Fordson van. Rick has lots of old photos and magazine articles on show, and it soon becomes clear that Rick, like me, is here to remember.

'I grew up in the hot rod scene,' he tells me. 'When I was a kid, we used to travel every weekend to custom car shows. My dad, Mo Reynolds, got into it in 1978, which was a time of creativity, murals, metalflake paint and gold Dralon seats. He had a 1968 Torino which he customised. Cars were about reflecting the personality of the owner. My dad has passed away now and I came back into it trying to find his car. I tracked it down in Sweden, still with the Dralon seats, the metalflake just about hanging in there, but the great thing is, it survived!'

Rick started a Facebook group called Back To Our Roots, which brings people together to remember the period. 'As a kid I took loads of photos and shot a lot of Super 8 cine film,' Rick tells me. 'The scene has been through many stages, and for a while in the '90s it kind of died down. Now there's a nostalgia for that era.'

Another owner whose car is a blast from the past is Andy Hogg, whose red T-bucket is on the NSRA display. T-buckets are the most iconic of all hot rods, dating back to the famous *Kookie Kar* of 1955. ▶

## Wanting a Ford Model A with Daisy Duke's face airbrushed on the side was just a phase



Not what Henry imaged 91 years ago



Hint of a ghost of a shadow of a useful vehicle

## There's everything here from a Hummer with a fake machine gun to an Escort van inspired by the *Highlander* movie

Built by a 22-year-old called Norm Grabowski, the *Kookie Kar* was a cut-down Model T body mounted on a shortened Model A chassis with a Cadillac engine. In 1957, Grabowski was photographed hanging out in Hollywood by a *Life* magazine photographer, eating a burger in his car. When this iconic picture appeared in a story about Californian car culture, it kick-started a nationwide craze, inspiring thousands of young men to copy the Grabowski car's exposed engine, raked stance and open, whitewalled wheels.

T-buckets became so popular that by the mid '60s kits were being sold with fibreglass bodies, and by the '70s these so-called Fad T kits were being produced here in the UK too, by custom builders like Nick Butler and Geoff Jago. Like all cars, the Model T changed over the years, but the most popular fibreglass bucket was based on the 1923 Roadster. Andy Hogg's red 23 T is such a car.

'It's a '70s original, and I'm only the third owner,' Andy tells me. 'Mine's one of Nick Butler's - I'm not sure if it came as a kit but probably most of it was bought from him. It has a fibreglass bucket and a Rover V8, with a supercharger from a Deutz lorry.'

Andy's love of the hot rod scene also goes back to that era. 'I used to buy *Street Machine* and *Hot Car* - I've got loads of copies still in the loft,' he tells me. 'I used to go to a lot of shows and dream. Years ago, I got Nick Butler's pamphlet, and I actually bought a Jaguar V12 and gearbox, had it all stripped down, ready to build my own car. Then my wife fell pregnant and it didn't go ahead.'

Now in his sixties, Andy decided to finally fulfil that ambition and bought his 23 T about six years ago. 'T-buckets were popular in the '70s, but they've gradually dwindled down and there aren't many left. I don't

know how much horsepower it has - it's more about the looks and the sounds. I normally just cruise along at 50mph!'

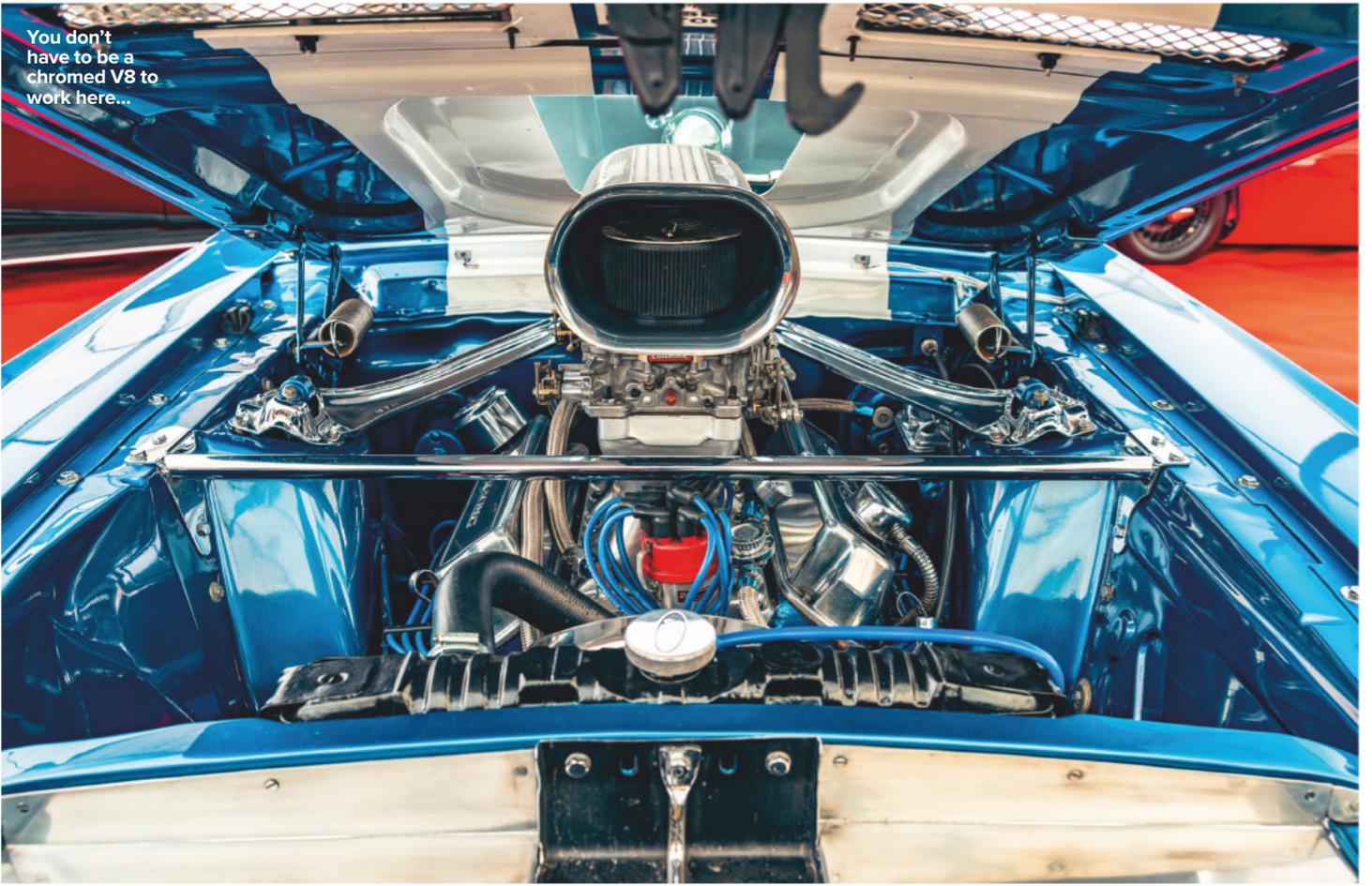
Nearby is another early T, this time an American original, built in 1967 with a Buick V6. Like many cars on show - from the *Hellboy* pick-up to a nearby 'rat rod' with a skull hanging in the passenger seat - its *Addams Family* styling is inspired by the macabre. At the rear is Matt Marson, hand-painting some lettering for the car's owner, Chrissie. It reads: 'Don't look at the skull... he will take your soul' - a reference to the skull-shaped rear diff which lights up at night. Matt, a CNC machinist whose artistic side hustle is called Danger Sign, explains the grisly side of customising as he paints in blood red.

'There's definitely a link between hot rodding and horror,' he tells me. 'Horror, sci-fi - it's all outlier art. I'm a massive horror fan and a comic fan. Hot rodding is for people who can't leave things alone - they have tattoos because they like to modify themselves. You're into cars that aren't the ordinary, that people will stop and stare at.'

Like the green van covered in squirrels, for example? I leave Matt to his lettering and wander back outside. The rain has stopped, the sun is out and now - thankfully - dozens of cars have arrived in the show field. It looks a lot more inviting than it did at roam.

Hot rodding is clearly a broad church, and there's everything here from a Hummer with a fake machine gun to an Escort van inspired by the *Highlander* movie - but I have to find out more about that green van. Turns out it's a 1996 Chevy G20 - and they're not squirrels after all. The owner, Chris MacKenzie, is sitting beside the van waiting for her husband Duncan to return with bacon sandwiches. The incredible airbrushing was done by an artist called Kev Hill, she tells me. 'And ►

You don't  
have to be a  
chromed V8 to  
work here...



Hot rodding is  
a broad church.  
Some broader  
than others



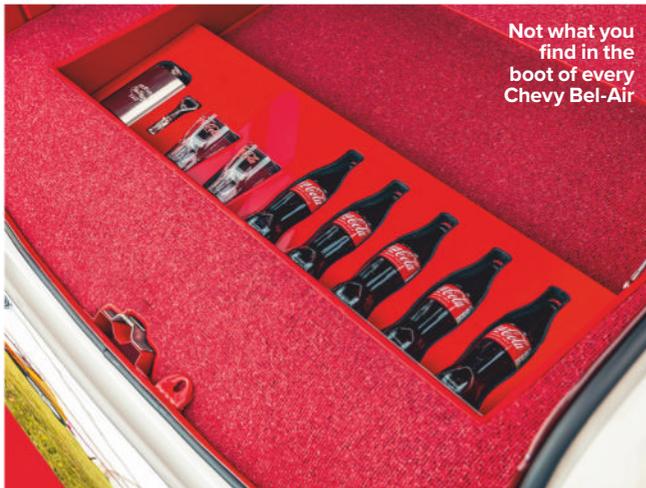
Grass less than ideal, but not as hostile as speed bumps



Matt Marson: no rest for the talented



Not everything's modified; not everything needs to be



Not what you find in the boot of every Chevy Bel-Air



## Hot rodding is clearly riding a wave of nostalgia, as middle-aged men and women remember the glory days of the 1970s and '80s

what was the brief?' I ask. 'Show the beauty of foxes,' she answers, immediately. Wow, that's a specific brief. 'I love foxes.'

What's clear – just as Matt explained earlier – is that Chris just can't leave things alone. 'It's been ongoing for years,' she tells me. 'We just keep adding to it. These projects are never finished – this is its fourth interior. I get bored with things!'

She opens the side door and shows me inside. 'I bought a large throne, cut it down and painted it to look like a tree,' she says, as matter-of-factly as anyone ever could say those words.

Another car has arrived in the sunshine, its gigantic V8 burbling like a dragster as it parks up. I'm immediately drawn to it – for me, this is the car of the show. I ask the owner, Russell Cook, about his incredible creation. 'It's a 1930 Model A with a 6.0-litre Chrysler Hemi,' he tells me. 'I bought it as a rolling chassis and body from Canada, then basically built what you see. It's had a six-inch roof-chop and a four-inch channel, which means the body's lowered over the chassis. So basically you sit on the floor. It's a proper, traditional hot rod.'

By now, Russell's story is familiar. 'I built my first hot rod in my teens, then I got into sports cars and drag racing, then drifted back into hot rods,' he tells me. 'You never stop tinkering. When I first built it, it wasn't supercharged. Then a friend sold me a 6-71 supercharger, and I had to cut the car in half to make it three inches longer, to get the front pulley in. So you're always fiddling – sometimes big things, sometimes small. It was brown, now it's green.'

The V8 puts out around 600bhp, which is a lot in a car that's basically an engine on wheels. 'I've done 120mph in it,' Russell tells me, 'but it's proper scary. It weighs about 1300kg, but 1000 of those is forward of the gearlever, so all the braking is done on those skinny front wheels.'

Russell invites me sit inside. It's tiny but much more comfortable than I imagined when I first saw the little seat cushion on the floor. The tricky thing is the low roof, which means you have to duck your head to see out. 'I use it in the summer – my wife I might go out for dinner with friends,' Russell tells me. 'I've been to Belgium, Germany and France in it. But I'm 62 now and I get a bit of back ache because you have to stoop to drive it.'

Russell is also realistic about the future of the whole hot rod movement. 'My generation is the last that'll put a high value on cars like these,' he reckons. 'We grew up with movies like *American Graffiti*. When you grow up on films like *Fast & Furious*, the cars you aspire to own are Nissan GT-Rs. Why would you want 600bhp that doesn't handle?' For now, though, hot rodding is clearly riding a wave of nostalgia, as middle-aged men and women remember the glory days of the 1970s and '80s. But there's also a modern twist. Rebellion was always

big part of hot rodding culture – even as a 10-year-old, I could see that. Now these barmy, impractical, often expensive creations look like a revolt against the sanitised EVs we're all being forced to buy. And having submerged myself once again in the world of chrome V8s and air-brushed foxes, I think I'm ready to join the revolution. I don't have a hot rod but I can bring the Blu Tack. **car**

### HOT RODDING'S ALL-TIME GREATS

#### HOT ROD #1

In 1948 Bob McGee returned to California after the war and modified his 1932 Ford Roadster with a clean, minimalist look (below left). It appeared on the cover of the first issue of *Hot Rod* magazine and became an icon

#### BUCKING THE TREND

After featuring in *Life* magazine in 1957, Norm Grabowski's ground-breaking roadster inspired the T-bucket craze. Originally called *Lightning Bug* it starred in a hit TV show, *77 Sunset Strip*, and became known as the *Kookie Kar*

#### OUT THERE

Ed Roth, the LA artist behind the Rat Fink cartoon character, learned of a new material used by surfers called fibreglass. He hand-moulded the stuff to bring one of his cartoon monsters to life and called it *The Outlaw*

#### A CAPITAL C

When the T-bucket craze came to the UK in the early '70s, Nick Butler was a pioneer. In 1976 he built a delivery-van-inspired C-Cab called *Revenge* (below right), named Best Hot Rod of the Century in 2000

#### THE BIG BANG

In 1978 Nick Butler wanted to build the ultimate T. *Andromeda* – with its 7.0-litre supercharged V8 and leather interior – took hot rod detailing to a new level. Legend has it *Andromeda* had 1000bhp and did 0-100mph in 8.0 seconds



# Our cars

HELLO PEUGEOT E-2008 & MINI COUNTRYMAN JCW + READERS TRY OUR BENTLEY + GOODBYE RANGE ROVER SPORT & MERCEDES EQE





Why is it BMW grilles get all the flak?

Lee Brimble

# Middle ground

Goodbye

Hard to see why anyone would spend £86k on an EQE. By **Piers Ward**



## Mercedes-Benz EQE 300 AMG Line Premium Plus Month 4

### The story so far

Merc's electric equivalent of the E-Class is a grower

- + Comfortable; touchscreen works well; ease of charging
- Blobby looks; dreadful brakes; shocking residual values

### Logbook

**Price** £86,345 (£86,345 as tested) **Performance** 89kWh battery, e-motor, 241bhp, 7.3sec 0-62mph, 130mph **Efficiency** 3.3 miles per kWh (official), 2.4 miles per kWh (tested) **Range** 337 miles (official), 220 miles (tested) **Energy cost** 15.0p per mile **Miles this month** 788 **Total miles** 2628

Let's be brutal about this – the EQE is unlikely to go down in the record books as one of the great cars in the long history of Mercedes-Benz.

It's burdened by inelegant looks, numb steering and absolutely shocking brakes, and it's not especially quick. This is not a list of positive traits lifted from *How to Build a Car*.

Lots to dislike, then. But as my time with the car went on I found the dislike fading into the background. That sounds a bit like when your mate says, 'no offence but...' and then launches into a critique of your worst character flaws. The point with the EQE is that it tends to make a poor first impression because of those disappointments listed above. But live with it for a

while and its strengths come to the fore.

The brakes remain a big problem. You stop being surprised by them, but you don't stop wishing they were better every time you drive the car. But the looks, the steering and the modest pace don't grate so badly after a few weeks.

Rather, the EQE slips into the background, with an operating system that functions well, decent comfort and a general ease of use that makes it a very okay car. Its normality is its strength.

Take charging. The range increased from a low of 200 miles in foul winter weather up to a more acceptable 240 once the temperatures climbed. We saw a high of 3.03 miles per kWh while it was with us, with plenty of journeys in the 2.9s. That's no better than middling efficiency, but the way the EQE typically made it pretty easy to use public chargers helps offset some of that.

By using the car's nav, which intelligently links to charge points and can divert around traffic jams, the Merc took the stress out of journey planning. It found fast chargers where I never knew they existed, told me exactly how much I needed to add in order to make it home, and sucked the electrons in at 128kW thanks to the battery being pre-conditioned.

On one stop, I literally only had time to take a couple of photos before the EQE was ready to go again – six minutes and it had inhaled enough to make it home. It's the closest I've got to Tesla's ease of use in an EV not made by Tesla.

But does it have enough to ►

Touchscreen  
and interface  
among the best



## The charging system is the closest I've got to Tesla's ease of use in an EV not made by Tesla

elevate it above 'white goods' status? That's a trickier question. It doesn't drive as well as the universally admired Porsche Taycan or even the quietly impressive BMW i5. And, as I said in my first report, it lacks a USP that feels distinctly 'Merc'.

Certainly the touchscreen, and more specifically the logic behind it, is impressive, but will that actually wow many people? It's worked for Tesla. But that feels a bit shallow for a brand of Merc's heritage. Finding charging spots in random pubs just off the A1 hardly has the same ring as Klaus Ludwig in a 190E through the Craner Curves.

We're told that the successors to the EQE and the larger EQS will be built on modified versions of the current underpin-

nings, rather than the all-new platform previously touted. Given the slow-down in demand for EVs, you can see why Merc might want to adjust its priorities. But it suggests the EQE will continue to be slightly below par for another generation. 'More of the same' doesn't sound like a great plan given how little appreciated the current EQE seems to be; you don't have to look far to find a used car with less than 10,000 miles being offered for less than £50k.

An electric Merc to compete with the best of the brand's history is an enticing prospect. But it's not here yet.

### Count the cost

**Cost new** £86,345 **Part-exchange** £45,235 **Cost per mile** 15.0p **Cost per mile including depreciation** £15.78



Ride is fine,  
steering  
less so

# The grass is much greener

Just how similar is the Avenger to other compact EVs? By **Curtis Moldrich**

This month I swapped keys with colleague Jakes Groves to try out his new Smart #1. At £35,950, with a lot of gear fitted as standard, it seems like good value, and has a big dose of character. Jake's been making mixed noises about it since it arrived, though, so I was curious to have a steer for myself.

And after a couple of hundred miles... yes, he's right: it's a mixed bag. It also sheds some fresh light on my Avenger.

It's very gaudy outside, with a silhouette that suggests a complete lack of interest in dynamism, and headlights that look like the eyes of a newly discovered species of amphibian, but inside it makes more sense. It's all curves, shiny white plastic and lots of space – such a departure from the gloomy Jeep cabin. This is the upside of that odd silhouette: a huge glasshouse brings better visibility.

Unlike my Jeep, the Smart features a head-up display. It's clear and easy to read. Just below there's a letterbox-style display that shows all the key info.

The touchscreen is the cabin's main attraction. I quickly grew attached to the built-in system, whereas in the Jeep I use Apple CarPlay.

The Smart is a story of two halves on the road. Where my front-wheel-drive Jeep can be pushed a little and handles like a go-kart, this rear-wheel-drive Smart handles like the softest Flump. And it's made all the better by the pleasingly positive steering, direct acceleration and ample power. Roll is comparable to a dinghy on the high seas, though, so you're best off not exploiting those nicely weighted controls too much.

There are some tech annoyances. Adjusting the door mirrors via the touchscreen takes

time – and attention – and it's at this point that the car tells me to focus on the road, and maybe take a break. It seems a tad unfair and makes me miss the simple controls of the Jeep.

On the motorway the Smart's tech is less passive-aggressive and just plain aggressive. The adaptive cruise with lane keeping wants the car dead centre. Changing lanes always involves a light skirmish between my inputs and whatever the car feels is best.

The Smart feels refreshing and more polished than the Jeep. Even the charging cable feels better; on the Jeep it's a generic item, in the Smart its handles match the design language and bright colouring of the car.

Both EVs could learn a lot from each other: if only the Jeep were a little more premium, and the Smart were a little less intrusive.



## Jeep Avenger Electric Longitude Month 5

### The story so far

Characterful take on the small Stellantis EV, wrapped in a convincingly Jeep-style body

- + Decent looks; nippy in town
- Deceptive range; fussy tech

### Logbook

**Price** £39,600 (£42,125 as tested) **Performance** 50.8kWh battery, e-motor, 154bhp, 9.6sec 0-62mph, 93mph **Efficiency** 3.9-4.0 miles per kWh (official), 2.7 miles per kWh (tested), 0g/km CO2 **Range** 249 miles (official), 221 miles (tested) **Energy cost** 12.2p per mile **Miles this month** 1073 **Total miles** 3242

Jeep styling a clear winner over the Smart



Today's whole Mazda range has this clean, grown-up styling



Jordan Butters

# The heart of the matter

So-so car. Terrific engine. And so much better to live with than the plug-in hybrid this replaced on the *CAR* test fleet. By **Jordan Butters**

Looking back through my previous musings on the CX-60 you'd be forgiven for feeling I've been harsh on Mazda's premium SUV. But despite its frustrating shortcomings in areas such as the choppy suspension and overbearing warning/safety systems, there are some areas which I really can't fault. As mentioned previously, there's not a thing I'd change about the interior, for one. But the real success story in our CX-60 is the 3.3-litre inline six-cylinder e-Skyactiv D diesel engine.

Having previously run the 2.5-litre PHEV petrol CX-60 on the *CAR* fleet, the main reason for opting for another CX-60 back-to-back was to see if the straight-six diesel powerplant made up for the PHEV's shortcomings.

And the good news is that it more than does. On paper, the

PHEV looks to be the better choice, but in the real world it's a different story. The PHEV's 322bhp motor will get you to 62mph quicker than the 241bhp diesel, but the diesel not only offers 10 per cent more torque, crucially it's available from an impressive 1500rpm compared to having to wind the petrol motor up to 4000rpm to reach peak torque.

Given most people want power available while on the move, as opposed to launching their SUVs from the lights at Santa Pod, this makes for a far more useful and pleasurable power curve, with plenty of get-up-and-go in day-to-day use. What's more, if you're interested in utilising the 2500kg towing limit then extra torque and its efficient delivery will no doubt appeal.

Being an inline-six, the en-

gine is also incredibly smooth and refined, with a nice burble under load in the cabin. The eight-speed transmission is the same as in the PHEV, which can be a bit slow to react at times, but for the most part does the job. There's also a 48-volt mild hybrid system which, rather than boost power, is there to aid efficiency.

The result is a book figure of 52mpg combined, which in real-world terms I've found settles at 40-45mpg in normal day-to-day conditions with the boot laden with camera kit.

But best of all this consumption figure isn't influenced by the amount of charge in the battery – as long as there's juice in the tank you know what you'll get without carting around a depleted chunk of battery, as you would in the PHEV sibling.



**Mazda CX-60  
Homura e-Skyactiv D  
MHEV 3.3  
Month 6**

## The story so far

Slightly quirky crossover, here tested with a diesel mild hybrid

- + Great inline-six diesel engine
- Slower to 62mph than the PHEV equivalent

## Logbook

**Price** £50,705 (£54,357 as tested) **Performance** 3283cc diesel six-cylinder, 251bhp, 7.4sec 0-62mph, 136mph **Efficiency** 53.3mpg (official), 44.0mpg (tested), 138g/km CO2 **Energy cost** 16.2p per mile **Miles this month** 827 **Total miles** 8342



Switches good. Accidental activation, bad

## Yeah but no but yeah

Nice ointment, with flies. By **Ben Oliver**

I just got into a remarkably together-feeling 650,000km Skoda Superb taxi at Zagreb airport and was reminded again of the unfussy practicality and durability that makes us love this brand. Driver Sasha had put on half a million of those kilometers. I don't plan to do the same in this Enyaq, but its fundamental qualities and effect on the driver are the same.

It's comfortable, spacious and easy to live with. So please keep that in mind while I pick a few holes in it. There are a few minor ergonomic irritations, like the row of physical switches taking you straight to functions like climate on the main screen, which are too easy to knock with your hand as you reach into the phone cubby below them, putting the hazards on.

And once in that cubby your phone sits at an angle that prevents you seeing if the wireless charging is working. This might be deliberate to avoid distraction, but it just seems to cause more faffing and peering.

More seriously, the Enyaq came on a set of Hankook tyres which are causing me concern, given the car's 2.3-tonne mass, 335bhp peak output and near 60-grand price. I've had two noticeable ESP-triggered understeer moments in the Enyaq, compared to none at all in the four generally heavier and more powerful electric long-term test cars I've run previously.

There's also a disconcerting lightness and lack of connection at motorway speeds in the wet. This may be unfair, as I've not done back-to-back tests, but for both I'm inclined to blame the rubber given that the rest of the chassis is so well sorted.

The other issue is the brakes, which are fine for ultimate retardation but too weak in their initial application, meaning I was arriving into junctions too quickly until I'd learnt to drive

around the issue. It's a shame: driving almost one-footed is one of the joys of EV ownership, but the brake calibration on the Enyaq sometimes takes me back to the combustion era.



### Skoda Enyaq Coupe iV vRS Month 2

#### The story so far

Most powerful Skoda ever still feels like a Skoda

- + Quick; practical; good range
- Needs better tyres and sharper brakes

#### Logbook

**Price** £54,155 (£58,800 as tested) **Performance** 77kWh battery, twin e-motors, 5.5sec 0-62mph, 111mph **Efficiency** 3.9 miles per kWh (claimed), 3.5 (tested), 0g/km CO2 **Range** 336 miles (claimed), 302 miles (tested) **Energy cost** 8.7p per mile **Miles this month** 1511 **Total miles** 4667



### Renault Clio TCe 90 Evolution Month 3

#### The story so far

We've fallen in love with this fabulous all-rounder

- + Great at motorway speeds, despite the tiny engine
- Apple CarPlay means Renault's own tech is redundant

#### Logbook

**Price** £17,995 (£18,695 as tested) **Performance** 999cc turbocharged three-cylinder, 89bhp, 12.2sec 0-62mph, 112mph **Efficiency** 54.3mpg (official), 44.7mpg (tested), 118g/km CO2 **Energy cost** 14.6p per mile **Miles this month** 1039 **Total miles** 2866

## Seaside special

Destination: fun.  
By **Mark Walton**

One of the things I love about the Clio is how it does it all. It's great round town, it's fun when you thrash it, but it's also a good long-distance car.

That's mostly down to its magnificent 1.0-litre engine. Just as it's surprisingly zesty when you wang it along a country road, this turbocharged three-cylinder is also astonishingly good at high-speed motorway work.

Of course I never go over 70mph... but hypothetically I can tell you the Clio is happy to cruise at 85mph, never feeling

overstretched or harsh, the six-speed manual gearbox giving it the long legs it needs to cruise all day long.

A good interior is critical on a long-distance drive and here too the Renault scores highly, with comfy seats, lots of cubbyholes and cupholders and – crucially – it has Apple CarPlay for Google maps and binge-listen-

ing to Spotify podcasts.

Why do manufacturers still offer their own interior tech, when all we want is phone integration? Here you get both, but I never use the built-in option.

Anyway, this is all to say that a recent drive to Bournemouth – a seven-hour round trip – went very well. The sun shone, making the car look like a lolly.



Looks good enough to eat. (But don't)

# Mini no more

Bigger and bolder, the new Countryman JCW promises Mini thrills in a family-friendly shape. By **Piers Ward**

Controversy is never far away from the Mini Countryman. Bigger than ever, this latest version isn't even built in Britain, this being the first Mini to roll off a production line in Germany. That sound you can hear is Basil Fawlty choking on his cornflakes.

Now in its third generation, the first BMW-era Mini Countryman appeared in 2010, and since then has consistently been the car that gets chewed by fans of the traditional Mini. Will those complaints fade away over the period of our long-term test?

It certainly has an appealing amount of punch. Being a John Cooper Works model, it's the most powerful available, with a 2.0-litre four-cylinder turbocharged petrol engine providing 296bhp and 295lb ft. It defaults to front-wheel drive but

can flip to all-wheel drive when needed, via a propshaft and rear Haldex clutch controlled by the DSC electronics.

Countryman JCW prices start at £41,575; the new VW Golf GTI is likely to be around the same price. Our car has £5800 of optional extras – the Legend Grey paint is £600 while the remainder is made up of the Level 3 pack, involving upgraded 20-inch wheels, an electric massage seat for the driver, adaptive LED headlights, JCW performance brakes, sliding rear seats, and on and on. It's one hell of a list, but even without it the Countryman JCW gets enough kit.

The interior is dominated by the circular infotainment. I'm yet to really get to grips with all the finer points. Being circular gives it a distinctive design USP but also means the rectangular

Apple CarPlay display sits awkwardly in the middle; round hole, square peg.

On the move, it disguises its size well. Despite weighing 1735kg it turns in with vigour, feeling sharp like all the best recent Minis. The flipside is you get bounced around quite a lot.

What's odd is that it's not gone down especially well in the school car park. I would have thought this Countryman would be peak Mini – the car for young families who love what the brand stands for but in a size that means they can get the cricket kit in the boot. But it doesn't seem to resonate with them as a Mini.

Maybe it's just too big for what they think a Mini should be, but not big enough to displace the default Defender from their affections. It's Mini's Usyk to Land Rover's Fury.



## Mini Countryman JCW All4 Month 1

### The story so far

Massive rapid Mini that hides its bulk well, if not beautifully

- + Mini feelgood factor in a more practical shape
- Gearbox has a mind of its own at times

### Logbook

**Price** £41,575 (£47,375 as tested) **Performance** 1998cc turbocharged four-cylinder, 296bhp, 5.4sec 0-62mph, 155mph **Efficiency** 35.3mpg (official), 33.0mpg (tested), 180g/km CO2 **Energy cost** 21.0p per mile **Miles this month** 565 **Total miles** 3507

Jordan Butters



Biggest ever Mini, and one of the fastest



## Battery half full?

The SQ8 had a crazy five days piling on 995 miles, with return trips to the Ruhr valley and South Yorkshire.

Getting the SQ8 onto a motorway, autoroute or autobahn revealed an ability to be economical at significant speeds. Cruising through France, Belgium and Germany at 80mph, the Audi returned 2.45 miles per kWh. With the UK's lower limit, it clocked 2.65 miles per kWh to Rotherham and back.

It's aided by air suspension that lowers the body at speed, active grille closure, numerous underbody aero features and a dormant front motor at cruise.

That said, reasonable motorway economy only makes my 1.7 miles per kWh urban average look even more tragic.

**PHIL MCNAMARA**



## Man vs machine

ARRGGHH. Not long into life with a #1 and it's clear the two of us are not co-existing well. I tried to set it up with the Smart app to unlock some bonus features, but no dice – and very unhelpful 'just reinstall the app' advice from tech support.

The powered door handles pop back in just as you're about to reach for them – why do that when the car is parked and unlocked?! The adaptive cruise is so paranoid that the closest follow distance is far enough for people to cut you up. The cherry on top? 'BEEP BEEP BEEP. Fatigue warning. Please take a break.' After just FIVE MINUTES at the wheel.

All of this stuff is seemingly designed to help, but it just gives me a headache.

**JAKE GROVES**



## Mind the gap

Our Stelvio's standard 20-inch wheels look almost as good as the optional 21s, have a very similar five-hole design and saved us £750. But the Pirellis they're wrapped in have a surprising amount of headroom considering no one will ever drive one off road.

Upgrading to the 21s would help plug the gap, but probably not by as much as you'd think. The bigger wheels run a lower-profile tyre (35 vs 40) so the overall height is only 11.4mm greater, and half of that is below the axle line.

The unnecessary ride-height inches don't seem to hurt the handling, and given that the ride is already firm, sticking with the smaller wheels was definitely the right choice.

**CHRIS CHILTON**



## Abarth meets a bus

The Abarth 500e is a tiny tearaway of an EV, while our recently departed VW ID. Buzz is one of the largest, roomiest battery cars going. Chalk and cheese? Yes, but I find similarities too.

Stylistically, each draws on its manufacturer's heritage. Both are unthreatening designs laced with a streak of happiness, although the Italian tot is a push for any more than two passengers. I'm having to juggle family duties so I can prioritise shorter trips in the Abarth, where the VW could swallow anything we threw at it.

Still, the compact dimensions of the 500e are much easier to park and I love the sheer chuckability that comes with downsizing from an MPV to a mini.

**TIM POLLARD**



### Audi SQ8 e-Tron Black Edition Month 6

#### The story so far

Audi's e-SUV is a mixed bag but impresses dynamically

+ Quiet and economical on the motorway

- Three phantom warning messages on one trip

#### Logbook

**Price** £103,310 **Performance** 106kWh battery, three e-motors, 496bhp, 4.5sec 0-62mph, 130mph **Efficiency** 2.2 miles per kWh (official), 2.1 (tested) **Range** 269 miles (official), 223 miles (tested) **Energy cost** 12.0p per mile **Miles this month** 1404 **Total miles** 6722



### Smart #1 Premium Month 2

#### The story so far

Smooth electric hatch, but infuriating at times

+ Sweet to drive; well-made and roomy interior with comfy seats

- Spoiled by infuriating tech

#### Logbook

**Price** £38,950 (£38,950 as tested) **Performance** 66kWh battery, e-motor, 268bhp, 6.7sec 0-62mph, 112mph **Efficiency** 3.7 miles per kWh (official), 2.54 miles per kWh (tested) **Range** 273 miles (official), 204 miles (tested) **Energy cost** 14.7p per mile **Miles this month** 1337 **Total miles** 5430



### Alfa Romeo Stelvio Quadrifoglio Month 2

#### The story so far

Facelifted Stelvio super-SUV now with more power and a sharper chassis

+ Gorgeous-looking wheels; great all-wheel-drive grip

- Firm ride from sporty suspension; odd wheelarch gap

#### Logbook

**Price** £87,195 (£90,745 as tested) **Performance** 2891cc twin-turbocharged V6, 513bhp, 3.8sec 0-62mph, 177mph **Efficiency** 23.9mpg (official), 20.2mpg (tested), 267g/km CO2 **Energy cost** 34.0p per mile **Miles this month** 1130 **Total miles** 6210



### Abarth 500e Turismo Month 2

#### The story so far

We're a few weeks into life with Abarth's electric hot hatch

+ Ease of use; compact; fun

- 500 bodysell is cramped for passengers and luggage

#### Logbook

**Price** £38,195 (£38,795 as tested) **Performance** 42kWh battery, e-motor, 152bhp, 7.0sec 0-62mph, 96mph **Efficiency** 3.3 miles per kWh (official), 3.4 miles per kWh (tested), 0g/km CO2 **Range** 158 miles (claimed), 143 miles (tested) **Energy cost** £48.59 **Miles this month** 590 **Total miles** 3170



# ‘I love this thing to bits’

We’re big fans of our Bentley. But what will *CAR* readers Gareth Morgan and Andy Cordial make of it? By Ben Miller

You drive our cars



## Bentley Continental GTC V8 S Month 5

### The story so far

Droptop version of Bentley’s timeless Continental GT 2+2  
 + Riotous performance; blissful comfort; top-down fun  
 - Not the (now defunct) W12 Speed, so lacking that car’s playful tech; fuel bills

### Logbook

**Price** £227,100 (£282,745 as tested) **Performance** 3996cc twin-turbo V8, 542bhp, 4.1sec 0-62mph, 198mph **Efficiency** 22.6mpg (official), 24.0mpg (tested), 284g/km CO2 **Energy cost** 35.0p per mile **Miles this month** 782 **Total miles** 3725

With a rich and varied car-owning history behind him, Gareth Morgan recently found himself in the enviable position of choosing a ‘pinnacle car’ – an indulgent purchase that’ll likely prove his four-wheeled high-water mark. He tried all the contenders, including the Continental GT, before buying an Aston Martin DB12 Volante.

‘I’ve had all sorts of cars, including 911s, an F-Type, an Audi RS5, a little Clio Cup and a Merc SL350, and I raced a Golf GTI,’ says Gareth, who’s been reading *CAR* since he was in his 20s. ‘Last year I decided I wanted a grand tourer. I test drove them all, including a Continental GT V8 coupe, which I loved. I also drove a Roma, which wasn’t going to work: tight on space, fiddly controls, a footrest halfway up the transmission tunnel and a set-up I found twitchy just

U-turning in the wet... The 911 Turbo S Cabriolet was impressive but when you look in the mirror it could be any 911 – that didn’t feel right.’

And what of the new generation of GT contenders, like Audi’s electric e-Tron GT or BMW’s M3 Touring? ‘For me the clue’s in the name: grand tourer. It’s got to be grand. No one ever played Bond music driving an electric Audi through the Alps.’

To the rousing strains of Monty Norman’s immortal theme, Gareth and I jump in the Conti GT, drop the roof and head into the closest thing Rutland has to mountains.

‘I love this thing to bits. It gives you everything; the comfort, the wow factor, the torque, the power... The seats are way comfier than my Aston’s, it has the air scarves which my car



## ‘I do like the Bentley’s V8; it’s so strong low down’

GARETH MORGAN

doesn’t, and the exhaust sounds much better than mine. But the steering’s not as nice; it’s duller, even in Sport. In the DB12 you think and it jinks – it’s much quicker to change direction. But I do like the Bentley engine; it’s so strong low down.’

We’re soon flying between blurred summer hedgerows, Gareth’s confidence in the car obvious in the way he’s powering through corners. ‘I love the



feel of it when you do that – the torque pushing you through.’

So, Gareth, how come you arrived in the DB12 this morning and not a Conti GT? ‘It’s just not as sharp as the Aston,’ he explains. ‘Even in the sportiest mode you still feel the weight and a reluctance to really bite on turn-in. My Aston feels like a go-kart next to this. It’s like the Bentley doesn’t want to be hurried, and I’m not quite ready for that. Maybe in another 10 years. For now I want something I can play around in.’

As does Andy Cordial. A successful business owner, Andy’s long had his eye on a Continental GT. Today that ambition may well acquire critical mass.

‘It’s almost like you’re inside the V8!’ smiles Andy as we get moving, the S’s bass-heavy woofle working its magic inside 300 yards. We’re in Sport, and



**‘It’s so, so lovely. The itch really needs scratching now’**

ANDY CORDIAL

to illustrate the bandwidth in the adaptive dampers I switch to Comfort while we’re still pattering over rough village tarmac. ‘Suddenly it’s like a different car,’ notes Andy.

Out on the open road, we round a tight left-hander to see the tarmac run arrow-straight for half a mile. A dip into the V8 S’s vast reserves and we warp to the next corner in moments, the V8’s rich, bassy tones wash-

ing over us like warm surf. ‘It’s just effortless, isn’t it?’ grins Andy. ‘There’s real oomph as soon as you want it, and I love how much more responsive the engine and gearbox are in Sport. I like that it firms the steering, too – feels good. It’s got it all, really. You can throw it into corners on a road like this but you’ve also got massage seats for those long motorway drives. I’m impressed.’

With every mile I sense Andy falling harder for the Bentley. ‘It’s so, so lovely. I wouldn’t want to get out of it. Any excuse, the merest hint of a sunny day, and that’s it, I’d be gone for as long as I could get away with!’

‘The itch really needs scratching now. I knew it’d be a sumptuous Sunday driver but I wasn’t expecting the agility and the performance. I underestimated it, no doubt.’



# Nothing to see here

Only kidding. Its beauty's soul deep. By **Ben Whitworth**

There are many things this F-Type doesn't have. It doesn't have a decent boot and more does it have any usable cabin storage. The centre console won't swallow a charging smartphone, so there's always a cabled iPhone either propped up in the cupholders or slung out on the passenger seat.

It doesn't have the right balance of body control and suspension compliance in Dynamic mode. On our gruesome West Sussex roads it rides with a jarring abruptness that soon becomes wearying. Better to flick from Dynamic to Normal and waft along at silly speeds.

It doesn't have any lag. The supercharged engine beneath that vast aluminium bonnet responds instantly to your right foot. That sense of immediacy is enhanced by the quick-witted eight-speed transmission. Left

to its own devices it always seems to be in the correct gear, and will bullet through the gears when using the paddles or stubby gearlever.

It doesn't have the snappiest of infotainment systems, but it's intuitive, it always hooks up to my phone, it's been fault-free and it allows you to personalise the instrument layout.

It doesn't have the chassis rigidity you want in a car weighing in at 1718kg. You sense rather than feel the slight flex and stretch over ridges and cracked surfaces but, being a roadster that invites a more laid-back driving approach, this doesn't bother me.

It doesn't annoy you with a complex start-up-and-deactivate-overkill-safety-systems process. Just walk up to the car, drop down into the fragrant cabin, thumb the illuminated

start button and drive off; no bings and rings to swear at, just the engine's rich three-dimensional soundtrack to fill the cabin, gently vibrate nearby windows and turn the heads of pedestrians.

What this Jaguar does have is character, presence and flair. Whether you're just doing local chores or absolutely pinning it in every gear on a solitary late-night roof-down blast through the South Downs, driving the Jaguar always feels like an event to be relished and remembered.

It's on your side. Late for the airport? The F-Type's serious cross-country pace and athleticism will help you get to Heathrow Terminal 5 far quicker than you believed possible. It can also slip unobtrusively through traffic and draw the right kind of glances in the car park. What an absolute joy.



## Jaguar F-Type 75 Month 4

### The story so far

Character and flair of V8 convertible easily overcome its minor shortcomings

+ Tackles every type of journey with multi-faceted skill

- If only the boot could better the capacity of a jiffy bag

### Logbook

**Price** £84,125 (£88,145 as tested) **Performance** 5000cc supercharged V8, 450bhp, 4.4sec 0-62mph, 177mph **Efficiency** 27.0mpg (official) 22.7mpg (tested), 238g/km CO2 **Energy cost** 29.0p per mile **Miles this month** 615 **Total miles** 2790

Rich Pearce

## The supercharged engine's sense of immediacy is enhanced by the quick-witted transmission



Lack of roof doesn't help stiffness, does help fabulousness



Look out, it's an electric crossover that fits within the white lines

# The lion, the switch and the crossroad

Almost affordable and lightweight, this is electric done right. Right? By **Ben Miller**



## Peugeot E-2008 GT Electric 54kWh Month 1

### The story so far

Ben's a sucker for a great Peugeot, having owned two. Is this a great Peugeot?

- + Stylish inside and out
- Hopeless range predictor

### Logbook

**Price** £40,700 (£42,060 as tested) **Performance** 47.7kWh battery, e-motor, 154bhp, 9.1sec 0-62mph, 93mph **Efficiency** 4.9 miles per kWh (official), 3.9 miles per kWh (tested) **Range** 227-271 miles (official), 183 miles (tested) **Energy cost** 7.0p per mile **Miles this month** 324 **Total miles** 497

We have the wallbox, we don't have the second home in Wales or Cornwall (yet?) and the family car is a crossover doing 10,000 miles per year, rarely in chunks much bigger than 100 miles at a time. All of which makes us ripe for electrification. That an EX30 is both almost affordable and a Volvo (the current family whip's an XC40 with the petrol triple under its contoured, clamshell bonnet) isn't doing the idea any harm with the primary decision-making element of the household, either.

Does this imminent switch feel like a bold step into the future? Not really. The Volvo's on a PCP, as the next car likely will be, which is reassuring given the recent spate of EV residual horror stories. And the XC40's three-banger, while worthy, isn't the kind of engine to make

you lament the demise (imminent, imagined or otherwise) of the combustion engine.

But now this E-2008 is in our lives, presented in a similar shade of cool grey to our XC40 and trying to persuade us to go with French flair rather than Sino-Scandi style. It's off to a flying start, too, helped by a soft spot a mile wide for the brand. I've owned two Peugeots, both 205 XSs, and since the demise of the second I've yet to drive anything with comparably spell-binding steering feel. Gen's family once owned a 205 CTi with Geoff Capes listed as the previous keeper, which is quite the mental image.

But what, when you strip out nostalgia and brand fondness, can the E-2008 offer? A beautifully simple choice when it comes to powertrain, for a start. The sharply styled crossover

can be had with petrol, hybrid or electric power, and there are two options when it comes to EV: the 50kWh 136 (from £32,700 in entry-level Active trim) and the 54kWh 156, for which you must stretch to GT (black roof, keyless go, LED headlights, sports seats, reversing camera, ambient lighting) and pay at least £37,700. At least the grey paint's free.

That list price is a few grand more than we paid for the XC40, but it's a whole chunk more than a 2008 with the 130PS petrol engine (from £26,830). Less powerful than this flagship E-2008 it might be but, being lighter, it's barely any slower. But we must let go of the past. That the E-2008 is proving swift, easy to live with, sweet to drive and cost-effective to run is making that more straightforward than I dared hope.

# The complete car

Goodbye

It's easy to take exception to the Range Rover Sport... until you live with one. By **Ben Barry**



## Range Rover Sport D300 SE Month 6

### The story so far

Liked even by people who don't want to like it

- + Relaxing refinement
- Could be sharper

### Logbook

**Price** £83,620 (£90,845 as tested) **Performance** 2997cc turbodiesel six-cylinder, 296bhp, 6.6sec 0-62mph, 135mph **Efficiency** 36.9mpg (official), 33.9mpg (tested), 200g/km CO2 **Energy cost** 24.5p per mile **Miles this month** 4074 **Total miles** 24,946

While my wife hasn't been caught slashing SUV tyres, she reflexively dislikes luxury off-roaders – too heavy, too arrogant, too thirsty, she thinks.

So it says much about the Range Rover Sport that she loves it – the look, the way it rides, the effortlessness with which it gathers speed. And it's so calming.

Such a complete car won't be easy to replace. Ours was the D300 SE, the middle of three six-cylinder 3.0-litre Ingenium diesels with 296bhp. It's a peach, humming gently at idle, easing off with a leisurely throttle tip-in and feeling muscular more than rapid. The sweet six even kept its dignity when really stretched.

It's no gas guzzler. I've racked up a load of miles in the last month, getting within 10 per cent of the official 36.9mpg on the way. My biggest stint saw

561 miles between fills, with 12 litres remaining in the 90-litre tank. Sometimes diesel really does do it best.

Standard SE equipment includes a fixed panoramic roof, pixel LED headlights and Windsor leather (gorgeous smell, lovely squish as you settle in) and the Meridian stereo, which all took the sting out of long journeys.

The well-sorted fundamentals help here – the space, comfort, isolation from rushing wind or roaring tyres. German rivals just can't do crunchy-gravel regal like this.

Our £83,620 car was bolstered by over £7k of options, including Firenze Red paint (£895), contrast roof (£950) and 22-inch SV Bespoke alloys (£1600). Along with the wheels, most significant for cost and handling was the £5330 Stormer Handling pack with its e-diff,

rear-wheel steering and active anti-roll control.

Dynamically it's very comfort-focused, and though it's composed enough to hustle very quickly, it's never nimble (it's a tall SUV weighing 2390kg, after all). The ride could be more compliant still, and the lighter plug-in hybrid Velar I recently tried (fitted with the Dynamic Handling pack) struck a more pleasing ride and handling balance.

But overall this has proved hard to beat as posh daily transport. My wife's converted. The kids think it's the best car we've had. I'm reminded how satisfying a Range Sport can be. This car is going to make someone a cracking used buy.

### Count the cost

**Cost new** £90,845 **Part-exchange** £64,500 **Cost per mile** 24.9p **Cost per mile including depreciation** £1.20

Jordan Butters



Paint, roof and wheels all add to the steep cost

**BOTB**



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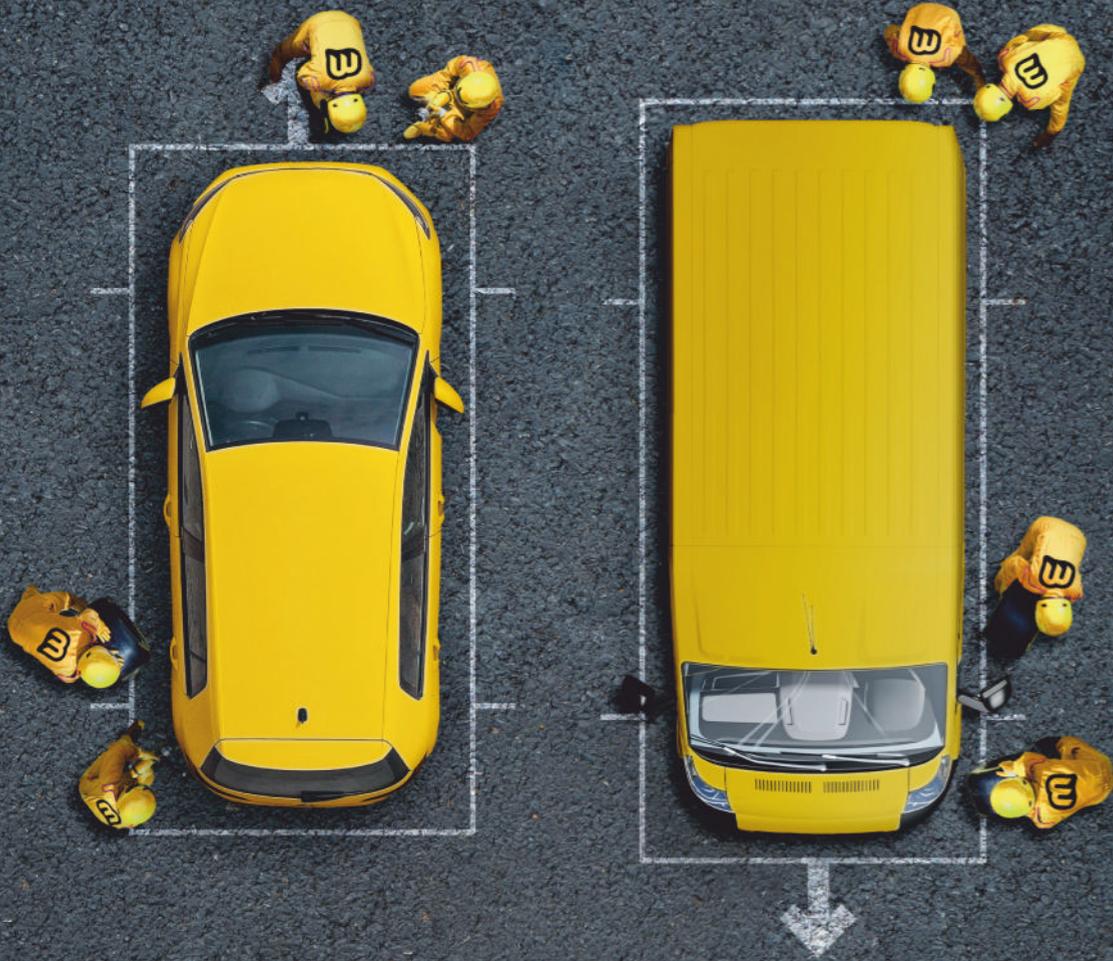
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## The Good, the Bad & the Ugly: The Top 5s

### TOP 5 HOT HATCHES

Tiny price rise is instantly forgiven



GIANT TEST WINNER



#### HONDA CIVIC TYPE R

**THE GOOD:** Feel, feedback, focus: a phenomenal full-sized hot hatch

**THE BAD:** Now £50,050 for a front-drive hatchback with barely any more power than before

**THE UGLY:** Probably the last of its kind; good job it's one of the best

**THE ONE TO BUY:** There's just the one model; £529 a month on a three-year PCP with an £11k deposit

GIANT TEST WINNER



#### TOYOTA GR YARIS

**THE GOOD:** A modern-day rally homologation special

**THE BAD:** Road noise like a death-metal gig; joke rear seats

**THE UGLY:** Long waiting list, even with some versions priced at £60,000

**THE ONE TO BUY:** Now has optional auto but go for the manual; opting for secondhand will be quicker

GIANT TEST WINNER



#### HYUNDAI IONIQ 5 N

**THE GOOD:** Electric gets exciting – synthetic drive modes and gearchange are game changers

**THE BAD:** Ignore that it's software-driven – the car feels real

**THE UGLY:** £65k!

**THE ONE TO BUY:** Paint and a sunroof are the only options – all the drive modes are included. It's £855 a month for four years

GIANT TEST WINNER



#### HYUNDAI i20 N

**THE GOOD:** Edgy, agile and full of classic hot-hatch spirit

**THE BAD:** Firm ride hampers all-round usability

**THE UGLY:** After the current stock runs out, it exits Europe

**THE ONE TO BUY:** Only one model but it comes well stocked, with mechanical LSD. A snip at £27,130; PCP currently from £385

GIANT TEST WINNER



#### AUDI RS3

**THE GOOD:** As fun to drive as it is fast, in any weather; five-cylinder engine sounds fab

**THE BAD:** Well over £50k for a posh Golf

**THE UGLY:** Much-improved new S3 at £45k makes the RS look very pricey

**THE ONE TO BUY:** Saloon looks slick but Sportback more usable and £1k cheaper at £56,590

# TOP 5 SPORTS CARS



GIANT TEST WINNER



## PORSCHE 911

**THE GOOD:** Exquisite blend of power, accuracy, excitement, style and usability, and new GTS integrates hybrid beautifully

**THE BAD:** You have to look all the way down to #3 to see the affordable performance Porsche; 911 barely scrapes in at just under £100k

**THE UGLY:** It keeps getting bigger and heavier

**THE ONE TO BUY:** That basic Carrera is ace, and it's hard to imagine you'll regret it for a minute. But if you want more power and more trickery then Porsche has plenty of ways to take more of your money

992.2 has arrived. Ravens have not left the Tower. As you were

GIANT TEST WINNER

2



## ARIEL ATOM

**THE GOOD:** A beautiful object as well as a thrilling drive; think of it as a modernised Lotus Seven crossed with a high-end sports bike

**THE BAD:** You'll need bike-style wet-weather gear if it's raining. And at least £40k – this is an expensive toy, if a captivating one

**THE UGLY:** The 4R is even more bonkers

**THE ONE TO BUY:** Do you really need the 350bhp power upgrade option?

GIANT TEST WINNER

3



## PORSCHE 718 CAYMAN/BOXSTER

**THE GOOD:** Sublime handling; surprising practicality

**THE BAD:** Less characterful than an Alpine; such an obvious choice it's almost boring

**THE UGLY:** Flat-four versions sound like a VW Beetle in a duet with Eeyore

**THE ONE TO BUY:** GT4 RS the most thrilling, Spyder is ace, but flat-six GTS 4.0 is a cut-price GT4 at £73k

4



## LOTUS EMIRA

**THE GOOD:** The first new Lotus in years is fantastically well resolved. Usable, desirable and thrilling

**THE BAD:** Harder work to live with than a Cayman

**THE UGLY:** The last petrol Lotus – just as the company gets the financial stability to build on its brilliance

**THE ONE TO BUY:** AMG-sourced four is an interesting but pricey addition

5



## ALPINE A110

**THE GOOD:** The perfectly formed antidote to a world of excess; a modern classic in every sense of the term

**THE BAD:** Two boots, neither big, and not much oddment storage inside

**THE UGLY:** 'R' is 34kg lighter – some effort – but also nearly £100k. Too much

**THE ONE TO BUY:** A110 S adds handling poise for £67,490 but £54,490 base A110 is all you need

# TOP 5 GRAND TOURERS

GIANT TEST WINNER



## FERRARI ROMA

### THE GOOD:

Style, speed and sensuous lines; a car for, and from, a bygone age

**THE BAD:** An age in which we no longer live, tragically

### THE UGLY:

Baffling steering-wheel touchpads; strangled exhaust note

### THE ONE TO BUY:

The cabrio. Arguably even more beautiful, until you sit in it, that is



## BENTLEY CONTINENTAL GT

**THE GOOD:** Luxury, power, agility and a great-looking body

**THE BAD:** Nope, it's really sorted

**THE UGLY:** Just because it's always been heavy and thirsty won't stop us complaining that it's heavy and thirsty

### THE ONE TO BUY:

New plug-in range-topper is the most powerful Bentley ever, and so much more

GIANT TEST WINNER



## PORSCHE 911 TURBO S

### THE GOOD:

Hypercar-bothering pace, any road, any weather

**THE BAD:** Only fun when you're really going for it

**THE UGLY:** Turbos never good for depreciation and even less so recently

### THE ONE TO BUY:

Entry car plenty fast enough but £180,600 Turbo S outsells it; add £10k for a Convertible

EV CHOICE



## PORSCHE TAYCAN CROSS TURISMO

### THE GOOD:

Raised ride height absolutely monsters lumpy UK roads

**THE BAD:** Not actually that practical

**THE UGLY:** Audi's e-Tron GT gets the nicer cockpit

### THE ONE TO BUY:

Revised versions are just about to arrive, along with revised prices: 4S Cross Turismo is now £100,400



## ASTON MARTIN DB12

### THE GOOD:

Effortlessly beautiful DB11 replacement now has the traction to make the most of the rampant turbo V8's stomp. Excellent new interior

### THE BAD:

Overshadowed by the success of DBX

### THE UGLY:

Aston simply doesn't do ugly

### THE ONE TO BUY:

Coupe is £185k; Volante the stunner

# TOP 5 COUPES AND CABRIOS



## BMW M2

### THE GOOD:

The longitudinal-engined two-door BMW coupe lives

**THE BAD:** Bigger and heavier than we'd like but outrageous fun

**THE UGLY:** You need £66k to get involved; steering a shade rubbery

### THE ONE TO BUY:

Manual or auto transmission options – get the knob. We'd go M carbon seats, too



## TOYOTA GR86

**THE GOOD:** Finally, Toyota's back-to-basics sports car gets the engine and style the old GT86 lacked

**THE BAD:** Have they built enough for the demand?

**THE UGLY:** A £32k car with a £20k interior

### THE ONE TO BUY:

Any manual you can get your hands on; approved-used GR86s are priced at up to £38k



## MASERATI MC20

**THE GOOD:** A no-excuses excellent Maserati. Handling and ride to match the looks; a GT as well as a sports car

**THE BAD:** Throttle could be sharper in normal mode

**THE UGLY:** Convincing your mates you did mean to buy the Maser and not the 296

### THE ONE TO BUY:

The droptop Cielo. All the coupe's go with added style



## MERCEDES-AMG SL

**THE GOOD:** Latest SL is developed by AMG but it's still a cruiser, and all the better for it

**THE BAD:** Engines are still better than the ride and handling

**THE UGLY:** Cabin designed by touchpad scattergun

### THE ONE TO BUY:

The £148k, 469bhp SL55; also look at the coupe cousin, the AMG GT



## MAZDA MX-5

### THE GOOD:

Closest thing to a modern-day Lotus Elan; genius folds-flat-in-seconds roof

**THE BAD:** Lashings of bodyroll; the 1.5 can't climb hills

**THE UGLY:** If you're over 6ft tall you simply won't fit

### THE ONE TO BUY:

Motorised-metal-roof RF doesn't quite make sense; 1.5 starts at £28k, punchier 2.0 from £32k with an LSD

PCM (per calendar month) figures are typical prices for PCP (personal contract purchase) deals available at the time of writing. For guidance only

# TOP 5 SUPERCARS



## FERRARI 296 GTB

**THE GOOD:** Timeless styling and a driving experience as good as any of Maranello's finest

**THE BAD:** You need reflexes like a fighter pilot to drive it as fast as it can go

**THE UGLY:** Touch-sensitive steering-wheel pads make the interface borderline unusable

**THE ONE TO BUY:** Fiorano pack is £25k+ overkill. GTS adds sunshine



## PORSCHE 911 GT3 RS

**THE GOOD:** Spine-tingling sound; 9000rpm redline; total immersion

**THE BAD:** Nothing to see here

**THE UGLY:** Getting on the waiting list is like winning both *The X Factor* and *The Apprentice*

**THE ONE TO BUY:** RS is somehow more focused than the GT3 but more road-compliant at the same time. How do they do it?



## LAMBORGHINI REVUELTO

**THE GOOD:** The monstrous, naturally-aspirated V12 lives on – now e-boosted and wrapped in such a hard-to-crash package insurance should be a tenner. Vastly improved cabin, too

**THE BAD:** Price has skyrocketed

**THE UGLY:** EV-only range is six miles

**THE ONE TO BUY:** There is only one for now



## McLAREN 750S

**THE GOOD:** Lighter, more powerful, better: evolution of 720S is another corker from Woking

**THE BAD:** 30 per cent new but you'd struggle to tell

**THE UGLY:** Convincing your mates you actually bought the new car

**THE ONE TO BUY:** Stick to the comfort-spec seats and avoid the harnesses on the top 'super carbon' ones



## CHEVROLET CORVETTE Z06

**THE GOOD:** A beautifully balanced performance package that can stand tall among the supercar aristocracy

**THE BAD:** Interior quality and kit not quite there

**THE UGLY:** Brings out anti-Yank snobbishness

**THE ONE TO BUY:** Add the Z07 pack for upgraded aero, suspension, brakes and wheels; expect to pay £140k

# TOP 5 PLUG-IN HYBRIDS



GIANT TEST WINNER

## BMW X5 50e

**THE GOOD:** Massive 67-mile official e-range; horizon-eating performance

**THE BAD:** Hybrid hardware cuts into boot space to the tune of 150 litres; no seven-seat option

**THE UGLY:** Not much now that the facelifted 50e model with more e-range and power is here

**THE ONE TO BUY:** This one, for £81k



## PEUGEOT 308

**THE GOOD:** Bravely avant-garde design; decent fuel economy; different

**THE BAD:** Still persisting with the infernally small steering wheel

**THE UGLY:** Interior layout looks fab but can be a stressfest to use day-to-day

**THE ONE TO BUY:** Starts at £37,960 per month for the 180. Stretch to 225 spec with extra power and kit if you can



## PORSCHE CAYENNE

**THE GOOD:** Handling; driver focus; choice of body styles; 0-62mph in 5.0sec

**THE BAD:** Bigger battery for facelift model but still can't match the X5

**THE UGLY:** The front passenger touchscreen: £1000 and not needed

**THE ONE TO BUY:** If you value the U in SUV, steer clear of the coupe – even if it is a great steer



## VOLKSWAGEN TIGUAN

**THE GOOD:** Mk3 is bigger than ever but still a neat all-round package. Choice of 201 and 268bhp PHEVs, both with 62-mile e-range

**THE BAD:** Room for improvement with the infotainment

**THE UGLY:** People are buying Tiguans instead of Golfs, in huge numbers

**THE ONE TO BUY:** Go for either of the eHybrids in good-value Match trim



## BMW 330e

**THE GOOD:** Goes sub-six to 62mph and up to 41 electric miles on a charge

**THE BAD:** Engine is slightly coarse; plain 330i is less heavy, more fun

**THE UGLY:** Hybrid kit eats into boot space so regular 3s are roomier

**THE ONE TO BUY:** Choice of saloon or estate. Handsome, vaguely affordable 330e Sport Touring is £48,785

# TOP 5 ELECTRIC CARS



GIANT TEST WINNER



## PORSCHE TAYCAN

**THE GOOD:** The EV that's best to drive has been thoroughly overhauled and retains its top slot: still fast, responsive and fluid; now more efficient

**THE BAD:** Info screen in front of the passenger is faintly ridiculous

**THE UGLY:** Prices are all up

**THE ONE TO BUY:** As before, three body styles to choose from: saloon, estate or raised estate. Prices start at £86.5k for the rear-drive basic Taycan; you can pay a lot more and get a bit more performance as you work your way up the range

EV market changes fast, but still nothing tops the Taycan



## TESLA MODEL 3

**THE GOOD:** The alternatives keep getting better, but the Model 3's mix of range, driving pleasure and ease of use remains formidable

**THE BAD:** Stop nicking the switches

**THE UGLY:** That queasiness around Elon Musk

**THE ONE TO BUY:** Revised Performance really is fab; less powerful single-motor, rear-drive entry model is £20k less at £40k, but we'd pick the £50k Long Range bi-motor



## KIA EV6

**THE GOOD:** Design inside and out, with cabin materials and tech to match the design; efficient performance; potential for rapid charging; it's practical and good value

**THE BAD:** Kia's rather long waiting list

**THE UGLY:** The high-powered GT isn't as good as we wanted it to be

**THE ONE TO BUY:** You'll need £49,175 for a RWD GT-Line with the handy, winter-ready heat pump



## MG 4

**THE GOOD:** Incredible value and remarkably good fun to drive – the EV hatch's Focus moment

**THE BAD:** Poundland Lamborghini Urus vibes, especially in orange

**THE UGLY:** How do you feel about driving an MG-badged hatchback from a Chinese-state-owned parent company?

**THE ONE TO BUY:** Not the XPower. Best value lies in the SE Long Range, currently with zero per cent APR



## CITROËN E-C3

**THE GOOD:** Cute and comfortable, like a 2CV; well equipped, unlike a 2CV

**THE BAD:** Real-world range of 160-ish miles limits its usefulness

**THE UGLY:** Boot isn't big and isn't well shaped; that's the sort of thing Citroën traditionally excels at

**THE ONE TO BUY:** New C3 range starts at a good-value £21,990, but the impressive electric e-C3 is a modest £1700 on top of that, which feels like progress

PCM (per calendar month) figures are typical prices for PCP (personal contract purchase) deals available at the time of writing. For guidance only

# TOP 5 SUVs/CROSSOVERS



Can't wait to drive the road-biased Octa version

GIANT TEST WINNER



## LAND ROVER DEFENDER

**THE GOOD:** Reboot brings untold dynamic improvements wherever you drive

**THE BAD:** Second-row access is a pain in the 90; expensive; 130 in particular is very big, so parking can be tricky

**THE UGLY:** Very nice inside, so you're wary of getting it muddy

**THE ONE TO BUY:** Range spans 90, 110 and 130 bodies, with significantly different dimensions but remarkably similar character and the genuine off-road ability that Land Rover always delivers so convincingly. Heart says petrol V8 90, head/wallet say diesel-six D250 110

EV CHOICE



## PORSCHE MACAN

**THE GOOD:** The new one is electric – and as impressive as the outgoing combustion version

**THE BAD:** As family transport it has its shortcomings, especially boot space

**THE UGLY:** If you want an engine you'll need to be quick

**THE ONE TO BUY:** Go Turbo, from £95k, or the slightly less potent 4, from £70k, which offers all you could sensibly want

GIANT TEST WINNER



## ASTON MARTIN DBX 707

**THE GOOD:** Now with a much improved interior, the DBX keeps the glorious noise, masterful balance, rear-axle bias and surprising practicality

**THE BAD:** High fuel consumption and emissions from the twin-turbo V8

**THE UGLY:** There's no longer a non-707 version, so you need to pay top dollar

**THE ONE TO BUY:** The 707 will cost you around £210k

NEW ENTRY



## MERCEDES G-CLASS

**THE GOOD:** Rejigged range spans diesel, petrol, AMG and EV, and they're all good: agile off-road, smooth and comfy on-road

**THE BAD:** It's all a bit fancy; how do you feel about muddy wellies?

**THE UGLY:** Merc's premium mission means it's a posh version or nothing

**THE ONE TO BUY:** Electric is astonishingly good, but painfully expensive at £180k-plus

NEW ENTRY



## INEOS QUARTER-MASTER

**THE GOOD:** Pick-up version of the Grenadier has a long wheelbase that if anything improves the handling

**THE BAD:** Not very roomy for passengers

**THE UGLY:** Isuzus are much cheaper

**THE ONE TO BUY:** Prices start at £66k, but a Trialmaster edition at £74k brings together a practical and good-looking set of extras

# TOP 5 LUXURY CARS



**RANGE ROVER**

**THE GOOD:** Masterful and hugely desirable reinvention of an icon. An EV version is due soon

**THE BAD:** Reliability remains a worry. EV could be v v heavy

**THE UGLY:** The D350 mild-hybrid straight-six diesel is sublime. Can you live with the guilt?

**THE ONE TO BUY:** The above (from £104k), though the V8 is fun



**ROLLS-ROYCE PHANTOM**

**THE GOOD:** Money-no-object pinnacle of serenity and craftsmanship

**THE BAD:** Is this really you? And is this really appropriate in 2024?

**THE UGLY:** Filthy-money associations

**THE ONE TO BUY:** It's 'standard' or long-wheelbase, from £380k. All cars are built to order and most owners spend £500k



**MERCEDES S-CLASS**

**THE GOOD:** Tech-fest with timeless waftability. Few cars are more calming

**THE BAD:** Surprisingly unrefined petrol six; doesn't ride as well as it should

**THE UGLY:** Trying not to crash while using the Hyperscreen

**THE ONE TO BUY:** Hybrid 580e works best. That's £114k in entry AMG Line Premium trim



**BENTLEY FLYING SPUR**

**THE GOOD:** The definitive modern limo: effortless, but rewarding when you want to put some effort in

**THE BAD:** W12 is fast but short on soul; hybrid V6 a bit lame; go V8

**THE UGLY:** Air of feigned aristocracy

**THE ONE TO BUY:** V6 hybrid starts at £180k, before the limitless options



**ROLLS-ROYCE SPECTRE**

**THE GOOD:** A joy to drive, and exquisitely built

**THE BAD:** Efficiency not great

**THE UGLY:** Fabulous detailing and engineering will benefit so few

**THE ONE TO BUY:** It's £330k in theory, but in reality, as every one is spec'd from a large and flexible options list, it's going to cost you more than £400,000

# TOP 5 FAMILY CARS



**BMW 3-SERIES**

**THE GOOD:** On-the-deck driving position; dreamy handling balance; slick interior

**THE BAD:** Knowing you've made the obvious choice

**THE UGLY:** You'll need an M340i or M340d for six cylinders

**THE ONE TO BUY:** 330e if you want a hybrid; 320i if you're on a budget



**BMW 5-SERIES**

**THE GOOD:** Brand new, still brilliant. Handling still defines the class

**THE BAD:** It's grown to become a very hefty car

**THE UGLY:** Is nowhere safe? Even the tradition-embracing 5-series gets a full EV option in the form of the i5

**THE ONE TO BUY:** Prices start at £51,900 for the 520i but can go easily north of £80k



**DACIA JOGGER**

**THE GOOD:** Seven seats; massive boot with the rear row removed; prices start just over £18k

**THE BAD:** Sandero base means it's a bit narrow; spartan

**THE UGLY:** Low Euro NCAP score, although it's pretty safe in a crash

**THE ONE TO BUY:** Hybrid usefully punchier than petrol, but much clunkier. PCP a steal at £197 a month



**VOLKSWAGEN ID. 7**

**THE GOOD:** The most coherent ID to date now in a choice of hatch and estate. Not posh, but highly agreeable

**THE BAD:** Frumpy styling and that still sub-par interface

**THE UGLY:** So few electric estates to choose from

**THE ONE TO BUY:** Pro Match with 77kWh battery does the job just fine, priced from £51,500 for the hatch



**SKODA KODIAQ**

**THE GOOD:** New version builds on the Mk1's strengths: roomy, comfortable, decent value

**THE BAD:** Not the most responsive steering

**THE UGLY:** Awkwardly, the diesel is the best engine

**THE ONE TO BUY:** Range starts at £26,645, but the smart choice is the 2.0-litre TDI in SE trim at £38,805

# TOP 5 FAMILY HATCHES

GIANT TEST WINNER



**BMW 1-SERIES**

**THE GOOD:** Premium and practical; available in two spicy versions

**THE BAD:** Said spicy models aren't worth the extra

**THE UGLY:** Facelift reaches showrooms soon, dialling down the ugly

**THE ONE TO BUY:** 118i M Sport at £31,585; all-wheel-drive M135i super-hatch tops the tree at £42k



**PEUGEOT 208**

**THE GOOD:** Style; big-car character; knockout interior; EV version available

**THE BAD:** So-so handling; a squash for adult rear-seat passengers

**THE UGLY:** Dumping the wheel in your lap like a TV dinner to see the dials clearly

**THE ONE TO BUY:** Range from £20k, but £25k GT is worth saving up for. Bright colour is best

GIANT TEST WINNER



**MINI COUNTRYMAN**

**THE GOOD:** Wonderful interior and all-round feelgood factor from big new five-door

**THE BAD:** You need to be in the mood for the built-in zaniness

**THE UGLY:** Options can send the price into the stratosphere

**THE ONE TO BUY:** Your basic Countryman C Classic is just fine at a sniff under £30k



**VOLKSWAGEN GOLF**

**THE GOOD:** Brain-out default choice still a solid all-rounder; ride, visibility, roominess

**THE BAD:** Seat Leon a very similar package for a lower price

**THE UGLY:** Revised Mk8.5 version imminent, so supplies are patchy

**THE ONE TO BUY:** 1.5 TSI 150 at £300pcm or £28k; roomy estate is also great value



**RENAULT CLIO**

**THE GOOD:** Still fun to drive, and pretty practical for young families

**THE BAD:** Not actually very quick

**THE UGLY:** An even simpler, more basic version would be welcome

**THE ONE TO BUY:** No need to go higher than the base Evolution spec and an 89bhp TCE 90 three-cylinder engine, yours for £18k/£191 a month

# TOP 5 SPORTS SALOONS

GIANT TEST WINNER



**BMW M3/M4 COMPETITION**

**THE GOOD:** Mighty straight-six; front axle's never-give-up attitude; dreamy chassis balance

**THE BAD:** No manual; nearly 911 money now

**THE UGLY:** M3 Touring £88k new but now changing hands for much less

**THE ONE TO BUY:** The CS, if you were lucky enough to bag one of the 100 brought here. Used Touring is a good secondhand buy



**MERCEDES-AMG S63**

**THE GOOD:** V8 plus e-motor shows AMG can do a great performance hybrid, and in the most unlikely of places: a huge luxury saloon

**THE BAD:** Boot size suffers, and ride quality isn't perfect

**THE UGLY:** It's a pity this approach wasn't applied to the new C63

**THE ONE TO BUY:** Two versions, both at £189k, one with more black trim



**ALFA GIULIA QUADRIFOGLIO**

**THE GOOD:** Charisma in spades, fantastic agility and almost as good as an M3 to drive

**THE BAD:** Emphasis on *almost* as good as an M3 to drive

**THE UGLY:** Flaky interior quality; infotainment still lags behind the best

**THE ONE TO BUY:** There's just the one, wonderful, model from £78,315/£749pcm



**PORSCHE PANAMERA**

**THE GOOD:** New version builds on success of the very fine model it replaces

**THE BAD:** Barely a saloon – four-up is okay, but forget five

**THE UGLY:** Estate version is no longer available, even though it was the best looker

**THE ONE TO BUY:** £79,500 gets the base model; Turbo E-Hybrid at £141k now tops the range



**AUDI S8**

**THE GOOD:** The thinking person's super saloon. Broad-based luxe appeal that's as good to be driven in as it is to drive

**THE BAD:** Still lacks the badge cachet of AMG and M

**THE UGLY:** The nerves at Audi HQ when Maserati announces the new Quattroporte

**THE ONE TO BUY:** Vorsprung, with its 21-inch wheels

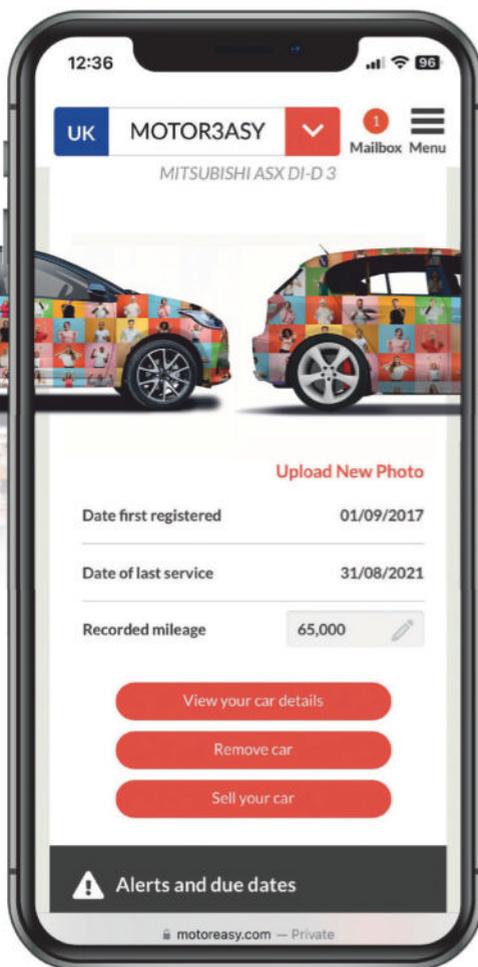
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# CUPRA FORMENTOR E-HYBRID



WHAT YOU FEAR IS  
WHAT MAKES YOU FEEL MOST ALIVE

Average fuel consumption for Formentor e-HYBRID range mpg (litres/100km) 176.6 (1.2) – 235.4 (1.6); combined CO<sub>2</sub> emissions 27 - 35g/km. These figures were obtained using a combination of battery power and fuel. The Formentor e-HYBRID is a plug-in hybrid vehicle requiring mains electricity for charging. Figures shown are for comparability purposes; only compare fuel consumption, CO<sub>2</sub> and equivalent all-electric range figures with other vehicles tested to the same technical procedures. These figures may not reflect real life driving results, which will depend upon a number of factors including the accessories fitted (post-registration), variations in weather, driving styles and vehicle load. Data correct at January 2024. For more information, please see [cupra.co.uk](https://cupra.co.uk) or consult your CUPRA Retailer.

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हन्दी मीगजीन

समय पत्रिका साधनापथग हलकषमी उदयइंडिया नरिंगधाम मॉडर्न खेतीइंडिया टुडेदेवपुत्र  
कुरकिट टुडेग हथोभा अर्नखीहनिदुस्तानमुक्ता सरतिा चंपक परतयोगिता दरपण सक्सेस मरि  
सामान्य ज्ञान दरपण फारम एवं फुड मनोहर कहानियां सत्यकथा सरस सललि स्वतंत्र वार्ता लाजवाब आउटलुकसचची शकिषावनति  
मायापुरी रूपायन उजाळा ऋषा पुरसाद जोश रोजगार समाचार जोश करंट अफेयर्स जोश सामान्य ज्ञान जोश बैकग और एसएससी  
इंडिया बुक ऑफरकिरड्स परकू तमिल  
राजस्थान रोजगार संदेश राजस्थान सूजससखी जागरण अहा! जदिगी बाल भास्कर योजना कुरकषैन्  
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