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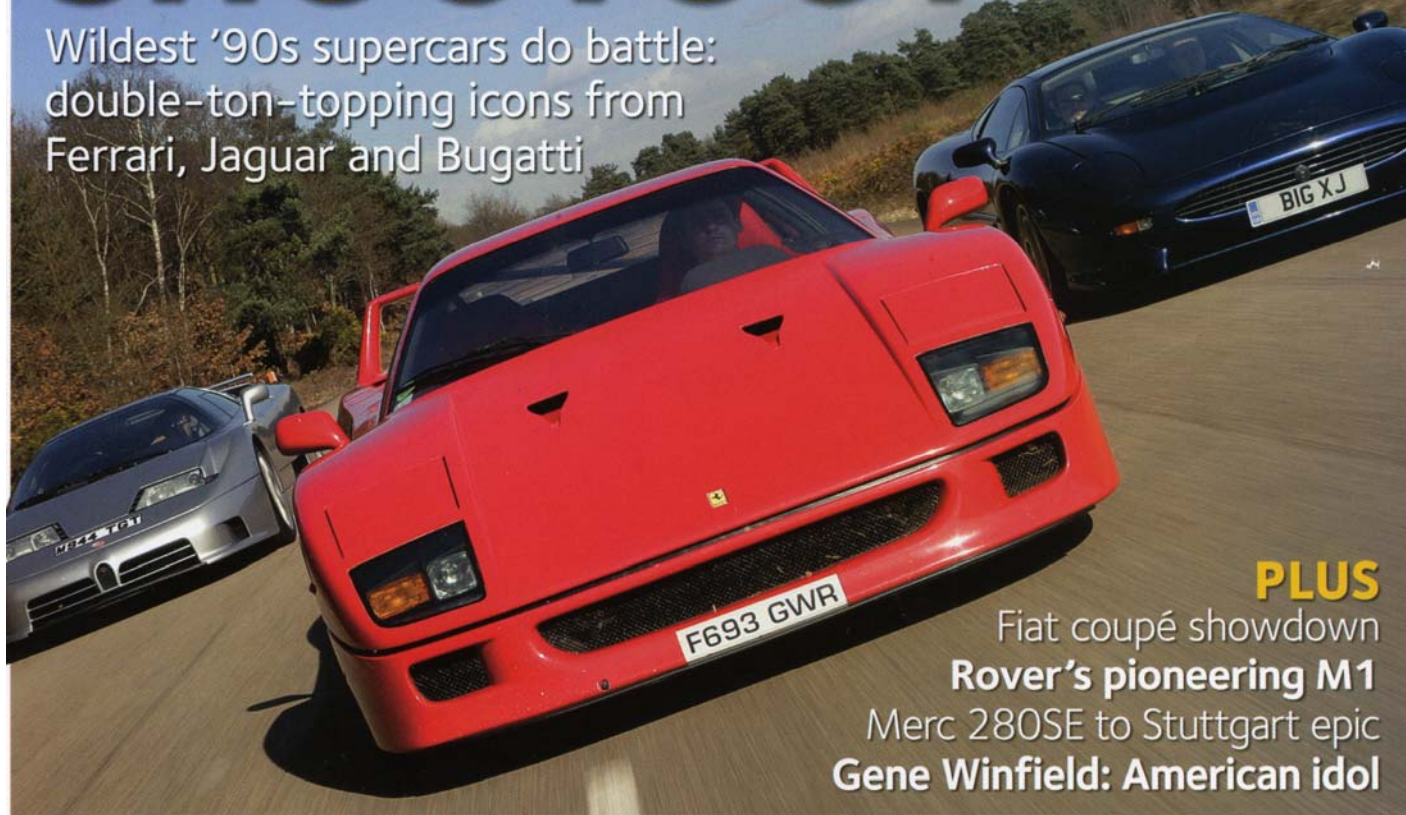


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200MPH SHOOTOUT



Wildest '90s supercars do battle:
double-ton-topping icons from
Ferrari, Jaguar and Bugatti



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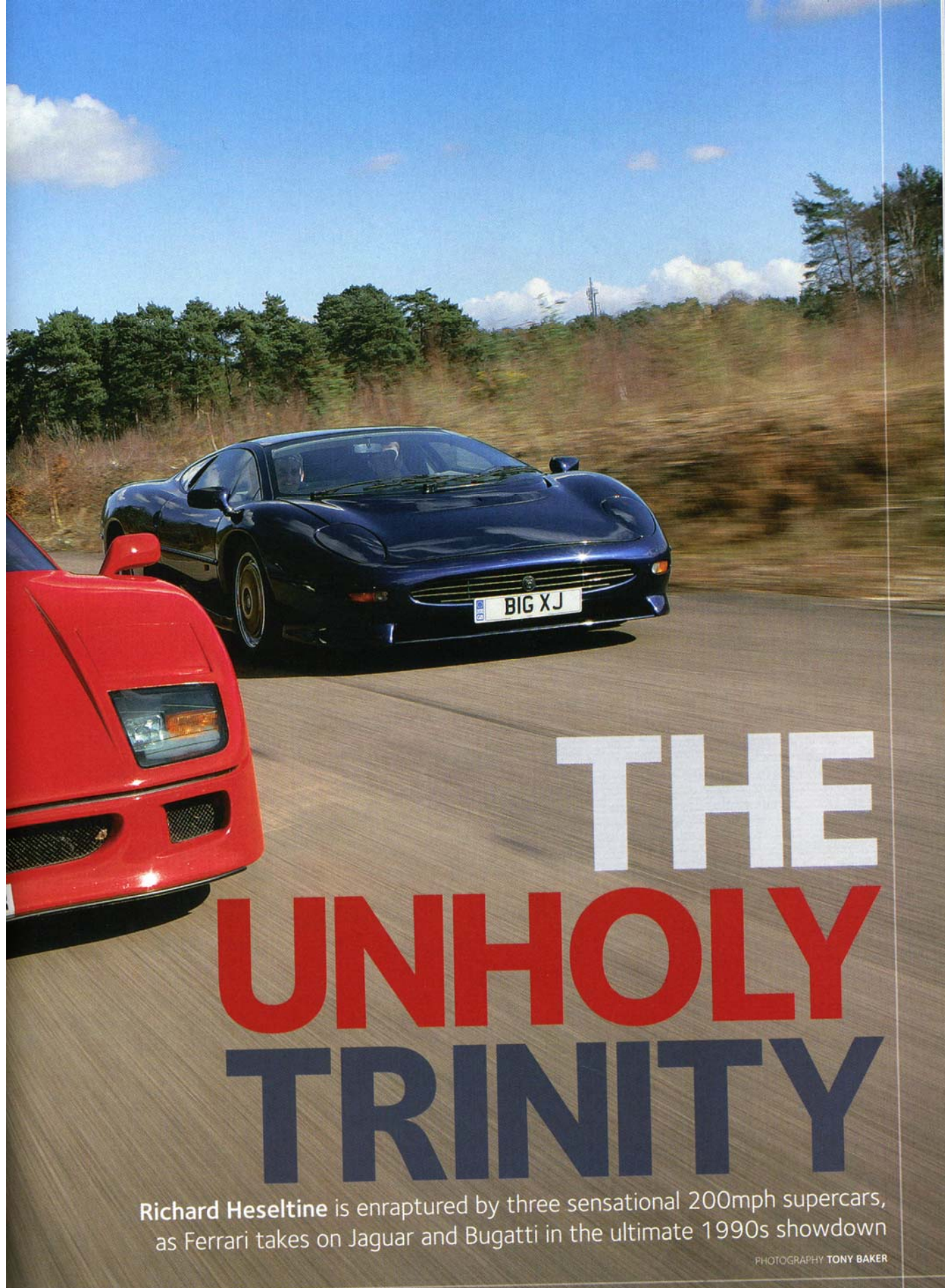
Fiat coupé showdown
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THE UNHOLY TRINITY

Richard Heseltine is enraptured by three sensational 200mph supercars, as Ferrari takes on Jaguar and Bugatti in the ultimate 1990s showdown

PHOTOGRAPHY **TONY BAKER**

'It could lap Fiorano faster than Gilles Villeneuve managed in his 312T5 single-seater only seven years earlier



That's the beauty of supercars: the disorientation, the mind-melting lack of reason. Concessions to ordinariness don't apply. You just get in, disengage the part of your brain marked 'think' and rely on instinct instead. Supercars are seductive for the simple reason that they are completely and utterly ludicrous. All very groovy, but illogicality here doesn't end with the be-thunderous, be-quick stuff: this one appears to be hermetically sealed. Thank the Lord (or Nokia) for mobile phones: "Oh Hi. Yeah, it's all going well. Yeah, the Bug's fab. Just one thing: where, precisely, is the interior door handle? Oh *there*. Natch. Of course. Bye."

So, in one probably-going-to-regret-mentioning-that anecdote lies the reality behind the real-world supercar experience. You have to be prepared to take the maddening with the mad. And it's the flaws that serve only to reinforce the positives. What supercars – the proper high-coffee stuff – lack in rationale, they more than make up for in extremism. And, to anyone of a certain age (let's say, cough, mid-'30s), the one that managed to bridge the gap between dreams and outright fantasy was the Ferrari F40.

To those of us then new to shaving, the spec sheet said it all. While it wasn't as pretty as the 288GTO donor (no car of the '80s was), the F40's Leonardo Fioravanti-devised outline marked Pininfarina's new-found commitment to aerodynamic efficiency. Beneath the Kevlar bodyshell, the resilient twin-turbocharged V8 was enlarged by 100cc (to 2936cc) while power rose by 20% to 478bhp. This really was that journalistic cliché of a road-going race car. Bag tanks? Check. Optional dog box? Phwoar. This was the first 200mph (202 to be precise) supercar. No bullplop. Built to celebrate Ferrari's big



FERRARI F40

Sold/number built 1987-'92/1315

Construction bonded tubular steel spaceframe, integrated with composite materials, Kevlar body

Engine all-alloy qohc 32v 2936cc V8, with two IHI turbochargers and intercoolers

Max power 478bhp @ 7000rpm

Max torque 426lb ft @ 4000rpm

Transmission five-speed manual, driving rear wheels

Suspension independent all round, by double wishbones, coil springs, telescopic dampers, anti-roll bars

Steering rack and pinion

Brakes ventilated discs (no servo at rear)

Length 14ft 3in (4343mm) **Width** 6ft 6in (1980mm) **Height** 3ft 8½in (1130mm)

Wheelbase 8ft ½in (2451mm)

Weight 2425lb (1100kg)

0-60mph 4.6 secs **Top speed** 202mph

Price new £160,000

Price now £150,000+

four-oh, and the last car to be signed off by *Il Commendatore* himself, the F40 was a pure-bred. One that, when introduced in 1987, could lap the firm's Fiorano test track faster than Gilles Villeneuve managed in his 312T5 single-seater only seven years earlier.

Ironically then, that for all of the purple gush latterly bestowed on the F40, it received more than its fair share of negative ink back in the day. Some railed against Maranello's decision to sanction a racing car that would never be raced (said hacks weren't psychic; Group C still held sway)

Brutal F40 lacks the elegance of its 288GTO predecessor yet packs more of a punch; seat was tailor-made to fit first owner; car looks every millimetre the racer, with massive rear wing, Plexiglas engine cover, NACA ducts and signature triple exhausts

while others bigged up the rival Porsche 959 technocrat for its forward-thinking vision. Yet if the Ferrari was given a bit of a kicking, that was nothing on what was meted out to its British rival, Jaguar's XJ220.

Anyone who witnessed its unveiling

at the 1988 British Motor Show was left in no doubt: basking in the reflective glow of the marque's win at Le Mans that year, the XJ220 was hyper-kinetic sculpture. Here was a car initially conjured by Jaguar boffins' after-hours Saturday Club, one that promised to take on the supercar elite despite being hindered by a budget that wouldn't keep Porsche's canteen functioning for a week. Everyone was willing the then-liberated (from Austin-Rover) firm to succeed: some 1500 or so deposits flooded in at £50,000 a pop.

Fast-forward to 1991 and, when cars finally began to emerge from Tom Walkinshaw's JaguarSport operation in Oxfordshire, the mood was very different. Officially released just as the economy turned turtle, fewer punters – most of them speculators – were willing to shell out the vastly inflated £415,544 asking price.

And they had just the ammunition needed to worm their way out of purchase agreements. Gone was the promised 6.2-litre quad-cam V12. Its length and longitudinal placement (not to mention the size of the fuel tanks) meant that the



signature side scoops would have to go. It would have been a mite heavy, too. In its place came a V6 borrowed from TWR's IMSA XJR-10. Based on the MG Metro 6R4 unit, the end result bore little commonality parts-wise. The prototype's four-wheel drive was also abandoned on cost grounds, with Ricardo devising the five-speed manual transaxle. However you sugarcoat it, this wasn't the car Jaguar pledged. No, it was better. Mostly. The XJ220 was the world's quickest production car – 211.9mph – it could lap the Nürburgring faster than most purpose-built racers (the car pictured being a former record holder), the V6 was more powerful than the envisaged V12 and the 8in lost from the wheel-base rendered the car even prettier. Nonetheless, Jaguar – by then under Ford's custodianship – was forced to slim down projections to just 350 units. In the end, 288 cars were made, some remaining unsold until the late '90s.

Which is still a less calamitous yarn than the one that trailed the Bugatti. In a very roundabout way, it was Ferruccio Lamborghini who initiated the EB110. By the mid-'80s he was no longer

involved with the marque that bore his name, but bashing out ideas with like-minded car types led to him bending the ear of one Romano Artioli. As the world's premier Ferrari distributor – and soon to be a very ex-Ferrari distributor – it was this impeccably coiffured motor magnate who persuaded the French state-owned SNECMA to sell the rights to the name, Bugatti Automobili being registered in October '87.

And no expense was spared. A palatial factory was built in Campogalliano on the outskirts of Modena (architect Giampaolo Benedini being Artioli's cousin) and outfitted with all the best kit. A roll-call of engineering superstars was recruited, including technical director Nicola Materazzi, formerly project leader on the Lancia Stratos. The most controversial aspect was the car's styling, Marcello

Sublime XJ220 looks almost understated in this company, with beautifully resolved details such as cooling ducts; BBS wheels on development car; 6R4-derived V6 was good for 542bhp, this one packs 700bhp; Momo wheel, Sparco seats non-original

JAGUAR XJ220

Sold/number built 1991-'92/280

Construction bonded and riveted aluminium tub with aluminium panels

Engine all-alloy qohc 24v 3498cc V6, two Garrett T3 turbochargers and intercoolers

Max power 542bhp @ 6500rpm

Max torque 473lb ft @ 4500rpm

Transmission five-speed all-synchro transaxle, driving rear wheels

Suspension: front double wishbones with pushrod and rocker-operated spring/damper units, anti-roll bar rear double wishbones with toe-control links, twin rocker-operated spring/damper units, anti-roll bar

Steering rack and pinion

Brakes ventilated discs, with servo

Length 15ft 11in (4850mm) **Width** 6ft 7in (2010mm) **Height** 3ft 11in (1140mm)

Wheelbase 8ft 8in (2642mm)

Weight 3210lb (1456kg)

0-60mph 3.6 secs **Top speed** 211.9mph

Price new £415,544 **Now** £120,000+





promised to take on the supercar elite on a budget that wouldn't keep Porsche's canteen going for a week'



Gandini's original shovel-nosed outline being deemed too similar to the Lamborghini Diablo, so Benedini made many alterations.

Unveiled at the Place de Défense, Paris on 14 September 1991, to mark Ettore Bugatti's 110th birthday (hence the initials and numerical designation), all looked rosy: the EB110GT was then the fastest production car on earth (214mph) and arguably the most advanced. Yet the world economy collapsed. Artioli's prosperous Suzuki import business was obliterated after the yen buckled, although there was still enough cash around to buy Lotus in August '93. But it couldn't last. The proposed EB112 super-saloon was quietly dropped as production of the EB110 gradually ground to a halt.

The first delivery was made in December '92, the last in September '95. Just 85 of the 'entry-level' GT editions were made (only one with right-hand drive), as well as 30 SuperSports and 13 development hacks. Except that wasn't quite the end. Following the bankruptcy sale, former Le Mans-winning entrant Jochen Dauer bought a number of partially built cars and has thus far finished a further six GTs. Volkswagen subsequently acquired the rights to the name for an undisclosed sum (said to be around £20m) and has since invested (lost) vast amounts more creating the 16-cylinder Veyron.

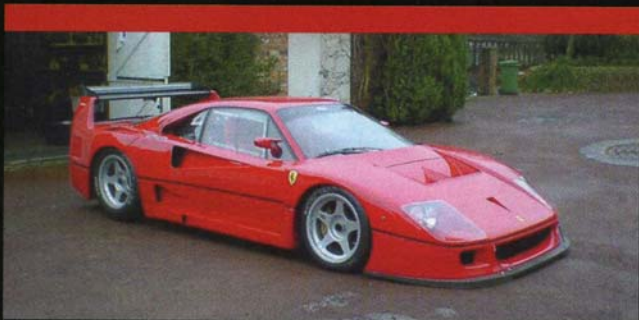
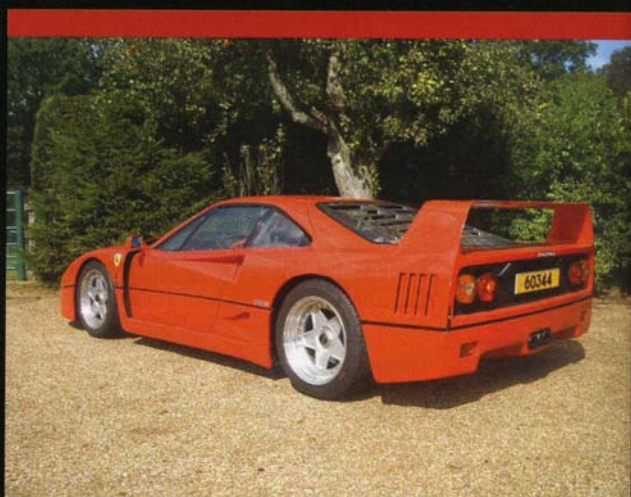
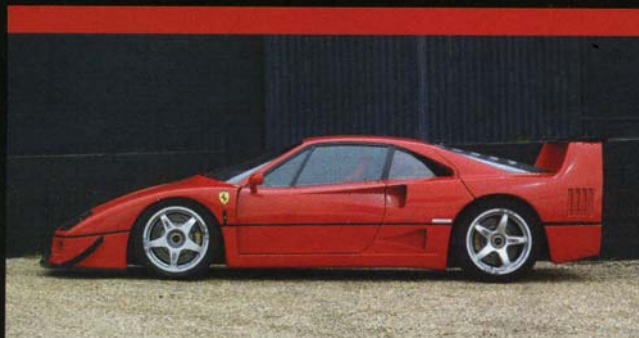
So three supercars: one latter-day icon, one technological marvel and another that, if armchair pundits are to be believed, is a corpulent old tugger. Except the XJ220 is nothing of the sort. Sure, the 90° V6 sounds like a chemical toilet mid-flush on start up but that's pretty much where the complaints begin and end. This is a toweringly capable machine, although it's not so much what it does that impresses as more what it

DKengineering



We are uniquely qualified with respect to this model having sold in excess of 85 F40's since the cars launch in 1987. We cater for day to day road use to competition use. We were also responsible for the preparation of the F40 which won the Ferrari Owners Club concours overall in 2001.

Below are some pictures of a few cars we are currently associated with. Please see our advertisement at the back of the magazine for a list of current cars we have for sale.



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F40 GTM

Here at DK Engineering we have a state of the art rolling road dynamometer with an 800bhp capacity. This modified Ferrari F40 was recently tested on our rolling road at about 600 horsepower. The car is fitted F40 LM brakes and wheels and Michelotto carbon fibre front and rear spoilers amongst various other modifications. This is the ultimate track day F40.

esn't do. At near 5m in length and more than wide, you'd expect the Jag to be less than eldy. But while it's the heaviest of all the cars re, it's far from lardy, being 150kg lighter than Lamborghini Diablo. Roll is barely perceptible, thanks in part to those monstrous boots (5/45ZR17 fronts, 345/35ZT18 rears). You lift off, change line mid-corner and it barely pitches (in the wet it's a bit more lairy). The steering loads with reassuring but manageable effort while the accelerator pedal is ideally weighted, allowing you to draw on the massive performance reserves with absolute accuracy.

In standard form, the XJ220 will reach 60mph in 3.6 secs. This pre-production car has been given the Don Law Racing makeover, so has gone on 700bhp (up from 542). Acceleration is in the 'would-scream-but-can't-breathe' variety. The first two gears are close coupled. Move into third, keep your toe in and you run out of road in a picosecond. It just keeps pulling. No hesitation, no discernable lag. All too often aftermarket tuning only serves to detract from the driving experience. Not here.

Yet, leaving aside the *Looney Times* velocities, here this XJ220 – where any XJ220 – really shines is in what you can do at dawdling speeds. Drive your average supercar over rutted British

B-roads and the ride is roughly akin to the Space Shuttle on re-entry. Not so here. It's a Jaguar after all.

The Ferrari, in comparison, is far from cossetting yet for sheer, unadulterated driving

light, from top: Michel Ferté's F40 LM; Nielsen, Brabham and Coulthard in class at Le Mans '93 but lost it on legality of exhaust; petrol leak and turbo failure thwarted B's 24 Hours promise

SUPER TRIO'S RACING UNCERTAINTIES

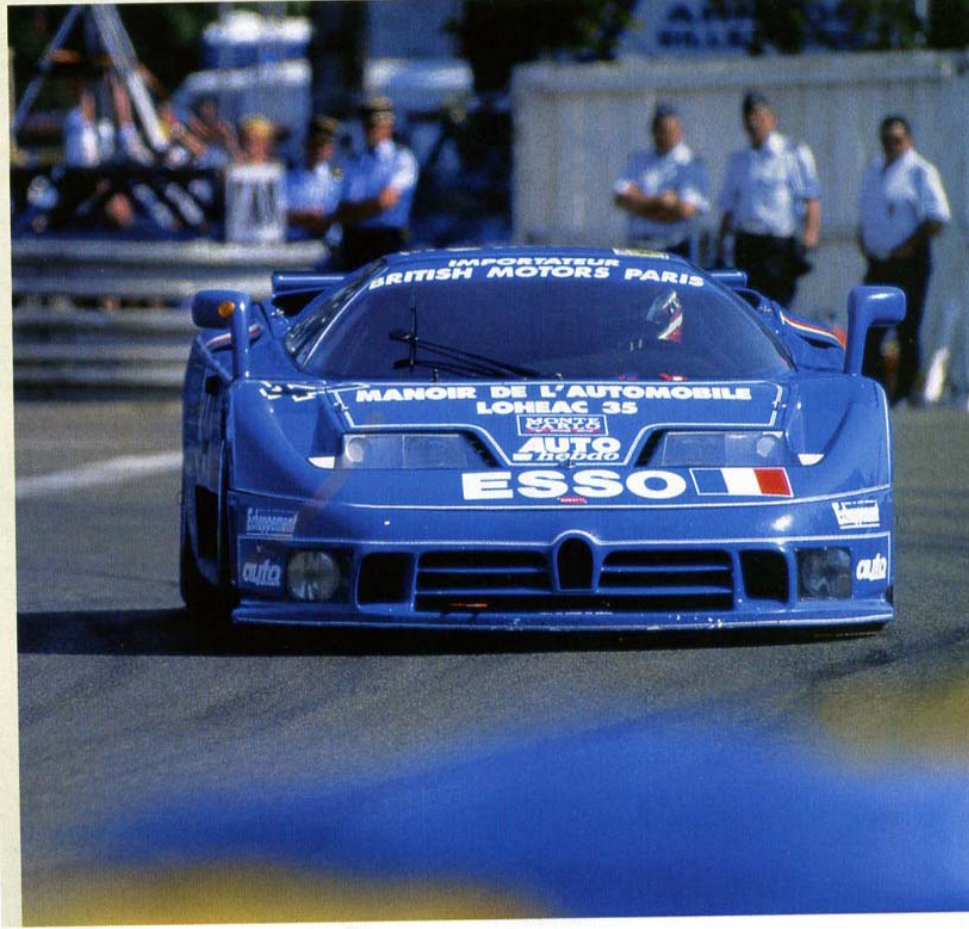


Though the F40 was trumpeted as a road-car-cum-racer, the bods at Maranello failed to take into account one nettlesome detail during its conception: there was no championship in Europe that would accept it. The model would have to wait until '89 before making its race debut, Jean Sage entering his modified F40 LM in the last two rounds of the IMSA GTO series. Jean Alesi was third at Laguna Seca, Jean-Pierre Jabouille running out of cogs at Del Mar.

And that would have been it had it not been for BPR Global GT racing in '94, with Luciano Della Noce and Anders Olofsson winning the Vallelunga 4 Hours in Bo Strandell's entry. In '95, the championship-status series attracted the mighty McLaren F1: Strandell equipped his drivers with a new F40GT-E (Evoluzione), Michel Ferté also flying the Ferrari flag with his Pilot Aidax equipe, with brother Alain and Olivier Thevenin in an LM. The French squad won at Anderstorp but it would be the only Ferrari victory that year. For '96, Della Noce and Olofsson shared the Ferrari Club Italia entry for another F40 win at Anderstorp but that would be the model's closing triumph at international level.

If the F40 reawakened Ferrari's position as a player in sports car racing, the XJ220 added little to Jaguar's sporting heritage. Win Percy made its debut in May '93 in a BRDC GT round, sandbagging his TWR entry to make it look interesting: but he still won by nearly a lap. A month later, TWR's three-car attack on Le Mans ended with a class win for John Nielsen and Davids Brabham and Coulthard only for it to be rescinded following question marks over the exhaust. Future visits to La Sarthe for privateers only ended in disappointment.

Yet the EB110 could have added to Bugatti's lustre in the 24 Hours had fate been kinder. Publishing magnate Michel Hommel commissioned Synergie to prepare an SS for '94. With Alain Cudini, Jean-Christophe Boullion and '93 winner Eric Hélary on the driving strength, much was expected. A petrol leak early on cost time, as did a stop to replace all four turbos. Even so, the car was running eighth overall after 16 hours only to be forced out following an accident.





thing comes close. Get yourself snug in bucket (each having originally been to the customer's form), and the racers are obvious: exposed carbonfibre (it *appliqué*), pull cords and no armsched, neck-cricked-to-see-out-of-it stance. Turn the key, press the rubber button and the atonal soundscape is a disappointing, as is the juddering action of eg five-speeder until it's warmed up. Up and running it's oh so different. 125mph in 12 secs different. Acceleration blisteringly swift but that's not what your attention. There are faster supercars a few of them – but none as singularly as this. Hit 4000rpm and it's frantic, then, the turbo boost gauge needle rotates a windmill in a hurricane. It's mental. Sink each shift against the H-pattern gate, the revs and only fear – plus the lack of a damage waiver – gets in the way of z for the sun.

When there's the steering. No supercar – no other car – has uncommunicative steering as the feels never less than mechanical action, telegraphing its. You're constantly aware of it doing and where it's going. Hint. F40s are notorious for forsways into the scenery, is entirely understandable. So comfortable, relax a little the back steps out it'll stay keep it clean, focus and you'll be zed at just how fast you can be of these.

EB110 is its polar opposite.

SUPERCARS THAT WEREN'T SO SUPER

The late '80s and early '90s era was one glorious supercar cackfest. Flick through any motoring weekly from the period and you'll invariably find a 'scoop' about some preposterous, bewinged monster with a name that sounds like a venerable disease and reads like a Scrabble triple word score. Lack of pedigree or anything resembling a business model appeared to be almost mandatory. Hands up all who remember the MCA Centenaire, aka MiG Tako M100, Aixam-Mega Monte Carlo? It had a Lamborghini V12 engine and cost \$500,000.

Then there was the Cizeta Moroder V16T that made its debut at the '88 Geneva Salon. Conceived by Claudio Zampoli and synth god Giorgio Moroder, it was made just down the road from Sant' Agata by a cabal of ex-Lambo men and styled by serial Lamborghini art boy Marcello Gandini. On sale from '91, its arrival coincided with the recession and only nine were made – seven more than Yamaha managed with its OX99-11, six up on Monteverdi's Hai 650 F1 and a full nine greater than the Frank Costin DFV thingy that never made it past the plaster model stage, the GKN-sponsored Vanwall revival and the 'new' BRM.



MCA, only legal in Monaco. Below: dreamy Cizeta





If and when someone gets around to writing the definitive history of the supercar, chances are the Bug' will be mentioned only as a footnote, an intriguing 'what might have been'. But it deserves so much more. Yes, it's a bit of a road-going gargoyle but you still would. Get past the 'challenging' styling and there's brilliance here. This SS edition – 603bhp rather than 550 for the GT; carbonfibre panels rather than aluminium – is revelatory. If it was built today, the EB110 would still stack up. Everything feels meticulously honed and obsessively focused.

If anything, the cabin is disappointingly normal. Somehow you expect something a bit more out there, but pull down the scissor door (the release is hidden under the armrest in case you were wondering) and your neck is in line with the base of the windows. Headroom is tight but the leather-clad seats are ultra-comfy, the pedals only slightly offset towards the centreline and all the instruments are visible. And it has proper ventilation. Remarkable.

Fire up. Expecting an eruption of sound, there's initial disillusionment: a muted burble. Ease in the clutch – stiff, naturally – give it a bit

more gas and, heading out over calloused asphalt, there are no creaks, groans or thuds from the structure. The suspension seems to soak up the worst of road imperfections and, at moderately enthusiastic speeds, it's all very civilised. Forward visibility is reasonable, it doesn't feel remotely intimidating and the gearchange is super-slick while the power-assisted steering, with just 2.8 turns lock-to-lock, doesn't feel edgy.

So far, so shopping car. Then comes the good bit. At around 4000rpm, the turbos start to inhale air. Acceleration builds abruptly but smoothly. Ease off and you can hear all four huffers exhale sequentially left to right, left to right. Power on again, keep the throttle nailed open this time and forward thrust is shocking. This is one car in which you genuinely do get pinned back in your seat. Peak torque (479lb ft) arrives at 4250rpm

With quad-turbo 6-litre V12, outlandish all-wheel-drive EB110SS is searingly fast around test track; Gandini's shape was deemed too like Diablo and suffered from in-house makeover; cabin plush compared to other two; nose echoes Bugatti horseshoe grille

BUGATTI EB110SS

Sold/number built 1992-'95/123 (all)

Construction carbonfibre/Kevlar body fixed and bonded to carbonfibre tub, with integral roll-cage

Engine all-alloy qohc 60v 3500cc V12, with four IHI turbochargers and intercoolers

Max power 603bhp @ 8250rpm

Max torque 479lb ft @ 4250rpm

Transmission six-speed manual, driving all four wheels

Suspension independent all round, by double wishbones, coil springs, adjustable gas-filled dampers, anti-roll bars

Steering power-assisted rack and pinion

Brakes ventilated discs, with servo

Length 14ft 5½in (4400mm) **Width** 6ft 5in (1960mm) **Height** 3ft 8¼in (1125mm)

Wheelbase 8ft 4½in (2553mm)

Weight 3462lb (1570kg)

0-60mph 3.1 secs (claimed)

Top speed 218mph

Price new £281,000

Price now £150,000



and the four-wheel-drive arrangement provides unfeasible levels of grip.

There's seemingly never ending – and hugely satisfying – boost but without any stumbling or flat spots: you're left slightly detached from the surreal madness of it all. That a car with more than 600bhp can be this usable – so refined, so exploitable – is a feat of breathtaking creativity. It's a pity that so few will ever get to experience this kind of a rush.

Except, of course, the lack of superficial prettiness ultimately stymies it short of greatness. The Jaguar, in comparison, should be welcomed back in from the cold because it really is a hugely capable machine. Thing is, its prominence in the supercar firmament remains middling due largely to the whole it's-not-the-car-it-was-supposed-to-be period bluster. That and the arrival of the McLaren F1, which did for every supercar, showing what could be achieved with the right materials, the right budget and a genius as a designer. But that too lost money. Which brings us to the F40. It's far from perfect. Actually, perfect isn't even on its radar but it's brutal, ballistic and a bit scary. Magic. That it's routinely cited as the greatest supercar of its generation (and when did you last hear anyone mention the Porsche 959?) isn't just journalistic shorthand for emperor's new clothes: try getting hacks to agree on anything other than mutual antipathy. No it really is *that* good. ■

Thanks to Steve Wilson and Don Law for the Jaguar (01782 413875, www.donlawracing.com), DK Engineering for the Ferrari (01923 255246, www.dkeng.com) and Verdi for the Bugatti (020 8756 0066, www.verdiferrari.biz)

at a car with 600bhp-plus can be this usable – so refined, so exploitable – is a feat of breathtaking creativity'

