



LIFESTYLE

TIM BARNES-CLAY Motoring

TIM TESTS IT

We don't know how many cars our motoring editor, Tim Barnes-Clay, has driven over the years – but we reckon it's got to be four figures.

How one man manages to review so many motors without losing his passion for them is inspiring. Let's face it, we're not all petrolheads – but having a passion for something, whatever it may be, is important because it's what gives us that purpose when waking up in the morning. Above all else, passion is an attractive quality. Here are just a few of the cars Tim's been reviewing lately. They may not get your pulse racing; you may even hate some of them with a passion, but we hope you enjoy reading about them nonetheless.

New Citroen C3

I tried the petrol version of the new C3 at its initial media launch in Spain a few months back. But I wanted to see what the car is like with diesel power – and, more importantly, how it handles Britain's pothole-peppered roads.

But first, let me tell you about the latest Citroen C3 – it has character and is a real looker. The French brand is always good at giving cars a quirky personality – and this model is no different. There are innumerable bright colour combinations inside and out – and you can have Airbumps stuck on the door – just like the Citroen Cactus – or not – depending on your mood at the time of ordering.

Despite it really being a city focused car, the 2017 C3 serves as a decent little family-of-four car, too. That's especially the case with the 100PS 1.6-litre diesel engine, as tested here in top of the range 'Flair' trim.

The car has a pleasing amount of gusto, meaning you can press on well on dual carriageways or on smaller urban roads. The hatchback has enough pull for overtakes and doesn't feel vulnerable in the fast lane of motorways. It's by no means a sporty drive, though, as the 2017 Citroen C3 is set up for a relaxing

driving experience. The five-speed manual gearbox is long-legged and the car does lean in corners, but not worryingly so. It's also quite noisy, at around 3,000rpm and upwards, but it's not a deal-breaker. Zero to 62mph arrives in 10.6 seconds and the maximum speed is 115mph. Indeed, the new C3 with this diesel engine is a bit of a gem – especially when you see the average fuel consumption hovering at a steady 70+mpg. CO₂ emissions are low, too, at only 95g/km.

The 2017 Citroen C3 rides well on the UK's roads. Let's face it, they're not the best in Europe, often with inadequately patched over potholes, or streaked with tar-banding, and the like. The C3's smooth suspension seems to take these challenges on the chin, turning what could be teeth-rattling moments into cushioned bumps instead. Thanks to the laid-back suspension set-up, and direct steering, it's all very civilised – and the car never loses its ability to grip well.

Leg and headroom is good for what is essentially a supermini. Sure, six-footers and above will feel a bit cramped in the rear, but I've seen worse. There are cupholders and a smallish glovebox, and the boot is a good size at 300 litres. It will take a pushchair and some shopping without a problem. Cabin tech is awesome on this new C3, too. It includes a touchscreen that is as responsive as an iPad and there is Android Auto and Apple CarPlay smartphone connectivity. This means you can mirror your sat-nav from your smartphone onto the C3's touchscreen. Also, as standard on the top of range Flair model, there's a camera fitted near the rear-view mirror that can snap stills or take video. It's cool to take pics of your journey when you want, and upload them to your smartphone; but there's a serious side: it will record footage before, and after, any crash. This is bound to help with any accident



"I feel Citroen's on to a winner with the new C3."



Fast Facts

Max speed:
115mph
0-62mph:
10.6 secs
Combined mpg:
76.3
Engine layout:
1560cc
4-cylinder turbo
diesel
Max. power (PS):
100
CO₂: 95 g/km
Price: £17,095

investigation, insurance issues and the legalities that go with it all.

With the characterful appearance of this car; the option to choose lots of different colours; the comfort, efficiency, tech, boot space and overall ride, I feel Citroen's on to a winner with the new C3. →

"I've got the top-of-the-range version, so it comes with all the bells and whistles."



Ford Grand C-Max

I've never been a fan of multi-purpose vehicles – or MPVs as they're known in motoring circles. But I can, hand on heart, say that the Ford Grand C-Max really has changed my mind.

I've been living with the car for the past few weeks now, and it's the perfect vehicle for my lifestyle. When I say "my lifestyle", I mean my kids' lifestyle. I have very little social life now – as any parent of growing kids will understand. My 'social life' consists of running my offspring to their friends' parties and to football or gymnastics practice. Rock 'n' roll.

Yep, my days of burning around on a 955cc motorbike or in a two-seater sports car are behind me – for now, anyway. And that's why my head is now ruling my heart when it comes to cars.

Ford's Grand C-Max isn't bad looking for a car designed to carry up to seven people safely and comfortably. It's got all the things that make life easier. Things such as sliding rear doors that mean the children can get in or out without bashing the doors on walls or other

cars. It's amazing what pleases me these days. But it's true – I hate it when other people ding my car with their door – I also hate scraping the paint off my own car. What's more, the Grand C-Max is roomy inside, with a smart set-up that enables the centre chair in the second row to double over beneath one of the other seats, leaving a space to walk through.

I should add, the Grand C-Max Ford has loaned me is the Titanium X 2.0 TDCi 150PS Powershift. Basically, I've got the top-of-the-range version, so it comes with all the bells and whistles. However, whether you get the entry level or the top level Grand C-Max, its function is the same – it's a car that'll hold lots of people. Granted, the third row of seats are tucked away for most of the time in the boot floor, and even though they're really only for kids, they're still very handy. There's also a 'normal' Ford C-Max, which is a spacious five-seater – so don't feel you have to go for the 'Grand' version. So far, my three children haven't had any friends in the car with them, so the two spare seats have remained

where they are. This is no bad thing, as without the third tier of seats in operation, the boot stays big. With the seats up, the load area is only good for about three bags of shopping, but with them down, you can knock yourself out filling it up. Not literally, you understand.

Standard equipment on the Ford Grand C-Max is generous. It includes Ford's Quickclear windscreen, sports-style seats, air conditioning and DAB radio. Upgrade to the flagship Titanium X trim and you get a panoramic sunroof, bi-xenon headlights, a partial leather interior, heated front seats, dual-zone climate control, rear parking sensors, and keyless start and entry. There's also Ford's Sync 3 infotainment system, with an easy-to-read eight-inch touchscreen.

But the best thing, for me, is that the Grand C-Max is a surprisingly good drive. I say surprising because, remember, I was a man who used to dislike MPVs. The 2.0 TDCi 150PS Powershift model is smooth and has lots of low-down shove. It works particularly well with the slick-changing six-speed automatic transmission. In fact, it doesn't drive like a bus (I sort of thought it would) – it behaves just like a decent 2.0 litre turbo diesel car should. It holds the road well, feeling planted on motorways and through twisty sections of tarmac. It's also got a cheeky punch to it, with the Titanium X 2.0 TDCi 150PS Powershift model able to do 0–62mph in 10.7 seconds. It's efficient, too, consistently doing mid to late 40s real-world mpg, so I've got to say, I'm seriously starting to wish I'd bought this car rather than having it on loan.

Fast Facts

Max speed:
124mph
0-62mph:
10.7 secs
Combined mpg:
56.5
Engine: 1997cc
4-cylinder turbo diesel
Max. power (PS):
150
CO2: 129 g/km
Price: £28,865



2017 Suzuki Ignis

If you're a retro lover and small cars are your thing, then you'll like the new Suzuki Ignis.

The car's design pays homage to the tiny Suzuki Whizzkid. It has slats just behind its rear doors – and, if you're over 40, you'll just about remember the same look on the Whizzkid when it graced our roads in the latter part of the 70s. Even as a seven-year-old, I thought the car was small.

The all-new Ignis is petite, too, but not in a sweet, girly way. It's more evil Hillman Imp than cutesy Fiat 500. The Ignis has got the same power units under its bonnet as the recently launched Suzuki Baleno. It is propelled via a 1.2-litre petrol unit or via hybrid power. It is also available in front or all-wheel-drive, and comes with either a manual or automatic gearbox. A BoosterJet turbo engine is also going to be ushered in soon.

Despite its all-wheel-drive styling, the Ignis is only 3,693mm long, yet it does seem roomy enough inside. It's truly comfortable in the rear for two adults, but the front has the best leg and headroom. Suzuki has been clever with the way it has packaged the back seats. They can be adjusted so that you can increase

Fast Facts

Max speed: 103mph
0-62mph: 11.5 secs
Combined mpg: 60.1
Engine: 242cc
4-cylinder
petrol/electric
Max. power (PS): 90
CO₂: 106g/km
Price: £13,999



“This variant of the Suzuki is no sports car, but because it's so minuscule, everything feels faster than it really is.”

either load space or legroom. Back in the front, the dashboard is cleanly laid out, so all the switchgear falls easily to hand, and there's a large 'in-your-face' speedo. Additionally, as with most modern cars now, there's a touchscreen with connectivity for smartphones.

I tested the Ignis in 1.2 SZ5 SHVS 4x4 guise. This hybrid version makes use of a belt-driven starter and generator, as well as a second lithium ion battery. This boosts the car's petrol engine during acceleration. Producing only 90PS, this variant of the Suzuki is no sports car, but because it's so minuscule, everything feels faster than it really is. Zero to 62mph arrives in 11.5 seconds, and the top speed is only 103mph. But there's a lot of fun to be had if you work the Ignis' five-speed 'box hard.

The new Suzuki Ignis' steering is a tad vague and the car does roll in corners, but that just adds to the entertainment factor. Hit a pothole,

and things become even crazier as the rear bounces up and down like a 1970s' space hopper. Bizarrely enough, none of this makes you dislike the car at all. And that's because the 2017 Suzuki Ignis has bags of character – something many motors lack today.

The Ignis is agile, and with four-wheel-drive added, the Japanese car turns very mountain-goat-like, clambering up inclines and muddy trails like said beast in season. There's even hill descent control, to keep you from overeagerly scrambling back to earth. The Ignis' talent for traction transfers to the tarmac, too, with oodles of grip in corners.

With an average fuel consumption of 60.1mpg, and CO₂ emissions of only 106g/km, the 4x4 hybrid version of the Ignis will be cheap to run. The basic Ignis is on sale now, priced from just £9,999, while the 1.2 SZ5 SHVS 4x4, reviewed here, will set you back £13,999. →





Fast Facts

Max speed:
105mph
0-62mph:
12.2 secs
Combined mpg:
40.9
Engine: 2442cc
4-cylinder turbo
diesel
Max. power (PS):
151
CO₂: 180g/km
Price: £23,083

“£23,083 on-the-road is not a lot to fork out for such a workhorse – especially one with decent fuel economy, and four-up cabin space.”

Mitsubishi L200

Since launching the fifth incarnation of the Mitsubishi L200, the Japanese automaker has added a Club Cab version of the renowned pick-up.

The Mitsubishi L200 4Life Club Cab seats four-up, and is very much a ‘tool’, as it comes in basic 4Life trim only. Don’t get this L200 confused with its L200 Double Cab sibling, which has a more car-like interior.

The 4Life is utilitarian, but comfortable enough for a working vehicle. The biggest difference for this fifth generation L200 Club Cab is that rear passengers enter the vehicle via back-to-front opening doors. They are not obvious as rear doors from the outside, but they give great access to the two individual seating areas in the back.

If you don’t need to carry anyone in the rear, then you can just flip the seats up to make more space for loading.

There is a lot of space up front for the driver and front seat passenger, and the L200 4Life Club Cab’s dash is made of tough but no-frills plastic. The same can be said for the switchgear – much of which is refreshingly simple to use. The instrumentation is much like that of a car you’d drive in the late 80s. However, back then you’d think it was the height of luxury to have electric windows or air conditioning. Well, the L200 4Life comes with both as standard – and there’s even a bit of modern tech – in the form of Bluetooth, a USB port and two airbags.

Power is a simple affair, too. You get one engine choice – a 151PS 2.4 litre turbo diesel unit, hooked up to a six-speed manual transmission. The L200 also comes, as you might expect of a hard-working pick-up, with four-wheel-drive. You can swap between two and four-wheel-drive by using Mitsubishi’s ‘Easy Select’ system. This is basically a knob situated by the L200’s gear-lever.

Compared with the superior version – Mitsubishi’s ‘Super Select’ four-wheel drive set-up, the ‘Easy Select’ system can’t operate all the L200 4Life’s four wheels at high road speeds. But this is not an issue as it has a proper differential lock, which is far better for coping with hardcore off-roading. Indeed, off-tarmac, the L200 clambers and tramples over everything admirably. There’s loads of control when descending a hill if you use the pick-up’s low-range mode in the four-wheel drive settings. All you must do is stick the Mitsubishi into first gear, lift off the clutch, remove your feet from the pedals, and the L200 will drive down in a nicely controlled way.

On-road, the L200 4Life Club Cab feels like a big boy’s Tonka toy. It’s heavy, but not unwieldy, due to the accurate steering. It does lean heavily in the corners – but only if you push the L200 too fast. Likewise, the oil-burner only starts making that familiar diesel din if you stamp on the gas; otherwise the pick-up is refined – for an entry-level machine. It’s also economical, returning an average of 40.9mpg. Only the stiff manual gearshifts and heavy clutch rain on the driving experience – making you feel as though you’ve been for a workout after a stint in stop-start traffic.

This Club Cab is a practical vehicle if you need to carry big loads. The payload capacity is 1,045kg and the L200 4Life’s load bed is 1,850mm in length, 1,470mm in width and 475mm in height. This Mitsubishi is also able to haul up to 3.0 tonnes, so it’s a top tow truck, too.

The best thing about the L200 4Life Club Cab is how little it costs to buy. £23,083 on-the-road is not a lot to fork out for such a workhorse – especially one with decent fuel economy, and four-up cabin space.





Audi TT Coupe

Audi is a car-maker of quality. From the strong, yet sophisticated, lines of its models to the flawless interiors, the German firm always delivers. The TT Coupe is no exception.

The TT Coupe 2.0 TFSI 230 PS S Line S tronic, under review here, has a virtual cockpit, which is based around a sizeable high resolution LCD display. It fills the instrument binnacle and supersedes the time-honoured analogue dials. It's marvellous and clear as day.

You can cherry-pick between two display settings: in the 'classic' view, the rev counter and speedometer are in the forefront. Then in 'infotainment' mode the virtual instruments are smaller. The area that becomes free therefore provides sufficient room for other functions, such as the navigation map. At the lower edge of the Audi virtual cockpit, the displays for time, outside temperature and mileage are perpetually visible.

The Audi TT is comfy and the Alcantara and leather super sports seats are hip-huggingly supportive. The 2.0 TFSI 230 PS S Line S tronic

"Open up the TT on the straights and you're pressed into your seatback."

also has manual climate control with functionality ingeniously incorporated into the air vents.

Other interior tech highpoints include: a music interface with Bluetooth connectivity, a touchpad for fingertip data input, and keyless go. Outside the cabin, attractive alloy wheels adorn the TT. Mine was fitted with 19-inch five-spoke 'Blade' design wheels. These are optional and cost £450 – but they do look awesome. Other features fitted include sports suspension; xenon headlamps with LED daytime running lights and a speed-dependent active rear spoiler.

As a 2+2 seater, the Audi TT Coupe is a sports car that is suitable for everyday use. My three-year-old daughter sat in the rear, but you'll probably use the back seats as an area to keep superfluous shopping. That said, with a load area capacity of 305 litres, the boot space is practical enough to load in a tot's buggy – or a couple of flight cases.

Behind the wheel, the first thing I noticed about the Audi TT is how well it drives. The 1984cc, 230PS petrol powerplant is domesticated in urban environments, but it's still hard to disguise the rasping clout waiting to be set free. Open up the TT on the straights and you're pressed into your seatback. Zero to 62mph arrives in an eyeball-yanking 5.3 seconds and the top speed is 155mph. The ride is firm, but not unpleasantly so, and the steering has a good weight to it, while the dual-clutch automatic transmission changes seamlessly. What's more, the car grips like a vice in the corners – thanks to its all-wheel-drive 'Quattro' set-up.

If the Audi TT's talent for turning heads and drivability is not enough, its average fuel economy figure of 42.8mpg and relatively low CO₂ emissions of 153g/km are also to be applauded. Driving from Kettering in Northamptonshire to London – a journey of 76 miles – I averaged 38mpg. That's not at all bad, considering how heavy my right foot can get on the M1.

Fully kitted out, as my review car was, with luxuries such as heated seats and an LED interior lighting package, the price-tag came to £44,095. The on-the-road basic cost is nearer to £37,000. That's an acceptable price to shell out when you consider what a well-made, entertaining car the Audi TT Coupe is. ■

Fast Facts

Max speed:
155mph
0-62mph:
5.3 secs
Combined mpg:
42.8
Engine layout:
1984cc
4-cylinder turbo
petrol
Max. power (PS):
230
CO₂: 153g/km
Price: £44,095

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Tim is an experienced motoring writer with a background in radio and TV journalism. He puts his pedal to the metal each issue with his must-read car reviews. Visit carwriteups.co.uk.

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