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When a new car is launched, the manufacturer typically flies journalists from around the world to test it at a destination outside the UK. In line with this practice, Sunday Times writers frequently travel at the expense of a car manufacturer. That doesn't mean the cars get favourable write-ups, as the reviews in InGear testify

**VIZ TOP TIP**

**Playing a waiting game**

Restaurant lovers: recreate the dining-out experience in your own home by simply eating loads of bread while repeatedly checking your watch.

**JAY LENO'S GARAGE**

The presenter shows off his enviable collection of Lamborghinis, from a 1967 Miura once owned by Dean Martin to a 1986 Countach that's still a favourite today

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NEWS [ingear@sunday-times.co.uk](mailto:ingear@sunday-times.co.uk)

## Let it bark — your hand is now firmly on the leash

**Aston Martin V8 Vantage £84,995**

The first thing to grab drivers' attention about this new version of the V8 Vantage is the way it tackles a winding stretch of road. The previous car always felt as though it was cornering by its own rules. Now, thanks to quicker-acting steering, grippier tyres and more powerful brakes with much-improved pedal feel, you feel as though you are back in the driving seat and can sense what's happening not only through your fingertips but also your backside.

And yes, since you ask, that is important because this is a sports car that likes nothing more than to be driven by the seat of your pants and given the full-throttle treatment. In fact, there's no other way to drive it if you are going to get the most from it. That's because the 4.7-litre V8 is less responsive below 4000rpm, and needs to be turning at 5000rpm and above before it comes into its own.

Other improvements? The company says the Sportshift transmission has been reworked, from six to seven speeds, allowing the ratios to be more

closely spaced for better power delivery. That's a good thing, but sadly Aston Martin supplied a car with manual transmission for testing, so we'll have to take its word for it.

Inside, the changes are more subtle. A Garmin sat nav system is a marked improvement over the previous Volvo device. The cluttered switchgear is largely unchanged, however, and the gearlever remains uncomfortably far back on the transmission tunnel.

But this is a car whose faults you easily forgive, especially when you hear the V8 bark. Some drivers may prefer the more polished approach of the latest Porsche 911 (see Clarkson's review on pages 10-11) but the roads would be a duller place without this Vantage.

James Mills

**THE RIVALS**  
**Porsche 911 Carrera S, £81,242**  
**For** Peerless all-round performance complete with back seats  
**Against** Neither as head-turning nor as exclusive as the Aston

**Jaguar XKR, £78,900**  
**For** Faster, more practical and better value than the Aston  
**Against** Doesn't make such an entrance



The new V8 Vantage gives control back to the person in the driver's seat

ENGINE	4735cc, V8
POWER	420bhp @ 7300rpm
TORQUE	346 lb ft @ 5000rpm
TRANSMISSION	Six-speed manual
ACCELERATION	0-62mph: 4.9sec
TOP SPEED	180mph
FUEL / CO <sub>2</sub>	20.5mpg / 321g/km
RATING	★★★★☆
VERDICT	When it looks and sounds this good, you can forgive it its faults
RELEASE DATE	On sale now

## Pothole-detector app to put town hall on the spot when a car is damaged

Smartphone software that automatically detects potholes could force councils to step up repairs of poorly maintained roads. An app called Street Bump, to be launched this year, will be able to detect the location and size of defects on thousands of miles of road.

It can also send the data to local highways departments, making it difficult for councils to argue they were unaware of potholes.

The information provided by the app could have significant implications for the amount of compensation paid to

drivers whose cars suffer damage. At present, councils can refuse to pay up on the grounds that they did not know about the defect in the road surface.

The app uses a mobile device's accelerometer, or motion sensor, and GPS to detect the tell-tale jolt when a motorist drives over a pothole or sunken manhole cover and pinpoint where it is. "Every time there's a significant bump, data from the accelerometer is captured," said Chris Osgood, the app's creator. "We record the nature, the size and the location of each bump."

The driver has the option to send the data at the touch of a button to the local highways department.

The app is being tested in Boston, America, by New Urban Mechanics, a division of the Boston mayor's office. It is due to be launched in the city this spring. The developer has already met British council chiefs at a Downing Street event to discuss implementing the technology here.

In tests carried out by The Sunday Times, the app proved effective and very sensitive — registering every hole and rut and emitting a beep to confirm

that it had logged a defect in the road surface. Even with the forgiving suspension on our Mercedes-Benz 240D, the screen of the iPhone was filled with wavy lines indicating the uneven surface of the road.

The developer said the device could save local authorities time and money spent on surveying roads. By collating the data from drivers and matching it against known speed humps, level crossings and roadworks, sections of road in need of maintenance could easily be identified. The developer said councils could guard against false alerts by combining data from drivers travelling over the same section of road to create a map based on multiple individual journeys.

However, the Local Government Association (LGA), which represents councils, said it was uneasy about the idea because of the risk of information



Councils struggle to repair roads

overload. "Councils will always try to make the best use of technology to improve services, but an automatic alert system which reports every little undulation risks being more hindrance

than help. Highways departments could end up being inundated with thousands of new reports each day about potholes they are already well aware of, taking hours for officers to sift through," said the LGA.

Even with the threat of an increased number of claims for compensation from drivers, there is no guarantee that councils will improve road maintenance in the short term.

Last week, the annual Alarm survey into the state of roads in England and Wales revealed that local authorities already faced a shortfall of £895m in road maintenance budgets.

The survey was conducted by the Asphalt Industry Alliance, which represents companies that carry out the repair work, and is regarded as the most accurate reflection of the state of the roads.

Mark Harris

**TOPGAME**

**Magical mystery tour**

**JOURNEY PS3 (download only); £10. Age 7**

The plot might be obscure, the backdrops basic (the game is set entirely in the desert or on barren, snowy slopes) and there are just three actions available for your character — walk, jump and make a noise. Yet Journey is one of the stand-out games of the year. You play a robed character, making your way towards a distant light. As you cross the desolate terrain you'll dodge some huge enemies, encounter other players online (whom you can choose to help but not talk to) and stumble across shrines where hieroglyphics slowly reveal the world's history. Journey is a genuine one-off because it's so emotionally involving: as your character tries to discover more about this land, you find yourself really wanting to find the answers as well. A game that is all too short, but is captivating while it lasts.

David Phelan

**WATCH THE GAME**

To watch a trailer for Journey, download the free Blippar app for iPhone, iPad or Android. Launch the app, wait for it to sync and then fill the screen with the text and image (left). The video should start to play within a few seconds.

**blippar**

MORE GAMES P18-19

**TOPGADGET**

**Now, angel, you can stop 'borrowing' my iPhone**

**ARCHOS CHILDPAD, £99 archos.com**

Parents will be familiar with "disappearing touchscreen syndrome", when their smartphones and tablets vanish and are later found in their offspring's bedroom with a half-completed game of Angry Birds on the display.

Now parents can regain control of their gadgets thanks to the ChildPad, an affordable 7in Android tablet with pre-loaded apps and games. It provides parental peace of mind by having a child-friendly web browser and linking to a vetted version of Google Play — the Android app shop previously known as Market.

The ChildPad puts many other tablets to shame in performance by being one of the first tablets to run Ice Cream Sandwich (the latest version of Android) and by having a respectable 1GHz processor and 1GB of Ram — as much as the Apple iPad.

Archos has given the Android home screen a colourful makeover, and has installed 28 popular apps, including the Android version of those irritable avians. The device goes on sale online at the end of March.

Matt Bingham

MORE GADGETS P18-19

## The secret to avoiding a motoring conviction: ditch the Saab for a grey Daihatsu

The stereotypical Saab driver is an ice-cool architect or doctor, but new research suggests that underneath that chilled exterior may be a burning need for speed.

One in five Saab drivers has received penalty points, most commonly for speeding, making them the most likely to commit a motoring offence, according to insurance data. Drivers of Chryslers and Porsches come second and third in the table of offenders, with about 19% of owners of both makes having motoring convictions.

The data also reveal how a driver's choice of colour appears to indicate the likelihood of having or picking up points. In general, Honda drivers are well behaved, coming low down in the league table of offenders, ranked according to the make of cars they drive. But drivers of silver Hondas are the exception, with significantly more points on their licences. The data appear also to confirm the popular perception of white van man. One in four drivers of white LDV vehicles, a make popular with tradesmen, had points on their licence.

It is drivers of more powerful cars who unsurprisingly tend to have more speeding tickets, according to Tiger.co.uk, an independent motor insurance comparison site, which analysed the data from half a million drivers. Among the 10 marques whose owners had the highest rate of motoring convictions were Audi, BMW, Jaguar and Subaru.

"There's a fairly clear correlation here between the power of a vehicle and the likelihood of a driver picking up penalty points — primarily of course for speeding," said Andrew Goulborn, Tiger.co.uk's commercial director. "In this instance, points certainly don't mean prizes: they will lead to considerably higher car insurance quotes."

The identity of motorists least likely to receive a driving conviction is also revealed: 1.6% of people with a beige

### IN THE FAST LANE

Cars owned by drivers most likely to have a motoring conviction

Saab	19.77%
Chrysler	19.20%
Porsche	19.11%
Audi	18.64%
BMW	18.57%
Lexus	18.19%
Volvo	17.89%
Jaguar	17.49%
Subaru	17.27%
MG	17.16%

Source: Tiger.co.uk

Toyota have received a ticket, just behind drivers of grey Daihatsus and purple Rovers, of which fewer than 1% have driving points.

Dominic Tobin

**The stereotypical Saab driver may have a hidden love of speed**

**'I'VE GOT A DISHWASHER MORE COMPLEX THAN APOLLO 11, MY JUICER HAS A 200-PAGE MANUAL AND HAVE YOU TRIED TO USE A PAY-BY-PHONE PARKING METER? OF COURSE NOT, OR YOU'D STILL BE THERE' CLARKSON**

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