

# Bucket List

## Full to the brim



Words and photos by Andy Scott

With the dark winter nights drawing in and predictions of a Siberian winter heading our way, I think it's best to park the BMW up for a while. If this leaves you suffering automotive withdrawal symptoms then you can always play the fantasy garage game. Just imagine you've come in to some spare money – what could you put in that garage?

Well, pull your chair up to the fire, pour yourself a glass of your favourite tipple and share some of my four wheeled suggestions.

### Alfa Romeo Montreal

Do you fancy a 1970's junior supercar with a detuned racing engine and styling by the same designer who penned the Ferrari 308, the Lamborghini Miura and Countach, the Maserati Khamzin and Ghibli, the Lancia Stratos and even the E12 5-Series? Then consider the Alfa Romeo Montreal.

The Montreal was a flagship for Alfa Romeo which first appeared as a concept at the 1967 Montreal Expo. Designed by Marcello Gandini at Bertone, it was intended to look as though it was mid-engined – check out the Miura inspired vents behind the doors. It was actually based on the more prosaic front engine/rear drive running gear of the Alfa Giulia Sprint GT. The design, with its unusual retractable slats covering the headlights, proved extremely popular. In fact, the public's reaction was so enthusiastic that Alfa decided

to put the car into limited production to give a little sparkle to the rest of their range.

A real mid-engine layout would have cost too much to engineer and the 1600cc Giulia engine wasn't really going to cut the mustard in a flagship model so when the first production car was shown at the 1970 Geneva Motor Show, it sported a 200hp 2.6 litre V8 with SPICA fuel injection and dry-sump lubrication.



This engine was a development of the motor used in the Tipo 33 sports prototype racer and its specification was exotic enough to match the Montreal's looks. However, the chassis and running gear were still based on the Giulia with its rather less exotic leaf-sprung axle at the rear.

Despite its impressive racing pedigree, the engines performance struggled to match the cars looks and the old school suspension struggled to keep up with the engine. Some owners have had their engines rebuilt as 3.0 litres with an increase in power to around 220hp.

Low production numbers meant development funds were limited and so the Montreal remained pretty much unchanged until it was discontinued in 1977. Total production was only 3917 cars and rather ironically, none were sold in Montreal due to US/Canadian emission regulations.

Today, the Montreal still looks special; the engines racing heritage is reflected in a spine-tingling howl when it's on a charge. Taking one out for a run will always be a special event and you are unlikely to pass another Montreal on the road unless you are at a major Alfa Romeo meet. In theory you can still buy a Montreal for under £20,000 but prices are rising and, with such low numbers around, you'll soon have to pay double that.

### Aston Martin DB7

Back in the early 1980's I tried in vain to persuade my dad to trade-in his Ford Capri for a restored Aston Martin DB4 convertible. With prices these days somewhere well over £100k this may sound outlandish but back then this DB4 was for sale at under £15,000. Those were the days. The price of playing out your James Bond fantasies in a DB5 now is likely to cost £200,000+. However, there is a cheaper way into Aston ownership – the DB7.

The DB7 owes its existence to an accident of circumstances. The NPX project started out as the Jaguar F-Type based on the old XJS platform (itself based on the older XJ chassis). It was a long and troubled development which led to Ford cancelling the project before it was completed. Fortunately, sister company Aston Martin desperately needed a cheaper and easier to produce model with which to supplement its hand-built V8's and the F-Type looked like an ideal shortcut.

Upcoming designer Ian Callum refined the shape to make it more Aston Martin-like and the result debuted at the 1993 Geneva Motor Show (was it really 18 years ago?). Powered by a 355bhp supercharged straight six derived from Jaguar's AJ engine, the DB7 had the performance to match the looks. It instantly made the hand built Virage look like a lumbering dinosaur and, despite some criticism over the use of Jaguar parts, more than 7,000 were built including a convertible Volante version from 1996 making the DB7



When the Jaguar XK8 (also based on the XJS) entered the market, the DB7's price/performance balance was called in to question so Aston responded by developing a new V12 engine based on a pair of Ford Mondeo V6s that someone had left lying around. The result was the 420bhp 6.0 litre, V12 Vantage introduced at the 1999 Geneva Motor Show. With a top speed of 186 mph and a sub 5 second 0-60 mph time, it comfortably out-performed its Jaguar half sister and sales of the six cylinder model soon petered out.

Naturally, everyone wants the V12 but the 6 cylinder model still makes a good case for itself by being (slightly) more affordable to buy and run. The DB7 looks and sounds fantastic and to most eyes doesn't look that different to a DB9. This means you can pretend you're a premier league footballer driving a £100k Aston despite paying £25,000 or less. The bar-room 'experts' may sneer but an Aston Martin is still an Aston Martin. Isn't that right Mr Bond?

## Bitter CD

If you like '60's Italian automotive styling, American V8 power and German engineering and wish you could get all three in one package then the Bitter CD is right up your street. Most people will never have heard of Bitter and even fewer will have seen one although, if you were at the 2010 NEC classic car show, you may have spotted some on the Bitter Owners Club stand.

The Opel Styling CD concept car was first seen at the 1969 Frankfurt show. It was built on a shortened Opel Diplomat chassis and powered by the Diplomats standard Chevrolet 5.4 litre V8. Opel's own design studio styled the car with some help from Italian Carrozzeria Frua. German ex-racing driver Erich Bitter saw the potential in the car but had neither the capital nor time to set up his own production facilities. Fortunately, Baur of Stuttgart had the necessary experience and capacity to build the car, and their build quality was impressive. Bitter took the concept and fettled the suspension while Dave Hollis, Opel's Head



of Styling helped fine tune the styling. Baur made the body panels, assembled the shell, trimmed and fitted the interiors, and mated the Diplomat's running gear to the shell.

The CD was introduced at the Frankfurt Motor Show in 1973 and although 176 orders were taken at the show, the oil crisis soon hit plans and most orders were cancelled. Production never reached the target of 200 cars per year but, by the end of production in 1979, Baur had built 395 CD's.

The CD had a distinctly Maserati look about it (Frua's influence), especially when compared to the Maserati Indy. Although the Chevrolet V8 was not

225hp, it benefited from being the world's most modified engine and can be tuned to 400bhp with ease. The chassis was fairly old-school in having an independent coil and wishbone front suspension and a live coil sprung de Dion rear axle. Not hi-tech but par for the course back in the late '60's. With a little tuning it can hold its head up amongst contemporary Maseratis and the like and all for considerably less outlay.

If the CD is a bit too old fashioned then consider its replacement, the SC Coupe which was based on the Opel Senator. The SC came with either the standard Opel 3.0 litre 6 cylinder engine or an optional 2.0 litre

Ferrari 400 so you get Pinninfarina looks with Opel reliability and running costs. Only 488 SC's were made so exclusivity is assured.

## BMW 840

People's perception of the 8-series has been clouded by a few early magazine articles which damned it for being too heavy and not sporting enough compared to its predecessor, the 6-series. Fairly enough, they said the same thing about the 6-series when that appeared.

Launched at the Frankfurt Motor Show in 1989, the 8-series was, in essence, a coupe version of the 750 saloon but there was nothing wrong with that. Using Computer Aided Design (CAD) tools (pretty cutting edge for the time) and wind tunnel testing, BMW got the drag coefficient down to 0.29 with the bodysell 3kg lighter than the E24. However, by the time the 5 litre V12 and extensive luxury kit was added the 8-series was considerably heavier at nearly 2000kg.

The 850 featured a 299hp V12 with an electronic "fly-by-wire" throttle, and a sophisticated multi-link rear axle pioneered in the Z1. There were grand plans for a range of models from the range topping V12 down to a 3 litre V8, active suspension, 4 wheel steering and even a convertible. Sadly, BMW got cold feet over development budgets versus projected sales when the early '90's recession hit.

BMW's engineers were so pleased with their technical tour-de-force they planned to take on Ferrari with an M8 version, however the bean-counters didn't share their optimism and a watered down model with a 5.6 litre, 380hp engine was launched in 1992 as the 850i. The





ideal proving almost as quick as the V12 and duly made its entrance in 1993. The 4.4 litre M62 replaced with the M60 in 1995 and remained in production alongside the V12 until the end in 1999.

Rather surprisingly, the V12 is the most numerous model with just over 20,000 built while the combined V8 production is less than 8,000. Depending on which figures you believe there were some 31,000 – 37,000 8-series built over 10 years. That's well short of the 86,000 E24 6-series over 13 years.

There were just over 3,000 8-series built for the UK, nearly 2,200 were V8's and just under 700 were the M70 V12, the remainder being 850CSi's. The UK never got the 5.4 litre M73 850Ci although a few have been imported.

The 8-series still looks very modern although the running gear is a mix of E34 5-series, E32 7-series and beefed up E36 3-series. Parts availability is good, rust is not a problem and market prices are almost criminally low. Even with the V8 models, performance is more than adequate, handling is better than most similarly sized competitors (despite the weight) and as a GT, it is still a force to be reckoned with. With the 8-series starting to follow its predecessor into classic status, what's not to like?

## Citroën SM

If you really want to stand out from the crowd then you need a Citroën SM. Launched at the 1970 Geneva Motor Show, the SM looked like nothing else and packed some real cutting-edge technology.

The SM was unusually aerodynamic for the time with a very low drag coefficient of 0.26 and at 16 feet long was big but, in true GT tradition, only offered 2+2 accommodation. Like the DS, the covered rear wheels gave the SM a "flying car" look and I was always

surprised it didn't have vertical take-off capability. The nose was striking; six headlights behind a full width cover with the inner lights connect to the steering – a feature forgotten until BMW resurrected the idea more than 35 years later on the E92.

The external bright work was stainless steel, rather than chrome so it wouldn't rust. The standard wheels were steel with stainless trims, but a factory option of lightweight composite wheels less than half the weight were unique at the time.

To power the SM, Citroën needed something better than their ancient four cylinder motors. Luckily, they had recently bought Maserati so had their engineers develop a 2.7 litre (for French tax reasons)

DOHC 90-degree V6 with 170bhp. Installation in the SM was typically unusual with the engine mounted in-line behind the front axle driving forward to the gearbox.

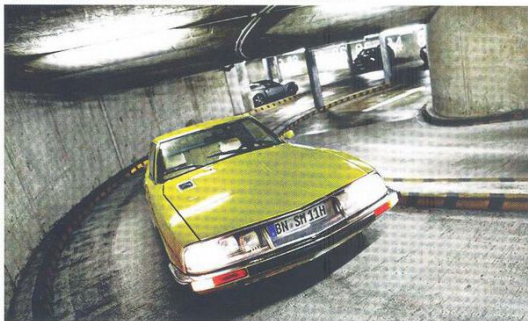
Citroën's reputation for cutting edge technology didn't stop there. The SM was the first car with variable assistance power steering which has since become the norm. The steering was actually fully powered (as opposed to hydraulically assisted) and had the same 'assistance' at all speeds but the steering was hydraulically locked against movement so that even hitting a pothole at high speed would not turn the wheel in the driver's hands. It was quick too with only two turn's lock-to-lock.

The braking system was also unusual with inboard discs at the front cooled by large ducts on the underside of the car. The front to rear brake balance automatically varied itself according to the weight in the rear.

The brake pedal was replaced by a mushroom shaped button which reacted to pressure not movement. For some time the SM had the most efficient braking system in the world. The oleo-pneumatic suspension allowed a variable ride height and, together with the innovative steering and braking systems, gave a driving experience like no other.

Sadly, Citroën's bankruptcy and acquisition by Peugeot in 1974 saw the end of the SM. In total there were some 12,920 produced with just 325 sold in the UK. All SM's were left-hand-drive, although three official RHD conversions were performed in the UK.

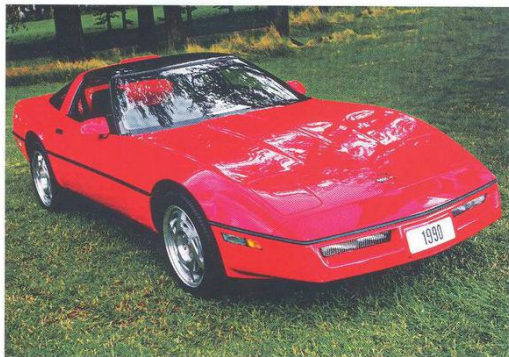
If you can get your head around the idiosyncratic French-ness of the car and accept that it needs specialist care then there isn't anything more unusual to drive on the road.



## Chevrolet Corvette

From the European point of view, the Corvette is generally assumed to be a quick if rather unsophisticated car. The Corvettes' problem was that its performance put it in competition with Jaguars and the like whilst its technology level was more MG/Triumph TR. All that changed in 1984 with the arrival of the fourth generation C4. This was the point where the Corvette started to get hi-tech.

Dispensing with traditional fibreglass construction, the new C4 used injection moulded plastic for the bodysell, a technique pioneered by Lotus for the Elite/Eclat. The clean design was far more European in style and it was all the better for it. A lot of emphasis was put on handling although the suspension was softened after complaints it was too



The Corvette's "4-3" gearbox was something of an oddity intended to improve fuel consumption. It was the existing 4 speed manual transmission with an automatic overdrive on the top 3 gears giving 7 ratios to play with. Later cars used a conventional ZF 6-speed manual, familiar to many BMW owners.

The Corvette was an early adopter of GM's "Pass Key 1" immobiliser which was an early forerunner of BMW's EMS key. Unfortunately, there were only 15 different values available which limited its usefulness. An LCD dash like the Audi Quattro's was a dubious addition and like every other digital dash, they don't actually work as well as conventional instruments.

Despite initially only having 205hp from the 5.7 litre V8, the torque meant performance was brisk giving a 0-60 mph time around 7 seconds. Brakes were pretty good with aluminium callipers and the aluminium suspension with 8.5x16 wheels and wide (for the time) 255/50 tyres coped ok. Later developments pushed power over 250bhp which elevated performance from brisk to quick.

When GM bought out Lotus in 1986 they immediately put them to work designing a new engine for a high performance version of the Corvette. The result was the LT5, an all alloy V8 with DOHC and 32 valves. It was an advanced unit that could shut down half the engine at part throttle but still deliver 375hp when needed. Final versions had 405hp giving a 0-60 mph time of 4.4 seconds and a top speed of 180mph or more. Lotus also worked on honing the LT5's suspension in order to make the most of the new engine. If the LT5 isn't fast enough there is always the Callaway Twin Turbo which was even more powerful with 450hp and 613lb/ft.

They may not be as sophisticated as a Ferrari but a Corvette is a lot more rugged and affordable with coupes available from £5,000. The LT5 is more expensive but £15,000 should put you on pole position for the traffic light grand prix.

## Jaguar XJS

When the XJS launched in 1975 it met with a rather lukewarm reception. Everyone had been expecting an F-Type replacement for the iconic E-Type but what they got was more GT than sports car. Blame US crash test proposals for forcing manufacturers to beef up their cars with the result the XJS became a bit of a battleship. The E24 6-series which appeared the following year had a similar reception for the same reasons.

To cut development, Jaguar based the XJS on

XJ was very accomplished. However, there was some controversy over the styling, especially the rear buttresses. After such an inauspicious start it was quite an accomplishment for the XJS to stay in production for the next 21 years.

The XJS's USP was the alloy 285hp 5.3 litre V12 engine which gave it effortless performance. However, a 0-60mph time of 7.6 seconds and a top speed of 143mph was the same as the BMW 635 managed with only 6 cylinders and 1800cc less. The V12's thirst was legendary - expect 12-14mpg! The HE update improved

fuel consumption by nearly 40% and gave a little extra power too although the V12 was still pretty thirsty. The new 6 cylinder 3.6 litre engine with 225hp was a sensible alternative and also offered a 5-speed manual instead of the auto only V12. The 3.6 became a 4.0 litre which narrowed the gap until the V12 went to 6.0 litres with 304hp.

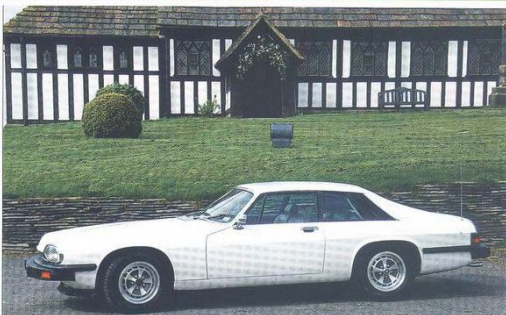
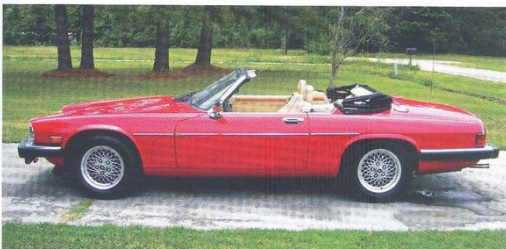
A convertible version which was a Triumph Stag/Baur type cabriolet with fixed side windows and a two part removable top came out in 1983. They are quite rare with only 5,000 or so built before the much more popular full convertible arrived in 1988.

Jaguar and race partners TWR cashed in on the XJS's racetrack success producing the XJR-S which had an obligatory tasteless '80s body kit and, on later cars, a special 6.0 litre version of the V12. There were just over 1,100 XJR-S' built and they are becoming quite collectable. However, if you want rare then consider the Lynx E-venter which was a very stylish shooting brake conversion similar to the Reliant Scimitar though with only 67 made it will be a job finding one.

By the end of production around 115,000 XJS had been built. During the last few years the XJS was only available with the 6 cylinder engine but for the last year of production the 6.0 litre V12 was made available to special order.

The XJS used to be regarded as just another old Jag but now people are calling it a classic and prices have risen. While they will never be as valuable as an E-Type, you can pay more for a good XJS than for a newer XK8.

The good news is that there's enough room in the XJS boot for a large LPG tank which makes even the V12 vaguely do-able. At last you can play at being The Saint.





## Porsche 928

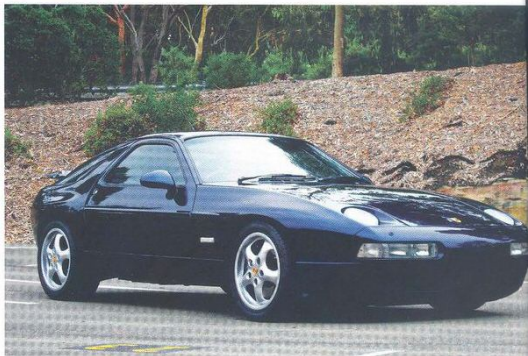
The 928 of 1978 was a real departure for Porsche. Expected legislation made the air-cooled 911's future look bleak, so a replacement was needed. The technical requirements to meet the new legislation encouraged a clean-slate design and Porsche took the opportunity to broaden the models appeal. Like the 911, the 928 was to be a 2+2 but it would be more GT than sports car. A large front-mounted and water-cooled V8 engine driving the rear wheels was considered a good place to start.

Accordingly, Porsche developed an all alloy 4.5 litre V8 with 240hp. This was a very under stressed unit with 53hp/litre compared to the 911's 3.0 litre flat six with 70hp/litre. Despite the difference in the two engines output, the power to weight ratio was very similar at 160-170hp/ton.

To achieve a 50/50 weight distribution, power was sent to a rear mounted transaxle which aided the car's balance and made it far less demanding to drive than the 911. Uniquely for 1978, the body was mostly galvanised steel, but the doors, front wings, and bonnet were aluminium to save weight whilst the body-coloured plastic bumpers were integrated into the nose and tail – an unusual feature for the time.

The 928 pioneered several other innovations. It was the first vehicle in which the instrument cluster moved along with the adjustable steering wheel to maintain instrument visibility (also seen on the Nissan 300ZX).

Passive rear-wheel steering aided cornering stability (used on the BMW 850) and a sleeveless aluminium engine block with a silicon coating reduced weight. This latter idea was picked up by BMW and Jaguar and seemed a great idea until the mid '90s when high sulphur levels in UK fuel destroyed the



Nikasil silicon coating. Porsche's design innovations helped it win the 1978 European Car of the Year competition which was some achievement since usual winners were small family cars.

While the basic shape of the 928 didn't really change apart from various spoilers and the wider rear wings of the GTS, it was continually developed throughout its life with capacity and power being increased through various iterations. The 300hp 4.7 S model arrived in 1980, the S4 with a 32 valve 320hp 5.0 litre engine was introduced in 1987 and the final

5.4 litre 345hp GTS version came out in 1991. The GTS specification saw the 928 through to the end of production in 1995. Total production over 17 years was a little over 61,000 cars.

Today, a 928 can be picked up for less than £5,000 with the top GTS model being the most expensive at £15,000. Although parts prices can be high, Porsche build quality means a good car can be a reliable modern classic that is fast enough to give an E63 6-series a run for its money. Just make sure you buy a good one.

