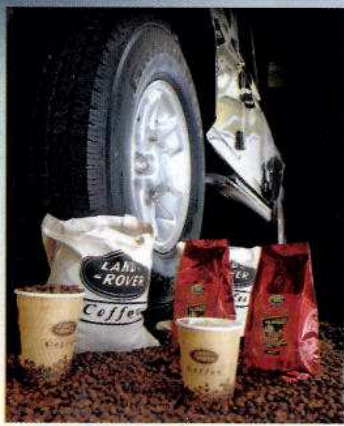


## NEW GEAR



### Land Rover coffee

**Cost?** £6.16 per 227g pack

**Where?** [www.landrovercoffee.com](http://www.landrovercoffee.com)

Unsurprisingly, this isn't coffee grown in Solihull, but Land Rover does have a long history in the coffee trade going as far back as 1949. Costa Rican farmers were among the first to use Land Rovers to gather their crops from the high-altitude plantations. It's not the strongest coffee blend, but it has a pleasant, slightly nutty taste and is Fairtrade. If you like to enjoy your coffee while reading a story, you won't be disappointed; this is definitely a brew with history.

★★★★☆



### AlcoSense Light

**Cost?** £34.99

**Where?** [www.alcosense.com](http://www.alcosense.com)

Driving the morning after a big night out is never advisable; drink until the nightclub kicks you out and you're sure to be over the limit for the drive to work. This latest breathalyser from AlcoSense provides a more affordable starting point to allow you to test your alcohol level. The entry-level tester is easy to use and accurate to 0.25 per cent blood alcohol content. The AlcoSense Light gives an easy-to-understand result in seconds, too. It's vital equipment for the morning after the night before.

★★★★☆

**Google Maps: jam today**  
Traffic jam info is now available on Google Maps. Highways Agency data is overlaid on major roads to show current average speeds.

# Steve Sutcliffe

**Quick thinking** How to size up real achievements



Tonn (above) is rightly proud of the Ka

**W**hat takes more skill, imagination and business acumen to get right: a £1 million supercar or a £10,000 supermini?

Admittedly it must require a sizeable pair of corporate cojones to announce, build and then try to sell a £1 million hyper-car in the current climate but, as Aston Martin and Caterham have recently proved, the wilder you go and the more money you're prepared to charge, the more customers you are likely to attract.

Not sure I can get my head around how or why, precisely, but the truth is that the £1.2m Aston One-77 and the £150k Caterham Levante have both sold out within days of going on sale during the last month. Yet in neither case does there seem to be a whole lot of raw creativity on display.

Although one is rather more expensive than the other, both are little more than far-reaching versions of models that already exist. Whereas producing a £10k supermini that completely rewrites the rule book is, for me, not just more difficult to pull off but much more significant.

Step forward the all-new Ford Fiesta, which I've been driving this week against each and every one of its rivals for a test that will appear in the magazine soon. Actually, that's not entirely true: not every rival. At the 11th hour, the Fiat Punto became a no-show for reasons that only Fiat GB will understand...

## 'I came away wondering if I'd ever met an engineer better at his job'

Either way, testing a group of 10 cars like this, whose abilities are so impossibly close to one another, is always a fascinating exercise, with or without a Fiat in the mix. And what struck me more than anything was how competitive all of them were.

There were no duds, not one, and at least five cars could have claimed the outright win. As a result, you end up having to look unbelievably closely at what they do, and how they do it, to spot the differences; to work out what distinguishes a Yaris from a Mazda 2, or a Clio from a 207.

Obviously, they look quite different to one another inside and out, but what I'm talking about is working out the differences in the way cars like this drive. The way they feel.

In the end, it's the smallest things that make the biggest differences, the way they change gear, the difference in their steering efforts and the subtle changes of response to their damping. Were you just to climb in and drive any of them without thinking, it would be hard to pick a Corsa from a Clio from a Fabia; they are all *that* good at what they do on a base level.

But, of course, there are differences and, as a whole, they do eventually stack up. Overall, it became fairly obvious fairly quickly that the Fiesta is a terrific package. It leads the way in most areas dynamically, and in no area whatsoever does it get left far behind the best in class.

Here's the rub, though: I'm not sure that it's a better car overall than the one you can read about in the book attached to this week's magazine, the mind-bogglingly excellent new Ford Ka.

A few weeks back I spent a day talking to and driving with the project manager for the new Ka – a delightful bloke called Matthias Tonn – and at the end I came away wondering whether I'd ever met an engineer who is more passionate about his job. Or better at it. The pure completeness of the Ka – cheaper than the Fiesta by around 10 per cent, remember – is very much the proof of the pudding.

What else has Matthias Tonn done that you might have heard about? The Focus ST, for starters, which was "fun to do, but not as much of a challenge as the Ka".

So there's your answer – from someone who genuinely does know what he's talking about: the smaller the car, the bigger the achievement it is to get it right. As of today, Ford has not one but two world-beating examples in its range. That seems unusually relevant in October 2008.