

Cars – The Evolution of the Hot Hatch



Young drivers, often with no family and free of responsibility, will usually find the vehicle of their dreams in a small, two-door car with just enough zip to keep things interesting. No need for depth of storage in the boot, and no need for an abundance of space in the back, car manufacturers have continued to give them what they want – and what they want is the hot hatch.

So often the preserve of ‘boy and girl racers’, the pacy, compact and customisable potential of hatchback motors have got drivers hot under the collar from the start of their road-going lives for decades. It can be traced back to the late 1970s when the **VW Golf GTi** arrived on the scene. The German manufacturer kick started a revolution and instantly made their own Beetle look clunky, the austere Morris Minor a thing of quaint history and gave the saloon some serious competition.

The Golf progressed through the 1980s in variable style, as British drivers chose their own paint jobs, attached more imaginative accessories and finished the job with dashboard decoration like the ubiquitous fluffy dice. The performance of the ‘hot hatch’ could only improved as manufacturers fought it out for supremacy, with Ford’s Fiesta XR2i and Vauxhall’s Astra amongst the contenders. Combined with escalating speeds, rising prices and the nervousness of insurance companies, the

evolution of the hot hatch eventually took them beyond the affordability of new drivers.

Modern day performance hatchbacks, like the new Ford Focus RS 500 and the modern day Golf GTI, can be bought new only by drivers with the means to do so, coming in at anything between £20,000 and nearly £40,000 depending on specifications. The BMW developed and built Mini Cooper S is a favourite amongst petrol heads, and other German brands such as Audi with their TT draw everyone's attention, but with starting prices around £24,000 on average, they're an increasingly expensive toy.

However, it is in the second-hand market that young or more mature speed freaks can get their fix of three door fun. Cars driven off the forecourt as little as five years ago can easily be found for less than half their original price, and with so few owners likely to have had their paws on them in that time it's a market that buyers can be confident dealing in. With 2007 and 2008 VW Golf GTI models in abundance between £7,000 and £12,000, the impact on the pocket doesn't hurt quite so much. What's more, earlier models that can provide the same thrill as the day they were bought in the 80s or 90s can be snapped up for hundreds of pounds, not thousands. Variants of the Seat Ibiza, Ford Focus and Peugeot 206 are all out there for the taking.

Newer models of hot hatch cars come with the comforts of modern design, and maybe the older used cars don't quite stand up to such slick modern engineering, but newer cars can feel a little too straight laced when compared with their earlier, more unruly cousins. With a little research, drivers can find the thrill of a nippy hatch back in reliable older models for a lot less than they might think.