WE DRIVE THE NEW FAMILY FLIERS THAT DOUBLE THE SPEED LIMIT

and not Ford's '85 Granada
The new breed super saloons are on the loose. They can crack 140mph
NS BREAK OUT

corner with Porsches – and turn their hands to toting families on holiday
决了收购的计划与一个兴奋而
的尝试停在10,000ft
跑道上，支持着导航
和建筑物来耕种土地，然
后利用这片场地的
作为试验和测试的
设施有些了。我们只
是努力组建一个
的项目，我们需要
发展一个形
的展示，也许
”会从未来的测试
的
。我们不
想在全面
的比赛中
表现
，我们
希望
它

对俱乐部赛车
和
的比赛
...}

**serious testing was something which required a line of bravery on our two days at Bruntingthorpe.**

The superb runway wore a
 coating of packed snow, melting slowly on Day One. Only on Day Two were we able to wear a track
 in it, right beside the centreline. That would withstand 130mph
 plus, as ice spat out against the
 bottom of the cars, but woe betide the
 driver who put a wheel outside the groove...
Only the lines of its sporty character of car; cabin appointments are those of luxury. Engine is smooth, punchy, flexible. Oversteer is easily controlled.
and a body colour boot lid spoiler. The usual claims about stability and reduction of drag factor are made for these; BMW say the C4 goes down from 0.38 to 0.37, an improvement barely worth having for the comical look they bring to what is essentially an 'upright' and matronly motor car. Something like the Dowager Queen with thigh-high boots and l連れ G-string badges that shouted a little louder and somewhat less of the body plastic would have been more welcome.

This test car was fitted with what turned out to be a crucial option, the Getrag close ratio gearbox with direct drive top gear instead of the standard wide-ratio ZF box's 0.81 to one in driven top. The Getrag gives the five a top gearing of 23.9mph/1000rpm, just enough to provide a theoretical 140mph at a 6000rpm limit, but it gives full tuck-in up-cruise at a whisker over 4000, the engine's torque peak, where 229lb ft is smoothly and effortlessly delivered. There is thus enough in buckets to push the car into the 120s and 130s and whereas the ZF box's 28-odd mph/1000rpm does not (according to tests elsewhere) provide anything of the instant 100mph response, the engine/gearbox combination makes the car sing. It surges away from the line as the firm clutch is popped, without wheelspin unless you dump it aggressively with 4000rpm or so. There is a brilliant progression through the gears — 40mph, 60mph, 80mph — with the engine never off-song. The smoothness of the BMW is there, the typical engine whine-whir with an edge of aggression from over your shoulder.

You change out of fourth at 114mph and there is a strong acceleration which doesn't really peter out until past 130mph. After that the engine, well past both its power and torque peaks and with a housebrick shape to propel, has a job to make way rapidly. Eventually, though not on a two-mile straight, the remarkably accurate speedo will show 144mph, a whisker under 140 true.

Out that car's tacho would hardly show 6000rpm, let alone reach the 5100-5200 red sector, before the rev limiter built into the engine's Bosch Motronic II engine management system stepped further progress. The M535i chassis is a brilliant piece of development. The car comes up plain up to the limit with no discernable understeer. Its turn-in is as crisp as any a track car's, and the violent wheel movements in mid-bend or abrupt hardlining is well contained if watched quickly or aptly. Under heavy engine braking, the nose just tightens a whisker to provide a gentle throttle steering facility. The main adjustment to compliment this is made with the power. The brilliant partnership of power spread and close gear ratios makes real punch available whenever the demand comes. Press the throttle decisively, and the car will poke its tail with superb stability and predictability. Power slides come easily in this car, because the slippery diff prevents power from being spun away. The car is weighted on the inside rear wheel. You can hold them, too, effortlessly through the 80mph bends of the Bruntingthorpe sprint track, and when you want to go faster because the car's heading is just right, you either flick it straight, a quick move, or you feather the power a little — not too much — and just ease the opposite lock away to straighten itself.

This BMW displays rare benefits of strong roll stiffness. As the tail recovers itself from a power slide there is none of the body lurch that can so easily in a lesser car, lead to a loss of adhesion the other way. The BM just stops sliding, grips straight and goes. The fact that this adhesion and balance, this power and grace, is tailored to a superbly weighted and direct (2.75 turns lock to lock) steering system only heightens your enjoyment.

There's a simple specification here. Heavy fuel injection lump, pumping out 190bhp and 220lb ft of torque, is levered into relatively crude but essentially accurate handgear and well developed Brit chassis to provide Blighty's closest thing to a US-bred muscle car. The Vitesse's all-alloy V8 of 3528cc is fed by Lucas electronic fuel injection and punches out its maximum power up around the 5300rpm mark, and its torque high up for a V8 at 4000rpm. The power is fed through a widely arrayed set of five ratios, the first of which is no higher than the BMW's, the fifth of which is a radical 0.79 to one overdrive with a theoretical maximum at the engine's 5500rpm redline of 160mph plus.

The Vitesse stands up quite well to the competition. The body is looking in interior leg and headroom now, and the footwells seem surprisingly confined for a big car, but the dashboard, tared down, as a matter of course. The car is very nearly a match for the BMW, especially in the indistinct, missing out only for its lack of a strong top-end. It sounds strained and shows a surprising lack of torque near its 5500rpm redline.

The Rover is well tied down. The firmness of the damping is particularly obvious as you rumble it through town, on your way to do some big sprees. Yet the ride is always flat and it's quiet over most surface, too; more so than the BMW. Certainly the family user should have no trouble with any lack of refinement, provided he's prepared to give a little for the sake of near-limit stability.

Chassis then mirrors the BMW's. It understates little (perhaps a whiff more than the Bavarian) and stays stable on the over-run, even when it has been pushed close to breakthrough. It will flick into shallow oversteer if deliberately unbalanced with wheel and no throttle, but it's the gentle kind, which practically peels out by itself. With a manageable steering wheel, there would be the same kind of effortless flick-straight corrections available in this car as the BMW. But the glorious power-slides aren't really on the menu, mostly because the Vitesse's power spins uselessly away through the inside rear wheel in really hard corners, for the lack of a limited slip diff. If any fast car ever needed better traction, this gutsy old Rover is the one.

As far as outright performance goes, the Rover slows dramatically after 92mph, its third gear limit. Fourth and fifth are high, too high for rapid acceleration to a top speed. But given time and patience — and the forebearance of the law — the car will show 135 and 4600rpm without much trouble; 140 might just be possible with a five-mile run in. It's an honest old truck, the Rover.
BIG, STABLE ROVER STILL LOOKS AGGRESSIVE; VITESSE HAS SOME OVERTONES OF RACERS. CABIN ISN'T ROOMY FOR SIZE BUT SMOOTH, TORQUEY ENGINE AND SLICK GEARBOX MAKE IT A TRUE DRIVER'S CAR. LONG TOP RATIOS SAP URGE. ON LIMIT HANDLING CAN'T QUITE MATCH BMW, HOWEVER
The French make a play about not having changed the chassis and running gear specification much for their new car over that of the former, non-turbo GTi which, you will remember, was a 138bhp, 125mph car also of sportifying mettle. The Turbo has the same ancient 2.5litre four-cylinder engine of unsophisticated design (iron blocks, light pushrod-operated valves), but its compression ratio is lowered from 8.75 to 7.75 to one (still fairly high for a turbo engine) and fitted with a Garrett T3 turbocharger which pressurizes the induction system to a maximum of just over 10lb in². The puffer feeds the engine through Bosch L-Jetronic fuel injection and ignition is provided by a solid state electronic system, already seen on the 'ordinary' GTi, but now with a knock sensor to retard the timing in case of pre-ignition.

By these means, Citroen have produced a car with a 22percent power boost (165bhp at 5800rpm) and 40percent more torque (217lb f at 3250rpm) compared with the GTi's solid figures. But what is also important, and may account for the lack of any intercooler, is the refinement which has been poured into the engine to take it beyond the traditional turbo problems of lag and poor low-speed performance. To complement the work the car gets revisions to parts of its suspension (damper rates have been revised in some modes; front and rear anti-roll bar diameters are greater) and Citroen's latest hydraulics, a set of 210/55VR390 Michelin TRXs, go on to a new set of 'aerodynamic' wheels, each of which is distinguished by a flattopped 'F' for Turbo, which looks much more like a recently-flattened seagull than a letter of the alphabet. The GTi had an unfortunate motif for years; now it's the Turbo's turn.

The car's other distinguishing feature is a large, rear-mounted rubber spoiler, much more prominent than the GTi's. The French engineers are refreshingly reticent about making any grand claims for dramatic stability or Cd improvements; the thing is there first and foremost to distinguish this fast car from the others of the CX persuasion. The only striking claim for the car, one chock-full of serious intent, is that this machine has been built with 200km/h - 125mph - all-day serious motorway cruising in mind. Cruising is very much this car's métier. It will, of course, chase quite well along the back roads. But its bulk and the concentration required of its driver to place it accurately with that ultra-direct, low effort and somewhat insensitive steering, make it a more difficult business than in a car like the BMW, whose superb small wheel and steering system - with its high seating position - makes its placement in tight going far easier. The Citroen is a righty, all right; stacks of it.

The car usually corners always in mild understeer; most of it is postponed beyond the old GTi's limits by the new, excellent fat tyres. Towards the new limit there's a good deal of body roll, but the car's low seating position and soft fabric-covered seats hold front occupants against it all. But the Turbo, perhaps because of the greater cornering speeds it will accept before breakaway at the front, will move into surprising, shallow oversteer when the driver throttles off brutally in mid-bend. It is not an unsettling characteristic - a tinge of opposite lock corrects the condition instantly - but it's a bit of a shock for those of us who have grown used to the certainty in life being that the CX's long wheelbase and low CG always prevents the tail from pok ing out. The car has simply sensational dead ahead stability, functions of its wheelbase, its equally wishbone front suspension (which prevents the gyroscopic effects which other systems generate that deflect the car off-line) and its front weight bias. The car will track, hands-off, at 120mph. Sadly, at that speed there's more wind noise in either Rover or BMW. Winds of those velocities put real loads on door sealing and the Citroen's can well stand improvement. So can the car's general finish. It's poor which for a flagship is a disappointment.

But the French have scored a notable success in both spreading their engine's turbo puff, and endowing the gusky old engine with quite good off-boost performance. The 7.75 to one compression is high for an exhaust-blown engine; the car pulls from 1500rpm, even in its higher gears. There's real turbo urge available from about 2200rpm, plenty low enough to cover gaps left by the gear ratios. Actually, the first four ratios are stacked fairly closely together; on the low side, but fifth is geared for just about 136mph at the 5500rpm redline (and a whizzer above 150mph where the fuel injection's cut-out works at 6000rpm).

In the event the car simply can't do 136mph, unless less than a four mile run-up. It will show 133mph (with the speedo hovering around the 140) but that takes some achieving.

**CONCLUSION**

The BMW, as befits its price, is the best of these cars. As well as achieving the 140mph target, it beg to be driven harder, the driver feels there's a little in sacrificed refinement. The Citroen, without great fanfare, presents the '85 state of the turbo engine art. Cruising stability is the other terrific feature. This is a car which truly offers all-day 125mph cruising potential, something not necessarily available even in a Ferrar 400.

The Rover, the big, stable, familiar old tank, packs real performance, even when measured against the best. A slippery diff and short gearing grade better might well give it handling the inspiration of the BMW's. And its extension of the Rover SD1 theme provides further justification for the car's creators. They'll be calling this a classic car while we're all too much older.

In sum, this trio makes up one of the car market's most important, though this is not commonly recognised. The cars deliver true high performance in a place where it's harder to engineer, where buyers are more discerning, than in any sports car category yet devised. They're the inspiration for the cheaper performance cars that are coming - the 16valve Golfs, the Escort Turbos and their successors. Their prices aren't in the bargain basement, yet they offer unrivalled power for the money. The test is simple: there are plenty of cars costing twice as much as these which, if a flag were dropped, wouldn't see which way they went.
CITROEN'S CLASSIC SHAPE HASN'T DATED MUCH IN A DECADE, BUT CABIN IS OUTMODED AND WILL SOON BE REVISED. TURBO ENGINE HASN'T QUITE THE STUFF OF ROVER OR BMW, BUT CX IS STILL A FAST CAR. HANDLING IS FAIL-SAFE FWD, WITH UNDERSTEER AT LIMIT. STABILITY IS EXCELLENT.