



The hot hatch is undergoing a welcome resurgence, thank God. Manufacturers and tuners alike are busy re-creating the special blend of car dynamics needed to build exciting, interesting, memorable drives from 'wrong wheel drive' performance cars. Just look at the latest Clio 197, Civic Type R, Mk5 Golf GTI, Focus ST, MINI Cooper S, Megane R26 or Vauxhall's VXR range for evidence. The hot hatch is back.

Hopefully, gone forever are the days of over-weight, under-powered, softened, luke warm 'sports' models – born out of a bad reaction to megalomaniac insurance giants and their monstrous punishment, nay extortion, of the GTI brand. And manufacturers – called upon by you, the hot hatch hungry public – are now making proper, fun, FWD chariots again. Hooray.

In fact, you could say, we've never had it so good since the days when the Pug 205 Gti 1.9, Clio Williams and Mk2 Golf GTI did battle royal. But these old heroes are now potentially being superseded by a new breed of hardcore hot hatches – heavier

sure, but safer, more powerful and dynamically advanced too.

To cut it as a true GTI these days, 200bhp is entry level. And, with tuning potential for up to and over 300bhp, and a plethora of performance products and passionate, skilled tuners begging to let them maximise your motor, there's no excuse not to tune.

The evidence is right here at our secret test facility in Suffolk. Here, we have gathered a supercharged Honda Civic Type R from CPL Racing, a boosted-up Vauxhall Astra VXR from Courtenay Sport, Graham Goode Racing's Ford Focus ST300, a tuned MINI One (only n/a) from Lohen, a turbocharged Renault Clio from K-Tec Racing and a modified Mk5 VW Golf GTI from Morego. Nice.

And, in the bright Suffolk sunshine, this collection of over 1,600bhp of some of the UK's hottest hatches cuts quite a dash. But which one will rise supreme? Which car offers the most thrills 'n' spills? Which tugs the heart strings? And, perhaps most crucially, whose car is the quickest over the quarter mile, at full chat over 1.2-miles and around a tight, technical handling track?

There's only one way to find out. Let battle commence.