

# Quentin



Virages are under-valued at the moment

## THE BEAN MACHINE

TWENTY-TWO grand for an Aston Virage isn't bad. But if it was once owned by Rowan Atkinson and featured on the front cover of Autocar, it's a steal. Finished in graphite with 95k and full AM history, this mint 1990 example with all the bits needs to be bought. Details at [www.duncanhamilton.com](http://www.duncanhamilton.com)

At your service

JASON Hughes has seen a clean 100,000-mile 53-reg Volvo S40 at a reputable local dealer, advertised at £2,295 with three months' warranty. The service history is missing, but the dealer says he will try to trace it. Jason has agreed to buy the S40 for £2,150, on condition the history is found. What should he do if it doesn't appear?

QUENTIN SAYS: The S40 isn't that cheap - you're paying more or less retail. Assume the history won't turn up (lost ones rarely do), but at 100,000 miles it probably doesn't matter much anyway.



I'd be more worried about getting a longer warranty. Three months is no cover at all.

## Paying bonkers big bucks for a Bugatti ballpoint



THE first madness of 2010 has bloomed. A Bugatti pen for £9,250. Heavily plated in silver and platinum with 18-carat gold and a lacquered black embossed Bugatti logo, this isn't a pen, it's a piece of calligraphic engineering for signing seven-figure cheques. All of which assumes the average Bugatti owner can write...

## Funny plates for funny money..

**BOG 8**

**CUR 5E**

**FOL 1E**

THERE are some sensibly priced comical plates at DVLA's next sale. CUR 5E and CRA 5S are reserved at £400, DAM 77 and BOG 8 at £1,900, and, perhaps best of all, FOL 1E at £900. Details at [www.dvlaregistrations.co.uk](http://www.dvlaregistrations.co.uk)

## Yours for £1.2m ...Hudson River Airbus for sale



HERE'S an auction lot with a difference. The Airbus that miraculously landed in the Hudson River after a bird strike is going under the hammer. The remains of the one-owner 320 (without engines) has a full service history and signs of flood damage. Offers over £1.2million to AIG Aviation by February 26.

# A MINIMUM COUNTRYMAN

### WHO'D DRIVE IT

The world, his wife, his cousins and his aunts

## If ever a motor was going to be a monster hit, it's the new Mini Countryman.

Longer, wider and taller, it's the biggest Mini ever, with five doors, elevated driving position, optional four-wheel drive, six-speed gearbox and even a turbocharged 180bhp 1.6 engine, promising high-50s mpg thanks to stop-start and regen brakes.

This is a mini SUV (if you'll pardon the pun) that's stuffed with must-have kit like air con, panoramic roof, sat nav and alloys, and will send ripples through global markets like the US, China and Japan.

Like BMW's best-selling Mk I version, it still has the same funky cabin, kart-like road manners and BM build quality. In fact, there's absolutely nothing to dislike about this car. So much so that you have to ask what sort of alchemy the Germans

are on when they predict the need for four-wheel drive, cheeky attitude, searing economy and load-lugging rear accommodation.

The Countryman is classless, cute and enormously clever. And with prices kicking off at around £17,000 when it goes on sale in September, I can see it having one of the longest waiting-lists in the entire world.

Few small cars have ever been so completely compelling.



Suspension's been raised for higher ground clearance & better driving view

# Willson

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**Q** I'VE decided on a four-wheel drive estate car, but don't want a big SUV. It must be diesel, not flash and ideally German.

Oh, and I've only about five grand. Is there anything out there for me? - *Paul, Morpeth, Northumberland*

**A** YOU need an Audi Allroad. The A6-based 4x4 carry-all is a cracking workhorse that's uptown,

capable and really good to drive. Your £5k should buy you a 2001X 2.5 TDi Quattro with around 60k miles.

Let's hope you don't have to wait another 30 years for snow serious enough to get your money's worth.

**Q** I CURRENTLY drive a Peugeot 207 1.4 manual, but am swapping it in March for a new car.

I fancy an automatic for a

change - any advice on which I should buy? Are there any disadvantages? - *Glen Kurz, by email*

**A** AUTOS are great. You're less distracted, so they're safer, and small self-shifters actually hold their value better than manuals.

The smartest place to put your money (and the nicest drive) would be a Mini One Auto at around £13k.

# ARVEL AN IS SIMPLY PERFECT



High roof and wide rear doors means 4's not a crowd

**ENGINE:** 1598CC 4-CYL  
**TURBO POWER:** 180BHP  
**0-60:** 7.5 Secs  
**MAX:** 128 mph  
**PRICE:** FROM £17,000  
**IN A WORD:** Nothing minor about this Mini

**TECH  
FILE**

Barbie pink is the new black



## PINKO CENTO

MOST weeks I get letters about pink cars. Well, all those prayers have been answered.

Fiat are doing a limited run of 500 Cinquecentos in pink for £11,700 a pop.

They've got £1,500 worth of extra equipment, including sunroof, start-stop system and special pink key cover.

Only available online, exhibitionists should go to [www.fiat.co.uk/500pink](http://www.fiat.co.uk/500pink)

## 4X4 REALLY IS BETTER BY FAR

FUNNY how people aren't sniping at 4x4s any more.

Having recently proved that they're the transport for all reasons and all seasons, interest in used examples has suddenly exploded.

And the doubters get less credible. One greenie interviewed on the radio with me this week actually said that if you want a high and commanding driving position, sit on a cushion. Whatever...



Open wide..

## BANK ON A USED BARGAIN

THE palmy days of high used prices are over. January's been a grim month for dealers, with punters staying at home under the duvet.

Plenty of outfits are stuck with stock they paid too much for in December and need the cash back in the bank. So if you are in the

market, don't be told lack of supply is keeping prices up. Yes, there's still a shortage of motors...but there's an even greater shortage of buyers.

## Electric Jag-chaser is total stunner

LOOKS like Tesla's gorgeous electric saloon will be a production reality, with prototypes being tested now.

The seven-seat Jag-chaser has a 300-mile range and

could be on sale as soon as 2012 for less than £40,000.

Trust me - I've seen the Model S in the flesh and it's an absolute stunner. Bring it on.



For emission-free executives