

**W**ednesday dawns as bright and cloudless as you'd hope a Wednesday would in southern Portugal. But as we arrive in the paddock at the Portimão circuit there's bad news: the Performante has been withdrawn from the running. The handling quirks we noted yesterday have been getting worse; seems it suffered damage to its suspension in transit from Italy. Lamborghini family honour will

have to be upheld by the Aventador. The plan is to use the surrounding roads for driving and photography, while Chris Harris, who has jetted in from Spa to join us, concentrates on video. So, as Harris disappears into make-up (it's all blusher and eyeliner to get that look, you know) Meaden and I take the 1M for a recon of the surrounding countryside. With its outrageously pumped arches, the lighter BMW certainly manages to

hold its own with the exotics in terms of road presence, but there's not a lot to get excited about inside. The seats and wheel are both on the plump side and it's all a bit dark, with not so much as a single shiny button to spark the interest of your inner magpie. There is, however, a gearlever sprouting from between the seats... It's a strange thing when the manual box is no longer the norm in a Car of the Year test, but just four of the 13 contenders are



**'DAY THREE AND WE'RE BLESSED WITH MORE GLORIOUS SUNSHINE. SOME GREAT ROADS, TOO. TIME TO TAKE THE 1M FOR A QUICK RECON.'**



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contrast to the Cayman, incidentally) but it really only struggles over the bigger compressions, where it lacks a bit of travel in the suspension. What it doesn't do is wallow. Every input to the short wheelbase from the road below or with the direct, meaty steering is met with an immediate reaction, so you are continually involved. A small bundle of excitable energy, it feels rather like the C63's exuberant alter-ego as you hammer

the old-fashioned D1V type. The BMW's shift is light and slightly less knuckly than some previous ones but it still possesses that feeling that the internals are made of nylon. It's lovely. You can tell exactly how far the money for the race circuit spread, because there is a very abrupt deterioration in road quality as soon as you go much beyond the perimeter. The M1 feels busy all the time on the bumpier stretches (in stark

**'YOU HAVE TO KEEP THE  
CAYMAN'S 3.4-LITRE MOTOR  
SPINNING ALL THE WAY TO  
7000RPM AND BEYOND, WHERE  
IT MAKES ITS FULL 325BHP.'**



down the road. Mike Duff has the canine analogy nailed. 'It's terrier-like,' As we climb out of the valley, Meaden suggests we hang a right onto a smoother, faster, more moneyed road that runs through the trees. The 1M's twin-turbo straight-six is a stonker up here. It's almost utilitarian in the way it delivers its huge punch, yet it still manages to have what Barker describes as 'that classic BMW note - gritty yet aristocratic'. It's hard to believe just how fast the pint-sized 1M is until you experience it, but at times it's almost unsettling.

Driving down off the ridge again, back towards the circuit, is a road a little better than the first but not quite as smooth as the second, with tighter hairpins tumbling down the hillside. The 1M's short wheelbase and lack of roll mean that it can feel quite a snappy car over the limit, but with the throttle set to Sport (the one and only setting you can change) you have the perfect tool to keep the rear wheels spinning just as much as you want once sideways it seems to stabilise sweetly, albeit with a lot of tread being shed from the tyres. One last bit of Magellan-esque



Left: Cayman and 911 share a number of components, 'M' including doors, wheel button on 1M's wheel (far left) simply alters the throttle response

