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- REPLACE YOUR GLASS WITH POLYCARB WINDOWS
- FITTING A LIGHTWEIGHT GRP BONNET AND TAILGATE

PLUS: 205 T16 – RALLY LEGEND PROFILE • RENAULT 21 TURBO
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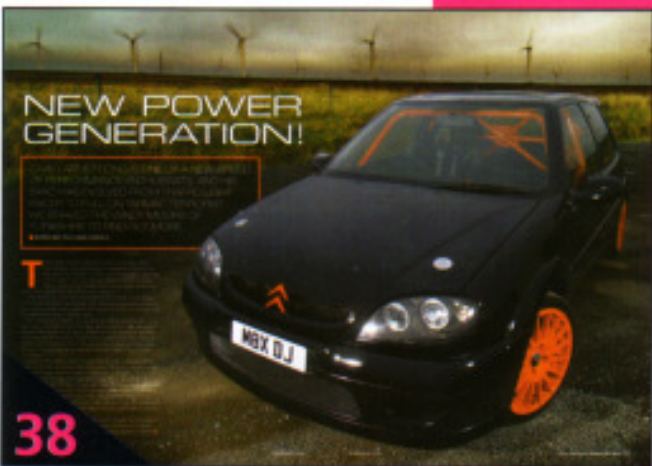
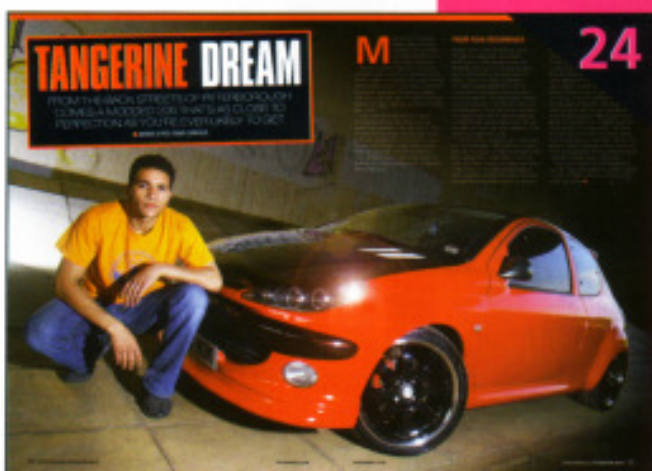
In pursuit of extra performance, we're on a mission to shed a bit of weight – starting with the windows...

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Okay, we've ditched the glass – now it's time to chuck out that heavy steel bonnet and boot

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Our man Tait stops his grumbling, and gives the Highways Agency a pat on the back





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DRAG RACES AND GRUDGE MATCHES...



FORTY ONE OWNERS CLUB MEMBERS COULDN'T RESIST TRYING THEIR MONSTER MOTORS AGAINST THE VIOLET VARIETY AT SOME RACETRACK. DID THEY GET THEIR AIR-SELS WHIPPED OR WERE THERE SOME VICTORIOUS TONY MONDY REVELLS ALL...

After some months of...
 The reader might remember...
 ...and...
 ...and...
 ...and...



EVENTS DIARY

28 October 2008
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 See Club London, from 10am
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1 November 2008
 France at The Motor Show
 Paris, Paris Nord
www.clubclass.co.uk

20-21 November 2008
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RENAULT 21 2L TURBO/QUADRA



CHANCES ARE IF YOU WERE ASKED TO COME UP WITH A LIST OF THREE GREAT FRENCH SPORTING SALOONS, THE RENAULT 21 TURBO WOULDN'T BE ON IT – YET THIS FORGOTTEN CLASSIC HAS AN ENORMOUS AMOUNT GOING FOR IT

During the 1980s, Renault took a rather interesting turn with the development of its mid-range family cars. After decades of producing innovative, charismatic, and genuinely groundbreaking cars, such as the R16 and R5, a new wave of mediocrity swept over La Regie. In 1981, the company launched the R9, and in a stroke, flair went out of the window as the management insisted that Renault built its own take on the Japanese motorcar.

Although the R9 went on to bag the European Car of The Year in 1982, it was a dismal effort. Buyer backlash was responsible

for the R11 and R25 maintaining a modicum of character, with their glass-back rear ends, but it was back to situation normal with the launch of the R21 in 1986.

Or was it?

At first glance, it might have looked dull – but look a little closer and there were the green shoots of a return to form for Renault. Take time with the styling, and the three-box 'shell had many neat touches that marked this out as an effective Giugiaro effort. Unlike any of its rivals, it was also available in two wheelbases. Not for passenger benefit, you understand, but to house the differing layouts of the 1.7-2.0-litre versions. In smaller form, it was transversally mounted, while with the

larger lump was longitudinally mounted under the bonnet.

None were exciting – none raised the pulses, and outside of France, at least, it did little to persuade buyers out of the Sierras, Cavaliers and Montegos.

BLOWN AWAY

That was until June 1987, when blower-crazy Renault unleashed its fire-breathing 2L Turbo. Buoyed by turbo-powered F1, rallying and endurance racing success, La Regie was rapidly moving towards the policy of offered a forced-induction sports version of every model in the range, and was at the cutting

“The top speed was high though – 142mph in an era when 120 was considered quick, put it in the same category as some very serious players”

edge for passenger carmakers.

The R5 GT Turbo and R9/R11 made extremely good use of their pushrod 1.4s, but an altogether more sophisticated solution would need to be found for the larger saloon, which Renault management knew would need to convince enthusiastic buyers out of their prestigious BMWs and Audis. And that was before they knew anything about the Mi16 powered PSA double header (BX 16V and 405Mi16) that would hit the showrooms almost simultaneously.

Using the all-alloy 1995cc J2 Douvrin engine was a good starting point. With wet cylinder liners and a crossflow head that housed hemispherical combustion chambers, the basics were there – 21 Turbo additions amounted to sodium cooled exhaust valves and extensive upgrades to the cooling and exhausts systems.

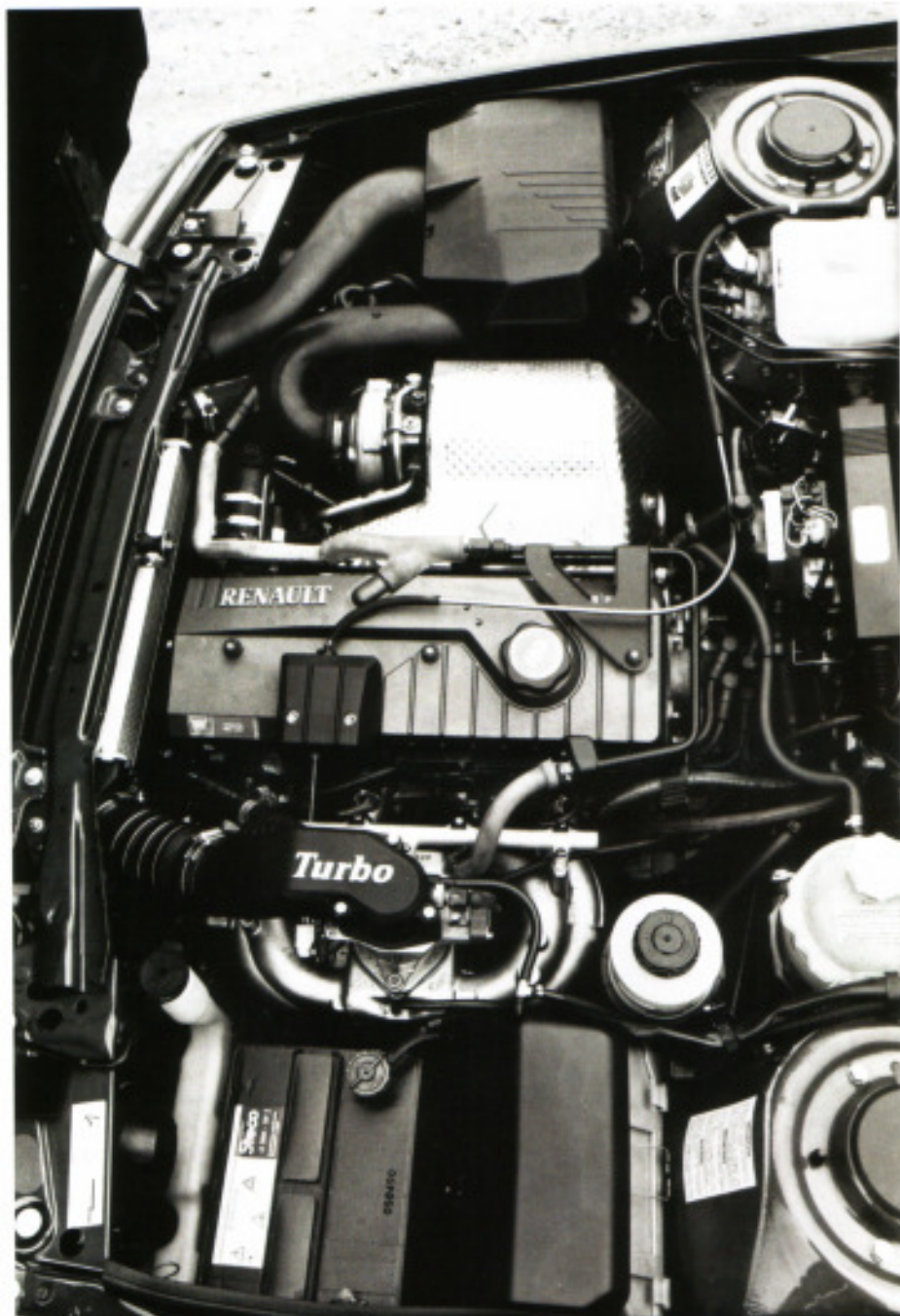
The Garrett T3 Turbo would need that extra room to breathe. Featuring an air-to-air twin heat exchanger intercooler set-up, there were lessons learned from the once-volatile Renault F1 engines to keep everything running, as it should. Engine management was a new development for this class (although the Alpine A610 and R25 V6 Turbo featured it), and full computer mapped control of the injection and ignition systems ensured optimum running at all times. The system now sounds laughably underspecified, with an 8K Motorola microprocessor at the heart of it all, but it was a very effective upgrade over mechanical systems.

Running boost pressure of 13.2psi, the maximum power was a very impressive 175bhp at 5200rpm, but a torque curve that peaked at 199lb ft at 3000rpm told you all you needed to know – this was going to be an effortlessly fast car.

ON THE ROAD

Performance was a league ahead of the PSA twins – and it wasn't just on the Autobahn that the extra grunt from the turbo made its presence felt. The 0-60mph dash was dispatched in 7.4 seconds (including enough wheel spin to fear for the life of the newest set of Michelins), but fail to dial in enough revs and it'll bog down, leaving your R21 at the mercy of the average shopping trolley.

The top speed was high, though – 142mph in an era when 120 was considered quick, put it in the same category as some very ▶▶



The all-alloy 1995cc J2 Douvrin engine was used with wet cylinder liners, hemispherical combustion chambers and an advanced twin heat exchanger setup similar in concept to the ones used on Renault's F1 engines



An unlikely candidate for classic performance car status, the Renault 21 Turbo offered impressive performance along with high levels of equipment and driving comfort. Few truly original unmolested examples have survived



TEN THINGS TO LOOK FOR WHEN INSPECTING AN R21 2L TURBO

- **Bodywork:** Rust shouldn't be a problem but check closely for crash damage. Take a close look under front wings and around the rear arches, and try and get behind the bodykit.
- **Interior:** The quality of fitments isn't that bad in the R21, but it's let down by poor quality mouldings, which pop up all over the place. Bare in mind that even standard 21s are now thin on the ground in scrap yards, so don't discount minor trim damage as unimportant.
- **Electrics:** Not good. Window and mirror switches typically pack up with alarming regularity. Window motors are also weak. Wiring into doors is brittle and fails, as do the light switches in the doorjamb.
- **Suspension and drivetrain:** Rear wheel bearings are a nuisance, and fail regularly – listen for whining from the rear.
- **Braking:** ABS failures are a regular occurrence and the sensors aren't cheap. Ensure sure it's all as it should be, and that the yellow tell-tale light up and extinguish when the ignition is switched on. Pad and disc wear above average. ABS warning system computer displays also play up, and are a pain to fix or replace.
- **Engine:** The Douvrin engine is strong and durable, and will last 150,000 miles without breaking a sweat as long as it's properly serviced and fed with synthetic oil.
- **Check condition of head gasket** – about 100,000 miles seems to be the time they fail. Cambelt condition needs monitoring closely. If it's not boosting properly, don't instantly assume it's the turbo – the hoses pack up, causing air leaks.
- **Turbo:** Blue smoke when the engine is warm is a sure sign of turbo bearing noise. Garrett T3s are easy to overhaul, but it's a specialist job to do it properly.
- **Transmission:** Clutches tend to last about 50k miles, and rarely last longer. Gearbox bearings are weak, so listen for any input shaft bearing noise – a road speed-dependent whine.
- **Quadra:** The centre differential is horrendously expensive to replace and hens' teeth secondhand, so make sure it works, or be prepared to pay the price for a replacement if it doesn't.



Leather epitomised height of T21 luxury, as did heavily padded leather clad three-spoke sports steering wheel

serious players, and not all that far behind the legendary Sierra Cosworth.

Lag was never very far away, and if you tried demanding anything meaningful from it at less than the magic 2800rpm boosting point, then forget about it. But that's not a problem if you want to waft – the R21 was a smooth riding car, and docile in these conditions.

Luckily a suitably beefed-up chassis and brakes easily contained all that power. Cornering was flat and stable, and the steering razor-sharp despite power assistance. It didn't so much attack undulating B-roads, but



BUYING ONE

The days of cheap fixer-uppers are long gone – you can still buy a project car from around £500, but you'll need to put a lot of work into it. General reliability is better than the 19, but still not good. If you can, buy a fully working, fair condition car for £1500 or above, but reserve £2000 from your bank account for true piece of mind. In short, these cars need constant care to remain in tiptop condition, so buy from someone you know who has loved their car...

demolish them, just as a proper performance car should. But at £16,500 at its launch in the UK, so it jolly well should have done. In comparison, the Peugeot 405 Mi16 was a relative bargain at £14,995, and the delicious Citroën BX 16 Valve weighed in at a mere £13,244.

GAINING ANOTHER DIMENSION

In June 1990, and not long after the R21 range received its Phase II facelift, the 4WD Quadra version arrived on the scene – much to Audi's annoyance (the Germans unsuccessfully used the courts to try and strip Renault of the name). With an extra pair of wheels and a centrally mounted viscous coupling to harness all of that power, the Quadra should have been the answer to French enthusiasts' dreams. Additional handling security was a given, but with a weight penalty of 130kg over its 2WD sister, performance was blunted by a considerable margin (0-60mph in 8 seconds, and a top speed of 138mph).

It would seem that the 4WD bubble had

SPECIALISTS, CLUBS AND INTERNET RESOURCES

RENAULT OWNERS CLUB
www.renaultownersclub.com

RENAULT CLASSIC CAR CLUB
www.renaultclassiccarclub.com

RENAULT 21 TURBO CLUB
www.renault21turbo.com

RENAULT TURBO OWNERS CLUB
www.rtoc.org



already burst by the time the Quadra hit the market, and it failed to make headway against increasingly powerful opposition. The restyled dashboard and leather-clad interior were a considerable upgrade, but at £20,875, it was up against the likes of the BMW 325i and Audi 90 quattro, arguably more desirable cars in badge-conscious times.

Sales for the R21 2L Turbo and Quadra models resultantly never took off, and that kept numbers extremely low in the UK. By the time it was phased out in favour of the Laguna in 1993, it was seen as a product of a bygone era, despite being such a capable road car.

That's good news for enthusiasts today though – assuming they already own a Turbo. There are so few left remaining that exclusivity and cult status has pushed prices to a reasonable level after spending most of the 1990s and this decade languishing in the doldrums. Owners tend to keep hold of their cars now, appreciative of its prodigious B-road pace, and near unbeatable Q-car status.

Today that makes it as far from boring, as it's possible to be. Buy one, and enjoy yourself surprising countless others... ■

“not long after the R21 range received its Phase II facelift, the 4WD Quadra version arrived on the scene – much to Audi’s annoyance”



DATA FILE

1987 RENAULT 2L TURBO

ENGINE:	1995cc, inline 4-cylinders, SOHC
BORE X STROKE:	88mm x 82mm
COMPRESSION RATIO:	8.0:1
MAXIMUM POWER:	175bhp@5200rpm
MAXIMUM TORQUE:	199lb ft@3000rpm
LENGTH:	4643mm (182.8in)
WIDTH:	1715mm (67.5in)
HEIGHT:	1372mm (54in)
KERB WEIGHT:	1190kg (2624lb)
0-60MPH:	7.4secs
0-100MPH:	19.1secs
MAXIMUM SPEED:	142mph (227km/h)