

Motoring week

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Smooth is fast; young guns give racing fresh ammo



Monday

Riding the Prancing Horse

Rapid lunchtime blast with Mr Editor Hallett in Ferrari UK's steel-grey F430 demonstrator, fresh from the Le Mans trip you'll read about on p76. We have a short but tough test route in Surrey, just outside London's M25 orbital motorway, and there's no better way of getting to know a car quickly than to punt it out there for 20 minutes, then end with a quick run along a strip of lumpy bitumen we know as The Ride Road. You discover plenty about a car's suspension noise, damper quality, body control and chassis rigidity.



Ferrari F430: rides beautifully, even at full gallop

Tuesday Briton Katherine Legge led the Milwaukee Champ Car race for 12 laps, finally coming sixth



Friday New Design Museum expo opens next month, showcasing 100 years of grand prix cars

PIC OF THE WEEK

Are you fed up with the antics of the growing horde of rich, stupid, law-breaking Gumball Rallyists? I reckon they give motor sport a bad name



Given that this car was steeped in 24-carat racing heritage and had a mid-mounted 483bhp engine, it may seem perverse to start banging on about its great ride, but this indeed is what struck us both. In softer-edged machinery, we road testers are inclined to believe most cars offer either great body control or a great ride: one or the other. However, the F430's great body control is its ride quality. It's very firm, yet very flat. And if you haven't been in a really good low car for a while, you're reminded what a treat it is to be sitting right down among the wheels, held by brilliantly supportive seats, neither displaced sideways by body roll nor up and down by bumps, as happens in more conventional cars. Chas and I kept telling one another how particularly brilliant this Ferrari would have been on a longer trip such as, say, to Scotland. Or Le Mans.

Tuesday

New talent, fresh interest

Couldn't help thinking, while reprising the weekend's British Grand Prix (see p24 for full results) over a brew in the office, that whatever the fascinations of this year's race, the usual people ran and won. Have to confess I'm most moved nowadays by the exploits of talented newcomers in all codes – people like Dani Pedrosa in MotoGP, or Britain's magnificent Katherine

Legge, who scored a sixth place in the recent Champ Car race on the Milwaukee one-mile oval, a type of racetrack she'd never even tried before. For 12 laps she actually led – the first woman in Champ Car history to do so – though this was only her fourth race in one of these big, animalistic open-wheelers. I've never cared much about US racing, but I can't wait for the next race, at Portland next weekend, to see what happens.

Wednesday

Shifting up a gear

Intriguing rumblings from Zeroshift, the somewhat mysterious Milton Keynes-based technology company that seems to have found the proverbial pot of gold at the end of the automotive rainbow: a way of replacing synchromesh in a manual gearbox with a mechanism that allows completely seamless gearchanges, up or down. Zeroshift refers to its new system as "a successor" to the Audi/Volkswagen dual-clutch DSG gearbox. That's a rather cheeky claim, in my view, since DSG is (a) in production, (b) admired by all, and (c) has plenty of untapped potential.

Zeroshift struggled at first, but has lately started looking prosperous and purposeful. It now has protective patents in place; its new chairman

is Charles Matthews, former CEO at Cosworth, and the car business is starting to recognise the firm's ambitious claims. Major licensing deals are just around the corner, apparently. Now I hear that Bob Dover, former boss of Aston Martin, Jaguar and Land Rover, has joined the board – surely the best recommendation yet that Zeroshift is going places. "They're a great bunch," said Dover when I rang for a chat, "but the best thing is the system itself. It works brilliantly. When you see how it works, you'll wonder why you didn't think of it yourself?"

Friday

Grand designs

From the Design Museum, handily placed beside the Thames near Tower Bridge, comes news of a new '100 years of grand prix cars' exhibition, majoring on their design history. It opens on 1 July, runs until October, and features iconic cars from every decade, an exploded car, a selection of engines and a look at the future of F1 technology. There's some great film footage, and both Red Bull Racing's technical boss Adrian Newey and Patrick Head of Williams F1 will be delivering lectures while the exhibition is running. Find out more at www.designmuseum.org.

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