

# NEWS FLASH

WHAT THE PAPERS SAY...

## Renault Clio: To Cup or not to Cup?

Should you spec your Clio 200 with the ultra-stiff Cup chassis or this softer non-Cup set-up? Tricky one. It's an important decision, especially because there's now a greater differentiation between Cup



and non-Cup than an old Clio 197. The standard 200's dampers are 15 per cent softer than those of the old non-Cup 200, a full 45 per cent softer than the Cup 200. Though the Cup 200 isn't as brutally brittle as some hatches, it's still a rigid little ride that headbutts every hole in the road. This is a far more pliant thing, absorbing divots and dents with smoothness, and imbuing the Clio with a bubblier character than the sterner-faced Cup. It feels, in fact, more like the original 197, which sat further to the malleable end of the hot hatch scale than the new 200.

The inevitable trade-off for this bubbiness is a slight lack of precision on the limit. The non-Cup still gives you the confidence to belt it to the limit, but it just

won't give you quite the same level of surround sound feedback once you're there. Speaking of sound, the softer chassis set-up actually seems to dull a little of the revvy rawness of the 200's engine. It's the same

naturally aspirated 2.0-litre four-pot revving to the same 8,000rpm, but it sounds just a little more civilised, a little more muted. Maybe it's the deadening effect of the extra kit on board this test car, but the non-Cup feels a touch more urbane than the Cup. Renault expects to sell slightly more non-Cups than Cups, and – if really, really pushed – it's the softer set-up we'd recommend for driving on UK roads, trading in those last microns of feel for the benefit of not grimacing in anticipation of that next pothole. If you're torn between the two, here's the solution. Test them both, back to back.

For a long, long time. Perhaps to the end of Scotland and back.



November

## Reader test team on Mégane Renaultsport

Karim, 29, from Kingston, said:

"Renault has really upped its game – I really like the radical, futuristic styling. The seats are comfortable, there's plenty of adjustment and I especially like the rotary knob to fine-tune the backrest's angle. There's good adjustment for the steering wheel, too. I could see myself owning one of these. It looks good on paper, and now I've seen it, it looks good in real life, too." **RATING: ★★★★★☆**



stance and lots of presence. It feels luxurious inside and there are lots of gadgets. Despite looking thin, the seats are supportive and comfortable. The steering wheel with its yellow stitching looks good, too. I really like it. ★★★★★

Phillip May, 52, from Cambridge, said: "The styling is really impressive. It's very much in the vogue of Renaultsport models, but represents the next step. It's definitely a car that looks like it wants to be driven hard. In a car like this, you want the best of equipment, so I'm pleased that Renault hasn't skimped – the Brembo brakes and Recaro seats are proper performance items. The projected £23,500 price means the Mégane should give the Ford Focus RS a real run for its money." ★★★★★☆

Jeff Pilot, 34, from Isleworth, said: "This car has the wow factor – it's really attractive. The sharp lines at the rear flow well together, and I like the sporting touches at the back. The hydraulic bonnet lift and the sunroof are also pluses."

★★★★☆

Jeff West, 45, from Brighton, said: "Visually, it's stunning. I love the detailing, such as the spoilers, vents and flared wheelarches – it looks like a racing car for the road. You're left in no doubt about what it is. All of the sporting features fit well together. The looks are jaw-droppingly aggressive and the lines flow into the car's haunches. It seems special and it doesn't look like it's based on a family car. Renault has really thought about it. I also like the interior detailing, such as the yellow stitching and yellow dials on the dashboard." ★★★★★☆

Howard Joseph, 29, from London, said: "This is an exciting car. It looks aggressive, with a chunky

**WHATCAR?**  
November

## Sporty Twingo gets cheaper

Renault is making its nippy Renaultsport Twingo 133 Cup even more tempting by building one with no air-con, tinted windows, automatic headlamps and wipers, and with bench rear seats instead of individual sliding ones. The idea is to save money and produce a cheaper version for these tough times. The result is a saving of £700, so you can now buy a new 133 Cup for 11,795. Sales have started with deliveries from the beginning of November.

**Mirror.co.uk** 2 October

## Grand Scénic shines in MPG Marathon

*Which?* contributor Richard Aucock entered the annual MPG Marathon event in a 130hp Renault Grand Scénic 1.4 TCe petrol, and finished as the runner-up in the percentage improvement class. Simply by driving more efficiently, he recorded 50.3mpg from the turbocharged model – a 30 per cent improvement on its official economy figure.



7 October

## GT takes a hike

If you fancy a Clio that looks similar to the fire-breathing Renaultsport models but is nearly twice as economical, then say hello to the new GT. The sporting credentials aren't simply skin deep, either. As well as 16-inch alloy wheels, twin exhausts and a beefy rear spoiler, the GT has stiffened suspension and sharper steering. The mechanical changes **WHATCAR?** work, too – the GT is a hoot to drive.

**WHATCAR?**  
November



## Renault Clio GT

The fact that our Clio GT shares its engine with its smaller brother, the Renaultsport Twingo, tells us everything we need to know about this Clio's DNA. It's hardcore, but not too hardcore; it's fun to drive, but family sized; it's fizzy, but not insanely fast. In short, it's the point where sensible Clio meets crazy Clio. Unlike most compromises, it works on every level. The grown-up stuff is taken care of by a pliant ride, refined cabin and comfy seats, and Dr Jekyll, Mrs Jekyll and the Jekyll twins can enjoy these during Sunday afternoon wafts. But on Friday night Mr Hyde presses the fast pedal and finds it responsive, shuffles the six-speed manual box and finds it pretty tight (for a

Renault), twirls the wheel and finds (shock) nice steering. For an hour or so he's the hooligan that Twingo owners have to be all the time, as the smaller car's bag of tricks contains just the one: rabid, noisy, rattly, good damn fun mode. True, Clio takes more than a second longer to hit 62mph, but does he notice? No! At these speeds fun is taken at face value. There's 5hp between the two engines (128 in Clio, 133 in Twingo) but the more potent one feels more breathy at the red line, probably because you're calling it. I loved our Twingo but there's nothing this Clio can't do. A slightly more grown-up Renault for the partially grown-up.

**car**  
November

## Renaultsport Twingo 133 Cup

Renaultsport does possess a rather fine line in hot hatches. The outgoing R26.R is amazing, the Clio 200 is brilliant, and we're all fans of the tiny Twingo 133. And now there's a new Renaultsport Twingo 133, the Cup. You can already buy a regular little Renaultsport Twingo 133 for £12,495, but there's also a Cup chassis option. For £650 it adds 10 per cent stiffer springs and dampers, reduces the ride height by 4mm, and adds 17-inch wheels and tyres in lieu of the regular 16s. It's the same set-up Renaultsport has with the Clio, whereby you can spec a regular 200, and then opt for a Cup chassis to sharpen things up. But on the Clio 200 there's also the option of a lightened (and cheaper) Clio Cup. And now the Twingo is following suit. The new Twingo Cup keeps the Cup chassis settings, but in comes a regular rear bench in place of the sliding back seats, while out goes the air-con, auto lights and tinted rear windows. The reduction in equipment cuts 10 kilos from the Twingo's kerbweight, and you'll shed a few pounds yourself on a hot summer's day when there's no air-con to cool you down. But the benefit of going without air-con is that you'll save yourself a few quid. The new Twingo Cup costs £11,795, which means it's £700 cheaper than a basic Renaultsport Twingo, and



£1,300 less than a Cup-equipped car, even though it retains the latter's chassis. Shell out another £150 and you can have the white paint, plus gloss black door mirrors, spoiler and bumper trims, while another £175 nets you the mean-looking black wheels.

Seems like a pretty good bargain. On the road, it's strongest above 4,000rpm, and with the rubber bung removed from the airbox it sounds nice and rorty too. Plus the gearchange is sweet and can be rushed as fast as your left wrist can move. Turn-in is instant and the Twingo is lovely and darty, and the soft bucket seats grip you tightly. And as with all Renaultsports, the suspension is firm but well controlled so it can tackle back roads without it coming unstuck and bouncing you around.

**VERDICT:** On the road you won't notice the difference between a Twingo Cup and a regular Renaultsport Twingo equipped with a Cup chassis, but that means it's still a brilliant little hot hatch. Where you will notice the difference is under your armpits, which will be dripping with sweat on a hot summer's day thanks to the lack of air-con. Luckily we don't have too many of those in the UK, and you can spend some of your £1,300 savings on extra deodorant.

**car**  
5 October

## Electric for the people

Twenty per cent of Renault's business in the near future will be in electric, zero-emissions (Z.E.) vehicles. In partnership with Nissan, which is developing the battery technology, Renault will launch four electric cars from 2011, along with a full infrastructure to support them in larger European cities. That means recharge points and battery-swap stations, and back-up which



will ensure that none of these cars will ever be stranded. Yes, Renault will provide a service that will detect if your car won't reach the next charge point, and send a van to help. However, that shouldn't happen too often, as three of the cars here have a range of 100 miles, enough for 80 per cent of urban journeys. Good work, Renault.

**TopGear**  
November

## Going green

The Renault Fluence Z.E. was unveiled at the Frankfurt Motor Show and will be on the road by 2016. The five-seat sedan is powered by a lithium-ion battery, with which the car will be able to travel 99 miles (160km). Its key feature is 'swappable batteries'. There will be no more waiting for the battery to charge – which can take up to eight hours – because it can be swapped in minutes at what Renault calls a Quickdrop station. **THE TIMES** 8 October

## All in a twiz

Looking like a high-tech golf cart, this Twizy is Renault's answer to urban mobility. The two-seat runabout has no windows and its 20hp electric powerplant gives it scooter-like performance. It arrives in 2011.

**ZOO**  
7 October



## Twingo 133 Cup

Renault has a new Renaultsport Twingo 133 Cup version. The latest model keeps the 131hp 1.6-litre petrol engine and Cup suspension set-up, but does without air-con, automatic headlamp and wiper operation and extra tinted rear windows. This means buyers get all the performance and dynamics of the more expensive car, but for £700 less, at £11,795. It's available to order now.

**Sun**  
7 October