

Come The Revolution

Need a faster car but been hit buy the credit crunch?
If you drive a Seat Leon Cupra we may have the answer.

Words: Mauro Calo Photography: Max Earey

After five years in the BTCC Seat has pulled out of what is arguably the most entertaining and competitive race series in the UK. The reason? Money, or more specifically, a lack of it.

With a BTCC-spec Leon costing more than £200,000, not to mention associated race fees, the BTCC is not a cheap sport. Which makes it even more amazing that for £4000 more than the £20,350 Seat charges for a standard 237bhp Leon Cupra K1, tuning guru Revo Technik can give you a car with 123bhp more than the BTCC machines. So, more power and a potential saving of £175,000 over the race car. Sounds right up our street.

Extreme as its power output is, the Revo Cupra remains a road car though, so you won't have to

clamber over a roll cage, struggle with five point harnesses or warm the slick tyres every time you pop to the shops. What you will have to do is try to acclimatise to the extra grunt. And there's lots of it. Revo claims 360bhp and 345lb ft of torque, which let's face it, if accurate should provide this Leon with astonishing performance. Either way, dressed in its white paintwork, black roof and black wheels the Revo Cupra certainly looks fast.

Given the claimed power hike it's a surprise to find the modifications are limited to an engine re-map, Milltek exhaust and uprated fuel pump, forming what Revo calls 'Stage 2 Plus'. Part of this includes the company's handheld pre-programmed ECU upgrade that allows owners to chose from several engine maps, from 98 Octane to valet mode,

by simply plugging into the car's OBD port.

So that's the power taken care of but what about the chassis? Well, suspension has been replaced by a set of fully adjustable KW Variant 3s and the wheels swapped for a set of lightweight 18-inch Team Dynamics racing rims, claimed to reduce the unsprung weight that is so crucial to steering precision. Only the brakes remain standard, which concerns me a little, but I'm assured that they are well up to the job. Only one way to find out...

Climb aboard and the interior's unchanged from the standard car. This means hip-hugging seats and a steering wheel that is adjustable for both reach and rake – allowing you to assume the perfect touring car style driving position. The Milltek exhaust gives the Leon a purposeful blare at idle, hinting at

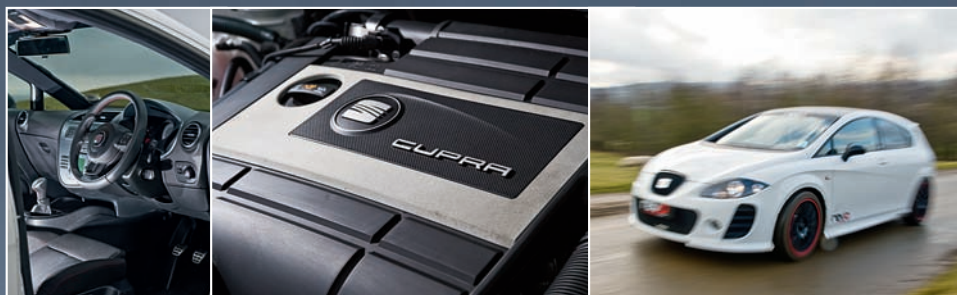
THE SPEC SHEET: REVO TECHNIK SEAT LEON CUPRA KI

ENGINE >> four-cylinder, turbocharged CAPACITY >> 1984cc MAX POWER >> 360bhp @ 6500rpm
MAX TORQUE >> 345lb ft @ 3400rpm 0-60mph >> 5.0 seconds (est) TOP SPEED >> 155mph (est)
WEIGHT >> 1375kg approx PRICE >> £4000 (plus standard car)

WE LIKE >> Extra power is addictive, quality of delivery

WE DISLIKE >> Why doesn't Seat do it? You won't be able to resist driving everywhere at full speed

VERDICT >> A quality conversion that lives up to its claims



the potency about to be unleashed. On the move the chassis copes with the undulating wet roads of our test route in a very touring car like manner, so despite the suspension's firm set up, body control is good, only getting choppy once you really start to drive hard over rougher surfaces.

It's once the road smooths out and you can attack an apex with commitment that the Revo Leon shines, turning in with as much accuracy as any front drive hot hatch out there. More importantly, and astonishing given Ford's efforts with its Focus RS, is the fact that the Revo Leon deploys all its power with a complete lack of torque steer. Just plant the throttle and go.

That's not to say it won't light its front tyres with careless application of the power from a standing

start or at the exit of a corner but the standard ESP copes extremely well, treading a fine line between not being overbearing, nor letting the Leon spin all its power away in a cloud of burnt rubber.

What of all this extra power though? Does it work? Absolutely. This Cupra is laugh out loud fast, the throttle response is razor sharp from idle and it has usable grunt from 2000rpm right up to the raised 8000rpm limit. What's more, there are no gaps in the power delivery, so smooth is the onslaught that this engine conversion could be a factory upgrade. On the road it feels as fast as an E90 M3. There has clearly been much time and expertise devoted to developing the software.

And what about those brakes? Amazingly, for road driving, the standard discs and pads appear more

than up to the job in hand, proving reliable despite some spirited driving.

So the Revo Leon Cupra will reward smooth driving with the sort of pace you would normally expect from the current crop of mid-size super saloons costing twice the price. It's a giant killer, and arguably the most complete modified hot hatch we've ever tested.

Which makes the price of the ECU upgrade a steal. For just £599 plus the VAT you can transform your Seat Leon Cupra from a hot hatch to a super saloon chaser, while even if you want to go the whole hog and get yourself the full Stage 2 kit as featured on this car you'll still be spending less than £4000.

BTCC car it may not be, but the next Focus RS, bring it on, and Seat take note 📌

