

DRIVE



Business Scene's motoring correspondent **TIM BARNES-CLAY** reckons those among you who are in a position to choose a super-swish car for company business,

Raising the game

Lexus has crammed a mighty V8 engine into its IS-F model and, with 417bhp and a top speed of just under 170mph, it is, quite simply, sensational.

The IS-F is touted as a rival to the Audi RS4 and BMW M3, but

looks more discreet than these German mean machines.

A bonnet bulge is the big give-away that this is no ordinary car and the revised front bumper and side sills also indicate the car's

performance potential.

The IS-F's engine produces 417bhp, allowing the beautiful brute to sprint from 0-60mph in under five seconds. Fortunately, six-piston callipers grip huge 14-inch discs to ensure the Lexus

can scrub off that speed just as quickly. The Japanese motor company has also developed the world's fastest-shifting eight-speed transmission. The Sports Direct-Shift automatic gearbox can change ratios in only one-tenth of a second, meaning that shifts are, more or less, instantaneous.

Power aside, the Lexus IS-F is a very well built, practical and highly specified car and, at restrained engine speeds, you would be hard pressed to hear the large V8 lurking under the bonnet. With suspension an inch lower than that of the standard IS, the ride is firm but the seats are comfortable. Handling is razor-sharp and it generates driving confidence.

Lexus has an enviable reputation on the used car market and, compared to German marques, the relatively limited availability of the IS-F should guarantee very good residual values.



Lexus IS-F

Price: £58,350
Top speed: 168mph
0-60: 4.7secs

Jaguar XFR

Price: £65,350
Top speed: 155mph
0-60: 4.7secs



Over the last couple of years, Jaguar's XF model has secured 'Car of the Year' awards from two major automotive magazines and more than 30 other commendations worldwide.

So, it is no surprise that the Midlands motor manufacturer has gone on to raise the game by producing the high performance XFR.

Distinguished by unique exterior and interior design

features, the XFR includes revised bumpers and lower front air intakes, sill extensions, bonnet louvres and grilles, four tailpipes, a boot-lid spoiler, unique seats and 20-inch alloy wheels. Powered by a

supercharged 510bhp V8, the spirited Jaguar delivers undiluted might and performance.

With acceleration from 0-60mph in just 4.7 seconds, it makes it the ultimate Jaguar sport saloon.

Tim Barnes-Clay



might want to take a closer look at the four cars featured here. Each of them is at the top of its game – stealthy, stylish and incredibly quick.

Aston Martin's DB9 has established itself as the authoritative grand tourer, thanks to an enduring combination of unpretentious elegance, sporting character and genuine opulence.

Recent styling changes have freshened the DB9's appearance, with a new front

bumper, bright finish radiator grille and a re-shaped lower intake featuring bright hexagonal mesh. New headlight bezels, re-styled sills, silver brake callipers, 20-spoke diamond-turned alloy wheels and clear rear light lenses complete the external revisions.

Under the skin, the DB9 has

an enormous 6-litre, 12-cylinder engine, allowing the car to sprint from 0-60mph in 4.6 seconds and on to 190mph. The drive is phenomenal, helped, no doubt, by a new adaptive damping system, which offers enhanced ride comfort together with sharper handling when switched to Sport mode.

The Aston Martin DB9 is available as either Coupe or Volante (convertible) with rear mid-mounted six-speed manual gearbox as standard or optional 'Touchtronic 2' six-speed automatic transmission.

Aston Martin DB9

Price: £125,050
Top speed: 190mph
0-60: 4.6secs



The latest Continental GT is an automotive work of art, with superb craftsmanship and elegant, contemporary design.

It drives like a supercar, but without the usual sacrifices in ride or practicality. A beautifully sculptured new body gives the

GT coupe an even crisper, more defined appearance. The contemporary interior offers new levels of cabin design, comfort and hand-crafted luxury. The seats, for example, provide even greater support and rear leg-room; a sweeping dashboard even

more style and modernity.

Bentley's acclaimed 6-litre, 12-cylinder, twin-turbocharged power train now has a raised power output of 567bhp and this is mated to a new Quickshift transmission which enables double downshifts. Thanks to

advanced FlexFuel technology, it can also run on both standard unleaded petrol and sustainable bioethanol or any mix of the two.

Later this year, an all-new, high-output 8-cylinder engine will also be available to order. This advanced power unit will deliver a 40 per cent reduction in emissions, compared with the W12 engine, and will offer a class-leading CO₂ emissions-to-power ratio with Bentley levels of performance and refinement.

Both engines are coupled to an all-wheel drive system with a sporty 40:60 rear-torque bias, minimising understeer during hard cornering and allowing the driver to control the car's line and balance via precise throttle control.

Bentley Continental GT

Price: £135,760
Top speed: 198mph
0-60: 4.4secs

