

Gripping tight

Bridgestone praised for dry handling in independent tyre test



The Turanza ER300: Praised for its almost perfect dry handling ability

The Bridgestone Turanza ER300 has been praised for its dry handling ability in the biggest tyre test ever carried out by a UK consumer motoring magazine.



More than 20 makes of tyre were tested in the Auto Express annual test, with experts assessing the rubber in a variety of disciplines including wet handling, rolling resistance, and dry handling – where the Turanza ER300 scored an almost perfect 99.9 per cent. The comfort-oriented tyre was also placed in a respectable sixth place overall, ahead of other leading tyre brands such as Dunlop, Goodyear, and Michelin.

“We are delighted with the results of this test,” said Andy Lane. “The Auto Express test is comprehensive and very

well-respected, so to be given such a high rating is pleasing.” And the wet performance of the tyre also impressed the judges. The inner tread pattern is designed with lens-shaped blocks with rounded edges that reduce water turbulence

and improve drainage away into the main grooves, giving more grip and traction on wet surfaces.

The Turanza ER300 is a state-of-the-art tyre, designed to complement the engine power and ride comfort of luxury and mid-range touring models, and is original equipment on a range of top-quality mass market cars including the Mercedes A-Class, the Vauxhall Astra, and the Audi A4. It is also available in the replacement market in sizes ranging from 185/60 R14 H to 225/45 ZR17 W.

RFT tyres pass tough test

Bridgestone has continued its programme of preparing tyre dealerships for the expected rise in replacement fitments of run-flat tyres by inviting members of its First Stop network to test the technology at a specially-designed event in Bedford.

Dealers were given the chance to drive new BMW 3-Series cars fitted with original equipment Potenza RE050 RFT run-flat tyres around a track designed to simulate a variety of different road conditions, in order to fully appreciate the comfort and safety levels of the tyres for themselves. They drove the cars with fully inflated tyres at first, and then with one tyre deflated – and all reported they were amazed at the comfort and safety levels.

Jim Eden, director of Eden Tyre Sales in Nottingham, was one of those testing the technology for the first time. He said: “I was very surprised at how comfortable the RFT tyres were when inflated. I certainly wouldn’t have guessed they were run-flat tyres had I not known.

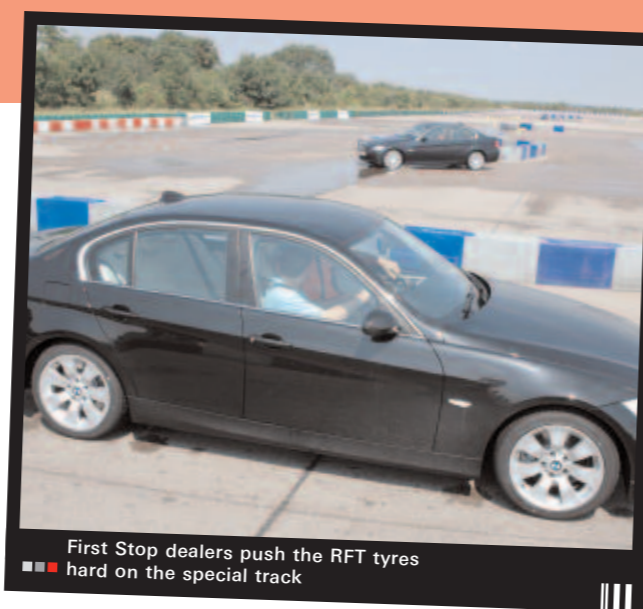


Dealers end the day driving a range of stunning racing cars

“More surprising still was how safe the car felt when one of the tyres was deflated. I was expecting the handling to be difficult, but I felt in total control of the car at all times, including when cornering, accelerating or even braking hard,” added Jim.

Andy Lane said: “With all the myths surrounding run-flat tyres, we felt it important that the guys who will soon be seeing their forecourts flooded with customers wanting replacement RFT tyres get a better understanding of them. It’s clear from their reactions that the event has been a success.”

And while at the track, which is used for motor racing events, the First Stop dealers took the opportunity to drive a range of stunning racing cars, including a Nissan 350Z and a Formula Palmer Jaguar Le Mans car, around a state-of-the-art track to end the day with some high speed fun.



First Stop dealers push the RFT tyres hard on the special track

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profitable information for the tyre trade

UK's three 'Greatest Drives' all fit Formula One-derived tyres...

The Volkswagen Golf GTi, the Porsche Boxster and the Nissan 350Z GT4 have been voted the top three 'Greatest Drives' of 2005 by Britain's best selling weekly motor magazine, Auto Express. And these top models have one thing in common – they all fit Formula One-derived Bridgestone Potenza tyres.

“This is excellent news,” said Andy Lane, consumer marketing manager at Bridgestone UK. “All three cars are exciting, top-of-the-range models, that require the very best in grip and control. This is just another example of how the UK's top cars perform at their best on Bridgestone rubber.”

At under £20,000, the Volkswagen Golf GTi took the top honour of the UK's best drive. It has only been on the market for a few months, but is already renowned for its superb

handling and acceleration. With a sophisticated and powerful 200 PS 2.0-litre turbocharged engine and a precise six-speed gearbox, it covers 0-60mph in just 6.6 seconds.

Perfect match

The driveability of the Golf is perfectly matched by its Bridgestone Potenza RE050 tyres. Offering excellent sporting capability in all conditions, the RE050's asymmetric tread pattern delivers enhanced wet performance and low noise levels for the Golf, while its stiff pattern blocks maximise handling. The fun and stylish looks of the car are also complemented by the sporty and attractive design of the Potenzas.

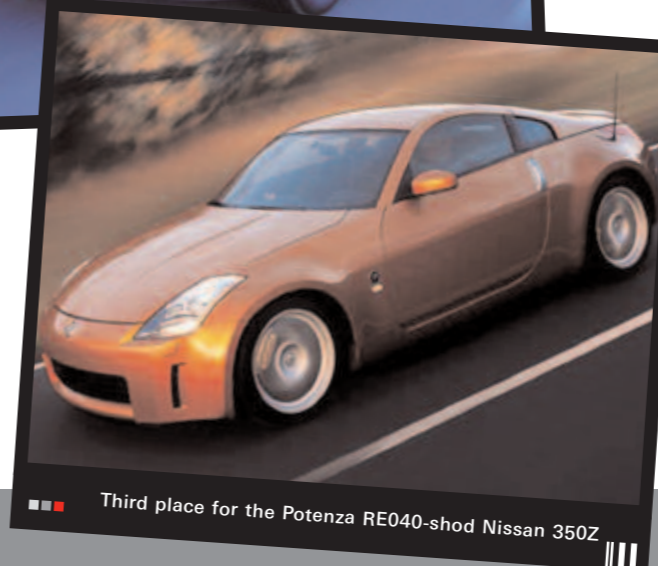
“We have a history of original equipment fitments on award winning cars, and it's great to know that the top three cars all fit Potenza tyres,” added Andy Lane. “The technology incorporated in these tyres is the same technology developed for the tyres on the World Championship-winning Formula One car, so they are the perfect choice for any driver demanding the highest levels of performance from their car.”

The Golf narrowly beat the second placed Porsche Boxster, which also fits Potenza RE050 tyres, and third placed Nissan 350Z, which fits Potenza RE040 tyres.



The Volkswagen Golf GTi: The Greatest Drive of 2005, according to Auto Express

It's a close second for the Porsche Boxster, which fits Potenza RE050 tyres



Third place for the Potenza RE040-shod Nissan 350Z

Classy new car? It has to 'B' a Mercedes

Mercedes is targeting young, urban drivers with its newest addition, the B-Class, which will fit high-performance Bridgestone Potenza RE050 tyres.

A premium five-seater people carrier, the B-Class will sit comfortably between the new A-Class mini MPV and the more traditional C-Class Estate. And with 70 per cent of the inside of the vehicle set aside as load carrying space it is designed to be more of a 'multi-activity vehicle' than an MPV.

The high-quality Mercedes B-Class is perfectly complemented by the Potenza RE050, which is also a premium brand aimed at the discerning driver.

Already proven on top high performance sports cars in the Mercedes range including the SL 55 AMG and the new CLS 55 AMG, the Potenza RE050 offers top sports performance and ride comfort. It also enhances vehicle handling at high speeds and improves performance in the wet and dry. Sales of the B-Class are expected to reach 6,000 in the first year, so tyre dealers can expect to see them on their forecourts soon. It will fit Bridgestone Potenza RE050 tyres in the 215/45 R17 size.



The classy new Mercedes B-Class, which fits Potenza RE050 tyres as original equipment



Bridgestone is in a 'very high period of growth', according to John McNaught

Still growing strong

Bridgestone UK is in the middle of a phenomenally busy period, according to managing director John McNaught.

"We are in a very high period of growth," said Mr McNaught, "and for all our staff it is a tremendously busy and rewarding time."

The company's sales figures have increased by a staggering amount in the past five years. In 2001 its sales figures in the replacement market totalled £100 million. That figure has now risen by a third to £135 million.

And the figures for original equipment sales are even more impressive with a 50 per cent increase from £31 million in 2001 to £47 million.

"Bridgestone aims to be first or second in every market and to do this we demand not only high-quality products, but also a very high degree of customer service. As such, our development has always been about sensible and sustainable growth – not just putting tyres into circulation.

"The hard work that we have put in the past few years is now coming to fruition as we continue to gain market share, not only in the high-performance car sectors, but also with new products such as our run-flat tyres, which are growing steadily," said Mr McNaught.

Fit run-flat right

As reported in the last In The Black, Bridgestone continues to invest in the development of run-flat technology, and it is now becoming increasingly vital that dealerships across the country understand the fitting implications the innovative tyres bring with them.

While the number of RFT tyres on UK roads continues to grow, there have been reports of a lack of knowledge within the industry about how they could and should be fitted.

Consumer marketing manager Andy Lane explains: "Some media reports have highlighted instances where a customer has requested RFT tyres, even though their car is

not set up for them. Whenever this happens, we advise all dealers to point out that RFT must only be used in conjunction with TPMS (Tyre Pressure Monitoring System).

"Our RFT tyres are introduced through original equipment fittings, and retro-fitting is absolutely not recommended," said Andy. "That's because we develop the tyres in conjunction with manufacturers to

Successful launch for Think Before You Drive



Bridgestone tyre testers and the campaign icon – a crash test dummy – launch the Think Before You Drive campaign

The Think Before You Drive campaign was launched during the British Grand Prix weekend, promoting tyre safety and awareness to the public.

The Bridgestone campaign, in association with the FIA Foundation and RAC Foundation, is aimed at encouraging drivers to check their tyre pressure and tread depth more often, to reduce the number of accidents on UK roads.

To coincide with the launch event at Silverstone, a tyre checking event was organised at a nearby supermarket. A team of Bridgestone UK staff carried out more than 200 tyre tests over the

course of the weekend, ensuring that drivers were not risking their lives on unsafe tyres.

Senior marketing analyst Andy Dingley said: "We set up a display to show people what the campaign is all about, and set about checking the tyres of shoppers in the supermarket car park.

"To make sure people knew what was going on, we had the campaign icon – a crash test dummy – helping us with the tests, and handing out leaflets and campaign wristbands to those who were attracted to the event," he said.

• Watch out for more Think Before You Drive news in the next issue of In The Black.

Training team receives boost



Paul Turner has been appointed to the role of technical training manager, replacing Steve Howat who has taken up a similar position in Bridgestone Europe.

New technical training manager Paul Turner is looking to make Bridgestone the first point of call for tyre technicians requiring training

Paul has more than 21 years' experience in the tyre industry, and has worked for Bridgestone UK for more than a decade in a variety of roles ranging from sales office supervisor to technical engineer, where he ran the company's RFT (run-flat technology) dealership certifying courses.

More recently, Paul's experience of running management training courses for Bridgestone personnel has led him to his new position of technical training manager, which he sees as a fresh challenge. He said: "It is my aim to develop and deliver more training courses to internal staff, First Stop dealers and general retailers, and make Bridgestone the first calling point for anyone in the tyre industry requiring training," he said.

For more information on taking part in Bridgestone training courses, call 0808 1800 800.



Spot the difference: Bridgestone Potenza RE050 RFT Fully inflated (left) and deflated (right)

Bridgestone UK has established a comprehensive, free training course on run-flat tyres. For information about the RFT Certificate Programme, please contact 0808 1800 800.

