

Weekend  
Warriors  
Skelta v  
Lotus v  
Radical v  
Aussie



# Circuit specials

No-compromise, featherweight and pin-sharp track weapons

**A**nyone who uses Sundays to sit on their arse clearly hasn't driven anything we've gathered here. Y'see, I reckon we've got the 'Sabbath-as-a-day-of-rest' thing the wrong way round, because getting all dressed up to stare at stained-glass windows and then baking a roast just ain't my caper. Sundays are play days, and, as they say, you'll go blind if you play with anything but a toy. Now, if I had to park only one car in the garage, I could easily live with any of the assembled road cars on the previous pages, yet they're all compromised in some way when it comes to the racetrack. And if the whole premise of this test is to find the ultimate one-day-a-week machine, then who needs numberplates anyway, right? With that in mind, we could have extended this test as far and as wide as the world of racing cars extends - from a go-kart all the way to a Formula One car - but the quartet of machines you see here are as close to road-going racers as you'll get. Okay, maybe the Aussie Racing Car is stretching that a bit far, but it's the only way a Toyota Aurion is ever going to compete with a 911 GT3! And, besides, the Aussie-made Skelta G-Force can

WORDS ANDREW MACLEAN



Purposeful cabin (top) can seat two. Front crash structure meets UK road laws, but not ours yet...

be driven on the road – having already chalked up impressive results in road rallies like Targa Tasmania – and the Lotus 2-Eleven and Radical SR3 can both be road-registered in the UK where they hail from.

All four are wildly different to look at and in concept – the Radical being essentially a mini-Le Mans-type sports car with indicators; the Lotus a pared-to-the-bone roofless Elise; the Skelta a bespoke tarmac rally car and the Aussie Race Car a cut-price entry into serious circuit competition. But they all share a common foundation of no-compromise lightweight construction.

In fact, if you could stick all four of them on the scales at once, they'd only weigh slightly more than an Audi RS6 Avant! But it's the Radical SR3's staggering 347kW/tonne power-to-weight ratio – better than a Lamborghini Murcielago SV's, and even a V8 Supercar's – that really hammers home its potential, even before it hits the track.

The two-seater is built around a beautifully constructed carbon-steel spaceframe with lightweight bodywork that covers only what it needs to and then liberally sprinkles it with enough wings to produce F1 levels of downforce.

Tipping the weighbridge at just 559kg means it doesn't need too much grunt to get it going,

but while it's mid-mounted, naturally aspirated four cylinder only has 1.5 litres, they're some of the hardest-working cubes in the business. The screaming atmo four is a bored-out, dry-sumped version of the 1.3-litre from the Suzuki Hayabusa motorcycle, producing a mind-altering 194kW at an equally dizzy 10,500rpm.

Having just jumped out of the road cars, the Radical seems a pretty daunting prospect to tackle first up. Sliding into the moulded seat, with its lay-down driving position, doesn't help much either.

As the engine fires into life via the dash-mounted starter button, however, it's ergonomic anomalies disappear and the whole racecar philosophy ignites as the bar graph tacho blips past 5000rpm. Dip the clutch, snick the paddle-shift lever behind the tiny steering wheel into first gear, give it a healthy dose of revs and gently feed out the clutch and the Radical buzzes its way into motion without any of the fuss I expected.

With its grabby clutch and closely stacked floor-hinged pedals, it's not the easiest car to launch hard, but its 4.12sec lunge from 0-100km/h certainly ain't hanging around.

It's when you really hook into it around the track, though, that you really appreciate it's sheer

## The Radical rewards you lap after lap at any pace



depth of talent. It takes a couple of laps for me to get my head around just how capable it is, but it helps to build confidence gradually, lap after lap. Unlike other types of race cars that only work within a narrow window – and feel like they're going to spit you into the scenery until you meet them at the limit, particularly when the tyres are cold – the Radical rewards you at any pace with its smooth power delivery, easy-to-use air-actuated gearbox, superbly balanced chassis and progressive braking balance.

But it also seems to never give up the harder it's pushed, particularly as it starts to generate serious downforce from the aerodynamic add-ons. While Luffy's stupendously quick 58.2sec lap was the fastest we've ever recorded around Wakefield Park (and almost six seconds quicker than the next-best Lotus), that wasn't the only impressive number it punched out. It's no surprise the SR3 topped the apex speeds on every corner (except the Turn Eight hairpin where the Aussie Race Car pipped it by less than 1km/h), but it annihilated everything through the fast Turn Two kink, hitting the slowest point a staggering 40km/h faster than the Aussie Race Car.

At over \$100K in base trim it's an expensive toy, but it's mega fun and mega quick!

The Aussie Race Car is a third of the price. Yet it has the same smile-inducing addictiveness and

Beautiful craftsmanship and focused engineering justify the Radical SR3's six-figure price tag





Like the Lexus LFA and IS-F, the Aussie Race Car Aurion has a Yamaha-developed engine too!

is cut from a similar cloth; a lightweight racer powered by a high-revving motorcycle engine.

In this case, though, it's a front-engined 1.2-litre 93kW carb-fed Yamaha donk with a six-speed dog 'box bolted into a spaceframe chassis and draped with a 'Honey I Shrank the Aurion' body.

Climbing into the 'caged one-seat-only cockpit isn't as easy as the Radical and it's instantly apparent that it doesn't have the level of craftsmanship or the high-tech electronics and paddle-shift box (there's an analogue tacho, a couple of toggle switches, a bloody big gear lever and that's it). But after 50-odd laps I couldn't pull myself out it! Where the SR3 is a mind-warping challenge to build up to its ability, it's surprisingly easy to find the Aussie's limits.

Surprising, because I'd figured that with a wheelbase shorter than your average wheelbarrow, I'd be fighting it from spearing me into the scenery every corner. But nope. With its oversized semi-slicks you can chuck the little blighter around with masses of attitude and still get away with it ... to a point.

The torquey old Yammy engine produces the least amount of power of the group and is really at its best between 8000rpm and 11,000rpm. But it's loaded with character; from the instant response



## You can chuck the little blighter around with attitude

and induction roar as you open the throttle to the never-ending crackle on the overrun. And as you're sitting two centimetres from the road in a 'car' weighing 450kg, it feels fast at any speed.

Although it's 173.94km/h top whack put it down with the Evo X, Skoda and Clio, it was right up there on the apex speeds. Outright, its respectable 1:06.8sec lap was just one second slower than the GT-R, which definitely ain't slow!

The dog 'box, with its lever on the right-hand

side and clutchless changes, takes a bit of getting used to, particularly synchronising the revs on downchanges, but otherwise the harder you work it, the more responsive it becomes.

It's the same with the brakes, which, like the oversized tyres, are more than the little bugger ever needed. But that just prompts you to build-up the courage to jump on the middle pedal later than your brain thinks is possible. In the end, it's the kind of car that provides massive thrills the more you grab it by the scruff of the neck.

The Lotus 2-Eleven, on the other hand, is an altogether different beast. That's not just because jumping from the claustrophobic confines of the Aussie's tiny cabin to the open-topped sparseness of the 2-Eleven is like getting out of a phonebox and into the middle of a desert - you feel, and are, totally exposed to the elements. It's because the Lotus requires smoother, finer inputs to extract its best. In essence, it's just like a regular Elise/Exige, but cranked up a notch.

Not only is it missing a roof, stereo and air-con, but it has fully adjustable track-tuned suspension, semi-slick tyres, a roll-over hoop and a lightweight body that includes a front splitter and a massive rear wing on the back deck that helps to keep it glued to the black stuff.

The supercharged 1.8-litre four also receives a unique state-of-tune, producing 188kW at 8000rpm (which is just shy of the 192kW produced in the Exige Cup 260). But due to the fact it has an almost open exhaust system without a catalytic converter, pumps out 252Nm, or more

2-Eleven can't hide its Elise/Exige DNA. Clocks our second-quickest Wakefield lap time ever



Trusty Toyota-based blown 1.8 boasts 252Nm, more than in any Elise or Exige application





Supercharged Honda S2000 engine is stunning and pops flames out the exhaust on the overrun!

torque than any of the Elise/Exige models, albeit at a head-spinning 7000rpm.

While, on paper, it suggests there's a pretty narrow powerband to work with, the blower helps deliver a strong surge of torque from just over 3000rpm and then pounds the tach needle quickly all the way to its nine-grand cut-out. But even though it's screaming its head off up there, it doesn't have the acoustic drama of a Honda VTEC at that kind of engine speed, which is a shame – especially as the engine sits so close to your eardrums.

But, then again, it's primary purpose is to push around 745kg of bonded aluminium as briskly as it can. And it does that in a pretty convincing manner, bolting to triple figures in just 4.41sec (the fastest 0-100km/h we've recorded in an Elise/Exige) and setting the second-quickest lap (and also our second-best ever around Wakefield behind the Radical SR3) with a 1:04.9sec.

But there's a fine line between you pushing it super-quick or it sending you off into the weeds. It certainly has bucketloads of mid-corner grip when it's balanced – as evidenced by its near top-of-the-timesheets apex speeds – but the front end gets light under power and it, therefore, has a tendency to understeer through the quick corners.



If this was a straight-line shootout, the Skelta wins...



If you're brave you can drive through it – to a point – but get out of the gas and it can quickly swap ends. So you've got to be as sharp as its looks to get the best out of it.

And speaking of looks...

The Skelta G-Force SC certainly won't win a beauty contest, will it? Then again, it isn't aimed at boulevard poseurs either; it's a no-compromise road racer designed with the single purpose of winning events such as Targa Tasmania.

With that in mind, Skelta's primary target was to build a road-legal car that weighed as little as possible but had enough grunt to keep up with the likes of twin-turbo Porsche 911s around the Apple Isle. So under its carbonfibre body is a spaceframe chassis that's reinforced by composite sidepods and a centre tunnel that, all up, adds up to a kerb weight of just 780kg.

A Rotrex 3094 blower strapped to the side of a Honda S2000 engine lifts peak output to 231kW, meaning the Skelta is only beaten in the power-to-weight stakes by the Radical. And, if anything, it's the highlight of the car.

What the screaming VTEC donk was missing in S2000 form was torque, but now supercharged, the Skelta version has bucketloads of it. Where the Honda would gradually build its way to the 9000rpm ceiling and you'd have to keep it on the boil, the Skelta has grunt everywhere.

The acoustic barrage of it wailing into the redline and then whistling, as Cockburn calls it, like a Peacock on heat as it dumps boost is like a mash-up of Mariah Carey and Metallica. But it's brilliantly effective and, thankfully, still mated to the magically mechanical six-speed gearbox.

If this was just a straight-line shootout, the Skelta walks away with the gong – belting out a blistering 3.93sec sprint to 100km/h – but it's not.

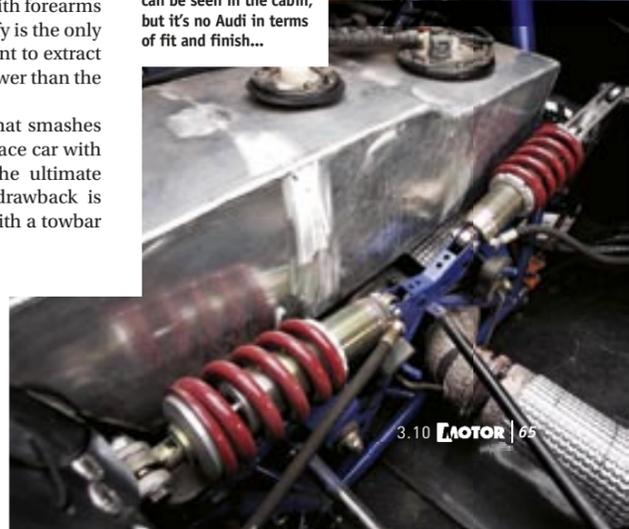
Our test car arrived with the softer rally-spec suspension rather than a tauter track set-up. And, admittedly, that made it a bit of a handful. The unassisted steering is razor sharp but rock hard, while the rear-end's a bit soft and squirrely, which makes it bloody hard to confidently position the car perfectly into the apex or correct its snappy power-down oversteer on the exit.

While Cleary looks the only bloke with forearms enough to manhandle the Skelta, Luffy is the only one of us with enough ticker and talent to extract a 1:05.2sec lap out of it, just 0.1sec slower than the GT3 and ahead of the famed GT-R.

In the end, though, it is the Radical that smashes our minds, and its rivals. Sure, it's a race car with headlights and indicators but it's the ultimate Sunday speed machine. The only drawback is you'll have to drive something else with a towbar the other six days of the week. **LA**



Honda mechanical origins can be seen in the cabin, but it's no Audi in terms of fit and finish...



# 6th



SKELTA G-FORCE SC

**TOTAL POINTS**  
[106.9]

0-100km/h	3.93sec
V-MAX	192.75km/h
APEX SPEED 1	86.12km/h
APEX SPEED 2	115.80km/h
LAP TIME	1:05.2sec
JUDGES' SCORE	8TH

## SPECIFICATIONS

<b>DRIVE</b>	rear wheels
<b>ENGINE</b>	in-line 4, DOHC, 16v, S/C
<b>CAPACITY</b>	1997cc
<b>POWER</b>	231kW @ 8500rpm
<b>TORQUE</b>	not supplied
<b>REDLINE/CUT</b>	9000/9000rpm
<b>KERB WEIGHT</b>	780kg
<b>POWER-TO-WEIGHT</b>	296kW/tonne
<b>TRANSMISSION</b>	6-speed manual
<b>SUSPENSION</b>	double A-arms, adjustable coil-over spring/damper units (f); double A-arms, adjustable coil-over spring/damper units (r)
<b>BRAKES</b>	298mm ventilated discs, four-piston calipers (f); 298mm ventilated discs, four-piston calipers (r)
<b>WHEELS</b>	16 x 7.0-inch (f), 17 x 8.0-inch (r); alloy
<b>TYRES</b>	Kumho Ecsta V700
<b>SIZE</b>	225/45R16 89W (f), 235/40R17 90W (r)
<b>PRICE</b>	\$160,000

## WARREN LUFF SAYS:

"It's still set up from Targa so it's really soft. It tends to roll around a bit and could go a lot faster if it was set up for the track. It's a fun car to try and find the limit, with plenty of mechanical and aero grip. But it doesn't have the rear grip to go with it because it's too soft. It'll never win a beauty pageant, but it's good fun. And the engine is awesome."

6

## OTHER JUDGES SAY:

**ANDREW MACLEAN**  
"It's definitely the hardest car here to drive by a long way. But you can feel its potential if it was set-up right, and the engine is just awesome"

9

**NATHAN PONCHARD**  
"The Honda S2000 engine is brilliant with a blower attached and the gearchange is equally tits. But if you don't set it up for a corner properly, she's a handful."

6

**SHAUN CLEARY**  
"Too-soft suspension gave the Skelta a mind of its own, blunting its on-track potential. It also loves a good compression lock-up under hard braking"

8

**BEN PORTER**  
"The acceleration is awesome and the braking's quite good, but it feels like it's off-balance the whole time, which doesn't fill you with a lot of confidence."

8

# 5th



AUSSIE RACING CAR

**TOTAL POINTS**  
[109.7]

0-100km/h	5.00sec
V-MAX	173.94km/h
APEX SPEED 1	88.83km/h
APEX SPEED 2	118.80km/h
LAP TIME	1:06.8sec
JUDGES' SCORE	2ND

## SPECIFICATIONS

<b>DRIVE</b>	rear wheels
<b>ENGINE</b>	in-line 4, DOHC, 16v
<b>CAPACITY</b>	1200cc
<b>POWER</b>	93kW @ 11,500rpm
<b>TORQUE</b>	136Nm @ 8500rpm
<b>REDLINE/CUT</b>	none/11,500rpm
<b>KERB WEIGHT</b>	450kg
<b>POWER-TO-WEIGHT</b>	207kW/tonne
<b>TRANSMISSION</b>	5-speed dog-box
<b>SUSPENSION</b>	double A-arms, coil-over dampers, anti-roll bar (f); live axle, trailing arms, Panhard rod, coil-over dampers, anti-roll bar (r)
<b>BRAKES</b>	235mm ventilated discs, four-piston calipers (f); 225mm solid discs, single-piston calipers (r)
<b>WHEELS</b>	13 x 5.5-inch, alloy
<b>TYRES</b>	Yokohama Advan A048
<b>SIZE</b>	205/60R13 86H
<b>PRICE</b>	\$45,000

## WARREN LUFF SAYS:

"Such a good thing to drive. It's so light and accurate, you have to be smooth – same old story. It's so short, you feel it moving around a lot underneath you, so it takes a while to really feel comfortable. But once you get the hang of it, it's so much fun. The brakes are good, the gearbox is great and the speed it offers for the price is just awesome."

2

## OTHER JUDGES SAY:

**ANDREW MACLEAN**  
"The cartoon-like looks are matched by its on-track fun factor. They look really taily on telly, but it's easy to thrash and it's a hoot at the limit"

2

**NATHAN PONCHARD**  
"An absolute crack-up – I loved it! Small and darty, but also fluid, friendly and fast. Carby-fed engine howl and race-style dog box deliver old-school hilarity"

2

**SHAUN CLEARY**  
"Good, clean, honest fun that proves you don't need the Radical's tech to enjoy yourself. It's the most amusing \$40K you could possibly spend"

2

**BEN PORTER**  
"What an awesome piece of kit. It does all the right things - it slides and moves around, but it's really progressive. It'd be great fun to race in a proper series"

2

# 2nd



LOTUS 2-ELEVEN

**TOTAL POINTS**  
[121.6]

0-100km/h	4.41sec
V-MAX	186.63km/h
APEX SPEED 1	88.87km/h
APEX SPEED 2	120.34km/h
LAP TIME	1:04.9sec
JUDGES' SCORE	4TH

## SPECIFICATIONS

<b>DRIVE</b>	rear wheels
<b>ENGINE</b>	in-line 4, DOHC, 16v, S/C
<b>CAPACITY</b>	1796cc
<b>POWER</b>	188kW @ 8000rpm
<b>TORQUE</b>	242Nm @ 7000rpm
<b>REDLINE/CUT</b>	none/8500rpm
<b>KERB WEIGHT</b>	745kg
<b>POWER-TO-WEIGHT</b>	252kW/tonne
<b>TRANSMISSION</b>	6-speed manual
<b>SUSPENSION</b>	double A-arms, coil-over dampers, adjustable anti-roll bar (f); double A-arms, coil-over dampers, track control-arm brace (r)
<b>BRAKES</b>	288mm ventilated/drilled discs, two-piston calipers (f); 288mm ventilated/drilled discs, single-piston calipers (r); ABS, TC
<b>WHEELS</b>	16 x 7.0-inch (f), 17 x 8.0-inch (r); alloy
<b>TYRES</b>	Yokohama Advan A048
<b>SIZE</b>	195/50R16 84W (f), 225/45R17 90W (r)
<b>PRICE</b>	\$127,500

## WARREN LUFF SAYS:

"A well-balanced, fast car, but hard to get the best time out of. It's got a fair bit of understeer on the way into a corner – both low- and high-speed – and if you lift off too sharply, the rear end wants to snap around on you. Up to nine-tenths, it's forgiving and it does everything right, but you need your wits about you at the limit. A lot of fun, though."

4

## OTHER JUDGES SAY:

**ANDREW MACLEAN**  
"I love its no-frills, big-thrills philosophy and its alien-like looks. It's also quite nicely-balanced ... until you push it too far! Isn't that right, Luffy?"

4

**NATHAN PONCHARD**  
"Easily the most professionally finished of the pure track cars, with a sharp chassis and a great engine, but the Skelta and Radical put its gearbox in perspective"

5

**SHAUN CLEARY**  
"The 2-Eleven should be treated with respect, but that doesn't mean it's not a brilliant drive. A little more steering feel would inspire confidence"

4

**BEN PORTER**  
"It reminds me very much of a proper open-wheeler style race car – very rough, very raw. It's purely built for speed. It rewards smooth driver inputs"

4

# 1st



RADICAL SR3 RS

**TOTAL POINTS**  
[184.0]

0-100km/h	4.12sec
V-MAX	198.27km/h
APEX SPEED 1	94.17km/h
APEX SPEED 2	143.19km/h
LAP TIME	58.2sec
JUDGES' SCORE	1ST

## SPECIFICATIONS

<b>DRIVE</b>	rear wheels
<b>ENGINE</b>	in-line 4, DOHC, 16v
<b>CAPACITY</b>	1500cc
<b>POWER</b>	194kW @ 9000rpm
<b>TORQUE</b>	220Nm @ 7100rpm
<b>REDLINE/CUT</b>	10,500/10,500rpm
<b>KERB WEIGHT</b>	559kg
<b>POWER-TO-WEIGHT</b>	347kW/tonne
<b>TRANSMISSION</b>	6-speed sequential
<b>SUSPENSION</b>	double A-arms, adjustable coil-over dampers, anti-roll bar (f); double A-arms, adjustable coil-over dampers, anti-roll bar (r)
<b>BRAKES</b>	260mm ventilated discs, four-piston calipers (f); 260mm ventilated discs, four-piston calipers (r)
<b>WHEELS</b>	15 x 8.0-inch (f), 16 x 10.5-inch (r); forged alloy
<b>TYRES</b>	Dunlop SP Sport slicks
<b>SIZE</b>	200/580R15 (f), 265/605R16 (r)
<b>PRICE</b>	\$170,000 (as tested)

## WARREN LUFF SAYS:

"Amazing to drive. Every lap you get more confident in finding out just how much aero grip it's got. You can lean on it more and more and it keeps finding more grip. The gearbox is a dream to use – so smooth and effortless. It's so fast, but it doesn't feel like you're having to work really hard. You could do another 10 laps and you know you'd go quicker."

1

## OTHER JUDGES SAY:

**ANDREW MACLEAN**  
"The kind of car I could never get bored with; brilliantly capable for an ace driver and gently inspiring for a novice. The perfect weekend warrior"

1

**NATHAN PONCHARD**  
"Just brilliant, with a dynamic threshold high enough to humble virtually any human. The screaming Hayabusa engine and stunning gearshift make it epic"

1

**SHAUN CLEARY**  
"Wow! If this is what aero grip is all about, then we want more of it. Engine, gearbox, chassis and aero results in a devastating track package that's even good value"

1

**BEN PORTER**  
"What an amazing car – it's an absolute weapon. With all the aero, you just cannot push it hard enough – the more you push, the more grip you've got"

1