

Feeling Smug

Ian Lamming unleashes his inner smugness at the Society of Motor Manufacturers and Traders annual test event

THE walls of York have stood the test of time, countless invaders from across the seas and north of the border, the ravages of floods and acid rain.

But the foundations could be seen to quake, Jericho-style, under the onslaught of a particular test car.

Jamie, the Barnard Castle School work experience student and budding blogger, quickly hacked into the Jaguar F-Type R's electronics in a way a man of a certain age would never have managed.

"Dynamic" mode sounded promising, the "exhaust" button even more so. What was unleashed on the senses, the world and the Roman city's crumbling walls was the full might of a 550PS supercharged 5.0 V8 motor and it was music to the ears.

A cacophony of roars, snarls, spits, pops and bangs proved to be a veritable orchestra as it resounded off ancient walls.

The passing world stared in wonder and envy at the old idiot behind the wheel of this sub four seconds to 60mph animal. I know it was anti-social, I could see them seething with hatred, but I, make that we, simply didn't care as we were in the £101,000 F-type R and they

were on shank's pony.

Smugness is normally not of my nature but today I simply could not help myself. This is Christmas day for motoring correspondents, the annual test event organised by the Society of Motor Manufacturers and Traders, bless 'em, and bless Jaguar for bringing North this stunning beast.

But all good things must come to an end – or must they. After such a peerless experience, jumping straight into a VW Up might seem a curious destination. But this was no ordinary UP and continuing with the musical theme, this one was definitely Up Beats.

Handling, performance, engine noise, in this case, were irrelevant, they are not the Beats' raison d'être. This car is judged more on the sound system; a 300 watt Beats audio unit complete with thumping sub-woofer in the back.

What a genius concept; how do you keep your precious children safe as they explore the world of motoring with as much experience, knowledge and dexterity as Bambi on ice?

VW has shifted the emphasis away from potentially lethal powerful engines and crippling insurance costs to a young person's favoured

pastime – music.

Young, me, no. But young at heart, always, so back to the metal available to test.

A Maserati Quattroporte? Well it would be rude not to especially with an interior as exquisite and opulent as that – can I prise the clock from the dashboard please and keep the machined alloy key for a keepsake? And the twin-turbo engine? Glorious.

Then there was the Mercedes C43 AMG; wunderbar absolutely wunderbar, with its muscular 4.3 litre V8 and F1 sharpness and handling. It barks, it bites, it thrills.

And finally there was the flying bonnet; I haven't seen so much metal stretching before me since I was a toddler and climbed on the dashboard to peer out at the expanse of bonnet of my dad's Zodiac.

Mustang doesn't do shy and retiring. From the minute the 5.0 V8 rumbles into life from underneath the aircraft carrier-sized bonnet. This is a truly iconic all-American boy. All Yankee doodle dandy, Steve McQueen and Bullitt-proof.

Let's find some hills to fly over, some trolley cars to dodge – oh we can't, we are still in York having a wail of a time.

