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Toyota GR86 sports coupé – Road Test

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It's a delicate balance building cars for the masses, for markets around the world and meeting the needs of motorists with a love of



motorsports, but Toyota does all three very well, writes Robin Roberts (WheelsWithinWales)...

The new GR86 is a very good example of bringing motorsport engineering into the mainstream, well almost. It has been developed from the earlier GT86, which used a 2.0 litre flat-four cylinder engine but has now been replaced with a more powerful, stronger and sportier near 2.4 litre power unit.



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There are just two versions, the 6 speed manual from £30,140 or the 6 speed automatic



costing £32,230. About 1,500 have been sold since launch in 2022 so it's also a rarity on the road in Britain and means that residual value should hold up.

Since 2008, Toyota has owned about a sixth of Subaru through its parent Fuji Heavy Industries and they jointly set about developing a compact 2+2 sports coupé, the 86 series and the BRZ.

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Using the engineers and expertise from both brands and their motorsporting heritage made a lot of sense and also reduced costs for both brands.

Today's GR86 is the third member of Toyota's performance line after the GR Supra and GR Yaris and the new enlarged engine provides a generous 17% power lift over the 2.0 litre unit, but it's also designed to be stronger with a wider power band for better acceleration and long distance cruising.

The 6 speed manual close ratio gearbox has also been revised and improved with a better defined shift action, particularly when cold, and the top ratio is an overdrive to slightly improve economy and lower emissions.

What comes out of the tailpipe is still high for tax costs and the H-layout of the flat four engine is renowned for not being particularly economical, but we still saw a reasonable 33 mpg overall.

A big clear GR button starts and stops the engine while a modestly heavy clutch gradually comes into play and the gear lever slots precisely and cleanly into place.

Power take-up is very strong and brisk, the changes come easily and within seconds you are at the legal limit on main roads and just a whisker away from the absolute limit on motorways and dual carriageways.



You know you're on your way by the increase in engine noise from a rumble at low speed to a more excited busy note mid-range onwards. At motorway speed the noise does trail away behind until you downchange.

The Toyota GR86 steers well with a new electrical system in your hands giving good turning circle, no kick-back or vibration and plenty of feeling when pressing along twisting roads. It never felt heavy even parking.

When it comes to slowing down the GR86 is really good. Pedal pressure is very precise and progressive with a rapid action and no dramas, while the traditional lever handbrake held it on a very steep slope.

The newest GR86 has received a few revisions to the springs and suspension although the front struts and rear double wishbones set up is retained and these are designed to work well with the more powerful engine.

Two console buttons can deselect traction control and initiate a track mode for ultimate thrills on a circuit but really need a good understanding of their features to benefit a driver.

For general road use I found the revised suspension a bit too firm for my liking but it does give the car really sharp handling for its pure rear-wheel-drive traction and front engine layout. There are a few driver safety aids as well to monitor surrounding traffic and parking obstructions.

Everything was very well communicated to the driver and responses to brakes, throttle and steering were instantaneous and it was surefooted and safe as a result.

The two front seats were really comfortable and masked some of the hardness of the suspension but their limit of travel was short and not really good if you were over 6 ft tall. The back seats were just small buckets and their front edges brushed the back of the front backrests so were practically useless for most purposes except stowing odd items.



The bootspace was also suitable only for a few soft bags with limited height and intrusive wheelarches to contend with.

Getting in and out demanded some contortions too but once seated the room was reasonable and the driver has an adjustable column and everything came to hand, fingers and feet.

Secondary controls were minimal and worked well with good lights, front wipers and wash only, and powered mirrors and windows.

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Climate control was effective in the compact cabin, warming with seat heaters as well as the system's output over a broad range.

Oddments space was on the tight side unless the back seats were used as trays and bins were on the small side.

VERDICT

Toyota has described the latest GR86 as “an analogue car for the digital age” and while that may seem a retrograde remark, it's true and, more importantly, does not diminish the enjoyment to be derived from driving it.

In many ways it reminded me of a Ford Capri from the 1970s and that was a model which captured so many hearts and minds, which might be a good reason to roadtest one yourself.

For: Performance, comfortable seats, taut handling, steering and strong brakes, precise gearchange.

Against: Loud engine and intrusive road noise, very firm ride, cluttered instruments, small boot and occasional twin back seats.



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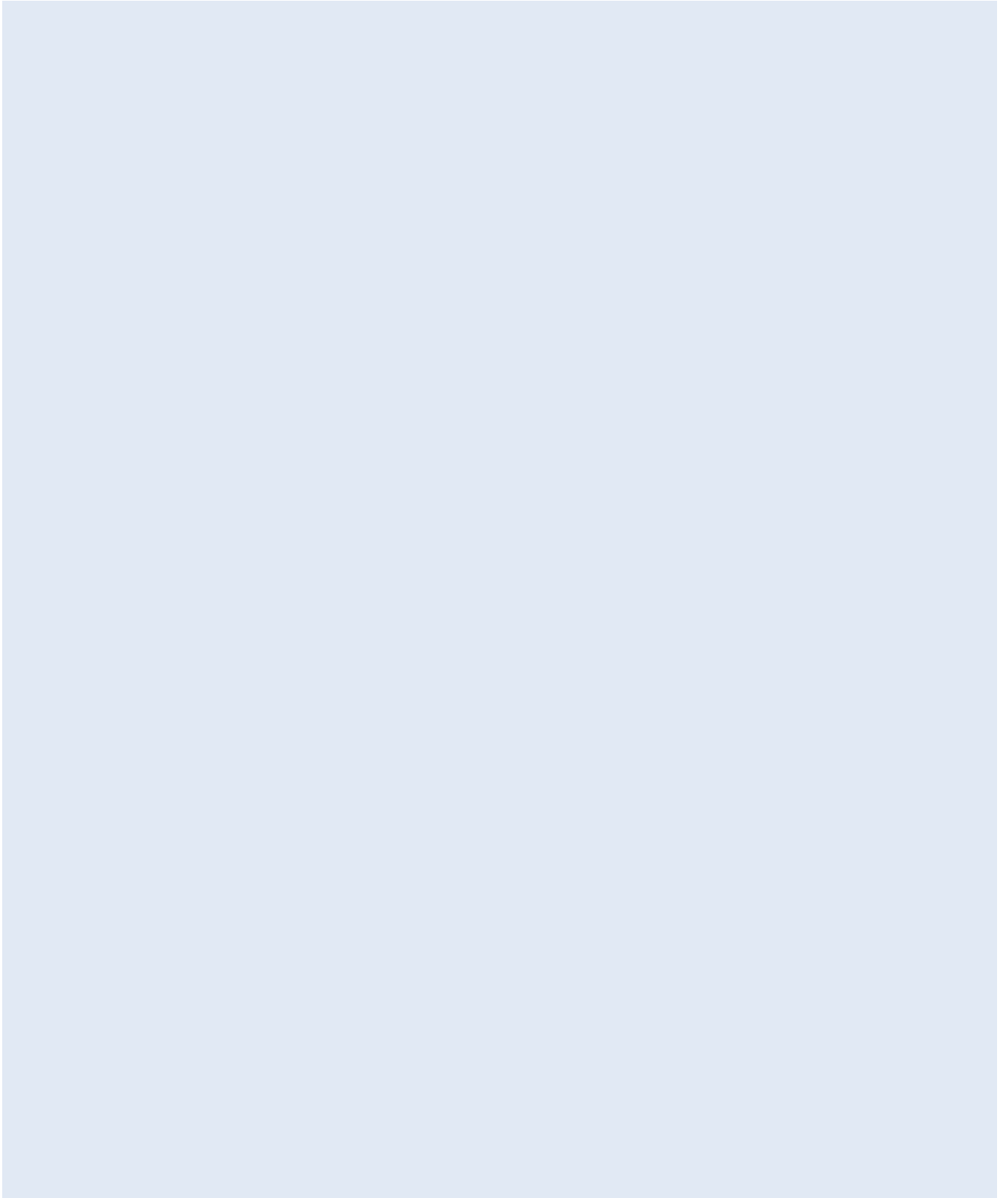
FAST FACTS

Model: Toyota GR86



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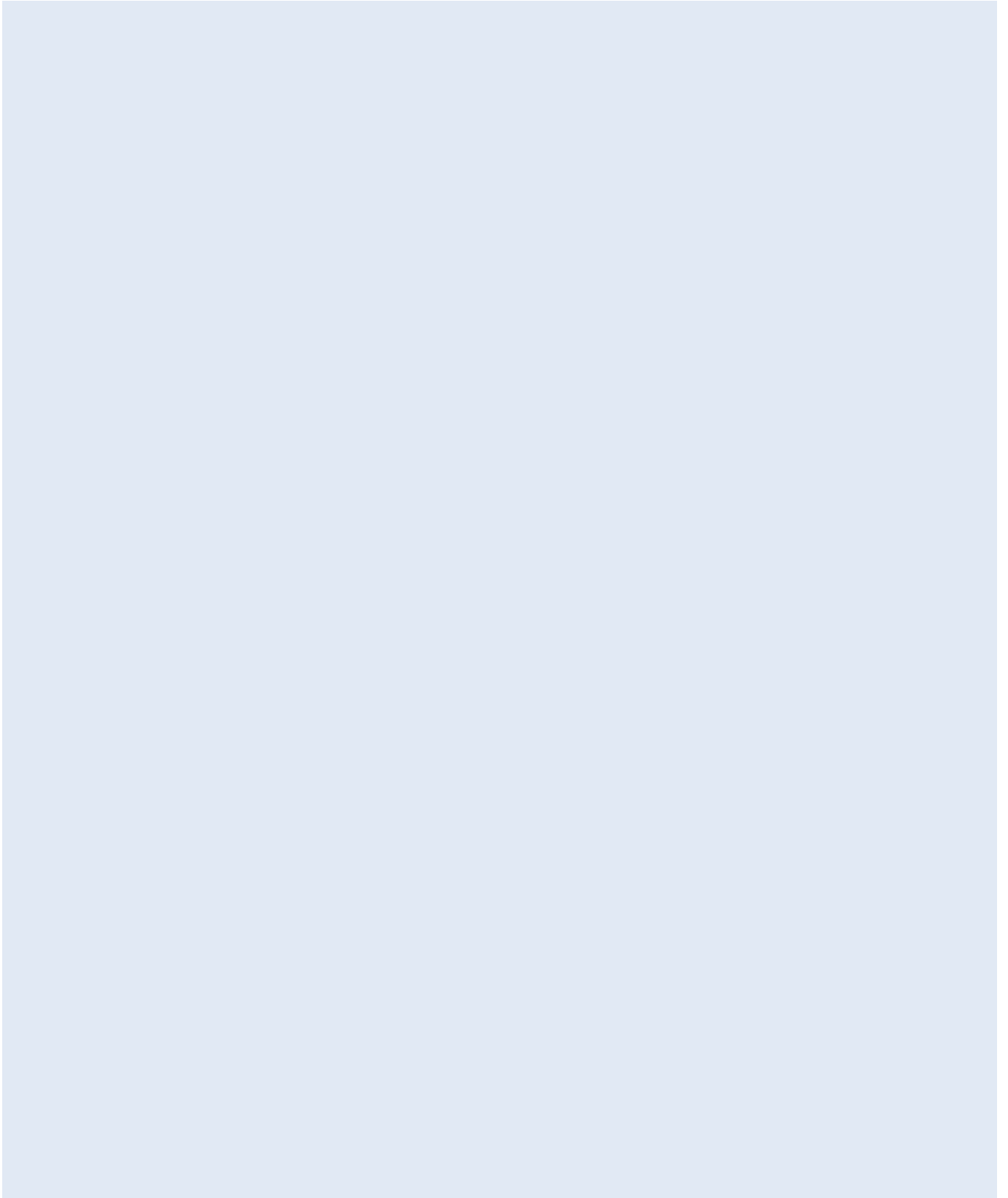
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Price: £31,105

Mechanical: 231 bhp 4 cyl 2.4 litre petrol engine, 6 sp manual

Max Speed: 140 mph

0 - 62 mph: 6.3 secs

Combined MPG: 33

Insurance Group: 45D

C02 emissions: 200 g/km

Bik rating: 37%, £1,650FY, £190SR

Warranty: 3 years/ 60,000 to 10 years/ 100,000 miles

Size: L 4.27 m (14.01 ft), W 1.78 m (5.84 ft), H 1.31 m (4.30 ft)

Bootspace: 226 litres (7.98 cu.ft)

Kerbweight: 1,276 kgs (2,813 lb)