

RADICAL SR3 SL

■ ROAD-LEGAL SR3 ■ 2-LITRE TURBO ENGINE FROM NEXT FOCUS ST ■ 300BHP ■ SEQUENTIAL GEARBOX

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his isn't the first road-legal Radical. We've seen SR3s converted for highway use before. However, this SL (Street Legal) is the first specifically designed to wear a tax disc.

It may not look particularly different to the rest of the SR3 range, but underneath the multi-coloured 'art car' bodywork sits a turbocharged 2-litre Ford EcoBoost engine, the one that will be powering the new Focus ST later in the year. Final tweaks to the remapping by ECU specialist Life Racing are still ongoing, but **evo** has been granted an exclusive run – on track and the road – in a pre-production SL to get an early taste of what it's all about.

'For a long time now we've been getting requests from our European customers for a Euro 5, fully type-approved car,' says Radical MD Phil Abbott. Confirming this ready-made audience, the company already has orders for over 20 SLs, all adding to a busy workload for the factory, which is enjoying something of a boom at the moment.

This SL is putting out 260bhp, but final versions will produce 300bhp, which will be



'THE SET-UP WOULD EASILY ALLOW YOU TO BE KING OF A TRACKDAY'



SPECIFICATION

Engine In-line 4-cyl, 2000cc, turbo CO2 n/a
 Power 300bhp @ n/a pm Torque 340lb ft @ n/a rpm
 0-60mph 3.0sec (est) Top speed 165mph (est)
 Price £81,300 On sale Now

plenty for a car tipping the scales at 675kg. In fact, ensuring that the torque is delivered in a smooth flow is where all the engine work is currently being concentrated, as during early tests it was lighting up the rear tyres everywhere. It is much more composed now, though – even on wet roads I have no problem at all. Unsurprisingly, there's plenty of pace wherever you are in the rev-range, but you really need earplugs as the whines and whistles are so loud it feels like your head is actually inside the turbine. Weirdly, from the side of the road it makes hardly any noise at all.

At least as impressive as the engine is the paddleshift system, which is as fast as that on any other road car I've ever driven and incredibly smooth too. You seamlessly flick your way up and down the six-speed sequential Quaife transaxle, only using the clutch to pull away. It's superb, and the damping is well sorted too. The Intrax set-up would easily allow you to be the king of a trackday – the SL corners hard and flat in the same way as Radical's racers. The



SL can be used to nip to the shops (above) or a trackday (bottom). Above left: ST engine will produce 300bhp. Below left: interior lacks creature comforts

overall grip levels are obviously slightly lower, but only slightly, and the balance is much the same, while on the road it manages to pull off the same trick as a GT3 RS, namely a stiff set-up, but with enough composure and compliance to soak up bumps and not crash, jar or have a fixation with cambers. It's very neat.

So is it a viable road machine? In the same way as a Caterham that doesn't have a roof, or an Ariel Atom or a KTM X-Bow, yes. You do need a helmet for anything other than short drives and you will get wet in the rain, but if you want a trackday car that you can drive to the track and have fun with in the summer, then this really does fit the bill. Further down the line, it's also likely to form the basis of a coupe, and on this evidence that really should be something.

Roger Green

EVO RATING

★★★★★

- Incredible performance on road or track
- Pricey, and you'll need to be in the mood