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**Freestream: A Small Sports Car That Out-Accelerates The Biggest And Best**

**By John Hartley**

Latest super-sports car from England is the Caparo Freestream supercar, which will have a

power-to-weight ratio of 1,000 bhp per ton! The Bugatti Veyron which has 1,001 bhp manages about 560 bhp per tonne, so how you can see that the Caparo is streets ahead of any other supercar in power-to-weight ratio, and that is what makes cars accelerate fast. And fast acceleration is very exciting, and can also improve safety of the car in some circumstances.

So how does the Caparo do it? Not with 2,000 bhp because the car would weigh at least 2.5 tons, which would miss the target. In fact, Bugatti has demonstrated that sheer power means a lot of weight, particularly in the transmission and brakes.

To get a high power-to-weight-ratio you need a light car. And why is a high power-to-weight-ratio important? Because it dictates how fast the car accelerates flat out. A car with a high power-to-weight-ratio can cover the ground quicker because it gets out of corners fast and accelerates up the straights faster. So long as the handling is good, the car will be very fast anywhere.

**Lightweight solution**

Instead of going for a big engine with masses of power, the designers, who worked on the McLaren F1, have gone for ultra lightweight and a compact V-8 engine based on F1 technology. The result is a pencil-slim car with 480 bhp at 10,500 rpm from a supercharged 2.4 liter engine, and a weight of under 1,100 lb. Both the new engine and transmission are very light, as are all the components. The very narrow body without fully enclosed fenders also reduces weight.

The whole design concept has been aimed at reducing weight, ore not putting in things that add weight. First, the power train is very light compared with mass-production units. Then, the carbon fiber body/chassis is also much lighter than most, as designers without Grand Prix experience tend to over-design their structures. Also, because the power train is light, the loads on the body are lower, so again less weight does not need to be built into the structure.

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It has a very narrow cockpit, with the passenger sitting slightly behind the driver to reduce width, so this is more of a track racer or trackday special than a road car. Even so, this car changes the concept of exotic cars to where it should be – ultra–lightweight, compactness and exciting performance round twisty roads or circuits.

To save weight they have adopted a narrow coupe body with cycle–type front mudguards, and side–mounted radiators which flow into the rear fenders.

In fact, these are all factors used by Colin Chapman to design the early Lotus cars, and since used by all racing car companies. In other words, the Caparo Freestream really takes advantage of Grand Prix technology to build a supercar.

The Caparo Freestream looks very unusual, but if you want sheer performance this is it! The makers say the car will hit 200 mph, and accelerate from a standing start of 100 mph in 5.5 seconds!! Holy mackerel that is fast. Oh, and they also say that owing to the downforce available, the T1 will be able to

corner and brake at 3g – incredible. This tremendous cornering power and braking would not be possible without the use of Grand Prix design principles.

On top of all that, Caparo, which produces a lot of components for the auto industry, have priced the Freestream at about \$320,000 (£176,000).

John Hartley is editor of

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, an online magazine devoted to fast cars and

supercars. He has written from many of the world's top auto magazines, and has written many books about cars and the auto industry, including 'Suspension and Steering Q&A' and 'The Electronics Revolution in the Motor Industry'.

## **Why Sports Cars Cost More To Insure**

**By Joseph Kenny**

Have you ever wondered why sports cars cost more to insure than other types of car - even when the purchase price of the sports car is less expensive? If so, the following are the main reasons why this is the case.

### Car Insurance Group Categories

While many of the factors that determine the make–up of car insurance quotes are not known, what is known is that insurance companies `group' certain types of cars into categories. For this purposes,

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insurance companies have groups ranging from 1 through to 20. Group 1 is the least expensive type of car to insure. Group 20 is the most expensive type of car to insure. So, if you buy a Fiat Panda, you'll be classed a Group 1 car driver. Buy a sports car, any sports car, and you are looking at being classed a Group 15 and above driver. Buy a performance sports car, such as a Porsche 911, and you'll definitely be Group 20 driver!

### Theft

Over 2 million car crimes happen in the UK each and every year. Aside from popular model cars, such as a Ford, the biggest car crime category is sports cars! Have a soft–top convertible sports car, and the chances of it being stolen are red hot! So, even if you live out in the countryside with no one else around for miles, you will still be seen as driving an extremely high risk car when it comes to car theft. With increased risk, comes an increased premium!

### Accidents

Insurance companies are not charities - they're in the business to make money. As such, they keep vast amounts of data and part of that data tells them that if you drive a sports car there is an increased risk you'll be in an accident and that the accident will be more serious (and costly) than if you were driving a regular car. As such, the premium charge is going to be higher.

### Under 30?

Unless you have just won the Lottery, if you are under 30 there are no appealing factors when it comes to insuring a sports car. Not only do the insurance company see the car you drive as being a high risk car to insure, but you as the driver are far more risky to insure as well. Consequently, car insurance premiums for those 30 years of age or under, driving sports cars, is probably the highest of all types of car insurance available in the UK today.

Joe Kenny writes for the personal finance comparison sites

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