

# WHAT CAR? CAR OF THE YEAR 2000

**Winner: Hot Hatch**

*Peugeot 306 GTi-6*



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**Hot Hatch**

**Peugeot 306 GTi-6**

**£18,320**

*What we were looking for: A car you crave at first sight and would kill for once you've driven it. Performance and style must blend harmoniously.*

**W**HAT better commendation can Peugeot's thrilling hot hatch earn than to return to the top spot after a year's sabbatical? In fact, the only reason the GTi-6 was not included last year was because its bare bones Rallye sibling served up the same potent driving experience for less cash.

One year on, the limited edition Rallye is no more and the GTi-6 is back on top. It's not all been plain sailing for the French master, though. Renault tried to outgun the 306 with its Clio 172 and Proton charged Lotus with making its GTi a great handler. Both worthy efforts, but neither comes close to matching the blend of performance, practicality and unabated driving excitement proffered by the Peugeot.

The 306 GTi-6's piercing ability as a hot hatch is what makes it our choice. An engine that thrives on revs and hard use coupled to a closely stacked six-speed 'box keeps the GTi-6 constantly on the boil. But this is no edgy prima donna in traffic, the 306 will ease through city streets without murmur and refuses to rattle your fillings over flawed city roads.

It's the same story on both motorways and back roads – the natural hunting ground for the GTi-6. The suspension is stiff-set, but not so much that lumps and bumps will deflect the car from any given course.

Responsive steering keeps the driver fully informed and is more than up to catching any of the rear end waywardness the 306 GTi-6 is known and loved for by keen drivers.

The decent roster of equipment and safety features is a match for any of the 306's rivals. And all the controls are conveniently placed in the roomy and refreshed cabin, although some materials do feel a little bargain basement next to some others in the class. The exterior is unchanged from the 306 GTi-6's last win two years ago and it still looks clean and lithe.

One major reason for it taking the award for top hot hatch this year is that it represents even better value than before. The £18,670 price tag is not cheap, but it's only £200 more than it cost two years ago and the 306 depreciates more slowly than others.

If the cost is the only stumbling block, we say try a 306 GTi-6. Afterwards, sit down and try to think of a reason not to buy one. Hard, isn't it?

**The thrilling  
306 GTi-6  
represents  
even better  
value**