



## MISSION STATEMENT

**C**aptain Sensible had an eminently forgettable Eighties hit with *Glod it's All Over*. At the end of a rain-sodden week in Staffordshire we dragged ourselves home, hung our clothes on the drier, and reflected on a slog that, deep down, we all knew would translate into a massive 4x4 test for a superb UK publication – **4x4 Of The Year 2004**

And here it is – seven opinions from seven staffers and freelancers, for whom four-wheel drives rule their lives, armed with the experience that is earned from driving every off-roader to grace this booming sector of the UK vehicle market – 48 cars, seven categories, one outright winner.

### TESTED TO THE LIMIT

You may be considering chopping in your workaday saloon or hatchback for something with a little more presence and practicality. In which case a four-wheel drive is the car for you. You may want more room for your family but are eschewing the MPV sector as you're still young, adventurous and want a fun car to drive. Again, a 4x4 is the vehicle for you. If safety and a high seating position for better visibility is what you want, you'll be looking at a 4x4. You may be upgrading your off-roader. Whatever the reason, we've tested to the limit the UK's best four-wheel drives.

We've driven these kings of the automotive world through bomb-holes, along gravel tracks, up and down estate roads and muddy lanes, all so you will know what your car's capable of when you find yourself in the rough stuff. Some 4x4s are much better than others off road, of course, and believe us, money is not the deciding factor. Daihatsu Terios or BMW X5 in a field? You'd be surprised.

And we're not just looking at off-road ability – we know the majority of 4x4s rarely leave the highway. So we have examined these cars on the tarmac as much as off: handling, cornering, acceleration, motorway cruising, braking, and, of course, fuel economy. We've also deciphered for you the gadgetry of this high-tech sector.

The 4x4s on test are rated for comfort, value and ability on and off road. You can trust our judgement. Style is also graded, as a great car below the bonnet means little in this fashion-conscious market if it's downright pug ugly. We've all offered an opinion, but beauty is in the eye of the beholder, so if we've marked a car low on style, but it's your dream vehicle, don't listen to us – it's your car and your cash. Join the ranks of Britain's fastest growing automotive sector. Go buy that 4x4.

## JUDGING PANEL

**JOHN CARROLL** – a confirmed petrolhead, with a car collection to rival Beaulieu

**ESTHER NEVE** – a woman in sheep's clothing when she turns that ignition key

**BOB COOKE** – a legend in motoring circles, he's driven everything, several times

**KEVIN BALWIN** – pulled from the Land Rover fraternity, and a true 4x4 fan

**STEPHEN GOSLING** – keen on classics, even keener on VWs, loves 4x4s

**MATT FLEMING** – drives like a daredevil both on and off road. Speed freak

**SUE LOY** – a stalwart of 4x4 since 1986! Careful and considerate at the wheel

## STAFF

JOHN CARROLL

ESTHER NEVE

STEVE GOSLING

MATT FLEMING

SUE LOY

BOB COOKE

KEV BALDWIN

## PHOTOGRAPHERS

ANTHONY BUTLER

DEREK GOARD

NORMAN HODSON

WAYNE MITCHELSON