grunt. And, in anything but bone dry conditions, you'd be wise to have the low boost setting, as this Astra has got a serious torque wave to surf. It's a hooligan. The boost comes in so fast (c2,200rpm) and is held so strongly, thanks to that gutful of torque. There's no denying it, this Astra is a rush on boost, even ploughing straight on in a bend, perversely. And the AP stoppers (SO fantastic) are the perfect antidote to the rampant boost hit snapping at your neck. Drive around the torque steer and push the chassis hard and it responds well though, very well. And, in a straight line, it is barking mad fast. ASBO territory.

Sadly, after a few too many hot laps on the circuit (where both testers – frustrated boy racers - had a hoot I might add), one of the standard radiator hoses blew, meaning the Astra had to sit out the top speed passes. It would have been good to see what 303lbft would have resulted in. Another day.

Fellow tester, Jim Cameron adds: 'This car is all about one thing – torque, and buckets of it. Does that make it a one-trick pony? Maybe, but it's fun. Also, the exhaust makes a great tearing sound on full boost and the brakes are awesome.'

Courtenay Sport VX-Racing Astra stage three conversion is not for the faint hearted. Boost hit is huge, and lag free, developing a bonkers 303lbft torque. Again, the addition of AP Racing brakes makes for a well-rounded mix of uprated power levels and braking prowess. Stock suspension copes well too

Specification
COURTENAY VXR ASTRA

ENGINE	Courtenay Sport VX-Racing front mounted intercooler, full 2.5-inch Milltek stainless steel exhaust system with 200Cell HJS sports cat, Denso Iridium spark plugs, Courtenay Sport Silicone hoses, Courtenay Sport stage three ECU remap, silicone hoses
TRANSMISSION	Standard VXR six-speed manual
BODY	Standard Vauxhall VXR Astra
INTERIOR	Standard Vauxhall VXR Astra
CHASSIS	345mm AP Racing four-pot VX-Racing front brakes, 8Groove rear discs, braided hoses, Dot 5.1 fluid, lower arm brake cooling ducts (£17.50), 8x18 Speedline Torini flow formed wheels with 225-40X18 Toyo Proxes T1R tyres (19in optional VXR road rims)
POWER	287bhp and 302lbft
PRICE	Stage three engine pack £2610 inc. VAT & fitting (or stage one & two less), AP's £1600 fitted, grooved rears £165 supplied, hose kit £161 supplied, wheels £1455
OVERALL MARK:	■■■■■■■■■■

The AP stoppers are the perfect antedote to the rampant boost hit, snapping at your neck