

Exterior: It's not just inside where complex technology can cause problems ..

Coupe-cabriolet folding roof

The art of putting a solid roof into a boot was perfected by Mercedes (there's a theme developing here) in 1996, when it launched the SLK. Peugeot launched a cut-price version with the 206 CC in 2000 and the coupe-cabriolet was born. Problems soon struck, with owners complaining of roofs halting midfold, but how's the situation now?

Adam Davey of convertible specialist Cayman Auto in Dorking, Surrey, says "There's about 50 per cent more moving parts than in an electric soft-top, so there's a lot more to go wrong."

A computer tells hydraulic actuators which bits to move and when, but relies on a network of sensors and microswitches to



tell it if everything is going smoothly. One of these fails and everything stops.

"It's difficult to track down what's wrong," says Davey. "Roof diagnostics are still quite basic." If a hydraulic pump goes on a Mercedes SL, the resulting blast of fresh air through your wallet will remove a whopping £2,000.