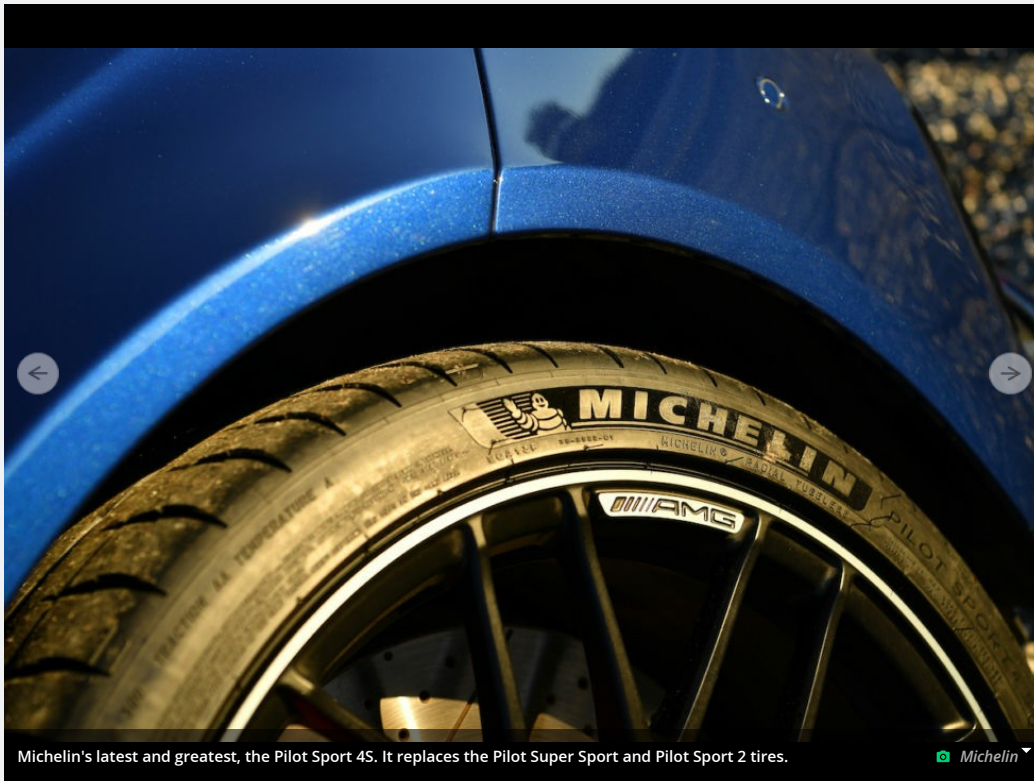


TIRES ARE IMPORTANT! —

# Michelin's new performance tire might just be too good at cornering

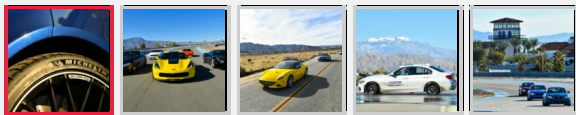
We've tested it, but need many more miles to make a definitive judgement.

ERIC TEGLER - 1/30/2017, 9:10 AM



Michelin's latest and greatest, the Pilot Sport 4S. It replaces the Pilot Super Sport and Pilot Sport 2 tires.

Michelin



PALM SPRINGS, CALIF.—Michelin's got a new performance tire out. Called the Pilot Sport 4S (PS4S), it's a direct replacement for the company's current Pilot Super Sport (PSS) and Pilot Sport 2 (PS2) tires, and it's very good. The funny thing is that, in a way, it may be too good.

High-performance tires go on performance cars; sports cars, muscle cars—nowadays even SUVs. Since time began, they have been designed with one overriding goal in mind: more grip.

Michelin says that in independent testing in Germany against five top ultra-high-performance tire competitors, the PS4S ranked first in wet braking, dry braking, and dry lap times. In fact, the PS4S was 1.72 seconds faster than its closest competitor on the 1.6-mile test track. Extrapolate that to the 8.4-mile track at the [24 Hours of Le Mans](#) and the difference would be about 9 seconds per lap.

Going by Michelin's claims, there's an awesome amount of dry grip in this new street tire. Michelin engineers like Sarah Robinson are justifiably proud to point out that the PS4S was able to stop a car from 62mph in a dry braking test 3.5 feet shorter than the nearest competitor.

Michelin emphasizes that it worked hard to improve wet grip as well. We drove a variety of sports cars fitted with the PS4S at Michelin's global launch event in California, and we have no doubt the



"In Michelin's eyes, good enough is never enough," Robinson says. "We're never going to stop trying to improve grip.

"Wear life was not one of the functional specs that marketing [emphasized]," she continues. "They weren't like 'Oh you've got to go after this, this is a problem.' It was nice to have for sure, but the functional specs we really wanted were handling, wet performance."



[Enlarge](#)

For the record, the PS4S is under warranty for 30,000 miles (48,280km) (300 treadwear rating) for square fitments (all four tires the same size) and for 15,000 miles (24,140km) for staggered fitments (different front/rear sizes). In fact, Michelin says the PS4S has significantly longer life on average than the PSS but hasn't yet provided a specific percentage improvement.

In any case, Sarah Robinson says that ultra-high performance tire consumers aren't the same as many standard passenger car buyers who pray they can get to 100,000 miles (160,934km) before even having to think about replacing a set. But then she adds this intriguing nugget. "We're getting to the point where the level of traction is so high, most people will never extract the full performance capability of the tire. So what they see are things like wear-life or even ride comfort."

If the weekend warriors who fit their rides with PS4S for hot lapping at the local track realize they can't get all the goodness out of the tire because its performance exceeds theirs, what else might they ask for? More miles-per-set would be a good bet. (The PS4S has borrowed a lot from the track-focused Pilot Sport Cup 2s that we so enjoyed when fitted to the [Ford Focus RS](#) and [Chevrolet Corvette Grand Sport](#).)

As mentioned, we drove a selection of cars on PS4S, including the Ferrari California Turbo, Audi R8 V10, Mercedes C63 AMG, and BMW M4 on street and track at the launch. We learned a couple minor things from the seat of our pants, but take any impressions you read of Michelin's new tire with a large grain of salt.

A 45-minute street drive and a few minutes on autocross/road course tracks don't relay much, particularly to a group of largely non-engineering-focused journalists and YouTubers. (Predictable YouTube vid title: "Michelin PS4S is EPIC!")

If durability is the next Holy Grail in high-performance tires, it may be useful to know how Michelin determines it. Here's a synopsis from Steve Calder, Michelin Technical Marketing Manager:

“

Michelin has a fleet of identical cars with identical alignment run around a circuit in South Carolina. Michelin test drivers try to replicate the aggressiveness of an average driver, mimicking average rates of acceleration, deceleration and lateral acceleration, a "normal" wear test called D50. Cars run from 200 to 400 miles a day on the circuit, tires rotated amongst the vehicles to average-out variability. After several thousand miles, the tires are unmounted and laser-profiled to establish wear. This cycle is done several more times and then a computer model is used to extrapolate the tire's life cycle. Tires like the PS4S also get a more aggressive D90 test to establish their longevity.

You should also know that a PS4S, like any tire, will wear differently on different cars. "Michelin Pilot Sport 4S" is really an umbrella term. It represents a family of tires (60 different fitments) that differ slightly across cars with different drive layouts (AWD/RWD/FWD), weights (BMW M4 vs. Ferrari 488), and fitments (square vs. staggered), among other things. (OEMs work with Michelin engineers to individualize tires for particular models, [often the same tire engineer that works on their race team](#).)

The PS4S is already available in Europe, with pricing starting at around £210 in the UK. You'll see the PS4S for sale in the US in March starting at around \$233 per tire. They'll initially be available in 35 sizes in widths ranging from 225mm to 345mm, aspect ratios from 30 to 45, and rim diameters from 18 to 20 inches. Don't write off Michelin's old tires, though; the PSS and P2S will continue to sell alongside PS4S for years to come—there may be good deals to be had.

Even if there are diminishing returns to grip, Michelin will still tout it. The fact that the Porsche Panamera Turbo you bought can go from 0 to 60mph in less than three seconds is cocktail-party gold. Michelin thinks you'll want to brag similarly about your PS4S. "We always want to be on top and ahead," Sarah Robinson admits.

But she acknowledges the race to stickiness may be less of a headline in the future. "It was unheard of to have a mileage warranty on a summer high performance tire until we offered it on the Pilot Super Sport."

The next time you fling your vehicle onto an off-ramp, mentally preparing your "There I was..."

story for friends and family, you may want to add "And I got 40,000 miles out of this rubber!"  
*HiQPdf Evaluation 02/09/2017*

Listing image by Michelin

READER COMMENTS **100**

SHARE THIS STORY    

[← PREVIOUS STORY](#)

[NEXT STORY →](#)

### Related Stories

### Sponsored Stories

Powered by  outbrain



**12 Expensive Celebrity Cars You Have to See to Believe**  
deposts.com



**Enter Your Name, Wait 14 Seconds, Brace Yourself**  
TruthFinder



**Congress Urges Homeowners To Claim \$5,088 Rebate**  
financeinformers



**Finally, 4 Crossovers That Have It All**  
VoteItUp



**If You Are An American Resident Born Between 1936 and 1966 Check This Out**  
EverQuote



**10 Credit Cards For Those That Don't Want To Pay An Annual Fee**  
Credit Cards

### Today on Ars

[RSS FEEDS](#)  
[VIEW MOBILE SITE](#)  
[VISIT ARS TECHNICA UK](#)  
[ABOUT US](#)

[CONTACT US](#)  
[STAFF](#)  
[ADVERTISE WITH US](#)  
[REPRINTS](#)



**CONDÉ NAST**

WIRED Media Group

Use of this Site constitutes acceptance of our User Agreement (effective 1/2/14) and Privacy Policy (effective 1/2/14), and Ars Technica Addendum (effective 5/17/2012). Your California Privacy Rights. The material on this site may not be reproduced, distributed, transmitted, cached or otherwise used, except with the prior written permission of Condé Nast.