



Next week on the pages of Shift, we explore the whacky and slightly misinterpreted world of Car Clubs and the local automotive scene.

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SHIFT

THE JOY of pistons

BBC Top Gear's Jeremy Clarkson on cars: "SPEEEEEED, SPEEEEEED, and the noise of the SPEED!!!"

We asked around and found like-minded car enthusiasts who share the same passion for cars and bikes that we have. We asked them why they love cars, and this is what they gave us.

Saurin A Rahman

"The moving mechanical parts in an engine in harmony, the sound and power and the smell of petrol, all leave an impression on a car enthusiast, just like a good musical instrument does to a musician or artist." Saurin is currently finishing his MBA from BRAC University and has worked at Rahimafrooz. Usually found making DIY modifications to his Toyota Axio.

Anika Anjum

"It is self-explanatory, really. The tire screeches, the hum of the engine, the moving mechanical parts—they all vouch for themselves. The thrill of being in control, wearing a car like a jacket, is truly accepting. Plus, they have little complications unlike humans; attachment with them is much easier." Anika studies Economics at BRAC University and is a certified car nut, having been a forum moderator at Wheelsbd.com. Her technical knowledge of her Toyota Starlet and almost any other car can put an average car geek to shame.

Mohammad Ishtiaque

"I love cars for the passion of the motor, the design, the thrill of it. For the ridiculous love of the curves of a Ferrari F40, for the growl of the spinning turbo under the bonnet of a Toyota Supra, for the roar of a Lambo Gallardo. I love it because it's something natural, because it is a part of who I am, a petrol head." Ishtiaque is one of the countless teenagers in Dhaka who are obsessed about cars and feeds off on images and articles on the internet. He is currently studying for his SSC and it'll be a few more years at least before he can venture out onto the road.

Aadnan Zaman

"My early love of cars led me into the local car scene at a young age. Growing up watching the automotive world evolve, around fellow car enthusiasts and watching three British men by the name of Jeremy Clarkson, James May and Richard Hammond on television, it wasn't too long before cars became the centre of my world." Aadnan is giving his A levels, and he's an official photographer of R3V, one of the more popular car clubs in Dhaka. Most of his status updates on Facebook revolve around him trying to sell off the rims on his Toyota Allion.

Three boxes, four wheels. Metal. Air conditioning. Safety. Privacy. Ease.

Somehow, almost everywhere, the definition of an "automobile" has sunk to these few words bundled into a package that you can buy off a dealership by trading in some of your hard-earned cash. As important to day to day human activities as the micro-wave oven, or a washing machine. Buy, operate, maintain when necessary.

I refuse to think of a car as an appliance, just another convenient by-product of our mechanized world. Appliances don't have enthusiasts. A micro-wave oven will never be loved by someone, a washing machine will never be observed with the slightly catatonic stare that teenage boys reserve for rare beauties like Bar Refaeli (swimsuit model) or the Lamborghini Muira (the better swimsuit model). You can hardly race a blender, build million dollar race teams and businesses around it. You cannot show pride at how beautiful and smooth to operate your toaster is.

If you thought car aesthetics were important to a car enthusiast, wait till they start explaining how the mechanical bits work.

Intake, compression, combustion, exhaust. Chemical energy converted to mind blowing amounts of kinetic energy and torque.

Rotational forces converted to translational forces, then back again. A mass of gears, valves, pistons, chains, sensors, electronic brains, all working in unison, perfect harmony, magically converting a liquid and some air into something useable, while the main components rotate NINE THOUSAND times a minute. 150 times a second. It doesn't break, doesn't complain, doesn't groan under incredible amounts of stress. The engine just pushes the car forward.

Some will point out that jet engines are much more intricate pieces of machinery and

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EXHAUST

Chemical energy converted to mind blowing amounts of kinetic energy and torque.

that one can get doctorate level degrees and not fully understand how a space shuttle works.

I ask them, did you ever own a jet engine? Or even a chip off the heat resistive tiles that cover a space shuttle? Nope. The automobile is the single most piece of pure machinery you will own, the most amazing work of man's innovation in engineering and technology. Your PC is smarter and your phone is probably a better source of entertainment than your car. Again, not pure machines. Just the black magic of electricity coursing through their veins. In a

car, you have a mix of air, fuel, electricity and mechanical motion, a mix you will be hard pressed to find anywhere else.

Unless you own a motorbike. Take everything you love about cars, add the experience of wind in your face and the thrill of balancing yourself while the world moves at warp speeds around you. It's a pure adrenaline rush, even on tiny 50 cc motorcycles with louder exhausts than proper punching power.

A motorbike is even more of a purely mechanical marvel, compared to the car.

It's a balancing act on the edge of your life, its unsafe, its cheap. Millions in third world countries have love affairs with the motorbike, preferring to ferry around entire families of five on a motorbike designed for a maximum of three passengers. If you're not a family man, you probably love the freedom and maneuverability that a motorbike offers in a crowded city. Motorbikes are almost an anti-social statement, and motorbike owners alone will know what it feels like to be a rider.

Speed and the need to go faster than everyone else is ingrained in our minds and bodies. If you're not a car geek or a bike lover, you'll find your hit somewhere else. Most people have not had their inner speed demon released yet, but it takes one ride along in a high horsepower car, on a sport bike or maybe even a theme park roller-coaster to set it free. Once its out, there's no stopping your love for everything mechanical, man-made, and moving.

Whether it's two wheeled or four wheeled, we get it. We get your passion for the mechanical, wheeled modes of "transport". We know it pains you to think of the car as just another useful commodity and nothing else. Shift caters to YOU.

Shaer Reaz



The Lamborghini Miura changed everything about cars when it came out in 1966. Mid engine layout and a shape to die for. It was uncomfortable to drive, unstable at very high speeds and caught on fire occasionally more often than pop stars get drunk. Yet, people pay millions because of the way it looks, sounds and goes. It epitomises the allure of cars.



Two wheeled menace and the family man

A family man plays safe. He googles the safest option when purchasing a screwdriver. He doesn't go out in the rain. He plays it safe because he's responsible. So it goes against logic when a family man uses a motorcycle for family transport. Riding a motorcycle is like dancing on a hungry polar bear's head while the bear is fighting mutant alligators. Yet, Bangladeshi streets are full of motorcycles that are full of

family members. It's not uncommon to see the parents and three children with a day's grocery carving through the city traffic, precariously balanced on a bike. That's not responsible, is it?

"It's about cost. I can't afford a car, fuel may be cheap but tax and maintenance is a killer. And reality is such that it is actually more expensive to use rickshaws and CNG autorickshaws. But I need transport I can find

readily, right away," says Tareq, a young mechanic in his mid 30's. His two-wheeler gets him to his clients when they call him for home service. And it's easier to get his wife and kid to places quickly, conveniently.

Convenience is a big factor. Middle and lower middle class families live in small apartments with no parking space whatsoever. "Even if we could scrounge up the money for a car, where would we keep it? My

tiny bike fits under the stairs where the water meters are," says Arman who just recently got a better job as a teller at a private bank. Every morning, he knows that he doesn't have to worry about transport, his bike will get him to work. And work demands punctuality. "A bike is also easier to get through the traffic. In Dhaka, streets are full of stationary cars."

Sanjana Akhter works in telecom. She gets dropped off by her husband by motorbike. "It plays havoc with my hair. But it gets us both to where we need to go." She defended the biking choice further by saying it might be scary when buses loom on both sides but what choices are there? But a motorbike according to Sanjana is no vehicle to have a child on board.

I caught up with Babul Ahsan of Lalbagh. He has a business in old town and he's been a biker for the last 32 years. He considers it a bit of a record that in all those years he has not had a serious accident so far. How? "I've been playing it safe. I ride slow. And I'm a little afraid

every time I get on a bike so I take no chances. I give way to everything on the road. But I can't think of using a car, it's too constricting, even when I'm riding with my family." What about rain? Dust? People spitting from nearby busses? He laughs and says these are minor issues that he's learned to live with. Riding with a full family on a motorbike is a cultural thing. Babul Ahsan added that it's not changing anytime soon, unless the government makes a law outlawing the use of bikes as a microbus. People will pile up on it because every day it's getting even more difficult to commute. Walking is not a Bangladeshi thing, not in this humid weather.

Motorcycles are dangerous. But they offer convenience, practicality and affordability especially when people have to consider the rising price of just about everything. Running a family on a budget is getting ever more difficult. Hence the tradeoff between safety and convenience.

E R RONNY



SHIFT – WHAT IS IT?

We're the first fully dedicated English publication to cover the budding automotive scene in Bangladesh. There are a ton of cool iron and fiberglass out there on the streets that needs a spotlight, and we'll give it to them. Reviews, maintenance tips, useful information, and features from all corners of the automotive scene here.

Its not just all cars and motorbikes though, we'll be covering bicycles as well. The newest craze in Dhaka has teenagers and university students going bonkers over these two-wheeled green machines, and we want a slice of that pie.

Every Friday morning, in your hands, the definitive local automotive publication.



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