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NAVANA
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SHIFT



TEST DRIVE

Sleeper Turbo

2009 Toyota Axio GT



VERDICT

You can take this car to office, go grocery shopping and at the same time you can dust quite a few bigger engined cars out there. It's proper fast for what it is. It's like having a wife and a mistress in one package. And the best part is it's only about 4 lakhs more than the stock counterpart. You can't get this amount of kit, performance and reliability with that money. It's worth the price.

This car is on sale for a little under 23 lakhs at JZ Automobiles in HOUSE # 38, ROAD # 9/A, Dhanmondi.

SPECS

2009 Toyota Axio GT

Engine: 1.5 liter 4 cylinder turbocharged, intercooled 1-NZFEpetrol engine.

Gearbox: 5 speed manual with uprated clutch cover.

Numbers: 148 HP, 145 lb-ft of torque.

Brakes: Disc brakes at the front, large drums at the rear.

Wheels and tires: 215/40 R-17 tires, 17T4wheels.

Price: 23 lakh Taka.

WORDS: EHSANUR RAZA RONNY
PHOTOS: TASDID CHOWDHURY

A sleeper is a car that looks like an ordinary rabbit but is actually a psychotic carnivore inside. And few things are cooler in effect than the perfect sleeper. Question is, how is Toyota's most pedestrian 'daal-bhaat' car a cool sleeper?

The Axio is the Japanese market version of the Corolla that Bangladesh loves so much. In stock form it is a pretty decent car. The 1.5 provides ample forward movement courtesy of roughly 110bhp coupled with a fuel efficient CVT transmission. The car looks smart without really standing out from the crowd, la car the designers penned by playing it safe. How's the Axio GT any different?

First clue: Turbo. Everything sounds better with the word 'Turbo' attached somewhere. Cars, planes, shoes, computers, even a washing machine would probably sound a lot cooler. The Axio GT we tested here comes with the TRD enhanced bits and pieces to make it faster, sharper and slightly more macho stanced. Although we've seen TRD badges on everything from Hondas and Mitsubishis to Chinese motorcycles, it is strictly Toyota's racing division. And what they learn on the track, they sometimes put in their cars for us mere mortals to enjoy.

The first ting to notice is that the car sits pretty low on the TRD Sportivo suspension. The appearance is subtly tweaked by the jutting lip spoiler and sideskirts, which lower the car further visually. Inside you're faced

with a similar layout as the regular Axio, but the differences include an inviting tachometer and a lovely leather stitched gear knob that asks you to row, row, row. Five speeds, mind you.

The most significant mechanical bit is that turbocharger and intercooler setup providing an ample 148bhp for this lightweight car. That's nearly a 35 percent increase in power. It also develops 145lb/ft of torque over the stock Axios 100lb/ft. Those are great numbers on paper compared to the base Axio. Are they as good on road?

Right away this car feels a lot different. It feels firmer over small bumps and the ride is quiet despite the huge 17 inch wheels. The manual gearbox is a joy to operate. Toyota played it safe. They did provide a beefier

clutch cover to tolerate the higher forces but they didn't make it uncomfortably stiff. You can really drive this car all day in traffic and not feel tired. For those wussies complaining about shifting manuals, enroll in leg day exercises at a gym. Or just walk a little.

The joy of pressing that throttle is indescribable. But I'll try anyway. The turbo spools the moment you floor it. Boost comes on at low RPMs. Each time I pressed the accelerator, the car responded right away. And each time, I needed to press it a little harder. See, the car is light, and there's a mechanical LSD to reign in that torque and improve traction so you keep heading in the direction you're intended. This is not your typical fire breathing monster. Far from it. This is the ultimate sleeper. The car turns

sharp, it desperately scabbles its wheels to show you urgency with which it can pull and it takes bumps a little harder but it's all composed on the inside. It's a light sportscar for the family. The one downside is that it doesn't come with disc brakes in the rear. Visually that's a bit of a downer. Fast cars always look better with disc brakes glinting from behind wheel spokes. Toyota fitted bigger, grippier brake shoes. And guess what? Those drums provided ample and reassuring braking power. It stops where and how you want it. It works and adds to the whole sleeper effect.



Axio GT faces off against its basic brother.



This week on our Facebook Page



Our resident car spotter came across this VW Beetle in a remote corner of Dhaka. What's special about it? Look closely and you'll see a Guy Fawkes-esque face sculpted on to its back. Some FB fans found it cool, others found it a hideous waste of a valuable classic.

For more of our weird, rare and cool car spotting, visit our Facebook page.

Photo: Shadman Al Samee



FOOTBALL SPECIAL



Baller Dreams

Football players work hard. No, they really do, no sarcasm. With a year chock full of little else than running around with 10 other men after a ball and going to great lengths to ensure they are fit and ready both mentally and physically, all football fans worth their salt will admit that every football player earns his wage by working hard.

When they spend that money on lavish lifestyles with purchases of houses, cars, and everything in between, you'd almost forgive them for it. With preposterously expensive exotics, flashy sports cars, and massive SUVs rolling on huge wheels, some may question their tastes in automobiles, but they definitely know what living large means.

Speaking of terrible taste, the worst car collection of any footballer belongs to Stephen Ireland; the Irish national and Stoke City player's white-pink and white-blue Audi R8 is infamous. He also happens to own a black Range Rover with pink wheels, and a disgusting Bentley Continental with shoddy custom work.

Another footballer with a shoddy custom Bentley is Mario Balotelli. The ex-Manchester City, current AC Milan and Italy national team striker used to drive a Bentley Continental Supersports, with a horrifying olive green camouflage wrap. Thankfully, after leaving City and moving to Milan, he gave away his \$300,000 GT and got a much nicer, much more digestible Ferrari FF in Fiorano Red. He also has a matte black Maserati GranTurismo MC Stradale, a matte black Audi R8, and an orange Range Rover Evoque.

Players in the English Premier league are often lauded as the most extravagant on the planet, Premiership football club car parks reportedly a haven for ridiculously expensive pieces of machinery. Steven Gerrard, Liverpool's ever-loving hero and

the England midfield's centerpiece, has recently shown great class and taste in keeping it subtle with a silver Jaguar XKR convertible. Maybe he'll upgrade to the F-type soon.

Its not all glitter and glamour, however. Wayne Rooney is often laughed at for posing with his Ford Ka, possibly the girliest looking car among the ones owned by top-flight footballers. Manchester United and England's frontman can definitely afford much more exotic cars and does (like the Range Rover Overfinch), but why pose with a humble piece of metal excrement? We can't really tell.

Unlike other celebs, footballers don't really care much about the environment, or at least they don't like showing people that they care about the environment. The number of Prius' in footballers' garages are thankfully quite low, with just Emanuel Adebayor fighting the good fight with his eco-friendly electric Fisker Karma.

Lionel Messi and Cristiano Ronaldo may compete head



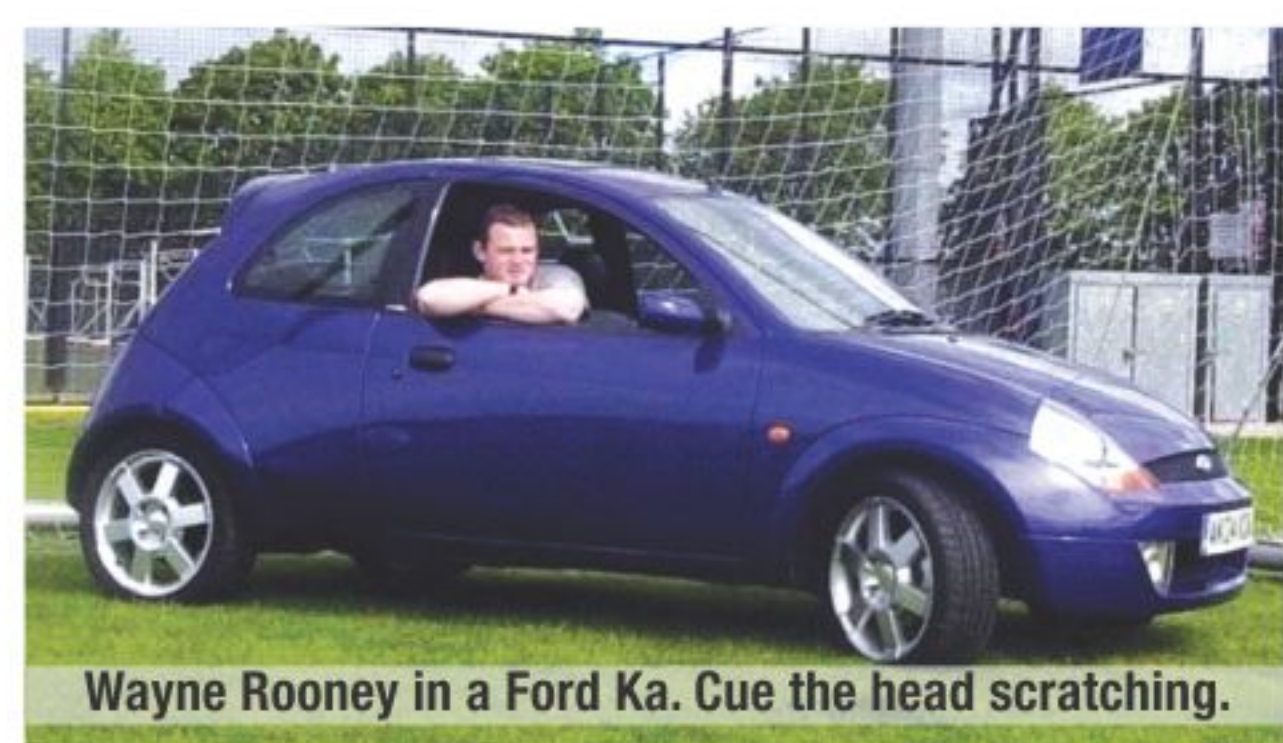
El-Hadji Diouf's gold plated Cadillac Escalade. Gah.

to head for the title of best footballer on the planet, but when it comes to cars, Ronaldo has Messi beaten. The Argentine Barcelona superstar likes to lay low when it comes to extravagance, Messi's most expensive car being a frost white Maserati MC Stradale. On the flipside, Ronaldo's car collection shows off the massive number of zeros on his paycheck. From the brand new Ferrari LaFerrari to a custom painted Lamborghini Aventador LP 700-4 to countless others, C-Ron is definitely living most teenagers' dreams (and we haven't even mentioned Irina Shayak yet).

Rarest supercar owner crown, however, goes to Spain's midfield maestro Andres Iniesta. The World Cup winning champion rolls in a blue Bugatti Veyron Supersports, the fastest and most expensive road legal car on the planet.

How's that for extravagance?

THE GREEN STIG



Wayne Rooney in a Ford Ka. Cue the head scratching.



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thedailystar.shift

Email: shift@thedailystar.net