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GARAGE COLLECTIONS

The Poor Man's Ferrari

Toyota SW20 MR2

Think back to the last time Toyota released an affordable, mid-engined, turbocharged, rear wheel-drive sports car. In fact, think back to the last time any Japanese manufacturer attempted such a combination.

Chances are, you'll end up in the early 2000s, the bath-tub shaped, slightly flowery roadster that was the MRS. While the MRS wasn't exactly a massive flop (nor a resounding success), compared to its predecessor, the phenomenal SW20 MR2, many said the MRS was less focused, less refined.

Does the SW20 live up to its reputation, then? Let's find out.

Tareq Ahmed is a veteran in the car scene in Bangladesh. One of the pioneers of the car club scene with ClubGT, he owned fast cars before most of us were even born. His specialty the MR2, an encycl

opaedia of knowledge on Toyota's mid-engined icon, having owned two examples of the rare sports cars. His current car is a bone stock SW20 MR2, top of the range targa top version, equipped with a screaming 2 liter four cylinder turbocharged engine.

The engine is definitely the cream on top. The response is a little slow, the 3SGTE taking a little time to spool up before supplying the surge of boost. On the deserted roads of Uttara, the MR2 was docile as a kitten at low speeds, but a downshift and accelerator flooring later, the lightweight little car sprang forward with the lithe prowess of a much bigger cat.

The noise element was subtle and somewhat muted, the stock exhaust and blow off valve making a humble pair of instruments. The jazz that emanates from these two, however, is less than humble.

Louis Armstrong would be proud with the restraint shown in this music.

While taking the photos, Rahin suggested we take a few rolling shots. Taking laps around a deserted roundabout, I got a taste of how good the handling of this MR2 beast is. The mid-engine layout gives the car a very low center of gravity and a very favourable weight distribution, the MR2 planted on the ground at all times and at all speeds. The car's stability was put to the test as, spurred on by his ClubGT colleagues, the owner and the only person authorized to do such a thing, pulled up the handbrake and attempted a 360 degree turn. It honestly felt completely safe, the car staying level all-throughout and not transmitting a shred of discomfort onto the occupants.

Its a 20 year old car, yet it sounds and moves like it was fashioned out of glass,

rubber and metal just yesterday. The suave black interior, with a wide center console and transmission tunnel, is as clean and fresh as the day it was assembled. Only a bit of roughness on the seat lumbar support show its true age.

Outside, the MR2 is truly the last of a kind. The front quarters ape the Ferrari F355, a smartly chiselled face complete with a feature which was a make or break element in 90's sportscars: pop-up headlights. This resemblance to the Ferrari, coupled with the mid-engine, rear drive layout, earned the SW20 the moniker of "the poor man's Ferrari".

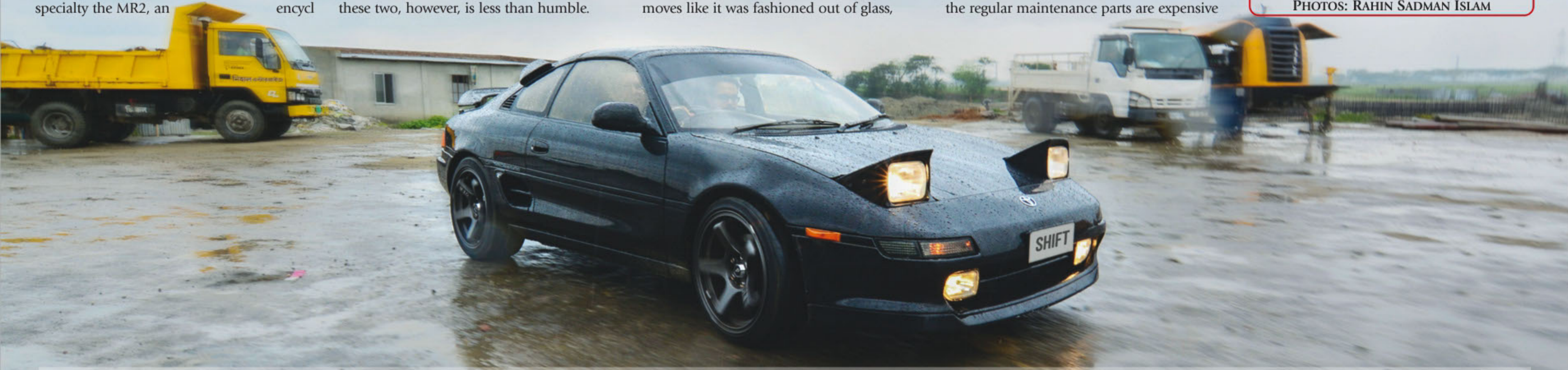
Not that you can be poor and own one here, as Tareq Ahmed tells us, "Parts are obviously hard to find here, almost impossible. Forget modification parts, just the regular maintenance parts are expensive

and have to be brought in from abroad."

When we say the MR2 is bone stock, we mean performance wise. The wheels are aftermarket items with an aggressive offset, in a shade of bronze that sets it off nicely against the black body of the car. A front lip, smoke effect front indicators and a pair of air intake scoops replacing the single snorkel intake are the exterior upgrades. The interior is stock, with the exception of a Lockwood instrument gauge with both MPH and KPH on display.

What's next on the cards for this MR2? The owner wants to upgrade the exhaust before moving on to intake upgrades, and that's about it. It's the crown jewel of his life, and he loves it as it is. And so do we.

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NEWS

Formula gEeek

Formula E – the greener version of Formula 1

What do you do when you love motorsport, but the environmentalist side of you keeps you in a constant state of upheaval about the pollution horror show that is an entire grid of high-revving, petrol burning V10 engines? Cry quietly in a corner hugging your potted cactus while "Justify my love" plays in the background, Sunday's qualifying race muted on the TV.

Or, you know, drool over Formula E. It's the brand new spin to motorsport, and features all electric race cars and city circuits only. The

- Race mode (power-saving): 178 HP
- Push-to-Pass: Additional 90 HP

Formula E will feature something called a "Fan boost", and no, it doesn't refer to a turbocharger spooling up. Fan boost is a way for popular drivers to use their fan following to their advantage in a race. The top three drivers with the largest social media fan following will be able to use the Push-to-Pass feature to overtake.

The series features a whole lot of breaks from

reasons for using just city circuits, since electric cars will be marketed to city-dwellers in the busiest parts of the world. Its appropriate, then, that Formula E will kick off in Beijing, one of the most polluted cities on the planet.

It won't be entirely alien from Formula 1. The glitz and the glamour will be there, with motorsport pedigree thrown in for good measure. Leonardo DiCaprio is funding his own team, while racing greats such as Alain Prost, JarnoTrulli and Emerson Fittipaldi are backing

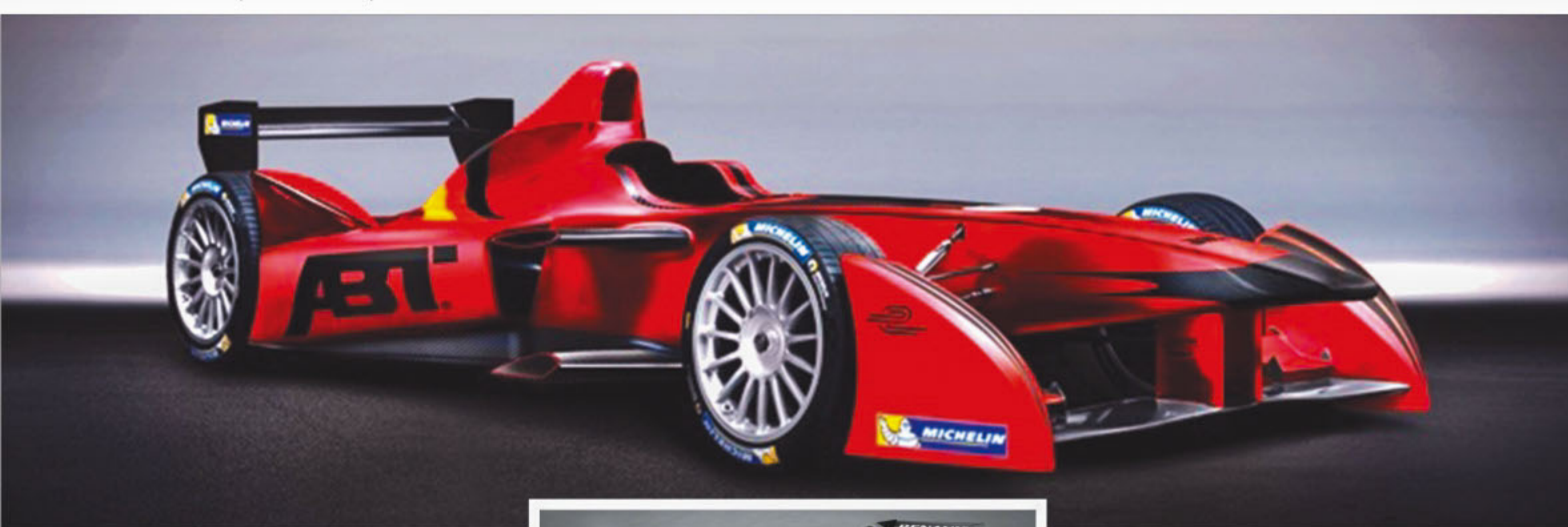
Wolff of Williams

Okay so she's much prettier than Leo DiCaprio. And her suit is a racing overall and she does wear it much better than the Wolf of Wall Street.

Susie Wolff is the first woman to be a driver in a Formula 1 team and race in a weekend since 1992 (Giovanni Amati). Part of the Williams crew as a development driver, Susie participated in the British Grand Prix practice session, with the Williams team planning on using this as a huge publicity opportunity. However, due to oil pressure problems grounding her Williams, Susie's time on the track was cut down to just 20 minutes. She probably hoped her first foray onto the track in an official race weekend would involve more fanfare, but the engine problems and the retired car meant she left the track on the verge of tears. No worries though, she will be back for another practice round at Hockenheim, gathering valuable data for her team and slamming it out with the boys on track.

The media coverage pointed fingers at her marriage to Toto Wolff, a majority shareholder in the Williams team, as the reason she's out there on the track. Susie and the team dismissed all of these notions, and with reason. Susie has risen through the ranks in motorsport, starting with karting and moving on to successful stints in Formula Renault, Formula Three, and the fiercely competitive DTM disciplines, and as a test driver for the Williams team. She's earned her right to be in the driving seat.

We can't wait to see how she does in her practice run at Hockenheim.



engines will be provided by McLaren for the entire field of entrants.

The Formula:

- There will be 10 teams, 20 drivers, and 40 cars
- Each team will include 2 drivers and 4 cars
- e-Prix will be held in 10 cities across the world
- Racing circuits will be held in cities, and will be approximately 2.5 km to 3 km long
- Cars will accelerate from 0 km/h to 100 km/h in 3 seconds, with a maximum speed of 220 km/h
- Noise decibel levels will be approximately 80 dB(SPL)
- Max power (limited): 268 HP, 170 ft-lb torque



tradition, with all-electric powerplants, female drivers, city-only circuits, and the controversial fan-boost feature. They're all part of a campaign to garner a fan following for "clean" motorsport, and in the process, break the myth of clean cars being boring cars. Its also one of the main

Formula E for success. Big-shots like Audi will field a team as well, alongside Renault and Indian giant Mahindra.

As far as the idea behind the racing discipline goes, it's a solid idea. Motorsport is sometimes said to be irrelevant, especially with the onset of climate change and the harmful effects of internal combustion engines. Formula E is the greener, environmentally conscious sibling of Formula 1, and it seems to serve a genuine purpose in making electric cars sexy. Can it be a genuine alternative, making Formula 1 redundant and internal combustion a dinosaur of the past? We hope not, but it just might.

THE GREEN STIG



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