



The Daily Star
DHAKA, WEDNESDAY, FEBRUARY 18, 2015
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SHIFT

SUBARU IMPREZA STI



BOXING CHAMP

We're no strangers to the abilities of the Subaru Impreza STI, here at Shift. The last time we featured an Impreza, we had to undergo a decompression procedure usually reserved for deep-sea divers, as the after-effects of time warping acceleration left its traces following the ride-along. Before we kick off this duel of rallying gods, we will admit that we're sort of biased towards Imprezas. They're magnificently engineered cars, the turbocharged boxer engine is a marvel and the rear-bias all-wheel drive system makes the Impreza livelier than its chief rival, Mitsubishi's Lancer Evolution.

The featured Subaru is a prized combined possession of brothers Zaem and Imran Aziz, and is part of a car-crazed lifestyle that sees them importing all manner of cars through RPM Motors, their own business. Zaem, the younger brother, studied automobile engineering in the UK and worked with Jaguar-Land Rover and had a shot at ending up in Formula 1 as an engineer, but circumstances forced him back into Bangladesh. Before that, though, he had his share of automotive fun, driving Skyline GT-Rs and Evolutions and all manner of Japanese rockets during his time in the UK and Australia. When it was time to get a turbocharged ride in Dhaka, the choice was obvious.

"We had a lot of Evolutions, VII, VIII, IXs, even Evo Xs, passing through at RPM Motors. I've never considered keeping one for myself, because the Impreza is what my brother and I wanted, and it's what we got", says Zaem, when asked why he chose the Subie over an Evo.

We have to agree with him on the noise and drama factor. The STI is a cartoon character of a car, oversized spoiler, flared fenders, and that gaping hood scoop. The "Scoobie"

moniker fits perfectly, although it bears distinct similarities to the Road Runner escaping the clutches of Wile E. Coyote in the way it accelerates away from the Evolution.

The STI is bone stock, and the ride along experience is a glimpse into how stable and fast even a stock Impreza can be. It weaves in and out of traffic with incredible poise, and it'll tackle the worst pot-holes Dhaka can offer up. The EJ20T has the typical bulletproof characteristics that you'd expect from cars in this segment, but it is truly one of a kind in the way it responds and in the sounds it makes. If pistons and valves could sing, the Subaru's boxer-four engine would be Edith Piaf at her best.

The real downside to the Subaru would be its looks. While the hooligan attitude may go well with the whole persona of Subarus being the muscle-cars of the East, when placed next to the sleek, smooth lines of the Evolution, the Subaru looks like a fat couch potato who has given up on everything for a life of sauced up ribs and reruns of Sons of Anarchy. But then that's the thing, you know? The Impreza is definitely not a car for posers, it backs up the



Subaru vs Mitsubishi: The rivalry goes back a long way, but who wins in our books? We'd prefer the Impreza, but honestly, they're both incredible cars.

unchecked aggression of its looks with, well, unchecked aggression.

Still don't believe how good the Impreza is? The late Colin McRae has an eternal seal of approval on all Imprezas, having won three consecutive World Rally Championship seasons from 1995-1997 and countless podium finishes at the X-Games. "If in doubt, flat out", the entire ethos of the Subaru Impreza STI.

took a much better turn when the Evolution, based on the more versatile Lancer platform, hit the rally stages. Homologation followed, and the Evolution would create a cult following on the streets that would last for over a decade.

The idea was simple. Keep the weight down as much as possible while keeping the roster of creature comforts intact so that homologated models have air-conditioning and

WORDS: SHAER REAZ ● PHOTOS: RAHIN SADMAN ISLAM

airbags, and use a bulletproof, efficient four-cylinder engine. The 4G63T was designed to handle an immense amount of stress, with the ability to cope with dust and dirt, as well as a huge amount of power pulsing through it, even on stock engine internals. Because the 4G63 responds so well to even basic performance parts customers buying Evolutions off the showroom floor will rave on and on about them. The Evolution, especially the CT9A (Evo VII, VIII, IX) found huge fan followings in pro tuner shops, with HKS, Cyber and Sierra Sierra using CT9A Evolutions in various states of tune to set blisteringly fast lap-times all over the world in Time Attack championships. On tarmac and racing against the clock, the Evolution was truly the king.

Its rallying record isn't something to scoff at. The legendary Tommi Mäkinen took the world rally title four years in a row, giving the CT9A chassis Evolutions (IV, V, VI) the street rep that would make the next generation Evolutions huge sales successes.

The Evo VIII MR featured this week has a 4G63 under the hood that has been worked on with a simple setup, running an aftermarket exhaust system and manifold, coupled with better breathing thanks to the HKS intake. Tein suspension components and a Cusco stabilizer link stiffen up the ride. The genuine carbon-fiber hood further lightens the car. Rolling on genuine 18 inch

Work CR Kai rims, the Evo is a sight to behold in a dark gunmetal-grey.

At speed, the Evo whistles and bellows, each upshift of the 5 speed gearbox launching the car forward as the boost builds up. How does it compare with the Subaru, its sworn enemy? Sorry to disappoint fans of the Evolution, but when it comes to pure drama, the Impreza sheathes you in a hot, steamy cocoon and the boxer burble sounds immensely impressive next to the high-pitched whine of the 4G63 Evo. In terms of acceleration, both are on par, although the Impreza is at a slight disadvantage because it is bone stock while the Evo benefits from improved intake/exhaust. That just shows how good the Impreza is, to be honest.

What makes it so incredibly popular as a road car, though? The Lancer Evolution far outnumbers the Imprezas on the street because the Evo is a much better all-rounder than the Impreza, being reliable, usable and having less of a hooligan streak than the Subaru. Its Recaro bucket seats will crush your hips to bits, but it'll do almost anything you ask of it and it'll go fast, if not faster, when you decide to let it off the leash. Plus, tuned Evolutions can be crazier than any tuned Impreza with the right parts.

The Evo VIII featured is for sale at Need4Speed for a price of 40 lakh taka. While it is a bit steep, factor in the immense potential this beast has as a street machine, and the price seems warranted.

MITSUBISHI EVOLUTION VIII MR



DARWINIAN VICTOR

The Evolution came into being when Mitsubishi's rallying efforts needed a lighter, more advanced car to compete with the new breed of all-wheel drive, turbocharged rally cars ripping up the tarmac and dirt roads. Previously based on the Galant, Mitsubishi's rallying competitiveness

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THE ESCAPE PLAN

THE FORD ESCAPE IS THE LATEST MODEL INTRODUCED IN BANGLADESH AFTER THE SUCCESS OF THEIR FIESTA AND ECOSPORT. TARGETTED TOWARDS THE GROWING SEGMENT OF SUV BUYERS, THE ESCAPE HAS ALL THE MAKINGS OF A STRONG CONTENDER, GOING UP AGAINST THE LIKES OF HONDA'S CRV AND HYUNDAI'S SANTA FE. SO HOW DOES IT PLAN TO COMPETE?



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Look for a review of the Ford Escape in an upcoming issue of Shift.

SHIFT ZONE

This week we have two of the greatest all-wheel-drive Japanese turbo cars in a combined feature, as we explore the deep rooted rivalry of the Impreza and Evolution in the hopes of finding a winner. While we're cautious in announcing a winner, the title has to go the Impreza for the in-your-face attitude it exudes. Don't like the verdict? Feel free to give us your thoughts via our Facebook page/email.

- Shaer Reaz, Sub-editor, Shift.

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CORIGENDUM

In last week's issue of Shift, we mentioned the Ssangyong Actyon sport truck. We got the spelling wrong, writing "Actyon" instead of "Actyon".

