



PROJECT CARS

Sleeper beast

2003 TOYOTA PREMIO

On the surface, this week's feature car could be any of the million silver Toyota Premios you see out on the road, albeit with a very nice set of wheels and a lowered stance. On the surface, this is another boring family sedan, occupants living in the upper middle class suburbia bubble, mundane and non-descript, the Premio used as an appliance for getting to and from work or classes.

That's why, when it storms past you on Airport Road at 12.30 at night, you kind of, sort of, really don't expect it.

Zafar Mashfee's Premio is a little special, because he's one of the pioneers in a growing group of people in Dhaka who are waking up to see the potential in these family sedans, a potential most people attribute to older, edgier, apparently cooler cars (more on that later). Underneath the hood of the Premio lies a 2ZZ-GE 2.0 liter VVT-i engine, one of the only engines built in that period that had any sort of sporting aspirations. With close to 190 hp and boatloads of torque on offer, not to mention a great deal of reliability and fuel efficiency compared to the venerable 4AGE, the Yamaha designed, high-revving 2ZZ-GE was the only choice Mashfee had when he wanted more oomph from the Premio. Getting power to the ground is a 6 speed manual.

On the ride along, the Premio was a thoroughly weird experience because its difficult to get over the fact that this is the same boring chassis that I've experienced countless times. Sitting in traffic, engine idling, it actually does feel like that, the comfortable, plush seats pampering you, faux wooden panels everywhere and cold air blasting your face. When the roads clear up, the fun begins. The gears fall into place with a decidedly mechanical thump, and the car's front end raises itself as all that horsepower courses through the thing. The speed climbs with surprising pace, and with precise shifts, the car rides the power curve well into the higher ranges. Mashfee is lazy with the shifting at low speeds, using the 6th gear as a kind of pseudo-automatic, and it's a testament to how much torque the engine produces, if the car can get moving with the final gear.

Mashfee uses the Premio daily, and the way



it is driven and the fuel efficiency it gives is outstanding: 10.9 km/l. That kind of mileage figures is hard to get on even a regular 1-NZFE engine, so a 2ZZ-GE getting that is unthinkable. To suspend the disbelief, though, Mashfee shows us the mileage as calculated by the ECU, via a Bluetooth connector plugged into the OBD-II port (on board diagnostics). It's a nifty little device which, when paired with a cellphone and an app, can be used for precise measurements of oil temperature, voltage, and a host of other useful figures in real time. Its one of the major advantages over older engines with OBD-I systems.

Outside, the wheels are OEM Subaru Legacy GT items, and other than the muted exhaust and an intake snorkel low down in the bumper, there really aren't any clues which give away the beast hiding underneath.

We at Shift don't really like this generation Premio and the one that followed, but we have to admit, if this is what people will be tuning in five to ten years' time, we're pretty excited.

WORDS: SHAER REAZ
PHOTOS: RAHIN SADMAN ISLAM

SHIFT ZONE

The massive popularity of the NZT240 chassis Toyotas in Bangladesh pretty much guarantee these cars are going to be popular as secondhand buys in the near future. While they aren't exactly what you'd call "cool", they do have their merits, and parts availability will only go up from here. That makes these cars ripe for smart modifications, and this week we feature a properly modified 240 Premio, with the right balance of performance, comfort and usability.



Ford brings in the Ecosport Diesel



Powered by a 1.5 liter DV5 engine and putting power to the ground through a 5 speed manual, Ford's EcoSport Diesel was recently launched in the local market. Featuring top of the line safety features and infotainment systems, the funky little five seat mini-SUV is part of Ford's expanding lineup of cars in Bangladesh. Priced competitively at 31.5 lakh taka, the EcoSport comes with extensive after sales support and warranty from AG Automobiles, the official dealer for Ford vehicles in Bangladesh. Look for a review of the diesel variant EcoSport in an upcoming issue of Shift.

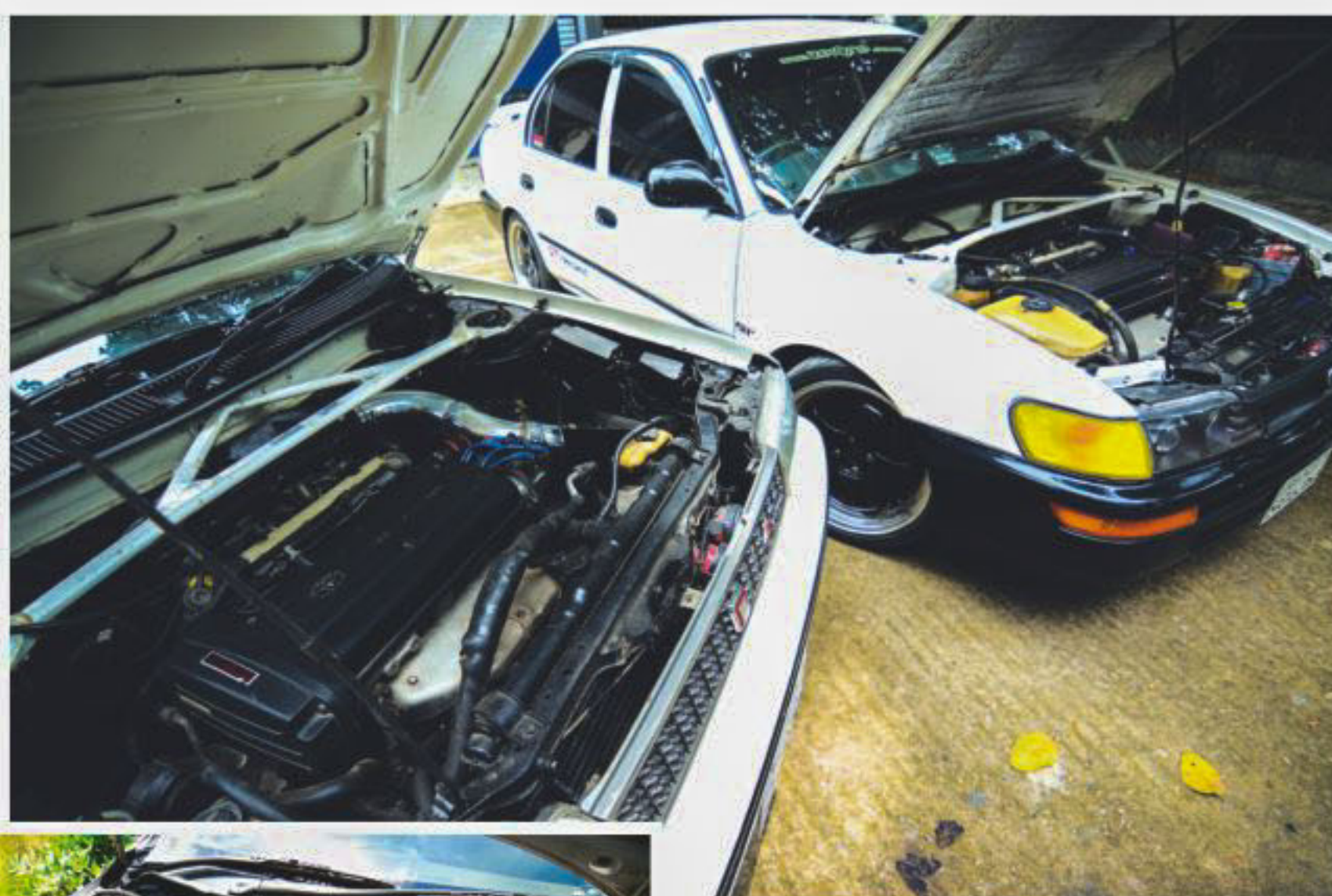
Old school vs new upstarts

We've all seen the way the 1.6 4AGE 4 cylinder, in blacktop and silvertop forms, and the B16A as well as the B20B have dominated the local tuning scene. When it comes to new cars, though, performance engines have been largely absent for quite a while, due to the relative lack of interest in newer platforms.

It's all changing, though. As evidenced by the 2ZZ-GE Celica engine powered Premio featured this week, there's a surge of interest in performance modifications for newer cars. The 2ZZ-GE is one of the only feasible new engines to swap into other cars, since it has a good balance of displacement, horsepower and torque, and reliability.

What about the past favourites, though? The 4AGE, a high strung, 9000 RPM kissing engine, is still swapped into anything with wheels and a Toyota badge from the 90's. At 1.6 litres displacement, the 4AGE is neither a big engine nor is it as chalk full of sensors as the 2ZZ-GE, so why is it so popular? The relative lack of electronic trickery is an advantage. It is well proven that older engines with less sensor dependency responds well to bolt on modifications such as aftermarket headers and intake/exhaust. With the 4AGE, a good intake setup that retains the MAF (Mass Air Flow) sensor and a free-flowing exhaust along with lightweight pulleys, you'll see an impressive gain in horsepower/torque. The same goes for the 3SGE, the older and bigger brother to the 4AGE, as well as engines from Honda, Mitsubishi and Nissan.

Why are newer engines less responsive to bolt-on mods? The answer lies in the role of the engine



management units in these engines. The ECU in the 2ZZ-GE is leap years ahead of the 4AGE or 3SGE's OBD-I (On Board Diagnostics version 1) systems, and even in the most basic modern engine, the ECU has a lot more control over the vital functions of the engine, such as throttle position, A/F ratio, and so on. When you throw in a free flowing intake or exhaust into the mix, the ECU takes the higher airflow as a problem and all sorts of tiny adjustments are made that make the engine performance erratic. What does the doctor recommend? If you want to put bolt-ons on a new gen engine, take

time to remap the ECU. That doesn't mean new engines are less powerful n any way though, since the 2ZZGE makes close to 200HP while a similar displacement 3SGE makes nowhere near that.

That's one major advantage of newer engines. Due to OBD-II, the brains of the engine can be easily fettled with and monitored. All new cars come with a OBD-II port underneath the dashboard that allows easy access via laptop or even smartphone, something that was considered unthinkable back in the day.

So who wins the battle of old versus new? We at Shift are definitely biased towards the older, mechanical ways of making power, but we are almost won over by the appeal of newer performance builds. We'd need to sample more before giving a verdict, so go grab 2ZZs and do more swaps.

This is a condensed article for print. Head over to our site www.thedailystar.net for the full story.

Bangladesh isn't the worst, yet

Good news: Bangladesh isn't the worst at least not in terms of how we drive.

There are other countries where the way people drive hasn't evolve much since the time monkeys jumped off the tree branch and into a car.

Take for example China. For years they were told they could not think for risk of being executed. Thought was sacrilegious. But that's communism. You are not supposed to think but just do what the state wants you to which is not to think. And then suddenly, they figured out they could take over the world by sheer number of their own population being more than a billion. Sudden wealth, capitalism and influx of cash meant everyone who was previously walking in shared sandals could now have a car. The Chinese even have the dubious record of the longest traffic jam ever; about 100 kilometres long and stuck for eleven days in August 2010. Russia? Same thing: communism gave way to vodka fueledrealisation that money could perhaps buy happiness. So they bought cars and video cameras. Thousands of crash videos are uploaded on Youtube regularly from Russia with China coming in at a close second.

There's good old US of A where roads are ridiculously wide and yet people still can't avoid bumping into each other. It takes certain skill to crash a car while going straight in a wide empty road. Saudi Arabia isn't any better. Long wide open desert roads



lead to curious and furious cases of 'hagwalah'. It's a strange kind of driving where they get in regular cars, get on regular streets and get up to irregular speeds like 180kmph. And then they drift while school buses and other vulnerable soft-tissued humans come the other way. Crashes happen spectacularly. The most recent video online shows a car flipping more than twenty times with the occupants being thrown out. And there's people cheering from the sidelines. Can't figure out whether the cheers are for number of flips or number of limbs dismembered. Sometimes, these drivers shoot guns while drifting or even change tyres while up on two wheels. Perhaps this is the Saudi way of population control.

India has mostly small cars, but they are fast and operated by drivers with NO FEAR (not the lame sticker). It's closest to our scenario. They cut lines, drive on the wrong side of the road, use the horn for everything including speaking to each other. To top it off, they have random cows making life difficult for the racer-to-be. You can't hit a cow unlike in Bangladesh, where, if you hit it, you eat it. Hit a cow in India and you are doomed to be reincarnated as a urinal in public restroom. Twice.

We Bangladeshis are still terrible but like they say, if you are overweight and want to appear slim, hang out with people more overweight than yourself. By comparison, we are not the worst drivers in the world. Yet.

This article is a Digitally Re-mastered, no-holds barred, director's cut of a piece previously printed in Star Lifestyle.

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We have a new and revamped website for The Daily Star. Make sure to check out:

www.thedailystar.net/shift

for regularly updated automotive news, reviews, and everything in between. We will be running web-exclusive features on project cars, modification/maintenance tips and tricks, and more. As a bonus, you get access to exclusive hi-res wallpapers ready for download.

TOYOTA BANGLADESH

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