



SHIFT

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Honda Integra Type R DC2: according to EVO magazine, "the best FWD car of all time." We won't argue. Too bad none are in Dhaka. There are several DC5 Integras, though.

WHAT'S WRONG WITH FWD?

Front-wheel-drive cars bear a whole lot of ridicule when it comes to performance, with "purists" claiming that FWDs are the slowest around corners and least efficient in the way they put power down on the ground. Why, though, and what are some of the cars that break the FWD stigma through sheer performance?



Ford's Focus RS: so powerful it doled out torque steer.



Lancia Fulvia: the original FWD rally car.



Peugeot 205 GTI: a modern classic and super French.



VW Golf Mk1: the original hot hatch, and the first time a FWD hatch was shown to outperform supercars.

Developed as a cheap, economical and easy to maintain alternative drivetrain layout to the conventional (and ancient) rear-wheel drive layout, the very first production FWD car was in 1929, BSA's three wheeler. FWD would not be a mainstream layout till the early 80s, however. It was a new way to slash costs, and in an ever competitive global automotive industry, it was the Japanese who rose to the top and dominated for decades.

The Italians got to the performance FWD title early, with Lancia's incredible Fulvia coupe performing incredible feats in rallying in the 70's, a motorsport that was dominated by rear-wheel drive monsters at the time. The road going car was prone to rust and was far removed from the German attitude towards efficiency, and thus were a rarity on the roads, even in Italy.

The Germans were the first to take performance and add it to the FWD economy-performance car equation, with what everyone calls the very first "hot hatch": the Volkswagen MK1 Golf GTi. Not only did it revolutionise the way Europeans looked at the hatchback, it also surprised everyone with its nimbleness. So much so that test-drives of the GTi by the journals would be incomplete without a snapshot of the GTi cocking a wheel and turning on three wheels like a hyper, happy dog.

Ever since, the Germans have built rock solid cars that are fast (both in corners and in a straight line), frugal, easy to maintain and more reliable than someone saying the traffic in Dhaka is bad. You just accept the qualities and abilities of these cars without question. Case in point? Top Gear recently announced the Golf R to be best hot hatch in Britain, beating out solid contenders like the 2016 Honda Civic Type R (but only just).

The British were never great though, at making front wheel drive cars that performed well. The only commendable effort in the past couple of decades being the Lotus Elan, which looked prettier than it performed. Scroll way back into history and the original Mini was pretty zesty, but it was more of a cult symbol than a performance scorcher. The British hot hatch field only



People who've driven one say there is nothing else like it: Honda Civic Type R FD2.



Honda CRX Si-R. VTEC goodness started here, made it a legend.



Mazdaspeed3: Japan's answer to the Ford Focus RS.

did well in 4WD layout.

The French embraced front-wheel drive like no other. Dating back as early as 1934's Citroen Traction Avant (literally meaning "front wheel drive"), the French had greater understanding of what it took to make FWD work and work well. The late 80's saw the introduction of Peugeot's 205 GTI, which created such a sensation in the hot hatch market that every subsequent GTI, from Peugeot or otherwise, were compared to the original. A 1.9 litre 126 HP 4 cylinder engine powered the most powerful 205 GTI at the time, throwing the cause for its appeal into doubt. No one could ever pinpoint what they liked about the car, except that it felt fluid and smooth and fast like nothing else, even if it wasn't actually going fast.

The Japanese approach has been laughed at by the rest of the world ever since its inception, even though they made some of the best FWD performance cars, ever. Honda was a clear leader in engineering superb FWD cars, with the CRX Si of 1988 responsible for launching the careers of the best import drag racers in the world, like Stephen Papadakis and Jeremy Lookofsky. However, over time, FWD Hondas took on the image of cars for reckless, childish street racers and the term "ricer" became a common term for anyone driving a bodykitted Honda. While it may have been a valid term back in the day for the US, in Japan it was a completely different story. Japan, and other right hand drive markets, got access to the bonkers Type R Hondas. Armed with tiny four cylinder VTEC twin cam engines and a signature "Type R" feral feel, the Civics and Integras and Accords ripped into supercars costing almost ten times more and having many more horsepower. The Civic and Integra Type R's gained a cult following in the UK, with automotive journalists such as the ones from EVO magazine calling the DC2 Integra Type R "the best front wheel drive car ever made".

As always, there were engine swaps aplenty, people turning regular Hondas into fire breathing Type R spec cars. However, they did not come with the magic suspension and grip setups that factory Type R's came with. The latest, turbocharged, 100% FWD Civic Type R did a blisteringly fast lap of Nurburgring's Nordschliefe race track, regarded by many as the infamous, fiendishly difficult holy ground of lap times and comparisons between cars. What did the 306 HP monster do? It soundly trounces the old front-wheel-drive record, a 7:54.36 set by the Renault Megane RS 275 Trophy-R, by doing a 7:50.63 minute lap.

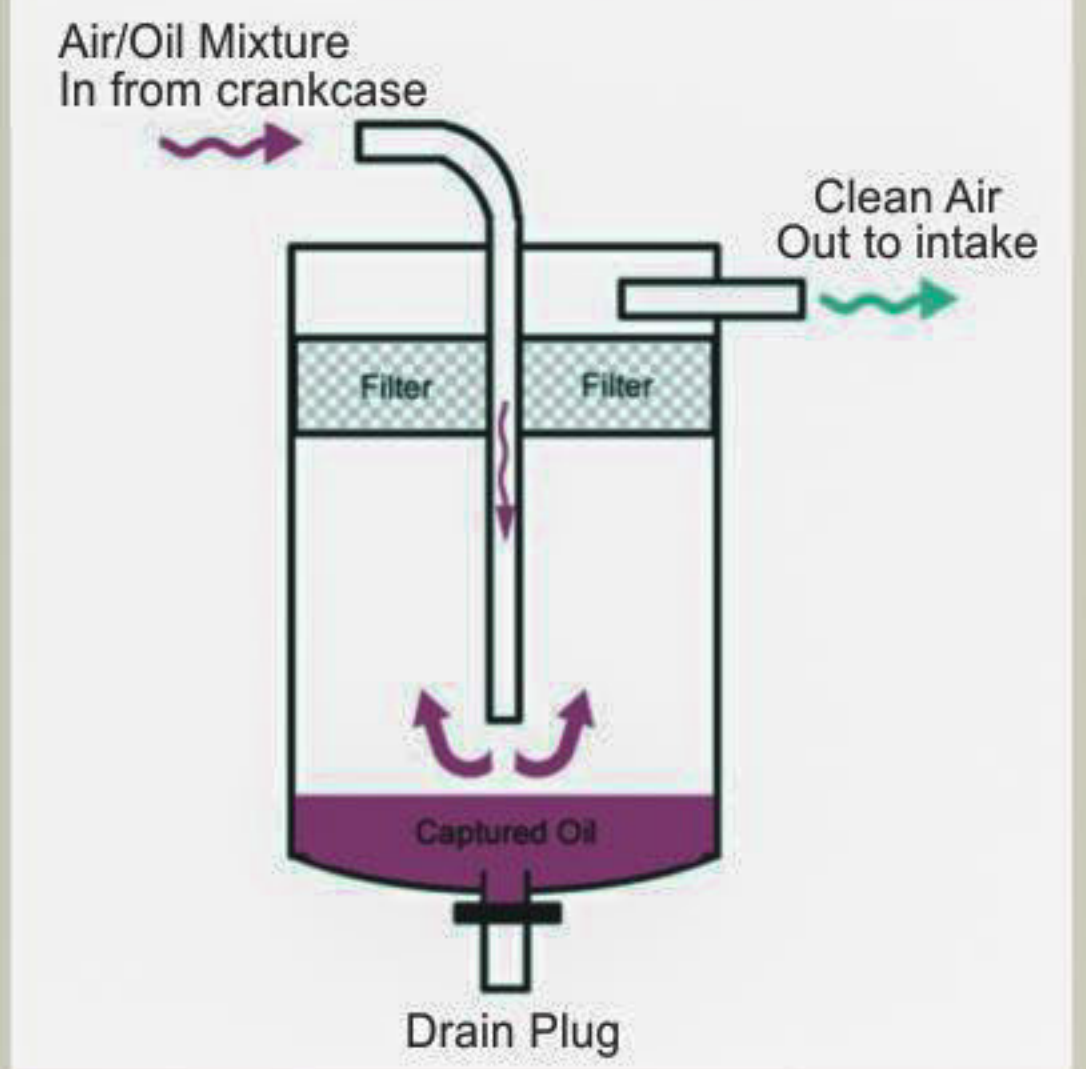
The Americans were never great at building FWD performance cars, but Ford Europe was a different entity altogether from their ribs-n-guns cousins across the Atlantic. Ford Europe, starting in the early 2000's, gifted the world some incredible gems: the first generation Ford Focus ST, the Ford Focus RS, and the Fiesta ST. All of them were overpowered and in the case of the last gen Focus RS, it suffered from severe torque steer. For the latest Focus RS, Ford turned to all-wheel-drive to tame the 315 plus horsepower figure.

Say what you will about front-wheel-drive cars, but car manufacturers will keep making them in the pursuit of more performance per buck. If you can go fast and corner as efficiently as rear or all-wheel drive cars, why not front-wheel drive? So lay off the hate and see FWD performance cars for what they are: performance cars.

MYTH

Oil catch cans keep your engine rock solid

What the thing is - Cylindrical container the size of your palm, these oil catch cans are designed in a manner so they 'trap' crankcase fumes and alleviate the crankcase pressure which could possibly cause engine seal leaks or damages. Modern combustion engines have a mechanism of optimizing the efficiency through all means; even sending in refined engine fumes to the intake manifold. The problem is, as the motor gets old, the fumes are no longer properly distilled before being re-used again, resulting in injector clogging and shorter



motor life. With an oil catch tank installed, you prevent this sticky oil entering your intake. What car noobs think of this - Glitzy engine bay ornamentation. Erm, that's it. And nothing else. As a result, they resort to getting the cheap kicks and fake knock offs out in the market which literally do nothing except drying off the wallet. Even after a lifetime of hundred oil changes, possibility of having any residue in the catch can is nil. What auto tuners/ enthusiasts think of this - Worked out naturally aspirated motors and engines running high psi forced induction have more crankcase pressure which needs proper release. Enthusiasts ensure to get the branded catch cans which actually function as opposed to (cheap) non-branded ones. HKS/ GReddy/ Cosco ones are around in eBay for around US\$ 200. Pricey, but they work. A cleansing of the tank is required occasionally, depending on the car's make and model; some say after every couple of oil services.

Or if you want to be a rebel, just get a breather worth nothing and put them on.



MAHBUB HUSSAIN

COLLECTIBLES



DCCCB holding scale model photo contest

Die-cast Car Collectors Club of Bangladesh (or DCCCB for short), are having a big meet up on 12th of September. They are an online group of die hard collectors, young, old and very old, sharing one thing in common. This weekend they will be meeting up offline so they can eat good food and talk good cars. And to celebrate the occasion there's a photo contest going on. For details on all this, head to the Facebook page and join the group if miniature cars are your thing. Some of them like bikes too.



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