



SHIFT

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AUTO NEWS

HOT HATCH 3-WAY

The concept of hot hatches has been stretched a bit too far it seems. There was a time when having a hot hatch meant zipping through the alleyways on three wheels with great front wheel drive and body dynamics. Firepower and the need for speed have changed it all.

Ford Focus RS - Over the last two years, a phenomenal development has been brewing across Ford's R&D plants across the globe. A dedicated team from Ford Performance got together and cooked up the third generation of Focus RS- and Ken Block is one of the main brains behind the development of this beast. Mind you, the last generation 2009 RS already had a round figure 300 HP, but it had FWD and lacked appropriate handling balance. This time



around, they introduced the award winning Mustang sharing 2.3 litre EcoBoost 4 cylinder twin scroll turbo motor. Mated with a 6 speed manual tranny and a rally spec 4WD torque vectoring unit and aerodynamics trickery, you can throw the mean looking RS into any corner or terrain and come out exactly the way you want to with ear shattering pops and burbles from the twin tail pipes. 345 BHP and 324 lb ft of torque; no wait, 347 lb ft for 15 seconds of over boost-that's how mental the 2016 Ford Focus RS is. For the first time in the history of hot hatches- there is a Drift mode. And it works. You want to be Ken Block? Get the new Focus RS. As much as we want this to hit Bangladesh, we also doubt it would ever happen. So much for a deshi Block.

Mercedes Benz A45 AMG - Behold the mighty 2 litre four cylinder boosted engine of this little hatch that won the most powerful four cylinder production engine this year. I drove the sedan version (CLA45 AMG) equipped with this little devil of a power plant earlier this month and I can only imagine it should be a handful when stuffed into the smaller and lighter A45 AMG. Part time all-wheel drive & 355 BHP that does a 4.8 second 0-100 KPH sprint. However, we concluded in



our CLA45 AMG piece that it (and the A45 AMG too for that matter) is perhaps not the best car to badge the AMG emblem with as it lacked certain hooligan character. Just because we love the three pointy stars so much, you shouldn't be surprised to see a lone A45 around soon.

Honda Civic Type R - JDM power. That's what we all crave, and the high revving naturally aspirated Honda has revolutionized history with the release of its 2016 Civic Type R. Eye piercing design, track spec handling with FWD, 6 M/T, 2 litre turbo 4 cylinder VTEC power to kill your adrenaline rush-306 BHP, 295 lb ft of torque, 0-100 KPH in 5.7 seconds. The engine may not have the VTEC step-change-scream of the 2.0 K20A N/A at 8,000 RPM, but it still charges hard at the top and gives enough mid range thump to battle the Euro competitors. You bet you can have



this crazy little Honda for one third the price you would pay for the cars mentioned above, you can expect to have this on our shores as soon as Honda starts international deliveries. Official imports? Dunno. But grey imports, certainly.

But there's more 300 HP madness going on in the hatchery. Audi RS3's 363 HP does 0-100 in 3.9 seconds which is erm, supercar territory. BMW's last RWD hatch M135i has a 322 HP turbo straight six while Volkswagen's Golf R with almost 300 HP is perhaps the most balanced out of all. Check our online section for more on those.

MAHBUB HUSSAIN

TEST DRIVE

Boardroom suaveness 2014 Lexus GS300H



Strictly in a Bangladeshi context, the eat-your-greens Lexus GS300H is a car you would buy if you were a successful business man and have your chauffeur drive you about. What makes me come to that conclusion? Quite frankly, there are loads of cars that are much nicer to drive than this, but very few that is so nice to be driven in. It's just that smooth and it's a handsome looking car as well; if you were to be driven around town in something



subtle, this is it.

If you leave this car in Eco mode (where it most probably will be driven in for the rest of its life sentence), the big rev counter on the left of the cluster disappears and a "eco-meter" appears which encourages economical driving. The throttle pedal actually feels like it's doing the work of two pedals in one. The first half of it, the car

doesn't really go anywhere; sure the speed climbs but at the same urgency as a fat dog. When you start to step on it further, it's far too sensitive which gives an impression that this car doesn't really want to go quickly, it likes being driven smooth. If you're gentle with the throttle the passengers would fall asleep in a matter of minutes without even realizing it. It's like floating on water, the suspension does a tremendous job.

There is a Sport and Sport+ mode in the car, which brings back the good 'ole tachometer. If you put it in manual mode, you can use the paddle shifters and somebody wearing a lab-coat at Lexus thought it would be a good idea if the CVT were to emulate "actual gears" in the same fashion as a tiptronic transmission. The car, being a hybrid, makes all its power in the

low RPM range and is out of breath after 4000 RPM, which is probably what it was designed to do. Although I did not expect it, this car with all its comfort-oriented suspension handles quite well, and this is a sign Lexus really did a good job on the chassis: its rigid but it won't break your back.

The interior has a gigantic 12.3 inch display set into the wide center console, which can be operated by a very Lexus-sy computer mouse inspired remote touch controller. The finish of the interior panels is top notch, you get heated seats, all the switches and knobs are beautifully made and feel posh. The steering is not just a steering, it's cluttered with all sorts of switches to control...things just in case you feel like driving it yourself once in a while. You get a traditional dial and needle style clock mounted between the AC vents and a neat drinks holder. The front seats are electrically adjustable, although I can't help but wonder: if a 2001 onwards Toyota Allion can have a reclining and folding rear seat, why not this? Possibly because the hybrid battery packs and trees and such are hiding behind the seat. The rear leg-room is a bit cramped when the front seats are in their normal position. Considering you'll be spending most of your time in the rear seats, Lexus decided to put switches on the

side of the front passenger seat which allows you to move the front seat forwards in order to create more space without actually asking the passenger up front. That's not the solution Lexus, that's just a Band-Aid around the problem.

The brake pedal needs a bit of encouragement to work because of the regenerative braking system which converts the wasted heat energy from braking into battery charge for EV mode. This car can be driven purely on EV mode itself for a short while, and while we didn't get to test it out properly, in our short test we drove it through a traffic jam on electric mode only. That means as long as you don't stomp on the throttle, the petrol engine won't fire up and some polar bears will be very happy. The switch from EV mode to the petrol engine is seamless and we noticed that the fuel gauge didn't move at all during our test drive.

Whatever Lexus has done to make this car so efficient has surely worked, I bet you could run around in this all day without worrying about it eating up my wallet.

The Lexus GS300H is for sale at a price of 97 lakh. For details, contact RPM Motors Ltd.

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GAME REVIEW

RETURN OF THE NEED FOR SPEED?

EA games made an unprecedented move last year when they announced they had no plans on a NFS release for 2014, thus breaking a cycle that had remained untouched for nearly a decade. The break was required to make the next title as great as it is possible to make by bringing back what all gamers have wanted for a while now. Need For Speed 2015 is that very game. Supposedly a reboot of the entire franchise, EA hopes that with this new title, they will bring back the once loyal

followers back under its banners. But how is the game really? All that one hopes for, or yet more marketing gibberish?

For the first time since The Run, this new title features a storyline. However, if you are expecting and immersive story like the original Most Wanted, then don't hold your breath. The storyline is similar to the Underground series; lone driver shows up, hooks up with friends who, in turn, hooks you up with races and parts. To be honest, the story doesn't really bother much as that wasn't the point anyway, but be prepared for a barrage of fist bumps. With the basic outline dealt with, let's dive into the review.

THE PROS

GRAPHICS: No matter which way you look at it, the graphics is spectacular. The droplets you can see on the rims as you customize your car really show how beautiful the graphics is. Also as you blaze through Ventura Bay, the city elements combined with the lighting, brings everything to life. And I love how they implemented game elements into the story clips.

CAR ROSTER: If 250GTOs and Bertones are your thing, then you'll be disappointed, although the game does feature an F40. Other than that, the game features popular JDM icons like the GT-R, Supra, RX-7 and so on. It also has an assortment of Euro spec cars like Ferraris, Lamborghinis, Porsches, and BMWs, including the M4 and the recently announced M2. In short, most petrol heads would have an easy time with the

THE CONS

HANDLING CHARACTERISTICS: The most polite way to describe the handling dynamics of the game is "unrealistic". Every car feels like a four-wheel drive block of lead. A good example to demonstrate the drivetrain flaw is tuning a muscle car for maximum power but leaving handling aspects stock and then taking it to the wet streets for a standing



roster of cars.

CUSTOMIZING: Barring a few exotics, customization options are quite numerous for most models, particularly JDMs. Customizations range from slapping on a body kit to intricate bodywork modifications. A point to note is that while there is an option to modify the lights, both front and back, they aren't available for a large number of the cars.

start. The scenario should be burning rubber and the mother of all burnouts, but in the game, the wheel spin lasts less than a second before launching off like a 22B Impreza. The handling slider doesn't do help either as switching between Grip or Drift feels like either choosing non responsive, understeering behemoths or driving on a road made of banana peel and grease.

AI RUBBER BANDING: By far and away the worst bug in the game, which comes very close to ruining the whole experience. AI rubber banding refers to the computer controlled opponents' ability to keep up with the player. In most other racing games, this rubber banding is kept at minimum and is based on a lot of variables such as AI car stats vs. Player car stats. In this game though, it doesn't matter what you drive or how well. Be ready to have your lead taken over by an underpowered opponent who you left behind in an accident not 10 seconds ago. In short, this is the worst case of AI rubber banding I have come across since the days of Juiced.

ALWAYS ONLINE: While this isn't really all that big of a bug, it is a definite nuisance. Not only are other players in the same city as you, they can also mess around during your single player missions. Also, the game spits you out the moment you lose your internet connection. So did the new Need For Speed achieve everything it set out to do? I'm afraid not. However, this game has a secret charm to it. The handling and rubber banding does pull the game down, but EA has recently announced an update to fix the rubber banding and also introduce neon mods. So this game does have the potential to turn its fate around. In the end, it will be PC gamers who will enjoy the game properly in the end as all updates, both present and future, will be baked in.

INTISAB SHAHRIYAR

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