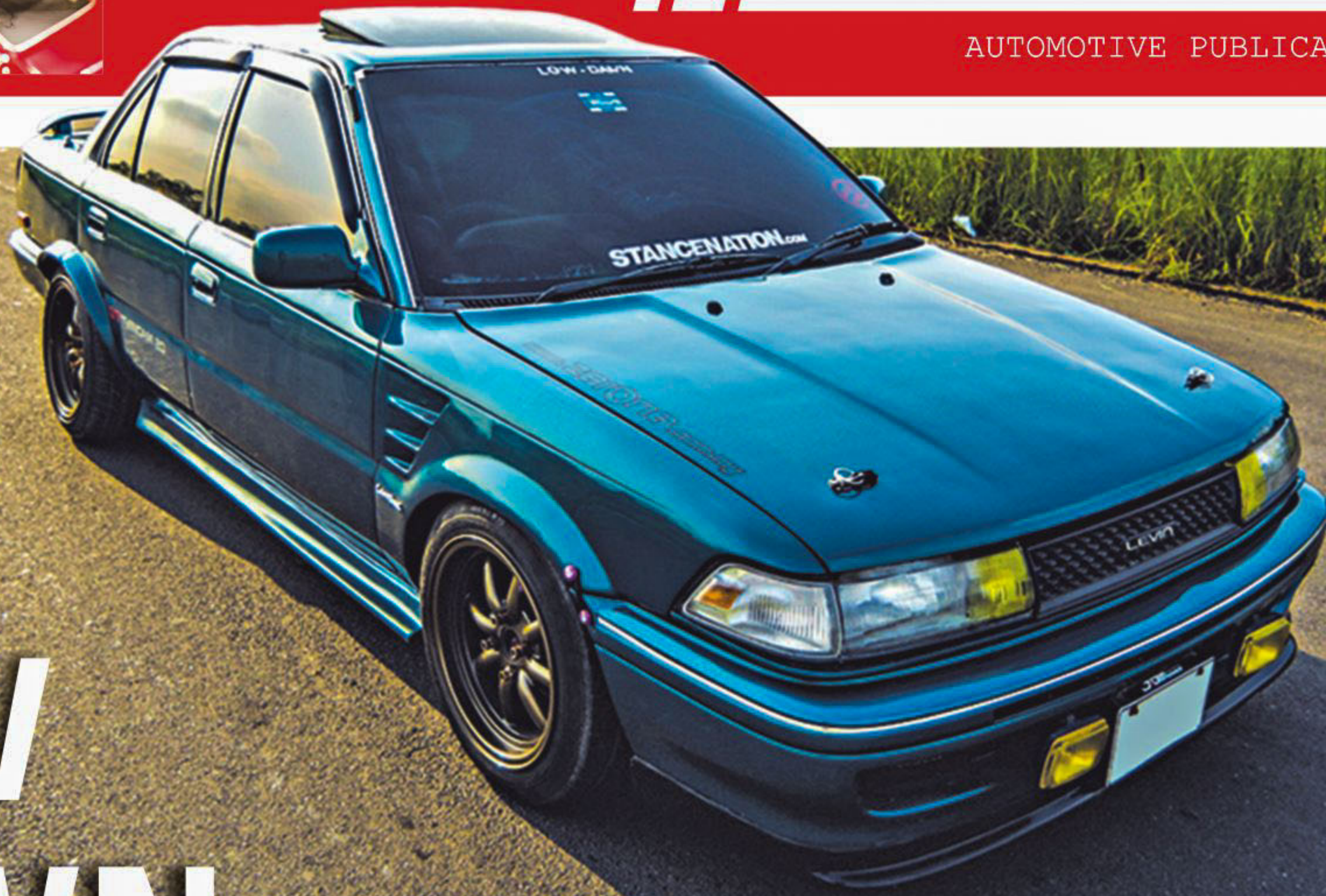


SHIFT

AUTOMOTIVE PUBLICATION OF The Daily Star



PROJECT CARS

LOW DOWN

The Toyota Corolla EE90, at one time the national car of Bangladesh, has been customised to the ends of the Earth by every Joshim out there in various ways. Some are priced to the point where it's difficult to tell what car it is underneath, let alone look long enough at it to find out. Some are done properly: sleeper looks with 4AGE power and overall ease of use, the Corolla name's trump card. Yet others take a page out of the South East Asian style of building front wheel drive Toyotas: loud, brash, and often slightly unrefined, to better show the car (and the owner's) roots.

Syed Abrar has gone through several phases with his Ee90 Corolla. First came the "lowered slightly, with loud exhaust" phase - everyone with a project car or the desire to start a project on a car has been through it, when you want to start work on the car but don't have the right direction fixed yet. Then, over the years, the Corolla slowly evolved, the parts list grew, and inspiration was found in places here and there.

At the height of his experimentation, Abrar decided to facelift his Corolla. Plastic surgery might not yield great results when done on 50 year old women who desire to be considered the Real-sist Housewife of New Jersey, but on cars, if done right and with the right vision, they can make you stand out more than your average wheel-swap. The headlights, complete with JDM style in-housed yellow fogs, grille and badge are lifted off the AE92 Levin coupe, and swapped in seamlessly onto the E90 front end. The bumper is from the AE90 Sprinter, and the whole front end comes together very nicely, giving the E90 a square cut, handsome face that is a far cry from what many would call the

lumpy, awkward front end of the basic Corolla. The custom front lip, side skirt, widened rear arches and vented front fenders add up to make it seem more aggressive.

While the front end might look like it came with the car from the factory, the rest of the car has been treated to an array of parts and JDM style pieces that make it anything but factory fresh.

Custom exhaust and piping expel the outgoing gases from the blacktop 4AGE beating under the hood (in the purple painted engine bay), while on the other end, a K&N intake system sucks in fresh air to feed to the 20 valve motor. The car is slammed to the ground and a set of Ultra Racing bars tighten up the aging chassis for some on the limit fun. There's some serious camber on this car, both front and rear.

On the inside, an array of gauges let Abrar know the state of things when he's pushing the 20 valve, while his obvious fascination with stickers is further evidenced through a stickerbombed centre console.

The car is not buttery smooth. The roughness, the inconsistent panel gaps and the custom touches all add up to give the aura of a car that is driven hard, often. That there is the whole ethos of the people driving and customising these cars in places like Thailand, Philippines, Indonesia, Malaysia and Brunei. They like their cars loud, abrasive and in-your-face, and Syed Abrar's inspired efforts with his 90 are certainly on the mark.

WORDS: SHAER REAZ
PHOTOS: TASDID H. CHOWDHURY



The South Asian way of doing it



Front end swaps, loud colours, retro style bodykits - the South Asian style of building basic cars like the Corolla takes a page out of classic Japanese tuning and applies the unique flavour of a bustling urban landscape to it. It's not entirely about going fast, you have to look good while moving, too. That means lowering the car until it scrapes and is mostly difficult to drive. Bonkers, but cool.



COLLECTIBLES

1:43 Ferrari Daytona torpedo



Ferrari's designs were once only about three portions: a mile long hood, a tiny space for a person to sit in crookedly and a short butt. They were road going rockets designed to take care of, or cause phallic envy. And the 365GTB4 embodies that more than any other.

More popularly known as a Daytona, this torpedo of a Ferrari isn't that well known to the newer crowd of scale model car collectors. Hotwheels made only one low detailed version which frankly does not elicit that much oohs and aahs. Whoever else makes it, make it for the collectors. And this Kyosho 1:43 model is a work of art. It is embellished with amazing engine detail that includes hood and battery terminal wires and fully working hood struts that extend like the real thing. The trunk opens to show a carpeted space and the interiors is made of a multitude of different pieces accurately coloured and textured to be as close to the real thing as possible.

Kyosho makes mostly terrible 1:64 models. The paint is often so thick for anything other than silver cars that most details are drowned. But the 1:43 takes care of all that. And then when you go into 1:18, it's a crazy world. Head to our site for more photos and details.

WORDS & PHOTO: E.R. RONNY

OUR ROADS AND STANCE

Let's play basic- take any car and lower it by a few millimeters. Regardless of the car, a subtle lowering can bring profound aesthetic changes. A zero tuned Corolla X, despite being an egg on four wheels, will still look polite and not make you want to kill it with a sledgehammer. But is Dhaka built for lowered cars?

Happened with couple of friends of mine - they could not even get their lowered cars out of their garages as the apartments they reside in have drive ramps with hill climbing geometry angles. Yes, our country is flood prone, but the real estate builders forget that apartment residents use cars. And some cars have long wheelbases, some have lips or rear diffusers. My neighbour's friend tried too hard in getting his TRD lipped Celica out of his apartment and resulted in scraping the front lip. There are worse cases - the imported bumper of a Lancer EX snapped and cracked completely while climbing down the driveway. The horror is just about to begin.

Interestingly, we are yet to venture near the ungodly topic of speed bumps. While discussing lowered cars, we MUST rage against these ridiculous speed bumps. Dhaka can very well be called the city of speed breakers. Ironically, you can't even attain 'speed' in this city; instead these end up breaking your car and its suspension gradually. Hatirjheel's rather charming bridges and curves are now infested with humongous speed



bumps, which too, will not only scrape (and may break) your car's front lip, rear diffuser/bumper and side skirts, but might damage your total exhaust system if you are not careful or if it is one of those unlucky days. A friend with his lovely GX110 Mark II on 17 inch wheels got caught off guard while ascending a bridge on an ill-fated night and according to him, "flew for a wee bit and then drove back home with the front bumper in the rear trunk". My own car, an E90 Sprinter, is low with 15 inch SSRs and has an Ultra Racing front four-point harness. For me, speed bumps are like devil's trident ready to prick you if you are not vigilant in going slow and sideways over them. The smaller/flatter bumps can be forgiving at times but the Everest inspired ones are the murderers. I once got stuck at the Dhaka- Sylhet N2 highway where the bumps scraped my car's total bottom surface area along with the surface area of my heart. Some have to resort to forcing their rear passengers to dismount, before their stanced cars can go over the bumps. Certain groups have had enough with the impatient honking of drivers trailing them while they climb over speed bumps at snail's pace and slapped a "Be patient-I'm Lowered" sticker on the back of the car. As if all drivers would be able to comprehend that.

Multiple ridged speed bumps is a modern concept of relatively slowing down the car before it enters a

residential complex or a busy intersection. They are a few sets of four to five strips of industrial/road paint maxing out at 10 to 15 millimeters vertically, allowing the vehicle to gently dribble over them at a moderate speed without disrupting the flow of traffic. In Bangladesh however, the idea has been taken to an all new level where the authorities decided to have them at multiple locations on already busy roads such as the Mymensingh Road (leading to and from the Hazrat Shahjalal International Airport), making the traffic congestions worse. The ridged strips are in fact two inches of concrete tar, placed couple of feet off one another. Not all the vehicles of Bangladesh are trucks or busses with indestructible suspension parts. While the SUVs and vans can go over them as if they are nonexistent, the lowered and stiffened cars go through living hell.

So, cohorts of 'Stancenation' and 'illest' fantasizing tucking in their cambered, stretched tires under the fender should in fact be pondering on how to move from point A to B in this country without hewing off fender bits. You just cannot be dreaming of a decently lowered car in this country.

Check online for the full article at our site, www.thedailystar.net/shift

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