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LANCER EVO & IMPREZA OWNERS' MEET

The parking lot at Le Meridien hotel in Nikunja got a lot more interesting thanks to a meet organised on 27th January for owners of Mitsubishi Lancer Evolutions and Subaru Imprezas. Organised by the Lancer Evolution Owners Club of Bangladesh, it was the first time all the Subaru Imprezas of the country gathered in one place opposite their Lancer counterparts. For extended coverage with more photos, head to our site at www.thedailystar.net/shift.



AUTO NEWS

Ultimate luxury: 2018 Lexus LS



The Lexus LS model launched the Lexus brand in 1990 and completely revolutionised the standards for flagship luxury models, with an unmatched level of smoothness, quietness and reliability. Since then, Lexus has cemented itself as a genuine rival to the European powerhouses such as Mercedes Benz and BMW. At the 2017 North American International Auto Show, Lexus launched the fifth generation of their flagship LS model.

The new LS is based on an extended LC500 chassis and will be built on the GA-L platform, which promises a much more engaging drive than previous generations. Like the BMW 7 and Mercedes S, flagship luxury sedans are now also considered drivers' cars, and Lexus wants a piece of the action – the bulky, slightly underpowered V8 motors are gone, switched for a twin turbo 3.5 litre V6 producing 415 HP and 442 lb-ft of torque. For putting power to the ground, there's a 10-speed transmission, the short, closely spaced ratios aiding both fuel efficiency and driving dynamics.

Inside, expect a whole host of new tech from the screen-filled interior as Lexus claims the LS will introduce a whole new dimension to luxury cars. One brilliant touch are the 80's style knobs on either side of the instrument binnacle, invoking a vague sense of nostalgia for people who grew up with 80's dashboards.

The looks may be opinion dividing, but there's no doubt the LS will stir some feathers for the more established luxury brands.

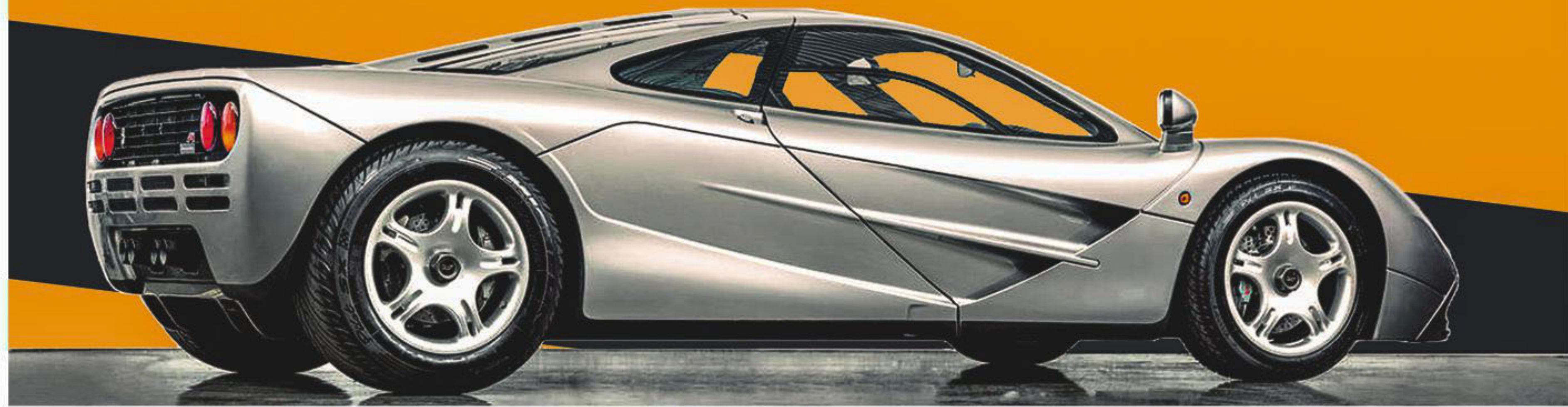
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ACTUALLY, THE 90'S WAS THE GREATEST DECADE FOR CARS



My love for cars is probably genetic. My father has a thing for simple old American cars with loads of torque: 70's cars basically. Part of his experience involved a 66 Ford Falcon that never ever stuttered or broke down while his later series of Mazdas, Datsuns and Toyotas often did. He would likely agree that the 70's was great for motoring. Except, it wasn't.

The 70's gave us boxy cars designed by curve-challenged engineers. As children they kicked a cube around a field because no one showed them what a ball really was. Few cars had curves, fewer yet were made to last the ravages of the environment. It was only due to rust these square cars transformed into balls of red dust.

The 90's on the other hand proved to be a game changer for cars despite being probably the most boring decade of all. It was the time when fashion involved running into a wardrobe and coming out to see what had stuck. And Donald Trump was busy building walls around his hotels instead of walls around his country. But the cars are what we care for.

The Japanese takeover & birth of the efficient turbo

The 70's saw Japanese build the Kenmeri and Celicas that are considered classic collector's items. But these were all derivative of American cars of the era. The Japanese took western designs and infused them with lighter, more efficient powertrains. It's in the 90's this continuous striving for efficiency took off. It was also rise of the Japanese supercars. The 4th gen Toyota Supra came with twin turbos and active yaw control. The FD RX7 turbo showed the world what rotary power from small displacements is all about, until it exploded. The R32 Skyline GTR brought twin turbos, AWD. Same with the Mitsubishi 3000GTO. You could see the commonality being smallish engines with turbo assist. Turbos existed another couple decades earlier but they simply didn't work smoothly. The 90's started the perfection. And let's not forget the naturally aspirated Honda NSX, the one car that gave supercars everywhere a bit of a scare. It was Ayrton Senna's ride of choice (he also helped develop it), who was arguably the best damn racing driver in the world.

These cars set the stage for everything we have now with turbo being the choice for most luxury marquees seeking efficient power. Hello BMW and Mercedes of today. Crazy coachbuilders and fast grocery getters

This was the last era when anyone and

everyone could build crazy sports cars in the little space behind the kitchen sink and turn it into a legitimate business. Wonderfully insane cars emerged, suddenly. Isdera Commendatore, Ascari, Noble and Panoz. They all had power and some swoopy exterior styling hiding an often horrendously mashed together interior.

On the other end of the spectrum, the public had a huge assortment of fast grocery getters to choose from. Toyota offered their highly improved 4AGE engine for all types of pedestrian Corollas. Honda went bonkers offering performance versions of just about everything they had, especially the lowly Civic.



And then there was Autozam, an offshoot dealership of Mazda that made the AZ-1. It was a quirky Kei car with turbo and gullwing doors. Automakers experimented like mad. And this was during the time of the Japanese asset price bubble burst. Overinflated real estate and stock prices came crashing along with their confidence in creating strange cars. For a while anyways.

The European supercars

90's gave us the one Lamborghini that kick-started and carried the company through a decade of troubled times. Chrysler bought it in 1987 and replaced the ageing Countach with the Diablo.

Over the next decade Lambo changed hands several times until it was sold to Volkswagen 1998. In that time the Diablo singlehandedly carried the torch for being the coolest, loudest, brashest looking supercar from Italy.

The British Jaguar XJ220 was recorded back in 1994 as the fastest production car hitting a bit over 217 MPH. It went so fast that the air over the windshield caused the wipers to bend. Could be the budget for the wiper department was really low. The follow up was the McLaren F1, the car that is considered the epitome of all modern supercars. In 1998 it set the record for fastest production car at 240.1



racetrack. It had a terrible interior just like the other gem, the Dodge Viper. They put an 8.0 litre truck engine pumping out way more torque than anyone without steel ball should be able to handle. But that was it. Only recently they realised the joy of adding turbo to small engines. And they even went AWD for their Challenger muscle car. The leaders are not followers.

Less than electrifying beginnings

The Americans did one other thing right. Then they did it wrong instantly. GM launched the EV1 in 1996 with people giving it high praise for being a true zero emission vehicle. There's great controversy as to why this car was killed off even though public interest was high. Save the oil burners maybe? We'll add that to the mystery pile labelled 'Jet fuel can't melt steel beams'.

The Prius came along in 1997 as a successful hybrid and now almost every automaker has a hybrid vehicle in the works. This includes supercar manufacturers who previously only found power in the fossilised memories of dinosaur families.

Safer at speed

Up to the eighties, things just rolled along for the petrolheads. Cool cars came and went. What the 90's got right was bringing in speed, safety and reliability together. Lincoln started providing standard ABS on all four wheels from 1993. Others followed suit. Airbags were patented as early as 1951 but it only gained momentum in the 90's as more and more people realised the benefits. And thus the stage was set for all the cool things we have now. It also got rid of the cassette tape and the need to tighten the reel so it doesn't get jammed in the middle of your favourite jam. The 90's was like the opening track of Phil Collins' "In the Air Tonight". It set the mood, built up the pace and now we have the heavy drum riff that follows, the bit everyone waits for during the song. If you know it, you're probably making those drumming sounds with your mouth right now.


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