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PROJECT CARS



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TOYOTA ALTEZZA RS200

When Toyota launched the Altezza in Japan in 1998 and subsequently decided to sell it as the Lexus IS (Intelligent Sport) in Europe and North America, their idea was to make a capable, well rounded sport sedan that would offer sharper driving dynamics than the rest of the softly sprung executive sedans that were for sale in the Lexus range. What they got in the Altezza was a highly adept sport sedan that now has a cult following in parts of the world.

The Altezza is truly a thing of beauty. Taut proportions, wheels placed at extremities, bulging bodywork in all the right places and sleek lines running front to back, the Tezza is hands down one of the best looking sedans to have come out at the turn of the century. It's also a highly significant design, since it existed only for a brief time in the late 90's and early 00's before the Altezza was replaced by fatter, heavier, uglier designs that eventually became the standard.

Shafiee Rahman, professional gamer, racing simulation geek and the owner of this pristine white Altezza, is relatively new to the car scene - his brother used to drive an RX8 and Shafiee was generally interested in cars, but he wasn't what you'd call a full-bored petrolhead. Till he got a taste of a machine as well engineered as the RS200 Altezza, anyway.

The RS200 comes with a 3SGE BEAMS 4 cylinder motor from the factory. Utilising a dual VVT-I system on both intake and exhaust camshafts, the fifth and final generation of the 3SGE had an output of 197 BHP/160 lb-ft torque if paired to the 5-speed auto and 207 BHP/160 lb-ft torque if hooked up to the 6-speed manual transmission. While the 3SGE is a gem of an engine (albeit a bit underpowered) with brilliant naturally aspirated response, fans of the Altezza rave on and on about how balanced, poised and fun the chassis is.

Shafiee knows a thing or two about chassis dynamics - spending countless hours on racing simulations like Project Cars and Forza Motorsport, he's mastered countless corners on the most well-known tracks around the world behind his Logitech G25 gaming wheel. The transition from simulation to reality takes more effort, obviously, but so far, Shafiee is happy with the way his Tezza handles. The front strut bar, lowering springs and the slight rake helps, although Shafiee has ordered coilover suspension, which will go on soon enough.

This Altezza is completely clean - custom headlights and taillights, TRD kit, custom wing and a few details here and there, the Tezza is as fresh as it was from the factory. With only about 35,000 km's on the clock, it's a low mileage example as well. Everything on the car works

- the sleek lines, the wheels, the stance and the brilliant white paintjob - the sheer presence this beauty is palpable. An Altezza, done right.

Head to our site (www.thedailystar.net/shift) for an extended feature.

WORDS: SHAER REAZ
PHOTOS: RAHIN SADMAN ISLAM



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AUTO NEWS

BMW 8 comes back with a bang

The BMW 8 series was a hugely desirable pop-up festooned GT car from the early 90's. Powered by V12 engines with pillarless doors and big wheels and fancy interiors, it was just too advanced for its time to actually sell in numbers - making it a rare, sleek BMW from one of the best design eras the German marque has had.

Now, the 8 is back. And they're definitely making it. Unveiled at the 2017 Concorso d'Eleganza Villa d'Este, the Concept 8-Series is slated for production in 2018 and is going to be BMW's flagship sports-car.

The design brief was definitely meant to bring the 8 into modern times.

visual link with the previous 8 is just the Hoffmeister kink in the side window profile, and that's it. The kidney grilles are set to be the largest in the BMW range, continuing with the recent tradition of giving the flagship model the largest grille. Front to back, it isn't really sleek, but it IS drop dead gorgeous in a hyper-modern, vaguely Aston Martin-ish way. We're just not sure if those oversized kidney grilles work with the rest of the stunning bodywork.

There's no word on the drivetrain yet, although you should expect the regular BMW levels of refinement and modern efficiency. That most likely means there won't be a thumping great V12 under the hood, instead going for a small displacement turbocharged V8 for the highest spec, more in tune with the times.

It might not be as heart-ache inducing as the original, but it's still brilliant.

PROPOSED BUDGET 2017-18

Want that Volvo XC90? Get it before it's too expensive.

Every time the Finance Minister prepares to announce a budget, the country goes into a frenzy, stocking up on chewing gum and fresh air in case the supplementary duties on imported gum and non-polluted Nepalese air goes up by 6000%. It's generally a time of dread for even the most cautious of optimists - and FY2017-18 is no different.

declared to be "the best budget ever". Instead, we'll focus on how the proposed budget affects the transportation sector.

The proposed budget for FY2017-18 has not increased the supplementary duty placed on cars - in fact, the major changes have been reductions in the SD.

The major changes for regular vehicles come in the slab for

hybrid vehicles with petrol engines ranging from 1600cc to 2000cc gets 45% SD (down from 60%), 2000cc to 3000cc gets 60% SD (down from 150%), 3000cc to 4000cc gets 100% (down from 300%) and those exceeding 4000cc gets 300% supplementary duty (down from 500%). This softening of attitude towards hybrid vehicles is apparently supposed to encourage the import of more environmentally friendly vehicles, which goes in line with the government's mandate for reducing carbon emissions. Obviously, when it comes to charging your environmentally friendly plug-in hybrid, feel free to be morally ambiguous about the coal-fired power plants that the government is building for you.

Overall, the proposed budget allocates 26.8% of the total budget to the Transport sector - excluding the budget allotted to the Ministry of Railways, the Road Transport and Highways Division as well as the Bridge Division gets 25,224 crore Taka for FY2017-18. Considering that fund was 4,390 crore Taka for FY2012-13, that is a huge increase - approximately a 470% increase, discounting the cost of inflation. For a more in-depth look at the 2017-18 budget and how it will affect you, head to our site (www.thedailystar.net/shift).



While there are reservations elsewhere in the budget that will cripple the middle class and discourage savings (what logic dictates discouraging saving in a developing nation?), we won't be going into all that because someone with a lot more experience has, no doubt, already ripped into the proposed budget which AMA Muhith has

vehicles with displacement ranging from 2000cc to 3000cc. Previously, cars from 2000cc to 2750cc had 200% SD levied on them while 2750cc to 3000cc got 350% SD. These two slabs have been combined into one slab, with 200% SD placed on the 2000cc to 3000cc segment.

The other major change comes in the slab for hybrid vehicles -

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