

PROJECT CARS



TOYOTA'S M5 KILLER – ARISTO V300 VERTEX

The idea of a super-sedan is not new. The idea of a luxurious, smooth, four door sedan being blisteringly fast was tinkered with by manufacturers such as Jaguar in the late 50s and 60s—resulting in cars like the Mark 2, which effectively took Jaguar away from pure sports cars and into the luxury-sports car market, where they've stayed to date. With time, the Germans came to the forefront—cars like the Benz 300 SEL 6.3 and first-gen BMW M5 cemented Germany's reputation for building fast, luxurious sport sedans that attained crazy triple digit speeds while pampering occupants with leather, air-con and relative exclusion from the outside world.

On the other side of the world, though, the Japanese were trying their best to match the pursuit of luxurious speed. With large RWD cars like the Nissan Cefiro and Toyota Chaser powered by big, burly six cylinder motors, it was only a matter of time before someone thought of strapping turbos to them to create proper beasts-on-four-wheels. While that happened in the world of aftermarket tuners and illegal street drifting to a great extent, the response from manufacturers were slightly more subdued. Once in a while though, the

Japs let loose and packed everything they could into one trim of one car—like the Toyota Aristo V300 Vertex you see here.

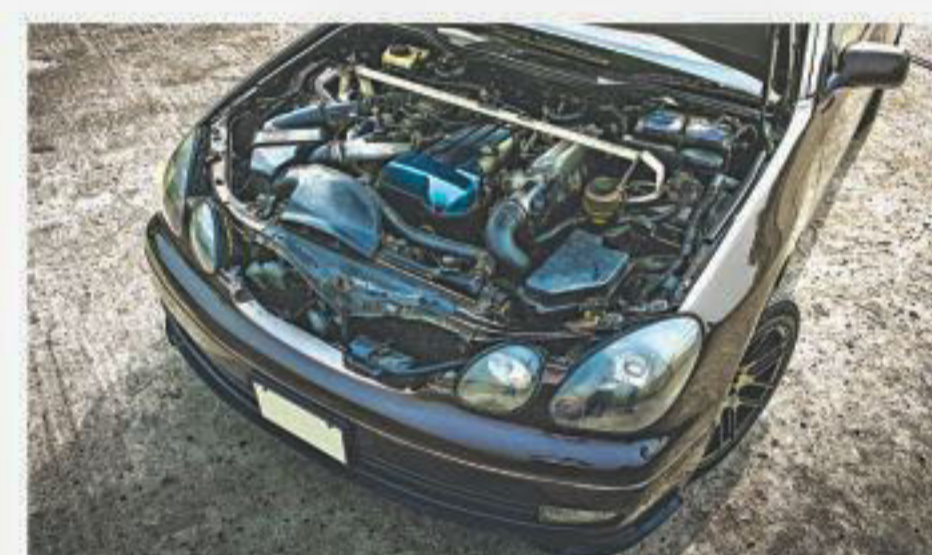
Calling it an M5 killer is not as unjustified as you'd initially think. With Toyota's 2JZGTE 3.0 litre twin turbo straight six (made famous by the MKIV Supra) packed under the hood, the Aristo V300 came with power figures of 320 HP (brochures claimed 276, as per the infamous Japanese gentleman's agreement) and 332 lb-ft of torque. By contrast, the E39 M5 (often referred to as the best sports sedan of all time by some enthusiasts) had 394 HP and 369 lb-ft torque. While the numbers show a big difference, in reality the Japanese market Aristo V300 had a closer claim to the throne of "fastest four door sedan in the world" than the global Lexus GS, which was advertised upon launch along similar lines.

Owner Ashique Un Nabi uses the Aristo daily. With a leather and piano-wood clad interior, automatic (touch-screen controlled) climate control, power memory seats, a sunroof and loads of space all around, the Aristo V300 is a fully loaded beast that gives it two distinct personalities—one that centres around the over-powered, over engineered motor, another

that revolves around all of the creature comforts of a refined and tasteful luxury car. When pushed, the car combines the two—this is a car you can be doing 200 km/h with ease, while having a conversation with your passengers, with the air-con running and the heated seats warming your back. Stability comes from the Active Rear Steering system—typically an expensive affair on cars like these, but thanks to typical Toyota over-engineering in the 90s, the electronics are robust and not particularly prone to failure. It'll slide for days if you want to, but then Ashique is a mature automotive enthusiast, not your typical hooligan. He's owned large sedans before—a Mitsubishi Galant Super Saloon as a first car, followed by Toyota GX110 Mark 2. He also appreciates the classics, having owned a 1965 VW Beetle.

With a little over 53,000 km on the clock, Ashique isn't too keen on tuning the 2JZGTE any further than a basic upgrade consisting of dialled up boost and a speed limiter delete. After all, why mess with one of the best four door sport sedans ever made?

WORDS: SHAER REAZ
PHOTOS: AHBAAR MOHAMMAD



Criminally underrated fast sedans you (probably) haven't heard of

Sport sedans are typically assumed to be the forte of German manufacturers like Mercedes Benz, BMW and Audi. Sometimes, British marques like Jaguar and Bentley are factored in. However, when it comes to sport sedans, the following are criminally underrated—despite being face-melting fast and just as comfortable as...a non-melting face. Here goes.



Lotus Carlton

The Lotus Carlton happened as a result of Vauxhall wanting a sporty, fast car without spending the big bucks. Lotus was approached and given the basic Carlton mid-size sedan, to which the Brits attached two Garrett T25 turbos while upping displacement from 3.0 litres to 3.6 litres. 377 HP and 350 lb-ft torque equalled a top speed of 180 MPH.

Nissan Cefiro A31

If you're the maker of the Z car and the Skyline and you want to make a fast luxury sedan, what do you do? You cram the basic engine, AWD system and rear suspension/drivetrain from a Nissan Skyline into a three-box four-door sedan, of course. The factory RB25DE might only have produced 200 HP and 188 lb-ft torque, but they were highly tuneable, making the A31 a drifters' favourite.



Mitsubishi Galant VR4

Before Evos and Imprezas were a thing, Mitsubishi and Subaru fought it out with Legacys and Galants. The Galant VR4 was a continuation of Mitsu's rallying heritage—a 2.5 litre twin turbo 6 cylinder motor and AWD, with 276 HP and 271 lb-ft torque, provided significant grunt and loads of tuning potential. Inside, there was leather and the typical luxury features you'd expect from Galants.



Mercury Marauder

Another cop car turned hot rod, the Mercury Marauder got a supercharged 4.6 L V8 with 302 HP, sport tuned suspension, big wheels and a limited slip differential, not to mention the coolest name ever given to a car. The Marauder was basically little more than a hopped up Ford Crown Victoria (America's favourite fleet car), but that's what made it a fantastic sleeper car.



2nd Indo-Bangla Automotive Show held



The 2nd Indo-Bangla Automotive Show, aimed to showcase products manufactured by the Indian automotive industry, was held from the March 1st to 4th at the Bashundhara International Convention City grounds.

Organized by Society of Indian Automobile Manufacturers and Automotive Component Manufacturers Association of India, the 2nd instalment of this event saw 10 major Indian vehicle manufacturers participating, namely: Ashok Leyland, Bajaj Auto, Force Motors, Hero MotoCorp, Mahindra & Mahindra, Maruti Suzuki, Eicher/Runner Motors, SML Isuzu, Tata Motors and TVS Motor Company.

For the four-wheeled variety, the primary focus was on commercial vehicles rather than personal. Various new upcoming light vehicles and people movers filled the show alongside a handful of passenger cars—the Dezire, Eartiga, Ciaz GL and GLX from Suzuki, the TUV300 and Bolero from Mahindra, and the Nexon from Tata.

At the two-wheel area, Hero MotoCorp introduced two new upcoming motorcycles in the 110cc segment - the Passion X-pro and the Maestro Edge scooter, while showcasing the X-pulse, a dirt bike in the 200cc segment with fuel-injection and ABS. Bajaj showcased their 2019 version of the NS-160, which featured a thicker rear tyre in response to feedback from customers.

A number of companies put emphasis on their moves toward local assembly, with both Bajaj and SML Isuzu putting locally made "body in white" on display.

Various Indian parts manufacturers also attended the event. The most notable among them was MRF, whose large stall featured a wide variety of tyres for a multitude of vehicles.

WORDS & PHOTOS: RAHBAR AL HAQ

Volvo 850R

Typically known for making staid, safe sedans, Volvo's 850R took a standard 850 sedan and dialled everything up to 11. A 2.3 litre 5 cylinder turbo motor produced 250 HP and 258 lb-ft of torque, while a six-speed manual allowed drivers to make full use of power. The estate version was more popular, but the sedan, with its three-box design, had a distinctive presence.



Subaru Legacy B4 Blitzen

When Subaru moved away from using the big, heavy Legacy in rallying and started using the Impreza, they didn't really stop making hot road-going versions of the mid-size sedan. We're glad, because the world got the quirky, super-fast madness that is the Legacy B4 Blitzen. With a name that translates into lightning, you expect performance. How does 280 HP and 253 lb-ft from a turbo boxer 4 sound?



Chevy Impala SS

The end of the muscle car era saw a lot of American manufacturers move away from big, powerful RWD sedans and start making econoboxes. In the 90s, almost all big American manufacturers had a body-on-frame sedan with big V8s under the hood, for sale as fleet cars. The Chevy Impala SS was a rarity, transformed thanks to the LT1 V8, which gave it 260 HP and 331 lb-ft torque, along with sport tuned suspension and a bunch of other goodies



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