

## PROJECT CARS



# FWD Tofu run

## Toyota AE91 Trueno

On May 1983, the world got the latest version of one of the most iconic sports cars from Toyota's stable—a plucky, lightweight, chuckable (albeit underpowered) two door coupe based on their best-selling sedan, the Corolla/Sprinter. Called the AE86 Levin/Trueno, the two door Jap was solid, reliable, responded well to upgrades and was a cult classic in the making along with the 1.6 litre 4AGE motor that powered it. It was also Rear Wheel Drive, which meant you could take it sideways as often as your wished in a safe and fairly controlled manner.

What pushed the AE86 (especially the Trueno variant with the pop-up headlights) to heights of fame—much higher than a 128 HP power figure from the factory should have, anyway—was Japanese manga artist Shuichi Shigeno's Initial D series, where a panda white AE86 took centre stage as Takumi Fujiwara's ride. As a manga it garnered a mainstream audience that perhaps wouldn't have picked up a manga had it not been for the drifting cars and mountain street racing. As an anime adaptation beamed to households globally, Initial D essentially raised a whole generation of automotive enthusiasts and fueled the fascination for JDM car culture as well.

Takumi's Fujiwara Tofu Shop AE86 might have established him as a fictional drifting god, but in the years during which the show



was set in, Toyota drastically changed the approach to making the Levin/Trueno sports cars for subsequent generations. The biggest change came in the drive layout—while the 86 was RWD and perfect for drifting, the AE91,

AE101 and AE111 generations of the Levin/Trueno were all FWD. While power outputs increased with the 20 Valve 4AGE 'silvertop' and 'blacktop' motors (not to mention the supercharged 4AGE variant), the FWD layout



meant the later generations were deprived of the RWD fun that characterised the KE30, K370 and AE86 generations.

Shahed Hossain's AE91 is a visual tribute to Initial D's iconic AE86. With the signature

white-black 'Panda' paint scheme, dished black Watanabe wheels and the 'Fujiwara Tofu Shop' decal emblazoned across the doors in Japanese script, this AE91 is distinctive, to say the least. Powered by a silvertop 4AGE with tasty bits like Kelford cams, the 91 has enough power and lack of weight to make the driving experience a fun, engaging one.

Nimbleness is a character trait that all Levin/Trueno models have had since day one, and this is no different—even under hard acceleration, the Trueno is able to dart in and out of traffic and change lanes in split seconds without much hint of body roll or discomfort. The VVT (on the intake cam) kicks in fast and hard, with the aftermarket cams holding the revs in place for more top-end power.

Shahed is no stranger to old Toyotas—he's had a RT40 Corona, an EP71 Starlet and an AE111 Levin as well. So when it came to restoring and driving the AE91, he knew what was involved. Everything from doors to fenders to the dashboard had to be sourced—from Dhaka's Dholaihal to Malaysia to Japan.

The AE91 is a comfortable, fast and reliable sports car—with a bit of paint and the right parts, it can be a fitting tribute to an iconic piece of pop-culture history.

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## AUTO NEWS



# The Rolls Royce Cullinan for the tasteless and rich – Mansory Billionaire

Take the most offensive Rolls Royce ever made, hand it over to the masters of botching up perfectly fine cars, and what you get is the Mansory Billionaire—a lumbering monstrosity based on the Rolls Royce Cullinan.

If you think that name is crass, we agree. But it's not a result of Mansory's well known lack of taste—they tagged up with German luxury label Billionaire to create



their take on the Cullinan. That entails a widebody kit, extra carbon fibre pieces and body cladding all over, a touched up interior featuring a two tone colour scheme that matches the exterior, as well as a new exhaust. To re-establish the lack of taste that Rolls Royce, Mansory and Billionaire have all come together to create, this hopped up Cullinan has random inserts of crocodile leather on the interior, like the armrest and the sides of the seats. Yuck.

Featuring 602 HP and 701 lb-ft torque from the upgraded 6.75 litre V12, the Billionaire does 100 km/h in 5 seconds. Only 13 units will be made for their crass, tasteless customers, who will be expected to dish out more than \$880,000 USD for one.

Just goes to show that SUVs are truly for the tastelessly rich.

## COLLECTIBLES

# All the Initial D Truenos

If you're a fan of Initial D, you will want at least one model car sitting on your desk. The simplest and relatively inexpensive is the Dream Tomica AE86 Trueno. This happens to be the most basic one with permanently popped up lights, opening doors and working suspension. Aimed more at kids, it can take loads of falls from your desk and a few hundred



drifts around your coffee mug. I got mine for 600 taka but expect to pay more now.

If you want the best, nothing beats the 1:18 model by Autoart. Comes in both Stage 1 and Final versions with latter having the upgraded 4AGE, racing bucket seats and a carbon hood. Exquisitely detailed, these models have carpets, accurately bent hood support and a gorgeously detailed engine. And they come with a cup holder with a cup of water as well as a box of Tofu in the trunk. The original is now discontinued but the Final version is available for \$200. You do not want a kid playing with it.

In between, you can have slightly unusual scale of 1:28 by Hommat Simulation which is some random hitherto



unknown Chinese manufacturer. Their AE86 has working pop up lights, opening hood and doors. Music, too. Slightly poor paint and decals but does look the part. Kyosho makes a lot of 1:64 and 1:43 some of which are available on our local DCCCB group.

If you want to make your own, nothing beats a 1:24 kit. I love building them as they offer more freedom to customise. What? You wouldn't want to customise an Initial D car? Fujimi makes a lot of variants but the proportions are ever so slightly off and so far I do not know of any variant that comes with an engine. Aoshima makes some fantastically detailed versions where the rear lights alone are 6-8 pieces. Full engine details and all the variants. Prices range from Taka 2500-4000. Patience required to cut, shape, paint and glue all the pieces.

More Initial D reviews coming later. For questions regarding sourcing and building kits, email me at ronnyraza@gmail.com.

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