

SHIFT

AUTOMOTIVE PUBLICATION OF The Daily Star

PROJECT CARS



BUTTER SMOOTH PERFORMANCE

1991
Toyota
Mark II X81

It's a rare moment when a locally built project car leaves everyone on the Shift team in utter awe—having seen countless hack jobs and botched builds over six years of sourcing Bangladeshi enthusiast builds, we've pretty much seen the entire spectrum of what is possible with the unique constraints placed on project car owners in the country. This is one of those moments.

Don't get me wrong, X-chassis builds are dime a dozen nowadays—with only a certain number of combinations available in 1JZ this, R154 that and X-90/100/110 there, the Toyota Mark II/Chaser/Cresta/Cressida series has become a staple of the project car builds on the road. It's difficult to stand out, even with bodykits—after the 10th TOM'S style bumper, the visual impact of a kitted and lowered X-chassis car starts to wear thin. How do you differentiate yourself from the crowd, then? You go older. You start paying attention to the tiniest of details. You build something with a magnetic personality that simply cannot be ignored by those in the know.

That's what S.M. Rifat Fahim did with his pristine X81 Mark II. This is clearly a different breed of project car—restrained elegance, huge power and performance potential, comfortable despite handling and going like a crazed maniac. It's a very grown up sort of project car,



built by an enthusiast with over two decades of experience under the belt.

Under the long, sloping hood of what is perhaps the best looking Mark II generation ever (eat your hearts out X90 fans, I'll stick by my judgement) beats the mighty twin-turbo 1JZGTE. 2.5 litres, VVTi, six cylinders, breathed on by an Apexi intake. The 1JZ motor gives the X81 a menacing streak that is absolutely



not evident upon your first encounter with the sleek black/silver two-tone sedan. But the way it squats, launches and disappears into the horizon in a furious frenzy of speed and fire and noise, you'll remember it every time you see it.

While the Mark II whistles and cracks and growls on the outside, it's very different on the inside. Think of it as a destroyer—hugely

capable with an arsenal of artillery guns and cannons—but with the looks and the plush interior of a cruise ship. The interior has leather inserts and seats so well padded that you literally sink into them, with a healthy dose of 90s maroon and red everywhere. The digital dash instrumentation and the buttons are lifted straight out of the 80s, but the gold-standard Toyota build quality means there's not a single

rattle or shake from the interior, even as the Mark II goes over bumpy dirt roads and cracks in the pavement.

Where the Mark II excels is in the dry—with adjustable BC Racing coilovers, a stock 1.5 way limited slip differential and Zestino semi-slick tyres, the Mark II refuses to break traction without a solid stomp on the accelerator or some serious lack of heat in the rubber. When it does break traction, it slides beautifully in a controlled, composed manner (even with the automatic) that'll put any GT86 to shame. In a straight line, the X81 feels untouchable—even by cars more powerful and several stone lighter—but that's a feeling you'll get in most turbo six cylinder vehicles of this size.

Fahim is full of nostalgic tales of the early days of the local car scene. He's had several project cars by now, including a 2ZZGE powered Corolla 90 (featured on Shift) but with the added responsibility of married life, he needed a car that would be a comfortable cruiser in daily driver mode and a powerful beast in weekend driving that would satisfy the hoonigan in him. In this gorgeous X81 Mark II, he found both, in seamless, perfect harmony.

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PHOTOS: FARHAN AHMED

The passing of a phoenix

Rest in peace, Niki Lauda



AUTO NEWS



BMW brings back lost Garmisch concept

BMW has decided to bring back the Garmisch concept, a design study from Bertone that was originally debuted at the Geneva Motor Show in 1970. Designed by Marcello Gandini (the designer of the Lamborghini Miura), the original 2002ti based concept car vanished after its debut, with its fate unknown.

Since few original documents remain of the concept car, BMW took painstaking lengths to form a team consisting of members from BMW Classic and BMW Group Design to recreate the concept for the 2019 Concorso d'Eleganza Villa d'Este. Gandini himself was roped in

to provide valuable input to the design team, which worked off period images of the original. Intended for the BMW Museum in Munich, Germany, the Garmisch concept is a hark back at the days of sleek, understated BMW design, featuring what must have been a 'controversial' take on the BMW kidney grill. It's also impressively understated, with the only whacky detail coming in the form of louvers for the rear window which cast geometric shadows onto the minimalist interior.

In a world of oversized grills and aggressive design, the Garmisch is a boldly pared back study. That's good design.



From 1971 to 1985, the world of Formula 1—the pinnacle of motorsport and automotive technology—was graced by the presence of Niki Lauda.

Andreas Nikolaus Lauda got his start racing Minis, despite disapproval from his family. Defying their wishes, Niki took out a bank loan to buy his way into the March Formula 2 team, which promptly got promoted to Formula 1 in 1972. With little hope of being competitive, Niki took out another loan to buy his way into the BRM team, where his talent at setting up cars and his bluntness about his own driving skill caught the eye of teammate Clay Reggazoni. When Reggazoni was signed by Ferrari and Enzo inquired about Niki, favourable comments by Niki's former teammate landed him a spot in the declining Ferrari team in 1974.

Over the 1975 season, Lauda cemented his spot at the legendary Italian team—lapping the fearsome Nurburgring Nordschleife in under seven minutes and securing his first world title. On 1 August 1976, at Nurburgring, Lauda's Ferrari skidded off the track, hit an embankment and burst into flames—fellow drivers managed to pull him out of the burning inferno, but not before Lauda suffered first degree burns to his face, as well as damage to his lungs and blood from toxic fumes. Lauda showed immense determination and returned to racing after only six weeks, having missed only two races. He retired from the Japanese Grand Prix—the final race of the F1 calendar—and handed the championship to his longtime friend and rival James Hunt of McLaren. Their friendship became the stuff of legend, and the silver screen.

The quiet Austrian was prone to moments of sheer fierceness—from brushing off the outreached hands of death, to defying il Commendatore to have his way with Ferrari—Niki was a tour de force in one of the best eras of Formula 1. He will be missed.

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"FROM SUCCESS, YOU LEARN ABSOLUTELY NOTHING. FROM FAILURE AND SETBACKS, CONCLUSIONS CAN BE DRAWN."

NIKI LAUDA
(1949 - 2019)



CHAMPIONSHIPS WINS PODIUMS POLE POSITIONS FASTEST LAPS RACE STARTS

Infographic: Shaer Reaz