



NEW SWIFT SPORT vs.
USED COLT VERSION R vs.
USED IMPREZA WRX
WHAT YOU CAN GET FOR UNDER
\$1,000 A MONTH!



**WE DRIVE
FERRARI'S 458
SPYDER**

WHERE CARS ARE MORE THAN A TO B

N. GINE

FROM THE PUBLISHERS OF BURNSPAVEMENT.COM

ISSUE THREE



**TOYOTA
STRIKES BACK**
WE'RE IN LOVE WITH JDM ALL OVER AGAIN

DRIVEN
INFINITI G37 <
AUDI A6 AVANT <
VOLKSWAGEN BEETLE <
PORSCHE BOXSTER S AND MORE <



01 // Joel Tam



02 // Azfar Hashim



03 // Dr Kevin Co



04 // Low Fai Ming

Managing Editor & Photographer

Joel started sister publication Burnpavement.com, and in 2 years, garnered 150,000 unique readers the world over with 5 million overall hits. He is an art director, active commercial photographer and father of three boys. Although he drives an STI now, he claims the EVO 9 GSR to be the best car money can buy.

Associate Editor

With almost 10 years of automotive journalism under his belt, Azfar has been in the industry long enough to have his 'COE' renewed. A hard-core driver, he is our default travel and drive-trip guru, and is looking to purchase himself something that can cover long distances faster.

Contributing Writer

As an avid car enthusiast, Kevin is the perfect person to review cars for his consortium of fellow dentists - now his stories will be read by their customers as well. He may look meek, but our doc's ride packs a whopping 600 Nm. Don't play play.

Photographer

He doesn't look it, but Fai is truly one of the industry's best photographers. With a keen eye that stems from a passion for cars, he is able to see things us normal folk can't. He hopes to be able to pack his equipment into a Suzuki Swift Sport one day.

WHY DO YOU DO WHAT YOU DO?

Money? Passion? Necessity? More money?

We all have our own reasons why we do what we do.

I dare say though, for the three full-time staff at N.GINE, it's because of the money. Afterall, everyone knows that automotive journalism makes the most money in the world!

You know that ain't true.

So why do we do it?

Actually, I'm not sure. Having a passion for cars can be a curse. Having to schedule test-drives of the latest fast cars back-to-back can be such a chore. As if driving them here is not hectic enough, we get flown around the world to drive them even before they get here. Then we drive them AGAIN when they arrive on our shores! It's tough!

Seriously now.

I for one, do it to strike a balance. Money isn't everything, as attractive as it really is (did you know it makes the world go round?). Doing what I love is of utmost importance. In the end, the purpose has to be clear too, otherwise it's all for nothing.

Till I reach my end goal and purpose, I've pledged to bring you the best in automotive eye-candy. We can't claim to be the best writers, but we do shoot pretty darn well, and a picture - as you'd know - speaks a thousand words. We've got a lot of pictures.

We've brought all our news to Burnpavement.com, so what you get here at N.GINE is the main course right away.

So enjoy this issue. We've got some really hot cars that some of you who have foregone love for money should be able to afford.

Managing Editor
Joel Tam

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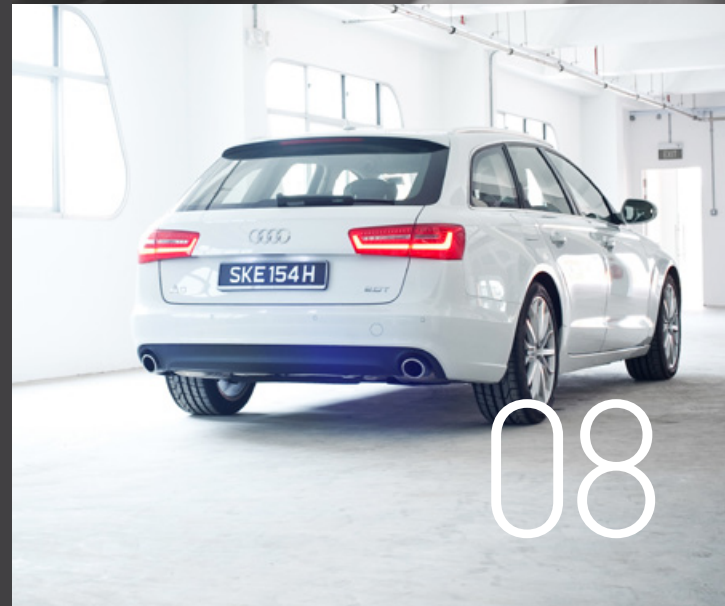
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Less than 42 remaining.



Less than 26 remaining.



Less than 10 remaining.

Introducing the highly exclusive CR-Z Mugen Aero and Mugen Sport packages.

Celebrating ten years of hybrid power in Singapore, we've given the CR-Z an injection of new energy, inside and out, with our Mugen Aero and Mugen Sport packages. Together they're worth \$11,500 and, amazingly, we're giving them away absolutely free. What's more, there are less than 10 of them still available - that's fewer, even, than the number of Faberge Eggs or Amur Leopards remaining in the world. Don't miss this opportunity to own this rare breed of car.



Call us today on 6840 6888 to reserve your test drive.

08 | 09

FIRST DRIVES

Audi A6 Avant 2.0 TFSI



AUDI'S AVANT-AGE

Our wagon-man *Joel Tam* gets behind the wheel of the new Audi A6 Avant and tells you why it's not hard to love this estate.

Photography | Low Fai Ming

FIRST DRIVES

Audi A6 Avant 2.0 TFSI

"I just love wagons ... they are no longer the bland, buy-only-because-they're-practical cars they once were. Today, estates are elegant alternatives with all the class and luxury of their sedan stablemates.



An increasing number of station wagons have been roaming our streets in recent years, which is a good thing to me.

I just love wagons, they're different, have loads of space and look cool. They are no longer the bland, buy-only-because-they're-practical cars they once were. Today, estates are elegant alternatives with all the class and luxury of their sedan stablemates.

That is the case of the Audi A6 Avant. Audi were the ones who made estates cool. Remember the RS2?

The mad RS6 Avant with a V10? In fact they are still the ones leading the fast-estate game, with the new supercar-slaying RS4 to be available only in estate form. I can't help but love them for this!

In recent years, almost every European premium brand has a refined wagon in its stable. Mercedes-Benz, BMW, Volvo, and even Alfa Romeo, all offer a wagon variant, but none of them do it as well as Audi.

I mean just look at it. It's so handsome. I almost get the feeling they built and designed the Avant before

the sedan version. Especially in this white finish, the car looks sleek and classy, with Audi's leading LED technology accentuating the sophistication found not just within the car, but on the exterior as well.

Ingolstadt designers are masters at creating great interiors; the A6 Avant is no exception. The Avant's cabin exudes a level of classy ambience found in few cars. The seats are beautifully trimmed and there is fastidious attention to detail throughout. Controls and switchgear are smooth and robust to the touch and have a premium tactile feel.

Space on the inside is very good. The A6, being the larger model in Audi's stable of cars, does not have to worry about not having enough room. Front and rear legroom is a tad better than a 5 Series.

The electric seats are wide and generous and there is ample leg and head-room in the rear. With the rear seats occupied, there is 565 litres of luggage space at the back. Fold the seats away and this becomes a pretty handy 1680 litres. There are even handy eyelets for tying things down, restraining straps, an adjustable rail luggage-securing system.

FIRST DRIVES

Audi A6 Avant 2.0 TFSI

Audi packs their cars with lots of features (save the RS3, which we drove earlier this year). You get pretty much the whole package, cruise control, multi-function steering wheel, Audi 'drive-select' (for comfort, auto, dynamic, and efficiency modes), light and rain-sensors, parking cameras, keyless remote opening and closing, electric tailgate, the works.

While the Multitronic CVT is definitely not one of my favorite transmissions, I must say that Audi's CVTs are the best out there. You do get some hesitation flat-spot at some points (I say 'some' because you can't always predict where it happens), but otherwise, it's smooth and efficient 99% of the time.

With a 180 bhp and 320 Nm on tap, the car is more adequate than it is fast. 0-100km/h will still come in at a pretty brisk 8.6 seconds, but there is a sense that the engine is taking some effort to prove itself, maybe the CVT transmission and 'gearing' also has a part to play in this.

The A6 Avant handles well for a car of its size. It's predictable round the corners and well-balanced throughout speeds that most people buying this car would carry it through. The electro-mechanical steering is a wee bit too light on the whole for me, but most customers won't complain.

Braking performance is exceptional too. The Avant has electronic stabilisation control, brake servo and hydraulic brake assist, serving up lots of confidence even if you do take this car up to not-so-legal speeds.

All in all, the A6 Avant 2.0 TFSI is a convincing premium estate that marries both practicality and the finer things in motoring. **N.**

OMG! ONE MINUTE GLANCE

| | |
|-------------------|-------------------------|
| Max Power: | 180 hp @ 4000-6000 rpm |
| Max Torque: | 320 Nm @ 1500-3900 rpm |
| Max speed: | 218 km/h |
| 0-100 km/h: | 8.3 seconds |
| Transmission: | 8-speed Multitronic CVT |
| Kerb Weight: | 1,630 kg |
| CO ² : | 152 g/km |



14 | 15

FIRST DRIVES

Honda CR-Z Mugen Sports Package

HORT HATCH

The world's most popular hybrid hot-hatch has gotten some presents. *Joel Tam* unwraps the Mugen-adorned Honda CR-Z to see if it is any better to drive.

Photography | Low Fai Ming & Joel Tam



16 | 17

FIRST DRIVES

Honda CR-Z Mugen Sports Package



"...with some Mugen tuning bits, the CR-Z has been sharpened up a bit to seal its place as the best hybrid hot-hatch out there."

It might not be new, but with some Mugen tuning bits, to be specific, an engine oil-filler cap, sports mats, carbon fibre gear knob and sport suspension, the CR-Z has been sharpened up a bit to seal its place as the best hybrid hot-hatch out there.

Actually, it's the only hybrid hot-hatch out there.

As the world's first hybrid with sporting intent and a six-speed manual box, the Honda CR-Z has made hybrid cars fun.

Designed as the successor to the classic pocket rocket, the Honda CR-X, the CR-Z's sharp styling is both modern and visually striking. The rear may look odd to some who won't appreciate the sudden cut-off backside, but it does lend a unique design trait to the car. Either way, you won't miss it on the road.

To me, the interior is where the car shines. There is a wealth of modern technology on board, such as the clever 3-Mode Drive System. Side buttons on the right of the dashboard give you the choice of Sport, Normal and Econ. These settings will alter the throttle feel, transmission and electric power-steering to suit your mood and mode of driving. The speedometer ring will change colour too (red, blue or green).



"Honda cabins have come a long way, and they feel less 'Japanese' with each new model. The CR-Z is no different, controls have a precise and solid feel them and the gearshift has a smooth and accurate hot-knife-through-butter action to it, coupled with the Mugen carbon gear knob, it feels just perfect.

"Honda cabins have come a long way, and they feel less 'Japanese' with each new model. The CR-Z is no different. The CR-Z is no different."

Space in the rear is a joke. But other than that, the compact car still manages to feel roomy enough up front. The racy and loud Mugen floor mats help to spruce things up visually, although the original mats look just fine.

Fire the CR-Z up and work the 1.5-litre hybrid in Sport mode, and you'll be rewarded with rather punchy performance. It's not blisteringly fast, but it'll still cover distance enthusiastically. I won't bother with the other modes, although Eco mode works perfectly (read it as 'slow') to pair down the car and provide the claimed 4.7 litres/100km fuel economy figures.

While it is not a hard-edged, high-revving performance machine like the Civic Type R, the CR-Z still manages to feel every bit as sporty. What is an absolute joy to use is the six-speed manual box. Both quick and precise, it gets addictive the more you drive it. I can almost still hear the slick shifts slotting neatly into each gear.

This car excels in the twisties. With the 5-way adjustable-damper Mugen sport suspension, the car is lowered by 15mm, giving it a meaner stance and sharpening the handling. Set to the mid-setting, the lowered coupé tracked quick bends with no fuss and minimal understeer. Stable and fun, the car felt nimble, with a consistent, linear feel to the steering and turn-in.

What the stock CR-Z lacked it in sharpness in the chassis and suspension department, the Mugen set-up made up for perfectly. The result is a car with a more equal balance between speed, handling, comfort and eco-friendliness.

While the 125 bhp and 174 Nm is not exactly hot-hatch figures, the CR-Z packed with the Mugen bits is still a very lovable car in many ways. This is one time I would easily overlook the performance figures and grab one simply for the whole package - the CR-Z Mugen is a sporty and economical hatch with great build-quality and reliability. **N.**

While the 125 bhp and 174 Nm is not exactly hot-hatch figures, the CR-Z packed with the Mugen bits is still a very lovable car in many ways. This is one time I would easily overlook the performance figures and grab one simply for the whole package - the CR-Z Mugen is a sporty and economical hatch with great build-quality and reliability. **N.**



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FIRST DRIVES

Honda CR-Z Mugen Sports Package



Honda CR-Z Mugen Aero Package

What is this?

As if an 'aftermarket' sports suspension system fitted by the local dealer is not heresy enough, they are offering Ah-beng (ricer)-looking aerodynamic kits for the car as well?

Technically, Mugen is not 'aftermarket'. It is after all, a Japanese company formed in 1973 by Hirotoshi Honda, the son of Honda Motor Company founder Soichiro Honda. Despite the family connections, however, Mugen is not owned by Honda.

That said, their sole existence is to develop parts to reliably enhance Honda cars.

The kit you see here has been extensively tested in a wind-tunnel and will improve the aerodynamics of the CR-Z, apart from making it look more aggressive. The kit consists of a Mugen front under spoiler, rear under spoiler, side under spoiler, front sports grille and that huge rear wing.

To celebrate 10 years of Honda Hybrid power in Singapore, Kah Motor is offering 3 Honda CR-Zs (6MT) with a Mugen Sports Package. Also, the Mugen Aero Package is going free for the first 10 CR-Z orders.

We think the perfect combination would be the 6-speed manual transmission with both the Sport and Aero package, in white and with blacked-out wheels.

Aaahh, I'm dreaming about one already. **N.**

OMG! ONE MINUTE GLANCE

| | |
|-------------------|------------------------|
| Max Power: | 125 hp @ 6000 rpm |
| Max Torque: | 174 Nm @ 1000-1500 rpm |
| Max speed: | 199 km/h |
| 0-100 km/h: | 9.8 seconds |
| Transmission: | 6-speed Manual |
| Kerb Weight: | 1,160 kg |
| CO ₂ : | 117 g/km |



22 | 23

FIRST DRIVES

Volkswagen Beetle 1.2 TSI



DR. FEELGOOD

When a car feels this good. It is this good. *Joel Tam* steps back into the future to see why a little bit of the old is always good in the new.

Photography | Low Fai Ming



It may seem oxymoronic, but 'modern retro' is the best way to describe the awesome new Volkswagen Beetle. Ok, so I gave it away right from the start, yes, this car is good, and I like it!

More than anything else, the one thing the new Beetle has going for it is the feel-good factor. That's pretty much all you need to be attracted to it.

From the outside, the car already wins your heart. Looking more closely related to the original than its predecessor, the car is flatter and looks lower, with its design proportions harking back to the classic model that sold millions of units around the world.

Swing open the large door and you'll be greeted with a stylish and chic interior. Finished in a combination of

white gloss panels and red leather seats, our test car was funky without being gaudy. The cool twin gloveboxes (the top one opens upward, old school-style) reminds you that this model has a history. Yet, you're always reminded that you're in a thoroughly modern car with comfort features like steering-wheel-mounted trip computer and stereo controls, integrated touchscreen sound system and climate control, to name but a few!

To further seal its personality, the Beetle comes optional with a newly developed Fender sound system. As a guitarist, I'm familiar with the Fender name. Think Beatles, Elvis and Eric Clapton, these are just some of the artistes that have chosen Fender as their weapon of choice to make the awesome music they did. Now that same technology know-how in sound production has gone into your Beetle's audio system. Sweet!



"Finished in a combination of white gloss panels and red leather seats, our test car was funky without being gaudy. The cool twin glove-boxes (the top one opens upward, old school-style) reminds you that this model has a history."

Volkswagen Beetle 1.2 TSI

See what I mean by 'modern retro'?

However, some things have changed drastically. Modern Beetles now have front-mounted engines and front-wheel drive, versus the classic's rear-engined, rear-wheel drive layout.

We've not had a chance to try any of the more potent engines as Volkswagen Singapore has only brought in the 1.2 TSI for now. But despite its small-capacity, the 105bhp single-turbo engine offers adequate power and very likely, the best fuel economy among the other petrol engine options.

Floor the punchy 1.2 TSI and a rorty exhaust note will fill your cabin. It's nice in a sporty kind of way, yet manages to be rather refined when you're cruising. Volkswagen's 7-speed dual-clutch DSG transmission does the job of swapping the gears, but the sweet flat-bottomed steering doesn't come with paddle-shifters, which I sorely miss. I've come to expect this feature of all VW cars.

What really surprises me is how well this little thing handles. Chuck it into a corner and the car grips and swings around convincingly. Maybe the 'lack of power' helped, but I couldn't find a hint of understeer at all. Ride quality was a tad harsher than I'd expect. But then again, Beetles are not the choice models for a plush ride anyway. You buy a Beetle because it's fun, quirky and full of character.

The new Beetle still can't match the Golf for practicality, plus it needs steering-wheel shift paddles and the DSG gearbox isn't perfect. There are more efficient cars for the money, too, but it outshines them for character and individuality. **N.**

OMG! ONE MINUTE GLANCE

| | |
|-------------------|-----------------------|
| Max Power: | 105 hp @ 5000 rpm |
| Max Torque: | 175 Nm @ 1550-4100rpm |
| Max speed: | 180 km/h |
| 0-100 km/h: | 10.9 seconds |
| Transmission: | 7-speed DSG Automatic |
| Kerb Weight: | 1,297 kg |
| CO ₂ : | 137 g/km |



WHITE STALLION

It's so good, *Dr Kevin Co* faces withdrawal symptoms after driving this topless Italian beauty.

Photography | Low Fai Ming





“Red is so yesterday. Now we know why Alonso has one in this exact color. Fantastico!”

Bianco Fuji, Bianco Fuji, Bianco Fuji, the color of this 458 spider is permanently etched into my mind. The color is like a metallic pearl white with gold dust all over, seriously not that easily to describe what it really looks like. But it is absolutely stunning! Red is so yesterday. Now we know why Alonso has one in this exact color. Fantastico!

Okay back to the car... the 458 spider. It is ridiculously good, for the first time that after giving the car back, my Jag suddenly feels like it has lost a few cylinders. I was having pretty bad withdrawal symptoms for the next few days.

This car is what a Ferrari is all about, the epitome of Italian engineering. The 458 beauty looks even more desirable with the top off. The aggressive stance remains unchanged. The unique triple exhaust outlets are still there. The all aluminum drop top is even lighter than the soft version and it opens in a relatively quick 14 seconds, so you can easily make it during the traffic light stop (or for showing off).

The two-piece folding roof does make a very interesting spectacle. The dramatic back sloping buttresses that is accentuated with the roof down acts as the nicest roll over protection I have ever seen. The only bad thing is the mechanism permanently covers the engine, which is such a shame, as the scarlet V8 is an enthralling sight by itself.

The 458 spider's aesthetic appeal is just amazing, not only does it have pedestrians turning to look; even drivers and their passengers strain for a better view. So this is 'THE' car to be seen.

The 4.5litres V8 free revving engine pushes out 570hp at 9000rpm. With the 0-100km/hr less than 3.5 seconds, it is almost impossible to contain your smile while driving. The structure integrity is slightly compromised without the roof as Ferrari Engineers have noted but it is impossible to differentiate unless you spent a lot time on the track.

In fact, you feel faster with the roof down, it always feels faster with the roof down. That is the beauty of convertibles; the roof-opening button should be renamed as the sport mode button instead.



34 | 35

FIRST DRIVES

Ferrari 458 Spider

If you keep the revs below 4000rpm, the car purrs along without much drama but the moment you floor the accelerator all hell breaks loose and the exhaust soundtrack is better than any audio system in the world.

The 458 spider as expected feels really planted as I go through the winding roads, even with all the humps and potholes, the ride is surprisingly comfortable. The standard carbon ceramic brakes give you the assurance that the car will still stop at command.

Definitely a through-and-through purebred Ferrari, with the manettino switch at 'race' it can tackle any track session you throw at it. You can even fully off all electronic aids, for car that cost a mind blowing 1 million dollars, the insurance company will probably hope you are not that 'crazy'.

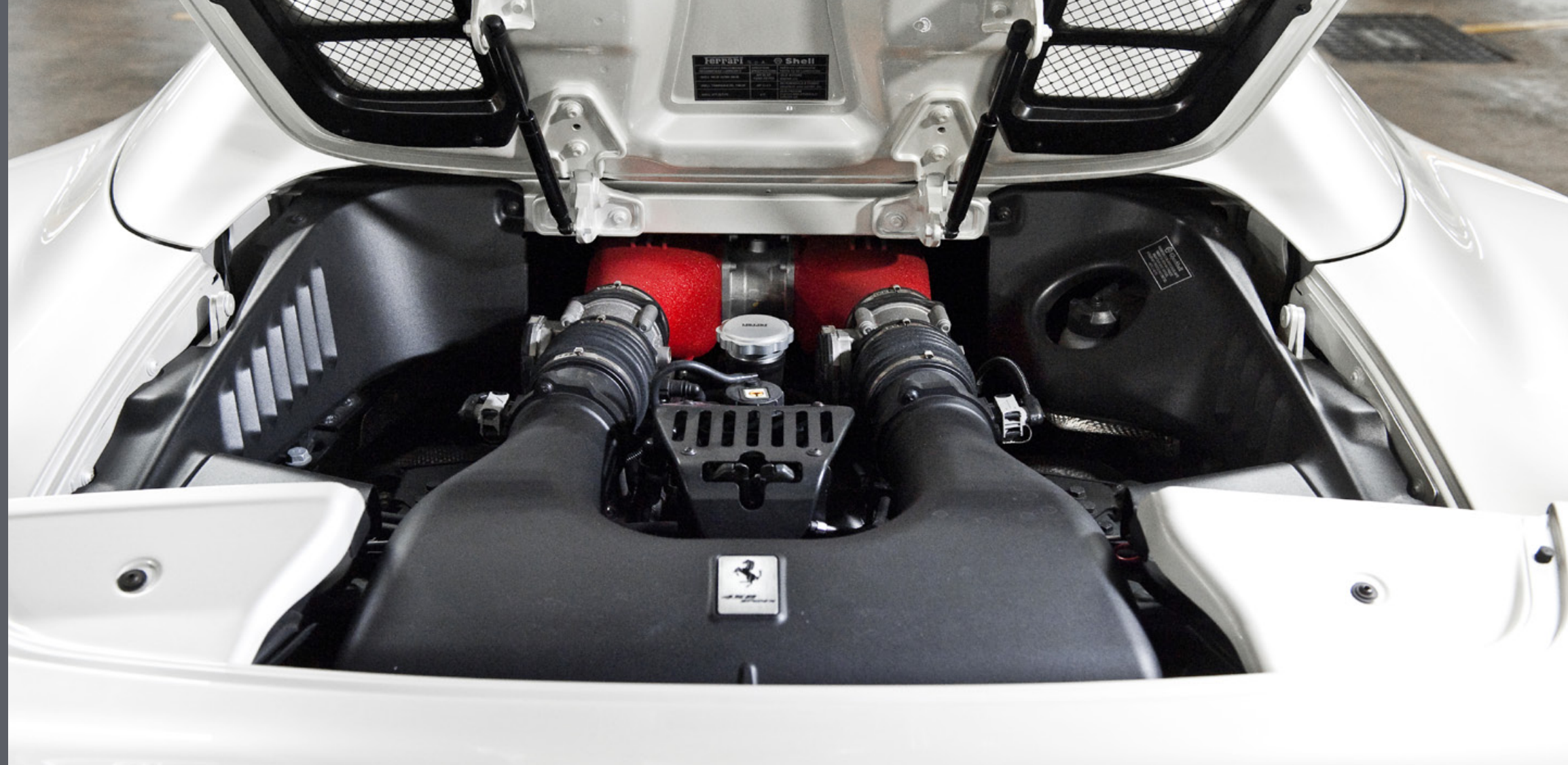
In the driver's seat the car seems to wrap itself around you, the visibility is so good you tend to forget how wide the 458 really is, and that is with the top up!

The suspension is adjustable so the humps are of no issue. I was brave (foolish) enough to try going into the basement carpark at marina square and emerged unscathed. It's pleasantly easy to maneuver in tight areas. The boot is obviously not going to be very big and there are only two seats, but of course these are the last things you would notice.

Although the hot weather in Singapore is not that conducive for open top driving, most people will still go for the convertible, and just to hear that 'noise' when you are driving is all worth getting that tan line. **N.**

OMG! ONE MINUTE GLANCE

| | |
|-------------------|------------------------|
| Max Power: | 570 hp @ 9000 rpm |
| Max Torque: | 540 Nm @ 6000 rpm |
| Max speed: | 320 km/h |
| 0-100 km/h: | 3.4 seconds |
| Transmission: | 7-speed F1 Dual clutch |
| Kerb Weight: | 1,535 kg |
| CO ² : | 276 g/km |



36 | 37

FIRST DRIVES

BMW M6 Convertible



MANIC STREET CRUISER

Do you even need an 'M' 6 Series, when the 650i Convertible is already up to task?

Azfar Hashim finds out.

Photography | Low Fai Ming



You get an extensive amount of lines and curves to give the M6 an imposing stance. Then, it's complimented further by that sporty rear bumper, very vocal quad exhaust pipes, aggressive front bumpers, gills along the sides topped off with massive 20-inch alloys wrapped in 265/35 R-20 front and 295/35 R-20 rear Michelin Pilot Super Sport run-flat rubbers.

Those humongous brake kits are equally yummy too.

Measuring in at 4,898 mm long, 1,919 mm wide and 1,368 mm tall, the M6 is undoubtedly b-i-g. Which translates to a peculiarly useful cabin that can accommodate and ferry three other adults – and I mean those no taller than 1.6-metres tall for the back seat.

That said, you still get a useful amount of boot space though – good enough for a small travel bag and a briefcase.

Build quality remains at an all-time high, and to compliment it even further, you get carbon-fiber bits around the center console and doors. The steering wheel – together with beautifully crafted paddle-shifters – is perfectly sized; not too overly chunky like something out of Dunkin Donuts...

We may all think the Germans are crazy, with too much time in their hands, building such a preposterously fast convertible; who on earth would need such an M in the first place?

Because after all, the 650i Cabriolet is already more than up to task, being BMW's (next to the M3 Convertible) fastest cabriolet to date.

But if you were to look at it from another angle – as in the way BMW looks at it – the M6 here is another exercise: one to display the coveted M division's engineering might.

BMW needs the M6. They need to justify and prove why turbo-charging is the way forward, although bidding goodbye to massive V8s are hard to swallow.

Now, the 1M Coupe proved a massive success. The M5 received massive amount of interest and take up rate.

This new M6? Remains to be seen... For now.

Let's begin with how hunky the car looks.



"...the M6 is undoubtedly b-i-g. Which translates to a peculiarly useful cabin that can accommodate and ferry three other adults – and I mean those no taller than 1.6-metres tall for the back seat.

40 | 41

FIRST DRIVES

BMW M6 Convertible

It's the gear shifter console has the most action. Here, you get all the relevant buttons to select your preferred mode for the steering, suspension and throttle response. Other (less distracting) standard goodies include a 360-degree view camera to aid parking, 7-speaker Bang & Olufsen system and, of course, iDrive.

You can choose between two different driving setting from the steering: via the 'M1' and 'M2' button, you can configure the M6 to either mild or wild. This function allows you to set your preference for the traction control (on, semi-on or fully off), throttle (relaxed, sharp or super aggressive), suspension preference (Comfort, Sport or Sport +), steering sharpness and gearbox response (smooth or ultra quick).

All these gadgetry when left untouched, the M6 by default is set at the - surprisingly - most comfortable and efficient mode.

"...the way it catapults forward will undoubtedly put your driving license at risk – if you enjoy driving fast and want to do it with glamour, the M6 should be the default choice."

You might initially question the use of a very fast convertible, but the way all that power is delivered when you floor the accelerator, by golly, is so fast it could probably fly you to the future; it's immense and effortless. Zero to hero takes only 4.3 seconds - woah Nelly!

There are no signs of struggles either. Keeping in mind it weighs in at a rather hefty 2,050 kg, the way it catapults forward will undoubtedly put your driving license at risk – if you enjoy driving fast and want to do it with glamour, the M6 should be the default choice.

With the top up, the level of refinement is respectable. Wind and tyre noise is properly suppressed, and it doesn't get in the way of the melody from both the exhaust and engine.



Try driving in third and fourth down the CTE or KPE, and you can still hear all the glorious roar of the V8. Ahh...

However, all that weight does get in the way of the car's agility. When taking sweeping corners at speed, you can feel the shift in weight from one side to the other. On top of that, there's that funny feeling of under-steer kicking in, although grip level is at an all time high.

Braking power is the M6's other strong point. In fact, you can just know lots of effort was put into engineering the car's anchor. A fast car needs equally fast brakes; hence I'm glad to report that the M6 has no err here.

Caution needs to be taken when driving in 'Sport+' though. Go a little too over enthusiastic and you can progressively feel the rear end kicking out when you go around bends fast (keyword here is 'progressively').

Entering the M6 with much doubts, I somehow returned it with a new level of respect.

Ok, so it could do with a tad improvement in the handling department, but from an engineering point of view, the M6 has the credibility. It's the sort car that gives you so much choices: roof up or roof down, to cruise or terrorize, stiff or soft suspension, immediate or refined power delivery, that sort.

And it's bloody fast.

So if you have the means, don't be hesitant to sign on the dotted line. Unless you're waiting for the Porsche 911 Turbo Cabriolet... **N.**

OMG! ONE MINUTE GLANCE

| | |
|-------------------|---------------------------|
| Max Power: | 560 hp @ 6000 rpm |
| Max Torque: | 680 Nm @ 1500 rpm |
| Max speed: | 250 km/h (limited) |
| 0-100 km/h: | 4.3 seconds |
| Transmission: | 7-speed M DCT Dual-clutch |
| Kerb Weight: | 2,050 kg |
| CO ² : | 239 g/km |

42 | 43

FIRST DRIVES

Porsche Boxster S

OPEN MINDED

Azfar Hashim thinks that a cabriolet such as Porsche's Boxster should be for life, not just the evenings, as this latest rendition proves.

Photography | Low Fai Ming



Whoever said having a cabriolet is pointless obviously talk through their butt and have nothing to look forward to, besides their mundane daily grind.

Being cocooned in safety is all very well while driving through the urban jungle, but there's a point about cabrios that even the most myopic shouldn't miss: they offer a driving experience like nothing else.

Especially if it is Porsche's latest Boxster S.

The melody from that 3.4-litre flat six. The urge from 315 bhp and 360 Nm of torque. The chirp of 265/35 R-20 Pirellis as you take bends with gusto. Ahh... This is the life.

Like a tailored high-end suit, much thought was obviously put into the third generation (code 981) here: a face that doesn't look far off its predecessor (but you can just identify it as the new Boxster), the side profile that looks sharper now (but retains the basis of the first generation 986 Boxster) and last but not least, a rump that's curvier (but still not that far off the 986/987).

So yes, it is a new Boxster that isn't radically different from what it replaces – something that only Porsche can do perfectly.

Park the 986 next to this 981, however, and you can see other stark differences. Interestingly, what the naked eye can't really notice is how the Boxster has grown: specifically, by 32 mm longer, 27 mm wider and a wheelbase that was stretched by some 60 mm. Height wise, it has been brought 11 mm closer to earth.

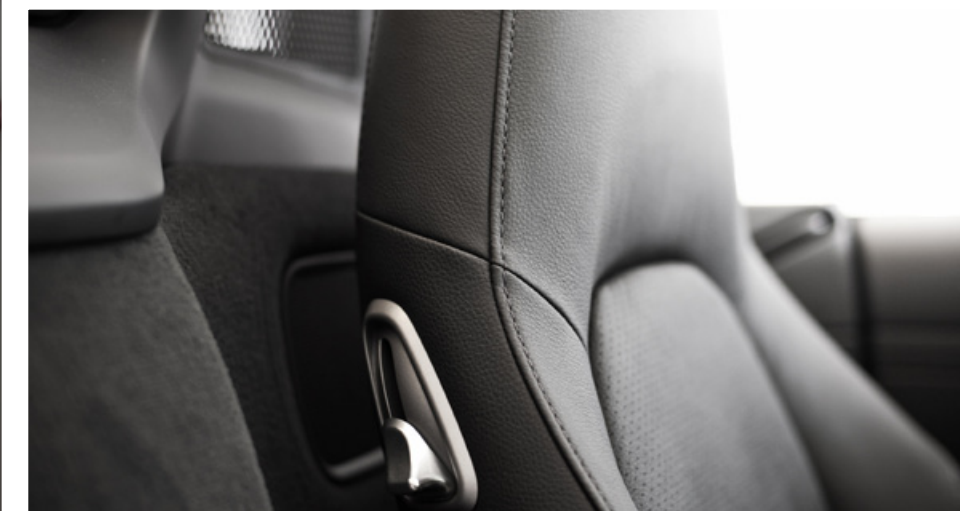
Comparing it to the current herd of cabriolets like BMW's Z4, Mercedes-Benz's SLK and Audi's TTS, Porsche's Boxster looks the sleekest.

That said, despite the Boxster looking beautiful with the roof hidden away, it still looks highly attractive even with the roof up. Personally speaking, this has to be Porsche's best looking (after the Carrera GT, of course) cabriolet to date.

Those 20-inch lightweight alloys, paired to high performance 235/35 R-20 front and 265/35 R-20 rear Pirelli P Zero, matches the car's look brilliantly, complimenting the car's sporty intent. Quick fact: If you're buying a Boxster, you have a total of six other alloy designs to choose from...

You also get an automatic spoiler on the boot: when driving fast at three figure speeds, the spoiler will rise up to improve the car's aerodynamics. But if you still prefer to be subtle, there is a button on the centre console to keep it hidden away from watching eyes.





The grown Boxster also lead to a bigger cabin this time around. So you might opine, 'it doesn't make much difference', as the Boxster is - after all - a strict two-seater; but with obvious improved head and shoulder room, hey, even the toughest critic will appreciate this.

Also worth mentioning is the improvement in cabin sound insulation. The Boxster might come only with a canvas roof, but driving with it fixed, the cabin is well suppressed against wind and road noise.

So the centre console and dashboard might seem taken off the Cayenne and Panamera, but look beyond that and you will notice how better built the cabin is - premium leather covering the interior and perfectly sized steering wheel deserving two thumbs up. Heck, every control button is even located conveniently within the driver's reach.

But like any other car, even the Boxster isn't excluded from some issues. For example, the signal/wiper stalks seem taken off the 986. Also, those sport seats could still do with some additional lumbar support to make it more comfortable (then again, it probably wasn't built for, erm, buffed drivers like myself).

The 3.4-liter Boxer 6-cylinder, 24-valve engine here received some minor improvements in terms of power output: if it previously churns out only 310 bhp, the 981 has 315 bhp at its disposal. Maximum torque figure remains the same at 360 Nm.

Well thanks to the additional horsepower, a lightened body (by 40 kg) and a responsive 7-speed PDK 'box, this Boxster needs only five seconds to do the century sprint. It's nearest competitors, the SLK 350 and TTS Roadster on the other hand, needs 5.6 and 5.2 seconds respectively.

"Retaining its rear-wheel drive configuration, the Boxster can be a fun tool to use as well. So the nose goes where you point it and quick direction changes are easy."



What you will surely notice is how fast it goes when you press the accelerator pedal hard. It even shifts up at lightning speed, with such a glorious melody from the engine to make it even more sensational to drive. More so in 'Sport' mode – not only is the throttle response sharper and gearshift more aggressive, the suspension system gets tightened up as well, providing seemingly endless grip.

Retaining its rear-wheel drive configuration, the Boxster can be a fun tool to use as well. So the nose goes where you point it and quick direction changes are easy. But if you're the sort who is highly confident and mildly insane, switch off the traction control, throw it fast into a wide but sharp curve, feel the tail end kicking out and enjoy the show.

Those brakes are utterly dependable too: there's so much capacity and capability.

It won't put its power down as brutally as a turbocharged Z4 or TTS, but unless you're critically serious about track-day lap times, you won't feel short-changed by the handling and steering, or its trusty brakes.

Add the extra sensory inputs of a well-sorted cabrio, drive it down some driver's road and you'll be convinced that, contrary to old wives tale, money really can buy happiness.

And the Boxster S is not just a toy for the evenings. **N.**

OMG! ONE MINUTE GLANCE

| | |
|-------------------|-------------------------|
| Max Power: | 315 hp @ 6700 rpm |
| Max Torque: | 360 Nm @ 4500 rpm |
| Max speed: | 250 km/h |
| 0-100 km/h: | 4.8 seconds |
| Transmission: | 7-speed PDK Dual-clutch |
| Kerb Weight: | 1,350 kg |
| CO ₂ : | 188 g/km |

50 | 51

FIRST DRIVES

Toyota 86



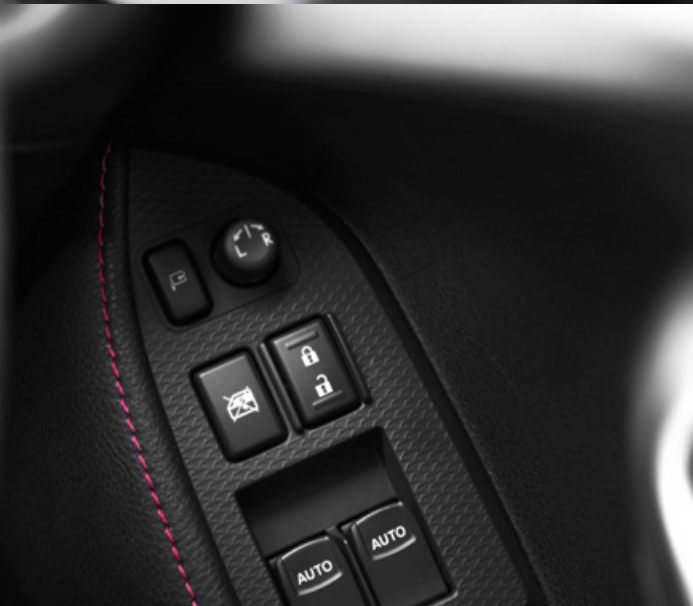
WHY COE WHY?

It was supposed to be 'the affordable sports car'. But high Certificate Of Entitlement (COE) prices have skyrocketed prices of cars here in Singapore. *Joel Tam* wishes this wasn't so, because the 86 is pretty darn good!

Photography | Joel Tam



"It's not the quickest or the flashiest, but that's part its brilliance. If you've ever thought to yourself that too many sports cars these days have too much power, and way too much sophisticated electronics, you're not alone."



I've won't consider myself as a sporty person. While I enjoy soccer, swimming and cycling, I'm not the type to carve out time in my schedule to make sure I engage in these activities on a regular basis. It's by divine grace that I'm still fairly trim.

I do however, enjoy driving sports cars (does that count?). As in I really love these things. I'm by no means a perfect driver, but I'd like to believe that 16 years of driving, owning (and yes, crashing) cars have sharpened my skills over time.

Many of the cars I've owned and driven are still etched in my memory, more often than not, because they were thoroughly enjoyable cars. The Toyota 86 is one such car.

It's not the quickest or the flashiest, but that's part its brilliance. If you've ever thought to yourself that too many sports cars these days have too much power, and way too much sophisticated electronics, you're not alone.

The 86 is perfectly balance in style, weight, power and electronic features. The result is a car that is near perfect.

Ok, so the exterior has a few conflicting design lines (I much prefer the concept car design), but otherwise, it's low-slung and still a very sexy shape to behold. While shooting the car, I found that at some angles it even resembled a Lexus LFA!

Get comfortable in the cockpit and you'll find the seating position is just right. Plastics all around remind you that you're in a Japanese car. That said, the front and center console have been designed rather well, with some switches mimicking an aircraft's instrumentation panel. Fitting is good, so you do get the sense of progress in the cabin, from say the MR-S, which was Toyota's last affordable RWD sports car.

All that doesn't really matter once you put your foot down on the accelerator.

No, it's not fast, but yet, it's flippin' fantastic. Contradictory? Not quite.

You see, enjoying a car is not always about power alone. BMW's recent efforts in the M5 and M6 are great examples. Stupendously quick, but not half as engaging as the 86. With the 86, you don't have to be a high-speed hero to have fun in the car. Just be sensible.

The modest 2-litre flat-four boxer engine with 200 bhp may not sound like much, but it's just right. It's easy to light up the rear wheels even. Build up the juice, dump the clutch and hold the brakes - instant tyre smoke.

"...the front and center console have been designed rather well, with some switches mimicking an aircraft's instrumentation panel. Fitting is good, so you do get the sense of progress in the cabin..."



But that's not what this car is about. Light with a low centre of gravity, rear-wheel drive, beautifully balanced, precise, accurate. These are the highlights of the Toyota 86. Superbly nimble and agile around the corners, you always feel at one with the car. Working the car hard is also part of the fun. The precise 6-speed gearbox is a joy to use, as is the direct steering. The weight is also perfectly balanced on the steering, with just the right amount of feedback and resistance when you're handling the car.

Low end torque is a little lacking, but it's still a nice drive when you work it. So nice, that any initial ideas one might have to modify the car may just fade away. But if you're the type that cannot accept a stock car, you'd be glad to know that Borneo Motors is also selling a TRD specced version.

"Low end torque is a little lacking, but it's still a nice drive when you work it."

Toyota 86

Rather go aftermarket? You'd be interested to know that the car was built with that in mind. We noticed that the bolts and nuts on the suspension struts are longer than usual - for aftermarket strut bars perhaps?

Did you know that the wheel PCD of 100 is the same as the Subaru WRX? The brake caliper mounts are also similar to a WRX/STI! Plus, the V-mounted radiator is ideal for track applications. Also, the bonnet opens a full 90-degrees so you can easily drop in a Lexus IS-F engine in like Max Orido's drift 86 (ok, we're crossing the line here)!

While some power-hungry critics have lambasted the car for lacking power, I think that's precisely the beauty of it. Power is overrated.

The Toyota 86 is great! Not perfect, but great. It's beautifully balanced and has every intention of putting you, the driver, in that balance as well. If I may use an idiom with different take today, I'd say it's the 'sharpest tool in the shed'. **N.**

"The Toyota 86 is great! Not perfect, but great. It's beautifully balanced and has every intention of putting you, the driver, in that balance as well."



OMG! ONE MINUTE GLANCE

| | |
|-------------------|-----------------------|
| Max Power: | 200 hp @ 7000 rpm |
| Max Torque: | 205 Nm @ 6400-6600rpm |
| Max speed: | 226 km/h (limited) |
| 0-100 km/h: | 7.6 seconds |
| Transmission: | 6-speed Manual |
| Kerb Weight: | 1,240 kg |
| CO ₂ : | 180 g/km |

58 | 59

FIRST DRIVES

Infiniti G37 Convertible

INFINITE BEAUTY

One of the best-looking convertibles in the market, the Infiniti G37 drop-top struts its stuff with *Joel Tam* behind the wheel.

Photography | Joel Tam



60 | 61

FIRST DRIVES

Infiniti G37 Convertible



The Infiniti brand hasn't really taken off here in Singapore. Which is truly a shame, because the cars are really quite good. I'm not just saying that too.

Sure they may not be as luxurious and well thought out as Lexus, their most direct competitor. Nor are they as well-built or dynamic as their German competitors. But the overall package is still rather attractive nonetheless. All the models we've driven so far have been nice cars to drive, not special, but nice.

Take the G37 Convertible we have here for example. It's a sexy little thing. Ok, at 4.6 meters, it's not so little, but it is pretty.

It's got a folding hard top that opens and closes in about 20 seconds. We don't get the coupe here, but that's no problem, because with the G37 Convertible, you get both! With the top up, it's even better looking than the coupe in my opinion.

"An automatic climate control system adjusts to ambient temperatures, while the Bose audio system with stellar sound quality accounts for cabin noise and wind."

Power comes from the same 3.7-liter V6 engine found in the Nissan 370Z. It's a potent performer with 325 horses, with a nice V6 rumble coming through when it is fully engaged in pedal-to-the-metal mode.

Inside, the Infiniti G37 Convertible is comfy and rather luxurious. It's a fairly large convertible, so I did expect more space, but there isn't - particularly in the rear. The front is well-suited to long cruises, with comfortable support and ventilated seats with a heating function.

An automatic climate control system adjusts to ambient temperatures, while the Bose audio system with stellar

62 | 63

FIRST DRIVES

Infiniti G37 Convertible

There are even premium integrated Bose speakers in the headrests, which not only look cool, but are highly effective as well.

Voice commands were also a novel feature, and it worked well which enabled easy use of the navigation system and Bluetooth phone controls.

So does it go? Well, yes it does. 325 bhp is not supercar-slaying, but this Japan-built engine that has become a staple of Nissan and Infiniti's lineup does suffice in covering distances quickly.

The independent double wishbones in front and a multi-link kit in the rear with anti-sway bars on both ends, puts the G37 in a good position for action around the corners as well. Handling is fairly sharp too, but there is some noticeable scuttle shake when the roof is down. Once the top is up though, the car is as tight as a Tupperware.

So should you buy one?

A Mercedes-Benz E350 Cabriolet will set you back by about \$50K more, compared to the G37. That's quite a lot of money. Considering that the Infiniti comes in a decently specced package, add to that the exclusivity of the car itself, it's does sound like a pretty good choice.

If not for anything else though, buy it for its good looks, as this is truly one of the best looking convertibles on the market right now. **N.**

OMG! ONE MINUTE GLANCE

| | |
|-------------------|--------------------------|
| Max Power: | 325 hp @ 7000 rpm |
| Max Torque: | 362 Nm @ 5200 rpm |
| Max speed: | 250 km/h (limited) |
| 0-100 km/h: | 6.3 seconds |
| Transmission: | 7-speed Sports Automatic |
| Kerb Weight: | 1,852 kg |
| CO ² : | 264 g/km |



Suzuki Swift Sport

Power: 134 bhp @ 6900 rpm
Torque: 160 Nm @ 4000 rpm
0-100 km/h: 8.7 seconds
Top speed: 195 km/h

Mitsubishi Colt Ver. R

Power: 154 bhp @ 6000 rpm
Torque: 210 Nm @ 3000 rpm
0-100 km/h: 7.9 seconds
Top speed: 180 km/h (limited)

Subaru WRX

Power: 330 bhp @ 6000 rpm (tuned)
Torque: 480 Nm @ 4200 rpm (tuned)
0-100 km/h: 5.5 seconds
Top speed: 240 km/h



MULTIPLE CHOICE(S)

So you're about to spend \$110k on a new hot hatch. Did you know that you could buy a turbocharged rocket for that? *Azfar Hashim* explores your options.

Photography | Low Fai Ming

Have you ever heard the saying that if you don't skydive before turning 30, you never ever will? Simply because once past that, a sensible gene kicks in and a self-preservation instinct - that manifests itself as a greater need to avoid danger and take fewer risks - takes control.

But if the younger you and I were once so geared towards having fun, towards making life more exciting, perhaps we should heed this want a little more often; unless our lives have grown stale...

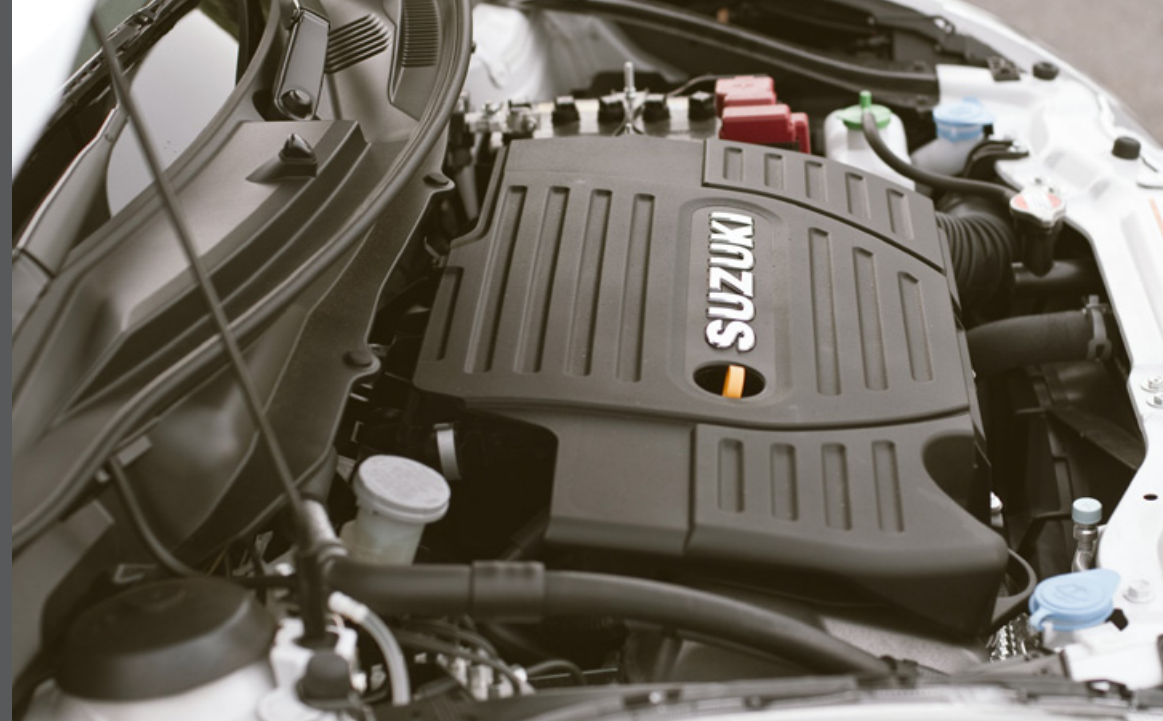
Don't stay in, don't say no, don't buy a new hatchback with a warranty and low carbon emissions when you could have a fast used car that spits fire and will make you a hero at a glance.

"So to explore this concept in more depth, we took a trio, all certainly holding plenty of charm on their own. It could be the allure of a turbocharged engine seals the deal, or that a modern interior and peace of mind is more compelling..."

Here's the simple truth: Anywhere between \$110k to \$120k, while plenty to land yourself a 'performance car', is just about sufficient also to afford one of a healthy selection of sports cars from days gone by; plus with some change to spare.

It is a reality - so why would you choose the obvious hatchback over a sensational car?

Problem is - in local context anyway - we're mostly the sensible sort who considers fuel and servicing costs, reliability and practicality. And the prospect of running a sports car on a tight budget might become daunting, and maybe even unappealing. But let's look a little closer: is there any way of fulfilling our childhood motoring dreams without getting bent over?



So to explore this concept in more depth, we took a trio, all certainly holding plenty of charm on their own. It could be the allure of a turbocharged engine seals the deal, or that a modern interior and peace of mind is more compelling. So, let's find out.

Here are the cars for today's comparison: a brand new Suzuki Swift Sport, an impeccable six year-old Subaru WRX and last but not least, a well maintained five year-old Mitsubishi Colt Version R.

With less than 150 bhp, the SSS is the least powerful car of our bunch. Crucially, it also holds the heftiest price tag, no thanks to sky-high COEs. There's no doubting its overt sense of style, and in this latest iteration, looks just like a proper tarmac rally car.

The pairing of a high-revving 1.6-litre 4-cylinders, 16-valve N.A VVT lump to a close-ratio 6-speed manual transmission results in a maximum power output of 134 bhp @ 6,900 rpm and torque figure of 160 Nm @ 4,400 rpm. It does the century sprint in a respectable 8.7 seconds and maxes out at 195 km/h.

The spotlight now turns to the other corner: Mitsubishi's (take a deep breath) Colt Turbo Ralliart Version-R. Arriving first back in 2006, the - also affectionately known as - Colt R was quite a hit, considering its overall package as a pocket-rocket.

Let's see, back then for less than \$80k (brand new!), it buys you 154 bhp (@ 6,000 rpm) and 210 Nm (@ 3,000 rpm) of torque - all thanks to a 1.5-litre turbocharged lump paired to a 6-speed CVT 'box. Surprisingly though, the take up rate for the self-shifters surpass the manual rather significantly; which also shows how less involving drivers are becoming (egad!)

It goes from zero to hero in only 8 seconds, and top speed limited to only 180 km/h - not so bad for it's size. You can find a similar one going for less than \$50k.

Now here's the last white stallion in this group. Needing no introduction considering how much of a favourite it is among boyracers, family men who wants something spacious and also the choice of our boys in blue, meet Subaru's WRX.

It's powerful, fast and affordable - this version of Subaru's long line of WRX reached our shore back in 2006 with a rather tax-unfriendly 2.5-litre turbocharged engine. Despite that, the sub-\$95k asking price was enough for a queue to form outside the showroom.



In our comparison stories, we don't pull our punches. Our team starts out each feature story out by taking an oath. An oath to be honest and completely impartial to any brand, and most importantly, to not accept money or advertising revenue in exchange for a favourable result (not that any of the car companies offer anyway). We swear to be truthful in the presentation of the facts and promise to drive the cars very hard (on your behalf of course). So read on and enjoy, nothing is sugar-coated here (if you don't see another issue of N.GINE, at least you'll know why).

Mated to a 5-speed manual transmission, it whips out 230 bhp and 310 Nm of torque. In stock condition.

This WRX here - which is also burnpavement.com's company car - however, is no ordinary Rex. Converted to full STi Spec-C inside out, including the addition of a roof scoop and rear windshield wiper, it whips out 330 bhp and 480 Nm of torque. Oh yes, that's a 6-speed manual STi 'box by the way.

Our Editor, Joel, bought this unit a year ago for less than \$50k. And along the way, he only spent on replacing the stock suspension with a set of coilovers.

Being the newest model in the bunch, the SSS has the 'new car smell' and best build quality. It's not exactly premium in there, but the one thing worth pointing out is how durable the entire cabin is, paired to a user-friendly console.

It has the ability to haul four other passengers, but doing that compromises shoulder room despite the expanded width as compared to its predecessor. The boot size remains useful, but for trips to Sepang, carrying additional bulky parts might pose a problem - thankfully, you can bring down the rear seat's backrest for additional practicality.

The Colt-R isn't that far off in terms of cabin space, from the SSS. But the added advantage here is that egg-shaped roof translates to useful headroom - so you can still ferry Yao Ming (well maybe not, but you get the idea.)

At half a decade old, you can already feel age catching up with its overall design, but like the SSS, the plastic used throughout is built to last. Boot space is adequate here, but (again) the tall stance of the car allows you to haul tall and bulky items without much issues - tyres, extra bottles of lube, spare batteries and tools for a track day can all be thrown back here.

Car development occurs at such a rate these days that six years equates to several lifetimes, and since the WRX's design is at least that old, it should by right feel fit to crumble. While the simplistic and functional cabin design has aged in its appearance, the quality of build was (surprisingly) so far ahead of its time, that it still feels robust till today, as if it will forever be in existence.

Being the only sedan in this group, the WRX gets a useful cabin and an equally useful boot. Which means if you turn into a dad along the way, there's no real need to look for a 'family-friendly' car; it's a real all-rounder.



Quite why the WRX is so highly regarded is obvious just as soon as you up the pace, because the quality of the steering remains, and never does it feel like it's guiding a disconcertingly light front end.

Looks like having a STi steering rack, 235/45 R-17 Dunlop Direzza semi-slick rubbers on all four corners, and KW V3 fully adjustable coilovers does help improve things further.

Tip it into a corner and the front end turns in smartly, it's driver sure that it will stick, the steering wheel fidgeting in his hands with as much clarity as you could expect of such a car. On top of that, there's reasonable ride comfort despite the solid body control and flat cornering, and guiding the WRX down a winding road, be it at maximum attack or half pace, becomes more absorbing

than it could ever be in anything brand new with twice the price tag.

The engine needs to be worked hard for it to deliver its all, which is just so perfectly suited to modern motoring on our congested roads. Never does it feel unwilling. Furthermore, it appeals on an emotional level, for the styling and history are so evocative that owning a WRX would be as much fun as driving it.

For the price of a WRX but a year younger, you could put yourself into a Colt-R. A hot-hatch like this has garnered quite a following over the generations and has always been the most youthful in Mitsubishi's stable. While the standard Colt is an... err... egg, the R adds real aggression with dark headlamps and a deep front bumper, and lowered on larger wheels it also has

a purposeful stance. It's youthful aggression achieved through wise design.

The CVT gearbox almost sit at odds with the Colt-R's youthfulness elsewhere, because it seems more befitting of a grown up hot-hatch.

Almost instantaneously, you do learn that in dynamic terms, a grown up hot-hatch is just what the Colt-R is. Only tyre and wind noise intrude on long journeys, for the sixth (virtual) ratio keeps engine speeds down, and the CVT makes it effortless in town.

The consequence of these talents is that it can't rival a Polo GTI for ultimate driver enjoyment. It will begin to wash into understeer rather earlier, and the tall stance prevents any kind of tail-happy silliness. What a pity.

We're huge fans of the SSS here at N.GINE. It remains an accomplished handler that serves up plenty of fun for drivers of all abilities.

If you remember, we mentioned in our Suzuki Swift Sport Special issue of N.GINE that it turns in with determination and accuracy and rolls controllably; it has almost exactly the right amount of grip, and is constantly prodding you to get a bloody move on. It will also willingly climb up to the 7,000 rpm mark, accompanied by a zesty – and not nasty – note.

At close to \$110k box fresh however, it certainly gave us plenty of options when considering a used counterpart. You may think with your mind all the time, but in this case, there's the risk of the heart taking precedence.

Let's get to the dollars and sense, I mean, cents then.

Say you're willing to part with \$10,000 for a deposit. Based on its price tag of \$108,500, bank interest of 2.28% and 10-year loan, the SSS will cost you about \$1,008 a month. To see it in a different light, you have to take a longer loan to enjoy the car – which might not sound enjoyable if you're the sort who doesn't quite like the idea of long repayments.

But the upside is it's brand new (new car smell, yipiee!), covered by an agent warranty at least for the next three years, much more affordable road tax, and also good fuel economy.

Insurance, a subjective issue here, is surprisingly some \$1.5k pricier than the Colt-R's for my case.

And being a Suzuki, it won't cost you an arm and a leg (or kidneys for that matter) come servicing.

Then there's the Colt-R. Look up online and you should be able to find a mid-2007 unit going for about \$49,000. Say you manage to drive a hard bargain and drop

the price further to \$47,500. Put down a ten grand deposit and match it to a 2.28% bank interest for the remaining 58 months and you're looking at a monthly repayment of \$726.

Shorter loan, lesser repayment, affordable road tax and insurance premium, the Colt-R suddenly sounds so promising. The vast amount of aftermarket parts and tuners might make you want to grab this deal ASAP.

A 2006 WRX can be had between \$38k to \$45k, depending on the condition and state of tune. To be realistic, a done-up unit like ours is hard to come by, so let's take a stock mid-2006 model with a \$38,800 asking price as reference.

Then, bargain it down to \$37,500. As the other two, let's then put in a ten grand deposit, with 2.28% bank interest for the next 46 months. Do a quick calculation and you're looking at a repayment of \$659 monthly.

Sounds good, doesn't it? A sports car for less than \$700 month, for the next four years at least.



But this might put you off: a sky-high insurance premium (e.g \$6.8k if you're below 30 years old), out of this world fuel economy and high wear and tear rate at this age. Let's not forget a yearly road tax of about \$1,750 due to its engine capacity. Plus, if you do not have an idea of the car's history, you would need deep pockets to pay for the time spent at the workshop.

Short of selling the organs or winning the lottery, there's no other way into sports car ownership for the majority of us, and the realities of money can't be escaped. What should fill the youthful you with joy, though, is that there are used cars out there that offer a taste of supercar ownership half the price of a brand new hot-hatch.

So, if you have the means and time, Subaru's WRX should be right down your alley. Want a fun, brand new car? The Suzuki Swift Sport is a brilliant choice. An affordable, understated but fast hatchback? Tadaa... Mitsubishi's Colt Version R then.

But what's the point of a comparison without a conclusion? If I have to pick one right now, it will be the Suzuki Swift Sport. With this purchase, I may have to pay more monthly, but I will have lesser headaches, am covered by warranty, enjoy a fine balance of both power and economy and Suzuki's reliability.

It can still be brought to track too. **N.**



TRAVEL IN STYLE

Joel Tam packs his family of five into a handsome Passat CC and makes his way 300 km up north to the town of Port Dickson in Negeri Sembilan, Malaysia.

Photography | Joel Tam



Port Dickson in a VW Passat CC

"Thistle Port Dickson is a 5-star hotel with lots of activities, swimming pools, game room, movie room, three restaurants, two bars, a Fitness Centre & LifeSpa, water sports, golf course and even a foosball and pool table...!"



Port Dickson is one of the nearest and most drivable beach destinations in Malaysia. Just three and a half hours by car at 'cruising' speeds from Singapore, it's the perfect reason for a family drive-up, especially with three boys in the back seat (yeah right!).

Still, I was up for it. After all, I've brought the whole Tam family up to Malacca before, Port Dickson is just a little further.

Thankfully, with the help of an iPad, lots of snacks and a soft ride from our ride for the weekend, the boys hardly gave any trouble. The ride is question is none other than the stylish Volkswagen CC. Packing a 160 bhp 1.8-litre turbocharged engine, with a punchy 250 Nm from as low as 1500 rpm, the drive up was a cinch. Power is not all the car packed, it fit all five of us and our luggage with space to spare too.

After we got everything in, we started our trip from Alexandra, heading Port Dickson via Tuas checkpoint. We had the convenience of a GPS in the CC, but even without it, you won't have much trouble, as the drive up to Port Dickson is very straightforward.

Once you clear the checkpoints (for first-timers, you'll need to prepare \$3.20 for toll charges at Tuas), you will find yourself on the North-South Highway, just head towards Kuala Lumpur (a Touch 'N' Go card is pretty handy for paying the toll charges along the way and can be purchased from any petrol station along the highway).

As you head towards Kuala Lumpur, you'll first past Malacca (Melaka) before you reach the Port Dickson exit, once you've turned off and past the toll, turn right and you're well on your way to Port Dickson via the Port Dickson highway. By the way, we reached our destination only having used a quarter tank of petrol! Which attests to the CC excellent fuel economy.

We stayed at Thistle Port Dickson, which was a very pleasant stay overall. Finding it was not as easy as I thought it'd be. While there were signs initially, they stopped adding the signboards as it got nearer the resort (which is an odd thing to do). Nonetheless, we travelled in faith towards the earlier directions and found the resort at the far end of town. Port Dickson is built along the coastline anyway, so it's either up or down - it's quite hard to get lost.

"...in the process of our exploration, we found interesting roads and lanes that led us right up to the beach"

Thistle Port Dickson is a 5-star hotel with lots of activities, swimming pools, game room, movie room, three restaurants, two bars, a Fitness Centre & LifeSpa, water sports, golf course and even a foosball and pool table - which the boys really enjoyed! Our package even came with an offshore fish-feeding session via speedboat. So if you're not the type to venture out of hotels, you could actually spend 3 days and 2 nights in the resort itself!

But my wife and I are explorers (sort of)! We love discovering new places and going on food trails, so it wasn't long before we were on the road again.

One really good joint we found was a mexican eating house called El Cactus. We ordered a main dish for everyone and fruit juices all round and the bill came up to only RM60. But we wanted to try some street food for dinner, so we waited a bit and headed for the weekend night market. Like all night markets, there were things to buy as well as things to eat, all in abundance.

The next day was filled with more pool time, both swimming pool and pool table in fact. By now, the kids had enough of their parent's taste in food, so it was off to McDonalds for lunch. It was a pretty scenic one too, double-storey and planted by the coastline so you have a perfect

view of the sea while you munch on your fillet-o-fish. We then drove around to look for the famous Cape Rachado Lighthouse at Tanjung Tuan. It was difficult to find the lighthouse as there aren't any clear directions and the GPS didn't have it on the map. Once we found it though, we realized that a bulk of the trip to the lighthouse had to be on foot, so we gave up. But in the process of our exploration, we found interesting roads and lanes that led us right up to the beach.

Dinner was back at the hotel, but we packed BBQ chicken from a stall along the road called Cowboy Place, it was pretty awesome.

Alas, all good things come to an end. After we checked out at the hotel on our last day, we decided to make one final stop at the Ostrich farm along Jalan Kemang. While it is a little run down, the animals are friendly and there's a petting zoo with rabbits, goats, turkeys and other farm animals. The kids loved it!

It was time to head back, and our lovely Volkswagen CC was up to the task again. The smooth ride and ventilated seats made driving home less dreary, and soon we were back cruising on local roads again. I'm not sure if I'll be heading back to Port Dickson anytime soon, but it is a trip worth making at least once. **N.**



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OUR CARS

Subaru WRX

Model: 2006 Subaru WRX (STI)

Acquired: Jan 2012

\$pent this month: Petrol: \$400

S202 Wing: \$250 (used)



It's been a busy two months for our company runabout. Being involved in two of our shoot-outs and being the reliable workhorse for all our photography assignments.

So far, it's been a smooth ride and there's very little to report in all honesty. But the modifying bug did start to bite earlier in the month, and we were looking for some added ... er ... downforce.

OK, so it's was more for aesthetic reasons than functional need. But to be fair the new spoiler you see here is as functional as it is pretty.

An original S202 low GT Wing, we found it off the local Subaru forum. The previous owner had it painted in black, but kept the STI logo and carbon fibre grain underneath exposed, so it could be verified as an original piece. The deal went through at S\$250 only!

While it is a simple add-on, I feel it changes the whole look of the car. There's a sense of balance now, and yet it's not over-the-top. Rear-view visibility is slightly blocked as a result though, but it's a small price to pay for beauty!

Other than that, we've shopped for a new Nardi suede steering wheel, but haven't had the time to get that fitted though. We'll post pics of that once we have them. **N.**

MOAR DOWN FORCE

A newly added S202 spoiler adds aggression and downforce to our trusty WRX.

Photography and report
by Joel Tam



N.GINE highly recommends these vendors who worked on our car (NOTE: no sponsorship was extended, all services were duly paid for).
[Autodynamac Performance](#) | spoiler installation

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OUR CARS

Porsche Boxster S

Model: 2008 Porsche Boxster S 3.4

Acquired: March 2010

\$pent this month: Petrol only



Wet roads were treacherous, and dry roads equally dangerous especially round the bends. That was how 'botak' our Michelins PilotSports were.

It was now getting really urgent to have a new set of shoes for this car, and we decided to shop for another brand to see how the Boxster would perform on an alternative set of ultra high performance tyres.

After a quick discussion with the good people at Pirelli, we got a set of P Zeros fitted on the Porsche. Installation was swiftly done at Chin Wah & Co. at 63 Killiney Road. Tyre specs 235/35/ZR19 at the front and 265/35/ZR19 at the rear.

'It's ok, just be honest, we can accept it if you have some bad points about the tyres.' said Brendan Ang, Sales Director of Pirelli Singapore. Well Brendan, I can honestly say that after about 800 km, I have nothing bad to say! The tyres are superb and have exceeded my expectations. Road noise is very acceptable and is quieter than the previous set of tyres.

Superb handling and traction in both wet and dry. Simply grips and won't let go! Making the already excellent Boxster S even better to drive.

Turn in is sharp and the steering feel is a tad light at the recommended tyre pressure. But otherwise, it feels good upon each steering input.

The car does feel a bit bumpier than before though, but I'm thinking that the both steering feel and bumpiness can be solved by deflating the tyres just a wee bit. Oh well, we'll probably give that a try and also monitor the tyres for their wear rate as well. More updates soon... **N.**

NEW SPORTS SHOES

Our bald-as-an-eagle Michelins give way to a new set of sticky Pirelli P Zeros!

Photography and report by Joel Tam



N.GINE highly recommends these vendors who worked on our car:

▪ [Pirelli Singapore](#) | tyre supplier ▪ [Chin Wah & Co. at 63 Killiney Road](#) | tyre installation

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NEXT ISSUE
Coming soon...



COMING
SOON...

WHERE CARS ARE MORE THAN A TO B

N.GINE

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