

## READERS REVIEW

OUR READERS GET  
PERSONAL WITH  
THE CAR AND  
TELL YOU WHAT  
THEY THINK!



## SPECIAL SUPPLEMENT

WHERE CARS ARE MORE THAN A TO B

# N.GINE

FROM THE PUBLISHERS OF BURNPAVEMENT.COM

SPECIAL ISSUE

## SUZUKI SWIFT SPORT SPECIAL ISSUE



INSIDE! EVERYTHING YOU  
NEED TO KNOW ABOUT THE  
NEW SWIFT SPORT!



INSIDE  
MANUAL & CVT DRIVEN <  
OLD AND NEW SSS BACK TO BACK <  
AND MORE! <



01 // Joel Tam



02 // Azfar Hashim



03 // 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.

**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.

**COE KILLS. SWIFT SPORT THRILLS.**

In these dark ages of high COEs, cars have been made ridiculously expensive. Inevitably, the market has slowed down tremendously and buyers are holding back in making a car purchase.

However, not everyone has a choice. Some have to look for a car due to work, some are in need of a replacement once their current car heads for the scrappers. Either way, the market still moves, albeit slowly.

So maybe you're one of those who doesn't have a choice.

You can look for a car that will do the daily commute effectively and achieve the everyday 'KPI's (send the kids to school on time, reach your meetings on time, etc.), or you can do better, and accomplish a different set of *Key Performance Indicators*.

This E-supplement was put together because like you, we love to drive - *hard*. The new Swift Sport allows you to do that. It's not a 300 bhp machine that will scare you out of your wits when you're turning out of a 90-degree corner at 80 km/h. It doesn't leave you pale-faced. It leaves you laughing!

Chuck it a series of corners and hear those tyres protest as you push harder. Floor the accelerator and hear the wheels scramble for grip as you blast off from the lights. This is one fun car.

I won't spoil the party by revealing too much, but if you're in the market for a car, read on, because real drivers don't need supercars.

Managing Editor  
Joel Tam



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**FIRST DRIVES**

Suzuki Swift Sport (M)



# SECOND COMING

The second-generation Swift Sport has a lot on its shoulders; question is, can it save buyers from these dark ages of high COEs? *Azfar Hashim* finds out.

Photography | Low Fai Ming



"...it generally retains a similar styling as the regular Swift's. But to make its sporty intent more obvious, Suzuki added twin exhausts, a bumper diffuser and a roof-mounted spoiler."



Churning out a hot-hatchback seems to be like an art form long lost. Gone are the days where the term 'hot-hatch' simply means a powerful engine, manual gearbox and a lightweight body. Modern hot-hatches these days, although still with the basic essence, also come with electronic nannies, and are therefore much heavier, and worst of all, cost a bomb.

Not so in the case of Suzuki though. With so much experience in building basic hot-hatches (case in point the Swift GTI) Suzuki can be considered a connoisseur in this particular class.

So what if Suzuki was missing in this class for a significant period? All that mattered most was their comeback kid - although missing the 'GTI' badge and replaced with a 'Sport' instead - was a brilliant hot-hatch that provided so much punch in a compact package (the way it should be, anyway). Best of all, it doesn't cost a bomb to buy, run and maintain.

With the monumental success of the mark one Suzuki Swift Sport (let's refer to it as the SSS from now on), it clearly means that all the models after it have to be better - and better.

With us for almost a week is the mark two SSS. For a start, it looks very different from its predecessor. While it retains the overall bulbous shape that every boyracer has grown accustomed to, the SSS now gets for itself a much different face: larger darkened headlamps, a bigger and more prominent grille, an aggressively-styled bumper and topped off with a pronounced foglamp.

At the rear, it generally retains the similar styling as the regular Swift's. But to make its sporty intent more obvious, Suzuki added twin exhausts, a bumper diffuser and last but not least, a roof-mounted spoiler. As before,

16-inch alloys come standard, shod with 195/50 R-16 Yokohama Advan rubbers. (By the way, local Suzuki dealer, Champion Motors, has an OEM bodykit if you want to make your SSS look different.)

The interior is where you will find the significant improvements. To begin with, although hard plastics are still used, the dashboard looks more premium this time around - those digital screens, for both the audio system and climate control, definitely are a big jump from the no-frills type seen in its predecessor. Even the control buttons feel more solid.

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## FIRST DRIVES

Suzuki Swift Sport (M)

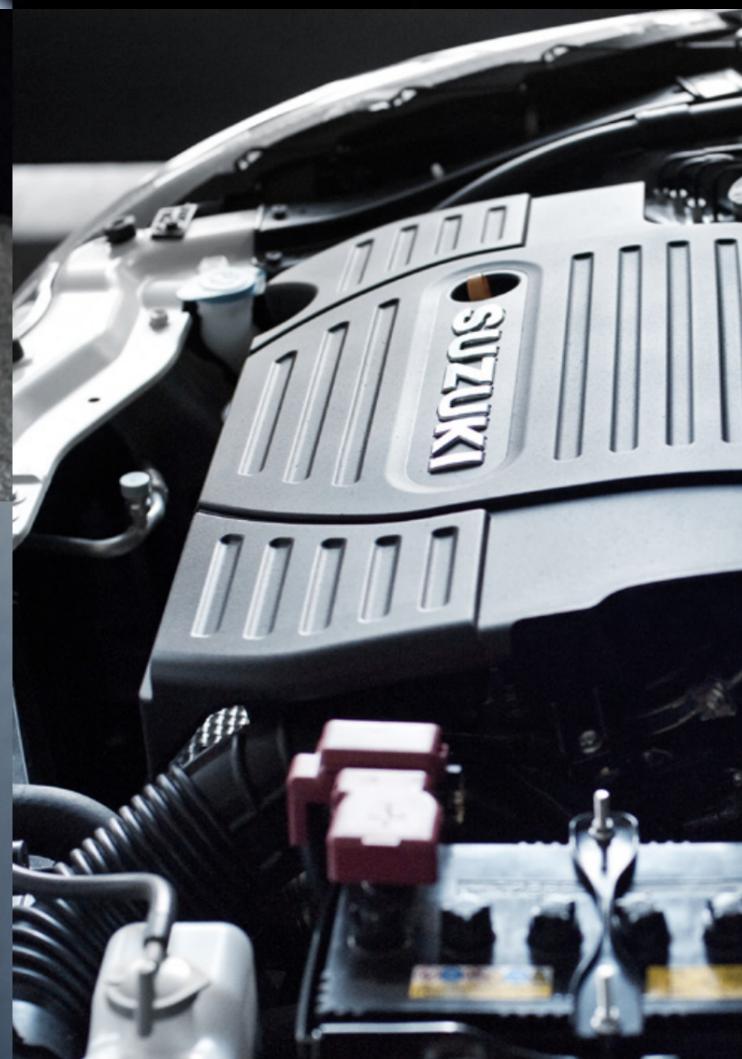
“A hot-hatch is about entertainment, pure and simple... and the Swift Sport does its utmost to blow your socks off in a distinct fashion...”

The driving position is surprisingly comfortable, thanks to the perfectly-sized steering wheel that adjusts for both rake and reach, plus those supportive sports seats that provides the right amount of support – even if you’re the sort with ‘spare tyres’, like myself, will have no reason to complain. Those are not the only details Suzuki has improved upon though: both the speedo and tachometer gets clearer fonts that are easy on the eye, together with a multi display screen in between the two.

As the mark two SSS is bigger in size, it leads to a bigger cabin; legroom has improved for rear passengers. Then again, a third adult seated in the centre might get uncomfortable over longer distance; and the boot size hasn’t changed much too. But as the bootlid opens up high, you know that loading and unloading items, particularly on days at the beach or trips to Ikea, won’t be a problem.

A hot-hatch is about entertainment, pure and simple. Having said that, the Swift Sport does its utmost to blow your socks off in a distinct fashion.

Under the bonnet lies a 4-cylinder 16-valve 1,586cc powerplant. Matched to a 6-speed manual transmission (also available in 7-speed CVT with a manual selector), it churns out 134bhp and 160Nm worth of torque - 10bhp and 12Nm more than its predecessor. It will also do the century sprint in 8.7 seconds.



**FIRST DRIVES**

## Suzuki Swift Sport (M)

But knowing how conservative Suzuki usually is with figures, we suspect it takes slightly faster than that, because the Swift Sport feels eager and quick. You can floor the car, and most willingly, it will climb all the way to the 7,000rpm mark - there's no accompanying gruff noise, but instead, just a zesty note. The SSS muscles its way along hungrily, and provided you keep it ticking above 4,000rpm, you will not be left wanting for more. By the way, daring overtaking maneuvers are a specialty...

It also has a satisfying gearchange, with a chunky, machined throw, although its six forward ratios are stacked pretty close together and reverse requires a hefty push.

Some might find the SSS stiffly sprung, but pair it to the rather short 2,430mm wheelbase, what you get here is, pretty much, an agile car. Though it's firm, it's never uncomfortable.

There's nothing to hate about this car's handling. It has good weight and feel at the helm, commendable composure out on the road and a chassis that responds to sudden steering twitches very well. You can take tight turns and bends faster than you normally could, and the SSS will willingly take on it with minimal under-steer.

On top of 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. Which isn't a problem - at sane speeds, a little throttle lift simply tightens the line. Go harder though, and the SSS offers up slides enough to make you grin from ear to ear.

We won't have enough space here to go into the full driving gamut, but one thing's for sure: with the current asking price, nothing else comes close to providing as much driving fun as the Suzuki Swift Sport. It's just impossible not to have a good time in this car: it's simply textbook hot-hatch stuff, standing on its own. **N.**

**OMG! ONE MINUTE GLANCE**

Max Power:	134 hp @ 6900 rpm
Max Torque:	160 Nm @ 4400 rpm
Max speed:	195 km/h
0-100 km/h:	8.7 seconds
Transmission:	6-speed manual
Kerb Weight:	1,070 kg
CO <sub>2</sub> :	153 g/km



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FIRST DRIVES

Suzuki Swift Sport (A)

# THE CHOICE OF A NEW GENERATION?

A continuously variable transmission (CVT) in a hot-hatch? Has Suzuki lost the plot? *Joel Tam* thought so. Until he drove it.

Photography | *Joel Tam*



**FIRST DRIVES**

Suzuki Swift Sport (A)

When the first-generation Swift Sport was launched, it only came with a manual gearbox. Following its success, lady drivers and younger drivers were asking for something more 'appropriate' for city driving, an automatic gearbox was then introduced later to fill that 'need'. With the second-generation Suzuki Swift Sport though, both manual and automatic transmissions are being launched together.

As you can tell from our previous article, we like the latest Swift Sport. The fact that you can drive it hard anywhere is a big plus point.

Realistically though, you won't be revving the nuts off the car everyday, and most definitely not if you're giving your granny a ride home. What you want is a smooth riding car that can still impress your girlfriend's parents when you give them a lift. At least I'm presuming you would.

Anyway, enter the Swift Sport automatic, here is a car that will have to perform day-to-day city driving, where many Singaporeans are likely to spend most of their time. We find out if it manages to blend smoothness and sportiness into one package.

First the not-so-good points.

The automatic is matched to a continuously variable automatic transmission (CVT). For those new to this type of transmission, it's basically a smooth and seamless system that does not work with a set number of gears. Instead belt-driven pulleys are (in most systems) used to keep gear ratios continuously driven. The benefits are often better fuel economy and a smooth power delivery. One less known fact is that the CVT was first sketched back in 1490 by none other than Leonardo da Vinci.

He might have been an engineering genius, but da Vinci was no driving enthusiast, because having this transmission kills the lively and high-revving character of the Swift's 134 bhp powerplant. Whichever way you prefer, power delivery can be seen as smooth, or dull and without any drama. That said, it does not for one moment rob it of its power. 120 km/h will still arrive quickly and the risk of losing your license is still high.



"Realistically though, you won't be revving the nuts off the car everyday... what you want is a smooth riding car that can still impress your girlfriend's parents when you give them a lift. At least I'm presuming you would."

SWIFT  
Sport

The aural experience is also lacking, with an unlimited number of gear ratios, not only do you feel nothing, you hear nothing as well. At best, a low frequency roar is audible as the revs climb.

All this is experienced when left in automatic 'D' mode. Things get better when you toggle the paddle-shifters which control the seven 'gear ratios' Suzuki has pre-set into the system. It's no DSG, but it will shift quickly enough for you to feel the snappy changes and provide a more involved driving experience.

Once you have familiarized yourself with the gearbox though, you can really start to enjoy the car, as all the characteristics found in the manual version are still there to be exploited.

The well-sorted chassis comes alive when you treat the car with little (or no) respect. Floor the accelerator and you'll find it's easy to get a chirp out of the tyres, although the manual will result in more drama with prolonged wheelspin when the clutch is dumped.

With one less pedal to work with, you can now concentrate on enjoying the direct steering and sharp turn-in too! Just floor it and steer that lovely leather-wrapped wheel.

It may not be the fastest thing around, but boy does it handle! It'll allow you to drive flat-out and hang on to the edge of your own limit before you reel yourself back in. It's a splendid little thing.

This is the sale clincher though, even with all that hard driving, we managed to get a 12km per-liter fuel economy rate. Which is superb!

In our opinion, the key strengths of the Swift Sport remain even in this automatic form. In fact, with its smoothness and improved fuel economy, it has gained some benefits.

But this remains a choice for those who don't place driving pleasure a priority. For us though, the manual is still the one to have. **N.**



### OMG! ONE MINUTE GLANCE

Max Power:	134 hp @ 6900 rpm
Max Torque:	160 Nm @ 4400 rpm
Max speed:	195 km/h
0-100 km/h:	8.7 seconds
Transmission:	CVT (7-speed preset manual override with paddle-shifters)
Kerb Weight:	1,085 kg
CO <sub>2</sub> :	153 g/km

# THEY SAID IT! PANEL OF PROFESSIONALS

We love to meet our readers. In fact, they are the most important entity in what we do - I'm glad to say our readers love to meet us too. Here are some of the stuff we talked about when we brought the new Swift Sport to meet them.

Photography | Low Fai Ming

BENJAMIN NG

BUSINESS OWNER  
PHOTOGRAPHY INDUSTRY

Ben's daily drive is a  
VOLKSWAGEN SCIROCCO 1.4 TSI

"The Swift has strong appeal and potential... but alas it's betrayed by the current COE prices."

BEN THINKS...

"The Swift is one of the most popular small cars in SG; that says a lot about its appeal and potential. But alas it's betrayed by the current COE prices. Like many 'warm' hatches on the market today, it offers both performance and practicality."

"Despite its tall height, soft suspension and slight body roll, it felt like an exciting drive and the engine seemed eager to rev. Good power-to-weight ratio too."

"The 6-speed manual option is a definite plus in the current market saturated with auto boxes."

"Equipment level could be more generous though..."

## NICK LIM

MARKETING MANAGER/  
EDUCATION COUNSELLOR

Nick's daily drive is a  
MITSUBISHI COLT VERSION R

"... the engineers improved on the previous model so this is a better, and hell yeah, a very fun car!"

### NICK THINKS...

"From the outside, the changes are subtle. The interior is a different story. The cabin is now much improved over the old model. Everything looks much better and imparts a sense of quality."

"135HP and 160Nm sounds little in comparison with modern day figures of a hot hatch. However, from the short joy-ride, the engine seems pretty quick revving and would not protest if you spin the needle up to the 7200rpm."

"The engineers have left the all-important smile factor in the corners. It just feels nippy and agile. You'll make other people think you're an idiot for smiling to yourself – but it's all in good fun and that's what the Swift Sport does best."



ALASTAIR HOYNE  
HEAD OF STRATEGY, GLOBAL INVESTORS  
BANKING INDUSTRY

Alastair's daily drive is a  
**NISSAN GTR R35**

"It's perfect for a first-car. You could fold the rear seats down and free-up loads more space. The spare tyre can be easily removed and a neat sound system installed in place of it."

ALASTAIR THINKS...

"The engine is strong in the lower gears, it's quite evident the shorter gear ratios in the new 6-speed box' works."

"Headroom is fine, but legroom for a 6-footer like me is a bit of an issue. Some abrasion occurs on my shin against base of the dash."

"It's perfect for a first-car. You could fold the rear seats down and free-up loads more space. The spare tyre can be easily removed and a neat sound system installed in place of it."

"I love how the way the design of the side mirrors flow with the fender panels. Overall design is aggressive, you can tell it apart from the regular Swift."



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FEATURE

Old vs. New

# BIG ENOUGH FEET?

The oldie was indeed a goodie. So can the new one fill its big shoes? *Joel Tam* finds out.

Photography | Joel Tam



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## FEATURE

Old vs. New



When Suzuki launched the Swift Sport, it was basically saying, 'We know all of you miss the Swift GTi, so here's something we came up with. Enjoy!'.

So we did. We enjoyed it very much in fact. It was an affordable hatchback (well below \$60,000 at one point) with a buzzy engine that was willing to be thrown into any corner. It was brilliant.

The new one doesn't have that opportunity to be a 'saviour' of those missing a classic hero, and let's face it, launched in these times, it can't possibly be labelled as 'affordable', whichever way you look at it.

That said, it has grown up. It also has more power and features to back up that dearer price tag. So we couldn't help but bring out an old Swift Sport to drive back-to-back with the new one. The results were rather interesting, to say the least.

Let's take it from the outside first. Initially when the new Swift was launched, many were saying that it looked too similar to the old one. Place the two Sport versions side by side however and you would beg to differ. The differences are distinct and clear.





The new car has a flatter, wider stance and the lamps, both front and rear are definitely sexier too. Some may argue that the old car is generally cleaner and less fussy, but in another year, that look is going to be dated.

At the back, the old car's exhaust housing has integrated reverse lamps, which are really cool. But they do risk being damaged if the car is on aftermarket coilovers, the same way exhaust tips are often scratched. The new car on the other hand has integrated vertical diffusers designed into the bumper, we can't be sure if they're functional or for show. Either way, it's not as neat.

Step inside and the older car immediately feels, well, old. It still is a very well appointed interior with an organised dash and factory audio system, but the new car's glossy digital interface trumps it in this area hands down. It also feels 'cosier' in the old one, which actually means that the new car is roomier. Even the new seats are lovely. We'll take ours in the sporty fabric option please.

Now for the all-important factor, the drive. We had been driving the new car for a couple of days, so I immediately hopped on the first-generation and zoomed off.

One thing came through instantly - even at 5 years of age, the example we drove still had a robust and well-made feel to it. The steering was well-weighted, body composure was rigid and the car felt solid and cohesive overall. I remember being pleasantly surprised when I first saw a Swift Sport back in 2006, it felt like it was built in Europe! This car actually feels heavier and better-made than the new one!

A quick check revealed that the new car is indeed 40 kg lighter (made even more obvious when driven together). Being lighter with more power has clear advantages, we hop back into the new car and are instantly impressed with how keen it is to rev. The torque benefits are clear too when you squeeze the throttle, the new car leaps forward with greater fervor.

"... even at 5 years of age, the example we drove still had a robust and well-made feel to it...I remember being pleasantly surprised when I first saw a Swift Sport back in 2006, it felt like it was built in Europe!"

Handling is something both cars share equally in merit. If you're thinking of buying a Swift Sport, buy it because of its direct handling. While it is no Lotus Elise, it is honest and won't disappoint. On the roads we know well, we never let up until the tyres protest (we DO NOT condone speeding by the way - just had to add that). The newer car has a lighter steering feel though, but is still undeviating and will listen to your inputs.

So, the new one is a grown up car with more power and a bit more goodies, but quite a bit more expensive too. The old one, which is readily available in the used car market, is less manic, but still a sweet package. So either way you'll win.

But I've had my fair share of purchasing both new and pre-owned cars, and there's just something about buying a new car that can't be compared with a used one. Especially if the car in question is this good. **N.**

**W**e all agree that having fun in a car is about being able to drive it on its limits. What is the point of having a Lamborghini that has a speedometer that never sees past 100 km/h? Or a supercar that you struggle to control because it's simply too powerful?

In a world where cars are more powerful by the launch of each new model, infinite power and unbridled speed seem to be the only requirements for those looking for a sports car.

True, a 500 bhp machine will probably run rings around a moderately powered hatchback like the Swift Sport, but who will crash louder? OK, let's not get morbid.

Real drivers don't need supercars. I said that in my opening note, and I truly believe that. As automotive writers, we are blessed with the opportunity to drive the latest cars. Where N.GINE is concerned, we've pointed our noses upwards and only allowed premium and performance cars in here. Yet nothing we've driven this year at this price, made us smile this wide.

The Swift Sport is an honest car. It is by no means the best, many cars out there fulfill other duties far better. But the Swift Sport doesn't pretend to be like other cars, it knows its limits and more importantly, it is aware of its strengths. My daily driver has almost two times more power, but yet it doesn't make me laugh as loud when I'm carving a corner.

I never believe in wanting more power unless I can handle what I already have. Truth is, too much power can be dangerous. So would you rather something that *kills*, or something that shows off your *skill*? Funny how the meaning of a word can be poles apart depending on where you place the 'S'. **N.**



WHERE CARS ARE MORE THAN A TO B

# N.GINE

FROM THE PUBLISHERS OF BURNPAVEMENT.COM

## **WE LOVE FAST CARS. BUT WE CARE TOO.**

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