

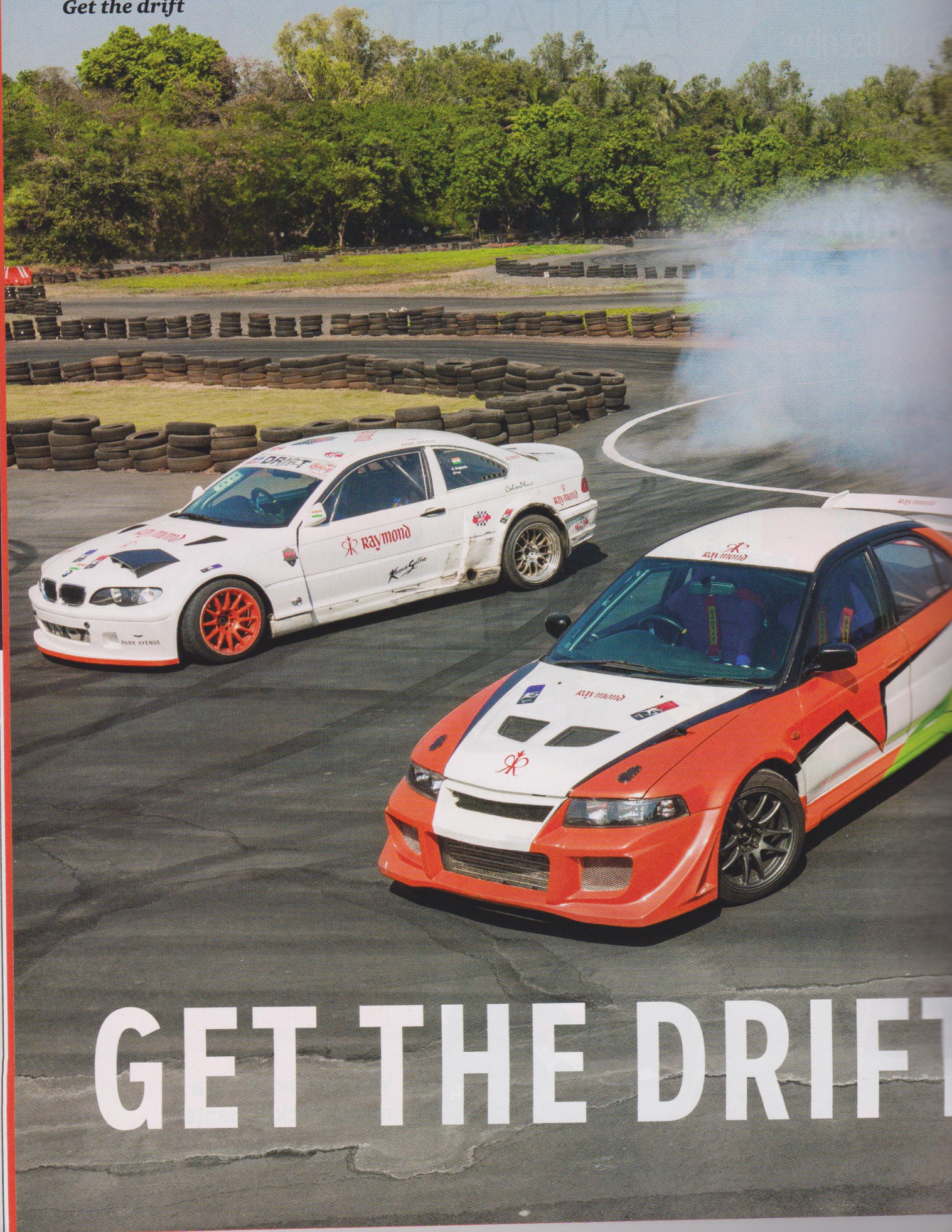
# evo

INDIA  
THE THRILL OF DRIVING





Get the drift



# GET THE DRIFT





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*We burn rubber, trying out the new fangled sport of drifting*





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**BIG POWER, EVEN** bigger slides, lots of noise and clouds of smoke pouring out of the rear tyres... Allow me to get you up close to a sport that hasn't been known

to many for long, and not known to some at all – the spectacular sport of power drifting. Or what is now commonly called just drifting.

Drifting is one of the most eye-popping forms of motorsport, easily accessible to spectators as it usually is contained within of a parking lot or large go-kart track and is guaranteed to make you hair stand on end as nearly 1000bhp is deployed to shred the tyres of the car smoking sideways, inches away from you. The D1 drift championship, which originated in Japan, is now a worldwide phenomenon and has given rise to drifting events and championships all over the world, the latest entrant being India. Held in December in Mumbai at the only drifting track in India, the 'Will it Drift' event gave Indian fans a taste of what proper top-spec drift cars can do while also giving them advanced training and then letting them loose in their front-wheel drive cars.

Proper drifting though is done in powerful rear-drive cars while the more adventurous ones try it in all-wheel drive sedans like Mitsubishi Evos and Subarus. Drifting essentially requires one to use the power of the car to kick the tail out and then, with opposite lock applied on the front wheels, keep the car going sideways while still carrying decent speed. Rear drive is essential for this, while professional drift cars have drift-

***After all drifting is all about style – it is possibly the only form of motorsport for which points are awarded for style***

spec steering racks and special suspension and control arms so that they can achieve greater steering angle encouraging more spectacular drifts. After all drifting is all about style – it is possibly the only form of motorsport for which points are awarded for style!

Maybe that's what attracted Gautam Singhania to the sport in the first place; after all his businesses are nothing if not purveyors of style. And motorsport is something that runs

in his blood. Regular readers of his column will be familiar with how he got his first go-kart at the age of four and then proceeded to wet the marble foyer and drift the kart around. An accomplished wheelsman, Gautam has set the record for the fastest lap at the BIC in a closed-wheel car, clocking 1min 59.44sec in his Ferrari 458 Challenge. He is passionate about motorsport and it shows in his approach

to every activity that he partakes in, be it go-karting (the original purpose of this track), racing (he plans to race the 458 Challenge internationally next year), drifting or in the years gone by, rallying.

So, on one Saturday morning I found myself not grumbling as the alarm went off before sunrise and I made my way to the Jekegramgo kart track at Thane

near Mumbai, home to four of the maddest drift cars in the country. First off the BMW E46 drift car, lightened in every way possible with composite fibre panels, fibre-glass doors and one-piece bonnet. The car is built around a full roll cage to make it safe as well as super rigid, there's a motorsport-spec fuel cell in the boot to hold the special fuel and the plumbing is all high-pressure hosing and safety valves in clearly visible areas. It all feeds a mammoth





**Facing page:** Gautam Singhania is determined to make drifting popular in India. **Above:** Tandem drifting! Nissan S15 Silvia chases S13

980bhp Corvette V8 motor, supercharged to put out a gut-wrenching 850Nm of torque. But that's not the amazing part - this car has been further customised by the best drifting experts in the world with specially designed lower arms that give the car a crazy 65 degrees of steering angle, something that I am witness to as I look out of the side window as the BMW drifts almost perpendicular to the direction its moving in.

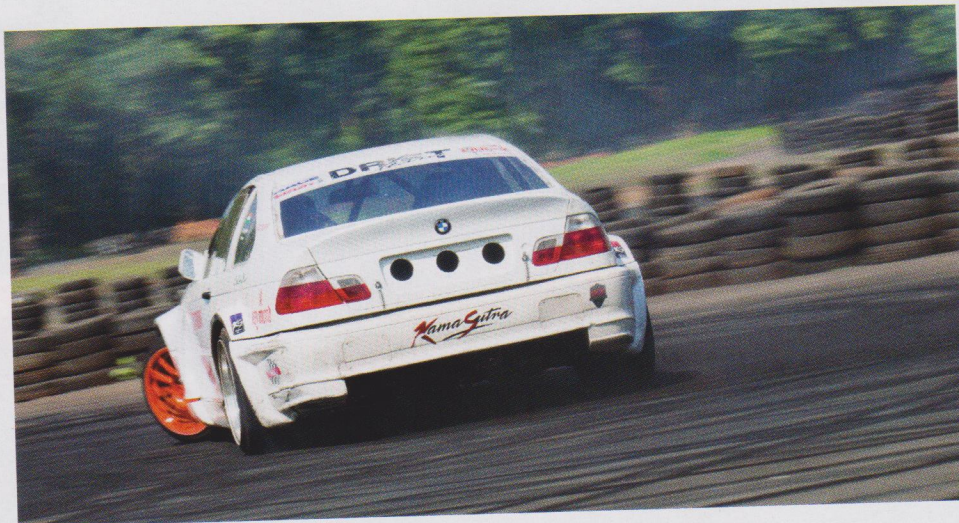
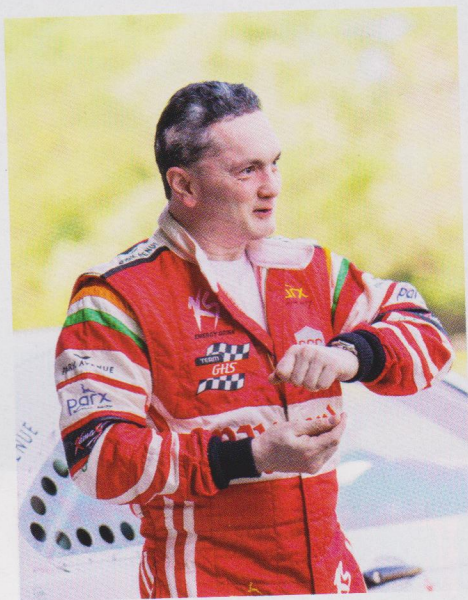
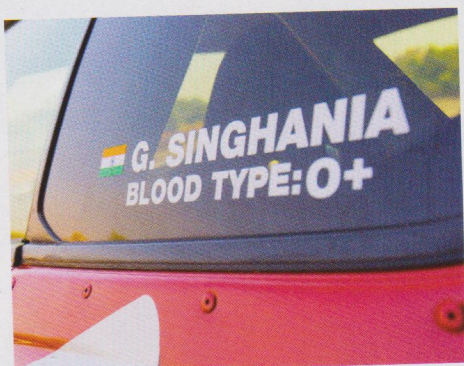
Now it's not like I haven't been chauffeured at speed at crazy sideways angles by talented drivers but my first time in a drift car is really something else. There is mad power on tap, that much is evident as the car squirms and howls when Gautam breathes on the throttle but the way the tail kicks out when the accelerator is booted is just something else. In any car, any bloody car, the tail stepping out so much will result in a surefire spin but in this car, equipped with those trick lower arms, Gautam winds on the steering lock and the tail is caught from beyond the point of no return and is kept there as he modulates the throttle, feeding in precise amounts of torque to keep the rear tyres spinning and the car drifting. The technology used to craft the lower arms is being patented and will totally change the drifting scene when it is available to the drifting community.

Despite Gautam's evident familiarity with the car it is also patently obvious the car is not easy to drive. The transmission is a heavy-duty



**Clockwise from above:** Hydraulic handbrake mounted high for ease of operation; it doesn't lock like on road cars. Tyres are chewed up at an alarming rate - these are from the BMW after two flat-out laps. Full roll-cage provides rigidity to the chassis along with safety





**Above right:** The BMW gets a massive supercharged Corvette engine with enough torque to shred tyres. **Below:** One-piece fire bonnet keeps things light. **Facing page:** The S15 Silvia is equipped with a 2.5-litre straight-six with forged pistons and con rods, race bearings, special engine mounts, ball bearing turbo and high-flow intercooler among other mods.

unit to handle that mad torque and takes serious effort to shift gears and holding a drift is not as simple as it looks. And to sample it for myself, Gautam asks me if I'd like a go in it. Does a fat kid like chocolates?

All my years of rallying have made me comfortable with a car sliding around beneath me and so it was easy to get the car sideways but you always tend to be extra cautious when driving somebody else's overpowered car. I think this car makes as much power at idle than most cars make with the throttle screwed into the floorboard. Just let the rather heavy competition clutch go, step on the gas and let the steering wind on opposite lock, feeling for the moment the slide has been caught and being careful not to overcorrect which can result in the tail snapping out the other way. Getting the car sideways then is easy but carrying the drift, getting the rear tyres to smoke exuberantly while carrying good pace round the corner, now that requires proper skill which can't be acquired in a day.

Gautam though displayed a fair bit of

patience as he taught me the tricks to get the car to drift without me having to spend hours at the track (and far too many tyres!) trying it myself. The most valuable lesson was shouted out over the sound of screeching tyres and the roaring engine: "Remember, power can get you out of any situation in life!" Instinctively when a situation is going out of hand your right foot heads to the brake pedal, but instead when the car is drifting you are already in a major slide so you have to feather the throttle to feed in more or less power to maintain the angle without losing speed. He also showed me an amazing trick where if you feel you are too close to the corner or about to collide with the barriers while crossed up, you just tap the brake and you can move the car some ten feet away from the object.

Having scared myself with the BMW it was time to switch to the Evo I had my eyes on from the moment I came to the track. With the passion for rallying running thicker than the blood in my veins I was itching to drive the Mitsubishi Evo 6 – the car of any rallyist's dreams. In stock trim it is a potent monster

with a 2.0-litre turbocharged motor putting out in the region of 350bhp but this one is fu souped up to kick out a massive 650bhp, all the power going to all four wheels. It's the lat that demands a different driving style since four wheels are driven and that means the off handbrake has to be used generously. T is also the car in which I experienced and tr my hand at the clutch-kick technique wh basically involves kicking the clutch while a corner to upset the flow of power, upset balance of the car and use that upset attitud the car to get it sideways. It is a technique th as vicious and mechanically brutal as it sou but once you get the car sliding it is a spectac drift machine will all four wheels indulgin a heavy smoking habit. Honestly though I re couldn't be so brutal with somebody's else's least of all in a car that I have idolised all my and so I quickly swapped over to the Nissans have been darlings of the drifting communi

The Silvia S13 is a very popular drift car sports a mechanical package that can take s serious tuning without blowing up. How



*Get the drift*



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*The Nissan S15 is so torquey that it throws out chunks of rubber from the rear wheels as it drifts around the circuit*

here the standard engine has been chucked out in favour of a 6.1-litre V8 that normally finds duty in Corvettes. This is the easiest car to drift according to Gautam since it is naturally aspirated and so there's no turbo lag to deal with, nor any kick from the supercharger. Though calling 500bhp and 450Nm of torque docile is a tad misleading.

I begin my lap slow and steady and, of course, Gautam had never been a passenger in one of his own drift cars before, which he let me know the moment the wheels started turning with a gentle warning not to try any funny stuff while he was on board. Most good drivers make horrible passengers!

Behind the wheel the car feels like a thoroughbred race machine, loud, hot, bumpy and eagerly awaiting a press on the throttle to burn up the rear wheels. Sure enough a light dab on the throttle was enough to get the S13 ablaze. I drove around the course once slowly to get a feel of the steering response, the thrust when you accelerate and the brakes, and the only word that describes it is thrilling. Even

though I have never drifted a proper drift car on a drift circuit I wanted to try it as soon as I could so on the next round on the main drift patch, I gave it everything. Okay, it wasn't perfect, but the tail did come out a fair bit and I could feel my heartbeat rise and adrenaline course through my veins. We did a few more laps and my technique did get better though I never could string together the tandem drifts where you swing gracefully from full lock one way to full lock the other way but I did get the drift - if you get my drift.

To make things easier Gautam then set up three cones and made me do some basic donuts around them which too weren't the easiest, but that's like the boring cardio you have to do in the gym before you can play around with the fancy looking machines and heavy weights, all the while looking at yourself in the mirrors.

Finally, when Gautam thought I was ready, we went out in the Nissan S15 that has the original 6-cylinder engine but it's turbocharged. Now this is the car to watch, for spectacular drifts; it is so torquey that it throws out chunks of rubber

from the rear wheels as it drifts around the circuit. There's so much torque that it just shreds the rear wheels like a carrot in a blender, and then came the moment everyone was waiting for - the tyre pop.

Imagine this mean powerful car coming at you sideways as fast as it possibly can with plumes of smoke pouring out from the rear wheels, the tyres screeching so loud, almost drowning out the sound of the 650bhp engine at full chat, without any silencing and the tyre bursts, due to extreme heat and friction against the hot tarmac. That pop is the icing on the cake.

Later over lunch we spent time understanding the sport and talking about its future in the county. As Gautam explained, there is much interest in the sport and it is clear in the increasing preference for performance cars and performance tuning and upgrades. Interest in all forms of motorsport is also on the rise but if you want to see cars drifting, rallying is currently your only option. Unfortunately rallying isn't the most friendly sport to go out and watch and if you want to see rally cars drifting between





trees you will have to trek 100km outside the host city to the actual rally stages. It calls for effort which very few are willing to put in. For drifting though all you need is a nicely sized and paved parking lot or a public area. Get permission, close it off, set up a few cones and voila, you have your own drifting circuit. For basic drifting you do not even need any special equipment or vehicle, just your daily driver, a well adjusted handbrake, and an ear out for the responses the car is feeding back to you so you know how much lock to dial in and when, and how much throttle to feed in.

Drifting is an expensive sport. Not only are these cars sophisticated and very expensive but they chew tyres at a frightful rate. The worn out tyres showed on previous pages are after just three laps of drifting in the BMW. But the joy that you get when the car is sliding around you, making small adjustments to the steering to hold the sideways angle, modulating the throttle so that forward momentum is maintained despite the car being crossed-up and smoke billowing from the rears, that joy is unparalleled.

## Technical specifications

### NISSAN SILVIA S15

**Engine:** 2568cc DOHC 24-valve straight-six, forged pistons and con rods, race bearings and crankshaft, steel head gasket, race spec oil cooler, alloy radiator, viscous fan with extra electric fans, special engine mounts, ball bearing turbo, high-flow intercooler, fuel cell with high-pressure fuel pump, custom braided fuel lines, high-flow fuel injectors, high-current ignition coil packs, special programmable race ECU with independent MAP sensor, wastegates, race exhaust manifold, HKS exhaust system

**Gearbox:** Close-ratio with six speeds, twin-plate clutch, custom braided clutch lines, special driveshafts and modified rear differential

**Wheels:** Rota 18-inch alloys with 235/45 and 265/35 Sport tyres front and rear

**Suspension:** Specially designed control system, two coilovers, extended front-lower arms, modified front hubs for extra lock

**Brakes:** Brembo four-pot front brake calipers and discs, two-pot Nissan calipers and disc at the rear, custom braided brake lines

**Exterior:** Sports body kit, vented bonnet with aero catches, GT-style carbon rear wing, custom paint and graphics

**Interior:** Motorsport weld-in rollcage and tubbed arches, single-piece bucket seats, Luke harnesses, OMP Superleggero steering wheel, hydraulic handbrake, Lifeline safety equipment, Acewell digital dash display

### BMW E46

**Engine:** Corvette 650bhp, 850Nm, supercharged LS3 engine, VEMS engine control management

**Gearbox:** Tremec transmission, LSD

**Suspension:** Wisefab front suspension kit with wheel turn angle of 65 degrees. Custom made driveshafts

**Tyres:** 225/45 R17 front and rear x