EVO Vs. STI SHOWDOWN

SPRING MOUNTAIN MOTORSPORTS PARK
PAHRUMP, NV

With the new Mitsubishi Lancer EVO X in showrooms already and the new Subaru Impreza WRX STI soon to follow, the time seemed right to take a look at where the outgoing models of these all-wheel-drive Japanese hooligans are at when the boost has been dialed up and the suspension dialed in. But instead of peppering you with all kinds of hardcore facts and figures collected by GPS-based data acquisition systems, we thought it might be more fun if we simply evaluated our time-attacking test machines in a more subjective way, by putting our four test drivers of varying levels of experience in four highly modified cars – an EVO9, STI and WRX – and sharing their driving impressions with you. Our one concession to science was equipping all four cars with Nitto’s stocknest track rubber, the NT01, so that we’d be sure the differences we felt between each car would be the result of tuning instead of tire choice. Thanks Nitto!

TEST DRIVERS

ROBERT ‘ROBISPEC’ FULLER
Racing veteran on dirt, oval, and road circuits, nobody knows more about what it takes to make EVO’s and STI’s stick like glue in the corners than this suspension-tuning guru.

NILS LEUFVEN
Local Spring Mountain Motorsports Park expert and winning Time Attack driver in his Robispec and GSC enhanced EVO9.

DAVE PRATTE
Modified’s Senior Editor has been competing in motorsports for almost 20 years, starting out in Autocross and working his way up to a Time Attack and Touring Car road racing, winning a bunch of $5 trophies along the way.

PETER TARACH
Modified’s Editor-in-Chief isn’t just a body builder, he’s also a motor killer! Having blown up his H22 at a Time Attack last year, we were expecting some serious EVO and STI stress testing with this boost junky behind the wheel.
VanderHeide's STi

Scott - My car has just undergone some recent modifications in terms of suspension and power. A big thanks to Forced Performance for the FP Green turbo which powers strong and comes on very fast... full spool at 3500rpm! With the added benefits of a Snow Performance methanol/water injection kit, we were able to safely add more boost, resulting in even higher horsepower and torque. And although Harman Motive did a fine job tuning the car for power, we just got the car together in time for the event and were unable to properly test it under such harsh conditions. With that in mind, we were having issues with the charge pipe slipping off under high boost, but when it was running the power delivery was amazing (and since the event, a new silicone coupler and 90° clamp have solved the problem with the charge pipe). For handling, Rob has customized my suspension settings and the balance and grip is phenomenal. With the new found power thanks to Harman Motive and Snow Performance and having Rob Spec in my corner handling all of my race preparation needs, it's going to take some more time at the track to re-learn how to drive it again, but I'm ok with that.

2005 Subaru Impreza STi

Engine & Drivetrain: Forced Performance 'Green' turbo, Snow Performance Water/Methanol Injection, APS CAI, turbo back exhaust and FMIC, Tomei header/uppday, ACT clutch and flywheel, ECOTEC refresh.

Suspension & Brakes: Rob Spec STi Clubsport KW coilovers, Whiteline sway bars, anti-lift and roll center kits, adjustable trailing arms, endlinks, rear camber and toe links, Hawk Blue brake pads.

Wheels & Tires: 17x9.5" Enkei NT03+ wheels and Nitto NT01 245/40 17s.

Inside & Out: Cusco front lip, APR canards, GTC-300 wing, and rear diffuser; Beatrush carbon fiber brake ducts, Sparco EVO race seats, 5-point harnesses, and steering wheel, Autopower 6-point roll cage.

Power: 373whp and 400ftq (tuned by Harman Motive).

Rob - An STi that doesn't push...no real! Thing is, this is an EVO car that can't just hand to "John Q Customer". The reason is that all-handling is a series of compromises and a front heavy car will tend to push or understeer if you don't maximize the front grip and then tailor the rear grip to the level that balances great turn-in with good mid-corner balance and solid off-corner grip to get the power down early. In other words, the rear is loose on entry under trailing throttle and the car goes neutral at up to 80 percent throttle mid-corner and as the steering wheel starts to unwind and 100 percent throttle is applied a hint of oversteer returns. So if you aren't ready for the rear end to want to turn faster than the front and lose your nerve and get out of the throttle, you might have just landed yourself in the "spin zone". That's ok too, just put two feet in and wait for the dust/smoke to clear. But this really is a fast and forgiving setup if you can school yourself not to do certain things. If that's your goal then there are plenty of track days out there to hone your craft and satisfy your need for speed.

Niko - You know when I first saw Scott's car I almost thought he had gone to my garage and stolen my car...I think I might have to send my lawyer over to claim paid due royalty fees on the white/orange color scheme! Seriously though, Scott's car felt great overall - suspension, power delivery and brakes all felt very well matched. The car was predictable at the limit and had good rotation on smaller radius turns. I'm used to driving an EVO so it took a lap to get comfortable with the torque engine and had to change my shifting points because of that. It had really good power delivery but it pulled hard, and throttle modulation was a little harder than with a stock turbo. Brakes had great bite and no signs of bleeding. Suspension provided excellent feedback, giving me confidence to push the car really hard and it felt solid and easy to drive at the limits. Spring Mountain Motorsports Park is built as a school track, so they made it fairly tricky, giving you tastes of all kinds of corners & sweeps. The NT01's were awesome as usual, handling the AWD pouring really well. The thing I love most about the NT01's is how they talk to me (really loud, hahah) and how they handle the weight and power of the EVO's and STi's so well without overheating too quickly. Other than the charge pipe popping, my only real complaint was feeling extremely awkward with the seat positioning. My expectations were high with this car and I left the driver's seat with a huge smile on my face.

Scott - I'm glad you enjoyed it.