



Interview with Hiroaki Yoshimatsu

(Project leader for Lancer Evolution 1-3)



Lancer Evolution: why it came into being

Mitsubishi Motors campaigned the WRC in the 1980's using the Galant VR-4 but Yoshimatsu felt at the time that were the Lancer to compete successfully in this international rally series then it would provide a great way to promote the Lancer among regular drivers. Managing to persuade those around him that being lighter and more compact than the Galant VR-4 the Lancer would definitely be a winning machine in the WRC, Yoshimatsu pushed ahead with its development to get the homologation required for participation in WRC events.



Market reception exceeds all expectations

Would the Lancer Evolution sell or not? This was the most important issue for Yoshimatsu who was in charge of the product planning. But once the ball got rolling, and helped by talk about the Lancer Evolution's high potential even before it went on sale, the 2,500 cars necessary for homologation purposes sold out in just three days. Nor was that the end of the story. The company was flooded with calls from people wanting to buy the car and in the end it produced a total of nearly 7,000, far exceeding the original target.



Expectations drive evolution

Having been so well received by motorsport users in particular the call for a next-generation Lancer Evolution swelled quickly. Expectations on the part of those involved also rose and the development team was flooded with requests for changes to many of its performance parameters. In response to these calls Lancer Evolution II came to market riding on larger tires and with evolutionary improvements to its chassis and suspension.



Styling reflects awesome performance

When Lancer Evolution III was launched it reflected the WRC team's request for better aerodynamics as well as market wishes for styling that projected its road presence more strongly. The use of aero devices to improve the car's aerodynamics also led to its design being more highly rated by regular owners.





First-generation series reaches peak

Aerodynamic performance was not the only area targeted for improvement in Evolution III. Raising the compression ratio from 8.5:1 to 9.0:1 and using a new turbocharger turbine design pushed maximum output to 270 PS. In all respects Evolution III could be described as the climatic culmination of all the advances made by its predecessors.



Moving up to next-generation model / strongly impressed

In a changing of the guard, a new team took over the development of Lancer Evolution IV. The new team had been looking at a new electronic system that would enhance cornering performance on the new model – the AYC (Active Yaw Control). While Yoshimatsu, who had raised and fostered the previous models in the series, could understand the logic behind the system he wouldn't be happy until he physically experienced it himself. The development team urged him to just get in and try it out and when he drove a prototype fitted with the system he was quite amazed and visibly impressed at tremendous handling performance. He was later to say, "It was my experience in that test drive that gave me the confidence to hand over development to a new team."

