project MR2

PART 3

WITH THE MODIFICATION BALL WELL AND TRULY ROLLING, THIS MONTH WE DROPPED THE PROJECT MR2 OVER TO RENOWNED SUSPENSION GURUS, WHITELINE AUTOMOTIVE IN MINTO, WHERE THE EXPERTS COULD ASSESS AND MAKE NUMEROUS IMPROVEMENTS TO THE TOYOTA'S FACTORY SUSPENSION SETUP.

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Since its initial release, each new version of the Midship Runabout Two-seater (or MR2 as it is better known) has been the result of a conscious effort by Toyota to provide driving enthusiasts with the sporty characteristics of a mid-engine rear wheel drive layout in a compact and affordable package. Toyota has always aimed to provide the handling characteristics usually found on the most exotic of sportscars. (Think Lamborghini and Ferrari.) For the second round of modifications to our project MR2 we have focused all efforts on tuning the car's suspension to make the most of the excellent mid-engine, RWD base provided by Toyota. Although the handling package in standard form is quite dynamic, there is a fair scope for improvement.

The ZZW30 (current shape) MR2 has all the basic characteristics of a nimble vehicle, however as with most mass-produced passenger vehicles, the Toyota is intentionally biased towards passenger comfort rather than sporting performance. This is where the guys at Whiteline enter the equation as we present them with the task of tightening up the loose ends on an otherwise optimal chassis layout.

For those of you who may not be familiar with Whiteline's work, they manufacture an extensive range of aftermarket suspension components and through their links to the Selbys brand; possess more than 25-years experience in designing and building racecars. Their current experience is based on literally thousands of hours spent tuning suspension both on the track and on the street and their input in creating a suspension package that remains street legal, but also improves the handling of the MR2 was invaluable. Whiteline has had considerable success in racing events around Australia, and recently the Whiteline enhanced Evolution VIII Lancer of Martin Notaras finished an incredible first outright in the Dutton Rally. The Dutton Rally ranks second only to the Targa Tasmania in regards to tarmac racing events in Australia and now plays host to numerous International entrants in addition to highly competitive local teams with extensive financial backing.

Since the current model MR2 is not yet overly prevalent within the modified fraternity, our project MR2 was used as a development vehicle for the design of Whiteline's suspension components. To begin with, the car was driven by a number of Whiteline experts who assessed the standard suspension system and then began on the production of some components to enhance the car's road holding abilities. The aim from the outset was to tighten and refine what is already a fairly competent package.

Toyota has designed the MR2 chassis as the basis for a sporty handling vehicle, however considering that not all of the population wishes to use the car as a race vehicle the suspension system is somewhat 'soft' from the factory. The good news for modifiers however is that with a solid base to work from it doesn't require a lot of work or money to create a very balanced vehicle.