

SON OF A GUN



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Issue: May/June 1999 Story: Aaron Noonan Photos: Martin Wielecki

If WRX is your dad, then MRT has put a match to this Forester fire!

It's still happening. School kids spending large portions of their lunch times mulling over the latest car mags. Their tongues flapping over the latest trick Subaru WRXs and high-tech rocketships that one-day they dream of owning. If you were a teacher on yard duty you're more likely to hear the words WRX, Evo V and Nissan GT-R rather than the details of the fisticuffs on the oval between Joey and Billy.



But one name you're unlikely to hear is Forester. The original 90kW WRX normally aspired small 4WD wagon wasn't particularly awe-inspiring, but potential was the keyword with the GT model which had a de-tuned 125kW WRX EJ20T motor on board. But the Forester is a family car, not a sports car and doesn't attract the interest of the performance-focused playground.

But then there's Mr. Middleton. You may know him as three-time Australian F2 Rally champion. Or you may know his business, MRT Performance, which has a habit of making cars go fast. Mr. Middleton had a customer who was a family man and liked the Forester GT. But he also liked performance in his vehicles, so he decided to have the Forester attended to by MRT. Here's what he did, and how it ended up as a car that should have the whole playground buzzing.



The Forester was a totally new challenge. Packing so many modifications into what would still be a family vehicle would prove to be an interesting exercise.

The two-litre turbocharged engine in the Subaru Forester GT remained standard - now don't groan kiddies - but the intake system, turbo and exhaust system were all improved upon.

The factory fuel injection system stayed, but an MRT Uni-Filter Ram Pod kit replaced the standard air-box.

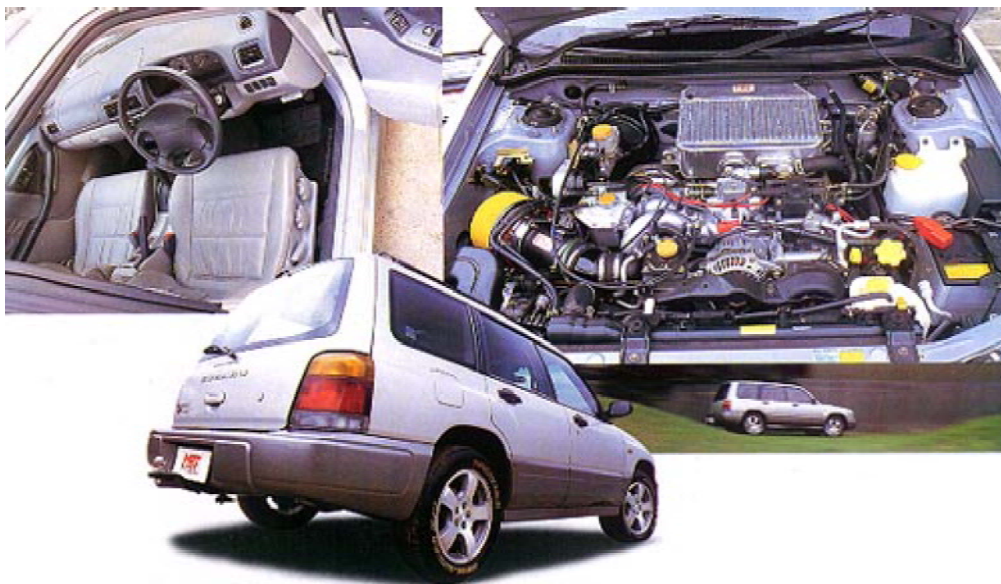


An Sti roller-bearing turbocharger replaced the standard item for good reason: the Forester's does not have a roller bearing turbo and is just plain tiny. Not only does the roller bearing turbo allow less friction and faster spool-up time, hence less lag, as well as better top end, it also has the benefit of a higher ultimate top speed of the turbine blades due to less frictional losses.

Now you can hear the "hmm" and "geez" from the playground start to the increase in volume....

But it wasn't all plain sailing in regards to the turbo. It was here that the trickiest part of the Forester project came in. "The Forester is VERY complicated in its boost control and took some smart thinking to overcome!" said Brett. Next it was out with the standard exhaust, replaced with an MRT mandrel-bent exhaust with turbo collector and special wastegate separator. Handmade MRT specification SS type mufflers were fitted (similar to the WRX) next.

Perhaps the most surprising thing in the entire wash-up is the fact the Forester is automatic with standard diff, axles and tailshaft. The front suspension is augmented with a swaybar for now, although improved springs and shocks are in the pipeline.



The leather interior is the go to serve the purpose that the car was modified in mind of – a practical family vehicle but with lots more response when asked. Which is exactly what this GT does: plant the foot and it will virtually match a stock WRX is acceleration: that's one to tell the kids about!

Be careful the when you next pull up at the lights in what you feel is a quick machine. While the Forester may feature three bickering kids in the back, a plain and standard appearance, as well as a concentrating father behind the wheel, that doesn't mean to say that it can't surprise.

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