



CAR ROMANIA
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***FROM JAPAN IS
THE 2008 MIT-
SUBISHI LANCER
EVOLUTION GSR,
A 3546-POUND
TRACK MAS-
TER CAPABLE
OF THROWING
DOWN IN CONDI-
TIONS RANGING
FROM TARMAC
TO GRAVEL TO***





***WEIGHING
IN AT A TRIM
3356 POUNDS,
IS A BLACK
BELT WITH THE
HEART OF A
BOXER: THE
ALL-NEW 2008
SUBARU WRX
STI.***



ROUND 1

CALIFORNIA SPEEDWAY, FONTANA, CALIFORNIA

This time around, our Evo is clearly in fighting condition, needing only 5.2 seconds to sprint to 60 and only 13.9 seconds for the quarter mile. Problem is, the STI is even more fit-4.7 seconds is all the STI needs to hit 60 mph, and the quarter mile arrives in 13.4 seconds.

The STI smacks the Evo around in the braking test as well, needing five fewer than the Evo's 111 feet to stop from 60 mph, even though the Evo sports larger-diameter brake discs. Must be those extra 190 pounds of curb weight.


The Evo battles back on our figure-eight course, running three-tenths quicker at 25.1 seconds. The big surprise is on the skidpad; while the STI shucks and jives to a 0.94 g, the Evo stings it with a 0.99 g. Credit the Active Yaw Control torque-vectoring element of the Evo's slick S-AWC system, because it can't be the shoes; these two wear the same size wheels (18 x 8.5) and tires (245/45R18) with similarly sticky compounds.

ROUND 2

K&N DYNO FACILITY, RIVERSIDE, CALIFORNIA

The STI runs first, and lays down three passes that average out to 255 horsepower and 278 pound-feet of torque at the wheels. Subaru claims 305 horses at the crankshaft, and with approximately 15 percent lost to drivetrain inefficiencies, these are numbers that seem spot on. The Evo's 245-horsepower and 259-pound-foot of torque average are also in line with its claimed 291 crankshaft horsepower.

So does this round automatically go to the STI because of its greater power figure? Not so fast, because the Evo manages to hang with the STI despite being half a liter down in engine displacement. Fact is the Evo's 122 horsepower per liter easily bests the STI's 102 horsepower per liter.



But it's not that simple either, as another important ratio to examine is weight to power. And no matter where it's measured—from the crankshaft or wheels—the STI has at least a 1.2-pound-per-horsepower advantage over the Evo. Doesn't sound like a lot, but with fighters so evenly matched, that could very well be enough.



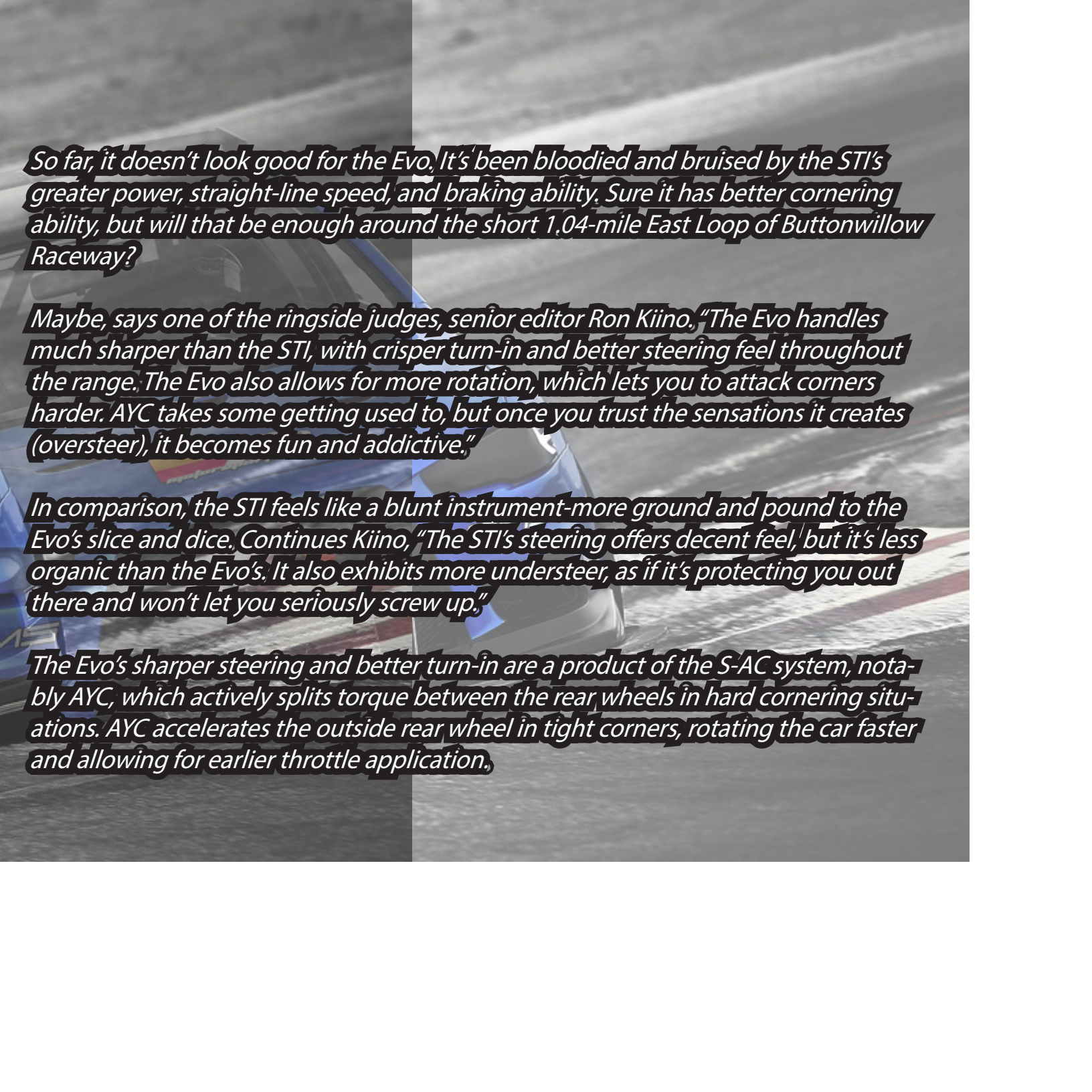
Looks like it's going to come down a decisive round three at the track.



ROUND 3

BUTTONWILLOW RACEWAY EAST LOOP, BUTTONWILLOW, CALIFORNIA





So far, it doesn't look good for the Evo. It's been bloodied and bruised by the STI's greater power, straight-line speed, and braking ability. Sure it has better cornering ability, but will that be enough around the short 1.04-mile East Loop of Buttonwillow Raceway?

Maybe, says one of the ringside judges, senior editor Ron Kiino. "The Evo handles much sharper than the STI, with crisper turn-in and better steering feel throughout the range. The Evo also allows for more rotation, which lets you to attack corners harder. AYC takes some getting used to, but once you trust the sensations it creates (oversteer), it becomes fun and addictive."

In comparison, the STI feels like a blunt instrument—more ground and pound to the Evo's slice and dice. Continues Kiino, "The STI's steering offers decent feel, but it's less organic than the Evo's. It also exhibits more understeer, as if it's protecting you out there and won't let you seriously screw up."

The Evo's sharper steering and better turn-in are a product of the S-AC system, notably AYC, which actively splits torque between the rear wheels in hard cornering situations. AYC accelerates the outside rear wheel in tight corners, rotating the car faster and allowing for earlier throttle application.





THE DECISION! Ladieeee and gentlemen, after three rounds and no knockout, we must go to the judges' cards. It's close, but the decision is unanimous: By virtue of its sharper handling and superior fun factor, the Mitsubishi Lancer Evolution takes the title of all-wheel-drive, turbo four-cylinder champion.

We can't wait for the rematch.



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