



A race driver who has driven the Evo IX MR in Super Endurance and other races give us his impression of the new Lancer Evo X.

Takayuki Kinoshita

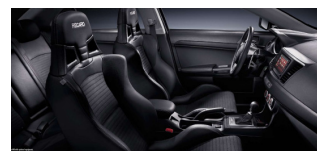
Motor journalist / Racing driver

He started driving in dirt trials and gymkhanas while at college and has chalked up many victories. He has several Japan titles to his name and has also driven in rallies overseas. He has driven more Nürburgring races than any other Japanese and holds the lap time. As a racing driver he drives the GT-R and is known as the "LanEvo master." In the Super Endurance Series he has driven the GT-R and Evolution to more victories than anyone else. He is a member of the Japan Car of the Year selection panel and of the Japan Motor Journalist Association, and he also makes frequent appearances as a commentator on Wowow and other TV channels.



What were your impressions when you first saw Evo X?

Well, bearing the Evolution name as it does the series has always seen evolutionary steps forward with each new model, as you might expect. But in terms of driving performance, I thought the Evo IXMR had really raised the bar as high as it would go. I was therefore very interested to see the direction Evo X would take. And particularly today, as regulations governing environmental and safety performance get more and more stringent, such regulations cannot but shackle attempts to improve a car's performance. Against this backdrop, it must be a major challenge to realize a clear-cut evolution in performance. That is a high hurdle to clear, but Mitsubishi Motors ranks number one in the world in terms of automotive engineering and technology and so I was pretty certain the development team would come up with something special.



So I did have rather mixed feelings about it. But now that I've seen the new car, I have to say that the styling is fantastic. I'd give it full marks. Yes, I really do like it now. But that still leaves the question of what is wrapped under the styling. So, I'm now going to put Evo X through its paces on the high-speed test course and over the handling course and perhaps drive the Evo IX MR to compare the two cars and find out just how good the latest Evolution really is.



Well, what are your impressions after driving Evo X for the first time?

My first impression is that it is a truly superb machine. To begin with, it has grown in stature. With previous Evolutions, you got the impression that the car was much more a mechanical beast. But Evo X has about it a feel of quality, a weightiness or solidity, a sense of composure, and all these qualities seem to be totally inherent, to ooze out naturally. I can say with absolute confidence that Evolution has climbed a couple of rungs up the stature ladder and now ranks as one of the world's leading premium sedans.





So what exactly does Evolution mean to you?

To date, the Evolution for me has always been about speed, the faster the better. But having driven Evo X, I feel there's now more to it than just speed. There's the joy of ownership, and there's also something about it that touches you, moves you even when you're just cruising along and not just when you're flooring the pedal. It really has grown and matured into a premium class car and so it looks like I'm going to have to revise the image I've held about the Evolution series.



I think that Evo X is the kind of car that many more of its fans will now want to buy but what do you have to say about that?

Previous Evolutions have really only been for those who drive fast, for motorsport competitors. But Evo X is almost certainly going to attract a much broader age group. Not only that, I also feel that it lends itself to a much wider range of user situations: it's the kind of car that male owners, of course, but also female owners can drive down to the shops in and then, without making any changes, hop onto the expressway and cruise comfortably at high speed, or derive exquisite pleasure from driving fast along winding roads. I'm sure this is a car that will win the support of many fans, regardless of gender.

What are your feelings about the evolutionary changes in technology Evo X brings with it?

To be truthful I was somewhat concerned that the Evolution series had just about reached the limit in terms of how much further it could be evolved, but Evo X has totally dispelled those worries. It really is tremendously fast. And in its handling, the S-AWC really does make a huge difference. Of course, its new suspension and dimensions are largely responsible for this. However, I really feel the benefits they bring have been maximally exploited by its 4WD control technology, a field in which Mitsubishi leads the world, and in a way that only Mitsubishi could make happen. It makes you feel that even if you hurtle into a corner at high speed, the car will quietly follow the line you've chosen and come through safely. Of course there are physical limits but Evo X corners so fast you even start to doubt such limits exist. I have no hesitation in saying that Evo X achieves world-class levels in terms of its speed and cornering performance.

