



VIRTUAL JDM

The Real JDM is a monthly column written by Ben Schaffer of Bespoke Ventures. Bespoke Ventures operates a number of JDM related businesses including: Bulletproof Automotive, Top Secret III, Ings+1 USA, VARIS USA, HyperRev USA and Bespoke VIP. Visit www.bespokeventures.com for more information.



HERE'S AN EXCLUSIVE LOOK INSIDE BANDAI NAMCO'S UPCOMING VIDEO GAME THE FAST AND THE FURIOUS.



Nearly a year ago The Real JDM brought you an exclusive look into the behind-the-scenes details of *The Fast and The Furious: Tokyo Drift*. As you read this, the film will likely be old news. And really, who needs to read yet another movie review? This column brings you the insider's perspective on breaking news, and until *Tokyo Drift 2* gets going, there is nothing worthy left to report on the film. Regardless of whether you liked it or hated it, the reality is that Hollywood filters down everything it creates for mainstream success, nearly without excep-

tion. While we all hoped for the best with *Tokyo Drift*, we know that Hollywood values above all, money. Understanding that *Tokyo Drift* was conceptualized, written, directed and marketed by non-car enthusiasts with no background in JDM tuning, I could realistically hope for only a hint of realism and JDM representation. After watching the Hollywood premier yesterday, I got the hint. But that's old news and the hints are over, this time around Universal is smacking us upside the head with a more in depth, more JDM tuning influenced world of *Tokyo Drift*. I'm proud to present to you an exclusive look inside BANDAI NAMCO's upcoming video game *The Fast and the Furious*.

I've been fortunate to get inside the creative heads at BANDAI NAMCO who have partnered with Universal to release the counterpart video game to the movie. During my time with BANDAI NAMCO, I've uncovered some exciting details that could make any JDM tuning freak uncontrollably bust out into a Nomuken pose. The beauty is that this time around, the world of *The Fast and The Furious: Tokyo Drift* is re-interpreted and built by actual tuning freaks like you and I. This is thanks to Mike Morishita and Mitch Boyer of BANDAI NAMCO, the game's producers and real life drivers of a ZZW30 MR-S and CT9A EVO VIII RS respectively. They track their cars, they know JDM tuning and they have built the game with us

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THIS GAME BRIDGES THE GAP BETWEEN HOLLYWOOD'S MAINSTREAM APPEAL AND THE TRUE ENTHUSIAST'S PERSPECTIVE.

in mind by teaming up with the biggest names in JDM tuning to properly represent our scene to gamers around the world.

While you might feel that Gran Turismo represented JDM tuning by getting a small grouping of brands represented in the game, *The Fast and the Furious* puts that to shame. Rather than discussing all of the tuning options you'd expect like turbo upgrades, weight reduction, suspension tuning and others, let's talk about what you wouldn't expect to see. There are over 100 JDM tuners, over 300 licensed full aero kits and over 100 licensed JDM rims included in the game. BANDAI NAMCO has also built the most detailed car editor I've ever seen, which is necessary when you have so many products to choose from for customization. For example, while you might anticipate that you could install aero parts from licensed JDM tuners, I doubt you would have guessed that you can change rim diameter and width independently from front to rear, and even choose to stretch the tires for that VIP/Drift look.

There are so many licensed parts in this game that most players will probably start right off with the idea of building a virtual version of their own

car, down to exact rim sizes and colors. Have a white S13 with a Uras kit and blue Work S1 two-piece rims? No problem the game has that. What about a blue G35 Coupe with a Top Secret Widebody kit and Advan RG11s? Yep, they have that too. Too easy? How about a white CT9A EVO with staggered Volk TE37s running 265s up front and 245s in the rear with a Gialla Hood, DAMD front bumper, Varis side skirts, a C-West rear bumper and a Voltex GT Wing? You guessed it ... this game goes deep into JDM tuning. Before the game play is even experienced, the virtual world in which you can either replicate your own car or try out new style combinations will keep you busy for days.

Luckily they keep it real on the JDM front within the game play too. BANDAI NAMCO has recreated the world famous Tokyo Bay Wangan, allowing you to race your ride through the same streets your favorite tuners race during their mid-night tests. When you get bored of high speed battles, NAMCO has also included another exciting area of game play, the Touge. This is when the drifting gets exciting, as Japanese mountain roads allow for some great corners to link up perfect drifts against your competition.

The influence of true to life JDM tuners is not limited to simply tuning parts. This is the only game where you can race the real world king of the Wangan, "Smoky" Nagata of Top Secret. As you climb the ranks and defeat race teams on the Wangan, you'll eventually get to race Smoky in his V8 twin turbo widebody Skyline coupe. The same excitement carries over to the mountains where you'll race against real world cars and drivers while honing your drifting skills.

BANDAI NAMCO has pulled out all of the stops, making the most of their industry knowledge to bring details that no other video game could think of. Whether it's a drifting tutorial taught by Daijiro Yoshihara, or details like Tein Dampachi drift charms with built in physics that swing from the rear bumper while sliding, the authenticity is clear to any JDM drifting enthusiast. This is built by the hardcore for the hardcore.

This game bridges the gap between Hollywood's mainstream appeal and the true enthusiast's perspective. Ever wondered who's faster; Smoky with his Skyline coupe or Han from FF3's Veilside Fortune FD RX-7? Or curious to compare the Top Secret S15 D1 champion car to DK from FF3's 350Z to see who's harder to beat ... it's an interesting mix of real vs. fantasy all unfolding on the accurately mapped streets of Tokyo.

As video games advance with technology, inevitably the realism of the game play will increase. Rather than restate the obvious, it is noteworthy to point out that games such as *The Fast and the Furious* are setting the benchmark for customizing and creativity that makes the game play such a personal experience. Players already expect a great driving experience, but we're discovering a new joy in the creativity and excitement of building personalized cars that most games previously couldn't offer. Hopefully future games will follow the path that BANDAI NAMCO has laid down and provide the players with more licensed parts and more tools enabling them to build cars that they are proud of. It's the only way to recreate the creativity and feeling of satisfaction that mimics customizing a car in real life. After all, it's one thing to do 300km/h through traffic down the Rainbow Bridge, but its much more fun when you can look at the car on replay and feel a sense of ownership in what you've created.

As of writing this on June 5th the details discussed are true but not yet finalized. BANDAI NAMCO is still relentlessly adding more realism and further tweaking the driving model of the game. Originally intended for the same release date as the movie, BANDAI NAMCO has over-shot the schedule due to the size and scope of what they're putting into this game. When it gets released, rest assured that it will fulfill the unmet need for living out the world of Tokyo Drift within a more authentic, JDM tuner endorsed environment. ■■■

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