



The spectacle of burning tyres and perilous speed make drifting a massively popular form of motorsport



Used in the Japanese D1 series last year, the Racelogic GPS-based DriftBox is this season's must-have for every professional drifter and amateur enthusiast.

GOING SIDEWAYS

Words: Louise Woodhams Photos: Joe Clifford

Pinned into the bucket seat of Julian Smith's Nissan Skyline GTS, I couldn't help but smile knowing I was about to experience a demonstration in drifting from a D1 Series competitor. Cars aren't engineered to go sideways, it's certainly not the fastest or safest way around a corner – but it's sure as hell fun, and a drift at its most refined is a thing of balance and beauty.

In Japan, where the sport was born over 30 years ago, drifting has evolved from late-night teen scene into a fully-established national sport. America is following suit and had its first Pro Drift competition in mid 2003, while in Europe the sport is still in its infancy but is quickly gaining recognition and popularity. And it's easy to see why. The entry fees are relatively small and anyone with a rear wheel drive road car can experience drifting with a bit of practice. All that's required for most is a helmet, a good supply of spare tyres, the ability to learn and think fast and a serious passion for driving.

At the top levels of competition, especially the D1 Grand Prix from Japan and others in Australia, Ireland, Britain and United States, good drivers have the ability to take five or six opposing turns without having traction at any point in time. A drifter's feet have to work the throttle and clutch like a jazz drummer, pushing their car beyond the limit of traction and into a series of unrelated parabolic curves united in a single, fluid movement. Not surprisingly, the fishtailing ballet of burning rubber is judged not on the time it takes the drifter to complete a course, but on line, angle, speed, and show factor.

To make judging less ambiguous, electronic system specialist Racelogic developed the DriftBox, a GPS-based data logging device that enables users to measure the angle, speed and g-force during a run. Not only is the dash-mounted gizmo an affordable solution for anybody wanting to accurately measure vehicle or driver performance, but judges at competitions no longer have to guess the angle and speed of a drift. *BMW* was invited to Silverstone for the official launch so we could see for ourselves how this new piece of kit works.

Within minutes a Racelogic technician had plugged the DriftBox into the Skyline's 12v lighter socket, stuck the unit to the windscreen, inserted the 64Mb memory card and we were ready to run. It gathers data from the GPS receiver, logging and displaying information on the DriftBox's LCD screen at a rate of ten times a second. A large constant display of drift angle is shown in the centre of the screen with smaller speed and peak angles shown slightly smaller on the

left and right respectively. There's no need to constantly reset it either as the electronics are clever enough to know when each run starts by monitoring your movements. Each run is then stored on the removable MMC/SD card, which allows you to later analyse the data using comprehensive PC software supplied with the DriftBox.

Julian later downloaded the data on to his laptop. Simple and easy to use, the software allowed him to overlap runs to see if he was making progress through the day. It was also useful to see what speeds were being maintained through each corner. "It's great for practice. I can do several runs, changing my technique, and then download the information enabling me to analyse and view the data graphically to see which one gave me the best angle."

DriftBox has a number of other functions which make it an ideal piece of equipment for everybody, and not just those with rear-wheel drive cars. It can be used to measure current speed and lap times, plus has a performance mode which records acceleration times from rest, in-gear acceleration times, braking and distance tests. It will even alert you to speed cameras. Better still, for \$465 it's well within the budget of any serious driver and will provide an invaluable tool in building your repertoire of drift techniques ●

PRICE: \$465

CONTACT: 01250 823803

WEB: www.racelogic.co.uk

The DriftBox is simple to fit. Place the unit in the mount, plug in the power source and attach to the windscreen. For accuracy, the external aerial needs fitting to the roof

