

CULT HERO IN HYPERBLUE

BY JOE SAGE

We grabbed our Subaru WRX STI Series HyperBlue and drove it straight out to Phoenix International Raceway. We were only grabbing our race credentials, but doesn't that just sound right? After all, STI is what makes a Subaru a Subaru—the most radical one in the lineup.

The Subaru WRX STI is not shy. When it hits the stage, it gains immediate applause. Just post a few pix of the STI online, and watch the clicks roll in, immediately and in a sustained manner. The fan base for this car is among the most enviable in the industry.

The WRX STI defines its niche—a factory-ready super pocket rocket. The niche used to be shared with Mitsubishi Evolution, but with Evo out of the market, STI reigns supreme.

This is not just a local corner meetup reign—the Subaru WRX STI dominates competition worldwide. The car has just come off wins at 100 Acre Wood in the Rally America Championship, and at the Oregon Trail Rally, and has announced its team and equipment for another record run at the famed Isle of Man TT event in the British Isles in late June.

A non-STI WRX is no slouch. Its 2.0-liter boxer engine puts out 268 hp and 258 lb-ft of torque. The WRX STI, however, has a turbocharged, intercooled 2.5-liter boxer with 305 hp and 290 lb-ft, built with specially reinforced die-cast aluminum, integral cast iron cylinder liners, five main bearings, semi-closed deck cylinder design, and SI-DRIVE to fine-tune it. It has a high-performance chassis and driver-controlled center differential.

The big wing, the quad tailpipes, the low stance—all are here for the most purposeful

of purposes. The car likes being showy—the showier the better. You've seen blue STIs before—World Rally Blue and Lapis Blue are both very popular—but here we have a special edition of just 700 units, the WRX STI Series HyperBlue. It has most of the features of the WRX STI Limited top trim, but with distinctive Hyper Blue paint, coordinated blue stitching on a rugged interior and STARLINK 7.0-inch Multimedia Navigation.

The WRX STI comes with a 6-speed manual transmission—so tight, smooth and perfectly ranged we had been motivated to put the shifter on our cover a couple of years ago. STI has ample legroom front and rear, with plenty of seat travel for the driver, so you can get your clutch reach just right. It also has a big trunk, for those rally road trips.

The WRX STI is born sporty and lives sporty all day every day. Multi-mode Vehicle Dynamics Control (VDC) gives the driver specific control over an already highly capable drivetrain. The center differential has six levels of manual or automatic options and SI-DRIVE has Sport or Sport# (Sport Sharp) options. You will find your favorite combination, for road and weather conditions at hand or for your driving style. For us, the click to Sport# was simple and effective, with a great front-to-rear dry pavement split and smoothest steering through the sweepers. Other settings offer particular advantages in sand, snow, ice, mud and so on.

If the rear wing is just too much for your office parking lot or PTA meetings, you can order your WRX STI without it—a low profile rear lip spoiler is a no-cost option. ■



SPECIFICATIONS

ENGINE	.....2.5L DOHC intercooled turbo 4-cyl boxer
DRIVETRAIN	.....AWD
HP/TORQUE	.....305 hp / 290 lb-ft
TRANSMISSION	.....6-speed manual
BRAKES	.....Brembo F 12.8" 4-piston, R 12.4" 2-piston
WHEELS	.....18 x 8.5J cast alloy
TURNING CIRCLE	.....36.0 ft
ROAD CLEARANCE	.....4.9 in
SEATING / CARGO CAPACITY	.....5-p / 12.0 cu ft
WEIGHT	.....3411 lb
FUEL / CAPACITY	.....91 octane premium / 15.9 gal
MPG	.....17/23/19 (city/hwy/comb)

BASE PRICE	.....\$38,995
SERIES HYPERBLUE:	Hyper Blue paint, leather and alcantara interior w/ blue stitching, black 18" BBS alloy wheels, black mirror housings, black badges and fender garnish
DESTINATION CHARGE	.....INCL 795
TOTAL	.....\$39,790