



PRESS RELEASE

Bottas Unleashed: VB77 Drifting In The UAE

Abu Dhabi, UAE – 09 December 2021 — PUMA's sponsored Mercedes-AMG Petronas Formula 1 Team driver Valtteri Bottas jumped in an 800bhp drift car at a private drift track outside of Abu Dhabi on Tuesday, 7th December. With only one more race remaining of the 2021 Formula 1 season, the 10-time Grand Prix winner took time out of his hectic schedule to meet up with the infamous UAE-based drift team Lunatics By Nature (LBN) to go for some laps.

Linking up with LBN Team member Dany Neville, Valtteri spent an afternoon on the track. *"The sound of the V8 is incredible, and you can smell the melting rubber from the tires. It's really really cool,"* explained Valtteri.

"I've taken part in a lot of rallies - I suppose I have done some drifting in a way - because the techniques of car control are very similar; but I haven't done anything like this before with a proper drift car and on an asphalt drift track."

Bottas continues: *"I've been driving cars since I was six years old, so that for sure helps - but for sure the things that helped me the most is my experience from rallying. In rallying you are always sliding the car and controlling the throttle, the weight transfer, the balance, and everything very differently to how you would drive an F1 car."*

It's no secret that the 32-year-old Finn can drive anything which has got wheels. Valtteri's driving talents have won him an army of loyal fans across the globe in both Formula 1 and Rally.

[INTERVIEW TRANSCRIPT]

Valtteri on drifting:

Talk us through drifting today?

It was fun - really good fun! It was a new experience for me today getting to drive a real drift car; and not just that but together with someone on track - I think it's called twinning! It was great fun!!

Have you been drifting before? Did you know much about it?

Where I've taken part in a lot of rallies - I suppose I had done some drifting - the techniques of car control are very similar; but I hadn't done anything like this before with a proper drift car and on an asphalt drift track. I've been driving cars since I was six years old, so that for sure helps - but for sure the things that helped me the most is my experience from rallying. In rallying you are always sliding the car and controlling the throttle, the weight transfer, the balance, and everything very differently to how you would drive an F1 car. I found it pretty fun and quick to adjust, and my learning curve was pretty steep.

Did you get a different buzz out of this than circuit racing?

You definitely get the adrenaline out of it. It's a full sensation experience - the sound of the engine is seriously loud in the drift car, and you can smell the melting rubber from the tires, it's really really cool - and completely different to F1 - but I think it's for sure now a sport that I enjoy!

Your love of Rally has already been talked about a lot - was it easy for you to get the hang of it? Would you Consider building a car for drifting?

Yeah, I've started to think about it now!! Maybe I should - the guys here in the LBN Team have been building their own cars and having such a good time with it. You can see what they are doing here carries huge passion - and I love to see that. So, you know - never say never!

Do you have favorite music to listen to get in the mindset for racing?

You know, I don't really listen to music while I'm driving competitively, drifting, or rallying, or before I get in the car. I like to focus on what I have to do in the car before I get in, and then when I'm racing, I want to hear the engine and all the sounds from the car. The engine is my music!

Valtteri on the UAE:

You've obviously been here many times racing, but how do you enjoy the UAE and in particular Dubai/ Abu Dhabi?

I've been coming to Abu Dhabi since 2011 - when I had my first ever Formula 1 test at the proper track here in Abu Dhabi, so it's a special place to me for sure. There has obviously been a massive development in ten years in terms of the circuit and the facilities - which are some of the best in Formula 1, if not the best. The people are really nice, and the climate is always bullet proof.

Anything local you have tried/ local delicacies you've experienced?

In recent years I've been able to explore a little bit more - heading into Abu Dhabi and getting to go off-roading in the desert and seeing some of the nature. The coffee is great here - there are loads of small coffee shops and roasters - which is great. I love the local foods too with all the different Arabic spices, so food and coffee wise it's a great place too!

Valtteri on F1 and the end of the season:

How was your year, are you happy with your performance?

Another year has flown by - it's crazy to think that, and honestly it feels like we have just started the season. Now it's coming to an end, and it's going to be the last race with Mercedes. The season overall has been a bit up and down. It started pretty bad - the first six or seven races were a big disappointment, which already put me a bit off the championship fight. After that - for the rest of the season the mentality changed a bit. I tried to maximize the points as much as possible and work in a support role, rather than fighting for the title myself. But it is what it is; there have been great moments, but also some really unlucky moments - so it was a bit mixed.

Any highlight races for you and which were they?

I would say there are a few races that have stood out as highlights this year for me. The win in Turkey for sure. I won a couple of the new format sprint races in Monza and Brazil. I've got quite a few pole positions - especially towards the end of the year. Obviously, the highlight would be to finish on top with the team after the last race

The race in Saudi last weekend was a real thriller, any comments on the experience?

The race in Saudi was intense. Even from the very first session out, the margins were so fine. Then during the race, there was all the drama from two red flags. When that happens, the stop-start nature is quite all consuming while you try to stay focused for the re-start. I definitely felt tired after the race, mentally and physically. I kept fighting until the very end and got the podium in the final few meters.

What are your thoughts heading in the final round of the season?

I think it comes with experience that the main focus has to be on my own race. I will push to get the best out of myself and do the best race possible. It's important to me to try and finish on the best result possible in my last race with Mercedes. As a team we are still fighting for the drivers and the constructors' titles, so the focus is on that. But no doubt after the race - when I have time to process; that's the last Grand Prix with Mercedes, it's going to be emotional!

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