**The History of Drifting**

Drifting, as a motorsport and driving technique, has its roots deeply embedded in the car culture of Japan, but its influences can be traced back to the mid-20th century. What started as a method to navigate tight mountain roads has evolved into a globally recognized motorsport, captivating fans and competitors worldwide. The history of drifting is one of innovation, creativity, and cultural expression.

**Early Beginnings in Japan (1960s-1970s)**

Drifting's origins can be traced back to the winding mountain roads of Japan in the 1960s and 1970s. The Japanese term for drifting, "torque-steer," refers to a driving technique where the driver intentionally oversteers, causing the car’s rear tires to lose traction while maintaining control of the vehicle. This technique was first popularized by street racers, who used it to navigate the tight, hairpin turns of mountain roads (known as "touge") at high speeds. The technique not only provided faster times but also allowed drivers to showcase their skills in handling and vehicle control.

The origins of drifting are most often attributed to the legendary Japanese driver Kunisada "Kuni" Makoto, who was known for his ability to navigate mountain passes with unmatched precision. Makoto’s drifting style became a vital part of the underground street racing scene in Japan during this time, where skilled drivers would compete for bragging rights on narrow, treacherous mountain roads.

**Drifting's Evolution in the 1980s**

In the 1980s, the sport began to gain more recognition in Japan as manufacturers started tuning their cars for the growing street racing scene. The use of rear-wheel-drive cars like the Toyota AE86 Corolla, Nissan Silvia, and Mazda RX-7 became central to drifting, as these cars were well-suited to the technique due to their lightweight design and handling characteristics.

A major turning point in the development of drifting as a sport occurred in the mid-1980s when a young street racer named Keiichi Tsuchiya, later known as the "Drift King," began using drifting techniques in official competitions. Tsuchiya’s innovative driving style involved pushing the limits of car control by using both throttle and steering input to maintain a controlled drift. His performances at local events and street races caught the attention of both enthusiasts and professional drivers, and his skills became a defining feature of the drifting movement.

**The Birth of Professional Drifting (1990s)**

By the 1990s, drifting began to move out of the underground street racing scene and into professional motorsports. The Japanese motorsport organization, the All Japan Drift Championship (AJDC), was established in 1996, marking the official beginning of professional drifting. The Japanese car culture of the time was heavily influenced by drifting, with companies like Nissan, Toyota, and Mazda providing cars that were ideal for the sport.

At the same time, Keiichi Tsuchiya’s popularity was growing beyond the streets. He began appearing in motorsport media and car shows, helping to bring attention to drifting and elevate it from a subculture to a mainstream motorsport in Japan. Tsuchiya also became a key figure in the creation of the D1 Grand Prix, the world’s first professional drifting series, which was launched in 2000.

**The Rise of D1 Grand Prix (2000s)**

The D1 Grand Prix played a pivotal role in the global expansion of drifting. Officially founded in 2000 by Tsuchiya and other members of the Japanese motorsport community, D1 Grand Prix created a platform where drivers from around the world could compete in a formalized competition structure. The D1 Grand Prix adopted a unique point system that judged drivers on factors like angle, speed, and style, rather than just raw speed alone, which differentiated it from traditional motorsports.

The series quickly gained a large following, attracting both Japanese and international drivers. The cars used in D1 Grand Prix were heavily modified, with high-powered engines, specialized suspension setups, and aftermarket parts that allowed drivers to perform extreme drifts at high speeds. Some of the most iconic figures of this era included Daijiro Yoshihara, who became a champion in D1 Grand Prix, and Tsuchiya himself, whose legendary status was solidified by his driving in the series.

**Drifting’s Global Expansion (2000s-Present)**

By the mid-2000s, drifting had expanded far beyond Japan’s borders. The sport made its way to the United States in 2003 when Formula Drift, the premier U.S. drifting championship, was established. Formula Drift’s entry into the American market was a key moment for the sport, as it marked the beginning of drifting’s widespread popularity in North America. With backing from major sponsors like Monster Energy, Falken Tires, and Nitto Tires, the U.S. series began attracting large crowds, showcasing the spectacle of drifting to a broader, mainstream audience.

In Europe, drifting also began to take off, with the European Drift Championship (EDC) gaining traction and hosting events across the continent. The global appeal of drifting was fueled by the rise of social media and online content, which allowed fans to watch high-quality drifting videos and share them with others, further promoting the sport.

Drifting's appeal lies not only in its technical driving challenges but also in its cultural influence. Drifting has become closely associated with youth culture, street racing, and car customization, with a vibrant community of fans and drivers sharing their passion for cars and driving techniques. In many ways, drifting represents a fusion of motorsport and lifestyle, where style, creativity, and car culture are just as important as technical proficiency on the track.

**The Influence of Drifting in Popular Culture**

Drifting’s mainstream success was further solidified by its portrayal in Hollywood films, particularly the 2006 movie *The Fast and the Furious: Tokyo Drift*, which showcased the sport to an international audience. The film highlighted the underground street racing scene in Japan and introduced the concept of drifting to millions of viewers around the world. While the movie was dramatized for entertainment, it played a significant role in bringing attention to the sport and inspiring a new generation of drifting enthusiasts.

Additionally, drifting has influenced car modification culture, with many car enthusiasts seeking to replicate the styles and techniques they’ve seen in films, competitions, and video games. The rise of games like *Need for Speed* and *Gran Turismo* allowed fans to virtually experience drifting, and many drivers in real life started out playing these games before transitioning to actual motorsports.