

# SPORT COMPACT CAR™

THE PREMIER PERFORMANCE MAGAZINE

A Once and Always  
**LEGEND**

The  
Complete  
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Story  
of the  
Z-Car

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# SPORT COMPACT CAR

THE PREMIER PERFORMANCE MAGAZINE

January 1997 • Volume 9 Issue 1

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COVER PHOTOGRAPHY BY LES BIDRAWN



# Z-SCENE

## Z Parts Warehouse

Where can I find parts for my Z-car?" Believe it or not, this is the most frequently asked question that I receive by mail or phone. So in an effort to assist all of you with the need to know... I'm dedicating this month's column to the subject.

Paging through the numerous advertisers in SCC, the Z club newsletters and using IZCC member Tim Nevins' extensive listing, I was able to piece together some names and addresses of companies (and wrecking yards!) that cater to Z-Car enthusiasts. Those companies listed here offer parts for your Z or ZX, however shop with common sense — I didn't have the opportunity to personally inquire with every company about their policies and prices. Membership in your local Z club might provide an added discount at some of these establishments.

## Z Shopper's Guide

Nissan Only Wreckers, 3561 Recycle Rd. #1, Rancho Cordova, CA (916) 631-8333 or (800) 649-9936; Barn, Coldbrook Rd., Oakham, MA (508) 882-3900; Aging & Older Imports, Inc., 2601 West Reno, Oklahoma City OK (405) 235-4657; South May Auto Salvage Inc., 1823 South May Ave., Oklahoma City, OK (405) 685-7112; The Z Farm, Ripon (North Yorkshire) England 01-765-620238; Mr. Z of Albuquerque, 10113 Acoma SE, Albuquerque, NM (505) 291-0095; The Z Connection, 2570 NW 141 Street, Opa Locka, FL (305) 688-2948; Z Car Atlanta, 6404 Buford Highway, Norcross, GA (770) 446-1090; Z Services Unlimited, 1055 South Cobb Drive, Marietta, GA (770) 514-7792; Ratz Motorsports, 961 Shallowford Rd. NE, Kennesaw, GA (770) 926-6609; Rising Sun Import Parts, 8983 Mira Mesa Blvd., San



by Stan Beckmann

**"In an effort to assist all of you with the need to know... I'm dedicating this month's column to the subject"**

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Arizona Z Car, 2043 East Quartz Street, Mesa, AZ (602) 844-9677; Atlanta Racing Enterprises, 3516 Lawrenceville Highway, Tucker, GA 30084; Auto Rust Doctors, 2728 Dover Rd., Bamber Lake, NJ (609) 693-1631; Banzi Motorworks, 6735 Midcities Ave., Beltsville, MD (301) 937-5746; Borla Performance Industries, Inc., 5901 Edison Drive, Oxnard, CA (805) 986-8600; Classic Datsun Motorsports, 402 Olive Ave. #A, Vista, CA (619) 940-6365; Dandos Performance, 45300 Industrial Place, Unit #1, Fremont, CA (800) 918-6363; Dave Turner Motorsports, 5555 Magnatron Blvd., Unit A, San Diego, CA (800) 854-6640; Dobi, 320 Thor Place, Breva, CA (714) 529-1977; Eibach Springs, 17817 Gillette Ave., Irvine, CA (714) 752-6700; Fairlady Products, 11101 Cabriole Ave., Northridge, CA (818) 363-2015; HKS, 20312 Gramercy Place, Torrance, CA (310) 328-8100; Hussline, 495 Peninsula Blvd., Hempstead, NY (516) 485-5550; Impact Parts, Glen Wild Rd., Glen Wild, NY (914) 434-3338; JTR Engineering, P.O. Box 66, Livermore, CA 94551 (510) 462-3619; Jim Wolf Technology, 212 Millar Ave., El Cajon,

*Continued on page 126*

# LETTERS

## VTEC Swap

I have a 1994 Honda Civic EX coupe and was wondering if I could drop the more powerful (160 hp) Del Sol VTEC engine in my car without any serious modifications to the engine bay. If so, will it be worth the trouble and money? Also, will I lose or gain any performance or ride comfort with 17-inch wheels on 205/40-17 rubber, or would a 16-inch on 205/40-16 tires be the better choice? Different shops give me different answers, so I decided to ask the pros. That's why I turned to *Sport Compact Car*.

Lee Hang  
Hazel Park, Michigan

*We called D.C. Sports to ask about the engine swap, and they said it will drop right in. The engine mounts are the same, so mechanically it should be about the same as pulling your current engine and putting it back in. However, the electronics are different. If you do this swap, get the factory shop manuals with complete wiring schematics for both cars (if you're lucky it will be the same manual). Some manufacturers have specific electrical system manuals, which are what you would want. When you buy the new engine, be sure to get the complete engine wiring harness and computer, with all sensors and connectors. Relatively speaking, it seems pretty straightforward, but if you have any doubts about your own ability to complete such a project, we highly recommend you find a professional you can trust to do it right. There is nothing worse than an investment of thousands of dollars that is sitting in the garage on jacksstands because the time, money or know-how ran out before the project was finished. As to whether it's worth it, only you can answer that.*

*As for your second question, we passed it on to the pros as well, people who deal with wheel and tire fitment all day, every day. Ron Ortiz of Discount Tire Direct said that the*

*choice between 16-inch and 17-inch wheels really depends on your geographic location, and the condition of the roads where you live. His general recommendation is a 16-inch wheel. It is more economical, and the same tires are available in a ZR speed rating as can be had for 17-inch wheels. He said to use a wheel with a 38-45mm offset, a 35mm offset will cause the tire to rub the fender. With proper offset and a 1.25-inch Eibach drop, a 205-45/16 on a 16x7 wheel will fit perfectly and look bitchin'.*

## More Datsun Fan Mail

I am always delighted when I see Datsun coverage in *Sport Compact Car* and the recent series of BRE articles is no exception. There were, however, quite a few errors in Paul Mitchell's article on the Datsun 2000. Since articles on these cars are so rare, and there is so little information available about them, I feel it is important to correct these mistakes.

First, the chronology of the Datsun Roadster has a few errors. Mitchell states that the 2000's predecessor, the SPL310, was powered by a 1300cc engine. He then goes on to state in two different places that the 2000 debuted in either 1968 or 1969. In fact, the SPL 310, or Fairlady, was powered by a 1500cc engine. This was increased to 1600cc in 1965 (I think), and the 2000 model finally debuted halfway through 1967. The 1967 model was significantly different than the 1968 model, so I am not just being picky when I point out this six-month discrepancy.

Next, Mitchell states that the spray bar developed by BRE was later incorporated into production 510 engines. While Nissan Motorsports did offer a spray bar for 510 engines, production engines were internally oiled. Nissan did incorporate a spray bar into production Z engines from 1970 to 1977. Mitchell also stated that the 2000

developed 135 hp in stock form. While this is true, I think it is important to point out that there was an optional 150 hp version available in 1967. While American emissions regulations prevented this engine from being sold officially in the U.S. from 1968-70, a kit containing all of the necessary parts to convert from 135 hp to 150 hp was sold through Datsun parts departments, and often installed in new cars. With the 150 hp engine, the 2000 was virtually race ready right out of the box. Also, the picture on page 96 is not a 2000 roadster engine, but a later L-series engine. In fact, based on the dual, remote reservoir master cylinders, the finned spray bar and the Aeroquip hoses, I would have to guess that the photo is of a BRE Trans Am 510 engine.

Finally, as a Datsun junkie, I am probably required to take offense with Mitchell's statement that Datsun "could build capable sports cars; even if not quite on a level equal to the Europeans." While I could easily debate this until I exhaust the world's oxygen supply, I'll simply point out that with 150 hp, a 2000 roadster could stomp all over any competitively priced European car of that era. Sophistication be damned, they had POWER!

Dave Coleman  
Claremont, CA

## Return of the Jetta

I have recently purchased a 1996 VW Jetta GLX and I am looking for any products that might enhance the performance and appearance of my vehicle.

David R. Henning  
Oklahoma City, OK

*We looked through the last few years of back issues to find tech stories of Volkswageners. We ran a story on limited-slip differentials in June 1995, and*

**"Americans had never seen anything like this from Japan, at the time still thought of as a place of trinkets and cheap toys"**

**T**he Datsun roadster, for all its worthy attributes, never won much public recognition. Sports car enthusiasts knew, of course, about its quality, speed and racing championships. But to most it was just another sports car, indistinguishable from the horde of imports from the UK, with the exception of the

"Datsun" emblem placed on it. It was just another Japanese sport car.

However, everyone knew about the 240Z. And everybody wanted one.

Americans had never seen anything like this from Japan, at the time still thought of as a place of trinkets and cheap toys. The 240Z, however, looked like a European exotic car, had a 150 hp in-line six with sidedraft carburetors and a 7000 rpm redline, and had fully independent suspension. It sold for a surprising low price, a suggested \$3,526. A Jaguar XK-E sold for about twice that and sure, it was a Jaguar, but the 240Z was something that a working stiff could afford. There was nothing else like it.

Certainly not Nissan's own roadsters, though for 1970, the 240Z's first year, the older cars were sold along

# ***A Once and Always***

by John Matras



1971



side the debutante. Unlike the roadster, the 240Z had MacPherson struts up front and lower A-arms with struts at the rear. It wasn't the most sophisticated suspension ever, but it was several ages beyond the oxcart springs under the roadster. The 240Z was strictly a two-seater, but it had more elbow and leg room, and under the fastback hatch, a lot more luggage room.

Instead of the 2-liter roadster's U-series 4-cylinder, the Z-car, as it would quickly become known, had a 2.4-liter in-line six, an elongated version of the 510's sohc 1.6-liter four. The engines shared bore and stroke, rods, bearings, valve train and duplex chain cam drive. The 240Z had flat top pistons instead of the dished pistons of the 510, however, for higher compres-

sion, as well as larger intake valves, a more radical camshaft and the aforementioned carburetors, a pair of Hitachi-SU HJG 46W units. Essentially, they were Veddy British carbs, but made in Japan.

At introduction only a 4-speed manual transmission was offered, a 3-speed automatic was not available until 1971. A 5-speed manual was promised but never delivered in U.S. 240Zs. The rack and pinion steering was unboosted, but didn't need power assist. Front disc brakes with solid rotors were standard and fully up-to-date, as were the finned cast iron drums at the rear.

By today's standard the 240's interior was austere, with vinyl, vinyl everywhere, but it was great for 1970. The thin vinyl buckets had ventilating

buttons and there was full carpeting. Peculiar even by contemporary standards, however, was quilted vinyl that was frequently compared to a plastic version of the ubiquitous coats worn in Red China. Datsun at least got the steering wheel right—at least for the times—with a thin imitation-wood rimmed steering wheel, three black metal spokes and square recesses apparently intended to mimic holes drilled for lightness. The speedometer and tachometer were mounted in separate round nacelles, though the three accessory gauge nacelles across the top center of the dash became a Z-car trademark.

If the American public had never seen a car like this from Japan, Datsun dealers had never seen anything like the response for a product

# LEGEND



## A ONCE AND ALWAYS LEGEND

**Z** from Japan. They were floored by demand. It didn't take long for the dealers to apply that old American adage, "Make hay while the sun shines." Dealers added mandatory options to jack up the price. Indeed, it was hard to buy a 240Z with the standard steel wheels and wheel covers. Some dealers even became so blatant as to add "extra dealer profit" to the window sticker. New 240Zs were selling for as much as \$5500 - up in Jaguar territory - but it didn't slow sales. In fact, demand was so great that Nissan halted production of the roadster at the end of 1970 so it could use the assembly line space to build Zs. Demand would not slacken. Even two years after introduction, the blue book price for a used 240Z was higher than its original MSRP.

Cabin vents were relocated from the rear deck to the C-pillar insignia

as a running change, the easiest way to differentiate the earlier and later 240Z. Otherwise changes for 1971 were mechanical, an improved transmission—still 4-speed—and differential. In 1972 the compression ratio was down but the price was up. The differential was moved rearward about 1.5 inches to improve half-shaft



angles. Base price - still an if-you-can-find-it deal - was up to \$4045.

Tightening emissions rules took another hit at the Z in 1973. Exhaust gas recirculation and different carburetors slowed the 240Z and hurt driv-

ability, particularly causing vapor lock and hard starting. Venting the underhood area helped, but the best solution - though illegal - was substituting the earlier carbs. Nissan attacked the decreased performance caused by the emissions controls directly, bumping displacement by 200cc for the 1974 model year. The new model was called the 260Z after its displacement in deciliters. This helped restore acceleration, but the longer-stroke 2.6-liter engine was not as smooth as its predecessor and still had problems with vapor lock. And although home and European market came with 5-speed manuals, U.S. buyers still had no alternative to the 4-speed manual but a 3-speed automatic.

The 1974 260Z also introduced the 2+2 Z. An extra foot of the wheelbase and a humpback roofline allowed the 260Z 2+2 to swallow a pair of diminutive fold-down seats. Surprisingly, weight went up by only 100 lbs. Factory-installed air conditioning



the entire fuel tank and the other for the final quarter, and a low fuel warning light.

A ZXR package was released to homologate a whaletail rear wing for racing. The ZXR had special badging - with a big "R" - with two-tone striping over Silver Mist paint. Only 1000 were made.

Nissan had changed the Z from sports car to sports-touring and moved up in price as well. The new base was \$9899, the GL package priced at \$2298.

In 1980, the ZX was still new but

that didn't stop Nissan from updating it by adding the option of a "skyroof" - a T-top. It was a popular move; by the end of the year half of all 280ZXs sold had the option. Other new options were leather upholstery and automatic temperature control. A 1980 special was the 280ZX Anniversary edition, finished in black with gold striping and gold-tone alloy wheels and featuring tinted-glass panels in the T-top, headlamp washers and commemorative decals on the front fenders celebrating ten years of Z cars.

Scott, captured his first national crown in GT2 at the wheel of the same 280Z that had carried his father to the 1975 C Production crown.

The overtly professional IMSA series became a parallel target for the Z-Car racing programs. Running in the GTU (under 2.5-liter) class, the Z Car ran with Porsche's built-for-racing 935 and the GM backed, V-8 powered Chevrolet Monzas. Still, the Z Cars often were found at the front of the pack, contesting for overall placement against motor racing's elite, driving cars that were backed by sponsors with seven figure budgets.

When it was decided to contest the better publicized, more prestigious GTO series, a Japanese market Nissan V-8 engine was the basis for the potent powerplant that Bob Sharp Racing shoe-horned into a highly modified 300ZX chassis. It was raced on several occasions by Paul Newman, who was the team's longest term pilot following Bob Sharp's accident inspired retirement late in the 1976 season.

After dominating an ever-increasing progression of racing series, Nissan raised the ante to be able to play in the absolute top in sports cars racing. GTP had become IMSA's highest stakes game, a class comprised of prototype cars built of space age composite materials by engineers who hardly needed to concern themselves with budgetary constraints. No matter what nameplate, there was little besides the logo to identify a GTP race car with anything found in a dealership showroom.

Steve Millen, an expatriate New Zealander now living in Southern California, was named to carry Nissan's banner into this ultimate sports car racing arena. The choice was justified when Nissan captured the first of four consecutive Manufacturers' Championships in 1988, as well as the GTS top honors in 1992 and 1994, with the corresponding drivers crown going to lead driver Millen.

As this is written following the ceremonies that installed the final Z Car, a black 300ZX Turbo, in the Petersen Automotive Museum in Los Angeles, Nissan Motorsports is about to tackle one of racing's few remaining challenges... under the banner of the luxury division, Infiniti, Nissan will be providing engines to the IRL IndyCar series.



Don Devendorf's Electromotive Datsun 280ZX Turbo.

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## A ONCE AND ALWAYS LEGEND

The Seventies had been rough on performance, but by 1981 horsepower had bottomed out for just about everyone. Recovery for the ZX began with higher compression for the '81s and output raised to 145 hp, but the real excitement came on April Fools Day with the introduction of the Turbo. The 1981 280ZX Turbo sported a single AiResearch turbo that raised horsepower to 180 hp, a new high for production Zs. The engine was extensively modified, including a new head, camshaft and intake and exhaust manifold, and new pistons to lower compression to 7.4:1. The turbo's boost was limited to 7.0 psi by a wastegate with a backup pop-off valve. There was a bigger radiator and an oil cooler was added, and the cat got bigger inlet and outlet pipes. It was Nissan's first engine with electronic engine management, and was available only with an automatic transmission. (So that's why they chose April Fool's Day). Badges, dual outlet exhaust and a functional NACA-style hood scoop identified the Turbo. Price was an all-time high \$16,999, but reviewers called it "a remarkable bargain" with "gobs of performance and sporting handling characteristics."

In 1982, ZXs learned to talk, which pleased few but gave cheesy material to stand-up comics. On a better front, the ZX got a better front - and rear. Bumpers were covered with soft urethane for a more finished look, while the Turbo's hood scoop was added to all ZXs. Power steering became standard and a 5-speed was allowed with the turbocharged engine which itself could be put in a 2+2.

The trend toward luxury continued in 1983 with a leather/digital option package that included leather seats with "nu-suede accents," automatic temperature control, premium sound, defogging for the rear window and rear view mirrors, and hard to read digital instruments. Meanwhile the suspension became softer. Price was up to \$14,799 for the GL and \$17,299 for the Turbo.

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## A ONCE AND ALWAYS LEGEND

The Datsun marque was abandoned in favor of the corporate moniker in 1984, a move to unify branding worldwide. Courage to move away from the original styling themes was shown in the new Nissan 300ZX of 1984. Instead of the older rounded Z, the new 300ZX had a wedge profile with an almost flat hood, and a new V-6 engine, turbo and non-turbo. The Turbo could be spotted by a raised scoop on the hood - not universally popular - and a single "TURBO" badge on the tail. The new body was particularly aerodynamic, with a drag coefficient of 0.30 for the Turbo. The V-6 worked well too, the naturally aspirated version rated at 160 hp while 6.7 psi boost (and 7.8:1 instead of 9.0:1 compression) raised the Turbo's output to an even 200 hp at 5200 rpm. A 5-speed manual was standard equipment with either engine, though the Turbo had a beefed-up Borg Warner box while the non-turbo had a Nissan 5-speed. A 4-speed automatic was optional.

The suspension was nominally the same, with MacPherson struts up front and semi-trailing arms at the rear. But more caster and low trail gave the new 300ZX better stability at high speeds, with more anti-dive and less bump steer. The Turbo had driver adjustable shock absorbers that contained a motor in each shock tube; a shutter turned to different openings for different resistance. Testers, however, said they needn't have bothered, as there was little difference over anything but the deepest holes. Power steering was speed variable, and four wheel disc brakes were standard.

The new ZX had a 2+2 version, though it was styled not to look very different than the standard version - a neat trick with 7.9-inches additional wheelbase.

A possible cure for a low fiber diet, Nissan offered an audio enhancement called "Bodysonic," speakers in the seat bottoms that boosted lower octaves! A vestige of the 240Z's interior design survived in a pair of gauges

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— HUNTER — STREET

popping up with the headlamps. Full width taillamps marked the new 300ZX from behind and both naturally-aspirated ZXs and Turbos had new wheels. Those on the Turbo, however, had a charcoal finish that always looked dirty; that would be changed the following year. Larger brake calipers improved braking and suspension and steering changes improved cornering and response.

More power came in 1988 with five more horsepower for turbo and non-turbo engines alike, and better midrange response came from a new turbocharger. A Limited Edition had an improved "European" air dam and shorter springs for a lower stance. The 1989 model was strictly carry-over, with a replacement due in the spring.

And what a replacement. Nissan was shooting for "the world's number-one sports car" with the 1990 300ZX. What "number-one" meant didn't matter really as much as Nissan's dedication to a sports car. The new looks were stunning — remember the first one you saw in traffic? — and the 222 hp DOHC V-6 (only the block was unchanged from '89) made it a rocket. The Cray computer-developed suspension, a modified double A-arm arrangement, was more complex than most race car's and effective at delivering ride and handling, and huge disc brakes provided exceptional stopping power.

Debuting on April 24, 1989, were two models, a standard \$27,300 two-seater and a very well disguised 2+2. You'd have to know the difference to see it, and it was all packed away in a wheelbase only 4.7 inches longer but there really wasn't room for two adults in the back seat.

A twin-turbocharged version was promised at the April introduction and it came at standard new model introduction in the fall. For turbocharging, the engine was treated as if it were two in-line threes, except that one bank boosted the other. An intercooler was located in each front corner of the car. The turbocharger



itself was cooled by both oil and water, and the engine internals were beefed up top to bottom and the compression ratio lowered to 8.5:1.

The clutch and 5-speed manual transmission were strengthened, enhancing the clutch so that vacuum assist was provided to help push the pedal down. A 4-speed automatic

transmission was optional with the turbo but power was cut back to 280 hp by valve timing and a different fuel injection map.

Nissan governed top speed to 155 mph, keeping it from reaching a top speed of over 160 mph. Two-seaters only were turbocharged and wider

*Continued on page 134*

### Albrecht Goertz

When Nissan in Japan decided to develop a serious sports car as the image and performance pace setter for its attempt to best Toyota for market leadership, like many other companies around the world, they looked to Europe, selecting BMW 507 creator Albrecht Goertz to pen the new car... or so the story goes. Yutaka Katayama, who headed the West Coast Datsun distribution organization, recalls things somewhat differently.

A German born nobleman, Goertz had followed his BMW coupe by designing the Silvia, an aluminum bodied sports car, for Datsun. While the small displacement sportster was stylish, it was ergonomically less successful. Bob Sharp spent three weeks with a Silvia prototype, and his 15 page report was candidly critical. He couldn't get comfortable in the car... and neither could Katayama. A few Silvias were produced, but not for America.

Goertz then took on a Yamaha design project, followed by one for Toyota. Meanwhile, according to Mr. Katayama, the USA market driven sports car development was continued in-house... and the Fairlady (240Z) was the end result. Still, fearing possible litigation and negative press in America, Nissan's management in Tokyo honored Goertz's billing. As recently as 1995, Goertz purportedly stated during a speech in England that his claim to having created the 240Z design had already demonstrated his mastery of the sports car design idiom with his now classic solution (only 250 507s were produced) to BMW's mandate that he create a viable response to the Mercedes Benz 300SL, "Gullwing", the controversy over his authorship of history's best selling sports car may never be resolved to everyone's satisfaction.

As to why a coupe rather than a convertible configuration was chosen, Katayama admits that Jaguar's E Type coupe influenced the decision. He said that safety was another high priority as was the interstate highway network in America.

The Z-Car featured a sharp, air splitting leading edge and headlamps recessed into buckets in the front fenders. There was no grill as such — just a horizontal opening above the front bumper — nor did the 240Z hood sport a bulge to establish a visual illusion of power... illusion was not what was sought. The hatch-back coupe had a tapered tear-drop shape, in much the idiom of the E Type Jaguar, and not unlike the Porsche 911. There was no excess width in the form of fender flares or contrived "go faster" gimmickry. Goertz originally designed the tail lamps and bumpers to be proportional with the Z-Car's dimensions and lines. The realities of American driving made it advisable to make the bumpers more substantial, a process that began with the later 260Zs and continued with the 280Z. Later evolutions were designed with front and rear protection integrated into the bodywork.

**"Although described  
as the 'first' Z-car, this  
is not quite the case,  
but its true identity is  
even better: It belonged  
to Katayama—the  
'father' of the Z-car—  
himself"**

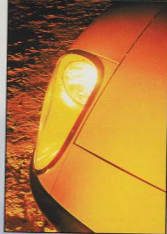
by Keith Buglewicz  
PHOTOGRAPHY: LES BIDRAWN

In automotive circles, soul is what makes or breaks a classic car. There are lots of older cars, but few have been given the coveted appellation "classic." Sure, there are plenty of old Italian sports cars, but few are coveted like Enzo's Ferraris. Germany has produced its share of sporty cars, but the Porsche 356 offers enthusiasts the soul they desire in their cars. And of the numerous fine cars produced by Japan, the only one to bear the "classic" mantle is Datsun's original Z-car.

Each of these cars was born through the cult of personality of one person. Mr. Ferrari pulled his cars into existence, creating one of the most prestigious automobile companies in the world. Ferdinand Porsche did the same thing after World War II, and few dispute that Porsche is a leader in the sports car world today.

However, it was one man at Nissan (then Datsun) in the United States that brought the Z-car into existence. Yutaka Katayama was president of Nissan's U.S. operations from 1958 through 1977. In that time, he took a little known manufacturer of appliance-mobiles to international acclaim. And he did this with a car that is known by only one letter: Z.





**Soul &  
INSPIRATION**



When first introduced late in 1969, the Z-car was an immediate success. Katayama had shown the world that Japan was more than capable of producing a real sports car that could run with the big dogs from Europe, but without the sky-high price that often accompanied those European exotics. To say the Z-car was successful is like saying the ocean is wet. Through the years, the car grew in both size and price, eventually becoming a world-class grand touring machine capable of humbling the Corvette, Supra and RX-7, not to mention giving lesser Porsches and Ferraris a run for their money.

It is interesting that, on the heels of terminating production of the Z-car, Nissan's latest ad campaign is built around the very image the Z-car gives its lineup. In these "Enjoy the Ride" commercials, Nissan showcases a certain yellow Z-car with wire wheels and a "G-nose" body. Although described

as the "first" Z-car, this is not quite the case, but its true identity is even better.

It belonged to Katayama—the "father" of the Z-car—himself.

The car itself is not much more than your run-of-the-mill '72 Z-car, from a mechanical point of view. Certainly, the G-nose, ducktail spoiler for the time, but the drivetrain, suspension, and other hard parts are. However, dismissing it as another old Z-car would be shortsighted. Where this car's life's journey has taken it is where the story lies.

The story actually begins on May 23, 1963. That is the day that Johnnie Ueda Rinard began work at Datsun as secretary to the parts manager. Back then, the staff was so small parts were sold over the counter at the corporate headquarters. Johnnie remembers one of those early parts hunters was



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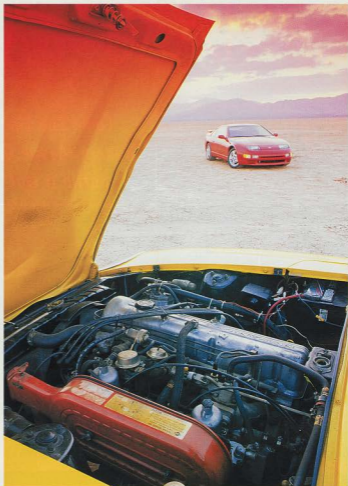


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## SOUL AND INSPIRATION



Roy Rodgers, owner of a Datsun Patrol, a Jeep-like sport utility vehicle that sported—of all things—Nissan badges 22 years before the name was changed in the U.S. In 1965, Katayama (affectionately known as Mr. K) promoted Johnnie to be his personal secretary, beginning what would be a life-long friendship.

Aside from being the first president of Nissan North America, Mr. K also had a keen awareness of how Americans looked at their cars. While Japan viewed automobiles as appliances to get from point A to point B (and in the mid '60s, few had cars anyway), Americans viewed their vehi-

cles as extensions of themselves. They customized their cars to reflect their personalities. They wanted cars that were unique, that could be tinkered with.

Unfortunately, Datsun was saddled with an assortment of rather dull cars. The 1500 roadster was their only sporty offering, but it wasn't quite up to the standard set by British and Italian sports cars. There was a hole waiting to be filled in the U.S. market. One for a sports car that would offer world-class performance, would be comfortable for tall drivers, and would also be relatively inexpensive. Thus began the prototype work in

occurred that destroyed the Z's pretty G-nose. The paint was ruined, and the decision was made to have the car repainted. A long search ensued, and eventually, the correct color (and paint shop) was found to do the job in a more durable urethane coat. The Z's guardian angel has been more vigilant since then, and the car hasn't been repainted since.

In 1992, the car was retired from daily driving duty. The increased awareness and enthusiasm the Z-car was generating rode on the popularity of the fourth (and last, as it would eventually turn out) generation Z. Introduced with a great image ad (a close-up of a white sheet of paper, struck suddenly and violently by a typewriter, leaving behind a solitary capital Z), the latest Z was pricey, but closest in driving pleasure to the original car. As interest in the Z-car was rekindled, the yellow Z appeared at small shows in Southern California.

However, the big break came at the 1994 national Z-car convention in San Diego. The first time the car had been shown at any major event, the response was overwhelming. People knew exactly what the car was, and who it once belonged to, but few knew what had happened since Mr. K had left Nissan. From there, the floodgates opened. The car was shown again at the annual Surfside Nissan show, a showcase for vintage Nissans held each November. Although the car didn't make it to the 25th anniversary convention in Colorado, it did participate in the "Z Across America" rally, carrying the baton from the Cathedral City, California, to Buena Park, California. Nissan also used the car for photography, shooting it in front of their mirrored-glass building. It was not the last time Nissan would be interested in the car.

From August 1995 to April of '96, the car was at the Peterson Automotive Museum, although it was only on display from February to April. After its stint in the Peterson museum, Chlat Day (holders of Nissan's advertising account) wanted

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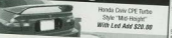
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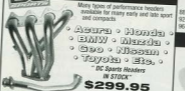
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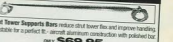


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## SOUL AND INSPIRATION

to start filming the car for promotional purposes. Both Johnnie and Kenny are members of Group Z, so they decided to bring it to the club's June '96 meeting. Mr. K arrived in the U.S. the same day as the meeting, so Kenny drove him to the meet in his old car. Chiat Day spent \$100,000 shooting the meeting that night. The next day, Chiat Day called back, wanting to shoot the car more, in Raleigh Studios. At this point, there was still no mention of commercials.

However, on June 21, the car was trailered to Brawley, California for the first commercial—the "Gas Station" scene. At this point, Kenny insisted on insuring the car, and it was...for \$26,000. Next on the agenda was the "Field" commercial, filmed near Seattle, Washington. The final, "Dream Garage" commercial was being produced while the first two were airing on television. The debut of the "Dream Garage" commercial officially kicked off Nissan's critically acclaimed new ad campaign.

Currently, the car is in high demand for publicity purposes. After the "Dream Garage" commercial was filmed, it was off to New York for a dealers meeting, and was returned 59 days later. The rigors of commercial shooting had taken its toll on the car. The windows were tinted, but had been removed for the tint job, and some of the molding was slightly damaged. There were also a few small scratches and dents on the body. Although the familiar eyes of Johnnie and Kenny see the scratches, to us, the car looks great.

Although offers had been made on the yellow Z, it is not for sale, for any price. This particular car's value transcends mere dollar amounts. As Nissan rediscovered its roots, the company's spirit continues to live on. An important part of Nissan's soul lies with the original owner of this car. In a way, it rests with this car itself. And, we wouldn't expect Johnnie and Kenny to sell Nissan's soul.

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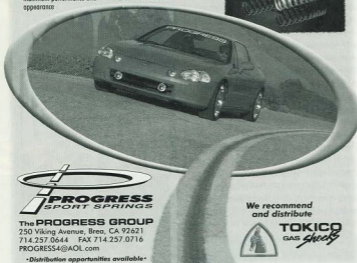
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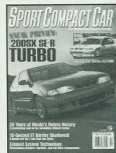
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**Z SCENE**

Continued from page 19

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**SCC**





Mr. K

be the last for the 300ZX in the U.S., a victim of either the 1997 side impact rules or difficulty in compliance with evaporative emissions rules, depending on what you heard said when. Whatever, it simply wasn't worth it to Nissan to make the changes. Sales, which had topped 86,000 in 1979 and were as high as 39,290 in 1990, were down to 4,836 for calendar year '94 and 4,176 in 1995.

It's the end of an era. Regulations made the 300ZX more expensive to build and the yen/dollar relationship made it more expensive to buy. It continues on the Japanese market, where it remains popular, but the final U.S. model, a pure and unadulterated sports car, was just simply too expensive. People still wanted a Z, perhaps as much as they did the 240Z, but now too few could afford one. The Z-car finally met its match, and it was itself.

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