

432R - Road Racer

AN ULTRA-EXCLUSIVE go-gadget with 180 horses straining in the nose and an under-belly full of handling mods. Skip Scott drove it, just to make you jealous . . .

JAPANESE automobile manufacturers have a most frustrating habit of producing a limited number of exotic sports cars which they have used as image-up cars, or style leaders in their domestic market — without making any special provision for export. It seems that universal complaint has not been the fact that these cars were produced in limited numbers, but the fact that they were not made available to enthusiastic overseas buyers.

In some rare cases they would "sneak" a few out of the country to test overseas market reactions, but since they really had no concrete plans for mass production only a few ever got to the "right" people. In other rare cases, foreign resident car buffs have bought one of them locally and taken it back home with them when reassigned.

These are some of the cars that have stirred world-wide interest: Mazda's original rotary, the Cosmo (1200 units), Nissan's Silvia (555 units), Prince's GTR Hardtop (1101 units), the Toyota 2000GT (340 units), the Hino Contessa Sprinter (40 units) and last, but, by no means least, the Fairlady 432-R version of the Datsun Z car (362 units). All might be considered in this special group of what we could label "unavailable" or "Eat-your-heart-out exotics."

Don Knight, an "ex-Australian" advertising exec who is presently involved in PR and advertising work in Japan including the Kawasaki account, is one of the few foreign owners of a Fairlady 432-R. The production number of his car is No. 17.

Don has spent a small bundle of extra bucks juicing-up Nissan's original version of the car in order to give it better handling, a little more positive acceleration and a slightly more gutsy appearance.

These expenses, coupled with his original investment and jealous feeling for the "little lady" quite naturally makes him a rather "overpossessive husband" as far as the car is concerned. Although I finally talked him out of leaving my wife, Setsuko, on deposit when I took his "Lady" for a test, I did have to promise him a night on the town which in Tokyo these days can blow a week's salary. As a result, I am trying to cancel my promise out by letting him play with my Berry Mini-T for a weekend, which we car nuts consider almost as wild as wife swapping.

Since the Fairlady 432-R was never formally exported or splashed around in overseas shows, there are bound to be car-conscious people who don't even know what kind of car it is.

Basically, it's a Datsun 240Z, and in



OSTENSIBLY a stock Z-car, this 432 gets a subtle badge, wide mags, fat boots, and headlight fairings for identification. Nit-picking regulations eliminate the headlight fairings in Australia.



DAMN-ALL identification — the Z-car, still called a Fairlady on the home market, wears only a 432 badge to the rear. Underneath, it's pure performance — the DOHC mill puts out 250bhp in racing trim.

stock condition the only difference between the 432 and the 240 is the engine and the name-plate on the rear deck. All the stock running gear, suspension, interior layout, transmission, body, etc. are 240Z components. About the only way you can tell the 432 from a 240 is to lift the bonnet, check the name-plate; or run it off at the lights against a stock 240.

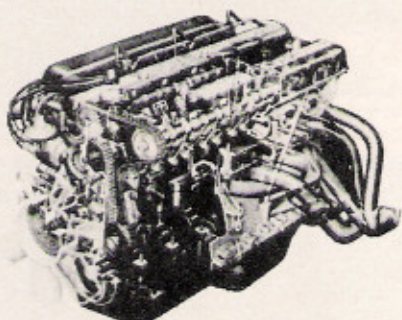
The engine in the 432 is a DOHC, 2-litre, 6-cylinder powerplant which turns out 160bhp stock against the 150 stock of the 2.4-litre SOHC engine.

It should be noted, however, that the DOHC 2-litre is *not* a destroked 24-L engine with a twin cam head bolted on — they are two completely different engines. The camshafts drawing and accompanying photos will give you an idea of how the DOHC engine is laid out, and coupled with the data sheet you should have the complete picture.

But Don Knight's Fairlady 432 is not a strictly production version and this makes it an even more interesting piece of machinery.

First off, Don has done a custom paint job on the car. What else but British Racing Green. Then, partially for looks and partially for handling he's installed a set of Ansen Sprint mag wheels and booted them with some F70 x 14 Goodyear Polyglass tyres. No fender or hub modifications were required to fit the wide wheels and tyres.

Engine modifications which have



boosted the stock horsepower to 180 include:

- Racing valves
- Rally option cam
- A switch from triple 40mm Mikuni Solexes to three 42DCOE sidedraft Webers.
- Racing headers and a dual pipe exhaust system including a pair of American glass-pacs which give the car one of the sexiest exhaust tones I've heard in a long time.
- A tad has been milled off the head to bring up the compression ratio as well.

In the gearing department, Don has left the stock Z-car five-speed as it is, but the differential has been modified for better acceleration — a 4.1 ratio. The original suspension has been changed to include a set of adjustable Konis and beefed-up front and rear stabilizers.

Other extras include dual Bendix electric fuel pumps, a racing coil and high capacity water pump which is definitely welcomed as the car does tend to run a tad hot considering I flogged it some on the Tomei, one of Japan's few super highways.

How does the car perform and what does it really feel like? I must confess somewhat reluctantly that although I've driven a standard 240Z I have never raced one or done a real road test on one. But I do know the modified 432 is a flier.

Plenty of guts it has, especially running through second, third and

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fourth gears at highway speeds. It does bog down a bit in first from a standing start, probably due to the fact that with the rally cam and slight over-carburetion, the power really doesn't start to come on until you get over 4500rpm. And the engine certainly doesn't have that 250-280 V8 horsepower required to smoke a set of F70s on dry pavement.

However, once you get into the gears and over 4500rpm, you've got all the power you need for above average high speed highway cruising, manoeuvring and passing, and it sure felt good after driving my old docile four-cylinder Cedric which gives you heart failure when you try to pass in any tight situation.

Here's a nutshell-road test in figures:

Speed	Gears used	Time
0-100km/h (0-60)	1-2	8.9secs
80-100km/h (50-60)	2	2.8secs
60-100km/h (33-60)	2	5.6secs
80-100km/h (50-60)	3	3.2secs
60-100km/h (33-60)	3	6.5secs
80-120km/h (50-75)	3-4	9.6secs
100-140km/h (60-87)	4	10.2secs

(Note: 100km/h = 62.6mph exactly)

Not what you would call head-snapping performance, but good, smooth, full-on power where you feel

confident, with the proper gear selection, that you have complete control of the machine.

There is no question that the Konis and rally option front stabilizer give you a more positive reaction in the turns, especially in long sweepers where you are popping along at over 120km/h. In tighter turns at lower speeds, control and steering with the big Goodyears gets a bit heavy-handed, but then again this isn't a car for the 98lb weakling.

Until I analyzed the situation, I was a bit disappointed in the rear suspension set-up. At first I thought the car was bottoming-out when I speed-shifted from first to second (that big thump like the diff casing is hitting the body), but after thinking about it I concluded that it probably was the big tyres hitting the wheel wells as I jumped gears.

There is a transmission whine in the lower gears but considering the car had seen 47,000km (29,500 miles) of hard driving, this isn't something to get too excited about. Right now the exhaust does smoke a bit. Don says he's been meaning to replace the valve guides (now made of a better material than the original) which came in the car.

Since the day I tested the "Lady" was one of Tokyo's hot and muggy summer swelters, one thing I did miss was the fact the car was not air-conditioned. With the oppressive

outside heat, the engine running a little hot and the transmission slightly on the warm side, it didn't take too long to sweat through my T-shirt.

However, all in all, it was a fun day and made much more so with Lyn Dean, a popular new American singer making a name for herself in Japan, along for the ride. She says she digs anything sleek and fast. Of course that leaves the Fairlady 432-R "in" and me "out."

Don casually mentioned to me that he might consider putting the car up for sale depending on what kind of offer he can get. For a round-trip airline ticket and a week's expenses I will try and see if Lyn will deliver the car personally. Now wouldn't that be a mind grabbing package? Eat your hearts out guys — we got all the best marbles here in Japan!

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SPECIFICATIONS

NISSAN'S DOHC SIX-CYLINDER 2000CC ENGINE

Engine name: S20
Bore and stroke: 82mm x 62.8mm
Capacity: 1989cc
Compression ratio: 9.5 to 1
Horsepower: 160PS @ 7000rpm
Torque: 18.0 Kg/m @ 5600rpm
Carburetion (stock):	... triple 40mm Mikuni
..... Solex sidedrafts
Mis.: four-valves-per-cylinder