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The Real JDM is a monthly column written by Ben Schaffer of Bespoke Ventures. Bespoke Ventures operates a number of JDM related businesses including: Bulletproof Automotive, Top Secret III, Ings+1 USA, VARIS USA, HyperRev USA and Bespoke VIP. Visit [www.bespokeventures.com](http://www.bespokeventures.com) for more information.

**T**he meaning of the acronym JDM over the past decade has evolved and morphed. Although 10 years ago it was relatively uncommon to hear people using the acronym JDM, today JDM has become a word on its own. A word commonly used by car enthusiasts, found on magazine covers, used within the names of hundreds of registered business corporations and also comprising the title and focus of this column. While Japanese tuning parts are fascinating to discuss monthly, this month we'll reflect on what JDM means on a more universal level.

Technically JDM stands for Japanese Domestic Market. It has been used for many decades as a label for goods sold specifically to Japanese based residents within the country of Japan. Its origin has truly nothing to do with the automotive aftermarket, and applies to any and all items that could be sold. A little more than a decade ago, JDM started being mentioned more in conversation amongst aftermarket enthusiasts. What started as an acronym to describe Japanese market parts, gradually became something that was more comfortable and commonly used to describe a wider range of things. First it was used to describe cars like a JDM right-hand drive Civic. Then it was used to describe OEM tuning parts like one-piece JDM Prelude headlights. Later it was used to describe aftermarket parts like JDM RE Amemiya GT wings. After that it was used to describe aftermarket parts officially sold in America like Toda camshafts. Then it jumped to the next level, JDM became a basis

# REDEFINING JDM

## A LOOK TO THE PAST, PRESENT AND FUTURE.

for a style, no longer limited to items sold only within Japan. For example, paint colors like hot pink, wheel colors like matte black, reverse vinyl graphics, and other related styles all became labeled as JDM, regardless of where they were built or sold.

What we find today is no longer the acronym JDM but the evolved word JDM. The reason is simply because the definition of Japanese Domestic Market has not kept up with the use and common meaning of the scene today. JDM as a word encompasses and defines something far more massive than it was originally intended. As this reality relates to enthusiasts, I often find people arguing over the definition of the word JDM. For example, are GReddy parts JDM anymore? They are sold officially in America so technically no if using the original definition. In some cases Japanese branded parts are not

made in Japan, but are sold only in Japan, is that JDM? By definition yes, but some would argue not. Is a color JDM? By old standards no but by new standards yes, it can be.

In short, there is no right or wrong answer for what is JDM. It will mean different things to different people. In a sense, it means the same thing as "cool" except with a cultural twist to it. Nobody can define cool, as it relates to Japanese car tuning culture, it is simply always up for debate.

I have a personal connection with the word JDM, as an enthusiast, entrepreneur and a columnist. I'd like to share with you, my suggested redefinition of JDM as I believe it to be. This redefinition of JDM serves as a backbone for what The Real JDM stands for, what I stand for and it is ultimately my motivation and passion behind virtually everything that I do.



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## THE REDEFINITION OF JDM

JDM is a mentality, an attitude, a culture, a desire, and a philosophy:

### JDM IS INNOVATION.

Through a no expense spared, no shortcuts taken mentality, Japanese manufacturers consistently innovate with new performance and style, often trickled down from JGTC technology and applied to street cars. Over the past decade, countless new trends and successful applications have been created and popularized by JDM innovation. This is thanks in part to two factors, one is the Japanese culture's famous attention to quality and detail. The second factor is that Japan's market is perfect for high-end products because the cost of car ownership is prohibitively expensive and as a result the average car owner is more accepting of paying top dollar for tuning parts.

### JDM IS AN ATTITUDE.

I and certainly many other JDM enthusiasts have a tendency to be early adopters. What this means is that we scour the world for underground activities, lifestyles and products that are refreshing, unique, exciting and that we relate to. Everything from skateboarding, hip hop and of course JDM starts from the underground and works its way up. JDM is lead by those who look for the next exciting thing, apply it to their lives and set the trends for the world. It is not uncommon for those into JDM tuning to also be

into underground fashion like A Bathing Ape, underground music like mashup remix projects of DJ Danger Mouse/Jay-Z, and underground collectables like Kubrick vinyl figurines.

### JDM IS A CULTURE.

Much like how rap has started as a music and grown into a lifestyle and culture, JDM has also. Ten years ago it was unlikely for a white emcee to get on stage and freestyle and it was also unlikely for white enthusiasts to represent JDM tuning in hotspots like the Los Angeles scene. Hip hop started out as nearly all black and JDM started out as nearly all Asian, yet both have evolved into cultures that are accepting of people of all backgrounds, so long as they properly represent the culture to the fullest. JDM parts are our producer/DJ, enthusiasts are our MCs, drifters are our B-Boys, and vinyl graphics are our graffiti. Ultimately just like any culture, there is a glue that binds and JDM enthusiasts can relate to each other regardless of their language and background. A drift car ripping up the perfect line sideways means "dope" in any language, nothing else need be said.

### JDM IS A DESIRE.

JDM is pursuit of the ultimate car using the latest in innovation, technology, style, craftsmanship and exotic materials. Any enthusiast true to themselves will understand and accept that no project is ever truly finished and perfect. There is a shared struggle and desire that can't

JDM is a mentality, an attitude, a culture, a desire, and a philosophy.

be quenched or overcome and it's result is the continued push of innovation from both the project cars that enthusiasts develop and the new products that they inspire and create.

### JDM IS PHILOSOPHY.

JDM encompasses all of the above beliefs and also carries with it some of the culture that Japan has embedded into minds of JDM fans. In Japan there is a rivalry between drivers, teams, shops and enthusiasts but in the end everyone is friends sharing in the same joy and there's no violence or long term bad blood. Also biting styles is strongly discouraged, everyone is pulling themselves up by innovation, work and skill, not by stealing the formula of their competition. There is a strong sense of respect, honor and responsibility with an understanding that a culture is a tight knit community which has the ability to grow and improve or be destroyed depending on the attitude and action of its members.

I'll wrap this up saying that JDM is not a trend or fad like some tend to say. As long as there is innovation and style in our scene, there will be always be JDM. Although JDM carries the word Japan within its meaning, the future of JDM is not dependant solely on Japanese manufacturing. It is true that for the past decade and still continuing to this day Japan is leading the new development and design of ground breaking products. Yet the staples of the JDM scene do not hinge on Japan as a manufacturing location. It is already true and it will continue to be that products representing JDM interests can be originated and produced by anyone from any country. For example, Top Secret who is considered JDM uses on all of their cars: suspension made in Holland, fuel cells made in America, and steering wheels and brakes both made in Italy. The day may come when Japan is no longer the top innovator within the scene, and when that day comes the word JDM may need a refreshed identity. Regardless of what we call it, the underlying beliefs that hold the evolving JDM culture together today will never disappear. ▀



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