



GLOBAL INTERPRETATION

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 for more information.

Last month's column discussed the redefinition of JDM, past, present and future. We concluded that JDM has changed from acronym to adjective and that a vehicle or product representing JDM need not be produced in Japan to fit the description. In collaboration with Florida's Patrick Callahan, this month we'll explore the global interpretation of JDM tuning principals and its parallels to what conventionally is already considered JDM tuning.

The first example is Europe's equivalent to the C-West Prototype II S2000, a car that has made the leap from light weight to ultra light. Making C-West's racer look obese is a near impossible task that Graeme Finlayson's custom rocket, titled the WR1C accomplishes with ease. This car is loosely based on the popular super light weight European Westfield 7 kit, but has been so modified that all references to Westfield

have been removed from the car. So what is it that makes the car so different? To quote Graeme, "money was ploughed into the car with no regard for the consequences." Pre-preg carbon fiber has been used for the car's entire chassis and body, creating a car that is strong enough for stage rally, yet incomprehensibly light at 858lbs. The solid mounted Yamaha R1 engine has been thoroughly worked over and connected to a sequential gearbox that is "like PlayStation, only louder." The result is 180hp to the rear wheels.

The WR1C represents JDM tuning philosophies from front to back, utilizing the same techniques employed by top Japanese tuners yet containing very few parts actually originating from Japan. The primary difference between this and the closest Japanese built equivalent like the C-West S2000 or the light weight Tommy Kaira ZZ series cars is the visually European style of this even more minimalist track day specialized

platform. When examining the WR1C, the mark of obsession appears in even the smallest details. Ounces were shaved wherever possible, with care being taken to preserve and even improve strength. Only the best components were used and they were assembled to the highest specs with thoroughly engineered custom parts like aero section A-arms connecting the off-the-shelf bits. The end result is a car that exhibits just the right combination of perfection and insanity while being enormously capable on a variety of surfaces. This is no surprise since the car was built for the Barbados Rally Carnival which contains many different surfaces in various states of repair. The WR1C's debut win with a margin of over 7 seconds in the TotalSport RallySprint at Bushy Park is a testament to the ability of the car and its creators.

Next up we look not at a car, but a tuning and fabrication shop who shares in JDM tuning philosophy. In 1998 when Honda decided to go

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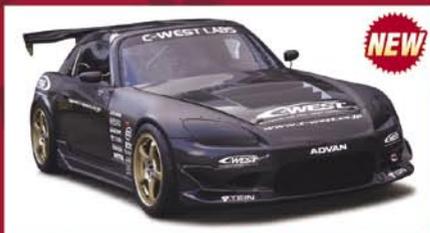
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858lbs of pure racing focus can be understood in any language.

touring car racing, they looked for a company that could represent their brand in the highest level of production-based racing. This company was not Mugen. It was not Spoon. In fact, it wasn't even Japanese. Honda decided to use a team named J.A.S. This is an Italian Honda-specialist, with tremendous skill in touring car preparation. Despite its geographical location, J.A.S. is like a top Japanese shop, minus the Japanese staff strung out on cigarettes and coffee and the obligatory waving Super Lucky Cat at the door. At J.A.S. all surfaces are eat-off-them-if-you-dare-soil-them-clean. Everything is in its place and there is a place for everything. Body shells straight from Honda sit on rotisseries and JDM Civic Type-R engines are stacked on shelves, ready to be prepared for competition. A section of the facility is dedicated to manufacturing and testing shock absorbers. Computer screens are often showing CAD images of the latest parts cooked up by the R&D department.

It shows in the results. Despite stiff competition from many better-funded teams that arguably had some rule advantages, J.A.S. represented Honda well in the Super Tourenwagen Championship with 23 wins and 20 poles. However, J.A.S. is different from many manufacturer backed outfits. J.A.S. not only runs its own touring car program, it provides a comprehensive range of parts for teams worldwide interested in campaigning Hondas. Even many Japanese famous tuners like Mugen and Tracy Sports purchase parts from J.A.S. to use in their cars. J.A.S.'s customers have had success of their own with three wins and two poles in the World Touring Car Championship. This is more akin to the Porsche factory program than a standard

works team. By sticking to their strong principals of innovation, quality and reliability J.A.S. has established itself as a global leader of race preparation for Hondas. Their commitment to racing Hondas is so strong that when Honda decided to pull out of touring car racing to focus on their JGTC and F1 programs, J.A.S. decided to continue on with an independently developed touring car to fly the Honda Flag.

Next we discuss a fully developed OEM tuner car, the Nissan Micra 350SR. Although the name Nissan might fool you into thinking that this car is produced in Japan, this vehicle has been designed, developed, produced and sold in the UK, not in Japan. The Micra 350SR is the perfect marriage between the UK's "hot hatch" obsession and JDM tuning strategies. This Micra has been truly transformed from demure to demonic under the hands of the Brits. It all began when two Micras were sent to Ray Mallock Limited of Britain to gestate. This decision isn't surprising as RML had developed a good relationship with Nissan, running their R90C at LeMans in 1990 and their BTCC Primeras in the late '90s.

The Micra Rs that came out of RML's womb had been transformed from tame commuters into wild track machines with four cylinder race engines and straight cut gears in their sequential transmissions. Ultimately the car was later revised to be more daily driving friendly yet equally devastating. The final form of the Micra 350SR sees a Nismo modified 350Z engine placed in the rear of the car, mated to an Altima SE-R six speed transmission which sends all 310 horses to the rear wheels. Nissan battle graphics lifted from their JGTC vehicles

JDM is no longer determined by a 'Made in Japan' sticker, it has evolved into something far bigger.

adorn the body while Rays wheels and Brembo brakes fill the new blistered fenders. The Micra 350SR carries JDM spirit consigned by Nissan themselves, yet the car itself proudly represents the UK.

There are countless examples that represent the global interpretation of JDM, but hopefully the WR1C, J.A.S. and the 350SR all give a good taste of the world's JDM fusion cuisine. JDM is no longer determined by a "Made in Japan" sticker, it is a philosophy reflected by tuners and enthusiasts from all corners of the world. In fact, sometimes, because of cultural and economical circumstances, tuners outside Japan are able to be even more intensely focused on JDM principles than their Japanese counterparts. With this column perhaps we've blurred the boundaries of JDM further, but consider that with the added confusion comes added potential. After all, the entire world can represent JDM interests and as such, the possibilities for innovations and breakthroughs that stay true to our underlying interests can spawn from anywhere at anytime. So next time you look to *Option Magazine* or *RevSpeed* to draw inspiration for your project, consider looking at other global tuning magazines to expand your creative possibilities. ■

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Tanner Foust
ATLANTA FORMULA 'D' CHAMP

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 550 West Artesia Blvd., Compton, CA 90220
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