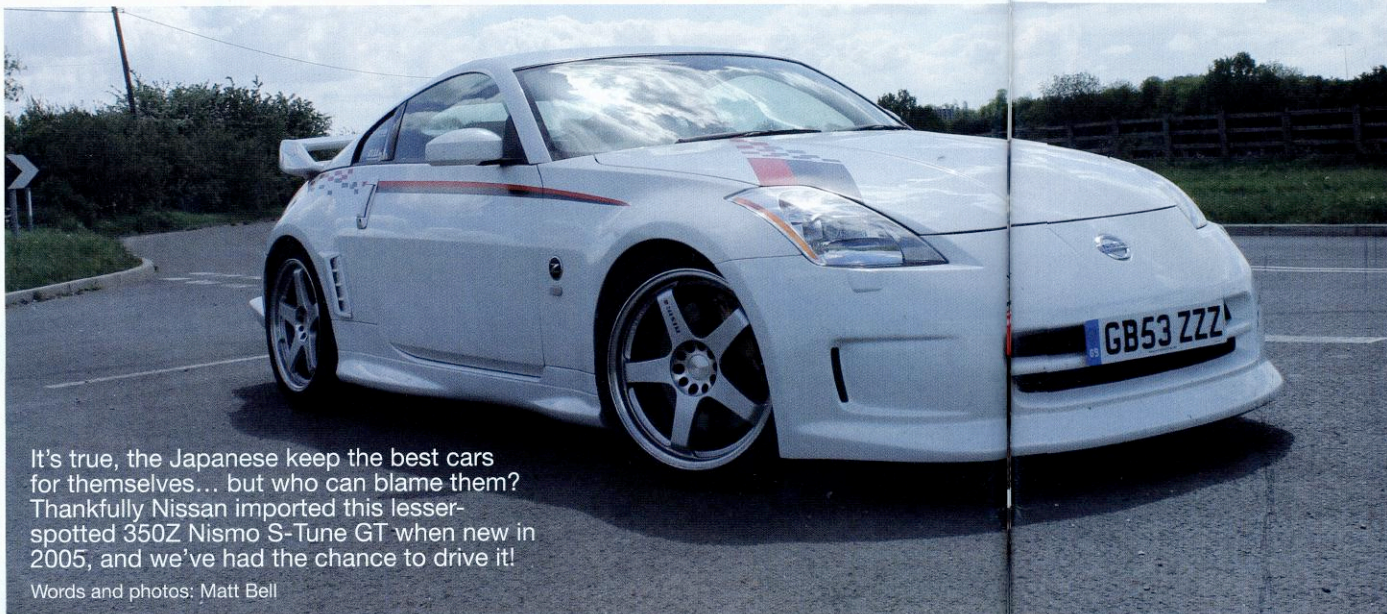


# NISSAN 350Z NISMO S-TUNE GT



It's true, the Japanese keep the best cars for themselves... but who can blame them? Thankfully Nissan imported this lesser-spotted 350Z Nismo S-Tune GT when new in 2005, and we've had the chance to drive it!

Words and photos: Matt Bell

When it comes to the Z range, Datsun/Nissan has always delivered on producing a spectacular sports car. We know how brilliant the 350Z is, Midge has just spent the last 8 months or so building one to give away... or mostly razing one around taking his sweet time bolting on the parts (I can't deny that - Midge). We've driven a number of variants, both stock and modified, but never one quite like this. I even wasn't aware this car existed! Still, good relations with Nissan's press team and a twist of the arm to find out just what they've got locked away in a hanger revealed the Nismo S-Tune GT. If you don't know what it is then here's a breakdown of the changes they made to the regular 350.

It was built by Nissan and Nismo to celebrate winning the 2004 GT500 Touring Car championship and was only sold in Japan. In fact, this is the only known car in the UK. Nismo set to work attaching every available part it made to produce a

specific vehicle honed for both road driving pleasure and performance on the track.

The clutch was replaced with a Nismo high performance version, although it's still good in operation with a nice weight to the press. The differential was replaced with a Nismo LSD to better cope with the slight increase in torque. The suspension system is their G-Attack variant which drops the ride height by 20mm.

Instead of the regular-optional RAYS wheels, the alloys are now 8.5x19-inches at the front, and 9.5x19-inches at the rear (so a slight increase in width). They also adopted a road version of the LM GT4 race car wheel design. Each alloy is a one-piece forged rim, and they are apparently 10% lighter than the 'lightweight' RAYS option.

The seats are now Alcantara bucket seats embossed with 'Nismo' just in case you forgot that you weren't in a regular 350. And, while the engine is the S1 version, it receives the full Nismo treatment to give it 300bhp, not to mention an exhaust loud enough to make the big V6 truly sing.

Nismo high-lift camshafts help improve intake and exhaust efficiency, and a carbon air duct with a much larger air filter improves airflow, and makes a lovely sucky-sucky sound.

The biggest change, though, is the body kit. Designed to replicate the GT500 race car, the front is 180mm longer, the rear 135mm longer; and this is said to hugely improve the overall aerodynamics. It's all a bit Marmite, I quite the look of it in person, although I can understand why some may think it's completely OTT. The wing is a double-spoiler, which is said to improve high-speed stability; it's also adjustable for those wanting to flex their spanners...



## Let's Go For A Hoon...

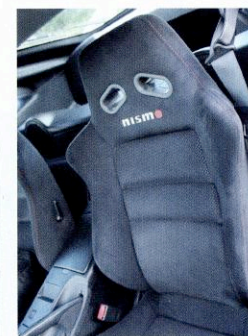
Engage first, drop the clutch and pin the throttle, the standard thing to do in a Z, right? This S-Tune hooks up brilliantly from the line, the Nismo LSD does a great job of distributing the power to the rear wheels, and you get going with just a hint of slip. The sound is tremendous, the Nismo exhaust just heightens the intensity of the V6 engine more than enough to turn heads and make people realise this is no ordinary car.

Power delivery is beautifully linear (all the clichés, eh? - Midge), it irons out the regular flat spot in torque through the mid-range and pulls with much more urgency towards the red; it ultimately feels quicker, sharper, more focused than the regular 350Z, which has been brought about by a tweak to the engine's map... it really is amazing what a spot of computer-fettling can do these days.

The best part is the way it reacts in corners. The steering is precise and accurate but its the rear that comes alive and helps to bring smiles. Once the front end has bitten into the road, a dab of the throttle brings the rear into play. It's easy to control, almost as if it has a failsafe mode to keep you in control. It's not overpowered, and those looking to drive a RWD car for the first time would feel comfortable pressing on.

I'm not entirely sure how functional the body kit is from behind the driver's seat, in all honesty it doesn't feel that much more stable at speed than a regular Z. It's difficult to notice, if at all, when driving on the road as you can't physically travel at the speeds necessary to pick up on the improvements. I suppose on a fast-flowing circuit like Silverstone the wing would aid downforce through the corners, but it's difficult to say.

The countless number of improvements that Nismo has made to this 350Z has ultimately resulted in a car that you feel should have been offered on a wider scale and not just left in Japan. I can't help but feel that a 350Z Nismo, much like the 370Z Nismo has been marketed, would have been the perfect introduction to the UK. Offering that vehicle (perhaps with the body kit being optional) would have increased Nissan's brand as it moved away from the Skyline. What I will say is that this is probably the best iteration of the 350Z family, built for far more grunt than 300bhp. But you don't really need more than what it offers here - I'd argue it's at its best in this purist form.



## FAST FACTS

■ In total, there were 14 changes to the engine in order to produce the increase in power safely. It seems like overkill, but the strengthening of the engine allows you to drive hassle free for a lifetime.

■ Only one example is thought to be in the UK, with only 20 examples built per month by hand in 2005.

■ Special Nismo boot struts had to be designed and made to go with the car as the increased weight of the spoiler was too much for the regular struts to hold. As a result, two metal pieces hold the boot up but have to manually placed in and out. Inconvenient while doing the weekly shop as you hold the boot up with your head to save time.

■ On the underside of the boot, a Japanese logo indicates how to properly store golf clubs in the back of the 350Z. It might seem strange but mostly all Japanese cars have to be able to store golf clubs, a popular sport in Japan and a huge marketing tool.



## ROAD TEST NISSAN 350Z NISMO S-TUNE GT



### Get Yours

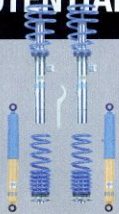
As mentioned, with only one in the UK, chances of finding one for sale is pretty much impossible. It sold in small numbers in Japan, so again, if you thought about shipping one over you'll be hard pushed to find one there too.

With that in mind, what you could do is buy an early 350Z and build your own Nismo version. You can buy reasonable Zs for £5000 to £8000; buying Nismo parts is usually an expensive business though, although you can find similar products that are priced more competitively to give your Z the added edge. \*



### POTENTIAL

While the 350Z in stock form is good, we know that when subtle differences are added, it turns it into an absolutely brilliant car. Here are some suggestions on how you build your own 'Nismo' 350.



#### >>> SUSPENSION

While Nismo uses its own G-Attack system, why not opt for a Bilstein B14 suspension setup? These guys are known for producing razor sharp suspension that doesn't compromise on comfort. The 35mm drop in ride height isn't ridiculous either, and offers a strong purposeful look. These retail at just under £700. [www.bilstein.com](http://www.bilstein.com)



#### >>> EXHAUST

The exhaust that Nismo uses is built by Weldena and comes in at £1500; possibly too expensive? In that case give Japspeed a shout for an amazing-looking system that will produce a strong tone. Their K4 exhaust costs around £499 and will bag you loads more grunt, especially if you add a couple of sports cats. [www.japspeed.co.uk](http://www.japspeed.co.uk)



#### >>> STYLING

One important thing about anything Nismo, is looking like it's Nismo. The guys at Tarmac Sportz can sort you out with all manner of Nismo-style body parts, including this awesome quality front lip. In fact, we loved that one so much, we put it on our very own giveaway 350Z. At 110-quid it's a bargain too! [www.tarmacportz.co.uk](http://www.tarmacportz.co.uk)



#### >>> FORCED INDUCTION

OK, so you may not have a genuine Nismo, but there's one sure-fire way of blowing all the real ones into the weeds, and that's with the big, bad AAM twin turbo kit you'll find here in the UK at Torqen. It's true it'll cost you the best part of 10-big ones, but the 600-bhp or so that you'll get is worth every penny! [www.torqen.uk](http://www.torqen.uk)



# TORQEN

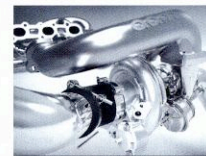
supercharge your passion for cars

TORQEN specialises in Japanese performance car parts, offering the most comprehensive selection of modifying and OEM parts in the UK. Our aim is to provide unrivalled customer service, while continuing to build an ever-growing collection of parts for the Japanese market.



#### EXHAUSTS

full systems, decats, high flow cats



#### TURBO KITS

twin turbo kits in RHD and LHD



#### BRAKES

big brake kits, discs, pads, lines



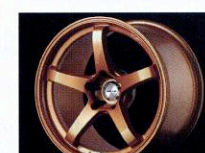
#### STYLING

sport seats, gear knobs, lighting



#### COOLING

radiators, hoses, oil coolers, fans



#### WHEELS

alloys, spacers, caps, lug nuts

**0% APR finance available for orders over £300 and up to £25,000**

TORQEN is an Authorised Distributor for some of the biggest names in the Japanese Performance car parts market: AAM Competition, Greddy Performance Parts, StopTech, Ohlins, Vortech Engineering, ARK Performance, Stillen, Tanabe, SSR, COBB, Braum Racing, SprintBooster, Oracle Lighting, SoulFunction, SuperPro, Voodoo13, Air Lift, AccuAir, C.J. Motorsport, RaceSeng, SPL Parts, Treadstone, VMR Wheels, Cosmis Racing, Fortune Auto, Girodisc, Ferrada Wheels, NWP Engineering, GrimmSpeed, Pandem RocketBunny, Vertex, Sikky, Sprintex, Trust Power Japan, Mishimoto, Cosco and many more. Check our website for a complete list of products we offer: [www.torqen.uk](http://www.torqen.uk)

