

THE REAL JDM

FM + GT-R = Hybrid Future

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BY BEN SCHAFFER (WWW.BULLETPROOFAUTOMOTIVE.COM)

ONE OF THE oldest techniques used by tuners for building a fast car is doing an engine swap. Whether in the US or in Japan, engine swaps have been done for ages and offer reliable horsepower that a standard engine often is incapable of producing. Back in the 60s and 70s when American muscle cars ruled supreme, American manufacturers offered engine swapped cars straight from the dealership. Times have changed and today if you were to ask a modern car manufacturer like Nissan about the possibility of it happening again they'd probably just laugh. Yet without Nissan intending it, they are actually laying down the groundwork for a very exciting future of hybrid tuning. This future will undoubtedly yield some of the most exciting swapped creations ever imagined. The future

is called FM.

Nissan, under the direction of their cost conscious President Carlos Ghosn, created the modular FM chassis to keep production costs to a minimum. The FM chassis serves as the foundation for an increasing number of Nissan/Infiniti vehicles including: G35 (Skyline) Sedan and Coupe, 350Z (Fairlady Z), Murano, FX35/45, and the new M35/M45 (Fuga). Most importantly for us, Nissan has said that the 2007 Skyline GT-R will also use the FM chassis in its G35 Coupe configuration.

The previous Skyline GT-R shared its platform with only the Skyline Coupe, Skyline Sedan and Stagea Wagon, reducing the possibility for a wide range of swappable vehicles. Now that the next generation

GT-R shares a platform with cars that fit into the category of VIP 4-doors and SUVs, the possibility of aftermarket tweaked GT-R VIP cars and GT-R off-roaders is not as crazy as it may sound.

But let's not get ahead of ourselves, the GT-R won't be here until 2007. Like many of us, GT-R tuning legend Smoky Nagata of Top Secret was also not happy waiting until 2007 to drive the next GT-R. Instead of waiting, Smoky built his own GT-R using the future GT-R's closest sibling, the V35 Skyline Coupe (G35 Coupe). Hard-core tuners like Smoky have been disappointed with the announcement that the next GT-R will use a V6 variation of the VQ35 engine. According to Smoky, "The V6 doesn't have the same aggressive engine tone as the previous RB26DETT and it also has



Signal Auto's V35 Skyline Coupe sports a highly tuned SR20DET engine from a Silvia. With Signal Auto's SR tuning prowess, expect this light weight car to persuade other FM chassis owners to also change to the smaller 4-cylinder for increased power and decreased weight. For more information visit www.signalauto.com or call 310-787-0505.



In January 2005 Ings+1 became the first to produce aero parts for the Nissan Fuga (M45 in North America). Available in Ings+1's unique Hybrid Aero construction, this durable kit creates an even more classy look for the latest sporty VIP car from Japan. Although this 4-door looks more suave than intimidating, with the current motor swap possibilities you'll never know what engine lurks beneath this beauty. For more information visit www.ingsusa.com or call 310 327 4676.



The ORC/Top Secret D1GP Fairlady Z uses the classic RB26DETT to deliver reliable high horsepower while going sideways. Amazingly, Top Secret has installed the RB further back and lower in the engine bay than the stock VQ engine. With excellent weight distribution and over 700hp coming from a mildly tuned RB, expect this Z to do extremely well in the D1GP for 2005. For more information visit www.oguraclutch.co.jp.



Top Secret's V35 GT-R engine bay can impress even the most jaded enthusiast. Pushing over 800hp with a twin turbo V8, the car's debut gave Top Secret top honors at the Tokyo Auto Salon. Next up for the car, Top Secret plans to tackle Tsukuba Circuit and the time attack record book while retaining a full interior and upgraded I.C.E. For more information visit www.topsecretjpn.com or call 310-327-4602.

reduced potential for high horsepower tuning." Rather than listening to the diminutive sound of the V6 engine struggling as he blasts down the wangan, Smoky went for the ultimate in muscle, a one-off VK45DETT V8 engine based on the VK45DE, which is found as factory equipment in the Infiniti Q45 and FX45. The Top Secret GT-R puts out over 800hp and has a rumble that no V6 will ever offer. While the

VK45 is a difficult swap, it is possible because the Infiniti FX45 also shares the same FM chassis and comes stock with the V8.

At the opposite end of the spectrum, Signal Auto in Japan recently built a G35 Coupe powered by a SR20DET engine from a Silvia. As odd as it may sound, many tuners find the 4-cylinder SR turbo engines easier to extract big horsepower from than the V6 VQ engine.

Being a smaller engine than the V6, the 4-cylinder swap also allows for a more rearward engine placement which improves weight distribution and ultimately handling.

It doesn't stop there, Top Secret has also swapped the RB26DETT from the previous GT-R into many FM chassis cars including two twin Pikes Peak competition Zs. These fine examples leave us with four excellent high



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performance engine swap options for FM chassis vehicles: SR20DET, RB26DETT, VK45DE and the upcoming V6 GT-R engine.

In the late 90s, a limited release version of the Nissan Stagea in Japan called the Autech RS260 gave lucky owners the opportunity to drive a GT-R powered wagon. Now with ambitious tuners on the loose, it may not be long before you see an Infiniti M45 or a Nissan Murano with a crazy engine swap doing things that you thought were not possible in a luxury 4-door or SUV package. If you're lucky enough to have one blast by you on the freeway, take a split second to listen and try to guess which engine they've chosen to swap into their ride.

Look for next month's The Real JDM as Ben brings more cutting-edge industry insider knowledge from Japan to Modified's pages. ■■■

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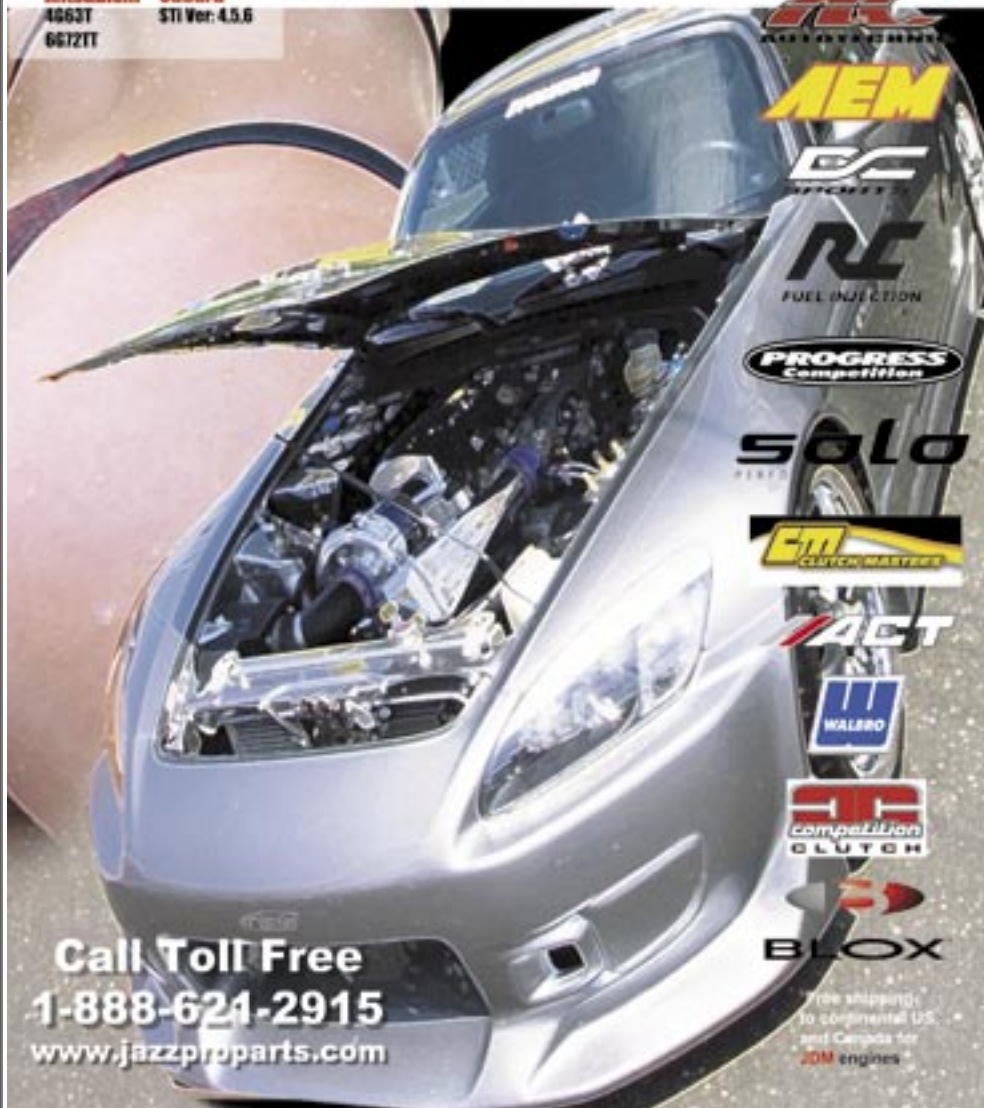
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