

# The Real Tokyo Auto Salon 2006



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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.

Every year in January worshippers make the pilgrimage to the Tokyo Auto Salon at the Makuhari Messe Convention Center to witness first-hand the Mecca of JDM tuning. This annual gathering brings the most devout enthusiasts to witness the birth of new iconic creations produced by the gods of tuning.

While the magic of TAS really has to be experienced first-hand to appreciate the sheer importance and enormity of the show, this column will attempt to introduce you to the newest trends and creations unveiled at TAS for the first time, all from an industry insider's perspective.

In no particular order, we begin with the continued evolution of the VIP tuning scene in Japan. The Ultra VIP tuning sect was treated to new offerings by Fabulous in the form of the incredible new Ferrari 430 Modena kit, a new Benz S Class kit and a new Lexus GS350 kit. Also throwing their hat into the VIP tuning ring was Vertex whose Vertice

Design luxury line introduced aero parts for the BMW 7 series. BMW aero tuning, which has often been overlooked, saw not only the release of the Vertice kit but also a 6 Series kit by Wald this year. Lastly, Wald brought out its new Bentley GT aero kit, continuing their trend of introducing a new exotic car every year at TAS.

DAMD who has been gradually climbing the ranks to aero styling notoriety last year successfully bridged the gap between Ultra VIP tuning and sports tuning by taking Aston Martin-esque bumper and grille styling and applying it to the 350Z, creating a kit and look that has had many people buzzing. This year, DAMD curiously applied the same concept to a surprising donor car, the new '06 Miata. Although I personally wouldn't dare think of morphing an Aston Martin and a Miata together, somehow it turned out quite amazingly. DAMD also showed off its custom car building prowess with amazing bespoke interiors for both their Miata and 350Z demo cars. The quality of the leather and craftsmanship is unlike anything I've seen applied

to Japanese sports car tuning. Along the same lines, Robson Leather also highlighted their dominance in custom crafted interiors with their superb 350Z demo car - the interior left people drooling.

Volk introduced more unique rim finishes that attracted many people. Mastering how to use exclusivity as a marketing tool, Volk introduced new candy coated finishes at TAS this year that continued along the theme of last year's bright red candy coated wheels seen on the Vertex Soarer. This time, it came in the form of bright gold wheels on multiple Top Secret demo cars. The emotion of wanting is a painful thing and Volk has poured salt in our wounds by saying that these candy coated finishes will not be available to the public and are only for use on a limited number of sponsored demo cars in Japan. Another unique finish introduced at TAS is called "ion plating" and gives the look of a burnt titanium gradation, essentially a rainbow like effect, on the outer lip of the rim. The good news is that this finish may someday be offered to the public on all Rays Wheels



utilizing a stainless steel outer lip.

The FD3S RX-7 continues to be one of the most versatile cars to re-sculpt, this year seeing yet another interesting set of remixes. Any JDM fan will know that RE Amemiya loves to put Porsche headlamps on the FD3S, but this year Fujita Engineering took it a step further by putting TYR headlamps onto their FD. The outcome was a whole new amazing look for the RX-7. Tamon Designs also brought out their entirely reworked FD roadster utilizing their \$20,000+ complete widebody to make an FD undistinguishable from the original yet more exotic in every way. These modifications make use of the common belief that the FD is an amazing platform that deserves to be continued, and until the next RX-7 is released, tuners are clearly happy with taking the old base and refreshing the look into something more modern.

For me there were two "shockers" at the show. One was ORC's award-winning twin charged 350Z sporting twin HKS turbos, an ORC supercharger, and using a Top Secret long nose widebody with a wild custom hood to house the massive supercharger unit. The engine bay would elicit a "WTF?" from any English speaking gaijin who saw

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it. The second car that blew me away was the Garage Kagotani widebody BNR34 GT-R. Its massive Super GT inspired widebody, beautiful Rays Wheels with that new ion plating finish, and an ultra professional tuning job worthy of potentially record setting time attack laps made it one of the most impressive and well-rounded tuner cars at the show. I also must mention that after seeing the completed ASM dry carbon widebody S2000 in person, I can report that the car is flawless in every aspect and was my favorite car of the show.

Top Secret exhibited perhaps the most demo cars (seven if you really need to know) and also some of the most talked-about demo cars at TAS. Their new "Mecha Tuned" R32 GT-R was on proud display to show off Top Secret's new 6 throttle setup and NA tuning skills of the 350Z's VQ35DE engine. In a controversial move, the RB engine was replaced

with the VQ, putting out a naturally aspirated 350 horsepower to all four wheels and offering improved throttle response when compared to the RB. The car featured a trick air intake routing into the individual throttle bodies that is unlike anything I've ever seen and far too complicated to put into words here. The interior utilized Robson leather on everything including the roll cage, continued Top Secret's trend started on their legendary 212 MPH V35 GT-R; Street legal race cars with luxury interior amenities. Other notable cars included a new long nose kitted non widebody 350Z and their two-year-old 350Z widebody refreshed and now using six ITBs in conjunction with a unique carbon fiber induction box linking up to a new twin turbo kit.

If Auto Salon continues to act as the barometer for the JDM tuning scene, then it looks like the development of more functional aerodynamics, more widebody kits, more carbon fiber, more titanium, and more street legal tuning are all a sure thing in our future.

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