



THE BEST LOOKING JAPANESE COUPES

So there was this debate the other day over at the SHIFT desk on a list of top ten Japanese coupes which are bound to catch your attention. You know, look away from the mundane everyday things and focus your gaze on these machines, which dribble elegance, sportiness, flamboyance or eccentricity.

TOYOTA 2000GT

The star of the 1967 James Bond flick You Only Live Twice is a star of our hearts too- the Toyota 2000GT is a true reflection of Japanese collectible that are auctioned at over \$1,200,000 these days. Pop-up headlamps on a long nose, minimum front and rear bumpers, smooth flowing coke bottle styling, Yamaha engineering and a very low roofline are all it takes to make this a classic.



MAZDA COSMO SERIES L10

The original Mazda Cosmo is reminiscent of the old Koreisha mark, a teardrop sticker placed on vehicles driven by senior citizen in Japan. The hard top meets the long, slender rear trunk that slithers down with two small brake lamps divided by a chrome bumper. From the front, a lot of us will mistake it to be a Datsun 240Z because of the perspex covered front lamps, but it was readied in 1967, two years before the "Lady turned Fair".

DATSUN 240ZG S30

Like the HachiRoku, the Fairlady 240Z is also a Japanese cult classic, thanks to the popular anime Wangan Midnight. The masculine rear hunch, short buttress and a long shark nose are the unmistakable signature design cues of the 240Z. Retro-modifications with stretched tyres on Watanabes and over fenders make a beautiful car prettier. Only if the designers thought of this during the 70s, then the world would've had gotten the S30s with these as factory options. Drool factor. The Japanese spec 240 ZG, with a streamlined nose and Ferrari 250 GTO-esque headlights is probably one of the best-looking cars ever made and is ultra-rare as well.



NISSAN 300ZX TURBO Z33

Back to back Nissans? They deserve it. In 1990, the Z32 300ZX was acclaimed with "Good design Award" by Motor Trend magazine followed by Automobile magazine's nomination of "20 Greatest Cars of the Past 20 years" and the "25 Most Beautiful Cars in History" and couple of years later GQ magazine's "The most stylish cars of the past 50 years". The Z32 has a timeless appeal that most modern day sports coupes don't have. True, it looks a lot like a 80s Pontiac Firebird, but let's be honest- it is not a Firebird. The T-top, sloping C pillar, clear lens integrated front lamps and the powerful twin turbo V6 makes it one of our favourites.

NISSAN SILVIA S15

We wouldn't be doing justice if we don't talk of the drift-friendly Silvia S15 here. Most cars have particular angles in which they look splendid, but the S15 has no such angles; no matter from which perspective you choose to look at the car, it is jaw dropping pretty. It looks good in almost every colour you throw at it, from pearl whites to the zany shades of purple and pink favoured by Japanese street drifters. The S15's raked front and svelte profile makes it a uniquely elegant yet aggressive machine.



ISUZU 117 COUPE

The name Giorgetto Giugiaro means a lot to the automotive world. For the noobs, he is the famous Italian designer who inked out iconic cars such as DeLorean DMC-12, Lotus Esprit S1, and quite a few other jaw dropping cars. He was also the first Italian designer to have designed a vehicle for a Japanese marque in 1968; and that was the Isuzu 117 coupe. It had to be exceptional in all proportions. It wins our heart with the intricate level of detailing put to the chrome bits, leather wood interior combo, and exquisitely simple bodyline with a laid-back tail. The Italian finesse of the Isuzu 117 coupe is irrefutably palpable.

LEXUS LFA

The 2000s have been dry for Japanese automotive design, coupes suffering immeasurably. But Akio Toyoda, CEO of Toyota gave the world a global icon to wow at- the Lexus LFA. It is probably the most expensive Japanese road car ever built, with an eargasmic V10 made out of aluminum and titanium and a lightweight diet shell made out of carbon fiber-reinforced polymer (CFRP). The LFA body features sharp edges and cutoffs for improved down force and aerodynamic performance. The unconventional rear wing incorporates a Gurney Flap that deploys at higher speeds. The space age design was based on the principle of "form follows function", yet the outcome being aesthetically astounding.



HONDA NSX

We are jumping eras, but it is worth it. The second on the list has to be the Honda NSX, as it redefines timeless automobile design. The sleek Honda supercar was the car of choice of F1 legend Ayrton Senna. He himself helped Honda to develop it - cornering and handling characteristics were improved substantially after developmental inputs from Senna. It made the NSX one of the fastest lap holders of the 'Ring. After a decade of conceptualization, Honda has finally come up with a new NSX, which is not doing the original proper justice. Fifty years from now, and the original NSX will still be the Asian Countach for kids.



MAZDA RX7 FD3S

A beautiful Japanese car list will be incomplete without Mazda's FD RX-7. The designers gave both the pop-up lamp and the face-lifted lens lamp version a good shot of aggression, which accentuates the power they pack underneath the hood. The 13B wankel turbo motor is also a modern revolution in automotive engines. The roofline of this beautiful piece of art is bulged out on the sides and caved in at the centre, the glass sunroof moulded to take the form where the metal does not. The uniquely sculpted side mirrors serve both aesthetics and aerodynamics, cutting air and sending it through the rear hunches. The designer's obsession with aerodynamics is quite obvious with the FD.



TOYOTA MR2 SW20

A poor man's Ferrari (F355) - that's what it is. SW20 MR2 is a haven of curves, lines and scoops blending in the most proportionate manner to form an aerodynamic eye candy with a punch- it is a perfect RR layout coupe for heaps of fun. We fancy the targa top turbo model (which we featured last year on SHIFT). elegant yet aggressive machine.



Now this piece is going to raise a lot of eyebrows and question the SHIFT desk's sanity. There is no mention of the Supra or any of the Skyline GTRs here. That's because we aren't discussing performance abilities here. Supras, Skylines and plentiful other Japanese coupes are out there which pack serious performance potential but at the same time carries an aura of controversy- some like the R32 more than the R34. We take the R35 to be voluptuous and the JZA80 Supra to be awesome in plenty of ways, but not in the good looks book. I wanted to vote the Mitsuoka Orochi, but the whole team resented (and with reason, a car shouldn't pretend to be a diseased fish- editor).

WORDS: MAHBUB HUSSAIN

COLLECTIBLES



M2'S MOPAR GLORY

You can't go wrong with a set of '70 Challengers. This particular Mopar is one of the most storied and sought after muscle cars of the psychedelic era. It was made for a short time meaning pristine condition cars are rare and hence high dollar. Or Yen. Or Saudi Gold Bars, depending where you live.

What you can have are any variety of scale models. We've featured the Greenlight 1:18 before. And here's the smaller 1:24 version from M2 with a guest appearance by some 1:64 set pieces.

The M2 is well built, has very accurately detailed parts and has a solid heft that makes it give off an impression of high quality. Which it actually is for this particular 1:24 scale. Every panel opens the way they should, wheels turn with the steering and engine compartment comes with heater tubing and decals for added realism. Best of all, the doors are hinged to open INSIDE the fender like the real car instead of the typical way where doors hinge completely outwards. It's all about the little things.

If you've got an interesting car or an entire collection you want showcased here, mail us shift@thedailystar.net or message us on Facebook.

WORDS AND PHOTOS: EHSANUR RAZA RONNY

NEW KIDS IN THE YARD

Trio of supercars get ready to battle it out in the jail yard. Here be their dog-tags.



INCARCERATED: 2016

NAME: Acura NSX

NUMBERS: 550+ HP

CHARGES: Speeding ticket, powered by 3.5 litre twin turbo V6 and three-electric motor. Attempted murder via tuggish looks and LED stare. Rep sheet includes threats of attempted dismemberment of Ferrari 488 GTB. Proceed with extreme caution, connections with Yakuza reported but unconfirmed. Likes to slay enemies with hunting knives and not katanas, eschewing the stereotypes.

INCARCERATED:

2016

NAME:

Lamborghini

Aventador

LP750-4 SV Roadster

NUMBERS:

750 HP, 509 lb-ft

torque



CHARGES: Throwing the planet out of rotation permanently using a 6.5 litre V12. Accused of being a legendary bull-whisperer, having the ability to mind control angry bulls into skewering its enemies in the gut. Threats to rival Italian mafia don, Ferrari Automobili, confirmed and in records. Prone to discarding tops and showing off loudly.



INCARCERATED: 2016

NAME: McLaren 675LT "Longtail"

NUMBERS: 666 HP, 516lb-ft torque

CHARGES: British mobster, weapon of choice is a 3.8-litre twin-turbocharged V8. Has several siblings and they all look alike with varying degrees of aggression, making it hard to keep track of who does what. Nicknamed "Longtail" after its predecessor, McLaren F1. Approach with extreme caution, known to collect scalps of Audis, Lamborghinis and Ferraris.