

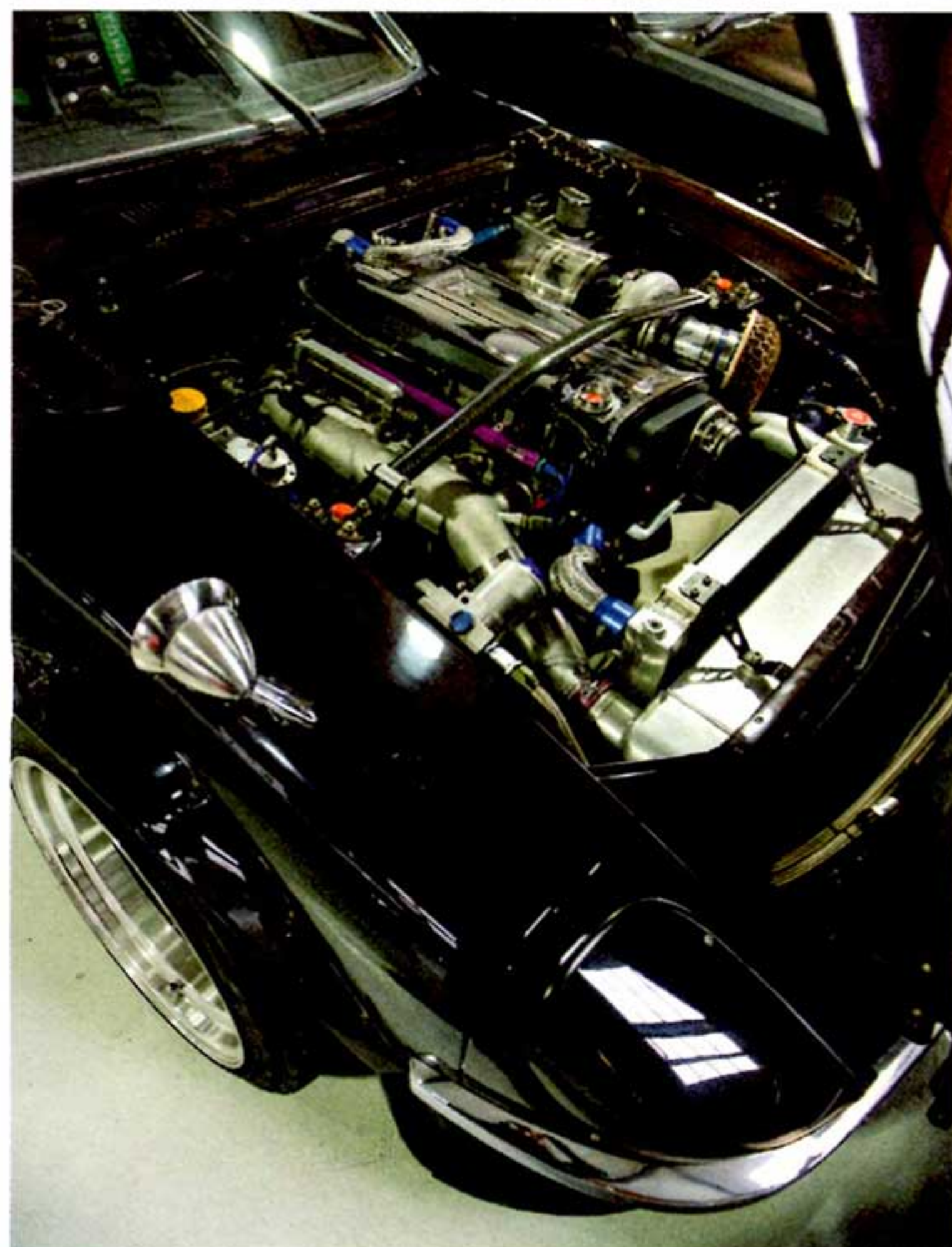
rocky auto.

OKAZAKI JAPAN
Interview & Photography *Luke Ray*



Yoshiya Watanabe founded renowned Japanese tuning workshop Rocky Auto. Watanbe-san is well known for his performance upgrades and engine swaps for classic Japanese cars. Watanbe-san was kind enough to spend a short amount of time with me at his new premises on the outskirts of Nagoya during a recent visit. I grabbed a few shots on-site, and managed a short interview, despite the language barrier preventing us from getting into too much detail.





How did your career in the car industry begin?
I launched Rocky Auto after working for some time at the Toyota Motor engineering department.

What was your plan for the business?
The revival of Japanese old cars.

Which cars did you start to collect?
Skyline Hakosuka, Kenmeri, Fairlady 240ZG.

What is your work goal/ethic?
It is to make a car that delights our customers.

What modifications do you do to the cars?
We modify older Japanese cars to enable them to keep up with contemporary performance cars. For example, a modern Toyota 1UZ V8 engine transplant, automatic air conditioning, power steering, brake strengthening, underbody changes. As well as the engine swap, we tune them up to maximise the power output. By reinforcing the frame of an older car, we further modernise it and allow it to reliably handle the increase in power.

What do you love about this kind of work?
I love to make older cars run faster!

What are you working on at the moment?
I am working on a Toyota 2000GT, the 'Rocky Hybrid Vehicle'. There is a demand for such a car from wealthy Japanese enthusiasts.

How has Japanese car culture changed in the last 10 years? Are there new trends and fashions now?
I have seen a strong revival of the Japanese older cars such as Skylines, Fairlady Zs, Toyota 2000GTs.

Do you only create projects for yourself, or do customers come to you with ideas?
I specifically work on Skylines, Fairlady Zs and Toyota 2000GTs. That's the world that I am in. If someone wants this kind of car, then they may come to me.

What are your future plans for the Rocky Auto business?
To improve customer satisfaction and deliver a quality product to the customer. 🇯🇵

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