

# PERFORMANCE imports

No. 132

BUYING  
USED:  
HOW TO AVOID  
THE TRAPS  
SAVE  
\$\$

EXPOSED!  
75 MODS  
YOU CAN DO  
WITHOUT

100%  
JAPAN  
INSIDE

475HP EVO WEAPON  
AUSTRALIA'S BEST 300Z  
220HP PIT ROAD M K-CAR  
850HP PHOENIX'S POWER R3  
SPOON'S CR-Z SHOCKS US

# Nu-Retro

ROCKY AUTO CARBON S30 ATMO RB26/30

TOP 10 IMPORTS WE DIDN'T GET  
MODELS THAT MISSED THE BOAT

No. 132  
A\$9.95 (inc. GST)  
NZ\$9.95 (inc. GST)  
US\$9.95 / CAN\$9.95



With little in the way of mufflers or filters  
the sound is nothing short of amazing

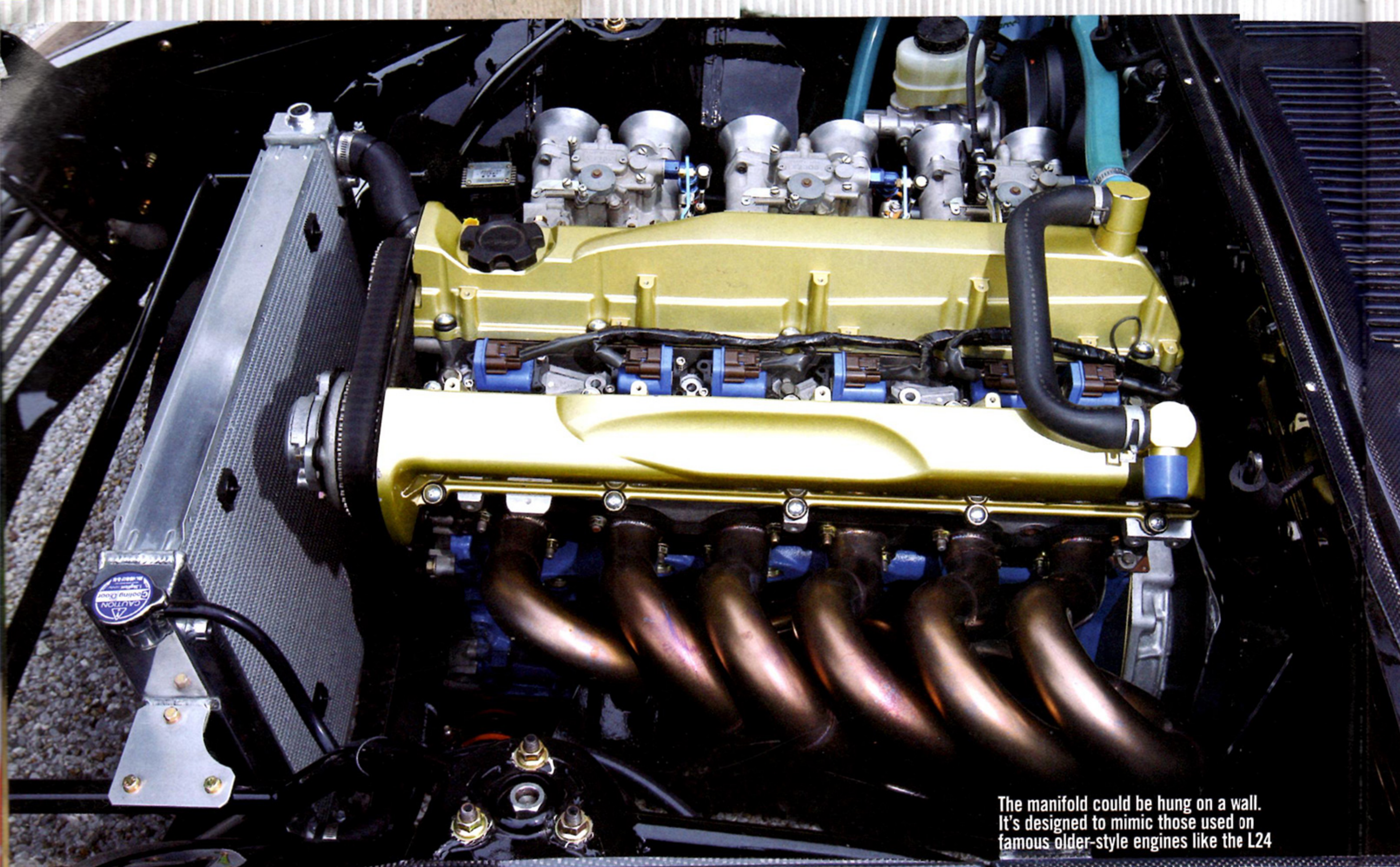


# Carb Diet

We give in. Rocky Auto's dry-carbon, carb'd  
RB26/30 masterpiece is the greatest Z in existence

Words and pics: Dino Dalle Carbonare





The manifold could be hung on a wall. It's designed to mimic those used on famous older-style engines like the L24

## THE SOUND OF THIS RB IS SIMPLY BREATHTAKING



**E**xotic composite materials and billet aluminium would never be things one would associate with classic cars, but for Watanabe-san of Rocky Auto, these words are music to his ears. Forget your nostalgically restored old-school rides, Rocky Auto does things its own way when it comes to fixing up classics, and its latest creation raises the bar well over anything it has ever done before.

Shaving weight off was only the beginning on this dry-carbon-bodied S30 Fairlady Z. It is what lies under its ultra-light skin that will really leave most speechless. Even before the car was complete, Watanabe sent us pictures of the final stages, and we knew there and then this was one car we just couldn't pass on. So, as the final touches were literally being completed, we arrived at the Rocky Auto HQ in Okazaki ready to unleash our cameras on this one-of-a-kind carbon Z.

Most of Watanabe's projects are financed by wealthy customers who want to create their dream classic cars based on vehicles they had lusted over during their teenage years. Using modern components, be it engines, brakes or suspension links, Rocky Auto not only makes older cars more fun to drive thanks to the additional performance, but also makes them safer by allowing them to handle better and stop more efficiently.

This may be nothing short of blasphemy for those that believe that vintage machinery should never be fettled with in these ways, but you really can't ignore the coolness factor of cars of this calibre.

After the 600hp RB26-powered S30 Watanabe made for the Tokyo Auto Salon earlier in the year, he wanted to concentrate on using all of his company's expertise to create the ultimate driver's Fairlady Z. Balance was to take

over outright power to help make a car that would tantalise the senses with just the right amount of performance.

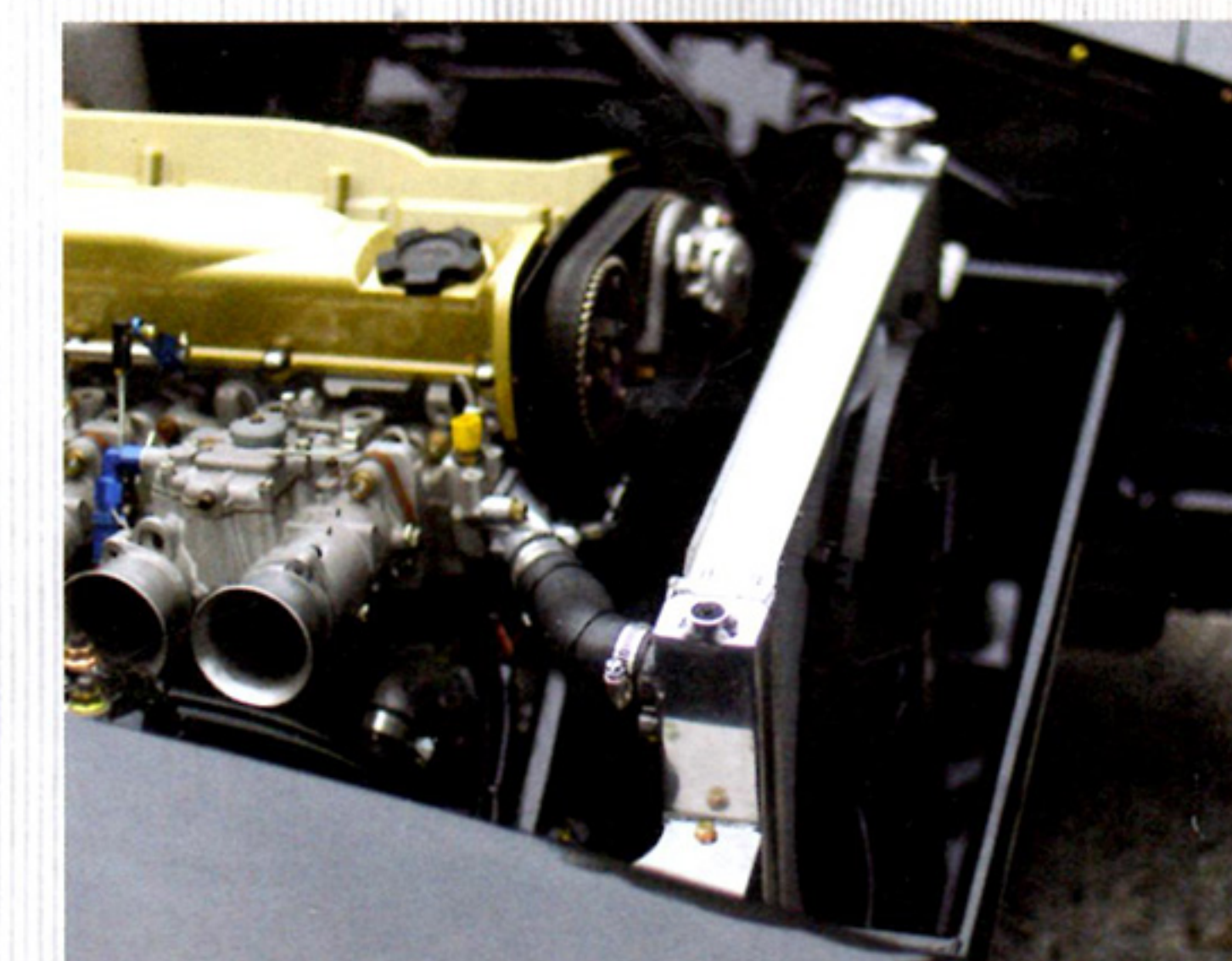
Weight-saving came courtesy of custom-made carbon body parts that replace the old, thick steel panels of the 36-year-old S30. Watanabe didn't cut any corners by using cheaper wet carbon; he had every panel moulded and subsequently formed in lightweight dry carbon, which for anyone that doesn't know, has to be vacuum-sealed and pressure-cooked in an autoclave to guarantee its rigidity.

Looking at the car head-on, there is nothing other than tantalising composite fibres to see, as the bumper, front splitter, bonnet and front fenders have all been replaced. Even the headlight bezels are dry carbon, finished off with slightly smoked acrylic covers covering the Rocky Auto projectors. Even the riveted-on over-fenders are carbon. A lot of weight was saved with the Rocky Auto dry-carbon hatch, which joins the tail-light and numberplate panel at the rear.

The roof, doors and rear fenders were left stock since they are an integral part of the chassis itself, but were wrapped in 3M carbon-look vinyl to help the rear blend in with the real carbon front end. Half of the front fenders were wrapped with the realistic-looking vinyl to help protect the delicate surface against potential stone chips.

Rocky Auto carbon mirrors and carbon rear over-fenders are the final pieces in the exterior transformation, which has kept the S30 looking very standard – except for the actual material, that is!

Since weight is just over the one-tonne mark at 1040kg, braking requirements were perfectly satisfied with a set of overhauled Nissan R32 Skyline four-pot calipers at the front and two-pots at the rear. These

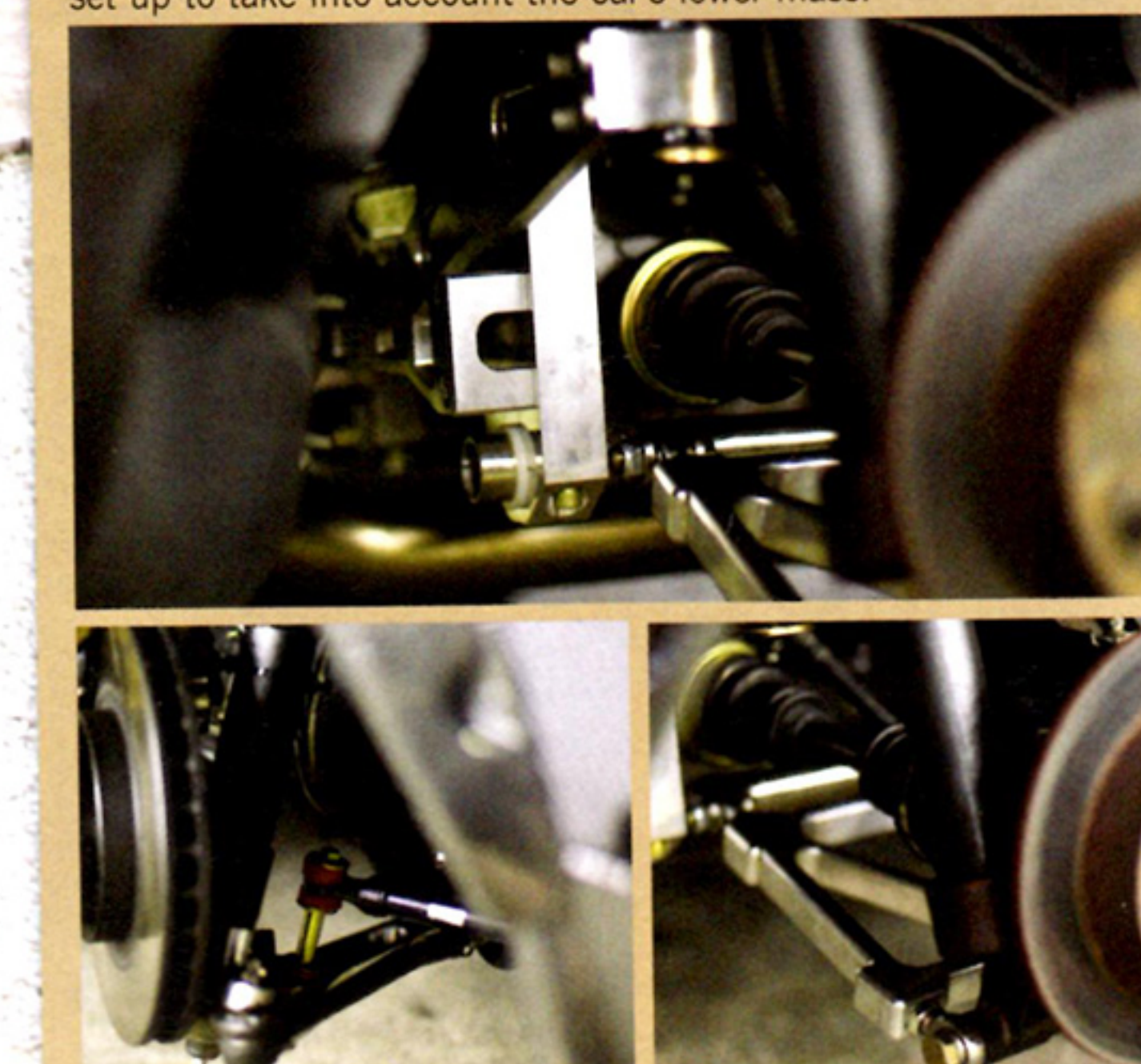


### >> SUS STUFF

Watanabe explains that for years they have been upgrading the suspension on S30s via borrowed components from Nissans like various generations of Skylines. Anything from complete sub-frames to suspension links and arms have proven to be a cheap and very effective way to inject extra feel and performance into the ageing chassis. But the carbon Z called for something far more advanced.

Watanabe had a complete custom rear sub-frame created, first carefully designed in CAD and then precision cut from billet aluminium to guarantee the best performance. This is joined by billet aluminium front and rear lower arms, and a host of other linkages that give the S30 incredible precision coupled with yet another substantial weight saving.

The front and rear roll-bars have been custom engineered into the new geometry, and all bushings are harder to eliminate any possible slack from the way the car feels. Joining these modifications are the Rocky Auto adjustable dampers, valved and especially set up to take into account the car's lower mass.



The Toyo Trancio semi-slick tyres are a great touch, as they have a very classic design about them, with an angular tread pattern and big chunky, rounded sidewalls



