

## DRIVEN: NISSAN 370Z NISMO

Nissan's 370Z NISMO brings back an intimate cabin and driving-feel missing in many of the latest sports car models

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The classic idea of the sports car as a small, rear-wheel-drive, front-engine, manual-transmission-equipped instrument of fun has been under assault for years now. Today, many sports cars are in fact grand-touring machines, even those with two-seats.

More powerful and capable of higher performance than ever, a significant number of these are also heavier and physically larger than ever. In many ways, sports cars have lost a once-defining characteristic.

The latest Z car from the Nissan's NISMO motor sport brand however, feels more like a traditional sports car than most of the competition.

Refreshed for 2015 on the heels of a 2014 revision, the 370Z NISMO features updated bodywork, including a toned-down rear spoiler, new side-sills and front and rear fascia - changes more for aesthetics than function.

Complemented by 350 horsepower and 374 Nm of torque (18 horsepower/8 Nm of torque over the standard, non-NISMO Z) from its 3.7 litre V6 via a six-speed manual transmission, it is the most fun iteration of the now sixth-generation Z.

Weighing in at 1,549 kilograms, the NISMO Z is no lightweight. Somewhat puzzling, when one considers this 370Z has an overall length shorter than many other 'sports' cars - Porsche 911, Cayman and Jaguar F-Type to name a few. Combined with the 370Z's close-quartered cockpit, it feels comparatively small.



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The NISMO Z's aural qualities aren't particularly pleasing, and the way it builds power isn't terribly exciting. Despite the marginal horsepower increase, it's no quicker than the standard car. The car's "VQ" architecture V6 has been in production since 1994, revised and retuned for applications as broad as Nissan and Renault sedans, estates and people carriers. A good engine fundamentally, but it was never designed specifically for a sports car.

Additionally, the six-speed manual has an odd mesh-point. It can be driven smoothly, but it robs performance.

On the other hand, the transmission's synchrorev-match function will be embraced by those unfamiliar with rev-matching the 'old-fashioned' way - a shame when the NISMO Z's pedals are arranged well for heel-and-toe downshifts. Braking is a strong suit, though for a track-focused car, we wonder how they would actually hold up when taken for a few laps.

The interior is cosy and comfortable. The NISMO-standard Recaro seats provide great support and there is more than enough technology in the Tech model's infotainment system for this reviewer.

Given its less than stellar drivetrain and comparatively high weight, we came away pondering why the 370Z NISMO still managed to be so enjoyable. Ultimately, our verdict for this little racer hinged upon two points.

The chassis is wonderfully rigid, with cornering a fun, confidence-inspiring affair. Additionally, the 370Z NISMO's proportions, with its intimate cabin, confers a nimble feel that is missing from many of the larger, faster sports cars we've wheeled in 2014.

Should Nissan continue to finesse this formula - a better drivetrain and weight savings without altering the proportions - the next-gen Z could be an undeniable world-beater.

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