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'70S CELICA PACKS 210BHP LEXUS LUMP



RETRO RESCUE

OFFERING CUSTOMERS A NEVER ENDING SUPPLY OF GENUINE SALVAGE PARTS GAVE SAJID MOGHAL THE OPPORTUNITY TO RAID HIS STOREROOM AND BREATHE A NEW LEASE OF LIFE INTO THIS EPIC LIFTBACK CELICA GT

WORDS: DAN FURR
PHOTOS: DAN SHERWOOD

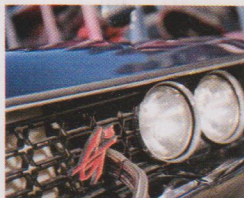
Every now and again, *Japanese Performance* has the good fortune to meet somebody involved in the modified motor scene that seems to be tirelessly assisting fellow enthusiasts with the build of their cars. During these encounters, it doesn't take long for us to start wondering what the ride of choice is for someone who spends all day getting their hands dirty on other people's projects! Thankfully, Sajid Moghal – or Saj to his mates – proprietor of Crawley-based Jap Performance Parts, was only too happy to lift the lid on what sits in his own garage.

Over the past eight years, JPP has grown from a small

family run enterprise into one of Europe's largest suppliers of OE JDM second-hand spares and tuning parts. Importing all of the cars that it dismantles or sells, Saj takes great pride in the fact that JPP items haven't suffered at the hands of the temperamental British weather. 'Loading a container full of cars and having it shipped over from Japan enables us to supply parts that haven't been in contact with UK roads or council salt spreaders,' he says. The company is also filling a gap in the market that owners seemed to be crying out for; 'People were fed up with the rot available on eBay but couldn't necessarily justify the expense of brand new







KING OF COOL
THE TA27 LIFTBACK CELICA IS UNDENIABLY COOL, ALTHOUGH WE'LL BE THE FIRST TO ADMIT THAT THE STYLING OF THE BEAST OWES MORE THAN A PASSING NOD TO THE AMERICAN MUSCLE CARS OF THE ERA. NEVERTHELESS, THE TA27 WAS RELEASED TO THE JAPANESE DOMESTIC MARKET WITH A 1.6-LITRE ENGINE IN APRIL 1973, AND MADE ITS WAY INTO WORLD-WIDE DEALERSHIPS THREE YEARS LATER. UNSURPRISINGLY, THE CAR EARNED THE NICKNAME 'JAPANESE MUSTANG' SOMEWHERE ALONG THE LINE (ALTHOUGH WHEN LOOKING AT THOSE REAR LIGHTS WE CAN'T IMAGINE WHY...!)

genuine components,' he continues. 'We manage to satisfy demand somewhere in the middle!'

The wealth of parts sitting on JPP's shelves has enabled the company to build a number of demo cars over the years. Unsurprisingly, this has led Saj to get involved in competitive motorsport. 'We based our last creation on an Impreza Type-R and installed a Skyline RB25 engine,' he explains, adding that the car is heavily tuned and running in excess of 520bhp. With performance figures like that, and a desire to extend JPP's marketing efforts, a place in the JDM Drift AllStars seemed inevitable. In fact, just as we were about to go to press, we learned that the team has been nominated in the World Drift

Awards! – there are about 1000 nominees, so it's not that special – however the car has been seen on Discovery and Nat Geo shows, plus been to Dubai, Belarus and all over Europe.

So where does a 1975 Celica TA27 GT fit into all of this?! 'There are a bewildering number of drift and Time Attack series cars on the scene,' groans Saj. 'It seemed that the time was right to build something a little different,' he reasons. Expressing a desire to put together a car that screamed 'retro-cool', but was reliable enough to be used as his daily driver, he decided upon the Liftback Celica as the basis for the project.

This isn't the first TA27 that Saj has owned, already boasting two previous examples on his



motoring CV. With this in mind, it's fair to say that he's a fan of the aggressive looks and subtle lines of this particular seventies smasher. It is also correct to assume that he could see the potential in fitting modern running gear into a classic shell.

The first step was to find a rot-free Liftback in Japan. Fortunately, as JPP has a Japanese partner, Sou Kuwabara, based in the region, the search began without delay. A low mileage non-runner soon emerged complete with a number of bodywork dents (not to mention a small amount of surface rust!). Crucially, the car was in the same spec that it left the factory and proudly displayed all of the difficult-to-source original accessories. Satisfied that most of the boxes had been ticked, Saj arranged for the

neglected Celica to be aboard the next boat bound for Blighty.

Once the car was parked up in the JPP yard, an exhaustive examination of the new purchase began. 'There was much more corrosion than we had anticipated,' frowns Saj. 'The doors, arches and sills were hiding a multitude of sins under a lot of filler,' he adds. The car was stripped and the offending panels were either replaced or remodelled using whatever was available in the JPP warehouse. 'There were sections cut out of an Integra DC2 wing that were used to repair one of the doors!' he laughs. Additional creative expertise was employed by Saj's father, who, due to the deterioration of the original item, made a brand new headlight panel out of fresh metal.

With much of the remedial bodywork complete, attention was diverted to the engine bay. Saj knew that he wanted something a little different, but wasn't necessarily interested in big power, as he already has a 550bhp R34 GT-R. By chance, as he was weighing up the pros and cons of the possible donor engines at his disposal, a JPP customer arrived with an accident damaged Toyota Altezza RS200. The Altezza is the Japanese version of the Lexus IS200 and was sold with the 'Black Top' BEAMS edition two-litre 3S-GE powerplant. As the Altezza engine produces close to 210bhp from the factory and is mated to a six-speed gearbox, Saj immediately saw the potential for a transplant into his GT.

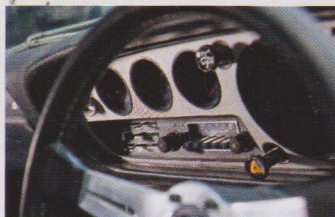
Fitting the Altezza's running

gear was going to be tricky, so the donor car's transmission tunnel was cut out and welded into the Celica's chassis. This decisive measure was essential as the new gearbox is much taller than the original unit. Additionally, a single-piece prop shaft was formed out of the front half of the Altezza item and the original TA27 rear section.

The Celica's engine subframe was sufficient enough to accommodate the 3S-GE, so JPP's ever-fruitlest storeroom was raided for various brackets to sit alongside bespoke mounts. Customising continued in the 'bay with the tubular exhaust manifold. 'We couldn't find one that would sit comfortably with the Altezza setup, but we still had the car's original manifold to play with,' recalls Saj. The exhaust ports on

'SAJ SAW THE POTENTIAL FOR PUTTING THE 210BHP ALTEZZA MOTOR INTO THE CELICA'

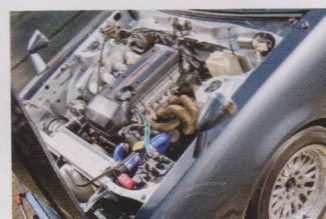
THE FAME GAME
IF YOU THINK THE NAME 'JAP PERFORMANCE PARTS' SOUNDS FAMILIAR, THEN IT MAY BE BECAUSE YOU'VE SEEN SAJ AND HIS COLLEAGUES ON YOUR TELLYBOX. THE GUYS HAVE APPEARED AS ADVISORS TO MOTOR SHOW PRESENTER MIKE BREWER ON DISCOVERY'S WHEELER DEALERS, AND HAVE RECENTLY MADE THE SHIFT TO THE BIG SCREEN BY SUPPLYING PARTS FOR THE FOUR-WHEELED STARS OF THE IMPENDING FAST AND FURIOUS 6 MOVIE. IF YOU'RE AFTER SOME QUALITY COMPONENTS FOR YOUR OWN MOTOR, THEN GET IN TOUCH WITH JPP ON 01293 520090 OR VISIT WWW.JAPPERFORMANCEPARTS.CO.UK FOR MORE INFO (ALTHOUGH IF YOUR NAME IS DOM TORETTO THEN YOU'RE PROBABLY BARKING UP THE WRONG TREE!)





**'I WANTED IT TO
SOUND JUST LIKE A
TUNED CELICA FROM
THE PERIOD... AND
THEN SOME'**

BEAMS STANDS FOR 'BREAKTHROUGH ENGINE WITH ADVANCED MECHANISM SYSTEM', AND SUCCESSIVE EDITIONS OF 3S-GE BEAMS ENGINES CAN BE IDENTIFIED BY THEIR COLOUR CODED ROCKER COVERS; THE 'RED TOP' WAS FOUND IN JDM MR2S (AS WELL AS CELICAS) IN THE MID TO LATE NINETIES, THE 'GREY TOP' WAS AN OPTION ON THE RAV4, AND THE LATER 'BLACK TOP' WAS FOUND EXCLUSIVELY IN THE ALTEZZA RS200. COUPLED WITH THE FACTORY SIX-SPEED GEARBOX, THE ALTEZZA EDITION BOASTS ENLARGED TITANIUM VALVES, DUAL VARIABLE VALVE TIMING AND PRODUCES NEAR-210BHP. THE ENGINES WERE THE RESULT OF A COLLABORATIVE EFFORT BETWEEN TOYOTA AND YAMAHA AND FEATURE CAST IRON BLOCKS WITH ALUMINIUM CYLINDER HEADS



TECHSPEC

ENGINE:

1998cc, 4-cyl, 16v, Dual VVT-I 3S-GE BEAMS engine, Altezza wiring harness and ECU, Altezza in-tank fuel pump, VW Polo radiator, Mishimoto slimline radiator fan, A'PEXi induction kit, heat-wrapped custom exhaust manifold, Integra DC2 A'PEXi modified exhaust system, custom silicone hoses

TRANSMISSION:

J160 6-speed manual gearbox, Altezza transmission tunnel, custom propshaft

SUSPENSION:

Cusco coilovers (front), Skyline R33 GT-R rear springs, modified steering bars, camber adjustment kit

BRAKES:

220mm vented discs (front), original drum brakes (rear), performance pads, calipers painted red

WHEELS:

8x15in (front) and 9x15in (rear) Vaarstoen V3 alloys, 195/50/15 Nankang Ultra Sport tyres (front), 215/45/15 Bridgestone B530 tyres (rear), lightweight Grayston Motorsport wheel nuts painted black

EXTERIOR:

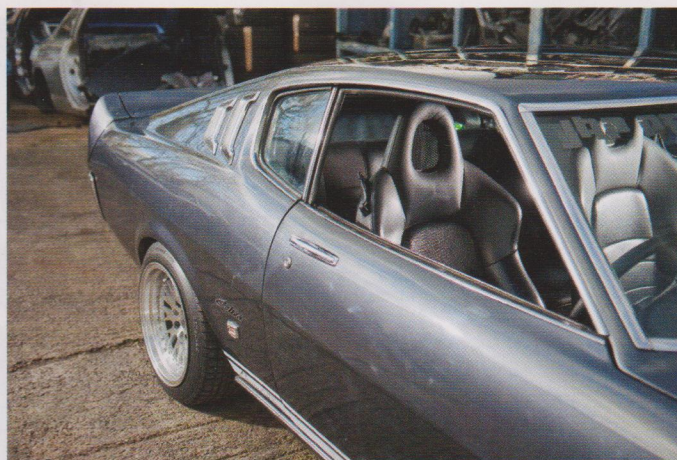
Full respray in Mercedes AMG Tenorite Grey, JDM remodelled front lip and rear spoiler, fibreglass bonnet, custom side stripes with BEAMS GT graphic, Jap Performance Parts sunstrip, exposed oil cooler and braided hoses, bespoke headlight panel

INTERIOR:

Honda S2000 front seats, modified seat rails, original Celica rear bench, Skyline R32 GT-R carpets, Mk4 Supra tachometer and rev counter, rally-spec single speed heater, Evo VIII gear gaiter, Impreza STi gearknob, Nardi steering wheel, Altezza pedals, Celica factory radio and speakers

THANKS:

Customize Bodyworkz for the paint, Lee from Crawley Autofit for the welding, Vit from Jap Performance Parts for his patience with the wiring!



the newer engine are much further apart than the stock 2T lump, so the flange was removed from the manifold, the pipe openings were reshaped, and the Altezza flange was cut and welded in place. The complete item bolts to a downpipe joining an Integra DC2 A'PEXi exhaust system, something that was the subject of close scrutiny when installed. 'I spent ages playing about with different resonators and the angle of the exhaust to achieve exactly the right tone!' grins Saj. 'I wanted it to sound like a tuned Celica would have done in the period... and then some!'

With its loud, gutsy roar you'd be forgiven for thinking that there was a V8 powering the car, but the ever-determined Mr Moghal is quick to dismiss the suggestion; 'It had to be four-cylinders as the aim was to create a TA27 GT that might have rolled off the production line if modern engine technologies were available at the time of the car's original release,' he says.


Mechanically, everything was shaping up very nicely indeed. Beneath the surface, however, a mammoth effort was required to plumb in the Altezza's ECU and loom. As standalone management was deemed unnecessary, the work

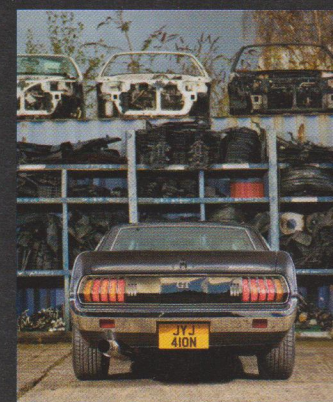
demanding wiring up all the original Celica dials and mechanical levers to work in place of the Altezza's nifty modern switches. Described by Saj as 'a nightmare', the end result is a testament to the time and skill that Vit Seebauluck (JPP's in-house wiring whizz) invested in getting everything up and running without fault.

Focus soon returned to the GT's exterior, and Saj imported an OE boot spoiler and front lip from Japan. Both items appeared to have suffered the ravages of time, so some modification was required to achieve a perfect fit. A wide arch kit was also on the cards, but after so much time spent perfecting the original panels it seemed like sacrilege to hide them away! Instead, the colour of the car became the hot topic of conversation at JPP, and an initial suggestion of white soon made way for a stunning Mercedes AMG shade of grey, complemented by custom side stripe graphics.

The choice of rim was also carefully considered, and the 13in factory wheels were ditched in favour of some rarely seen Vaarstoen 15-inchers (complete with stretched rubber). The alloys were one of the only elements of the build that weren't salvaged from the JPP

parts bin, although the same cannot be said for the stunning Honda S2000 leather interior that populates the cabin. In near-mint condition, the seats look like they were made for the car and provide Saj with plenty of support when the accelerator pedal is planted squarely into the shagpile!

Now that the car is finished, Saj is once again busying himself with customers' projects, although he reveals to us that JPP are toying with the idea of building a competition focussed Evo IX Wagon to run alongside the Impreza. No plans to take the TA27 out on-track then?! 'Not likely,' he laughs. 'The handling isn't quite as sophisticated as a modern car! Besides, we built it for one reason alone – because it's cool!' We nod cheerfully in agreement. After all the time, effort and downright ingenuity that Saj and the boys at JPP have put into rescuing this classic Japanese muscle car from the crusher, it would be a shame to see the perfect paintwork blemished with the scars of doing battle out on the track. No, this retro roadster is much better off keeping its original title as the king of cool, rather than chasing circuit silverware, and we look forward to seeing it at many of the shows in the coming year. 



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