

NISSAN SKYLINE R33

IBERIAN WHIRL

This UK-built Skyline is rich in Portuguese flavour along with a cornucopia of global influences. But don't go thinking it's a pure show car: it's an absolute whirlwind on the track...

Words: Joe Partridge Photos: Adam Rous



There are many benefits to living in Portugal. The climate is relentlessly spectacular, the scenery is dramatic, the people are friendly, the beaches are incredible... however, there's one key element that makes dwelling there unworkable for people like us: you're not allowed to modify your cars.

We know, it's a choker, but incredibly that is the case, and this was presumably a large factor in the decision for Valter da Silva to relocate to the UK. He's the owner of the R33 Skyline you see here and, as you will no doubt have spotted, he's modified it quite a lot. Indeed, you mightn't

have even realised that it's a Skyline at all at first glance. Those of you sufficiently well-versed in obscure bodykit design will recognise the nose profile of Rocket Bunny's retro-fabulous Boss kit, although this is something more likely to be found on an S14-generation Silvia – or, in rare cases, an FD3S RX-7. An R33 Skyline, though? Nope, it was a new one on us too, hence why we were quite excited to get it on front of the lens and bring it to you.

There's no end of custom chicanery at play here; clearly growing up in a culture where modding is a no-no means that Valter's had a fair bit of catching up to do. As we can see, he's channelling the spirit of the 1960s with his muscle car-

inspired front-end styling, but the tail end indicates more of a 1990s bodykit approach – the sort of thing you used to see on seafront cruises in the Britpop era, brought screaming into the modern age by the expert hands of Carlos at Custom Car Repairs. Sounds like we'd better dig into Valter's back story and see just how all of this came about...

"I was always into cars, since I was 18 and tearing about in my mum's Opel Corsa 1.5 TD," he explains. "I blew two turbos on that car, that's how hard I drove it. It was great fun! Then I bought a brand new SEAT Ibiza, and won a lot of street races in that car. I miss those days. Several cars later, and now in a different country, I bought



this Skyline GTS-T back in 2006, imported straight from Japan. It came with almost zero mods on it, and still had the bloody factory speed limiter."

Needless to say the limiter came off straight away and the mods commenced with gusto so that Valter could give the R33 a hard time on track days. However, as the pressures of fatherhood and building his own business combined, there was less and less time for the big Nissan coupé, and it ended up being laid up in a friend's company car park for seven years.

Fast-forward to 2017, and the friend in question rang Valter to let him know that the business was being sold so he'd have to put his Skyline somewhere else. Having

been somewhat disconnected from the car scene for the better part of a decade, his first response was to put the car up for sale; in fact, he got as far as getting a buyer all lined up, so he went down to the car park to see how it was looking. Incredibly, having sat unused for seven years, it started up straight away and ran perfectly. Well, this was enough to flick the petrolhead switch in Valter's brain. There was no way he could get rid of the car – it was time to bring it back, and make it the Skyline he'd always dreamed it could be... the buyer was gently let down, and he started to make some serious plans. "Despite appearances, this was never built as a show car – it was built for the track."

Valter assures us. And it's not just the strong factory spec and endless levels of tuneability that drew him to the R33 in the first place; there's a deep yearning here fed by the model's emotional and cultural significance. "It's the car that all the kids from my generation wanted as we were growing up," he reasons. "We all dreamed of a GT-R, although for me it had to be a GTS-T... I like the fact that it's rear-wheel drive, I prefer the power delivery, and I love that it's lighter than a GT-R!" Having already upgraded the brakes, and carried out all manner of chassis work to make the car more capable on the track (including the HICAS lockout and the full Driftworks adjustability package), Valter was sure of

NISSAN SKYLINE R33



his focus: while he enjoys and appreciates drifting, that's not what this build is all about. Fast laps, that's the key, and he wants everything as planted and controlled as possible.

"The project was divided up into five expert teams," he continues. "Valken Racing were in charge of concept design and project management, Jap Performance in Crawley were the mechanic team, Redline Tuning did electronics and mapping, Custom Car Repairs handled bodywork, and B-Trim did

the interior. The makeover took fourteen months from start to finish, with all of these expert teams working together, and the results were 100% worth the wait! It's just the result I'd wished for – a very fast and capable track day car that we all like to look at between hot laps."

The RB25 has been built for usable power rather than showboating, with a solid 350bhp attributable to a shiny new turbo, uprated fuelling courtesy of a Racing Line 340lph fuel pump and fuel pressure regulator and Subaru 440cc injectors, and

a Link ECU corraling all of the digits. A full suite of Mishimoto goodies take care of the belt and braces (intercooler, oil cooler, catch can), and there's a boisterous decat exhaust system finishing in those '90s-style centre-exit tails.

It's that back end which most people see on track, owing to the incredible attention to detail Valtier's put into the chassis spec; it features Tein Mono Sport coilovers with EDFC, uprated anti-roll bars, Driftworks adjustable arm kit (which comprises a HICAS eliminator, adjustable rear camber,



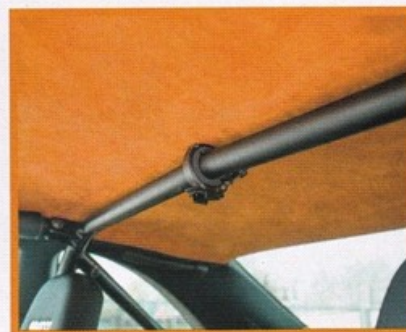
traction control arms, tension rods, and upper camber arms), and adjustable wishbones and arms. The brakes are also pretty devastating; Brembos all round, the fronts coming from a 350Z, with the rears being Subaru items. And that in-your-face rear end does more than show track cars a clean pair of heels: it's part of a cohesive exterior treatment that would have looked right at home on a pull-out poster in Fast Car or Redline back in the day, and yet it's a thoroughly 21st-century approach. The Rocket Bunny kit is bang on-trend with its

aggressive arches, and the Mopar-style nose is a gloriously retro shocker to the uninitiated... and again, even those who know what this kit is won't be expecting it to be hiding a Skyline inside. The custom paint that sets it all off could have been specifically designed for Portuguese-style climates, popping effervescently in the sunshine, and we just love how downright rude it all looks. It's a properly angry and unapologetic car, with a thoroughly distinctive look; such is the quality of the finish that you have to keep reminding



WHAT IS EDFC?

A smart bit of kit by suspension kingpins Tein, EDFC stands for Electronic Damping Force Controller. This is a cunning add-on that can be used with a variety of Tein coilovers, allowing you to adjust the firmness of the damping from inside the car rather than having to get out and fiddle with knobs. This may sound like a cutting-edge idea (well, because it is), but Tein actually launched this concept way back in 2002; it's been constantly evolving since, and the new EDFC Active is the real game-changer – this is the modern version that has wireless control, GPS functionality that can automatically adjust damping according to acceleration/ deceleration, and the Active Pro option can even adjust each corner individually based on lateral G-forces. How clever is that?



NISSAN SKYLINE R33

TECHSPEC

Engine: RB25 2.5-litre straight-six, HKS turbo, Mishimoto intercooler, Mishimoto oil cooler, Mishimoto catch can, Racing Line 340lph fuel pump, Subaru 440cc injectors, Racing Line fuel pressure regulator, Link ECU, custom decat exhaust system with twin HKS rear boxes, R34 GT-T gearbox, Xtreme 200mm twin ceramic clutch, Cosco 1.5 way LSD
Power: 350bhp

Chassis: Custom 18-inch wheels finished by First Aid Wheels, 235/40 (f) and 265/35 (r) tyres, Tein Mono Sport coilovers with EDFC, Tein strut brace, uprated anti-roll bars, Driftworks adjustable arm kit (adjustable rear camber; HICAS eliminator; traction control arms; tension rods; upper camber arms), adjustable wishbones and arms, 350Z Brembo front brakes, Subaru Brembo rear brakes, DBA T3 discs, Hawk pads

Interior: All-vegan Alcantara retrim by B-Trim, full custom rollcage, Sparco R333 seats and 4-point harnesses, Nismo short-shift, Ferrari 355 Momo steering wheel, Zoom Engineering rear view mirror, Pioneer double-DIN with CarPlay, Race Technology Dash2 Pro

Exterior: Rocket Bunny Boss kit, custom paint, all bespoke bodywork by Carlos at Custom Car Repairs

Thanks: "Thanks to Valken Racing, Saj and all at Jap Performance, Custom Car Repair (Carlos is a magician!), Redline Tuning (Richard is an absolute pro and a superb engineer), and B-Trim – they're the best in the business, taking on the mission of creating a vegan interior that looks as cool inside as the car does outside."



yourself that this was built as a track car first and foremost. The fact that it looks incredible is merely a fringe benefit.

Of course, track cars tend to have uncompromising stripped-out interiors, but Valter was keen for this R33 to offer a complete usability package. So while it features a full custom rollcage and a pair of Sparco buckets with 4-point harnesses, it's also been fabulously trimmed. It's no ordinary retrim either – the company in question, B-Trim, made it their mission to create a sumptuous interior that was 100% vegan. This project has been all about balance – a hell of a looker with a thoroughly pleasant interior, 350bhp, RWD, and an all-in weight of 1,450kg. "It's tons of fun," Valter grins. "I've recently

lapped Brands Hatch in 56.96, which isn't bad! Yes, I take extremely good care of it and I polish it between track days, but I use it hard all the time. After fourteen months of designing, cutting, amending, welding, and painting, the car design as a whole came out really well and people seem to love it. The reactions from young to old are always tremendously positive; when we take the car for late evening trips to central London there are always loads of boys and girls asking to take pictures of the car, that's always quite cute and it's good fun too!"

It's a car that fulfils a tricky brief – well-appointed, handy on the track, with a show-winning finish – and it's definitely rekindled a deep passion for modifying after seven years in the wilderness. Valter's currently working with Valken Racing on a 1973 Porsche 911 that he imported from the States, which will be a hell of a track monster with 450bhp pushing 980kg down the road. He's also modding a 996 Turbo for a Spa-Francorchamps project, and of course he's wringing the Skyline's neck every chance he gets. People may pigeonhole this build as a pure show car when they see it out and about, but make no mistake – they won't see which way it went on the track. All of this neatly proves the point that if you criminalise something popular, you just drive it underground.

Portugal's laws against modified cars didn't put Valter off the idea; no, they pushed him further in the other direction. And their loss is very much the UK's gain – after all, how cool is it when something that looks like this takes all the trust-fund Boxsters to school around Snetterton? We're sorry Estoril, you definitely don't get to play with this one... 🌟

