



Generation Z

NEW MODEL

By Colin Smith

There can be a love at first sight effect with a new sports car. But a few hundred kilometres down the road the relationship is being tested.

As they say “things can get a bit complicated”. It might be the firm ride, peaky power delivery, cramped interior and restricted visibility wasn’t revealed on a short blast but is exposed by big kilometres and demanding roads.

After a 500km launch drive in the new Nissan 370Z through South Otago and Southland to finish at Queenstown I would have happily climbed aboard again and repeated the journey.

Nissan’s claim that the new Z

car is a supercar for daily use certainly held true.

It wasn’t merely an exhilarating drive through the almost deserted twists and turns of the Catlins but cruising on Southland’s provincial highways — covered in winter grit and a distinctly unhealthy amount of livestock effluent — the 370Z was a relaxed, sure-footed and comfortable grand touring car.

These are the very attributes that make a Porsche 911 the benchmark “everyday” supercar. The new Z shares both similar ultimate performance and much the same broad set of skills — but for less than a third of the price.

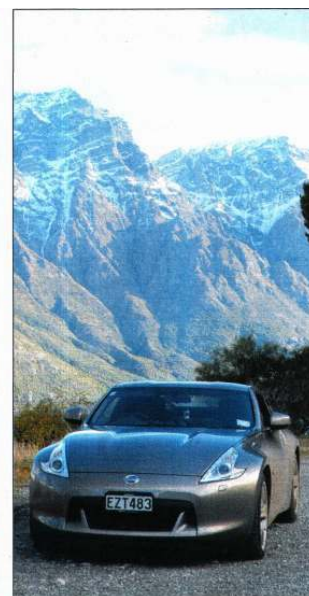
The sports car market in New Zealand has slowed dramatically this year — to such an extent that by beginning deliveries of its

rare \$160,000 GT-R supercar that Nissan has leapt to top seller status in recent months.

Nissan’s leadership looks like being consolidated by this new Z car which at \$71,200 for a manual model and \$73,200 for the automatic offers an unmatched performance and value combination.

There’s always an early boom in sales with the debut of a new sports car and while the economy dictates the 370Z is unlikely to sell the 200 annual units which the 350Z managed when it appeared in 2003 it’s hard to see the car as anything other than the clear leader of the sports car segment for the immediate future.

Muscular V6 performance and a poised chassis make the 370Z a rewarding drive. The fact it’s lighter, shorter, wider tracked





and more powerful than the 350Z makes this sharper focus no surprise while bigger brakes and more rubber on the road are also part of the equation.

A decision by Nissan New Zealand to only take the highest specified model that was available to them adds some edge to the stance and dynamics of the Z and its value.

In Australia the package of 19-inch Rays alloy wheels — with a design similar to the new GT-R — and upgraded brake hardware

package is optional. We get those features as standard and the brakes are a highlight of the Z with an impressive combination of stopping power and pedal feel that inspires plenty of confidence.

On a challenging road the performance is best exploited with finesse — delicate steering inputs and balancing the car on throttle or brake. The flexibility of the powerful V6 with strong torque from below 2000rpm means response is still eager even if

you're caught a gear higher than ideal in the twisty stuff.

This is a more complete sports car than the 350Z. It feels more sophisticated in its chassis tuning so that even though it's riding on 19-inch wheels with low profile tyres the ride seems less reactive over bumpy surfaces.

The perception of quality has been raised significantly with greater use of soft materials and surfaces and plenty of thought has been put into the driving





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Page: 6

Supplements

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position and visibility.

The specification is comprehensive with firmly bolstered leather and alcantara trimmed seats having power adjustment as well as being heated. An eight-speaker Bose audio system is standard with six-stack CD unit, auxiliary input and steering wheel controls while Bluetooth phone connectivity is also standard.

Automatic Xenon headlights are standard along with rain sensor wipers, a trip computer,

automatic air conditioning, alloy pedals, a tilt adjustable steering wheel, cruise control and push button start.

In 500km the biggest drawback I could find with the 370Z was the lack of a net to secure my luggage — although the repositioned and better integrated structural cross member is now much less intrusive into the luggage space.

If you're heading out to enjoy the delights of the Z car make sure you either have no luggage

at all or alternatively fully load the luggage area so your belongings don't get thrown around in your enthusiasm.

Compared to its predecessor the 370Z delivers more complete sports car experience — demanding less from the driver but offering greater rewards.

Better yet the fact it's some \$4500 cheaper than the car it replaces in a market where prices are trending upward is a remarkable achievement.

