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# A to Z

Tim takes a look at something a little  
different in the shape of the MZR 240Z,  
and finds there's rather a lot to like.

Written by: Tim Hanlon





The 240Z and I have something in common. Both born in 1969, one has become a timeless classic, the other even more so. Back in 1969, 'the summer of love', the 240Z burst onto the motoring stage as Datsun's answer to the now bustling US sports car market that was still lapping up the E-Type and MGB that had been released over the pond some four years earlier.

Here's where Datsun pulled a blinder, the 240Z looked out of this world! A car the Jetsons would drive rather than the Archers' MGB, and it brought with it not only eye-popping (for the time) performance – sub 8 seconds to 60mph – but also Datsun's legendary reliability (a must for discerning US buyers) and it was very frugal on fuel when compared with big yank V8s. And so an icon was born and it sold in the tens of thousands. The 'Z' was cool and it graced California highways, the Florida Keys and bustling New York Downtown. Hell, even Evel Knievel had one as a daily. Today it seems, nearly 50 years on, it's still in high demand.

Despite all the success, seeing a 240Z in the UK is pretty rare. You see, much as we loved the Z, our climate didn't suit it terribly well and many, like Alfas, E-Types and Pagodas of the era, were sadly discarded through the 80s and 90s. Fortunately, the drier climate of the US has ensured many are preserved bone dry and still in great shape, which brings us neatly onto our mouth-watering drive today, the MZR 240Z – the product of passion for Rahail Tariq and his love of the 240Z.

Rahail and his team wanted to do something special with an icon, but not content to simply restore 240s, they wanted to create an as-new 240, keeping all the best bits whilst improving everything possible during the process, and also adding some modern twist without losing any of the car's original charm and character. MZR are to the 240Z what Singer and Eagle are to the 911 and E-Type.

Today, I get to meet Rahail in person and the gorgeous 240Z Sport Design you see on these pages. We chose our meet point in Skipton near some fast-flowing roads

as Rahail wants me to get the best out of the drive.

Rahail arrives at our meet point and I get my first glimpse of the 240Z as it enters the busy car park. It stops admirers in freeze frame, Rahail parks up and jumps out with seemingly boundless, enviable energy, and once intros are out the way, we get into the 240's specs and build and his eyes light up, describing each minuscule detail and design touch. I, having briefly worked in a Nissan parts department in 1985, describe to Rahail being given the task of 'skipping' all the old Datsun parts, some 20 years' worth of badges, panels and lamps – he looks at me like I have drowned a puppy!

I wish I had not mentioned it, but he forgives me and we talk about sourcing parts. "So where do you get wiring harnesses?", "All brand new bespoke". "What about dashboards?", "We have amassed a great stock of right-hand drive dashboards ready to use". "Err, why not just buy UK cars to work with?", "Well, we just don't work with UK cars".



I then get schooled on chassis integrity, you see the UK cars, even decent looking ones, once acid dipped are normally like Swiss cheese and beyond economical repair, whereas the US cars fair exceptionally well, having little if any corrosion and make a great starting point for what is a 12 to 14 month operation, creating your bespoke, 'as-new' 240Z in either Classic, Sport or Sport Design spec.

Judging by what is sat in front of me, the result is nothing short of fantastic. The attention to detail goes way beyond anything I have ever seen before and even my terribly annoying OCD for detail is satisfied. The engine bay is, well, a work of art; fuel injection and coil-on-plug ignition, modern ECU, beautifully redesigned rocker cover retaining its period breather, high torque starter, bespoke radiator and cooling, "Wow wow

wow". And that's before you look at the body and paintwork, the seam welds are smooth and the suspension turrets house delicious dial-adjustable coilovers – I am in Z heaven before I have even opened a door!

Bumpers are brand new fabricated polished stainless steel, guaranteeing longevity, rear lamps painstakingly recreated for improved functionality and clarity, door and boot seals all brand new. But how have they got hold of all these bits? Rahail, like the CEO of Pepsi, won't tell me everything and why should he? Such effort has gone into getting to this point I wouldn't give away the whole delectable recipe either!

The wheels are designed in-house by MZR to bring together a fusion of retro look with the ability to take modern dimension

rubber and look superb. Glass is also new where required and badges are pristine. Time to open the door, a lovely clunk as the original handle is lifted, popping the door open like taking a lid off a new jar as the air is expelled. I stand and stare without actually getting in and Rahail asks, "What's up?", "Nothing, absolutely nothing".

A waft of aroma has hit me and the nostalgia and memories have come blasting back like seeing an old school girlfriend 35 years later, the difference being this one hasn't aged at all (I hope Mrs H doesn't read this bit). Rahail can clearly see I'm besotted and suggests we take a drive. I let Rahail drive first for two reasons. One, to enjoy the experience without the need to focus on driving and secondly to see how the car's creator gets the best out of the 240Z.







We set off on the A59 and it's immediately clear this is a very tight, very sorted road car. Adam who spent time with it in Wales said, "Mate you're going to love it", and he wasn't exaggerating. Rahail is methodical with gear changes and I am amazed at how this Z pulls from any rev range in any gear, the torque seems massive compared to the original. "That torque!", "Yep, when we do the engines to 2,900cc with forged pistons and rods and install injection to replace the carbs, we map them that way for maximum torque, so there's really no need to redline them to extract decent pace", Rahail explains.

We swap over at Bolton Abbey and I get settled in. The seats are not only great to look at but also super comfortable and the runners are designed so that each seating setup can be tailored right up to 6'4". Luckily Rahail and I are both a similar height and I'm in a perfect position to enjoy the Z experience. I take it gently at first, using the rich torquey motor to just flow along the sun-kissed B roads. It's what I would lovingly call a third gear car as you rarely seem to need any other gear on a fast-flowing road.

The body composure is well judged, not harsh, not wallowy. It's on the medium setting and for me that suits its character.

Rahail urges me to push the car, he really wants me to explore the power and composure. I'm normally being asked to slow down, but whilst I have massive respect for every car I drive, the 240 has kidded me a bit. I have initially treated it as a 48-year-old car, akin to handling an antique vase. Then Rahail says the immortal line, "Tim, it's well new". He puts my mind at rest and we string together a beautiful stretch of road, crests and dips using all the sighted road, its narrow 70s hips threading easily down a road a GT-R would completely fill.

We are wafting along at a respectable pace and the brakes (yes new, yes brilliant) slow her down with ease and third gear is again enough to pick the rude pace up once more. Even the aromas in the car are nice, engine bay smell from the crank breather, a touch of brakes and a dash of fresh-cut hay from the neighbouring field – if only you could bottle it.

I ask Rahail how the gearbox has such a precise feel, it's as slick a shifter as I can recall with really clean take up. "We upgrade the gearbox internals from an S14 240SX and use a modern limited-slip diff at the rear. It fits without much fuss and suits the character of the car". Even the gear knob is MZR-designed,

similar to that of a Carrera GT and made to order in Mexico from maple and mahogany. The carpets are woven heather loop sourced from Switzerland and probably cost more than double your Wilton. Everywhere you look, there are bespoke touches like the stereo with its modern functions but a 70s look. We debated the climate controls, to leave or not to leave? How far do you go? I think the perfect balance has been achieved.

We set off back towards Skipton, the MZR 240Z floating along fast roads at a decent pace completely brushing off its predecessor's limitations. It's an amazing achievement, if the brief was to take one of the world's most beautiful cars and retain all that beauty whilst making it fast, reliable and user-friendly on a daily basis, then the MZR 240Z has hit the bullseye and then some.

If you're reading this and have always fancied a classic but don't want to compromise on performance and practicality, these stunning 240Z creations by MZR are your answer. I have not only been blown away the car itself but the incredible attention to detail and passion Rahail and his team clearly put into each individual MZR 240Z. ●



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