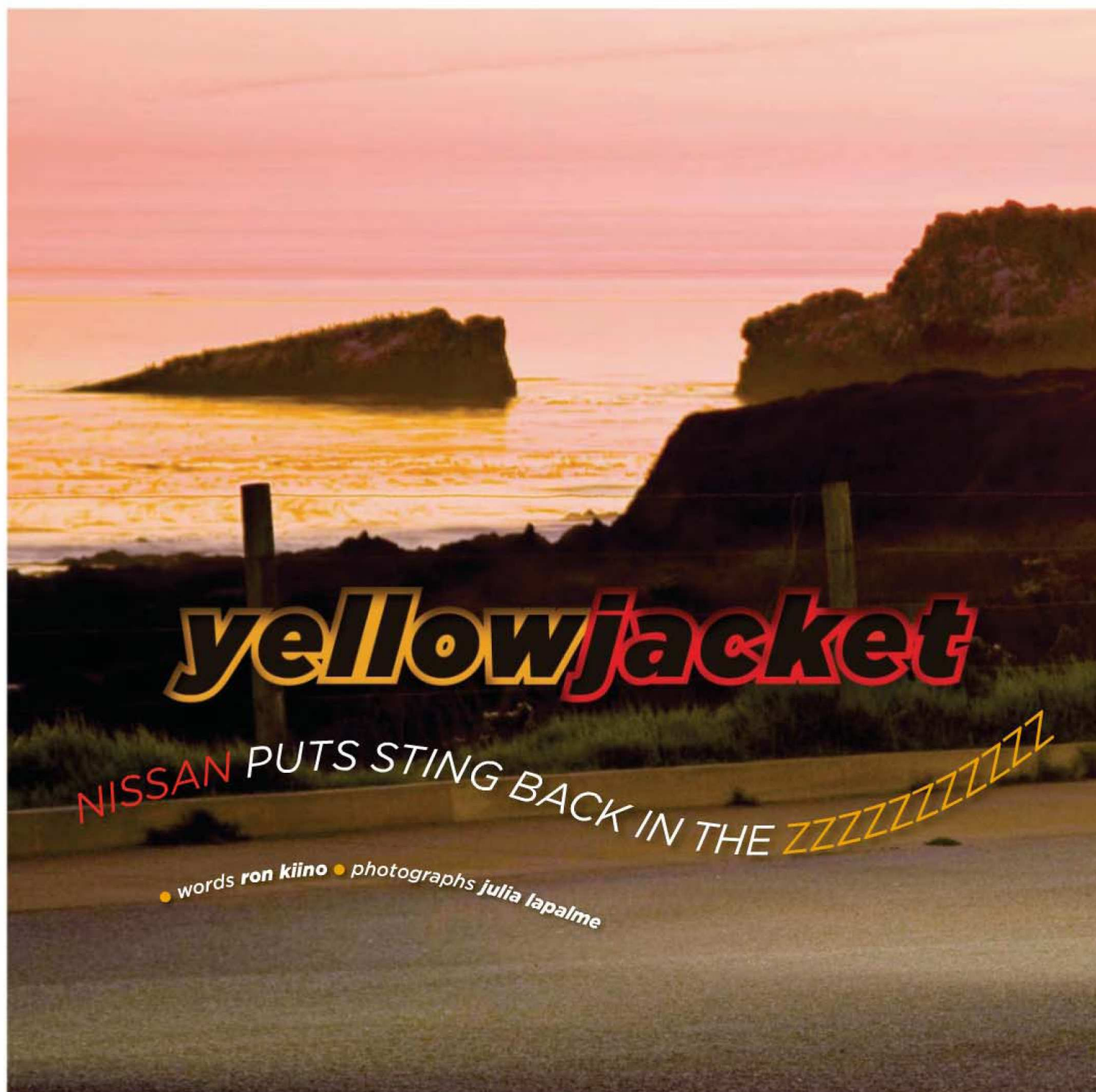
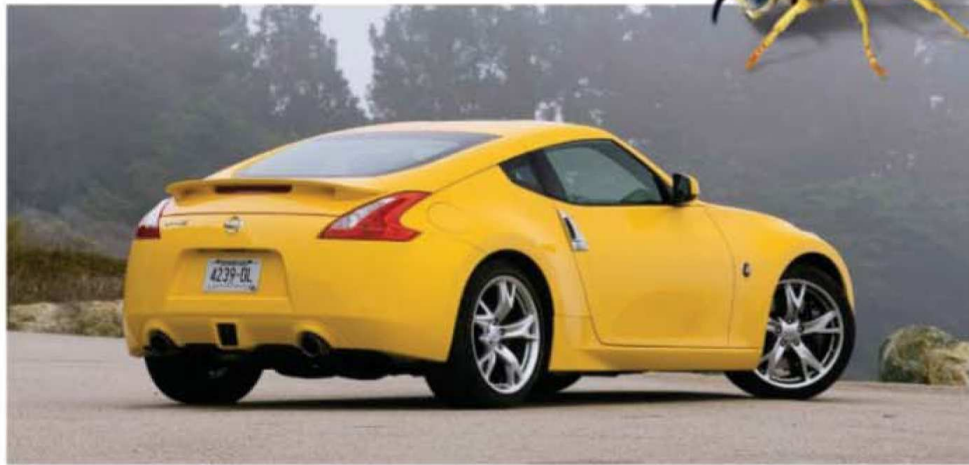
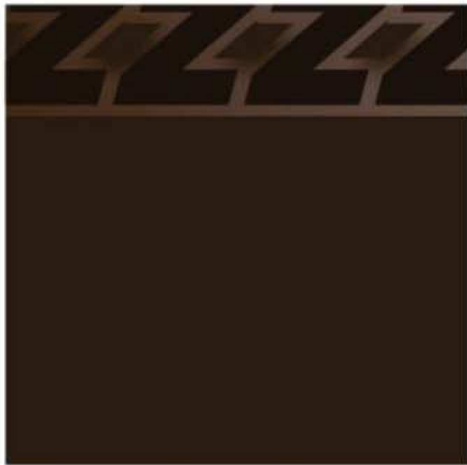


(first test) **nissan 370z**



yellowjacket
NISSAN PUTS STING BACK IN THE ZZZZZZZZZZZZ
● words **ron kiino** ● photographs *julia lapalme*



(first test) nissan 370z



*THE 370Z FEELS SHARP,
DIRECT, AND BALANCED,
A WELL-HONED SANTOKU KNIFE
TO THE 350Z'S BLUNTER AND BULKIER CLEAVER.*

WHEN WE evaluate a group of cars at the test track, it's often the case that we inadvertently get to compare dissimilar vehicles, be it contrasting type (sports car versus SUV), configuration (coupe versus sedan), engine (V-6 versus V-12), or simply price point. Side by side, these unrelated vehicles can often shed light on one another at revealing angles, making some cars shine and others lose luster. As luck would have it, the day we recorded numbers on the all-new Nissan 370Z was the same day we conducted our very first test of the Aston Martin DBS (see page 112). Surely the DBS would embarrass the Z, no?

Looking at the two, in person or on paper, they do share apparent similarities. Each is a front-engine, rear-drive sports car offering seating for two adults and a low-slung stance a mere hand's width off the ground. Yet, the idea that a \$34,000 Z would be a match for

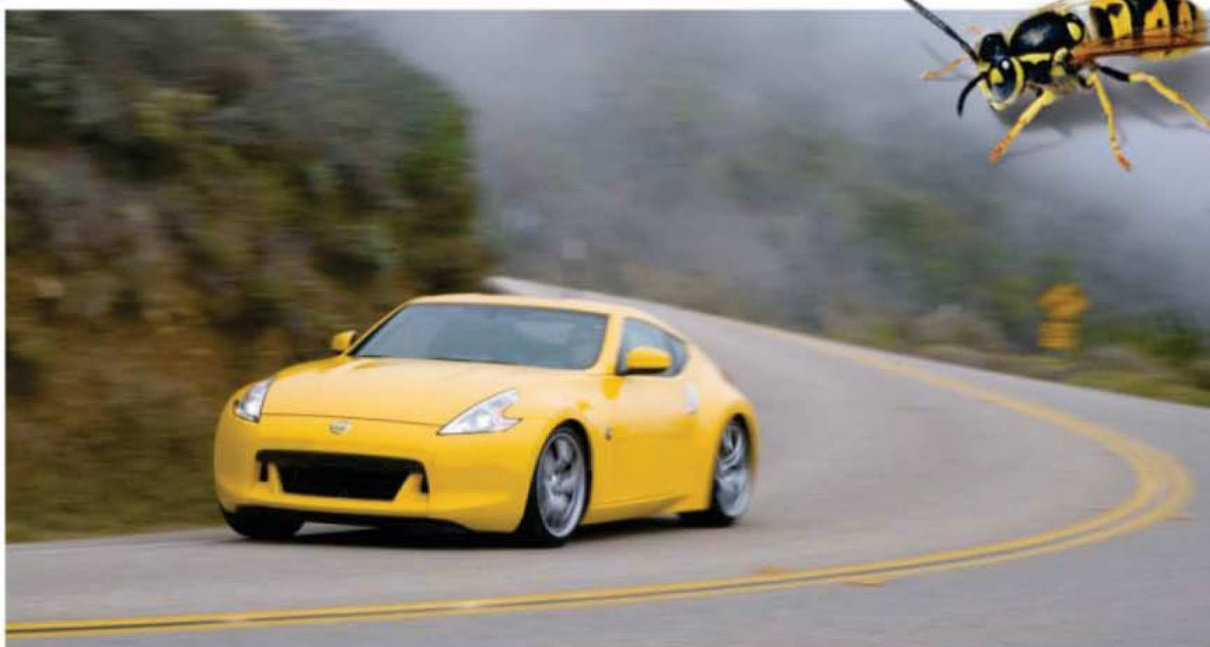
a \$278,000 Aston, much less outperform it in some respects, never crossed our minds, especially considering the Brit has six cylinders and 178 horses on the Nissan. Plus, the DBS is the Aston Martin, the flagship of the brand, not to mention James Bond's transporter. And the Z? Sure, it's Nissan's iconic nameplate, but it's more for those working nine to five than it is for 007. But like Rocky Balboa's left hook, a blue-collar punch can pack a potent sting.

The 510-horse V-12 DBS is daunting. Peruse the spec panel and there's no denying its imposing credentials: 0-to-60 in 4.2 seconds, quarter mile in 12.6 at 112.3 mph, lateral acceleration of 0.96 g, and 60-to-0 in 106 feet. In fact, all these figures are superior to those of the Ferrari 612 Scaglietti. As we said, "It's the quickest, stickiest, and shortest-stopping Aston Martin we've ever tested." But is it quicker than the new 370Z? Well, yes.

Locked and loaded with a 332-horse, 3.7-liter VQ37VHR V-6 and unique "Synchro Rev Match" six-speed manual that blips the throttle on downshifts without a heel-toe maneuver, the Z rips to 60 in just 4.7 ticks on its way to a quarter-mile run of 13.3 at 105.7. While not an equal to the DBS, the 370Z is speedier than the racebred 306-horse, 3.5-liter Nismo 350Z we ran in 2007, which reached 4.9 and 13.5 at 103.9, respectively, making the 370 the quickest production Z we've ever tested. Further, the 370Z does match the Aston in braking (106 feet) and even manages to exceed it in lateral acceleration, posting a Rubber Cement score of 0.99 g. This also makes the 370 the stickiest Z we've ever tested. (Alas, it's not the shortest-stopping Z, as the Nismo recorded 60 to 0 in 103 feet.)

So what's the 370Z's secret? Simply put: Nissan turned to the tried-and-true sports-

WITH WIDER front and rear tracks than the 350Z's, the 370Z delivers 0.99 g of lateral grip.



car formula of cutting weight, reducing size, and adding power. The Z diet from 350 to 370 included hacking 3.9 inches from the wheelbase, 2.7 inches from the overall length, and 0.3 inch from the height as well as replacing numerous steel pieces, namely, the doors, rear hatch, front suspension cradle, and hood reinforcements, with parts made from lighter aluminum. Nissan even managed to trim mass from the fuel tank and audio and exhaust systems. The net weight reduction, according to Nissan, is around 88 pounds, depending on trim, although our scales indicate the 370Z with the optional Sport Package (viscous limited-slip differential, 19-inch forged Rays wheels, Bridgestone tires, Akebono brakes, SynchroRev Match, front and rear spoilers, 0.29 Cd) weighs 12 pounds more than the Nismo 350Z. That said, our tester does represent enhanced equipment, i.e., larger (and heavier) tires and brakes, not

to mention the more powerful 3.7-liter V-6, which, according to Z project manager Peter Bedrosian, "packs an additional 42 pounds compared with the 3.5-liter."

Nonetheless, given the 370's superior acceleration and handling, we'll take the stouter 3.7 and any negligible weight gain, especially considering the new Z's stiffer structure (up 22 percent in rear torsion and 30 percent in front torsion and rear vertical bending) and fiercer façade, whose cantilevered roof, "barbed" head- and tail-lamps, and 240Z-like upswept beltline give the 370 a tighter, sexier shape. More important, the 370's structural and visual enhancements only complement its stellar driving dynamics. Its organic steering is a model of linearity and responsiveness. Its brakes, with a variable-ratio pedal, are stout and easy to modulate, whether decelerating gently for a red light or aggressively for



a hairpin. Its grip is immense, rendering instant turn-in and near-absent understeer. The most alluring aspect of the new Z is the

(first test) nissan 370z



THE Z'S NEW 3.7-LITER V-6 and upscale cabin inch it closer to its corporate cousin, the Infiniti G37 Coupe.

sense it imparts: It feels sharp, direct, and balanced, a well-honed *santoku* knife to the 350Z's blunter and bulkier cleaver.

There are a few characteristics of the new Z with which we're not entirely enamored. The VQ engine, more powerful and polished than its predecessor, still exhibits a coarseness near redline. That coarseness rears its unwelcome head in the gearbox and pedals, transmitting a vibration to your hands and feet when firing off high-rpm shifts. A remedy, however, is the new seven-speed automatic with paddle shifters and a downshift rev-matching system. We've sampled this trans in the Infiniti G37 S, and it's one of the sportiest and smoothest slushboxes around and achieves the same fuel economy—18 city/26 highway—as the manual.

One aspect of the 370 we can't harp on is the interior, which Nissan has upgraded with finer materials (read: less hard plastic),

bigger gauges, a race-style oval steering wheel, a convenient glovebox (the poorly placed one between the 350Z's seats has been laid to rest), and a useable cargo area

(Nissan inverted the rear strut tower brace that denied access to large suitcases in the 350Z's hold).

For a grander environment, the upscale 370Z Touring trim adds leather, Bluetooth, and Bose audio. The standard

Z and the Touring can be equipped with the Sport Package, but only the Touring is available with nav.

As this goes to press, Nissan has announced only a base price, which, at \$30,625, represents a hike of \$800 next to a comparably equipped 350Z with side and curtain airbags. In view of its enhanced power and handling, slick SynchroRev Match feature, and chic duds, the 370Z epitomizes a sports-car steal. To its competitors—heck, even the DBS—that's gotta sting. ■



2009 NISSAN 370Z

POWERTRAIN/CHASSIS

DRIVETRAIN LAYOUT	Front engine, RWD
ENGINE TYPE	60° V-6, alum block/heads
VALVETRAIN	DOHC, 4 valves/cyl
DISPLACEMENT	225.6 cu in/3696 cc
COMPRESSION RATIO	11.0:1
POWER (SAE NET)	332 hp @ 7000 rpm
TORQUE (SAE NET)	270 lb-ft @ 5200 rpm
REDLINE	7500 rpm
WEIGHT TO POWER	10.1 lb/hp
TRANSMISSION	6-speed manual
AXLE/FINAL-DRIVE RATIOS	3.69:1/2.93:1
SUSPENSION, FRONT; REAR	Control arms, coil springs, anti-roll bar; multilink, coil springs, anti-roll bar
STEERING RATIO	14.7:1
URNS LOCK-TO-LOCK	2.7
BRAKES, F;R	14.0-in vented disc; 13.8-in vented disc, ABS
WHEELS, F;R	9.0x19 in; 10.0 x 19 in, cast aluminum
TIRES, F;R	245/40R19 94W; 275/35R19 96W, Bridgestone Potenza RE050A

DIMENSIONS

WHEELBASE	100.4 in
TRACK, F/R	60.6/61.6 in
LENGTH x WIDTH x HEIGHT	167.2 x 72.8 x 51.9 in
TURNING CIRCLE	34.1 ft
CURB WEIGHT	3355 lb
WEIGHT DIST, F/R	55/45%
SEATING CAPACITY	2
HEADROOM	38.2 in
LEGROOM	42.9 in
SHOULDER ROOM	54.6 in
CARGO VOLUME	6.9 cu ft

TEST DATA

ACCELERATION TO MPH	
0-30	1.8 sec
0-40	2.7
0-50	3.6
0-60	4.7
0-70	6.2
0-80	7.9
0-90	9.6
0-100	12.0
PASSING, 45-65 MPH	2.4
QUARTER MILE	13.3 sec @ 105.7 mph
BRAKING, 60-0 MPH	106 ft
LATERAL ACCELERATION	0.99 g (avg)
MT FIGURE EIGHT	24.9 sec @ 0.73 g (avg)
TOP-GEAR REVS @ 60 MPH	2300 rpm

CONSUMER INFO

BASE PRICE	\$30,625
PRICE AS TESTED	\$34,000 (est)
STABILITY/TRACTION CONTROL	Yes/yes
AIRBAGS	Dual front, front side, front curtain
BASIC WARRANTY	3 yrs/36,000 miles
POWERTRAIN WARRANTY	5 yrs/60,000 miles
ROADSIDE ASSISTANCE	—
FUEL CAPACITY	19.3 gal
EPA CITY/HWY ECON	18/26 mpg
CO ₂ EMISSIONS	0.93 lb/mile
MT FUEL ECONOMY	21.5 mpg
RECOMMENDED FUEL	Unleaded

