



Nissan 350 Z

Knight-in-shining-metal

First impression | Once upon a time computer games were based on films but somewhere along the way the roles have been reversed. Lara Croft's Tombraider is the best-known example of a film based on a computer game. Ringtones too once were derived from existing songs, whereas musicians now especially record tunes as ringtones. Autozine even took it a step further and started as an Internet-magazine, never ever to come out on paper. Now, Nissan has made a car that was inspired by a computer game. The Nissan 350 Z is available in a special GT4-edition like the racecar in the Playstation game "Gran Turismo 4".



The car that can be driven in the computer game is bright yellow. Therefore this special edition has been painted in this colour for the occasion of the release of the new game. This makes the car stand out in a major way, to say the least. In traffic car drivers, cyclists and pedestrians follow the yellow test vehicle with their eyes. And not only the looks of the car attract attention. Nissan

provides the 350 Z with an almost intimidating exhaust noise that leaves nothing to the imagination about the engine power.

GT4

It is particularly the engine that has been adjusted for this special GT4-version. Although the most obvious thing to do to a car based on a computer game would be to put all kinds of electronic extras in it, here Nissan hardly adjusted a thing. No G-force meter or even an mp3 player for this GT4. A light or rain sensor is not part of the standard equipment either.

Instead, all attention has gone to the 3.5-litre 6-cylinder engine. Every spare part has been examined closely and where possible tweaked, polished and fine-tuned. As a result the internal friction of the engine has been reduced significantly. If moving parts turn more smoothly, it almost automatically results in a better performance. The air filter has been adjusted too to enhance combustion. All these adjustments have resulted in raising the revolutions to 7,000 per minute (it was 6,600), which in the end released 20

more horse power. That brings the total up to a cool 300.

Nissan doesn't show off though, but whoever studies the specs well, finds out that the maximum torque at the same time dropped by 10 Nm. More horse power and less Newton metres means that the GT4 is more lively and aggressive, but hardly any faster than the normal version.

In practice the GT4 has primarily become more refined. Like the name in the computer game already implies, the "Gran Turismo 4" has become less of a racing car and more of an extremely sporty touring car. The lighter tread is found in a calmer and more silent power source. The mighty roar has been exchanged for a more controlled techno sound that nonetheless still sends shivers down the spine of the outsider.

Road holding

The real spectacle however of this and every other Nissan 350 Z is its road holding qualities. The cars meant for the European market have a completely different character to the American ones. The European 350 Z already had a hard-as-nails suspension, the GT4 is even more neutral thanks to wide rims. This makes the wheels feel stiff and handling more communicative. The road holding is in a word phenomenal. Each bend can be taken with at least twice the advised speed. Even then the chassis doesn't yield.

Reaching its limits, it is obvious that only the rear will drift out a bit. The front wheels are determined to remain on their chosen path. This is not only thanks to the well-balanced chassis, but also to the perfect distribution of weight to the front and rear wheels. Therefore the 350 Z also handles well in the rain, although the traction control indicator will light up a bit more often.



The combination of excellent handling and an even livelier response, if that were possible, to the accelerator (much dependent on the brand of petrol!) make the 350 Z GT4 the ultimate Nissan of this moment. No computer game, home cinema or virtual racetrack can even begin to compare. The only difference: whoever puts his virtual Nissan to the barrier will immediately receive a new one. The 350 Z GT4 is harder to replace: only 700 examples will be sent to Europe.

Conclusion

The Nissan 350 Z was the most brutal and purest sports car in its class and still is in its GT4-version. Despite its aggressive appearance this special edition is not noticeably faster. The modifications have made the car less raw and give this coupé more finesse, which makes life more pleasurable. For a coupé the 350 Z offers remarkable headroom and luggage space. When the brakes are off this knight-in-shining-metal is pushing the boundaries even further than the normal version. No computer game can compare to this, but it is a fine source of inspiration. ■



Specifications

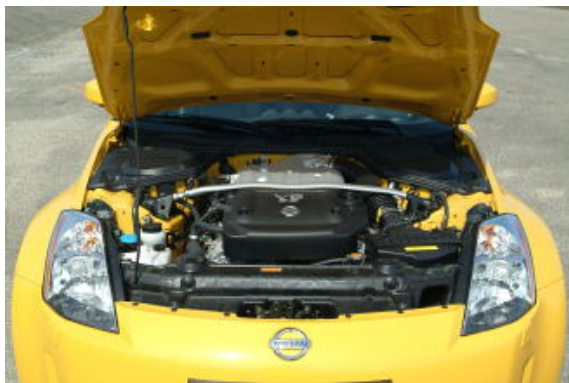
Nissan 350 Z GT4

Size and weight



Length x width x height	431 x 181 x 132 cm
Wheelbase	265 cm
Kerb weight	1.547 kg
Trailer	unknown
Trailer - braked	unknown
Fuel capacity	80 l
Luggage space	235 l
Tyre size	

Engine and performance



Capacity	3498 cc
Cylinders / valves	6/4
Max power	300 PS @ 6600 rpm
Max torque	353 Nm @ 4800 rpm
Drive	rear wheels
Acceleration 0 - 62 mph	5.8 secs
Top speed	250 km/h
Average mileage	11.7 l / 100 km
Mileage urban	16.7 l / 100 km
Mileage extra urban	8.9 l / 100 km
CO2 emissions	280 gr / km

Price

Price	Â£ 29,400
Price base model	Â£ 26,900