



"Love Cars! Love People! Love Life!"

Yutaka Katayama, *Father of the Datsun Z (and the Nissan Fairlady Z)*

Zakira's Special Summer Projects

Exciting New Things Are Coming

Some things happen gradually and then all at once. Over the past few months, between the Cars 'n' Coffee mornings and the projects filling the bays, we've been putting together something we've wanted to do for a while — a proper way to share behind the scenes moments and tell the stories that happen here every day which seldom make it into our newsletters.

Starting with this issue, we're re-launching our occasional car showcase as **Head Over Wheels** — a feature that puts the spotlight on people and the cars they love. Customers who drove halfway across the country for a car they spotted online. Restorations that took years and more than a little stubbornness to finish. The kind of machines that make the whole shop stop when they roll through the door. Written for those who like to read and filmed for those who like to watch as we start to craft video to go alongside these stories.

Exciting enough, that means a YouTube channel is coming. We'll share the link when it's live — but the short version is this: Head Over Wheels and other content series will exist in print and on screen.

This just the start. We've been thinking carefully about what Zakira's has to offer beyond the work itself — the knowledge that lives in this shop, the projects worth documenting, the things we wish more owners knew about their own cars. So alongside the customer stories, you can expect to see

us getting into the builds, the people doing the work, the life inside the shop and some practical content for anyone who takes their car seriously.

We'll leave a little room for surprises. A few things are still taking shape and we'd rather show you than tell you. But the direction is clear — and we're glad you're along for it.

As always, scroll down to the end of the newsletter to find a list of upcoming events. We don't want you left out!

Head Over Wheels - Issue #1

Eric Zwart's 1970 Datsun 1600 Roadster

Every so often we slide back the shop doors and spotlight a car story that's just too good to keep to ourselves. Welcome to our renamed car showcase ***Head Over Wheels***, where we share the machines, miles and memories that make Zakira's car community tick. In this showcase the car keys belong to one of our very own.

Eric Zwart is a master mechanic here at the shop, and he's spent most of his career buried in modern complexity as a diagnostic tech. More than two decades of turbocharged, all-wheel-drive cars. A self-described fuel-injection expert. Nothing older than a 1989 model had ever sat in his own garage. So the 1970 Datsun 1600 Roadster in his driveway is a bit of a plot twist. It's one of the first sports cars Datsun sold in the United States, it's his first carbureted car, and at 55 years of age, it's the kind of Japanese roadster you almost never see in the Midwest anymore.

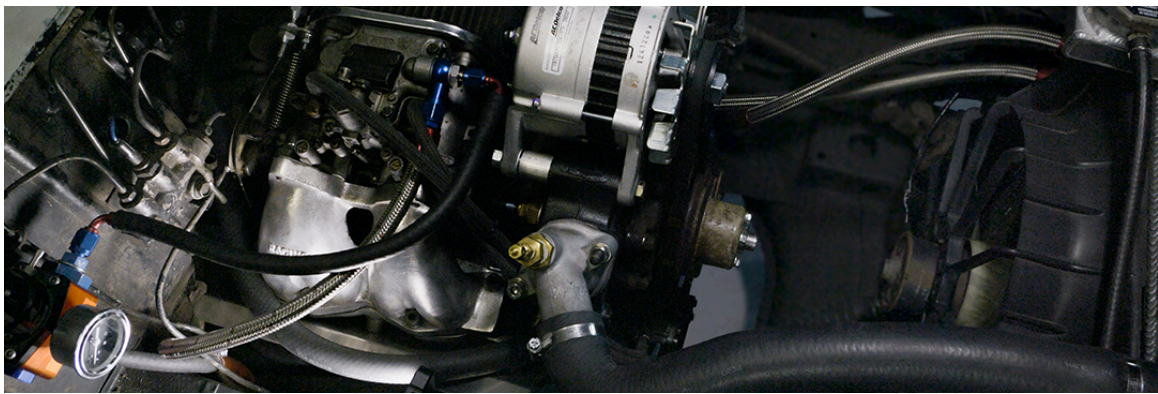
"Most people wouldn't expect this car does not have the original engine. It's been swapped with a Mazda RX-7 driveline."



Getting one wasn't easy. Datsun Roadsters are rare around here, and Eric had tried and missed on two before this car surfaced. What made this one worth chasing harder was under the hood. Somewhere along the way the original engine had been pulled and swapped for a Mazda RX-7 12A rotary, a 1.1L that's been worked over to make around 150 hp. For a lifelong Mazda fan who'd wanted an old Japanese car for years, the combination was exactly right. He worked a little harder and he made it his.

The catch is that the car was barely running when he bought it. The listing was, in his words, “semi-misrepresented”, and it ran just well enough to crawl onto a trailer. It had been sitting for about 12 years. Eric put roughly 120 hours into it before he trusted it on the road, and he was learning on the fly the whole time. Two unfamiliar cars at once, really. The Datsun chassis on one hand, the Mazda driveline on the other, and a carburetor sitting where three decades of fuel-injection instinct expected something else. This car is old enough that it still uses American SAE fasteners, so even reaching for the right wrench meant unlearning a few habits. More than once he’d go digging through the Datsun service manual for a problem that actually lived in the Mazda half of the car.

"With a carburetor, you're a screwdriver's turn away from fixing your problem and getting on with your day."



Here's the part Eric didn't expect. Once it was set up and tuned, the thing has been dead reliable. As someone who's spent a career at the mercy of a laptop and a tuner, he's found something freeing in a car you can fix with a screwdriver. "You're a screwdriver's turn away from potentially fixing your problem and getting on with your day," he says, and it changed his mind about what owning an old carbureted car is actually like. He drives it three or four days a week whenever the weather's good, his wife along for the ride, and it's put close to 2,000 miles on the clock since he sorted the basics. A self-described tattooed ginger who doesn't love the sun, he never pictured himself a convertible guy, so he added a hard top to stretch the driving season.

There's no radio in it, and he has no plans to add one. The soundtrack is the 12A breathing through a side-draft carburetor, a noise that's unmistakable to anyone who knows rotaries and confusing to everyone else. People have asked him if it's a two-stroke. It's happy revving to around 8,000 rpm, and Eric will tell you that's the whole point. He built the rest of the car to stay quiet about itself. The paint and the non-standard blue interior aside, he's kept the look close to original on purpose. He likes cars that don't stop everybody, the kind where the small things reward the people who bother to look closer.

"The most important thing with older cars is using them. The worst thing for them is sitting."



Funny thing is, this one stops everybody anyway. Eric owns another car that's nicer in every measurable way, and the little Datsun still gets all the attention. He can't drive it anywhere without someone flagging him down. He bought it as a placeholder while another project was on hold, figured he'd sort it, enjoy it and move it along. Instead it's carved out a permanent spot in the garage next to his other forever car, a 2005 Subaru STI. There's always an hour of small improvements he can put in before a weekend drive, and for a guy whose other cars carry big problems, a car he can just hop in and use has become the one he reaches for.

If you take anything from Eric on old cars, take this. Drive them. "The worst thing for them is sitting," he says. It's the same logic he'd apply to a person. Keep moving and you stay limber, and a car is no different. Before you buy one, get a pre-purchase inspection from someone who actually understands the car. He tells people to spend a few hundred to a thousand dollars up front to learn the truth before the car is yours, and buy the nicest example you can afford. His Datsun is proof that the right old car, driven the way it was meant to be driven, will more than earn its keep.



What's on the Calendar

Glendale Gathering 2026 – Thank You

First, a belated thank-you to everyone who stopped by the Glendale Gathering in June — we know, we know, this one's coming in a little late. But good shows deserve to be acknowledged regardless of the postmark. It was a great turnout, the cars were excellent, and we always come away from that village square grateful for the community that keeps showing up. Familiar faces and a few new ones — that's exactly what these things are for.

Zakira's Cars 'n' Coffee – August 15

- Back lot of Zakira's Garage - Blue Ash

We're hoping for sunny skies and an even sunnier turnout. The service entrance will be open if you need to escape the weather for a bit — just note, no shop tours this time around. Come

for the coffee, stay for whatever rolls in.

Our final Cars 'n' Coffee of the season is Saturday, September 20, same time, same lot — after that we'll see you at the Fall Open House in October. Make the last two count.

Bellefontaine Hill Climb Revival 8 – August 21 - 22

- Corkscrew Hill - Zanesfield, Ohio - [Register Here](#)

Zakira's will be back on-site at the Hill Climb this year, providing tech inspection services for participants. If you're running a car — or just coming out to watch — this is one of the best days on the Ohio motorsport calendar. The Hill Climb is the longest-running public road competition in the state's history (1953–1974), and the revival keeps getting better. Last year hit 70 cars on the hill — more than any previous year.

Registration closes Tuesday, August 18.

Fall Classic Driving Tour – October 10 | 9:30 AM – 5:00 PM

- Sports Car Preservation HQ - Milford, Ohio - [Register Here](#)



The Final Pylon...

Summer's not done yet — and neither are we. There's still a hill climb, a couple of Saturdays in the back lot, a driving tour winding down to the river and a Fall Open House to go before we call it a season. Thanks to everyone in the local car community for the steady support — whether you swing by Cars 'n' Coffee, pop in for service, or just read along. Your enthusiasm keeps the shop humming.



ZAKIRA'S
GARAGE

As always, if you need anything automotive, please call us at [\(513\) 272-2229](tel:5132722229), email us at info@zakiras.com, check out www.zakiras.com or just stop by the shop 9 AM - 5 PM Monday through Friday in Blue Ash at 4480 Lake Forest Dr., #314, Cincinnati, OH 45242.

***We thank you for your continued business
and we'll see you on the road!!***

Regards,
your Team at Zakira's