

1968 Datsun 2000 Road Test

from the article

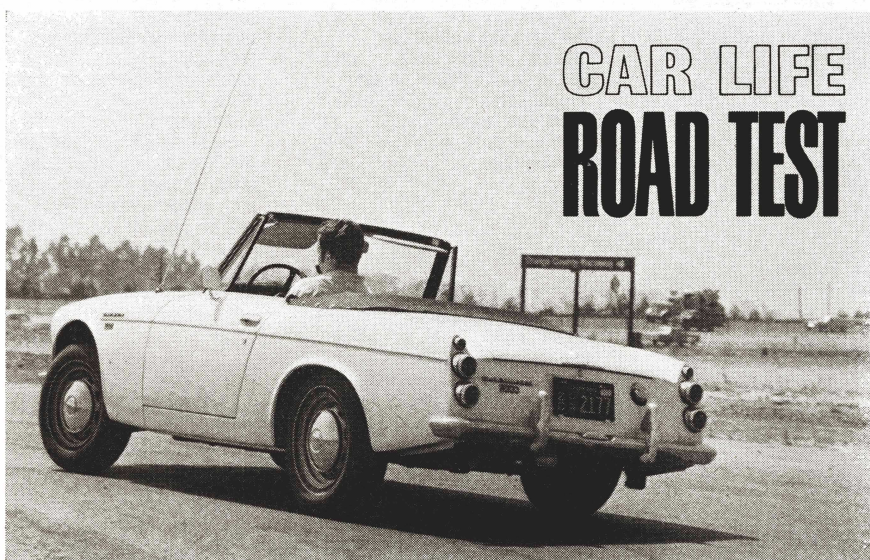
MOVE OVER, WORLD

**Here come the Japanese.
They've staked a claim on the automotive market.**

by Jim Hamilton, Editor, Car Life

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DATSUN SPORTS 2000



Datsun is second to Toyota in sales both in Japan and the United States. Possibly as a consequence, Datsun has concentrated its range of cars in the most popular of the current import

markets; sports and economy cars.

The Datsun 2000 Sports, a two-place sports car, is at the top of the factory's range. It would be unfair to compare it with Toyota's 2000 GT. The Datsun is

for sale, for one thing, while the Toyota isn't ready yet. Projected price of the grand touring car is \$7000, while the Datsun 2000 with tachometer, electric clock, tonneau cover and whitewall tires as standard equipment, sells for \$2998.

With the 2000, Datsun begins to reverse that copying criticism. Several years ago, long enough so that it would be fair to forget about it, Datsun built engines under license from British Motor Corp. The early Datsun engines had an unmistakable MG look. But with the new 2000, the owner can indulge in the time-honored American sport of tweaking the British lion's tail by letting Englishmen examine the engine.

The 2000 is powered by an in-line four-cylinder 121-cid engine. It's topped by an overhead camshaft, while the current MG engine has rocker arms as it did in 1936. The Datsun 2000 has a five-speed transmission with all five speeds synchronized. MG owners figuratively threw their checked caps in the air this year when the factory finally got around to synchronizing all four speeds. MG might have a five-speed gearbox in, say, the next generation. ►

MADE IN JAPAN

continued

The American market is a power market. The 2000 engine is the older Datsun 1600 engine, with a longer stroke to increase the displacement to 121 cid. (The still-continued 1600, with only a four-speed gearbox, has 39 fewer horses.) The overhead cam activates rocker arms which in turn act on the valves. The lightweight gear train lets the 2000 engine wind up, with the 135-bhp maximum coming at 6000 rpm. It's a big four-cylinder engine, though, and begins to vibrate (more a tooting than a shake), at 4000. The factory sets the redline at 7000, a tribute to their faith in the product and to the sturdy lower end. Even so, road test acceleration times were taken with shifts at 6500. The engine would go higher, but the driver lost heart.

The lightweight valve train pays off in other ways. Good breathing lets the factory use a mild camshaft. The 2000 is flexible with torque all through the rev range.

Performance is brisk. A quarter-mile time of 17.6 sec. put the 2000 even with the average full-size American car, and

certainly with the 2000's imported competitors. The Datsun driver won't blow the doors off the cheater-slick set, but he won't be mumbling excuses about all those cubic inches either. Given proper use of the gearbox and the engine's willingness to wind, the 2000 merges nimbly on the freeway, and zaps through traffic in a manner delightful to the driver, if nobody else.

The extra gearing pays off all the time. Supercar buyers, tired of hearing the engine at speed mile after mile, sometimes wonder if there isn't some way they could have drag gears on Sunday and highway gears the rest of the time. There is. All they have to do is talk more manufacturers into using five-speed transmissions.

The Datsun 2000 has a rear axle ratio of 3.70:1. It's a good choice for driving around town, with extra power available at the cost of extra engine speed, just like Supercars Fourth gear is direct. Fifth gear is an overdrive, and the effective final drive ratio in fifth is 3.15:1. At an indicated 70 (actually 68), the engine of our test car turned a hair over 3000, and it felt capable of cruising around the world without breathing hard.

The lower gear ratios are close to ideal for in-town driving. Starts are

easy, and the engine winds comfortable and drops back in each gear to just the right speed for adequate acceleration. The Porsche-type synchronizers are hard to beat. There are, however, one or two gaps at steady speed. At 40, for example, the engine sounds buzzy in third and the driver feels cruel in fourth.

The shift pattern is standard four-speed, with fifth and reverse in an extra slot to the right of the "H". Datsun guards against accidental selection of the wrong gear, as in shifting from second to fifth, with a heavy spring detent. There's a spring on the other side, too, guarding first and second, but it's lighter and no trouble except to the very touchy, or testers looking for something to complain about. While nit-picking, Datsun might consider moving the handbrake an inch or so further from the gearshift. With the brake set, reverse must be selected with the palm of the hand or at the cost of a squashed little finger.

The suspension is conventional, independent in front, with upper and lower control arms, coil springs and an antiroll bar, and a live rear axle riding on semi-elliptic springs. When a Detroit manufacturer with the same system feels compelled to offer a handling

1968 DATSUN 2000 CONVERTIBLE



DIMENSIONS

Wheelbase, in.	89.8
Track, f/r, in.	50.2/47.2
Overall length, in.	155.7
width	58.9
height	52.2
Front seat hip room, in.	20.0 x 2
shoulder room	44.25
head room	36.5
pedal-seatback, max.	40.5
Rear seat hip room, in.	n.a.
shoulder room	n.a.
leg room	n.a.
head room	n.a.
Door opening width, in.	33.5
Trunk liftover height, in.	27.0

PRICES

List, FOB factory	\$2996
Equipped as tested	\$3136
Options included: Radial tires.	

CAPACITIES

No. of passengers	2
Luggage space, cu. ft.	3.8
Fuel tank, gal.	11.36
Crankcase, qt.	5.15
Transmission/dif., pt.	5.5/2
Radiator coolant, qt.	9.2

CHASSIS/SUSPENSION

Frame type:	Unitized.
Front suspension type:	Independent by s.l.a., coil springs and hydraulic shock absorbers.
ride rate at wheel, lb./in.	n.a.
antiroll bar dia., in.	0.625
Rear suspension type:	Hotchkiss drive, with trailing control arms, semi-elliptic leaf springs and hydraulic shock absorbers.
ride rate at wheel, lb./in.	n.a.
Steering system:	Cam and lever.
overall ratio	14.8:1
turns, lock to lock	2.5
turning circle, ft. curb-curb	32.16
Curb weight, lb.	2180
Test weight	2500
Distribution (driver), % f/r	52.5/47.5

BRAKES

Type:	Solid discs, front; hydraulic drums, rear.
Front rotor, dia. x width, in.	11.18 x 1.87
Rear drum, dia. x width	9 x 1.57
total swept area, sq. in.	310
Power assist:	None
line psi at 100 lb. pedal	n.a.

WHEELS/TIRES

Wheel rim size	14 x 4.5
optional size	none
bolt no./circle dia. in.	4/4.5
Tires:	Goodyear.
size	175R-14
normal inflation, psi f/r	24/24
Capacity @ psi	4200 @ 24

ENGINE

Type, no. of cyl.	ohc 1L-4
Bore x stroke, in.	3.43 x 3.27
Displacement, cu. in.	120.9
Compression ratio	9.5:1
Fuel required	premium
Rated bhp @ rpm	135 @ 6000
equivalent mph	132
Rated torque @ rpm	132 @ 4400
equivalent mph	97
Carburetion:	Hitachi 2x1.
throttle dia.	1.73
Valve train:	Overhead cam, rocker arms.
cam timing	
deg., int./exh.	18-58/58-18
duration, int./exh.	256/256
Exhaust system:	Cast iron headers; single reverse-flow mufflers.
pipe dia., exh./tail	1.75/1.50
Normal oil press. @ rpm	75/4000
Electrical supply, V./amp.	12/30
Battery, plates/amp. hr.	n.a./50

DRIVE TRAIN

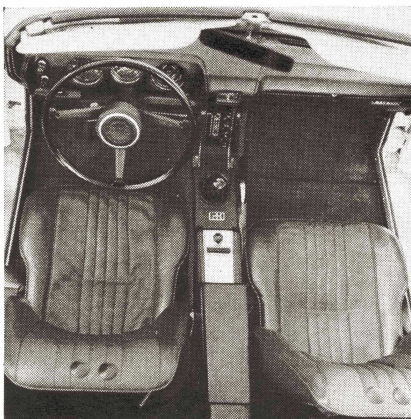
Clutch type:	Single dry plate.
dia., in.	7.87
Transmission type:	Five-speed manual, all synchromesh.
Gear ratio 5th (0.852) overall	3.15:1
4th (1.00:1)	3.70:1
3rd (1.311:1)	4.85:1
2nd (1.858:1)	6.88:1
1st (2.957:1)	10.95:1
Shift lever location:	Console.
Differential type:	Hypoid.
axle ratio	3.70:1

package, he uses the same components, but stiffer. So does Datsun, but it didn't work.

The ideal would be a soft ride in a straight line and firm resistance to side forces in curves. The 2000 is the reverse; the softness on corners is equalled by harshness on the straights. It bottoms, or feels like it, over seams in pavement. A drainage dip puts driver, passenger and parcels in the air. Maybe the English would take credit for the vintage ride.

Datsun is active in Sports Car Club of America amateur road racing. They do fairly well. Determination, enthusiasm, a strong engine and wide, wide tires can overcome many obstacles. Racing fans who long for the good old days of flying elbows and jutting jaws are advised to go to the sports car races and watch the Datsun drivers on tight corners. Busier men you'll seldom see.

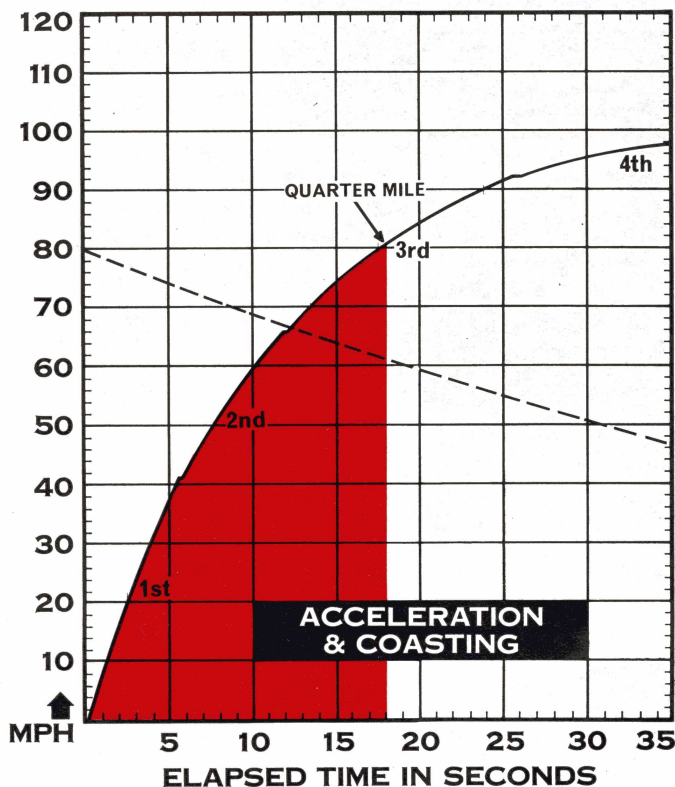
The steering is fine—light, positive, and without the wheel fight that usually shows up when bounding over bumpy roads in a lightweight car. The ratio is a little slow for vigorous driving, but it's pleasantly insensitive at high speed on straight roads. The 2000 tracks well, allowing for the squirmy feel of extra-cost Goodyear radial tires, and the car is insensitive to crosswinds.



LOOK FOR the 2000 emblem on the flank to distinguish Datsun's newest roadster. Once behind the wheel, the difference from the still-continued 1600 is apparent in the 39 additional bhp and a five-speed gearbox. Radial ply tires are options.



CAR LIFE ROAD TEST



CALCULATED DATA

Lb./bhp (test weight)	18.52
Cu. ft./ton mile	81.25
Mph/1000 rpm (high gear)	22
Engine revs/mile (60 mph)	2720
Piston travel, ft./mile	1460
CAR LIFE wear index	41.2
Frontal area, sq. ft.	17.05

SPEEDOMETER ERROR

30 mph, actual	29.05
40 mph	38.15
50 mph	48.80
60 mph	57.40
70 mph	67.77
80 mph	76.53
90 mph	87.30

MAINTENANCE

Engine oil, miles/days	3000
oil filter, miles/days	6000
Chassis lubrication, miles	6000
Antismog servicing, type/miles	check engine tune, PCV valve, air pump and fittings/12,000
Air cleaner, miles	clean at 2,000, replace at 11,000
Spark plugs: NGK-BPGE.	
gap (in.)	28-31
Basic timing, deg./rpm	TDC 600
max. cent. adv., deg./rpm	n.a.
max. vac. adv., deg./in. Hg.	n.a.
Ignition point gap, in.	0.018-0.022
cam dwell angle, deg.	n.a.
arm tension, oz.	n.a.
Tappet clearance,	
int./exh.	0.008/0.012
Fuel pressure at idle, psi	n.a.
Radiator cap relief press., psi	n.a.

PERFORMANCE

Top speed (6100), mph	114
Test shift points (rpm) @ mph	
3rd to 4th (6500)	92.9
2nd to 3rd (6500)	65.6
1st to 2nd (6500)	41.1

ACCELERATION

0-30 mph, sec.	3.5
0-40 mph	5.6
0-50 mph	7.7
0-60 mph	10.3
0-70 mph	13.4
0-80 mph	17.4
0-90 mph	23.7
Standing 1/4-mile, sec.	17.6
speed at end, mph	80.5
Passing, 30-70 mph, sec.	9.9

BRAKING

Max. deceleration rate from 80 mph	ft./sec./sec. 30
No. of stops from 80 mph (60-sec. intervals) before 20% loss in deceleration rate	10% after 8
Control loss? Slight.	
Overall brake performance..excellent	

FUEL CONSUMPTION

Test conditions, mpg	22.0
Normal cond., mpg	22-28
Cruising range, miles	250-318

MADE IN JAPAN

continued

Braking is great. The 2000 has discs in front and drums in back as standard equipment. With its large-section radial tires, the 2000 recorded a deceleration rate of 30 ft./sec.² on CAR LIFE's first test stop from 80 mph. On the eighth hard stop the rate had dropped—to 29 ft./sec.². The car was easy to control, with very little tendency to swerve, throughout the tests. The brakes have a high initial deceleration rate, no control loss and no fade. That's what it takes for an excellent rating, and the 2000 rates it.

The car's top is an obvious Americanism that isn't. It's high, almost to the point of absurdity. The conclusion first leapt to is that Datsun knew about tall Americans, and allowed for extra headroom, plus. Datsun factory representatives say it isn't that simple; that the top was raised, so to speak, by the American safety regulations. Seems there's a minimum area that must be swept by the windshield wipers. Datsun was in the position of the housewife who needs dirt before she can begin spring cleaning. The total windshield

area was less than the federal government's minimum to be swept. The solution was to increase the area, by raising the windshield one inch. There's such a thing as researching a story too far, so the factory men weren't asked about the note in the shop manual that the added height was to increase visibility.

However the top went up, getting it down is tricky. With its accompanying flaps, folds and pouches, the top has more snaps than the Lawrence Welk show. It doesn't compress easily, either, and the desperate driver usually winds up pushing the top behind the seats, then hiding the jumble under the tonneau cover.

Datsun 2000 styling is Contemporary Humdrum. The basic body has been decorated, as they do in Detroit when All-New time rolls around and they've got to get one more year out of the old tooling. The 2000 has a big hood scoop that narrows down before it scoops in much air, and front wheel arches to cover tires already covered by the fenders, and rear lights tacked on a flat panel.

Inside, though, things get better. There is plenty of head room, hat room for that matter, and leg room, more than in many larger cars. The semi-bucket seats are comfortable, and the

seat backs can be adjusted for rake. The steering wheel is a trifle high, and the wheel and the pedals are far apart. A driver of average length may find that his feet are a fraction of an inch too short. He slides the seat forward, and finds that his arms are now a fraction of an inch too long. It's a surmountable problem, and drivers of all sizes will be accommodated without too much trouble. The headlight dimmer switch is on the right of the steering column, part of a stalk that also controls the turn signals. The floor space where the dimmer switch isn't anymore is occupied by a foot rest, against which the driver can brace himself when cornering as sportingly as is possible. Very useful.

The entire cockpit is well thought out. There's a full set of instruments, legible and big enough to be read quickly. The heater and defroster heat and defrost, and the dashboard and console both have storage bins. The space behind the seats is big enough for a suitcase. That's worthwhile because the trunk isn't big enough for a suitcase.

In sum, the 2000 isn't a very sporting sports car. Instead, it's a peppy little convertible. Judging from the sales figures, that seems to be what a lot of people are looking for. ■