



SCOTT MALCOLM PHOTOS



DATSUN SPORTS 1600

More for the money than any other sports car in its class

DATSUN WHEN WE FIRST encountered the Datsun sports car—the SPL-310 it was called then—we weren't very favorably impressed. Three years have passed since, however, and though the car's looks haven't changed appreciably we're happy to report that it has been developed into a highly satisfactory car.

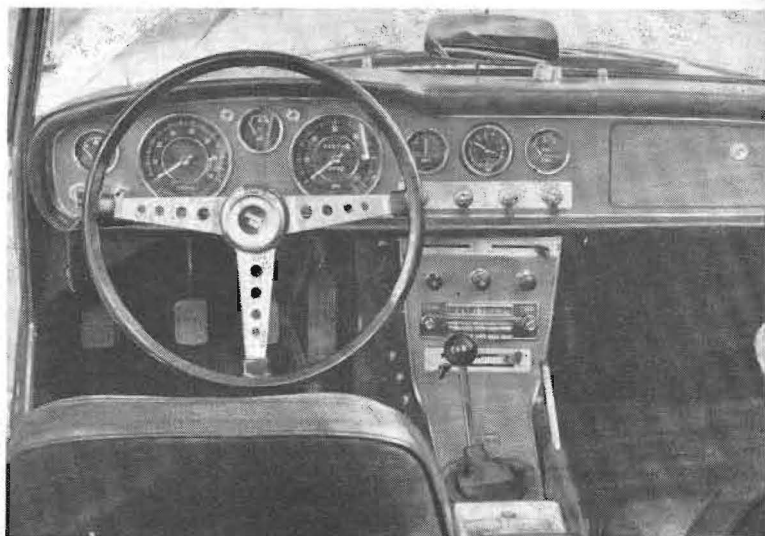
The exterior is little changed. The grille is a bit different, with a horizontal bar motif in place of small rectangles, the chrome strip on the side has been attractively re-positioned, the handle has been discarded from the trunk in favor of a key-turn lock, the trim now says "1600" where it used to say "1500" and there are 14-in. wheels where 13s were used before.

The interior shows more changes, and these are all for the better, we think. The top, for example, was previously one of those that had to be removed completely, bracing and all, and stowed in the trunk. Now it is a simpler fold-back type and when folded down can be very neatly covered with a smooth-fitting boot. The folding process is a bit involved, however,

and the top drums at speed. Another improvement comes from discarding the sideways third seat behind the passenger. Now there's a lightly padded shelf which could still accommodate the odd extra short-haul passenger but serves more effectively for parcel or luggage space. A console has been ➡

DATSUN SPORTS 1600 AT A GLANCE

Price as tested.....	\$2621
Engine.....	4 cyl, ohv, 1595 cc, 96 bhp
Curb weight, lb.....	2085
Top speed, mph.....	101
Acceleration, 0-¼ mi, sec.....	19.9
Average fuel consumption, mpg.....	23
Summary: vintage sports car feel with modern accommodations & weather protection... brakes and gearbox greatly improved since 1500-cc model... excellent value for money.	



DATSUN SPORTS 1600

added over the driveshaft tunnel, which gives a nice finished look and also includes a locking map box with a padded top that doubles as an arm rest. The instrument panel has also been re-done into two major dials plus separate smaller dials, instead of four equal-size dials with clustered minor instruments.

Then there are the mechanical changes. First, the engine is larger, with slightly more power. This wasn't done simply by running out the bore but by increasing it from 3.15 to 3.43 in. and at the same time reducing the stroke from 2.91 to 2.63. This has the effect of lowering the piston speed (it was 1660 ft/mi and has been reduced to 1430), and thereby increasing the safe rev range. The earlier engine developed its 85 bhp at 5600 rpm, for example, while the 1600 gets its maximum, 96 bhp, at 6000.

The next important change is the new all-synchromesh 4-speed gearbox. This gearbox is superior in every respect and is as good as any 4-speed manual we've ever driven. In our test car, which had more than 5000 miles on the odometer, the gearbox was quiet, the linkage crisp and light, and the synchromesh faultless.

The third major mechanical change is the brakes. These are now a very effective disc/drum front/rear combination in place of the 9-in. drums that weren't very impressive on the earlier model. During our panic-stop braking test from 80 mph the control was excellent and the deceleration rate a thoroughly respectable 78% g. There was a moderate 50% increase in pedal pressure (from 50 to 75 lb) during our 6-stops-from-60 fade test, but there was no loss of stability and hardly even an odor of cooked pad material. We rate the brakes as Very Good, a rating earned by less than a quarter of all the cars we test.

So how does it drive? Classically. The suspension is not exotic—independent at front, live axle with semi-elliptic leaf springs at rear—and the settings are stiff. There is strictly limited rear suspension travel, which can give you quite a jolt on a dip, and everything conspires to keep you informed of the exact condition of the road surface at low speed. At higher speeds, say cruising on a highway at 70 mph, the ride is nicely smoothed out and comfortable.

The driving position is a bit cramped for drivers over six feet tall, but certainly no more so than in most sports cars this size. The array of instruments in front of the driver is impressive. Every vital function in the Datsun is reported on a dial; warning lights report only turn signals and high beams.



The engine requires a lot of choke when starting from dead cold, but this function is taken care of by a notched choke pull that makes it convenient to feed it back a click at a time as the engine warms up. We weren't able to test the heater in any really cold weather but we noted that there is a 2-speed blower and that the heater was quick to take the chill off on a cool California morning. Ventilation for both driver and passenger is good, as there are separately controlled vents to bring in cool air from outside.

The ride and handling of the Datsun 1600 Sports were described by one of our drivers as "pure vintage sports car." It is fun to drive for this reason. With the tires inflated to the recommended 22 psi, the rubber affords an audible warning system related to cornering speeds and it's lots of fun to go howling around flat corners with the tires a-squeal and in an easily controlled slide. It is a predictable car to drive close to its limits and with the good steering, the good gearbox, and the good brakes, it would be a near-ideal car in which to learn to drive sports car style with double-clutched downshifts, tail flicked out, a little opposite lock to catch the rear end and the whole enjoyable drill. Incidentally, Datsun is serious about racing in this country and will have active factory teams in both the east and west parts of the U.S.

And we must comment on the equipment and accessories that are included in the \$2621 list price because they make the Datsun one of the most completely equipped sports cars on the market at any price. The car comes with complete instrumentation, radio, locking antenna, tonneau cover, boot cover, center console, scuff plates on the doors and sills, carpeting, cigar lighter, map light, seat belts, heater with 2-speed blower, windshield washers, locking map box, white sidewall tires, outside mirror, back-up light, and probably some other things we've overlooked. You equip any other sports car on the market with comparable equipment and it'll cost you considerably more than a Datsun 1600 Sports.

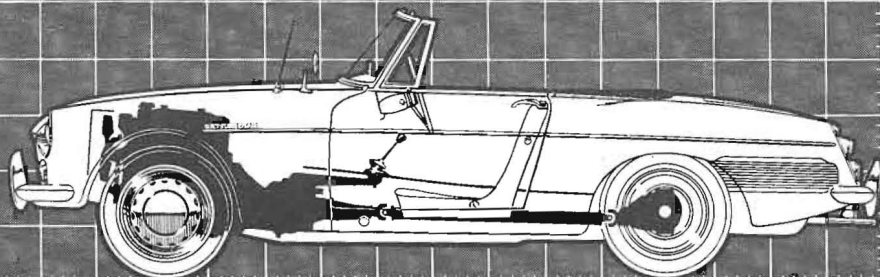
What could we find to complain about? Not much. Oh, there's the jouncy ride, a rattle here and there, and a big induction roar; but if you have never had a vintage sports car you should try it before you decide you don't like it. The seats themselves are a bit uncomfortable for the broad of beam, as there seems to be a frame member right under each hip socket and the backs of the seats are so flat and narrow as to offer no lateral support. We might also point out that the carpeting in our 5000-mile-old model was beginning to get scuffed out of shape. We'd suggest a supplemental rubber mat to take care of that.

But none of this detracts seriously from our conclusion that the Datsun 1600 Sports offers more for the money than any other sports car in the low-priced field.





ROAD TEST DATSUN SPORTS 1600



SCALE: 10" DIVISIONS

PRICE

Basic list.....\$2621
As tested.....\$2621

ENGINE

Type.....inline 4-cyl, ohv
Bore x stroke, mm.....87.2 x 66.8
Equivalent in.....3.43 x 2.63
Displacement, cc/cu in.....1595/97.3
Compression ratio.....9.0:1
Bhp @ rpm.....96 @ 6000
Equivalent mph.....111
Torque @ rpm, lb-ft. 103 @ 4000
Equivalent mph.....73
Carburetion.....2 Hitachi HJB 38W-3
Type fuel required.....premium

DRIVE TRAIN

Clutch diameter, in.....7.9
Gear ratios: 4th (1.00).....3.89:1
3rd (1.31).....5.10:1
2nd (2.01).....7.83:1
1st (3.38).....13.2:1
Synchronesh.....on all 4
Final drive ratio.....3.89:1
Optional ratios.....4.11:1

CHASSIS & BODY

Body/frame: pressed steel box rails with X-member.
Brake type: 11.2-in. discs front, 9.0-in. drums rear.
Swept area, sq in.....310
Wheel type.....steel disc
Tires.....Toyo 5.60-14
Steering type.....cam & lever
Overall ratio.....14.8:1
Turns, lock-to-lock.....2.5
Turning circle, ft.....32.0
Front suspension: independent with A-arms, coil springs, tube shocks, anti-roll bar.
Rear suspension: live axle with semi-elliptic leaf springs, tube shocks.

STANDARD EQUIPMENT

Included in "as tested" price: radio, windshield washer, white-wall tires, clock, tonneau cover, seat belts.

ACCOMMODATION

Seating capacity, persons.....2
Seat width.....2 x 16.5
Head room.....39.5
Seat back adjustment, deg.....0
Driver comfort rating (scale of 100):
Driver 69 in. tall.....75
Driver 72 in. tall.....70
Driver 75 in. tall.....65

INSTRUMENTATION

Instruments: 120-mph speedometer, 7000-rpm tachometer, water temperature, oil pressure, ammeter, fuel level, clock, trip odometer.
Warning lights: directionals, high beam.

MAINTENANCE

Crankcase capacity, qt.....4
Change interval, mi.....3000
Filter change interval, mi.....6000
Chassis lube interval, mi.....6000
Tire pressures, psi.....22/22

MISCELLANEOUS

Body styles available: roadster (as tested).
Warranty period, mo./mi. 12/12000

GENERAL

Curb weight, lb.....2085
Test weight.....2450
Weight distribution (with driver), front/rear, %.....51/49
Wheelbase, in.....89.8
Track, front/rear.....50.0/47.1
Overall length.....155.6
Width.....58.9
Height.....51.4
Frontal area, sq ft.....16.8
Ground clearance, in.....7.2
Overhang, front/rear.....28.2/37.6
Usable trunk space, cu ft.....3.8
Fuel tank capacity, gal.....11.4

CALCULATED DATA

Lb/hp (test wt).....25.5
Mph/1000 rpm (4th gear).....18.4
Engine revs/mi (60 mph).....3260
Piston travel, ft/mi.....1430
Rpm @ 2500 ft/min.....5700
Equivalent mph.....105
Cu ft/ton mi.....74.8
R&T wear index.....46.6
Brake swept area sq in/ton.....253

ROAD TEST RESULTS

ACCELERATION

Time to distance, sec:
0-100 ft.....3.8
0-250 ft.....6.9
0-500 ft.....10.8
0-750 ft.....13.9
0-1000 ft.....16.7
0-1320 ft (1/4 mi).....19.9
Speed at end of 1/4 mi, mph.....70
Time to speed, sec:
0-30 mph.....5.0
0-40 mph.....7.1
0-50 mph.....9.6
0-60 mph.....13.3
0-70 mph.....19.9
0-80 mph.....31.5
Passing exposure time, sec:
To pass car going 50 mph.....7.8

FUEL CONSUMPTION

Normal driving, mpg.....21-26
Cruising range, mi.....240-300

SPEEDS IN GEARS

4th gear (5500 rpm), mph.....101
3rd (6000).....84
2nd (6000).....55
1st (6000).....32

BRAKES

Panic stop from 80 mph:
Deceleration, % g.....78
Control.....very good
Fade test: percent of increase in pedal effort required to maintain 50%-g deceleration rate in six stops from 60 mph.....50%
Parking brake: hold 30% grade, yes
Overall brake rating.....very good

SPEEDOMETER ERROR

30 mph indicated.....actual 29.1
40 mph.....39.1
60 mph.....58.4
80 mph.....77.4
Odometer, 10.0 mi.....actual 9.96

ACCELERATION & COASTING

