

Driving Godzilla

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Nissan is not a name that most people would associate with supercars but the GT-R can hold its own against the European competition. Godzilla, as it is nicknamed, is a monster that has a small yet dedicated band of followers in China.

This year, the Nismo will be rolled out in various markets. However, with no Nismo available, we picked up the current top of the range premium edition from Nissan's global headquarters in Yokohama, Japan. Decked out in black, the car cuts a menacing appearance with its low-slung body. There is little mistaking this beast for anything but an all-out performance machine. And the limited amount of Nissan branding is telling. The badges at the front and on the steering wheel merely say GT-R. On the boot there is a Nissan badge, but this is nearly matched in size by a lower mounted model insignia.

Controls have been ergonomically designed around the driver. The dials, touch screen infotainment system and wing mirrors have all been placed at the same eye level. In a rare triumph of function over form, the whole effect of the console gives a somewhat dated appearance. At the bottom are three very old-school looking set-up switches to control transmission, shock absorbers and vehicle dynamic control – the distribution of torque between the four wheels. When on the move, the tactility of these mean you are able to make changes without taking your eyes off the road.

While there are definite touches of luxury, the emphasis is on performance

rather than opulence. There is a liberal use of leather with hand stitched seats, leather trim on the steering wheel and parts of the dashboard. However, there is no sunroof, and the seven-inch touch screen is angled towards the driver giving readouts for information such as the g-force sustained in turns and braking and acceleration pressure.

Seating configuration is 2+2, and like many sports cars the rear seats are only realistically usable by small children on anything but the shortest journeys. Boot space is reasonable and can supposedly accommodate two sets of golf clubs – although you need to lift luggage over a high lip, making loading difficult.

Power for all GT-Rs is courtesy of a hand built V6 3.8 litre twin turbo engine. Up until now, this produced a highly respectable 353kW, but in the Nismo edition this is set to rise to the blistering heights of 441kW. Crawling through town,

the engine burbles away, but put your foot down, and the speed climbs at a lightening rate. Power is delivered to all four wheels meaning incredible road holding and grip. With its low centre of gravity, Nissan claim Godzilla performs better in snowy conditions than an SUV.

Controlling the power is a specially designed six-speed, dual clutch automatic gearbox. When driven as an automatic, emphasis is placed on the most efficient gear selection. Drop it into manual, and the fun really begins. Unlike many manual modes, this one does not override driver inputs, and so you really do need to change up using the paddles. This allows you to get the most out of the angry Godzilla.

Prices in China start at RMB 1,505,000. Currently, the Nismo version hasn't been officially announced for the Middle Kingdom, but will no doubt be available soon on the grey market for those with the need for speed and the cash to back it up.



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