



# Gateway Relay

Vol III, No. 7

St Louis Sports Car Council

March 2014

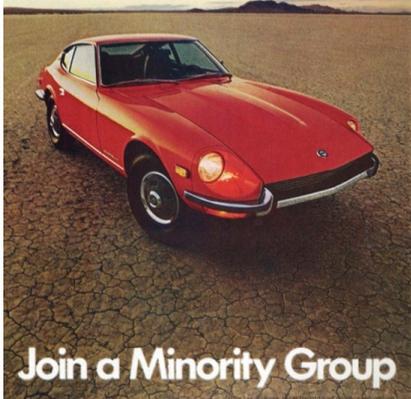
## Council News & Notes

- And with this edition of *Relay* we welcome another club to the fold: the Gateway Z Club. The group dates to 1976 and lays claim to being one of the oldest active Z clubs in the country. Its members own and enjoy 240Zs, 260Zs, 280Zs, 280Zxs, 300Zxs, 350Zs, 370Zs and 240SXs. They hold an annual car show (usually in the fall), participate in regional and national Z activities and apparently like to get out and drive, so they should fit in fine. If someone from Gateway Z shows up for one of your club drives, say hello and make 'em feel at home.
- Only one month to go until the resumption of Cars & Coffee for the season, as well as the start of the Boeing Sports Car Club autocross season. And yes, the drives and other events are starting to come fast and furious; the annual huge Horseless Carriage Club of Missouri Forest Park Easter Concours is in about five weeks. More than enough to keep everyone scrambling, eh?
- Finally, for all clubs, you may have noticed we regularly publish "out of area" major regional club events, generally within a two-state area. Baring unforeseen circumstance, we'll keep the info coming. Drive 'em!

The Datsun 240-Z is not exactly what you'd call a common sight. Those who've been able to get their hands on one are a fortunate few. They report being the center of attention wherever they park. Their biggest problem is keeping the fingerprints wiped up.

At first we figured it was a combination of a new car and glowing reviews in car magazines. But now the car has been out a few months. The car books have used all their ad-

**DATSUN**  
PRODUCT OF NISSAN



jectives. And the Z-Car is still drawing crowds. There's only one explanation left. Our sexy GT car with its 150-horsepower overhead cam engine and four-wheel independent suspension just plain turns people on. And with a price of \$3,596\* (complete) we've bogged some minds that could never afford to be bogged by a GT car before.

So join our minority group. If you're thinking of a GT, do yourself a favor. Drive a Datsun... then decide.

## Up & Coming

- 16 Mar 2014—MG Club of St Louis Pinewood Derby**, 2 PM at The Gas House Grill, 12643 Olive Blvd, Creve Coeur, see [www.stlouismgclub.com/events-calendar/](http://www.stlouismgclub.com/events-calendar/).
- 17 Mar 2014—MG Club of St Louis Tech Session No. 3**, 7 PM at British Cars Restorations & Services, 2336 N Lindbergh 63114, MGA and MG TD brake conversions. Info at [www.stlouismgclub.com/events-calendar/](http://www.stlouismgclub.com/events-calendar/).
- 20 Mar 2014—Gathering of the Royal & Grand Order of RUBCO** (Retired/Unemployed British Car Owners), hosted by the MG Club of St Louis, 9:30 AM, Denny's, 11266 Midland Blvd, east of Lindbergh/north of Page. Info at [www.stlouismgclub.com/events-calendar/](http://www.stlouismgclub.com/events-calendar/).
- 21 Mar 2014—Sonic Drive-In Weekly Cruise**, 1002 S Kirkwood Rd at Big Bend, 6 PM to 10 PM, all makes/models welcome; the participants tend towards American heavy metal and rods but the cars are highly entertaining. Hosted by the Outsiders Car Club, 50/50 drawing with proceeds to the Wounded Warriors Project. Event continues every Friday until 31 October.
- 22 Mar 2014—Annual Terry Fanning Memorial Rally**, hosted by the MG Club of St Louis. Meet at 10:30 at Starbucks, Manchester and Taylor in Wildwood; drivers meeting at 10:45, cars out at 11 AM. Drive to Washington for lunch, stops planned for use with the Moss Motors 2014 Challenge. Monitor [www.stlouismgclub.com/events-calendar/](http://www.stlouismgclub.com/events-calendar/).
- 22 Mar 2014—Early Spring Run**, hosted by the Gateway Z Club. A drive on the back-road twisties of Monroe County, IL; details to follow, monitor [www.gatewayzclub.com](http://www.gatewayzclub.com).
- 29 Mar 2014—Jaguar Association of Greater St Louis Day Trip to Ste Genevieve**. Meet at 8:30 AM, Holiday Inn/Route 66, 10709 Watson Road 63127 for complimentary continental breakfast in the Shelby Room. Depart at 9:30; day includes exploration of Ste Genevieve and lunch at the Chaumette Vineyards and Winery. Please RSVP to Allan Ellis (314)229-9610 no later than Saturday, 22 March.
- 5 Apr 2014—Annual Missouri Endurance Rally "With A Twist,"** hosted by the MG Club of St Louis. Open to all British vehicles built before 1982. Start and finish at the Red Roof Inn/Westport, 11837 Lackland Rd 63146; drivers meeting at 6:30 AM in the motel conference room, teams depart by 8 AM. Distance unknown but you must return to the Red Roof Inn no later than 9 PM Saturday

(Continued on page 2)

**Note:** Some club driving events restrict participation to club members only, primarily for national/chapter insurance reasons. If interested in joining in on a drive or other event, we recommend you contact the club's event coordinator in advance for details.

## In Print



Looks like another leaping cat month, starting with the March issue of *Octane*, which features a road test of a replica (continuation?) Jaguar XJ13, complete with V12. *Thoroughbred & Classic Cars* has two Jag articles: the first is a road test which pits a 1964 S-Type 3.4S against a 1963 Rover P5 MkII; the magazine follows up with an article on Canadian Geoff Moyes and his collection



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night, awards at 10 PM. This year only, entry fee dropped to \$10, GPS, laptops and smart phones are allowed; you will need a digital camera or smart phone cam to capture evidence of successful stops. Monitor [www.stlouismgclub.com/events-calendar/](http://www.stlouismgclub.com/events-calendar/), Facebook at <http://tinyurl.com/om8snsn>.

**11-12 Apr 2014—ZAttack 2014**, hosted by the Middle Tennessee Z Club and Nissan North America, Inc, in Nashville. Events include a visit to Nissan's North American headquarters and the heritage collection, plus a tour of the vehicle manufacturing facility in Smyrna and powertrain plant in Dechard. Info and registration at [www.middletennesseezclub.com/html/zattack\\_2014.html](http://www.middletennesseezclub.com/html/zattack_2014.html).

**12 Apr 2014—Gateway VCOA Tech Session**, start at the St Louis Bread Co, Affton, 99 Grasso Plaza (Gravois Rd/Mo Hwy 30, west of Tesson Ferry). More details to follow at [www.sites.google.com/site/gatewayvcoa/](http://www.sites.google.com/site/gatewayvcoa/).

**12 Apr 2014—Collinsville Area Vocational Center Car Cruise & Open House** at Collinsville Area Vocational Center/Collinsville High School, dash plaques to the first 100 entries, 50/50 drawing benefits the Vocational Center's programs. 2201 S Morrison off IL 157, info [tblackar@kahoks.org](mailto:tblackar@kahoks.org) or (618)381-1680.

**13 Apr 2014—Boeing Sports Car Club** autocross season starts, Family Arena, St Charles, \$35 for six runs, show about 9 AM. Contact Racer Steve at [sshab@yahoo.com](mailto:sshab@yahoo.com) for details and to get on the event email list.

**18 Apr 2014—Third Friday Free Party, "From Hot Rods to Teslas,"** 6-10 PM, Third Degree Glass Factory, 5200 Delmar Blvd (314)640-7392. Gearhead's delight; Mr C will show the art of hot rod pin striping, sample free treats by St Louis Snowcone, see Teslas and learn about electric and converted vehicles. Chef Heidi will serve up snacks (\$2-\$8 each), live music by Salt of the Earth starts at 8 PM, cash bar and more. For more info, see [www.stlglass.com/](http://www.stlglass.com/) or call (314)367-4527. Play with fire!

**19 Apr 2014—Cars & Coffee returns!** Starbucks Coffee at 9616 Manchester Rd, Rock Hill Plaza, 8:15-10:15 AM. On Facebook at [facebook.com/groups/stlmetrocarsandcoffee](https://www.facebook.com/groups/stlmetrocarsandcoffee).

**19 Apr 2014—Gateway Healey Association Wash-Up/Tune-Up**, traditional day before prep for the Forest Park Concours. 8 AM until whenever, bring something to share, at Keith Bester's garage, 115 N Sappington, Kirkwood.

**19 Apr 2014—St Louis County Police Welfare Association Car Show & BBQ.** Registration 8 AM, \$20 per car, awards/dash plaques/music, 50/50 drawing. Proceeds benefit the St Louis Police Welfare Association, helping officers in need. At Mehlville High School, 3200 Lemay Ferry Rd.

**20 Apr 2014—53<sup>rd</sup> Annual Forest Park Concours d'Elegance**, sponsored by the Horseless Carriage Club of Missouri. Open to all cars 1989 or earlier, \$25 per vehicle (judged) or \$20 (displayed); recommend you pre-register and arrive no later than 11 AM, show ends at 4:30 PM. More information including registration at [www.hccmo.com/id14.html](http://www.hccmo.com/id14.html). The concours will also serve as the site of the **6<sup>th</sup> Annual British Leyland Attendance Challenge** (aka the Triumph-MG Challenge).

**21 Apr 2014—MG Club of St Louis Tech Session**, w/ John Mangles, All British Car Repair, 2618 Woodson Rd. Topic TBD, monitor [www.stlouismgclub.com/events-calendar/](http://www.stlouismgclub.com/events-calendar/).

**27 Apr 2014—St Louis Region SCCA Solo No. 1**, Gateway Motorsports Park. Info at <http://stlsolo.org/node/98>.

**27-30 Apr 2014—South Central VTR Regional**, The Elms Spa & Hotel, Excelsior Springs, hosted by the Kansas City Triumph Club. Large variety of events, several area attractions. **Registration is now open** at <http://kansascitytriumphs.com/Registration%20-%202014%20VTR%20South%20Central%20Regional.htm>.

**3-4 May 2014—St Louis County Air Show**, featuring the US Navy *Blue Angels* and STEM (Science-Technology-Engineering-Math) Expo, celebrating the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Spirit of St Louis Airport, 18270 Edison Ave, Chesterfield. Should be/might be some interesting cars there but hey, it's the *Blues*, **FLY NAVY!** Info at [www.spirit-airshow.com/](http://www.spirit-airshow.com/).

**4 May 2014—St Louis Region SCCA Solo No. 2**, Family Arena, St Charles. Info at <http://stlsolo.org/node/98>.

**10 May 2014—Boeing Sports Car Club autocross**, Family Arena, St Charles, \$35 for six runs, show about 9 AM. Contact Racer Steve at [sshab@yahoo.com](mailto:sshab@yahoo.com) for details and to get on the event email list.

**10 May 2014—Spring Fling & Car Corral**, O'Fallon, IL. Hosted by Gateway Classic Cars, 9 AM to 5 PM at 1237 Central Park Drive, benefits Shriners Hospital for Children. For info, call Ashley Rodgers (618)271-3000.

**17 May 2014—Cars & Coffee**, Starbucks at 9616 Manchester Rd, Rock Hill Plaza, 8:15-10:15 AM. On Facebook at <http://facebook.com/groups/stlmetrocarsandcoffee>.

**17 May 2014—Gateway VCOA Missouri Route 66 Tour.** Details to follow, in the meantime monitor [www.sites.google.com/site/gatewayvcoa/](http://www.sites.google.com/site/gatewayvcoa/).

**18 May 2014—St Louis Region SCCA Solo No. 3**, Gateway Motorsports Park, info at <http://stlsolo.org/node/98>.

**29-30 May 2014—Branson Z Fest**, still coming together but planned events include drag racing on Friday and a car show on Saturday. More details to follow, monitor [www.gatewayzclub.com](http://www.gatewayzclub.com).

## Roadwork: Game Changer

**DATSUN**

Hard to believe, but 45 years have passed since the Nissan Motor Company, Ltd. of Yokohama, Japan, unleashed the car which set the sports/GT world on its collective head: the 240Z. To be sure, the company had already racked up several years of sports car sales with its “Japanese MGBs,” the 1600 and 2000 roadsters, but no one was prepared for the impact of the “Fairlady Z” (as known in the home market) when word came out about the car in 1969.

Take a look at the competition of the time. With the exception of Alfa Romeo and Fiat (and somewhat further out, the Opel GT, Volvo P1800S and Saab Sonett MkIII), British cars ruled the market for affordable sports cars. If you didn’t want affordable, you could pick up an Aston Martin DB6 MkII for about \$8300 in the states, the newer DBS for \$7433 or even an AC 428 for about \$9262. But the “mainstream” Brit cars – Austin-Healey, Jaguar, MG and Triumph – ran from about \$5300 for a Jaguar E-Type Series II down to \$2050 for the last of the Healeys, the 1969 Sprite MkIV.

Then Nissan announced a modern, \$3500 Japanese sports/GT car (Nissan management preferred the term “Personal GT car” over sports car) under its Datsun brand name. To be sure, the initial reaction probably included a fair amount of comments of the “made in Japan” variety but the end result, which debuted as a 1970 model, stunned everyone. According to *Car & Driver* magazine, “Datsun didn’t invent the overhead cam engine, or disk brakes, or independent suspension, but it (had) a habit of incorporating these sophisticated systems into brilliantly conceived and easily affordable cars.”

Notably, Datsun already had nearly two decades experience in the production of sporty – or at least, “sporting” – cars at the time of the 240Z’s debut. The company, founded on 26 December as *Jidosha-Seizo Kabushiki* (“Automobile Manufacturing Co., Ltd”) by Yoshisuke Aikawa, became the Nissan Motor Company eight years later and rolled out its first car, a sedan powered by a 772cc engine, on 21 April 1935. During World War II, Nissan manufactured trucks, aircraft and boat engines; remarkably, the plant survived the war, enabling the resumption of truck production in 1945. In 1953, license-built Austin designs started coming off the production lines.



Source: Early Datsun.com

It was during this later period that the company released its first sports car under the Datsun name. Designated the DC-3 (which was the actual model number and not a reference to the legendary Douglas airliner, nor the license-built Japanese versions, the Show L2D/

Nakajima L2D, nicknamed “Tabby” by the Allies during the war). The car looked remarkably like the MG TC/TD or, at the very least, had that classic British roadster look, if a tad taller than most Brit sports cars. Based on the Datsun 5147 truck, the car was powered by a 4 cylinder, 860cc engine; interestingly enough, Datsun only produced 50 in 1952 before moving on to other vehicle projects.

The company resumed sports car production at the end of the 1950s, commencing with the fiberglass body S211/Sports 1000 in 1959 (988cc, 37 hp, only 20 built) and followed by the SPL212 in 1960. The latter car, the first to carry the “Fairlady” name, came with a 1189cc four-cylinder engine which gener-

ated 48 horsepower, clad in an all-steel body. A total of 217 Fairladies with 19 more horsepower, designated the SPL213, went to the states and were sold through 1962.

Datsun then moved into the big time with the iconic SPL310 Sports 1500, SPL311 Sports 1600 and SRL311 Sports 2000, manufactured from 1961 through 1970. While never quite as popular as the British sports cars, they two-seaters managed to build a strong following, both on the road and in competition.



Datsun 1500 at the Pittsburgh Vintage Grand Prix. Photo: Concept-Carz.com.

One *Car & Driver* reviewer stated, “...the vitality in the engine and gearbox of the 2000 sports car makes a Triumph feel like a first-round loser in the soapbox derby”

The one person most responsible for the development of these first really modern Nissan sports cars – as well as the 240Z – was the legendary Yutaka Katayama, otherwise known as “Mr K.” Now 104, he joined the company in 1935 and over the years served in a number of positions prior to assuming the duties of president of the Nissan Motor Corporation USA in 1960. Through a combination of vision, drive, insistence and strength of will, Mr K convinced the very conservative Nissan corporation to build the 1500, 1600, 2000 and Datsun 510 sedan/coupe/wagon and ship them off to the states. Through his efforts – and, on the strength of its product – Datsun became a major player in import sales by the end of the decade.

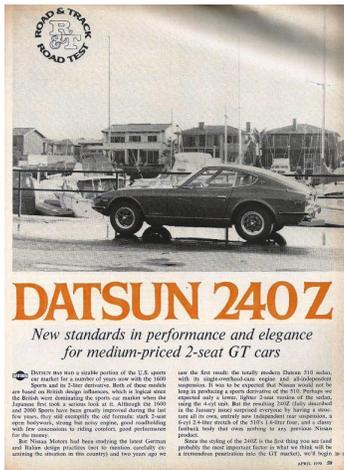
Then came Mr K’s home run and Datsun’s first GT, the 240Z. The SOHC, 2.4 liter straight six with twin SU carbs and 9.1 compression ratio developed 151 hp and 146 lb/ft torque; mounted in a 2238-pound car with front disks, rear drums and struts and coils at the four corners, the car could do zero-to-sixty in eight seconds *and* handle. *Car & Driver* got a hold of an early example and, in a test at Orange County Raceway, Irvine, ran the quarter in 16.1 seconds at 86.5 mph, more than one second and 9 mph faster than a Triumph TR6 and also faster than 2-liter Porsche 911T.



Photo: Taylor Vinson Collection

The car debuted in the company’s showrooms on 1 January 1970 for about \$3500 and was an immediate smash success; dealers couldn’t keep the 240Z in stock. *Road & Track* stated, “...at this price it is a super bargain, with a combination of styling, performance and handling far ahead of anything else under \$4000,” adding the 240Z’s overall ride, noise level and performance capabilities rendered “...qualities that up to now were available only in sedans or very expensive GT cars.”

(Continued on page 4)



Road & Track, April 1970



Photo: Bring A Trailer

Unfortunately, the high demand also resulted in the immediate requirement for a waiting list; *R&T* noted in an article that during the first year customers regularly had to wait six months for their cars. Nissan had set up for 1600 deliveries a month; with demand running over 4000 a month, in some parts of the country "...dealers are telling customers they can't get the cars without lots of optional equipment – wide alloy wheels, air conditioning, etc., and getting away with it" (sound familiar?). Once production caught up, Datsun sold over 150,000 240Zs in four years.

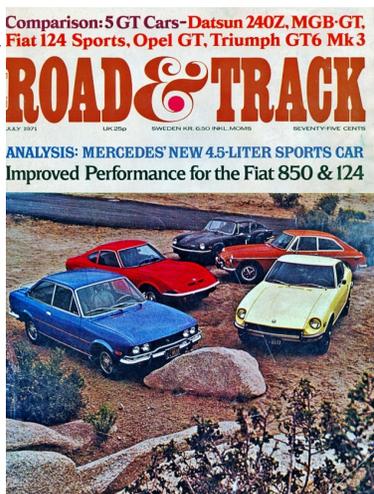
Not that the car was perfect. The major car magazines quickly noted the 240Z suffered from poor direction stability, particularly at higher speeds and in crosswinds. *C&D* stated, "When you'd like to be going straight down the road the Z-car would rather weave

back and forth. The wiggles are small – and they seem to correct themselves – but they are annoying, nevertheless." Conversely, *Road & Track's* testers managed 0.728 on the skid pad, slightly better than the equally new mid-engine Porsche 914, and on the curves, "The Datsun can really be driven hard; flung enthusiastically into corners, its near-neutral handling (helped by the near 50/50 weight distribution) makes it very stable, with just a hint of oversteer..." The rave reviews only served to boost the car's popularity and in 1971, *Road Test Magazine* named the 240Z its Sports Car of the Year.

Not surprisingly, it didn't take long for the motoring press to publish comparison tests. According to *Car & Driver*, "They (Datsun) know perfectly well who the customers will be – sports car buyers-adventuresome young Americans who are collecting their dollars for an Opel GT or MGB-GT or Porsche 914 until something better comes along and changes their minds."

In March 1970, the late, lamented *Sports Car Graphic* did a comparison between the 240Z, the Opel GT and the MGB GT; the Japanese car came out on top. In July 1971, *R&T* did a five-car comparison with the Datsun pitted against the Fiat 124 Sports Coupe (\$3292), Opel GT (\$3306), Triumph GT6 (\$3424) and MGB GT (\$3620).

The MGB served as the oldest design in the group, with the roadster dating to 1962. With a 92 hp pushrod four, it was also the slowest car of the five. Fiat had recently updated the 124 with a new front end and larger 1608cc engine; it also was the only car in the test with a five-speed gearbox. The Opel GT,



Road & Track, July 1971

based on the Kadett, featured a front suspension combining upper A arms with a transverse leaf spring and lateral control arms (in *R&T's* words, "Odd") and a 1.9 liter four. The GT6 was, of course, the other six in the group, based on the Triumph Spitfire roadster.

The magazine staff launched from their Newport Beach, California, office and headed south to Dana Point, then turned inland on CA 74/The Ortega Highway for a run over the mountains to Lake Elsinore, the Anza-Borrego Desert Start Park and Joshua Tree National Park before returning home via Victorville. At the end of the run, the 240Z scored the most points; four of the five drivers gave it the most points and three of the five selected it as their personal favorite. In order, the other cars were the 124, Opel GT, MGB GT and finally the Triumph, although the scoring was close in several areas.

They highlighted the 240Z's strong, smooth and powerful engine; its handling ("the 240Z shines"), great brakes, its controls and excellent comfort and accommodations. However, like the other magazine writers, the test group noted the cars sensitivity to crosswinds at high speeds and road imperfections. The authors said Datsun had some homework to do, but in the meantime, recommended a front spoiler offered by Brock Racing Enterprises for the grand sum of \$32. The concluded,

In sum, the Datsun 240Z's pluses are its striking good looks, its effortless, strong performance, its good brakes and low-speed handling, and its comfort and equipment...if you can get one for list price, or even get one with the extras you want, it is not only the best car in the group but the best buy...one of our five drivers commented after the trip that the Datsun should be rated separately, as it is simply a class above the rest.

While the 240Z may not have killed the competition, it certainly contributed to their demise. The Opel GT and the GT6 departed the market first, in 1973. While the Fiat 124 Sport Spider continued in production until 1985—the last three years as the Pininfarina Track day at Mid-Ohio. Photo: Spider Azzura, following ConceptCarz. Fiat's abandonment of the US market—the 124 Coupe went out of production in 1975. The MGB continued until 1980, by which time Datsun had its second generation car, the S130 280ZX in production. The Z-car continued through several modifications and redesigns, culminating in the 300ZX which left the US market in 1996.



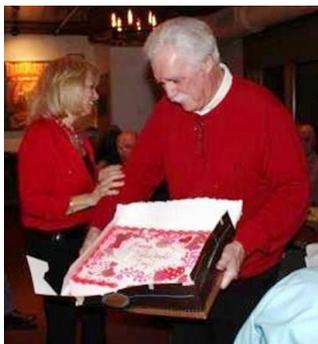
One question remained. The 240Z immediately proved itself on the street; how well would it do in competition? It fell to Pete Brock of BRE, Bob Sharp and drivers like John Morton, Jim Fitzgerald, John McComb and Sharp himself to find out.

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**Sources:** "Datsun 240Z," *Car & Driver*, June 1970; "Datsun 240Z: New standards in performance and elegance for medium-priced 2-seat GT cars," *Road & Track*, April 1970; "New Performance Car From Datsun," *Competition Press & Autoweek*, 15 November 1969; Aaron Severson, "Z Trip: The Original Datsun Z-Car," *Ate Up With Motor* (<http://ateupwithmotor.com/model-histories/datsun-z-car/>), 11 July 2009; Aaron Severson, "The Strange Odyssey of Yutaka Katayama: The Datsun 510 and the Rise of Japanese Cars in America," *Ate Up With Motor*, 26 December 2007; ConceptCarz.com; "A Brief History of Nissan Motor Company," Nissan Motor Company; "1952 Datsun DC-3 Model," *Earlydatsun.com* ([www.earlydatsun.com](http://www.earlydatsun.com)).

## Featured Events *continued*

### Annual Valentines Party GHA—11 February 2014



### Annual Polar Bear Run SLTOA—16 February 2014



Photos: John Moore and YFE



### ***In Print*** (Continued from page 1)

of 19 cars, ranging from a 1950 MkV to a 2003 XJ8 Vanden Plas (he and his sons also own two Minis and three MGBs). Also available, an article on the restoration of a 1962 Austin-Healey 3000 MkII by the sons of the late owner, who run one of the largest Healey restoration shops in England.

Over at *Classic & Sports Car* for February, another comparison test, this time between a Jaguar XK150 DHC and Jensen 541R. The same issue has an interview with Peter Browning with tails of the British Motor Company (BMC) competition department – MGs, Minis, the odd Rover and the famous “Landcrab,” a somewhat modified (!) Austin 1800 – and what happened when the proverbial bean counters took over. Finally, the April edition of *Car & Driver’s* cover article, “25 Cars Worth Waiting For!” provides photos and brief information on a wide range of new vehicles. The list includes the upcoming Jaguar XE (“...a compact sports sedan aimed squarely at BMW’s 3-series”) and, for the Nissan faithful, the 2018 IDx, which evokes the Datsun 510. The NISMO version will offer the classic BRE 510 markings as an option.

## Featured Events

**Christmas Lights Tour**  
**JAGSL/Plaza Motors—December 2014**



**Annual Dinner Gala**  
**JAGSL—11 January 2014**



**Back Road Rallye to Meramec Caverns**  
**JAGSL—8 February 2014**



Photos: JAGSL/Diane Schlueter, Jim Hendrix and John Testrake



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Gateway Club

