

# SAME, SAME; *but Different*

IF YOU FOCUS ON DOING THINGS RIGHT,  
SOMETIMES THERE ARE NO WRONG ANSWERS.

Story by Adam Gordon // Photography by Christian Dizon (@calicarclicque)





***All too often, we find enthusiasts trapped in the cycle of trends. Builds become more of a checklist of modifications rather than an expression of the owner's true style and tastes. Part of the blame for this phenomenon lies with car show culture where, in some cases, throwing everything at a car accrues more points on the judging sheets. Bolt-on widebodies, flashy lighting, intricate graphic vinyl wraps - nothing is intrinsically wrong with these mods, but they also aren't the end-all-be-all of show-worthy modifications.***



**T**ake a look at the two RX-7s before you. Each of them unique in their own right, and each one with a vastly different approach from the other. The most common feature between the two, other than the platform of course, is the owner's commitment to clean execution. In red, you have Andrew Ilbegi's 1993 Mazda RX-7 - a true to form period correct FD RX-7 with all sorts of JDM goodies and a simplistic yet effective styling approach. In the purple chameleon finish, John Ubalde's 1993 Mazda RX-7, an LS-swapped beast of a machine with a blend of old and new takes on modification.

Both of these builds can easily take home the hardware at shows, and while I'm sure most of our readers will have a preference for one or the other, neither of these builds is "better" than the other. There's an important lesson there: build what you like. It's easy for enthusiasts who don't care about shows and awards to do that, but it goes for show car guys too. If you focus on the end product and the execution of the whole build, there are no wrong answers.

Ilbegi's RX-7, the red one, was built with a simple goal in mind: a subtle and sleek look. It could have some flashiness to it, but overall he wanted a simple and classy look. When he was growing up and was first interested in cars, he thought he wanted a big GT wing, flashy paint, and a loud exhaust.







As he got older, his tastes changed, and his appetite for simple and clean mods took over. With style being his overall goal for this car, he stayed true to the FD's JDM roots with period-correct modification inside and out. If you know what you're looking at, it definitely turns heads.

Modifications like the Fortune Auto 500 series coilovers, EXEDY stage 1 clutch, B&M short shifter, and up-graded brake systems go the distance in making Ilbegi's car a comfortable, well-rounded, and simple street car, but the build still shows off that JDM style and flair with things like the Reinhard double cannonball exhaust, RE-Amemiya body pieces, and the highly decorated interior.

Ubalde's RX-7, the purple chameleon colored one, is the "beast" in this Beauty and The Beast tale. A built LS-swap with launch control, custom step-lip built Blitz o3s, a Fortune Auto Air Piston Lift System (APLS),

and aggressive styling are just some of the modification mainstays of the build. Ubadle still loves the original lines and period-correct goodies, but he knew he wanted to turn things up a notch. With a rotary RX-7 already in his garage, he picked up a clean LS-swapped FD for long distance cruising, high torque, and ease of maintenance.

With the RX-7 in his clutches, the LS was given a full once-over by Hinson Supercars, and they outfitted

# Style BOOK

## FEATURE

### - ESSENTIALS -

**Andrew Ilbegi's  
1993 Mazda RX-7**

**LOCATION** • Los Angeles, CA  
**ENGINE** • Mazda 13B-REW  
Twin-Rotor

#### SOCIAL MEDIA

[@ilbegi7](#)  
[/andrew.ilbegi](#)

#### ENGINE

Griddy front mount intercooler  
• HKS intakes • APEXi Power FC  
management

#### EXHAUST

HKS twin-turbo downpipe  
• Bonez high-flow catalytic  
converter • Reinhard double  
cannonball exhaust w/ semi-  
titanium mufflers

#### DRIVETRAIN

BBM short throw shifter •  
EXEDY (Stage 1 clutch w/ heavy  
duty pressure plate, lightweight  
flywheel, counterweight)

#### WHEELS/TIRES/BRAKES

Volk Racing TE37SL wheels -  
18x9.5 +22 (f), 18x10.5 +22 (r)  
• Michelin Pilot Sport 4S tires  
- 225/40/18 (f), 255/35/18 (r) •  
Project Kics R40 Iconix lug nuts  
• StopTech slotted brake rotors  
• EBC Yellowstuff brake pads •  
J-Auto stainless steel braided  
brake lines

#### CHASSIS/SUSPENSION

Fortune Auto 500 series  
coilovers • Mazda RX-7 R1 front  
strut tower bar

#### EXTERIOR

OEM 1999 spec (front bumper,  
front RX-7 moniker plate, tail  
lights) • Group A Motoring (1999  
spec front lip wrapped carbon  
fiber, 1999 spec rear wing) •  
Garage Alpha 1999 spec turn  
signals • RE-Amemiya (AD9  
hood, carbon fiber pro diffuser,  
carbon fiber center diverter, carbon  
fiber vortex generators) • FEED  
carbon fiber side skirts • Aero  
Catch hood pins • Updated  
Mazda badges • LED exterior  
lighting • 3M 15% window tint

#### INTERIOR

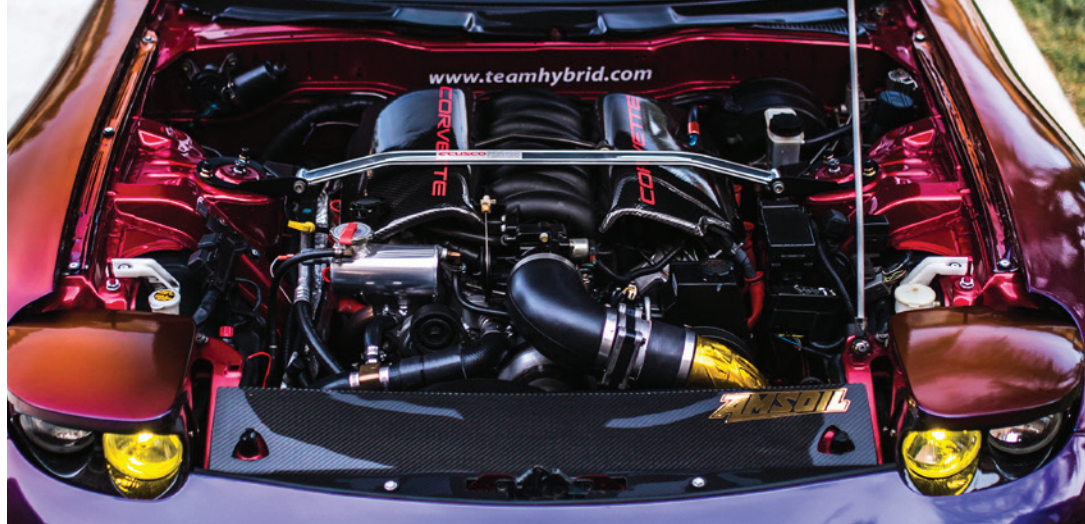
JDM spec (arm rest, passenger  
foot rest) • Banzai Racing  
Power FC commander holder •  
Aluminum interior door handles  
• Works Bell (short hub, quick-  
release) • Nardi Personal suede  
steering wheel • FEED weighted  
shift knob • Garage Alpha floor  
mats • Sakebomb Garage (fire  
extinguisher, extinguisher mount,  
extinguisher quick-release) •  
FlyRX7 52mm triple gauge pod  
• Griddy Profec B Spec 2 boost  
controller • Defi 52mm gauges  
(boost, temp) • AEM 52mm  
wideband gauge

#### AUDIO / MOBILE ELECTRONICS

Pioneer head unit • Rockford  
Fosgate (speakers, subwoofer)



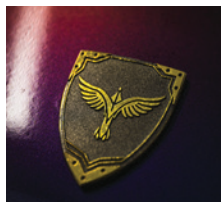
it with everything from Patriot 706 stage 2 heads and cams to an LS6 manifold and a Holley Sniper throttle body, with a ton of supporting mods to make power reliably. With a T56 transmission, Hinson Motorsports provides the short shifter, as well as braces for the transmission and differential. Instead of wheels out of the box, Ubalde had a set of Blitz o3 wheels custom built with a step-lip conversion to take them from 17s to 18s, which are 10.5 inches wide in the front, and 11.5 inches wide in the rear, fitting nicely beneath the FEED +20mm fenders front and rear.



For all their differences in engineering and style choices, the two RX-7s still share some similarities. That 1999-spec front bumper is an iconic favorite among FD owners, so we're not surprised to see it on both of these 1993 models. RE-Amemiya is a popular choice for the platform as well, as you can see here. Again, it's not about how good your personal concept is - it's all in the execution. The result of the hard work from both owners is a show-worthy RX-7 that doubles its duties as a reliable, stylish, and fun street car. It just goes to show you there's more than one way to get it right. **PAS**







## - ESSENTIALS -

### John Ubalde's 1993 Mazda RX-7

**LOCATION** › Menifee, CA  
**ENGINE** › Chevrolet LS 5.7L V8  
**HORSEPOWER** › 435 whp  
**TORQUE** › 400 ft-lb  
**CLUB** › Team Hybrid

#### SOCIAL MEDIA

Instagram @jubalde  
 Facebook /jubalde

#### ENGINE

Chevrolet 5.7L LS engine swap • Patriot 706  
 64cc Stage 2 heads • Ported and polished • 650  
 lift springs • Titanium retainers • Patriot Cam  
 225/229 • MSD 8.8mm Wires w/ jackets • Holley  
 Sniper 92mm Throttle Body • LS6 intake manifold  
 • Auto Specialties under-drive pulley • Walbro  
 255 Fuel Pump • Aeromotive FPR • Micron inline  
 fuel filter • Battery relocation kit to passenger  
 rear • Custom carbon fiber cooling panel • AFe  
 filter w/ custom cold air intake piping • HOWE  
 custom aluminum radiator • Volvo 740 electric  
 radiator fan • MSD 2-step launch control • HP  
 Tuners tuned ECU

#### EXHAUST

Hinson custom long tube headers • Custom  
 4-inch exhaust piping • ReinHard titanium double  
 cannonball exhaust

#### DRIVETRAIN

T56 6-speed transmission • Hinson Motorsports  
 (T56 short shifter, differential brace, transmission  
 brace, torque arm) • Cobra 8.8 differential (3.73  
 gears) • Wilwood clutch cylinder

#### WHEELS/TIRES/BRAKES

Blitz Type 03 wheels - 18x10.5 (f), 18x11.5 (r) • BF

Goodrich G-Force Comp2 tires - 255/35/18 (f),  
 275/35/18 (r) • Wilwood (BBK 6-piston calipers,  
 cross-drilled and slotted 2-piece rotors, stainless  
 steel braided brake lines, proportioning valve) •  
 ABS delete

#### CHASSIS/SUSPENSION

Hinson subframe • Fortune Auto (500 series  
 coilovers, Air Piston Lift System) • 12K Swift springs  
 • VIAIR dual 444c compressors • Cusco strut  
 tower bar • Adjustable tie-rods • HURST Line-loc

#### EXTERIOR

Avery Dennison Roaring Thunder vinyl wrap  
 • 1999 spec (JDM front bumper, 3-piece rear  
 adjustable spoiler mounts) • Group A Motoring AD9  
 carbon fiber hood • FEED (20mm front fenders,  
 rear fenders) • MazdaSpeed carbon fiber front  
 lip • LegSport (carbon fiber front canards, carbon  
 fiber side deflectors) • DDULA carbon fiber center  
 spoiler • Shine Auto carbon fiber side skirt  
 extensions • RE-Amemiya (carbon fiber pro rear  
 diffuser, side mirrors) • Carbon fiber (rear diffuser  
 vortex generators, wiper cowl, custom front plate) •  
 Aero Catch hood pins • Griffith Racing rear tow  
 hook • Car Shop Glow (V2 LED front turn signals,  
 V1 LED tail lights) • EVO-R Knight Sports LED  
 low-profile pop-up headlights

#### INTERIOR

Seibon carbon fiber door panels • Carbon fiber  
 (center console, HVAC frame, gauge dash frame,  
 triple gauge pod) • ProSport Evolution carbon fiber  
 seats • Corbeau (seat rails, seat brackets) • Works  
 Bell steering hub adapter • NRG quick-tilt system  
 • Renown 130R suede steering wheel • Weighted  
 neochrome shift knob • SakeBomb passenger  
 foot rest • Custom aluminum dead pedal

#### AUDIO / MOBILE ELECTRONICS

Alpine (ILX-W650 head unit, MRV-MS00 amplifier,  
 SPR-50C Type R speakers, S-W12D2 12-inch  
 subwoofer) • Custom trunk molded subwoofer  
 enclosure

#### SPONSORS

ChamorroBoy88 • Fortune Auto Suspension  
 • Group A Motoring • BF Goodrich • AMSOIL •  
 Wilwood • FinalSpeed Garage • Renowned •  
 Status Racing