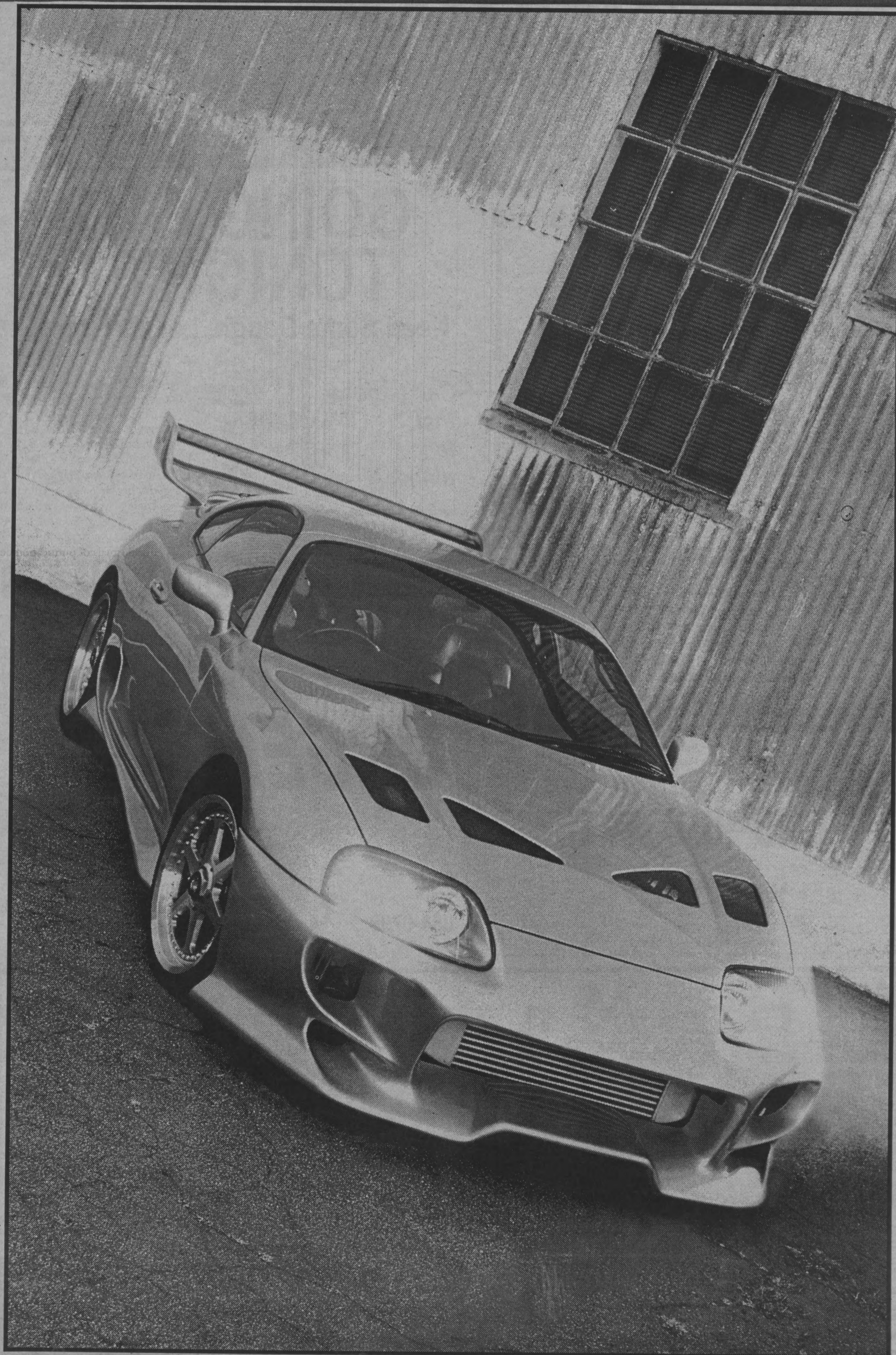


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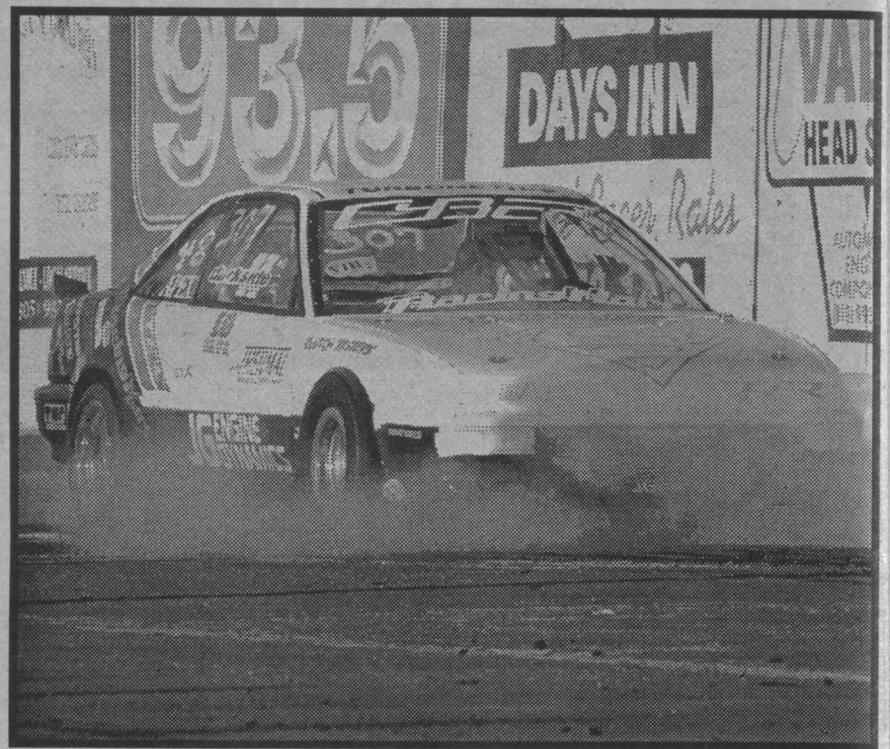
Automotive Issue



Japan's Finest Strippers

A Brief History of Import Drag Racing

Photos and Story by Alan Jacoby



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When the term "drag racing" is mentioned, what comes to mind? Top Fuel Dragsters losing control, hitting barricades and rolling down the track in a ball of flames? Or maybe a fat, white, hillbilly-type male with a beer in his hand cheering in the stands. Although most of the country embraces drag racing as an American tradition, a majority of Southern Californians would rather watch "Melrose Place." However, about five years ago, the import race scene was born and has since flourished in California.

Many people purchase Japanese cars such as Hondas, Toyotas

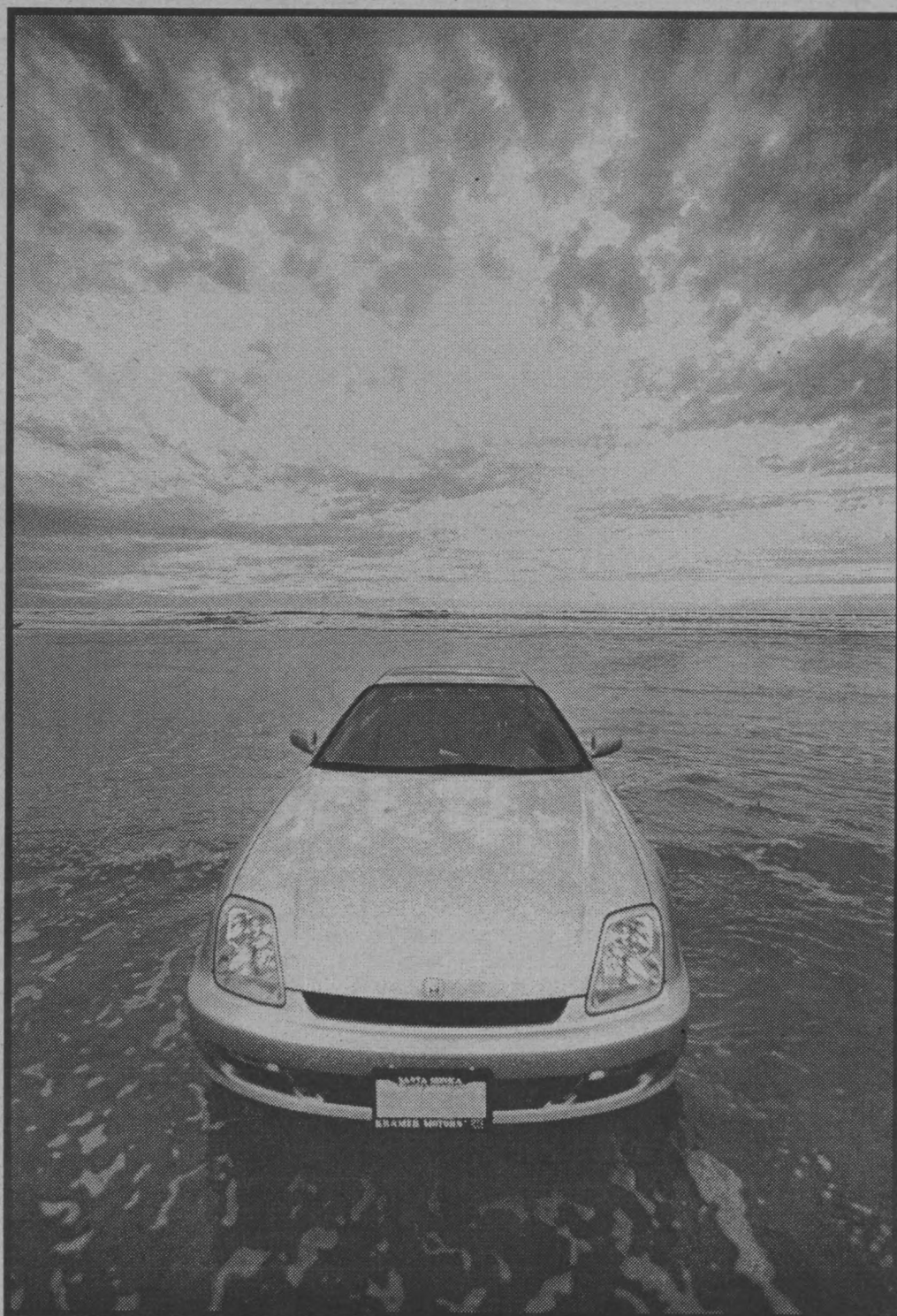
Import racing has become a subculture of its own, allowing all enthusiasts to collaborate with one common goal — to go faster. And because of all the effort, records keep getting broken. Three weeks ago, a Honda Civic hatchback with a Prelude motor became the first front-wheel-drive car in history to run a sub-10-second quarter mile. Last Sunday in Palmdale, this record was broken by an Integra-powered CRX, and then broken again by the previous record-holder. To date, the fastest time is 9.71 seconds at 149 mph. This comes out of a car that gets 35 miles to the gallon in stock trim and has only four cylinders. Just

These days, if you don't hit 11s, you might as well have raced your U-Haul or laced up your Nikes.

and Nissans because of their impeccable reputation for reliability. As more and more young adults started driving imports, they began fixing them up, and import dragsters came into their own. What started off as just adding an exhaust and air filter (usually just making more noise than power) has grown to using nitrous oxide, turbo-charging and even swapping motors to gain precious ponies. What has been typically thought of as an "Asian" hobby is now embraced by people from all walks of life.

three years ago, if you ran a 14-second pass, you were among the elite. These days, if you don't hit 11 seconds, you might as well have raced your U-Haul or laced up your Nikes.

I do not intend to downplay fast American cars, but they have always been fast. Imports have just recently entered the racing scene, and import drag racing deserves respect as a serious and growing sport. This sport is real. It is here to stay. I encourage everyone to support legalized racing and please, keep it on the track.



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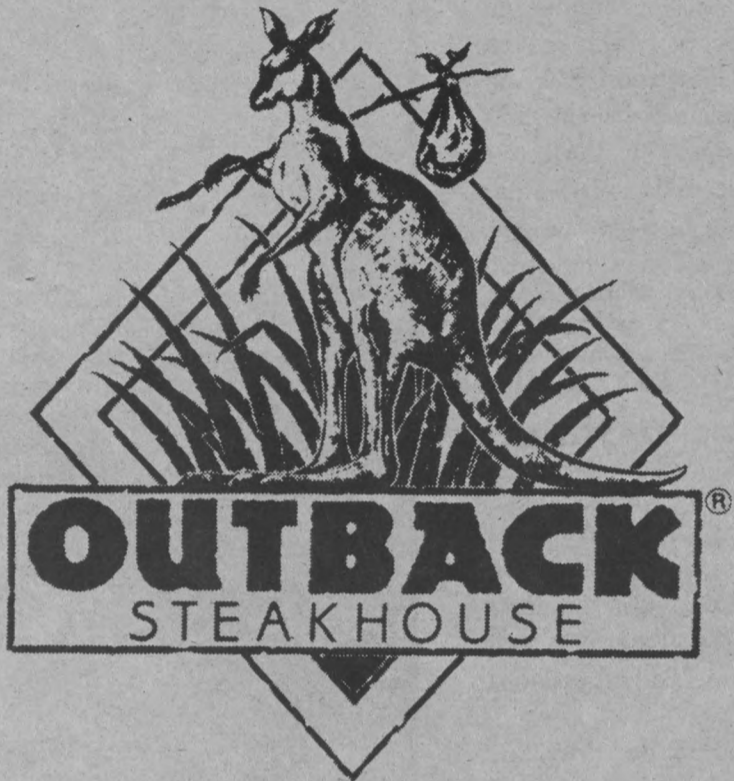
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