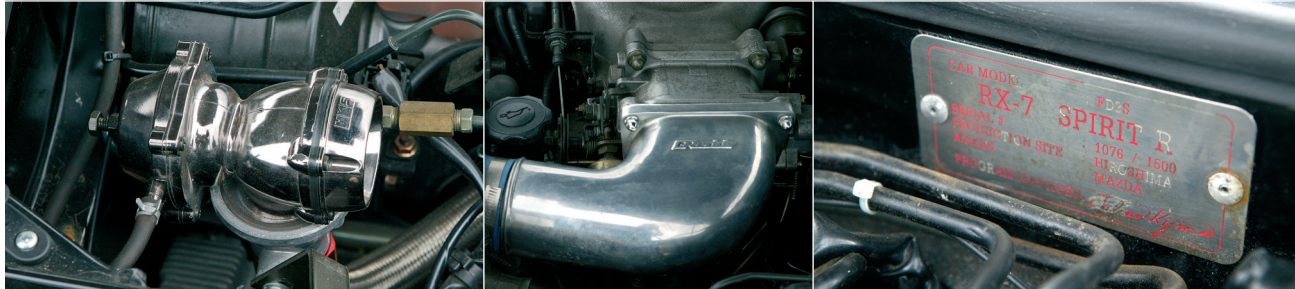


The twin-rotor Wankel engine, with its sequential turbos, produces enough power to provide a top speed of well over 160mph for this great-looking coupé



of the rotary engine, having owned four RX-7s in the past – three Series 2s and one Series 3.

Andrew's life was completely taken over by RX-7s in 2000, when he and his business partner, Ian Simmons, bought an RX-7 parts and servicing business called Jimmy's, which had been established during the 1980s by the late Jimmy Pinnock. Andrew decided to retain the name, as the company had a good reputation among RX-7 owners, but he relocated from Cambridgeshire to Hoveton, just outside Norwich. The business has expanded to offer everything – from guaranteed used parts to full engine rebuilds, as well as maintaining a stock of imported RX-7s with warranties.

With only 2500 miles on the clock, Andrew's Spirit R still looks like new. Personally, I have always thought the RX-7's sleek lines look lost when the car is in black, but that does not mean it doesn't look good. It certainly helps that the car sits on 17in BBS alloys (standard on all Spirit Rs, although Type A wheels were gun-metal grey instead of silver). The red-painted calipers are another nice finishing touch, along with braided stainless mesh brake hoses.

Inside the car, the Spirit R is endowed with a set of fabulous Recaro carbon-fibre-backed,

ultra-light, red-coloured, full bucket seats. They not only look fantastic, but they give the interior a race-car feel and brighten up what a lot of people consider to be a dark and dull cabin. And, of course, they help this RX-7 become as lightweight as possible.

Under the bonnet of the Spirit R lurks a 13B rotary engine with a sequential twin-turbo set-up, which produces 280bhp at 6500rpm. When you drive this car, it feels like it has more power than that – mainly down to its low weight of only 1260kg. Andrew has driven a great many RX-7s, in both standard and modified form, so it carries weight when he says that his Spirit R is among the best handling of the lot.

The classic double-wishbone front and rear suspension combines with dampers exclusively manufactured by Bilstein, fitted to both Type A and Type B models. This helps to give this RX-7 superb poise when cornering, especially in the dry. As this is a rear-wheel-drive car endowed with plenty of power, some care is needed in damp conditions. Handling is also helped by superb rack-and-pinion power steering and the ability to brake late – as with all Series 3 RX-7s you only need to touch the brake pedal and things slow down amazingly quickly. The all-round ventilated

discs and four-piston aluminium calipers see to that.

'The Spirit R is a great package,' says Andrew, 'but, of course, you can always make improvements.' Andrew has not gone down the route of ripping out the twin turbo and replacing it with a huge single one which, being in his position, would be an easy thing to do. Andrew's Spirit R retains the twin-turbo set-up and, let's face it, with a top speed of over 160mph and a 0–60mph time of under five seconds, the RX-7 performs pretty well.

However, Andrew has fitted an HKS induction kit and a decat Racing Beat performance exhaust. This not only makes it sound good but adds quite a few horses, as well. An HKS sequential dump valve has been fitted, and an A'PEXi Power FC fully-programmable ECU and Commander unit (for mapping) now keep the engine settings correct to suit the changes made. Mazdaspeed strut braces have also been fitted at the front and rear. Inside, Andrew has replaced the original steering wheel with a Momo item.

'When it comes to the exterior, I've just made a few small changes,' comments Andrew, 'like the clear rear bumper lights and rear marker lights, as well as the side indicators.' A Feed headlight cover with an air intake is another personal touch. That's as far as the mods go for now.

