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# Monster RIDES

Scary-fast blasts in a race-ready Lexus,  
a Nissan named after a legendary  
spy plane and a VW we call Golfzilla

PHOTOS BY JEFF ALLEN & BRIAN BLADES

**HKS Altezza:** When Hiroyuki Hasegawa oversees a project, he seldom holds back. The founder and current president and CEO of HKS Co. Ltd. is notorious for his energy and enthusiasm in his work, playing an active role in everything from the company's racing program to its flourishing aftermarket business. Anyone who has ever bolted on a turbocharger has heard of HKS; it's one of the largest tuners in the world and the most recognized name in the import drag-racing community.

HKS has built its reputation on going fast in a straight line. It has the fastest drag car in Japan (see R&T, June 2000) and manufactures some of the best-selling turbocharger kits in the world. But Hasegawa wanted to show the world that he still knows how to



the Swedish company Öhlin. This adjustable system does a commendable job of soaking up road irregularities without jarring the car's occupants.

According to Nanahoshi, MotoRex's true aim was to build a Porsche 911 Turbo killer. And as far as I'm concerned, it has succeeded. Unfortunately, the price of the Blackbird is right up there with the Porsche at \$115,000. But I feel that it's still a good buy, especially if you like standing out in a crowd—MotoRex has stated that it plans to sell only a handful of these cars. But I must warn you that you will have to learn to shift with your left hand because all Blackbirds are right-hand drive.—SM

**Golfzilla:** Officially, the car before you is called the HPA Motorsports Golf VR6 Biturbo. Perhaps "Golfzilla" would be a better name, as it's a kindred spirit to the 1950s' lizard-mesomorph with 500,000-Btu breath, a roar like twisting steel girders and a fondness for leveling downtown Tokyo with sweeps of its tail and disproportionately small forelimbs.

What's truly monstrous about this relatively stock-appearing, all-wheel-drive VW Golf is the 442 bhp at those wheels, enough to wreak havoc with Vipers and Vettes. How about a 0-60 run of 4.4 sec.?...*In the wet?* Like a benevolent Dr. Frankenstein (to shift monster comparisons for a moment), HPA's Marcel Horn has carefully assembled donor parts from other VW/Audi and Porsche cars to breathe vigorous new life into this once-

■ The HPA Motorsports Golf seems to relish splashing through puddles, as VW's 4Motion all-wheel drive seems to find every available bit of traction. Porsche Turbo wheels and brakes complement the well-sorted suspension—and handle 442 bhp.



ordinary hatchback. It's all you can do to resist screaming, "It's *alive!*" as the turbos hit their stride at about 3000 rpm, all four Bridgestone Potenza S-02s scratch for traction, and this VW bolts off the line as if clouted by a wrecking ball. You can't seem to grab shifts quickly enough, and each successive gear seems to provide the same heady thrust. Third's my favorite—good for a passing-friendly 70-120-mph blast, it brings on the tunnel vision of rapidly building speed and makes the "passeé" appear to be standing still. But don't step out to check.

Turbos are the key—in a system developed by the German firm HGP Turbo, a

pair of Garrett T28 turbines pack 16.0 psi of boost into the 12-valve 2.8-liter VR6, whose standard 10.0:1 compression has been lowered to 7.0:1 via a laser-cut 5-mm plate between the head and block. Charge temperatures are kept in check by dual air-to-air intercoolers from the 225-bhp Audi TT—the TT's boost control valves are also used—and extra fuel is introduced through a second inline Bosch pump and higher-flow injectors.

All this power remains under the watchful eye of a stock VR6 engine-management computer, though its flash-memory chip has been heavily reprogrammed. According to Horn,





■ Nice symmetry accompanies the power. Twin turbos are seen up high, near the firewall.

the self-preservation tendencies of the system are extraordinary. "It's almost bulletproof," he says. "It'll shut itself down, it'll pull the timing back, it'll dump in extra fuel." He should know; he's actually had the car airfreighted to Germany for *Autobahn* testing, and claims to have run continuously for 3½ hours at over 170 mph, to verify that the turbos and stock VW internals were up to the task.

Although Horn could duplicate this Golf for about \$60,000, the \$25,000 engine package is targeted at the Audi TT. "They come with the factory 4Motion, so you don't have the expense of grafting in the all-wheel drive; they also come with a factory 6-speed so you just have to change the final drive [Horn uses the extra-tall ring and pinion from the European diesel version] and drop in the V-6. If you get a TT for \$35,000, you'll be into it for less than \$60,000 and you'll outperform just about anything on the

road." That's a believable statement, as the TT package will use the 24-valve VR6 variant now undergoing development. At what Horn considers a safe 20.3 psi, this engine makes a staggering 587 bhp at the chassis dyno's rollers for performance that should equal, if not surpass, a 911 Turbo's.

Golfzilla started life as a front-driver, so a European awd Golf rear floorpan (a pre-assembled unit Horn buys directly from VW in Wolfsburg) had to be grafted into place to accept the TT's independent rear suspension—"a 33-hour job," says Horn. But this is nothing compared to the 120 hours required for the first car, where each separate stamping had to be spot-welded together. The all-wheel drive uses the electronically controlled Haldex coupling and a normal 60/40 front/rear torque split. So even during our rain-dampened acceleration runs, the front torque bias pulls Golfzilla away from the line, straight and true.

A track star needs proper running shoes, and the Bridgestones, size 225/35ZR-18 mounted on Porsche 911 Turbo hollow-spoke alloys, handle the application of power effectively. Enormous Brembo monoblock 4-piston calipers and cross-drilled rotors, also from the 911 Turbo, mount up easily to the Golf's front suspension—a caliper bracket for just such a purpose exists, from the Porsche-developed Audi RS4—and provide capillary-popping

deceleration with a very firm pedal. KW Variant 2 suspension allows a ride-height adjustment of 1½ in. and variable rebound adjustment of the shocks, a setup that's appropriately firm yet supple enough for use as a daily driver.

In fact, Golfzilla's overall level of refinement is far from beastly. With its tall final-drive gearing, the VR6 spins at just 2400 rpm at an 80-mph cruise in 6th. There's a muffled whoosh and only slight lag from the turbos, as bypasses (instead of potentially hissy pop-off valves) deal with excess boost and keep cabin noise levels close to stock. There are no garish wings or hugely flared fenders to tip your hand. It's just the thing to sneak up on the unsuspecting Corvette, whose driver will soon know to equate HPA with serious BHP.—Douglas Kott

## CONTACT:

### HKS U.S.A.

13401 S. Main St., Los Angeles, Calif. 90061  
(310) 763-9600  
[www.HKSUSA.com](http://www.HKSUSA.com)

### HPA Motorsports Inc.

101-5763 198th St., Langley, B.C., Canada V3A 1G5  
(888) 530-1433  
[www.HPAmotorsports.com](http://www.HPAmotorsports.com)

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