

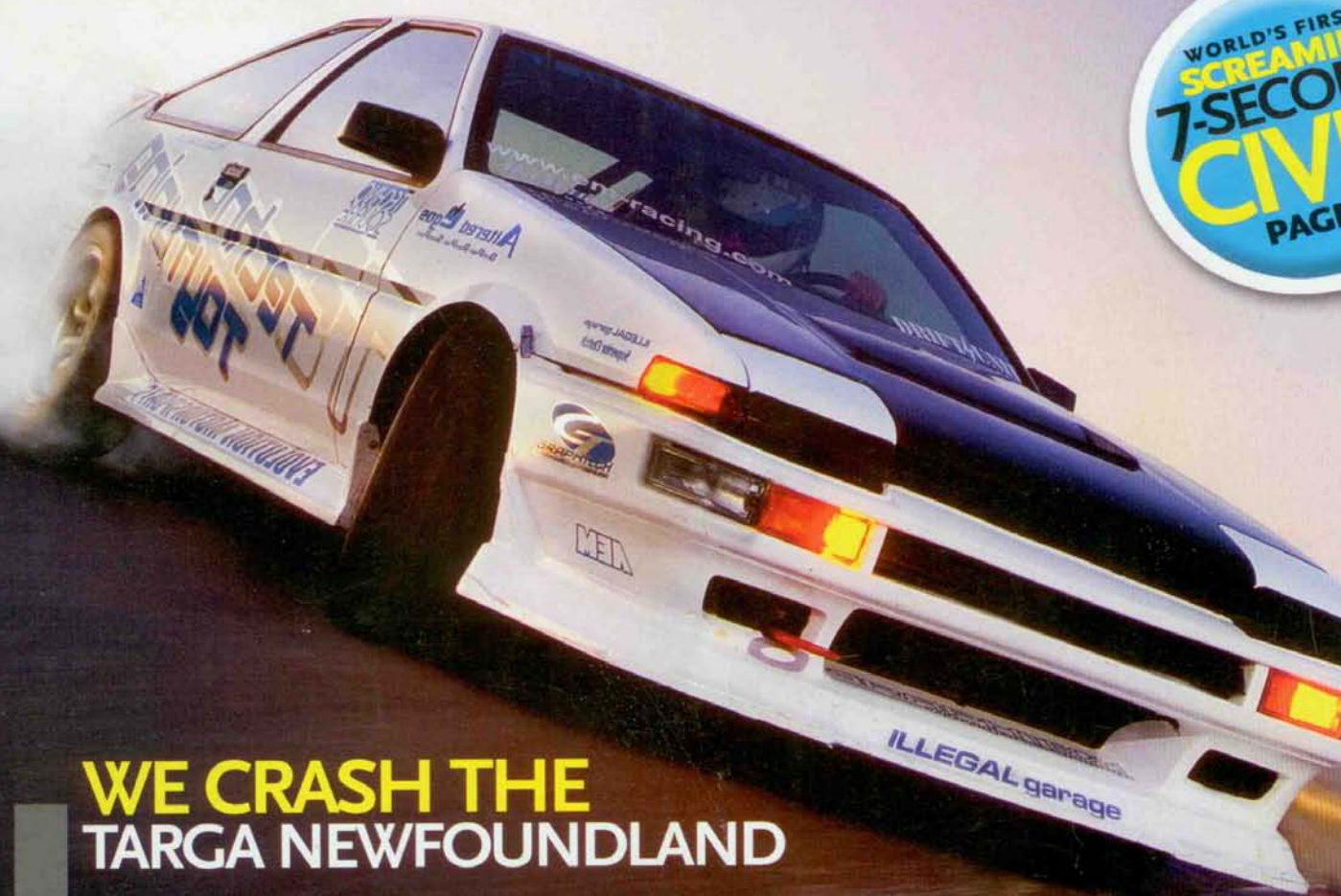
# SPORT COMPACT WAR

JUNKYARD

# DOGFIGHT

**TRACK TEST** THIS RABID HONDA MUTT VS. TWO PUREBREDS

WORLD'S FIRST  
SCREAMING  
7-SECOND  
CIVIL  
PAGE



**WE CRASH THE  
TARGA NEWFOUNDLAND**

**BUDGET AWD BATTLE**  
\$7K SUBARU VS. \$35K EVO

**TEST SECRETS**  
OUR METHODS REVEALED



# JETTA R

HPA AND VW'S 550BHP EXPERIMENT



# GT

BY GLENN OYOUNG • PHOTOGRAPHY BY JOHN KIEWICZ

In early 2005, members of VW's Moonraker Project and HPA's founder, Marcel Horn, met to discuss plans to exhibit at the Specialty Equipment Market Association (SEMA) trade show in Las Vegas later that year. VW, arguably one of America's first tuner brands, had long shunned this after-market circus in favor of traditional car shows. For its inaugural SEMA, the project (established to shake up VW's presence in North America) wanted to make a big impression, and sought Horn's valuable insight.





# JETTA RGT

Horn's answer was threefold: 1. Ensure this car would prove to aftermarket manufacturers that VW was a 'safe' tuning platform to invest in; 2. Build a car that would appeal to everyone from JDM tuner enthusiasts to old-school Holley carburetor guys; 3. Show that the future of the aftermarket lies in collaboration between OEMs and tuners. In Horn's words: "Project RGT was about showcasing passion, market awareness, and brand savvy."

HPA and VW heralded an official SEMA debut with a trio of impressive RGT vehicles covering each major segment of the aftermarket: the Jetta (sport compact), Passat (sedan), and Touareg (SUV). Of the three, the undisputed crowd favorite was the Jetta RGT, the car that Marcel fondly describes as: "a Glock strapped in a holster."

The Jetta RGT came into the world as a 2005-model 2.5-liter five-cylinder with automatic transmission and front-wheel drive. Out went the stock engine; in came an R32-spec 3.2-liter V6. HPA gave it some SEMA-worthy juice by installing its twin turbo conversion package. Dual Garrett GT25R turbos blow boost through twin side-mounted intercoolers, a custom cast aluminum short-runner intake manifold, and a custom quad-bypass exhaust system, accented by custom tips that fit

in perfectly with the rear valance. The result is a whopping 550bhp at a full 19psi. of boost. With boost settings turned down to generate 500bhp and launching at 3000rpm (out of respect for VW's wishes), the RGT still turns in a 0-60mph time of four seconds and a quarter-mile of 12.2 seconds at 118mph (according to *Motor Trend*).

Generating this maddening amount of horsepower is fun, but useless unless it is transferred to the road. So a DSG gearbox featuring taller gears and sport-shifting calibrations replaced the stock transmission. The RGT's substantial torque is transmitted through a heavy-duty wet-plate style dual clutch to a 4MOTION all-wheel drive system from an R32. Handling tweaks include a three-way competition suspension from KW and a six-point roll cage.

HPA/VW tapped Avus to create some rolling art. The RGT's track wheels are custom 18x9.5 one-piece forged DTMs. Its show rims are DTM 19x9.5 center-lock items. Not one to pay lip service to the race/street concept, Horn also

ordered WRC tarmac-spec Brembos with eight-piston calipers up front and four-piston calipers in back. The final infusion of race DNA came in the form of an AP Racing quad air jack system, tipping a hat to every tuner's secret wish of performing a Touring Car-style pit stop at their local Starbucks drive-through.

Horn and his team worked closely with VW's Design Center California to make sure the car's street side sported exterior styling and interior





trim on par in terms of quality and cool-factor with its race side. Both HPA and VW were adamant that any changes would be OEM quality in terms of fit and finish. "This was one of the few projects where a manufacturer actually worked hand-in-hand with a tuner," says Horn. A tuner's dream is to have "a car with a body that houses the widest wheels possible, puts air over the intercoolers, and looks just right," he

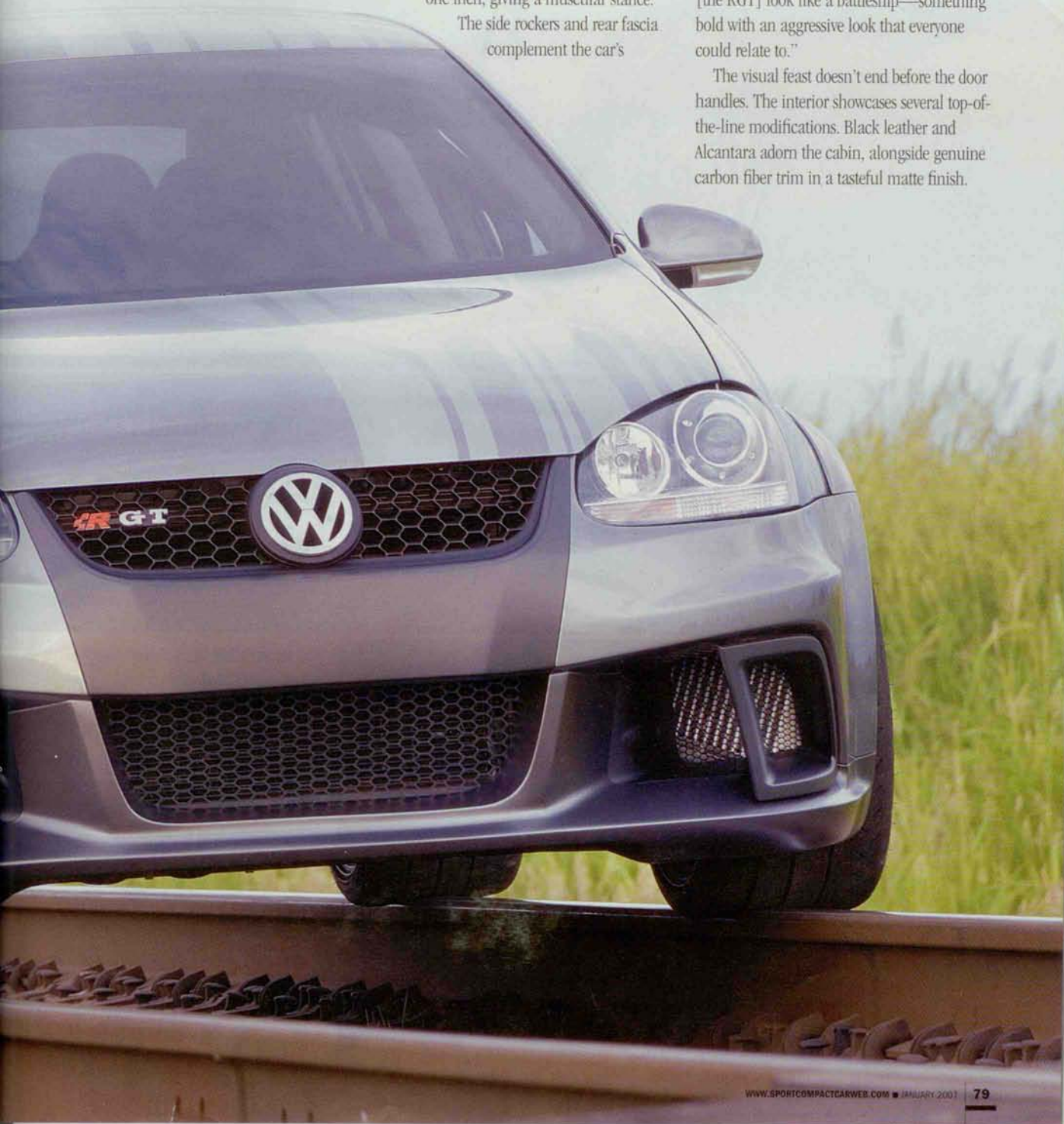
continues. "The designers at VW made it happen, just like waving a magic wand."

The end result is a Jetta that truly looks more like a "stealth fighter's sibling" as Horn puts it, than the stereotypical surfer girl's floral-sticker-clad Jetta we see in Southern California so often. The front was designed not only to look tough, but also provide the dual intercoolers with maximum airflow. Fenders are flared by one inch, giving a muscular stance.

The side rockers and rear fascia complement the car's

aggressive nose and wider body. Tying everything together is several coats of Smoke Grey paint with ghosted silver graphics. Asked to describe the vision for the exterior, Horn says: "We were trying to go the anti-bling approach." (notably before VW's popular Unpimp Your Ride campaign). "I wanted to return to 'authentic' tuning. I didn't want to do anything gaudy like diamond-studded spinners. I wanted to make [the RGT] look like a battleship—something bold with an aggressive look that everyone could relate to."

The visual feast doesn't end before the door handles. The interior showcases several top-of-the-line modifications. Black leather and Alcantara adorn the cabin, alongside genuine carbon fiber trim in a tasteful matte finish.





# JETTA RGT



**IF WE HAD TO SINGLE ONE ASPECT OUT, IT WOULD HAVE TO BE NOT THE SPEED IT ATTAINS, BUT THE SPEED AT WHICH THIS COMPLETE TRANSFORMATION TOOK PLACE.**



All four occupants are treated to Euro-spec R32 Recaro race buckets and are held in place by Schroth Profi II five-point harnesses. HPA's final touch is an F1-style ST8600 digital display system, making those aforementioned fantasy pit stops all the more rewarding.

The most impressive thing about Project Jetta RGT is that it's hard to say what the most impressive thing is. Very Zen. But if we had to single one aspect out, it would have to be not the speed it attains, but the speed at which this complete transformation took place.

Marcel, his HPA staff and their family members brought the RGT to life in only 45 days. And prior to that, we were informed that designers and engineers from Moonraker gave

