

New Enduro Beetle



BY DEAN KIRSTEN

Hippies Racing builds the world's first NB race car

Who would have ever imagined that the world's first New Beetle race car would be campaigned by an Australian, built by a North American race car builder, and raced at Germany's famous 24 Hours of Nurburgring? Not us, that's for sure! But that's exactly what happen this past year, when the idea came to Ross Palmer, president of Hippies — a Brisbane, Australia-based pantyhose company. With the release of the New Beetle in North America, Ross, along with team leader Damien White, decided to purchase three of the cars from a dealership in Chicago, Illinois. One of these sedans was then delivered to AKG Motorsports in Zion, Illinois, where race car builder, Andy Kritikos, transformed the Uni-Red sedan into an endurance racer in less than five weeks.

Using the basic body shell and suspension, Andy, removed the stock 2.0-liter engine and replaced it with a race-prepped, A3 1.8-liter turbocharged engine, air-lifted from Australia. With a modified ECU from

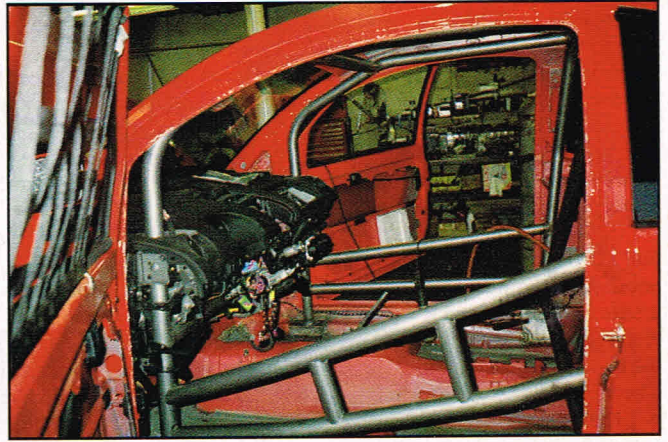
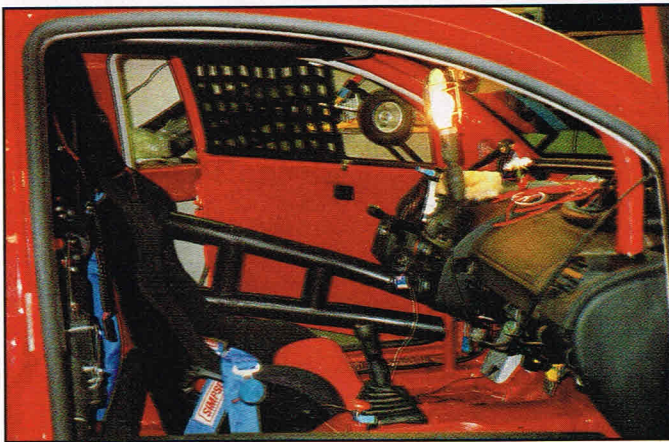




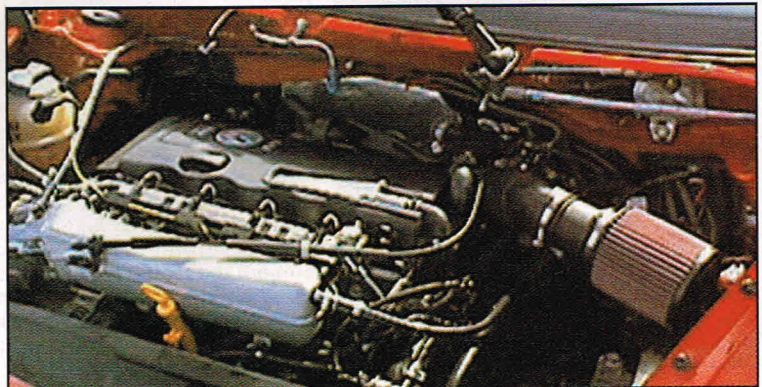
the German tuner MTM, and an open 2.5-inch (I.D.) exhaust, the engine was set at 16-p.s.i. of boost, which would produce over 200hp. Compare that to the stock rating of only 150hp! This engine also had to meet the pre-set emission levels for the Nurburging event.

To bring the car up to race standards, Andy installed a six-point roll cage, using 1-3/4-inch .095-inch wall DOM tubing. The stock fuel tank was removed and replaced with a 29-gallon ATL Super Cell, fitted between the rear wheels, and the battery was remounted to the rear of the car (where the rear seat used to be). Stock seats went by the wayside, and were replaced with a pair of Corbeau carbon fiber Pro Sport seats, along with Simpson 3-inch, 6-point "lock" belts (and window nets). Fire protection was also included, by installing a Phoenix 11-pound onboard fire system, with three nozzles fitted into the car.

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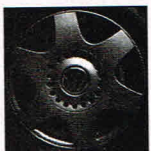
TOP, action from the 24 hours of Nurburging. Hippies Racing's New Beetle racecar completed the event despite one crash, and the loss of the turbo intercooler. CENTER RIGHT & LEFT, construction in progress at Andy Kritikos' AKG Motorsports in Zion, Illinois. Photos show roll cage construction, seat installation and safety equipment fitted. ABOVE, with stock gas tank removed, Andy boxed the rear floor with metal ABOVE RIGHT, and installed a 29-gallon ATL fuel cell . RIGHT, an A3 1800cc turbocharged (gas) engine was fitted into the New Beetle. Germany's MTM dialed-in the ECU and fuel management system. Horsepower was rated at over 200hp (stock factory rating was 150hp). This engine is similar to the 1.8T engine that will soon find its way into the 1999 New Beetle.



got brake dust?

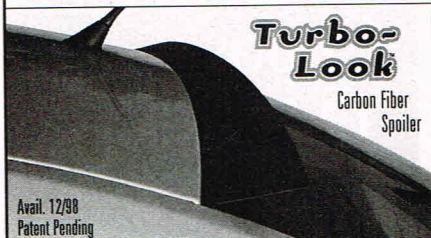
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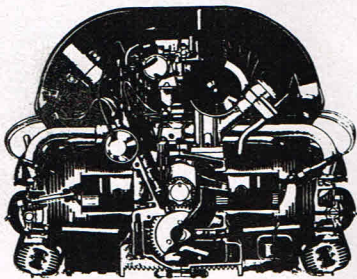
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ENDURO NEW BEETLE

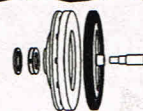
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Underneath, Andy's work continued by fitting a 27mm rear anti-roll bar, along with a 24mm front sway bar and Bilstein racing struts. The 2-1/2-inch (I.D.) coil-over kits included 8-inch, 500-lb. front springs, along with 350-lb. rears. Braking was improved by installing Carbon Metallic 83 compound front pads, with carbon fiber rears. Wheels for the race were BBS Moda 1, measuring 7.5x17-inches, running Dunlop radials with 9-1/2-inches of tread on the ground. Other additions include: lightweight Lexan door windows; carbon fiber rear wing; two 100-watt aircraft landing lights; two 100-watt low beams; and two 100-watt high beams (for a total of 600-watts of night vision). About the only other area that remained was the dash. And, like most of the rest of the car, it was totally revamped with aftermarket VDO gauges and a 2-way Motorola VHF radio system.

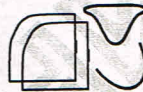
With just days before the big race in Germany, the newly completed race car was air freighted, via Lufthansa Airlines, to Frankfurt, and trucked to MTM in Ingolstat, Germany, to have the engine management system adjusted. Once all was race-ready, the car was then road tested by driving it some 3-1/2-hours on the German Autobahn, to Nurburgring, just in time for the 24-hour torture test to come.

The race team consisted of Ross Palmer, Damien White, Peter McKay and Melinda Price. During qualifying, the New Beetle ended up being 125th out of 155 cars — but they were in the race, despite no support from Volkswagen. In fact, with the European release of the New Beetle some eight months away, VW was upset that the car was even in Germany in the first place! The Australians were on their own.

As the big day, June 13th, 1998, finally came around, the race was on, and so was the first New Beetle race car! Things went smoothly for the first hour, other than fighting an understeer problem. At 80 minutes into the race, an alternator bracket broke, and forced a pit stop. Then at six hours, now nighttime, Peter McKay crashed the car at 100km/h in a hard left-hand turn. While not heavily damaged, it did force a one-hour pit stop to fix the damaged front end. Once back on the track, the turbo intercooler hose let loose, and stranded the team on the backside of the track. Once towed in, the intercooler was bypassed, and back on the track they went. Despite a loss of power, the team did manage to complete the race and make a piece of automotive history for the New Beetle. Since this race, the car has competed in the 6 hours of Nurburgring, and several other international endurance races. If you would like to see more on this unique racer, you can log-on to their web site at: <http://www.gtprod.com.au/beetle/>.



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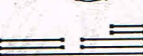
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