



Tim Lanocha, who has created a monster of a TR8.

Tim Lanocha owns this stunning TR8, and it really is as fast as it looks. I was going to be allowed to drive the car myself, but before doing so Tim strapped me into the co-pilot's seat and took the controls for a quick tour to give me an impression of the car's capabilities. Tim clearly knows his car inside out, and during his brief drive he gave me a comprehensive demonstration of the car's potential. I can report that not only is it the fastest Triumph I've ever experienced, but it is actually the fastest car I have ever been in. And that long list includes some fabulous cars from Lamborghini, Ferrari and Porsche. Maybe the Bugatti Veyron would give this Triumph supercar some competition, but be under no illusions – the Lanocha TR8 is a very high performing and very capable street rod. Just squeezing the throttle marginally in any gear causes a burst of thrust that pushes you back into the all-encompassing bucket seats and powers the TR

forwards like a Bullet (pardon the pun!) from a gun.

So just how did this one-off car come about? What was it that set Tim off on a process that would result in such an extreme car which to all intents and purposes is basically a TR7? It takes an extreme enthusiast to want to push a humble British sports car this far, and Tim is certainly an enthusiast. And his interest in these cars – just like my own – started after he first saw the car in advertisements at the time of its launch.

In America the tag line for these ads was *The Shape Of Things To Come* and Tim felt just as I did, that this was a fantastic looking car from the future. But then his brother Bill, who is 15 years older and also had an interest in the TR7, purchased one of the first TR8s that went on sale in Maryland. How fortunate then that both Tim and Bill arrived at the recent Vintage Triumph Register convention with the supercar – a car Tim has christened 'Bulitt' (and yes, that is three Ts) – enabling me to get the full story.

King of the Road

This TR8 wears the same styling as the Bob Tullius Group 44 Inc cars. But it is not simply a TR7 V8 with a wide body created just for show - this is actually the fastest road going Triumph in the world today.

Interview: John Clancy Pictures, Bill McAllen and John Clancy

Andy, can we clone out the light areas from behind the white text, please?



BILL: I had always wanted a Triumph, and back in the 1960s I wanted to get one after High School. But the problem was that our father thought Triumphs were too small and I would have problems if I was ever involved in an accident. So I had to wait a few years. I first had a TR6, but then purchased a TR8 right off the showroom floor. Tim of course had been watching all this and in the end I think he wanted something a little different. I think he should explain what 'different' means.

TIM: Being around Bill and seeing some of the cars he had gave me a passion for cars. I'm one of those people who always wants to improve on things, and it all started by looking at Bill's TR8, which was gorgeous. I first had a Camaro when I started driving in 1979 and I tinkered around with that to try and make it go faster. Then a little later I got an '87 Lotus, but things changed when Bill said we were going to Charles Runyan's Roadster Factory Summer Party back in 1990 and that's when I saw all the TR7s and TR8s there. Charles had

turned his passion for cars into a first class business; now that is living the dream! That summer party was the best car event I had ever been to, and I realized I had to get a TR8 of my own and start tinkering!

In 1992 I found one and started building what I think ultimately turned into one of the fastest Rover V8 TR8s around. It makes over 330bhp at the rear wheels. That was my first TR8 and as I have a lot of history with it, it's kind of my baby. But I developed a passion for the Group 44 car and about 15 years ago we had a trip down to Sebring and met Bob Tullius for the first time. I took one look at his TR8 race car and fell in love with it. Mr Tullius has always been an inspiration for me and I respect him greatly. His racing team was one of the finest that ever existed and his cars were a work of art. Bob gave me Lanky Foushee's telephone number [Lanky Foushee was Group 44 Inc. crew chief - Ed] and as a result I became good friends with Lanky. He was a wealth of knowledge and a real gentlemen. I feel



Tim's brother Bill, who shares his passion for fast cars.



very honoured to have known these guys. A special 'Thank you' to Mr. Tullius.

The moulds to create the same bodywork as Bob's original cars were developed from the second Group 44 TR8 owned by Bill Warner. Bill was very kind and loaned me the front of the car to reproduce the moulds. The rear of the car came from the original moulds that we obtained about ten years ago from a company called Mountjoy, which is near Washington DC. As a result we have a complete set of moulds for the car now. I admire the Rover technology, but this time I wanted to do something more modern so I put a Chevrolet drivetrain in. That enabled me to take things to the extreme and led largely to the car being what it is today.

BILL: I feel kind of responsible for getting Tim so deeply involved, but I enjoy it all as much as he does. Back in the 1960s the thing in the US was fast quarter mile racing. We called them the muscle cars. One of the fastest cars in the history books is the 1965 GTO by Pontiac. I ended up with one of those and had to wait until I got married before getting the car I really wanted – the TR8 in 1980. At the time the US was going through a real problem with gas (petrol) and so the car had sat for a while before I bought it.

What Bill says here about his V8 car languishing in the showroom concurs with US sales records of the TR8. The energy crisis in the early 1970s had decimated the market for cars with bigger engines and was one of the reasons why Triumph didn't release the TR8 right from the start.

TIM: The nice thing about these cars is the engine was originally the Buick 215, which is very similar to the Rover V8. So basically it was originally an American motor. We have modernized it by making a fuel injection system and also used a pair of Buick 340 heads off another Buick motor that fits the Rover block. When it came to this car I wanted to fit in with a few car clubs where not many members know about a Rover engine, but just about all of them know a Chevrolet engine. So combined with Chevy reliability and the power you can make, I opted for the Chevrolet engine.

I was interested to know if its current extreme performance was something Tim always planned, or

whether it just developed gradually. It appears to have been a little of both.

TIM: You can build something normally aspirated that can make a lot of power, but then you've got to sacrifice driveability. Group 44 were limited in what they could do because they were racing, but I didn't have to worry about that as I wasn't going to be putting it on a track in any kind of competitive racing. On the street though, there's not much out there that's putting down 1000 horsepower that has a chassis like this, nor with handling like this either. You'd have to get into one of the super exotics which are out there, but there's not too many of them! This car uses ordinary pump gas and it's tuned with 21lbs of boost. Right now it's putting down 828bhp at the wheels. It's kind of effortless, but the reality is I don't want to pay \$10 per gallon for race fuel so I cheat a little by running methanol injection. That cools the charge down and you can run ordinary 93 octane fuel. I think I'm right at the edge with it now and obviously I don't want to blow it up, I want to keep it safe and dependable.

The car still has a short wheelbase TR7 shell as its basis, so I wanted to know just how such a powerful package stays on the road.

TIM: I modernized the suspension with coil over shocks and the spring rates were changed until I got them right. It hunkers down pretty well with the power we're putting onto the road, but the wheelbase is very short, yes. If you lose this thing then there's no turning back, you might just as well lie down and make yourself comfortable because there's nothing you can do at that point. You have to be very, very careful when you drive it, especially in the wet.

There is a very substantial roll cage which ties this car together. Even though the TR7 shell is renowned for its strength, it's not able to handle the power output of this turbocharged, fuel injected V8. The roll cage is essential for other reasons because Tim has taken it to drag strips where quarter miles from a standing start in around 11 seconds are the order of the day.

TIM: We have a unique kind of cage we call The Skeleton, which is super safe. There's a lot of steel in this car so it still weighs about 3000lbs. The car has been

ABOVE: It is not built for competition, so the cockpit is surprisingly well kitted out. There is, however, a complex cage built in to stop the turbocharged 355 Chevy V8 engine from shaking the TR7 to bits. Oh, and there is still enough room in the boot for a little shopping!





licence and had some cars with big blocks. They were powerful, but what we have here is the same thrust built into a small car and it just takes your breath away. There's a G force which you've got to be ready for.

TIM: Small block American motors are traditionally anything up to 400 cubic inches, and then anything over that is considered a big block. With the newer aftermarket technologies they're able to get the larger capacity into the same physical dimensions as a small block. So this is really a big block within a small block if that makes sense? I realized that this was going to create a lot of torque within a light car. So what I had to do was get the turbo to flow lots of air into the cylinder heads because the larger bore would handle larger valves, but I also used a very short stroke. Even though this is a 427 small block, it's de-stroked to a 376ci so we have the air advantage of the big block combined with the huge advantage of the revs. This means the car is set up for low end horsepower which means we shift gears at about 5500rpm. Why make it rev higher when it would cut the longevity of the motor? We can spin it up and make just as much power on the low end so when we come out of a corner it's right there on the throttle. I think you experienced a little bit of that when I demonstrated a little half throttle acceleration.

clipped at the front firewall so it has been modified forward of that, but the back half is still a TR7. We did re-engineer the suspension which is hard to see, but if we had this thing on a lift you'd really understand how well it's put together, how the frame structure works and how strong it is. We were actually twisting the car in half because the control arms were coming apart from the unit body, so we had to upgrade a few things.

A unique diffuser has been created which controls the air flow under the car and helps it sit down onto the road even further. Altogether this car is an amazing package and is Tim's ultimate creation so far. So what does Bill think about this behemoth now it is pretty much the finished article?

BILL: There's no question what the capability is. I guess Tim and I were built for speed. I'm getting older now but I still love it. I remember when I first got my driver's

BELOW: The body styling is a copy of the Group 44 Inc TR8 racers. Owner of the second of those cars, Bill Warner, lent Tim the front end so he could make fresh moulds, while the rear was made from the original moulds that Tim acquired ten years ago. It looks incredibly fast, even standing still.

I certainly did experience that and it is something I'll never forget. After only a couple of seconds the car was pulling over 100mph and would have continued had Tim not backed off. Whilst I did not dare to push the car anywhere near that level, I did get a feel of how responsive the throttle was during my sedate little drive – just the slightest squeeze of the pedal and you feel your back pressing into the seats. It's phenomenal performance. And whilst I was trying to concentrate on driving, Tim was pointing out the turbo boost gauge attached to the roll cage in clear view. 'When it gets to zero, change gear,' he says. And then as soon as the clutch is depressed and the gearstick is shifted there is a rush of air from the engine bay and the boost gauge resets. We're not moving very quickly with me behind the wheel but it's still exhilarating, and I know that at a moment's notice we could take off down the road like an F1 car. The fact that we are in a Triumph just makes the experience all the more special.



Parking the car up draws a crowd wherever it goes which is no surprise. But perhaps the most surprising features are revealed when looking at the boot – there may not be much room left in there, but there is a little and the idea was to be able to use the car to go shopping! Then there is the HiFi – just fabulous sound and when Tim put it on, the track playing was hard rock which is totally appropriate for this car.

BILL: Well, you might as well be comfortable. We have our favourite tunes which I won't get into here, but it's a brother thing. We'll bang certain music out and you'll lose your hearing in there. It's got a really good juke box. The cockpit is very comfortable too. When they designed the car they did a wonderful job. The leg room is unreal. By comparison, getting into a Lotus is a little tight for us.

Tim modified the floor on the driver's side to lower it about 2in, thereby enabling him to wear a helmet at certain events. It still has sufficient ground clearance. That isn't something that can be supplied as part of a kit, but because Tim owns all the body moulds he does occasionally supply a complete body kit to racers.



TIM: We've done a few kits for various folks - mainly racing, like minded people. Now if someone like Bill Warner damages his car and needs replacement panels, then I'll spend the time getting the replacements made. Other than that I'm not in the business to just go and mass produce these kits so there are thousands of them running around. At that point it would take the uniqueness away from what this is.

Given the perfection of this car today and the fact that it's only fairly recently got to the present standard, I asked Tim if he was pleased with it.

TIM: I'm in more of a refinement stage now and at this stage I try not to make big changes because I have other projects. But am I pleased with it? Yes. It's dependable and I am pleased with it.

And what about the all-important miles per gallon and the potential top speed?

TIM: Fortunately it's only about a half hour drive to meet up with the trailer it will be going home in because when I'm playing around driving the car, it's probably only 8 to 10 miles per US gallon. In terms of top speed, I can work out mathematically what the top speed should be with the gearing. For example, I can cruise at 100mph with the tachometer reading just 2100rpm and there's a lot more to go. So on paper I would say it should exceed 200mph. Now being capable of that on paper is one thing, but actually doing it in real life is something else so I think one of my goals is to get involved in one of these mile long runs and see what I can achieve safely. Who knows, it might crest 200mph. I certainly think it has the capacity to do so.

Finally, I suggested this car was made in America to which Tim replied: 'Yes, but let's give credit where it's due, it's an English car with some American touches.' A perfect summary.

LEFT: Tim was delighted to meet the TR7's original stylist, Harris Mann, at the VTR meet. Harris was suitably impressed.



Lifting a bonnet always draws a crowd, but with this car whatever you open, there is something to see.

Bulitt Specs

BODY

1976 TR7 with 50k original miles, garage kept, with custom moulded fiberglass body panels

Frame: Custom hand crafted tube/box steel reinforced frame with front tubed frame from original firewall forward. Roll cage tied to original body with new reinforced frame plus rear, custom reinforced tube/box frame

Acknowledgments:

Bob Tullius
Bill Warner
Lanky Foushee
Brush Chassis
Michael Perkins
Fiberglass Frank

Engine:

355 Chevy V8 / turbocharged
350 four bolt main block, 30 thou overbore, billet main caps, ARP studs
Cosworth 5.7 H-beam rods
JE 8.0:1 pistons
Canton racing oil pan/trap doors/windage screen
Lunati custom ground cam
Air Flow Research billet cylinder heads, race ported with Manly Inconel 2.05 intake/1.6 exhaust valves and Lunati roller rockers
Edelbrock custom modified intake

Garrett T4 custom turbocharger with dual Deltagate MkII wastegates
Electromotive Tec 3 engine management system with onboard wideband O2 tuning
Borla stainless steel muffler with 3in downpipe

Acknowledgments:

JB Machine
Mike James
Kevin Black

Drivetrain

Transmission: Borg-Warner T56 six speed with Ram billet CNC flywheel, Ram 6000 Series paddle disc and Ram 3000lb pressure plate

Rear Differential: 9in Ford with disc brakes and 3.08 Detroit locker

Rear suspension: custom 4 link suspension

Front Suspension: custom modified coilover shocks with 6 piston Wilwood calipers and 12.75in Winston Cup vanned discs

Tyres: Front 245/40 ZR17 on 17x 9.5in rims
Rear 335/35 YR17 on 17x 12 rims

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