

Prepare to get flamed

Words: Harry Charnock & Elliott Roberts Photos: Harry Charnock

A standard-looking, oil burning more-door in the pages of *Performance VW*. Should we reach for our flame suits? Well not just yet. Harry Charnock takes a closer look at this somewhat understated Mk2 Golf to find out just why it's gracing these hallowed pages.



Is this the first car we've ever featured that sports a tow bar? It's certainly the only one we can remember. What a claim, hey? Don't go turning the pages just yet though, because it could just be the ultimate street sleeper, too.

Our first experience of this car cemented our view of it as being a great sleeper; coming off a roundabout on to a stretch of dual carriageway. To see a five-door Golf fly past, defying the laws of physics and smoking like a North Sea oil rig to the point

that other road users were visibly wondering if it was on fire or being powered by JATO rockets was memorable to say the least! "Most people don't seem interested in it as it looks like a normal Golf," claims its creator, Michael Till. "That all changes once they see it in action though!" If you've ever witnessed a B52 bomber at an air show, being forced skyward by rocket boosters, then you might be able to comprehend the surreal image of Michael's Mk2 Golf Syncro accelerating up the road in full flight.

We've always been a sucker for a street sleeper here at *PVW* and this has got to be the ultimate, because not only is it fast, very fast, but it also returns great mpg, too. Although Mike claims to have built a car that doesn't stand out, and to us it's more than slightly reminiscent of an elderly neighbour's Golf kept in similar condition, it definitely stands out from the crowd. It was somewhat amusing to watch people obliviously walk past it in the line-up of cars waiting to run down the strip at Santa Pod recently, and

then the *hrum* of activity as the bonnet and boot opened up to arm the nitrous caused people to do a double-take and ask: "*Is that a diesel?*" Yep... "*With NOS!*" Yep!

Built over three years to be the ultimate daily driver, everything has been thought of in minute detail. Looking at the spec sheet we'd say it's a small engineering miracle. As well as dropping in a PD lump, Mike has taken advantage of the Syncro shell, and stuck with driving each road wheel. He achieved this with Audi TT Haldex running

gear, using an O2M TT 'box with Mk4 TDI ratios, internally sleeved Mk4/2 front drive shafts and a TT/Syncro front prop. The rear subframe had to be modified to fit a Haldex rear diff, and a Sachs uprated clutch has been fitted to cope with the power and torque the modified PD puts out.

That brings us neatly to the car's party piece; its PD engine. It's no longer a complete rarity to see these engines fitted into Mk1/2 Golfs, but it's by no means common either, especially not as complete

or factory fresh as this one is.

The thing is, everybody seems to be talking about PD swaps, but why aren't they all doing them? "My best advice to someone thinking about doing something similar by themselves would be to have an open mind. I didn't even know it could be done until I tried," he laughed. "Do lots of research and be prepared to put in plenty of long hours. Oh, you'll need a complete Mk4 donor car, too!" He also claims you'll need the ability to get your hands dirty and make custom parts,

Dub Details

ENGINE: 1.9TDI (ASZ code) PD130 from Mk4 Golf, Pro Alloy intercooler, front mounted PD fuel cooler, full custom (part Range Rover, part Transit, part hospital bed) exhaust, Turbo Dynamics Stage 2 MD376 turbo, Mk4 management and instrument cluster, adjustable Tuning Box with custom map by The Phirm, 'Wizards Of NOS' 50 shot, O2M Audi TT six-speed 'box with Mk4 TDI ratios, Haldex rear diff, Haldex hydraulic valve control system, Sachs uprated clutch. Performance: 250bhp and 380lb ft of torque, 0-60mph: 5.60sec (approx) and 13.4sec quarter-mile time

CHASSIS: 15" G60 steels, KW Variant 1 coilovers, Eibach front ARB, Thule roof bar strut braces, Powerflex bushes, Polo 22mm brake master cylinder, GTI 16v front hubs, G60 calipers with 280mm drilled discs. Mk4 rear calipers and discs. Citroën brake bias modified to be manually adjustable, Corrado pedal box, 6mm sump guard

INSIDE: Mk4 Recaro seats, boost and 4WD bias gauge, Corrado MFA stalk for Mk4 trip computer, Mk4 Golf radio with iPod control and Bluetooth hands free, Mk4 coded key in driver's door that activates 4WD and NOS

SHOUT: Dai at Talbot Garage for wiring diagrams and decoding, Julian at Bedw Services for the use of the lathe and machining equipment, plus the guys at The Phirm (especially Dave) for the remapping



unless you've got a trusty local tuner or very deep pockets!

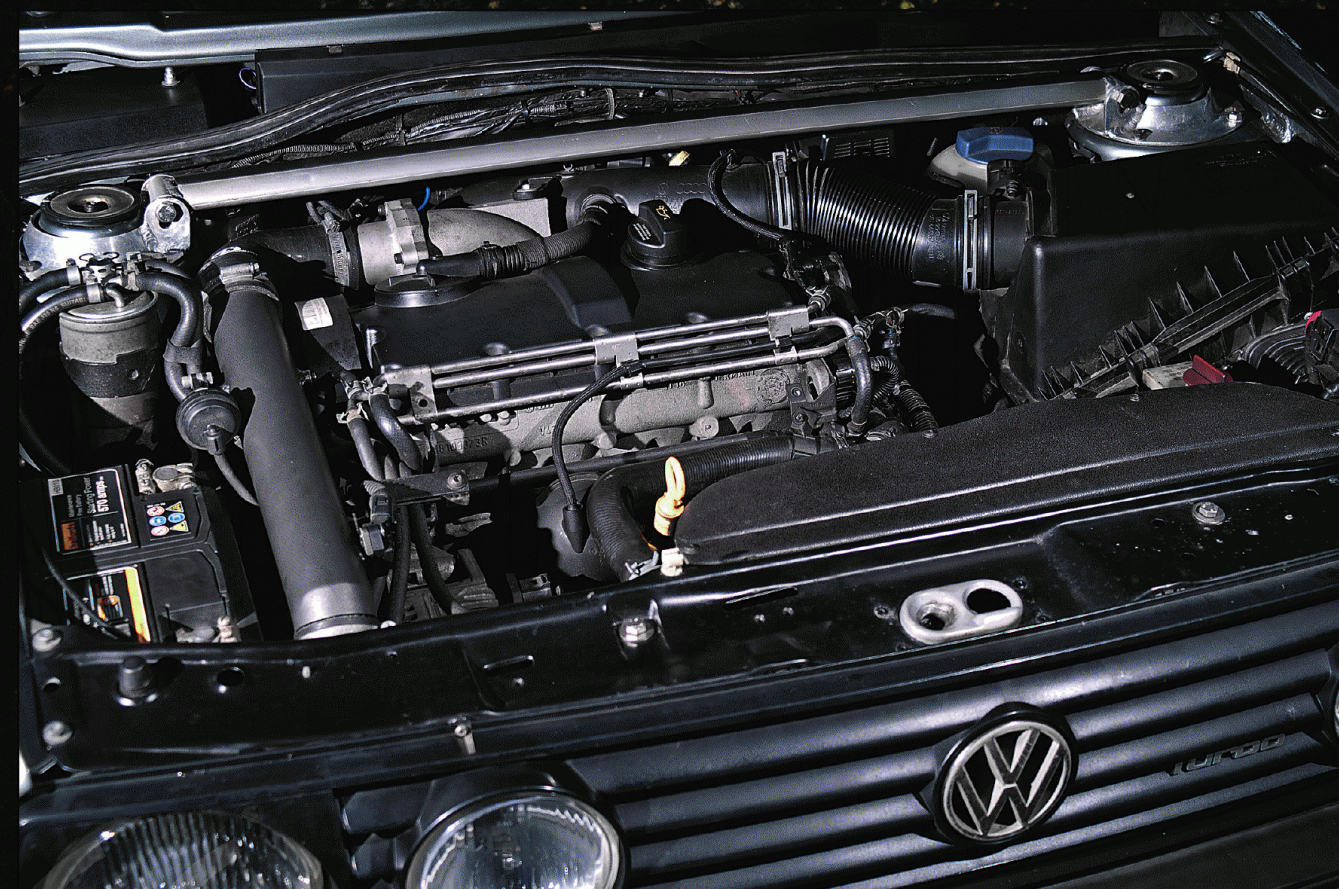
With custom rad mounts and boost piping to and from the large front mount intercooler all looking like OEM kit, the sleeper image is carried off beautifully. It's a shame the shiny snail of the Turbo Dynamics Stage 2 MD376 hybrid turbo isn't visible, hiding away below the inlet plenum, but we guess that's part of the appeal. To milk the benefit of that hybrid turbo a custom map by The Phirm's resident diesel guru (and *PW* contributor), 'Diesel Dave' (of Haslemere Tuning) is run in via an adjustable tuning box, allowing a progression

from mild tune to a maxed-out fueling and boost map that sees the Mk2's rear hatch developing the appearance of a coal miner.

We've made that all sound relatively straightforward but there was a lot of R&D and good old-fashioned trial and error that went into the build. "Apart from the mapping and decoding I did everything myself, including the wiring, which was fun," he remembers. Not bad for a first engine swap. Michael claims it was a case of learning as he went along, which is okay if you've got the skills to start with, but to the majority of us, well, you might as well forget it.

"I made engine mounts and a rear diff support by cutting templates using cereal boxes and then fabricating them out of 4mm steel," he said. The intercooler was made in a similar way: "For that I used a cornflake box and a toilet roll before ordering the correct 'cooler!" As for the charge piping, that was constructed from old hospital beds: "The exhaust is actually part Range Rover and part Ford Transit, with a bit of old hospital bed thrown in for good measure." Don't ask!

Mike modestly estimates the car to have "around 225bhp or so" during our



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photoshoot, though with this car it's all about the torque and its ability to launch crisply every time. Moving off with a small amount of wheel slip, a nice chirp into second while squirming around slightly, it sounds undramatic, but when you see it in person it's awe-inspiring. Mike has cleverly fitted a 'Wizards Of NOS' 50 shot, actuated by a switch at the end of the accelerator pedal travel, and armed by a Mk4 coded key that sits in the driver's doorcard.

One of the reasons this car is such a sleeper is its ride height. Although it has KW Variant 1 coilovers fitted, they're not far from

wound all the way up, so the car is only dropped about -50mm; subtle stuff. This combined with its five-door trim makes it all the more surprising when it suddenly takes off. It's stopped by G60 calipers with EBC GreenStuff pads and drilled 280mm discs up front, with bare minimum of clearance sat in the G60 15" steels and Mk4 discs and calipers on the rear.

It's the level of attention to detail that's inspiring though. Wherever you look, it's all done to such a standard that you have to second glance it sometimes to realise it's not an original feature. The front strut brace

and the removable one in the rear have been fabricated from Thule roof bars. They look properly rigid and really neat; just one of a handful of original ideas from Mike.

The years of work to get it where it is today have certainly paid off, and have led to the creation of something genuinely original, an over-used term that's for sure, especially in the world of the Mk2 Golf, but something Mike has definitely succeeded in doing. This hasn't necessarily been the aim; that would be Mike's dream of making *the* ultimate daily driver. He's completely succeeded in that, but also built something genuinely unique. Is



there even another PD-powered Haldex Mk2 golf out there? We doubt it. And it's fast. Very fast!

Since the shoot Harry has had the car remapped by Dave to make better use of the nitrous: "This improved performance and gave me a 13.4 second quarter pass at Santa Pod during GTI Festival in October last year." Not only did he pick up the trophy for fastest diesel of the day but he also beat a couple of high-spec company demo vehicles in the process. Not bad for car built on a budget in a small shed with no ramp or lift!

The best part, though, is the economy: "I do 40 miles a day and average 48mpg on the twisty and hilly Welsh B-roads." Even better, during his 430-mile round trip over to Santa Pod in Bedfordshire (including eight runs up the strip), Michael claims his 250bhp, 380lb ft Mk2 returned 56mpg.

Mike's aim to build an understated daily driver in the popular form of a Mk2 Golf has been achieved, and with such a kick too. It has taken time however: "It took a year of evenings and weekends to get the engine in and running (at the time I think I was one of

the first), then six months for the Haldex swap, plus a further year for its restoration."

That feeling of being pinned to the seat is accentuated by the way a diesel delivers you a big fat lump of power and torque, just like that, something noticeable even in a lowly 90bhp turbo diesel, it feels more like an Apollo Saturn 5 launch when this car takes off. If only all daily drivers where this awesome and practical at the same time. Listen to your iPod, talk through hands free Bluetooth, and hustle Scoobys, all behind the wheel of a period-looking Mk2 Syncro. Heaven! ●