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SHARP DRESSED MAN

BECAUSE EVERY GIRL'S
CRAZY ABOUT ONE

TEXT & PHOTOGRAPHY / Ian Kuah

GRAY IS A CONTROVERSIAL COLOR FOR A SUPERCAR.

While it looks sharp and technical in bright sunshine, its stealthy character doesn't deliver the "Coming through, move over!" message so vital for *autobahn* stormers. Aside from that, Porsche's Meteor Gray metallic hue really suits SpeedArt's take on the second-gen 997 Turbo, which comes with the mind numbing BTR-II 650 EVO appellation.

Red accents serve to highlight the new parts. The big side intake ducts in the new front bumper incorporate daytime running lights and a pair of driving lights, and a matte black frame complements the larger central air intake. Deeply sculpted side skirts are designed to channel airflow upwards past the big rear wheels to reduce turbulence in that area, while the rear wing perched on the new engine cover has a pair of ram intakes to boost flow to the airbox. Final body additions include a small rooftop spoiler and a valance extension below the factory rear bumper that continues the visual line from the deeper side skirts.

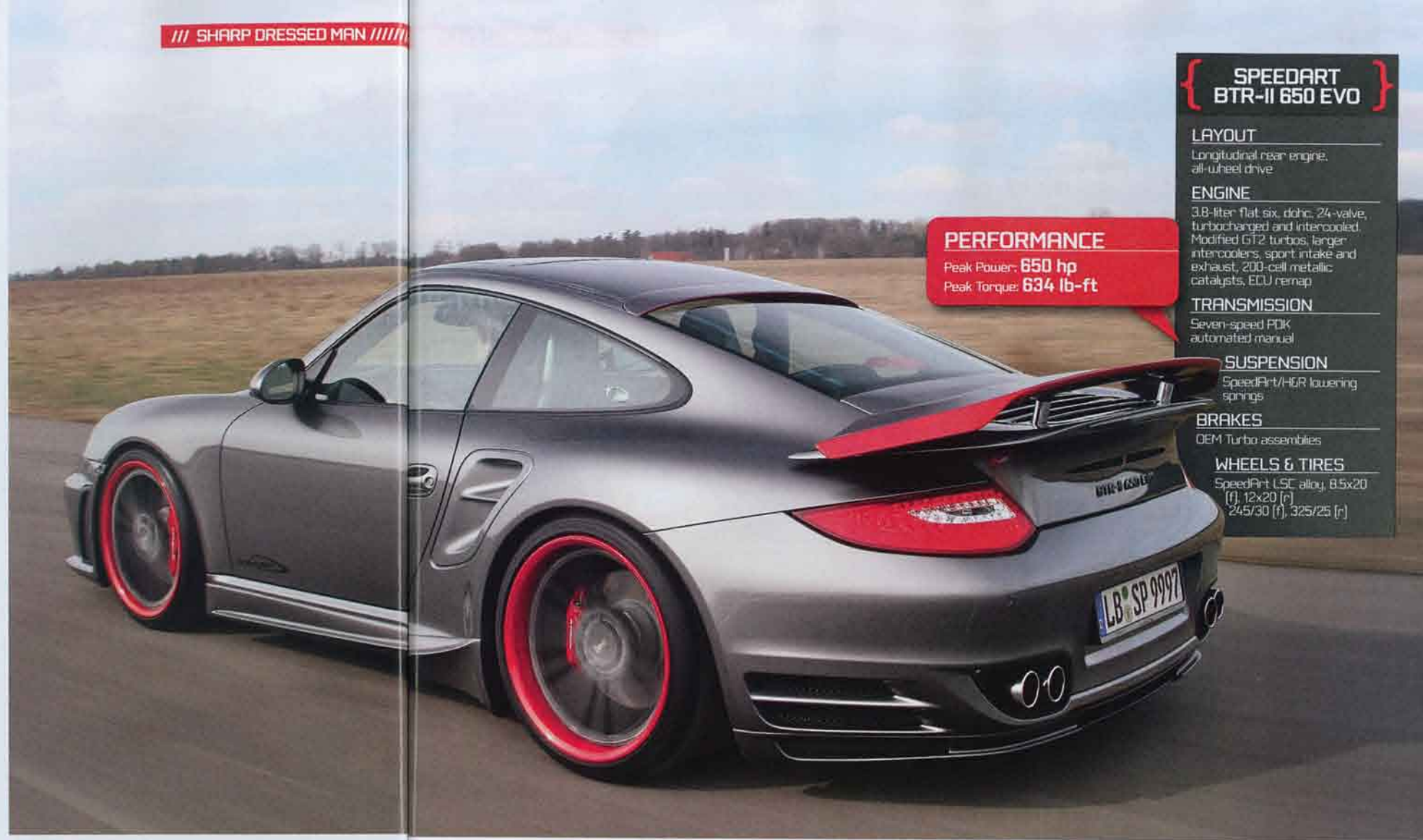
Red accents continue in the cabin with color-coded instrument faces and the unusual red carbon trim on the center console and doors. Further detail work includes red edging for the floor mats and red stitching on the steering wheel, seats, door panels, and dashboard.

The finishing touch for the enthusiast driver, who does not already have Porsche's optional paddle-shift steering wheel, is SpeedArt's wheel. This comes with a thicker contoured rim and is a straight swap for the Tiptronic and PDK steering wheels on all Boxster, Cayman, and 911 models.

The new 500-hp Turbo motor is a gem. Sweet from idle to cut-out, it's everything the old GT1-blocked engine was not and delivers a 16 percent improvement in fuel consumption as well.

SpeedArt offers a modest 580-hp Power Kit and a much wilder 650-hp version. The former uses a free-flow air filter, exhaust with sound switch, 200-cell catalytic converters, and four 90mm outlet pipes. The ECU is remapped to increase boost pressure and alter the fuelling and ignition curves to suit.

SWEET FROM IDLE TO CUT-OUT THE NEW TURBO MOTOR IS EVERYTHING THE OLD GT1-BLOCKED ENGINE WAS NOT.



PERFORMANCE

Peak Power: 650 hp
Peak Torque: 634 lb-ft

SPEEDART BTR-II 650 EVO

LAYOUT

Longitudinal rear engine, all-wheel drive

ENGINE

3.8-liter flat six, dohc, 24-valve, turbocharged and intercooled. Modified GT2 turbos, larger intercoolers, sport intake and exhaust, 200-cell metallic catalysis, ECU remap

TRANSMISSION

Seven-speed PDK automated manual

SUSPENSION

SpeedArt/H&R lowering springs

BRAKES

OEM Turbo assemblies

WHEELS & TIRES

SpeedArt LSC alloy, 8.5x20 (f), 12x20 (r)
245/30 (f), 325/25 (r)





Even the latest standard VTG turbochargers reach their flow limit at 580 hp, so the 650-hp Powerkit IV involves replacing them with a larger pair of turbos and larger intercoolers.

"We use the GT2 turbochargers since they have a higher flow rate to start with, and our engineers further optimize them for higher output levels," says SpeedArt boss Bjorn Striening. "The housings are machined to increase the internal scroll size for greater airflow, and we carefully match the turbines to achieve good low-end response. Our special high-efficiency intercoolers drop the intake temperature by more than 68 degrees Fahrenheit so we can run higher boost pressures."

This kit uses the same intake and exhaust as the 580-hp version, but an

uprated clutch is required for a manual-equipped car. Some uprated parts are used for PDK.

The standard Turbo is over-braked, so the extra power is not a big issue unless you're doing track work, in which case PCCBs will do the job perfectly. This car is fitted with the standard steel brakes, which proved perfectly adequate on the road.

SpeedArt's H&R-made lowering springs take 25mm out of the standard ride height. Tuned to work with the factory PASM dampers, these springs are about 10 percent firmer and are designed to retain the front-to-rear balance while delivering better body control at speed.

"Most of our customers use their cars on the road rather than on track days,

so we placed a lot of emphasis on retaining reasonable ride comfort," Striening says. "Off-the-shelf H&R springs for the Turbo are biased more toward track days, which is why we developed our own specific springs."

SpeedArt offers a one-inch diameter increase over the largest factory wheels with its LSC lightweight forged alloys. Available in three sizes, 8.5, 11.0, and 12x20, these wheels look even larger than they are thanks to an optical trick where the spokes extend all the way to the wheels' edges.

Striening took great pains to emphasize just how careful his team was to not upset the much-improved balance of the second generation 997 Turbo. "The factory corrected all the problems of the original car, which made things even harder for us to improve," he says.

Driving through town away from SpeedArt's HQ, the extra ride stiffness was immediately apparent. It feels more like 20 percent stiffer than stock, but retains a relatively good secondary ride. Firm but never jarring is



the best description.

The big-output motor, on the other hand, feels every bit as tractable as standard, which is exactly how you want things in a daily driver. It was only when the vital fluids were properly warmed through on a fast open road en route to the Malsheim test track that I lit the afterburners and experienced this monster Porsche's darker side.

Because the big turbos have been so finely

ALL YOU FEEL IS ONE LONG, HARD BLAST OF ACCELERATION, AND ON THESE FAST COUNTRY ROADS, THE SCENERY BLURS RATHER QUICKLY.

fettled and the electronics so well mapped, the SpeedArt Turbo picks up speed with deceptive ease. While the push in the back is noticeably more aggressive than standard, there's none of the lag, and then all-or-nothing shove you might expect from an engine that matches the output of a 1990s Le Mans Porsche 962C Group C racecar blow.

The effect might well be more dramatic if

you row your own gears, but the PDK transmission does a hugely effective job delivering each ratio seamlessly. All you feel is one long, hard blast of acceleration, and on these fast country roads, the scenery and other traffic turns into a blur rather quickly.

In the first part of this exploratory foray, I was up-shifting at 5500 rpm, some way short of peak power. Now more familiar with the car's capabilities, I took it up to 6500 rpm where I had the space to do so. My take on this car's acceleration went from impressed to simply staggered.

The chassis and brakes are up to the challenge. The lower ride height, stiffer springs and wider rubber give the car almost physics-defying cornering powers. Despite being on street rubber, it feels like it could easily generate 1.1g in steady state cornering.

I pondered the choice of just 8.5 inches of wheel in front, but this works very well as wider wheels would create bump steer problems on some road surfaces, especially those with odd cambers. Also, given the recalibration of Porsche's AWD system to direct more power to the rear, this front/rear wheel size differential makes a lot of sense. As Striening promised, the relatively narrow front wheels and optimized geometry keep bump steer off the menu.

While I have to think twice every time I try to recall the BTR-II 650 EVO designation, this 997 Turbo Mk 2-based car proved itself quite comprehensively as yet another very fast and well-sorted addition to the SpeedArt stable. ☺

THE ART OF SPEED

BRAND LOYALTY TAKES YEARS TO BUILD.

Ask any premium goods manufacturer. But once you have happy customers, repeat business and word of mouth recommendations tend to come thick and fast.

Founded in 1999, SpeedArt is the youngest of the three Porsche tuners in the Leonberg suburb of Stuttgart, about half an hour from Porsche's Zuffenhausen HQ.

CEO Bjorn Striening used to work in the sales department of Gemballa before leaving to set up his own company. "The marketplace is simply too crowded for three companies in this area to be chasing the same clients," he explains. "So I set out to differentiate my products from TechArt and Gemballa by creating our own niche, and customer base."

"Gemballa and TechArt have a lot of very wealthy clients in the US, Middle East, and Russia who do not blink at doubling the price of their cars and more with elaborate modifications," Striening explains. "I decided from day one to concentrate on customers who want fairly simple and straightforward conversions with larger alloy wheels, body styling, and mechanical upgrades. Some clients even modify their cars in stages as they can afford it."

"We use high quality GRP rather than carbon fiber to keep our prices relatively modest, and this strategy has brought us many good clients who are wealthy, but not in the super-rich league." —IK

