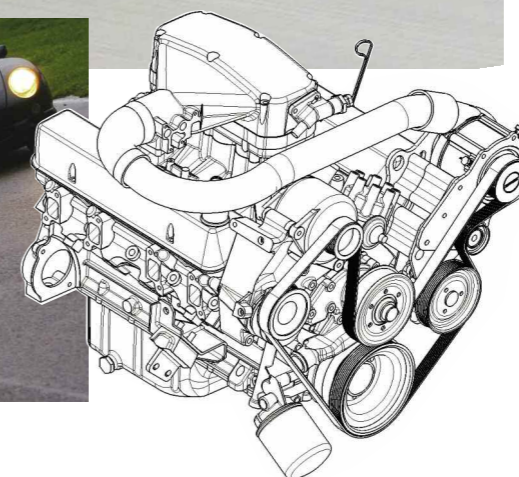




supercharged power @ mallory



"with 315bhp and 330lb/ft of torque at the rear wheels, the SC500 is the ultimate RV8 TVR. More grunt than a WWF wrestler, lovingly blended with the charm and sophistication of Leslie Phillips, with perhaps just a splash of Vinnie Jones"



Having been fortunate enough to have taken the new TVR Power SC400 supercharged Chimaera across the Alps for a week in September (see Sprint article - November 2006) I was delighted to receive an invite for a further test at Mallory Park Circuit in February of this year.

But this time it was going to be different. Not only were we to be testing the SC400, which had been re-mapped since last I drove it, but also the new SC450 and SC500; it was going to be a fun day. Also Power's new 'Hybrid Taraka Plus' was going to be in attendance, a non-Supercharged 5.0 litre Rover V8 unit further developed last season in Marc Hockin's race car. I couldn't wait.

It was also said that Marc Hockin, Andy Race and I would be busy all day taking TVR Power customers around the circuit at 90% race speed to show what the cars are capable of. Even better!

The thought of piloting anything significantly faster than the SC400 certainly whetted the appetite. Eating up the Swiss motorways, the 4.0 litre Supercharger left the 5.0 litre Griffis for dead, so the prospect of testing the 4.5 litre and 5.0 litre bigger brothers did it for me. I was on my way to Mallory.

Arriving at the circuit with Sprint graphic designer Jonathan Lowey, we met up with Tuscan Challenge driver George Carter who was going to be working alongside Jon photographing the sessions from different parts of the track. We also met up with the crew from Evo Magazine who were there to take video footage and put together a feature for the popular Evo website.

Taking refuge from the driving rain we huddled together in the welcoming Mallory Park café. Armed with a bacon and egg sandwich and a hot cup of coffee we watched as the superchargers and the Taraka were lined up in the paddock alongside an interesting assortment of customer's TVRs.

Following the safety briefing, Dom Trickett of TVR Power and Colin Harvey of Autodesign, the company working with Power to help develop and grow Power's supercharger range, explained the format for the day. Each session would feature at least one 'charger out on track, with customers being able to take the SC400 out solo. The SC450 and SC500 however would be piloted by the three test drivers, with everyone having the chance to take a passenger ride in both cars by the end of the day.

The rota was drawn up and we took to the paddock. My first outing was to be in the SC450 with Tuscan Challenge rookie and road going 4.5 litre Chimaera pilot Jes Bunce drawing the short straw for the first ride. Examining the track we could see at least a dozen large areas of heavy standing water, with what looked like a stream running across the top of Gerrards bend. We would be taking the first few laps carefully.

Pulling out of the pit lane we tip-toed around Gerrards and then opened up the 450 down the back straight. The response from the throttle was beautiful; just tickle the pedal and she sings to you straight away. Taking the wet line, but perhaps just a little too quickly first time out, the back end stepped out wide as we drifted through the Dunlop Esses. Pointing the car towards the hairpin at Shaw's Corner and putting the power down progressively we straightened her up and spun her round the hairpin. Accelerating through Devil's Elbow and opening the car up fully down the pit straight we started our second lap, just a little more quickly this time, picking up the pace.

Power delivery from the SC450 was just as smooth as the 400 with a very definite improvement in grunt at around 3000 rpm. This thing could pull you up a cliff face. And we kept her in a straight line most of the time, much to the joy of Jes. I couldn't help feeling though that the handling of the 450 wasn't quite as planted as the SC400 and on more than one occasion I found myself cadence braking to pull us up more quickly. You really do gain momentum very quickly in the supercharger. But we would have plenty of time for comparisons later. Still, even cornering through standing water the SC450 responded very impressively and just ate up the tarmac.