

# CELEBRITY WEIGHT WATCHER

Shedding the kilos is how Cargraphic thrashed the 911 Turbos at Hockenheim's annual Tuner Grand Prix. We drive the winning machine

Words: Nick Hall Photography: Antony Fraser

Performance through light weight is intrinsically linked with Colin Chapman, but German tuner Cargraphic has adopted a similar approach to the Tuner Grand Prix for three years now, beating 650bhp-plus Turbo heavyweights with a well-balanced GT3 RS.

The David and Goliath headlines get dusted off, and everyone goes home from Hockenheim happy and full of Schnitzel. But an invitation to drive the winning car reveals that a kid who got lucky with a catapult is a wholly inappropriate analogy. This is a lion running amok, teasing the







overweight wildebeests offered by the rest of the tuning fraternity. The likes of TechArt knowingly took on the most finely-honed GT3 on the planet, a factory RS with 120kg stripped out. Yes, really.

Brothers Thomas and Michael Schnarr introduced carbon-fibre front wings, side sills, doors, mirror housings and more to cut the

perfectly-engineered doors and swooping wide-body front end, even the lightweight carpets that save about 18 kilos, should be food for thought for RS owners everywhere.

Ironically, the stereo still works, as without it they cannot start the car. So while I sweated away to a grimy end while Fraser weaved his photographic magic, cheery oompah music was

**Wild thing.** Cargraphic GT3 packs a presence on the road. Weight-saving gives it a turn of speed, too, which should make it nearly untouchable

rules, they could even ditch the electric windows and properly strip the interior that is a bizarre blend of full race cockpit and everyday road companion. They had to keep the standard glass and winding mechanism, as per the rules,

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weight to an astonishing 1365kg when loaded up with all the requisite fluids and 90 litres of fuel. No expense was spared and every gramme thought about – this is a seriously light car.

As I sat roasting in the car during unseasonable autumn weather, I would have swapped 20 of those kilos for the return of the air-conditioning system. That's how far they've gone in the pursuit of reduced weight – and the

always on hand.

Those front wings are so thin that the sun's harsh rays revealed the weave. The race car went right to the limit on each and every front, but thicker versions will be offered to customers.

Almost everything on the car filters through to the production process, and if you have a spare €200,000, then Cargraphic will build you one just like it. Freed from the Tuner Grand Prix

and found that a carbon-fibre bonnet would save just 1.4kg, so didn't bother fixing it in time for the Tuner Grand Prix.

A much better use of their time was spent widening the front track as much as the rules

**Bottom left:** There's not a lot to see on the outside but, internally, the GT3 engine gets bigger barrels and pistons and revised induction and exhaust, plus remapped ECU, taking capacity to 4 litres





**CARGRAPHIC GT3 4.0 RS**

|                      |  |
|----------------------|--|
| <b>DRIVETRAIN:</b>   | Longitudinal rear-engine, rear-wheel drive   |
| <b>ENGINE:</b>       | 4.0-litre flat-six, 105mm pistons, sports exhaust with 70mm flaps  |
| <b>TRANSMISSION:</b> | Cargraphic 35 per cent shorter shift mechanism   |
| <b>SUSPENSION:</b>   | Fully-adjustable Bilstein coil-over race suspension with remote reservoir and H&R springs  |
| <b>EXTERIOR:</b>     | Reinforced plastic front bumper, carbon-fibre wide-body front wings, carbon doors, wing end plates, front air vent, grille set and mirror housing                |
| <b>INTERIOR:</b>     | Lightweight carbon door inserts, lightweight carpets, carbon-fibre racing seats with six-point harnesses, alloy pedals   |
| <b>WHEELS/TYRES:</b> | Front: Cargraphic Racing 9.5x19 wheels with 265/30R19 Dunlop SportMaxx GT tyres<br>Rear: Cargraphic Racing 12x19 wheels with 315/30R19 Dunlop SportMaxx GT tyres |
| <b>PERFORMANCE</b>   |  |
| <b>PEAK POWER:</b>   | 460bhp at 7340rpm  |
| <b>PEAK TORQUE:</b>  | 357lb/ft at 5500rpm  |
| <b>0-60MPH:</b>      | 3.9secs  |
| <b>TOP SPEED:</b>    | 199mph   |



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allowed – more than 2cm, to allow for a grippier front end and specially-developed Dunlop SportMaxx GT tyres. Dunlop contributed a lot more than rubber to the project, hence the colour scheme in their honour, and it was fitting that they took a good deal of the credit when the brothers celebrated victory.

Cargraphic took its own unique concoction of Bilstein race suspension with remote dampers and H&R springs through the TÜV approval process, fitted a strut brace, and the result is a car that corners on rails. Find the prodigious limit of the 9.5x19-inch fronts and 12.5x19-inch rears and the back end will swing out, but it's deliciously easy to read and will make the average driver – not just former Supercup stars like Marc Basseng – look like a hero.

Marc had the pedals perfectly set up for heel-toe downchanges, the racing wheel perfectly weighted and the chassis poised and ready to hold the bend. The car scythes into faster bends with just pressure and a knowing glance at that Alcantara wheel – and a slight sideways attitude out of the slower corners showed that it would arc through bends with little help from the man at the wheel.

It's nearly perfectly balanced. Even in the slow bends, with as much provocation as I dare provide, the RSC 4.0 simply danced through the bend and entertained my pretence with the opposite lock while gently taking care of things.

And then, coming on to the long and deserted straight in the outskirts of who-knows-where, I finally got to plant the accelerator and feel the full force of detonation.

Flattening the gas pedal felt like pressing a detonator, as the 460bhp beast just took off with a vulpine edge from its heavily-tweaked engine that comes with bigger pistons and linings, a new air filter, revamped ECU and a lightweight exhaust that resonates every rev like a binful of angry wasps. RS Tuning does Cargraphic's engine work, and did such a good job that the ringing sound of the haunting flat-six filled the local vineyards. Even the field hands came out for a look.

They really came out with pitchforks, which was kind of scary for a moment, until one of the girls asked for a ride and emerged two minutes later with trembling knees and unrepeatable Polish thanks...

But back to the car, which nails the 62mph

**Below: Stripped interior in the pursuit of saving as many kilos as possible. Air con? Forget it. Electric windows? Wind them yourself. Right: Tyre-track livery is a reflection of Dunlop's support**

## TUNER GRAND PRIX

Bill Ford coined the phrase: 'Win on Sunday, sell on Monday,' and nowhere is this more true than at Hockenheim every June, when crowds come from all over Germany to watch the tuners go to war at the Tuner Grand Prix.

It goes beyond the 30,000 that pack the grandstands – the event garners massive TV coverage and the backing of *Sport Auto* magazine. This is big news in Germany, and guarantees the winners' phones will ring off the hook and kits will fly off the shelves for months. This is a rare chance to go head-to-head, credibility in a can, and many tuners with a gilt-edged chance to prove their wares are conspicuous by their absence.

Cargraphic has scared some away with a straight hat-trick of wins with tricked-out RS models that have blown more celebrated Turbos, GT2s and other GT3s off the track. But, with just two months to develop the Dunlop-backed 997 GT3 RS that replaced the all-conquering white 996, it was a nervous time as Marc Basseng took to the track.

A dinner-time story in his own right, Basseng was a promising Supercup driver who incurred the wrath of one Bernie Ecclestone with one too many victory donuts – and subsequently lost his licence for a year. Now he's on the road back to the top as an FIA GT driver in Porsches and the gorgeous Lamborghini Murcielago, but he still found the time to build the perfect GT3 RS with Cargraphic. Nobody was betting against the machine and the reigning champions went in the red-hot favourite.

But anything can happen with the time-attack format that gives just 30 minutes to secure a time. Scorching hot weather that left some more enthusiastic amateurs dousing their tyres with cold water added a new dimension, and the brothers were nervous as the bell tolled. This was either time for an assured win or humble pie.

With 10 separate classes, there are ingenious battles to be had between hot hatches, diesels, high-powered GTs and even SUVs, with brave drivers drifting two tonnes of metal on the ragged edge of adhesion round the Sachs Kurve.

It's an almighty sight watching a Cayenne on opposite lock with smoke pouring from the tyres, and SpeedART driver and SEAT Cupra Cup competitor Fredy Barth showed a gigantic set to win that battle by 0.9sec. But the GT class provides the true heavyweight battles that everyone comes to see – and Cargraphic won with ease.

'We came here looking for something under 1mg – and that's exactly what we've got,' said Michael. 'All our partners have done an amazing job and we are so happy, but there's more to come from this car – we're still learning it, after all.'

This should have been a devastating blow for the opposition, but it wasn't. Bizarrely, everyone knew Cargraphic was going to win at the canter, and the likes of TechArt still came with a much heavier, slower Porsche Turbo, knowing they would get blown off the map.

'We are the fastest Turbo,' explained Ralph Niese, our friend at TechArt after half an hour of watching Frank Schmickler push their 997 GT Street to the very limit. 'Maybe the crowds don't appreciate what is going on, but the people who buy the cars see that our Turbo is the fastest by a clear 1.6s, and we'll do business as a result.'

Cargraphic won't do badly after taking victory in the GT and Coupe/Cabriolet class with the GT3 RSC3.8 based on a Porsche 911 Carrera Cabriolet in a result that is publicised around the world. They even brought a GT3 RSR race car out to play for some hot demonstration laps.

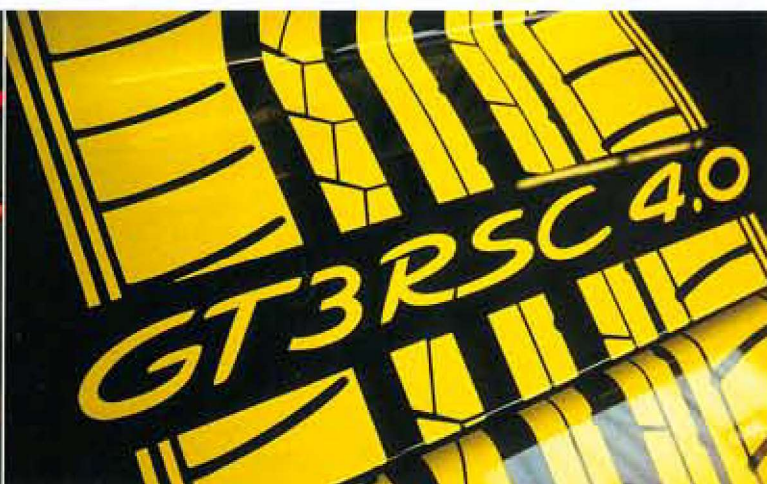
And when the fun was over with the Tuner GP itself, there was still plenty of action in the Sport Auto Drift Challenge. Basseng even took part himself, and offered some burnouts for the crowd. Bernie would have him thrown out for such shenanigans – but on this day, and in this car, nobody was going to stop him.

mark in 3.9s and, by the end of our decent-sized straight, discretion battled with valour as 260kph registered on the clock and the race-tuned suspension began to dance in tune with the road as 7500rpm screamed through the cabin.

A 35 per cent shorter shift mechanism gives a rifle-bolt feel to the gearbox and it became a

matter of pride to nail the downchanges on the way into a sweeping third-gear bend, where the back goes light and tiptoes round the corner at a speed that would seem frankly impossible on any other day.

And that lightweight body makes the braking point so late that I arrived at the bend apologetically slowly the first few times, as





“ Cargraphic claims a top speed of 199mph - and all it would take is a following wind to sail through the hallowed 200mph mark ”



belief caught up with the RSC's innate ability. It reacts like a 993, yet sticks like a 997 GT3 RS race car - it's the best of every world.

The bodykit is pure bolt-on, with the ground-scraping front splitter good for 10kg of downforce at 100mph, and those wide front wings, side sills and a full-on racing rear wing with the adjustable plane. It all kicks in on the fast and flowing stuff, and I was left to wonder just how wise it was to nail it through the 270kph mark on public roads. It's an addictive high, though, as the RSC seems to climb to its toes when pushed hard into a bend - and every sinew, every nuance of road surface, comes through loud and clear in the tight confines of the race seat.

Cargraphic claims a top-end speed of 199mph - and all it would take is a following wind to sail through the hallowed 200mph mark. That's a GT3 that can top the double ton and make even a Carrera GT look like a lead-footed wildebeest in the bends. For the man who has everything, this is an essential addition to the garage from one of the more sensitive tuners on the market.

Cargraphic doesn't get off on big engine conversions and preaches a holistic approach to handling and race-inspired touches, so a final output of 460bhp is about as wild as they were ever going to go with the light weight of the 911 line-up. But the meticulous work that goes into the set-up would shame race teams - and this latest combination of racing shocks and custom

**The view that most people are likely to see of Cargraphic's Tuner Grand Prix-winning machine. Power is up to 460bhp, which is a staggering amount for a normally-aspirated flat-six**

springs take a streamlined, stripped-out GT3 RS to a sublime new level.

Without success at the Tuner Grand Prix, Cargraphic's wares could easily be overshadowed in the media by the huge-horsepower Turbos that looked like lumbering oafs in comparison when they ventured on track.

Luckily, we have the event every June to remind us of performance through light weight, and I have that reckless blast through a vineyard as a reminder of what might just be the best GT3 RS on the road today. **LD**

