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First on the rollers was John Kenyon's hotwire 400SE. The most striking thing about this particular rolling road as against any others I'd seen, was the obvious ease with which the cars were positioned and secured into place. The Tunit rolling road features single raised rollers over which you position your driven wheels. The single raised rollers are of great benefit to low ground clearance cars such as TVRs and you actually get to drive away with your chin spoiler still attached. You could happily sit the Sagaris RT car on this one. With the 400SE quickly and efficiently secured, Michael Bromley and his technician started to put it through its paces:

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John's standard 400SE hotwire features a K&N air filter, a set of 8.5mm red Magnecor leads and a sump full of Millers CFS 10-60 competition sprint oil. After 15 minutes on the rollers Michael printed out the graphs; a very respectable 232.2 lb ft of torque with 231.3 bhp. Most impressive, particularly taking into consideration the published figures of a new hotwire 400SE of just 240bhp, and not forgetting the 63,000 miles on this Wedge's clock.

Second on the rollers was Neil Ashworth's 1998 4.0 litre Chimaera, driven on this occasion by his brother Adrian. Both Neil and Adrian have an impressive motorsports history, and on short circuits such as Ty Croes, Neil's Chimaera has on the odd occasion been known to outgun his brother's Griff 500 by a healthy fraction of a second. This Chimaera is therefore considered to be 'a fast one' and the results of the run were eagerly awaited – particularly as the guys were actually racing each other at Ty Croes the following Saturday.

After a couple of minutes on the rollers it was clear that all was not well. The Chimaera spluttered its way to a feeble 160bhp and the dynamometer was turned off. After a comprehensive diagnostic check, and a lot of soul-searching from Adrian, who feared he had killed his brothers car, it was discovered the HT leads were breaking down and the Chimaera was only sparking properly on five cylinders. This from a well serviced vehicle which appeared to be running perfectly - and with only 9000 miles on the clock too. Michael explained that the load from the rolling road would always accentuate any imperfections that normal road going momentum would usually paper over for you. “If a fault is going to be highlighted anywhere, it will be highlighted here”. So a short while later, and now with an on-loan set of 400SE red Magnecors fitted, the Chimaera magically leapt straight to 222.6 bhp at 3200 rpm with 260 lb ft of torque – and all that from just a fresh set of performance leads. Eye-opening stuff.

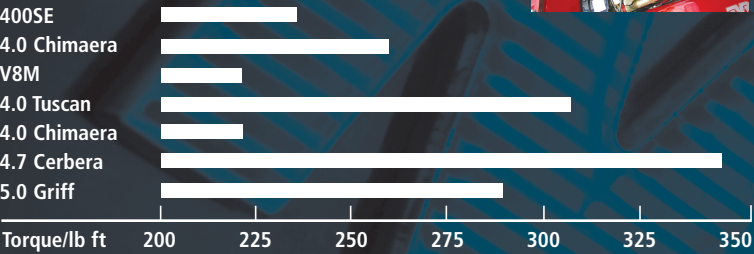
Next on the Tunit dynamometer was the normally aspirated M Series 3.5 litre conversion of TVR Car Club Archivist Richard Sails. Given the V8 treatment by Barnett Motors in the 1970s, the M gave a good account of itself showing 165.3bhp @ 3,500rpm and a healthy 219.9 lb ft of torque - with the kind of curve that most track day drivers would die for. The M's twin SUs worked well to around 5400rpm where they started to run out of lungs. Perhaps just as well as Richard's M doesn't happen to have a rev limiter fitted.

Colin Gibson's Tuscan was quite a diversion and set the standard for the day. Despite three previous engine rebuilds, the Speed 6 monster with only 2000 miles driven since it's last visit to Blackpool, boasted in excess of 360bhp with a glorious 310 lb ft of torque. Most importantly it must be noted that the torque curve for the 4.0 litre engine hit its peak at 3,000 rpm and continued at the same level right



How fast, and how furious

The simplified charts below are to give a quick at a glance indication of how each car performed up against the next. If you would like to view a printout of each cars run on the rollers, including a torque power curve please see the events archive on www.tvrwestlancs.co.uk



through to 7400rpm when the rev limiter kicked in. This was pulling power at its very best and impressive figures indeed from the de-catted stock motor which also gave a measured top speed of 182mph.

Having watched one Chimaera stumble its way through the session, it was now the turn of Alex Leith. He uses his car throughout the summer as his daily transport, and with 44,000 miles on the clock would be pleased to be within striking distance of Neil Ashworth's final run. Indeed returning a little over 200bhp with almost 220 lb ft of torque on the dyno' is a good result, although Alex has promised in the future to invest more heavily in new coils and leads and perhaps just a little less on single malt and haggis. Good man!

Topping some of these performances would always be interesting and the 4.7 Cerbera special certainly tried its best. The history of this particular beast is enthralling, as the standard 4.5 litre stock engine was apparently replaced with one of Peter Wheeler's 4.7 litre ex Tuscan race-car engines. Proud owner Gareth Pomford is a real computer whiz and impressed us all by plugging his laptop into his Cerberas ECU and showing how he could monitor and tweak the engine management system at the push of a button. The laptop showed the Cerbera running at optimum performance, and the car returning 350.5bhp with 337.6 lb ft of torque on the rollers appeared to prove the point. But this is where the advanced diagnostics of the Tunit dynamometer software, which the company has been developing over the past eight years, suddenly came into in to its own. The German based programming, which is capable of gathering and assimilating information from up to 256 engine sensors simultaneously, had actually picked up that the V8 unit was carrying a minor fuel/air imbalance.

It showed the nearside bank of four running a slightly weaker mix than the offside bank – this giving the unit a less efficient output. Michael Bromley did take time out to explain to us here that the data acquisition software developed by Tunit is now so far advanced that it is being used by over 40% of the European Super Touring Car teams. Gareth just appeared delighted that his 4.7 litre special could be Tunit tuned to fly even faster.

Finally the big daddy of them all – Russell Larcombes 1999 5.0 litre growling Griff took centre stage. A stock motor with only 15,500 miles on the clock and properly equipped with a set of blue 8.0mm Magnecors. The figures from the refex blue 500 were just as impressive as the fabulous V8 noise it gave. Almost 260bhp and 280 lb ft with a very sexy curve was a wonderful way to end the day. Altogether a fabulous showing.

So from our apprehensive voyage of discovery we have come away from Tunit in Chorley with a few hard earned home truths: top quality heat resistant HT leads are definitely a must. Regularly check your plugs, distributor cap and rotor arm, don't forget your coil and a fully serviceable alternator and trickle charged battery wouldn't be a bad idea either.

I hate to say it, but it is precisely what my father told me over 25 years ago and I ignored him then. John 'Magnecor' Kenyon had tried to tell me since – and I've ignored him too. So having now seen it all for myself I'm going off to replace my electrics. That having been completed and when all is happy again, I'm going to ring Michael & book in for a diagnostic session on the Tunit rolling road for myself - and I seriously suggest you do the same.

You can contact Tunit on 01257 274 100, or email them on sales@tunit.co.uk

Howard Bryan & Jonathan Lowey