

# GENTLEMAN, START YOUR ENGINES

It's race day at the Tuner GP, and we went trackside with the leading contenders.

**8** am, trackside at the Hockenheimring and the conditions are perfect for the sport-auto-Yokohama-2008 Tuner Grand Prix. The track sweeper makes one final pass, cleaning the racing line in anticipation of the upcoming action. So what is the sport auto-Yokohama-Tuner-Grand Prix? Essentially, it's an opportunity for the world's tuning companies to showcase their latest creations, promote the brand and battle it out against the clock for the crowning accolade of Tuner GP Champions. The competition was designed for the tuning scene, with entries from tuning companies the only applicants allowed, no privateers. The event for 2008 takes place on Hockenheim's small circuit and is subdivided into different classes, with the cars' starting positions being determined by the fastest lap time

set during qualifying. Another key criteria of the event is that the cars must comply with the general terms of the Germany road traffic act or with the German licence regulations. Everything fitted to the competition cars must be available to customers' road cars. As you'd expect, the familiar Porsche tuners are in attendance, with Cargraphic and TechArt sharing neighbouring pit garages. With everything to play for, the teams make their final preparations as the warm-up approaches.

The Cargraphic pit garages are a foray of buzzing activity, as brothers Michael and Thomas Schnarr are focused on the last stages of the build-up to the event. The two Cargraphic cars are poised in the pits with last year's reigning Tuner GP 2007 champion, the Cargraphic GT3 RSC 4.0, looking to post another scintillating lap. However, their GT RSC 3.6, based on the 997

Turbo, driven by Marc Basseng, is the team's hopeful candidate to make it four successful victories in the GT class. A quick chat to Michael confirms Cargraphic's preparation has been the best they could've hoped for. "In practise we've done the best we could have, we will see. If someone else is quicker, they have done a better job." Humble but confident, Michael disappears, as Cargraphic's garage door opens.

The action starts at 9am and the 25,000-strong crowd positioned at Sachs Curve show their appreciation as the cars feed into view. First sight of Cargraphic's 997 Turbo sees it slingshot out of Sachs Curve accompanied by a venomous whistling roar emanating from the 3.6-litre 627bhp twin-turbocharged engine, then hard onto the brakes for the turn-in point for the circuit's long right-hander, Südcurve, before





assaulting the back straight. The Turbo appears slightly skittish with minimal heat in its Dunlop road tyres, however first impressions are that the car looks mighty fast during warm-up, and the Cargraphic GT3 RSC 4.0 piloted by amateur driver Thomas Neuert continues to look quicker, as the driver gets his eye in as warm-up draws to a close. TechArt's GTstreet RS, based on the 997 GT2, also looks right on the pace, deploying its 700hp to the tarmac very effectively. TechArt's other entrant, the GT Street Cabriolet, too seems very quick, as does speedART's white and orange themed 997 Turbo Cabriolet, dubbed the BTR XL 550. As the wailing of engines subsides and the warm-up draws to a close, the times are quickly published. Cargraphic's 997 GT RSC 3.6 has posted a 1:07.1, followed closely by TechArt's GTstreet RS. A quick word with Tubias Beyer,

from TechArt, reveals they have confident aspirations for the GT street RS. "We are very confident for the car."

Just before the GT class cars go out for their 25-minute stint and go for glory, the pits are bustling with activity. With hardly anything between the front-runners, it should be a closely contested finale. After some superb action the session draws to a close and it seems there is nothing separating the top positions, however, on the final lap, Carrera Cup pilot Jörg Hardt assured the overall victory at the wheel of the GTstreet RS with a lap time of 1.06:811 in the GT class. TechART also achieved first in the Cabrio class with a lap time of 1.10:382 minutes.

Pipped to the post, Cargraphic's 997 GT RSC 3.6 posted a time just 0.135 of a second to the winning GT2 with their 997 GT3 RSC 4.0

finishing in third place. Thomas Schnarr from Cargraphic concedes second place with great grace, "We are pleased with the result, we did what we did in qualifying so we're very pleased."

The result is even more impressive taking into account that the Cargraphic's entries were running on treated Dunlop SPORTMAXX GT UHP tyres, which they had done extensive testing and development with on the car prior to the competition. However, a last-minute change in regulations preceding the event meant that entrants could use semi-slick tyres (ie Michelin Pilot Sport Cups) which, had the regulations not been changed at such a late stage, may have led to Cargraphic developing the more powerful GT2 to run in this year's competition. There is, of course always next year...

*Richard Middleton*

