

Specter Werkes/Sports GTR - Blue Streak

With A Little Help From Lingenfelter, Specter's Latest GTR Achieves Warp Speed

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You think you know fast. You think you've driven quick cars. But you don't know-not, at least, until you've driven a Z06-based C6 with a Lingenfelter-built 800-horsepower twin-turbo engine. That's what motivates the unique Specter Werkes-built GTR seen on these pages. It's a stunning blend of design, performance, and luxury-but mostly performance.



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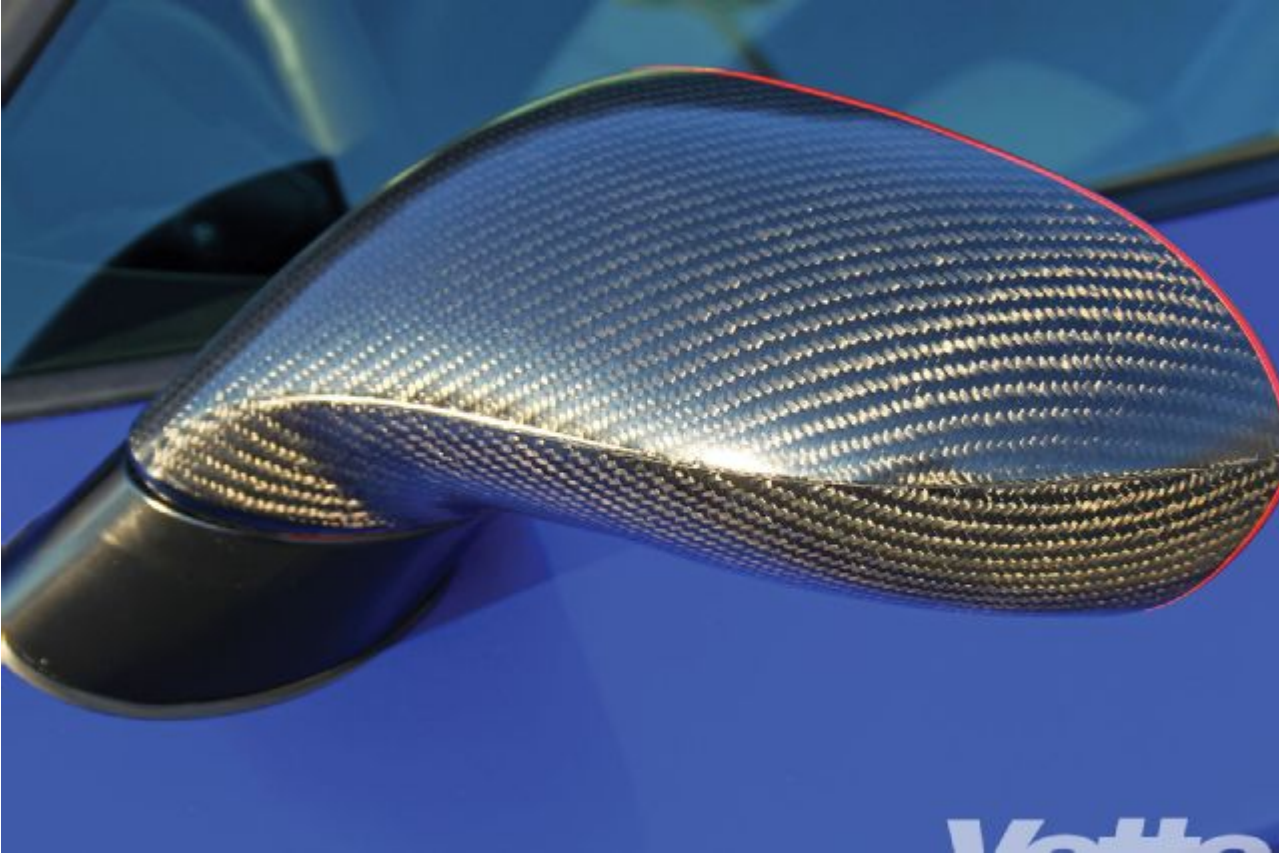
We mean, there are fast cars, but this thing is fast. It's fast in a way that, when you're behind the wheel, your brain immediately starts calculating "what if" scenarios, because it realizes the velocity the car is capable of achieving within a very short distance. As a passenger, your brain kicks into roller-coaster mode, blending exuberance and fear into a weird emotion that's tempered only by nagging thoughts of whether the driver's capability is anywhere near the car's.

Fortunately, our recent experience with the twice-turbo'd GTR was with Specter's president, Jeff Nowicki, who has many years of track experience under his belt. He knows how to drive quick Corvettes. After only a few minutes riding shotgun with him, the typical automotive-journalism superlatives and adjectives fell away. They simply failed to convey the true scope of this car's performance. Corvettes like the Z06 and ZR1 are unquestionably powerful, but this one trumps the Z06's 505hp output by a stunning 300 horses and has almost 200 ponies on the 205-mph-capable ZR1.

Indeed, this is performance from a different perspective and a seemingly different realm of existence—one where the laws of physics are upended, and gravity is reduced to enable such warp-speed acceleration. You know those scenes in Star Wars, where Han Solo pushes the handle to engage hyperspace travel, and the stars blur as the Millennium Falcon hurtles across the galaxy? It's like that.

You can't lay into the GTR's throttle from a dead stop. The car simply won't move, even while the tach needle dances between shifts—the tires simply spin wildly, without the grip

to initiate forward momentum. At speed on the freeway, even moderate pressure on the throttle is enough to light up the rear tires, as if the department of transportation was testing out a new "burnout" section of the highway.



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Faithful readers will recognize this turbocharged GTR as the subject of our technical story, "The Nuclear Option" from the Aug. '10 issue, in which we delved into the basics of the Lingenfelter twin-turbo engine system. If you can't remember-or, even worse-didn't pick up that copy of the magazine, here's a quick recap:

Lingenfelter rebuilds the LS7 engine with an all-forged rotating assembly and lower-compression pistons, then loads the crankcase with a full serving of Mobil 1 synthetic. The turbo system uses a pair of medium-size Garrett water-cooled, oil-lubricated, ball-bearing turbos and an air-to-air intercooler. The turbos are mounted low in the engine compartment, which helps reduce underhood heat while keeping the FI system's visual profile to a minimum. The mid-size hairdryers also offer an optimum balance between quick spool-up and minimal lag. In fact, lag is, for all intents and purposes, nonexistent. The turbos spool quickly and deliver a smooth yet incredibly forceful application of power. As with any turbo system, the boost is tunable, but the base Lingenfelter system, as installed on the GTR, delivers about 10-12 pounds, helping the 7.0-liter engine produce 800 hp.

Along with the performance, the installation of the turbo system is exceptional. Many of the lines and connectors are carefully measured and custom-tailored from hard tubing, for a precision appearance that's rare in the automotive aftermarket.



The same attention to detail is evident in the exterior and interior details of the GTR. Each is hand-built to order, with the color combination and performance upgrades the customer chooses, so no two GTRs are identical. That means a customer could purchase a GTR with a stock engine or opt for anything from a simple head-and-cam package to the full-on twin-turbo setup. The sky-or, more accurately, the checking-account balance-is the limit. (And just so you know, the Lingenfelter twin-turbo engine runs about \$46,000 to build and install, so start skipping lunch and save those returnable bottles now.)

We're pretty sure the owner of this unique, Liquid Pearl Blue (a BASF color) GTR got a deal on his engine. He's Ken Lingenfelter, and he owns Lingenfelter Performance Engineering (see sidebar). The car debuted at the 2009 SEMA Show, where it drew a steady stream of admirers to its humble, almost hidden, outdoor display location. Many a photographer's camera was aimed at the GTR, but Lingenfelter gave VETTE the exclusive on the driving experience and feature story.

To create a GTR-which can be built on standard, Grand Sport, Z06, or ZR1 models-every panel except the roof and deck is replaced. The new bodywork, which takes weeks to carefully fit and adjust, gives the car a profile that is unmistakably racing inspired but still instantly recognizable as a Corvette. Highlights include a pronounced front fascia; a heat-extractor hood; pronounced body-side lines that accent the wider fenders; a road-racing-type rear diffuser; a large, LED-lit center brake lamp; revised taillamp lenses; and a Corsa stainless-steel exhaust with Specter-designed outlets. The GTR is 4.5 inches wider than a base Corvette and 1 inch wider than a Z06.



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There's quite a bit of matte-finish carbon-fiber found on the car, too, including the great-looking headlamp bezels, side-mirror covers, and front splitter. The total package comprises a myriad of subtle and overt details, but they work harmoniously to give the car its distinctive appearance. (Note that some of the pieces, including the hood, headlamp bezels, and taillamps, are available as separate bolt-on parts. Go to www.spectergtr.com for details.)

Chassis upgrades complement the styling. As part of the standard GTR package, Lingenfelter's car received a Hotchkis stabilizer bar kit to flatten esses and improve cornering reflexes. As an option, the stock brakes were swapped for a StopTech STR big-brake setup, with six-piston front calipers and four-piston rear calipers mounted to rotors that look large enough to haul the Millennium Falcon down from hyperspace velocities. Bolted to those manhole-size rotors is a set of HRE carbon-fiber-trimmed wheels wrapped with Michelin's sticky-yet-compliant Pilot Sport 2 Zero Pressure tires. The rubber measures 285/30ZR19 in the front and 335/25ZR20 in the rear—the same as the production ZR1.

The GTR package also includes interior enhancements, and Lingenfelter's features Spinneybeck hand-tipped leather accents in a unique silvery-tan color, with gray-fleck and red stitching. It has the look of ostrich hide, lending a luxurious detail that ratchets up the premium feel of the car. There's also a serialized plaque mounted on the center console.

Premium interior elements, however, are definitely secondary to this car's mission. It's a high-profile demonstrator of take-no-prisoners performance that transcends being merely fast to reset the threshold for that subjective term means.

The Millennium Falcon doesn't stand a chance.

Who is Ken Lingenfelter?

Ken Lingenfelter is a lifelong car nut who recently acquired Lingenfelter Performance Engineering (LPE). He's a distant relative of LPE's late founder, John Lingenfelter, but the familial connection had nothing to do with Ken's acquisition of the company. He just happened to have the same name.



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By all accounts, some fresh blood was needed at the Decatur, Indiana-based company. Encouraged by John Lingenfelter's brother Charlie, Ken stepped in, bringing with him a spirit of renewal and a sharper focus on the company's direction. Since then, the company has vigorously engaged C5 and C6 enthusiasts with new engine and upgrade packages, including parts for the ZR1 (see them at www.lingenfelter.com). It has also had success with the new crop of Camaro enthusiasts, and if you've seen those classic-looking Trans Ams-strategically dubbed "LTAs"-built out of new Camaros, LPE did them, too.

Along with his new duties at the helm of LPE, Ken Lingenfelter oversees a number of other business interests, as well as an absolutely mouthwatering collection of about 150 Corvettes, classic muscle cars, and European exotics. About 40 percent (70 cars, give or

take) of the collection is Corvettes, ranging from '53 models to a new ZR1. He's an avid collector, and you've probably seen glimpses of him bidding for cars on the televised Barrett-Jackson auctions.

Ken Lingenfelter has big plans for LPE, and the company's recent activities have merely laid the groundwork. It's safe to say we'll all be hearing a lot more from him in the future.