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Speak Out

We regularly invite a leading figure in our industry to give their views and perspective. This month we hear from **Marcel Horn** at HPA Motorsports.



The summer of '87 stands out as the year my passion for the Volkswagen brand was ignited. It was two years before I could legally drive but I dreamt of what my first car would be. Coming from humble beginnings I was prepared to assemble my first jewel from reclaimed parts. Countless trips in and out of auto-recyclers ensued and this introduced me to the vast interchangeability of Volkswagen models and their platforms. It was a dream come true and set the stage for what was to come.

It was '89 when I launched onto the scene with a brown '76 four-door carbureted Rabbit 1.6L – a model I believe was never introduced south of the Canadian border until '81. With the suspension and gearbox from a '79 GTI, plus a Scirocco S downpipe, the performance bug bit me.

HPA started as a hobby out of the family garage in '90 and took its first corporate form a year later. Highwater Performance Autostyling was the name above my first commercial facility. It was subsequently shortened when the company was incorporated a few years later as HPA Motorsports Inc.

The company's "big break" came in '97. The New Beetle was the first watercooled VW to be released in North America before Europe and it presented a tremendous opportunity for US tuners. I saw it as a chance to set trends instead of following what happened overseas. So I laid out a business model with which I would showcase the skills cultivated by my team

over the past years. At the heart of the plan was a V6 conversion. And eight days after HPA took delivery of one of the first New Beetles to hit Canadian soil, the motor was in and we were off to show the world. With unbelievable media attention from magazines in America and around the globe, we found ourselves in exciting new territory. The HPA GT6 conversion was born.

The global acclaim of the GT6 conversion earned us the rights to introduce KW Suspensions to North America. The company was looking for a hungry, motivated, technically competent partner. So from '98 to the present day I've worked diligently in Detroit with my right hand man, Glen Messinger, and landed accounts such as Daimler-Chrysler, Ford, Mazda and Roush. Today the KW corporate headquarters are officially in California but I'm still the director of OEM operations for KW – one of the world's leading coilover suspension manufacturers.

In '98 we saw our tuning clientele expand at an exponential rate. Our quest for more power led us into a lifetime friendship with our technical partners at HGP in Germany. Together we expanded their concept for a twin-turbo V6 into what we offer around the world today. Showcased across all three of the Volkswagen Project R GT cars at SEMA '05, our collective efforts have raised the expectation of Volkswagen performance.

In June '02 my first son was born, followed by a second in January '05. Not only do they look a whole lot like their dad,

both seem to have a love of cars. So the next generation of HPA is ready to go!

Looking back, November '04 was a moment in history for HPA. From my lead tech, Darren Scharfenberg, to my entire team of dedicated and passionate staff, it was a dream come true when our twin-turbo R32 won best of SEMA '04. It was subsequently immortalized in the world's most successful gaming franchise, Gran Turismo, and this would serve as an undeniable signature for everybody's career. Accepting the award reduced me to tears as I reflected on the relentless pace and impossible hours my team had endured to get us to that moment.

Working on special projects for OEMs like Volkswagen, Chrysler and Ford Motor Company, my groups' experience has expanded tremendously. With successful debuts on nationally televised programs and at the Barrett Jackson Auto Auction, HPA has laid the foundation for our next 15 years in the industry.

So I find myself blessed with an extremely dedicated and talented staff – a team able to tackle the most impossible challenges. This team of 13 has been embraced by our global technical partners and is ready to dive into whatever the future holds.

Today, with all our projects and achievements behind us, I can honestly say the best part of the past 15 years has been the amazing people I've met and worked with through the Volkswagen brand.

The views of our guest speaker are not necessarily shared by eurotuner magazine.