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## UP TO SPEED

THE LATEST AUTO NEWS, TIPS AND TRENDS

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### Gluteus Maxximus: A study in power-to-weight ratios

The makers of something called the **Maxximus G-Force**, which appears to be a heavily modified version of the British-made Ultima GTR supercar, have captured three world records for street-legal cars: 0-60 mph (2.134



seconds); 0-100 mph (4.451 seconds); and the mother of all supercar metrics, the 0-100-0 mph mark of 8.861 seconds. These records were set in October at my old stomping grounds, Rockingham Raceway in North Carolina. Maxximus Industries will unveil the car to the crab-puff-eating press on Feb. 11, at L.A.'s Peninsula Hotel.

For some lust-inducing footage, go [here](#).

Great. Lovely. We've been down this road before (Vector, Mosler, SSC, etc.), and it's always fun when some wild colonial boy decides to stuff obscene amounts of pony into a lightweight racing chassis and hang a license plate on it.

But the back story, hinted at in the press release, is even more, well, intriguing. Apparently, philanthropist, businessman and entrepreneur David Bruce McMahan got into the Maxximus project when he met the car's designer/test driver, Marlon Kirby, while the latter was working as a chauffeur.

McMahan and Kirby got into a casual conversation while Kirby was driving McMahan from the private airport where he had just parked his jet. McMahan -- a former hot-rodder from Southern California who had moved on from cars to planes -- was so impressed with Kirby that he decided to back Kirby's dream of building a monstrous record-breaking car with an engine producing over 1,600 hp.

"That was the initial thing that impressed me," McMahan said in a phone interview. "The original P-51 Mustangs with Rolls-Royce Merlin inline 12-cylinders only produced about 1,500 hp."

What came next was four years and a blue streak of money. "Let's say I wasn't price-sensitive," McMahan says.

From the tale these two tell, it might have been faster and cheaper if they had started from scratch. For instance, modifying the Ultimata GTR's kit-car frame required drastic surgery. Kirby estimates he has 3,000 to 4,000 man-hours invested in the chassis alone, as the unreinforced Ultima mid-engine frame would have folded like a broken kite under the shock loads of 1,600 hp.

The engine is about what you'd expect: twin Turbonetics turbos jamming air down the gullet

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**Dan Neil** is a Los Angeles Times Pulitzer Prize-winning columnist who writes the weekly column, Rumble Seat.

**Ken Bensinger** is a Los Angeles Times staff writer who covers the automotive industry.

**Martin Zimmerman** is a Los Angeles Times staff writer who covers the automotive and finance industries.

**Joni Gray** is a Los Angeles Times staff writer who covers the automotive industry.

**Whitney Friedlander** is a Los Angeles Times staff writer who writes for both Autos and Travel section blogs.

**Colin Ryan** is a freelance writer who covers the automotive industry.

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of a 7-liter Chevy V8, putting out a salty 1,600 hp at the flywheel. Getting all that to the ground is a custom-built, three-speed, paddle-shifted tranny. The body work is by a blind man's dog, apparently.

Kirby and McMahan are emphatic that this is a streetable car, with air conditioning, leather interior, navigation system and other amenities. Kirby also says it is a smooth-running and capable sports car, which will idle at 950 rpm and even gets reasonable gas mileage. Oooooo-kay.

But what really caught my eye was the picture of the car, with McMahan (left) and Kirby, who was the test driver for the record runs. Kirby says he weighs 245 pounds -- "My wife feeds me good," he says -- and the car weighs 2,700 pounds. In other words, Kirby represents 8% of the car's tested weight. Now, my question: Could the Maximus shave a couple tenths off its own records if it went with a more, shall we say, minimus driver?

"We did," Kirby says. The first two drivers he hired were lighter, professional drivers who apparently were restrained by some sense of self-preservation. In other words, when it came time to pull the pin on this four-wheeled hand grenade, the pros chickened out. "It's the driver's determination to get the job done" in these situations, Kirby says. After consulting with his wife, he "strapped in the car and I made it happen."

The bespoke hypercar business is tough sledding any time, but especially so in the worst recession since the Great D. McMahan is not worried. "I anticipate the car will make a lot of money," he says. He already has a Middle East buyer on the line for the world record car; meanwhile, Kirby is busy sketching out a second-generation car -- bigger, longer, more luxurious. Faster? Perhaps if there is Slim-Fast involved.

-- Dan Neil

*Photo: Maximus*

04:08 PM PT, Jan 26 2009 in [Supercars](#) | [Permalink](#) | [Comments \(3\)](#) | [TrackBack \(0\)](#)

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The designer claims he couldn't find a race-car driver who wasn't afraid to put the throttle to the floor, drive in a straight line for a few seconds, and apply the brakes on his new car. I'm incredulous. Racing drivers take more risks than this every second they're on the track. Either this car is not fit to drive, or its creator is gilding the tailpipe with respect to its potential. Is it me, or do the tall tales get taller as the car market plummets?

Posted by: [CG Stuart](#) | [January 27, 2009 at 09:56 AM](#)

the car looks great but take a look at that wind shield looks like a bit of different to me nice body form of a car bad thing is the wind shield alot of appearance of a car.

Posted by: [car loan virginia](#) | [February 02, 2009 at 11:47 PM](#)

CG Stuart has it right. Go to any open wheeled series including the amateur Skip Barber regional series and you could sign up dozens of 150 pound lunatics that would push this car to its limits and more than a few who would exceed those limits.

As to ascetics, the windscreen is not the problem. The car probably looks good in black, red or silver. Blue only looks good on a sports car if you're French.

Posted by: [Windfall](#) | [February 03, 2009 at 10:17 AM](#)

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