



SHOT TO THE HEART

MTM's 318-HP X-BOW:
CRAZY MULTIPLIED
BY Hardcore

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KTMs X-BOW IS AN EXERCISE IN PURE MADNESS. There's no roof or windscreen. You need to wear a helmet to take it shopping and there's no storage space when you get there. It's a pure adrenaline machine then, a racer for the road, and with a curb weight of 1,650 pounds and 240 hp, it's ludicrously fast. But that's never stopped people wanting more. Luckily, this car is essentially a

carbon-fiber monocoque, some seats and wheels strapped to a 2.0-liter TFSI VW/Audi engine and gearbox. Simple enough. MTM is the first to step in and create a 318-hp kart that I just had to try out...on a wet, wintry road.

With skidlid on and Alpinestars' best guarding against frostbitten fingers, I slap the throttle to the floor. The rear wheels spin helplessly on the damp tarmac, the car slides through each

and every bend on a twist of opposite lock and it doesn't straighten up until I turn it off. But it's never threatening, never dangerous, just the most as a progressive throttle helps to keep the back out on every apex. Driving a big-power Porsche like this would end in one place: the morgue. But the X-Bow wants to be thrown through the bend. It's what it was built for, it's *all* it was built for.

Such focused track-day cars and weekend warriors haven't quite gripped the American psyche, but they're big business in Europe. From the Lotus Seven-based Caterhams that have stood the test of time through to the space-age Ariel Atom and bike-engined Radicals, track-day specials are big business.

So when motorbike superstar KTM brought its X-Bow to market, Europe

collectively got the horn. It's easy to see why: The X-Bow looks like it's landed from another time and space, and challenges the very definition of the word "car." It's a big, powerful kart with race-bred technology throughout and a stripped frame that lives up to the billing of four-wheeled motorcycle. It even pops the question "Ready to Race?" when the rubberized starter button is pushed.



It's not slow, but that carbon-fiber chassis is so well balanced that card-carrying adrenaline junkies were always going to want more power, noise and drama. It's the natural way of things. Roland Mayer is well versed in tuning the VW/Audi 2.0 TFSI and was happy to oblige.

He started with the best possible base, one of the first 100 examples (built by racing car manufacturer Dallara) with lightweight carbon mudguards, was guaranteed a perfect engine and the best chassis to work with, which is kind of important when brewing up supercar power-to-weight ratios in something so exposed. Then all it took was a new

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turbo, inspired by the TT RS and in similar dimensions, which is all the information available on that score.

It comes with a new air intake, beefed-up fuel injectors, engine remap and the most visible change, those beautiful braided exhausts that replace the clunker of a box on the standard X-Bow that's as much about protection as exhaust exit. That takes it all the way to 318 hp and 300 lb-ft of torque, which—in a car that weighs so little—is simply epic. Virtually 30 percent more power, or in technical terms: a lot.

Gone is the muted tone of the original, which attracted criticism for simply not matching the character of

the car. Instead there's a gruff, throaty roar that seems so perfect, so right. And with the torque all there from 2000 rpm, the car rockets off the line and hits 60 mph in 3.9 seconds and 125 mph in 15.8 seconds. Sitting in a giant slithering rollerskate with bugs and raindrops smashing into my visor, it feels a damn sight faster than that.

The biggest problem is that those 6500 rpm evaporate. When the turbo comes, the needle whips around and suddenly there are no more revs. But with peak torque coming in so low, there's no need to use them all, and they disappear in what feels like milliseconds.

And driving the car in the bends



{ MTM X-BOW }

LAYOUT

Transverse mid engine, rear-wheel drive

ENGINE

2.0-liter I4, dohc, 16-valve. MTM turbocharger, fuel injectors, air intake, metal catalyst and exhaust, ECU remap

BRAKES

Six-piston calipers front and rear, 12-inch rotors [f], 10-inch rotors [r]

WHEELS AND TIRES

MTM alloys, 7.5x17 [f], 8.5x18 [r]
Michelin Pilot Sport 2, 205/40 [f], 235/40 [r]

Brembo six-pot brakes, and a benign chassis that slips into understeer at the first sign of trouble. This has to be powered through to reach those thrill-seeker slides.

Mayer has wisely not messed with

PERFORMANCE

Peak Power: **318 hp** @ 6500 rpm

Peak Torque: **300 lb-ft** @ 2000 rpm

this part of the X-Bow's magic; it's an easy car to drive, to push, to have fun with, until you go looking for the final few tenths when it becomes a wayward, wild beast. The extra power means it's more of a handful at the limit, but that's what Mayer's customers want.

And when they get bored with that, Mayer might have something else in store. He's working on a complete revision of the X-Bow, with V10 power, 500 hp and a curb weight of around 2,000 pounds. It's a magic idea, a scary idea, and I can't wait to drive the results. ©



takes total focus: no traction control, no EBD, no PASM and no help if you get it truly wrong, just a long and easy throttle pedal to help moderate power, a gearchange so soft it could come from a Golf (because it pretty much does), Michelin Pilot Sport 2 tires wrapped around 18-inch wheels,

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