

# for men

style « success « sports « watches

# PORTFOLIO

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## ROSCO'S ROCKET

Perth's Rosco McGlashan is already the fastest Aussie on wheels; now he plans to go where no-one has gone before and blast his rocket-powered car, Aussie Invader 5R, to 1600kmh and a place in history.

It's a story worthy of a James Bond plot. Dashing driver, in Moscow to buy MiG jet engines for an attempt on the world land speed record, is "kidnapped" by mysterious forces. Driver smashes the windows of the kidnapper's vehicle and escapes Russia to resurface with a new game plan – to pilot an 8.5-tonne rocket-propelled steel bullet and smash the magical 1000mph (1600kmh) barrier on wheels.

Not much fazes Perth's Rosco McGlashan, 58, (above) who has been chasing down – and vanquishing – the demons of speed since he left school at 12, boasting to his mates that one day he would go faster than Englishman Donald Campbell, who was visiting Australia with his record-

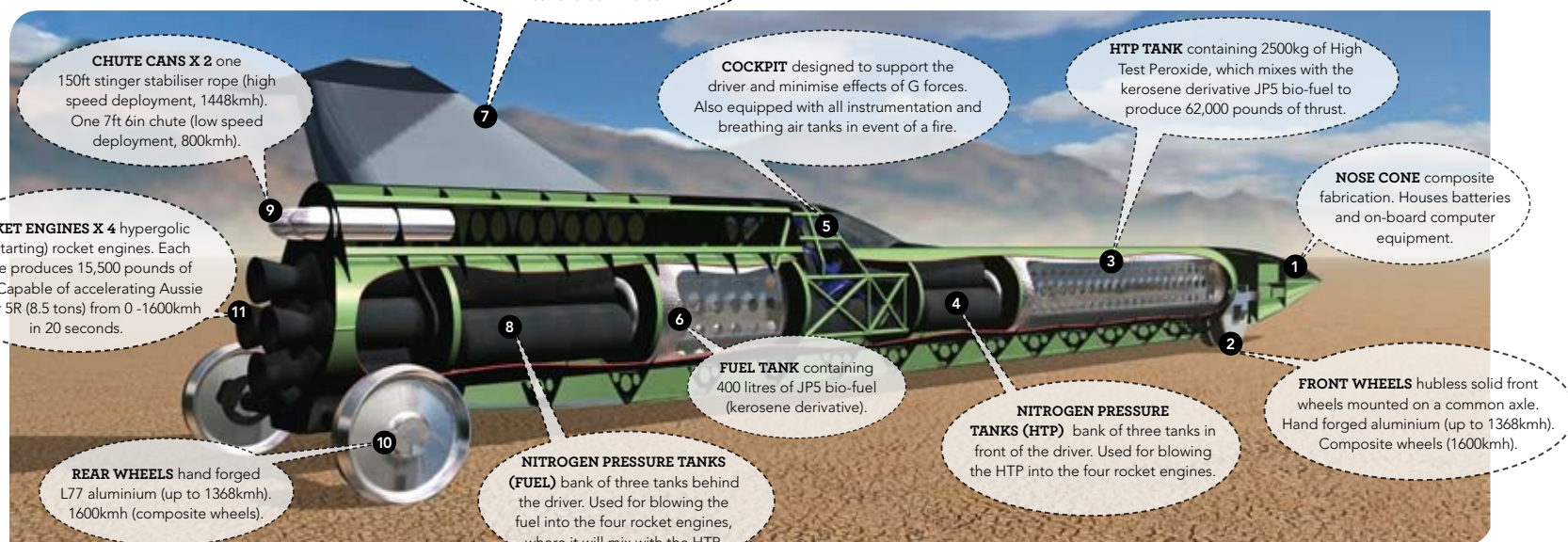
setting Bluebird land speed racer. Lying that he was 16, Rosco got a job in WA's North West and began saving his pennies to chase a dream. He eventually became a top drag racer and then graduated to a jet-powered car, Aussie Invader II, steering it to the Australian land speed record of 500mph (802kmh) in 1994.

The record still stands but Aussie Invader II was written off in a spectacular crash during a bid to break the world mark.

Today, Rosco doesn't even blink at the thought of being strapped into Aussie Invader 5R, now taking shape in a Midland workshop, and blasting across 27km of desert or lake-bed to again have a crack at the world record

text norman burns « portrait tony mcdonough « images courtesy rosco mcglashan/mike anear

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(760.343mph – 1223kmh – set in 1997 by Briton Andy Green in his jet-powered ThrustSSC car).

Mention Russian “taxis” though and Rosco’s heart rate jumps a notch or three. It was in Russia, looking at buying two MiG jet engines for a previous Aussie Invader 5R design, that he found himself in a “situation”.

“These were the world’s most powerful jet engines – 35,000lb of thrust each – and they were in wooden crates at an army base. But the guy I was talking to couldn’t get me a price,” he says.

Negotiations dragged on for days and when Rosco found he had a few hours’ spare, decided to take in some tourist sights. After visiting Red Square he hopped into a “taxi” to head back to his hotel. But near the hotel he suddenly realised the taxi was anything but. It had no door handles inside and the driver, who was talking animatedly on a mobile phone, suddenly sped off.

“He got up to around 90kmh and I was wondering what do I do; did he have a gun?” says Rosco, who decided on a Bond-like method to escape when the car was forced to slow in traffic. “I used my elbow and smashed the rear window and jumped out.”

Rosco doesn’t plan on returning to Russia anytime soon and no longer needs the MiG engines.

The new-look Aussie Invader 5R will use four engines designed by New Zealand’s Rocket Lab Ltd to hurl Rosco from 0 – 1000mph (1609kmh) in just 20 seconds. Getting the project off the ground, and keeping Aussie Invader 5R firmly on it, presents some immense technical – and financial – issues. So far, it has cost around \$800,000 and Rosco is still chasing a major sponsor to help fund the estimated \$4.5 million needed. Then there’s the question of *where* to attempt the record.

Despite all its wide-open spaces, WA or elsewhere in Australia is unlikely to host the record attempt; lack of any interest from State and Federal Government is one reason, as are the sheer logistics of shipping the car, equipment and support crew to remote Outback sites.

The McGlashan camp believes it will be easier to attempt the record overseas; Abu Dhabi, UAE, is a leading contender.

Aussie Invader 5R faces some daunting technical challenges. It needs specially designed hand-forged wheels to handle the stress of hurtling across the ground at 1600kmh. Keeping the car balanced as it guzzles 2.5 tonnes of hydrogen per-

MIGHTY MACHINE: Aussie Invader 5R, above, is a complex, powerful beast. Below: Rosco McGlashan’s earlier car, Aussie Invader II, fires up.



oxide and 400 litres of bio-fuel in 20-25 seconds is another issue. There’s a whole bunch of red tape, too, in setting a record; the car’s “runs” must be carefully monitored, timed and verified by officials of the FIA, the international motorsport body.

The car will take 16km to stop but slowing down is not straightforward; the rockets have to be shut down sequentially as instant deceleration will black out Rosco due to negative “G forces”.

Despite the likely choice of an overseas attempt there is, however, a very local feel to the project. The rollcage is being built by LF Performance Products, of Bentley; the car’s body is constructed from steel provided by Di Candilo Steel City of Bayswater while K.J Beer, a West Perth engineering firm with extensive experience in the energy industry, is building the special pressurised fuel tanks.

Another local firm, Internet job site WestJobs.com.au, has come on board with financial sponsorship. Just how much of Aussie Invader 5R will be computer-controlled is yet to be determined but Rosco, echoing the argument of the early astronauts who did not want to be just ‘spam in a can’, is adamant this will be a driver’s car.

“I don’t want some computer telling me I can’t race,” he says.

*For more information, see aussieinvader.com.*



## Rosco’s rival

Just when Aussie Invader 5R will be ready to roll is not yet certain, although there is one big factor helping drive the project – to beat a British team, Bloodhound, to the 1000mph mark.

Bloodhound will use three different engines (hybrid rocket, a piston engine and turbofan jet)

in its attempt. Current world record holder Andy Green will drive Bloodhound.

Rosco is determined not to be the also-ran.

“Chuck Yeager is known as the guy who officially broke the sound barrier (Mach 1) but later Scott Crossfield hit Mach 2 – and nobody remembers him,” he says. “The guy that hits 1500mph will be the same.”