

Stormchaser

Text by Scott Kendall // Photos by Bryan Fross / SoCalCustoms.com

When a vehicle is headed for the halls of the big CES show, aftermarket companies have to find new and exciting ways to appeal to its target demographic. In recent years, the demo car has become one of the CES' biggest draws, just as it has become the in-car electronics industry's key tools to success. So much so that without these modern mobile technology demonstrators tugging at the consumer's bank card, the industry could very well have a big identity crisis on its hands.

In the case of Lightning Audio, it was left up to Mark Bruno, regional sales manager for Lightning Audio in Tempe, AZ, to come up with a demonstration car that left a lasting impact on the folks from the most recent edition of the CES.

"I was finished with my supercharged 2000 Maxima and was trying to figure out what I wanted for my next project car," he says. "When my good friend Shawn Williams in Orange County let me drive his GReddy twin turbo 350Z, that quick drive made up my mind.

"It just so happened that another friend of mine in LA wanted to sell his 2004 G35 Coupe for a good reason. He bought a (Lamborghini) Gallardo. So, after several months bantering back and forth over the price, we came to an agreement and I was on a plane to pick it up."

Forty thousand USD later, Bruno had a fledgling project car complete with only 4,000 miles on it. It was July of 2004 when this clean and mean G35 Coupe became the destiny



of its new owner's aftermarket obsessions. Since then, this car has been transformed from the ground up into an even more powerful performer while still retaining its exquisite presence and poise. As an added bonus, it is now also equipped with a functional, sweet-sounding audio / video system that completes the enhanced experience of this particular tuner.

The first thing Bruno did was get Vivid Racing of Tempe, AZ, to install GReddy's twin turbo kit. Featuring two Mitsubishi 18G turbos, matching manifolds and a front-mount intercooler, the system ingests the atmosphere through an upgraded intake and filter combo. It also includes external wastegates and 440cc fuel injectors. While the motor was exposed during installation, it was hit with an Unorthodox Racing underdrive pulley kit and Samco silicone hoses throughout. "I opted for Injen's SES dual exhaust system to help exhaust gases escape faster and spool the turbos faster," Bruno points out. Combined with an NX N-Tercooler kit, the aluminum V6 produces 368 whp and 345 rear

wheel torque on 91 octane thanks to custom-made GHL Motorsport test pipes that can be inserted in place of the cats. To ensure easy plug-in accessibility with a laptop and tuning software, the e-Manage unit was mounted in the glove box. Tony Szirka at UMS Tuning in Tempe, AZ handled the tuning duties.

A reinforced driveline consists of an Unorthodox lightweight flywheel and racing clutch, which is necessary to transfer the might of the GReddy e-Manage-tuned VQ35DE motor. The six-speed manual G35 Coupe comes standard with the factory OEM upgrade Brembo brake package with four-piston front and two-piston rear calipers that were deemed satisfactory when used with stainless steel braided lines. The suspension, however, was removed in favour of an electronically-adjustable set-up from Tein. Here, Tein's EDFC directs a set of corresponding Type Flex coil-overs that allow for various street and racetrack settings. The EDFC controls are also located in the glove box and, to ensure precise turn-in and proper balance, adjustable

front and rear sway bars by Hotchkis Tuning were installed on the car. Contributing to the gorgeous stance is a set of custom Volk Racing GT-C two-piece wheels (custom because they use the RBC face) sized 20 inches all around and plenty wide at 10.5 in the back. Paired up with Toyo Proxes T1-S 235/35ZR front and 275/30ZR rear rubber, grip can always be found.

Because this car was bound for the big spectacle in Las Vegas, much more work was needed to bring it on par with a lightning storm on wheels. In the exterior styling department, VeilSide USA stepped up with a killer polyurethane body kit that includes the lower front lip spoiler, side skirts and rear bumper valances. Although they don't change the G35's look too drastically, these minor yet visible additions are further highlighted by the shapely factory spoiler and a charcoal-coloured roof. TG Race Designs finalized the car's new image with a Madico clear bra, window tint and copper Lightning Audio-themed vinyl graphics.

As this car was bound for the Lightning booth



at CES, Bruno called upon his employer to outfit this whip with enough products for a pacemaker-stopping audio system. Sound Xpression in Phoenix then took the helm, thus becoming responsible for the immaculate CES-worthy install.

Taking care of the driver first, SX converted the standard 1-DIN slot to the JDM-sized double-DIN in order to accommodate a Kenwood eXcelon DDX 7015 in-dash DVD / CD / MP3 / WMA receiver with 6.5-inch monitor / interface. This incredibly handy unit can display navigation information and, when combined with Kenwood's KDS-P901 surround decoder / digital processor, reproduces sounds with great accuracy. Setting the soundstage, the P901 takes care of the equalizing and processing as well as the crossover and time-alignment functions. A Nismo shift knob and 350Z aluminum pedal kit were also included for the driver.

"The front speakers utilize the factory locations, but both had to be heavily modified to accommodate the much larger Lightning Audio (X1.65C) Storm 6.5-inch components," explains Bruno. "The tweeter pods were reconstructed out of fibreglass to house the larger one-inch tweeters," and the door skins are reinforced with MDF so as to allow the grills to line-up flush with the precisely-trimmed door panels.

In the rear, a second set of X1.65C components was surface-mounted on the rear deck, which was covered in black vinyl to match the door panels. Meanwhile, a 2.5-cubic foot (net) dual vented sub enclosure was being built into the car to house a single X2.H12.vc4 Lightning Audio Storm modular subwoofer. "I wanted big bass that was still very tight and accurate and since I didn't want to add a bunch of weight to the car, I chose the lighter and more responsive X2.Neo magnet assembly to complete the Storm modular woofer set-up," says Bruno.

"This magnet weighs roughly half that of a standard magnet and offers 30 percent more magnetic force." The enclosure is actually two enclosures with two three-inch ports tuned to 35Hz. "A second enclosure seals the front of the sub from the trunk and forces all low frequency energy into the cabin," he explains. Construction materials back here included MDF, fibreglass, Plexiglas and black vinyl to match the G35's interior and trunk where some neon has been added for display purposes. You'll also find a pair of N-Tercooler-feeding nitrous bottles back here.

Powering the front and rear components as well as the subwoofer is the job of three Lightning Audio amplifiers that have been flush-mounted on a false floor inside the trunk. A single

S2.1000.1d amplifier supplies more than 1,000W at 1Ω to the sub while a pair of S2.300.2 amps juice the front and rear component speakers independently from one another. All of the Lightning Audio wiring, fuses and distribution blocks have been hidden from view and, to shore up the electrical system, a Lightning SBATTEX-1 extreme duty, deep cycle battery and an SCC25 25-farad capacitor were installed to supply steady power for extended periods of time.

"I think the Storm components are a perfect match to the G35 interior," says Bruno. "The pure titanium cones on the mids match the factory titanium finish perfectly and the chrome accents complement the factory chrome accents. Dave and Jeff at Sound Xpression did an excellent job on the audio system in this car."

All in all, Bruno and his project helpers gave this storm chaser awesome turbo performance with a tuned audio package to envy. The G35 already stokes the fire for many sports car enthusiasts. When outfitted like this, it can wreak havoc on their willpower. **PAS**

// For more visit www.pasmag.com

