



SHUT UP AND DRIVE

GET BEHIND THE WHEEL OF 2003 CHAMP CAR WORLD SERIES CHAMPION PAUL TRACY'S 2003 HUMMER H2.



When 2003 Champ Car World Series Champion Paul Tracy's not cruising around on one of his custom Harleys, ripping it up on his Paul Tracy model 125 CC shifter go-cart, or doing a scary 150 MPH in his 50-foot Skater boat, he needs something to get him from point A to point B in his hometown of Las Vegas, NV. The active Champ Car driver with the most career victories (26) chose a white 2003 Hummer H2 for his daily driver and filled it with all the necessities. With the help of his long time friend, and fellow vehicle customization enthusiast Allen Jay and the folks at Sound Xpression in Phoenix, AZ, Tracy built an audio/video/performance powerhouse that perfectly complements the prolific racer's personality.

"When I got the Hummer, I pretty much was going to keep it stock," Tracy explains. "I liked the new body style, and it turned some heads the way it was. Then I went to SEMA and CES here in Las Vegas and the wheels in my



head started turning. They had a lot of nice Hummers there, and I was seeing all these custom headliners and interiors and monitors. Once my wheels start turning, that's it. There's no stopping me."

Soon, Tracy would add the following performance enhancements: a Magusen 6.0L supercharger, an Airaid cold air intake system, an SMA Hummer billet shifter with accessories, an exhaust and suspension system custom built by a Las Vegas performance shop, and BF Goodrich G-Force tires on 24-inch chrome CEC wheels with spinners (he would later upgrade to 26-inch tires and wheels). Then Tracy had the H2 factory body flares and bumpers painted white to match the rest of the exterior.

With the outside of the Hummer in tip-top shape, it was time to focus inward. Tracy and Jay called on Sound Xpression's Jeff Hempleman and David Clark, a pair of 12-volt veterans who've done some stellar installs for Tracy over the years, and whose install portfolio includes several NIKE Hummer H1 vehicles and the famous NBA Miami Heat Fire Truck.

"They pretty much know what I want in an install," Tracy says of Hempleman and Clark. "I dropped off the Hummer and gave them a few general preferences. They basically said, 'Call us in a month, and it'll be done.' They handled all of it. We have a good trust thing going on."

Tracy was off to the races, literally. Between practice laps, meetings,





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appearances, and Champ Car races in different cities every weekend, the only way for him to keep on top of the H2 install was via Sprint PCS phones. Jay regularly sent him pictures and videos of the H2's progress.

At the very beginning of the first week, installer Hempleman completely gutted the interior — including the front dash and rear tire carrier — and applied Dynamat sound-damping material throughout the vehicle. Next, he laid out Directed Essentials wiring from front to back. He then began fabricating the front dash to fit a Directed 10.4-inch monitor and a Kenwood Excelon KVT-911 touchscreen, in-dash TV/DVD/CD/Sirius Satellite Radio tuner.

"The Kenwood tuner and flip-out screen has been completely rebuilt to become a part of the dash," Jay explains. "The unit no longer opens up, as it was taken apart and re-configured. Now, the Kenwood unit looks like it came straight from the factory."

"I wanted something that looks factory," Tracy adds. "A lot of times these things turn out not looking factory and, later down the line, when you want to change cars, you might have a problem."

Hempleman also re-fabricated the front and rear pillars to accommodate two sets of a/d/s/ 345cs 2-



way component speakers, which include 5-inch midranges and tweeters. He chose a/d/s/ 346cs 6.5-inch 2-way components for the factory front and rear door locations.

During the second week, Hempleman built an amplifier rack into the headliner that would house three Orion amplifiers — the 8004 splitting 3200 watts between the front door and front pillar speakers, the 8002 feeding 800 watts to each of two Orion H2 12-inch subs, and the 6002 splitting 1200 watts between the rear door and rear pillar components. The rack also houses a Kenwood 902 Sirius Satellite Radio receiver.

After Hempleman built the amp rack, he installed two Directed 10.4-inch flip-down monitors for the rear passengers. Because the truck would become Tracy's daily driver, Hempleman built a vented tuned sub enclosure into the spare tire well so that Tracy could use the rear compartment to store mountain bikes, gear, or anything else he wanted to store. He then had the seats, door panel trim, headliner, and shifter area upholstered in Gucci material.

"It's very 'MTV Cribs,'" Tracy jokes about the Gucci print. "But seriously, I really wanted suede. I work on a lot of my own stuff, so I'm not always the cleanest guy in the world, and the Gucci material was made of canvas, so it's a little easier to keep clean. Plus, I use my cars pretty hard



— they're not just show cars. The Gucci is fairly subtle; it's not as 'bling bling' as you might think."

Weeks 3 and 4 were all about putting everything back together and installing a Directed Viper 791XV security and remote start system and a Kenwood GPS navigation system.

"Paul wanted audio, video, and Sirius Satellite Radio; and clean sound was important to him," Jay explains. "But when he heard music on Sirius that he liked, he wanted the system to be loud with some heavy bass. So, between the high-end components and the intense 12-inch subs, we got both sound quality and boom covered, and it only took 28 days to achieve."

Tracy says that he loves the stealthy aspects of the install: "My favorite thing about the install is that if you just peeked in the window, you'd hardly have any idea that any work was done

inside at all," he explains. "It's very clean; everything's hidden really well. The other important thing is I had to keep room in the back to store my bags and my bikes and stuff when I go on the road. The sub enclosure built into the spare tire well doesn't really take up any space."

You'd think Champ Car racing's baddest driver would be a maniac on the road, but he says he drives his H2 in a mellow manner with his two kids, Alysha and Conrad, in tow.

"It's a car that not only I can enjoy, but also my kids can enjoy," Tracy says. "The video screens make my life easier when we take a road trip. And the Sirius — between US1 playing top 40, Octane pumping alternative, and all the hip-hop stations — is pretty much all I listen to. I also have satellite in my mobile

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UNDER COVER

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Y will likely be a good fit. This is not to say that you have to use the same brand. Take a look at the brand Y rating — if it's X watts at 1ohm, mono, at 12.5 volts, you can look at other brands with similar ratings and be reasonably confident that brand Q, which has a similar rating, will work for your brand Y subs.

Cosmetics are the other "red light" according to Rheinoltz.

"The other thing is what I like to call the 'bling-factor'," he said. "Don't be suckered into the first piece of shiny chrome that you put your eyes on because, believe me, more than likely you'll live to regret the purchase in the long run if this is the sole deciding factor. If you can, take every opportunity to listen to the product. For the life of me please, please, please, don't base your purchase just on what someone tells you. Be your own judge, jury, and executioner."

An long-time friend of mine, Sean Belanger, a former installer and start-up manufacturer of dBMonkey woofers in Spartanburg, SC, would always give newer enthusiasts this advice: "A chromed piece of poo is still poo."

Yes, having great looking gear is what gets people interested, but it can also attract the kind of attention you don't want. Remember, your ears — which hear the music, the reason you have a system — don't "see" what's actually producing the sound. ■

SHUT UP AND DRIVE

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home for when I'm away at the races and I've got it in my boat."

Other vehicles that Tracy has or had in his eclectic fleet include a 2003 Ferrari 360 Spyder, a Mercedes CL 55 and SL 600, a supercharged Chevrolet Suburban, a BMW X5 and M3, a Porsche 911, an Acura NSX, a Chevrolet Dually, and, of course, his Forsythe Racing Turbocharged Ford V8 open wheel Champ Car with Lola chassis.

Tracy thanks Sound Xpression and Concept1 for their excellent installation and fabrication skills and West Coast Customs in Southern California for providing the Gucci material.

Visit www.soundxpression.com, www.westcoastcustoms.com, and www.paultracy.com. ■

ANATOMY OF AN SQ CHAMPION

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which components are fused based on the different colors."

Dynamat products are used throughout the install for sound deadening.

The BMW's performance has also been beefed up. Ground Control added custom springs for the back of the car to support the weight of the system.

"They took the spring rates from a regular T318ti, looked at the rear axle rate, and factored in the weight of the stereo system to recalculate the spring rate and make custom coilovers for the back of the car," Buffington says. "I wanted a car that can actually be driven. A lot of competition vehicles are trailer queens that don't enjoy any street time. I like to drive this car, and I drive it to all the shows I compete at."

Other performance mods include 17-inch BBS Mota Wheels with Yokohama ES100s, European headlights, an M3 front bumper and mirrors, a BMW motorsport rear wing, and a TC Kline racing chip and performance exhaust.

"Most of these things are designs that I picked up from T. C. Kline," Buffington reports. "He built some cars that I liked, so I built my own."

Buffington began competing with this car, which used to be his daily driver, in 2001, but the car almost didn't make it to finals that year.

"I was getting real behind for the show, so I called a couple of buddies of mine, including fellow competitor and world champion Mark Richmond," Buffington recalls. "They showed up on the Thursday before the Sunday of the show, and I didn't have a sub enclosure. We stayed up for three nights straight and completed the install and I ended up finishing third at finals that year."

Buffington, who competes in IASCA and SLAP in Pro 601-up Ultimate, finished fourth in IASCA finals in 2002, and second in class in 2003, to Gary Biggs.

This year, he finished second in class to Biggs again in Spring Break Nationals — by just 1/2 point — before finally finishing first (over Biggs) at the Steel Valley Regional in IASCA, with a 4th place showing in the top 40 soundoff competition, setting up a showdown at finals between the two long-time rivals.

"We will be at World Finals this year hoping for the best," Buffington asserts. "There are a lot of great cars there. It's going to be a gun fight." ■

STARTING OVER

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you liked and what you did not, then figure out what needs to happen in what order to get to where you want to go.

USE A PLAN

Any good plan starts with a goal and works backwards. If you are not sure where you are going you will never be able to plan your way there. Seriously, if you do not know what your end result will be then you are going to get just that — no end result! Once you figure out where you are going, you can plan how to get there. Laying your plan is a three dimensional deal. To start, you must schedule based upon what needs to be done first, second, and then third. For me, the first step should be the electrical, then the filling of holes, the painting of the floor, the painting of walls, and then cabinets. As the world works, however, things will not happen that way. When setting a plan in motion you need to look at a three things, what you need, how long it takes to get it (or when you can get it), and how much it will cost. The last thing (budget) is the one that holds most of us up, but any one can cause a problem. For me, right now, the timing is causing an issue. So, I will have to best adapt my plan to allow for a difference in scheduling. Look for more later, but, no matter what you have going, make sure you have a plan, even if you have already started, it is never too late to plan for the next step. ■

MTX THUNDER T7512-44

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SUMMARY

The MTX T7512-44 combines great looks, excellent fit and finish and great SPL number in the 40Hz to 70Hz range. Never in my auditioning of the woofer did it lose its composure. In fact, even when I doubled the RMS power handling the T7512-44 held strong. MTX is definitely conservative about the performance of the T7512-44. If you are looking for a great sounding woofer with hard-hitting performance in the meat of your baseline, the MTX T7512-44 is your woofer. ■