

MOSLER'S

Lately, it seems like everybody is trying to build a Group C car for the street. It must be something in the beer.

There's Vern Schuppan's \$1.4 million Porsche 962, the \$1 million Kremer 962 and Walkinshaw Jaguar XJR15, and Ferrari's F40.

In the USA, a bloke named John Evans is selling an IMSA sports car replica called a GTP Kuzdu with a Chevy V8 for \$80,000, while another named Jay Drake offers the similarly-priced Eagle GTP, a road-going version of Chevrolet's factory IMSA racer.

Then there's the Consulier GTP — pronounced con-soo-lear. About four years ago a wealthy Florida bond trader named Warren Mosler decided to spend some of his excess millions on starting his own car company.

Depending on who you talk with, he's disposed of close to \$10 million so far.

What's he got to show for it? A big tax write-off, and a little factory/race shop/tyre store next to the highway in West Palm Beach which employs more than 50 people, at least some of whom are currently molding fibreglass canoes instead of Consuliers.

Oh, yes, and about a hundred of the homeliest quasi-race cars you've ever seen.

Unlike his competitors, Mosler didn't start with a 'real' race car and detune it for the street. Instead, he hired old-time Can-Am race engineer Bob McKee to draw a 'race-type' mid-engined chassis.

McKee specified a conventional suspension, with fabricated lower A-arms and upper rocker arms, front and rear. Carrera coil-over spring/shocks are mounted inboard, with Chrysler vented disc brakes outboard behind

15x6 alloy wheels. Tyres are comparatively narrow; 205x50VR15 on the front and 225x50VR15 on the rear. There is an anti-roll bar on the front only, which coupled with soft spring rates gives the Consulier a very un-racey boulevard ride.

The suspension pieces are carried on tubular steel subframes front and rear, which in turn bolt to a unit/body chassis made from epoxy-Kevlar-carbon fibre and epoxy-fibreglass over closed-cell foam.

Apart from the subframes, all the structure is composite, which makes the car the most high-tech passenger car chassis since Colin Chapman's original Lotus Elite 30 years ago.

Composite-foam is great stuff. The Consulier meets every US safety law — including front and side impact — without using hydraulic impact absorbers like conventional cars.

Taking his cue from the Toyota MR2 and Fiat X1/9, engineer McKee placed the engine and transaxle from a front-wheel drive econobox behind the seats, for a cheap and convenient mid-engined design. Consulier uses a 2.5-litre Chrysler turbo engine with five-speed Getrag gearbox, rated at either 175 or 245 horsepower depending on tuning.

The Consulier is not small, but it is light and relatively powerful and so it can zap from 0-100km/h in less than five seconds and top 250km/h. Keep your foot out of the turbo boost and the Chrysler four even delivers outstanding fuel economy.

Mosler also uses Chrysler econobox bits in the brakes, steering, spindles, hubs and interior hardware. Despite leather-covered

Recaro seats and VDO instruments, the Consulier's interior has a real kit-car look, most because of cheap Chrysler door handles and controls. Glued-on patches of vinyl and plastic are meant to upgrade the inside above the stripped, race-car level, but the overall effect is pretty tacky.

Mosler would be smart to take some of his millions and hire a real designer to re-style the interior of his car. And, while he's at it, he ought to re-style the body of the Consulier as well.

Warren Mosler, who is as prickly about his car's looks as any father of a homely child, simply refuses to believe that the Consulier is ugly. His sales figures should tell him.

Even Mosler admits that "no-one a everyone" styled the car in the beginning and subsequent attempts to spruce it up have been too little, too late. The side profile is decent, but the surface development and details are excruciating; the window treatment is almost embarrassingly amateur.

Put it all together and looking at the Consulier is the visual equivalent of scratching your nails on a blackboard.

So what is the Consulier GTP? Good question.

It would make a decent racing car — against real GTP racing cars, of course — kept away from endurance racing the Consulier should be as durable a street machine as any Chrysler.

Is it fun to drive? Mostly. It goes, stops, handles as well as any car you can buy for less than \$100,000 in the 'states; the overall effect is like driving a Formula Ford with guards, doors and roof. The cockpit will accommodate someone two metres tall and

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