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26.10.08

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THE NEED FOR SPEED sundaybriefing

Oasis sang about feeling supersonic, but there are a few men - including world land speed record holder Andy Green, a Brit - who know how it feels to travel at up to ten times the UK speed limit

WHEN the Bloodhound SSC accelerates, from 0-1,050mph in 40 seconds, 46-year-old Wing Commander Andy Green will experience a force of 2.5G (twice his bodyweight) and the blood will rush to his head. As it decelerates, he will be subjected to forces of up to 3G, causing the blood to drain to his feet, with the possibility of blackout. To prepare for this, he will practise flying upside-down in a stunt jet.

The Bloodhound SSC will be the ultimate land speed record car. Inside, it will have a V12 racing car engine, but that's just a motor to power its pumps. The motive power will come from two sources: a jet engine normally found on a Eurofighter aircraft will get the car moving, at which point a Falcon hybrid rocket engine will join it to push Bloodhound past 1000mph, breaking the record by the biggest-ever margin.

Green holds the current record of 766mph, the first supersonic record, which was set in Nevada's Black Rock Desert in 1997. The engineer and chief designer of both projects is Richard Noble, an adventurer and former wallpaper salesman, who himself reached 633mph in the turbojet-powered Thrust 2 in 1983.



Green's biggest challenge is to keep the car running in a straight line. The slightest gust of wind or the most minute turn of the steering wheel could send the vehicle veering dangerously off course.

The vehicle will be airtight - otherwise air could be sucked out of the cabin like a vacuum cleaner. The car's wheels will be made of titanium to withstand 10,500 revolutions per minute (a car on a motorway does around 1500rpm).

The entire run, expected to last just under a minute and a half, will burn so much fuel that the car will end up weighing over two tonnes less than when it started.

Stopping the vehicle is another challenge: two parachutes will be deployed slow it down, but Green will have to wait until the speed drops to 200mph before he can hit the brakes.

Then, according to the rules, he has to turn the car round and do the same thing again. Two consecutive recordbreaking runs within an hour are required.

More than 300 companies and universities are taking part in the project, including Swansea University in Wales and the University of West England in Bristol, where the team is based.

The engines have been secured, sponsorship is in place, plans have been drawn, but one thing eludes the team: somewhere to drive it. The Black Rock Desert in Nevada, where the last two runs took place has suffered from unusually dry weather which has degraded its normally flat surface, so they are on the look-out for a new site.

So if you know of a mile-wide, continuous 10-mile straight, unobstructed, smooth, load-bearing surface which will be reliably dry for three months of the year, let the team know.



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Sunday Herald, The, Oct 26, 2008

E-MAIL PRINT LINK

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