

MAKING A DREAM COME TRUE

A Florida financier has gotten his plans for making the world's best sports car off the drawing board and on the road

By Jeffrey Dworin

Like many car enthusiasts, Warren Mosler dreamed of building the "world's best sports car." But while most people never get beyond the drawing on the cocktail napkin, Mosler is making a go of it. Mosler's theory is that the world's best sports car should have exceptional handling, lightweight construction and a good power-to-weight ratio. Not a terribly original set of criteria, we realize, but they're the same sorts of goals that moved Malcolm Bricklin to build the SV-1 and John DeLorean the DMC-12. They ultimately failed. Warren Mosler thinks he can succeed.

After all, Mosler has succeeded so far in building the life he wants. A thirty-something bond trader/amateur racer, Mosler worked at firms on Wall Street and in Chicago. A bond trader does most of his work on the phone, and Mosler realized he could work the phone just as well from sunny Florida as from snowy Chicago. So a few years ago he moved to Riviera Beach, Fla., where he opened his own securities firm, and has been very successful.

He has brought some of that financial savvy to his plans for the Consulier, which just may be key to the project's success. Rather than finance his own testing, development and certification, Mosler is buying most of the mechanical hardware from Chrysler. The engine and transmission combinations, shifter mechanisms, steering columns, the spindles, brakes and hubs, as well as many of the interior switches and buttons, are off-the-shelf Chrysler parts.



Construction techniques and high-tech materials borrowed from racing mandate the Consulier's awkward looks (above and below). Not-so-exotic pieces borrowed from Chrysler detract from car's overall image, particularly in the interior (left)



One of the biggest benefits to this decision is that the engine comes to Consulier already EPA-certified and even carries Chrysler's 5/50 drivetrain warranty. The engine is the familiar 2.2-liter turbo four and produces 175 hp. But while it is usually found driving the front wheels of a K-car, the 2.2 and its Getrag five-speed are mounted midship in the Consulier and drive the rear wheels.

By purchasing Chrysler parts, Mosler also hopes to buy Chrysler reliability. After all, most of these components have seen daily use on every K-car variant in Chrysler's lineup for years. And relying on these parts' reliability seems to have worked. At Nelson Ledges last year, a Consulier GTP won the pole and not only lasted the 24 hour race but finished 14th overall.

Unfortunately, all those not-so-exotic mechanicals add up to a rather confusing sense of this car's personality. For instance, the heavily optioned car we drove had leather-covered Recaro seats, both beautiful and functional, but the crude Chrysler cable shifter offsets their impact. The steering wheel and gauges are all serious-looking items, but the switchgear and buttons are all K-car items, too. While being functional as ever, they just don't impart a feeling of quality.

The body is probably the most innovative aspect of the project, and also the most controversial. Mosler was aiming for an aggressive race-car-for-the-street look, and borrowed race car construction technology as well. Consulier

has an all-composite unibody. The primary load-bearing members (bulkheads) are made of carbon fiber and Kevlar with closed-cell foam in a sandwich configuration. The rest of the body is foam reinforced by glass fiber in an epoxy resin. Mosler manufactures the body in Riviera Beach. The only metal used is in the subframes that house the engine, transmission and suspensions.

But some of the most extreme elements of the IMSA racer-like styling come less from Mosler's esthetic desires than from engineering constraints. Without a frame or chassis in the conventional sense, the body becomes a load-bearing surface; consequently, much of the heavy-handed styling was necessary for structural integrity. The thick pillars and door frames as well as the five-inch radius atop the fenders contribute to