

2010 GUMPERT APOLLO SPORT

LAUNCHING THE APOLLO: STREET- LEGAL SUPERCAR WILL HAVE YOU SEEING STARS

STORY BY BOB GREEN ▶ PHOTOS BY RENATO ZACCHIA

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LONG-TERMS

□ THERE'S A VIDEO MAKING the viral rounds showing a Mercedes-Benz SLS AMG screaming through an alpine tunnel upside down, seemingly glued to the ceiling by a combination of speed, down-force and magic. Luckily for the stunt driver, a Gumpert Apollo Sport wasn't coming the other way.

According to the manufacturer, the Apollo Sport can achieve ceiling clinging at 190 mph, a mere 85 percent of its estimated 224-mph top speed. And it needn't be a long tunnel—with 0-to-60-mph times in the three-second range, the Gumpert gets “up” and running pronto.

Our test wasn't held in the confines of a tunnel. We got to sample the Bavarian bad boy at the sprawling Monticello Motor Club, the “luxury automotive-lifestyle resort” not too far from New York City that aspires to host a Formula One race. Monticello encompasses 150 acres, the heart of which is a 4.1-mile-long, 40-foot-wide, billiard-table-smooth asphalt ribbon that weaves through 22 turns, numerous elevation changes, brake-blistering hairpins and a mile and a half of straightaways.





Designed by Porsche driver extraordinaire Brian Redman, the track has parts that are reminiscent of the Nürburgring's Nord-schleife, where, in August 2009, the Apollo Sport turned a sizzling 7:11.57 hot lap, breaking the record for street-legal factory cars previously held by a Donkervort D8 RS06. (And you thought Gumpert was a weird name.)

With tongue firmly in cheek, Gumpert founder and managing director Roland Gumpert remarked, "We could have gone faster, but we don't want to demoralize our competitors."

But of course, he does.

Gumpert very much wants enthusiasts to know that his eponymous supercar is ca-

2010 Gumpert Apollo Sport

ON SALE: Now

BASE PRICE: \$595,000

DRIVETRAIN: 4.2-liter, 700-hp, 645-lb-ft twin-turbo V8; RWD, six-speed sequential manual

CURB WEIGHT: 2,646 lb

0-60 MPH: 3.1 sec (mfr)

FUEL ECONOMY: N/A

pable of humbling anything that Maranello, Affalterbach, Ingolstadt, Zuffenhausen, Tokyo or anywhere else can throw against it. Why else would his PR team have summoned us to Monticello?

Upon first viewing, the pearlescent burnt-orange race car with registration

plates draws a double take. How can this beast possibly be street-legal? From the front splitter to the rear diffuser and wing, the low, wide Apollo Sport's exterior is all about downforce. The aero bodywork is sculpted around the cockpit greenhouse to create a single-center-seat prototype feel. The width of the car from the front wheels back increases diagonally below the driver-door access and boxed monocoque doorsill to accommodate the mammoth aero scoop that supplements the car's 10 fans, while the wheel-flare housings round over the rear wheels similarly to those of an ALMS LMP1 car. Even standing still, the car emits brutality, but its gullwing doors open to a comfortable, driver-friendly cockpit.



The engine fired on a push start, and on the access road, the car was docile and calm at 10 mph, with a smooth idle and no driveline lash, buck or stall. But once on the track, the 700-hp twin-turbo V8 immediately wanted to pretend it was back on the Nordschleife. We ran well below the turbo boost up through the late-apex curves and short straights. But after arcing onto the long straight, a smooth throttle squeeze brought on the turbo with a progressive push back into the seat—no surprises or sudden boost. The car hit 130 mph in a heartbeat, with two more gears to go, but since this is Gumpert's only U.S. demo car, we were requested to brake early with no ABS and no heroics.

Driving two laps on an unfamiliar course in an unfamiliar car with a protective coach didn't provide much of a taste of what the Gumpert can really do. But it was enough to convince us that this Apollo has all the right stuff. 🍀

2011 SUBARU IMPREZA WRX/WRX STI

TURN THE PAGE

Will Subaru's hot 2011 Imprezas write the next chapter in the WRX story?

BY MAC MORRISON



■ PERHAPS IT IS UNFAIR TO CONSIGN the last-generation Subaru Impreza WRX STI to a place in history best occupied by the likes of New Coke and the Pet Rock. Yet when Subaru unveiled the 2008 STI—the replacement for its legendary flame-sporting predecessor, which launched in the United States in 2004—its performance flagship felt as if it might have lost as much as it gained.

Yes, the 2008 model was smoother and quieter. It also felt softer and easier to drive, even depressingly tame compared with the original. Some of that feeling was perception born from inevitable refinement, but it remained in place even as Subaru improved the car's suspension and engine for 2009, with further underpinning upgrades to the 2010 STI Special Edition ("You're So Special," *AW*, May 3).

Fear not, you longtime, hard-driving loyalists. The 2011 STI's most obvious distinction is the return of a sedan, which joins the hatchback. Almost as noticeable, the WRX and the WRX STI now share aggressive wide-body panels, and the STI sedan once again flaunts a tall signature rear wing and a larger wheel-and-tire package to distinguish it as the top-of-the-line edition.

You'll want to skip this paragraph if you hoped for more power, as engines and transmissions remain unchanged. The WRX's 2.5-liter turbocharged boxer four still features maximum boost pressure of 14.2 psi and produces 265 hp at 6,000 rpm and 244



2011 Subaru Impreza WRX STI

ON SALE: Late August/early September

BASE PRICE: \$34,720

DRIVETRAIN: 2.5-liter, 305-hp, 290-lb-ft turbocharged H4; AWD, six-speed manual

CURB WEIGHT: 3,384 lb

0-60 MPH: 4.9 sec (mfr)

FUEL ECONOMY (EPA): 19 mpg

lb-ft of torque at 4,000. The STI engine, with 14.7 psi of boost, stays at 305 hp at 6,000 rpm and 290 lb-ft at 4,000. Subaru engineers say that the WRX still runs from