

Danny Thompson: 420 MPH or Bust



When it comes to ultimate velocity on land, nothing beats good old fashioned jet power: it propelled the twin turbofan-equipped ThrustSSC to a record busting 763.035 mph in 1997, and continues to taunt would-be record breakers like Craig Breedlove, who has vowed to break 800 mph in 2013.

But for proof that die-hard internal combustion fanatics continue to push their particular envelope of technology, look no further than Danny Thompson, son of late offroad legend Mickey Thompson. The elder broke the 400 mph barrier in 1960 with the quad-engined Challenger I, but never fulfilled his goal of running Challenger II, which was then powered by two 427 cubic inch engines. Danny's efforts to start running the rig again in 1988 came to a screeching halt when his father and stepmother were tragically murdered, which eventually led to the mothballing of Challenger II.

Enter 2012, and Mickey Jr. is determined to break the current internal combustion wheel-driven land speed record of 417.020 mph, which was set in 2008 by the twin supercharged Chrysler V8-powered Burkland Streamliner. By retrofitting Challenger 2 with twin mid-mounted, 500 cubic-inch nitro methane and methanol blend-burning engines, the updated rig-- dubbed Challenger 2.5-- will see Thompson reclined between the two powerplants, each of which produces 1,500 horsepower. The massive mills power all four wheels, which are wrapped in specially designed Mickey Thompson tires equipped with four-ply sidewalls that have been tested to 590 mph.

Can the 29 foot, 7 inch, aluminum-skinned bullet break the record? Danny Thompson is currently shaking down the four decades-old machine, and you can bet we'll be watching with bated breath when he blasts across the Bonneville Salt Flats this summer with hopes of capturing the crown.

Source: thomsponlsr.com (thanks to Erik Arneson for the tip!)