

Headed for the Trails? First, Get Ripped to Ride

Kamloops-developed snowmobile system promises to take machines to the next level

BY SHANNON LINDEN >> KAMLOOPS BUSINESS

Snowmobilers who love smokin' the trails, listen up. A Kamloops company has what you want: the secret to leaving other sled-ders in your powdery dust.

More than four years in the making and nearly ready for retail, the Ripcharger — a system designed to increase horsepower and torque for two-stroke snowmobiles — will soon be unleashed.

Developed by local entrepreneur Russ Pocha, the Ripcharger promises to deliver everything a turbo or super charger does, but with bottom-end power responsiveness that will become the industry standard — at least according to operations, marketing, and sales manager Dennis Smith.

"With all power sports, like dirt bikes and race cars, the bar is always being raised," Smith said. "Snowmobiles come out of the factory with power, but, until turbos came along, nothing existed to take the machines to the next level."

But turbos are not without their troubles. In turbocharged systems, compressors are driven by pressure harnessed from exhaust fumes. These systems suffer from "turbo-lag," meaning that the boost system is always a bit behind the throttle, especially at low RPMs (revolutions per minute).

Another drawback is that the compressor and turbine are contained as one unit as part of the exhaust system, which generates high levels of heat. To combat temperature, the system requires extra cooling capabilities, which can be heavy and bulky, not to mention complex to work with.

Superchargers driven by the crankshaft of the engine through a variety of methods, including belts and pulleys, chains, or gears, are an improvement.

Because superchargers do not require the cooling turbochargers do, fewer components are used, resulting in less weight and simpler working parts. Best of all, lack of lag means instant power for the rider who wants it — and who doesn't?

But even superchargers come with super challenges: trouble-free delivery of power from the crankshaft to the compressor is a major mechanical and engineering issue. The team at Ripcharger says they've creatively overcome that challenge. But most of all — and here's where Pocha's secret formula comes in — they say they've got the goods the need-for-speed crew craves: raw, instant power that comes from creating big back pressure in the combustion chamber without blowing the boosted fuel mixture right through.

"People said it couldn't be done — in fact, there are still snowmobilers who say it can't be done — but that only pushed Russ more," Smith said.

Pocha, an avid snowmobiler, was intrigued by enthusiasts' passion to push their machines further and faster.

A skilled automotive mechanic, he worked tirelessly from his garage to create a system that would satisfy sledders. If preliminary test results are any indication, Pocha and the diversely talented team working with him to perfect and promote his creation could soon be celebrating.

"We recently sent the Zollinger hill climb team in Utah a prototype to run in a race," Smith explains. "They were blown away with the bottom-end responsiveness and lightness. The Ripcharger has created a huge buzz in that world."

Pocha and his group (Smith, along with engineering and operations expert



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Dennis Smith, operations, marketing and sales manager for Ripcharger, says racers were "blown away" by the performance of the Kamloops-developed device.

Casey Dundass and engineering support guy Tim Leggett) planned to continue extensive runs of the Ripcharger right through the summer, wherever they can find some snow, with hopes of having the system ready for retail for the 2010-11 season.

The Ripcharger will be sold as kits through distributors. While Smith describes the install as easy for anyone mechanically inclined, factory-trained technicians will handle initial installations.

Administration, assembly, and ship-



ping will all be from the Kamloops-based warehouse and the company will endeavour to employ the best local people they can find.

"One of the keys to bringing a new product to market is to build a team that can deliver the goods," Smith explained. "We have an incredible team of talent right now with potential to employ more."

Calling Pocha's breakthrough technology "the heart and soul" of the product, the boys at Ripcharger are remaining tight-lipped when it comes to specifics, pending patents.

There's nothing more seductive than a secret, and while snowmobilers might be juiced to know more, for now they'll be pumped by the company's promise that the Ripcharger will put their sleds on steroids — minus the mood swings, we're told.

For more information, check out the company's website: ripcharger.com. **KB**



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