

# SURF CLUB!

Toyota's small turbo-diesel isn't known for super-fast start-line launches. This breathed-on import is no longer grey, but red-hot

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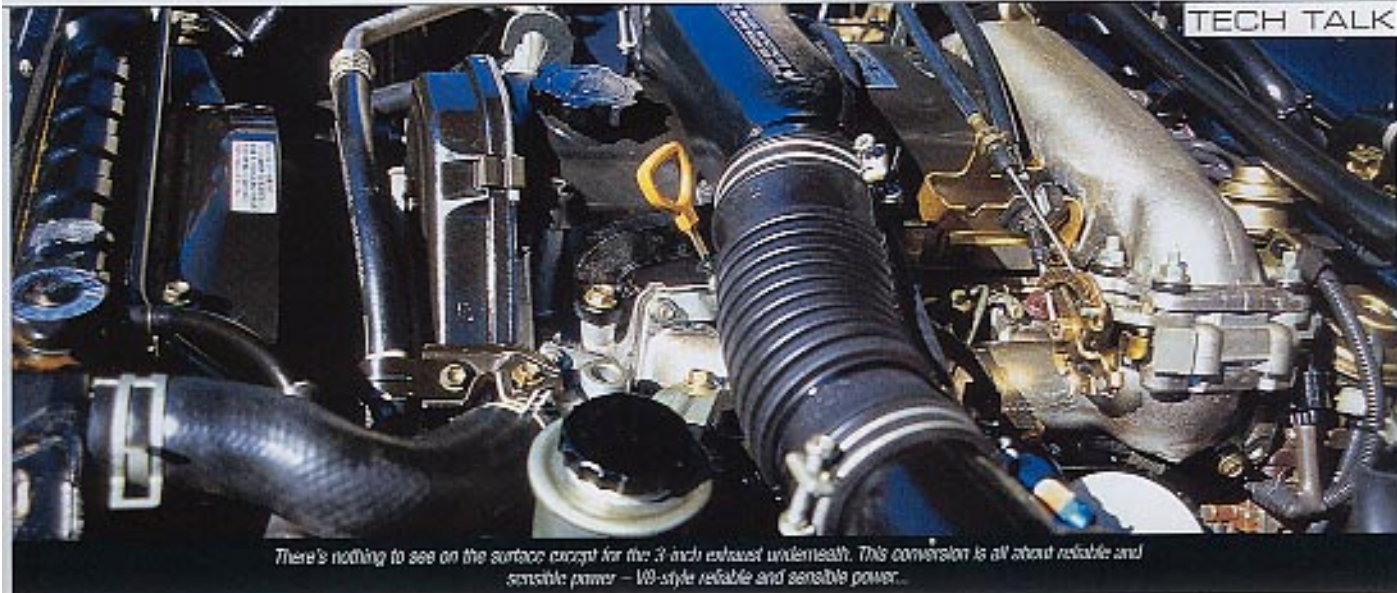
Left: John and Dennis Whittaker with the 1.3TD Surf competition Surf

**B**risbane's John Whittaker is one of the big names in competition motor tuning. He's had a huge involvement with motor sports - dating back some 30 years - as both an engine tuner who specialises in turbo- and super-charging and as a driver. He won the Queensland Racing Drivers Club Championships in a turbo car he built from scratch. Stewth, his daily driver is a Datsun 260 running a GT-R Nissan motor with twin turbos. It's only

making around 547hp at the flywheel because John's turned the turbo down to 15lb boost...

Get the idea? The man's a turbo demon and now he's transferring that track knowledge of turbocharged petrol engines to the new breed of high-revving turbo-diesels. So when John asked me over to look at the enhancements he'd made to his wife's Surf, I knew it'd be good. What I hadn't figured was that it'd be this good!





*There's nothing to see on the surface except for the 3-inch exhaust underneath. This conversion is all about reliable and sensible power - V8-style reliable and sensible power.*

The Surf is a 1996 grey import that had around 70,000km on the clock. The motor was a stock Toyota 1KZTE: the turbocharged, 3-litre, four-cylinder donk that's well known for being as reliable as a windmill - and about as exciting.

By giving it the Whittaker treatment, which involved a delicate balance of modifying the wastegate and boost pick-up point, remapping the electric fuel pump and resetting the pump timing, John worked a bit of a miracle. To make the most of things, he also fitted a 3-inch free-flowing exhaust and flowed the injectors - although the latter was more to check their operation than add anything - before putting it back on the dyno.

The Surf, which Toyota claims makes around 90hp, had in reality made 78. After the tune-up and exhaust, it made 130hp - with a torque curve that began from idle! That puts the little four-cylinder diesel in the V8 petrol power stakes. Ooh! All this and it doesn't even have an intercooler!

Being one of the first 3-litre models John had worked on, there was a little problem with excessive fuel consumption at first, but now it makes all 130hp for the same meagre fuel consumption figures Barb was getting before. And it's done 22,000km or more of general duties - including son Brendan's beach trips - without missing a beat.

Whittaker says Toyota turbo motors are very reliable. They're great to hot up because they come with high-volume oil pumps and oil squirters under the piston skirts for extreme cooling. They already have better cylinder-head breathing, a nitrided crankshaft and totally different pistons, so they're built to handle a lot more power than they make in stock condition. The auto transmission is a beauty and doesn't need anything to handle the power. Sure, there's more stress when you use more power, but it's nice to have the choice!

To prove the point, John mentions a 3-litre Surf, which he modified for a mate, that's running 19lb boost (a lot more than Barb's car) and making heaps more power again. It's been used as a daily commuter and weekend weapon for 12 months without any problems. Obviously, they can take it.

How much? Every job is different, but around \$1650 for the modifications that have gone into Barb's car. And John would need it for a couple of days. Personally, I reckon that's about the best money you could spend on a Surf. In fact, I'd consider buying a Surf, now I know you can make them go V8 hard.

## QUICK DRIVE TEST

When John Whittaker insisted I take Barb's car for a drive to feel the difference, I had to suppress a yawn. Why couldn't he have asked me to test the 500hp twin-turbo competition special he'd just finished tuning instead?

Sitting behind the wheel, it felt like any other Surf, apart from a woodgrain wheel, but when I turned the key, the exhaust sound was deep and insistent, nothing like the usual feeble Toyota blurt. Not intrusive, but a fat pipe sound all the same.

It idled perfectly at 750rpm. I selected Drive on the floor-mounted automatic and pushed the pedal down. The bloody thing squealed like a stuck pig and launched as if there was a V8 lurking under the bonnet! It didn't rev, it just hauled. No surprise I guess, making 130hp means it's right in the game with a small-block V8 and packing more punch than most V6s.

I dropped off the pedal and the Surf changed up a couple of gears, cruising to the next set of lights. Again, a steady 750rpm diesel idle. The bloke next to me in the lowered black Holden Calais didn't even look at the shopping-trolley Surf - until the lights changed, and I tromped it again...

This time I held the pedal down until legal speed was reached. We were ahead of the Calais easily, poor bugger had woken up late to the challenge. I tried the same stunt some minutes later on the motorway and stayed with a late-model Ford to, err, empty dump over the legal speed. Let me just say that if you were allowed to do 130km/h, a Whittaker-tuned Surf would get there as fast as just about anything. Yes, it will go faster but the acceleration definitely drops off around 130km/h.

But it's the way Whittaker's Surf makes its power that's intriguing. It makes muscle from idle. The torque comes in straightaway, no build-up at all. I didn't try it off-road, but it certainly makes power where it's needed. In sand or in a tight situation, this thing would be a weapon. The difference from stock is almost absurd and, yet, at all times it's civilised, with only that big exhaust note and a tad more turbo whistle to pick the wolf from the flock.

I gave it back to Barb so she could go shopping...



## CONTACT

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