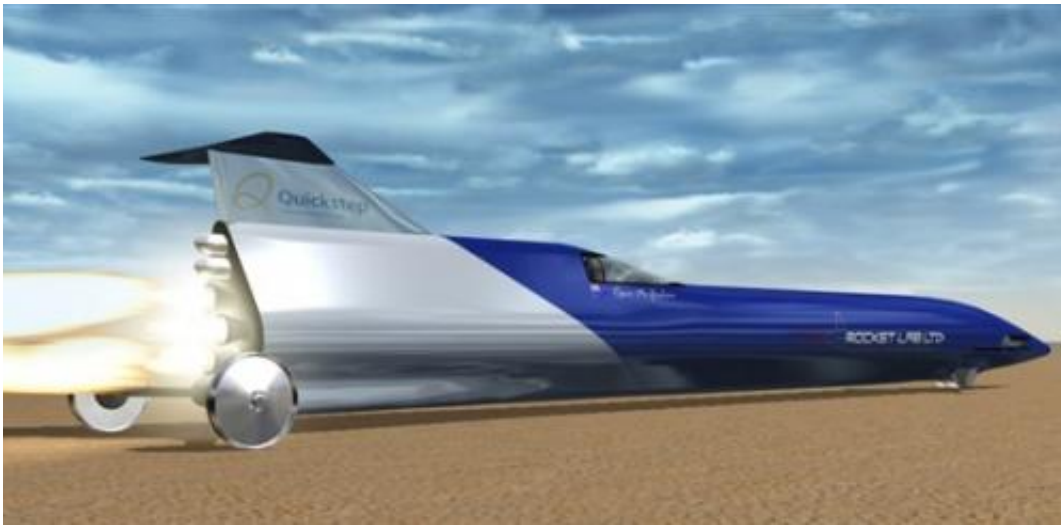


Australian race crew in faster-than-a-bullet bid (Update)

October 18 2012, by Amy Coopes



An Australian race crew hoping to beat their British rivals to a new supersonic land-speed record of over 1,000mph launched their bid Thursday, unveiling the first parts of their rocket-powered car.

Daredevil drag-racer Rosco McGlashan has dreamed of being the fastest man on wheels since, aged 12, he saw Britain's Donald Campbell hit 403 miles (645 kilometres) per hour on Australia's Lake Eyre saltpan in 1964.

The record has been smashed several times since and currently stands at

a blistering 763mph—faster than the speed of sound—set by another Briton, Andy Green, in 1997.

McGlashan believes he can go quicker still and top 1,000mph using rocket technology to propel his 200,000-horsepower super-car, Aussie Invader 5R, set to blast off in 2014, 50 years after he first eyed Campbell's mark.

If successful, McGlashan will travel faster than a bullet, going from 0-1,000mph in 20 seconds as he rips through three tonnes of rocket fuel.

Like Austrian adventurer Felix Baumgartner who made headlines this week with a spectacular freefall jump from the edge of space, McGlashan believes it is important to push the boundaries of human knowledge and endurance.

"A lot of people will say 'Oh that's great but how does that benefit mankind?'," McGlashan, 62, told AFP.

"But there's just so many spin-offs with it—the physics, the science, the technology that goes into developing something like this is a win-win for everyone."

McGlashan jokes that he has served the "world's longest apprenticeship" in speed, having raced V8 motorcycles and rocket-powered go-karts in an esteemed speedway career in Australia and the US spanning four decades.



Rosco McGlashan holds a model of his rocket car that he and his team hope to use to break the land-speed record. The team hopes to break the 1000 mph mark using rocket technology to propel the 200,000-horsepower super-car Aussie Invader 5R, in Sydney.

"But it's all been a culmination to where we're at now, where we've nearly built, nearly completed the world's best, fastest land-speed car."

Breaking the speed mark is not all McGlashan has to contend with—Britain's Green is also gunning for the 1,000mph record with his hybrid Bloodhound SSC.

It's a showdown already being dubbed the "Land-Speed Ashes", a play on Australia's famous and long-standing cricket rivalry with England.

"It's part of their patriotism, the land-speed record's been in the UK for 1,000 years," he said.

"But we've got a lot more powerful car, a lot tighter-knit group of guys and we believe that we can go out and blitz them."

Two US teams are also plotting a land-speed attempt, including one headed by former record holder Craig Breedlove, but McGlashan said they have not set their sights on the ambitious 1,000mph target.

The Aus\$4 million (US\$4.2 million), 16-metre (53-foot) Invader 5R will be powered by a missile rocket fuelled with liquid oxygen and a kerosene-based biofuel.



Rosco McGlashan inspects one of the specially designed wheels he hopes will allow his team to break the land speed record by going through the 1000 mph mark.

It will travel at three times the force of gravity and faster than the speed

of sound.

The car's weight—nine tonnes when fully fuelled—will help to keep it grounded, with a downward-tilted nose-cone and small adjustable wings or canards on either side of the front section designed to counter any lift.

Reaching and maintaining such speeds requires highly specialised materials and technology; complicating matters is the fact that the feat must be achieved twice within a one-hour window to qualify for a record.

This involves being able to slow and stop the car, refuel and go again within 60 minutes, with the record calculated as an average of the two attempts.

McGlashan has missed the record before, in 1996, when he hit 643mph in the Invader III but was unable to complete a second pass due to poor weather.

It is not without risks and McGlashan admits to being "terrified". "The thing with a rocket is you flick the go switch and it can explode... Particularly with this car here you're sitting on a bomb."

The team hopes to begin test runs of the streamlined, bullet-shaped car next year.

They are targeting a record attempt in 2014, the same year as the British team.

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