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Upgrading a Westfield



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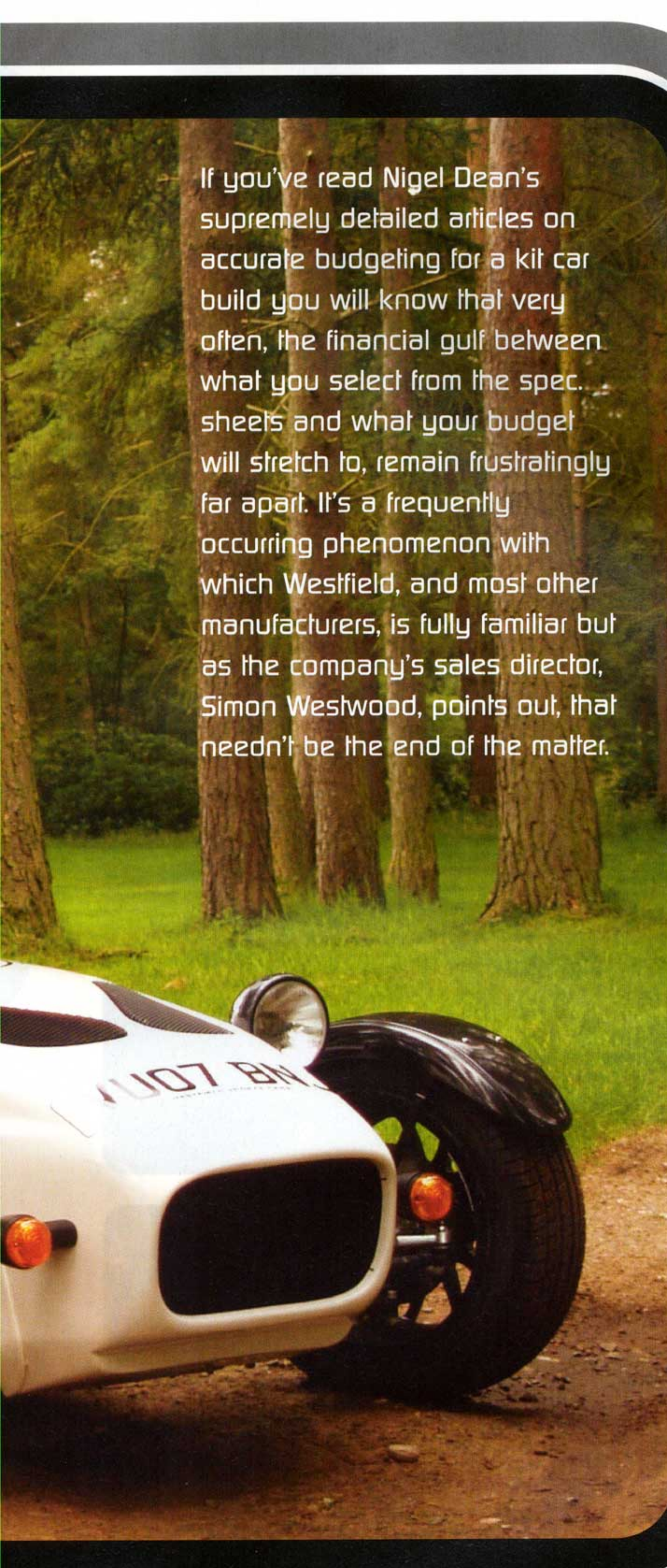
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The only way IS UP





If you've read Nigel Dean's supremely detailed articles on accurate budgeting for a kit car build you will know that very often, the financial gulf between what you select from the spec. sheets and what your budget will stretch to, remain frustratingly far apart. It's a frequently occurring phenomenon with which Westfield, and most other manufacturers, is fully familiar but as the company's sales director, Simon Westwood, points out, that needn't be the end of the matter.

Kit cars are exciting. Going to the factory showroom creates the buzz, leafing through the brochures makes it an itch that no amount of what Top Gear's James May refers to as 'man maths' can adequately scratch. But often, the unpalatable truth is that your current budget just won't cover the car you want no matter how you rearrange the figures. Game over? Absolutely not, for as Simon points out, kit car manufacturers are very flexible and design their cars in a similar fashion. What he means is that, in respect of Westfield, with a common chassis underpinning the entire range, just about everything that is fitted to the top of the range Sport S model will fit on the basic body chassis kit that you can build very affordably with a set of self-sourced donor components. In the kit car world, as in many others, there's more than one way to skin a cat, or your knuckles, such that starting out with a car that your budget will adequately cover can be seen as the first positive step towards eradicating the itch while subsequent upgrades as and when they become either desirable or affordable, will eventually see the itch banished to a distant memory. Though we're talking specifically Westfield, it's an approach that works on the products of many other manufacturers.

So what are we talking about here? The variations in the specification of a Westfield, as with any other kit-form car, are legion. They cover bodywork styles, wheels and tyres, suspension, anti-roll bars, dampers, brakes, differentials, engines, power outputs, trim, weather equipment and every other aspect of the complete car. Thus either building from a basic body chassis unit or buying a built car from the classifieds can be looked upon as the first move rather than the final solution.

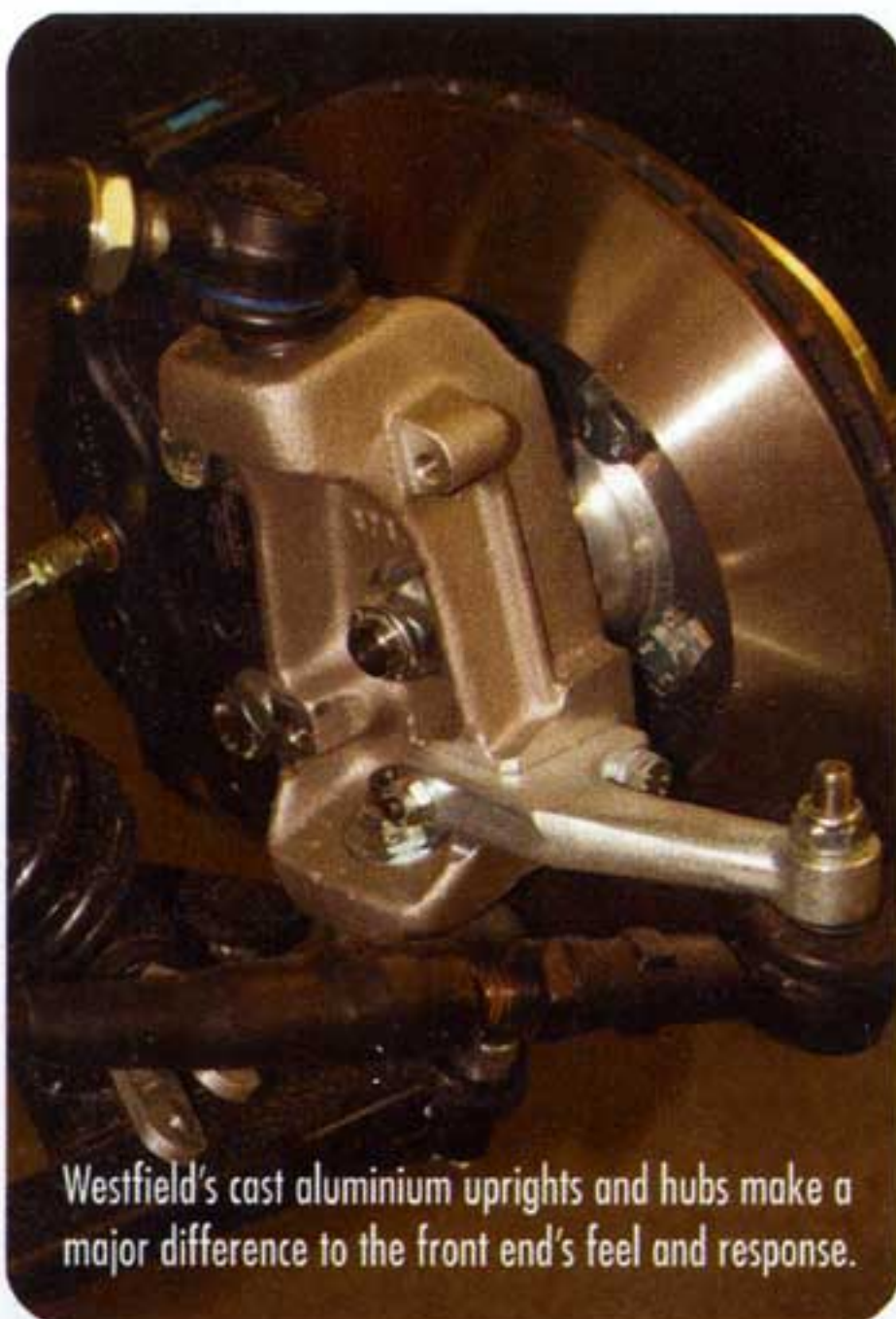
The first thing is to decide where to start. This can be either with a basic kit to build or a used car. In respect of the latter, Kit Car's classifieds form an excellent hunting ground in which to track down a bargain. Take our November issue where you will find a very well priced car at £4,550. It's got a crossflow engine on twin 40s, it's taxed and tested and has covered less than 10,000 miles. It's a great price and you'd be hard pressed to build a new kit for the same outlay. However, it does have a live axle and a switch to an IRS back end is a job that's far more easily accomplished by buying an IRS car in the first place. It's not that there's anything wrong with a live axle. It's just that if your plan involved an increase in power above 130 – 140 bhp, an IRS

back end will be much better in allowing a softer ride and improved traction especially on the exit of corners. So how about an Sei wide bodied car at £6,200? This one's got clamshell wings and is again a 1600, probably crossflow or maybe a CVH. Then there's a 1994 car with a 1600 CVH and a five-speed box at £4,500 or another crossflow car at £6,350.

The same issue has an SEiGHT but if you've got the £10,000 asking price, you can probably afford the specification you're ultimately after. There's also a new, unregistered 2-litre Duratec car with all the right bits at £16,950.

The gulf that exists between the price of older and more modern cars is very clear to see but buying the older cars and upgrading them is one way to get what you want in a manner you can afford or, as is equally often the case, in a manner that you are happy to afford.

That said, starting with a basic kit is the best way to go as you can build the car to suit yourself from the outset and get as close to your ideal specification as the budget permits. You can also build it to your own standards and with your preferred seats,



Westfield's cast aluminium uprights and hubs make a major difference to the front end's feel and response.

instruments, wheels, tyres, engine, gearbox, differential etc. and get to choose the colour.

So assuming you either build or buy a basic car, where do you start with the upgrades? That's pretty much down to you and what you want to achieve but as for what you can upgrade, the list covers everything.

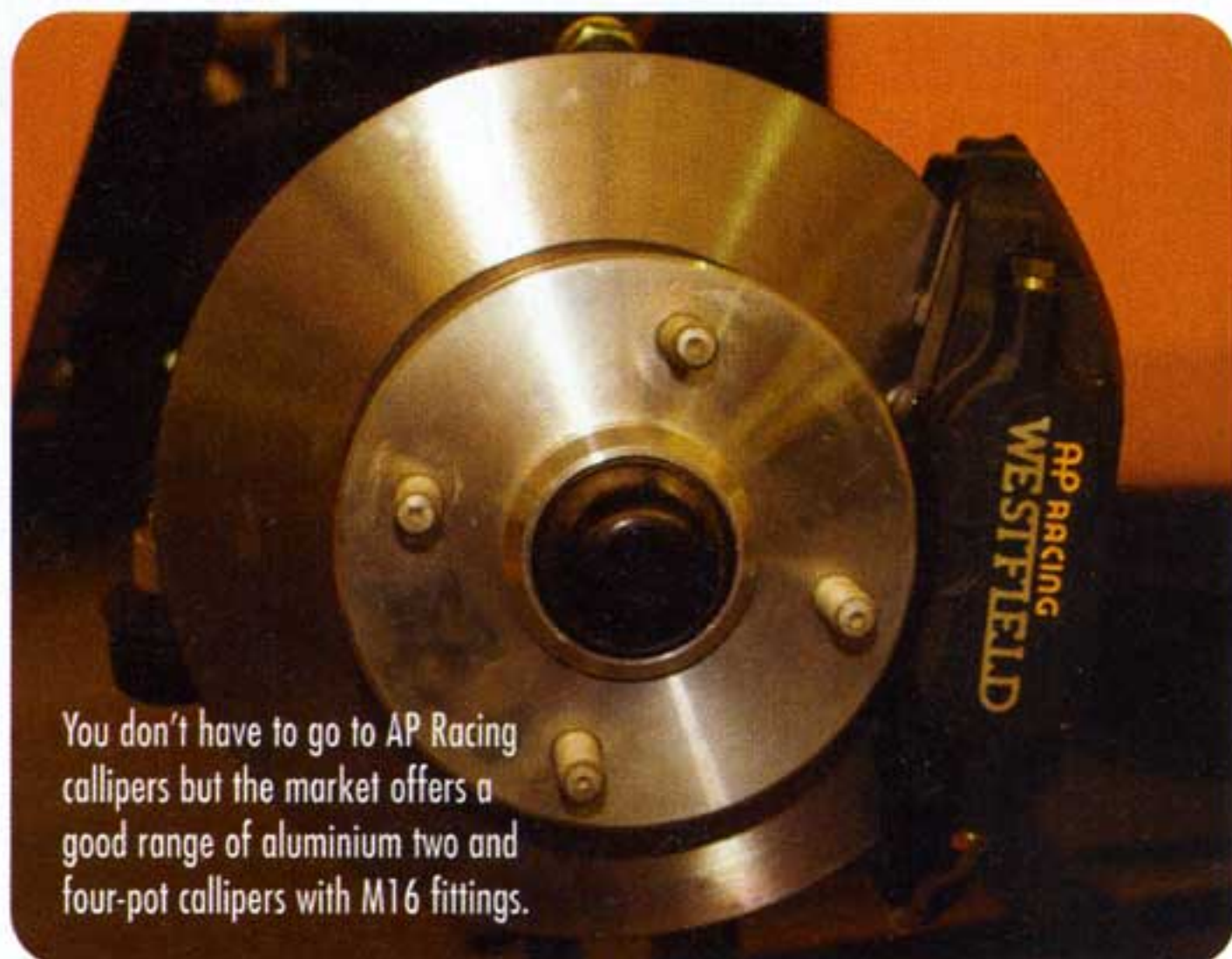
Very often the immediate requirement is for more power either through an engine swap or tuning. However, a faster car makes increased demands of the car's suspension, brakes, handling and roadholding such that this area is a better place to start. Aside from the cosmetic attraction of nickel plated wishbones, upgrades ultimately aim at creating a more responsive front end chiefly through a reduction in unsprung weight.

This is achieved through the use of lighter materials and components and Westfield have a full range to suit every car from road to race. Replacing steel with aluminium uprights, hubs and brakes makes an excellent start. They also offer a range of coilspring damper units to suit cars with various engines from the bike-powered Mega range to Ford and Vauxhall four-cylinder engines and the Rover V8. Top of the shop on the 2000S are Nitron units mounted upside down to further reduce that all important unsprung weight.

Bushes are another consideration as the firmer bushes give a sharper, more lively response at the expense of a little more noise and vibration.



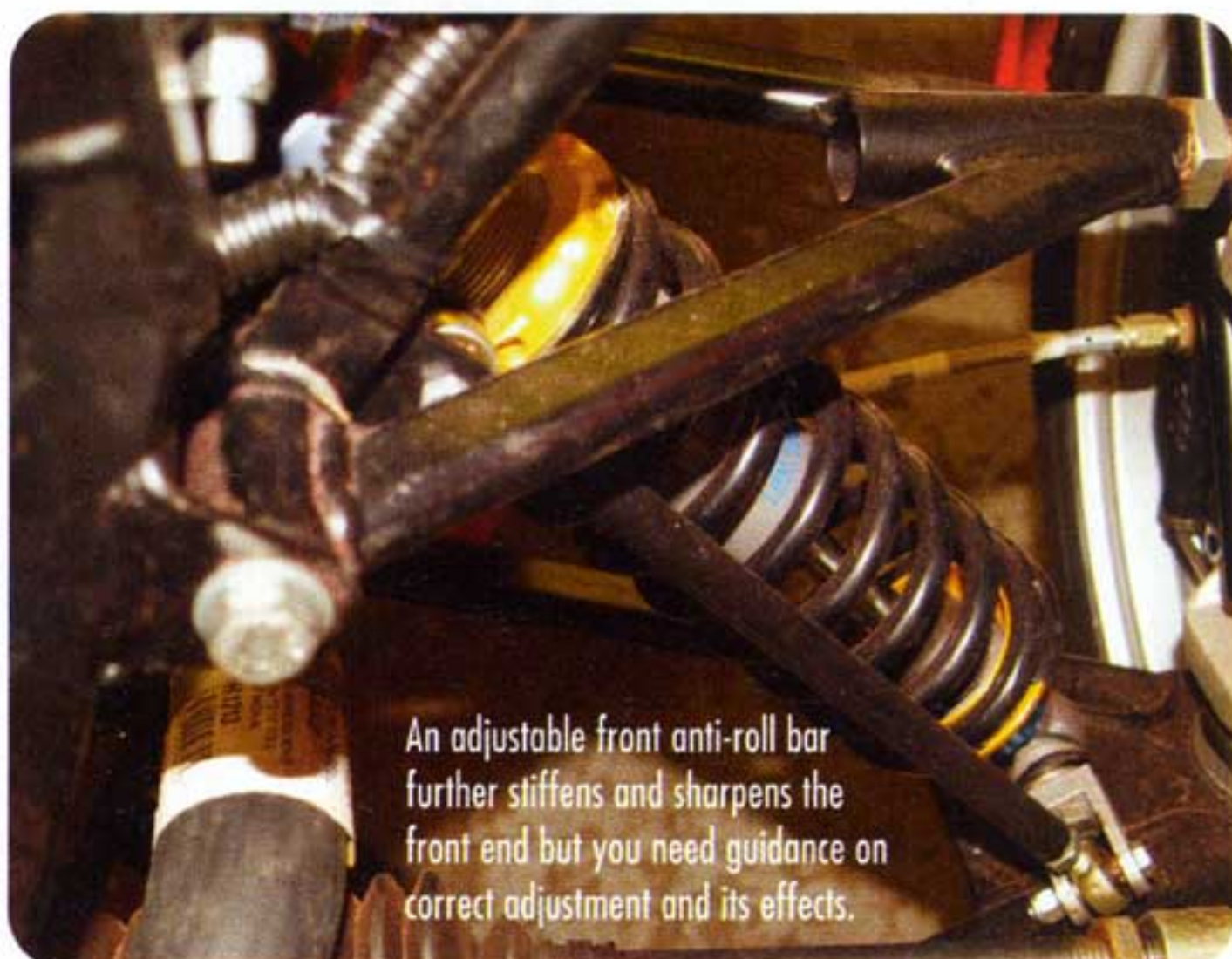
Standard steel brake callipers are fine for stopping a lightweight road car but they're heavy.



You don't have to go to AP Racing callipers but the market offers a good range of aluminium two and four-pot callipers with M16 fittings.



Westfield offer both Sierra steel callipers and these lighter and more compact VW Golf units. The prices are the same so really, it's no contest.



An adjustable front anti-roll bar further stiffens and sharpens the front end but you need guidance on correct adjustment and its effects.



The back end also benefits from an anti-roll bar upgrade in enhanced grip and body control.

In respect of brakes, you can upgrade from standard Ford steel callipers to the lighter AP callipers offered by Westfield as a full set with discs and pads, or go for any of the other aftermarket aluminium four-pot calliper options all of which are compatible with the Ford M16 mounting lugs. And if going for four-pot front brakes, don't overlook a larger capacity master-cylinder which the company also supply.

At the back end, standard Sierra rear callipers are perfectly adequate for a road car but the Golf units Westfield use are lighter, more compact and come for the same price so they're the ones to go for if you're buying from Westfield in the first instance rather than using what conveniently comes with the donor car.

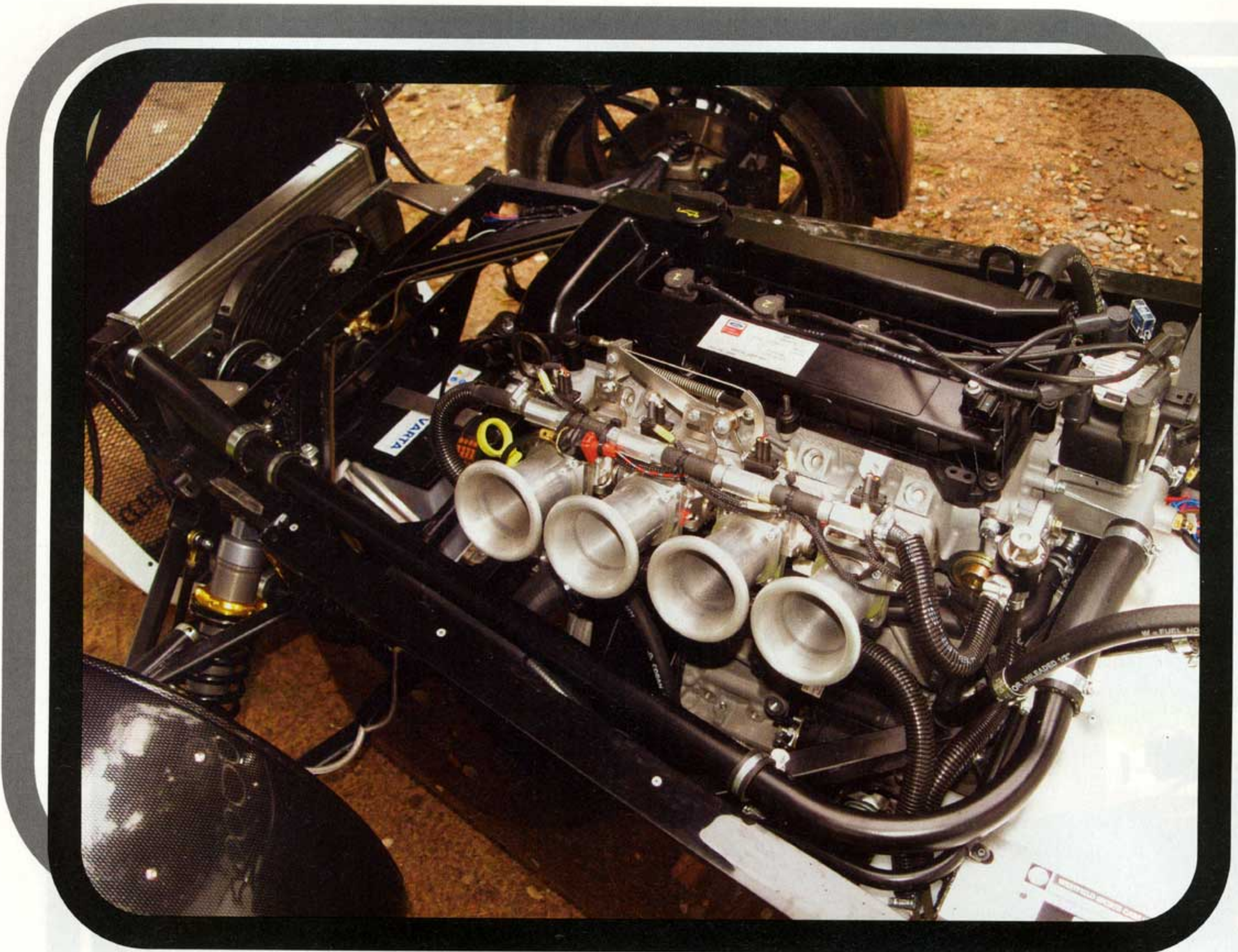
Anti-roll bars are another option that sharpens the car's response and cornering ability and Westfield offer adjustable installations front and rear. Like anything

adjustable, you need a little expert guidance on how to set it up. It's the same with springs, dampers, ride height, tyre pressures, brake balance etc. but Westfield's staff are a well clued up bunch who have the benefit of twenty five years experience to call upon.

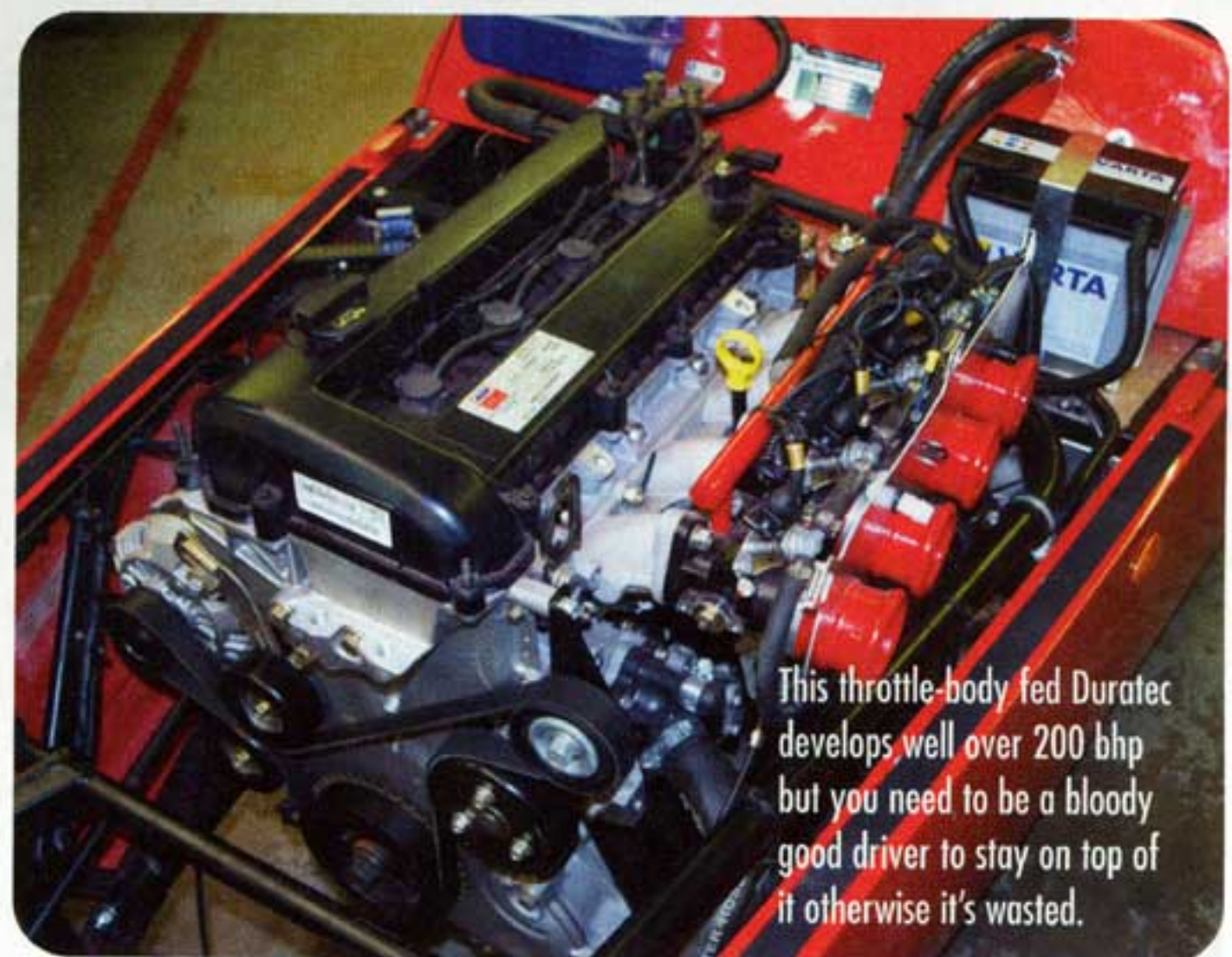
The steering will be fine. Westfield use the Escort Mk2 rack as a standard installation and the only real need for a unit quicker than the standard 2.5 turns is if you're going racing.

Opportunities to lighten the load continue under the bonnet where a lightweight radiator and electric fan save weight over the stock steel unit.

As far as the gearbox is concerned, you're going to stick with the Ford Type 9 five-speed and though there's a choice of differential between the Landrover Freelander's 3.2:1 for bike engined cars and the Sierra unit in either 3.92:1 or 3.36:1 final drives, the only choice here is



Engine upgrades needn't only be for more power, it could be simply to use a more modern and flexible engine like this Ford Sigma 1600 giving around 130 bhp.



This throttle-body fed Duratec develops well over 200 bhp but you need to be a bloody good driver to stay on top of it otherwise it's wasted.

an LSD but since you're going to be buying a box and differential anyway, it makes sense to go for what you want from the outset.

Something else to think about before investing in more power is tyres. There are any number of half decent road tyres available at very acceptable prices but once again, you get what you pay for and in respect of tyres the payback is in grip. Obviously you don't need a set of Yoko 48s for road use and even if you're doing track days, don't forget that they don't last that

long. A good road / track day selection would be Yokohama's A539 although once again, Westfield will advise you on tyre choice depending on application.

Where the engine is concerned, generally an upgrade will typically concern a Ford four-cylinder unit either from crossflow or CVH up to Zetec or Duratec. The Zetec is available in a range of capacities but chiefly 1,800 and 2-litre while the Duratec is a 2-litre unit although there is a US spec 2.3 but once again, it's a question of expense.

The other thing to bear in mind with power is that kit cars long ago acquired the punch to totally overwhelm the ability of the average driver so there's no need to spend money on power you will never be able to use. That's not to say you can't build up to it but if the 130 bhp of the average engine isn't enough, generally the 160 - 170 of a good spec Zetec will be a sufficient handful without the extra 30 odd bhp that will arrive with a similarly set up Duratec.

No matter what you choose, if it's a Ford, Vauxhall DOHC or Rover V8,

Westfield have the full fitting and plumbing kit to make the job as straightforward as possible and professional looking when it's done.

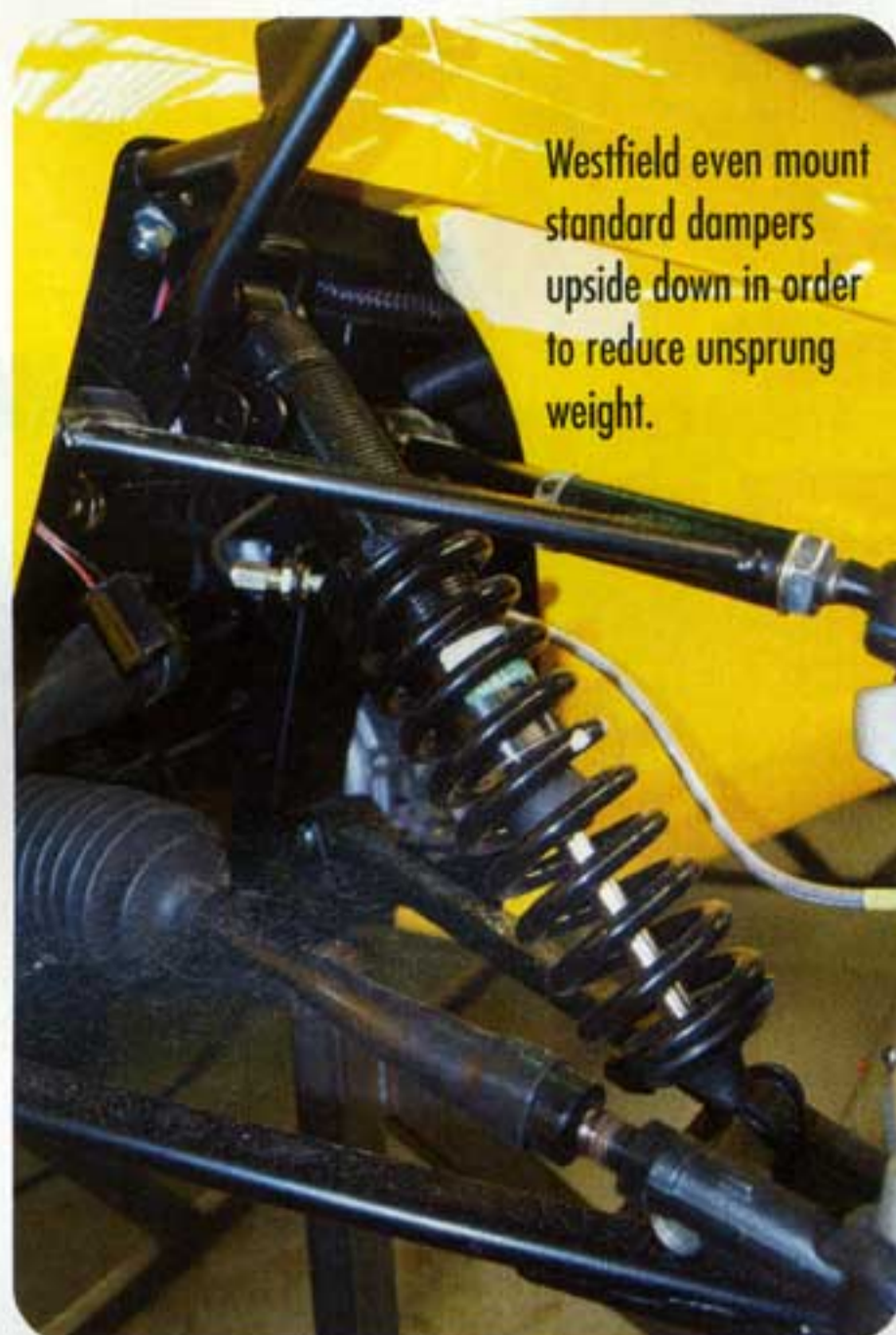
That's pretty well covered the mechanical options and upgrades that are available but Westfield is more versatile than most in offering two body styles. If you're buying a kit to build, naturally you'll go for your preferred body style from the outset but if you're upgrading a used car or effecting repairs to an accident damaged car, then it's something you could consider.

The latest body style, as per the black and white car pictured, comes from the company's carbon-fibre, Rover K-series powered FW400. This has a single-piece flip front with heat extracting nostril vents on top of the bonnet and two additional ones at either side. The rear end is more cleanly styled with individual round light units rather than light clusters, while there's also an bootlip spoiler moulded into the rear deck. Though either style is equally attractive and Westfield reports pretty well even choices between the two, the new one has the novelty of being new as well as something very distinctive amongst competing marques. And it's not just the body you can change. There are now two styles of dashboard moulding. There's the traditional flat fascia as featured on this car or there is a version with a raised section ahead of the driver for the main instruments and two central recesses for the auxiliary instruments and the switch panel. It also has a small glovebox ahead of the passenger.

Not content with that, you can add cockpit trim finishers, rear valance panels, black anodised screen uprights and mirrors or drop the screen completely and go for a moulded wind deflector. You can fit carbon-fibre effect wings front and rear and thereby totally transform the look of a car.

Of course, at the end of the day, you will still end up paying the same for the car whether you buy your preferred specification in the first place or whether you go for a more affordable option and gradually build up to it so where's the advantage? It lies in the fact that you don't spend nearly as much money in the first instance plus you can be using, enjoying, becoming familiar with and more skilful at driving the car as you gradually upgrade it rather than having a half-built car sitting in the workshop as you save up for the next step.

And while you may think such a car could actually cost you more to build as in paying for the upgrades, there is a gradually increasing pile of discarded componentry on the workshop shelf, the truth of the matter is



Westfield even mount standard dampers upside down in order to reduce unsprung weight.

Further information:

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that with getting on for 9,000 Westfields out there, there's a ready market for parts.

So even if Santa only brings you Westfield's Parts and Accessories catalogue, there's still plenty in it to interest a potential Westfield builder and it doesn't have to be an idle dream.



These Nitron dampers are Westfield's top option and give major benefits over standard units.



The interior can be enhanced and enlivened just as much as the mechanics and body thanks to Westfield's many trim options.