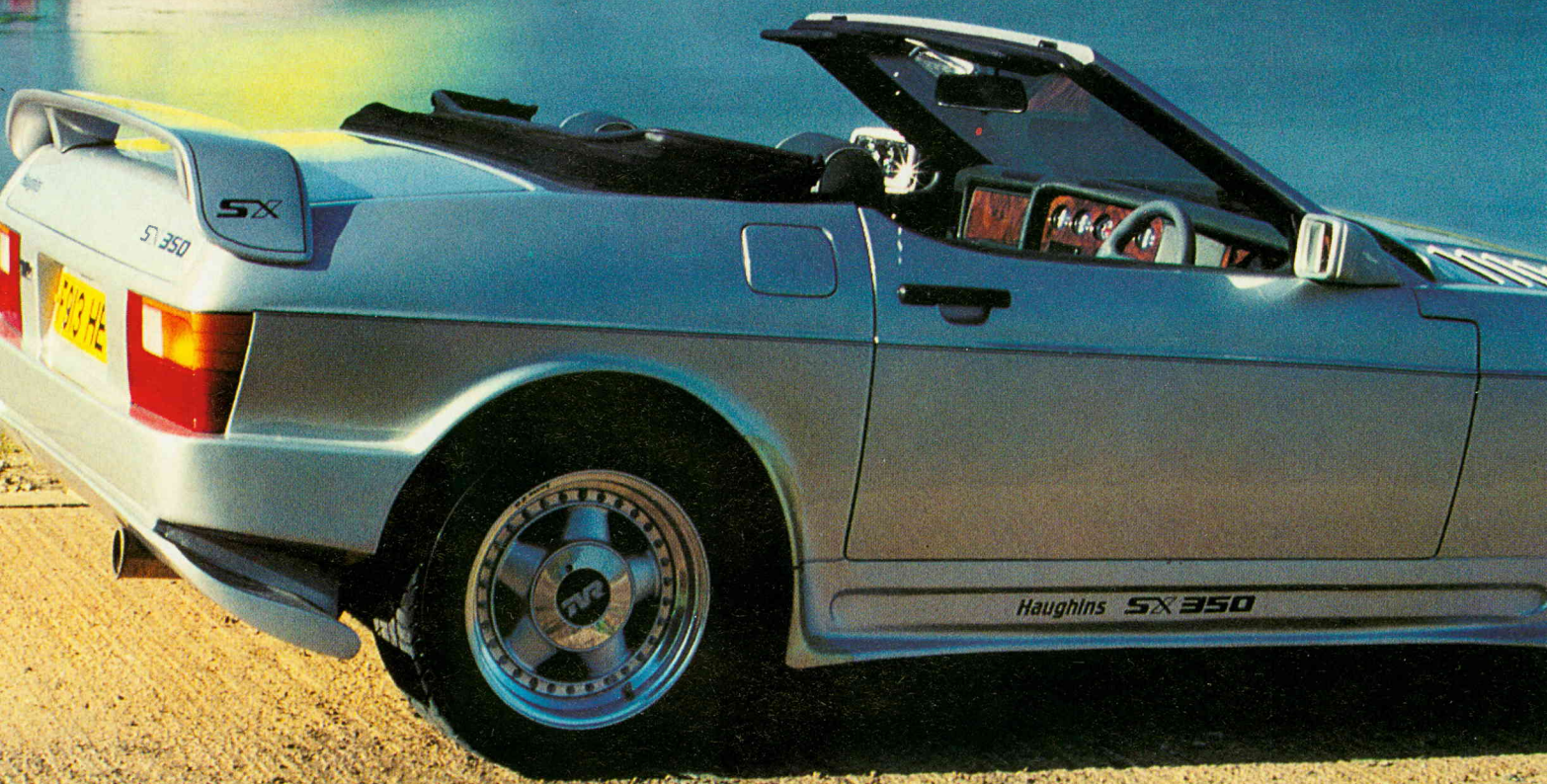


TVR 350 SX

BLOW



IN'

FREE

Mark Hales takes a fresh look at Haughin's supercharged TVR 350

WE HAVE tested Haughin's Sprintex supercharged TVR SX package before (*Fast Lane*, September 1988) and, generally, we liked it, or at least we liked the idea. Big engine, made bigger by a blower, light car, fat tyres, vroom vroom. Generally, we at *Fast Lane* have always preferred the concept of supercharging rather than turbocharging. The idea of expanding the effective size of your engine by bolting on a pump to squeeze in the extra gases is an attractive one, and it doesn't suffer the attendant heat and turbo lag problems associated with the exhaust driven turbocharger. It is a heavier, more expensive and sometimes noisier way of doing it, but then you can unbolt your pump and fit it to the next car you buy, always assuming that you liked the last one enough to buy another.

Why, you might ask, are we testing this TVR again, so soon? Partly because of late we have driven some extremely

good turbocharged cars (particularly some of the conversions from specialists such as Turbo Technics). Despite the environmental objections, turbo technology still appears to be galloping forward. Throttle response appears very much better than it was, and the rush of power, which used to light up the wheels just when you didn't want it, appears able to be tamed. Whilst not all cars fitted with a turbocharger display these improved characteristics, it is now becoming a question of how *little* turbo lag rather than how *much*.

Thus another look at our love of the engine-driven supercharger seemed appropriate, plus the fact that this particular Sprintex lay under the cosmetically-revised shape of TVR's 400 wedgemobile. Haughin's apparently buys the car without engine, and sells the complete SX for £24,350, some £645 less than the 400, so there is method in it . . .

The supercharger installation is the work of Dennis Priddle Racing of Yeovil, who now hold all the manufacturing rights to the Sprintex, and very neat it is too. The blower, or Lysholm screw compressor to describe it more correctly, is belt-driven from the end of the crankshaft and blows into the plenum of the Rover Vitesse engine,



"Some of these idiosyncrasies are part of the joy of owning any TVR"

ALLAN LEVY



unmodified save for some thicker head gaskets which reduce the compression ratio a touch to 9.5:1. A revised electronic control unit looks after the different fuelling and ignition requirements. Power is increased from 197bhp at 5,280rpm to 270bhp at 5,500rpm, just a slight hike in the peak power rpm, while the torque peak occurs earlier than standard: 290lb ft/3,500rpm compared with 220lb ft/4,000rpm. Torque and pulling power is the whole point of this conversion, and 290lb ft is as much as Mercedes's five-litre V8 can deliver. It's also slightly more than TVR's own 390 can muster (270lb ft/3,500rpm) although the 3.9-litre engine's peak power is similar (275bhp/5,500rpm).

The difference between the two cars, however, is one of temperament. You have to stir the gear lever on the 390 to make it go, and certainly it's much quicker over the standing starts. 60mph comes up in 4.9sec as opposed to 6.3. In fourth, however, the SX simply walks away; all the 20mph gaps between 40 and 80mph disappear in under five seconds, and this makes driving the SX a much more restful proposition. Some indication of the engine's lugging power can be gained from the fifth gear acceleration figures – all the increments between 40 and 90mph are put away in exactly 6.8sec. Eagle-eyed readers will also have noticed that this SX is slower than the previous one from a standing start, although with a maximum of 140.1mph, it's five mph faster on top speed. This is due to a taller final drive, which has the benefit of making the cruising more relaxed.

The SX's suspension has also received attention, with stiffer springs and gas-filled Spax dampers, and the test car was fitted with a set of 8Jx15 five-spoke OZ aluminium wheels shod with 225/50 Bridgestone RE71 Sport sticky ones. I can't help feeling, however, that the original suspension was probably a better compromise for an open coupé. True, the SX's grip and composure was excellent, and although rather light and lacking in any real feel, the steering was nonetheless precise and the turn-in excellent. Grip too was truly enormous, and even the full 290lb ft deployed in judiciously on the exit of a roundabout would merely tighten the line rather than promoting real oversteer. On really smooth roads all was well, but show the car a bump and

the ride became uncomfortably jiggly; the body would shudder over sharp imperfections while the steering column would dance and shimmy in your hands.

Some of these idiosyncrasies are part of the joy of owning any TVR, but as we have always maintained, the kind of rooflessly muscular performance they can provide is almost unmatched anywhere at the price. The Haughin's conversion does at least take out some of the

frenzy because it is so smooth and friendly, right down to 1,000rpm in any gear including fifth. Sensible, fast progress need involve the use of the top two gears only.

At a cost of £5,000 for the engine conversion alone, it's good value. At a total of £24,350 for a converted new car, it starts to sound more expensive, and the competition, not least from TVR's tidy little 2.9S, begins to look more attractive.



TVR 350SX

Price (New car) £24,350. (Conversion only: £5,000)

ENGINE

Cylinders	V8
Capacity, cc	3,528
Bore/stroke, mm	88.9/77.1
Camshaft	Single chain driven, operating two valves per cylinder via pushrods and rockers
Compression ratio	9.5:1
Fuel system	Sprintex supercharger blowing at 6psi through modified Lucas L-type electronic fuel injection and engine management
Maximum power, bhp/rpm	270/5,500
Max torque, lb ft/rpm	290/3,500

TRANSMISSION

Type	Five-speed synchromesh
------	------------------------

PERFORMANCE

Maximum speed, mph	140.1				
Acceleration through gears, sec					
0-30mph	0-40mph	0-50mph	0-60mph	0-70mph	0-80mph
2.3	3.5	4.7	6.3	8.0	10.1
0-90mph	0-100mph	0-110mph	0-120mph		
12.7	15.8	19.8	26.1		
Acceleration in fourth, sec					
30-50mph	40-60mph	50-70mph	60-80mph	70-90mph	80-100mph
5.2	5.2	4.9	4.4	4.5	5.2
90-110mph	100-120mph				
5.6	6.8				
Acceleration in fifth, sec					
30-50mph	40-60mph	50-70mph	60-80mph	70-90mph	80-100mph
6.9	6.8	6.8	6.8	6.8	7.3
90-110mph					
8.4					

"The rush of power, that used to light up the wheels just when you didn't want it, appears able to be tamed"