

The man who knows how to talk the torque

Architect Mario Kleff pushes the boundaries even further



Mario Kleff loves nothing better than to draw comparisons between the architectural and construction business he runs and the 250mph supercar he designed and is having built.

The German-born, Pattaya-based MD of the Wandegroup last month alluded to the need for an additional 1,700 horses in the form of horsepower for his supercharged road vehicle and the equivalent in manpower to complete the Wandegroup's full-to-overflowing order book.

Modify concept

This month, however, he's decided horsepower alone just isn't enough. "What's important is how efficiently horsepower can be applied," he said. "That's where torque comes in. So we decided to modify our last concept by focusing more on torque quality."

Well yes, of course ... a jolly good idea when you are determined to have a car capable of reaching speeds in excess of 210mph over a quarter of a mile in less than seven seconds. But torque quality in business?

"It's all about muscle power and how it is developed and applied," Mario said. "Just like in my new supercar. I thought that having all that horsepower would provide the performance that I wanted - not in terms of absolute speed but in terms of acceleration. The fact is it won't. Having an engine with more torque will make the car quick and more reliable, so I am having a new engine built which I hope will provide the perfect blend of torque and horsepower."

"We strive for the same balance of power and speed in our business. As I have said

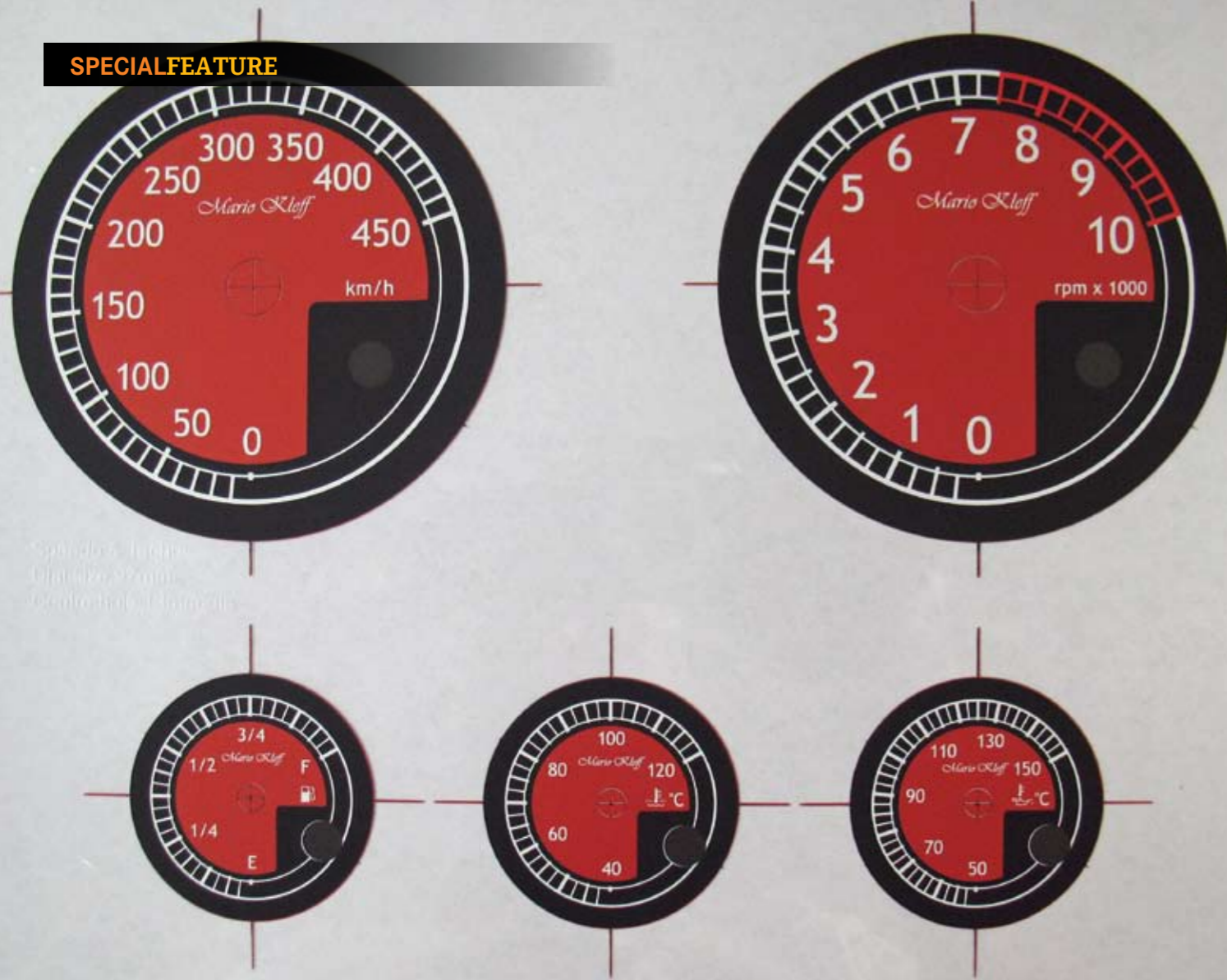
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Mario Kleff, designer of the exemplary lifestyle.



Mario's Chinese wife and partner in business : Nittaya Wongsin.

"My husband is developing both his engine and the Wandegroup, whether he plans to drive at more than 1,700bhp down the road or provide our customers with extreme engineering solutions - he will show success and results. Today, Mario builds on nine construction sites and four condominium blocks at the same time. He has not reached the limit yet."



Heights Holdings and Wandegroup are to increase the number of condominium units for sale in order to stimulate the local property market and increase opportunities for Pattaya's real estate agencies.

At a meeting at Wandegroup's Threppaya Road offices on August 12, Mario Kleff and Haim Bar-David agreed to press ahead with further projects, such as with Club Royal Condominium - a 450-unit resort and Park Royal No 2, a premium, 79-unit development on Pratumnak Hill. Further projects were also discussed with a view to starting them within next few months.

These latest developments will require a reorganisation of the Wandegroup and the hiring of an additional 50 to 150 builders. In 2008 Mario designed his own supercar which he is now having built. The vehicle will be capable of speeds in excess of 400km/h and when finished he plans to use it on road to visit his numerous construction sites. Pictured left is the car's dashboard featuring a speedometer - the only one available in the world that displays up to 450km/h.

more than 24 metres.

After more than six months of meetings with other architects, both Thai and foreign, in a futile attempt to get her dream house designed, a disillusioned Khun Toy turned to the Wandegroup on her husband's advice.

"Our earlier meetings with other architects were at best confused," she said. "After contacting the last one we had to wait more than two months to get what I consider a standard design solution presented on two pages of floor plans. It was nothing special and I didn't like it.

"In desperation my

husband recommended a visit to the Wandegroup architect Mario Kleff, who he called 'Mr Modern'. He talked about his no-nonsense, straightforward approach to business and said he would turn my dream house into a modern architectural sculpture.

"During our first meeting Mario listened carefully to me and tried to understand my ideas. Then he showed me some of the work he has done and I was impressed. Seeing these beautiful houses and villas made me understand why my husband called him 'Mr Modern'.

Sketching solutions

Even at that first meeting he started sketching solutions and explained to me the advantages and the likely cost. I came away with a good feeling so I agreed to work with him."

Within a few days of that first meeting Mario produced an innovative design featuring very high ceilings and spans of more than 24 metres between columns - certainly one of only a handful of designs in Pattaya featuring such extreme engineering solutions. With living space in the region of 700 sq m plus a pool, the garden and two-storey house

will occupy nearly one rai on the Phoenix golf course. The ground floor will feature ceiling heights of between 4.5 and 6.5 metres and will contain the living area, guest bedroom and a huge kitchen of 76 sq m. The upper floor provides two master bedrooms, each of 55 square metres, together with 22 sq m bathrooms, 33 sq m balconies and 20 sq m walk-in wardrobes. Completing the picture is a 100 sqm roof terrace.

Readers may associate the Wandegroup with condominiums and high-rise buildings, but the team is also

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Need for speed

Star architect, family man and car lover

Mario loves his family, but he also loves to design, whether it's a custom villa, a profit-boosting condominium tower or simply his own supercar. Almost every part of each project will be custom-made and fabricated

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many times before, we can provide our clients with large-span buildings that are not only structurally strong but are constructed quickly. And we can do this because our teams are not only well trained but are applied to tasks where their skills are best suited."

With all this talk of torque, we asked Mario if he felt his company could be improved further.

"Yes, of course," he replied, "in exactly the same way that I am improving my engine. Striving for perfection

in both super car and super construction means constantly extending the boundaries of the possible. Some people ask why I am building such an impractical car; others question why I use large and expensive engineering solutions. I think we all have to strive to find our limits and I aim to prove that construction spans of 40 metres can be improved - and for that matter so can 1,700 horses!"

Largest spans

It's not a good idea to tell Mario Kleff that something is impossible because he will

simply devote all his energies to prove the opposite is true. Over the past two years he has proved to both developers and the Thai authorities that he can take the engineering solutions prevalent in his architectural designs to a level hitherto unseen in Pattaya in particular and, indeed, Thailand in general ...witness the fact that the Wandegroup holds the record on several housing and condominium projects for the largest construction spans used in Thailand to date.

In July, the Wandegroup was contracted to design and

build another extraordinary villa with a touch of Thai-Bali or, perhaps more appropriately, modern-Thai style. The design of the house, to be built near Phoenix golf course, combines Mario's approach to both architectural design and engineering innovation.

Extreme ideas

The owner, wanting something different and aware of Mario's reputation for extreme engineering ideas, requested him to design an innovative building. Mario's response was a design featuring clear spans of



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responsible for some amazing house designs featuring extreme and modern engineering solutions.

Mario first extended the boundaries with his acutely detailed 3-D designs and stretched them even farther when he was confirmed as the architect who submitted the most construction designs in Pattaya and the holder of the record for the largest span construction solutions. Perhaps the new supercar, which he designed from scratch, will

break yet another record.

An engine was designed and built capable of delivering in excess of 1,700 horsepower – that’s more than twice the power of a Formula One car. The chances are that your own car delivers between 100 and 200 brake horsepower, so it is reasonable to deduce that 1,700 bhp is too much power for a road car.

“It’s true that the engine is capable of immense speeds in the region of 400 kph,” said Mario, “but really that’s not important because you would never be able to achieve that kind of speed on public roads.

What is important is acceleration, but 55 metres per second is not that fast and well below what I was expecting to achieve.

Additional torque

“The goal I have set myself is a car capable of covering a quarter mile in less than seven seconds and reaching a speed of more than 210 mph in the process. That means acceleration of 75 metres per second per second which requires additional torque – in other words, quality of muscle, not sheer horsepower.”

As a result Mario decided to

sell the new engine, even before it had been placed in a vehicle, and build a new, more powerful one. He draws a parallel with the Wandegroup in its constant search for fresh ideas and fresh approaches to construction.

Does designing a house really have anything to do with building an engine? “Yes, I think it does,” said Mario.

“The Wandegroup in general and I in particular try to optimise every single opportunity and provide our customers with intelligent engineering and construction solutions that fit the

budget and boost the profit, if, indeed, that’s what the client requires. Most developers would be happy to get 9,970 sqm condominium buildings instead of 9,500 sqm while in some cases we have even provided over 10,800 sq m for them legally. Such plans go beyond accepted architectural practices and regulations, requiring not only official approval, but also special skills to deliver the project.

“I started developing my own supercar 18 months ago using the same approach I adopt when designing and engineering

houses and condominiums – that is pushing the options beyond accepted limits and bringing the project to a successful conclusion. Working with construction spans of 25 metres is standard for us.” When you consider that past projects have incorporated extreme engineering solution to heights of over 185 metres and condominiums with floor spans of over 40 metres it’s easy to see why.

More muscle

While Mario makes a case for more torque meaning more speed on the road, he also

makes a case for more muscle in the form of 150, powerful, well-trained builders being preferable to 300 not-so-well-trained labourers when it comes to fast, efficient construction. Mario prefers to use modular steel girders on house construction because they not only provide additional strength but also facilitate faster construction.

Just why Mario Kleff wants to design and build a motor car that will eventually run as quickly as a USA Super Champion Pro Stock Car and

in the process perhaps become the world’s fastest road vehicle is likely to remain a mystery to most people.

But for a man who shuns the mundane and constantly strives for perfection in whatever sphere he happens to find himself in – whether it be designing the perfect home regardless of size or cost or a vehicle unique in its ability to out-perform just about everything else on the road – it makes perfect sense.

After all, it’s just one more boundary to exceed. Ω

**Mario’s solution for Modern Thai Living.
Khun Toy’s villa near Phoenix golf course.**

