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What Jesus Drives: A Volvo 240 with 595 horses on the hoof

By Paul Serendynski

Photography: Rich Chenet

Jesus drives a 600-bhp, 1975 Volvo 240, and he's a plumber, not a carpenter. How do we know this? We recently spent some time with Henrik "Jesus" Alfredsson, a man who's had that ecclesiastic nickname since the fifth grade, is an industrial plumber, and is squarely on track to building Sweden's fastest street legal Volvo 240.



It didn't start out that way. Alfredsson bought his 240 2 years ago for \$120, solely as a method to get to work. Problem is, Alfredsson's always been a fan of winter projects, and by the time he fixed a little rust on the boxy coupe, the seasonal effects had already taken hold. Given Sweden's nine months of potential non-summer, "winter project" can easily snowball into something Herculean. Exhibit A is this formerly humble 1975 Volvo 242 (the first year of the 200 series, four cylinder, two door).

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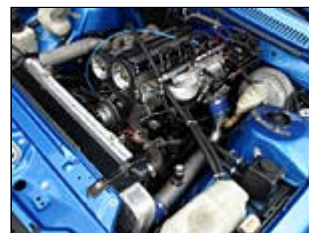
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Visiting his home outside Trollhaettan, it doesn't take long to figure out that Alfredsson is a craftsman of the highest order. He's also got turbo on the brain. The desk in his immaculate downstairs den sports a collection of turbos arranged like you'd place pictures of your kids. The smallest housing is bigger than your head. The 240's current compressor comes off a 7-liter Volvo truck engine, but he has plans to use an even larger turbo from a 9-liter Volvo truck powerplant. Alfredsson dead-lifts it from the desk with a large grin. It resembles an industrial vacuum cleaner.



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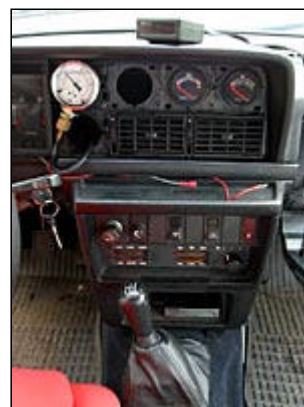
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Call him a Volvo apostle, but you can't fault this guy for brand loyalty. Nearly every major component for "God's-own 240" is sourced from within the Volvo family. The block is a Volvo B21ET which Alfredsson bored out 0.5mm to bring displacement up from 2.1 to 2.15 liters. The intercooler is off a Volvo FL6 diesel truck. The cylinder heads are from a Volvo-Penta 16-valve marine engine. The shifter and linkage are from a '97 940, the clutch from a '95 850R. The suspension is from an '84 244 Turbo. The front end and bumpers are from an '83 240, the dash from a '93, and the mirrors and mudflaps are from an '86. The 17-in. wheels are aftermarket Volvo "Polaris" hoops, and even the paint is Volvo--"Laser Blue" from a 2000 V70R AWD.



That he wasn't able to cull from Volvo's parts bin, Alfredsson either adapted or fabricated himself. The oil-fed piston cooling system, oil cooler, front seat and fuel pumps are Saab parts, of which Alfredsson has owned two, which pales slightly to the 53 Volvos he's run through (there are five in his manger at the moment). Besides adapting the piston-cooling system, Alfredsson machined his own cams for more lift, sandblasted and powdercoated the entire suspension, and designed and constructed his own stainless exhaust system (44mm internal diameter), which grows to 3-inches from the turbo back to the Simons muffler.



Those two Saab 9000 fuel pumps feed the voracious engine through parallel, 9mm fuel lines Alfredsson fabbed, and the flood of octane is handled by a ProSpark ignition and fuel management system. Current output according to the SQR chassis dyno--running 1.95 bar (28 psi) of boost--is 595 hp. He's run upwards of 2.8 bar (41 psi!!) on the street, and currently has the engine rev-limited to 7800 rpm, after a dyno run ending at exactly 9473 rpm instigated an engine-internals catastrophe of biblical proportions.



As you might have prophesized, channeling that much horse-pressure through an open differential could be pricey unless you own Pirelli stock. Unable to find a suitable locking differential for his application, Alfredsson simply welded up the stock one. This 600 hp, rear-wheel-drive, 2,900-lb Volvo has a permanently locked differential. Alfredsson says it's rarely a problem, unless you wish to turn, to which he injected: "You turn with the throttle."

Anyone wishing to see God should simply take a spin with Alfredsson. Even the Almighty couldn't call shotgun, however, as Alfredsson removed the passenger seat for a track day and never reinstalled it. The effect from the rear bench is akin to a carrier launch on your sofa. "If you try to accelerate in third gear, even at 130, 140 kph [80, 90 mph] the tires just spin up. The car starts to feel loose over 250 kph [155 mph], and it gets there quickly," Alfredsson calmly explains. "With the locked diff it wants to go straight--you need to get on the gas to get it to turn. You are terrified and excited at the same time." Nodding while I digest this conversational nugget, Alfredsson adds flatly, "Lots of donuts."



So what'll she do? This mother of all Volvos has only been to the dragstrip once, where it did it's best to liquefy the 225/45-series Pirelli rear tires, but still turned an 11.91-sec. 1/4-mile. More telling is the trap speed, a brisk 122 mph. "With the 7800 rpm rev limit, it works out to 259 kph in fourth [160 mph]...I've never been to redline in fifth, but with that rev limit, it works out to 290-something kph." That's 180-something mph.

We got a peek at Alfredsson next project car, lurking in the corner of his backyard shop, draped with sheets against January's chill. Tired of evaporating tires, it's another 242, into which he's inserting a turbocharged inline-six and his own all-wheel-drive system. As for this Laser Blue rocket, Alfredsson says plainly that he wants to have the fastest street legal 240 in Sweden. "The turbo from the 9-liter engine should help out," he said, thinking out loud. "With some mods that will allow more boost, that will take it up to around 1000 hp. Then I will also add nitrous. Should be enough."

Amen, brother.

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