

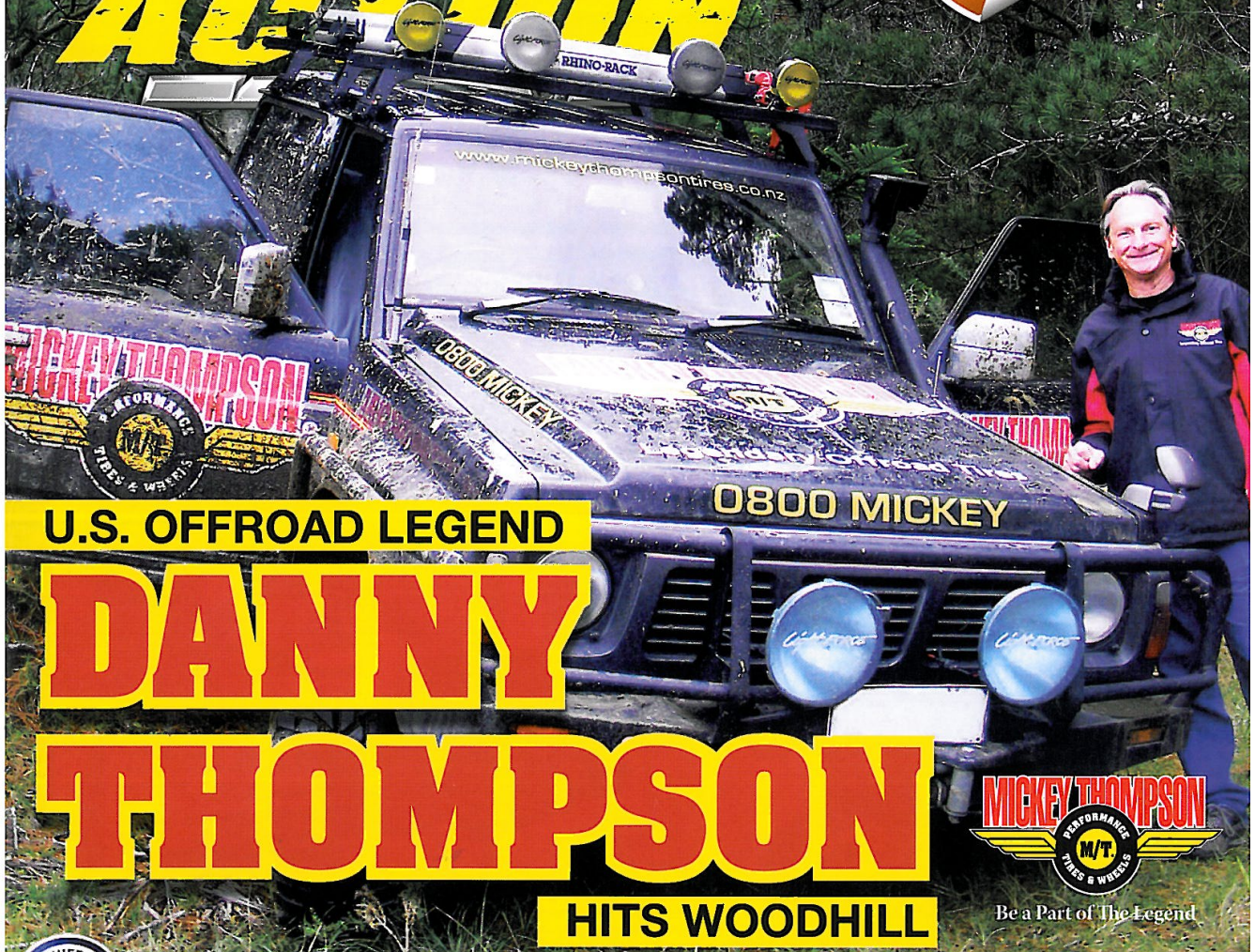
NEW ZEALAND'S BEST OFFROAD MAGAZINE

4x4

NEW ZEALAND

ACTION

**Taupo 1000
Preview!**



U.S. OFFROAD LEGEND

DANNY THOMPSON

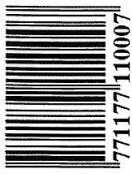
HITS WOODHILL



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ISSUE 84
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Danny Thompson

IN NZ FOR NEW BAJA LAUNCH

If there were any doubts remaining that the return of Mickey Thompson Tyres to New Zealand's 4WD scene was anything but serious, they would have been well and truly laid to rest at the recent dealer weekend in Auckland to celebrate the launch of some new additions to the iconic Baja range.



The guys at Motortech 4x4, who are the New Zealand importers and distributors of the US brand had some real heavyweight support for the introduction of the new STZ entry level all terrain, and Baja Claw TTC extreme.

Along with the Aussie distributor, Terry Smith from Exclusive Tyre Distributors, Motortech were playing host to California Based Bill O'Roake, Mickey Thompsons

International Marketing Manager, and Danny Thompson, son of founder Mickey Thompson, and an off road legend in his own right.

Even before their attendance at the very first SEMA show in Las Vegas in 1963 (they are the only organisation that has been at every SEMA) Mickey Thompson Tires has been keenly aware of the power of positive marketing. Being one of the largest tyre advertisers in the market has translated into being one of the largest players in the market, and last year over 25% of all the trucks on US offroad magazine covers were wearing Mickey Thompson Tyres.

To illustrate Exclusive Tyres commitment to the brand, as well as outlining their marketing strategy for Australia, Terry Smith gave a graphic account of an experiment Exclusive Tyres carried out where they took 6 full sets of their major Australian competitors tyres to the US to conduct a series of comparisons at a purpose built testing facility.

As well as an amusing "Okker at large" story, it was a very educational look at just what goes into the development of not only the tyres themselves, but the plants that build and test them.

Obviously the Mickey T's came out way ahead of the opposition, "otherwise we wouldn't be showing you all this!" in such things as stability, traction and strength. The stability comparison, and the way it was reported, was particularly fascinating.

According to Terry, Mickey Thompson sales in Australia were up by 27% in Australia in 2010, and 2011 to date is showing more than 20% growth.

The tyres themselves were introduced by O'Roake, starting with the entry level STZ ("essteezee"). This new tyre range covers both the SUV and light truck markets. Interestingly, although the two applications look the same, the final construction compounds differ with the application, for example the LT is biased more towards

load carrying capability.

Both are manufactured from rubber containing a "High Modulus Silica" compound that specifically reduces cut and chip reduction, while improving both wet traction and fuel efficiency.

But it was the new TTC Claw that was the real feature of the show, with much time devoted to the evolution of the tyre from the already very successful Claw. The tyre is based on the Baja Claw that is used on around 80% of all competition trucks on the US scene – the TTC designation – Tough truck Challenge!

The theory behind the "Power Ply" construction of the new tyres, and the way the slightly biased third ply band actually works, was run through, before the details of the new tyre were discussed.

As Bill said, the existing Claw is so successful there was not too much changed, so there is a strong family resemblance in the new tyre. Most of the changes have been aimed at improving the self cleaning ability with very precise angling of the groove walls to eject mud and stones, without creating tread instability.

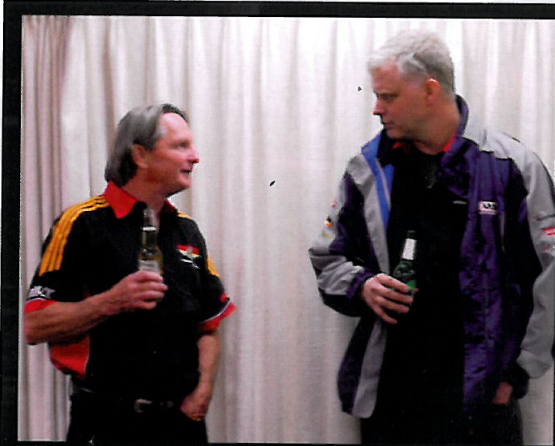
The new sidebiters have a radial decoupling groove to increase sidewall flexibility, as well as scalloped mud scoops which are part of the self clearing process. They also have a different pitch pattern to quieten them up when on road.

Water clearing sipes in the main tread blocks are much

finer than in the regular Claws, resisting rock and stone damage, but are also better designed to increase wet "pavement" performance.

One of the subjects that kept recurring was the fact that the entire Mickey Thompson range is manufactured in the States, in their own plants, and are subjected to intense quality control scrutiny.

It was a very educational exercise, and one that those of us there not directly related to the tyre industry learned a lot from. I would imagine Mickey T's NZ dealers will have also come away with a new understanding of the workings of one of the industries major players.



Danny and Dan Cowper discuss the new BAJA CLAW TTC tyres over a cold one



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FEATURE

DANNY THOMPSON VS WOODHILL FOREST



JR JNR AND THE CREW TOOK DANNY AND BILL FOR A TURN IN WOODHILL FOREST PARK ON THE SUNDAY



A real highlight of the new TTC launch weekend, was the time we spent with Danny Thompson, son of Mickey, the founder of the Mickey Thompson Tire Company, the SCORE racing organisation that runs such events as the Baja 500, and the originator of Stadium Truck Racing in the US.

As part of the story we got to hear the story first hand of how stadium racing was born, with Mickey and Danny engaged in a massive duel across the desert with another racer, and not a spectator in sight.

In fact it was Danny that ex pat kiwi Rod Millen deposed as World Champion back in the late 80's and early 90's. A couple of old team movies from this stadium era, with trucks racing through taped off spectator concourses and launching back over ramps down the grandstands really brought home just how wild this form of racing really was.

But it was the upcoming attempt on the land speed record that was the real focus of Danny's presentation. In the 51 years since Mickey was the first person to go over 400mph in a wheel driven vehicle, that record has only risen 11 mph, from Mickey's 406.6 to the current 417. "So it's a pretty easy thing to do" commented an ironic Danny.

The attempt on the piston engine, wheel driven (not a rocket sled) record will be made next year in Challenger 2.5, a vehicle Mickey drove at 400 mph in 1968, and currently being updated for Danny's record attempt.

Danny comments that the car was built by craftsman engineers at the peak of the industry back in 68, and is still a superb piece of technology. Driven by twin big block V8s the car is just wide enough to accommodate the driver. It is a true 4WD, the front and rear axles driven separately by the two engines.

Now synchronised by technology, originally the car had twin accelerator pedals that Mickey used to balance out by rolling his foot across the two. Not a bad feat when you consider the front one is naturally aspirated, putting out about 800 hp, and the rear is supercharged at around 1200.

Danny told us that the original team had spent over \$700,000 in engines alone, and had a crew of 14 mechanics and engineers preparing the car.

4x4 Action will be bringing you a feature on this car in a future edition as we get a complete build and rebuild story from Danny.

And you may be interested to know that the man planning to be the fastest on 4 wheels drives a classic VW Beetle as his daily driver, and has only just regained his drivers licence, after 15 years without, for his trip down under. "I failed the theory and never went back to resit it." he confessed.



Legendary Offroad Tires

