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WE 'WHEEL THE HIMALAYAS

BIG RED

In some ways, Jason McKrill, of Elkhart, Indiana, is no different from anyone else. He's built his deep-red '95 F-250 to be a perfect reflection of what he thinks a great four-wheeler ought to be. Where he is different, though, is that it took him a series of experiments

to finally find a stage that he's satisfied with. At least for now.

First of all, about that "International" banner across the top of the windshield. That's a clue to what lives under the big Ford's hood. It's a 444ci Power Stroke diesel, an engine that is, for all its identification with Ford trucks, man-

ufactured by International. It was fine when he first got the truck, Jason reports, but the more he drove it, the less it seemed like the big-block gas engines he was used to.

So on went a full Gale Banks PowerPack kit, which consists, at least in Jason's case, of a high-performance

cover
truck

An experimental F-250

By Jon Thompson

Photography by Tom Wilk



turbocharger housing, an intercooler, a high-performance chip for the engine-control computer, and a new electronic shift module for the transmission. He also added International High-Output fuel injectors, and a 5-inch exhaust system. As a result the truck now dynos at 316 horsepower at 3,400 rpm at the rear wheels, up from a stock 176 at 3,000 rpm, Jason says.

Torque production also is way up—it's now 553 lb-ft at 2,700 rpm, up from 326 lb-ft at that same rpm.

With horsepower handled, Jason now was free to turn his attention to his truck's altitude. He started out by adding a 2.5-inch Tuff Country lift sys-



▲ Lift the hood on the big Ford and what you find is a Power Stroke fed by a Gale Banks PowerPack kit, which Jason says has boosted the engine's output by more than 100 horsepower.



▲ The interior of Jason's Ford looks deceptively stock until you recognize that the seats came from a Dodge, that a triple-pod of gauges lives on the A-pillar, and that hidden inside are 10 stereo speakers fed by a ground-shaking audio system.

tem and a set of 33-inch tires. Two years later he stepped up to a set of 35-inchers and a Skyjacker 6-inch lift system. With a set of 4.10 gears for each axle and a Detroit Locker in the rear pumpkin, The Ford was still Jason's primary work truck, and also was doing snow-plow service. But he kept it clean enough that he was displaying it at shows. Then in 1999 he attended the Fall Jambo at Indy. Seeing all the cool, high-altitude trucks there prompted him not only to add a set of 38-inch tires, it also got him thinking about more serious upgrades. He huddled with Mark Bontrager, at Barney's 4x4 in Nappanee, Indiana, and as a result of that consultation, added a Trail Master 3-inch body lift, an Off Road Unlimited reverse-shackle kit, a crossover steering system, also from ORU, and dual Skyjacker shocks with limiting straps at all four corners.

Now, finally, it was time to go big with the Ford's axles. Though Jason and Mark installed a reverse-rotation Dana 60 front axle and a Dana 70 rear axle, the front diff remained open, and a Detroit Locker went into the rear. This time, gear ratios were bumped to 5.13:1; and disc brakes to match those up front were hung on the rear axle.



Big Red

◀ If that looks like a Dana 60 doing duty under the front of Jason's Ford, that's because it is. Jason also treated his truck to a drop pitman arm, ORU crossover steering, and dual Skyjacker steering stabilizers.

▼ How much beef is enough? For now, Jason is satisfied with the swapped-in Dana 70, which is loaded with 5:13 gears and a Detroit Locker. He's added disc brakes to this rear axle.



▲ Jason didn't stop at installing two Skyjacker shocks at each of his Ford's corners. He also didn't stop at painting those shocks Ford's electric Red. He also had to add extended shock mounts, which were coated with Powershield metallic coating.

Finally, a set of 39.5-inch Bogggers were mounted on 16.5x12 Weld Super Singles and bolted to all four corners.

It all worked well, but Jason was determined that his truck be beautiful, as well as effective. So he brought it home, took the suspension and axles completely apart. He stripped the undercoating off the big Ford's frame, smoothed out all welds and brackets, and had everything in sight layered with either fresh paint or Powershield metallic coating.

With the essentials complete, Jason began looking after the details. He added a set of Sidewinder electric hide-away steps, front and rear bumpers that were custom-built for him at Barney's 4x4, a Reese Class IV hitch, and a Warn M12000 winch.

"The more he drove it, the less it seemed like the big-block gas engines he was used to."



Then he turned his attention to his Ford's interior, adding a set of leather-covered seats from a 2001 Dodge Ram, and a stereo system that includes a Kenwood head unit and Kenwood amplifiers that feed a mixed bag of 10 speakers by Kenwood, Clarion, and JL Audio. To keep track of what was happening under the hood, he installed a set of Banks gauges to measure boost, exhaust temperature, and transmission temperature, all in a pillar-mount from Auto Meter. And finally, with all that money invested—he won't divulge the total, but it's bound to be a bunch—Jason added an alarm system, complete with keyless entry.

Now Jason avoids using his truck, except when absolutely necessary, during the months when there are snow and salt on the roads around his home. But during the summer he not only uses it, he also shows it. We ran into him at the Lima Jambo, where he was doing just that. Chances are that if you attend the Midwestern jambos, you'll

find him there, showing a truck that will be every bit as clean as it looks in these pictures. But the chances are just as good that Jason will continue his experiment, and his truck will be even taller than it is now, and wearing bigger tires. That's what comes from being experimental. **FW**

specifications

GENERAL

Owner Jason McNeil, Elkhart, Indiana
Vehicle model '95 Ford F-250

ENGINE

Type 444ci Power Stroke diesel
Induction turbocharged, with Gali Banks PowerPack kit

DRIVETRAIN

Transmission E4OD
Transfer case B-W 13-56

SUSPENSION

Front Skyjacker 5-inch-lift leaf springs, ORU reverse-shackle kit, two Skyjacker shocks per corner, ORU crossover steering, drop pitman arm, dual Skyjacker steering stabilizers
Rear Skyjacker 4-inch-lift leaf springs, 3-inch lift blocks, custom spring hangers, 2 skyjacker shocks per corner

AXLES and DIFFERENTIALS

Front Reverse-rotation Dana 60, open diff
Rear Dana 70 with Detroit Locker

WHEELS and TIRES

Wheels (in.) 16.5x12 Weld Super Singles
Tires 39.5/18R16.5 Super Swamper Bogggers