



Richard and Mitch
pose for the camera



KW COMPANY PROFILE

Suspension gurus KW are among the best in the business. Rich visited their headquarters in Fichtenberg, Germany for a factory tour

The number one stereotype about German way of life, particularly in regards to industry and commerce, would be their unwavering efficiency. Their reputation for creating some of the best performing products, especially surrounding the design and manufacture of cars, has won them worldwide respect. It was a German who first invented a petrol-engined car, and today Germany has the largest share of automobile production of any European country. With them knocking out products like Mercedes-Benz, BMW, Audi and VW, it's fair to say that as a nation, cars are in their blood.

This passion extends to the aftermarket too, and there are a large number of German companies infiltrating top-quality products into the tuning scene – which



brings us nicely on to today's topic of discussion; after market suspension manufacturer KW.

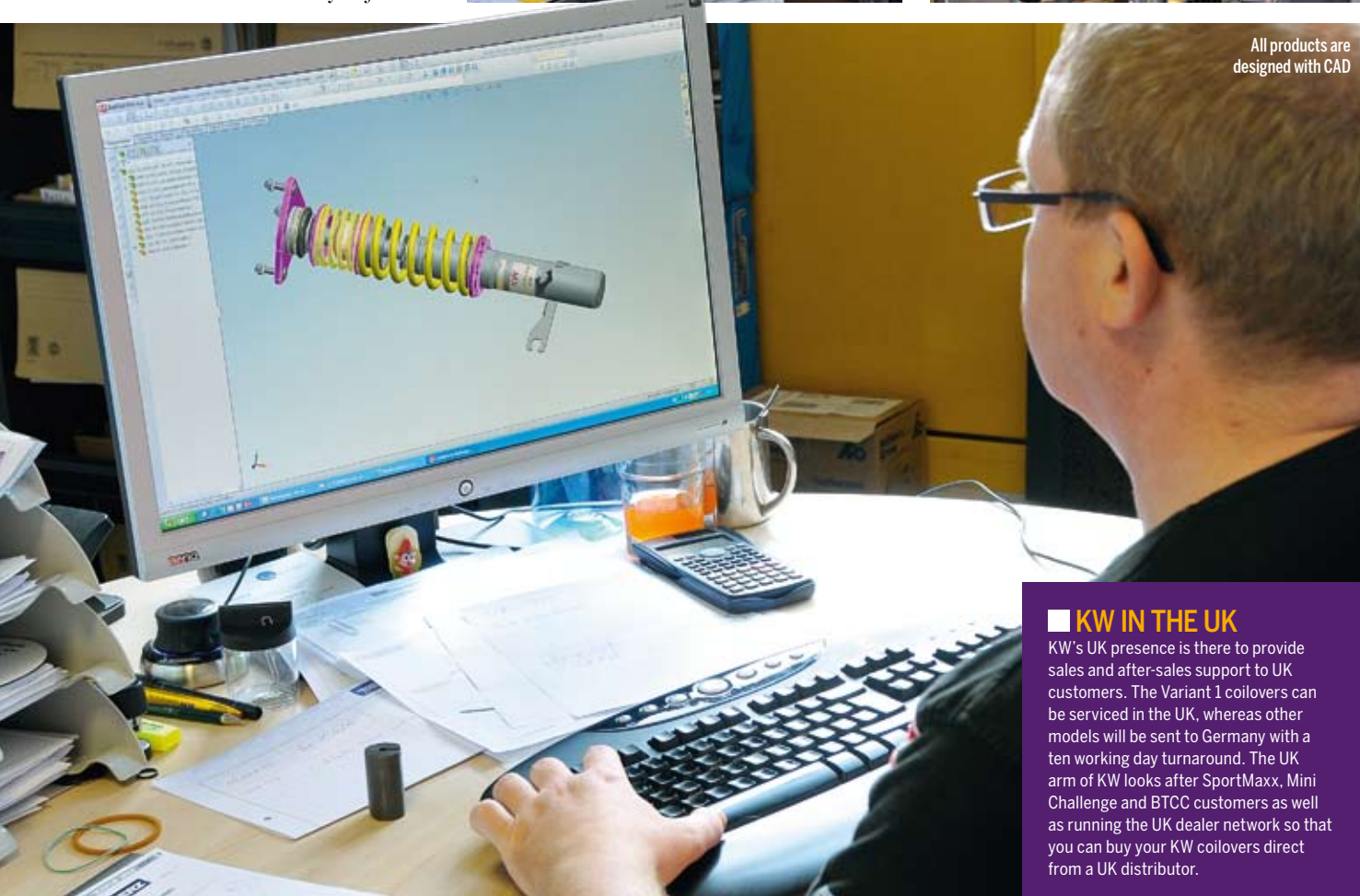
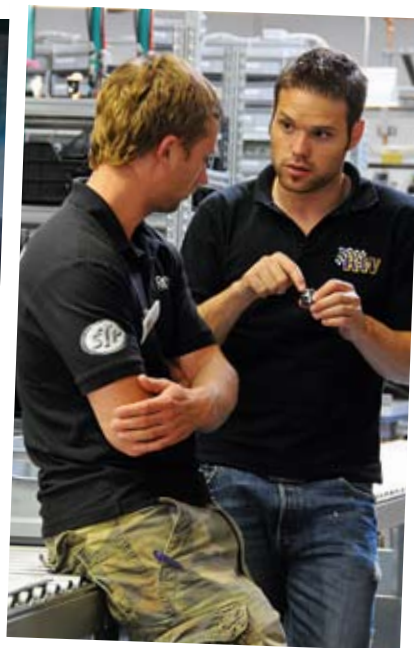
Starting with a brief history lesson, Klaus Wohlfarth founded KW Tuning in 1989, with a decision being made in 1995 to concentrate on the suspension market. In 1996 the company had three employees and operated out of an old chicken farm, but fast forward to 2010 and KW Automotive GmbH boasts 200 employees in five locations, manufacturing 70,000 suspension kits a year.

The company is a great example of natural expansion, and as their needs have grown, they've simply expanded the factory to accommodate. They operate a system that involves the in-house conception, design, manufacture, sales and support of all of their products, so they can cater for everything the customer may require throughout the lifetime of a particular product.

Their specialist motorsport division takes care of the manufacture and service of all of their Competition range of dampers, which is based in a separate building and for any tech-head, is an ideal place to drool over remote reservoirs and aluminium three-way adjustable



Strut bodies are machined and await assembly



All products are designed with CAD

■ KW IN THE UK

KW's UK presence is there to provide sales and after-sales support to UK customers. The Variant 1 coilovers can be serviced in the UK, whereas other models will be sent to Germany with a ten working day turnaround. The UK arm of KW looks after SportMaxx, Mini Challenge and BTCC customers as well as running the UK dealer network so that you can buy your KW coilovers direct from a UK distributor.



A KW employee TIG welding a strut body

“200 employees in five locations, manufacturing 70,000 kits a year”



struts. Their latest toy is a seven-post chassis dynamometer that was bought straight from an F1 team, which allows them to replicate the different loads placed on a car during a race without exposing it to unnecessary wear and tear. While we were there an Audi TT that competes in the VLN race series was being put through a simulation of a Nordschleife lap.

The best thing about the company is that it remains a family-run

business, to the extent where Klaus' house is ten metres from the factory. He's even got an underground tunnel to the chassis dyno from his house, so he can be home for dinner without even going outside!

Walking around the factory, it's obvious that the quality of production is outstanding. Everything is clean and ordered, boxes are labelled properly, and waste is recycled accordingly. The German efficiency is clear to see. The

Above A range of finished KW products on display

employees smile at you and you come away with the general consensus that it's a great product made by knowledgeable, passionate people. The company also manufactures a wide variety of different kits, catering for the entry level with their subsidiary Weitec brand, through to their excellent range of Variant and Clubsport packages, with the Competition series offering the ultimate in performance for race and rally teams alike. KW's presence



7-POST CHASSIS DYNO

SEVEN-POST CHASSIS DYNO

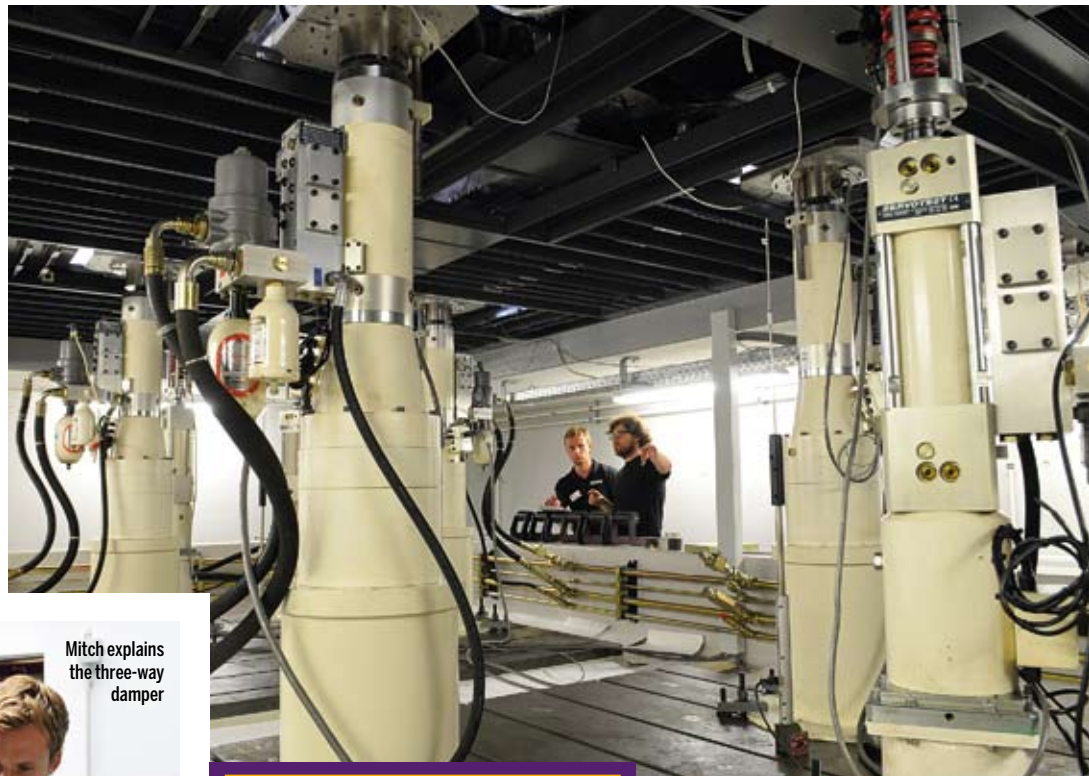
This is a relatively recent acquisition for the company, and is a highly-advanced bit of kit that isn't usually found outside of F1. KW Automotive are the only suspension manufacturer in Germany to use one for the development and setup of their products. There are seven hydraulically operated posts (as the name suggest) – four of which go under the vehicle's wheels, while the other three can be attached directly to the vehicle's chassis to mimic pitch under acceleration or braking.

But what does it do? Well, the dyno allows KW to replicate the typical stresses that a car might go through during a typical race. Different circuits can be programmed in, so for example the Nürburgring can be used and the different loads the car will experience for example during the tight and bumpy Karussell corner can be studied in detail. The benefit of the rig is that the suspension and chassis can be optimised without the engine, tyres or brakes being worn out over hundreds of kilometres of testing. You can hire the dyno if you wish – the costs are €600 for setting up, and €4,000 per day of simulation.



VLN TT race car on the chassis dyno

“KW’s presence in the motorsport arena is well documented”



Mitch explains the three-way damper

CONTACT

www.kwautomotive.co.uk



in the motorsport arena is well documented too, and they make a point of backing up their products with podium places in WTCC, FIA GT and the demanding 24hr race at the Nürburgring.

KW's success is refreshing to see – they remain humble in their ways and let the products do the talking, which is the way it should be in such a competitive market. **Redline**