



The Focus Sport crew get busy analysing lap times



Above: Lambo'd SVT Focus looks hard as nails in black



Another engine bay that shows it means business



SPEC FOCUS As well as hosting Jetfest, NASA was using the Focus, to quote the organisation, is "geared towards budget-minded enthusiasts looking for an affordable and fun class with rules that guarantee close competition." We like this idea, as it fits in with what the Focus is all about. "Spec Focus allows owners of a Ford Focus to go racing by simply adding an easily available assortment of bolt-on parts and safety equipment," continues NASA. Those parts, it turns out, are approved by Ford itself. The manufacturer has always targeted the enthusiast market with the Focus, and it's great to see it getting behind the brand at the grassroots level of motor racing.



THE JETSET

Sunshine, barbecues and track action. California's Focus show calendar kicks off with Jetfest.

IT'S all to do with climate. In the UK, an outdoor car show in March is an almost unthinkable event, pretty much guaranteed to be washed out by rain. But on America's west coast the beginning of spring marks the start of the motorsport and car show calendar.

There is a flourishing Focus scene in California. The Focaljet.com web forum is particularly active, and a couple of major annual events have developed from it. One is a summer party by the sea, Focus on the Beach. The other is a spring event more geared to track action. Which is why we find ourselves at California Speedway in Fontana, on the edge of Los Angeles.

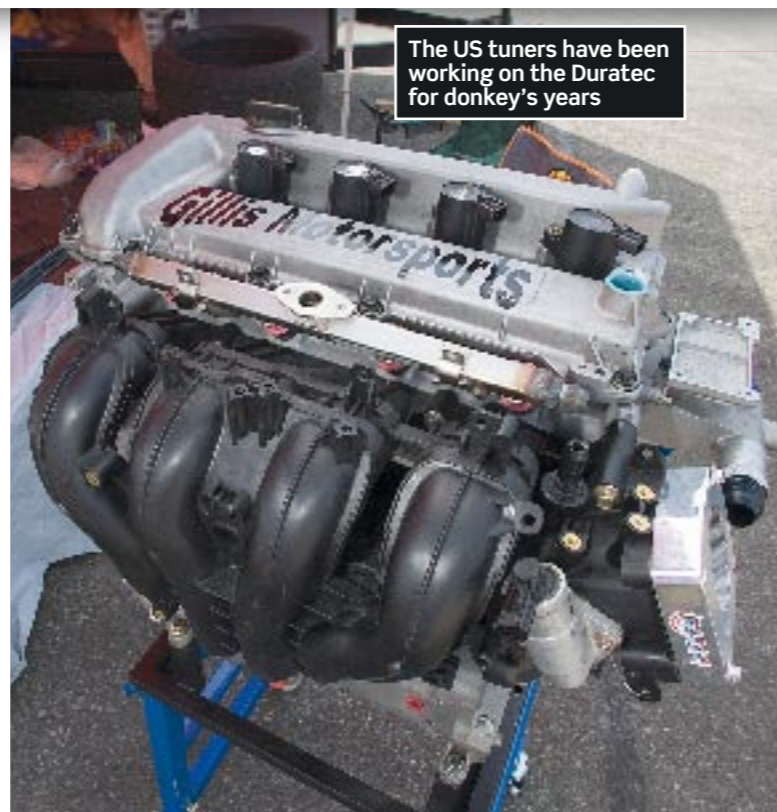
Jetfest is incorporated into a wider track event organised by NASA, not the space agency but the National Auto Sport Association. Outside the Focaljet paddock area is a huge variety of cars, from track-prepped Subarus to massive NASCAR

titans. This makes for fascinating track action, the lithe Fords and other imported cars mixing it with hulking American iron.

Back in the Jetfest compound, local tuners FocusSport, Xios Motorsport, F2 Focus Performance and Leo Capaldi Racing all have stands showing off what they can do. But the whole event has non-commercial feel. While the surprising number of people with a NASA track licence are here for the hot laps, many have come simply to catch up with each other and hang out.

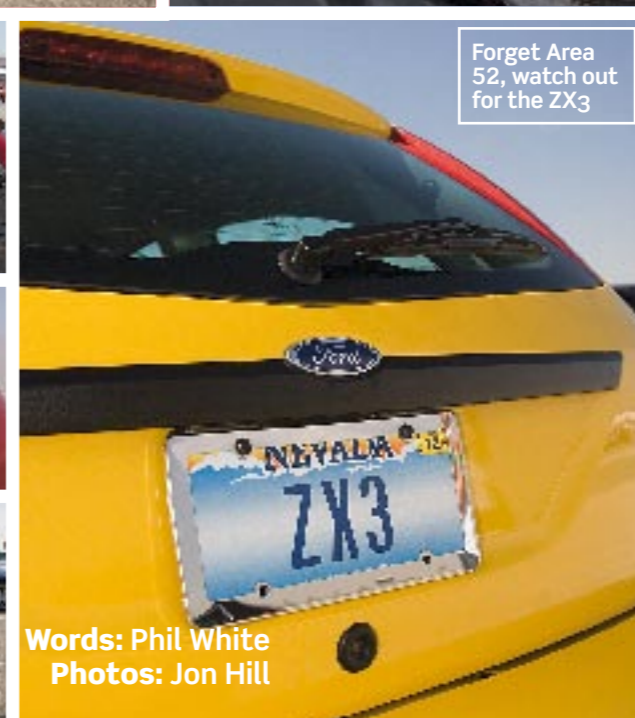
This is America, so meal times mean that barbecues are set up and huge quantities of meat grilled. Watching a group chomping away on their burgers, we call home. England has spent the day wrapped up against sleet and snow. These guys are definitely on to a good thing.

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The US tuners have been working on the Duratec for donkey's years

The GT40 was so fast the driver had to hold the door shut



Forget Area 52, watch out for the ZX3



Carbon boot lid is ultra trick



Words: Phil White
Photos: Jon Hill



474 WHP FOCUS

Really big power is rare in a Focus, but is not impossible to get. In fact, the April 2007 issue proved this when we put Jon Kuroyama's 462 bhp orange monster on the cover. Jon's car was at Jetfest, but just down the row was a car boasting even more horses. Silver State Motorsports has coaxed 474 whp out of its demonstrator.

"The engine is pretty similar to Jon's car," says head man Mike. "It uses the same HKS turbo and similar upgrades to the fuelling, head and cams. It's a very fast car, but it drives real nice too." Just as soon as we have time to visit Mike at his Las Vegas headquarters, we'll bring you a report.



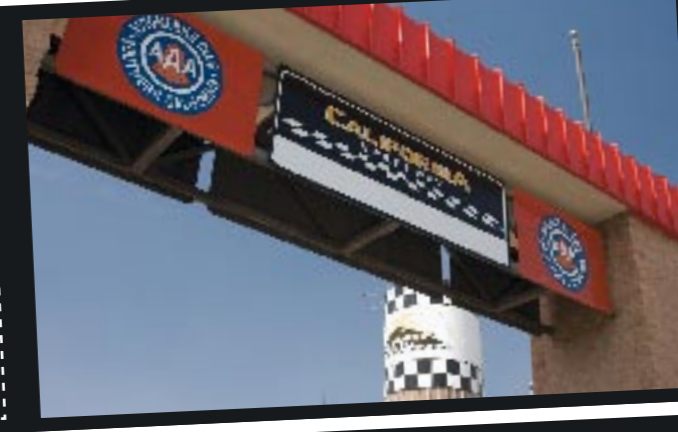
Yep, they even race five-doors!



THE VENUE

California Speedway is the home of NASCAR in the state. Its main attraction is a two-mile, D-shaped banked oval, on which cars can run at nearly 250 mph. The venue was purpose-built in the '90s, and also incorporates a test circuit, a pair of competition courses and a quarter-mile drag strip. The Jetfest course uses the banked oval and some of the infield twisties, which makes a challenging place for drivers to play.

NASCAR is big-bucks motorsport, and spectator stands are a far cry from what we're used to in Britain. The grandstands have neat fabric roofs to protect spectators not from rain, but searing summer sun. To British eyes this is deeply cool stuff, used as we are to ageing race circuits based on former Air Force bases.





TRACK ACTION

A very healthy number of Focus drivers took to the track, many of them carrying transponders so their laps could be timed. There was a competition in progress, where one Focus caused a bit of an upset.

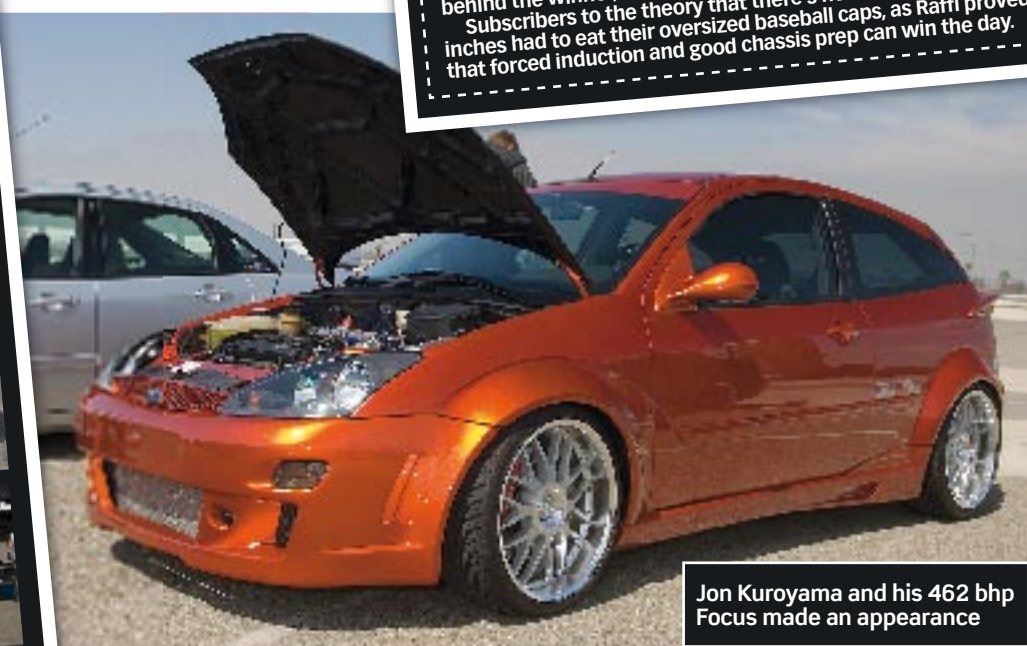
Being a NASCAR track, there was plenty of all-American gear in evidence. So when Raffi Kazanjian, President of tuner FocusSport, beat off a lot of stiff competition to come third in the Time Trial Unlimited Class people sat up and took notice. Getting his time of 1.52.99 involved

booting the banked sections at up to 150 mph, but what was even more impressive was that he was only about two seconds behind the winner, a race-prepped Corvette Z06.

Subscribers to the theory that there's no substitute for cubic inches had to eat their oversized baseball caps, as Raffi proved that forced induction and good chassis prep can win the day.



Right: Ron from FocalJet helped organise the event
Left: 2008-spec US Focus... thankfully we're not getting it here in Europe



Jon Kuroyama and his 462 bhp Focus made an appearance



Dan wants this Zetec lump for his three-door



2008 FOCUS

To show how supportive of its fan base Ford can be in the US, it sent over a pre-production prototype of the up coming 2008 Focus coupe from its Dearborn, Michigan HQ. Along with the car came its chief designer, who was distinctly proud of his new creation.

In the US the Focus is still not based on the C1 platform we have in Europe, so how much of this car will make it to the UK is debatable. Its styling is an interesting departure from the rather hunch-backed old profile, favouring nips, tucks and creases over slabby sides and chunky wheelarches.

"We have gone for varied planer aspects to areas such as the bumpers to add interest and tension," says Ford's man. To European eyes the front end is a little odd, those blocks of chrome sitting uneasily with the curved leading edge of the bonnet. It's rather like a Saab with heavy jewellery.

The interior however, is a delight. Made of decent materials, it is designed "to reflect the look of today's consumer electronic goods." This means blobs of brushed alloy finish against a black background, and the cabin looks great. Some electronic goods can be used in the car too, thanks to Ford's new SYNC system, which allows you to plug in iPods and telephones, and have them work through the on-board entertainment system.