

**HYBRID SPACEFRAME CHASSIS**

The basis of the Sarthe is what Luuk Potze refers to as "a hybrid spaceframe chassis". It is made of high-grade tubular steel, with a safety structure and rear subframe made of chrome-molybdenum and an aluminium honeycomb floor structure.

CARBONFIBRE BODYWORK

Body panels are carbonfibre, contributing to an impressively low weight of 1390kg. "We used a lot of materials to achieve all of the objectives we had, like torsional stiffness, crash safety and so on," says Potze.



The back-to-basics supercar

Dutch firm Vencer thinks that there is a market for 'analogue supercars' stripped of today's electronic driver aids. **Matt Burt** takes a closer look

When CDs went on sale in the mid-1980s, music industry sages sounded the death knell for vinyl. Three decades later, LPs continue to hold sway among connoisseurs, who maintain that music recorded on analogue equipment loses its purity when converted to compressed digital files.

In 2013, with Ferrari, Porsche and McLaren all developing highly advanced, hybrid-powered supercars,

there's an argument that a mid-engined car equipped with a large-capacity combustion engine and six-speed manual transmission is outmoded.

However, start-up Dutch car maker Vencer believes an "analogue sports car", stripped of all but the most basic of electronic assistance, is more relevant than ever. That's what it has set out to prove with the Sarthe, a new €265,000 (about £224k) supercar shown off at the Salon Privé exhibition in London last week.

Vencer came into being in 2010 after chief executive Robert Cobben had sold his plumbing, heating and electrical businesses and was hunting for a new challenge.

"As a car lover, I was inspired by all the brands around the world, but there wasn't the car that I really liked. So I started investigating how to start a brand myself," he says.

Cobben sketched out his vision of a back-to-basics supercar, inspired by Le Mans racing cars of the 1980s, and

began pulling together a team of like-minded people.

"I didn't really know anyone I could call upon in the automotive industry, but I had my plan and I spread the word that I wanted to accomplish a new brand. From then on, people reacted to my search."

Lead project engineer Luuk Potze was the first employee. He says: "The first thing Robert said when I came in was, 'I only have one objective: to build a real analogue supercar of the type that you can't buy

any more; a manual-shifting car, but with a modern finish'."

Vencer grew to a team of eight full-time employees working out of the company's base in Vriezenveen in the east of the Netherlands. Freelance specialists were drafted in to assist with specific aspects of the Sarthe's development.

Vencer quietly developed its car for more than two years, before unveiling a pre-production version at Monaco's Top Marques event in April. From the outset, Cobben

was adamant that he wanted to develop and build a road-ready car, as opposed to a wildly styled one-off prototype that would then have to be toned down for production. The Sarthe adheres to European low-volume type approval regulations.

Cobben says: "You see a lot of small start-ups like us, but only a few have started to build their cars. We started with the development of the car, and that's a big difference in mindset."

Cobben says the Sarthe is "made to be driven on a daily basis", and some thought has been given to refinement and comfort in the hand-crafted interior, which features Vencer's own infotainment and display system.

The appeal, says Cobben, will be to "distinguished car enthusiasts who love the old days of analogue technology, manual gearboxes and hand-built cars. Everything can be bespoke. We are only building and selling a few cars each

year and we want to deliver them to car lovers and build something special for them."

Potze adds: "We have put the car into a corner of the market where there are not a lot of exclusive cars around it, because if you want the exclusivity of this car, you have to go to Pagani, Koenigsegg and so on, and the price will be four or five times higher."

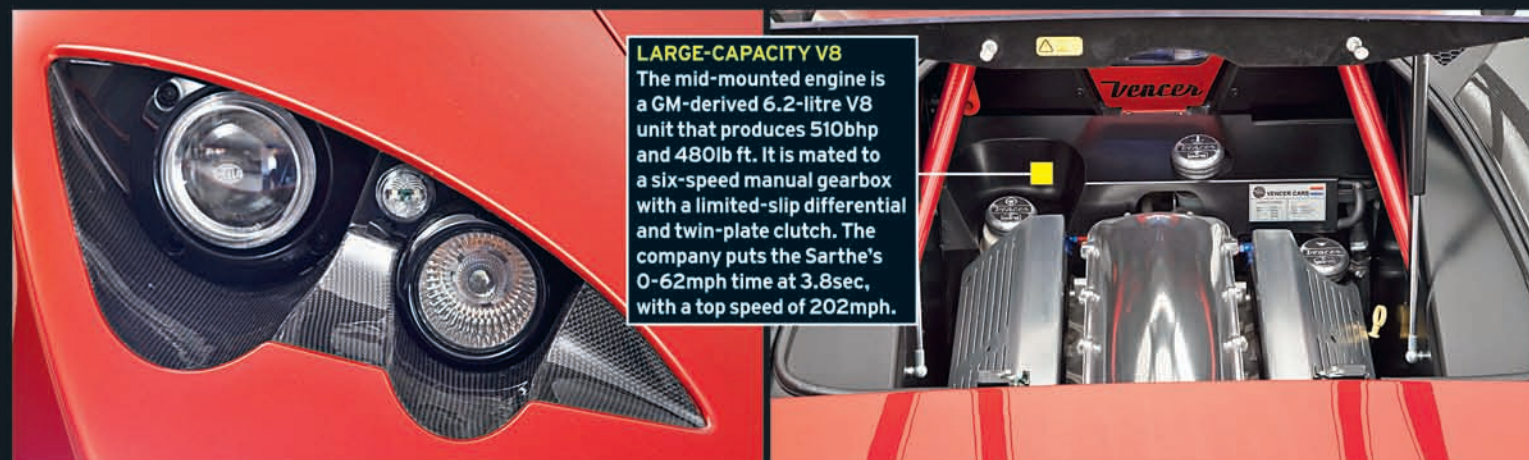
Vencer's short-term ambitions are modest: production is under way at a

rate of one car per month, with deliveries to customers due to start next year.

Long term, Cobben would like to see the company celebrate its 10th birthday, because that would be a sign that it has done things the right way. He is coy about committing to future models until he has had time to gauge reaction to this one, although Vencer has launched a car design competition on its website that could throw up a potential Sarthe successor.

The Netherlands isn't renowned for its bustling car industry, but Vencer prides itself on using local parts suppliers where possible, and about 60-70 per cent of the car is built using components sourced or made within an hour of the company's HQ.

And the name? 'Vencer' means 'to overcome' in Spanish and was inspired by those who doubted Cobben's convictions when he first stated his intentions to build a supercar.

**LARGE-CAPACITY V8**

The mid-mounted engine is a GM-derived 6.2-litre V8 unit that produces 510bhp and 480lb ft. It is mated to a six-speed manual gearbox with a limited-slip differential and twin-plate clutch. The company puts the Sarthe's 0-62mph time at 3.8sec, with a top speed of 202mph.

**SELF-DEPLOYING SPOILER**

The Sarthe utilises double wishbone suspension all round. At 62mph, the rear spoiler rises for additional high-speed stability, but there are no driver aids apart from compulsory systems such as anti-lock brakes.