

Motor 3

Rarität W10 Motor aus dem Besitz des Motorenentwicklers Sabine Wolfram Willeke

The W10 Engine: Volkswagen's Secret Experiment

In the realm of automotive engineering, there are few things as intriguing as the discovery of a prototype engine. These engines, often developed in secrecy and never released to the public, offer a tantalizing glimpse into what might have been. One such engine is the W10, a prototype developed by Volkswagen but never made for production. However, this engine found its way into an unexpected vehicle – a BMW M5.

A little background. I'm passionate about these misfit engines. I spend a lot of my free time digging into VR and W engine lore to learn as much as I can, being they're not domestic and public historical information is scarce. In a recent weekend stint of deep dives into VW Self-Study Programs—thrilling, I know—I stumbled upon the mention of the W10 engine in a W12 SSP which included some of its technical specifications, and some curious text alluding to the fact the engine was, in fact, possibly real.

Fast forward a couple of weeks, and a fellow named Ari who'd recently come into possession of a W10 prototype from one of his clients at his automotive shop, shared some incredible photos with me of what he's saying is one of only a couple prototypes produced for testing. Naturally, I immediately had to share this with the VR/W community. If after all these years geeking out over these engines I am just learning this, I'm assuming it'll be news to others as well.

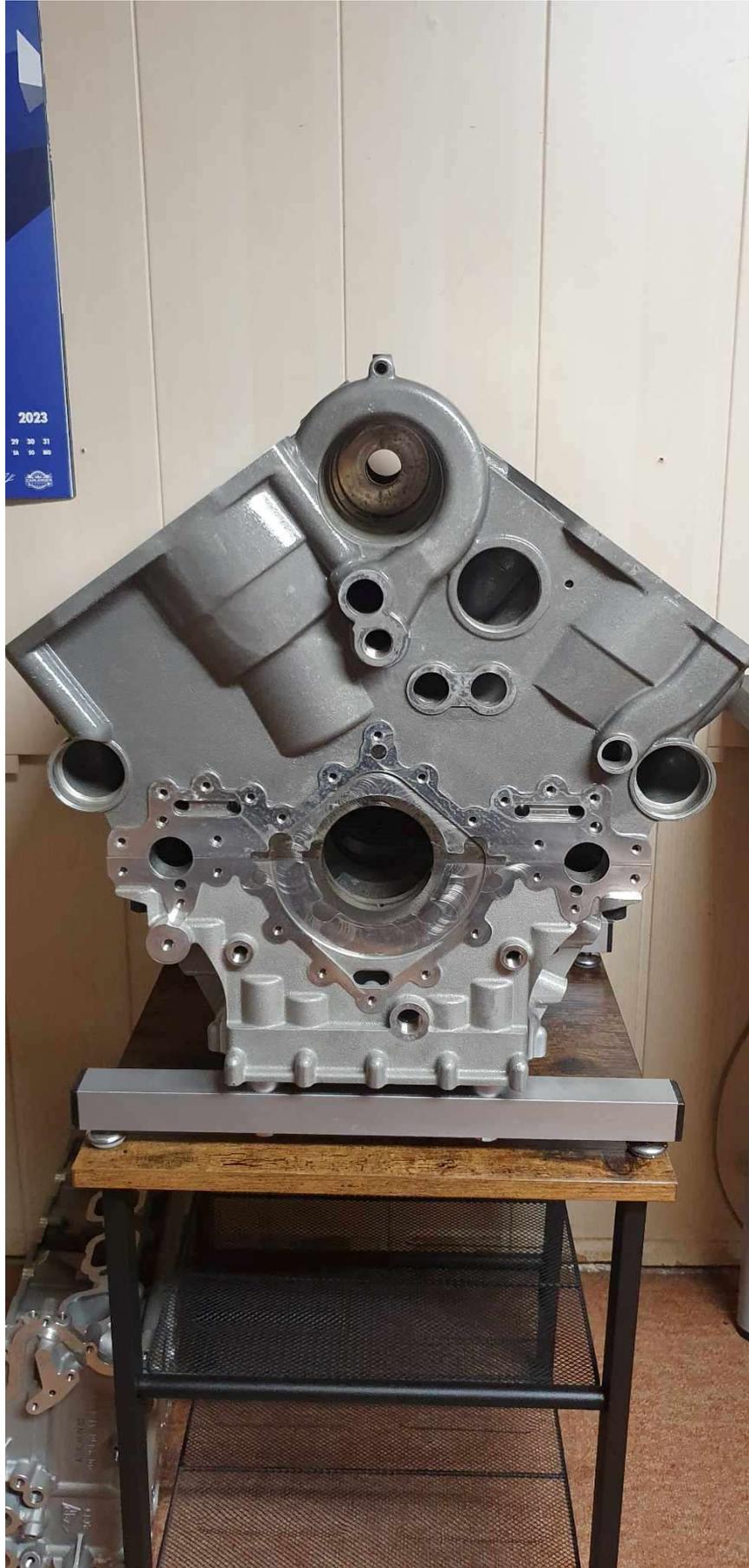
This was shortly followed with some additional links to this podcast (in German) providing more detail, and a link to what seemed to be a BMW M5, currently for sale, powered by one of these prototype engines. The story around the engine's real-world existence and its shocking test bed started coming together.

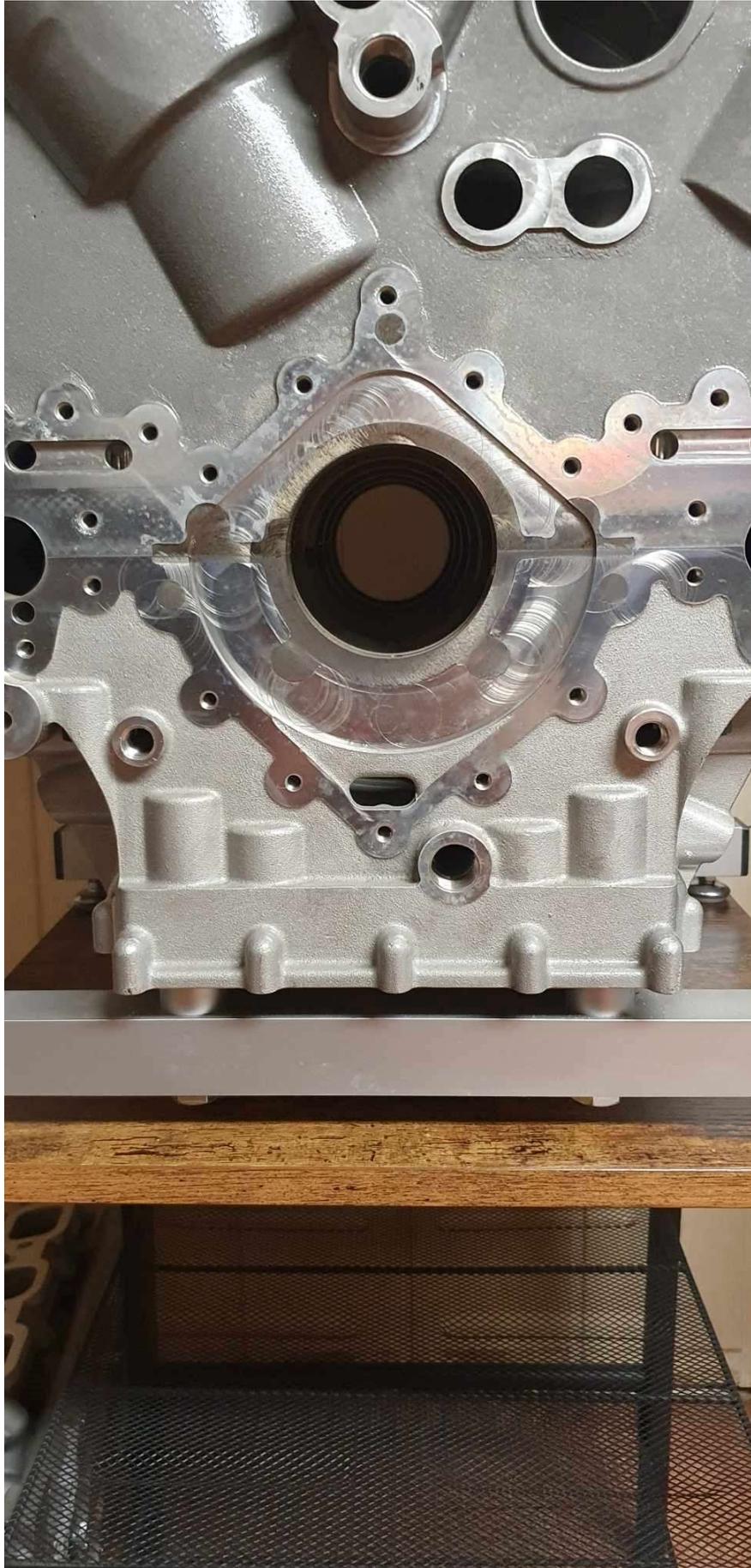
The W10 engine was a bold experiment by Volkswagen, an attempt to push the boundaries of their new W-engine design. The W10 was intended to be a smaller, more compact version of the W12 and W16 engines later found in high-end luxury cars. However, despite its smaller size, the W10 was designed to deliver power and performance on par with its larger counterparts.

The W10 engine was developed under the supervision of Dr. Sabine (Wolfram) Willeke, who was personally appointed by Ferdinand Piëch, the owner of the VW group at the time. The development of the W10 was part of a larger project that also included the W8, W12, and W16 engines. These engines were designed to set future Bentley and Bugatti cars apart from the competition.















However, during the development of the W10, the team faced a unique challenge. There was no car in Volkswagen's lineup at the time that could handle the power of the W10 engine. So, they turned to an unlikely candidate – the BMW M5. This high-performance sedan was chosen for its manual gearbox and its ability to handle the power of the W10. The result was a BMW M5 like no other. The W10 engine produced 500 horsepower and 550 Nm or 404.4 lb-ft of torque, significantly more than the standard M5's output. The W10 was heavier than the standard engine, adding around 136 kg to the car's weight. However, the increase in power more than made up for the added weight.

Ferdinand Piëch was so impressed with the W10-powered M5 that he used it for his personal countryside jaunts as well as for business rides. This unique M5 served as a testament to the potential of the W10 engine and the possibilities it could have offered. By the way, did we mention it's for sale? It can be yours from GDM-Motors, if you're willing to stomach the unlisted, but likely astronomical price tag.





Despite its impressive performance, the W10 engine never made it past the prototype stage. It remains a fascinating "what if" in the world of automotive engineering. However, the legacy of the W10 lives on in the W12 and W16 engines that were developed alongside it.

These engines have found their way into numerous high-end cars, including the Bentley Continental GT and the Bugatti Veyron.

The story of the W10 engine is a poignant reminder of the constant innovation and experimentation in internal combustion that once defined the automotive industry. A long standing era where Volkswagen was known for its bold and quirky innovations, from the iconic air-cooled flat-4, to the G60 Corrado's supercharger, and of course, the VR6 engine. Sure, it was borrowed and refined from Lancia, but that's another story. These were not just engines or cars, but symbols of an era where uniqueness and character were celebrated. However, in recent years, it seems that Volkswagen, like many other automakers, has shifted its focus towards mass-market appeal and uniformity. Today's VW lineup, filled with entire model line-ups powered by the same cookie-cutter engines, badge-engineered special editions, or 'beige' EVs, in my opinion lacks the charm and individuality that once set the brand apart. The era of the W10, the VR6, and other unique creations seems to be a thing of the past. The ID Buzz feels like a spark of the days of old—but in my opinion, there's still a certain 'je ne sais quoi' missing for it to be truly iconic.

It's a shame to see this shift away from the innovative spirit that once defined Volkswagen. A company that at one time wasn't afraid to take risks and push the boundaries of what was possible. Today, I, and likely many others find ourselves longing for the return of that innovative and quirky VW, the one that delighted us with its unique creations and bold engineering feats.

While we celebrate the past and the remarkable engines it brought us, we also look to the future with hope. Perhaps one day, we'll see a return to the bold, risk-taking innovation that gave us engines like the W10. Until then, we'll continue to cherish the legacy of these engines and the unique character they brought to the automotive world.