

The world's fastest bed – almost

By Sophie Finnemore

It's certainly not every day that you see a bed speeding down the fast lane of the motorway.

But it's a sight two AUT University engineering students, a dedicated senior lecturer, a racing car driver and a world record enthusiast are trying to make a reality.

Jono Barry and Alexi Groutso, two third-year Bachelor of Engineering students, are making the world's fastest piece of furniture — a bed they hope will reach speeds of up to 200km/h.

The bed is the brainchild of Alastair Galpin, a self-described "world record nut" who approached AUT two years ago in the hope of adding this record



GRAPHIC: ALASTAIR GALPIN

BED PLAN: Is it roadworthy?

to the 50-plus he currently holds. Barry says the bed gave him and his classmate Groutso the chance to have some fun and do something a bit different.

School of Engineering senior lecturer David White says the bed is an intriguing project with plenty of academic merit for the two students involved.

The bed will sit atop a three-wheeled frame and be powered by what used to be a Toyota Corolla.

Barry says the bed will be complete with a mattress, pillows, bedding, frilly skirting and an intricate headboard.

"The aim is to have a bed which you couldn't pick out to be anything else until it drives away."

Once finished, the queen-sized

bed will be taken to a race track where V8 driver Angus Fogg will take it for a few laps, all the while tucked up under the covers and resting against the headboard, with a police car following to record the speed.

In order for the bed to hold a Guinness World Record for the fastest piece of furniture, the bed must be roadworthy — something the students and their mentor are struggling with at the moment.

White says: "It's not the sort of thing you can just drive into a WOF testing station".

The Land Transport Safety Authority has not approved the team's design at this stage, despite the proposal being in line with all the regulations.

"They just don't like it because it's a bed," says White.

If the bed cannot be made roadworthy, the team will enter it as the world's fastest piece of furniture under a different record authority, the Record Holder's Republic.

The current holder of the Guinness World Record is Englishman Edward China whose 'Chaise Lunge' reached speeds of 148km/h.

The Chaise Lunge was a three-seater sofa, complete with light cream covers and powered by a 220 horsepower Rover V8 engine, the same motor that drives a Range Rover.

While this couch had the potential to provide some healthy competition for the AUT students, the sofa did not reach the speeds it was capable of during the record attempt.

The chance to drive it was auctioned off for charity and the winner was not experienced enough to take it to its top speed, estimated to be closer to the 200km/h mark.

The AUT students are confident their creation will be faster than China's couch.

"When it's finished it will easily break the record," says Groutso.

Barry says China will probably attempt the record again, this time with an experienced driver,



PHOTO: VALERIE SCHULER

THE NEED FOR SPEED: Jono Barry and Alexi Groutso like their beds fast – 200km/h fast.

if their bed breaks China's record.

However the students still think their bed will be fast enough to hold off the Chaise Lunge.

The Chaise Lunge record was the second time China has held the world record for the fastest piece of furniture. Previously he held it for another sofa — the 'Casual Lofa' — a couch which

reached 140km/h.

The leopard-skin sofa was powered by a Mini 1300cc engine and was the ultimate ride for couch potatoes. A beer can doubled as the brake lever and its steering wheel was a pizza pan.

China has also been involved in the construction of a bed which reached 111km/h and the 'Bog Standard' which is a motorbike with a bathtub, toilet and

sink attached which got up to 114km/h.

Projects such as the bed the AUT students are attempting to make are completed as part of the Bachelor of Engineering degree.

The students are assessed on the design process, how innovative their ideas are and how well they have applied their current learning.

NZSO for free

By Jacqueline Tran Van

A new sponsorship programme makes the New Zealand Symphony Orchestra available for film soundtrack recording for free.

NZSO, Park Road Post Production, the New Zealand Film Commission and Radio New Zealand National have offered the sponsorship.

New Zealand director Vincent Ward's new feature *Rain of the Children* is the first film to benefit.

NZSO artistic planning manager Rachel Hyde says the orchestra has worked in film for many years but "grass roots"

film-makers struggle to get access to an orchestra.

The sponsorship programme allows the NZSO to offer its musicians at no cost, while Radio NZ and Park Road provide equipment and post-production at a reduced cost.

"The most significant cost is the musicians."

Hyde says: "The most significant cost is the musicians, so removing that cost makes an orchestral soundtrack an option."

The cost of the composer and conductor are not covered by the scholarship.

The NZSO hopes the project will create momentum overseas.

Hyde says the NZSO is in discussions with several producers, but has not picked a film to receive the scholarship for 2008.

Eco-friendly and thirst quenching

By Valerie Schuler

An Auckland company has launched New Zealand's first fully biodegradable water bottle.

After two years of research and development, the Good Water Company launched 'Good', the country's first water bottle made from high starch vegetables, on September 3.

"It's always frustrated me that while water is healthy for the body, the plastic packaging it comes in is terrible for the environment," says Good Water Company chief executive Grant Hall, who has been in the bottled water industry for more than 10 years.

Approximately 300 guests attended the Maritime Museum launch of what Hall says is the world's most sustainable bottled water packaging.

The company, which is using Sir Peter Blake's quote "good

water, good life" to market the product, is donating 10 per cent of its sales to the Sir Peter Blake Trust.

Vicki Watson, general manager of the trust, says: "This is one of many great initiatives which continues the great work of Sir Peter Blake."

The trust, which was established in 2004, aims to help New Zealanders make a positive difference for the planet through activities that encourage environmental awareness and action.

Marine scientist Dr Mark Orams says he and Sir Peter Blake had long been concerned about marine pollution from plastics.

"This is an environmentally friendly alternative and a big step forwards," he says.

The trust will use the funds to help finance its environmental education programmes for young Kiwis.

Traditional water bottles are

made from non-biodegradable petroleum-based plastics.

Biota, in America, was the first company to launch a biopolymer water bottle in 2005. United Kingdom-based company Belu followed suit in 2006.

Even though Good, which aims to raise \$1 million for the Sir Peter Blake Trust by 2012, uses the same technology, it goes one step further by using a compostable wood pulp label and water-based adhesive, says Hall.

Approximately 14,000 tonnes of plastic bottles a year currently go to New Zealand landfills. Therefore, the company's biggest challenge has been coming up with an end-of-life plan for its water bottles.

The Good Water Company aims to recycle the biodegradable bottles separately from traditional plastics, so they can be broken down and on-sold to interested parties within New Zealand.