

GREG HIGGS

Reinventing the Bumper

story by **HILDA J. BRUCKER** | photo by **TIM MANTOANI**

Greg Higgs has always followed his passion in life, even when it involved traipsing across the United States or halfway around the globe. This fearlessness when it comes to relocating and reinventing himself has paid off, as his company, Fab Fours, sets up shop in a brand-new 7,200-square-foot manufacturing facility in Charlotte, N.C. Rampant growth in the very young company—it debuted in 2005—made this latest move a necessity.

Fab Fours is a bumper fabricator with sales at both the wholesale and retail levels. It's large-scale production all the way as the company doesn't do small runs or custom fabrication. This strategy allows Fab Fours to not only maintain a constant level of quality, but also to keep enough inventory on hand so orders can be filled almost as fast as they come in. It's a simple formula for success that Higgs thinks of as "quality delivered on time," and it comes from his personal experiences buying aftermarket products. "Being an enthusiast, I've been purchasing parts for the past 15 years. And too many manufacturers apparently deem it acceptable to have incorrectly fitting parts, missing parts or fasteners, and extensively long lead times. Well, we wanted to build a business that would be respected in any industry," he says.

THE INCREDIBLE JOURNEY

Higgs could not have foreseen the chain of events that led him from off-roading as a hobby to a career path based on the sport. After graduating from Texas A&M University, he took a job in international business, landing in Jakarta, Indonesia. Before long, he linked up with a rock crawling group. "I realized there was a big opportunity there because they were about 10 years

behind us in technology. I saw a unique opportunity to have a 'crystal ball.' I already knew each step of the evolution that those guys would be taking as far as technology, and I thought I could be the one to introduce it," he explains.

Higgs began writing a business plan and, before the ink was dry, managed to find an investor. He promptly quit his job and founded Fab Fours Indonesia, a company that imported high-end rock crawling

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parts and promoted the sport. Though successful, Higgs recognized the company would always be limited by the infrastructure of the still-undeveloped country. He sold it to locals and moved back to the States, settling in Durango, Colo., to bring about the second incarnation of Fab Fours in 2005. But in just two years, the company had outgrown not only its space, but the whole town as well.

"Durango is a beautiful mountain town, so beautiful that they're trying to make it into another Vail," Higgs observes. "And just like you would never find a large-scale manufacturer

in Vail, come to find out that's something Durango is also trying to avoid. We weren't expecting the rampant growth that we've had, but as soon as we found Durango to be the limiting factor, it took us about two weeks to decide we were going to relocate."

FUTURE VISION

The move to Charlotte is already proving a good one. The area thrives on both manufacturing and NASCAR, things that ensure a good labor pool and plenty of networking opportunities. The prospects look bright to Higgs: "We're always hungry for more, and I think that will be what sets us apart as we move forward," he says. He sees a time in the near future when the company will add an entirely new product line, though he's not certain yet whether it will be wheels, suspensions or something else he decides should be improved upon.

Higgs is also interested in research and development, hoping to advance the technologies that go into rock crawling. "I'd like to create a lab and have a mad scientist on our staff take the outlandish, far-fetched, futuristic things we brew up and turn them into realities," he says. When asked what role he'd play in that scenario, he hesitates for only a split second. "I will not be the mad scientist," he replies decisively. "I do have the ability to come up with the ideas, but I'm not patient enough to be the tinkerer who actually goes through the process of trial-and-error." **ORB**

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