



DIGITAL IMAGE: Chris Harris

Holden cutbacks

Holden cuts design and engineering jobs as GM abandons global RWD projects

By TERRY MARTIN

GM HOLDEN is shedding an unspecified number of contract design and engineering positions following parent General Motors' decision to abandon work based on the Australian-developed global rear-wheel drive architecture.

After another tumultuous week for Australian vehicle manufacturing, during which 240 fresh job cuts across three automotive component suppliers and Kenworth Trucks were announced – less than a week after Ford declared that 350 jobs would be slashed at its Geelong and Broadmeadows plants – GM Holden has revealed to GoAuto that contract positions were being terminated on an ongoing basis until it reached the “appropriate level to meet the revised workload”.

The cutbacks commenced some weeks ago.

“There’s been a number of global programs either cancelled or put on hold,” said GM Holden spokesman John Lindsay.

“Because we do global work through our global design and engineering (operations), essentially what we’ve been doing is reducing our workforce to the appropriate level to meet the revised workload.

“What we’ve been doing is approaching our contracted staff, and those who aren’t required we’ve been letting them go. So

that’s an ongoing process at the moment.”

Mr Lindsay refused to divulge the exact number of positions being cut but confirmed that no permanent positions had been affected. He said the contract terminations would continue “until we’ve got the right balance and mix of skills that match the workload that we have”.

GoAuto sources have indicated that the staff cuts are extensive and have had a dramatic impact on operations and morale.

“We haven’t been giving out any numbers on this because basically it’s ongoing,” Mr Lindsay said. “But essentially we scaled up to match the projects we were getting from global (head office) to cope with that – and we did that with contract staff, which is why we do have contract staff – but now with those reductions, we’re scaling down appropriately.

“It’s something we’ve done before – and part of our normal business practice ... I wouldn’t want to put a specific time (frame) on it, but it’s something that we’re working through at the moment.

“We have to make sure that we have the right skills mix. There will be some contractors that have the skills that we still require, even with the reduction in the current workload. So we’re working through that,” he said.

The rear-wheel drive centre of excellence for the GM world, Holden was known to have been in the running to develop the

replacement for the Buick Lucerne sold in North America, while GM was also understood to have considered building the next-generation Chevrolet Impala on the Holden-developed RWD architecture.

Mr Lindsay refused to comment on the global programs that have been canned and/or shelved. However, overseas reports have suggested that stringent fuel consumption standards in the United States have forced GM to abandon plans to create both the Lucerne and Impala using Australian-sourced design and engineering.

Furthermore, US industry journal *Automotive News* this week reported that design work for a number of GM brands outside North America was being transferred to Detroit in response to US vehicle programs being delayed or cancelled, which in turn has freed up US designers for other projects.

It cited the Impala and “an unnamed Buick sedan” as examples, and quoted GM design vice-president Ed Welburn, who said: “We have had a couple (of) studios where some projects have been cancelled. We have other studios that are totally overloaded. We just need to level that work around the globe.”

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THE GREATEST
911 OF THEM ALL?
– page 7

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LCT bill on knife-edge

Luxury car sales continue to fall as key senators determine tax bill fate

By DAVID HASSALL

THE federal government's controversial proposed luxury car tax (LCT) increase was riding on a knife-edge last night, just hours before official sales figures are expected to reveal a further downturn in the Australian new-car market in August.

Key senators are negotiating with the government, and yesterday even keen Canberra observers were not prepared to predict which way the debate will go, with a vote expected to take place today (Wednesday) or tomorrow.

VFACTS data for August to be published this afternoon are expected to show an overall decline in the market and an especially depressing result for the luxury car segment, which one industry insider described as "disastrous".

The figures will put even more pressure on the government to soften its proposed tax hike (set to rise from 25 per cent to 33 per cent) before being put to the vote in the Senate, where two independent senators and five Greens hold the balance of power.

Crucially, the Coalition announced on Thursday that it would oppose the legislation,



so the government requires the support of all of the other seven senators to pass the new LCT, which was controversially announced in the May federal budget without any warning or industry consultation.

Coalition senators last week slammed the government move, saying it is "based on naked class warfare and the politics of envy".

But the critical votes are in the hands of the Greens and independents Nick Xenophon and Steve Fielding – any one of whom can scupper the legislation or force amendments.

Although Senator Fielding has not revealed his position on the issue, Senator Xenophon and the Greens have expressed concerns about the LCT hike and indicated that modifications may be required to pass the legislation.

Greens leader Bob Brown said he would try to get the bill redrafted so that it focused on "gas guzzlers".

"We want the bill made climate-friendly," Senator Brown told ABC Radio at the end of last week. "If you're going to tax people,

tax the gas-guzzlers; that's what it comes down to. Barring any talks in the meantime, (Greens senator) Christine Milne will be moving in the Senate to have the government withdraw the bill and redraft it to make it climate-friendly."

The Greens appear to have embraced a recent Mercedes-Benz proposal, with Senator Milne proposing that the government phase out the LCT and instead introduce a carbon tax on all vehicles to encourage fuel efficiency.

"The government needs to be consistent if it wants to be a leader on climate change, if it wants to reduce dependence on foreign oil," said Senator Milne.

"If it wants to build competitive advantage in Australian car manufacturing for green cars, then the best way of doing it is to look at the vehicle fuel efficiency of our fleet and make sure the tax system drives the right outcome."

Senator Xenophon, meanwhile, told reporters that the LCT legislation "is not doomed; it just needs some major surgery".

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Holden sheds contract jobs as GM cancels RWD programs

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Studios believed to be swamped with design work are those working on GM's new-generation small cars, in particular the Opel R&D centre in Germany and GM Daewoo Auto & Technology in South Korea.

"They can't handle it all," Mr Welburn said. "So some of that work will be done in North America."

GM spokesperson Mike Albano was also quoted as saying that GM's design centre in Warren, Michigan, was expected to eventually handle work for two vehicle architectures. He declined to identify those platforms, but said: "We have

some work being shifted in process for small, subcompact (vehicles), that kind of category. I certainly could foresee more car programs coming into Warren as the market changes."

Mr Lindsay insisted that design work at Holden was not being channelled into an overseas studio.

"The projects that have impacted us are ones that have either been cancelled or delayed – they were not projects being moved from here to elsewhere," he said.

Industry downturn forces job cuts in component sector – page 21

John Mellor's



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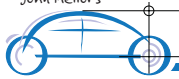
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LCT bill on knife-edge

Continued from previous page

In the Senate on Monday night, the South Australian senator officially weighed into the debate with a speech in which he expressed serious concerns over specific aspects of the legislation. He also revealed that he has had discussions with the government and that he expects a response to his concerns, especially with regard to raising the \$57,180 threshold.

"I had the benefit of further discussions with the government today in relation to this legislation and I raised my concerns," Senator Xenophon told Monday night's debate.

His main concern is over the threshold at which the LCT comes into effect, which has increased only marginally in the last two decades, resulting in 12.0 per cent of cars being captured under the tax last year compared to only 4.5 per cent in 1986.

The car industry universally opposes the LCT but has said that, at the very least, the threshold should be raised considerably to reflect inflation and avoid the luxury car sales crash of 1990 that forced the then Hawke government to drop changes it had hoped would boost Treasury coffers.

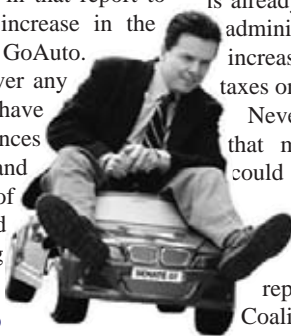
Senator Xenophon warned the government to "bear that lesson in mind" when considering the consequences of the LCT legislation.

Mercedes-Benz Australia spokesman David McCarthy said that its sales have already slumped from more than 1500 per month to only about 1000 in August and that, even if a 20 per cent drop across the luxury car market was maintained over the next three years, it would more than negate any increase in government revenue.

"There's really nothing in that report to substantially support an increase in the tax," Mr McCarthy told GoAuto.

"I don't think it will deliver any revenue and it's going to have some unintended consequences in terms of investment and employment. This level of sales is not sustainable and is fundamentally changing

**Nick Xenophon 2007
election campaign promo**



the business equation."

Mr McCarthy said it could prevent or delay the introduction of new high-tech, low-emission vehicles to Australia in the future because reduced volumes would make it harder to justify the cost of right-hand drive production and local validation.

The Labor-dominated Senate Standing Committee on Economics review, which was forced on the government by the previous Coalition-controlled upper house, handed down its report on Thursday and predictably supported the legislation – despite the fact that all 29 witnesses and 18 written submissions rallied against it.

The committee said it was reasonable for high income earners to wear higher prices because they had benefited the most from income tax cuts and the resources boom.

It also argued that, while only cars attract a luxury tax, this could be justified somehow, and it was easier to increase the LCT because it already exists rather than introduce new taxes.

"The committee sees some merit in the argument that it is 'unfair' that luxury cars are taxed but not other luxury purchases such as yachts or expensive artworks and jewellery," said the Senate report. "However, as there is already a luxury cars tax, there are less administrative and compliance costs in increasing it, rather than introducing new taxes on other luxury goods."

Nevertheless, the committee indicated that more wide-ranging luxury taxes could be introduced following the current review of Australia's tax system by Treasury chief Ken Henry. Attached to the 'majority report' was a 'Dissenting Report from Coalition Senators' that rejected the

LCT increase, saying that it would take the Australian car industry "from protectionism to discrimination".

Noting a 30 per cent downturn in sales of luxury vehicles, it said: "If this downturn is reflected for the remainder of the year there is a very real possibility that the proposed eight per cent tax increase, if passed into law, will actually result in a decline in Government revenue.

"The Rudd Labor Government has put forward no sensible policy rationale for this tax increase on cars other than it being a naked grab for cash."

One of the opposition senators, shadow industry minister Eric Abetz, said the increase was "punitive" and would damage the Australian automotive industry.

"Labor's only rationale for this tax increase is to increase revenue and supposedly fight inflation – yet even Labor senators concede it will be inflationary in their majority report," said Senator Abetz.

"Labor says they want to look after Australia's car industry, yet they are proposing a tax increase which will damage it.

"Labor says they want safer, 'greener' cars, yet they are proposing a tax which will discourage innovation in these areas.

"Labor says this is a tax on the 'rich', yet the highest-selling so-called luxury car is the Toyota LandCruiser, which retails for around \$70,000 and are driven primarily by those in rural and regional Australia and those with the need for a 'people-mover'.

"Labor's luxury car tax surcharge is a tax grab based on the politics of envy. It is bad policy and it will be opposed by the Coalition."

FULL STORY: [CLICK HERE](#)

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Hybrid recycling 'solved'

Toyota refutes negative hybrid battery charge in wake of eco Camry deal

By DAVID HASSALL

TOYOTA has reacted strongly to claims by the Victorian opposition that the local production of Camry Hybrids from 2010 could be an environmental disaster because Australia has no ability to dispose of the batteries.

The opposition claims made front-page news in *The Australian* newspaper, which quoted Liberal MP Andrea

Coote as saying that the government-backed Camry Hybrid production program would see "the government busy basking in the benefits of this policy while leaving the environment to pick up the tab".

"In the next decade, Victoria will be faced with tens of thousands of dead hybrid car batteries, with no environmentally sustainable way of disposing of them," Ms Coote was quoted as saying.

However, Toyota Australia product planning manager Peter Evans told GoAuto that a hybrid battery recycling program had been in place since the Prius was introduced to the market here in 2001, and he accused the opposition of simply trying to discredit the government.

Mr Evans said that an approved recycler that is also licensed by EPA Victoria breaks the nickel-metal hydride (NiMH) batteries down and locally recycles the plastic, copper wire and some other metals, while the resin circuit boards and nickel battery elements are exported to Korea for recycling.

Toyota has sold more than 10,000 Prius models in Australia and has replaced only three batteries due to wear and tear, each of which was recycled at Toyota's expense.

One Prius being used as a taxi in Cairns covered 500,000km before needing a new battery and Mr Evans said that anecdotal evidence suggests there have been no failures from regular use at less than 300,000km.



Camry Hybrid



While Toyota will start building 10,000 Camry Hybrids annually from 2010, it will be some years before battery replacement

will become an issue and Mr Evans suggested that full local recycling was possible by then.

"You've got 300,000km before they may need replacing – at 20,000km a year, that's 15 years, so there's quite a long lag time between now and when we start to see volumes of the batteries hitting the wall," he said.

"There isn't a plan (for local recycling), but we would expect that, as our society moves to a more recycling focus like the Europeans, as more and more of these precious metals are recycled, then it becomes economically viable to recycle them locally. I would therefore expect that, when the volumes become economically sustainable for local recycling, you would expect us to move to that."

Mr Evans noted that each NiMH battery weighs 27kg and that "the price of nickel has gone up so much you'd be crazy not to recycle".

As well as the three batteries that have been recycled, Toyota has replaced another 14 – either as a result of a recall due to an electronic fault, or due to warranty issues – and these have been used for research and training purposes here and overseas.

Mr Evans said that the longevity of the hybrid batteries had been proven both here and overseas, with more than one million Toyota hybrids having been sold globally.

Almost the entire taxi fleet in Vancouver, Canada, was converted to hybrids some years

ago and the evidence there has reflected the experience in Australia, with 300,000km-plus mileages proving to be the norm.

He said the issue of battery life was merely an urban myth that might scare off some potential early adopters, but does not believe it is a big issue in the minds of most consumers.

In fact, he suggested that the lower stress put on the petrol engine in a hybrid car meant that they went further without the need for a major overhaul than a Ford Falcon or Holden Commodore.

Cairns taxi operator Graham Boundy, who owns Black and White Taxis, said last month that the Prius costs half as much as his conventional cabs in terms of fuel and maintenance costs. Local dealer Pacific Toyota has delivered 32 Prius taxis in the harsh environment of Cairns and has orders for a further eight.

Toyota Australia senior vice-president David Buttner said that hybrid technology remains important to the company and is serious about its responsibility to the environment.

"Toyota Australia regards the batteries as a key ecological issue and has had a recycling solution in place for more than seven years," said Mr Buttner.

"Toyota's hybrid batteries are designed to last the life of the vehicle. We have sold more than 10,000 hybrid vehicles in Australia and the performance of the batteries has been outstanding. Hybrid Synergy Drive is a core technology for Toyota and an important part of the company's strategy towards the ultimate eco car."

Toyota hits sales bump – next page

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Toyota hits sales bump

TMC forecasts lower sales as VW replaces Ford as worldwide number three

By DAVID HASSALL

TOYOTA'S unrelenting global growth has hit a bump in the road with the world's largest car-maker lowering its global production for the first time in recent memory because of slowing worldwide demand.

The revised forecast means that the Japanese giant will not achieve its plan to break the 10 million vehicles sales barrier for the first time next year.

At the same time, Volkswagen has surged to third place among the global car-makers, pushing the troubled Ford Motor Company back to fourth place and underscoring the problems afflicting the vital US market.

Proving that even the world's most profitable car company is not immune to the US economic meltdown, Toyota Motor Corporation (TMC) – which climbed above Ford for second place in 2003 and then claimed top position from General Motors in 2007 – yesterday downgraded its sales forecast for 2009 to 9.7 million.

This will almost certainly soon end Toyota's run of increasing overseas production levels, which stands at 79 consecutive months after another record sales month in July.

Earlier this month, Toyota shares hit a three-



Tundra

year low after the company announced a 4.7 per cent drop in profit in the first quarter on the back of a 38.9 per cent decline in revenue and a plunge in profit from its US operation.

TMC president Katsuaki Watanabe, who last year predicted sales would reach 10.4 million in 2009, admitted that its general forecasts had been incorrect.

"The economic environment, crude oil prices as well as the material cost trend was not accurately forecasted by us, and we initially thought there would be a greater number of vehicles sold," Mr Watanabe said at a press briefing.

Mr Watanabe said that sales in Europe are expected to decline by 3.8 per cent this year, forcing Toyota to reduce production at its assembly plant in the UK (cutting back from two shifts to one for five months) and an engine plant in Poland.

In the US, Toyota has slashed production of its Tundra pick-up and Sequoia SUV.

Despite the downturn in Europe, VW sales increased by 7.2 per cent in the first half of this year to 3.31 million vehicles, pushing it past Ford with 3.22 million.

Ford's figure could diminish further with the transfer of Jaguar and Land Rover sales to Tata Motors from June as well as falling demand in the US.

"We are delighted that the Volkswagen Group has made it to the global automobile industry's top three for the first time," said VW chief executive Martin Winterkorn.

"This shows that we are on the right track with our ever-stronger international presence and, above all, our product program. We will systematically push ahead with our growth course even in the present difficult market environment."



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ANCAP holds firm

Local crash-test ratings to remain as Europe targets tougher pedestrian safety

By DAVID HASSALL

THE Australasian New Car Assessment Program (ANCAP) has no plan to change its rating system in the wake of an announcement last week that Euro NCAP will incorporate pedestrian protection in its overall rating from 2009.

Euro NCAP will in future also consider active safety systems such as electronic stability control, which this year became mandatory for a five-star rating in Australia.

The Europeans are concerned that, while 33 of the 34 cars tested in the past year scored four or five stars for occupant protection, two-thirds of them scored only two stars (out of four) for pedestrian protection.

ANCAP chairman Lauchlan McIntosh told GoAuto this week that the Australian rating system would not be changed immediately to match the new European regime, but that ANCAP was still keen to promote pedestrian safety.

"We're pretty keen to focus on the pedestrian results, but we're not sure that adding that into the total will actually make that much difference in the Australian market," Mr McIntosh said. "There is some discussion that, if you add the pedestrian rating, as Euro NCAP are doing, everybody might just (settle for) four stars and be done with it, rather than try to get five stars."

"We think it might be better to actually focus on the pedestrian results quite separately."

As a result, it is likely that cars downgraded to four stars overall in Europe will continue to be awarded five stars in Australia on the strength of their crash-test performance.

"Yes, it's likely that you will have a situation where you have a car that's five-star in one



country and four-star in another," said Mr McIntosh. "That's already the situation in the United States, where they've split the rating based on different passenger seats – they've made a massive change in the way they rate each position and it's extremely complicated."

"We're watching how (the new European system) will work and how it will evolve (but) less and less of our cars are European-based. More of our cars are Japanese and Korean and Thai, so ... it's more important for us to look at Japan NCAP results and even Korean NCAP, which is starting up."

"Of course, we'll have the Chinese cars coming in as well, so we'll be testing those to our own protocols and rating them for the Australian market. We've got some lined up in the next six months or so. There's no reason why they shouldn't get it right."

One point on which Mr McIntosh agrees with Euro NCAP is the decision to keep five stars as the maximum score because consumers understand that.

"I don't think it makes any difference," he said. "What was a five-star hotel 10 years ago isn't a five-star hotel today. I don't think it's that big a drama. Over time, you just modify the hurdles that people have to jump."

Mr McIntosh made the point that the Australian Design Rules (ADRs) were once the hurdle that the car-makers had to jump, but these days a car that simply meets the ADRs would rate at little more than one star.

Euro NCAP announced the launch of its new 2009 rating system at the same time that it released the results for five new cars – the Daihatsu Cuore, Hyundai i30, Lancia Delta, Renault Koleos and Mercedes Benz ML-class – noting that four of the five received the maximum five-star award for adult occupant protection (the Daihatsu scored four stars) but none achieved higher than a two-star pedestrian rating.

The organisation said that, when Euro NCAP was established in 1997, the achievement of five stars in adult occupant protection did not even seem possible, yet now it is a regular occurrence.

Euro NCAP secretary-general Michiel van Ratingen said that there were still areas of safety where lives could be saved that needed to be prioritised by manufacturers.

"It is imperative that Euro NCAP continues to set higher benchmarks for car-makers to aspire to. Our new rating system will do this," he said.

"I have no doubt that manufacturers will step up to the challenge, just as they did when we first started."

"The creation of new technologies means enhanced safety performance and a potential reduction of fatalities on our roads. We intend to reward those manufacturers that make this their ultimate goal."

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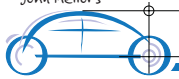
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Dual-punch Porsche

Direct injection and a double-clutch gearbox transform the iconic 911

By BYRON MATHIOUDAKIS

WITH new direct-injection engine technology, significant suspension modifications and the introduction of a dual-clutch manual gearbox dubbed PDK, Porsche's facelifted 997 is the most advanced 911 ever.

On sale from September 20 from \$219,300 (up a whopping \$18,300), it is also the most expensive, although this is at the federal government's proposed 33 per cent luxury car tax rather than at the 25 per cent levy affecting the outgoing version's pricing.

Without the tax hike, the latest 911 is still about \$10,000 more expensive than its



Carrera 4S

predecessor – reflecting the extra technology and equipment levels across most of the range. However, stripped of the extra taxes and equipment upgrades, the new 911s are only up by around 1.5 per cent, according to Porsche Cars Australia managing director Michael Winkler.

Visually, the 997's transition to Series II is subtle, with the most obvious being the redesigned front and rear bumpers, revised headlights incorporating bi-Xenon headlights with washers and daytime LED running lights, and reshaped tail-lights.

Look more carefully and you may notice the newly designed wheels, exhaust outlets, door mirrors (which are now larger and double armed) and front air intakes, with the latter's shape now more in harmony with the lighting/indicator panel above.

But it is under the skin where changes run deepest, resulting in one of the most heavily altered 911s in the model's 45-year run.

Leading the charge is a pair of new direct fuel injection engines espousing improved efficiencies for Porsche's trademark water-cooled horizontally opposed six-cylinder boxer units. Again available in 3.6- and 3.8-litre guise, both engines feature an aluminium engine block (saving 6kg), four overhead camshafts, four valves per cylinder, variable valve timing (known as VarioCam Plus), and dry-sump lubrication with an on-demand oil pump.

Goals for Porsche's engineers were to create a new engine family that is significantly more compact, has a much lower centre of gravity, and can be flexible enough to increase or decrease in capacity from under around 2.5 litres to beyond 4.0 litres. The old unit

reached its maximum capacity at 3.8.

There are 40 per cent fewer moving parts thanks to innovations like a new timing chain technology and one-piece cylinder heads with integrated camshaft bearings and guide cylinders for the hydraulic cup tappets.

The engine's power-unit rigidity is now 22 per cent better than before, to handle the extra power of a turbocharger in future iterations such as the one that is expected to feature in the upcoming 997 911 Turbo Series II in 2009.

Porsche has fitted four special 'scavenging' oil pumps to stop oil from 'slopping' around inside the engine unevenly at more extreme cornering speeds, improving oil circulation and effectiveness, and reducing mechanical friction, to the point where there is a two per cent fuel economy benefit.

The latest 911 engines also introduce a new air-intake manifold to aid power and torque accessibility, while new air filters last 30 per cent longer than before. A more efficient exhaust system helps achieve a Euro V emissions rating.

The upshot of these changes is a pair of powerplants that deliver the naturally aspirated specific engine output benchmark of 100hp and 110Nm per litre for the first time in a 911.

The all-new 3614cc flat six serves up 254kW at 6500rpm (up 15kW on the old 3596cc engine), while the Carrera S's 3800cc secures 283kW at 6000rpm instead of the 261kW rating of the old 3824cc unit. Peak torque rises by 20Nm in both cases – to 390Nm at 4400rpm and 420Nm at 4400rpm for the 3.6- and 3.8-litre engine respectively.

Continued next page

PRICING:

Carrera Coupe	\$219,300
Carrera Coupe (PDK)	\$226,300
Carrera S Coupe	\$248,100
Carrera S Coupe (PDK)	\$255,100
Carrera Cabriolet	\$241,500
Carrera Cabriolet (PDK)	\$248,500
Carrera S Cabriolet	\$270,300
Carrera S Cabriolet (PDK)	\$277,300
Carrera 4 Coupe	\$236,400
Carrera 4 Coupe (PDK)	\$243,400
Carrera 4S Coupe	\$265,200
Carrera 4S Coupe (PDK)	\$272,200
Carrera 4 Cabriolet	\$258,600
Carrera 4 Cabriolet (PDK)	\$265,600
Carrera 4S Cabriolet	\$287,400
Carrera 4S Cabriolet (PDK)	\$294,400
Targa 4	\$258,600
Targa 4 (PDK)	\$265,600
Targa 4S	\$287,400
Targa 4S (PDK)	\$294,400
Turbo Coupe	\$361,100
Turbo Coupe Tiptronic (a)	\$369,100
Turbo Cabriolet	\$386,800
Turbo Cabriolet Tiptronic (a)	\$394,800
GT2	\$447,500

Note: Prices include 33% luxury car tax

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Dual-punch Porsche

Continued from previous page

PDK stands for Doppelkupplungsgetriebe – a seven-speed double-clutch transmission with roots dating back a quarter of a century to when Porsche first developed the system (successfully) for motor racing – although the current item has ‘only’ been in development over the last nine years, according to Porsche’s 911 powertrain programme manager Thomas Krickelberg.

Today’s version is co-devised with specialists ZF, and – like the (unrelated) DSG item pioneered in a production vehicle by Audi in the 2003 TT V6 – differs from a conventional transmission by being a fully manual gearbox that comprises two clutches that activate two separate sets of pre-selected gear ratios.

Yes, the regular six-speed manual gearbox 911 has a marginally faster top speed, but 911s packing PDK offer quicker acceleration – even when not fitted with the optional Sports Chrono Plus pack’s launch control system.

Nevertheless, the Carrera S Coupe manual breaks free of the 300km/h barrier at 302km/h (up 9km/h), which is within a whisker of the 996 911 GT3 and 996 Turbo, while the Carrera S Coupe with PDK’s 300km/h top speed is 15km/h more than the old S Tiptronic. Similarly, the regular 911 Carrera coupe manual will achieve 289km/h (up 4km/h), which is just 2km/h quicker than its PDK sibling and



7km/h faster than the outgoing 911 3.6 Tiptronic auto.

Of the rear-wheel drive 911s, only the Cabriolet 3.6 manual fails to breach the five-second 0-100km/h acceleration time at 5.1 seconds (PDK: 4.9 seconds), with both the 3.6 and 3.8 manual coupes shaving one-tenth off the Series 1 cars at 4.9 and 4.7 seconds respectively.

Pick PDK and you cut another 0.2 seconds off these times for a 0.8 second saving compared to the old Tiptronic times, while another two-tenths are sliced again if the Sport Chrono Plus’ launch control system is fitted, for a 0-100km/h result that is just 0.4 seconds shy of the 997 Turbo manual’s 3.9 seconds sprint time.

Similarly, economy and emissions benefit, with the 3.6 manual coupe using six per cent less fuel at 10.3L/100km (previously 11L/100km), while the S equivalent is eight per cent more economical at 11.5 versus 10.6L/100km.

In the PDK guise the gains are even



Carrera S

greater, with both the Carrera coupes 13 per cent more frugal – 11.2 down to 9.8L/100km for the 3.6 and 11.7 down to 10.2L/100km for the 3.8. As a result, CO2 emissions fall by a similar margin, with the Carrera coupe manual nine per cent cleaner (266 versus 242g/km) and the Carrera S coupe manual 10 per cent better (277 versus 250g/km).

PDK versions of both 911 coupes emit 15 per cent less CO2 emissions – from 270 down to 230g/km for the 3.6 and 283 down to 240g/km for the 3.8.

Porsche has also modified the suspension and brakes for the 911 Series II, with revised springs, dampers and anti-roll bars across the range. The technical changes are widespread, but perhaps the most obvious change for 911 aficionados is the inclusion of an additional stop spring on both the front and rear axles, which (controversially) eliminates the car’s famous nose ‘bobbing’ action.

For full details and drive impressions, go to www.GoAuto.com.au from Thursday. Read more: [GoAuto's European drive](#)

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Diesel will do

Citroen's Gen II C5 has arrived as an all-diesel affair, priced from \$49,990

By MARTON PETTENDY

CITROEN has taken direct aim at Europe's dominant premium mid-sized models with its second-generation C5 range, which goes on sale in Australia from this Saturday (September 6) as a diesel-only model for the first time.

To be available with the option of two bodystyles, two engines and two specification levels, the redesigned French mid-sizer is expected to attract some 400 customers this year and a further 1100 buyers in 2009 – some 60 per cent of which are forecast to be conquest sales.

The first-generation C5 model range was fundamental to the relaunch of the historic Citroen brand in Australia, attracting a high of 776 sales in 2003 following the C5 hatchback's release here in June 2001 and the C5 Estate's launch two months later.

However, sales have dwindled to their lowest point in the model's seven-year lifespan, with just 427 examples sold in 2007 and sales down 43.7 per cent so far this year with just 147 sold.

Combined with slower C3 and C4 hatch sales, Citroen will sell only about 3000 vehicles in 2007 (down from a high of 3803 in last year's boom market and similar to 2005 levels), but hopes the new C5 will contribute to a new record total of 4000 sales in 2009. Year-to-date, Citroen Australia is 15.6 per cent down, with 1739 sales.



Despite the elimination of an entry-level 2.0-litre petrol model priced under \$40,000, Citroen claims the decision to go all-diesel with the new C5 range – which will open \$10,000 higher at an unchanged \$49,990 for the C5 2.0 HDi Comfort sedan – was easy because 85 per cent of current C5 sales were diesel versions.

Furthermore, the remaining 15 per cent of sales comprised the discontinued 3.0-litre V6 petrol variant, which Citroen Australia said was eclipsed by the new C5's headline engine, a 2.7-litre twin-turbocharged diesel V6.

Available only in Exclusive specification grade, the flagship 2.7 HDi pushes C5 sedan pricing to \$62,990 – well upstream of both the \$53,990 2.2 HDi twin-turbo and \$55,990 3.0 V6 sedans it replaces.

For the first time, six-cylinder power is also available in the C5 wagon, which switches its name from Estate to Tourer and gives the C5 range a top-shelf pricetag of \$65,740, for the C5 2.7 V6 HDi Exclusive Tourer.

The C5 2.0 HDi Comfort Tourer is priced just \$750 higher than the C5 2.0 HDi SX Estate it replaces, while the C5 2.0 HDi Comfort sedan is expected to be the volume-selling C5 variant with 50 per cent of sales, followed by the 2.0 HDi Exclusive sedan (\$54,990) at 30 per cent, and the 2.7 HDi Exclusive at 20 per cent. The sedan is expected to account for 70 per cent of sales.

The Exclusive grade is priced \$5000 higher than the base Comfort level, the wagon bodystyle adds \$2750 and the twin-turbo 2.7 V6 carries a further \$8000 premium over the 2.0 HDi four-cylinder turbo-diesel. All new C5s will come as standard with a

six-speed automatic transmission.

Based on the same new foundations that underpins Citroen's \$100,000-plus luxury flagship, the C6 sedan, as well as sister brand Peugeot's new 407 model range, the second-generation C5 eschews its predecessor's five-door hatchback bodystyle for a more conventional four-door sedan with a boot.

Riding on a (70mm-longer) 2815mm wheelbase, the new C5 is bigger in every dimension, except height. The sedan is 1451mm high and now 4779mm long, while the Tourer is 1479mm high and now 4829mm long. The sedan's boot holds 439 litres, while the wagon can handle up to 1462 litres with the rear seats folded. All models have a 71-litre fuel tank.

The newest Citroen will be available in Europe with two (92kW 1.8 and 103kW 2.0-litre) four-cylinder petrol guises, plus the 155kW 3.0-litre petrol V6 and no fewer than four turbo-diesel engines – led by the 2.7 HDi V6 twin-turbo and also including 80kW, 100kW and 125kW four-pots.

Joining the carryover 2.0 HDi engine in Australia, the C5's 2.720cc diesel V6, jointly developed by PSA Peugeot-Citroen and Ford, was first seen in the C6 and features twin variable-geometry turbochargers and a cast-iron engine block.

Like the 1997cc four-cylinder turbo-diesel 2.0 HDi engine, Citroen's 2.7-litre twin-turbo diesel V6 meets Euro IV emissions standards and features four valves per cylinder (for a total of 24), an 88mm cylinder stroke, 1650-bar common-rail injection system and variable-displacement turbocharging technology.

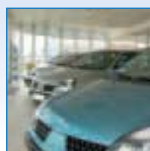
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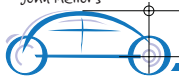


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Diesel will do

Continued from previous page

But while the 2.0 HDi develops 100kW at 4000rpm and 320Nm of torque from a low 2000rpm (340Nm in overboost mode), the 2.7 HDi V6 adds an extra two cylinders and a turbocharger to produce 150kW at the same 4000rpm plus a beefier 440Nm from just 1900rpm.

The result is higher top speed (just above 220km/h for V6 models versus around 200km/h for the 2.0 HDi), quicker 0-100km/h acceleration (12.8 seconds for the 2.0 HDi sedan and 13.3 for the wagon – down to 9.6 and 9.8 seconds respectively for the V6) and higher fuel consumption (7.1 and 7.2L/100km for the 2.0 sedan and wagon, compared with 8.4 and 8.5L/100km for the V6). The six-cylinder also produces more CO2 emissions (223g/km for the sedan – up from 189g/km for the 2.0, plus 2g/km for the wagon).

C5 kerb weights start at 1658kg for the sedan and 1695kg for the Tourer, rising to 1766kg (V6 sedan) and 1802kg (V6 wagon). Similarly, payloads range between 532kg (2.0 sedan) and 571kg (2.7 wagon). The unbraked towing capacity for all models is 750kg, rising to 1200kg (2.0 wagon), 1300kg (2.0 sedan and V6 wagon) and 1400kg (V6 sedan) with a braked trailer.

All 2009 C5s employ Citroen's second-generation fixed-hub steering wheel from



the C4, a new electric parking brake, and double wishbone front and multi-link rear suspension with self-levelling Hydractive 3+ hydro-pneumatic spring/damping system.

The entry-level C5 Comfort will come standard with ESP stability control, ASR

traction control, ABS brakes with EBD and emergency brake assist (including auto hazard lights), operating 304mm ventilated floating discs up front and 290mm solid fixed rear discs. The C5 sedan scored five-star occupant, four-star child and two-star pedestrian protection results from Euro NCAP.

All new C5s also come with at least seven airbags, including adaptive driver and front passenger airbags, twin front side airbags, a driver's knee airbag and twin side curtain airbags, plus five three-point seatbelts, front seatbelt pretensioners, four outboard seatbelt force-limiters, seatbelt warning lights, auto door locking, deadlocking and superlocking.

Also standard from basic Comfort specification grade is cruise control with speed-limiter and black panel function, dual-zone climate-control air-conditioning with cooled glovebox, auto headlights, auto wipers, auto-dimming rear-view mirror, one-touch power windows, power/heated/folding mirrors, leather height/reach-adjustable steering wheel, external roof bars and a six-speaker CD/MP3 sound system with steering wheel controls (Comfort variants miss out on an auxiliary input jack, while the V6 gets an in-glass aerial instead of a roof unit).

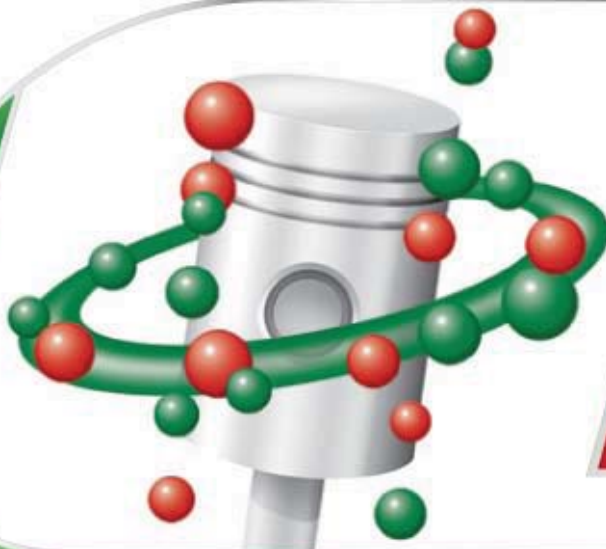
Continuing the standard equipment list is an acoustic laminated windscreen, rear side sunblinds (the sedan also gets a rear sunblind), static adaptive front-lighting system (AFS), front/rear foglights, follow-me-home lights, front puddle lights, rear parking sensors, hill-start assist, 17x7.0-inch alloy wheels with 225/60-section tyres and a 17-inch steel spare wheel.

PRICING:

2.0 HDi Comfort sedan (a)	\$49,990
2.0 HDi Comfort Tourer (a)	\$52,740
2.0 HDi Exclusive sedan (a)	\$54,990
2.0 HDi Exclusive Tourer (a)	\$57,740
2.7 V6 HDi Exclusive sedan (a)	\$62,990
2.7 V6 HDi Exclusive Tourer (a)	\$65,740

standard with ESP stability control, ASR traction control, ABS brakes with EBD and emergency brake assist (including auto hazard lights), operating 304mm ventilated floating discs up front and

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Jazz sedan bid

Honda is set to introduce a Jazz-based four-door sedan Down Under inside the next six months

By BYRON MATHIOUDAKIS

HOT on the heels of the second-generation hatch, Honda Australia is expected to add a four-door sedan version to its new Jazz range within the next six months.

However, it will not be the existing City/Aria sedan that has served the company in its mostly Asian markets since 2002, but an all-new model derived from the second-generation Jazz hatch launched in Australia last week.

Whether it will be called the City or Jazz sedan in Australia remains to be seen.

Although Honda executives will not confirm the arrival of a three-box Jazz to Australia, it has been reported recently that managing director and CEO Yasuhide Mizuno supports the idea of an inexpensive compact four-door sedan like the City.

He suggested that some of the four million or so Australian households who speak a language other than English are more inclined to purchase a sedan than a hatch, even in the light- and small-car segments.

The existing City has been developed expressly for this type of buyer taste, and has been sold in markets such as India, Pakistan, Malaysia, Thailand, Singapore and Japan since late 2002.

Adding weight to Honda Australia's City/Jazz sedan ambitions, senior director Lindsay Smalley hinted last week that he would like to see a sub-Civic sedan sell

alongside the Jazz hatch.

"There is certainly room for it," he told GoAuto.

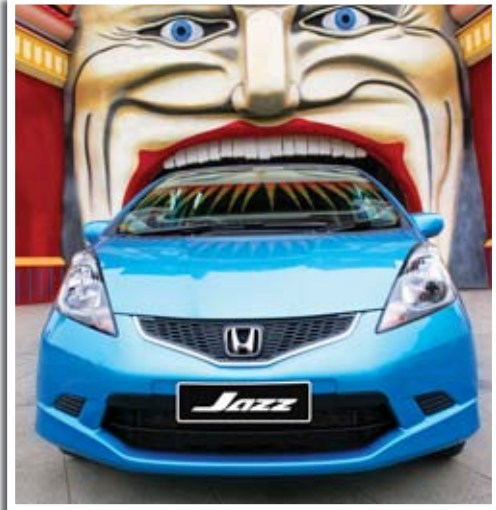
The light-sedan segment is growing, with the established Toyota Yaris, Holden Barina, Kia Rio and Hyundai Accent soon to be joined by a Proton (based on the Saga), while Mazda and Ford are believed to be deliberating over importing sedan versions of the Mazda2 and upcoming Fiesta.

Images of the next-generation City have been surfacing on the Internet for some time now, with a completely undisguised example appearing on independent Honda news website 'Temple of VTEC'.

Unlike the existing City, the new model is more than merely a Jazz with a boot bolted on. The 2009 City appears to share no body parts with the new Jazz, and even has its own dashboard – with a more conservative layout and appearance.

One Honda insider did admit that the latest Jazz and City were developed to share as many under-the-skin parts as possible, including the centrally mounted fuel tank that allows for the fitment of the hatch's versatile 'Magic Seats'.

If Australia does get the go-ahead for the new City, the engine in question is likely to be the same 1.5-litre single-overhead cam 16-valve four-cylinder petrol engine that



powers the new Jazz VTi and VTi-S.

Driving the front wheels via a five-speed manual or (new) five-speed automatic gearbox, it delivers 88kW of power at 6600rpm and 145Nm of torque at 4800rpm.

Not coincidentally, the Thailand facility that has supplied Australians with the first-generation Jazz since 2006 (previously it came out of Japan) will also produce the new City alongside the latest Jazz in the next few months. To this end, Honda in Thailand has added another factory in order to almost double total Honda vehicle production output to 240,000 units per annum.

If Honda does elect to use the City name, it will not be the first time. From 1984 to 1986 a two-seater three-door City hatch was imported to Australia and sold as a light-commercial vehicle.

Jazz zinger – page 13

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Applications close **Wednesday 10th September 2008.**



Honda hits the right note in most areas with its all-new light car – but misses the ESC key

By BYRON MATHIOUDAKIS

AFTER six years and 51,000 sales in Australia, Honda has reinvented its Jazz light-car with an all-new body and interior, revised mechanicals and significantly improved refinement, dynamics, safety and space levels.

However, electronic stability control (ESC) will not be available for at least one year, and the expected volume-selling Jazz VTi leaps by \$1000 to \$19,170 as a manual and \$21,490 for the auto.

Offsetting this in the Thai-built Jazz is the implementation of standard side and curtain airbags on the VTi and VTi-S. They are part of a \$1000 safety pack on the entry-level GLi, which keeps its predecessor's \$15,990 pricing, while all models also gain rear-wheel disc brakes, larger wheels and more equipment.

Virtually nothing has been carried over from before, but the old Jazz's front-wheel drive configuration, tallboy five-door hatchback

design and flush-with-the-floor 'Magic Seat' rear seat-folding arrangement (made possible by a centrally mounted fuel tank) remain.

With 2.5 million sales worldwide, the outgoing Jazz was an unexpected global success despite having been designed primarily for Japan, so the new model has grown in almost every dimension as it takes on a more pivotal role for Honda – particularly in the North American and European markets.

Thus, the company has refined its 'Maximum Man, Minimum Machine' philosophy to vehicle design with the 'Super Forward Cabin' approach for the 2009 Jazz.

Increases abound in the new car's 3900mm length (+55mm), 1695mm width (+20mm) and 2500mm wheelbase (+50mm), while front and rear tracks are 35mm and 30mm wider than before, at 1492mm and 1475mm respectively. Only the 1525mm height remains constant.

The second-generation Jazz now has a Mercedes-Benz A-class-style monospace silhouette, with A-pillars that are positioned more forward than before to liberate more cabin space.

The resulting interior dimension changes, which Honda claims give the Jazz medium-car space, include 30mm more cabin width, 44mm more front shoulder room, 43mm more rear shoulder room, 40mm more rear knee room, and 10mm more rear head clearance.

New, larger front seats are now also "medium sedan-sized" and so accommodate wider posteriors, yet the seatbacks are scalloped so the seats do not have to slide forward for the split rear seats to clear them when folded down into their floor cavity.

Furthermore, the rear seats are now 20mm wider, 15mm deeper, have 10mm thicker cushions, and include head restraints that sit flush with the top of the backrest to assist reversing vision and turn the rear-seat folding procedure into one simple movement.

However, with all seats erect, the Jazz offers 43 litres less luggage capacity than before, at 337 litres, while a full-sized spare wheel resides underneath the floor. There is also 848 litres available to the window line in two-seater 'utility' mode.

Recline the front passenger seat and a 2400mm-long object such as a surfboard can be accommodated or – from the rear of the front seat – a 1720mm object (say, Tom Cruise lying down). A 1280mm-tall pot plant can be transported with the rear cushion folded vertically.

A low hatch opening means that heavy objects need only be lifted 605mm from the ground, while wider opening doors have also been incorporated, with the rear pair now arcing to an 80-degree angle (with two stop settings along the way) for easier entry/egress and access.

Continued next page



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Jazz zinger

Continued from previous page

Forward vision is aided by A-pillars that are 20mm narrower, quarter windows that are three times larger than before and a windscreen that is 20 per cent bigger due to its base being positioned 120mm further forward, while the upper windscreen edge is set further back into the roof.

The driver now has a tilt/telescopic steering column with more adjustment, and a left footrest, while the perceived quality of trim and materials has increased due to the use of different grains and textures.

The Jazz's body is far stronger than previously, thanks to the adoption of Honda's Advanced Compatibility Engineering structure, which includes a load-distributing frame for better crash safety as part of the company's G-Force Control (G-CON) technology. Honda's internal crash-test regime suggests that – fitted with the side and curtain airbags that are a \$1000 option on the base GLi but standard on the rest – the new car should score a five-star Euro NCAP crash safety result.

However, unlike the pioneering Hyundai Getz and latest Mazda2, ESC will not be



available on Australian-bound Jazz models for some time, so a four-star Australian NCAP result is the best that the 2009 model will achieve. Honda is developing an ESC system for Australia, even though it is offered on other Jazz variants with different mechanical configurations abroad, with an estimated arrival time slated for sometime in 2010.

Class-leading pedestrian-impact scores are also on the cards, thanks to Honda's diligence in reducing potential bonnet, bumper and wiper-striking related trauma. Still on safety, increased reinforcements like an additional lower member bolsters rigidity, which, in turn, makes for a better riding and more dynamic driving experience and greatly reduces noise, vibration and harshness

transmission. For example, the interior is a claimed 4dB quieter than before, helped by the implementation of sound-absorbing material in the roof, carpet and dashboard.

Honda's chief engineer of product development Toshiyuki Harada told GoAuto that over 90 per cent of the latest Jazz's platform is new, with only the fuel tank and "a few bolts" carried over from before.

Extensively revised versions of the previous car's MacPherson strut front and H-shaped torsion beam rear suspension systems have been employed, with increased wheel travel via larger springs incorporated to address the old Jazz's brittle ride. Improving steering, handling and roadholding qualities were further goals for the new car.

PRICING:

GLi	\$15,990
GLi (a)	\$17,990
VTi	\$19,170
VTi (a)	\$21,490
VTi-S	\$21,590
VTi-S (a)	\$23,920

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Applications are strictly confidential and close on Friday 12 September 2008.



Suzuki stands tall

Japanese brand plans to reach 40,000 annual sales by 2010 via three all-new models



Kizashi III

By PHILIP LORD

SUZUKI Australia claims it is on track to boost annual sales by 14,000 units over the next two years via new and refreshed products to go on sale over the next 18 months.

Suzuki Australia general manager Tony Devers told GoAuto at last week's launch of the facelifted Grand Vitara that a strategy was in place to reach 40,000 sales by 2010.

Mr Devers said that the strategy included not only new products but also "to develop and position the Suzuki brand image as aspirational and sporty and great value for money".

Mr Devers said that the third element of Suzuki's growth strategy was "to ensure we have a professional dealer network that generates industry-leading customer satisfaction".

Various sporting and conservation sponsorships and the SX4's rally participation are also part of the brand renovation Suzuki Australia is undertaking.

Mr Devers noted the importance of new product in new segments. "We currently only

participate in 45 per cent of the Australian car market, so (we need) new models in new segments," he said. "We will do it (increase sales) by offering new products in new segments and (with) incremental volume."

The just-released Grand Vitara update is expected to build sales up from around 300 per month for the existing model to 500 per month. Then there is next year's new sub-Swift micro-car (see page 17) and the much-anticipated mid-size luxury car, which has been previewed as a concept called the Kizashi.

Mr Devers said he was confident the Kizashi would add a substantial number of sales to Suzuki's bottom line, although actual on-sale timing has not been locked down.

"The mid-size prestige car, we will look at 4000 or 5000 of those," he said. "We have been told we can have it towards the end of next year but then you have to weigh up whether you launch it in November/December or do you hold off and launch it in February.

"I could say 2009 but probably it's going to be 2010 – and that'll be our choice. We're probably better off waiting."

According to Mr Devers, while Suzuki Australia wants to use the Kizashi name, the production model's appellation is yet to be decided. There will be a 2.4-litre and a V6 engine, the latter possibly a 3.6-litre, according to Mr Devers – both of which are derived from the newest Grand Vitara engines.

The new Suzuki will be slotted into a segment that is populated by well-respected Japanese marques, which Suzuki clearly has in its sights. Mr Devers said he saw competition as "probably Mazda6 as a benchmark, and (Honda's Accord) Euro. (Toyota) Camry to an extent, but I think we'll be positioning it more against Mazda6 and Euro".

Even though in North America Suzuki sells a vehicle called XL7, based on a monocoque GM platform, Australia is not on the list for this model.

Mr Devers pointed to a longer-term proposition for Australia in the works: "There is a brand-new seven-seater in development now, which will be 2011 – unless we can get it earlier."

Continued next page



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DATE: Thursday 18th September 2008
TIME: 7.00pm (pre-dinner reception)
VENUE: Nine Darling Street, South Yarra, Melbourne, Victoria
COST: \$135 per person
\$1350 Corporate Table of 10
(all prices include GST)
RSVP: Friday 12th September 2008

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Suzuki stands tall

Continued from previous page

Also attending the Grand Vitara launch in Central Australia last week was Mr Toshihiro Suzuki, a Suzuki board member and senior managing executive officer, and executive general manager for global marketing.

Mr Suzuki endorsed the four-cylinder version as Kizashi's key volume model, citing escalating fuel costs as the main motivation.

The Japanese company is working on hydrogen fuel cell vehicles, one of which is in co-operation with General Motors. Mr Suzuki said that despite the shared arrangement's advantages, it was not a simple process.

"While GM's hybrid powertrain is designed for a large car, Suzuki has to arrange the hybrid to suit a small car," he said.

The fuel cell platform Suzuki is working on is based on the SX4. Suzuki will reveal both the SX4 FCV and a concept dubbed the Crossage, which is powered by an air-cooled fuel cell system, alongside the all-new Alto at the Paris motor show in October.

While the company has just launched a facelifted Grand Vitara, the question was put to Mr Suzuki about whether the Grand Vitara would continue as a genuine off-roader – unlike most of its competitors. "At this moment, yes," said Mr Suzuki.

Mr Suzuki said that the company



SX4 FCV

ultimately had to offer a vehicle that appealed to customers. "Suzuki has to

WHAT'S COMING:

Suzuki micro-car	mid-2009
Kizashi medium sedan	early 2010
New seven-seat SUV	2011

investigate competitors and market conditions. We have to consider customers demands," he said.

However, Mr Suzuki also pointed to the Japanese company's long off-road vehicle heritage, which began in 1968 with the LJ10. "While we will consider that (no low-range transmission, like its competitors), off-road capability is a Suzuki strong point."

Answering criticism that the current Grand Vitara lacks an automatic transmission option, Mr Suzuki said it was primarily intended for the European market, where automatics were not so popular.

While Mr Suzuki would not comment on timing, he did acknowledge his company was

planning to start developing an auto version of the diesel Grand Vitara. "In the future, automatic transmission (in the diesel) will be used, but at the moment it has to be developed. It depends on the market conditions."

Mr Suzuki said cost was the primary reason that the new 2.4-litre four-cylinder Grand Vitara engine was teamed with an (optional) four-speed automatic when competitors were appearing with more ratios.

"To achieve good fuel efficiency, sometime in the future Suzuki will have to consider a six-speed automatic transmission. (However), there are cost issues," he said.

Suzuki is represented in 190 countries globally and remains the world's 12th largest car-maker following nine consecutive years of sales growth.

Wishing on A-Star – next page

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Wishing on A-Star

Alto emerges front-runner in Suzuki's micro-car plan, badged as the A-Star

By PHILIP LORD and MARTON PETTENDY
SUZUKI Australia is expected to use this year's Australian International Motor Show in Sydney to announce the Alto as its hotly-anticipated sub-Swift micro-car – just a week after it makes its global public debut at the Paris motor show on October 2.

As previously reported, Suzuki will introduce a cheap sub-light car to Australia by the middle of 2009 and has two global products to choose from: the Alto, which is made in India by the Maruti-Suzuki joint-venture, or the Suzuki Splash, which is made in Suzuki's facility in Hungary.

Suzuki Australia will announce which car it will take at the Sydney show next month, and with low pricing being the paramount consideration to minimise sales substitution of the popular Swift, GoAuto understands the Alto is the current odds-on favourite.

According to Suzuki Australia general manager Tony Devers, the model would come with a full suite of safety features, Prius-like fuel economy and a pricetag under \$13,000.

"We would have to position it well below Swift, because we don't want to undermine Swift sales, so it may be a sub-\$13,000 car with ABS, curtain airbags, ESP and under 5.0L/100km," he said. "We will pick what we consider best for the market."

While the Splash is already on sale in Europe following its premiere at last year's Frankfurt motor show, the Alto is yet to make a public

appearance in production guise.

The latter was previewed by a concept dubbed the A-Star – a name Mr Devers said he hoped to apply to the all-new model when it arrives next year.

Suzuki describes the Alto and Splash as 'phase two' of its family-car development plan, but Mr Devers thinks his smallest model will more likely be bought by students or empty-nesters. "They are inner-city type cars," he said.

How many sales the Alto/Splash can attract "depends on what fuel prices do", but Mr Devers said he expected at least 8000 additional sales.

"Look, the way things are going, probably another 10,000 incremental business. We will probably, just by the nature of the beast, cannibalise some Swift sales, so we may lose a few Swift sales, but if we get to 10,000 of the other one, there's probably 8000 incremental sales," he said.

Suzuki board member, senior managing executive officer and executive general manager for global marketing Toshihiro Suzuki, who was in Australia last week for the facelifted Grand Vitara launch, said that there will be no issues if Australia sources the new sub-light car from its factories in India or Hungary.

"Quality out of India and Hungary (is) the same and both (are) nearly as good as Japan," he said.

The five-door Alto hatch has already been confirmed for sale in New Zealand

next year following the commencement of production in October.

Annual production of the tiny front-drive model is expected to reach 960,000 by 2010, with around 100,000 units destined for European markets.

Both Alto and Splash are offered with a choice of 1.0-litre or 1.2-litre petrol engines. In Europe, the Splash is offered with a 48kW 1.0-litre three-cylinder or 63kW 1.2-litre four-cylinder petrol engine, plus a 55kW 1.3-litre turbo-diesel engine.

At present, the 1.0-litre and 1.3-litre versions of Splash are manual-only, with a four-speed option for the 1.2-litre.

Like New Zealand's model, GoAuto believes Australia's Alto is most likely to be powered by the all-alloy Euro V emissions-compliant 996cc three-cylinder engine, which produces average CO2 emissions of less than 109g/km.

Further, Mr Suzuki also hinted at an LPG future for Suzuki's sub-Swift city car.

"LPG is very important, so Suzuki has to develop an engine for LPG," he said. "It is currently testing engine durability for LPG. For Suzuki a small car is main volume, so a car with LPG engine will go into a small car. A three- or four-cylinder car."

But the Suzuki executive warned that an LPG-powered sub-light car was not fait accompli.

"Suzuki has to investigate volume and the customer wants. Infrastructure is a problem, globally," he said.



Alto



Splash

Kracka

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'Nissan' Megane



Renault's next small car will use Nissan tech to reduce its retail price

By BYRON MATHIOUDAKIS

RENAULT'S next-generation Megane small car will herald a new philosophy for the marque that should see prices that are in line with the mainstream Japanese brands in Australia.

To be unveiled at the Paris motor show in early October, Renault's third-generation Megane might even enter our market from as low as \$21,000 in today's money when it is released in 2010 – around the same as a Mazda3 Neo.

This is according to Renault Australia managing director Rudi Koenig, as he prepares for the arrival of the first of his volume products, the Koleos compact SUV.

"Renault is becoming a much more global company, sourcing componentry from all its plants around the world," he told GoAuto recently.

However, to achieve this new price positioning, the next Megane in Paris will not be exactly the same under the skin as the next Megane slated for Australia, as Renault leverages its lower-cost brand affiliates Nissan, Dacia and Samsung.

"There is an opportunity for us to establish a 'European stream' of Renault, and a more 'international stream' of Renault products," Mr Koenig revealed. "And on some of the new products we will consider whether we will take the international stream – which will give us a much better-value proposition."

Mr Koenig used the largest segment in Australia – the small-car market – as a prime

example. "The problem we face as European (car distributors) at the moment is that we need to charge a \$2000 premium over our Japanese competitors, but to get to the volume part of the market we have got to have a pricing position that is in line with the Japanese pricing position. And to do that, we have to be in line with Japanese costs," he said.

"Now the international stream version – which has got more sharing of Nissan componentry – will give us that opportunity in the future. It's all about getting the right car at the right pricing point."

Not coincidentally, the Megane III is closely related to the Koleos, which is itself built on the Renault-Nissan Alliance 'C' platform that debuted underneath the super-successful (in Europe) Nissan Qashqai/Dualis. It also underpins the Nissan T31 X-Trail.

However, Mr Koenig was quick to point out that any international stream Renault wearing the Renault badge would be visually indistinguishable from its European stream brother, and would also share the same DNA in terms of driveability, safety and quality.

It will use cheaper Nissan parts, such as engines and gearboxes, as well as electrical modules and mechanical componentry, to introduce simplicity, cut complexity, and ultimately contain costs.

Importantly, the international stream Renaults will also most likely be built in a low-cost country, such as somewhere in Eastern Europe or even Africa, rather than in Western Europe like most locally bound Renaults are.

Renault is not saying exactly where right now, but countries like Turkey (which already supplies the world with the X84 Megane Sedan) or South Korea (home to Samsung, a subsidiary of Renault and the production source for Koleos, making it a strong contender) are thought to be in the running to manufacture the international stream Megane III.

This alone will be one of the single biggest factors in matching the Japanese brands for price and value.

Today's base X84 Megane Authentique 1.6 hatch retails for \$25,490 and is sourced out of Spain, adding considerably to the cost of the car compared to, say, the \$21,990 Honda Civic sedan (Thailand), \$20,990 Toyota Corolla (Japan) or \$20,490 Ford Focus (South Africa).

GoAuto also understands that, compared to the European stream Megane III, the international version will eschew items that the increasingly sophisticated European 'C' segment (small-car class) consumers expect, like keyless starting, adaptive dampers, cornering headlights and automatic radar-guided cruise control.

Volkswagen has already confirmed that its all-new Golf VI due next year will offer some of these items, adding significant complexity and cost to that car; the European stream Megane III may also follow suit, but the international version probably will not.

FULL STORY: [CLICK HERE](#)

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Audi is set to produce a race-prepped GT3

By BYRON MATHIOUDAKIS

AUDI has created its ultimate performance car in the form of a race-ready GT3 version of the R8 supercar, possibly powered by a V10 engine and with limited production planned for the second half of next year.

It will be the first time that Audi has made a racing sportscar available over-the-counter to its customers, but the Ingolstadt company has not yet revealed the price, or the likely production volume.

The car would be a competitive weapon in Australian GT racing and Audi Australia spokesperson Anna Burgdorf told us that the company would be keeping its ears open for any local customer interest, but that was too early to tell if one will ultimately come here.

Audi has not released much in the way of technical information, apart from the fact that the engine will churn out more than 500 horsepower (373kW).

That leaves us to speculate on whether it will use a development of the current 4.2-litre V8 from the RS4 or Audi's rumoured new Lamborghini-based 5.2-litre V10, which is tipped for a second-quarter 2009 debut in the regular R8.

Interestingly, Audi has revealed the involvement in the program of the company's high-tech engine plant, Audi Hungaria Motor in Győr, Hungary – which just happens to be where Audi's V10 engines are made...

For comparison, the Gallardo GT3 produces 388kW of power and 510Nm of torque while the almost race-ready but still

road-legal Porsche 997 GT3 RS – which sells in Australia for \$304,400 – produces 305kW and 405Nm from its 3.6-litre flat-six.

Although the standard R8 comes with four-wheel drive, that is prohibited by the FIA GT3 regulations so the race version employs only rear-wheel drive.

Power is transmitted via a newly developed six-speed sequential sports gearbox – most likely produced by the European division of Australia's own Holinger Engineering – while the suspension components are claimed to be almost exclusively from the production R8.

German factory driver Frank Biela, 42, who has won the famed Le Mans 24 Hour race five times for Audi as well as the German, French and British touring car titles, conducted much of the prototype testing and had the honour of rolling the car out for its first official photo opportunity.

Racing is in the mid-engined R8's blood, of course, as it is named after Audi's breakthrough Le Mans-winning race car, although it physically has more in common with its Lamborghini Gallardo sibling.

The R8 GT3 – developed by Audi Sport under the project name R16 – will take on the GT3 versions of the Gallardo, Porsche 911, Ferrari F430, Aston Martin DB9 and others in various national championships starting with selected races next year, and will ultimately battle for class honours at Le Mans.

FULL STORY: [CLICK HERE](#)

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Lone ranger

Trident creates the ultimate cruising car with the lean, mean Icen

By DAVID HASSALL

BUDDING British sportscar-maker Trident Performance Vehicles is about to commence production of a unique diesel-powered two-seater that combines supercar performance with mini-car economy.

Although powered by a mighty GM-sourced 6.6-litre turbo-diesel engine, the \$170,000 Trident Icen has a unique eight-speed automatic transmission that enables the car to cruise at 113km/h with the engine ticking over at just 980rpm. Testing at the Millbrook proving ground in the UK shows that this results in a fuel consumption figure of only 4.0L/100km when cruising at that speed, providing a cruising range of more than 3000km.

Open up the throttle, though, and the lightweight Trident will accelerate from a standing start to 100km/h in a blistering four seconds, putting it up with the elite of the supercar world.

Trident claims that, while electric cars will be an excellent solution for city use, the Icen is an environmentally friendly supercar designed using current technology for people living in rural areas who travel on the motorways.

Chief designer Phil Bevan said the secret to the car was "torque multiplication". "Diesels operate more efficiently within the right rev range and fewer revolutions mean less friction," said Mr Bevan from Trident's base in Norfolk. "A 2.5-litre diesel engine hammering down the M4 at 4200rpm is not very efficient. With modification, it could be doing it at 1000rpm. Diesel engines are torque-rich, but brake horsepower-poor.

"(Horsepower) is a myth. The most important thing is optimising the efficiency



of an engine. In Formula One, the optimum rev point is 18,000rpm, which means that all gearchanges occur at this figure. With the Icen, it is 3500rpm." Mr Bevan said that a big engine doing no work is more efficient than a smaller engine doing lots of work.

Trident first started building sportscars in the 1960s and produced more than 100 vehicles before production stopped in 1978, but was revived by Lola racing car founder Eric Broadley in 1999 to develop the Icen, which was originally slated to have a 3.2-litre GM petrol engine.

Trident has had a few false starts as a company over the past decade, including a British International Motor Show debut appearance in 2000, where deposits were even taken, but the latest revival began in 2006 when a prototype took to the track and contested the British GT series.

The latest owners have invested £2.3 million (\$A4.9 million) in developing the Icen and making it production-ready without any British government assistance. The company has applied for grants from a number of agencies established to promote and develop more environmentally friendly motoring but has received nothing, despite having what it claims is a solution to the amount of emissions that diesel vehicles produce.

Modifying the GM 6.6-litre V8 turbo-diesel has resulted in a power output of 280kW at 3100rpm and a maximum torque figure of 705Nm at 1800rpm, with a rev limit of only 4500rpm. It is mounted in the front of the car, but behind the axle-

line, while the Bevan-designed eight-speed automatic gearbox – which is made in the US and is sealed for life – is located in the rear to improve weight distribution.

A monocoque chassis made from folded stainless steel (which is guaranteed against corrosion for 100 years), forged aluminium front and rear suspension and a separate kevlar-carbon fibre composite body enable the car to weigh in at 1220kg. With a wheelbase of 2640mm, the Icen sits just 1140mm high and rides on 20-inch alloy wheels (8.5-inch wide at the front and 9.5-inch at the rear).

Inside the leather-trimmed interior, the seats are rigidly mounted, but the pedal box and steering wheel can be adjusted to suit the driver. The suspension is also fully adjustable.

With a projected price of around £75,000, the car has four removable 'oculight' roof panels so it converts into a targa top, while the boot will not only hold a reasonable amount of luggage but (Trident claims) two golf bags. It also comes with more equipment than most other low-volume British sportscars like the old TVRs, including ABS brakes, traction control, paddle shifts, full leather interior, electric windows, central locking, satellite-navigation, MP3 and Bluetooth compatibility, a rear-view camera and even power steering.

And where does the name come from? Well, apparently the Icen were a tribe in the Norfolk area from around the 1st century BC, but we're sure you already knew that.



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INDUSTRY DOWNTURN FORCES JOB CUTS IN COMPONENT SECTOR

By TERRY MARTIN

FEDERAL industry minister Kim Carr's acknowledgement at the Bracks automotive review launch late last month that as many as a third of Australia's major component manufacturers were in "a distressed state" rang true last week when planned job cuts at component suppliers PBR, Unidrive and AME Systems were revealed.

Putting further pressure on the government not to reduce vehicle import tariffs in Australia, the latest job losses came within a week of Ford Australia announcing 350 redundancies and a

reduction in plant operating hours at its Geelong and Broadmeadows facilities from November.

In a further blow to Australian vehicle manufacturing, Kenworth Trucks also announced last week that it would shed 80 jobs at its Melbourne plant. On Wednesday, driveshaft manufacturer Unidrive announced that 40 workers would be sacked from its Melbourne operations.

On Thursday, electrical wiring supplier AME Systems confirmed that 40 jobs would be lost at its Ararat plant in regional Victoria, while on the same day the

Australian Manufacturing Workers Union (AMWU) revealed that brake component manufacturer PBR was moving calliper work to the US, which would result in 80 workers being made redundant at its East Bentleigh factory in suburban Melbourne.

In June, Holden announced that it would cease production of four-cylinder engines at its Fishermens Bend engine plant in Port Melbourne late next year, threatening 530 jobs, and South Pacific Tyres announced that almost 600 jobs would be lost when it closed its Melbourne factory at the end of this year.

GLOBAL SUV DOWNTURN HITS JAGUAR LAND ROVER

THREE months after Jaguar Land Rover was sold to Indian car giant Tata Motors, British 4WD manufacturer Land Rover has announced that it will scale back production – and overseas reports have indicated that 95 jobs will be cut at Jaguar Land Rover's Halewood site in Liverpool during September, and that almost 300 Land Rover workers will transfer from Solihull, Birmingham, to build the Jaguar XF at the nearby Castle Bromwich plant. The move is designed to offset the global reduction in SUV sales with the current strong demand for the XF.

An AFP report said Land Rover management told its employees on Friday that only a "small percentage" of its annual production would be cut, with one day in the week shaved from Discovery and Range Rover Sport assembly from September, and night-shift production of Range Rovers halted from October. Solihull employs around 5000 people.

The move follows an announcement last month that three "non-production days" would be held during September, and that line speed would also be reduced, for the Jaguar X-Type and Land Rover Freelander built in Halewood.

Last weekend, the *Liverpool Daily Post* reported that 55 agency staff and 40 temporary workers at Halewood were told by union officials last Friday that their contracts were being terminated on September 16. An official announcement is still to be made.



Jaguar XF

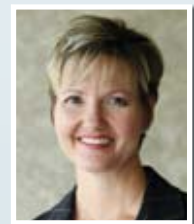
WHEELER NAMED TOP 'DIVERSE EXECUTIVE LEADER'

FORMER Chrysler Jeep Australia boss Judy Wheeler, who continues her climb up the Chrysler corporate ladder in the US, was last week recognised as one of the 'top 100 under 50 diverse executive leaders'.

Currently advertising director for the Chrysler, Jeep and Dodge brands in the US and international markets, Ms Wheeler was one of three Chrysler executives to be named in the respected annual list – which identifies executives who have "reached success within the highly competitive corporate environment" – compiled by business magazine *Diversity MBA*. The others were chassis control and safety systems product development director Christine Barman and Jefferson North (Detroit) assembly plant manager Richard Owusu.

Ms Wheeler directs teams that create "assets" for TV, print and outdoor advertising, in addition to catalogues, brochures and dealer point-of-sale materials for all markets globally.

She also serves as chair/president of the Chrysler Women's Forum employee resource group.



Judy Wheeler

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GoAuto's latest car review

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Fiat Ritmo Emotion 1.9 JTD five-door hatch

FIAT offers what is arguably the prettiest small car around – and it isn't at all bad to sit inside or drive either. The Ritmo is a promising premium hatch that scores well for packaging and driveability. But steep pricing against ever-improving European and Asian rivals means that you might not even give this impressive runabout – tested here in high-spec Emotion 1.9 JTD turbo-diesel guise – the consideration it deserves. Ritmo derives from the Italian word for rhythm, but in this case it is not the car that is out of step with the market.

CAR REVIEW: [CLICK HERE](#)

ASTON REVIVES LAGONDA

ASTON MARTIN has announced that it will revive the Lagonda marque, with chief executive Ulrich Bez confirming this week that the British sportscar manufacturer will show a concept car next year – Lagonda's 100th anniversary year – ahead of an expected production debut in 2012.

FULL STORY: [CLICK HERE](#)

M-CLASS MESSAGE

MERCEDES-BENZ has announced higher prices and equipment levels for its facelifted M-class SUV range, which goes on sale in mid-September with a number of cosmetic and equipment upgrades. On top of the July 1 luxury car tax increase that saw M-class prices rise between \$1285 and \$6145, the midlife makeover for Mercedes' five-seat luxury off-roader now sees pricing rise between \$255 – for the range-topping ML63 AMG, which rises from \$167,245 to \$167,500 – and \$3022 for the ML350 Luxury, rising to \$94,000.

FULL STORY: [CLICK HERE](#)

SATRIA SLASHED

PROTON has slashed \$2000 from the entry price of its three-door Satria Neo hatch model range, which now starts at \$14,990 for the entry-level 1.6-litre GX manual.

The Satria Neo's previous opening price of \$16,990 was the same as that of the five-door Gen.2 hatch and four-door Persona sedan but, at under \$15,000, the Satria is now just \$1000 more expensive than Proton's smallest model and fellow light-car entrant, the Savvy 1.2 (\$13,990).

FULL STORY: [CLICK HERE](#)

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Audi A4 Avant
Citroen C5 sedan/wagon
Dodge Journey wagon
Holden Barina facelift
Mercedes-Benz M-class facelift
Mini JCW Hardtop/Clubman
Porsche 911 facelift
Renault Koleos wagon
Skoda Octavia Scout



New model diary: [CLICK HERE](#)

2WD CAPTIVA ARRIVES

GM HOLDEN has released a front-drive version of its Daewoo-sourced Captiva diesel crossover, lowering its price point in the medium-SUV segment by \$2000 to \$33,990 for the five-speed manual SX – the same price as Hyundai's Santa Fe 2.7 SX AWD petrol manual and Kia's (AWD) Sorento 3.3 LX petrol auto, which are also built in Korea.

FULL STORY: [CLICK HERE](#)

MIDDLE EAST HUMMER BID

GENERAL Motors has received interest from two separate investors in the Middle East for the sale of its Hummer brand, GM's managing director for the region Terry Johnson told Reuters last week. "There has been interest from various parties within the Gulf ... there is a precedent in the cases of Aston Martin, Ferrari or Daimler and those kinds of solutions could be very realistic," he said. "We have had two separate investors raise their hand as being interested." He added that selling Hummer was still not a "foregone conclusion".

FULL STORY: [CLICK HERE](#)

MAZDA TESTS VOLT RIVAL

MAZDA is developing an electric car to rival the forthcoming Chevrolet Volt but is still to confirm whether it will enter production.

Respected UK publication *Autocar* last week quoted senior sources who said trials were underway in Japan with a prototype based on the Mazda5 mini-MPV using a rotary engine to power the battery pack.

HOLDEN FUEL CAP

GM HOLDEN has commenced a fuel-saving promotion across its range in which it effectively caps the price of normal unleaded or diesel fuel at 99 cents a litre for the first 20,000km or two years from the purchase date. The offer is restricted to private buyers on new vehicles delivered before November 1, 2008. It does not apply to HSV.

CUT-PRICE CALIFORNIA

ANYONE who thought that British DJ Chris Evans paid too much for a 1961 Ferrari California in May – a world auction record of \$A11.6 million – will be left in no doubt after a similar car sold in the US last week for about one-third that price.

The 1959 model 250 GT LWB California Spider, which is essentially the same model as the Evans car, but was not owned by a Hollywood actor, was sold by Gooding and Company at its annual Pebble Beach classic car auction for 'only' \$US3.6 million (\$A4.2 million). Its price was almost matched by the final bid of \$US3,190,000 for the rights to the chassis number one of the Bugatti Veyron 16.4 Grand Sport when it rolls off the production line in the first half of 2009.

Stop advertising. Start selling.