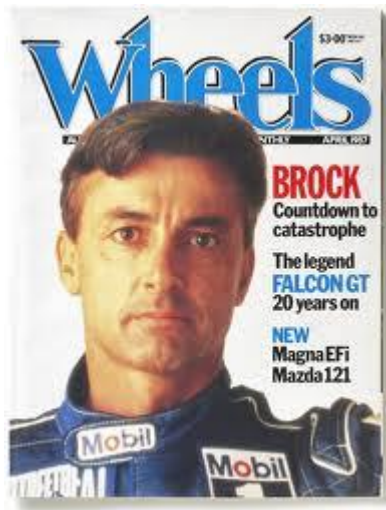


# Brock: Countdown to Catastrophe

Edited by Ian Williams

*This article has been reprinted with the permission of the Editor from Wheels Magazine's April 1987 edition.*



**Peter Brock, one of Australia's best loved and most successful sportsmen, has reached the end of his 18 year association with Holden. Phil Scott tells how.**

The background music was bright and brassy: the rollicking Glen Miller number *In the Mood*. John Harvey, cigarette in hand was feeling neither bright nor particularly brassy. The black dinner suit perfectly matched his disposition.

Harvey knew what he was looking at: he saw beyond the black-tie glitter, the chandeliers, celebrities and television cameras. John Harvey believed he was witnessing the final moments in a countdown to self destruction. He was watching a mate commit - at very least - corporate suicide. At worst, a hero-to-zero slide into oblivion.

Loyalty, but not *blind* loyalty was all he had left. That and the sliver of hope that even this late, he might be able to salvage a reconciliation from the ashes.

It had begun a long time ago, this business, and it was not of his making. He had tried desperately, valiantly, to wind back the clock, reverse the tide . . . but he was fighting a force that defied logic and the normal rules.

John Harvey watched as his friend, business partner and co-driver Peter Brock took to the podium and unveiled the car that symbolised his obsession. At that moment Brock closed

the book on 18 gilt-edged years. At the front of the knotted crowd, a thin, bearded man looked on intensely, showing no emotion. The papers called him The Guru, but his name is Dowker - Dr Eric Dowker.

Then John Harvey turned and melted into the crowd, as the backslappers and the media descended on Peter Brock. Quietly, in an uncrowded corner, Harvey gave vent to his feelings. "The warning bells have been ringing for six months and I've said to him, 'Can't you hear them?'"

Harvey spoke with great sadness and resignation about a partner he'd worked with for 12 years. "Next week is our last chance, and if that doesn't work, then it's all over. He'll have to compromise, but I can't see that happening in his present frame of mind. I'll support him, yeah, until it looks totally hopeless. But if we can't get cars from Holden then we're bugged. That's the bottomline ..."

Five days later John Harvey, the most loyal knight The King of Bathurst ever had, joined Allan Moffat and so many others by resigning his commission. For Peter Brock, the countdown had finally reached zero.

## **ZERO MINUS 22 MONTHS Sunday, June 17, 1984. Le Mans.**

Brock was shattered. Mentally and physically. Living in the same chateau, sharing the same dinner table, it wasn't hard to observe the effort Brock expended. The fraught Sarthe 24 Hour campaign with Larry Perkins had left him drained, and after all that buildup, all the publicity, the defeat hurt very badly. Brock had failed and he returned to Australia ailing, desperately in need of rest and relief from the unrelenting stress of the previous month.

His wife Bev introduced him to Dr Eric Dowker, a chiropractor and natural health wizard. Brock looked terrible. There were rumours he had cancer, others said he'd suffered fibreglass poisoning driving the Bob Jane Monza.

Under Dowker's guidance, Brock regained his strength, gave up the cigarettes, and seemingly returned to his old self. At work, it was business as usual at his burgeoning Special Vehicles division. At home, Brock had a new friend. Dr Dowker had become more than a chiropractor and health adviser. . .

## **ZERO MINUS 12 MONTHS Tuesday, February 18, 1986.**

Brock was in the passenger's seat as we approached Byron Bay on the official Holden drive-day for the new VL model Commodore.

He was relaxed and talkative as we punted along through the northern hinterland, towards a lunchtime stop at the Byron Surf Club. Brock was doing his usual PR bit for

General Motors, riding shotgun with various scribblers. He'd done it often, and we knew each other pretty well - professionally - after Le Mans, the stories on HDT and all those races over all those years. I even owned one of his cars - a special he'd knocked up under the old mate's act. Even so, it was time to ask a delicate question:

"What's this new gizmo I keep hearing whispers about, Brock, that one that fixes unleaded fuel?"

Neatly and with good humour, he skirted the question but offered to tell me more when he was ready.

The gizmo first appeared - unannounced - on one of his cars just prior to the VL launch. It was attached to the plenum chamber, but Holden didn't know what it was and neither did anyone else. Brock wasn't saying, although scuttlebutt suggested he'd developed an anti-pinging device to get more compression - and thus more power - into unleaded V8 engines. If he'd done that, he was sitting on a fortune.

Meanwhile there were stories emanating from the racing team that no journalist could believe, let alone print. Magnets in the dyno room, magnets under the bonnet of race cars, crystals too, and strips of shiny foil ... surely not we said. After all, this is Brock we're talking about.

Time passed and the rumours gathered strength. Ray Borrett, Holden engineer and factory link man with the HDT, would just shrug his shoulders when I'd mention Brock's box. He'd tell me I'd better ask Peter about it. Ray, one of Holden's straight arrows and a friend of Brock, was uncharacteristically ill at ease on the subject. He had good reason, for ultimately it would be a major factor in Brock warning him off the HDT site. Other Holden executives and key members of the racing team were perplexed. Dr Dowker's influence was becoming more apparent and it created some unease in the corridors of power and on the workshop floor. Unease is probably the wrong word. Coincidentally or otherwise, first Larry Perkins, then engine builder Neil Burns quit. Former Holden National Service Manager John Stevenson, who left GMH to run the road-car side of Brock's business, had resigned some time earlier.

## **ZERO MINUS NINE MONTHS Friday, May 9, 1986**

A letter arrived from Peter Brock, asking me to call in and see him for the run-down on his little "sucker". On an overcast Friday afternoon, we sat down in his inner office and he talked. I was unprepared for what followed: Brock's box had a name. He called it The Energy Polarizer, and it wasn't an anti-pinging device. In his own words:

"It's a magic cure - it makes a shithouse car good."

Uh. huh. How does it work?

"Physics doesn't recognise that this energy exists or that it can do these things." he said. "So, the laws of physics are going to have to be redefined."

Was this really Peter Brock talking, the self-taught engineer, the practical hard-nosed racer? The words suggested otherwise but the delivery and the manner were totally plausible.

### The Polarizer explained

*Extracts from the DB Tech description of the Energy Polarizer*



"An Energy Polarizer transmits a high energy mainly generated by the vehicle to which it is attached. This high energy field – A.B.A. Energy – causes all molecules in its sphere of influence to be aligned or polarized to the direction of the high energy transmission, and are held in a linked or aligned state..."

"The printed circuitry in a Polarizer causes a multiplicity of frequencies to be transmitted, affecting each molecule and allowing that molecule and its environment to absorb specific vibration levels..."

Where is the proof then, I inquired? He'd been to GM's Milford proving ground in the USA, he said, and "their top engineering boy came back and said "hey, what's going on here. What have you guys done?"" Brock claimed

GM tests were still under way but they would prove very positive:

"I'm totally confident because the answers I've had back are along the lines that initial reaction was great, that it works well and all vehicles should be fitted with one. That's from the guys doing the hands-on testing in the States, but from there you get into the realm of politics . . ."

Then came the demo, for Brock was anxious for me to try a polarized car. It was a Calais LE six with a rear window sticker proclaiming it to be polarized.



Polarizer rear window sticker

Eyes flashing, Brocky arced the Momo over and squeezed down on the gas. The protests of squealing rubber echoed off warehouse walls in the deserted back streets of Port Melbourne.

"I know it's good. I know it's terrific." he said, "and I know eventually it will become accepted . . ."

The automatic kicked down a gear. Brock, animated now, flicked the car left then right through a roundabout:

"I refuse to accept the conventional, you know. I've always had an inquisitive mind: always read a heap of books and the most outrageous ones are the ones that appeal to me most. It gets the brain thinking - what did the human race know at some other time that it doesn't know any more?"

We sped down an indifferent piece of concrete roadway to Yara Bay. Brock was positively effusive:

"How's the stability - it's ridiculous, isn't it? If you drove a standard Commodore down that bit of road it'd be bouncing all over the place. That's a fact."

The car did ride well, but it ran a modified suspension and low-profile rubber that was under-inflated to just 24 psi, both factors which would improve ride quality. He dived for the marbles on the edge of the road and mashed the brakes down hard. I think it was meant to prove the Commodore had ABS style brakes. He squeezed the throttle again and buzzed the Calais through the gears. I thought maybe I heard it ping under load, but Brock didn't think so. He wasn't worried about sceptics anyway

"There's never been any truly avante garde invention that hasn't received derision." he quipped.

"I sit back and say, OK, I know you don't comprehend but that doesn't mean that what's happening isn't happening..."

Back in the office, at Brock's suggestion, I telephoned Beverley Brock in an effort to grasp the concept. We talked for 20 minutes, she with impressive authority and conviction: me with fragmented understanding. Dr Dowker didn't get a mention, but Brock later credited the chiropractor as his co-developer on the polarized project.

Writing that story - the first polarizer piece any journalist had published - was a difficult task. It had to be played straight down the

middle. To give my newspaper, *The Sun-Herald*, its due, the story ran uncut on May 18. It caused quite a stir in motorsport circles and also within the motor industry. There were worried looks at Holden.

It wasn't until several months later that the significance of the rear window sticker was explained to me. "This sticker, you see, had to be positioned exactly - because it acted as an antenna for the polarizer. The star-spangled motif actually gathered energy from the atmosphere..."

### ZERO MINUS FIVE MONTHS

**September 25, 1986**

**Coombe Circuit, England.**

The prototype Calais Director, especially built by the HDT and Holden emerges from a comparison test program against the M5 BMW, Ford Cosworth Sierra and Mercedes-Benz 190 2.3-16 in fourth place. The car is on the first leg of a round-the-world road test program initiated by *Wheels Magazine*, that is to take in the US and Japan. The idea was begun in February 1985 when editor Peter Robinson first spoke to Brock about the idea of comparing a Brock Commodore against the best sports sedans in the world. The project was delayed by the introduction of lead-free fuel and the lack of an unleaded V8. The prototype was finally built in July 1986 and then shipped off to Europe.

Its specification was based on the Calais Director with a five speed gearbox, an adaptation of Opel's Senator / Monza, independent rear suspension, and with the bolt-on body kit that distinguishes the Director from the lowlier cars in the HDT range. The car was supplied by Holden to Brock, who carried out the modifications, and was then driven briefly by Ray Borrett before being driven to Sydney by Editor Robinson. After 2000 km of motoring the editor expressed disappointment in its performance compared to the leaded VL Director which had so impressed the magazine the previous year, found it excessively noisy and the rear suspension bottomed out over bumps when the car was loaded. The ride, however, was superb.

It was fitted with an energy polarizer. The magazine decided to ignore the device since it believed it had no effect, one way or the other on the car's behaviour. Brock however insisted that the car run on 22 psi in the tyres although the recommended pressure is 35 psi; and the compromise of 26 psi was unsatisfactory. And when the car was run against the Americans at Willow Springs in December, the tyres had the full 35 psi, The Calais wiped the boards with the Americans. Japan, it seems won't now happen.

This is the overseas testing referred to in Brocks brochure for the 1987 Director, which

is mechanically the same as the prototype but has an even wilder body kit. "The Director has been uniquely tested throughout the United Kingdom, Europe and the United States - with sensational results" So says the brochure. Yet, in a letter to Robinson, Brock says of the US comparison, "many of these comments by you leave things understated and with less impact than we expected. We will leave the vehicle where it is until further notice."

#### **ZERO MINUS FOUR MONTHS Sydney Motor Show, October 1986.**

The polarizer issue had reached crisis point shortly before the Sydney Motor Show. Holden had quietly issued a statement saying it could find "no technical merit" in the polarizer and could therefore not endorse its use. The statement was a Holden face-saver in what had become an ever-widening rift. It was obvious by then that Brock's Milford tests had washed out, but both Brock and Holden had signed a legal agreement not to publish the results of the tests. Now he was talking conspiracy. On November 25, on the telephone, he told me: "It's pretty obvious what's happening. GM has looked at this and said why should Brock have it. We'll develop it ourselves . . ."

Behind closed boardroom doors the fight grew more heated. Holden wanted Brock to drop his Polarizer: Brock said no. He retaliated by refusing to allow his signature to be used on the 500 Permanent Red Commodore Group A road cars ... Holden built them as homologation specials for his racing program: now he was thumbing his nose.

"After all," he told me. "I am permitted to say what I feel. So, I reserve the right to put my name on what I wish to put it on - and it won't be on this latest car. "



His signature was scratched off the Momo steering wheels. He'd only endorse the car, give it full Brock status if it was fitted with his Plus Pack – a euphemism for the polarizer. Some cars were sold that way.



Holden, fearing consumer fraud claims, wanted nothing to do with Polarizers and, on November 12, Chuck Chapman wrote to his dealer network. He advised there would be no more polarizers on Holdens. HDT, apparently, agreed not to fit the device.

#### **ZERO MINUS 3 WEEKS January 187, HDT Melbourne**

Brock dropped his first bombshell by inviting only selected pressmen (excluding all those - including me - who had not written favourably about the polarizer to a function at his Melbourne headquarters in Bertie Street. It was to launch a range of "Plus Pack" Commodores. The thrust was that a Brock conversion could now be ordered with any Commodore or Calais in the Holden range. At Fisherman's Bend the excretia hit the fan. Brock had not consulted on this new plan. Holden said for them the Plus Pack was shock news. Yet Holden had to certify that the cars complied with Australian Design Rules. The company was footing the warranty bills too. Both matters were viewed seriously by Holden.



The *Sydney Morning Herald's* David Robertson, one of the favoured few at Brock's soiree, explained the complex shuffling of polarizers and company names better than anyone in the March issue of *Wheels*.

"Brock has established a separate company - Peri Integration - to fit the device, road test each car, and issue the Peter Brock certificate of authorisation. He has also appointed another company, CGM Marketing of Bendigo to market the polarizer as part of a Plus Pack to dealers and the public.

"Peri Integration is a wholly owned subsidiary of HDT Special Vehicles and is credited by Brock with total design and engineering responsibility for all HDT products since August last year. Brock insists that he is complying with Holden's wishes that its name not be associated with the polarizer in any way, by sending every car he makes to Peri Integration before shipment to the dealer.

"I spent several hours in Brock's company during the launch before establishing that every car bearing his signature will be fitted with a polarizer."

#### **ZERO MINUS FIVE DAYS Thursday, February 12, 1987 Fisherman's Bend.**

They gathered at The Bend for a crucial conference. Holden's Director of Marketing Rob McEniry, his lieutenant John Crennan and engineer Ray Borrett. Across the table sat Brock. These men had practically grown up together under the GM umbrella.

According to the minutes of that meeting, McEniry "indicated to Mr Brock that Holden Motors Co (HMC) considered he had broken the spirit and intent of an agreement reached in December with respect to the marketing of the Energy Polarizer and product modifications that contravened Australian Design Rules". Brock responded by saying Holden had been the first to break the agreement by saying the polarizer has no technical merit and by issuing written statements to the press.



**Commodore Group A homologation Specials**

McEniry was cool. He pointed out that Holden dealers were very concerned at the continued marketing of the polarizer despite Chapman's letter of November 12. Then he dropped his thunderclap. Rob McEniry tabled a letter the Australian Holden Dealer Council intended forwarding to all dealers recommending non-purchase of HDT modified vehicles and a stop to all dealer cash flowing to the racing team. According to the minutes, Brock "expressed his concern that legal actions would certainly occur should this letter be forwarded".

Brock pleaded a breakdown in communications. He agreed there would be an absolute end of polarizing by HDT and that no car would be shipped to a dealer fitted with the device.

Brock also toed the line on ADR compliance, agreeing that all his future vehicles would comply, but stipulating that he could not be held responsible if polarizers were fitted after the sale. He said that would be 'a *laissez-faire* example of a free enterprise system functioning within a democratic society, and fully supported by the legal system of that society.."

The meeting broke up. Later that day Holden got word that Brock was planning to launch another special – the Director - on February 20. The following telex was then sent from Grant Steers, Holden executive in charge of HDT liaison, as well as being a life long friend of Brock's:

"Management has requested information on your company's new model to be publicly released on February 20. I was embarrassed somewhat when I couldn't provide an answer as I have no knowledge of this subject. Prior to public release or prior to customer delivery can you provide detailed listing of model specifications. Can you provide use of new model to HMC for engineering department review? Please advise by return today as I'm looking sillier than Collingwood in any September."

#### ZERO MINUS SIX DAYS

##### February 13, HDT Port Melbourne

Brock wasn't at the office to receive the telex but his secretary contacted him and cabled the following reply:

"Peter has told me the following which should be an adequate answer to the questions you posed. The specifications you requested of the '87 Director have been outlined on numerous occasions via the *Wheels Magazine*. Peter Robinson, his colleagues and associates have conducted numerous tests, accumulating the driveability, durability and performance test data ..."

The reply left Holden engineers dumbfounded, for there is a world of difference between a magazine specification sheet and the rigorous engineering procedure necessary to validate a new model. Brock was, in effect, telling Holden to go buy the magazine to find out about its next, new HDT model.

For Holden it was the final straw. The matter was referred to the company's general counsel, M. H. G. Whiteman. In a hand delivered letter Whiteman said in part:

"The telex . . . does not, unfortunately resolve the difficulties which we face regarding this model. In short you are proposing to promote a modified General Motors product which, in the normal course would carry our usual warranties and which would be regarded in the marketplace as a General Motors product, albeit modified by your company. The situation requires us to be satisfied that the vehicle is one to which we are prepared to extend our usual warranties and which we are prepared to allow to be promoted and sold by our dealers.

"Unfortunately, we have not as you know had the opportunity to test the proposed model or, indeed, been informed of the technical specifications of the modifications to our product. You appreciate that we have a commercial interest and, possibly, a social responsibility to ensure that all products sold to the public have our publicly confirmed confidence ...

'The test vehicle to which your secretary's

telex refers was not, of course, an example of the proposed new model, and was not examined by us from the point of view of safety, handling and compliance with Australian design regulations. In those circumstances we have no alternative but to formally require you to deliver to us for testing by no later than 10:00am on Monday, February 16, an example of the new model, together with detailed specifications as to modifications ...

'We are conscious of the proposed 'unveiling' of the model on February 20, and wish to indicate that we are concerned to attempt to resolve the outstanding questions regarding the new model as quickly as possible.'



1987 HDT Brock Director

#### ZERO MINUS FIVE DAYS

##### February 14, Port Melbourne

Peter Brock's reply stunned Holden. In part it said: "HDT are astonished that HMC are now saying some months later that HMC has no knowledge of what constitutes a Director. As HDT have pointed out, the November '86, December '86 and January '87 issues of *Wheels Magazine* have detailed precisely what components are to be found in this vehicle, the excellent primary safety aspects the vehicle possesses, including braking, steering, chassis balance, which are termed as "superb handling".

"HDT can only say that it will continue to build cars to these specifications and that ex-GMH engineer Ray Borrett approved this vehicle for export to Europe, USA and Japan. If we wished. Ray Borrett will thoroughly and completely endorse the specifications as he did previously ..."

"... as the vehicle has been approved prior to shipping for international testing, the discordant note from M. H. G. Whiteman is totally irrelevant."

Borrett the engineer could not believe the reply. He inspected one engineering prototype for roadworthiness - a far cry from full engineering certification for ADR's. Doubts remained over the Director's noise and exhaust emission levels, brake compliance and with a new independent rear suspension, it would have to undergo a new series of barrier crash tests.

Holden bit its corporate lip. Within the company there were many executives who silently prayed for Brock to change his mind and deliver a car by 10am Monday.

#### ZERO MINUS THREE DAYS

##### Monday, February 16.

##### Fishermans Bend

Brocky missed the most important appointment in his business career. He didn't deliver a Director. He only had one, and it wasn't fully finished. The deadline passed. Holden management conferred and a letter was delivered to Brock from the general counsel's office.

It said, in part: "This letter is to confirm that as at 10am today there has been no compliance with the request for delivery.

"As a courtesy it is confirmed that following non-compliance with the request this company will proceed to protect the interests of itself, the dealer network and the community without notice to you."

Brock was as good as sacked and on Thursday, February 19, Holden issued a statement which in part said, "with regret business relations with Peter Brock and HDT would have to be concluded". But there was still hope. His mates, at Holden and HDT, mounted a campaign to try to get him to cancel the Director's debut, scheduled for Friday night, the 20<sup>th</sup>. Brock ignored them, pressing on, with Dr Dowker and clay modeller Vern Mendez, to finish his lone, non-certified prototype.

Precisely what he hoped to achieve with one hand-built car that couldn't yet legally be registered, only Brock knows. But on Friday, Tudor House in Kooyong Rd. Caulfield was readied for the final act in the showdown.

#### ZERO

##### Friday, February 20.

##### Tudor House, KooYong.

John Bertrand was there, so was Ian Baker-Finch and various media heads. It was a curious cross-section of people all dressed to the nines.

For those in the know the atmosphere was one of supreme melancholy. This was a sad end. Yet Brock, serene, friendly and controlled, was talking about reconciliation:

"It's retrievable," he said. "I'm astounded how it's escalated daily. I believe satisfactory ground can be found if they want to ..."

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## Zero Plus

### Saturday, February 21

Holden issues a statement replying to Brock allegations, re-affirming that Holden's position was taken in the best interest of customers and "can see no solution that would revive the relationship."

### Sunday, February 22

Brock appears on television refuting claims on Dowker's involvement with HDT. He claims media reports are part of a "smear campaign" against his friend.

### Monday, February 23

Brock's younger brother, Phillip, returns from running his own business in Qld to join older brothers Peter and Lewis at HDT. Brock confirms the sacking of the company accountant while rumours abound that others on the staff will soon leave.

### Tuesday, February 24

Brock claims "cash flow" problems as HDT as key staff resign. Advertising placed in newspapers extolling virtues of the energy polarizer while Brock still maintains the polarizer issue is a smokescreen to cover other areas of debate.

### Wednesday, February 25

Drivers Harvey and Moffat resign as HDT race division becomes embroiled in the issue. Harvey cites the differences of opinion between himself and Brock over the direction of company policy, while Moffat departs due to lack of contracted drives in the WTCC. Neither driver indicates any immediate plans as major HDT sponsor Mobil reaffirms support for the team. Brock's wife, Beverly, appears on television and blasts departing staff as "not being able to stand the heat", while Brock plans sale of recent equipment to bolster sagging finances. Stories begin to appear about consumer affairs departments taking an interest in the polarizer. Advertisements appear for the polarizer with quotes from Mike Kable of *The Australian* and Paul Gover of the *Canberra Times*.

### Thursday, February 26

Brock sells off new model VL racer to an un-named investor on the eve of the Calder ATCC for reputed \$100,000 plus. He signs ex-Nissan driver Gary Scott to race a second VK Commodore.

Brock holds a media conference claiming Holden is attempting to crush his business by advising dealers not to sell HDT products and threatens legal action through the Trade Practices Act. Holden rejects the Brock accusations claiming its moves were necessary to protect the legitimacy of Holden vehicle warranties.

Television presenter Tony Charlton was the MC. At 8.45pm the Glen Miller mood gave way to silence.

It was a pep talk followed by words of encouragement from John Bertrand, stressing the hightech nature of the event:

"The fact the car has tested so well overseas tells me what we're witnessing here is a research and development company that searches for excellence" Bertrand said "They don't need luck, they need the support of Australia and Australians..."

Then the King of Bathurst was on the podium. The good doctor looked on.

"This is a very proud moment for me, for there's the soul of Brock in this motor car. It's the pinnacle. A car I'm determined is going to succeed. The price I'm paying to release this car is very high indeed, but the amount of research and development has given us great heart."

Brock, a master presenter went on to tell the audience about a series of exhaustive overseas tests: he stressed the export dollars - \$250 million, he said, from a 5000-unit order.

Then calling Dr Dowker forward as co-designer of the car, they unveiled it. Under the panels and paint it was a modified Holden Calais. Without Holden the car was stillborn, surely?

But the general press loved it. The battler fighting the giant uncaring corporation. The facts of this huge export order didn't, of course stand too much scrutiny. Brock's Director does not pass ADR's, let alone the more stringent US Federal Safety requirements. It would take over 1 million dollars and a year's work to get within reach of US approval, and the VL Commodore would be off production by then.



Brock Calais Director Launch 20<sup>th</sup> Feb 1987

In many ways it was a De Lorean. An interesting car without a practical future. In many ways Peter Brock was Don Quixote, charging at a windmill he could never defeat.

But he played the television men like children. A quotable quote for each one - a big corporation crushing the little guy: the loss of export earnings.

He was glib with the hard questions; "In the next few weeks it will be certified." How, without Holden?

"I'll still buy my cars from Holden "

"The left-hand drive version is almost ready"

"American design rules are not so different to ours."

Brock was seemingly content, comfortable with his decision, although deep down one suspects, a little shell-shocked to have discovered that he was after all, dispensable.

The final notice had been delivered at 5.15pm. It was all over, yet he was still talking about the door "being wide open." That a "reconciliation is always there, anything's possible in business."

"Look. Holden had the car and the specs since July and gave me no indication they'd ever give me approval, I'm not here to be told what to do by corporations that don't have Australia's best interests at heart. This car is a threat to their design department. The polarizer is not an issue. The problem is they don't want me to launch this car because it 'gives Brock too much power'. Our biggest problem will be catering for demand."

In centre-floor, Dr Eric Dowker held court. I even managed an interview.

"We don't get stuck on negativity," he said, "we just do it."

He is a lean, fit man with piercing eyes and a laudable aim in life: "My purpose is to make the greatest contribution to mankind that I can - and live with total integrity."

"I love to see people reaching their level of potential; people with goals and ambition. Life is so exciting when you're going for it, and Peter's going for it."

Dowker has no formal automotive training but says he has a "strong scientific background". Together, he and Brock "just brainstormed" the Director.

Queried about his involvement in Brock's split with Holden, he simply said: "I'm not involved with that, not with the Holden Dealer Team at all. My role has been design, not production."

Some would argue Dr Dowker's role was somewhat larger than that.

John Harvey checked the bottom of his glass, lit another cigarette and walked into the night. On the other side of the world, the phone rang in Kidlington, Oxfordshire. Tom Walkinshaw took the call ... *IW*