

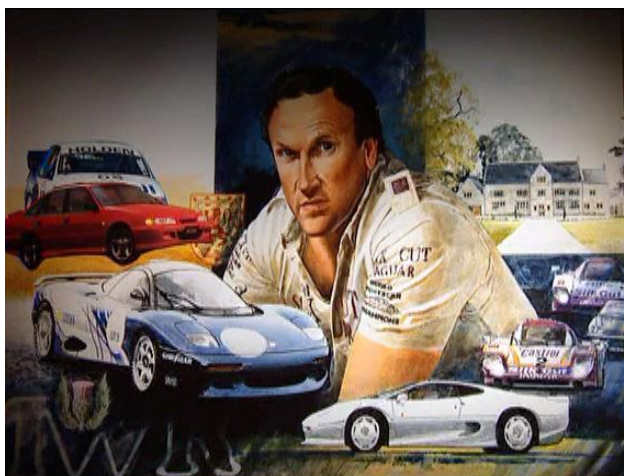
The HSV Story 1987 - 2006 DVD Review

By Ian Williams

2006 marked the 50,000th Holden Special Vehicle. The "HSV Story" DVD looks back at the history and achievements of Australia's most famous high performance, niche vehicle manufacturer. This review takes us on a tour through the highlights of this classic DVD, from the birth of HSV through to the E Series introduction.

The Start of Something Special

Times were pretty tough for Holden in the 1980's and Holden's Director of Sales and marketing at the time, Robert McNery, envisaged the development of a "halo" brand to lift Holden's image with the public and to add another level of technical expertise to it's ongoing product development. 15 parties responded to Holden's tender, with the presentation from Tom Walkinshaw Racing (TWR) being the winner.



TWR was doing Jaguar Sport in the '80's and Holden were keen for TWR to set up a similar "clone" operation for Holden. So in July 1987 Holden Special Vehicles was born.

The new company was established with John Crennan the founding Managing Director, and a management team of John Harvey (Marketing & PR), Tony Wilson (Manufacturing) and with several Holden executives on the board of Directors.

The hiring of John Harvey meant a kind of seamless link between HDT and the new HSV was formed. John's first task was to find suitable premises for HSV to operate from. A facility at Notting Hill, Victoria was subsequently rented, and the TWR folk literally camped out there for the first 4 months assisting with the set up of the new HSV operation.

1988 The VL Group A

It was important that the VL Group A (which became known as the "Walkinshaw") was released on schedule as 500 had to be built before Bathurst 1988 for homologation. It sold for \$45,500 on release and a further 250 were commissioned due to the immense interest.



The "Walkinshaw" was designed to achieve a level of aerodynamic efficiency that was lacking in road cars of the time. The body kit had 27 individual fiberglass components. The high boot spoiler was found in the wind tunnel to be the only way to prevent the VL's rear lifting at speed. It proved itself when it won Bathurst in 1990, under "Group A" regulations.

1990 HSV VN Clubsport

The Clubsport represents a model line of enduring popularity for HSV. Introduced in June 1990, the Clubsport was an instant hit. It represents the best mix of affordability and performance.

John Harvey came up with the name and the concept, and its introduction revived the affordable muscle car market.



The Clubsport R8 came in 1999 in the VTII model, adding a blend of proven race track technology.

The Clubsport is the number one seller in the HSV range and is the mainstay of the business.

The “E” series is the 10th variation of the Clubsport and is one of the fastest sedans in the world.

1990 The Maloo

Australians have always had a love affair with the utility, dating back to the very beginning of our automotive history. So it was a natural fit back in August 1990 when John Crennan announced to the HSV staff that there would be an all new HSV sports ute, and it would be called the Maloo. As a kid, John Crennan had always admired the El Camino, and this was the inspiration for the Maloo. The name “Maloo” is an indigenous word that means “Thunder”.



The Maloo was introduced at the time when “the recession we had to have” was taking effect. Because of this only 110 Maloo’s were initially built, but they all sold without a problem. Orders kept coming in after the initial build had been completed, and as interest grew, more Maloo’s were built.

Maloo is now the number 2 seller in the HSV range with over 4,500 being produced by 2006, and is in the Guinness Book of Records as the “Worlds fastest production ute”.

1994 Move to Clayton Plant

Around Christmas in 1994, HSV relocated to the current business park facility in Clayton, Victoria. In the beginning, 12 staff members worked for HSV. In 2006 there was over 200 employees and contractors.



HSV engineers and designers are closely linked with Holden engineers and designers. As Holden engineers and designs its new car models, HSV’s engineers and designers are right there with them.



State of the art computer aided design (CAD) allows HSV engineers and designers to work at the cutting edge of vehicle development, laying a strong foundation for the future.

Holden include the quality and technology that HSV want in their products into the “core” car that they produce for HSV.



The car is already an HSV when it leaves Holden’s production line in Adelaide. More than half the parts that make up an HSV are already on the car, and it comes to Clayton for the majority of the visible parts and some of the unique parts to be installed that can’t be fitted down the Holden production line. As the Holden operation is a “High Volume” plant, low volume and “specials” create huge complexity challenges. The decision as to what is fitted to the HSV product in Adelaide or in Clayton is constantly reviewed, with *quality* being the ultimate deciding factor.



With Holden engineering a better “SS” every model, the pressure is on HSV to keep ahead of the development of the Holden product, and this in turn

has lead to the fantastic vehicles that are being produced by HSV today.

1995 The GTS

From day one, HSV has always created cars that quicken the pulse. When you appreciate excellence in motor cars, there is nothing more empowering and exciting than to sit behind the wheel of a high performance vehicle.

Underpinning the HSV design philosophy is a clever blend of racing knowledge and advanced road car engineering. The first HSV GTS was a VS model and was released in April 1995. Then in February 1996 this philosophy was taken to a new level with the VS HSV GTS-R. Only 85 were built, but they remain one of the most striking HSV cars ever produced.



Bright yellow in colour (known as "XU-3 Yellah"), the GTS-R had a 5.7 litre 215kW stroker engine, a six speed gearbox, IRS, a premium braking package, hydratrak differential, carbon fibre trims and an HRT style rear wing. The car was packed with many other features and sold for \$75,000.



The HRT link was further enhanced with a \$10,500 engine blueprint being an option, and about one third of these cars were built with it.

Everyone who bought a GTS-R was flown to Melbourne to take delivery and have lunch with HSV management. This philosophy of developing a close relationship with its customers is still entrenched in HSV today.

1997 The Grange

In 1997 the Grange replaced the HSV modified Statesman and was designed as a blend of both luxury and performance. In total 316 HSV enhanced Statesman's were produced before the Grange became HSV's long wheelbase flagship.



Grange personified understated aggression. It offered cavernous accommodation and lavish appointments combined with HSV's trademark styling, performance and driving dynamics. Built in limited numbers each year, Grange blurs the line between limousine style magnificence and a performance bred sedan.

Half the production runs are normally pre-sold and over 1,200 Grange vehicles were produced to 2006.

2001 GTO & GTS Coupe

December 2001 was a defining moment in the history of HSV. The GTO and GTS were the first 2 door models in HSV's history. The anticipation and excitement for HSV's Coupe release matched that of the re-launch of the much loved Monaro name.

Driven by massive public demand, the Monaro rocketed from concept to production in just 22 months. And HSV delivered the Coupe to the market even faster.



The GTO featured a 215kW 5.7 litre engine, coupled to either a 4 speed auto or a six speed manual, and an awesome braking package developed from the HRT race program. Mark Skaife once described the handling of these cars as the best ever HSV's.

The HSV Coupe's became a very important factor in developing HSV's export business, as well as being a fore-runner for the fantastic all wheel drive Coupe 4.

2004 Clubsport

HSV models have always been differentiated by exclusive and premium engineering features. However, the VZ ("Z" Series) took the brand to a whole new level. The heart of the new car was GM's latest Gen IV powerplant – the 6 litre LS2. It was an all new engine that drew upon a long heritage of small block design.



In HSV form it delivered 297kW at 6,000 rpm. The engine had great flexibility with 87% of peak torque available from as low as 1,600 rpm.

The Z Series saw virtually every drivetrain component upgraded to an exclusive HSV specification. The unique character of the LS2 and drivetrain opened up a new era in the HSV performance line up.

Holden re-established the performance car benchmark with the Z Series range.



HSV Race Relations

HRT has often been described as V8 Supercars equivalent of the Ferrari Formula One team. Established in 1989, HRT was the perfect marketing tool for HSV and the two companies share an intrinsic link.



HRT's engineering and presentation have always been world class. Some of the greatest local and international drivers have raced for HRT, helping to preserve Holden's winning motorsport heritage. The "Red" team has been the most successful in Australian touring car history.



Tom Walkinshaw sees that the HRT racing "DNA" runs right through the HSV product. He says that the key factor that came to HSV from racing was the integration of stringent quality control processes. These were even more demanding than those of the core product of the time. That's not the case now with Holden's current level of world class quality. HSV's high quality demands also helped lift the quality of Holden's suppliers and everyone benefitted as a result. This focus on quality came from racing where any breakdown of parts is totally unacceptable.



HSV's Managing Director, Phil Harding knows that there is a synergy between HRT and HSV. "The HSV customer will see motor racing on Sunday and get into his car and would like to think he is driving a car that Skaife has just driven" Harding said. This is supported by the fact that 80% of HSV buyers nominate Motorsport as their number one recreational interest. With that in mind, Mark Skaife has been an integral part of HSV's product development team since he joined HRT.



The “HSV Story” DVD includes interviews with John Crennan, Mark Skaife, Tom Walkinshaw, Tomas Mezera, Greg Murphy, Garth Tander plus Rick & Todd Kelly.



They trace HRT’s growth and racing successes as well as the formation of the HSV Dealer Team in 2005 from it’s origins as K-Mart Racing to its current form as the Toll HSV Racing Team.



These interviews are supplemented with some classic racing footage from HSV’s Touring Car and Bathurst wins as well as their V8 Supercar victories.



John Crennan believes that success breeds success. He says that “This is at the very core of HSV’s racing philosophy. Since the inception of HSV, motorsport has been intricately woven through every facet of the business. The on track success of HRT and the HSV Dealer Team is reflected in each vehicle.

HRT drivers work closely with HSV’s engineers in product development, so that when a vehicle rolls off the assembly line it’s undergone extensive research and hundreds of hours testing. The on road performance of every HSV produced benefits from HSV’s race relations.”



John Crennan and Mark Skaife both see the “DNA” that exists between HSV and the racing operations. They say that this does not just happen overnight, and it is essential for HSV to be able to claim to it’s customers that HSV have proven themselves from an engineering standpoint on the race track.



Tom Walkinshaw says that HSV has met its original objectives of creating aspirational cars at the top of the Holden range. He goes on to say that this could not have been done alone. But with linking the core Holden business with the premium HSV business and the racing teams, it has created a business model that is a benchmark in the industry.





A Record of Continual Growth

In 1988, the first full year of production, 421 HSV's were built. 200 SV 89's were sold before they even rolled off the line.

Of the 50,000 cars produced to 2006, 12,426 cars were made at the Notting Hill facility and 37,574 were completed at the Clayton facility.



Notting Hill production averaged 1,775 cars per annum over 7 years, whilst Clayton averaged 3,131 cars per annum over 12 years.

By 2006, build volumes had grown to over 4,000 cars per annum.

Today, HSV makes cars that rival the prestigious European makes in performance and style – but for half the money. Production continues to set records and HSV clearly remains Australia's leading manufacturer of niche performance vehicles. *GW*

