



# THE NEW GENERATION

PETER CHAMPION'S NEW HDTs ARE A SERIES OF ROAD CARS DESIGNED TO PAY HOMAGE TO THE FAMOUS MARQUE, YET THEY DRIVE LIKE PRESENT-DAY VEHICLES

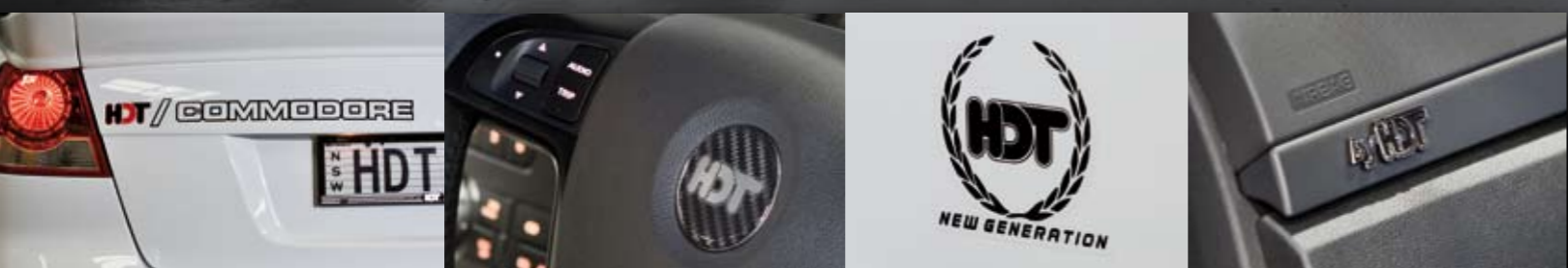
STORY BY LUKE OXLEY DRIVE IMPRESSIONS: BEN NIGHTINGALE PICS BY LUKE OXLEY AND DEAN SUMMERS

**W**hen we first heard that HDT would be releasing a new VE-based model, it sure left a lot to the imagination. 'Just think Brock VC' was one comment, and they were not too far off the mark. After all, if there is one name that goes hand in hand with distinguished Commodores, it's HDT.

HDT opened its doors recently at the new Melbourne-based premises in Ringwood. HDT boss Peter Champion, manager Darren Gillis and James Brock were on hand to answer any questions enthusiasts and passers-by had. "These two new prototypes from HDT are the only two in existence at present. From concept to reality, it has taken less than 12 months," Gillis said. Modernising an already sought-after

brand, HDT will also be making available as many original parts as possible for all existing HDT customers, which is great news for current owners. Floated concept sketches showing VE mock-ups in all guises from the VC to VL Group A models have attracted a very broad range of reaction. When queried whether these would become reality, Darren Gillis responded, "Well, that's up to the

public. If there is enough interest, then yes, we will build them". But, what about for the individual wanting something different? "If someone wants us to build a particular look for them, we can do that. What HDT can offer compared to what is on the market already is as it has always been - it's a unique brand. It's not the same as what your neighbour has."





The 20in wheels were chosen as they are reminiscent of the original Irmscher design

## NITTY-GRITTY

- MODEL:**  
2008 VE HDT Commodore
- COLOUR:**  
Factory white
- ENGINE TYPE:**  
6L L98 V8
- ENGINE MODS:**  
Harrop cold-air induction system, remapped ECU
- EXHAUST:**  
HM headers, full exhaust system
- GEARBOX:**  
Six-speed manual or auto
- DIFF:**  
Factory
- POWER:**  
310kW
- BRAKES:**  
Factory (optional big brake packages available)
- SUSPENSION:**  
HDT sports suspension
- WHEELS/TYRES:**  
Custom 20x8.5in wheel and tyre package
- BODYWORK:**  
HDT bodykit, including modified front bar, bonnet scoop, rear spoiler, HDT striping and badging, HDT build plate
- INTERIOR:**  
HDT embroidery, HDT badges, HDT binnacle gauges



## THE DRIVE

After the dust had settled from the launch in Melbourne, the cars returned to their Sydney base, and I was quick to get in contact with Darren Gillis to organise a drive. The idea of a new era of HDT is fascinating to me.

In this increasingly corporate world, where companies like GMH are extremely protective of their copyrights and intellectual property, I was looking forward to seeing what 'take' a little company like HDT would have on Holden's 'Billion Dollar Baby'.

Upon arrival at HDT's Sydney headquarters, I spied the white sedan sitting in the front showroom where many a classic HDT Commodore had been parked before it. The black ute was out in the car park, as it is serving as Darren's daily driver. The ute, while looking the absolute biz, is based on an SV6, so it was the SS-based sedan I was here to steer.

First impressions of the car – it sure looks different. Melding old and new style was always going to be fraught with danger, but I reckon HDT has actually managed to pull off melding two vehicles, almost 30 years apart, into a new look at the HDT legend.

We wheeled it into the workshop for Deano to get some pics, and didn't he do a fine job of it. Then, it was onto the road to see what she felt like.

The first thing I noticed was the sound. It sounds nice. Like, real nice. It's beefy and burbly without being obtrusive; all V8-powered VEs should sound like this. Then I noticed the performance. It has a very strong mid-range – much stronger than an SS and even better than an HSV ClubSport.

It pulls strongly and smoothly. I did notice a slight ping, but this was indicative of the distinct lack of 98-octane fuel in Sydney at the time, rather than the tune.

Handling-wise, the car feels just as balanced and poised as the SS it is based on. Although, it's a little tighter thanks to the slightly heavier spring rates utilised. Steering is, as you would expect, just as crisp as the SS.

This car was the rushed-to-completion prototype, and thus had a few niggling quality issues. Mainly, it was with fit and finish of the trim, and a few paint imperfections – but any cars built from hereon out will be 100-percent topnotch.

I love the concept, and the drive was impressive too. HDT has come up with a good all-round package, but I'll take mine in Formula Blue thanks!

– Ben Nightingale



James Brock, HDT Manager Darren Gillis and Peter Champion standing beside HDT's newest car

Wanting to reflect the trademark HDT look, the VE prototypes are extremely exclusive, and we think they would sure turn heads on the street. The two models on display are based on the VC era with cosmetic and mild under-the-bonnet touches.

Based on the VE SS, the white sedan code-named 'Retro One' features a 310kW L98 6L power plant encompassing a revised and remapped ECU, Harrop cold-air induction system and a complete HM exhaust system.

Other changes include dynamically enhanced sports suspension, HDT embroidered seats, badging, bodykit and custom 20x8in wheels. That's not to mention the all-important prestigious HDT-numbered build plate.

Would you like to see a modern HDT back on the street? We sure would! **SC**



What a fat rear end!



Every VE built will have its own HDT build plate



Making 310kW, the 6L engine's only additions are a CAI, exhaust system and custom tune

