



HSV Coupe 4



HSV's Sydney stunner



**Holden's all-wheel drive system
hits the road under a hot Monaro**

By BRUCE NEWTON

HOLDEN Special Vehicles took centre stage at the Sydney motor show today, revealing the all-wheel drive Monaro-based Coupe 4.

No pie in the sky concept car, Coupe 4 will go on sale in June 2004 with an asking price HSV promises to come in under \$95,000. Just 100 are planned for 2004 production at this stage.

The Coupe 4 was unveiled by outgoing Holden chairman and managing director Peter Hanenberger, an appropriate choice considering his key role in bringing Monaro to market and the company's development of all-wheel drive technology.

The Coupe 4 is also full of symbolism for HSV. Traditionally, it takes production Holden Commodore V8s and upgrades them, but this time it has been given first crack at the all-wheel drive passenger car market.

HSV's future has been under intense study all year, with former Holden marketing executive Rob McEniry installed at the company's Clayton headquarters to develop a 10-year plan.

As previously reported in GoAuto, a key component of that strategy is HSV developing more bespoke vehicles. The Coupe 4 is an obvious starting point.

Holden's first two all-wheel drives are high-rise cross-overs – the Adventra wagon on sale this month and the Crewman Cross8 which goes on sale in December. HSV's Avalanche wagon goes on sale in December (see page 2) and an identically named Cross8 adaptation in the first quarter of 2004.

At this stage there is no indication when Holden will use the traction control-based all-wheel drive Cross Trac system to underpin a passenger vehicle.

But significantly the Coupe 4's basic structure will be built on a special line at Holden's Elizabeth plant because of the need to make extensive sheet metal and chassis system modifications, before being shipped to Clayton for final assembly.

The existence of this new line is solid evidence that Holden will soon add passenger all-wheel drive cars to its range.

The Coupe 4 was developed by HSV and Holden powertrain, chassis engineering and design

specialists.

It uses the Cross Trac system, dubbed Quad Drive by HSV, and features the same 38:62 torque split front to rear. Front and rear tracks are both wider than the rear-wheel drive car and weight lifts to a hefty 1802kg.

Coupe 4 is powered by a 270kW/475Nm version of the HSV 5.7-litre LS1 V8, mated only to the 4L65 four-speed automatic gearbox.

HSV claims 6.1 seconds 0-100km/h on tar and 6.6 seconds on gravel, with a 0-400m dash completed in 14.8 seconds.

Other key mechanical features are HSV Performance brakes, 19x8-inch alloy wheels, Pirelli P-Zero directional tyres and a unique AWD "low ride" sports series suspension set-up.

The styling treatment includes flared wheel arches, large air intake and a quartet of big bore exhaust outlets. There is also a unique grille, Senator-style front fascia with mesh inserts, black bezel headlamps and High Intensity Discharge driving lamps, side skirts and technical mesh rear inserts.

Continued next page





HSV SHOW STUNNER

Continued from previous page

Inside, the standard equipment list includes LED interior effect lighting, rear park assist, eight-way electrically adjustable front sports seats with active head restraints, the driver's seat with three memory settings, driver, passenger and side impact airbags, leather-bound sports profile steering wheel, specific instrument cluster, premium 200 watt sound system with six-disc CD changer and subwoofers, dual zone climate control air-conditioning, satin chrome accents and alloy pedals.

□ Thailand was yesterday confirmed as Holden's latest export customer, with General Motors announcing a program for Holden Commodores to be sold in Thailand as Chevrolet Lumina.

Two models of the Chevrolet Lumina will be exported initially in right-hand drive configuration – Lumina LTZ, equivalent to Holden Berlina; and Lumina S, equivalent to Commodore S.

By BYRON MATHIOUDAKIS

HSV today revealed at the Sydney motor show its first cross-over four-wheel drive, which goes on sale in December.

Called the Avalanche, it is based on the Holden Adventra, which goes on sale later this month.

Avalanche prices have yet to be announced but expect them to begin upwards of \$75,000 as its features are lineball with the \$74,200 HSV Senator sedan.

The Adventra starts at \$52,990 for the base model and \$60,990 for the LX8.

And like its Holden cousin, the venerable 5.7-litre GEN III V8 engine will be the all-wheel drive HSV's only power source for now.

For the Avalanche, HSV's LS1 unit, mated to a four-speed automatic transmission, generates a maximum of 270kW of power at 5700rpm and 475Nm of torque at 4000rpm.

This compares to the 235kW and 460Nm power and torque outputs respectively of the Adventra.

A 0-100km/h sprint time of less than seven seconds on gravel and approaching six seconds on tarmac is promised.

The HSV Performance Braking System package, comprising grooved 336mm front and 315mm rear rotors and front twin-piston callipers acting on AP Racing discs, keeps the Avalanche's hefty momentum in check.

HSV says the Adventra's existing Cross Trac four-wheel drive system suffices for the Avalanche, bar a few minor software changes.

The Avalanche's 62 per cent rear/38 per cent front

torque split is carried over, as is the 200mm ground clearance. HSV says the increased ride height and wheel travel, as well as the dual-purpose 245x45 R18 tyres (that ensconce very BMW X5-style 18-inch alloy wheels), have enabled it to dial in a sporty but supple ride quality.

To help differentiate the HSV from its lowlier Holden base, the front sports the existing Y Series II sedan nose, while the roof racks are standard and the wheel arch flares are body-coloured.

There are also the ubiquitous side skirts and black chrome highlights to help do the job.

Inside there's an HSV Senator feel to the Avalanche, from its centre console-sited instrumentation to the alloy pedals.

Also augmenting the Avalanche's luxury aspirations are the standard leather upholstery, bolstered sports seats, dual zone climate control air-conditioning, a sunroof, premium audio system and a cargo area roller blind.

High-end options include Xenon headlights, a tyre pressure monitoring system, roof-mounted monitor that plays DVDs, wireless headphones and PlayStation 2/Xbox computer game compatibility.

Also of specific relevance to parents with children is the availability of a rearward facing third row seat, a first for an HSV vehicle.

The Avalanche moniker won't be limited to the Adventra-based wagon.

The HSV version of the Cross8, Holden's four-wheel drive Crewman utility variation, is expected to carry the name when it is released in the first quarter of next year.

The Avalanche utility should also boast a similar front-end design and interior appointments to the HSV wagon.

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Inside Territory

Ford confirms its new cross-over will have two spec levels and seven seats

By BRUCE NEWTON

FORD revealed the interior of its vital new Territory cross-over at the Sydney motor show today, confirming the wagon will be available in two spec levels and with optional third row seating.

Due on sale on June 1, 2004, the Territory is expected to add important volume to Ford's existing Falcon sales, with the aim of 32,000 sales annually by 2005.

The entry level Territory will include traction control, anti-lock brakes, front airbags, air-conditioning, CD player, power windows, power seats and power adjustment for pedals.

The upper-spec model will add standard leather, cruise control, a six-stack CD player, alloy wheels, dual front and side curtain airbags and a cargo shelf in the rear load area.

The all-wheel drive Territory will have the same equipment levels as the rear-wheel drive version, but adds stability control and the option



of hill descent control.

The standard powerplant will be the Barra 182 six-cylinder from BA Falcon, with the turbo version a strong chance to join it in production.

There will be no V8 version of Territory, at least initially.

Pricing is expected to start in the mid-\$30,000 range for the entry level rear-wheel drive.

Ford has yet to reveal the branding of the models in the Territory range but at this stage the plan is for them to have unique nomenclature, breaking away from XLS, XLT and Limited used with Escape and Explorer.

Ford Australia interior design manager Marcus Hotblack said the Swiss army knife was the inspiration for his team's work.

"A Swiss Army knife has every gadget under the sun and can literally do anything. We wanted the interior of the Territory to be like that," he said.

Ford claims the Territory's interior will seat up to seven adults, with the optional third row sliding away under the seat floor.

Other highlights are:

- All-new seat designs.
- Theatre-style seating where each row of seats is higher than the one in front of it.
- Optional sliding second row seat releases more room for third row passengers.

- Second and third row seats fold flat.

- Second row has a 60:40 split-fold.

- Lap-sash seatbelts and headrests all-round.

- Up to 33 storage compartments, including handbag and bottle holders and a removable rubbish bin.

- Split tailgate including flip glass.

- Front doors open 65 degrees and rear door 70 degrees – much wider than Falcon.

- Wet area under the rear floor of five-seaters.

The cockpit area of the Territory is basically the same as the Falcon, although some new elements – such as different graphics in the instrument cluster – are incorporated. Ford was also keen to emphasise the strong T-shape of the central spine of the car.

"That has helped in creating an interior that includes all the passengers, making them feel part of the interior and not alienated from it," Mr Hotblack said.

"At the same time it gives the driver a feeling of control with its driver-orientated cockpit, something our customers were emphatic about. It's an active family vehicle and the T-shape definitely helps in reinforcing that theme."

Interior colour and trim designs for Territory include a new colour family called Eucalyptus.

Outside there are eight colour choices, with a choice of single or duo-tone.

Ford will also market a range of accessories for Territory – everything from a DVD player to kids backpacks that hang off the back of the front seats.



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Go you good thing

Volkswagen sticks to a winning formula with the fifth generation Golf

By GAUTAM SHARMA

IT'S the car that defined the hatchback category. Volkswagen's Golf may have been preceded by Alfa Romeo's Alfased, but it was the German vehicle that captured the imagination of buyers around the world.

Imitators have sprouted like mushrooms but the Golf has maintained its stranglehold on segment leadership since the first generation was launched in 1974.

The original Golf only had to fend off the challenges of 10 other direct competitors, but Volkswagen says there are now about 130 rivals spread across eight sub-segments of the class.

Despite this, the fourth generation Golf has still topped its segment with a share of between 20 and 22 per cent worldwide. The popularity of the nameplate can be gauged from the fact that, on average, about 2100 customers worldwide have bought a new Golf every day for the past 29 years.

Something else unique to the Golf is that each iteration is clearly identifiable as exactly that – a Golf. Every model revision has been evolutionary rather than revolutionary – Volkswagen choosing to carry over the DNA that made its predecessors a success.

It's no different with the fifth generation model, launched recently to the international media in Wolfsburg. While its arch-rivals such as Renault's Megane II and GM's new Astra have gone down radical design paths, the Golf Mark 5 carries over the proportions and many of the design cues of its forebear.

It is all-new – and looks it – but is still clearly a Golf.

However, in the face of red-hot competition, Volkswagen has left no stone unturned in upgrading the car's dynamics and packaging. It is claimed to be more spacious, more powerful, safer and with better handling.



VW Golf

Dimensions have increased in all directions. Measuring 1759mm wide (+24mm), 1485mm high (+41mm) and 4204mm long (+55mm), the newcomer offers greater levels of interior space.

Rear seat legroom is up 52mm, while rear headroom is up 24mm. Front seat occupants also gain 8mm more headroom.

Luggage space has grown from 330 litres to 350 litres.

Static rigidity has increased 80 per cent and Volkswagen claims the Golf is now the stiffest car in its category. The benefits come in the form of good NVH levels and improved crashworthiness.

Renault's Megane II recently earned the distinction of being the first small car to register a five-star rating in NCAP testing and Volkswagen engineers say they are confident their car will match this performance.

They say it is very important for it to do so.

Part of the car's improved rigidity stems from 70m worth of laser-welded seams, compared with 5m in its predecessor.

The engine room has come in for much attention and European-spec cars are offered with a host of new powerplants – all of which comply with EU 4 emission laws. Australian buyers will have a choice of three engines when the car is launched Down Under in September/October 2004.

The entry level engine is a 1.6-litre unit with 75kW at 5600rpm and 148Nm at 3800rpm. This powerplant is essentially unchanged from the unit used in the current Golf. However, further up the scale are a new 1.9-litre TDI (turbo-diesel) and a 2.0-litre FSI petrol engine.

The 1.9-litre TDI cranks out 77kW at 4000rpm and a fat 250Nm at just 1900rpm, while the 2.0-litre FSI pumps out 110kW at 6000rpm and 200Nm at 3500rpm. These figures are well up on the current 2.0-litre engine's outputs.

The 1.6-litre petrol and 1.9-litre TDI engines come as standard with a five-speed manual gearbox, but the latter will be available with an optional six-speed direct shift gearbox (DSG), which is claimed to offer the ease of operation of an automatic along with the economy and agility of a manual.

The 2.0-litre FSI engine is mated to a six-speed manual gearbox – a rarity in this class – and a definite first for this category is the optional availability of a six-speed automatic.

Only one body style will be offered in Australia initially – a five-door hatch – but there will be other variants further down the track, including a hard-topped convertible and possibly a station wagon.

But we won't be getting the Touran mini-MPV, which is also built on the same underpinnings.

No Golf line-up is complete without a GTi variant and word has it the latest version will be truly deserving of the badge, unlike its recent predecessors. Packing a 150kW 2.0-litre turbo engine, the new age GTi will be offered in three and five-door guises, according to Volkswagen Group Australia managing director Peter Nochar.

Expect it to arrive in Australia around mid-2005. If you think 150kW isn't enough, you can always hold out for the 3.2-litre V6-powered R32, which will follow further down the track.

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Ibuki previews next MX-5

TAKE a good, hard look. For this, right on cue, is what the replacement for the world's most popular sports car will look like in just two years.

Described as a near-future concept roadster, Ibuki will herald the first all-new MX-5 since the 1989 original when it stars at a rejuvenated Mazda's home motor show in Tokyo next week, as predicted.

A whole foot shorter and highlighted by a new mid-engined, twin-backbone chassis claimed to achieve big gains in balance, comfort and safety, the two-seater rear-drive Ibuki convertible also features a 1.6-litre hybrid engine and extensive plastic, aluminium and carbon-fibre components.

Much speculation has surrounded the redesigned MX5, which is expected to appear in production form at the 2005 Tokyo show. The showcar's four-cylinder petrol-electric hybrid engine is expected to make way for a conventional four-pot by then, despite recent reports the next MX-5 could employ rotary power like RX-8.

Further confusing matters, Mazda will also reveal a hydrogen-powered RX-8 rotary in Tokyo, and has hinted a similar engine could power a possible RX-7 successor. Also unclear from the concept pictures is whether Ibuki's roof is cloth or steel, however it does feature an active four-point rollbar within the super-slim A-pillars and rear cowl.

But most significant is Ibuki's high-mount twin-backbone frame incorporating a "super front midship" layout similar to RX-8.



Mazda Ibuki

Pushing the engine well behind the front axle (400mm further back and 40mm lower than in the current MX-5), the new chassis places all powertrain and accessory components within the 65mm-shorter wheelbase (2330mm) and allows substantially shorter and lighter overhangs at both ends.

The air-conditioning unit is located behind the seats in front of the rear axle, as is the fuel tank and main exhaust muffler, while overhangs are a combined 380mm shorter than MX-5 and overall length is 315mm shorter at 3640mm.

Similar in height, Ibuki is 40mm wider than MX-5 at 1720mm and has 75/55mm wider front/rear wheel tracks (1490/1496mm). The showcar wears 215/40 run-flat tyres on 18-inch wheels.

Along with reducing the yaw inertia moment by 15 degrees to provide even more neutral handling, Mazda says Ibuki's upper and lower backbones achieve a level of rigidity similar to that of a closed-roof chassis.

Attached to it, taking MX-5's lightweight theme to the limit, are plastic bumpers, bonnet, rear floor panel and door outers, while inner door panels and brake rotors are aluminium and the prop shaft and powerplant frame are carbon.

FULL REPORT: [CLICK HERE](#)

HONDA HSC CONCEPT

HONDA will give its strongest hint yet to the next generation NSX supercar when it reveals the oddly named, radically styled HSC concept in Tokyo next week.

Little is known about the two-seater successor to one of the world's original supercars, but a next generation NSX coupe is expected to appear in production form next year, and has been tipped to feature a 300kW V8.



Honda's pre-release press materials offers no clues, with an (under)statement that accompanied the first pictures saying: "HSC offers the driving pleasure of a sports car". While the long-rumoured rear-drive V8 luxury

sedan replacement for Legend is unlikely to surface at Tokyo, alongside the HSC will be an all-new Odyssey people-mover and a facelifted 2.2-litre S2000, plus an eight-seat monospace concept dubbed ASM, a hybrid sports concept called IMAS and a fuel cell sedan named Kiwami.



For continued Tokyo motor show updates, go to www.goauto.com.au

HYUNDAI NEOS-II

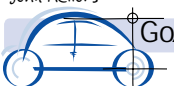
HYUNDAI has revealed pictures and basic details of a micro cross-over concept it will unveil at the 2003 Tokyo motor show opening next Wednesday.

Described by Hyundai as a Crossover Utility Vehicle (CUV), Neos-II – which, according to Hyundai, is a name derived from "NEologism Of Style" – is the second major concept to spring from the company's Japan Design Centre in Chiba.

Said to provide a hint of Hyundai's future design direction, Neos-II measures 3835mm long, 1775mm wide and 1585mm tall – which makes it 25mm longer and 90mm higher than the Getz light car, and 15mm wider than the Tiburon sports coupe.

If produced, the four-seater Neos-II would be positioned as a Daihatsu Terios-sized light off-roader below both the compact Santa Fe and the mid-sized Terracan SUVs – and it could be on sale here as early as 2005.

According to Hyundai, Neos-II offers front seats with enough space and comfort to surpass luxury cars, a multi-link rear sliding door for easier entry and egress, and an Adaptive Forward Lighting System. The concept car wears 255/35-section tyres on massive 20-inch wheels.



Toyota's clean and green Prius gets serious with a growth spurt and dollar cut

By TERRY MARTIN

TOYOTA Australia has lowered the retail price, increased features and tailored an optional package to appeal to prestige-car customers with its second generation petrol-electric Prius hybrid car launched this week.

On sale from November 12, the Prius II has been redesigned as a hatchback and will be repositioned to broaden its appeal outside government fleets and private institutions looking to make a statement with their green credentials.

About 475 cars have been sold since the Prius sedan was introduced to Australia in October 2001, 80 per cent of which have gone to government or NGOs and the remainder to well-lined individuals with an environmental bent.

Things are about to change. The recommended retail price will be lowered \$3000 to start from \$36,990 and an increased sales and marketing push behind Prius II will concentrate on average Australian families and, with an \$8100 i-Tech pack, customers who lean towards prestige brands such as Volkswagen, Peugeot and BMW.

"This product is no longer a science experiment but a mainstream car," said Toyota Australia divisional general manager - marketing, Scott Grant.

"We see our success with the next generation product as being able to cross the chasm in terms of moving from the technocrats and the early adopters of technology and (go) more into the mainstream private marketplace."



Mr Grant said Prius sales should now more than double to 50 units per month, with an even split between fleet and private customers.

"We don't think we'll lose any of our penetration in terms of governments, fleets and so forth but purely through the growth of volume to the private market we expect to get a 50/50 sales mix into the future," he said.

Supporting this quest are Prius II's pleasing aesthetics, hatchback practicalities, performance improvements and increased specification over the previous generation.

Continuing equipment includes dual airbags, anti-lock brakes and climate control air-conditioning, with new features running to cruise control,

traction control, brake assist, stereo-mounted steering controls, a six-speaker stereo, 60/40 split-fold rear seat, push-button start, new storage facilities, automatic headlamps and front foglamps.

The i-Tech package adds satellite navigation, front side airbags, curtain airbags, stability control, keyless entry, a premium six-CD nine-speaker stereo and Bluetooth mobile phone compatibility.

From whichever angle one studies it, Prius remains an expensive proposition for a small car. Yet the latest incarnation makes important improvements in areas such as acceleration, emissions, fuel consumption, handling and braking.

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Smart thinking required

By TERRY MARTIN



MERCEDES-BENZ has downgraded sales expectations for its Smart car range in Australia and will decide within 18 months whether the brand should be axed.

Admitting that his organisation still needs to work out how to best position the micro-car range in this country, Mercedes-Benz's Australian passenger car boss Horst von Sanden said a more realistic sales target – once the four-door model arrives late in 2004 – would be around half the 2000 units forecast at the brand's launch in June.

And if that proves unattainable, Mr von Sanden agreed the smartest move could be to pull up stumps altogether.

"It depends on whether it is the whole brand (we remove) or whether it's part of it," he said.

"We will review it after having launched the four-door four-seater and then we will see ... We are convinced we can do it but in the end the market will tell."

Arguing that the Mercedes-Benz A-class fell back to a comparable and sustainable level, Mr von Sanden said that poor performing products in the range – to comprise the current two-door coupe and cabriolet, roadster (due next month) and the so-called Forfour model – could be taken from the

market as an alternative course of action.

He said that before then an increase in marketing dollars to the tune of 100 per cent would be sought from Europe and time devoted to ascertaining the brand's best position in Australia – an astonishing afterthought given Smart was a long time coming here and considerable planning was believed to have gone into its local launch.

"The positioning worldwide is clear – now we need to find the right interpretations for the Australian marketplace because we are conscious of the fact that Melbourne is not Rome ... We have to find the right interpretation for that concept for the Australian marketplace," Mr von Sanden said.

"We observed the situation and you know that even in Europe Smart went through difficult periods, and only after Smart had gained a serious position in Europe and in other markets we considered to launch it here. And that was basically decided last year."

Volume restrictions and modest sales expectations with the coupe and cabrio variants meant the Australian introduction was a "soft launch" which relied on word of mouth and media reports, rather than an advertising and public relations blitz.

"We are aware that the launch of a new brand

in a marketplace like this, without any major marketing initiative, that is quite a risk," Mr von Sanden said.

"We deliberately did that because our limited volume we decided to bring in did not justify a big campaign. So we will certainly rev up the marketing initiatives."

Something needs to happen. VFACTS statistics for September show a miserable 10 Smart retail sales were achieved nationwide, bringing the total volume since launch to 170.

Nonetheless, Mr von Sanden said dealer leads and the launch next month of the roadster gave him confidence the Smart range would achieve close to the expected 300 sales come December 31.

Longer term, more retail outlets will be sought along the east coast, adding to the single SmartCentres in Sydney, Melbourne and, from November, Brisbane.

"When the volume comes through and with a bit more knowledge about the Smart situation in the marketplace in general, we will review our retail concept," Mr von Sanden said. "Three outlets will not be sufficient for the future."

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Homogenised



Spider

156

but not sterilised

ABANDONING the design ethos that created striking differences between its models, Alfa Romeo has stepped into line with other European marques and instilled a more homogenous look to the front end of its revised 156 sedan and Spider and GTV sports cars.

On sale from October 15, the new models each have a 147-like interpretation of the hallowed shield grille, using crossbars and sitting much closer to the road. There are some subtle differences in execution and two Italian design houses were involved.

FULL REPORT: [CLICK HERE](#)

ALFA ROMEO PRICING:

- ❑ 156 2.0 JTS manual – \$49,950
- ❑ 156 2.0 JTS Selespeed – \$52,950
- ❑ 156 2.5 V6 24V manual – \$57,500
- ❑ 156 2.5 V6 24V V6 Q-System auto – \$59,950
- ❑ 156 Sportwagon JTS manual – \$53,500
- ❑ 156 Sportwagon Selespeed – \$56,500
- ❑ GTV 2.0 JTS manual – \$55,000
- ❑ GTV 3.2 V6 24V manual – \$73,500
- ❑ Spider 2.0 JTS manual – \$55,000
- ❑ Spider 2.0 JTS Lusso manual – \$59,990
- ❑ Spider 3.2 V6 24V manual – \$75,500

DON'T get the wrong idea about the looks. These cars still look great from all angles, look nothing like their German rivals and will still turn heads.

But line up the Spider and 156 alongside a 147, as we did, and the similarities are written all over their face. Before now, these were cars still recognisable from afar as Alfas – and each was all the more interesting for its unique interpretation of the shield grille.

Now the differences are far too subtle and there could be a trend toward Teutonic cohesion emerging here. And that is what we fear most.

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Concept showdown

By GAUTAM SHARMA

THE future of Volkswagen's racy Concept R – unveiled at last month's Frankfurt motor show – will depend on public response to it at the biggest auto shows in Asia and North America.

"The car will next be shown at Tokyo and Detroit and based on the response from those experiences we'll make an evaluation (as to whether it will go into production)," Volkswagen Group Australia managing director Peter Nochar told GoAuto.

But a production version of the Concept R will not appear until 2006 at the earliest, according to Mr Nochar. This is, of course, assuming it gets the green light.

Some European sources suggest the car has already been given the production go-ahead, but even if this isn't the case, it provides a clear indication of the look of VW's future products.

"Some of the styling cues of the Concept R, like the grille and so on, are an indication of the design direction of the future. And it kind of softens people up to the idea that things are changing," Mr Nochar said.

"The car itself gives the brand a bit more excitement and dynamism. Whether that will be transposed into an actual car, nobody knows.

"With the Beetle and Audi TT, there was such



Concept R

a sensational response when the prototypes were shown that they subsequently went into production. But there were other concept cars we've shown that are stillborn – they never went anywhere, like the W12 sports car."

Mr Nochar said the Concept R was not to be confused with a yet-to-be-revealed steel-roofed convertible that is also built on the Golf platform.

The hard-top convertible is likely to be unveiled at next year's Geneva or Paris motor shows. It will be pitched squarely against the Peugeot 307CC, which makes its Australian debut at the Sydney motor show.

The Concept R, if it gets the green light, may be targeted at costlier rivals – namely the Porsche

Boxster and BMW Z4 – and its on-paper credentials suggest this is not beyond the realms of possibility.

Powering the Concept R is a mid-mounted version of the 3.2-litre V6 engine used in the Golf R32. The addition of direct injection and a free-flowing exhaust system bumps power up to nearly 200kW, while peak torque is just shy of 350Nm.

Drive is channelled to the rear wheels by VW's six-speed Direct Shift Gearbox, which is available in the new Golf.

VW says the Concept R can dispatch the 0-100km/h sprint in 5.2 seconds – quicker than a Boxster S – while top speed is limited to 250km/h.

There could also be a cheaper base model as European analysts say the Concept R is aimed at injecting "affordable excitement" back into Volkswagen's line-up after its costly forays into the luxury arena with the Phaeton and Touareg.

The entry level model could be powered by a mild 2.0-litre four-cylinder engine – putting it up against the likes of the Toyota MR2 and Mazda MX-5. However, this could also result in cannibalising VW's own steel-roofed convertible.

Measuring 4.16m long, 1.78m wide and 1.25m high, the Concept R is around 15cm shorter, 4cm lower and a fraction narrower than the Boxster.

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Nissan *accelerates*

By ALEXANDER CORNE

NISSAN Australia is aiming for a bullish 60,000 sales for its financial year April 1, 2003 – March 31, 2004.

Speaking at the launch of the 350Z Roadster, managing director Leon Daphne said Nissan would eclipse Mazda sales and would set a new high-watermark for Nissan Australia in the wake of the withdrawal from local manufacture more than a decade ago, and retain number one importer status.

He noted wryly that when he came to the job a decade ago, his task was deemed a "poisoned chalice" by a commentator. Today, he says it has been transformed into a "golden chalice".

The ailing car manufacturer has become a successful importer, booking \$95 million in profits for the previous financial year (before interest and taxes), via a model line-up bearing some embarrassing gaps for a supposed full-line importer.

In the calendar year 2003, Nissan expects to sell 56,000 vehicles, sales and marketing director Paul Stead said, citing strengthening Pulsar sales and the new Maxima as key drivers, as well as the enduring performance of the X-Trail compact 4WD wagon.

Nissan's local success echoes that of its parent.

Nissan Motor Corporation is accelerating hard towards meeting the objectives of its ambitious three-year "180" project a year early.

The plan calls for an annual increase in vehicles sales of one million units, an eight per cent operating margin and zero net automotive debt by the end of the 2004 financial year (March 31, 2005).



Leon Daphne: From a poisoned chalice to a golden chalice.

Mr Daphne said NMC should achieve close to three million vehicle sales in 2003, pushing it closer to the main target.

In addition, Nissan is spending seven per cent of its turnover on research and development, a 20 per cent increase and the highest level ever.

The man pushing through the painful changes at Nissan, president and CEO Carlos Ghosn, has been recognised for his efforts. He was recently acclaimed one of the top five business leaders in Japan, a milestone achievement for a non-Japanese.

Mr Ghosn's position at the head of Nissan will be swapped for a more powerful role running Renault and Nissan from Europe in early 2005.

Mr Ghosn's mantra of product development and more efficient working has yielded results, while disposing of cash-devouring non-core assets and some headcount as a result of the sell offs, helped ease Nissan's crippling financial burdens of the late 20th century.

Nissan's sales are looking healthy right around the world, although ironically performance in Japan is the only low note.

Among individual world markets outside Japan, Nissan Australia ranks a distant fifth to China, Mexico, Europe and the US, but is the biggest single market where Nissan does not make cars.

It also has the highest market share of any Nissan territory outside Japan, at the current rate of 6.7 per cent of the Australian market.

In the 2003-2004 financial year, Nissan has so far enjoyed 9.6 per cent growth for a high-water mark 6.7 per cent market share thanks to strong performances from Pulsar, X-Trail and Navara.

Nissan would have been happy with 500 X-Trail sales a month but they accelerated to 1400 a month and are constantly in excess of 1000 units, keeping company with Toyota's enduring RAV4 and Honda's CR-V, despite being a generation late to the party.

The X-Trail's success is explained by its large capacity, high power 132kW 2.5-litre four-cylinder engine, as well as some perceived Patrol styling cues.

FULL REPORT: [CLICK HERE](#)

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BMW Group Australia has confirmed its all-new 6 Series will go on sale in the second quarter of 2004, priced at just over \$200,000 in coupe guise and around \$210,000 for the convertible, which will comprise 50 per cent of sales.

A total of just 180 units has been allocated for Australia, most of which are expected to be sold prior to arrival.

Exact pricing and specification are also currently being finalised for the X3 off-roader, which BMW has also confirmed will go on sale in Australia by mid-2004, initially as 2.5 and 3.0-litre petrol variants.



BMW 6 Series on the way



All Daewoo passenger models will be available to choose from, with fuel the only expense for drivers.

HOLDEN IN SOLAR RACE

IN an attempt to raise the local profile of turbo-diesel technology, Holden has entered the inaugural Greenfleet category of the 2003 World Solar Car Challenge to showcase the Euro-spec Astra EC04.

Holden wants a higher profile for turbo-diesel technology here because it plans to start selling oil-burner Commodores to help it hit official fuel consumption targets.

No timeline for a Holden turbo-diesel passenger car has been announced nor has there been any suggestion that an Astra t-d will be added to the range.

The Astra EC04 is powered by a 1.7-litre turbocharged, EFI diesel engine with comparable performance to similar sized petrol engines. This results in combined city/highway fuel consumption of only 4.4 litres per 100 kilometres.

CAR SHOW CONTINUES

CHANNEL NINE has announced that it will continue the motoring program, *The Car Show*, in 2004.

The second series will be double the length, beginning its 26-week season on February 28 to tie in with the Melbourne motor show.

UP CLOSE on PERSONNEL

ALFA APPOINTMENT

ANTONIO Baravalle has been appointed vice-president - marketing of Alfa Romeo. Mr Baravalle, who directly reports to the president of Alfa Romeo, Daniele Bandiera, replaces Alessandro Furfaro, who resigned recently.

Mr Baravalle joined Fiat Auto in 1999 and has increased his responsibility in the marketing and sales area, becoming responsible for Alfa Romeo's "other markets".

DEMEL CONFIRMED

FIAT SpA, as we predicted last week, has named Herbert Demel, a former Volkswagen AG executive, to turn around its ailing car business.

Mr Demel, 49, will succeed Giancarlo Boschetti, 64, as CEO of Fiat Auto. Mr Demel ran Volkswagen's unit in Brazil and its Audi AG luxury-car business before leaving in August 2002 to become president and CEO of Magna Steyr, the Austrian unit of Canadian auto parts maker Magna International Inc.

Austrian-born Mr Demel will be the first non-Italian to head Fiat Auto and the unit's third chief executive since 2001.

SCHREMPP PRESSURE

DAIMLERCHRYSLER is reportedly putting "gentle pressure" on chief executive officer Juergen Schrempp to extend his contract with the company, according to a *Wall Street Journal* report.

Mr Schrempp, 59, declined to say whether he wants a contract extension, but he did say he is "in top shape" and likes what he does, the newspaper reported.

Mr Schrempp has been criticised for the decision five years ago to buy Chrysler Corp, which has hurt the company's profit growth and weighed on the share price.

'BREAK A LEG' BRERA

THE 2003 Sydney Motor Show opens this week without the Alfa Romeo Brera after it was damaged during preparations for a flight to Australia.

Alfa Romeo Australia spokesman Edward Rowe said it suffered substantial damage.

"But we still have no less than four new cars making their Australian debut at the show, so there will still be a lot to see on the Alfa Romeo stand," he said.

The Brera was voted the 2003 Concept Car of the Year and was designed by the legendary Giorgetto Giugiaro.

DAEWOO GIVEAWAY

ONE thousand South Korean customers will be selected to drive a GM Daewoo of their choice for one year for free in a campaign to boost the home market weakened by the recession, according to *Automotive News*.

"We wanted an eye-catching way to show the Korean public the quality of our products firsthand," GM Daewoo CEO Nick Reilly said.

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GoAuto latest road test

Honda Accord Euro sedan

HONDA might be confusing people with its decision to offer two quite different Accord models at the same time, particularly when both are priced – at entry level at least – identically. The smaller “Euro” Accord is aimed more at people who like to mix the tasteful restraint of European design with a rewarding driving experience, who are less influenced by bells and whistles than by the innate quality of the car. These things the Euro delivers, without the suggestion of any lurking shortcomings in terms of dynamics, comfort, safety or quality. It's a good thing in a relatively small package. [REPORT: CLICK HERE](#)



MAZDA RECALLS BRAVO

MAZDA Australia will contact all new Bravo owners to replace the bonnet striker, which has been found to wear excessively, potentially causing the bonnet to open unexpectedly. Mazda is not aware of any such cases and will replace the striker free of charge.

DE JAGER STAYING

THE announcement in last week's GoAuto e-news that Kris de Jager has been appointed to head the Global Automotive Practice Group of IIC Partners caused quite a flurry at his company, Kris de Jager and Associates. Many people thought the announcement meant Mr de Jager was leaving the recruiting firm he started 12 years ago. Within 36 hours of e-news being published, Mr de Jager reported he had received 128 e-mails and 15 telephone calls wondering if he was moving on.

For the record, IIC Partners is a leading worldwide network of independent recruitment firms. Kris de Jager and Associates has joined the IIC Partners Group.

Because of Mr de Jager's expertise as managing director of a leading Australian auto recruitment company, IIC Partners has called on him to help increase its focus in the automotive growth markets of Latin America, North Asia, South-East Asia, China, India, Eastern Europe and Russia. He remains at Kris de Jager and Associates.

LAUNCH PAD

OCTOBER:

- Alfa Romeo 156 update
- Alfa Romeo Spider update
- BMW 530i
- Citroen Berlingo
- Citroen Xsara update
- Ford RTV
- Holden Crewman Cross8
- Holden Adventra
- Mercedes-Benz E-class wagon
- Mitsubishi CH Lancer sedan
- Nissan Maxima
- Nissan 350Z convertible
- Porsche 911 C4S Cabriolet
- Porsche 911 Turbo Cabriolet
- Saab 9-3 convertible
- Peugeot 307 Touring
- Peugeot 206 GTi 180
- Toyota Avalon update
- Toyota Kluger
- Toyota Prius
- Volvo S80 T6 update

CARSALES DIVIDEND

AUSTRALIA'S leading automotive website, Carsales.com.au Limited, has paid a dividend of \$1 million to its shareholders. The website, which is mostly owned by car dealers, means that for the first time car retailers are able to share directly in the media in which they spend millions of dollars of advertising each year. The dividend payout follows a profit \$1.3 million in the year to June and represents a distribu-

tion of 75 per cent of earnings. The payout was 0.77 cents a share.

HYDROGEN HONDA

HONDA has developed an experimental Home Energy Station (HES) that generates hydrogen from natural gas to use in fuel cell vehicles while supplying electricity and hot water to the home.

The new HES system, jointly developed with strategic fuel cell partner Plug Power Inc, will undergo experiments in hydrogen production, storage and fuelling.

Honda views hydrogen fuel cell power as a potential to be the next generation power plant needed to overcome problems related to the development of alternative fuels, reducing exhaust gas emissions and the effects of global warming.

Honda is researching ways to improve the energy efficiency of the hydrogen fuel production process and vehicle efficiency.

GOLF IN DEMAND

INITIAL strong demand for the new, fifth generation Golf has forced Volkswagen to ramp up production.

Barely a month after the new Golf's Frankfurt motor show debut, VW has decided to add a Saturday shift to the Wolfsburg plant where the small car is made. The decision affects 12,000 workers and came after an agreement was reached with Volkswagen's worker's council in Wolfsburg. The extra day's production will continue until at least the end of the year, with an outlook to extend that to the end of the first quarter of next year.

Volkswagen is expecting to build around 600,000 Golfs in 2004.

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