

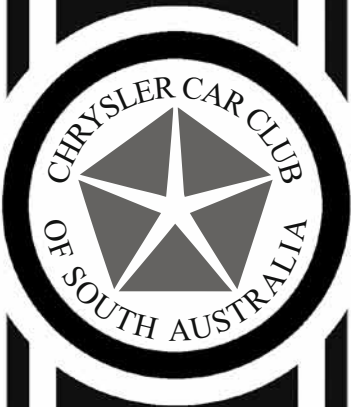


# ***Torqueback***

OFFICIAL MAGAZINE OF THE CHRYSLER CAR CLUB OF SOUTH AUSTRALIA



**THE FORWARD LOOK**  
**PART ONE**



CHRYSLER CAR CLUB OF SOUTH AUSTRALIA INC

# ***Torqueback***

JUNE - AUGUST 2009

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General Meetings are held every second Tuesday of every month at:  
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Membership Fees  
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Historic Registration - \$30.00 per year (& quarterly magazine)



Greetings all....

Well its that time again, time for the new Torqueback!!

As promised this issue is all about the Aussie delivered **Forward Look** vehicles. The next issue will also cover this topic, featuring more so on the '60, '61 Dodges whilst this issue will be focused on the '58 & '59 Dodge, De Soto and Plymouths.

A big thank you to **Andrew Sharpe** from Ballarat for writing the fabulous article for me. I'm sure you will all find it very interesting and insightful! We also have the next chapter of Selling Plymouth's in 1964, thank you again to **Gary** in the US for sharing your experiences with us.

On a sad note, we have not had a very good quarter in the club, losing two members. Firstly, 19 year old **Jarrod Biagi** and not long after **Ben Martin**. Both have been active and positive

members of the club. Our thoughts go out to their families at such a hard time. Thankyou to **Greg Helbig** for writing the two lovely reflections.

Hopefully you have seen all the articles that have been appearing in the car magazines about **All Chrysler Day**. It's all been really positive from what I've read, so that's superb!

There's a great article in the second issue of the all new **Chrysler Action** magazine. If you haven't checked the magazine out yet, then get to your local newsstand quickly, because they've been selling out fast, and rightly so....

I recently bought a AP6 Safari wagon as my new daily driver, so hopefully now I should be able to attend some cruises & events.

My Suburban's coming along nicely. All the body work is now done, I just need to get it painted and work on the mechanics!



Oh how I cant wait to cruise in it!

Well I hope you find this issue of Torqueback interesting and that you look forward to the next issue which concludes the history of the Aussie Delivered Forward Looks.

You also might be interested to know that there's a **Hardtops** bumper issue of Torqueback in the works...

Cheers **Adriana**



**adrian brien automotive**

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G'day to you hibernating hemi heads. The chilli winter season is upon us with some wild weather to keep things interesting. I don't know about you but it seems harder and harder to find any spare time to go out to the shed and lift the bonnet on the old val. All of my projects are sitting idle and neglected which makes me sad. I sure do hope that you members of the chrysler club are having a bit more luck than myself. Even though winter is upon us the club has still managed to hold some cruises which have been well attended with the usual regulars and also some new cars and faces which is great to see. Currently our monthly cruises are leaving from Welland plaza on Port Road on the 3rd Saturday of each month shortly after 7pm. The committee are curious to know what you think of the venue and timing of these cruises - are you happy to keep the current arrangements? Shall we mix up the start points evenly around the suburbs eg north, south, east, west?

Please let us know if you have any suggestions, opinions or feedback as it is your club and our job is to do what is in the best interest of the clubs members and unless we know what you want things shall remain the same. We now have the new sms program up and running and you should be receiving sms reminders about events and cruises, if you have not received any in the last month it means we do not have your current up to date phone number on record. So its up to you to get in touch with us and update your current details.

This brings me to the next change that we have made - we will not accept ANY membership renewal unless it is accompanied by a completed membership application form with your up to date contact details filled in. We have had ongoing issues for many years now where we simply do not get notified of some

members mailing address or numbers and we get your quarterly magazines returned back to us.

On a very sad note the club has lost 2 members recently and they will be sadly missed by many. I was very shocked to hear of the passing of **Jarrold Biagi** - One of our youngest chrysler club members.

Just over a week after we saw him at our June meeting **Ben Martin** passed away suddenly. Ben was a regular at our meetings and also took out the best original category at this year's All Chrysler day. Later in this issue of Torque Back you will find a tribute on both members which will go into more detail.

At the June meeting it was decided that the **2010 All Chrysler Day** will hold a spotlight on **VG** models. So now is the time to get off your lounge chair and walk out to the shed and finish off that VG. Now if you do not have a VG now is the time to purchase one as you have heaps of time to get it ready for next years show. I think that we may even see 'the largest gathering of VG Pacers' at the show - they are really growing in popularity and collectability which is great to see. The date is yet to be finalised but is looking like being one of the last weekends in February. The venue is yet to be finalised also.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank all the committee members and historic vehicle inspectors for their hard work over the last 12 months, we are all unpaid volunteers who give up our spare time so that the Chrysler car club runs smoothly. Without the committee members who meet twice a month, every month of the year the club would not be where it is today. The last 12 months i believe have been a real team effort which i have appreciated greatly as my small business takes up 12 hours a day, 7 days a week of my time which doesn't leave me much spare time to do club business. The annual general meeting is upon us so all positions are declared vacant at the beginning of the meeting and by the end of the meeting all those positions need to be filled again so if you would like to have your say about the future of the club its up to you to nominate yourself or another member for which ever position you see fit.

I hope you are enjoying the new look club magazine as I certainly am - thanks Adriana and Dave.

The committee has decided that we will most likely be putting together another calendar this year which we aim to have completed and ready for distribution around October this year. It will be 12 months only this time and more importantly we will be taking pre orders plus an extra 20 approx. If you want a copy of this professionally produced calendar you **MUST** pre order your copy otherwise you **WILL** miss out! So don't say I didn't warn you. Contact me via the club phone to place your order. (0412426360)

By now you should have noticed the Chrysler Club members vehicles that have been featured in the last 4 issues of **Street Machine** magazine. I was impressed by the articles and pictures. Well done to all involved. The next project that the Chrysler Club is helping out with is the production of a book on the history of the Chrysler production facilities in Australia being compiled by **Gavin Farmer** who put together the **Charger book**. (With the red cover).

We are looking for any interesting information, articles, photographs about the Chrysler plants. Gavin also would love to speak to anyone who was involved with Chrysler that has any information to share and stories to tell about the good old days when our favourite cars were rolling off the production line. Please don't be shy - we want your stories so that this history can be documented and not lost forever. Garry is also wanting vehicles to photograph for the book, keep an eye on the website to find out more.

Anyway I have to get going out to the shed as I am giving my maroon hard top a bit of a make over, the 360 is coming out for a freshen up as I have a broken ring or two. When the motor goes back in, power should be almost double, hopefully. I don't want to give too much away at this stage, all I can say is yes I am excited and yes I will be tearing up the tarmac this October at the **Gazzanationals**.

Hope you got the chance to purchase a bottle of charger lager from the brew boys, a professionally produced beer cleverly packaged as charger lager E4.9 %. It was a limited run and sold out quickly. I have a few empties floating around my lounge room and I must say it was tasty!

Cheers! Cya on the road,  
**Raddy**

Hi y'all

Winter is finally here, and all we can do is hope for some great soaking rains to end this wretched drought. Things have been relatively quiet on the scene lately due to the inclement weather.

However we did have a wonderful night at Tonsley Hotel for the annual volunteers dinner which was quiet well attended. We had around 30 to 40 turn up, and as per usual we were one of the last to leave. Graham from **Boss Engineering** thoroughly enjoyed himself as he does with us every year. Go hard Graham, you party animal!! And of course there was some tomfoolery from a certain couple, (let you guess who) they never fail to entertain.

Also we attended **McLarens on the Lake** event earlier. There must have been in excess of 300 cars. We were given a police escort down the main street of

McLaren Vale which was blocked off to the public. There were many people who came out to see the broad array of cars, all sent off to different local wineries to show their vehicles and enjoy lunch (incredibly expensive it was).

The event as really well attended as the weather was pretty daggy. But fun was had by all except the **MG Car Club** (eh Margaret?). They took our undercover spot at the winery and did not book for lunch and couldn't handle the fun we were having. Oh well, tough luck.

On a very sombre note now.

On the 27th of May the Chrysler community was hit by tragedy and lost a wonderful soul.

Jarrod Biagi was unfortunately involved in a fatal car accident and has been lost to us all. Our deepest condolences go to Ralph and Annabel, his parents,



prolific in the Chrysler and automotive circles. His funeral was held at Tanunda on Saturday the 6th June and was attended by many hundreds of mourners. It was a beautiful service.

He will be deeply missed by all who knew him.

**Cathy Groot**

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On Wednesday 27th May 2009 **Jarrold Biagi** was fatally injured in a car accident just east of Lyndoch on the Barossa Valley Way.

He passed away in hospital later that night.

Jarrold was a member of the Chrysler Car Club for about 3 years and having just turned 19 was one of the youngest members of the club.

He was passionate about his motoring hobby and owned several vehicles including a VC sedan, VG hardtop, Gallant, LB lancer hatchback (seen at All Chrysler Day 2008) just to name a few.

The vehicle that he drove at the time of the accident was a Nissan 200 SX and he was the only person in the vehicle. Jarrold is the son of **Ralph** and **Annabel**, who have been members of the club since about 2000.

A floral tribute and sympathy card were handed to Ralph & family on behalf of the club.

The funeral was held on Saturday 6th June at the Faith Lutheran Chapel where four members were present along with about 800 others.

Jarrold was well known and very popular. He was a very likeable character and will be sadly missed.







**Benjamin and Jeanette Martin** have been members of the Chrysler Club since February 2007. They are the proud owners of an immaculate 1975 VJ sedan in metallic bronze which they have owned since 1982. It was Ben's daily driver for many years and it also had quite a work out as he was always towing around something for the organizations he was involved in. The car was well maintained and got covered in a blanket every night and covered during the day while at work. It was often said that he loved the car more than he did Jeanette.

Ben was a bricklayer by trade and also did some blacksmithing and farriery. In 1952 at the age of 23 he joined the police force where he remained (interrupted for a couple years in the early 60s while he served in the military police riding a Harley) until retirement in 1987. The police force is where his motoring passion begun as he got to drive the Royals and then the Valiants. He got to test them to their full potential. He has even tested the crash safety of many, like the AP6 he put into the Gawler River at high speed during a pursuit along Pt Wakefield Road.

His first valiant an AP6 ended up wrapped around a stobie pole in his own street which he just left there, walked home and got it later. Ben had many stories of his pursuit days.

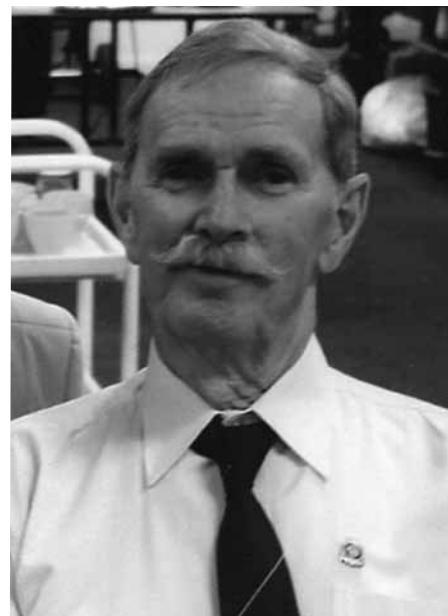
On Tuesday 16th of June Ben was scheduled to have repairs or a

replacement of a heart valve. Ben never made it through the operation. The operation itself was a success and the heart was functioning as it should, but at the disconnection of the bypass the aorta split. Doctors worked on Ben for about 16 hours but he sadly passed away in the early hours of Wednesday.

Ben entered his car at this years All Chrysler Day and won the 'Best Unrestored' category. He was determined to get the car immaculate but with his heart condition most of the work was carried out either while seated or literally on his hands and knees.

When able, he climbed down into the pit and detailed areas visible from under the bonnet. By the time he had finished the car looked like it had just left the showroom floor.

The vehicle itself is unique as it is a 4litre six cylinder fitted with an eight cylinder torqueflite transmission from the factory. Chrysler made a special issue of only 5 vehicles and used the non standard transmission. Also included with these 5 vehicles were a vinyl roof, bucket seats, and factory optioned mag wheels. When Ben's winning number was called he was totally thrilled to bits but once again due to his condition was unable to complete the walk to collect his trophy. Jeanette enthusiastically did this on his behalf.



At age 80 this was Ben's first trophy and he let everyone know all about it and they even got to see it as it was taken everywhere. A very proud and deserving winner.

Ben loved his car and he loved the club, he said we were his kind of people he never missed a meeting. Even during his last days he was trying to arrange someone to drive his car to the Clarendon run on the 28th June knowing he would be recovering.

His wish was to have his profile and his car in the club magazine. He has his wish, but he will never see it. Ben leaves behind Jeanette his wife of 29 years and a long list of others in the family.



# forward look down under

BY ANDREW SHARPE

## CHRYSLER AUSTRALIA'S 1958/1959 US IMPORTS.

For those of us who have an affinity with late 1950's American automobiles, it is hard to go past the winged wonders being produced at the time by the Chrysler Corporation. Here in Australia, a fortunate few would take new car ownership of such vehicles when Chrysler Australia made the bold decision to import new US sourced 1958/1959 Plymouth Belvederes, Dodge Custom Royals and De Soto Firesweeps for the local market. Volume would be strictly limited and by 1960 the switch would be made to the more cost effective Canadian sourced Dodge Phoenix as Chrysler Australia's sole luxury import.



ABOVE: Old press photo showing the Aussie Delivered 1958 Plymouth belvedere 4-door hardtop. Wonder if this old girl is still on the streets of adelaide? Or hibernating in a shed somewhere waiting to be discovered?

### 1957: A Royal Flush.

1957 was a pivotal year for Chrysler in the US, where the company released their second generation of vehicles designed under Virgil M Exner and his talented styling team. With the introduction of the '57 models, Exner realize his vision in full of what a modern, contemporary mode of transport should look like. In the age of the rockets and jet aircraft, the shape desired was that of a wedge, wedge with large intergrated tailfins, a shape of motion.

Chrysler called it "The Forward Look". This styling term wasn't brand new, Chrysler had first used it on their 1955 models, which were indeed new cars stem to stern. It was a year later however, with the introduction of the 1956 models, that Exner's first true tailfin rear end designs were seen on all Chrysler vehicles. Although the new tailfin designs were placed onto the existing 1955 body shells, the move gave the 1956 cars a completely

different profile, that of dropping the front and lifting the rear. This styling theme would be taken to the next level with the 1957 designs, where the tailfin shape was on the drawing board from the very beginning.

The new 1957 Forward Look Chryslers met with acclaim from both the public and critics alike. They were incredibly low vehicles, with crisp clean lines, large glass areas, flat thin roof sections and of course, those tailfins. In a time when designs particularly from General Motors, were still utilizing full, rounded forms with heavy chrome accents, the new Chrysler lines were a real breath of fresh air. The car buying public agreed by purchasing the vehicles in record numbers, boosting Chrysler's profits and allowing the company to near its goal of reclaiming 20% of the domestic US auto market.

The '57 Forward Look Chrysler vehicles weren't just beautiful to look at; they were incredibly capable road cars thanks to the company's



LEFT: Fin of an Aussie Delivered 1959 Dodge Custom Royal.





ABOVE: Photograph of the Aussie delivered, 1958 Dodge Custom Royal being put through it's paces during a roadtest for the August 1958 issue of Modern Motor magazine.

excellent new torsion bar suspension, Torqueflite automatic transmissions and powerful Hemispherical and Polyspherical V8 engines.

New Chrysler vehicles weren't without their flaws however. The single biggest problem with the cars was considerably poor quality control and this problem was twofold. Firstly there was the fast tracking of the new designs to be released as the 1957 models. A rush to production which didn't allow the necessary time to really evaluate, or master, more complex body construction techniques utilized on the finned '57 cars. The result saw new production vehicles having poor panel fit and finish and water leaks.

Secondly, to make things even more challenging, as the factories were getting used to how the new cars needed to be assembled, production output was stepped up to meet the increased public demand.

Volume certainly went up; quality control went out the window.

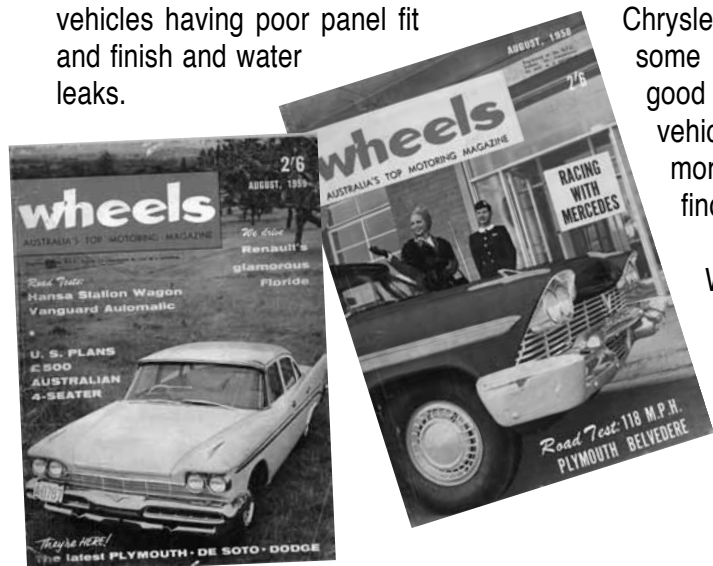
Things would improve gradually for the 1958 model year and greatly by the time the '59 models were being built, when most of the problems had been address. Unfortunately the damage had been done, the cars suffered greatly with early rust out issues and it indeed tarnished Chrysler's reputation for some time. It also makes good condition Chrysler vehicles of this era even more of a challenge to find for collectors today.

While all this was going on in the USA, Chrysler Australia was getting ready to launch their very own version of the Forward Look,

the new 1957 Chrysler Royal. By February 1957 the new AP1 Royal was making its debut in dealer showrooms across the country. This new singular model was designed to replace the three car line up of Plymouth, Dodge, De Soto which Chrysler Australia had been marketing from 1954 right though to early 1957, still using the same ageing 53/54 US Plymouth bodies, with only grille, badge and detail changes to create brand identity for the Dodge and De Soto variations.

Chrysler Australia's 1957 Royal was a new car, with a new name, but underneath the new front and rear sheet metal sourced from the 1956 US model Plymouth, a larger wrapped rear glass and nicely worked out local grille design heavily based on the current US Plymouth, the new Royal wasn't really that new at all, it was still the carry over body shell from the old '54 Plymouth. Chrysler Australia was trying to created a new vehicle for the domestic market with what funding and resources they had available and the decision to make their new 1957 offering utilising this existing body shell, shows the cost saving measures that were put in place. Still, considering what they had to work with, the new "hybrid" Chrysler Royal turned out pretty well and the design team should have been proud of their efforts, but would it sell?

It appears that to begin with, sales for the new Royal were reasonable, but probably started to decline once the new car interest wore off. Total Chrysler Royal registrations for 1957 amounted to 2'340 units. Early 1957 also saw Chrysler finish moving the old Plymouth, Dodge, De Soto cars,



LEFT: The August 1959 & August 1958 issue of Wheels magazine.

with their collective registrations numbering 1618 units. Chrysler Australia's total combined car volume for 1957 came to 3958 units, giving the company a 2.6% share of the Australian car market, but was this a good or bad result? It was indeed a drop from the previous year, 1956 saw Chrysler Australia's market share at 3.4 %, a year in which sales were generated from the old Plymouth Dodge De Soto models mentioned earlier. Total combined registrations for 1956 were 4826 units.

Was the Royal to blame for the drop in sales that Chrysler Australia experienced in 1957? A drop of 768 units? There were some significant issues at play. Potential customers may have seen the car for exactly what it was, an updated version of an old existing body with no really new features, the one exception to this being the new push button selection for the Power Flite automatic models. Or was the Royal a vehicle which the general car buying public perhaps felt was not of the same modern standard or quality that GM-H was offering with their Chevrolet and Pontiac models, or Ford with its V8 Customline, the later prompting Chrysler to get a V8 option on the Royal as quickly as they could.

Perhaps there was another problem, that of a complete identity crisis?

Was replacing three existing familiar makes, which had strong brand loyalty, with one singular make, with a new, different name such a good idea?

Chrysler may have underestimated their customer's wants and needs in this respect. A Dodge man visits his local dealer to trade his car and move up to the latest new model, only to be told by the salesman, "Sorry, we don't sell Dodges any more, but let me



Dealership photograph of an Aussie Delivered 1959 De Soto Fire Sweep.

show you our beautiful new Chrysler Royal". To which the customer replies "Chrysler Royal? What's a Chrysler Royal? I'm here to buy a new Dodge thank you".

Maybe Chrysler would have done better if they had in fact called their new offering a "Dodge Royal"? Dodge models of the recent past had been edging out Plymouth slightly in sales, with De Soto running third.

Whatever the reason, it must have become apparent to Chrysler Australia very early on that the Royal was just not selling in the volume that was hoped for. It also appears that the dealers, trying their best to

sell the new cars, may have been rather vocal in requesting a more competitive product and the familiar old brand names back to satisfy their customers. Something had to be done rather swiftly to solve the problem. Enter the 1958 US models.

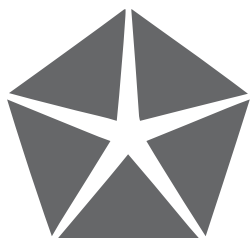
## Detroit Decision

Chrysler Australia's "Royal" concerns must have been realized shortly after the new vehicles were released. The company certainly wasted no time in devising a strategy to increase sales and reclaim their dealer confidence and customer loyalty. One can only

CONTINUED  
PAGE 12



No it's not Steven Segal, this is Nick Katsos in 1964 with his newly acquired red 1958 Plymouth Belvedere.



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imagine the meetings that must have been taking place within Chrysler management at this time of urgency. Ultimately, Chrysler's decision was to import, assemble and sell brand new current US model, Plymouth Belvederes, Dodge Custom Royals and De Soto Firesweeps.

Strangely, the decision was made to have the new vehicles imported out of the USA rather than from Canada, where Australia had a much more favourable trade agreement with less imposing tariffs and taxes. Perhaps Chrysler Canada was not able to accommodate the request, or vehicle volume, in the time frame required, which no doubt would have specified for immediate delivery.

Another possible issue may have been the limited variation of Canadian models available for export. A Plymouth was a Plymouth in Canada, but the Dodge Kingsways and the De Soto Diplomats built there at the time, were both Plymouth bodies with different, brand specific front clips. Chrysler Australia had been playing that game and may not have wanted to risk being caught out again.

So the USA it was, with a higher price tag and a tighter Australian imposed import restriction policy limiting volume to around 300 units per manufacturer.

This import limitation may in part explain Chrysler's decision to bring in the three different makes to allow for their desired number of vehicles. They simply couldn't order 1'000 Plymouths out of the USA, even if they wanted to.

Or, were they really giving their best effort to provide the dealers and customers with what they apparently desired, the old familiar Plymouth Dodge De Soto trio.

## Forward Look Touch Down

"To boost sales and prestige the Chrysler Corporation are now marketing three new models which have come from the series of very latest 1958 American models. Priced at around the 3,000 pound mark, these cars bring a new concept of motoring to Australia. Massive V8 engines, dual headlights [quad], push button transmissions and high sweeping tail fins characterise the cars which are all capable of speeds over 100 M.P.H. and accelerate to 50 M.P.H. in just over 7 seconds"

This was the general introduction to the new Chrysler Australia offerings, published in the May 1st 1958 issue of Monthly Motor Manual under an article titled "American Chrysler Cars Here". When the cars actually became available for public purchase, is



Rare production line photo of a '59 Plymouth.

somewhat of a mystery. The Monthly Motor Manual article only featured US press release images, not actual photographs of the locally assembled vehicles. Although the article's author does speak of viewing the local cars in the flesh, perhaps through a visit to Chrysler Australia's Adelaide facilities, where the new cars were being assembled, or maybe the author saw a preproduction model displayed by Chrysler distributors at one of the motor shows held in capital cities throughout February/March '58. This certainly would have been the case at the Melbourne Motor Show, where a shiny new '58 Dodge Custom Royal was taking pride of place with the distributor there. The car was a fully imported pilot vehicle to promote the local models on offer, which it would seem at the time, were still being assembled.

The local cars can't have been far from ready though; most accounts have the new '58 models actually starting to see deliveries to dealers around late February/early March, with a few suggesting that deliveries began around April/May, which still would have made these "brand new" 1958 cars.

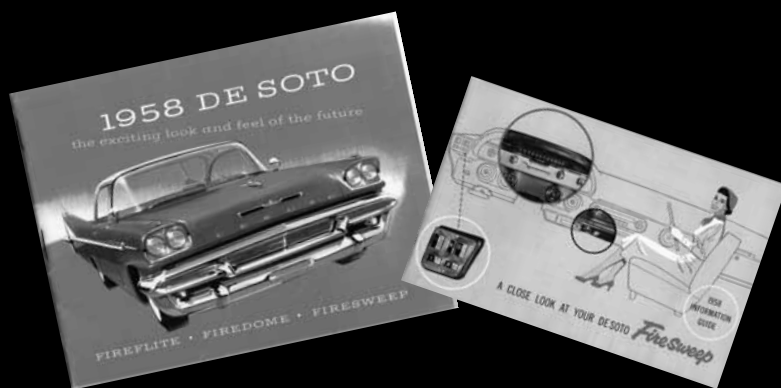
Either way, the delivery dates show an incredible effort from Chrysler Australia, when looking at the time frame from making the initial decision to market these cars, to 'placing the purchase orders, to shipping and unloading them, then setting



Aussie delivered '59 Plymouth Belvedere.

GO TO PAGE 16

# TRIPLE TONED DELIGHT!



I'd been looking for a finned Mopar since selling my Caddys, my wife had her heart set on a 1959 Dodge custom royal but after a couple of deals fell through, we realised it was not to be. Around the same time I was offered a black Aussie delivered De Soto Firesweep. That needed paint and reassembly.

This I decided would quench my thirst for a finned Mopar. It sat under a tarp in my yard as I advertised for the parts I needed to complete the car. The ad ran for over a month and then one day I received a phone call asking if I would be interested in a whole car, how could I resist? After receiving pictures of the vehicle through email I decided the car looked decent enough to consider restoring and decided to meet the owner.

As I saw the car and trailer pull up behind me, I could see the Desoto out my side window and my decision was made. I paid the owner and towed the car home that day. Under the dust, crazed paint and rust was a very striking and desirable car, a car that was easier to envision on the road than the one that resided under a tarp in pieces at my house.

With an array of factory colours which differed from their US counterparts. Its hard to know what colour you'll see next... Take the colour combination of yellow, red and black, what could sound so bad yet look so good? Well that is precisely the original colour scheme of Herman Kloss' Aussie delivered '58 De Soto Firesweep.

The car was all original yet had gone down hill the recent years as it was removed from the garage and used as a shooting vehicle. When I got it home I gave it a good wash and polish, it scrubbed up quiet well. The mechanicals and brakes had a go over and within no time at all we were out cruising.

The car turned heads everywhere we took it, with people laughing when I told them that there was a 350 motor under the hood. These people being to stupid to know that it was the only year that motor was offered. After I while Instead of taking it out and enjoying it I was more preoccupied it would catch the attention of coppers and I'd end up with a defect. Although I loved the originality of the

De Soto, it was necessary to get the body and paint done, it was time to manage the growing rust before that's all I had. By this time I had sold the black '58, as it was clear it would be a project that would never get done.

After 10 months the Desoto was ready to shine. I debuted it at Kustom Kulture 2007 and took out Best Klassic. At the time the resto was a tough decision, but it is a decision I was glad I made.

I feel lucky to be able to say that I have owned two of the Aussie delivered '58 De Soto Firesweeps as there are not many around at all anymore.

**Herman Kloss**











*Herman Kloss*



Anthony Vigilante's gorgeous Aussie delivered 1958 Belvedere

up for assembly and putting them together. It was apparent that the new imports struck a chord with Chrysler customers. Once dealers had been notified of the plans to offer the new vehicles for sale here in Australia, information they quickly passed on to potential customers, they found themselves promptly taking down orders. In fact, Sydney and Melbourne distributors alone, had written orders for over two hundred cars before they even arrived in the country!

## THE CARS: 1958

With the arrival of the new 1958 imports Chrysler Australia now had on offer some of the most powerful, best handling, large luxury cars Australia had ever seen, with up to the minute ultra modern styling; from the cars heavily hooded quad headlight front ends to their soaring tailfins. Like all 1958 Chrysler products, the year old [but still very new styling and engineering wise], 1957 body shells were utilized, with only minor trim, grille and tail light modifications. But the '58 models were indeed brand new cars in this country and the sight of one of these vehicles on

the streets and roads of 1958 Australia no doubt, must have been somewhat of an other worldly experience. Cars like these Chryslers would have literally stopped some people in their tracks; they were just that new and different. The experience was one probably not to be matched by the local competition until June 1959 when Chevrolet's new "Bat Wing" Bel Airs arrived.

Chrysler Australia had decided to import their new US cars as CKD [Complete Knock Down] units, which would have allowed a considerable tax saving over fully imported finished vehicles. The new cars were assembled, painted and had their interiors fitted at Chrysler Australia's Adelaide facilities, before they could finally be distributed to the various dealerships nationwide. Body shells were set up to accommodate Right Hand Drive assembly, although modifications had to be made to the firewalls. Floor pan stampings were also set up to accept RHD. The light, but very strong box section frames were indeed RHD export units, with RHD manual steering boxes fitted. It is also likely that frames were fitted with the available "Export Suspension Package". This meant thicker torsion bars, stiffer rear spring rates and export shock absorbers.

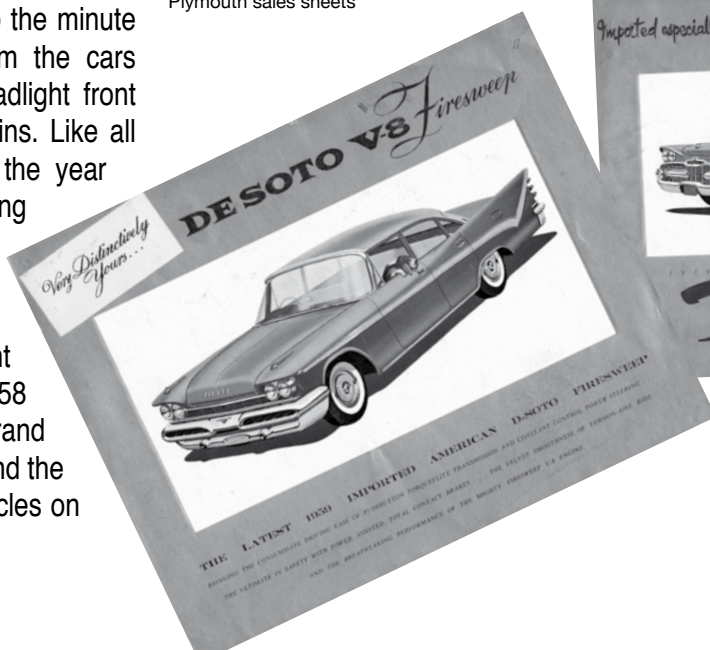
All assembled vehicles regardless of make, were fitted with Chryslers export RHD 1957/1958 Dodge dashboard, which carried a few small, but quite unique differences from the domestic US versions. This dash was also utilised the following year, in the new 1959 imports.

So just what exactly could a 1958 Chrysler customer expect to purchase for themselves in these new Detroit offerings? All the Australian assembled cars came standard with V8 engine and Torqueflite transmission, radio, heater, full wheel covers, windscreen washers, power brakes, electric clock and Solex tinted safety glass, [a few Plymouth have been found without Solex]. It is interesting to note that the local cars also included the US optional "Bumper Group" packages as standard features.

Out of the three 1958 US imports available, Chrysler Australia's biggest seller was the 1958 Plymouth Belvedere, one very sharp, aggressive looking automobile indeed, with its shark fin rear and a clean four door hard top body. What inspired Chrysler Australia's decision to market the top line Plymouth Belvederes as a hard top is unknown.

STAY TUNED...

Below: Rare Aussie Delivered 1959 Desoto, Dodge & Plymouth sales sheets



PART TWO  
NEXT ISSUE!



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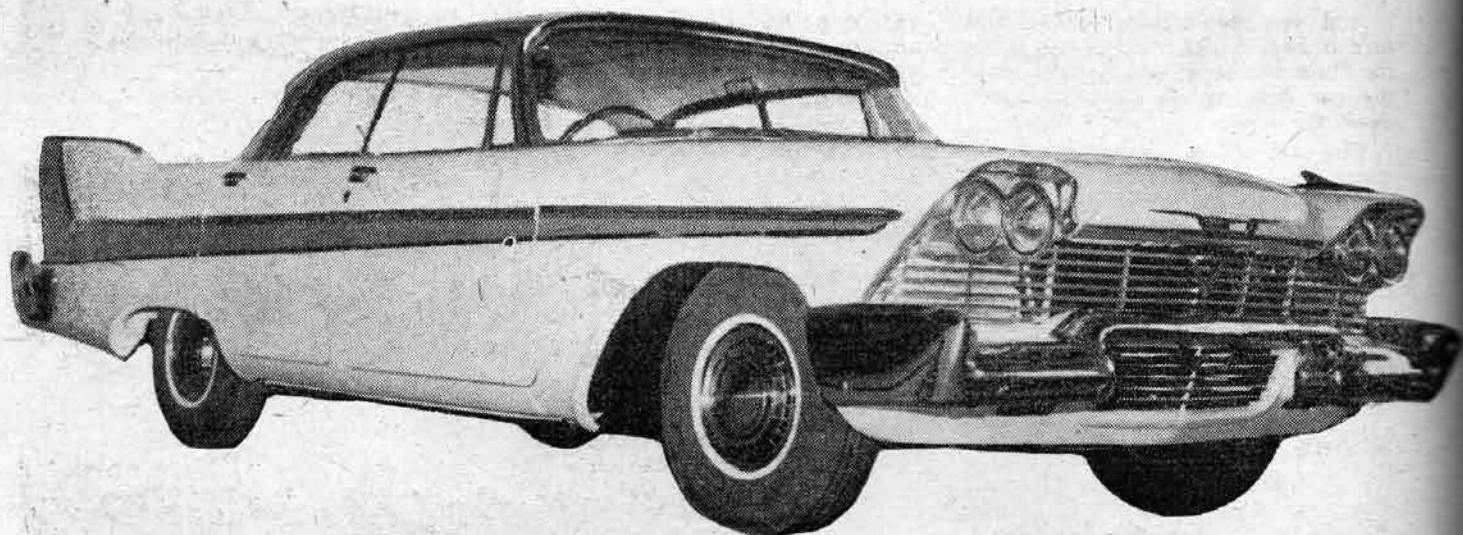
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# GOODBYE BLACK MARKET

***Genuine American 1958-model Plymouth, Dodge and De Soto V8's are now being assembled in Australia by Chrysler!***



***FURY V8, fitted on Plymouth hardtop, churns out 225 b.h.p. RIGHT: Hardtop's impressive cockpit has two pedals, pushbutton drive control.***

**H**ERE'S bad news for racketeers who have been waxing fat on the resale of American luxury cars imported either illegally or under special privilege:

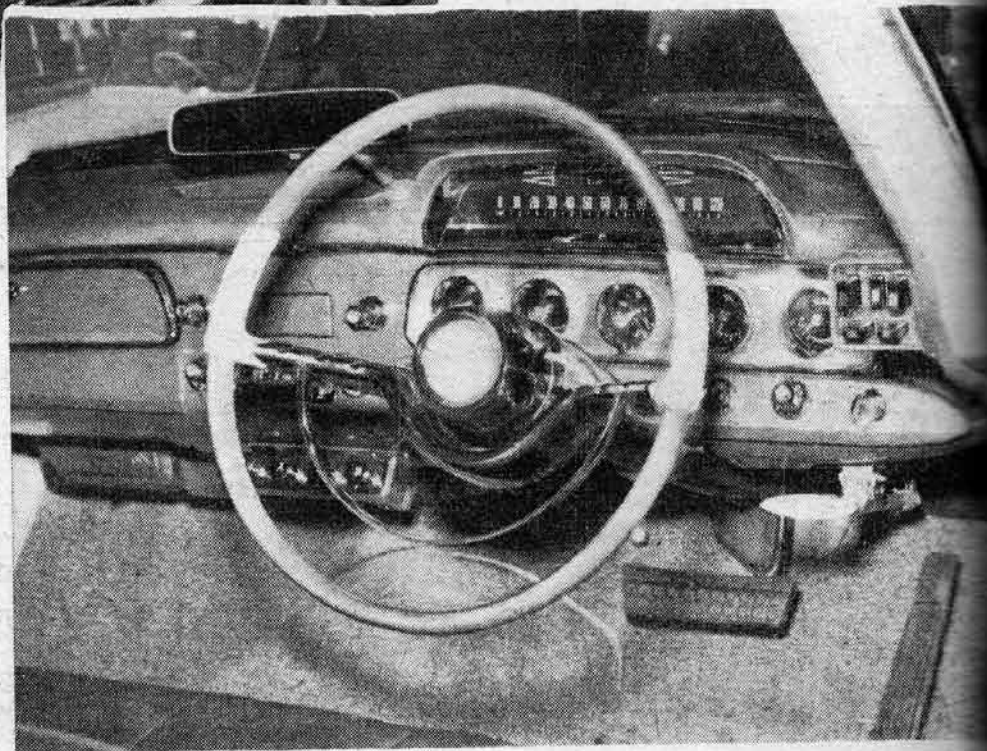
Cars every bit as glamorous will be assembled right here from now on at the Keswick (S.A.) factory of Chrysler Australia Ltd.

Imported C.K.D. from America, they will have all the trimmings: genuine 1958-model U.S. bodies with four headlights and outsize tailfins; big, powerful V8 engines on 9 to 1 compression; latest pushbutton automatic transmission; hot-and-cold air-

conditioning; built-in radios; power brakes; and multi-color combinations in paintwork and trim.

The three models—Plymouth Belvedere 4-door hardtop, Dodge Custom Royal and De Soto Firesweep sedans—made their debut at Sydney's Royal Easter Show, and first deliveries were promised late in April.

Price? About half the amount imported late-model American cars have been fetching. You'll get the Plymouth Belvedere for £3050, the Dodge Custom Royal and De Soto Firesweep for £3275 each, tax included.





And you won't have to toss and turn in bed at night, wondering when the Customs people will come to seize the car, sending all your thousands down the drain.

The cars will be produced in small quantities—perhaps 1000 a year between the three models—but that should be enough to knock the bottom out of the black market.

The Customs Department, whose concern over illegal car imports is mentioned elsewhere in this issue, owes a vote of thanks to Chrysler.

So do prospective buyers of American glamor wagons.

## About the Cars

Let's take a closer look at these new jobs. First to arrive here, and the only one ready for photographing, was the Plymouth Belvedere, so we'll start with that.

On a 118in. wheelbase, it is a shade over 17ft. long, 6ft. 6in. wide and 4ft. 6½in. high when loaded. The interior is vast, and full wraparound screens fore and aft, plus very slim door pillars, give an all-round vision comparable to that of a goldfish bowl. And if you like to carry plenty of luggage, there's 35½ cubic feet of space in the boot.

In the four-headlight system, only the two outside lights are used in city driving; when high beam is desired, all four are brought into operation by pressing a button marked "Bright."

The Plymouth Fury V8 engine, of 318 cu. in. capacity, develops 225 b.h.p. at 4400 revs with the help of twin carburetors. Ignition is 12-volt and the fuel tank holds 20 gallons.

The Torqueflite automatic transmission incorporates a torque-converter. Optional at extra cost is a "Sure-grip" differential which transfers all torque to the wheel that still has traction if you get stuck in mud or sand.

**FOUR EYES and lashings of chrome—everything a glamor-car buyer wants. All photos show Plymouth Belvedere hardtop; Dodge and De Soto V8's weren't ready yet.**



Along with the other two cars, the Plymouth uses torsion bars instead of coil springs in its suspension—not that there's anything new about it, but it's a good system.

Power brakes are standard equipment, but power steering is not available on any of these models. Dry weight of the Plymouth is 3465lb; the Dodge and De Soto are a bit heavier.

Main characteristics of the other two cars are similar to the Plymouth's,

but they are bigger all around. Both have a 122in. wheelbase; the Dodge is 17ft. 10in. long overall, the De Soto 18ft. ½in.

Their engines are bigger than the Plymouth's (350 cu. in.) and develop close to 250 b.h.p. Again, such luxuries as power brakes, heater-demister, pushbutton radio, armrests, variable-speed screen-wipers, etc., are standard equipment.

Yep, there's no more need to risk your dough on the black market! • •



## *true life story*

SELLING PLYMOUTHS IN 1964

That year, the Plymouth side really had it over the Dodge guys. Ramo Stott was a former series champion, and his Hemi-powered Sport Fury, 2-door hardtop had been running very well on the fair circuit. He'd won several races and was vying for the championship with the factory sponsored Ford of Dick Hutcherson. Ernie Derr, another champion, drove a Dodge, but a couple of weeks earlier, he'd seriously wrecked his car and had picked up a new Polara hardtop from a dealership along the way.

He was turning it into a race car, but that was hard to do on the road. All he had done to it by the time he got to us was install roll bars, remove the interior, put on bigger tires, and of course, replace the small block poly with a Hemi engine. He was even running stock shocks, so despite being one of the top drivers in the series, there was no way he could win the race with nearly everything just as it came from the factory.

As I said, our sales manager was a nut for performance cars and racing, so once the teams arrived, he spent all his time with Ramo and his crew of two...a mechanic and a crew chief. Not quite the big-bucks show

of modern NASCAR racing, but they got by. Any parts they needed were available free of charge, but except for a few trim items to make the cars look nice, the only thing he needed on this stop was a couple of windshields. They practiced with one windshield, and replaced them just before the race. Dirt tracks were pretty hard on glass.

Bill nearly got fired over a little trick he played on the owner. Old Alvin would occasionally drink a few too many at night, and when he came in the next morning, he would head for his office in the center of the building, lock the door and close the shades that opened onto the showroom on one side, and the service area on the other.

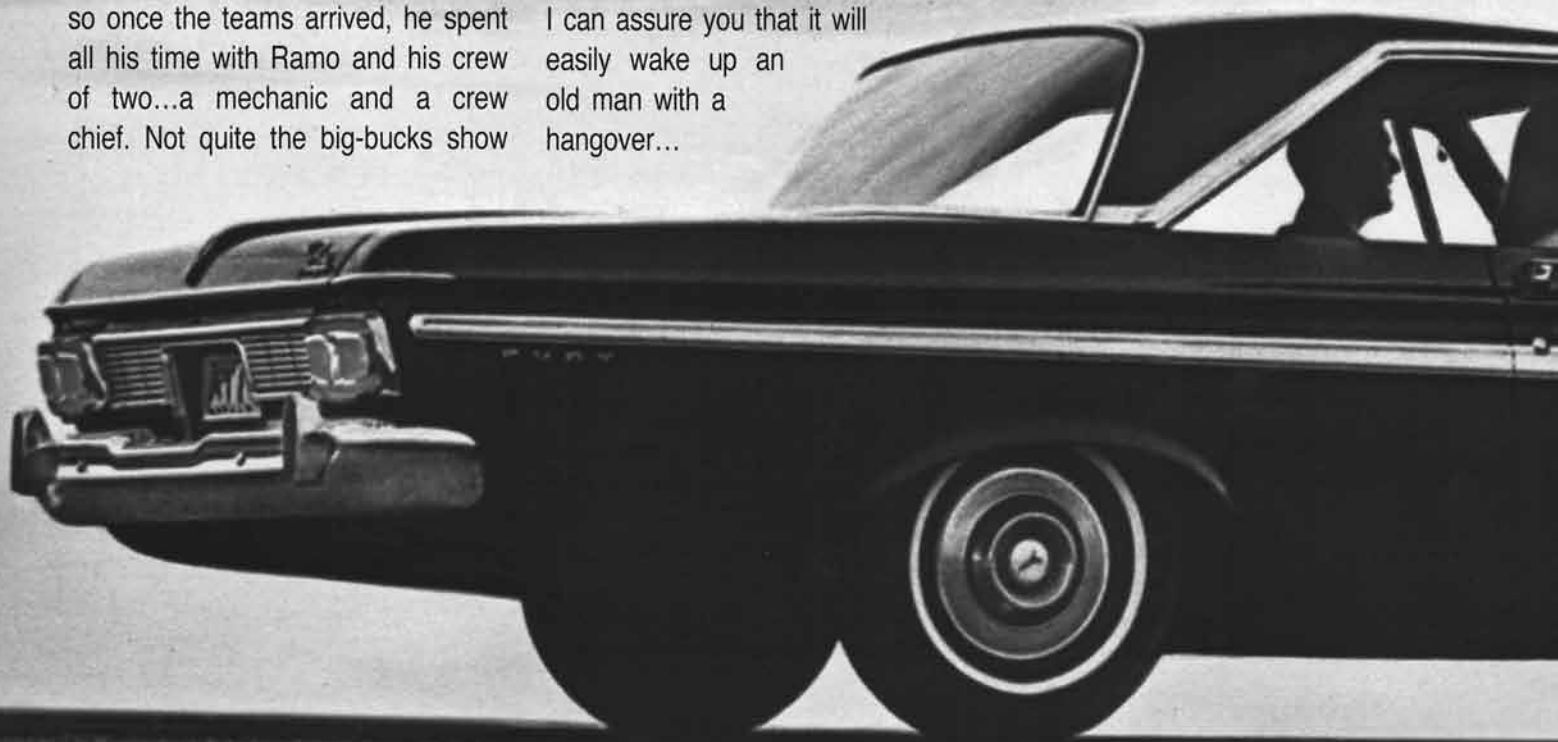
Bill saw Alvin come in and knew he was hung over. After giving him time to fall asleep on his sofa, Bill told Ramo... whose car was backed up against the office wall. That he would give him \$20 if he would start the car and floor the accelerator. I don't know if you ever heard a race Hemi with open exhausts start up inside a building, but I can assure you that it will easily wake up an old man with a hangover...

And it will do it instantly!

The Hemi blasted...the curtain flew open...and Alvin stood there with his eyes staring madly and his face the same shade of red as the race car. He opened the window and screamed at the top of his lungs that everyone in sight was fired. Of course, the entire sales staff and half the mechanics were standing around waiting for the results of the prank, so he couldn't fire all of us unless he closed the dealership.

The fact that everyone was laughing hysterically, didn't help his disposition either. After he finished his nap and his headache went away, even he saw the humor in the situation, and no one was fired.

The night before the race, the sales manager took the race crew and the sales staff out for dinner and drinks. I left the bar at midnight and was pretty well loaded, but the crew and several of our guys closed it down at 2 AM. Ramo had to race at 1PM the next day, so he didn't have much time to





recover, but he managed to make it to the track on time.

He was running in second place when he broke an axle, and suffered too much wheel spin to do well in the race. He finished mid-pack, which was an accomplishment considering the condition of his car. The Dodge didn't even come close to being competitive, so despite losing the race to a factory-backed Ford, we at least won bragging rights in the Mopar camp.

One interesting item about racing in those days. They had no radios, so communications were handled through hand signals and chalk boards, but Ramo's crew chief had a unique way of letting him know when his lap times were too slow.

He had a BB pistol, and he'd shoot Ramo in the side of his helmet when he came by, to tell him to speed up. He must have been a good shot, because the side of the black helmet was covered with tiny brass-colored scuff marks.

While I'm talking about Hemi cars, I'd like to make a point that is often

contradicted by the "experts", but it was fact. There were street licensed Hemi cars in 1964...and we received two of them. Our parts manager was a drag racer and he ordered a root beer colored Sport Fury Hardtop with a Hemi and a 4-speed. Within days of getting the car, he drove it to Minneapolis, Minnesota, to have the engine blueprinted at a race shop. On weekends, he'd race and during the week, he drove it to work.

I don't recall details of the purchase, but it came to the dealership during a normal factory delivery and as far as I know, it had not been delivered to a professional race team first. We also received another Hemi car...a 2-door sedan, I think it was...and it went to another local guy who raced it, but he also had it licensed and drove it on the street.

We honestly didn't get too excited about the Hemi, because we remembered them from the pre-59 cars, and we had still several of them on our used car lot, so they were looked upon as just another high performance engine.

Special order cars and trucks were very common. I remember one visit by the regional factory rep. He told us that we should never turn down a deal because a customer wanted equipment that wasn't in the option book, so I remembered

his comment when the opportunity arose. The New Yorker with the manual transmission was the first example of a special order vehicle. At least I don't remember a manual transmission being listed as original equipment on the luxury line.

At this point, I should mention that we could walk across the hall and sell a Dodge if a customer decided they preferred that brand, or if they wanted a truck. As it turned out, a truck proved to be the oddest special order vehicle I sold.

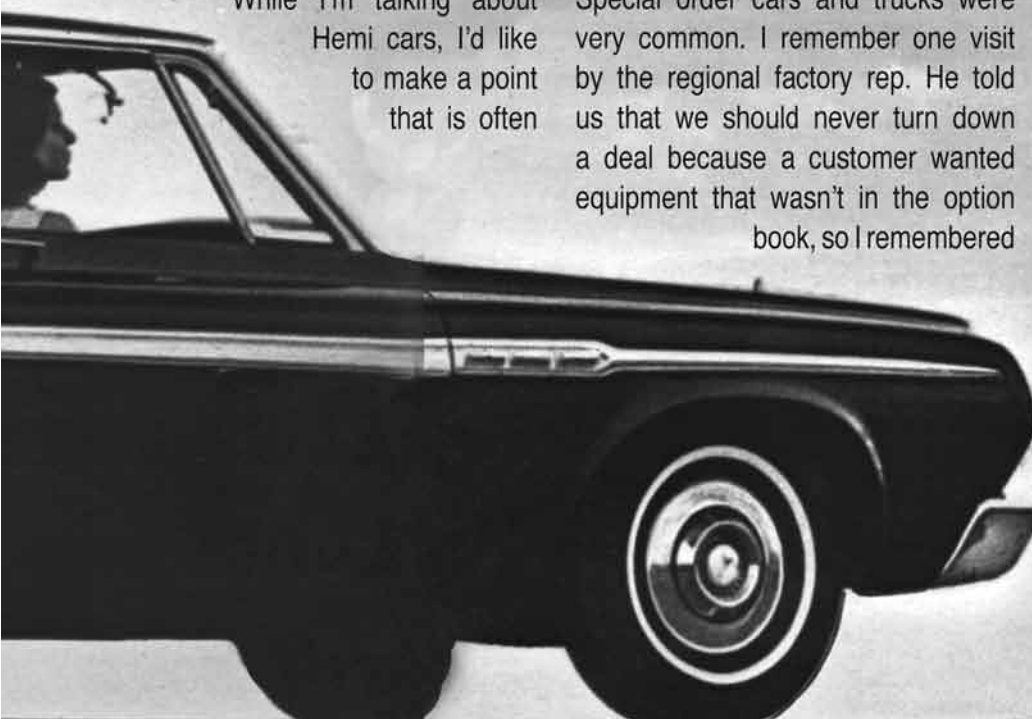
Not long before I left the dealership, one of my customers referred me to a guy who owned a company that worked in oil field exploration. He had a couple of helicopters, and wanted a truck that he could use off-road to support his helicopters and other vehicles used in his business. He wanted a crew cab, 1 ton, 4WD, with special mounting for his oversized gas tank and spare tires.

He also wanted special winches, front and rear, special tires and wheels, heavy duty alternator, company paint scheme, etc. In those days, there wasn't much of an aftermarket, so it was up to the dealers, or customizers, to modify a vehicle to meet a customer's needs and desires.

In this case, I gave the customer's wish list to the factory rep and he handled everything from that point on. I left the dealership before the truck was delivered, but would have loved to see it.

**STAY TUNED...**

**PART FOUR,  
NEXT ISSUE**



**THE CARS THAT ATE PARIS  
- PETER WEIR 1974**

Now if you can bare to watch this film you will be rewarded.

This movie is a prime example of truly unbearable 70's Aussie filmmaking. It's about a rural town, whose residents set up roadblocks/traps to run out of towners' cars of the road. The town folk do this in order to steal their cars and use the dead bodies for medical experiments. This all goes wrong when one victim of a road trap survives (at least this is what I believe the movie is about?)

There is however some hope for this dreary movie [obviously or I wouldn't be writing about it in this magazine].

One of the main cars in this film is a rare Aussie delivered 1958 De Soto Firesweep. So it is worth a look just for the feature car.

You probably won't be able to find this film in video shops, but there are a couple of stores that do stock it. It makes me wonder what ever happened to this car? Is it still around? Or was it deemed a dented worthless car and scrapped?

Watch it if you dare... but don't say you weren't warned. This film is really bad and most of the time unbearable. I give this movie 1 Desoto out of 5 [and the star is purely only for the car!]

Enjoy!  
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Let the good times roll (in a Chrysler Corp vehicle of course!)*

**AUGUST:**

- 8th: Midyear dinner,**  
Buckingham Arms.  
RSVP & deposit compulsory.
- 11th: CCCSA AGM 7.30pm**
- 15th: CHRYSLER CRUISE**  
meet 7pm Welland Plaza, leave 7.30pm.  
Finish Castle Plaza  
(Edwardstown)
- 16th: Public meeting**  
at Pt Adelaide 2pm.  
Regarding Motorplex
- 22nd: SMASA Bowling Night,**  
Cross Road, 7pm
- 23rd: Willunga Swapmeet**  
ph. 0412578188 - Graham
- 28th: Protest Parliament House**  
5pm. Regarding Pt Adelaide  
Motorplex

**SEPTEMBER:**

- 3-5th: Auto Collectors Club of**  
Murray Bridge  
– Twin Bridges Run
- 8th: CCCSA MEETING 7.30pm**
- 13th-20th: Toop & Toop Rock n'**  
Roll Festival.  
Warland Reserve  
Victor Harbour
- 19th: CHRYSLER CRUISE**  
meet 7pm Welland Plaza, leave 7.30pm  
Finish Tea Tree Plaza.
- 20th: COMBINED CRUISE**  
with GT club.  
Meet @ Eagle on the Hill .  
9am for 9:30 departure.  
BBQ lunch at Meningie.  
BYO Meat and Salad
- 20th: Gawler Swapmeet**
- 27th: Bay to Birdwood Classic**

**OCTOBER:**

- 4th: Shannons Memorial Cruise**  
& Family Day. 2pm, free entry,  
American & Aust pre '75  
clasics.  
Civic Park Tea Tree Gully.

- 4th: Motorcycle only swapmeet,**  
Balhannah.  
Peter (08) 8255 8856
- 13th: CCCSA MEETING 7.30pm**
- 17th: CHRYSLER CRUISE,** meet  
7pm Welland Plaza, leave 7.30pm
- 18th: Strathalbyn Swapmeet,**  
Strathalbyn Harness Racing Club.  
Bob 8383 0501  
Dean 8552 1042

**NOVEMBER:**

- 10th: CCCSA MEETING 7.30pm**
- 21st: CHRYSLER CRUISE,**  
meet 7pm Welland Plaza, leave  
7.30pm

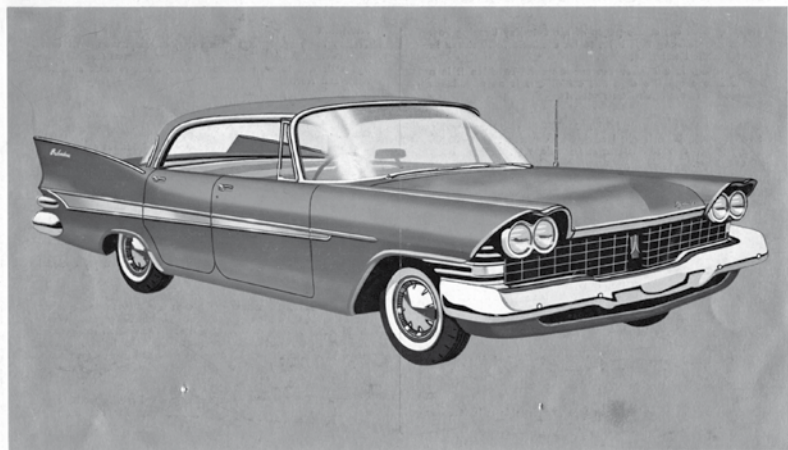
**DECEMBER:**

- 6th: Uradla Hot Rod & Classic Picnic.**  
cruise starts 9am Morphettville  
Junction. adults \$5. bands, art,  
memrobia & model display.  
open to hotrods/ customs,  
American cars & pre '67 classics
- 8th: CCCSA MEETING 7.30pm**
- 19th: CHRYSLER CRUISE,**  
meet 7pm Welland Plaza,  
leave 7.30pm

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'66 VC, beige, dual fuel, elect ignition, mags, stereo, 116,000 orig miles. good authentic car. \$4500  
Dennis 0406300089

'68 Valiant Regal, slant 6, new paint, spent 20K on engine, new tyres, \$12,000

'64 AP5 wagon (modified to AP6) black/ white, V8 5 speed, 9" diff, new tyres \$7000  
Jane Burke 0411 461 680

'71 VH Charger base model \$10,000.  
Cathy 0433 755 132

Scorpion & Lancer coupe.  
Steve 0419 853 224

Chrysler Sigma 1978, yellow, brown trim, tidy, runs well, \$1200, moving interstate URGENT SALE!  
0401 887 620

Chrysler Sigma, good overall, no rust, slipping trans.  
0412 429 630

'84 Mitsubishi Scorpion coupe, blue paint, auto, power steering, not currently rego'd.  
Murray 8264 8809

'75 Centura (deseased estate) 245 auto, was blue. now undercoat, good mech, going cheap. Coburg, Vic.  
Mark (03) 9383 2882

'79 Chrysler Sigma, fawn, good body, URGENT SALE  
0411 697 525 Trina

'80 CM, good interior, average body, dual fuel.  
Herbert 0337 1810

VC wagon, slant 6, extractors, interior good, white paint, new tyres, been sitting for approx 4 years  
\$3000 0403 816 041

**PARTS FOR SALE:**

Various parts for sale, VH rear bumper \$100 NOS badges from \$50, NOS CxC hardtop panels, 245 intake manifold and much more!  
Cathy 0433 755 132

4x 6" steel rims, suit R- VG, ex cond. \$80  
Allan 8352 1383

Ap5-CM Valiants. most parts available. sorry no Charger/ Hardtop parts. email or sms part requirements and i'll get back to you if i can help.

John - Two Wells (08) 8520 2147  
or 0419 146 924

Ap5/ Ap6 Regal rear seat. blue. good cond. \$100 ono  
Smokey 8258 8883

'71 Phoenix factory thumb-wheel radio. various badges for Aussie & American Chryslers.  
Arthur 0403 232 017

1 complete 4 speed box & speed cable. 1 Ap6 boot lid. 1 ap6 front left guard. 1 Ap6 wagon tailgate.  
Trevor 8532 3283

360 crankshaft \$100. 318 crankshaft conrods & pistons & bearings to suit \$150.  
Richie 0412 883 440

1978 Chrysler Sigma yellow paint. ex cond. interior ex. auto \$2000  
Peter 0401 887 620

S Series 1.5 cars. rolling all chrome. + 14 doors. \$2000 also: standard 8, 1954 rolling, all there \$600  
Greg 0449 057 440

various '60s '70s mags. charger, valiant roadtests & ads.  
0423 158 342

1956 6 cylinder Desoto badges.  
0439 891 804 Peter Couch

Auto for Royal \$30, auto for VC recond with torue cnvertor \$350 2 second hand auto with twin cable to suit valiant. 727 parts also.  
Terry 0428 816 555

Several 318 motors in various cond. prices from \$400. also have 245

**WANTED:**

VC radio  
Ben Neville 0423 725 409

Tie rod ends for a 1950 Dodge 30 cwt. truck.  
Cathy 0433 755 132

273 heads closed chamber, good cond.  
Chris 0433 783 778

Webers 6pk setup.  
Damian 0412 693213

LH door mirror suit R/T VH.  
0418 817902

Ap3 front bumper, bonnet, lettering/ trim, grill. Also any info concerning ap3 wayfarer variants. Think mine might have been an ambulance.  
Steve 0419 853 224

Sigma GJ-GK auto. brake redal, booster & master cylinder setup.  
Smokey 8258 8883

VH Regal 770 sedan. price neg. depending on cond.  
Pat 0409 404 940

Ap5 regal bonnet & left front guard.  
Herman 0412 108 990



Ap5/ 6 front seat, door trims, rear seat (two tone brown) also rear bumper. VF- VG front floor mat. rubber if possible. 0415 392 535  
VH sedan rear 1/4 window needs rubbers.  
Dave 0413 951 496

360 suit rebuild.  
Iain 0417 802 474

Headers/ extractors 318 santooth motor  
David 0417 840 382

VH bonnet.  
Debbie 8242 6751

E55 fishscale dash.  
David 0406 938 466

LH door handle for a CL/CM.  
Jim 0434 945 029

Ap6 boot lining, rear window venetian, 318 4 barrel inlett manifold, any '71 Phoenix parts.  
Em 0437 190 708

Front sunvisor for outside AP6 solid & white.  
0431 648 433 Tom

1971 drivers side rear door to suit VG wagon.  
Louise Sparks 0413 632 133

Boot mat to suit VG VIP.  
Hugh 0419 857 905

Charger doors. good cond.  
Richard 0418 831 283

AP5 front or complete car.  
Danny 0417 824 031

E49 or E38.  
Michael 0412 253 525

E49.  
Lloyd 0429 874 351

VG  
0419 036 579

VG headlight.  
Front drivers side seat & rear seat to suit  
Peter 0434 515 813

'80 Lancer. Peter 0411 540 274  
Orig carby to suit 360 CxC. Mick  
0423 977 344

4x 1957 300C's for wedding 18th Sept 2010. Tony 0409 517 429  
Rear venetian for a station wagon. must be in ex. cond. Chris 0433 783 778

Right side mirror to suit AP6 regal.  
Front outside body colour sun visor.  
Adriana 0423 158 342

CM headlight surround & passengers side section of nose cone. 8337 1810

Complete webber set-up to suit e48  
0427 360 265

Rust to suit valiant. 0427 360 265  
The Club Smart Arse.

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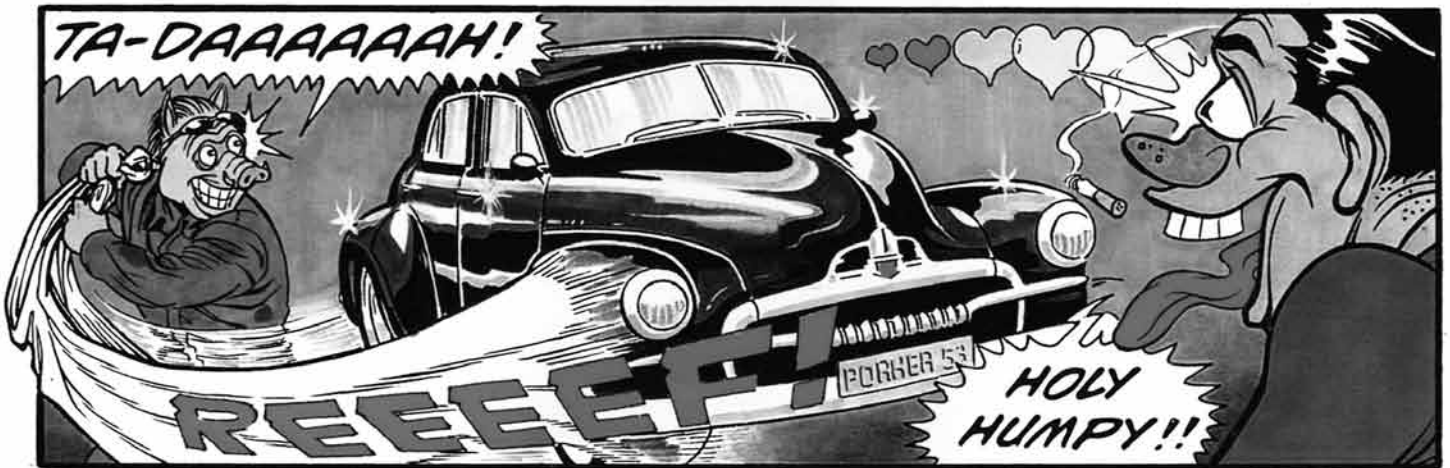
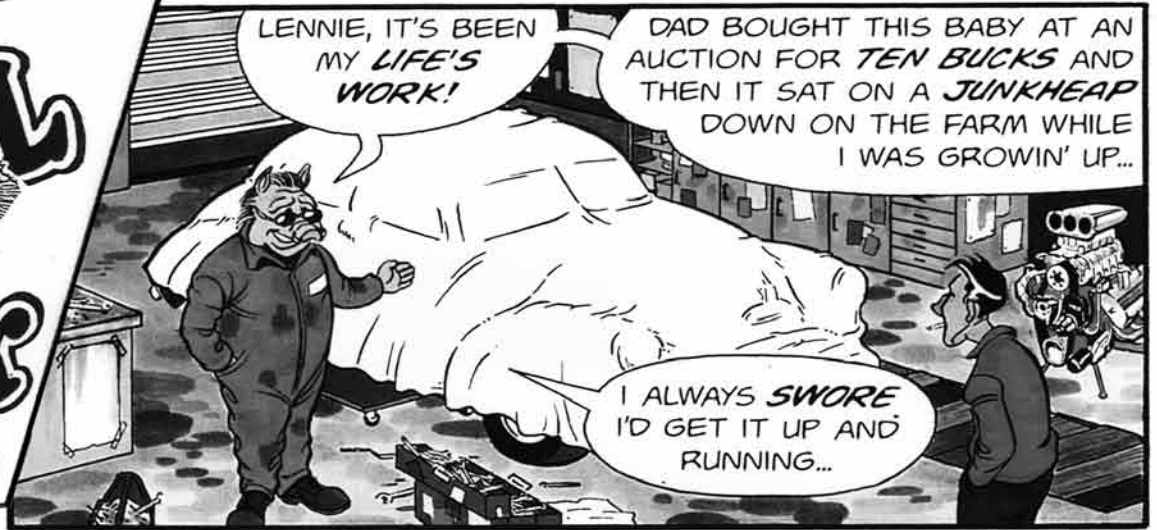
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