

Blown Budget



Glenn Alford has been a loyal reader of Perth Street Car Magazine since long before he took out the burnout comp at Motorvation '97 in his mighty XY.



Well, eight years have past and the carbied Ford eventually gave way to an injected Holden. Glenn is not the parochial type to argue the toss about Ovals and Generals; he'd rather just get inside something tough and light the tyres to keep the crowd happy!

And that was exactly the problem when he first made the switch to this Panther Mica VS ute. Lighting the tyres was a bit of a challenge with the stock 5.0-litre engine aboard and soon the little horsepower demons were whispering in his ear, "Glenn, we need more power..."

More time passed until one fateful day the Postie dropped off the latest issue of Perth Street Car Magazine and Glenn began to read a technical article about a 5.0-litre V8 that had just been fitted with an Eaton supercharger kit, developed by Mark's Workshop in York. Glenn was transfixed by the tale, with its recollections of effortlessly breaking traction and forcing the occupants into their seats until their kidneys ached. At that moment he knew that this was the power option the little shoulder goblins were on about. So, he dutifully copied the article and carried it with him for over a year, often referring to it as he painstakingly amassed the money to purchase the blower kit.

Such focus and dedication was rewarded when the kit was finally fitted and the torque and power described in the article became reality. After several months of satisfied driving, Glenn returned to York to have the intercooler, water injection and 90mm throttle body upgrade installed. Although Mark from Mark's Workshop rates this kit at 12 psi, Glenn has seen as much as 14 psi on a cold night. This ultimate step turned the otherwise standard engine into a street monster that howled like a Top Doorslammer and black tracked like a like a Funny Car with too much clutch. Glenn's ute had been transformed into a formidable street car with instant throttle response and the mid-range pull of an engine twice its actual size.



At a recent Genie Performance Exhaust dyno comp, this mild mannered wolf in sheep's clothing put down 439 rear wheel horsepower and stunned the huddled crowd. This engine is totally stock apart from a custom MWS hydraulic camshaft which helps the exhaust scavenge more efficiently, clearing the cylinder of all that extra burnt gas. Just after Motorvation 2004, the engine was stripped and treated to new, standard, parts. It has cast ACL pistons, stock rods, crank, cylinder heads and rocker gear – it is a true 5.0-litre engine which produces the power of a modified LS1 with a bunch more torque to boot.

With a stump puller like this between the strut towers, it is little wonder that Glen has traction issues. He has spent a lot of time trying to make the rear end hook up better with street tyres. The first step was to install adjustable lower control arms at the rear, along with an adjustable Panhard rod – courtesy of Colin from Malaga Springs and Suspensions. This helps to achieve the optimum location and pinion angle for the diff which is critical for launching a car from a standing start. Even after resorting to sticky Potenza tyres, the ute refuses to bite the road under full throttle and soon those same sticky radials are reduced to slicks. Some would argue (and do) that this is a great problem to have and that nothing puts a smile on your face faster than incinerating the tyres at will. However, Glenn will continue to work on this aspect of the car in the search for perfect traction. (We can feel another article coming on).

The engine is backed by a trusty T5 transmission which also continues to surprise with its longevity. Jason from Commodore Service Centre, in Wangara, fitted a short shifter to help cog-swap quicker, slotted in a new synchro for second gear, fitted a new 10.5-inch flywheel with a high rise Chev clutch and a very subtle red shift light located just under the 100 kmh mark on the speedo – almost imperceptible during everyday jaunts but unmistakable at night on the drag strip. The standard 3.07 diff gears have been swapped for a set of 3.46s and the LSD was shimmed up a little tighter at the same time.





Under boost the dominant sound emitted from the ute is the whine of the blower but just before that is the deep bark that only a Holden V8 can produce. Northside Mufflers fitted a set of Pacemaker headers and then built a single 3-inch system that incorporates two Lukey mufflers. Graham from Perth Brake Parts, in Welshpool, helped improve the whoa department to match the stunning go department. Graham supplied a pair of 296mm DBA slotted rotors for the front and a pair of VT twin-piston alloy callipers with all the necessary mounting hardware and brake lines. Needless to say, the ute now pulls up like a baulking show jumping horse.

The VS is Glenn's daily transport which demonstrates just how drivable and well-mannered it is on the street. The photos from Motorvation 2004 also demonstrate just how easily it generates tyre smoke on the notoriously sticky Hankook Snake Pit. So, although the engine is blown, the budget certainly is not, this ute shows the level of performance that can be achieved reliably with a little patience, the correct part selection and some tuning know-how.

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