

HSV Y Series 2 & Coupé 3

Power Play



When it comes to mid model upgrades no one could accuse HSV of resting on its laurels. Indeed, the latest VY Series 2 and Coupé Series 3 models deliver exhilaration with a capital 'E'.

Both the HSV VY range and GTO/GTS Coupé have played starring roles in the company's continued sales growth. Customers greeted the sharply chiselled appearance and quality materials of the VY models with genuine enthusiasm and the Coupé duo remain perennial favourites. The result pushed HSV sales to record levels for each of the first three months of 2003 and put the company on track for it's sixth successive year of record sales.

In typical HSV style, rather than focus on visual change with these latest model upgrades, the main brief was to even further enrich the HSV driving experience. Perhaps the biggest news is the more muscular output of the HSV enhanced LS1 V8 fitted to all models (excluding GTS sedan and Coupé) – maximum power has been boosted to 285kW @ 5800rpm while maximum torque soars to 510Nm @ 4800rpm. Interestingly, these substantial gains have essentially been achieved by making subtle modifications that improve gas flow or the way the engine breathes.

On the intake side the lower airbox has been redesigned, as has the 'zip' tube, which directs air from the airbox to the engine. The zip tube's 'bellows' section has been replaced with a tube similar to that employed on HSV's C4B 300kW engine. Its smoother internal shape is less disruptive to airflow thus allowing the engine to breathe in more easily at all engine speeds.

Similarly, the alterations to the lower airbox are designed to provide the engine with a plentiful supply of air. A larger opening allows a greater volume of air to enter the airbox and it's drawn from a cooler location inside the inner guard where it's more isolated from engine heat. That's important in limiting the negative effect heat soak has on engine launch performance, particularly after the vehicle has remained stationary – for example at traffic lights.

To take maximum advantage of the more efficient intake system and recent upgrades to engine calibration, HSV's unique exhaust system was also refining. Using in-house engine dynamometers HSV engineers set themselves the task of designing the ultimate set of extractors.

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It's a common misconception that simply increasing pipe diameter will increase efficiency. In fact exhaust system design is a fickle art that relies on a wide variety of factors coming together to produce greater efficiency. The primary pipes from the engine must line up exactly with the exhaust ports in the cylinder heads. The subtle bend of each primary pipe, as it snakes to the four-into-one collectors, is critical. So, too, is the design of the collectors themselves and the optimal diameter of the various components. In this instance primary pipes increase from 41mm to 44mm and collectors to catalytic converters from 57mm to 63mm, as do the converter outlets.

After many hours on the dynamometer developing the new exhaust and intake system, along with engine calibration refinements, the results were validated via extensive on road testing in real world conditions and checked to ensure they met strict ADR drive by noise restrictions. The gutsy exhaust note is unchanged but it's now joined by a perceptibly deeper intake note.

HSV's thoroughbred powerplant has responded magnificently, not only with increased maximum power and torque but also with lusty bottom end and mid range thrust that's immediately noticeable.

To better cope with the engine's more potent output the optional automatic transmission for all models is now the heavy-duty 4L65E HZD Turbo Hydramatic electronic four-speed unit, which was introduced on VY GTS models.

Exterior styling for VY Series 2 and Coupé Series 3 remains essentially unchanged, although ClubSport and Maloo receive R8 18-inch wheels, Maloo R8 wheels are now finished in 'Chrome Shadow' and R8 sedan upgrades to 19-inch wheels. Two new colours join the range – 'Ultra Violet 2' and 'Syracuse' (a washed out gold colour). All struts and shock absorbers are now painted red and under the bonnet there's a new strut brace linking the front strut tower to assist with even sharper steering response.

High Intensity Discharge (HID) driving lamps (identified by their distinctive bluish hue) are making a big impact in the automotive arena and they will shortly become an option on HSV models. Rather than fog lights these are genuine driving lights (they operate via the high beam switch) that emit a brilliant beam of white light that offers a greater safety margin during night driving.

Inside the cabin, a number of detailed changes combine to enhance safety, convenience and appearance. HSV's trio of specialised front seat designs – Sports, Performance and Luxury – have been redesigned for greater comfort and to incorporate a simple yet effective new passive safety feature – active head restraints.

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The head restraint is attached by a lever to a pressure plate mounted in the front seat backrest. During a rear impact, the occupant's body is pressed into the backrest, which moves the pressure plate backwards. Via a lever and pivot that movement is reversed to push the head restraint forward and upwards to meet the occupant's head, thus reducing the chance of whiplash neck injuries.

Optional new tyre pressure sensors on all models offer additional safety and convenience, as does the new Senator and Signature feature, which uses a soft red LED light to illuminate the centre console controls during night driving. New anthracite coloured headlining material lift interior ambiance on all models – except Senator and Signature, which use a neutral tone to match their light shale interior. In-car entertainment takes a leap forward with the option, across the board, of a built in DVD player complete with a seven-inch screen in the rear of each front seat head restraint.

Since the launch of VY, HSV's 'Touring' and 'Luxury' suspension packages have been widely applauded for their combination of fine handling and sophisticated ride quality. This time the more focused 'Performance' suspension tune has come under the microscope.

To maintain outstanding handling and add a further degree of ride comfort the HSV development team concentrated on eliminating the vehicle's pitch motion and ensuring all-round body control. Three major alterations were made – revised front springs, increased rear rebound control and more digressive shock absorber valving (a major factor in improving ride quality on VY 'Touring' and 'Luxury' suspension). A fourth factor is the nature of the 19-inch Pirelli tyres, says senior chassis engineer, Mark Beasy.

"They offer very good sports characteristics combined with a more compliant sidewall design which assists ride quality."

Delivering excellent handling combined with decent ride quality is always a compromise, Mark explains.

"We want to tightly control body roll but also have a ride that's supple enough not to create impact harshness. With the new Performance suspension there is a little low speed harshness but it quickly disappears as speed rises. And, it's the quickest we've ever been around Holden's Lang Lang ride and handling circuit to date."

From VY Series 2 the R8 sedan returns to its roots – it was originally conceived as a features package for customers who wanted an extra edge in on road performance and appearance. What's more, despite an injection of desirable standard features – full leather upholstery, 19-inch wheels, Pirelli tyres and Performance suspension – pricing remains static making R8 sedan a great value package.

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Initially, GTS sedan and Coupé will not form part of the new model line ups – both are scheduled to start production, in very limited numbers, in early 2004 when their awesome new specifications will be revealed.

Despite the fact that the VY Series 2 and Coupé Series 3 are only mid model upgrades they are positive proof of HSV's depth of engineering. Each model delivers demonstrably increased performance, safety and refinement over its predecessor, along with greater differentiation than ever over their distant Holden cousins. Once again HSV has raised the performance vehicle benchmark to a level few can contemplate.

LE Coupé d'état

HSV's latest limited edition sees the renaissance of a very special nameplate – the 'LE'. The GTO Coupé LE will form the first 100 vehicles of Series 3 production, comprising 80 automatics and 20 manuals split between Australia and New Zealand.

Available in 'Turbine Grey' or 'Quicksilver', the 'LE' includes all Coupé Series 3 refinements plus distinctive inclusions such as a plush Senator-style interior trim package (in anthracite), a roof spoiler, HSV 'Signature' 19 X 8 inch five spoke alloy wheels, rear parking assist, special 'LE' badges and a unique GTO LE build plate. As with its legendary namesake, the GTO LE offers an exclusive, subtle and very seductive package.