

Story Martin Donnon

Photos Guy Bowden



SLIDER RULES!

The Aussie drift scene is about to get turned upside-down by two evil, blown utes

FOUR cylinders, sixteen valves, and single turbos have ruled the predominantly Japanese sport of drifting since its inception, high in the mountains of Nippon in the late 80s. Drift is skilled sideways driving, with razor-sharp car control, and it's exciting to watch. Drift is possibly the fastest growing form of motorsport in Australia right now and it's just about to be run over by a pair of hulking great Aussie V8 utes — one Holden Crewman, one Ford XR8. With a combined rear-wheel power output in excess of 1200hp, this pair of heavyweight bruisers is bristling to serve up some hardcore Aussie domination on the small-cube imports that currently drive the sport.

The cars are the result of a partnership between Aussie supercharger specialist CAPA and Donut King stuntman Robbie Bolger. CAPA's Tony Rullo has the know-how to make these cars grunt hard and Robbie has the talent to get them sideways in a big hurry.

"Personally I don't give a toss for drag racing," Robbie blurts diplomatically in his thick Irish drawl. "I'd much rather do something really exciting, with some corners, where we can make lots of tyre smoke sideways, rather than just in a straight line. That's why I've got my aim on being the best of the Aussies at this drifting."

We got to see Robbie in action at South Australia's Malalla Raceway and I had a lash at this drifting caper myself. A daunting prospect at the best of times but on a damp track you can bet I was shitting bricks!

The Crewman is the more modified car of the pair — and more daunting. Under the bonnet is a built LS1, with an intercooled Vortech T Trim supercharger kit, generating 688hp at the rear wheels —

on the sidelines, that you will get to see the real differences between the pros and the also-rans.

Be prepared for the odd bit of panel damage though — finding the drifting limits of your combo often ends up against the tyre barrier. Thankfully, drift speeds are fairly low compared to those encountered in either circuit or drag racing, so the factory safety gear (seat belts etc) should suffice for most events.

For more information on drift competitions and practice days in Australia, pump gas — something it's going to be required to do under extreme conditions time and time again.

The balance between camshaft and supercharger has been critical for developing the power, with Rullo stepping well outside the square and opting for a high lift and duration cam that still has the traditional blown V8 builders shaking their heads in disbelief. Factor in a healthy — but still fairly conservative — 11psi of boost from the intercooled Vortech T Trim supercharger and the makings are there for seasons of sideways fun.

Suspension set-up has also received some attention in the Crewman, making the extended ute lower and stiffer with the fitment of coil-over suspension uprights up front and reset rear leaf springs sorting the tail out. There are also AP multi-piston calipers front and rear to give massive stopping power at the 200km/h plus speeds that



IF YOU STOMP THE GAS IN THE CREWMAN IT WILL TURN YOU



WANNA DRIFT?

YOU don't need to be a multi-millionaire to go drifting. All you need is a mechanically sound car, some stiff and low suspension, and enough sets of rear tyres to get you through the day. Even with the wear 'n' tear on the rubber, drifting is probably the best value motorsport of the moment, with competition and practice entry prices ranging between \$15 and \$50.

Control the body roll with some super-stiff springs in your Holden or Ford, install

the heaviest rear sway bar you can find, and add some camber to the front wheels to help the car turn in to the corners. Getting additional castor dialled in to the wheel alignment helps the steering self-centre and can be a real boon in a totally outta control situation.

The rest is pretty much up to you but practice is the most important part of the drifting process. Get to as many events as you can, and slowly — carefully — start to learn the techniques required for sliding. It's okay to watch for a while first as it's here,

on the sidelines, that you will get to see the real differences between the pros and the also-rans.

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For more information on drift competitions and practice days in Australia,

check out these websites:

- ▶ NSW — www.initialdrift.com.au
- ▶ QLD — www.driftzone.com
- ▶ VIC — www.fulllock.com
- ▶ SA — www.clubpsi.org
- ▶ General — www.ausdrift.com





Under-bonnet area isn't going to win any show 'n' shine prizes but it's all about function over form. Supercharger fits in nicely and powers the Crewman to 688 rear wheel ponies. Enough to break those real wheels loose

PHOTOGRAPH BY [unreadable]



AROUND IN THE BLINK OF AN EYE



CAPA CREWMAN

DONK

Engine: 346ci LS1 V8
Internals: Forged pistons, H-beam conrods
Heads: Ported heads, big valves
Induction: FAST intake manifold and 100mm throttle body
Blower: Vortech T Trim
Intercooler: CAPA double thickness, drift-spec
Fuel system: 50lb/hour fuel injectors, twin Bosch Motorsport fuel pumps
Exhaust: CES 1 7/8-inch, 4-into-1 headers; CAPA single four-inch exhaust system

SUSPENSION

Front: Coil-over adjustable shock absorbers
Rear: Reset leaf springs, uprated shock absorbers

BRAKES

Front: AP six-piston caliper, 385mm, two-piece discs
Rear: AP four-piston caliper, 330mm, one-piece discs

ROLLING STOCK

Rims: 20x8.5 Advanti Racing
Rubber: Ventus Sport 235/35

DO'S AND DON'TS

- ☑ DO check your cooling system. Drift can be hell on radiators;
- ☑ DO slightly over-fill your sump. Oil surge through a high speed corner can make short work of bearings;
- ☑ DO make sure your tyres have plenty of tread before you start, as they won't have at the end of the day;
- ☑ DO take a pair of rear spares in case you get carried away;
- ☑ DO get your seating position right -

you'll be sawing at the wheel like nobody's business mid-corner, so you need to wrestle it with both hands;

- ☒ DON'T run with a low fuel level. Starvation mid-corner can cause an embarrassing exit as your drift comes to an unexpected end;
- ☒ DON'T carry too much speed straight up. Ending up buried in the fence is not a good way to start a drift career;
- ☒ DON'T get too close to other cars on the track. Unless you are highly

experienced they are easy to hit;

- ☒ DON'T leave anything loose inside your car. It'll fly about as you drift and could end up clouting you in the noggins at great speed;
- ☒ DON'T drift your mum's car. She might not notice the bald tyres the next day, and lose it in the wet. Then you've got some explaining to do!

As with any kind of motorsport, your car needs to be in good mechanical order to drift safely and smoothly. Fix problems BEFORE you take to the track.

Bolger drifts at. Low-profile tyres on 20-inch rims sort the grip.

"You'd reckon that the Crewman would be a right bugger to drift," Bolger laughs. "The surprising thing is that once you trip it up sideways into the corner, it just hangs out there beautifully, and really boils those rear tyres. It's really very nice but what would you expect? It's a Holden after all!"

That's easy for him to say. To me this is a big, long, heavy car and I know that holding it sideways is going to require balls the size of watermelons. The LS1 bursts into life with a sharp-edged, highly-cammed crackle from the single four-inch exhaust system. Out on the track, the Crewie is terrifying and hilarious all at the same time. It can be difficult to correct on the limit and wheelspin is only ever a flick of the big toe away. Thankfully the long wheelbase makes the transition to drift slow and controllable, giving the driver plenty of time to squeeze on the power. Squeeze it you must too — if you stomp the gas in the Crewman it will turn you around in the blink of an eye. Drifting the Crewie requires excellent control and seat-of-the-pants driving feel. Something Robbie obviously has plenty of.

The XR8 is a different kettle of fish with 'just' 538hp at the back wheels but that's very impressive from what is an internally stock engine. Save for a bolt-on exhaust system, some headers, and a non-intercooled Vortech T Trim running 10psi of boost pressure, nothing's been touched under the bonnet.

"We've been through about five sets of rear tyres," Rullo says, "but haven't hurt anything other than the stock clutch."



CAPA XR8

DONK

Engine: 5.4-litre Boss 260 V8

Internals: Stock

Blower: CAPA Vortech T Trim

Fuel system: 42lb/hour fuel

injectors, Bosch Motorsport

fuel pump

ECU: CAPA custom engine

management programming

Exhaust: CAPA 4-1 headers and

twin three-inch exhaust system

SUSPENSION

Front: Up-rated springs

Rear: Reset leaf springs, up-rated

shock absorbers

Brakes: Ford Premium upgrade.

ROLLING

STOCK

Rims: Ford 17x7

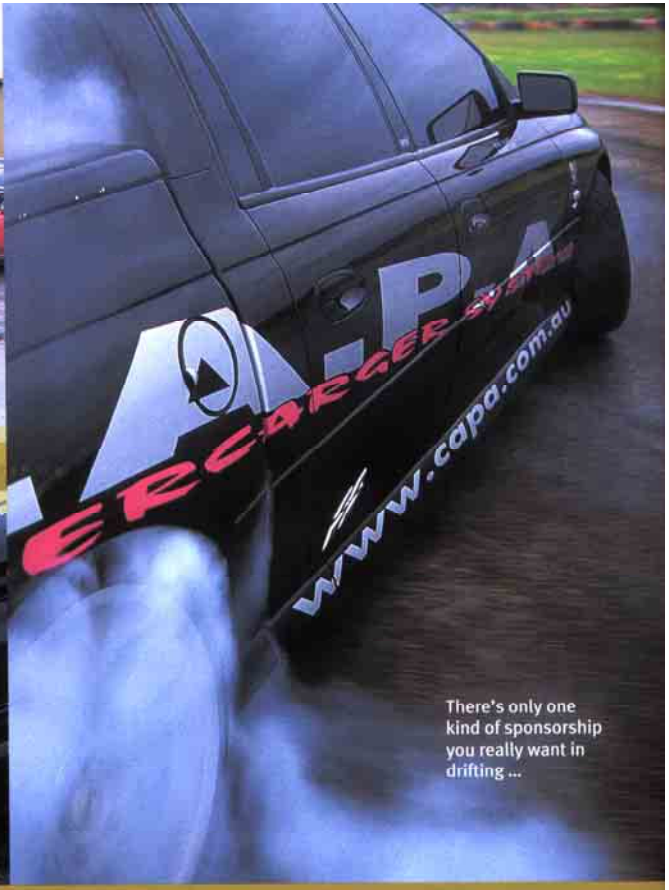
Rubber: Dunlop SP3000 235/45



**WITH ITS SOFT SUSPENSION SET-UP, THE XR8 BECOMES
A REAL HANDFUL TO DRIFT CLEANLY**



Can you make skid marks when the track's wet? Donnon reckons you can!



There's only one kind of sponsorship you really want in drifting ...

Replacing the factory friction disc is a Spec clutch assembly that CAPA imports, and so far it's coped with the punishment of two burnout meetings and a drift event, where it has transmitted the engine's hefty power without the slightest slip. However, what the Falcon does need is more suspension work. It's already had urethane bushes and uprated springs and shocks, but it is still too soft for serious drifting.

Out on the track the Falcon has really nice throttle control but the excellent traction from its leaf spring rear end makes it difficult to break loose in the first place. Once you get the rear wheels spinning though,

with the Vortech supercharger on full noise, it's all you can do to stop the Boss engine constantly pounding the rev limiter. Combine this with its current soft suspension set-up, and the XR8 becomes a real handful to drift cleanly.

This pair of beasts is just the beginning. Holden has jumped feet-first into the project. It not only supplied the Crewman as a development car but also donated a VZ SS ute, which is currently being built up as a full-on, pro-style car. By 2005 we should see Bolger and the ute compete in rounds of the D1 Drift series in America and Japan as well as Australia. Now that will be something to behold!

I DON'T GIVE A TOSS FOR DRAG RACING, ROBBIE BLURTS, I'D RATHER DO SOMETHING REALLY EXCITING

