

VAUXHALL MONARO



ARRIVED: AUGUST 2004 / SPEC: VXR 5.7 / PRICE: £35,595 / MILEAGE: 23,065 / TEST MPG: 24.7  
 RECENT COSTS: £3,860 / OWNER: TOM FORD (WOOKIE) / CONTACT US WITH YOUR EXPERIENCES AT: VAUXHALL.MONARO@BBC.CO.UK

MIDLIFE CRISIS THIS MONTH. ME AND the Monaro both. We finally get booked in for the 20k service and suddenly have a wobble of confidence that we are not 'powerful' enough. So I get in touch with Paul Spinks of HSV-tuners extraordinaire Wortec, and decide to get pumped up for summer.

Cue the entrance of amenable dealer Brian Richards of Greens in Rainham, whose personal transport is the red 5.7 VXR pictured. He's been working with Paul to provide some good-value tuning products to HSV and Vauxhall owners, which is handy, because he also has a workshop and technicians who have all been subverted to our cause.

After my less-than-satisfactory brush with Linden Special Vehicles (whose

£1,200 exhaust was actually blowing after just eight weeks on the car), I was after something to make the 'Ro feel a little bit more extreme in its final months with me. Cue also the green-eyed monster, as I realise Brian's red VXR is equipped with full-on HSV brakes (as opposed to my standard stoppers, which catch fire on my way home), a grumble-tastic exhaust and a naturally aspirated 440bhp.

So Paul came up with a package that included a fabulous-looking polished cat-back exhaust system, a re-map to an estimated 410bhp and a Ripshifter. Now, the GM 5.7-litre V8 is an immensely tuneable bit of kit, but getting the power figures people claim without auctioning your kids off has

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proved to be an issue. Enter Wortec, whose re-map forgoes the generic engine map of the standard car for one more biased towards performance, and whose bits and bytes work better with their free-flow exhaust.

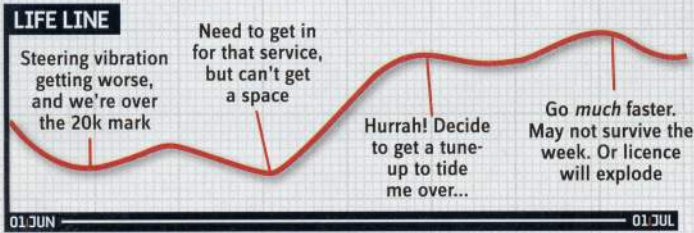
The tune isn't the most attack-mode banzai, either, but it does move the torque curve down the rev-range by 1,000rpm and affects the way the throttle works. Basically, the Monaro feels more insistent and gets on with the business of going faster much more quickly. It loses some of the flab that's in-built in the GM software. I have to say - it works. The exhaust looks like someone poured it from mercury, such is the quality, and it sounds vaguely like an M5, but it still isn't loud enough for my taste - something I'm sure Paul could sort out if you ask nicely.

The engine modifications (including assisting cooling by just, er, removing

the engine cover) are all fantastic, but by far the most visceral modification of the whole day was the Ripshifter. Now, this piece of descriptively-named Aussie metal is a direct-shift for the Monaro's long-throw gearbox. It replaces two connecting rods in the top of the 'box with one bent bit of extra-thick rod. And it's incredible. I wouldn't compare it to the Honda S2000, but it's definitely 350Z quality and the shift action from second to third is unrecognisable.

OK, so it's not included in Wortec's package (total including fitting would be nudging £500 just for the 'Shifter'), but it's the best present you could give your Monaro (and therefore yourself). I swear it'd be worth half a second on any drag strip you care to mention.

So, service underway, mods making a difference to how fast we can go - bring on the last three months of Monaro ownership. I'm ready for summer!



This is Paul Spinks, partner in Wortec, the company that chivvied the Monaro up for me. He's holding part of the 'Ripshifter' that went in...

...to replace the standard gearbox linkages. The old job is a pause-and-effect unit; this small mod tightens it up and is A Very Good Thing.

This beautiful exhaust comes as part of a £2,500 package that includes a re-map of the engine. I say the exhaust alone is worth that.

Also had the 'Ro in for its 20k service. It overran a little, but after checking the oil and other bits, it was deemed fine to keep truckin' for a bit.

Managed to wring the very last mile out of the front tyres, but in the end Greens insisted they were illegal. That's £418 for a new pair of Pirellis.

The exhaust looks much better than the last effort from LSV, both from the rear and underneath. But still not loud enough for me. And no, I'm not deaf.

HIGHEST  
£1,924



VAUXHALL MONARO VXR

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