

PROJECT BACKSTOP



When you're heading into rough country as often as we do, it's a good idea to have at least one vehicle capable of getting itself and others out — no matter what goes wrong. What you need is a backstop, a last line of defence . . .

It is quite amazing the number of people who wanted to buy our project Range Rover when it came up for sale late last year. We ran one advert in the magazine — sold it to the first person to look at it — and received something close to 100 enquiries during the following weeks.

Deciding on its replacement was not all that easy either . . . Another Range Rover was on the short list for some time, but, with a price fast approaching \$50,000 it was simply too expensive.

A petrol Nissan Patrol was also on the short list and this was favoured by ex editor Hammond and current editor Maron, however, in the end we decided on a Toyota LandCruiser; air conditioning and a limited slip diff. being the only optional extra equipment fitted.

We took delivery of it a day or so prior to Christmas and spent the following few days clocking up the initial mileage. There's no point in going through the specifications as the unit was bought off the floor as a bog standard FJ62 in metallic silver with the G configuration rear doors.

The level of preparation on delivery was good and now, some 5,000 kilometres down the track, our complaints would be the same as anyone else who has purchased a similar model.

Firstly, the standard suspension leaves a lot to be desired under the requirements of Australian conditions and, secondly, we have yet to get the engine tuned to the point where we believe it to be right.

Having received its 1,000 and 5,000 km services and a complaint having been made on each occasion about an enormous flat spot it has still not been rectified. This is annoying more than anything else and as we have not been able to have the fault fixed in service visits I suppose that we will have to take it to a specialist and have the job done properly.

From other LandCruiser owners to whom we have spoken it appears that the problem is an inherent one to new Cruisers and it's a pity that it is not cured during one of the early services.

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The suspension, however, is not something which can be fixed as easily (or as cheaply) as can the matter of correct engine tune. Let's go on record right now as stating that there is nothing mechanically wrong with the stock suspension and it will probably cover 100,000 and more kilometres without a problem, but unless you are something of a masochist you will learn to hate the ride which the original suspension provides.

It is harsh and choppy with limited wheel travel and it is invariably the first thing to receive attention when an owner looks to "option up" his LandCruiser.

We fitted a set of "experimental" replacement springs and shock absorbers,



ARB bar and Warn winch — attractive as well as functional. Yokohama Super Digger tyres on Mullins Bathurst mags for traction in varying conditions and good road ride.

these spring problems and simply say that on our eventual return to Melbourne the springs were returned from whence they came with the comment that it was fortunate that they were "experimental" ones.

We replaced the "experimental" system with the well proven Old Man Emu equipment (fitted by A.R.B.), however at the time of going to press we have not had sufficient time for a full evaluation. This will follow in our next issue.

The first piece of equipment fitted was **Not everything worked right the first time. An experimental suspension system packed it in on the first drive. Replacement Old Man Emu is heaps better.**



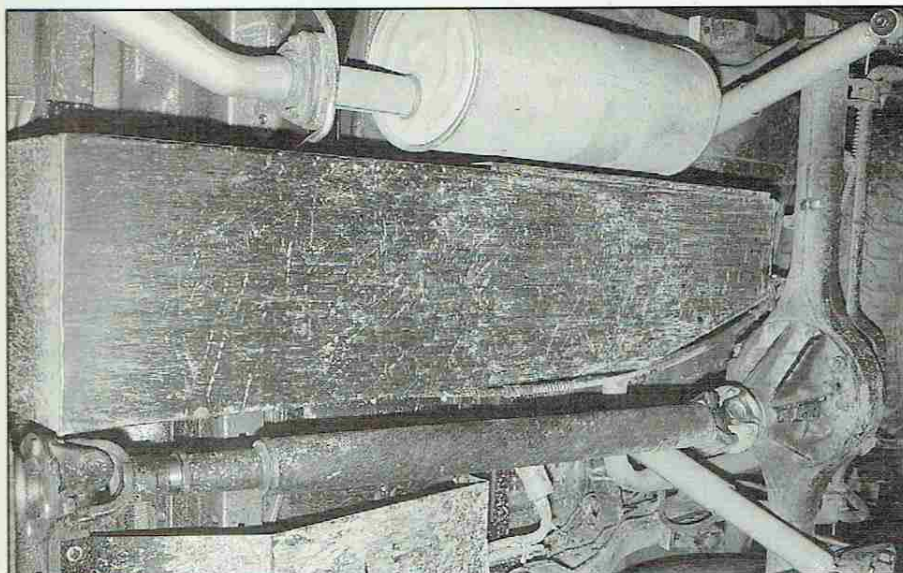
but on the vehicle's first offroad outing it sheared the locating bolts in both the rear springs. We were fortunate to be able to carry out the repairs on a relatively flat piece of hillside. Had the trouble occurred on other parts of the track (it was the Caledonian River track for those who might know it) we would have been in more trouble than John Howard.

Incidentally, for those who might be wondering what happens when this problem occurs, the spring leaves start to pop out and the rear axle wanders back and forwards — all very exciting stuff believe us.

We were also fortunate that we had fitted A.R.B. equipment (more on this later) which included side protection bars and holding these items to the bullbar were a couple of high tensile bolts which just happened to be precisely the right length to become the new spring locating bolts.

Let's forget the eight or so cold, dark and miserable hours spent in repairing





Brown Davis long range fuel tank fits snugly and dramatically increases capacity — at least 800km in off-road conditions.

a Brown Davis Automotive auxiliary fuel tank. We have always considered this to be an essential for anyone considering serious offroad operation. By 'serious' we mean getting well away from the bitumen for several days at a time and on a fairly regular basis.

Extra fuel tanks don't come cheap and

there needs to be a good justification to fit one rather than simply load up with a few jerry cans at considerably less cost. From a safety angle alone the extra tank can be easily justified, but if cash is a problem there can be little argument that four jerry cans at around \$25 each are still going to sound pretty good.

Still, as the 'Cruiser usually acts as the "salvage" vehicle during our offroad tests, will follow this year's Wynn's Safari (hopefully with less drama than last year

with the Rangie) and do a couple of planned Simpson Desert crossings, we elected to fit the 73 litre tank.

This is fitted between the prop shaft and the exhaust and requires no modifications to the vehicle — larger tanks can be fitted, but these require some rerouting of the exhaust system. The operation of the original and auxiliary tanks are completely independent. The engine runs only one tank at a time and fuel does not flow from one tank to the other at any time.

There is a two position switch fitted to the dashboard which swaps the engine from one tank to the other and also causes the fuel gauge to read off the tank in use. The change over of tanks can be made at any time.

There is an electronic valve fitted to the vehicle which automatically switches the return fuel line to flow back to the tank on which the engine is running. The valve is waterproof and seals off all the fuel lines not in use. If either tank is damaged, the vehicle can continue to operate on the undamaged tank provided only that the dashboard switch remains on the correct tank.

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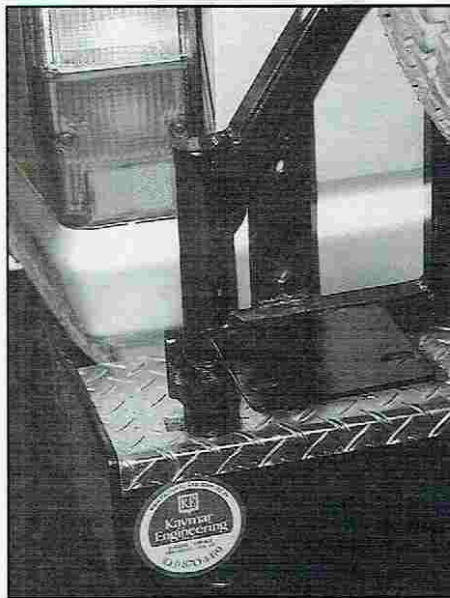
The filler is sensibly located alongside the original one and both are protected by the lockable filler lid. In terms of convenience, safety and security the auxiliary fuel tank is certainly the way to go.

To date, we have not emptied both tanks to check the distance which can be travelled without refuelling, however, indications are that it is in the vicinity of 800 km under hard offroad conditions and probably close to 1,000 km given economical highway driving. We will update and confirm the actual distances in a future issue. Incidentally, the price of a 73 litre tank for the Toyota is in the vicinity of \$650 fitted.

The next items fitted were an ARB deluxe steel bullbar, side protection rails and roofrack — all color coded to the Toyota's metallic silver paintwork.

I have a great deal of respect for ARB equipment. We had a steel bullbar fitted to the Rangie during the '85 Wynns and this saved us from a forced retirement on the final day when a tree leapt out and attempted to demolish the front right hand corner.

The bar was folded back and the corner panels slightly modified, but there is no



Kaymar Engineering's rear step bars are generally considered among the very best. The sturdy rear wheel carrier is in a similar class. All of it is well built.

doubt that it saved us from a complete wipeout of the right hand wheel and suspension.

We also decided to fit a pair of side rails. If you have ever surveyed a comprehensively dented front mudguard after gently sliding sideways into a small tree at just a walking pace you will quickly

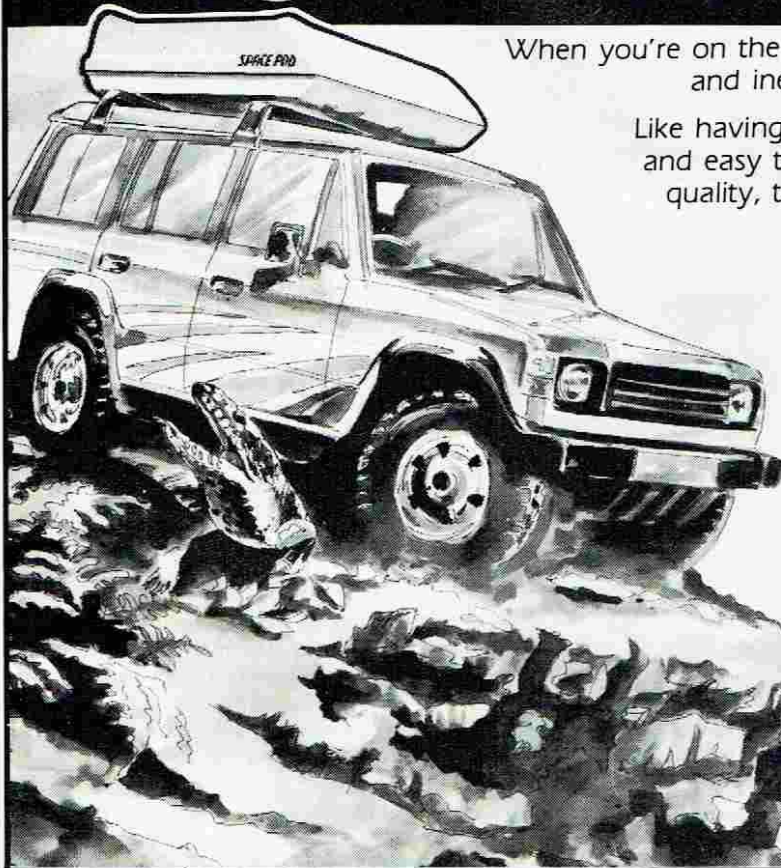
become a convert to anything which will help prevent this sort of minor, but, expensive mishap. My only complaint with side rails is that children need to use them with caution as a slip on a wet and/or muddy rail could find the child with a leg stuck between the rail and the body of the vehicle.

The roofrack is a substantial one with a full length section which locates into the gutter and is then clamped down at four positions on each side. We steer clear of carrying anything of much weight on the roof, but on the couple of occasions on which we had no option but to carry more than we liked there was never any doubt that the rack would stay there — even if the vehicle fell over. It really is the sort of roofrack which will remove the roof guttering with it if it ever looks like coming off.

Another practical piece of equipment is a dual battery installation and, again, this was supplied and fitted by ARB. The kit is a fairly simple one consisting of a heavy duty battery, battery carrier and clamps, earth strap, isolator and all necessary wire and connectors.

A typical installation retains the original battery for use with the engine and uses

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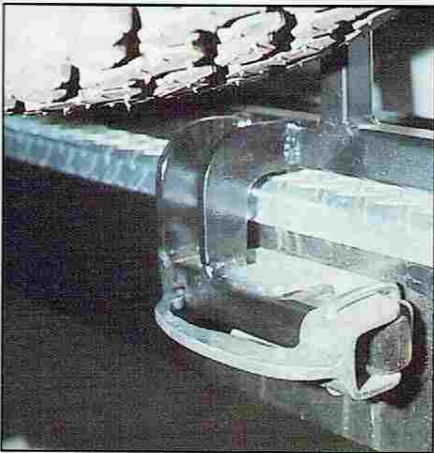
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Roofrack was chosen for full length mounting. If it comes off, the roof comes with it! Step bumper and wheel carrier also features Kaymar's Jackall mount.



Fitting wider wheels and tyres often calls for flares. These Sahara replicas in fibreglass were obtained from Opposite Lock, fitted by ARB.

the auxiliary one to power lights, winch, refrigerator and other accessories. The two battery circuits are separated by a "Sure Power" isolator which ensures equal battery charging, voltage regulation, current control and alternator protection.

As we intended to fit wider wheels and tyres, we decided to also fit mudguard flares and, because the original equipment variety fitted to the Sahara range looked good and were relatively substantial, we thought that these were the ones to fit. Well, that's what we thought until we obtained the price for a set of four.

Now we do not expect you to believe this, however, the price quoted was a staggering \$1,200 — even the salesman who provided the quote sounded embarrassed!

We eventually discovered that Ed Mulligan's Opposite Lock store sells replicas of the original at a somewhat more conservative price. These were fitted by A.R.B. and they set the vehicle off very nicely, but in terms of practicality when offroading they are pretty vulnerable.

Original wheels have been replaced with Mullin's alloy Bathurst units. These have long been an extremely good selling model and were initially developed and marketed by Globe Industries of Adelaide. A report on the Mullin's operation will appear in an upcoming issue.

Now, it's a rotten thing to be forced to admit, but, on our first offroad session in the nice new LandCruiser we bent it.

The track down to the Caledonia River is not only rough and steep, it also possesses a number of switchback corners where it is necessary to either back and fill several times or go down each second slope in reverse gear. Either way it can be heaps of fun.

Our first back and fill resulted in a bent rear bumper bar when we encountered a large boulder which remained unsuspected at the time. The result was a bent left hand section of bumper bar and rather than simply replace it with another piece of relatively lightweight metal and plastic our thoughts turned to a heavy duty steel step/bumper/tow bar. Further down the same track we had some clearance problems with the spare wheel and the thought of a spare wheel carrier on the rear bar became very attractive.

Enter Kaymar Engineering and proprietor Ken Jackson. Ken is to our knowledge probably the only manufacturer of a steel rear step incorporating a towbar and spare wheel carrier with optional jerrycan holder to fit a current model 'Cruiser. As a bonus, the Kaymar step also incorporates a mount for a high lift jack which makes it a very desirable piece of equipment.

Not surprisingly, Ken enjoys a bit of offroading himself and the original step was designed for much the same reason as we wanted to replace the original. With all the heavy engineering machinery on hand, Ken decided to make a few and see how they sold and they have sold very well indeed thank you. In fact they have sold sufficiently well for Ken to now be expanding this side of his engineering business.

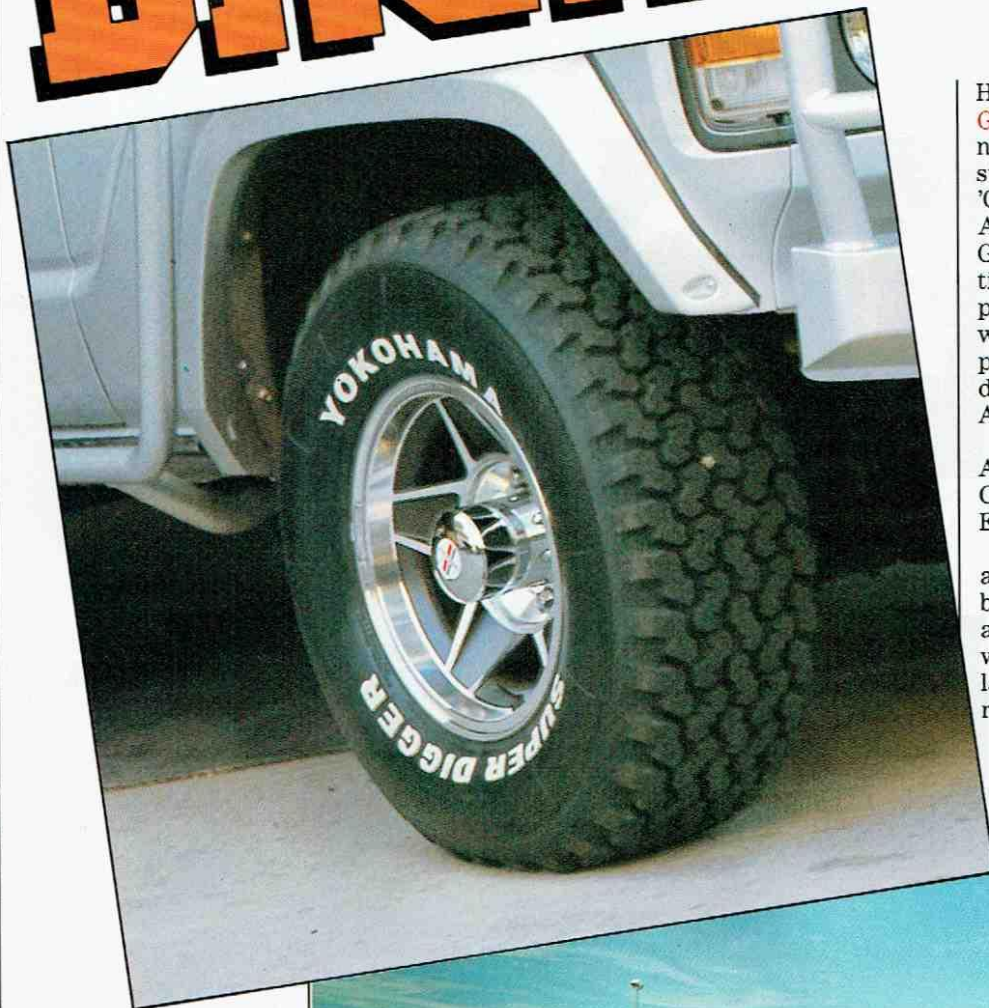
The steps themselves are top quality units and a report on them will appear in an upcoming issue, along with a background story on Stratos seats which have replaced the originals.

For obvious reasons we have fitted an 8,000 lb low mount Warn winch and Yokohama Super Digger tyres and again reports will appear on these shortly. Later this month we have a Simpson Desert crossing planned so we figure that we will soon find out how well the winch worked — also the tyres and Old Man Emu suspension. Stay tuned . . .

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Part 2



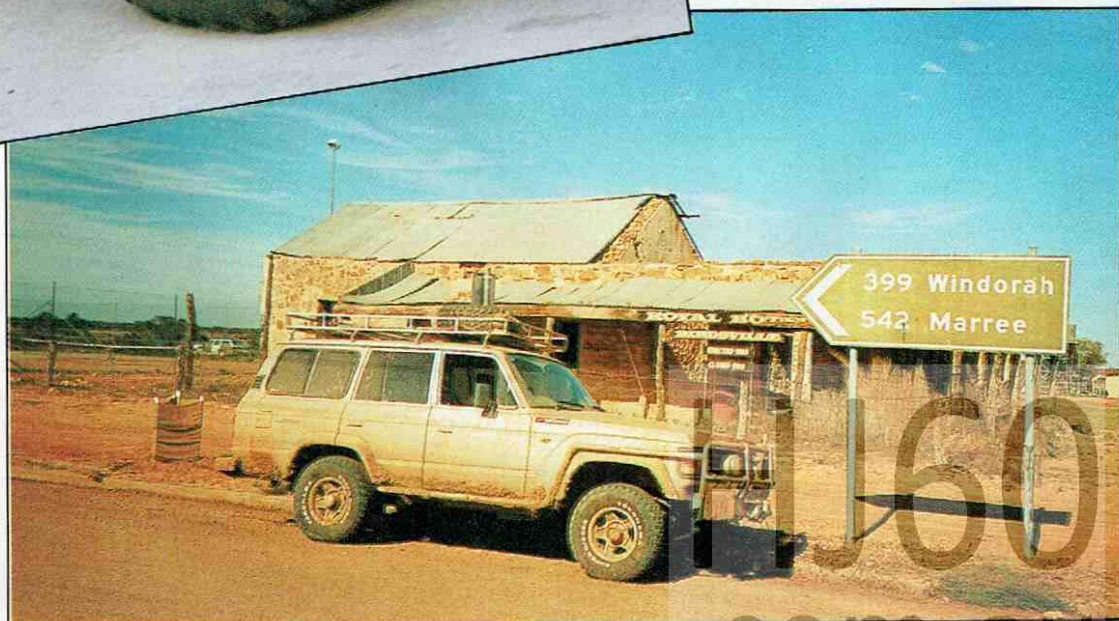
Having had a long association with **Globe Wheels** of Adelaide it was pretty natural that we decided to replace the standard split rim steel wheels of the 'Cruiser with alloy wheels from **CSA Alloy Wheels** which had taken over **Globe** some time previously. About this time, however, an amalgamation took place between **CSA** and **Mullins Wheels** whereby the latter company became probably the largest manufacturer/distributor of decorative wheels in Australia.

The range includes **Delta Alloy**, **CSA Alloy**, **Globe Alloy**, **Delta Steel**, **Delta Chrome** and the imported Japanese **Enkei** wheels.

We have used **Globe Bathurst** style alloy wheels for a number of years on both our rally and offroad vehicles although we did in fact use **Peco** steel wheels on the **Range Rover** due to the lack of a suitable **Globe** alloy replacement.

The construction of a quality alloy wheel — often incorrectly termed a "mag" (genuine "mag" wheels are usually fitted to race machinery) — is

Globe wheels and a set of Yokohama tyres did more than improve appearance. Matched with the Old Man Emu suspension kit, they provided a more stable and comfortable ride that didn't deteriorate even on our Simpson crossing (right).



Our backup beast has to have the best legs in the business, so we went out and got some. Wheels, tyres and suspension are the critical items.

a complicated business. It commences with aluminium alloy CP610 being melted and held at a temperature of 730 degrees Celsius with chambers being fluxed regularly and degassing done as necessary with dry nitrogen.

The molten aluminium is ladled by hand and poured individually into single cavity dies and allowed to cool until it is solid enough to be removed from the mould. The unwanted centre portion of the cast wheel is removed by drilling and the castings are then heat treated at 540 degrees C for eight hours, quenched in hot water not less than 60 degrees C and aged at 155 degrees C for four hours.

Excess "flashing" is then removed from the casting and the required coloring is applied after the casting has been prepared by a seven stage chromate bath and dried in a heating oven.

The wheel is then held by the rim and bore, while mounting face and caliper clearance is machined. Then, to ensure the trueness of the wheel, all subsequent machine operations are done by holding the wheel by the bore and using the bore and mounting face as the datum points. Such wheels are claimed to be superior in lateral and radial runout as a result of this process.

The diameter of the centre bore is checked by the operator and the offset is stamped on the mounting face. The rim profile and front face are then machined in accordance with "Tyre and Rim Association of Australia" standards and following further checks the wheel is stamped accordingly to W.I.A. standards — e.g. W.I.A. 5.5JJx13 45P.

Further drilling creates the valve hole etc., and the wheel is again heat treated and given a baked clear coat for maximum protection. Every wheel is leak tested at 60 p.s.i. and all are guaranteed tubeless. A final inspection takes place and wheel nuts, studs, washers and caps are added and the

box sealed ready for despatch.

Quality control has always been a feature of the once Globe, once CSA and now Mullins Bathurst wheels. In the dynamic cornering fatigue test the test wheel is clamped to a powered turntable and a specified bending movement is achieved by applying a force to a rigid load arm at a specified distance from the mounting surface of the wheel which must complete 100,000 cycles without failure.

The impact test requires that a weight of 1,000 kilograms is dropped from a pre-determined height to strike the mounted wheel on the tyre side wall and wheel flange area. The energy of impact in Newton Metres is required to be numerically equivalent to 1.2 times the kerb or tare mass kilograms of the heaviest vehicle for which the wheel is intended.

A Dynamic Radial Fatigue test is designed to evaluate the wheel rim under the stresses caused by normal loading and flexing. A tubeless tyre is fitted to the wheel and inflated to twice the normal working pressure. The wheel/tyre assembly is attached to the machine spindle and the test load applied to the surface of a large rotating drum. To pass this test the wheel must survive a minimum of 500,000 cycles without failure.

During our long term association with the Bathurst alloy wheels — going back some 13 years — we have never yet encountered any type of problem and nor do we expect any with them now fitted to our Project Backstop Land Cruiser. To back this up, we have just completed a fast nine day, 5,300 kilometre round trip including a Simpson Desert and Sturt Stony Desert crossing which on occasions required running tyre pressures of 16, 18 and 40 p.s.i. without either wheel or tyre damage.

Our past usage of **Yokohama** tyres also dictated that we again choose this brand to run on the Mullins wheels. We used Yokohama on the Project

Range Rover to complete the '85 Wynn's Safari, follow the '86 one and clock up countless miles during the magazine's offroad and outback test sessions.

During all this time we experienced only one failure — a blowout caused by hard cornering when a sidewall gave its best after a sideways encounter with a sharp rock. In our recent 5,300 kilometre sprint the Cruiser carried a heavy load of, at maximum, 250 litres of fuel, 60 litres of water plus the necessary camping/eating/tools/spare parts necessary for the trip.

With this weight we ran 40 p.s.i. on the highways and down to 16 p.s.i. for something in excess of 1,000 km in the deserts and suffered not one problem. Another area which received a complete workout during this tour was that of suspension.

As anyone who owns one knows only too well, the standard Land Cruiser suspension, while tough enough for anything, leaves a lot to be desired by way of comfort and clearance. We replaced ours with **Old Man Emu** "Safari" suspension — the heaviest of the three grades available as a standard replacement assembly.

John Chapman, managing director of Old Man Emu, has long been dedicated to producing after market suspension which both works and lasts and he is not afraid to test systems to the limit in offroad races and events such as the Wynn's Safari. Leaf springs are still used by the majority of four wheel vehicles and, really, they have changed little since they were used in horse drawn carts.

The originals are tough, but rough, and the improvements which can be gained by fitting after market systems are dramatic. The O.M.E. Safari system uses new leaf springs (not simply reworked) and low pressure, twin tube "Nitrocharger" shock absorbers.

There has been and probably always will be two schools of thought on shock absorbers. The European style used by such units DeCarbon and Bilstein use "high pressure gas" as against the O.M.E. "low pressure system".

The two styles both have their ardent followers, but, when used with the O.M.E. suspension the low pressure units performed extremely well during the recent lengthy test.

As mentioned earlier, the 'Cruiser was carrying a heavier than normal load over tracks which can only be called diabolical in some instances but

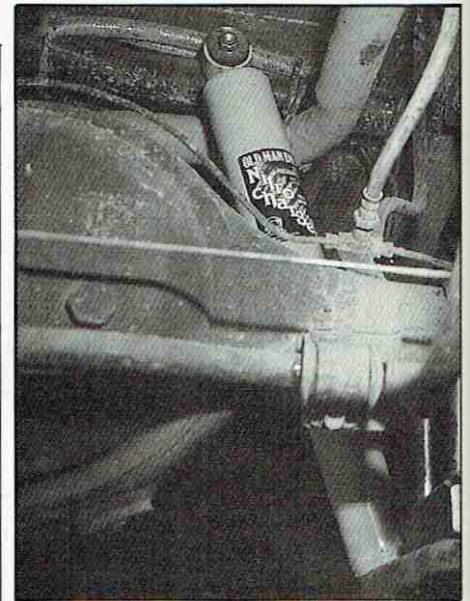
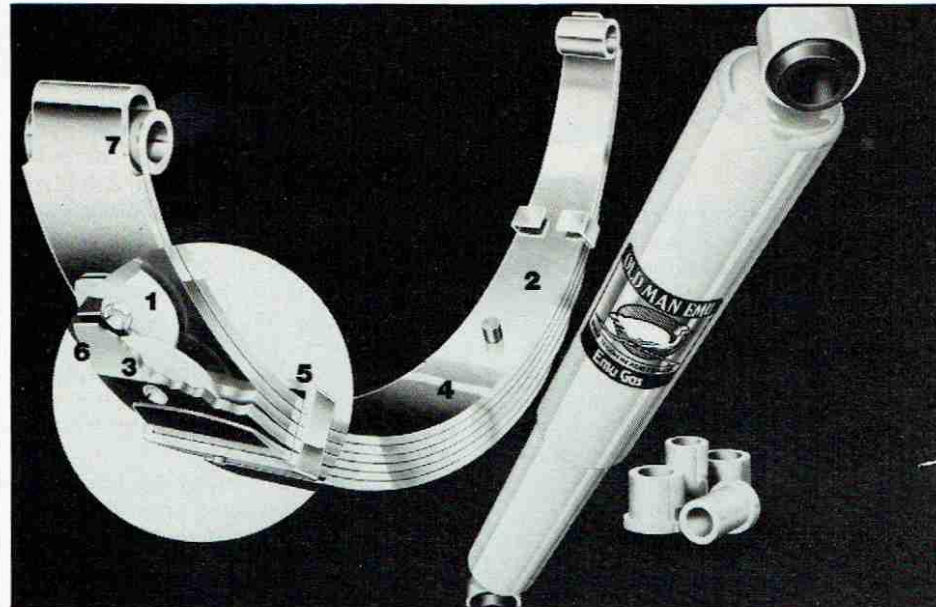
PROJECT BACKSTOP

at no time did they soften-up nor did the ride become uncomfortable. The same could not be said for two other vehicles on the test which were

running standard suspension.

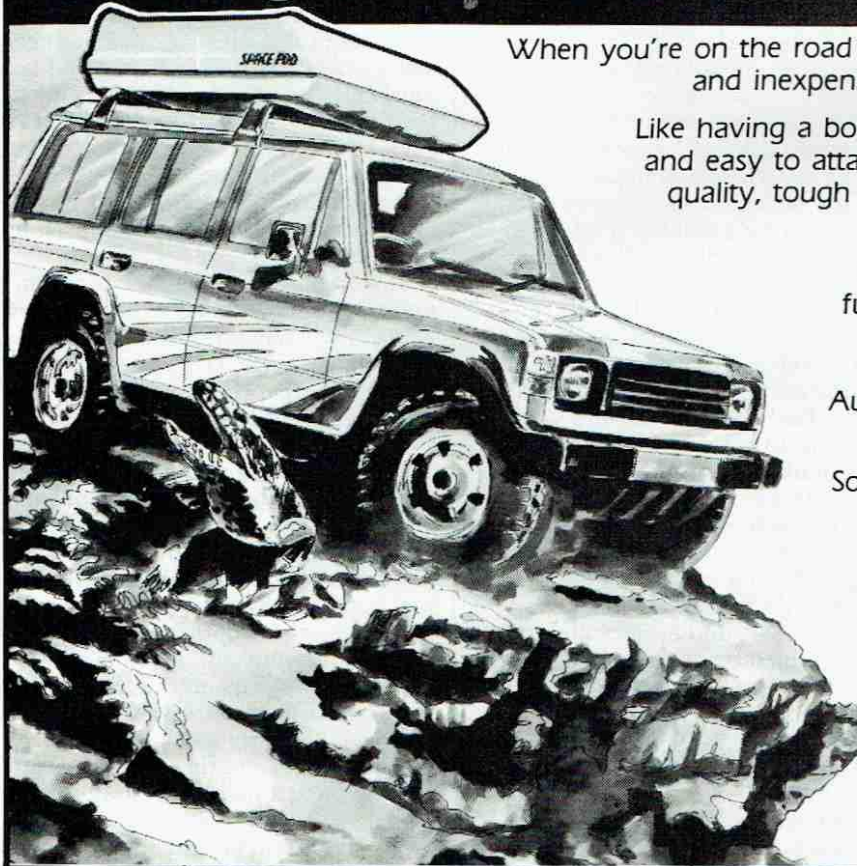
One finished with totally dead front shocks and the other was rocking like an overweight Cadillac. The seven main features of O.M.E. suspension can be easily seen by simply referring to the diagram reproduced here. There is simply not sufficient space available to dwell on each individual point.

Suffice to say that on the 'Cruiser



OME suspension boasts a number of improvements over the old horse drawn cart spring, among them the use of increasing rate and reduced interleaf friction. Above: the rear shock in place, showing increased bump stop clearance.

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the body clearance is considerably increased and there is a dramatic improvement in available wheel travel, load carrying ability and comfort.

The "Safari" system employs a secondary spring which does not really come into use until the vehicle is heavily loaded or pushed fast over rough surfaces. As the springs flatten out, this spring is brought into use to stiffen the suspension and it performs this function extremely well.

The length of leaf springs must be carefully calculated to uniformly accept the stress and secondary springs must come into action progressively. Failure to achieve the above will result in damaged and/or broken springs plus, of course, either a wallowing or far too firm ride. There are plenty of owners of four wheel drive vehicles who know these problems only too well.

In a standard suspension 'Cruiser the wheel travel is severely limited due to the distance between the top of the axle and the rubber bumpstops. Also, the curvature of the springs (rear in particular) flattens out very quickly and by 5,000 kilometres the rear springs are often almost flat, so, even less wheel travel is possible.

With the Safari suspension fitted this



Abrasion from stones and branches can become severe, so well protected shock bodies and shafts are a must on any 4WD.

wheel travel improves from an original 67mm to about 162mm at the rear and from 47mm to around 95mm at the front. This also means that the vehicle has considerably more ground clearance.

With original suspension a 'Cruiser tends to walk all over the place when confronted with a washboard road surface — with the Safari arrangement there was literally no wander and washaways across tracks which had accompanying vehicles diving for the brakes could be taken at speeds which would knock the fillings out of your teeth in a standard vehicle.

Yes, we were impressed.

In case you think we might be biased towards either A.R.B. which fitted the system or O.M.E. which supplied it — we have already agreed to fit other makes of suspension at a later date and subject them to the same treatment — and bring you the same unbiased type of report as above. Elsewhere in this issue you will find an extremely complimentary report on Ultimate Suspension.

We would also like to make the point that we carry out continual product testing on both the Land Cruiser and other long term test vehicles and with the co-operation of manufacturers/distributors we will respond as best we can, giving our honest opinions on how products stand up under offroad conditions.

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Part 3



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Although the standard of seating in four wheel drive vehicles has improved considerably during the past ten years, many owners still prefer to improve the comfort level by replacing the original front seats with individual (sometimes incorrectly called "bucket") seats.

To some, this might seem to be an unwarranted extravagance, but, you can say much the same about quality hi-fi radio/cassette systems, alloy wheels and driving lights.

Sure the vehicle will operate without them, but, aren't they nice to have fitted . . .

Stratos seats are marketed by Opposite Lock and, because we found them so good in the old Project Range Rover during the Wynn's Safari, we again went for them in the new Project Backstop Land Cruiser.

Seating in the current Land Cruisers is pretty good to start with, but, it's better again with the new seats.

A major shortcoming (to our minds at least) is the complete lack of anywhere convenient in the 'Cruiser to carry the bits and pieces which accumulate in any vehicle.

Cassette tapes, sunglasses, cigarettes, etc., are a problem, and while fitting individual seats up front means that only two can be carried rather two adults and a child, or three very intimate adults as with the original installation, it also gives you an excellent excuse to purchase a central console in which to stow all these stray objects.

The XT range of Stratos seats are Australian made and strength tested to comply with stringent Australian Design Rule test standards.

The range is wide, including four recliners and two fixed styles — the

latter being the Monaco and Monaco Sport plus one racing style, the Le Mans.

The best seller of the range is the Turbo which is ideally suited to road cars, four wheel drives, utilities and vans.

The upmarket version of this is the Turbo Sport which has even better lateral support, is recommended for high speed motoring and is, quote, "ideal for the Wynn's Safari, etc."

A major feature of the range is the adjustable lumbar card with which the lumbar support can be varied to suit each individual's specific requirements.

The mesh base system gives a consistent damping rate at all points, an important factor in reducing, or eliminating fatigue. Stratos sport styles (mainly fixed) are in wide use through motorsport and were fitted to winning cars in the 1985 Australian Rally Championship, 1985 Esanda 2GO Rally of Australia and the 1985 Group A Championship of NSW — among others.

There is a choice of three heights on the base frame to provide the correct

The beast is nearing completion, but with all the hardware taken care of, we figured it was time to get stuck into the software — like seats for example.



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level for each individual driver/passenger. There is also more fore and aft movement than on most standard vehicle seats.

The designs are top quality throughout, the base foam, for example, being of aircraft quality specifications. The first few times you use them will probably prompt the comment, "they're firmer than I would have expected".

They certainly feel firmer than original seats, but, on the road, and particularly over rough going, you will



Removal of standard seating (left) and replacement with buckets has allowed the fitting of a useful centre console (above).

notice they are also considerably more comfortable in overall terms.

The lateral support is excellent and you no longer have to brace your legs and bite on the seat with your bum to stop sliding all over the place.

Standard finish is brushed polyester and, while the standard colors are black and brown, the optional colors include beige, royal blue, light blue, red

and grey. They can also be trimmed in a wool fabric, vinyl and leather — obviously at a somewhat higher price.

Moving Stratos seats from car to car presents no problems as it is necessary only to change the base mounting — additionally, the original seats can be refitted when the vehicle is sold.

Surprisingly, it is much cheaper to fit Stratos seats to vehicles where stolen or damaged seats need replacing. After all, the rear seat can be retrimmed in matching fabric without too much trouble.

As you might have gathered, we like Stratos seats.

We have used them in assorted vehicles and found them to be long wearing, as well as being a major asset when driving hard over long distances.

During a recent trip over about 3,500 kilometres, involving five different, current model four wheel drives, drivers swapped from one vehicle to another. All were in agreement that the Stratos seats gave considerably more comfortable and less fatiguing ride than did the originals fitted to the other vehicles.

There are many different makes of individual seats on the market and during coming months the staff will be trying many of them in our long term test vehicles and duly reporting on them.

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