



From the

WORDS & PHOTOGRAPHY ANTHONY KILNER

ASHES

Now that Roadstar and Compass Caravans have been resurrected by Australian Hitec Engineering, AC+RV takes a look at the brand new Roadstar Limited Edition Off-Road



It was the end of an era when Roadstar and Compass Caravans hit the wall in February 2009, after almost 20 years in the Australian caravan market place. In recent years the company had concentrated on building big, flash tourers, and when the global economic slump hit and super went into negative growth, punters shied away. The company went into liquidation.

Enter Australian Hitec Engineering's Ken Nizam, who stepped in and purchased the rights to both Roadstar and Compass. But rather than take up where the company left itself - in a heap - he's gone back to basics.

Hitec started in 1974 as a small family business building Saturn trailers. Ken's father, Allan, was at the helm. The company then diversified and began manufacturing Roadstar's chassis, something it's been doing for about 15 years. In that time, Hitec has earned a reputation as a builder of tough,



TOP There's a light and airy feel to the LE's interior.

BELOW A Dometic porcelain toilet and a fully sealed shower can be found at the rear of the caravan.



no-nonsense chassis to handle the rough and tumble of Aussie roads.

It's worth noting that while Hitec supplied the chassis to Roadstar and Compass, it had no involvement in running the company. It was simply a materials supplier. The new Roadstar and Compass products are being built to Ken's specs. There are, however, some key people with building experience who've been retained, and under Ken's watchful eye, they are putting together a package that should impress even the most discerning touring customers.

Roadstar is currently producing two vans under the Roadstar name: a Daintree, which is a fully customised caravan available with a range of layouts, and a Limited Edition version that also has a variety of layouts and interior colours to choose from. Our review model is the Limited Edition Off-Roader. The LE is based on a Hitec SupaGal chassis with cross members for lateral stability.

Manufactured onto the chassis is a tandem load-sharing suspension system. The LE package also includes 31-inch off-road tyres wrapped around 15x8-inch rims, which give the unit a look of ruggedness. Ten-inch electrical brakes along with a Brake Safe controller and cable handbrake are all standard. Items on the A-frame include twin 9kg gas bottles, an ALKO 50mm ball coupling, an 8-inch jockey wheel and a tap. This is rounded out with a rear bumper bar, spare tyre and mud flaps. Inside the front boot is a 97amp/hr deep-cycle battery and



Hitec has a reputation as a builder of tough, no-nonsense chassis



ABOVE The LE shares its gently rounded shape with the Roadstars of old.
BELOW RIGHT 31-inch off-road tyres inspire confidence when the going gets tough.



RIGHT Buyers can opt for a bed conversion package for the dinette if extra sleeping space is required.



+ Fast Facts

MANUFACTURER: Roadstar Caravans
MODEL: Limited Edition Off-road
LENGTH/WIDTH/HEIGHT: 5800mm/2290mm/2920mm
ATM: 2440kg
TOWBALL DOWNLOAD: 220kg
PRICE AS TESTED: \$54,169 (Ex-Melb, including GST)
EXTRA COST OPTIONS:
Independent suspension
Galvanised chassis
Drop jacks
Jerry can holders
Second spare wheel
Mesh A-frame
Pressure hatch
Galvanised under-floor sheeting
Safari bumper bar
Dinette bed conversion
Laminex sink cover
Lemair washing machine
Dividing curtain
Concertina door

battery charging system that is fully fused and pre-wired for solar power, with panels optional.

Body-wise, the LE is very much in the vein of the Roadstar we knew and loved. The gentle slopes and bold front-end are finished off with chequer plate as are the skirts along the side. There's a small section of vinyl padding on the front boot, but the rest of the body is typical aluminium cladding. Sitting behind the front boot is a full-width galvanised tunnel boot with access hatches on each side.

Scattered around the body are a number of flyscreened Camec windows. A triple-lock door is fitted for added security. There's also an awning and awning light, picnic table and the usual vents and fillers.

At first glance, the interior of the LE very closely resembles earlier Roadstar interiors, but there are differences. For starters, proper sliders are used on the drawers with easy-locking catches and rollers are used on the doors. In previous Roadstar models there were a few spaces not used very well, but the current design now utilises as much space as possible. A classic example of this was a blank wall above the stereo that is now a cupboard.

The layout choices are limited on the LE models, but the layout on this review caravan is light, airy and practical. The front houses a queen-sized bed with inner-spring mattress fitted island style with wardrobes on either side. Corner cupboards *à la* caravans of yore are used to create a dividing wall separating the bedroom from the kitchen/dining area.

Dining is comfortable on an L-shaped four-seater couch covered in a suede-like material, plus there is a swivel table to match. Roadstar offer the option of a bed conversion package for the dinette if extras are staying over.

Above the seats are storage cupboards, while opposite is a neat little kitchen. There is a deep sink with draining space, water filter and hot and cold water. There is a smallish



Not everyone will have fond memories of previous Roadstars, but this differs completely



+ Verdict

+ The off-road chassis design including lateral stabilising cross members is unique and very strong.

- Apart from a few small trim issues there wasn't much to pick on (but bear in mind this caravan hadn't been given a final pre-delivery check).

= Roadstar's new owners are keen to impress with quality products.

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space between the sink and the fridge cabinet providing a useable area for food preparation.

Appliances in the kitchen include a 150-litre three-way Dometic fridge, Elfa microwave, Swift 3&1 cook top with oven and griller plus a Swift rangehood. Above the fridge cabinet is an LCD TV unit with a JVC stereo package.

Across the back of the LE is the shower and toilet which is neatly finished with a Dometic porcelain toilet and a fully sealed shower unit with a fan, hatch and light. There is plenty of storage space in this area which also has a basin and mirror for grooming. There is a raft of extras including venetian blinds, 12V and LED lighting, laminated bench tops and stainless steel splashbacks, which all add up to a practical touring package.

To be honest, not everyone will have fond memories of previous Roadstars, but this latest incarnation differs completely. The LE, in test guise, isn't cheap at \$54K, but then it's a big package designed to take you around the block time after time. Spend another \$10K on it and the Roadstar becomes a rock solid independent tourer. AD-RV



ABOVE Corner cupboards provide added storage options and help separate the bedroom from the dining area.

