

■ Words & photos: Ron Macdonald

I said in an earlier article that I had two design issues with the standard NB8A: the first was an unprotected radiator; the second is the most pathetic exhaust note I have ever heard on a car of this ilk!

Actually the more correct statement would be a lack of exhaust note. *Gracie*, my Grace Green NB, sounded just like Granny's Mazda 2 ... silent! It was quite evident from the moment I turned her key that one of the very first modifications was going to be an "exhaustectomy". Let's face it, what is the point of having something shiny and sporty-looking if, when driving through town, no-one notices the well-placed downshift? (OK, I do realise at 53 it's time I grew up!)

However, before I went out and spent a squillion dollars I really needed to set out the criteria for the new system.

My requirements:

- » Deep throaty tone on acceleration
- » Nice bark when downshifting
- » Low noise level at idle
- » No over powering tone in the cockpit at cruising speed
- » Look good

When thinking about what I required I also came to understand what I did not require: basically any extra power. I am not (currently) into the whole motor sport thing so an extra Kw or two was not big on my list of requirements. At the end of the day *Gracie* has more than enough grunt to do the things I require of her.

My first idea was a full stainless system – headers, engine pipe, pong box – the lot. However when I started asking around I realised I could not justify spending something like \$1000 - \$2000 to replace a perfectly serviceable exhaust system!

With this in mind I decided to start at the back and work my way forward until I ended up with the result I was looking for.

I found a stainless sports muffler online from a company in Sydney (*N*POWER*) that looked promising:

- » 302 Stainless Steel
- » 2.25" straight flow design
- » 3.5" polished S/S tip
- » A claimed 2.4 HP gain over a conventional muffler (*woo hoo*)



With a price tag of \$200 (+ \$45 shipping) this was worth seriously thinking about and it must have been a full 10 minutes later that I produced my credit card and organised the purchase. I realise it is very much a case of each to his own but I did have a one concern with this muffler – namely, when fitted, will *Gracie* have that high-pitched whine the young guys today seem to like coming from the Milo tin fitted to the back of their Japanese cars? Guess only time will tell on that one.

Two days later a courier arrived at work carrying a large cardboard box with a big shiny thing inside (of course I had to check). Then, within 15 minutes of arriving home that night, I was laying under *Gracie's* butt removing the old muffler (yeah, I know, but it's a guy thing).

Removal of the old muffler and fitting the new muffler was quite a simple task. First, I removed two 17mm nuts and split the muffler from the engine pipe, then slid the muffler off the three rubber hangers. Fitting the new muffler was simply the reverse procedure.



There are a couple of things to consider, however. In removing the standard muffler you will find the pins that hold it into the rubber hangers have a mushroom head on them and, because of this, quite a bit of "jiggling" is required to extract them from their home (though quite achievable).



I guess an easier way out would have been to cut the hangers off and fit new ones, though personally I think it unnecessary.

When fitting the new muffler you must remember to fit the donut-shaped seal between the muffler and engine pipe. This muffler came with a new seal though I opted to refit the original one as

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it was still perfectly serviceable.

Muffler now fitted, I kicked *Gracie* in the guts (*mmm*, nice starting sound) and crawled back underneath to check for leaks. None found, so time for a test drive.

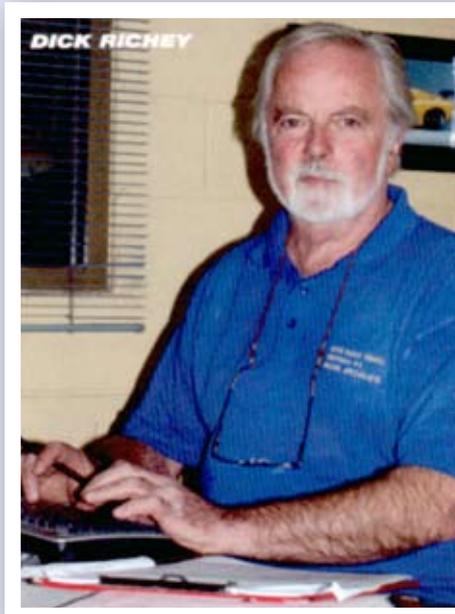
Wheeling out on to the road I took the old girl up through the gears. It definitely seems to fit my acceleration "tone" requirements – deep, throaty and not the slightest hint of that high-pitched sound I was hoping to avoid. Fourth gear, third, second (with the obligatory blip between each gear of course). As I flicked her around the 90° corner I was most impressed ... looks like my punt had paid off.

Unfortunately the time had come to stop playing (it was dark now and the worms were biting) and set course for home. I pulled up at a red light just before a freeway underpass, not five minutes from home. As I waited for the light I considered my purchase: the best \$245 I have ever spent! The light changed and I passed under the freeway with my boot nearly resting on the floor. *DAMN* what a sensational sound as my exhaust bounced around the walls of the tunnel! This is better than sex! (OK, well maybe not better but in the top two 😊). The only downside I could find was the stink now emanating from the hot muffler as it "burnt in" ... one of the downsides of an open car but not a major problem as after one decent run the smell disappeared.

I stated near the start of this article that this solution will not suit everyone, but I am very pleased with it and can say it has ticked every box on my list of requirements.

If any of you are looking to put a bit more *Varoom* in your little friend but are not fussed about the zoom then this might be worth considering. If you want to "check it out" first feel free to give me a yell at the next Club run. ■

PS: As far as I can tell this company only supplies a muffler to suit the NB model.



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