



STORY IAIN KELLY PHOTOS BEN HOSKING

OVER THE PAST 23 YEARS, SYDNEY'S PROFLO PERFORMANCE HAS BUILT SOME OF THE ANGRIEST STREETERS TO ROAM AUSSIE ROADS. WE TAKE A LOOK AT THEIR NEW DIGS



STREET MACHINE 049



SOME shops have a signature look. For Sydney's ProFlo Performance, that means worm-burning ride heights, steamroller meats out back and metal skyscrapers jutting out of engine bays, all finished to Summernats Elite-level quality.

Owner Paul Sant first came to *Street Machine's* attention with a tasty blown Torana hatchback that we featured way back in our March 1996 issue. "I wasn't ProFlo back when that car was featured," says Paul, sitting in his office at the new, much larger shop he moved ProFlo Performance into a little over a year ago. "Jeez, when was the start? I don't even know!"

You can't fault the street machining legend for

not recalling the exact date his empire began (it was 1998), given the hundreds of top-shelf street machines and off-tap engine combos he's built since then. But it all started from after-hours, extra-curricular activities.

"I used to tinker with engines and cars at home when I worked elsewhere," says Paul. "When I started ProFlo, it was intended to be more concentrating on building engines and developing cylinder heads, with a bit of car work involved. But I didn't believe it would evolve into the monster it is today."

Paul took home the John Taverna Memorial Award in 2014 at Summernats 27, which is fitting when you consider the ProFlo highlights

reel. Some of the cars you may recognise from his workshop include Paul Souma's 2000rwhp ATTACK '56 Chev (*SM*, Jan '13); the blown small-block IMB05S Escort of Geoff Newton (*SM*, Feb '20); Brett Hewerdine's pro street HT Monaro (*SM*, Apr '19); Blake Fardell's blown Hemi-powered XY (*SM*, Dec '14); Milan's 940ci LJ Torana (*SM*, Feb '20); and the genre-busting '57 Chev of Anthony Sant (*SM*, Feb '04).

However, Paul points to a bona-fide legend of the Sydney scene as being the one who put him and his fledgling business in the spotlight. "I believe one of the cars that really kickstarted the ProFlo name was Tristan Ockers's Capri, MINCER," he says. "Tristan was one of my first



1: This Datsun 1200 coupe is in the workshop for a firewall-back chassis, wheel tubs, four-link, sheet-metal gin diff and tubbed front. Power will be delivered by a turbo Nissan SR20DET four-banger, with a C4 auto behind it

2: Destined for radial racing on 315s, this Barra-powered XF Falcon has copped a ProFlo rear end and been tubbed into the doors by the lads. "Everyone wants fast cars now, but they want them riding super-low," says Paul

3: This Camaro packs a 6/71-blown ProFlo-built 496ci big-block Chev and TH400 transmission. "I built the engine, the owner fitted it and brought it back to have a few last little jobs done. It's a good basic street car," Paul says



I DIDN'T BELIEVE IT WOULD EVOLVE INTO THE MONSTER IT IS TODAY



4: Louis Younis's small-block LJ Torana debuted at Summernats 28 as a nitrous-huffing 1100hp build good enough to land in the Elite Top 60 that year. ProFlo has updated it with a 14/71 pump and EFI for more street duties. See p. 32 for the results!

5: Here's a fully polished, water-jacketed Noonan billet Hemi wearing a BDS 14/71 "street blower", as Paul calls it. This is going into a show car, though the customer intends to eventually drive it. "This thing is a work of art, and it eventually will be driven on the street," Paul adds. "We're making a billet hat for it to replace the carbon hat, so it will be billet from top to bottom"



6: Paul Souma's twin-turbo 2000rwhp '56 Chev is back at ProFlo to get stepped up. "We had unfinished business with ATTACK," says Paul. "It has come back in for a switch to a water-to-air intercooler to get airflow to the radiator – which we also improved – plus a Haltech ECU, and bigger 102mm Garrett turbos. It would be nice to see 2500-plus horsepower at the hubs"





1: "This '67 Camaro is a cool car," Paul says. "It came in for a mid-700rwhp 427ci LS with a Harrop 2650 blower, Turbo 400, FuelTech ECU, 9in and four-link, and the owner drives the wheels off it"

2: A tidy 318ci mill is sitting resplendent in Mopar teal in Paul's engine room, destined for this Valiant ute. "It's getting just a basic small-block combo," he says. "We also did a dead-stock Holden for a matching-numbers Orchid Metallic HQ Sandman panel van recently, including fully restoring the chassis for the owner, so I do like a bit of resto work"

3: "I would love to build a blown alcohol Holden engine using a Torque Power block to make stupid power," Paul says. "I actually have a Torque Power engine in the shop for a car we're doing, but it is going twin-turbo, so it will also make stupid power. But a blown alcohol combo is a bit more me, even though it wouldn't suit the car I'd want to put that engine in. While I'd love another hatchback, my ultimate car is a '56 or '57 Chev, but I don't think I could put a Holden in a Chev"



1



2



3

4: "I don't really have much downtime," Paul says. "Cars are my passion; that's all I do. I'm one of those people who just live and breathe it. It is nice, though, to sit down at the end of the week and have a few beers with a mate or two, but I don't really do much else – you can ask my wife and she'll tell you the same! I don't play golf or tennis – look at me! Maybe it is a golf body, actually! I'm normally too mentally buggered by the end of the day to do anything else"

5: The ProFlo Performance crew (L-R): Paul Sant, Charlie Sant, Chris 'Grechy' Eggleton, Peter Robins, Paul Burke, Nick Poriotis. "I still build every engine and machine every cylinder head that leaves here," Paul says. "Charlie is getting more involved in this side of the business now, so hopefully in a few years he can take on more of that responsibility"



I COULDN'T TELL YOU HOW MANY CARS WE DO A YEAR, BUT THERE'S NORMALLY 40-50 ENGINES ON THE GO AT ONCE



engine customers, so then all the Thirlmere Fryers boys came to me, and they were a big force at Summernats at the time."

This was in the days before everyone had a Roots blower sitting in the stratosphere and power figures for street cars were well down in the three-digit territory. The sight of tubbed and blown cars with number plates was absolute outlaw territory, and the connection with the Thirlmere skid fiends led to ProFlo building a rep as the place to go if you wanted a titanium-tough car that was detailed to the nines.

After 21 years in the same shed, ProFlo took a big leap at the start of 2020 and expanded into a new facility in Campbelltown on the southwestern fringes of Sydney. Paul feels it will be a much better workspace, among other benefits.

"We've been almost a one-stop shop for a while, so the new shop is an evolution of that process of expansion," he says. "Cars are very expensive these days, so presentation is an important part of the business. The old shop evolved from a tin shed into a giant tin shed, so there were some bits of the shop here and other areas over there, but the new shop's layout is much better thought-out, as it was designed to do this job from the get-go, and it flows between work spaces."

"I have the engine room and cylinder head area upstairs, near reception, with the fab area and car assembly across the shop downstairs. When we first purchased the building, a few good mates and I spent six months after-hours renovating and upgrading the facilities to make it present well and function well for both staff and clients. There's a few of us working here now; I have four fab guys, one mechanic, my son Charlie and myself."

"I couldn't tell you how many cars we do a year, but there's normally 40-50 engines on the go at once, and there's usually 20-30 cars on the go, too. When we do a full build, the car basically only leaves for paint, as the trimmers and auto electrician come to us. The rest we do in-house."

Keeping projects moving between sections of the shop is a challenge for anyone building a handful of cars, let alone tackling as many full-on builds as ProFlo knocks out each year. This is why Paul points to his employees as one of the shop's greatest strengths.

"What I like about my guys is there are no egos at work; everyone works together and I think that is a big part of why the cars turn out the way they do," Paul says. "Everyone has a car they work on and a job to do; I don't usually team people up because everyone knows what to do and when. The boys all work together consulting each other to make sure projects flow through the shop, and they'll sometimes come grab me from upstairs in the engine room to look at something and



IT'S CRAZY. BACK THEN, IF YOU SAID YOU WANTED A 1000HP STREET CAR, PEOPLE WOULD'VE THOUGHT YOU WERE COOKED!

collaborate, throw some ideas in to see if there is a better way to do something."

While the full builds get most of the headlines, almost half of ProFlo Performance's business is in screwing engine combos together for customers, from mild to wild. However, Paul has seen the shift in what customers define as a 'wild' engine over the years.

"Engines in project cars have definitely stepped up in power from when we started," Paul says. "Every engine is now a stroker; every engine has alloy heads, too. Parts are a lot more available – and more affordable too, I think. I remember back when Jason Gray won Horsepower Heroes at Summernats at 404rwhp with a Vortech-blown Holden, and everyone was blown away. Now

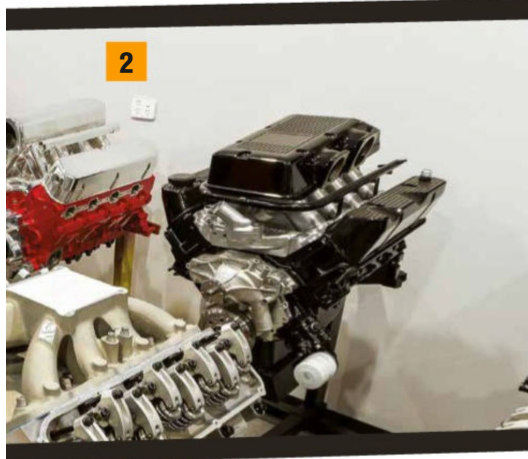
we're building aspirated Holdens using the same cylinder heads that make more than that!"

The rise of events like Powercruise, where people thrash cars making four-digit power figures, has also changed. These mega-grunt engines now need to perform but also live after being pounded, and that has presented some challenges for Paul.

"It's crazy," he says. "Back then, if you said you wanted a 1000hp street car, people would've thought you were cooked; that's what a Wild Bunch car had! Now, it's a normal street car, and it's a bit like, if you haven't got 1000hp with your turbo LS then you're nothing and nowhere! People drive around Powercruise with a blown alcohol engine that is more than what Wild

Bunch had back in the 90s. And these guys are trying to drive them just like a normal car! But parts have evolved a lot more, so most of the time the big bangers seem to live."

While the entry price to the classic car hobby and the cost of building cars has exploded to match the rise in engineering behind the projects, Paul hasn't seen a slow-down in people wanting to build off-tap cars. "We've got five HK-T-G Monaros and a few Torana hatchbacks to chop up this year," he says. "These are expensive cars now, and I can't fathom where they are coming from! You've got people who sit on both sides of the fence for stock restored cars and modified cars. Me, I'd take the chopped-up one – and a stock one too, maybe!"



2

1: "I think it would be unfair to all my customers to say I had a favourite build," Paul laughs. "I think all of them are cool, and I like anything that makes power, whether it be Ford, Chrysler or Holden. I guess I'm a blower guy through and through. I definitely live a lot of my fantasies through other people's cars! Guys come to us to build their dream car and a lot of the time they're looking for us to give it that ProFlo vibe

2: This twin-throttle plastic is headed for a Walkinshaw VL lookalike with a smoothed engine bay. "It has a 355 stroker and makes about 520-550hp with a six-speed behind it, but the manifold has been smoothed and painted in two-pack paint, too, so it will be nice," Paul says

