

## BIG AND BOLD - AND IT COMES IN BLACK

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**THE WORLD WHIZZES BY:** It looks a bit like a hearse, but the muscular 5.7 V8 engine makes sure the Chrysler 300 Hemi doesn't handle like one.

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By Peta Lee

My daughter's funny. We climbed into the long black Chrysler 300 Hemi Touring and 10-year-old Jordan looked around and said: "Mom, what do they do with the seats when they put the coffin in?"

You've got to admit it; in black it looks pretty damn hearse-like. No question. But pop it into D, put your foot down, and as you blast off, all thoughts of sombre slow coffin-carriers fly right out through the sunroof.

With its muscular 5.7 V8 engine, this is one long and mean machine. And funnily enough, despite initial misgivings, and despite not always being a huge fan of American cars, I loved piloting this boat around. It delivers such a beautiful drive.

### 'A dream on the open road'

Smooth, with wonderful and effortless gear changes, terrific

Mercedes-like suspension, comfortable seats, fantastic cornering ability; it's actually a dream on the open road.

And now I also know why those small, insecure and insignificant little government officials behave the way they do: the kind who need flashing blue lights to make themselves feel important. Whenever anyone spotted me in their rear view mirror, they'd quickly move over to the left.

Don't know if they assumed I was a forerunner for the blue-light brigade or what, but it crossed my mind that if they reacted so smartly to the car without a light, how much faster would they have shifted had I actually had one?

Apart from its charming coffin capacity, Jordan also liked it "because it's so big we can just squash anyone who gets in our way, mom, especially lunatics". (Her understanding of

### 'We can just squash anyone who gets in our way'

L-plated drivers is that the L stands not for learner but for lunatics: she constantly reminds me it's dangerous to drive behind lunatics...)

Lest I forget, the legendary Hemi V8 engine offers a thumping great 250kW at 5000rpm (and 525Nm of torque at 4000rpm) without sacrificing fuel economy. A sophisticated Multi-Displacement System helps produce up to a 20-percent improvement in fuel economy - depending on driving habits, of course.

And hell, it's got everything a woman needs. Jordan, naturally, found the two DVD players, showed me how to flip them into action and how to work the remote control to get them going. She also swiftly spotted the seat-warming

switches, and on an unseasonally chilly morning, warmed up her skinny little pins nicely on the way to school.

Found the touch-screen radio/CD incredibly user-friendly and easy to use, all dials and gauges big and clear and amazingly visible, and those big seats - stunning!

### **DESIGNED TO BE ROOMY**

The boot lid is huge- as is the boot, or trunk, as the Yanks would probably say. I looked for a spare wheel but found a shallow space, a warning light and a luggage net, and went no further down because I was distracted by something else, but did later discover that it has a Marie-biscuit spare only.

Loved the big half-tortoiseshell, half-leather steering wheel. Yet, despite the car being so 21st century, I felt it just needed an old-fashioned great big glory knob on the steering wheel, an eight track cassette blasting out The Who's "Meaty Beaty Big and Bouncy" or perhaps Grand Funk's "Survivor", and I would have felt transported back to my wild youth and jolling-in-a-Studebaker days... but let's not go there!

The Chrysler is comfortable, big, easy to drive, and what can I say? It feels, incredibly, like coming home. Danged if I know why!

Yours for R469 900.