HULME SUPERCAR STALLS
NEW ZEALAND'S CAPARO RIVAL STRUGGLES TO FIND FUNDING

Regular readers will be familiar with the Hulme CanAm, the 600hp 200mph Caparo T1-rivaling supercar from New Zealand. Named in honour of the country's only F1 champion, Denny Hulme, the CanAm first appeared in 2005 following a two-year development programme, and the initial signs for success looked good. However, despite opening the order books in May, its maker has so far failed to gain sufficient funding to guarantee production.

The company needed to raise £2m by July 1 for construction of a facility to build the CanAm and continue development. Initially only New Zealanders were given the opportunity to invest, with the chance to contribute as little as NZ$1000 (€470) to buy a stake in the company, but managing director Jack Freemantle now admits that he's looking overseas for investment.

'We have incredible skills in New Zealand,' he told Car. 'We've developed and built cutting-edge sailing craft for the Americas Cup, and I know we can do the same in the supercar industry.' Funding and support have been very difficult to come by, though, and with all investor money now needing to be repaid, where does that leave the Hulme project? Although the refreshingly down-to-earth ex-pat Brit is keen to keep the car in New Zealand, he knows overseas investment may end up saving the Hulme, and that will probably lead to production moving outside New Zealand. But the project definitely goes on. 'Testing and development is continuing,' says Freemantle, and we have just completed a closed-canopy body shell.

'Ve have contingency, and will get the next prototype built. We did not get the funds we required from the public float, but we have a couple of people interested in joining as major investors, plus we are in contact with two more who could be future partners.' It's not going to be easy, but Jack Freemantle's dream could yet come true.

Keith Adams

Far left: cockpit is basic but well executed. Centre: mid-mounted engine is GM's LS9 V8, the same unit that powers the Corvette ZR1

Driving the prototype

'Bar 1' is the only running prototype in existence, and despite Jack Freemantle's constant apologies, it looks well finished and feels solid. The cockpit is roomy and the driving position is spot on. The V8 fires up vocally, but it's neatly installed and free from the shakes you might expect from a hard-driven prototype. A dip of the throttle reveals plenty of induction roar, too.

On the road, the car feels agreeably taut yet rides surprisingly well. Out of slow corners, the traction is fantastic, and even when using liberal throttle inputs it's difficult to unstick the rear. When it does let go, quick and accurate unassisted steering makes corrections instinctive. From our brief drive, it's clear this car is well-developed and has considerable potential.

V8 SPYDER ON WAY

Audi has surprised precisely no-one with the news that it will shortly be launching a V8 version of the R8 Spyder. Apparently the 4.2-litre has been tweaked to develop an extra 100hp — 424hp in total. It goes on sale this autumn, and Audi has indicated that it will cost around £20,000 less than the £112,500 V10 version, with equipment on a par with the V8 coupe — which also gets the engine upgrade.