

AUSSIE JK-8

By Michael Bowen
Photos by Jacko



Jeep/Mopar Australia has teamed up with Jeep Action to supply and fit the first JK-8 Kit in Australia.

Jeep/Mopar Australia was keen to show that the JK-8 Kit can be fitted by enthusiasts.



Wrangler before the conversion

We featured the first JK-8 which was released at the 2011 Easter Jeep Safari and in the last issue we showed the second JK-8 fitted by Mopar in the U.S.

I recently had the opportunity to fit a JK-8 kit supplied by Jeep/Mopar Australia to the Jeep Action Wrangler. I chose to do the conversion with Neil at Marathon Spares. Neil had looked over the Orange JK-8 and spoke with Mopar engineers with me in Detroit and has many years' experience with army Jeep bodies.

I also wanted to complete most of the conversion over three days so we could video the work for a future Jeep Action DVD.

The kit arrived in a big wooden box with Mopar and JK-8 stamped on the outside. On top of the wooden box was another

box containing the hardtop. The lid was peeled off to view all the goodies but we had lots of work to do before any of these items would be needed. This included stripping a perfectly good four door Wrangler. Jeep enthusiasts who understand were excited about the project and non Jeep friends thought I was mad.

Off with the roof, doors, seats, seat belts, sound bar, subwoofer, roll bar padding, rear flares, side steps, rear bar, tailgate and spare wheel. The next major step is removing hundreds of spot welds that hold the inner and outer side and centre panels on. At this stage you're not unbolting items that can be refitted, there's no going back. Spot weld removers can be purchased from any good tool shop. The B-Pillar panels are next to be removed and then the rear section of the roll bar.

We were privy to the fitting instructions a couple of months



Blue removing the seatbelts



Neil using a spot weld remover



Removing the rear bar



Michael removes the rear outer panel



This is how the kit arrives



The strip-down underway



Just the roll bar to go



Foam between the panels

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before we received the kit so we had studied them well. They aren't detailed step by step instructions but informative enough to guide you along.

The JK certainly looked different with the strip down complete. It was now time to dig into the kit and start the assembly process. A new B Pillar panel is fitted followed by the new inner and outer side panels which lined up and fitted well. We clamped them into place, checked alignment front and back then started the welding process. Throughout the panel installation we did a mixture of spot welds with a borrowed spot welder and plug welds with a mig welder. The new roll bar fits well and is bolted to the floor using the existing rear seat bolt holes.

A new cross member bolts to the roll bar to support the new

bulkhead and floor. The panel work and welding phase of the install was complete and we were happy with our progress and impressed with the Mopar kit. It was now onto the hardtop installation. The hardtop is bolted to the new bulkhead and belt rail and new freedom panels are secured the same as a standard Wrangler. The three windows can be fitted after paint. What colour to paint the hardtop was discussed. There were two thoughts, colour code the top to match the Jeep like the two Mopar JK-8's we had seen before or go black. The Rescue Green is a good colour but I thought it would be too much with the top done so opted for a black hardtop. The inside of the tub would be painted in a bed liner finish. With the colour decided we double checked our work, applied sikaflex to the edges of the



Neil removes the B Pillar



Removing foam from the B Pillar area



Strip-down complete



Jacko welding in the new B Pillar



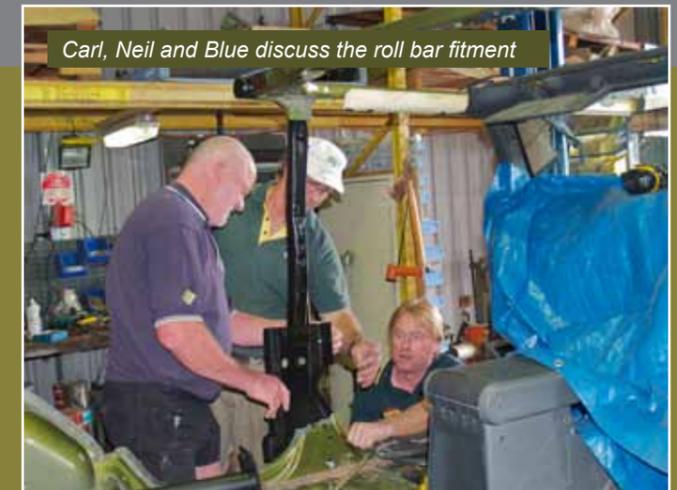
The kit is opened up



Drilling more spot welds



Jacko separating the roll bar



Carl, Neil and Blue discuss the roll bar fitment



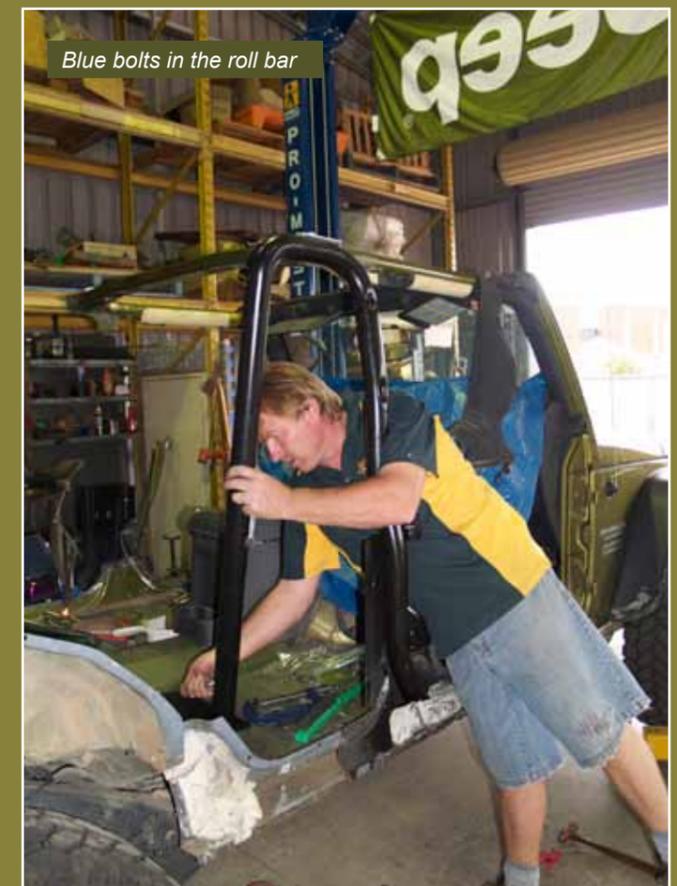
Roll bar being removed



Removing inner panel



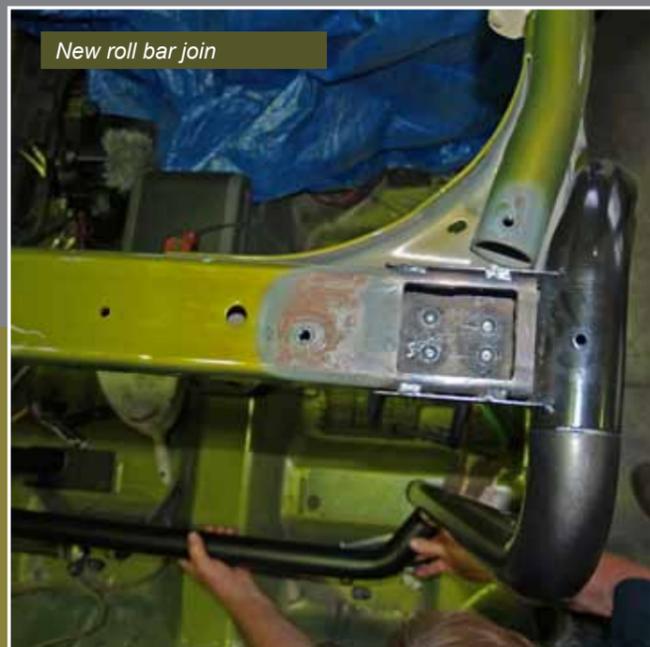
Neil and Blue prepping for the panels



Blue bolts in the roll bar

new floor and bulkhead then headed off to the spray painter. Back from the spray painter it was onto the interior trim. The supplied trim for the B pillar area is from a two door Wrangler and a little trimming is required. We spent some time on this and decided to fit the existing trim for a better looking finish around the door striker area. I also used the original rear sport bar padding to cover the new bar work. It's a bit fiddly but worth the effort and saves painting the new roll bar. I also opted for automotive carpet around the bulk head. This meant that no painting was needed inside the cab. Windows were fitted and the

hardtop rebolted to the Jeep. Rock rails, rear bar and flares were re-fitted and wiring connected. The rear of the Jeep was a lot lighter and sat quite high so we fitted shorter springs and shock absorbers to the rear to level it out. The kit was completed and for a finishing touch I had a tonneau cover made. Any serious Jeep enthusiasts with a work shed, some mates, a welder and basic tools could fit a JK-8 kit. I am very happy with the outcome of the JK-8 and the Jeep gets many positive comments including, how factory finished it looks and "When did Jeep start making utes again?"



New roll bar join



New inner panel fitted



New inner panel fitted



New panel alignment check



Door on to align new outer panel



Spot welder



More spot welds



Outside for a clean and photograph



Roll bar fitted and ready for new floor



New cross member fitted to roll bar



New floor going in



Jacko still welding



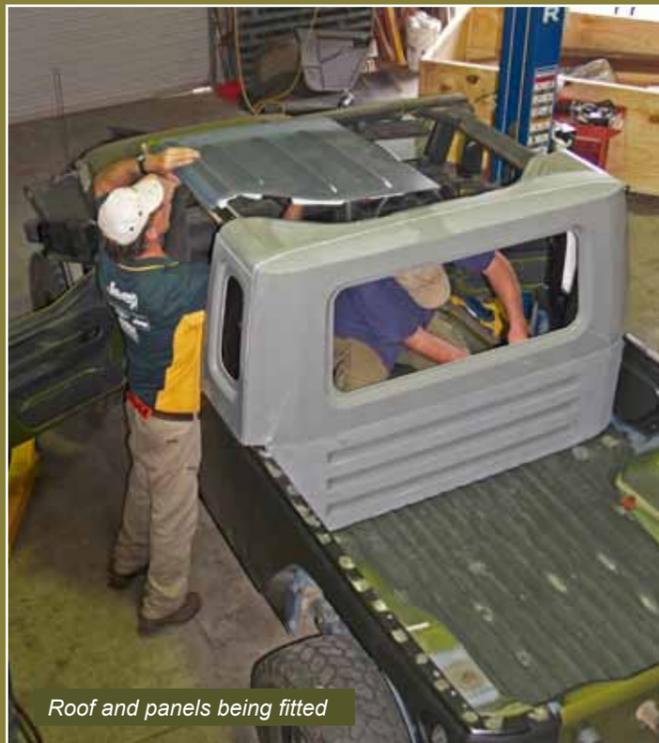
New floor in



New bulkhead fitted



Starting to take shape



Roof and panels being fitted



Roof fitted



All the parts removed



Michael happy with the work so far



Getting close to being painted



Heading to the paint shop



At the paint shop



New interior



A Jeep ute



Paint done



Bedliner paint applied



Job done



JK-8 Kit fitted to the Jeep Action Wrangler proudly supplied by Jeep/Mopar Australia.

The Jeep Action JK-8 is also fitted with Mopar Front and Rear Off-road Bars, Rockrails and Half Doors



The JK-8 Kit is available through Jeep dealers and you can visit www.jeep.com.au for updates on availability.

In the next issue of Jeep Action we will update engineering and pricing on the JK-8 Kit.