

HARDTOPS ARE IN

What with a freezing drive to the snow country and a "swim" in a flooded creek, it seemed as good a time as any to test the J and S Fibreglass hard top on our MG 123.

AT FIRST we were very anti hardtop for MG 123... after all what is sports car motoring all about? The top down, wind in the face driving, with the hood in place only when the heavens open up or the wind was so cold that to attempt to drive with the hood down would only invite a bout of pneumonia. Sure the soft-top was draughty and leaked when it rained heavily but for normal driving we found it quite satisfactory... until we took MG 123 to the snow country. That was a different story. Even with the heater going full bore we nearly froze as we drove through Southern NSW in the early hours of the morning. We vowed the minute we got back to Sydney we'd get a hardtop before attempting any more snow-trips.

In Sydney, J and S Fibreglass make two types of hardtops for MGs, including the special fastback style for the local MG GT. We chose the semi-fastback style shown in the photos, the style that seems to be the most popular. The other top made by J and S is called the Sports while there is another style in the mould at the moment featuring a sunroof. More about these tops in the next issue.

The semi-fastback comes either painted to match the car's paint job for \$196 (trimmed and painted) or with a vinyl cover for \$212.52. Each top is fitted individually to the car, which takes about 20 minutes and for this there is a \$4 fitting fee.

We noticed the difference immediately the top was fitted. It was just like having two cars in one... a GT and an open car. The top is secured by two clips, identical to those fitted to the soft top, and the sides are held down by a hook which fits under the body lip behind the seats and is tightened by a knurled nut. It can be taken off or put on a lot quicker than the normal soft-top. The inside is lined with white vinyl and gives the car a lot more space inside. There's certainly more headroom and the compartment behind the seats is easier to get to for the removal of luggage or checking the batteries.

All round visibility is better than with the soft top, too. With the soft top cars tend to hide behind the left-hand passenger side and makes city traffic driving sometimes a little perilous. The rear window is tinted and with the sun behind you the interior tends to warm up. This is okay in winter but in summer it could get too hot... but then you wouldn't want the top on anyway.

On our next trip to the snow country, the hardtop proved its worth and we had a far more comfortable trip. It kept our bird happy, too. She had vowed she would never make another trip to the snow with us if she was going to freeze again.

As enthusiastic as we are about open car driving, the hardtop is still a handy item to keep in the garage for rainy days or that interstate trip... you won't regret buying one.

Another luxury we have allowed ourselves is carpet on the floor, made by Tasman Car Carpets, of Mona Vale, a Sydney northern beaches suburb. The set of four mats, passenger side, driver's side (with rubber inserts for the heels under the pedals) and two mats to go under the seats to complete the picture are made from the same material that covers the transmission tunnel and battery cover. The edges are bound and there's a range of seven colors. Tasman Car Carpets fitted ours while we waited and the affect was very pleasing. For just \$13.80 you can dress up the interior of your B and add that touch of luxury carpets give. Like the original rubber mats they use the same press studs to hold them in place and are easily removed for cleaning.

So far we have covered 13,000 miles in MG 123 with no major hang-ups. Most of the miles have been notched up in heavy city peak hour traffic or long hard trips interstate and the car is standing up to the punishment well. We replaced the muffler, after it cracked through and we broke a wheel when it fell into a hole big enough to hide a truck, just outside Berrima on the Hume Highway.

The starter motor, alternator and windscreen wiper motor all had to be reconditioned after we all but sank MG 123 in a creek. It was during the big rains in Sydney and a creek had overflowed on to the road. We were in the water before we realised it and there was nothing we could do but keep going. At one stage the water was over the headlights, and we had visions of undoing the hood and climbing out the top if it stalled. But the car kept going and we drove

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The J and S Fibreglass hardtop gives the car a sleeker look and more headroom inside. We chose the Semi-fastback style with vinyl covering for MG 123.

