



FIVE-BEARING GEE

FOR a couple of years the MG B has been the fastest, safest, and most comfortable MG ever. Now it's been made the smoothest, too — since March, B.M.C. have been fitting it with a new five-bearing crankshaft.

Following is our test report on this latest MG B version — it is supplementary to the full road test published in our August 1963 issue.

Even non-sports-car drivers should find the new test of special interest: the same five-bearing engine will be fitted to the Austin 1800, which will probably be released about the end of the year.

Other new features in the MG B are an electric tachometer and a bimetal tank unit and fuel gauge. The price is new, too—up £25, to £1420. Otherwise the car is virtually identical to previous Bs.

Performance

Power and capacity of the new motor are unchanged—95 b.h.p. from 1798c.c. Presence of the new crankshaft is felt in overall smoothness, the motor spinning freely and without a trace of roughness, right up to the 6000 r.p.m. limit. This is a marked contrast to the three-bearing unit, which was inclined to be lumpy throughout the range and chattery at high speed.

The crankshaft change will be good news for MG owners who like to hot-up. Five bearings are better able to stand the strain of higher compression and higher revs than three.

Surprisingly it proved to be fractionally slower than the earlier three-bearing B. We put this down to increased bearing friction (there's about

MODERN MOTOR — August 1965

30 percent more bearing area), but the newness of B.M.C.'s test car may have contributed, too.

Acceleration is not the whizz-bang sort often associated with sports cars, but it is deceptive. Although the MG B feels a gentle performer, it continually returned times which surprised us.

For instance, 0-80 came up in 22.3 seconds, 0-90 in 30.6. Very respectable.

Tractability is outstanding, the car trickling along in top at 15 m.p.h. on a whiff of throttle, and then accelerating away fiercely without a trace of distress.

It cruises comfortably in the 80s, and seems well able to keep this up

SPECIFICATIONS: As for MG B tested August 1963 Modern Motor, except for new five-bearing crankshaft.

PERFORMANCE

CONDITIONS: Fine, warm; two occupants; super grade fuel.

BEST SPEED: 104.6 m.p.h.

FLYING quarter-mile: 103.8 m.p.h.

STANDING quarter-mile: 19.2s.

MAXIMUM in gears: 1st, 32 m.p.h.; 2nd, 52; 3rd, 83.

ACCELERATION from rest through gears: 0-30 m.p.h., 4.1s.; 0-40, 6.4s.; 0-50, 8.8s.; 0-60, 13.5s.; 0-70, 16.4s.; 0-80, 22.3s.; 0-90, 30.6s.

ACCELERATION in top (with third in brackets): 20-40 m.p.h., 10.7s. (6.0s.); 30-50, 9.0s. (5.5s.); 40-60, 8.9s. (6.0s.); 50-70, 9.2s. (7.5s.); 60-80, 11.0s. (9.8s.); 70-90, 16.0s.

BRAKING: 30ft. to stop, from 30 m.p.h. in neutral; 137ft. from 60.

FUEL CONSUMPTION: 24 m.p.g. over 420 miles, including all tests.

SPEEDOMETER: Accurate throughout.

PRICE: £1420 tax paid

Sturdier, smoother - running engine is latest improvement to MG B, says Barry Cooke

— with brief respites — for hours on end. Our test included a spirited climb to Lithgow, west of Sydney, and for much of this journey over winding, undulating country the speedo hovered in the 70-90 m.p.h. sector.

Fuel consumption was 24 m.p.g. for a distance of 420 miles. The average owner could confidently expect 27-28 m.p.g. Super fuel was used without "pinging," although the engine is still prone to "run on" after switching off.

Gearbox, Clutch

Gear ratios are not well chosen, first being rather low and the gap between second and third too long. Maximum in first is 32, second 52, and third 83 m.p.h.

Furthermore, first is not synchronised, which makes engagement while the car is moving very difficult (even with double declutches). It's even difficult when stationary, the easiest way of picking it up being to "touch" second with the lever before trying for first.

Gears are selected by a robust stick which juts directly from the gearbox without a remote extension. Like all new MGs, it was very stiff and, from past experience, should stay that way for at least 8000-10,000 miles. Despite this, very smooth changes were the rule, particularly

Continued on page 11

5-BEARING GEE

(Continued from page 43)

if a firm hand was used. Synchro handled even brutal changes well.

The clutch was lovely, although the pedal pressure might be a little heavy for some. Take-up was smooth and progressive, bite firm, and no amount of abuse induced slip.

Good Handling

Although the suspension layout for MG A and MG B is identical, softer springs on the B provide a considerable improvement in ride comfort at the cost of increased body roll. Another result is a lessening in the degree of oversteer traditionally associated with MG.

The B's handling characteristics range from slight understeer on slow corners to final (completely controllable) roll-oversteer on fast ones.

Unitary construction makes the B more rigid than its predecessor, which lessens scuttle shake and general body movement. The ride is still firm, but more heavily damped, and although rough roads still cause some discomfort, it's not the bucking-bronco variety of the MG A.

Rack-and-pinion steering is tiresomely heavy. Steering geometry is such that castor action on the front wheels is virtually nonexistent and self-centring action very subdued.

The car has to be steered continually and is not very good at "finding its own way."

In its favor is a high degree of sensitivity at speed. Even then — and despite fairly low gearing of 2.9 turns lock-to-lock — stiffness persists, and the over-large, antiquated steering wheel is more hindrance than help.

MG A 1600 was one of the first production cars to use a disc/drum braking combination, and B.M.C.'s experience with this set-up is evident in the B. Despite lack of servo-assist, it stops on a reasonably light pedal, and there is no fade to speak of from the 10½in. front discs and 10in. rear drums.

Heel-and-toeing was not possible for me, but more supple drivers may be able to contort themselves sufficiently to achieve this.

Interior

Cockpit comfort rates very high and a good standard of finish is maintained throughout. Seats adjust, through a wide range of positions. They're not particularly "anatomical" in shape and lack lateral support, although deeply padded and generally comfortable.

Black plastic door handles and window-winders are suspect, in my estimation. They don't seem robust enough, particularly as MG doors are notorious for "stickiness."

The hood, stretched tight over three bows which collapse and break

into halves for stowing, provides a snug and mostly draught-free interior. It rattles at high speed — a problem which seems to beset all rag tops — but keeps at bay most of the dirty weather.

The MG B is not without faults, some of them quite serious. Lack of synchro on first gear, ill-spaced ratios and stiff steering are the most glaring.

However, the overall result is still satisfactory. The B is a good sports job with many of the qualities of the true GT car. Addition of a five-bearing crankshaft to the perennial B.M.C. B-series motor gives the car a smoothness never before experienced by MG owners. They will like it. ●