

Now that BLMC have done the last they can do to the mechanicals, what are they going to do for an encore? A six? A V8? A new shape? HmMMMM.

ENTHUSIASTS are going to do one of two things when they come across the BLMC MGB automatic. They are going to either throw their hands up in horror and scream their heads off about so-called sacrilege to the marque and sports cars in general — or they'll sit down, run the black-topped, chrome floor shift through its markings a few times and decide they really like the option after all.

We took the MGB automatic for a 400-mile run, about 150 miles more than usual simply because we felt we'd come up against a slightly ticklish situation. You see, the problem is simply that of "should sports cars come equipped with an automatic, or should they, for tradition's sake, remain with the age-old manual gearbox."

For openers, we'll put it this way. You don't HAVE to buy any make or model of car. No one is twisting your arm to accept the X-mobile, nor do you have any duty to make a certain choice. But, in this case, a manufacturer namely BLMC has taken the initiative to offer the choice of four-speed or four-speed with overdrive manual, and the three-speed automatic. It's really nothing new. The Americans have been playing this game for



*This is a photograph we haven't published before. It shows the amount of gear to stow into the boot when the hood is disassembled. There still remains a lot of boot space, and the area behind the two seats.*



# MGB-

years with their sporty-type cars — and automatics are suddenly becoming the thing to wear, despite what the purist says.

So, what will the purists say in this case? Frankly, we feel they'll be divided into sections striving hard to retain the image and tradition as against those who see the move as one of progress and refinement of the sports car as we've known it. After all, the purist says, "Thou shalt not drive with the hood up . . ." Yet how many sports cars do you see running around the place with hardtops, fastbacks and such, all of which are of a semi-permanent nature? Particularly in our winter months.

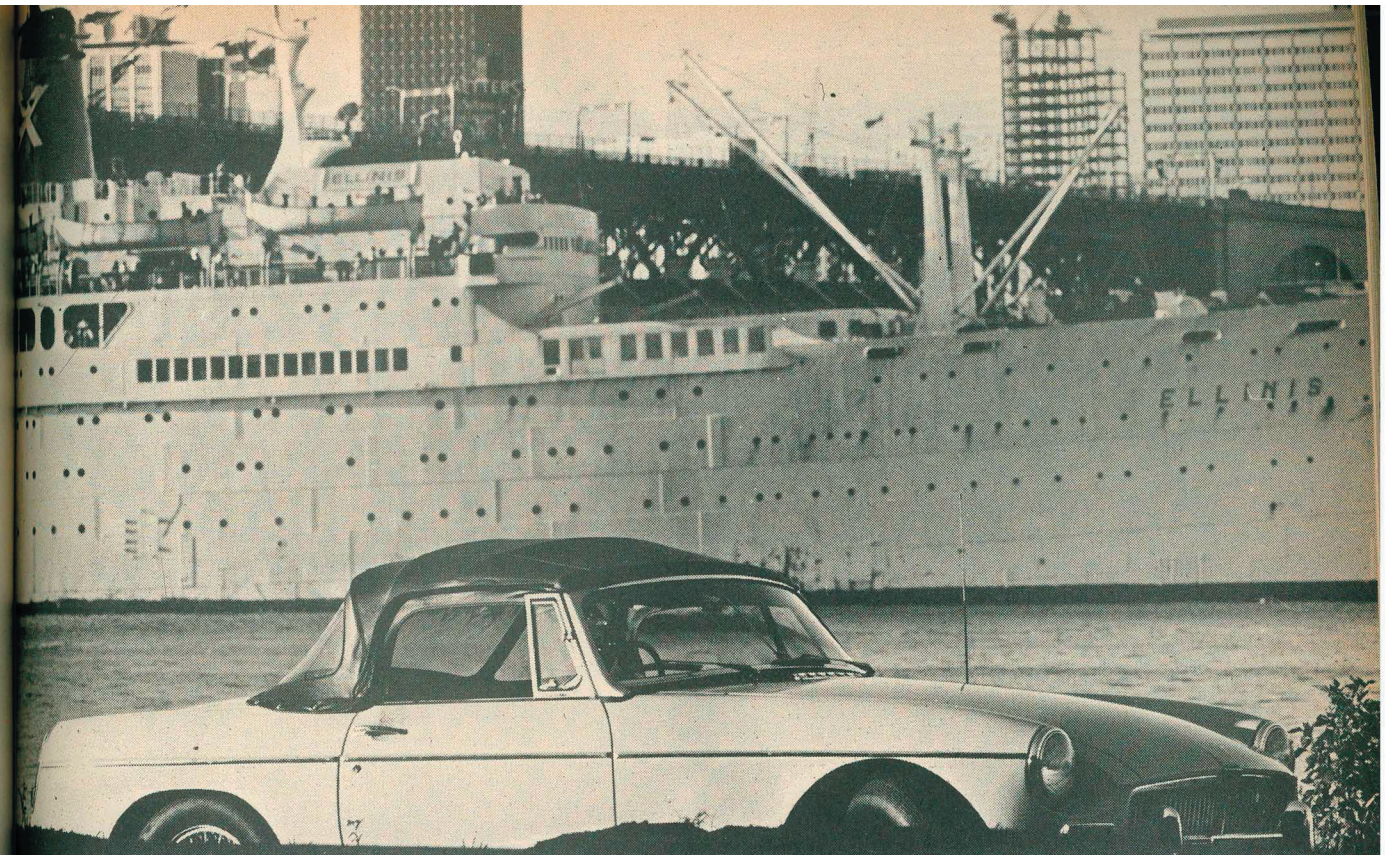
So half of the argument is shot to bits right there. Maybe the numbers of upright purists is dwindling in the face of the masses who are suddenly becoming able to buy sports cars and who don't really give a damn for the traditions of the whole thing. Put it this way. If you owned a commercial building which was a few years old, yet it would be financially beneficial for you to get a new one, you'd do so, wouldn't you? Even if you had to forsake the heavy stone appearance and the solid oak double doors in favor of glass and aluminium and plenty of light. Your personal feelings would have little bearing on the matter, your heart being ruled by your pocket — plus the fact they just don't make those dark, dreary stone buildings any more.

The automatic transmission, the Borg-Warner type 35, is used on over 90 different models of cars which gives it a proven record. BMC was

first to apply it to the east-west engine design, front wheel drive car. The selector is placed centrally on the floor in the same position the manual shift was. It operates very much like the 1800 and the Mini in that it has a lift-release for getting from Park and Reverse back through Neutral and the three gears. The slide-lift is quite basic, but very effective. It's base is stopped in the normal position by a small raised "knob" on the right of the selector console, thus ensuring the lever cannot be taken further backward (or vice versa) until the outer shaft is raised by lowering your grip from the lever knob to the slide section of the stem.

Now, as we've already said, the automatic's operation might not suit some, but plenty of people are going to love the new ease with which they can now drive a sports car.

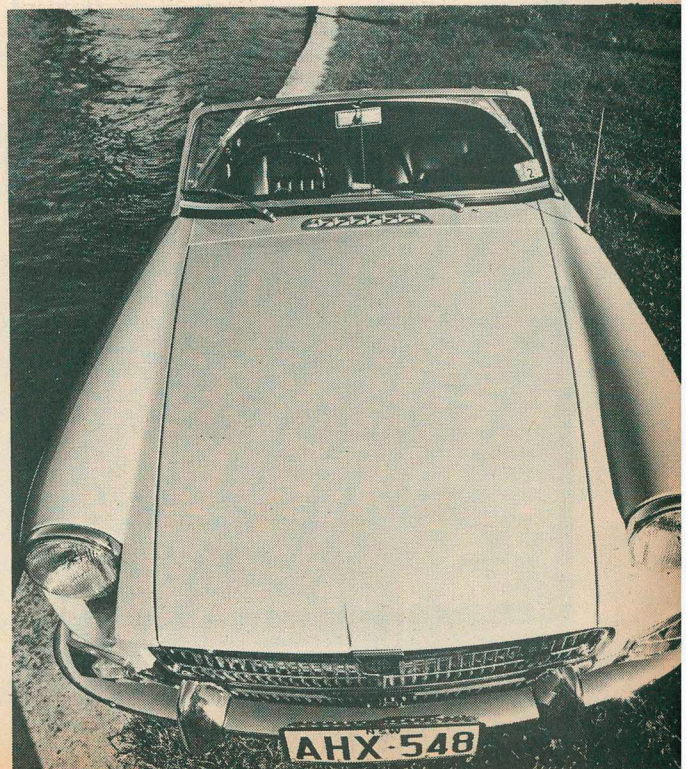
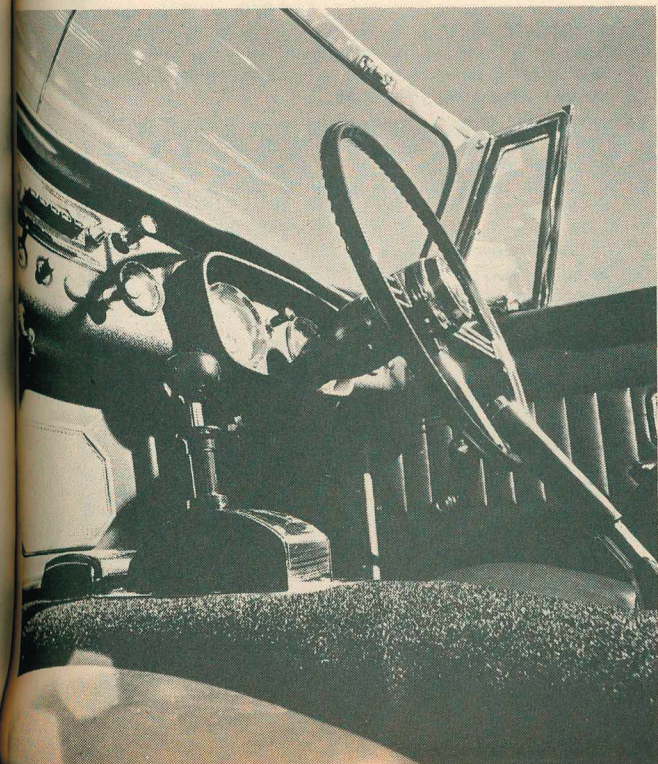
First, for any serious work — such as the odd amateur gymkhana or such — you'll find the automatic shift something of a slouch. There is too much elapsed time in changing both up and down through the gears, even shifting manually. High speed passing brings its own problems for the automatic has definitely robbed some of the old MGB punch. If you require a quick change back from third to second, you'll have to learn to anticipate your needs a little more than before to allow the shifting time. In short, this automatic (or the one we drove indicated — and we'll say adjustment is possible) will not go down with the fellows who feel they are quick of eye, cat-like in reflexes and enjoy cutting things a little fine at times.



# AUTOMATICALLY YOURS

*The console rises about three in. from the carpeted floor. In this photo you can see the slide outer section of the stem. The "stop" is behind it.*

*No changes here. The car is identical to the Mk2 four speeder, so if you haven't liked MGBs yet, this won't change your mind through styling.*



But the appeal is there. Definitely so. For anything but spirited driving which calls for instant transmission changes (like that of the Torque-flite) the MGB automatic is a dream. It's the first time (our first time) we've had that expensive feeling of climbing into the seat, switching on, snicking the lever into drive and forgetting it until you have to park somewhere.

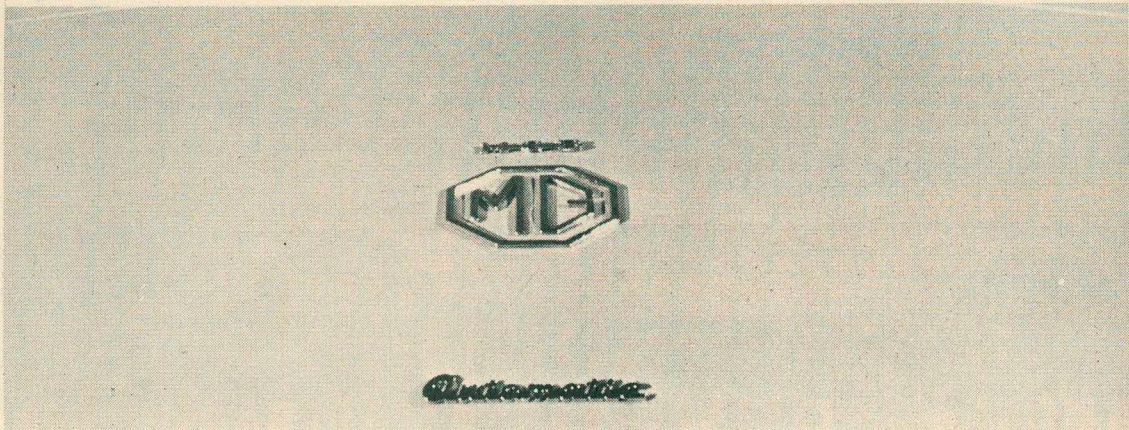
As we just mentioned, adjustment is possible if you want the transmission to change at higher or lower speeds, so just about anyone's fancy can be suited during the warranty period. After that, you'd probably want to leave it alone, anyway.

Have we been squirming around the direct answer? Not likely. We like the MGB automatic. Anyone but the die-hards would. As far as competition goes, you wouldn't consider an automatic, anyway; very few ever have.

Handling, as such, hasn't been affected. The only difference is it will take longer to get used to setting your car up for spirited (that beating-around-the-bush word again) driving — at least until you know within an umpteenth of a second just when the transmission will do its work.

If anything, BLMC deserves the plaudits of sports car owners. At least they've taken the plunge and offered us all another option. A different way of enjoying sports cars. As we said, you don't have to like it — but you'll find it's damned easy to live with. #

*Only external give-away is the small, unobtrusive badge on the rear deck. On our test car it turned many heads, particularly other sports car drivers.*



MAKE ..... MGB Mk 2 Automatic  
PRICE ..... \$3445

### PERFORMANCE

ROAD TEST MILEAGE ..... 400 miles  
TOP SPEED:  
Fastest run ..... 115 mph  
Average ..... 108 mph  
Speedometer indication ..... 126 mph  
Rpm at max speed ..... 6100 rpm  
SPEEDS IN GEARS (mph):

	Drive	Gears	Equivalent rpm	Held
First	38	49	5000	6000
Second	68	82	5000	6000
Top	115			

ACCELERATION THROUGH GEARS:

0-30 mph	4.8 sec
0-40 mph	7.0 sec
0-50 mph	9.8 sec
0-60 mph	13.2 sec
0-70 mph	17.1 sec
0-80 mph	21.1 sec
0-90 mph	25.2 sec

ACCELERATION IN GEARS:

	2nd gear	Top
30-50 mph	5.6 sec	7.8 sec
40-60 mph	5.2 sec	7.25 sec
50-70 mph	5.9 sec	7.55 sec

STANDING QUARTER MILE:  
Fastest run ..... 19.5 sec  
Average of all runs ..... 19.6 sec

FUEL CONSUMPTION:  
Overall for test ..... 18.5 mpg  
Normal cruising ..... 22-25 mpg

SPEEDOMETER ERROR (mph):

	30	40	50	60	70	80
Indicated	30	40	50	60	70	80
Actual	27	36	45	54	63	72

### SPECIFICATIONS

ENGINE:  
Cylinders ..... four in line  
Bore and stroke ..... 80.26 mm x 88.9 mm  
Cubic capacity ..... 1798 cc  
Compression ratio ..... 8.8 to 1  
Valves ..... pushrod overhead  
Carburettor/s ..... twin SU semi-downdraught  
Power ..... 95 bhp at 5400 rpm  
Torque ..... 110 ft/lb at 3000 rpm

TRANSMISSION:  
Type ..... Borg-Warner type 35, 3-speed  
Gear lever location ..... central floor

CHASSIS AND RUNNING GEAR:  
Construction ..... all-steel mono  
Suspension front ..... independent, coils/wishbones  
Suspension rear ..... semi-elliptic springs  
Shock absorbers ..... hydraulic on all four  
Steering type ..... rack and pinion  
Turns, lock to lock ..... 2.9  
Turning circle ..... 32 ft  
Brakes: type ..... disc front, drum rear  
Dimensions ..... 10½ in. front, 10 in. rear

DIMENSIONS:  
Wheelbase ..... 91 in.  
Track front ..... 49 in.  
Track rear ..... 49½ in.  
Length ..... 153 in.  
Width ..... 59½ in.  
Height ..... 49½ in.  
Fuel tank capacity ..... 12 gal  
Touring range ..... 360 miles  
Tyres: size ..... 165 x 14  
Make on test car ..... Olympic GT  
Ground clearance ..... 5 in.  
Weight (kerb) ..... 1915 lb