

# OUR FIRST 3000 MILES



We run in our new test car and learn the intricacies of MG hood erecting.



WHEN we drove out of the BLMC Sydney plant, our brand-new MGB had only one mile on the speedo. Despite this the car immediately had that Abingdon touch. There's something about an MG that has been carried down from model to model. And our car had the same feel as the MGAs and TFs that preceded it. If someone had blindfolded us and sat us in the car we could have immediately identified it as an MG, such is the character of the car which British Leyland has continued in the Bee.

Sure, the knockers will tell you that the Bee in its present form is nearly 10 years old, is not as quick as some other sports cars and is plain old fashioned. Okay, we'll go along with this. The Bee doesn't accelerate like a drag racer and doesn't straighten out corners like a Lotus Europa—but it's still the most practical sports car on the market. If a sports car can be called practical in terms of luggage space and passenger comfort.

Ahead of us, over 10,000 miles of motoring in the Bee which would include all aspects of motoring, including some club-type sport. Our first job was to run the car in, a chore not many motorists care for, especially in a sports car. The first 1000 miles were clocked up on a trip to Melbourne and back. At this stage the car had only received its pre-delivery check and the

*There is nothing more exhilarating than a brisk run through the countryside with the top down and a blonde in the bucket seat. That's what sports cars are all about.*

*It's a good idea to teach your bird the art of erecting the MGB hood. It saves a lot of time if you want it up in a hurry during a rain squall.*

motor only the factory tuning prior to delivery. It was still very stiff and we were limited to around 3000 rpm, or about 60 mph. The optional two-speed overdrive helped here. On top gear it drops the engine speed 1000 rpm and we were able to keep up a good average speed without over-exerting it in its early life.

Naturally, we were not short of company on the trip. A quick thumb through the little black book, and eni-meeni-mini-mo, five cents invested in the PMG and, "We are running in a new MGB. Would you like to come for a trip to Melbourne and back over the weekend?"

"An MGB? Yes, please."

Man, if you own an MGB you've got it made. You'll have to beat the fluff off with a stick, will never be stuck for a date. And you'll never be embarrassed by a bird jumping into the passenger seat and blandly saying, "Its a nice car, but what sort is it?" Which has happened to us with other cars, including a Lotus Elan the editor once owned. The birds know what an MGB is all about and are only too eager to let their friends know their boy friend drives one and they went for a drive in one last weekend.

We're not advocating you rush out and buy an MG just to become a hit with the birds, although it sure does help. There's more to MG motoring than that.

On past experience we have found an engine run in quickly becomes a good performer. By

quickly, we don't mean putting the foot down and pulling 6000 rpm straight off. For the first 1000 miles we stuck to the 3000 rev limit through the gears, but after this took the engine to 3500 in short bursts and occasionally to 4000 rpm. The engine remained stiff until around 3000 miles when suddenly it came good and showed signs of freeing up.

During the running-in period we could only manage 25 mpg and used two pints of oil each 1000 miles. At this stage the engine still hadn't been tuned and the performance was very sluggish.

The BLMC engineers told us the MGB didn't start to show any signs of good performance until it had notched up at least 5000 miles. Because of this we decided to wait until it had done this mileage before running any performance figures.

Our MGB was fitted with the new lay-back seats that come with the up-dated models in England but are now standard on those assembled in Australia. The new seats make a lot of difference to passenger comfort on long trips. The driver can now adjust the back to give an almost lay-back racing style position. If the passenger wants to sleep on a long trip, hers will lie right back into the compartment behind the seats. It has other advantages, too.

In these days of woodrim and leather-bound steering wheels, Abingdon still persist in carrying on the old tradition of the big wire-spoked steering wheel. This is okay for the T series cars—where you sit up close and need to flap your elbows in the wind—but is not one with the new

driving position provided by the lay back seats. We immediately replaced this with a smaller, leather-bound Cosmic wheel supplied by Melbourne based Jim Abbott, the importer of all Cosmic accessories, including the new Cosmic mag wheels.

While the new wheel made the steering heavy, especially while parking, we found we had more control of the car at speed. With the big wheel there was a tendency to over-correct. With the Cosmic, the car can be lined up for a corner and a little extra power applied to the back wheels to bring it around in a power-on oversteer attitude.

The only real disadvantage of the smaller wheel is in the operation of the overdrive switch, mounted on the right hand side of the dash. With the original wheel the switch is ideally placed for operation with the tip of the forefinger without taking the hand off the wheel. But with the smaller diameter Cosmic the switch just too far away to be so operated. The right hand has to come off the wheel.

Another problem is the rear vision mirror. It's just at the right height for the car following to mirror its headlights straight into the driver's eyes. And with so many gentlemen who dip their lights on the highway after you have passed them this becomes a problem. We solved it by fitting a clip-on blue perspex shield to lower over the mirror at night to cut out the glare. When not in use it hinges up out of the way.

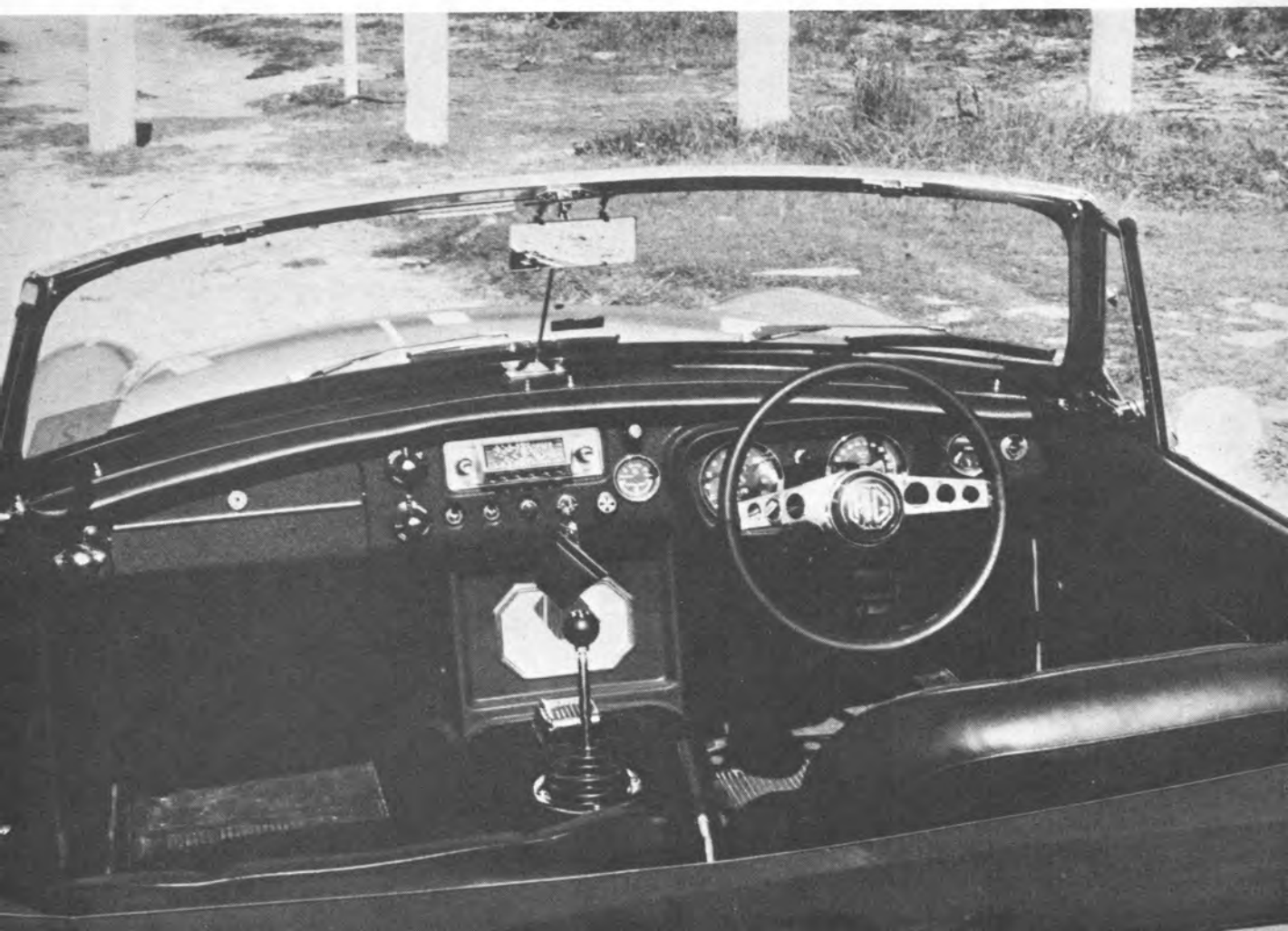
*(Continued on page 64)*

*When not in use, the hood stows away in the boot in a special bag along with the tension bows. With the spare wheel, there is not very much room for luggage.*

*The original wire-spoked steering wheel was replaced with a smaller leather-bound Cosmic wheel. We found this suited our driving position in the car a lot better.*







## OUR FIRST 3000 MILES

(Continued from page 42)

And, of course, there's that bloody lockable glove box that can only be opened with a key. And nine times out of ten the bird beside you wants to put something in it when the key is ringed with the ignition key. You either have to switch off the engine to open the glove box or have an argument.

Then there's that almost-famous MG hood, the operation of which will keep the uninitiated amused for hours. After struggling with the damn thing, we managed to devise a quick and easy way. We are now so expert we can erect the thing in under 60 sec. We found the quickest way was to attach the rear clips first—leaving the rear bow still folded—then attached the windscreen clips before doing up the studs around the base, finally opening the rear bow to place the tension on the hood.

It's also smart to train your bird in the art of MG hood-erecting. Too many willing birds pitch in to help and do all the wrong things first. So, in a storm, two get wet.

We were just beginning to enjoy our top-down mile-gathering MG motoring car when the whole test nearly ended in disaster. It happened on a Saturday afternoon in an outer Sydney suburb. Fred Nerik had spent a pleasant afternoon in the local pub and had decided to scarp off home before he got the rounds of the kitchen or sent to bed without any tea or something. With this on his mind, he pulled straight out of the kerb in his 1950 something rust bucket and planted his equally rusty bumper bar right in the middle of our left hand mudguard. And that was the end of our test for a couple of weeks while a new guard was fitted and the door panel beaten. #



Detachable GT hardtop for Triumph Spitfire range.

New detachable GT hardtop for MGB and C.



## THE ASHLEY LINE

Hardtops for MGB, C, MIDGET, XKE, SPRITE 1, 2, 3, SPITFIRE. Fully detachable, built-in ventilation, heated safety glass window, stainless steel trim. Priced from \$240 or terms from \$3 p.w. Trade inquiries invited. Send stamp for brochure.

**ASHLEY AUTO IMPROVEMENTS (AUST.) P/L**

Div. of  
GRAND PRIX, 663 Burwood Road, Hawthorn, Vic 82-3930

## A MIDGET Q SHIP

(Continued from page 58)

and welding in a strip of 2½ in. 16g steel.

The performance is roughly equal to an MGB and, at a recent electrically-timed standing and flying quarter mile event, covered the standing quarter in 18.0 secs with a mis-firing motor due to a sticking choke release cable and the flying quarter averaged 110.1 mph, pulling 7200 rpm in top gear. The engine would pull a much higher diff ratio and I am considering fitting a 3.7 rear end.

The rest of the car is completely standard and the gearbox and rear end handle the 50 percent extra torque without protest. The little 7 in. drum brakes are, however, quite inadequate and I am currently fitting a pair of A40 Farina 8 in. drums to the front. This is quite a cheap conversion and the complete pair cost \$10 from a car wrecker. These brakes give a 37 percent increase in lining swept area to the front.

To sum up, if you want cheap, flexible and reliable power this is the way to go. The whole conversion cost \$207, including the cost of a second-hand motor but not including partial reconditioning or modifying in the way of camshaft, balancing, etc. And I still have a Midget motor sitting in the garage all ready to drop into my wife's A40! #

### Breakdown of costs:—

Second hand Ford 109E 1340 cc motor complete .....	\$140.00
MG Midget 1098 cc clutch pressure plate .....	10.40
MG Midget 1098 cc clutch plate .....	11.72
MG Midget 1098 cc carbon thrust bearing .....	2.52
MG Midget 948cc ring gear .....	5.33
Dural offset for adaptor plate .....	2.00
Machining first motion shaft and flywheel .....	20.00
Second hand Vauxhall LIP starter motor .....	9.00
Ford engine mounts .....	2.70
Radiator hoses .....	1.50
Nuts, bolts and washers .....	2.00
	<hr/>
	\$207.17

