

# The Boomerang TD

The TD2000 has carved out its own market niche and, despite numerous changes of ownership, keeps coming back

Right, early Zaps-built car, in full Targa warpaint

Many Victorian readers will remember the much publicised TD2000 project of 1984 – the ambitious plan to build a modern sports car based on the classic MG TD was greeted with much optimism and supported with huge lumps of Victorian taxpayers' money, when there was plenty around!

Despite the initial enthusiasm, the project came to an abrupt halt in 1986 and the TD2000 company was placed into receivership. A large Australian public company, Westmex, then took over the project and started again with a review of the TD2000's design and thorough market research.

Westmex learned that potential TD2000 buyers were not necessarily looking for a classic car – although the classic shape was popular, potential customers placed a high priority on quality of finish, low maintenance costs, reliability, safety, resale value, modern handling and performance as well as simple creature comforts like a heater, radio, weather proofing and good seats. As a result the TD2000, already a fine little machine, was further improved with a stronger chassis to eliminate body flex, and other technical and comfort refinements.

Soon after commencing production of the TD2000 Mark 2, Westmex ran into financial problems – its subsidiary company, Australian Classic Cars, which had been set up specifically to market the TD2000, was wound up in late 1990. An Ararat firm, A F Gason Pty Ltd, had been manufacturing cars for Westmex and was heavily commercially committed to the project – it battled on for some time after Westmex's withdrawal, building about 100 vehicles before also deciding to call it quits. To recover some of its investment, quite a few TD2000s in parts form were sold off at bargain basement prices to anyone who would buy them.

On 1st July 1994, Zaps (Australia) Pty Ltd, a manufacturer of domestic lights,



heaters and other small appliances, acquired the TD2000 business and moved a mountain of parts and tooling to its factory on the New Gisborne industrial estate, north of Melbourne. After further refining the design, Zaps is now building the TD2000 as a sideline to its main business. This time, however, a much more realistic assessment of the potential market has been undertaken and, in sharp contrast to the original promoters who planned 12,000 cars per year, Zaps will build only about 25 cars per annum at their 'boutique' assembly plant.

The proprietors of Zaps, Garry Barnes and Bruce Nunan, have taken on the TD2000 as an extension of their consuming interest in classic and sports cars, and because they believe that the TD2000 is simply too good a product to be allowed to fade away. After all, a total of about \$18 million had been invested in the project over the past 12 years, to build just 107 cars.

Bruce and Garry make no attempt to pass off their car as an MG replica. Rather, they see the TD2000 as a modern sports car which combines the classic styling and good looks of the TD

with the comfort, performance, safety and reliability of a modern motor car. They also make the point that the TD2000 is not a kit car, or a backyard assembled 'special' – it is a fully engineered unit complying with current Australian Design Rules.

## The new generation TD2000

At first glance, the TD2000 looks very similar to an original TD. Grille, headlamps, bumpers, bonnet line and sweeping guards are practically identical, although the fat wheels, taller windscreen and higher roof line of the TD2000 set it apart from its distinguished predecessor.

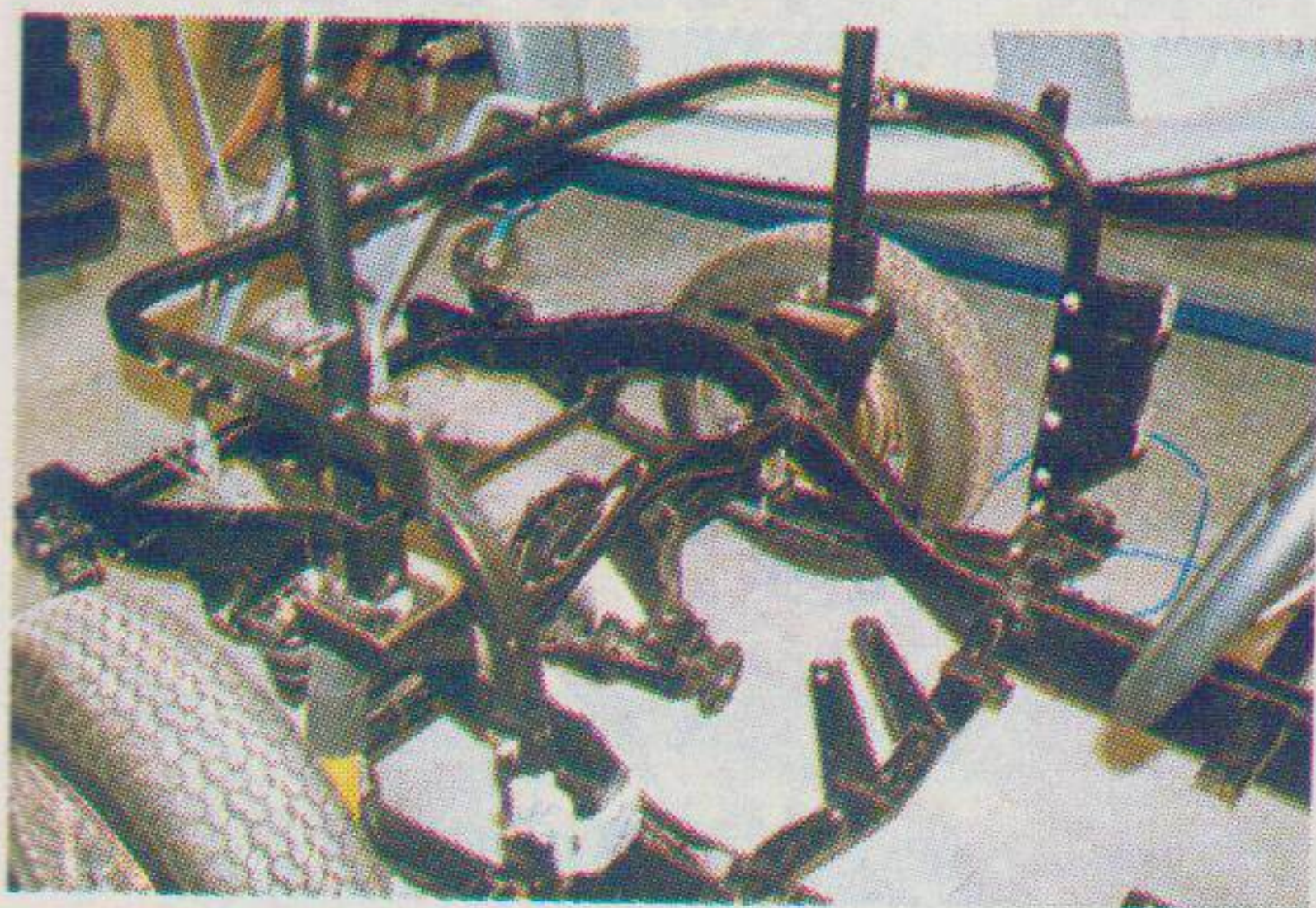
Finish of production cars is first class – the heavy-duty fibreglass body tub is nicely moulded, with a gleaming two-pack paint job. There are few separate body parts, just two doors and four guards, also moulded in fibreglass, and steel folding bonnet sections, and all fit together very neatly – the doors close firmly with a very satisfying and reassuring 'clunk'. The grille surround, which is actually a reproduction MG TD surround imported from Moss Motors USA, is chrome-plated steel,

but all other brightwork is in highly polished stainless.

To ensure that the whole package fits together properly, each car is fully assembled for adjustment, then dismantled, painted and finally assembled.

### Mechanical

The important mechanical components have been sourced from Nissan's popular Pintara, the engine a lightweight, high-performance, fuel-



injected, lead-free, four-cylinder 1974cc unit with single overhead camshaft and alloy head, and computerised management system.

The Pintara motor has been around for a few years but is still quite a modern design, featuring two spark plugs per cylinder, electronic ignition and twin coils, Bosch electronic fuel injection and semi extractor exhaust with catalytic converter. Output is rated at 78kW at 5200rpm.

The engine is matched to a five-speed, all-synchro Pintara gearbox driving the rear wheels through a Ford Falcon differential and cut-down Falcon rear axle assembly. The rest of the specification is also 'state of the art' as one would expect - disc brakes on all four wheels, rack-and-pinion steering with collapsible steering column and built-in steering lock. The car is shod with 185SR65 x 15 tyres, on 15cm x 38cm (6in x 15in) rims, either wire spoked, alloy or drilled pressed steel wheels, MG TD style.

### Comfort and style

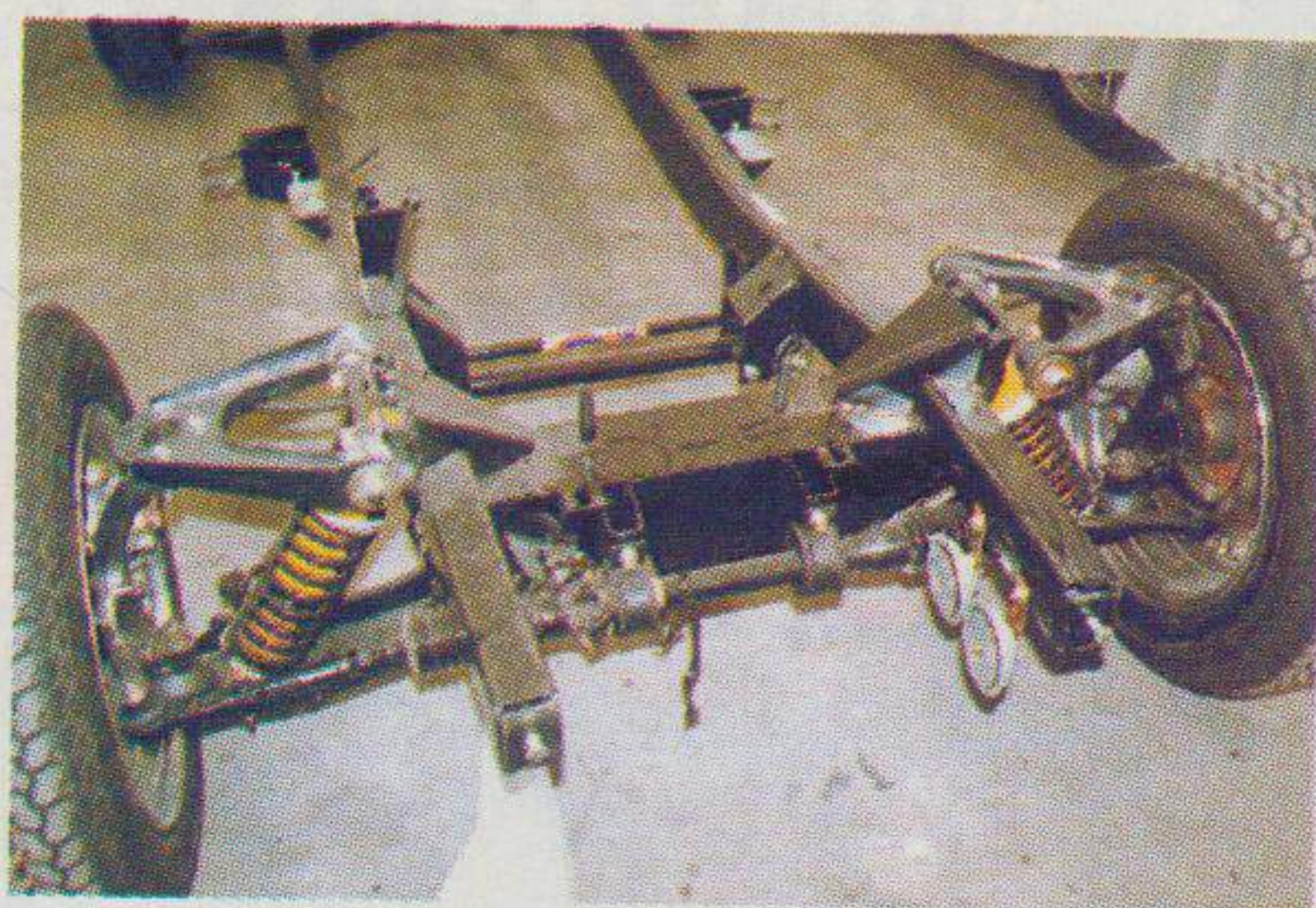
The TD2000 is fitted with independent coil springing (mostly Nissan in origin) at the front with semi-elliptics at the rear. The ride on early cars was regarded as a little hard for everyday use, so softer rear springs are now being fitted as standard.

Interior design and finish are both of very high standard - beautifully soft Howe leather has been used extensively for upholstery and trim, and the dash panel with its comprehensive range of VDO instruments is tastefully finished

in burr walnut for a touch of extra luxury and style. The cabin is fitted with plush wall-to-wall cut pile carpet of obvious quality and the modern-style bucket seats with head restraints are superbly comfortable.

### Road test

On the road, the TD2000 drives very nicely, with nippy acceleration, precise steering and excellent braking. Although not developed as a racing car, the TD2000 could be quite competitive - in



the current crop of TD2000 owners are generally not so much interested in motor sport - the local TD2000 club is not registered with CAMS, and is mainly socially oriented.

Despite all that, Garry and Bruce each entered a standard car in the final Tour Adelaide, and the last two Targa Tasmania events, bagging a first outright in the Tour, a class win in the Targa and Targa plates in 1995 and 1996. Excellent results, which show that the TD2000 is a robust and reliable performer as well as being a real good-looker. To test the racing potential of the car, a modified version, for clubman racing, is currently under construction at Gisborne and should make its appearance on the track towards the end of this year.

### Third time lucky?

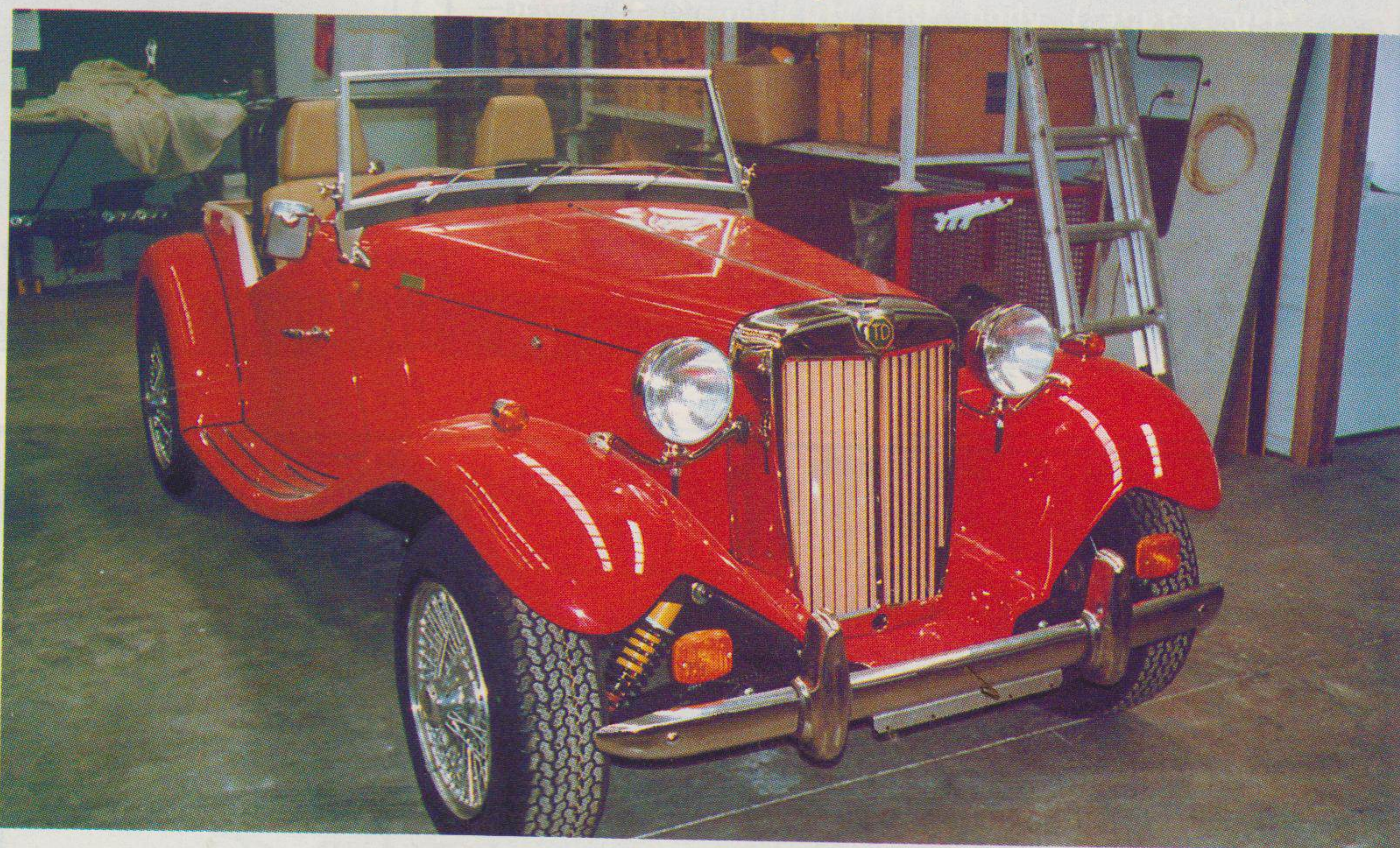
Two previous organisations have tried

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Far left, simple yet robust box section chassis

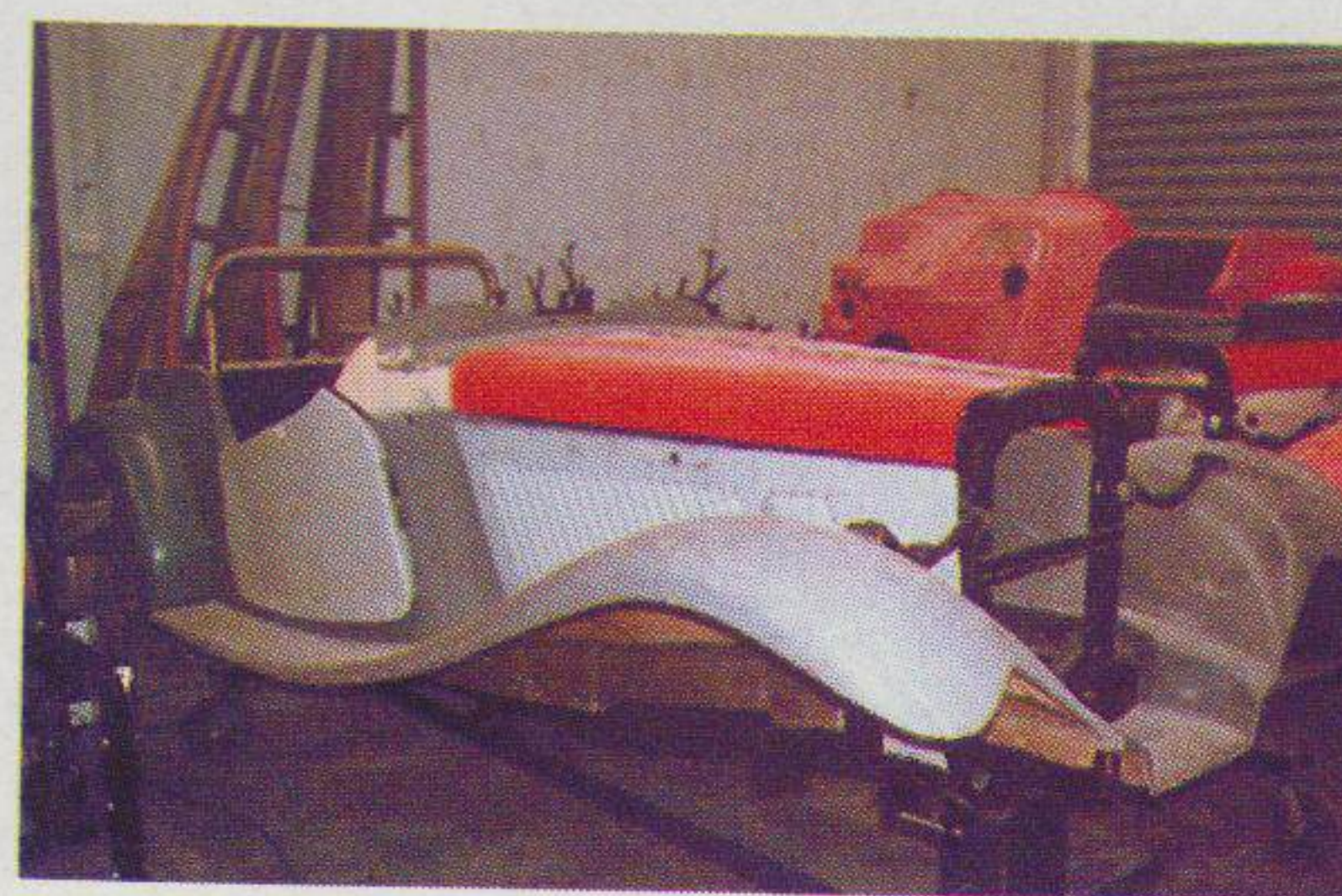
Left, box section chassis is fully galvanised prior to painting

Below, production model nearing completion



standard form, it will complete a standing 1/4 mile in 16.9 seconds, which compares more than favourably with the MGB (18.7s), 3.4 Mk2 Jaguar (19.1s) and 1275cc Mini-Cooper S (18.4s). Performance is assisted by the car's favourable power-to-weight ratio - although the TD2000 weighs a solid 900kg, it is propelled by an engine designed for a vehicle weighing almost half as much again.

Garry Barnes tells us that a standard TD2000 will accelerate to 100kph in about ten seconds and will continue to gain speed quite quickly up to about 140kph, when it hits a 'brick wall' due to the car's aerodynamics, or lack of them! Given time, Garry says it will struggle to a top speed of about 160kph. However, he also makes the point that



Left, body panels fully assembled to ensure fit, prior to painting

producing this fine little sports car in this country and have been forced to pull out on each occasion. We can only wish the new owners of the TD2000 good luck with their revival of the TD2000 project - a classic example of an Aussie firm 'having a go', against the odds! For their sake let's hope that, this time, it will be a case of 'third time lucky'!

Neil Wakeman