

HOW CAPRIS GO : NEW VW AUTO

# Wheels

JULY, 1969 40c

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AUSTRALIA'S TOP MOTORING MAGAZINE

**TWIN TESTS IN COLOR:  
BMC 1500 AND NOMAD**



**INSIDE:  
FREE CLASSIC CAR  
LIFT-OUT**

**FULL TESTS**

**PORSCHE  
911T**

**RENAULT TS**

**MGB AUTO**

ULTIMATE SACRILEGE...

# MGB AUTOMATIC

**B**MC incurred the wrath of every true-blue MG enthusiast by mating an automatic gearbox to the "Bee". We will add spice to that wrath and say the idea couldn't suit the MGB better.

Having now removed the poisoned darts from our road test gear, we will explain it to the square rigger boys like this. The Bee never really fell into line with the rugged, bone-jarring, wind-in-the-hair sports car image from the start. Any sports sedan worth its salt could blow it ten feet in the air, while the suspension compromise favored milady's comfort and not ultimate handling. The number of permanent hardtops on Bees is horrifying. Adding a slush-box has gilded the lily. T-register boys may now leave.

The automatic MG-B is the ultimate boulevard cruiser.

The Mark Two updating of the MG-B added a few touches long overdue. Reversing lights, headlight flasher, new safety door handles, an extra map light, demister and for the manual car, overdrive. These new features blend well in the automatic version. The gearbox chosen for the Bee is naturally the Borg Warner 35 unit used on the Austin 1800 and developed in BMC vehicles since the Freeway and Wolseley 24/80.

It is now smooth and has full over-ride for those still missing the manual change. At first it seemed quite unnatural to be driving a Bee without that palm-bruising gear lever to play with. Very smartly, we decided that for city work, an auto tranny — even in a sports car — is the only way to travel.

Only on the downchange to first as the car rolled to a halt was the gearbox apparent. Then it clunked very loudly — possibly a defect in the test car only. The selector lever is mounted atop the transmission tunnel. A spring loaded collar guard must be lifted for Park and Reverse. For Drive, L1 or L2, the

lever slides in easily and positively. Drive gives full three speed range, L2 first and second gears while L1 holds first.

The automatic transmission calls heavily on engine power and is obviously adjuted for smooth changes rather than minimum slippage of the torque converter. Acceleration is leisurely, with the quarter coming up in 19.5 seconds — over a second slower than the manual car. Top speed, however, has suffered little and although the automatic shares the same final drive as the manual, we saw no less than 126 mph on the Bee's speedo — no,



that's not genuine. After speedo correction, the terminal velocity comes back to 112mpn, which is still very, very good for a Bee. On a two-way average, flat road run, the MG-B auto came up with 108 mph.

Apart from the gearbox, the car is unchanged. We drove two versions, the roadster in Sydney (the yellow car) and the grey GT in Melbourne. The GT is not readily available and when especially imported the price tag ranges up to \$5000 — which is pricey for a four seater family car! At \$3445, the automatic version roadster is still not small brass, but the MG-B's excellent resale value does make it tangible value.

For sporting travel, the manual override needs some anticipation. Dropping back to L2 does not bring the instant response of a Chrysler Torqueflite box — and if you wish

to arrive in a corner already in second, the selector has to be moved some seconds before. Likewise, changing back to top after a corner means moving the lever while actually in the corner. By the time you have exited and built up revs, the gearbox then changes. Throttle kickdown requires a full travel poke, which is not endearing to fuel economy.

Consumption is a sore point. We saw 12 gallons of fuel go in only 179 miles — yes, that's 15mpg. But we were working the car hard and normal conditions will see 22-26 mpg which we obtained around town, letting the gearbox do all its own thinking.

No heater is provided (a blower-assisted fresh air demister and footwell ventilation only) but the engine heat soon makes the cockpit cosy. The cast metal selector surround in fact becomes too hot to touch.

An extra map light similar to the head of a Butler flexilamp is set close to the transmission tunnel but as a light is provided near the glovebox we thought the new addition redundant. The money would be better spent on say a cigarette lighter, if you must have gimmickry for gimmickry's sake.

BMC has taken over production of the MG-B itself (formerly assembled by Pressed Metal Corporation in Sydney). Finish and trim seems better than ever though the test car developed an annoying dash rattle which eluded all attempts to stop it.

All up the automatic MG-B is open air or GT motoring made even easier. Acceleration and economy are down but top speed unaffected. The idea is far from incongruous for a sport car in today's traffic tedium. #

**AT-A-GLANCE:** smooth . . . manual override slow . . . performance significantly affected . . . successful mating.

Turn To Page 62 For Specifications

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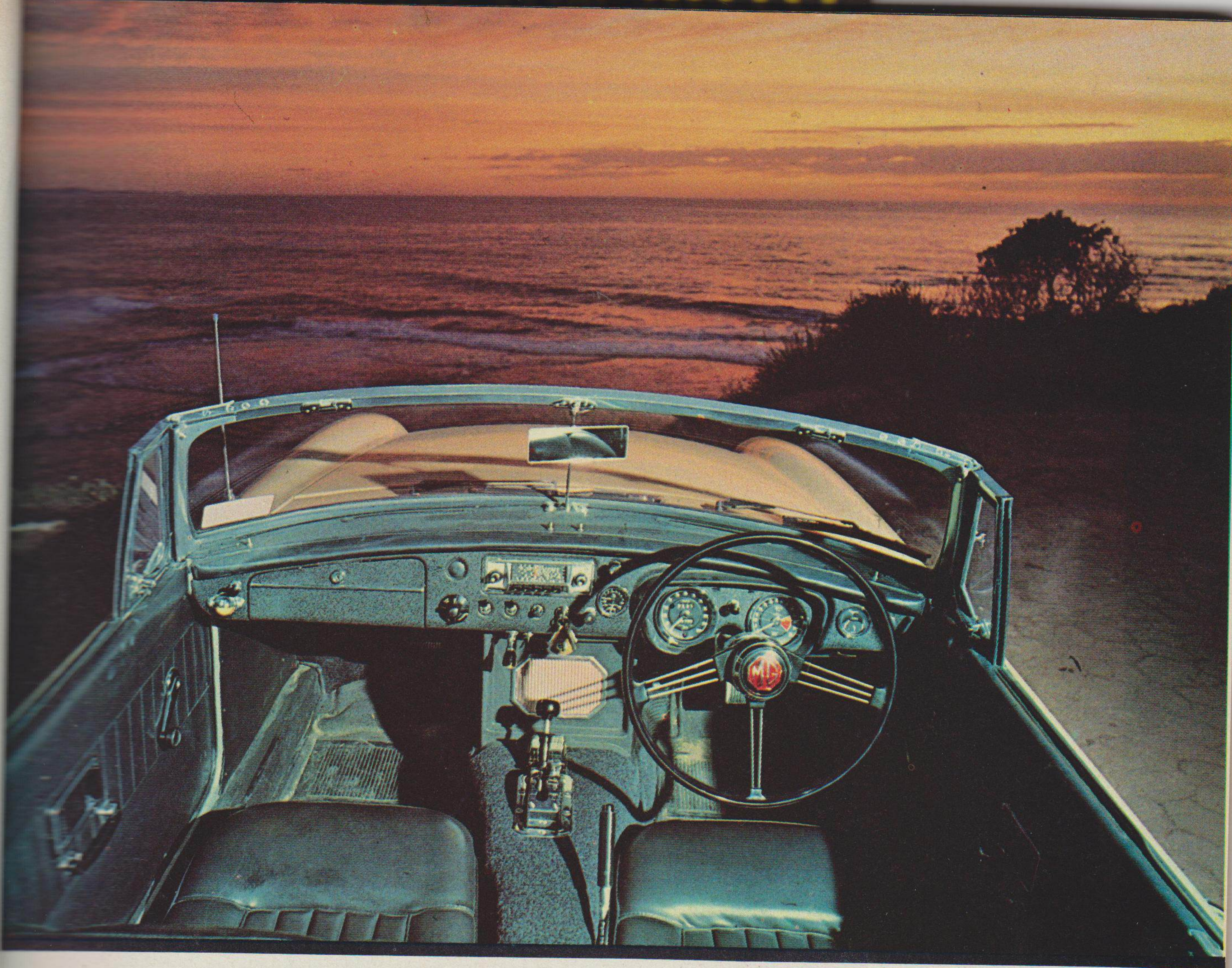
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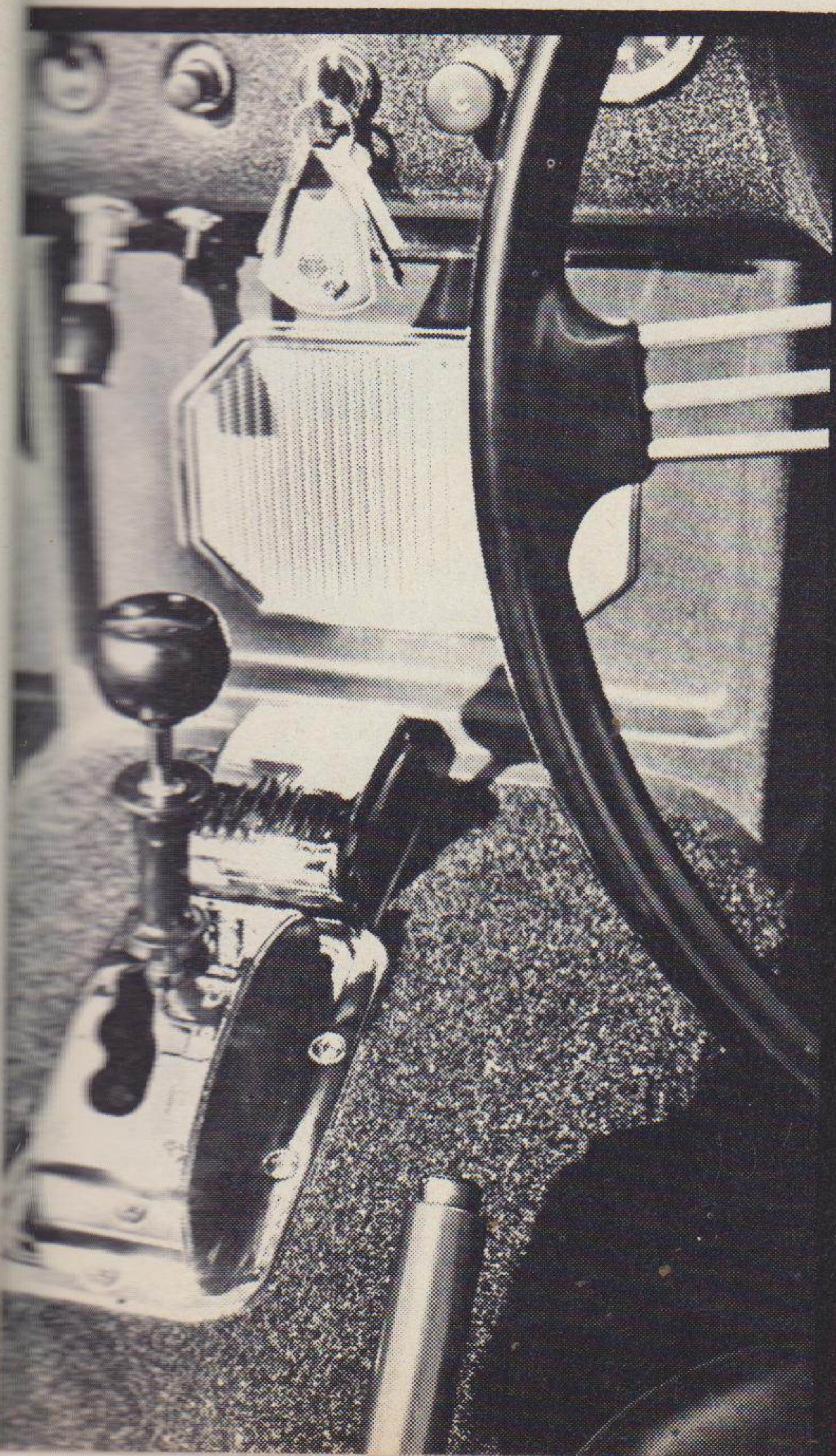
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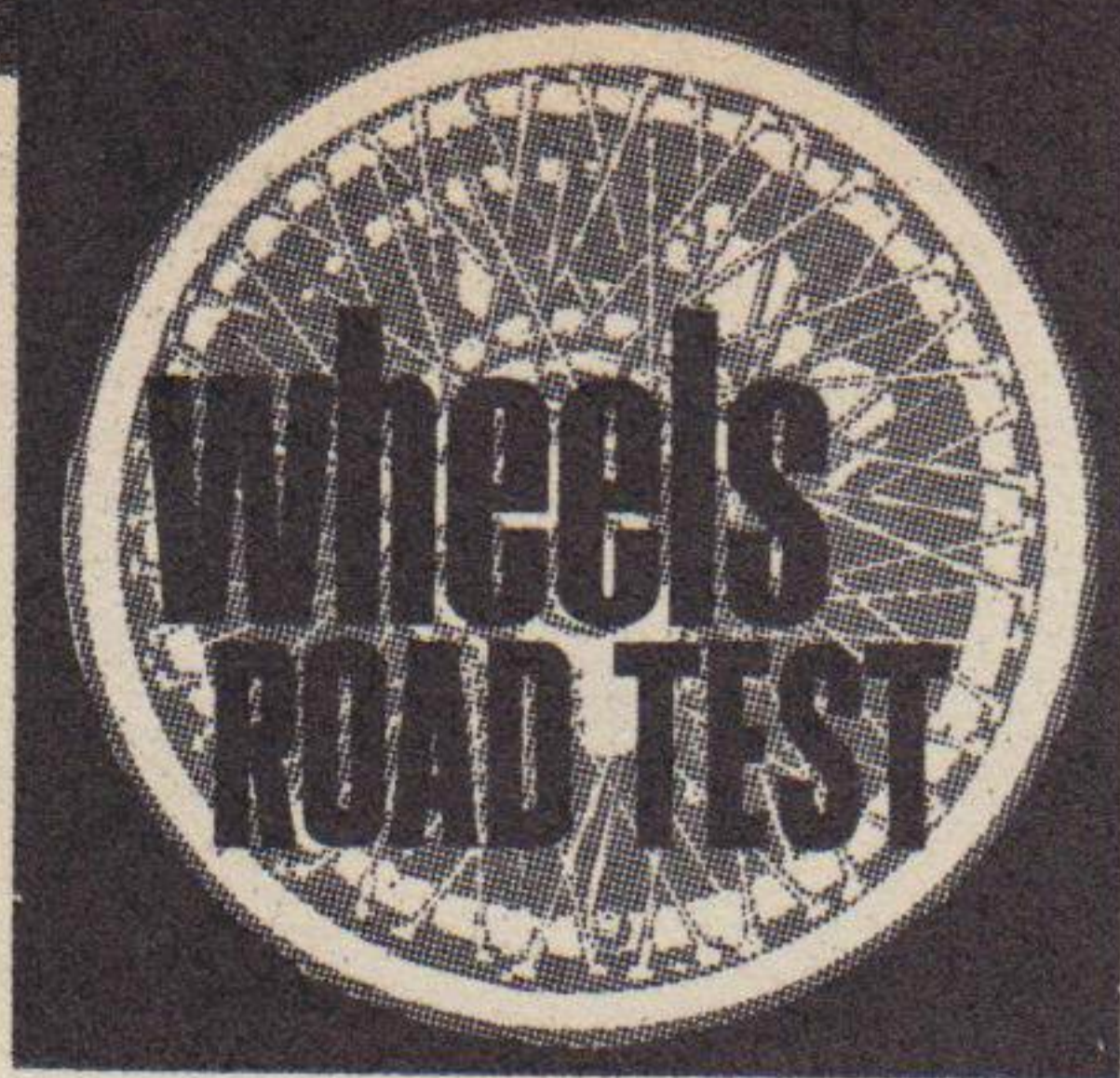


*Selector has spring loaded collar to stop inadvertent use of Park or Reverse positions. Movement is positive. Tunnel gets very hot.*

*Ian Fraser's wide angle lens catches the Bee's cockpit. BMC's venture into automatic sports cars is as forward thinking as the rising sun.*

*Family GT transport, automatically. The fully imported MGB 2 plus 2 is not readily available in Australia. Alloy steering wheel is non-standard.*





## TECHNICAL DETAILS MGB AUTOMATIC

— From Page 21

MAKE: ..... MG  
MODEL: ..... B  
BODY TYPE:  
..... Roadster or 2 plus 2  
PRICE: ..... \$3445

OPTIONS: ..... nil  
COLOR: ..... yellow  
MILEAGE, START: ..... 3250  
FINISH: ..... 3470

FUEL CONSUMPTION:  
Overall ..... 15 mpg  
Cruising ..... 22 mpg

SPEEDOMETER ERROR:  
Indicated mph: ..... 30    40    50    60    70  
Actual mph ..... 26.5    36.0    43.5    53.0    62.0

### PERFORMANCE

Piston speed at max bhp ..... 3150 ft/min  
Top gear mph per 1000 rpm ..... 18 mph  
Engine rpm at max speed ..... 6100 rpm

MAXIMUM SPEEDS:  
Fastest run ..... 112 mph  
Average of all runs ..... 108 mph  
Speedometer indication fastest run ..... 126 mph

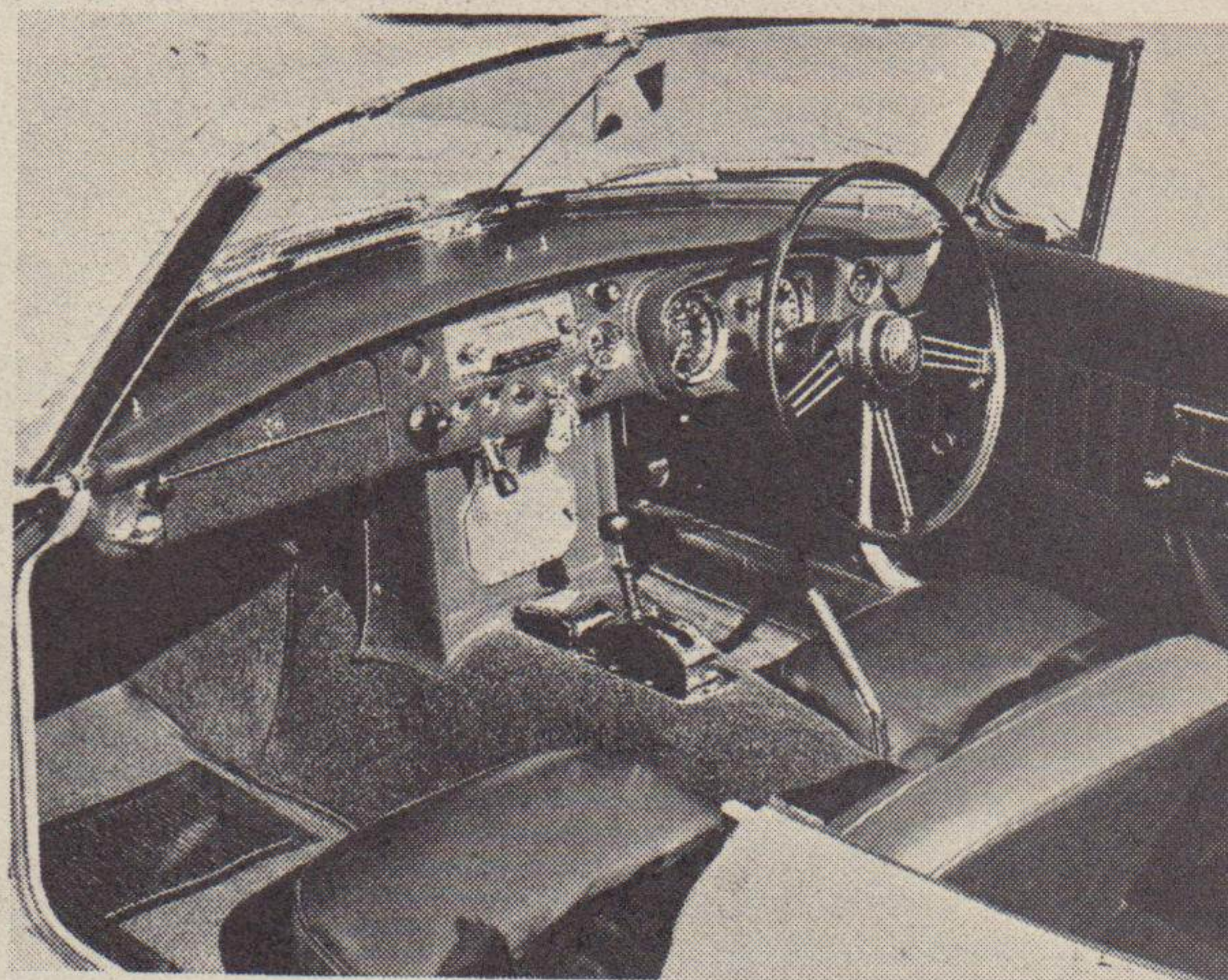
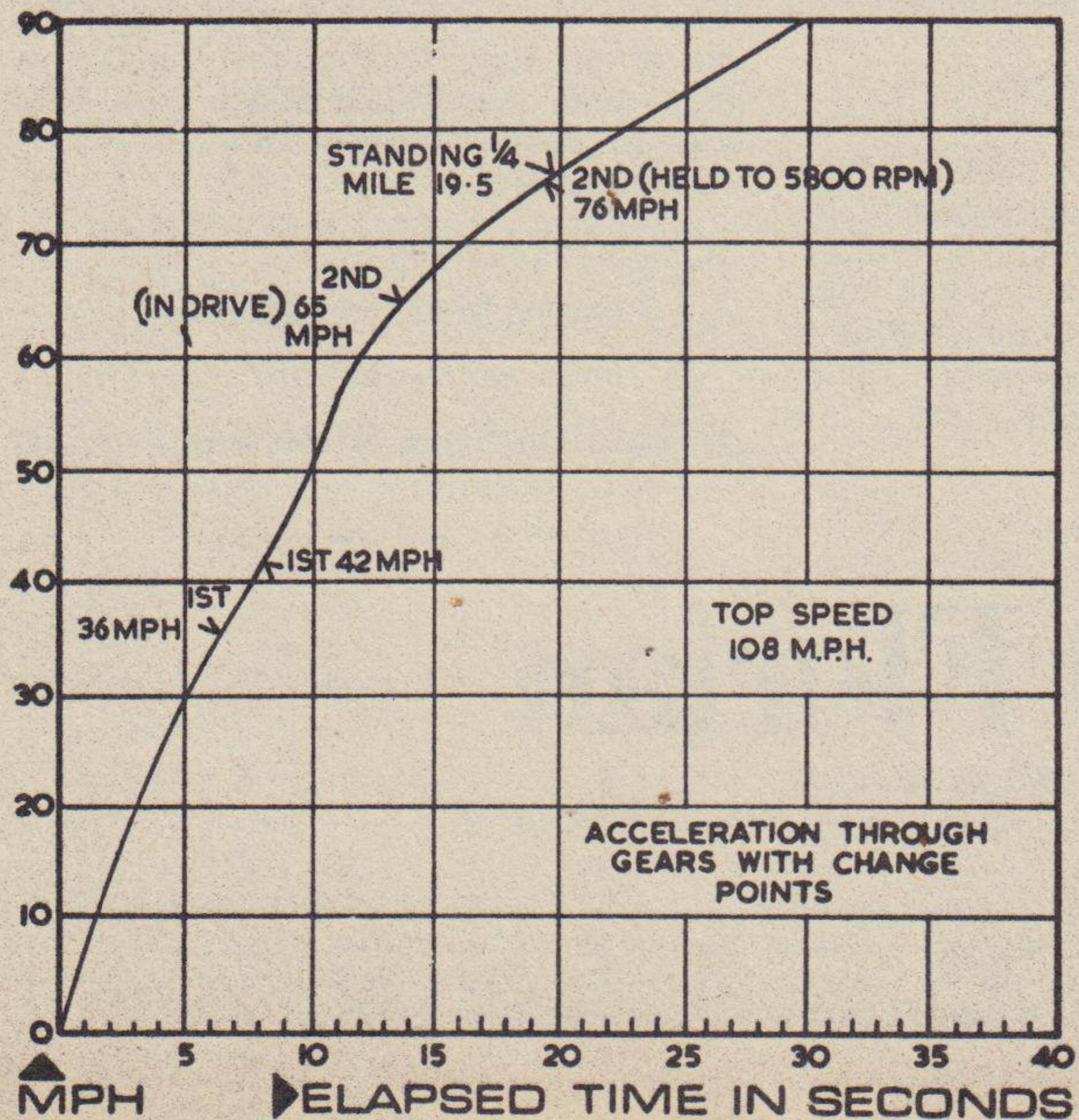
In Gears:	1st	2nd	3rd
	36	65	108 In Drive
	42	76	108 Held to 5800 rpm

ACCELERATION:  
(through gears)

0-30 mph	5.0 sec
0-40 mph	7.8 sec
0-50 mph	9.5 sec
0-60 mph	12.3 sec
0-70 mph	16.2 sec
0-80 mph	22.4 sec

20-40 mph	4.8 sec	2nd gear	3rd gear
30-50 mph	5.6 sec		
40-60 mph	5.2 sec		
50-70 mph	5.9 sec		

STANDING QUARTER MILE:  
Fastest run ..... 19.4 sec  
Average of all runs ..... 19.5 sec



### SPECIFICATIONS

ENGINE:  
Cylinders ..... four in line, water cooled  
Bore and stroke ..... 80.26 mm by 88.90 mm  
Cubic capacity ..... 1798 cc  
Compression ratio ..... 8.8 to 1  
Valves ..... ohv  
Carburetors ..... two SU semi-downdraft  
Power at rpm ..... 95 bhp at 5400 rpm  
Torque at rpm ..... 110 ft/lb at 3000 rpm

TRANSMISSION:  
Type ..... Borg Warner 35 fully automatic three speed  
Gear lever location ..... central tunnel

RATIOS:  
Low ..... 9.342  
Intermediate ..... 5.668  
Drive ..... 3.909  
Final Drive ..... 3.909 to 1  
Converter maximum torque multiplication 2.0 to 1

CHASSIS AND RUNNING GEAR:  
Construction ..... unitary  
Suspension, front ..... coils, wishbones, anti-roll bar  
Suspension, rear ..... leaf springs  
Shock absorbers ..... telescopic  
Turns 1 to 1 ..... 2.9  
Turning circle ..... 35 ft  
Brakes, type ..... disc front, drum rear  
Dimensions ..... 10½ in. disc, 10 in. drum

OVERALL DIMENSIONS:  
Wheelbase ..... 91 in.  
Track, front ..... 49½ in.  
Track, rear ..... 49½ in.  
Length ..... 12 ft 9½ in.  
Width ..... 4 ft 11½ in.  
Height ..... 4 ft 3½ in.  
Fuel tank capacity ..... 12 gal

TYRES:  
Size ..... 5.60 x 14  
Make on test car ..... Olympic GT radial

GROUND CLEARANCE:  
Registered ..... 5 in.

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