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*Automobiles*

DECEMBER  
1963

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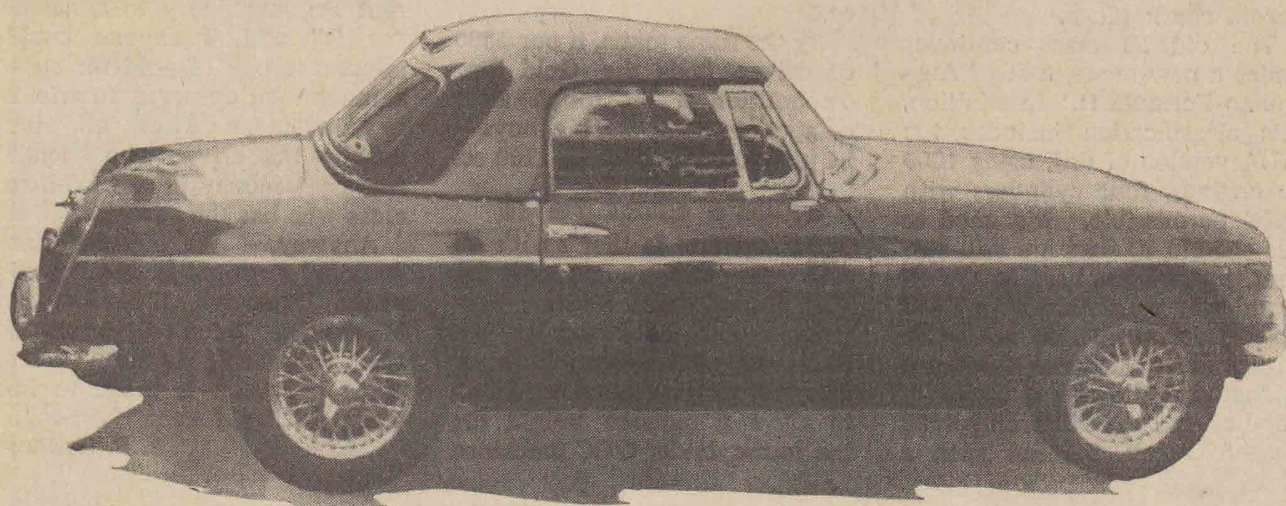
VOLUME 18  
No. 12



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A.M.S.  
18th year of



Fitted with the optional fibreglass the MG B is as handsome a sports car as anybody (including us) could wish for

## ROAD TEST

# MG B has good looks but it's not a sissy

By Dennis Richards

**I**F your idea of a sports car is a cart-sprung spine-bender that roars, clatters, pops the fillings from your teeth and puts you in hock for an ear trumpet, then forget about the MGB. It's a sissy.

At least that's how the Old Guard would class it. But to those who have outgrown the craving for hot exhaust smells, the giddy pong of leaking petrol and the exquisite agony of skinned ankles, chafed knuckles and a bruised backside, then Abingdon's latest is the sweetest little sportster this side of Silverstone.

It is a civilised car, but still a sports car. Of course it has wind-up windows, soft ride, oodles of living area, a boot that actually takes luggage, and comfort that comes pretty close to saloon car standards.

But it is no Liberace hiding behind an MG badge. It can run with the greyhounds and often outpace them. Or potter along in the peak hour without fuss or fluster.

In fact, the MGB is one of the best of the breed to carry the famous Morris Garages octagon.

### Foot room is limited

Yes, it has its faults. But they are few when taken in the broad view. Let's deal with them first:

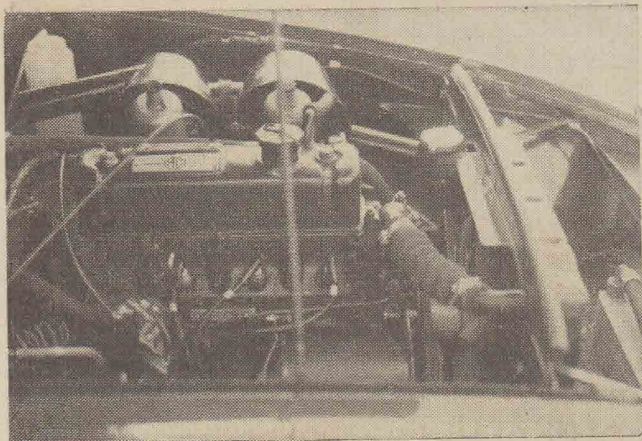
The driver has two choices of where to put his clutch foot — either under the pedals or smack dab on the head-lamp dimmer. Both unsatisfactory.

The sliding-arm mirror is a good idea, but vibration shakes the view of what's going on behind. In its lowest position, just above the scuttle, the mirror steadies up. However, it successfully blots out the nearside wing. The verge-clippers will find this a bit dicey.

Rain takes shelter in the boot, which, apart from being insufficiently sealed, lacks even a rudimentary piece of lining.

And the petrol gauge. What fun it has. It swings its needle from full to empty — with occasional stops in between — at the slightest bend in the road. What about some baffles, Mr. BMC?

For my money the MGB's looks are a nice blend of beauty and purpose. I can even live with the small tail-fins without getting an attack of Detroititis. The slight boat-shape is smoothly followed through from stem to stern. No ugly wrinkles or kinks to gather grime and set the airstream whistling like a kettle.



Bored out to 1798 cc the engine is now more powerful.

## Good looks and good performance have made the "B" the best MG yet

Inside the cockpit — set out in excellent black trim— everything is as it should be . . . a fine sweep of instruments, handspan-high gear lever, central handbrake, and two of the most comfortable bucket seats to grace any car. Despite my lanky 6ft. stretch, there was more seat adjustment than I could use. And enough room to flap elbows without giving the passenger a fourpenny one in the ribs.

Peering through the largish T-spoked wheel are speedometer, 7000-rev. tachometer, trip and total mile meters. Flanking the two main dials are gauges for fuel content, oil pressure and temperature.

Set out in mid-panel are a row of switches—unmarked— pull-out choke control and knobs for a heater-demister (an extra-cost option). Screenwashers are standard, as well as a laminated glass windscreen and outside mirror on the driver's side.

Carpet spreads itself along the floor and sweeps up on to an unpadded midget perch behind the seats. Hiding below is the battery, cool, calm, but not quite so easy to collect.

Strangely for a car of this type, the pedals are not set up for heeling and toeing. Pity.

### Hardtop is optional extra

Bonnet and boot are held open by props, which went out of vogue with the ark. Surely BMC can spend a few more pennies on finding a better way to let owners get to grips with the innards?

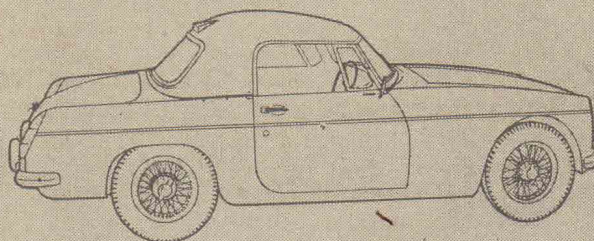
The test car was turned out by Peter Manton Motors, complete with hardtop — in foam-rubber-backed fibreglass, £59/10/- fitted — and chromed wire wheels (£12 a wheel for the glitter).

The hardtop, which has an acrylic finish, allows a roof light to be built in. Works off the same switch as the map light. There's another nasty slap at the Old Guard.

If I believed in Father Christmas instead of the tax man, "my" MGB would carry a solid lid. Soft tops are not really suited to Australian conditions. Well, Melbourne's, anyway. It's either too cold or wet for the top to be down. And when the sun breaks through and the hot winds blow, the top has to stay up or the consequences

Continued overleaf

## MG B



**ENGINE:** 4 cylinders, overhead valves.

Capacity: 1798 cc.

Output: 94 bhp at 5500 rpm.

Bore and Stroke: 80.26 mm (3-16ins.) x 88.9 mm (3.5ins.).

Torque: 107 lb. ft. at 3500.

Compression Ratio: 8.8 to 1.

**TRANSMISSION:** Four-speed, central remote-control lever. Synchromesh on top three ratios. Gear ratios: First 14.214, second 8.656, third 5.396, top 3.909. Final drive 3.9.

**SUSPENSION:**

Front: Independent by coil springs and hydraulic dampers.

Rear: Semi-elliptic springs and hydraulic dampers. Anti-roll bar.

**FUEL SYSTEM:** Twin SU semi-down draught carburettors, electric fuel pump, 10-gallon tank.

**WHEELS:** 14-inch wire type on 4½-inch rims.

Tyres: 590 x 14 Pirelli Cinturas.

**DIMENSIONS:**

Length, 12ft. 9¼ins.; Width, 5ft.; Height, 4ft. 1½ins.; Ground Clearance, 5ins.

Track: Front and rear, 4ft. 1¼ins.

Wheelbase: 7ft. 7ins.

Weight: 2030lbs.

**PERFORMANCE:**

Speeds in Gears: First, 30 mph; Second, 50; Third, 78; Top, 107.1.

Acceleration: 0-30 mph, 3.1 secs.; 0-40, 5.2; 0-50, 7.3; 0-60, 11.3; 0-70, 14; 0-80, 19.1; 0-90, 25.1; 0-100, 34.

Standing Quarter Mile: 18.2 secs.

All acceleration times using 6000 rpm limit.

**FUEL CONSUMPTION:** 26 mpg over 325 miles, driven hard.

**PRICE:** £1365. Hardtop £59/10/- fitted.

Test car from Peter Manton Motors, Elizabeth St., Melbourne.



Lower bonnet line, cleaner rear end and forward-sloping grille give the MG B a "get up and go" appearance.

## **MG B ROAD TEST**

are a lobster complexion liberally spread with the girl friend's cold cream.

In the first few yards behind the wheel of the MGB, grave doubts arise about the handling. The ride feels so soft that gobs of body roll must show up on the first corner. Not so.

### **Corners smoothly at speed**

The car can be whipped through bends at the 100-mile-an-hour mark smoothly, safely and with no hint of yawing or teetering. Helping the roadholding and the saloon car serenity of the test car were the fat, low-pressure Pirelli cinturas. At low speed they hum a bit on the bitumen, but during the hairy stuff they stick to the road like the white line.

Despite almost three turns of lock-to-lock steering, little more than a slight increase of pressure on the pointing hand is needed to alter the car's course. Some kick-back from the rack and pinion set-up is noticed, but everything stays nicely under control, with only a teensie trace of twitchiness.

Well-spaced gear ratios give plenty of get up and go, and the MGB's 1798 ccs give quite a good torque spread.

The standing quarter can be put away in 18.2sec. and

0-50 mph comes up in 7.3sec. The so-called magic three figure takes 34sec. to appear on the optimistic speedo.

Cruising speed is an easy 80-85 and planting the throttle from there sets the B really bustling and the decibels soaring. It is only at this point that the combination of exhaust noise, engine din, back axle growl and road rumbles become outspoken.

### **Light gearbox movement**

But if you like to have a dash or two into the red-zone on the tacho, the stretched-out B-series engine won't complain. An oil cooler is there to stop the motor grinding itself into powder and only a downright nit will cool the lot.

The gearbox movement is quite light, but on the test car the action across the gate was sloppy. Synchronised guards all but first gear.

Enough to say that the brakes, discs front and drums at the back are never outpaced. Pedal pressure is light, a characteristic that it shares with the clutch.

Petrol is sucked through a couple of 1½ in. SUs which sport air cleaners that look too restrictive. The pancake type would be preferred. Nevertheless, the test car gave 26 miles a gallon over more than 300 loud-pedal miles.

I'd sum up the MGB this way: It is a sports car made for the present, not just a modern shape hiding the past. It makes very pleasant company indeed.

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