



February 2009



The Lugnut



Northwestern, North Carolina

Presidential Thoughts: (or B.S.)

February 4, 2009

Those of you who attended the January meeting participated in my "surveys" about the Club. Driving trips topped the list of things people wanted to do 3 to 1. Next came a club member picnic and then weekend or overnight trips. Other suggestions were visiting museums or botanical gardens. We had several people volunteer to organize trips or help with them. I guess Patricia and I will start trying to find a good route for a club drive in our area. I would encourage members in other areas to start thinking about other possible drives that would be fun too. More discussion to follow at the next meeting!!

My idea for the club was a Saturday gathering at my shop in Jonesville to get our cars ready for a "Fun Summer of Driving!!" There are a lot of things to go over on a British car before setting out for a trouble free season: checking front brake pads and rear brake shoes for serviceability, brake and master cylinders for leaks and fluid levels. The flexible lines used for the brakes and some slave cylinders the condition of radiator hoses and fan belts need a close look. Also changing the oil and filter is important. While the car is up on the lift check the rear differential and transmission fluids and follow the fuel line to make sure there is no damage or leaks. Back on the ground check the fuel hoses under the hood. Now is a good time to change the coolant or just top off the radiator. I guess that's enough of a list to think about for now!! All you need to do is bring your supplies and/or parts to my garage and feel free to use the facilities and help each other out.

Let me have some "feed back" about this.

Drive, Trailer or Drag 'em !

Warm Regards !!

Ken Nicks



Next meeting of the Piedmont British Motor Club is February 24th Come early for dinner to meet and greet your fellow club members. Bring a guest but just come to annoy Nick and PJ!

Club Notes

by Danny Jacob

There was a good club meeting in January. It was the proverbial cold and rainy night but we had more than 20 members make the trip to Statesville, in addition to **special guests, Jim and Patti Haley**, who dropped in just to check us out.

Jim and Patti arrived a little late to meet everyone so here is a brief introduction. Jim made the trip after meeting Larry Yow and seeing the website. He works for Lowes, lives in Wilkesboro and owns a 69 MGC-GT, a 68 TR250 and, his daily driver, a 2005 Mini Cooper. Jim is really into his

cars which have "followed him" from Connecticut to South Carolina and now here to North Carolina since 1994. So I ask him my favorite question to everyone, why are you into British Cars? Jim says (American) "Muscle cars never appealed to me except for Corvettes and the British

muscle car, the Jenson-Healey Interceptor which I couldn't afford. Someday I'd like an XKE." The Haleys look forward to joining the club soon, so let's all make them feel at home. Honk if you see Jim and Patti on the road.

Vice president PJ Lenihan was absent due to work obligations out of town, but **President Ken Nicks** seemed intent on following up past president Walt Curl's goal to increase more support for club goals and scheduling new events during 2009. Ken passed out two questionnaires which generally challenged the club to give their reasons for being members and how they proposed to support the club during 2009. He quickly reviewed the results, but it was clear the club's success depends on individuals' willingness to get involved, not just meet once a month for a quick dinner.

Also I brought in a wall **clock with the club logo** which was designed and offered for sale by Joe Kaiser. Joe is a fellow MG owner, who along with his wife, writes several club newsletters in Florida while making these clocks as a hobby in his garage. As of now we have 19 orders for the clocks with the club logo.

During the meeting the club's **annual financial report** was reviewed. A copy may be

requested by contacting Nancy Causey. Special Note: From the comments I heard, current club officers wish to be excluded from the annual gift giving tradition. Speaking for the club officers, most of us enjoy contributing to the club so your friendship and the fellowship during club events is more than enough compensation.

Club secretary, Denice Thompson reminded everyone that she has just distributed, via email, the **current list of club members**, their cars and birthdays.

We also talked about the proposed **2009 calendar** that was emailed to everyone before the meeting. There was a discussion about specific club sponsored events and other events that might interest club members. Some events are pending until details can be arranged later this year. (As always check the website for the latest information) The Club did decide to hold a **tech session** in Jonesville at Ken Nick's garage (near Elkin, NC), date to be decided some time in March. It is hoped that members will have some car issues that we can all work on together under the tutelage of Ken Nicks, Bob Thompson and Clyde Hollar. Ken has plenty of room for all our cars to be brought inside the garage. He has 3 lifts and all kinds of tools and equipment available for club

use. So, plan to drive your car to Jonesville. Begin thinking now what you want to cover in this session on a Saturday some time in March.

A final note from the January meeting: As you know we have a small **raffle** just before the beginning of the meeting. Somehow the raffle information did not come before the January meeting so some folks asked if that tradition was going to continue. According to Nancy Causey the club raised over \$200 last year from the raffle and apparently everyone enjoys the intrigue of "pay to play." So, unbeknownst to PJ at this moment as club VP, this is his only official responsibility when the president is in house, except to be a yes man every time Ken speaks during 2009. We were told that members make donations themselves, but it is likely we will have to purchase additional gifts. I'm sure PJ will appreciate anyone who has the time to pick up a small car related gift for the raffle occasionally. Nancy Causey can give us more guidance on reimbursement if needed.

These are my recollections of the January meeting. If I have made any errors or deleted anything, please let me know.

dj

Don't Forget we need to set a date for the upcoming Tech Session so bring ideas that we can work on.



The following members are celebrating their birthdays during February. Please wish them a Happy Birthday. Gary Colborne, Ken Nicks, Rob Orlander, Bob Wasson, Alice James and Brenda Lenihan. Happy Birthday! and may you have a safe, happy and successful year ahead!!!

BMW Museum Cars

Editor's Note: We are fortunate to live in a state where there are many interesting places to visit within a days drive. Club member Bob Ravich recently explored the BMW plant and museum just south of Charlotte. *dz*

Take a look at my photos taken while visiting at the BMW Museum in Greer, SC last month. The plant is 2,000,000 sq. ft. and all assembly for their 3 and 5 model SUV's is done there from parts to completed vehicles ready to ship to their dealers. Cars are built there on an as-ordered basis. The assembly line is programmed to build each car as specified by the customer. That is, they can build any assortment of colors and options on the same line. All parts and options are scheduled to show up at the right time and place so that the production line never has to stop. There are two 10-hour shifts at the plant. Shift A works for ten hours, the plant is shut down for preventative maintenance then shift B starts up for 10 hours. This is repeated non-stop with each shift putting in 40 hours each week.

While there, we visited the museum and saw these fine cars. The blue Z3 is

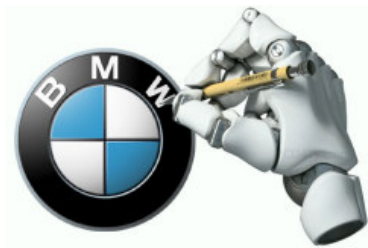
the original one that was used in the James Bond movie several years ago. In fact, if I recall correctly, it served as the national introduction for the Z3 model in the country.

Bob



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Looking back I probably should have kept a diary on my own MGB's road to recovery. So my ears perk up when I hear someone else is going through the similar experiences. Somehow their trials and tribulations are more interesting than my own struggles. So, Harry may be surprised to know, but I have been keeping track of his "new" MGGT progress. *dz*



December 23, 2008

Picked up drove home from Lewisville, NC with very little brakes. Shades of the teen years.

January 19, 2009

Making progress on the BGT - got one front brake back together. Only three more corners to go.

January 21, 2009

Latest find on the BGT was a cracked inner front wheel bearing - another slight delay

February 1, 2009

The brakes on the BGT are done and working with almost all new parts - even got the handbrake to work, just needed some lubing. Now the mechanic says the front suspension is marginal - kind of knew that because there's a real wiggle in the steering at about 55 mph. The plan is to get rebuilt swivel axles with all the pieces, V8 bushings, etc. The B-Hive has a complete set, and Moss does, too, for a few bucks more. Probably will go with B-Hive, unless I hear from somebody with negative reports. Oh yeah, at least 2 shocks are bad - one front and one rear - so that's another project. And the sad part is, I knew that you never buy an old car without having it checked out by a mechanic. That should teach me a lesson about what the previous owner tells you.

Harry



The Heritage Motor Centre declares that 2009 will be "the year of the Mini"

Next year it will be 50 years since the Alec Issigonis' inspired design for a small car was launched to the world. The versatile and nippy little car was loved by all and, although owned by many ordinary drivers and families the Mini was also the choice of film stars, musicians and even royalty.

Olfactory Treats

I'm going to start by making a shocking confession. I have not read all of Proust, not even half, but I've read the first couple hundred pages about nine times and, by golly, that ought to count for something! Perhaps

some of you also have reading all of Marcel Proust's Remembrance of Things Past on your "to do" list. Perhaps even lower down on that list than things like gum surgery. If so, here a synopsis (and we will be getting around to MGs, I promise), Mr. Proust, a French person, dunks a little cookie,

called a Madeleine, into his tea, takes a bite and (since this is a food he enjoyed as a tadpole) the flavor brings back a virtual flood of memories from years gone by. These memories ramble on for hundreds and hundreds of pages (with nary a Hobbit or ring of power in sight!)

So, what the heck does any of this have to do with MGs? Well, I maintain that MG cars themselves have a very certain and distinct smell, different from other cars. What it is comprised of I do not know, probably a mixture of many components but it seems to concentrate in the glove box (if you haven't replaced it). Every once in a while I go to my parent's garage, open the glove box of the TD and inhale this pure MG essence, and this, gentle reader, is my Proustian Madeleine. So, where does it take me and what memories does it inspire...?

I'm sitting in the passenger seat of the TD in my grandparents' garage. It's summer vacation and I'm about six years old. The car doesn't get around much these days. I have to sit in the passenger seat because my grandmother has actually used the rest of the non-running car for storage of miscellaneous items, but there is potential for rebirth of the car and that vague promise of future joy rides has me ready and waiting. With the glove box open. (I'd much rather be behind the wheel pretending to drive, but I have to make do with what's in front of me) There are a lot of other smells in the garage besides that wonderful MG essence. Fermenting grass from the lawn mower. Chemical (but not unpleasant) smells from various gardening elixirs on nearby shelves. Cigar boxes, repurposed as storage for small hardware bits and pieces, exude the aroma of stogies past. And speaking of tobacco, there is a pouch of Sail pipe tobacco (sweet as a nut) on the

workbench and the pipe itself, being puffed by my grandfather as he meditatively works on some small project of his own. If the door to the kitchen happens to get opened heavenly smells of my grandmother's cooking will mingle with the already heady mix in the garage. This time and these people are gone from this earth but I can be with them again in memory just by opening a little glove box door.

So, you see, my early memories of the MG are all closely tied in with smelling good things, and this leads around to the olfactory experience of driving an MG because, unlike a sealed-up-tight modern car, whether the top is down or not, in an MG you don't just see things you pass, you smell them too.

Some of these smells are bad. At the top of the list—other people's exhaust. While that from your own precious car may be perfume to your nose, the exhaust of other cars is yucky and probably bad for you. Next, poultry houses—ugh—and in Georgia we have quite a few of these. Road kill—if some poor chicken (or armadillo) tried and failed to get to the other side of the road everyone riding in an MG will know it. Bradford pear trees only reek for a few weeks each year but it's more than enough, thank you. This is the tree whose beautiful flowers smell worse than (but similar to) a whole high school locker room full of dirty socks.

But enough of the bad and on to the good. First obviously of MG itself That wonderful oily,

leathery, floor-matty, gasolene, ultimately indefinable perfume. There is no "new car" smell about it (SO over-rated). Once you are in there appreciating that old car smell you tend to pass by a lot of other good smelling things. That just-cut grass smell for instance, especially if there was a lot of clover involved—sweet as honey. And kudzu flowers smell just like grape Kool-aide. Honeysuckle and that yellow jasmine vine literally smell like perfume. Pine needles roasting in the hot sun must be the quintessential smell of Georgia summer. (a smell whose accompanying sound effect is the mesmerizing drone of cicadas, but that's another article)

Food smells are usually good. The hickory smoke scent that promises BBQ is near is a favorite of many of the faithful. Coffee, bacon, sausage, the good morning scent of a Waffle House is wonderful. (Although some of our number would say this place smells better than it digests!)

Even other people's clean laundry—have you ever noticed how often the whiff of dryer sheets perfumes the air of residential streets? What about the "no smells" that actually are detectable like the ocean, the mountains, and that clean "after the rain" smell.

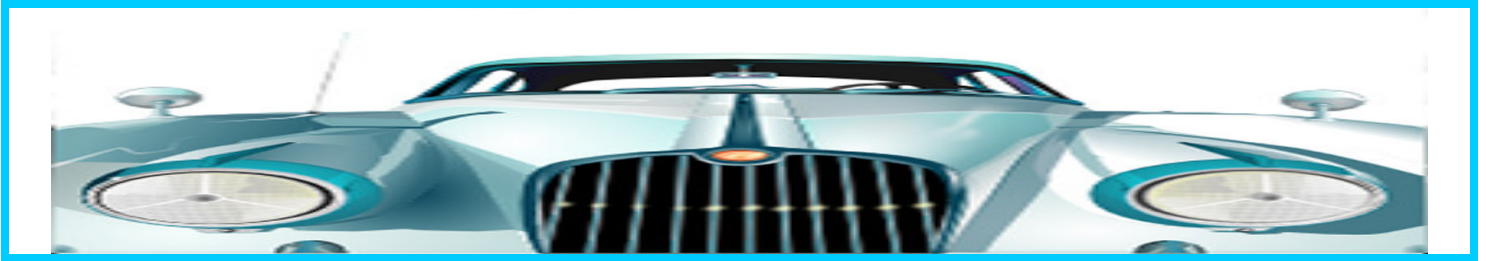
So, now I've admitted that I've never read a certain great work of literature and that I sneak around sniffing old cars for fun. My point with all this, if any, is that driving in an MG is an experience that engages our

senses fully. Our journey can only be enriched by this heightened engagement and I think that's a good thing. So now, if you'll excuse me, I'm

on my way out to the garage. I have a nostalgic appointment with a certain, much loved TD.

Reprinted from MG Talk, the Feb 2, 2009 issue of the SEMGT Register (www.semgr.org)

Mrs. Minivan

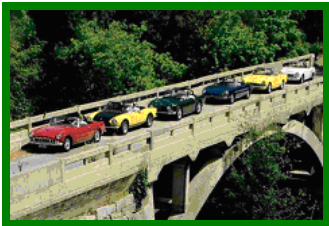


Following is an interesting article, a bit long, reprinted with permission from Classic Motorsport magazine. The results do not fall in line with my preferences but what do you think? Give us some feedback. dj

[Classic Motorsports](#)

Drop-Top '60s Roadsters

(From the Sept. 2003 issue)



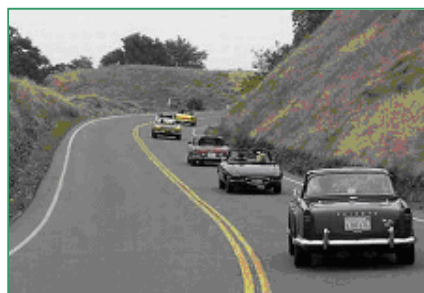
Summer, 1968. The war in Vietnam was heating up, but guys in college or grad school were safe for at least another year. For many, the most important decision to make was which sports car was best for enjoying top-down journeys along curving country roads.

Back in September of 1966, Car and Driver assembled six new sports cars and had Ken Miles drive and compare them before subjecting the field to the magazine's battery of quantitative tests. Anyone with even a remote interest in sports cars had read that article, and much time was spent discussing

and arguing the results in more than one study hall or late-night dormitory bull session.

By that summer of 1968, the selection of cars had changed only slightly. Fiat had replaced the tested 1500 with their new 124. The Sunbeam Alpine had just gone out of production, but dealers still had some in stock. The others from the original article—MGB, Alfa Romeo Duetto, Triumph TR4A and Datsun 1600—were still in the showroom. It was a great summer to be looking forward to open-air drives.

Good Cars Then, Classics Today



Each of those cars that sports car drivers could enjoy in 1968 has survived the test of time. They're still on the road, and each has attracted a loyal following.

With the dog days of summer currently upon us, we decided to roll back the calendar to 1968 and find out what was so special about these cars: How come, some 35 years later, they're still considered to be great driving classics?

It was easy to find a good example of each car in the San Francisco Bay area. We looked for cars maintained with pride and used with enthusiasm, rather than trailer queens restored to showroom perfection.

While today's comparison can't tell us which one was best when they all were brand-new, it offers lots of information on what the current owners did to make the cars more road-worthy for today's driving conditions, and how they compare in today's real world.

The starting point for the drive was at least 50 miles from everyone's home base, and we then drove a circuit of 150 miles through some of the best back roads that curve through California's Gold County and wine valleys. And then

everyone drove home. Not a single car had problems.

The comparison was done by the owners. Everyone drove each of the cars at least 20 miles and then rated each car against their own based on nine attributes.

Each car was rated in terms of performance—start-up, power, brakes and handling—as well as the car’s design and style, covering items like exterior and interior style, interior comfort and convenience, interior space, and luggage room.

At the end of the day, we totaled the results. Then we asked each owner which car, besides their own, they liked best, and whether they would trade.

The results were quite different from what Car and Driver learned in 1966. But compared to so many other cars that were introduced in the ’60s, every one of these classics is a winner, since every one is still driven and enjoyed today.

Datsun 1600



At the Tokyo Motor show in 1961, Datsun—as the company was known to U.S. consumers before adopting the home market’s Nissan name—launched a new two-seat sports car called the Fairlady SP310. The 1500cc, 85-horsepower car

was Datsun’s first entry into the sporting roadster world.

After some initial success in the U.S. market, the Fairlady was upgraded in 1965 to the SP311, receiving a more powerful 1595cc, 90-horsepower engine. The upgraded car was extensively marketed in the U.S. as the Datsun 1600.

Although it was introduced two years earlier than the MGB, the Fairlady had much in common with the popular British sports car. The Datsun was equipped with dual Hitachi carburetors manufactured under license from SU, as well as a four-speed, all-synchro manual gearbox and front-wheel-disc brakes.

The Datsun roadsters used body-on-frame construction that was similar to the earlier MGA, but the styling resembled the MGB. Although many people believe the Fairlady was copied from the MGB, the opposite might actually be true.

Joined by the higher-powered Datsun 2000 roadster in March 1967, the 1600 stayed in production through 1969 before both roadsters were replaced by the Datsun 240Z in 1970.

Raul Libunao bought this 1967 Datsun 1600 via eBay two years ago. It was a partially completed restoration that had been sitting for several years. The engine had been rebuilt, the body was repainted white, and the interior’s vinyl was replaced by red leather upholstery. At some point previously, it had been fitted with a roll bar. Raul finished the restoration, making

only one change from original specifications, as he replaced the no-name tube shocks with Konis.

Once the car was on the road, Raul liked it so much that he eventually bought five more Datsun roadsters. His collection now includes several 2000s and even a rare factory-upgraded performance model fitted with dual Solex carbs.

Triumph TR4A



Introduced in 1962, the Triumph TR4 was a budget-restricted upgrade for the hoary TR2 and TR3, which had been in production with limited changes since 1952. Triumph engaged Michelotti to design a more contemporary body style for the TR3A platform to create the Triumph TR4. Chassis details were largely unchanged from the previous model, except for the substitution of rack-and-pinion steering.

The TR4 had a much longer, wider and more square stance, with straight fender lines replacing the swooping lines of the TR2s and 3s. Wind-up windows were added, while an optional “surrey” top provided good weather protection, yet still permitted top-down motoring when desired. In 1965, Triumph reengineered the body-on-frame car to install independent rear suspension. The new model, which retained

the TR4's body style and drivetrain, was designated the TR4A. It was replaced by the six-cylinder TR250, the predecessor to the popular TR6, in 1968.

Rich Scotti and son Bryce joined us for our Sunday drive in their British Racing Green 1966 Triumph TR4A that Rich has owned for more than 20 years. The car sports the optional surrey top, and Rich says it really helps when driving at highway speeds. Despite the dreary early morning weather that greeted our outing, Rich had removed the top panels, confident that we would see the sun later.

The car has not been restored, though Rich has upgraded various parts of it. When the original exhaust rusted into oblivion, as they all do, he installed a Falcon stainless-steel system. He's also upgraded the suspension, adding polyurethane bushings and Koni shocks to stiffen the handling.

Other than that, what you see is what you get. This TR4A cruises and corners with the best of them, but has that rough-and-ready character for which Triumphs are appreciated.

MGB



Introduced in 1962, the MGB was the best-selling MG of all time, remaining in production

with only minor changes for two decades. Breaking from MG's tradition of body-on-chassis construction, the new unibody construction gave the MGB a solid feel.

The MGB was also the first model to sport roll-up windows. Its nicely trimmed interior and decent soft top made it a practical daily driver then and now. The four-cylinder, five-main-bearing engine provides 98 horsepower, enough grunt so the car can hold its own in traffic, while the optional overdrive makes long trips comfortable. Parts are easy to find, and the support network is extensive.

Chuck and Suzanne Blakeslee's 1967 is the fifth MGB they've owned. Suzanne found it at a garage sale in their neighborhood, and they bought it for \$750. After a little work on the fuel system and hydraulics, it started on the first try.

The car hasn't been restored as such, though Chuck rebuilt the engine and suspension, cleaned up the interior, installed chrome wires and had the car repainted. He estimates he's invested about \$10,000 in his MGB.

Chuck says he built the engine for reliability and power. He started by increasing the displacement to 1830cc and substituting a "fast street" cam. The head was extensively redone, receiving hardened three-angle valve seats plus polished and ported combustion and intake chambers. Breathing is helped with a Manifold intake setup and Peco

exhaust header. Exhaust is handled by an Ansa high-flow system. The original generator has been replaced with a Delco alternator, while Chuck installed a Pertronix electronic ignition and high-performance spark plug wires.

Chuck took care of the MGB's tendency to run hot when stuck in traffic by installing a four-row, high-capacity radiator plus an aftermarket radiator shroud, six-blade fan and 12-inch electric auxiliary fan.

Although springs are stock and suspension movements are controlled by stock Girling lever shocks and a 3/4-inch anti-roll bar, to tighten things up Chuck installed polyurethane bushings when he redid the kingpins. He also put performance brake pads on the stock front discs for better braking.

Alfa Romeo Duetto



Alfa Romeo was no stranger to the world of two-seat roadsters in the '60s. As rapidly as the company could get back into production after World War II, it started producing gorgeous, but expensive, two-seat roadsters.

By 1954, Alfa saw the opportunities in the mid-priced market and introduced the roadster version of their

Giulietta coupe. With cosmetic changes and engine upgrades, they kept these affordable roadsters in production through 1965.

Alfa introduced the sleek new two-seater (hence the Duetto name) at the Geneva show in 1966 to replace the Giulia Spider. Inspired by the Alfa Disco Volante and designed by Pininfarina, the original Duetto had a sleek nose with faired-in headlights and a similarly shaped tail that also came down to a point.

Under that sloping hood, Alfa had installed a jewel of a 1600cc alloy engine marked by lovely valve covers placed over chain-driven twin overhead cams. A smooth five-speed transmission finished off the package.

Achieving notoriety in the film “The Graduate,” the Spider—the Duetto name was dropped after two years—was to stay in production in various evolutionary forms through the early 1990s. Though originally priced almost 50 percent higher than the other cars in this group, the Alfa Spider’s exceptional handling and smooth performance made it a contender against even more expensive cars.

Robin Boyar was smitten by the sports car bug at a very early age, and by high school had decided she wanted an Alfa Spider. Five years ago, to treat herself on her 30th birthday, she searched for and eventually bought a Duetto.

The car had been in storage for 10 years, but rather than restoring it, Robin and a friend, who had worked on Ferrari race cars in the ’60s, decided to do only what was necessary to make it a safe and reliable driver. Consequently, everything about this Alfa is original, and the car is still running on the correct 165-width tires, though they’re now made by Yokohama instead of Pirelli.

Robin couldn’t be happier with the final outcome. “You can’t be in a bad mood when driving this car,” she quipped. She commutes in her Spider once or twice a week, takes numerous road trips in it, and a few times a year bolts in a roll bar and participates in club track days.

Sunbeam Alpine



In 1959, the Sunbeam division of England’s Rootes company introduced a new sports car for the 1960 production year. Engineered under contract by Armstrong-Siddeley and assembled by them, the car used the steel unibody chassis from the Hillman Husky station wagon and the drivetrain from the Sunbeam Rapier sedan.

Despite this unlikely combination, the result was a sweet little roadster called the

Alpine, a name Rootes had originally used for their 1954 roadster. The new car offered roll-up windows and comfortable trim, but with styling that was much more American than Italian. Through the early ’60s, several series of Alpines were produced, though the changes were largely cosmetic. The final version, the Series V, was introduced in late 1965, sporting the four-speed synchro box that had been introduced in 1964 plus a new 1792cc engine. The last Alpines were produced in 1967.

For our Sunday comparison drive, we invited Bill Atalla to bring out the Series IV Alpine that had graced the cover of the final issue of British Car magazine (April-May 2003).

Although it doesn’t have the larger engine of the Series V, the changes Bill has made under the hood have increased performance enough to match the later car. He put the engine through a careful rebuild with the requisite porting, polishing and balancing before replacing the Solex carburetor with a Weber.

The original cars ran on 13-inch wheels and 70-series tires, but Bill has substituted 14-inch wheels with lower-profile tires. Other than those few changes and the addition of lots of chrome, this Sunbeam is representative of what the model was like when new, and drives like a good, new restoration.

Fiat 124



Fiat was no stranger to the sporting roadster market in the mid-'60s, having introduced the 1100tv two-door convertible in 1957. This was replaced by the 1200 Spider and then the higher-performance 1500 Spider in 1959.

The 1500 Spider was in production in 1966 when Car and Driver wrote its comparison. Then, in 1967, Fiat brought out a sporting little two-door coupe called the 124. By 1968, the 124 line had been rounded out with a four-door sedan, a station wagon, and the prettiest of the bunch, the 124 Spider.

Powered by a dual-overhead-cam, four-cylinder 1438cc engine that produced 96 horsepower, the car was a worthy competitor for the MGB. With its smooth curves and Italianate driving position, it offered a very European alternative to the squared-off Triumph at a much lower price than the Alfa Duetto.

The 124 was a very successful model, staying in production under the Fiat name until the company abandoned the U.S. market in 1983. It was then imported by Malcolm Bricklin under the Pininfarina nameplate for two more years before

production was finally discontinued.

In appearance, our 1968 Fiat 124 is the least stock of the group. It was just restored by Joseph Lakatos Jr., who has been working on Fiats under his Joe's Fiat Service sign in Redwood City, Calif., since before the 124s were first introduced. The car was registered and licensed for the street on the Thursday before the drive, so our Sunday drive comparison was its (very successful) maiden voyage.

Joe decided to have a little fun with this rebuild, which he was doing in hopes of finding a buyer. He added high-compression pistons, a mild "rally" cam, a baffled sump and a Weber carburetor with Edelbrock filter to the otherwise stock engine.

Then he fitted a custom exhaust system and mated the engine to the stock five-speed transmission and 215mm clutch. He's pretty sure it produces a few more horsepower than stock, and the acceleration was certainly better than the original specs would suggest.

Careful thought was invested in the suspension as well. Without changing the stock configuration, Joe fitted KYB shocks and one-inch front and 5/8-inch rear anti-roll bars to improve the handling characteristics. Joe finished the car with a bright yellow paint job, spraying the hood and trunk in contrasting matte black. A neat little bumblebee on each

fender sets off the colors.

Rating the Cars

We'd mapped out a picturesque 150-mile, two-lane driving route, allowing each driver to test each of the cars for about 20 miles. A good stretch of curves was included in each rotation. At the end of each stint, drivers marked their rating cards.

To give them a basis for comparison, we asked them to give the car they had just driven a rating from one to 10 on nine attributes of performance and styling, with their own car considered a five.

While it's impossible to compare today's results one-on-one to the 1966 article's conclusions, the results are nonetheless worth a look. While these cars may have originally been sold at different price points, today they can all be considered affordable classics with comparable values.

And the Final Tally Sixth Place: Datsun 1600

There always has to be a last-place car, and in our test, that dubious honor went to the Datsun 1600, just as it did in 1966. Only one owner scored it higher than sixth, and it only got better than sixth on one attribute, interior style and comfort.

The problem, perhaps, is that Datsun was using older chassis technology while the company was still learning how to make a good sports car. The later

success of the 240Z shows that Datsun did learn fast, but hadn't yet gotten it right with the 1600. Nevertheless, when asked if he'd swap the car for any other in the mix, Datsun owner Raul was adamant. "What I like about this car is that it isn't all smoothness and comfort. I like the rough edges and the challenge of having to work to drive it right."

Fifth Place: Triumph TR4A



The Triumph didn't do well, either, probably because our example hasn't been completely restored while demonstrating that British solidity that people either love or hate. On performance, it was ranked fifth by three drivers, though the MGB owner liked it better than the Alfa and Datsun. The Triumph's own owner ranked it above those two cars as well as the MGB.

The TR4A scored best on its exterior styling, tying for second with the Alpine and beaten only by the Duetto. It also did well on interior styling, rating better than the MGB and Datsun. However, on all the other attributes, it couldn't do better than fifth among all the cars.

Although he takes pride in the work he's done to the MG, Chuck says he'd consider a swap for the Triumph. He and his wife have always liked the

Triumph's styling and, he says, "It is very British, like the MGB."

Fourth Place: MGB

Rankings for the MGB were more diverse than for any of the other cars. While three owners ranked it in fourth place, our Datsun owner liked it best of all, and our Triumph owner thought all the other cars, except the Datsun, were better than the MGB.

Ranked on the basis of individual attributes, the MGB managed a tie for third place in performance rankings, though it dropped to fourth place when ranked on the basis of design and styling. It suffered on both interior and exterior styling, even though owners liked its interior comfort and luggage space.

Perhaps the secret to the MGB's continuing success is simply that it was a good, solid car for its price: It may not have been as good as more expensive cars, but it seemed better put together than other cars at the same price. Owner Chuck Blakeslee says he likes that attribute best of all, and uses the MGB as his commuting car in all but the hottest or wettest of weather.

Third Place: Alfa Romeo Duetto

In the original 1966 article, the Alfa was rated above all the other cars on quantitative performance measures. However, in our informal driving comparison, it rated only third. This might simply be due to the better conditions of the two top-ranked cars.

One problem with doing classic car comparisons today is that it's impossible to find cars that are in exactly the same condition, so these results may not be surprising. In this case, the Alfa didn't do well on the performance measures. If we'd had the opportunity to include a freshly restored one, it probably would have done better in the performance attributes of power, handling and braking.

On styling and design measures, everyone liked the exterior styling of the Alfa best, but on interior attributes, the Sunbeam managed to outscore it; this was the factor that pushed the Sunbeam above the Alfa in the overall rankings.

Although Bill Atalla says he's a fan of British cars, other than his Sunbeam he says he liked the Alfa best: "It has a different, smoother and more refined feel. It is very Italian in its feel, and looks beautiful and curvy."

Second Place: Sunbeam Alpine

Proving that a good restoration can turn an originally inexpensive car with only average performance into a near-winner, the Sunbeam Alpine ranked second overall.

It managed a first ranking overall on design and styling, narrowly beating out the Alfa. The Sunbeam clearly offered the best combination of interior design, convenience and space, which was as true when it was new as it is today.

However, it just barely edged out the MGB on performance attributes, leaving the Fiat

cleanly in first place. The Sunbeam rated a strong second in all performance attributes except power and acceleration. This is also very consistent with the 1966 ratings when it was new.

When asked if he'd swap his Triumph for any of the other cars, Rich Scotti said he might consider the Alpine. "It is very drivable and much more comfortable than mine," he explains. "It was beautifully prepared, and though it could use a bit more power, the handling felt tight and responsive."

It's no surprise that Robin Boyar wouldn't swap her Alfa for any of the others on the list. Nevertheless, she liked the Sunbeam best of all. "It's in perfect condition, but it still retains the technological primitiveness of a vintage car that makes it unique," she said. "It harkens back to a simpler day and the fantasy of going back to a different time."

First Place: Fiat 124

There is certainly something to be said for a fresh restoration done by an experienced service shop. Everyone enjoyed driving the Fiat. It was ranked first in all performance respects except power and acceleration, where the Duetto's larger engine gave that car an advantage.

The Fiat didn't do as well on styling and design, managing to rate only third behind both the Italian Duetto and the British Alpine. The Fiat was rated fourth on exterior styling and

interior comfort and convenience, and third on luggage space. However it did tie for first on interior space, and ranked second on interior styling. Our MGB owner enjoyed the Fiat for its tightness and driving pleasure, noting "the revviness was awesome." Robin also liked the Fiat, but thought it drove too much like a Miata for her taste.

As the ultimate accolade, Don Barker, who was riding shotgun to help navigate, called Joe on Monday morning after the tour. "I couldn't get the car out of my mind all night," he said. "I've decided I'm going to buy it."



Conclusions

Clearly any comparison among such different cars is not going to produce clear-cut results. No one is going to learn that they own the "wrong" car, or be able to decide from this comparison which car is the "best."

It was no different in 1966. Although Car and Driver could add up its scores and declare a winner, people still disagreed with its findings, and many bought the other cars for a variety of reasons.

What we did learn is that condition counts for a lot in deciding which classic car offers the best all-around driving fun. A carefully

maintained or well-restored car will always pay dividends in enjoyment.

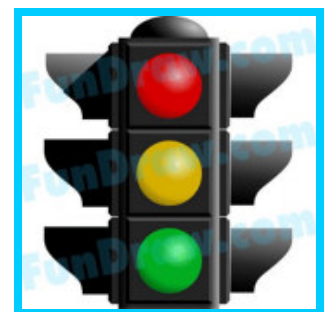
Our owners also made it clear that no matter which of these classic sports cars they were driving, they'd rather be driving it than any modern car when they were out on the back roads for a sunny summer Sunday drive.

From: Tim Baxter
<baxter@grassrootsmotorsports.com>
To: mgb_mga@yahoo.com
Sent: February 4, 2009
Subject: classicmotorsports.net
message from danny jacob

Danny, thanks for asking! Your club is welcome to reprint it. We ask, of course, that you give us credit, and let your club members know they can request a free issue of the magazine--no obligation--by going to <http://classicmotorsports.net/try/>

£

**Got an Idea?
Share it!!!**



**Our Club is looking
for exciting things to
do in 2009!**

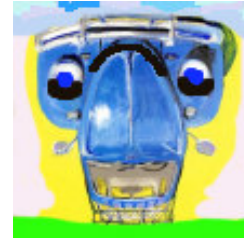


I have finally found a resource for the plain USA stickers. I had one of these on the rear of my 1954 Volkswagen when I was in Germany during the late 1960s. They were displayed on American owned cars throughout

Europe. So I want to buy one for my 1970 MGB when it's back on the road.

They sell for \$3.99 plus postage. If more than one is ordered, postage is less so I thought I'd see if there is any club interest before ordering mine. If there is enough interest I'll buy them myself, divide the postage amongst us and distribute them during a future club meeting.

Please let me know if you would like to order one (or more). Thanks, *Danny*



Ich bin ein toller Käfer

MGB Stars in Holly Movie

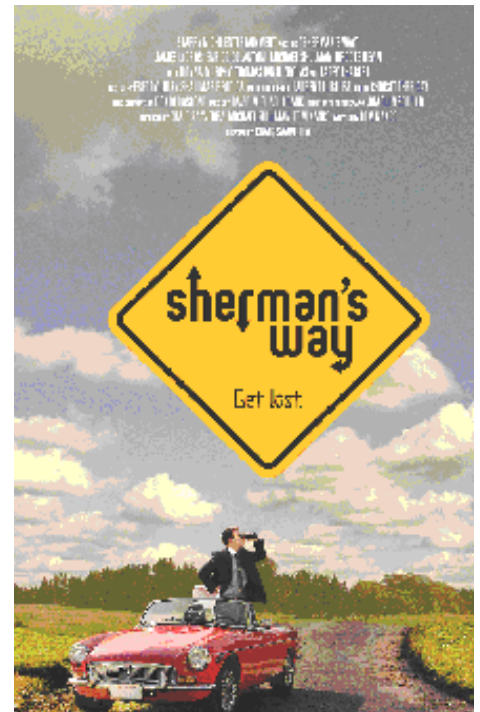
By Dick Lunney

Not since a black Austin-Healey was featured as Steve Martin's car in the *Father of the Bride* movies has a classic British sports car been featured in a major Hollywood movie. Now a red 1975 chrome bumper MGB is truly the star in a soon to be released feature film entitled *Sherman's Way* and the attendees at MG2008 were treated to a special "Premier" showing complete with an introduction and question/answer session with the film's director, Craig Saavedia. The organizers had hoped to show the movie on a large outdoor screen in the hotel parking lot giving everyone a Drive-In movie experience, but threatening skies and nearby thunderstorms forced the showing inside.

This wonderfully entertaining movie has a Yale law student, Sherman Black, following his girlfriend out to the California Wine Country only to find himself dumped and cut off from his high-society mother's money. A stranger stranded in an alien land, Sherman finds himself hitching a ride with a washed-up, unapologetically eccentric former Olympic skier who happens to be driving a beat-up MGB. The journey holds many funny and unexpected detours along the way centering on

the restoration of the MGB and the opportunity for Sherman to learn several life lessons. This truly bittersweet comedy about absent fathers and damaged sons is for anyone who has ever strived to find balance between responsibility and recklessness.

The audience at MG2008 laughed and cried at all the appropriate places, but also got some extra laughs at the film's ability to have the cast complete a total restoration of the MGB in a long week-end and seemingly transform the chrome bumper car into a rubber bumper car then back into a chrome bumper car almost overnight. Mr. Saavedia stepped forward after the screening with some trepidation as the MG-oriented audience laughed at the ease in which the stars were able to remove the car's windshield, fix the body work and install a new interior. Now a proud owner of an MGB, in fact the donor car actually being restored in the movie, Mr. Saavedia admitted that he now knows just how involved a total restoration can be. However, he is justifiably proud of the movie and how the MGB plays such an important role in the story. The overwhelming consensus of the audience was that *Sherman's Way* will be a "must have" movie for every MG enthusiast's DVD collection. See the details and preview at <http://www.shermansway.com/>.



Classifieds

Needed - transmission for a TR4a, perhaps a core overdrive tranny **Contact:** Ken Stone, 40 Ford's Crossing Norwell, MA. 02061. 781-659-4768. Email: kenstone1@comcast.net. Thanks, *Ken Stone*



For Sale 1973 Stag needs restoring. It is powered by a V6 Buick automatic. The motor

And transmission work really well. The convertible top cloth is rotten; I removed it from the frame. The hard top needs a headliner and the chrome strip along the front of the top is bent. It has a very good body, no rust

anywhere. I just put a battery in and drove it around. new NAPA fuel pump. asking \$2500.00 Contact David E Hedden (864) 638 7373 Walhalla, SC or email: dehedden@fs.fed.us



For Sale – Time-capsule MGB-GT. 1974 MGB-GT, 35,618 original miles. Teal blue/autumn leaf interior, OD & A/C. Original British Leyland radio. Rostyle wheels, good chrome, and no rust. Garage since mid 1990s, not driven, hence the low mile-age. Car needs a good going over to be driven, but that is all. I looked at the car for the owner and I would say that freshening should be able to get the car started and running. Will need new tires. Call me for my impression: Tom George 770-565-6692. Talk to the owner, Jackie Gensemer at 941-351-1076 or 941-504-1373 to talk about price. Car in East Cobb/Marietta, GA



This auction is for a complete set of overlays for a set of Smith gauges that were designed for a 1974 MGB.*

* Winning Bid: \$28.50



These have been a huge hit at car shows I have attended. "Rick"

This auction includes overlays for a square-type oil pressure gauge and separate round fuel/temp gauges.

Installation takes a couple of hours if you are cautious, but not difficult

Contact: James "Rick" Sullivan jstferus@yahoo.com

336 782-1622

King, NC, United States

(Ed. note: I believe this is near Winston- Salem, NC)

Birth Announcement from our Dutch foreign correspondent, Hermann!

"Biscuits with mice" or as we call them "Beschuit met Muisjes"



Hermann Egges

In Holland it is common that people come over to eat biscuits with mice. That is how it is called. Biscuits with mice, are biscuits with sweets on it. If a girl is born the sweets are pink, if a boy is born the sweets are bleu.



Hugo's card of birth

From: Hermann Egges h.egges@hetnet.nl **Sent:** Friday, January 16, 2009

Subject: Heep Heep Hurray we have a son! (Yesterday afternoon our second child was born.)

We have a healthy son. I will come later with technical specifications, details and measurements, because this is more girls stuff. So consider this as a preliminary announcement.

His name is: Hugo Peter Senna, we call him Hugo. Born at 16:35, weight is 3475 grams, length is 51 cm!

Kind Regards,

Hermann Egges, Thorbeckelaan 49, 9665 CB OUDE PEKELA, THE NETHERLANDS



The winning author on his sports bike at the Gerrie Knetemann Classic September 14, 2008 .

Greetings from Holland.

Abu Dhabi business trip.

Hello friends.

I was in Abu Dhabi in the United Arab Emirates for the international oil and gas conference and exhibition ADIPEC 2008. I found two articles in the newspaper which were worth to mention in The Lugnut I believe.

200.000 cars will be past out United Arab Emirates in two years time. By December of 2009, the streets of the United Arab Emirates will be relieved of 68.000 old cars, to start with. Authorities will start to phasing out cars older then 20 years. This decision is aimed at easy traffic and curbing motor vehicle pollution. In addition of that, old cars hinder traffic and could cause accidents, if they break down.

As the phasing out continues, by 2010 approximately 200.000 cars will be banned from the streets, with the authorities renewing registration of cars of only cars less that 15 years old.

Al these banned old cars may be sold to workshops for spare parts or have to be exported to other countries.

Taxis older as five years old, will not be allowed as well, since these cover long distances in a short time and cause more pollution. For that reason more than 12.000 Taxi's will be banned within the end of next year as well.

The banning of the vehicles, more than 15 years old will happen in phases to ensure a smooth process. And since the interior ministry announced this decision only earlier this year, people have been given ample time to be prepared.

Classic and antique cars are exempt for this rule, provided they pass the necessary vehicle tests. Which means that the maximum of Carbon Monoxide coming out of the exhaust should not exceed 2,5%. Also the cars shoeld be screened of exhaust gases for oxides of Nitrogen. The maximum of Hydrocarbon emission in vehicle exhaust will be reduced to a maximum allowable amount of 300 ppm.

The definition for a classic or antique car is however not given in the article.



Typical Abu Dhabi Taxi's

Introduction of Maserati in UAE

During my one week stay in Abu Dhabi, Al Tayer Motors, one of the UAE's premier automobile dealerships and official Maserati dealer, has launched the latest Maserati Quattroporte range of luxury limousines. They include the new-look Quattroporte with a 4.2-litre, eight-cylinder engine and the brand new Quattroporte S equipped with a powerful 4.7-litre eight cylinder engine.

Pininfarina, the renowned Italian design house, has enhanced the basic Quattroporte design incorporating some style elements of the GranTurismo in the interior and exterior of both cars. "The highly awarded Quattroporte is a reliable and luxurious sedan that has sold more than 15,000 units worldwide in just five years, Its fresh look, technological advancements and aerodynamic styling that make the car more attractive to customers with its sporty appearance. The addition of the Quattroporte S extends the line-up with a powerful car representing the best of the Quattroporte range.



Introduction of Maserati in AUE.

I am not sure if these are the most pollution friendly cars remembering the previous article. Kind Regards,

Hermann Egges

Please check out my website:
www.car-brochures.eu

I hope you enjoy my column. If you have suggestions or questions: feel free to contact me by e-mail:
h.egges@hetnet.nl



*Hermann Egges
enthusiast of MG
and other British cars*

