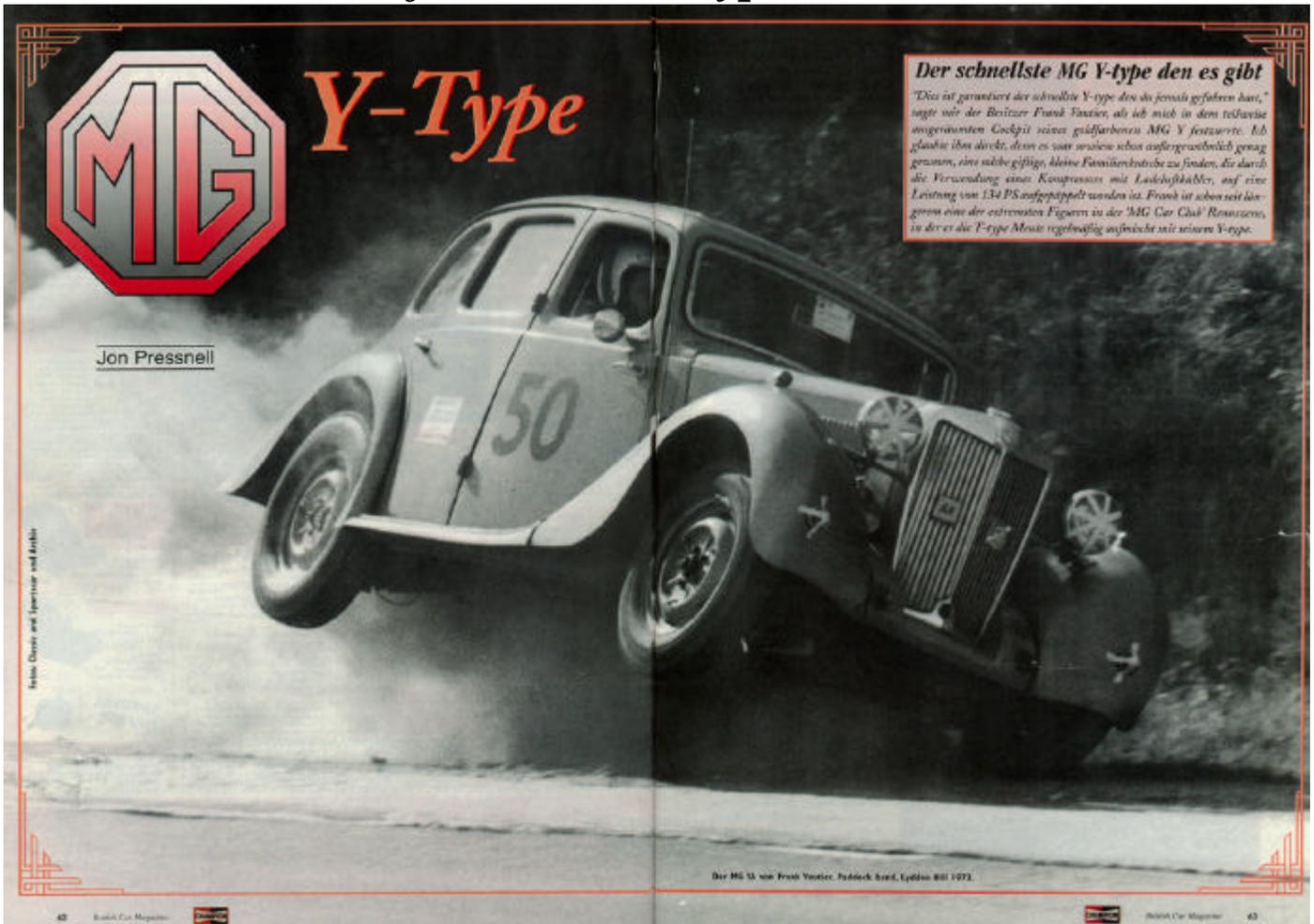


The fastest MG Y-type ever



The MG YA of Frank Vautier, Paddock Bend, Lydden Hill, 1973

“This surely is the fastest Y-type you’ll ever drive,” said owner Frank Vautier, as I fastened the seat belt in his countersunk cockpit of his gold coloured MG Y. I quickly believed him, as it was already extraordinary finding such a **small poison** family car, which was tuned to 134 hp with the help of a blower and intercooler. Frank has for a long time been one of the most extreme figures in MGCC racing, where he regularly roughs up the T-types with his Y type.

Have I heard a purist saying that Frank’s car is more a hot-rod than a classic car? That’s not true! Frank has tried to keep the Y-type as contemporary as possible. Therefore he does not use electronic ignition, does not use glass fibre kits and abandoned composite and other material ... and does therefore in a field of average T-types not reach the finish in front of the first mid-class cars

First of all the Y-type is too heavy to get better results. “That doesn’t turn me on,” says Frank, “I don’t drive to win championships. I like the challenge and the fun. I’m happy



“To begin with I used the car to drive to work.”



when I have some good duels against the T-types and I'm satisfied when the lap times get better constantly." Frank bought the Y-type in 1971 for just £25 sterling and consequent tuning lead to the result, which I drive today. John Bibby of 'Supercharge' is much involved on the Y-type scene now. "In the beginning I used the car to drive to work." Frank recalls. "The first phase of tuning was installing a larger S.U. carburettor, and raising the compression ratio from 7:1 to 8.6:1. These arrangements improved the driving pleasure considerably. Then I became infected by the MGCC racing virus, and I raised the compression ratio to 11:1, installed twin S.U. carburettors and installed a racing camshaft. The car was running fairly well with this, but I went one step further and bought a Shorrock supercharger, which made driving more pleasurable with 0.36 bar pressure. Installing the supercharger also made it necessary to lower the compression ratio back

to 9:1 and the sports camshaft had to go too.

The engine now showed a completely different performance. It was working much better from low revs." After the first supercharger blew up, and the second also started to fail, Frank decided to install the more modern Marshall J100 Charger, which is bigger and more effective than the Shorrock one. The Marshall uses 1.1 bar pressure, and is belt driven. Engine capacity remained at 1,250 cm³ although you can bore out to 1,500 in the future! "Because of the intercooler I can drive with high pressure without being worried about the engine temperature. Without this charger I couldn't drive with high pressure without the engine starting to pink" Frank recalls. The charger raises the air temperature to 140° Celsius; the intercooler drops the temperature to 80° which means that the engine actually is running too cold. There are no problems with the power train as the stronger gearbox of a pre-war MG VA was used.

"This gearbox isn't slower than the YA gearbox but is much stronger. I don't like to break parts and as the original gearbox wasn't strong enough I decided to use the VA gearbox." For the same reason Frank had already mounted the rear axle of a ZA Magnette; the half shafts of the YA wouldn't cope with the power and the stronger YB half shafts were easy to access and ideal for my purposes. At the front suspension stabilizers were added, and lower and harder springs and alternate wishbones were used to receive negative camber. The braking system was matched to the faster driving performance by using the stub axles and disc brakes of a MGA. Dampers stayed original. The rear axle was tuned less: lowered springs and telescopic shock absorbers are the only changes. According to Frank the rear axle does not have a tendency to tramp! And the minilites? These rims were necessary after the original ones wore out. "This formula worked fine," says Frank. "With the standard suspension the car lifted off the rear wheel when cornering. You had to wait until the wheel touched the ground again before you could accelerate. The stronger suspension now keeps the wheels on the ground and the speed, when cornering, is much higher. During the years the car was used at several hill climbs and MCCC races, and Frank only crashed once, when he "rolled-off" at

Wiscombe. "After this I raced at two other events and then I went on holiday with this thing. I have to add, that I had to use some tape to hold the car together. It wasn't really tragic as the chassis is really resistant..." A drive in Vautier's "Y" is a great experience! One expects a car with perfect road holding, a rough clutch, extremely hard braking and razorblade cornering. One also expects professional performance and a suitably accompanying background noise – but not the insane impressions you get using this car! With the

At the end of the 70s at Brands Hatch. The YA leaves a T-type behind.



The box on the firewall is the intercooler. The Marshall blower is working with a single SU-carburettor.

noise of a starting Starfighter you drive the MG down the road. Using the much available torque, the engine revs up willingly to the red mark, while the driver is busy finding the next gear, which isn't easy with the lightly synchromeshed gearbox. At 4,000 rpm the engine awakens and from 5,000 rpm the engine screams in ever higher pitches up to the 7,000 mark, which means a speed of 185 km/h (115 mph). The most fantastic aspect of the "Y" is that the engine revs from down the bottom of the range without shaking but with a fair thrust – you can attack from 2,000 rpm and catch rivals without changing down. If you let go of all the power in normal traffic your hair stands on end. When accelerating up to 150 km/h (93 mph), while you feel every discarded cigarette but; you need an absolute faith in the technique of this beast. "I don't use it on public roads anymore." says Frank. Of course the "Y" is too tuned to drive on the road, but the driveability of this muscle car shows what you can get out of it. Even the standard "Y" has the property to baffle someone. It looks like an elderly lady's Euro-box and hides the characteristics of a real sports car, which it really is. As a mix of parts from an MG T-type and a Morris Ten, completed with the modified body of a Morris Eight, the "Y" had become an attractive creation. The origins of the 46 hp single carburettor powered engine are from the "Ten series M" engine, which did not have a large power output. But this engine hides a larger tuning potential, starting with changing to twin carburettors, to a blown 1,517 cm³ and 219 hp of a MG record breaker, which was built in 1953. The chassis is unique; a frame with rough springs, designed by Mini constructor Alec Issigonis, and a direct rack and pinion steering (a maximum 2.75 turns from left to right). The later and better braking YB (1951 – 1953) had an anti-roll bar fitted at the front. The complete set-up was good enough to be used within the sports cars from MG TD



1992. The car is cornering much better and the wheels maintain contact.

to MGB. The MG uses the passenger compartment of the 'Morris Series E Eight' – not a roomy car. But it has all attributes the ambitious driver could want for. In addition to the leather seats and sliding roof, you notice an adjustable steering wheel, a windscreen to open, a fitted hydraulic jack, a rear screen to reduce dazzle, and a fitted fog light! It just is beautiful! The gauges are in octagon shaped bezels, the leather, showing little signs of use, has contrasting piping. The interior is comfortable and you don't feel cramped in this car. It has space for four adults and sitting on the rear seat feels like sitting on the armchair at a 'London-Club'. If you are tall you might have some problems with the backrest of the bucket seat, which are otherwise very comfortable. But even then you will be deeply moved with the view over the bonnet onto the chromed headlights, which are mounted gracefully outside the bonnet. In between twinkles the operational radiator cap. Traditional styling has something! As you drive away, the clutch is soft in operation and the gear change is short and accurate. To really change gears noiselessly you should drive using double clutching. The series YA (1947 – 51) brakes at the front are only single leading shoe on each side, which contrary to common belief make braking direct and effective. The hand brake operates the rear wheels via a simple chromed lever. The chassis with the Issigonis steering is faultless. The steering is fast, direct and informative. Only few cars have a better steering. The chassis will never win a prize for immaculate comfort, but neither is it too stiff. While noticing every bump, this is exactly what you expect of a sports

car of this time. Once you are used to the "Y" you'll recognize that the chassis is well-tempered and can be driven accurately around corners without too much tilting. As with the Riley 1.5 you can just prevent being categorised as slow. The small 1,250cc engine, assisted with the short differential, gives just enough power to prevent this.

The "Y" feels best at a speed of 80 and 90 km/h (50 and 55 mph). It doesn't sound as if it would collapse when driving 100 km/h (62 mph) and downhill, with a tailwind it possibly reaches 110 km/h (68 mph) the end of its potential. Acceleration in third feels like what you expect with a torque of 79.6 Nm at 2,400 rpm, and



Few cars have a better steering also while climbing up hills the MG gives no impression of breathlessness. All the time the engine feels alive and kicking, same as I felt earlier with the Wolseley 4/44. When you use this entire potential well, this firm sporting saloon becomes even more pleasing. But you must take care that you don't get too enchanted with such a project. Frank Vautier can tell exactly what happens, when you can't resist ...

Originally printed in British Sports Car Magazine August 1996. Text by Jon Pressnell, Photos Classic and Sportscar Magazine. Despite extensive efforts, no copyright holder for the magazine title could be traced.