

ON THE ROAD

with the

1¼-LITRE M.G.

SALOON



THE Series YB M.G. saloon is an interesting and logical variant of the sports TD model from the famous Abingdon company. It is a relief to many to find in production a car in the older style, with headlamps unashamed to be seen, normal wings, and a radiator shell which, to those who find streamlined shapes unacceptable, makes this M.G. "look like a motor car."

The attractive folder issued to publicise this M.C. saloon calls it a car "for sporting men who are also family men ...", which is perhaps fairer than terming it a sports saloon, because with its substantial, generously appointed body and a single-carburettor engine of only 1,250 c.c., the Series YB can hardly be compared to what our Continental friends term *Gran Turismo*.

Let us face it, the 1¼-litre M.G. asks for full use of the gearbox to make it hurry, while its maximum speed is not much above 75 m.p.h. It is, therefore, on its appointments and handling qualities that this handsome, compact car should be judged. On such counts the M.G. gains very high marks.

The appreciation which the fine finish and well-balanced lines ensure on first acquaintance are well maintained when you open the doors and climb inside. The leather upholstery, the pile carpet with rubber mat at the driver's heels, and the deep walnut instrument panel are rare luxury in a small car costing, basically, only £635. As you tot up the practical features the quality is confirmed. The deep back seat has side and folding centre armrests, the front seats are comfortable buckets, there are two ashtrays in the fascia sill and two more in the backs of the front seats. The doors have useful pockets, the windscreen winds open, the steering column is adjustable, the steering wheel is of "spring" type, there are twin anti-dazzle visors, the front doors are held front flying fully open, the driver's door takes the key, the luggage hoot has a lockable lid which can be let down to accommodate bulky luggage. Listed thus, these amenities tend to be taken for granted, but as the prospective purchaser ticks them off the value offered can hardly fail to impress favourably. Especially as many other attractive details can be added—that now rare luxury, a (Pytchley) sliding roof, a neat roof switch convenient to the drivers right hand for the interior lamp, electrical equipment which embraces fog-lamp and reversing-lamp, a Lucas screen demister, H.M.V. radio, with unobtrusive roof aerial, safety-glass in all windows, a blind for the back window, and a heater which really does work and is easily controlled by turning one small knob. This, and the equally invisible but effective radio loudspeaker, deserve high praise after so many complicated, ugly installations.

The trafficators, worked from a knurled knob on the steering-wheel boss, cancel after a reasonable period, denoted audibly. The fuel filler in the near-side back wing is of a very simple quick-action variety, light in action and entirely foolproof to operate. The fascia is of real walnut, with a huge cubby-hole, closed by a matching lid with light, automatic catch. Imitation wood inlays complete the air of luxury about the M.G.'s interior. The cubby-hole is flanked by the instruments and minor controls, two hexagonal dials comprising, respectively, combined oil-gauge (50 lb./sq. in. is normal), ammeter, and fuel-gauge, and speedometer with trip and total mileometers. The figures are clear and well lit. The lamps are controlled by unobtrusive pull-out knobs. Starter knob and choke control match. The ignition warning light is unobtrusive, the foot lamp-dipper well placed. Twin screen wipers, each with its own parking knob, work very efficiently.

The major controls are in keeping, the pull-up central hand-brake with press-button ratchet very convenient to use, and the gear-change, with a stiff central lever calling for short movements, a delight. Reverse, incidentally, is opposite third, beside the top-gear position, very useful in rally tests. The pedals, rather slight,

are well placed and comfortable to use. The near-side side-lamp is visible to the driver. Altogether, one feels well in command of the car.

On the car tested the gear lever moved somewhat stiffly, but as the mileage ran was under 2,000 this would no doubt wear off. A curious vibration was conveyed to the occupants via the gear lever, and the engine made a fair amount of noise. As handed over, considerable "pinking" was evident but, using National Benzole premium petrol, this was not noticed subsequently.

Our test embraced over 480 varied miles and we were able to appreciate the easy running and good handling qualities of this little saloon. The steering is smooth without being over-light, has useful castor action and transmits only slight return motion. Geared 2¾ turns lock to lock, it does not give an "over-low" impression and it is essentially taut and accurate. A pleasing aspect is the presence of definite-stops at each end of the rack-and-pinion's travel.

The suspension, wishbone and coil spring at the front, underslung ½-elliptic at the back, gives a good balance between hard and soft riding. The cornering tendency is to understeer and while this can change to oversteer as roll sets in, the degree of roll is slight and is arrested firmly by the lateral control link. The M.G. is exceedingly happy when flung round corners, the tail following through pleasantly in a manner reminiscent of, if not quite so pronounced as in, the splendid little Morris Minor. The 9-in. Lockheed hydraulic brakes are about the best "anchors" you could wish to have. All of which adds up to a car the keen driver can enjoy.

As the fuel consumption works out at approximately 26 m.p.g. with spirited driving, a lot of enjoyable motoring is available for a modest outlay. No oil or water was needed during the test, amid the engine got going promptly and without touch financial anxiety. The tyres howl only slightly under the stress of very fast cornering, changes of road surface go unnoticed, and generally the M.G. runs unobtrusively for a 1¼-litre car carrying four persons with a high degree of luxury.

There is some wind noise, which is to be expected, round the angular body, and an odd whistle at about 50 m.p.h., perhaps from air passing over the radiator-grille slats. Less excusable were the rather too obvious rattles which developed, one of which was traced to a loose ash-tray. Negotiation of country lanes which deteriorated into tracks showed the M.G. to have ample ground clearance of all save its front number-plate and to grip well in slime. The speedometer maxima on the indirect gears were first, 20 m.p.h.; second, 30 m.p.h.; third, just over 50 m.p.h. Sixty is a happy cruising speed, with the speedometer needle going easily to 70 m.p.h. without effort. The clutch is light and positive.

The smart green bonnet was apt to reflect passing shadows but this never became irritating, and the lamps, if small, gave just ample illumination.

Points where full marks could not be awarded were few. The car is definitely a four-seater and those with long legs found the rear compartment somewhat cramped. In front, care had to be taken not to jab one's knees on the deep wooden fascia or on the radio. It was necessary to stoop to reach the front window winders. The horn had a blatant note. Otherwise, 100 per cent marks to this sturdy, well-appointed saloon. Incidentally, although it didn't roll to any extent, emphasis that M.G. make only sports cars is lent by the presence of "pulls" whereby the back-seat occupants can brace themselves on sporting occasions. The only trouble experienced was a loose front number-plate nut - the one from which a spring washer had been omitted.

There should be a ready market for This inexpensive saloon

amongst those who seek a tailor-made vintage car, the tradition of which is painted by such items as the external radiator filler and

undisguised lamps and radiator. We rated our weekend with a Series YB as a very pleasurable experience. —W. B.

THE SERIES YB 1 1/4-LITRE M.G. SALOON

Engine. Four cylinders, 66.5 by 90 mm. (1,250 c.c.). Pushrod o.h.v. 7.2 to 1 compression ratio; 46 b.h.p. at 4,800 r.p.m.

Gear ratios—1st. 17.938 to 1; 2nd, 10.609 to 1; 3rd, 7.098 to 1; top, 5.125 to 1.

Tyres.—5.50 by 15 Dunlop on bolt-on disc wheels.

Weight—21 cwt. (less occupants but with live gallons of fuel).

Steering ratio—2 3/4 turns, lock to lock.

Fuel capacity—Eight gallons. Range approx. 208 miles.

Wheelbase—8 ft. 3 in.

Track—Front, 3 ft. 11 in. Rear, 4 ft. 2 in.

Overall dimensions—13 ft. 8 in. by 4 ft. 11 in. (wide) by 4 ft. 9 in. (high).

Price—£635 (£989 5s. 6d. with p.t.).

PERFORMANCE DATA

Speeds on gears :

1st : 20 m.p.h.

3rd : 52 m.p.h.

2nd : 30 mph.

Top : 75 m.p.h.

Makers.—The M.G. Car Company, Ltd., Cowley, Oxford.

Originally published in Motor Sport Magazine, April 1953