
CAR and DRIVER

ROAD TEST

Austin Healey

3000



A long hood covers the powerful six-cylinder engine, which is set well back in the chassis. The forward slope provides a good view from behind steering wheel.

Aerodynamic Edwardian with roll-up windows

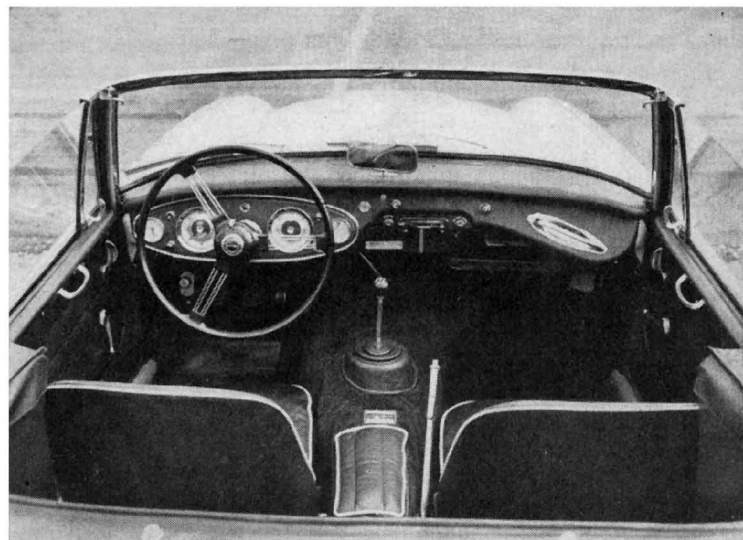
Capping a three-year period which has seen BMC score a series of truly dramatic engineering and marketing breakthroughs with cars like the Mini-Minor, the MG/Morris 1100, and the MGB, the new Austin-Healey is a bit of an anachronism. It really doesn't seem to be in keeping with the newly won BMC reputation for brilliantly executed dream-cars-come-true. It's marvelous fun to drive, it makes a great whomping six-cylinder noise, and it has all the qualities one traditionally associates with wind-in-the-face sports cars. But somehow these qualities, of themselves, aren't enough to keep us from being a trifle disappointed with the over-all result.

When first introduced at the London Motor Show of 1952, the Austin-Healey was an overnight sensation. This creation, inspired by Donald Healey and designed by B. Bildey and G. Coker, has withstood the test of time, and the body lines remain basically the same, although the car has undergone numerous mechanical changes through the years. British Motor Corporation ceased to enter it in sports-car races when the six-cylinder engine replaced the old Austin 16-based four, but it is now a contender for international rally honors.

With a hard-to-beat combination of great structural strength and booming performance, the Austin-Healey has been a consistent top finisher in the hands of drivers like Pat Moss and David Seigle-Morris. The sight and sound of Pat Moss howling over an Alpine pass in hairy-looking Healey, sans bumpers and loaded with lights, is a never-to-be-forgotten thrill. In more than one rally the straight-line performance of the Healey has given it the edge over many more sophisticated, more expensive automobiles.

Repeated efforts to up-date the car have been successful in that its appeal has been broadened and sales have continued at a high level. But looking at the 1963

version one sees much evidence of a 10-year-old design. This is particularly true of the suspension, which provides a harder ride than many lighter and later sports cars. The main attraction of the Austin-Healey 3000 lies in its powerful and untemperamental engine—a sports version of the BMC C-type unit that powers the Austin A-110, the Wolseley 6/110 and the Vanden Plas Three-Liter. The latest Austin-Healey version has two carburetors instead of the three that have been standard equipment for three years—BMC has managed to cut manufacturing costs and simplify maintenance without



Wind-up windows and a central gear lever set the interior of the new model apart from earlier Austin-Healey versions.

AUSTIN-HEALEY 3000 *CONTINUED*

accepting any reduction in performance. The big and heavy engine develops maximum torque at 3,000 rpm and begs for high gearing. A good compromise has been found by using a 3.91-to-one rear axle ratio and fitting a Laycock-de Normanville overdrive unit on the transmission. In this manner, normal top gear gives brisk acceleration while overdrive top provides economical and relatively silent high-speed cruising. The engine is quiet up to about 3,000 rpm; after that noise seems to increase in direct proportion to rpm.

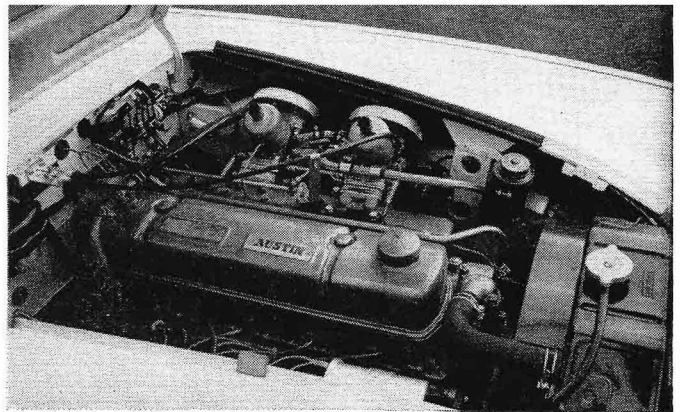
A new centrally located gear lever has replaced the cranked direct-working side lever of previous models, but the remote-control linkage is no quicker than the offset mechanism, and during warm-up requires much more muscle than the old linkage. As on so many BMC models, the main complaint in the transmission department remains the absence of synchromesh on bottom gear. The gate itself is the same as before, and reverse engagement is excellent. You positively cannot get reverse by mistake, yet when you want it a sharp sideways tap on the lever brings it over the catch so easily as to make parking almost a pleasure.

In many ways the fun of driving a Healey is directly traceable to this transmission and its Laycock de Normanville overdrive. Running fast in third and fourth, using the overdrive switch like another shift lever, can be pure joy. The shift lever's action is stiff but accurate, and declutching to switch the overdrive in and out, though quite unnecessary, results in crisp, fast shifts that are a delight to the ear and the seat of the pants. The ponderous nature of all the controls is a factor which lends a kind of appealing massive masculinity to the car. Again, this is traditional, harking back to those days when sports cars were meat for men only and the ladies rode reluctantly if at all or, better yet,

stood timidly and admiringly by the side of the road.

On older Austin-Healeys, competition-minded customers often installed special higher-rate springs to improve high-speed cornering. New standard springs on the 1963 model are an approximation to those, and steering characteristics are improved throughout the speed range. As before the Healey understeers mildly up to the point where the rear lets go, but directional stability is better. Stiffer springs have done nothing to eliminate road shocks reaching the steering wheel, and bumps on a corner can affect the car's stability to an uncomfortable degree.

Body roll is as absent as ever on the 3000. There are no complications about seeing your line through a turn, since you sit in exactly the same vertical position regardless of how many times you may have to alter your direction. This is an inherent quality of the Austin-Healey which probably has served to endear it to more

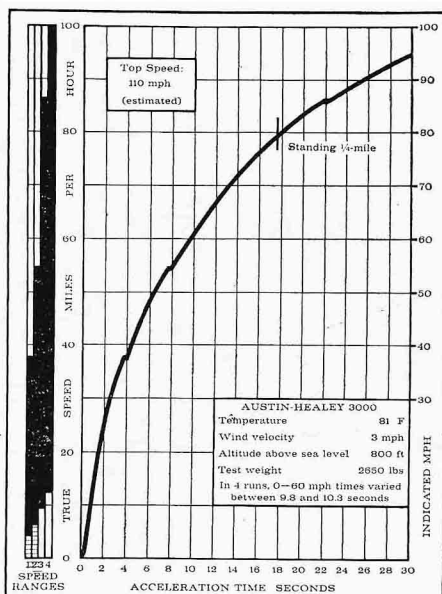


An engine produced in large volume in its single-carburetor form provides a highly reliable power plant for a sports car.

AUSTIN-HEALEY 3000

Price as tested: \$3,535 POE N.Y.

Importer: Hambro Automotive Corporation
27 West 57th Street,
New York 19, N.Y.



ENGINE:

Displacement.....177.7 cu in, 2,912 cc
Dimensions... 6 cyl, 3.28-in bore, 3.50-in stroke
Valve gear: Pushrod-operated overhead valves
Compression ratio.....9.03 to one
Power (SAE).....136 bhp @ 4,750 rpm
Torque.....167 lb-ft @ 3,000 rpm
Usable range of engine speeds... 650-6,000 rpm
Carburetion: Twin semi-downdraft SU HS-6 carburetors
Fuel recommended.....Premium
Mileage.....14-22 mpg
Range on 14.2-gallon tank.....200-315 miles

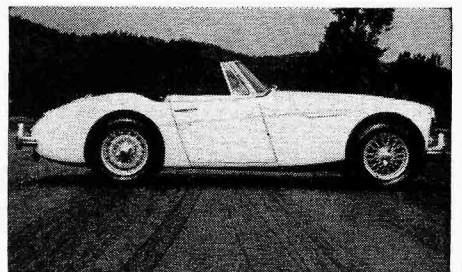
CHASSIS:

Wheelbase.....92 in
Track.....F 49 in, R 50 in
Length.....157.5 in
Ground clearance.....4.5 in
Suspension: F: Ind., wishbones and coil springs, anti-roll bar. R: Rigid axle, semi-elliptic leaf springs, anti-roll bar.
Steering.....Cam and peg
Turns, lock to lock.....3
Turning circle diameter between curbs... 35 ft
Tire size.....5.90 x 15
Pressures recommended.....F 26, R 28 psi
Brakes, Girling 1 1/4-in disc front, 11-in drums rear, 192 sq in swept area
Curb weight (full tank).....2,465 lbs
Percentage on the driving wheels.....52

DRIVE TRAIN:

Clutch.....10-in single dry plate
Mph per 1000

Gear	Syncho	Ratio	Step	Over-all	rpm
Rev	No	3.78	14.80	-5.01	
1st	No	2.93	43%	11.46	6.47
2nd	Yes	2.05	49%	8.03	9.24
3rd	Yes	1.31	21%	5.12	14.47
3rd OD	Yes	1.08	8%	4.23	17.65
4th	Yes	1.00	22%	3.91	18.94
4th OD	Yes	0.82		3.21	23.10
Final drive ratio					3.91 to one





Luggage space is not the Healey's strong suit. However, the occasional rear seats can be easily pressed into service.



One of the car's happiest features is its good-looking, tight-fitting top. It goes up or down with truly minimal effort.

drivers than has any other one of its good qualities.

As for habitability, there are new improvements. We all remember the great step forward initiated in 1957, when the top could be put up or down by one man alone. Now he can complete this operation without getting out of the driver's seat. And instead of side curtains the car now has roll-up windows. These refinements, coupled with the Healey's two occasional rear seats, make genuine sports-car driving acceptable to a new class of customer. The extra seats are, of course, just as occasional as those in a Porsche 356-B or a Volvo P-1800, and on a long trip should be considered just storage space.

We have always had difficulty in trying to drive straight-armed in an Austin-Healey. The short seat travel makes it almost impossible even in the 1963

model, and the muscular force required to turn the wheel makes it inadvisable anyway. The large-diameter steering wheel provides good leverage for taking sharp turns, however, and the steering ratio is high enough to enable women to drive it enthusiastically.

Whether the car, as a two-seater, provides any enjoyment that, for instance, the MGB does not give, is questionable. With a top speed perhaps 10 mph higher, and taking about one second less over the standing quarter-mile, the Austin-Healey is so closely matched to the MGB in performance as to make you wonder about the monetary value of two occasional seats.

Servo brakes are optional at extra cost, but we found that the Girling system, with discs front and drums rear, required pedal pressures so normal that power assistance seemed quite superfluous. Stopping distances were minimal, and no fade could be provoked.

As for maintenance, the car has not stayed with the times. There are 17 grease points that require attention every 1,000 miles. The fuel tank holds only 14.2 gallons, which gives a range below average for any type of car.

We drove a couple of cars in the course of this test. They were identical, differing only in color. Our impressions of the Healey are drawn from several hundred miles of all kinds of driving on all kinds of surfaces. We found the car to be a nearly perfect expression of the pre-war two-seater brought up to date. It has the same kind of go-to-hell rakishness we all loved in the TCs and Healey Silverstones, but it tempers these characteristics with wind-up windows and creature comfort that those semi-classics never knew. As we've pointed out, it's strong and reliable. We just wish that it had a more modern chassis and suspension system to match its up-to-date mates in the BMC model line-up.

Though its basic design is a decade old, the Healey will still find an eager audience with the more traditionally minded enthusiast. It is a true sporting machine in the sense that it looks fine, sounds fierce, and goes fast. If it rides hard and crosses cracks in the road with a loud thump, so what? We can remember when unyielding suspension and continual tightening of all the nuts and bolts on the automobile were status symbols to be treasured by any true aficionado.

C/O



Roll-up windows and vent panes! Creature comfort and convenience come to the traditional sports car, English style.