



CAR AND DRIVER ROAD TEST

MGB GT

Evolution overtakes the venerable MGB in the form of a neat GT coupe

No matter what the purists tell you, the sports car as we know and love it is up to its axles in the automotive tar pit, and there ain't no way anybody is going to yank it free. This is a simple case of natural selection, because an ever-increasing majority of enthusiasts are looking for more refinement in their automobiles, and the spartan old sports car, designed not really for fast transport but to make some sort of ringing statement about the endurance and resolve of its driver, is gone forever.

One of the last major manufacturers of sporting vehicles to service

these shores is an absolute delight. Called the MGB GT, it is an uptown version of the well-known MGB roadster that sets new standards for medium-priced grand touring automobiles. At first glance, the MGB GT is nothing more than a "B" with a coupe body (or "fixed head" if you insist), but there is considerably more to the plucky little import than that. For the first time, an MG sportster is being imported to these shores that really seems to be at home on our highways.

For example, the "A" and "B" are both a bit uncomfortable at sustained turnpike speeds, due mainly to high interior noise levels and minor discomfures like excessive heat from the transmission tunnel. Both cars are fine for an afternoon of rallying or acting out low-key racing fantasies on winding country roads, but they have never radiated a strong sense of belonging on the American scene. Not so with the GT.

Because of its increased interior comfort, the MGB GT is neatly tailored to most domestic driving—not counting mid-summer treks across the Nevada desert or delivering Christmas mail in Bemidji, Minnesota. That is to say, the car is intended for temperate climates, owing to a typically weak-hearted English heater and little surplus room for an effective air conditioner. However, when operating in

ting crunching and whining that emanates from the MG gearbox and the excessive heat that used to radiate from the transmission tunnel on previous models.

There is plenty of longitudinal travel for the two nicely shaped front seats, and the backs are adjustable for rake, though it is not an operation that can be done by the simple turn of a knob. The seating, coupled with the interior silence, makes the GT a really neat touring car for two, but don't kid yourself about the "occasional" rear seat. We have seen a lot of so-called rear seats stuck in the back of GT and sports cars, but the one in the MG sets a new record for silliness. It does provide enough headroom for a small child, but it's like they designed the seat itself exclusively for double amputees. Foot room does not exist, and any unwitting passenger will have to be content to travel in a loose pre-natal huddle. To make matters worse, the seat back is raked slightly forward as a final warning to anyone seriously contemplating climbing back there. Happily the seat back does fold down, providing a fully usable 10 square feet of luggage space that is accessible through a generously-sized, swing-up rear door. Provided this rear space is restricted to cartons and luggage, it is perfect; but stay out of there at all costs!

The crisp coupe treatment on the GT is a pleasure to behold from the inside and out. Several previous attempts from the British Isles to fit hard tops to roadsters—including the old MGA coupe—were something wide of the mark in a styling sense, but the MGB GT has the kind of tough, squared-off looks that should endear it to everyone. Contrary to the old "A" coupe, which had a wraparound roof that created the impression that you were riding in a diving helmet, the GT has vast areas of glass. This is not only excellent in terms of esthetic appeal, but it offers outstanding visibility from all angles.

The appointments and instrumentation are basic MGB, with the same switches and no-nonsense dials. There is also the same, slightly oversized steering wheel with the rim a tad too thin for our satisfaction. However, this is a niggling complaint in the face of all that is positive about the car's interior. We register general acclaim for the inside of the car, from doorsill to shining doorsill.

The rest of the automobile is identical to the 1800cc MGB we tested in December, 1964, though the noise damping of the coupe body



the masochistic needs of pure sports car owners was the British Motor Corporation, which persisted in building the Stone Age MGA until it became some sort of four-wheel fossil. Happily, the British Motor Corporation has seen the light in recent years, and it is now marketing several sports cars that go, stop and negotiate corners without lashing the passengers with wind, rain and flying rocks in the process.

The latest BMC effort to reach

temperatures ranging from 20 to 80 degrees F, the MGB GT is perfectly suited to sustaining life at a reasonably comfortable level.

The interior is great. It is extremely airtight and soundproof for a car of this type, and road and wind noises are effectively damped at all but flat-out speeds. Also lost in the body insulation is that irritating clatter of push rods that has been the trademark of MGs for 10, these many years. Gone too is the unset-



PHOTOGRAPHY: BILL HUGHES



gives one the impression of being in an entirely new car. The handling remains acceptable for a vehicle with leaf springs and a solid rear axle, and the added stiffness of the coupe structure may have improved the roadability over the conventional "B" roadster. We did not have a roadster on hand during our test, and therefore our observations are entirely subjective—but several of the staff noted an improvement over the regular MGB. This may be true, but it may just be the result of the overall enthusiasm the car generated among us. Either way, the MGB GT corners with a minimum of fuss, especially considering its uninspired rear axle location.

The entire drive train is unchanged, including the venerable MG four-cylinder engine, now featuring five main bearings and 1800cc. This means 98 reliable old horses are being produced, which are sufficient to run the car to 60 mph in 12.1 seconds, and to provide it with a top speed slightly in excess of 100 mph. Better yet, the car will cruise—with its 3.90 final drive ratio—at 70-80 mph without wear and tear

on either the mechanism or the passengers.

We still have that aged MG gearbox, complete with a non-synchro first gear, and a wide ratio spread between second and third gears. It's still very difficult to engage first gear at a standstill, but the aforementioned interior insulation reduces the heat and noise to a point where the gearbox isn't anywhere near the irritant it used to be.

Our test car had its rear-view mirror hung out on the left-front fender, where it was constantly being knocked out of adjustment, and the bumpers are a bit dainty for American parking tactics, but otherwise the GT's exterior fittings are entirely acceptable.

All of the other positive MGB points—including strong front disc brakes, real leather upholstery, generally good quality control, et cetera—remain. With an East Coast list price of \$3,095, the MGB GT should be a roaring success in the American market.

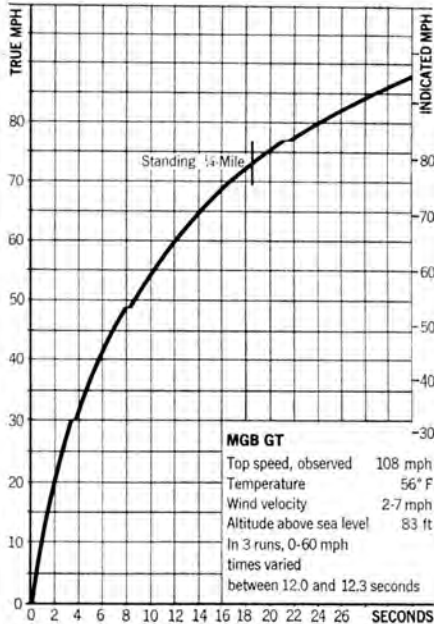
If it isn't, it may mean that old Charles Darwin was wrong after all.

MGB GT

Importer: BMC/Hambro, Inc.
734 Grand Ave.
Ridgefield, N.J.
Price as Tested: \$3095 POE East Coast

ACCELERATION

Zero To	Seconds
30 mph	3.5
40 mph	5.7
50 mph	8.6
60 mph	12.1
70 mph	16.6
80 mph	24.2
Standing 1/4 mile	73 mph in 18.5



ENGINE

Water-cooled four-in-line, cast iron block, 5 main bearings
Bore x stroke 3.16 x 3.50 in, 80.3 x 89 mm
Displacement 110.5 cu. in, 1798 cc
Compression ratio 8.8 to one
Carburetion Two SU H-4
Valve gear Pushrod-operated overhead valves
Power (SAE) 98 bhp @ 5400 rpm
Torque 107 lbs-ft @ 3500 rpm
Specific power output 87 bhp per cu. in.
54.3 bhp per liter
Usable range of engine speeds 1000-6000 rpm
Electrical system 12-volt, 50 amp-hr battery
Fuel recommended Premium
Mileage 22-28 mpg
Range on 12-gallon tank 264-336 miles

DRIVE TRAIN

Clutch	8-inch single dry plate
Transmission	4-speed, non-synchro first
Gear Ratio	Overall mph/1000 Max rpm
Rev	4.75 18.58 -3.81
1st	3.64 14.21 4.97
2nd	2.22 8.65 8.14
3rd	1.41 5.37 12.82
4th	1.00 3.90 18.08
Final drive ratio	3.90 to one

CHASSIS

Wheelbase 91.0 in
Track F:49.3 R:49.3 in
Length 153.2 in
Width 59.9 in
Height 49.8 in
Ground Clearance 5.0 in
Curb Weight 2310 lbs
Test Weight 2756 lbs
Weight distribution front/rear 52/48%
Pounds per bhp (test weight) 28.1
Suspension F: Ind., unequal-length wishbones, anti-sway bar
R: Rigid axle, semi-elliptic springs
Brakes Lockheed 10.75-in discs front, 10-in drums rear, 239 sq in swept area
Steering Rack and pinion
Turns, lock to lock 2.9
Turning circle 3.2 ft
Tires and wheels 5.60 x 14 on 4.5-in rim

CHECK LIST

ENGINE

Starting	Good
Response	Fair
Noise	Good
Vibration	Fair

DRIVE TRAIN

Clutch action	Good
Transmission linkage	Good
Synchromesh action	Fair
Power-to-ground transmission	Good

BRAKES

Response	Good
Pedal pressure	Good
Fade resistance	Good
Smoothness	Good
Directional stability	Good

STEERING

Response	Good
Accuracy	Good
Feedback	Fair
Road feel	Good

SUSPENSION

Harshness control	Fair
Roll stiffness	Good
Tracking	Good
Pitch control	Good
Shock damping	Good

CONTROLS

Location	Very Good
Relationship	Good
Small controls	Good

INTERIOR

Visibility	Good
Instrumentation	Very Good
Lighting	Good
Entry/exit	Fair
Front seating comfort	Good
Front seating room	Fair
Rear seating comfort	Poor
Rear seating room	Poor
Storage space	Fair
Wind noise	Fair
Road noise	Fair

WEATHER PROTECTION

Heater	Good
Defroster	Good
Ventilation	Fair
Weather sealing	Good
Windshield wiper action	Good

QUALITY CONTROL

Materials, exterior	Good
Materials, interior	Good
Exterior finish	Good
Interior finish	Good
Hardware and trim	Good

GENERAL

Service accessibility	Good
Luggage space	Good
Bumper protection	Fair
Exterior lighting	Good
Resistance to crosswinds	Good

