SINCE the new M.G. Midget was introduced at the end of June, the Chancellor's tax adjustments have increased the U.K. total price by some £20; yet it remains within the £700 bracket. At this price it is still good value as a thoroughly well-planned and soundly constructed little car, and promises to regain the popularity won by its pre-war predecessors. It is no secret that the car is in effect a luxury version of the Austin-Healey Sprite II, and is thus £30 dearer with tax.

Mechanical dissimilarities are few, and the differences in performance between the Midget and the Sprite II (which we tested on 2 June) must be attributed to variations of tune, and mileage run since new by the test cars. Throughout the speed range, the Midget accelerated slightly faster in any given gear, and showed a saving of 3 sec for example, from 60 to 80 m.p.h. in top. In acceleration from rest, some of this advantage was lost by a clutch which was not ideal for rapid take-offs. It took up the drive rather abruptly over a small part of the long and largely ineffective pedal travel, pulling engine revs below the point of maximum torque. Attempts to slip the clutch during rapid getaways resulted in clutch spin, which also prevented the car from restarting on a 1-in-3 test gradient.

Starting was always immediate, and there was no need for the choke in mild weather. After the car has stood for more than half-an-hour or so, the engine is often a little reluctant to pull straight away; this reluctance disappears rapidly as the engine warms up in the first few hundred yards, and acceleration is then crisp and responsive.

One is immediately impressed by the smoothness of the Midget's power unit. Normally the rev counter needle is held between 2,000 and 4,000 r.p.m. on the open road, but 5,000 r.p.m. may be used without roughness or excess noise from the engine. A noticeable surge of power is felt at 2,500 r.p.m. There was a noticeable engine period between 5,000 and 5,500 r.p.m., it became smooth again up to the valve bounce speed of 6,500 r.p.m. At this speed the unit remained sweet and smooth, so that a watchful eye had to be kept on the rev counter which is standard equipment. On this an orange warning band starts at 5,500 r.p.m. and changes to red at 6,000 r.p.m.; the calibration extends to 7,000 r.p.m.

An intelligent choice of gear ratios enables full advantage to be taken of the wide span of engine power. When making a fast getaway there is a logical progression through the gears, and after reaching peak revs in bottom and second a useful range of acceleration remains in the subsequent gear. Second is particularly useful up to 45 m.p.h. for spurtng past slow-moving traffic, and allows up to 50 m.p.h. Yet the docile behaviour of the engine at low revs enables the car to pull away from a walking pace in second gear.

In third gear the most practical range extends from about 25 m.p.h. to 60 m.p.h., with a 70 m.p.h. maximum in reserve. Complementing these excellent gear ratios are the
Large amber winking indicators blend neatly with the stop and tail lamps. The rear side-screen panel is slipped forward to give access to the interior as there are no outside handles.

ease and speed with which changes can be made, for the lever can be
snatched from one position to the next almost as quickly as the hand can
move. For fast upward changes the
synchronesh cannot always quite cope,
especially if the lever is pulled smartly
from bottom to second. Distinctive
out unobtrusive gear whine is audible
in all the indirects. The gear lever is
placed conveniently only a few inches
from the driver's left hand on the
steering wheel, and its knob is of hard
plastic, insulated with rubber.

Bearing in mind the engine's
willingness to rev, top gear gives
just the right combination of liveliness with high-speed
cruising, the road speed being just over 60 m.p.h. at 4,000
r.p.m. The fastest speed reached with the Midget was 85
m.p.h. at 5,600 r.p.m., when the engine is nowhere near
the point of "running out of revs." The theoretical maxi-
mum, based on the engine's safe rev limit, would be just
short of 100 m.p.h.

Factors tending to dissuade one from taking full advantage
of the car's abilities were a marked increase in noise above
70 m.p.h., accompanied on this example by vibration,
apparently from the transmission. The most comfortable
and restful cruising rate is around 60 m.p.h., and the fuel
consumption figures at constant speeds show that 60 m.p.h.
is relatively economical, for at a steady 70 m.p.h. 10 miles
fewer are averaged per gallon. If faster speeds are sus-
tained, as when the car was held at 80 m.p.h. and above
for long periods on M1, the oil pressure drops rapidly from
its normal 60 p.s.i. maximum to nearer 40 p.s.i. Three
pints of oil were consumed in 1,037 test miles, equivalent to
nearly 3,000 m.p.g. At the higher speeds also, slight final
drive whine was heard.

As for fuel consumption, the best figure obtained was
48-5 m.p.g. on a main road run with restrained use of the

performance, but this figure dropped to 34-1 m.p.g. when the
same 20-mile stretch of road was covered as fast as the car
would go. In city traffic and at sustained high speeds con-
sumption naturally increases, giving the overall figure of
33-4 m.p.g. for the entire test, but any owner in search of
eco will have no difficulty in exceeding 40 m.p.g. with
the Midget.

The 948 c.c. engine has a compression ratio of 9:1, and
needs to be run on super premium grades of fuel. The
lower compression ratio of 8-3:1 is optional to suit normal
premium grades of petrol, and any increase in consumption
resulting from this would probably be recovered in reduced
petrol costs; performance, naturally, would be a little lower.
The fuel tank holds only six gallons, so that frequent re-
filling is necessary when the car is driven hard.

Directional stability of the Midget at speed is much
affected by cross winds, and frequent correction is necessary
to maintain a straight course. This characteristic is made
less troublesome than it would be otherwise by the excellent
precision of the rack-and-pinion steering. The control is
completely free from lost movement, and with 2½ turns
of the wheel between the extremes of acceptably wide steer-
ing locks, it requires only small or even imperceptible move-
M.G. Midget

With the hood in place instead of the hardtop the Midget uses the same sidescreens as are fitted to the Austin-Healey Sprite, but the car is still identifiable in this view by the full-length rubbering strip and " MG Midget" motifs on the luggage locker lid when the hood is in position. When not in use the struts separate like tent poles at the centre and fold away into a bag for stowage in the luggage locker. At above 70 m.p.h. wind pressure causes the leading edge of the sidescreens to bow out.

A generously large luggage locker is provided with an exterior lockable handle—an important point since the car doors do not lock. Although the spare wheel lies flat in the centre of the boot floor there is ample room in it for carefully packed luggage. At the forward end of the compartment some space is lost when the folded hood is stowed in the bag provided. The boot is held open by a swivelling prop which proved annoyingly clumsy.

Visibility is particularly good, and the driver sits high enough to see over the steering wheel and scuttle without difficulty, and with both front wings and the bonnet in sight. The windscreen pillars are slender and offer little or no obstruction to visibility even when the car is closed. To the rear of the windscreens with the hood in place, vision is better than when the hardtop is fitted, as rear quarter windows are incorporated in the hood.

Self-parking wipers have blades as long as allowed by the depth of the windscreen, but a large portion is left unsupported at both ends. The interior mirror is mounted too low and vibrates; for safety's sake we added a suction-fitting interior mirror to the screen of the test car.

Well-upholstered seats are adjustable fore-and-aft, and covered in black p.v.c. with a red-painted car. The cushion is comfortable and the backrest provides good lateral support, but it is too firm at the top, and tends to make the occupants slump forward. The backrest is shaped in the small of the back. The occasional rear seat fitted to the test car costs £4.5s, and is adequate for two children if the adults have their seats well forward to provide rear legroom. The floor and gearbox housing are covered with dark moulded rubber flocked with red. Carpet is used behind the seats and, for protection, on the lower portions of the folding seat backrests. Both front floor mats are readily removable. A plain but functional instrument layout is provided, with the main rev counter and speedometer on either side of the steering column. A fuel gauge is on the right, and a combined oil pressure gauge and coolant thermometer is fitted on the left, where it is partly masked by the driver's left hand on the steering wheel. Provision of a trip millometer in the speedometer is particularly welcome. The steering wheel and column surround adjoining the facia are of yellow.

Acceptably Soft Suspension

Extremely good bump absorption is provided by the suspension, which is softer than its layout would suggest. On secondary or badly surfaced city roads the car sits down well and does not jolt its occupants. On rough pavé the limited vertical wheel travel begins to tell, and the rear suspension bottoms violently on bump stops which seem to be too small. Severe humps in the road naturally result in some firm upward movement, and when tall drivers were at the wheel they found their heads were near enough to the hardtop for them to hit it as the car bounced.

The stylish and well-made, glass-fibre hardtop with plastic interior linings may be fitted or removed single-handed in a matter of minutes. However, with the hardtop, sidescreens different from those supplied with the standard hood are necessary. As the total cost of the hardtop and sidescreens is some £75, including purchase tax, when they are ordered with the new car, most owners will probably be content with the basic p.v.c. hood as all-year-round weather protection. Purchase tax on the hardtop kit is not payable if it is ordered after delivery of the car, and the price is then £50.

The draught-sealing with the hood in place is about as satisfactory as one may ever hope for in a car with detachable sidescreens, and a particularly good seal is made by the rubber surrounds. The sidescreens have light alloy frames with double sliding Perspex windows allowing opening for ventilation at both front and rear. The hood fit is also good, and a metal bar sewn into the leading edge ensures a perfect overlap joint at the top of the windscreen, while the strut springs can be locked, and then released.

The toolkit comprises a side-lifting jack, a wheelbrace, and a socket spanner for the sparking plugs. Storage bags are provided for the hood.
plastic material somewhat out of keeping with the character of the rest of the car.

Tumbler switches are used for the wipers and for the lamps, which are the latest sealed-reflector and filament pattern. They give ample main beam illumination for the speed potential of the Midget, and have a generously long reach on dipped beam without dazzling oncoming drivers. A switch similar to that for the lamps is mounted centrally on the facia to control the winking indicators. They are not self-cancelling, but a bright warning lamp is fitted above the steering wheel boss.

Twin windscreen horns fitted to the test car are a specially desirable extra, priced at £1 12s 1d including tax. A fresh-air heater is another practically essential optional fitting, and costs £17 10s with tax. This was also among the £116 worth of accessories on the Midget tested, and gave a good flow of air through inlets with cut-off flaps to either side of the engine bulkhead. An overriding air control is fitted on the facia, and a tap on the engine allows the hot water supply to be turned off for the summer. There is no provision for a reversing lamp to be fitted. Twelve grease points require attention every 1,000 miles.

This new M.G. is an enduring little car with a remarkable capacity for nipping about among heavy traffic. It is easy and safe to drive, and certainly is approaching the ideal for the market which it is intended to serve.

**DATA**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>PRICE</th>
<th>(basic), with open two-seater body, £472.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>British purchase tax, £217 11s 5d.</td>
<td>Total (in Great Britain), £689 11s 5d.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Extras, incl. p.t.</td>
<td>Hardtop and sidescreens, £70 16s 8d; Tonneau cover, £6 11s 3d; Heater, £17 10s 0d; Fresh air unit, £5 16s 8d; Twin horns, £1 12s 1d; Cigarette lighter, £1 12s 1d; White-wall tyres, £7 9s 6d; Heavy duty tyres, £6 11s 3d; Radio, £30 5s 2d; Laminated windscreen, £4 0s 2d; Ace Mercury wheel discs, £16 8s 1d; Luggage carrier and wing mirror, £12 15s 2d; Rear compartment cushion, £4 7s 6d.</td>
</tr>
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</table>

**ENGINE**: Capacity, 948 c.c. (57.9 cu. in.).

Number of cylinders, 4.

Bore and stroke, 62.9 x 76.2 mm (2.48 x 3.00 in.).

Valve gear, o.h.v., pushrods and rockers.

Compression ratio, 9:1 to 1 (8:3 to 1 optional).

B.h.p. 41.6 (net) at 5,500 r.p.m. (b.h.p. per ton laden 49.3).

Torque, 531 ft. lb. at 3,000 r.p.m.

M.p.h. per 1,000 r.p.m. in top gear, 15.4.

**WEIGHT**(With 5 gal. fuel), 13.4 cwt (1.554 lb).

Weight distribution (per cent): F, 52.7; R, 47.3.

Laden as tested, 16.9 cwt (1,890 lb).

1 lb per c.c. (laden), 2.

**BRAKES**: Type, Lockheed hydraulic.

Drum dimensions: F and R, 7in. dia.; 1.75in. wide.

Total swept area, 110 sq. in. (131 sq. in. per ton laden).

**TYRES**: 5.50-13in. Dunlop Gold Seal.

Nylon tubeless.

Pressures (p.s.i.): F, 18; R, 20 (normal).

F, 24; R, 20 (fast driving).

**TANK CAPACITY**: 6 Imperial gallons.

Oil sump, 5.5 pints.

Cooling system, 10 pints (including heater).

**DIMENSIONS**: Wheelbase, 68 ft. 8in.

Track: F, 3ft 8.75in.; R, 3ft 9.75in.

Length (overall), 11ft 4.25in.

Width, 4ft 5in. Height, 4ft 1.75in.

Ground clearance, 5in.

Frontal area, 12.4 sq. ft. (approx.).

Capacity of luggage space, 11.5 sq. ft. (approx.).

**ELECTRICAL SYSTEM**: 12-volt; 43 amper-hour battery.

Headlamps, 60-45 watt filaments.

**SUSPENSION**: Front, coil springs and wishbones, lever-type dampers.

Rear, live axle, trailing quarter-elliptic leaf springs, radius arms, lever-type dampers.

**ACCELERATION TIMES**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Speed range, Gear Ratios and Time in Sec.</th>
<th>m.p.h.</th>
<th>4-22</th>
<th>5-73</th>
<th>8-09</th>
<th>13-5</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>to 1</td>
<td>to 1</td>
<td>to 1</td>
<td>to 1</td>
<td>to 1</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>10–30</td>
<td>10–1</td>
<td>6–3</td>
<td>12–6</td>
<td>30–30</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20–40</td>
<td>13–3</td>
<td>8–6</td>
<td>6–2</td>
<td>75–75</td>
<td>50–75</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>30–50</td>
<td>14–1</td>
<td>9–5</td>
<td>7–1</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>40–60</td>
<td>15–7</td>
<td>11–2</td>
<td>16–5</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>50–70</td>
<td>17–9</td>
<td>16–5</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>60–80</td>
<td>28–6</td>
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From rest through gears to:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Speed range, Gear Ratios and Time in Sec.</th>
<th>m.p.h.</th>
<th>6–3 sec.</th>
<th>9–4 sec.</th>
<th>14–4 sec.</th>
<th>20–2 sec.</th>
<th>32–8 sec.</th>
<th>56–8 sec.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>30 m.p.h.</td>
<td>6–3 sec.</td>
<td>9–4 sec.</td>
<td>14–4 sec.</td>
<td>20–2 sec.</td>
<td>32–8 sec.</td>
<td>56–8 sec.</td>
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<tr>
<td>40 m.p.h.</td>
<td>9–4 sec.</td>
<td>14–4 sec.</td>
<td>20–2 sec.</td>
<td>32–8 sec.</td>
<td>56–8 sec.</td>
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<tr>
<td>50 m.p.h.</td>
<td>14–4 sec.</td>
<td>20–2 sec.</td>
<td>32–8 sec.</td>
<td>56–8 sec.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>60 m.p.h.</td>
<td>20–2 sec.</td>
<td>32–8 sec.</td>
<td>56–8 sec.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>70 m.p.h.</td>
<td>32–8 sec.</td>
<td>56–8 sec.</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>80 m.p.h.</td>
<td>56–8 sec.</td>
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</table>

**FUEL CONSUMPTION** (at steady speeds)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Speed range, Gear Ratios and Time in Sec.</th>
<th>m.p.h.</th>
<th>51-6 m.p.g.</th>
<th>54-8 m.p.g.</th>
<th>47-2 m.p.g.</th>
<th>43-0 m.p.g.</th>
<th>33-8 m.p.g.</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>30 m.p.h.</td>
<td>51-6 m.p.g.</td>
<td>54-8 m.p.g.</td>
<td>47-2 m.p.g.</td>
<td>43-0 m.p.g.</td>
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<td>40 m.p.h.</td>
<td>54-8 m.p.g.</td>
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<td>33-8 m.p.g.</td>
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<tr>
<td>70 m.p.h.</td>
<td>33-8 m.p.g.</td>
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</table>

**TRACTIVE EFFORT** (by Taupley meter):

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Top (mean)</th>
<th>Equivalent gradient (lb per ton)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>180</td>
<td>1 in 12–4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>240</td>
<td>1 in 10–9</td>
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<tr>
<td>350</td>
<td>1 in 8–5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**TEST CONDITIONS**: Weather: dry; sunny intervals, 10 m.p.h. wind gusting to 25 m.p.h.

Air temperature, 68 deg. F.

**STEERING**: Turning circle:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>30 m.p.h.</td>
<td>25 ft 6in.</td>
<td>25 ft 6in.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>40 m.p.h.</td>
<td>25 ft 6in.</td>
<td>25 ft 6in.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>50 m.p.h.</td>
<td>25 ft 6in.</td>
<td>25 ft 6in.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>60 m.p.h.</td>
<td>25 ft 6in.</td>
<td>25 ft 6in.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>70 m.p.h.</td>
<td>25 ft 6in.</td>
<td>25 ft 6in.</td>
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</table>

**SPEEDOMETER CORRECTION**: m.p.h.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Car speedometer</th>
<th>True speed</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>10</td>
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<tr>
<td>20</td>
<td>20</td>
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<td>30</td>
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<td>60</td>
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<td>70</td>
<td>70</td>
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<tr>
<td>80</td>
<td>80</td>
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Scale 1 in. to 1 ft. Driving seat in central position. Cushions uncompressed.