

ROAD TEST/13-62
MG-A Mk. II Competition



For the competition-minded, BMC continues to improve the breed.

OVER THE PAST FEW YEARS we have often heard the complaint that though many sports car manufacturers list a mass of options with which one can make a raceable car out of a production street machine, such a car can't be purchased so equipped. In other words, to take advantage of these good things one must strip down the standard vehicle and add the options oneself, or pay someone else to do it.

Actually, though there is cause for the complaint in the average case, most cars can be purchased fully equipped if one is persistent enough and willing to wait while a special order is processed. The main reason for the difficulty is that quotas for U.S. delivery are fixed far in advance and special orders tend to throw a very large Whitworth monkey wrench into the well-planned works. Too, local distributors are reluctant to stock such cars on the gamble that the order will come through.

While one answer to the problem has been to convert these cars on the dealer or distributor level, MG has come up with another. This one gives the customer a partially prepared car, with a fully raceworthy chassis, coupled with a stock MG-A Mk II engine, which the customer can prepare to suit the rules that govern racing in his own area or, perhaps, leave showroom stock for rallying or just plain enjoyable ironpants motoring in the *pur sang* manner.

Designated the MG-A Mk II Competition, the car is basically the standard Mk II with all of the competition chassis modifications completed and charged for, but with credit given for the stock items and no labor bill. The result is a legally "prodified" chassis at far less net cost than the do-it-yourself job on a standard version, with the added factor of knowing that the job was done according to and by the precepts of the men of Abingdon. The tab is less than \$500 over the list price of an absolutely standard, non-deluxe MG-A, instead of the \$800-and-up that would be charged by the local speed wizard who may or may not know what he's doing.

Outwardly the car looks like the late-lamented Twin Cam, with its pin-drive knock-off disc wheels and unpre-tenious demeanor. In fact, we have a strong suspicion that

there may have been some Twin Cam chassis laying about when they discontinued the DOHC engine production. Quite obviously the car has the stiffer front springs used in the Twin Cam and the big, meaty anti-sway bar as well. The four-wheel disc brakes, with hard competition type pads, are also in outward evidence. The rear end is equipped with the stiffer competition springs and both ends have the racing shock absorbers, with the result that jumping up and down on either front or rear end produces a reluctance of movement that borders on the obdurate. Such seeming stiffness would normally lead one to believe that the ride might be somewhat like that of a plank dragged through a stone quarry, but such is not the case. The ride is definitely on the firm side but is anything but harsh. Bounce and rebound rates have been well-chosen and balanced to give good control without producing the roughness that too often goes with competition type suspension systems.

Not apparent to the casual glance or to the casual passenger are several other items aimed at making the car raceworthy. Most important is the close ratio gearbox that eliminates the wide spread between Second and Third gears. In fact, all the intermediate gears are of higher ratios than in the standard box. We fail to see why First gear should be as high as it is, since it isn't synchronized and so cannot be used at any decent rate of speed. Its high ratio makes it just a little bit ticklish to get the car off the line without bogging down, but the other two intermediate gears are very nicely spaced and help avoid those situations wherein one finds oneself trying to figure out whether to over-rev in Second or lug the engine in Third. Aiding the getaway problem posed by the high First is the competition 4.55 to 1 rear-end gearing which, while it cuts down the absolute top speed, gives the car all sorts of acceleration in the gears. With the engine brought up to whatever stage of prodification the local club rules allow, the combination of low rear-end gearing and close ratio transmission makes the car a pretty fearsome machine in its class.

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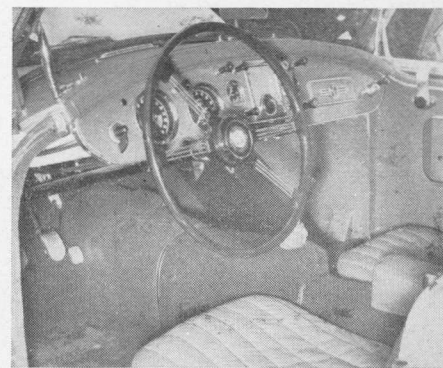
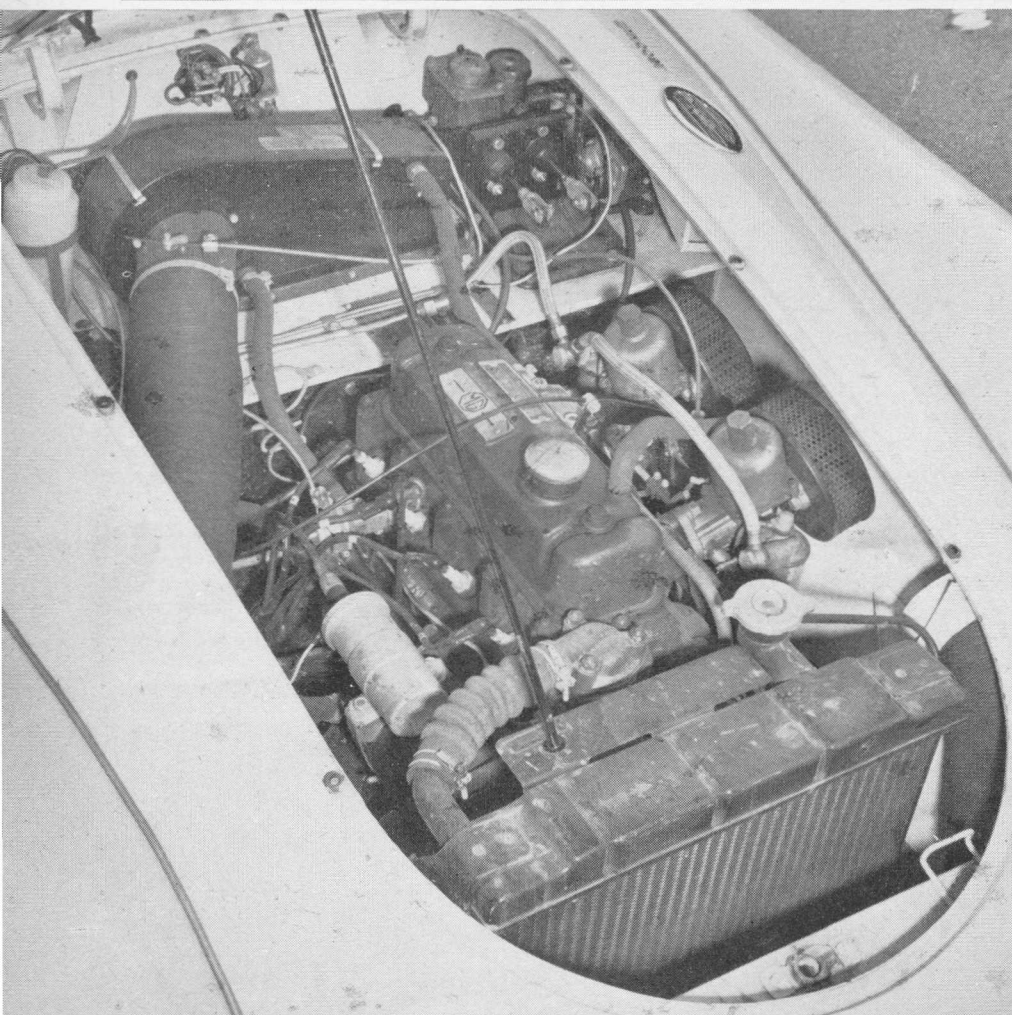


Pointing its inside "toe" a tad at the turn apex, the option-equipped Mark II scurries through a serpentine route in the hills "sticking like paint" to the choppy asphalt surface.

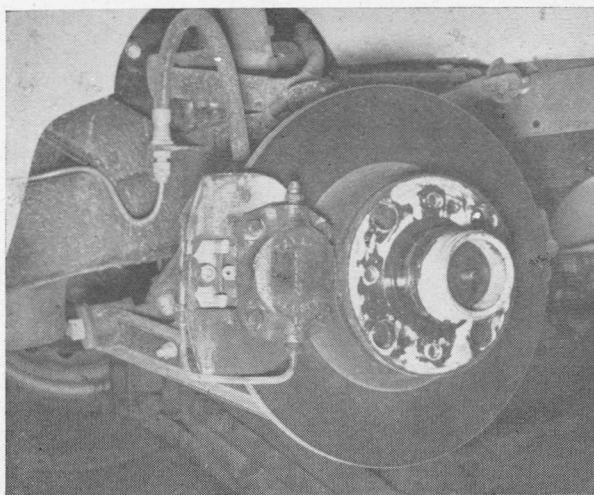
Showing a reluctance of suspension movement that borders on the obdurate, the Competition Mk II is not a race car per se, but the basis for a sizzling "prodified" for pur sang use.



Slicing through a dirt-covered downhill, the car depends on its big, meaty anti-sway bar and RS-5 tires for stability.



Hidden between the grille and radiator is a small Smith oil cooler. The engine compartment is otherwise like stock MG.



With the exception of the knock-off disc wheels—of Twin-Cam derivation—these above views are like the normal Mk II. Instrumentation is complete and there is luggage space for weekend touring. Performance options are yet to be included, but everything needed for maximum roadability has been installed.

PHOTOS: RANDY HOLT

Dunlop caliper-type brakes and 9½-inch discs are mounted both front and rear, provide the car with superb stopping.

TEST DATA

Our test car was picked up from Hollywood Sport Cars with zero mileage on the clock and was stiff as starch when we started out. This soon loosened up and things got easier to do as each day went by. Shifts, at first an effort, got to the point where the lever seemed to be almost automatically pulled into the proper gate if any effort was made to match engine and gear speeds, especially on down shifts. Lever movement on the close ratio box is similar to that on the normal box with, if anything, shorter throws and the total H-pattern covers little more than the span of a large man's palm. Steering is, as on virtually all MGs, direct and with a strong return action which is all right for street use but just a bit stiff on the track. Reducing the caster angle of the front wheels cuts down this return considerably and this minor change in setting is S.O.P. in track preparation. Strong return or not, it is possessed of as nearly pinpoint accuracy as can be found on a production car, with little or no kickback from the road.

During the course of our test, we were fortunate or unfortunate enough to have some of the foulest weather to hit Southern California in a decade. While the hard top left something to be desired in terms of sealing over the top of the windshield (a nickel-and-dime repair item at worst), the rest of the car was adequately weather-tight even in strong gusts and 80 mph speeds. Even when splashing through deep puddles and flooded intersections there was no sign of leakage up through the floor or around the pedals. More impressive than the weather-tightness, however, was the rock-solid stability in both wet and wind. Part of this was undoubtedly due to the Dunlop RS-5 tires, which are a far cry indeed from the Roadspeeds of yesteryear. They clung to road like paint and, with the wide-based competition rims, were completely stable and totally predictable. How much of the stability was due to the tires and how much to the solid suspension is hard to determine. However, the combination provided near perfect road holding and predictability, even under the most abominable conditions of wind and rain. Side gusts, a bugaboo for most small cars, were no problem with the MG-A Competition; in fact, they were hardly noticeable even when other small cars, both sports cars and sedans, were having visible trouble staying on a straight line.

Thanks to the stock engine and the high First gear, the 4.5 rear-end gearing did not make itself felt in taking acceleration times. The close ratio box and low ratio rear-end balanced each other out, and the result was that the times were virtually identical to those shown by the standard machine tested before. However, even with a dead stock engine, lap times around a road circuit should be considerably better, due to the combination of gearing and suspension that would permit higher cornering speeds and to the superb braking that allows diving far deeper into turns than is possible with the standard set-up.

What the MG people have here, then, is a car that a novice can use in stock form for drivers' schools and practice sessions in complete safety, and still have a car that is perfectly suitable for the street. For the man with a competition license, it is a car on which all the heavy conversion work has already been done, leaving only super-tuning or allowable engine modifications to be done. In short, the MG Competition is a race car basis rather than a race car *per se*. While more expensive than the standard version, it provides a means by which the purchaser can end up with a competitive car at considerably less cost than that of converting the standard MG-A and bringing it up to a similar state of preparation. For those interested in Class F Production competition, this latest offering from Abingdon is well worth the price of admission. — John Christy

VEHICLE MG-A MODEL Mk II Competition
 PRICE (as tested) ..\$3190 POE L.A. OPTIONS See text

ENGINE:
 Type: BMC Type B — 4-cyl. 4 cycle water-cooled
 Head Removable, cast-iron
 Valves Overhead, pushrod/rocker actuated
 Max. bhp 90 @ 5500 rpm
 Max. Torque 97 lbs. ft. @ 4000 rpm
 Bore 3.0 in. 76.2 mm.
 Stroke 3.5 in. 88.9 mm.
 Displacement 99 cu. in. 1622 cc.
 Compression Ratio 8.9 to 1
 Induction System: Twin SU carburetors
 Exhaust System Cast manifold, to single pipe & muffler
 Electrical System: 12V Lucas distributor ignition

CLUTCH:
 Borg & Beck
 Diameter 8 in.
 Actuation Hydraulic

STEERING:
 Rack & Pinion
 Turns Lock to Lock 2.5
 Turn Circle: 30½ ft.

TRANSMISSION:
 Ratios: 1st 2.45 to 1
 2nd 1.62 to 1
 3rd 1.27 to 1
 4th 1.0 to 1

BRAKES:
 Discs, front and rear, 11 inch dia.
 Swept Area 569 sq. in.

DIFFERENTIAL: Hypoid
 Ratio 4.55 to 1
 Drive Axles (type): Enclosed, semi-floating

CHASSIS:
 Frame: Steel, conventional box-section
 Body: Bolt-on steel assemblies
 Front Suspension: Unequal "A" with arm shock forming uppers, coil spring
 Rear Suspension: Live axle, semi-elliptic leaf springs, arm shocks
 Tire Size & Type: 5.90 x 15 Dunlop RS-5

WEIGHTS AND MEASURES:
 Wheelbase: 94 in. Ground Clearance 7 in.
 Front Track: 47.5 in. Curb Weight 2013 lbs.
 Rear Track: 48.75 in. Test Weight 2338 lbs.
 Overall Height 50 in. Crankcase 4 qts.
 Overall Width 58 in. Cooling System 10 qts.
 Overall Length 156 in. Gas Tank 12 gals.

PERFORMANCE
 0-30 3.9 sec. 0-70 16.5 sec.
 0-40 6.4 sec. 0-80 20.3 sec.
 0-50 8.7 sec. 0-90 29.1 sec.
 0-60 12.4 sec. 0-100 — sec.
 Standing ¼ mile 20.4 sec. @ 74 mph
 Top Speed (av. two-way run) 104 mph
 Speed Error 30 40 50 60 70 80 90
 Actual 29 39 48 57 67 76 86
 Fuel Consumption: RPM Red-line 6,000 rpm
 Test 23 mpg Speed Ranges in gears:
 Average 28 mpg 1st 0 to 44 mph
 Recommended Shift Points: 2nd 25 to 64 mph
 Max. 1st 44 mph 3rd 35 to 82 mph
 Max. 2nd 64 mph 4th 40 to 104 mph
 Max. 3rd 82 mph

Brake Test: 76 Average % G, over 10 stops.
 No Fade encountered

REFERENCE FACTORS:
 Bhp. per Cubic Inch 0.99
 Lbs. per bhp. 22.3
 Piston Speed @ Peak rpm 3220 ft./min.
 Swept Brake area per Lb. 0.276 Sq. In.

