

STARTER CLASSICS

Chris Harvey examines three interesting Classics for sale at less than £4,000

MG YA saloon (1949) £3,500*

Right, the smart-looking MG YA saloon carries a full MoT certificate and has to be good value at the £3,500 being asked.

**NB This article was originally published in March 1990. The prices are therefore out of date, and the car may have since been sold.*



ROBIN Rother has an enduring passion for old cars and every so often he has to make room for more in the back garden of his home near Canterbury. Now that he has a Delage, his charming little MG Y-type saloon has to go. Resisting the temptation to sell its original number plate for as much as £2,000, he is offering a car that was until recently in everyday use for a bargain £3,500 so that it does not deteriorate in the open.

With a pricing policy as keen as this, the MG is likely to move faster than it ever has before in a remarkably undemanding 41 years. It can also be expected to appreciate at a relatively fast rate now that the basically similar TD sports cars are touching £20,000. The fact that T-series MGs have been so popular over the past 20 years has been of immense benefit to anybody with a Y-series saloon, or the rare YT open touring version. The availability of spares is good, along with the expertise needed to tend such antique machinery.

The Y-type four-seater saloon has always been underrated simply because the two-seater sports cars had such a romantic appearance and were about 10mph faster. But in many ways, the Y-type is a more practical Starter Classic than a T-series, apart from being so much cheaper. It has the independent front suspension designed by Alec Issigonis in 1937 for Morris saloon cars that was overruled on the grounds of cost. As a result the Morris saloons got a rough-riding beam front axle, and so did the MG sports cars that used their basic components. The Morris Ten saloon got an advanced new pressed steel monocoque body, however, while the sports cars had to soldier on with traditional bodies using a wooden frame.

In the race to get something on the road after the Second World War the TC sports cars left Abingdon from 1945 hardly changed from their pre-war TB specification. But when the new YA saloon was introduced in 1957, it had a far smoother-riding chassis with the new independent suspension, and underslung rear rails, which gave much-needed extra rear suspension movement. It also had a four-door body based on Wolseley's version of the Morris Ten. Eventually, the new chassis was shortened for the MG TD of 1949, the saloon going into a second phase as the YB with smaller wheels and modified suspension. It would be six years before the sports cars got a modern steel body.

This all means that the YA saloon has a far smoother ride than the contemporary TC sports car and a body that is far easier to maintain. The rewards are similar in that the detail work is as charming as the overall appearance. The YT open four-seater tourer was not nearly as pretty, so it hardly commands a premium today. In fact only 877 were made, against 6,158 examples of the YA and only 1,301 YBs, production of which had to be curtailed to meet a heavy export demand for the TD, which went on to reach 29,664 units. A YA saloon in good running order, with a full MoT certificate, and its original, attractive, registration number has to be an absolute bargain at £3,500.

Specification

1949 MG YA: in-line four-cylinder cast iron water-cooled engine, 1,250cc, 66.5mm x 90mm bore and stroke, 7.4:1 compression ratio, pushrods and rockers, side camshaft, single SU carburettor, 46bhp at 4,800rpm, 116lb/ft torque at 2,600rpm; four-speed manual gearbox, synchromesh on top three ratios, rear-wheel drive; suspension, independent front, wishbone and coil springs, rear live axle, half-elliptic springs; rack-and-pinion steering, drum brakes all round, 5.25 x 16 tyres; steel ladder-frame chassis, steel body four doors, four seats; dimensions, wheelbase 99in, track 47in front, 50in rear 164in long, 59in wide, 57in high, 2,296lb dry weight; performance 69mph top speed, 27.3sec 0-60mph acceleration, 27mpg.

Price guide: £8,000 condition A, £5,000 condition B, £3,500 condition C.

Verdict: Exceedingly good value, especially with a registration plate worth around £2,000. Plus Points: Originality, docility, availability of spare parts.

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