



MG for four. Yes indeed! It does exist and it smells of mahogany and good English leather, mixed in with a subtle aroma of motor oil

All the charm of a British saloon

An MG for four. Yes! It exists and it smells of mahogany and English leather.

It was to make its debut at Earls Court, at the 1940 London Auto Show, but its birth was delayed until 1947, in order for Great Britain to recover from the destruction brought upon all of Europe by the Second World War.

Thus, it was born with this old-fashioned air which characterizes the cars of pre-war period: square shapes, straight grill, wings detached from the body and two prominent headlights. An old-fashioned but charming air, at least for those which are fond of the look of traditional and luxurious English limousines.

Admittedly, with a price of £525 in 1951, it could not have been as luxurious a limousine as a Bentley or a Rolls-Royce. Indeed, this sympathetic English mini-saloon is a MG. Yes, a four door MG, conceived in 1938 to widen the range of this English marque, so well known for its roadsters will are still venerated today by a horde of nostalgics, both in Europe and in America.

Four door Midget

MG (Morris Garage for those which did not know) was founded in 1921 by William Richard Morris, which already owned Morris Motors since 1912.

It is when he recruited Cecil Kimber that Morris adopted the MG name to designate the cars produced under Kimber's direction, the most famous being the tiny Midget (a word which means dwarf).

These adorable roadsters have long symbolized the perfect small English sports car that many American GI's brought back in their luggage. Rudimentary, uncomfortable, exiguous, oozing of oil below and letting pass the rain from above, these frail looking jalopies nevertheless did wonders in racing, initiating a whole generation of North-Americans youths to the pleasures of European style automobile sport.

But MG wished to expand and decided to add a smaller four seater to its then series of SVW saloons. The new arrival, christened Y-Type, borrowed mechanical elements from its small sporty sisters, in particular the 1¼ liter (1250cc³) engine, a robust enough little mill which nonetheless badly hid its "agricultural" origins, like several British engines of the time.

This perhaps explains why these engines, with generous tolerances more adapted to tractors, were not embarrassed to shed their oil by every crack... As Gilles Bachand, owner of our star of the week, so well explains: "A British car never loses its oil; it marks its territory!"

The misfortune of some is the luck of others

Mr. Bachand tells that his MG-Y, of which he is the proud owner since Christmas 2006, was restored in England in 1996 and lived the 10 following years in company of an elderly resident of the Shetland Islands, north of Scotland.

The car then returned to its native land where it was snapped up by an enthusiast of the MG marque. Unfortunately for him, his wife yelled in horror at the sight of "this ugliness" and summoned the poor fellow to immediately exchange it against a convertible. "He then entrusted its sorrow to the MG-Y Club Registrar with who I had talked of my interest a few weeks before. He alerted me at once and thus the deal was concluded.", adds Mr. Bachand, an astute collector.

"Why a MG-Y? I had 1936 Ford which was expensive to drive and handled like a truck. I was thus seeking a car having the same shape but more modern and more pleasant to drive. The MG-Y fulfilled my desires perfectly, at a very reasonable price... and my wife likes it a lot too."

In spite of its old-fashioned look, this new offering indeed proposed some modern technical solutions for the time, in particular the independent front suspension, designed by Alec Issigonis, the brilliant father of the Mini (1959), and a rack-and-pinion steering worthy of a sports car, two elements which appreciably contribute to its driving pleasure. As for the look of the body, one owes it to its designer, Gerald Palmer, which used the Morris Eight to which he grafted a more fluid rear section and, at the front, the traditional vertical MG grill flanked by detached headlights and separate wings.

Four wheels in the air

Another interesting characteristic of this small saloon (that the Americans call sedan): the Jackall System which consists of four hydraulic jacks, one fixed at each corner of the chassis, and which makes it possible to raise the car to change a wheel. This same system exists today on certain modern racing cars... This only goes to prove that we haven't invented anything new.

But where this MG distinguishes itself is by the care taken to the design of the cockpit. The mahogany instrument panel is decorated by octagonal instruments which recall the shape of the MG emblem. This same wood is also used for trimming on the doors.

Height of luxury: a beautiful three spoke steering wheel is adjustable, seats are covered in leather, a sliding roof and a small blind which can be drawn on the rear window to give more intimacy. And let's not forget the "air-conditioning" afforded by being able to open the windshield from the bottom...

All things considered, it has all the undeniable charm of a traditional British saloon.

In the rear view mirror

Of the MG-Y 1951

Wheelbase/length/width/height (cm): 251/416/152/152

Motor: four cylinders, 1250 cm³
46 hp at 4800 r.p.m. 58 lb

Transmission: four speed

Steering: rack and pinion

Suspension: front/rear:
independent/ Rigid axle

Brakes: Hydraulic drum

Tires: 5.25 X 15

Weight: 933 kg

Performance: 0 – 100 km/h: 30
Seconds; maximum speed 115
km/h

Production: (YB 1952-1953)
1301 units

Price: (1951) £525

Valuation: (2008) about \$25,000

The same year (1951)

- Libya achieves independence after being a colony of Italy since 1912.

- In the USA, Julius and Ethel Rosenberg are accused of having sold nuclear secrets to the USSR. Sentenced to death for espionage the couple, who will always claim their innocence, will nevertheless be executed in the electric chair.

- In Quebec, the government of Louis Saint-Laurent (Liberal) adopts the first Law regarding the protection of youths.

- In Canada, adoption of the Old age pension plan for citizens aged 70 and over.

- It is the beginning of color television and, on the radio, DJ Alan Freed coins for the first time the term **rock & roll** to describe rhythm & blues.

- In Quebec, the fire that destroys St-Cunégonde asylum, operated by the Grey nuns, is responsible for 45 deaths.

- Death in Germany of Ferdinand Porsche. In NASCAR, Marshall Teage and Herb Thomas' Hudson Hornets win just about every honor.

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