

British Car Network - October 22, 2008

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2008 Clovis British Car Roundup - October 11-12
Photo Montage attached.....

Every year on the second weekend in October the Valley British Auto Club puts on the British Car Roundup in "Old Town Clovis" benefiting the Valley Nature Rehabilitation and Education Center.

The show is put on in conjunction with "Old Town's" Antique and Collectable Show creating eight blocks of British cars antique vendors, specialty shops, and restaurants .

The car show grows in size and quality every year and this year was no exception. Since "Old Town Clovis" is located the center of California , the British Car Roundup has more and more cars coming from both the Bay Area and Southern California creating a North meets South type of event.

The weekend included a run into the Sierras ending up with a lunch put on by Fresno Wildlife , the future managers of the Valley Nature , Rehabilitation and Education Center on Saturday. Later that day a get acquainted dinner was held at Yosemite Falls Cafe. Sunday brought the car show with "Old Town Clovis " closing it's streets for a display of almost all of the British marques.

The show is designed for "kicking tires" and swapping stories and has an "oil spot" competition judged by applause which is very popular. British cars of any condition are encouraged to participate and join in the fun.

Judging for classes is done by "participants choice" and this years "Best Of Show" went to Austin Kilbern for his 1938 Bentley 4 and quarter liter Sport Saloon.

You can't help but have a good time the second weekend in October in "Old Town Clovis."

MG TF LE500: The Return of MG (photo attached)

MG is back in business with the TF LE500, a revised version of what used to be Britain's most popular sports car. But can it and the now Chinese-owned brand succeed in the modern world?

Peter Hall reports

Do you recall the story of Rip Van Winkle? Lovable but lazy bloke falls into dubious company, gets drunk and sleeps for several years. Returns to find the world much changed, his friends long gone. Resumes a life of idleness and eventually dies of old age.

MG TF We can only hope that the fate of Britain's most popular sports car is more inspirational. Thirteen years have passed since the car you see here made its debut as the MGF, the first genuinely new model from the venerable MG marque since the demise of the MGB GT in 1980, although it was another seven years before the MGF was transformed into a sports car worthy of the brand's sporting heritage. Sadly the revised TF lived only three years before the collapse of MG Rover, the rump of a once-great industry abused by British governments, trade unions and management, picked up and discarded by BMW and preyed upon by vulture capitalists before the bones were thrown to the Nanjing Automobile Company (NAC) and the Shanghai Automobile Industry Corporation (SAIC).

Now, after a hiatus of three years, the MGTF is back in production. But the world has changed a great deal in that time. What hope can there be for what is basically a 13-year old car (albeit revised) from an 84-year old marque that once epitomised a British tradition and is now owned by the Chinese?

As a nation we might now be more cynical than complacent, but let's not rush to judgement before we've covered a few miles on what the revitalized MG concern describes hopefully as "a new journey".

First, the corporate status of the marque needs some explanation. MG and MG Rover's Longbridge factory were originally acquired by NAC, which among its other activities can claim to be China's oldest car maker. In a recent deal brokered by the Chinese government (signed off on April 8), NAC's automotive sector (including Longbridge) was acquired by SAIC, China's biggest vehicle manufacturer and the owner of Rover (or Roewe as it is called there); in addition SAIC owns a 51 per cent stake in SsangYong and is involved in joint ventures with General Motors and Volkswagen. It has worked with Shoreham-based Ricardo to develop new cars, and established the Shanghai Motor Technical Centre (SMTC UK) at Leamington Spa (plus a design studio at Coventry) to provide engineering and design skills for both MG and Roewe; the "new" MGTF was re-engineered here and chief designer Tony Williams (who previously worked under Peter Stevens) and his colleagues are now working on a range of forthcoming MG and Roewe models, pending their move later this year to a new facility at Longbridge, which will also be the headquarters for R&D, marketing, sales, distribution and training. A UK network of enthusiastic independent dealerships is being established, with almost 50 already signed up and more to come.

No fewer than four new SMTC UK-designed MGs are expected within the next five years. An upper-medium- (Mondeo) sized car based on the existing Roewe 550 platform will roll off the old Rover 75 line at Longbridge in 2010, followed by a mid- (Focus) sized model, a supermini and an all-new replacement for the TF.

MG is SAIC's flagship brand for Europe and all the above will be assembled in the West Midlands in order to satisfy European quality expectations, although they will also be manufactured in China (where the bodyshells are made) and go on sale first in that fast-expanding, right-hand-drive market; for the next five years at least there are no plans to import finished cars from China to the West. After the UK, MG has its sights set on Germany, France, Italy and Spain; it has US ambitions only for the first of the brand-new models.

Will all this come to pass? Notwithstanding NAC's £50 million investment at Longbridge, the development of a mass-market car usually costs something like £5 billion, against which SAIC's UK investment of tens of millions on a project-by-project basis seems minuscule. SAIC's investment in China is much greater, of course, and the British operation can probably survive and prosper for as long as its design and engineering skills are still seen as crucial by the Anglophiliac Chinese. Even when amalgamated at Longbridge, the MG workforce will number a few hundreds rather than thousands - small comfort to the 6,000 MG Rover workers who lost their jobs three years ago and remain understandably bitter about their fate, but surely better than nothing.

Much depends on satisfying the customer. MG retains an enviable heritage and reputation among its devotees worldwide, but it's important that the new cars live up to expectations. With the revitalized TF, the omens are generally good. The first 500 are being sold in LE500 limited-edition form, equipped as standard with what were previously optional extras - leather upholstery, piano-black trim, sports seats, detachable hardtop, MP3 audio, air-conditioning, parking sensors and so on, plus a numbered plaque and certificate - but all TFs feature a number of significant revisions.

From the AMGBA Octagon

35th Annual ALL MG Parts Exchange
Sunday, November 23, 2008.
7:00 a.m. to 1:00 p.m.
College Park, College of Communications,
2600 E. Nutwood Ave., Fullerton.

The Vintage MG Club of Southern California will hold the 35th Annual ALL MG Parts Exchange on Sunday, November 23, 2008. 7:00AM to 1:00PM College Park, College of Communications, 2600 E. Nutwood Ave, Fullerton. Across the street from Cal State University-Fullerton. Parts from 1929 to 1980 MG's can be found. In addition, there is a Food Booth on site.

Admission is \$5.00. Vendor spaces are \$20.00 for the first space, and \$10.00 for each additional parking space.

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Mini shares details on crossover concept (Photo Attached)
by Tony Lewin

Automotive News Europe
Sept. 10, 2008

Mini Tuesday revealed some features of its Crossover Concept that it will unveil at the Paris auto show.

The car hints at Mini's planned sports activity vehicle, which is due in the second quarter of 2010. Austrian contract manufacturer Magna Steyr will produce the car.

Other than saying the concept has all-wheel drive -- a first for Mini -- the BMW-subsidiary provided few technical details on the car, which debuts at the auto show next month.

The Crossover Concept's exterior design features a grille and headlights with exaggerated proportions. The car's high ground clearance and black rocker panels and wheelarch moldings give it a rugged look.

The concept is the first Mini to measure more than 4000mm in length. It is also the first Mini with four passenger doors.

Yet, true to Mini's individualistic style, the door arrangement is innovative. While the passenger side has conventional doors, behind the driver's door is a sliding rear door to give access to the rear seat. The car's one-piece tailgate opens sideways, but its frameless glass can be retracted. Mini says this arrangement allows the Crossover to carry items such as skis, snowboards and surfboards.

Free Rein

Mini designers have been given free rein to apply a series of playful ideas to the Crossover's interior. The most spectacular of these is a large three-dimensional globe in the center of the dashboard. This has a touch-activated surface and houses all the communications, navigation and entertainment functions. It can be controlled using a trackball on the steering wheel or a keyboard that slides out of the dashboard in front of the passenger. In addition, says Mini, the display can be split into two independent halves

so that driver can use the navigation system while the passenger surfs the Internet.

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submitted by John Voelcker

Top Gear's Jeremy Clarkson causes outrage after blowing up Routemaster
Top Gear host Jeremy Clarkson has caused outrage after blowing up a classic Routemaster bus worth £20,000 on his show.

By Charlotte Bailey
20 Oct 2008

Top Gear host Jeremy Clarkson has caused outrage after blowing up a rare Routemaster bus worth £20,000 on his show.

Fans of the famous bus are angry that one of the few remaining Routemasters has been destroyed.

Top Gear hosts Richard Hammond, Jeremy Clarkson and James May: Clarkson has caused outrage after blowing up a rare Routemaster bus worth £20,000 on his show. Clarkson with his Top Gear colleagues Richard Hammond (left) and James May. Photo: BBC

The presenter, who is known for his controversial views, destroyed the classic British double-decker in a huge fireball as part of his new DVD, Thriller.

However, fans of the famous design are angry that one of only 500 remaining Routemasters in the country had been destroyed. Andrew Morgan, chairman of the Routemaster Association, said: "It's just sacrilege and a very sad thing to do. Why pick on a vehicle like that when you wouldn't do it to a classic car like an E-type and there are more of them? There are plenty of other red double-deckers that he could pick on in scrapyards.

"Typical Clarkson, he likes picking on things that people know. The way he attacked caravans was done in a similar vein. He does things just to make a story to sell his video. The worst of it is that I'm a Top Gear fan.

"This bus is held in great affection by the public. It was in service for the best part of 50 years and it's been part of everyone's life for so long. The only way he can slightly redeem himself is if he gives the wreck over to us for spares."

A trailer of the DVD on the Top Gear website shows Clarkson blowing the Routemaster

apart with a rocket. Written on the side of the bus are the words: "Wasting space and causing jams in your community".

A Transport for London spokesman said: "We don't agree with what Jeremy Clarkson has written on the bus. We are keen to see people transfer from their cars to buses and the Routemaster can carry up to 90 passengers, actually reducing traffic."

A BBC spokeswoman refused to comment on the incident, saying that the programme was not made by them but by company 2 entertain.

A 2 entertain spokesman said: "Jeremy has been presenting this hugely successful video/DVD for the past 13 years. What he wants to blow up for his own, and the viewers' entertainment, is up to him. However, it's a well-known fact that he isn't fond of buses."

Only 18 Routemasters are still in service around the capital but London's Mayor Boris Johnson has pledged to return them to the streets.

submitted by Kevin Lynch