

## MAKING GOOD ON THE MG MYSTIQUE

By Pete and Sue Murdoch, #78-432

Interior Upgrade British sports cars have unique characteristics which have long held the fancy of motoring enthusiasts in the United States. For example, styling is a major reason vehicles such as the TC series MG's, Austin-Healys and Jaguars are almost universally recognized as classics, and their current market value serves to dramatize their enduring popularity. Unlike post-war American sedans, the British sports cars brought with them a new excitement in driving. The low centers of gravity, a short turning radius, manual gear boxes and the open air thrill of a convertible all added to the appeal of these cars. It quickly became known to the driver and the passenger alike that these characteristics were accompanied by the car's questionable reliability, buck board ride and inadequate protection against the elements (read...leaky tops and poor heaters). The creature comforts in the interiors of these cars were an absolute minimum, and the inclusion of roll up windows in the early 1960's was considered almost a sacrilegious modification to the spartan vehicles. Modest leather seats and a walnut fascia were an integral part of the British sports car, and the rich fragrance they provided for the interior was as rewarding an experience for the occupants as the actual driving of the car itself.

The years have brought with them a dramatic change in the character of these cars. Government safety and emission regulations have brought about the demise of several marques, and cost pressures and changes in consumer tastes have dictated modifications in the few remaining British sports cars still marketed today. Perhaps the most dramatic example of such changes are found on 1975 or later model MGB's, whose plastic bumpers, raised suspensions and single carburetors attest to their federal certification. In anticipation of these modifications, in 1973, my wife and I purchased a new MGB/GT. Our new "B" had all the characteristics we had grown to expect that would make an MGB fun to own: style, handling, economy, a noisy gear box and the unmistakable MG mystique. While the lever action buck board ride still remained, customary shortcomings such as ignition problems and weather sealing were non-existent. The simplistic interiors of past MG's had given way to a comparatively plush set of bucket seats made with a combination of brushed nylon seat facings, carpeting and vinyl trim throughout. While such accommodations provided for unquestioned comfort and durability, they were the single element in our "B" that did not serve to reinforce the images we had of the traditional Abingdon sportster. Somehow, it never seemed quite right that plastic and vinyl should replace leather and walnut in the MGB and last fall we set plans in motion to make our MGB/GT complete.

A local tannery in our community (Grand Haven, Michigan) provides leather hides to upholster GM, Ford, and Chrysler products, and we were able to select and purchase quality hides from a wide variety of patterns and colors. We chose a black, bold grain hide that would complement the blaze red exterior of our "B". Unlike the standard navy blue interior, the black leather brought a new dimension of quality and class to the car. Prior to beginning the project, we agreed to retain a cloth seat facing on the seats because of their exceptional comfort in all climate conditions, and to replace all interior vinyl trim with leather. An attractive scotch plaid material was purchased through an automotive trim shop, and after receiving assurances of quality work, we hired them to upholster the front bucket seats and the rear jump seat using the plaid material and the leather we provided. With these components out of the car, we began to remove all the interior trim pieces. Items removed included the door panels, side kick panels, window pillar trim and all miscellaneous parts covered in the stock navy blue vinyl. The vinyl material was carefully removed

MAKING GOOD ON THE M.G. MISTIQUE (Continued)

from each panel (glue and staple held most in place), and each piece served as a pattern to cut a replacement piece of leather. Automotive trim glue and staples were used to mount the leather on the parts. Careful attention to detail often resulted in a finished interior component superior in fit to the original. Recognizing that we were well on our way to completing our "B's" interior in leather and cloth, we looked for a proper location to apply walnut trim. The upgraded interior required only an accent piece of walnut that would lend a touch of class to the project rather than giving it the wide-spread "wood" look that Detroit often employs. A natural for this accent treatment was the face of the plastic glove box door. A friend located in Denver, Colorado, that specializes in auto restoration, was sent the door and a beautiful piece of veneer was inserted on the front of the door.

As the project comes to an end and each detailed piece is carefully installed back into the vehicle, we are pleased with the finished product. The cost (approximately \$300) and our efforts are repaid each time we enter the vehicle and we pause briefly to enjoy the charm of the interior appointments. No doubt some purists will argue that our "B" is no longer stock (we did retain all the pieces we removed), yet we have fulfilled our personal dream of owning an MGB that has all the physical and mechanical charisma that made MG the sports car America loved first.

- Pete and Sue Murdoch, #78-432

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***Isay! All you bloody***  ***owners***

***and enthusiasts! Look here!***



## TECHNICAL NOTES

By Ken Smith, #79-845

The MGB has a typical front engine, rear wheel drive, layout. Although most cars with this configuration have gearboxes that will come out from underneath, on some with limited engine space the whole engine and gearbox have to be lifted out. The Rover 2000 is like this. The Sprite and Midget can be worked on this way, or the engine can be taken out, followed by the gearbox as a separate unit.

The MGB unit is removed as follows:

1. Take off the bonnet.
2. Remove the radiator.
3. Disconnect all wires, cables, pipes, etc.
4. Remove carbs, starter (starter can only come forward slightly) and dynamo, etc.
5. Undo the exhaust from the manifold and pull away.
6. Remove gearbox oil.
7. Remove gear lever.
8. Take out the gear lever extension cover.
9. Disconnect speedo drive.
10. Remove the universal joint bolts from the front u/j and drop the propshaft.
11. Remove the rear block on the end of the engine tie-rod.
12. Undo the four bolts holding up the cross member.
13. Unbolt the gear box mountings, on each side of the cross member. Support the gearbox.
14. Take off the crossmember.
15. Fit up the hoist and place a sling under the engine, or use sling brackets.
16. Keeping the gearbox down as low as possible, lift out the unit.
17. Unbolt the gearbox.

Needless to say before attempting the above, disconnect the battery and familiarize yourself with what's where!

### Useful Tips

- a) Try and take the carbs off with the linkage intact! Remove them carefully, and pass them over the engine and lay them on the opposite wing, on a cloth. This saves messing around trying to re-assemble the linkage when replacing.
- b) Take out the radiator, together with the apron (the black upright thing the radiator is fastened to!) There is no need to undo every bolt on the radiator this way!
- c) Disconnect the oil cooler pipes at the engine end. Pull the pipes through the apron and drape them over the front wing. This saves removing the oil cooler.
- d) In the States you have some double ended ratchet spanners. Whilst these are expensive they are very useful for getting at certain parts of the 'B' engine, i.e. the bolts down behind the engine mounting block covers, where a normal ring or open-ended spanner will not fit.
- e) Put EVERY bolt and nut you take off into a polystyrene foam block. Just press them in this way you will not lose any, and you can mark them if you are unsure where they came from!



MGB GT V-8 CONVERSION,  
BY GARY GRADY, #79-722



