



A GOOD OLD SPORT

TAKE A SPIN IN A VINTAGE BRITISH ROADSTER AND IMPROVE YOUR DISPOSITION.

FORGET THE NASDAQ. Get your kicks as you watch the tachometer go up and the endorphins shift your mood into high gear. From its' sexy body styling to its' purring exhaust note, Britain's MG is viewed by car enthusiasts as the sixties sports car icon. Rumor has it that BMW, the last owner of the Rover and MG marques, diverted its energy into the Z3 much to the dread of MG devotees (of which I am one) and most of England. BMW sold the MG Car Company to London's Alchemy Partners, leaving a great deal of speculation as to whether the new owner has any intention of continuing production. The MG series may cease to exist; so naturally, I had to have one.

Once ubiquitous on this side of the pond but now scarce, vintage MGs can still be found. I set up appointments and was soon consumed by traveling long distances to find cars that only vaguely resembled anything like the strategically cropped photos sent by owners. With hopes dashed, there I stand looking at yet another disappointment—a rusted body sprouting an oak from the rear bumper.

I soon discover that there are two options in this elusive search. First, seek an original owner who is willing to sell and has spared no maintenance expense to keep his car in tiptop shape. The probability of this happening is as likely as turning water to petrol. A more viable option is to search the land for a restored car or restore one yourself. In either case, verify that the car possesses documentation beginning with original ownership and transfers, if possible, service history and true mileage. Valid car numbers stamped on the chassis and engine block ensure that you have found a thoroughbred manufactured in the year the seller claims.

Find a reputable classic restoration specialist because you'll be hard pressed to find an older car that hasn't suffered the ravages of time. If you are lucky, he may have a gleaming jewel wait-

ing. If you are not looking for authenticity, he can rebuild one using reproduction parts that exceed original factory standards to suit your made-to-order specifications. That MG can look as good, and even drive better, than a model rolling off the production line 40 years ago. (A restored MG can range from \$7,000 to \$30,000.) However, a purist considers an original condition car, even with flaws, more collectable than one newly restored. When it comes to restorations, the rule of thumb is that better is not best. The huge nautical steering wheel, quirky dashboard switches and manual transmission predating synchromesh add to the car's period charm, value and historic originality.

If you opt for a rebuild, don't expect to be driving your weekend plaything anytime soon. Most well-respected restoration specialists have a number of concurrent projects in the works. You will hear stories from them about the 1957 MGA delivered years ago into which they are finally getting around to installing the new dashboard while your dream car sits under an inch of dust. Try not to be deterred as this may be one investment that yields a great return in both money and enjoyment.

One final word of advice. Unless you like to tinker, find a trusted mechanic close to home BEFORE purchasing your classic. No need to find out afterward that there isn't a qualified technician within 25-miles to work on your new baby.

I was not delusional enough to pretend that I had the fortitude to live through a complete restoration so I went on with my search for perfection. Finally, after six months I found her (and a good mechanic!). There she was, a completely restored 1963 Tartan Red MGB convertible roadster with highly sought after pull door handles, glistening chrome bumpers and wire wheels. That car needed nothing—but me. I was in love. I call her Emma (after Emma Peel), my other first love.

Now, if it would only stop raining... ■

BY HANS GSCHLISSER