

It really is the new B!

Simon's new MG is faster, more economical and even more garish than his BGT. But what made him change his mind about the modern roadster, and was it a good move to skip forwards some 30 years of design development?



Very standard in every respect, but the F has more than enough power and poise.



1996 MGF 1.8i

Owned by: Simon Goldsworthy

Owned since: May 2011

Mileage: 114,902

Last month, I explained why I was putting my MGB GT up for sale. It basically boiled down to the fact that I really wanted a convertible again, a feeling intensified by our early spring sunshine but not entirely down to those soaring temperatures that are now a distant memory.

In the past I've had motorbikes as well as convertibles – first a Herald, then a Velorex, Skoda and finally a Midget 1500. I always loved the feeling of freedom they gave to any journey, and

while for various reasons a motorbike is not on the options list, the pressure to get another ragtop has been growing. Sadly, my finances were not growing at an equal rate.

Regular readers may recall how I intended to buy a Midget when I went shopping in 2006, but I came home with the BGT instead. I also tried out an MGF back in the April 2009 issue when the B failed its MoT, but decided instead to invest in extensive structural repairs and a respray instead.

There was no such dramatic catalyst this time around; in fact the BGT sailed through its latest MoT, just as I expected it would. But I reckoned I would need around £4000 to get a decent Midget, and that would mean selling the BGT first and then finding some extra cash to add to the pot. I didn't much fancy being without an MG for a while, not least because there was no guarantee that the summer sunshine wouldn't end before I found a replacement.

There was, however, an alternative. Back in that April 2009 issue, I said that MGFs being available for as little as

£1850 were the ultimate MG bargains. Well, now they can be even cheaper. And I'm not talking about old nails for a few hundred quid – they will inevitably end up costing you more and being less of a car that buying a half decent one in the first place. There is also a lot to be said for paying a little extra to get a car from a specialist who knows its history and can vouch for the work that has been done – head gasket repairs and the like can quickly swallow any savings in a bargain purchase price.

However, Hall's Garage had the very same Amaranth purple MGF on their forecourt which I tested two years ago, only this time the asking price was just £1395. With a year's MoT, a few months tax and half a tank of petrol, that was simply too much of a bargain to resist. I could scrape that much together before selling the B and get straight into enjoying the car. In fact, all I have had to do is remove the rather dubious MaxPower air filter fitted by the previous owner (using the cardboard box from a packet of biscuits to join it to

the intake manifold) and refit the original airbox to start enjoying my new purchase.

The funny thing is that two years ago, I felt the F didn't tick enough of my personal boxes to justify buying one. Maybe my boxes have changed or maybe it is simply that ownership changes your perspective, but I am delighted with the car. No doubt you will read more from me about it in coming issues, but this week my 15 year old son Ben has been skiving off school on a work placement and discovering the joys of MGE. So, as well as blaming all the typos on him, I thought I should give him a little space to air some of his own thoughts about the new arrival. This is what he said:

As I stand by the side of a road in the middle of nowhere, one thought goes through my mind: 'He'd better come back.' Dad has driven off into the distance, ostensibly to get to the roundabout to come by for another pass, while I try to remain nonchalant at the side of the road with a camera.

Call me paranoid, but I think it's silly not to be suspicious of any plans that involve being left alone whilst the person who has been blessed with your company for the past few days speeds off, out of sight. He did come back in the end, however. I imagine he wanted the camera back.

On account of suffering very strongly from travel sickness, I've never really got into cars. I know enough to identify them as metal boxes I go inside in order to throw up, and then get out of again to find the scenery is different, but technical details are as lost on me as I imagine my computer's technical details are on other people. Despite this, I will have a go at reviewing the car.

I did appreciate the fact that the roof goes down. With that folded away, I didn't feel at all sick, and with the roads devoid of other drivers we went rather fast which, with an old man like dad at the wheel, made a pleasant change. It even made the car feel quite powerful.



Sadly no leather interior, but it does have power steering.

“With a year’s MoT, a few months tax and half a tank of petrol, it was simply too much of a bargain to resist”

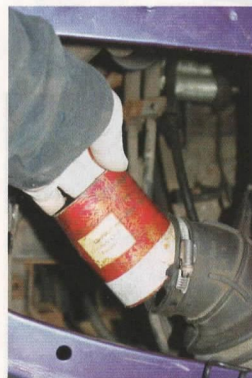
On the downside, the car sits very close to the ground which, as the floor is much further down than I constantly expect, nearly turned my attempts at getting into the car into amusing fights with gravity. [And he has the cheek to call me old! – Ed] Also, the car’s flamboyant purple paint job, while certainly eye-catching, made sitting in it a bit embarrassing, but over the last 15 years I’ve come to expect nothing less from my dad.

Dad’s old, yellow MG was interesting to see develop, as there was often something new sticking out of it, or something wasn’t sticking out of it any more on the rare occasions I left my computer. It was fun to drive in too, with lots of vibrating and rumbling and other such adjectives, but it wasn’t a convertible so it instantly lost a lot of points.

Actually, thinking about it, convertible or not, I may have gotten a little attached to the yellow MG. Maybe, in a couple months when I look and realise it hasn’t been in the driveway for a while, I’ll

look back and feel nostalgic. Or maybe not. Who knows?

While the purple MG hasn’t had as long to grow on me as the yellow MG, and its paint job leaves a little something to be desired, this new, convertible MG seems like a good car. It’s fast, powerful and most of all, to combat my travel sickness, it is windy. And that makes a pleasant change, as being windy is usually the preserve of my brother, Max...



MaxPower filter and cardboard tube it sat on were quickly ditched.

It’s had front end repairs in the past, but nothing serious.



Hard to believe you get so much driving pleasure for £1395.