

JANUARY 1985

Peter Filby's

£1.25

Component Car

CAR CRAFT FOR THE CONNOISSEUR

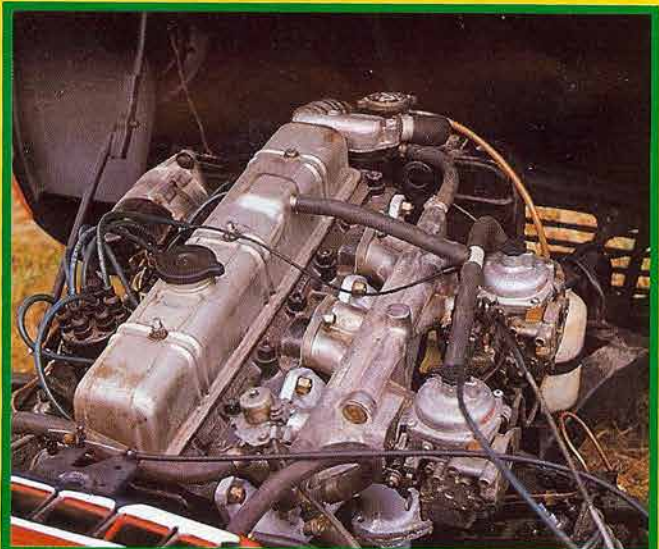
British Sports Cars are alive and well!



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'SIXTIES SMOOTHIE

With so many thirties-style roadsters on the market today the sixties-style Hurricane makes a refreshing change, especially when it sports 2.5 litre TR6 power. Roger Ormisher reports,

The boom in the market for convertible cars has led to most of the major manufacturers chopping the tops off one or other of their production saloons in order to cater for what appears to be insatiable demand. Models such as the Escort, Samba and Golf drop tops are now becoming a common sight on Britain's roads.

But many motorists still mourn the passing of the great open sports cars which these chopped saloons can never hope to replace. Memories of fast dashes down country lanes in Triumph Spitfires, the TR series or MGBs must still be fresh in many enthusiasts' minds, and those who still own such cars must continually worry what will happen when their car has reached the end of its useful life; when the rust bug has grabbed an irreversible hold.

Well, one alternative such a person could consider is the Vincent Hurricane, a car which is styled along the lines of the classic open sports cars of the 1950s and '60s. This attractive looking roadster certainly seems to be a real alternative to, or replacement for, a mass produced sportscar. It was in fact the brainchild of brothers Martin and Robin Vincent, who set out to re-clothe a Spitfire/GT6 chassis some two years ago. Since then they have supplied about 50 cars for home assembly and have also built up some half dozen complete cars by themselves to individual customer orders.

PACKAGE DESCRIPTION

One of the main plus points of this component car must be its sheer simplicity. Basically, all that it consists of

is a body replacement for the Triumph Spitfire or GT6. The actual package contains a one-piece, partially stressed body/floorpan unit which is formed in hand laminated GRP and supplied to the brothers by John Ingram Fibreglass, a firm with considerable experience in this field. Chopped strand mat in polyester resin, with double skinning, is used throughout and box sections help to reinforce stressed sections of the body. Additional strength and support for the windscreen surround, door hinges, steering column and dashboard is provided by a subframe constructed from tubular steel. An examination of the doors and forward hinging bonnet also reveals bonded-in tubular frames for extra safety. The car's inner wheel arches are bonded-in as well to eliminate the possibility of surface crazing by flying stones.

Both the doors and the boot are fitted at the factory to ensure they properly align and the handbrake brackets are also put on. The Hurricane package includes such items as bonnet hinges, radiator grille material, gearbox cover, a dashboard and building instructions. Before leaving the factory, all the chassis mounting points and most of the subassembly mountings are drilled, all the fibreglass edges are finished off and apertures are cut out for the headlights, radiator intakes, petrol cap, heater unit and differential inspection plate.

Finally, to make sure the owner encounters no fitting problems, each Hurricane bodyshell and front end is tried on a chassis to ensure correct alignment. So the eventual package the customer receives is a thoughtfully devised, well designed and professionally finished job.

BUILDING THE HURRICANE

All that the customer then needs is a donor Spitfire or GT6 from which he can use the complete rolling chassis with its engine and gearbox without any modification. This allows a choice of engines which includes the 1150 and 1300cc units for those who are concerned with economy, and the 2-litre GT6 (104bhp) or the 2.5 litre TR6 unit, which can develop up to 150bhp, for those whose main concern is performance.

The master cylinders, handbrake components, door internals, seats, pedal assemblies and all the electrical and lighting equipment can then be directly transferred. The only extra parts required are the fuel tank and filler pipe from a Spitfire for those using a GT6 as a donor car, and the windscreen assembly, hood and hoodframe, and door windows (which Vincent can supply new) from a pre-1971 Spitfire. The only non-Triumph parts are the bonnet and boot locks, and rear lights from a Hillman Hunter or VW Polo.

ON THE ROAD

The Hurricane model which I had the opportunity to drive was a customer's car and the first to be fitted with the 2.5 litre engine from the TR6. In fact, with its deep red colour scheme, the car looked as good as it performed. A close examination revealed that both the doors and the boot fitted extremely well and that the well trimmed interior complemented this carefully constructed body.

The Hurricane is also fairly practical with room behind the seats for a couple of squashy bags as well as even more boot space than the original Spitfire; with the floor being deepened, this

Far left: Hurricane dashboard is neat and simple and has a mass-production sports car air about it. Near left: Straight six 2.5-litre TR6 engine is ultimate power unit for this car, although most builders will opt to stick to Spitfire engine.

allows a couple of suitcases to be fitted in with relative ease,

Once installed in the cockpit, a good driving position is not difficult to find with both the seats and the steering column being adjustable. In fact a six-footer would probably find ample legroom. The standard row of instruments consists of (from left to right) water temperature, fuel, oil, speedo and rev counter, whilst column stalks operate indicators, lights and wipers. All very practical and easy to operate,

The engine starts at the first turn of the key and the twin exhaust option improves the already forceful exhaust note. A few miles in the car soon convince you that this is a real road-burner. It accelerates quickly through the gearbox to reach 60mph in something under nine seconds and when given its head will eventually run to a top speed approaching 120mph. It is a fast car by any standards,

This particular car was fitted with stiffer suspension and was primarily constructed for fast main road touring. Consequently the ride was somewhat jiggly and jarring over twisting C-class roads. However, these particular lanes did demonstrate the superb handling and roadholding of this car. With 14 inch tyres all round, it is a veritable joy to push through the leafy lanes, with its smooth clutch action and short throw gearbox allowing one to accelerate hard before braking and changing down for the next corner,

A heavy shower put a sudden stop to the fun but demonstrated the ease with

which the hood can be put up, and the watertight protection that it gives. It also gave a chance to assess the car's wet weather handling. This proved to be commendable, though accelerating hard out of a corner could well provoke the tail into breaking away sharply,

Overall, though, a pleasing open top sports package which gives you the thrills and exhilaration of wind-in-the-hair motoring in a car which could almost pass as a production model, albeit one from another era,



For practical, everyday use, the Hurricane can be fitted with a soft hood or a glassfibre hardtop.

HOW TO BUY

A Hurricane body unit package costs a reasonable £1540 plus VAT. This includes all the parts previously described which are then fitted on to the donor vehicle. Alternatively, there is an economy package costing £1360 plus VAT, designed for the experienced builder who can build the car from untrimmed mouldings. The Vincent

brothers will also convert a Spitfire or GT6 into a Hurricane at their factory or build a complete Hurricane from scratch to customer specification,

When their cars are completed, owners can choose from a range of options which includes a fibreglass hardtop (£150 + VAT), roll bar plus hood frame, door trim assembly and carpet sets. Wood veneer dashboards can also be supplied.

CONCLUSION

Whilst the Hurricane is perhaps not one of the most instantly desirable component cars available, it certainly has integrity and a properly engineered 'feel'. Though the styling is a little dull, the car grows on you, its all-round talents producing a machine that provides 'the goods' rather than acts as a cosmetic poser.

The Hurricane's outstanding features are its excellent quality, its performance potential and its easy construction. Whether enough people are these days inclined to perform full conversion jobs on ancient Spitfires and GT6s to keep the Vincent brothers in full production I wouldn't like to say, but let's hope they are. Martin and Robin Vincent deserve to make enough money to finance the really outstanding, scratch-built component car which they are surely capable of building.

For further details, prospective purchasers of the Hurricane should send a pound note to **Vincent Cars, Northend, Turville Heath, Henley-on-Thames, Oxon RG9 6LE.**

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