

ABOVE: Cutaway shows main features of new Austin's unconventional design. Hydrolastic suspension, extra stiff structure ensure smoothness.

BELOW: Oceans of room to roll round in on those full layback seats. They're a standard fitting.





AUSTIN styling looks awkward at first — but it grows on you. And, with engine producing 4 bhp per sq. ft. of frontal area, economy benefits.

THE EYE-OPENING



ALL right, Alex, I surrender. You have got me. Until now I haven't been over-enthused about the Issigonis concept of east-west engine and gearbox used on BMC's Mini and 1100, apart from conceding the more obvious merits and admitting the Mini is a great fun car.

But since driving the Austin 1800, BMC's and Issigonis' latest — and, I believe, greatest — I've changed my tune. This car sets a whole new standard of practicality in motoring. It is, considering all the extras that come as standard, brilliantly priced at £1165 — But **Modern Motor's** staff agrees with me that at almost ANY price it would be the most exciting mass-produced car yet made here.

Ah, you say, fine words, but you-know-how-these-road-testers-go-on — would Cookie really put his money where his typewriter is? The answer is YES, YES — 1165 times YES. Now let me try to explain why.

Layout

Briefly the 1800 utilises the same east-west-engine-with-gearbox-in-the-sump layout common to the Mini and 1100.

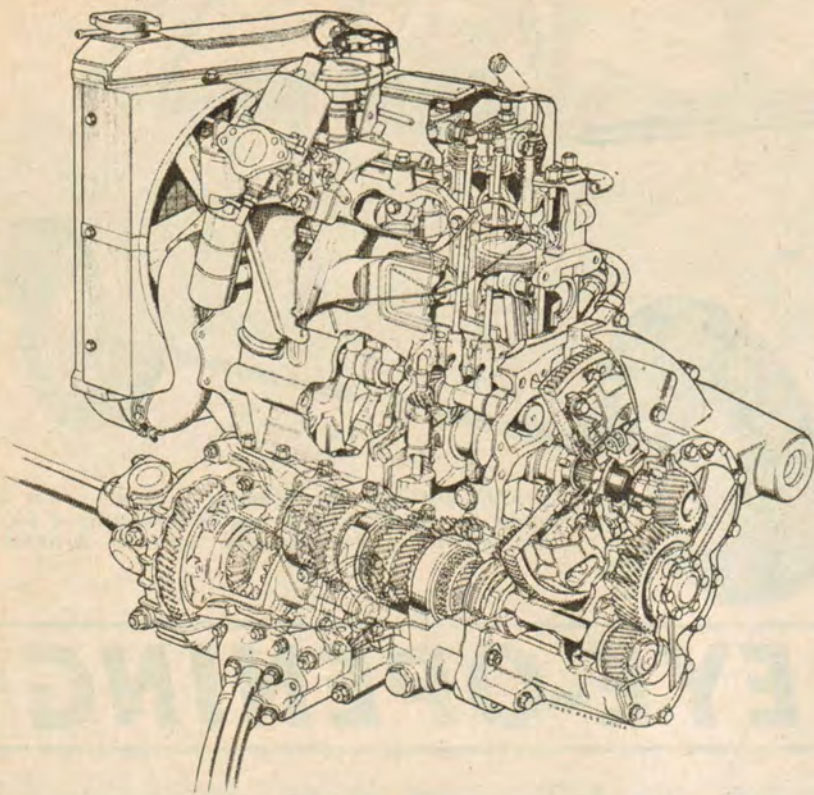
It also features the Moulton-designed Hydrolastic suspension, first

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AUSTIN 1800



Australian version of Alex Issigonis' greatest four-cylinder triumph sets new standards in practical motoring, reports Barry Cooke. And, at £1165, it's going to hit the ailing six-cylinder market hard



seen on the 1100, and more recently incorporated in the Australian-bred Mini Deluxe.

All these bits and pieces are slung into, on, and around a body/chassis whose wheelbase is very close to its overall length — again in the Issigonis tradition of a wheel at each corner of the body.

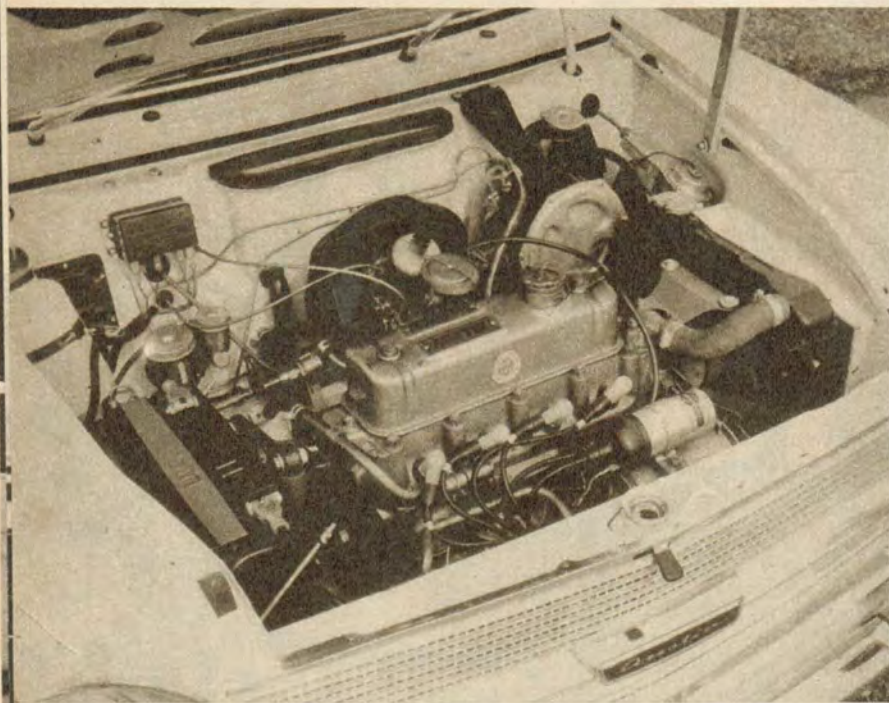
The body looks something like an 1100, though not nearly as nice, being rather heavy at the for'ard end and lean in the haunches.

Wheelbase is 8ft. 9in.—just 7in. less than the Rambler Classic, although overall length is a good 2ft. 7in. less!

Thanks to this long wheelbase, there are four whacking great doors that open at rightangles to the body and provide darn near perfect access.

Inside, the seats, splendidly padded and tastefully upholstered, rest on an almost flat floor—no transmission hump to stumble over.

There is oceans of leg-room in both the front and rear compartments. In fact, as I've heard one BMC man unkindly but tellingly point out, the car is shorter overall than a Cortina, yet contains more interior room than a Holden.



AUSTIN 1800

ABOVE AND TOP: Photo, cutaway show details of MG-based 84 bhp engine, all-synchro four-speed gearbox. Power brake unit is standard fitting, located behind radiator. BMC are already working on automatic transmission, hope to market it here in a year to 18 months.



There is so much room in the back, in fact, that by stretching the legs forward, sprawling back in the deeply padded seat and closing the eyes, it is easy to imagine you're sitting in one of those teddibly well-bred limousines.

Only notable seating failure is the absence of a centre armrest in the rear.

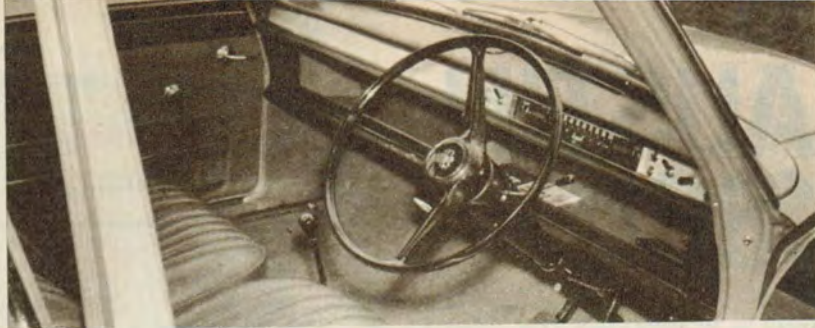
Individual front seats adjust for rake and length, meaning that the upright, bus-like steering column angle is not so troublesome in the 1800 as on the Mini and 1100. (There's a good reason for that angle, incidentally: in a crash the top of the column would most likely be forced back toward the engine, instead of digging itself into the driver's chest.)

In fact, the driving position was exactly right for me.

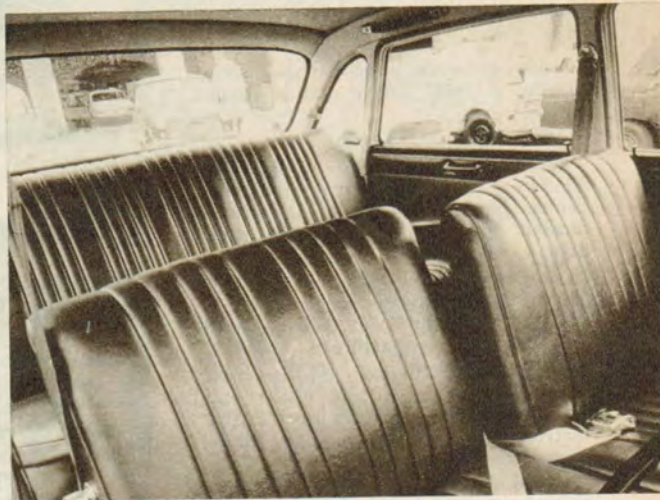
The front seats can be let down completely to form reasonably flat bedding—a no-extra-cost provision that is bound to be a big selling point.

Pedals are offset slightly to the left, but they're well spaced, and if you're very keen facilitate a "heel-and-toe" of sorts.

Instrumentation is sparse—simply

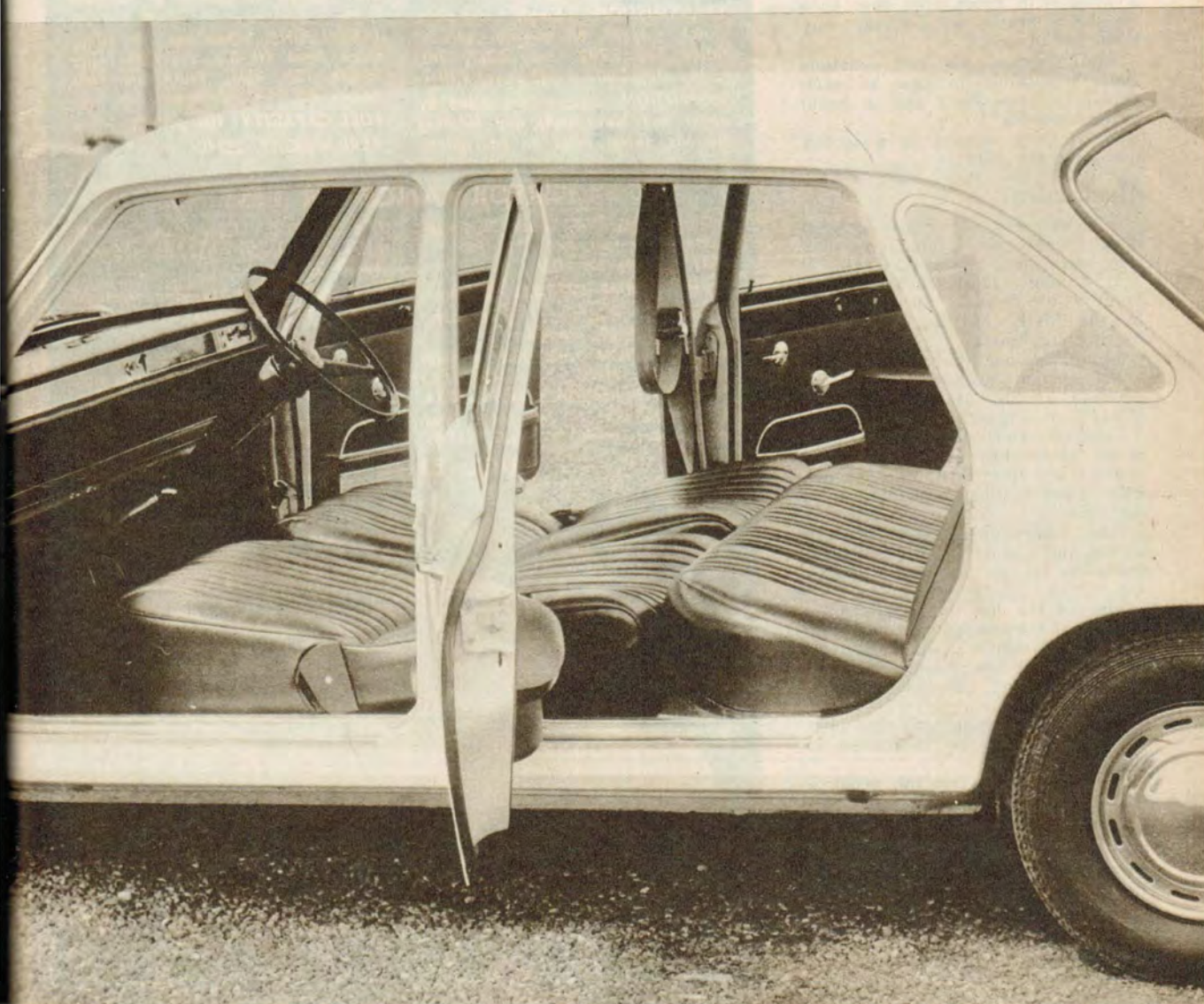


ABOVE: Dash is free of fuss and gimmickry. But instrumentation is bare minimum.



RIGHT: Good all-round view through big glass area. Upholstery is top quality.

BELOW: Long wheelbase permits wide-opening doors, huge area of leg-room.



AUSTIN 1800

BOOT space is easily got at. Spare is in wind-down tray under floor. There is a boot light, too.

a very accurate and readable strip speedo, a fuel gauge, and a temp. gauge.

Warning lights do the rest.

Stowage space is laid on lavishly. There's a full-width parcel shelf with centre baffle under the dash, and sensibly proportioned bins in each door.

The boot is big (17 cu. ft.) and full of usable space. Spare wheel is located under the floor, and is wound down with the wheelbrace.

Interior ventilation is first-class with directional vents at either end of the fascia, and hinged rear quarter-lights—in addition to whopping door glasses.

Front seat belts are standard equipment, and—nice touch—the car is fitted with nylon clips that keep the belts neatly out of the way when not in use.

Also standard are two sunvisors (very collapsible in case of accidents), screenwashers and a beautiful heater/demister.

Only thing missing is a second speed for the wipers.

Mechanicals

The east-west motor has internal measurements of 80.26mm. by 88.9 mm. for a cubic capacity of 1798c.c.

If these measurements seem familiar it's because they're shared by the MGB, just as is the five-bearing crankshaft.

Motor uses one SU carburettor, and has a compression ratio of 8.2 to 1. It develops 84 bhp at 5300 rpm and 99lb./ft. of torque at 2100 rpm.

Gearbox, which lives in the sump, is an all-synchro set-up (first all-synchro box from BMC to my knowledge), and it leaves something to be desired.

The baulk-ring synchro is very strong, and a heavy hand is sometimes needed to get the gear you're looking for.

One of the less desirable characteristics of the box is its inconsistency—sometimes snappy down-changes are easy, while at other times you hunt around in blind alleys looking for the right slot.

Clutch is a strong unit that bites well and displays no inclination to slip.

It works best when the pedal is

(Continued on page 77)

SQUAT tail isn't Austin's most flattering feature. But there's 17 cu. ft. of luggage space in boot.



MAIN SPECIFICATIONS

ENGINE: 4 cylinders in line transversely-mounted ohv.; bore 80.3mm., stroke 88.9mm., capacity 1798c.c.; compression ratio, 8.2:1; maximum bhp, 84 (gross) at 5300 rpm; maximum torque, 99ft./lb. at 2100 rpm; SU HS6 carburettor, electric fuel pump, 12v. ignition.

TRANSMISSION: Single dry-plate clutch, 4-speed, all synchro gearbox; ratios: 1st, 3.292; 2nd, 2.217; 3rd, 1.384; 4th, 1.00. Final drive, 4.19:1.

SUSPENSION: Independent front by upper and lower arms and locating tie-rods, swivel axles on ball joints,

Hydrostatic displacers; independent rear by trailing arms incorporating Hydrostatic displacers, anti-roll bar.

STEERING: Rack-and-pinion; 4.4 turns lock-to-lock; 37ft. turning cycle.

BRAKES: Disc/drum, servo assisted.

WHEELS: Steel disc knock-off wire with 175 by 13 Dunlop SP tubeless tyres.

DIMENSIONS: Wheelbase, 8ft. 10in.; track, front, 4ft. 8in.; rear, 4ft. 7in.; length, 13ft. 8in.; width, 5ft. 7in.; height, 4ft. 7in.; clearance, 6in.

FUEL CAPACITY: 10½ gallons.

KERB WEIGHT: 2534lb.

PERFORMANCE ON TEST

CONDITIONS: Fine, warm; two occupants, super fuel.

BEST SPEED: 84 mph.

FLYING ¼-MILE AVERAGE: 83.5 mph.

MAXIMUM in gears: 1st, 28 mph.; 2nd, 43; 3rd, 69; 4th, 84.

ACCELERATION from rest through gears: 0-30 mph., 5.7s.; 0-40, 8.5s.; 0-50, 13.2s.; 0-60, 18.3s.; 0-70, 28.1s.

ACCELERATION in top (with third in brackets): 20-40 mph., 11.0s.

(7.6s.); 30-50, 11.2s. (8.0s.); 40-60, 11.7s. (9.0s.); 50-70, 14.5s. (16.6s.); 60-80, 26.2s.

BRAKING: 29.5ft. to stop from 30 mph in neutral; 140ft. to stop from 60 mph in neutral.

FUEL CONSUMPTION: 25 mpg over 530 miles, including all tests; 25 mpg in normal country and suburban use.

SPEEDOMETER: Accurate at 30 and 50 mph, 1 mph fast at 70.

PRICE: £1165 tax-paid

