



More on the Issigonis theme — Boat Hydroelastically by Mini, 1100 or alternatively ...

Austin's Audacious Eighteen

Featuring full flow ventilation and disc brakes, the 1800 is a very safe car. It pioneers seat belts and radial ply tyres at standard on a volume seller.

I FCK the Morris 1800, various specimens of ADJUST — from this day on to be known as the Austin 1800 — were sent at various points around the Australian countryside as long as 18 months ago. But the car has only just been officially released, and even then, because of production and later difficulties here and in Britain, only in very small numbers. Some believe for the 1800 will not happen until 1986.

WHILE it has been pre-ordering the car for almost two months at various times, overall, the testing staff feel that it came through with flying colors. Although it lacked the immediate appeal of the 1300 and the Mini, in spite of similar specifications, it is, of course, designed specifically for the British medium-car market. When it reaches such things as four cylinders, centrally-located gearshift, good handling, and above-average interior room, the Mini and the 1300 fulfilled these demands very well, yet have still been marginally successful in Australia, where the market is more concerned with low-gear performance, fuel mix, six cylinders and fuel economy than with the way the thing looks.

The 1800 seems aimed of fact as bright a future as the two-bike brother, although it is selling against the hottest six-cylinder one with all their brake horsepower, automatic transmission and long lists of options. What sort of people will buy the Mini 1800 and 1300 is hardly likely — because, let's face it, income absorbed with front-wheel-drive and hydraulic suspension with all the attendant benefits — but also people who want more equipment, better ride and handling and big interior room in an admirably small car.

The 1800 is a very capable car. From outside it looks fairly compact, in spite of a long wheelbase and a full 85 in. (2160 mm) of wheel travel, and it is not by any means a pretty car. The six-window treatment,

combined with a bumper rear, makes it look quite awkward and untidy until you look past either nose or tail end. But the room in the interior is astonishing. A rear passenger, no matter if he is 7 ft 6 in. tall, can sprawl in vast ease in a very comfortable seat with his feet on a flat floor, so only a small centre hump hinders the rearward vision. The amount of interior room is surprising; this is, of course, part of the Issigonis theme, by which you stretch the engine transversely and put a wheel at each corner and you have so facilitated a steel box as you could wish.

Technical description of the car is varied in a following article, but it should be said that there were no major problems associated with releasing the 1800 fleet. Of those, the problems of low-speed steering and heavy five-and-a-half pitch movements, because of the long wheelbase, have not been completely overcome. On the test car also we found a bit of head-back lurch the steering wheel concerning hard on corrugated dirt roads, plus some thumping in the drive shafts or constant velocity joints when the wheel had to make a large steering deflection while being locked over in a tight corner.

Apart from these things the 1800 has been extremely successful. This is a car which will not fade in appearance and which is so advanced in concept that it will still be doing the job as well as many other-designed counterparts 10 years from now.

The Austin 1800 runs the five-bearing 1800 cc engine from the MGB in slightly de-tuned form, and while it still produces 84 bhp (61 kw) and spins very freely, steering gear and final drive line in, tend to overshadow the quite good performance. Fuel gear is on the high side, but moved is low, and the big air system worked and third gear not very satisfactory. The overall gearing of 18.4 mph per 1000 rpm is a little better than the 1300's, but the 1800 is also low, and it seems that BMC of Australia has more than pumped solely for low gearing to make its own reachable in top at the expense of high top speed on the open road. They have been accused in the past of forgetting they own the British suburban work and nowhere else; this is not at all true because they are simply recognizing that the Australian driver insists on being able to leave his car in top gear until it is perfectly shagging from exhaustion.



All but 2 ft 10 from the rear seat up to the passenger wheel in this picture is on one with the loading edge of the cushion. Two adults can sleep comfortably.



Curved hard, the 1800 shows some roll, but its disturbance about that is relative to the curving velocity the roll is minor. Car's handling is admirable.

Hundred

This was particularly important with the 1800 for it has a central floor provision — something that tends to alarm the Australian motorists who — as it was clearly important to make the car as flexible as possible in all years. This has been done: the 1800 will get away effortlessly from a standstill in second, will get away from rest in third with some deliberate clutch slip, and will get away from under 10 mph in top gear without complaint, which is also a tribute to the stoutness of the five-bearing engine and the good low-end torque one always gets with long-stroke engines.

The engine starts instantly on full choke and the 1800 BMC engine the driver has to be treated to perhaps one-third start-off in slip footing. It starts up very quickly and in summer the clutch can be pulled home after perhaps 30 seconds. The methods used by BMC to insulate the 1800 against noise have been very successful, for the 1800 is certainly a noisy engine. Yet little of it gets through to the passengers except when revved very hard in the indirect gear. Typically there is a constant tapping noise from the side gears between the clutch and the gearbox, and this gets quite loud when the car is idling and the oil is very hot. The most obvious noise (and this is not surprising) is the constant mild whine from the mechanical fan.

This was the first BMC car produced in Australia to get systematically on first gear; and while the gearbox is good, if a little stiff, the movements across the gate seem to be a little longer than necessary. Reverse is engaged by pulling the lever across to the right, lifting, and moving toward the rear. It is a bit easier than in the 1300, but the car's movement into second gear was very stiff but after we completed our running in and headed toward the 100 mph it started to become easier. The gearbox is slightly cramped and very well-geared considering the big range of gear adjustment available.

The clutch, from Borg and Beck, is very smooth, light and progressive, but occasionally when one of our drivers tried to make a change without using the full three gears reduced tend to engage. Violent steering start acceleration caused fairly positive clutch control because if the clutch was dropped too suddenly it would produce lurches from the drive



Wide range of seat adjustment gives driver very comfortable. Note rubber floor in carpet, full-width pedals and three-point belts in standard gear.

