

Romsey Quints explodes the British Leyland rally plans for 1970...

# ZETLAND GONE ZANY



With Evan Green in control, British Leyland will swing promotional activities hard at rallycross and rallies, with room for a little dabble round the tracks. As usual Jack Murray will provide the sound effects...

TO the residents of the little town Si Esta in Mexico it may not mean very much to say that Jack Murray is competing in the London-Mexico World Cup Rally. It will probably mean a great deal to the indigenous tribes of Pakistan, Yugoslavia, Western Australia, and other parts where the rally will not be going. For they will be glad.

Murray, indestructible, only half-crazy, and fit as Paddy's pig, will once again be partnered by the dry-witted Evan Green now a very senior executive with British Leyland and still one of the legendary long-distance driving talents of this country.

Memos from the Board are less often addressed to Evan Green than To Whom It May Concern, for he is sometimes away in strange places. What he and the dreaded Murray will drive is not yet known, but my sources say it will be a secret weapon from the Old Kent Road, something cobbled up just in time for the epic.

The Yr Of Our Lud 1970 will be a very busy one for the sleeping Zetland giant. Forced to cut back drastically on its competition program

over the last 12 months due to reorganisation following the merger, BL has now laid down a nice fat budget for 1970, helped by Castrol, which has been backing BMC since Moses played fullback for Jerusalem (they beat the Arabs 108 points to 1, but that's another story... read my piece in the Bar Mizvah Gazette next month).

The budget is Green's, and he has gone for an across-the-board attack, with the emphasis coming down more on the rallying and rallycross side since few BL products can do better than class wins in racing. "We're going to make a big effort in rallycross", says Green. "We're very serious about it. Our cars like it, and it's very visual for spectators". Rallycross circuits will be operating at Calder, Oran Park and Amaroo Park by mid-year.

Green will lead the rallycross bid, and may have a couple of other works drivers. You can also have a bit of nine to four on that they'll use the Morris 1500; they have to do something with it to show that it's tough and that Cubic Inches Don't Count, for it sure as hell suffers from night starvation.

BL will probably also front with a works team for the Ampol Trial, but Green — like so many other industry executives — is suitably bitter about what promises to be a gigantic farce and a stunning blow to the mid-section of rallying.

"No rally car in Australia is eligible, and Carl Kennedy tells me it will be the roughest Australian rally since the Redex! Series production cars for that? It's no use designing the rally to appeal to the ordinary man with his standard production

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Snug seats, thick-grip leather wheel, and a confusion of instruments point this cockpit out as a sheer functional work-area. Driving position was comfortable, equipment comprehensive, and car was absolute dart on rally roads. It topped at just over 100 mph.

Technicolor nightmare in action: SPORTS CAR WORLD Editor Kevan Wolfe charges the ex London-Sydney car over some simulated rally rough-country near Sydney. This is the Evan Green vehicle, Car No. 31, which seized a wheel bearing in the Marathon. When we took over the ex-Green car, it still carried stickers from the Alpine rally where ex- Holden pilot Greg Garrard had steered the car with John Bryson. We covered nearly 400 noisy miles in the car, which refused to budge with less than 3500 rpm in hand.

Photos by Rob Luck



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car, because factories can build far better standard production cars than the ordinary man can ever buy — take the 500 cars, for instance."

Another bad scene in the Ampol is that the sponsor has absolutely banned any appearance by any other oil company, right down to no badges on overalls.

Green: "Well, Castrol is very liberal in its thinking, but *that* was a bit hard to take. Anyway, the Ampol is badly timed in that it is too close to the World Cup Rally, so we probably won't see any overseas teams, regardless of other oil companies being unable to give support in the Ampol."

What else? Oh, they'll tackle the Southern Cross and probably the BP, but certainly the Australian championship series, with — surprise-surprise — Greg Garard in a Morris 1500. After five years in Holdens, dislocated elbows from too much opposite-locking, and strained neck muscles from glaring out side windows to see the road because the windscreen's looking at the shrubbery, big mover Garard is going fwd and BL. Good scene. Green says they may extend their works participation still further. Don't tell your father, but don't be surprised if you see John Keran and Col Bond saying they'd rather switch to BL than fight. You read it here first . . .

Road racing doesn't look half so exciting for the BL team. My guess is that they'll freight in some cross-flow fuel-injected heads for Minis and have them homogenised for Imp Prod. This gives maybe 15 bhp more, not enough to go Mustang-hunting, just wear off more rubber.

Main BL runners for 1970 will be Melbourne's Jim Smith in Cooper S (he bought Peter Manton Motors), John French in Queensland IP racing in Mini, and Don Holland in the runwhatyabrun class, otherwise known as the Warwick Farm Hot Rodders' Society.

Green says they are awaiting the 1970 Hardie-Ferodo 500 regulations "with interest" (and I'll bet Ford and GM are, too), because they'd like to see it re-jigged a little to put the Mini back against the cars the enthusiasts want to see it (here he almost said "beating" but revised it to "competing against").

Green: "We're really looking more at motor sport in two to three years' time, because we've got some fairly wild gear coming by then. But you can't just drop out and then come back in again, because you lose drivers and contracts and so on. But we think we can do reasonably well for those couple of years."

"I'd like to get the overseas factories more involved; that's one reason for the trip to Mexico. And I'd like to get back to the days when we were bringing out overseas drivers to race here. I know Andrew Cowan and British sedan drivers Alec Poole and John

Handley would dearly love to have a crack at the 500, for instance."

Green is that rare thing — a romantic pragmatist, and he sees motor sport as the way for a car maker to make his cars do exciting things, to lift them out of the ordinary, to reveal a promise of adventure.

"Buying a car is rarely something you do cold-bloodedly; there's a number of personal and emotional things involved. It's important that a car should be able to do these exciting, adventurous things and get away from the humdrum."

He says quite firmly that they're not interested mainly in tomorrow's car buyer, but the 10-year-olds and up. "They are very knowledgeable car buffs — make no mistake about that. They know far more about cars than any of my generation did at that age. We go to a lot of car club things and a lot of schools — and generally we can't tell the difference between the two types of enthusiast, even though they're seven to 10 years apart in age."

"That's why the Mini is what it is. It's young, it's cheeky, and it promises the young driver something special — something's going to happen to them and it together. It hasn't changed its shape — it's just that different people are buying it. My son has 12-year-old friends who have already committed themselves to buying a Mini as their first car."

I did not ask Green whether Green Junior was on 15 percent commission or whether he was simply as charming and persuasive as his father. I do remember that like Fred Markone my son and heir (May God Have Mercy On Humanity), young Green's biggest moment at school was arriving in a Mini-Moke. Vanden Plas 4-litres and Marathon Land Crabs were a bit ho-hum, but when Evan took him to school in Moke he was King of the Kids for a week. #



"I don't know what all this secrecy is about — after all, we did steal the design."

# "Lightguard"

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