

MG Sport Sedans

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The name MG, especially in the U.S., is associated with two seat roadsters. However, while MG was best known for basic, affordable sports cars, it also marketed a line of sedans, or in British terms, saloons. They shared mechanics, and even styling, with the open sports cars especially the TC, TD and TF. Many of these models were sold in the U.S., albeit in limited numbers.

The first postwar MG sedan was the Y-Type that appeared in May 1947, a year and a half after the MG TC had been introduced, and remained in production until 1953. Its very British styling was

definitively dated, at least by American standards, not unexpected since the Y-Type was planned to be launched in 1940, but World War II intervened.



The MG Y-Type had 1930s-like styling with its narrow body, separate fenders, separately mounted headlights and opening front window.

While its styling was a bit dated, the mechanics were quite contemporary, again by British standards. The saloon was fitted with an independent front suspension system, a first for an MG production car. Unlike the TC, it had superior rack and pinion steering. The TC still had a solid front axle as well as cam and lever steering. Marketed as an upscale car, the Y-Type featured leather and 'Rexine' leathercloth upholstery complemented by much wood trim including the instrument panel, glovebox and window frames.

Both the Y-Type and the TC were powered by the MG XPAG, 1,250 cc, four-cylinder engine. Thus, the model was marketed as the One and a Quarter Litre MG Sedan. For the Y-Type, a single SU carburetor was used to provide 46-horsepower at 4,800 rpm, 8.4-horsepower less than the TC with its twin SUs.

A somewhat updated Y-Type, the YB, appeared in 1952. The previous model is now referred to as the YA. Improvements included a completely new Lockheed braking system and a much more modern hypoid rear axle. Handling was enhanced by 15-inch wheels, while the YA and Y-Tourer wore 16-inch ones, a front roll bar and stronger shock absorbers. When production ceased in late 1953, a total of 7,452 Y-Type sedans had been built - 6,151 YAs (including 9 cars supplied to Swiss and Italian custom coach-builders) and 1,301 YBs.

In 1948, MG unveiled the Y-Tourer, an open four-seater based on the Y-Type sedan. Only 877 were built with either right or left hand drive, but all were meant for export in the then 'Export or Perish' environment in Britain. Performance was upgraded



Looking like an oversized MG-TD, the four-place MG Y-Tourer was built between 1948 and 1950.

a bit by using twin SU carburetors and the TC's hotter camshaft, the result being

54.4-horsepower, just like the MG TC. Sports car-like features included cut down doors and fold down windshield.



The Y-Tourer's instrument panel was laid out like the TC with tachometer in front of the driver, speedometer before the passenger and other dials in the center.

For 1954, the Y series was replaced by the much more modern MG Magnette, the first version being designated the ZA. MG had previously used the Magnette name on a couple of models, the K-Type and N-Type, that were produced in limited numbers in the 1930s.

This was the beginning of MG sedans being 'badge-engineered' versions of other marques in the British Motor Corporation lineup. The BMC was the result of the 1952 merger of the Austin Motor Company and the Nuffield Organization, MG's parent, as well as that of Morris, Riley and Wolseley.

The new Magnette's body, which now used unitized construction, looked much like the 1953 Wolseley Four Forty-Four or 4/44, a car that was widely used by the British police. While having an Italian look, the styling was all done in house. The MG version looked better than the cop car. The MG looked more sporting partly because of its lowered suspension, independent in the front with coil springs, and a live rear axle with half elliptic leaf springs.



While the MG Magnette ZA looked like the Wolseley 4/44, only the front doors, trunk lid and roof panels were shared.

A new XPEG 1489cc 'B-Series' engine was under the hood. This same engine would be used in the 1954 MG TF 1500. In the 2500 pound Magnette, the four-cylinder produced 60-horsepower with twin SU carburetors, so performance was a bit leisurely. The ZA was replaced by the

ZB in 1956. The engine now had four more horsepower, and a semi-automatic transmission was optional. There was now a Varitone model that featured a two-tone paint scheme that followed the



The MG Magnette ZB Varitone's paint scheme (above) was like that of many other contemporary cars.

The MG Magnette (right) featured leather trimmed individual front seats and rear bench seat. The dashboard and door trim were done in polished wood.



BMC turned to Italy's Pinin Farina for the styling of the MG Magnette Mark III debuting in 1959. This body would be shared with the Austin A55 Cambridge Mark II, Morris Oxford Series V, Riley 4/69 and Wolseley 15/60. Like many cars of the day, there were finned rear fenders, though more subtle compared to some of the competition. The car still used the 1489 cc B-series engine fitted with twin SU carburetors to give 66.5- or 68-horsepower, depending on the source. With tweaking of the coil-spring-wishbone front suspensions and solid rear axles with semi-elliptical rear springs and return to cam and lever steering, some of taut handling and precise steering of the previous Magnette models was lost. Some 16,676 Magnette Mark IIIs were sold between 1959 and 1961.



The Magnette Mark III, and Mark IV, shared everything except for some MG identifiers, with several other BMC brands like Austin, Morris, Riley and Wolseley.

The Mark III was revised in 1961 to create the Mark IV version. The B-Series engine was

enlarged to 1622 cc by an increased bore. It also had a slightly longer wheelbase and a wider front/rear track. Better handling was achieved through front and rear anti-roll bars plus dual-valve Armstrong shock absorbers. Outside, the fins were toned down a bit. An automatic transmission was optional. The Mark IV had a relatively long life, from 1961 to 1969 with a total of 14,320 built. Right to the end, these Magnettes featured high quality wood and leather interior interiors.

The final MG sedan, the MG-1100 Sports Sedan, was far different than its predecessors. Again, it was a badge-engineered version of a BMC design. In this case, ADO16 (Austin Drawing Office project number 16), another design from Sir Alec Issigonis, most famous for designing the Mini. Besides the MG-1100, the ADO16 platform was used for the Morris 1100, Austin 1100, Wolseley 1100, Riley Kestral and with some upscale fittings, the Vanden Plas Princess. During the 1960s, these various versions of the ADO16 added up to the best selling cars in Britain.

The design featured the BMC 1098 cc, A-series, four-cylinder engine mounted transversely to drive the front wheels. Its front disc brakes were rare on mass produced cars in the early 1960s. The Issigonis-designed Hydrolastic interconnect fluid suspension system was used. The styling that provided lots of interior room in a small package was done by Pininfarina, now one name.

The MG-1100 version was primarily aimed at



While the MG 1100 was a nicely designed small car with competent mechanics, it was flawed by quality control problems that were so typical of the British auto industry of the day.

the U.S. market with sales starting in 1962. Unlike most of the other versions that were four-door sedans, the MG-1100 for the U.S. market was a more sporting two door

sedan. It sold only moderately well being about \$250 or 15-percent more than the VW Beetle. Even more of a deterrent to sales at the time was the notorious poor quality of British cars especially from BMC.

In 1964, BMC sold the more luxurious MG Vanden Plas in the U.S. It was the Vanden Plas Princess 1100 wearing MG badges on the rear, hubcaps and steering wheel. However, the Vanden Plas grille was retained. It came in two models, with or without a sunroof. With a price of about \$3,000, only 154 were sold.



The MG Princess wore MG badges, but not the iconic MG grille.

The MG 1300 with a 1275 cc engine appeared in the summer of 1967 about the same time MG sedan sales in the U.S. had ceased. It was replaced here briefly by a lower cost Austin 1100 as a competitor to the hot selling VW Beetle. In 1968, British Leyland, which had replaced BMC, sold the Austin American in the U.S., Canada and Switzerland. It was essentially a two-door Austin 1300 Mark II. About 59,500 were sold in 1968 through 1971 and they were marketed as 'The perfect second car.'



The Austin 1100 was introduced as a competitor to the VW Beetle.

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