

- The spare wheel should be in an accessible position, not necessarily on the outside of the car.

- There should be a comprehensive array of instruments including a water temperature gauge, oil pressure gauge and revolution counter.

- If the owner desires, the car should be able to compete successfully in races, hill climbs and trials, without extensive modifications.

Other features, such as the type of hood or side windows used and items such as the bumpers or racing screens, I would leave to the discretion of the manufacturer.

Above all, a sports car should be a pleasure to drive and the design should have features rarely found in the quantity produced car, for all its undoubted merits.

Now, let us see just what is offering under £2,000 on the Australian market in the sports car, and if there is a car that could find room in YOUR garage.

Cheapest sports car is the Singer SM1500, which is fitted with an overhead camshaft engine that has been giving good reliable service to owners.

Selling for £879 (including sales tax) and offering four seats, the SM1500 sports

has quite an appeal. Performance is a little behind the general run of cars nowadays, though, with top speed of only 75 m.p.h. and acceleration from 0-50 m.p.h. of about 13.5 seconds. The handling qualities of the Singer are good and the ride not over firm.

The driver and front seat passenger are seated in two well-curved bucket seats, and the centrally located gear lever is in a position which comes naturally to the driver. No rev counter is provided on the instrument panel, but the remainder of the dials are quite legible and comprehensive, though standard.

All-weather equipment is good and the side screens have sliding panels to allow a free circulation of air into the interior. Because of the sharp cut-away nature of the doors it has been possible for the designers to provide a flap for signalling in the lower half of the screen. Many of the latest sports cars have flush doors which necessitates the inclusion of the signalling flap in the actual screen glass.

The luggage compartment is mainly taken up by the spare wheel, but when the lid is dropped, fairly large suitcases can be strapped into position.

Access to the engine is gained by raising

- ABOVE: The sleek and elegant Swallow Doretti, Mark 1. This newcomer to the sports scene uses Standard Vanguard parts and engine but the car is slower than the TR2, having a maximum speed of around 97 mph. It is also £140 dearer.

either half of the bonnet, hinged down the centre. Engine capacity is 1,497 c.c., and, fitted with optional two-carburettor kit, 58 b.h.p. is developed at 4,600 r.p.m.

Girling hydromechanical brakes are used and the total lining area at 80 square inches is fair; weight of the car is down to 15½ cwt. The turning circle is tight at only 33ft.

Famous for many years, the name M.G. is regarded with affection by many an enthusiast. The latest T/F is up on compression ratio and with its 8 to 1 "comp," 57 b.h.p. is developed at 5,500 r.p.m. Twin S.U. carburettors meter the fuel and the under-the-bonnet view is quite businesslike.

Price, including sales tax, is under £1,000 and a prospective owner can count on about 85 m.p.h. in top speed and acceleration from 0-50 m.p.h. in just on 12 seconds.

Strictly a two seater, the car's occupants are nevertheless seated most comfortably, and upholstery is in fine leather. Across the top of the instrument panel is a rolled padded leather trim and the dials are centrally mounted with a glove locker on either side. All the necessary instruments are there, including a rev counter.

The short remote control gear lever is well placed and the "fly-off" type handbrake can be found between individually adjustable seats. Inside the cockpit the finish is as good as any sports car on the road; attention to detail right throughout the car is really excellent.

From the exterior the car is a sports in every sense of the word, with the characteristics of the type apparent from every angle. Side on, for instance, there are the long low bonnet, the separate sweeping mudguards, dashing wire wheels complete with knock-on hubs and the cowed instrument panel falling away to a cut-away door. From the rear there is the large externally mounted fuel tank set off by the uncovered spare wheel—all features that are aesthetically fine, but not without minor inconveniences.

(next page please)

- LEFT: TRIUMPH'S TR2 is an interesting car and the makers have designed it with competition in mind. The envelope body shape is typical of modern sports cars. Top speed is about 110 mph.





● LEFT: AUSTIN-HEALEY in action. The car slides on a dirt corner during a rigorous road test by CARS' staff. The car stayed perfectly in control on the gravel.

The outstanding thing about the TR2 is its handling. The ability of the car to hang on at high speed through a corner which has a few bumps in the surface is amazing. There is no noticeable wheel hop and the tail seems well behaved at all times.

Braking is superb and even when steel disc wheels are fitted there seems to be no tendency to fade. Most models coming to Australia now have the wire wheels with knock-on hubs, which should increase further the ventilation to the drums, which have a large lining area totalling 148 square inches.

Weather equipment is quite snug and a large plastic window provided is for rear vision. The doors are cut-away and a leather flap is set in the lower half of the side screens.

Price, including sales tax, is £1,349, which includes overdrive on top gear and wire wheels.

Classed by many enthusiasts as the perfect example of the modern trend in sports car is the pretty Austin-Healey selling for £1,409, including the sales tax. The appearance has a distinct Italian flavor and knock-on wire wheels add to the sporting touch. Mechanically the A-H is sound and the well-tried 2,660 cc. power unit pushes out 90 b.h.p. at the comparative low r.p.m. of 4,000.

Electrically operated overdrive is used on third and top gears, giving the car five forward ratios, which can be used to good advantage in competition. Another feature in the gearbox is the inclusion of synchro mesh on first gear.

The seats are comfortable and all the controls lie well to hand, with the overdrive switch on the fascia panel being operated by the index finger of the left hand as it rests on the steering wheel. The instruments, including the rev counter, are set in front of the driver and can be well-read through the three-spoked steering wheel. A heater is provided as standard equipment.

Always light and extremely accurate, the steering is all one would expect of a sports car; the turning circle is only 30 feet. Cornering is nice and flat and there is a satisfactory amount of understeer noticeable. The ride is firm without being harsh and all bad bumps are adequately absorbed. In the front independent coil springs are used and there are semi-elliptics at the rear.

The spare wheel is stowed away in the luggage compartment with the fuel filler. There is a fair amount of room here for small incidentals and there is further baggage space behind the seats inside. Unlike the TR2, the fuel tank is located flat beneath the luggage compartment.

Latest models have flaps provided in the side screens for signalling purposes. Previously there was no provision made and come rain, hail or whatever you like, the

driver's side screen had to be left down if hand signals were to be made.

The performance off the mark of both the TR2 and the A-H are very similar and in competition these cars have a close run for it. In the Healey, 0-50 m.p.h. takes about 8.5 seconds, and top speed is about 110 m.p.h. On tests of the car we have not found it as economical as the TR2, and overall m.p.g. has worked out at 25.

Plenty of lining area has been provided in the brakes, which total 142 square inches.

Another newcomer to the sports car scene is the Swallow Dorretti, which also uses standard Vanguard parts. The engine is identical to the Triumph TR2 and the Morgan. The layout employed for the suspension is similar to the TR2 in the front with coil springs and wishbones, but at the rear there are arms which locate the back axle fore and aft in addition to the semi-elliptic springs.

The interior finish and general appointments are somewhat better than in the TR2, but the Dorretti costs another £140 over the former's selling price and both overdrive and wire wheels are extra.

In layout, the cockpit is all one could wish for, with such luxuries as a heater provided. Performance from 0-50 m.p.h. is nine seconds. Top speed without overdrive is 97 m.p.h.

There is a separate luggage compartment at the rear which is released from a knob inside the driving compartment and here most of the available space is taken up with the spare wheel. However, there is a fair amount of usable space behind the seats. The fuel tank is laid flat beneath the floor of the luggage compartment.

A short, centrally located gear lever, working into the same excellent box fitted to the Triumph, is provided, and the hand brake of the "fly-off" pattern is set between the separately adjustable bucket seats.

All the instruments normally required in a sports car, including a rev counter, are provided and are arrayed in the centre of the fascia panel. There is no glove locker in the fascia, but small items can be stowed in the large open pockets in the doors. Like the Austin-Healey, the bonnet is hinged at its forward edge.

Fuel consumption is similar to that re-

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● ABOVE: THIS Triumph TR2, driven by Eldred Norman of South Australia proved itself in hot company last year when it won the sports car race at Southport, Queensland, against stiff opposition. The car is supercharged. Here the car is just cornering

# Sports Cars and You

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turned by the TR2, with a consumption of about 30 m.p.g. with normal driving.

The ride is firm, but body roll is right down to a minimum. There is the same braking area as in the TR2, namely, 148 square inches.

Weather equipment is good, but the line of the doors does not allow a flap to be placed in the lower half of the side screens and it has been necessary for the designers to place a hinged plastic panel in the plastic screen. As with the other latest sports cars, there is a large rear window provided.

Weight has been kept down by the use of a tubular chassis, and under severe conditions the structure seems good and rigid. Turning circle is larger than most of the other sports at 36 feet.

More in the sports-touring class than the other cars mentioned, the Sunbeam Alpine offers all the comfort of a normal drop-head, but gives an owner handling qualities as good as any sports on the road. One of the disadvantages in most of the other models is a lack of ease in ingress and egress when the hood is in position, and in several of them a woman has to watch the way in which she

swings her legs out of the car when about to alight.

It has been the aim of the manufacturers of the Alpine to provide the owner with the maximum of comfort and convenience, and yet still retain sporting character. In the side windows there are large sliding panels, and with the top in position the car is perfectly waterproof. Nothing is flimsy in construction and every item in the comprehensive equipment is solid and well made.

In the cockpit there are arm rests on the doors and a large central arm rest over the hand brake between the separately adjustable seats. Floor space has been kept clear, for the gear change lever is mounted on the steering column. A useful range of instruments is provided, and in the latest models a rev counter is set in the centre of the fascia panel.

At the rear there is an abnormal amount of luggage space for a sporting car, with an area measuring just over 14 cubic feet. Beneath this compartment there is separate locker which contains the spare.

The 2½-litre power unit is remarkably flexible and when one considers that the weight of the car is 26½ cwt., it does a mighty job pulling the sports up to 50 m.p.h. in 11 seconds. Top speed in the optional overdrive available engaged is 96 m.p.h. Fitted with the special speed equipment, which consists of an 8 to 1 compression ratio, twin-choke carburettor and different manifolding, performance is considerably increased with a top speed of over 100 m.p.h. possible.

The magnificent brakes have a total lining area of 172 square inches and the drums are deeply finned to assist cooling. The writer has raced the saloon version of the Alpine a number of times and under the severest conditions there has never been a trace of

fade, which is certainly a credit to the design. The wheels are slotted in the interests of cooling.

Price of the Alpine, including sales tax, is £1,598.

A sensational addition to the cheaper range of high-speed sports cars is the new German Porche "Speedster," which should be selling between £1,600 and £1,700. This version is a two-seater, with occasional seats in the rear and a folding top. The wind-screen is well curved with the corner pillars swept right back to eliminate any blind spots for the driver.

Twin bucket seats have been provided, and there are straight-through slots in the seat back to keep the passengers cool in hot weather. The finish both inside and out is magnificent and the instrument panel is the acme of simplicity.

The floor-mounted, centrally located gear lever has a slight bend towards its end so that it will fall naturally to the driver's left hand. As yet we have not tested this car, but if it's anything like its more expensive saloon counterparts to drive, there is something in store.

This car would be one of the few sports with a rear mounted flat four-power unit. The 1,488 cc. engine develops 55 b.h.p. at 4,400 r.p.m., and the compression ratio has been kept down to 7 to 1. Maximum speed claimed by the manufacturer is around the 110 m.p.h. mark, which is really outstanding for an under 1500 cc. car. Fitted with the optional 1500 Super engine with four overhead cams, the development is increased to 70 b.h.p. at 5,000 r.p.m. With the latter motor fitted, top gear goes up to 120 m.p.h.

With all this power there is only 14½ cwt. to be moved off the mark, so that with the standard overhead valve engine 0-50 m.p.h. should be under 10 seconds and with the overhead camshafts about 8.5 seconds. ●

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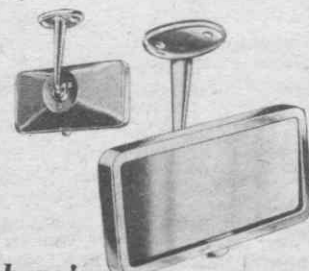


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