

# Great Dane

The fuel injected, catalysed and controlled efficiency of the Haldane HD 300 is a far cry from the raucous din that accompanied the wrestling necessary to keep control of a big Healey on the charge. In which case, does the Haldane evoke the character of the original? Ian Hyne ponders the question.



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Externally, the Haldane perfectly captures the Healey look much aided by the classic two tone paintwork. It will always be a very attractive sports car.

A glorious afternoon found me behind the wheel of the Haldane trickling through Shoreham intent on taking some suitably flattering photographs on the beach. I had been down there before but this time and with only an hour to get the pics in the can, I found my way barred by a newly constructed kerb. I was not impressed and having about turned to head for pastures new, my black mood was enlivened when I pulled up at the lights beside a woman in an MGB GT. In the fleeting moment we sat side by side waiting for the green, she leant across,

wound down her passenger window and said, "Nice".

I acknowledged her comment, waved and moved off feeling a bit of a fraud for failing to summon the courage to correct her impression that it was an original car. Was it because there wasn't time to explain before the lights changed, did I wish it was an original or was I merely happy for her to think it was? I don't know.

What is certain though is that, had she had time to examine the car, she would have spotted the fake in no time flat. Externally, the Haldane

duplicates the classic Healey form and enlivens its appearance with the characteristic two tone split line. That aside, there's little to connect this car with its artistic inspiration. She would have spotted bolt on wire wheels, an L prefix registration, modern reverse and rear fog lights, plastic instruments, electric windows, vinyl trim and a steering wheel calculated to make any true Healey enthusiast weep. Had she looked further, she would have lifted the bonnet to find a Ford 2 litre DOHC 16 valve in place of the 2.6 or 3 litre six.

Of course, such deviations from original specification are very much the norm where modern replicas are concerned and many of the compromises have been forced upon the Haldane due to its compliance with the requirements of LVTA which it has successfully passed. That said, there's nothing tying you to magnolia trim, plastic VDO instruments and a bloody awful steering wheel. Black leather, Smiths duplicates and a wood rim Moto Lita will solve the the problems of interior decor for me.

So what of the rest? Well, the Haldane's mechanical spec bears no relation to that of the original. Instead it's a thoroughly modern approach to



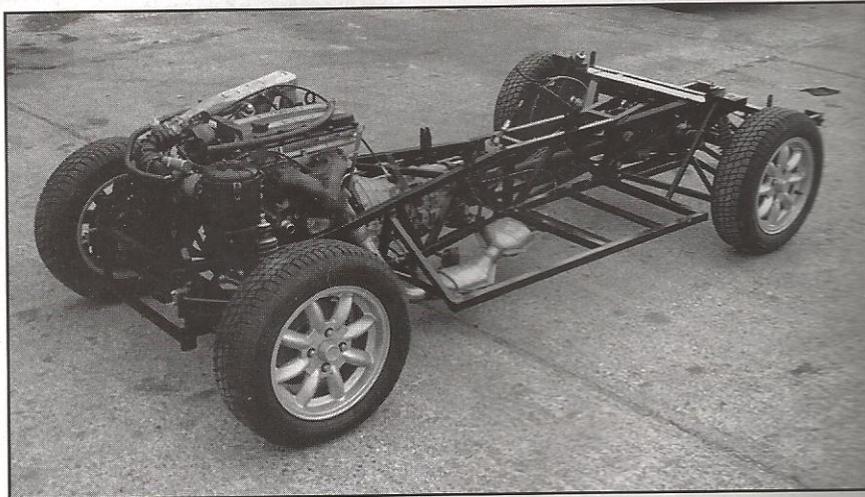
The Haldane interior is hardly the epitome of authenticity but trim is available in any colour while Smiths instruments and a Moto Lita will create the desired effect.

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sports car design. A tubular backbone spaceframe chassis carries double wishbone suspension front and rear with four wheel disc brakes and adjustable coil spring dampers. Power is from Ford's 2 litre DOHC, 16 valve, fuel injected and catalysed motor driving a five speed manual MT 75 gearbox and a Sierra differential unit.

Barring the points mentioned, the Haldane is a credible and creditable visual facsimile of the famous Healey. It has the proportions, the elegance of line and the squat stance of the classic machine. It also duplicates some of its faults. Open the door and, in the absence of a locking mechanism, there is nothing to prevent it swinging back and raking your shin. The door's heavy too as it has a steel internal frame, double skinned GRP and an electric window raising mechanism. You may say, 'hop in before it gets you', but that's easier said than done. The door is very short and getting in can be a squeeze, especially if the hood is on.

Once there, the Haldane has a driving position which will be very unfamiliar to most. If you're tall, you'll need the seat right back on the bulkhead but even then, the wheel is mere inches from your chest enforcing a very upright driving position with elbows by your sides, your right one

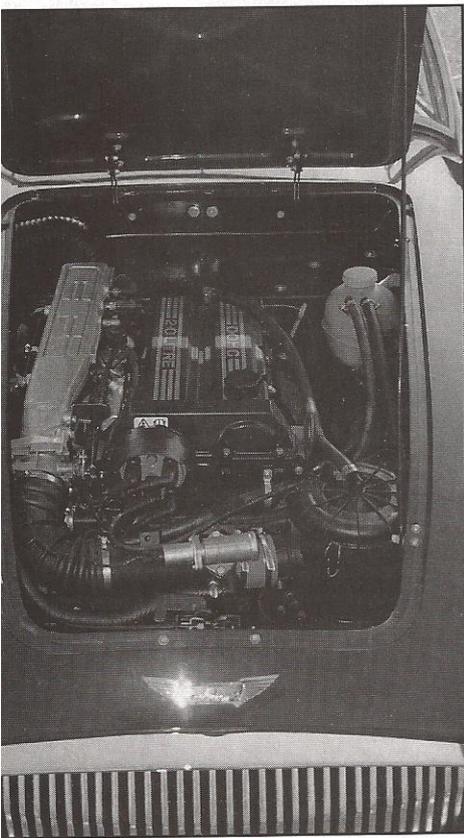


The tubular backbone chassis is a well engineered and extremely rigid base for a well handling car. Factory built cars will be catalysed but kit built cars can use lesser spec engines.

restricted by the proximity of the door that has its upper edge at the level of your shoulder. It's a similar story in the footwell where, even though there is sufficient space to work the pedals, there is nowhere to rest your left foot when not operating the pedal. And yet, you still feel the car is worth further investigation and, after a few hundred yards, you're glad you gave it the chance as, big Healey it may not be but damn good sports car it most certainly is.

The first impression is of the car's

total smoothness. It's not just the ripple free ride; it's more of an aura that pervades every aspect of the its operation. Power is delivered with silken precision no matter how hard you press the pedal, the gear change of the MT 75 box is like a knife through butter and about as precise, the pedals seem to operate to perfection without the need to feel them bite and the whole thing just wafts along. Definitely the complete antithesis of a big Healey which was a heavy brute of a car that called for firm and committed handling.



It's light years away from a big six but Ford's DOHC 16 valver is a brilliant performer and the chassis and suspension design can handle all you can throw at it.

## SPECIFICATION - HALDANE HD100 & HD300.

<b>Chassis.</b>	1" square section, 16 gauge steel tube backbone with perimeter frame and bolt on roll over protection. Powder coated.		
<b>Body.</b>	Unstressed GRP. Double skinned doors.		
<b>Suspension, front.</b>	Haldane double, unequal length wishbones, Cortina uprights, inclined, adjustable coil spring damper units, anti roll bar.		
<b>Suspension, rear.</b>	Independent by Haldane double, unequal length wishbones, fabricated steel uprights, adjustable coil spring damper units.		
<b>Steering.</b>	Haldane rack and pinion.		
<b>Brakes.</b>	Disc front, choice of disc or drum rear. Dual circuit, servo assisted.		
<b>Engine options.</b>	Four cylinder OHV, OHC or DOHC. Ford or Fiat.		
<b>Engine fitted.</b>	Ford 2 litre DOHC, 16 valve EFI with catalytic converter. 125 bhp @ 5500 rpm, 128 ft lbs @ 2500 rpm.		
<b>Transmission.</b>	Ford MT 75 5 speed manual, Ford Sierra differential, hubs, bearings and shortened driveshafts.		
<b>Wheels and tyres.</b>	5 1/2 x 15" Minilite replicas or bolt on wires fitted with 185/65 x 15" radials.		
<b>Dimensions.</b>	Overall length.	12 ft. 8 ins.	Overall width. 5 ft. 1 ins.
	Overall height.	4 ft. 0 ins.	Wheelbase. 7 ft. 6 ins.
	Track.	4 ft. 2 ins.	
	Weight.	1892 lbs.	Weight distribution. 48F/52R.
<b>Kit prices.</b>	Complete chassis kit.	£1850 inc vat.	
	Body kit (HD100 & 300)	£1950 inc vat.	
	Complete car.*	£22000 inc vat.	

\* Complete cars employ all brand new components.

\* The Haldane has full LVTA approval.

Full details of kit contents, specifications, prices, options and extras are given in the fully detailed information pack available from:

Haldane Motor Company, Dept KCI, Unit 12, Mackley Estate, Small Dole, Near Henfield, Sussex BN8 9LL.  
Tel. 01273 493860. Fax. 494889.

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However, power is there aplenty. 130 bhp doesn't sound much but coupled with the engine management system that spreads power and torque evenly throughout the rev range, it's always there when you need it and, when you press the throttle hard, the Haldane responds with committed zeal. The crescendo of noise may be absent as the revs rise but there's no mistaking the speed. The Haldane is quick and though the change of the MT 75 is hardly a masterpiece of precision engineering, it never finds the wrong slot and slips between them with speed and an unerring homing instinct.

When you've got the motor really singing, the car is rock solid and totally stable displaying a steadfast refusal to be upset by any road imperfections or adverse surface conditions. It takes everything in its stride as it reels in the

horizon at Warp Factor 9. The steering is another mechanical function that the Haldane accomplishes with detached nonchalance and once you are used to the soft feel of the controls, you come to realise that it in no way detracts from the car's shining ability.

Point it at a corner and the brakes shed speed in an instant. The pedals don't really invite heel and toe changes down the box but dropping down the cogs one by one, the engine never gets ragged no matter how high the revs. The steering suddenly displays feel as you turn it in, weighting up a little as the front end digs in to follow the dictates of the wheel. Hit the power and the tail squats to enhance rear end grip and you really have to boot it to induce oversteer.

When you accept the car for what it is and forget all performance

comparisons with a Healey, you realise that it is just as quick, if not a good deal quicker but a great handling and roadholding car into the bargain.

As well as driving the car on a sunny afternoon, I have also driven it across Holland and Belgium in absolutely torrential rain and can attest to another highly untypical aspect of traditional British ragtops; it doesn't leak. Electric windows may be at odds with the hairy chested image of the car but they form a brilliant seal with the hood and the rain just didn't get in. The only downside was that it's hard to get into with the hood up.

Even so, all things considered, I agree with the woman in the MGB GT, it is 'Nice' and next time, I'll have the courage to tell her it's a Haldane. The car's got nothing to be ashamed of and a great deal to shout about.

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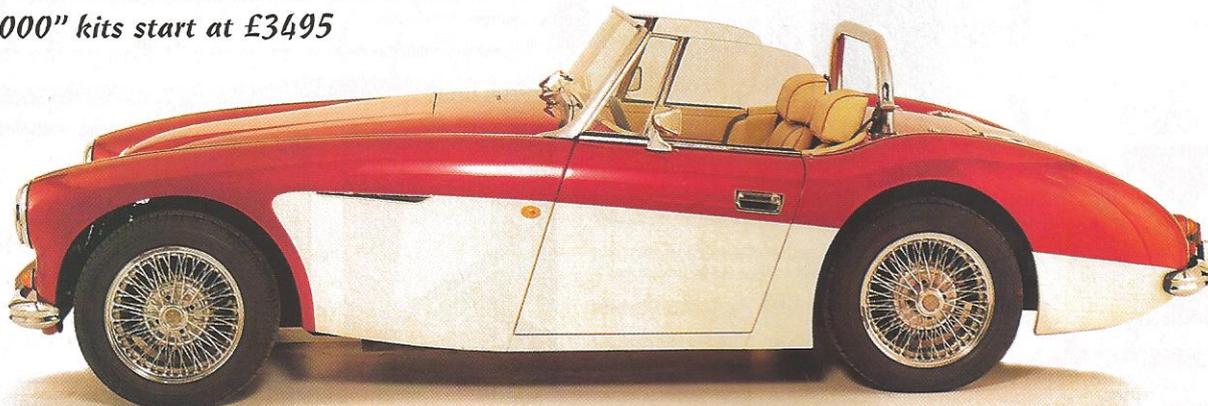


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