

Scots produce a real winner from kit-car background

By DAVID FINLAY



Haldane's Healey lookalike: the HD-100 redesigned from the tarmac upwards.

ALTHOUGH they have displayed their Healey 100/4 replica at kit-car exhibitions in the past, Haldane's appearance at the SECC marks the first major show presentation for the Blantyre-based company.

It is also something of a comeback, following a voluntary hibernation which lasted for most of 1991. Production came to complete halt to allow time for the HD-100 model to be redesigned from the tarmac upwards.

For a start, there was a completely new chassis, which among other things provided a lot more interior space. Comfortable kit-car driving is

notoriously available only to the gnome-like, and the fact that the original Haldane accommodated anyone up to 6ft tall was something of a plus. The second-generation chassis, however, is said to be a practical proposition for drivers 4in taller still.

There has also been a change of running gear. Most of the major bits — 2-litre fuel-injected engine, five-speed gearbox, rear axle — come from the Ford Sierra (the early cars used less modern Vauxhall Chevette parts), and thanks to direct dealing with Ford themselves Haldane can provide reconditioned units.

Purist kit-car builders, the ones

which eschew instruction manuals and take offence at the sight of a clean fingernail, are likely to go for the basic kit, which includes the chassis, the fibreglass body, and such items as will not be found at the local scrapyards, and which costs £3300 plus VAT.

More genteel types, who just want a Ford Sierra-based Healey replica to drive around in, prefer buying the car in as complete a state as possible. Either way, the finished article will probably have involved an investment of about £8000.

A further refinement is due soon.

Type Approval legislation for low-volume cars is flapping its wings off-stage, and once it comes through the Haldane will be available in drive-away form, with not so much as a slack wheelnut to tighten.

Ten new kits have already left the factory since the doors reopened in the autumn, and there are half-a-dozen more on the order book. That is a fair old jump in productivity, since in its first three years of existence the company built a total of just over 30 cars.

Staffing levels have increased as a result. At first, directors Brian Harri-

son and Alasdair Scott were involved only on a part-time basis. Last year they went full-time, with other personnel called in as necessary, and six months ago they began employing permanent staff.

Haldane's modest contribution to central belt employment figures may well increase further when the company is able to sell completed cars. Scott reckons that production will be "anything from one a week to an absolute maximum of one a day — that's a combination of kits and fully-built cars. More than one a day is really over the top for a specialist product."