

6. Ross

# KITCARS

## INTERNATIONAL

# HEALEYS

**TAKE  
YOUR  
PICK**

**SEBRING & HALDANE**

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# Take Your Pick



**The Austin Healey 100 and 3000 have always seemed ripe for replication. Now two very different cars are available. We drive them both and let you take your pick.**



## Take Your Pick



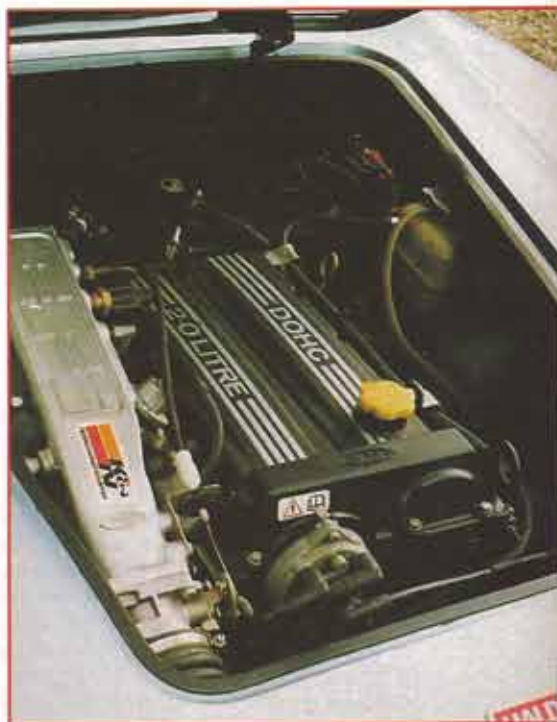
The Austin Healey, besides being the epitome of a British sports car, was blessed with the classic good looks that ensured it would always be recognised. That, and the passion the cars have created as their legacy, makes them ideal targets for replication in an industry that exists on the practice of making dreams become reality.

Of course, the car hasn't suddenly been discovered. There have been previous Healey replicas in the form of the MGB based RMB Healey from Roger Blockley, creator of the Gentry. In the MGB he selected an ideal donor car just at the time that any lump of rust with an octagon badge suddenly became classic. In addition, the car's reskinned MGB doors and full flip front betrayed the Healey ideal and deviated from the pure physical duplicate customers tend to expect and, allied to a quality of manufacture that retained a good few rough edges, the project was

*The interior is spacious and comfortable. There is also excellent boot space.*

not well received. But the moulds and chassis jigs are still in existence so it is possible there may one day be other replicas from which to make a selection.

So, what is there to choose from? Well, on the one hand, there is the Haldane; a car that started life as a true physical copy of the Healey 100/4 with a ladder frame chassis, Vauxhall Viva running gear and a Ford OHC engine. It was a brave and successful effort that has seen the company become sufficiently established to take the bull by the horns and totally redesign the car with a view to a long term future. The latest model uses a backbone, tubular steel chassis with double wishbone independent suspension all round. Ford supply the rest of the hardware and none of your old Cortina stuff either. The car employs the latest



*The Ford 2 litre DOHC engine gives a power to weight ratio of 170 bhp / ton with full emission equipment.*

Ford 2 litre DOHC engine with full management system, fuel injection and a catalytic converter. In this form Europe beckons. Above it they offer a choice of very authentic bodies between that allow customers to build a replica of virtually any Healey except the later 3000 models with their two rear seats. You can build a car to reflect the 100/4, 100/6, 100S, 100M and the 3000 Mk 1.

On the other hand, the Sebrings couldn't be more different. It has been around for years, first as the VW Beetle based Saxon before growing into the Nissan straight six powered Sebring Six and the beefier V8 powered Sebring MX. The cars were made in America by Classic Roadsters but a new deal has led to their manufacture in this country by Classic Roadsters Ltd. There has been a good deal of mechanical redesign on the running gear which now offers a choice between American Ford Mustang live axle, straight six or a Jaguar IRS rear end, double wishbone front and Rover V8 power.

In terms of pure physical appearance, the Haldane is the most authentic, closely followed by the Sebring Six being a Healey 100/6 copy with the oval grille shared with the 3000 although its screen is restyled. The Sebring MX is more in the Cobra mould with its wide, flared wheel arches and V8 power but still manages to totally capture the 'big Healey look'.



## I'LL TAKE THE HIGH ROAD

Ten minutes out of Haldane's Glasgow base finds you in the middle of nowhere amid breathtaking scenery which, on a perfect summer's afternoon and in total defiance of the weather forecast, was the ideal habitat for the 100.

In the driver's seat everything felt absolutely fine. The driving position is very comfortable although the backbone forces the well spaced pedals a little to the right. I was sitting on a Cobra style bucket seat sited low down in the car. You really do sit low as raising your eyes to take in the view your line of sight is only a couple of inches above the louvered aluminium engine cover but the view of the road is unobstructed and what a road. Long, arrow straights, sweeping bends, gradients both up and down, tight turns, even tighter combinations and twisting tracks that ensure the wheel is never still. And all this with virtually no traffic either oncoming or impeding your very rapid progress.

At 1800 lbs, I thought the Haldane surprisingly heavy but that aside, the 120 bhp from Ford's DOHC emission controlled motor gave it a very decent shove although the punch was delivered in a manner that takes some getting used to.

The engine is on Ford's



*The new 3000 style body uses the same chassis and allows customers to build a full works Healey replica. This one's original.*

hydraulic mounts and you feel very little vibration, the controls, especially the throttle, feel very soft and spongy and at times you feel as if you are just not connected to the motor. Start her up and the noise immediately strikes you; there isn't any! Well, there is a bit but not what you and the interested party of onlookers expect from a Healey. Press the throttle and it hardly increases so you have to feel rather than hear the point at which the clutch and throttle interact to produce forward motion. Then you're moving and almost immediately, you need second; first is very low. Pull back the stick on the MT 75, five speed box



and the rubber gear selector, like the Wildcat featured on page 58, feels very spongy as it ambles towards the general location of second although there is no 'snick' to let you know it's arrived. From there on, progress up the box is rather better, better than in the Wildcat as the Haldane's gear lever is considerably shorter.

Criticism aside, you rapidly get used to it as the combination of the Haldane's pleasing aspects make their presence felt and soon you are squeezing the loud (well, loudish)

## FENLAND FLYING

Classic Roadsters Wisbech base looks like a tree in the middle of a desert. There's absolutely nothing around it save flat fenland countryside. But such isolation means there is little traffic on the

roads which is handy when you wind up a car like the Sebring MX.

In comparison to the Haldane, the Sebring is a beast. It sits aggressively on its 6 and 7 x 15", 205/60 and 225/60 tyres beneath heavily flared arches. It's wider and altogether more intimidating, especially if it's in your rear view mirror. It also sounds the part, the pipework emitting a snarl from the action of the eight cylinders in Rover's 3.9 fuel injected motor developing around 190 bhp. But is it a Healey replica?

Well as soon as you see it you immediately say 'Healey' so that must answer the question. Authenticity is another matter but the Americans are well used to stretching a point and, in this case, I think all but the most ardent purist would forgive for the benefits the policy offers.

While the Sebring Six with its flat arches is a pseudo Healey 100/6 sharing the oval grille with the 3000, the MX is Classic's interpretation of what the Healey might have *Rally driver Roger Clarke piloted the SX on January's Sealink Stena Challenge. He will be a build agent.*

become. Indeed, while searching for a suitable British sports car in which to install his Ford V8 engines, Carroll Shelby looked at the Healey so flared arches and big V8 power could well have been a reality. However, Classic have done it and it certainly looks good.

Not only that but the car is beautifully turned out. The chassis is a typically American ladder frame but it is considerably beefed up by the panelled in floors, backbone and side impact members as well as the superlative quality GRP body which has a full inner structure of complex GRP panels that greatly enhance the rigidity of the whole frame when the two are bolted together. At the front, the wheels are connected to a double wishbone set up with Ford uprights and brakes while at the back, the Jaguar IRS system has been pressed into service. Under the bonnet sits Rover's fuel injected 3.9 V8 and everything seems geared for go.

Besides its impressive performance pedigree, the Sebring is also beautifully put together. The Haldane has a replica 100/4 dash



## Take Your Pick

pedal with gusto and the effect lets you know that, although quiet, the motor is no slouch. Through 3000 rpm on the Triumph rev counter and the shove goes up a few notches and you're really moving. Come the need to drop down, the chip does its little electronic nut if you try to 'heel and toe' (the pedal arrangement will let you) for as soon as the drive is disengaged, the chip closes down and the motor will not rev as high as you want it to. The operation is further frustrated by the gearstick feeling very notchy on the way down and slowing the change. After a while you develop the knack of knocking it out of fifth, letting the return springs pop it into neutral and then pulling it back to fourth with a little right bias.

If all this sounds as if I hated the car, it isn't meant to as I think I've covered not necessarily all the bad points, but more all the points that would very quickly register with anyone expecting a sports car of traditional feel. But that's progress!

Nevertheless, modern componentry induced foibles aside, the Haldane also has a great deal to offer on the plus side.

On the day of our trip, the dampers were set quite firm so Brian Harrison took me on his smooth Harrison route to really get the feel of it. Unfortunately he took a wrong turn and we did a good fifty plus miles on some very dodgy surfaces that haven't seen a car in donkey's years. However, the Haldane went well. No matter how poor the surface, it tracks

straight as a die and virtually nothing upsets it. The point is rammed home when, bouncing along the Loch side, I looked at the speedo to discover we were travelling very, very quickly indeed; 100 mph is easily achieved in this car and I can well believe the 130 mph top end estimate. It also does it at well short of the 6000 rpm red line; in fact it will never get there in top.

The other revelation is the steering. No prizes for guessing the source of the rack; it comes from the Ford Escort Mk 2. Perfect weight, perfect gearing and total directional control at pretty well any speed and believe me, we needed it!

In the bends, the car shows the efficiency of its chassis and suspension design. There is virtually no trace of understeer going in, unless you make a muck of it and miss the line at speed (only twice) while the back end stayed rock solid all afternoon. I daresay a snappier motor with bang on throttle response would break its grip pretty easily but the soft pedal brought the power in very smoothly to power you gently but firmly out of the turns. Having said that, I was greatly impressed with the 185/65 x 15 Continental radials fitted to the Performance Minilite replicas. They really did grip the road and gave the car a real feeling of solidity.

If the chipped engine displayed a few annoying traits in the press ahead department, it did have its good points when a more relaxed approach was adopted. The chip is constantly working a great deal of

overtime and its constant adjustments make the motor smooth and effective the whole time. At anything over 2500 rpm, it will pull cleanly in top, even on gradients and it seems to save a very great deal of down changing, unless of course, you want to. This little act allows it to give genuine 100 mph plus performance, good acceleration, excellent mid range torque and punch for quick overtakes and 40 mpg even at 80 mph up the M74 on the return trip! Now you can't moan at that. Driving aside, the cockpit is spacious and civilised, well trimmed and comfortable. The hard top with its solid sidescreens and sliding perspex windows is very noisy but aren't they all? But it's also weather proof and very quickly detached to be replaced by the hood. There's storage room in the door pockets, behind the seats and the boot is very accommodating.

The choice of body styles allows you to build a close replica of any of the Healey models except the 3000 Mk 2 with its four seats, modified screen and wind up windows while the company also produce the 'works' boot panel with its bulge to accommodate the second spare.

Although rather different to drive than a souped up motor on Webers, this particular Haldane has the technical spec that will carry the company forward but you can stick in whatever engine you like but whatever you choose, you will have bought a car that will be a constant source of delight.

which is also available on the Sebring Six but the MX uses the later style Healey 3000 fascia with full width walnut and a centre console below. Leather and wilton cover the rest of the cockpit to create an office of the utmost sophistication and comfort.

Start her up and you know she's fired as the exhaust emits a purposeful bark and idles with that unmistakable V8 rumble. Allow it to warm up and blip the throttle and the note evens and hums. Having struggled into the four point harness, I dipped the clutch on the Marina pedal box, slipped the stumpy, wooden

headed lever firmly into first and let in the clutch.

First impressions are of a totally solid machine with a superlative built quality. There is not a rattle, squeak or groan to betray any moving part other than the noise produced by the action of the pistons in the bores and the wind whistling overhead. It rides ultra smoothly and the driving position is absolute bliss.

No spongy throttle here; just press for go. The MX leaps away with a rapidly rising scream from the exhaust. No problem reaching 6000 rpm either; the MX is there in a flash. No soup stirring gear change; the lever swaps slots with a satisfying mechanical click and progress to 60 is achieved within 7 seconds. The top end is about 130 mph, as per the Haldane, but this is certainly a more impressive manner in which to achieve it.

You can really shift round Cambridgeshire. The flat landscape

removes a great many blind bends and you are all the quicker for being able to see and speed in the Sebring MX is sheer delight. Everything works to achieve it and everything is geared up for it. There is no drama on tight bends, no locking brakes with heavy pedal pressure. You push the pedal and the car slows down, you press the throttle and it accelerates like Seb Coe, you turn the wheel and it changes direction and there is never a murmur of mechanical protest from either end. It has good handling, great roadholding and power and torque aplenty.

In my book, there is nothing with which you can find fault. Pen Roberts was amazed at the quality of the whole Classic range when he ventured across the pond and the car has lost none of its polish on the return trip. The only thing you could say is that the screen upright creates a little blind spot but if you can't move your head a few inches to look round it, stick with your Sierra. Every part is of the highest quality, the versatility of the car is supreme and the options list ensures that you will be able to arrive at a specification to suit yourself.

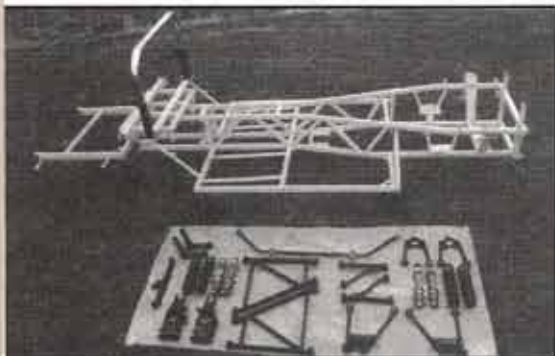
*The British mechanical spec includes double wishbone front end, Jaguar IRS rear, Marina pedals and a Rover V8 but you can fit bigger V8s.*



## Take Your Pick

Classic Roadsters are keen that their cars are well put together and reflect credit upon themselves and the individual builder. To that end their kit packages are fully comprehensive and provide virtually every single item required save for the donor mechanics. The kits include weather equipment, trim, hood, seats and a host of other essential components. There are no extra packs containing vital parts and no hidden extras. You just decide on the spec you want, choose your engine and order your kit. When you've built it, you'll have a car to be truly proud of.

Classic Roadsters are far from *The chassis has been designed with future European approvals fully in mind.*



*The Sebring chassis is a twin rail ladder frame with a sheet steel backbone and floors. The heavy body enhances rigidity.*

a typical kit car outfit. They have adopted a thoroughly businesslike approach to the project and it is patently obvious that they have made a very considerable financial investment in order to achieve success. You only have to look at their excellent colour brochure and information pack to see that. Of course, nothing can completely guarantee success but the product is excellent and the rewards richly deserved.

### AT THE END OF THE DAY

This was not intended to be a back to back comparison, more a review of Healey replicas and their respective merits. For the enthusiast in the market, these are two totally different cars as presented for testing but the Sebring can be built with a straight six and the Haldane can be

#### SPECIFICATION - HALDANE 100 / 3000

|                           |   |
|---------------------------|---|
| <b>Chassis.</b>           | Square section steel tube backbone with outrigger side rails, roll over bar and deformable crumple zones front and rear.  |
| <b>Body.</b>              | Unstressed GRP heavily reinforced with plywood diaphragms, and woven roving cloth. Choice of 100/4 or 100/6 and 3000 styles.  |
| <b>Suspension, front.</b> | Double wishbones, Ford Cortina upright, adjustable coil spring damper unit. Anti roll bar.  |
| <b>Suspension, rear.</b>  | Double wishbones, fabricated steel upright, adjustable coil spring damper unit.   |
| <b>Steering.</b>          | Mk 2 Ford Escort rack and pinion.   |
| <b>Brakes.</b>            | Dual circuit disc front, drum rear. Servo.  |
| <b>Engine.</b>            | Ford 2 litre DOHC with fuel injection, electronic engine management and three way catalytic converter. Approx 120 bhp.  |
| <b>Dimensions.</b>        | Overall length. 12 ft. 8 ins.<br>Overall width. 5 ft. 1 ins.<br>Overall height. 4 ft. 0 ins.<br>Wheelbase. 7 ft. 7 ins.<br>Ground clearance. 4 ins.<br>Weight. 1892 lbs.<br>Weight distribution. 48 F / 52 R. |

**Kit packages.** Chassis kit £1695. Body kit £1950. Prices plus vat.

Full details of kit contents, specifications, prices, options, extras and accessories are contained in the fully detailed colour brochure and information pack available, price £.50, from:

**Haldane Developments Ltd, 3, Rosendale Way, Blantyre, Glasgow G72 0NJ. Tel. 0698 826950. Fax. 0698 829245.**

#### SPECIFICATION - SEBRING MX

|                           |  |
|---------------------------|--|
| <b>Chassis.</b>           | Twin rail ladder frame with sheet steel backbone and roll over bar.                                |
| <b>Body.</b>              | Unstressed GRP in 100/6 and 300 style.   |
| <b>Suspension, front.</b> | Double wishbones, Ford upright, adjustable coil spring damper unit.                                |
| <b>Suspension, rear.</b>  | Jaguar IRS system mounted direct to the chassis. Adjustable coil spring damper units.              |
| <b>Steering.</b>          | Ford rack and pinion.  |
| <b>Brakes.</b>            | All disc system. Servo assisted.   |
| <b>Engine.</b>            | Rover V8 3.9 injection.  |
| <b>Dimensions.</b>        | Overall length.<br>Overall width.<br>Overall height.<br>Wheelbase.<br>Ground clearance.<br>Weight. |

**Kit contents.** Kits are supplied as fully comprehensive packs comprising everything required save for the donor mechanics.

|                    |             |                 |
|--------------------|-------------|-----------------|
| <b>Kit prices.</b> | Sebring SX. | £5802 plus vat. |
|                    | Sebring MX. | £6265 plus vat. |

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

**Classic Roadsters Ltd, PO Box 100, Wisbech, Cambs PE14 9JL. Tel. 0354 8678. Fax. 0354 8640.**

put together with any number of engines other than the rather strangled DOHC Ford. But whatever

car you select, they are both worthy choices and do great credit to the kit car industry.