

Griffith Club of America

March 1977

Entering our fith year and still going strong! That's right, five years of steady growth to a club membership now numbering 80. Five years of Griffith Club meets, tours, and parties all attended by many enthusiastic members. Five years of newsletters being sent everywhere from Hawaii to England. Five years of super members like Bob Mariani and George DeStefano working to make our club a success. We've come a long way since May 27, 1973 when six Griffith owners congregated and officially launched the club. So, everyone take an active part in your club, attend meets! We have our Fifth Annual coming up this September 17-18. Everyone should be there! Why not write and contribute articles to your newsletter. They could be anything from tech tips to humourous experiences. Let's make our Fifth Year our best year to date.

At this time I would like to present a financial report to all members:

1 MAY 1976 - 1 FEBRUARY 1977

Money in treasury May 1 Income from: Dues Back newsletters Patch sales	\$357.57 460.00 52.64 48.00	
Total income	\$918.21	6
Expenses		
Printing (newsletters)- Postage Miscelaneous supplies (checks, envelopes, photo	358.11 46.13	
development) Pinkerton guard (Annual meet)	21.02 86.94	
	\$512.20	

BALANCE ---- \$406.01

M. S. Eckhaus & Co. Motorcars, 9925 Main Street, Fairfax City, Virginia have now joined our ranks in the classified section. They are an authorized T.V.R. dealer with a large

amount of Griffith knowledge and interest. Technical assistance and T.V.R. parts at a 30-35% discount are now available to all club members. They also buy and sell good clean Griffiths along with other unique motorcars.

New Griffith windshields are presently available through Bob Mariani, Blood Street, Old Lyme, Connecticut (203) 434-8544. Clear or tinted, the choice is yours, at \$125.00. This is a good break considering that a replacement through T.V.R. will cost you well over twice that.

Michael Dodson, Baltimore, Maryland writes that "owners with dual radiator fans that eat 30 amp fuses might try wiring each fan independantly with its own switch. This system offers two advantages, 1) Eliminates the high initial surge of current that weakens the fuse. 2) One fan can be used when two are not needed, thus saving the battery." Thanks Michael!

In the October 76 newsletter I mentioned that pictures would become a permanent part of our newsletter. I requested that members forward photos of their cars to be used. To date this idea has run into only one snag. One member has sent pictures! Seriously, we now have the necessary funds to do this. It would allow members unable to attend meets because of distance the opportunity to view other cars as well as show theirs. All photos will be used, so dig out your photo albums.

With Spring around the corner, Griffith Meets are now being scheduled. Anyone interested in hosting a meet please contact me immediately.

Well that's about it. Special thanks to Bob Mariani for the Griffithtoons, Michael Dodson for the tech tip, and Art Patstone for the Road Test.

DRAWING: DENNIS SIMON

Sincerely,

Randy Hartigan, Director Bushy Hill Road

Eandy

Deep River, Connecticut 06417

(203) 526-5531

Breathes there a car-loving man with soul so dead that he has never nourished the desire to have a little automaking factory all his own? I've dreamed that daydream, and I'm sure you have too. One man who has not only dreamed it but done something about it is Andrew Jackson Criffith, Jr., at 39 the president and sole proprietor of

Griffith Motors, Inc., of Plainview, New York.

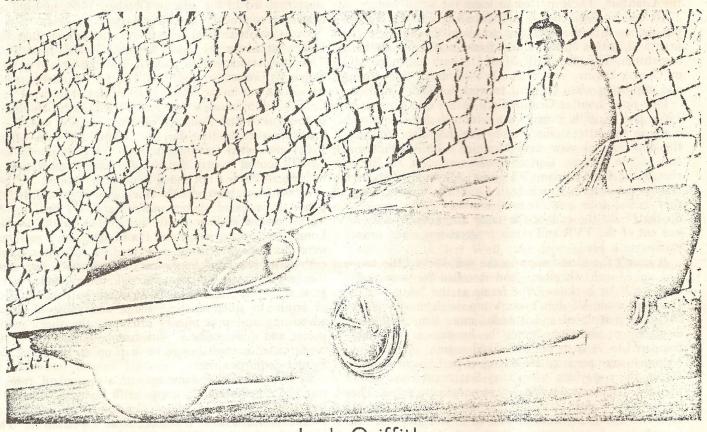
Fortunately for those of us who are in a position to buy one of his cars, nobody has pointed out to Jack Griffith the sober fact that the United States has not seen for many years such a thing as a successful small manufacturer of passenger cars. Sure, there have been many attempts—such names come to mind as Scarab, Cunningham, Frick, Multiplex, Playboy, Bocar, Dolphin, Begra, Kurtis, Muntz, Argonaut and Centaur, plus the current projects to revive the Cord and Duesenberg names. Except for the last two, these attempts have either expired for lack of funds or lived an artificial existence through the infusion of massive doses of capital. Few if any have ever actually earned any money for their financial backers.

Take heart for the Griffith, however, and for several reasons. First and foremost is that nothing in Jack Griffith's

past has prepared him for anything less than success. Born into a family with a tradition of success in business, Griffith started a new tradition of involvement with automobiles. After the war he bought one of the first MG TC's in the country, then acquired an early Riley sedan and moved on to sundry special vehicles.

From 1948 on, Jack Griffith merged his automotive and business enthusiasms, starting out in the used car business. In 1950 he acquired a Packard franchise, and in 1954 he switched over to the DeSoto-Plymouth line. Two years later, with a partner, Jack set up a Ford agency and at one point expanded outside the Long Island area with a branch in Connecticut, but this was too much to handle and in 1962 Griffith bought out his partner and gave up the branch.

At about this time the sporty-car urge reared its head once again and Griffith took on the Jaguar line in addition to his (pre-Mustang) Fords. During a visit to Sebring in early 1963, Griffith met Carroll Shelby, and the two tali, curly-haired enthusiasts hit it off well. As a direct result, Griffith Ford became one of the first dealerships to handle Shelby's Cobra and to get a race-equipped car, which was



Jack Griffith
is doing the impossible,
becoming an
independent manufacturer
of quality automobiles
—and staying solvent

PHOTO AND TEXT BY ERIC NIELSSEN

campaigned very successfully in the east in '63 by Griffith and driver Bob Brown-the son of the local Chevrolet dealer. During 1963 Griffith was also experimenting with a tentative step toward car building: a specially-equipped Falcon, sort of a Ford equivalent of John Fitch's Corvair

Sprint package.

To handle various racing-related projects Jack Griffith had obtained the part-time assistance of enthusiast Richard W. Monnich, whose technical background well complemented Griffith's promotional skills; when the Cobra operation got under way Monnich was hired full time by Griffith Ford. Dick Monnich brought with him from the electronics business a moonlighting sideline: the importation, sale and racing of the British TVR sports car.

What the devil is a TVR, you ask? We'd better reply, because TVR's have played a major part in the Griffith story. The name itself derives from the consonants in the first name of the TVR's designer, Trevor Wilkinson, who with Bernard Williams began making do-it-yourself car kits in Blackpool, England, in the early fifties. The first American to take an interest in the rugged, independentlysprung TVR chassis was New Englander Ray Saidel, who began importing the Blackpool bolides with Climax engines in 1956, either built-up or as kits, selling them under the Iomar name.

In 1959 TVR/Jomar announced an ambitious venture: the production of a compact fiberglass-bodied GT coupe, the Grantura. These started to leave the small factory in 1960, and by 1962 enough people had bought TVR's and put money into the operation to allow the design to be improved, with a stiffer tubular frame and more advanced suspension. This, the TVR Mark III, with choice of MG or Climax engine, was what Dick Monnich was driving and importing when he went to work for Jack Criffith.

One noon hour at Griffith Ford in the late summer of 1963, Jack Griffith joined Dick Monnich for a sandwich lunch in the latter's office out by the shop floor. Outside the door and in view were Monnich's TVR coupe and one of the Cobras, Carroll Shelby's mixture of British chassis and Ford Fairlane V8 power. An essentially simultaneous brainstorm struck both Griffith and Monnich as they looked from one car to the other: "Why don't we do that?" By the end of the same afternoon the engine was out of the TVR and much progress was made toward

stuffing in a Ford.

It wasn't the easiest swap in the world-the little coupe had an 84-inch wheelbase-and it called for a widening of the tubular backbone-type frame at the front, but the Dearborn-made V8 didn't weigh too much more than the MG four it replaced and it added more than double the displacement and three times the horsepower (271 bhp, compared to 94 from the MG 1800 engine). Griffith and Monnich were prepared for a level of performance bordering on sheer mayhem when they first twisted the key of their TVR-Fairlane, and they were not disappointed. They had created a mean little machine which could reach 145 mph and could leap from zero to 60 in tolerably less than 5 seconds and, on occasion, very nearly 4.

Dick Monnich was already scheduled to take the special Griffith Falcon out to Dearborn for evaluation by the Ford performance people, and as a secret weapon he took along the TVR too. It stormed impressively around the former airport now known as the Dearborn Proving Grounds and thoroughly earned the badge its descendants would carry: "Powered by Ford."

Monnich's next trip on Griffith's behalf was to England to see what kind of a deal they could work out with the powers that were at TVR. Dick discovered in December of 1963 that work was already under way at Blackpool's on a new, longer, more luxurious version of the car to be known as the "Trident," with sleeker, razor-edged bodwork and to be made in Italy in coupe and convertibly versions. "That's the job we want," Monnich told Griff. when he returned in January. "It will cost more but it much nicer looking and better suited to the U.S. market. I think we should wait until we can get the Trident." Griffith agreed; a point of decision had been reached. A new make of automobile was about to be created.

Not everything proceeded according to plan, however. lack Griffith wanted to launch his venture on the rising tide of the International Automobile Show in New York in April, 1964, but in February a TVR representative came over with the disappointing news that the Trident wouldn't be ready in time. He suggested that Griffith get things under way with the original TVR-Ford concept, adding the Trident to the line whenever it came on stream. lack agreed, more out of eagerness and enthusiasm than any conviction that this was the ideal way to proceed.

There were three TVR coupes on the Griffith stand at the Coliseum in April, one of them a new Griffith "200," bonnet bulging with Fairlane V8, which created great interest among show visitors, dealers included. This was proof enough for Griffith that he was on the right track with big American power in a small British car. He now moved to set up Griffith Motors, Inc., and to take the first steps that led to the sale, in October, 1964, of his Ford

dealership to provide capital for the new business.

Later events showed that it was just as well that they hadn't waited for the highly heralded Trident from TVR. That project dragged on and on, and the later it got the higher its projected price rose. The last figure quoted by its makers was in the \$9000 bracket, not at all what Jac Griffith had in mind, but he told TVR he'd display the c in the United States and see what the reaction was. It wa finally finished in time for the Geneva Show in March, 1965, and when it came to New York a month later Griffith looked it over and decided against marketing it: too impractical and not enough car for the money.

All had not been exactly roses with the Griffith 200, either. A series of strikes and other delays held up deliveries of the British chassis and bodies to the Svosset, Long Island, plant where the Ford engines and gearboxes were installed, preventing an immediate follow-up on the enthusiasm generated by the car's introduction. And when the cars did start to come through, their quality left a great deal to be desired, both in equipment and in level of finish. In spite of these snags, and some ill-advised advertising and promotional attempts, the sheer performance and dollar value Griffith had built into this \$3900 car attracted enough buyers to snap up all Blackpool and

Syosset could produce.

In early 1965 TVR came up with a squared-off, roomier rear end for the chunky coupe, still no more than 111/2 feet long overall, and added a multitude of interior refinements which made it a much more appealing car. This was designated the "400" and price-tagged at \$4900. Jack Griffith was pleased with the improvements and still was hammering away at the need for improved quality when, in June of 1965, he received word that TVR, veteran of almost yearly changes in organization and ownership, had gone bankrupt. It did so after manufacturing a total of 265 Griffiths powered by Ford-two-seater tornadoes which had established the Griffith name but had failed to w for it a favorable reputation as well.

When TVR went under, Griffith Motors was left in an (Continued on page 54) awkward but not entirely impossible situation. Much earlier, Jack, with Dick Monnich and Don Johnson, the firm's vice president and general manager, had begun a search for a new design direction, to take the place of the ill-fated Trident. At several times Griffith had come in contact with proprietors of the Apollo car-building project, using Buick components in an Italian-made chassis and body, and he had even considered adopting as a Griffith a new four-seater coupe that had been built as an Apollo prototype-at a time when it looked like Apollo wouldn't

be able to make use of the design.

While looking at the Apollo possibilities, Griffith met the man whose firm in Turin, Carrozzeria Intermeccanica, makes the Apollo bodies: not an Italian, but a Hungarian of Canadian citizenship and American education, Frank Reisner. His firm had started out as North-East Engineering, making speed equipment, Peugeot-based Formula Junior cars and a little GT coupe fitted with the Stevr engine for sale in Austria. Later he had switched primarily to body construction, and for Apollo he had produced some bodies of excellent trim and soundness. This was just what Jack Griffith had been looking for. In April, 1965, he arranged to purchase chassis-body units for a future Griffith from Reisner's Intermeccanica.

Jack Griffith also knew where the design for his new car would be coming from. From early 1964 he had under contract one of the few experienced independent automobile stylists, Robert Cumberford. Bob had been with the General Motors styling staff on advanced projects, and after leaving them had done design work on a number of automobiles, including a body for a stillborn Holman &.

Moody Indianapolis car.

Associated with Bob in Robert Cumberford Design International is John Crosthwaite, a Britisher with experience on both sides of the pond. John's chassis design and fabrication experience includes cars from Lotus, Cooper, Dolphin of San Diego, Mickey Thompson and B.R.M., for whom he still does some work on a contract basis. Crosthwaite's responsibility included the review and amendment of Frank Reisner's structure and suspension design for the new Griffith, while Cumberford did the shape and worked out the general concept and proportion of the car.

One feature of the earlier product Griffith had no intention of changing: the comprehensive use of Ford parts. In fact, the new Griffith will extend their use to include the rear axle as well as the engine transmission, the latter being either four-speed or automatic as desiredno difference in price. Criffith Motors is recognized as an original equipment automobile manufacturer by the National Automobile Dealers Association and by the Ford Industrial Engine Division, which sells it engines and other assemblies at "o.e.m." prices, more favorable than those enjoyed by Ford dealers, for example.

Specifically, the 1966 Griffith continues to use the 289cubic-inch Ford V8 engine, and if in the future Ford should decide to effect any improvements in this engine Griffith Motors would enjoy the benefits of those improvements. Griffith hopes to be able to offer the three-speed automatic with manual override as used in the Fairlane GT/A, and if he can't get it he'll consider going to another source to get the kind of gearing he feels he needs. Either way a Griffith owner can take confidence in the fact that the drive components of his car can easily be serviced anywhere in the United States.

The concept of the 1966 Griffith can be summed up most simply this way: It's conceived as direct competition

for the Jaguar XKE and Corvette Sting Ray. It resembles them both very closely in terms of size, with a 941/2-inch wheelbase and an overall length of 175 inches. Unlike its raw and uncultured predecessor, the new car is very much a luxury machine, with a strong appeal to those "personal car" customers who don't need a full four-seater.

There is no direct resemblance to the other cars in its class in terms of appearance, but the new Griffith does have much of the animal grace of the XKE combined with no small amount of the sharp, machinelike character definition of the Sting Ray. It is a nice combination and it is without argument a very good-looking automobile. At the moment it comes either as a convertible or a hardtop, again with no change in the price, which is expected to be substantially less than \$7500, including as standard most accessories except for radio and air conditioning. This year Griffith expects to show another version, about which we will say only that it should be one hell of a fine way to carry your golf clubs and/or skeet-shooting gear.
An integral body-frame has been designed for the new

car, for fabrication in steel by Intermeccanica. It has a live rear axle (increasingly a rarity in this class of car) and independent front suspension with rack and pinion steering. Disc brakes are used at all four wheels. A major advantage of the new semi-monocoque frame layout is the elimination of the gigantic center tunnel required by the backbone-type frame of the old TVR chassis. Good riddance! (Jack Griffith is not so happy, however, about being rid of the TVR line as such, and he is still on the lookout for another car, possibly British, that will allow him to

offer a lower-priced series as well.)

With the Griffith contract in hand, Frank Reisner is putting up a new building in Turin which will allow him to meet the target of 650 cars in 1966. The leased premises at Plainview, Long Island, with a total of 18,000 square feet including offices, are being reorganized to accommodate the different assembly procedure the new design requires. Griffith, candidly hungry for cars to feed his dealers since the mid-1965 TVR shutdown, had the completed prototype and the first nine bodies flown to the U.S. to meet press and dealer preview needs and get the new

program off to a swinging start.
Your nearest dealer? Well, that depends on where you hang vour hat. Griffith dsitribution to date has been through some 45 outlets in the eastern United States, extending from Pittsburgh and Washington up through New England; some but not all of these will be carrying the more expensive, more luxurious new Griffith, an upgraded car which deserves, Jack Griffith feels, upgraded dealers carrying more parts and offering a factory warranty that he says will be comparable with such competition as Jaguar and Mercedes-Benz. Griffith also plans to solicit dealers in other parts of the country through factory branch offices to be established in Chicago, Florida and Los Angeles with the help of interested new capital.

As I talked with Jack Criffith in his handsome office, and as this tall figure, like a James Garner with glasses, showed me his excellent facilities with pardonable pride, I thought to myself that here was one man who, much more than most, had come close to making his daydream a living reality. How close he's come we'll all know later this year. Meanwhile, Jack Griffith might want to have embroidered for his office wall the following adage, a quote from the British Motor: "It is dangerously easy to become a motor manufacturer; far more difficult to become a successful one."

PARTS & ASSISTANCE

TVR CARS OF AMERICA, LTD.
29 New York Avenue
Huntington, New York 11743
(516) 423-6333
Now offering a 10% discount
to all Griffith Club members.
Ask for Jerry Sagerman.

DAYTON WHEEL PRODUCTS, INC. 2326 East River Road Dayton, Ohio 45439 (513) 294-2606 Wire wheel service, Dunlop and Dayton wires in stock. Ask for Ed Williams.

DESTEFANO FORD SALES, INC. 231 County Road Barrington, R.I. 02806 (401) 245-5600 Genuine FORD parts. Now offering a 25% discount to all Griffith Club members. Ask for George DeStefano.

COLOR CREATIONS by DANNY
River Street
Rockville, Conn. 06066
(203) 871-1791
Specializing in Griffith
paint and fiberglas repair.
Ask for Danny Magnon.

KIRK RACING ENTERPRISES
P.O. Box 20004
Birmingham, Alabama 35216
(205) 823-6025
Now offering Griffith headers
to all members. \$110.00 per
set. (\$100.00 per set with
order of 5 or more.) Shelby
GT350 Tri-Y & Cobra headers
and roll bars available on
request.
Ask for Al Kirk.

THE COMPLETE AUTOMOBILIST LTD.
39 Main Street
Baston Nr. Peterborough
PE69NX, England
Griffith side vents-Part No.
224-Ventilator \$23.00/pair
plus \$5.00 Air postage.

BOB MARIANI
32 Blood Street
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(203) 434-8544
Now available, new Griffith
windshields, clear or tinted.
\$125.00.

M. S. ECKHAUS & CO. MOTORCARS
9925 Main Street
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Authorized T.V.R. dealer-30-35%
discount to all Griffith Club
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670 Academy Street
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Repair on Smiths speedometers.
Can fabricate new speedometer
cables using your original as a guide. Will adapt your own
cable to your present speedometer. When calling for quotation, tell them you are with
the Griffith Club.

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Repairs on Smith instruments.

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CONDON & SKELLY ANTIQUE MOTOR CAR INSURANCE BROKERS
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Willingboro, New Jersey 08046

CLASSIFIED ADVERTISEMENTS

Griffith 400,#006, new black Imron paint, quality interior, Holman-Moody 289, corvette rear, immaculate, \$5700.00, trades welcome, financing available. M.S. Eckhaus & Co. Motor cars, 9925 Main Street, Fairfax City, Virginia 22030 (703) 591-6522

Griffith 200,#147, new shocks, headers, springs, tires, ball joints, trunions. Converted to altenator, recent tune-up. \$5500.00. Fred McKenny, Old Antrim Road, Hancock, N.H. 03449

Split window VW complete and stock. Doesn't look like a Ferrari and doesn't run like a Griffith! \$900.00 sale or trade. Bob Mariani, Blood Street, Old Lyme, Conn. 06371 (203) 434-8544.

1961 Bugeyed Sprite, new white paint, clutch, top, interior, wiring, tires, shocks. 1970 1275 cc engine and trans., excellent, many spares. Best offer. Eric Bries, 12P-3 Govenors Island, N.Y. 10004 (212) 344-8115

"MOTORCARS" -PARTIAL INVENTORY-

AMX '68 - IMMAC. ASTON-MARTIN '67 DB-6 ASTON-MARTIN '66 DB-6 BRICKLIN '75 2900 MI. BMW '76 2002 3900 MI. BMW '75 2002 BLUE CORD '70 11000 MI. CORVETTE '60 MINT! CORVETTE '66 CPE CORVETTE '67 CPE CORVETTE '71 CONV EXCALIBER '67 JAG '74 CONV	\$3100.00 \$6900.00 \$6100.00 \$9100.00 \$7100.00 \$6150.00 \$13750.00 \$5200.00 \$4600.00 \$4900.00 \$11000.00 \$9400.00
EXCALIBER '67	
EXCALIBER '67	
JAG '58 XK-150 CPE	\$6450.00
MG-TD '50 ORIGINAL	\$4000.00
MG-TF '55 VOLVO ENG MG-TF '55 MINT!	\$6350.00
PORSCHE '63 CABRIOLET ROLLS-ROYCE '49 CONV SQUIRE '73 (NEW)REPLICA TVR's-NEW & USED - FROM	\$4500.00 \$31000.00 \$9900.00 4 \$3300.00
TATE DELIMINA OF CAMPA	- 4770000

(6-60 FINANCING AVAILABLE)

MOTORCARS (703) 591-6522
"WE BUY CLEAN UNIQUE MOTORCARS"

TVR's - NEW '77's - LIST PRICE \$9255.00. LARGE DISCOUNT TO GRIFFITH CLUB MEMTERS! FIVE YEAR/50000 MILE PARTS & LABOR GUARANTEE-CALL MARK ECKHAUS AT "MOTORCARS" (703) 591-6522

WANTED - Griffiths-any solid car, immediate cash paid! Call Mark Eckhaus - days(703) 591-6522.

WANTED - Cobras 289 or 427, immediate cash paid! Call Mark Eckhaus -days(703) 591-6522.

WANTED - T.V.R.'s good solid cars, immediate cash paid! Call Mark Eckhaus -days(703) 591-6522.

WANTED - Corvetts 53-67 solid original cars prefered, immediate cash paid! Call Mark Eckhaus - days(703) 591-6522.

WANTED - 65-66 Shelby GT-350s, good solid cars only, must be 4 speed, immediate cash paid! Call Mark Eckhaus -days(703) 591-6522.

PARTS

Griffith rack & pinion, (1)
new, (1) used, 456 ring &
pinion for MG rear (used),
Detroit Locker for MG rear,
Koni shocks with Tuscan springs,
Series 400 half shafts, center
section, all brackets, Misc.
interior and exterior parts.
Offers on all parts or trade
for Shelby or Cobra parts.
Mike NiBali, 3405 Sylvan Lane,
Ellicott City, Md. 21043
(301) 747-2312

Series 200 halfshafts, complete less U-joints, brand new optional spicer (large size) shafts. \$150.00 or best offer. George DeStefano, 15 Pinetop Road, Barrington, R.I. 02806 (401) 246-0397

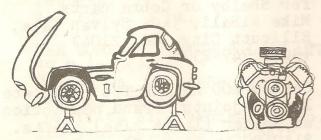
110 New Champion racing plugs, various heat ranges from Boss 302 or 351C \$50.00. Holman-Moody 8 qt. steel pan with baffles and Wayes and a Triple Pick-up pump for Sm. Blk. Ford \$100.00 or trade for 3X2 setup for 289 Ford. Jerry Bugay, 875 Falck Road, McKees Rocks, Pa. 15136

Griffith windshield, used, excellent condition, \$75.00. 4 Ansen alum. wheels - 4 lug. Griffith pattern, 7" wide 0 offset, \$75.00 or trade. Bob Mariani, Blood Street, 0ld Lyme, Conn. 06371 (203) 434-8544

WANTED: AM-FM or AM-8 Track with dash plate for 1966
Mustang. Must be factory.
Jerry Bugay, 875 Falck Road,
McKees Rocks, Pa. 15136

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ALL ADS DUE BY THE 15TH OF THE PRECEDING MONTH



the manual says it fits



The

GRIFFITH

World's Fastest
Production Automobile

powered by Ford



\$3995

as shown

Goes like all get out

For those who like to get out and go!





Griffith Motorcar Company

Griffith Motors, Inc.
DEPT. SCG 25 141 EILEEN WAY
SYOSSET, NEW YORK

WANTED - Griffiths-any solid car, immediate cash paid! Call Mark Eckhaus - days (703) 591-6522.

WANTED - Griffith 400 - any condition considered. John Shea, 604 Broad Street, Riverton, N.J. 08077

PARTS

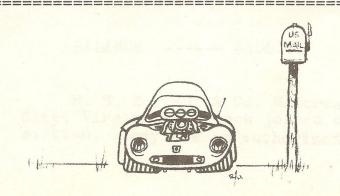
Griffith rack & pinion, (1)
new, (1) used, 456 ring &
pinion for MG rear (used),
Detroit Locker for MG rear,
Koni shocks with Tuscan
springs, Series 400 half
shafts, center section, all
brackets, Misc. interior and
exterior parts. Offers on all
parts or trade for Shelby or
Cobra parts.
Mike Nibali, 3405 Sylvan Lane,
Ellicott City, Md. 21043
(301) 747-2312.

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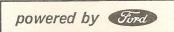




The

GRIFFITH

World's Fastest Production Automobile



\$3995

as shown

Goes like all get out

like to get out and go!



IT'S GRRRRREAT!!!



Griffith Motorcar Company

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DEPT. SCG 25 141 EILEEN WAY

SYOSSET, NEW YORK