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# STUBBY & SPORTY

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# TVR

# 1800S

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**Y**OU take a tubular steel chassis and stuff an MGB engine into one end and the transmission bits and pieces into the other. Over the whole issue you then paste a glassfibre body with very distinctive and chunky lines and the answer is not a lemon as you might first have thought but a TVR 1800S—to be exactly precise, the Mark IV version thereof, which arrives on your doorstep at a bottom price of just over twelve hundred quid. And we reckon its worth it, too. Quite why it should answer the dreams of a real enthusiast to such a markedly greater degree than the common-or-garden MGB to which it owes most of its works isn't obvious, at least not to us. But for a start it weighs the best



Well like we said, not exactly trendy—just stubby (and sporty of course).

part of four hundredweight less; it stands on bigger wheels, has a shorter wheelbase, by six inches odd, and a wider track— $2\frac{3}{4}$  ins. at the front and  $5\frac{1}{2}$  ins. more at the back. And apart from this increase, the relationship between front and rear tracks is completely different when you compare it with the MGB, too: the differential between front and rear track on the Abingdon product is only a quarter of an inch, whereas anyone of you with enough fingers will by now have worked it out for the TVR at  $2\frac{1}{2}$  ins. all told. So you can't really compare the two at all, which probably explains why it answers the dreams, etc. as aforesaid.

Of course, our opening paragraph (what we call an "intro" in the trade, if you're interested, which we doubt) is altogether too much of a generalisation, because it makes the TVR sound like a cross between a backyard special and a straightforward derivative of the MGB. Which isn't in the least bit true—the TVR is nowadays, whatever it may have been in the past—and it has had, as a marque, a somewhat chequered career—a properly developed car, well thought-out and well-made as well, in its own right. It is comfortable, fast, very sporting in its handling and general behaviour, and in addition is the sort of motor-car which tends to attract a good deal of attention in public car parks and similar places.

The power unit, which is mounted well back in the short

chassis, is bog-standard MGB—you know, 1,798 c.c., 8.8 to 1 compression, five-bearing crank, twin S.U. carbs, an electric cooling fan, diaphragm clutch and 95 b.h.p. at five-four. It works through a standard-ratio MGB gearbox (you can get close-ratio gears as an optional extra for another forty quid) and a 3.9 rear axle. Extreme rearward location of the engine has, in turn, shoved the gearbox well back, quite obviously, and this ends up by having the gear-lever further back in the cockpit than is usual. At first it feels very awkward, but we quickly got used to it and once this has happened nothing abnormal strikes you. The gear-change, of course, is normal MGB, and there's no synchromesh on the bottom cog.

Having the engine right back in the chassis also means you have to have rather narrow doors, which for our tall men made getting in and out a shade tricky. But even they soon mastered the knack, while for normal-sized chaps like the five-nine-and-a-half editor (to whom we raise our hats) the operation presented no difficulties, and he spent some time hopping in and out like a baby kangaroo just to show the others how easy it is if only they'd known when to stop growing. Once you are in, the seats are very comfortable and hold you in well—they get some assistance in this from the high transmission tunnel. A wood-rimmed steering wheel is standard equipment and you can sort yourself out

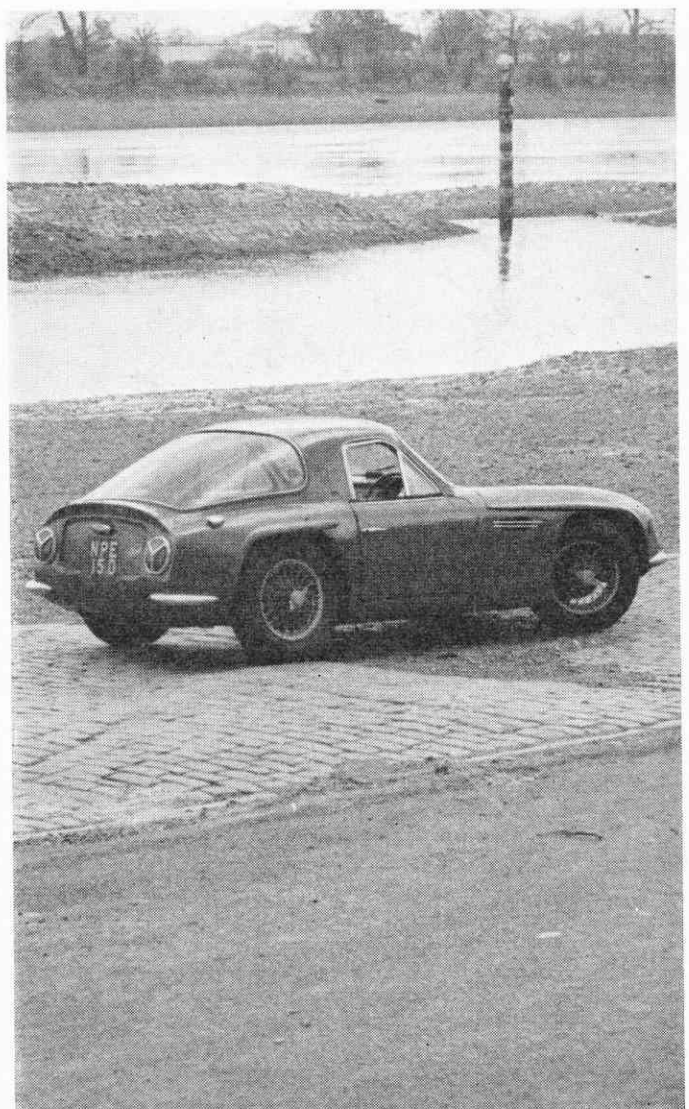
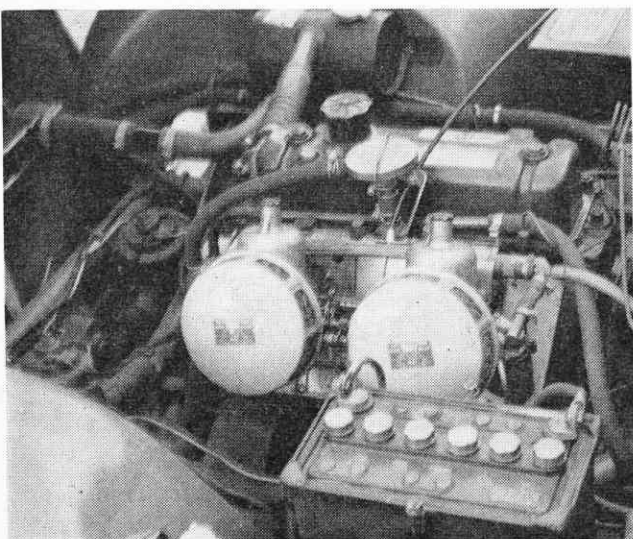
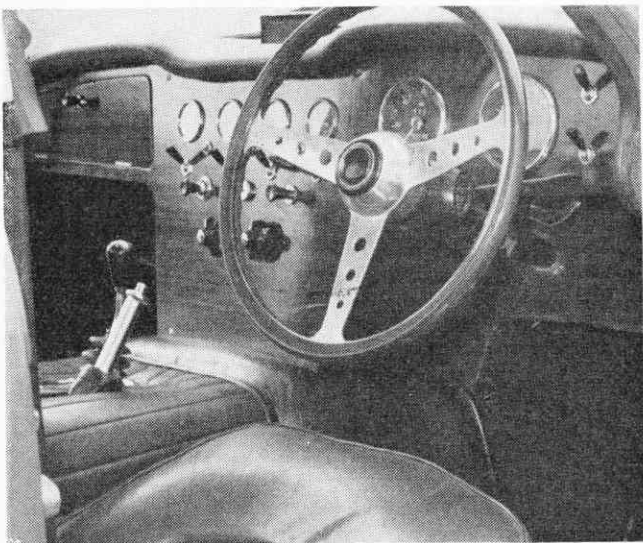


into a comfy driving position—even Gerry Marshall of the Barnet Motor Co., who lent us the car, can get suited in it, and he is something over seventeen stone and big, as you might say, with it. Oddly enough, we found it absolutely impossible to heel and toe without having the right leg much longer than the left, and the other thing that struck us was the enormous travel on the loud pedal: when we first drove the car it didn't seem to be going awfully well, which we later discovered was simply because we were only using half-throttle. The dashboard is furnished in some sort of imitation genuine treewood and is fitted with the right number of the right dials—you get a speedometer, rev-counter, water temperature, oil pressure and fuel gauges, and an ammeter, with warning lights for ignition, headlamp main beams and, of course, the blinking indicators. Switches and gauges are laid out for the most part in a centre console, the switches being labelled with pretty pictures of their functions, although the one labelled with a picture of a light only turns on the side-lamps—for main and dipped headlight beams you operate a stalk on the column, Herald/Spitfire style, and you use this for flashing the lights as well.

As it comes you get a toughened screen and a clear back window, but on "our" car we had the optional extras—coming to a tenner and twenty quid, in round figures, respectively of a laminated screen and a tinted "Sundym" rear window. Visibility was very good indeed all round the

car, and at least during the period of the test we never had any trouble with misting-up of the back window. The quarter lights don't open, but there are small ventilator nozzles, adjustable for direction and air flow, at each end of the dashboard. On the passenger's side of the fascia is a lidded glove compartment: about the only thing you go short of with a TVR is real luggage space. All the bags and baggages, apart from anything of the sort you may care to park on the seat at your left elbow, have to be fed through the door, over the back of the seat and on to the platform under the back window, a space they have to share with the spare wheel. Much more than not quite enough for two people, unless you are travelling very light, cuts off the view through the rear-view mirror.

With a TVR you get independent suspension at both ends, with wishbones, telescopic coil-spring/damper units and a stout anti-roll bar at the front. The thing sits on 15 in. wheels, compared with the 14 in. of the MGB, and the ride is firm almost to the point of harshness. The centre of gravity is very low, the track wide at 4 ft. 3½ in. front, 4 ft. 6½ in. rear, in relation to the 7 ft. 1½ in. wheelbase, and the overall result of this is that you can get the TVR round corners very very fast indeed. It sticks down very well and goes where it's pointed until you start cornering much too fast, at which point the tail will slide out. Once you get used to this you find the best technique is to let it, so that you emerge from the corner with the nose pointing the right way





for the straight bit. In the wet you can run into understeer of high proportions if you turn on the tap too soon, but you can still get the thing round very quickly so long as you bear this in mind. If you lift off halfway through the corner it does a sort of Mini on you, and the nose cuts smartly in, which leaves you with the sort of attitude you can balance on the loud pedal until the time comes to travel in a different direction.

So far as the stoppers go, you've got ten-inch discs on the sharp end and nine-inch drums astern, and the combination is about right to stop the beast from its mean maximum of just about 110 m.p.h. The suspension behaves itself when this is going on, too, which is something you might not necessarily expect from a short wheelbase vehicle. But in practice the only snag arising from the short, stubby length of the TVR is in a bit of choppiness on rough surfaces, and this, to be frank, would probably arise anyway, even with a much longer wheelbase, with suspension as firm as it is. This isn't by any means a bone-shaking movement—the car is, as we seem to have said before, perfectly comfortable—but you do notice it. There is in fact quite a lot of violent wheel movement if you happen to be travelling rapidly over poor surfaces—you feel it particularly in the steering and

from the front end, which will hop about a bit under certain cornering conditions without the wheels actually losing adhesion, which may sound a bit of a minor miracle but you probably know the feeling.

Performance is basically what a TVR is all about, and you can make it go alright. "Our" car had the optional overdrive on third and top (another hundred-odd quid) but not the close-ratio gears. Unfortunately its mixture setting was a shade suspect, so for performance figures we drove another car, supplied by Normand's in the Bayswater Road, and this one simply had the normal standard box without the overdrive. This makes no difference to maximum speed since the TVR, like the MGB from which it gets its motive power, is quicker in direct top than in overdrive, although this might not prove to be the case with, say, the 115 b.h.p. Special Equipment model which you can have for £1575 all told. However, the car we timed had a top whack of just about 110 m.p.h. and got from 0-60 in ten seconds, which is a sort of datum line on one side of which you have the really fast cars with the more pedestrian machines on the other, slower, side. This puts the TVR just about in the middle, from which you can assume that it is quick without being very quick, and that's all you can ask from 95 b.h.p. and seventeen hundredweight. From rest to the legal limit takes 14 seconds, and you can get up to the ton from a standing start in 36 seconds, which is a lot quicker than the MGB.

You get a bonus from the light weight in the fuel consumption, too. The second car, which had its carburettor needles in the right places, gave us a steady 25 m.p.g. overall, with a bit less in heavy traffic and up to 27 m.p.g. on a long though rapid journey. At none of which can one honestly sneeze, even if you wanted to.

One way and another we grew very fond of the TVR. It has a purposeful look about it which we like, and the performance is there to back it up, and on top of all this the car is well finished and has a pleasantly solid feel about it. This car, or to be more precise cars because there were two of 'em, was the first—were the first, sorry—TVRs we had driven since the days of the 1100 Climax-engined instrument of seven or eight—maybe more—years ago. The improvement is colossal and nowadays they have themselves a really worthwhile motor-car.



## Cars on Test

### TVR MK. IV 1800S

**Engine:** Four cylinders, 80.3 mm. x 88.9 mm., 1,798 c.c.; twin S.U. carbs; 8.8 to 1 compression ratio; five-bearing crankshaft; push-rod o.h.v.; 95 b.h.p. at 5,400 r.p.m.

**Transmission:** Diaphragm spring clutch and four-speed gearbox with synchromesh on upper three forward ratios only.

**Suspension:** Independent front and rear, with wishbones, coil springs and telescopic dampers; front anti-roll bar.

**Brakes:** Front, 10 in. discs; rear, 9 in. drums.

**Dimensions:** Overall length, 11 ft. 6ins; overall width, 5 ft. 4 ins; overall height, 4 ft. 0 ins; turning circle 32 ft; kerb weight, 17 cwt.

#### PERFORMANCE

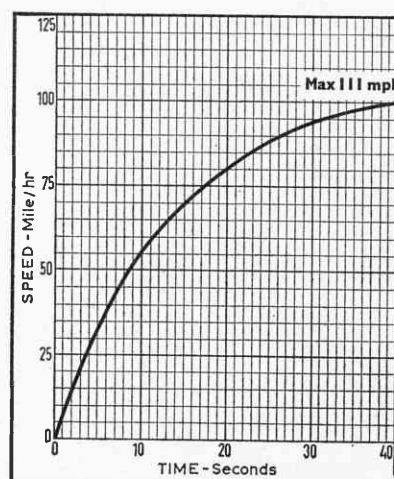
	m.p.h.
Maximum speed	111
Mean of 2 ways	110.2
Speeds in gears	
First—	28
Second—	48
Third—	75

#### ACCELERATION

	secs.
0-30	4.2
0-40	6.1
0-50	8.1
0-60	10.0
0-70	14.0
0-80	18.6
0-90	25.0
0-100	36.0

Fuel consumption: 25 m.p.g. overall

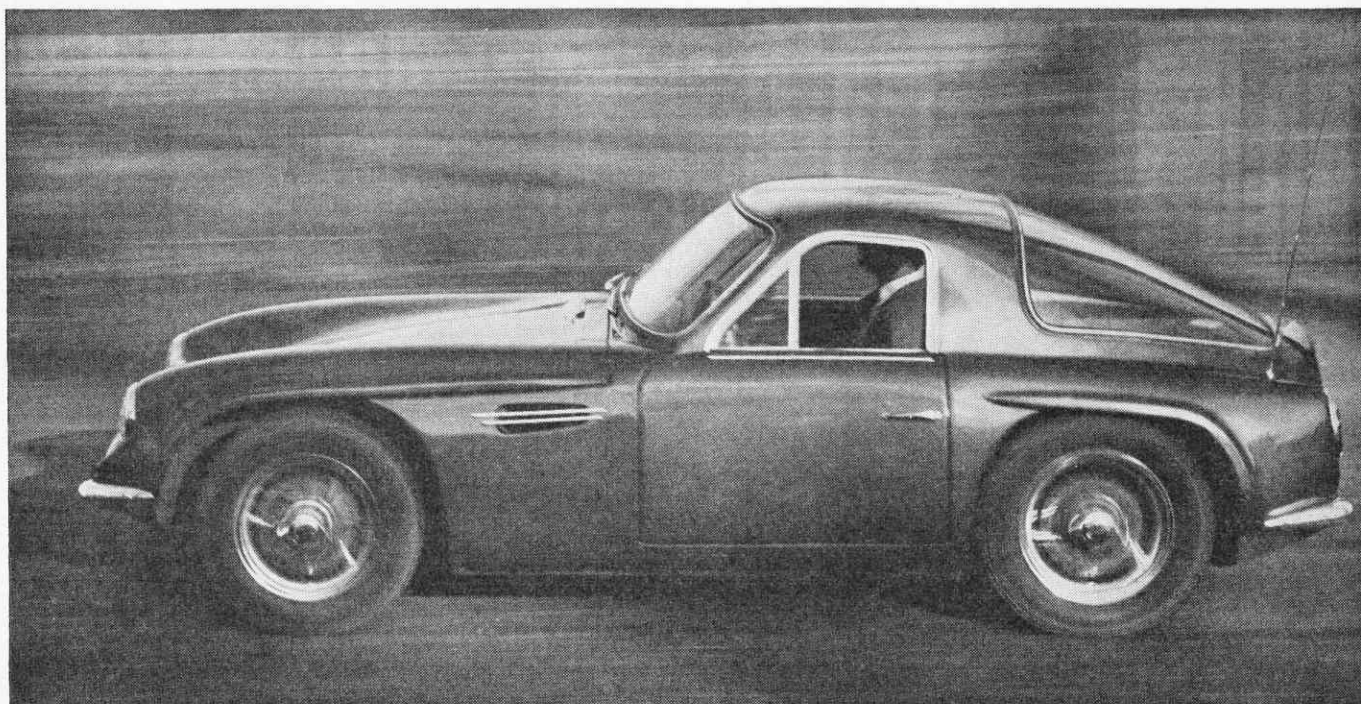
Manufacturers: T.V.R. Engineering Ltd., Fielding's Industrial Estate, Bispham Road, Blackpool, Lancs. (Cars supplied by Barnet Motor Co. Ltd., Victoria Lane, Barnet, Herts. and Normand's Ltd., Bayswater Road, London W2.)  
Price: £1,216 2s 9d. Price as tested, with wire wheels, overdrive, laminated screen, tinted rear window, etc., £1,449 6s 3d.





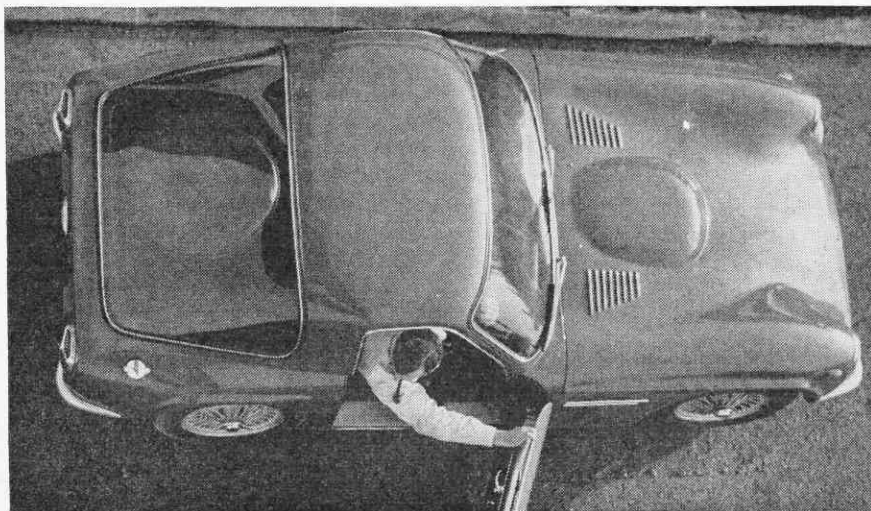
# TVR

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