Week ending 2 JUNE 1979

Autocar

SPORTS CAR NUMBER

HAS THE SPORTS CAR A FUTURE?

Tested to max.—TVR TURBO

AutoTEST

TVR Turbo

Machismo lives . . . .

NOT ONLY IS it satisfying to watch a specialist manufacturer like TVR weather the burden of seemingly endless vehicle legislation, and the extraordinarily costly business of crash testing, but even more gratifying to see a new model — even if it is based on those existing — coming from this small Blackpool factory.

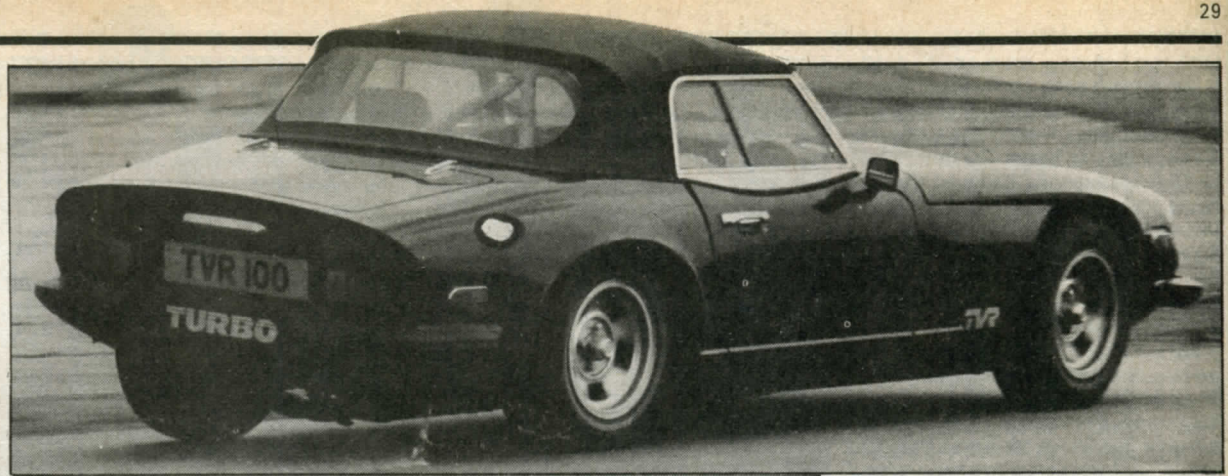
The TVR Convertible was announced just over a year ago, and its ready acceptance can be gauged by the fact that over 200 normally aspirated versions (the Convertible 3000S) have been built since then — a number that approaches half total production. With a near £12,000-on-the-road price tag exclusivity of the Convertible Turbo is guaranteed (around 15 have been built so far).

Billed as the "Ultimate moving experience" this rather stylish looking open air machine uses the same tubular backbone chassis as other 3-litre models (hence the wide and high transmission tunnel). The separate body/chassis conception assures that the open topped car requires no further chassis modifications to retain an acceptable degree of torsional stiffness. The frame spreads at the front to carry the engine, unequal length double wishbone front suspension, bonnet, radiator, and so on, and at the rear to support similar suspension and a Salisbury differential unit. Coil spring damper units are used all round.

Surprisingly the convertible Turbo has required no suspension or drive line strengthening. The standard 3-litre Capri gearbox is used. Spring rates, damper settings, even brake type and size, remain common throughout the range, though the Turbocharged cars do run very hard DS11 front pads.

That the "standard" chassis and transmission specification copes is all the more remarkable when you consider that power and torque are massively increased from the standard Ford Essex V6's 138 bhp (DIN) at 5,000 rpm and 172 lb ft at 3,000 rpm. Broadspeed's turbocharged version of this lazy 94 mm bore by 72 mm stroke 2,994 c.c. unit (as used in the Turbo Bullit) gives an extraordinarily high output of 230 bhp at 5,500 rpm (67 per cent better) while peak torque rises by 58 per cent to 273 lb ft at 3,500 rpm. It's a well proven conversion which employs one Holset or AiResearch turbocharger mounted forward of the engine and a clever dash-pot-controlled inlet air pressure relief valve rather than a wastegate to limit boost pressure to 9 psi. This is also surely the only conversion of its type that conforms to all the current European emission standards. An oil cooler is a very necessary standard fitment. The high speeds attainable have necessited fitting 195/14 70 aspect ratio VR tyres (Michelin XWX on test car) and together with a 3.33 final drive these give lowly overall gearing of 21.7 mph per 1,000 rpm (a higher 3.07 to 1 final drive ratio can be specified which would give a far more satisfactory 23.5 mph per 1,000 rpm). Fortunately the engine is safe to run to 6,250 rpm continuously and 6,500 rpm intermittently, but under these conditions Broadspeed advise owners to use upper cylinder lubricant in the fuel. Another surprise (considering ratio of 8.0-to-1 and the previously stated boost pressure) is that the engine will run satisfactorily on four star fuel.

The test car tipped the scales at 21.7 cwt distributed 52/48 front to rear. Strangely this was 1.5 cwt heavier than the Autotest Taimar hatchback (24 October 1977). The substantial roll-over cage that graced "our" car is not a normal fitment, but was welcome none the less.



Ultimately there is just a trace of understeer on slowish corners. Roll is generous enough to help give plenty of feel — yet is not upsetting to the low seated occupants. Notice (above) the fuel pouring from the filler

TVR Convertible Turbo
The Convertible 3000S and Convertible Turbo are latest in the TVR range. They joined the hatchback Taimar (introduced August 1972) and the basic 3000M Coupé (introduced August 1972) in June 1978. Blown versions of these three models use Broadspeed's highly developed turbocharged Ford Essex V6 power unit.

PRODUCED AND SOLD IN THE UK BY:
TVR Engineering Ltd
Bristol Avenue
Blackpool
Lancs FY2 OJF

Performance
Electrifying

Finished in black with TURBO spelt clearly across the back, the test Convertible caused considerable interest wherever it came to rest. Eventually everybody asked the same question: "What will she do?".

A quick trip to the Continent gave us the answer. A mean maximum of 139 mph (6,400 rpm) and a best one way speed of 140 mph (6,450 rpm) could at first glance be regarded as disappointing bearing in mind the extraordinary acceleration curve. Marked undergearing — the 5,500 rpm (peak power) equals a mere 119 mph — pretty turbulent airflow around the hood and a sharply dropping power output above 6,000 rpm are mainly responsible. The slowing effect of turbulence can be judged by the fact that the car was ultimately 5 mph slower with the hood down — not to mention rather breezy. We also noticed a significant slow down in an almost linear acceleration curve at exactly 127 mph with the hood up.

With an as-tested weight of just over 25 cwt, good weight distribution (close to 50/50 with two up), 230 bhp, dry tarmac and a clutch that takes clutch dumping type racing starts in its stride, acceleration is electric. Using 5,000 rpm for the start and 6,500 rpm in the gears the Convertible pours away from the line reaching 30 mph in 2.4 sec., 60 mph in a staggering 5.8 sec. and 100 mph and the quarter mile in 14.5 sec. — unbelievably a fraction faster to this speed than the *Autotest* 3-litre Porsche Turbo. By the time the kilometre post flashes past — in 26.3 sec and at 125 mph — the engine is however already revving past its power peak.

The enormous torque of the Broadspeed unit and low gearing give the Convertible remarkable mid-range performance. However in order to exploit this you have to keep the engine "on the boil". Although low down tractability is every bit as good as the standard-engined car, low down *acceleration* response is actually inferior to say the similarly geared, normally aspirated Taimar, that is, when the engine is working in the unboosted "dead" period below 2,700 rpm. For instance 20-40 mph in second, 30-50 mph in third and 40-60 mph in top take 2.8, 3.7, and 6.4 sec in the Taimar against 3.4, 4.7, and 6.8 sec in the Convertible Turbo. Of course once the boost gauge starts climbing and that sensuous push in the back begins the situation changes more than somewhat; 70-90 mph in third occupies a mere 4.1 sec (Taimar 8.8 sec) while 80-100 mph and 100-120 mph only take a shattering 5.3 and 8.3 sec respectively — performance that is actually better at this point than the admittedly much higher geared 3-litre Turbo Porsche.

One of the most satisfying experiences is to floor the throttle at say 80 mph and feel the surge of acceleration that leaves all but the fastest supercar receding in the mirror — up to 120 mph at any rate. Like most current turbocharged engines the step on to the boost is smooth enough, yet the sudden increase in power can be embarrassing in the wet where wheelspin is quite easy to generate in second and even third gear. This makes the Convertible Turbo very much a car for the skilled driver — somebody who possesses a degree of car control — because it follows that it is all too easy to set the rear fishtailing when conditions are poor.

Invest in ear plugs. Make no mistake, the Convertible Turbo is a very noisy car. An urgent exhaust growl accompanies hard acceleration. We liked it, but imagine it could become a bit of a bore after a while. Wind noise starts increasing dramatically from 60 mph to a point — at 90 mph — where all normal conversation has to stop. Above that speed, wind roar, engine and exhaust noise even dominate the high level of coarse surface and rough road tyre noise, not to mention the shudders, jiggles and shakes generated by the roofless bodywork and sidescreen catches. "It's just like my MGB used to be" commented one tester. We also noticed a pronounced transmission vibration while accelerating hard through an indicated 70 mph (67 mph true thanks to an unusually slow speedometer).

Economy
Easy to better

If it had not been for the fact that a leaking fuel filler allowed considerable initial spillage of fuel on

left-hand bends — even on the road — we should have easily improved on an overall consumption figure of 17.7 mpg. On several long fast runs we were able to better 20 mpg while performance testing reduced the figure into the 13-15 mpg bracket. Interestingly the constant speed figures not only show that the Convertible Turbo is at its most economical at 50 mph, but that at 100 mph it is still doing nearly 18 mpg — a slightly better figure than we saw at that speed with our Autotest Taimar. As we have suggested, the car would easily pull a higher final drive ratio and this would doubtless improve high speed cruising economy.

What all TVRs desperately need is a larger than 12 gallon fuel tank. Within a few miles of brimming the fuel gauge needle starts moving off its stop. With an absolute range of just over 200 miles one begins to search anxiously for a friendly garage after covering as little as 150 miles — a ludicrously small effective range. A fuel filler that requires the last two gallons to be patiently dribbled in to avoid blowbacks makes the all-too-frequent fuel stops doubly annoying.

We also noticed some fuel surge (even with the tank half full of fuel) under hard cornering, both on the road and at MIRA, which caused the engine to cut after negotiating long left-hand bends. Oil consumption was negligible throughout the test period.

Road behaviour

Underdeveloped

As we have already mentioned no alterations have been made to the chassis to cope with the extra power. Suspension settings remain the same as the Taimar too. The result is an odd mixture of very good dry weather road-holding and traction, a neutral handling balance and taut smooth road ride, countered by a frankly very disappointing crashy ride over cat's eyes, potholes, road repairs and the like. Over all but the smoothest surfaces the bonnet, scruttle, and side screens shake and shudder to betray the lack of body rigidity and seemingly very stiff, high frequency damper settings.

The ride improves with speed and the TVR absorbs long undulations well but poor surfaces (such as the typical French secondary road) nearly always sets the bonnet dithering before one's eyes.

The TVR's short wheelbase and overall length clearly suggest manoeuvrability, yet we felt rather frustrated by the low geared if nicely weighted steering. It was also rather vague and with 3¾ turns from lock to lock made the car seem unnecessarily ponderous. Often, we found ourselves "crossing hands" when driving along a country road and winding away at the wheel in town. A lack of self-centring action and feel around the straight ahead position could be tracked to a sticky bush at the top of the steering column and a rubber-mounted rack that could move full ⅜ in laterally in its mountings. During the maximum speed runs — which were conducted in a stiffish cross wind — natural straight line stability was satisfactory, however the flexibly mounted rack conveyed small corrections too late, thus tending to compound any movement from the desired track.

On the other hand we were able to negotiate MIRA's 85 mph "hands off" banking comfortably at 125 mph and this served to dispel any doubt that the TVR is not capable of very high cornering speeds. At that speed an over-long bolt sticking down from the chassis began scraping along the track, halting any faster running. The near-ideal weight distribution and front-engine layout give neutral handling balance yet inherent straight line stability — a high speed puncture at the rear was only noticed at first as a thrumming noise and larger throttle opening required to maintain 100 mph. The short wheelbase, wide track and comparatively soft springs allow a moderate amount of roll and pitch. Certainly the TVR has plenty of feel *in extremis*. Very mild understeer at slow speeds can be easily and delightfully neutralised with throttle. In faster corners the rear squats under hard acceleration and ultimately under these conditions the car tends to slide all of a piece. Lifting off in mid corner produces the usual tail out attitude but correction is swift — the steering being far more accurate once "loaded up" in a corner.

Brakes

Balanced but stretched

Under all but fade test conditions the Convertible's brakes gave the utmost confidence. During the response test, pressure on a firm yet sensitive pedal varied progressively between the 20 lb needed to give 0.28G retardation — a typical check stop — and 60 lb for the best crash stop when the decelerometer simply shot down its scale to read better than 1.0G. The car came to rest with absolutely no drama and only moderate pitch — a quite surprising performance to those on board who had not seen this sort of braking efficiency for some time. Further pedal effort locked the front wheels, the car sliding, with tyres squealing, straight ahead.

In contrast, our new fade test (in this case 10 consecutive ½G stops from 100 mph), tried the front disc/rear drum brakes to the limit. The fade resistance of racing DS11 pads is legendary (these are fitted as standard to all TVR Turbos) and ultimately they did not disappoint. Accompanied by some friction material smell and smoke from the fourth through to the seventh stop, pedal pressures rose dramatically then settled back somewhat. More telling of the punishment they were taking was an initially firm brake pedal that got progressively more spongy and subsequently never fully recovered — even well after the test.

The handbrake needed an enormous heave to prevent the car from running backwards on MIRA's 1 in 4 slope. Predictably it would not look at the 1 in 3 test hill — and produced only a gentle 0.25G retardation on the flat. It seems a better linkage and/or more leverage are required.

Behind the wheel

Good in parts

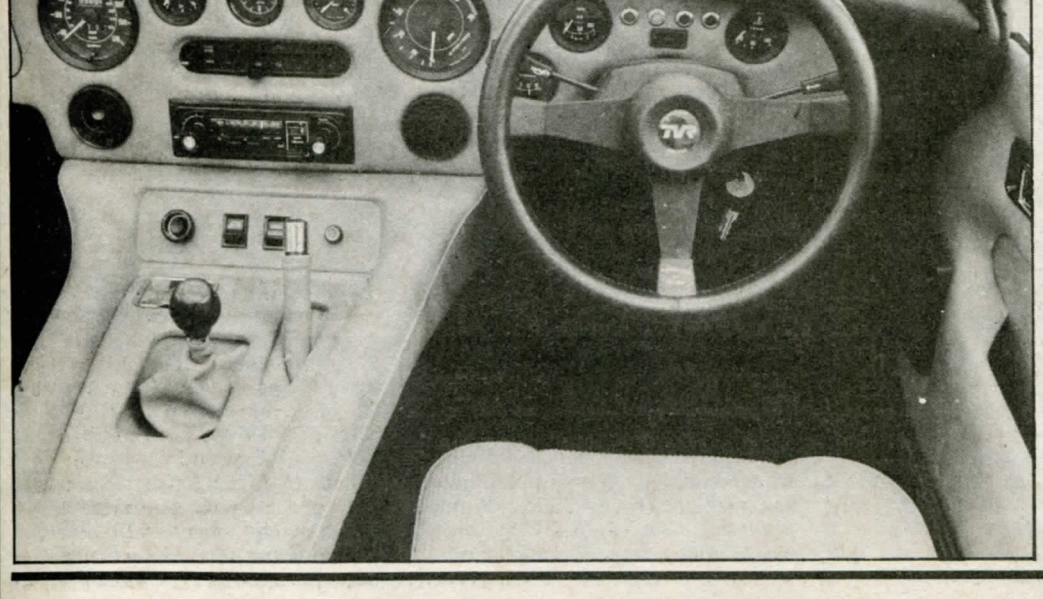
As you would expect of a true sports car, a fair degree of agility is needed to get in and especially out when one tends to snag one's right leg on the front of the door opening. Each seat has a ratchet type squab adjustment (micro type would be better) but only enough aft movement for a 6ft driver. Testers found them comfortable and supportive. The feeling of being "at one" with the car was heightened by further lateral support given by the wide and high tunnel and padded doors.

Forward visibility from such a low driving position is surprisingly good, less so in the wet though where better wipers are needed to clear more of the screen. A nearside door mirror would also be welcome to compensate for relatively poor three-quarter rear visibility with the hood up.

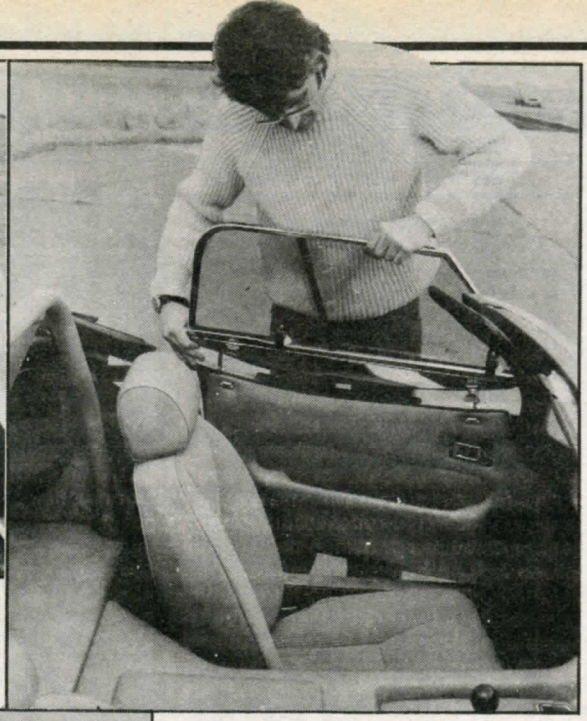
An unnaturally cranked arm is needed to change gear because the gear change lever pokes through the tunnel fairly far back — an inevitable result of the short chassis design. It took one tester a few miles to get out of the habit of "changing gear" with the far more conveniently placed handbrake. Annoyingly, the throttle on the test car was positioned too far away from the brake for easy heeling and toeing while the crisp, short clutch movement needed a high 55 lb pressure to free, making gear changing rather tiresome around town.

Behind a pleasant-to-use leather-bound, three-spoke steering wheel are Leyland type stalk controls to operate (on the right) two speed plus manual flick wipe and screen wash (automatic intermittent should be standard), and on the left, indicators, dip/main beam, headlamp flash, and horn. Lucas H4 Halogen headlamps give good night driving light on full beam.

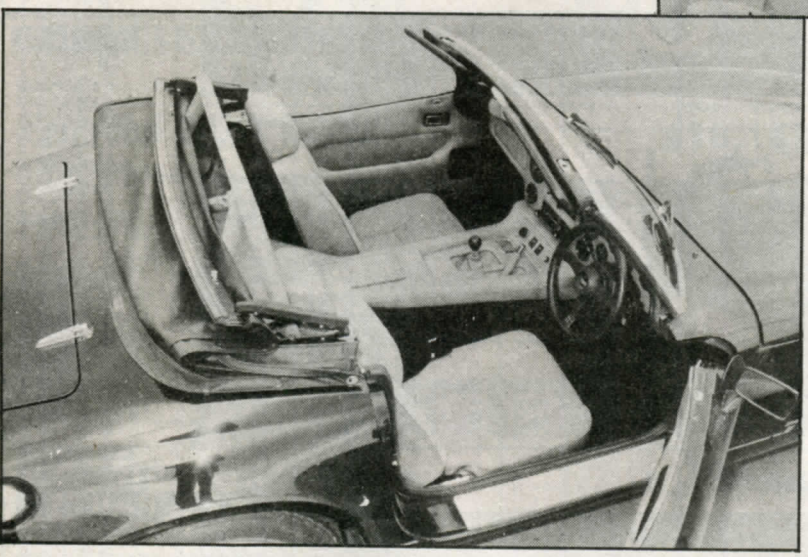
There was something slightly rebelliously British about the way the Convertible Turbo's speedometer (whose odometer was incidently 8 per cent fast) was mounted furthest from the driver's eyes and a revcounter — which was nearest — that had been "turned" to give the best sight of the 3,500-6,000 rpm "working sector." Full Smiths instrumentation is sensibly laid out with the oil pressure gauge and a row of warning lights plainly visible through the top half of the wheel. The cigar lighter, hazard warning and main light switches are sited

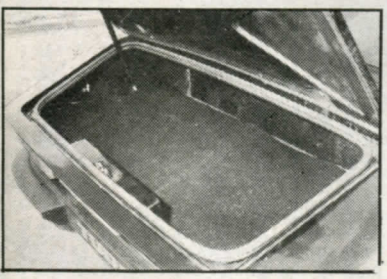


Dashboard layout is comprehensive and tidy. Two stalks operate wash/wipe (right), indicators, dip/main beam, headlamp flash, and horn (left). Instruments comprise (from right) speedometer, fuel gauge, clock, boost gauge, revcounter (angled), ammeter, oil pressure and water temperature gauges. Heater controls, radio (straddled by fresh air vents) are sited above console mounted cigar lighter, hazard lights and main light switches, and panel light dimmer

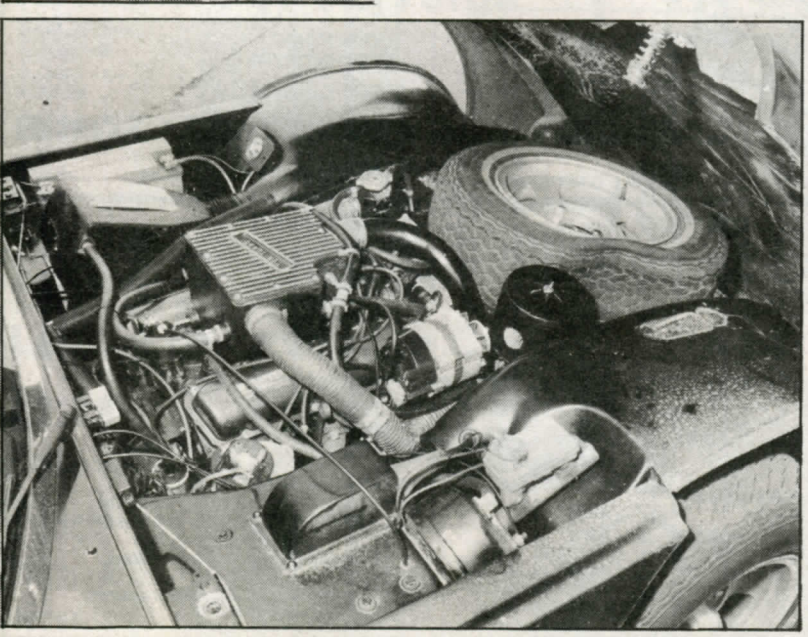


Erecting the hood can be a little tricky at first. Little snags are soon conquered. The sidescreens (above right) remove quickly via two turn buckles. The folded hood (below) could do with a cover to improve the Convertible's otherwise pretty appearance





The boot (left) is well able to accept weekend luggage for two. A panel between the boot space and driving compartment opens to allow in golf clubs and the like. Accessibility to the power house (below) for day to day item checks is good. The entire carburettor is pressurised. Boost control valve (see text) is to right of alternator. Note awkward position of spare wheel



beneath the heater controls and radio in the centre console.

With only a tiny passenger's side glovebox and small tunnel top compartment, oddment space is limited. However, there are usefully long door pockets in which to put maps, guide books and so on. A very neat electric boot lock operates via a button in the driver's door shut. Two medium-sized suitcases can be carried or by removing a panel between the boot and driving compartment a set of golf clubs could be squeezed in.

Living with the Convertible Turbo

In everyday use this sometimes thrilling, sometimes infuriating macho machine proved utterly dependable. No choke is provided but the time-honoured method of pumping the throttle a couple of times before cranking the engine over was quite sufficient to get the engine to fire in the mornings, whereupon it ran without fuss or hesitation from cold. We have already spoken of the enormous wind noise penalty one has to pay for driving the Convertible. Of course more diesel-lorry-like noises get in from the outside too. But what is the hood like to operate — and does it leak?

There are three configurations: Hood up, or hood down with or without sidescreens. The hood itself is a traditional pvc covered scissor frame affair held by two catches to the screen top and poppers and Dzus type fasteners round the back bodywork. Before it can be lowered the two forwardmost back body fasteners have to be released to prevent the hood material tearing. With a bit of practice putting it up becomes a 30 second job. Nevertheless, either operation means getting out of the car (unlike the VW Golf Convertible), and if you are on your own, running backwards and forwards around the car doing the various operations on each side. When collapsed the hood appears rather unsightly — a cover would help.

While it proved reasonably wind and leakproof when the car was in motion (even though an alarming gap appeared between the screen top and hood during high-speed running), it allowed quite a lot of water to enter when the car was stationary. Heavy overnight rain found its way past the hood and side screens and soaked the seats and carpet — a depressing occurence.

The sidescreens remove neatly via two turn buckles per side, however we tended to take our open-air motoring with the sidescreens in place.

The air blending heater gave a rather lacklustre performance. Airflow directional control was adequate, but a plain lack of temperature and feeble flow to the footwells — even with the admittedly quiet fan on full boost — were disappointing. Fresh air seemed laggardly in finding its way through the facia vents too, and there were times when we were also conscious of engine heat permeating through to the passenger compartment.

Minor annoyances were a very stiff bonnet catch, non inertia reel belts that kept getting caught up in the seat back, and an awkward-to-get-at jack and wheel brace. They are hidden behind a panel in the side of the left-hand footwell. The spare wheel — thankfully car-sized — is also a struggle to haul out from its forward mounting because of the restricted bonnet opening.

Daily service items and fluid levels are easy to check. It's worth mentioning here that the fan belt is a "special" and fitting it requires removal of the turbocharger steady bracket — quite a lengthy job. If the fanbelt breaks a diode in the stationary alternator cuts the ignition — a nice safety feature.

Four fuses are housed under a cover on the engine bay bulkhead. Normal service intervals are every 6,000 miles. However, more frequent oil changes might be worth considering bearing in mind the extra contamination caused by engine oil passing through the turbocharger bearings.

Exterior body and interior trim finish are good, though for the price we would have liked to have seen leather rather than rexine trim inside. Frankly the hood is cruder than we would have expected and the body's shakes and rattles disappoint. The suspension and steering need fine tuning. Yet very little can compare — even for the price — with the Convertible Turbo's basic mannerliness and enormous performance.

The TVR range

Three normally aspirated and three turbocharged versions of the 3 litre Ford powered TVR are available. The basic non-hatchback 3000 M costs £7,244, the Convertible 3000S £7,591 and the Taimar hatchback £7,886. The same cars fitted with Broadspeed's superb blown unit are priced at £10,921, £11,445 and £11,712 respectively.

HOW THE TVR CONVERTIBLE TURBO PERFORMS

MAXIMUM SPEEDS

Gear	mph	kph	rpm
Top (mean)	**139**	224	6,400
(best)	**140**	225	6,450
3rd	**100**	161	6,500
2nd	**72**	116	6,500
1st	**45**	72	6,500

TEST CONDITIONS

Wind: 0-5 mph
Temperature: 7 deg C (45 deg F)
Barometer: 28.2in. Hg (956 mbar)
Humidity: 90 per cent
Surface: dry asphalt and concrete
Test distance: 1,101 miles

Figures taken at 3,791 miles by our own staff at the Motor Industry Research Association proving ground at Nuneaton, and on the Continent

ACCELERATION

FROM REST

True mph	Time (sec)	Speedo mph
30	**2.4**	29
40	**3.2**	39
50	**4.5**	49
60	**5.8**	59
70	**7.2**	69
80	**9.4**	78
90	**11.5**	88
100	**14.3**	97
110	**18.2**	107
120	**23.1**	117
130	**31.3**	126

Standing ¼-mile: 14.5 sec, 100 mph
Standing km: 26.3 sec, 124 mph

IN EACH GEAR

mph	Top	3rd	2nd
10-30	—	5.8	3.9
20-40	8.2	5.0	3.4
30-50	7.1	4.7	2.9
40-60	6.8	4.0	2.6
50-70	6.4	3.4	2.7
60-80	5.7	3.5	—
70-90	5.0	4.1	—
80-100	5.3	—	—
90-110	6.3	—	—
100-120	8.3	—	—
110-130	13.2	—	—

FUEL CONSUMPTION

Overall mpg:
17.7 (16.0 litres/100km)

mph	mpg		
30	25.1	70	25.4
40	28.6	80	23.2
50	29.8	90	20.5
60	27.8	100	17.8

Autocar formula: Hard 15.9 mpg
Driving and conditions: Average 19.5, Gentle 23.0 mpg

Grade of fuel: Premium, 4-star (97 RM)
Fuel tank: 12 Imp. galls (54 litres)
Mileage recorder: 8 per cent long

Official fuel consumption figures
(ECE laboratory test conditions; (not necessarily related to Autocar figures)

Urban cycle: N/A mpg
Steady 56 mph: N/A mpg
Steady 75 mph: N/A mpg

OIL CONSUMPTION

(SAE 20/50) 2,000 miles/pint

BRAKING

Fade *(from 100 mph in neutral)*
Pedal load for 0.5g stops in lb

	start/end		start/end
1	50/30	6	70/70
2	50/50	7	70/70
3	50/45	8	60/80
4	60/70	9	60/90
5	60/110	10	60/90

Response *(from 30 mph in neutral)*

Load	g	Distance
20 lb	0.28	107 ft
30 lb	0.55	54 ft
40 lb	0.63	48 ft
50 lb	0.85	35 ft
60 lb	1.05	31 ft
Handbrake	0.25	120 ft

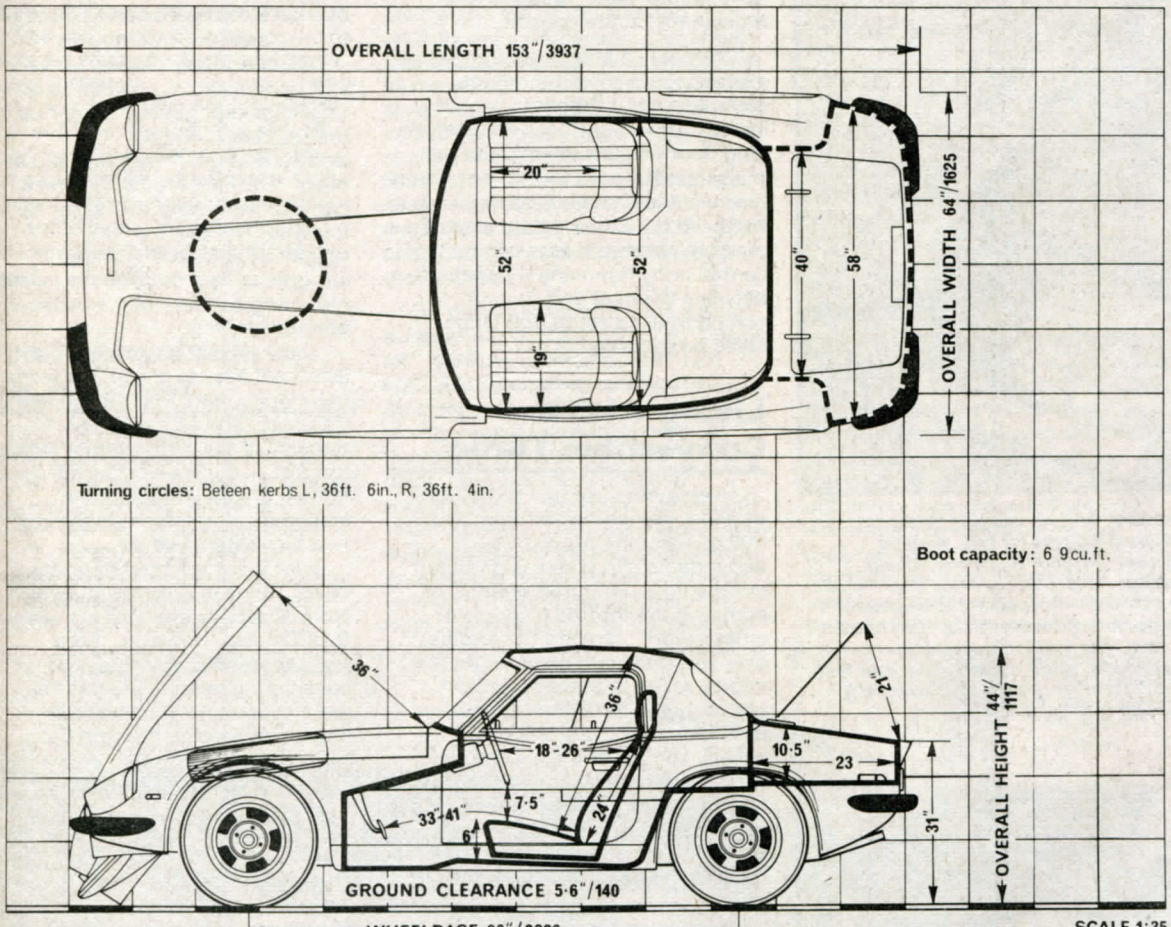
Max. gradient: 1 in 4

CLUTCH Pedal 55 lb; Travel 4¾in.

WEIGHT

Kerb, 21.7 cwt/2,436 lb/1,106 kg
(Distribution F/R, 52/48)
Test, 25.1 cwt/2,810 lb/1,276 kg
Max. payload 650 lb/295 kg

DIMENSIONS



PRICES

Basic	£9,781.91
Special Car Tax	£815.16
VAT	£847.77
Total (in GB)	**£11,444.84**
Seat Belts	Standard
Licence	£50.00
Delivery charge (London)	£60.00
Number plates	£10.00
Total on the Road *(exc. insurance)*	**£11,564.84**
EXTRAS (inc. VAT)	
*Stereo cassette player	£211.25
*Locking fuel cap	£13.00
*Electric aerial	£30.33
*Halogen headlights	£36.83
*Slotted alloy wheels	£189.58
*Door mirror	£16.25
Coachwork model band	£52.54
*Fitted to test car	
TOTAL AS TESTED ON THE ROAD	**£12,062.08**
Insurance	Group 7

SERVICE & PARTS

Change	6,000	12,000	12,000
	Interval		
Engine oil	Yes	Yes	Yes
Oil filter	Yes	Yes	Yes
Gearbox oil	No	Yes	No
Spark plugs	No	Yes	No
Air cleaner	No	Yes	No
Total cost	36.29	73.29	36.29

(Assuming labour at £6.50/hour)

PARTS COST *(including VAT)*

Brake pads (2 wheels)—front	£12.13
Brake shoes (2 wheels)—rear	£10.30
Exhaust complete	£71.34
Tyre — each (typical)	£78.40
Windscreen	£90.59
Headlamp unit	£4.32
Front wing	£N/A
Rear bumper	£34.65

WARRANTY

12 months/12,000 miles

SPECIFICATION

ENGINE

Front, rear-drive	
Head/block	Cast iron
Cylinders	6
Main bearings	4
Cooling	Water
Fan	Electric
Bore, mm (in.)	93.97 (3.7)
Stroke, mm (in.)	72.41 (2.85)
Capacity, cc (in³)	2,994 (182.7)
Valve gear	Ohv
Camshaft drive	Gear
Compression ratio	8-to-1
Ignition	Breakerless
Carburettor	Weber, twin-choke
Max power	230 bhp (DIN) at 5,500 rpm
Max torque	273 lb ft at 3,500 rpm

TRANSMISSION

Type	Manual, 4-speed
Clutch	Single dry plate

Gear	Ratio	mph/1000rpm
Top	1.0	21.7
3rd	1.41	15.4
2nd	1.95	11.1
1st	3.16	6.9

Final drive gear	Hypoid bevel
Ratio	3.33

SUSPENSION

Front—location	Double wishbone
springs	Coil
dampers	Telescopic
anti-roll bar	Yes
Rear—location	Double wishbone
springs	Coil
dampers	Telescopic
anti-roll bar	No

STEERING

Type	Rack and pinion
Power assistance	No
Wheel diameter	13½ in.
Turns lock to lock	3.7

BRAKES

Circuits	Two, front-rear
Front	10.87 in. dia. disc
Rear	9 in. dia. drum
Servo	Yes
Handbrake	Centre lever on rear drums

WHEELS

Type	Alloy
Rim width	6 in.
Tyres—make	Michelin
type	Radial ply XWX
size	195/70 VR 14
pressures	F22, R24 psi (normal driving)

EQUIPMENT

Battery	12V 60Ah
Alternator	60 Amp
Headlamps	120/110W
Reversing lamp	Standard
Hazard warning	Standard
Electric fuses	4
Screen wipers	2-speed & manual intermittent
Screen washer	Electric
Interior heater	Air blending
Air conditioning	Extra
Interior trim	Cloth seats, pvc headlining
Floor covering	Carpet
Jack	Scissor type
Jacking points	2 each side, under sills
Windscreen	Laminated
Underbody protection	Stove enamel

HOW THE TVR CONVERTIBLE TURBO COMPARES

TVR Convertible Turbo £11,445

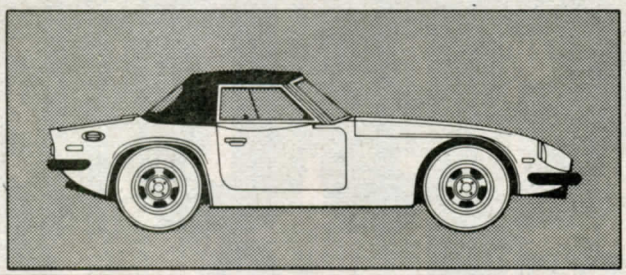
Front engine, rear drive

Capacity 2,994 c.c.

Power 230 bhp (DIN) at 5,500 rpm

Weight 2,436 lb/1,106 kg

Autotest 2 June 1979



Porsche 924 Turbo

British price not yet available

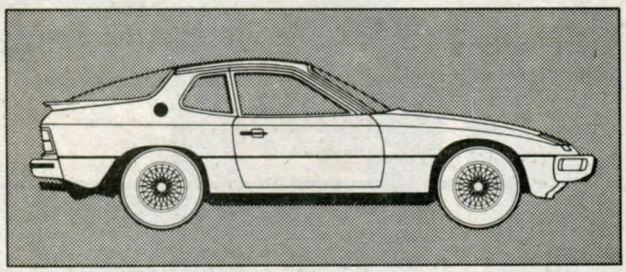
Front engine, rear drive

Capacity 1,984 c.c.

Power 170 bhp (DIN) at 5,500 rpm

Weight 2,602 lb/1,180 kg

Autotest 12 May 1979



Ferrari 308 GTS £18,169

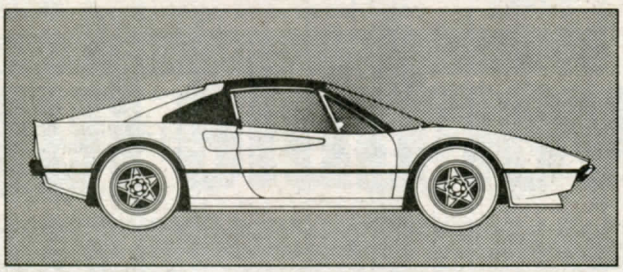
Mid engine, rear drive

Capacity 2,927 c.c.

Power 255 bhp (DIN) at 7,700 rpm

Weight 2,870 lb/1,300 kg

Autotest None. Figures for mechanically similar 308 GTB tested 23 October 1976



Morgan Plus 8 £6,499

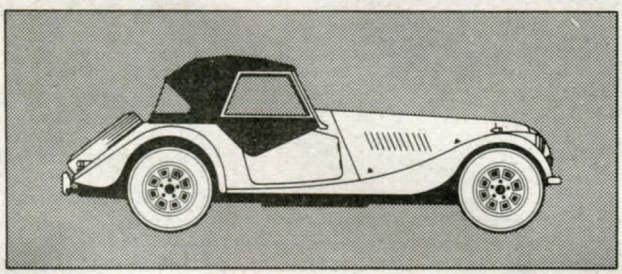
Front engine, rear drive

Capacity 3,532 c.c.

Power 155 bhp (DIN) at 5,250 rpm

Weight 2,128 lb/965 kg

Autotest 15 July 1978



Porsche 911 SC Targa £14,549

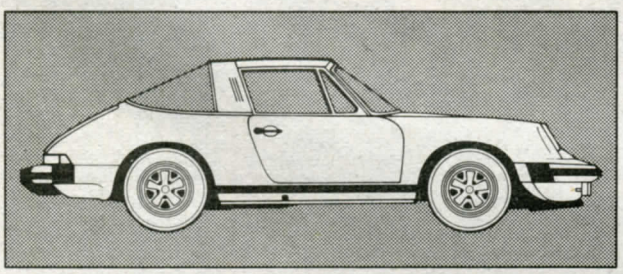
Rear engine, rear drive

Capacity 2,993 c.c.

Power 180 bhp (DIN) at 5,500 rpm

Weight 2,716 lb/1,233 kg

Autotest None. Figures for mechanically similar 911SC Coupé tested 17 December 1977



Lancia Beta Monte Carlo £5,927

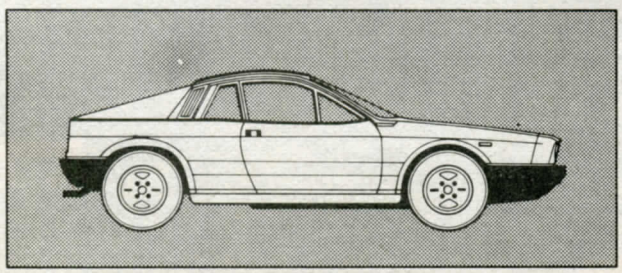
Mid engine, rear drive

Capacity 1,995 c.c.

Power 120 bhp (DIN) at 6,000 rpm

Weight 2,290 lb/1,040 kg

Autotest 1 November 1975



MPH & MPG

Maximum speed (mph)

Ferrari 308 GTS	154
Porsche 924 Turbo	142
Porsche 911 SC Targa	141
TVR Convertible Turbo	139
Morgan Plus 8	123
Lancia Beta Monte Carlo	119

Acceleration 0-60 (sec)

TVR Convertible Turbo	5.8
Ferrari 308 GTS	6.5
Porsche 911 SC Targa	6.5
Morgan Plus 8	6.5
Porsche 924 Turbo	6.9
Lancia Beta Monte Carlo	10.1

Overall mpg

Morgan Plus 8	20.5
Porsche 924 Turbo	19.8
Ferrari 308 GTS	19.2
Lancia Beta Monte Carlo	19.1
Porsche 911 SC Targa	17.9
TVR Convertible Turbo	17.7

High on smoothness are the Ferrari and Porsche 911SC. There is no denying that the TVR's urgent power, enormous torque, and relatively light weight combine to give stunning performance — it's superbly tractable too. The Morgan is also quick off the mark and the most economical. Light weight helps here. For the ultimate — if rather academic top speed — you will have to opt for the "top endy" Ferrari. Otherwise the two Porsches and TVR fall very much into the same bracket.

Of the two 2-litre cars the 924 Turbo is a terribly impressive machine whose performance — as you can see — is well up to 3-litre standards. It's also, perhaps surprisingly, slightly faster ultimately than a less than ideally geared (for top speed anyway) TVR. For its power the Lancia goes well, is reasonably accelerative, fast, but a bit thirsty.

ON THE ROAD

Getting to grips with the Morgan on a rough road could be likened to taming a rampant horse — you sit close and hang on. It epitomises traditional fresh air motoring. Potential owners (addicts) won't see the faults — it's a car you love blindly. The TVR — the only other true convertible — has something of the same spirit. It's noisy and quite poorly ventilated — hood up. The hood is basic, but underneath it all — vague steering and rough road ride apart — there is a well balanced, incredibly potent, yet forgiving machine.

Of the Targa tops the Porsche does most things well. It can catch the unwary though, by oversteering pretty dramatically on a trailing throttle — especially in the wet. In contrast the 924 Turbo is taut, neutrally balanced, mannerly, adhesive, and being front engined, very forgiving when the limit is reached.

Mid engined power on understeer and mild trailing throttle oversteer are typified by the Ferrari and Lancia. Ultimate cornering power — assuming none of the cars were fitted with Pirelli P7s — might rest between the TVR, Ferrari, and 924, and civilised all round performance between the two Porsches — they have the best heating and ventilation too. Comparing cars with Targa type removable roofs — and the closed 924 — with our two proper convertibles is slightly false perhaps, but they do provide very civilised open air motoring — and incidentally are far more difficult to steal.

SIZE & SPACE

Legroom front/rear (in)

(seats fully back)	
Porsche 911 SC Targa	40/28
Porsche 924 Turbo	44/23
Ferrari 308 GTS	42/–
Morgan Plus 8	41.5/–
TVR Convertible Turbo	41/–
Lancia Beta Monte Carlo	38/–

Space comparisons are a bit misleading. The 924 Turbo being a hatchback — and front engined — would easily have the best overall carrying capacity and like the 911 will carry four — just. Conversely the Morgan is more cramped than the legroom dimension suggests, while the Monte Carlo's legroom dimension — the Italian ape again — belies a reasonably spacious interior. Of the Ferrari and TVR we would favour the Convertible's driving position — it ranks with the German cars — and both have comparable and reasonable luggage carrying capacity. Overnight bags have to be fed into the Morgan via the back seats — awkwardly.

VERDICT

If price be your only consideration the Morgan and Lancia offer extraordinarily diverse qualities and very good value for money — the one is a bumpy, hardy, high performance handbuilt, and the other a stylish if not very accelerative mini-supercar.

Conversely Ferrari charisma — mainly justifiable — costs a lot and *in extremis* prancing horse handling may not be as predictable as many imagine.

As always the Porsches are beautifully made and perhaps possess more of the qualities necessary for touring in the grand manner.

In the midst of these the TVR ranks an utterly individual tag. It's basically super but needs detail improvement. With Porsche or, say, Lotus quality in mind the TVR is expensive but would — because it uses easily obtainable mechanical components — be comparatively cheap to run. The Morgan and Lancia probably rate as cheapest in this respect.

That said, nothing but nothing can compare for the price with the TVR's slingshot acceleration and staggering mid range performance.