

FIBREGLASS FLIER

between the car's
Morgan and Buchanan.

HERE'S a road test that should appeal to every enthusiast who has ever wanted a modern, good-looking sports car with real performance, plenty of spare parts, and costing less than £1000. The car?—Nat Buchanan's fibreglass-bodied MG. Nat Buchanan, boss of Buchanan Motors (Annandale, N.S.W.), is well known among Australia's motor-sport fraternity. Nat has raced (mainly Lea-Francis and MG cars), competed with distinction in hillclimbs and trials, including the Redex, and was one of the guiding hands in the Australian Sporting Car Club in bygone days. So when he produces a sports car it has every chance of earning respect. It has earned mine. Nat had been experimenting with



Buchanan body on TD chassis, plus an overbored engine, has given this MG a fantastic performance, reports David McKay

modern
MOTOR
SPECIAL
TEST

fibreglass bodies for some years and already had one striking coupe body design to his credit when he decided that the real future lay in producing something "different" but inexpensive in the sports-car class.

Just then Tom Sulman obligingly bent his Aston-Martin DB3S at Mt. Druitt, necessitating complete removal of the body for repairs. Nat pounced upon the chance to use the sleek DB shape as the basis for his sports car. He made a few alterations here and there, just in case anyone's feelings got hurt, but basically his body has all that is good of the Aston-Martin design. Using Sulman's body as a mould for his initial cast, Buchanan hasn't looked back

Racing Successes

As soon as the first Buchanan version came out, orders started to pour in. But Nat realised that the proof of the pudding was more in the eating than in its looks, so he set about getting a machine ready for the track. In association with well-known TC exponents Jimmy Johnson and Bruce Maher, Nat and his partner, Jock Morgan, fitted the new body to a TD.

The engine was modified to TF specifications and tuned to run on

super fuel with a high-compression head. A good full-flow exhaust manifold was fitted and 600 by 15in. tyres used at the rear, making this a fairly hot TD with the advantage of a well-designed, streamlined and light body. Weight was cut by 4cwt., which gave vast improvement in braking and acceleration.

Bruce Maher took the jockey's seat and went out to conquer the opposition—and the sports-special market—for Buchanan Motors. Success came at once, and in 13 starts the car notched eight firsts and three seconds at Mt. Druitt and Bathurst.

Nat offered me a drive at the V.S.C.C. race meeting at Schofields (N.S.W.), and I had a most enjoyable outing, the car behaving like a lady, apart from jumping out of third and top gear on the overrun—a "bug" that has since been cured. Pick-up and top gear were much better than I had hoped, the car disposing of hot Healeys and TR's without going over 6000 r.p.m. Handling was in the usual MG tradition, the sweeps on the back leg being taken at over 90 m.p.h. Only fault was the usual solid back axle, which allowed too much wheelspin and loss of power on the loose surface.

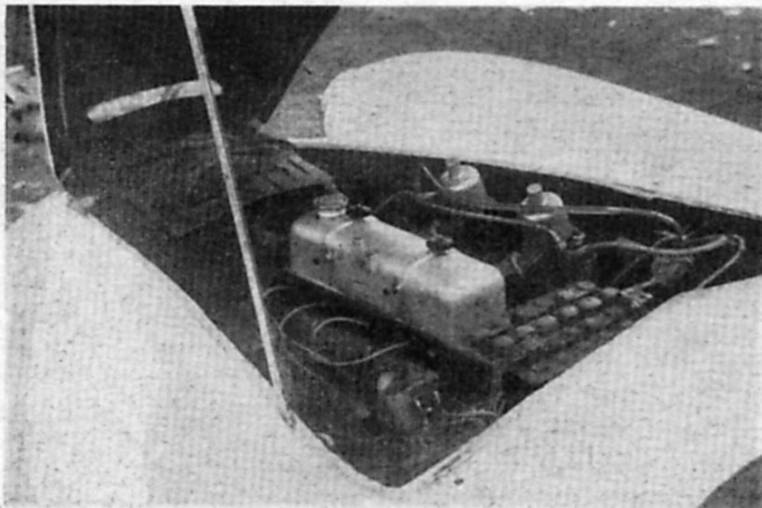
Docile, Comfortable

Shortly after this meeting I took the car out for a full road test. No special tuning had been done—the gearbox had been righted and the brakes checked, but that was all.

Amidst the busy Sydney traffic the car was tractable and free of the little irritations which often go with a highly tuned engine. Premium fuel was used, and provided one played the throttle and gearbox sensibly there was a minimum of ping. In top gear the car idled along happily at 25 m.p.h.

The driving position was most comfortable, with a padded rest for the right knee, but I felt that a rest for the throttle foot would have been a help. Vision was excellent over the long, low bonnet with its shapely air intake and bulge for the large SU carburettors. The body had been given only a quick rub-over, yet it gleamed and glistened most impressively.

On the left front wing was a slash of red paint collected in a glancing collision with a larger sports car at Mt. Druitt. The fibreglass shape wasn't altered a fraction, but the conventionally-bodied red vehicle was rather badly mauled. The small amount of damage to the Buchanan



ENGINE is a TD unit modified to TF specifications; bay is snug but accessibility remains good. **BELOW:** A view familiar to many racing rivals.

car was fixed cheaply and quickly by patching with fibreglass.

Boot room in this model is limited, but customers could enlarge on this when fitting the body to their own chassis. The doors are already cut, fitted and hinged, and offer adaptation to spacious side pockets. Leg-room is vast.

Once out on the open road the exhaust made healthy noises, but not enough to worry the most fastidious cop.

On the Test Strip

At Druiitt, using 6000 r.p.m. as maximum, I ran off the speeds in the gears at 25, 45, 70 and 90 m.p.h., and had the feeling that this car could easily pull a higher ratio in the back axle. The standing quarter-mile took 17.5 seconds—a feather in the cap for the tuners.

The flying quarter averaged 95

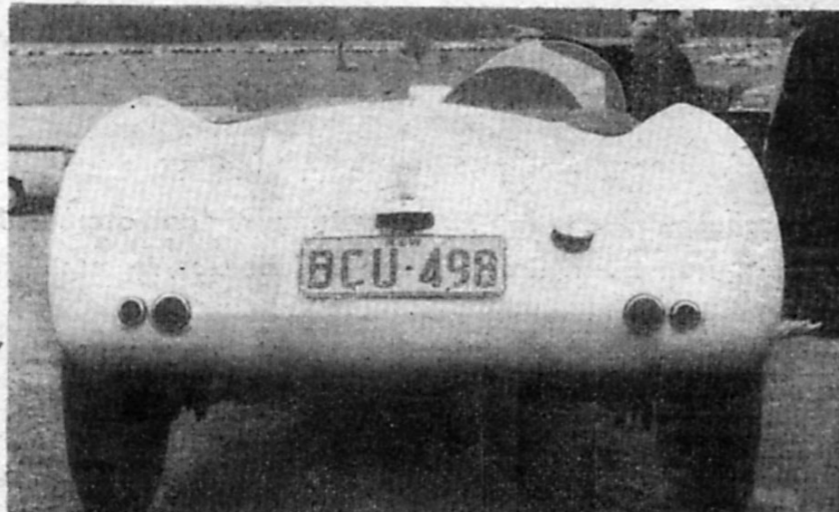
m.p.h. at 6200 r.p.m. Down Conrod Straight at Bathurst the same car had been timed at 103.5 m.p.h. In this, of course, the sleek shape helps a lot, doing away with the built-in headwind against which MG's have battled for years.

Acceleration figures were again very impressive—see the performance panel. The 0-70 m.p.h. in 14.5 seconds would be good in almost any company.

Throughout all this testing the engine remained happy, the oil pressure sticking around 75lb. p.s.i. and the temperature about 75deg. C.

MG brakes have always been above average, but on this car, with so little weight to stop, they really shone. Half-a-dozen times the brake meter showed 100 percent efficiency. They were smooth and very sure, and could lock all four wheels evenly at surprising speeds.

Before leaving Mt. Druiitt I tried a lap, but had some difficulty in the



shape of proprietor Belf Jones sitting on a grader in the middle of the track, and also in having to avoid the new repair work. But I turned in 2min. .02sec., which is fast Healey time; Maher has lapped consistently at 1 min. 55sec.

Real Mountain Goat

With a very sincere respect for the Buchanan car, I headed for Kurrajong and the hillclimb test. I made my best time to date—1min. 39sec.—and this could have been faster if the corrugated bitumen on the top corners hadn't induced a fair amount of wheelspin. Coasting downhill again to test for brake fade proved a waste of time, the meter still showing 100 percent.

That night I carried out the night-average section and another hillclimb. The night was cold and we were rugged up, but it was fine, exhilarating

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MODERN MOTOR — October 1957

MAIN SPECIFICATIONS

ENGINE: 4-cylinder, o.h.v.; bore 72mm., stroke 90mm., capacity 1466 c.c.; compression ratio 9.3 to 1; max. b.h.p. 80 at 6500 r.p.m. (approx. only); twin SU carburetors, electric fuel pump, 12v. ignition.

TRANSMISSION: 8in. single dry-plate clutch, four-speed gearbox with synchromesh on top three.

SUSPENSION: Front independent, by coils and wishbones; semi-elliptics at rear; tubular shock-absorbers all round.

BRAKES: Lockheed hydraulic, 2 l. s. front; 115 sq. in. lining area.

STEERING: Rack-and-pinion; 2 2/3 turns lock-to-lock, 31ft. turning circle.

WHEELS: Disc, bolt-on; 5.60 by 15in. tyres front, 6.00 by 15in. rear.

DIMENSIONS: Wheelbase 7ft. 10in.; track, front 4ft. 3/16in., rear 4ft. 2 13/16in.

WEIGHT: 14½ cwt.

FUEL TANK: 13 gallons.

PERFORMANCE ON TEST

MAXIMUM SPEED: 95 m.p.h.
FLYING quarter-mile: 95 m.p.h. at 6200 r.p.m.

STANDING quarter-mile: 17.5s.

MAXIMUM SPEEDS in gears at 6000 r.p.m.: 1st, 25 m.p.h.; 2nd, 45; 3rd, 70; top, 90.

ACCELERATION through gears (6000 r.p.m. maximum): 0-30, 4.5s.; 0-40, 6s.; 0-50, 8.5s.; 0-60, 11.5s.; 0-70, 14.5s.; 0-80, 19s.

BRAKING: 100 percent.

FUEL CONSUMPTION: 25 m.p.g. overall.

FIBREGLASS FLIER

(Continued from page 16)

motoring. The lights gave adequate coverage for fast driving, although the dimmer switch and horn were a trifle low on the dash for my 10-to-2 steering-wheel grip.

The second test hill, on which my previous best time had been 2min. 24sec., was mounted in 2.18. Wow! This was fun.

My "private" mountain circuit is a little similar in layout to the Nurburgring—a series of swoops and hairpins, up and down hills over fair bitumen surfaces, and a brief straight. Distance is comparable to the Ring, too, and the very nature of the circuit limits outright speed, so that a nippy, manoeuvrable car will make better time than a powerful limousine with only mediocre handling.

The low-g geared TD was well suited to the game ahead of it, and I wasn't very surprised to see that we raised the fastest average from 52 to 54 m.p.h. This may not seem much to

those unfamiliar with the circuit, but I can assure you that averages around the 45 mark are fairly hectic, and the passengers have usually had enough after a couple of runs at those speeds. This time, however, my passenger was quite happy after this much faster run—in fact, I don't think another lap would have caused either of us any worry.

Taken all round, the Buchanan car is a delight. Even fuel consumption, at 25 m.p.g., was good for a racing motor driven hard for 200 miles.

In case you're interested, the Buchanan body can be bought in two ways—ready to fit it costs £255, but if the owner is prepared to do some of the work himself, bonding the various panels together, then buffing and finishing, the charge is £150. The body will fit the TC, TD or TF chassis—the T.C. requiring special brackets, which are supplied. ● ●

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FANGIO CHAMP . . .

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his tail. Still Hawthorn and Collins sped around, showing no concern for their tyres, which were standing up wonderfully.

But Fangio was catching up fast: by lap 16 he had reduced the gap to 32 seconds; lap 17, 25sec.; lap 18, 20sec. Speed-up signals were being waved frantically from the Ferrari pits—but Hawthorn and Collins couldn't go any faster.

Lap 19—13sec. behind, and Fangio was still taking time off the record. All other contestants were forgotten as the crowd rose to their feet, their eyes fastened on the three leaders—and Collins without a clutch!

Past the pits on lap 20, Fangio was only 2.6 seconds behind Hawthorn, having made up more than 10 seconds on one lap. At 9min. 17.4sec. (91.84 m.p.h.), the record had been well and truly smashed.

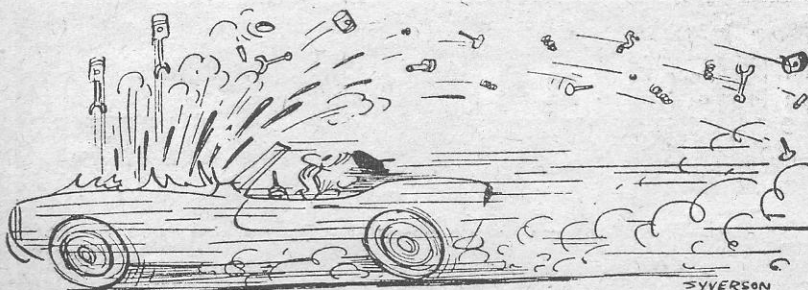
Into South Curve they went, then into North Curve, and Fangio slipped past Collins; Peter made a supreme effort and passed Fangio again—but the Master repassed him, this time throwing up a stone which smashed

Collins' goggles and took the fight out of him. Then it was Hawthorn's turn—Fangio went past him like a rocket, and the race was over.

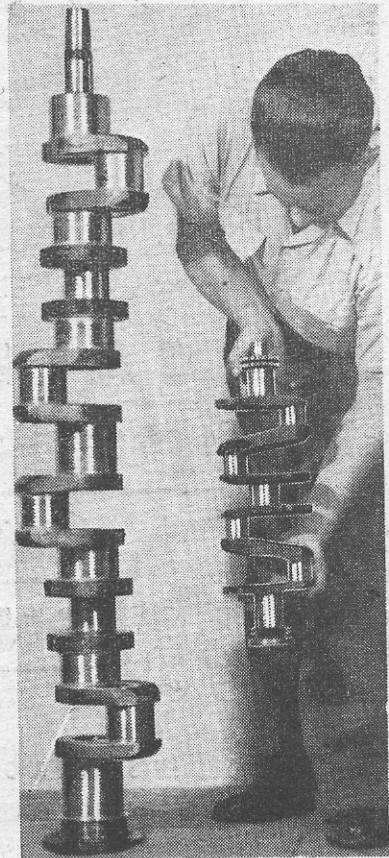
Fangio crossed the line with 3.6 seconds in hand on Mike Hawthorn, with Peter Collins third. Luigi Musso's fine drive into fourth place had gone almost unnoticed in those circumstances, but it was really a grand effort by the Italian, then running second to Fangio on the world title pointscore. (The score at this stage read: Fangio, 34; Musso, 16; Hawthorn, 13; Collins, 8½; Behra, 8; Moss, 8.)

All over Europe, Fangio's Nurburgring triumph was acclaimed as his greatest effort—many old-timers were saying he is a greater driver than the immortal Nuvolari, whose list of victories he has now eclipsed.

RESULTS OF GERMAN G.P.: 1, Fangio (Maserati), 3hr. 30min. 38.3sec; 2, Hawthorn (Ferrari), 3.30.41.9; 3, Collins (Ferrari), 3.31.13.9; 4, Musso (Ferrari), 3.34.15.9; 5, Moss (Vanwall), 3.35.15.8; 6, Behra (Maserati), 3.35.16.8; 7, Schell (Maserati); 8, Gregory (Maserati); 9, Brooks (Vanwall); 10, Scarlatti (Maserati); 11, Halford (Maserati).



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