A Matter of Opinions... MG Owners Give Their Views of the New MG GS

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MG owners tend to be very loyal to the marque, but what do they make of the company's new GS family sports utility vehicle (SUV), and in particular, would they buy one?

Chris Adamson found out, when he showed the top-spec version to potential buyers who are already MG owners.

Report and all photos by Chris.

The new GS family car, MG's brave debut entry into the highly competitive world of sports utilities, has been generally, if cautiously, welcomed by the motoring press and potential buyers alike. (To see our previous reports on this website; please click here, for our first

launch feature in May 2016, also here, for our first driving impressions of the car in June, and here, for a full road test, published in July.

Taking into account the established operators in this fiercely contested sector and the starting price there can be few serious gripes about the GS package, but to succeed drivers need to see a few more on our roads to inspire confidence to part with a minimum of £15,000 on a new and untried formula for the famous British brand.

With the ever expanding MG dealership network in the UK there should be an outlet close to almost everyone in the market for a new sports utility, but for many the stumbling block is unfamiliarity with a marque that has, until recently, been missing from the High Street.

One group of drivers who, by their very nature, ought to be predisposed in favour of anything wearing an octagon badge are existing MG owners and it is these that the new Chinese owners should be cultivating if they want to see more examples of the GS on the road.

To find out what dedicated MG owners (both classic and modern) think of the new GS, motoring writer Chris Adamson, who was among the first journalists to test drive the new GS prior to its public launch, took one along for fellow members of the Bournemouth and Poole MG Owners Club to clamber over – and in general they didn't hold back on their opinions.

Club Area Secretary Graham Lowe, who already owns an immaculate 1969 MGB Roadster and a 2003 TF, is a prime GS customer as he has been looking for some time to replace his everyday car and would like to continue to support the marque.

His family transport is an ageing automatic four-wheel drive estate so the GS would be a good substitute especially as it offers similar stowage space and comes with an auto box which is essential and, on first acquaintance, Graham was very positive.



“The more I see of it the more impressed I am, especially at the price they are charging. Hearing it drive up it has a nice exhaust note from the outside but is surprisingly quite inside.

“I particularly like the automatic gear change, it seems smooth and almost seamless and there is plenty of power available. The only thing for me that it is missing is four-wheel drive. I have a son who lives in northern England and his area can get a lot of snow so that extra traction when I visit would be nice.

“Some people have complained about the ride quality being too stiff, but I didn’t notice any

discomfort although getting three adults across the back row of seats is not to be advised on a long journey."

For David Bailey (no relation to the famous photographer) who owns a lovingly cared for 1979 MGB GT, the main consideration is will it be capable of towing his caravan? Following glowing reports from the Caravan Club he is reassured.



"The weights and size look good and the turbocharger gives it enough power so I wouldn't have any hesitation about hitching it up although the lack of rear visibility through the small rear screen and the large rear three-quarter pillars means you would need to be careful."

The combination of the slope on the rear roof and the high hatch that creates a pillar box like observation area through the rear-view mirror is something almost everyone picked-up on, including Alex Garvey who is a prime target customer for the GS as besides a pristine restored, award-winning 1975 MGB Jubilee GT, he also owns a Toyota RAV4 which is a natural competitor.





However Alex isn't fazed by the rear view short-comings: "It very similar to the RAV4 and there I rely on the rear-view camera when reversing, it's something you get used to and for me having the top specification GS with the camera would be an essential."

He was impressed by the amount of rear leg and head room even for passengers over six foot and also picked-up on one thing that no one else commented on – the position of the left foot rest on the automatic specification.

“It is exactly the same distance up from the floor as the throttle so you sit in a really comfortable position – on the Toyota the foot rest is a lot further down so you are twisted in the seat which can make the hips ache on a long journey.”

Alex also owns two Labradors so getting them comfortably in and out of the back would be essential – the recent addition of a dog guard to the GS accessory list would be welcome in this case.

Fellow dog owners are Sue and George Parrott who already have an extensive MG stable featuring a de-bumpered 1975 MGB GT V8, a 1996 MGF and a 2012 MG6 which George takes to Longbridge for servicing.

Their latest addition to the family is four month old Labrador puppy Sid, who was quite happy to sit in the back of the GS for our photographs.





“Yes it’s a bit high over the rear bumper to get him in and out at the moment but he would soon get used to it and with the rear seats folding flat there shouldn’t be a problem taking him on long journeys so the GS would work very well for us,” comments George.

A vocal enthusiast of the MG6, George thinks MG is making good quality products and is surprised at some of the negative comments about the MG6 he has read: “Our car has run perfectly from day one, I haven’t got a single complaint about it.”

He also responded to some of the comments about the quality of the plastics used on the GS; “ I had heard a lot about people saying the trimmings were hard and cheap but certainly on the top grade model they look fine to me, they are clean and serviceable – I am not sure what people want for their money these days.”

One person who is likely to see a lot of the new GS in coming years is MG ZR owner Steve Newman who works as the senior technician for a leading MG and Rover specialist on the south coast of England (South Coast MG Rover Ltd, based in Poole, Dorset, Tel. 01202 677196).



With more years' experience than he cares to admit to, working on both classic and modern MGs, Steve spends his days servicing and repairing everything from late 1960s MGBs up to some of the last MGFs and TFs as well as the full gambit of the ZR, ZS and ZT series.

Although the GS will initially stay within the sphere of the main dealers in its early years of life, it will eventually find its way into the hands of experienced mechanics such as Steve so he was keen to see what awaits him.

Lifting up the bonnet he was immediately impressed by the amount of working space around the engine bay: "Everything looks easy to get at for routine servicing and there is plenty of

room around the engine to carry out most repairs, unlike a lot of modern cars, so I would be happy looking after them."

And he adds: "This is the first one I have seen in the metal and I must say it looks very attractive, even better than in the photographs."

DRIVING IT…

As well as giving fellow MG enthusiasts the opportunity for a closer look at the GS I also spent a week using it as my everyday transport and this only served to re-enforce my initially good impressions obtained during the press driving day back in June.

The engine has plenty of guts and copes with all conditions while the automatic transmission can offer a sporting edge if you use the paddle shifts to slide through the gears. Pushed hard in full auto it does have a tendency to take the revs higher than seems necessary and then engage the next gear with a bit of a bash so a smooth operation requires some gentle driver intervention.

I can see why some people might criticise the ride quality, yes it is firm and can bang in and out of pot-holes, but the up-side is that it means the GS has a flat and stable platform for some high speed direction changing without the effect of body wobble exhibited by some of its competitors.

The firmer set-up also means that there isn't a great deal of difference in the road handling when the car is fully laden – I spent a day with five adults on board (snug in the rear) and noticed very little change in the driving experience from being on my own.

Seven days also allowed time to load-up the GS with the weekly shopping and here I was pleasantly surprised. Having felt at the launch that the luggage compartment was only modest, it swallowed up more than I had expected, the variable recline angle of the rear seats helping to allow more consumables to be accommodated, but I still feel MG has missed a trick by not fitting a two-position floor board above the spare wheel.

One verdict that hasn't changed is that the side sills have to go – no one, especially ladies, appreciated the need to stretch out over the sills getting in and out and there is a strong risk of mud catching on the backs of legs, trousers, jackets and skirts.



The sills may look smart but I would definitely recommend the no-cost option of having them deleted.

VERDICT

From this quick snap-shot of views there was almost universal praise for MG's first attempt

at an SUV and most were actually surprised that with no track-record in this sector that the design team in Longbridge had done such a fine job.

However, there was an equal amount of reservation about committing to purchasing a new GS; the final hurdle it has to clear is residual values.

Most, if not all those who said they might be tempted, were going to reserve judgement and see how much the GS drops in value over the first 12 months – but there could be quite a healthy demand this time next year for second-hand examples.

So, while established MG owners like the GS they are not going into any purchase with rose tinted glasses or nostalgia about the marque – the GS is going to have to gain their trust and appreciation over time.


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