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Book review – MGB – The Illustrated History

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MGB

The Illustrated History



Jonathan Wood & Lionel Burrell

Foreword by John Thornley

Fourth Edition
Updated and enlarged



B - The Illustrated History (4th edition).

Reviewed by Kieron Fennelly.

Authors: Jonanthan Wood/Lionel Burrell

Published by: Veloce; veloce.co.uk

248 pages; hardback

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Over half a million MGBs were built during the model's eighteen year life and the rorty MG remains one of the most popular and useable of classic cars. Veloce's reprint of Jonathan Wood's original work from 1988 is very timely. As the author himself says in the preface to this new edition, the book is now a historical document as many of the prime movers at MG, notably general manager John Thornley and chief engineer Sydney Enever, whose first hand accounts help to make this story so vivid, are no longer alive.

And a vivid story it is, told in this volume by two of Britain's most respected writers about classic cars... From its conception as a much improved MGA, through the ingenuity and commitment of the management of MG, which steered the model through both Federal regulations which were the death of most other sports cars and the homogenising demands of British Leyland, the 'B' upheld the flag for the traditional sports car for two decades.

The book reveals the imaginative new design proposals of the mid and late 1960s as its genitors tried to develop the MG, but were stymied by lack of budget and reliance on parts bought in from an increasingly hostile parent company. That the 'B' survived as long as it did is clearly a tribute to the devoted group at Abingdon who managed to sustain quality and engineering standards while other BL car companies foundered.



Separate chapters cover the six cylinder MGC and the MGB V8, as well as the B's motorsport achievements which in terms of class wins turn out to be surprisingly numerous. The author also describes in impressive detail the later R V8, built by Rover Special Products and which if only ever a niche model, did however keep the brand alive and pave the way for the successful mid-engined MG TF, which like the MGB itself, was a classic basic sports car.

VERDICT

The book is exceptionally illustrated with largely archive material and the layout and captioning are particularly well done. Jonathan Wood and Lionel Burrell are highly experienced old hands and their erudite yet immensely readable prose style draws the reader in. Your reviewer, not especially a marque fan, felt his scepticism melt away while MG enthusiasts will need no second bidding to give this fine work pride of place on their bookshelves.