

# AUTOCAR

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The appeal of modernised and upgraded classic motors is growing. **Richard Webber** assembles the best of the breed at Goodwood to find out why

PHOTOGRAPHY STAN PAPIOR

**N**o need to check the front cover; you haven't picked up an issue of Classic & Sports Car magazine. So why has Autocar lined up some of yesteryear's greatest cars on the home straight of the Goodwood circuit in West Sussex?

Well, like Goodwood's storied acres, these five iconic knee-weakners have retained their evocative looks while being lovingly

enriched with modern-day convenience and technology. All are produced by British companies that are part of the growing market for modernised classics, born of buyers' indifference to the mass-produced white goods of today's showrooms.

But have their modifications diluted their spirit, and can they really cut it as regular transport in 2014? Let's find out. →

# THE FORGE SQUAD



## JENSEN INTERCEPTOR R

PENNED BY CARROZZERIA Touring, the Interceptor presents an unmistakability that has only strengthened with age. But time has been less kind to its dynamics. A wheezing Chrysler V8 can be revived to some extent, but the wallowing chassis and overlight, time-lapse steering of West Brom's muscle car feel painfully outdated.

Jensen Motors of Banbury is a new business, but its owners have been making modernised Interceptors since 2007. This is their hottest: the 6.2-litre V8-powered Interceptor R. Created from a Mk3 car, its shell has been chemically stripped and rebuilt with much-improved fit, finish and sound deadening, while the cabin has been retrimmed with yards of luxuriously pungent leather. The rack and pinion steering and front double wishbones are reconditioned and the live rear axle has been replaced with Jaguar-sourced independent suspension. Adjustable coilovers complete the 30-40mm lowered set-up.

The starter button and modern shifter stand out in the otherwise period-perfect cabin. But does firing up the 429bhp GM LS3 lump shatter the illusion? Not a bit. The old-school, big-cube luxury GT traits remain; the engine's metallic churn, the loping gait, the 'slow in, fast out' methodology and the embarrassment of 424lb ft of torque are all in evidence. But the plane on which all this familiarity operates is that much higher. The

engine loves to streak beyond 4000rpm, its note rising from gentle rumble to heady scream. This is a seriously rapid car, and also one that's settled at a high-speed cruise.

The suspension shudders a bit over ridges, the four-speed automatic gearbox can be ponderous, wind noise is greater than you'll be used to and the upgraded brakes still aren't as well mannered as modern kit. But you could live with – and enjoy – this car every day. The Interceptor R strikes a sweet balance between throwback character and 21st century composure.

### ALSO CONSIDER



#### FERRARI FF £227,142

Maranello's 651bhp four-seat breadvan costs similar money to the Jensen from new but can shed up to £50,000 within a year.

### JENSEN INTERCEPTOR R

Price	£200,000
Top speed	Over 167mph
0-60mph	4.5sec
Kerb weight	1775kg (est)
Engine	V8, 6162cc, petrol
Power	429bhp at 6600rpm
Torque	424lb ft at 3800rpm
Gearbox	4-spd auto



Jensen Motors' Interceptor R blends welcome modern underpinnings with the original car's classic look and feel



## SPYDERCARS ZETEC ELAN

LOTUS'S FLYWEIGHT ELAN offers a sublime steer, but rust can ravage its steel backbone. That malaise has created a demand that Spydercars has served for 30 years with its replacement chassis. The Peterborough company's spaceframe adds about 40 per cent stiffness – plus better servicing accessibility, safety and repairability – without increasing weight.

To all of this, Spydercars adds performance, reliability and economy with its Zetec conversions, most of which are Elan +2s like this 76,000-mile development car. It doesn't represent a workshop-fresh finish but does, crucially, let us experience the car's dynamics.

The race-tuned 2.0-litre, 16-valve Ford Zetec four-pot echoes the Elan's original, Cortina-derived 1.6 twin-cam but increases power and torque by half. Rear struts are dropped in favour of custom all-round double wishbones, and CV joints replace the springy Rotoflex couplings.

Happily, the engine exhibits startling similarities to the original. Following a purposeful-sounding idle, it pulls from 2000rpm and hits its stride at 4000rpm, when an entertaining, raucous raspiness erupts. There are pops and bangs on the overrun and heel-and-toeing is a cinch. The five-speed Ford gearbox is almost as satisfying as the Elan's original click-clack four-speed unit and far slicker than the later five-speeder. Fifth provides easy high-speed cruising, when the exhaust hushes nicely.

The small, thick Moto-Lita steering wheel and 2.2-turn rack feel settled, while the ride is good

(some low-speed shudders aside) and the car feels planted in the dry. But the original's big-diameter, thin-rimmed helm, and the delicacy it transmitted, are missing. Spydercars reckons combining a slower rack and higher-profile tyres with a bigger wheel would recreate that lightness. It's also easy to overwhelm the 185mm-wide rear tyres in the wet, and the Wilwood brakes want for more feel.

But value is on the Zetec Elan's side, with this example here on sale for £25,000. Prefer a 'new' one? Donors cost from just £2000 (you'll retain little more than the glassfibre shell), and Spydercars charges £45,240 for a scratch build, including a respray and new leather and walnut interior, making the evocative, charming little Elan easily our most affordable choice. ➔

### ALSO CONSIDER



#### LOTUS EVORA +2 £54,980

Like the original Elan +2, Hethel's latest 2+2 rides and handles beautifully. The Zetec Elan's drivetrain is more entertaining, though.



The rejuvenated Spydercars Elan gains strength and reliability; leather and walnut trim is the finishing touch

### SPYDERCARS ZETEC ELAN

Price	£47,240 (approx)
Top speed	130mph
0-60mph	6.0sec
Kerb weight	950kg (est)
Engine	4 cyls in line, 1998cc, petrol
Power	190bhp
Torque	160lb ft
Gearbox	5-spd manual

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**DMS SL65 BLACK SERIES (EVO OCTOBER '10)**  
"IT FEELS LIKE THE LOVE CHILD OF AN SL65 AND A PORSCHE GT2"

**DMS 135i (BMW CAR MAY '09)**  
"THE STANDARD CAR IS GREAT BUT DMS HAVE SOMEHOW MANAGED TO TAKE IT TO THE NEXT LEVEL"

**DMS 997 TURBO 3.6 (EVO SEPTEMBER '08)**  
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997 TURBO 3.6 » 625+ BHP  
997 GT2 RS » 670+ BHP  
996 TURBO/GT2 » 600+ BHP  
997 CARRERA S PDK » 400+ BHP  
997 CARRERA S » 376+ BHP  
997 CARRERA PDK » 368 BHP  
997 CARRERA GTS » 435 BHP  
997 GT3 UP » 436 BHP  
BOXSTER 3.4S » 336+ BHP  
CAYMAN S » 342 BHP  
CAYENNE GTS » 440 BHP  
CAYENNE TURBO 4.5 » 565+ BHP  
CAYENNE TURBO 4.8 » 578+ BHP  
CAYENNE TURBO S 4.8 » 600+ BHP  
CAYENNE 4.2 DIESEL » 450+ BHP  
CAYENNE DIESEL » 300+ BHP  
PANAMERA TURBO » 600+ BHP  
PANAMERA DIESEL » 305+ BHP

### MERCEDES-BENZ

'63' 5.5 BI-TURBO ALL MODELS » 600+ BHP  
'500' 4.7 BI-TURBO ALL MODELS » 498+ BHP  
SL65 BLACK » 720+ BHP (+DELIMIT)  
SL65 AMG » 690 BHP (+DE-LIMIT)  
'55' AMG KOMPRESSOR » 580+ BHP  
C63 AMG » 530+ BHP (+DE-LIMIT)  
SL63 AMG » 560+ BHP (+DE-LIMIT)  
RE-MAP & LOWER ABC SUSPENSION  
CL600 BI-TURBO » 580+ BHP  
SLK55 AMG » 389 BHP (+DELIMIT)  
SLK350 » 328 BHP  
220 CDI ALL MODELS » 210+ BHP  
250 CDI ALL MODELS » 259+ BHP  
320 CDI V6 » 274 BHP  
350 CDI V6 » 312 BHP  
420/450 CDI V8 » 358 BHP

### BMW

M5/M6 F10 » 620+ BHP  
M5 V10 » 548+ BHP (205 MPH)  
X5M / X6M » 618 BHP  
1M » 411+ BHP  
M3 E90/E92 » 445 BHP (+DE-LIMIT)  
M3 F46 » 370 BHP (+DE-LIMIT)  
F10 S20D » 221 BHP  
F10 S30D » 296 BHP  
F10 S35D » 358 BHP  
335i/135i/X6 » 370+ BHP (+DE-LIMIT)  
123D » 252 BHP  
330D E90 » 296+ BHP  
320D E90 » 215 BHP  
730D » 290+ BHP  
X5 4.0D / 740D » 370 BHP  
X5 3.0D » 296 BHP  
X6 X50i 4.4 » 500+ BHP  
535D / 335D / X5 SD » 355+ BHP  
M135i Please call for more info

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FERRARI 599 » 647 BHP  
FERRARI 430 » 525 BHP  
GALLARDO » 546 BHP  
LP560 » 600+ BHP  
LP640 » 707 BHP  
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AUDI S3 / GOLF R » 317+ BHP  
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EVOQUE 2.2 DIESEL » 240 BHP  
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### FRONTLINE DEVELOPMENTS MG ABINGDON EDITION

Price	£95,874
Top speed	160mph (est)
0-60mph	3.8sec
Kerb weight	999kg
Engine	4 cyls in line, 2488cc, petrol
Power	304bhp at 6800rpm
Torque	240lb ft at 4800rpm
Gearbox	6-spd manual



## FRONTLINE DEVELOPMENTS MG ABINGDON EDITION

ONLY ONE CAR here goes for the baby-and-bathwater approach, adopting as it does a new bodyshell, chassis, engine and transmission. That it's the bechromed Mk1 MGB is a surprise. No less surprising is the shockingly stark disconnect between the aesthetics of Frontline's MG Abingdon Edition and its performance; the 999kg roadster is claimed to hit 60mph in 3.8sec.

This it does via the unlikely installation of the Mk2 Mazda 6's 2.5-litre four-cylinder engine, hiked from 167bhp to 304bhp via upgraded internals and management systems. The seam-welded steel monocoque body and chassis are new, produced for Abingdon-based Frontline by British Motor Heritage, the licensee for pre-1982 MG parts. That makes it OEM equipment, helping to meet the required provenance to make this, officially, a 1964 car. Front suspension is still by double wishbones, but the live rear axle has been replaced by a bespoke six-link set-up and there is an adjustable coilover at each corner.



Frontline MG's classic looks belie its rapid performance

The Abingdon Edition really looks the part. Its wheelbase matches that of the original and its extra 18mm of track isn't obvious. Given contemporary production processes, you'd hope for tighter panel fit – although this is the inaugural build – but the cabin's quality is more consistent, with tidy switchgear, ample soft leather and custom-fitted low-back seats.

The car tremors at idle like the mini-rod it is. Take-up is sometimes bitey, but there's a fantastic warbling howl as speed shoots up and an addictive bark when blipping, though heel-and-toeing isn't practicable. Tractability really impresses above 2000rpm, and six snickety gears allow quick shifts and a serene 2500rpm at 70mph in top. Electric steering from EZ is a revelation. It is fluid, responsive, ideally weighted and feelsome and helps to exploit the little roadster's tight body control and keen turn-in. It would be a hoot on track, but with the current suspension settings it's too animated for subsiding A-roads.

At nearly £100k, this is one expensive MG, but Frontline's 2.0-litre, 238bhp 'LE50' MGB GT costs £78,000 on average, after options (many of which are standard fit here), although most of those are sold. Refine the ride and shore up the panel fit and there are many reasons to snare one of the 25 Abingdon Editions. →



### ALSO CONSIDER



**JAGUAR F-TYPE R COUPE £85,000**  
Frontline says its car is quicker to 60mph than the supercharged V8 Jag. It would be a hilarious drag race to watch.

## EAGLE E-TYPE SERIES 1 4.2 ROADSTER

Price	£245,000
Top speed	150mph
0-60mph	6.5sec
Kerb weight	1339kg
Engine	6 cyls in line, 4235cc, petrol
Power	265bhp at 5400rpm
Torque	283lb ft at 3800rpm
Gearbox	4-spd manual



## EAGLE E-TYPE SERIES 1 4.2 ROADSTER

MORE FAMOUS FOR its hometown Speedster and Low Drag GT specials, East Sussex-based Eagle's meat and drink is restoring and sympathetically upgrading E-types. In contrast to the Frontline Developments MGB, the Jag's original body, bones and heart are retained; Eagle sources tidy E-types and gives them a bumper-to-bumper refresh outside and in. From there, four specification levels are offered, from £13,200 to £98,400, variously focusing on general usability, handling, performance or all three, though specs can be mixed and matched.

Our example is a Series 1 4.2 Roadster in 'Sport' spec, valued at £245,000. Engine tweaks include a high-flow air filter, electronic ignition, modernised fuelling, stainless manifolds and a sports exhaust. The all-round independent suspension's architecture is rebuilt with custom parts such as new radius arms and adjustable



Eagle's upgraded E-type is of the highest quality

Koni dampers, and the geometry is revised.

From afar, the shape is as beguiling as ever: long, narrow, lithe. Up close, there's no need for Vaselined lenses; chrome gleams, shutlines are consistent and the cabin quality matches that of today's blue-riband car makers, yet, stereo aside, it looks, feels and is absolutely authentic.

A bright, tappety chunter begins when the engine fires and remains throughout, while the trumpeting exhaust starts low and loud and only gets louder, blaring as the engine meets its screaming 5000rpm red line. The four-speed manual gearbox (a five-speeder is optional) shifts quickly above second and has a sweet, mechanical feel. Conservatively rated at the original's 265bhp, the E-type feels swift, but no more than that in today's company. Eagle does offer a fuel injection conversion, but triple SU carbs render it redundant. This is already a responsive, well-mannered powertrain that feels entirely up to track use. Instead, we'd look towards the 4.7-litre upgrade that packs an additional 81bhp.

### ALSO CONSIDER



**MERCEDES-BENZ SLS AMG GT FINAL EDITION ROADSTER £199,500**  
Another charismatic, long-nosed sports roadster, the SLS might dust the E-type for pace but can't touch it for class.

## PS AUTOART RETRO TOURING R

THE 911 FUSSBUDGETS may squint at Essex-based PS Autoart's Retro Touring R. Its stocky proportions indicate a 964-series Porsche 911, but its details recall earlier, classic versions. The 964's plastic fantastic bumpers and skirts are absent; in their place, slivers of rubber are bordered by slimline brightwork that also adorns the lights, mirrors and glasshouse.

The truth is, this is not a modernised classic 911, but a loosely backdated 964 (specifically a Carrera 4) of the Singer genre. Diehards might cruelly refer to it as a mongrel; others will say it is simply stunning.

Of the bodywork, only the doors and roof are original; the rest is neatly fabricated in steel, aluminium or GRP. Inside, there's high-quality leather everywhere (even on the roll cage) and bespoke aluminium switchgear.

Mechanical upgrades come largely from the car's original manufacturer, granting a sizeable head start against our other contenders. Besides



Revisions to this 964-series 911 go more than skin deep. Original Porsche parts ensure desirability and reliability

trading on Zuffenhausen's engineering clout, that also allows servicing by any Porsche specialist and lends PS Autoart the confidence to sell with a three-year, 60,000-mile warranty.

This car's air-cooled 3.6-litre flat six has been enlarged to 3.8 litres and fitted with 993 RS-spec cams, cylinder barrels and pistons. Fresh from the production line, its low-rev unruliness needs to be tuned out, and its buyer's choice of loud, bassy exhaust wouldn't be ours. But what a powertrain.

Torque delivery is super-smooth, with a little kick at 4000rpm, beyond which a deep scream soundtracks properly eye-widening pace up to 7000rpm. The five-speed manual gearbox is slick and the brakes are strong and progressive.

The power-assisted steering has an equally glossy feel that's peppered with gentle kickback and characteristic front-end bobbing, while turn-in is appropriately nippy.

Gripes? While the ride is more supple than

### Modernised classics | Comparison

#### ALSO CONSIDER



**MCLAREN 650S £195,250**  
Hit the track and the 650S will blow you away. But on the road and at legal speeds, the Porsche might produce the bigger grin.

that of a stock 964, West Sussex's rippled asphalt unearthed an unsettling vertical reactivity at speed that deviates from this car's 'touring' remit. Tweaking the adjustable Bilsteins (on the to-do list for this car) might lessen that trait, but you're stuck with the 964's seriously offset driving position.

Overall, though, the Retro Touring R presents a strong package. It's quick, fun, characterful, luxurious and extremely solid. Not to mention very, very covetable.

## VERDICT

Between these five modernised classics, the cat has been skinned every which way. But they are all absolutely usable, mixing with modern traffic at a trot. There's no need to relearn how to drive to enjoy them and their customisability means if you don't like something, such as the steering or suspension set-up, you can change it. None is cheap, but look after them and they'll depreciate far less than modern counterparts. One near-universal (if manageable) weakness, however, is braking – a tricky area in any upgrade.

So which is best? It's hard to dial out subjectivity here, but the Porsche is arguably the most complete package – perhaps as much a win for measured backdating over modernisation.

But whichever takes your fancy, these are all cars built specifically for the likes of thee and me. And that's a rare and wonderful thing. **A**

### PS AUTOART RETRO TOURING R

Price	£200,000 (approx)
Top speed	170mph
0-60mph	4.9sec
Kerb weight	1290kg
Engine	6 cyls horizontally opposed, 3800cc, petrol
Power	300bhp at 6200rpm
Torque	295lb ft at 4800rpm
Gearbox	5-spd manual

