plenty of torque for instant response from fairly low revs.

The performance of the car we have just tested matched up well with those we have driven in the past. The first B we drove had a top speed of 106.5 mph at MIRA, a later model managed only 105 mph, and the current example was back at 106.2 mph. All these differences are of a kind to be expected with varying weather conditions.

As for standing starts, the 0-60 mph times on the three cars we have tested over the years have been 12.6sec., 11.0sec., and 11.5sec respectively. The first gain was due to an improved second gear ratio, while the slight drop in acceleration now may be due to the fact that the B has put on a little weight since 1969. Both the most recent figures were taken in slightly damp conditions: we would not expect any significant improvement in dry weather as axle tramp, never a problem under normal conditions, is a slight hindrance in proper racing style starts, so a fairly soft touch is demanded. We assume that a slight flat spot on this car at 2000 rpm was peculiar to this vehicle.

The current gearbox was introduced in 1967, when first gear was given synchronesh. There seemed to be a little clutch drag on our car, causing a lot of baulking in the selection of first gear from rest. This problem, for which there should be a simple cure, should not be confused with that of basic gear selection: some drivers took some time to get to the “feel” of the gear gate which is very close in the reverse, 1-2, and 3-4 planes. To select first gear easily it is important to permit the lever to find its own centre and then push it forward. Overdrive is an essential option for any driver who contemplates long trips in the MG B, otherwise its effortless cruising potential in the 80s and 90s will be lost.

Interior of the latest MGB includes fresh air vents on the facia and new rocker switches. Old style heater controls are retained, however, and it is still not possible to heel and toe.
Another virtue of the MGB is its handling. It car was not long in production before the front anti-roll bar became standard equipment, so cutting down the excessive understeer that spoiled the original model. This unusual remedy for understeer was presumably effective because in this case a good camber angle was more important than weight transfer considerations. The B still has plenty soft springs and, for a sports car, rolls quite a lot: despite the very large steering wheel the steering is quite heavy due to the high caster angle, but even so it is a pleasant and reassuring car to drive at speed.

As age creeps up on the B its ride seems to be rather poor by modern standards, a fault that may be due to the strong damping at the rear which no doubt helps to keep the axle in line. Likewise, while road noise is generally low, a degree of tyre roar is apparent and, in the wet, all sorts of splashing noise come up from the back, probably via the unpinned boot. The hood, however, while it remains a fair job to erect or tuck away, was beautifully taut and as noise-free as ever. It also managed to keep the rain out in bad weather, but some water did get in elsewhere to drip onto the driver's left ankle. To be fair, it was raining extremely hard on that occasion.

Most of the time the B is a comfortable touring car with good seats, legroom, and headroom so that drivers of all shapes and sizes can sit happily for long periods behind the wheel. Apart from the large wheel and impossibility of heel/toe changes the other major controls are well placed.

As for the dash layout, the recent facelift seems pretty half-hearted. The speedometer and tacho have always been easy to see, the overdrive switch is conveniently placed at fingertip reach, and the substitution of rocker switches for the lights, heater fan, and wipers is no bad thing. The fresh air system, with outputs placed high on the centre of the facia, is excellent. But it is still hard to read the other instruments and there are still no sun visors: the awkward old rotary heater knobs do not provide much effective adjustment between full heat and none. Why wasn't the Marina wash/wipe stalk gone before B? It would be so much better than the manually operated washers and separate wipe switch. The indicator/flasher stalk, mounted on the right, is good except that it also works the horn: we have always campaigned for horn buttons or rings on steering wheels to avoid confusion in an emergency. The small glovebox must still be opened each time with a key, but this is excusable in a classic car. The ignition/starter key has been moved to the steering column to enable a column lock to be fitted.

You can get quite a lot of luggage behind the seats but if you want to make the best of the boot, which now seems fatter than before, it's best to pack your gear in a holdall rather than a rigid suitcase.

To conclude, we still like the well-mannered B as do a large number of satisfied customers. But we feel that with a little bit more attention to a few details it could be better. The opportunity has been missed again in many respects, even though the MGB and BAC have been...