

# **CLASSIC CAR MAGAZINES**

Continued Survival in A Modern Market

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## **ABSTRACT**

This dissertation examines how classic car magazines sold in the UK market use their intended demographics, content and design to create an end product that attracts both readers and advertisers. Both should be attracted to maintain any publication's continued success and growth. The classic car magazine sector of automotive magazines still maintains strong appeal from thousands of buyers and subscribers, and so maximising these numbers is a key element of continued survival.

This content analysis research of five classic car magazines on the UK market aims to showcase how these publications cover those three aspects, using qualitative data taken from numerous issues and relating back to sources in the field of magazine production and demographics, writing and design. Including scans of the reference material to demonstrate some of these ideas in action, this dissertation showcases numerous methodologies and ideas that the five magazines each use to continue their success, using the research to suggest ways in which those magazines could improve if necessary.

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# CONTENTS

<b>List Of Illustrations</b>	<b>ii</b>
<b>Chapter 1 – Introduction</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>Chapter 2 – Literature Review &amp; Analysis Introduction</b>	<b>2</b>
Literature Review	2
Analysis Introduction	3
<b>Chapter 3 – Demographics</b>	<b>5</b>
Audience	5
Advertising	6
Branding	10
<b>Chapter 4 – Content</b>	<b>13</b>
Road Tests	13
Car Selection	16
Secondary Content	22
Unique Features	24
<b>Chapter 5 – Design</b>	<b>28</b>
Cover	28
Colour	32
Page Layout	36
Text	38
Photography	42
<b>Chapter 6 – Conclusions</b>	<b>46</b>
Classic & Sports Car	46
Octane	47
Classic Cars	47
Classics Monthly	47
Classic.Retro.Modern	48
<b>Appendices</b>	<b>50</b>
<b>References</b>	<b>52</b>

## LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS

Fig. **1A**: Advertising spread, *Octane* (240) (pp. 190-191) © 2023 Autovia

Fig. **1B**: Advertising spread, *Classics Monthly* (332) (pp. 126-127) © 2023 Kelsey Media

Fig. **2A**: Advertising spread, *Classic & Sports Car* (42, 4) (pp. 178-179) © 2023 Haymarket Media Group

Fig. **3A**: Advertising spread, *Classic.Retro.Modern* (20) (pp. 138-139) © 2023 Motorworld Media

Fig. **4A**: Spread from “1980s Culture Club”, *Classic Cars* (601) (pp. 54-55) © 2023 Bauer Media

Fig. **5A**: Spread from “Kings Of The Road”, *Classic & Sports Car* (42, 4) (pp. 90-91) © 2023 Haymarket Media Group

Fig. **6A**: Spread from “1991 VW Golf 1.8 Driver Automatic”, *Classics Monthly* (333) (pp. 54-55) © 2023 Kelsey Media

Fig. **7A**: Spread from “Two Trick Ponies”, *Classic & Sports Car* (42, 3) (pp. 96-97) © 2023 Haymarket Media Group

Fig. **7B**: Spread from “Taking The Mickie”, *Classic & Sports Car* (42, 3) (pp. 104-105) © 2023 Haymarket Media Group

Fig. **7C**: Spread from “The Forbidden Z”, *Classic & Sports Car* (42, 3) (pp. 132-133) © 2023 Haymarket Media Group

Fig. **8A**: Spread from “Horse Play”, *Classic.Retro.Modern* (20) (pp. 102-103) © 2023 Motorworld Media

Fig. **8B**: Spread from “The Forbidden Z”, *Classic & Sports Car* (42, 3) (pp. 134-135) © 2023 Haymarket Media Group

Fig. **9A**: News spread, *Classic.Retro.Modern* (21) (pp. 12-13) © 2023 Motorworld Media

Fig. **10A**: Spread from “Eight Steps To Buying A Ferrari 550 Maranello”, *Classic Cars* (601) (pp. 54-55) © 2023 Bauer Media

Fig. **11A**: Spread from “The List”, *Classic Cars* (600) (pp. 8-9) © 2023 Bauer Media

Fig. **12A**: Spread from “The Truth About... The Vauxhall Victor FD”, *Classics Monthly* (334) (pp. 114-115) © 2023 Kelsey Media

Fig. **12B**: Spread from “Shed Heavens”, *Classic.Retro.Modern* (22) (pp. 48-49) © 2023 Motorworld Media

Fig. **13A**: Front cover of *Classic & Sports Car* (42, 1) (p. 1) © 2023 Haymarket Media Group

Fig. **14A**: Front cover of *Classic.Retro.Modern* (20) (p. 1) © 2023 Motorworld Media

Fig. **15A**: Front cover of *Classic Cars* (600) (p. 1) © 2023 Bauer Media

Fig. **15B**: Front cover of *Classics Monthly* (334) (p.1) © 2023 Kelsey Media

Fig. **16A**: Front cover of *Octane* (240) (p. 1) © 2023 Autovia

Fig. **17A**: Contents spread from *Classic & Sports Car* (42, 3) (pp. 10-11) © 2023 Haymarket Media Group

Fig. **17B**: Contents spread from *Classic Cars* (599) (pp. 4-5) © 2023 Bauer Media

Fig. **18A**: Contents spread from *Classics Monthly* (332) (pp. 4-5) © 2023 Kelsey Media

Fig. **19A**: Contents spread from *Octane* (241) (pp. 8-9) © 2023 Autovia

Fig. **20A**: Contents spread from *Classic.Retro.Modern* (21) (pp. 4-5) © 2023 Motorworld Media

Fig. **21A**: Spread from “Month In Cars – Events”, *Classic Cars* (600) (pp. 24-25) © 2023 Bauer Media

Fig. **22A**: Spread from “Marques & Models”, *Classics Monthly* (332) (pp. 114-115) © 2023 Kelsey Media

Fig. **23A**: Spread from “Ads On Test”, *Classic Cars* (599) (pp. 106-107) © 2023 Bauer Media

Fig. **24A**: Spread from “Rotorarmed”, *Classic.Retro.Modern* (21) (pp. 84-85) © 2023 Motorworld Media

Fig. **24B**: Spread from “Horse Play”, *Classic.Retro.Modern* (20) (pp. 104-105) © 2023 Motorworld Media

Fig. **25A**: Spread from “The Game Changers”, *Classic & Sports Car* (42, 2) (pp. 88-89) © 2023 Haymarket Media Group

Fig. **26A**: Front cover of *Classics Monthly* (333) (p.1) © 2023 Kelsey Media

Fig. **26B**: Spread from “Rootes Rarities”, *Classics Monthly* (333) (pp. 36-37) © 2023 Kelsey Media

## **CHAPTER 1 - INTRODUCTION**

The classic car magazine format has been a regular mainstay of British store shelves for the last fifty years. With its combination of news, features and interviews, fuelled by nostalgia and driven by a growing interest in vintage vehicles and a lucrative existing audience to tap into (Federation Of British Historic Vehicles Clubs, 2020), this had led to a large range of classic car magazines being available on the UK market (WH Smith, 2023), and many ways of doing the same core ideas.

As such, it can be hard to figure out what different magazines offer in terms of inspiration for any firm or individual wishing to develop their existing publication further or publish their own. With there being little research and analysis in this field, this document aims to provide an insight and suggestions to parties interested in developing their own classic car magazine, or teams looking to adjust their existing product. This content analysis of five different UK-market magazines aims to explain key elements which make up a typical classic car magazine, discuss and observe ways in which five publications aim to meet these criteria, while also referencing professional magazine analysis in fields such as design.

## CHAPTER 2 - LITERATURE REVIEW & ANALYSIS

### INTRODUCTION

#### LITERATURE REVIEW

Unsurprisingly for a relatively small market, reading and research specifically into classic car magazines is rare, if not non-existent in the public domain. Most research conducted around the format either relates to areas like sales figures or unpublished internal research into areas like target audience, meaning this research fills in a new niche category, and will be using existing research on magazines in general.

There are two main points to creating magazines, of which editors need to find the balance between to result in a successful publication – creating a high-quality product that the staff can be proud of and an audience is happy with, and making money (Morrish, 2003, pp. 1-3). These two fundamentals then play into the three components of classic car magazines that must bring readers and advertisers in, which are the main points of analysis here – **demographics, content and design**. The important part is balancing these two elements as best as possible, and for as long as possible, to achieve continued success. If a magazine is not creating sustainable long-term profits, then it is not succeeding, and change will be needed to stop the publication going out of production. There are plenty of magazines, like *Retro Japanese*, which close within a couple of years of being launched, despite catering to well-sized niche audiences with content that should have satisfied their chosen market (Retro Japanese, 2019).

A classic car magazine is written for those with an interest in classic cars, and on paper, this seems like an extremely easy strategy, what with a large audience already and growing interest in the hobby. The Federation Of British Historic Vehicles Club (FBHVC)'s 2020/2021 vehicle ownership survey estimated that the number of people in the UK interested in owning a classic car sat at around 4.6 million (2020). The number of owners in the UK was estimated at 683,967 in 2020 and is projected to be at around 860,000 by 2025, according to their research. These figures, while impressive, should be narrowed down further, as while there is potential in that group, having a readership of even 200,000 people is beyond even a mainstream magazine's audience reach today (Majid, 2023).



Even with a reasonably large potential audience, a classic car magazine should not try to cater to all audiences, as noted by John Morrish on magazines in general in *Magazine Editing* (1996). Like any business, finding a target demographic within this possible audience of millions, and then catering to that niche, is key. After all, very few classic car enthusiasts enjoy all types of classic cars. Some may enjoy a particular brand, or cars from a specific country for example, and both of those categories of enthusiasts have magazines for their interests, such as *ClassicFord* or *Classic American*.

In *Editorial Design*, Yolanda Zappaterra notes that that “any publication should create an enjoyable, accessible and appropriate experience for its reader” (2007, p. 128), which, once an ideal demographic is decided upon, should be a balance of content and design. Content in this regard covers both text and images, and how they are used by journalists and photographers to create interesting narratives to captivate and interest readers. As further described by Sumner and Miller in *Feature And Magazine Writing* (2013), content should be so interesting that even the most busy readers should be utterly distracted from doing anything else but reading further and further into the magazine. Magazine readers tend to be “more educated than the general public” on the topic they are reading about (2013, p. 12), and so finding stories that will interest them, are of excellent quality and high standards, then readers will return for more content in future editions.

In *Editorial Design*, Yolanda Zappaterra describes the titular topic of her book as a form of visual journalism in itself: it entertains, enthrals, and emotes a reader just as much as the text it carries (2007, p. 1). Both a magazine’s demographic and content heavily influence the look of a publication based on their needs and requirements. For example, the majority of classic car magazines do not have to strive for design flair in the same way as a fashion magazine must, though some such as *Magneto* and *Octane* will do so, due to their intended audiences’ interest in art and design (Dennis Publishing, 2008) (*Magneto Magazine*, 2022).

## **ANALYSIS INTRODUCTION & METHOD**

The analysis here involves the reading of several issues of different magazines currently available on the UK market, and comparing its features and brand to three

points of analysis – **demographic, content** and **design**. These are three core elements of magazine production that make up any brand or publication.

The five magazines chosen for examination were as follows: *Classic & Sports Car* (Haymarket), *Classic Cars* (Bauer), *Classics Monthly* (Kelsey), *Classic.Retro.Modern* (Autoworld) and *Octane* (Dennis/Autovia). Due to the limited budget of the research, three of the most recent issues of each, during the point of research (May – July 2023), were analysed through reading and observation to gather primary qualitative data of how each magazine covers components within those three fields of analysis. The brands were chosen to get a good spread of demographics that classic car magazines cover, though with the niche market of these format, some audience overlap is expected.

In terms of design for example, a singular aspect of it, such as colour, has had data collected on what colours are being used thematically by a particular magazine. This data is then compared to what experts have said about the use of colour in magazine design. For example, are there any positive or negative connotations from using yellow that may influence a reader's emotions? (Zappaterra, 2007, p. 30)

This analysis aims to point out both positive and negative points about each publication, compare it to relevant sources on the field being discussed, and use this evidence to suggest changes that could be made to improve the publication in areas if necessary. When suggestions for areas of improvement are made, these are based on research into those analysis points. Where applicable, scans of the original magazine material will be provided to visually highlight points of interest, especially in relation to content and design.

## CHAPTER 3 - DEMOGRAPHICS

### AUDIENCE

Any good team, or more specifically, its editor, should know what its magazine's audience is and put them at the forefront of their aims to make a successful publication. Through methods such as in-house research and characterisation (Morrish, 1996, pp. 29-32), a team should be able to judge their reader's needs and interests as best as possible, and cater their magazine to them (pp. 26-28). Readers who are not catered to will not be interested in continuing to purchase future issues or subscribing to a publication (p. 28).

Getting this right does not just have an impact on audience-based funding, but every other element of a magazine. Everything from content to design is based upon satisfying a reader's interests, and companies will be swayed to advertise in magazines based on audiences that they need to sell their goods and services to, just to name two examples.

*Classic & Sports Car* and *Octane* both share a very similar market of well-educated, middle-aged (45-55 years old), car collectors and enthusiasts, but have very different ways of meeting their audience's interests. Especially in *Octane*'s case, it represents something of a lifestyle magazine rather than a hobbyist publication; a website for the brand once claimed that its typical reader spent "an average of £1,369 on their watch" (Dennis Publishing, 2008), for example. *Classic Cars*' interests are similar but are aimed more at a broader range of wealth than specifically richer individuals. Their target audience is between 30 and 60 with an average age of 47, generally already a classic car owner, who makes higher than average wages and as such, can afford to be involved with their vehicle regularly, both in maintaining and driving (Bauer Media, 2011).

*Classics Monthly*, which has changed ownership multiple times since its creation in 1997, has also skewed its market appeal in recent years. Currently, it targets a less-affluent hobbyist market, aimed primarily at individuals with an interest in repairing and restoring affordable vintage vehicles often found on UK roads, akin to Bauer publication *Practical Classics*. It currently resides in this position mostly thanks to current publisher Kelsey Media's vast empire of motoring magazines such as *Classic Car Buyer*, *Classic Car Mart* and *Future Classics*, which have a heavier focus on

buying and selling classic cars, fitting under its *Classics World* moniker (Kelsey Media, n.d.).

*Classic.Retro.Modern*'s audience situation is interesting. Its website claims that the publication “is fresh enough to appeal to young drivers taking their first tentative steps in the world of classic cars”, while also being “established enough to appeal to knowledgeable enthusiasts who have seen it all” (Motorworld Media, 2018). This is an extremely contradictory statement; blending material intended for an audience of new enthusiasts and seasoned experts creates a magazine where neither audience feels particularly catered to. These ideas should be two separate magazines, not one amalgamation. But it is clear that people are buying *Classic.Retro.Modern* issues, and so finding out the demographic of this actual audience, and figuring out how best to cater to them, is vital to ensure continued survival.

## **ADVERTISING**

Magazine designer Vince Frost once noted that magazine content is “built around the idea that editorial breaks up the advertising” – it merely exists to sell advertising to an audience (Zappaterra, 2007, p. 17). Though not always the case, only a minute number of magazines are 100% reader-funded, with the five analysed featured here all requiring advertiser funding to help finance the team and generate profit.

While some companies like Vintage Tyres and Lancaster Insurance advertise in several publications due to their wider appeal and catering to numerous markets, there are plenty more who advertise in magazines that cater more specifically to their intended audience. After all, a company do not want to spend its advertising budget appealing to an audience that they cannot sell their product or service to.

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190

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Fig. 1A & 1B: advertising spreads from *Octane* (above, June 2023 pp. 190-191) as compared to *Classics Monthly* (below, May 2023 pp. 126-127).

7

An example of this comes with car dealerships and auction houses. *Octane* (see Fig. 1A) attracts affluent, high-end dealerships selling vehicles worth hundreds of thousands that its intended reader demographic might be interested in purchasing, while *Classics Monthly* (see Fig. 1B) attracts dealerships that sell cars at far lower prices, and that are more accessible to a less-wealthy audience.



Fig. 2A: advertising spread from the July 2023 issue of *Classic & Sports Car* (pp. 178-179).

Another thing to consider is how much space advertising space takes up within a publication. In his book *Publication Design* (1982), Roy Paul Nelson designates that there should be a set ratio between advertising space and editorial content. He proposes that a magazine should be somewhere between 70:30 and 50:50, leaning towards advertising – anything below that, such as 40:60, and to quote Nelson, “the magazine is in trouble” (p. 142). In this instance, the argument may be somewhat nullified due to the niche nature of these magazines as compared to the mainstream publications that Nelson is referring to, and how magazines have changed since his book was published in 1982. Most modern sources state an average of between 50:50

and 40:60 as being fine (Grafterr, 2019). However, I still wanted to find out what the ratio of these magazines' advertising to editorial was.

Through counting the total number of pages per magazine, and the number of those pages with more advertising than content, I have noted the average ratio of dedicated advertising to editorial space across the five brands. There are a few details worth clarifying in relation to what did and did not count. For example, some of the magazines, notably *Classics Monthly*, sometimes have regular features sponsored by companies, such as Lancaster Insurance's sponsorship of its 'Buying Guide' articles. However, as those articles are simply sponsored and the advertising is not a key component of the article, I have decided to not count those pages. Loose inserts featuring advertising, meanwhile, were counted.

These ratios are based on an average compiled from all three issues of each magazine, and follows the same format as Nelson's discussion:

- *Classic & Sports Car* – 50:50
- *Classic Cars* – 45:55
- *Classics Monthly* – 33:67
- *Classic.Retro.Modern* – 25:75
- *Octane* – 33:67

From this, we can see that all of the magazines put preferential treatment towards content over advertising, with an average ratio of between 1:1 and 1:2. *Classic & Sports Car* features a 50:50 average, meaning for about every page of content, there is one of advertising. *Classic.Retro.Modern*, meanwhile, averages at just one page of advertising to every four of editorial content.



Fig. 3A: advertising spread from the March 2023 issue of *Classic.Retro.Modern*, featuring gaps filled in by old car advertisements (pp. 138-139).

Continuing with *Classic.Retro.Modern*, every issue features plenty of space being used to display scans of old car adverts and posters. While it makes for nice visual material, it sometimes distracts from paid advertisements, especially when the two are placed right next to each other (see **Fig. 3A**). The bigger implication, however, is that these old adverts are being used to fill in space because firms are not interested in paying for advertising space. It seems to be that *Classic.Retro.Modern* is struggling to pull in advertisers, and the result seems to be a magazine that, to paraphrase Nelson, seems to be in “big, big trouble”.

## BRAND

Having a strong brand that is identifiable by a target audience is the third piece of the demographics puzzle. Though all of these titles go for a niche demographic, there will be times that these magazines have very similar audiences, and in fact, may collectively be purchased by some. As such, developing a brand that stands out to a prospective reader is vital.



Helped by being published by magazine giant Haymarket, the brand's existence since 1982 and its strong presence on magazine racks since, *Classic & Sports Car* prides itself on being a go-to source for enthusiasts of all interests, though primarily those interested in sports and GT cars (see **Car Selection**). The name, for example, tells a prospective buyer what the magazine is all about, and makes for a recognisable name that most enthusiasts know about.

Meanwhile, if it were a brand being launched today, *Classic Cars* would likely suffer in that its name is simplistic and does not allow for good search engine optimisation (SEO) (Lamour, 2020). Searching the name online, for example, will rarely, if ever, show the brand's website, even as far back as the second or third page of a search engine without including the prefix "magazine" afterwards. The saving grace is that *Classic Cars (Thoroughbred & Classic Cars* in export markets) has existed since 1973, giving the brand 50 years to develop to offset its generic name and build a brand for itself.

Similar to the more-popular *Practical Classics*, the brand that *Classics Monthly* is built on surrounds trading, restoring and enjoying classic cars, through from a more hand-on perspective. The brand has existed since 1997, first published by SPL Publishing under the *Classics* name, before a series of ownership changes led to it being managed by Kelsey Publishing. The *Classics* name returned on the front cover following a design revamp in 2018, which does lead to a conflict of identity.

*Classic.Retro.Modern*, the newest magazine here, launched in 2018 with a brand that constantly discusses how anti-zeitgeist it is compared to its competitors. Editor Richard Dredge's columns make claims such as *Classic.Retro.Modern* bringing audiences "another set of features that nobody else would dare to bring you" (April 2023, p. 3) and that *Classic.Retro.Modern* is not a "tick-box exercise" like "other magazines" (March 2023, p. 3). This seems much more fitting of a free website like *RetroMotor*, which often goes for assorted, than a typical magazine.

*Octane*, which launched in 2003, was initially introduced to fill in a niche at the upper end of the classic car market that its founders believed was not being fulfilled, which is something it has done ever since. Acquired by Dennis Publishing in 2007 and spun off into their Autovia brand of automotive publications in 2022, the magazine continues to cater to its audience by being an open and accessible

magazine featuring some of the world's rarest and most collectible classic cars, as well as offering reviews of watches and outdoor gear. This is unlike rival publication *Magneto*, which is more restrictive to its audience on purpose, to create a level of exclusivity for a level of wealth beyond even *Octane's* aims.

# CHAPTER 4 - CONTENT

## ROAD TESTS

If there is one type of article that defines the automotive magazine genre more than any other, it is the road test. First utilised by *The Autocar*, though not named as such until 1928 (Autocar, 1928), the formula of examining and driving a vehicle to assess its appearance, driving characteristics and other elements is only part of the equation within this category of magazine. Elements like a model's history, provenance, reliability and value will almost always be assessed and discussed as part of a road test, all dependent on the publication and its intended audience.



Fig 4A: A spread from '1980s Culture Club', from the August 2023 issue of *Classic Cars* magazine (pp. 54-55)

Road tests cover numerous formats. The single car road test is omnipresent in all of these magazines, with *Classics Monthly* and *Classic.Retro.Modern* using them for all of their road tests. The group test format, meanwhile, is commonly used by *Classic & Sports Car* for the majority of its road tests, while *Classic Cars* and *Octane* use both to varying degrees.



### DAYTONA: WHERE IT ALL BEGAN

Just as this issue of CR is reaching print, the very first 355GTB prototype was being sold via a private bid auction to Bill Somers, and this significant machine inevitably created huge interest. Chassis 10287 was completed in 1967, prior to five further prototypes being built before Daytona production commenced. Only the first four adopted this car's hybrid look, melding the long, curved nose, hornet-bulge and Perspex-cowled twin headlights of the outgoing 275GTB with a more identical profile and rear-three-quarter design to that of the incoming production car. Six rather than four circular lights and a full-width rear bumper also deviated from the Daytona's final specification. The prototype's 170-hp engine was completely bespoke and never used in the production 355GTB. Based on the 330GT block that bored out to 4380cc, it featured three valves per cylinder (two inlet, one exhaust, like the P4 racer) versus the 3300s two, along with a dry sump and six Weber 40 DCHS carburetors. It was initially registered in May 1968 and its first private keeper was Count Vincenzo Balabani, to whom Enzo Ferrari loaned the car while the Count was waiting for delivery of his Daytona Spider. It was then exported to the US and went through various owners before being brought back to Europe in 1989. After it had changed hands twice more, in 2003 its Dutch lesser commissioned a full restoration. Now Ferrari Classic-certified, the car was displayed at the prestigious Monaco Ferrari in 2015, '16 and was awarded Best of Show at the 2016 Concours d'Elegance Pikes Hill Low Appealoon.



tradition of looking as if it was crawling at 150mph even when it was stationary.

The Gilbert Smith family's 1.6-litre-supplied GT304 perhaps shows this in the best light. Highly original, down to its distinctive and rare Viola paint, the Ferrari was delivered new to Kevin M. Donald in August 1970 (costing \$3830, then the UK's most expensive two-seater at the time) and has covered more than 70,000 miles, 27,000 of them in the present owner's 17-year tenure. As an early model, it has the flexible panel running across the front of the car, shrouding its four Carrera headlights. Given that this car is well used (its keeper describes various 150mph 'cruises' across Europe), it feels surprisingly well built for a 35-year-old Italian supercar. Pull on the delicate chrome doorhandle mounted in the rear-most corner of the window, drop into the wonderfully padded driver's seat (still trimmed in original leather, but re-upholstered) and you find yourself in a cabin that perfectly blends old with new. A big, wood-rimmed Nardi wheel faces you, behind which is a large, eight-dial binnacle with oversized tach and speedometer, trimmed in now lightly faded Alcantara. Press the throttle down a couple of inches - it pivots from a post at the side of the footwell - and after a pronounced spin on the starter, the 132-hp and soles to a subdued rumble. The pedals are a touch offset to the right and the column is fixed, yet the driving position is comfortable - although the fixed-back seat encourages a long-armed style.

*The Daytona feels secure from the off. The unassisted steering is heavy at low speeds, but alive with feedback'*

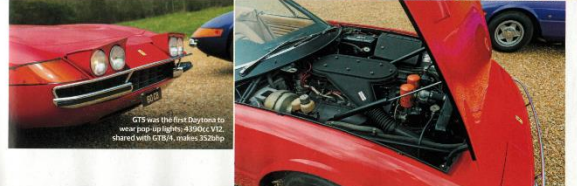
Select the dog-leg, first-leather-galler covers the open gate on right-hand drive Daytonas), dial in plenty of revs and point the Daytona towards UTAC Millbrook's Alpine Route. This stretch of tarmac is challenging in any car, but the Daytona feels secure from the off. Vision is good, if impeded slightly by the bonnet's upward fluke, which diverts air over the wipers. The unassisted steering is heavy at low speeds, but alive with feedback (and kibble over surface imperfections). For a manual system it's quite direct, as three turns from lock to lock, but on this fast and sinuous track that's a boon. The Daytona is a physical car to drive: clutch, gearbox and steering all require firm inputs, although not to an unacceptable level. The engine, initially quite subdued, really gets into its stride from 3500rpm. As soon as the Weber second-chokes open, the full majesty of the V12 is released, and if you keep it percolating between 4000 and 6000rpm you're rewarded with one of the all-time great automotive experiences. It's immensely fertile, too, pulling heartily from lower revs if required. After a few laps of



The Spider remains composed in turns, and there's no costly plastic from its roofless but reinforced coachwork



Black-rimmed disk and a smaller diameter leather-trimmed wheel bring this, as a late model of GT304



GT3 was the first Daytona to wear pop-up lights (4390cc V12, stored with 1000, miles 35200)



### BE MIGHTY MITE

The job was not without its difficulties, the main one being that so few spare parts had survived. The surviving Mighty Mite population worldwide is considered to be about 10% of total production. I've been lucky to find a specialist in Pennsylvania who had some stock, brought directly from the US military, and I was able to locate the most vital components of the engine. In the post-internet era, for an Italian this would have been an impossible task. It did require a couple of journeys to the USA. I personally went through all the mechanical parts, while the body shop took care of the alloy body panels. Disassembling and then reassembling the chassis and the body was one of the trickiest aspects of the restoration. Its construction is very sophisticated, like a piece of aeronautical engineering, with all the panels joined by rivets. These rivets, thanks to their age, are prone to corrosion and became loose, weakening the whole structure, and that meant we had to replace every single one. We are talking about a thousand of these! I found the right rivets, and the specific tools to attach them. In the USA from a company that manufactures parts for airplanes. It then took me about a year to get the Italian plates, so I could use it on the road. I also had to add homologated headlights and indicators.

The high original build quality has been helpful, however, as used parts from other cars have been straightforward to fit. 'I've been amazingly lucky with the original fire extinguisher,' says Marco. 'I found one complete with its

frame. When I bought it, I checked it against the car, and the two holes for the fittings were a perfect match. That is quite amazing when you consider how much handwork there was in the assembly of this product, and that it was made to fly with helicopters and be thrown into seasports. You might have expected much, but indeed engineering and manufacturing quality, at these activities would shorten the life of the product.'

The gearbox and differential were provided by Dana Corporation, the best available at the time for off-road vehicle applications, and were known to be bulletproof. The transmission is the most reliable part of the car, thanks to the over-pressure system to keep the internal dry sump Marco. While working on the restoration, I had found myself admiring the quality of the materials used. I believe this explains why the car was so expensive to buy in period, with a cost of about \$5000 per every single unit. Even so, the rear joint of the transmission shaft is not protected with an O-ring but has a gasket re-seal that, after getting hot and cold a few times, breaks in half. A notable aspect of the Mighty Mite career was its participation in the Vietnam war, where it was widely used in Marine Corps activity - though it wasn't universally loved. The car was - and is - good, but you can't compare it with the contemporary M151 made by Ford, known as the 'Mutt' (Military Utility Tactical Truck) and used by the Army. One of the main issues that affected the early M422 was potential loss, while being driven, of the rear



### 1961 AMC Mighty Mite M422

Engine 1768cc, 4-cylinder V4, 160hp 1300cc, 4-cylinder Power 1000-hp @ 2800rpm  
Transmission Full-speed manual, four-wheel drive Suspension Front and rear leaf, long-travel, quarter-elliptic coil springs, hydraulic dampers Brakes Discs Weight 2700kg Top speed 52mph

### Above and opposite

The air intakes of the restoration model; air-cooled V4 was developed especially by AMC; only two seats, but an emergency provision for four more in a crate.



Fig. 5A and 5B: Spread from ‘Kings Of The Road’, from the July 2023 issue of *Classic & Sports Car* magazine (pp. 90-91), and from ‘It Might Be Giant’ from the August 2023 issue of *Octane* magazine (pp. 118-119).

Even with the basic format, how it is executed changes between magazines. The group test format, for example, involves multiple cars within a set of constraints like era, price, or category of vehicle (cars from the 1970s, under £15,000, sports coupes, etc) are tested together. The idea is simple, but different publications take different approaches. *Classic Cars*, for example, often treats the cars they test as , devoting a spread to each (see **Fig. 4A**) to discuss its history, driving characteristics, present photographs and feature an interview with the owner. This is before concluding with what vehicle the author perceives as the best, such as in ‘1980s Culture Club’ (August 2023, pp. 44-58). Meanwhile, *Classic & Sports Car* and *Octane* use their group tests to tell a story (see **Fig. 5A**) rather than comparing, intertwining the vehicles together to create a long narrative while also covering regular road test elements like how the vehicles featured are to drive.

Balancing context and experience, however, is a fine art, and often depends on the writer involved. A prime example is with *Classic.Retro.Modern*. Its road tests are often conducted by veteran writer Richard Heseltine, and balance context and experience well. In his article ‘Rotorarmed’ (April 2023, pp. 82-91), the balance between historical context and what the Mazda RX-7 was like to drive is at about a 50:50 split. Meanwhile, contributor Gavin Braithwaite-Smith’s ‘Coupespace’ (May/June 2023, pp. 78-85) has a context/experience ratio of around 70:30, with just four paragraphs on the final spread featuring any sort of hands-on driving experience.

# 1991 VW GOLF 1.8 DRIVER AUTOMATIC

**In the first of our new Road test series, we try out a mid-range model from Volkswagen's Mk2 Golf family.** REPORT: SIMON GOLDSWORTHY



**ROAD TEST**

1991 VW GOLF 1.8 DRIVER AUTOMATIC



**V**olkswagen introduced their first Golf in 1974, and it arguably saved the company. Up to that point VW had been largely relying on the Beetle to keep it afloat, but that had become a case in its own lifetime and a replacement was long overdue. The Golf was so dramatically different with its crisp, angular styling and water-cooled engine driving the front wheels that it could all have gone horribly wrong, but the basic concept was spot on while the engineering and build quality were both exemplary and VW never looked back.

The Golf nameplate is still on sale and currently in its eighth generation, which was introduced in 2019. For *Classics Monthly* it is the Mk1 (1974-1983) and the Mk2 (1985-1991) that are of real interest, though the convertible Mk3 is already nudging at the door of classic status. And while everybody gushes over the GTI versions, there are many options further down the food chain that can give just as much pleasure, if not quite the same turn of speed.

It is just such a car that we have on test today, a Driver from close to the end of Mk2 production. As such it had most of the styling cues of the GTI and some little added luxuries, but a carburettor-fed engine with only eight valves. It belongs to James Lee Roberts, and is used today in exactly the same way that it would have been used from new – as daily family transport.

As you approach the Golf, first impressions are that it is a small car by modern standards, not tiny by any means, but certainly compact. In fact it is 180mm longer and 55mm wider than the Mk1, but each successive generation of any car always seems to gain a little extra bulk – the latest Golf is a full 264mm longer than the Mk1, 103mm wider and 85mm higher. For me though, the Mk2 hits a sweet spot and its proportions are spot on. I even prefer the rounded corners of the Mk2 to the more angular lines of the Mk1, a view that may be not to all tastes but which is my take.

There is a distinct lack of chrome, but plenty of black trim which is so very much of its era and looks really good against the bright red paint. Being a 1991 car it has no quarterlights (lost in a 1987 update) and the bigger bumpers that were fitted from 1989. Being a Driver model, it also has a sliding metal sunroof and a slatted grille with twin headlights. Post-1990 cars like this also got the plastic arch trims blending into the black rubbering strips more commonly found on the GTI.

There is plenty of glass area, but the big and chunky C-posts do look like they could seriously affect your rear 3/4 vision. You can see easily across the roof, a reminder of just how tall and gangly the current crop of SUVs has become. The compact external dimensions belie the amount of space on the inside, though. Sit in the back and there is plenty of leg room and good visibility out. Again, it is a reminder of the foolish styling trends of modern cars with their steeply rising waistlines that may look sleeker from the outside, but end up leaving rear seat passengers feeling claustrophobic and travel sick. This is a proper family car – it can take plenty of people away and nobody really gets short-changed by sitting in the back.

In the front there is plenty of headroom again, despite the presence of the sliding sunroof. The bonnet drops away quite sharply at the front compared to cars of just a few years earlier, but generally the four corners are easily visible, partly because the seating position is reasonably high. The dash sits well away from you, a flat face that differs so markedly from the swooping, curvy affairs that came in later – I'm thinking particularly of the new Beetle here, a car which seems to have a mile of dash between you and the screen. Partly that feeling of space is a result of the simple dash design, but it also helps that the Golf's screen is really rather upright. The screen pillars are nice and thin to aid visibility and a feeling of spaciousness, unencumbered by the need to accommodate air bags. All in all the glass area to the front and the sides is superb and gives cracking visibility, while the rear window is big too so there is decent vision in that direction whether using the mirror or turning your head for low-speed manoeuvres. The cuplars are not nearly as bad as I had expected, certainly not enough to translate into any zirconic visibility issues on the move. With such huge glass areas everywhere else and decent mirrors, it is just



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Fig. 6A: A spread from the first in a new batch of *Classics Monthly* road tests, from the June 2023 issue (pp. 54-55)

Until the June 2023 issue, *Classics Monthly* did not actually feature a consistent road test section. Editor Simon Goldsworthy's newly introduced test feature (pp. 52-56) offers a more technical focus than the majority of road tests, which makes sense for *Classics Monthly*'s hobbyist demographic. As the road test segment is set to continue into future issues, this addresses the suggestion of developing one that the research would have suggested being done otherwise.

## CAR SELECTION

Along with the personalities who make them what they are, the car is the star of this genre of magazine. Just like how a fashion magazine needs to feature clothing relevant to its audience, a classic car magazine should feature cars that both its existing audience will find interesting, and a new reader may be enticed into buying the magazine for (Sumner & Miller, 2013, p. 12).

Determining what cars should be featured can depend on many factors. There are more common choices that pull average readers in, including Morris Minors, Minis, MGs, classic Fords and Land Rovers, just to suggest a few that hobbyist magazines might be interested in. At the same time, predictability can get old rather quickly, and so quirkier choices can spice up a magazine's selection, if used in conjunction with popular choices. *Car & Classic's* 2023 study of the most-searched classic cars in the UK (Redfern, 2023) includes choices like the BMW 3 Series and Toyota MR2. However it is done, a good editor will have a vision of what type of cars their magazine should be featuring to appeal to an audience.

Some magazine brands have it easier than others when it comes to choose in vehicles. Single-make publications like *Classic Porsche* and *Triumph World* have a limited pool of vehicles from one manufacturer they can choose from that appeal directly to their audience base of that manufacturer's enthusiasts. However, as none of these magazines are single-make, this is not an option here.





Fig. 7A, 7B and 7C: spreads from the June 2023 issue of *Classic & Sports Car*, featuring two Ford Mustangs (pp. 96-97), a Kremer Porsche 911 2.7 (pp. 104-105)



and a Nissan Fairlady 200ZR/Mitsubishi Starion comparison test (pp. 132-133), showcasing the magazine's variety while maintaining an overall sports car theme. *Classic & Sports Car* and *Octane* most commonly feature vintage sports, GT and race cars like Lamborghinis, Ferraris and Porsches, which are staple vehicles of magazines focusing on wealthier readers. Neither are immune from more oddball choices however, so long as they could be considered special or have interesting stories. The August 2023 issue of *Octane*, for example, features a road test of both two Aston Martin DB4GT Zagato sports cars (pp. 50-60), and an AMC Mighty-Mite jeep (see **Fig. 5B**) (pp. 114-120), two very different vehicles, but ones that could be seen as collectable by *Octane's* wealthy demographic.

*Classic.Retro.Modern* generally targets cars built between 1960 and the early 2000s, though with most of its variety coming from vehicles built between 1970 and 2000. To quote the magazine's website, the selection of vehicles in each issue are "accessible, attainable and relevant" (Motorworld Media, 2018). The choice of vehicles themselves are heavily varied, even more so than the *Octane* example - the May/June 2023 issue features both a Renault Avantime MPV (pp. 78-85) and a Chevrolet Chevelle SS muscle car (pp. 98-102). In terms of representing its intended 'newbies and nerds' demographic, the spectrum of cars makes a lot of sense, with a mix of common and quirky choices. Some choices, like a Citroen SM GT car however (March 2023, pp. 70-79) are more upmarket than what *Classic.Retro.Modern's* intended demographic entails, with examples in the condition presented currently averaging a price of between £43,700 and £70,500 (Hagerty, 2023).

For the most part, *Classic Cars* is somewhere between both of the aforementioned groups, almost as a middleman between *Classic & Sports Car* and *Classic.Retro.Modern*, dabbling with everything from vintage supercars from the Ford GT40 (August 2023, pp. 64-72) to everyday classics like the Mercedes 190E (June 2023, pp. 76-81). While it is a broad spectrum of vehicles, it makes sense with the magazine's demographic to feature a wide array of vehicles, whether aspirational vehicles like the GT40, or more obtainable vehicles like the 190E.

*Classics Monthly's* selection of vehicles, according to Kelsey's brand website, is made up of "British and European classic and sports car[s] from the 1930s to the

1980s” (Kelsey Media, 2023) which, based on previous statements about cars that are popular magazine-sellers for the hobbyist market, fits perfectly. While the vast majority of cars featured do meet these criteria, there are some that do not, and a feature focusing on modern classics (post-1990) known as ‘Emerging Classics’ is present in two of the three issues analysed (May 2023, pp. 106-107) (July 2023, pp. 104-105).

PROFILE: MITSUBISHI STARION



**I**n the 1980s automotive family, the coupé is the cool kid. The estate car is the practical one, the saloon is honest and understated, and the hatchback is the modest one. Yes, there are exceptions of course, hot hatches and cool saloons do exist, but there can be no doubt that the coupé is the coolest of them all. As all mainstream manufacturers used to offer at least one car in each body shape, the coupé was the one in the showroom that we all gravitated towards. Coupé means 'cut' and, as you'll know, this shape usually has a cut-down roofline, only two doors, and probably only two usable seats, with a couple of under-sized ones behind. You'd pay more for this over a saloon willing to get less 'car', but when the coupé in question is as handsome as Mitsubishi's Starion you won't care. Modern automotive families now offer a nerd (EV) and many fatties (SUVs) at the expense of the cool coupé, and I would argue that the Starion is one of the coolest coupés ever made. I am aware I am over-using the word cool, but looking at this car it's hard to stop.

The chassis and drivetrain were carried over from the Galant Lambda GSR, a design dating back to 1978 with, broadly speaking, two versions of engine and two bodies to choose from. Considering home-market regulations on engine and body size, earlier domestic models mostly had a narrow body and 2.0-litre turbocharged engine with electronic fuel injection, the same 4000 unit which went on to be used in the Lancer Evo. That meant 150bhp and about seven seconds to 60. The Starion was made from 1982-1990, and in 1985 a wide-body variant was introduced, and a 2.6-litre turbocharged engine; these didn't hit the UK until 1989 though. That 2.6-litre engine was one of the largest four-cylinder units available at the time, beaten, most notably, by Porsche's 2600cc unit in the 944. The wide-bodied Starions have different suspension, axle and diff. All

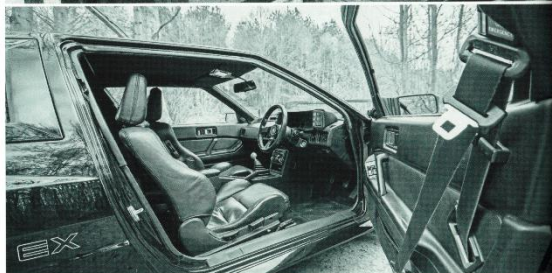
of this grossy, under-bonnet talk shouldn't detract from the main reason to buy a Starion today (if you can find one); they're the epitome of coupé, of '80s styling, of proper, hairy, arse-out driving style.

Mitsubishi had aimed at the US market with its chunky coupé, but emissions requirements meant that the bigger-engined car still packed only modest power, with a peak of just 197bhp. But the 11H turbo was easily fiddled with and the delight of RWD, LSD and a general robustness meant that the Starion performed well in motor sport, Group A and Group N, in particular. A Starion finished second in the 1988 British Rally Championship and when judged by modern standards the Starion feels laggy and baggy to drive fast, it's best appreciated as a grand tourer; a waffer, something to enjoy for its looks and rarity.

In period the Starion was admired, even if some initially viewed it with suspicion. When Roger Bell took an early car up to 18,000 miles over a year for Jost Lowe, he wrote: "First impressions of the blown Mitsubishi were that it was a capable performance car with an excellent drivetrain, crisp handling (achieved by sacrificing ride comfort) and the sort of thoughtful detailing and equipment we've come to expect from the Japanese. But twelve-and-a-half grand? Surely not. Ten perhaps, maybe 11, but never over 12. There were too many shortcomings, or so it seemed at the time."

Living with the car, commuting and long-hauling in it, I began to appreciate certain qualities that were not at first apparent. It is often the way. Now, six months on I see the Starion in a different light. After reading the editor's Porsche report, I regard it not so much as an expensive Japanese coupé but as a cut-price 944. Considering that the 944 costs over 24000 more, probably 15000 after loading it with such essential extras as a second door mirror, it's surprising just how much the two cars have in common.

PROFILE: MITSUBISHI STARION



102 CLASSIC. RETRO. MODERN.

CLASSICRETROMODERN.COM 103



Fig. 8A & 8B: spreads from the March 2023 issue of *Classic.Retro.Modern* (pp. 102-103) and June 2023 issue of *Classic & Sports Car* (pp. 134-135), both featuring Mitsubishi Starions.

Thanks to overlaps in magazine audiences, it is not uncommon to see identical choices of vehicles in different magazines at a similar time. With ever-changing trends in the enthusiast market, as well as some coincidences in thinking between writers, a specific model can suddenly peak in popularity in different magazines for a few months. Both *Classic.Retro.Modern* and *Classic & Sports Car* feature Mitsubishi Starions as part of a retrospective ('Horse Play', March 2023, pp. 100-105) and comparison test ('The Forbidden Z', June 2023, pp. 132-139) respectively. This is in spite of both magazines being aimed at two different ends of the market, though interesting, neither use the vehicle as part of their respective issues' main stories.

## SECONDARY CONTENT

For brevity, “secondary content” in this regard covers typical magazine mainstays like news articles, interviews, columns and smaller stories – the bulk of what makes up a classic car magazine outside of road testing.

Any piece of content worthy of being published should be able to hook a reader with a great story or something interesting, continue to hold that attention throughout, and end with a satisfying conclusion that culminates in the reader being entertained and educated. Magazine readers, especially classic car magazine readers, are “more educated than the general public” on the topic they are reading about (Sumner & Miller, 2013, p. 12), and so finding stories that will both interest and entertain this audience is required.



Fig. 9A: a spread from ‘Ignition’, the news section in the April 2023 issue of *Classic.Retro.Modern* (pp. 12-13).

News sections in all of these publications are often very similar, focusing on topics that are important within their respective niches. There are some publications, such

as *Classic Car Weekly*, that act as a hybrid of magazine and newspaper. None of these publications are, so their news content is fairly typical across the board, with some deviation in terms of theme. *Classic.Retro.Modern* (see **Fig. 9A**) and *Classics Monthly* have a heavier emphasis on issues that will affect less well-off enthusiasts like the cost of living, as well as small-scale shows and events that fit in with its demographic, while *Octane*, *Classic Cars* and *Classic & Sports Car* often cover prestige shows, racing events and auction results – something much more befitting of their wealthier target audiences. This does not mean that these magazines do not feature similar content; they do, most often in areas like political policies (e.g. ULEZ and electrification).

Columns are a regular feature of all these publications, generally appearing within the first quarter of a magazine. Seeing as most columns are dedicated to one person’s opinion, worldview, or experiences, it is important to make sure the columnists have ideas and stories that, to quote Sumner and Miller, “move, alarm, outrage, delight or inspire readers” (2013, p. 11). *Classic & Sports Car*, *Octane* and *Classic Cars* have the influence and budgets to attract celebrities of the classic car scene such as Quentin Wilson and Derek Bell. *Classic.Retro.Modern* has a mix of sector celebrities and interesting contributors such as Sarah Crabtree and Ben Hooper, while *Classics Monthly* often has magazine industry veterans like Phil White to fall upon.



Fig. 10A: a spread from the 'Buying Guide' section of the June 2023 issue of *Classic Cars* (pp. 86-87).

The guide format varies from magazine to magazine but can be condensed into several key points to cover. These generally relate to purchasing a specific make and model and include areas of the car to look out for (engine, gearbox, suspension, etc), owner testimonies and static studio shots of the vehicle being discussed (see **Photography**). But how a magazine carries these ideas out varies. *Classic Cars*' 'Buying Guide' format (see. **Fig. 10A**) is two spreads of simple, clear information, while *Classic.Retro.Modern's* 'Ultimate Guide' format is a long, multi-spread block that covers everything from a specific model like the Rover SD1 (March 2023, pp. 128-137) to a group, like tax-exempt cars (May/June 2023, pp. 128-139).

## UNIQUE FEATURES

Having a unique idea in terms of written content is a must in this niche, especially with plenty of archive material to play around with and helping to build a few USPs

for the magazine. These features most often there to play on a reader’s nostalgia, which makes sense considering the generally older demographics that these magazines possess.



Fig. 11A: a spread from ‘The List’, from the July 2023 issue of *Classic Cars* (pp. 8-9)

For example, the “reader’s car” article offers an excuse to create a USP, as the basic principles are adjustable. The format entails presenting stories about a particular example of a car, usually sent in by its owner, discussing history and some ownership with the vehicle. Almost all of these magazines include their own versions, with some publications like *Classics Monthly* heavily relying on this for content. But with owners playing a huge part in assisting with the creation of content for these magazines, *Classic Cars* attempts to give back with ‘The List’, a feature where readers are given the chance to drive a car that they have interest in, but do not own.

While having a few unique features makes for a great piece of brand image building, some magazines may rely too heavily on unique features. *Classics Monthly* attempts to inform and educate readers with ‘Brands & Badges’, and ‘The Truth About...’ (see **Fig. 12A**), which act as multi-page guides or stories about an automotive brand or model of car respectively. At the same time, it also has ‘Archive Images’, which goes through the press vaults of a car manufacturer to help tell a story. *Classic.Retro.Modern*’s similar ideas, such as ‘Old News’ and ‘Sheds Heaven’ (see **Fig. 12B**) are also prime examples of good ideas that might not be being used to their full potential.

## The TRUTH about... The Vauxhall Victor FD



**Having sung the praises of Vauxhall’s Viva in the May issue, Terry is staying with the Luton firm this issue and sticks his neck out by claiming that the FD Victor was the epitome of family car styling.** Report: Terry Burgess

I’ve only ever had three Vauxhalls, and one was an early FB of 1962. The others were a Senator Mk1 and a Cavalier Mk3. The FB was well-received in its day. The styling was, after the perceived excesses of the F-type Victor, absolutely right for the somewhat plain and minimalist fashion of the early 1980s. I can’t honestly say that I ever really liked it though, either the one I had or the model in general. I have always thought the original Victor with its extravagantly swage-lined flanks, wrap-around front and rear screens, coo-oo front pillars, exaggerated rear overhang and lavish chrome-plated detailing to be a bou-do-force in stylistic terms. I am quite aware of its deficiencies as regards durability and utility, but to achieve such a wonderfully well-proportioned and dramatic result with what was a rather small body was extraordinary.

The third generation Victor was the FC or ‘101’, so named, it was said, because it embodied 101 improvements over the FB. Without being any larger, it had considerably greater space within, using curved side window glass for the first time and having exaggeratedly full-width styling from front to rear and top to bottom. It is another Victor design which I have always liked.

The FD Victor introduced in 1987 was a very different car in every respect. It was certainly transatlantic in style (as was the original F-type) being very similar to contemporary Chevrolts, but it suffered nothing for being reduced in scale. Such was the beauty of the sculptured ‘coke-bottle’ shape that the FD needs no adornment, and the grey Victor 2000 shown at the model’s launch looked absolutely superb – these isn’t




a thing which I would change because the styling was perfect in every detail.

The interior was great too. The FD had the first truly new Vauxhall engine since the short-stroke E-series: 1500cc and 2262cc engines had been introduced in the early 1950s (the Viva 1000cc, 1150cc and 1256cc engines were all Opel Kadett-derived.) It looked exciting, being a semi-4 OHV unit with toothed belt drive for the camshaft; in 1600 and 2000 versions (1599cc and 1975cc) going 72bhp and 88bhp respectively.

Surprisingly, the basic specification continued to offer a bend-type front seat and a column-change three-speed transmission, although few were sold in that configuration. Most FDs came with individual front seats and the optional four-speed floor-change gearbox. Road test reports were generally positive, although the engines were disparaged as they lacked power having poor breathing at higher engine speeds, and they were none too smooth.

The renowned engine tuner and former VX 4900 H1 racing driver, Bill Bydenham, could remedy the power deficit problem with a reworked cylinder head, though.

Sadly Vauxhall hadn’t completely shaken off their reputation for prodigious rusting of the bodywork and the FD was really rather bad in that respect, with both the inner and outer front wings rusting badly, in addition to all of the usual rust spots in the sills and rear wheelarches. Another problem was the premature snapping of the toothed camshaft drive belts. However, this did not result in valves hitting pistons as the engines were a ‘valve-safe’ design. It was only days for toothed belts though and things did improve – the semi-4 Vauxhall engine had a long career and would be enlarged to 1750cc and 2279cc for the Victor FE. It was also used in the Bedford CF van and formed the basis for the twin-cam Lotus 1973cc unit fitted to the 1974 Elite 501, later enlarged to 2174cc for the Mk2 and also used in the Excel, Eclat and Eprift.

The FD suspension was a significant change from the old FC. It had double-wishbone coil-sprung front suspension and a coil-sprung rear axle on trailing arms with a Panhard rod. This promising design was found, in practice, to be less than perfect and some testers found the FD to be rather wallopy.

Whilst the Victor and Ventura FD models were true Vauxhalls, the blander FE models used an Opel Rekord floorpan. If only the engines had been smoother and more efficient in their performance and the bodywork had been better protected against rust, the FDs might have made a greater impression than they did. They had a three-year head start on the Corolla Mk3 and were arguably far better-looking than the Foros. Well, I certainly think so. The real test of a car body style is whether it looks better in its simplest form or with bright paintwork and adornments such as extra chrome, a vinyl roof and fancy wheels. To me, the most basic Victor FD looked just superb. There are some cars that, irrespective of their practicality or performance, are simply a pleasure to stare at. The Victor FD was ultimately a fairly average family car of its day, but I challenge you to name another medium-sized saloon which is such a treat for the eyes.



**FB**



**FB**



**FC**



**FE**





Fig. 12A & 12B: spreads from 'The Truth About...' (pp. 114-115) from the July 2023 issue of *Classics Monthly* and 'Sheds Heaven' (pp. 48-49) from the May/June 2023 issue of *Classic.Retro.Modern*.

To *Classics Monthly's* credit, the pieces themselves are well-written and intriguing stories filled with information that would heavily interest its reader base – it is perhaps a case of having one or two of these features with more effort put into them instead of several. *Classic.Retro.Modern's* unique features, however, fail to do the one job that they should, and that is hold a reader's attention – especially 'Sheds Heaven', and the miniscule amount of context related to every photo featured. This feature could be reduced to just one vehicle instead of eight, and one spread instead of two, creating an article that explores said vehicle in-depth, instead of featuring eight separate vehicles with little to no context. That way, it would allow *Classic.Retro.Modern* to gatekeep the information (Shoemaker, Vos, & Reese, 2009) rather than leading readers away from the magazine and towards other sources for more context, retaining a busy reader's attention for longer (Sumner & Miller, 2013, p. 11).

## CHAPTER 5 - DESIGN

### COVER

The cover of a magazine is one of the most important pieces of magazine design to get right, hence why it is its own separate point here. A magazine cover “principally carries information designed to persuade the potential reader to peruse or buy the magazine” (Foges, 1999, p. 25) – it is a make or a break element that can heavily influence a sale. It is an area that, as Foges notes, “art directors, editors and publishers treat with almost neurotic seriousness” (p. 19). It should be cohesive and recognisable to a reader. Uniformity is generally advised in this market and as such, a great cover template can make or break the sale of an issue.



Fig. 13A: the front cover of the May 2023 issue of *Classic & Sports Car* (p. 1).

All five publication cover design templates here take the form of figurative designs (Zappaterra, 2007, pp. 34-35), with a feature car or group of cars being the star attraction (Mann, 2016, pp. 92-97), as a model might in a fashion or lifestyle magazine. Features such as the masthead should be bold and prominently display the magazine's name, whether as a logo or as text. In terms of brand recognisability,

*Classic & Sports Car's* iconic masthead design, using a white box containing the magazine name, dateline and price, is the only solid block of a single colour, and this has been a magazine staple since its founding. The same goes for the magazine's logo, which has remained virtually unchanged since the November 1996 issue, and acts as an ambassador for the brand (Zappaterra, 2007, p. 44).

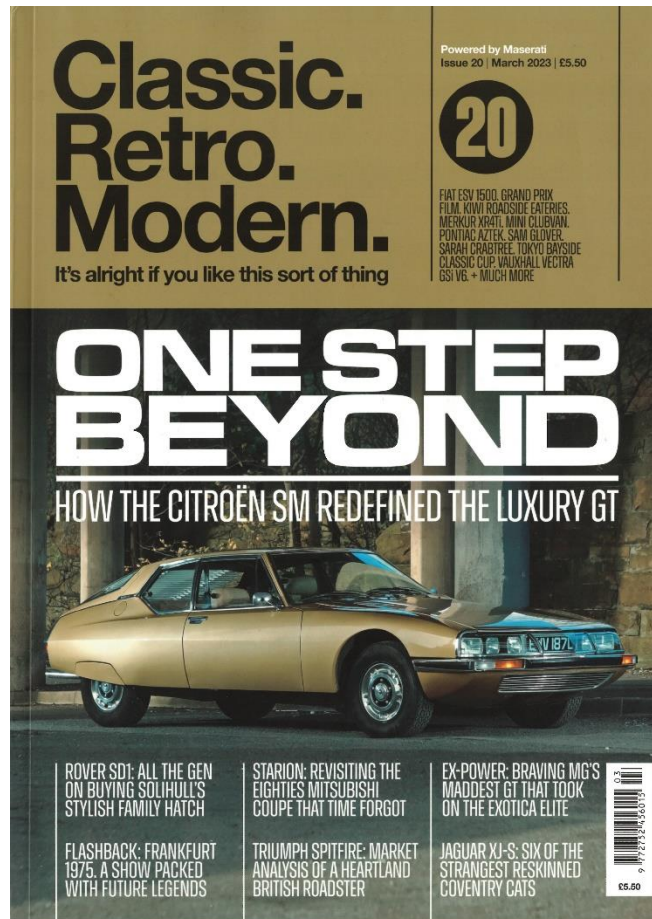


Fig. 14A: the front cover of the March 2023 issue of *Classic.Retro.Modern* (p. 1). Meanwhile, *Classic.Retro.Modern* cover design, justified by being “as at home on a coffee table as it is at a local cars and coffee event” on their about page (Motorworld Media, 2018), offsets the masthead to the top left, with the magazine’s name displayed in a clear, simple font on a large solid colour background. The design itself is stylish and contemporary, going for a semi-industrial, almost Bauhaus look which fits in with the retro appeal of the magazine. The comedic tagline of “*It’s alright if you like this sort of thing*” fits right in just below it, but this is where the good design seems to end. Supporting cover lines, a major feature on all of these covers, are strewn about the page in two areas – segmented stories at the bottom, and an ugly

paragraph next to the masthead that can be disorientating to read (Zappaterra, 2007, pp. 28-29).



Fig. 15A and 15B: the front covers of both the July 2023 issues of *Classic Cars* (p. 1) and *Classics Monthly* (p. 1).

As a cover needs to convey what a magazine contains, *Classic Cars* magazine covers (see **Fig. 15A**) make the contents of the magazine clear by featuring as many photos of vehicles featured on the cover as possible. The June 2023 issue, which features a star article by Quentin Wilson on numerous different vehicles (pp. 44-59), features a total of 15 vehicles on the front cover, the most of this group. On average though, each cover features between seven and eleven cars. Notably, there is a lack of solid colour blocks to break up the cover, with the cover photo acting as a background. The masthead works with this by using an Impact-style font that is distinctive, bold and stands out against the background in white and red.

*Classic Monthly* uses a similar layout (see **Fig. 15B**), but its design comes across as clunky, due to the use of brightly-coloured boxes to break up its design and make stories more prominent, which cheapens the magazine's look. While this move may be deliberate, and similar to other hobbyist magazines like *Practical Classics* that use vibrant, eye-catching designs in this manner, using more than one font and using

different thicknesses of fonts could really help in emphasising stories, rather than sticking with Impact in either white or yellow.



Fig. 16A: the front cover of the June 2023 issue of *Octane* (p. 1).

Like *Classic.Retro.Modern*, *Octane* features one single shot on its covers – a striking visual of the main story that acts more like an art piece than a cover photo, in line with its demographic. The amount of text is kept to a minimum; cover lines are kept to the top and bottom of the page in a similar position to *Classic & Sports Car*, with only a box surrounding cover lines at the bottom as the only geometrical shape bar the barcode.

An often-overlooked aspect of cover design is the spine, which not only can be used to reinforce a brand (Zappaterra, 2007, pp. 46-47), but can also assist collectors when looking for a particular issue on bookshelves. *Classic & Sports Car*, *Classics Cars* and *Octane* make great use of their spines by listing the title, dateline and some of the cars featured inside, making it easy for a reader to find without having to remove the issue from a shelf, and establish a brand that encourages regular purchasing

(Foges, 1999, p. 38). *Classic.Retro.Modern*, meanwhile, heavily underutilises its spine, featuring just the name of the magazine and the issue number. I would recommend that *Classic.Retro.Modern* begins implementing a system similar to the three previous publications, as it is a simple change that can make a positive difference for its readers. *Classics Monthly* currently is the only magazine here to not feature a solid spine as issues are stapled, not glued. This could change in the future, and if it does, using a spine to present details of magazine content is, as the research suggests, a great addition.

## COLOUR

The use of colour, especially brighter shades, is intended to catch the eye of a reader. Magazine designer Roger Black notes that, in magazines, there are three essential colours when creating magazines – white for a background, black for text and red for accents (Zappaterra, 2007, p. 67). Of course, if all magazines were this scheme, then design language would be repetitive across all magazines, and so, to change things up, most simply exchange red for a different colour.





Fig. 17A and 17B: the contents spreads of the July 2023 issue of *Classic & Sports Car* (pp. 10-11) and June 2023 issue of *Classic Cars* (pp. 4-5).

Both *Classic & Sports Car* and *Classic Cars* do this, going for three main colours: white, black and green in the former and white, black and red in the latter. The use of red is more prominently recognised by magazine designers due to its vibrancy, and its recognition as an exciting accent colour (2007, p. 67). Interestingly however, green is not a popular colour to use in colour psychology for magazine design. Even Yolanda Zappaterra points it out herself, noting that “green logos... don’t sell” (p. 29) but at the same time, it is a pleasant colour, associated with positivity and wealth (p. 30). A theory is that *Classic & Sports Car* chose to use green due to British Racing Green’s long history as a motorsport colour, which fits in with the magazine’s themes, and is an understandable choice in this scenario.



Fig. 18A: the contents spread from the May 2023 issue of *Classics Monthly* (pp. 4-5).

*Classics Monthly* uses four main colours to create a vibrant scheme, incorporating a mix of white, black, red and yellow. This makes it very eye-catching on store shelves, especially combined with the multitude of other elements on the front cover. The white, black and red combination works well, as proven by *Classic Cars* and chief rival *Practical Classics*, but yellow as a quaternary colour is unusual, as it can be seen as an overpowering colour if used incorrectly (Zappaterra, 2007, p. 30).




## CONTENTS


128



122



104



94



84



**FEATURES**

**20 YEARS OF OCTANE!**  
Page 20  
All the highlights in our picture special

**ULTIMATE FERRARI 250 GTO**  
Page 72  
Winning take of the last of Ferrari's greatest

**JAGUAR XK120 SPECIALS**  
Page 94  
Meet the stars of the 1952 Belgian Auto Salon

**LANCIA HYENA**  
Page 94  
How exotic bodywork transformed a legend

**MERCEDES-BENZ 300 SL'S**  
Page 104  
Ice-racing in Stuttgart's own O'Shea homage

**CISITALIA S08 COUPE**  
Page 112  
Fascinating revival of Ford's lost sports car

**THE OCTANE INTERVIEW**  
Page 122  
Morgan designer Matthew Humphries

**SPENCER WILKS' LAND ROVER**  
Page 128  
Roving the wilds of Scotland in a special SIIA

9

## CONTENTS

34



152



146



154



98



162



180



**REGULARS**

**EVENTS & NEWS**  
Page 34  
The month in pictures: busy dates; MG's electric future nods to its sporting past

**GEARBOX**  
Page 56  
Chris Bucknall, fund-raising trackday organiser

**COLUMNS**  
Page 59  
Car talk and more with Jay Leno, Derek Bell, Stephen Bayley and Robert Coucher

**LETTERS**  
Page 67  
Mucky novice fun with the VSCC

**OCTANE CARS**  
Page 138  
BMW Convertible comes back better than new

**OVERDRIVE**  
Page 146  
Super rare Abarth 750 Zagato; Maturò Stradale

**GONE BUT NOT FORGOTTEN**  
Page 150  
Betty Hais, unsung racer and rally driver

**ICON**  
Page 152  
Bowler hat, 'headgear of Chaplin and Churchill

**CHRONO**  
Page 154  
Meet a British horological wunderkind

**GEAR, BOOKS, MODELS**  
Page 158  
If you love cars you'll love all this

**THE MARKET**  
Page 167  
Sold and selling: how to buy a Matis Bagheera

**AUTOBIOGRAPHY**  
Page 236  
Artist and automobilist Renée Fernandes

10

Fig. 19A: the contents spread from the July 2023 issue of *Octane* (pp. 9-10).

Octane, meanwhile, makes heavy use of black and white as bold, impressive colours, very rarely resorting to using the accent colour outside of small details. Said accent colour changes frequently depending on the section of the magazine, though the most frequently used colour is a light blue. This colour choice is an interesting one, with blue representing a “peaceful and tranquil” colour, opposing the use of black and white to create striking contrasts, but one that can also be “cold and depressing” if used poorly (Zappaterra, 2007, p. 30). The accent colour appears very little throughout, making Octane more of a two-colour magazine than one with three.



Fig. 20A: the contents spread from the April 2023 issue of *Classic.Retro.Modern* (pp. 4-5).

Unlike the other magazines, which feature a standard colour chart of a few basic colours, *Classic.Retro.Modern* uses black, white and an accent colour derived from the magazine's main feature car. The March 2023 issue, for example, has brown as its accent colour, derived from the Citroen SM featured in 'Sa Majesté' (pp. 70-79). While the combination does not work as well if the accent colour is not vibrant and bright, it is a unique idea. To that end, maybe this is why the April 2023 issue uses pink, derived from a filter used over photographs of a black Mazda RX-7 in its feature article (pp. 82-91) (see **fig. 20A**), instead of the car itself.

## PAGE LAYOUT

Having a cohesive page layout for all the different types of content in a magazine is an important element of magazine design. If pages are incohesive and unreadable, then investing time and effort into filling those pages with interesting content is irrelevant, hence why most magazines will use a template. However, playing around

with layouts, as Zappaterra points out in relation to Roger Black's ten rules of design, is a good way of keeping eyes on a magazine for longer (Zappaterra, 2007, p. 67) by surprising and exciting the reader (Foges, 1999, p. 82).



Fig. 21A: a spread from the July 2023 issue of *Classic Cars* (pp. 24-25), showcasing a typical classic car magazine layout example.

Most magazines featured here opt for a three-column layout per page, allowing for six columns across a spread. This allows for a solid degree of flexibility when it comes to playing around with laying out text and images. However, some, like *Classic Cars* and *Octane*, alternate between two and three for emphasis reasons, which can work, if done in a way that does not look clumsy and leave too much white space, which can be distracting to readers (Zappaterra, 2007, p. 78) if not being used in an impactful way. *Classic Cars*, for example, uses two columns during pieces like their road tests (see Fig. 4A), which works a majority of the time.

### MARQUES & MODELS PALMER'S BMC



The Varitone 28 Magnette had a bigger rear window - cut out by hand at Abingdon!

the Home Counties. 'I'm flat out chum!' exclaims the driver as he frantically sounds the bell. The Met used 690s until 1963, four years after their demise, and one London squad car is believed to survive. It is currently undergoing restoration.

Fullinider production ceased in 1957 after 5152 units, and when BMC announced its hair that August, it represented an important development in Riley's history. The Fullinider's 2.5-litre engine meant a link with their previous traditions despite the car's ties with the Wolseley. By contrast, the new Two Point Six was essentially the 690 Series III with a new counter, flashing indicators, an array of dual-tone paint finishes and a slightly more powerful C-Series engine. A few devotees of the diamond badge were rumored to have kept on their flat hats in rage on seeing the advertisements for the Two Point Six.

At £1417.75, the Riley was not cheap, and Motor Sport regarded the steering and road holding as 'not in keeping with its very considerable performance.' However, they also thought it 'a well-appointed car which is

notable for powerful brakes, excellent lamps and a gear change as pleasing as it is unusual.' Autopart neatly summarised the Two Point Six as 'just the sort of machine the successful businessman would like to see in front of his house.' BMC promoted the Riley as a sports saloon, but its essential qualities were a more potent 690 rather than an alternative to the Jaguar 2.4 Mk1. Today, some blue diamond enthusiasts regard the Two Point Six as a better car than the Pathfinder.

December of 1958 marked the beginning of the end of the Palmer saloons when the Pininfarina-styled 1500 replaced the 1500. Riley Two Point Six production ceased in May after just 2000 units, and two months later, the

3-litre 699 succeeded the 690. The most controversial development occurred three months earlier when BMC discontinued the 28 Magnette in favour of the Magnette Mk3. As we previously wrote in *Classics Monthly*, the MG Farina was an entirely different form of a machine from the 2-Series, and many enthusiasts were unimpressed.

As the 1960s progressed, Palmer's departure from BMC indeed proved costly. The decade saw the Corporation fail to create an MG rival to the Alfa Romeo Giulio or the Lotus Cortina. Nor did they produce a Riley alternative to the BMW 1500/1800 Neue Klasse, Land Rover, Rover P6 or Triumph 2000.

Gerald Palmer died in 1999, and today the Fullinider, 6990

and Two Point Six are rightly celebrated as some of their generation's most attractive large British saloons. The 466 and 1500 represented a fascinating combination of Italian verve for an East-Of-England market, while the 2A and 2B embody so well the qualities highlighted in that *Motorweek* (illustrated) report. To quote Mr McCall's wise words: 'If you like fine machinery and a car that handles like a low-carrot Ferrari with the quality of a Tiffany diamond, then you will get a real kick out of the MG Magnette!'

**With thanks to: Jeffrey Bridges, Bernie Peal and the Wolseley Register - check out the club's website at [www.wolseleyregister.co.uk](http://www.wolseleyregister.co.uk)**

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3 Bays (1800x1100x400 mm)	ALTA	£119.99	£136.99	£149.99	£171.99
3 Bays (1800x1100x400 mm) + 8 Really Useful Boxes	ALTA	£169.99	£192.99	£209.99	£239.99
3 Bays (1800x1100x400 mm)	ALTA	£169.99	£192.99	£209.99	£239.99
4 Bays (1800x1100x400 mm)	ALTA	£199.99	£227.99	£249.99	£283.99

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Fig. 22A: a spread from the May 2023 issue of *Classics Monthly* (pp. 114-115), featuring image placement that covers the header.

*Classics Monthly* often resorts to a four-column per page layout, and it is the only publication to do so. In an attempt to cram in as many components as possible, some of them are haphazardly plastered on top of others, such as photos going over the top of page titles (see. **Fig. 22A**), inconsistent spacing between elements on the same page and advertisements for companies sponsoring articles covering up the page numbers at the bottom of the road test sections.

## TEXT

Placing any form of copy (headlines, standfirsts, body, etc) of a feature or article into a magazine spread is not a simple case of copying and pasting the unformatted text over. The way that text is presented is important: Foges refers to text as the “backbone” of a magazine, and so making text “palatable through judicious use of type and image” is vital (Foges, 1999, p. 98). Any text presented should be made as easy to read as possible, especially with many classic car magazines catering for

older readers, who generally have poorer eyesight (Zappaterra, 2007, pp. 28-29) than a younger target audience might.

## HURST PARK Classic Cars

A family business founded in 1938



**JAGUAR E-TYPE SERIES 3 V12 ROADSTER 1974:** Azure Blue with Chromium hide interior. Navy Blue metal upholstery. Chromium wire wheels. Automatic gearbox. Original Handbook Park with Transport to Service booklet and subsequent service invoices. MOT's going back many years. 80,000 miles from new. Considerable recent expenditure with well-respected local specialists. **£129,995**



**JAGUAR E-TYPE SERIES 3 V12 ROADSTER 1974:** Signal Red with Black hide interior and red piping to the seats. Black soft-top. Chromium wire wheels. Automatic gearbox. 2L carburettor conversion. However that Sport Machine. A 5-speed gearbox. All original parts and complete which has benefited from original UK supplied, original gearbox and complete which has benefited from much expenditure over recent years to produce a superb driving machine. **£129,995**



**ALVIS TD 21 DROPHEAD COUPE BY PARK WARD 1961:** Cherry Red with Beige hide interior. Matching soft-top and hood cover. Chromium wire wheels. Automatic gearbox. Electric 2+2. Handmade conversion. Comprehensive body of restoration some years ago. Super quality of fit on easy to drive, classic, in-hand, coach-built 4-seater four. **£27,500**



**MERCEDES-BENZ SL320 (R129) 1998:** Dark Blue with Sand hide interior. Dark blue hand-made soft-top with 4-spoke alloy wheels. Four seats. Two doors. 73,000 miles only from new. Air conditioning, electric heated seats and other local refinements. **Available shortly**



**LOTUS ELAN S3 DROPHEAD 1967:** Lotus Yellow with Black interior and soft-top. Silver steel wheels. Electric windows. Two owners since 1978. Restored in 1980/91 and maintained to an extremely high standard since having been used regularly. Well documented history. Previous Goodwood exhibit. **£37,995**



**LANCIA FULVIA 1.5 S RALLYE COUPÉ SERIES 1 1976:** Mediterranean Blue with cream interior, black carpet. Chrome wheel trim and hub caps. Wooden steering wheel. A most unusual Right Hand Drive example essential care in South Africa. Very smart condition throughout. **£23,500**



**JAGUAR XK R 4.2 Lit SUPERCHARGED COUPÉ WITH UPGRADES 2007:** Special order in Silver Red with Warm Charcoal hide interior. 17 alloy wheels. Two owners. 20,000 miles only from new. Paramount Performance 5/2 pulley exhaust & suspension upgrade when new (200 BHP). An outstanding collector's car for the future. **£27,500**



**JAGUAR XJS 3.2iR (X-308) 1998:** Madeira Red with Cashmere hide interior. Alloy wheels. Burr walnut wood trim. Two owners. 27,000 miles only from new. Substantial service history. Air conditioning and other local refinements. **Available shortly**



**MG MIDGET MK 2 1966:** Tartan Red with Black interior and white piping to the seats. Black soft-top and weather equipment. Wire wheels. Extensively restored some years ago. Lovely example from the classic Midget production period. **£13,995**

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Fig. 23A: An advertisement for a car dealership next to a regular page in the *Classic Cars* (June 2023, pp. 106-107), comparing font size in the dealer advertisement to a regular article.

Fortunately, none of the magazines analysed here have any major issues in terms of readability for their own content, in terms of fonts or sizing of text. A few advertisements feature small text (see Fig. 23A), but the majority of text published by the magazines themselves is clear and easy to read, using simple serif fonts in contrasting colours with the background (Zappaterra, 2007, pp. 128-130).

The only real examples of poor readability come from *Classics Monthly*. Using ragged right alignment, one of the most-popular text justification formats due to being easy to read (pp. 78-79), occasionally results in widowed and orphaned lines which make pages look untidy and unkept. This mostly comes down to the publication using four columns instead of three and could be easily fixed by a sub-

ADS ON TEST



A rare car, with a sympathetic and low-mileage.



Interior barely worn, only gear lever shows use.



Sub-40,000 miles based up by lots of service history.

### 2004 BMW M3 CSL £134,950

It's rare, but can it really be worth this much? Perhaps when it has an unusual manual gearbox conversion, says Richard Gunn

**A** mere 422 of these lightweight racing-inspired M3s were produced, so this car is a bit special. But even more so, as flawed semi-automatic SMG-II gearbox has been replaced by a full six-speed manual conversion. The price may be high, but this is a superb low-mileage, high-quality example.

With a genuine sub-40,000 miles and a paperwork file that testifies to much care and attention over the years, this BMW is barely run-in. It includes all the original owners' books, in the correct CSL wallet, a fully stamped service book, a large file of invoices and MOT certificates, confirming its mileage – and a wooden box containing the original gearbox.

It drives absolutely superbly – docile when it needs to be, with massive reserves of power when required. The gearbox conversion makes it much better at lower speeds and in stop/start traffic than its factory-spec siblings. The conversion was a professional one, accompanied by a differential upgrade; there's some catchiness to the short-throw lever.

That very dark metallic green finish is not actually paint – it's a wrap. A previous owner was a collector of green cars, so had the silver-grey body professionally shrouded. It's been done very well, so well, in fact, that it's difficult to tell it's not paint. There are virtually no areas where the wrap has started to wear, crease, tear or get tatty – in fact, all we could find is a small chip below the CSL-branded deadplate in the driver's door-shut. We're told that the original paint is immaculate underneath. We can definitely confirm that the M Sport 19in alloy wheels are in a similar state of order, and their Michelin Pilot Sport low-profile tyres, date-stamped 2004, have plenty of life left.

The cabin is resolutely grey, with the few splashes of colour being the gauge needles and M Sport stitching on the steering wheel. The seats are Amaretto suede and reflect cloth; suede, of course, marks easily, but while there is some very minor wear to the driver's seat bolsters, there is remarkably little from issues.

The carbon-fibre innies are fine, with the limited edition plaque – confirming UK production of just 422 units – all present and correct just in front of the handbrake, albeit with some superficial scratching up close. The boot looks like it's never even carried anything, and has

**2004 BMW M3 CSL**  
Price £134,950 Contact Classic Cars, 1 Hot, Norfolk, 01703 77550 [info@classiccars.com](mailto:info@classiccars.com)  
Engine 3746cc six-cylinder, electric fuel injection Power 258hp @ 7000rpm  
Torque 178lb ft @ 4950rpm Top Speed 160mph 4.2sec Length 4492mm Width 1782mm

**CHOOSE YOUR BMW M3 M3**  
 ▶ Last model (1/2003) of the new M3 was available as a coupe only, fitted with a 52-litre straight six and choice of manual or SMG-II semi-automatic gearboxes.  
 ▶ Convertible version to come in 2004.  
 ▶ Ten M3 CSL Track/Show cars were built in 2001 to homologate the car for racing, featuring a 4.0-litre V8 and six-speed semi-automatic gearbox.  
 ▶ UK's highest specification coupe-only CSL is 2004 with SMG-II gearbox and 510bhp.  
 ▶ M3 CSL featuring suspension elements from the CSL in the standard specification, including the option of a conventional five-speed manual gearbox, is released in 2005. All models discontinued in 2007.

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editor in minutes. Fixing these formatting issues is an easy recommendation to make to improve the quality of the final product.

DRIVEN: MAZDA RX-7

T

here is much to be said for perseverance, and also for knowing when to stop. Everybody and their dog took out an option on Felix Wankel's 'rotary' engine patent way back when, from AMC to Mercedes-Benz via Citroën and, of course, NSU. Except the revolution never happened. It didn't take over the world. Rightly or wrongly, instead it became a byword for reliability. Only Mazda staged the course, and how. It had made its 200,000th rotary-engined vehicle as early as 1971. Those enterprising chaps in Toyo Kogyo stuffed them into everything from luxury saloons to buses. Nothing was off limits.

Mazda was evangelical about rotaries to the point that it came close to eliminating all regular piston engines from the range, a move that almost spelled its demise following the Fuel Crisis in 1973. The point is, the marque persisted while the rest of the world moved on, and it only called time on rotaries in road cars in 2012.

Even then, it didn't entirely give up on the concept, continuing to produce units for motor racing applications. More recently it announced that rotaries would be making a mainstream comeback, albeit with the engine acting as a range extender for hybrids rather than powering the wheels.

Which by way of a non-existent segue brings us to Tunbridge Wells during early morning rush hour. This isn't one of those cleansing, meditative, soul-settling moments. It's perpetual purgatory. Hopes are sinking faster than a submarine as we move along at the pace of a funeral cortege. If nothing else, it gives us time to take in our surroundings. This largely comprises a lot of tactile leather and four plastic. That, and to ponder how this third-generation RX-7 and the cars that bore it almost didn't happen. Yes, the Mazda with which the rotary engine is most commonly associated the world over was something of a slow burn project.

Akio Uchiyama isn't a name that is talked up in newstrack tones in Europe, but he was a player all the same. What in time became the RX-7 was largely his initiative, after all. In the late 1960s he devised a rotary-engined two-seater codenamed XG20A (later RS-X). He was making headway, too, only for the Fuel Crisis to come along. Demand for cars, especially those with relatively poor mpg, inevitably took a tumble. Like so many of his colleagues, Uchiyama found himself being co-opted into helping clear Japan's massive backlog of unsold Mazdas. It would probably have ended there but for one thing: he found an ally on the board.

Shinpei Hanaoka had worked in the USA as a banker prior to returning to his homeland. He had witnessed first-hand how Nissan had pulled the rug from underneath complacent European sports car brands with the Datsun 240Z. He reasoned that a car of its own would help generate valuable dollars and thus help turnaround Mazda's flagging fortunes. He managed to talk the rest of the suits into backing this vision and thus Project X805 was born. Chief designer Sumio Mochizuki, ably assisted by Uchiyama, concentrated on the chassis design, while Kenichi Yamamoto oversaw development of the existing 13A engine.

Following protracted discussion over where it should sit - front or middle - the front won the toss, the rakish coupé outline being a Matsushiro Maeda and Yasuji Yamamoto co-production. To cut a long story short by missing out lots of pertinent information, X805 became RX-7 in early 1971, with production up and running in March of the following year. A month later, the first small trickle reached the US. It soon became a flood: by the end of 1979, 140,000 cars had been made, the majority heading Stateside. A series of developments followed thereafter, not least the adoption of the six-port version of the 13B rotary (for the US only), plus suspension tweaks which polished the handling.

Nearly half a million cars were shifted before the first-generation RX-7 was pensioned off in 1985 (although sales continued into the following year). Its replacement was a different animal, and one born of 'Operation Feedback'. In the early 1980s, Uchiyama headed to the USA and remained there for three months during which time he interviewed existing RX-7 owners; what



DRIVEN: MAZDA RX-7

"MAZDA WAS EVANGELICAL ABOUT ROTARIES TO THE POINT THAT IT CAME CLOSE TO ELIMINATING ALL REGULAR PISTON ENGINES FROM THE RANGE, A MOVE THAT ALMOST SPILLED THE BEAN. FOLLOWING THE FUEL CRISIS IN 1973"

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40



Fig. 24A & 24B: a spread from 'Rotorarmed' in the April 2023 issue (pp. 84-85), and 'Horse Play' in the March 2023 issue (pp. 104-105), of *Classic.Retro.Modern*.

However, that does not mean that there are not minor issues with formatting and presentation. *Classic.Retro.Modern* has the biggest of these issues. It features some article titles and subheadings that, thanks to excessively styled fonts, can be hard to read, especially when used with certain colours. The bubble-like font used for the headline and other text in the 'Rotorarmed' article (April 2023, pp. 82-91) would be fine to read, if not for the white text being used in conjunction with a pink filter that makes it a struggle just to observe the article's name. Similarly, 'Horse Play' (March 2023, pp. 100-105) features a retro LCD-style font alongside several other 1980s-style fonts that cannot show certain characters, leading to weird formatting issues with lower-case and upper-case letters. Both of these articles also go against Roger Black's ten rules of design (Zappaterra, 2007, p. 67), which insist on using just one or two typefaces that work well together to avoid "a free-for-all of multiple fonts".

## PHOTOGRAPHY

Magazines are an inherently visual format, reliant on a mix of text and imagery to get a message across to readers (Zappaterra, 2007, p. 67). Jeremy Leslie continues on this point in his book *Issues: New Magazine Design*, noting that those two elements need to be “combined in different ways to create the unique feel and look of a publication” (2000, p. 148). Photographing people and cars, however, are very different things, as noted by James Mann in the introduction to his book, *How To Photograph Cars* (2016, pp. 9-11).



Fig. 25A: the feature shot used by *Classic & Sports Car* for its May 2023 feature article, ‘The Game Changers’ (pp. 88-89)

Comparing the magazines, it is very easy to see how both a magazine’s budget and target demographic affect the sort of shots used, though more the former than the latter. For the most-striking photos, *Classic & Sports Car* and *Classic Cars* regularly use tracking shots (see **fig. 7A**), in which the car is photographed while moving from another vehicle (Mann, 2016, pp. 59-65). *Classics Monthly*, perhaps due to a limited budget or timescale when doing shoots, goes for panning and 3/4 panning shots (pp.



51-55), which can achieve a similar effect, but without needing a larger crew, a camera vehicle and safety equipment on-location. *Octane*, meanwhile, uses a mix of studio (pp. 112-121) and tracking shots, with the studio shots being heavily stylised and used to make striking primary photos when needed. Especially with *Octane*'s aims to appeal to a wealthier demographic which enjoys stylish visuals, this is a must.

To its credit, *Classic.Retro.Modern* does punch above its weight, regularly featuring at least one tracking shot per road test (see **Fig. 24A**) in conjunction with detail shots (Mann, 2016, pp. 41-49) and static shots in interesting locations. This, however, is to be expected, based upon the magazine's heavy lean towards visuals (Motorworld Media, 2018), and having none would seem unusual. On top of this, outside of road tests, the magazine relies heavily on stock images, or images scanned from older magazines and press material.

Due to its emphasis on maintenance and restoration, *Classics Monthly* features a lot of restoration photographs, which require the capture of information clearly for a reader who might be interested – it is a case of substance over style (Mann, 2016, pp. 122-123).

However, just gathering images and inserting them into a layout is not enough. Like inserting text, most images will receive some sort of manipulation and alteration, ranging from enhancing lighting to adding or removing background details such as trees and signposts within post-production (pp. 132-136). Often, this is done fairly seamlessly, leaving a reader none the wiser that an alteration has taken place – try examining a front cover of *Classic Cars* and see how many times details like trees are added in or removed, for example. However, the misuse of poorly edited images can ruin the look of a magazine, making it feel disingenuous.

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## ROOTES RARITIES



The Seeds family from Northern Ireland are big Rootes fans, and Andy Starkey gets to inspect two of their rarer models – an H120 Rapier and an Avenger GT, both wearing Sunbeam badges.



**A**most all families in the UK rely on a car to get them wherever they need to go. Taking kids to school, commuting to work, holidays, shopping – in fact pretty much everything that needs doing away from home, the family car (or cars) is called into action. I say cars in the plural because most modern families will have more than one. Gone are the days when you'd plead with one of your parents for the keys to the family pride and joy so you could take your turn behind the wheel. These days every member of the household that becomes eligible to drive seems

to have their own set of wheels cluttering up the drive. One big problem here is that when the family not only depends on their cars for daily duties but also has something of an obsession with them, space can become a bit of an issue. One family that springs to mind in the region is the Seeds family, two of whose cars are featured here. As is clear from the pictures, the Seeds from just outside Belfast do like a nice car, and one manufacturer in particular features particularly highly – the Rootes Group.

David Seeds is the head of the household and bears pretty much all of the responsibility for the ever-expanding collection of Hillman, Sunbeams and Chryslers that are secreted in his workshop unit at home. However, this is not a recent obsession. David's childhood was filled with memories of all sorts of vehicles of all makes and models, but the Rootes Group was at the forefront. This was possible because some members of the Seeds clan worked for AS Baird, the Rootes dealer in Belfast, of which one of the silencers was the eminent and highly successful rally driver of the 1970s and 1980s, Robin Eye

Mausnell. It just so happened that his favoured mounts were Imps initially and then later Avengers. This undoubtedly is where David caught the infectious motorsport interest. It also helps, no doubt, that David's dad drove Hunters and Minies, then later Avengers. David's brother was a Hunter fan, but, for David it was the Avenger that held the most appeal, due in part to its motorsport prowess. This is probably why, among the Seeds family fleet of Rapiers, Imps and Silencers, David has three GT Avengers and two Avenger Tigres. It is one of those GTs that you see on these pages.



Fig. 26A and 26B: the front cover of the June 2023 issue of *Classics Monthly*, along with the original image inside the feature it corresponds with (pp. 36-37).

The July 2023 issue of *Classics Monthly*, for example, features a Sunbeam Rapier coupe on a digitally altered background as the main cover image (see above). In this case, the trading estate the photograph was taken at has been entirely replaced with a field, which becomes clear when viewing the article it relates to (pp. 36-41). Even without viewing the original image however, it is clear that the image manipulation is poor thanks to the cover shot looking extremely unrealistic. The drop shadow, blurring of the rear of the car and angle of the photograph are giveaways to this. While a little bit of enhancement is recommended, something like replacing the entire backdrop of images is something that the research would advise *Classics Monthly* against continuing to do.

## CHAPTER 6 - CONCLUSIONS

It has been interesting to see how just five magazines, out of the many more on the UK market, have attempted to meet criteria for demographics, content and design with different methods and ideas. Certainly, any new magazines entering the field would have to plan out every aspect of its launch and continued development very carefully to have a chance against such strong competition, especially when said competition can evolve quickly if it needs to, such as *Classics Monthly* adding a road test section in within the time frame of the three issues examined.

There is plenty of overlap in terms of ideas, whether in demographic, content or design. As such, each magazine tries something different, or unique, or special, to attempt to meet its ideal demographic, both in terms of attracting an audience and advertisers, and to create what staff feel is the ideal motoring publication for both.

Each of the following sub-chapters feature a quick overall conclusion, followed by points made within the analysis which could be used to improve upon the publication it is referring to.

### CLASSIC & SPORTS CAR

From 1982 until 2023, *Classic & Sports Car* has had over 40 years of development to become both a strong seller in the UK and abroad (Majid, 2023). There is little to question about the approach that the magazine's staff is taking to make its product a success in both digital and print formats. The amount of advertising, alongside well-researched and intriguing articles and excellent photography suggest that *Classic & Sports Car*'s methodology is bringing the magazine continued success.

It would be nit-picky to make suggestions for tiny elements that would do little to push the magazine towards more success as overall, *Classic & Sports Car* is firmly grounded and secure in its place in the market. It is instead easier to conclude that, from the research, that there is nothing major that would need to be altered to improve the *Classic & Sports Car* brand and magazine.

## **OCTANE**

Octane's intended demographic requires a high level of understanding, and its approach to its intended market leaves very few errors or issues. Fashion and lifestyle trends change regularly, and what was once trendy can be uncool within a matter of months, and the same is true with classic cars. To that degree, Octane's staff understands its audience very well, with an understanding of the lifestyle and interests of wealthier collectors, whether in content and visuals they may enjoy reading about or advertising that appeals to its readers' needs and, in turn, pulls in advertisers to match.

Though there are few issues that the research has brought up, a change that could be made, based on the analysis, is making use of the highlight colour/s a little more throughout the magazine.

## **CLASSIC CARS**

As the longest-published of the five, *Classic Cars* magazine has clearly been doing something right since its introduction in 1973 to have survived in this competitive a market for that long. With it currently being the UK's third best-selling classic car magazine (Majid, 2023), it would seem that the team at *Classic Cars* have a clear vision for their magazine, and what it needs to be to satisfy its market.

As with *Classic & Sports Cars* and *Octane*, the research suggests that there is not much that could be changed with *Classic Cars*. Other than making sure that white space is being used for emphasis or effect, and not left due to lack of material, Bauer have done a great job at continuing to develop *Classic Cars* into a successful publication with its own identity.

## **CLASSICS MONTHLY**

Kelsey's ownership of *Classics Monthly* has drastically reshaped the brand far beyond its origins into a very different magazine as to what it once was. It is not necessarily for the worst, however: it resides in an interesting demographic of a "realistic" Practical Classics, with less of a focus on "epic" restorations that provide

some escapism, and more to do with jobs that the magazine encourages its audience to do with their cars. It tries its best to meet its audiences needs, and for the most part, it succeeds, especially in how much involvement it has with said audience for content. However, it could do with some tweaks to get the best out of its formula and ensure that the *Classics Monthly* name remains on the market for years to come, mostly in terms of its design, which is lacking compared to its competitors.

Various changes that could be made, based on the analysis, include:

- Introducing a consistent name scheme to the brand – something as simple as reintroducing the “*Classics Monthly*” name and logo back onto the front cover would go a long way to creating a solid brand image with the name that Kelsey still uses in its branding and on its websites.
- Relying less on archive-based articles for content – perhaps something like *Classic Cars*’ ‘The List’ format could work here, which plays into *Classics Monthly*’s strong reader interaction.
- Refine the front cover design further – use more than one font, reduce the clutter, make it a little clearer, especially considering the age range of *Classics Monthly*’s typical target audience.
- Using less photographic manipulation on photos (e.g. with only minor editing work instead of changing the entire background) and for establishing images.
- Fixing visual issues such as text formatting issues and image layers to improve the quality of presentation.

## **CLASSIC.RETRO.MODERN**

Out of all the magazines analysed, *Classic.Retro.Modern* seems to be the one most in trouble of ceasing publication, and that is a shame for the market. It has some brilliant ideas, areas of extremely high quality, a varied selection of vehicles and a loyal readership, but these things do not always guarantee success or continued publication. And based on the magazine’s move to being bi-monthly (Dredge, 2023), as well as its editor’s regular sarcastic and defensive columns about rival publications to try and push the magazine’s brand as being a little edgier and rougher, going out of print is something that *Classic.Retro.Modern*’s team desperately wants to avoid.

Possible changes, based on the analysis, include:

- Finding out the magazine's actual audience base, perhaps through a survey, and targeting the magazine's content, design and future development to that group.
- Developing an identifiable brand that both audiences and advertisers recognise to encourage advertisers to use *Classic.Retro.Modern*.
- Keeping free ad space taken up with classic car advertisements out of space being used for paid advertisements.
- Making better use of space on the cover (e.g. including a dateline and featured cars on the spine) and clearing up some of the text (e.g. the paragraph of cover lines) to make it less cluttered and easier to read.
- Reducing the number of unique features (e.g. unnecessary top ten lists with no justification, see **fig. 9A**) and adjusting others (e.g. Sheds Heaven) to be more engaging and interesting to a prospective reader base, and to keep attention firmly on the magazine.
- Making sure that text colours and fonts are readable and do not cause formatting issues, as well as trying to stick to a maximum of two fonts.

These are works that were examined and read for research, but for one reason or another, did not end up being referenced in the final dissertation. This was mostly down to the limited word count and/or lack of relevancy to the material required for this content analysis:

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