

# CUSTOM CAR

AND NOW  
FOR SOMETHING COMPLETELY  
DIFFERENT



Some four score years ago, people who travelled in motor cars were individualists. Albeit rich individualists. And their cars were likewise as individual. New ideas were fermenting the whole, time. Cars appeared and disappeared, propelled by all manner of different means, trundling about on anything from two to eight wheels. There were no construction and use regs to comply with, no American safety regs to hassle with, and as long as you didn't go faster than the guy with the red flag everything was superswinging.

Things evolved, not unnaturally, and patterns became established. Like two-wheeled motoring was never seriously considered (till the A30/35 was introduced that is) and multi-wheeled motoring settled in favour of one roughly at each corner, with three wheelers having bursts of popularity, specially in the twenties when the light car boom happened.

Latterly, only Bond and Reliant have seriously plugged the three-wheel angle, but on rather prosaic machinery like the Frugal and the dreaded Bond Minicar. But now, sapristi! Bond gets swallowed up in Reliant and suddenly the three-wheeler gets a whole new image. Like the Bond Bug was designed to look right with three wheels instead of trying to look like a small car during a wheel component strike.

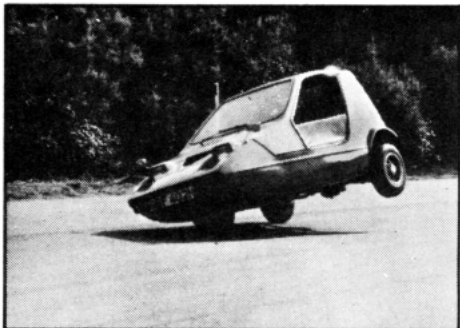
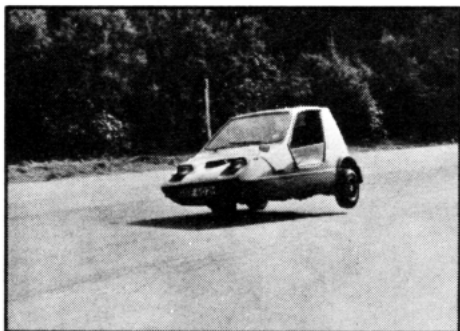
And so kooky with it, from its wedge-shaped styling to its slingshot driving pos, its Nascar scoop and its flip-up top. And if it's not orange, it's not a Bond Bug. Suddenly, friends, you can be an individualist again, but at a modest price and straight off the peg.

We dwelt on the outline spec of the car in our July issue. Now we've had a chance to look at it over a longer period, and, well chaps, we think it's a jolly wizard little car. But it does have limitations, some of them connected with only having three wheels instead of four.

Start with the nice bits, shall we? As an eye turner it's a gas. Can't help it really. Mind you, opinions vary—like that of the bus driver who threatened to sprinkle flea powder over us to rid the highways of the new pest. The glass fibre body is well finished and trimmed, the exact spec of the trim depending on which option pack you order. All is functional but smart, with the orange glass fibre being continued into the

# EUREKA!

## THE WONDROUS INVENTION OF MR BOND



cockpit except where panelled or floor-trimmed in black.

Seats are fixed into an immovable semi-reclining position, and pedals are fixed likewise—fine for most drivers between 5ft 6in and 6ft but difficult for anyone above or below that figure. It's all a bit quirky but in fact easy to drive with good visibility all round, even through the narrow rear window slot.

Reliant's little 700cc alloy four pot has a modest output of 29bhp, 32bhp in the posh ES version, which doesn't sound much till you relate it to weight—under 800lb basic—and 750 MC owners will tell you how a Reliant can be made to run. On the road the nicely spaced ratios and the free revving engine snort the Bug up to a staggering 82mph in top with very respectable times through the gears. We averaged out at 4.2sec to 30, 6.2 to 40, 10.9 to 50 and 15sec dead to 60 which is just half a second slower than a Mk3 Midget!

That's in a straight line: cornering is somethin' else. What's acceptable in a Frugal saloon isn't so hot on a fun-bug designed to appeal to young ravers. I mean look at the pix—see that inner rear wheel lifting? And lifting, and lifting? Not much you can do about it either except pussyfoot a bit round the sharp ones. Generally through the Bug is remarkably stable in a straight line and on more modest cornering, the good aerodynamics keeping it from being gusted around.

Mind you, it's a noisy car to drive if that sort of thing worries you. Yes the aerodynamics are good so that there is little actual wind noise from the body but the side screens (or lack of them if you have them removed) naturally create a fair amount of turbulence. And the truly fruity exhaust fitted as standard successfully drowns any seductive noises you might have been attempting.

It's just a whole fun scene, sold to you complete at the price of a non-fun Mini or Fiat. You can insure it fully comp for 25 sheets via Bond's special tie-up, it'll cost you just a tenner a year to tax since it's under 8cwt, and driven moderately you will see an easy 60 miles to the 95 octane gallon. And the price? £548 for the basic Bare Bug, £579 for the 700E with side-screens and other novelties, and £629 for the ES with higher performance engine and still more options. And wait till Mark Stratton's V8 Bug funny car hits the strip!

MH

