

Almost 100 years ago, the Morgan Car Company produced its first motor tricycle. Three wheels attracted less road tax than four wheels and H.F.S Morgan bought a seven hp twin-cylinder Peugeot engine and mounted it into a light three-wheeled tubular chassis. The first Morgan Runabout had been born.

"HS," as he was affectionately known to the workers in his factory, would probably recognise the Morgan character in the Aero 8. For sure, it would blow his iconic bowler hat clean off. The car is an animal!

One glance at the Aero 8 says it all: from the classic sports car proportions to the elegant but non-functional horseshoe grille, it epitomizes British Neoclassicism. With the sweeping protruding mudguards lending a graceful curve leading via a running board to the bulging rear mudguards, the Aero 8 is every inch a Morgan. It is also a technically very advanced car, a result of the Morgan project with BMW that produced it.

More conservative aficionados of the marque tend to be a trifle sniffy about the quirky duck-tail trunk lid introduced on the later models but it has an aerodynamic purpose and increases the capacity of the trunk considerably; you can get a set of golf clubs in this one. That is handy because for a fairly large two-seater car (4.1 metres) there is precious little space for anything apart than the occupants.

Sniffy or no, one a grizzled and somewhat taciturn veteran of Morgans who went for a rather rapid ride in the Aero 8 actually *giggled* with relief and disbelief as he clambered out after a demonstration over a particularly challenging part of a Powys hillside. "How on earth are you going to describe THAT!" he challenged. It has that effect on people.

The Aero 8 is not a shopping runabout for the retro-minded dilettante; it is a full-blown sports car capable of some 260 kph with acceleration and road-holding to match. It is a result of a project with BMW and it is a huge success. Charles Morgan, grandson of the founder, relates how his test drivers took an early Aero 8 to BMW's test track in the French Camargue. It was a hot sunny day and the men from Morgan set up camp with their cricket hats, biscuits and flasks of tea. BMW's engineers, who until that afternoon were unaware of the project's existence, thought this was deeply amusing. Morgan's engineers fired up the Aero 8 and hauled the bellowing car through the track's corners on road tires; BMW's engineers were flabbergasted. They went into shock when they looked under the hood and saw the body resting on a frame made of Belgian Ash.

Fitted as standard with a six forward speed Getrag gearbox and a BTR limiter, left in full automatic the Aero 8 shows its mannered breeding and bumbles along thrumming a melodious basso profundo from the open pipes just below the doors. Slip the beautifully machined

Brute in a (Retro) Suit



Roger Harrison
Arab News

gear stick into sports mode and floor the accelerator however and the companionable burble from the exhaust changes instantly into a crisp hammering roar and your view of the road reduces to a still oval on the horizon; all peripheral vision becomes a blur. The monstrous 4.4 litre V8 32 valve BMW engine hurls the ridiculously light (1000kg) aluminium and wood car forward in a blast of gut wrenching acceleration. It glances at 100kph in 4.5 seconds and charges onwards with no apparent inclination to stop. You don't so much accelerate in the Aero 8; you unleash the beast and ride the wave.

The traction control never kicks in; there isn't any. Nor airbags. That very much focuses the mind on the fact that this is a car for drivers and you had better be on your mettle!

Reigning it in is nearly as much fun. The ABS braking developed with BMW, Bosch and Siemens, coupled with the AP Racing six-pot front (4 pot rear) calipers on 13.7" rotors gives you all the deceleration you will ever need. Wide low-profile 18 inch foam filled run-flat tires grip like glue and the very firm sports suspension effectively eliminates nose dive from the long tapering front end of the car.

Even hard acceleration on full lock - the electro-hydraulic steering imparts a great degree of accuracy and just the right amount of understeer - round hairpins on Welsh hillsides only occasionally produced a squeal from the rear tires. That brightened up, albeit temporarily, the lives of a few sheep.

The Aero 8 corners with no hint of body roll, and this with no anti-roll bars. Its unique suspension, designed by Morgan, has long cantilevered upper arms and lower wishbones at the front with in-board Eibach coil springs over Koni shock absorbers. At the rear are