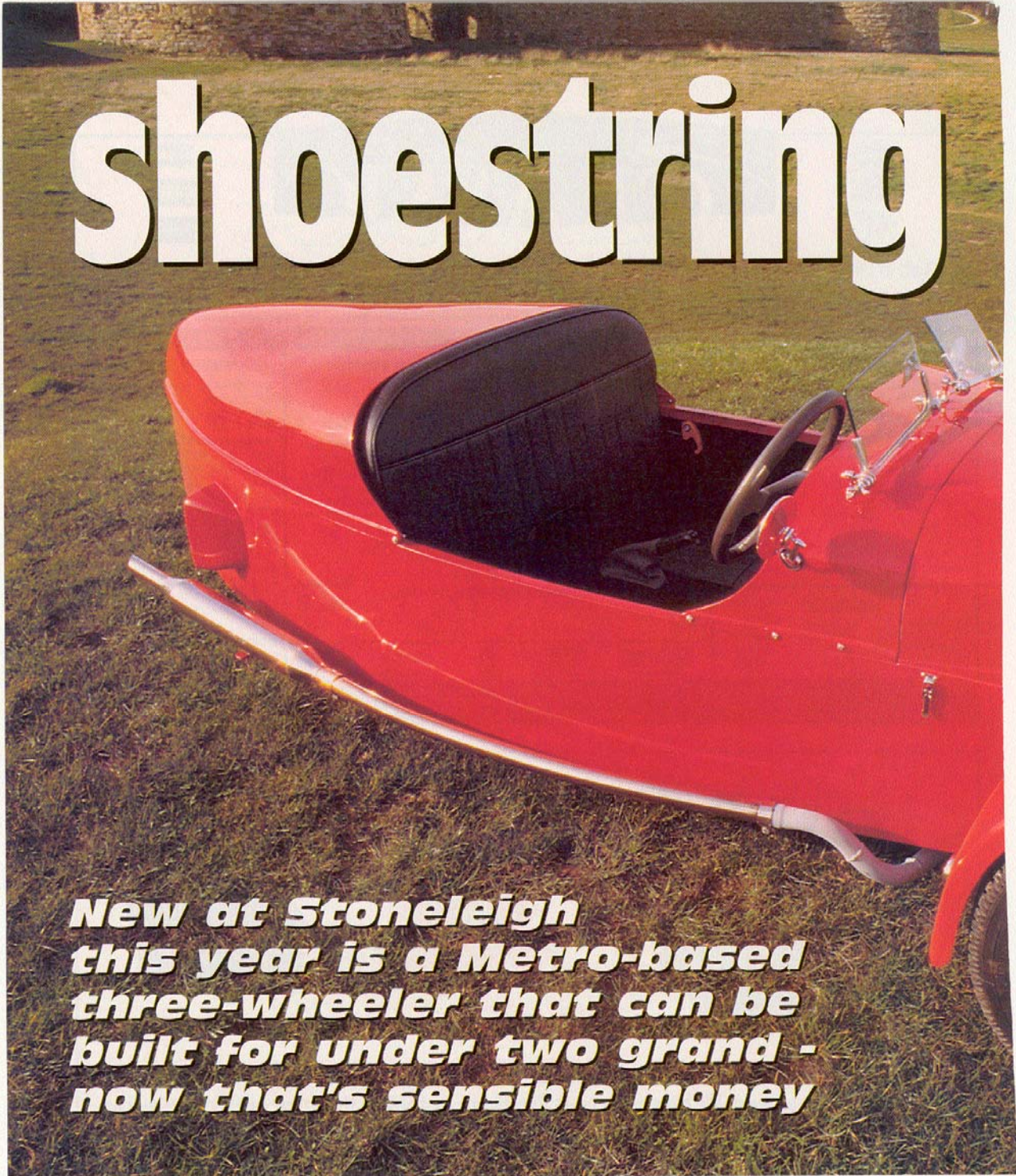


shoestring



***New at Stoneleigh
this year is a Metro-based
three-wheeler that can be
built for under two grand -
now that's sensible money***

With all three wheels alight, we took the Porsche 911 Turbo on the second roundabout; he just managed to shut us out on the first. After we outridged him at the lights we were baulked by a slow moving truck in our lane and he took the opportunity to pull ahead but imagine his amazement as we screamed past on the outside. With full opposite lock on, a blip of throttle straightened up

the game little three-wheeler and with the engine just getting into its stride at 6500 revs we changed up and left him for dead in a haze of dust and exhaust gas.

Well, no not really. But we did have an awful lot of fun pottering about the Welsh hills in the new BRA Metro-based MR3 (MetRo3). In fact, this brand new trike from the company that already produces the

CX3, a Honda-powered three-wheeler, and the CV3, a 2CV-based car, is a game little car. With a 1000cc Metro engine and no weight to speak of it accelerates lustily, handles well and brakes like a demon.

It all came about because one of the partners at BRA, James Mather, (the other partner is David Wiles) was reminiscing about the good old days of motorcycle sidecar racing - he

trike



explains it thus:

"If you have ever driven (or should it be ridden?) a motor cycle and sidecar combination (what is known by the aficionados as 'an outfit') then you will know that unless it is set-up very, very well, then the steering has a mind of its own. In the mid 60's, racing outfits were more often than not home brewed and generally took their own racing line while driver and

passenger hung on with white knuckles, Ben Hur style.

Enter one Owen Greenwood, who, armed with the ACU (Auto Cycle Union) Construction Rule book set about making himself a British Sidecar Champion-winning machine in his first 12 months on the track. Owen took a Mini Cooper S front end, hung a wheel precariously at the back and sat with his passenger

alongside, driving car style. For 2 years in the late 60's, "The Mini" (as it was known) was unbeatable. Then the ACU changed the rules and Greenwood's creation was left to gather dust.

Fast forward to the late 80's and armed with a whole load of nostalgia, I (not at that time involved with B.R.A.) made myself one of the many Mini-front-end trikes that were to be seen at the time. I was so impressed with how it went; that I knew there was a market for it. At the same time I was so unimpressed with the way it looked that I called it the 'Mini Plug'. So The Plug remained a one-off and having been sold to fund a beer drinking session, it went into oblivion.

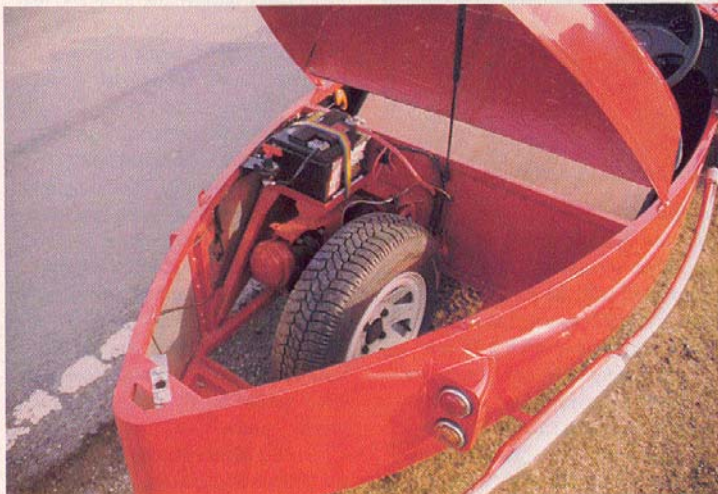
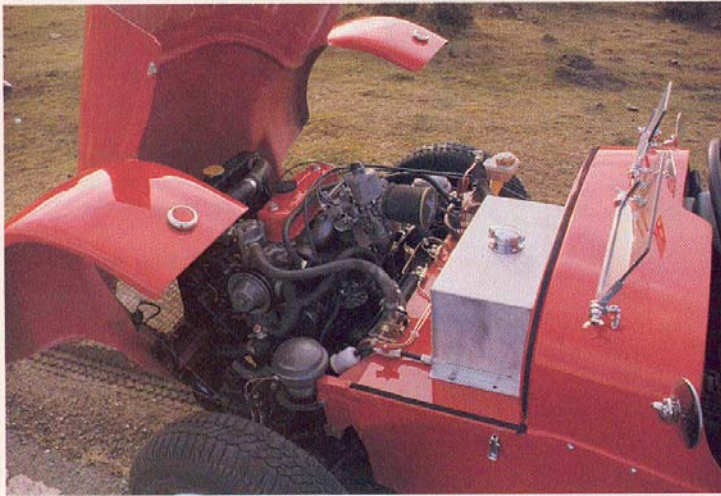
In December last year the offer of two mechanically sound but rotting Metro's rekindled a fire. Using the same chassis jig as the firm's existing CX3 and CV3 three wheelers, a chassis was soon welded together, and with the Metro sub-frames hung front and back, the car had its first outing on BRA's car park in just two weeks. At that stage it had no more arresting force than just a handbrake that operated on just the back wheel at that!

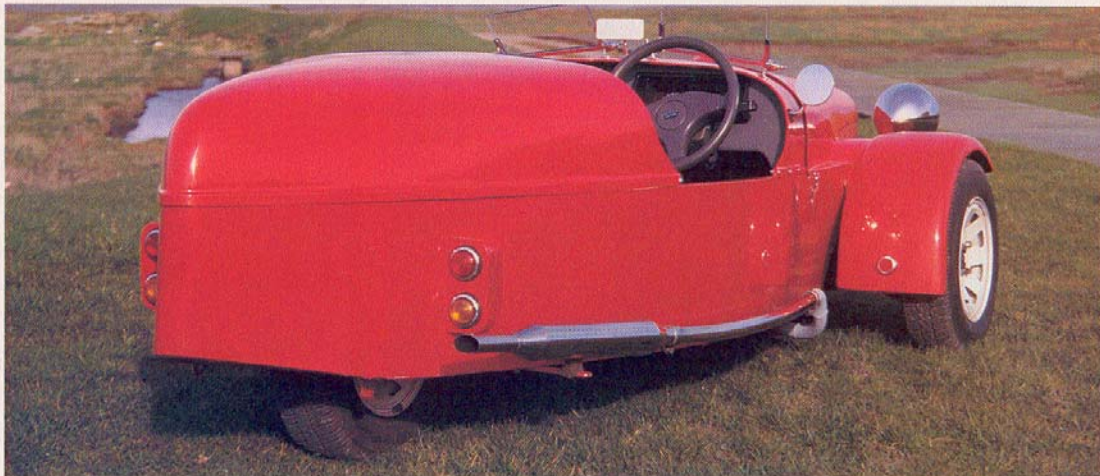
Lots of GRP, filler and sparks, (not to mention time) later, the new MR3 emerged from B.R.A.'s North Wales workshop."

The prototype made its debut at Stafford but the production car is being officially launched at the Stoneleigh show on May 2 & 3.

Two things make it immediately attractive. Firstly, it is easy to build; you simply remove the front and rear subframes from a Metro and bolt them to the new chassis - the rear subframe for the single back wheel is slightly modified for you by BRA. It is claimed a driveable rolling chassis can be built in a weekend and I wouldn't dispute that, providing that the necessary refurbishing work had already been carried out on the donor car parts. To my mind that is a big attraction and a number one selling point. Second, it's very inexpensive. The demonstration car you see here cost under £2000 at retail prices and BRA guarantees that it needn't cost you any more.

As a glance through this magazine will confirm, there are





plenty of very sophisticated kitcars available, on which you can spend a lot of time and money. For the person without those resources but who nevertheless would like to build and run something a little bit different from the norm, then this car will surely have an appeal.

Using Metro mechanical components does have its drawbacks. The engine and gearbox unit is quite tall and that means that the front of the car necessarily has to be high. Take a look at the front of the MR3 and you'll get my drift. However, even the boys at BRA acknowledge that the prototype could look prettier and they are working on this aspect of the car. So the car you see at Stoneleigh may well have a sleeker front-end than the one you see here.

Even so, the MR3 has so many plus points, I think it will sell, whatever its cosmetic treatment. The car really does perform very credibly. Even with a stock 1000 cc engine acceleration is brisk, with a K-series installed it will certainly fly. It turns-in sharply, it corners well and all three wheels stay in contact with the tarmac even when pushing on hard. There is a little roll on cornering, but an anti-roll bar could be fitted if necessary. In the interests of economy, all Metro stock components are used and this includes the instruments and steering wheel. I found the large diameter steering wheel knocked against my left knee and I'd definitely fit a smaller one. However, production cars won't have the dummy tunnel in place nor will the Metro consul cum coin tray be fitted, in which case the problem will be solved and the Metro

Customer Profile

While it would have been nice to have spoken to one of BRA's customers who had built a MR3, it wasn't possible because the kits were not in production at the time we tested the car in early March.

However, while we were at the factory in Flint, Brian Whitmarsh arrived with his newly built CX3 and we were able to talk to him.

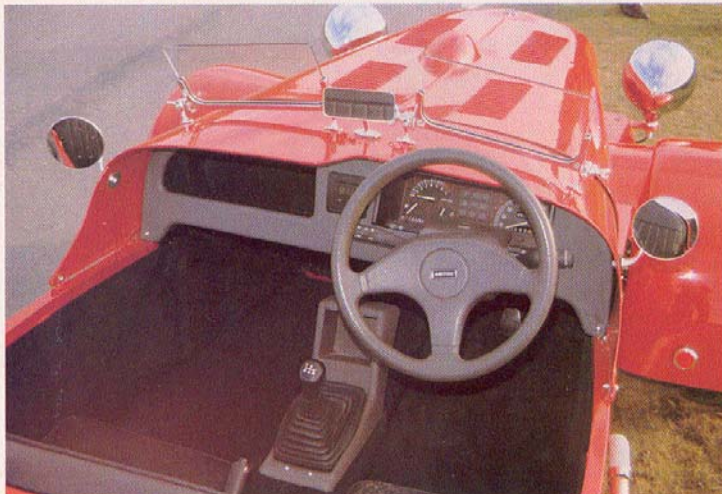
He said he had no problems with build except that his wife extracted a promise from him to rebuild the kitchen (or was it the bathroom, or both?) before spending time and money on a kitcar - now that sounds like a familiar story. Balancing his time between tiling and

the garage, it took about 18 months and around £4000 to complete the CX3 to its present stage. It still needs a bit of work on the interior and so on, but he's having a lot of fun with it already.

Brian, who is a research technician with an oil company, is not a trained mechanic, just a spare-time tinkerer, although he has some experience with kitcars in that he helped his son build a Fiero-based Finale. Out of the hearing of the BRA blokes, he said that they were great to deal with and helped him with a couple of problems, one of which was an out-of-balance prop. shaft. He says the quality of the kit was excellent and the back-up fine.



Brian Whitmarsh, BRA customer



wheel can stay.

Four pot calipers and discs provide plenty of braking power and here again, all standard donor car components are recycled. In a straight line a little bump steer was apparent. At least, I thought it was bump steer but James Mather said that it was caused by the shorter wheelbase of the prototype and that this will be lengthened on production cars.

With its standard controls, the MR3 is easy to drive, not at all intimidating and very user friendly. I liked the wide, deep cockpit, the clear instruments and simple layout of the switchgear. Under the rear lid there is a largely under-utilised space which only needs a little ingenuity to covert to luggage compartments - this is another on the list of jobs that BRA

intends to carry out.

I have always liked the can-do approach of the guys at BRA, rather than talk about things, they get on and do them, the result is a bustling atmosphere with plenty of action and ongoing development. The MR3 is the result of just such activity, it was conceived and carried out in a short space of time and there are a few areas that have still to be worked upon. However, I predict a bright future for this little trike. It is cheap, it is cheerful but nothing is lost in the quality and you could spend a lot more in exchange for a lot less product.

COST OF BUILDING A CAR SIMILAR TO THE ONE SHOWN HERE:

Donor car - Free - or from around £50
 MR3 kit - £1550
 BRA seat set - £100
 Paint, trim etc. - £100
 Wheels - £75
 BRA exhaust system - £180

Using the original seats, wheels and exhaust system, a good example could be built for a lot less that £2000 claims BRA

KIT CONTENTS

Chassis; aluminium body panels; GRP front section, scuttle and rear body section; Zintec steel fuel tank 3.5 gal; mounting brackets for pedal box, cables etc.; scuttle and steering column support frame; handbrake mounting plate; gear lever mounting brackets; seat belt mountings; brake hose support brackets; choke cable bracket, heater cable bracket; throttle cable stop; modified single rear sub-frame on exchange; modified gear lever mechanism on exchange; front headlamp shells; rear light pods and light units; rear number plate light; nut, bolt, rivet & fixing pack; body panel adhesive two tubes; adhesive application gun; latex gloves; rigger gloves for when trashing donor; dash pattern & comprehensive build manual.

