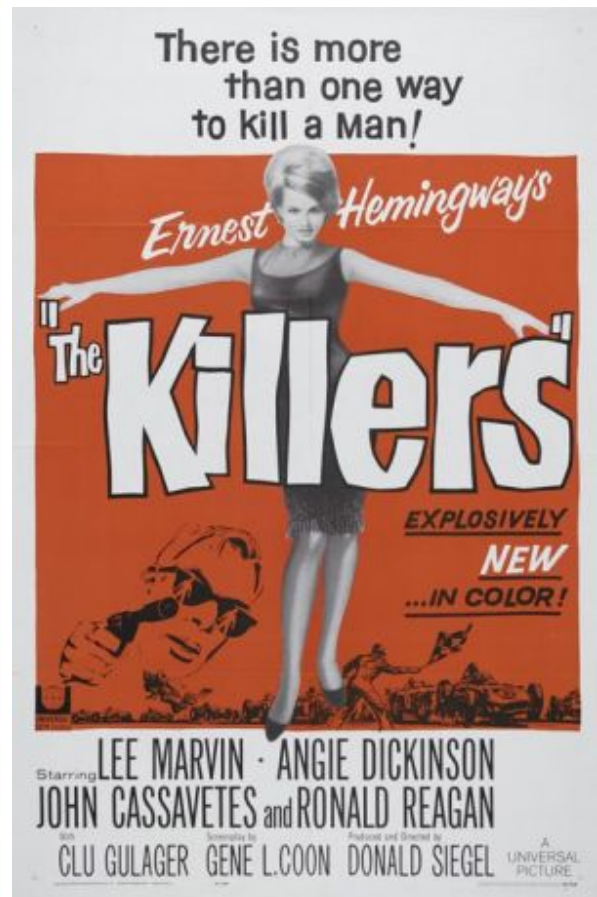


My Hawk Build. Part 1 by Stuart Clarke

Or if you are going to have a mid life crisis build a car, it's a lot less frustrating and you've got something for you money at the end of it!

I've always liked the Cobra, but the kits that you see with the bulbous wheel arches and the plush padded interiors and chrome side pipes, they're not for me.

I've always liked the 60's sleek lines of the "slabsiders". Famous on the race track and in Elvis's film "Viva las Vegas" and "The Killers" with Lee Marvin and Ronald Reagan (playing a baddie!), these are the ones that I liked.



I had a picture on my wall of an AC Cobra as a boy, (this was next to the XJS and Lamborghini Countach) but it's the AC look and style that's stuck with me.

All these thoughts came flooding back to me, sat in a restaurant, in Trogir in Croatia, talking to a fellow traveller about cars. "You do know that Hawk cars make a lovely example of an Ace replica and a 289", do they now? When I got back I dug out the serviette with Hawk cars scribbled on it, typed it in to the internet search engine and That's it!

So now I'd finally accepted that I was hopefully going to realise a childhood dream and something that I never thought I'd achieve, I was on my way.

Now it was time to get down to basics and start planning. A garage to build the kit, haven't got one but I'll get one. Money, yes I'll need money and probably more than I think. As far as the car itself goes, what do I need, I need to decide upon which kit, which engine, which running gear and what spec.

The first selection criteria was answered in an article in Classic Car magazine which had a bright blue 289 on the front cover. The sleek lines and the slightly more aggressive look of the 289 over the Ace is what swung it for me.

The engine was a tough decision. There are lots of options which were narrowed quite quickly to 2 choices, namely a Rover V8 or a Ford V8.

There are pro's and con's for both and it all boils down to personal choice. I did a lot of research, trawled through forums, blogs and message boards. I eventually decided that I'd prefer to spend a bit more money, go down the more difficult and riskier route and hopefully end up with something more authentic that I would be happier with in the long term. So a Small block Ford 289 it will be - but more on that later.

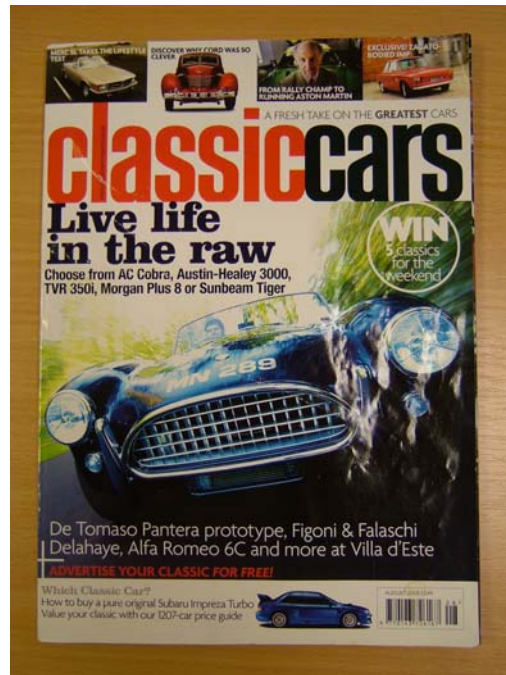
As far as running gear was concerned, that was one of the most critical choices as a number of factors would be determined by this decision. I finally decided on the MGB donor car option. This would enable me to register the car on an age related number plate (by using a specific number of components from the donor vehicle) and would give me a good insight into where the parts came from, how they fit together and how they work.

Knowing that it would be MGB underpinnings would finally allow me to order the car as this, along with the engine choice, would specify the chassis that I would need from Hawk Cars.

I managed to locate a garage in Ironbridge that a friend of a friend was happy for me to rent off him. Now I could look for a donor car.

I found a 1967 Chrome bumper MGB for a few hundred pounds. So after the deal was done I went to collect it with the trailer.

The car had been off the road for some time as a couple of the previous owners had attempted to renovate it. This was fine as I only needed the running gear and all this appeared to be sound.





There was a lack of sills and a rear wing on one side, wouldn't be needed and was reflected in the price. I purchased 2 sets of axle stands. I wish now they had been a bit higher (to make it easier to get under the car) and in hindsight I would have purchased a wheeled crawler board (to get under the car and back out, under and b.....)

A couple of very tiring weekends later I was left with a pile of bits that I just need to strip down and refurbish and a carcass of a remaining car that I stripped further and sold the bits on to regain all of my original investment and some!

Stripping down an MGB is not an easy job. Its very hard work and it is a very dirty job. The first thing is to get a good maintenance book such as the Haynes manual. There is also some really helpful information on the internet and "You tube" of all places.

The sub group parts on an MGB are very heavy so a great deal of caution is required and it shouldn't really be attempted on your own. Ensure that the weight of the car is always supported by well positioned, sturdy axle stands. I had a 2 tonne engine lifter and a number of different length slings that were very useful.

On the suspension assembly use the weight of the car to help remove the front springs, as the poor design makes it very difficult to use coil spring compressors (as you cant get them in between the spring pan and the suspension crossmember!).

Never just undo the bolts and let the things just fly out! After you have the springs out, disconnect the brake pipes (carefully drain the brake fluid and dispose of correctly) undo the steering rack UJ's (remember to take the clamping bolt, on the UJ, completely out before trying to pull the UJ off the splined shaft!) undo the four large bolts that hold the front suspension cross member on. Then just jack the front of the car up raise the height of the axle stands and pull the lot out!

I removed the complete assembly before I took the springs out .I made a clamping jig (that fitted around the top crossmember and under the spring pan to hold the spring compressed) out of some angle iron and 22mm threaded bar and it worked a treat.



The rear axle was more difficult as most of the bolts were rusted on and the propshaft to diff collar bolts were totally seized. The propshaft was disconnected from the gearbox and the rear axle and propshaft came out in one go! For this job I needed a large breaker bar and a lot of elbow grease. Once it was out I went home for a well earned couple of pints!

Now I've got a complete front suspension, a complete rear axle with springs and rear drum brakes, handbrake mechanism, steering rack, steering column and quite a few smaller items that may come in useful such as horn, relays, fuses, switches, windscreen wiper motor etc etc. I've just got to sort through this lot and refurbish it all. More on that next time.

