

Way back when, in 1978, there was an ex-Formula Fordster who, having had little luck in that category against the likes of Weaver and Mansell, decided to have a crack at Prodsports. He already had a Lotus Europa Special which had been a racer in Belgium, so he decided that in the light of one Chris Meek's success with a similar car, it would be an ideal candidate for the production-sports-car class. He took his car to the people who prepared Chris's Championship winner and threw a vast amount of money at it. Its engine readout from the dyno after having been blueprinted was 148bhp, one heck of a leap up from the standard 126bhp Big-Valve engine factory figure, itself a tad optimistic, if truth be known.

For the debut race at Silverstone Club with its long straight things looked promising. Prodsports racing was changing however and there was now a serious threat to the fleet and nimble Europa. The threat was brute force and this was emphasised as first a Plus 8 Morgan came ripping past the Lotus on the straight and then a brace of TVRs with Stewart Halstead and Colin Blower behind their wheels. Stewart soon gave up racing to concentrate on being Sales Director for the Blackpool marque; Colin carried on and the following year swapped his 'M' Series coupé for Stewart's Convertible and reeled off 22 outright wins — every event he tackled with the car. The Europa driver packed it all in and went back to what he did only slightly more successfully than his racing: being a motoring hack. The last we heard of him, he was Publisher on some little-known rag called *Sports Car Monthly*, although information is somewhat sketchy about this....

It was no less than nine years after this abortive crack at Prodsports, the author got to sample a taste of the 'opposition', courtesy of David Gerald TVR Sportscars Ltd's ex-Colin Blower Convertible — oh, and their ex-works 420 SEAC racer, as well!

The David Gerald concern should be familiar to sports-car enthusiasts for they were the company who earlier this year took over the supply and manufacturing rights of all 'M' Series cars. Partners David Field and Gerald Jinks were wholesale butchers until six years ago, and they were both TVR enthusiasts and long-standing TVR Owners' Club members. By chance they got to buying and selling examples of the Blackpool beauts and finally decided to take the bold step of buying out the pre-1980 spares stock from TVR so that TVR could then concentrate on Tasmin and later-model spares. Since the take-over, business has boomed and their reputation has flourished. So, when TVR decided to sell their 420 SEAC racer project it was offered first to the genial gents from Redditch. 'I can't say how much we paid', said David, 'but it is fraction of what it cost the factory'.

They already owned the ex-Blower car which was campaigned throughout last year by long-standing friend, Andy Clarke. Andy is a 33-year-old Civil Engineer and gets his drives with 'DG' in return for looking after the car and handling the PR side. When the SEAC came along, it was natural that the man who had been successfully campaigning Class 210 karts for several years previously should drive that, too. Although a very quick driver, Andy is blessed with that rare commodity called mechanical sympathy, which suits 'DG' well. Andy doesn't break the cars so they keep their racing costs down (an important fact

PRIDE AND PASSION

If the 420 SEAC is the present pride of racing TVRs, then the 3000S is the passionate reminder of Prodsports racing a few years back. **Laurie Caddell** has a go in both





The sleek 3000S powers its way hard out of the hairpin (**above**). Andy sneaks off for a few laps in the Century Oils-sponsored car while Cad is about to trip over his helmet (**below**) on his way to a 'cuppa'. The SEAC's interior (**below right**) is much more spartan than that of the plush 3000S (**bottom right**). Both have fine driving positions

when David and Gerald have invested much money in the long-term financial security of their company). It is a very happy relationship all round and one which hasn't damaged the strong friendship of the West Midlands triumvirate.

So it was that a fleet comprising Range-Rover towing the SEAC, XR3i towing the 3000S, David's wife Pam driving the mint-condition Turbo 'M' for our profile shoot, and Overton and Caddell in their respective Italian rot-boxes rolled into the friendly Mallory Park paddock on a warm late-May morning for the test-cum-photo session.

The 3000S, complete with its TVR 300S numberplate, is a gloriously attractive car, and certainly goes too with its Group A 3-litre Essex Ford motor pumping out some 220bhp. Except that for the first time ever in

the hands of David Gerald it failed to produce but one of those horses even after a hefty shove down the hill from the hairpin to the paddock. Several changes of plugs and a quick re-routing of the plug leads after the first change finally had the beast stuttering into life and, after a few seconds, it was revving cleanly and powerfully with that gorgeous growling exhaust note, made famous not only by this two-seater Convertible but by the all-conquering Capris which were equally dominant in Group A saloon racing.

Quite how Andy manages to get his 6ft frame into the car remains a mystery, for it fitted the compact author quite well. Inside was really just what one would expect of a road-going TVR. The dials were haphazardly spread across the dash, but then they were



Pix by John Overton



for the original, while a deep bucket seat was fitted along with a stout rollcage. Indeed, driving from the paddock to the pits, it felt like a road car, too. The one real significant difference from its Blower days was the adoption of slicks, but the rest was 'as before'.

It took just a blast out from the pits to the long sweeping Gerrards corner for the author to realise what he had suspected almost a decade ago: the 3-litre TVR's phenomenal speed. There was no jump in power delivery, just a silky smooth flow of urge right up to the specified red line of 6500rpm. The rear-set gear lever was as awkward as was remembered with the road-test cars of yore, but the ratios swapped easily and the controls were altogether quite lightweight, although that really could be a disguise of the extra effort usually exerted on a race track.

The 3000S steering was precise and the tyres really gripped hard, but the car was very sensitive to bumps, of which there were plenty at Mallory. In the third-gear Lake Esses there is a bump right on the apex and this had the effect of jogging the back of the car out of line a touch. Not enough to upset the car markedly, but there and the double-apex Devils Elbow where the car drops to the outside of the track off camber twice certainly stopped the steady course of the driver's heartbeat for a few laps.

Noticeable body roll tended to pull the car hard, too, but we will have to take Andy's word for it that when 'she starts to go: that's it. She stays gone!' However, the 'S' was really set up to run road tyres and the extra grip of the slicks puts a lot of extra strain on the car. Driven within its limits, the easy power, strong brakes and direct steering made it a real pussycat, and it was just a shame that it was while out with this car that the author was re-learning the circuit again after an 11-year absence.

If the 3000S felt like a road car on race tyres then the 420 SEAC felt like the 'Real McCoy', a pukka racer. This in spite of it being basically the same thing, a road-going sports car, but then there is a lot of development time between the two vehicles.

The 420 SEAC was built early last year for the Prodsports Championship and much work and money was put into the car. It was used as a development hack for the company's new wishbone rear suspension, the bigger 4.2-litre engine and the special construction using Kevlar, among other exotic materials, of its body. The adjustable carbon-fibre rear wing alone cost £1000. Steve Cole won 19 out of 24 races with the car last year when it had 300bhp, but has since taken a whole second off his Oulton Park lap times when 'guesting' for David Gerald with the car running an NCK motor.

The Coventry-based tuning company of Alan and Graham Nash managed to extract 327.6bhp at 6500rpm from it after a rebuild and 301lb ft of torque at 4250rpm. 'The motor's weakness is the injection', said Graham. 'Whatever you do to the rest of the engine it still has to breathe through one flow meter and the motor can't get enough air'. As it is, apart from a cross-bolted block, Group A rods, dry sumping and a strong but not-wild Crane cam, the motor is standard road-going bored-and-stroked Rover, taken out to 4228cc. With a wilder cam and running Dellortos, NCK have just got a dyno figure of 382bhp for a hill-climb motor, which also idles happily at 600rpm! Whatever, even before Graham got hold of the engine, *Autocar* got the SEAC racer to 60mph in 4.6secs and 100mph in 10.7secs, so you can take a few tenths off those times now. Which is *plenty* quick....

It was no surprise then, in view of Graham's words of air starvation, that the SEAC had trouble idling at less than 2000rpm. However, with the throttle open, power was certainly *not* a problem.

After the plush interior of the 3000S, the spartan cockpit of the SEAC was altogether more race like, dominated by a NASCAR-size roll cage and a row of all-important dials. 'Pre-flight checks' included warming the transmission with the car up on axle

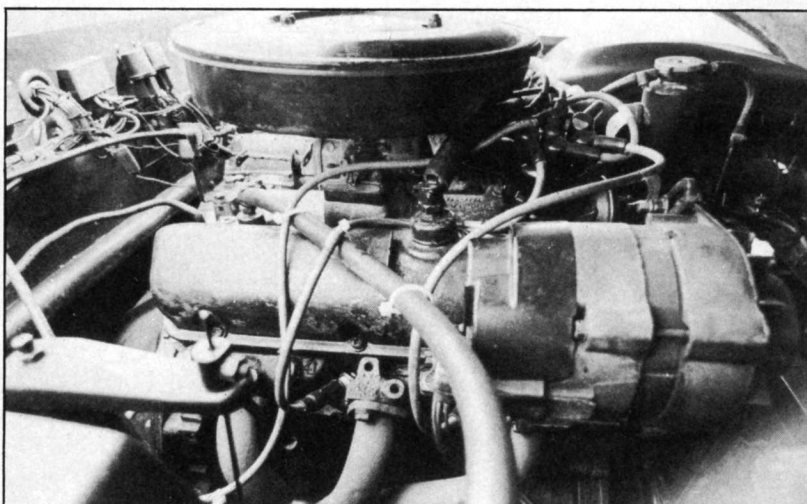
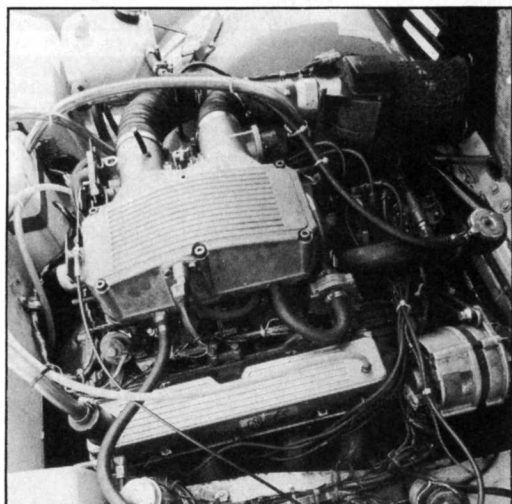
The sleek 3000S and the brutal-looking SEAC (above). 327.6bhp of NCK 4.2-litre Rover engine (below left) and 220bhp of good-old rorty 3-litre Essex V6 (below right)

stands. A spate of diff failures have been cured by oil-cooling the Torsen items, but even so the 'DG' men take every precaution in making sure that these £2000 units don't get chewed up while they are cold.

The SEAC would get moving once 2000rpm was on the clock but didn't really push until around 4000rpm was dialled in and then the big V8 sang its high-pitched song and accelerated hard. Even though this car started out on road tyres, it suited slicks so much more and cornered with virtually no roll and plenty of grip. Andy was right: you needed to be strapped in tight to save yourself from being thrown around but even so a crash hat was necessary as the *g* force pulled your head into the (thankfully padded!) roll bar over the door.

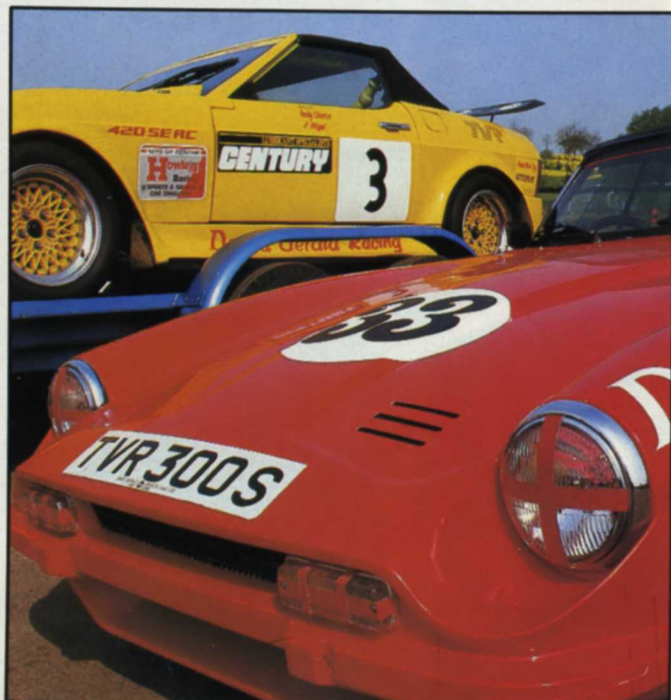
What felt like nervousness was actually the suspension working hard on the circuit's bumps and the monster car in fact remained predictable with very neutral handling and no quirks to frighten the driver. This TVR certainly looked more fearsome than it really was! On the hard-in-third stretch from the Lake Esses down to the hairpin the steering could have been made more direct, but it was still precise enough to guide the car out of the hairpin in a smooth opposite-lock slide in first gear — until Cad managed to spin, just as Andy rounded the turn in the 3000S.... Cad waved nervously at the red car passing and could see its startled driver anxiously eyeing the 'yellow peril' for signs of contact with the high Mallory kerbs. No damage, though.

A few more laps were enough to convince the driver that the big 21cwt TVR was really a mild-mannered beast up to a point, but like its older stablemate could bite either the *very* hard trier or, as in this case, an ageing and rusty hack. However, all was well, and author and photographer were rewarded for their efforts by cups of tea and ham rolls from Pam, the sort of pampering neither is used to at the track. However, that really was just a continuation of the friendliness the whole equipe had been showing all day. Nice weather, nice people, nice place and fine cars: there can't be many better ways to spend a Wednesday. ■





Cad takes a wide line at the hairpin (above) in the 3000S as Cad nips up the inside with the SEAC: neat trick? Later on (below), our 'hero' drives back to the hairpin to wave and 'make sure that Andy following takes the right line...' (whoops!)





TVR Sportscars Ltd

**Exclusively specialising and
LEADING THE WAY WITH TVR**



Photo courtesy Sports Car Monthly

As usual we offer the largest selection of 'M' Series TVR sports cars anywhere in the world, and now with our purchase of the 420SEAC factory-developed racer, as tested in this issue of *Sports Car Monthly*, with which we are contesting this season's BARC NW Championship, we are offering selected used 280, 350, 390SE models.

TVR NEWS RELEASE

"TVR SELL OFF 'M' SERIES PARTS BUSINESS"

In an unprecedented move TVR have released the official supply and manufacturing rights for all the pre 1980 spares to DAVID GERALD TVR SPORTSCARS LIMITED, based in Redditch, Worcestershire. As the sole officially appointed worldwide supplier, DAVID GERALD TVR SPORTSCARS LTD will pursue the parts business generally referred to as the "M" Series. In total, just over 6,000 of the pre 1980 models were manufactured and it is the supply of Parts and Service to that section that DAVID GERALD TVR SPORTSCARS LIMITED have taken over. All chassis and suspension jigs, along with the vast number of body moulds and master bucks, for the fabrication and manufacture of these earlier parts are included in the deal. DAVID and GERALD are two long standing TVR CAR CLUB members and TVR OWNERS. Their experience and knowledge of the earlier models rivals that of the factory and they have been involved in the TVR Parts business for the last five years.

DAVID GERALD TVR SPORTSCARS LIMITED is currently located at Unit 16, New Meadow Road, Lakeside, Redditch, Worcestershire. Telephone: (0527) 22303. They are shortly due to move into a 100,000 sq ft showroom and manufacturing facility at The Green, at Inkberrow, Worcestershire for the complete distribution of the "M" Series Parts business. This movement of the pre 1980 Parts business out of the Blackpool factory will allow the TVR Parts and Service departments to concentrate on the post 1980 model business. It will also provide additional factory space to the expansion of the current range of vehicles.

REMEMBER — WE ALWAYS HAVE AT LEAST 25 TVRs (NO OTHER MARQUES), ON SHOW FOR YOUR INSPECTION



**YOUR SPARES HOTLINE IS (0527) 22303
NEXT DAY DELIVERY WITH ACCESS/VISA**



1980 TVR 3000S CONVERTIBLE, black, tan interior, low mileage	£8,799	1977 TVR 3000M TURBO, blue, cream model band	£6,999
1979 TVR 3000S CONVERTIBLE, graphite, black interior	£7,999	1979 TVR 3000M, red, black model band	£6,395
1980 TVR 3000S CONVERTIBLE TURBO SE, ex-Martin Lilley	NFS	1979 TVR 3000M, red, black interior	£5,500
1979 TVR 3000S CONVERTIBLE TURBO SE spec (David Davies)	NFS	1978 TVR 3000M, red, white model band	£4,750
NEW TVR 3000S CONVERTIBLE ROLLING CHASSIS	£4,999	1978 TVR 3000M, white, brown model band	£4,750
1979 TVR TAIMAR TURBO SE, original black and beautiful	POA	1978 TVR 3000M, black, tan model band	£4,550
1978 TVR TAIMAR TURBO, tobacco, brown model band, 23,000 miles	£7,999	1977 TVR 3000M, harvest gold, tan interior	£4,250
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1980 TVR TAIMAR, gold, brown model band	£6,999	1973 TVR 3000M, red, white model band	£3,450
1979 TVR TAIMAR, black personal reg, 10,000 genuine miles	OFFERS	1976 TVR 1600M, brown, tan interior	£3,999
1979 TVR TAIMAR, brown, cream model band	£5,995	1976 TVR 1600M, Ferrari red, black interior	£3,999
1978 TVR TAIMAR, burgundy, cream model band	£5,450	1970 TVR TUSCAN, blue, blue interior	£4,350
1978 TVR TAIMAR, gold, tan interior	£5,995	1967 TVR GRIFFITH 400, superb in red	OFFERS
1977 TVR TAIMAR, green, cream model band, o/d	£4,995	1983 TVR 200 CONVERTIBLE, Ferrari red	£8,995
1977 TVR TAIMAR, white, brown model band, tan interior	£4,999		
1979 TVR 3000M TURBO SE, midnight blue, TVR 8 registration	OFFERS		
1976 TVR 3000M TURBO SE, black, black interior	£7,495		

Also on show: the fabulous Boss 302 V8 Tuscan Sprint car (ex-Paul Tankard) — the White Monster — and the highly developed 3000S (ex-Colin Blower) — the Red Devil

**Showroom: (0527) 28282. Mobile Phone: (0836) 502978. Spares: (0527) 22303. TVR Car Club: (0527) 22444
LAKESIDE, REDDITCH, WORCESTERSHIRE (Fifteen minutes from National Exhibition Centre,
Birmingham)**