

TVR *Sprint*



TVR Car Club Magazine August 1994
SEAC Special Edition

Sunday was the Dorset Barbecue. We had all the important items to make a good day; sunshine, food and drink. All that was missing were one or two friends, but the rest of us ate and drank their share. The bouncy castle was designed to keep the younger ones quiet and it worked, but the effect on bigger kids is just the reverse!

Malcolm Cook waits in the Pit Lane, Goodwood '94. Photo - John Tolhurst



This year's BBQ concours was split into four groups by age. Thus the pre '70s winner was Ian Massey-Crosse's Grantura, which incidentally had been second at Goodwood so that made two trophies in one weekend. The pre '80s class was won by Derek Fowler's 3000S and the pre '90s class by another visitor from Somerset (just to prove we don't cheat in Dorset), Stan Cross with a very tidy S. The post '90s class was a much closer contest with Ralph's Chimaera just pipping Mark Smith's S3 by a single point. Oh, and there was a novelty class for HGV transport...but I'll leave Chris Ridgers to report on that!

I must thank Anita and her galley slaves plus Barbecue chefs Fiona and Roger. Last but not least, a big thank you from Anita and I for Anita's bouquet and my big toy. The Dorset lot are nice people.

Thank you to John Howells for the report in *Sprint* about Castle Coombe. I had completely forgotten that Dorset member Trevor Miles won the Concours. And did I miss Hampshire's Treasure Hunt report. I was SO looking forward to reading about their winning team....

Paul



The Sports & Specialist Car Company



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The start of the Hillclimb



Mid-Kent Sports Day

The weather was hot and sunny as we gathered for our annual sports day at Graham and Christine's field, ready to play volleyball, rounders, football, tug'o'war and an obstacle race. TVRs lined the field along with the assortment of tin boxes. Children armed with water pistols kept us cool, but be warned, if you take them on with a water pistol be prepared to get wet. I disarmed one to give him a taste of his own medicine when one of his friends outflanked me with the garden hose!

Ladies and children of course joined in to make it a real fun packed day. Bill took a dive in the penalty area and proceeded to roll around in agony; Christine to the rescue but instead of a wet sponge she delivers the whole bucket. A rather soaking Bill squelched away through the rest of the game so at least he was cool. Christine also threw a bucket of water at Graham who was immediately scooped up and dumped in the water trough.

Food arrived at 5ish in the form of Kentucky Fried Chicken, baked potato and dessert with all the trimmings supplied by Laurie and Sharon. Bill came in for a second soaking as he was mobbed and thrown in the water trough. Some new members came along to join in the madcap fun, so Ciaran and Rebecca, Darren and Sue we hope you weren't put off and will come to our future meetings.

A great day was had by all and we're now all looking forward to the Treasure Hunt on 11th September.

Our monthly meetings are still in good attendance with 11 cars gracing our overfull car park. A warm welcome to new member Chris Shore with a Griff 500 - our second 500 at the meet. incidentally, we also have three 390SEs which is quite something considering how few of this not so often seen TVR were actually made.

Talk at our meeting ranged from speed cameras and other high tech equipment used by our boys in blue to what's happening on the other circuit days this year. Hopefully we will be able to send a few cars along to support the Loseley event this year and also the National event at Snetterton.

I'll be looking for a new Regional Organiser to continue the Mid Kent area soon. If anyone feels like having a go, please give me a call.

Keep taking the tablets

Jim Gamsby

There were lots of supercars in attendance of course together with a six figure price tag to match. But wait, what's this car with one of the biggest crowds around it? Oh yes, the Griffith 500. Just what I like to see, and so obviously do lots of other people too.

There were two other highlights too. The Autoglym Parade of representative cars from the fifties to the present day including, in the late eighties, Jim Gamsby's SEAC. Well done Jim, it looked great, sounded ...well we all know how great it sounds!

The final high spot was meeting with Lynn and Andy again. I really must get about to the other regions. Or I suppose you could always come to see us in Essex, you know, at the new venue at the Hurdlemakers Arms...!

Roar On

David Lobb

From Triumph to Griff to SEAC

Dear Ed,

Up until 1992 Triumphs were our main interest, having owned several TR's and Stags. Buying a TVR had been in the back of our minds for some years, since a friend introduced us to his Tasmin. Hardly anyone seems indifferent to the wedges, either liking the shape a lot, or not at all. We fall into the former group.

However, the TVR bug really got hold when the Griffith came out. We loved the styling, the hint of E-Type our all time favourite car meant the bug was taking over. It became terminal after test driving a Griffith at Team Central in late 1992.

The test drive will always be a vivid memory. Never having driven anything remotely as powerful it was a stimulating experience, particularly as it was pouring with rain. Clive was very trusting allowing us to take his demonstrator for a test drive together.

When we arrived back Clive asked "How was it?".

"I'm glad I went to the loo before we went!" Angela replied.

Clive said with a smile, "I heard the wheel spin when you joined the dual carriageway". I looked suitably embarrassed but we sat down with Clive, wrote out our spec, signed on the dotted line and looked forward to taking delivery.

We collected the car in Feb 93 after three months of



eager anticipation. It was worth the wait and 18 months on we can report that mechanically it has been faultless. Our only minor reservation has been with the overall standard of finish. There is still room for improvement in this department from TVR.

Keeping our faith in TVR has been due to Clive and the team at Team Central who have attended to our concerns with courtesy and enthusiasm way beyond the call of duty. We were so impressed with their service that as a mark of our appreciation, Angela and I presented Clive with a cake displaying his Tuscan Racer.



Angela presents the cake to Clive

All thoughts of Triumphs were now disappearing fast to the point that we decided to sell a TR5 which we have owned for 10 years, to buy another TVR. Having a His and Hers would save arguments over who was going to drive the Griff. What we had in mind was something that would be relatively inexpensive to buy and suited to track use. A Vixen was suggested as a good bet. Driving a new car on track days (on which we have become very keen since joining the TVRCC) with very little experience seemed slightly irrational.

We failed miserably to stay within our original budget though, and bought a 420 SEAC.

Well, what can I say about the SEAC, also purchased from Clive at Team Central. He described it as a 'BIG HAIRY MONSTER' and I don't think I can improve on that. It is very apt.

To summarise our thoughts on the two TVR's:

The Griffith is more comfortable, having a softer suspension set-up. The steering is lighter and dynamically it is more suitable as an everyday car, it doesn't let in water and the heater sort of works.

The SEAC in contrast has very stiff suspension, heavy steering (ours has no power assistance), requires more frequent gear changes and can probably only be matched by Heavy Metal Music in its ability to damage your hearing.

Does this mean we prefer the Griff? Not at all. The SEAC would win on the "Broadest Smile Meter". It's so much fun to drive. We love the way it 'Pops and Bangs' on the overrun. The effect it has on other motorists and pedestrians is amusing, as other SEAC owners will know. It is a total over-statement. It would be impossible to be inconspicuous in a SEAC.

Having driven both cars around Goodwood at this year's track day, the heritage of the SEAC shone through. It was a surprise how much more at home it felt.

Ask us which car we would least like to part with and we would probably say "PASS", it's too painful a thought to contemplate

Malcolm Cook

420SEAC vs Griffith 500 'My comparison of these two thunder chariots'

Dear Ed

I've been lucky enough to drive several Griffith 500s and more than my fair share of SEACs. The Griffith feels very well put together with no scuttle shake and a very comfortable driving position, a superb sports car that feels at home in any driving situation. It is a pussy cat in town and a pleasure on the open road with great acceleration. The interior is well thought out and pleasing to the eye with a lot of attention to detail. The Griff has probably the best shape of any convertible sportscar.

The SEAC is a different animal. It is harder to drive and less refined; the Griffith is as gorgeous as the SEAC is brutal and aggressive. In terms of refinement the two are as far apart as you would expect with roughly seven years of development between them. The clutch is heavier and so is the steering. SEACs are not happy in town as they chunter and protest at being held back and forced to behave. The brutish looks of the SEAC turns heads as much as the curvacious Griffith but a big plus for the SEAC is its thunderous exhaust note which totally overshadows the quieter Griff. A 350i or 400SE sounds very musical when cog swapping but the SEAC is louder and deeper. The noise alone can set off car alarms when passed. It rattles windows and shakes foundations; I'm afraid the Griff just doesn't have it.

On acceleration it is very difficult to choose between them without proper testing equipment. The Griffith is smooth and refined whilst the SEAC is rough and raucous. Both are in the Jeeesus category.

In the handling department I would have to put the SEAC first, the Griff handles exceptionally well but is a bit twitchy and doesn't feel quite so stable near its limit. The SEAC feels solid and very surefooted with the more you give it the more it soaks up. Both rate high in the feels good factor but the SEAC tends to make the senses tingle more.

The Griffith is excellent, a wonderful cross section of all driving situations. I'd love one but that exhaust would have to go. For me the SEAC with its better handling and thunderous exhaust note has the adrenalin pumping faster and therefore a more pleasurable driving machine - possibly still the fastest road going TVR.

Jim Gamsby

Another Satisfied Customer

Dear Ed,

What a pleasant surprise it is to open an envelope that not only does not contain a bill but that actually makes for a pleasant, informative and enjoyable read; I am of course referring to *Sprint*.

As you have probably guessed from my first statement, I am only a recent addition to the TVRCC, but after reading a couple of editions of *Sprint* I feel I have joined a Club whose members have one over-riding factor in common. No, not that we all own/have owned/plan to own TVRs, but that we all enjoy the essence of what TVRs represent; the love of an uncompromising machine that provides a tremendous feeling of enjoyment,

SEAC Snippets

SEAC = Special Equipment Aramid Composite. Body made of kevlar and other composite materials. 200lbs lighter than GRP equivalent. Not all SEACs were Aramid Composite as name suggests as most are GRP or a mixture of the two. Only the first dozen or so cars were built with Kevlar of which just three are left; the remainder have had panels changed or repaired in smoother GRP. At least one has had a total body change to GRP.

420SEAC racer was built in feb 86 and campaigned in the '86 season with great success winning 19 out of 24 races before being banned.

420SEAC unveiled at the October '86 Motor Show.

Only two cars came with fully rose jointed suspension; some were partial rose jointed and some had none at all.

Some have adjustable spring seats all round with adjustable shock absorbers but most were only on the front.

Tyre size is 225/50VR15 Bridgestone RE71 front and rear with an option of 245/45VR16 on the rear.

Early SEACs had a 350i dash changing to a new style with four gauges in top centre with no bulky box of switches and radio etc. 450s had the later dash with five gauges in top centre and turned slightly towards the driver.

420 cars have 300 bhp although one has 355 bhp, one 327 bhp and the racer 360 bhp. 450s have 325 bhp.

Wheels are OZ racing five spoke or multi spoke split rims.

SEACs are two inches wider and seven inches shorter than a 390SE.



Inner door panels are scalloped out to give extra elbow room.

Some have solid lifters but most are hydraulic.

Because of the few numbers built and of course their high performance the SEACs are fast becoming very desirable TVRs.

I'm still working on the SEAC Register and still need any information I can get on the subject; hopefully I will discover exactly how many were built and have details on them all. Figures so far suggest around 35 420s and 18 450s.

Jim G



The Saudi SEAC



I bought my SEAC in March last year. The car is left hand drive as it was originally bought by an Arab who shipped it to Saudi Arabia. He used it to blow away his friends' Porsches and Ferraris before getting bored with it having had overheating problems and being fed up with sand entering the cockpit. He then sold the car to a British businessman who had the car brought back to UK. He only ever got pulled over by the police once, and that for using the Saudi number plates, although they seemed more interested in what the car was and how fast it could go.

The performance of the car amazing and the acceleration phenomenal. With the available power, the fact that it is left hand drive doesn't really matter as you can follow a bit further behind the vehicle in front than normal to see past him and still get by when a gap appears. Extras fitted to this car are power steering, air conditioning and a high level brake light fitted in the centre of the boot lid.

Just like any TVR, my SEAC has had a few problems. Since I've owned it, it has needed a new throttle cable, ball joint, front shocks and the exhaust manifold gaskets replacing. Despite it having had a new battery fitted before I bought it, I also had to replace this due to starting problems. Apparently the wrong type had been fitted and wasn't up to the job, so thanks to all those members who gave me push starts at Brands Hatch last year. The clutch has just started slipping, even though the car has only covered 20000 miles; I'm told this is an engine out job, not to be attempted by the faint hearted! I'll try anything once though, so it's major surgery time in the coming weeks.

The thrill from driving the car more than makes up for the attention it demands and besides, what other make of car gives you this performance in a convertible for the price.

Martin Price

TVR 420 SEAC Racer

The eyeball grabbing yellow 420 SEAC Racer will be well known to many Club members, its exploits being well documented by this mag and others.

Built in February 1986 by Chris Schirle and Peter Wheeler, with a 4.2 litre engine developed during the 1985 season and run in the 390SE factory racer with much success. The driver was the successful Steve Cole, an ex-Morgan racer and winner of the Prodsports Championship to which he would campaign the SEAC in '86.

The first outing saw the SEAC take pole position at Oulton Park and again at its next race at Cadwell Park; it would have won but for a spin on the final lap which denied victory. The third race was at Donington Park where the lap record fell in fine style before a class win at Oulton Park in a Modsports competition.



The SEAC, in winning 19 out of 24 races, tasted successes against Lotus, Porsche, Ferrari and many others in the Prodsports Championship taking consistent pole position and slaughtering lap records as TVR's King Kong rocketed around the UK's circuits. A clear two seconds were knocked off the lap record at Donington Park making a much feared force on the circuits. The SEAC though was banned from racing due to insufficient numbers being produced to satisfy homologation requirements, a victim of its own success and proof of its ferocious pace.

David Gerald Motorsport then raced the car for a year with Andy Clarke at the wheel. In Macau, an extremely modified 3000S with 550bhp Cosworth engine driven by John Kent, and the 420SEAC driven by Steve Cole were raced with others and finished first and second respectively. Richard Witts from Hong Kong saw the race at Macau and became the next owner, but I am not sure of his success with it.

I bought the car from him through David Gerald Motorsport in 1991 and my thanks go to Chris Schirle and Julian Knapp for their help and advice with the car. When I bought the SEAC it was dark green and needed work; I've been restoring it ever since and it should be ready for testing (me as well) next year.

To bring you up to date with the car's latest spec, the bodywork now has a removable nose and an adjustable rear wing. Jim Gamsby resprayed the car back to yellow and has made an excellent job of it. The engine is 4.5 litres, dry sumped and running 4x48 Dellortos. TVR Power rebuilt the engine three races ago and reckon it produces 360bhp and 330 lbsft torque. The gearbox is a Getrag unit and the differential runs a pump and oil cooler. Brakes are vented all round with AP four pot calipers front and magnesium calipers rear.



If anyone has any articles, old photos or information about the car I would be very pleased to hear from them on 0268 692964.

Jeff Statham



SEAC DAY - SUNDAY 3RD JULY

The meeting was set for 12 noon at the Chartridge Centre, just outside of Chesham. With Wimbledon and the French Grand Prix 'live' on TV, several of us had driven there thinking that we may be one of only two or three cars to turn up.

However, by 1.30pm a staggering 9 cars had arrived in the car park. It was a blistering hot day, so after a lot of talking and admiring one another's cars, we retired to a reception area indoors where everyone was able to cool off and tell a few stories. One we hadn't heard before was being stopped by the boys in blue, but instead of being booked - SWAPPING CARS! There were a few tales of minor niggles and the old joke about TVR's having a heater that worked.



Fully refreshed, everyone was keen to go back outside for the first of three photo shoots. Cars were arranged in a semi-circle on the lawn with the stunning yellow racer, restored by Jeff and Kathy Statham, taking pole position. This was to be the official photo of the day and can be seen in centre fold. We had just moved into the Courtyard, when car number 10 arrived, which was quickly squeezed in. The photo here was immaterial, the real object was to cram as many cars as possible into a confined space, start the engines and rev 'at will' to see how much noise it was possible to make. A rare treat for the ears, which brought guests and staff running.

For our third photo session, cars were assembled behind the centre where there was a large balcony from which we could gaze down and admire the view. Following this we did a quick re-take on the lawn, to include our tenth car, and with all the photos taken it was decided the day would not be complete without hitting the streets of Chesham in convoy.

It was 4.15pm and despite the fact some people had a long journey home, nobody wanted to miss out. The SEAC Racer was not road legal, so Jeff and Kathy found 'empty' passenger seats and a nine car convoy set out. Miraculously, we all managed to keep together. Quite an achievement considering Chesham is made up entirely of roundabouts with a few roads inbetween.

Having turned a few heads in the town centre, we headed for some open road and found a wonderful hill to have a quick blast of acceleration. This turned into a quick blast of excitement for Declan and Charlotte, who suddenly found their bootlid flying up into the air! The following cars watched in amazement as Charlotte undid her seatbelt, leaned precariously over from the passenger seat and slammed it shut. Now I know why most SEAC's have that large spoiler on the bootlid. Shortly after, we found ourselves winding down country lanes into a small QUIET village. Residents could be forgiven for thinking the French Grand Prix had arrived on their doorstep. One resident who stopped to turn around took a rather odd shaped chunk out of the hedge he was cutting.



On-route, we had passed 2 MGAs, a Healey 3000 and a Corvette, not another TVR to be seen. Then suddenly, just as we were arriving back at the centre a V8S appeared from the opposite direction. We all waved and by the time he reached the end of this 'awesome' convoy, I expect he wondered what on earth was going on.

This was a fitting end to a very exciting day. I think those that attended will be talking about it for some time. On behalf of all those members, I would like to say a big THANK YOU to Jim Gamsby for organising the day and to Tony Weston for providing the venue, refreshments and standing in at the last minute after an official photographer let us down. What made the day particularly special was the long distance many people travelled to make it possible. It wouldn't be a report for Sprint if we didn't have a long list of cars and drivers, so here goes:

Jim and Eve Gamsby
Tony Weston
Angie and Malcolm Cook
Jeff and Kath Statham
Colin Brady
Oliver and Debbie Sedlacek

John Tolhurst
Martin Price
John Tanguy and Yasmine
John Walker
Declan O'Riordan and Charlotte

Lets hope we can do it again next year

Angie Cook

SEAC Day - The Definitive Revue

by Tony Weston

Sunday morning, 3rd July. It seemed like every other quiet, lazy, hot and sunny Sunday morning in the sleepy village of Chartridge. By 10am the locals were out in their gardens enjoying the peace and quiet.

Little did they know that 3000 brake horsepower of 420SEACs were, at that very minute, speeding their way across the British Isles to shatter the tranquillity of the Chiltern countryside.





By 11am, Jim and Eve arrived to discuss arrangements and parked their blue 420 next to my grey one, and after a brief rest we went out to enjoy the now blazing heat of the car park. Sure enough at 12 noon we heard the now familiar howl of a 420 but it only paused momentarily at the gate of Chartridge Conference Centre before revving up and blasting off down the road.

A very makeshift red arrow was placed on a bush next to the entrance with the letters SEAC written on it. That did the trick, and within 30 minutes there were a total of 9 SEACs in the car park. From as far away as Jersey must have been the greatest distance travelled - by John Tanguy and Yasmine - but they had only come up from London that particular day. The furthest drive of the day must have been very close between Colin Brady from Newton Abbott, Devon, and John Walker from Leek in North Staffordshire. Both had travelled over 200 miles - dedication or is it fanaticism?

At 1pm everyone retired inside to get out of the searing 90°F heat for a cup of tea and a chat about the various problems and solutions to the foibles of the infamous 420SEAC. Thermostats, oil pressure, water leaks and cold starts were high on the agenda along with the usual TVR niggles like heating, insurance and the oh so long arm of the radar gun.

Quiet roads are at a premium for the SEAC driver. 0-60 in four seconds is not problem but it takes the continent to truly exercise their 165mph+ top speed. Such a shame really.

At approx 2pm the first highlight of the day took place. John Tolhurst arrived in the tenth SEAC to take his place in the front row ready for a rare moment. All ten cars were to start together and be caught on video. On the count of three, the whirring of starter motors was heard for a second or so followed by the ear splitting rasp of 3000bhp. IT WAS DEAFENING! Only by looking at the rev counter on my car could I tell how many revs I was clocking! Two minutes or so of this ear shattering experience and it was off to find another photo opportunity.

By 4.30pm we were itching for a blast on the old two lane black top so we all climbed back into the cockpits and spun up the engines. With my car leading we proceeded through Chesham and Amersham before heading off for the A413 Great Missenden Link Road...6 miles of almost straight dual carriageway.

Jeff Statham was my passenger and I'm sure he enjoyed the drive. Comments like "Look at that...and that...and that..." came from the stunned local public as we cruised the streets. Upon reaching the almost deserted A413 I could no longer hold back the desire to give the car a good old thrashing. Pressing hard on the loud pedal all the way into the carpet and into the carbon fibre was undescrivable. All 327 brake horses stampeded up the road with eight more SEACs doing the same behind. The noise heard by the final car was said to be "Great!"

When we arrived back at Chartridge everyone was as high as a kite and almost shouting at each other with excitement. I think Declan O'Riordan caught it on video, I'd love to see it.

After more tea to calm the nerves, people departed. Declan and John Tanguy in particular left in spectacular style with first, second and third gear wheel spins at what must have been 6000rpm. A massive thank you to everyone who came to Chartridge and made the SEAC day what it was. We must do it again some time. Until then, "Later Dudes",

Tony

Battersea to Britannia by SEAC

by John Tanguy

A demonic drone on Battersea Bridge, a guzzle of gas from an Elf filling station with thoughts of F1, 1200 Monday. feeling the frailty of a Chelsea weekend. A purposeful roar, a tweak from the fumed forecourt and a fight for space on the A4. Sun sizzling down, heater on cold but blowing hot as usual. keep the fans on to reduce overheating. Gauge okay, time to find the M4.

Only one lane with space, great when it's the lane you want. Hod down and foot down to Cornwall. 400 revs and a soulfully sweet engine. Other traffic disappearing ponderously in the mirrors. Half an eye on the gauges but all in balance, waiting to be tested. cautiously relaxed and time for a cigarette. Blast, forgot the onboard lighter packed up years ago and no chance of using an ordinary lighter with the hood down. I would give up smoking rather than put the hod up. Never mind, select a track on the stereo, Fleetwood Mac, Chain. Up a couple of notches and go with the flow.

Clouds appearing rapidly, it wouldn't would it? Oh yes it would. Splattered spots mingling with the pressed wildlife on the windscreen. A notice board announcing tantalizingly but unreachably "Services, 56 miles". No point in pulling over, shades off and keep going. Wiper on - big mistake as the insects mixed with grease and polish - but keep fingers crossed and wait for the road to become visible again. Snakingly braking behind vehicles that seconds previously had nothing in their rear view, down a gear and with disdain drag the next quarter.

Services coming up 28 miles, the clouds still threatening but the rain's abated. The petrol gauge seems to have suddenly dropped below 1/4 but can't remember if this means that it's nearly empty or that there's nearly half a tank. When it's full it reads 3/4 so there should be plenty, but with services as frequent as sunshine in Scunthorpe, would you trust it? A quick pit stop with gas for the monster and coke and a cigarette for me. Bark the engine back to life and slither through the chicane back out onto the open road. A startled tandem of Porsches move aside as third gear leaves them with a thunderous roar and a glimpse of a chromed tailpipe.

Next stop somewhere on the M5. Forgot about the blow back from the filler cap and ended up wearing nearly half a gallon. As I pull back out a strange sound annoys the ear drums. A tinkle of tappets? A variation of valves? Probably pinking in protest to low grade fuel. Next change point Exeter and then onto A roads to St Austell and time for a stretch. Not bad 287 miles in 2 hrs 55 mins. Then onto Truro, two traffic jams, one accident tailback and another hour to complete the trip before being welcomed at the Britannia pub with a private parking spot, friends and a welcome vodka tonic.



John Tanguy's - "The Jersey SEAC"
"LoadsSEACs"



Tony Weston's SEAC
Declan O'Riordan's SEAC



First Impressions of a SEAC



I saw my first SEAC, the one belonging to my friends Jim and Eve Gamsby, at the 1992 Blackpool Extravaganza. It was a 420 and I remember thinking at the time what a fabulous looking machine it was; I'm sure my eyes turned an envious shade of green. When Jim started it up the noise was deafening sounding just like a racing car. I had seen pictures of SEACs in books and magazines, but no amount of photography could prepare you for that first sight of one in the flesh.

I made up my mind there and then that I had to have one. The only problem was money, or rather lack of it, having only recently bought my 350i a few months earlier.

The next time I saw a SEAC again was at the Doune show, and again it was Jim and Eve's 420. Jim very kindly showed me around and let me sit in it, which surprised me with how much space there was. This encounter finally made up my mind and shortly afterwards I put my 350 up for sale which sold quickly. I must admit I felt a little disloyal selling the 350 because I'd bought it in Newcastle and it was an excellent car that had given me two year's trouble free motoring, but I wanted a change.

I placed a "Wanted" ad in Market Place in our esteemed *Sprint* and was very surprised at the response. Two members rang me up; one from Elgin in the Highlands to tell me about two 450SEs that he knew of for sale and Tony Weston rang me to tell me of a 450SEAC down in Oxford which was for sale at the local dealers. So map in hand, I travelled down to view it.

When I arrived, it was standing on the forecourt in brilliant sunshine with several other TVRs. It was silver and looked superb. I was told it was the 1988 Show car and it had 13000 miles on the clock. I went out with Norris Miles for a test drive, but the car was firing on only seven cylinders and after quite a lot of attention the problem was still not cured when it was time for me to head north the 260 miles home. If they could cure it, I said, I would buy it.

A few days later they phoned to say the car was ready and I travelled down the next weekend, checked everything was okay and handed over my hard earned cash. I also bought the registration which was very apt - TVR 450. I drove home without trouble but plenty of stares from other motorists plus a motorcyclist who rode alongside me on the A1 trying to goad me into a race. I just put on my superior smile face plus a slight shake of



the head and after a few moments he streaked ahead. I was doing 70 at the time and I guess he was well in excess of the ton.

The car hadn't been serviced at the 12000 mile interval, so I decided to get it done plus a rolling road tune. The nearest TVR dealer is about 90 miles away and so I decided to get it done at a top service centre much nearer

home. They had serviced my 350 and I was pleased with the result, but the 450 was a different kettle of fish. When I went to collect it, the boss, who is a very nice chap, asked me what work had been done on the engine as it was obviously very highly tuned and was one of the most powerful cars they had ever serviced. I told him I had just bought it and had no idea but would try to find out and let him know.

As I drove away I noticed that again, it was only firing on seven cylinders so I turned around and told the garage. As the mechanics began testing it, two of the spark plugs failed the test and were replaced. I also noticed that the exhaust was smoking which I thought might have been because I had asked for synthetic oil to be used. When all the tests were complete, the boss gave me a printout of the results...they could have been in Chinese for all the sense they made to me.

The smoking exhaust still bothered me, so I gave it another oil change this time using GTX but to no avail. I had visions of a broken piston ring so I took it back to Oxford who discovered that the timing was incorrect and the tappets needed adjusting. A few days later I collected it and it's been fine ever since.

On the plus side, 450SEACs are very rare and create a lot of interest amongst car enthusiasts; on the minus side their rarity means that not much technical information is at hand and it pays to have any technical work done by a TVR dealer. I have also found Paul Willis at TVR Power extremely helpful with information.

One thing that I have come to respect is its awesome power, especially in the wet. This is the fastest car I have ever driven and care needs to be taken. I'm not sure about the performance figures but I would guess that 0-60 in around 4.2 secs, 0-100 in about 10.5 secs, and a top speed of 165 mph are achievable from the 345bhp engine.

The question I hear you all asking, is "Are you pleased with it?"

The answer is definitely yes; every time I drive it I come back with a big grin on my face.

Bill Pini

420 SEAC "Sweet Thunder"

'Designed to turn airborne insects into tiny red skid marks on the front panel'

Photos - Hans E Scheur

Take your seat and nestle behind the steering wheel; there's an air of space with the centre box of switches missing from the 350i arrangement and the lack of handbrake near the gear lever, the umbrella type flyoff handbrake being tucked away underneath the steering column. Turn the key, wait a few seconds for the fuel pump to prime the system, then turn to start. An almighty roar sets the senses tingling as it coughs into life. Tickle the accelerator to keep it going and restrict the revs to below 2500rpm; after a few seconds it will settle down to a rough idle at around 1400rpm since the cold start device is disconnected and not needed as great gulps of fuel pour down the cylinders. Stay at standstill for a few minutes until the engine warms before proceeding.



Time to go for some motion, so it's seatbelt on feeling at ease in the comfy cockpit. Press the heavy clutch to the floor and select first, the gearbox feels tight and difficult to select until warmed up. Handbrake off and you're away, into second staying below 2500rpm and up into third, any more and you're over the speed limit. The steering is extremely heavy and the car needs to be nursed gently until warmed up. The burbling V8 is loud even at low revs but once warm the gearbox makes for easier and smoother cog swapping, the steering lightens up on the move and the ride is comfortable if firm.



Around town the torquey, gutsy V8 shakes foundations as and has old ladies holding their ears; all heads turn as the thunderous 420 passes. It can snap a schoolboy's neck at 100 paces. Out on the open road it comes to life, engine warmed, gearbox slick, press the loud pedal and in any gear the rear squats forcing the seat hard in your back. Going up the box sets the adrenalin pumping as it rapidly empties the rear view mirror, the noise is almost deafening and telegraph poles look like fence posts as the road ahead gives the effect of a video game gone haywire. Come down the box and the exhaust cracks and rumble like overhead thunder, it's simply gorgeous.

This is a serious speeding ticket collector; even stationary it looks like it's exceeding the limit. It doesn't like slow moving traffic and protests at being restrained.

On the open road, constant speed soon has your head pounding with the monotonous roar but try swapping gears and the fun you can have playing with the exhaust note brings a feel good factor of 11 out of 10, not to mention the ability to overtake so fast you're pulling back in before you've even thought about it. On the handling side it feels solid, take a corner hard and the Bridgestones bite hard with the forces pulling on your body threatening to displace your eyeballs leaving the thought of how fast can I go before the rear will overtake the front. Unless your name is Nigel Mansell, or you're two spanners short of a tool box, you'll never know.

The exhaust size and note is sufficient to dissuade the hot hatch brigade that a challenge at the lights is a waste of time and if a VW on steroids should throw down the gauntlet, let him go. A watching custodian of the law will hear and spot you first and besides, a check in the mags will show him he's lost. You have to be very careful where and when to unleash the horses; Club Track Days are the best.

Overall the SEAC is an effort to drive but very satisfying. there is no other car that has given me more pleasure to drive and of course, with the roof down, it is a sportscar's sportscar.

Keep taking the tablets

Jim G

Declan's Loves and Hates of the SEAC

Loves: Opening the garage door. Catapult acceleration. The deep note that sets off car alarms. The "General Quarters" bell ringing noise at 140mph+. All the noises in between. The seats. The dashboard at night. The 'G' forces on fast corners. Pensioners asking for a go in it. Young ladies going for a drive in it. Giving it to the latter. The wave from other TVR drivers. Knowing that the brakes and handling will greatly assist in an emergency. Making Ferrari Mondial QV drivers feel impotent. Going through towns in first gear at 4000rpm. Driving through tunnels; just think of the fun I could have in the Channel Tunnel! The people that stop and look when you park up. The amount of people that come over and say "I'd love to have one of those".

Hates: The electric windows coming up too far because the wires have stretched again. The shake and rattle on non perfect roads. Long journeys without earplugs. Seeing something in the road that requires more than four inches ground clearance. Not having a locking petrol cap. Leaving it in a car park. The size of the petrol tank. The way the petrol disappears as soon as the gauge gets into the last quarter. Water dripping on my foot when it rains hard. Wheel spinning when I really don't want to. Pub mechanics comments ("It's a kit car", "Got a Rover engine"). Trying to put a suitcase in the boot. Only having one!

Declan O'Riordan