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# Wheels

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FIRST DRIVE  
**NEW  
MARINA**

**FULL TEST:  
NEW FALCONS**

**NEW CAR  
SPECIAL**  
—Geneva, Melbourne



# marina

**Take a bow, Leyland Australia: Your Marina leaves the British version in the wake of its ohc engines and it's going to win back a sizeable portion of the small car market.**

FORGET THE ENGLISH Marina. That rather unfortunate car shares the same name and body as the local version but little else. We knew the Australian car would be different — it had to be — but we had little idea the changes would be so significant.

Experience with an English Marina in New Zealand held out little hope for the car as a savior in Australia for BL (or as it is known Leyland Australia).

But the local car rates very highly as a competitor to the Japanese — and other Australian — small cars. It is a tribute to the local engineers. Certainly when the British motoring Press hears of our car there will be a few sour grapes.

In a day long impressions run, we drove two Marinas — a Super Deluxe 1750 and TC automatic — over 400 miles. We came back impressed and hopeful that they will prove the turning point in Leyland's fortunes in this country.

Technically, of course, they are not especially advanced, particularly from a suspension point of view, but with a completely conventional layout which is well proven — as it should be since it owes much to the 1948 Morris Minor — it seems to be just the kind of car the average Australian is searching for.

*(Continued on page 90)*



# makes it!



Photography Uwe Kuessner





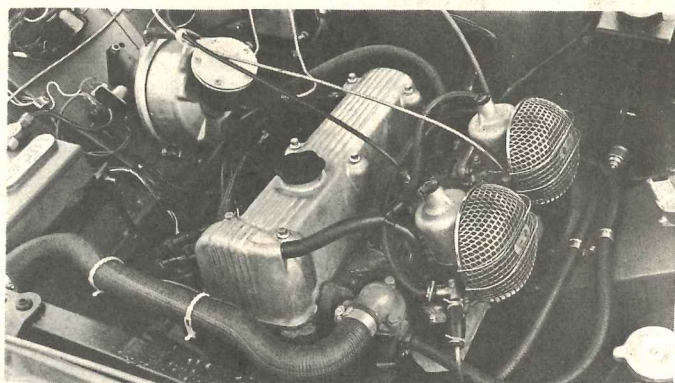
*Super interior has quality feel with excellent finish. Eye-ball vents are deleted on Deluxe. Gearchange has long throws but is very light.*



*Above, and Right: Coupe and sedan hustled through same corner, same speed. They look the same but feel different. Sedan has more steering feel, more understeer than coupe.*



*Entire front seat moves forward on two-door models to make access to comfortable rear seat easy. There's room for three across the back seat.*



*Formerly east-west now north-south the E-series engine has been taken out to 1750 cc and gets twin carbies on TC.*

## Marina makes it!

(Continued from page 21)

It might not appeal to the automotive purists, but sheer economic necessity and Australia's buying habits mean this is the path the company must follow if it's to survive here.

Within the limitations of the basic design, the Marina achieves a high degree of efficiency and driver appeal.

Leyland Australia has gone the full options route with a very wide model line-up. There are three versions — Deluxe, Super Deluxe and TC. Deluxe and Super are offered in two or four door versions while the TC comes in two door form only. The Deluxe and Super can be had with either the 1500 or 1750 engines while the TC gets a twin carburettor version of the 1750 engine.

Automatic transmission can be had with either 1750 but not the 1500. All models feature disc brakes on the front wheels and a power booster is optional.

Difference between the Deluxe and Super are many. The Deluxe has rubber mats where the Super gets carpets. The Super also has rear armrests, a clock, front parcel tray, cigar lighter, wood-grained instrument panel, face-level vents and aluminium scuff plates. Externally, the cheaper car can be recognised by plain stainless steel hubcaps and a general lack of bright metal ornamentation.

The TC takes the Super one step further — reclining bucket seats as standard, opening rear quarter vents, a wood-grained three spoke steering wheel, a tachometer replaces the clock and the gear shift lever is enclosed in a console.

Grilles are essentially the same in all three models but serve as a means of identification. The Deluxe has a bar painted in the same color as the body, the Super a silver bar and the TC a black bar.

The engine chart explains the difference between the three engines. You might notice the 1500 engine in the Marina develops less power than the unit fitted east-west in the front wheel drive 1500. With the 1750 engine option, it was felt the 1500 engine should emphasise low speed torque rather than power.

The Marina 1500's maximum torque figure of 77 lb/ft at 2500 rpm compares unfavorably with the old 1500s 84 lb/ft but this was developed at a much higher 3600 rpm. Power has dropped from 73 bhp to 62 bhp, both being developed at 5500 rpm.

Those who want extra power have only to option the 1750 engine or go to the TC.

We have been seeing Marinas around Sydney for months now so the styling didn't come as a surprise, but the cars do look much better cleaned up with all the badges visible. The TC, especially, looks very smart, although it suffers a little because it shares the same front doors as the four door models. Most genuine coupes have longer doors to match the fastback styling.

The sedan, in some colors, looks almost dull, but there is nothing controversial about it so it should appeal to most buyers.

Inside, however, both models set a very high standard of finish and comfort with excellent seats, both front and rear, and both create a warm feeling which has been lacking in some past BL cars. Trim and upholstery are tastefully applied and give a genuine impression of quality.

The dashboard layout is simple. The Morris takes a lead from brother Triumph in having two steering column stalks which look after wipers/washers (and it also has a single sweep operation in addition to the normal two-speed set-up) on the left and lights/indicators/horn, but not flasher on the right.

In front of the driver there are three circular dials (two on the Deluxe) with eye ball vents at either end of the dashboard. The heater controls are in a panel below the main dashboard area together with the ashtray and radio.

Tall drivers will appreciate the reclining bucket seat option which makes the driving position very comfortable. The seat padding is very soft with sufficient lateral and shoulder support to prevent the occupants from sliding around.

On the two-door models the entire front seat moves



forward as the squab is folded to make access into the rear compartment simple. The rear seats in both cars are outstanding with deep cushions and gently raked squabs and more leg and knee room than most of the competition.

We viewed driving the cars with some trepidation after reading overseas tests. This wasn't dispelled after a quick 100 miles on wet roads, but after a longer drive in the dry in which we really learnt the car's handling characteristics the return trip, also on wet roads, was far more relaxing as well as being quicker.

Both the steering and handling differ considerably from the TC automatic to the 1750 manual. The TC had light, vague steering with strong self centring while the Super's steering retained a good degree of feel, was a little heavier but with less self-centring. With four turns lock to lock neither steering feels like it has a rack and pinion set-up. The turning circle is a tight 31 feet.

The coupe also understeered less but wandered in cross winds. The sedan was completely stable. Even so the sedan understeered far less than the English car.

The rear end tends to bump steer and the primitive semi-elliptic leaf spring back axle develops axle tramp under crash stop conditions although an anti-tramp rod is fitted.

But for all that the cars are responsive to the throttle and can be driven flat out and still feel safe and sure, although the opposite applies if you view them from outside.

It is an easy car in which to set up an understeer drift and hold it through a corner and although the car bounces around on rough roads it holds the road surprisingly well. There is some scuttle shake inside the car. Radials are standard on the TC and optional on the others.

Performance is excellent in either case. The TC engine seems ideally matched to the automatic transmission with smooth upward changes occurring at 4700 rpm. On the early TCs the instruments are taken straight from the Mini Clubman GT and the tachometer has a redline of 6500 rpm, but on the later cars this will be bought back to 5700 rpm which is much more realistic. We ran the TC engine to 5500 rpm but it becomes noisy and little harsh so if you buy one of the early versions don't try for the redline.

A spongy brake pedal doesn't prevent the brakes from pulling the car up straight and true and the ride, although noisy and inclined to clonk across bumps or joints in the road, is far smoother than we imagined it would be. The manual gearchange is quick and feels rather like a small Ford but with longer throws into second and fourth.

Australia's Marina range would seem to have a good chance of succeeding in a tough and already crowded small car market. Its simplicity, good finish and performance will open up a new buying area to Leyland. But we wonder how many front-wheel-drive advocates are going to make the switch? \*

MARINA	Engine Specifications		
	'1500'	'1750'	'1750' T.C.
Displacement (cc/ins.)	1485/90.6	1746/106.6	1746/106.6
Bore/Stroke	3 x 3.2	3 x 3.77	3 x 3.77
Max BHP @ RPM	62 @ 5500	78 @ 4800	90 @ 5200
Max Torque @ RPM	77 @ 2500	99 @ 3000	104 @ 3400
Compression Ratio	8.6:1	8.6:1	9.0:1
Carburetion	Single SU	Single SU	Twin SU
Dimensions	2 Door		4 Door
Wheelbase	96"		96"
Track —			
Front	52.5"		52.5"
Rear	52.4"		52.4"
Height — (unladen)	55"		55"
Length	163.1"		166.1"
Width	64.31"		64.31"
Kerb Weight	1990 lbs		2030 lbs
Fuel capacity	12 gallons		12 gallons
Boot Capacity	17 cubic feet		20 cubic feet