



MG X80 now an incredible 965bhp MG SV

MG Rover is to build a new luxury high-performance sports car for next year (2002) was the surprise announcement was made after the Le Mans 24-hour race that MG Rover had acquired part of the business interests of the Qvale Automotive group, which manufactures the low-volume but US-certified Qvale Mangusta at a factory in Modena, Northern Italy.

The new MG - codenamed X80 - will be based on the Mangusta's highly regarded chassis and engineering, coupled to a Ford 4.6 litre V8 engine which produces up to 380 bhp. The X80's styling is the work of MG Rover's design director Peter Stevens, and confirms hints given when the EX257 Le Mans car was unveiled that it signified future MG design directions. Note in particular the grille aperture, with a slim central horizontal bar. (Stevens told us previously that he was worried that the MG grille shape risked becoming too much like a Pontiac; this is clearly his solution) as well as the triple headlamps, a feature also seen on the MGF XP500. The MG X80 will give the MG brand a world-class product in the high-performance luxury sports-car sector. Both coupe and roadster versions are planned, with manual and automatic transmissions.

Kevin Howe, chief executive of MG Rover said: "The X80 will be an excellent fit at the top of our family of MG cars. It also provides an opportunity to look at

markets in which we are not currently represented. In particular the USA, the World's largest sports-car market, where we can now seriously evaluate the full potential for the MG brand."

Bruce Qvale, president of Qvale Automotive group said: "MG Rover showed an interest in our Mangusta project in Modena, and we have since agreed a very good deal for both sides. The power of the MG brand now takes the project forward on a global basis."

Qvale Mangusta

The Qvale Mangusta is the most recent chapter in a long career for the Qvale family. The business, which was founded by Kjell Qvale in 1947, has grown over the years to encompass both car sales (including, incidentally, the US's first west-coast MG dealership) and manufacture. The Mangusta styled by Marcello Gandini (designer of the Lamborghini Countach and Diablo), began as a joint project between the Qvale family and DeTomaso Modena S.p.A in March 1998 to build a new sports car using the Ford Mustang's 4.6-litre V8 engine, echoing the DeTomaso Mangusta of the 1960's. Both the Qvale family and Alessandro DeTomaso, father of the DeTomaso marque, had second thoughts about this arrangement, though, and so a divorce

was arranged in March 2000. The project continued under the Qvale name and the car was manufactured in Modena.

The following specification of the Mangusta gives a revealing taste of what to expect from the MG X80.

Ford 4.6-litre dohc 32-valve V8 with multi-point sequential fuel injection and twin throttle bodies.

Power: 320 bhp at 6,000rpm.

Torque: 314lb/ft at 4,800rpm.

Top speed circa 160mph, and 0-60 in around five seconds.

Five-speed manual Tremac T45 gearbox driving the rear wheels via a BTR speed- and torque-sensitive hydraulic limited slip differential.

Programmed production in the range 300-500 cars per annum, including European and US sales.

US price \$69,500 (around (£50,000)).

This news item was published in the August/September 2001 issue of **MG World** and is reproduced here with the kind permission of the Editor of MG World (May 2002).