

## V8 POWER MG HANDLING.

### V8 – a passion to perform

The 4.6 litre V8 engine in the MG ZT 260 V8 and its estate variant, the MG ZT-T 260 V8, is only half the story, the chassis has been completely re-engineered to provide superb performance through a new rear wheel drivetrain. It is not for the faint-hearted driven hard, but it is a wonderfully relaxing car for drivers with a smooth style. Just a touch of throttle in any gear and the eager engine delivers a surge of power without fuss or strain which eases the car forward with a subtle change of pace as only a V8 can do! The outward signs and badges of the 260 V8 are just as subtle - simple V8 logos and a double twin exhaust, and no go-faster stripes. Here Victor Smith describes his impressions from a test run in an MG ZT 260 V8 loaned for an hour or so by MG Dealers, Ames MG at Bury St Edmunds. (February 2004)



MG ZT 260 V8 - not for the faint-hearted driven hard, but it is a wonderfully relaxing car for drivers with a smooth style. (Photo: MG Rover)

In fact **one of the marketing challenges for MG Rover** will be product recognition because very few people will recognise the 260 V8s as anything other than an ordinary MG ZT. Yet it is a car which will have a broad appeal from middle management as a comfortable car for commuting and moving between appointments, to more senior drivers in both management and lifestyle senses! Yes if you are a moderately well-heeled person at or nearing retirement and you enjoy driving, this car will have an enormous appeal! Why? - simply it moves with a subtle but understated purpose, surging a little when required to make journeys an effortless pleasure where the miles just drift by. But although this car is so flexible it is uncanny, make no mistake it is no contender for a funeral procession. Hit the throttle in third and it is a rocket! In 6.2

seconds from rest you pass 60mph and pick up mid-range in any gear is faultless. No this is not a car for auto-animals like Clarkson, this is a car for people with a great deal more subtlety and a feeling for the marque which is MG!

**The braking is impressive** as the balance is set to minimise front end dive so you feel a very progressive deceleration from the reassuringly fast-acting 4-channel ABS as standard through massive ventilated discs front and rear. The ride and handling are precise and, even on the flat side roads between the vast arable fields around Bury St Edmunds, the 260 V8 soaked up the bumps and surged along without a hint of roll or rear end hop. "Comfort without compromise" is MG Rover's claim - it's certainly that and a most reassuring driving feel. However with all V8s, driving in the wet does need a very sensitive right foot with hard acceleration. But frankly after a few furious bursts you very soon realise that there is far more driving pleasure in using the power with care and letting the eight cylinders of the Mustang derived power unit and gearbox just ease the car along with pace and not a little grace.

**Inside the seating is comfortable** with good lateral support, with good controls and creature comforts, and good visibility. The dials and dashboard were a little cluttered for my taste and the silver grey speedo and rev counter looked a little sad. With the bellhousing well back, there is no space to the left of the clutch pedal to rest your foot, so you will need a crash course in ankle flexing to develop a conditioned reflex which will park your foot under the pedal. But frankly unless you feel you are a prospective Touring Car Championship contender, gearchanges are not that frequent!

**Under the bonnet** the powerhouse still sports a Mustang emblem and packs the bay in all directions. But it's reassuring that such a well proven power unit and gearbox have been chosen for this remarkable model. The gearbox in the test car was still



Performance chart show the broad torque curve and the power curve rising to 260PS. (MG Rover)

quite stiff but I was reassured "it was getting better by the day!". The other interesting feature with this car is it needs to be run in with care, particularly the back axle, which is something prospective secondhand buyers of this model will have to watch very carefully indeed. Drivers with an inbuilt feeling for good quality performance machinery will find that second nature of course, but I know Ames MG will be stressing this to their new 260 V8 customers as they really do care about both the cars and their customers' enjoyment of them.



Old front grille and panel on the test car - a new front has been introduced with a family style across all the current MG models. (Photo: Victor Smith)

**Yes definitely an MG V8 that has character and style** which can be driven in an understated manner that just gobbles up the miles with enormous reserves of torque and power to ease by situations and breeze up hills. Now that's what MG V8 motoring is all about - not door handle grinding, gearbox stirring, Clarkson shoot from the lip macho glibness, or tyre burning ..... Yes it's a car for driving enthusiasts with a mature mentality.

**Welcome back subtle MG V8 power!**



Outward signs and badges on the 260 V8 are just as subtle - simple V8 logos and a double twin exhaust with no go-faster stripes. (Photo: Victor Smith)