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January 2019

Windsor Car Show



Back on September 2nd, the town of Windsor held their annual car show to benefit Windsor's Reduced Fee Program. The show was held in beautiful Eastman Park and the weather was perfect. This is a very well run show, and if you're from Denver, you will see cars there that you don't see all of the time. Check the Town of Windsor's web site (<https://windsor.gov.com>) for details about next year's show. This show is traditionally on Labor Day Weekend.



More cars from the Windsor Car Show



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**FROM RUSSIA WITH LOEWY:
THE U.S.S.R.'S FAILED WORLD CAR**

Reprinted from Hagerty News



He designed streamlined locomotives and streamlined pencil sharpeners. The Studebaker Avanti and the Greyhound Scenicruiser. The Shell logo, the USPS emblem, the Lucky Strike package. A better fridge and a better razor. The livery for Air Force One. And in the mid-1970s at the height of détente, 86-year-old Raymond Loewy, the father of industrial design, took on his biggest client, the government of the Soviet Union, to create a new car for Western showrooms.

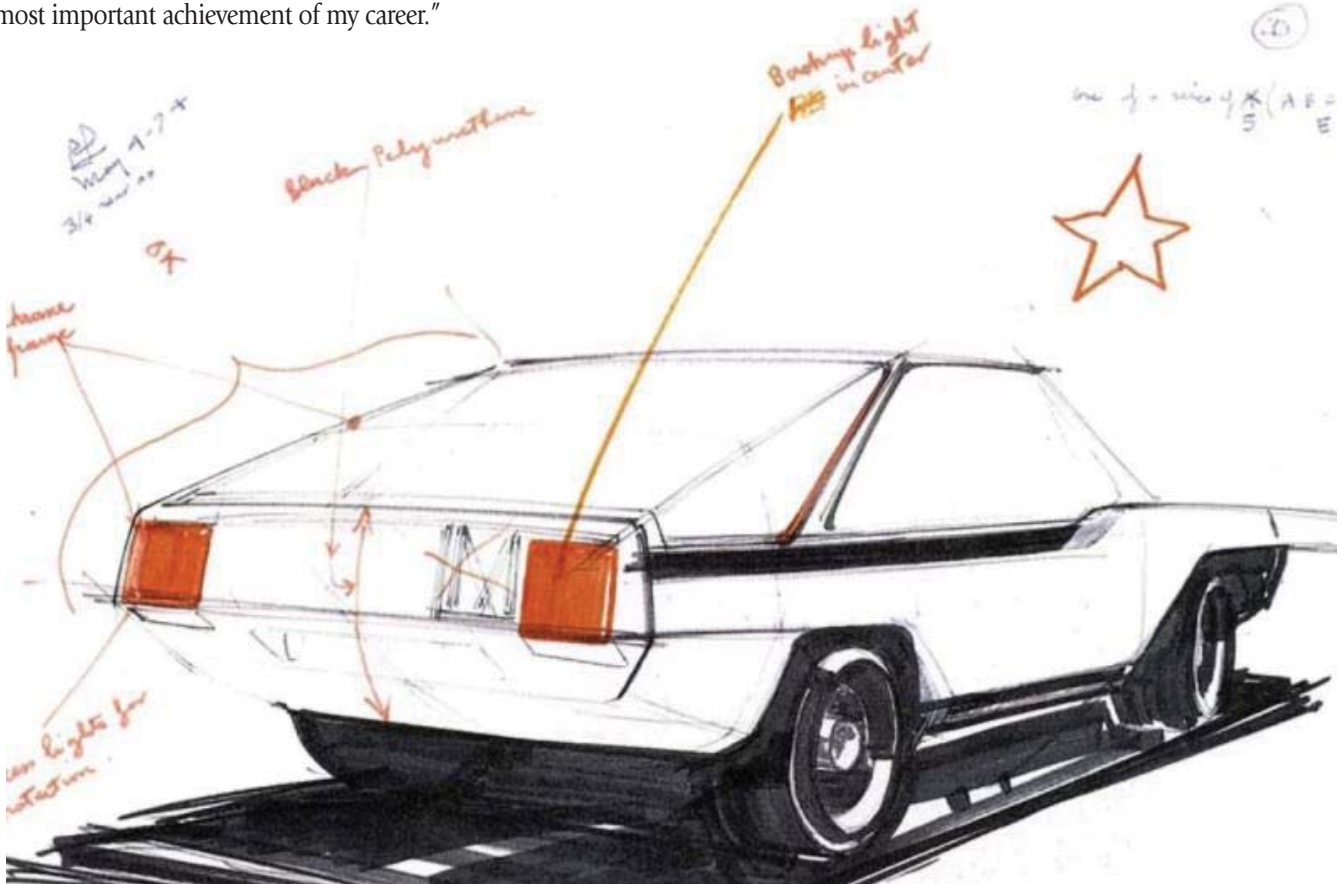
The Moskovich XRL (for Experimental Raymond Loewy) was supposed to be the Soviets' "world car," a vehicle to showcase the manufacturing capabilities of the Communist behemoth and anchor an aggressive plan to export consumer goods to the West. Loewy himself said it "could well be the most important achievement of my career."



Loewy (left) shares a laugh with his Soviet counterpart on the project, Yuri Soloviev.

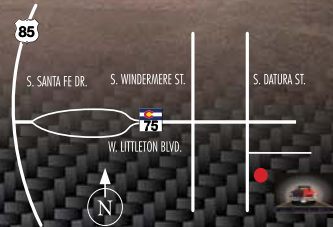
Loewy employed a team of young Americans to style the XRL. This early sketch, dated May 4, 1974, shows the car's low beltline, upward slash at the A-pillar, and wide wheels set at the corners. Loewy envisioned the driver's seat as separate from the rest of the interior, as illustrated by the black leather. The gold and black exterior highlighted the XRL's sharp lines.

Instead, the XRL died on the vine, crushed by bureaucracy and shifting economic strategies. Today, the XRL is little more than an automotive footnote, its curious renderings a reminder of what could have been. It is, however, an interesting historical and cultural moment that is worth remembering.





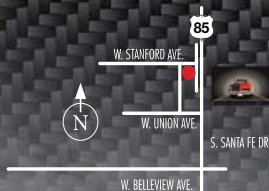
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Thanks for your help!

IN 1972, A COUPLE OF MGBS TOOK AN 8000-FOOT PLUNGE FOR TV

by Burton Hall / Reprinted from Hagerty News



Achingly slow, a twin-engine De Havilland Caribou cargo plane lumbered to 8000 feet above a dry lake bed near Edwards Air Force Base in the high desert north of Los Angeles. In the Caribou's vibrating belly, draped in shroud lines, a brand-new 1973 MGB shook as if foreseeing its fate. A helmeted driver stood close by, poised to push the MG out into space and leap after it.

"Do it!" crackled a voice over the walkie-talkie. Below, on the dusty desert floor, the creative team of British Leyland Motor's U.S. advertising department craned their necks skyward like hungry hatchlings in a nest. Relegated to powerless bystanders afflicted with squinting eyes and clenched sphincters, they watched the drogue chute blossom from the open cargo bay. Once fully unfurled, it pulled the 1973 MGB out into space. This time it would work. It had to work. Oh, God, they prayed, please make it work.

Months earlier, the so-called Parachute television ad, as it would come to be known, seemed so right. Bob Burden, then British Leyland's advertising manager for MG and Jaguar, needed a "bust out" advertisement for MG, which by 1972 was facing increasingly tougher competition, especially from the Japanese. Dropping a car and a driver separately from a plane, and having them land together on the desert floor and drive off, was the sort of wacko high-concept frolic that could penetrate the fog of what in the 1960s had come to be known as the "vast wasteland" of television.

The need for the bust-out TV spot was glaringly evident to Burden. From his vantage point, MG's in-house rival,

Triumph, enjoyed a stronger market presence because Triumph had the dollars to advertise on television, thanks to a marketing scheme that harnessed funds from the dealers. With no dealer co-op money, MG historically did not have the budget, but that had changed.

Mayhew laid out the concept for Burden's approval. "Fundamentally," Mayhew said, "we drop an MGB with a parachute out of a plane from a mile and a half up." Recalls Burden, "Being the client ad guy in the room, I asked, What is the selling point?"

Mayhew explained there would be three competitor cars: a Datsun 240Z, a Fiat 124, and a Porsche 914 driving across the desert leaving plumes of dust in their wake. The MGB would land in front of them. A parachutist, who had jumped from the same plane, would land by the MGB, hop in, and drive away ahead of the competitors. Again, Burden asked, "What is the selling point?" Mayhew responded, "MG, still one jump ahead." And with that line, Burden was sold.

British Leyland's management fortified Burden with an unheard-of budget of \$45,000. That sum exceeded anything previously spent on any MG commercial by a factor of ten. The company then sent Burden off with a hearty Godspeed. In the minds of Burden and Dale, the send-off included the unspoken message, "Or don't bother coming back."

Filming would take place in the Mojave Desert of California over a dry lakebed near Edwards Air Force Base. Sweet light, golden light, the magic hour. Photographers have different names for the hour after dawn and the hour before dusk when sunlight softens and imparts its greatest cosmetic luster. All vehicles photograph best in the sweet light, so on that November day in the California desert in 1972, Burden and the MG's crew began to set up for filming around three in the morning to be ready to capture the drop at sunrise. Two red \$3695 MGBs were prepped to be the hero cars.

The team had to address myriad details. One was that the U.S. Federal Trade Commission, the agency that oversees advertising, insisted the action portrayed be authentic. It had to be a real car that landed and started up and drove away. If not, the spot couldn't be aired as a TV commercial. So the MGB had to be able to absorb the impact without modification to the suspension system and then have a working lead-acid battery and sufficient gas in the tank to drive off.

A small air armada gathered: two Cessna chase planes, a helicopter, and the Caribou mother ship. Responsibility for the primary camera belonged to the helicopter; a second camera was stationed in one of the Cessnas. As for the second Cessna,

(Continued on next page)

it would fly above the Caribou. If by chance the actor jumping from the Caribou dove too fast and passed the MGB, a second jumper would leap from the Cessna above to be in the frame with the dropping MGB. He would then become the driver at touchdown. As the sun climbed in the sky, so did the fleet of aircraft.

Wind loomed as a major concern. Dropping a sports car from 8000 feet suspended under a parachute, to a significant degree, qualified as an act of faith, but precautions were taken to ensure the car would land where it was supposed to. Mayhew had the Caribou do passes while dropping smoke bombs to gauge the drift and establish a target area.

Hands tightly gripped binoculars. Faces pressed firmly to eyecups. MG's advertising team silently, breathlessly focused on a winged dot in the sky. First, the drogue chute trailed behind the Caribou and could be seen opening. Its purpose was to pull the platform-mounted MGB with the main parachute out of the Caribou's cargo bay. The larger main parachute, once free of the plane, would billow out to support the MGB in its gentle descent to earth. Precisely as intended, the drogue chute functioned flawlessly, drawing out the MGB. Then...nothing.

The main chute failed to open. Falling with a slow-motion grace, the MGB plunged tail down for about 7000 feet before rolling over, shiny side down, with the platform on top. The car impacted upside down in a cloud of dust on the desert floor.

Burden called Dale and explained what had happened and passionately advocated for a "take two." Dale agreed there was no other solution, and take two got a green light.

Dawn arrived for take two. Caribou loaded. Chutes rigged. Planes sent airborne. Smoke bombs dropped. It was a go.

All eyes gazed skyward. All thoughts the same: Oh, please, work this time. From the Caribou's open belly, the drogue chute exited, drawing with it the gleaming red MGB followed by the main chute, which blessedly deployed as planned. Burden's hero car began its slow, controlled descent to the desert floor.

The Parachute proved to accomplish all that Burden, Mayhew, and Dale desired. At the national MG dealers' meeting, the Parachute received a standing ovation. It was picked up by media outlets across the country, won a U.S. Television Commercial Festival Award. It elevated MG to the big-time, but only for a brief moment. As the 1970s wore on, MG's static product line went from aging to ancient as prices steadily

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rose. Newer and better-made competitors ate its market share and, in 1980, six years after the Parachute, the lights at MG's U.S. operation went out.



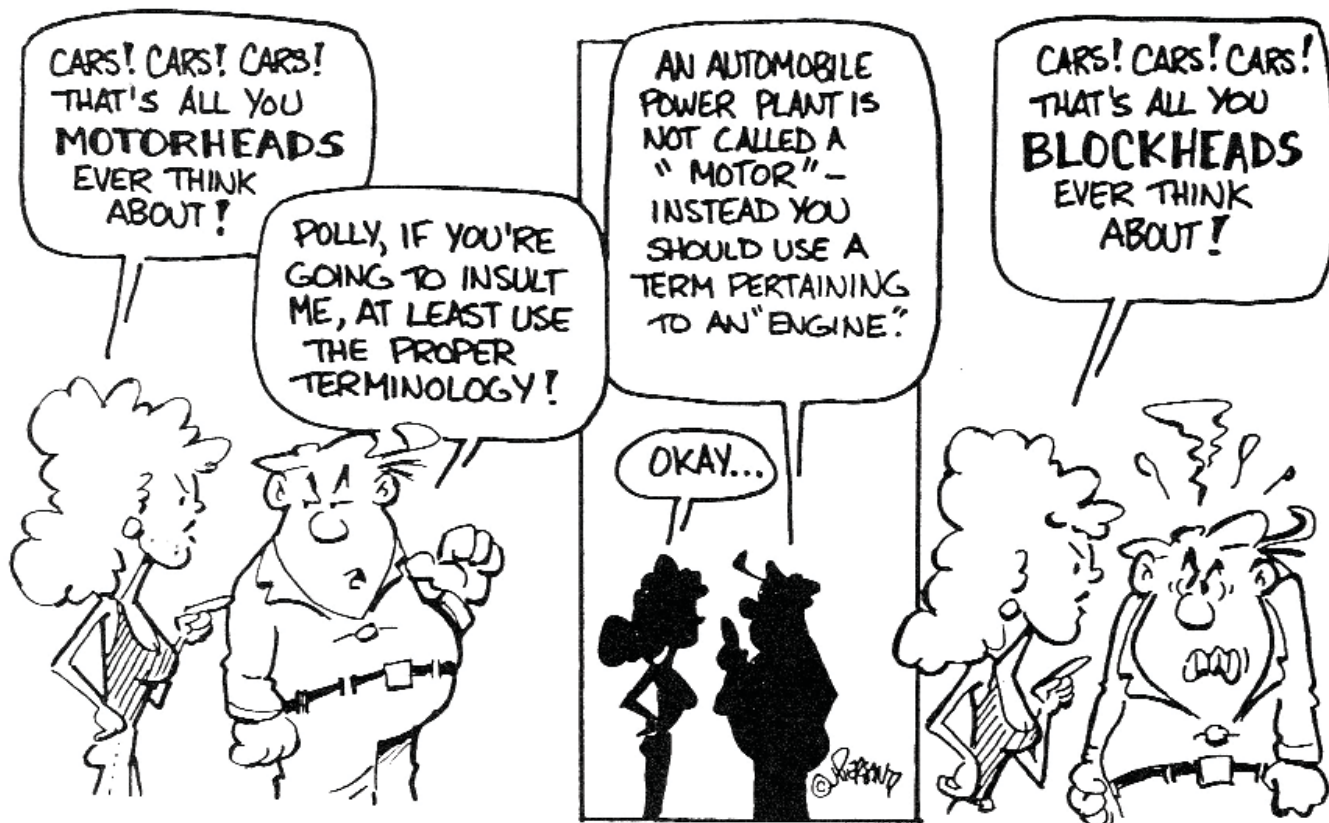
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"Otto Mechanic"

By Jay Piersanti





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Greg Akiyama / Publisher / 303-680-8298

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Quarter Page - 3.25" x 4.75"
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This is a monthly publication dedicated to the enjoyment of the collector car hobby in Colorado.

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Greg Akiyama
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ED: I am looking for other Cars of the Month. These cars do not have to be concours award winners, just cars that have owners who are proud to own them. (Don't we all feel that way?) To nominate a car and owner, please contact me at gakiyama@earthlink.net. Thanks.

ED: I am always looking for more subscribers. If you know someone who you think would enjoy getting my newsletter, please have them send me an e-mail complete with their name, club affiliation and phone number. I ask for a phone number because when (not if) an e-mail stops working, I can contact that person for an updated e-mail address rather than just stop sending them the newsletter. My e-mail address is: gakiyama@earthlink.net. Thanks.

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