



# Repro!

By Bob V.

THIS LITTLE METROPOLITAN is the inspiration of a half-dozen former AMC/Chrysler stylists. Its story was written by our member Pat Foster and published in the June issue of Hemmings Classic Car (pics reprinted here by permission).

Frank Geraci was lead stylist on the project, which commenced about a decade ago with the main object of having some fun. Kicking around ideas, they settled on creating a brand new American Motors car; one that might even be put into limited production.

Such projects have been done several times over the years. Repro Model A's, Jaguars and the like. The Plymouth Prowler was actually produced as were others with limited success. Why not the little Metropolitan? Metros became favored collectibles because they're cute, easy to restore and maintain, plus plentiful enough to be reasonably affordable.

Following the logic of the Model A repro built on an International Scout chassis, the team chose to work around a Fiat 500 chassis. It's about the right size, built by Fiat/Chrysler, the owner of the AMC birthright, and might be amenable to production?

The trick: creating a design producible in low volume, using very inexpensive tooling and attractive to a niche market big to justify the undertaking. That after all, was the premise of the Corvette, and look what happened there! OK, maybe this Metro was a dream, but when you're retired and still full of creative juices, it's dreams that get you going in the morning. Us King Midget fans know the feeling.

Probably some nice drawings and a slick clay model is all that will come of this project. But maybe it will inspire others. Maybe just for fun—or perhaps someone as competent as Claud Dry and Dale Orcutt

will pop up and find ways to build repros at lower cost and as efficiently as Midget Motors built King Midgets.

One can hope.

Several King Midget reproductions have been built with varying degrees of success. Lee Seats, Randy Chesnutt and I designed and built the Club Special and published plans (*Make Driving Fun Again, the King Midget Club Special*). Various members are using those plans to build their own. One by Del Wilson was featured in the Spring issue, going for the look of a 1952 MG TD crossed with a 34 Ford hot-rod.

I'm fond of MG TDs—made a cross-country trip in one once. Back in 2002, I tried sketching a 1932 version. Those MGs had cycle fenders and should be easy to build on a Model 3 chassis, right? Wrong. I gave up—couldn't make the proportions work out. I wound up drawing a 3/4 size VW Beetle concept.

Del's project got me thinking about MG's again. Most of the body is simple sheet metal. Even those flowing fenders of the TD could look fine fabbed similar to early Model T fenders, if the proportions were maintained. Adapt or carve a grille, but the key question; how to get the proportions right?

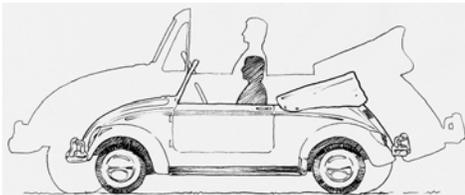
Proportions of the MG, as with the early Mustangs, are crucial. Long sleek hood, short deck and tight low cabin. Even the most careful attention to detail can't compensate for the contrasting proportions shown in the table bottom left on this page.

I now believe an attractive compromise might be possible.

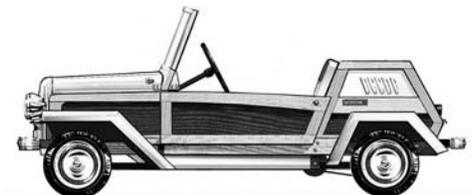
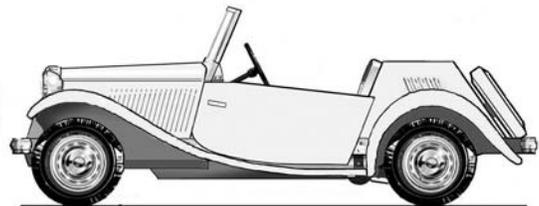
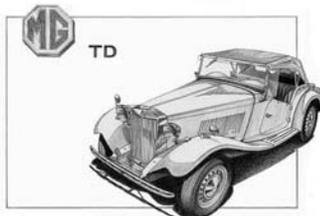


Leave the CS cabin and deck proportions essentially as designed. Stretch the wheelbase by moving the front wheels forward 16 or more inches and fabricate a set of fenders replicating the MG sweep:

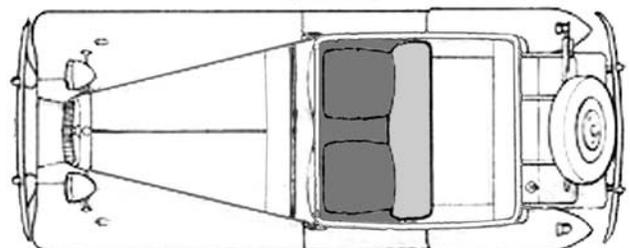
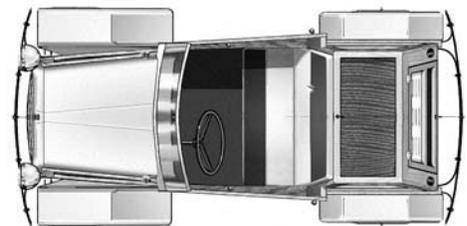
Use a real or repro MG TD grille mounted within six inches of the ground. The oak frame can probably handle the extended length and bend. The hood top and sides could be cut down from actual. Build a fake spare tire. Fab the rest as best you can. It could look sweet—the longer the front clip and fender sweep, the better. And more authentic. ■



*The VW proportions, shown above at 3/4 actual size mounted on a stock M3 running gear, worked out great! But building it would generate the same sort of challenges faced by the AMC designers. Even a fiberglass body would be too much challenge for most home shops. Rats—sure would be cute.*



*Scaled at right are side and plan views of the King Midget Club special with a possible CS TD above and a "real" MG TD in the plan below. Clearly the proportions are quite different. Both have tight cabins with short decks, but the MG has a long skinny hood vs. the stubby CS hood. The side view sketch of a CS TD suggests a possible compromise between the two cars.*



	MG's	Percent of:	KM CS
Length	145"	+42%	102"
Wheelbase	94"	+36%	69"
Width	58"	+18%	49"
Cabin	36"	>=<	36"
Grille	18"	-25%	24"
Hood	50"	-50%	25"