

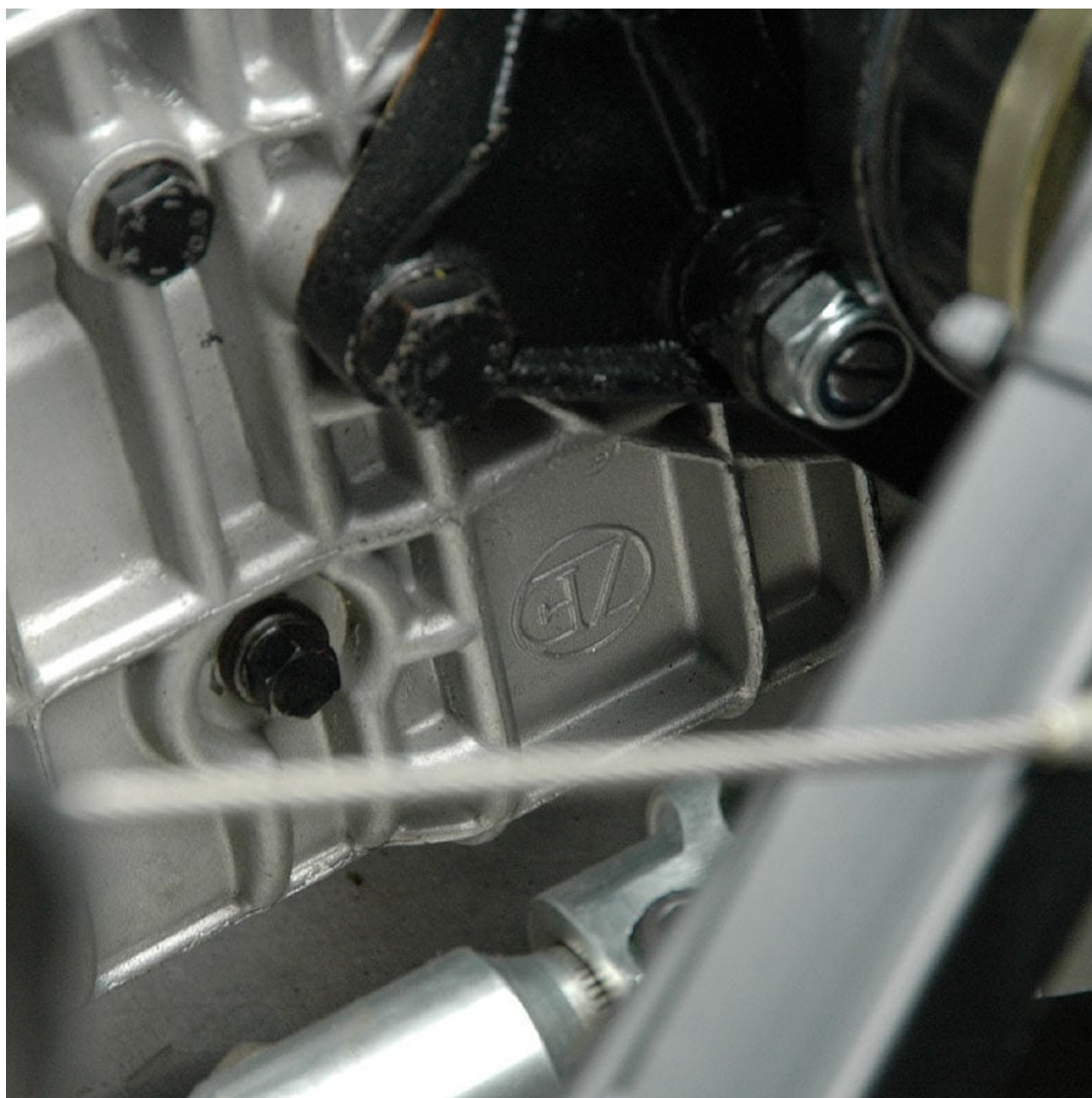
CLASSIC DRIVER

Superformance GT40

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‘Alan Mann Racing Ltd., Byfleet England’: evocative words, and ones in that familiar sans-serif script that now adorn the side of a brand-new GT40, specially ordered by Alan Mann himself. This is a significant feather in the cap for the British importers and distributors of the Superformance GT40, not to mention Classic Driver, where the original news story elicited a positive response from the famous 1960s entrant.

The car is built by **Hi-Tech**, in South Africa, and is dimensionally identical to the original. In fact, so many parts are interchangeable (some "90%", the importers say), that the casual observer would be hard-pushed to recognise the difference. The cars have the iconic silver-eyeleted seats, right-hand gearchange, **ZF** five-speed transaxles and even original-type **Hartswell** door latches. Behind the driver sits a Ford V8 courtesy of tuning experts **Roush**, while modern concessions are limited just to fuel-injection, a discreet air-conditioning system and up-to-date **Wilwood** brakes.







The suspension geometry remains the same, but specially selected **Bilstein** dampers and tall-profile **Avon** tyres keep the car on the road better, probably, than 1960s components. Steering is true to the original, with inputs made by a (detachable) authentic-looking wheel.

Technological summary over, here's the clever bit: the company can finish the cars to your specification so if, like **Alan Mann**, you wanted to re-create the livery of the **Sir John Whitmore/Frank Gardner 1966 Sebring** entry, they will do it. By juggling the different nose and tail sections, different wheel rims and types ('Halibrand' or 'BRM'), and colours, you can replicate just about any original car, including the last **JW Automotive Gulf** cars with their extra-wide rear bodywork.



To make life simple, however, two 'standard' configurations are offered: the Mk I's you see here, and the Mk II, based on the 1966 Le Mans-winning 'big-block' 7-litre cars, with four small rear lights and extra air-scoops on the rear body panel. The company will be producing a limited run of '66 Le Mans '1-2-3' cars, too, each exactly painted as the originals.

The UK cars are distributed and sold by **Rod Leach's Nostalgia** but imported by **Nigel Hulme**. Nigel had just finished a pre-delivery inspection of the red/gold car and offered me an opportunity of adding a few more miles to the 40-or-so he'd already put on it. A generous offer, indeed.

I've never driven a GT40 before, but once behind the wheel it's all pretty straightforward - and not so different from a modern mid-engined machine. The driving position is pure 1960s, though; very reclined with straight arms, and legs *slightly* inclined to the centre. Turn the key and press the red starting button and **blam!** the 342ci (5600cc) V8 springs to life.



The A264 from East Grinstead to Crawley may not have the romantic allure of the Mulsanne, but within minutes you are time-travelling to another era. The big V8 is probably much better-mannered now it's on fuel injection, delivering power and torque aplenty. Another British magazine has tested Nigel's own 'Gulf' car, producing a 0-60mph time of 3.7 seconds, with a top speed of 175mph at 6250rpm in 5th gear, and the ability to keep a Lamborghini LP640 honest up to wind tunnel speeds. Nigel, a vastly experienced racing driver, takes me out for spin in his well-run-in blue car and the acceleration is devastating.

He's taken it abroad, too, on a charity run - two-up - to Denmark. "You can get quite a bit of stuff in the door pockets, and a squashy bag in the passenger's footwell", he says, proudly defending his car's ability to tour with the best of them.



It is surprisingly comfortable. No, honestly, the seats are comfy, and the a/c (surely something the hi-tech-crazy **FOMOCO** of the '60s would have investigated, given more development time) is essential. The right-hand 'change is a dream and the turning circle not bad - with a little help from your right foot, coming out from T-junctions...

The cars are all SVA'd, and fully road-legal in the UK, with prices starting at £85,000 + VAT and a likely delivery time of 6-9 months.



But, likely purchasers, please: metallic blue with white stripes is **so** 1990s. Get your **Automobile Years** out and choose something else from the rainbow of colours used by **Shelby, Ford Advanced Vehicles, Holman and Moody** or any one of the many privateers fielding small-block GT40s. Pale non-metallic green, with original-type, black and white stick-on UK number plates - who's to know?...

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