



Is that an MG?

Dave Doroghy

The first time I drove my 1966 Plus Four Morgan to work was about three days after I bought it. The brake lights didn't work; it had no rear-view mirror and no seat belts. As I motored down Broadway at 7:15 in the morning en route to the office, a police car pulled up alongside me, and the cop rolled his window down as we both drove. I thought to myself, "Oh no, here we go - this guy is going to ask me to pull over and give me a ticket." As we continued to drive along beside each other at 30 m.p.h., he just looked at me, smiled and yelled out, "Hey, man, I love your car." At that moment I knew that I had made the right decision to buy an old Morgan. Any car that can elicit a response like that and charm its own way out of a ticket is a car worth having. Since that morning I have gone on to fix the safety deficiencies and have gotten hundreds of different responses from people. This article is about my observations of people's initial reaction to spotting my car as I drive it through the streets of Vancouver.

There are three general response categories that almost all "Morgan sightings" fall into:

1) Thumbs Up

The thumbs-up gesture is a universal symbol of approval. It's happy, positive and encouraging. Kind of like a Morgan. It feels good to give a thumbs-up and it feels good to get one. I'd say that the thumbs-up gesture is by far the most common reaction I get when driving around in my Morgan. Eighty per cent of the time it's from men. Most of the time it's from some guy driving beside me, or stopped next to me at a light; sometimes it's from a pedestrian on the street. The thumbs-up gesture pretty well says it all. And when I get it, I always give one back along with a big smile.

2) "Look at That" Partner Alert

Sometimes I'll observe pedestri-

ans on the sidewalk as I am driving by. Usually when there is a couple (man and women), the man will point to my car and say to the woman, "Look at that." If I am not going too fast I can often actually read the man's lips as he enunciates those three syllables. As with the thumbs-up gesture, the "look at that" response almost always comes from a guy.

3) Stationary Comments

Stationary comments occur when, well, my Morgan is stationary (the other two categories were observations of my Morgan in motion). I am either getting in or out of it, or perhaps I am in a lawn chair sitting in front of it down at Jericho Beach. Stationary comments are great because they allow you to meet friendly people. They mostly result in a dialogue, and without exception the people who approach me are pleasant.

These are the ten most common opening comments or questions that usually lead into a short conversation about my car:

- 1) Is that an MG?
- 2) Is that your car?
- 3) I used to have a friend who had one of those.
- 4) What year is that car?
- 5) Nice car, what is it?
- 6) Is that a kit car?
- 7) Is that a real car?
- 8) What did you pay for that?
- 9) Where did you get that car?
- 10) I wish I had a car like that.

Last month someone asked me if it was a Volvo, but that was a first. I think that in most cases people are genuinely interested. Some may just be making small talk and others may feel that they have to comment because they have just stumbled across something unusual. I have encountered countless complete strangers I have been able to educate and assist in identifying the ultimate British sports car.

In conclusion, all of the reactions - whether they be a thumbs-up, a partner alert or a bystander's comments - are positive. Although some of the questions I have received are dumb, like "Is that a real car?", I always react in a polite, patient and humble manner. No one has ever been nasty or taken umbrage to the car. People either have no reaction or a positive one.

And the positive reaction is justifiable, because in our own little way, I think Morgan owners provide a pleasant, short diversion for people from the endless stream of humdrum conforming and boring cars and SUVs on the roads today.

So the next time someone gives you a thumbs-up, return it with a big smile and all of the gusto you can muster! Especially if it comes from a policeman.

