

MX-5 TRIA

The monthly magazine of the
Mazda MX-5 Club of Victoria Inc.

MARCH 2010

www.mx5vic.org.au



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Who let the fives out?

In this edition ...

- » **Al's uglies ... the biggest loser**
- » **Tassie Chapters' weekend at Strahan**
- » **DIY oil change ... handy hints from our resident expert**



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Cover image:

An impressive convoy on the road to Lorne during the president's run ...

Photo: Bryce Reeves, on his first run

See MX-TRA on-screen: go to < www.mx5vic.org.au/mx-tra_0310.asp >

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Murray's Corner ...

■ Murray Finlay – President

I hope you and your car survived the hail damage from last Saturday.

My MX and I were driving back from Mansfield ... I could see the storms ahead and was hearing about the carnage on the radio, but I missed the lot!

It's NatMeet time again, and about 30 of us are about to head west to McLaren Vale for this great event.

For those relatively new to the Club, NatMeet is an event held every second Easter in a different State, planned and hosted by that State's Mazda MX-5 Club.

This year's event – the ninth – will be held in McLaren Vale, south of Adelaide, and with about 140 participants from all over Australia, and even a few from overseas, this will be the biggest NatMeet yet.

(Victoria set the previous record at NatMeet 2008, with 130 attendees.)

It promises five days of fun on the road, on the hillclimb track, on the grass and on the dancefloor. You really have to try to get to at least one NatMeet while you own your MX-5.

We will try to bring you reports of some of the NatMeet action in the April MX-TRA, but our return will be very close to deadline so they might have to wait for May (*sounds like Jeremy and the Hamster in Top Gear: waiting for May ...*).

Before then, though, we have a couple events of our own:

» **Thursday, 18 March:** the 2010 New Members' Night at The Garage café and bar, 213 Berkeley Street, Carlton (at the Grattan Street end). We'll be gathering at 6:30pm – no fancy speeches (a couple of brief welcomes); just good conversation with folk who share your love and enjoyment of a great little car!

We'd love to see everyone who has joined the Club in the last few months, as well as a few of the "old" faces coming long to share some Club stories.

» **Thursday, 25 March:** Karting night at Moorabbin. So far there has been a slow response. Full details are repeated in this month's MX-TRA, so please book your spot NOW!

... and after NatMeet we have ...

» **Sunday, 2 May:** our Founders' run, organised by Michael & Margaret Cemm to celebrate 20 years of MX-5ing. Among the first in Australia to own an MX-5 (Classic Red, of course!), they have put together a run reminiscent of our runs in "the good ol' days" ... navigation, observation, scavenger hunting, lots of laughs ... and no GPS! (*See the flyer for details.*)

Plans for the Club's 20th anniversary celebration are well underway.



Our planning sub-committee of Joan and Ken Read, Janette and John Todd, Steve Dunlop and yours truly have been meeting and knocking a few things into shape.

Details will be announced shortly, but please write this date into your diary now: **Saturday night, 14 August.**

That's the night of our celebratory dinner-dance at none other than the **Lexus Centre** at Olympic Park (yes, Mazdas are taking over Lexus for one night!). We'll have a cake, live music, a bit of history, some wonderful prizes, great food ... and with you there, some great company as well!

We only turn 20 once, so make sure you're there to join in the celebrations!

With the long weekend in March and with NatMeet approaching, our calendar for the start of this year has been a bit disrupted, but that doesn't mean the MX-5s have been idle.

Something a few of us have been working on quietly over the summer is the Club's first book: a compendium of write-ups of **our 20 favourite roads to celebrate our 20 years.**

Members and their MX-5s have been buzzing around the coast and the high country in everywhere in between to put together a fun and informative book that will be a valuable addition to any MX-5 glovebox.

We're aiming to have it published for our 20th anniversary in August. It will be well worth the wait!

Until next time, look up, stay back!

Murray

For your diary ...

See the full calendar for details

March

- 13 09/10 Championship Rd 6: Twilight Sprints, Calder
- 14 Reefton run (morning)
- 14 Hobart run to Southport
- 18 New Members' Night, Carlton
- 21 North Tas – Cradle Mt run
- 25 Karting night
- 28 North Tas – Devonport car show

April 2-6



NatMeet 2010
McLaren Vale, SA

- 4 Daylight saving ends (3am)
- 11 09/10 Championship Rd 7: Sprints, Phillip Island
- 18 NE Vic – Yackandandah run
- 18 North Tas – Rob's Runaround

May

- 2 Founders' run
- 9 Mother's Day
- 30 09/10 Championship Rd 8: Sprints, Sandown

July

- 3 09/10 Championship Rd 9: Sprints, Phillip Island

August

- 8 10/11 Championship Rd 1: Sprints, Winton
- 14 20th Anniversary celebration – Lexus Centre
- 22 10/11 Championship Rd 2: Hillclimb, Haunted Hills
- 29 Fed Square display

September

- TBC 10/11 Championship Rd 3: Sprints, Sandown
- 12 Great Ocean Road run



Motor Sport

■ James Saunders – Club Captain - Motor Sport



My last couple of columns have included some ramblings on the new year, interstate holidays, and have exhibited a fairly laid backed vibe about the year ahead.

Well can you believe it's March already, and from here on in it's strictly back to the business at hand! If you're anything like me, I'm sure the Christmas period seems like a distant memory and you've got your nose to the grind stone. It's quite amazing how busy life seems sometimes, especially so soon after a relaxing holiday break.

Before I get to the official motor sport activities, there are three items I'd like to mention that relate to motor sport but are also relevant to the club as a whole.

Firstly, I've had a few enquiries from Club members about a DECA event this year. We have not included an event at DECA on the motor sport calendar, but rest assured we have not jettisoned the event entirely. It is a very popular event and we are keen to continue with it, however after some discussion it has been decided that the event will be moved from the motor sport calendar across to the *social* calendar. I believe this a really positive change as it still allows the wider membership to engage in some serious – and fun – driving, without the pressure of motor sport points attached to it. We're thinking that the day will be pretty much the same as previous years, and there may still be some sort of trophy or award for the best results on the day. But please stay tuned for news on this event, as it is still in the early stages of planning.

Secondly, Ben Sale has organised a kart racing event for Club members, which will be held in Moorabbin on 25 March. Further details can be found on the Club website and in the flyers with this month's MX-TRA. RSVP for this event is 11 March, so please act quickly. I think this is a fantastic opportunity for the motor sport crew to have a whole lot of fun for less than half the price of a normal track day. I know there are a lot of people out there who used to be regulars at our motor sport events, but no longer compete for one reason or another. Maybe they are in the process of rebuilding their car, or they no longer want to risk their "daily driver" on a

2009 -2010 Calendar

Mar 13	Rd 6	Calder (twilight)
Apr 11	Rd 7	Phillip Island
May 30	Rd 8	Sandown
July 3	Rd 9	Phillip Island

2010 -2011 Calendar

Aug 8	Rd 1	Winton
22	Rd 2	Haunted Hills
Sept TBC	Rd 3	Sandown
Oct 23-24	2010 AROCA Winton 6-Hour regularity ... Non-Championship Club event <i>Spectators and helpers welcome</i>	
Nov TBC	Rd 4	[event TBC]
Dec 12	Rd 5	Phillip Island

race track ... well, here's your chance to get a taste of motor sport again! I also think it will be a unique and interesting opportunity for drivers from different classes to compete on a "level playing field". *So come on you guys in "standard" classes ... come along and show those guys in "open" who's boss!!* And you "open" guys ... please come along so you don't have to suffer taunts for being "too chicken" to strut your stuff against the rest of us!!

Thirdly, this being our Club's 20th anniversary, we are planning some very special events this year and will also be expanding our merchandise range to include special 20th anniversary gear. As part of that, I've been asked to put the feelers out in relation to motor sport merchandise. As many of you will know, we already offer long-sleeved shirts suitable for use in motor sport, as well as beanies and other items. We're looking at offering a range of merchandise that will have the usual "MX-5 Club Motor Sport" insignia, but will also have a reference to the 20th anniversary. So I'm looking for some feedback as to what items people would be looking to purchase if such a range was offered. Predominantly I suppose it would be the long-sleeve cotton shirts (suitable for use in motor sport), caps, and beanies. So please shoot me an email indicating your interest in these items and please also mention what size you are, as this will help us plan to meet the demand for these items.

Okay, so now to the business end of

things. Our event at Calder with the WRX Club is rapidly approaching and we already have plenty of entries from the MX-5 Club. If you haven't entered yet, *DO IT NOW*. I reckon it's going to be a great event and the fact that it is a "twilight" event just adds a whole new dimension to it. Racing under the stars? Yes please!

The next event after Calder is at Phillip Island on 11 April. There seems to be quite a buzz around this one, as I've already had enquiries about this from MX-5ers from NSW and Tasmania. So we'll have at least a few interstate people to entertain on the day. The Entry Forms have not been published yet, but as usual I ask you to keep a keen eye on our website, as I will publish the forms as soon as I receive them from our host club (WRX). I'm sure I'm not alone in looking forward to this event with great anticipation, as the Island always provides a spectacular experience for both drivers and spectators alike. And even more so, I'm looking forward to my free accommodation and meal at the wonderful Silverwater Resort in San Remo (courtesy of me winning the door prize at the Club Christmas party there in December! And, no, it was not rigged!). I'm sure Amanda and I will very much enjoy our stay there on Saturday evening, and we'll see you all at the track bright and early on Sunday morning.

In closing, I'd like to mention that we've found a replacement for Phil Munnings' role of time keeper/scorer/classification officer. Phil has done a mighty job and has left some very big shoes to fill, but with his move to NSW it has become impractical for him to continue in the role. I'm sure you'll all join me in thanking Phil for all his hard work over his time in the role, and as has been previously mentioned our loss in the NSW club's gain.

Russell Garner has stepped up to the plate to take over Phil's role. It is a big ask but I'm confident that Rus is up to the task. Rus has plenty of experience in motor sport, and enjoys the statistical side of the sport, but most importantly he is an IT nerd so he actually enjoys fiddling with spreadsheets! I think it's a match made in heaven and I wish Rus all the best in the role.

See you at the track.

James



Membership

■ Bill Campbell – Membership Officer

Numbers keep rising. We are already significantly ahead of last year's final total of 429. It will be interesting to see where we end up!

So, on behalf of our fine Club, I extend a warm welcome to the following new members:

» Ann Bonnell	2010 Yellow NC
» Karen Bradshaw	2000 Black NB
» Eric and Annette Field	1993 Red NA
» Peter Galtry	2002 Titanium NB
» Adam Marshall	1993 Classic Red NA
» Nick Papadopoulos	1999 Silver NB
» Geoff Roche	2004 Stratos Blue NB

The 2010 NatMeet is now just around the corner.

Thirty Victorian members are attending this year's festivities in South

Australia and if past NatMeets are any gauge, it will be a fun-packed and busy five days.

The majority of us will be heading off just before Easter in a 12-car convoy. We'll be taking the scenic route via the Great Ocean Road; this alone should make the time away worthwhile!

Expect to read lots on NatMeet in upcoming issues of MX-TRA.

All the very best for a safe and happy Easter break.

See you out and about ...

Bill

Current membership count:

448

Details! Details!

The car detailing day on Saturday, 27 February, at AG Group in Tullamarine was well worth the time invested by those lucky enough to score a spot at the event.

AG Group proved very generous in their efforts to provide an open forum for discussion about all sorts of detailing issues, offering informed advice & tips gained from years of hands on experience about process and generic products without ever resorting to sales hype promotion or competitor bashing.

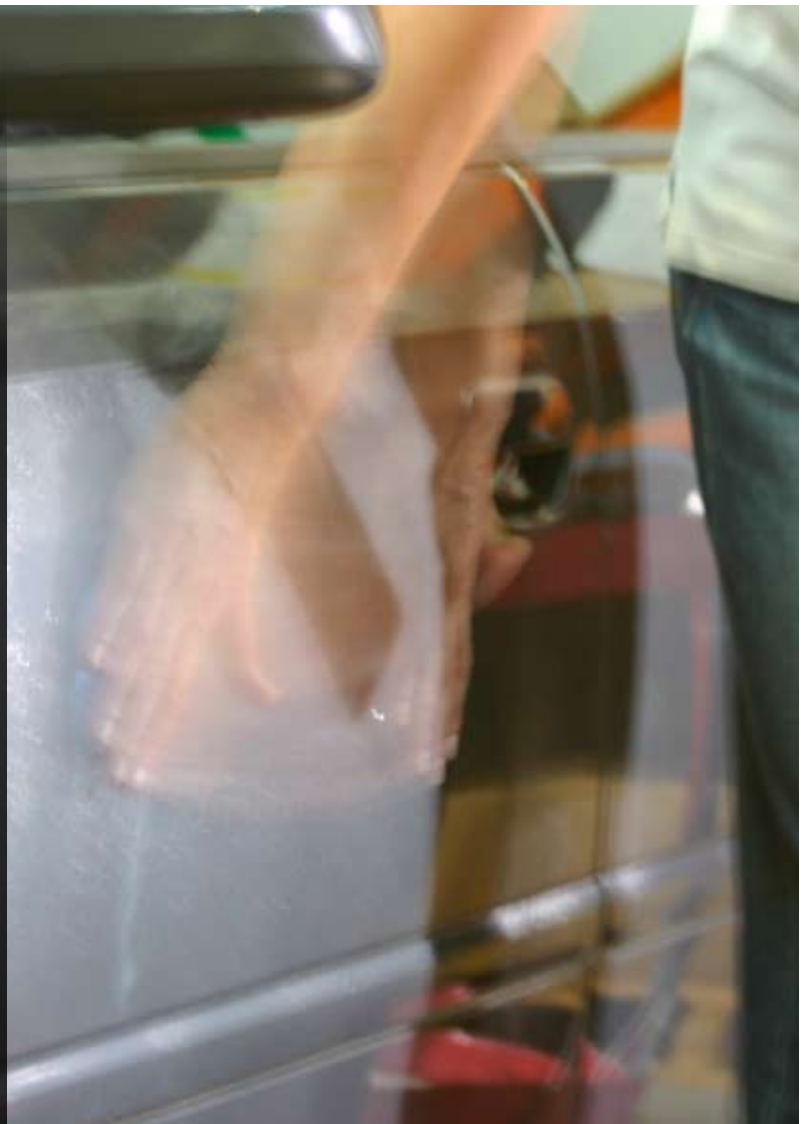
Thanks to Russell, David, Brian and Matt at AG Group for hosting the day and providing our members with the benefit of their considerable expertise.

For those who missed out this time, I will be organising another detailing day in a few months' time.

In the meantime, if you're interested in AG Group and their detailing products, please visit either:

- » www.concoursecarcare.com.au or
- » www.waxit.com.au

~ Steve Dunlop



Scene about ...



The best-laid plans of presidents ...

■ Words: Terry Murphy ■ Photos: Bryce Reeves & Terry Murphy
(both new members and first run 'virgins')

■ Run organisers: Murray Finlay & Bill Campbell

This was my first run, and being without a 'navigator' I had a sense of nervous anticipation.

Arriving early at the starting rendezvous, we were surprised to have the obvious assembly point at the BP service station at Little River occupied by a gaggle of Elfins. (I'm sure *gaggle* is the correct collective noun for Elfins — it's either Elfins or Formula Vs.)

Soon the Elfins fired up and were off. The MX-5s present were fired up and wheeled into position. My nervous anticipation became shame as it became painfully obvious that my car was the only one not buffed and polished for the day!

By starting time, the group had grown to 28 cars.

Along the way, I was quite intrigued by the sign, "Surf Coast Camel Hire". I hadn't considered a pent-up demand for camels in the area, but clearly there is some.

Turning on to the Dean's Marsh road, we were soon greeted by the sight of the Ballarat group parked along the verge in a line that seemed to stretch for kilometres, all waving excitedly as the Melbourne contingent thundered by.

Now we had *nearly 60 cars* in our convoy, and it wasn't long before we entered the Otway Forest. A noticeable drop in temperature signalled that the weather gods had turned on the air conditioning. The road became a lot more interesting too, with some quite tight and twisty stretches requiring committed concentration.

Entering the outskirts of Lorne, I wondered whether the good burghers were prepared for the onslaught of "The Mild Ones". I was sure Murray had practiced a bit of Brando-like sneer in his instructions. One poor Lorne resident was poised to make a right-hand turn, but ended up watching a seemingly unending procession of MX-5s bar his way. I wouldn't have been surprised if he'd expired on the spot and been put to rest in the verge nearby.

Lorne, it seemed, had anticipated our arrival and had called in reinforcements! Half of Melbourne must have decamped to the little Surf Coast hamlet. It was pretty clear parking and regrouping was going to be problematic. I spied Murray



and Alyssa coming back up the street toward me and thought I'd detected Murray shouting that we'd go straight on to Torquay. Well, I hoped that was what I'd heard.

The unforeseen turn of events, along with wall-to-wall traffic in Lorne, saw MX-5s darting this way and that to beat an escape up the coast. Communication was nigh on impossible, so it was every car for itself. I made it back to the far outskirts of Lorne, but the car I was following turned back toward Lorne again. Boy, was I confused. I was pretty sure we were going straight to Torquay, but there wasn't any sign of anyone else doing that.

Eventually a group of MX-5s arrived, heading in the expected direction, so I inserted myself, not too forcefully I hope, into the traffic stream, glad to have company once again. The ensuing ride to Torquay was leisurely for the most part, but it's difficult to enjoy the scenery properly when driving.

I found myself leading a small group of cars. I'd checked the run notes, so I had a vague idea of where the assembly



point for lunch was. When I arrived at a roundabout, I took a right instead of the straight on the notes dictated. I wasn't alone, but soon found myself a fortuitous parking spot for an emergency pit stop! After a little discussion with some other lost souls, we eventually found our way to the Torquay foreshore and a shady tree for a pleasant lunch and a chat.

I'd survived!

Note to Murray and other run organisers: perhaps a Google map of the final assembly point could be included in the run notes?

Thanks to all those who chatted to the newbies. It was a very welcoming environment to find ourselves in.

7.2.2010



Coming alive!

■ Words: Christine Boak ■ Photos: Rodney Laitt

Hi everyone ... my name is Christine Boak and I've been a member of the Club for about 12 months now.

I have participated in a handful of motor sport days including the recent weekend of 6-7 February when we headed to Winton for driver training on the Saturday and sprints on the Sunday with our friends from the Alfa Romeo Owners Club.

It was also great to meet some of the other members who had heaps of advice for me as a relatively new MX-5 owner.

I have to start with acknowledgement of everyone who volunteered to organise and coordinate such a great weekend so that the rest of us could get out there and have so much fun. To James Saunders, Greg Savage, Neil Choi and to all of the people whose names I am yet to learn, your efforts are appreciated. Here's a huge "THANK YOU".

On Saturday there were two courses run. The first was aimed at teaching young drivers car control – what a great opportunity for the participants to learn why and how their cars respond the way they do in various situations. This was run on the "new" (or long) section of the track.

The second was aimed at improving skills driving on a race track. This was held on the short track which I was really excited about because I've been told how it is made for cars like *Zoomy* (my affectionate name for my Classic Red NA).

Our course started with some theory on car dynamics and how they come into play on a racetrack; then we met our instructors and took to the track. My instructor was Bruce from the Alfa club.

We really concentrated on lines and getting the track to flow. Bruce had a drive of *Zoomy* and he was clearly having too much fun – I had to prise him out of the driver's seat.

The following day I went out in my first session and thanks to Bruce's great tuition and patience I definitely felt more confident in both my own and my car's abilities.

Next session that confidence probably got the better of me and I spun at the cleavage trying to get on the accelerator too early. I pulled myself back and remembered my talks with Bruce about how "*sometimes you need to slow down to get faster*". Next lap out I pulled back and consolidated what we had worked on the day before.

I had an absolute ball and I recommend everyone pencil this weekend in to next year's diary.

Now I'm looking forward to Calder on 13 March and meeting and getting to know many more of you over the years ahead.

Christine Boak



Joan Read



Lindy Anderson



Peter Phillips

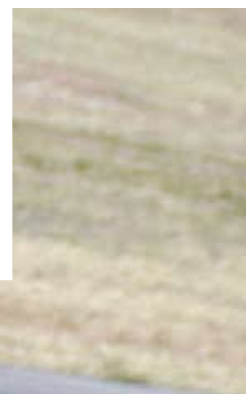


Ken Read



Alistair Dennis & friend

Driver training at Winton ...



Randy Stagno Navarra

**Winton Sprints (short track)
7 February, 2010
2009-10 Championship –
Round 5**



Teruo Delacroix

Times & Tyres ...

■ Words & photos: James Saunders – Club Captain - Motor Sport

You'll notice from the results block below that we saw another slew of Club records broken at the Winton event.

It's been a while since we ran on the "short track" at Winton so, given the current form this season, that is hardly surprising. However, it does not tell the full story.

What I found even more remarkable on the day was that, not only were records broken, but many other people also came in with times under the old Club record.

Robert Downes set a new standard NA record, while **Brendan Beavis** also came in under the old record and drove his car hard all day much to the enjoyment of spectators. **Randy** beat my Restricted Open record, and **Damon Ethakada** beat his own old Clubman record, a stunning return to the Club after a short absence.

Peter Phillips, Sam Gumina and **Ray Monik** all also came in under the old record. And last but certainly not least **Russell Garner** beat another of Sam's modified records. Russell was over two seconds clear of his closest competitor, a really super effort!

One of the most interesting sessions of the day, for me as a spectator, occurred towards the end of the day when Russell was on the track with four of the new BMW-made Minis. Anyone who has been

at our track days in recent times will be familiar with these cars: they are basically stripped out, fully-prepped race cars. Russell managed to best all but one of the Minis in this session in what is essentially an MX-5 road car with a few tweaks.

I believe there are a couple of reasons why we have seen such consistently good performances from so many people this season, especially in the more "standard" types of classes that do not allow "R" spec tyres.

Firstly, and most obviously, are the drivers themselves and the healthy competition between them. It seems that people have been honing their skills and it's all coming together at the same time, so that we have quite a few people now in the running to take the main prize on any given day.

Secondly, and what I alluded to earlier, is that there has been a fair bit of advancement in road tyre technology in recent times ... the gap in performance between "road" and "track" tyres has narrowed a fair bit. The Dunlop Direzza DZZ1 (available to Club members at a discounted price through Club sponsor Stuckey Tyres*), along with a few others such as the Kumho KU36, have really been performing well and have allowed the drivers to get the most out of their cars.

Right: Russell Garner waits patiently on the dummy grid. Below right: Brendan Beavis chases down a Lotus Exige.



WE ALL KNOW that motor sport rules require non-flammable clothing from neck to wrist and ankle... somehow I think this attire just won't cut it. Teuro is called to have a chat with Clerk of Course Greg Savage to explain himself, as Bruno from the Alfa club presents the evidence.



Results - Round 5	1st		2nd		3rd	
Standard NA	Robert Downes	» 1:16.655 ¹	Brendan Beavis	» 1:16.969	Teruo Delacroix	» 1:17.619
Standard NB	John McGregor	» 1:16.000	Max Lloyd	» 1:18.435	John Downes	» 1:19.518
Standard NC	Lindy Anderson	» 1:23.391				
Clubman	Damon Ethakada	» 1:14.953 ¹	Peter Phillips	» 1:15.080	Sam Gumina	» 1:15.156
Modified	Russell Garner	» 1:09.382 ¹	Craig Healy	» 1:12.129	Mike Kirby	» 1:14.269
Restricted Open	Randy Stagno Navarra	» 1:12.401 ¹	Wun Keat Ding	» 1:16.710		

¹ New Club motor sport group lap record

Championship standings after Round 5

	1st		2nd		3rd	
Overall Champion	Russell Garner	» 50	Peter Phillips	» 44		
			John McGregor	» 44		
Standard NA	Brendan Beavis	» 40	Teruo Delacroix	» 33	Robert Downes	» 29
Standard NB	John McGregor	» 44	Max Lloyd	» 24	John Downes	» 19
Standard NC	Lindy Anderson	» 10				
Clubman	Peter Phillips	» 44	Ray Monik	» 36	Damon Ethakada	» 16
Modified	Russell Garner	» 50	Craig Healy	» 27	Mike Kirby	» 18
Restricted Open	Randy Stagno Navarra	» 50	Marcus Stacey	» 14	Andrew Shenouda	» 13
Open	Darrin Morice	» 34	David Wilken	» 20	Michael Ruck	» 12

* See the Stuckey Tyre Service advertisement on p23]



... continued from
February MX-TRA

Last month we counted down 10 to six of the uncoolest cars on Australia's roads.

To re-cap, VP Alistair assembled a range of over 25 cars that he felt were the worst of the worst. They had to be for sale new in Australia and from the late '50s on ...

After the list was made up, the cars were presented in a visual form for our Committee and significant others to judge at a gathering in January.

There was a mixed selection of people from youth (18+) to stylists and graphic designers. People who were totally disinterested in cars were also given a vote; the only guidelines were to peruse the nominees and choose their own top 10. Then number the 10 vehicles from the ugly to the very very very darn right stinkin! ("10 to 1" if you like, just without Bert Newton doing the countdown.)

Each time a car was nominated it was given a point. After that the top three cars each judge voted for were awarded points for an extra poll (3rd spot = 1 point, 2nd spot = 2 points and 1st gets 3 points). This allows for separating any cars that may have equal votes.

For example, two cars might have been tied in the top 10 for 10th spot, so we then looked to see how many times (if any) they hit the top three and then tallied those points up.

Last month, our 10th to 6th placegetters were:

- » 10: Citroen DS
- » 9: Subaru Tribeca (series 1)
- » 8: Jeep patriot
- » 7: Triumph TR7
- » 6: Subaru Vortex

Now let's count down to the, er, winner ...

The final results:

Number 5 ~ Daihatsu Copen

On the show Kath and Kim, the Daihatsu Copen was used as a rental vehicle so Kath and husband Kel could zip around on a weekend away together ... This from the people that owned a Matiz? Got one word to say to you peoples ...

The fact it made it on their program shows how bad it is.

Its only and I do mean only saving grace is that

it was the cheapest folding hardtop convertible on the market and maybe also because it was Japanese it would be reliable. But ask yourself this: would you want a car that Kath and Kel Day-Knight thought was a sports car? No, didn't think so.

So *Kimmoi*, look at moi, look at moi, it's a full fat 10 points for the baby Daihatsu.



Number 4 ~ SsangYong Actyon

Okay, my first opinion on this steaming pile of crap is that it reminds me of the tow truck character from the Pixar movie Cars. (Mater, is in Tow, mater?)

It's a poor man's version of the BMW X6 but 10 times uglier and without the European cache! At least if you owned a BMW X6 people would know you had money, just questionable taste. Owning a SsangYong Actyon says I have no taste and I am cheap skate!

But it gets worse; you can buy this thing as a ute. Yep that's right, the good old Aussie battler tradie can buy one of those things and pull up to the building site with pride. I so want to be around to hear what kind of flack he's going to cop from his mates who have bought Toyotas, Ford or Holden utes. It's just not going to be pretty and, that said, neither is the car

So, the SsangYong scored 10 points, same as the baby Daihatsu, but wait ... the top three scores show that out of those 10 nominations, it hit the top three spots five times!



Beauty and the beast ... Alistair's un-Cool Wall

Number 3 ~ SsangYong/Daewoo Korando

Now I have a confession to make here, I used to work for dealerships (two) that actually sold these tanks.

They are in my opinion the worst looking creation ever.

Now, if you wanted a utilitarian type 4WD why wouldn't you go and buy a Jeep (no, not the bucket we presented earlier up this list but a real goddamn Jeep). Sure the American Jeep is slow, thirsty and will its value will drop faster that a brick in a swimming pool, but people will expect and can live with the fact.

The Korando is that and a whole lot more and none of it any good.

The looks, glory be, the looks just cannot be described in a family publication. So I will leave it all to the picture. Look at it if you dare, for you shall surely turn to stone.

The non-thinking person's Jeep scored 12 votes and it really deserved more – a lot more.



Number 2 ~ Ford Taurus

Now I have to admit this one surprised me. Scoring eight votes overall and being nominated by three people for their top three (but only for a single point each time), it would seem the British may be able to build stunningly beautiful Aston Martins, graceful E type Jaguars, but in the '70s Triumph may have lost their way.

The TR7 was plagued with the usual British Leyland build quality issues.

Woeful assembly aside, the car was a bit of a dog to drive as well.

We all know the British have never made an oil seal that worked, but here in this wedge shape they made a car that in its entirety never worked. And I am prepared to bet that it fell apart on the showroom floor.

Universally bagged by the press the car was then replaced by the near-identical TR8, which as the name suggests was powered by a V8. So now they had more power that the thing could handle and then they lopped the roof (truth be known it fell off) to give us a convertible variant. *WHY?*

The Trumpie broke down and leaked into 7th spot with eight points but with marginal top threes.





The Winner ... or Loser (depends on how you look at it) ... drumroll ...

Number 1 ~ SsangYong Stavic

OK, let's start with some housekeeping here. A lot of you know that the president of our fine club used to own one of these. Both he and his wife were used in the poll. But only one of them voted for this in their top 10, the other chose to ignore the bleeding obvious.

(Hint, it was Alyssa who stayed true, but don't tell Murray OK?)

(Oi, I thought this was a secret ballot!! ~ Ed)

Scoring a massive 14 points coupled to seven top-three placings – and most of them number ones and twos – can only mean that this unfortunate vehicle takes number one spot.

Being universally praised for its sheer ugliness from TopGear UK, with Clarkson and Hammond both paying out on it, to Wheels magazine scoring in their ugliest cars of the world ever.

Now Murray will tell you (repeatedly!) that “it's a good car” and I am sure that underneath the elephant-man looks beats a heart of gold.

But I am shallow and I can't go past the fact that the styling is just a mess and that I do not want to be seen driving something that can't decide if it's a wagon, a coupe, an SUV or even an early model Mercedes Benz A class.

I have two lesbian friends who own one as a second car; they love it, and they can throw the dogs in the back, the kids and the whole shooting match. They don't care about looking after it too much because they know it's worth nothing. They call it Ugly Betty and they laugh about how bad it looks. They can deal with that because their other car is an RX-8. They said they had to have at least one good-looking car to balance out the fact that the Stavic is just so @&^#*%~ ugly.



NOW... there were some runners up.

Just out of the Top 10 sat the PT cruiser. The car that was released in the very early 2000s. People thought the retro looks were kinda cool, but 10 years later the retro looks are so passé and really what's with the idea of building a retro hot rod that's powered by a 1.8 litre four-cylinder driving the front wheels?

The BMW X6 was there with IX votes and Ford's butt ugly AU Falcon landed four votes.

It saddens me to say one of the ugliest things that I thought would scare ... I mean score well – the Chrysler Sebring – hardly rated a blip compared to the rest. So maybe the pictures I found of it were too flattering because in real life it's a horror show as well!

Now, for interest, the stylist scored the ugliest cars as the Stavic, the Tribeca and the Actyon with the Taurus in 4th.

The graphic designer bagged the Lexus LX530 4WD, the Taurus and the MGV8 with the Stavic bringing up the rear.

The voice of youth said Stavic, Actyon and the Sebring with the Lexus SC430 convertible a credible 4th.

So there it is folks. Take from this one thing: don't buy a Korean SUV or people mover and don't buy a large front-wheel-drive cockroach.

Have fun in your MX-5 and rest assured you are driving one of the best looking sports cars ever.

I may be a bit biased on that last point, but hey, *it's my party!*



The MX-5 Club Grill



John Gleeson Convenor – Ballarat Chapter

Full name (including any embarrassing middle names)? John Michael Gleeson

Age (in years thanks)? 62

Born where? Creswick

Where do you live? Ballarat

Profession? Sales rep for building supply company

Married/single? Happily married to Noellene

Pets? Two dogs – Sandy & Kerbie. Cat called Noodles & budgie called Turk

Cats or dogs (choose one)? Too hard!

Fave food? Love BBQs

Can you cook? I think I can, others may not share this view

Favourite tippie? Brandy & dry

What age did you learn to drive? Eight

What did you learn to drive in ... or on? Grey Ferguson tractor

What was your first ever car (make/model/colour)? Ford Zephyr, Mk II, 1957, Yellow with grey top

Where was your first fender bender, and in what car? Hit the gatepost 'head on' at the farm while driving a Chev ute with mechanical brakes ... legs too short (I was about 10 years old!)

What is your current car/s (ie, everyday driver if not the MX-5)? Commodore wagon (work car); Holden Astra

What's your current MX-5 (colour, options, name)? 2001 NB, Supreme Blue. "Noellene's baby" (She says she'll be buried in it!)

What have you done to improve your MX-5? Polish it!

What don't you like about your MX-5? Cannot drive it enough

Why an MX-5? Noellene's idea (what a beauty!)

Fluffy dice (yes/no)? NO

Southpark or The Simpsons? Cannot stand either!

Dream wheels (money no object)? Have not really thought about it

Would you ever be seen driving a Daewoo or Hyundai? NO

Favourite other Mazda vehicle in current line up (ie, RX-8, 6 etc)? RX-8

How long in the Club? Almost two years

Have you been on many MX-5 Club runs? Have organised about six in the Ballarat area, joined in four or five others and attended Portland last year with SA Club

Favourite Club run location? Hard to decide between Great Ocean Road and Northern Chapter Loop Run through the mountains from Bright

Funniest thing seen on a Club run? Murray pulling the chair out of his boot and sitting in the middle of the road up in the mountains on the Loop Run



Have you been to DECA? No

Ford vs Holden? Holden

What is playing in your car at present? Rod Stewart

Footy team? (AFL/NRL/Soccer)? Current Premiers, Geelong

Anything else you would like to say? We first sussed out the Club at NatMeet 2008 at Winton and could not believe how friendly and welcoming all the members were. We joined soon after and certainly have never regretted one second of it.

We have made a lot of really great friends and truly enjoy being involved. The growth of the Ballarat Group has surprised us all



Tassie news ...



Twilight in Dunalley ~ 30.1.2010 | Hobart Chapter

■ Words & photos: John Waldock ■ Event organisers: John Hadrill/John Waldock

In what seemed a good idea at the time, we organised our February run to occur in January, which gave us a little gap in the program before the run to Strahan and back.

We again went with the twilight format, as attendees had expressed their enjoyment of a later start and the opportunity to have an evening meal during the run.

This time we started the run at one of the local car model shops, "Chequered Flag" in Moonah, where we had the opportunity to view and purchase some pretty cool car models. The visit ended up being like attending a mini car show, and generated lots of discussions about the cars that the models represented. Unfortunately, John the proprietor didn't have any MX-5 models in stock, but hopefully our enthusiasm will encourage him to see what he can do for us!

The group left Moonah and headed out towards Sorell, the weather being fine and mild and the open and winding roads of the Tasman Peninsula beckoning. Generally the roads towards Port Arthur are very good, while still retaining some nice twists and turns to get the heart pumping. The drive down to Dunalley, and then on to Eagleawk Neck was trouble free (sans motor homes and caravans!) and we eventually arrived at Eaglehawk Neck to pause, enjoy the view and chat about the merits of various air intakes and other such MX-5 arcana. We did overstay our stop a little, and had to be herded along as the co-pilots were getting hungry and a little bored with the discussions.

The run back to Dunalley in the evening light was lovely, the mild air refreshing and helped to get our appetites ready for the meal at the waterside café. The meal itself was quite good,

and there was a really nice relaxed feel to the evening. Much discussion was made of various grape varieties and envious eyes were cast over the seafood plate when it arrived. They do say the grass is greener!

Eventually it was time to complete our dessert (I do believe it was *two* desserts for AP; but that's OK as he is still growing) and head off. Though the sun had set, the air was mild and the road and stars provided a lovely backdrop on our trip home.

Thank you to all the attendees – your attendance made the evening a relaxing and enjoyable one.



Tassie news ...

Weekend at Strahan ~ 13-14.2.2010 | Hobart & Northern Tassie Chapters

■ Words: Day 1 - Nigel Whawell; Day 2 - Tim & Dot Manion ■ Photos: Ruth Beaton, Rob Bryan, John Waldock
■ Event organisers: Rita & Malcolm Eastley/John Waldock

Day one started with about 10 cars from the Northern Chapter rendezvousing at Longford for a trip to Strahan.

The route became fairly interesting (from a driving perspective) once the road began its climb past Poatina, through the Western Tiers and into the Great Lakes plateau area. We joined the Lakes Hwy for a great run into Bothwell (passing by the oldest golf course in Oz just on the outskirts of Bothwell).

The rain, which had started falling just after Poatina, came in some heavy showers; once we had stopped in Bothwell for lunch, however, it started to rain heavily in between the showers and the temperature was more suited to soup around the fireside than a summer picnic. It was pointed out to Malcolm on numerous occasions during lunch that it was the trip Coordinator's job to arrange for decent weather.

At Bothwell, we met up with three cars from the Hobart ("Southerners") Chapter. Once we were all a bit damp, fed and watered, we departed for Hamilton (on a back road) and then joined the Lyell Hwy and some more "MX-5" roads up hill and down dale. There was a short stop at "The Wall" just prior to Derwent Bridge. ("The Wall" is a 10-year wood carving project, still in progress, made up of numerous wood panels exquisitely carved depicting various aspects of Australian life). As an aside, it was also cold and wet here!

From Derwent Bridge, we progressed to Queenstown. This stretch of the trip was spoilt slightly by some very slow moving vehicles, the drivers of which seemed to think there was nothing unusual in having a great queue of cars behind. Prior to this episode, we had been treated very courteously by other road users. Immediately prior to Queenstown, the road goes absolutely loopy as it descends from mountains guarding the west coast down to the flatter plains. It's also here that you get a inkling of what the scenery would have looked like when Queenstown area was famous for having no vegetation cover on its surrounding hills due to past mining and processing activities.

In Queenstown, the Caltex owner must have had a bumper day's takings as we all fuelled up there. At the same time we were warned that all EFTPOS and mobile phones were out of action in Strahan. After another exciting road from Queenstown to Strahan, we found our digs and tried to straighten ourselves out. It had been a long day, leaving Longford at 10am and getting into the Motel at about 6.30pm – just as all the mobiles began to get signals and work. (I'm not sure if Malcolm claimed that one or not!) I'd covered 450km from just near the Batman Bridge but others would have done close to 500km – with very little of it straight or dry.

The Coordinator finally came good with the weather in both Queenstown and Strahan. The latter was in the low 20s until late into the evening.

All in all, a great day.





Sunday, day two, started absolutely stunning: the sun shining, gleaming cars outside our digs and the prospects of some of the finest road in the country. After brekky, the convoy set off for the wild west town of Zeehan. A short stop to catch our breath and say goodbye to the two departing Johns who were returning to Hobart. The northern crew set off for Tullah via the Reece Dam (yep, that's the road the *Top Gear* crew raved about). Drive over that road and you know why. Quick stop at the stunning Reece Dam for a few pics then off to the most important stop of the day: **coffee**.

Refreshed, a short run up the Murchison to the Cradle Mountain link road and beyond. We seemed a bit lucky to start with, damp to wet roads but no rain ... this has got to be good. Must have thought that a bit early, as not far from Cradle Mountain turnoff it started ... drizzle to start and heavier as we went. Animated discussion in the lead car, to stop or not to stop. Decision made: "we will pull up at Moina" – which we did. Surprise, surprise, the rain stopped; everybody damp, but spirits high. "Don't

be soft", "get on with it", "we want lunch", "just drive". Some of the responses from the hardy group, roofs still down on all the cars.

Now for what I think are some of the best MX-5 road on the state, maybe the country. Running the Cethana stage of Targa Tas in reverse, over Mount Claude toward Mole Creek – absolutely fantastic and little to no traffic (what a burden it is living in Tassie). From there to Deloraine and lunch in a lovely little café overlooking the river.

In summing up, it was a fabulous weekend, in fabulous cars, with a great group of people. Oh, and the scenery wasn't all that bad either.

A special thanks to Malcolm and Rita for organising such a memorable west coast trip.



Tech talk ...

DIY Oil Change

■ Words & photos: Matt King,
Past President and Club Captain - Motor Sport

Oil changes are a quick and easy job to perform. You only need a few basic tools: some ramps or axle stands, five litres of new oil and a new oil filter.

Oil can be purchased nearly anywhere, the filters bought from Mazda and then all you need is a spare 30 minutes and you can do your own oil change. The tools you'll need are a 17mm (for newer model MX-5s) spanner or a 19mm (for the old girls) spanner, some rags, a flat screwdriver, a container that will comfortably hold five litres of fluid and you may also need a filter wrench. The instructions below outline the basic procedure. Remember – safety first. If you're not confident doing this job, please turn to the professionals.

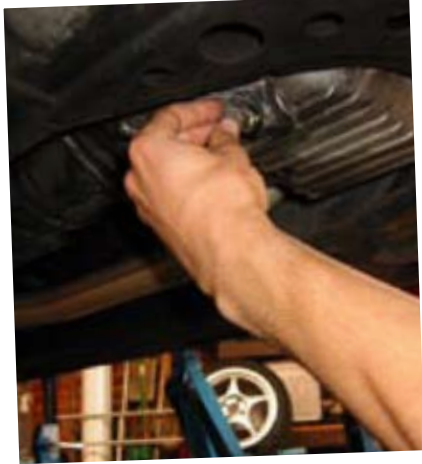


These are my oil change tools. Note my expensive funnel!! Remember that rags are your friend ... you can't have enough of them.

1 Before you start working you'll need to go for a short drive to get the oil warm. This helps the oil drain out of the car. Don't drive for too long, you don't want to get the oil really hot because hot oil scalds.

When you get back from your drive, jack the car off the ground.

Always, always support the car on stands or sturdy ramps, and make sure that it's safe to get underneath - never get under a car supported only by a jack. You'll need your spanner, a rag and the container for collecting the oil.



Unscrew the sump plug washer with your finger on the end to avoid any unnecessary drips.

If the sump or the plug are too hot to touch then wait a few minutes and let the motor cool to a safer working temperature.

2 If the sump or the plug are too hot to touch then wait a few minutes and let the motor cool to a safer working temperature. Loosen the sump plug (as pictured). Unscrew the sump plug with your finger on the end to avoid any unnecessary drips.

Position the container under the edge of the sump so it will catch the oil as it comes out of the sump. Make sure that you pull your hand away quickly once the plug comes out otherwise you will end up with a hand full of oil. It will flow out in an arc initially, so be ready to catch it! As the flow rate slows, reposition the container so that it will continue to collect the stream of oil.

3 Open the bonnet and unscrew the oil filler cap on the top of the motor. This helps the old oil flow out and it also reminds you that you need to replace the oil later on. Now reach under the driver's side of the motor (in the NA and NB) and unscrew the oil filter. If you can't do it by hand then use the filter wrench. In the NC you will have to remove the small protection plate under the back of the motor on the passenger side and remove the filter through the gap. Once you unscrew the old filter, turn it on its back to stop the oil dripping out and leave it to drain into your oil container. Wipe up any spills.

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4 Get your new oil filter out of the box and remove the plastic covering. Then open your new container of oil and pour a little bit into the filter. Before all of the oil disappears into it get some on your finger and rub it into the rubber seal on the filter. Then clean it up and screw it onto the motor. I find that the easiest way to do it is to find the screw point on the side of the motor with my left hand and then move my right hand to that spot while holding the filter. Screw it on until it's hand tight; you don't need to use the wrench to make it super tight.

This is where you'll need to reach down to in order to find the oil filter. Wearing a rubber glove will help to grip the filter and placing a rag under your arm will stop you from getting cut by the hose connectors positioned right where you need to lean your arm.

5 Put the funnel into the oil filling point and pour a little of the new oil into the motor. You just want to use a small amount to help flush out the last of the old oil. Once this has drained out of the motor get back underneath the car, give the sump plug a clean and check to see if the sump plug washer



is on the plug. If it isn't then you'll need to prise it away from the sump with your screwdriver. This is an important step as having two or three or four washers there will greatly increase the likelihood of a leak occurring from the sump. Once it's all cleaned up, screw the sump plug back into the sump and tighten it with the spanner.

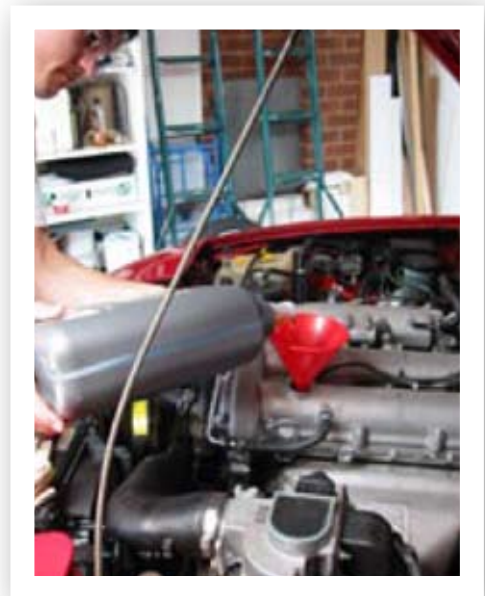
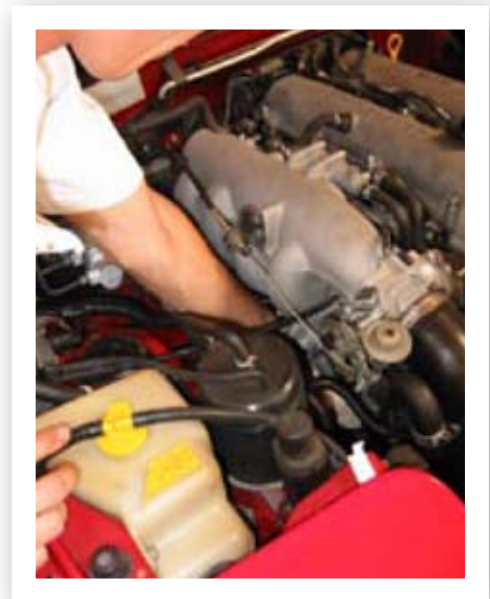
Pour a little oil into the filter and then rub some of it on to the black rubber seal.

6 Get back out from under the car and start pouring the oil into the motor. When you have poured about three litres in there, check the oil level with the dipstick (remove the dipstick, wipe it, reinsert and pull it out to check). Continue filling as necessary, until the oil reaches the "Full" mark on the dipstick. Remember that it can take a few minutes for the oil to sink to the bottom of the motor, so don't be too quick to check the levels with the dipstick. When you have finished, replace the oil filler cap and also double check the filter and the sump plug.

Pour the oil into the funnel slowly at first to avoid getting oil all over the motor. A good precautionary method is to drape a rag around the filter and over the side of the cam cover. You don't want to get oil on the exhaust!!

7 OK, the oil change is finished. Now for the clean up: Find an old container to pour the used oil into, and dispose of it safely (not in the rubbish. Part of the cost you pay a mechanic to do the job is disposal of the old fluids). Triple check the sump plug and if you're happy that nothing is leaking start the motor and let it run for a few minutes.

If you still can't see any leaks then go for a drive and when you get back check it again. If you still can't see any leaks then it's probably time for a celebratory beer.



Next month: fitting an airhorn

If you have a handy hint to pass on to your fellow MX-5ers, or are doing some modifications to your car that others might find interesting, please send your report and photographs to editor@mx5vic.org.au and share it with the rest of us through MX-TRA.

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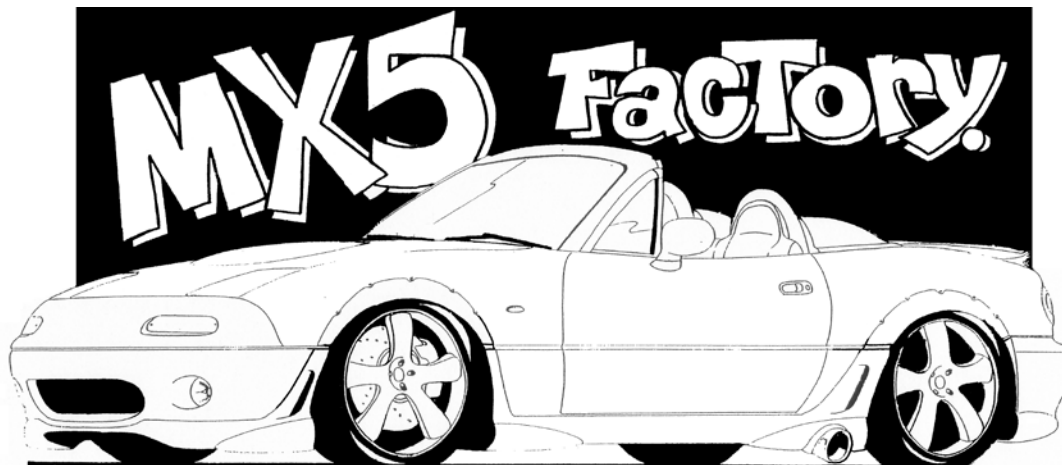
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