

AUTOMOTIVE

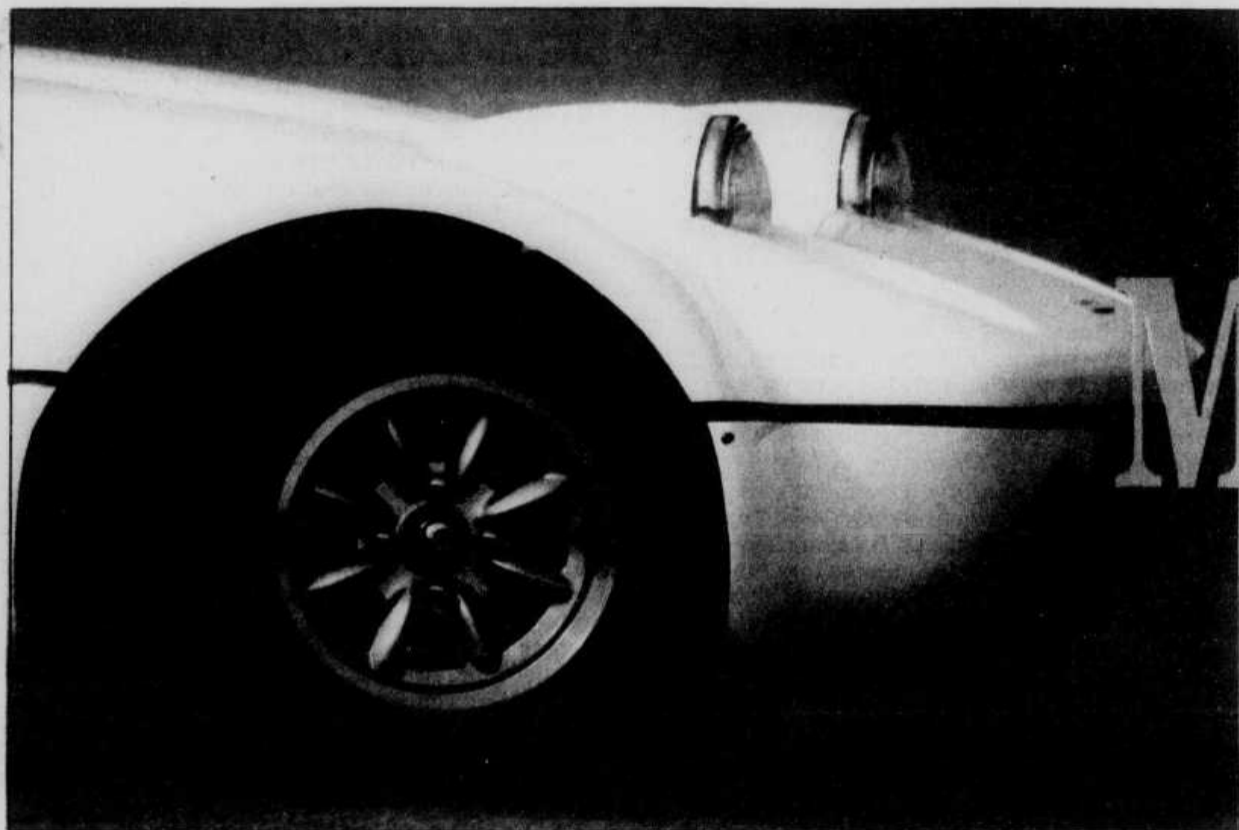
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GAZETTE TELEGRAPH ADVERTISING SECTION

SECTION F

KIT CARS

By Julie Andrews/Gazette Telegraph



Brad Armstrong/Gazette Telegraph



Counterclockwise from top: The tradition of sports cars lives on in the sleek, molded fiberglass body of the Maxton Rollerskate. Dan Ripley, president of Maxton Components Ltd., is a race car driver who did most of the test driving himself. Everything's put together except the interior finish, the engine, and the paint job for this component car made in Englewood.

Ripley is president and owner of Maxton Components Ltd., a new manufacturer of a component sports car called the Rollerskate.

Maxton's 5,000-square-foot manufacturing facility is in Englewood, and Ripley commutes from his home in Colorado Springs.

The story of Maxton Components starts with Bob Sutherland, of Sutherland Lumber fame, who conceived of a new sports car that people could buy and put together themselves. He asked Ripley to help develop the idea. Today, five years later, the product has begun to roll off the line.

During the process, Ripley bought out Sutherland, took over project development and created the prototype of the Rollerskate.

Automotive artist Michael Mate

or hire a mechanic to do the work.

The Maxton Rollerskate is unusual because it carries product liability insurance, which makes up about \$2,000 of the sticker price.

"I didn't have a clue what I was doing when I started," explained Ripley. "I didn't know what equipment we needed for the manufacturing plant. We started with 2,500 square feet but had to expand right away.

"The liability insurance dictated a lot of how the manufacturing is done. I got it not only for my protection but for the end user. I checked and no other kit car has liability."

This type of insurance primarily covers accidents in the vehicle caused by negligence or breakage traced back to the manufacturer, and insures Maxton Components. It was difficult to get

and now they feel very comfortable with it, Ripley said.

The Rollerskate that was tested at Bandimere Speedway outside Denver showed acceleration from 0 to 60 mph in 6.2 seconds, and turned one-quarter mile in 16 seconds flat.

The car, with the Mazda RX-7 engine, runs on premium unleaded gas at about 25 miles per gallon, has a five-speed manual transmission on the floor, and rack and pinion steering.

The suspension is a mix of double wishbone front suspension with Ford uprights and ventilated disc brakes. Its overall length is 142.5 inches, with a wheelbase of 90 inches, and it measures 41.5 inches to the roll bar behind the two bucket seats.

The chassis is a steel space-frame weighing only 211 pounds, with tor-

sional rigidity and strength eight times that of a regular production car, according to Ripley. The car, with the engine installed, weighs only 1,680 pounds, and has a front/rear ratio of 47 percent/53 percent.

"It's supple. It's precise. It's easy. It's extremely well-balanced. The front to rear balance is ideal for handling, and was difficult to achieve.

"We tried to keep the car as simple as we could. We track tested it 5,000 miles, and most of it I did myself. I drove 'til I had blisters on my hands. We worked on the handling. We tried 15 different exhaust systems to get the sound right."

The right sound is a visceral, throaty purr, according to Ripley, to match the sports car performance with
See MAXTON/F3

People have different kinds of fantasies. Car buffs dream about great cars they'd like to know and

Mighty Maxton

love. One of Dan Ripley's fantasies is not about a dream car, it's about the Maxton Rollerskate, and it's not about owning one, it's about someone else wanting to own one.

from Denver designed the body, and the frame and suspension were designed by auto engineer Ben Vanderlindin. C.G. Maier Composites of Lamar manufacturers the smooth, fantasy-inspiring body.

According to Ripley, who has 20 years experience with the Sports Car Club of America racing cars over most tracks in North America and many in Europe, the performance of the Rollerskate is the real news.

"Even hardened car nuts who are so jaded on cars get out of it with a grin on their face and say, 'I had no idea it was that good.'"

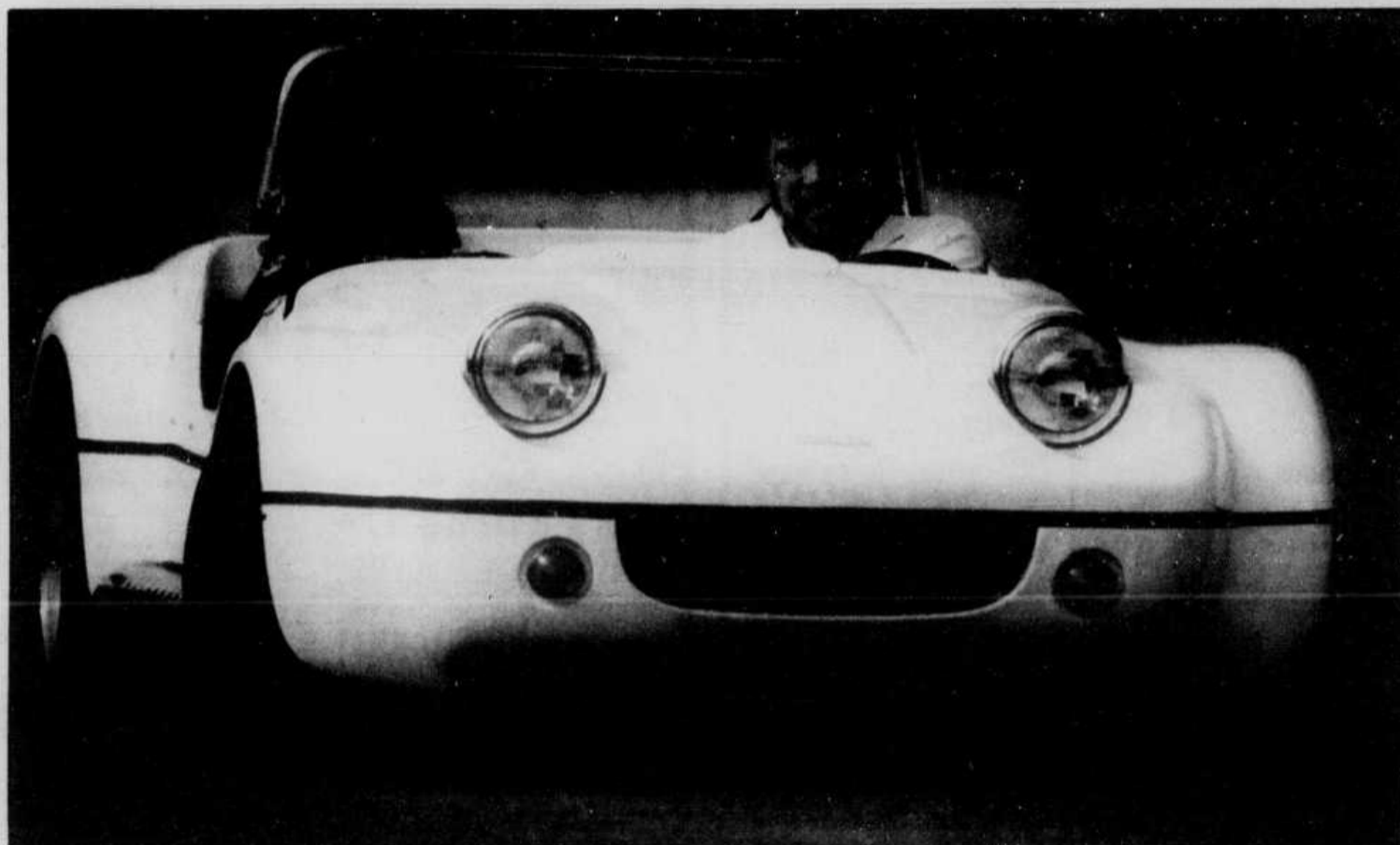
"The quality is what they can't believe. They get out and say, 'Don't change a thing. Don't change a thing,'" he said.

The Rollerskate, so named because it resembled a roller skate when the body-less chassis was first test driven on a track, is built to accommodate the RX-7 Mazda engine, though other engines may be used.

It shouldn't be called a kit car, according to Ripley, because all of it except the engine, interior and paint comes to the buyer already finished.

All parts, including the tires, come with the purchase price of \$19,500. The owner can drop in an engine himself and paint the exterior to his liking,

"It's supple. It's precise. It's easy."



Maxton/Three new models

From F1 a sports car sound.

A sports car fan who's a director for "Motor Week," a weekly program about cars on the Maryland Public Television Network, got wind of the Rollerskate and filmed one of the cars being completed for the weekly show. The program will air this spring.

The station plans to display the finished automobile at the 1991 New York Auto Show, and Ripley anticipates lots of response from the exposure. Other publications, such as Sports Car Illustrated and Road and Track, also have covered the birth of the new sports car.

In the meantime, while work is ongoing to develop a roof for

the Rollerskate, Ripley and his associates are dreaming up some more new sports models.

The company is working on plans for three more cars, including the more expensive Maxton Mille Miglia. It has purchased rights to a 12-valve engine, and is looking for funding and partners in Europe.