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By Steve Temple

When the Maxton Rollerskate was first introduced, contributing editor Jim Youngs borrowed one from the factory and spent the better part of three days blitzing through the canyons surrounding Denver, Colorado. He came away profoundly impressed with the car's nimble handling and pure driving fun ("Rocky Mountain Roadster," September '91 *Kit Car*). He left out one "small" detail though, just one "little" aspect. In addition to being a crackerjack photographer and a gifted writer, Jim is an old friend of mine, so he shouldn't mind if I mention that he's, well...vertically challenged. To put it another way, Randy Newman's "Short People" is one of his all-time favorite songs.

So when Jim stated that the dimensions of the Rollerskate's cockpit were well-nigh perfect, you should figure that it will feel cramped for those drivers with the physical defect of a 6-foot or greater stature. Maxton President Bob Sutherland, no Lilliputian himself, realized this fact

and has rectified it by introducing a stretch version of the Rollerskate with 6 inches more room in the cockpit, increasing the wheelbase from 90 to 96 inches.

Sometimes elongating a body ruins the styling proportions of the design, but it's barely noticeable in this vehicle, and it greatly improves the comfort level. For someone of my "bigger than the average bear" bulk, getting into the regular version feels akin to pulling on a pair of one-size-too-small Jockey shorts, while the longer model fits like a favorite pair of old blue jeans.

The car's performance has not been adversely affected, either. In fact, the .93g figure we pulled on the skidpad is a tad higher than the .88g number Maxton claims for the regular model. Also, the Rollerskate whipped through the slalom in 6.287 seconds at 65.1 mph—that's as good as a Ferrari 512TR! We feel the Rollerskate is capable of even better numbers, in part because the

BLADE RUNNER

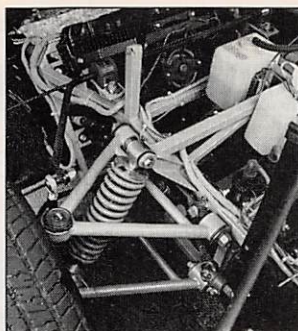
Maxton's Rotary-Powered Rollerskate Offers A Whole New Approach To Performance



PHOTOGRAPHY: STEVE TEMPLE



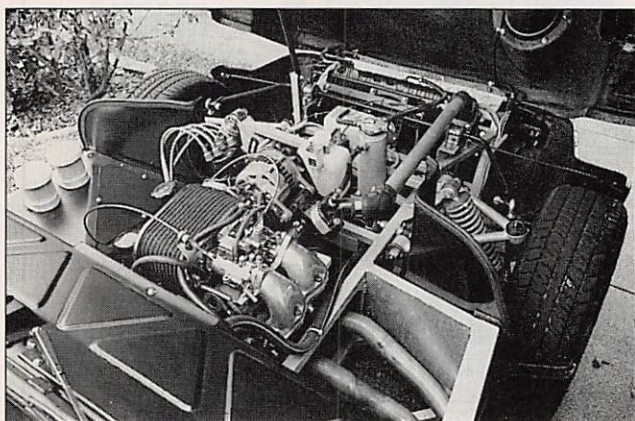
Though enlarged, the cockpit still has a minimalist quality.



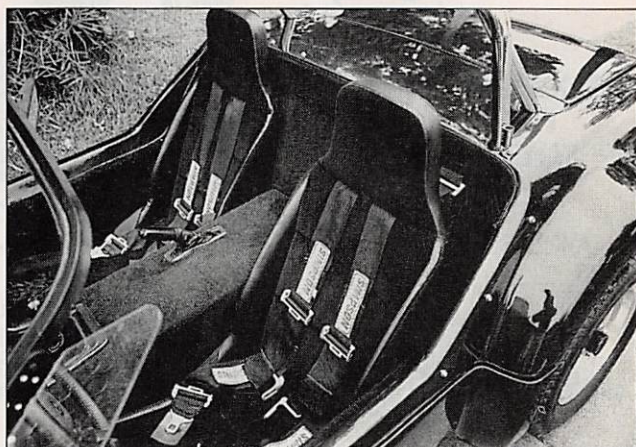
The race-quality front suspension features Ford uprights with coil-overs and custom-fabricated upper and lower A-arms.



Leave the spare tire at home if you need trunk space.



The one-piece nose lifts up to expose both the engine and front suspension.



The doorless cockpit feels a bit exposed, but it does have side-beam protection.

seat belt arrangement lacked a center strap for between the knees. It didn't hold me as securely as I'd like.

On the smooth pavement of the test track, the Rollerskate is an utter delight to toss into a corner with the rotary pumping furiously in the heart of its powerband. There's scarcely any body roll, even in the most extreme turns. And as you bring the wheel back to center and stomp the noise pedal, the throttle response bursts like a geyser, catapulting you down the straightaway.

Driving on city streets is no less stimulating, but for different reasons. Scampering around a bumpy curve, the Rollerskate's lightweight, live-axle rearend will hop and lurch sideways if you get a little too enthusiastic. Some sway-bar mods might provide a bit more flexibility. And on the freeway, if you look sideways, truck wheel hubs are spinning right at eye level, an unnerving experience at 65 mph. Just don't think about it too much, keep your eyes focused ahead, jam on the accelerator, and you'll be fine.

Maxton claims a braking distance from 60 mph of 130 feet, but the best we could manage on the track was 143 feet, which doesn't compare favorably with the Mazda RX-7's figure of 109 feet. Also, the acceleration numbers were much slower than we found on the standard-length Rollerskate, and the difference was so substantial that it could not be attributed to the slight increase in weight of the stretch version. The problem was later traced to a faulty distributor setting and a misaligned muffler, but not in time for retesting. With a massaged, 210hp 13B Mazda rotary, Maxton says to expect a 0-60-mph time of less than 5.5 seconds, and 14.56 seconds at 92.2 mph

through the quarter. Cobra replica fans will probably sneer at these dragstrip figures, but they pay a penalty in both handling and the build-up budget.

How much does a Maxton Rollerskate cost? An 80-percent assembled, rolling chassis is available for slightly less than \$20,000; or turn-keys range from \$26,500 to \$30,000. Do-it-yourselfers can opt for the following packages: the suspension pieces and brakes cost \$995; the box-tube spaceframe with fuel tank and quick-ratio rack-and-pinion steering all run about \$5000; and the fiberglass panels, upholstery, trim pieces, and electrical system are priced at \$7000. Added together that's about \$13,000 for all the bits required for a complete buildup, except paint, wheels, tires, and drivetrain. A slightly modified 170hp rotary can be obtained for \$3000, and a used five-speed transmission runs about \$500.

One of Maxton's designers, Ben Vanderlinden (who now works on Carroll Shelby's Can-Am race cars and reintroduced 427 S/C Cobra), claims a V6 engine will fit with some rewelding on the engine mounts. He adds that even a Chevy 350 might work, but that's a mind-boggling concept in a vehicle that tips the scales at less than 1700 pounds. For now, it's enough that the Rollerskate not only offers brisk performance for those on a budget, but also fits all sorts of sizes. **SC**

SOURCE

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