

When you plan to do a photo session on a feature car you have to arrange things well in advance and hope that the unpredictable British weather will be okay on the day. It was with some trepidation, therefore, when in the midst of the June monsoons we had to schedule the Fugitive III. A dark, dismal morning found photographer Steve and I sheltering from the rain at the test track wondering what the chances of getting anything done were.

"Do you think Alan (A. Arnold Esq, head man at UVA) will bring the car on a trailer?" asked Steve as we gazed gloomily at the ever-increasing puddles. "Of course" I replied, "Nobody would want to drive a car like that on a day like this." How wrong can you be?

A short while later Alan drove the little black beauty in, sporting a grin that would have looked more at home on the face of the fabled moggie from Cheshire! Oh sure, he was wearing goggles and a water-

proof oversuit, but he had driven the 35 miles or more from Newbury and obviously had a bundle of fun in doing so! His arrival immediately brightened the day, and before long the sun came out and we were able to get on with the pics.

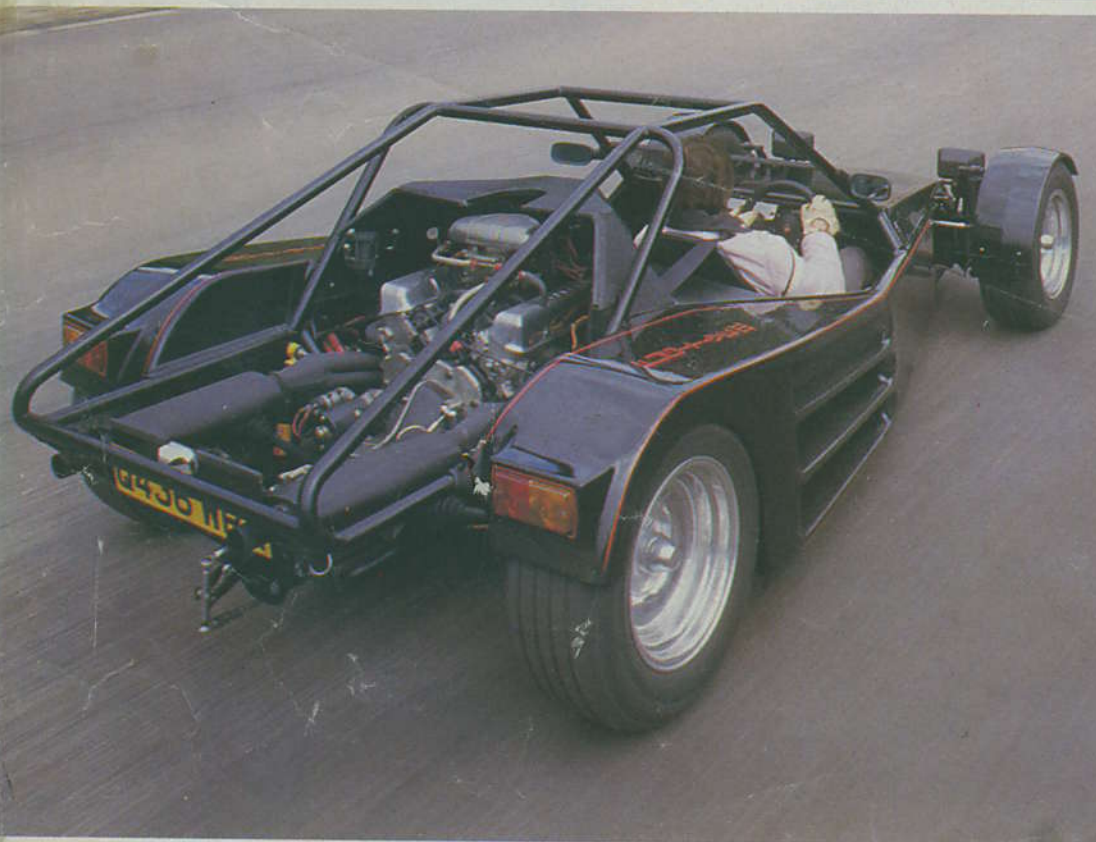
This served to illustrate that here was a man who really believed in the cars he makes and sells. And why not, when the Fugitive concept has proved so successful over the years? The original was a VW-powered off-road racer that came here from California. Fugitive II was introduced in 1984 (see Street Machine September '84) as a road-going version, but still with the Veedub engine hanging out back as in the standard Wolfsburg products. Enquiries from several customers for larger engines, such as V6's and V8's, which would substantially alter the handling characteristics if this layout was retained, led naturally enough to a mid-engined arrangement. Fugitive III was born.



The original, extremely rigid chassis constructed of 1½ inch and 1 inch diameter steel tube was altered to accommodate the new configuration, but the 100 inch wheelbase of the other models retained by moving the people compartment forward. The Variant gearbox has been beefed up and is flipped to face the opposite direction with the crown wheel swapped over to make sure there were 4 forward speeds and not 4 reverse. From my own personal experience I know that when this is done the gear change becomes a real problem. The shift mechanism on the box now comes out the back of the car at the furthest possible point from the driver. Watching Alan drive it was obvious there were no such problems on that score and when I squeezed my bulk into the driver's seat for a couple of laps, I found the gear shift smooth and positive.

Talking of squeezing bulk into the car, my personal volume prob-

by Tony Beadle

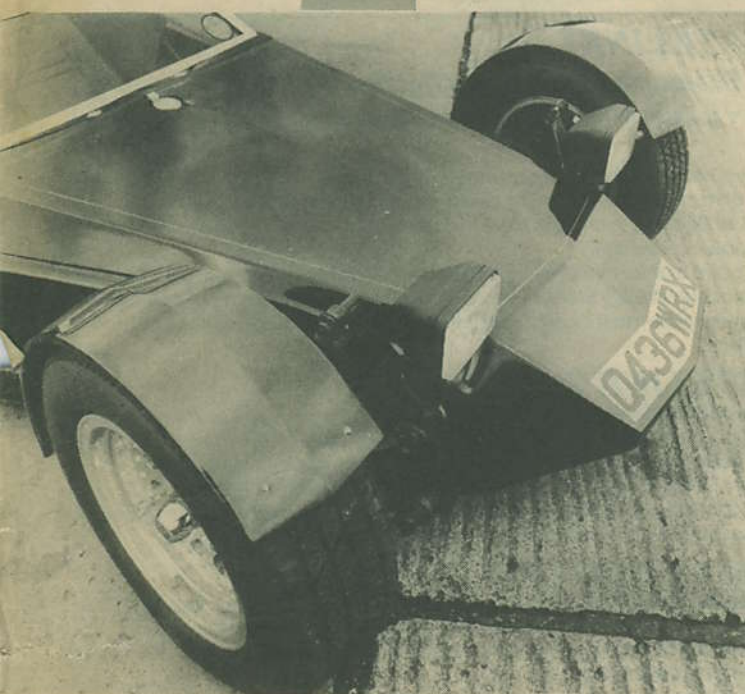
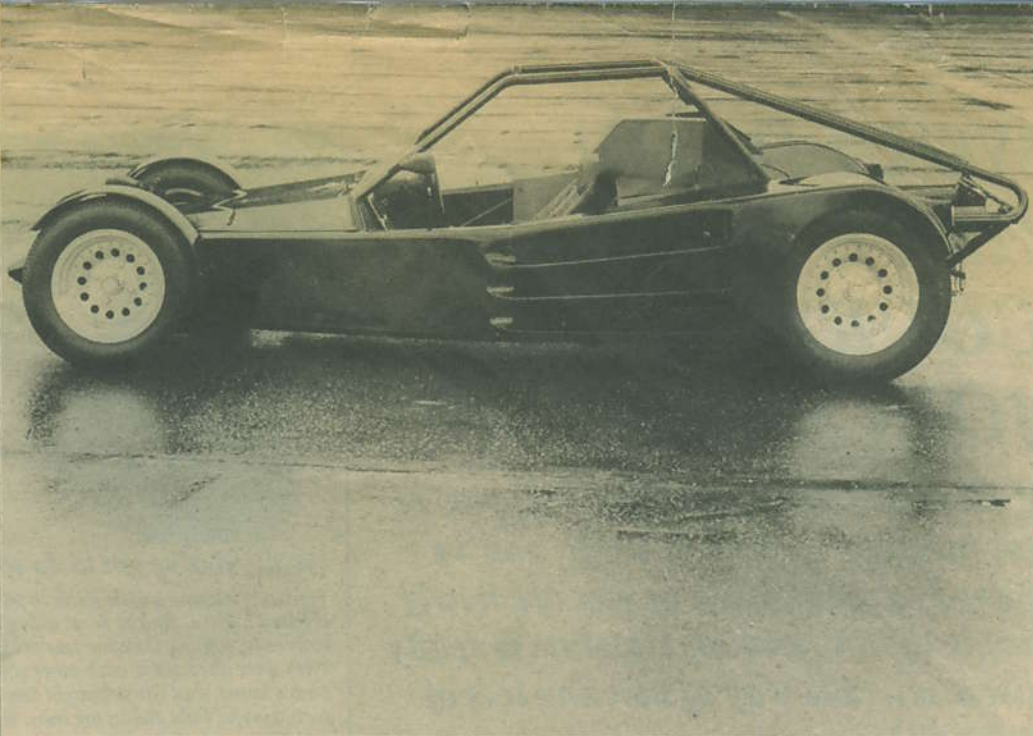


ably equates to something around three times that of Alan's and, as the seat was non-adjustable, to say I found the driving position cramped is an understatement! My knees hit the steering column, my large plates of meat had trouble sorting out the closely-spaced pedals and I was totally uncomfortable. But, even in this deformed state I found the rack and pinion steering light and precise, the handling superb and the performance electric. But actual entry and exit, whilst not performed with the practised ease of a regular Fugitive driver, was relatively easy and quickly learned. Much more so than say a Lotus Seven.

The Spax gas adjustable shocks all round and the 3 inches of height adjustment give ample leeway to set the car exactly how you want it. The car has been developed for road use without either front or rear anti-roll bars to give a more pleasant ride, but these items are available for the serious racers. The important suspension dimensions are — ½° negative camber at the rear, 1½° negative camber at the front, 1/16 inch toe in front and rear with a 6½° castor angle on the front. All the suspension bushes are urethane.

For any builder, the starting

point will probably be the Stage 1 kit comprising of the chassis, body, wiring harness, floor, tinted and laminated screen, suspension bushes, nuts and bolts etc etc which costs £1904.75 + VAT. Two other kits of equipment are also sold plus many optional extras so that you can build a car in stages or to the specification you can afford. Stage 2 has items like dash, VDO instruments, seats, engine cover, gear shift kit and so on and sells as a package for £1222.30 + VAT. Stage 3 has the fuel tank, lights, clutch and brake pedal assemblies etc for £565.75 + VAT. Of course, all items are individually priced and can be bought separately. The total cost of a fully built-up Fugitive III will obviously depend on how many secondhand parts you care to use or how skilled you are — for instance, you can buy the chassis in pieces



Above: Looking from the side, this view really emphasises the dramatic appearance of the latest Fugitive. Left: Front end looks really sharp! Below: Cockpit viewed with the top cover raised shows stark interior and the minimal amount of legroom around pedals. That thing sandwiched between driver and passenger is the fuel tank which some might feel is a bit close for comfort, but space in this car is really at a premium — luggage and spare wheel are other luxuries to be done without

THREE TO GO

a premature halt to our acceleration tests. However, UVA have a heavier duty clutch on the shelf, ready to be fitted and prevent any further problems on that count.

The car is geared at present to give a theoretical top speed of 148 mph, and although we were unable to verify this Alan said that despite the fact that it had not been fully run in he had seen 120 mph on the clock! What stops you from these speeds is a healthy set of four, 11

inch diameter, crossdrilled, ventilated discs that handle this 500 Kgs projectile with ease.

Tyres play an important part in handling and the BFGoodrich Comp T/A's came in for a lot of praise, especially for their performance in the wet. This III uses 235/60 x 15's on the back and 215/60 x 14's up front. Wheels are American Eagles that were originally smooth Center Line style until Alan had them drilled to add to the appearance.

There's not a lot more to be said, the new bodywork really enhances the looks in my opinion, making the car appear stubbier than the 100 inch wheelbase would suggest, and the engine cover with rear spoiler will no doubt further improve the clean lines. Hard and soft tops will be available soon, as will full interior trim packages to make the accommodation slightly more civilised.

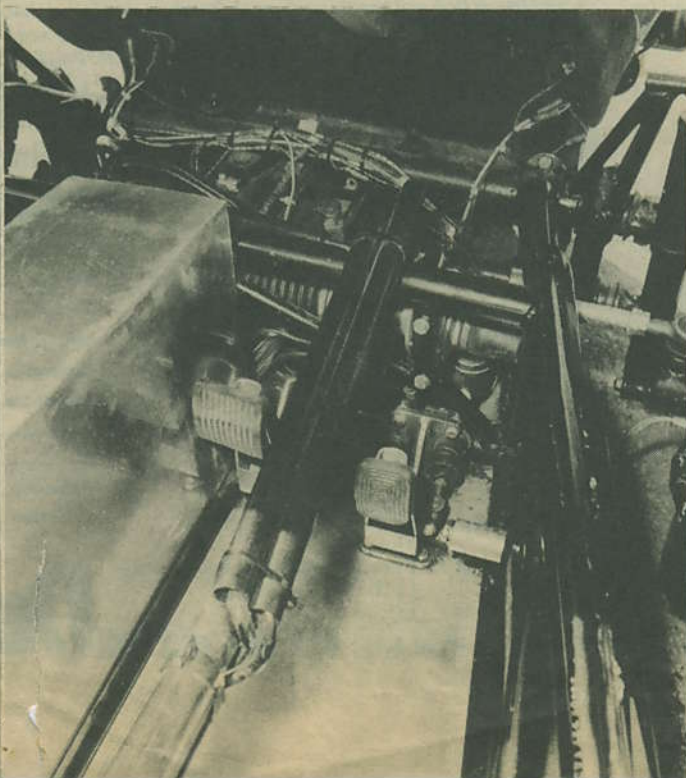
Yes, the Fugitive III is still fixed firmly in the fun car bracket, but name another mid-engined two seater that will give you 130 mph top speed, 0-60 in under 7 seconds and cornering on rails for under £5000. There's more than one reason that Fugitive III drivers be laughing all over their faces.

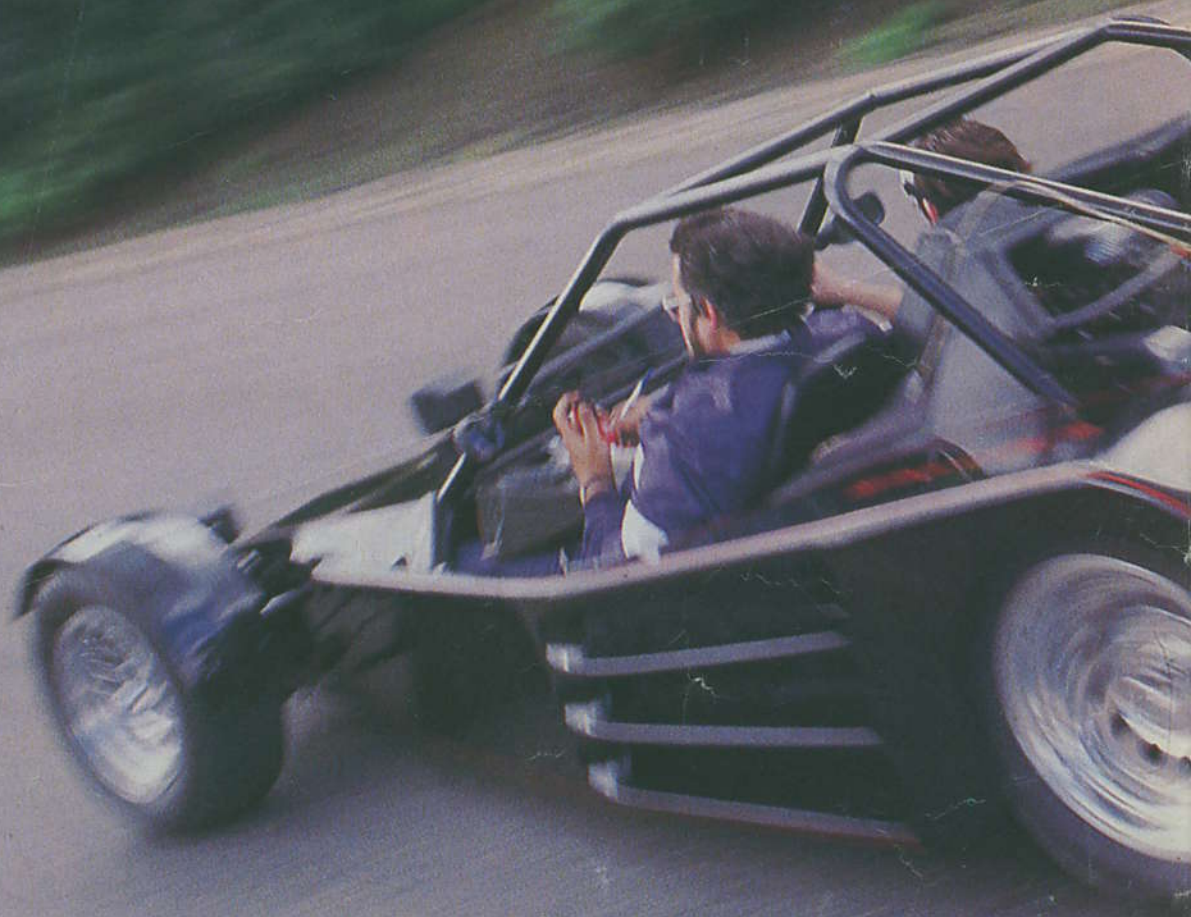
Further details are available from The Unique Vehicle & Engineering Co Ltd, Argents Me Technology Park, He Lane, Newbury, Berks RG Tel: 0635 33888.

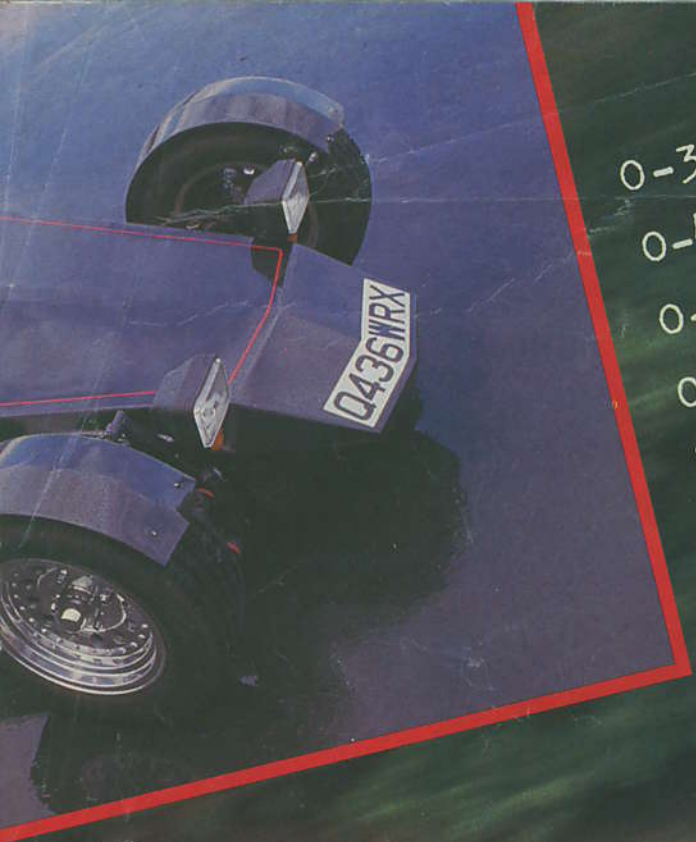
and weld it together yourself and save money, but this exercise is only for experts. UVA state that a good example could be put together for around £2500 while the ultimate will be pushing the five grand mark.

A fair chunk of the money spent could be involved in tuning the V8 lump — the engine in the demonstrator has been blueprinted and mildly breathed on to give around 230 BHP. It features a fully balanced bottom end, gas flowed heads that have also been pocketed for double valve springs, adjustable push rods, Auto-Power Services 244 cam and a 440 cfm Holley four barrel and an APS manifold. The tube exhaust headers were made from a UVA kit and the silencers are also UVA items.

The clutch used to transfer the power from the Rover is a Bug Pack item actuated by a UVA hydraulic system. It was this item that started to show signs of strain and brought

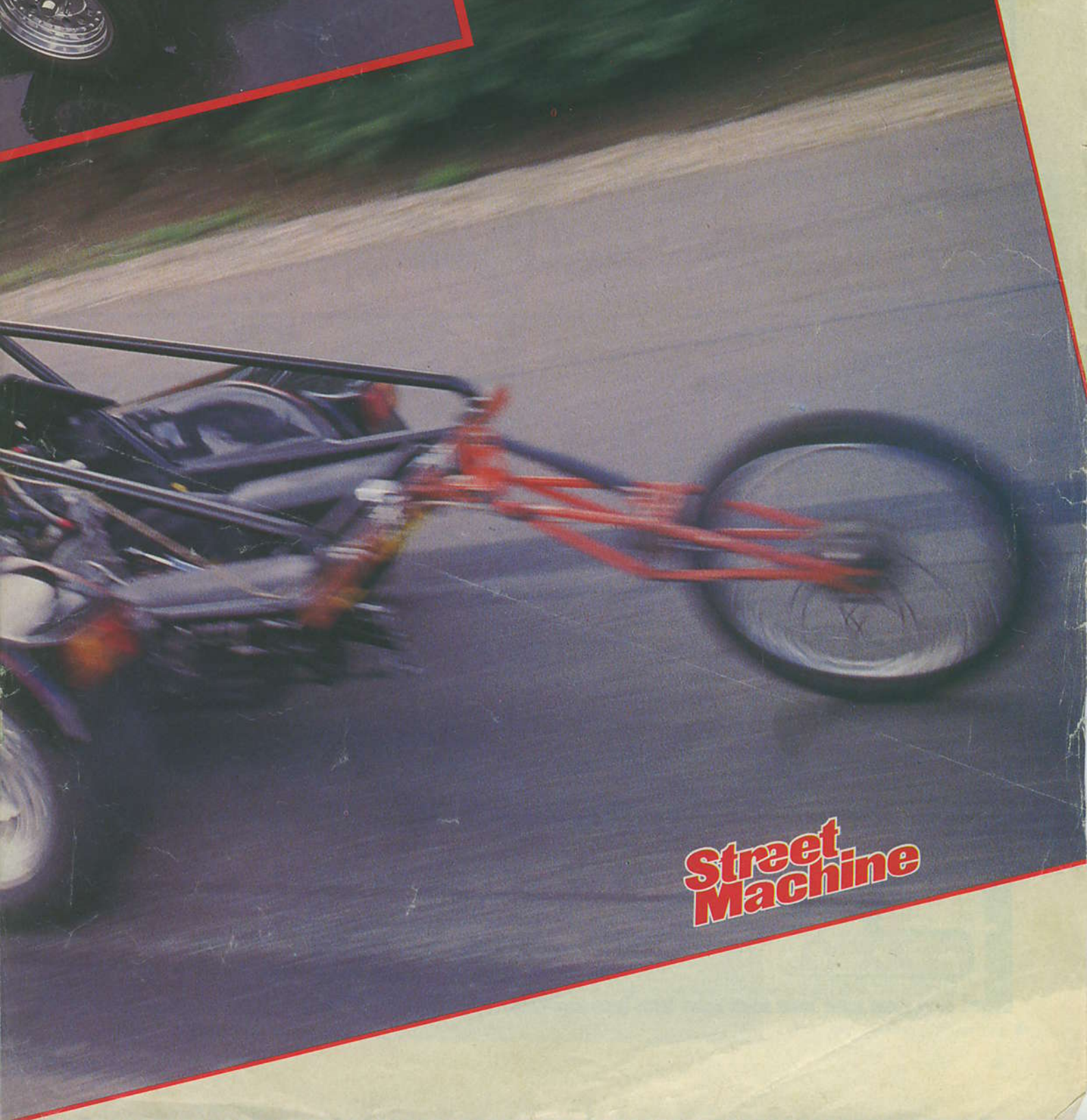






0-30.....2.6
0-40.....4.1
0-50.....5.4
0-60.....6.9
Standing start $\frac{1}{4}$ mile...14.6

UVA'S V8 Fugitive III



**Street
Machine**