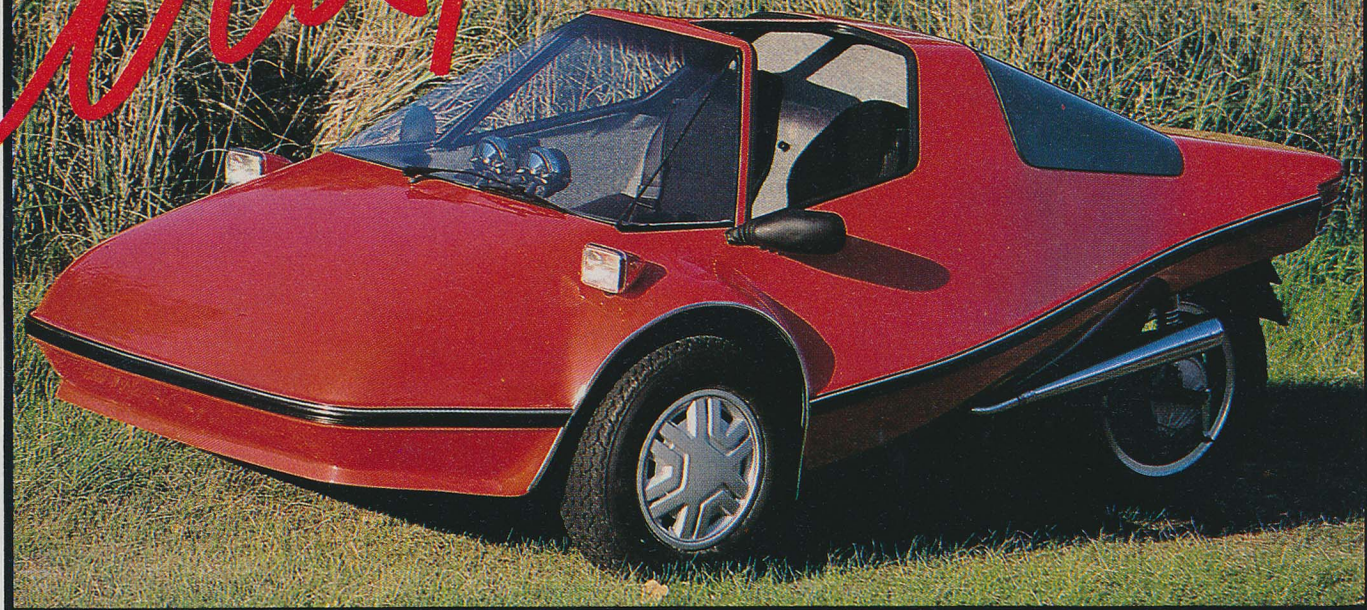


# Wasp

## A Motorcycle With Sting



What do you get when you cross a Volkswagen with a motorcycle? According to Western Australia's Autocycle Engineering, a Wasp — and it's definitely not a joke!

LOOK, a temporary Australian with a hood on!" the passing jogger cracked to his mate as they spotted the object photographer Greg McBean had well and truly trapped within his focus ring. Look, another bloody crazy jogger begging to be run over, we thought.

Autocycle Engineering's Wasp had previously been on display at the Sydney Motor Show, appropriately placed outside the door to the motorcycle displays, but before you reached the cars. Fair enough for a three-wheeler powered by a motorcycle but encased in fibreglass to disguise its 1600 Volkswagen front end. It had caused laughter, dismay, admiration and a lot of downright confusion at the Show, but TWO WHEELS was sufficiently fascinated to approach Aldo and Lance of Autocycle to ask if we could take it out afterwards.

Due to various legal hassles, we couldn't actually drive (ride? *drive*?) the Wasp on Mr Wran's public thoroughfares, but only play passengers.

First step to the business is climbing in over the side panel and "arranging" yourself, legs stretched out in front and shoulders drawn in. It is a tight squeeze in there for two. On with the seatbelt. Pull out the bike's choke button (now mounted on the firewall between the occupants' heads), hit the go button and put the gearstick (which is actually a piece of handlebar with the motorcycle's original switchblocks mounted on it) into first. Let the foot-operated clutch out, while pressing down on the foot throttle. Cruise out onto the busy street to watch people fall down manholes and out of windows. And especially, off bikes.

The Wasp we were in was powered by a Honda CX500 Custom — all there, mind, except for the front end and seat. Even the tank was still on the bike (and operational). Aftermarket exhausts replaced the stockers for clearance reasons. The CX's rear drum brake was not operational (though in the future it is possible it may be rigged up as a "hand" brake) as the Wasp uses the Veedub front

drum brakes. Naturally, the other car-like feature is a steering wheel.

After the long trailer ride across the Nullarbor to make it (just in time) to the Sydney show, neither the CX nor the Z1300 Kawasaki (which had also been on display) were found to be running very well; Aldo thought the carbs had gone out of adjustment somewhere along the way.

When running properly, the Wasps are claimed to have higher top speeds than their original motorcycles, despite the increase in weight. This is due to the aerodynamic effect of the fibreglass bodywork (a normal motorcycle has an extremely poor drag co-efficient).

We asked how safe the Wasps were; like, er, would they roll or do other silly things in high-speed cornering? According to Aldo, extensive testing by rally drivers of the original CB750 prototype at Perth's Wanneroo circuit denied this. Running odd shocks, no stabiliser bar or bodywork (just the frame), there were no criticisms of the machine's handling.



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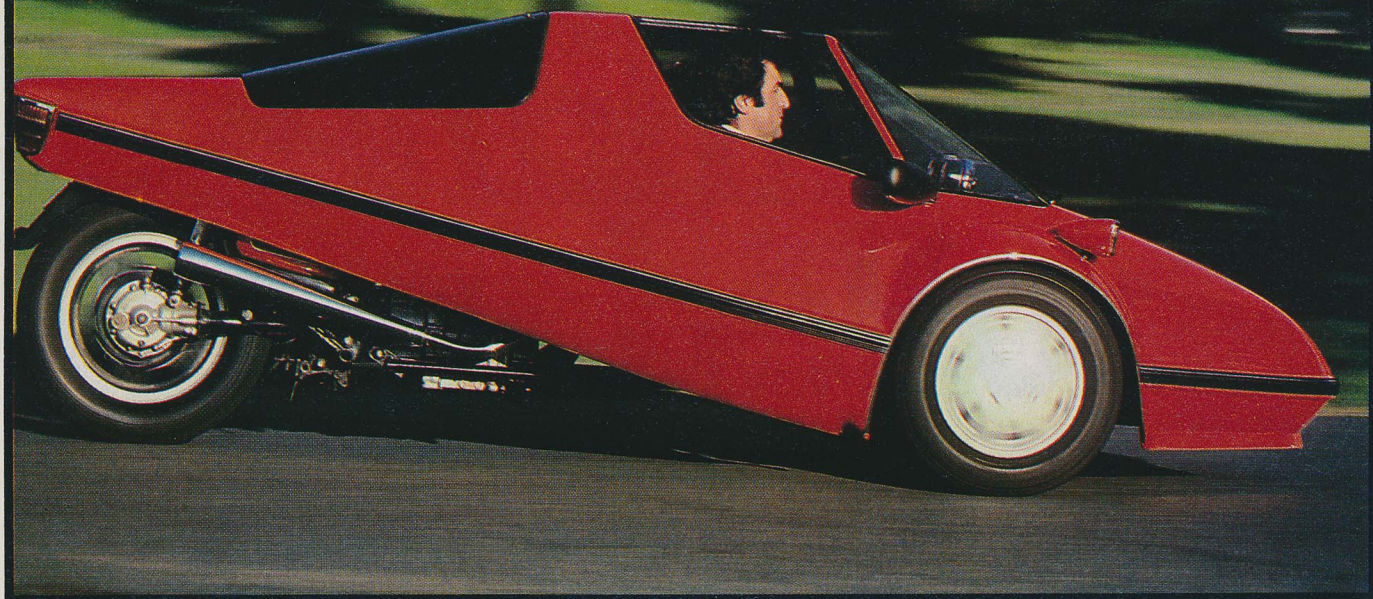
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(and an extra wheel . . .)



When we stopped for Maestro McBean to take some static shots, one problem did appear: no reverse! Yep, just like a motorcycle now, except that you have to get out to push. But like a car, you hold the steering wheel and push against the bodywork. It's no trouble for one person to do this, providing the terrain's not too steep. The idea is the same as a motorcycle (especially for smaller-capacity owners): think about where you park, *before* you park there! Lance and Aldo have had ideas about a reversing mechanism but have to be careful here because there's one very important factor to be taken into account with such a move.

The motorcycle should remain removable, to be ridden as a solo. Honest.

The way the Wasp is put together, they claim you can remove and rehabilitate the bike with about a morning's solid work. Back on go the seat, front end, electrics and conventional clutch, braking and throttle systems. Then go ride, young man (or woman).

Think about it: if, for whatever reason you may have, you buy a Wasp, but still love biking, you've a bike as well!

On the other hand, if you don't have any aspirations to using the bike by itself, the classic front-ender wrecked bike can be used for construction of the unit (after making sure the rest of the bike is dead straight).

Although there are many finishing touches still to go into the existing Wasps (such as a windscreen heater/demister, perspex "hatch-covers" and luggage tray under the back "window"), the major problem at present is gaining final transport authority approval in all states of Australia, for the Wasp to go legal. For this reason, there were no front blinkers mounted when in Sydney. The constructors wanted to find out just where the NSW Department of Motor Transport would want them to be mounted! Funnily enough, the CX500 Wasp drove into the main Sydney DMT, was crawled over and under by various engineers and inspectors, deemed interesting, and drove out again, without comment about legality! The WA plates (belonging to the motorcycle!) must have fooled 'em! The guys are confident, however, that type approvals won't be too far off.

So what happens in the meantime?

Autocycle Engineering is willing to take orders, with prices for a complete ensemble (you choose the type of bike) starting at \$6500, your choice of interior and exterior colours. Of course, if you want to provide the bike, that's a different kettle of chickens. Expectations are that your Wasp would be ready for delivery three months after placement of the original order.

Besides being a motorcycle with three wheels and a hood, there's another way of looking at the Wasp. "We think of it as a really cheap way to own a small sports car," Aldo said. "A lot of women have been interested in it, for that reason. It's got the performance of almost any sports car — depending of course on the bike you use — and the handling as well; but you have to remember the Wasp has a motorcycle's reliability and fuel economy as well. We look at it as a purely fun vehicle."

So do we, fellas. Give us another ride. 🍓

*If you're interested in the Wasp, you can contact Autocycle Engineering at 5/7 Neil St, Osborne Park, WA 6017; 'phone (09) 444-7012.*

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