



SECRETS OF STYLE

at BMC-Leyland Australia
Look Inside

By

David Bentley

David Hardy

John Holt

Tony Cripps

2nd Edition

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Chris Rogers, who at the time was assigned to assist Jim Bigelow (Product Engineer) recounts the styling work done on the Morris Marshal:

“At this time, we had a stylist named Bill Moody, an easy-going chap who was charged with the task of choosing paint colours and selecting trim fabrics and generally influencing the appearance of the products. He was assisted in the selection of colours by Doreen Croker who was G.A. Lloyd's secretary and later became John Buckley's secretary when he succeeded G.A. Lloyd.



Fig. 1.2 *Morris Marshal, 1957.*

Bill produced drawings and renderings for the new car, designs of new badges fore and aft, a stylised "M" for the dashboard, Morris hub caps and a new grille which consisted of a metal mesh set behind a stylised boomerang shape embossed with "MORRIS" in paint filled capitals and a false air scoop in the bonnet which involved having the bonnet panel re-struck by the Ruskin Body Works in Melbourne.

The cars of this era were adorned with stainless steel side strips often delineating a paint colour change, and Bill went one better by trapping an anodised coloured aluminium panel between two strips along the body sides with two tone paint. Jim and I selected the various materials, and the drawings were done with the assistance of Ken Brannigan, a draftsman brought out from England.”

John Holt, with Ian Edgar and Jim Harris, joined the Company in 1957 starting as cadet stylists under Moody, and his two assistants Bryon Fitzpatrick and Harry Widmer. The work was mainly badge-engineering of existing UK models and colour and trim specifications for the Morris Minor, and later on, Morris Major/Austin Lancer and Wolseley 1500.



Fig. 1.3 *BMC Australia's Design Office with Jim Harris on left, Harry Widmer at rear and John Holt at the front, 1957.*

John Holt recalls:

“I can remember Bill (Moody) having many dealings with Buckley and it seemed that Bill answered to him. I don't remember having much to do with engineering staff at the time. One of Bill's first jobs was to slightly redesign the Austin A95 to become a Morris Marshal. This was something Buckley initiated and may have been one of his reasons for starting a Styling Department. I can remember Bill working on this project when I started at BMC.

Buckley went to Commonwealth Engineering when he left BMC and he employed Bill not long afterwards. In retrospect it seems like it was an example of "empire building" either by Buckley or Bill. There is no doubt that the work we needed to

Dave Beech had some sketches prepared by Harris Mann which had little resemblance to the 1800 body shell. Harris Mann as head designer was a very creative guy able to design original shapes e.g., Triumph TR7.

The Cowley studio was set up by Roy Haynes to the Ford system. Staffed by predominantly ex-Ford designers, the ADO28 Morris Marina was the major work in the studio with the Tasman/Kimberley work being fitted in whenever possible. I had completed the rear styling, but the front was still fluid when I returned to Australia.

Coming from the primitive facilities we had in Australia, the facilities at Cowley were quite overwhelming. There was a drawing / design office, separate from the clay modelling area which was adjacent to a showroom with turntable and a separate production design studio. The modelling bridge was a full gantry built like a precision instrument running on rails either side of the model. The designers designed and directed the clay modellers. I think there was some union style demarcation issues.

This was the beginning of the felt marker technique for illustration which was a complete change from pastel paint and coloured pencils on black paper which I had been used to. At the time I thought that many of the “designers” were primarily interested in the illustration process rather than in the cars they were creating

What surprised me about the Marina development at the time was the continual changes in the styling without an apparent style objective, other than to be visually competitive with the next Cortina – which they had full knowledge of, and also a new sports coupe, the Capri. The Marina styling was centred on the two door coupe with the four door happening at the last minute prior to management presentation. The two door coupe originally had dedicated doors and was thus well proportioned, but suffered when these were discarded for those from the four doors. Fibreglass shells were constructed for realism, with see-through windows and head/shoulder manikins inside. On the morning of the management presentation, three wooden crates appeared in the studio, from Farina, Michelotti and, I think, Karmann. As a master salesman, Roy Haynes obviously won the day. A sports car and other variants were intended but did not proceed beyond the sketch stage.”

After returning to Sydney in late 1968, Bentley sensed that even with the expanded styling area, he couldn't see that another styling assistant would be needed and encouraged by Rodbergh to move into designing other products, he left the company.



Fig. 2.5 Harris Mann's sketches for proposed Tasman/Kimberley.



Fig. 2.6 Some styling options for Tasman/Kimberley drawn by David Bentley.

With more work coming on for P76 and Marina, a mezzanine floor was built over the Styling and Trim areas. Trim moved up into the new floor and occupied about half of the mezzanine, while Styling had the remainder and included a large office for Cassarchis and his assistant Wendy Starkey.

David Hardy recalls the new arrangements:

“The rest of the “upper room” was a very pleasant workspace about 12x6 metres with polished timber floor and white gyprock walls along one side and at the end opposite Mark and Wendy’s office. This became my work area. I had a full-size layout table (ex-drawing office) and a drawing board. There was a sink with hot and cold water and a new clay oven was installed there. The new area had its own entrance from outside the building by means of a spiral staircase.

A new model-making area was established where the trim shop had been, and the model-making team expanded to five, most of whom were pattern makers. Pattern making is the trade best suited to modelling in wood, as both demand the skills needed to accurately sculpt compound shapes in wood, while following an engineering drawing. Mark also employed a couple of styling hopefuls, as well as Peter Mohacsi, who was still in the apprentice training scheme. Peter was very enthusiastic about design and was a big fan of the Tasman/Kimberley shape. I remained the only one working on paper, as the others were used as clay modellers.”

Next on the agenda was the interior. David Hardy takes up the story:

“Mark designed the fascia as a one-off clay model. Not a sketch or rendering in sight. It has a heavy look, in keeping with the competition of the time. Allowance for a column-mounted gear shift meant that there wasn’t much room between the windscreen and the arc of the gear lever for sculptural shapes. That, together with ADR’s which required pre-determined head impact areas with limited impact deceleration, meant that most dashboards in this type of car at that time were relatively shallow and flat.



Fig. 3.17 Mark Cassarchis’ desk in his office in the “upper room”. It was made to his design by the model shop. The curtain on the right covers a glass wall looking into the mezzanine work area where the stylists worked.



Fig. 3.18 Model fascia for Model B saloon.

Anderson went on to document the intended market and design requirements. For example, for the Coupe, we are told:

“Here we are aiming at replacing the Marina Coupe with a much more stylish mode which will command a higher price and hence produce more economic margin.... This market is traditionally very volatile and the success of this part of the programme will depend on the stylist’s ability to create a “long-life” design.”

Interestingly, a follow up memo was issued two weeks later. Amongst other matters, Anderson writes:

“Fascia: Mr Cassarchis requests that he be given maximum freedom to develop new features such as fibre optics in this area. I believe that the switches and other features be specified before styling starts.”

While Anderson recognises the importance of styling to the success of the whole project, the Styling Terms of Reference, issued to both Michelotti and Cassarchis, seems to give little room for freedom of expression. As we shall see, the models from Cassarchis and Michelotti are very similar in appearance – almost like a skin stretched over the engineering hard points. During the work in Turin, Anderson relates that Michelotti asked if he could move the spare tyre inwards by 10 mm – a concession which was granted.

Submissions for the design of P82 were invited from Michelotti and Cassarchis. Cassarchis, as was his way, went immediately into clay and produced three designs representing different body styles for the range: Saloon, Compact, and Commuter Coupe.

These were modelled full-size, and the only full-size clay models ever produced at Victoria Park for a complete vehicle proposal.

Michelotti prepared renderings and proceeded to 1/4 scale models for the saloon and Compact.

The state of play, quite late in the piece, is given in the September 1974 Status Report written by Fulford and Anderson:

“Five sets of renderings in 1/4 scale were submitted by Michelotti. He has progressed the selected theme in 1/4 scale models to completion of low-line and high-line saloon and is proceeding with 1/4 scale models of Coupe and Compact. He has completed initial full-scale skin lines of the Saloons. Michelotti has worked accurately within the Styling Terms of Reference.



Fig. 3.27 P82 full-sized models of Saloon, Compact and Coupe by Cassarchis.



Fig. 3.28 Michelotti and Leyland Australia’s John Kay discuss the P82 design at the Turin studio.