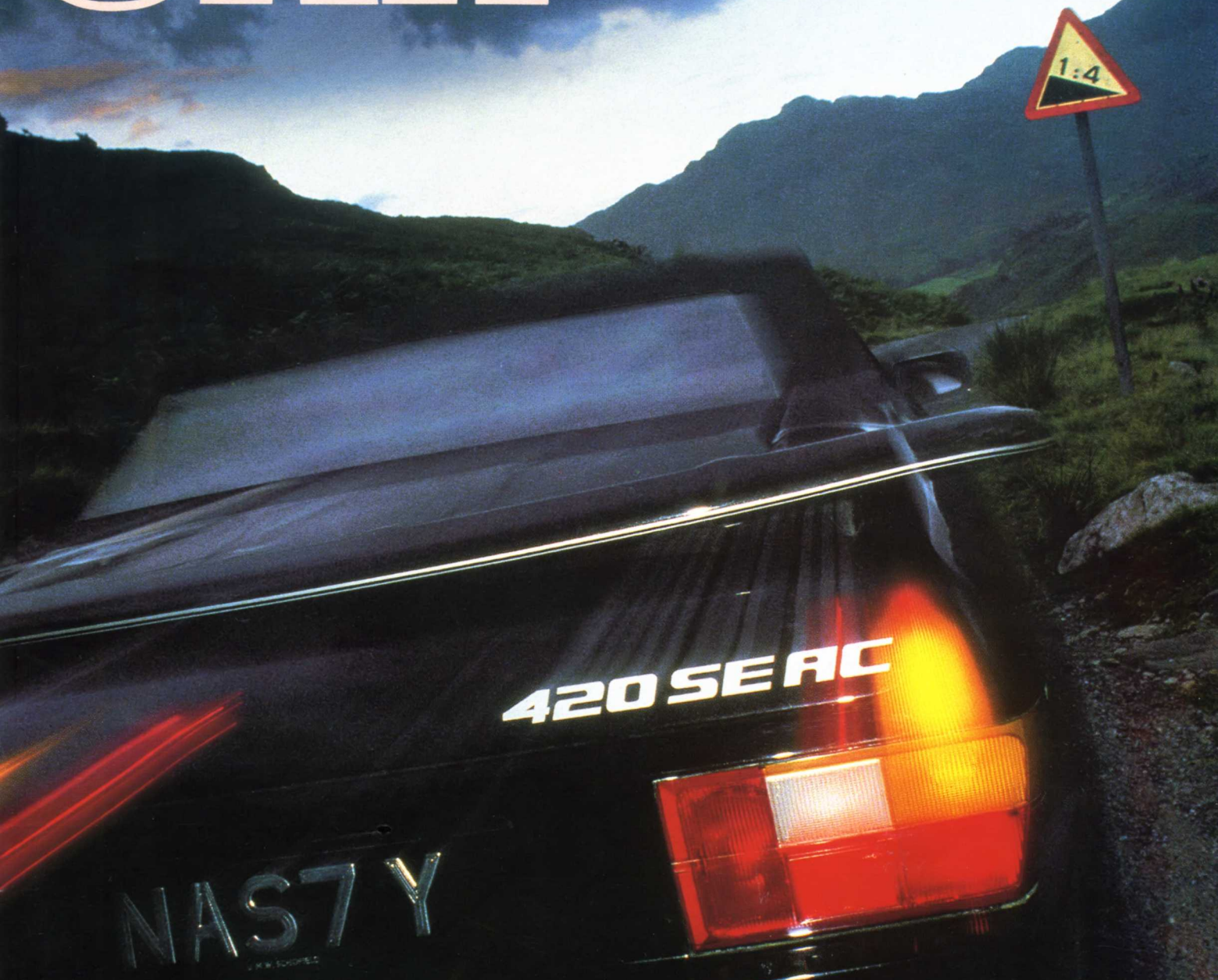


PERFORMANCE CAR

October 1987 £1.60 US \$4.00



420 SEAC

NASTY

TVR'S BIGGEST GUN

WORLDBEATING PERFORMANCE FOR THE VERY FEW

DARK STAR



The TVR 420SEAC is the most powerful road car the Blackpool sportscar specialists have ever built. With a gloriously responsive 300bhp from its all-alloy Rover-derived V8, plus a lightweight composite body, it has a power to weight ratio to beat those of a Ferrari Testarossa, a Porsche 911 Turbo or even an Aston Vantage Zagato. And it is a real sportscar with the topless option. **Brian Laban** been driving this race-bred, all-British, soft-topped supercar . . .

The video film which TVR's UK sales manager Brian Horner had just made from the passenger seat of the Nero Black Metallic 420SEAC was amusing and informative. It started like a travelogue, the car bounding gently along the leafy lanes of the Lake District, the camera panning occasionally over the stubby bonnet to the pretty fields and hedgerows skirting the smooth, narrowish road. Sometimes the camera looked across to the driver, taking it all very easily under the dappled sunlight from the arching trees, just burbling harmlessly along for the ride.

Once or twice, Windermere flashed silvery into the background and the camera zoomed tighter onto a cluster of small boats in the middle distance. Once there were even some cows.

It was while the camera was dwelling briefly on one of these transitory idylls that it missed the transformation. It didn't see it and I don't remember it – not going mild-mannered into a telephone box, or drinking from a bubbling beaker or growing hairs on hands and face and fangs in the mouth. But it happened alright. There was no mistaking it.

The sound was the first clue. From below the loafing V8 burble came two short, sharp shocks of noise – rrrap, pow. . . rrap, pow: fifth to fourth, fourth to third. The camera goes back to the view ahead, but it has changed.

The road is a little bit wider – not much but just enough; it is empty ahead and it has started to do something very strange. It has started to look like an amusement machine gone completely crazy.

The short straight is getting shorter; pow, back to fourth and the nose rises slightly under the huge, unrelenting blast of power. As the camera comes past the dash, the white needle on the VDO speedometer has leapt from 40mph to nudging 90. The noise changes again, the nose comes down a little under the powerful influence of disc brakes with four-pot callipers all-round. Rrrrap-pow; back into third with heel and toe and twitch the wheel left into the tightening little corkscrew of a bend at maybe 70mph, power hard on again even before the apex, easing lock off as the front bites hard and the tail gently kicks.

Flick right, flick left again, noise turning on and off with the throttle, big Bridgestone RE71 tyres chirping and chattering even over all that, just on the edge of how quick they want to go.

And just on the edge of how quick I want to go. . .

Powww, back to fourth for maybe two seconds-worth of staggering blast between the tight sequence of corners. The white needle, both white needles, flash round the dials like almost no car I have ever seen. The high hedges and the canopy of trees have turned into a thundering green tunnel, the camera has forgotten all about the cows.

The little sequence goes on for maybe four or five minutes, every corner a gem, every gearchange with that crisp, sharp bark, occasionally the rich mixture stutter on the overrun; every second is very close to the car's limit, and just once almost beyond it as the rear snaps rather further