

PLATFORM-SHARING GROUP TEST



Retro styling doesn't do the Lima any favours for residual value.



OWNER'S VIEW

The Panther has been owned by Roger Burn since new, and its varied career has included production car trialling, overseas tours and Panther Car Club events. 'The only modification is the overdrive gearbox, from an FE VX4/90 – that's to get the revs down when I'm driving on motorways,' says Roger.



Inside, HC column stalks and Magnum instruments.

PANTHER LIMA

BACK IN the mid-Seventies, Vauxhall managing director Bob Price and Panther MD Bob Jankel played golf together regularly. Panther was building secret prototypes for Vauxhall, and Vauxhall supplied Magnum floorpans so the Brooklands-based firm could build its small, Thirties retro sports cars.

Check underneath, and it has suspension and steel chassis legs identical to the HC range. Up top, there's GRP bodywork, MG Midget doors and Austin Maxi bumpers, but inside you're faced with familiar HC column stalks and the Magnum's seven-dial instrument cluster, although mounted in the centre of the car and angled toward the driver. The gauges are small and quite difficult to see that far away. Stare down the long bonnet, and you're reminded that the packaging works very differently here. You're sitting close to the back axle in a cosy two-seater cockpit. Your elbow hangs out in the breeze, and the wind whips back off the flat windscreen.

The 2300 engine provides excellent torque, but with less weight than the steel saloons, the Lima's



It's that 2300 overhead cam engine again.

performance is strong, heightened by the sensory overload. Tackle your favourite set of S-bends, and the roadster feels completely different to Vauxhall's offerings on the same platform. The steering column is much longer, yet the turn-in is a tad faster. The springing feels stiffer, but where the Panther really scores is when you're pressing too fast into a corner and that normally understeering wishbone set-up transitions to oversteer. You're on top of the back axle, so the messages come through harder and faster. And because the car is cornering flatter than the Vauxhalls – less weight on top – the tyre sidewalls communicate better to the driver.

The Panther is often disparaged as a pastiche boulevardier, but drive one and (whisper this) you'll find it is a proper sports car held back only by the snobbery of others.

JENSEN-HEALEY

THE JENSEN-HEALEY came about as a result of Donald Healey's frustration at BL's deletion of the Austin-Healey 3000. US businessman Kjell Qvale had taken a majority shareholding



NUMBER BUILT	– approximately 600
ENGINE	2279cc/OHC
POWER	108bhp
TORQUE	138lb ft
TOP SPEED	98mph
0-60 MPH	9.9sec
CONSUMPTION	21 mpg
GEARBOX	4-spd manual
LENGTH	12ft 3in (3.75m)
WIDTH	5ft 4in (1.63m)
WEIGHT	1900lb (861kg)
COST NEW	£4998
COST NOW	£5000