



Pics: Joseph Farrugia/Dave D'Amato



The Maltese C

We're not joking either, we've been. During January it's still sandals and shorts weather. But it *is* tiny – go above 50mph and you'll be lucky to stop before you hit the drink. And yes, the roads do look like the surface of the moon, which might not matter when you drive around in a hired jeep, but what do you do when you drive a heavily-lowered, tubbed Cossie Mk1 Escort? Just fly over the bumps, of course.

Josianne Camilleri is the lady who gets to drive this Mk1 in the sun and she's married to Dave D'Amato, an ex-Aussie and the man who put this fabulous machine together. Dave went to Malta about seven years ago and liked it so much he stayed. Being a paint and bodywork man, with his own business called 'Dave's Garage' (funnily enough), he had no problem churning out the goods when Josianne mentioned she'd always wanted a fast convertible.

Starting with a basic two-door Mk1 Escort - still plentiful on Malta - the underside got some hefty strengthening to cope with the loss of the roof. We reckon the car looks all the better thanks to no hood

frame to spoil the lines, along with smoothed over door tops and rear screen frame base. In fact, if you look carefully you'll see the whole car has received a clean-up, the handles having long since gone and the front wing rear lower edges having been welded to the sills and smoothed over.

Where Dave obviously comes into his own is in the paint department. The colour looks really deep under the sun, but then you could use the island as a baking oven, if you wanted. One thing we can't figure out is why





JOSIANNE CAMILLERI'S 1968 MK1 ESCORT

BODY

Originally two-door saloon

Modifications: Roof chopped off, strengthened floor and sills, handles and fuel filler shaved, bulkhead recessed three inches, bonnet on hydraulic rams, reinforced A-posts

Paint: Custom purple pearl by Sikkens, applied by Dave D'Amato at Dave's Garage

CHASSIS

Reinforced chassis, home-made strut brace

Suspension: (f) Mk2 Escort adjustable struts with uprated springs (r) Home-made four-link with adjustable coilovers. Lowered 4 inches all around

Wheels/tyres: 8x16-inch TSW Hockenheim, 265/50x16 (r) and 215/45x16 (f) rubber

DRIVETRAIN

Engine: 1991cc Sierra Cosworth engine, stage one kit, 3-inch stainless-steel exhaust system

Transmission: Escort RS2000 four-speed

Axle: Capri with 3.4:1 gears

PERFORMANCE

Power: 270bhp

1/4-mile: 11.5/120mph

INTERIOR

Narrowed Capri rear seats, Honda Civic front seats, glass-fibre dashboard, Auto Meter gauges, Kenwood stereo with Pioneer speakers

THANKS

To Dave's Garage (00356 460 973), Zebbug, Malta

Malta takes minutes to drive around and its roads would put the surface of the moon to shame, but no-one cares 'cause the sun shines all-year round.

Cosworth



the windscreen wipers and fresh air intake haven't been ditched, after all they seem kind of redundant now, eh? Maybe this is what Josianne is referring to when she states that, "We still need to continue modifying the car, with regards to both the

quarters at the island's run-what-you-brung events. Oh yes, Josianne drags as well. To get that power down through fat rubber, the rear outer arches have been subtly widened four inches and the inners tubbed – a neat job which hasn't spoilt the stock lines.

There's no pure-race interior here, because a Honda donated its front seats while modified Capri items make up the rear, with the whole lot recovered in a contrasting pale fawn colour. Black was ruled out, the Maltese sun would absolutely cook 'em - good for skin grafts maybe, but not much else.

So there it is, a great



idea that's superbly put together. With a year's worth of evenings and weekends invested so far, the hard work's been well worth it. Now Josianne just has to forget the potholes and concentrate on cruising in the sun. Can't think of a better life. **BM**

look and power-wise."

Well, how much power do you want? The turbocharged Cosworth is putting out about 270bhp at the moment with just a stage one kit fitted. With the Escort being so lightweight, it helps the motor to 11sec

