

# CELEBRITIES & THEIR HEALEYS

By Hank Leach,  
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## Ever wonder who else had their hands on the steering wheel of your Austin-Healey?

Throughout the years of Healey production, Donald Healey and company contacted many famous and semi-famous celebrities; from time to time, these individuals sat behind the wheel of our beloved cars as a promotional testimony, a photo op, or often to handle the Healey on the racetrack. Folks from all walks of life enjoyed the seat time in Healeys – from the early days of its inception to its final demise in 1967 and beyond – in movies, TV commercials, magazines, and as daily drivers for many influential people who respected the cars' qualities.

As the editor of Healey Highlights, I had the opportunity over the years to amass a collection of photos and stories related to some of these celebrities. In some cases, I was fortunate enough to meet or talk with some of them. Just for fun, I have comprised a list of as many people I could find to present them to the Austin-Healey Club USA membership. My hope is that some of you will recall other such examples of famous folks and their Healeys and respond. Perhaps you have photos of them in their cars. We could develop a gallery of celebrity photos with their Healeys.

### Here's a start for that gallery:

- Mel Tormé**, 1940-50s singer: drove and raced Austin-Healey 100s
- Gracie Fields**, British singer, comedienne, stage and film actress:
- Carroll Shelby**, auto entrepreneur and builder: raced 100s for Donald Healey
- Sir Stirling Moss**, racecar driver extraordinaire: On Donald Healey's racing team
- Pat Moss**, outstanding rally driver and Stirling's sister:
- Jackie Cooper**, movie actor: a Healey racer – passed away in 2011
- Harrison Ford**, actor: red BJ-8 Healey was birthday present from his wife
- Paul Tracy**, Canadian racecar driver: Healey collector
- Barbara Walters**, now retired newscaster and interviewer: poses in a 100
- Clint Eastwood**, actor and director: sits in bathing trunks on the rear of his black 100M
- Joanne Woodward**, actress: strikes a sexy pose with an Austin-Healey 100
- George Harrison**, "The Beatles" band member: in a Bugeye with Paul McCartney
- Sir Leonard Lord**, head of BMC: posed with the first 100 at London Motor Show
- Louise King**, actress: poses in front of Fulton Theatre in New York City with her 100
- John Gott**, chief constable of Northampton: great racer of 3000s
- Kjell Qvale**, entrepreneur of Jensen: posed with Donald Healey and many JHs
- Ann-Margret**, actress: poses in a blue Healey 3000
- Kirk Douglas**, actor: with son Michael Douglas and Kirk's 100 Healey
- Julian Lennon**, singer and son of "The Beatles" band member
- John Lennon**, John owned a Bugeye Sprite
- Barbie**, the famous doll: found sitting in a 1962 convertible model
- Bridget Bardot**, actress: looking very sexy in a duotone-colored 100 – wow
- Bella Darvi**, actress: laying on the bonnet of a 100
- Jerry Seinfeld**, comedian: clowning around in a blue BJ-8
- Cindy Crawford**, model: shown driving a 3000 in fashionable garb
- George Clooney**, actor: sitting on door of a 100 with his leading lady driving
- Johnny Depp**, actor-comic: dapper pose with mustache in a red Healey
- James Dean**, actor: tunes and races a 1962 Austin-Healey Sprite on the track
- Gerry Coker**, automotive designer: creator of the Austin-Healey body
- Joe Huffaker**: developed racing Healeys – AHs and JHs



Jackie Cooper campaigned the No. 13 Healey 100 on racing circuits back in the day. It is to be auctioned on March 14, 2015 at Amelia Island. The estimated price sale price is \$975,000 - \$1,375,000.



That's Mel Tormé with his racing goggles driving an Austin-Healey X1, the first car sold in the United States and one of 19 preproduction, all aluminum, Warwick-built cars.



Mel Tormé leans over the Austin-Healey 100 that he purchased from the New York International Auto Show and drove across the country with his musician aboard.

Not to mention all those other folks who contributed to the design, production and development of the Austin-Healey this list, too, is quite extensive.

Additionally, here are some movies and shows that featured major or cameo appearances of Healey automobiles:

**"On the Beach"** starring Gregory Peck, 1958: great racing scenes with Healeys **"Experiment in Terror"** with Ross Martin, 1963: bad-guy kidnapper in a Healey **"Sabrina"** starring Humphrey Bogart, 1953: he drives a Nash-Healey all over Paris **"Speed Crazy,"** 1954: features a gaggle of British iron with red racing 100 **"Les Cousins,"** 1959: a 1953 Healey is the star of the show **"The Fast Lady,"** 1962: features a Healey 3000 **"American Graffiti"** with Harrison Ford and Richard Dreyfus, 1973: a 1958 Sprite appears in this classic **"State Fair,"** 1962: featuring a 100 with a funny paint job around its grille **"Bullitt"** with Steve McQueen, 1968: a cameo of a '62 Austin-Healey 3000 Mk II **"A Bucket of Blood,"** 1959: an early 1953 Austin-Healey 100 is featured **"The Fast and the Furious,"** filmed in 1954: features a 1953 Healey **"Blowup,"** 1966: a 1961 Austin-Healey Sprite Mk II is seen **"Pffft!"** portrays a divorced Jack Lemmon driving a red 100 around Reno wooing Kim Novak **"L'urlo,"** 1968: a foreign flick with a bride in wedding dress piloting a red 100 **"The Bank Job"** with Jason Stratham, 2008: a restored 1957 Austin-Healey 100/6 **"The Love Bug"** with Dean Jones, 1968: Herbie races with a 1960 Austin-Healey 3000 **"Bewitched"** TV series, 1964-1972: remember a 1960 Austin-Healey 3000 Mk I?



The famous meeting of the minds: Sir Leonard Lord, head of Austin, and Donald Mitchell Healey agree to produce the Austin-Healey. Photographed at the 1952 London Motor Show.



A promotional raffle of a Jensen-Healey brings Donald Mitchell Healey and Kjell Qvale together with a very lucky winner in 1972.



A very young Barbara Walters posed for the cover of Sports Car & Hot Rod magazine long before her journalism career took off.



Sardi's Restaurant in New York City is famed for its caricatures. Here's one of owner Vincent Sardi racing his 100S.



In front of the Fulton Theatre in New York City, Louise King sits in her [dented] Austin-Healey for a photo op.



Donald Healey and Gracie Fields sit in the Austin-Healey 100 at the New York International Auto Show in 1953. The car was then sold to Mel Tormé when Austin Motors couldn't deliver a production model.

Alot of these facts, photos and clips can be found on the Internet: Visit <http://www.imcdb.org/vehicles.php?make=Austin-Healey>.

Back in the day, you had to clip ads from magazines or buy some popcorn and see the movie. Nowadays, you can Google "celebrity Healeys" and many topics pop up including photos and stories featuring, yes, Austin Healey, the entertainer and rugby star.

All in all, the automobiles of Healey name and legend participated in many activities throughout their production; the cars we all love to own and drive. Thank you DMH - Donald Mitchell Healey. Now, who was that star behind the wheel of your Healey?