



Watch for cheapo tyres. Dampers and bushes are common wear points



Like most specialists, TVR raided parts bin of carmakers, so few worries

TVR S AND V8S

CLASSIC TO CONSIDER

What is a TVR S and V8S?

It's the TVR that you've probably forgotten about, but one that will serve any classic sports car enthusiast well. Not half as posur-like as the medallion man Tasmin and the later TVRs, the S series looks like a TVR should - and goes like one too. Best of all, because this car has slipped out of fashion prices are really tempting right now, and this classic is ideal for those after their first TVR. As a quicker, cheaper alternative to an MGC or big Healey it is worth a look, so why not become a convert to S club heaven?

History

The S was introduced in the mid 1980s to run alongside the wedge-shaped Tasmin range, sharing many common parts including the chassis, but priced more cheaply. If the shape looked familiar, then it's because it was a more modern take on the 3000M of the 1970s.

Initially the TVR S used faithful Ford 2.8-litre V6 power for 160bhp - good enough to propel it to almost 130mph and a 0-60 skit in under eight seconds. In 1988, just two years after launch, the S2 was introduced featuring some styling tweaks, OZ alloy wheels and a special 'Penthouse S' edition in honour of that famous men's mag! But the most important change the



Cabins are quite plush but don't age too well, so vet carefully; watch for damp



Engines are Ford or Rover based, so well proven. Just the usual checks suffice

S2 brought was the adoption of the Ford 2.9-litre V6 which, apart from being rated at a healthier 170bhp, was also less asthmatic than the earlier 2.8. Performance was dramatically improved, slicing a second off the time-honoured standstill to sixty sprint.

Two years later came...you guessed it - the S3! Apart from another styling refresh, the doors were lengthened by three inches to aid entry and egress. The independent suspension was returned and if enthusiasts opted for the S3C, a catalytic converter was fitted.

The ultimate S is the V8S, a 240bhp TVR-tweaked 3.9-litre Rover-powered monster that provided Ferrari-beating pace when it hit the streets in 1991. Only 410 were made out of a total production run of over 2600 cars. A year later an improved V6 S4C was announced, which apart from more styling changes also benefited from the V8's superior all-disc brake set up. The S Series bowed out in 1994, replaced by a new wave of TVRs such as Chimaera and Griffith.

Driving

The lovely thing about any TVR is that they are full-on drivers' cars. There's nothing meek or mild about them and they demand a lot from owners - but the rewards are more than worth it.



Styling influenced by 1970s M series although not all bits are interchangeable

The S Series cars, for all their cheapness, are no exception. A good one, even the original 2.8 V6, will bring a smile to anybody's face with its brawny performance and classic rear-wheel drive handling that demands respect, especially in the wet and slippery.

Of course the Rover-engined models are the best - and the sound of the V8 tuned TVR exhausts will have you burying the throttle at every opportunity to puncture those eardrums. But driven with some restraint you will easily see the right side of 20mpg from any version.

The TVR S isn't refined and tired ones will invariably feel loose, but they are fairly practical and civilised for touring work. Really the best way to describe the TVR is that it makes a useful and far cheaper alternative to a classic Austin-Healey 3000, with which it shares a pretty similar character and driving experience.

Prices

This is the best bit! You can buy a TVR S for little more than a grand. Okay, it will be a ratty one in need of lots of TLC, but what other performance classic can you buy for that money? Even a dog of an MGB sells for more...

That said, it is best to buy the best TVR S you can afford as their lowly values negate any costly and involved restoration work, and slipshod servicing is pretty common. Expect to pay a not unreasonable £4-5000 for a decent example that could be used in its present state without too much worry. As a rule, the V8s command around £2-3000 over a V6, all things being equal. If you have the cash then you can buy a truly top V8 for £10,000 after some haggling... For the performance and style this roadster offers, then that's nothing less than a performance car bargain.

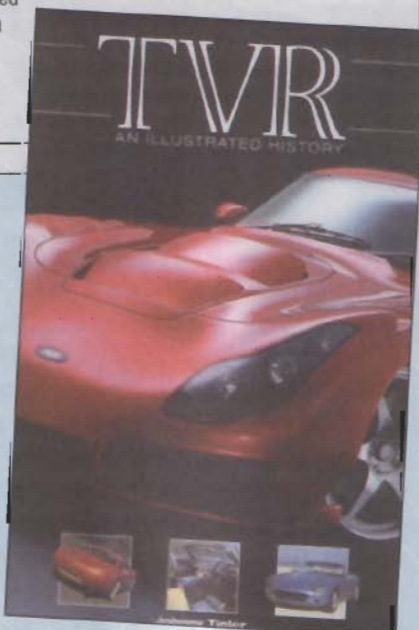
VERDICT

In many ways the overlooked S is the best TVR to buy out of the lot. It has all the looks, style and charisma of classic older TVRs but twinned with more modern running gear and added durability. It's not half as naff looking as the power-dressed Tasmin or the 'sexually challenged I'm all bloke really' Chimaera and Tuscan ranges - and cheaper than the lot of them.

So what's the catch? Only that you need to buy a good one and there aren't that many around due to their lack of popularity among the TVR fraternity.

So stop around and be prepared to wait for the right one to turn up; employ the services of a good specialist and join the owners club ASAP.

If you want the full low down of TVR and its cars through the decades then check out this new book from Haynes Publishing (ref: H4235). Although TVR - An Illustrated Story is more a short story and caption style hard-back, it contains a lot of useful information that will be of huge assistance to any enthusiast wanting to buy a TVR. It costs just £14.99.



WHAT TO LOOK FOR

- **Tough Vigorous Reliable** so said the adverts in the late 1960s but remember it's a TVR so expect kit car build quality levels that will have deteriorated over the years. If the car is exceptional, then suspect either a very caring owner (with a TVR/specialist service history to back it up) or a recent rebuild.
- **You won't see a rusty TVR of course because the shells are made of glass-fibre**, but the steel chassis rots with the best of them! It's the same design taken from the Tasmin, albeit a format that dates back to the original TVRs. When new, the S and V8s had the frames powder coated for protection but this will have eroded over the decades. Look for serious corrosion at the front, which is the least well protected.
- **Apart from corrosion you need to check the chassis for patch repairs**, both for rot and accident damage. If dodgy, a new chassis may be the only sensible option; they are still available but cost some three grand, plus time and fitting of course.
- **Ok so the shell looks decent, but inspect it further for 'spider's web' crazing of the finish and resultant cracking**. Remember that GRP repairs can be pretty complex; a dollop of filler isn't good enough. Check panel fit (especially the forward-hinging bonnet) which, if poor, may point to sub standard accident repairs.
- **Engine-wise these cars are simple to maintain**. The Granada-sourced German Ford V6 unit is robust. Watch for low oil pressure (around 50lb is the ideal), rumbling cranks, bearings and tappet noise, which may actually be cam wear and is not unknown.
- **The Rover V8 is well known and liked**. Chief concerns are caused by lack of care; the unit demands regular oil changes with decent lube to prevent sludging and subsequent hydraulic tappet problems. Oil pressure should be a lowly 30lb at normal driving conditions.
- **The biggest worries on both engines are hard use**, cheapskate servicing and overheating, the latter caused by marginal cooling. Look for signs of overheating, rusty stains caused by overflow and a worrying temperature gauge reading. Really the rad and the system need periodical flushing and the correct anti-freeze concentration at all times. Is the electric cooling fan working properly and cutting in/out when it should - or permanently wired on to mask problems?
- **The transmissions (Ford and Rover) are hardy but remember they may have been used hard**, so expect failing synchros and tired clutches.
- **The Tasmin-based chassis suffers the same suspension faults**. Watch for tired shocks and dampers and shot suspension bushes. A squeaky steering column isn't unknown due to its universal joints simply drying out.
- **Brakes are disc/drum on most V6 cars and an all-disc affair on V8s**. Apart from usual deterioration caused by hard use (such as worn discs), there's nothing to be concerned about. Best of all most spares are freely available via high street motorist centres if you can quote their respective part numbers and cross match with the relative Ford/Rover component.
- **The interiors looked pretty plush when new with half or full leather trim, but they may not be so inviting now due to age and leaky hoods and door seals**. Check for damp and lift the carpets. Does the cockpit smell musty? Most of the switchgear was BL/Rover sourced from that era. As with all plastic-bodied cars, wayward electrics are common, although usually due to poor connections and less than perfect earths.

CLUBS AND CONTACTS

- TVR Club, 01952 822126, www.tvr-car-club.co.uk
- David Gerald Sportscars, 01386 793237, www.davidgeraldtvr.com
- RT Racing, 0114 281 7507, www.rtracing.co.uk
- Steve Reid Classic TVR, 01928 719267, www.classictvr.com
- TVR Personal Possessions, 01253 727211
- Dreadnought Garage, 01877 331099, www.dreadnought-tvr.co.uk
- Webbs Auto Specialist Repairs, 01275 858461, www.tvrbodyshop.com
- James Agger Autosport, Loughborough, Tel: 01509 881516
www.jamesagger.com
- TVR Car Parts, 01884 266755, www.tvrpart.com