

# 1 Is it the right car for you?

– marriage guidance



## Chimaera, or Griffith?

The market, for many, will be defined by budget (which I'll expand on in chapter 4). The sensible option is the Chimaera, which has a larger boot, is a bit more relaxed on the move, and is arguably better value for money. The Griffith is more of a poster-child; to use the term 'iconic' might be stretching it, but the only reason for choosing a Griffith over a Chimaera would be because you *want* one.



The Chimaera 400 outnumbers the Griffith 500 by nearly three to one.



## Which V8 is the best V8?

If you want to wring the neck of your V8, the 4.0 or 4.3 are the happiest engines to be revved, though if you're used to fast machinery, you may find a standard 4.0 slightly lacking. The smaller displacement

**For the majority who want an enjoyable weekend drive accompanied by the sound of V8 pipe music whenever the sun comes out, any version will excel.**

you require fuel, access to the filler cap is via the boot, which, of course, doesn't open with anything so casual as a handle ...

### Advantages

The Chimaera offers a (slightly) roomier interior; a more capacious boot (including a wider opening making roof panel stowage easier), and a body that features what (almost) qualify as bumpers.

The Griffith doesn't really perform any single task better than the Chimaera, other than giving a slightly more visceral driving experience.

Both cars are beautiful to behold, brimming with charisma, and provide exhilarating soundtracks. They also manage to combine a supple ride with sharp handling – a balance that many manufacturers struggle to achieve, even today.

They're more reliable and durable than they're given credit for, and the majority of parts used to build them were sourced from mass-manufacturers, many of which are under-stressed.

### Disadvantages

Our duo are less-suited to daily duties than they are as weekend toys. They're hand-built, they're quite demanding, and while they're a riot on the sweeping back lanes of the countryside, they can be a chore in traffic. If you're planning to use the car daily, or cover higher annual distances (5000+ miles per annum is considered high for any TVR), then be aware that these cars require upkeep that some mainstream alternatives may not.

### Investment potential

We're now past the point that both models 'bottomed-out' in the market, and since 2010/11, values have been rising steadily.



**With a reborn TVR due to launch an all-new incarnation of the Griffith, these cars should continue to appreciate. (Courtesy TVR Ltd)**

might need a wetsuit to continue your journey. The cabin ventilation systems you need to restore order aren't exactly efficient, either.

There is an almost unique feeling as you drop down into their low-slung seats. The view down the bonnet is one of burly bulges juxtaposed with delicate detailing, and in traffic the car almost feels alive as the heat haze escapes from various slats and vents.

Insert the key, switch to ignition, wait for the fuel pump to prime, and turn to start. The rumble at start-up is an event in itself, though if you're not on first name terms with the neighbours, the cars still fitted with catalytic converters and standard exhausts are noticeably quieter than those with 'decats' and/or sleeved/sports exhausts. If noise emissions are a concern, get down to a local owner's gathering; many cars are modified with 'sleeved exhausts' (more in chapter 9), so you'll be able to hear the differences.

Mechanically, Chimaeras and Griffiths are robust cars. Reliability isn't a huge cause for concern, but there are a few areas where these cars suffer the odd misdemeanor. If any one aspect of the car will have you banging your head in frustration, it's likely to be the electrics, but most GRP-bodied cars are similar.

50/50 weight distribution is achieved with all



**Your chances of being allowed on a circuit or trackday are greatly reduced with a sleeved silencer, as most cars end up emitting over 105dB.**



**Every drive is an event, rather than just a journey.  
(Courtesy P Kent)**

# 7 Fifteen minute evaluation

– walk away or stay?



A TVR body tub is effectively there to provide you somewhere pretty to sit, while all the important stuff goes on underneath on the chassis, so though body condition is important, it's easy to inspect as it's mostly all on the surface.

The chassis and mechanical bits aren't as easy to evaluate, so I'd suggest

first looking at the exterior and interior, and checking that you're happy to continue the inspection in further detail, because either can have a significant impact on a car's value as both are costly to remedy.

The bodywork quality of either model is a progression from TVRs previous offerings. The doors should shut cleanly and with relatively even panel gaps.



**TVRs feature a separate chassis and body, while most cars use a monocoque (a unitary all-in-one bodyshell).**

The clever fluted leading door edge allows for quick and simple alignment.





... they should help you gauge the thoroughness and attention to detail of the work.

and remember: many people incorrectly assume that 'servicing' equates to an oil and filter change. This is not the case with any car, let alone a Griffith or Chimaera.

A sign of a looked-after car is a privately-advertised car being sold by a member of a TVR Car Club or owner's group (especially if they're replacing it with another model of the same marque) as nobody would knowingly sell a poor car when there's a chance you'll meet each other again.

Service history plays a significant part in a car's value, as the story of how the car arrived at where it is today is a strong selling tool. Evidence that the car has been mechanically cared for over the years is telling, because if somebody agonised looking after the paperwork and written history of the car, the odds are they took the time to look after the car itself too.



### Restoration photographs

If the seller claims that the car has received specialist repair or attention, such as a body-off chassis restoration, or a full respray or retrim, ask to see the pictures, if they aren't enthusiastically waving them in front of you already.