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Sportscar purists have always tended to look down on TVRs compared with their spiritual competitors from the likes of Lotus, even though the quirky cars from Blackpool have a devoted following. TVRs have never quite climbed out of a second division of prestige, their reputation stunted by all sorts of factors: the absence of competition breeding, upmarket kit-car character, sledgehammer engineering, the glaring omission of a convertible from the range until 1978, unsubtle styling, the lack of attention-to-detail design, even the turbulent history of their manufacture. Somehow a TVR is always seen as a poor man's alternative to another far more desirable machine.

They deserve better, for their virtues are many. For a start, in today's market they offer convincing value for money, even if prices when new could stray uncomfortably close to more exotic territory. They are immensely entertaining to drive, with good performance and rewarding handling. They may be uncultured, but they have plenty of character.

The model evolution through the early years of TVR production prior to the arrival of the M-series (profiled in C&S in June 1986) in 1972 is bewildering, but essentially the cars divide themselves into four-cylinder and V8 layers, with a couple of middling six-cylinder cars thrown in too. Eleven different engines from Coventry Climax, Ford, MG and Triumph were used through successive model



# TVR

changes as availability and rationalisation dictated where TVR bought the nuts and bolts of its cars.

Although the standard TVR body style never changed radically, there were three distinct phases of evolution in the tail treatment. All Granturas up to the MkIII 1800 (up to 1964) were given a beetle-back shape, all but the earliest examples having the tail lamps mounted on rounded fins. The so-called 'Manx' tail with 'Ban the Bomb' MkI Cortina tail lamps and a larger wraparound rear screen was used from the Grantura 1800S up to the Vixen S1 (1964-68). And from the Vixen S2 to the start of the M-series generation (1968-72) Cortina MkII rectangular tail lamps were used to tidy up the rear.

The robust multi-tubular chassis remained unaltered in principle throughout the life of these TVRs, but the structure was re-designed for the Grantura MkIII. Until this time the cars had an 84in wheelbase frame onto which VW all-independent torsion bar suspension was mounted, a package which produced sharp roll-free handling but a notoriously boneshaking ride. In order to civilise the car and improve rigidity, a revised 85.5in chassis with coil spring suspension came in 1962 and worked so well that it served all TVRs for 10 years. An extra 4.5 inches were added to the wheelbase in 1967 to counter criticisms of TVR's absurdly small doors and lack of cabin room.

Although Granturas were built with three types of

# Grantura, Griffith Vixen & Tuscan

*Pre-Taimar TVRs were crude but colourful and have always provided good value for money. Mark Hughes reviews the models' problems. Photos by Gary Stuart*



**FOR** Value, performance, handling, rugged construction, spares availability, glass-fibre body.

**AGAINST** Poor detail, lack of breeding, noise and vibration, no convertibles

MGA engine, the MGB engine, three types of Ford engine and two versions of the Coventry Climax, the latter variants accounted for the bulk of production, with power output ranging from 72bhp for the 1489cc unit to 95bhp for the 1798cc MGB unit. In such a light car (Granturas started life weighing 1570lb and grew to 1790lb) these options gave good performance and a top speed which hovered around the 100mph mark. The Ford Cortina GT engine arrived for the Vixen line in 1967, and its 88bhp output provided all these models, S1 and S4, with similar performance.

The V8s were in a different league, the wild Griffths and Tuscan produced between 1963-70 being absolutely stupendous acceleration which was virtually without parallel at the time. Sub-6sec 0-60mph times made them quicker than any Ferrari and on a par with the AC Cobras which they sought to replace. The inspiration for the 'Grrreat Griffith' (as TVR advertised it in the USA) came from an American motor trader named Jack Griffith, who disassembled a 4727cc Ford V8 into his own Grantura MkIII. Almost all Griffiths were left-hand drive sport cars, and most of the Tuscan V8s built after Arthur and Martin Lilley took over TVR in 1966 also went to the USA. Only now are they beginning to return as enthusiasts here wake up to the fact that their exhilarating performance is unmatched at the time - although values are rocketing.



*'Superlative design and engineering'... reads brochure for launch of Griffith, 1967*

These V8s are rare cars: around 310 Griffiths in 200 and 400 guises were built, while the Tuscan is even rarer. Indeed, all these early TVRs have scarcity on their side, for the estimate of total production stands at just 2426.

While V8 prices are now climbing beyond most people's reach, the best four-cylinder TVRs can be obtained for the price of very ordinary MGs and Triumphs TRs which makes them excellent value.

## CONTEMPORARY ROAD TESTS

TVR was so slow to get up and running in the early days that the first road test was not carried out until *The Motor's* appraisal of an MGA-engined Grantura MkII (29 March 1961). The report was launched amusingly: 'It was once said of Winston Churchill that the first time a person met him they saw all his faults but thereafter they would spend the rest of their lives discovering his many virtues. The same would appear to be true of the TVR'.

Complaints ranged from the lack of room for a tall driver to the smell of petrol, from wheels hitting the bodywork over bumps to a harsh ride on rough surfaces. But the author warmed to the TVR, enjoying the balanced handling and the car's air of quality: '...it has a very individualistic charm of its own that makes it remarkably good fun to drive'.

*Autosport's* John Bolster tried an MGB-engined MkIII 1800 (13 December 1963) and thought it a 'particularly fast little car', recording a 114mph top speed and 0-60mph in 9.9sec. He kept his strongest criticism for interior details which he thought could be rectified for 'a few shillings'.

For the 1 October 1965 issue of *Autosport*, Bolster got his hands on a Griffith 200, finding the V8's performance 'so vivid that it is almost beyond description'. He achieved 0-60mph in 5.2sec and a 163mph maximum, but confessed that he felt uneasy about the aerodynamic instability over 150mph. His concern was hardly surprising as air pressure under the bonnet had caused it to fly up at high speed - he tied it down with a rope for the rest of his test!

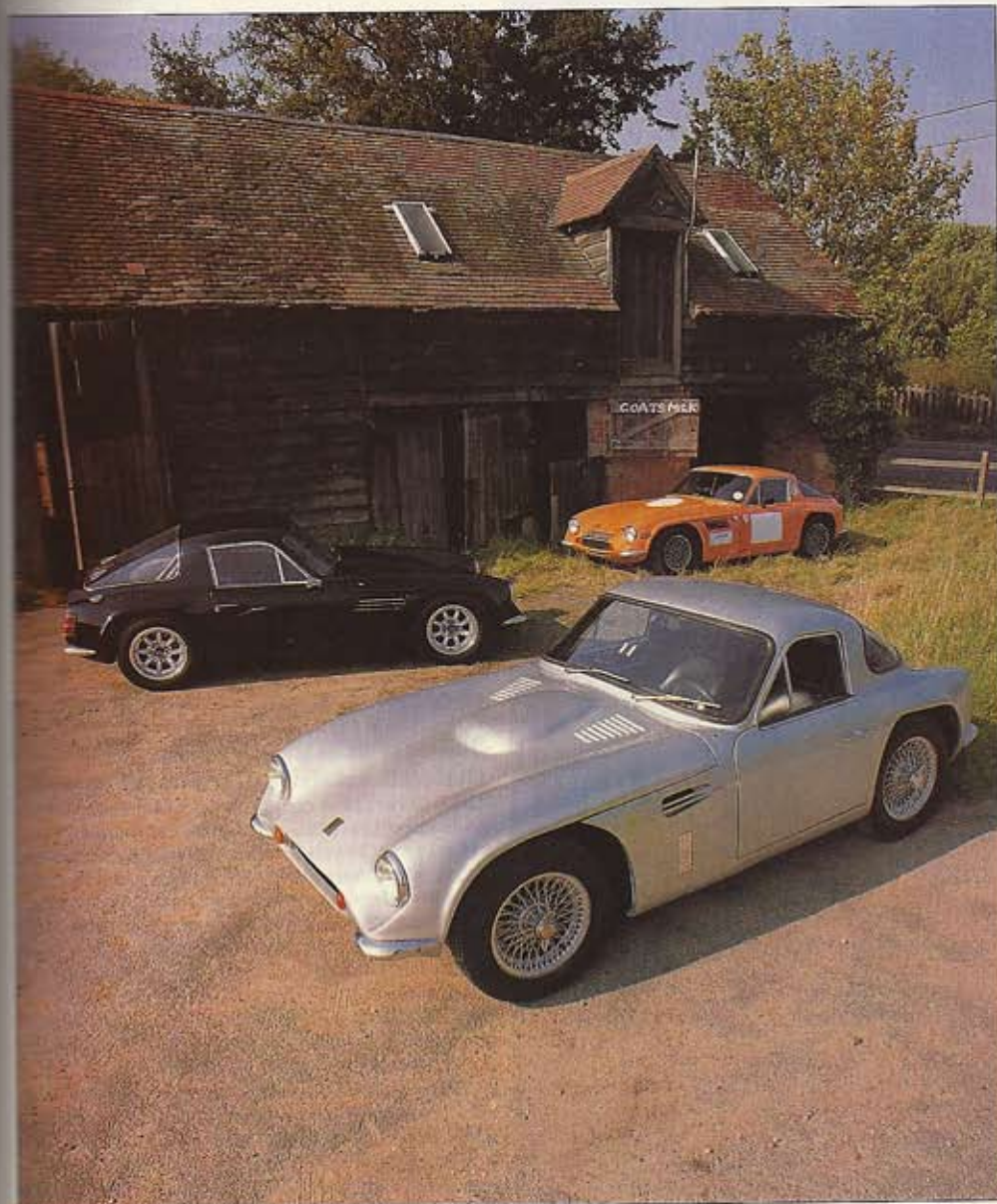
*Motor* bolted its fifth wheel to a Tuscan SE for its 20 May 1967 road test and set a performance record; 0-100mph in 13.8sec was the fastest the magazine had ever recorded, while top speed was estimated at 155mph. 'It is one of the few cars remaining designed to a large extent for FUN, for the sheer uninhibited enjoyment of performance either in a straight line or in a throttle-controlled blind through an open corner'.

*Autocar's* assessment of a Vixen S1 in its 25 April 1968 brief test noted improved steering, but showed that the magazine still had mixed feelings about TVRs. 'The Vixen is a perverse car, for at first its weaknesses overshadow its strengths. But as you get better acquainted it grows on you'. Criticisms included poor rear three-quarters visibility, the difficulty of aiming the car because of its invisible nose, excessive wind noise, and the awkward contortions still needed to climb in through its small doors. The handling and performance were considered excellent - the willing Cortina GT engine gave a 106mph top speed and 0-60mph in 11.0sec.

A year later, *Autocar* (26 June 1969) tried a Vixen S2 and appreciated the extra room provided by the wheelbase stretch. Steering kickback was criticised yet again, but the car was rated a lot of fun to drive.

*Motor's* test of a Tuscan V6 produced a verdict of 'rapid acceleration and effortless cruising', with 0-60mph taking 8.3sec and top speed being 125mph. The V6's installation was praised as 'very smooth and virtually free from mechanical noise and vibration', the only real noise coming from the exhaust's 'vibrant howl'. As usual, there were less glowing words for some of the car's bugs, and it was suggested that TVR really should improve the car's versatility by fitting a lift-up rear window. Only the heavy steering was thought to detract from excellent handling and roadholding.

Road test reports over 10 years show remarkable consistency of character despite the numerous engine/gearbox changes made to these cars. The cars were generally considered to be sturdy and well made, but at a price; for example, in 1967 a 195bhp Tuscan V8 at £1967 cost exactly the same as a Jaguar E-type 4.2 roadster. As *Road & Track* commented in a back-to-back Vixen/Tuscan comparison, 'Too bad the factory can't produce these in quantity and get the price down'.



Rare silver Griffith 200, black V8-engined Tuscan; longer-chassis racing Vixen S2 behind



*Taut yet lively handling from Tuscan V8, even when driven hard*



*The smaller Vixen S2's light body and spritely engine ensures a respectable 86-90bhp*



*Griffith 200 is real driver's challenge: awe-inspiring acceleration from powerful V8 engine*

## DRIVING IMPRESSIONS

The charm of all these TVRs is that they are enormous fun to drive. They can be crude and unrefined alongside mainstream British sportscars like MGs and Triumph TRs, their styling is rather gawky, and they do not have the cultured chassis of a Lotus Elan... but they do have bags of character.

Climbing into a short-chassis car is not the work of a moment since the doors are so ludicrously short, but, once you are in, there is a pleasant feeling of being tightly wrapped in place by a chunky fascia and the characteristically vast transmission tunnel. Elbow room is not generous, but the stubby gear shift falls beautifully to hand on the table-top to your left. TVR cockpits always look the part, with a businesslike array of dials studded across padded vinyl or polished wood – all typical of the 1960s.

These early TVRs are a strange mixture of practical and impractical features. There is a good area of luggage room on the flat deck behind the front seats, but you can only get to it from inside the car – an opening lid had to wait until the hatchback Taimar of 1976. Engine accessibility is terrific thanks to the huge one-piece bonnet with front hinges.

The real pleasure of all these cars is their lively character on the road, whether in humble Ford 1.6-litre or earth-shaking 4.7-litre forms. They have sharp, low-geared steering (rack and pinion except on the earliest Granturas) which communicates every ripple through a tiny wheel, firm suspension which trades ride quality for precision handling, and powerful brakes which make light work of stopping.

The smaller cars, such as Colin Bates' race-prepared orange Vixen S2 pictured here, are beautifully balanced, with a tidy cornering transition from initial understeer to restrained power-on oversteer. The small MG and Ford engines produce quite sprightly acceleration, and their power feels well-matched to the abilities of the chassis. Only the savage steering kickback over severe bumps detracts from the driver's well-being with the car, and this is best dealt with by a light grip on the wheel.

By any standards the V8s are raw, wild, adrenalin-pumping machines. Chassis tweaks make later Tuscan quite civilised when driven hard, but the Griffiths – like the remarkably original silver 200 in our photographs – are a challenge not to be treated lightly. The V8's immense torque can make the back end nudge sideways in an instant and the car feels distinctly nervous over bumps and changes of camber at higher speeds. But the acceleration is quite awe-inspiring, that marvellous rumbling engine dominating the Griffith's character. You just tickle the accelerator to unleash a mighty, effortless push which seems totally beyond the bounds of possibility for a 25-year-old car.

## TECHNICAL DESCRIPTION

MkI, MkII and MkIIA Granturas built up to mid-1962 were based on a Trevor Wilkinson-designed 84in wheelbase multi-tubular chassis frame to which an array of largely proprietary components were fitted. VW Beetle independent suspension was used at both ends, with springing by torsion bars running within transverse frame cross-members and wheel location by twin parallel trailing links. Telescopic dampers were used but the suspension was so stiff that no anti-roll bars were needed. Girling 11in drum brakes at front and rear were virtually the same as those used on the Austin Healey 100-6, and centre lock wire wheels were by Dunlop.

The engine bay was deliberately spacious to allow different engines to be fitted, according to a customer's wishes. The most desirable choice was the highly strung 83bhp 1216cc Coventry Climax FW20 also used in the Lotus Elite, and most of the 100 MkI Granturas built between 1958-60 used this power unit mated to a BMC B-series four-speed gearbox.



*Tuscan V8 throttle has to be treated with care*

from the MGA. Two Ford engines were offered: the ancient 35bhp 1172cc sidevalve 100E with three-speed gearbox cannot have been much fun and the 57cc 105E engine and four-speed gearbox from the new 1960 model Anglia was little better.

In early TVR matters the entire question of originality is difficult to fathom as the cars evolved gradually, and the parts used were often dictated by availability. Climax-engined cars often had Stage 2 or 3 tuning kits (especially if they were raced), and the sidevalve Ford engine could be mated to a KSK four-speed gearbox conversion. Regardless of engine/transmission specification, however, the differential was BMC's B-series hypoid bevel unit enclosed in a TVR-designed light-alloy casing.

In mid-1960 the Grantura was upgraded to MkII specification with a revised range of mechanical possibilities. Ford 105E and Climax FWE engines remained available, but most MkIIs used the new 88bhp 1588cc engine from the MGA 1600. Compared with the earliest Granturas, MkIIs had opening quarterlights, elongated flares over front and rear wheelarches, small tail fins with standard Lucas tail lamps and separate indicators, and air outlets behind the front wheelarches.

MkIIA specification arrived in early 1961. Apart from further engine choices, changes were confined to the standardisation of Girling front disc brakes (modified Triumph TR3 units) and the quarterlights becoming fixed. Still the MGA engine remained the mainstay of production, but now it had grown into the 86bhp 1522cc unit of the MGA 1600 MkII.

Through this 1958-62 period of the torsion bar Granturas, TVR's sales increased steadily and thoughts turned to more radical changes in order to refine the car. The top priority was a new chassis, designed by John Thurner, intended to provide a stiffer structure and a more compliant ride. Multi-tubular construction was retained but careful attention to triangulation provided more torsional rigidity.

The first car to receive this chassis was the Grantura MkIII – and the basic structure remained unaltered until the M-series cars arrived. TVR's bewildering range of engines was rationalised with the MkIII, only the 1622cc MGA engine and gearbox now being available – but as ever there were anomalies for a few early MkIIIs had Climax FWE and Ford 109E engines to use up existing stocks.

Production of MkIIIs began in the autumn of 1962, shortly after the MGA was replaced by the MGB – so another engine change was imminent. By mid-summer of 1963 TVR was forced to adopt the MGB's 1798cc, the Grantura now evolving into MkIII 1800 unit. Performance improved slightly because power increased to 97bhp with no weight

penalty; optional overdrive became available.

A further name change, to Grantura 1800S, came with new tail styling in line with the Griffith V8. The new 'Manx' tail featured a sharp cut-off in place of the old rounded rump, a new panoramic rear window (which remained unchanged until the last of the 3000Ms in 1979), and 'Ban the Bomb' tail lamps from the Cortina MkI. Within the tail section, which still had no opening boot, the spare wheel was moved from the old awkward position behind the rear suspension to a much more accessible location on top of the flat rear deck. The Grantura line finished with the introduction by the new Lilley management of the 'MkIV' 1800S in July 1966.

The change to the Vixen name for TVR's small-engined production from 1967 actually brought only an engine transplant, Ford's 1599cc crossflow engine and all-synchromesh four-speed gearbox from the Cortina GT replacing the faithful MG components. While the new installation was lighter, power dropped to 88bhp and overdrive ceased to be available. The only external change to TVR's familiar body for the Vixen S1 was a wider and shallower bonnet intake to feed air to the twin choke down-draught Weber carburettor.

More radical visual changes came for the Vixen S2 with the adoption of the longer chassis – with wheelbase up from 85.5in to 90in – first developed for the Tuscan V8 SE. Significantly, the body was now bolted, not bonded, to the chassis, making life much easier for crash repairers – and for restorers today. Vixen S2s are recognisable by their extra length, larger doors and Cortina MkII tail lamps.

S3 Vixens used the same Ford engine in Capri GT tune, which meant a slight power drop to 86bhp. Exterior recognition points are elegant cast-alloy wheels and neater front wing vents with new chrome trims (actually from the rear pillars of Ford's Zephyr/Zodiac MkIV). The S4 Vixen was an interim model which preceded the 1600M and used the S3's engine/gearbox, bodysheet and equipment in the new M-series chassis.

TVR's fearsome V8-powered cars were developed in parallel with the evolution of the four-cylinder range, the first being the Griffith 200 based on the chassis and suspension of the Grantura MkIII. Into this familiar structure – even the BMC differential and driveshafts were retained! – went a 4727cc Ford V8, which took overall weight up by 280lb. Two states of tune were available: standard spec was 195bhp (hence the '200' label) but 271bhp of Hippo muscle could be had as an option. The most obvious external change was a large bonnet bulge to clear the V8's air cleaner, while the new exhaust system had twin tail pipes. Larger 185 radial tyres were fitted to 5in wire wheels with 72 spokes.

The long-wheelbase chassis used from the Vixen S2 onwards was first seen on the Tuscan V8 SE LWB launched during 1967, although it had been conceived originally for the Trident. Apart from a longer propshaft and exhaust and a smoother bonnet bulge, the only significant changes were the visual ones seen on the Vixen S2 – Cortina MkII tail lamps, larger doors and different front wing air vents.

The so-called 'wide-body' Tuscan V8 SE came in 1968 when Martin Lilley decided that his flagship model should have a revised body, the styling giving hints of the M-series to come. The car's glass area was unaltered, but below the waist width grew by 4in. The lines of the nose and tail were smoothed out to give the car a leaner, meaner look, and new bumpers were added at both ends.

Two six-cylinder TVRs were also produced before the M-series arrived in order to fill the huge marketing gap between the Vixens and Tuscan V8s. The Tuscan V6 came first, in 1969, when the Ford 'Essex' 2994cc V6 developing 136bhp was installed in a chassis similar to the Vixen S2s, with the secondary damper rear end arrangement. The brakes were the servo-assisted front discs and rear drums of the Tuscan V8, while 5.5in cast alloy rims were used.

## PRODUCTION HISTORY

- 1958:** Grantura production begins with choice of 1216cc Coventry Climax FWE, 1098cc FWA, 1172cc Ford 100E or 1489cc MGA engines.
- 1959:** 997cc Ford 105E becomes available
- 1960:** Grantura MkII gains 1588cc MGA engine; FWE and 105E engines still offered. Styling changes include finned tail and wheelarch flares.
- 1961:** Grantura MkIIA arrives with standard Girling front discs and fixed quarterlights. MGA engine now 1622cc, Ford option now 1340cc 109E. Climax-engined cars now have rack and pinion steering; others retain worm and sector.
- 1962:** New chassis with coil springs and double wishbones for Grantura MkIII; wheelbase 1.5in longer. MGA 1622cc engine/box standardised.
- 1963:** 1798cc MGB engine/gearbox (with optional overdrive) for Grantura MkIII 1800. Griffith 200 launched for US market; choice of 195bhp or 271bhp 4727cc Ford V8 engine with Ford T10 gearbox; double spring/damper units at rear; BMC diff.
- 1964:** Griffith 400 launched in April has 'Manx' tail, with cut-off styling. Cortina MkII lamps, larger rear 'screen; larger radiator and twin Kenlowe fans; Salisbury 4HU diff. 'Manx' tail for Grantura brings 1800S in summer.
- 1965:** Griffith available in UK. Production temporarily ceases with Grantura Engineering's liquidation, followed by Lilley takeover.
- 1966:** From July 'MkIV' 1800S has minor mechanical improvements and interior upgrade, including wooden facia and heater option.
- 1967:** Upgraded V8 model becomes Tuscan V8; two engine specs still offered. 271bhp version badged SE. Vixen launched in October, with 1599cc Cortina GT engine/gearbox (88bhp) in Grantura 1800S package. 90in wheelbase for Tuscan V8 SE LWB; larger doors and Cortina MkII tail lamps.
- 1968:** First 'wide-body' Tuscan V8 SE built in April. From October, Vixen S2 has 90in wheelbase. Cortina MkII tail lamps and larger rear 'screen. Bodies now bolted to chassis.
- 1969:** Tuscan V6 launched with 2994cc Ford engine/gearbox and Salisbury 4HU diff.
- 1970:** Last 'wide body' Tuscan built in August. Vixen S3 given 86bhp spec Ford engine, cast alloy wheels. First 2500 models built with Federal TR6 carb straight-six (106bhp).
- 1971:** Lame duck 1300 introduced with 1296cc Spitfire engine/gearbox (63bhp). Last Tuscan V6.
- 1972:** Vixen S4 is interim model with M-series chassis but S3 body.
- 1973:** Final Vixen S4s and 2500s produced before M series takes over fully.

## PRODUCTION FIGURES

Grantura MkI	100*
Grantura MkII/IIA	400*
Grantura MkIII	90*
Grantura 1800S	90*
Griffith 200/400	310*
Grantura 1800S	38 (7 RHD, 31 LHD)
Grantura 'MkIV' 1800S	78 (38 RHD, 40 LHD)
Vixen S1	117
Vixen S2	438
Vixen S3	168
Vixen S4	23
Tuscan V8	28 (4 RHD, 24 LHD)
Tuscan V8 SE LWB	24 (12 RHD, 12 LHD)
Tuscan V8 (wide body)	21 (2 RHD, 19 LHD)
Tuscan V6	101
2500	385 (96 with M chassis)
1300	15 (6 with M chassis)
Total	2426*

\* Approximate figures; pre-1966 production records no longer exist.

SPECIFICATION	TVR GRANTURA MkIIA (1961)	TVR VIXEN S2 (1969)
<b>Engine</b>	In-line four	In-line four
<b>Bore/stroke</b>	76.2 x 88.9	81.0 x 77.6
<b>Capacity</b>	1622cc	1599cc
<b>Valves</b>	Pushrod ohv	Pushrod ohv
<b>Compression</b>	8.9:1	9.0:1
<b>Power</b>	86bhp at 5500rpm	88bhp at 5400rpm
<b>Torque</b>	97lb ft at 4000rpm	96lb ft at 3600rpm
<b>Carburettors</b>	Twin SU	Twin-choke Weber 32DFM
<b>Transmission</b>	4-speed manual	4-speed manual
<b>Brakes</b>	Discs/drums	Discs/drums
<b>Suspension front</b>	Ind by transverse torsion bars, twin trailing arms, telescopic dampers	Ind by double wishbones, coil springs/telescopic dampers, anti-roll bar
<b>Suspension rear</b>	Ind by transverse torsion bars, twin trailing arms, radius arms, telescopic dampers	Ind by double wishbones, double coil springs/single telescopic dampers
<b>Steering</b>	Worm and sector	Rack and pinion
<b>Body/chassis</b>	Glass-fibre/tubular steel	Glass-fibre/tubular steel
<b>DIMENSIONS</b>		
<b>Length</b>	11ft 6in	12ft 1in
<b>Width</b>	5ft 4in	5ft 4in
<b>Wheelbase</b>	7ft 0in	7ft 6in
<b>Weight</b>	1570lb	1625lb
<b>PERFORMANCE</b>		
<b>Max speed</b>	98mph	109mph
<b>0-60mph</b>	12.0sec	10.5sec
<b>Standing 1/4-mile</b>	19.0sec	17.2sec
<b>Fuel consumption</b>	23.7mpg	26.5mpg
<b>PERFORMANCE COMPARISON (Autocar, 1969)</b>		
	TVR Vixen S2	MGB GT
<b>Max speed</b>	109mph	101mph
<b>0-60mph</b>	10.5sec	13.6sec
<b>Standing 1/4-mile</b>	17.2sec	19.1sec
<b>Fuel consumption</b>	26.5mpg	22.8mpg
<b>Price</b>	£1487	£1217



Always a TVR fan, a youthful Gerry Marshall in action

Because the V6 could not meet US emissions requirements, another six-cylinder model, the 2500, was developed specifically for TVR's most important export market. Derived from the Vixen S3, this model used the 2498cc Triumph straight-six in carburettor form, as found in the Federal TR6, which meant that it was somewhat strangled at just 106bhp. Triumph's all-synchromesh four-speed gearbox with optional overdrive on the top two ratios was fitted, along with a TR6 differential.

The 2500 was sold in Britain in the same specification, although it would have been a much more exciting car with the TR6 engine in 150bhp fuel-injected guise. The model evolved into the 2500M in the same gradual manner as the Vixens and Tuscan became M cars; 96 2500s were made with the new M-series chassis but the old bodywork.

## COMPETITION HISTORY

TVRs have inevitably been campaigned by many club racers, among them some factory people, over the years, but the first notable competition outing came in 1961, when Arnold Burton (of the tailoring family) entered a Grantura MkII for the Tulip Rally. He finished, albeit in last place.

A serious factory competition programme was instigated for 1962 and Ken Richardson, late of Standard-Triumph, was hired as competitions manager. The exercise achieved nothing but cost a great deal of money. Three Grantura MkIIAs with light-weight bodies were entered for the Sebring 12-Hours and hurriedly prepared with rare-spec 1588cc MGA engines fitted with HRG crossflow alloy cylinder

heads and twin Weber carburettors. The outing was unsuccessful: two cars retired with broken final-drives after two hours and engine failure after four hours, but the third (driven by Mark Donohue/Gerry Sagerman) finished after a long delay to repair steering damage caused in a crash.

The 1962 Tulip Rally was part of the works programme and three cars were entered for Arnold Burton, Stan Pateman (MkIIs) and Anne Hall/Valerie Domleo (MkIIA). They held the top three positions in their class at one point but only Burton finished, third in class (behind two Porsches) and 20th overall.

Just before the company's bankruptcy, the end of TVR's futile competition effort came at the Goodwood TT, where the three Le Mans cars were entered. More overheating meant that one car failed to leave the marshalling area before the start and another blew a head gasket early in the race; but at least the third made it to 11th place at the finish, driven by Keith Ballisat.

Among the club racers Tommy Entwistle and John Wingfield earned some success, but the most notable non-works TVR exploits were those of Gerry Marshall in Martin Lilley's personal Griffith in 1965-66. Ever spectacular, Gerry was great value in a car which displayed a tendency to shed a rear wheel.

In more recent years there have been some memorable V8 TVRs raising blood and thunder on the circuits. Brian Hough raced a Tuscan in Mod-sports during the 1970s, but sadly died in a severe accident with it at Thruxton. More recently, Paul Weldon has raced his gorgeous Tuscan in HSCC events, winning the big-engined class of the Post-Historic Road Sports series in 1986 and 1987.

## BUYER'S SPOT CHECK

**Bodywork:** Although assembly quality was often suspect, especially on kit-built cars, these TVRs are basically very rugged machines. The bodywork was made from relatively thick glass-fibre mounted to a sturdy chassis, so stress crazing is not extensive compared with other glass-fibre sportscars.

Looking for evidence of 'bodge' accident repairs should be your main concern, as plenty of TVRs have found their way into wild hands; severe cracks or signs of repair joints could also mean hidden chassis distortion. If body repairs are necessary, all sections - bonnet, doors, tail sections and even roof panels - are available from David Gerald Sportscars Ltd, who hold all body moulds.

Assess the general fit of panels, especially around the doors and bonnet, and see whether there is evidence of water leaks around front and rear screens ① and around door seals. Replacement window glass, perspex rear screens and aluminium door frames can all be obtained. The same wind-screen, from the Ford Consul/Zephyr MkII, was used on all TVRs up to 1980.

Poor bodywork and paint quality should be reflected in the price of a car, since repairing and re-spraying glass-fibre is time-consuming. Stripping back to bare glass-fibre (which could take as long as 80 hours), repairing gel cracks and restoring body contours with primer filler is necessary before repainting, otherwise cracks and crazing will simply reappear through new layers of paint.

**Chassis:** These TVRs have tough multi-tubular steel chassis which withstand the ravages of time well, but they are not indestructible. Even the youngest cars of this family are now nearly 20 years old, so severe corrosion can be a problem. Good cars may have only surface rust on the tubular members, others will have rotted right through.

The front chassis section cradling the engine is clearly visible, so scrape around here first to weigh up the general condition ②. Other points which you should check are the longitudinal outriggers tucked beneath the sills, suspension mounting points and the differential cradle ③. Bodywork was bonded to the chassis on pre-1967 cars and bolted thereafter,

chassis repair or replacement on older cars means a longer job in cutting the body away.

Accident damage may have caused chassis distortion. In extreme cases this will be obvious to the eye, so check that the gaps between tyres and wheelarches are the same on both sides of the car and examine the tyres for uneven wear. A damaged chassis may also reveal itself if the car pulls to one side during your road test.

The good news is that replacing a rotten or damaged chassis is now possible. After a period of 10 years when re-manufactured chassis frames have not been available, David Gerald can now supply them from stock for all coil spring cars.

**Suspension, steering and brakes:** The notorious suspension weakness is the rear upright ③, an aluminium casting which is prone to breakage where the pivot rod passes through the base; re-manufactured uprights are now available again, five years after factory stock dried up. Check the condition of transmissions, bushes, wishbones and dampers; all parts can be obtained if excessive wear is found, even if this means pirating a Volkswagen Beetle for the early Grantura's torsion bar suspension.

Rack and pinion steering (or worm and sector on most pre-MkIII Granturas) should feel light and precise. The disc/drum brakes of all cars from Grantura MkIIA onwards should be powerful and stop the car in a straight line. Warped discs and corroded brake pipes are possible problems, but all parts are available.

**Engine and transmission:** Only general guidance is possible here since 11 types of engine were used in pre-M-series TVRs. But mechanical condition need not be your first concern when you assess a car, since parts and expertise are readily available for all the Ford, MG and Triumph engines.

MG engines are very rugged and parts present no difficulties for any of the three MGA engines or the MGB unit. Just make sure that the exhaust is clean, the oil pressure holds 50psi at 50mph and no continuous noises can be heard from the main bearings or timing chains.

All the Ford four-cylinder engines and gearboxes are similarly robust, and parts can be found easily from the many owners' clubs or from breakers' yards. The chances are that you will be looking at a Vixen with the Cortina GT's 'Kent' engine, which can go 100,000 miles between rebuilds and has no

## Ten things you didn't know about the TVRs

1. Only one TVR has ever raced in the Le Mans 24-Hours. A Grantura MkIII driven by Ninian Sanderson/Peter Bolton took part in 1962 but retired - after only three laps!
2. Big Gerry Marshall is still racing TVRs 25 seasons after his first spectacular exploits with a Griffith - now his mount is a 360bhp new shape Tuscan in the Tuscan Challenge.
3. Trevor Wilkinson founded TVR (TreVoR) but never reaped the rewards of its successful years. He left after management disagreements in 1962.
4. Few celebrities have been tempted by TVRs. Golfer Tony Jacklin is one, while Stuart 'It's a Knockout' Hall is a great fan who has owned many of the Blackpool cars over the years.
5. The basic TVR body shape was never styled: it was just gradually adapted from Rochdale origins through convenience and necessity.
6. Among the many TVR directors over the years was the unlikely figure of the late Bunty Scott Moncrieff, 'Purveyor of Horseless carriages

to the Nobility and Gentry since 1929' and a leading figure in VSCC circles. He appointed TVR's first UK distributors.

7. Despite the complication of offering 11 different engines before the M-series arrived, TVR made a fruitless attempt to squeeze the V8 from a Daimler SP250 into a development chassis.

8. After TVR's liquidation in 1965, Martin Lilley took over day-to-day running of the company while his father, Arthur, provided the finance. Martin must have been the youngest ever car company boss - he was just 23.

9. Ever innovative on the publicity front, TVR displayed its Griffith at the 1963 Bolton Motor Show with a tartan paint scheme.

10. Publicity tactics became more brazen at Earl's Court shows during the Lilley era. One model in 1968 wore a coat made of human hair above a very short dress. By 1971 the models wore absolutely nothing which is one thing you probably did know about TVR.

inherent weaknesses. Rattling noises from the valve gear and timing chain are the obvious signs of wear. Much the same advice applies to Ford's 'Essex' V6, while engine and gearbox condition will be the least of your worries when examining a Griffith or Tuscan V8. The TVR muscle cars are so hard to find that it would be daft to be choosy.

The Triumph Spitfire engine is very rare and the carburettor straight-six is not commonly found in home-market cars, but again none of their problems are insurmountable. The gearboxes are not as good as Ford items, the six-cylinder unit being especially notchy and prone to whine from layshaft bearings.

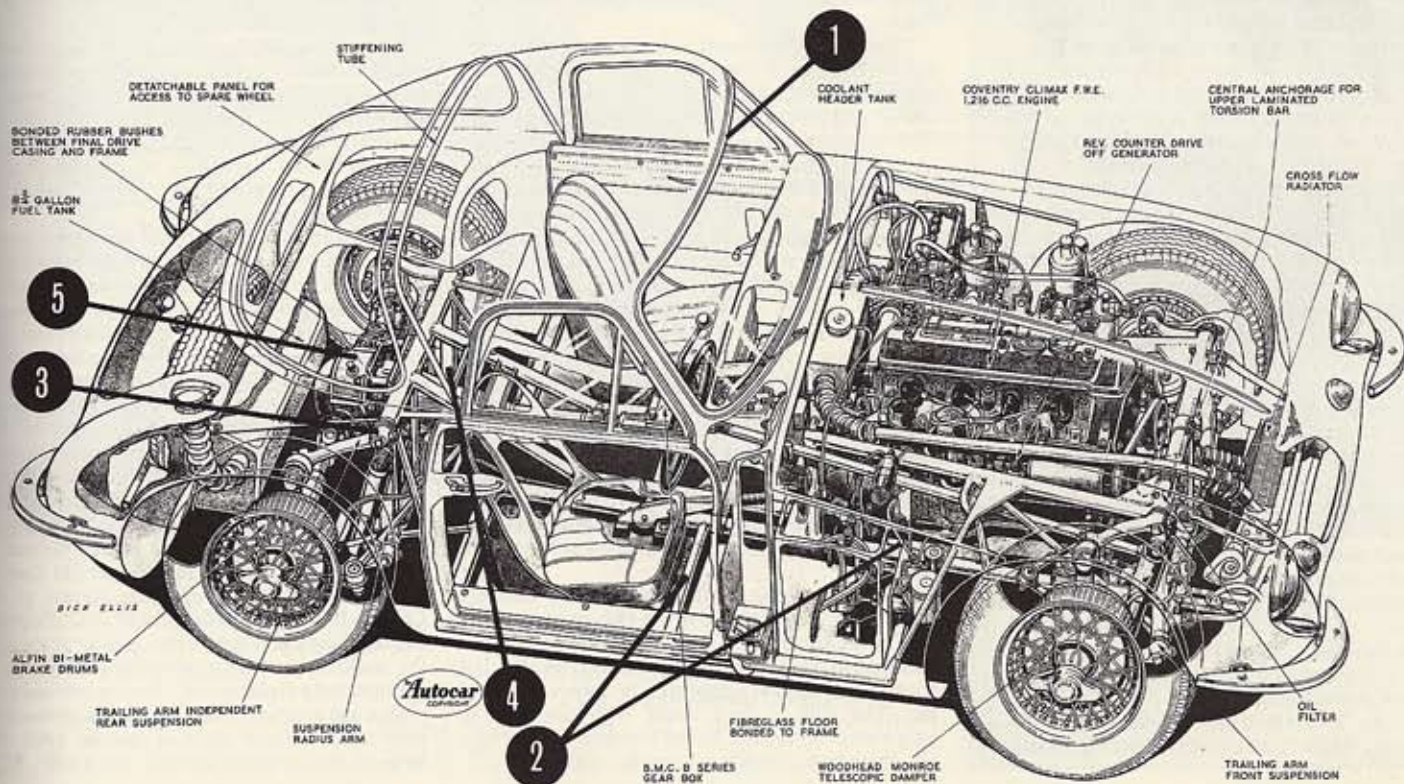
Back axle wear ⑤ may have occurred on cars with BMC B-series or Triumph Vitesse/GT6 differentials, but Salisbury diffs are virtually bullet-proof. **Interior:** You should try to obtain a car with as much original trim as possible, since interiors have often been hacked around. Non-original instruments, after-market roll-cages and competition seats are common modifications. Trim material, which is usually black Ambla, can be obtained if replacement is necessary.

## PRICES

Despite a steady rise in values over the past few years, prices of classic TVRs remain relatively low. Bargains can no longer be found, but now restoration looks a more realistic economic proposition the stock of good condition cars is growing.

Granturas and Vixens are all pitched around the same level, with first-class examples worth £4000-£5000, a running car around £2500 and basket cases anywhere between £500-£1500. There is a slight premium on coil spring cars (Grantura MkIII onwards) because they are more forgiving to drive, but the rarity of the earlier models helps to keep their values close to the same level. Although it is the commonest model, the Vixen S2 is also the most desirable; an excellent example will be closer to £5000 than £4000. Early Granturas make the cheapest basket-cases for as little as £500, but pricing reflects the higher cost of restoring them.

Griffith and Tuscan V8 values have rocketed in the past 12 months as people have woken up to this poor



man's Cobra. Restoration projects now seem to start at £10,000, and good cars fetch anything between £20,000-£30,000, depending on condition and engine specification. The engine is the biggest factor, as rebuilding a Hi-po unit could cost £10,000. Griffith 400s are worth more than 200s, while the Tuscan's rarity means that it fetches a little more again, particularly in 'wide-body' form.

Only a handful of these cars were sold in the UK, but US cars have been trickling back to Britain this year. It may sound appealing to try to buy from the US, but the cars are extremely difficult to find and you would now be very lucky to buy a US car for under \$20,000. Right-hand drive cars are worth more in theory, but there is strong demand for any V8 in any condition right now.

Tuscan V6s are worth 50 per cent more than the four-cylinder cars. The best examples fetch £7000, a

tired runner would be around £4000 and a crate of bits around £2000. Perhaps the best value at the moment would be a 2500 for around the same money as the four-cylinder cars.

## SPARES

The good news is that the spares situation for the early generations of TVR is better now than it has been for many years thanks to the efforts of David Gerald Sportscars Ltd, the only company to have taken a real interest in these cars. All the parts problem areas of recent years have now been solved through investment in new tooling - making a batch of new rear uprights, for example, has cost £10,000. Some of the parts are not cheap, but pricing reflects the investment made for relatively small production

quantities. David Gerald's acquisition two years ago of all the factory's pre-1980 parts stock included as part of the deal all chassis and suspension jigs and a vast number of body moulds and master bucks - enough to fill six seven-ton lorries! The company is also a source for the Standard-Triumph, Ford and BMC parts also used.

Chassis	£999
Bonnet	£750
Body rear quarter	£600
Front wing	£150
Perspex rear screen	£225
Aluminium door frame	£135
Aluminium rear upright	£195
Wishbone	£ 38
Brake disc	£ 25
Aluminium fuel tank	£150

## CLUBS

**TVR Car Club:** An active, friendly club with a strong tradition of helping people with practical advice. Around 1400 members worldwide, 1150 in UK, overseas representatives in the USA, Holland, West Germany and Sweden. *Sprint* is the club's excellent monthly magazine, packed with information and usually including colour. Technical publications, parts lists and owner's handbooks are available. Social activities in 26 regions, and club meets nationally for one or two major events each year. 1990 fixtures are factory weekend and Blackpool promenade sprint in April, Donington track day in June. New member enquiries to Gerry Jinks, David Gerald Sportscars Ltd, The Green, Inkberrow, Worcester WR7 4JF (tel: 0386 793239). Other enquiries during office hours to Colin Lyons (tel: 01-474 6141).

## BOOKS

*The TVRs* by Graham Robson. Published by Motor Racing Publications Ltd, £12.95. Second edition of excellent marque history in MRP's Collector's Guide series; the TVR reference work. Detailed background to all cars up to 1987; appendices cover technical specifications, chassis numbers, production records and performance figures; good information on buying and maintenance. *TVR Gold Portfolio 1959-88*. Published by Brooklands Books, £9.95. A 180-page scrapbook of 58 magazine articles and road tests. Indispensable and good value. *TVR: Success Against The Odds* by Peter Filby. Published by Gentry Books, £9.95 (out of print). Lively account of TVR's tortured history, strong on anecdote. Hunt for a copy at autojumbles.

## SPECIALISTS

**David Gerald Sportscars Ltd**, The Green, Inkberrow, Worcester WR7 4JF (tel: 0386 793239). Britain's only specialist dedicated to older TVRs. run by Gerry Jinks and David Field. Over 20 TVRs for sale, comprehensive spares stock (including many re-manufactured parts), servicing, restoration. Holds official supply and manufacturing rights for all pre-1980 TVRs. **Simon Anthony Classic Cars**, Lambourne Farm, Minety, Malmesbury, Wilts SN16 9RQ (tel: 0666 860699). Servicing and restoration, some parts stock. **GBL Vehicles**, Goswell House, Caxton Street North, London E16 1JN (tel: 01-476 2979). Car sales, some spares. **Coupés**, 25 Sheldon Road, London NW2 3AJ (tel: 01-452 6922). Spares, servicing, repairs.

## OWNER'S VIEW

*Roger Cook's passion for TVRs dates back nearly 30 years to his first buy, a Grantura MkII racer. He is now embarking on his second major restoration project*

Roger Cook, now secretary of the TVR Car Club, saw his first TVR when it flashed past him on the road in 1960. Two years later he decided to buy one and found himself the proud owner of a secondhand Grantura MkII racer with a Coventry Climax engine. He describes that as an exciting but very unforgiving car, with 'sudden death' breakaway on its Michelin X tyres. It survived for six months until a Sunbeam Talbot 80 crashed into it; Roger suffered no major structural damage but the car was written off.

Roger renewed his acquaintance with Granturas in 1968 when he bought an insurance write-off MkII from a breakers' yard in Watford. He stored it away at his Cheltenham home until he had the time and money to restore it... and 13 years went by. When he finally started work a complete ground-up restoration was necessary, although most parts were there.

"The car was in a drastic state because of accident and fire damage on the driver's side," says Roger. "I rebuilt the door, the panelling just behind the front wheels and part of the roof by trotting down to two TVR owners who lived locally and using one of those metal-strip gadgets which makes a profile of the body panel. I made new sections and managed to conceal the joints. I knew nothing about glass-fibre, but a local boat-builder explained the techniques.

"The body on a Grantura is bonded around the chassis, so I separated it with the aid of a small hacksaw and lots of scraped knuckles. The whole thing was stripped back to the gel coat by hand and repaired from there by grinding out cracks and filling. I was lucky in having the painting done in my employer's spray booth."

Although a front hub had been knocked off, the chassis itself was undamaged. The only work necessary was the replacement of a couple of tubes where the differential locates and a welded repair to a split torsion bar tube at the front. Then the chassis was galvanised, sprayed and coated with a salt-resistant paint.

"I knew nothing about TVRs when I started", says Roger. "I didn't know the club existed, and I didn't even know where the factory was. Finding out information about parts sources was difficult - but soon nosing around scrapyards became my way of life. The club is very useful with this kind of information nowadays, but at the time I received a lot of help from Stan Kilcoyne at the factory.



"People would tell me which bits came from where, and I would dive round looking for a Standard Eight or Ten for exterior door handles, a Riley 1.5 for interior door handles, a lowline MkII Consul for the windscreen, and so on. The range of sources is amazing: would you believe the steering box was from a Ford 101E, the American version of the 100E Anglia, and mounted upside down and filled with grease instead of oil, or that the fuel tank was an extended Austin A60 item?"

The 1588cc MGA engine had to be rebored and rebuilt, while the gearbox and differential were also stripped and rebuilt. New universal joints were needed on the propshaft and driveshafts, but otherwise little work was needed to brakes and suspension. With the exception of the headlining, all retrimming was carried out by Roger in new Ambler and Wilton carpet.

Roger returned his car to the road three years ago and has used it regularly, if sparingly, since then. He concedes that the Grantura MkII has its faults: the ride is absolutely atrocious, the low ride height has cost him several exhausts, it's extremely noisy inside, and the steering needs strong biceps because there is no self centring. But he finds the car great fun to drive and enjoys knowing that he owns one of the best surviving examples of a very rare car.

"The club knows of about 90 Granturas worldwide," he says, "but we reckon that fewer than 10 of those are actually in running order. Everyone seems to have one in the back garden."

Roger has now embarked on his second TVR project, having acquired the one-off SM Zante (the wedge-shaped styling exercise shown at Earl's Court in 1971) from the factory last year. Restoration will be a long job. Years in the open air at the back of the works has taken its toll on the chassis, but TVR has donated a replacement. The car arrived without engine and gearbox, while the body is no more than a bare shell, without glass or interior trim. Roger believes the car has never run... but it will.



*"40 Years..*



1949



1989

*..on the road..*

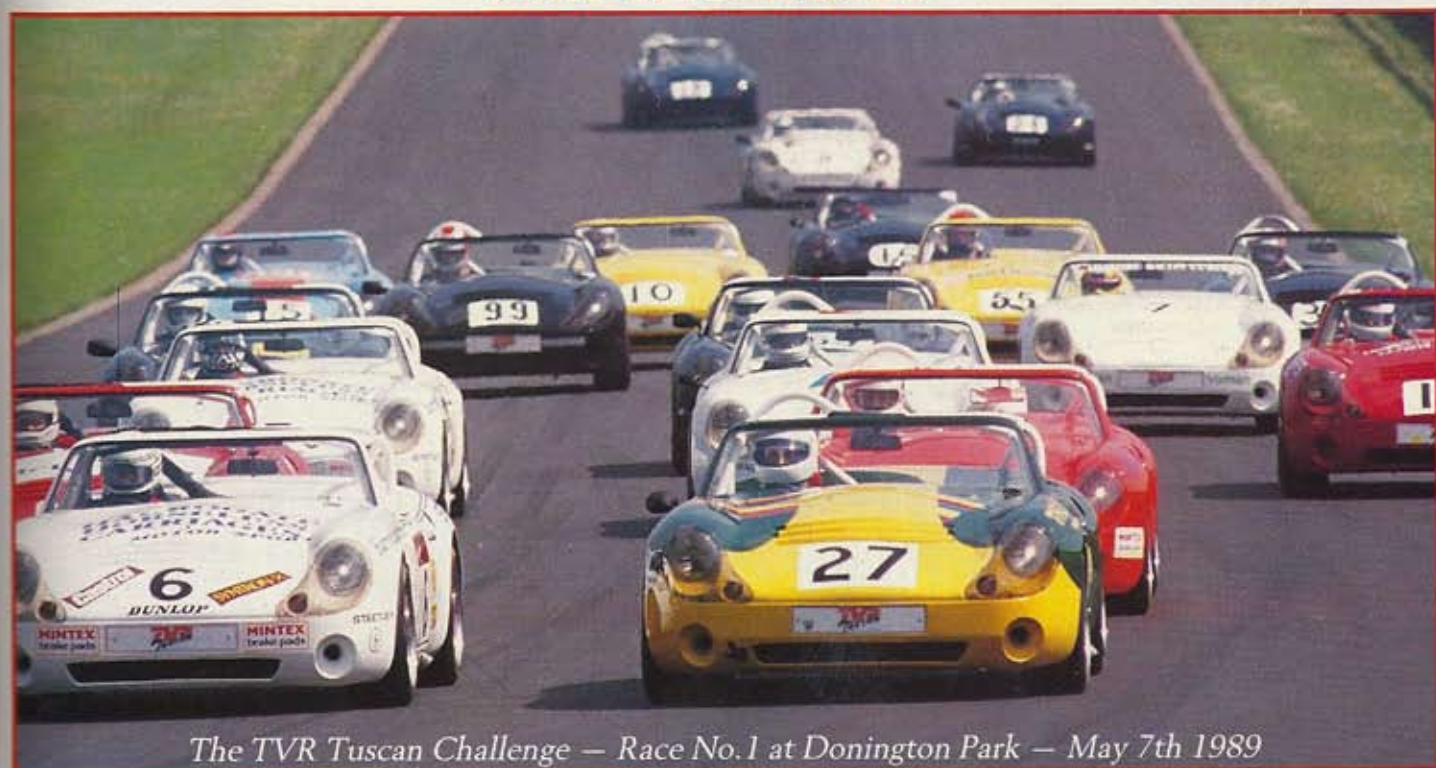


TVR S2



TVR 450 SE

*..on the track"*



The TVR Tuscan Challenge – Race No.1 at Donington Park – May 7th 1989



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