www.tvrcc.com

Guide to the TVR Chimaera

The Chimaera was designed for those that wanted to spend a weekend away, without having to worry about how the luggage would fit in the boot, and to feel refreshed and exhilarated after a drive along country roads. The car was initially launched in 1993 in 4 litre and 4.3 litre forms and fitted in between the S series and Griffith 500. The running gear was based on that of the Griffith 4.x but with softer springing, Bilstein dampers instead of Konis and an anti-roll bar, which was never fitted to the Griffith 4.x but did become a standard fitting on the Griffith 500.

The two engines were based on the engines that were used on the Griffith but were fitted with catalytic converters to meet the 1993 legislation.

The car was 2" inches longer than the Griffith and although it had a distinctive design, with the horizontal indent along the bottom of the body, it seemed to fit with the new styling that started with the Griffith. Let's not get carried away with this 'gentle' ap-proach. The 4 litre Chimaera is still a very fast and capable car but, in relative TVR terms, it is not as fast and it does not require the level of driving skill that the 5 litre Griffith demands. It became TVR's biggest selling car in 1993, a position that it has maintained ever since.

There are more Chimaeras on the roads today than total TVRs from the first 25 years of production! The Chimaera had its first major modification in 1994, when the gearbox was changed from the Rover SD1 (reverse on the left) to the Borg-Warner T5 (reverse on the right). This change was also applied to the Griffith 500.

The next modification was the introduction of the 5 litre engine from the Griffith 500. In 1996, the Chimaera and Griffith eventually shared the same chassis and brakes for all the engine variants. At this time, the Chimaera also adopted the front nose design from the Cerbera coupé, which does help in identifying these cars. The lack of a wire grill is the big feature to look for.

The Chimaera has remained the most popular car and looks certain to remain that way, especially with the introduction of the 4.5 litre model in 1996/7. This provided more power than the 4 litre version without the demonic frenzy of the 5 litre car. At this time the single rear light unit was replaced with the separate light cluster.

Although its appeal is softer and less aggressive than the Griffith 500 or Tuscan Speed Six, it combines a level of performance and comfort which, for the price, is irresistible to many. With production virtually at a standstill with only special orders only, now is the chance to enjoy one of these special cars.

For more detailed information – get *The TVR Griffith and Chimaera* by Steve Heath

www.tvrbooks.co.uk

1994 Chimaera dashboard with black surround dials.

1995 Chimaera with coloured instruments. Note the rev limit band on the rev counter and the fluted door opening knob in the centre of the transmission.

Ignore the number plate: this is the late body style Chimaera with the seperate rear lights.

For more detailed information – get *The TVR Griffith and Chimaera* by Steve Heath

www.tvrbooks.co.uk

	1992	1993	1994	1995	1996	1997	Total
Griffith 4.x	602	114[1]	–	–	–	–	716
Chimaera	–	601[2]	675[4]	750[5]	850[6]	900[7]	3,776
Griffith 500	–	129[3]	225[4]	250[5]	275[6]	300[7]	1,179

Notes:

[1] *The UK production finished in 1992 but some UK cars were delivered in 1993. The rest of the 1993 production was exported to Europe, the Middle East and the Far East.*

[2] *This figure is based on 401 cars (Sept. 93) plus an estimated 200 cars for the last 4 months production.*

[3] *This is based on 49 cars (Sept. 93) and an estimated 80 for the rest of the year.*

[4] *This is based on a total production of 900 cars with a 3:1 split in favour of the Chimaera.*

[5] *This is based on a total production of 1000 cars with a 3:1 split in favour of the Chimaera.*

[6] *This is an average derived from the 1995 and 1997 figures.*

[7] *This is based on a total production of 18 Chimaera and 6 Griffith 500 a week for a 50 week production period.*

Griffith and Chimaera production figures.

Model	Length	Wheel base	Height	Width	Front track	Rear track	Ground Clearance	Fuel Capacity	Weight
Griffith	3892mm	2282mm	1205mm	1943mm	1460mm	1470mm	146mm	57 l	1060kg
Chimaera	4015mm	2282mm	1215mm	1865mm	1460mm	1460mm	132mm	57 l	1060kg
Griffith 500	3892mm	2282mm	1205mm	1943mm	1460mm	1470mm	146mm	57 l	1060kg

Griffith and Chimaera dimensions. (Based on information from TVR Engineering)

	Griffith	Chimaera	Griffith 500
4 litre engine	92-93	93 onwards	–
4.3 litre engine	92-93	93-94	–
4.0 HC litre engine (i)	-	94-96	–
4.5 litre engine	–	96 onwards	–
5 litre engine	–	Late 94 onwards	Std
4.3BV engine (ii)	92-93	Optional	–
4.5BV engine (ii)	92-93	Optional	–
Leather steering wheel	Std	Std	Std
Wooden steering wheel	Optional	Optional	Optional
Power Steering	–	Optional	Optional
Air conditioning	–	Optional	Optional
Heated seats	–	Optional	Optional
Half hide	Std	Std	Std
Full hide	Optional	Optional	Optional
Roll bar	–	Optional from 1996	Optional
Limited Slip differential	Std	Std	Std
Hydratrak differential	–	Optional from 97	Optional from 97
Alloy wheels (iii)	Std	Std	Std
Second cold air blower (iv)	–	–	Std
Colour matched dials	–	Optional	Optional
Silver rimmed dials	–	From about 1994	From about 1994
Cerbera mirror catch	–	From late 1997	–
Spun aluminium dashboard	Optional	Optional	Optional
Alarm	Std	Std	Std
Electric mirrors	Std	Std	Std
Electric windows	Std	Std	Std
Catalytic converter	–	Std	Std

Griffith and Chimaera options

www.tvrcc.com

What to look for

Chassis

The chassis can rot on the outriggers, behind the front wheels and in the wishbones. However, the earliest cars are now about 9 to 10 years old and the plastic coating may have come off in these key areas, revealing bare metal. If not treated, the potential for chassis problems to start occurring may well increase over the next few years. The wishbones in particular can be prone to this and may need replacing. The chassis tends to be low down the maintenance list and if it has been maintained well, the probability is that the rest of the car has been well looked after. However, do not rely on this — still carry out the checks. The chassis can be replaced if necessary but is expensive. Check the straightness of the chassis at the front and rear — it is easy to fit new bodywork and hide impact damage. This should also be revealed on a HPI check, but not always.

Cooling

The temperature should stay rock steady at 70-90∞C during normal running. The fan should cut in at 90 to 92∞C or lower. Make sure that the car's cooling system is working correctly. If you cannot take the car for a run, start it and leave it idling while watching the temperature gauge and note the temperature when the electric fan cuts in. Also make sure that this reduces the temperature. Check for any coolant leaks, especially in the corners of the radiators and around the hoses and water pump.

Bodywork

Stone chips on the bonnet and on the mirror pods are quite common and should be viewed as a normal consequence of driving. If the front of the car is perfect, it may have been resprayed either to cover the stone chips or as a consequence of some front end damage. If these chips are only cosmetic and have not resulted in any chassis damage, this is usually nothing to worry about. Again, use some common sense when judging whether the damage is cosmetic and liveable with — or a symptom of something more sinister and potentially expensive.

Steering

If this binds as the wheel is turned, it is a sign that one or both of the steering column universal joints are on their way out and will need replacing. The steering is actually quite difficult to test on the road. The normal test is to let go of the steer-ing wheel and see if the car drifts to one side. If it does, the steering geometry or joints are suspect and need further investigation. Unfortunately, with the Griffith and Chimaera, this test is of limited use be-cause the steering is sensitive to the road camber and the car may drift to the nearside anyway, even if nothing is wrong! It is worth checking the geometry for problems or the chassis to see if there is any misalignment.

Engine

This should start and rev freely when warm. The exhaust should be smoke free, with no sign of burning oil. It should idle smoothly and not hunt. In terms of other features, check the engine does not overheat. 70-80∞C while moving and 90∞C only when stationary is a good sign. Check that the engine starts when hot. Stop at the dealer after the test drive and try restarting it — you don't want to get stranded. This fault is often due to a poor earth connection and is easy to fix. Check that the oil pressure is a good 25-30 lbs. Check that the engine idles smoothly at 1,000 revs and is free revving when accelerating.

Gearbox and clutch

Check that the gear change is smooth and positive. The Rover SD1 gearbox is a bit more notchy than the later Borg-Warner unit. Of the two, the later Borg-Warner gearbox is preferable and these cars tend to go for a higher price. Make sure the clutch works and that there is no fluid leak. This will involve removing the inspection hatch in the inner wing on the driver's side. The clutch should not slip.

Brakes

Make sure that the car brakes in a straight line and that there are no fluid leaks. Any judder when applying the brakes can mean that the discs need replacing.

Front suspension

This can take a hammering. Check the steer-ing rack, wheel bearings, and so on. (The car will need to be jacked up to do this.) Upper ball joint wear can be best detected by rocking the wheel with the car's weight on it. Look at the wear patterns on the front tyres to see if there is any uneven wear. If there is, this can be caused by a front suspension or steering prob-lem. It can also be caused by the wrong tyre pres-sures or too many track days.

Windscreen

There should be no milkiness around the edges. This is a sign of water ingress and de-lamina-tion and particularly affects early cars or ones that have had their windscreen replaced without ensur-ing the windscreen edge is bedded in with sealant. This problem can be hidden by black plastic or paint on the surface of the screen but it is not necessarily a major problem as the screen can be replaced rela-tively cheaply.

Exhaust system

They do tend to rust through, although the stainless steel ones have a very long life. Check the exhaust manifolds and gaskets.

Leaks

Check for water and rust marks on the uphol-stery and interior. Check that the carpets are dry underneath as well as on top. Seized or rusty seat belts can be a sign of a leaking roof.

Springs and shock absorbers

The car should be level. The shock absorbers should be functional and not leaking. The springs should not be compacted. A simple test is to push down on each corner. If the car is pushed down and then released, it should simply move back into place in a single movement.

Electrics

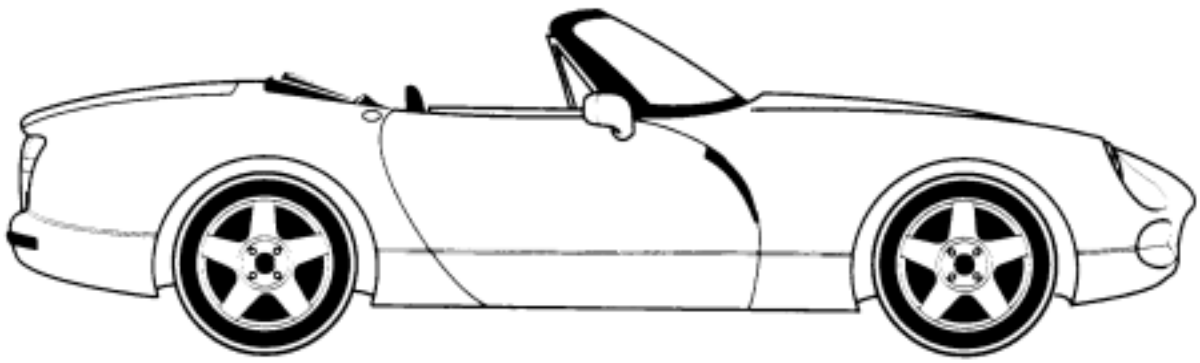
Do they all work? In particular, the instrumen-tation, the electric windows and the alarm. Do not forget the ventilation system, radio, cigarette lighter and any extras, such as heated seats and electric mir-rors.

Body panel fit

After looking at a lot of cars, you can tell whether the panel fit is right. The styling makes the door fit less critical, compared to the lines on a Wedge or an S series car. The doors may start to sag with time but this can be corrected — a job best left to a specialist.

Warranty

Check for history. The car should have been regularly serviced. If not, be suspicious. Make sure that the service history complies with the servicing small print on the warranty. This usually means an approved dealer and within 21 days of the appropriate time or the warranty is invalid. Finally... if you haven't driven a really power-ful rear wheel drive car before, take it easy. If you have, still take it easy! A Griffith or Chimaera, especially the 5 litre versions, deserve some serious respect, especially on anything but warm, dry roads. This advice is also applicable when you pick the car up for the first time.



For more detailed information – get *The TVR Griffith and Chimaera* by Steve Heath

www.tvrbooks.co.uk