

# 1 The Griffith and Chimaera story

The Griffith and Chimaera have become the most successful cars that TVR has ever sold in its 50 year history, with more Chimaeras currently on the road than any other model. These two cars built on the success of the S series and enabled TVR to move into its position as the manufacturer of arguably the most innovative and stylish sports cars. So how did TVR develop these distinctive and timeless classic sports cars? To understand where the Griffith came from, we have to go back to the original Griffith and the 1960s.

## The original Griffith

The original Griffith was the brainchild of Jack Griffith of Griffith Motors, Inc. in Plainview, New York, an American importer of the TVR Grantura in the 1960s. He had the idea of taking his Grantura and replacing the original 100 bhp four cylinder engine with a Ford 4.7 litre V8 engine. The result was a car with astonishing acceleration that quickly drew comparisons with the AC Cobra. TVR were impressed and a deal was quickly agreed where TVR (then known as Grantura Engineering) shipped cars without the engine or gearbox to Griffith Motors, who fitted the Ford V8 engine and its gearbox. The hybrid car, called the Griffith 200, was launched at the Boston Motor Show in 1963.

There were two versions of the Ford V8 engine: a 195 bhp standard engine and a tuned 271 bhp version. The car typically weighed around 3/4 ton, so the power to weight ratio was huge. The power was delivered using the standard Grantura BMC B series transmission and drive, although the suspension mounts and other parts were strengthened.

The Griffith 200 sold reasonably well in the US and its successor, the Griffith 400, was launched in 1964. This had the cut off manx tail rear body style that later appeared on the 1800S and the Vixen in the UK.

About 300 of these V8 cars were made before TVR was taken over by Martin Lilley. He produced

an upgraded version of the car called the Tuscan V8 but only a handful were made. However, the Griffith had already found its place in the history of TVR in two ways: it was one of the fastest road cars of its era and, arguably, *the* fastest.

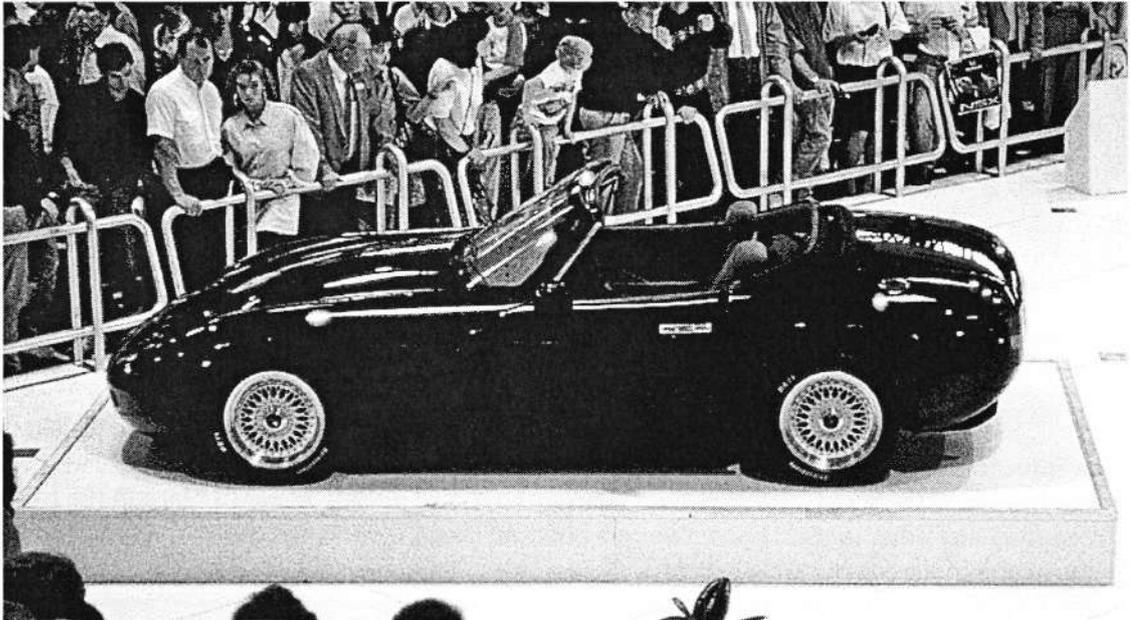


*The rear of an original Griffith complete with roll cage, full harnesses and additional ventilation. This car is raced regularly.*

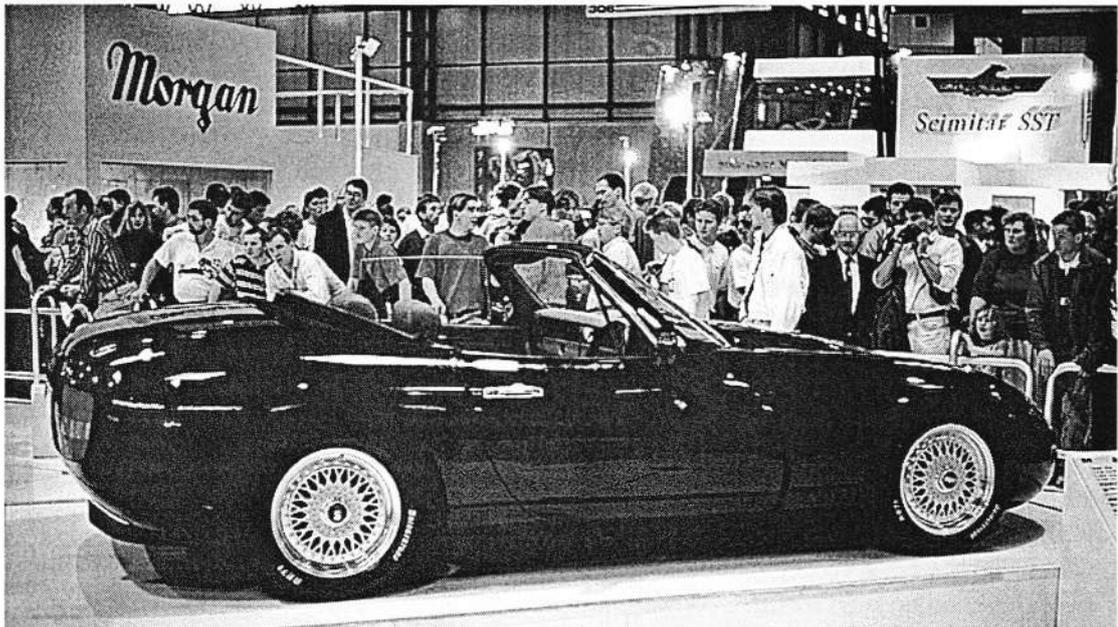
The Griffith's reputation was further enhanced by John Bolster's famous road test in October 1965, when he took the car up to 163 mph and a 0-60 time of 5.2 seconds — and complained when the front of the car started to lift off! It also established the concept of light cars with big engines in the TVR culture, an idea that the company has since never let go.

## The Griffith reborn

Even now, over twelve years since its first appearance at the 1990 Motor Show in Birmingham, the Griffith can make jaws drop and eyes stare in amazement and disbelief just by driving by. This is just part of the Griffith 'package'. It looks fast. The body oozes speed and acceleration — but even its fabulous looks do not prepare a driver or passenger for just how quickly this car will accelerate. In any gear. At almost any speed. Only those lucky enough



*The 1990 Motor Show prototype Griffith with external door handles and fuel filler. The door handles were subsequently recessed behind the door and the fuel filler was located under the boot lid. The tyres were initially Bridgestone RE71 high speed radials; Bridgestone SO-2 and SO-3 tyres are still the standard fit today. (TVR Engineering)*



*The same 1990 Motor Show car from a slightly different angle. The car created such a storm of interest that TVR could not keep up with demand from customers wanting to order on the spot. (TVR Engineering)*

to have driven or been driven in one on a race track will know *exactly* what that feeling is like. In the time most cars have reached the end of their rev range in first gear, the Griffith has gone through the 60 mph barrier and is ready to change into third gear. By the time most cars have reached 60 mph, the Griffith is close to a 100 mph and still accelerating hard. It is this ability to deliver power that sets it aside from most other so-called fast cars.

So how was the Griffith reborn after almost 25 years? There were several reasons: the success of the S series in the mid to late 1980s had shown that

the public loved the return to the curvaceous body that TVR had stopped making when the more angular Tasmin appeared in 1980. Although the Tasmin had been developed into a more and more powerful car, through the introduction of the Rover V8 engine in the 350i and the bigger engined versions, such as the 390SE, 400SE, 420SE and 450SE, and the angular body style had been smoothed and softened, it was clear that a replacement car was needed. This needed to be as powerful as the 400SE and 450SE cars it would replace — with a whole new body style.

Two attempts had been made with the Speed Eight to create a curvaceous car that could hark back to the Tasmin cars but the reaction was not favourable and the prototype was cut up with chain saws and dumped in a skip after the second attempt in 1990. The 1990 version was a 2+2 while the previous year's version was a two seater. The Tuscan name was revived in 1988 to create a new car that would be available in two forms: one for racing and one for road use. The original plans for this did not work out either. The car was certainly used for the race series but no road versions were officially produced (there are about three race cars that have been made street legal). Instead, the car created the most famous single marque race series of recent times, partly because any car that is overpowered and under tyred is going to provide plenty of spectacular action. The Tuscan race series is now established as a key part of TVR's activities.

The Tuscan was originally designed to use the S series chassis but it became quite apparent that this would have difficulty coping with the Tuscan engine's power. It was also intended that the race cars should use a mildly tuned Rover V8, of about 250 bhp — but, in typical TVR fashion, this was soon forgotten and the racing Tuscan ended up with 4.5 litre 450 bhp engines. As a result, a new chassis was quickly developed and the Tuscan race series created an ideal proving ground for developing the chassis. This was to prove vital later.

With the Tuscan and Speed Eight not providing the replacement road car, it was clear that something different was needed. That something appeared at the 1990 Motor Show: the new Griffith.

The new Griffith was styled by the TVR team, in particular by John Ravenscroft and Peter Wheeler. It caused such an impact on the stand that everything else appeared to be out of date in comparison, including TVR's second version of the Speed Eight. The public voted with its cheque book and orders were placed, with hefty deposits, for over 350 cars! (In comparison, the Speed Eight only received about 30 orders.) At one point, an order was being placed every 8 minutes. However, when the car did go into production, it was for only about 15 months.

## The Griffith 4.x

The original 1990 prototype was based on the S series chassis with the 4.0 litre V8 engine which was to form the basis of the V8S. The original intention was to use the S chassis but it became clear that it could not cope with the power levels that TVR were thinking of using at some point. Indeed, the first prototype Griffith shown at the 1990 show had an S chassis and running gear and, if you look carefully, the S interior. As a result, the decision was taken to develop a new chassis using the racing Tuscan as its basis. The development and design work needed to turn a prototype into a production car took about 18 months and the first pre-production cars appeared in late 1991/early 1992. By this time, the car had even won a British Design Council award for its styling. The aborted Speed Eight provided the basis of the new Griffith interior and away the project went.

With hindsight, the decision to develop a new chassis was inspired as it had several knock on ef-



An early pre-production Griffith. Note that the headlamp covers are simply retained by clips. This fixing was later augmented with a bead of sealant around the cover edge. (TVR Engineering)

fects. It provided an easy upgrade path to the Griffith 500 with its 340 bhp engine — which allowed TVR to overcome the delays in its own AJP V8 engine. Some of the Griffith improvements were also applied back to the V8S chassis to help improve its stiffness and handling.

The Griffith entered production with two engine specifications: an entry level 4.0 litre 240 bhp engine and a more powerful 4.3 litre 280 bhp engine. The 4.3 litre engine quickly established itself as the engine to have, due to its smoother power delivery and higher output. The car used a Rover SD1 gearbox with all the 4.x engines.

The reaction to the car was stunning. Journalists could not believe that a small English car company had produced such a flowing design with almost unbeatable power and performance. “So close to greatness, it hurts” was just one of the memorable comments from Autocar. Performance Car could only muster one word: “Wow!”

Production quickly ramped up. 602 cars were made in 1992 and 102 in the first half of 1993. The Griffith quickly became the main production car and it caused the reign of the V8S, introduced a year earlier, to come to an early end. The 1993 production figures are interesting because the Griffith 4.x officially ended production in December 1992. However, this was more due to the impending catalytic converter legislation than anything else. The 1993 cars have chassis that were made and registered in 1992 and therefore did not need catalytic converters to be fitted. The 1993 cars were either 1992 cars that were finished and delivered in 1993, or cars destined for foreign markets.

## The big valve Griffiths

TVR Power, TVR's engineering subsidiary, had been increasing the power of the V8 engine for many years, as specials for customers, to supply to the Tuscan race cars and for the last of the Wedge shaped 400/420/450 cars. It should therefore come as no surprise that from the first production run some of the cars ended up with slightly tweaked engines.

For the 4.0 litre engine, gas flowing the heads was an option that boosted power to 250 bhp. This was commonly done. However, for the really power crazy, one option was to upgrade the engine to the big valve (BV) specification and reach over 300 bhp!

As the name suggests, the ‘big valve’ upgrade involved increasing the valve size in the cylinder heads to allow more fuel to enter the cylinder and to help expel the exhaust. The 4.3BV engine is further enhanced to realise the horsepower. For some, even this was not enough and the engine capacity was increased to 4.5 litres. The 10 or 12 cars that were originally modified were reckoned to have over 300 bhp and, until the advent of the Griffith 500, were the fastest Griffiths available. Steve Beresford continues the story:

*“The 4.5BV was built in 1992 to special order. Peter Wheeler would not build a ‘regular’ 5 litre then. He did produce one 5 litre Griffith special for a Cheshire man. It now resides in the south of England. It was awesome and probably too much unless you had race experience, and was nothing like the current Griffith 500. It cost £45,000 in 1992, when the 4.3 cost £26,000-£29,000.*



*A pre-production Griffith from the rear. (TVR Engineering)*

My own 4.5BV was one of 10 or 12 built. There was an article in the August 1993 issue of TVR Sprint about it. Others went to Shropshire, Leicester, Jersey, New Zealand and the Middle East. Team Central sold most of them. All are non-cat, put out about 310 bhp at the wheels<sup>1</sup> and will rev up to 6,250 to 6,500 rpm. Torque is around 328 lb/ft, measured on a dyno. The car is much more responsive than the 4.3 or 500. It feels much quicker, is harder to drive and is also better on a track: the ride is perfectly balanced and so are the engine, chassis and suspension. Dealers love it and so do mechanics.

I paid about £2,000 for the specification and it's damned good value. It goes out of tune easily and really needs servicing every 4,500 miles with constant oil changes. I run it on 4-star or super unleaded petrol, although I believe the latter causes stiction in the valves. My own car has already had a partial rebuild at only 36,000 miles as we found that the crank and bottom end were not really up to it. The Cossie pistons and lightened flywheel are brilliant. The clutch blew at 17,000 miles and again at 36,000, the latter **not** my fault. It now has a Griffith 500 clutch which is a pussycat, compared to the first 4.5 one!

I would never sell this car. I've had 160 mph on the speedometer in 1996 and it was nowhere near the rev-limiter — and there was a crosswind. Most average TVR drivers would get 0-60 in 5 seconds out of it, and an experienced racer probably 4 seconds. Colin Blower set a production car lap record in it at Mallory in April '93. There were quite a few 4.3BVs made, as well as the 4.5s."

<sup>1</sup> (flywheel according to the factory)

The big valve cars are reckoned to be the best of the 4.x Griffiths ever produced. They normally attract a large premium and, because of this, it has been known for a car with a blowing exhaust to be described to a naive, would-be buyer as a big valve version when it is not. Checking the provenance on these cars is essential.

## The Griffith AJP

When Griffith production for the UK market stopped in 1993, it seemed a little crazy. The plan was announced at the 1992 Motor Show and allowed TVR to divert some Griffiths to the European and World markets and to concentrate on building the Chimaera. It was also announced that TVR would start building a Griffith later in the year with a new TVR-designed V8 engine called the AJP. This name was taken from the first initials of Al Melling, John Ravenscroft and Peter Wheeler.

However, this car never made it into production because the AJP development took longer than anticipated. Meanwhile, potential customers were clamouring for the return of the Griffith. The original cars were often selling for more than the purchase price. The Chimaera was selling well but it was going to a slightly different market. The solution was to take the Rover V8 engine and create the most extreme version of it yet made for a production car. The story of the AJP engine would continue with the Cerbera and not the Griffith.



Steve Powell's 1993 Griffith 4.3. Despite its 1993 registration plate, the chassis was registered in late December 1992 and therefore the car is not obliged to have a catalytic converter. (Steve Powell)



*The back of a 4.3 litre Griffith anticipating a blast up a straight road. Note that the bodywork is not blemished or interrupted by radio aerials, fuel caps or other unnecessary items. They have all been hidden to preserve the purity of the design. The Griffith actually won a Design Council award for its flowing design. (Steve Powell)*



*The Griffith 500 used the same body style but, with a 340 BHP 5 litre V8 engine under the bonnet, it was the answer to demands for the return of the Griffith and for even more power. The only external sign of the bigger engine is the 500 under the Griffith badge at the back and on the steering wheel.*

## The Griffith 500

The press announcement of the Griffith 500 in August 1993 marked the return of the Griffith with a 5 litre 340 bhp 350lb/ft torque version of the Rover V8 engine. It took the big valve concept, increased the capacity and compression ratio and tweaked the engine even further — so that about the only thing left untouched from the original Rover engine was the sump plug! The brakes were upgraded. The chassis and suspension were improved and, in general, this car is the pinnacle of the Griffith series.

If people thought that the earlier 4.x Griffith was fast, after driving a 500 even those cars seemed as slow as a diesel. The 0-60 time dropped to 4.1 seconds, compared to about 5 seconds for the ear-

lier Griffiths. TVR even started to quote a 0-100 time of 10.2 seconds. This was and is real supercar performance. Most Ferraris and other exotica would be struggling to keep up and here was a British company providing this performance for about a third of the price. Some journalists even complained that TVR had gone too far by adding more power — but others simply went around with an almost permanent grin from ear to ear.

In 1994, the Griffith 500, together with all the Chimaeras, switched to the Borg Warner T5 gearbox which is a vast improvement on the old Rover SD1 version. Better ratios, smoother gear change and an almost bomb proof strength meant that the car was a bit easier to drive and would accelerate faster as it was less prone to wheel spin. Note the word *less*: the car still has a 307 bhp/ton power-

to-weight ratio which means that wheel spins can still be induced. With the Griffith 500 in particular, you don't simply floor the accelerator, you have to feed it.

The Griffith 500 is a little bit more 'civilised' than its predecessor. It has optional power steering made by TVR and can be fitted with air conditioning and heated seats. This meant that the car became quite practical for town driving as well as the open road.

I agree with Peter Wheeler that the T5 gear-boxed Griffith 500, especially with the full 340 bhp spec engine, is the best of the series. It was announced at the Motor Show in October 1997 that this engine had been de-tuned slightly to 320 bhp to make it idle and drive better around town. This modification was widely used on these cars before this date if the customer required a smoother engine at low revs. It is interesting to note that the original 500 specification quoted a 325 bhp figure.

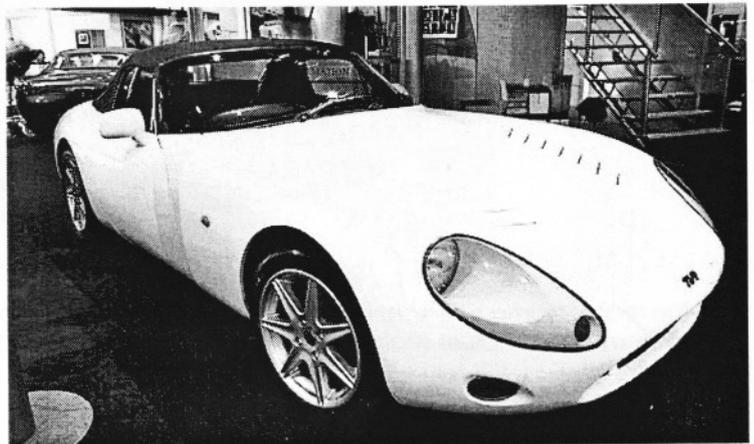
Owners of the original 4.x Griffith will also make similar claims for the earlier Griffith 4.x cars to be the best of the bunch, on the basis that the 500 was fitted with catalytic converters and has a more muted exhaust note. It is still loud and unforgettable but this is a valid point. I would argue that whilst the exhaust note is important, the way it drives is more important. Big valve owners argue that their engines are almost as

powerful as the 500 but they have a more free revving characteristic which makes them accelerate faster. My counter argument would be that they still do not get anywhere near the power of the 500 and do not have the improved chassis, gearbox, brakes and wider tyres of 500. In my experience, on a track a 500 in the right hands will out-accelerate, out-corner and out-brake a 4.x Griffith, including the big valve versions.

In the end, the important thing is that whatever the car or the engine size, driving *any* Griffith is an amazing experience. The car creates an incredible passion in those who have experienced it, which starts getting in the way of objective comparisons. The cars generate so much subjective feeling that everyone has a different set of comparison criteria and no one view can or should prevail....

## The Griffith Speed Six

One of the things that appeals about the Griffith is the burbling sound of the V8 engine. Imagine then the commotion that TVR's announcement of the Griffith Speed Six created at the 1996 Birmingham Motor Show. The new Griffith would have a new AJP6 straight six cylinder engine instead of the TVR Power V8. All was not doom and gloom, as a 380 bhp version of the engine was to be made available. This was like



*The 1997 Tuscan Speed Six. This was announced as the revised Griffith Speed Six but was renamed a few weeks later after the 1997 London Motor Show. (TVR Engineering)*



*The front of the 1996 Griffith Speed Six with the redesigned light cluster. (TVR Engineering)*



*The rear featured new light clusters and a wider opening boot. The spare wheel was removed and replaced by TyreWeld puncture sealant to free up more space, as was first done with the Cerbera. (TVR Engineering)*

man from heaven to owners that had struggled to keep up with a well driven Cerbera (with the AJP8 engine that was originally destined for the Griffith) on a track day. The styling was also updated, which people either liked or disliked. The problem with any classic design is that it becomes difficult to change and further develop it. The changes fell into this camp: some customers said “when can I have one” while others said “you are going to keep building the V8 powered 500”. TVR’s approach, as always, was to let the customer decide. The 500 would continue production as long as customers wanted it.

The Griffith Speed Six did not go into production. In 1997, a further developed version was produced which brought in more of the original Tuscan racer features and moved the design into the new millennium. Seeing the 500 and the new Speed

Six on the stand together, the impression was that the 500 appeared to be very traditional — a sure sign of a classic, despite the design being only a few years old. The Speed Six was also more aggressive and technically far more advanced. The AJP Straight Six engine that John Ravenscroft had worked on and refined produced almost too much power and the Griffith 500 chassis and running gear struggled to keep up with the power and performance. As a result, it was decided to use the Cerbera chassis in a slightly shortened form, together with its suspension and huge brakes to form the backbone of the new car.

A few weeks after the 1997 Birmingham Motor Show, the Griffith Speed Six was renamed the Tuscan Speed Six and the car went into production with that name. Although the 500 is likely to be the



*The planned interior for the 1996 Griffith Speed Six. It uses ideas from the interior of the Cerbera. (TVR Engineering)*



*The interior of the 1997 Tuscan Speed Six - née Griffith Speed Six.*

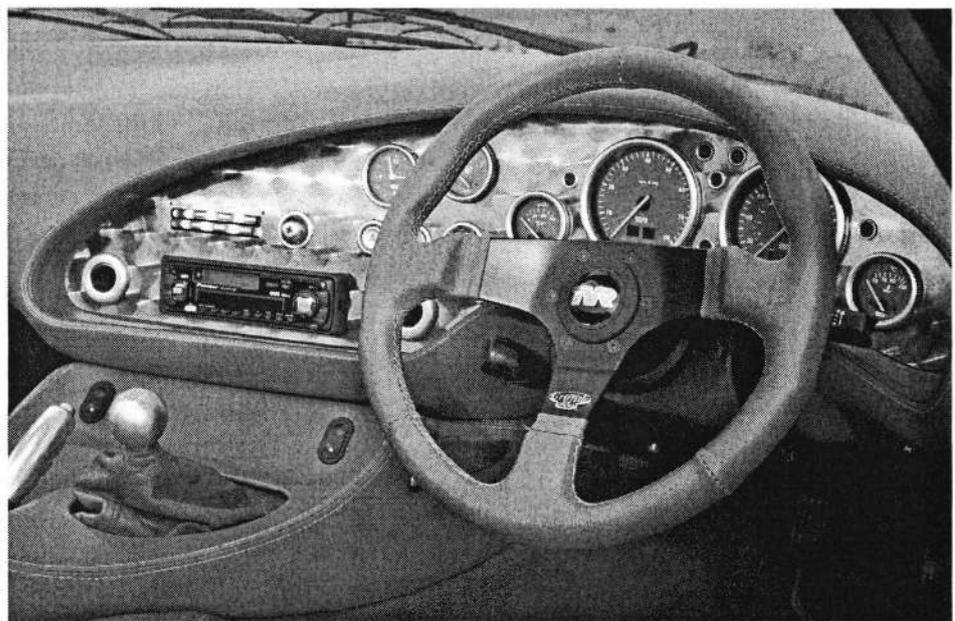
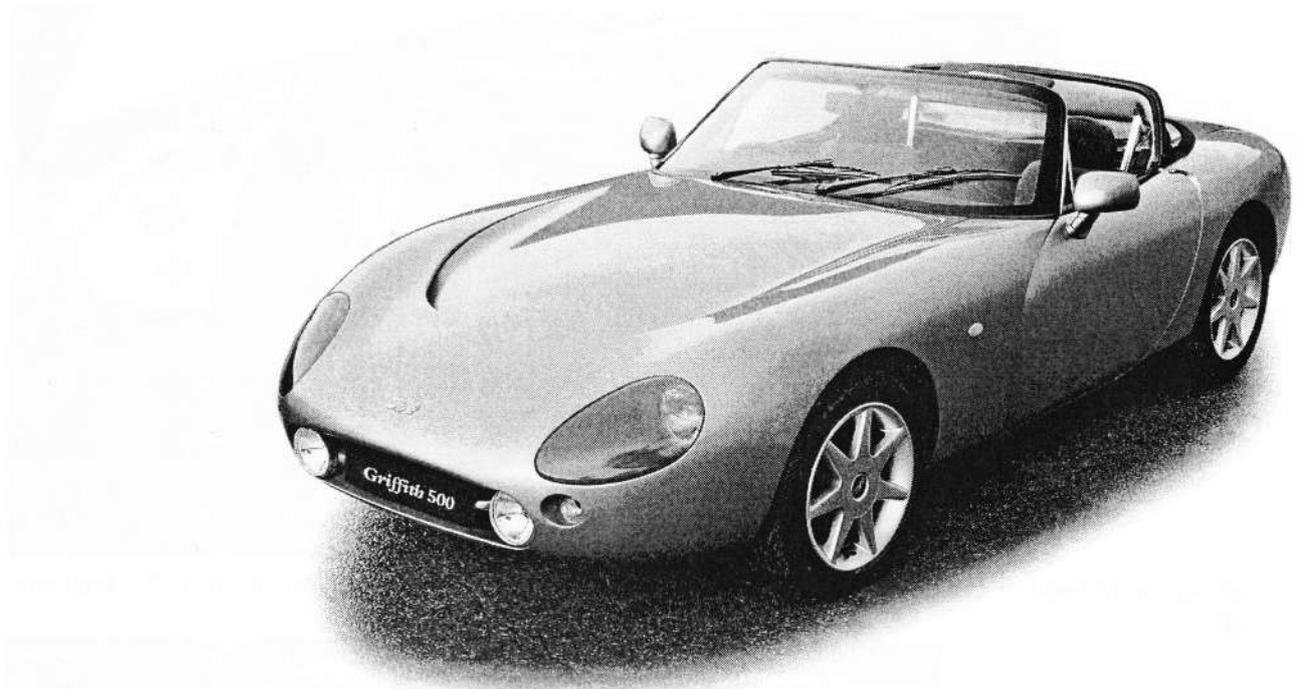
last of the Griffith line, it has already become a classic and created a devoted following. In some ways, because it was such a 'perfect' design, it is better that the new Speed Six is given a different name. With the original Tuscan coming from the developments of the Griffith 200 and 400, there is a definite sense of history in calling the new development of the modern Griffith and Tuscan.

## The last 100

In 2001, the unthinkable happened. TVR announced that Griffith production was to end and, to celebrate this, a special edition run of just 100 cars was to be built. To say it was unthinkable is a little strong. Sales of these cars had dropped with the Chimaera outselling the Griffith by almost 10 to 1 in some production periods. The customer base seems to have preferred the Chimaera. Whether this

was because the Griffith only came in the 5 litre version, which contributed to its ferocious reputation and guided potential owners to the smaller engined Chimaera is unclear but the facts were plain and simple: the desire to buy new Griffiths had vanished and now was the time to say goodbye. It is also true that many potential Griffith owners had moved to the Tuscan or Cerbera — so maybe it was not so surprising after all.

These last cars had several differences from the 'standard' Griffith 500s in that they had a hybrid interior using the Chimaera dashboard and some external changes to the rear lights and wing mirrors (from the Cerbera and including the door button underneath the mirror housing). Each car is numbered and has a plaque in the glove compartment indicating its production build number. The changes definitely created a reaction as many liked the modifications, while others preferred the original look.



The factory photographs of the Griffith 500 last 100 edition. Note the new rear lights and dashboard layout. (TVR Engineering)



*Aluminium was not compulsory: this example of a 'last 100' has a veneer dashboard.*

Whether other owners will update their cars to look like the 'last 100' will be interesting. It should be possible but will not be cheap.



*The Cerbera style wing mirror fitted to the Griffith 500 LE, as the last 100 production cars were called.*

Mechanically, they were the same as their predecessors but some of the cars appeared with 16 inch diameter front wheels instead of the more normal 15 inch versions. This was due to supply problems with both 15 inch wheels and tyres.

It is interesting to note that the Griffith became a cult car within months of its demise and there has been a recent trend towards higher prices.

## The Chimaera

The Chimaera was first produced in 1993. It was developed to appeal to two potential types of customer: those that wanted an entry level car but

did not necessarily require the power that the forthcoming Griffith 500 (née AJP) would provide, and also to appeal to the 'Grand Tourer' — those that wanted a more gentle approach from their sports car compared to the 'no compromise' Griffith.

The project was called UPI or Ugly Pig No 1 and was overseen by Peter Wheeler and John Ravenscroft, who spent many hours sculpting the body design from a block of foam — aided by Peter Wheeler's gun dog Ned, who played his part in the styling of the indicator. Legend has it that Ned bit a piece of the foam mock-up and it was decided that the modification was rather attractive, so the feature was retained. In a Top Gear review on the 5th October 1995, Peter Wheeler explained that Ned had "savaged the stylist who was doing the indicator" and thus the famous design was created. He also said that Ned had moved to the accounts department.... The similarity between the Chimaera and the new Jaguar XK8 prompted several comments about Ned seeking copyright damages. He is also used to give a final approval to a new car: his decision is usually based on whether there is a cheese sandwich located in it somewhere. Ned has definitely found his place in the annals of TVR history.

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 available 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 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' approach. 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. However, this was to change.

The initial road tests were favourable. Some reckoned its handling surpassed that of a Griffith 4.x and its acceleration times were within a tenth or two of a second of the Griffith. It became TVR's biggest selling car in 1993, a position it maintained until Cerbera production overtook it in 1998. 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 to the Borg-Warner T5. 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



*The 1992 Motor Show Chimaera. Note the TVR badge on the radiator grille. (TVR Engineering)*



*The Chimaera indicator, allegedly designed by Peter Wheeler's dog, Ned.*

Chimaera also adopted the front nose design from the Cerbera coupé, which helps in identifying these cars. The lack of a wire grille is the big feature to look for.

In 1997, the rear number plate recess was modified to accept an angled plate that was illuminated directly. This was followed by the adoption of the Cerbera 'door switch under the mirror pod' approach which replaced the chrome button. Further changes occurred when the rear lights were replaced with individual units instead of the single cluster.

The Chimaera has remained the most popular car and looks certain to remain that way. 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. It currently looks certain to continue with the TVR Power-Rover V8 engine. However, indications are that it may receive a stripped down entry-level version of the AJP6 engine at some point in the future, especially if the Rover V8 ceases production.

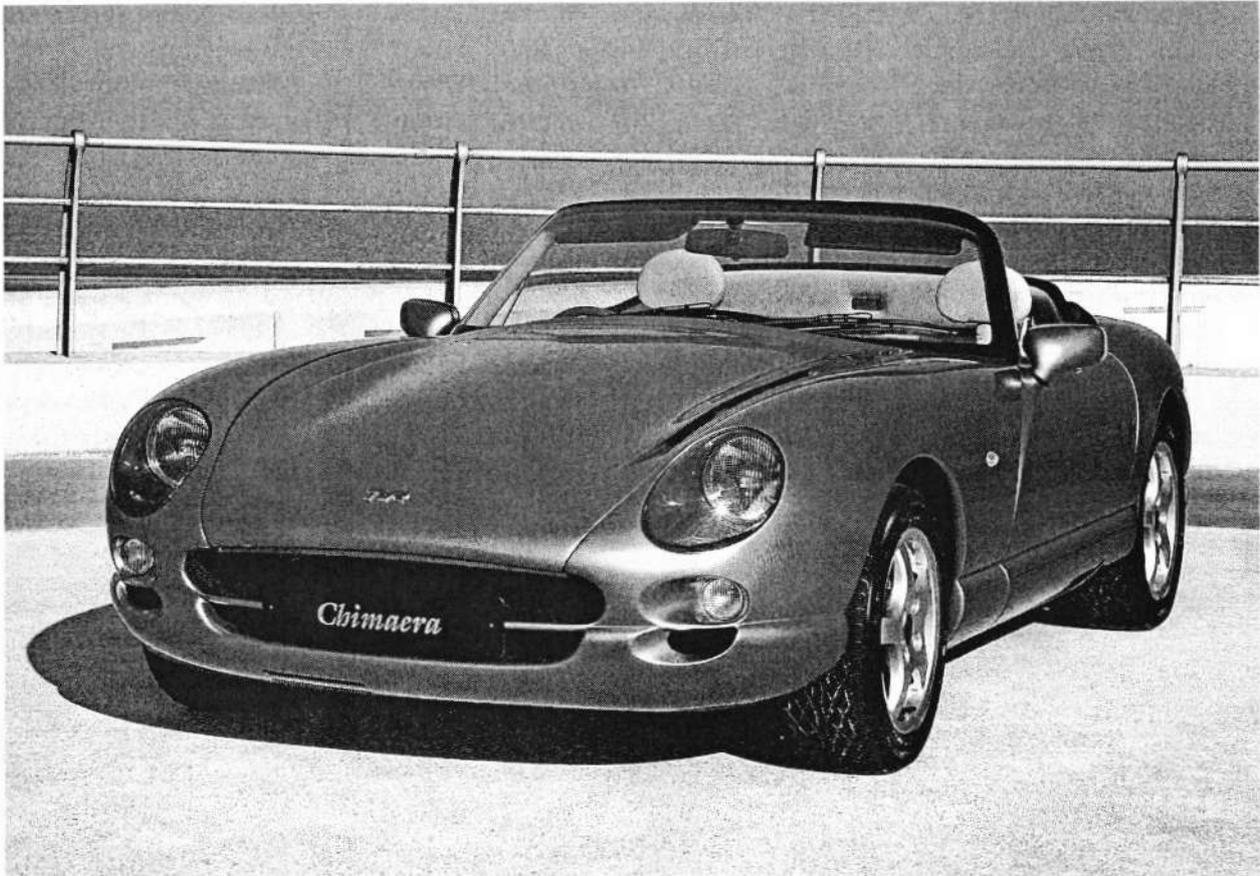
Those were interesting words, when I wrote them in 1997. Any thought of an AJP powered Chimaera have now gone. An AJP powered Griffith was built as a test bed but the results led TVR to develop the Cerbera and Tuscan chassis because of the need to further improve handling. This effectively meant



The radiator and indicator detail changed in 1996 from that of the original 1993 design shown in this photograph to that used in the Cerbera. As a result, the grille disappeared, although the basic shape and concept remained. (Steve Powell)



A 1993 Chimaera in yellow. The current cars have a recessed number plate with external lights instead of the original back light arrangement used on the Griffith and earlier cars. (Steve Powell)



The 2001 specification Chimaera. Note the faired in front headlamps (a styling cue from the Griffith). The individual rear lights and angled rear number plate (to allow direct illumination) are not new but had appeared in the late 1990s as production numbers increased and additional regulations had to be applied. These modifications were not carried out on the Griffith because its production numbers were a lot lower. (TVR engineering)



The 2001 specification Chimaera. The aluminium dashboard is optional and many owners are now retrofitting this style into the older cars. From the front and at a first glance, the lower photograph looks like a mid 1990s model but the faired in headlights are the clue that this is one of the last! (TVR Engineering)

that the Chimaera and Griffith would continue to use the Rover-based power plant. Since then Land Rover has been sold to Ford and the oft talked about rumour of the end of the Rover V8 production has come close to happening. Currently, the Chimaera engine options have been reduced to only the 450 version and orders for new cars will be by special agreement only. It is likely that 2002 will herald the end of Chimaera production in the UK. Production is still continuing at a joint venture in Malaysia and these cars could possibly be exported back to the UK. However, demand for new Chimaeras in the UK is

waning and considering the large numbers that are on the second hand market, it is not clear how viable this would be in the UK.

## Factory options

The number of factory options on all the Griffiths and Chimaeras are generally limited to the variations seen in previous model ranges, such as the S series. This is partly due to the high specifications that the cars had as standard. The main changes have been in the engine and between the models them-

	Griffith	Chimaera	Griffith 500
4 litre engine	92-93	93-2001	-
4.3 litre engine	92-93	93-94	-
4.0 HC litre engine	-	94-96	-
4.5 litre engine	-	96 onwards	-
5 litre engine	-	96-2002	Standard
4.3 BV litre engine (ii)	92-93	Optional	-
4.5 BV litre engine (ii)	92-93	Optional	-
Leather steering wheel	Standard	Standard	Standard
Wooden steering wheel	Optional	Optional	Optional
Air conditioning	-	Optional	Optional
Power assisted steering	-	Optional	Optional
Heated seats	-	Optional	Optional
Half hide interior	Standard	Standard	Standard
Full hide interior	Optional	Optional	Optional
Roll bar	-	Optional from 1996	Optional from 1996
Limited slip differential	Standard	Standard	Standard
Hydratrak differential	-	Optional from 1997	Optional from 1997
Alloy wheels (iii)	Standard	Standard	Standard
Second cold air blower (iv)	-	-	95-97
Colour matched dials	-	Optional	Optional
Silver rimmed dials	-	From about 1994	From about 1994
Cerbera mirror door switch	-	From late 1997	-
Spun aluminium dashboard	Optional	Optional	Optional
Alarm	Standard	Standard	Standard
Electric mirrors	Standard	Standard	Standard
Electric windows	Standard	Standard	Standard
Catalytic converter	-	Standard	Standard

### Notes:

- i. The 4.0 litre engine was often slightly upgraded by gas flowing the cylinder head to produce an extra 10 horsepower. This modification has led to the engine being incorrectly described as a 4.0 HC specification.
- ii. The big valve conversion has been carried out on some Griffiths and Chimaeras after they have left the factory.
- iii. Although all the cars came with alloy wheels, several different styles have been used over the years.
- iv. This has been retrofitted to some early Griffiths.

selves. The table gives the *approximate* differences between and options on the various models. It cannot be an exhaustive list because the cars are built to customers' specific orders and thus changes could and have been made. Add to this the opportunity to upgrade/change specifications after the car has been delivered — there are about twice the number of big valve engined cars now compared to the number that the factory produced due to TVR Power upgrading existing cars for example — and it becomes an impossible task!

## Production figures

It is difficult to determine the actual production figures but I have made an estimate of them based on published figures for 1992 and most of 1993 and by estimating using the total production build and the ratio of Griffiths, Chimaeras and Cerberas. As a result, these figures are approximate and do not give any indication of how many of each of the various engine and build options were made. Current production is being increased through the addition of a night shift in certain departments. Production

for 1998 is estimated to be around 2,000 cars in total. These figures do not include any of the Chimaeras built in TVR's joint venture in Malaysia. They do give an approximate idea of the total number of cars available and the ratio between Chimaera and Griffith 500 production is about 3 to 1. The rarest cars are probably the big valve 4.3 and 4.5 litre early Griffiths, although the number of cars that exist today is higher than the number originally built by the factory due to TVR Power's willingness to convert and upgrade engines! The Chimaera is the most popular car by far, with the Griffith 500 figures being surprisingly low. Its uncompromising reputation and the existence of the 5 litre option for the Chimaera may be one reason why.

## Will it fit my garage?

This is a frequently asked question, especially when many car dimensions are often ambiguous as to whether they include the wing mirrors, and so on. The official TVR figures are shown. They are accurate and include the wing mirrors.

	1992	1993	1994	1995	1996	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	Total
<i>Griffith 4.x</i>	602	114 <sup>1</sup>	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	716
<i>Chimaera</i>	—	601 <sup>2</sup>	675 <sup>4</sup>	750 <sup>5</sup>	850 <sup>6</sup>	900 <sup>7</sup>	900 <sup>8</sup>	500 <sup>8</sup>	300 <sup>8</sup>	200 <sup>8</sup>	5,676
<i>Griffith 500</i>	—	129 <sup>3</sup>	225 <sup>4</sup>	250 <sup>5</sup>	275 <sup>6</sup>	300 <sup>7</sup>	200 <sup>8</sup>	150 <sup>8</sup>	100 <sup>8</sup>	100 <sup>8</sup>	1,729

### Notes:

- <sup>1</sup> 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.
- <sup>2</sup> This figure is based on 401 cars (Sept. 93) plus an estimated 200 cars for the last 4 months production.
- <sup>3</sup> This is based on 49 cars (Sept. 93) and an estimated 80 for the rest of the year.
- <sup>4</sup> This is based on a total production of 900 cars with a 3:1 split in favour of the Chimaera.
- <sup>5</sup> This is based on a total production of 1000 cars with a 3:1 split in favour of the Chimaera.
- <sup>6</sup> This is an average derived from the 1995 and 1997 figures.
- <sup>7</sup> This is based on a total production of 18 Chimaeras and 6 Griffith 500s a week for a 50 week production period.
- <sup>8</sup> Estimates based on production figures from the other cars.

### Griffith and Chimaera production figures.

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

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

I measured my Griffith 500 and found that it was 1,870 mm wide — but this figure does depend on how the mirrors are set. So the official figures are definitely a 'worst case', which is reassuring. A more pressing problem is how to get out of the car once it is in the garage. At a minimum, this requires at least another 33 cm on the driver's side to get the door open wide enough to get out, and even that can be

pushing it! This also assumes that the roof is off, so you can stretch up and out. I normally swing the door open wide (this requires about 70 cm), swing my legs over the sill and then get out. It is well worth putting a piece of carpet on the garage wall so that the door edges have something soft to touch instead of brickwork...

Engine size	Griffith 4.3	Griffith 4.3	Griffith 500	Griffith 500
Power	4280 cc V8	4280 cc V8	4997 cc V8	4997 cc V8
Source	280 bhp	280 bhp	340 bhp	340 bhp
Date	Performance Car	Autocar	Autocar	Performance Car
Maximum speed (mph)	June 1992	June 1992	Oct. 1993	Nov. 1993
Acceleration (s)	155	161	161	151
0-30 mph	2.2	2.1	1.9	2.1
0-40 mph	2.9	2.7	2.6	2.9
0-50 mph	3.8	3.7	3.4	3.8
0-60 mph	4.8	4.7	4.2	4.8
0-70 mph	6.1	6.0	5.5	6.2
0-80 mph	7.5	7.5	6.8	7.7
0-90 mph	9.2	9.1	8.3	9.2
0-100 mph	11.2	11.1	10.2	11.2
0-110 mph	13.5	13.6	12.4	13.5
0-120 mph	16.5	16.4	14.8	16.5
0-130 mph	20.0	-	18.5	21.0
Standing 1/4-mile (s)	13.3	13.2	12.8	13.2
Top gear acceleration(s)				
10-30 mph	-	-	-	-
20-40 mph	-	6.7	6.1	-
30-50 mph	6.1	6.3	5.7	4.9
40-60 mph	6.0	6.3	5.4	4.7
50-70 mph	5.8	6.4	5.4	4.6
60-80 mph	6.2	6.4	5.5	4.8
70-90 mph	6.3	6.4	5.8	5.2
80-100 mph	6.3	6.1	6.1	5.4
90-110 mph	6.8	7.1	6.4	5.7
100-120 mph	7.6	7.8	6.9	6.5
110-130 mph	-	-	7.8	7.7
Engine size	Chimaera 4.0	Chimaera 4.0	Chimaera 4.0	Chimaera 5.0
Power	3,950 cc V8	3,950 cc V8	3,950 cc V8	4997 cc V8
Source	240 bhp	240 bhp	240 bhp	320 bhp
Date	Performance Car	Performance Car	Fast Lane	Top Gear
Maximum speed (mph)	June 1992	May 1993	May 1993	March 1998
Acceleration (s)	155	152	152.6	167
0-30 mph	2.2	2.0	1.9	2.0
0-40 mph	2.9	3.1	2.7	3.0
0-50 mph	3.8	4.1	3.7	4.0
0-60 mph	4.8	5.4	4.7	5.2
0-70 mph	6.1	7.3	6.2	7.1
0-80 mph	7.5	9.1	7.8	8.6
0-90 mph	9.2	11.3	9.6	10.6
0-100 mph	11.2	14.6	12.1	13.4
0-110 mph	13.5	18.0	14.8	16.3
0-120 mph	16.5	22.2	18.1	21.0
0-130 mph	20.0	-	23.1	28.0
Standing 1/4-mile (s)	13.3	14.1	-	14.0
Top gear acceleration(s)				
10-30 mph	-	-	-	-
20-40 mph	-	-	-	-
30-50 mph	6.1	6.4	6.2	-
40-60 mph	6.0	6.2	5.9	-
50-70 mph	5.8	6.5	5.9	-
60-80 mph	6.2	6.7	6.0	-
70-90 mph	6.3	6.9	7.3	-
80-100 mph	6.3	7.8	6.7	-
90-110 mph	6.8	8.9	7.1	-
100-120 mph	7.6	10.6	8.0	-

*The Griffith and Chimaera performance figures. (Various sources)*

## Performance figures

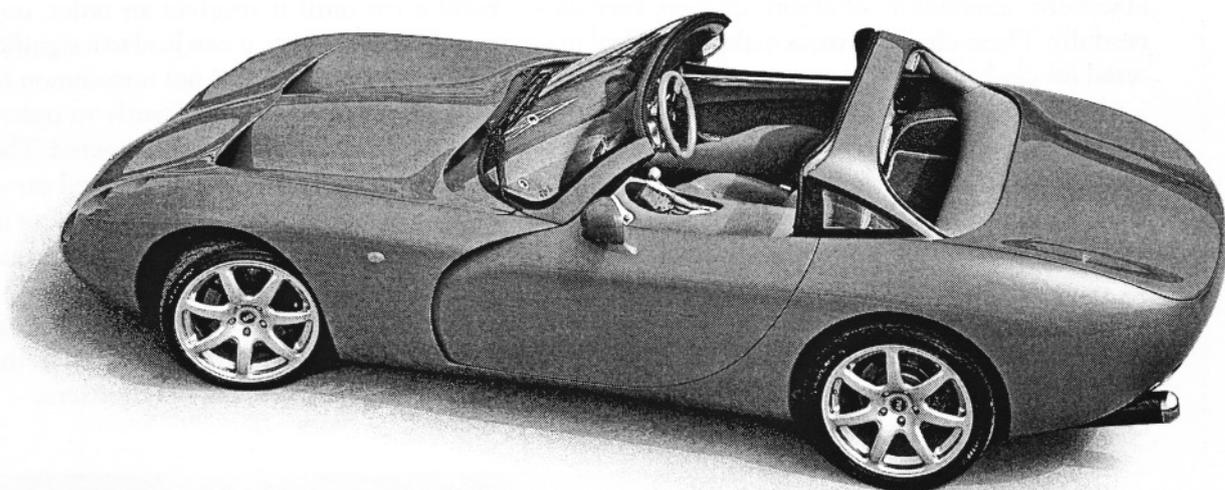
The table gives the performance figures for some of the Griffiths and Chimaeras that have appeared over the years. It is interesting to note that most of the tests use the biggest engine options available and that there are some differences in the acceleration times. This can be put down to slightly different driving skills or styles or even the type of road surface.

## The end of an era?

The Griffith and Chimaera made TVR's reputation in the 1990s for fast, uncompromising sports cars. It is interesting to note that towards the end of the decade nearly all major manufacturers had started to produce roadsters or at least convertibles. Whether they can really be classed in the same breath as a Griffith or Chimaera is another matter but it has

woken up the demand for sports cars in a market that was becoming increasingly mundane and bland.

Is this additional competition going to create problems for TVR? It doesn't seem so as its new cars are just as outrageous as the Griffith and Chimaera were 10 years ago. One way of looking at it is that there will be a lot of drivers who will need to graduate to a 'proper' sports car at some point where rear wheel drive, lots of power and a soundtrack to die for are the key requirements. This is exactly where TVR come into their own. Many have tried to muscle into this area — Rover even used a TVR 350i in the late 1980s to create a new Austin Healey and Jensen have just faded away from the scene — but TVR just go on relentlessly doing what they want to do and not what a focus group advises. As a result we get the opportunity to enjoy sports cars as they should be. Loud... Powerful... Rear wheel drive... Long may it continue!



The successors to the Griffith and Chimaera? The Tuscon (top) and Tamora. (TVR Engineering)