

TIPS WHEN BUYING A STAG

Always a superb car, let down by one or two serious faults, the Triumph Stag has by now undergone the sort of development work by private individuals that should have been done to start with and contrary to popular belief, you can now buy and run one on an economical basis.

Give a dog a bad name and it sticks (or something similar) is an old saying, which unfortunately applies to the Stag. It earned itself quite a reputation for engine problems, to such an extent that owners were replacing them with Rover V8 and Ford V6 motors to keep them on the road, then of course, they became pleasingly reliable cars.

Typical of so many Triumph cars, generally it was a well designed, very practical, superb looking car, with just that little bit of extra luxury. The availability of both soft and hard-top was something else as well, making the car even more widely appealing.

But, pity about the engine. Mainly it suffered from over-heating and all its various ramifications, a chronic problem. However, engineers found cures as time went by, so today the Stag can be as reliable as any other, but too late for its own good. It could have had the luxury sports-car market at its feet. It failed, which is all great news to today's enthusiasts, who can pick up a Stag from under \$10,000 for a fairly grotty one to around \$40,000 for a concours condition one and they know that either it will no longer have the problems of yesteryear, but even if it does, it can be satisfactorily cured.

What To Look For:

Rust:

Depending on its age and mileage, if you're thinking of buying a Stag, look for rust. The only place it rusts on the rear is on the wheel-arch itself, but the main bit is where the sill joins the rear wing, just in front of the rear wheel and also under the front valance. If it is caught in time, it is no bother. If it is too far gone, you have a problem. If it looks OK, try to make sure there isn't half a ton of filler underneath it!

Now to that engine:

Get it started, it should be nice and quiet and there shouldn't be any rattles. If there are, there are problems! You must then take it out on test. After 10 or 15 kms, check the water temperature, which should ideally read just below half way. If it's above that, suspect an overheating problem. If it is reading substantially lower, then possibly someone may have taken out the thermostat to hide an overheating problem. It is very important to know whether it does overheat. Secondly if it has got an oil pressure gauge fitted, at tick-over it should read 20 to 25lbs and at 3,000 RPM, with a hot engine it should be 40 to 50lbs.

What about drive shafts? (Rear axle half shafts)

These are normally very good and rarely give problems. Again, if you are only looking at it in the forecourt you may not see the problems, but if you can, it is worth getting it up on a ramp and checking the drive-shaft UJs. On Mk2 saloon cars you can change the UJs, but on the Stag you can't as they are of the staked type. Check for loose rear wheel bearings.

Is there any way you can tell that?

Pull the gaiter back and you can see whether the UJ is peened over or has circlips. If it is circlips the problem lessens. Mk2 saloon axles fit and are of the replaceable type.

What about things like prop shafts?

Prop shafts are not a problem. It is one-piece with a UJ at each end which are replaceable on all of the cars. So no real problems here.

Silencers:

A stainless steel system is well worth the money, especially if you plan to keep the car for a long time.

Are gearbox or clutch troublesome?

The automatic gearbox is a Borg Warner 35, which is the same as used in lots of other cars. So that is as reliable or unreliable as in any other vehicle. The manual-with-overdrive box on the early cars (pre '73) did give overdrive problems, but generally speaking, they are not too bad. On Mark II cars ('73 onwards) overdrives are very good and virtually trouble free.

What is the problem with the pre '73 one?

Slipping, and just generally not going into gear – not going into overdrive – things like that. The box and overdrive unit is the same as is used in the 2000/2.5 Triumph, TR6 and Dolomite Sprint. So it is strong, tried and tested box and it very rarely gives problems.

The clutch mechanism can give trouble but there is a modification for that which cures all the problems. It is hydraulic, but the problem is that you get a ratchety clutch. You put your foot down on the clutch with the engine running and it is very jerky going down or coming up, a problem that a lot of them had, which was cured when they brought out the modified release-bearing carrier.

What about areas on the suspension – such as wheel bearings?

Most of the other bits and pieces on the Stag are not difficult to repair. Things like wheel bearings that go wrong are not really a problem. Things that can be expensive are like if the steering rack is leaking, which means a replacement steering rack.

Are they all power steering?

Yes, if it is leaking, you have got to have it repaired. Repair kits usually don't work because the rack has scores in it and such like, so it works for half an hour and goes again.

Electrics:

There are no real problems with the electrics, all straightforward. The car has a volt meter which should read about 13 ½ or 14 volts.

What about the tops?

If the car hasn't got its soft top up, take the hard top off and look at the soft top. Make sure that it does go up and down. If it does but it needs a new covering, reckon on about \$3,000

to have it of the original material, which is a type of mohair. You can get it in a cheaper material, but I think it is false economy, as some just fall apart.

What about the frame?

If the framework for the soft-top has gone, it could be nearly \$600 to recondition the frame, a lot of money, so well worth checking! Finally, make sure you store it all away properly and make sure that it does go up and down easily. When putting the soft-top up or down, you should not have to force anything anywhere, it should operate easily.