

So what is putting you off servicing your RV8-engined TVR? One reason might be that compared to cars of similar performance, such as Porsche, costs for a Griffith are an absolute bargain. Of course, the fact that some mechanics seem to have a cavalier attitude to life and limb, not to mention that vacant stare that might come from inhaling various fumes, must deter the more prudent. However, for those wavering, the service schedule could well be the clincher.

Service

Some aspects of servicing are beyond the home mechanic, or at least those without some level of experience, although there is much that can be completed by the tyro. Doing it yourself will not save you much money initially, but experience soon builds, as does confidence, and you will steadily move onto more complex jobs.

Do not be put off by the fact that a full service takes a mechanic or two all day. Griffs and Chims have a service interval of 12 months or 6,000 miles, whichever comes sooner. In practice this means that for most it is an annual event. However, the work can be split into various 'blocks', each taking a couple of hours or so and spread over the whole year.

Remember, if you feel a specific task is beyond your capabilities you can always put it into a TVR specialist just to have that one completed. Consider changing the oil, one of the basic servicing jobs. There are 11 items in the Griffith schedule under Engine.

Engine 1. Check for oil leaks. 2. Renew engine oil filter. 3. Renew engine oil. 4. Check and adjust all driving belts. 6. Check and adjust operation of washers and top reservoirs. 7. Check and top up cooling system. 8. Check and adjust exhaust Co level and idle speed. 9. Check hoses/pipes for blockage, security and condition. 10. Lubricate accelerator control and linkage. 11. Change/flush out cooling system - renew antifreeze. (Biannual)

It is likely that you will not have sufficient specialist tools for numbers 8 and 11, but all the rest are easily completed by the competent. Further, as you already have the bonnet open you could have a go at the Ignition tasks.

Ignition 1. Alternate replacing and cleaning park plugs each year. 2. Check/adjust timing using electronic timer. 4. Check ignition wiring (including fuel pump) for security, chaffing and deterioration.

Whilst the beginner might be wary of number 2, ignition timing, all necessary tools are available at a reasonable price. Once you get the hang of things, you will think the expenditure well worth it.

You can set your own standards. Many people replace spark plugs annually rather than cleaning and readjusting them every other year. I have tended to do this on four cylinder cars but the price of eight could well put me off.

I was told that you should replace the oil and filter on higher mileage cars more frequently than scheduled due to the resultant increases in clearances, meaning that more combustion pollutants will find their way into the oil. The choice is yours.

Some items in the list are deceptive. Take Brakes for instance.

You are told to check visually hydraulic pipes and unions for cracks, chaffing, leaks and corrosion and inspect brake pads for wear, discs for condition, and adjust as necessary.

This is not a case of just sticking your head under the wheel arch and noting anything that looks a bit floppy. What you will have to do is to remove the wheel and callipers to ensure that you miss nothing. Many dealers will roughen the disc pads as well, something which should only be done when wearing a decent quality mask (if you have cheap lungs, buy a cheap mask). Modern pad materials are no longer allowed to contain asbestos but many people in the know are wary of any such dust. Therefore it is advisable to wear overalls so that they can be dumped in a bucket of hot water after use rather than run the risk of having your wife, partner or, indeed, you being contaminated when putting clothes into the washing machine.

There is an initial cost, although one-off, of tools. These will be covered in a later edition of Sprint but it should be noted that you should always go for the best you can afford. If you look after a decent quality socket set, it will last you forever. I still use the set I bought in 1972 although I have added to it over the years. It seems strange that many people will try to use a belt to remove an oil filter when one that would be perfect for your specific car can cost less than £20. Used once a year or so it will last you a lifetime.

You will make mistakes. Everyone does, even the professionals but they are under time pressures that the home mechanic should avoid at all costs. It can be instructive and entertaining to read www.tvrgit.com.

Andrew, the author is obviously a resourceful and knowledgeable chap who has, through one or two simple errors, squandered a lot of the money he has saved. Do not laugh at his expense as you will do something similar, sooner or later. And probably sooner.

I've serviced my own cars since 1964. With four children to support on the wages paid to police in the old days, it was either that or walk. My father, trained by Rolls Royce, taught me the basic principles but this has not stopped me making the odd mistake. I once tried to remove the propshaft on a Morris Minor when the car was up on four old-style metal milk crates. I had not reckoned on the degree of leverage I could exert on a bolt securing the propshaft flange to the differential and I managed to move the car forward. The rear springs caught on the edge of the crates but even so my nose still carries a little scar from the coming together. Despite the cachet of being one of the few people to be run over by their own car when it was stationary, I still view the whole incident with a degree of embarrassment.

Some advice:

Always wear protective gloves when working on a car. Many of the chemicals in oil and petrol are highly toxic and you don't really want such stuff seeping into your skin. I use clear plastic ones rather than latex as I've had some disappointing results from the latter. I've mentioned my four kids.

Select only the tools required for the specific job and place them in a tray. Replace them in the tray every time after using them. Once you've finished, check all the tools have been returned.

Despite never having heard the noise before, when a 1 5/16" socket spun off the pulley and through the radiator of my MGB, I recognised it at once. If possible, work on any item away from the car. Place any parts dismantled in a container. Little gubbins have a life of their own and can move and hide once they are not being looked at.

When you've finished the job, clean all the tools you have used and examine for damage. Spray all metal ones with WD40 or similar and then wipe off the excess. Most people will consider you a nerd, but you'll be a nerd without rusty tools.

Do not, ever, lend your tools to someone, no matter how good a friend they are. It is always a shame to lose a friend.

Stained records

Since leaving a job where there was easy access to photocopiers I have had to deal with the problem of getting grease and oil over the pages of workshop manuals. My solution has been to take apart Steve Heath's excellent The Griffith and Chimaera and put the individual pages into plastic envelopes. This means that stains can be wiped off without problem. Further, additional pages can be added as necessary.

It is essential to keep a record of everything you do to the car. There is no doubt that a full service history adds value to a car, although condition will always be paramount, and details of when and what has been done to your car, even if it is by you, will reassure a potential purchaser. However, the main benefit is that it can reassure an owner as well.