

If the TVR is the bruiser and the MG RV8 the cruiser, then the Lotus Elise is the car for the driving purist

CONFUSED? YOUR USED-CAR QUESTIONS ANSWERED BY JASON DAWE

Q With a budget of £12,000 what British-built, two-seat sports car could I buy that would be perfect for weekend drives?
AR, Kent

A Your shortlist should include a TVR Griffith, which is proving anything but mellow in its old age. It has a bellowing engine with glorious exhaust notes and packs plenty of muscle — to some, it is everything a sports car should be. Despite production ending in 2002 there is a healthy

network of specialists able to maintain TVR models — and it will probably need it. With a budget of £12,000, you would be buying one of the earliest models from 1991 or 1992, with a 4-litre V8 engine.

Concentrate on the condition (notably, signs of rust on the space-frame chassis) and history of each car, rather than its age and specification.

For rarity, try the MG RV8: only about 2,000 were built between 1993 and 1995. Fitted with a 3.9-litre V8 unit producing 190bhp, the car can

accelerate from 0-60mph in less than six seconds, but boasts more creature comforts than a Griffith and is a little more restrained to drive. As with the TVR, there is a good MG support network, which means that maintenance isn't a problem and parts are plentiful. Prices start at about £10,000 and rise to as much as £22,000 for a good example.

If the TVR is the bruiser and the MG is the cruiser, then the Lotus Elise is the car for the driving purist. With a bonded aluminium chassis it is light

and delivers a drive that is every bit as thrilling as the TVR and MG, despite having only half as many cylinders under its bonnet. In fact, the 1.8-litre Rover engine has never felt so sprightly.

There is no such thing as a slow Elise but some are faster than others. With your budget seek out a 111S model of 2002 vintage: with 156bhp it can hit 60mph from standstill in just 5.1 seconds yet will return up to 40mpg if driven gently — double the economy of the TVR and MG.



TVR Griffith

For Handsome styling; intoxicating exhaust note; brutal performance
Against Cars vary widely in quality; heavy on fuel and tyres



MG RV8

For Retro styling and cabin design make you feel terribly British
Against Crude suspension means it can feel a bit flat-footed on a winding road



Lotus Elise

For Impressive blend of performance and handling; understated styling; modest running costs
Against Cabin is spartan

A "used car question answered" feature on the **Car Clinic – your motoring problems solved** page of the Sunday Times issue on 29th September 2013