

RESTORATION PREPARATION

So you have a car in mind that you'd like to transform from wreck to show winner over winter – what are the important things to bear in mind? Paul Guinness offers his tips



Whether or not you've tackled a full-scale restoration before, it's easy to get carried away with the romance of it all. Cosy winter evenings spent tinkering with a few spanners, as a rusting hulk of classic metal is gradually transformed into a gleaming show winner, all in the comfort of a centrally heated garage and surrounded by the finest tools and all the spare parts you could wish for.

Sadly, of course, life isn't like that. You're far more likely to spend your evenings flat on your back on a freezing concrete garage floor, rain dripping through the roof, your fingers numb, your tool kit sadly inadequate, with your language foul enough to shock a shipbuilder,

as you curse the day you ever bought the box of bits that sits before you (which was laughably described in the advert as an 'unfinished project').

The completion of any restoration inevitably makes it all worthwhile. What's more, no matter what pain you go through during the process, you'll probably go and do it all again a couple of years down the line.

PICKING A PROJECT

Whether you're a restoration virgin or an old hand at rebuilds it's vital that you choose a project that's within your capabilities. Most of us can't afford cheque book restorations (even if we wanted to), so we do much of the work ourselves. But we all have our limitations.

Unless you're experienced with a MIG welder, should you really buy a Minor or 2CV that's in need of major bodywork renovation? And if you don't know your torque wrench from your junior hacksaw, are you simply looking at the idea of a restoration through rose-tinted glasses?

The term 'restoration project' can be applied to vehicles in wildly differing states of disrepair – from an MoT failure that requires a couple of sills, a respray and a few mechanical jobs to be made virtually perfect, to a box of bits that claims to be an E-type (but in reality looks more like the unwanted leftovers from a recent Autojumble). In the case of any vehicle that's not a 'fully assembled' when you inspect it, you need to ascertain that the vast majority of components are actually there; even if they're not in good order, they'll be invaluable when it comes to sourcing spares or having pattern parts made.

And while we're on the subject, it's essential that you make sure you can afford to see the project through before you buy the car. A £500 'box of bits' may seem like a bargain – but if it's going to cost you 20 times as much to get the thing back on the road

(at which point it's probably worth a lot less than you've spent) is it really worth it? Of course, a car with sentimental value that's been in the family for years is arguably a different proposition.

When budgeting, don't underestimate the cost of anything. Whatever you reckon it will set you back

(whether it's having a front wing fitted or carrying out a brake and steering rebuild) it's bound to cost more; one job inevitably leads to another, extra work is found to be required, and suddenly you've got bills to pay that are twice as much as you anticipated. There's no finer way of ending up either broke or in the divorce courts, as plenty of experienced restorers will confirm.

The great thing about today's classic scene is that there's such a vast array of very different potential restoration projects out there. So whether you're tempted by the simplicity of a Minor, the practicality of a Land Rover, the style of a Rover P6 or the luxury an XJ, there's bound to be something requiring work that's ideal for your requirements. Just don't jump at the first example you see; if it seems too good to be true, then it probably is.

GETTING STARTED

Once you've actually taken the plunge and you've got your newly acquired project car back home... well, what do you do now? Some detailed assessment and a step-by-step strip-down seems the logical answer, but even then there are pitfalls for the unwary.



FIVE MINUTES WITH... JUSTIN LAZIC – MANAGING DIRECTOR & AUCTIONEER AT CLASSICS CENTRAL

There's just over a month to go until Classics Central returns to the Bedford Autodrome for its next sale on Sunday, October 30. We caught up with man in charge Justin Lazic to discuss some of the upcoming lots, plus his views on projects – those awaiting repair and those that've been freshly restored.



MANAGING DIRECTOR & AUCTIONEER AT CLASSICS CENTRAL

Chris Hope: "So what can we expect from next month's sale? I understand you're expecting to offer around 80 cars this time out?"

Justin Lazic: "Top of the list has to be the 1965 Mercedes-Benz W113 230SL 'Pagoda' in right-hand drive, with power steering and automatic transmission, and just two former keepers, but the 23,000-mile Moonstone Blue 1989 Ford Sierra Sapphire Cosworth can't be far behind it. There's also the quintessential British classic touring saloon – a 1964 Jaguar S-type 3.8-litre with overdrive and stunning leather throughout, plus (a personal favourite of mine) a 1984 Lancia Gamma Coupé; you've got to see it, it's quite possibly the best right-hand drive example currently for sale anywhere in the world."

CH: "And what about those who don't perhaps have a lot to spend?"

JL: "The bargains of the sale so far are a pair of W124 Mercedes-Benz saloons; both 200E models, one in red and one in white, and each have estimates of just £1250 – maximum car for your money!"

CH: "This particular feature we're working on relates to projects – what for you is the appeal of project cars?"

JL: "Barn-finds are sexy. Seriously, there's nothing sexier than a dusty E-type – it's like finding a perfectly preserved Audrey Hepburn in your loft. Of course you're going to be inspired! These cars have an aura of greatness – and it's that which you're paying for."

CH: "And what about the advantages of buying a recently restored classic?"

JL: "Restored cars have their own 'turn-key' appeal; they allow people to turn instant attraction into instant fulfilment – for some the classic car dream doesn't involve oily and greasy fingers, and restored cars offer them immediate enjoyment."



CH: "Tell us a little bit about yourself Justin, after all you'll soon be writing for *Classic Car Buyer* as one of its contributors."

JL: "I'm a life-long car enthusiast. I launched Classics Central in 2015 as a dedicated club member because I wanted to offer an excellent service. The CC team is committed to working on behalf of members of owners' clubs – we're just a phone call away and are happy to walk people through the process. The cars I've owned include a 1968 Chrysler Imperial Crown Coupé (still going strong), a 1967 Jaguar 420, and the fastest four-door production car in the world when new – a 1979 Mercedes-Benz 450SEL 6.9, which readers will get to find out a lot more about soon!"