

Buying Guide



Just two seats
in the back on the
Mk III. Is and IIs have
a clamshell-shaped
structure – costly
to retrim.

VINYL ROOF

Many Interceptors
have a vinyl roof. Look for
bubbling underneath it, as
rust can form in the roof
panel, and repairing
such damage is
costly.

BODYWORK

Rust is common,
so check everywhere.
The factory used lots of
lead loading and very
little corrosion
prevention.

1966-1976

Jensen Interceptor

The barnstorming British GT that is rocketing in price

It's a simple formula; combine Italian style and American muscle with hand-built British quality and you can't fail. At least, that's what Jensen hoped when it launched the Interceptor in 1966. The car would go on to notch up nearly 7000 sales in a decade, and there have been a few encores since the company stopped trading in 1976. One of the most distinctive grand tourers created, the Interceptor was styled by Touring and originally assembled (badly) by Vignale. After a year, production was moved to Jensen's West Bromwich factory after 50 or so cars had been built in Italy.

Claimed by many marque aficionados to offer the build, charisma, performance and luxury of contemporary Aston Martins, the Jensen Interceptor is far more affordable. However, after many years of being seriously undervalued, word is spreading and the stylish Brit's talents are starting to be recognised. Values are rising accordingly, and, while they'll never reach the giddy heights of contemporary Astons, if you don't buy soon, you may find yourself priced out of the market.

Bodywork

Rot is an Interceptor weakness and you should assume that any potential buy has some – and fixing it will probably cost a bundle. The whole bottom six inches of an Interceptor is susceptible to rot, which means the sills, floorpans, front and rear valances, along with the door bottoms and lower wings. The lower section of the front bulkhead can also dissolve, as can the jacking points, seatbelt mounts and top

chassis rails. Because there are stainless steel sill trims fitted, it's easy to hide some of the rot, and with the sills being structural, this is one area that you don't want to have packed with filler.

Corrosion is common around the base of the rear screen and tailgate hinges, with the glass having to be removed for repairs. The front screen is also leak-prone, while the fuel filler flap rusts, along with the bumpers – which are costly to replace.



The cockpits are similar in the Mk II and III (above), but Interceptor IIs are more traditional, with plenty of wood.

WORDS RICHARD DREDGE PHOTOS JOHN COLLEY



TAILGATE

That chrome trim can hide corrosion in the tailgate. Proper repairs may mean removing the tailgate, and refitting it is awkward.

STARTER MOTOR

High under-bonnet temperatures can kill the original starter motors, which is why it's worth investing in a modern high-torque unit. Expect to pay £200 for one, plus fitting.

THE OWNER

Nine years ago, Phil Hayes bought the Interceptor in the pictures. He comments: 'I had the budget to buy a mint, restored car, or something completely original for much less. I chose the latter, taking a year to track down a barn-stored SP, which I then recommissioned over the next year. I've done virtually all of the work myself, but the car is largely original; I prefer to keep the car as close to factory specification as possible.'



Use a magnet to check for filler throughout the car; all panels are made of steel as there's no aluminium in an Interceptor's construction, but there is plenty of lead loading. Also look at the shut lines and panel fit very closely; these cars were built by hand to a very high standard, so everything should fit superbly.

Engines

All Interceptors came with a Chrysler-built V8, displacing either 6.3 or 7.2 litres; the Series IV of 1983, of which just 14 were built, had a 5.9-litre unit. While the free-revving 6.3-litre is the sweetest, the 7.2-litre unit is massively torquey.

These low-tech V8s just keep going with little more than an oil and filter change; hydraulic tappets mean you don't even have to keep on top of valve clearances. A huge mileage or poor maintenance will lead to the unit wearing out, though, as will lots of short journeys; rebuilding a tired

Why you want one

The Interceptor is one of the most effortless cruisers out there, the V8 soundtrack providing the perfect accompaniment on a long journey.

It doesn't skimp on practicality. A true grand tourer, the Jensen's boot offers plenty of luggage capacity while the cabin will house four people in comfort.

With values of rival sportscars and grand tourers having increased rapidly in recent years, the



Interceptor has been left behind. While we'd never advocate buying a classic because of the investment potential,

buying a sound example means high fuel bills are likely to be covered by rises in value in the next few years. Which means

this V8 grand tourer could genuinely provide cost-free classic motoring – as long as you do your homework.

engine costs around £2000 in parts and another £3000 for the labour. Many Interceptors rack up just a few miles each year, so listen for rumbling as you start the engine and check for an oily film over the V8 along with a smoky exhaust once everything has warmed up. Also check the oil pressure; there should be 25psi showing

at idle, and at least 60psi when cruising. If the exhaust is smoking, but none of the other symptoms are evident, it's more likely one of the exhaust valves has burned out; a top-end rebuild with a conversion to unleaded will cost about £2500. It's not unusual for the gasket between the manifolds and cylinder head to fail.



Replacement copper gaskets are available for £67 per pair, but the manifold may need to be skimmed flat as the extreme under-bonnet temperatures can lead to warping. If so, a specialist can charge up to £800 to do the lot, as the work takes around six hours per manifold.

What kills some Interceptor V8s is overheating; the electric fans can fail to come on while the radiator gets silted up. Get the engine up

THE SPECIALIST

Bob Cherry has been looking after Jensens since the early 1970s; now he works for Cropredy Bridge, which specialises in the marque, with a focus on the Interceptor. Says Bob: 'The Interceptor is the equal of contemporary Aston Martins, but it's now so much more affordable. At Cropredy Bridge we can maintain, service, restore and upgrade the Interceptor. We also offer an inspection and recommissioning service; there's not much we can't do.'



to temperature and see if the fans cut in; also check for signs of a blown head gasket, although such failures are rare. The head and block are made of cast iron, and warping of the former is possible.

If the fans fail to cut in, you can expect to pay £270 for upgraded units (plus seven hours' professional labour), while fixing a blown head gasket will cost around £1800. A new radiator costs £540; a specialist will charge around £250 to fit it.

Many Interceptors have had their original Carter carburettors replaced by Holleys. They're tricky to keep in tune though, which is why an Edelbrock carb is now the most popular swap; you'll pay £540 for one. Fuel injection brings 20mpg tantalisingly close; the powerful SP (Six Pack originally, because of its three twin-barrel Holley carbs), has the reputation of being thirsty, as well as tricky to keep in tune.

Transmissions

Simple and strong, the Interceptor's transmission rarely gives problems. Only the earliest cars came with the option of a manual gearbox, and just 24 were built; all



V8s are tough and relatively cheap to rebuild.

others have a Chrysler Torqueflite 727 three-speed auto. Fluid leaks from the Torqueflite can lead to it running dry, so make sure the fluid hasn't been in there for decades (you're looking for pink; if it's creamy or black, expect trouble). A complete overhaul, including a new torque converter, should have it sorted for £1000.

Steering & suspension

All Interceptors have power steering. Problems are unlikely, but check for leaks. If a new rack is needed, you'll pay £360 for one. Until 1969, the suspension was taken from the Austin Sheerline, so there are

Tech Specs

Model	Interceptor I	Interceptor FF Mk I	Interceptor II	Interceptor III 7.2	Interceptor SP
Engine	6276cc/V8/OHV	6276cc/V8/OHV	6276cc/V8/OHV	7212cc/V8/OHV	7212cc/V8/OHV
Power	325bhp@4600rpm	325bhp@4600rpm	330bhp@4600rpm	330bhp@4400rpm	385bhp@4700rpm
Torque	425lb ft@2800rpm	425lb ft@2800rpm	425lb ft@2800rpm	480lb ft@2800rpm	490lb ft@3200rpm
Gearbox	3-sp auto/4-sp man	3-speed auto	3-speed auto	3-speed auto	3-speed auto
Top Speed	133mph	130mph	137mph	133mph	143mph
0-60mph	7.3sec	8.4sec	6.4sec	7.6sec	6.9sec
Economy	13mpg	14mpg	12mpg	13mpg	11mpg
Length	15ft 8in (4.78m)	15ft 11in (4.85m)	15ft 8in (4.78m)	15ft 8in (4.78m)	15ft 8in (4.78m)
Width	5ft 10in (1.78m)	5ft 10in (1.78m)	5ft 10in (1.78m)	5ft 10in (1.78m)	5ft 10in (1.78m)
Height	4ft 5in (1.35m)	4ft 5in (1.35m)	4ft 5in (1.35m)	4ft 5in (1.35m)	4ft 5in (1.35m)
Weight	3697lb (1678kg)	3981lb (1807kg)	3695lb (1677kg)	4020lb (1825kg)	3934lb (1786kg)

Key dates 1966: Launch. 1967: Production moves to West Bromwich. 1969: Auto-only II gets PAS, optional air-con, new dash and seats. 1971: Interceptor III has revised interior and engine. SP (Six Pack) replaces FF. Air-con standard from August, LHD cars get 7.2-litre engine. 1972: RHD cars get 7.2-litre engine. 1973: Final SP built, Interceptor III S4 has trim changes. 1974: Convertible. 1976: Jensen ceases trading. 1983: Series IV; 14 are made up to 1993.

Spot the Grot What to look for and where to look for it



Original leather trim is hardy; many retrimms use softer leather which goes baggy quickly.



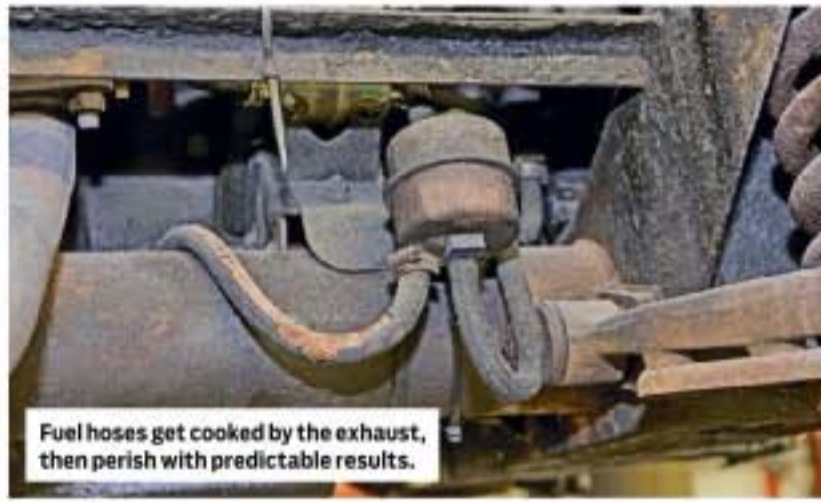
Inspect prop UJs carefully; the rear axle is leak-prone, so the oil level needs to be checked.



The twin-pipe exhaust system features multiple sections that often don't fit together very well.



Check each inner front wing for corrosion in this box section.



Fuel hoses get cooked by the exhaust, then perish with predictable results.



The under-bonnet wiring has to endure high temperatures, so check for fried cables.



UNLEADED
Officially, you need to use an additive or get the heads converted. But you'll probably be fine unless you do lots of high-speed miles.



Some cars have a walnut dashboard, which can delaminate over time. A professional repair is pricey.

ENGINES

Underbonnet fires are not uncommon. Check for evidence and inspect history files.

CHROME

Brightwork lasts, but if anything's missing it is available from specialists, albeit at a hefty price.



'Club membership is essential to get the most out of your Interceptor'

kingpins, which wear. Replacements aren't available so you have to rebuild what's there, which can cost £500 per side. Later cars feature double-wishbone suspension up front; these feature bushes and washers which wear, leading to vague handling. Fixing everything takes 16 hours and costs £250 in parts.

The car's bulk takes its toll on springs and dampers, so feel for wallowing in the corners and look for evidence of the car sitting low; you should be able to get two fingers between the top of the tyre and the rear wheelarch when unladen. If new rear springs are needed, they're £265 each.

Wheels & brakes

The Interceptor I and II came with steel wheels and Rostyle trims; the Series III got five-spoke GKN alloys. The former can look tatty all too easily; alloys are a popular swap. Refurbished items are available for £120 each, exchange.

Apart from the fitment of anti-lock technology to the FF, the Interceptor's braking system is conventional, with nothing to fret about. It's up to the job on the Mk III, but earlier cars might benefit from an upgrade.

Everything is available cheaply; the biggest problem is corrosion and seizures through lack of use. The main issue is with the caliper pistons corroding then seizing; each caliper has three pistons and they're

£30 each, although rebuilt calipers are available for £200 apiece, exchange.

Trim & electrics

Leather trim was standard on all Interceptors, most cars still featuring the original high-quality hide. Check for split leather and failed stitching, and watch for sagging leather on retrimmed cars. If everything needs doing because of damp or neglect, expect a bill of £7000-£10,000.

Later Interceptors came with air-con as standard, while it was optional from the Series II of 1969. You can fit a more efficient modern system – for £2000 or so.

Conclusion

Buy the best you can afford. Despite the car's mechanical simplicity, professional repair costs can be high – very high in the case of bodged bodywork or tired interior trim. So don't be fooled by shiny paint; you must delve, ideally investing in a specialist inspection for peace of mind.

There's no shortage of Interceptors for sale, but our advice is to get a specialist to check out the car you're interested in. There are well-restored examples around, and ones that have had sympathetic upgrades are generally the best.

Club membership is essential if you want to track down a good car and get the most out of owning it. While there was evolution of the formula, it's hard to recommend one derivative over another. Whatever you buy, it'll be a blast to drive, and much more usable than you might think. ■

Many thanks to Phil Hayes and the team at Cropredy Bridge, along with the Jensen Owners' Club committee for their help with putting this guide together.

Price Guide

C/D £27,500-£50,000
C1 £18.5k-£30k C2 £9k-£14k
C3 £3500-£7000

The FF carries a £5,000 premium over a regular Interceptor; convertibles a £10,000 mark-up.

For Sale

Our pick of the Interceptors from...



1969

Series I

Price:

£39,950

Stunning

example of

the purest of all Jensen Interceptors.

All books, tools, documentation, superb history and driving as new. S111 alloys, but has the original Rostyles,



1971

SP

Price:

£24,950

Restored, but

would benefit

from final finishing. All corroded areas including floors, sills, wing and door bottoms expertly replaced with new metal. Correctly etched and primed and repainted in original colour.



1974

Series III

Price:

£24,750

Thousands

spent to bring

this car to a very high standard. Pacific Blue with Navy interior. Only 44,000 miles from new, complete with manual, parts book and original handbook.



Need to know

SELECTED SPECIALISTS

Cropredy Bridge, Oxon:

01295 758159,

www.cropredybridge.com

K&D Enterprises, USA: 425 788

0507, www.interceptor.org

Martin Robey, Coventry: 02476

386903, www.martinrobey.com

Rejen, Hants: 01962 777400,

www.jensenparts.co.uk

Richard Appleyard, Notts: 0115

932 5320, <http://jensen.co.uk>

OWNERS' CLUB

Jensen Owners' Club,

www.joc.org.uk