

## Lagondaforum: Jay Leno's Garage Lagonda V12 Test

### Jay Leno's Garage Lagonda V12 Test

*Written by bruffsup at Oct 17, 2012 7:57 pm*

If you have not yet seen this check it out. It is thoroughly enjoyable. Jay is a true enthusiast. Does anyone know the history of this particular car? Just curious as he does not mention it. Also who is "Lagonda Joe"?

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### Re: Jay Leno's Garage Lagonda V12 Test

*Written by h14 at Oct 18, 2012 2:48 pm*

Barry,

Undoubtedly it's yet another lovely saloon vandalised into a Le Mans rep. A bit like vintage Bentleys, of 2 Le Mans cars, there are probably 20 survivors!

"Lagonda Joe" is Joe Harding, who is responsible for much the foregoing!

Laurence

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### Re: Jay Leno's Garage Lagonda V12 Test

*Written by bruffsup at Oct 18, 2012 5:05 pm*

I just watched Jay interviewing one of the authors of the book "Sleeping Beauties". Ironically they point out a Bugatti sedan that was very recently turned into what looks like a pseudo type 35.

I would frown on anyone making a living out of this sort of exercise however how can you blame impecunious enthusiasts who will now never be able to afford the few best open sports models? Personally, I like sedans but for most they do not have the desired cache.

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### Re: Jay Leno's Garage Lagonda V12 Test

*Written by Julian at Oct 24, 2012 10:49 am*

As this subject has been brought up I feel I should make some comments.

Firstly, Laurence, Although I too hate to see a good saloon broken up to make a Le Mans rep etc. I feel it is massively unfair to just "Assume" that this was what happened to Leno's car. Actually it was not! Joe Harding made this car initially for himself many years ago and made it from a complete wreck! Would you rather see it now totally decomposed and still in the field it was rescued from? or as a beautiful Lagonda being used and correctly maintained? I hope the latter.

I know you would rather see it with whatever body it left the factory with but that would be your choice if it were your restoration bill. A perfect world would be nice but it's not a reality unfortunately.

I have been in the Lagonda business very actively now for over 25 years and in all that time the only useable or even economically restorable saloon that I have seen split is the 3 litre that was mentioned on this site a few months back in Holland. This I find a crying shame with only finance as a motive. However even then there may be other motives that we do not know about.

I cannot in my recollection think of one single Lagonda that has been "Vandalized" to turn it into a special or Le Mans etc. Sure there are many old miseries who "accuse" regardless of any facts (Laurence I am not referring to you here) and spread bad words etc but in truth it happens very rarely in my experience, and believe me as I have a very good private database of most Lagondas that move!

Actually I find the most repulsing the fact that there have been people actually making complete NEW cars on NEW chassis with old registration papers and passing these off as original. Far more worrying than just restoring a car with a different style body than the one it left the factory with!

A very interesting subject but one we should all think very hard about before simplifying and judging too quickly. Accusations are easy, proof is another thing and rectifying a false accusation is generally like catching a basket of feathers in the wind!

Very best regards,

## Lagondaforum: Jay Leno's Garage Lagonda V12 Test

Julian

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### Re: Jay Leno's Garage Lagonda V12 Test

*Written by h14 at Oct 24, 2012 2:31 pm*

Hi Julian,

Fair enough and of course I agree, indeed I know of 2 recent Le Mans conversions where no body existed and where the existing coachwork was truly derelict.

That said, I suspect quite a few of the others have had viably restorable bodies, indeed I recall seeing one advertised not far from where I used to live in the UK.

My LG6 special was purchased as a seemingly derelict rolling chassis by the previous owner in 1985. I was horrified to discover it had been taxed and therefore Mot'd & driveable as recently as 1979. In that case, the then owner was a well-known VSCC racing member, who doubtless had plans, which he changed his mind over. I have been contacted by the family of its first owner, Frank Haslam, who was the architect of Odeon cinemas, and that of the second owners, and of course they are disappointed to see the car no longer exists as they knew it.

The even sadder correlation to all this is that the parts left over end up with the scrapyard, not because they don't have a value, but because the economics of turning out a fake Le Mans are all-persuasive. The fake Le Mans will sell for several times the value of a restored saloon, yet the restored saloon will have cost several times what it takes to make a Le Mans rep.

Perhaps one day we will see old cars "listed" as with stately homes, then at least the viability of the existing coachwork would be known!

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### Re: Jay Leno's Garage Lagonda V12 Test

*Written by M70 at Oct 24, 2012 9:31 pm*

I speak as someone who has regretfully removed a saloon body and replaced it, with as near as humanly possible, a recreation of one of the two four-sweater 1936 Fox & Nicholl cars that the factory broke up in 1936 after Le Mans was cancelled for that year. If you wish to go racing or participate in VSCC events, then you need a "buff form" then you will need to convince the VSCC that you simply haven't destroyed a wonderful saloon for your own amusement or financial gain. In my experience not an easy, quick or straightforward process. In my case the saloon ash frame was beyond repair and economic repair was impossible. I also have a wonderfully original saloon so I would argue these matters are never black or white but complex and it is always better to reserve judgement until the facts are known. Many years ago it was suggested that the Club had a "saloon restoration fund" to save marginal saloons, I recall there were very few acts of benevolence!

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### Re: Jay Leno's Garage Lagonda V12 Test

*Written by Julian at Oct 25, 2012 5:09 pm*

Two very good answers and it is a hard decision at the end of the day.

In truth it boils down to this.

Not many people can afford to restore a saloon to real top quality. OK some try to do it on their own but when you see the process it either takes many many years, or turns out not as good as expected or both.

And when it comes to selling, if it's not been done to a high professional level then it isn't going to sell for anything other than peanuts in comparison to what effort it needed to restore. And even a top professional restoration on a saloon would struggle in today's market to return half of the restoration cost.

Restoring a car as Stephen has done has at least saved another car and kept it from the scrap man.

The bodywork can go on the shelf to wait until someone needs or wants it. We have several saloon parts awaiting the day they are needed, it costs us good money to buy and store them but one day someone will be happy we did. (Probably not us though ;o)

And remember that not many of us can afford a real team car! or a real race car with history etc. etc. So why not restore/rebuild an old wreck to whatever you personally want? People did in period so why not now?

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I recently attended a concourse event and was next to a very wealthy collector with an enormous collection of cars, when, while chatting on the subject to someone else, he stated out loud, "I HATE replicas" I bit my tongue very politely and did not ask him, why then does he allow one of his companies to sell "replicas" on a regular basis? Perhaps we should all think extremely carefully on the reality and possible or PROBABLE consequences of what we are saying.

I think it is more easy and more realistic with far less likelihood of being accused of being hypocritical to just say, Let us be careful to preserve what we can, while keeping our cars and passion alive. But first and foremost let us enjoy our cars as working objects and not either rotting wrecks or static museum objects.

Julian

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### Re: Jay Leno's Garage Lagonda V12 Test

*Written by h14 at Oct 25, 2012 7:01 pm*

Well said.

I have a 1951 Riley 2.5, my first car. I bought it in 1974, did 1200 miles in it in 1975, and took it off the road for 3 or 4 weeks to replace the roof covering. Slowly it dawned on me that people had been mad enough to actually build a wooden frame then nail and weld the panels around it as recently as 1951, and also I found that my love and expertise for things mechanical didn't extend, at all, to work on the body. I suspect I'm not alone in that, which perhaps explains why so many saloons end up derelict.

In my case, I carried on dismantling the car over the years, but realised eventually that I was just too busy running my own business to spend the large chunks of time necessary. So a stark choice. Buy a good one (as I should have done originally) and sell or keep for spares my old one, or get it professionally restored. In the end I've opted for professional restoration, in full awareness that it will end up costing more than twice what the car will be worth.

I've justified it on the basis that I've never bought a new car and never will do so, so will never suffer the heavy depreciation entailed there.

Fortunately the lesson was well learnt so I took great care to check the body & wood frame of my V12 drophead before buying it.

It does seem odd to me that I'm not alone in having my RM professionally restored, so the question remains that if RileyRM owners are prepared to restore their saloons, why not Lagonda owners? Perhaps it helps that there were no "team car" Rileys, so no prospect of making big bucks by making replicas.

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### Re: Jay Leno's Garage Lagonda V12 Test

*Written by Julian at Oct 27, 2012 9:15 am*

Morning Laurence,

Unfortunately you are quite wrong with the "team car" Riley theme. 🙄

There were many team car Rileys and Rileys were / are one of the most successful pre-war racing cars ever made! "Forgotten Champions" is a good read, and thus the "Industry" for making "reps" is rather rife and enough to make Lagondas look extremely rare! Especially the Germans who seem to love racing Riley specials.

But great news on your RM restoration. Herman Arentsen another Lagonda owner also restored a very nice RM.

There are also people who restore Lagonda saloons, but the cost of restoring a Lagonda is massively different than a Riley. I know as I have restored both, and in fair numbers. Unfortunately there is a lot more to most Lagondas and the sheer size hurts hard when it comes to restoration costs on saloons. There are also a lot less parts available, and a great deal of difference between one restoration and another. I know of one "Restorer" doing a complete job on a V12 and thinking it can be done while the car is still rolling and without touching the woodwork! Well this one although a half price job, will cost the poor owner double in a few years when it needs doing again! These are the sort of traps people often get bitten by when contemplating a big restoration on a large saloon that is not going to hold its value. People try to cut corners and then get bitten and then the negative vibes hit saloons as a "don't touch" object. Sad but true.

We will fix it one day and Saloons are becoming more and more valuable so look after them if you have them, They are great cars, especially in the rain 🌧️ 🌧️

## Lagondaforum: Jay Leno's Garage Lagonda V12 Test

Julian

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### Re: Jay Leno's Garage Lagonda V12 Test

*Written by h14 at Oct 27, 2012 11:10 am*

Hi Julian,

I was referring solely to the RM series Rileys regarding team cars, so yes I'm fully aware of their track record pre-war. I think the only RM to compete in period was AEN10, a Roadster, and in any event that looked pretty similar to the production Roadster.

The RM saloon has a reputation for being one of the more difficult bodies to restore, and I daresay some of the cost of restoring a Lagonda saloon is based on the perception of the marque. Good point about parts availability, indeed even most wood body frame parts are "on the shelf" for RMs, & that must help tremendously.

There must be some affinity between Rileys and Lagondas because as you state, I'm not the only one with foot in both camps. Indeed, when I started going to RM Club meetings in the mid seventies, a guy often turned up in a Lagonda 2 litre fitted with an RM 2.5 litre engine; a great combination, & of course that engine design dated back to 1926, so not inappropriate.

Sadly the every day useability of a saloon will be of little interest to most buyers nowadays; perhaps as they become fewer, their rarity will increase their appeal! Really it needs people to think less of the end value and more of the beautiful car they will end up with. As an aside, I think the V12 Le Mans is a bit of a whale of a car to look at anyway...I suspect Frank Feeley was rushed into it just as Bentley was rushed into producing a Le Mans V12. Perhaps the 1940 Le Mans car would have been as gorgeous as the production cars!

Laurence

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