

Picking a car to start the build

Posted by Dolfan - 07 Jul 2011 05:49

I've read different accounts here on the forum of the car builds and I'm curious what item would rank highest with picking a car to begin the build?

It seem like all builds recommend to rebuild the bottom end of the engine for reliability so how important is the running condition of the motor?

A smooth shifting transmission would seem to be ranked high on the list of wants?

I know body should not be a big consideration but what are the thing you don't want to see?

Interior I would think is mostly about recouping as much value out of the project car through selling parts?

Good functioning brakes wanted but the entire system would be gone through in the build process?

Suspension need to be decent with no major binding or knocks in the operation, most of this would also be gone through during the build?

So would it be safe to rank these major areas like this?

1 Engine

2 Transmission

3 Suspension

4 Brakes

5 Body

6 Interior

Are there key things to look for and with run away from a project car or factor in extra expense?

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Re: Picking a car to start the build

Posted by Big Dog - 07 Jul 2011 09:36

Wow, now this becomes very personal with lots of different views. With that said, here is my view.

Transmission - I do not do anything here so I want one that seems solid.

Body - Why start with something that needs money spent here?

Interior - If you want to sell things to recover money and only if it is in great shape to allow you to do it. If it is bad but the price is low enough, who cares.

Everything else on your list - Who cares.

Engine - I would never put a car on the track without having the engine redone including water pump, hoses etc. I replace the radiator as well due to the temps we see here in the summer. I simply don't like the idea of not knowing the history of important bits and pieces.

Suspension - I replace wheel bearings, shocks, bushings, torsion bars, etc so the condition of the original suspension is not a concern for me.

Brakes - Who cares, I replace the soft lines with ss and either rebuild all of the calipers or buy them from Paragon. The rotors are replaced as well as the pads as part of the build.

Great post. You will get lots of different opinions and perspectives. I await others views on this topic.

Jim "Big Dog" Foxx

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Re: Picking a car to start the build

Posted by jaje - 07 Jul 2011 09:52

It also depends on what year cars - the early 944s were different than later models (metal versus plastic gas tanks, control arms, engine compression, short 5th gear) - and even changes happened after that. The holy grail (IMHO) is to find an early 83 / 84 944 or 87 / 88 924S sunroof delete car with LSD transmission.

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Re: Picking a car to start the build

Posted by Dolfan - 07 Jul 2011 10:15

OK,

Big Dog

I understand the idea of not going on track without the motor gone through, agreed. But would you purchase a project car with no signs of life in the motor? Seems like that could lead to hidden costs!

As for body damage I'm just thinking if you are going over the whole car, replacing a door or a hood or fender should be chump change?

Totally agree on the brakes!

JaJe

I agree the year will make a difference as they series of cars did have changes/improvements over the years.

I guess one question would be what would you say is the typical cost of a project car?

< \$1000

\$1000-2000

>\$2000

Just curious???

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Re: Picking a car to start the build

Posted by Sterling Doc - 07 Jul 2011 10:42

While rust is rare, it would definitely be something to avoid. I've seen some rust just ahead/around of the rear wheel opening, which is right at the suspension pick up point. I had this repaired on one car, but it wasn't cheap to fix right, as the metal work there is somewhat complex. Minor bodywork is not a big deal, though the rear fenders are a bit harder to fix than the front ones, or the doors.

I would make sure the motor runs, without knocking or banging. Street 944's are often left to die after a timing belt failure, which usually means many bent valves. #2 Rod bearing failures is another bad reason that they can be parked. That said, good used motors are around \$500, or less.

Often it's best to buy one project car, and a \$500 parts car (often a wrecked one). This saves having to buy a lot of part piecemeal.

\$1,500 should get you a decent example with a trashed interior if you shop carefully. Old paint, and higher miles are not a big turn off, if the the car is otherwise solid. Sometimes a bad transmission can be a great bargaining point, and they are only about \$300 to replace. It's also easy to do.

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Re: Picking a car to start the build

Posted by joepaluch - 07 Jul 2011 11:15

Most 944 donors cost \$250 to \$4000 dollars. I once bought a \$330 88 924S. The car was mostly complete and purchased as a parts car, but I could build into a race car if needed. My 84 944 was purchased for \$1400 back in 1999 and was non running. It had bad gearbox and needed a motor rebuild. Still the chassis lives on.

The things that are really a challenge in these cars is the following.

1) Tub damage. Don't buy bend tub as it will be nothing but problems. A dented fender is one thing, but a bent tub is not worth it for a donor unless it is purely a parts car.

2) Electrical issues. These can result from fire, water or just previous owner stupidity. Guys have spend many hours tracking down electrical issues. The good news is they can be fixed, but often need access to a parts car for things like harness and wires.

3) damaged blocks. Broken t-belt is not a damaged block. In fact it can be nice since it forces an engine rebuild and lowers the sale price. Bent valves can be replaced easily during a rebuild, but scored cylinders cannot. New piston rings? No big deal and even heads are pretty easy, but a damaged block is bad news.

Beyond that most stuff is not a big deal. None of my cars have had useable interiors to sell off nor paint of any quality. Suspension you will go through when you build the car. Engine can be rebuilt if the block is fine and gearbox... Well \$200-300 gets you a used long 5th open diff box. From there a 5th gear swap is not terribly difficult. LSD is more difficult to change out and a really nice find, but most cars will not have it. Even if you have a blown gear box should it have and LSD you can swap it over to a different box.

On my 84 944 which I started running in 2000 the only original parts of the car are.... Tub (which since it has a cage is worth value of weld in roll cage). hood, front fenders, rear qtr panels, drivers side door. hatch glass, bumpers, body electrical, torque tube, body mounted fuel lines and body mount brake lines, and fuel tank.

Engine (complete long block), gearbox, front suspension (including brakes and wheel bearings), steering rack, rear suspension (brakes and wheel bearings), passenger side door, Instrument cluster and dash have all be replaced with either new parts or parts from a low mile 87 924S parts car, 83 944 parts car, or 88 924S parts car. Most parts have been replaced just once over the track life of the car which is well over 100 races.

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