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How safe is the jack in your RV8?

Shortly after Chris Allan purchased his 1994 RV8 (Flame Red 1192) he decided to check the contents of the tool tray located within the spare wheel centre. What he found was not reassuring. (Aug 10)

Chris was already aware that his car did not come with an RV8 tool roll, but decided to check that he had the tools required in case of a flat tyre. Everything was there, the jack, wheel brace, Allen key and the locking wheel nut removal key. On inspection, however, it was clear from its label that the jack was not original as it was stated that the jack was for use only on the Rover200/400 and Honda Concerto and had a Safe Working Load of 625kg. As it is likely that most owners don't give their car jack a second thought until they have a flat tyre, and then they probably assume that it will be up to the job, Chris felt he clearly needed to investigate further and did so via a question on the V8 Bulletin Board.

Angus Munro responded and was able to provide details of the original RV8 jack and also kindly supplied the photographs of the correct RV8 jack which are reproduced below.



The original jack is of the half scissor (aka a Y or boomerang) design and is raised or lowered by a handle which operates a screw mechanism. The jack, including the screw mechanism, should be sprayed satin black.



There's a locating peg which fits in the car's jacking point. The jack can be readily identified by the two gummed yellow paper labels which should be attached thereto. The larger label shows three pictures:

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- A flat and inflated tyre and the associated angle the jack takes up depending upon the ground clearance available to it.
- How to locate the jack locating peg into the car's jacking point.
- Two pictures of the RV8 showing where to jack the car, and warning against working under an RV8 which is only supported by a jack.



The second yellow sticker carries the following information:

- Metallifactory Ltd - the manufacturer.
- Safe Working Load 700 kg.
- Only for use on the MG RV8 and Maestro Petrol Saloon [sic].



On the underside of the jack will be a number of characters stamped into the metal frame which relate to the date of manufacture. The format is as follows:



Either one or two numbers are the week of manufacturer – so the range is 1 to 52. There is a single letter which is day of the week of

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manufacture so an "A" is a Monday through to "E" which is a Friday. Finally there are two numbers which are the last two numbers of the year of manufacture, so we would expect to see "92" through to "95".

Those RV8 owners who are interested in originality may wish to compare the date on their jack against the date of their vehicle's manufacture. If the labels are missing, I am not aware that there are any other identifying marks which will enable the owner to confirm whether or not their jack is correct for the vehicle.

Instructions on the proper use of the RV8 jack are detailed in the RV8 Owner's Handbook in the section headed "Wheel Changing", pages 106-108. Of particular import is the following extract from page 106 - "NEVER work beneath the car with the jack as the only means of support. The jack is designed for wheel changing only!" Reference is also made to the importance of only carrying out a lift on firm and level ground and to the correct use of the vehicle chocks.

Next Chris decided to contact the technical department of Adwest Ltd, the successor to Metallifacure Ltd the manufacturer of the original RV8 jack. The information/advice provided by them is detailed below:

- The design of the RV8 jack (known as a 1/2 scissor, Y or boomerang design) can, in certain circumstances, cause it to be unstable in that it is liable to twist if it is subjected to any vehicle movement. Even with the use of the vehicle chocks provided with the RV8 some movement is possible. It should be noted that the wheel chocks should always be utilised when jacking up the car: a chock should be securely placed both at the front and rear of the wheel diagonally opposite to the wheel being removed. If the lift is attempted on anything other than firm/level ground (the flat tyre may not always be experienced at a suitable location), then the safety of the lift is brought further into question.
- Adwest did not have specific information to hand regarding the testing regime to which the RV8 jack had been subjected. However, the fact that it was also used on the Maestro, and that the RV8 was such a low volume vehicle increase the possibility that the jack supplied with the car was sourced from the existing Rover parts bin. It may not, therefore, be ideally suited to the RV8 application.
- The weak point of any jack of this design is the screw. On Metallifacure's higher specification jacks, the screw mechanism is phosphate coated while the RV8 jack's screw mechanism is sprayed satin black, and is thus of a lower specification. Owners should ensure that this, and the associated bearings etc., are properly greased. In addition, although the screw and bearings should attract particular scrutiny, owners should check that all parts of the jack are in serviceable condition.
- The jack is only tested by the manufacturer for its capability to make up to 10 lifts. This is a notional figure based on a maximum of 3 flat tyres being expected during the vehicle's warranty period, plus additional lifts for those drivers' who need to change between summer and winter tyres over these 3 years (common practise in Northern Europe). A particular jack maybe safe for additional lifts, but it could be viewed as reckless to assume that this is necessarily the case.
[As you may not be the original owner and your vehicle

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is likely to be at least 15 years old, do you know how many lifts your jack has already made?]

- Since 1998, the supply by vehicle manufacturers of jacks to this design and standard of manufacture would be illegal as they would not meet the requirements necessary to be awarded the "CE" mark.
- When considering an aftermarket jack, especially any scissor or 1/2 scissor jack, purporting to be for universal application, caution should be exercised.
- Adwest Ltd are keen to point out that nothing in this advice in any way constitutes a recommendation from them as to the suitability of a jack supplied with the RV8 for lifting the vehicle. On the contrary, their advice is that, in the interest of safety, owners should not use their RV8 jacks. Rather, they recommend owners call out a rescue service. An alternative would be to use a propriety brand of tyre sealant/weld, although they recognise that there are also issues here which need to be considered in the light of specific circumstances. They also recommend that in the workshop/garage environment, prior to work commencing either at the side or under the vehicle, a suitable trolley or bottle jack should be appropriately positioned and used to lift the vehicle to enable the correct placement of axle stands or other suitable supports.
- It should be noted that Adwest Ltd does not have any ongoing responsibility to provide service for these jacks. Unless any third party holds "new old stocks", the only source is likely to be through the secondhand market with the inherent uncertainties attached thereto.

It is clearly for individual members to decide on the appropriateness of Adwest's advice to their particular circumstances, but it can be taken as read that members will consider their own and other's safety as paramount. Members may also wish to consider the following, which must be considered as purely personal experiences/views. Angus only has had need to use his jack (original and previously unused) on the one occasion when he had a flat tyre. He noticed that it took a great of effort to achieve a full lift (possibly the jack needed greasing?) and he was also alarmed to see some buckling of the frame of the jack. He subsequently purchased a racing trolley jack and does not intend to use the original jack again.

Chris' personal preference (once he has obtained the correct jack), is to use it to achieve sufficient lift to enable a bottle jack to be put in place and then to complete the lift with the bottle jack. He would not remove the wheels from the vehicle when the only form of support is the car's jack. The procedure would of course be reversed when lowering the vehicle.