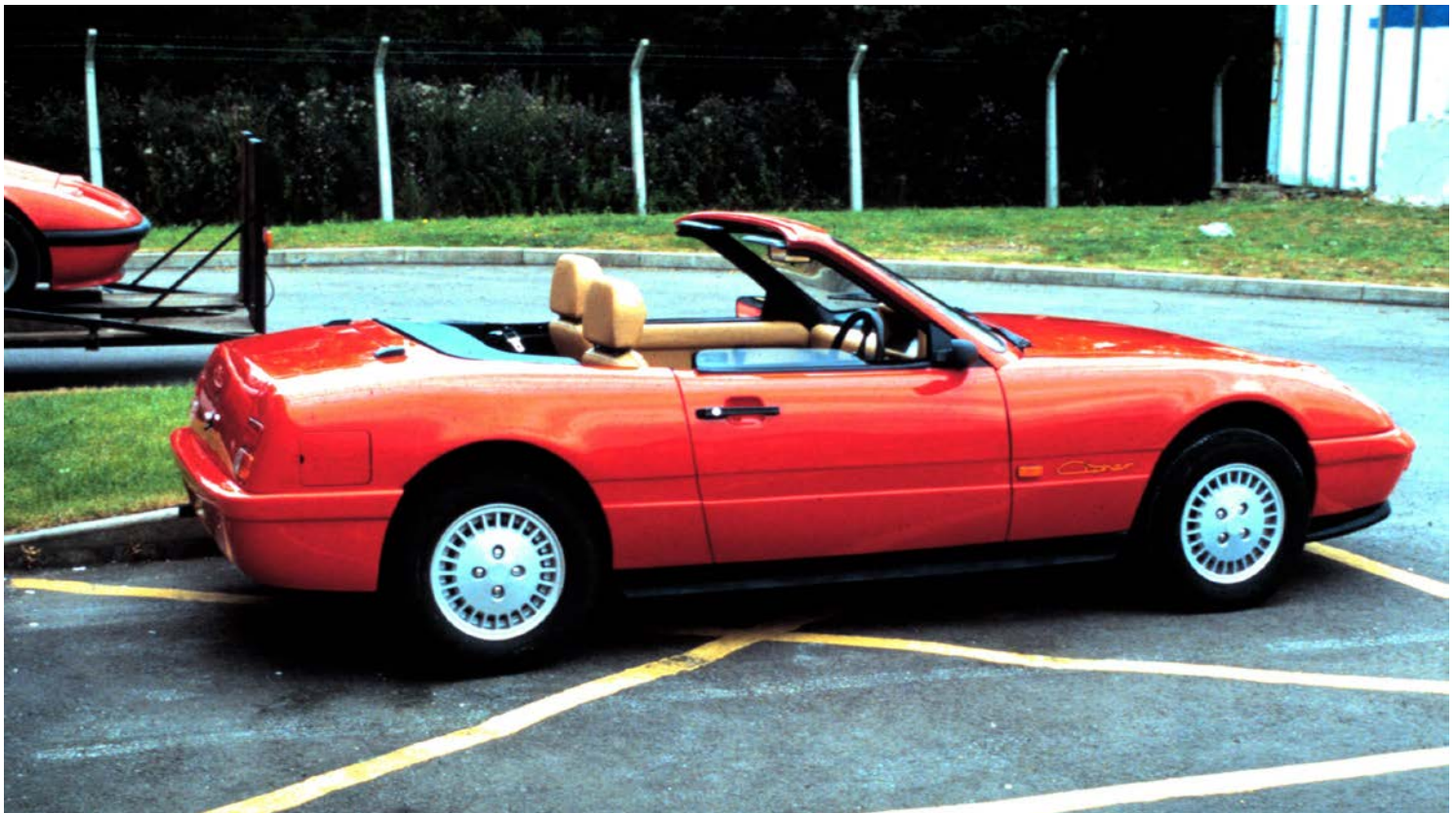
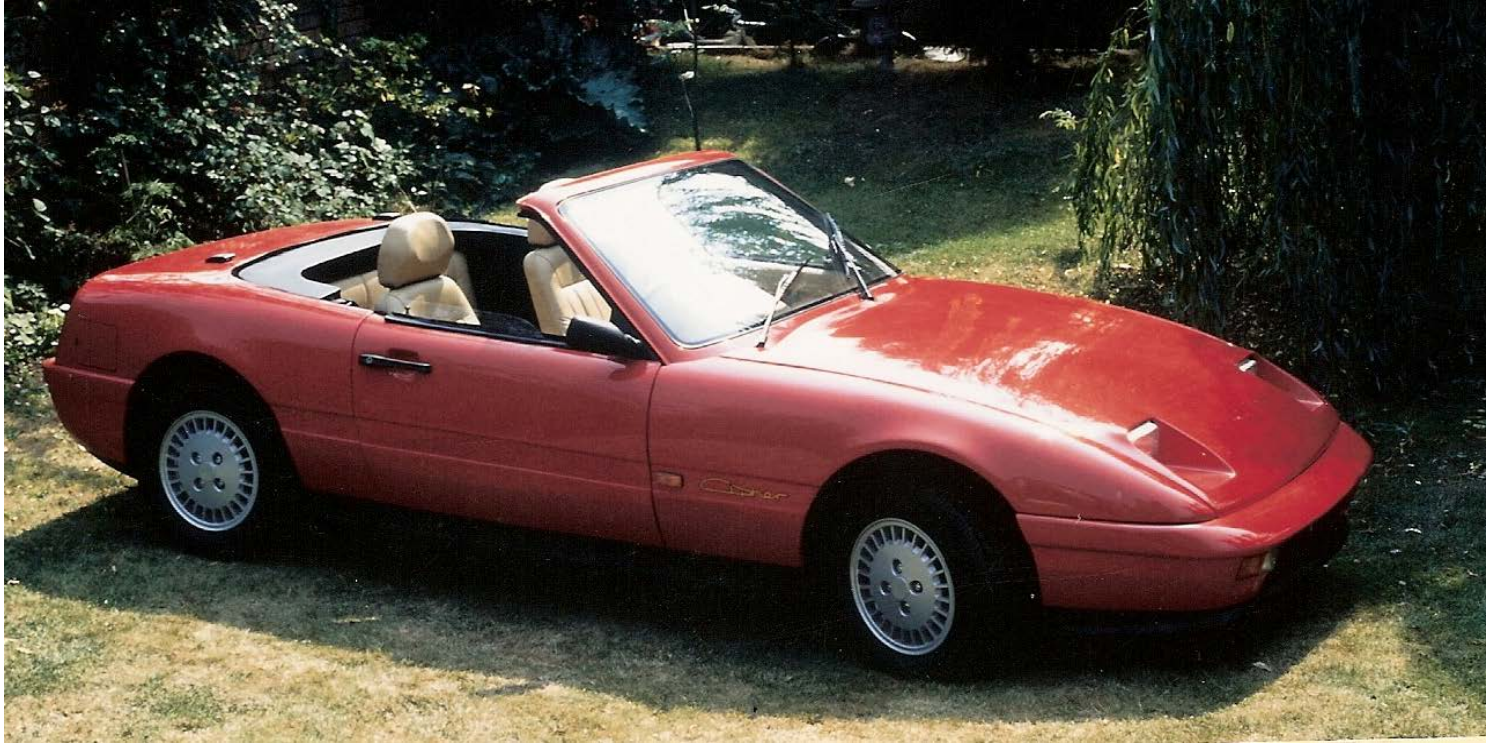


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LADA SPORTS CAR PROTOTYPE 1990





As now – in storage.

LADA STEVENS CIPHER. Never registered, total distance driven about 100 metres. This car is the only prototype for a Russian sports car in conjunction with LADA and various other Russian, Lithuanian and British interests. The project was very secret and the only press cover, which describes the interaction of the parties involved and the plans for the model, was in *AUTOCAR & MOTOR* 24th January 1990, reproduced below.



AUTOCAR & Motor

DISPATCHES

UK

Russell Bray

★ Vauxhall's hopes of winning a £200 million engine plant for the UK are still alive, says the company. Ellesmere Port, which builds the Astra, is competing with Kaiserslautern in West Germany to build GM's new V6 engines, but it was feared a new plant might not be needed after GM announced it was to build an engine factory in Hungary. "Ellesmere Port is still in the frame," said a Vauxhall spokesman.

★ Production of Rover Group's new 400-series saloon, due this spring, looks likely to be hit by a dispute over what unions claim are dramatic changes in shift patterns. Rover needs to increase K-series engine production at Longbridge, Birmingham, from 2000 week to 5000 to power the new 400 and 200-series cars, and the replacement Metro. That means 1400 employees will have to work 11½ hour shifts for up to 13 days at a time.

★ Police chiefs are to battle against a Government decision to refuse to give them blanket powers to carry out random breath tests on drivers. Ministers overruled Transport Secretary Cecil Parkinson who wanted police to have the power to set up road blocks and conduct random tests.

GERMANY

Walter Honscheidt

★ Porsche has signed a joint venture with Michigan plastics specialist Delta Design and Engineering. The agreement is part of a strategy to expand Porsche research and development activities in North America.

★ Mercedes-Benz president Werner Niefer has confirmed that a new cheaper version of the 190 will be launched at the Geneva show in March; in the UK 190s currently start at £14,960 — £3500 more than the cheaper BMW 3-series.



Soviets to build UK roadster?

CIPHER, ONE OF THE stars of the 1980 Birmingham Motor Show, looks set to make production — possibly in the Soviet Union. Tony Stevens, the designer and director of the project, says the little roadster should be on sale in the UK within three years.

The original Cipher, based on Reliant Kitten mechanicals, was enthusiastically received in 1980. Eight running prototypes were built before the project floundered and Stevens became involved with other after-market and kit-car projects. Work, however, never stopped on Cipher.

The car has been redesigned and re-engineered since its debut and is now a two-plus-two, built to accommodate a 1.3-litre Russian engine and front-wheel drive.

The plan is annual production of 60-70,000 cars by Stevens's Russian partner, which he describes as a large manufacturer — widely believed to be Lada. Backing is from both NAMI, the Soviet automobile ministry, and from a large US bank.

Under the scheme the Cipher would be assembled in Lithuania using both local and UK-sourced parts. Cars would then be exported to all world markets. Stevens claims that the redesign work on the Cipher has taken into account its potential worldwide market and says it would meet

global homologation requirements.

Stevens, and not his Soviet partners, would be responsible for the sales and distribution. With cheap production and labour costs the car could be sold for around £8000, says Stevens. It would not be a performance car (top speed will be no more than 115mph) but Stevens is confident that Cipher can find its own niche under the Mazda MX-5 and the Lotus Elan.

The Soviet connection began two years ago when Stevens contacted NAMI through a UK importer of Russian cars. His original aim was for the Russians to supply powertrain and minor componentry only,

and for him to build the car in the UK. NAMI, however, wants the whole car to be built in the USSR — the first such project by a UK automotive company.

Stevens's plans for UK production also floundered on the need to find £2.5 million capital — near impossible since the DeLorean scandal. This has led him to look also to the Far East, and to the growing markets in Korea and Malaysia. There, the industry and the banks are much more receptive.

Cipher is engineered in such a way that it can adapt to fit powertrains other than the Soviet options. Installing a Far-Eastern or even a European engine would only take months, says Stevens.

Cipher makes its debut at 1980 UK motor show (right). Ten years on, re-developed Cipher II (below/top) is ready for production

