



THE PANTHER CAR CLUB

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KALLISTA BUYERS GUIDE

This guide is a Panther Car Club Ltd publication. (First published 3/2005).

Is Kallista a Lima 'look alike' or even a S3 Lima ? NO.

This time if you cut one in half (please don't!) instead of the Vx Griffin hiding within, it has the Blue Oval (Ford) running through it, like a stick of Blackpool rock !

Announced in 1982, full production commenced in 1983 & ceased in 1990, or was it 1991? Due to the lingering demise of Panther, owners included Sangyong, Daewoo, GM. And now the brand name is back with Jankel the original Westwinds founder. No cars were made in the UK after 1991.

1.6, 2.8 carb & inj, plus the 2.9efi made up the full UK model range. A small number of pre-production cars were hand built, with some detailing lost or changed for the production cars. Around 1985/6 there was a chassis detail change, & from 1987/8 a new dashboard design was introduced, otherwise they are all the same. Unless 2 are parked next to each other, now you will see that they ARE all different. Wheels/paint/trim/woodwork/accessories making up some of the variables.

So lets start at the bottom & work up, for the details to look for during inspection for a potential purchase. But why not first come along to some of the Panther Car Club's car related events to familiarise yourself with the cars, so that you will get a feel of the cars just by being around them. Very soon you will spot the differences & which you perceive to be better than the next.

To business!!

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TYRES...As with any car, they should be fit for purpose, no cracks, cuts etc. Original tyres are not a bonus on a 20year old (at least) vehicle. Excess storage of a car can flat spot the tyres. So it's a good idea if their age is known, ask !

WHEELS...3 types of factory alloys were fitted named the Korean, the Ribster, & the Interstate. The last 2 being the most desirable especially in the 14" size. Shabby alloys can be re powder coated to maintain originality, but look for cracked rims. On driving, does it have the shakes ?

Wire wheels. Don't they look great ? Aesthetically the most appealing but there IS a commitment to maintaining their quality. Original Panther wires are bolt on dedicated items so check for rusting & flaking chrome. Very costly to refurbish or replace. An easy check for loose spokes, is run around the spokes with a Biro, & listen for sound change. Loose spokes could mean an 'out of true' rim. And don't forget there maybe inner tubes. If so, when were they last replaced ?

EXHAUSTS...Various layouts & materials were used – Single/twin outlet, mild or s/steel. Then of course some owners have had bespoke systems fitted. Check it is in sound condition & is not about to fall off the car. Manifold flanges are vulnerable to cracks when exhausts have been caught on obstructions.

CHASSIS...Kallista chassis is over engineered & gives very little problems. However early models can suffer from build welding debris that may cause localised corrosion. Plus again, on early cars the chassis had no drain holes, so if water does penetrate corrosion is possible. At risk areas are (i) at the bulkhead junction. (ii) The main chassis rail lower face & seams just in front of the rear wheels. (iii) Behind the rear valance. Door pillars could possibly suffer in the future, so probe the carpets in these areas.

FUEL TANK & LINES...Made of mild steel so check for rust/corrosion around the tank seams & flow/return pipe unions. When some tanks were factory painted, over spray has been known to have gone inside the tank, which of course can/does flake & travel through the fuel lines (a newly fitted in-line filter is some evidence of a caring owner). The main fuel lines are also metal, so give them a glance including the rubber connecting hoses & unions for cracking &/or weeping fuel. If so they should be replaced at the earliest opportunity.

SUSPENSION (front & rear)...The front suspension is effectively a Ford Cortina unit, made under licence by Hyundai on later cars. Check all rubber bushes especially the tie-rod bushes, & if any signs of deterioration these can be changed for POLY bushes (fit & forget!). Check for obvious accident damage. Also at the shock absorbers, for leakage & efficient operation.

The rear axle started life as a Ford Capri Mk3 unit, some but few cars including an LSD differential. Very late cars had a GKN supplied unit. All diffs create some noise; after all you are virtually sitting on top of it ! But not excessive or intrusive. The rear suspension layout is similar to the Cortina 4/5 design, but it is of Panther design and manufacture including parts used. This is generally NOT a troublesome area, but do a visual check of trailing arms, bushes & shock absorbers/springs. Ford diffs are known to 'sweat' oil, but should not leak.

STEERING...Kallistas are known for lack or minimal of self centring, this is normal, but the 'heavy' feel should only be evident at very low speed or when stationary. There are 2 distinct designs of steering columns (early/late) neither being dramatically better than the other, although the earlier design probably has more 'feedback'. Do check all joints & couplings. The front suspension subframe on early cars is rubber mounted to the chassis (later cars being solid) which causes a 'feel' at the steering wheel over bumps. (Virtually eliminated by fitting poly bushes). Check the rack bellows, track rod ends & wheel bearings for excessive play etc (some tech knowledge is reqd).

BRAKES... The front is pure Cortina. If the car has stood, check for 'brake pull' this is usually sticking piston(s) in the calliper. All pipes & lines should be checked for condition. – Rear brakes are large drums. The handbrake should be efficient in operation.

BODY/DOORS/BONNET... Take a step back & just look at the car, "does it look right" ? Go with your instinct, it's usually right, or ask a friend for an extra opinion. Don't insult the current owner about the car, it will not help your purchase!

The body is all aluminium except for the doors, which are steel & NOT MG midget items, they're 3" longer, so make sure they are sound. Look at the lower folded seams for rust & stress cracks, & check for full operation of door fittings – Locks/window, ¼ light etc. Weather rubber can be replaced readily if fiddly! Also check the doors have not opened into the side body, which leaves a vertical dent, as the clearance is minimal.

The wings both front & back are pop-riveted in situ, & should be checked for stone chip dents. Rear wing mounted mud flaps have been known to rip or fracture the wing itself. Bonnets are early/late, distinguishable by the air intake detail. Bonnet fit can be questionable so check for condition & closure. The body is unstressed, so no cracks anywhere !

PAINTWORK... It is true that aluminium does not rust, but it does corrode, usually evident by looking at the paintwork closely. If there are signs of blistering paint, this most likely has been caused by corroding metal below ! If the car has had a re-spray have a good look to see if it has adhered well & that no reaction is taking place (orange peel or micro-blisters).

GLASS... two door glasses, two quarter lights, & a windscreen. All Panther items except the ¼ lights (MG), later cars were stamped with the Panther logo & may even be tinted. On early look out for perished screen rubber & 'milky' glass, especially in the corners. Screens are available, but for new rubber an MG item would have to be modified. A loose screen frame could indicate stripped threads in the frame uprights, so check it.

SEATS & INTERIOR... Panther used 4 types of seats in the Kallista, 2 of which look the same & were available in both cloth & leather. A few cars had the Lima 2 style seat, & another few had the 'Sabina' seat fitted, not a pretty looking seat but probably the most comfortable. The Lima seat coming a close 2nd on comfort. On all designs check the tip & recline mechanisms for operation plus general condition (alternative narrow designed seats are hard to find). Carpets should be checked, but they are readily copied by auto trimmers, original interior door panels are not available! The interior woodwork fitted from new varies from virtually none, to a full wood veneered dash & door cappings. Early cars being Elm (usually faded & hard to match) to late cars being walnut. It's not so expensive to have the veneer restored & some owners have done their own thing! Alloy or machine turned dashboards etc. Glove boxes & parcel shelves are fitted to some but not all. Brooklands special edition cars benefit from full matching leather interiors.

CHROME... What little there is, should be in good condition, especially the bumpers which are an integral part of the chassis strength, some of which are chrome but most are stainless steel. A few early cars were done in 'all black' ironwork.

ACCESSORIES... A difficult one to say what a particular car should or should not have, but if it's fitted is it in good cosmetic & operational condition? Such as luggage racks, many designs, chrome, s/steel, body or spare wheel mounted. So look at the fixing points for 'pull' on the body. If accessories are electrical make sure they work. Things can be removed but how many holes would be visible? Music is virtually inaudible with the hood down at speed, so is it worth investing in quality systems, its your choice.

HOODS & COVERS... Please do take the time to check these items for yourself, both for condition & operation, plus general fit/security etc. Original hoods especially if vinyl, will show signs of wear and shrinkage. Vinyl hoods can be obtained for a few hundred pounds (UK) where as material, Mohair etc can be double that amount plus fitting costs.

ELECTRICS... You really must think 'operation & condition'. Starting with external lighting, are the bumper mounted light units securely attached, not cracked & wiring a mess. Do they operate properly? By checking the operation of such also confirms that the column-mounted switchgear is also okay. Instrument lighting? Headlights? Dip & main beam. Headlight shells are also known to rust on the underside, so check. Horn, wipers washers, heater fan, essential warning lights & instruments (fuel, temp, tacho etc). Have a quick look under the dashboard, is all the wiring secure. The same goes for engine bay wiring it should all look neat & tidy. Electrical accessories can be, but should not be detrimental to the cars general reliability. Instrumentation is either Smiths or VDO, neither being very bright at night!

ENGINES/G-BOX, CARBS/INJ, COOLING ETC..... It doesn't get any more serious than this. Unfortunately none of us have X-ray vision, so engine condition will be down to looks, sounds, how it runs/feels. Stated mileage, documentation to back-up such. What the instruments are showing (oil pressure, cold & hot) etc. Look at the dipstick & inside of the oil filler neck. The same applies to the gearbox & clutch (clutches are on the heavy side, & get heavier with age). Gear selection should be 'clean' & noise free (check the 'gate' into reverse, you should have to press down). Auto transmission cars are 3 or 4 speed & should select/change gear correctly. The cooling system should look well maintained, especially the radiator, hoses & coolant. The car should not run hot, or over heat (early 2.8 cars do appear to run marginal, but it is usually instrument error on Smiths clocks) No water loss should be evident.

The carburettor auto choke (1.6 & 2.8) can be a pain in the XXX, so ask the owner to leave the car cold for you to check choke operation. The same applies to both injection models (2.8i & 2.9i), as they also have cold start devices. There are no specific points to look for in the injection cars, but engine pickup both under light & heavy load should be without hesitation. Air flow meters can be affected from lack of use and will be stiff in operation. Injectors & fuel lines have been known to attract debris if cars have stood for long periods without use. So fuel filters should be changed at regular intervals. As should the engine oil & filters on all cars. It is also worth asking the owner, what if any invoices they have for parts/repairs/servicing.

OWNER MODIFICATIONS... Ask yourself & of the seller, to what benefit the modification(s) have achieved, plus why was it fitted? Of course mods can be either cosmetic or functional.

SPECIAL EDITIONS... There was a handful of 'anniversary' SE models around 1984, also a 'one off' turbo 2.8. But the most popular special edition was the 'Brooklands' with its full leather interior & hand painted coach line & logo, produced around 87-88, most being either BRG or Red.

THE END.

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The words above are intended to help anyone with their potential purchase, although I would recommend first, that the buyer analyses their own thoughts & perceived requirements. Do you want to do a restoration? Maybe a few DIY repairs, or a beautiful one owner/low mileage example. Be a realist on price as you will not get the latter for the former's price, as even items such as hoods, interior re-trims, resprays, wheels & tyres, exhausts, are 'high cost' items.. A cheap car will require work so buying the 'best' may work out to be the cheaper option in the long term. Having said that, the Kallista is a simply constructed car so should be well within the capabilities of a skilled motoring DIYer. The PCC Ltd does help its members where possible with both general & car based issues & has access to some parts &/or information relating to such.

As a last thought, why not ask the seller if they are happy for you to have either a RAC type of inspection done or a Pre MOT test carried out. If not, why not? There may be a good reason ! The PCC Ltd also provides an insurance valuation service to its members.

Good luck.

Terry Borton.