News – No laughing matter – Lada numbers fall and rise!

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Author:

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Flashback… A younger Kim Henson road-testing a Lada 1600ES saloon in the spring of 1979 (Kim adds, “Apologies for the fuzzy image quality; the only photograph – taken with an ‘instant’ camera – that I have of me with this Lada. Please also see notes below…).

WORLD CUP 2018: THE LAST TIME ENGLAND FAILED TO QUALIFY FOR THE WORLD CUP IN 1994 THERE WERE 134,297 RUSSIAN-MADE LADAS REGISTERED TO DRIVE ON

UK ROADS … TODAY THERE ARE 179!

London… With the World Cup due to kick off in Moscow Today (14th June 2018), car buying comparison website Motorway.co.uk thought it would be fun take a look at one of Russia's greatest exports; not vodka, not caviar, not dolls, but the car once the but of jokes about its reliability – the Lada.

The last time England failed to qualify for the World Cup in 1994, there were 134,297 Russian-built Ladas, registered to drive on UK roads. Today, the number has dwindled by 99.9% to 179. Between 1994 and 2005 – just over 10 years – the number of licensed Ladas fell from more than 134,000 to less than 3,000, a monumental fall from grace.

The Lada, was first built in the Soviet Union in 1970 by the Russian car giant AvtoVAZ. It spawned a thousand playground jokes but ended up selling more than 20 million worldwide. The VAZ-2101 was modelled on the 1966 Fiat 124 saloon and despite its boxy look and drab colours, it proved extremely popular. Almost two-thirds of Ladas went on to be sold outside Russia, with more than 300,000 selling in Britain between 1977 and 1997.

So, where did they all go? Although still a popular sight in Russia, the Lada is now largely exinnct on British roads. Sales hit the skids in the UK when tighter carbon emissions standards meant many Ladas didn't match up to more rigorous green requirements.

But claims 'the Lada is empty' may be a little premature since this piece of motoring history has now taken on classic car status – and for the first time since the height of its popularity in the 1990s, the number of licensed Ladas on UK roads has actually started to rise, albeit from a very low base.

At the beginning of 2017, the number of licensed Ladas on UK roads stood at 165. That had increased to 179 by the start of 2018. And with 679 Ladas registered as 'off the road', there appears to be a lot of Lada owners storing their rare models away under lock and key, hoping to see values boom, as has happened with many other classic motors from the 1970s, 80s and 90s.

Alex Buttle, director of car buying comparison website Motorway.co.uk comments: “The Lada is not quite empty, but with fewer than 200 now eligible to drive on UK roads it has become seriously rare. And with the eyes of the world on Russia for the next few months, has the Lada’s time come? Nostalgia for Ladas is growing and scarcity will drive up prices. Savvy classic car buyers should consider gefng one while they still can.”

Note: All data is from website www.howmanyleft.co.uk which publishes vehicle licensing statistics from the Department for Transport in the UK.

About Motorway.co.uk

Motorway.co.uk is the UK’s first price comparison site for selling your car, providing customers with instant offers from leading online car buyers. Car sellers can choose their best deal and sell their vehicle in a few clicks.

Kim adds… “I road-tested a number of Lada models during the 1970s/80s/90s, including the relatively sporty 1600ES pictured above, in which I drove many miles during my week with it. They were basic and inexpensive machines, but for many buyers they simply did the job. Yes they were old-fashioned, even in the 1970s, but were cheap to buy, roomy for people and luggage, designed to withstand Russian winters and rough terrain, and were tougher than many people imagined.

As an illustration, in 1984, as part of a comprehensive multi-model ‘off-road four wheel drive vehicle’ test for ‘Practical Motorist’ magazine, I was tasked to drive a Lada Niva in winter on a challenging test track intended for military vehicles. My colleague and I had doubts about whether the vehicle would be able complete the circuit, as the deeply rutted ground conditions were so poor…

However, despite remarkably steep, slippery slopes, deep mud, and water that came over the bonnet, the Niva survived the course and acquitted itself very well.”