



**Official name:** Rover Company Ltd, then British Motor Corporation, then British Motor Holdings, Leyland Motor Corporation, British Leyland Motor Corporation, British Leyland Limited, Austin Rover Group, then Rover Group, then MG Rover. The company went bankrupt in 2005.

**Owned by:** Shanghai Automotive Industry Corporation (SAIC).

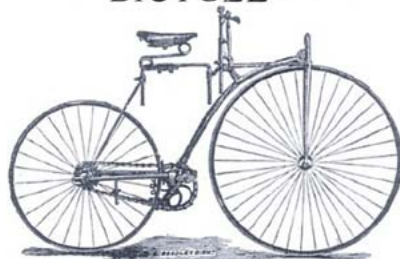
**Current situation:** The Rover brand is now dead. Ford owns the rights to the trademark 'Rover' and won't let SAIC use it. SAIC is making Rover 75 models and calling them ROEWE, with a similar logo.

**Chances of survival:** doubtful. Regardless of the badge on the front, Rover cars have zero chance of selling well in the West, unless they're practically free, which they're not. Roewe and MG cars have not been a bit hit in China, either •



# A brief commentary on Rover

THE ROVER SAFETY  
BICYCLE (PATENTED)



**I**N 1888, John Kemp Starley released the first modern bicycle. Starley's Rover bikes were so called because their riders were free to rove. They were called safety bicycles because they were stable and had brakes, which was revolutionary at the time.

The Rover company began producing cars in 1904, which, as might be expected, had cycle-like frames. However, The Rover company went from strength to strength, and by 1912 Rover was a major English manufacturer. There's more money to be made building expensive cars than building cheap ones, so after World War I, Rover began manufacturing quality vehicles for the conservative middle classes of Great Britain and her colonies.



ROVER LIGHT SIX SPORTSMAN'S SALOON

*Cenuine Weymann Body.  
Finishing details of Standard and Royal Models omitted. See separate sheet for Prices.  
Overall length, 13 ft. 3 in. (Ds. over Bumper, 12 ft. 10 in.) Overall width, 5 ft. 3 in. Overall height, 5 ft. 6 in.*

After World War II, Rover did some incredibly innovative research and development, producing, among other things, the Land Rover, the world's first gas-turbine powered car and a four-wheel drive coupé with an all-fibreglass body. And it was the Rover group that developed the iconic Land Rover.





Rover's innovation gradually slowed and in 1966 the struggling Rover company was absorbed into the British Leyland group. Although Rover kept trying hard, the quality and efficiency gradually dropped as its parent company grew old and senile.

The new chairman of British Leyland, Sir Michael Edwardes, closed down or sold off most of the British Leyland companies and in 1982 renamed the company as the Austin Rover Group, later shortened to just the Rover Group'.

As part of the modernisation of the Rover Group, Edwardes arranged a deal with the Honda Motor Co to share technology and manufacturing facilities in England. Thus, Honda got access to the lucrative European market, while Rover got access to successful Honda technology.



**The 1984 Rover 213, otherwise known as the Honda Civic**





Although the Honda-Rover deal was presented to the British public as a ‘partnership’, it was clear from the start that Honda wore the pants. After successfully marketing a series of Hondas as Rovers, Rover secretly leapt into bed with BMW, much to Honda’s dismay. We’d love to say that the Rover crew learnt efficiency from their Japanese masters, but they didn’t.

With BMW in charge, Rover lost its new masters a cool \$US6billion.



**The ill-fated Rover 75, Rover’s last model**

Facing a shareholder revolt in Germany, Land Rover was sold off to Ford. BMW then sold the Rover Group to a group of businessmen calling themselves the Phoenix Consortium – for ten pounds. Well, actually there were a teensy weensy few more expenses, such as a \$1.35 billion loan to the Phoenix Consortium and nearly three billion worth of unsold cars that they threw in for free. It seems doubtful that Phoenix ever had serious intentions of running a successful car company. Instead, Phoenix tarted up a few ageing models and began selling a crappy Indian small car as a CityRover. And, of course, market share continued to plummet.

However, the directors showed real talent when it came to lining their own pockets: despite the fact that MG Rover lost nearly £90 million in 2003, five Phoenix directors took home more than £16 million in salaries and benefits – more than twice what the entire BMW board earned in the same year. MG Rover made much of a proposed rescue plan from the Chinese-based Shanghai Automotive Industry Corporation (SAIC), but this also turned out to be vapourware. In April 2005, MG Rover went belly-up.





The car plant and other assets were sold to a Chinese company, Nanjing Automobile. However, it was soon discovered that the rights to build several Rover models had been previously sold to Shanghai Automotive, with both companies claiming the rights to build MG Rover cars. As if that wasn't messy enough, previous Rover owner Honda turned up and repossessed a number of blueprints and certain machines in order to stop the new owners producing new versions of Honda-based Rover cars.

Not that this stopped MG Rover's new owners. The first of the Chinese Rovers were announced at the Beijing Motor Show in 2006. The Ford Motor Company owned the trademark Rover and refused permission for SAIC to use it. Instead, SAIC called their new range the Roewe (pronounced Row-Wii). Their first model, the Roewe 750, was essentially a facelifted Rover 75. Also on the agenda was the Roewe 250, a facelifted Rover 25, which was essentially a reincarnation of a 1980s Honda Civic, endlessly reworked by Rover in order to avoid developing a genuinely new model. Roewe also announced an 'exciting new concept car' called the W2, although the W2 turned out to be yet another Rover 75 with strange front end styling.

Roewe was being marketed as the Best of British, improved by China. However, Rover sales tanked all over the world.

Worse, Roewe cars have not sold all that well in China, either. In the first half of 2015, Roewe and MG sales fell, 33%, on top of a 3% decline in the same period the year before.

SAIC had grander plans: the management apparently seriously believed that Westerners were going to buy large numbers of rebadged Rover cars, designed about the time the internet was taking off. Life is cruel for those who actions are governed by delusions •

