



Official name: SAAB Automobile AB

Formerly owned by: General Motors

Owned by: Spyker Cars NV

Current situation: After losing both money and market share in the critical American and European markets, Saab is a basket case. Saab's current tiny vehicle range is now hopelessly outdated. After the GM bankruptcy, Saab was sold to tiny Swedish carmaker Spyker Cars N.V, who in turn is trying to sell a majority share in Saab to two Chinese companies. However, the Chinese government has yet to approve the deal.

Chances of survival: poor. Saab's last owner, General Motors, lost billions on the deal. Saab recently filed for bankruptcy protection for the second time in less than 3 years, after trying to resurrect a dying company with an obsolete product range in the middle of a recession at a time of a chronic, worldwide oversupply of cars •



A brief commentary on Saab

S*venska aeroplanaktiebolaget*, or Saab for short, was an aircraft company that began making cars in 1950.

The first model was the 92. This vehicle was originally supplied only in green, reputedly because Saab had a large quantity of green aeroplane paint left over from World War II. Later models were available in a few more colours.

After modest beginnings (just 1246 cars in 1950), Saab established itself as a manufacturer of well-engineered performance cars.

By 1965 nearly 50,000 Saabs were sold in a single year. The revolutionary 99/90 model, launched in 1967, established a body shape that remains similar to this day.



The Saab 92

Small car manufacturers have found life increasingly difficult in the last few decades, so it was perhaps inevitable that Saab would form an alliance with a larger carmaker. General Motors bought a half share in Saab Automobile in 1990, later increased to 100%.



The Saab 99

With the General Motors takeover came pressure to cut costs, so the Saab range – such as the 9-3 model displayed – was designed around an existing GM car but styled to look like a Saab.

Saab has always had a reputation for solidity, something which slipped a bit when GM took over. On the outside,

modern Saabs may have resembled their predecessors, but inside, they were mostly cheap GM cars trading off Saab's good name, and the public was not so easily fooled.



After the GM bankruptcy, Saab was sold to the tiny Dutch car-maker *Spyker Cars NV*, with finance from Russian businessman Vladimir Antonov, who allegedly has connections to organized crime.

Spyker Cars then announced that it had sold 54% of Saab to two Chinese companies, *Pang Da Automobile Trade Co* and *Zhejiang Youngman Lotus Automobile*. However, the Chinese government has yet to approve the deal and no funds have been paid over.

In September 2011, Saab filed for bankruptcy protection for the second time in less than 3 years. The aim was to keep the company alive until Chinese government approval for the purchase was received.

We wish Saab well, but we won't be buying one of their cars anytime soon. And neither should you •

How Saabs die

Most Saab owners have a love-hate relationship with their cars. Matt Hickman's story is pretty typical:

"On the side of Alligator Alley, at mile marker 43, I sat in the dry, prickly grass calling roadside assistance. Thirty feet in front of me, she sat, silent and forlorn....perhaps the best looking broken down car I've ever seen, with her clean 3 spoke alloys, armor-alled bumpers, and glistening 12 year old paint...

Moments earlier I was driving in serene comfort...sunroof open, sipping on a Cherry Coke Zero, listening to March Madness on Sirius radio, with the cruise set at 82 mph. Suddenly, the car jerked and popped out of 5th gear...the tach needle lay limp, telling me all I needed to know. Turning on my hazard lights, I steered across the rumble strips and into the grass, away from harm. I gave the key one more turn – just to quench my remaining shred of hope. She gave her last half hearted groan and that was it. The Saab met its bitter end in South Florida, due to a seized engine.

I had [just] invested a \$500 in the car to replace some leaking axle seals, so I was pretty mad about that, knowing that it was essentially \$500 wasted. For me, \$500 is a considerable amount of money, but oddly, I wasn't all that concerned about it. With nothing on my hands but time (and a fair amount of grease) my mind drifted to the journeys that took place in my Saab: the blissful post-purchase drive from Atlanta, the countless ventures through Tennessee's windy back roads, the long hauls to the beach culminating with the intoxicating aroma of ocean air, the kamikaze journey to Kansas and back in a weekend, dates – good ones and bad ones – the drive to South Florida with my life packed in the trunk, and its final journey to Miami that ended 50 miles too short.



Considering that this was the 5th time the car had been towed, my relationship with this car could be defined as love-hate. But despite the frustration, its untimely end was sad."

