

# Ask Ronny

by Ronny Shaver @ Ronny's Garage

Answering Your Questions About Classic Car Care Service And Restoration

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## To Restore Or Not To Restore

by Ronny Shaver

First, I would like to thank Santos Guerra and Tony Handler for hosting a great technical event that covered Santos' concours award winning restoration of his Bentley Continental. Included in the presentation were many photos, hints and personal experiences (good and not so good) involved in the process. The quality of the restoration displayed an incredible amount of dedication to detail and originality not often found today. Few people are willing to spend the time and money required for this level of restoration but the reward is evident in the beauty of the car. Kudos to Santos. [1]

Many people ask me what it would cost to restore their car, I always ask them what kind of restoration they want and usually get the answer "not concours quality but nice and I don't want to spend too much". What does that really mean? If you talk to any two different people you will most likely get two different answers. Some think that a shiny new paint job constitutes a "restoration". Others believe that a good polish on the paint and dye job on the interior defines a "restoration". Even more, some think that unless the car is completely disassembled and reassembled with everything plated, painted and or replaced it hasn't really been "restored". According to my dictionary, "restoration is the act of returning something to its original or usable and functioning condition". So essentially, one must bring a car back to "new" or "original" state. With all of that in mind, how would I answer the original question?

Here's my usual approach, I first review the customer's intended use for the car. Will it be Sunday go to church driven, daily driven with modern updates, driven only to car shows to be judged for quality of restoration (please remember there are many different levels of concours competition), or will it be restored for investment reasons? Some people restore cars because a close relative had the car for years and was never able to realize their dream of restoring it.

Once the reason is determined then we can move on to the customer's definition of their "restoration" which usually is dictated by budgetary concerns and condition of the car as it sits. Present value of the car and potential value after any restoration processes should always be of concern. For someone to spend \$75k for a cosmetic restoration on a car that will only be worth \$45k when done hardly makes sense unless the person loves the car and plans to enjoy it for years to come. For someone to have a car that is worth only \$20k as it sits because of a poor cosmetic condition which may be worth \$50k in perfect condition, then spend \$20k on an inferior paint job and interior job may be surprised that the car is not worth that maximum \$50k value because of the lower quality work. So sometimes improperly restoring a car can actually make it lose some value. Of course, if the car is rare and desirable, then a proper restoration is necessary to preserve all the value in the car. It is always much better for someone to leave a precious car in its original condition than to "butcher" it with an inferior restoration. Sorry, but I have strong opinions about this subject.

After budgets and intentions are determined, a game plan for the restoration needs to be set up. Things to be included in the game plan are estimated time lines for the work, payment plans, paint color and interior material choices and so on. One important thing to remember is that estimates for time and costs are still only estimates. Taking a car apart will always reveal unknown problems. Many times removing all the paint on a car uncovers serious rust issues or previous collision damage. Another important issue is that

chrome plating parts involves completely disassembling every part (door-locks, handles, grille shells, lamp assemblies) and reassembling these parts after plating is sometimes very time consuming since plating usually adds material to parts making them not fit properly without filing/grinding. Performing just a cosmetic restoration will also involve many parties including paint and body workers, interior trim workers, platers and polishers, wood fabricators and refinishers, glass installers, pin-stripers, not to mention the people disassembling and assembling the car. Sometimes special order parts are delayed or even worse have to be fabricated. Whenever there are so many parties involved problems will arise. Patience and persistence are key attributes in any restoration process, not to mention funds and time.

I hope this little article will answer some questions and also pose some for anyone thinking of "restoring" a car.

Thank you for the questions and keep them coming. Please send your questions to Ronny at [ronnyshaver@ronnysgarage.com](mailto:ronnyshaver@ronnysgarage.com).

Happy Motoring!  
Ronny

[1]. Rolls-Royce Owners' Club - Southern California Region, Restoration Seminar June 2012 (YouTube video) 1960 Bentley S2 Continental Mulliner Restoration at <http://youtu.be/A8s6qiFRqxA>