"Rearview Mirror"*

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I woke up this morning, and as usual, YouTube was on my television screen. And the video that was playing was titled, “The REAL Cause Behind Stellantis Disaster (Fiat, Maserati, and Vauxhall Are Collapsing). That caught my attention. “Why?” you might ask. The reason is simple. Stellantis is the parent company of four legendary American automotive brands: Chrysler, Dodge, Jeep, and Ram. These are four brands that almost each and every one of us are passionate about. And this Stellantis mess has the potential to drag down each and every brand down with it.

Over the years, other legendary brands within the traditional Chrysler family have died. Through most of our lifetimes, we can immediately think of two, possibly three. First, for the traditionalists, we think of two; DeSoto (1961) and Plymouth (2001). For guys like me and editor Frank Pascoe, we throw in Eagle as well. This was the short-lived brand that came out of Chrysler’s acquisition of American Motors in 1987, in an effort to integrate the AMC dealer body into the Chrysler family of brands. And its death was almost as if by design. After Jeep, the AMC dealer body was the second-most valuable asset that Chrysler acquired along with its lean platform development teams.

Then about a decade later, came the disastrous Daimler-Chrylser “merger of equals” between Chrysler and Daimler-Benz. This event that nearly wrecked the company until it was rescued by Fiat in a process that started in 2009 and completed in 2014. Fiat was lucky, led by its charismatic CEO Sergio Marchionne, in that with clear product focus and ruthless cost-cutting efforts, Fiat Chrysler Automobiles (FCA) survived and even prospered under his leadership. Overall product quality improved; Ram, now a separate division, thrived; and Jeep sales skyrocketed, powered by being in exactly the right place at the right time as the SUV and crossover boom accelerated.

Back in 2009, I wrote an editorial titled “In Defense of… The Jeep Jinx” for the website *The Truth About Cars (bit.ly/RT2009JeepJinx).* There I outlined the fact that up to that point, seven different companies had controlled the Jeep brand; Willys (defunct, sold to Kaiser in 1953), Kaiser-Jeep (defunct, sold to American Motors in 1970), Renault (acquired a controlling interest in AMC in 1980), Chrysler (absorbed by Chrysler in 1987), Daimler-Chrysler (divested itself of the Chrysler Group in 2007), Cerberus (bailed on Chrysler in its run-up to Chrysler’s Chapter 11 bankruptcy), and Fiat (took over control of Chrysler in 2012). To this list it looks like we can add Stellantis, formed out of the merger between FCA and Peuogot completed in 2021.

On paper, Stellantis looked by a bold move that created the world’s third or fourth-largest automotive group (depending upon who was counting) that would ensure Chrysler’s long-term survival. And for the better part of a decade, it looked like a great move. In 2024, Stellantis generated a group profit of $6 billion. But in 2025, the wheels literally fell off, swinging to a loss of more than $26 billion… an absolute catastrophe. Why?

Why? For starters, Stellantis has too many brands, 14 in all, with several now on life support, Chrysler included. All are starved of funds needed to develop new models. Ram has lost its way, much of it due in part to the decision to abandon the Hemi V-8, a move currently being reversed. Dodge, after what was basically a government-mandated product shift to EVs, has faltered with sales down significantly. And Jeep, facing competition from all quarters, especially from South Korea, made the ill fated decision to launch full-sized SUVs—the Wagoneer and Grand Wagoneer—on a Ram body-on-frame, not a Jeep unitized platform.

Now the question, as traditional Chrysler enthusiasts, is whether all four brands can survive?

I don’t think so, at least not in their present forms. After a three-decade-long effort to consolidate the dealer body under the Chrysler-Dodge-Jeep-Ram umbrella, Chrysler looks to be a goner, and there is serious concern that Dodge will follow. Ram and Jeep will survive, but quite possibly with a different corporate parent, Hyundai-Kia perhaps? Time will tell. But the next 24 months promise to be extremely interesting.