



Motor - December 1986

TYPECAST by David Vivian

There are D-types and there are D-types. Those made by Jaguar won Le Mans three times in a row and are worth up to half a million. Those made by Lynx cars look, perform and sound the same for a more modest investment



It is doubtful if there are words to accurately describe the way a 4.2-litre Lynx D-type sounds on the overrun. If they exist, I don't know what they are. A stricken Flying Fortress in a spiralling, tumbling dive into oblivion is one aural image that springs to mind. A sperm whale dying of terminal flatulence is another, though such things strike me as being no easier to put into words than the exhaust note. So I won't try.

Of the sound's effect on those who hear it, however, I can tell you two things. First, it makes you go ever so slightly deaf. Second, if you allow the exhaust to let rip under a bridge or sandwiched between two brick walls, you can almost feel the pressure waves drum-rolling off your skull.

There are two ways of dealing with this. Either you stuff cotton wool into your ears and look embarrassed at being the focal point of so much unseemly noise, or you stuff your head into an embarrassing hat-a leather flying cap and goggles is traditional-and revel in time spent with Lynx's stunningly faithful replica of what many regard to be the greatest of all post-war sports cars: the D-type Jaguar.

These are the choices. Like the real thing, the Lynx offers no compromises, none of the creature comforts even the driver of a Lotus Seven would take for granted. There, is no heater, no roof. If it rains you get wet, if it's cold you freeze. The blaring, guttural exhaust noise is a constant and garrulous companion. Should you ever feel like reaching for the "volume" knob to turn it down you know the Lynx is not for you. It's driving undiluted. Every journey stings the senses like smelling salts; cuts through mental fogg with the measured menace of a machete, makes your eyes water.

To own a Lynx with conviction is to believe that being cold is invigorating, wearing clothes heavy with rainwater is refreshing, and announcing your presence with a perfectly tuned raspberry is a social grace. According to the Lynx order book, at least three people every year become solemn adherents to this philosophy. What's more, they pay the best part of £50,000 for the privilege and have to wait six months for delivery. You've probably twigged. The Lynx D-type isn't very much of a hardship. What people queuing for a bus feel as you rumble by, blue-nosed and grinning isn't sympathy but envy. What they can't see is just as evocative: a fighter-like cockpit-all bare aluminium and pop rivets, precision toggle switches and exposed black relay boxes. You almost feel you should tap the glass-faced dials into flickering life like a WWII Spitfire ace preparing to do battle. They're big and plainly marked, never more than the flick of an eye away from your low line of sight. The important ones you can see through the gentle arc of the large laminated wood-rim steering wheel which -like every other part of the D-type save for the engine, the transmission and the suspension-is made in-house by a highly skilled and motivated workforce.



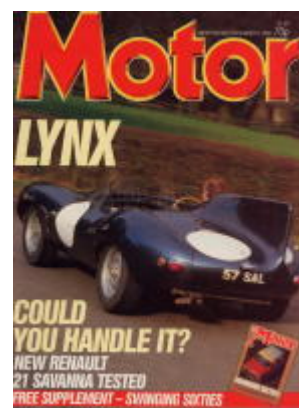
Each wheel takes a week to make, which seems excessive only to someone who hasn't spent 150 hours fashioning the nose section from flat sheets of aluminium. Today's D-type customers don't have a pressing date with the 24 Heures du Mans and Lynx don't mind taking all the time they need to get it right. The switches are sited on those parts of the black-crackle dash not occupied by dials or warning lights-a layout which eschews ergonomics for a plainer logic. They wear no labels, as if to intimidate the first-timer, but work with crisp precision. More significantly, they mirror Jaguar's original design with an authenticity that somehow transcends the merely tangible. Like Rubenstein performing Beethoven, there is more to a polished recital than playing the notes in the right order. And the D-type is a harder act to reproduce in spirit than it is in form.



The D-type. What is there to say that hasn't already been said? It won Le Mans three times in a row after nearly tasting victory first time out in 1954. It was, and is, one of the most dramatically beautiful sports cars ever made. And, of course, it spawned the E-type which distilled the essential elements of its design into the greatest road-going sports car of its day. In the Lynx, the E-type repays its debt to an illustrious forebear. An immensely strong aluminium monocoque centre section-virtually identical to that shared by D and E-carries E-type subframes fore and aft and on to this structure is bolted the E-type's all-independent suspension, dohc straight-six XK engine (3.8 or 4.2 litres) and 4-speed transmission, an alloy header tank, a special wide base lower wishbone at the rear, a shortened propshaft and a foam-filled alloy petrol tank. The Lynx is considerably lighter than the E-type, and the suspension is modified accordingly. Lynx remove one of the pair of coil springs on

each side, and fit Koni dampers all round. The original D-type, of course, used a live axle. Braking is also improved, with discs- supplanting the rear drums-a twin servo and a split circuit.

The crowning glory, however, is the hand-made alloy bodywork fashioned by Lynx, using traditional equipment which allows them to undertake double-curvature sheet metal work. This is famously time- consuming, but the Hastings-based company has recently doubled its working space to increase throughput and this will reduce delivery for the D-type from 18 months to six months. Making the monocoque in batches and





equipping each working bay with its own, dedicated parts store should further streamline the operation. Even so, the time and effort expended on the manufacture of the monocoque and the body represents more than half the total cost of production. In all, 63 D-types were made by Jaguar, not all of which survive. Some that do live in California, where they can swap hands for up to £500,000 or as much as an original Ferrari GTO. There are more valuable cars, but most of them are static exhibits in museums. Even ex- Weslake engineer Guy Black-a confessed D-type fanatic - couldn't have foreseen the price explosion when he formed Lynx Cars in 1969. Back then, Lynx were the acknowledged experts in the restoration and refurbishment of Cs and Ds. It wasn't until 1973, that the company decided actually to revive the classic old-timer. In the ensuing decade about 30 have been made, both long and short nose, and some from kits in the early days (no longer offered). Demand for the ready-built item, however, is stronger than ever, and with good reason. If you bought a Lynx D-type for £15,000 in 1977 it would fetch about£38,000 today. Like the real thing, the Lynx more than holds its value.

"57 SAL", a slightly wrinkled but utterly beautiful metallic turquoise long-nose, was bought by Lynx from a heartbroken owner who couldn't really afford it. We can sympathise. It totes a 4.2-litre XK unit with an easy-breathing big-valve head and an alleged 300 bhp. Believe it; SAL is a brutally fast car. Prod the accelerator hard in first and the car displaces itself fifty yards in space. It thumps a hole in the air and fills it with the bark of its fast disappearing exhaust. With little more than a ton to propel through the air, it gets to 60mph in 5.3 sec and 100 mph in 13.1 sec. The Porsche 911 Turbo driver who takes on this Jaguar is sadly misguided. But for the meagre traction afforded by the large yet slim Dunlops covering its 15in alloy wheels - original-size 16 inchers are now the order of the day at Lynx - SAL would be quicker still; maybe even capable of cracking the 5 second barrier to 60mph. Certainly, away from the artificial sadism of Millbrook's mile straight, It feels every bit as rapid as a Testarossa or an Aston Zagato. Its ability to cover each of the 20 mph increments between 30 and 90 mph in top in little more than four seconds apiece probably explains why.



On the road, the Lynx hauls in the horizon as if it was attached to a high-speed winch. Given half a chance, its bulbous snout devours short straights with an almost savage disdain. Once moving, you can barely trust your senses: the solid shove in the back should warn you, but until you've matched your rhythm to the car's, bends arrive too fast, brakes are worked too hard. They don't seem to mind, remaining firm, powerful and seemingly unfadeable.



For lovers of the twin-cam straight-six, the Lynx is a kind of Valhalla. It grumbles, it spits, it howls, and it grunts. But above everything is a mechanical purity you won't find anywhere else, a euphony that contrasts starkly with the sharp, metallic edge of an Italian V12. There's an alluring gentility, too. Snick. the stubby machined aluminium gear knob forward into first, ease out the meaty but progressive clutch and the Lynx trickles off at idle into the lethargy of the rush hour. Into second, then third; the shift is easy and fluid, the engine smooth and strong without the sense of frenzy that often accompanies latent fury. Capable of pushing the D-type through the air at over 160mph? Almost certainly, though SAL's particular gearing suggested a rev-limited top-end of around 150mph. It's enough. The D-types at Le Mans could brush 200 mph, but SAL was suffering from a worn limited slip differential when we drove it which invariably precipitated a worrying weave to the left when the throttle was eased. That said, grip was never found wanting and the steering made up in feel for what it lacked in precision- and that wasn't much. The Lynx was beautifully neutral in fast sweeps and, in tighter bends-that legendary D-type "driftability" had been preserved, too. All this and a decent ride.

The Lynx D-type is one of those rare cars that shakes up your emotions and rides roughshod over rationality. It leaves you aching with desire and spouting nonsense. After a brief ride in the passenger seat, Mr Art Editor

Parkin was seen sitting in a quiet corner of the office muttering "I must have one, I must have one". Poor deluded soul.

Now, who'll lend me fifty grand until lunch time?