



Classic & Sports Car – March 1995

S-TRANGER ON THE SHORE by Martin Buckley



Strange maybe, but true. Finally, someone has worked over Jaguar's Cinderella saloon into a twin-turbo, 300bhp roadburner. Martin Buckley drives Lynx's ultimate S-type before it heads east

Poor old S-type Jag. Living in the shadow of a feted father - the MkII - means that history has sometimes treated this less sporting compact Jaguar unfairly. Few these days appreciate its greater sophistication over the MkII (E-type derived IRS and the much improved steering mean it handles and rides better) but see only a heavier, slower, uglier car short on sporting pedigree, high on fat-

guttured '60s executive appeal.

Nostalgia has clouded the issue but, in the '60s, the S-type was widely acknowledged as being the better car. Eclipsed by its progenitor, outshone by its offspring (the brilliant XI), no wonder the '63 S-type was rarely viewed as a potential basis for a contemporary wood and leather hot-rod: only one Coombs 'S' was ever built and I know of no racing S-types in period.

So when Lynx, best-known for its D-types, rebuilt and re-engineered an S-type into a twin-turbo, 300bhp, 145mph roadburner for a mystery customer the editorial ears pricked up. Tweaked MkIIs and hot XJs have come and gone, but a blown version of Jaguar's Cinderella saloon had to be worth a look.

"The customer wanted us to build an S-type still with a '60s feel but with modern usability and performance. He wanted a unique car too, so there won't be any more like this," says Lynx managing director John Mayston-Taylor, who has lived with this oddball project from the day the rusty base car - imported from Sweden - arrived at the Lynx workshops near Hastings a little over a year ago.

Eight hundred colour prints tell the story of not only the brain-damage refurbishment but the thorough and thoughtful reworking, using modern technology, of the original design. We're talking huge money here.

The engine is the car's crowning glory. The classic 3.8-litre XK powerhouse - balanced and gas-flowed of course - fitted with twin, matched Garrett T25 blowers in the name of lusty low rpm pick-up.

There is a big, bespoke intercooler mounted under the front bumper: aesthetically questionable but the only place left. The twin SU carbs were junked in favour of injection, a modified twin-plenum set-up from the Series III XJ. Even with the boost turned down relatively low (1.2 bar, about 12psi) the unit easily produces the required 300bhp Mr X set as a lower limit. There is plenty more to come if he wants it, perhaps 400bhp, but as it stands there are no worries about reliability or the strength of the drivetrain. Torque is a colossal 365lb ft produced at an amazingly low 2500rpm - a corollary of the long-stroke design of the XK.

With twin turbos blowing in that cramped engine bay, cooling was seen as a potentially major problem. Taking no chances, Lynx fitted three electric fans - one behind the grille, one in the driver's-side wheel arch blowing on the turbochargers and one on the underside of the bonnet, sucking hot air out through the louvred bonnet. The water pump and radiator are beefed up and the lubrication system has been enhanced with an oil cooler. It also has cooling jets which spray onto the bottom of the piston crowns - a nifty touch.

With handsome polished alloy cam covers the presentation is magnificent, the big lump and its ancillaries filling every inch of the engine bay, even with the inner wings cut away to liberate extra space.

Urge goes through a competition clutch to the usual four-speed Jaguar gearbox with over-drive, the synchro' beefed up to take the increased power. Running a high 3.77:1 ratio, the limited slip diff is standard S-type: 4000rpm in overdrive top is around 100mph.

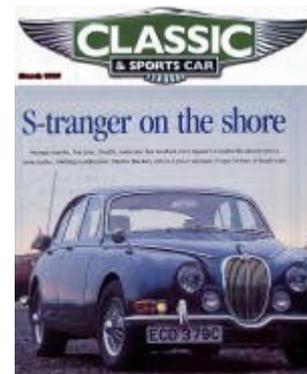
Brakes are bigger of course, larger diameter vented rotors gripped by impressive four-piston AP lightweight racing calipers, but the steering is merely a reworked version of the old Burman box: "The original power steering was awful," says Mayston-Taylor, "so we left it disconnected." With the engine bay so tightly packed, converting to XJ-type rack and pinion steering was unfortunately not on the cards.

Stiffer anti-roll bars and uprated Konis and coil springs all round firm up the handling, while 6in E-type VI 2 chrome wires, shod with 215/70x15 Dunlop SP Sports, give better grip and traction than the original equipment: they are stronger too. At the back the track is increased by two inches by fitting modified XJS wishbones and driveshafts. The rear arches are cut away, Coombs-style, to accommodate.

Inside, you snuggle down into modified Xf40 front seats (with six-way adjustment and retrimmed to match the back seat) and survey a cossetting cabin stuffed with the latest labour-savers: power windows, central locking, electric sunroof and a Sony radio cassette, with a CD changer in the boot.

There is an electric tilt-slide sunroof, air-conditioning (the heat/fridge unit in the boot, compressor driven from the engine) and a high-tech Philips alarm which closes all four windows automatically.

Modern Racetech gauges - mounted in the standard positions - keep tabs on the wellbeing of that megabucks engine and there's a big E-type style wood-rimmed wheel.





The cabin makes up for in equipment what it lacks in taste: the magnolia hide, piped in blue with dark-blue Wilton carpet to match, is a bit bright and gaudy to my eyes - not to mention difficult to keep clean - but what Mr X wants, Mr X gets: he's signing the cheques. Some of the period dynamic feel of the S-type has been successfully retained. The heavy clutch with its smooth progressive bite: the long throws and notchy action of the gearbox, with its slight first-gear whine; even the rush and rustle of wind around imperfectly-sealed quarterlights is redolent of every '60s Jag you've ever driven.

Beyond this there is an immediate impression of greater tightness as you move off down the road, and much firmer suspension as the Dunlops thud and shudder on Catseyes. Twiddle the steering: around-centre slop and wander has gone but without assistance low-speed manoeuvring tones the upper biceps.

Performance, though, is very '90s, a great surge of energy delivered evenly and smoothly, without a hint of lag or off-boost languor: a solid wall of big-hearted power that guarantees to be on tap all the time.

Pulling away from rest smoothly needs care though, as Lynx has not yet perfected the progressive twin throttle-body accelerator linkage: you can't balance it by ear and anything less than 1500rpm on the dial means you will be doing kangaroo hops up the road.

The turbos spin hard from 2000rpm onwards, and you can hear their ghostly whoosh clearly above the double-barrelled growl of the XK that revs so keenly right around to 6000rpm. You need very little throttle movement such is the engine's huge torque, just an inch or so for the engine to start climbing onto its long flat power curve, no matter what the gear. 3500rpm is usually enough and against the cerebral stopwatch 0-60mph feels in the order of 7 secs, maybe less.

If anything, the performance seems more cogent in top than it does in the intermediates when the gearing lets the revs run out too quickly. It's at its best on a long straight when just a twitch of throttle lifts the nose and squirts the S off into the middle distance, the pick-up between 70 and 100mph in overdrive top being especially potent. None of this is at the expense of particularly rabid fuel consumption, which is in the normal 15-18mpg range of a stock 3.8 S-type.

Roll, understeer and lots of tyre squeal are the main distinguishing factors of a standard S-type cornering quickly - anybody who's seen The Sweeney will know what I mean - but this one is different. Stiffer at both ends, it doesn't understeer so powerfully and simply holds its line better through any given corner, with steering that - while not especially sensitive or high-g geared - doesn't load up in the way a normal unassisted S-type's or MkII's would.

With superbly powerful brakes and well checked roll it feels fast and confident in a way no '60s Jaguar saloon ever did, rarely losing its step or composure. Those modern seats hold you far better than the bench-like originals too, so you don't have to scrabble so madly against the cornering forces.

The colossal final bill for this ultimate S-type remains secret but you can bet the customer, a major collector who has controlled the whole project through agents, won't bat an eyelid. I could think of better ways of spending the money but as a technology showcase for Lynx - a kind of four-seater, four-door D-type - the car is undeniably superb.

