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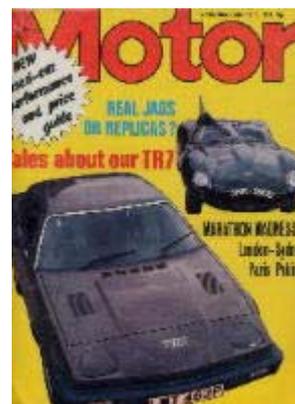
RETRO ROCKET

Lynx's Jaguar D-Type replica provides a potent (165 mph) £15,000 flashback to the glorious past.



OCCASIONALLY a racing car appears that is not only successful but has a certain something that rapidly makes it a classic, one of the all-time greats. This was certainly true of the D-type Jaguar. Not only did it win Le Mans three times on the trot (and damned near won it first time out as well, in 1954) but it was sensationally beautiful as well. In the present era of great fat bald tyres, wings, wedges and mid-ship engines there is still nothing quite like the sight and sound of a D-type in full song, those curves seemingly carved by the wind instead of the laws of mathematical

aerodynamics.



But it was more than that: it was the direct precursor of what many believe to be the greatest mass-produced sports car of all time, the E-type. The latter took the D-type's monocoque tub with spaceframes fore and aft, its wishbone and torsion bar front suspension and of course the magnificent dohc straight-six engine, albeit in detuned and refined form. In shape, too, the E-type looked like a stretched D, in spite of bumpers, windscreens and even a roof on the coupe.

The E-type, however, was much more than just a road-going D-type (the ill-fated XKSS took that role) since, among other differences, it had an independent rear suspension against the D's live axle. Nevertheless the two cars are very closely related.

Only 63 D-types were ever built, and many survive — but they are rare and horribly expensive. Besides which, though they were driven to Le Mans and back in their heyday, they are not the best machine for poodlin' round London. Intractable at low speeds, as the Road Test Team would have it. Not to mention oiling plugs, overheating and other irritations. But wouldn't it be lovely if . . .

Which is where the Lynx comes in. Roger Ludgate and Guy Black run Lynx Engineering, and are D-type fanatics. In fact Lynx Engineering came into being as the experts in the restoration and refurbishment of Cs and Ds— they have a stock of spares worth some £60,000 at the last count. Their compact little establishment has C, D and other Jag parts (including lots of body panels) stored in every nook and cranny, and at any one time you will find three or four cars being worked over — when I was there an XKSS was being lovingly attended to, while over on one side the special body that Michelotti designed and built as a one-off on a D chassis was awaiting restoration. Now there's a rarity . . .

A couple of years back Roger and Guy realised that there weren't enough Ds to go round, and deemed it a good idea to get into the replica business, which is where their D-type comes into the picture. There were two courses they could have followed: build it exactly as the original, or use later model (E-type) bits. To avoid accusations of plagiarism, and also to keep costs down (the prices for genuine D type bits would make your eyes water — even if you could get hold of them) they opted for the second approach. In fact they emphasise that no parts of the Lynx and a real D-type are interchangeable, which is just as well since you could then start getting into one of those "how original is original" sort of arguments...

Thus the wheel has come full circle, from D to E to D again. The basis of the Lynx is their own monocoque, very similar to that of the D and E, with E-type subframes fore and aft modified to fit. The result is a car (in long-nosed form) some 51 in shorter than an E but with a 1 in longer wheelbase than a D. Onto this structure they bolt the standard E-type suspension, engine and transmission except for triple Webbers (the SUs won't fit), an alloy header tank, a special wide-base lower wishbone at the rear, a shortened propshaft and a foam-filled alloy petrol tank. As the Lynx is somewhat lighter than an E-type, mods to the suspension were necessary. Lynx removed one of the pair of coil springs on each side at the rear, and fitted Konis all round. And that's it. On top of all this comes the hand-made alloy bodywork, trimmed with carpet, seats and headrest in matching material. Thus a complete kit (the Lynx comes fully built or as a set of parts) comprises everything so far described plus a host of other bits and pieces (such as the fuel cap access catch assembly, ventilated disc splined wheels and spinners, and throttle linkage assembly plus pedals, to name but a few). However, there are a number of options. Like an XKSS for a further £650 on top of the basic £15,000 for the ready-to-run model or £8,500 for the kit. On the other hand a short-nosed model, with single door and wrap around screen, a curved headrest as on the short nose and a side exhaust cost no more. Or how about a 285 bhp engine for another £890, or even a 320 bhp unit for £1,250? You could always dry-sump it too for a mere £1,800, though an oil cooler only sets you back £140, a set of Dunlop racing tyres and tubes £172, and a hood frame and tonneau cover (where applicable) £395. Alternative colour and trim, gearing and suspension is 'by negotiation'. If you've got the cash, you tailor the specification to suit yourself. Each Lynx should be different, since each customer has his own way. If you want to start with the kit, the Lynx people will give you all the advice and help you need before you start work. And when you've finished to their satisfaction, they will give you a gold-plated red-enamelled Lynx badge. WE HAD the opportunity to try two Lynxes, the first a customer car being readied for export to the States, the other the two-year old, 50,000 miles plus prototype 'hack', for want of a better word. The first gave a good idea of the standards of finish, the latter what such a machine would be like to live with. And I could, I could . . .



Since most of our mileage was put on the older car, it is that which I will talk about. The car itself is used daily by Roger Ludgate and has just been fitted with a rather special engine. It is basically a 3.8 litre unit taken out to 4 litre with the aid of an unusual set of pistons. It has been blue-printed and fully balanced with a lightened flywheel, straightened rods, the head has been gas-flowed, D-type valves are fitted and the cam is such as to give a respectable performance on the track yet leave the car driveable on the road. The triple Webbers had been set for the same operating conditions, while the exhaust manifold is



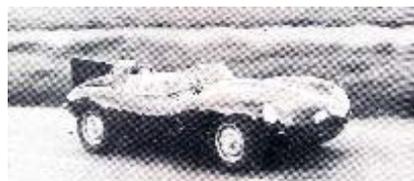
standard — a racing system would have left no room for your feet. Guy reckons it produces about 295 bhp gross, which, with a weight of about a ton, gives the car a startling performance.

"Rocket off the line" is a road test cliché, but in this case it's quite applicable. Popping the clutch at 4000 rpm gave times to 60 mph of an average 5.6 sec, which is quick in anyone's terms. We have tested quicker cars, but they've all had bigger engines too — like Colin Clarke's Lola, the GT40, or a 7 litre Cobra. So the Lynx is in good company: it's quicker to 60 mph than a Ferrari Berlinetta Boxer, a Porsche turbo and is only equalled by the Lamborghini Countach.

Obviously the car is set up to Roger's liking, but we would have preferred a little less performance in return for a little more refinement: more road, less race, as it were. Not that it was temperamental: on the contrary, it would quite happily poodle along in traffic, provided you could find a fairly open stretch now and then just to clear the plugs and bring the temperature down a little — not that either was a problem, for Roger commutes into the centre of London in it. Given that it is in near-enough race tune, the Lynx was remarkably tractable and vice-free in traffic. The sort of thing we didn't care for, though, was the way it would hesitate and fluff when exiting from a roundabout at normal traffic-flow speeds.

But of course town work is not what the Lynx is all about. It really comes into its own at speeds way above the legal limit—it is the open road car par excellence. With plenty of throttle and revs the air flow through those Webers sorts itself out and then — pow! It is ridiculously easy to see 130 mph, 140 mph plus is there for the asking if you're brave enough, while this particular car is geared to give about 165 mph at the red-lined 5500 rpm, which it will pull. But that incredible surge from 100 mph on just has to be experienced to be believed...

With such a high mileage on the clock the gearchange was nicely loosened up and generally lovely except that third baulked quite badly — we reckon we could have lopped an easy second off the 0-100 i-nph time if the box fitted to the customer car had been installed. But the clutch was smooth, light and progressive, as was the throttle linkage, and we soon adapted to the change so that driving the Lynx smoothly was quite easy, unlike some near-racers we've tried.



To go with the performance is handling to match. Again this particular car was on racing covers, which tended to 'tram-line' on any slight ridge, but they did have plenty of grip. It was very satisfying to power the Lynx through corners, holding the car in a neutral power-on attitude and feeding in yet more throttle to disappear rapidly down the next straight. There is plenty of feel from the traditional wood-rimmed, large diameter steering wheel, as well as a fair bit of kick-back over the bumpy bits. It's a doddle to play at being Moss or Hawthorn . . . Mind you, the ride is something else again, notably at low speeds, for you can feel every ridge, bump and ripple in the road. Once you get

properly on the move, though, it's tolerable. I doubt if the original was as good.

If you want to carry luggage forget it. There's no space. And as each car is tailored to its owner, there's no such thing as a moveable seat. Having said that, the Dron (who's tall) managed to fit himself in, despite the lack of legroom. I needed a cushion behind me, but the others all seemed reasonably comfortable. About the only area where more room would not come amiss is around the feet, for the pedals are close together and there's no room either side.

On full throttle it gets VERY LOUD, so you tend to keep a wary eye open for the lads in blue, but what a lovely noise! You can have your high-pitched Cosworth screams — give me the bellow of a good straight six anytime.

As you would expect for the price tag, the finish is superb. All brightly polished, gleaming alloy under the bonnet, mirror-shine paintwork outside, and those lovingly crafted panels with nary a flaw in sight. That's what quality is all about . . .

Few exotcars excite me, since I seem to spend most of my time waiting for something to break, but the Lynx was an exception. I fell in love with it the first time I saw it, and the affair continues. It still excites me even now that it's gone. And I'm not the only one. The Dron, Tony Scott and Rex Greenslade, still haven't stopped grinning and wiping flies off their teeth . . .

PERFORMANCE CHECK

	Lynx	3.8 E-type
0-30	2.4	2.6
0-40	3.3	3.8
0-50	4.3	5.6
0-60	5.6	7.1
0-70	6.8	8.7
0-80	8.3	11.1
0-90	11.5	13.4
0-100	13.9	15.9
0-110	17.1	19.9
0-120	21.7	24.2
Max (mph)	165*	149.1

* estimated