



## Autocar - December 1986

GENUINE ENJOYMENT by Mike McCarthy



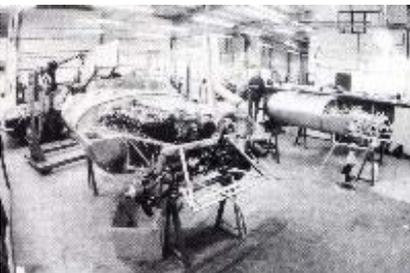
No, it isn't the real thing, of course, but the sensations it provides are every bit as good, as Mike McCarthy discovered after a day spent posing and performing in the Lynx D-type Jaguar.

What you see here is a fake, a fraud, a con, a rip-off. It is not the Real Thing.

On the other hand, it ain't 'arf fun, Mum.

Question is, though, how do you react to it? A quick poll conducted from the driver's seat while in a Lynx D-type indicated that 90 per

cent of the British public regard it as (a) too damn noisy for its own good, and it should be banned forthwith along with immigrants and ghetto blasters (alternatively; the owner is a capitalist millionaire and come the revolution . . .) or (b) it's a cute little old crock and why can't we have one Bert? or (c) wot-is-it-then-eh? The odd 10 per cent who are motoring enthusiasts ask is it a replica or real, and either way isn't it sensational and how much does it cost? On the whole, it seems the Great British Public tends to approve in a typically British mild way: it's obviously something eccentric, isn't it, and we always smile indulgently at eccentrics, don't we?



The question of replicas among the cognoscenti can be a vexatious one. On the one hand you have the traditionalists who regard them as an abomination, a fake, a fraud, etc. They are, though, in a minority. The much more common approach is free-wheeling - it looks good, tastes good, and by golly must do you some good whether as a driver or a bystander, so who gives a damn whether it's genuine or not?

Me? I think I'm more baffled and confused than ever. I used to believe that if replicas were good cars - and that was the sole criterion - then why not? After all, if

you can't afford a genuine Picasso, then why not buy a signed, limited edition print? It's all quite acceptable in the art world.



But just lately things have happened to make me think again. For a start, replicas began to be replicated at such a rate that it began to debase the currency. Not the actual value in currency terms — I suspect that, if anything, the originals have gone up in price thanks to the copies — but in scarcity and the excitement on seeing one. There's a severe case of Cobra-itis hitting us at the moment, and the chances are, if you see one on the road, it's a replica. They're even allowing certain replicas, brand-new cars, into historic racing . . . And, at a classic car show earlier this year, there was a genuine XKSS Jaguar on display, and they had to stick a sign on it saying 'This is the real thing' — it was surrounded by other C and D-type fakes which simply made one of the most exciting cars ever look common as muck.

Rather more serious — and it isn't just a matter of taste—is that some of the replicas are exact copies of the original. On the surface, a good thing — if you're going to copy why not copy exactly and recapture the true feeling of the machine? But what happens if somewhere along the line a genuine chassis plate appears on the copy? That is fraud, pure and simple. It has already happened. Want to bet that, within say five years, there's going to be a big court case over just such a matter?

All of which, however, became so much nonsense the minute I climbed behind the wheel of Lynx's D-type demonstrator. The fact is, you see, that it's a truly sensational machine that has you gurgling with delight within a couple of hundred yards.

A bit of background. Back in the early '70s, Guy Black left Westlake engineering to set up Lynx in a restructured barn (actually a milking parlour) down in Staplehurst which was at the time more barn than restructure. In 1974 I was the first to venture out in a Lynx D-type, the very first off, so you can say I've grown up with them. That first trip didn't last very long because the car had been finished in a great damn hurry, and we only got a little way down the road when there was a clonk and we came to an abrupt halt. A drive-shaft had fallen off. That short trip, though, was enough to have me addicted to the car for life. Strange but true.



Guy had started Lynx as a restoration business, and after rebuilding a C-type found his reputation for good, solid workmanship brought him a fair amount of business which gradually led to his specialising in C and D-types. However, the number of Cs and Ds ever built was limited, and they're not the sort of car you leave in for a 10,000 miles service. Guy had built up a goodly set of stores, and — more important — his company had the expertise to make those beautiful compound curvature body panels and that complex tub. The step to producing replicas was logical. Enter the Lynx.

Guy could have gone the exact copy route, but he then would have been accused of plagiarism, the genuine bits (or new ones to D-type pattern) were expensive, and anyway car developments had improved enormously since the 1950s. The E-type, for example, had been derived





from the D-type but was fitted with a superb independent rear suspension. Logical step number two: base the car on E-type components. No accusations of plagiarism, cheap components from donor E-types, and—in theory —better road manners.

And that's basically the form to this day. Lynx makes the aluminium tub, body, subframes front and rear (plus such items as those so evocative wheels and the steering wheel) and then bolts on E-type suspension and brakes with a choice of E-type engines, 3.8 or 4.2 litre. Which all sounds very easy but isn't: the monocoque, for example, is assembled using aircraft techniques, while it takes one man over 150 hours to produce the nose section using traditional equipment — in fact so much time is spent on the manufacture of these components that the operation represents more than half the total cost of production. Each car is, of course, tailored to suit individual customers, and you have a choice of which particular D-type you want, long or short nose, single or double screen, even an XKSS version. To date it has made 31 D-types, and Guy and partner Chris Keith-Lucas have just moved into larger premises to cope with the demand. They have also just laid down a further batch of 10, so if you want one put your order in now. Mind you, a Lynx D-type starts at £43,000, so I don't think there'll be a long queue.

Lynx, of course, doesn't just make D-types. There's the Eventer, the estate version of the XJS, a car as beautiful as the XJS is ugly, and the XJS Spyder for those who don't like Jaguar's own half-and-half cabriolet. It also chops tops off Porsche 928s and Mercedes-Benz 500SECs, still restores cars, and has a fair amount of sub-contract work in industry in general. The day we were there it was working on an auxiliary power unit for an airship. It was all very high-tech, with large quantities of titanium all over the place, but hidden within the structure was — a Citroen Dyane engine . . .



But back to the D-type. You know it's not the real thing because there's plenty of foot room and length via bigger footwells even for the passengers, which will astonish those who have passengered in the Real Thing. In fact there was rather more length than was really desirable for me, and the heel of my shoe kept slipping on the bare metal floor so that my foot was bent backwards. Very uncomfortable. Lynx has the answer—you can specify a bar across the floor on which to rest the heel. That's what's meant by 'tailor made'.

Turn the key to 'on', press the starter button, and immediately there's that bark from behind. You can have your Mozarts and Beethovens —or even your turbo-thingies, for that matter: there is nothing, nothing, like the sound of a well-tuned straight six. Did they have a special exhaust system just to make that gorgeous noise, I asked. Chris went into a long spiel which boiled down to 'Yes'.

The engine is a fairly tweaky 4.2 litre, giving some 300 odd bhp, via hot cams, big Webbers and big valves, which means that at low revs you have to feed in the throttle somewhat carefully if you're not to get any cough-splutter-gulp. In fact it will pull from ridiculously low revs sans temperament for what is basically a semi-racing engine, and never dies on you, but in traffic for example you just need to pay that little extra attention with the right foot.

Get it away from traffic, though, out on to lonely deserted country lanes and you fall instantly, joyously in love, an affair that will last a lifetime if you've a drop of enthusiasm in you. From about 2000rpm on, the torque from the Jaguar straight six picks you up and wallops you into the next county as quick as blink. The clutch copes quite happily with stop-start motoring — light, smooth take-up, no problems — but when you want to change gear in a hurry it behaves like a racing unit, in-and-out instantly. The gear-change, via a diddy little lever right to where your left hand moves automatically, is equally superb: you just grab it, dip the clutch, point it in the right direction, shove and thunk, it's in. It's the sort of transmission system that has you changing gear just for the hell of it — and particularly on the over-run, at about 3000rpm, when there's a loud — very loud — crisp rasp from around your derriere that literally has the hairs on the back of your head rising, and which draws attention from at least two counties . . . And there's performance to go with the sound and the fury: it'll power its way to 60mph in about 5 1/2 secs, and then go on to pull the 5700rpm red line in top, which is 147mph. You want different figures you just shove in another diff ratio. All part of the service.



The pleasure increases 10-fold when you find yourself in a series of bends. The steering is surprisingly light at parking, but even more surprisingly doesn't get lighter with speed: its weighting, gearing and feel are as perfect as you can get; there's a direct contact down the column, through the steering arms to the wheels and tyres and thence to the road. Why can't all systems be like this? Power it through a corner,



the nose rises slightly, the tail squats, and you drift oh so deliciously to the exact spot on the road you aimed at: a mere touch of the wheel and you're running straight, accelerating hard. Yes, I think you'd call the handling neutral, with balanced grip fore and aft, although you can hang the tail out.



Drawbacks? Millions of them. The slipstream over your head tries to tear what hair you have out by the roots and, unless you wear glasses (or goggles) you

have exceedingly watery eyes. If the sun's low, the minute crazes and scratches in the plastic windscreen turn it opaque, so you have to look over it, in which case the slipstream really takes over. Luggage space? Don't make me laugh. Rain? Don't take it out. Not only will you get very, very wet, but the chances are a brainrush of enthusiasm may well find you finding the limits of adhesion sooner than expected. The ride is decidedly firm — but then the feeling of contact it gives you with the road via the seat of your pants is too good to miss.



And then there's the pose factor. You find yourself ostentatiously choosing top gear and 1000rpm or so to poodle through a village, so as not to attract adverse attention, smirking in a highly superior way as you do so, casually glancing around you as if you do this sort of thing every day, and isn't it a bore, and what is everybody staring at, haven't you seen one before, and it's just a means of transport after all, and . . . And then the temptation becomes irresistible, and you give it a bit of throttle, and that exhaust echoes off the buildings, and heads rotate at 90rpm, and suddenly you're grinning and laughing and life is spectacular and yes, by God, I am a poseur, so there, and you come over all delirious, and you and your passenger are roaring with laughter, and that's what a Lynx D-type is all about.

It takes a while to calm down after you've been in a Lynx, and any time spent in it is too short. Anyway, after dropping the D-type off at Lynx's place I put my fears to Guy. Are they debasing the currency as it were? "We've only made 32, some of which have gone abroad, so you're not going to find them in every high street shopping precinct. The real worry has to be the fraudulent replica, the one designed to fool somebody that it's the real thing. The people who really know are the only people who really care..."

Who buys them? "It's quite surprising, actually: you can be almost certain that they're Ferrari owners! They've obviously done extremely well, have always wanted the real thing but find that they're not only viciously expensive but extremely rare — one or two perhaps change hands every year and that's it. With a Lynx they've got something that performs like it, is properly made and is relatively easy to look after, while the aesthetics of it are as near identical to the original as you'll get."

In this case the original of the copy which I drove was one of the classic long-nose D-types with the extended windscreen, the sort that were so successful at Le Mans in the '50s. The short-nose cars did not enjoy the same success.

Sod all the pros and cons of replicas: I think I'll just sit back again one day and enjoy, enjoy . . .