



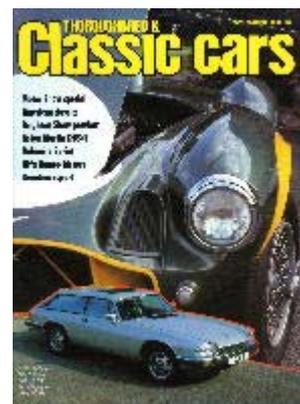
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UNWRAPPED - LYNX JAGUAR XJS by Roger Bell

Everyone who saw the car asked the same question: "Why didn't Jaguar do it that way in the first place?" If anything has hampered sales of the XJS, other than its heavy fuel consumption (much improved with the latest May-headed HE engine), it has been the car's rather ungainly rear-end styling and consequent poor utilisation of space. Make no mistake: for such a large car, the standard coupe carries outrageously little.



Lynx Engineering of Hastings, famous for their Jaguar preparation and C and D-Type replicas, had already tin-snipped the XJS to make an attractive convertible. They reasoned, not without justification, but there was probably an even bigger market for a sporting XJS estate which would not only provide more practical and versatile accommodation without detracting from the car's great driving qualities, but also improve it aesthetically. Enter the Eventer.



T&CC pictured the car in the September issue, since when Lynx have received several firm orders and many inquiries. They have also finalised marketing arrangements. The Eventer is to be sold exclusively through the Birmingham-based Patrick Motor Group, well known for their BL racing saloon sponsorship. Cost of the conversion which Lynx will carry out for PMG at their Hastings workshops, will be around £7000 (rather more than at first envisaged). New and used cars, provided they're in good condition, will be accepted.

Jaguar's chief John Egan apparently observed a little disparagingly when he first saw the car that it looked a bit like an up-market Reliant Scimitar. So it does. But that's not to discredit Lynx's excellent design and execution. Unlike so many estates, factory or specialist, the Lynx XJS doesn't look like a conversion, so well does the roof-line, replaced aft of the central pillars, flow into the new tail which retains the standard car's sill and light clusters.

Not only does it look good: it is good. The high-lifting tailgate, supported by two gas struts and equipped with wash/wipe, opens on to an uncluttered low-load platform that can be extended to a length of six feet by folding forward the rear seats. Cunning mechanics make this a particularly neat and easy operation.

To compensate for slight tail sag, caused by moving the new fuel tank (of the same capacity as the coupe's and neatly fabricated around the spare wheel, E-Type fashion), stiffer rear springs have been fitted at the back. A recent drive in the prototype, finished to Lynx's usual high standards, revealed no ill effects. Although there is no box-section reinforcement (the new rear pillars brace the extended roof), the car felt every bit as rigid as the coupe. However, slight tailgate rattle over broken surfaces was emphasised by the characteristically smooth and uncannily peaceful progress of the Jaguar, even over poor roads. Lynx say that this teething deficiency of the prototype's will not be evident in customer cars.

The estate is allegedly slightly lighter than standard so the car's surging acceleration is in no way blunted. From the driver's seat, it feels just like any other XJS HE. Powered by the world's smoothest and most refined engine, an effortless fuel-injected V12 of formidable potency, it will rocket to 100mph in under 17 seconds and exceed 150mph. More to the point, the Eventer will lope along with astonishing stability and tranquillity at 120mph. At Britain's legal limit, it is hardly trying.

Seat and ride comfort are also strong suits of this luxurious heavyweight. So, too, are the roadholding and handling which do not appear to have been adversely affected by the rearward shift in the weight distribution. All this plus practicality and head-turning looks. Yes, why didn't Jaguar do it like this in the first place?

