



Estate Car & MPV - January / February 1994

CAT'S WHISKERS by Tony Robinson

If the current crop of state of art high tech estates doesn't appeal and you're looking for that extra touch of class and exclusivity, Lynx Motors International well established conversion on the XJS coupe could be the answer.

From time to time specialist automotive engineering and coachbuilding companies manage to upstage the establishment with high quality and seriously well thought out bespoke products. Among them Crayford spent



many years chopping tops off Fords to create some interesting convertibles while Costello Engineering in Kent shoe-horned Rover V8s under the bonnets of MGB's so successfully that MG eventually rose to the bait and did the same on their own production lines to produce what became the ultimate "B".

Tucked away far from the hubbub of the motor industry in Hastings, is Lynx Motors International Ltd, a company who can reasonably claim to be the cats whisker's of the estate car business by specialising in turning XJSs into something rather more practical than the rather cramped 2x2 which Jaguar originally invented.

Our first experience with a Lynx in 1991 left us feeling highly favourable towards the breed. Despite some quite drastic looking incisions, principally as one might expect into the roof, Lynx's fine attention to detail is such that there's no evidence at all to suggest that this isn't a factory model from the outset. In fact, John Mayston-Taylor, Lynx's Managing Director, makes the point that there's absolutely no loss of structural integrity as a result of their work, if anything he says, the Lynx is potentially stronger than the new coupe. Not surprisingly then, the two Lynx estates we've driven, including the newer conversion pictured here, were both entirely rattle and squeak free and neither showed any sign of the type of structural flexing that is commonly a fault of the convertible and converted.



Although recent improvements to the Lynx Eventer may seem minor, the new look tailgate required considerable revisions in the sheet metal department and is beautifully engineered. Among the benefits, the previously rather crude external hinges have been incorporated into the underside of the roof to give an entirely clean and uncluttered roofline. Another area of improvement is in relation to the rear seat folding mechanism. Previously a mighty tug upwards was required before the backs would fold forward. The revised mechanism requires no more than a gentle pull - there is also a new arrangement for the seat belts with the shoulder strap neatly retained into the seat back itself.

Perhaps the biggest surprise about the Eventer is that it doesn't drive any differently from the coupe from which it's honed. For all the work that Lynx put into the conversion, there are no changes to the floorpan or running gear and there's certainly no change in handling or balance due to that extra

long roof.

So you get a car with all the legendary characteristics of the marque, including a superbly supple ride and immensely high speed cornering stability. Under the bonnet you can have either the seductively smooth V12 5.3 litre which will whisk you almost silently to 60 mph in around 8 seconds or the 3.6-litre straight six. There is also one XJRS Eventer at large, a full 6.0-litres worth, spoilers and all, let loose around the Autumn of 1993.

Lynx are just as happy to work with a four or five year old donor car as they are with a brand new one, so the price of joining this elite group of estate car owners (around 55 to date) can vary widely. Lynx, for their part, will relieve you of £19,500+VAT. As that includes by necessity a full repaint and interior re-trim, the idea of acquiring a bodily slightly tatty coupe as the starting point is probably quite a sound way to kick-off. Allowing say £16,000 to £18,000 for a 30,000 mile example, you'll be looking at the thick end of £35,000 to £40,000, not cheap by comparison with state of the art high performers such as the Audi S2 and S4 and BMW 530i V8.

For the Jaguar man though, this won't matter a bit and for street appeal we've not yet driven any estate which turns so many heads. From Park Lane to the M25 admirers are two a penny. Rumour has it, the chaps at Brown's Lane are pondering entering the estate car business themselves.

