

My XJ-S and XJS Experience - Andrew Byles

My penchant for an XJ-S was from childhood, when they were released. I never believed them to be a replacement for an E type as they are so different. Today I still admire them as a quaint English car like no other. I currently have my 10th XJ-S.

XJ-S No. 1:

My first was a 1987 UK spec (12.5:1 V12 HE) Silver Birch sold new to a mining Engineer in Saudi Arabia.

It came to me at 17,000 miles, but appeared as it was sand blasted along the left side. I had it repainted, but was not as good as jobs I'd done myself.

It was a lovely car to own and drive, but the availability of 98 Octane fuel was limited, so a cocktail of either racing fuel and 91 unleaded was used.

Country trips such as to the Sheparton national rally required a couple of Jerry cans of race fuel in the boot.

I broke the Torque converter at the national rally and rebuilt the transmission with high stall converter.

XJ-S No. 2

Next was an early V12 manual car (Which at the time, I considered to be the "holy grail" of XJSs).

It was in Green Sand with rusty bonnet door and 1 front guard. The rest of the car was excellent as it was "waxoiled" when new. It had been serviced 3 monthly!

Having an automatic before, the experience of the manual was not what I expected and after corrective repairs, I moved it on, when a UK enthusiast tracked the car to me.

XJ-S No. 3

Another was an early V12 convertible which had some fire damage and a vandalised top. I fixed it and bought a new top re-trim kit from BAS international. The car was great condition once fixed, but I never became attached to it.

XJ-S No. 4

Next was, what I was hoping to be a "cannonball" car, as it had the

Compomotive wheels and a trip computer. It wasn't. It was purchased after an injector hose fire.

As per most earlier cars it had little quality issues, that could lead to rust forming in many areas.

This car survives today in reasonable condition following a lot of careful sealing of the many leaks around the body.

XJ-S Car No. 5

Another was a TWR modified 6.0 litre coupe Automatic with soft magnolia trim which seems typical of many TWR cars.

I imported this car as it failed the MOT inspection with "wobbly wheels". Both front and rear suspension were very rusty. The body wasn't rusty surprisingly, as it was also "waxoiled". This was certainly a quick car but the ride was firm. I had to recondition the leather and fix the suspension. I sold it to a UK buyer as these cars are, deservedly well sought after, in UK.



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XL-S No. 6

Following this was an early XJ-S HE in grey with oatmeal trim. The trim was so knocked around I bought a trim kit from BAS including the diaphragms.

These cars are affordable and a pleasure to own (and restore if required) The reliability and simplicity of a HE engine, are good features.

XJS No. 7

I then bought a, rare for Australia, 6.0 litre convertible (Blue) which was badly neglected.

Another BAS roof was bought to re-trim the roof, and the entire leather interior was cleaned, and re coloured to a high standard.

While this was a lovely car to drive with the roof up, I didn't like the sun on my head with top down. And found it boring to look at, when the top was down, when parked in the garage. I actually like the look of the XJ-SC, but have never owned one.

XJS No. 8

I bought a 1994 blue 4.0 litre coupe, as an opportunistic purchase, as it was trashed inside and roof needed paint.

After attending to these repairs, I drove it a little. While most people would be satisfied, that these are the most practical XJS to have (if practical is a word for an XJS), I found it lacking the smoothness and excitement of a V12 car.

Lofty England's comment about the 3.6 XJS, would always be on my mind while driving it.

XJS No. 9

The 6.0 litre dark cherry red coupe that followed was an old person's car, who sold it to me, when he could no longer drive, and the dealer was going to pay him next to nothing for it. I did need to perform painless dent removal on most panels but it cleaned up well. I loved this car, for the way it drove and had respectable economy, but I prefer the look of the earlier cars around the buttresses and tail lights.

XJS No. 10

My current XJ-S is a Solent Blue 1989, with outstanding service history. I fitted the (very hard to find) Jaguarsport 16x8 lattice alloys with polished rims.

This car will be a restoration project for me to enjoy, with 8 speed ZF transmission and adjustable injection and ignition system.

With exception of the 2 late XJSs, I resealed the tappet blocks, retimed the camshafts, replaced all O-rings and seals around the oil filter. These maintenance items can be costly if you're paying someone to do it, but I find it enjoyable, as everything is cleaned and checked, while in the process.

Selling an XJS can take a long time, to find a buyer, who deserves it. If someone wants to sell one quickly, the price will always be low.

Service records for V12 engined cars are a great tool to sell one, as it broadens your market to first time owners.

Andrew Byles
(Member 1308 - since 1986)

Editor: Great story. Thank you Andrew.

