

Celebrating 50 Years of the XJ-C

JAGUAR

The Jaguar XJC (meaning XJ Coupe) is a short-lived two-door, four-seat luxury hardtop (pillarless) coupe version of the iconic XJ series saloon (sedan) introduced in April 1975 and built until November 1977. The idea went back to original XJ styling designs undertaken by Jaguar founder Sir William Lyons in the mid-1960s which included a two-door coupe but the concept would not be shown to the public until pre-production prototypes were put on display at the 1973 London Motor

Show with a planned debut of 1974. Delays caused by strong demand for the XJ saloon, preparation for the upcoming XJS and bringing the XJ series two to market held up the XJC with engineers striving to find a solution to sealing the XJC's frameless side windows to reduce wind noise. When the XJC finally arrived it was available with a straight-six or V12 engine and all examples, except one special order, came with a standard black vinyl roof. Common belief about the vinyl roof

is that it covered up paint cracks in the pillarless roof but most likely it was a time, especially in the United States, mainly created. There it was intended for personal luxury coupes to be commonplace. The body consists of a front section and the rear roof pillar was widened to facilitate the removal of the B-pillar. The XJC was

1869 PROTOTYPE



The original 1968 XJC prototype was built out of a rejected 2.8L XJ6 saloon (sedan) body shell that was bound for Sweden. The B-pillar was removed, the front doors were extended by welding in a section of a second pair of doors, the rear door openings were filled in using the actual rear doors, the rear cabin and the panel behind the rear seats were modified and unique side window glass was produced and fitted. The car was painted Regency Red and fitted with a beige interior. It had been tested with manual and automatic gearboxes and 4.2L XK, a quad-cam V12 and pre-production standard V12 engines. The car was put into storage then used as a utility vehicle at the Browns Lane plant before it was secretly saved from being scrapped in 1977 when it was sold to a private owner who gave it an XJ series 3 front end and painted it green. It continued to change hands before being restored back to its original form in 1999 in Australia.

1976 - 1978 XJ8C
4.2 (LHD) PRODUCTION: 3,084



The XJC was marketed as the base XJ6C and the more expensive XJ12C in the North American market, the names denoting the number of engine cylinders. The XJC was designed to compete in the United States where large personal two-door coupes were highly popular. Cars imported into this market were fitted with a list of standard equipment to simplify the import inspection process and were fitted with an automatic transmission, air conditioning, chromed disc wheels, white wall tyres and leather seat trim. The base engine in this market was a 162hp (120kW) and 225lb·ft (305Nm) 4.2L XK6. Standard equipment on all-market XJC cars included power steering, power front and rear disc brakes (ventilated front), fully independent anti-dive suspension, radial ply tyres, twin fuel tanks and pumps, central locking, painted steel wheels (except on non-American cars) and full interior carpeting.

1976 - 1978 DAIMLER SOVEREIGN
L2 PRODUCTION: 1,600 RHD, 111 LHD



The Daimler versions of the XJ6 were more expensive with some differences compared to the Jaguar-based models. The base Daimler model was known as the Sovereign 4.2 four-door and came with the 4.2L XKE engine. Up front was the vertically-slatted trademark Daimler chrome grilles and a central strip of chrome trim on the hood (bonnet) which ran back toward the windshield. The rear of the car featured a larger chrome trim with the model name on the left side of the rear panel and there were chrome wheels. Inside were minor differences including wide black vinyl trim along the tops of the door panels (rather than the colour-keyed trim on the Jaguar cars) and the steering wheel featured the Daimler logo.

LYRIK XJC CONVERTIBLE
PRODUCTION: 10



The Lynx Motor Company converted a number of XJC coupes into soft-top convertibles. Known to Jaguar enthusiasts for its XJS-based Eventer shooting brake and Spider convertible conversions, Lynx established itself as a specialist in the repair, maintenance and preparation of sports and racing cars. As part of the company's conversions work it produced a total of 16 XJC coupes into open-top bodies. One of the problems encountered during the conversion work was that the twin fuel tanks of the XJ are mounted inside the rear quarter panels and this prevented the installation of power bows to raise and lower the folding roof. Lynx's innovative solution was to develop a system of small electric motors installed on the hood frame which extended this important feature of a luxury open-top convertible.

1975 VANDEN PLAS PROTOTYPE



With the impending release of the new XJC, a prototype in the high-prestige prototypes in early 1975. It was taken to Vanden Plas Coachworks in Kingsbury, walnut interior trim, walnut fold-down picnic tables, modified door arm rests / polished chrome with Vanden Plas badging featured. The concept was not approved for production and the Vanden Plas Managing Director before being sold in the UK and road-registered Europe and is considered one of the rarest of all Jaguar prototypes ever produced.

1976 - 1978 XJ5.3C
U.S. (RHD) PRODUCTION: 863



The XJC was available with the Jaguar V12 engine which first powered the E-Type and XJC from 1975. Outside of North America the car was badged as the XJC 3.6 (3995cc), and very early production examples (as well as the prototypes) used a modified version of the Bosch D-Jetronic fuel injection system. Available options included air conditioning, power steering, power windows, central locking, power doors, additional rear compartment speakers, power antenna, tinted glass, cloth or leather upholstery, plated wheels and whitewall tyres (these being fitted standard on the XJC 3.6).

1875 - 1878 DAIMLER DOUBLE-SIX



The XJ sedans and coupes were the first badge-engineered Daimlers after the take-over by British Motor Corporation from 1966 with a cost-effective way to offer upmarket Double-Six two door and featured an additional chrome spear down the sides of the body but it is unclear if this was also done on the coupes. The Daimler coupes are high market and are quite rare due to their much smaller production numbers.

BROADSPEED XJC V12
PRODUCTION: 2 (prelim)



Two XJCs were developed by racing team Broadspeed to race in the Group 2 class with improvements race-by-race and featured a single racing bucket seat, large sports suspension, front and rear spoilers and a lightened body shell by using carbon fibre. The specially-prepared 550hp (418kW) 5.4L V12 engine had a Lucas fuel injection, forged pistons and race grind billet cams, and modified conrods and heads. Oil was up-rated. While the cars were very fast and set a new record, mechanical reliability was an issue.

Celebrating 50 Years of the XJC

R XJC

caused by flexing of the was simply the fashion of the dates for which the XJC was added share in the strong sales where vinyl roofs were fitted of heavy extended doors fitted to add strength after the was also available badged as

the Daimler Sovereign and Double-Six two-doors with upmarket features, though these were not exported to North America. The heavy XJC was chosen over the lighter XJ-S for racing in the European Touring Car Championship which led to the development of the Broadspeed coupes with their pronounced wheel flares and one was specially made to be driven by main character John Steed in the British TV show *The New Avengers*. The XJC was sold at a premium price over

the XJ four-door and Jaguar wanted to focus on the dedicated XJ-S sports model which led to the XJC being discontinued after only a few years, with the official line was that it was the only model left using the short wheelbase chassis. The XJC is considered one of the most beautiful Jaguars ever produced and has become highly collectable. A total of 10,427 were built with the last 96 cars being designated as a 1978 model. The greater majority had the XK straight-six engine.



1975 - 1978 XJ4.2C
4.2 (RHD) PRODUCTION: 2,800



Vanden Plas trim was built using one of the series 2 left-hand-drive London, and said to have been given a Chamois leather interior, special seats / panels, Vanden Plas instrument panel. Unique B-pillar chrome production however it remained in existence as a personal car for use by in late 1978. The car has since been sold onto different owners in d.



1975 - 1978 XJ12C
5.3 (LHD) PRODUCTION: 1,200



sports car from 1971, then the XJ range from 1972 and finally the XJC (internal code XJ36) with an engine output of 285hp (212kW) and 294lb-ft four side-draft carburetors. The XJC quickly received a Lucas / Jaguar options included radio and tape player (with 4 speakers mounted in the seats and trim and. Additional options included air conditioning, chrome. Optional for the V12 cars were Kent-style wheels (depicted).

The V12-powered XJC was badged as the XJ12C in the North American market and came with a 244hp (182kW) and 280lb-ft (383Nm) version of the engine. The XJC in this market came with unique bumpers front and rear featuring large black rubber strips with integrated turn signals, side markers mounted on the front fenders and rear quarter panels, and left-hand-drive steering. Further standard XJC equipment included pleated leather seat surfaces, head restraints for all seats, fully-retracting pillar-less windows, power windows with individual front and rear controls, electric rear window defroster, tach instrumentation, inertia reel front safety belts, black vinyl roof and coachlines. Other sound system options included AM only radio, AM/FM radio, inclusion of stereo 8 track player and inclusion of stereo cassette player.



AVON-STEVENS XJC CONVERTIBLE
PRODUCTION: 12 (plus kits)



cover company by Jaguar in 1960 and provided Jaguar (later taken over at versions of its cars. The V12-powered Daimler coupe was called the body. Thicker sound insulation was fitted to XJ-based Daimler saloons highly desirable for collectors as they were not sold in the North American

The Avon convertibles were the result of a request from a buyer who wanted a luxury convertible sports car that was larger than an Aston Martin but smaller than a Rolls-Royce. Design consultant Tony Stevens joined with Avon Bodies Ltd under the banner of Avon-Stevens to create the XJC convertible. Using a modified toy Corgi model of an XJC with the roof removed as a basis for the concept, their XJC convertible was delivered on Christmas Eve in 1975 to a delighted buyer, the first of 12 such completed examples, along with a number of additional conversion kits being produced. Modifications were made to the underframe to ensure body strength with the removal of the roof and the paint was fully refinished. Convertible XJC's were also produced by A.A. Garage in France and Catz Automotive in the United States.



THE NEW AVENGERS XJC



class of the European Touring Car Championship in 1975. The cars evolved larger wheel openings to permit larger wheels, braided cooling ducts, uprated oil-dripping. The wood veneer dash trim and power windows were retained. An air system using ram-effect plenum chambers, 12:1 compression ratio with coolers were fitted for the engine, gearbox and differential, and the brakes problems ultimately proved them to be unreliable during competition.

The main character of John Steed (played by Patrick Macnee) drove a 1976 Broadspeed-prepared XJ12C in the television British TV show *The New Avengers*. The car began life as one of the early pre-production XJC's before being transformed with the large flared wheel openings, braided cooling ducts and front spoiler characteristics of the Broadspeed cars, with a finishing touch of classic British Racing Green paint. It is said to be the 8th such XJC made by Broadspeed. Retaining its original 5.3L V12 engine, the car was registered MVK 60P and was sold off after the series finale in 1977, changing hands a number of times thereafter. During a prolonged time in storage since the 1980s the car suffered vandalism and disrepair, eventually resurfacing to sell at auction in 2015 for six times the price it was expected to bring.

Celebrating 50 Years of the XJ-C

BACKGROUND

The first-generation of the Jaguar XJ was produced for a total period of 24 years, from 1968 to 1992, with two major facelifts in 1973 and 1979.

SERIES 1 (1968-1973)

The Series 1 XJ was mechanically ahead of its time with smooth but very powerful engines and advanced suspension for significantly improved ride refinement that became synonymous with Jaguar saloons. So much so that the esteemed CAR magazine crowned it *"Car of the Year"* for 1968.

Pussy Galore

A high-performance version called the XJ12 was announced in July 1972, featuring simplified grille treatment, and powered by a 5.3 litre V12 engine coupled to a Borg Warner Model 12 transmission.

The XJ12 was Lyons' crowning achievement. Jaguar could now claim to have the fastest production four-seater in the world with a maximum speed just short of 140mph.

Daimler Double Six Vanden Plas

The Daimler Vanden Plas was released in late 1972 and became the most expensive car in the line-up.

The cars were trimmed to a higher standard and repainted in one of seven special colours and fitted with a vinyl roof.

The most significant change from the Jaguar was to the rear seat, which



XRW 119S was the very last Jaguar XJ-C ever built and is in the care of the Jaguar Daimler Heritage Trust. It has been quoted that the XJ-C model was William Lyons' favourite.

featured sculpted seating areas rather than a flat rear bench.

The Vanden Plas Series 1 are rare today with only 351 built before production switched to the updated Series 2 model in 1973.

SERIES 2 (1973-1979)

More stringent US crash safety regulations were a factor in the development of the Series 2. To comply, a higher front bumper was created and this necessitated a smaller grille, complemented by a discreet additional inlet directly below the bumper.

This visually differentiated the Series 2 from the Series 1, but the bigger change

was a completely revised interior which included simplified heating and A/C systems to address criticisms of the complex and not very effective Series 1 systems. In 1975 the 2.8 litre engine was replaced with a 3.4 litre XK engine.

XJ COUPE (1975-1978)

Aesthetics are, of course, a subjective matter, as confirmed by the old adage about beauty being in the eye of the beholder. One person's idea of a good-looking car might be seen by someone else as a styling disaster. But how many people would disagree that the two-door coupé version of the Jaguar XJ is a damned fine-looking machine?

Indeed, of all the variations on the 'Series' XJ, the XJ-C is surely one of the most attractive and most appealing, making it all the more tragic that it was also one of the shortest-lived members of the XJ family.

A short production run inevitably meant modest sales figures for the XJ-C, making it a relatively unusual sight even when new – and, of course, something of a rarity all these years later. Any well-preserved XJ-C is therefore a special machine.

XJ-C Model History

Jaguar had experimented with a two-door coupé concept of the XJ prior to the launch of the Series 1 saloon and in 1969 built the first prototype based around the body shell of a Series I. Prior to going into production, around 20



Celebrating 50 Years of the XJ-C (cont)

XJ-C prototypes were hand-built, 14 of them in 1973.

The Series II saloon was initially offered in both standard and long-wheelbase guises, but from late 1974 the smaller version was discontinued. That shorter wheelbase length would then re-enter production when the two-door coupé went on sale.

Originally unveiled as part of the new Series II line-up in the autumn of 1973, production of the XJ-C was delayed, partly because of engineering challenges with the car itself.

Severe Wind Noise.

Without the central window pillars of the saloon, the coupé's body lacked structural rigidity and suffered severe wind noise. The former difficulty was dealt with by widening and strengthening the rear window pillar, but the latter solution was a little more complex.

The noise was caused by the tendency for the front side windows to be pulled slightly outwards at speed, away from the seals of the rear side windows. Prior to production beginning, however, Jaguar came up with an ingenious pulley and cable system that pressed the front windows inwards towards the seals.

The effect was a dramatic fall in high-speed wind noise, and a two-door coupé that was almost as refined as the four-door saloon from which it was derived.

Large Heavy Doors

Bigger doors (four inches longer) were obviously needed for the two-door XJ to improve the car's appearance and to aid rear seat access, with these being made from two standard door shells cut down and joined together. (The weld seams are visible under the interior panels where two front door shells were grafted together with a single outer skin).



It was also reported, but not confirmed, that the door hinges could not initially cope with the weight of the heavy doors (90kg) requiring multiple redesigns and strengthening and that this issue contributed to the delays in production.

Roof Flex

A vinyl roof also came as standard, possibly to counteract paint cracking issues that arose during development.

The coupé lacked B-pillars and there was concern that the roof could flex enough that the paint used by Jaguar at the time may develop cracks. (Unconfirmed).

However, other reports note that it was just simply seen as a desirable feature at the time.

Short Career

Eventually though, the car was ready for production to begin by 1975, with a four-model line-up comprising the XJ-C 4.2 and its 5.3-litre V12 equivalent, with the Daimler-badged Sovereign and Double-Six versions offering even more prestige at the top of the range.

For the American market, however, just two models were offered, badged as the Jaguar XJ6C and XJ12C.

While the four-door version of the XJ went on to enjoy a long career, the two-door XJ-C derivatives were short-lived by comparison.

Production of the XJ-C ended in 1977 after a total run of just 10,426 cars.

The XJ-C family wasn't a huge commercial success for Jaguar, with the total production figure mentioned above being made up of 6,847 4.2-litre Jaguars and 1,677 Daimlers with the same engine, plus 1,855 V12-engined XJ-Cs and just 407 Daimler Double-Six models.

By XJ standards, these were exclusive machines – not surprising considering the XJ-C's relatively high pricing for what was a less practical car than the four-door on which it was based.

By the time this final V12-engined XJ-C (XRW-119S) rolled off the production line on November 8th, 1977, its list price was a hefty £11,755. By comparison, the longer, roomier and more comfortable XJ12 saloon could be had for £10,668, making it the best-value choice for those Jaguar buyers seeking V12 motoring.

From a purely commercial point of view, it perhaps made sense to kill off the XJ coupé. It was, after all, the only model to still use the old short-wheelbase platform, and worldwide sales weren't sufficient for it to generate a profit.

British Leyland was a loss-making giant that needed to cut costs, and the XJ-C was an obvious choice for the axe – despite it generating plenty of publicity for Jaguar, not least through the Leyland Broadspeed racing division that saw competition versions of the XJ-C competing in the European Touring Car Championship.

Collectability

The XJ-C offers exclusivity beyond that of the standard XJ without the asking price of an E-type. It's the classic Jaguar we've all been looking for, and the market is starting to wake up to its desirability.

Editor: Information for this story sourced from Jaguar Daimler Heritage Trust, Classic Jaguar Magazine and Prestige & Performance Car.

Jaguar Broadspeed XJ12C

After covering an article about the XJ-C, one can't exclude reference to **Leyland Cars** re-entrance into motor racing. A number of books have been published about the Broadspeed XJ12C racing period including excellent coverage by Paul Skilleter in his book "Jaguar Saloon Cars".

In the 70's, manufacturers such as BMW had earned a great deal of marketing exposure from the European Touring Car Championship (ETCC) successes. Leyland Cars were keen to do the same to help boost sales. However, Leyland wanted instant success, and when that didn't happen, the project was scrapped after only 18 months.

Virtually all commentators noted that Ralph Broad and his team were in a no-win situation with insufficient time for development and testing, with added pressure from Leyland for instant results.

One of the biggest problems that Broadspeed had was the weight of the car. The XJ12C was much heavier than its BMW competitor requiring the XJ12C to make additional pit stops for fuel and tyres, and so the Jaguars had to be able to pull away from the competition to afford the time needed for the extra stops.

As noted earlier, the two door coupes lacked B-pillars and the racing cars needed to be stiffened to make the chassis stronger and more ridged, requiring

more added weight strengthening the front and rear bulkheads. Even though the interiors were stripped and everything done to lighten the cars, they were still heavy at around 1.5 tons.

The weight of the car in turn caused other problems including major overheating problems with the brakes and a huge load on the gearbox and drive-shafts, often resulting in failures. Of key concern however were the wheels, which, under cornering loads "rocked" on the standard steel hubs causing stress cracks and stub axles to break. This became a perennial problem that would plague the project.

In its short career the Broadspeed Jaguar XJ12C competed in eight races, started in pole position six times, and led all eight races prior to mechanical problems.

Ralph Broad and the drivers that raced the cars were convinced that they would have been winners had the project been given another season. After all, it had taken several years for the BMW CSL's to be fully developed for motor racing.

"If Leyland had the foresight to stay in 1978, it would have realised the CSL would no longer have been competitive and the Jaguar would have walked it."

— Andy Rouse

"The BMW was a properly developed car. I think Leyland were short-sighted in stopping the development of the Jaguar. They got keyed-up about winning, but

just running the car all over Europe was a tremendous fillip to the morale of the dealers and the public loved it..."

— Derek Bell

Trivia

Ironically, Mercedes-Benz subsequently raced automatic 450SCL's, and did no better than the Jaguars, but did it quietly, then disappeared even more quietly.

The twist to the Leyland Racing effort was this. If the Jaguars had raced another year and been a threat at winning the championship as anticipated, it was very likely that someone would have eventually queried the legality of the cars and asked - how many XJ12C's were sold with manual gearboxes?

Editor- David Burton was at Silverstone to see the XJC's leading the race. When the cars retired, so did most of the parochial spectators.



Tim Schenken. *"If it was your turn to be the second driver, you generally never got a chance to drive". Seen here retired with a broken stub axle.*



The beautiful looking Broadspeed XJ12C. One of the team's drivers was Australian F1 racer Tim Schenken. In an interview, Tim said the cars were very fast but the project needed more money and more time. We needed 4 cars like our competitors so that we could alternate each pair of cars between races to give the team more time to rebuild each car before it raced again..

John Steed's Avengers Jaguar XJ12-C

