

Jaguar

again makes
motoring history

On 30th May, 1949, an entirely standard Jaguar 3½ Litre XK 120 Sports car running on pump petrol was officially timed in attaining a speed over a flying mile of:

132.6 M.P.H.

This speed, observed and recorded by the Royal Automobile Club of Belgium on the Jabbeke motor road, has gained for Jaguar four Belgian speed records and is

**THE FASTEST SPEED EVER
RECORDED BY A PRODUCTION CAR**

XK 120 (1948-1954)

Designed to be a low-volume vehicle rather than a high production motor car, the Jaguar XK120 became an overnight sensation. While most were exported to the USA, there are still examples to be found in Australia and the celebrated "classic" can still be purchased at a price.

Overview

The Jaguar XK120 was launched at the 1948 Earls Court Motor Show and was an immediate success. Considered a very stylish car in its time, the car had a top speed over 120 mph (hence the 120 name), and was tremendously good value for money being considerably cheaper and more advanced than any rival. It was a combination of beautiful looks combined with an impressive engine that was to ensure its success.

Production

12,055 cars were produced between 1948 and 1954.

Open two-seater (7,606)

- 1,170 (R/H); 6,436 (L/H)

Fixed-head (2,672)

- 195 (R/H); 2,477 (L/H)

Drop-head (1,765)

- 295 (R/H) 1,472; (L/H)



Alpine Rally 1950: Ian Appleyard's XK120, registered as NUB 120, won the Alpine Rally with his wife Pat navigating. (Pat was the daughter of Sir William Lyons). In 1951, NUB 120 and the Appleyard's repeated their previous year's success.

Design

It was the first car to feature the all-new double overhead camshaft engine, which in one cubic capacity or another went on to power all Jaguar cars - both saloon and sports, for about forty years.

The first cars featured aluminium body panels over a timber ash frame, but after production of 242 cars, Jaguar switched to a mass-produced mainly steel body to keep up with demand. (Approx. 50kg heavier). Aluminium doors, bonnet, and boot lid were retained.

The XK120 was ultimately available in three versions or body styles, first as an open 2-seater (OTS) described in the US market as a roadster.

In 1951 a Fixed Head Coupe version was introduced, with a Drophead Coupe joining the range in 1953. Both of these cars featured wind-up windows, external door handles, and a walnut dashboard.

A Special Equipment (SE) model was available from 1951. In addition to wire wheels, upgrades on the SE version included increased power, stiffer suspension and dual exhaust system.

Performance

"Motor Magazine UK" road-tested an XK120 in November 1949. The car ran with hood and sidescreens in place and the magazine reported a top speed of 124.6 mph (200.5 km/h). The car as tested cost £1263 including taxes.

Racing and Rallying

XK120s were active in racing and rallying. A few of these wins inc. (Refer Photos):

- The 1st race victory was a one-hour Production race at Silverston in 1949
- The first American victory was a Production Race in Florida
- Tourist Trophy 1950: (1st, 2nd, 3rd)
- Alpine Rally 1950 (First)
- Alpine Rally 1951: (First)
- Australia 24 Hrs Road Race (First)
- NASCAR road race (First)

Production of all models ended in 1954 when the XK140 was introduced. ■



An XK120 FHC driven by Chas Swinburne, Geordie Anderson and Bill Pitt won Australia's first 24-hour motor race, at Mount Druitt, NSW in 1954. They finished four laps ahead of the next placed car.

XK 120 (1948-1954)



Photo: The very first XK120 race victory was a One-Hour Production Car Race at Silverstone in 1949. 1st was Leslie Johnson (HKV 500) with Peter Walker (HKV 455) finishing second. The first American victory was a production race at Palm Beach Florida (Jan 1950), again with Leslie Johnson XK120 in 1st place.



Photo: Stirling Moss. XK120's achieved a 1-2-3 victory in the 1950 Tourist Trophy, held at Dundrod in heavy rain. On the eve of his 21st birthday, Stirling Moss drove to a brilliant win ahead of Peter Whitehead and Leslie Johnson, with Jaguar also taking the team prize.

XK 120 (1948-1954)



*Photo: Clarke Gable with Sir William Lyons.
In 1949 the first LHD production car, chassis number 670003, was delivered to Clark Gable.*



Racing Driver Leslie Johnson and close friend of Sir William Lyons was the first driver to race an XK120 winning races at home and the USA. He is credited with the idea of driving XK120 (LWK 707) with 3 other drivers around a race track at over 100 mph, 24 hrs a day for a whole week in August 1952.

XK 120 (1948-1954)



*Al Keller poses with his Jaguar at New Jersey's Linden Airport. NASCAR's first road-course event was staged over two miles of the airport's runways in June 1954. Al Keller in an XK120 FHC won the event. **Foreign made cars were banned from this series after this race** and remains the only win for a foreign-made automobile in NASCAR's premier series.*



Norman Parkinson was a celebrated British fashion and portrait photographer. Parkinson left the more posed studio setting to take outdoor shots that were more dynamic and carefree than his contemporaries.

In 2011 this 1961 Gelatin Silver Print (1/25) of a Jaguar XK120, dogs, model and handbag titled "Nena, Florence" sold for £5,250.

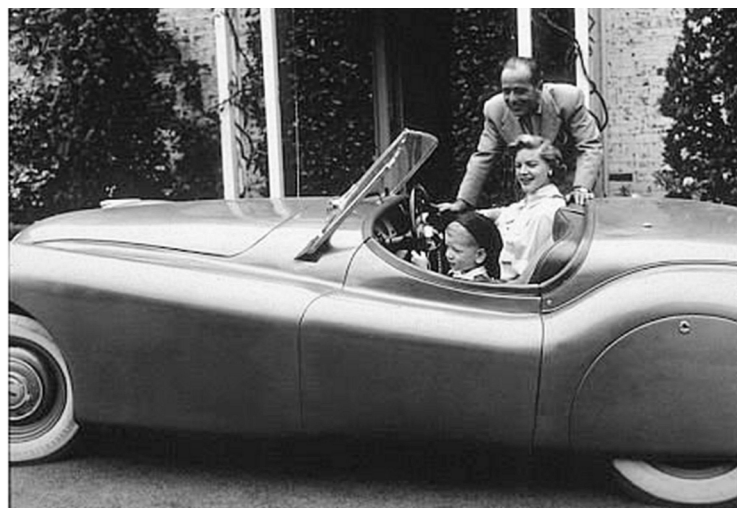
Celebrities and their XK 120's



1955: Jayne Mansfield in her XK120 with fellow actors Lance Fuller, John Smith, Natalie Wood & Bob Fuller



Robert Mitchum takes daughter Petrine (Trina) for a ride in his XK120 Roadster.



Humphrey Bogart and Lauren Bacall with their son Stephen, aged 2, sitting in their XK 120 Roadster.



Elizabeth Taylor's with her second husband, actor Michael Wilding's in his 1952 Jaguar XK120 OTS



1954: Actress Mamie Van Doren with her Jaguar XK120. Her film career was launched in 1949 at the age of 18 when Howard Hughes discovered her after she won Miss Palm Springs.



Swedish-Italian model and actress Anita Ekberg sitting on her Jaguar XK 120 Roadster.