

### Jaguar XK8 - The Ultimate Modern Classic? by John Eadie

I've been a fan of Jags ever since my dad's boss picked me up from swimming training at age 12. You see as a child I slipped unknowingly into the opulence that is Jaguar. It was the loungeroom-like interior of a Mark II and when I closed the door the subtle thud spoke simultaneously of quality, luxury and safety.

Then the outside world seemed to quiet into the distance and it was like being transported in a smooth bubble of complete serenity. I knew then what my car was going to be when I grew up!

Soon after I was back in Dad's Austin 1100 and after witnessing another wrestling match with the synchromesh between 1st and 2nd it seemed quite the lightbulb moment to me that he should simply upgrade it to a Jag and the whole family could experience the serene bubble of quiet. Apparently not though, he seemed to enjoy these moments of triumph when he conquered the reluctant synchro, and I was treated to a fatherly guffaw in response.

And so, the whole Jag thing was pushed to the back of my mind until 20 years later, after a series of company cars, when I started to eye my extra garage space as a potential Jag space. And so, started 30 years of Jag ownership. I went through every model XJ6 made - to my mind still the greatest single line of cars ever produced, and loved every one of them.

The problem then was how to follow this up. The best can be hard to follow. Whereas the lure of "Enzo's most beautiful car ever made" was strong, the difference in what I would like to pay and what I would have to pay to get into a nice E-type seemed to balloon out on a daily basis. At the same time, I wanted something with a feel of Jaguar heritage, something sporty, yet with relatively modern creature comforts and safety features like airbags, along with engine management and traction control.

The XK8 seemed to fit the bill perfectly. But wanting one and finding one are two very different matters. Jaguar released the model with a price point getting near \$200k so consequently not that many



were actually sold, and to compound that a small population like South Australia again reduces numbers sold, so they are quite few and far between on the used car market.

After what seemed to be an age in waiting, I landed my dream model - a 1997 first generation X100 sport coupe in black (Anthracite Pearl Metallic) with the ivory and black interior.

Having steeled myself with years of Jag ownership I was ready for the worst in teething troubles... like oil drips on the garage floor that say a Jag lives here, or the occasional mysterious electrical gremlins that previously came as par with the marque. But no, this car has been a dream to own, and dare I say it? It has been very reliable!

#### *And so, what is it like to own?*

Well first up it is simply wonderful to drive - plenty of grunt when you want it, yet with an interior refined and luxurious enough to befit the marque. We were lucky enough to get to take it around the Bend Racetrack on a JDCSA track day, and getting to exercise it on the track the way it deserves was a real highlight of ownership (speed limits on the way home seemed ludicrously low). Thanks, JDCSA for that one!

Creature comforts are good for the year, in line with the sedans, and for me it's a good compromise of classic and modern - no Bluetooth or navigation

of the modern era but everything like power steering, seats and mirrors of the relatively more modern era. It was made at the start of the OBD age so engine management is good and reliable.

It was intended as grand tourer more than a sports car so it has enough room for the golf bag and buggy with all the gear in the boot. Sadly, however the back seat is a bit too small for our Old English Sheepdog, and I really must say the small back seat is suited only for people of the collapsible legs and head variety! 2 people with luggage and shopping fit perfectly, but that's pretty much it. The compromise is worth it though for the overall sporty feel of the car.

The design to me is quite timeless, in fact I came out of Dan Murphy's recently to find a gentleman poring over it with great interest. He then proceeded to ask if it was Jaguar's new model. He was quite taken aback when I revealed it was 22 years old!

And that's pretty much what it is to me... in fact everything I hoped it would be... a sporty, beautiful, luxurious, timeless, powerful and exciting car with classic lines and a long heritage, yet with the essential creature comforts of the modern era.

For me that makes it the ultimate modern classic.

**John Eadie**