



Jaguar Unleashed

Introducing *AVENUE's*
newest voice: car expert and
jetsetter, Henry Broughton

You know that when the great Enzo Ferrari himself described it as “the most beautiful car ever made,” the vehicle you are dealing with is something pretty serious. I am of course referring to the Jaguar E-Type, or XKE as it's known on these shores. Today, the specific model I am driving is the 1966 Series I 4.2 Roadster, the most classic iteration of an iconic design, particularly given its stunning livery of British racing green-with-tan interior. The Museum of Modern Art agrees: The XKE roadster is one of only six vehicles in its permanent design collection.

Upon its launch at the Geneva Motor Show in 1961, the XKE created a demand so great that the head of Jaguar Cars, Sir William Lyons, made the unprecedented move of ordering a second car to be driven overnight from the factory in Coventry, England, to Switzerland to sate the public's desire and interest. No previous car in the history of popular motoring had caused such a stir, especially when it could claim to be the fastest production car in the world, and attainable at a third of the price of its rivals, from Aston Martin and Ferrari.

This was (almost) a sports car for the people. A production run of almost 73,000 during its 13-year life span, with two-thirds of these cars finding homes in the United States, tells you all you need to

know about the popularity of this magnificent machine. However, the passage of time and a huge resurgence of interest since the 50th birthday of the XKE back in 2011 have pushed prices up steeply, with a record \$467,500 paid at Sotheby's *Art of the Automobile* auction in Manhattan last year.

However, do not be put off, as good Series I XKEs are still available in the more palatable neighborhood of \$100,000.

The car itself is pure drama; it has an impossibly long nose with purposeful vents and elegant swept-up rear haunches that ooze style and power. Today, the sun is shining and I have decided that this is a day for going to the beach, via Southampton, to pick up some provisions. I also believe that to respect the car, it is necessary to drive it dressed in such a way that reflects the car's timeless elegance.

In the UK there is a growing trend among the owners of classic cars such as this to dress according to the era of the car they possess. However in the case of the XKE, its timeless class lends itself perfectly to Hamptons style. I therefore choose a pair of white linen shorts, long enough to ensure that my legs will not stick to the nicely patinated leather, and a simple blue linen shirt. My XKE is by no means the easiest car to get into with the roof up (but then again why would you need to do that on a glorious Hamptons day?), so I undo the three easy clips and with one deft movement manage to bring the top down in

MELANIE BROUGHTON

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hampton drive

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order to see and be seen. Once tucked under the oversized wooden steering wheel, I instantly feel at home, almost as if I were part of the car. For, make no mistake, as the car industry has relentlessly increased the size of its products over time, this is a very delicate and perfectly proportioned beast.

Sunglasses on, I press the clutch down and turn the key in the center of the beautifully turned aluminum dash. The fuel pump whirs and, once I've pushed the starter button, the magnificent 4.2 liter straight six erupts into life with a delicious rasp that is quintessentially British. No V8 burble here, just a very purposeful but polite hint of the power that lies within.

I select first gear and with the lightest of touches head gently down the driveway. If you are over six feet tall, your head will be over the line of the windshield, but this merely has the effect of your being able to enjoy the sensation of wind in your hair while the aural delight from the rear is hard to beat. I head down North Sea Road but am enjoying myself so much that when I see the sign pointing left to Southampton and right to New York, I decide to go into town the long way.

The beach will have to wait a little as I floor the throttle on the back roads over and over again, all the while convincing myself that the speedometer must be lying. I pull into town with a smile plastered across my face, and as I stand at the counter at Sant Ambroeus eating one of that vendor's superb sandwiches, I look out onto Main Street and feel satisfied and excited that this thing of exquisite beauty is mine—if only for the day.

I head on to the beach club, where the valets are jostling for position once they see the car approach. After all, Frank Sinatra, Steve McQueen, Tony Curtis and Brigitte Bardot, all one-time owners of an XKE, cannot have been wrong. ♦

