

A side-profile photograph of a classic Jaguar E-Type convertible, finished in a metallic gold or champagne color. The car is parked on a dirt road that winds through a wooded area. In the background, a prominent, light-colored rock face or cliffside is visible, partially covered with sparse vegetation. The lighting is dramatic, with strong highlights on the car's body panels and the rock face, and deep shadows in the surrounding woods. The overall mood is one of timeless elegance and natural beauty.

E-TYPE APPROVAL

There's little contest over what is the greatest classic car, but which Jaguar E-type iteration is the best buy today? **James Elliott** puts the case for the 4.2 fhc

PHOTOGRAPH BY TONY BAKER

circuit servoed disc brakes on all wheels (inboard at the rear): it really was a *cordon bleu* feast for pub-grub money.

And price-wise it remains amazing. While the very best examples rightly command six-figure sums, there are enough out there (72,500 of all types were built) that the man in the street with a good day on the scratchboards behind him could still pick up a usable runner (probably re-imported and all sorts of other irrelevant nasties) for as little as £10,000. Obviously there are the perennial favourites, reflected as much in their production numbers as their values, and obviously everyone should buy any E-type they can afford – however curtly so many models have been dismissed here.

So why if you have the choice today, as in period, should you pick the supposedly fractionally slower S1 4.2 over its stablemates, beyond the superficial conceit of having the all-important faired-in lights? After all, the chromed dash on the earliest 3.8s has more style, and the whole car – sitting on thinner rubber while you perch on skimpy sports seats – has a daintier precision to it, while the engine has a tauter, more revvy

Moss, the much-maligned unit an untrammelled joy to drive hard. But in this modern, overpopulated and lazy era, give me full synchro and ease over all applications.

I suspect the roadster fans are still fuming from the earlier tirade, busily cutting out type from newspapers, Pritt Stick at the ready, to compose their responses. Maybe I was a little brutal, but there are two fundamental reasons why a coupé is an essential choice over a roadster every time, and one of them is frustratingly personal and nebulous. So let's get the other one out of the way: your boot is supermodel-shallow. Someone had to invent triangular luggage so you can go away for the weekend, for heaven's sake. Compared to the capacious rear deck in the fixed-head, its runners giving it the look of a run-of-the-mill Brit exec estate of the era, there's no contest. The other is the look from the outside and the feel from within. The former needs no further explanation, the latter maybe does. Perhaps it is the combined lengths of the bonnet and the rear deck that make you assume that, like a Spitfire pilot, you are going to find the cockpit claustrophobic, but it isn't. That sleek mono-

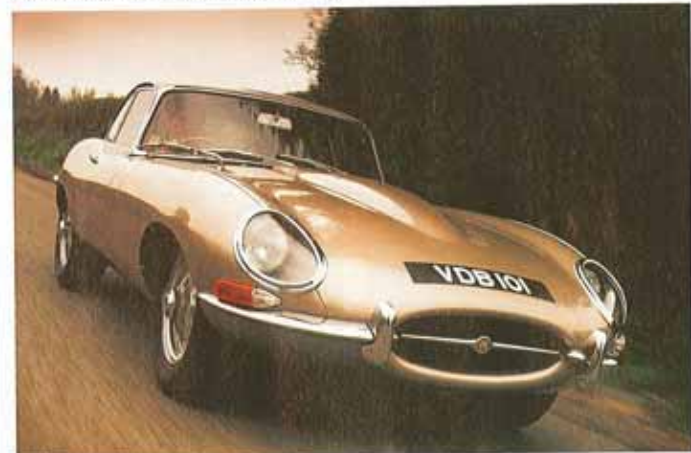
And for me? Well, with advancing years and governed as much by common sense as compromise, when it comes to *la crème de la crème* I find myself increasingly content to level a couple of peaks in return for ironing out all of the troughs. Each of these cars can be justified on its day, so it is a question of which one ranks highest on the greatest number of days... just like the pecking order of the greatest Rolling Stones albums. The public-pleasing *Let it Bleed* was the one when I was a teenager, but its star has dimmed as much through overfamiliarity as anything else. And I still adore *Exile on Main St*, but you have to try just a little too hard to love it throughout its sprawling soundscape. Hence, I keep coming back to *Beggars Banquet*. It may not have *Gimme Shelter* or *Tumbling Dice*, but it doesn't have *Country Hook* or *Turd on the Run* either.

Believe me, life doesn't get any more tougher than booting a 4.2 E-type while *Street Fighting Man* washes through the cabin. ■

Thanks to Classic Motor Cars (01746 765804, www.classic-motor-cars.co.uk)



From above: side-hinged hatchback gives access to useful, beautifully trimmed luggage bay; thrusting nose hints at E-type's near-150mph potential; Moto-Lita steering wheel replaces spindly original in this lovely Golden Sand S1



nature that screams purpose. That, precisely, is the problem. All of the impurities that came with the mid-season 4.2 make it a far more friendly car today. The less frenetic engine can be coaxed along or, with an instant response from the throttle, it will calmly Hoover up the horizon, its sonorous bellow more muted in intent but more implicit of power. It is more tractable too, the fatter modern tyres helping to drag it off the line and, while deadening the racing-driver thrills of high-speed cornering on tiptoe, adding a level of grip and solidity that pushes the limit of adhesion way beyond earlier cars. For the record, they all lighten in corners if you're not going slowly (or quickly) enough and they all want to wander slightly unless you really take command, especially this lustrous Golden Sand example with its smaller wood-rimmed wheel. Similarly, the more cushioned seats may not make you quite as integral with the machine, but they do allow you to see further down the bonnet and offer a comfort and cruisability that catapults the E-type into the modern era. As does the gearbox. Again, pushing through the ratios at high speed on a deserted B-road in 1962, I'd have taken the

coque encloses you without cramping you, spacious on all sides, but notably above, while also giving you that innate sense of being protected within your own little fiefdom.

And everything else, you know. Its legendary length (14ft 8in), counterbalanced by its waif-like width (5ft 5in, just 2½in wider than a BMW 2002), the way it goes – and boy does it go, those greedy triple SUs feeding its voracious appetite – and stops, suspension that schizophrenically alternates between boulevard comfort and track tenacity, and the way it makes you feel, however unrealistically and temporarily, that every car that came before and every one that has happened since is irrelevant.

One of the beauties of the E-type is that its longevity and range cover all needs and demands in terms of price and application. On another day and for a different purpose you could argue strenuously and convincingly for any of the other models – yes, even the V12 2+2 has its virtues. But if you are one of the legion for whom the E-type is their once-in-a-lifetime classic, and if you want to actually use it – a lot – you need an S1 4.2 synchro-box stereotype-on-wheels.



BUYING YOUR FIRST E-TYPE?

WHAT TO PAY

Dealing with the coupés alone initially, the vast majority fit in the £10,000 (marginal) to £40,000 (excellent) bracket, though recent results show that really special handtops (as-new cars or examples fresh out of megabucks rebuilds with aluringly low chassis numbers) can easily triple that top-end estimate. Bottom of the price list is the 1971 '75 S1 V12, for which £20k should secure you one of the best. Fixed-head S2s are similarly priced, garnering perhaps an extra £5k for top examples and costing £10-15,000 for usable (though potentially problematic) private sale cars. Both models could be picked up for less than £10k, but they will probably be imported cars and may have a whole heap of trouble in store.

S1 4.2s and 3.8s are similarly priced, with buyers really needing to pay a minimum of £15k to get a roadable right-hooker. Generally, 4.2s just have the edge for comparable cars, but 3.8s have an extra factor – originality – that can propel them well above an equivalent 4.2. For the best recently restored 4.2s and more original 3.8s, £20k is the starting point with £40,000-plus required to buy an on-the-button minter with lots of life in it.

Logically, S1Vs ('67-'68 examples incorporating many S2 features) fall between S1s and S2s in value. Add up to 30% over equivalent coupé values for all roadsters, and subtract up to 30% for 2+2s.

WHAT TO LOOK FOR

There is a huge parts-supply and support industry for E-types, but many replacement parts (such as bonnets) are pricey. Make sure you weigh up the costs of replacing necessary items before buying.

Most important are the condition of the monocoque and subframes, and especially where they connect. Sibs are not the walk-away factor that they can be on some classics, but must-check areas include the front lips of the wheelarches, the boot floor and the floorpan. Panel gaps and door-hang are big clues to overall condition, so open both doors, stand well back and get a sense of the overall rigidity and 'squareness' of the car. Rear brake and suspension problems can prove costly, particularly if they require subframe removal.

Engines are strong but suffer the usual maladies, so check for head gasket failure and make sure you do a compression test too.

FURTHER READING

Jaguar E-type Denis Jenkinson, Osprey Automotive ISBN 1 85532 881 X
Jaguar E-type Fay Martin Buckley, Temple Press ISBN 0 600 557812
Original Jaguar E-type Philip Porter, Bay View ISBN 1 870979 12 5
E-type Chris Harvey, Haynes ISBN 0 946609 16 0
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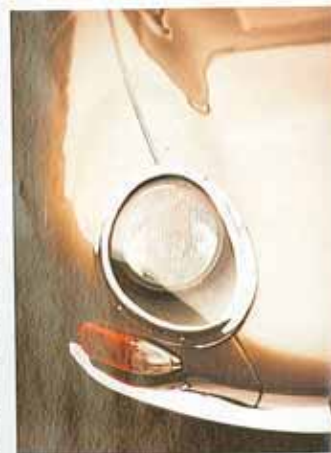
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The Carriage Company 01525 861474

'Nothing so crafted offered such performance or such engineering without talking in multiples of the Jag's price'





Clockwise, from above: with a roof this sensual, why would you want to chop it off? XK output often overestimated; evocative view and a clear road; radials boost 1960s grip; elegant cowlid lights; 4.2 fhc the pick of the bunch



world's most sensual roof and have a fat, VW Beetle-style hood bag behind their backs?

Next up for ritual sacrifice is the S1 3.8: the benchmark, the original, a car that oozes purity from every pore. All true, but by the same rote it is less practical, less usable (and that coming from a genuine fan of the Moss gearbox) and less developed. Worship them in the design museums where they surely belong, and exercise them whenever possible, but don't try to trickle one up the King's Road every Saturday that Chelsea are playing at home.

So you are left with the 4.2 coupé. A cliché I know, but be brave, embrace the obvious rather than shying away from it as if being part of the herd is as unacceptable as pitching up at the club concours in a Pinto-powered Wildcat. After all – and here comes more heresy – it's not as if any E-type is quite as flawless as misty-eyed romance currently has it. The sceptics may have based their anti-E-type argument largely on jealousy or obtuseness, but there are some valid points hidden in the hysteria.

As a former card-carrying sceptic myself – it has been a few years now, no lapses, still attend-



'Is anyone outside of 'Dubya'-land really going to argue for the S3? And, thanks to Federal laws, the S2 is a no-go too'

JAGUAR E-TYPE 4.2 FHC

Sold/number built 1964-'68/7770

Construction steel monocoque with square-tube front subframe

Engine water-cooled iron-block, alloy-head dohc 4235cc in-line six, with three 2in SU carbs

Bore x stroke 92x106mm

Max power 265bhp @ 5400rpm

Max torque 283lb ft @ 4000rpm

Transmission Jaguar four-speed all-synchro manual, with limited-slip differential

Suspension independent all round, at front by double wishbones, torsion bars, telescopic dampers, anti-roll bar rear lower wishbone,

upper driveshaft link, radius arms, twin coil/damper units, a/r bar Steering rack and pinion

Brakes discs all round, with servo

Length 14ft 8in (4470mm) Wheelbase 8ft (2438mm) Width 5ft 5in (1651mm) Height 3ft 11in (1194mm) Weight 2856lb (1295kg)

Wheels & tyres wires, 6.40x15in tyres (now radials) 0-60mph 7 secs Top speed 150mph

Price new £1896 Price now £40,000 (exc)

insatiable appetite for it. Some of you may not like that – we'll receive a handful of 'not another E-type' letters after this piece, just as for every other – but a vocal minority is a minority nonetheless. Then there is the fact that the E-type is the barometer of the entire classic car market, and has been since day one.

In fact, the E-type casts such a vast shadow over our hobby that people tend to take its towering presence for granted. And, criminally, to forget how it got there. Launched at the Geneva show in March 1961, Sir William Lyons' and Malcolm Sayer's masterpiece was rightfully a show-stopper: the sort of natural shape that today would be described as 'organic', the sort of power that even today would be described as 'mega', and a pricetag that today would be described as 'Kia'. The shape was governed by common sense, art appreciation and aesthetics rather than wind tunnels and target markets – this was the era, after all, when fag-packet sketches were handed over to craftsmen to create rather than fed into computers to constantly revise towards a lowest common denominator of acceptable normality.



ing the meetings – the original list has shrunk and such inane dismissals as "it's a GT not a proper sports car: too long, too heavy, etc" have been consigned to the bin (though at 2856lb – 1295kg – it's hardly a lightweight). But some qualms remain. The tail-lights and rear bumpers combine awkwardly, a messy arranged marriage of opposites that simply doesn't gel. The base of the windscreen is about 4in too far back, unsettling an otherwise perfect profile (it always has been and, to these eyes, it always will be). Oh, and when you are following an E-type the shallow rear tray is invisible, so far too many of the mechanicals are exposed. It almost looks as if something has fallen off.

It's all too easy to get these thoughts in your head and to convince yourself that they outweigh everything else, so let's quickly remind ourselves of the everything else. The Jaguar E-type is the most commonly desired car in the world. Period. Even car-haters swoon in its presence and, if you want to be taken seriously as a classic car dealer, you must have one on your forecourt. From CoS's terms of reference it is the Lady Di of classics: the vast majority of enthusiasts have an

The power may never have quite matched the PR frenzy, but focusing on that merely shrouds the fact that it was still awesome, giving 0-60mph in 7 secs and topping out at, well, just under 150mph (though *The Autocar* claimed to have hit the magic marker for the first time in a tweaked 9600 HP). Then there's price. The £2098 that the 3.8 went on sale for in 1961 would have bought you any of the following: half an Aston Martin DB4, Jensen CV-8 or Lancia Flaminia; two-thirds of an Alfa Giulietta Sprint, Mercedes-Benz 190SL or AC Greyhound; two-fifths of the Jaguar 407; a third of a Maserati 3500GT; or the back end of a Ferrari 250GT. For that you got a race-derived speed machine with all the latest technology. Nothing so crafted – and without the spectre of kit-car associations hanging over it – came close to offering such performance or such engineering without talking in multiples of the Jaguar's on-the-road cost. An all-steel monocoque with front subframe, all-synchro four-speed 'box (from 1964), all-round independent suspension (double wishbones at the front, wishbones and twin coil/damper units at the rear), sharp rack-and-pinion steering, dual-

