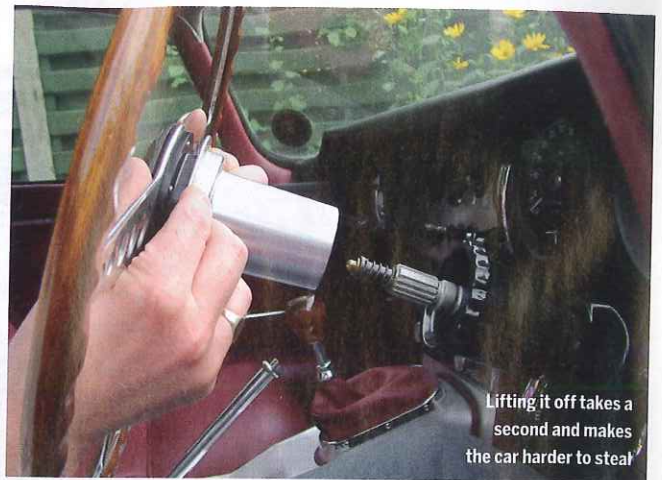




Detachable steering wheel is released with this aluminium ring



Lifting it off takes a second and makes the car harder to steal



Extra-wide spline on the steering column ensures the wheel lines up correctly

PHIL'S E-TYPE CAUSES MIRTH IN FRANCE



1962 JAGUAR E-TYPE SERIES 1 FHC

Owned by Phil Bell, phil.bell@bauermedia.co.uk

TIME OWNED Five months **ENGINE** 3781cc, in-line six-cylinder

POWER 265bhp @ 5500rpm **TORQUE** 260lb ft @ 4000rpm

PERFORMANCE Top speed: 152mph; 0-60mph: 6.9sec

MILEAGE THIS MONTH 123 **LATEST COSTS** £346.63

THE E-TYPE ATTRACTED A surprising amount of attention on my Le Mans trip, considering the number you normally see on the French roads during that weekend, but I really wasn't ready for the hilarity it caused.

Last month I told you about the work Jaguar specialist CMC did to create more room inside the car by remodelling the driver's seat and modifying the pedal box. What I didn't cover was the removable steering boss they fitted. It's a new product that allows you to take the steering wheel off with the flick of a lever. The idea is to make the car both harder to steal and easier to get in and out of for taller or wider drivers. With VAT it costs

£346.63 and you can add £155 for fitting (www.classic-motor-cars.co.uk).

I particularly like the fact that you can use it with the original steering wheel – to me its large diameter and slim rim is an essential part of the car's Sixties character – and once in place you can hardly tell that anything is different. It's a doddle to use – slip your fingers through the spokes, pull back on the aluminium release ring hidden behind the boss and the wheel slides upwards and off the column. Refitting in the correct position is guaranteed by an extra wide spline on the steering column that lines up with a groove inside the boss. After a couple of goes you get used

to lining it up. Push the wheel downwards and a sharp click tells you it's secure again.

The only problem is what to do with the wheel once you've removed it. CMC boss Nick Goldthorp told me that some customers have asked whether carry bags are available for when they're out and about for the day. Of course, with a suitable length of silver chain you could turn it



Detachable wheel always raises smiles

into a rather snazzy Jaguar-themed medallion, but I guess that would look more Eighties Beastie Boy than Sixties man-about-town.

It's most useful when you're staying away from home and have to leave the car outside overnight. My first experience of this was on the Le Mans trip. Our hotel was next to a roundabout and on the other side of it was an Italian restaurant. When we arrived I could see the waiters pointing at me as I clambered out of the Jaguar, steering wheel in hand. Later that evening as we walked back to our hotel and past the restaurant we were greeted by a group of hysterical waiters, all with arms outstretched in mock steering gestures. All I could do was reciprocate and depart with a 'but I am Eeenglish' shrug – the get-out-of-jail-free gesture that seems to work in most European countries.

OK, I may be an object of amusement in certain parts of France – but I slept soundly that night knowing that the steering wheel was tucked safely under my pillow.