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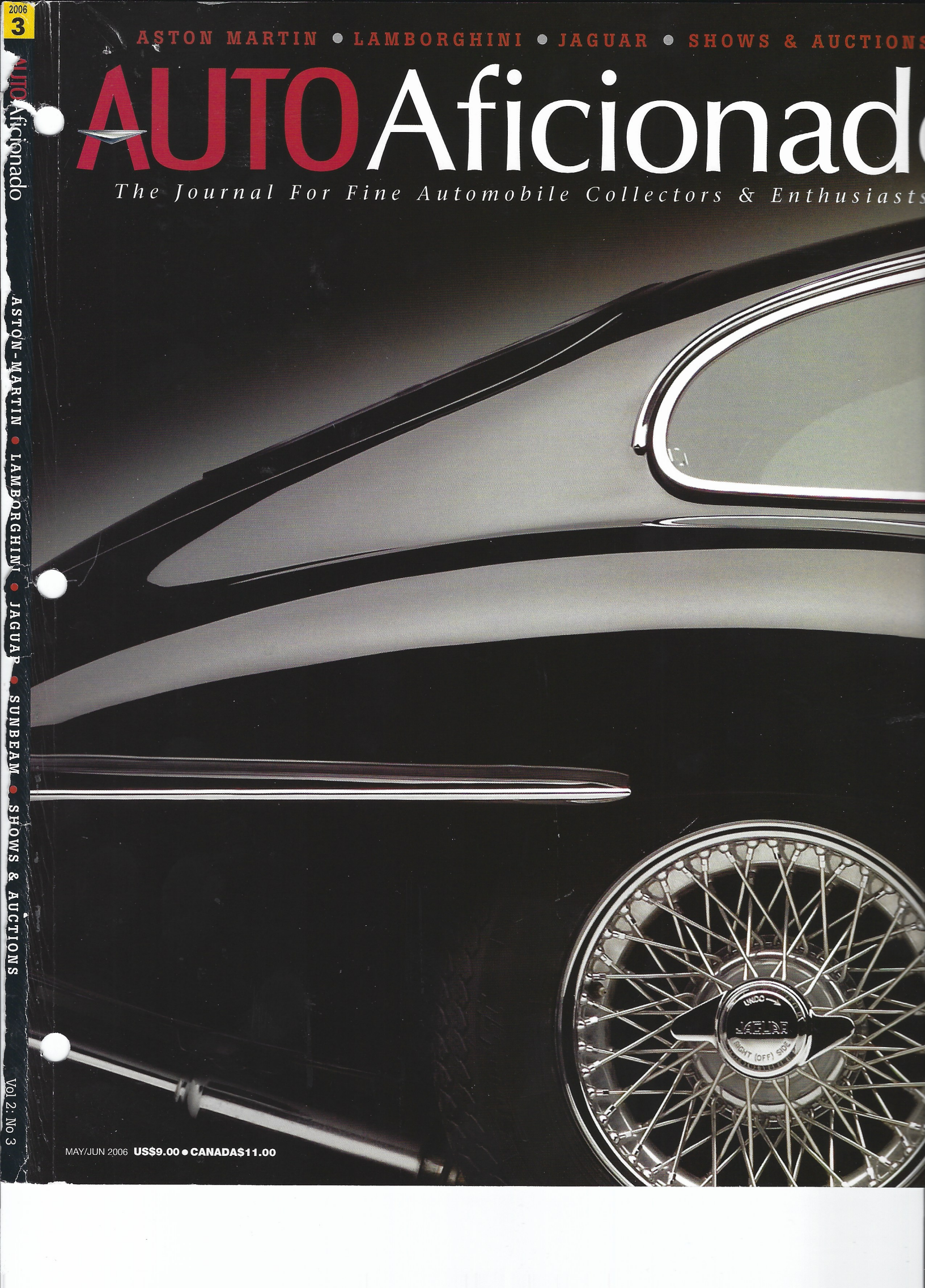
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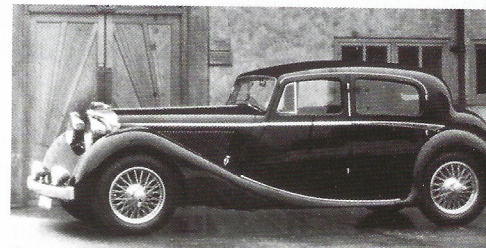
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NO-BAR FLYING SALOONS

GARY WITZENBURG encounters
Jaguar's top-of-the-line sedans
from 1935 to 2003



WT

When my mysterious New York City uncle, a dashing Clark Gable-type former actor, visited once in his '50s XK roadster, he let me drive it on neighborhood streets — despite the small detail that I was a couple years short of a license. Like my shifting, the engine was a bit rough at low speeds, but he said it smoothed out nicely over 100 mph.

My second Jag encounter was in 1965 when I flew to London to pick up a Triumph TR4-A, my first new car. A friend of my father's met me at the airport in the most impressive car I had ever seen. It was a big, imposing, wood- and leather-lined sedan shaped like a seaplane pontoon, tapered at the ends, plump in the middle. He said it was a "Jaguar Mark Ten."

Of course it was a Mark X, last of the "low-tech" big Jag saloons, which was introduced late in 1961 (hard on the heels of the sensational E-type sports car), and evolved into the 420G when it got the larger 4.2-liter engine in 1965 and was built through 1967. "Their smaller line of sedans at the

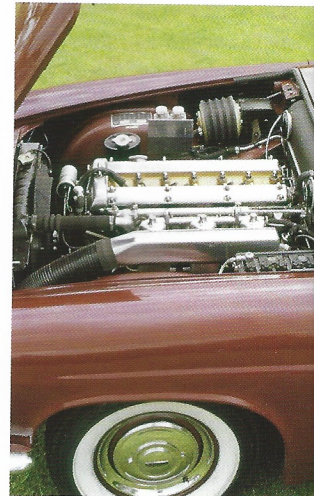
time had a car called the 420," Jaguar archivist and retired communications boss Michael Cook explains. "So when they put the 4.2 in the big car, they had to differentiate it." The "G" apparently stood for "Grande."

"It was the largest car Jaguar had ever attempted, not only long but quite wide," Cook goes on, "an expansive 6-seater. The interior looks like a gentleman's club — leather, wood panels, instrumentation, chrome handles — very good quality materials. That's what they did, right from the beginning at SS. They concentrated on that kind of opulent finish detail even in their sports cars and kept that tradition going. But it was low-tech in terms of creature comforts. It still had an occasionally recalcitrant British heater and didn't have factory air conditioning."

The entire instrument panel was polished wood, and the paneling extended over the doors and up around the windows. The large primary gauges — tachometer left, speedometer right — were directly in front of the driver,



The two black and white images illustrate the Jaguar Mark VII sedan winning the Monte Carlo Rally in 1956, an event traditionally won by small, light sports cars and the SS saloon of the mid- to late-30s. After WW II the SS name was no longer acceptable in polite company and it was changed to Jaguar, a name the company had used for its new 6-cylinder engine. Below the SS is a more typical photo of a Mark VII. Left and below are the luxuriously and fast Mark X and its XK engine.



while the secondary dials — amps, fuel, oil pressure, water temperature — were spread across the upper center of the dash, left and right of a rotary light switch. Just below were twin trios of toggles — interior lights (map and panel), fan, washers, wipers and one that chose between the Jag's right- and left-side petrol tanks — separated by a central cigar lighter, ignition switch and starter button. At top center, a large analog clock in a block of matching wood was the only rectangular shape.

The later 4.2-liter version improved 0-60 performance by a half-second and top end to 122 mph. Handling was excellent for the time despite the car's substantial size and weight. "It had the E-type suspension, all-independent, with 4-wheel disc brakes, inboard at the rear," Cook points out.

The Mark X weighed some 3,400 pounds and stood 202 inches (16 feet, 10 inches) long on a 120-in. wheelbase versus the current LWB XJ8's 4,000 lb., 200.4 in. length and 124.4-in. wheelbase. The 265-hp 3.8-liter triple-carb DOHC

inline-6 launched it to 60 mph in 10.8 seconds and to a top speed of 120 mph, compared to its naturally aspirated current counterpart's 300 SAE bhp and 6.3-sec. 0-60 and the XJR and Super V8's 400 hp and 5.0 sec. A total of 16,430 Mark Xs and 420Gs were built between 1961 and 1967.

EARLY SEDANS

Jaguar founder Sir William Lyons' first sedan was his first complete car, the SS 1 of 1934, though the beautifully styled automobiles turned out by his SS Cars Ltd. did not become "SS Jaguars" until the end of 1935. Two years later, the company upgraded from wood-framed coachbuilt bodies to all-steel construction and completed conversion of its straight-six engines to overhead-valve heads. "The large all-steel saloon was a milestone for Jaguar," Cook relates, "but their most significant car of the late 1930s was the SS 100 sports roadster."

Following World War Two, Lyons changed the firm's

America was awash in bad news in 1968, but enthusiasts celebrated the introduction of Sir William Lyons' beautiful new XJ sedan in spite of it. The new car remained full of classic wood and leather detail – and still, infamous Jaguar idiosyncrasies. The business problems of British Leyland corporation (owners of Jaguar) caused the XJ's late-70s replacement to be postponed and its Mark III edition, shown here in its 1979 guise, became a better than expected stand-in. Energetic new leadership from Michael Edwardes at the corporate top was at least partly responsible for attention to manufacturing quality.



name to Jaguar Cars Ltd. and resumed production. The handsome Mark V sedan, an interim car that married modernized prewar styling to an advanced new chassis with independent front suspension and hydraulic brakes, arrived in 1949. Total production was 7,828.

The Mark V was replaced in 1951 by the sleekly sculpted Mark VII sedan ("Mark VI" was skipped because Bentley's latest model was a "Mark 6"), a close mechanical cousin to the XK 120 that shared the sports car's suspension and advanced 160-hp DOHC 3.4-liter inline-6. Selling for \$4,500 U.S., it was good for mid-13-sec. 0-60 and a 102-mph top speed and was raced successfully by future Formula One star Stirling Moss, among others. The Mark VIII that followed in 1957 got a single-piece windshield and two-tone paint, and the Mark IX of 1961 boasted 220 hp from a larger 3.8-liter engine, 11.3-sec. 0-60 performance and a 114-mph top end. A total of 26,309 Mark VIIIs, VIIIIs and IXs were built before the Mark X superseded it at the end of that year.

THE XJs

The somewhat smaller 108.75-in.-wheelbase XJ6, the first "modern" big Jag, debuted in late 1968 to wide press acclaim. It had a handsome new look (which hasn't changed all that much in 38 years) and a choice of the 4.2-liter or a new 2.8-liter six. "The all-independent suspension maintained Jaguar's lead in luxury car specs," Cook contends. "Both ride and handling were better than anything else on

the market, in the class or even higher. It had a full leather interior, walnut-veneered paneling and quality carpeting, and it was designed from the beginning to have AC and rudimentary climate control."

At a starting price of \$7,950 U.S., that original XJ6 weighed 3,700 lb., sprinted from rest to 60 in 8.8 sec. and topped out at 124 mph with the 245-hp 4.2 engine. Series II and III offered long-wheelbase (113-in.) versions beginning in 1972, a V-12 in 1973 and fuel injection in 1978. With 245 hp and massive torque, the \$11K XJ12 did 0-60 in 7.9 sec. and could go 140 mph.

XJ6 and XJ12 production reached 321,095 and 15,665, respectively, before an all-new XJ6 debuted in the fall of 1986. Oft referred to by its internal name, "XJ40," this car had full climate control and a new 3.6-liter 24-valve aluminum inline-6 good for 221 hp, 7.4 sec. 0-60 and 136 mph. That grew to 4.0 liters in 1990, and a 330-hp 6-liter V-12 debuted in 1994. For 1995, the body was reskinned and stretched to accommodate a longer (117-in.-) wheelbase model, and a \$65K 321-hp supercharged XJR was offered on the 113-in. wheelbase. The first V-8-powered XJ8 debuted in 1998 on 113-in. and 118-in. wheelbases with a 370-hp XJR version capable of 5.3-sec. 0-60 sprints and a (governed) top speed of 155 mph. XJ6/XJ12 production 1986-1997 totaled 185,650, and 121,533 XJ8s were built from 1998 to 2004.

Thus was the stage well set for the all-new all-aluminum XJ8 to take its bow in 2004.

