

steering, recirculating ball type, produces a cornering ability unequalled by any car tested to date.

The Jaguar brakes are extremely powerful, requiring rather low pedal pressure, and did not display any tendency to fade (apparently only severe braking, such as during a road race, tends to bring about fade on the XK). While the cooling is adequate under normal conditions, traffic driving brings a rise in engine temperature.

The Jag went up a 32% grade in 2nd gear at 42 mph. This is 20 mph faster than the MG, and 30 mph faster than the Studebaker. The speedometer was only moderately optimistic, being 2.4 mph fast at 50 mph and 4.8 mph fast at 70 mph.

Apart from the rather awkward appearance presented with the top in place, weatherproofing is not up to the standard of the average roadster or convertible and rain finds its way in at various points.

Both interior and exterior finish are excellent. Instrumentation is quite complete, including such unusual, but welcome, items as an oil level gauge and a warning light which blinks on and off as fuel becomes low. Luggage accommodations are rather small. However, two good size suitcases may be accommodated in the luggage compartment, which is not entirely weather-tight. Storage of tools in the trunk is another praiseworthy feature, . . . included are such items as extra spark plugs, gaskets, and water hoses, each item having its individual clip, thus providing secure and accessible stowage.

Performance, smoothness, appearance and price of the Jaguar XK-120 make it one of the best sports car values on the market today.

MR. C REPORTS

The "XK" is remarkably smooth . . . for a fast car. Surprisingly, one can use 4th gear almost exclusively—in the "family sedan" manner—and yet, when the occasion demands, rocket ahead in 2nd or 3rd. Normal starts from rest are in 2nd gear, with more than ample acceleration. In 1st gear, care must be taken to avoid burning rubber on dry pavement. The clutch is smooth and easy to operate, as are the other controls.

The body work and paint (on the test car) was not up to usual Jaguar quality . . . sheet steel fenders must sacrifice some stiffness in order to achieve lightness. The metallic paint used on most of the examples seen is not very attractive by American standards.

Watching the high speed runs of the XK, it seemed to be making those remarkable speeds with little or no effort and with relative silence. Incidentally, when it was approaching from over a mile away, the sound in the crisp desert air was not unlike that of a jet plane.

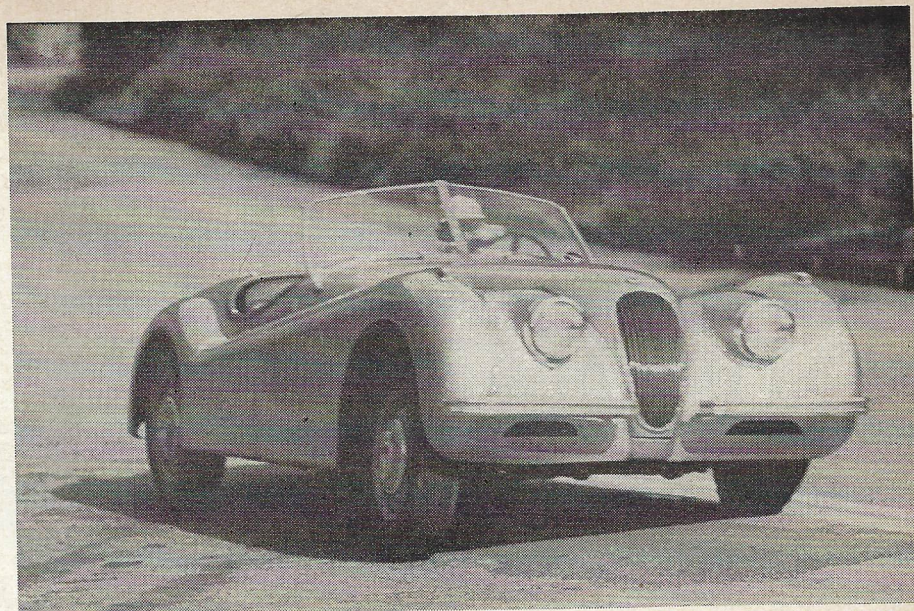
I agree with many who feel that this car looks much better with the fender skirts removed. The resulting interruption of streamlining might cut the maximum speed slightly. The homely top has been mentioned by the others and is probably on Jaguars' book of future modifications, along with new bumpers to provide more adequate protection. It's a shame that a little space isn't available for emergency passengers behind the seats . . . a la Simca Sport.

It is a car I'd love to own—but not unless I also owned a family transportation car.

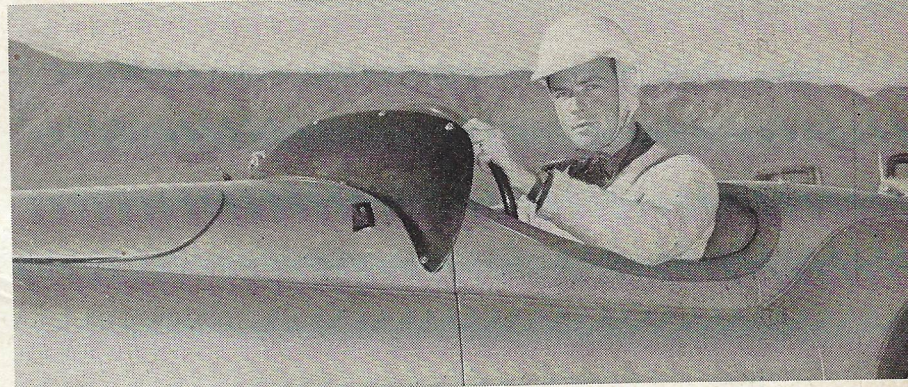
MR. X REPORTS

Sleek as a Kentucky Derby winner, as desirable as a beautiful woman, and faster than the wind . . . that's the Jaguar XK-120. Here is a sports car with real personality. Your morale receives a terrific boost as soon as you sink into the comfortable leather seats.

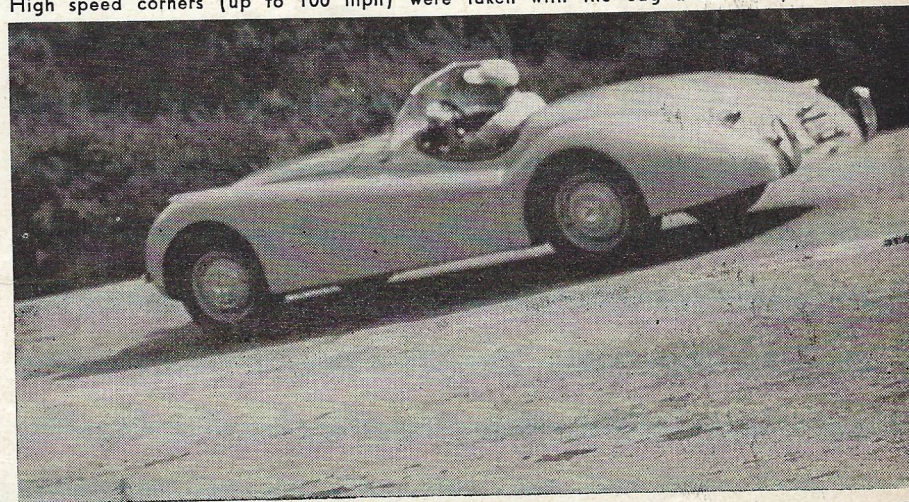
The heavy exhaust note sets the mood for a ride with a thrill. Altho it takes a bit of



Altho the XK-120 rolls slightly on corners, it handles beautifully with its quick positive steering. Windscreen was substituted during tests. Don Parkinson, well-known driver, helped with tests.



High speed corners (up to 100 mph) were taken with the Jag under complete control.



practice to "play" the gears, the shift lever has an ideal form and location. From low, a slight rear-end bump and a tire screech announced departure for high speed in a hurry.

A real surprise is that smooth acceleration in hand at any speed. Even at 90 or 100 mph, there is an immediate response to the throttle. And best of all, the engine sounds quite happy at the century mark . . . yes, this is truly a high speed motor car . . . and one that can be driven at terrific speed all day—and like it!

The expression, "It takes corners as if on rails," is often heard, but can really be appreciated in the Jaguar. If you drive with "the seat of your pants" you actually get

the sensation of being stabilized by rails. Real 90° crossed-arm turns can be made, aided by an almost vertical steering wheel and fast ratio. Very sharp corners can be taken at surprising speeds before a slide (which is quickly corrected) begins. Wider curves can be taken at Grand Prix speeds with complete stability and confidence.

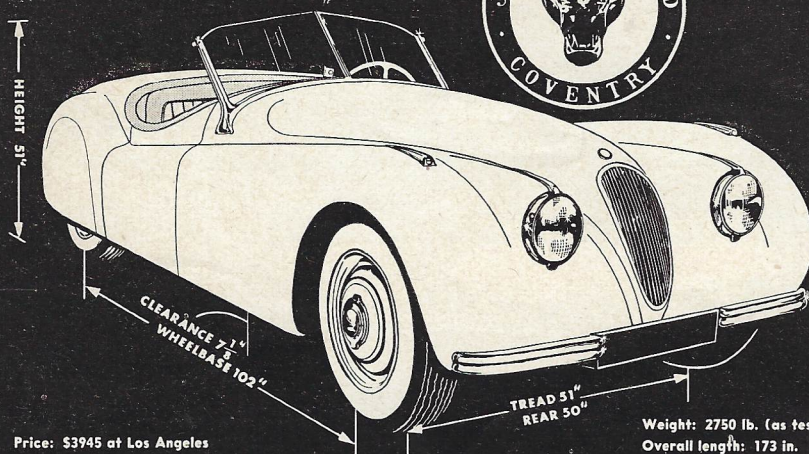
Faults are few: larger instrument faces (tach and speedo are big), a more graceful weathertight top, and non-fade brakes.

Oh yes, brakes . . . altho they can be faded in racing, they are real honeys in traffic.

So you think I am enthusiastic over the XK? Well, so is everyone else, and besides, I'm sold . . . I want a Jaguar XK-120!

ROAD and TRACK ROAD TEST No. F-4-51

Make: Jaguar Model: XK-120 Roadster



Price: \$3945 at Los Angeles
Horsepower: 160 at 5400 rpm
Displacement: 210 cu. in. (3442 cc)
Bore: 3.27 in. (83 mm)
Stroke: 4.17 in. (106 mm)

Weight: 2750 lb. (as tested)
Overall length: 173 in.
Overall width: 61 1/2 in.
Front seat width: individual
Rear seat width: none
Tire size: 6.00 x 16

kimzey

PERFORMANCE FIGURES

ACCELERATION

Standing 1/4 Mile - 18.3 sec.
0-50 mph - 7.5 sec.
0-60 mph - 10.1 sec.
0-70 mph - 12.6 sec.

MAXIMUM SPEED

Flying 1/4 Mile - 123.2 mph
Opposite Direction - 120.0 mph
Average - 121.6 mph

MR. A. REPORTS

Driving the Jaguar XK-120 is an experience not soon forgotten—one expects much and is not disappointed. Like any really good automobile, it is much easier to list the faults than the virtues.

Unquestionably, the XK-120 has performance far and above any stock American make, but due to the engine size being less than that of a Chevrolet, the torque is not high at low engine speeds. The four forward ratios are well chosen, and when used properly to take full advantage of the 160 horsepower available, the car can reach 70, 80 or even 100 honest mph in a very short time. The engine is smooth and unobtrusive all the way to its recommended maximum of 6000 rpm . . . it starts instantly and idles reliably but not regularly.

Purely personal grievances concern the too nearly vertical steering wheel which has a protruding horn (I managed to hit it fairly often when making 90° corners). The brake pedal pressure seemed almost too low, but this is probably a question of getting accustomed to the car. Likewise, the gear shifting lever seemed slightly awkward compared to the M.G. (with which I am familiar). In particular, the necessary travel from neutral seemed different for each gear and it would take considerable practice to master really snappy changes.

Suspension is all that could be desired for a very fast long distance touring machine . . . very comfortable, yet much stiffer springing and less roll than found on American family cars.

I particularly liked the modern styling and the excellent performance. Foot pedals seem a little high, but the seats are excellent, and the general quality of the interior appointments calls for considerable praise. Several XK-120 owners tell me that the interior is not exactly dry in rainstorms, but the new "hard top" coupe will satisfy those who demand comfort even at the expense of losing the features of open-air motoring.

MR. B. REPORTS

The Jaguar XK-120 is by far the fastest car yet tested by *Road and Track*, a two-way average speed of 121.6 mph being attained. Considering the daily use of this car for city traffic driving and the complete lack of special tuning, the fact becomes even more remarkable.

Altho the Jaguar XK-120 has enjoyed much popularity in the United States, some people have been inclined to doubt its high speed ability. For this reason, we were particularly anxious to obtain a top speed figure on this car. To assure strict compliance with stock status, the 5,000 mile tune up, by Joe Thrall of International Motors, was personally observed. Removing the windshield and fitting an aero-screen (optional extra) was the only alteration to the standard delivered form. (For ordinary use, we positively do not recommend driving without windshield. Both the driver and photographer turned a deep blue from the early morning desert cold.) The 121.6 mph average was obtained with the standard 3.64:1 rear axle ratio and not the 3.27:1 ratio used on the official Jabbeke Road record run in 1949. Unlike the XK used in the Belgian run, the *Road and Track* test car used no underpan or tonneau cover. Two men were in the car and the run was at an elevation of over 3,000 feet.

At top speed, the Jaguar has a steadiness usually associated only with a race car and gusts of wind have little or no effect on stability. Steering and roadworthiness of the Jaguar would be difficult to improve. The excellent seating position, combined with fast (3/4 turns lock to lock), positive

The fifth of a series of road tests of foreign and American automobiles from the American driver's viewpoint

