

CLASSIC DRIVER



Knowles Wilkins Engineering

KWE enhanced Jaguars - the modern alternative

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“What would you rather drive?” That’s the strapline on KWE’s advertising for their range of Jaguars that includes versions of the classic XJ SIII saloon and XJS. The question relates to the choice between a KWE Jaguar and a modern luxury saloon or coupé - at almost double the price.

KWE produces modernised, re-engineered cars that are equivalent to new cars in handling and reliability but at much lower prices and shorter delivery times. To achieve this the company has developed a production process that ensures high quality, repeatable manufacturing for products that have traditionally taken a long and variable time to deliver. The basis for their range of cars is of course one of motoring’s most famous marques, Jaguar, and its two models of the 80s and 90s that found so many fans; the Pininfarina-sculpted SIII saloon and the XJS coupé. Both cars were fitted with either Jaguar V12 or straight-six engines and KWE offer completely rebuilt versions of both. These aren’t simply restorations - they are small-run production of neo-classic cars with modern mechanics.



Chris Knowles, KWE’s Managing Director, takes up the story, “We believe our cars are viable alternatives to new cars such as BMW’s 5 or 7 Series, Mercedes’ S-Class and Audi’s A8 - but at half the price. They handle as well and the mechanical components are up to the job. From the safety aspect, the SIII saloon in particular has an excellent record and we inspect all cars (as far as is possible) for any structural flaws.

“We want to provide discerning individuals with high performance luxury cars that bridge the gap between bespoke, fully-restored classic cars and good quality, un-restored second hand vehicles. A classic luxury or performance car brought back to original condition will cost at least £50,000, and when performance improvements are specified the price can exceed £100,000. Not only that, but production time is usually 6 months or more. KWE produces cars for less than half this - and in 6 to 12 weeks.

“The Jaguar saloons of the 1980 to 1992 period embody a modern design that, with careful re-engineering, drives like today’s cars. With over 400,000 XJ bodies built there is no shortage of base

models, many of which are in excellent basic condition. Furthermore there remain very large stocks of spare parts, with many still in production.

“As far as servicing is concerned, we have been careful to ensure that any Jaguar main dealer or Jaguar specialist garage can service one of our cars, both in the UK and abroad. While KWE prefer to carry out servicing and repairs ourselves, so that we can maintain peak performance, we recognise this won't always be possible. The important thing is that the car is kept standard enough not to require specialist knowledge in either running or maintaining it. It's a genuine daily-driver, but one that stands out in today's mass-market herd of 'Euro-blobs'.”

How it works -

KWE buys the basic cars. (They can re-engineer a customer's car but it would have to meet stringent requirements for minimal corrosion and accident damage, and must have an immaculate interior). In the case of XJ saloons, it must be the Sovereign model to achieve KWE's standard specification.

They then strip out the engine, braking system and entire suspension. The engine is sent off for complete renewal by highly experienced professionals. Meanwhile the body has been thoroughly cleaned and any minor repairs carried out. If a new paint scheme has been ordered it would now be sent off for a complete re-spray that can be ordered as an option (with correspondingly longer lead-time).

Upon return of the body, the pre-prepared steering, braking and suspension assemblies are re-fitted, having been through a medium scale batch-renewal process which includes fitting of KWE-specified components to give the required handling characteristics. The new engine is now installed along with all the reconditioned ancillaries. (A KWE-specified exhaust system is standard, added after the engine test-run). Final tuning is followed by a thorough electrical systems check and all defects repaired. The new wheels and tyres are mounted and the car is now driven (at running-in speeds) to check suspension and braking systems, as well as fine-tuning the damper settings.

Finally the car interior is thoroughly cleaned and refurbished where necessary, the leather being cleaned and treated with hide food. The climate control system is checked, along with all the instrumentation and minor electrical systems, and a very detailed lubrication procedure is then followed including many parts that would never normally be serviced. The specified in-car entertainment and security systems are then fitted and finally the exterior is power-polished and any remaining defective fittings or blemishes repaired. To mark the renewal of so much of the car the odometer is reset to zero.

The car is then delivered with only a running-in mileage of up to 1500 miles required. Full documentation of the KWE process with pictures is supplied on a CD and clients are encouraged to view progress on 'their' vehicle on at least two occasions.

The models -

The **K1** is the luxury sports saloon based on the Jaguar XJ6 Sovereign SIII, 1979 to 1986. A range of engine sizes is offered, but the classic Jaguar 4.2 litre, fuel-injected, six-cylinder, XK engine with the easy-to-use BW 66 automatic transmission is standard. As with all KWE cars, air conditioning, cruise control, electric windows, electric front seat height adjustment, electric wing mirrors - and a fully trimmed Connolly hide interior with burr walnut veneer - is standard. Manual transmissions can be

specified, as can the later 3.6 and 4.0 litre AJ6 engines with ZF four speed automatic transmissions, at extra cost. Suspension components, wheels and tyres are revised by KWE to give modern ride and handling characteristics, while subtle improvements in engine breathing yield greater power and flexibility.

The **K2** is similar to the K1 in body and interior fittings, but contains the magnificent Jaguar 5.3 litre V12 engine. This creamy engine continues to set the standard for smoothness and effortless power. Available with the GM400 three speed automatic transmission or by special order with a Keisler or Borg Warner 5 speed manual transmission. The suspension is further modified to give best results with this more powerful package.

The **K3**, based on the Jaguar XJ12, offers the customer a wide range of engine, body and suspension tuning options with power outputs of up to 500 bhp from the V12 5.3 or 6.0 litre engine. These are rare, specialist cars giving their owners bespoke engineering and astonishing performance.

The **K-S** variants are based on the timeless Jaguar XJS sports coupé in 3.6, 4.0 or 5.3 litre V12 form. With improvements to handling and power yielding supercar performance in a luxury Grand Tourer, KWE believe this is one of the most satisfying cars in the world to drive.

Final word from Chris Knowles, "Our range of K Series Jaguars are a real alternative for today's drivers, offering classic looks and good modern performance yet suffering much lower depreciation than a modern car. For UK company car drivers they also attract less benefit in kind taxation and from an environmental perspective our re-engineered cars are 'green' in that they don't incur the heavy energy and greenhouse gas cost of making all new components for a new car (approx 10 tons of CO2 are released in the manufacture of one modern car). KWE stands for presenting cars from the past to add to the choice of today's new car buyer."

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