

CLASSIC DRIVER

[Paris Motor Show: Review by John Simister](#)



If the Lotus explosion was the talk of the show, there were plenty of other conversational topics when the line-up of worryingly similar-looking Loti had fried the mind into terminal confusion. Some we mentioned last week in *Classic Driver*, but three, in particular, deserve a closer look.

The greatest of these is the **Jaguar C-X75**. This sleek supercar, whose all-aluminium construction helps towards a surprisingly light 1350kg overall weight, is a new take on the notion of a plug-in hybrid. Unlike the **Porsche 918 Spyder** concept shown at **Geneva**, the **Jaguar's** wheels are always propelled by electricity. One 195bhp motor drives each wheel, each able to produce up to 295lb ft of torque. Multiply these figures by four and you have a great deal of thrust.

The electricity to power the motors comes from a hefty lithium-ion battery, which itself needs to be charged. This can be done from the mains, which is the key to the **C-X75's** projected 28g/km CO2 figure on the current EC drive-cycle test, a figure which blows the **918's** mightily impressive 70g/km into the weeds. (Clearly the EC test is going to have to change where plug-in hybrids are concerned.)



However, once the battery power is low it must be recharged. And here is the **C-X75's** killer feature: its generator is powered by a pair of tiny gas turbines. They weigh 35kg each, and they produce 94bhp each as they whistle at a steady 80,000rpm. For vigorous acceleration, such as when emulating the claimed 3.4sec 0-62mph time and then maybe heading towards the 205mph top speed, the generator can feed its power directly to the wheel motors. One turbine operates first, and the second joins if more thrust is needed.

Made by **Bladon Jets**, the gas turbines can run on anything liquid and combustible but are calibrated for petrol. It's the first time that axial turbines, the type found in turboprop aircraft, have been used in an automotive application in this way, although there have been experiments with radial turbines as used in helicopters.

Having a separate motor for each wheel opens up many possibilities for torque vectoring, by which torque is varied as needed to counter over- or understeer and keep traction intact. Running on electricity alone, the **C-X75** is predicted to cover 68 miles (at what sort of speed isn't stated), while a full charge and a full tank of fuel should together see it cover around 560 miles.



This is a fascinating project but, so far, the **C-X75** runs only on its battery. The show car's turbines are dummies, but a complete powertrain is on test in **Jaguar's** R&D department. While that is going on, we can admire the **C-X75's** looks, which bring a new 'face' to **Jaguar** sports cars somewhere between an **XF/XJ** grille and an **XK** air intake. Design director Ian Callum has been trying to bring **Jaguar** front ends into a single recognisable theme, and the **C-X75** shows how a future **XK** nose might look.

At the other end is a tail design reminiscent of the **XJ13 Le Mans prototype**, with its lateral ridge and horizontal lights. Will **Jaguar** make a production version? "We'll look at it," says **C-X75** engineer **Tony Harper**. "We'll take a judgment when the time comes. But if it's made, it would definitely be in aluminium."



Over on the **Renault** stand, the **DeZir** concept car mixed the stance of an **Audi R8** with a hint of **Renault's** next-generation nose treatment, which we'll see first on the humble **Clio**. Some of the show car's many surface perforations contained LEDs, and the doors showed a new take on the scissor-door idea by having the passenger's door rear-hinged. Inside, the driver's side is red and fiery, the passenger's white and calm. Design director **Laurens van der Acker** says it represents a man and a woman falling in love. Five more **Renault** concepts will follow, reflecting different stages of life.

Under the skin is the tubular chassis of the **Mégane Trophy** 'silhouette' race cars and the electric powertrain of the new **Fluence** saloon, suitably uprated to give **Tesla-like** pace. It works, too.



Could it be more than a piece of **Paris** show fantasy and a preview of the new visage? Is this, in fact, a preview of a new **Alpine** sports car? It would be good to think so, and the **DeZir's** creators are hoping for a petrol-fuelled production version. At a pre-show event, product planning chief **Beatrice Foucher** hinted that Renault might make an ultimate sporty car. "It's not decided," she said, "but **DeZir** keeps the roots of what Alpine was and has a piece of the passion. It is not closed. We have hopes for **Alpine**."



Our third must-see was the **Audi quattro** concept, unashamedly informed by the past (the original **Quattro**, with a capital Q, was launched 30 years ago) but reinterpreted for the future. It's actually inspired by the **Sport Quattro**, the short-wheelbase homologation special of 1984 intended to improve the rally cars' agility. This time the base is the recently launched **RS5**, from which 150mm have been chopped out of the wheelbase.

The **RS5's** dipped waistline between wheelarches remains, the result rather more elegant than the **Sport Quattro's** boxy arch extensions, while the tail is chopped and the nose bears a simple, stark radiator opening. The concept looks pure and brutal, and under its bonnet is an in-line five-cylinder engine just as the original Quattro had. This time it's the **Audi TT RS** unit, but here mounted longitudinally in proper **Quattro** fashion.



Design credits are shared between **Wolfgang Egger**, who joined **Audi** a couple of years ago from **Alfa Romeo** (the fabulous **8C Competizione** was his), and British designer **Steve Lewis** late of **Seat** and a sojourn in the US. Obviously they would love to see the **quattro concept** in production, but using the longitudinal five-cylinder engine would be a problem given the strictures of today's crash tests. That's why **Audi** abandoned that configuration. With the **RS5/R8** V8 engine, though, this would be quite some car.

One final Parisian thought. Whatever happened to the credit crunch? Walk around the show, and you start to think you must have imagined it.

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