



WARNING



If you are of a nervous disposition and a Jaguar traditionalist, DON'T read any further. If you want to know more about the ultimate X-type (so far!), then read on. Your Editor tries out the wildest X-type yet seen.

Ricky Groom is involved in the family window business (Super-Save Windows) in Wolverhampton. His brother runs a Lexus Coupe, his dad a Roller, although he has previously owned Jaguars; then Ricky, tired of his own Lexus, Saab Convertible and latterly Nissan Patrol, was going to buy a BMW 535 but didn't like the dealer's attitude or service. Instead, after visiting the local Jaguar dealer and considering an XJ (too large) and S-type (didn't like the styling), he opted to buy an X-type.

So, in 2002 he took delivery of a new X-type 3.0 litre SE automatic in Platinum Silver with Sand interior. In Ricky's own words "I just loved it right from the start, small and manageable, good performance, road holding and very comfortable. It really felt good."

Ricky is not one to be happy with a standard car and wanted to "play with it" and stamp his own individuality on it as soon as possible. So started a continuous stream of modifications and developments to turn this "basic" X-type into his ultimate Jag.

Gigantic Power Boost

His first, and probably most outrageous approach was to literally hit the performance by having a Nitrous Oxide injection system fitted. For the benefit of those who are not aware of what this is, it is a compound substance stored in a metal canister in the boot.

When pumped through to the engine and heated it allows the engine

to burn more fuel than normal. Burning more fuel creates higher cylinder pressures which will push down on the pistons with greater force. The end result is more power and this is controlled either by a button operated by the driver when he wants that extra performance or by full throttle activation.

The power boost is incredible in many cases doubling the bhp of the engine.

To extract the best performance this way a new exhaust system was required because the Nitrous had already burnt out the catalytic converter and negated the manufacturers warranty! Ashley Competition Exhausts from Walsall in the West Midlands built up a straight through exhaust system without cats.

Although the engine was coping well with the extra performance the automatic transmission wasn't and was never expected to. Ricky sourced from Just Jags a five speed manual box from another X-type which, to some extent, initially upset the ECUs on the car! Being a little worried about the engine as well, Ricky had new con-rods and pistons made up for the car to ensure the engine could handle the power boost.

Surprisingly the clutch is standard and AP Racing (who tested it) found it to be perfectly satisfactory for the





Not sure about the low density lighting but the exhausts and spoilers book the business.

purpose. Also, to date, the brakes have not been altered and probably may not need it providing the performance isn't used to the extreme.

The next stop was the suspension. Originally trying an Arden sports package he opted for alternative, fully adjustable dampers and springs, a lot of items again bespoke made for the car. The result is that the car now sits 40mm lower to the ground which lead to another problem – wheels – more on this shortly.

Tarting Up the Trim

Next came a complete respray, still in silver but one of the new custom rainbow illusion colours which, unfortunately on the day we photographed the car, didn't show up well in the pictures.

To go with this Ricky tried an Arden body kit but didn't like it so had a company in Reading (who normally work on custom cars) make up a special one-off kit for the car. When it arrived Ricky still wasn't very happy so entrusted the transformation to what you see now by Mike Hickmaw of Spray Station (who painted the car as well.)

Back to the wheels and in Ricky's own words "even 17" Jaguar wheels look nothing on the X-type so I checked out websites in the US where one informed me that it was possible to fit massive 20" rims to the car." Unfortunately, as with many things you hear on the internet, this was not correct but by then he had already spent over £3,500 on new chromed 20" wheels and tyres!

Back to Spray Station for the wheelarches to be rolled and slightly pulled out to accommodate the wheels.

Then with tweaking to the suspension to allow for the steering lock, the wheels fitted without catching anywhere.

Now the interior needed some attention. Ricky had a stamp made up of the Jaguar growler image and after having the seat centre panels re-upholstered in British Racing Green, the stamp image was embedded into all the seats. The headlining was also retrimmed in leather as was the steering wheel in BRG to match.

Despite this very contemporary approach to the interior Ricky still liked the Birds Eye Maple woodwork so had the centre panel and various other parts of the trim done to match.

Next came the sound system and he opted for a combination of high power, deep bass and overall performance with a whopping 1000 watt system with auxiliary amplifiers, 14 speakers, incorporating TV screens in the headrests, a Play Station

module, headsets, etc. This has necessitated the fitment of the amplifiers in the boot area, nicely "shown off" under glass and with blue lighting plus, of course, an etched growler image.

The Elite Touch

With fuel consumption down to the low teens and the harshness of Nitrous Oxide derived power, Ricky was looking for another avenue to achieve improved performance from the 3.0 litre engine. He heard that Elite & Performance of Derby had been working on a supercharger system, adaptable for various models, not least the Jaguar AJ-26 engines as fitted to the X-type.

A call made, an agreement done and earlier this year the X-type went off to Derby for conversion.

This was a major transformation and Ricky's car was very much the prototype installation. There was no concern for the suitability of the AJ-26 engine for



Massive US 20" alloys are unusual in their design, as is the individual air scoop treatment to the rear of the sills. Apparently Mike Hickmaw of Spray Station hand-made these out of drain-pipes!



Extra wood veneer added to good effect if not a perfect match for the original.

supercharging, the major issue was space. Because it is such a tight installation it can only be carried out on manual transmission models.

Despite the space restrictions very little alteration had to be made to the existing mechanics of the car. The air flow meter was moved, minor changes made to the cooling system, and wiring looms had to be modified and lengthened. A separate fuelling system had to be installed and the gearbox oil cooler (fitted by Jaguar because this was originally an automatic transmission model) was retained acting as the radiator for the charge cooler unit, sited underneath the battery area.

Elite & Performance dyno tested the X-type before the work commenced and the standard 3.0 litre engine managed a figure of 234bhp. With the supercharged installation completed, that figure had risen to a whopping 346bhp at 7,000rpm, a substantial increase in performance.

Although a relatively tight installation under the bonnet you wouldn't know the car was any different to another X-type

Green leather inserts to the seat and door trims plus steering wheel surround. Note the retention of the auto transmission centre console area and MOMO gear knob.

(given Ricky's many personal mods). The benefits are that the supercharger provides more controlled and progressive power, particularly in the mid-range 2,500 to 3,000 revs and, of course, better fuel consumption.

On the Road

I got the opportunity to drive this ultimate X-type, all be it on the urban rounds around the Wolverhampton/Bilston area of the West Midlands. Not the ideal place to try out the performance and certainly Ricky ought to be thinking about going along to the Woodbridge Speedtrial next year to see just how fast this car really is.

Take away the heavily tinted windows and the interior re-trims and you wouldn't know the car apart from any other X-type except when Ricky decided to "pump up the volume" on the sound system – great for stripping wallpaper and I am sure the sound was so sharp that it cut my hair as well!

You now start the car on a button in the overhead console and the engine burst



Embossed growler badging to the seats and extra speakers for the sound system. Not sure if the head-sets are there to protect your ears or for you to listen with if the sound isn't loud enough!



The business end of the sound system, all 1,000 watts of it with its own illumination and growler glass. No spare wheel any more. The blue covering on the right hides the nitrous oxide storage tank, currently disconnected.

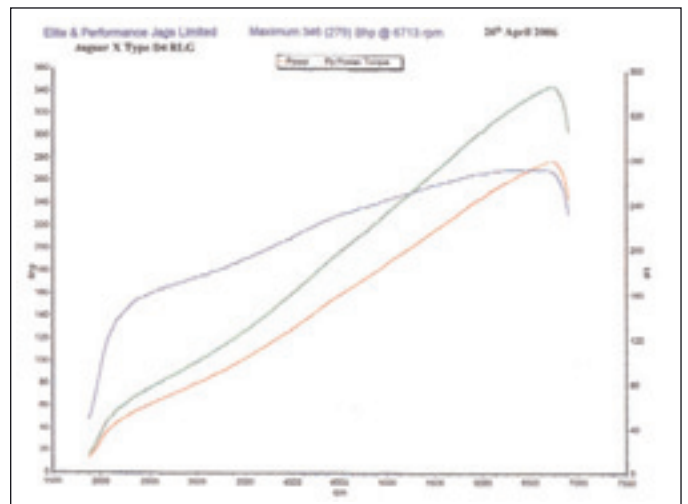
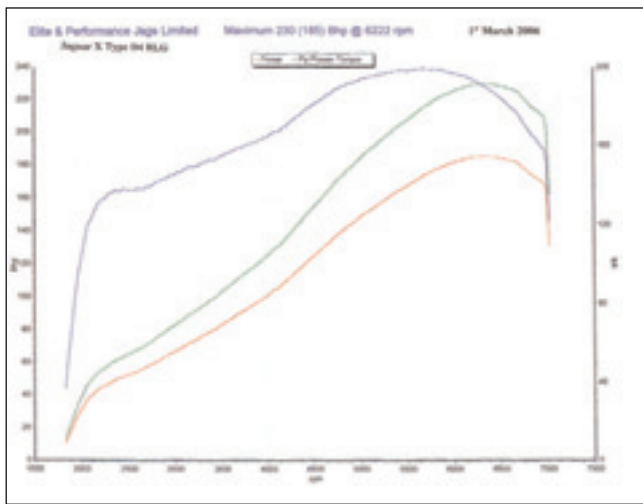


Leather headlining and a separate starter button for the engine.

into life instantly without assistance from the throttle. Immediately the differences start to kick in with the outrageous sound from the exhaust system which creates a slight vibration through the floor. Once on the road, however, the sound is more



The real business end with the very well installed and neat supercharger layout from Elite & Performance.



Before and after dynamometer recordings for the X-type.

acceptable and through the streets the echo around the building walls was somewhat reminiscent of an XK120 on full song.

Yes the car was very agile and digging your right foot into the accelerator pedal certainly created enormous response from the engine, more akin to an XJR than a relatively humble X-type. A slight whine from the supercharger was evident but it wasn't obtrusive and it's something that Ricky listens for and likes. The mid-range pulling power in the intermediary gears is fantastic and if nothing else, is worth having in a road car.

I have to say that the engine and performance never felt harsh, nor uncontrollable. The X-type would potter around the centre of Wolverhampton with as much ease as a standard car. Of course all this is with the new supercharger system installed by Elite & Performance on a stand-alone basis. At this point the Nitrous Oxide injection system is discon-

nected, in Ricky's words "at least for the moment until the warranty runs out"!

The suspension, in contrast was hard (as nails!). I noticed on our initial drive with Ricky at the wheel, he constantly tried to avoid everything from speed humps to manhole covers because every bump was felt through the whole car. It never grounded, however as he has taken great care to ensure this doesn't happen, nor did the tyres scrape the wheelarches but, the compromise is a harsh ride.

Not able to evaluate the handling characteristics of the car with this hard suspension and massive wheels/tyres, the package would certainly not be to most Jaguar owners liking but it still appeared softer than an equivalent Subaru Impreza. The Jaguar's softer seating must have soaked up some of the strain.

What's it all cost?

Well Mr. Groom didn't mention a total figure but he did comment that his X-type

has cost considerably more than he could spend buying a new Jaguar XK. But, he now has a unique car whereas in a few years there will be plenty of XKs around!

You pays your money, you takes your choice – one man's interpretation of the ultimate car is not another's – what do you think?

The Elite & Performance supercharged installation is the most notable feature of the car and now the development work has been done, it will be possible to install systems like this in other X-types quicker and more economically. As Jaguar are never likely to supercharge the cars themselves, it makes for an interesting way to boost the performance without destroying the refinement of these cars.

For more information on the installation and other modifications carried out by Elite & Performance, check out their advertisement in this magazine or visit their website at www.eapj.com

