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Next XJ will herald a new design language for Jaguar saloons

“The new electric technology will support twin motors and all-wheel drive”



AUTOCAR
IMAGE

New XJ turns electric as Jag bids to upstage rivals

Luxury flagship will use cutting-edge tech to steal a march on S-Class and 7 Series

The Jaguar XJ will be reinvented as an electric car for its next generation, which will go on sale in 2019 after a launch at the end of 2018, the 50th anniversary of the first XJ.

The XJ is Jaguar's flagship model and debate has raged within the company over exactly what sort of vehicle the XJ should be in the future, and even if it should exist at all.

Autocar has learned that the decision has been taken to replace it, despite the tougher market for luxury saloons in the face of the rising popularity of luxury SUVs. However, it is being replaced not with a like-for-like model but with one that reinvents the very idea of a luxury saloon as an electric car and can act as a high-tech flagship for Jaguar.

As well as aiming for the

success Tesla enjoys with its larger models, the new XJ will be pitched as a cutting-edge alternative to luxury saloons such as the BMW 7 Series and Mercedes-Benz S-Class.

A virtue will be made of its alternative positioning, similar to how buyers may shop between an S-Class and a Range Rover when buying a luxury model, despite the different body styles.

Turning the XJ into an electric car is a bold move, but the model has always been an innovative one for Jaguar, not least its two most recent iterations. The X350-generation XJ, launched in 2003, was the first aluminium car from Jaguar and the X351, introduced in 2009 and still on sale now, completely broke away from the design themes that had largely followed

the XJ since its 1968 launch. Reinventing the model as an EV, Jaguar argues, is the best way of keeping it relevant as the industry experiences an unprecedented level of change related to electrification.

The all-new XJ is being developed alongside a new, more car-like Range Rover model, dubbed 'Road Rover' internally. It will not use that name for production but will →

WHAT'S HAPPENING TO SALES OF LARGE LUXURY SALOONS?

Sales of large luxury saloons are still growing despite the impending arrival of a number of prestigious SUVs, which threaten to steal market share from their more conventional counterparts.

In the first half of 2017, luxury saloon sales grew year on year by 13% worldwide to almost 166,000 units, according to automotive market analyst Jato. That's only a small part of global car sales, of course, but luxury saloons represent important profit drivers for car makers.

The current Jaguar XJ is in ninth place in the segment, selling 5200 units in the first six months, up 1.4%, but far from the top three: the Mercedes-Benz S-Class, (37,500 units sold), BMW 7 Series (29,400) and Cadillac XTS (28,200).

China is the largest market for luxury saloons, with

71,300 sold, an increase of 58% over the first six months of 2016. Given China's strict emissions laws, Jaguar's choice to go electric should help its sales in this region. The US is the second biggest market, with 42,600 cars sold, and third is South Korea, with 13,800 units.

Despite the steady growth of luxury saloons, a host of

lavish SUVs pose a threat. The Bentley Bentayga, Maserati Levante and new Porsche Cayenne are already here, and models such as the BMW X7, Audi Q8, Lamborghini Urus and Rolls-Royce Cullinan will add to the competition. With non-premium saloons losing out to SUVs, it's likely the luxury segment will follow suit.



World's best-selling luxury saloon is the Mercedes S-Class

← be a Range Rover due to the huge cachet of that brand.

Despite its close relationship to a model from Jaguar's sister company Land Rover, the XJ will retain a sleek saloon profile, albeit with a switch from a four-door layout to a five-door.

Design work on the car has now been completed by design boss Ian Callum and his team. The design is understood to have been well received inside the company and united it in the belief that this reinvented XJ will be a true flagship for the firm, ushering in a new design language for the brand.

Callum told Autocar in September that there was "consensus" within the company that the XJ, a car he considers very personal to him, should remain Jaguar's flagship in preference to a large SUV, such as the rumoured J-Pace.

Without referencing the XJ directly, he added that the very idea of the saloon needed to be reinvented in the face of electrification, the rise of the SUV and the unexpected

acceptance of hatchbacks in the US due to Tesla.

Jaguar will launch its first electric car, the I-Pace, in March. That model will have a significant technology transfer with the XJ. The I-Pace will position Jaguar as an electric car maker in the eyes of the world and the firm will be keen to maintain that momentum.

To that end, the electric XJ's arrival couldn't be better timed. If the I-Pace reaches showrooms next summer as planned, it will be the first premium electric car with a credibly large driving range on sale without a Tesla badge, and the XJ will quickly turn into a range of Jaguar electric cars.

The XJ has always found favour in the UK without ever mounting a serious challenge to the S-Class globally, but the next-generation car will be tasked with making huge strides in China and the US, particularly California. That's because Jaguar senses a once-in-a-generation opportunity to reinvent both the brand and



Current XJ's predecessor, X350, was Jag's first aluminium car

the technology that underpins it, exploiting the company's smaller size and creative design and engineering base to steal a march on bigger rivals.

The versatile architecture used for the XJ and its Land Rover sibling will be a new aluminium one that will not only underpin electric cars but also traditional piston engines to support more hybrid models. It is understood the XJ will not go down the hybrid route initially - if ever - to avoid diluting the impact around its reinvention.

The electric technology will support twin motors and all-wheel drive. It will be backed with the chassis technology needed to create a supremely luxurious drive and also a sporty one, Jaguar being keen to keep the XJ's role as the sportiest car in its segment.

To that end, the electric drivetrain will enable strong performance figures and torque vectoring. A range well in excess of 300 miles is expected.

MARK TISSHAW



NEW XJ: WILLIAM LYONS WOULD HAVE LOVED IT

STEVE CROPLEY

Jaguar's decision to continue building a big, luxurious saloon called the XJ, positioning it as the flagship and reinventing it for the electric era, shows just how much the company's management continues to respect and be guided by the marque's heritage.

The launch of the first XJ (far right) in 1968 signalled the start of a new era for Jaguar. Company founder and chief designer Sir William Lyons (right) ditched many of the styling cues that determined the look of Jaguars, keeping only the essentials and introducing entirely new body proportions. Most striking was the XJ's amazingly low bonnet, the enabler of its new, sleek lines. It was a big engineering challenge, given the large, long-stroke XK engine under that bonnet.

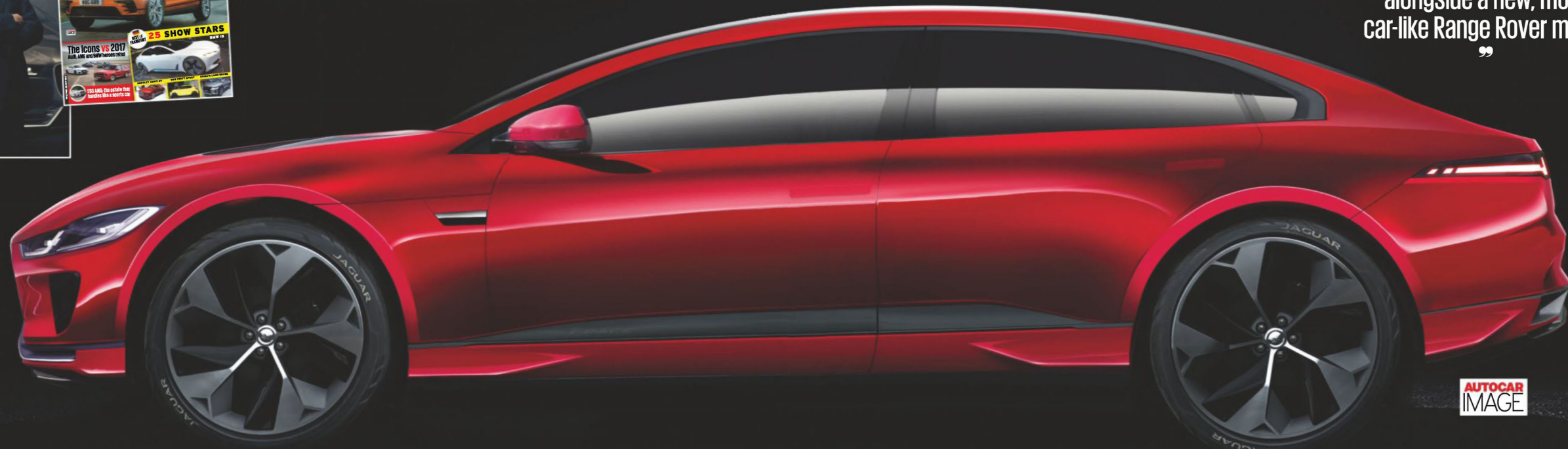
The 1968 XJ also laid bare Lyons' courage and love of the new, which are both traits shared by Jaguar's current management. Lyons had already won plaudits with sports cars such as the XK120 (1948) and E-Type (1961) and saloons like the Mark VII (1950) and Mark I (1955). He could simply have built an XJ in the image of these cars and called it new. Instead, he changed everything.

With its new XJ, Jaguar

is doing the same. The use of the electric powertrain's innate advantages (extreme smoothness and quietness, huge low-end torque) to create the most luxurious car possible, while also using new packaging opportunities (floor-level battery, less nose weight, less engine bulk) to reinvent the layout of a luxury saloon, is exactly the kind of challenge the company's creator, gone this past 32 years, would have relished.



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AUTOCAR IMAGE

JLR is developing Callum-designed XJ and a "Road Rover"