

R9949 July 1999

Jaguar S-Type



THE ARRIVAL OF A NEW JAGUAR IS A RARE, special occasion; few cars have been so eagerly anticipated as the new "small" Jag. Ford bosses decreed that the S-Type must use Lincoln LS underpinnings, should reflect the marque's sporting heritage and be instantly recognisable as a Jaguar. And while they're at it, could they better the BMW 5-Series the definitive sporting saloon? No easy task, then.

Despite Jaguar's insistence that it isn't "retro", the S-Type, like the Rover 75, comes over all nostalgic. It's riddled with styling cues from Jags of the fifties and sixties, yet with advanced options such as satellite navigation, computer-controlled suspension and voice-activated controls, the S-Type is anything but retro under its classical looks.

Powered by a 4.0-litre V8 or a 3.0-litre quad-cam V6 (a "Jaguarised" V6 Mondeo engine), the new Inspector Morse-mobile has grace and style a-plenty. It's no shrinking violet, though, in size, price or weight, with the 3.0-litre needing full use of its slick, positive gearshift to deliver its best.

Ride composure and body control are fundamentally

Featuring 3.0 V6 5-speed manual

SCORECARD

Overtaking / pulling power ••••00 Fuel economy **00**000 Handling / steering 00000 Comfort / ease of control Interior space / practicality Accident / injury avoidance Costs in service 0000 Depreciation prospects 00000

spot-on, yet an underlying fidgetiness and occasional tremors over deep ruts (especially on optional 17-inch Sport wheels) undermine overall composure at the wheel. The overlight, slightly detached feel to the steering disappoints a little, too.

Bathed in the warm intimacy of maple veneers and fine leather craftsmanship, the interior re-creates all the style and sense of occasion of the S-Type's forerunners. But don't be surprised to find that the instruments and a few switches have a familiar Ford look to them.

The back seat is roomy and cosseting for *two* (unlike the XJ's), but a bulky transmission tunnel short-changes the third occupant. The boot, too, is more expansive than on many previous Jaguars (comfortably taking golf clubs, for example), although height under the rear parcel shelf is limited.

Up with the very best, the S-Type appeases Jaguar traditionalists, yet breaks new ground in areas of style, space, safety and value, if not fuel economy. It's an impressive effort, given its inherited origins, but whether it eclipses the Bavarian benchmark will doubtless be debated for some time to come.

HOW THE S-TYPE COMPARES*	Engine cap/power (cc/bhp)	Revs at 70mph (rpm)	30-70mph through gears (sec)	30-70mph in 5th/4th gears (sec)	Fuel economy (mpg)	Brakes† best stop (m/kg)	Maximum legroom - front (cm)	Typical leg/ kneeroom - rear (cm)	Steering turns/ (p) circle (m)	Overall length (cm)
JAGUAR S-TYPE 3.0 V6	2967/240	2825	8.0	22.2/16.7	231/2	241/2/22	111	102/77	2.7/11.5	486
Alfa Romeo 166 2.0 Twin Spark	1970/155	3500	9.6	24.3/16.7	29	271/2/18	110	103/76	2.3/11.9	472
BMW 523i	2494/170	2975	8.1	24.1/16.9	30	231/2/18	116	103/76	3.0/11.0	478
Rover 75 2.5 V6 (automatic)	2497/177	2540	9.3	N/A	28	241/2/22	114	100/77	3.2/11.4	475
Saab 9-5 2.0t	1985/150	2560	9.5	30.7/16.3	311/2	251/2/32	110	103/78	2.9/11.0	481
Volvo S80 2.9 (automatic)	2922/204	2500	8.3	N/A	24	251/2/20	112	114/80	3.0/11.6	482
* all four-door saloons						† all with	ABS		(p) all power	r-assisted



LIKES AND GRIPES

Classy,	refined	cabin	with	sound	ergonomics
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- Power seats on all models, with convenient wheel/seat retraction to aid exit
 - Split-fold back seats, with release catches accessible only from within boot
 - Voice-activated control for audio, climate control and built-in phone
 - Spare wheel well holds a full size spare

- but the handbrake's an "elbow-banger" ...
- but leather extra on "base" model and underthigh support limited
- but load space uneven and limited height under ... rear shelf
- but you must speak its language and it's a ... £500 option
 - but you have to pay extra for one