



**Five decades on:** A decent E-Type is worth £35,000 to £40,000 but you can pay £150,000 or more depending on the model and provenance

# A classic Sixties symbol

**Jaguar E-Type cavalcade:** It's 50 years since the 'most beautiful car in the world' rolled off the production line, writes **RICHARD YARROW**



Braving the rain: Fifty Jaguars gathered for a cavalcade in London to celebrate 50 years since the E-Type was born

In 1961 at a press conference in a Geneva restaurant, staged as part of the city's annual motor show, a new era in British motoring began. Fifty years later, 50 much-loved and beautifully maintained examples of the car unveiled that day – the iconic Jaguar E-Type – have gathered in London.

The plan is to form a half-mile-long cavalcade passing some of the capital's most recognisable landmarks, in tribute to this car's five decades on the road. It starts at the headquarters of the Society of Motor Manufacturers and Traders near Hyde Park Corner, and snakes past Buckingham Palace, Trafalgar Square and along the Embankment before ending at Canary Wharf.

The E-Type was designed as a replacement for the XK and grew out of the racing Jaguars of the 1950s. It came to symbolise the Swinging Sixties and many celebrities of the time were owners.

The 50 cars on show today, all privately owned, include coupés and convertibles from the 13 years that the E-Type was built at Jaguar's plant in Browns Lane, Coventry. They are undoubtedly gleaming and in fantastic condition but the weather has made it hard to tell. Many owners say they don't know when their car had last been out in the rain.

At the starting line, former Formula 1 champion Nigel Mansell says: 'When I was growing up in the 1960s and 1970s, it was a dream car. I've

never been an owner but I was a driver and raced one when I was about 24 in an event at Silverstone. I was leading but it didn't end well: the brakes failed.'

My chauffeur for the trip is Jonathan Silverman, a London solicitor and knowledgeable E-Type enthusiast. Now 61, he drove his first E-Type when he was 18 and has been in love ever since.

'Why do people have a passion for certain things in life?' he ponders. 'I can remember being eight years old, sitting in the back of my father's Mk VII Jaguar and hearing on the radio that Jaguar had just won at the Le Mans 24-hour race again. When you're eight, those sorts of things make an impression.'

Our transport is a silver 1970 Series II 4.2-litre fixed-head coupé, powered by a 265bhp straight-six engine and capable of 140mph. Far from being a pampered 'dry weather only' car, it earns its living as part of the Classic Car Club fleet and is available for members to use. Silverman has driven it several times.



Climbing over the high and wide black leather door sill into the cabin, it's obviously motoring from another time. You get rudimentary seat belts but no head rests or exterior mirrors. The dashboard is dominated by ten large black switches, all for the lights and wipers. Today, everything they do is on two steering column stalks.

With the Series II's signature three front wiper blades working overtime to keep the windscreen clear, we venture into the London traffic. The convoy lines up in The Mall and Union flags left over from the royal wedding make quite a spectacle.

In truth, though, the cavalcade – which looked good on paper – proves a disappointment. Despite a police escort, we have no power to ignore red lights so it quickly breaks up. When we arrive at Canary Wharf an hour later, barely two cars are together. Perhaps Jaguar's star turn at the Goodwood Festival of Speed this month will be a more fitting tribute to this beautiful car.

## Celebrity Jag fans

George Best, Britt Ekland and George Harrison were all E-Type owners. Its image as the car of 1960s sex symbols was cemented when US journalist Henry Manney dubbed it 'the greatest crumpet-catcher known to man'. Two-thirds of

all E-Types made were sold in the US. It was famously described as 'the most beautiful car ever made' by Enzo Ferrari and when



Frank Sinatra (pictured) saw one, he reportedly said: 'I want that car and I want it now.' In 1974, production ended as the car's appeal had waned. The final one, with registration HDU 555N, is part of Jaguar's heritage collection.



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