



Like the 2.5-liter version, the top-of-the-line X-Type 3.0 more than keeps up with its German rivals. Boasting 231 horsepower, the 3.0-liter V6 has at least as much top-end power as the BMW 330xi, almost as much low-end torque as the Mercedes C320 and positively stomps Audi's A4 2.8. Jaguar claims the X-Type 3.0 with a manual transmission gets to 60 miles per hour in only 6.6 seconds (7.1 for the automatic). Mercedes says the rear-wheel-drive C320 requires 6.9 seconds and BMW claims that the BMW 330xi all-wheel-drive sedan takes the same amount of time.



Andrew Mead

**OK** now that I've got your attention, anyone who remembers the exploits of Melchester Rovers will undoubtedly recall the position the name Jaguar once had in every schoolboys mind. To get behind the wheel of a Jag was the dream of all of the classmates I can recall.

Well after a very long wait, I've finally lived out one of my childhood fantasies! Having spent the last two weeks behind the wheel of Jaguars baby, I can only say it's everything I'd hoped for.

Phrases like "straining at the leash", "engine purr" and "surefooted cat" suddenly have more meaning for me. From the moment you turn the key in the ignition, everything just feels....well..... right.

Caress the right pedal and the 3.0 litre X-type is off, responding with a precision that will bring a smile to your face. I'm told that an exceptionally stiff body structure is primarily responsible for the X-Type's agile handling. Its four-wheel independent suspension, employing a MacPherson strut layout at the front and a multi-link torsion control link system at the rear, delivers a high degree of inherent stability as well, but at the heart of the system is the transfer drive, which takes the output from the transmission and splits it between the front and rear wheels. Torque is split with 40 per cent directed to the front wheels and 60 per cent to the rear, reinforcing the sporting character of this beautiful saloon.

Not that I'm into the technical stuff. As one who doesn't know the big end from the little one, my concerns are solely that it feels good to drive and doesn't cost an arm and a leg either to buy or to run.



Detractors might tell you, that it's only a Ford, dressed up with a few pretty bits, and indeed many of the bits and pieces under the bonnet may well come from that source, but the package works well. Sharing development costs, is nothing new to Jaguar. Heck, the entire British motoring industry was built on incestuous interdependence. The company's most recent model, the S-Type, shares much of its running gear with the Lincoln LS. And for those "purists" who still grouse at the Ford association, it's worth noting that Jaguar's first automotive efforts were nothing more than coach-built bodies atop other people's cars.

The 2003 Jaguar X-Type, in addition to being quick, is also very safe. All models receive dual front airbags, front side airbags, curtain side airbags and antilock 4-wheel disc brakes.



Its not short on driver comforts either, Eight-way power driver's seat; automatic climate control; one-touch open/close power windows; alloy wheels; 120-Watt AM/FM/cassette audio system; remote entry; central locking with perimeter security system; auto-dimming interior mirror; tilt/telescope steering wheel; heated door mirrors and windshield washers; sliding front armrest; fold-down rear center armrest; puddle lights in front doors; leather seating surfaces and bird's-eye maple trim.

Whats more, It certainly looks the part, with those beautiful "cat's eyes" headlights . Yes, it shares some parts with a Ford — a non-luxury model at that — and from certain angles (mainly from the side) you can see its pedestrian lineage.

But it'll corner with a BMW 330, accelerate like a Mercedes C320 and stick to a slippery road like a quattro-equipped Audi. Sounds like a formula for success to me. Don't try one unless you're prepared to buy one, nothing else will ever seem the same again.

