

# AUTOMOTIVE

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## 1997 Jaguar XK8 Coupe: Wow!!!

### CAReport



By Anne Fracassa  
Avanti NewsFeatures

Now this is luxury. Everywhere you touch you'll find fine Connolly leather, polished wood veneers and soft, supple textures. And, ooooooohh, the styling.

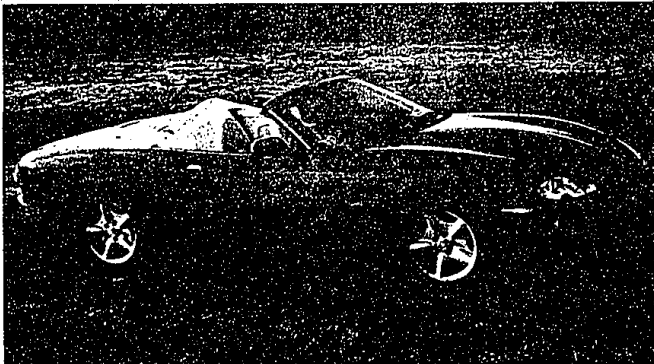
The XK8 Coupe is Jaguar's first new sports car in 21 years. Well worth the wait, I'd say.

Let's start with the outside. It's so unique, so different, that a middle-aged fellow zipping his Jaguar XJS down I-696 the other day slowed down to take a gander.

The XK8 Coupe is classic Jaguar styling, but with more sporty lines and curves that sets it apart from anything on the road today. The front of the car, with its classic Jaguar stance and oval grille opening, makes a definite statement: Get outta my way, Fast.

And fast it is. This is the first V8 designed by Jaguar. It's also exclusive to the XK8. The 4.0-liter V8 is an all-aluminum DOHC 4-valve-per-cylinder that outputs 290 horsepower. More than enough, in fact. And fuel economy is so great that it doesn't qualify for the gas-guzzler tax.

This thing moves when you ask it to. Yet, it's so quiet, you almost have to check the instrumentation to make sure the engine has turned over. Top speed on the speedometer suggests you could take it to the max: 170 mph. Not real practical in Michigan, however, with our top highway speed of 70 mph.



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But I took a chance. Took it up to 85 for a few seconds. The XK8 took it in stride and felt like I was traveling at 35. So smooth is the ride that you'd not take much notice at the higher speeds. In short, this one has to be a favorite with the state troopers.

The XK8 replaces the XJS, which retired at the end of last year. It was Jaguar's best-selling sports car ever with 115,413 built. Its reign was also Jaguar's longest with 21 years of production.

Let's of classic Jaguar design is here, including the round analog gauges and the J-gate transmission shifter. The shifter, by the way, is also in wood. The steering wheel is constructed of a fine — and tasteful — mix of leather and wood. The feel is certainly unique.

The XK8 has a smart 5-speed automatic transmission, newly designed front and rear suspension systems and a variable assist/variable-ratio power

steering system. Let's just say ride comfort is superb and the steering and handling are efficient.

As with most automakers, safety hasn't taken a back seat here. There are dual airbags and seat belt pretensioners that hold you to the seat during impact. High-strength steel is incorporated throughout the car, lending itself to a rigid body structure, front and rear crumple zones and stiff door frames and windshield frame.

There are active safety features as well, including 4-wheel disc brakes, anti-lock brakes, automatic stability control, optional traction control, independent suspension and rack and pinion steering.

Test driven was the coupe, but the XK8 is also available as a convertible. Jaguar projects sales of

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