

Two for the Money:

The Performance Cats

By Roger Witherspoon

Let's say you have \$85,000 to \$90,000 to blow on a luxury car, but conflicting ideas as to exactly what kind of wheels you want.

Presumably, at that point in your life, you are old enough to have a real appreciation for luxury and comforts, but not so old that you no longer can get an adrenaline rush from the kind of powered takeoff that rocks you deep back into your seat as the car rockets well into triple digits.

The kids may be gone and you long for a sports car to take you and your partner wherever you want. But then, the children and the grandkids may return, and you need a bit of family room in a working rear seat.

If you fall into one of those profiles, you might want to take a look at two offerings from Jaguar – the XK sports car, and the powered, supercharged, XJR sedan – and then ride off into the sunset.

For the sports minded type, there is the XK, with the long, sloping, low silhouette and the round, tapered grill which is offered as either a two door coupe or convertible. At \$88,250, it is the pricier of this pair of big cats.

The XK is billed as a four seater, but in reality it is not. The rear seats are little more than buckets to hold small items like pocket books or brief cases. It is more of an angled, leather covered, padded shelf. Officially, Jaguar lists the back seat leg room at 23 inches – but that's with the front seat forward, and the space would still be too short for anyone over about five feet in height. But then, the XK is not intended to be a family car – it's a magic carpet for two, with either a powered sunroof or full fledged ragtop.

But the seats in front are what you might expect from Jaguar: wide, double stitched, fine grain leather. It is all power controlled, and the sides and lumbar support can also be adjusted to fit expanding bottoms. The Jaguar XK is distinctive, rather than flashy, with understated elegance as more or less the theme. The same double stitched leather found on the seats is repeated on the dash, doors and steering wheel, an improvement from the usual molded plastic. Both the steering wheel and seats can be heated.

The XK features a V-8 engine producing 300 horsepower, which gives the Jaguar its dash. Its jumps from 0 to 60 miles per hour in just under six seconds, a respectable takeoff, through not one which will shove you back into your seat. But then the XK keeps accelerating, and has a top speed of 155, which means it runs with the bigger dogs on the road. There is a 6-speed automatic transmission, but it may be shifted into the manual sport mode using paddle shifts which respond instantly.

But the XK won't work for you if you're a family man. Which is why Jaguar offers the XJR – a refined sedan with a supercharged engine that kicks out 400 horsepower and zips from 0 to 60 in 5 seconds. This is the four door sedan which has Jaguar's traditional, understated, long, low look and purrs as it slides through its six-speed transmission up to a top speed of 155 miles per hour. Where the XK was a sports car with a sport tuned suspension, the XJR emphasizes comfort and performance, offering an air suspension which smoothes out any road surface.

The XJR is nearly two feet longer than the XK, and has interior room to take four basketball players on a long, comfortable jaunt. In this model, the leather décor is accented with walnut trim.

They share some electronics. Both have an easy to use Bluetooth communications system, and touch screen navigation program which is intuitively designed and easy to use. The touch screen also controls the audio, climate, phone, and vehicle settings. While the sound is superb on the audio system, Jaguar could use an electronics upgrade. Both cars feature AM/FM and Sirius satellite radio – which is an odd choice since Sirius is geared to a younger audience than XM radio. But they lack iPod, flash drive, and MP3 connections which should be standard on vehicles in this price range. In addition, the XJR has a single disc CD player with an optional cartridge in the trunk. An in-dash system should be standard.

While the touch screen is easy to use, it does require the driver to divert his or her attention from the road, even if it is just for a few short moments. The XJR, therefore, offers a hand held remote which can control the audio, navigation, Bluetooth, and cruise control. The latter is an adaptive system which utilizes radar to detect cars about 100 feet in front of the Jaguar. The Jaguar will slow to match the speed of the car in front, and then accelerate to the desired speed when the car moves out of the way. The radar distance is adjustable, and you can cruise to within a few car lengths of another vehicle.

The pair also feature a push button ignition, and the key remains in your pocket or purse. A soft button on the door handle allows you to lock or unlock it as long as the key is within a few feet of the car.

In either case, this pair of road running Jaguars are easy on the eyes, hot on the road, and a pleasure to roll in.

2008 Jaguar XK Coupe

MSRP:		\$88,250
EPA Mileage:	16 MPG City	25 MPG Highway
As Tested Mileage:		19 MPG Mixed

Performance/ Safety:

0 – 60 MPH	5.9 Seconds
Top Speed	155 MPH

4.2-Liter, aluminum alloy, DOHC V-8 engine producing 300 horsepower and 310 pound-feet of torque; 6-speed automatic transmission; sport-tuned independent suspension; 4-channel anti-lock brake system with yaw control; ventilated front and rear disc brakes; dynamic stability control; 20-inch cast alloy wheels; bi-xenon high intensity headlights with corner lamps; roll-over protection system; front and rear fog lights; front, side, head-chest air bags.

Interior/ Comfort:

AM/FM and Sirius Satellite radio; 6-disc in-dash CD player; 525-watt Alpine premium Dolby sound with 9 speakers and subwoofer; 7-inch LCD touch screen; digital and analog clocks; power sun roof; Bluetooth communications; DVD based navigation system; soft-grain leather, powered and heated seats; tilt & telescope, leather steering wheel and gear knob.

2008 Jaguar XJR

MSRP:		\$84,250
EPA Mileage:	15 MPG City	22 MPG Highway
As Tested Mileage		16 MPG Mixed

Performance/ Safety:

0 – 60 MPH	5.0 Seconds
Top Speed	155 MPH

4.2-Liter, aluminum alloy, DOHC V-8 engine producing 400 horsepower and 413 pound-feet of torque; supercharged and intercooled; 6-speed automatic transmission; Performance tuned, independent double-wishbone front and rear suspension with self-leveling air springs; power assisted rack and pinion steering; 20-inch alloy wheels; ventilated disc brakes; dynamic stability and traction control; xenon headlights with power wash; fog lamps; front and side seat mounted airbags; side curtain airbags.

Interior/ Comfort:

AM/FM Sirius Satellite radio; single CD player; 320-watt Alpine premium sound system with 12 speakers; digital and analog clocks; walnut trim; Bluetooth communications; Satellite based navigation system; 7-inch LCD touch screen; soft-grain leather, powered and heated seats; tilt & telescope, leather steering wheel and gear knob; power rear sun shade; manually operated side rear sun shades.