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The classic Seventies sports car is back from the dead with a bespoke fitting as individual as a Saville Row suit

Last updated at 10:01 PM on 8th January 2011

Not long ago I went to a National Lottery bash and met 200 or so past winners. Listening to their stories, I was fascinated by the first things they bought with their megabucks windfalls. It's never what you think. One bloke won £26 million and bought a fridge and a cooker. Another bought a new front door. One bought a duvet. Far be it from me to question, but seriously – a duvet?

I know what I'd get: a private plane. At this precise moment I'm very sure of that, because the fat bloke in front of me keeps bashing his seat back, jamming my tray into my ribs while I'm trying to write and spilling the teeny-tiny can of cola that the orange-skinned stewardess with eye-watering perfume gave me. Yes, if I won the Lotto I'd never fly economy again.



From the outside, the Jensen Interceptor S looks no different - unless you're eagle-eyed enough to spot the AP racing brake callipers

That just shows that lottery dreams are personal. It's what you need, what's missing in your life, that counts. That explains the door and the duvet. Those blokes must have been muttering about them for months, and winning a fortune meant they could finally replace them. I like that.

After a while, though, you're going to have replaced every bit of your house and if you like cars you'll have had one each from Ferrari, Lamborghini, Porsche... What do you spend the rest on? What you want is a deep, dark need; something that's been missing from your life for so long you've almost forgotten, but getting it will make you as happy as a kid at Christmas.

I'd forgotten about the Jensen Interceptor. Back when I was a nipper this car was über-cool, mega-stylish and if you were a millionaire playboy in the decade between Sgt Pepper's and punk rock, this is what you'd buy.



The steering wheel

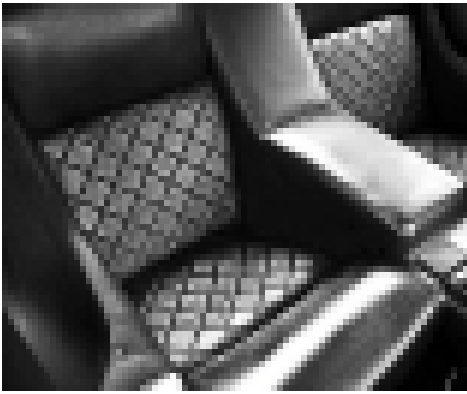
Italian-designed but built in West Bromwich with a massive 7.2-litre American V8 up front, it was more expensive than an Aston Martin, more powerful than an E-type and rarer than a Bentley. It was so legendary that Jenson Button's dad named him after it (getting the spelling wrong). And then it disappeared.

Dozens of car firms went to the wall while I was at junior school and with its small, costly output Jensen was never going to survive, so by the time I was putting car posters on my wall it was a distant memory. In a way, it's just as well it faded into history. The reality of cars from those days is that they always, always broke down. So I'm very glad that the one I'm driving here is not what it seems.



The retro control panel

Resurrected less than a year ago by a group of Jensen-loving businessmen, what you get when you order an Interceptor now is the body from an original 1976 donor car stripped right down to its skeleton by a 12-man team in a shed in Banbury – restored and rust-proofed to modern standards, resprayed and then rebuilt with a brand new engine, gearbox, suspension, propshaft, exhaust, wheels and electrics.



The leather seats

While they're doing this you can have a say in how everything's set up, from the throttle response to the leather, making each one as individual as a Savile Row suit. No wonder they only make 18 a year.

A recent buyer let me borrow his, and he's specified a £20,000 sound system in the boot: turning up The Cult's She Sells Sanctuary and burying the throttle pedal was one of the best driving experiences I've had all year.

This is due to many things, the engine being one – a cutting-edge General Motors 6.2-litre V8 that chucks out 429hp.

They've also replaced the old three-speed box with a four-speed GM auto, added limited-slip differential and given it independent suspension. The ride is 100 times better than it would have been in Harold Wilson's day.

From the outside, though, it looks no different – unless you're eagle-eyed enough to spot the AP racing brake callipers – and it's the same on the inside. The seats use new leather to the old design. The gauges are identical to the Seventies ones but new. Just as well, as they never worked properly, either. You can have a sat-nav put in, but I think it would spoil the effect. All this loving care isn't cheap, starting at £105,000 and climbing.

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So what's it like to drive an Interceptor after 35 years in limbo?

Well, the first thing you notice is the speed. It's quicker than the brochure stated and at a deep-throated 2,000 revs I was easily overtaking BMW M3s. When you put your foot to the floor, it drops a gear and blasts ahead with a whine like my old Corvette. But I actually preferred it in town: it's easy to handle, and I've never driven a car on test that turns heads like this. Even without the sound system, people were flocking around it in droves when I parked in Chelsea.

And who can blame them? I love cars like this. In fact, I once bought the shell of an old Mustang and filled it with brand new workings, similar to this, and it was massively rewarding both during and after. It's a way of bringing something beautiful back to life. Sure, there are some tiny problems with the fit and a few rattles inside, but they're easily forgivable.

I wish the blokes behind this resurrection all the best. It's brilliant to see Jensen back on the road. To think that all these years, I never knew I missed it.



The rear view

TECH SPEC



£105,000, jensen-cars.co.uk

Engine 6.2-litre V8

Power 429hp

Top speed 160mph

0-60mph 4.5 seconds

Fuel consumption 20mpg

Transmission Four-speed electronic automatic

Standard features 17in aluminium rims in original Jensen style, 13in AP Racing vented disc brakes, limited-slip differential, full leather interior, new CD/radio

Optional extras All colours, interior trim and ECU-mapping customisable during rebuild

DRIVE TALKING

What's hot on the road this week

DIFFERENT CLASS



March sees a new generation of Mercedes' best-selling model, the C-class, with a new front grille, interior and gadgetry, such as drowsiness detection, adaptive cruise control - and internet access. While stationary you can surf the web on the multimedia screen (linked to your smartphone), and on the move you can access destination and weather services. Expected to be slightly pricier, starting at around £25,000, the entire C-class range is now badged BlueEfficiency thanks to new gearing and stop-start; the C220 CDI manages 59mpg.

I ON THE PRIZE



Also in March is the Geneva Motor Show, which sees the launch of Hyundai's new flagship model. There's already an i10, i20 and i30 so it's no surprise that the new, larger and more luxurious car (to compete with the Ford Mondeo/Vauxhall Insignia) will be called the i40. Developed in Germany specifically for the European market, the i40 promises 'best in class' fuel economy and will come with Hyundai's five-year warranty,

servicing and roadside assistance.

THE X3 FILES



As we speak, James Martin is test-driving BMW's new X3 crossover, which went on sale in December and has a six-month waiting list. But they've already announced a new, souped-up model being added to the range in March: the X3 20dxDrive M Sport specification gets 18in alloys, high-gloss window surrounds and chrome door sills, sports seats and an M Sport multifunction steering wheel. Prices are to be announced, but should be around £35,000.

By Simon Lewis

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Another beautifully articulated ,breakdown of a vehicle, from the appearance,the interior,exterior, the performance. All questions answered.! Still waiting for that "coffee table book",somebody,get smart,collate these and turn them into a fabulously written and well read book,it will earn it's place,on sight,on the coffee table. Well Done love Valerie [Australia] xxx

- Valerie Scarr, Adelaide, Australia, 09/1/2011 01:35

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[Designer Yoshiaki Okamoto has created a game of some depth and charm that goes beyond superficial Zelda pastiche.](#)

[Rock Band Reloaded \(iPhone\)](#)

[One of the new aspects of the game, and the one that differentiates it most from Rock Band is the introduction of live vocals.](#)

[FIFA 2011 \(iPhone\)](#)

[You'll need all 10,000 hours to become an expert in EA Sports' second attempt on the iPhone - and, frankly, I no longer have the time nor desire to commit to that.](#)

[Gran Turismo 5 \(PS3\)](#)

[When the bar had been set so high, it was I suppose always going to be difficult to sail over it completely.](#)

[The Sims 3 \(PS3/XBox 360\)](#)

[It's a long time since I played a Sims game but although EA have rung the changes there's a lot that seems comfortable and familiar in the gameplay.](#)

[First review of Call of Duty: Black Ops](#)

[Despite the most complicated back story to date, Black Ops represents an incremental advance upon what has gone before.](#)

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[Having tried Freeview twice before it would need something different to lure me back in.](#)

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[MacBook Air: Fast, sleek and impossibly thin](#)

[The Air is an undeniably beautiful object, as virtually every Apple product released in the Steve Jobs era has been.](#)

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