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Jaguar: Celebrating 75 Years

A greatest hits collection.

Jaguar celebrates its 75th year in 2010, and it has never looked or driven younger. Drive a new Jaguar and you'll feel it in the spirit of innovation and performance that helped shape all modern luxury cars and sports cars.



Many brands have classics in their family trees; the Jaguar lineage includes some of the most iconic automobiles ever produced. The same approach that created those models continues today. The same brand DNA that created the classic Jaguars runs through today's line. The driver of any new Jaguar could be proud to park it next to any one of the brand's greats from decades past.

To look at any Jaguar, you would think, "That is a perfectly named car." By itself, the name has even served as a guide to what kinds of cars the company makes. In contrast, automotive history shows numerous lackluster cars named for dynamic animals. That's just marketing spin.

The Jaguar company traces its roots to a British manufacturer called Swallow Sidecars, founded in 1922 by Sir William Lyons. Named for a sleek, fast bird, the company was known simply as "SS" and branched into making sleek, fast sedans and coupes. When it introduced a fast, low sports car called the SS 100 in 1935, Lyons asked his ad agency to suggest some potential new names – for the car and the company. One might wonder if Sir William sensed the pun in a man named Lyons choosing "Jaguar."

In any case, the new name fit the speedy new roadster and the company perfectly. (The "100" in SS 100, by the way, was for the car's certified top speed; 100 mph was an amazing achievement for a road car in the mid-1930s.) The Jaguar name represented the feline grace and elegance, power and agility that set Lyons' cars apart. Sir William once said that a car was "the closest thing we can create to something that is alive."



That is still true today. From that point forward, cars bearing the Jaguar name would evoke the essence of sleek, powerful felines. You can certainly see that influence in the XF sedans and XJ sports cars, and one glance at the all-new 2011 XJ sedan reaffirms the choice of the name Jaguar 75 years ago.

After WWII, Sir William unleashed a series of sports cars that would keep the competition in the rearview mirror for decades. The 1948 XK 120 was a revelation in design and performance. At its

heart was a high-performance six-cylinder engine that, in various forms, would power Jaguar sportscars to racing victories around the world and would power its road cars into the 1980s. The "120" in the name represented its certified top speed, of course. The same was true for the XK 140 and XK 150 models that followed in the 1950s.

At the same time, Jaguar built a large luxury sedan that was sleeker and trimmer than those from Bentley, yet just as swift and luxurious (if not a bit faster) and much less expensive. That trend continued into the 1960s, a decade the brand entered with the iconic E-Type sportscar and a growing range of compact, midsize and full-size sedans. The E-Type has been called the most beautiful car ever built – such a work of art that one is in the permanent collection of the Museum of Modern Art in New York City.

How does a carmaker follow an iconic sportscar like the E-Type? Jaguar did so with an iconic sedan, the XJ-6, in 1968. Its sleek profile, low beltline and artistic use of glass made it an instant hit and an enduring classic. Other carmakers cribbed some of its lines well into the 1990s.

"A successful piece of design should stand the test of time, holding its own through passing fashions," said Ian Callum, Jaguar Design Director. "Jaguar has a range of cars that are as iconic today as they were when launched – testament to Jaguar's legacy in creating beautiful, fast cars."

The company remains quite proud of its position today. "The development of our new range of cars is all part of making Jaguar the modern, sporting company that it was under our founder Sir William Lyons – a company that made its name creating cars that were innovative, exciting and always original," said Mike O'Driscoll, Managing Director of Jaguar Cars.

Jaguar invites you to come in and celebrate a very happy 75th birthday.

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