

Low Volume Jaguar Prototypes & Concepts (In Monthly Episodes). Part 4

By Tony Johnson

XKSS (1956-1957)

Perhaps the most sought after Jaguar sports car for road use is the XKSS. Built from unsold D Types, the XKSS was effectively a more practical version of the D Type. Initially 16 cars were identified by the factory for modification into open two seaters, so the car could compete in the SCCA series of sports car events in the USA.

Road equipment included a folding roof, luggage rack, front and rear bumpers, and indicators.

The XKSS was a raw

sports racing car given a road package to refine it. The cars were never successful contenders in SCCA events and all were for road use. Production of the XKSS came to an abrupt halt in February 1957 when a disastrous factory fire saw several destroyed. Once the production line was rebuilt priority was given to getting as many of the saloon models back into production as these were the mainstay of Jaguar's sales. As all the available D Type tubs were destroyed, there were no thoughts of recreating this limited model and the XKSS was abandoned at that point. Whilst the XKSS project was a smart way to use up D Type tubs they were slow sellers as the car lacked the refinements of the XK150 as a road car, with no luggage boot, fixed side windows, heater or ventilation, making for claustrophobic conditions when the hood was up. Interestingly many D Types were converted to XKSS trim when their racing days ended, particularly in the 1980s when reproduction parts were available for restoration purposes. At one stage there were more XKSS cars than the original 16 intended, but many of these have been returned to their original D Type form to maximise their value.

A modern rendition of the XKSS was announced in 2016. The 9 cars lost in the 1957 fire were to be rebuilt – from scratch and by hand, just as they were originally. It was a mammoth undertaking to remake a “new original” version. In New Zealand, the result is Michael Giltrap's magnificent XKSS finished as per the originals. It has a 195 kW (262 bhp) 3.4 litre straight six engine, paired with a four-speed racing Moss gearbox with race clutch.



Tony