



**Preen and performance:**  
The Jaguar XJ Portfolio  
deserves plaudits for its  
appearance, opulence  
and on-road attributes

# Roaring redesign

## Big cat diary salutes Jaguar's evolution from pompous past to pride of the pack

**Review: Andrew Simms**

AS the owner of a Puma which has long since lost the spring in its step and is more Bagpuss than big cat, the very prospect of taking temporary care of a Jaguar XJ Portfolio had my whiskers bristling with excitement.

And, only too happy to welcome this svelter stray into my life in the name of journalism, I was not to be disappointed.

Since its launch in the summer of 2009, the Coventry Cat – the XJ was conceived at Jaguar's research and development centre in Whitley – has had motoring correspondents purring over its appearance and it is not difficult to see why.

Following the arrival of design director Ian Callum from Aston Martin and in the paw prints of the sporty XK and XF saloon, the pride of the pack is preened to perfection.

Boasting a sleek, sharp silhouette and panoramic glass roof, the XJ has put considerable distance between it and some of its more cumbersome predecessors.

But this cat's true beauty lies within. Delving inside the Jaguar you find a contemporary design

that is more akin to an expensive hotel suite than the cabin of a car, with chrome and ebony detailing blending with beautifully-crafted leather and veneer surfaces.

Shunning the threadbare seats of Ford's feline in favour of this lap of luxury, I decided to hit the catwalk of fashionable Farnham in Surrey.

This Georgian market town boasts a population seemingly immune to the economic gloom that has enveloped much of Britain and, more relevant to this tale, is where my five-year-old son Harry is being introduced to the national curriculum.

Residing five miles outside of Farnham (well beyond the financial reach of a humble public servant) means that the school run is a necessary evil. Performing this duty in the 1.7-litre Puma – a pimped-up, albeit fun-to-drive, Fiesta – never fails to draw looks of disdain.

Behind the wheel of the Jaguar, my late dash to beat the bell was greeted by an unexpected response – the XJ did not garner a second look.

Rather than being viewed as a slight on the appearance of the Portfolio, this snub represents a firm endorsement of the car's appeal.

In an area of affluence, where the roadsides are lined with Land Rovers, BMW 7-series and Mercedes S-classes, to give the XJ even the

smallest glance of admiration or envy would have been an acknowledgement of social inferiority.

While folk in Farnham were capable of exercising restraint, this reviewer and his son could not help but be impressed and fawn over the Jaguar's finer features (see below).

Cars are of course for driving and the XJ does not disappoint here either.

*Soldier* tested the 3.0-litre, 765bhp V6D and, once fired into action via the push-button start, the diesel engine delivered a near-silent ride whether crawling through rush-hour traffic or eating up the motorway miles.

The torque provided by the powerplant and its twin sequential turbochargers is capable of propelling the Portfolio from 0-60mph in six seconds and features such as air suspension, variable damping, differential control and quick-ratio power steering deliver a responsive and supple drive.

Once the preserve of corporate fat cats preoccupied with reviewing share prices from the back seat, the Jaguar brand has reinvented itself and done so in some style.

The supreme comfort remains but only a fool would want to enjoy this fine feline from anywhere other than the driver's seat. ■

### We take a closer look at the raft of features included in the Jaguar XJ Portfolio...

#### Little room for improvement

GOOD looks are all well and good, but not if they come at the cost of comfort. With the XJ they don't. Inside you'll find all you would expect of a luxury brand and much more besides. While the glass roof helps to create a feeling of light and spaciousness, this is no illusion. Even in the standard model – the long-wheelbase spec boasts an additional 125mm of legroom for rear passengers – there is plenty of space to stretch out. Throw in four-zone air conditioning, heated/cooled front seats, driver and passenger seat memory and a heated steering wheel and you have one cosy cabin. Oh, did I mention those in the front can also enjoy an in-journey massage?



**Mark out of ten: Nine**

#### Dashing display

PHYSICAL dials are so last century. In their place, Jaguar's designers have favoured a 12.3-inch high-definition screen which comes alive with virtual instruments. Firing up the XJ prompts three digital dials to flash up before your eyes: a speedometer in the centre flanked on the right by a rev counter and on the left by fuel and temperature gauges. When required – if fuel is running low or the driver is changing radio station – the rev counter fades away to be replaced by the relevant menu or message. Impressive stuff and even more so when the driver selects the XJ's Dynamic mode and the dials take on a red hue.



**Mark out of ten: Nine**

#### Travel show

THE hi-tech wizardry in the Jaguar XJ does not end at the digital dash. An eight-inch touch-screen display in the centre console commands many of the saloon's functions, including climate control, audio, communications and navigation. Old hat, I hear you say? Quite the contrary. The system also incorporates "Dual-View" technology that allows the driver and front passenger to look at completely different content on the same screen. In my case, this manifested itself in the wife watching FA Cup highlights while I, at the wheel, had to settle for the satnav map. Headphone compatibility allows the passenger to watch television or a DVD without distracting the driver.



**Mark out of ten: Ten**



Top cat: The British-made Jaguar XJ Portfolio is more than a match for the German “big three” – Audi, BMW and Mercedes – in the style stakes

### Audio appreciation

THE ability to distract children or nagging partners with a movie or episode of *Eastenders* is undoubtedly a bonus, but for the lone driver quality audio is far more important – and in the XJ you get the best that money can buy. A top-of-the-range 1,200W, 20-speaker Bowers & Wilkins set-up delivers sound equal to that of a high-end in-home entertainment system. Such is the clarity of the audio that even JLS sound good in a Jaguar. Further “infotainment” features include a hard-disc-drive, which allows for CDs to be loaded into the car for future listening and artist and track information to be stored, and a media hub with two USB ports and Bluetooth connectivity.



Mark out of ten: Ten

### Mean and green

BENEFITTING from technologies pioneered on the XFR and XKR models – such as continuously variable damping, electronically-controlled rear differential and quick-ratio power steering – the Jaguar XJ's performance matches its appearance. With twin sequential turbochargers, the 3.0-litre diesel engine put through its paces by *Soldier* went about its business quietly and with powerful efficiency. A dream to drive, it also boasts impressive fuel economy and CO<sub>2</sub> emissions – credentials hailed by *What Car?* magazine, which named the XJ 3.0 Diesel V6 as the winner of the luxury car category in their 2010 Green Awards.



Mark out of ten: Nine

### Service-specific sales

REGARDLESS of rank, pay scale and whether or not you are in receipt of Local Overseas Allowance, there is no denying that, at around the £65,000 mark, buying a Jaguar XJ represents a major investment. But luckily for serving personnel, the company offers hefty discounts on the prices civilians have to pay for their cars. All members of the Armed Forces are eligible to receive 13 per cent off the price of any vehicle in the British car-maker's range. Servicemen and women can find out more by calling Peterborough-based Marshall Military Sales on 01733 213231 or visiting the company's dedicated website.



[www.jaguar-militarysales.com](http://www.jaguar-militarysales.com)