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Jaguar F-Type

THE COMPLETE STORY



ANDREW NOAKES



Reviewed by Kieron Fennelly

Title: Jaguar F-Type – The Complete Story

Author: Andrew Noakes

Published by: Crowood Press Ltd www.crowood.com

192 pages (paperback), with 254 colour and 30 mono photographs

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The question Jaguar enthusiasts ask most often is why it took the company so long to make the E type's successor. In his latest book, Jaguar F-Type – the Complete Story, Andrew Noakes paints the picture of almost four decades of false starts and disappointments.

The E type was succeeded by the XJS, a completely different car, more GT than sports car and although Tom Walkinshaw was able to turn it into a spectacular and briefly, winning racer, there was still nostalgia for a purer sports car. The author recounts how a bright young South African designer, Keith Helfet, drew up a very plausible sports car based on the XJ40 saloon, but the project was delayed and delayed, partly by Jaguar's perpetual weakness, insufficient resources. It meant that by the time a start was possible the design had already been overtaken by competitors. Then development the exotic XJ220 took precedence before Ford's takeover of Jaguar brought an end to all such flights of fancy. Meanwhile the XJS was replaced by the more muscular XK8, but it was still a 2+2 GT rather than a sports car. As Jaguar's fortunes improved under the discipline of the Blue Oval, its designers produced the racy-looking XK180, an idea rapidly abandoned in favour of the stunning 2000 F-Type, yet another concept abandoned, this time because, the author says, of Jaguar's need to focus on diesel engines. It was only after Tata acquired Jaguar in 2008



that producing a proper sports car could become a serious objective.

This is a deeply immersive account, comprehensively answering the question why the F-Type's gestation was long. Technical descriptions are reasonably detailed as far as they go: The author offers a clear and very useful explanation of twin scroll turbochargers and acknowledges that the less than optimal 60° angle of the V8 engine was a production rather than engineering decision. But rather than fifteen or so pages devoted to the launch of the F type, this reviewer would have preferred more engineering descriptions and diagrams and more extended discussion for example with chief development engineer Mike Cross. Jaguar had sought to make the F type as light as possible, but there is no explanation here why it turned out at over 1600kg when its two Porsche rivals, the Boxster and the 911 were respectively 300kg and 150kg lighter.

Although the motoring press in the UK at least has been almost unreservedly enthusiastic about the F-Type, the author never loses his sense of perspective, remarking that the Jaguar was "Less of a precision driving tool than a Lotus or a Porsche, more like a Corvette with an added layer of style and civility," a perceptive enough summing up. He also acknowledges that as a low volume model the F-Type is less profitable than Jaguar Land Rover's SUVs and therefore vulnerable.

VERDICT

This is a timely book on an exciting and splendidly traditional sportscar which, as an electric future beckons, will surely be the last of its kind.