

CLASSIC DRIVER

Classic Driver Dealer: Eagle E-Types



If you have ever owned a Jaguar E-type, or even *thought* of owning one, then you will almost certainly have heard of Eagle E-Types, the definitive specialist in East Sussex. Established in 1982, Eagle has focused on that one car ever since. The man behind the business is Henry Pearman and there's an obvious question which has to be asked... Why, of all the cars in the world, is your business devoted entirely to this one model?

"Why? Because I've loved E-types since I was about 3 years old. And it's not just me: it must be the most loved car across the world. Just to look at it, the E-type has a certain magic – and it delivers what it says on the tin. You think 'what a fabulous-looking car' and then you drive it, and it's even better."



Eagle specialises in everything E-type but there are three main sides to the business. Best-known is the no-holds-barred Eagle E-type: a complete, ground-up 'restoration', although the word doesn't do justice to the process by which a complete, original car is painstakingly reconstructed with components that are as good or better than new, mated to an all-new monocoque body built at Eagle. It takes almost 4000 hours to complete the work, with each car rebuilt to a bespoke specification for an individual client. "Each one is different," explains Pearman, "like a Savile Row suit. We take into account, for example, whether it will be used mainly for touring, or for sportier pastimes, or whatever. For example, Eagle number three is exactly as it left the factory as a press demonstrator in 1967 and Eagle six is the most radical car to date, with a six-speed 'box and aluminium panels and all sorts of other tweaky bits – like a modern fuel-injection system."



Pearman and his team are obsessive in their quest to improve the car without destroying its essential character. "If the E-type had stayed in production - as the 911 did - this is the direction Jaguar would probably have taken. The cars were so advanced for their time that they naturally respond to just dialling out a couple of problematic areas - silly electrical things and suchlike, which we can improve today without taking away any of the greatness of the original car. They all keep the correct XK engine, they don't have electric windows and we wouldn't look at developing an electric hood. We're very loyal to the original design and idea of the car. And we do everything in-house - we have our own bodyshop, make our own body shells, do our own paintwork, all of our trim and our own engine work."

And the gearbox? Doesn't Eagle make its own? "Yes, we make our own five-speed gearbox. The original Moss 'box goes back to the 1930s and the rest of the car was so advanced that the gearbox had a rather

dated feel. In some respects, an early 3.8 is exciting and rewarding to drive because you can get the gearchanges to work so well. But the 4.2 all-synchro is a brilliant 'box that Jaguar put in and all we're doing is adding a fifth gear because there's so much more motorway work these days than there was in 1964. Our gearboxes are the same size as the original and the gearlever comes out in the same place, so you wouldn't know it's been changed. And that's important to us. We do point out to people that in, I think, 1960, there was a prototype E-type running with a five-speed box and fuel injection. The fuel injection we only really offer as more of a performance upgrade. We start with SU carbs because they just work so well with the Jaguar engine."



So what does one of these 'restored' models cost? "When the business moved to Sussex in 1993, we took the fairly radical decision to offer a fixed-price totally restored car. We'd found that so many restorations were compromised - starting out as a respray and then turning into something quite different, as more and more problems were revealed. So we decided not to do that any more. The price of an Eagle E-type depends on the year of the delivery date but to restore a really good car you're looking at something over £200,000."

If this is outside your budget, you might be more interested in the second of Eagle's core offerings: the Endorsed E-type, which are the very best original cars, in their original form. "We currently have a selection of 15 or 20 cars in the showroom and they're the very best we can find. Even then, we take each car through a pretty rigorous restoration programme before we'll offer them for sale. We have an 8-page checklist and we go 'aggressively' through this list and rectify any faults." Even though it might look like a perfect concours-winning car when it comes in, the Eagle team is likely to spend 200-400 hours ironing out any potential faults.



Among the showroom cars is a 3.8 Roadster: "Two owners from new, 30-odd thousand miles and never been painted. And we've got a 15,000-mile from new 3.8 Coupé."

Finally, the business offers a menu of upgrades to the cars for sale in the showroom, which Pearman calls 'Eagle Engineered'. There are full details of the upgrades on offer at www.eaglegb.com but, warns Pearman, "Our set-up is such that we don't actually take in E-types for work, we solely work on E-types we've supplied to clients. If someone has an E-type they'd like upgrades done to, that's not something we offer."

To close with another, obvious question which has to be asked... who is buying Eagle E-types these days? Has the market collapsed?

“No, far from it. We’re getting a lot of people who have jumped out of 911 Turbos or modern Ferraris, and I think this is for two reasons. First, most modern cars, the way they have to be built these days, have so much of the fun dialled out. Whereas an E-type is only five and a half feet wide – so it’s narrow, it’s light, and it’s so engaging to drive. Secondly, you’ve got to consider the fact that you’re putting money into something and you’d like to feel – particularly at the moment – that it’s going to maintain its value.



“At the moment, the market is recognising that quality is king. If anything, the market for Eagle E-types has almost strengthened slightly since average-quality cars have been selling for, perhaps, more than they ought to be worth but real quality always holds its value. Since E-types have never been dragged along on hugely rapid price rises, the prices have never been artificially inflated. So the really good cars are not dropping in value now – unlike the modern car market, where there are problems of over-production. But in

any case, you can't put your life on hold for the next five years and watch time just ticking away... we have a three- to five-year waiting list and we haven't had a single order cancelled. Not one."

Please click [HERE](#) to see all **Eagle E-Types's** cars for sale in the **Classic Driver** car database.



For further information on **Eagle E-Types**, visit www.eaglegb.com.

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