

# CLASSIC DRIVER

## Five Questions to Sir Stirling Moss

### **Lead**

One of motor racing's living legends, Sir Stirling Moss took some time out of his busy schedule to speak to Classic Driver. The occasion was the launch of Jaguar's Heritage Racing Programme at the Royal Automobile Club, London.

***Sir Stirling, what significance does the Jaguar marque hold for you?***

I came to Jaguar early in my career, and we went on to have great times together, going motor racing and also developing the disc brake for the automotive sector. At the time, Jaguar was the world leader for disc-brake technology, not only on the track but also in series-production cars. Without the former, we'd never have seen the technology's introduction to road cars in such a short time. It was already in common use in the aviation industry, but when fitted to my C-type for the 1952 season it really made a difference. The 1952 Mille Miglia, that was an adventure, I tell you! And in 1953 came the great victory at Le Mans, the first in that race for a car with discs.

***And as far as classic Jaguars are concerned, do you have a favourite?***

It has to be the 1950 XK120 which I drove with Leslie Johnson. 'JWK 651', I think, was the registration. It was registered for the road as an OTS Roadster and we went to the Montlhéry banked circuit, just outside Paris, for some high-speed record-breaking. We broke the world record for continuous running over 24 hours – an average speed of over 100mph...

***107.46 mph, in fact. And did that include the time for changing tyres and drivers, and refuelling?***

It certainly did. That was the first time that a production car had driven for 24 hours at an average of more than 100mph. We swapped drivers every three hours at the wheel, travelling over 2500 miles with a fastest lap of 125mph. The track was tough on the car, but the XK120 held out – that's why it's my favourite Jaguar.

***Now, leaving memories of the racetrack for a moment, do you have any favourite routes for touring the UK?***

Well, just cruising around has never been my thing. I am racer, in every fibre of my being. But, if I were to recommend a tour, then I would head north to Scotland. There are some fantastic open roads to enjoy where you can drive pretty quickly. Or why not head west, to Bristol and Wales? The scenery is stunning.



***And if you were touring in a classic car, which one would you take?***

In all honesty, for everyday use, I would not do it in a classic. But, if I had to choose... it would have to have

disc brakes. A Jaguar or a classic Porsche, perhaps.

***Looking in your diary for 2012, when are we going to see you in action?***

I'm looking forward to the Ennstal Classic in Austria, where I very much hope to be behind the wheel of something. In the autumn there's the Goodwood Revival: a real 'must-do'. I don't run in the Mille Miglia retrospective any more, the time for me in that event is over – but then I was there the first time round, and was moderately successful.

**Editor's note:** *In that last sentence, Sir Stirling's characteristic modesty hides his 1955 triumph on the Mille Miglia when, partnered by fellow Briton Denis Jenkinson, he guided a Mercedes-Benz 300 SLR to victory at an average speed of 97.96mph (157.65km/h) over 990 miles. It is considered to be one of the greatest motor racing feats of all time, and was achieved behind the wheel of a state-of-the-art, yet nevertheless drum-braked sports car.*

Photos: Jaguar

**Gallery**

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