

CLASSIC DRIVER

Under Construction: Restoring Clark Gable's specially modified Jaguar XK120

Lead

Clark Gable had a weakness for the Jaguar XK120 – and one of his former cars is currently being restored in Switzerland, complete with the bespoke specifications the Hollywood luminary demanded from the factory.



Gable famously took ownership of the first XK120 customer car to reach American shores – one of the early aluminium-bodied versions – after proclaiming he “wanted it like a child wants candy”. Three years later, Gable was apparently filming in Cornwall when he took delivery of another, a steel-bodied OTS with chassis number 672282. Having spent some time getting to know his first car, he requested that Jaguar make a few changes to better accommodate his requirements.





The first of these was a rear-mounted luggage rack; perhaps to ensure he didn't forego a weekend getaway with a female companion due to a lack of room for the associated baggage. This solution satisfied Gable for a short time, but he soon complained of the lack of ventilation for the six-cylinder engine. There was no factory solution but, after much insistence from Gable, a workaround was found. He brought the car back to William Lyons (seen above with Gable in front of his first XK120, which won its class at Pebble Beach in 2012), and two rows of slots were punched into the bonnet.





The result was visually coherent, but it now raised a new issue: there was no room to affix the bespoke bonnet strap, which was another of Gable's required provisions when ordering the car.

A few months later, Gable was spotted driving his 'improved' XK120 in Cannes with actress Suzanne Dadole. The additional luggage capacity must have come in handy on the way to the hotel.



In the early Eighties, the father of the current owner procured this particular Jaguar; he had been informed that it had an illustrious ownership history, but he was unaware of just *how* illustrious, and he remained

oblivious until he passed away. Since then, extensive research seems to confirm that this car is one of the three XK120s previously owned by the Hollywood superstar, and the current owner has commissioned a lavish restoration by marque expert Georg Dönni, in memory of both his father and Gable. The goal is to return the car to its last documented sighting in Cannes; stay tuned for further updates and a look at the final outcome.

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