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# The stunning new Jaguar F-Type



Will it or won't it go into production? Jaguar unveiled the F-Type concept car at Detroit that is fully functional. It is the smallest Jaguar in 40 years.

By JIM ROBINSON  
Road Worthy

Of personal interest to me was the Jaguar F-Type concept car roadster unveiled at the recent North American International Auto Show in Detroit.

It was the last work of chief designer Geoff Lawson who died last fall at age 54 of a heart attack. Geoff was one of the darlings of the automotive press -- known for his colorful descriptions about styling that matched the evocative shapes he created like the current XK sports cars and the S-Type.

I spent one morning four years ago with Geoff walking around at the Detroit show as he pointed out the strengths and weaknesses of various cars on the floor. Sadly, I had no tape recorder with me as it was one of the most informative hours I've ever experienced in the auto industry.

I was very pleased to hear that a styling studio at Jaguar will be named after him. This kind of respect in the industry isn't seen that often.

The stunning F-Type is the most compact Jaguar sports car in more than 40 years and presents the company's ideas for a roadster that would take Jaguar into a new segment of the global market.

The project was completed under the aegis of the new director of design, Ian Callum, who said the F-Type is a tribute to Geoff Lawson. "This car is the last to bear Geoff's inimitable stamp. It

is a fine example of the standards we will strive to maintain."

While the XK180 showcar of last year played a central spiritual part in the design of the F-Type, Helfet and his team were able to create a car that is more compact than XK180 and 25 inches (645 mm) shorter than the XKR, on which XK180 was based. It is also four inches (100 mm) narrower than both cars.

The design team set out to produce a shape that is contemporary, functional and distinctively Jaguar. But Helfet was careful that the new design should have its own personality. Jaguar design is always up-to-the-minute in terms of technology. The nose of the car carries a 'splitter', a low-set aerofoil designed to move automatically with increasing speed in order to increase downforce. At the rear, a fixed diffuser tunnel also uses increasing speed to generate additional downforce.

The distinctively styled headlamps employ an adaptation of the latest 'Baroptic' light guide technology in a unique multiple-element cluster.

The new Jaguar is designed to accept a range of powertrain options, starting with the 240 hp AJ-V6 engine successfully introduced in the S-TYPE sedan, while a supercharged version with around 300 hp is also a possibility. Automatic or manual transmissions would drive the rear wheels, while all-wheel drive is a production-feasible option.

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