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REASONS TO BE CHEERFUL

KEITH ANDERSON

THE MIGHTY JENSEN C-V8 has had its ups and downs through the years. The bold styling has not been to everyone's taste and journalists who thought they were being very smart and informed used to refer to it as 'A fine machine disguised as —', the remainder of this phrase we probably all know, and in 1991 we wonder what they were talking about.



In July 1963 *The Motor* magazine were honest, and obviously impressed: 'A very smooth silent 6-litre Chrysler engine and automatic transmission give it a performance so effortless as to be entirely deceptive. It comes as a shock when analysing the figures to find that its maximum speed of 136 mph, acceleration from rest to 100 mph in 20.9 seconds and standing quarter mile time of 15.9 seconds make it one of the *fastest cars we have ever driven*, and certainly the fastest full four-seater.'

Strong words indeed! But then, they were talking about the Jensen C-V8, and strong and powerful is what the C-V8 is all about, including in the styling department.

When looked at with modern eyes used to the styling aberrations of the seventies, the boredom of the eighties and the utter blandness of the early nineties (what does the new Escort look like? Mazda/Toyota/Nissan or what?), the C-V8 is a *real* classic car.

My own personal preference is for the Mk III model, I like the 'softer' front end styling and the beautiful walnut veneer fascia. To be honest, I don't know what Jensen were thinking about when they chose *formica* for the earlier fascias, but I would assume it was the 'innovation' factor — let's try this new material, it has got to last longer than traditional veneer. . . . They were right! You never hear of someone having 'new formica' fitted, it lasts for ever. But it doesn't really look the part, does it?

If you are a C-V8 enthusiast, then don't miss the October issue (Issue 100!), when you will be treated to the visual delights of John Cohen's Mk II, resplendent on the colour cover, with beautiful colour shots of his newly re-upholstered interior *inside* the magazine!

Why was there never a C-V8 Convertible? Well, there was. Apparently just one, and as you can see it is very stylish. There would have been more, if not for the management turnaround in late 1965/early 1966. Doesn't it look good?

As you can see, with the hood erected, the Convertible offers a much lighter aspect to the C-V8 styling: with the hood folded, the car changes considerably, and becomes real film-star material!

Where is this all leading, you ask? Yes, your favourite magazine will shortly publish an exclusive driving impressions/history on this particularly individual motorcar. One to look out for if you are a C-V8 enthusiast, or simply a *Jensen* enthusiast. When? Well that is the problem just now, with just six magazines every year.

Would you like to see a JOC magazine every month? Of the same award-winning quality as this one? Many members have expressed exactly this sentiment in the *Membership Survey*, sent out in February. I have devised a way that this *could* be possible, but I need to know if this is what the majority of the membership wants (obviously it will cost you more for instance). If you want a monthly mag. then **write** to me, the Editor. No hassle, just say YES, put it in an envelope, and post it to me. It will cost you 17p, and may change the future of this magazine to your benefit.

Next issue sees the first of our JOC 'Giant Tests' — we include a 541, a C-V8, an **Interceptor MK I**, an **Interceptor III** (to Series 4 spec), and a **Jensen FF** (also completely rebuilt and brought up to Series 4 specification). I should think that the outcome of this comparison test will surprise some of you. . . . Let's wait and see!

The response to the second **Giant Test**, the Jensen-Healeys, has been little short of phenomenal! I was originally hoping for five cars — so far, we have at least twelve cars lined up. The idea of these Giant Tests, is not to look at beautiful concours examples — no, we want to look at (and admire), the usual standard of club members' cars; but we want to **drive** these cars! If you own a Mk I J-H, what does a late 5-speed feel like? Does your car feel faster?

If you own a **GT**, what is your opinion of open-air motoring?
Look forward to the first **Giant Test** (next issue!), but the second Giant Test should also be very *interesting!*

Keith



Frank Kroemer reports on

The Loneliness of a German C-V8 Driver ...

Currently there are 35 million cars registered in Germany of which 77 are Jensens - that is a share of 0.00022%

The number of German JOC members is 39 of which eight drive a C-V8. You see, even within the German classic car scene a C-V8 is rarer than gold in the desert. A Mercedes 300SL Gullwing you find at every second street corner, but not a C-V8... What is it that leads you to drive such a rare beast?

After driving a Triumph TR6 and an Austin-Healey 3000 for many years, the time had come to look for a nice closed coupe; our daughter Lena was just born and my wife Ursula hinted that an open Healey might not be quite the appropriate car to drive with a baby...

So I began to look for an alternative. What was on offer (it had to be British!) from the late fifties, early sixties? I examined several XK 150s from underneath, had an eye on a Bristol 407, but had to accept that an Aston Martin DB4 was financially out of my reach.

One day, on holiday way up in the north of Germany, Ursula detected a nice looking car at the back of a petrol station. Looking closer I saw exactly what I was looking for: a big coupe in British Racing Green with green leather, and a walnut veneered dashboard, wire wheels and a powerful engine. All the ingredients that made British cars so unique and successful in the sixties. A brief chat with the owner revealed it was a *Jensen C-V8 Mk III*,

just having undergone extensive restoration with numerous technical improvements.

Back home I checked all my old issues of classic car magazines to get an idea of the market value of a C-V8. I couldn't find one for sale! Two months later I placed a 'wanted' advert in Germany's biggest classic car magazine. One car was offered to me: guess which one? Yes, the BRG example we spied in northern Germany. He wanted DM120,000 (£50,000) so I told him I could never afford to buy his car. However, he invited me along to take it for a test drive, and a week later I drove a C-V8 for the first time!

The acceleration was breath-taking - the sheer push in the back that was realised by pressing down the right foot could only be compared to a jet fighter - including the noise level from the twin exhausts. Years ago someone tried to set up a Jensen Owners' Club/Association in Germany. I was told that there were five founder members, but over the months interest declined and the man who took the initiative found that he was on his own again. He advised me to contact the Dutch club and Dicky Van Dalen was aware of a C-V8 for sale!

Thus, since April 1990 I have been the proud owner of a *C-V8 Mk III*. Because of a broken rear axle, the car was left behind in the Netherlands by its English owner in 1979. The previous owner to me installed a new axle but did not get

the car back on the road, so it lay in his garage for many years.

It took a while before I realised that what I had bought was a restoration project rather than a car that 'needed cosmetic attention' - but that's always the case, isn't it?

The first job was to remove the underseal with a hot paint stripper (awful!). Besides a small area in the rear wheelarch, the chassis didn't show any corrosion, although the complete braking system was corroded and seized.

After a small welding job, new chassis painting, replacement or refurbishment of all brake parts and suspension parts, and installation of a new stainless steel exhaust system and stainless petrol tank, the car looks better than new - at least from underneath. The dashboard fascia and instruments were next on the list.

Spring-time was approaching and it was becoming clear that I would be unable to finish the car in time. A telephone discussion with Andrew Edwards resulted a few days later in the car being on its way to Cropredy - as yet I still had not driven my new C-V8! Eight weeks later I collected the car and drove it back home to Germany. The work included interior trim work and the installation of a complete new wiring loom.

I personally prefer wire wheels. To be honest, I think they are a must for an older British sports car. They offer that little bit 'extra'. Yes I know C-V8s never had factory-fitted wires; they were optional for 541s but as the C-V8 styling is a development of the 541, I think the conversion is, at least, acceptable.

After testing some wheel/tyre combinations regarding body clearance, I fitted 6X15", inset 20mm, 72-spoke wheels from Motor Wheel Service (wheel type ZW 493) with 205/70 R15 tyres. To avoid any unpleasant sur-

prises, I had the wheels centred by an expert who adjusted all the spokes to eliminate any upright and side imbalance. Then every wheel was balanced together with the splined hub, the hub and wheel marked to ensure that they are always installed in the same position after removal (for cleaning, perhaps...?). The centre caps show a nice 'Jensen' script, supplied (together with several other parts for the restoration) by the *JOC Spares Service*. Everything fitted nicely and in May 1992 the TUEV test was passed with flying colours. A week later I was driving north to Denmark to participate in the inter-club continental trip.

A month later at the JOC International Weekend my C-V8 came 2nd in its class in the concours competition. With pride we drove back to Germany with the trophy in the boot. On our way we popped in to visit *Jencraft* - thank you Keith, for locating and fixing that strange noise coming from the exhaust mountings.

For a continental owner it is very worthwhile knowing that there are at least two garages in England working *exclusively* on Jensens!

That summer I used the Jensen nearly every day; the fuel consumption is a little bit higher than my Fiesta, but for 'fun to the mile', it is worth every extra gallon!

By early 1993 it became clear that the engine needed a complete rebuild. To find a specialist engine rebuilder with Chrysler V-8 experience was more difficult than imagined. But consider this: if you enter a garage and see a Monteverdi, a Facel-Vega, a Jensen Interceptor and one of the famous Chrysler 300s, what do these beautiful cars have in common? Yes, a Chrysler V-8 engine! I discovered such a garage in Hamburg. How the engine was rebuilt and additional goodies fitted on their advice will be disclosed in a future issue.