



Television viewers in the London area cannot fail to have noticed the tricky looking Jensen that Capital Radio have been using to publicise their newest recruit David Kid Jensen. Those of you not residing in the London area better skip this bit and go on to the next page. Unless of course you fancy hearing about one of the more remarkable feats of determination you're ever likely to read about in the motoring world. Confused? You will be, I know I was, but for me that's nothing unusual,

Classic

being as I am CC's answer to Neanderthal Man when it comes to mechanics. Are you sitting comfortably? Well, sit up straight you lazy buggers and pay attention.

The year was 1961, and a bright eyed youngster by the name of Dave Horton was taken along to the motor show by his father, who was anxious to introduce his son to the joys of motoring. 'This was well before the days of naked tarts on the bonnet,' says Dave, 'so it was definitely the cars we went for.'

On display at this long ago exhibition, was one of the few Jensen CV8s on the scene at that time. Unbeknown to Dave, the Jensen he had seen displayed at the show, had been hastily assembled in 12 hours flat by the Jensen staff after their original CV8 had fallen off the back of a lorry and been damaged. After the accident, on the eve of the show, Jensen decided they had no option but to bolt everything onto their prototype CV8, which had no chassis number, and use that as their demonstration show car. So it was

that Dave Horton first saw the car that was to play such a big part in his life. I'll let Dave take up the story himself.

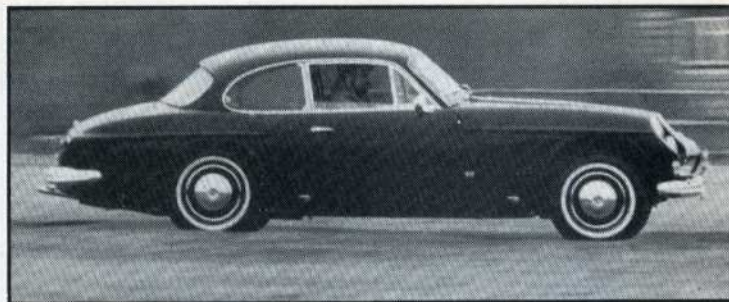
'When I grew up, I joined the fire service, and had a variety of cars, all with big engines because I like the feeling of power. Anyway, all that looked like coming to an end when one day in 1967 I put my hand through a plate glass window and severed it. I was in hospital for four years and I was the first person in this country ever to have micro-surgery. When I came out of hospital I felt I had to do something positive. When I was eventually paid compensation for the accident and disability, though, it went to my head a bit, and I went straight out and bought a Lancia Zagato. It was okay, but a bit like putting a pig in a pint pot, 'cos I'm quite a big chap.

'Anyway, one day I pulled into a garage for some petrol, and there it was. "Car of the Week" – that old Jensen CV8 I'd seen all those years ago at the motor show. It was in fairly

'From that day I'd got the competition bug. One time coming back from Belgium, where I'd picked up a first prize in their Classic show, we hit a top speed of 171.3mph, which was electronically timed by the Belgian police. They put up a road block three miles outside Ostend, and fined me three times over. It cost me £385, which I had to pay on the spot to save them impounding the car. All they could say when I left was, "Go back to England quickly. You're mad."

'The car has since won 191 first prizes, including two Grand Master awards in the Classic Car Nationals in '80 and '82. No other classic car has ever achieved that feat.'

At the time of our interview, Dave had recently returned from the famous Beaujolais Run, where a load of artists, not one of them a budding Picasso, race off to France in a bid to be the first back to these sceptred isles with a crate of malt vinegar masquerading as red wine. Despite



Fuel consumption, however, is highly competitive with any other motor in the right terrain, claims Dave. On a trip to Gibraltar in the late seventies, he averaged 20 miles to the gallon in his CV8 having managed only 21 mpg the previous year in a Mark 2 1300 Cortina. Mind you, Dave rarely has to negotiate the Pyrenees down Orpington High Street which is where he normally drives the car.

Dave's Jensen was the last to be constructed by the Jensen brothers

the most technically advanced car around when it was made in 1967, and in my opinion it's not been topped since for safety and road holding. I approached Jensen and they put me on to one of their subsidiary companies who could provide the spares. I wanted a Jensen FF convertible, which incorporated elements from all five different models of the Interceptor, plus the coupe and the FF itself.

'So I've now got an FF convertible

Classical Gas

good condition, but a bit scruffy. It'd been my lifetime ambition to own a CV8, so I sold the Lancia and bought the Jensen. I'd already decided that you can't let a car like that go to waste, so I promised myself I would do it up to look new.'

There's nothing unusual in that, you might think. Until you realise that Dave had been having extensive physiotherapy on his right hand, just to enable him to do the simple things we take for granted, like picking up a cup. Dave continued:

'I suppose I'm a bit pig-headed really. When I get it in my mind to do something, I won't let anything stop me. I looked on the stripping and rebuilding of the CV8 as a form of rehabilitation. It was difficult I'll admit, and very frustrating. It'd take me maybe an hour to undo a bolt or screw on the block that maybe you'd do in five minutes. The progression was slow, but 4½ years, or 17,000 hours later, the car was ready.'

In fact, the car had begun to take shape a little earlier than that, but with Dave being the perfectionist he is, it wasn't restored to his satisfaction until long after it looked good to the likes of you and me. In 1974 Dave joined the Jensen Owner's Club, and on their advice entered the CV8 in a classic cars concours. Much to the chagrin of the local champions, he walked off with the first prize.

being the 50th car to depart, Dave managed to be the first car to Paris, and the second overall in the race, blowing away Porsches, Ferraris and DBSs on his way.

Although the car is used as a normal road-going vehicle (Dave reckons he clocks up about 5,000 miles a year), Dave seems to thrive on competition. At this year's Essen Motorshow Dave and his Jensen walked away with a special top prize for his car, ahead of an incredible 10,000 vehicles. The man lives and breathes Jensens. He now owns 27.

'What I most like about the car is that it's bog standard to look at, but underneath it's been altered and tuned to perfection,' says Dave. 'It's what they call a stroker. With a 5.1 Chrysler engine bored to almost six litres and a new crankshaft and modified pistons it puts down 435 bhp at the rear axle. That is some muscle I can tell you.'

The car has also been fitted with a special gearbox, which combines the normal three-speed automatic transmission with a manual override and a pre-selection facility enabling the driver to 'program' a gear change in advance, and then bring it in to play at the optimum moment, leaving both hands free to manoeuvre the wheel. Very useful if you're driving at speed on a road you're not familiar with, if not much use in your average high street.

and he regards it with pride and affection – and why not when you bear in mind the long hours of frustrating effort that went in to its reconstruction? He claims it is the most successful classic car in the country, and it's insured for a massive £40,000. Jensen themselves give it pride of place in their managing director's office, where a portrait of it hangs on the wall. It's the only one of its type in the world according to Dave, but it's not the only unique Jensen he owns.

'It was the 50th anniversary of Jensen and my mum had the idea of asking the company to reconstruct a Jensen FF to my specifications. I'd gotten hold of this old FF chassis through the owner's club. The FF was

with a full race engine, series three dash, and series two interior. It's tri-powered and nitro'd, and at the Birmingham Classic Car show it just blew everyone away. It's a customised classic, and it cost £70,000, but I wouldn't dream of selling it at any price.'

Dave is known on the circuit as 'Mr Jensen' and whether or not you share his feeling for the marque you have to admire his knowledge of the cars, and the feeling with which it is expressed. So if you happen to be around a classic car show sometime, stop by and check out one of Dave's cars. You'll recognise big Dave, he'll be the one on the winners' stand. **TJB**

