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Electric Jag fit for a Duchess

By Nat Barnes

THE timing couldn't be much better. Just as Jaguar is on the brink of launching this new all-electric I-Pace, perhaps its most important car in years (if not ever), so the Coventry firm gets the public relations break of a lifetime.

Last month's wedding between Prince Harry and Meghan Markle saw them drive away from their wedding breakfast in Jaguar's one-off produced E-Type, converted to run on battery power. A much-loved British icon brought into the 21st century for a perfect combination of old and new.

You could use the same description for this new I-Pace too. Jaguar's first ever electric car it has beaten the likes of Audi, BMW and Mercedes in the race to bring a premium production, full-sized, fully electric car to showrooms.

On the electric side we've obviously got the BMW i3 while Tesla has been successful globally but probably can still be regarded as something of a niche choice for many UK drivers.

This I-Pace looks to be able to capitalise on two booming markets as well. Sales of electric vehicles



IN-TOUCH: The car's easy-to-use control screens

were up 58 per cent last year while those of SUVs are expected to reach 24.3 million by 2020. Build an electric SUV then and you get the best of both worlds.

Well, that's the theory anyway. In reality, despite the UK's 16,000-odd public charging points and the fact that the electric car market share is growing, this will remain a left-field choice for many.

The I-Pace should answer many of the traditional electric car fears though. Two electric motors front and rear, linked to a 90kWh battery, give the I-Pace four-wheel drive and a total, fully charged range of 298 miles. A standard home

wallbox for charging can give the I-Pace 80 per cent of that range in 10 hours (the time between you returning from work and leaving again in the morning) and when more powerful 100kW chargers are available that charge time will be even faster.

The I-Pace looks the part too. With none of the restrictions offered by a traditional engine and gearbox, Jaguar's design director Ian Callum has managed to bring the I-Pace a level of modernity while still nodding to the firm's past heritage. It's tall thanks in part to the battery packs being located in a sandwich section

between the wheels but we especially love the front with its dominant air duct on the bonnet. There are also pop-out door handles like the Range Rover Velar. The only element we're not entirely convinced about is the bluff, squared-off rear.

Not that you'll be left wanting by the car's performance mind you. The I-Pace races from 0 to 60mph in just 4.5 seconds (by virtue of all of the battery power being available immediately, unlike a traditional engine) and it goes on to a 124mph top speed.

Furthermore that electric power allows you to tailor the I-Pace's

on-road manners to suit your driving style. You can allow it to slowly creep forward when in gear like a traditional automatic, or not, plus adapt the regenerative braking power in two levels, either in low or high mode, which brings a high degree of one-pedal motoring (the car braking considerably just by lifting off the throttle pedal).

You can even change the car's noise to silent or a more dynamic hum that turns into a growl the faster the car goes.

And you'll be wanting to drive it fast. The availability of that immediate punch of acceleration means it's an addictive car to drive

LOGBOOK LOWDOWN

- Model: Jaguar I-Pace
- On sale: July
- Price range: £58,995-£76,995
- Engine: Electric – 90kWh
- Power: 0 to 60mph in 4.5 seconds, 124mph top speed
- Range: 298 miles
- Full recharge time: 12hrs 36mins (7kw charger)
- Rivals: BMW i3, Volvo XC90 T8 PHEV
- Rating: ★★★★★★☆☆



UNIQUE: Batteries are found between front and rear wheels



Check out our video of the Jaguar I-Pace on the road at express.co.uk/motoring

WATTS-UP: The I-Pace's bonnet air duct dominates; Harry and Meghan go electric

quickly with plenty of grip to help exploit that. The feeling that you're in a large and tall car never escapes you but it does its best to hide its substantial 2.1-tonne weight. In fairness the quick steering and the advantages of the four-wheel drive – which you can sometimes feel helping and sling-shooting you out of tight corners – gives the I-Pace a good degree of directness on the road and a reasonable level of feel (though it could be better).

A good ride quality especially in comfort mode does help matters as does the minimal body roll, though the sheer physics of moving that weight can't unfortunately be ignored. The result is that it lacks that final sharpness distinct to most other Jaguars but we suspect

that this is likely to be the new normal where electric cars are concerned. The sad facts are that if you want the range you need the batteries and if you have the batteries then, for the moment anyway, you also have their weight. This is sure to improve but at present this is as good as it gets.

We wouldn't mind some extra settings to the regenerative braking power either. Only having two settings means that the higher one can sometimes feel too aggressive when cruising but the lower one isn't enough. We'd prefer the likes of the VW e-Up or e-Golf's five mode settings for a happier medium between the two.

As far as the interior is concerned it's pretty good news. There

are two touch-screens in the centre of the dash, Jaguar's usual InControl system for the sat nav, infotainment and also the car's EV controls, with a second for the heating and ventilation. Rotary dials can quickly change the temperature settings on the move without having to take your eyes off the road for too long.

OVERALL it's a combination that works well, although we're not convinced by the rotary dials, which have a slight odd function that requires you to lift their outer edge to change the fan speed. Not

only is it not especially intuitive but the metal-look knurled plastic they're made of feels a little cheap.

There are some nice touches though, such as the the sat nav that can predict how much range you will have left and divert to a charge point if need be.

We also like the small extra trays under the rear seats and the large 10-litre cubby between the two front seats as well as the six USB ports.

Practicality-wise the I-Pace scores highly too with the batteries under the floor. Rear-seat head and legroom is good, although foot space is tight if the front seats are fully lowered, while there's a decent 656-litre boot that expands to 1,453 litres. There's a further

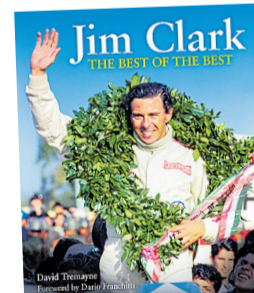
small 27-litre space under the bonnet but it's all but redundant.

Judged as a normal car the I-Pace can't help but fall short in terms of its handling and also its pretty hefty £58,995 starting price. But this isn't a normal car and in many ways this is possibly a more crucial arrival even than BMW's i3 in terms of the first step into all our motoring futures – something that Jaguar must be applauded for.

The fact that our future will be available to buy as soon as next month, with a workable mileage range and all the look and feel of a Jaguar is great.

And if an electric Jaguar is good enough for the new Duke and Duchess of Sussex then it's good enough for us.

THE BEST FROM BERWICKSHIRE



WAS Jim Clark the best Formula One driver of all time? You'd find plenty of drivers and fans that would agree given the double World Champion won 25 of his 72 Grands Prix.

This latest book by David Tremayne, *Jim Clark: The Best Of The Best*, is a must-have for any Clark fan, published on the 50th anniversary of his death.

A detailed look at this complex yet still very humble character, there are also dozens of interviews with friends, family, drivers and mechanics.

To order *Jim Clark: The Best Of The Best* by David Tremayne (£80, Evro), with free P&P, call the Express Bookshop on 01872 562310. Alternatively send a cheque or PO (made payable to Express Bookshop) to Express Bookshop, PO Box 200, Falmouth TR11 4WJ or order online at expressbookshop.com

DESPITE the proliferation of crossovers in showrooms in recent years we still love old-school estate cars dearly for their sheer size and load-lugging ability.

This is the first picture of the SW estate version of Peugeot's new 508, the saloon version of which we're driving later this month. This SW gets a roomy 1,780-litre boot but crucially continues the gorgeous good looks of its four-door stablemate, with that extra practicality.

There's also the same lovely i-Cockpit dashboard which still looks fresh. A plug-in hybrid version is due in the second half of next year to join the mainstream range, which arrives in showrooms in January 2019.

Prices have yet to be announced but expect the SW to start from about £28,000 and to give family buyers something to think about.

