



The Elite & Performance Jags team, including Dan Carpenter (front), John Marshall (left), Neil Webster (right) and Joe Horsley (front right)

The complete works

Offering a number of useful services in addition to its own self-designed parts, Elite & Performance Jags has traded on versatility and customer satisfaction during its first decade of business

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COMPREHENSIVE. That's the only way to describe the many services the Derbyshire based Elite & Performance Jags offer. From general servicing and repairs to performance tuning and body work, there aren't many areas of Jaguar maintenance that Dan Carpenter and John Marshall, the partnership behind company, don't offer.

The pair met in 1996 when John – an accountant and a Jaguar enthusiast who had previously owned all examples of the XJ from an XJ12 S3 to the X308 – started a Surrey based independent specialist in Surrey with two ex Jaguar franchised dealer staff. It's here that Dan later started as an apprentice mechanic. By learning his trade from the two Master Technicians, he soon became highly experienced and a key member of the technical staff.

Seven years later John wanted to take a different direction so took the huge decision to start his own garage but with no technical knowledge himself he was aware he needed

Dan's skills to make it work. For Dan, this was a bigger change than just his job. John had moved north to Derby in the late 1990s and was suggesting they open there. "It's a much nicer environment," explains John, "plus there was no other independent specialist nearby, just a main dealer."

But Dan saw the advantages of moving and in mid 2004 the company was formed with both as equal partners. They found a workshop in Derby and have remained at the same address ever since, expanding into adjoining units when their business has grown. Although both were experienced in their field, by being new to the area they had to start from scratch. "We had a zero customer base," says John. "It's not like either of us had come from a local franchised dealer and had brought our clients with us." The pair marketed themselves the old-fashioned way, leaving leaflets under the windscreen wipers of as many Jaguars as they could find.

Despite being new to the area, Dan and John were still certain what they wanted



Technician Joe Horsley mid way through a full timing belt change on an XF 2.7 diesel



Bodyshop employee, Neil Webster, prepares an XF for painting in Elite & Performance's own booth

the core area of their burgeoning business to be – servicing and maintaining all Jaguars from the mid-1990s to the present day. "We offer as many services as any main agent," says John. "Our facilities are comprehensive and we have a genuine concern for the cars and our customers since we're the owners of the business and are both passionate about Jaguar."

One of these comprehensive facilities Elite & Performance Jags offers is a body shop that includes a paint booth. Handily situated across the road from their original premises, Dan and John had already been sending cars there for paint and body work for some time. So when the opportunity arose to buy it in 2007, it was a natural opportunity for them to grow their business. Although it remains independent, enabling the body shop to work on any make of car, it perfectly complements the main business. Says Dan, "We can point out to Jaguar owners any minor damage on their car and then explain and even show them the body shop and paint booth." But for Dan the biggest advantage is about retaining control. "Whenever you subcontract anything," he says, "that's when it goes wrong. This way, any problems can be rectified immediately."

Another one Elite & Performance's key products is its own range of exhausts for the X100 generation of XK, something Dan and John have offered from the outset as a way of broadening their services. "The originals are these thin little pipes that are awkwardly crimped over the axle that don't sound or look good," says John. "What we wanted was to create something better, that wasn't too loud or too lairy but instead complemented the car." Today, the company offers a variety of exhausts manufactured for them but still designed by Dan. They can either be fitted by Elite & Performance at its premises or be sent directly to the customer.

The next notable project the pair became



involved with was again with an XK8 (they have since developed the XKR version). "We decided to buy an X103 – the 4.2-litre engined XK – with a dodgy transmission and make a manual version using a Tremec 'box,'" says John. With most gearboxes capable of being fitted to most cars, the tricky part is getting an automatic car to accept the new manual transmission without the dashboard warning lights. After much perseverance, Dan eventually achieved this and Elite & Performance now sells the electronics package required for anyone wanting to carry out the same modification.

Other upgrades the company offers are to the chassis, supercharger pulley systems and ECU remaps. If it's interesting and what they consider to be a tasteful conversion, Dan and John are happy to accept any performance tuning commission. A one off supercharged X-TYPE manual is another one of their notable modifications.

Yet servicing and repairs remain the key elements of the business – the performance exhausts and gearbox electrical kits are a good way to connect with Jaguar owners who don't necessarily know what else



An X350 XJ sits on one of Elite & Performance's three lifts ready to be worked on

they offer. "We had a chap recently who wanted an exhaust box fitting to his car, not realising we carry out servicing. When he found out about it he came back for that," says Dan.

One of the reasons Elite & Performance Jags has been so successful in a reasonably short space of time is the partner's matching view on customer service. With the pair wanting to be transparent in every sense of the word, owners are invited to view the work being carried out via the large windows that look onto the workshop from the waiting area – a fully functioning office suite customers are invited to use. They can also be shown what requires fixing on their car.

"We never alienate anyone," says John. "Instead, Dan and I encourage the customers to see what's going on and if they have any questions regarding our diagnoses, we can show them the computer screen. It's about hand holding throughout the process."

So from simply changing the oil, to upgrading the exhaust, to altering how we view specialists, Elite & Performance Jags really does offer the complete works. **PA**



A typical array of cars that Elite & Performance looks after; an X100 for a manual gearbox conversion, an X-TYPE for a dashboard repair and a full XJS restoration



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