



RADICAL APPROACH

In 2001 Eric Marziali brought his Series 3 E-type open two-seater to Stew Jones Restorations looking for 'something special'. The result was a 7.3-litre V12-engined supercar with up to 500bhp at its disposal

WORDS AND
PHOTOGRAPHY
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Stew Jones was a mere stripling when he first got into cars and in 1955 aged just 13, he was shoehorning a Mercury V8 into a Model A Ford. Enjoying the challenge, the next step was to find old Fords and fit the Chevy V8. Bursting with energy, he once took the wheel of his father's car while his parents were away and promptly drove it to 100mph! No mention is made of the consequences.

Growing up

While at college and living in what he refers to as an 'ugly' area, Stew saw a Mk VII

Jaguar parked up at a friend's place. It was in good order, only the clutch was burnt out. Nobody was interested so Stew took on the project and soon had the clutch replaced and put the big Jaguar into regular use, keeping it until 1998. He reckoned it looked pretty incongruous in an area of students or those on welfare.

After college, Stew started with Pratt & Whitney earning some real money while receiving the best engineering experience he could get. In the meantime his passion for cars – and Jaguar especially – led to buying and selling a few as well as hands-on restoration. Eventually he started teaching and actually launched his own business in

1976. Two years later he built his waterside house in Winsted, Connecticut and two years on, converted what was an old ice storage building into a good-sized workshop. In 1983 he put some Webers on a V12, rebuilt the engine and was completely hooked. The power was amazing. He was side-tracked for a while building a concours car for Terry Love, a car that is still winning trophies to this day and surely one of the few perfect 100-point winning cars around.

Stew was happy to be a one-man band, farming out spraying and other trades. But in 1985 he was involved in a car accident that should have changed his life. Although it was serious, he recovered from most of

CLASSIC DRIVE

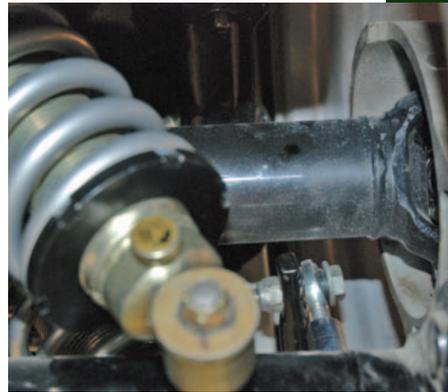
S3 V12 E-TYPE



Nardi steering wheel apart, the interior remains standard



Specially commissioned Dayton wire wheels cover the AP Racing brakes



Drive shafts are now the size of propshafts to cope with the power



7.3 litres of mighty fuel-injected V12 power

his injuries and was physically in good shape. But he was left completely blind, unable to tell day from night. It was in rehab that he garnered hope from the conditions of other patients. In fact he was inspired and realised that as long as he had a good team around him, his head could compensate for his sight.

Today he has Bruce Boada whose experience in motorsport – including preparation for Le Mans – has been a vital ingredient. Derek Sikorski runs the bodyshop and is able to work marvels to achieve a fabulous finish. Mark Evon is on hand to help everything flow. Danny Grech manages to free some of his very busy life to put in part-time work as one of the most skilful fabricators in the area. His abilities in manufacturing tubular racing frames has been especially useful.

A different kind of life

With dogged determination, Stew set about producing the best cars anywhere. His love of the V12 engine formed the focus that would evolve into specialising in the Series 3 E-type and that meant parts as well as restoration and service. His reputation over the years has helped enormously and even today he is still consulted about concours issues.

Stew set about producing the best cars anywhere

Everyone around Stew is smitten by his infectious enthusiasm. Years of understanding and research have resulted in some very special ideas. But it hasn't all been straight out of Stew's head. He admits to conferring with people like Rob Beere. Another company he worked well with is Medatronics with their five speed gearbox conversions – for the V12, naturally. Using the experience of competition, they built a car soon to be called the 'beast', producing 650bhp. Over the years it has acted as an informal test bed where all sorts of modifications have been tried.

Explosive refinement

Stew has this uncanny understanding of translating what his customer really wants. In 2001 Eric Marziali bought his Series 3 E-type open two-seater. He'd already been running a V12 2+2 with air-conditioning but he really wanted something special. Stew knew Eric well enough to run with these thoughts. It had to start every time, be as docile as a Lexus and yet offer the excitement of a pumped up Corvette.

They'd learnt that too much power twisted the half-shafts from the final

drive and occasionally broke them. After a development period, a completely new shaft evolved about as thick as a conventional prop-shaft but infinitely stronger. Then everything had to go up a notch. Happy that whatever power was produced would be transmitted to the road, Stew went into his creative world.

Certain areas were a given. The gearbox would be the bullet-proof Medatronics five-speed, specifically designed to accept V12 power. And what about that power! The engine is a full Rob Beere 7.3-litre V12 fuelled by a modern injection system and sparked by mapped ignition. Gases would be evacuated via a bespoke exhaust system with extractor manifolds made from stainless steel with four separate pipes of correct length exiting from the rear. Power is adequate – in fact delete that term and replace with 'in excess of adequate!' To transmit that power to the gearbox, a special Tilton triple disc carbon clutch is used, capable of gripping up to 800bhp!

Clearly this car would need some serious braking and suspension to keep

the formidable power in check and this is firmly addressed with everything dialled in to cope. The brakes are full-on AP Racing discs and calipers. As for the wheels, Stew lobbied Dayton to manufacture huge wire wheels. With 18-inch diameter rims, they would be 9-inch wide on the front and 10 for the rear, carrying 265 x 35 and 285 x 30 18-inch Michelin Pilot Sport Cup tyres.

Eric didn't want any diversions away from the pure essence of his E-type. So there's no music to compete with the sheer thrill of the exhaust; neither is there a heater or air conditioning. But there is plenty of design detail. Obviously to cover those huge wheels, the body has been altered to suit. The original eyebrow flares have been retained but the girth has been dealt with in the panels themselves by easing them out, rather than adding on some great arches. It's devoid of extraneous dressings like front and rear bumpers. The original lights have been abandoned in favour of simpler units blended into the svelte body, painted in a version of British Racing Green. Inside was to remain relatively unchanged

and any owner of a standard production version would find no surprises.

Stew consulted Eric throughout the project and when it was finally finished with sufficient road miles driven on its first shakedown, the team took the E-type along to Lime Rock for its debut showing. Nothing but rapturous applause greeted the project before Eric finally took delivery.

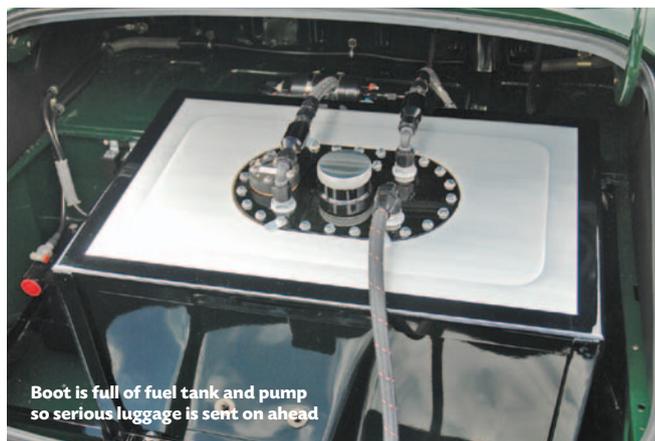
Stateside driving

We're in a humble hire car driving from New York City to Connecticut but craved more as the daily traffic grind lessened. It's quiet by the water's edge where Stew and Karen greet us. The setting could not be more tranquil. Then the doors are opened like rolling back a rock from a dragon's lair. But this is not the fire breathing monster expected, more a refined 21st century supercar.

After walking around playing spot the upgrade, it's time to drive. I move from the outside caricature where the E-type concept has moved on, into the comfort zone that is the standard interior. Here I know everything



Still E-type, the rear is de-seamed with smoothed in lights



Boot is full of fuel tank and pump so serious luggage is sent on ahead





and my expectations are normal. Until I stab that starter button and a raucous sound of purposeful intent fills the silence. I'm not worrying about the clutch weight, as Stew would never sanction anything that wouldn't sit comfortably in his build.

Bruce is sitting alongside me and warns of too much throttle. "It'll just break away," he says and so I nuzzle the throttle in slowly as if feeding our feral peacock at home, unwilling to cause sudden flight. The reaction is gentle as if the car is completely aware that its strength could cause harm and for the time being keeps it at bay. We're driving chatting about Bruce and his race

days and then the open road looms. I change down to second and simultaneously hit the accelerator – with care. The last thing I want is to face the way I've just come. Even so it's like a pack of mules on steroids has kicked me in the back and I even wonder if the tyres are actually touching the Tarmac.

I soon have the measure of the car and it comes to me. Handling and braking is on the modern side of efficiency and easily copes with the phenomenal levels of performance. Trucks and workaday traffic is dealt with in clinical effectiveness. The fuel injection behaves perfectly with power available throughout the rev-range. So sweet are the gear changes that it encourages up and down-shifts, although in truth the lever could be left where it is; the torque is so great that acceleration is barely affected.

It is an amazing car and will no doubt

the wheels, with output shafts twisting and stub-axles shearing off. That problem had been solved but 10 litres would surely present a whole set of new difficulties.

In a moment of inspired genius it all came together. By using the very latest Corvette trans-axle, not only is a six-speed gearbox available but the unit is capable of handling the massive amount of predicted power. Using a race car-inspired tubular frame it still retains the original style front frame. Then the entire assembly will be dressed in E-type clothes. This will be one to look forward to.

Its not all V12 E-type though, as customers often ask to have other cars in their collection looked after. This usually involves Jaguar and during our visit we saw a number of six-cylinder E-types, a range of XKs as well as an XJS and an XJ saloon. But perhaps the one that best caught this scribe's eye was a



The next project – a 10-litre V12 driving through a Corvette transaxle wearing E-type 3 clothes



Stew with his wife Karen make a formidable duo

I hit the accelerator and it's like a pack of mules on steroids has kicked me in the back

keep Eric fully occupied and entertained for some years to come. Without doubt it is one of the most accomplished V12-powered E-types I have driven and just when I think it is close to the ultimate, I get chatting with Stew again.

Ideas keep popping into this incredible man's mind with the latest verging on the crazy side of wild. He'd heard of Ron Beaty's attempt at building a 9.0-litre V12 engine and looked to go one better by hitting the full ten. They'd already had difficulties transmitting 7.3-litre's worth of power to

1952 Chevrolet truck – there would be room for that in the Patten motor-house.

It was clear from chatting with the guys in the workshop that they are all totally dedicated to the business and have a huge respect for Stew. His energy is boundless and riding as a passenger he has an uncanny sense of homing in on any faults. It's the same in the workshop. Any part can be identified by touch, where again he is usually able to pick out any imperfections. Despite his clinical condition there is no doubt that Stew Jones is a man of immense vision. **LD**