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SPIED: 2009 JAGUAR XKR WITH JAGUARDRIVE - CAR NEWS

Jaguar drives away from the "J" with JaguarDrive.

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Look closely at these pictures of the 2009 Jaguar XKR coupe and you'll notice a revised lower front fascia with a wider, "smiling" center air intake that replaces the triple-port lower fascia of the current model. More important, however, the XK, which already does a remarkable impression of James Bond's famous Aston Martins, appears on track to get at least some technologies that are straight out of 007's gadget collection, including the "JaguarDrive" shifter.

JaguarDrive was first previewed on the [C-XF concept](#) sedan that we sniffed and licked and pawed last January at the North American International Auto Show in Detroit. Don't remember JaguarDrive? Well, that's understandable—given the significance (and beauty) of the car's design, it was easy to overlook its interior particulars, especially as the car left the show before the public days. Even if JaguarDrive elements were noticed, many believed that, of all things, the sleek, integrated shift mechanism in particular was more auto-show than auto-go. And even fewer expected it to appear on other Jag models, like the still-fresh XK, so quickly.

JAGUARDRIVE?

So what exactly is JaguarDrive? Basically, it's a glitzy new way of integrating all the stuff on the center console with electronic, flush-mounted controls, including a push-button starter (which the XK already has), buttons for shift/throttle settings, and a dial-type shifter that, at last, replaces Jaguar's ancient and much maligned "J-gate" shifter design.



Jaguar C-XF concept with JaguarDrive transmission interface.

Spied: 2009 Jaguar XKR With JaguarDrive - Dials and Switches

In the C-XF, the shift dial is rendered in solid aluminum and set within concentric polished aluminum rings, all of which are embedded flush with the transmission tunnel. The rings around the dial spiral downward, one by one, about an inch once the driver—or passenger, we suppose—presses the throbbing red start button (said to evoke the “heartbeat” of the car), leaving the dial right in the palm of the hand. The rings motor back up when the engine is shut off. OooOOOOoh.

Now, while the multiple rings don’t appear to have translated into this development mule, nor can we tell if the dial will rise or the surround piece will fall (or both?), it is clear that the dial will become a new Jaguarism. It also appears that the ignition button won’t throb, which is just as well. We also hope JaguarDrive’s mounting piece is more lovingly integrated in production.

TRANNY REMAINS INTACT

Importantly, JaguarDrive does not indicate the presence of a whole new transmission, but is merely an aesthetically appealing—not to mention Bond-like—way to actuate the current Jaguar Sequential Shift automatic.



Spied: 2009 Jaguar XKR With JaguarDrive - Technical Details

And that's just fine, as the ZF-sourced six-speed is already one of the fastest-shifting manumatics on the market. Manual shifting is still done via steering wheel paddles, as with most manumatics and sequential manual transmissions. We also expect JaguarDrive to include several different shift/throttle settings also previewed on the C-XF: Dynamic, Track, and Launch, as well as, presumably, a "normal" setting.

In an interview with CARandDRIVER.com, Alister Whelan, lead designer for the C-XF concept as well as the production XF sedan, says that JaguarDrive is intended to dial—literally—some "emotional interaction" into the car.

As cool as JaguarDrive looks, it really isn't that complicated. "It's not rocket science," admits Whelan. Nor is it particularly sporting in character. After all, it's but another variety of electronic shifter, the likes of which have sprouted up on everything from the BMW X5 to the Mercedes-Benz S-Class. The difference here, is that there will be some showy bits that move around when you start the car. We just don't know which bits yet.

So is JaguarDrive tantamount to reinventing the wheel? No. But it's a welcome departure from the loathed J-gate. And at the very least, it's something that future XK owners can use to strike envy in the hearts of their golf buddies on Sunday, especially if one of them owns an Aston.