

Remake Eagle E-type 4.2 Roadster Series 1



Richard Webber

I'M NO big fan of drop-tops. Having the great outdoors club you about the head when you're travelling at anything over 30mph just doesn't appeal. Go faster still and you can't chat to your passenger without shouting, and the stereo sounds like someone's taken a Stanley knife to the speakers.

Then there's the cold. Sure, you can use the heater, but you just end up getting very hot in very specific places while the rest of you freeze – in a Morgan Plus 8 one summer's evening I felt as if a burning ferret was running up each trouser leg while I fended off facial frostbite.

Then there's the added weight and increased drag, both of which slow you down, and the fact that you can hear what

bystanders are calling you as you flounce along in roofless ridicule.

But today, I really don't care what they're saying, and the irony is that they're probably saying very nice things. Because I'm lucky enough to be threading through a pretty, sunshine-dappled village in a gleaming dark-blue Eagle E-type Roadster Series 1.

Its stainless steel, big-bore exhaust drones low and loud, crackling on the overrun, until both the road and the throttle open up, then it sounds like a riot between rival colliery bands, blaring away as the engine screams towards the 5,000rpm red line. A beautifully mechanical-feeling upshift later and we're bounding along, diving through bends and cresting rollers at a proper lick.

This would be a bucket-list drive in any E-type, but East Sussex-based Eagle produces arguably the best E-types in the world. "Better than new" is how Eagle describes its cars. This 1967 Series 1 E-type Roadster 4.2 was a relatively cheap car in its day, costing the equivalent of £32,000 in today's money and around half as much as its contemporary from Mercedes, the 230 SL "Pagoda".

And while you can now buy E-types from £30,000, this Eagle-built example is priced at £245,000. It's easy to see why – the chrome-embellished bodywork is flawless, its carnal shape jigsawed by steady panel gaps that speak of an obsessive restoration. Apart from the incongruous stereo head, the cabin, finished in chrome, wood and lots of plump,

rich leather that has fewer wrinkles than the proverbial bairn's bum, is picture-perfect to its original design, but fit and finish now match today's blue-riband car makers.

Cosmetics are only half the story, though. Eagle's expertise really pays off when it comes to the driving experience. The company offers myriad mechanical upgrades, which can be specified à la carte or in one of four pre-set packages, the least expensive of which costs from £13,200, and the priciest nearly £100,000. This car's upgrades total around £40,000, loosely matching Eagle's "Sport" specification.

Engine tweaks include a high-flow air filter, electronic ignition, modernised fueling, lustrous stainless steel manifolds and

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that raucous sports exhaust; power is rated at the car's original 265bhp, but that has to be conservative. The all-round independent suspension has been rebuilt using custom parts and adjustable Konis, its geometry revised to cope with wider modern tyres, and the brakes are thoroughly modernised, too.

All of which serves to massively enrich our countryside canter. While Eagle offers a fuel injection option, there really is no need, the triple SU carburettors producing rock-solid running and an amply keen throttle response from the sweet six-pot engine that retains a bright, tappety chunter throughout and feels easily robust enough for track use (not that you would). You can confidently lean on the car through sweeping corners,

all the while marshalling those distant front wheels that seem to reach the apex an age before you do. And there's no scuttle shake or crashiness – the ride is superb, smothering any surface imperfections away.

The steering is direct but a bit too nervous to suit the rest of the package, while the brakes are strong but lacking in pedal feel. And although pace is good – 0-60mph takes 6.5secs – some more power would heighten the thrill. But the good news is that all of this is configurable to suit your preferences. First on my list would be the 4.7-litre engine upgrade that adds another 81bhp.

But, what an experience: authentic, classy, cossetting and thrilling all at once, and all the better for going taps aff.

PRICE	£245,000
ENGINE	4.2l 6 cyl petrol, 265bhp
PERFORMANCE	Max speed 150mph; 0-60mph 6.5secs
ECONOMY	N/A
CO₂ EMISSIONS	N/A

PHOTOGRAPHY JAMES LIPMAN

Soaring success

