

Finally, Jaguar's new sports car

JAGUAR'S new compact sport coupe is out as a concept just now, at the Frankfurt international auto show. The real thing is due at the end of 2012, a rival for Porsche's Cayman and even the entry-level 911, as well as the BMW Z4 and Mercedes SLK. It will be sold as a coupe and convertible, and with a GT3 track-capable version from early in the program.

Its body structure is based on the larger XK's aluminum architecture. The new car is shorter than the XK and at least 200 pounds lighter, but about the same width. Although the 5.0-liter V-8 would fit, Jaguar wants to avoid cannibalizing XK sales, so the new compact sports car will use a 90-degree V-6 derived from the V-8. By offering naturally aspirated and supercharged versions, the company should be able to remain competitive on power: About 350 horsepower is in the cards for the supercharged car. An eight-speed ZF automatic carries the power to the rear. Suspension is derived from the all-aluminum system in the XK. The car will be set up as a purer sports car than the XK, with firmer ride and far greater agility.

The car doesn't look like a "shrunkn XK" as depicted in spy shots taken before the Frankfurt introduction. Rather, it defines the new surfacing for Jaguars, as seen on the C-X75 concept and the production C-X75, which will go on sale in 2013 and will be seen at the 2012 Geneva auto show in March. This gives it a more taut, slightly less rounded look than in current Jaguars.

■ paul horrell

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