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RAPIDE AMR



VALOUR FIRST TEST





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PURCHASE AGREEMENT

OWNING AN Aston Martin (or maybe a second one) is the dream for many of us but financially they often remain out of reach. Yet despite their reputation for having high prices, this isn't always the case. There's no denying the Rapide AMR (p62) or Valour (p80) featured in this issue are expensive, but as our 12-page feature starting on p20 shows which looks at five cars worth between £25,000 and £250,000, not every Aston Martin has to be. And these aren't models you wouldn't want to own, either, but genuine thoroughbreds, ranging from an early DB9 to the iconic DB6.

And to spice things up a little, we also suggest five very different alternatives for the same value.

Obviously cars like these won't be without their issues and so before you empty your bank accounts, we also look at the basic problems they can occasionally suffer from plus what to pay depending on their condition.

Hopefully our extensive guide will give you the confidence that not all Aston Martins are expensive to buy and not matter your budget, you can afford your first (or second) example.



Paul Walton
Editor



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UP FRONT

NEWS

THE VALIANT

ALONSO'S ASTON MARTIN



Originally conceived by Aston Martin F1 driver, Fernando Alonso, when he wanted some changes made to his Valour, the Valiant is an ultra-exclusive track-focused, road-legal special edition. The latest in a long line of extraordinary projects by in-house bespoke division, Q by Aston Martin, the Valiant is powered by a 745PS

(735bhp) twin turbo 5.2-litre V12 mated to a six-speed manual transmission. Production is strictly limited to just 38 cars globally and are already fully allocated.

Said Alonso, "Valour was a spectacular celebration of Aston Martin's 110th anniversary, and stirred me to create a more extreme, race car inspired version that was track focussed, while also delivering a thrilling drive on-road. Valiant is born from my passion for driving at the limit and I have enjoyed working closely with the Q by Aston Martin team on both the design and technical specification and believe we have created a masterpiece."

Thanks to what Marco Mattiacci, global chief brand and commercial officer of Aston Martin calls, "obsessive weight reduction," the Valiant's bodywork has been largely sculpted in carbonfibre while the 3D-printed rear subframe is claimed to save 3kg with no reduction in stiffness, and a magnesium torque tube that removes 8.6kg of mass from the centre of the car. The use of a lithium ion battery saves 11.5kg, while the 21in lightweight magnesium wheels (featuring 275/35 front and 325/30 rear tyres) reduce unsprung mass by 14kg.

Aesthetically, it features host of styling changes from the Valour to add downforce while reducing drag including a large front splitter, which features F1-esque multi-layer end plates to smooth airflow past the front wheels. Underneath sits a large rear diffuser honed using computational fluid dynamics, with four titanium exhaust pipes mounted within while the sharp Kamm tail and boldly upswept deck lid is topped by a prominent fixed wing. The carbonfibre grille is claimed to increase the flow of air to the



ALONSO AT GOODWOOD FESTIVAL OF SPEED

engine while the wings are heavily sculpted. Aero discs are mounted on the wheels to reduce turbulence, with six inlets positioned to draw cooling air onto the carbon-ceramic brakes.

Inspired by wheel covers fitted to the legendary 1980 RHAM/1 'Muncher' Le Mans racer and attached directly to the lightweight forged magnesium wheels, the aero discs reduce turbulence and drag created by the rotating wheels.

Inside, the interior is a combination of race-bred functionality with the immaculate design flourishes and mastery of materials for which Aston Martin is famous for and feature large swathes of exposed carbonfibre together with Alcantara or semi-aniline leather cabin trim.

To highlight the mechanical nature of the manual gearbox, a cutaway in the transmission tunnel exposes the gear linkage running rearward to the six-speed transaxle. There's also a new, circular steering wheel featuring a slimmer frame and stripped of all switches for a more intuitive feel.

Simon Newton, Aston Martin's director of Vehicle Performance, said, "With Valiant we've shifted the emphasis towards much increased track capability while retaining enough useability to remain enjoyable on the road. We've moved the dial in every key area to extract greater performance and deliver more excitement".

First deliveries of the Valiant are due to commence in late 2024.



Aston Martin F1 team's Fernando Alonso was at this year's Goodwood Festival of Speed when he demonstrated a Valiant up the famous hillclimb, the first time the Spaniard had attended the event in two decades. "I didn't remember it properly!" he said after his first run.

"I did it 20 years ago, so when I arrived I wanted to go again. I need another run to explore its potential more." After being involved with its design and development, the double F1 champion was very complementary about the new car. "I think the final product is a piece of moving art."

Also in action over the weekend was a Valkyrie, Valour, Vantage and Victor. "The Festival of Speed is the highlight of the season for those who worship at the temple of speed," said Aston Martin's Marco Mattiacci. "We are proud to play a part in this incredible, annual celebration of speed and this year we are delighted to offer up quite the array of Aston Martin sports cars



PEBBLE BEACH WIN

The Aston Martin Bulldog has won the 'Wedge-Shaped Concept Cars & Prototypes' class at this year's Pebble Beach Concours d'Elegance held in mid-August.

"Winning best in class is a fantastic achievement," said Tim Griffin, managing director the Bridgenorth-based specialist, CMC, that recently restored the car, said. "This amazing car's journey and its win at the Pebble Beach concours is testament to the fantastic team at CMC and their dedication to the project."

The car's owner, American businessman, Philip Sarofim said, "I am ecstatic that the Aston Martin Bulldog has won its class at the toughest and most prestigious Concours on the

planet! It is a fitting testament to the hard work, diligence and incredible skill of the entire team at CMC and all those who have dedicated themselves to this inspirational project."

The Bulldog was designed by Aston Martin in the Seventies to be the fastest production car on the road, but it fell short of its 200mph goal and the project was cancelled.

When Sarofim acquired the Bulldog in 2019, he appointed Richard Gauntlett, son of former chairman and the driving force behind the car, Victor, to manage the restoration, choosing CMC to undertake it.

The restoration was completed in 2021 when the car was unveiled at the Hampton Court Concours of Elegance.



DBX707 AMR24



Aston Martin is once again celebrating its Formula One Team with the release of an exclusive AMR24 Edition of the DBX707. Named after the brand's Formula 1 challenger, the AMR24 Edition shares a racing identity with both the AMR24 F1 car and the Official Medical Car of Formula 1.

The DBX707 AMR24 Edition has the choice of Podium Green, Onyx Black or Neutron White paint, complimented by Aston Martin Racing Green or AMR Lime brake calipers and paired with the 23"

Fortis wheel in either satin or gloss black, as well as an exclusive AMR24 engine plaque.

With the addition of either Lime Green or Trophy Silver accents to the sculptured in either gloss black or carbon, reminiscent of those on both AMR24 F1 car and the Official Medical Car of Formula 1, the F1 connection between the road car and those on the track is underlined.

Inside the AMR24 Edition, the Inspire Sport trim is available in a choice of two colours: Onyx black (Monotone) with a striking Lime stitch and piping, or Onyx Black/Eifel Green Duotone with a lime contrast stitch. Finer details can be specified with extended carbon fibre and dark chrome jewellery or titanium mesh complimented by satin chrome. The Aston Martin logo is also applied in foil to the dash panel and AMR24 is etched into the door sills, leaving occupants

in no doubt of the Aston Martin racing bloodline. This identification is also supported by the application of a unique, lime hand-stitched saddle strap to the wireless charging station.

Said Marco Mattiacci, "Now with a technically advanced interior to match its class leading performance, the DBX707 AMR24 Edition is a stand-out ultra-luxury SUV with incredible road presence. Aston Martin are competing at the pinnacle of world motorsport, which represents a key pillar in our brand and product strategy for our road cars, and it's a real pleasure to offer this special edition in celebration of the Aston Martin Formula 1 Team."

The DBX707 AMR24 Edition is now available for customers to order.



VANTAGE GT3 WINS SPA 24-HOURS

The Vantage GT3 took overall victory in the 24 Hours of Spa, the world's most prestigious all-GT3 24 hour race which took place at Spa-Francorchamps, in Belgium, over 29-30 June weekend.

The win, claimed by Aston Martin partner team Comtoy Racing, and works drivers Mattia Drudi, Marco Sørensen and Nicki Thiim, was the first for the British sportscar brand since 1948 when St John Horsfall and Leslie Johnson won in a 2-Litre Sports.

A complicated night of racing, where torrential thunderstorms and multiple incidents neutralised the event for several hours, Comtoy

Racing remained composed and kept the car in touch with the leading fight, even as pitstops during the safety car periods forced 20-car swings in the race positions on occasion.

Each time, Comtoy Racing rebounded and raced back to the front so that as morning came and the track dried out, it found itself in a straight fight for victory with a rival Ferrari, two BMWs and the other Pro class Vantage GT3 of Walkenhorst Motorsport.

In the final hour of the race, the Comtoy Racing Aston Martin trailed the Ferrari by ten seconds, when its rival pitted and was held-up in the pitlane entry by a stranded car. This turn of events prevented



Ferrari with the chance to race for the win and denied the fans a grandstand finish as Drudi raced to the flag unopposed.

"To win with Nicki and Marco has been a fantastic experience," said Drudi. "This is such a tough race, but I would say we had the perfect

run, with no problems and a very good execution. I am very proud of everyone in the team."

The Walkenhorst Vantage GT3 came home fourth following a strong run for the team that saw it lead on several occasions.

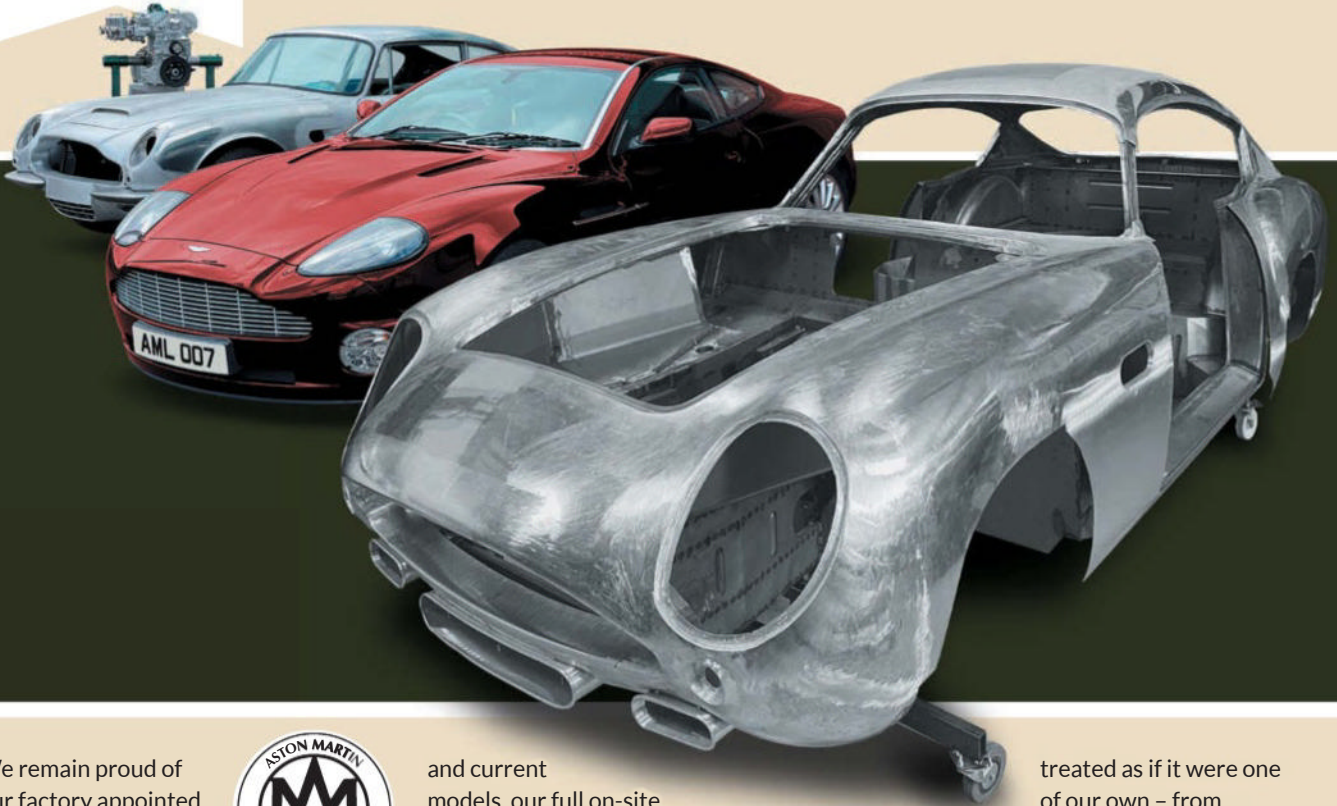


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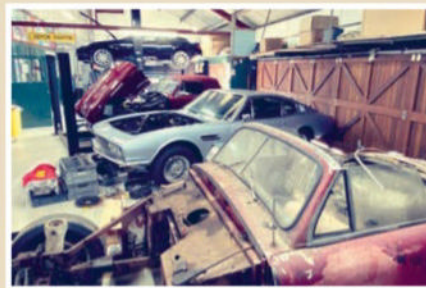


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Price: £29.99

Web: www.ringautomotive.com/en



VALOUR SCALE MODEL

German scale model manufacturer, Schuco, has produced a 1/43 version of the new Valour. Although at 10-12cm in length the model is tiny, it's also incredibly accurate showing the correct wheel design and even the winged badge on the nose.

Price: £69.99

Web: www.schuco.de/en





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Paul Walton
Editor

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GARRY TAYLOR

ASTON MARTIN STORIES FROM HOTEL DE FRANCE



ANYONE WITH any Aston Martin racing in their veins when they venture to Le Mans for the 24 hour race would almost certainly be aware of Hotel de France in La Chartre sur le Loir. Used as a base for the drivers in the Fifties and found by John Wyer the racing manger, the David Brown racing team would prepare the cars in the courtyard, allowing the drivers to rest in the hotel away from the circuit commotion. Well, I say rest; it usually involved late-night drinking and partying either to celebrate or drown sorrows.

Today, the hotel still retains its link with the marque, with period photos around the bar and restaurant. Aston Martin returned in 2013 as part of its centenary celebrations, and a few years later Prodrive recreated the tradition of driving the cars from the hotel to the circuit (see above). Some AMOC areas still make an annual pilgrimage to HdF (as it is affectionally known) often securing whole dining areas.

Presentations are still held on Aston Martin at HdF, including David Richards holding one which was a particular delight to attend. Another was presented by the much-missed Maitland Cook. He worked with John Wyer in the Sixties and his stories were often hilarious although I doubted their accuracy as the evening drank on....

Needless to say, it attracts many Aston Martin enthusiasts. One of those is Tim Butcher who owns Trinity Engineering, an Aston Martin specialist based in Surrey. Tim and I often meet at the hotel most recently in preparation for a forthcoming AMHT podcast when he

surprised me about his involvement in the little known Aston Martin Le Mans racer – the DB7 V8 GT1.

In 1995 a highly modified DB7 was fitted with a 6.3-litre ex-AMR1 V8 engine. Brought to existence by the team owner Michel Hommell with French expertise via Synergie, one of Tim's jobs was to get the car ready for Le Mans especially the engine. "I was bet £20 that the engine wouldn't start first time... and I won!"

Time was tight as the decision was only made in the previous

December and pre-qualifying was in the following April. "Initial testing proved the car needed a lot of work," Tim told me.

As an automatic entry was not guaranteed, pre-qualifying success was essential. "The car improved so much since the first test," he continued. "But sadly it wasn't fast

enough against the competition and became a runner up to be kept on a reserve list." It seems Hommell had enough and pulled the project so the DB7 V8 GT1 didn't progress any further. However, by waiting, it could have been so different as Tim said, "The teams above us withdrew, so with our reserve placing we could have entered in June". Makes you wonder what could have been.

More stories at HdF can only continue with Aston Martin at Le Mans with their various GT successes to date and in 2025 with the return fight for outright victory with the Valkyrie.

The hotel still retains its links with the marque

As well as being a lifelong advocate of the brand, Garry is currently a trustee of the Aston Martin Heritage Trust (www.amht.org.uk)

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PAUL WALTON

MISSING OPPORTUNITY



PHOTOGRAPHING THE 1963 Rapide for this issue was a reminder what a unique brand Lagonda has always been. Whereas some marques such as Aston Martin itself plus Ferrari and Lamborghini are all about speed while others, mainly Bentley, Lincoln and Rolls Royce, put luxury first, Lagonda has a very different persona.

Following its 1947 purchase by (Sir) David Brown and subsequent amalgamation with Aston Martin, Lagonda always produced highly original and distinctive cars resulting in the brand that still represents refinement, innovation and for never following any kind of trend. The extraordinary Rapide featured in this issue is a perfect example of this as is the William Towns designed Series 2 from 1976. It's why the brand continues to have such a loyal following despite the total number of examples produced since Brown's takeover standing at less than 1,700 (about half the daily production at Volkswagen's giant Wolfsburg Plant.)

This illustrates another of Lagonda's reputations, that of being the most underutilised marques in car manufacturing. Although the majority of its rivals such as Allard, Alvis and Armstrong Siddeley are dead in the water, with the company that owns the brand still having it in its name, Lagonda is very much alive and kicking.

And yet the last time it was used on a production car was almost a decade ago for the tiny volume Taraf (meaning "ultimate luxury" in Arabic). Although this is very much in keeping with Lagonda's recent history (as was its Series 2-inspired design) the 120 produced at

AML's Gaydon factory that were mainly destined for the Middle East did little to raise the brand's awareness. As *Autocar* said in its 2016 test of the Taraf, "This is a car that makes a Rolls-Royce Phantom or Bentley Mulsanne look positively mass-produced."

Personally, I think AML is missing a trick by leaving the Lagonda nameplate dormant. Not only is it one of the oldest British car brands with its origins going back to a company established in 1906 by an American-born businessman, William Gunn, to build motorcycles, but thanks to its reputation for uniqueness, any car today would

have a readymade market for those wanting something different from the norm such as an Audi, BMW or Mercedes-Benz for example.

This came close to happening in the late 2010s when AML announced a series of Lagonda-badged all-electric luxury vehicles, previewed by two concepts, the Vision (a large limousine) in 2018

that was followed a year later by the All-Terrain (a large SUV). The company initially said these and other models would reach production by 2022 but a subsequent shuffling of product priorities following Laurence Stroll's 2020 investment in the company meant this plan was scrapped earlier this year. Insiders reckon AML is still working on a new series of electric cars but they won't use the Lagonda name.

If the brand really is dead, then its reputation for producing unique if infrequent cars that were as different from each other as they were from everything else will never change. But leaving a name as famous and as inventive as Lagonda dormant will forever be a missed opportunity.

*AML is missing a
trick by leaving the
Lagonda nameplate
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ROB HAWKINS

INVESTMENT OPPORTUNITIES



HAVING WRITTEN the buying guide in this issue of AMD that covers Aston Martins from £25,000 to £250,000, it raises the questions as to whether now is the right time to buy such a car and if so, which one is the ideal investment?

I'm not one for gambling, so I'd rather buy something that I can afford to lose money on if its value drops by half or unforeseen repairs cost an arm and a leg. The trouble with this attitude is that you rarely make a noticeable or life changing profit from your investment. For example, buying a DB7 i6 for £25,000 and selling it in the future for 10 percent more would merely make me feel satisfied I haven't lost out. The extra £2,500 in my pocket would probably be used up on running costs.

If instead I buy a DB6 for £250k or more, then even if its value increases by ten percent, I've almost made an average annual salary for very little effort. On the flip side, I could lose more than an average annual salary in an engine rebuild for it or if it sells for less.

There's no easy answer unless you intend to buy something and wait. Anyone who recalls the classic car market crash at the end of the Eighties will probably also remember the pain and

suffering inflicted on DB5 owners who saw tens of thousands of pounds shaved off the value of their cars. It took nearly 30 years for those values to properly recover and become profitable.

Whilst another classic car market crash doesn't appear to be on the horizon (famous last words), the market does appear to have reached a peak following the repercussions of the Covid-19 pandemic and lockdowns where armchair auction bids went out of control. There are no bargain classics to be had at the moment, or are there?

***My money is with the
Aston Martins that
have seemingly hit rock
bottom in value***

My money is with the Aston Martins that have seemingly hit rock bottom in value. It's a pattern that repeats itself, and during the Seventies, the classis DB models such as the 4, 5 and 6 were cheap sports cars. The DBS had a similar experience and now it's the turn of the DB7 and possibly the DB9.

I can't predict whether the values of the DB7 and 9 are going to drop any further, but when problematic and tatty DB7s are being advertised for under £20k, can they get any cheaper? And more importantly, does that mean a well-maintained, low-mileage example for around £25,000 is worth snapping up? I think so. It will still need money throwing at it to keep it maintained to avoid common issues arising, but for this sort of budget, it's a lot more exciting than an ISA.

WHAT TO BUY FOR £25,000-£250,000



Which model of Aston Martin can you buy with a specific budget in mind? We have a few suggestions and outline which models to look for.

WORDS ROB HAWKINS

IMAGES PAUL WALTON & ASTON MARTIN



Choosing a car often comes down to a question of money and how much you are prepared to spend, but when it's a car you've always wanted or perhaps one that you're curious to own, it can feel like a bit of a gamble. And the potential for a major disappointment.

Based on a range of budgets, we've picked out particular models from Aston Martin to whet your appetite, even if it only enables you to dream. We've outlined their history and summarised some of the problems to look for. Aston Martin ownership is rarely cheap, but it can be incredibly rewarding if you choose wisely.



£25,000: DB9



The DB9 looks every inch a high-performance supercar, but if you have around £25k to spare, should you buy one?

Launched in 2004 and manufactured until 2016, the DB9 was available as a 2+2 coupe or open-top Volante. All models were powered by the Ford-developed 5,935cc naturally aspirated V12 petrol engine, with power outputs ranging from 443bhp to 540bhp (the DBR9 race car produces 600bhp), which was first used by Aston Martin in the DB7. Expect a 0-60mph time of less than five seconds, a top speed of 183-186mph and fuel consumption in the low to mid-twenties.

The V12 engine appears to be reliable if routinely serviced and if the oil level is regularly checked because they can consume it. Oil loss can be caused by a failed engine breather, such as one of the positive crankcase ventilation (PCV) valves, causing oil to drip out and stain the air filter and even find its way into the inlet manifold, resulting in an oily plume of

smoke on start-up. Should the problem not be addressed, and the engine runs dry and fails, then don't expect much change out of £18,000 for another engine and a week's work to swap it.

With a DB9 being one of the cheapest routes into AM ownership, choose wisely because the aforementioned engine swap can blow your budget. And whilst annual servicing costs should be under £1,000, a set of 12 spark plugs at 70,000 miles or every seven years costs the same again to have them fitted, new air filters every four years or 40,000 miles cost over £300 and a gearbox oil change at 40k is almost £500.

As a high-performance sports car, it's imperative that brake and suspension components are in good working order and tyres are all the same brand and in good condition. Rear springs and dampers on early models (not the later electronically controlled adaptive ones) cost around £1,200 per corner. At the





front, the wishbones cost £450-£500 each and a pair of discs and pads is over £800.

Make sure all six catalytic converters are fitted when viewing a vehicle to buy. It's illegal in the UK to have them removed and if replacement aftermarket cats have been fitted, they must be E-marked and carry an approval number.

If you are looking at a Volante, check the hood opens and closes in around 17 seconds and inspect the material for damage.

The DB9 is a very tempting entry to AM ownership, but if you find you need to scrape all your savings together to buy one, don't do it, because servicing and repair costs can easily total a four-figure sum. This is supercar territory, so it requires deep pockets for the upkeep.



ALTERNATIVE: **DB7**

The original Jaguar-powered DB7 is another entry-level Aston Martin that we recommend is worth looking at in this price bracket. Manufactured between 1994 and May 1999, roughly 3,000 of them were sold and most were the tin-top coupe, although there was also a soft-top Volante. Under the bonnet, a 3.2-litre supercharged straight-six engine gave this DB7 a sub-six seconds 0-60mph time and a top speed of 165mph.

Choose the best you can afford because repairs such as bodywork corrosion, engine failure and a complete brake or suspension overhaul can easily amount to thousands.



£50,000: Vanquish V12



Produced between 2001 and 2007 and initially costing £157k, the GT-styled V12-powered Vanquish is a supercar that's now available for the price of a brand-new mid-level electric vehicle. Sales only reached 2,588 for these hand-built high-performance machines that took around six weeks to assemble each one.

Using the same 5.9-litre Ford-derived V12 engine as the DB9, power outputs ranged from 460-520bhp, resulting in a 0-60mph time of around five seconds and a top speed of 190-200mph.

The James Bond association with the Vanquish has helped to promote these supercars, but not to the same extent as the DB5.

The 2+2 appears to be more popular than the two-seater, despite the rear seats being too small for adults. The Sports Dynamic Pack (SDP) was announced in 2003 and only 94 cars were made with it, which included upgrades to the brakes, steering and suspension, plus

lighter wheels. Most of these upgrades were included in the Vanquish S, along with 520bhp from the V12 instead of 460bhp – surprisingly, the Vanquish S is 0.1 seconds slower in the 0-60mph sprint due to changing the final drive ratio from 3.69:1 to 4.30:1 to help hit 200mph for its top speed.

All models have a Tremec T56 six-speed manual gearbox which has no gearlever. Instead, it uses a Magnetti Marelli electronically and hydraulically operated gearchange mechanism, with steering wheel-mounted paddles to change up and down the gears.

Check the operation of the paddles is smooth - earlier analogue gear position sensors are not as reliable as the later magnetic sensors, although later sensors can be fitted. There's no clutch pedal, so it's difficult to check the clutch operation (feel for judder on setting off), but note that if it needs replacing, the parts alone cost around £6,000 (V12Vanquish.com can re-

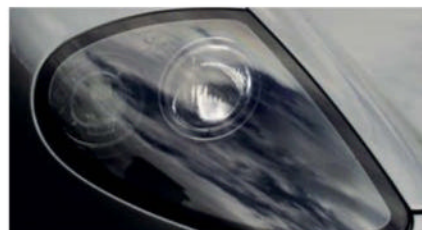




fibre-bonded body tub/structure. This is a complex structure and not particularly straightforward to repair.

Steel front and rear subframes are fitted, which are prone to corrosion. V12Vanquish.com offers a rebuild service for the front and rear subframes, which costs around £2,400 for each one, whereas a new one is roughly £7,500 and £5,000 respectively.

The Vanquish is, in many cases, a bargain supercar and offers value for money in the world of Aston Martin ownership, providing you are prepared to pay supercar-level prices for maintenance and repairs.



line an old clutch, subject to the condition of the flywheel, halving these costs) and the labour should be 12-14 hours.

Make sure the service records are up to date, which were originally set at every six months or 7,500 miles. Realistically, most of these cars will undergo an annual service, but check that nothing is forgotten, such as a brake fluid refresh every two years. And if the spark plugs have never been replaced, don't expect it to be a five-minute job. There are 12 of them and they cost around £500 for all the required parts along with a day's work to fit them.

The V12 engine has some common issues (see the previous section on the DB9) involving oil leaks. Also, look out for misfires that can be caused by ignition issues.

The Vanquish's bodywork consists of aluminium and composite materials, with composite front and rear crash structures and an aluminium and carbon

ALTERNATIVES: V8 VANTAGE S

Whilst the 2005-2017 V8 Vantage now sells for upwards of £20k, it's the 2011 onwards V8 Vantage S that is more appealing to our price range. It boasts a 4.7-litre V8 engine which produces 436bhp and achieves a top speed of 189mph.

With a bonded aluminium body tub, bodywork repairs can be expensive. The V8 engine has timing chains and is susceptible to oil leaks from around the timing chest or through blocked engine breathers. Check for traces of coolant leaks from the expansion tank and radiator.



£100,000: DBS



Aston Martin's American muscle car inspired four-seater fastback, the DBS, first appeared in 1967. Designed by William Towns, it was initially powered by AM's proven 3,995cc straight-six engine that had been used in the DB6, although a V8 was planned all along and finally fitted in 1970, after which the six-cylinder was axed two years later.

The straight-six produces around 282bhp in standard tune for the entry-level DBS, whereas the Vantage model boasts 325bhp due to a high compression ratio (9.4:1 instead of 8.9:1) and triple Weber carburettors instead of SUs.

Check the weep holes on the side of the engine block for oil, which can suggest a crack emerging in the engine block near the cylinder liners. This can only be fully checked once the cylinder head has been removed, and sometimes can be repaired with laser welding, although in some instances a new engine block is required. Other typical oil leaks include from where the engine and gearbox are mated, caused by a failed rear main oil seal, which is a scroll seal.

If an engine rebuild is required, budget for around £30k or more.

The DBS consists of a steel chassis with aluminium bodywork which, in

the case of the six-cylinder models, weighs in at around one and a half tons. Corrosion is the biggest problem here and a number of repair panels are available, but the work required to fit them can be time-consuming and expensive. Many problems can often be hidden.

A ZF five-speed manual gearbox and a Borg-Warner BW8 three-speed automatic were used in the straight-six DBS. Manual models appear to be rarer and more expensive to buy over autos. All models were equipped with a limited-slip differential (LSD), with a 3.54:1 final drive ratio for an automatic gearbox and 3.73:1 for a manual.

The ZF's layshaft can be a little rattly when neutral is selected and although it can be reduced, it's often difficult to eliminate it completely.

The suspension consists of coil springs all round with wishbones, telescopic dampers and an anti-roll bar at the front, whereas at the rear, there's a De Dion axle with a Watts linkage (four trailing/radius arms) and Armstrong Selectaride lever arm dampers. Listen for knocks and clonks during a test drive, which could be caused by worn bushes. In some cases, it may be better to overhaul a full set – budget for around £700 or more for a front set.

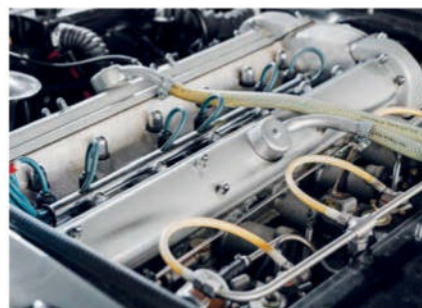




With servo-assisted disc brakes all round and a dual-circuit system, the brakes sound quite modern, but they are more time-consuming to maintain, especially the rears as they are inboard-mounted. If the fly-off handbrake doesn't work, don't assume it simply needs adjusting.

The vehicle electrics were originally installed with a positive earth system, but this may have been converted to negative earth. Remove the polished sill covers to check the wiring routed inside to see if it's brittle and broken.

The DBS is an iconic-looking Aston Martin that marked a change in the company's direction, helping to transform its image from sports car to supercar manufacturer.



ALTERNATIVES: **DB11**

Introduced in 2016 as a replacement for the DB9, the DB11 was in Aston Martin's words, "the most powerful, most efficient and most dynamically gifted DB model in Aston Martin's history." Under the aluminium exterior there was initially a front-mounted 5.2-litre twin-turbocharged V12 engine, although a 4.0-litre V8 arrived in 2017.

Whilst used DB11 prices start at around £50k, there's plenty to choose from up to our £100k budget, including the faster 630bhp AMR from 2018 onwards.



£150,000: DB2/4



Launched at the London Motor Show in 1953, the four-seater DB2/4 complemented the smaller two-seater DB2 that had first appeared a couple of years before. Not only did it offer seating in the rear, but it had a full-width windscreen instead of the split screen of the DB2, the rear screen was larger, and the roofline was higher at the rear to help accommodate rear seat passengers.

Available as a saloon or drophead coupe, 562 of these MkI versions of the DB2/4 were produced until, in late 1955, the MkII was launched with a higher roofline and more exterior chrome. The MkII was sold as a saloon, drophead coupe or fixedhead coupe (a drophead coupe with a roof), of which 199 cars were produced until the DB2/4 model was axed in August 1957.

The easiest way to tell whether you are looking at a MkI or MkII DB2/4 is by its aluminium bonnet. If the bonnet incorporates the entire front wings, it's a

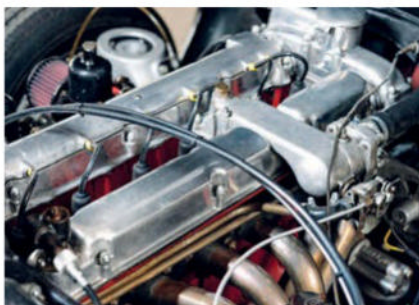
MkI. If the lower half of the front wing (rear section) is left attached to the chassis when raising the bonnet, then it's a MkII.

The MkI DB2/4 was initially powered by the Lagonda-derived 2,580cc straight-six double-overhead camshaft cast iron engine in Vantage specification. Autocar tested one in October 1953 achieving a 0-60mph time of 12.6 seconds and a top speed of 120mph.

In 1954, the DB2/4 engine's capacity was increased to 2,922cc, resulting in 140bhp at the flywheel. Motor magazine, in its August 1954 issue, measured a 0-60mph time of 10.5 seconds with a top speed of 120mph.

When the MkII DB2/4 arrived, the 140bhp 2,922cc engine was retained, although there was an optional Special Series engine with 165bhp, courtesy of





high-lift camshafts and larger valves. Additional performance options included replacing the SU carbs for Webers, raising the engine's compression ratio, adding an oil cooler and fitting twin exhausts.

Look for evidence of overheating, which can result in head gasket failure, but could

be caused by incorrect positioning of the cylinder liners. Check also for oil leaks, which can be caused by hardened or failed seals at the front and rear. Listen for top-end rattles, often due to incorrect valve clearances, which are a specialist job to adjust, although a popular upgrade is to convert to shims.

Parts are available to rebuild these engines, but don't expect much change out of £20,000 for the parts and machine work, and at least 100 hours of labour.

David Brown's four-speed manual gearbox was fitted to the DB2/4. Parts availability is scarce, so make sure it's in good working order, but remember there's no synchro in first gear. Look around it for oil leaks. Check the operation of the clutch – a replacement costs a little over £1,000.

Despite having aluminium bodywork, sills and A- and B-posts, it's all bolted to a steel chassis (and there's a steel framework inside each door), so corrosion is a potential problem. The steelwork can be inspected from inside the engine bay and underneath the vehicle.

The suspension is complicated, so ensure it's in good condition, whereas the brakes are drums all round with limited or expensive parts.

The price of a DB2/4 generally starts upwards of £150,000-£200,000, so our price range is very much a starting point.



ALTERNATIVES: V8 VOLANTE

The evolution of the DBS and its claim to fame as the world's fastest four-seater saloon in its V8 Vantage specification, resulted in the return to a ragtop in 1978 with the V8 Volante. This became known as the fastest four-seater open-top in the world, boasting a top speed in excess of 140mph and 0-60mph time of 7.7 seconds – all from a 5,340cc all-aluminium V8 mated to a Chrysler Torqueflite three-speed automatic gearbox (ZF five-speed manual was optional).

Examples from the 70s and 80s are within our price range and represent Aston Martin when it was at the top of the supercar league.



£250,000: DB6



To many the DB6 is the ultimate Aston Martin, and our price bracket is, in most cases, a starting point, so don't expect to find a 325bhp Vantage, a soft-top Volante or a rare Shooting Brake for this sort of money. Despite restoration projects occasionally appearing, on the whole, we'd recommend looking for a saloon, of which 1,567 of them were sold.

With a short production life from 1966 to 1969 for the MkI DB6 and a shorter run for the MkII that was initially going to be called the DB7, it was all over by November 1970, although sales continued into 1971.

The construction of the DB6 consists of a substantial steel chassis incorporating sills, bulkheads and floors, with aluminium bodywork laid over the top of it. The complicated assembly of the car means that if extensive corrosion of the steelwork exists, such as the sills are full of holes or the boot has excessive ventilation, then any repair that requires removal of the bodywork can result in a major restoration.

Fortunately, some areas of the DB6 can be repaired without undergoing major surgery, such as replacing the jacking points, but always be cautious with corrosion because you may not be able to see all of it. Trapped water around the rear wheelarches may result in superficial surface corrosion, but the aluminium exterior is rolled around a steel wire here,

which can corrode, not to mention further inside where there are steel inner arches.

Inspect all suspension and steering mounting points, many of which are attached to the steel chassis, as they can corrode and bushes can wear, resulting in handling issues.

Be cautious with missing or damaged exterior trim because very little of it is





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BUYING GUIDE

£25K-£250K ASTON MARTINS



cheap to buy. A chrome numberplate surround costs around £600, for example, whereas a chrome front bumper is over £3,000 and takes a long day to fit it, and a missing or damaged front grille will cost nearly £2,000 to replace. The same advice applies to the interior, which can cost a small fortune.

The DB6's engine is a 3,995cc straight-six, which for the entry-level saloon, produces 282bhp at the flywheel, hits 60mph from stationary in a mere 6.1 seconds and goes on to reach a top speed of 148mph. Routine maintenance is essential, with annual oil changes (or at least every 2,500 miles), coolant changes every two years regardless of mileage (overheating is an issue due to neglectful maintenance) and timing chain replacement every 60k.

Fuelling should be courtesy of three SU carburettors, although the Vantage was equipped with Webers and 46 of the MkII models received an AE Brico fuel injection system, which proved to be unreliable.

The ZF five-speed gearbox was the most popular transmission for the DB6, with a three-speed Borg-Warner automatic being an option. Look for oil leaks, including around the rear axle (sometimes caused by a blocked breather), and listen for excessive noise and crunchy gearchanges.

What many people consider to be the ultimate Aston Martin can turn into a financial nightmare that's a disappointment to own and drive, but choose wisely and you will be living the dream.



ALTERNATIVES: **DB7 ZAGATO**

This is no ordinary DB7, having been designed by the Italian coachbuilder and constructed from steel and aluminium – a mere 99 were made between 2003 and 2004. From the rounded front end and large front grille across to the Zagato-style double-bubble roofline and sculptured rear window, the DB7 Zagato looks nothing like a standard DB7. Not only is the body styling different, but also the wheels and interior, although the engine is from the GT (5,935cc V12) and the transmission is either a six-speed manual or an optional five-speed auto.

If you want the ultimate DB7, then it will cost over ten times as much as the mass-produced version.



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UK AUCTION MARKET REVIEW

A DETAILED LOOK AT THE UK ASTON MARTIN AUCTION MARKET FROM THE LAST 12 MONTHS

WORDS PETER LAVERS

WELCOME TO this new feature for the magazine. Some readers will be aware of Aston Martin Driver's sister title, Rolls-Royce and Bentley Driver, for which I write a regular Auction Tracker column. AMD's editor has asked me to conduct a similar review of the classic car auction scene in the UK for post-war Aston Martin models. In doing so, my aim is to track the big picture of market trends whilst also digging in to more detail about the highest volume model ranges sold and highlighting some individual results that illustrate the trends.



THE UK AUCTION DATABASE

I have built a database of Aston Martins sold by physical and major online UK classic car auctions going back to the start of 2022. I cannot track all cars offered for sale as the online sites only display the records for sold cars, which means that I cannot report on sales rates. Furthermore, in discussion with the editor, I have not included:

- Pre-war cars since they so rarely come up for auction
- DB11 and current models since these are effectively still in the used car market rather than on the classic scene



	Total market			Physical auctions			Online auctions		
	Jul 23-Jun 24	vs. 2023	vs. 2022	Jul 23-Jun 24	vs. 2023	vs. 2022	Jul 23-Jun 24	vs. 2023	vs. 2022
Cars Sold	321	-6.4%	14.2%	126	0.0%	28.6%	195	-10.1%	6.6%
Total Value of Sales	£22,980,579	-8.7%	3.9%	£12,643,259	-2.2%	9.9%	£10,337,320	-15.7%	-2.7%
Ave. Price Achieved	£71,591	-2.5%	-9.1%	£100,343	-2.2%	-14.5%	£53,012	-6.1%	-8.7%

	Non-project market		
	Jul 23-Jun 24	vs. 2023	vs. 2022
Cars Sold	273	-2.5%	20.8%
Total Value	£19,315,388	-3.0%	12.2%
Average £	£70,752	-0.5%	-7.1%



● Cars sold by small or emerging online sites (e.g. Evoke auctions) which have only sold one Aston Martin since they started. I will keep an eye on such new entrants and include them if they become players

● Cars sold via eBay auctions, which are few in number and value, and cannot be tracked back for more than a few months. If you wish to buy or sell via eBay then expect values towards the bottom of the figures quoted for each model range

The primary purpose of the analysis is as a market tracker rather than to give individual car valuations. The values achieved vary considerably even within model ranges, with numerous factors determining value e.g. condition, rarity, provenance, mileage, originality, documentation, recent expenditure, special edition, etc. I therefore calculate and log the high, low and average (physical and online) values overall and by range.

I have included and separately categorised cars that are described as “projects”, “in need of recommissioning” or “barn finds”, but not those offered as “for spares”. This is of great significance to Aston Martins sold in recent years. Most readers will be aware of the numerous cars sold at no reserve through Bonhams from a private Middle Eastern collection that had been on static display for many years and thus in need of recommissioning. In the tables I have included these in the “project” category as they can skew model range figures dramatically.

The trends are tracked on a 12-month rolling basis, moved on every six months. This means that we are always looking at whole 12-month cohorts, which eliminates seasonal factors. This article compares the latest 12-month period (1 July 2023 to the end of June 2024) with calendar years 2023 and 2022.

BIG PICTURE

So, how is the UK market doing? We hear a lot of doom and gloom about the market being ‘soft’, and indeed both volume and value have slipped back somewhat in 2024 from a high in 2023.

However, the latest totals are higher than 12 months ago (July 22 – June 23), with over 300 sales at a total auction

MARKET TRENDS

AUCTION REVIEW

	Number sold			Average £		
	Jul 23-Jun 24	vs. 2023	vs. 2022	Jul 23-Jun 24	vs. 2023	vs. 2022
Bonhams (Physical & Online)	102	-19.0%	1.0%	£100,856	2.7%	-3.8%
CollectingCars	87	8.7%	17.6%	£64,223	-4.7%	-13.7%
CarandClassic	47	-2.1%	20.5%	£33,216	-12.8%	-35.2%
Historics	19	-13.6%	26.7%	£63,946	-33.7%	36.5%
H&H	9	28.6%	12.5%	£37,942	45.7%	-66.3%

market value of c. £23m. These figures underline the importance of Aston Martin to the wider classic car sector. Online sales are taking the bulk of the volume, but physical sales are holding up and have much higher average values:

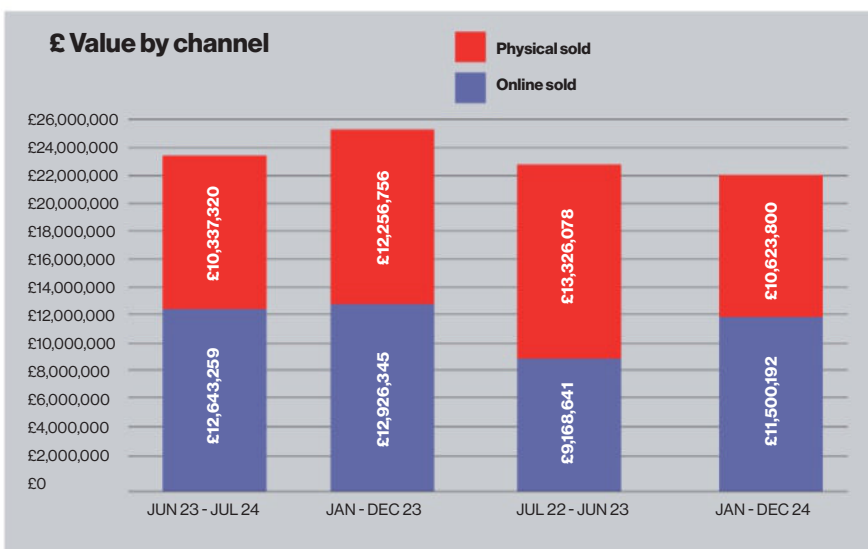
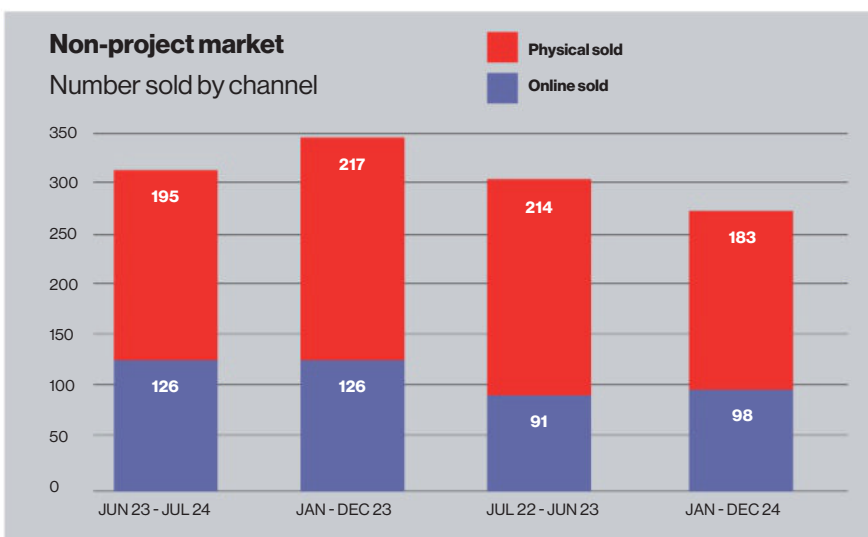
The fall in sales looks dramatic vs. only six months ago, at -6.4 percent on volume and -8.7 percent on value, but when we dig into the figures we see that much of this decline is due the aforementioned 'bubble' of Bonhams' private Middle Eastern collection sales – when "project" cars are excluded, we see that the market is only down by -2.5 percent and -3 percent respectively, and significantly up vs 2022.

The top five auction houses account for a colossal 82 percent of the cars sold:

Bonhams, with its established physical auctions and online site (ex-The Market), are the leading player in volume and average sale value despite the effect of the running out of the private Middle Eastern collection, which has resulted in a near-20 percent volume decline in six months. It will be interesting to see if they can hold this position once this 'bubble' has fully dispersed.

CollectingCars – a relative newcomer – has grown fast since 2022 and has the second highest average value of sales (despite slipping somewhat as numbers increased). The other major online-only player – CarandClassic – comes in third with the lowest average sales value of the top five, suggesting that they are losing out at the upper end to the top two. It is very interesting to note the average year of cars sold through these top three houses. CollectingCars sells by far the newest vehicles (average 2007); CarandClassic's average year of car sold is 1998, and Bonhams is 1985 – three very different eras.

A couple of well-established classic car auction houses complete the top





five – Historics and H&H, with Historics achieving higher average values (but beware – the smaller numbers involved have led to big swings in the data).

Other players of note are RM Sotheby's at the premium end of the market, and Mathewsons, CCA and Iconic at the mainstream end. It will be interesting to see how the battle unfolds between these players, as currently only double-figure sales are required to get into the top five. I hope this is useful information if you are considering selling by auction.

	Highest £	Average £			Lowest £	Physical Auction Average £				Online Auction Average £		
	Jul 23-Jun 24	Jul 23-Jun 24	vs. 2023	vs. 2022	Jul 23-Jun 24	Jul 23-Jun 24	vs. 2023	vs. 2022	Jul 23-Jun 24	vs. 2023	vs. 2022	
Total Market	£625,400	£71,591	-2.5%	-9.1%	£6,776	£100,343	-2.2%	-14.5%	£53,012	-6.1%	-8.7%	
Models												
DB9, DBS, Virage & Vanquish	£97,750	£41,261	-9.2%	-11.0%	£16,500	£46,211	-13.1%	2.5%	£40,096	-8.6%	-14.3%	
V8 & V12 Vantage	£79,277	£38,835	-5.6%	-17.5%	£21,000	£40,040	-2.9%	14.7%	£38,318	-6.8%	-19.8%	
Rapide & S	£32,500	£27,849			£23,000	£28,523			£26,500			
Cygnets	£31,250	£25,417			£23,750	-			£25,417			
Vanquish & S	£154,000	£73,535	11.3%	20.5%	£34,000	£91,669	5.8%	40.6%	£60,841	7.7%	3.3%	
DB7	£38,500	£18,507	-8.9%	-23.2%	£7,202	£15,851	-5.7%	-34.6%	£20,177	-10.0%	-16.1%	
V8 - DB9 Coachbuilt	£312,000	£271,084			£141,503	£287,500			£267,801			
Virage, V8 Coupe & Vantage	£174,800	£60,734	2.0%	-6.1%	£22,250	£79,255	-20.7%	-10.8%	£52,185	20.2%	1.7%	
V8 & V8 Vantage	£356,500	£153,930	18.6%	30.6%	£44,382	£202,367	23.1%	10.7%	£94,729	31.0%	27.2%	
Aston Martin Lagonda	£75,000	£71,667			£70,000	£70,000			£72,500			
DBS6 & AM Vantage	£77,280	£64,291			£46,592	£73,140			£46,592			
DB6	£253,000	£199,417			£155,000	£206,819			£155,000			
DB5	£625,400	£500,800			£432,500	£528,950			£472,650			
DB4	£325,000	£264,600			£230,000	£268,125			£250,501			
DB4-6 Coachbuilt	£550,000	£550,000			£550,000	£550,000			-			
DB1-3	£115,000	£101,764			£87,916	£104,917			£95,458			
40's - 60's Lagondas	-	-			-	-			-			
Projects	£342,500	£76,358	-8.8%	-14.5%	£6,776	£101,332	-10.6%	-8.7%	£41,395	-31.0%	-40.8%	

MARKET TRENDS

AUCTION REVIEW

To bring the numbers to life, below are a few examples of sales from the first six months of 2024.

January		
2008 DBS, CollectingCars, £60k	1996 Virage Volante, ACA, £53k	1987 V8 S, Bonhams Online, £72k
February		
1955 DB2/4, Mathewsons, £88k	2016 V12 Vantage, Manor Park, £61k	1990 Lagonda, CarandClassic, £75k
March		
1996 DB7, CollectingCars, £20k	2010 Rapide, Historics, £32.5k	1971 DBS V8 project, Bonhams Online, £42.5k
April		
1970 DB6, Bonhams, £209k	2017 Vanquish Volante Zagato, CollectingCars, £298.5k	2011 Cygnet, CollectingCars, £24.5k
May		
2007 Vantage, Historics, £39k	1960 DB4, CollectingCars, £250.5k	2014 DB9 Volante, CollectingCars, £57k
June		
2005 DB9, CollectingCars, £34k	1964 DB5, RM Sotheby's, £432.5k	2003 DB7 GT, Bonhams Online, £38.5k

MODEL RANGES

In my analysis I have identified 17 different model ranges, plus a 'project' category as previously described. I have ordered them by recency, starting with the DB9 generation models (including the 2007-2012 DBS, 2011-2012 Virage and 2012-2018 Vanquish variants) and concluding with the immediate post-war DBs and Lagondas.

This categorisation is required to generate enough data for analysis and trending purposes but even then, there isn't enough data to generate stable figures for every range. For this article's purposes I have made the cut-off 10 vehicles sold in the last 12 months, which means that only six of the 17 ranges can show trends. However, the high, low and average values of all ranges are shown and are useful indicators of what the current market is achieving. Hopefully more cars will come up for auction in the coming months to allow trends to be shown...

The table on the previous page offers a fascinating array of results and trends. How is it that Cygnets are fetching similar prices to Rapides?

It's worth noting the differences in value between the physical and online auctions – overall physical auctions command higher values, but not for every model range, e.g. DB7, which is attracting higher values online. Again, worth taking note if you are a potential seller.

The model range with the highest



volume of sales at auction is the DB9 generation (2004-2018), with 63 sold in the last 12 months. More have been sold, but at a lower average value in both channels vs. 2023.

Its predecessor, the DB7 range (1993-2003), is the next most popular car sold at auction (57), but with values similarly slipping vs 2023 and 2022. This model is clearly the entry point to Aston Martin ownership, and it appears that there are some real bargains out there. Do let us know if you have bought one!

Coming third by volumes sold is the V8/V12 Vantage range (2005-2018), with

50 sold but also with declining average values.

On a more positive note, the other model ranges with sufficient data to show trends have all increased in average sale value. V8s (69-89) have performed strongly (average values up 30 percent vs. 2022), and the Vanquish range (2001-2007) is similarly up 20 percent. I'm also happy to report that the Virage range (1989-2000) is holding steady in values.

This just leaves the project cars, which are down in volume and value as can be expected as the sale of that unique collection runs its course in the figures.

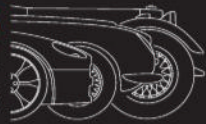
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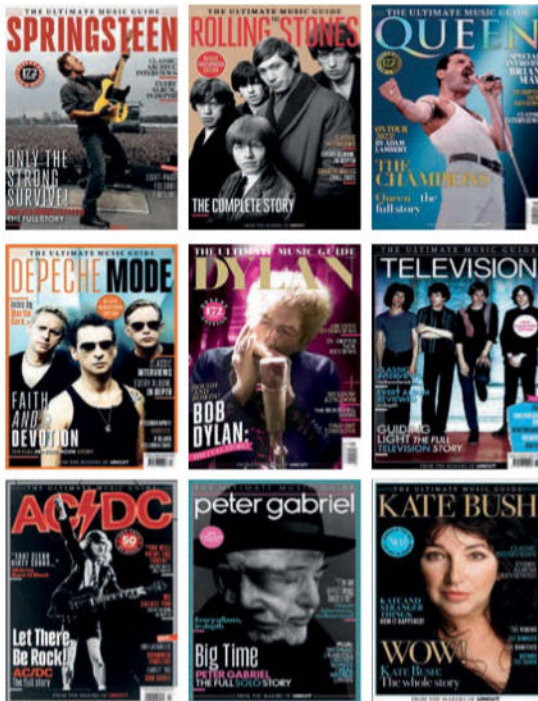
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HISTORY

25 YEARS OF THE DB7 VANTAGE



POWER OF 12

WORDS & PHOTOGRAPHY PAUL WALTON



As the first production Aston Martin to be powered by the 5.9-litre V12, the DB7 Vantage is an important moment in the company's recent history. To mark the car's 25th anniversary we take a look at its history before driving a very early example

HISTORY

25 YEARS OF THE DB7 VANTAGE

ALTHOUGH THE DB7 made its debut the year Manchester United won its first Premiership title in 1993, by the time the team took its fifth just six years later, the car was already considered by many as old-fashioned. Due to using an ancient Jaguar-sourced straight-six engine and an even older chassis that, although undeniably pretty, by the end of the decade mechanically at least the car hadn't aged well especially for its eye-watering £80k-plus price tag. With Aston Martin not yet in a position to replace it, what the model needed was a major update, a shot in the arm that would keep it relevant for a few more years.

One of the biggest issues was the 3.2-litre engine. Despite being supercharged, with its origins lay in Jaguar's AJ6 that debuted in 1983, by the

mid-Nineties it was a long way behind the competitions' newer and more powerful units such as BMW's M62 V8 and the Jaguar AJV8. "The six-cylinder engine was just not special enough," admitted the company's then chairman, Bob Dover, in David Dowsey's 2007 book, *Aston Martin: Power, Beauty & Soul*. "We needed more power and more torque."

Aston Martin originally considered giving the DB7 its existing 5.3-litre V8, even building one racing and one customer car which both offered outstanding performance. But due to ever tightening emission controls, the engine's days were numbered meaning the company needed to look elsewhere for a longer term solution.

The answer lay with Aston Martin's parent company and a V12 that had started life as an out of hours experimental project





by Ford's engineers in Dearborn that was effectively two 3.0-litre Duratec V6s placed end-to-end. The result was a reasonably light but powerful 5,935cc unit. Although it shared the same pistons, rings, conrods, valves, valve seats, valve springs and spring retainers as the V6, the crank, camshafts and cylinder heads were all new. To ensure reliability, the main bearings also came from Ford's Romeo V8. A very different design to the V6, the V12's crankcase extended well below the crank centreline while the main bearing caps were cross-bolted for strength meaning the V12's block was much stiffer than that of the Duratec 3.0-litre. Other changes over the V6 included an increased coolant capacity, a new water pump plus internal coolant passages.

The first prototypes were dyno tested in September 1995, a mere 18 months after ►

The answer lay with Aston Martin's parent company and a V12 that has started life as an out of hours experimental project



HISTORY

25 YEARS OF THE DB7 VANTAGE

the project had begun. It was originally expected the engine would be used for the Lagonda Vignale saloon that had made its debut in prototype form alongside the DB7 at the 1993 Geneva Motor Show. When this project was later dropped, the engine was first used in the Ford Indigo concept at the 1996 Detroit Motor Show that physically took inspiration for both Formula 1 and Indy cars.

Knowing the V12 would be perfect for Aston Martin's future, Bob Dover convinced Ford not long after he arrived as chairman to hand the engine over to the British marque. It agreed and in 1997 a deal was struck with Cosworth for the British engineering company (also owned by Ford) to build the engine for future production cars. It was next seen in the 1998 Project Vantage concept which in 2001 became the Vanquish.

The first production car it would be seen in was the DB7 for which the engine was reworked by Cosworth and the block enlarged resulting in 420bhp and 400lb ft torque. With the lacklustre wheezy sound made by the straight six always criticised, Aston Martin's engineers worked hard to create an engine suitable for a V12. "The engine has a purposeful sound," said the DB7's project manager, Dave King, in the 10 March, 1999, issue of *Autocar*, "and we think it's recognisable as a V12. We think the market is going to like it."

Whereas the later V12-engined Vanquish had a semi-automatic transmission operated by a hydraulic system by Magnetti Marelli, the gearbox choices for the DB7 Vantage were much more traditional. These were either a six-speed manual gearbox by Tremec or the familiar five-speed automatic from ZF.

Although according to the specification, no changes had been made to the basic design of the suspension, it had been seriously upgraded for the V12 model. The front coil-sprung double wishbone had different dimensions to reduce the front wheels' scrub radius and accommodate the huge 355mm diameter ventilated and cross drilled brake discs. At the rear was a coil sprung independent set-up with a huge lower link and the half shaft acting as the top link in traditional jaguar style. A cross-shaped cage below the diff was also added to control axle tramp and under full power



and braking while not disturbing overall refinement. The spring rates were 15 to 20 percent stiffer than those of the straight six model while the steering was sharpened from 2.7 to 2.5 turns lock to lock. "We think this and the suspension changes give the car a precise, purposeful feel it needs in its role as a GT with supercar performance," continued King in *Autocar*.





The car might have looked roughly the same as the 3.2-litre model, but it was still given a subtle but successful facelift by the man who had originally designed the DB7. "When the decision was made to build the DB7 V12," said Ian Callum, in *Autocar*, "there was some discussion over whether it should change its shape at all. I was a bit unsure about changing it, because naturally enough I'd tried to make the original design as close to perfect as I could."

However, the Scot went on to say when he realised it was going to be faster, more aggressive and more expensive than the 3.2 plus the the air intakes had to be larger due to the V12 he knew it needed to be updated. "Once you understand a car's altered function, you can see what needs doing."

To keep the V12 cool, a larger grille was required although the only way to achieve this was by combining the front fog lights and indicators resulting in two large units on either side which Callum said the inspiration came from the DBR1 sports car racers of the Fifties. "I'm pretty pleased how those worked out," he said. To make the car look closer to the ground, deeper side skirts were added while the bottom of the front balance now formed a deep skirt that lined up with the new sill covers.

Although the body design remained largely the same, the installation of the V12 gave Aston Martin's engineers the opportunity to stiffen the structure along with the transmission tunnel to improve torsional rigidity by around five percent. This particularly suited the Volante version which suffered from less scuttle shake as a result. Although it took just two years to develop the Vantage, its testing regime

was still harder than any previous Aston Martin. During 1998, prototypes covered more than half a million miles in Europe and North America, in temperatures ranging from -30 C to 45 C (-22 F to 113 F). Part of this consisted of 48 hours of non-stop running at 165mph during the summer. Together with being driven through mud and salt baths, over potholed and corrugated surfaces plus fierce braking and acceleration tests, it was proof Ford was committed to improving the British company's previously shaky built quality.

Obviously a car as updated this one needed a different name and so to differentiate it from the original Aston Martin gave the V12 model its famous Vantage moniker which since 1950 had usually (but not always) differentiated the faster models from standard versions.

The DB7 Vantage made its debut at the 1999 Geneva Motor Show in March when it was shown alongside another new model, the limited edition Vantage Le Mans. "We unveiled the DB7 V12 which was the first time anyone had seen it," said Dover in *Aston Martin: Power, Beauty & Soul*. "A V12 engine was actually sitting in a lake in the corner of the stand covered in a silk cloth. The idea was that the silk seemed to disappear down a tube, which was actually sitting in the lake and pulled through by guys with a winch out of sight. That was a spectacular day."

Although Aston Martin planned to produce the six and 12 cylinder models side-by-side, at £92,500, the Vantage cost a mere £8k more than the 3.2 meaning when it went on sale later the same year, the V12 model quickly accounted for almost 90 percent of all DB7 sales. As a result, the straight six was quickly



HISTORY

25 YEARS OF THE DB7 VANTAGE



forced out of production at Aston Martin's Bloxham-based facility although it remained on the company's price list until 2000.

As a handsome, powerful and relatively contemporary car, it went down well with the critics. "The DB7 Vantage is a landmark model in the company's history," was *Autocar's* verdict in its 23 June, 1999, issue. "It is one of the best cars Aston has ever produced and it shows that there is a bright future for the company."

It wasn't wrong. Thanks to the refined power of the V12, the DB7 Vantage laid down the foundations for Aston Martin's future models, the GT model especially that arrived in 2004 and offered even firmer suspension and a 15bhp increase of power (manual version only). This makes it a very important car in Aston Martin's long history, arguably up there with other landmark models including the DB4, DBS V8 and Vanquish.

Currently for sale at the County Durham specialist, Aston Workshop, the car featured here represents the start of that importance. Built in early 1999, chassis number 23 is thought to be the 13th production model and the first to be delivered to a customer in July the same year. Its colour combination of Derwent Green with Forrest Saddle Tan is also thought to be unique meaning it was probably built specifically for a customer rather than just stock. Together with the premium sound system, sports steering wheel and heated front screen

it also has the optional 18in Dymag five spoke magnesium wheels. An expensive aftermarket fit for the DB7 Vantage through Aston Martin's dealers, they're incredibly rare and this is the first example I've seen with them. They are covered in tiny blemishes, which Aston Workshop says is the result of a poor restoration earlier in the car's life but they will be repaired properly before the car is sold.

Together with the bigger grille and extended side skirts, the wheels help make the usually feminine DB7 appear much more aggressive, more like a high performance supercar than the 3.2-litre model. Yet with its always svelte lines and perfect proportions, it might still use too many outsourced parts for a thoroughbred

including the Mazda rear lights and door handles, but I still reckon the DB7 Vantage is one of the best looking cars ever designed and produced in this country. Hard to understand, then, why the Vantage remains such great value with average price for a Coupe like this one still at around 30 grand.

Other than a bright red starter button located in the centre console, the design of the DB7's interior was left largely alone for the Vantage which included the same use of Ford-sourced switchgear as the original. But with new, classier-looking dials plus thicker, richer, and shinier veneer, it feels of a far better quality than the earlier 3.2-litre model and less like a top of the range Mondeo. ►



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HISTORY

25 YEARS OF THE DB7 VANTAGE



With an empty road ahead of me, I give the pedal a proper squeeze, the big engine reacting the moment I do so. With 420bhp at 6000rpm, the car accelerates with an eagerness and urgency missing from the asthmatic straight six, its power much more accessible than the 3.2's which always needs to be worked hard to get best from it. Although 60mph is reached in a little over five seconds, the V12's real party piece is its terrific mid-range pull; nailing the throttle at around 50mph results in seriously rapid progress that belies the 25 years of this example, giving it ability to pick off slower cars like a fighter jet would a passenger plane.

Dave King was right all those years ago since the V12 sounds fantastic under power, a distinctive baritone wail yet one that's never as intrusive or as loud as those

of current sports cars sometimes can be.

With plenty of grip, even the ancient chassis that started life with the Jaguar XJ-S in 1975 can keep up with the extra power of the 5.9-litre V12, always remaining surprisingly composed through corners. The only issue I have with the car's handling is the relatively slow steering that lacks the responsiveness and accuracy of its rivals from Ferrari and Porsche for example.

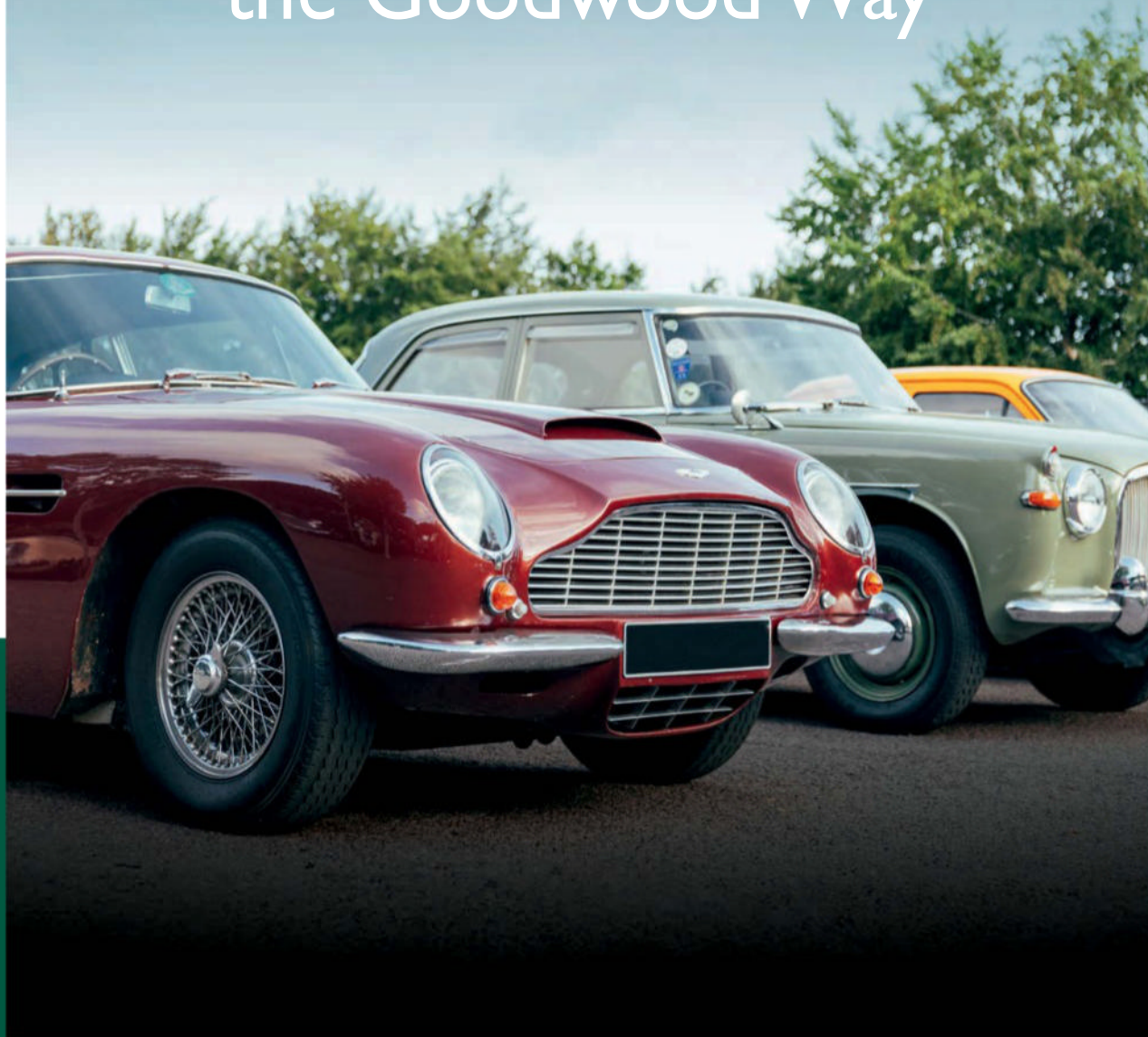
Yet despite its sports car intentions, at its heart the Vantage remains a grand tourer, happy to sit at triple figure speeds on European motorways. It might have stiffer springs than the straight six model but the ride is still supple enough to seamlessly iron out all imperfections in the road, the strengthening around the gearbox tunnel and revised wishbone and links imbuing the Vantage with an excellent straight line

stability. As mentioned earlier, in terms of its speed, refinement and looks, the DB7 Vantage set the tone for all future models that either used the same engine or the 5.2-litre turbocharged version. From its 2004 replacement, the DB9, to the Rapide AMR and new Valour that both feature in this issue, it can be argued that every V12-engined Aston Martin is directly linked to the DB7 Vantage making it a very influential model.

The original DB7 might have become old-fashioned before the Nineties were over, but a quarter of a century on from its debut, the Vantage remains as desirable and contemporary as it ever was. **AMD**

● **Thanks to: Aston Workshop for the early DB7 Vantage featured here. For further information, head to www.aston.co.uk**

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WORDS & PHOTOGRAPHY PAUL WALTON

FAMILY AFFAIR

As two-door coupes built at a time when Ford owned both companies, the Jaguar XK8 and Aston Martin DB7 Vantage have much in common. But with one being a high volume model powered by a V8 and the other produced in smaller numbers with a V12, they were also very different cars. So which of these sports cars do we prefer?



ON THE day I travelled to Aston Workshop in County Durham to photograph the DB7 Vantage for the feature you've just read, I happened to be in my own 2000 Jaguar XK8. Although its 4.0-litre V8 has 130bhp less than the Aston Martin V12, with the two cars coming from British manufacturers that were owned by Ford at the time and both having new engines that would become the backbone for future models, they actually have much in common. They even look similar. So which of these handsome coupes do I prefer?

Although I've owned my car since 2015 and genuinely love it, even I have to admit it's not quite as pretty as the DB7 Vantage. In my view, the boot line is too long and the grille too low. It's also much more feminine than the aggressive Vantage although a supercharged XKR with its 20in wheels and subtle body kit would change this.

If there's one area where Jaguar is better it's the interior. Using fewer obviously outsourced parts and dominated by a Spitfire wing-shaped dash that's covered in a rich seam of thick veneer, it looks more

coherent than the DB7's messy cabin, less like it was designed on a tight budget. But as anyone who drives a 996-generation of Porsche 911 or E63 BMW 6-Series will tell you, that expanse of wood is very traditional by the standards of the day making the car look more old-fashioned than it is. But it is supremely comfortable, though, the front seats being good enough to grace a living room.

When my car was new in 2000, it cost £50k with the XKR ten grand more, 40 and 30 grand less respectively than a DB7 Vantage. Yet as I sit in the Jaguar's driver's seat, surrounded by the soft leather and shiny veneer, and look at unique switchgear, I find it hard to understand why Aston Martin reckoned the DB7 was always worth so much more.

I think this again when the V8 fires with a deep, menacing growl. Arriving in 1996 with the XK8, the 4.0-litre was an all-new unit, chosen due its compact size compared with a straight-six or V12 yet still having the ability to produce plenty of power.

However, after I ease the gear lever down into drive and gently squeeze the throttle, it's immediately clear that with

290bhp, the big Jaguar has much less pull than the 420bhp Aston Martin. With the V8's power not quite as accessible as the Vantage's, the throttle needs to be worked harder for the five-speed ZF automatic transmission to finally kick down, but when it does, the acceleration is surprisingly swift. But by reaching 60mph in 6.6 seconds, one and a half slower than the Vantage, a 360bhp XKR would be a fairer comparison. I know from past experience of driving the two models back-to-back, the supercharged version of my car is more than a match for the Vantage, reaching 60mph in 5.4 seconds. But in terms of its smoothness and refinement, the normally aspirated V8 is still an equal of the majestically smooth V12.

Consisting of double wishbones, the XK8's front suspension is similar to the DB7's but at the rear there's a double transverse link arrangement similar to the X308 XJ's meaning it rolls over bumps as smoothly as the luxury saloon. At 1,653kg, the all-steel Jaguar is 170kg heavier than the Aston Martin yet thanks to the lack of power, it feels much more. But although you're always aware of the car's bulk, with

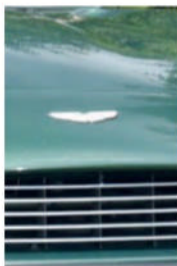
TWIN TEST

XK8 VS DB7 VANTAGE



plenty of grip plus more accurate steering than the Vantage, you'll be surprised by how quickly I can hustle the big car through fast corners. Although it never leaves its grand tourer pretensions behind completely, when pushed out of its comfort zone, the big car remains surprisingly composed.

There's no doubting the XK8 4.0-litre is a formidable car especially considering at £6,000 for a 4.0-litre example like mine, it's much more affordable than a Vantage. But by having less power and being produced in much bigger numbers (over 90k XK8s of all varieties were made between 1998 and 2005 compared to a mere 1,477 Vantages) does it have enough cachet to beat the more exclusive Aston Martin?



Verdict

If money is no object, then I'd have to put the DB7 Vantage ahead. Not only is it prettier than the XK8 but that 5.9-litre V12 is a majestic motor, transforming the car into an effortless grand tourer but with a definite sporting edge. Add in its relative rarity plus the undeniable prestige of the famed winged badge on the nose and it results in a highly desirable motor car, more so than its cousin alongside.

But I can't ignore how much cheaper the Jaguar is. Although not as good as the Vantage in some areas or as fast, it's closer to the DB7 than the £24k that currently separates the two (or the £20k for an XKR) would suggest. Plus it might not (in my eyes at least) match the DB7 looks wise, but it's still a very elegant coupe while the interior is definitely better than the Aston Martin's. If my car was a 370bhp XKR or the 4.2-litre version with 400bhp that arrived in 2002, it would be no brainer which one I'd choose. **AMD**



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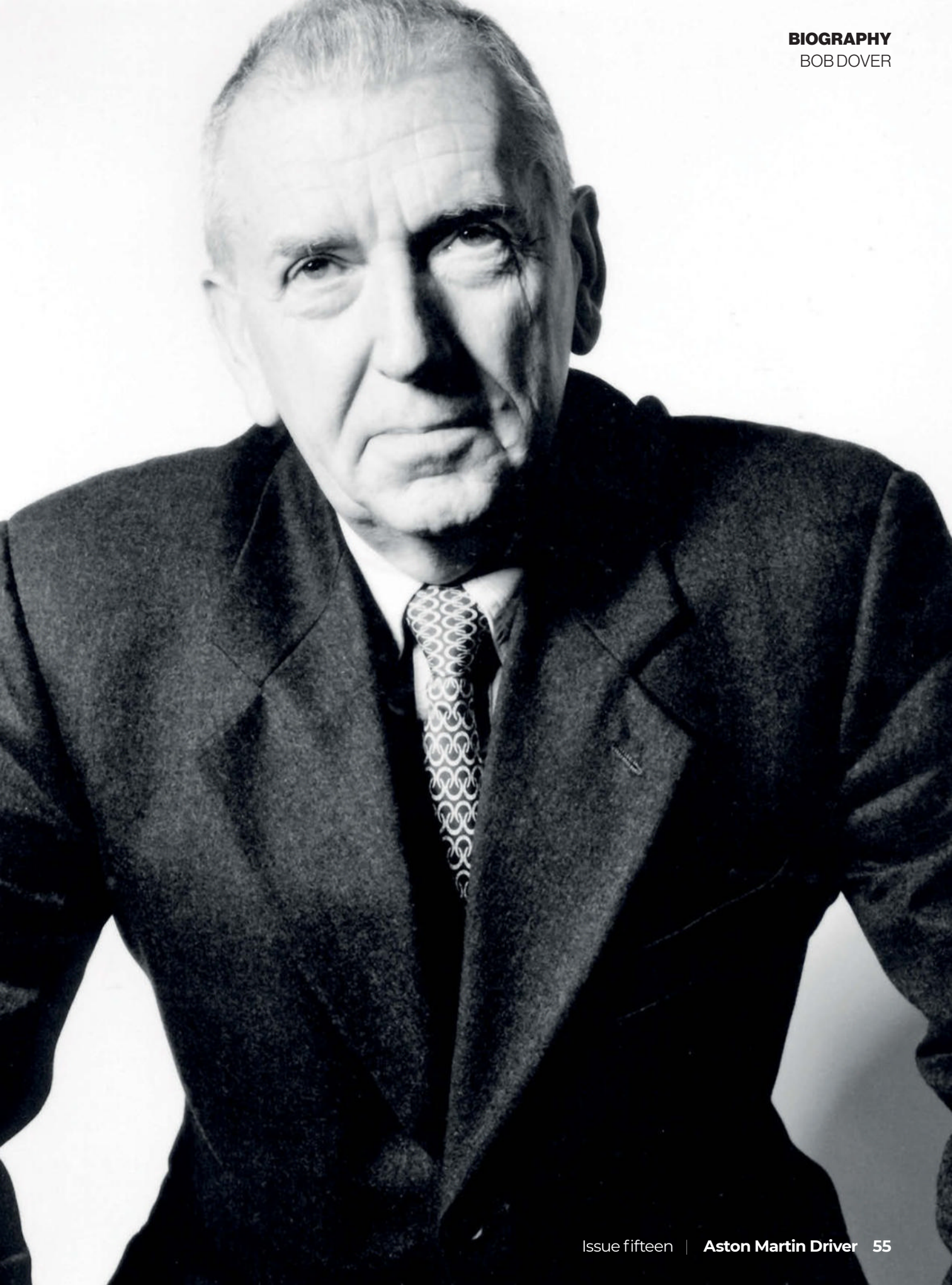
Bob Dover enjoyed a long career in the motor industry that including a stint at Jaguar and four years as Aston Martin's chairman. Although his time at the British company was brief it saw the introduction of two important models; the DB7 Vantage and original Vanquish

WORDS RICHARD BREMNER & PAUL WALTON

IT WAS designed to strike fast, strike low and strike with atomic fury. It could also climb high and spy, intercepting radio and radar signals and photographing targets far below.

The British Aircraft Corporation TSR-2 was developed in the late Fifties and early Sixties to be a vital part of British and Europe's defence, but being overweight, overbudget and late, only one TSR-2 ever flew test flights before the project was cancelled in 1965.

You may be wondering what possible link this might have with Aston Martin but I promise you there is one. The TSR-2 was one of the first projects that the company's future chairman, Bob Dover, worked on. He says of his early career, "I started as a ►



BIOGRAPHY

BOB DOVER

student apprentice at the Royal Aircraft Establishment and Manchester University. I was a graduate engineer and it very good training. I worked on the TSR-2.”

That this mightily ambitious aircraft project ultimately failed was hardly the responsibility of the young Dover, but three of the issues blighting this aircraft – excess weight, repeated delays and extra cost – would steer Dover’s direction in an ultimately more satisfying direction.

After his time at RAE, Dover moved into the car industry where he gathered plenty of useful experience. “I joined Pressed Steel Fisher at Cowley in 1968,” he says, “this body engineering and production company being part of the newly formed and vast British Leyland.” The job took him to various factories such as Solihull. “But I got fed up with the lack of progress,” he says. “This was the BL era.

“I moved to Massey-Ferguson, where

A young Bob Dover worked on the ill-fated TSR-2 project as a student apprentice at the Royal Aircraft Corporation in the early Sixties



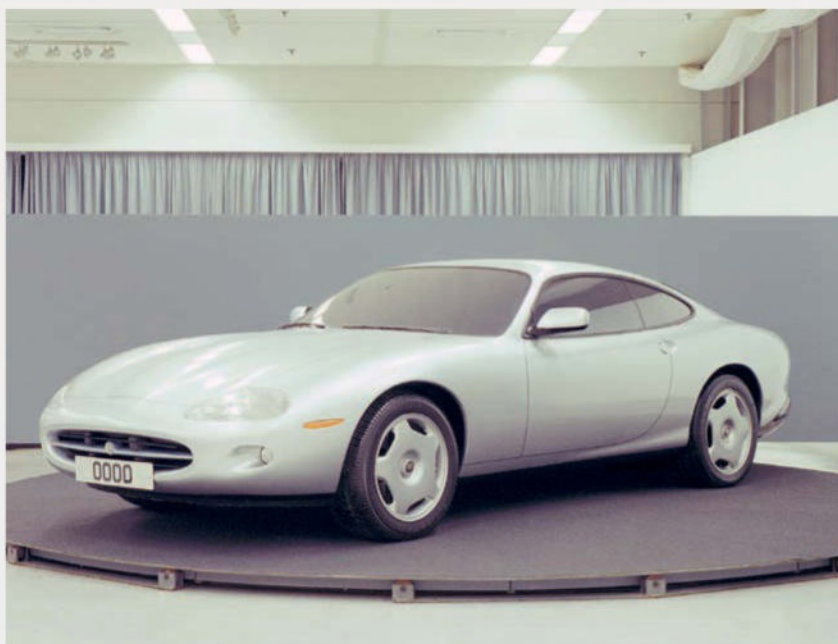
A 1986 design clay for the successful Land Rover Discovery that launched three years later

I ran the French operation, which made tractors, balers and combines. There was only one other Brit there, the finance manager, who told me that they’d run out of cash to pay the staff.” I very quickly learnt about the important of cashflow.”

Dover’s next move was to another company that wasn’t always flush with cash, Land Rover, when boss Tony Gilroy invited him to be director of

manufacturing. “Everything was not as it seemed,” he continues, “because they didn’t have a product plan.” The company’s only models were the Range Rover and Defender, improvements to which had been emerging at a glacial pace. “We did the Discovery (which eventually arrived in 1989), put leather





A design proposal for the XK8, the project that Dover made his name with in the early Nineties

in the Defender and so on. I also added articulation comprising anti roll bars to the [limited edition] CSK to cut the Range Rover's infamous body roll – they hated me for that.”

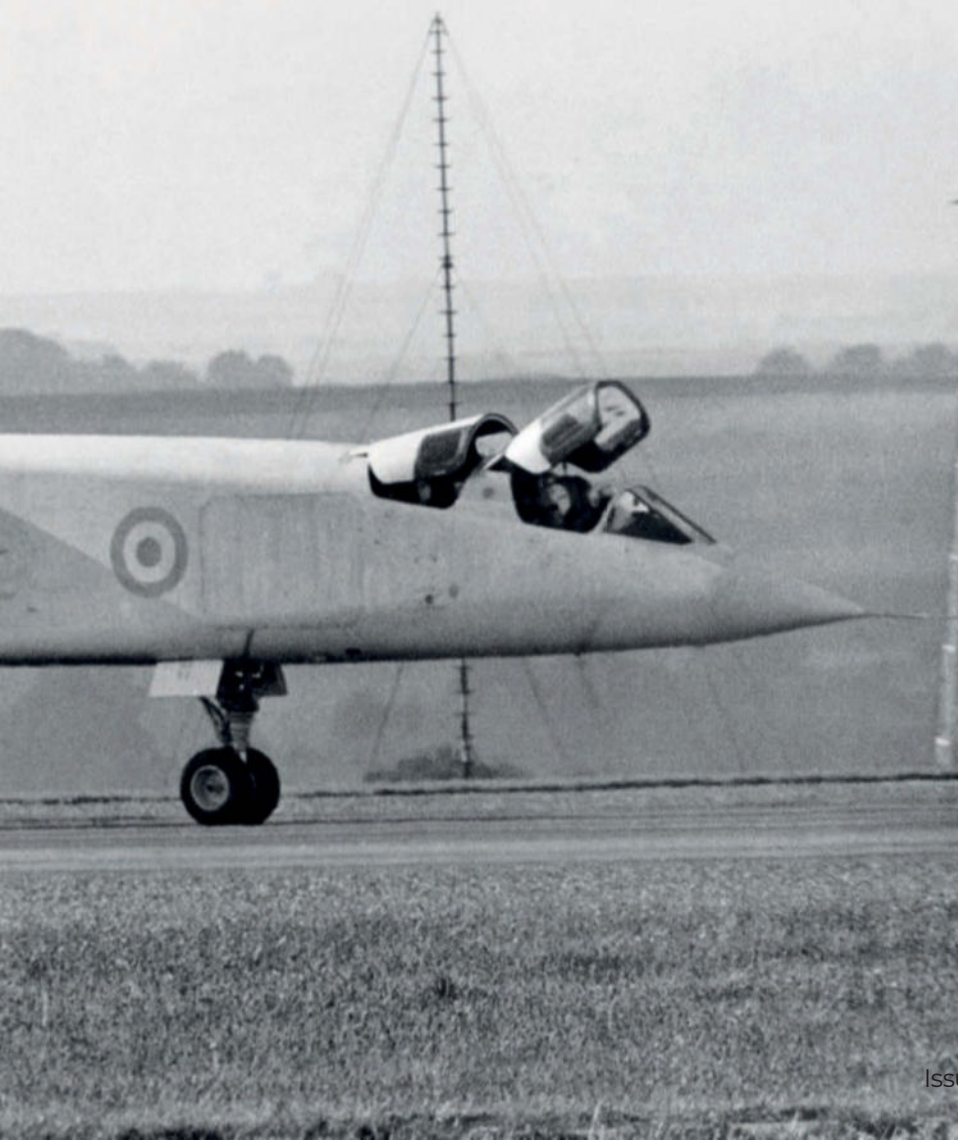
Gilroy and his top managers later attempted a Land Rover management buyout of the still government-owned Rover Group. “It didn’t succeed,” continued Dover, “and the team was booted out.”

Dover then became the head of Jaguar manufacturing in 1986, the year in which the XJ40 was launched. “It was a tough time,” he admits. “When Ford bought it [in 1989], it sent only seven or eight top managers, including Bill Hayden, Jim Padilla and, later, Nick Scheele. And they were looking for a strong leader for an XJS-replacement project.” Bob got the job.

Not only did he start by boldly telling Ford’s vice president, Jac Nasser, that the product plan wouldn’t work but that he also wanted his team for the car, the eventual XK8 from 1996, to stay for three years for, “A period of stability. At Ford, the most successful managers moved after 18 months.” Dover’s request was granted. “With the XK8 the challenge was to make Jaguar world-class. I could change things without being challenged. There were no rules so we just gone with it.

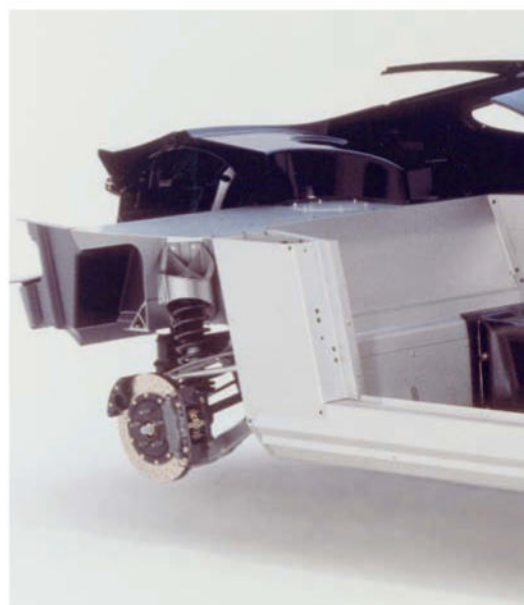
The result was a handsome, largely new and beautifully engineered car. “Using the XJS as a starting point didn’t compromise it much,” says Dover now. “The floor pressing was about the only carryover; we couldn’t carry over the XJS electrics, gearbox or back axle. We had a new body, a new engine and new electrics.” The fact the car sold relatively well – over 90,000 produced between 1996 and 2005 – showed it was well-liked by customers. More than that, the XK8 turned out to be a very reliable car with far fewer of the problems that Jaguars usually presented.

Dover had hoped that what he had learned from the project would help his career and it did, but not in the way he expected. “I thought that because I had successfully delivered the XK8 I might be made the company’s engineering director. But no; I was sent to Aston Martin.” His move from Coventry saw him become the Newport Pagnell based company’s



BIOGRAPHY

BOB DOVER



Heart of the XK8 was a new 4.0-litre V8, seen here in an XJ40 test mule

chairman and chief executive officer.

Despite the company producing just two relatively old-fashioned cars, Dover could still see the brand's potential and publicly announced 3,000 annual sales were possible, a level at which he said Aston Martin can be financially self-sufficient. To achieve this, what he wanted was a multi-car line up, rather than one model that spawned several derivatives such as the Virage and the later V8 coupe, Volante and Vantage.

His first task was to update Aston Martin's now ageing entry model. "Where do we go from the DB7 was one of our



A pre-production XK8 during high speed handling trials

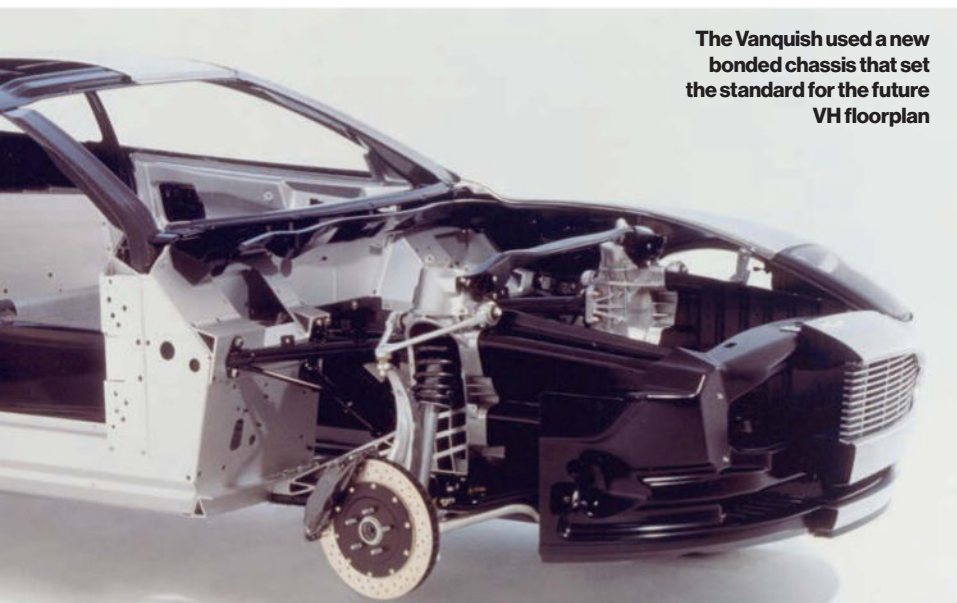
biggest questions," said Dover during an interview at the time, "for all our customers were saying, 'Don't change the shape of my car.' We decided to do similar elements and move things forward."

The answer was a 5.9-litre V12 Ford's engineers had developed behind the scenes in America but didn't have a home for. After more than a little persuasion from Dover not long after he arrived, Aston Martin seemed like the perfect place to utilise the unit and so in the late Nineties, the DB7 was facelifted to accept the engine resulting in the 420bhp Vantage.

The V12-engined car might have been a huge leap forward performance wise, but



(L-R) Bob Dover, Ford's Jac Nasser and designer Ian Callum with the Project Vantage concept from 1998



The Vanquish used a new bonded chassis that set the standard for the future VH floorplan

it still wasn't enough for Dover. "Although we had used the DB7 essentially to re-launch Aston to world markets, particularly the USA and the Far East, it was just not special enough to be the sole car in the range, although the V12 engine helped enormously in giving us back some supercar credentials," said Dover in an interview. "We also needed to replace the big V8s with something that was a little less daunting for many potential customers. They were wonderful cars, but relatively heavy and outdated. It was also becoming increasingly difficult to keep up with emissions legislation."

And so Dover turned to the man who had originally penned the DB7, TWR's Ian Calum, who duly produced a concept of a large coupe. "Bob and I have since become very good friends," said the Scot during a 2020 interview, "but he challenged me and he said look, we need a more muscular car to replace the V range, which of course was the Virage, and that range of cars which had to be replaced. So he asked me to build a more muscular version."

The result was the Vantage Project that was revealed at the 1998 Detroit Motor Show and which later became the Vanquish three years later. "The opportunity to do the Vanquish came about when my then boss, Ford's CEO Jacques Nasser, agreed to fund a show car to help build brand awareness. What he didn't know was that we used the money to do much of the engineering for what became the prototype Vanquish, which was launched at a press preview in Detroit. Media and dealer response was extremely positive and at the Geneva Motor Show ten weeks later I was able to persuade [Ford's chief product manager] Richard Parry-Jones and Mr Nasser to support the programme."

From the outset, Dover always wanted the car to be technically advanced and so featured a new bonded architecture plus a semi-automatic gearbox operated by F1-style paddles on the steering wheel. "Our customers want to make a statement about themselves," explained Bob in 1998. "They enjoy driving their cars, so we have to integrate technology to be useful to them." The V12 was central to the car's image and performance and so Aston



The first production car to arrive during Dover's tenure as Aston Martin chairman was the V12-engined DB7 Vantage



The Vanquish from 2001 was the production version of the Project Vantage

BIOGRAPHY

BOB DOVER

Martin went to considerable lengths to get the sonics they wanted. As Bob later revealed: "We recorded V12 sounds from a Ferrari and a Lamborghini on a cassette machine and made it sound like that!"

These two cars would lay the foundations for many of Aston Martin's future models, the V12 cars especially. The later DB9, DB11 and current DB12 plus the Virage and DBS all pay homage to Bob's DB7 Vantage and Vanquish.

Yet Dover didn't just concentrate on the products but Aston Martin's infrastructure as well. Knowing its existing Newport Pagnell and Oxfordshire factories were neither large nor modern enough to keep up with the demand for its future generation of cars, he persuaded Ford to give the company 90 acres of the vast ex-RAF test site at Gaydon, Warwickshire, for a new factory.

However, Aston Martin's first ever purpose-built factory wouldn't be



The 5.9-litre V12 as fitted to the DB7 Vantage and Vanquish would become the backbone of Aston Martin's production cars for the next two decades





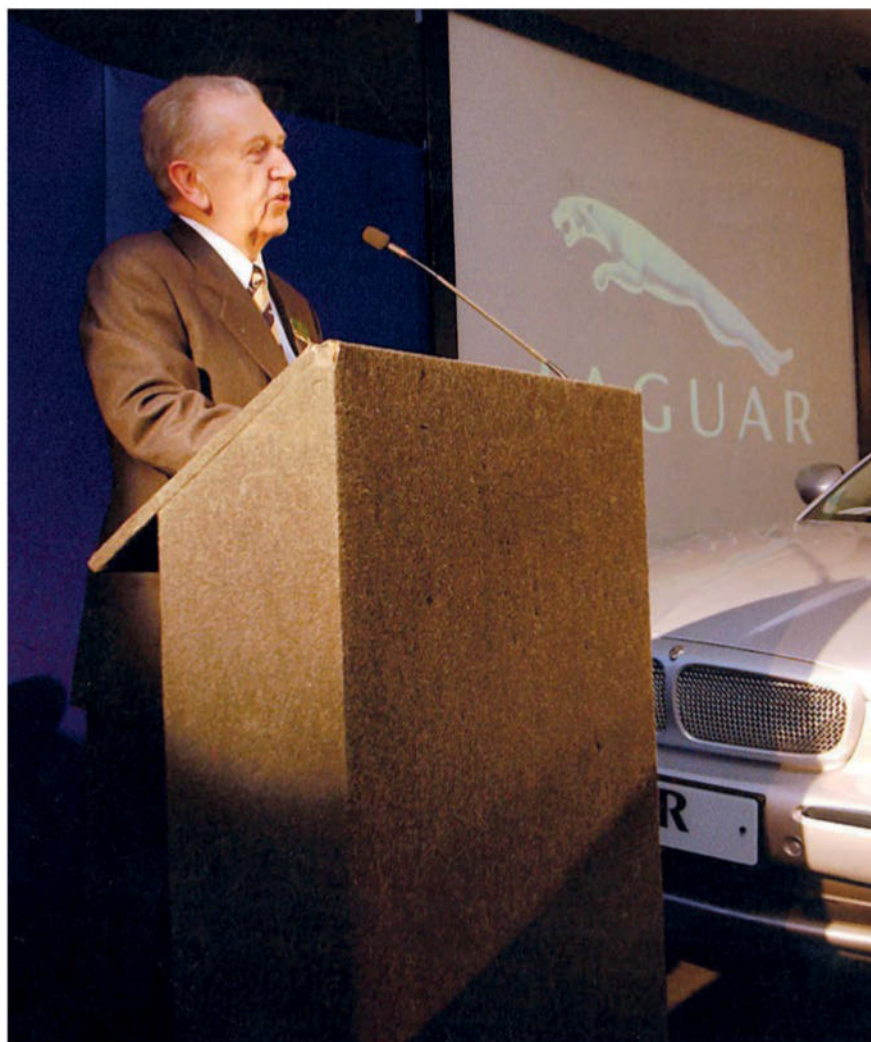
completed during his time as the boss since after just three and a half years, Dover was moved back to Land Rover which Ford had bought from BMW in 2000. Although Bob was, "totally happy at Aston Martin," he was told, "You know it [Land Rover]; go and be the CEO."

What he found was a company that had few managers since most had gone with BMW. "It was a wonderful opportunity – I had the pick of Ford. They didn't know Land Rover, but they did know the Ford system. They were all younger and smarter than me." When Ford joined Land Rover with Jaguar in 2002, he became CEO of both, only to retire two years later.

You might think after a stellar career in the motor industry which has included running Aston Martin, Jaguar and Land Rover that Dover would be putting his phone on metaphorical mute and closing the lid on his laptop. He's in his

late 70s after all. But no. He's currently the chairman of a British organisation that is all about looking forward, but not the mere four to five years it takes to birth a new car but a good decade or two ahead. The Advanced Propulsion Centre is a joint government and motor industry mission, 'to make the UK a centre of excellence for the research, development and production of low carbon propulsion technology,' explains the company's website.

Although Bob's time at Aston Martin was short, due to the importance of the two models introduced in this time, his impact on the company cannot be underestimated. But perhaps more importantly, due to the many cars across several brands that were developed during his 30-year career as well as the future models he will no doubt influence, his stature within the motor industry is larger still. **AMD**



Bob Dover during the 2003 launch of the then new XJ following his return to Jaguar

MODEL PROFILE

RAPIDE AMR



PRACTICAL PERFORMANCE

WORDS & PHOTOGRAPHY PAUL WALTON



Although arriving not long before production of the Rapide came to an end and was the last model to be powered by the 5.9-litre V12, by taking both technology and inspiration from Aston Martin's motorsport programme, its increased performance, more masculine appearance but always spacious interior makes the limited edition AMR version of Aston Martin's recent four-door saloon arguably the most desirable model to use the VH architecture

MODEL PROFILE

RAPIDE AMR

THE RAPIDE AMR is a car that no one asked for. Not only was the existing S already fast enough but as a four-door saloon, the car was in a different, more practical market than the aggressive Vantage and DB models. And so the idea of an even more powerful and racing inspired version seemed more pointless than a hot hatch version of the Cygnet or a DBX with two-wheel-drive only.

Yet the AMR upgrades – mainly an increased performance and handling plus a more masculine appearance – only heightened the Rapide’s already many abilities. This together with the car’s increased practicality over a traditional coupe resulted in a highly desirable model even by Aston Martin’s standards. And yet by being the final Aston Martin to not only use the 5.9-litre V12 but the original VH platform as well, the Rapide AMR marks a definitive end of an era in the company’s recent history.

Starting with a pair of concepts based on the Vantage and Rapide, the Aston Martin Racing (AMR) range was announced at the 2017 Geneva Motor show in March. Following previous high performance limited editions, its purpose was to bring together future models under one umbrella brand and image. With a comprehensive suite of power, chassis and styling upgrades, all supposedly inspired from the company’s Vantage GTE racing car, the sporting prowess and abilities of both cars were further amplified.

“Each time we have pushed the boundaries and done something extreme, the customers have loved the cars,” said the company’s chief creative officer, Marek Reichman, at the time. “AMR enables us to take Aston Martin into a new dimension. One where we can turn-up the sporting DNA present in all of our models and make a true statement. An AMR model will have an instantly recognisable design language. One that accentuates and amplifies, together with the latest GT race car technology for the road. They will be special and rare cars that are credible, thrilling to drive and hugely desirable to own.”

Although both were concepts, the company’s then CEO, Andy Palmer,





confirmed the AMR series was set for production. "As passionate enthusiasts of Aston Martin's competition pedigree," he explained in 2017, "AMR is something we have wanted to bring to fruition for some time. Cars such as the Vantage GT8 and Vantage GT12 confirmed that our customers love raw, race-bred models, but we also knew there was an opportunity to create cars that offer a sharper performance focus but stop short of those truly hardcore, special series models. With the AMR brand we have the perfect platform to deliver both."

The Rapide AMR version was first, arriving 15 months later and thankfully changed little from the original. With just 210 planned to be produced, the car's body-in-white was built by a small American-owned manufacturer,

MODEL PROFILE

RAPIDE AMR

Multimatic, at its Coventry facility. As a specialist in prototypes and low volume cars, Multimatic had previously been involved in the development of the One-77, Lagonda Taraf and Vanquish Zagato models and more recently the Valkyrie. The AMR's bodies were then transported to Aston Martin's main production plant near Gaydon for final assembly. However, with production of the Rapide coming to an end in 2020 due to the Covid-19 pandemic, just 188 AMRs were completed making it one of the rarest models to use the VH platform.

Visually the Rapide AMR included a large and aggressive front grille plus circular daytime running lights identical to those of the Vanquish Zagato models. The only time a feature from one of the Italian designed cars was used elsewhere was further proof of the AMR's exclusivity. To reduce lift there was also a larger front splitter, rear diffuser and boot lid lip spoiler, all produced from carbon fibre as were the deeper side sills bonnet with large ventilation inserts to minimise weight. In a first for Aston Martin, the car wore massive 21in forged alloy wheels, the multispoke design aiding brake cooling. The Rapide AMR had carbon ceramic brakes plus 400mm discs at the front with six piston callipers plus 360mm rear discs with four piston callipers making it the most powerful stopping system ever fitted to a Rapide.

Not only did the car sit 10mm lower than an S, but the three stage adaptive dampers were thoroughly reengineered to create a car which Aston Martin reckoned was, "more focused, agile and dynamic".

Heart of the Rapide AMR was the final iteration of Aston Martin's venerable 5.9-litre that had started with the DB7 Vantage two decades earlier and replaced by the supercharged 5.2-litre version as fitted to the DB11. The unit still went out with a bang, though, since drawing on technology and character from the unit used in the Vantage GT12, thanks to larger inlet manifolds with tuned length dual inlet runners that enhanced the airflow plus a new engine calibration, it produced 595bhp (an increase of 45bhp over the Rapide S). Although its 205mph top speed of 205mph and a 0-60mph time of 4.2 seconds were just 2mph and



two-tenths quicker than the Rapide S,

The design of the interior remained largely untouched although the centre console was now made from carbon fibre and the seats trimmed in Alcantara – both firsts for a Rapide – while stitched into the headrests was a silver AMR logo.

The result is a rare, masculine and driver focused car that with its four doors and four seats made it slightly more usable than a Vantage or DB9, a highly desirable combination. So despite its £194,950 list price – a £45k increase over a Rapide S – and the AMR being the final iteration of the now 14-year-old VH platform, the press was still largely positive about the car at its 2018 Warwickshire launch.

"Fitted with Aston Martin's last naturally aspirated V12 engine, which not only wails, screams, shrieks and waffles depending on the angle of your right ankle in relation to the throttle pedal," was *Car* magazine's





view, “but also takes you back to a time when exploring every thousand rpm of an engine’s power band was far more exciting than being whacked in the back by a mountain of torque.”

Autoexpress was equally encouraging. “Once fired up, it [the V12] comes to a gargling, bassy idle and dominates the driving experience the moment the wheels begin to turn. You probably won’t notice the extra 46bhp it has over a Rapide S, but once the motor hits its stride at 4,000rpm, it delivers unrelenting thrust all the way to its red line at 7,000rpm. If anything, the engine feels eager to rev beyond its limiter.”

The combination of a sports car like performance and handling but four doors and a sizable boot remains a highly desirable combination and one I’ve wanted to experience ever since the car first appeared. However, with just 44 of the 188 being right-hand-drive, it makes the AMR rarer in this country than a DB5 or DB7 GT meaning I never thought I’d find one. So when the owner of the example featured here, Charles Porter, contacted the magazine to kindly offer me a drive, there was only one answer I could give.

Although it was the final car to use the VH architecture, I reckon the Rapide is still the best looking of the series, the extra 250mm added to the chassis over the DB9’s giving it arguably better proportions while the gently tapering roofline and muscular rear haunches makes it still appear more like an elegant coupe than a traditional three-box saloon.

Aston Martin might have said the AMR was influenced by the company’s racing models and the carbon fibre aero additions and those dumper truck sized alloys make appear more aggressive than a Rapide S, but it’s still very discreet for such a car, lacking the big wing or swollen wheelarches of other low volume, racing-inspired models such as the Vantage AMR that arrived 12 months after the Rapide version. Charles’ car also misses the full length, bonnet to boot lime green stripe that was part of the Silhouette paint scheme. Although the 11-year-old in me thinks this can look exciting, the 51-year-old me realises it’s perhaps too garish for an elegant Aston Martin saloon. Green accents along the side sills were still

standard, though, which help to distinguish the AMR from standard Rapides.

When I compared a 2010 example against a Bentley Continental Flying Spur for issue ten of *AMD*, I complained that the grey plastic used for the centre console was too cheap looking for a four-door Aston Martin. Although the dials are disappointingly the same, when I climb inside, it’s immediately clear that the new, one-piece carbon fibre section is a huge improvement, giving the interior more of an upmarket feel the brand plus a car priced at £200k deserves. But together with the Alcantara covering the seats plus the yellow accents, the still has a warm, welcoming and intimate ambience. The rare, bespoke matching luggage is something of an eye-ful but it does fit the boot like a hand in a glove.

It is supremely comfortable too, the large seats being more supportive than those in a Vantage or even DB9 while there’s more space to stretch out than a private jet although that’s not something you can say about the rear. Like all Rapides, the AMR’s leg room might be surprisingly generous but the tall front seats block the view like Chewbacca would at the cinema, meaning it can feel claustrophobic. Obviously thanks to the rear seats folding flat resulting in something close to a traditional shooting brake it’s more practical than the two-door coupe but if interior space is higher on your list of criteria than design, buy a DBX. Or a minibus.

Thanks to a new quad exhaust, the deep, dirty gravelly-edged note when I fire the big V12 is befitting of car that was inspired by Aston Martin’s racing models. It also reveals the car’s intentions more than discrete exterior does because when I floor the throttle hard for the first time the car reacts instantly, accelerating with a hard, confident swagger that only naturally aspirated V12s can offer. Although the 0-60mph time of 4.2 seconds is similar to that of the Rapide S, the 595bhp V12 in the AMR has a stronger, more potent urge than the 460bhp version of its sibling, being even more eager to deliver its huge firepower. The 6.0-litre engine might have been almost two decades old by the time the AMR went on sale in 2018, yet it still feels strong and powerful enough to take on more modern units.

MODEL PROFILE

RAPIDE AMR

The Rapide's kerb weight is 1995kg seems like a lot until you realise a Bentley Continental Flying Spur weighs another half tonne. Thanks to its modern, bonded chassis plus its lengthy 2989mm wheelbase, the Rapide always had one of the nicest balanced and agile chassis balances among super-saloons, or even some big GT cars. But with the AMR's firmer dampers, it feels even more composed, with even less body roll through fast corners. Even now, six years after the car's launch, it's hard to think of another four-door saloon that's more engaging or more agile to drive, or that

hides their mass so well as the AMR. Yet it never loses its grand tourer pretensions and although some imperfections are transmitted back into the cabin, it still lacks the firmness of a fill track car. A few weeks before I photographed Charles' car, he used it for a 2000-mile round trip to Catalonia for the AMOC's Spanish concours and as he puts it, the Rapide AMR, "ate the miles easily."

This combination of speed and comfort, masculinity and practicality makes the Rapide AMR a highly appealing car, especially for those of us who are always in need of more space than a two-seat

coupe offers but something more interesting than a traditional three-box saloon. Add in the relative rarity and its importance on the company's recent history and in my opinion, it makes the car the most desirable of all the Aston Martins to use the VH platform if not from the past 25 years.

The Rapide AMR might be a car that nobody asked Aston Martin to produce but I'm so very glad it did. **AMD**

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PRODUCTS

The 1961 Lagonda Rapide set new standards for performance and luxury but by being large, expensive, and with controversial looks, only a tiny handful were produced, making it one of the rarest cars of the David Brown era. We look at the car's history and ask whether it deserves its divisive image

WORDS & PHOTOGRAPHY PAUL WALTON



IMPERFECT



LY PERFECT

MODEL PROFILE

LAGONDA RAPIDE



HISTORY HAS never been kind to the Lagonda Rapide. Always considered too large, too ugly and too expensive, even John Wyer, Aston Martin's then general manager, described it as, "an extremely bad car." It's for these reasons why only a handful were produced and why it remains severely undervalued compared to its Aston Martin siblings.

Yet strip away the controversial design and not only did it set new standards in terms of comfort and performance but it also introduced several new technical features that would become a mainstay for Aston Martin's later and more iconic models. And so six decades after its brief production came to an end, should the

Rapide be better remembered? Although it wasn't producing any cars when David Brown bought the company in 1947 and he only did so to access the excellent W.O. Bentley designed straight six, the chairman was always an enthusiast of the Lagonda brand. The 2.6-litre model arrived soon after which was followed by the handsome 3.0-litre in 1953. But with Aston Martin busy developing the all-new DB4, when the big saloon was discontinued five years later, it wasn't automatically replaced and many assumed the name would be discontinued for good.

But Brown always felt his company should be producing a bespoke, high performance four-door saloon and at the end of the Fifties, started pressing his





staff to produce one. On the face of it, this seemed like a good time for the British outfit. The DB4 had been launched at the 1958 Earls Court Motor Show to rave reviews while Aston Martin's motorsports programme had climaxed with winning the 1959 World Sports Car championship that included victory at the Le Mans 24 hours. "Immediately after the DB4 had been launched," wrote Wyer in his excellent 1981 autobiography, *A Certain Sound*, "he [Brown] said to me, 'Now, next year we must have the Lagonda.'"

Behind the scenes, though, the picture was far from rosy. Aston Martin was losing money which Brown had been happy to tolerate when the company was winning in sports car racing but once it had come to an end and its disastrous Formula 1 programme had been axed the following year he was no longer so understanding. Plus, by suffering from several mechanical issues including wheel bearing failure at high speed, it quickly became apparent that the DB4 had been launched with not enough development. Yet much to the chagrin of his technical staff, Brown was still insistent on relaunching the Lagonda brand for the new decade.

"It was during this period that I began to have my first serious differences of opinion with David Brown," wrote John Wyer in *A Certain Sound*. "David had always wanted to revive the Lagonda... and believed that all we had to do was

increase the wheelbase of the DB4 and add two more doors." Wyer carried on saying he'd told his boss that this was out of the question, that the real work on the DB4 was about to start. "It would call for our best efforts and our tiny engineering team would be quite incapable of giving proper attention to a new project."

More importantly, Wyer took the view that another model was ultimately not needed. "With limited production capacity, Lagondas could only be built at the expense of Aston Martins. We were therefore quite incapable of producing as many Aston Martins as we could sell; to add the complications of another model would merely reduce overall production."

Brown, though, remained insistent. "He wanted the Lagonda," continued Wyer in 1981, "and was determined to have it. Reluctantly, I was compelled to split my engineering team and put a task force into designing the Lagonda."

The car's development was much more complicated than Brown had originally considered, though, and in three important areas – engine, transmission and rear suspension – it pioneered designs that would be applied to later Aston Martins, from the DB5 through to the DBS.

To begin with, since the eventual car would be larger than the DB4, the Tadek Marek-designed 3.7-litre all alloy twin overhead camshaft unit was enlarged to 4.0 litres which was achieved by using cylinder liners of 4mm greater bore. The extra displacement was always planned to increase torque rather than top end power and sure enough, it rose by ten percent to 265lb ft at 4,000rpm while power actually dropped by 1½ percent to 236bhp at 5,000rpm. Revised camshafts and a pair of twin-barrel Solex carburettors rather than the DB4's triple SUs also helped to give more torque at lower engine speeds.

The car's standard transmission was a Borg Warner three-speed automatic which wouldn't become an Aston Martin option until the DB5 arrived a few years later. However, the car could also be specified with the David Brown Ltd four-speed manual but few were.

Although the front suspension layout of independent wishbones and Dunlop



MODEL PROFILE

LAGONDA RAPIDE



brakes all-round were shared with the DB4, a de Dion rear end – a development of the system fitted to Aston Martin's racing cars – was a departure from the live axle used by the previous road models. As well as improving the handling and ride quality, one of the main reasons for the change was because it gave more rear passenger space since the differential was rubber mounted on the chassis instead of moving up and down with the axle. However, its complexity and fragility were two of the reasons why the de Dion

rear end wasn't used again until the DBS of 1967. Wear tended to develop in the splined drive shafts and torsion bar rubber mountings, resulting in knocking noises that were at odds with the car's refined image.

Although rear springing was by transverse torsion bars, a system first used on the 2.6-litre and 3.0-litre Lagondas and further developed for the racing cars, for the first time on an Aston Martin the new car featured telescopic shock absorbers. Twin trailing radius arms

located the de Dion tube at each end together with a Watts linkage.

Like the DB4 before it, the new saloon was the work of Touring in Milan and also used the Italian's company's Superleggera method of construction (magnesium-aluminium panels suspended on a framework of steel tubes) which Aston Martin had a licence for. The DB4's chassis was lengthened by 16in but otherwise only altered to accept the de Dion rear end. As a simple three-box saloon, the design was very much of



the time, the nose dominated by a large upright grille that was reminiscent of both the Facel Vega and Edsel while the slanted quad headlight treatment would be used by other manufacturers later in the decade. Only the long boot gave away the car's Italian parentage since it was similar to the Touring-designed Maserati 3500GT. It was also very big. At 4,966mm long and 1,765mm wide (making it 692mm and 177mm larger than a Ford Cortina for example) plus tipping the scales at a hefty 3,780lb (25 percent more than the DB4)

it was huge yet still had an alleged top speed of over 120mph.

The interior was sumptuously trimmed with leather upholstery and Wilton carpets throughout plus a luxurious three piece dashboard finished in either polished walnut or elm. With Brown wanting the car to be last word in luxury, standard features included electric windows all-round, picnic tables in the rear, a remote-opening filler cap plus an elaborate heating and ventilation system with separate heating circuits for front and

rear seats. Although commonplace today, equipment like this was almost unheard of at the time, further illustrating the Rapide was no ordinary car.

"This new Lagonda will appeal to those who prefer a car of outstanding merit," explained Brown in a sales brochure for the Rapide, "possessing the thoroughbred characteristics and distinctive appearance of a high calibre British car."

None of this came cheap, though. At £5,251 when the car – now christened

MODEL PROFILE

LAGONDA RAPIDE



the Rapide, a traditional Lagonda name harking back to the Thirties – made its debut at the 1961 Paris Motor Show in October, it was £2,800 more expensive than a Jaguar MkX 3.8-litre and £2,400 over that of an Alvis 3.0-litre. More importantly, it was £1,200 more than the already pricey Aston Martin DB4.

It was perhaps due to this together with the car's distinctive styling while the Rapide was never greeted warmly by the critics. In its January 1962 issue, *Road & Track* magazine described the car as a, "rather undistinguished four-door sedan." A lack of marketing can't have helped, either, because as far as I can tell, none of the mainstream motoring press ever tested one in period. Just as tellingly, even Lagonda enthusiast, HRH Prince Philip the Duke of Edinburgh, replaced his trusty 3.0-litre drophead coupe with an Alvis TD21 in November 1961 rather than with a Rapide.

Production of the Rapide caused as many problems as it did during development. Not only did Wyer estimate that each one was built at the expense of

three Aston Martins but fitting the saloon into the regular production process at the company's Feltham factory caused major disruption. With the company unable to keep up with demand for the DB5 following *Goldfinger* the year before, in 1964 and after just 55 had been produced (eight with the manual box, the rest with

automatics), the plug was pulled on Brown's Lagonda project.

Perhaps due to not being as beautiful as the Aston Martins from the same age or maybe it's the size that puts people off, but the Rapide has never reached the same iconic status as its two-door siblings in the intervening years. Even today, you can



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MODEL PROFILE

LAGONDA RAPIDE



buy one of the surviving 48 examples for under £100,000, a fraction of what a DB5 is currently worth despite the two sharing the same ancestry.

Personally, I've always loved the car. Yes, the long grille gives it more than a slight Edsel look, but judging by the 1963 example shown here, the Rapide also has a menacing and muscular presence, the headlights especially that make it look more than a little like a Jensen CV-8. In my eyes, it's the kind of car a Sixties gangster would have driven, its bulk and aggressive-looking design helping to shore up their already tough reputation. Yet the perfect proportions also makes the Rapide extremely elegant and I can equally imagine a gentleman jewel thief driving one to his club after stealing a set of priceless diamonds.

Although the Rapide's styling is unique and it looks like no Aston Martin or Lagonda before or since, there are a few family similarities. The shape of the wing vents are similar to those of the DB4 for example while the three circular light lenses placed vertically at the end of both wings is an identical treatment to the sports car.

I'm not a fan of the chrome hubcaps that cover the 15in pressed steel wheels, though, thinking they're too fancy for such a masculine car but the wires that were fitted to the DB4 weren't strong enough to handle the Rapide's increased weight.

This car, chassis LR/146/R, was the

46th produced and originally in black. The first owner is said to have been P. R. Jeanty, a director of esteemed coachbuilders Hooper & Co based in Westminster and was bought by its second owner in 1967 when the mileage stood at 29,000. After the original automatic gearbox had been swapped for a ZF five-speed manual in 1970, the same time as the carpets were renewed, the Rapide was used extensively throughout the decade, including trips aboard and at the AMOC sprint at Goodwood. It was given a full respray in its original black in 1974 while new door bottoms and a stainless steel exhaust were fitted by Durham-based specialist, Aston Workshop, over two decades later.

In 2006 the car was offered for sale by the second owner's family through Bonhams' auction held at Aston Martin Works Service, Newport Pagnell. The subsequent buyer was none other than AML itself whose Heritage department gave the saloon a no-expense-spared, full nut and bolt restoration, which included changing the colour to metallic blue to make it look less gangster-like. The engine size was also increased to 4.2 litres by renowned marque experts, RS Williams, resulting in what's considered to be the best Rapide in the world. Although now on display at the excellent Whitewebbs Museum of Transport in Enfield, north London, the car continues to be part of Aston Martin's small collection of classic models.

It's only when I climb inside that I start to understand the car's high purchase price. The rich veneer, generous use of chrome switchgear and complicated ventilation system make it look and feel like the handmade, bespoke saloon Brown had always envisaged rather than a mass-produced vehicle like the Jaguar MkX had been. Yet despite the car's generous proportions, space in the rear is ludicrously tight for what's ultimately a limousine, making it less than ideal for those who wanted to be chauffeured, no doubt another reason why the car wasn't a commercial success. Customers who wanted to drive quickly stuck with a DB5 while those who preferred to ride in the back chose a Rolls Royce Silver Cloud instead.

Yet this doesn't detract from what it is ultimately a fantastic car. It might not be good looking in the traditional sense but nobody can argue the car doesn't have real presence while the engineering underneath makes it the equal of its more illustrious Aston Martin brethren. So although history was right and the Rapide has never been a perfect car, there's no denying it's a memorable one. **AMD**

● **Thanks to: Steve Waddingham from Aston Martin Lagonda Ltd plus the Whitewebbs Museum of Transport (www.whitewebbsmuseum.co.uk) where the Rapide featured is currently on display**

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BACK TO THE FUTURE

The limited edition Valour might look to be an old-fashioned bruiser, even featuring a traditional manual transmission, but it's a modern and cutting edge supercar

WORDS KYLE FORTUNE PHOTOGRAPHY MAX EAREY





FIRST DRIVE

ASTON MARTIN VALOUR



AS CELEBRATIONS go, a fabulously retro-styled, 5.2-litre twin-turbocharged V12 powered and stick-shifted one is about as good as they come.

There were mutterings about a car would become the Valour long before Aston Martin officially announced it. After the Victor, the glorious one-of-one commission spun-off One-77 and Vulcan parts mixed with visual inspiration from the 1970 DBS V8 (specifically the RHAM/1 Le Mans racer nicknamed 'The Muncher') wowed Aston Martin fans around the world, requests for something similar started coming in from the company's customers. The Valour was something

of an inevitability, then, with Aston always keen to exploit an opportunity and with a significant 110-year anniversary in 2023 to celebrate creating the perfect excuse.

Unashamedly referencing the Victor but not just in looks but in specification, the Valour is a concoction of bits, the result of Aston Martin raiding the parts department from a number of models. The resultant cocktail is akin to an old-fashioned, classic recipe, albeit covered in a bespoke body, crafted entirely from carbon fibre.

But it's not just the looks that give a reverential nod to the past, the drivetrain does too, since all 110 Valours Aston Martin is producing will come with that most ancient of tech – a manual transmission. Apparently, Aston Martin never considered anything else for the





Valour, and although that will have put off some of the millionaire customers who might usually have snapped up one, all 110 have sold. So, manual gearstick or not, there wasn't any shortage of demand.

That's true of the example we're in today. It's the car Aston Martin introduced the Valour with, and, on spotting it, one customer demanded to buy it. It's one of that 110, then, not a zero series car or a prototype, but a car that – once Aston Martin has let a lucky few (us included) experience it – will be added the customer's collection and hopefully used.

And it should be, too. Aston Martins almost universally elicit a resoundingly positive response, and it's particularly notable with this car. Proportionally it's fantastic, harking back to those Seventies V8s, but having a modern edge which Aston calls 'Retro Futurism'. The company's director of design, Miles Nurnberger, has elaborated that with the Valour the idea was to give the impression that the car has, through time, been modified in the pursuit of greater speed, like a racer might have been. That explains the front grille, which looks like it's been widened to feed more air in, the box arches and venting around the front wheels, as well as the louvered cover where a rear window might have once featured.

It's subterfuge, of course, but it's gorgeous, bristling with muscularity but

with assertiveness opposed to outright aggressiveness. That is a neat trick to pull off. It's similarly appealing inside, ignoring the most obvious aspect for a moment – that stick jutting out of the transmission tunnel – the interior's a fine mix of, well, anything you want it to be. There's carbon fibre mixed with tweed, leather and wood, plus a smattering of brushed metals thrown in, too. We'd lay off the carbon fibre (as you'd be able to, with each interior able to be specified exactly how you like it), because if we're really going for the old-school schtick, the modern weave seems a little misplaced.

On a similar note, it's a shame Aston Martin hasn't gone all-in with analogue instruments, instead the Valour featuring the same TFT instrument pack that you'll find on previous generation models. There's also the old Merc-derived satellite navigation, which is a bit clunky, but necessary, the Valour more befitting a dog-eared Michelin paper map stuffed behind a seat or into a door pocket with a few choice roads and destinations scribbled on it.

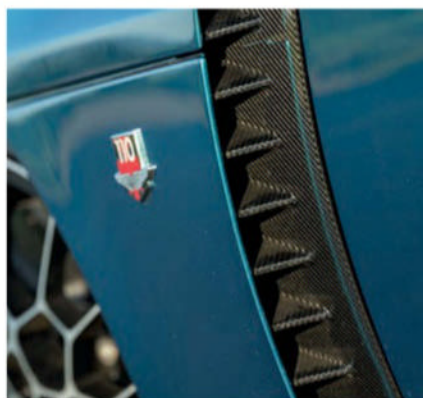
Small quibbles in an otherwise beautifully executed interior, key being the gearstick, here topped in wood, but, like everything able to be carbon fibre, metal or leather. Much as an open gate appeals elsewhere it's a bit overt for an Aston, even this one, some hide to hide would do no harm, though, again, that's just us. What is obvious is just how long in throw that shift is, it feels like a big mechanical object, but, really, that's not a complaint.

You'll need to floor the clutch in partnership with the brake to rouse the V12 via the starter button, otherwise it'll do nothing. Once it fires it's surprisingly cultured, the expectation, perhaps, due to the looks, that this Aston Martin might be a touch boisterous. It isn't, indeed, the clutch proves easily light, engaging smoothly, Aston's engineers having spent a great deal of time with the calibration of the engine software to allow smooth progress with the manual transmission. If anything, it's a bit too easy, odd as that might sound, but if you're invested enough to be buying a manual car today there's perhaps the expectation that you might need to be a bit handy to exploit it. Not so, the pedal ▶





Make no mistake, with 715PS (705bhp) and 555lbft of torque, the Valour is a fast car, but it feels more supercar than Hypercar in this regard



weighting and spacing is such that rev-matched downshifts are a cinch, as they need to be because there's no auto blip here, though the accelerator pedal seems unusually short in its travel, which often sees you pushing it to its stop, which does somewhat highlight the sometimes-tardy response in relation to the acceleration.

Make no mistake, with 715PS (705bhp) and 555lb ft of torque, the Valour is a fast car, but it feels more supercar than hypercar in this regard, despite its price being in the latter's sphere. Aston hasn't

released figures, but it feels around 3.8-4.0 seconds to 62mph – perhaps as low as 3.5 seconds if you're being brutal – while we'd anticipate a top speed up to and possibly just breaching 200mph. The engine delivers its best when those turbos are spooling and there's 3,000+ rpm showing, where the speed grows exponentially, with the exhausts giving some accompaniment, if not quite as much as we'd anticipated.

Naturally, it's all configurable, with the driving choices of Sport, Sport+ and



FIRST DRIVE

ASTON MARTIN VALOUR

Track, our preference being Track for the drivetrain, then pegging back the dampers to Sport+. Doing so increases the immediacy from the engine, while adding some suppleness to the suspension, with the thresholds of the stability and traction control systems raised a notch. Not that you'll be short for grip and traction, both being abundant, the brakes, too, unlike The Muncher it stylistically nods to – so called because it ate through brake discs – being more than up to the task in hand, with excellent stopping power and fine feel through the pedal. The steering is nicely weighted, if lacking in the finest of detail, but the Valour's a fast, capable and enjoyable road car, which appeals on every level.

If there's a but, it's that the car is perhaps a bit too civilised, although Aston's already addressed that criticism with the Valliant, which is Aston Martin F1 racing's Fernando Alonso's take on a more extreme, track-focussed version of the Valour. It will be built in a series of just 38.

Even without that, we'd have the Valour in a heartbeat, because it's got one and does a fine job of raising the driver and everyone else who ever gets to see one, which is kind of the point, and a very worthy car to celebrate Aston Martin's 110 years of existence. **AMD**



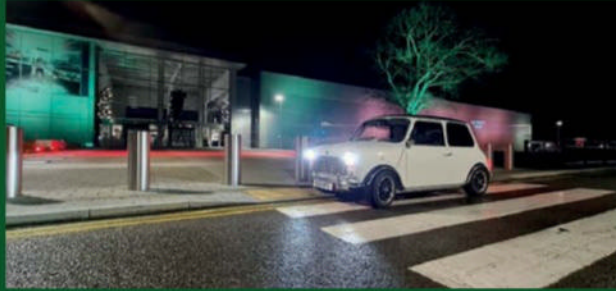
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The pride of the Valkyries set for a Le Mans challenge

Motorsport News editor Matt James looks at the drive to put Aston Martin back on the front line of sportscar racing

THE NEW landscape which has pervaded in international sportscar racing in recent years could have been designed with Aston

Martin in mind.

It wasn't, of course, but when global sportscar rule makers devised a new set of hypercar regulations which came into force at the start of the decade, it certainly piqued interest.

Aston Martin had already developed the Valkyrie in collaboration with the brains' trust at Formula 1 dominators Red Bull Racing. It is effectively a no-holds-barred track day machine featuring the very latest

in technology. It is a racing car in all but name. It meant Aston Martin had a head start on other manufacturers who wanted to join the World Endurance Championship with fresh hypercar machines, which is headlined by the Le Mans 24 Hours. Despite that, Aston took its time to commit to the programme.

In the meantime, hypercars have been developed and successfully raced by Ferrari, Porsche, BMW, Lamborghini, Toyota, Peugeot and Cadillac among others.

But Aston Martin couldn't resist for too long. While the other manufacturers all built cars especially to fit the regulations – which

proved a huge hit and unified the rules set across the World Endurance Championship and America's flagship endurance contest IMSA – Aston Martin had the basis already in place. For 2025, Aston will run in the full WEC programme with the Valkyrie as well as returning to Le Mans, the scene of Aston Martin's most famous motorsport victory in 1959.

When the Aston Martin programme was launched earlier this year, owner Lawrence Stroll explained: "Performance is the lifeblood of everything that we do

at Aston Martin, and motorsport is the ultimate expression of this pursuit of excellence. We have been present at Le Mans since the earliest days, and through those glorious endeavours we succeeded in winning Le Mans in 1959 and our class 19 times over the past 95 years.

“Now we return to the scene of those first triumphs aiming to write new history with a racing prototype inspired by the fastest production car Aston Martin has ever built.”

And there is the key difference: Aston is basing its design on a production car, unlike the others. That means it will come at the series from a slightly different angle from the likes of Porsche and Ferrari.



For 2025, Aston will run in the full WEC programme with the Valkyrie as well as returning to Le Mans



MOTORSPORT

VALKYRIE

Aston Martin, despite only winning once at the French endurance classic, has a love affair with Le Mans. It first competed at La Sarthe in 1931 and when the DBR1/300 came along in 1959, overall success belonged to the firm as Carroll Shelby and Roy Salvadori vanquished allcomers. The British firm, having won the World Sportscar Championship in that same season, decided to walk away from endurance racing and instead concentrated on an ill-fated grand prix attack.

There were various returns to Le Mans with effectively factory-blessed privateer efforts in the Eighties and Prodrive dabbled in the top class again from 2009 until 2011, although that was unsuccessful. What was successful, though, was the GT programme. The DB9 and the Vantage GTE machines were class winners and underscored Aston's heritage. In all, more than 240 drivers have raced Astons at Le Mans with 27 combinations of chassis and engines.

The legwork has been firmly committed to the history books, but the new programme with the Valkyrie is probably the most exciting yet, and it comes amid something of a boom time for international sportscar racing.

At Le Mans in 2024, there were nine different hypercar manufacturers gunning for glory. It means that while it is a tougher nut to crack, the bragging rights for a successful firm will be huge.

For the next generation of its sportscar assault, Aston Martin has chosen to adhere to the LMH (Le Mans Hypercar) regulations. The others have opted for the slightly different LMDh (Le Mans Daytona hybrid) route, and both will race on the track at the same time.

LMDh requires all machine to be built to a cost-cap of 1 million Euros and it demands that the car builders to use an element of off-the-peg specification parts which include the hybrid system itself. The chassis are built by one of four constructors: ORECA, Dallara, Ligier and Multimatic.

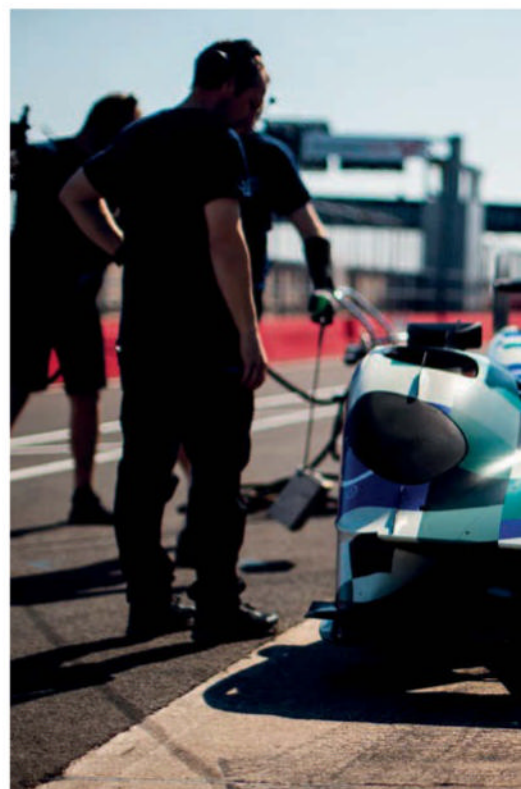
LMH, the path that will be followed for the Valkyrie, offers up much more freedom in terms of car development. The chassis can be bespoke, and powertrain can come from the engineers'

own design. Those particular rules were deliberately devised to allow the competing manufacturers to stamp their own brand identity on each design to make sure that, visually at least, they could easily be identified as being from that firm's range. LMH also offers much more scope for inventive thinking from the constructors themselves.

Aston Martin will also be the first LMH car to be operated without a hybrid system in place, which reflects the road cars and track day cars that the firm offers, but it does put the Valkyrie at odds with the other offerings on the grid.

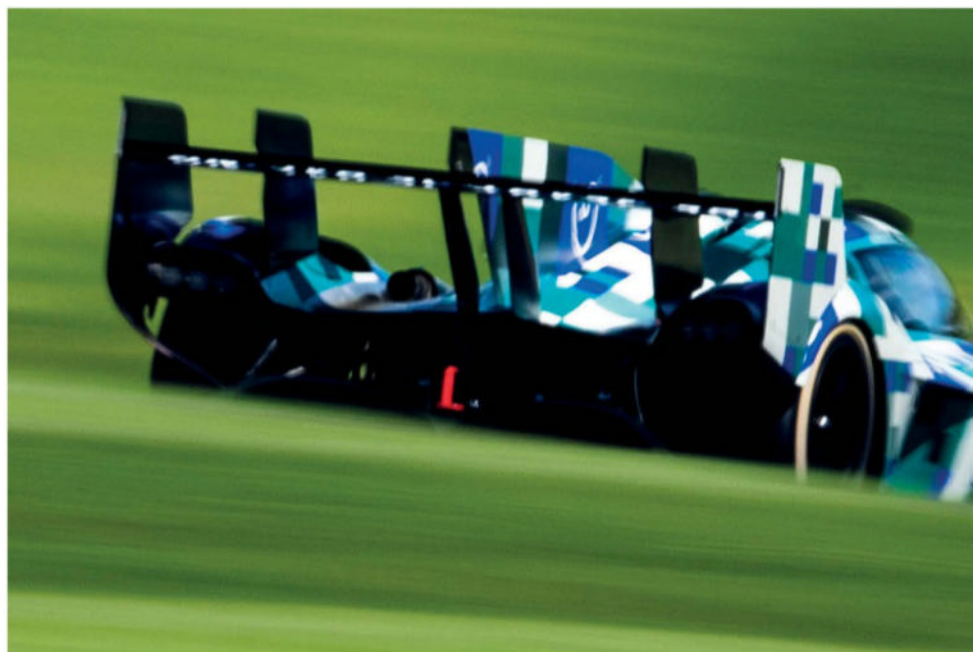
All cars across both classes have to be within certain parameters in terms of aerodynamic performance and drag levels, and the maximum power is mandated too. That is to ensure that the LMH cars and the LMDh machines are closely matched on track. The rule makers can intervene should there be a sizeable disparity between the speed of the different cars through something called Balance of Performance, whereby it can restrict some of the faster cars to bring them into line with the rest of the pack.

Adam Carter, Aston Martin Head of Endurance Motorsport, says, "The Valkyrie AMR-LMH sets its own standard as a thoroughbred endurance competition car. It is a pure, leading-edge racing machine, and while it is very early in the testing cycle, from what we have witnessed so far, we are



satisfied that it is achieving the targets and criteria we have set out for it to accomplish."

Those initial tests took place at Donington Park and Silverstone in early August and the reports from the drivers – including Aston Martin regular Darren Turner plus young Briton Harry Tinncknell – have been positive. The car features a carbon fibre chassis and initial estimates reckon that it can push out something in the





region of 1000bhp. The 6.5-litre naturally aspirated V12 rear-wheel-drive Valkyrie will now undergo its intensive gestation period before it makes its top-flight debut. Initially, when the programme was announced there was talk that the Valkyrie would be race-ready in time for next season's Daytona 24 Hours, but the late-January date makes that twice-around-the-clock showpiece race in Florida a push.



Instead, Aston Martin bosses have been increasingly vague about the precise debut of the machine other than confirming that it will be in time for the start of the World Endurance Championship, which is scheduled for Qatar on February 28, 2025.

The work on the programme is being done by both the Aston Martin Performance Technologies and the Heart of Racing team, Aston Martin's chosen competition partner. It is not unusual for leading manufacturers to co-opt in the expertise of an established racing team. Porsche has partnered with Penske, for example, and Cadillac has an alliance with American powerhouse Chip Ganassi Racing.

By employing a race-ready team with competition know-how, the path to the front of the grid can be somewhat easier. Heart of Racing was established by ex-pat Briton Ian James in 2014 and has been an affiliate of Aston Martin since 2020, running its GT cars in the IMSA series in America and it has been a teams' championship title winner. It has now expanded to create a base in the UK, not too far away from the new Aston Martin F1 HQ at the gates of Silverstone which will make co-operation with the mothership much easier.

The Heart of Racing Team Principal James, who is a racer himself too, said that

the initial outings of the Valkyrie AMR-LMH have been an immensely proud moment in the programme. "The birth of this project has been a couple of years in the making, so to get it to the track and to see it going around in the flesh, feels momentous for Heart of Racing," he explains. "We're looking forward to the journey ahead – it's a steep hill to climb for everyone involved in this project. We are at the pinnacle of sportscar racing, the competitors are formidable, and they have been doing it a long time. Some of them have endless resources."

Expecting success at the top level – and whisper it, Le Mans too – immediately is folly. The new landscape in the World Endurance Championship has been fully in place for two seasons now and others have far more mileage under their belt. Ferrari has won Le Mans for the last two seasons, while Toyota, which was one of the first to commit to the hypercar regulations, has been the title winner in the season-long championship for the last five years.

But Aston Martin, similar to Ferrari, not only has the World Endurance Championship programme to consider. It also has its high-profile Formula 1 campaign, and it has a full offering of Vantage GT3 beasts and runs cars in the entry-level GT4 category too. That means that while the production lines and engineering brains will be extremely busy, lessons learned from all areas of competition can, through Aston Martin Performance Technologies, be shared across the group as a whole. That will only help to speed up the programme.

James knows that the rivals will be tough to overcome, but the determination is there. He says: "We know we are going up against the best, so we intend to represent Aston Martin at the same level. I believe, from what we have seen so far, and with the DNA of where this car came from, I think we have the right tools to be able to do this successfully." **AMD**



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FROM THE CLUBHOUSE



Spring Concours 2024 Event



The event was even more special this year as it was held at the Sandringham Estate in the UK

WORDS: MICHAEL REED, CHIEF JUDGE CONCOURS



IN MAY we were delighted and privileged to hold the AMOC's annual International Dinner and Spring Concours at the Sandringham Estate in the UK which is the private country retreat to Their Majesties The King Charles III and Queen Camilla. The Concours weekend is one of our Club's largest social gatherings, with Members attending from across the globe.

Saturday

The Club's shop was arranged in a large marquee with plenty of display space, which also provided a covered home to the oldest Aston Martin, the A3 which was brought along by the AM Heritage Trust.

Aston Martin Lagonda (AML) provided a DB12, the new Vantage and a Valkyrie for display over the weekend and The

King very kindly made his DB6 Volante available. AML arranged a photoshoot in front of the house with these stunning cars. This drew an interested crowd as the cars formed up their display. The sight and sound of the Valkyrie in motion was not to be missed.

In the evening guests gathered in a marquee located near the House and enjoyed a champagne reception provided by The Club's official champagne partner - Pommery Champagne.

This was followed by a relaxed and informative tour of the House. Guests then strolled down past the lake to an impressive marquee where the International Dinner was held. There were two hundred Members and guests present who enjoyed dinner and a chance to socialise with friends old and new.



FROM THE CLUBHOUSE

ASTON MARTIN OWNERS CLUB



Sunday

The day of the Spring Concours dawned a bit wet and cool. Entrants were able to drive into the grounds through the elaborate Norwich Gates and drive into the private grounds to be lined up in class order. The cars were soon arranged in

front of the house and along the driveway to create a stunning display of about 80 Aston Martins.

Despite the early poor weather, the entrants got stuck into their final preparations and before long the rain stopped, the sun was out, and the cars

were sparkling in the spring sunshine. A team of 33 judges inspected the cars dating from pre-war right up to the present date. There was a significant entry of the classic David Brown (DB) era cars which made a stunning display along the main drive.

There were seven cars in Elite Class which were formed up on the circular driveway with The Kings' DB6, Sandringham House providing a dramatic backdrop.

The Club hosted a sit-down lunch in the main marquee, for around 200 Members and guests, overlooking the Sandringham Pageant of Motoring held in Parkland, and there were over four hundred Astons parked in front of the marquee.

Club Members were able to visit the Pageant, see live music, trade stands, and other car club displays.

The Club's sponsors, Lockton, RM Sotheby's, and Michelin had stands near the club shop creating a lot of interest.

After lunch, Members enjoyed a glass of Pommery Champagne in the gardens in front of the house in warm sunshine.

Members and entrants eagerly gathered for the prize giving, proceedings were slightly interrupted by a passing thunder and lightning storm which added extra drama and left many a bit wet.

The sun came out again though and the delighted class winners were presented with a magnum of Pommery Champagne and a Lockton bag of car care products.

This wrapped up an amazing weekend with the sight and sound of so many Astons departing through the fabulous grounds of Sandringham House. **AMD**

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ASTON MARTIN V8



1974, 73192 miles, £85,000. Series 3 Aston Martin AMV8 auto., in very good condition and in present ownership since 1998. The 5340 cc V8 aspirated engine (4-twin-choke Weber carburettors) has been converted to unleaded fuel and has matching original chassis (VIN) and engine numbers. Bodywork: Fixed-head coupe in smoke silver (champagne), repainted by previous owner from original brown. Interior: light tan leather and carpets with beige headliner, black dash and central console. Please call 07964241122, South East.

124218

ASTON MARTIN AM VANTAGE



1973, 78590 miles, £107,000. This Aston Martin Vantage is 1 of 72 built of this type and according to AML's records was the 1972 Earls Court Motor Show exhibition car. After David Brown had to sell the company, the new owners wanted the abbreviation "DB" to disappear and instead used the designation "Vantage" for the last vehicles equipped with the 6 cylinder. Thus, this original stopgap is now a rare collector's item. Private sale, viewing by appointment, live video possible. Please call +43 676 9176764, Rest of the world.

122857

ASTON MARTIN V8



1987, £399,000. Series 5 to 'Vantage' fuel injection spec. Manual. Please call 01993 849610, South East. (T)

121690

ASTON MARTIN VANQUISH



2018, 980 miles, £435,000. Zagato Volante. Automatic. 2 door. Please call 01993 849610, South East. (T)

121689

ASTON MARTIN V8



1983, 49000 miles, £149,000. To Vantage X Pack specification. Finished in Black with Red leather interior and black carpets. Rare manual gearbox and a detailed history file kept from new. Please call 01993 849610, South East.

121691



FEATURE YOUR **MOTOR** IN YOUR FAVOURITE MAGS!

OR FIND YOUR NEXT!

ASTON MARTIN VIRAGE



£99,995. First registered October 1993 (L Prefix) this Aston Martin Virage Volante is the property of a gentleman, and one of two cars from his collection that we are currently offering for sale. With just over 17,000 miles recorded this immaculate Virage was acquired by the most recent titled keeper in May 2016 with 14,000 miles recorded. Finished in Buckinghamshire Green with Magnolia Leather piped Green, Green Top Roll and carpets. Very comprehensive records are with the car including the original handbooks and service voucher book. Please call 01798 874477, South East. (T)

123111

ASTON MARTIN VANQUISH



2001, 413 miles, £129,999. Confirmed by the Aston Martin Heritage Trust as the earliest example currently road registered. Offering the unique opportunity of owning a virtually brand new 2001 V12 Vanquish showing delivery mileage, this beautifully presented and historically important motorcar is worthy of any collection. Please call 07999222999, Wales. (T)

123616

ASTON MARTIN V8 VANTAGE



2010, 361 miles, £89,999. Numerous extra-cost options. Offered from an extensive private collection. Recently recommissioned by Stratton Motor Company. Built to European specifications, this car boasts numerous special features in addition to the generous inventory of standard equipment. Option highlights include the following: special Kermit Livery paintwork; 'Intense' interior trim; satellite navigation; voice activated Bluetooth telephone; and auto-dimming interior mirror. Please call 07999222999, Wales. (T)

123617

ASTON MARTIN V8 VANTAGE



2010, 462 miles, £89,999. Special 'Rose' livery. Numerous extra-cost options. Offered from an extensive private collection. Recently recommissioned by Stratton Motor Company. Built to European specifications and originally ordered with Rose exterior livery, this car boasts numerous special features in addition to the generous inventory of standard equipment. Option highlights include the following: special Speed Yellow paintwork; Racing Yellow leather interior trim; Gunmetal fascia trim; Obsidian Black steering wheel; red brake callipers; front parking sensors; Sports Pack. Please call 07999222999, Wales. (T)

123618

ASTON MARTIN V8 VANTAGE



2010, 361 miles, £89,999. Built to European specification. Special 'Elwood Blue' livery. Numerous extra-cost options. Offered from an extensive private collection. Recently recommissioned by Stratton Motor Company. Built to European specifications, this car boasts numerous special features in addition to the generous inventory of standard equipment. Please call 07999222999, Wales. (T)

123619

ASTON MARTIN DB9



2007, 31,750 miles, £38,995. Petrol, Automatic, Meteorite Silver. Please call 01798874477, South East. (T)

ASTON MARTIN DB9



2007, 61000 miles, £27,500. The car looks fabulous in Beautiful Pentland Green over Sandstorm leather, with wooden centre dash and door cappings. This is the upgraded 2007 variant with enhanced interior and better ride. The car is fitted with 19" 15 spoke Alloy wheels, satellite navigation, H I D headlights, Linn 950 W audio system, bright finish grille, heated seats, heated front screen, auto dim rear view mirror, front and rear parking sensors, front and rear cameras, cruise control, Apple Carplay upgrade to allow use of Google maps etc on the standard screen, silver brake callipers, anti-misting kit fitted to headlights, air conditioning. Please call 07973839935, South East.

123983

ASTON MARTIN DB9



2017, 59 miles, £129,999. Historic last-of-the-line model. Built to European / Swiss specifications. UK Unregistered. Offered from storage. Circa 96 kilometres from new. Undoubtedly, Aston Martin's most successful production car ever, the DB9 can lay claim to being responsible for bringing Aston Martin firmly into the modern era of manufacture and in promoting today's enviable brand recognition. Delivering turbine like engine performance, agile handling and timeless styling, the DB9, last of 9, we are proud to offer is a highly fitting acknowledgement to the long-lived success of the DB9 and would make a fitting addition to any discerning Aston Martin collection. Please call 07999222999, Wales. (T)

123621

NEXT ISSUE:

ON SALE
1 NOVEMBER 2024



ASTON MARTIN MODEL GUIDE

From the DB1 to the DB12, the Vantage to the DBX, this special issue of AMD will include a comprehensive guide to every Aston Martin produced in the company's 111-year history



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ASTON MARTIN IN THE THAMES VALLEY



2003 Aston Martin Vanquish 2+2 in fabulous condition throughout and finished in Tungsten Silver with contrasting pale grey hide interior. This is a beautifully kept 2 owner example that has covered only 36,600 miles. Not expensive at **£49,950**.



2007 Aston Martin DB9 in Midnight blue with contrasting Sandstorm hide interior and the very desirable with rare MANUAL TRANSMISSION, making it a real driver's car. Superb condition with continuous service history. **£33,950**.



2000 Aston Martin DB7 Vantage Coupe with MANUAL TRANSMISSION, finished Porsche Cobalt blue with Pacific blue and Parchment hide interior, 38,000 miles only, near perfect condition, full service history and sensibly priced at **£23,950**.



2006 Aston Martin DB9 Volante in Onyx black with contrasting Sandstorm hide interior. This is a beautiful, well-kept example with just over 55,000 recorded miles and a full-service history. Seriously good value at **£29,950**.



1996 Aston Martin Wide-Bodied Virage Volante, finished in Cheviot red with Magnolia hide interior piped in red. Fabulous condition, 14,000 miles only, full-service history, a very rare find and very collectable. **£ Please enquire.**



1997 Aston Martin Wide-Bodied Virage Volante, finished in Oxford Blue with Cream hide interior piped in blue. Superb condition, 25,000 miles only, complete service history, extremely rare and very collectable. **£ Please enquire.**

'Brightling'



Despite its 10.95mm height, the Trident C60 Pro 300 'Lumière' leaps from your wrist. (Just like it jumped off this page.) Its brightness results from proudly protruding indices and the logo they encircle. Featuring facets finely machined to tolerances of 0.03mm, these mini-monoliths are super-legible in daylight. But it's the Globolight®, the unique luminous ceramic from which they're hewn, that produces their astounding, super-brilliance at night. And inspired this timepiece's name. The light show doesn't end there. Carved from titanium, the 41mm case incorporates a second sapphire crystal displaying its super-accurate movement. But it's not the back of this beautiful tool watch you're buying into. Is it?

Do your research



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