

DBS SUPERLEGGERA TESTED



ASTON MARTIN *driver*

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100% INDEPENDENT MAGAZINE FOR THE ASTON MARTIN OWNER & ENTHUSIAST



VANTAGE N430

BETTER BUY THAN A VANTAGE S?



DB6 vs E-TYPE ICONS OF '60S STYLE



**10 PAGE
HEAD-TO-HEAD
SPECIAL FEATURE**



THE 007 CONNECTION



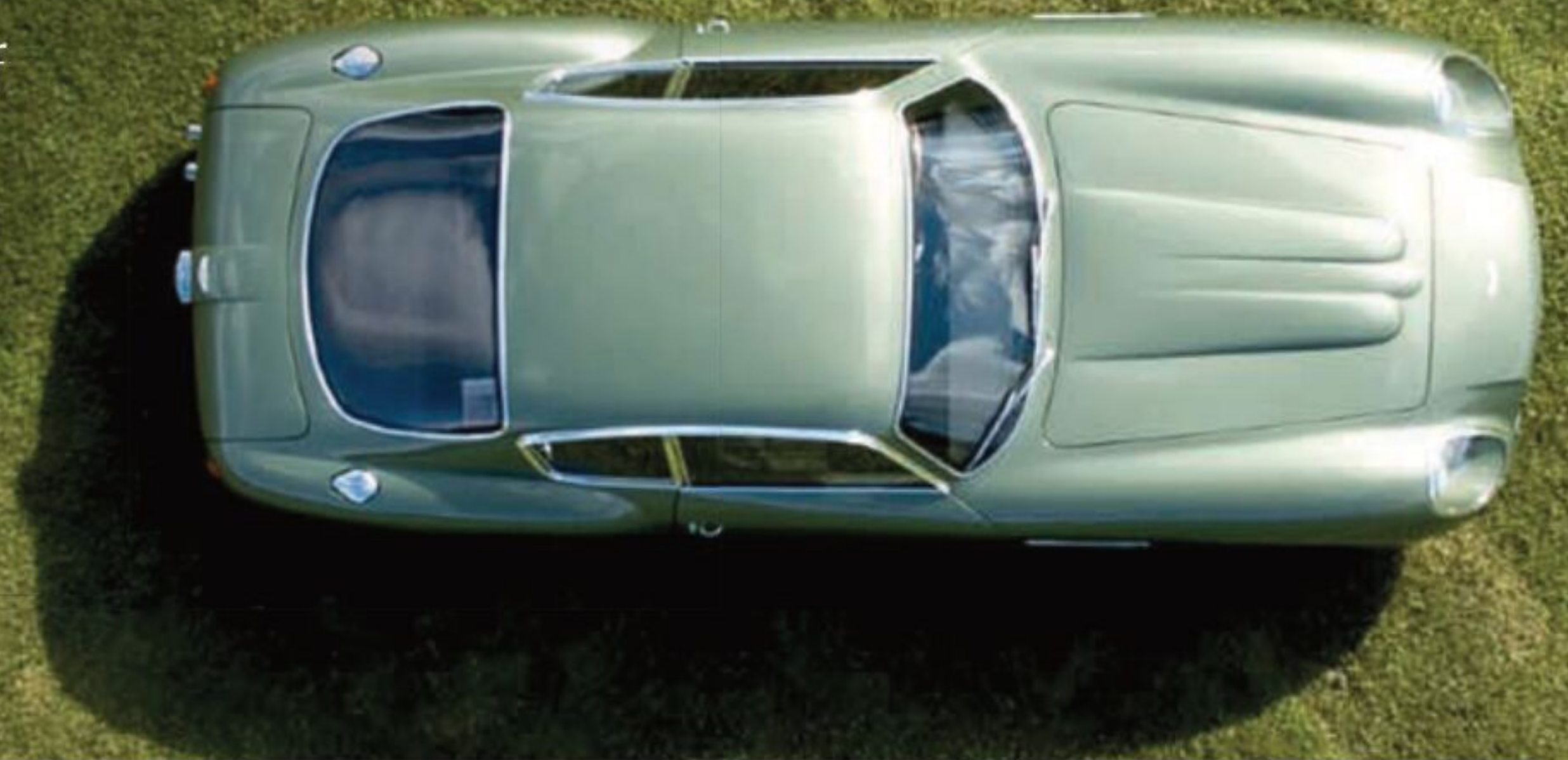
VICTOR GAUNTLETT



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Welcome



Welcome to issue two of Aston Martin Driver - and my last as editor. From issue three, Aston Martin Driver will be edited by Paul Walton - a name familiar to those who have been reading the Viewpoint opinion columns in both this issue and the first. Paul, former editor of Jaguar World, is an experienced editor who will develop Aston Martin Driver, featuring even more of the key models which fostered our love of the brand. For this issue, Paul has pitted the much-loved Jaguar E-type against the last of the Touring-shaped Aston Martin family, the DB6. Turn to page 66 to see whether old loyalties remain...

In issue two, we're building on the success of issue one - as evidenced by the large number of subscribers we've managed to accrue already. Thank you each and every one - and thank you to all who have bought this issue either online or in a shop as a single issue. We hope you'll be tempted to subscribe too.

We'll be taking a look at the inextricable link between Aston Martin and the world's best known secret agent, James Bond. Rob Hawkins has driven the competition-focused Vantage N430 special edition, while we've got road tests on the DBX and DBS Superleggera to boot. We've also profiled the man whose input ensured Aston Martin would remain with us into the 21st century, Victor Gauntlett, in the first of a new series looking at the people behind the brand.

All this, as well as our industry-leading news and market assessments, summarising all you need to know about the world of Aston Martin. Enjoy!

Sam Skelton

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UP FRONT NEWS

INVESTIGATION DROPPED

Red Bull Racing has stated that it will not be escalating accusations of copying against Aston Martin's AMR22 Formula 1 car, after the latter team unveiled a B-spec version which bore striking similarity to the Red Bull RB18.

Aston Martin had started the season with a unique design, but appeared at the Spanish Grand Prix with a car which appeared to show significant similarities with the Red Bull car. Given that Aston Martin has recently signed several former Red Bull personnel, speculation rose that intellectual property may have been shared.

Former Red Bull Head of Aerodynamics Dan Fellows was recruited as Aston Martin's new Technical Director, leading to court action by Red Bull. Both parties would subsequently agree to a deal that saw Fellows employed by April.

Red Bull boss Christian Horner told Sky Sports F1 that "imitation is the greatest form of flattery at the end of the day. What is permissible is – we see it up and down the paddock – individuals move from team to team after a garden leave period. What they take in their head, that's fair game. That's their knowledge. What isn't fair, and what is totally unacceptable, which we wouldn't accept, if there has been any transfer of IP at all."

While the FIA was able to clear Aston Martin of any copying courtesy of paperwork showing proof of their concept predating the employment of any Red Bull staff, Red Bull confirmed that it would carry out internal investigations to confirm no data had left its facilities. Those investigations appear to have



ASTON TAKES VICTORY IN GTE CLASS AT LE MANS

been completed, with nothing proved. “The current state of affairs is that we can’t prove anything specifically,” said Helmut Marko, advisor to Red Bull. “We’re not pursuing it because we don’t see Aston Martin as a direct competitor for us. If you can’t prove it in black and white, you shouldn’t.”

Aston Martin’s Chief Technical Officer Andrew Green denied that any data had been sourced from outside the company.

“All I can say is that at no stage did we ever receive any data from any team, from anyone. The FIA came in and did a thorough investigation, examined all the data leading up, in the history of this car, they interviewed all the people involved, and concluded that it was completely independent development. This car was conceived in the middle of last year, as a dual-route with the launch car, and the majority of the releases were made before anybody from Red Bull even turned up.”



Aston Martin and partner team TF Sport took victory in the GTE class at the 2022 Le Mans 24hr race. The victory – in the class’s largest ever grid of 23 cars – is TF Sport’s second in three years, after victory in 2020.

The winning car was driven by a team consisting of Ben Keating, Henrique Chaves and double FIA GT World Champion Marco Sørensen. All three are first time victors at Le Mans. The victory also puts the team at the head of its class in the FIA World Endurance Championship. The event marked the fifth year of Le Mans participation for the Vantage GTE.

“This is a great result and performance from TF Sport,” said a delighted Ben Keating on the victory. “We’ve had no penalties, no mistakes, no trips to the gravel or anything.”

A third place finish for North-West AMR in the GTE-Am class completed a strong Le Mans performance for the marque, with drivers Paul Dalla Lana, Nicki Thiim and David Pittard having previously let the GTE-Am class in the 1000 Miles of Sebring and the 6 Hours of Spa. “We are competing in the full championship and

there are a lot of guest entries here with very fast drivers,” said Pittard of his first ever Le Mans race. “But the consistency of both Aston Martins and our driver line-ups have brought us up. It’s been a roller-coaster of emotions because after half an hour I’d have been happy to even finish in the top 10. But for 20 hours we were fighting for a place in the top three. This is not the team’s first rodeo, so they have kept me calm. It’s been amazing, one of the best weeks of my life.”

Lawrence Stroll, Executive Chairman, Aston Martin said, “To enjoy this kind of success at the top level of endurance racing is testimony to the quality of the Vantage GTE, the TF Sport team and the Vantage road car that is the basis of the race car. Congratulations to Ben, Marco and Henrique on a faultless race and their first win at Le Mans.

Aston Martin was born 109-years ago out of a love of racing and competing at all levels of motorsport is at the heart of Aston Martin’s DNA. It is fitting that Vantage, our most focused performance sports car is a true success with our customers on the road and track - Vantage F1® Edition, V12 Vantage, Vantage GTE – all winners.” ▶

BRITISH BULLDOG TOPS ITALIAN CONCOURS



The Aston Martin Bulldog has become the youngest car ever to win the prestigious Coppa d'Oro award at the Concorso d'Eleganza in Villa d'Este on the shore of Lake Como.

One of the two highest awards available, it is voted by all entrants to the concours and denotes their choice of the cars on show.

Restored in the UK by Classic Motor Cars in Bridgnorth, Shropshire, the

Bulldog was a concept car engineered in 1979 to showcase the capabilities of the new engineering workshop at Aston's Newport Pagnell headquarters. Aston Martin had planned to build up to 25 examples, but following the appointment of Victor Gauntlett as Chairman it was deemed too costly a project and only the initial concept car was ever built. The restoration was project managed by Victor Gauntlett's son Richard, on behalf

of American owner Phillip Sarofim, and has taken two years.

Phillip Sarofim said: "The win at Ville D'Este is a momentous occasion - to win such a prestigious and historic award on its first concours is a testament to CMCs incredible work and the wild vision of and engineering skill of Aston Martin. The next challenge is to get the car to 200 mph, and we will do that later this year at a location which we will announce shortly."

Tim Griffin, the Managing Director of Classic Motor Cars in Bridgnorth, said "The Italian award is a tribute to the team at CMC who will be over the moon about the win."

Over 6000 hours of work went into the restoration of the Bulldog. Classic Motor Cars can be contacted at www.classic-motor-cars.co.uk, or 01746 765804.

AIRBUS DOUBLES CHOPPERS



A second run of helicopters is to be produced as a collaboration between Aston Martin and Airbus Corporate Holdings. The run – which follows a series of 15 announced in 2020 – will see a further 15 produced as 14 of the initial run have already been sold.

With orders from Asia, Europe, Latin America, North America and New Zealand, Airbus CEO Frederic Lemos told journalists that "We really did not imagine that the market would move so fast" at a press conference at the EBACE business aviation summit in Geneva. "There's no question that bringing together our values of excellence

and quality with Aston Martin's commitment to high performance automotive elegance resulted in a helicopter that excites customers"

Available with a choice of four interior and exterior designs, each Aston Martin Edition ACH130 is trimmed in the same manner as the DB11 road car.

V8/11491/RCA



1976 Aston Martin V8

- Matching numbers automatic holding its original registration (OYL 892R). -
- Ordered new in "Cairngorm Brown over Fawn" to the UK, where it has remained its entire life. -
- Original interior in superb condition. Presented in a fantastic "oh so 70's" period colour combination. -
- 82,858 recorded miles warranted through M.O.T certificates dating back to 1986. -
- Fastidiously documented history of over 150 pages with maintenance invoices dating back to 1982. -
- Invoices include sill replacement and chassis works by Aston Martin Works. -
- Documented bare metal repaint to original livery by specialist Stratton Motor Company in 2017. -
- Attractively priced V8 ready for the open road. -

£ 95,000

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REAL 007 ASTON TO BE SOLD

An Aston Martin DB5 formerly owned by the late Sir Sean Connery is to be sold in order to raise money for a philanthropy fund set up in his name. The winning bidder will also be driven in the car by former World Championship racer and friend of Sir Sean, Sir Jackie Stewart.

Sir Sean bought the car because he wanted to be able to enjoy driving a

DB5 without all the heavy gadgets of the film, according to his son Jason. "Dad did tell me that driving the movie cars, all laden down with the gadgets, especially the machine guns in the front, made the car really front-heavy and turning at slow speed was a Herculean task, so driving a standard model without gadgets was a joy. He loved how well balanced it was." Sir Sean did

reportedly wish on occasion that his car had the ejector seat, though his son was too diplomatic to ask as to the intended recipient...

Bought from a specialist, Sir Sean had it repainted in the same Silver Birch as the cars used in Goldfinger and Thunderball. The upcoming auction will be held at the Monterey Jet Centre in California, on August 18.

NEW CEO FOR ASTON

Former Aston Martin Chief Executive Tobias Moers has been replaced with Amedeo Felisa, formerly of Ferrari.

Following reports of reduced sales in the first quarter of 2022, Aston Martin chairman Lawrence Stroll has stated that Moers, formerly of AMG, has completed the first phase of Aston Martin's revival but that new leadership is necessary for

the second phase. Under Moers, quality improved, and many staff were replaced with those who had worked for him at AMG. It's not yet known what changes Felisa will bring, but the 75 year old was well-respected as a mark of continuity at Ferrari and has come out of retirement to take the top job at Aston Martin. He brings a former Ferrari colleague; Roberto Fedeli, as his Chief Technology Officer.





ASTON MARTIN

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V8 Vantage (2005 - 2018)	£705	£740	£705	£740	£825	£740	£705	£740	£705	£895
DB9, Rapide, DBS (2007 - 2014), V12 Vantage (2010-2018)	£805	£840	£805	£840	£920	£840	£805	£840	£805	£990



With the DBX now a firmly established product accounting for half of all Aston Martin's global sales, we get behind the wheel to discover the reasons behind its success

ALL-PURPOSE EXCELLENCE

ON TEST: DBX

WORDS: RICHARD AUCOCK
PHOTOGRAPHY: MOTORING RESEARCH



ON TEST

ASTON MARTIN DBX

Silverstone... where else to drive a pivotal Aston Martin?. The company has a test centre here after all, along with its own circuit – perfect for the high-speed honing of its famously sporting cars. With the Aston Martin Racing F1 team based just over the road, the sporting science couldn't be more perfectly set. Levels of excitement through the roof, I stepped up into Aston Martin's largest creation.

Yes, stepped up, not down. Because, of course, the pivotal Aston Martin in question is an SUV, not a sports car. Meet the DBX, the boldest step into a new area the company has made since the angular Lagonda of the 1970s. Only this time, rather than being a niche range-topping curio, Aston Martin plans for the DBX to double its sales, matching the entire sports car range for volume, plus even more on top.

Years ahead of its Italian rival, Ferrari, Aston Martin has given us a large and luxurious sporting SUV. And, after even more years of anticipation, I was finally getting behind its wheel.

The car had already stopped me in my tracks. Walking up to Aston Martin's swish Stowe building, I saw that the PR team had placed a sparkling clean, factory-fresh model right outside, beautifully finished in Hyper Red – a name as brilliant as the colour itself. I was meant to walk straight in and sign-on. Instead, I walked over to the DBX and soaked it up.

It's a big car, alright. This may not come across in the images, but it's Range Rover-sized: more than five metres long, nearly two metres wide. You tower over the sports cars, whereas this towered over me.

However, unlike a Lamborghini Urus, it's not brutal or brusque. Aston Martin chief creative officer Marek Reichman's sports cars are a great calling card, and



The DBX represents Aston Martin's first foray into the SUV market, a decision that's already bringing its rewards



his team has expertly transferred these lines across to the DBX. In describing the shape, he right away points out how it subscribes to the 'golden ratio': the science of perfect proportions whereby (to paraphrase) the body takes up two thirds of the mass, with the windows on top taking up another third.

As you'll see from the images, the team also aimed to position the visual mass over the rear wheels, just like in an Aston Martin sports car. This fastback look is combined with an ultra-long wheelbase, both boosting interior space but also giving the chance to design a long, sleek and elegant roofline. It even has frameless doors, just like a sports car.

The detailing is divine, the paint is incredibly rich and deep, the metalwork is crisp and the curves are sculptural and flowing. There's nothing awkward about it and the DBX has incredible presence, even when sitting quietly within a deserted Silverstone race circuit. It's going to look stunning in Mayfair, Monaco and St. Moritz.

MULTI-FUNCTIONAL

Time for my briefing. Which, in typical Aston Martin style, is quick, efficient and sensible. Because we now can, my first



task is to go off-roading, on part of the Silverstone rally stage where many future stars were first trained. A quick hose-down later, we're to then venture out on the circuit – in the very same vehicle, with the same wheels and tyres – before I depart in the DBX for 24 hours with the family, trying out Aston's new SUV in the real world.

And that's why my first drive of the DBX – that very same Hyper Red model I'd been ogling – lasted 0.9 miles. It was around Silverstone's perimeter road, from Aston Martin's test facility to an off-road section. It passed this brief test with flying colours: in my notes, I scribbled words including 'plush... well-weighted... tight... integrity... luxurious'. It was already clear this is not simply an identikit big SUV.

Then, without even a breather, I set the air suspension into full off-road mode (raising it 45mm – it looks great) and went off-roading for 25 minutes. The DBX does things no Aston has ever done before. Gripping with assurance up muddy slopes, descending steep drops with control, fording through deep water, it was imperious. Okay, it's not a patch on

what Land Rover gets us doing, and no owner would ever do this – yet it can if they want.

Or maybe they might. Aston Martin later told me about research that showed most of its sports car owners also owned a luxury SUV. Now, instead of going to a rival brand, they can complement their two-seater stable with an 'everyday' Aston Martin. You know how, in the countryside, you often see filthy nearly-new Range Rovers ferrying families to the local school or store? Maybe we'll now start to see DBX dailies joining the ranks...

Off-road prowess confirmed, it was then time for the exciting bit: the circuit. Although it weighs 2.25 tonnes, the big DBX has ample power (550bhp) courtesy of the same 4.0-litre V8 found in the Vantage. It does 0-62mph in 4.5 seconds, delivered consistently thanks to permanent all-wheel drive complete with an electronic rear limited-slip differential. There's also a nine-speed automatic gearbox, with big, beefy (fixed) paddle-shifters for circuit work. Oh, and just like the Vantage, a one-piece carbon fibre propshaft connects the rear wheels to the transmission.

Traditionalists might disapprove, but the DBX accounted for around half of all new Aston Martins sold worldwide in 2021



ON TEST

ASTON MARTIN DBX

ON-TRACK TEST

Aston Martin's test track is located within the main Silverstone circuit. I vaguely remembered it – and it all came flooding back during the sighting laps because I was sat up higher than I ever have been on-track at Silverstone before. Confident I knew where I was going, I could instead focus on the DBX's pure and linear steering (none of the fake over-heaviness of some rivals), its roll-free agility (48-volt electronic anti-roll is standard) and, of course, that wonderful engine.

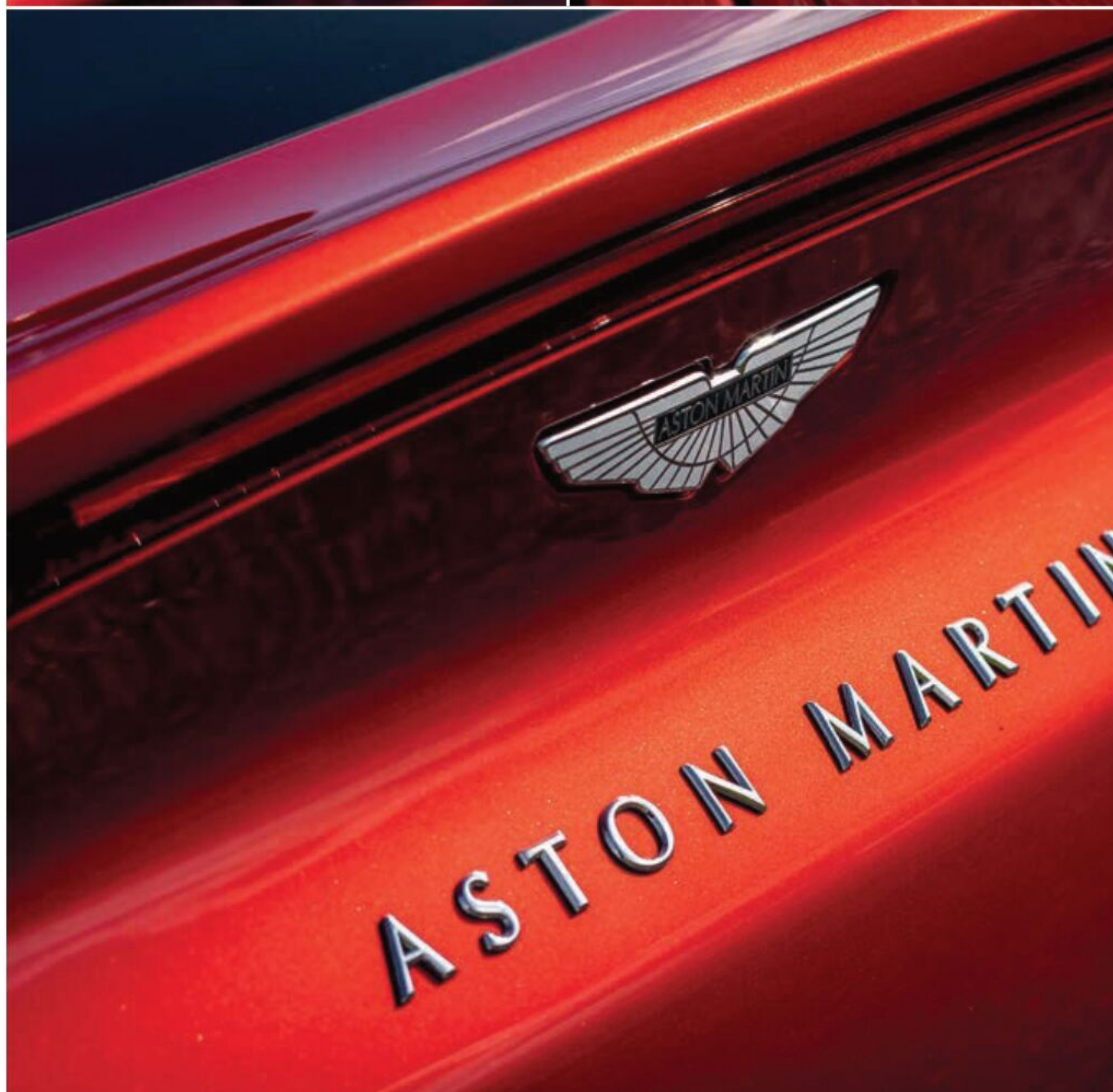
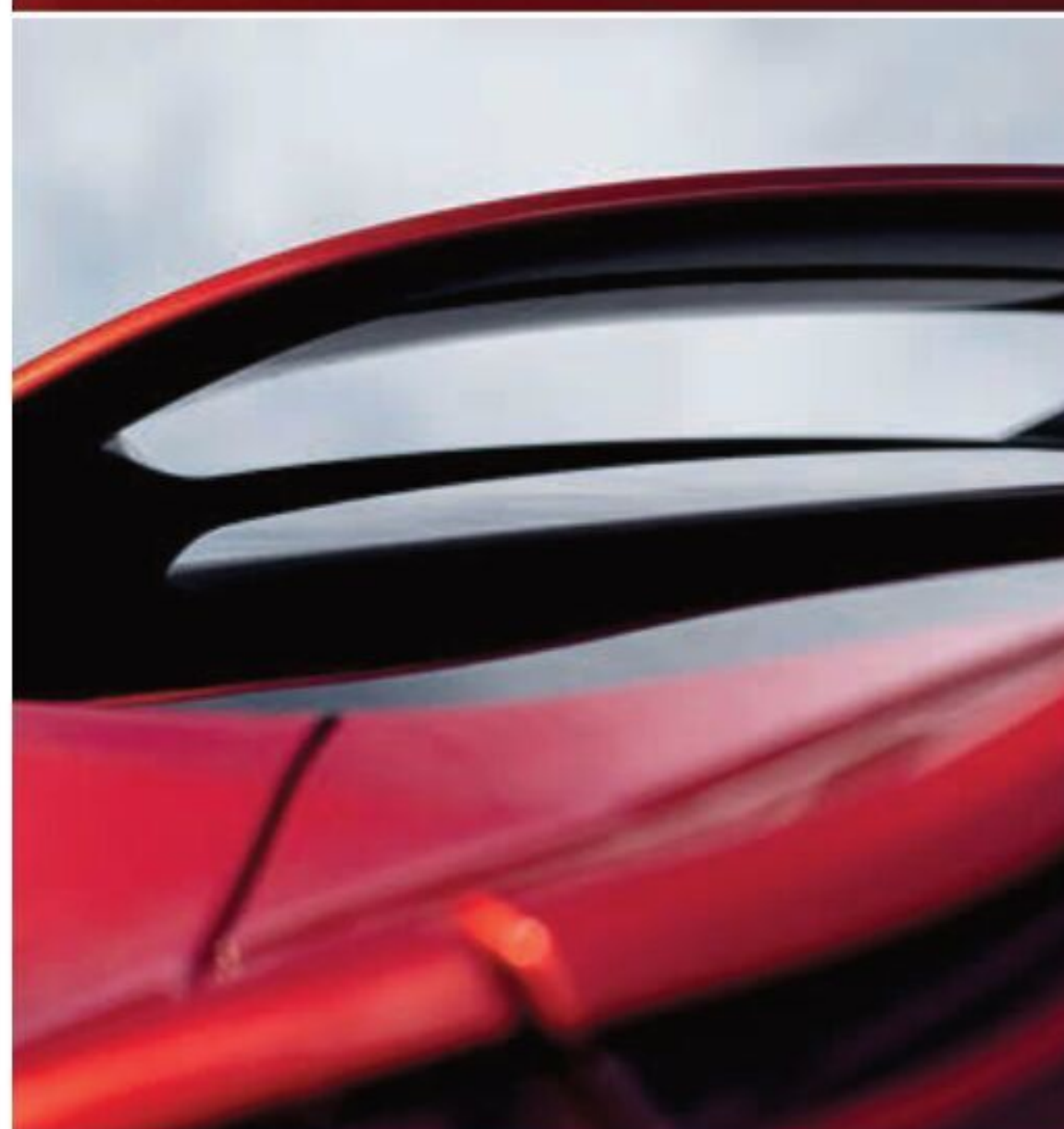
It's unashamedly a V8, with a characterful rort and growl. In full Sport+ mode, the exhausts pop and crackle brilliantly. They're not just loud and anti-social for the sake of it, but naturally effervescent and naughty. The engine rewards you for revving it, with a noticeable extra high-rev punch: a proper sports car engine in an SUV.

Owners who take their DBX on-track won't be disappointed, and probably will be surprised. You can hustle it and it doesn't cry for mercy. It feels agile and responsive, biting into corners and, once you get the hang of it, power-oversteering out of them. A heavy SUV shouldn't be this pointily confident; it's only the wilting brakes that will remind you what an enormous machine this is. Do as I did, have a cool-down lap, then press on again for another ten minutes of enjoyment.

There was now just one thing left to do: depart Silverstone for my 24 hours of driving the DBX in, once again, the same Hyper Red car I'd just been skidding around the circuit. How about that for a track-to-town-centre crossover? But first, after such an intense morning so far, I had to pause and take stock of what I had the (glass) key for.

FAMILY FRIENDLY

The DBX is an 'event' car. It has presence because of its size, and its lines, and its incredible paint quality; but flipping out the same door handle as Aston's sports cars immediately ties it to the rest of the family (as do frameless windows front and rear). Door sills are cut away and flat, so it's easier to get in and out (and keep your trousers clean) and the immediate impression is one of pure luxury. It smells delicious, because of all the





TECH SPECS

Price: £158,000
Engine: 4.0-litre V8 twin-turbo
Power: 550bhp
Torque: 516lb.ft.
Gearbox: 9-speed auto
0-62mph: 4.5 secs
Top speed: 181mph
Fuel economy: 19.7mpg
CO2: 269g/km
Weight: 2245kg
Length: 5039mm
Width: 1998mm
Height: 1680mm

leather, which extends far beyond the seats to virtually the entire dashboard. I love the pinched, stitched lines and it all has a hand-crafted feel that's very hands-on. The centrepiece is the oval centre console with Aston's smartest media system yet, complete with bright widescreen display – although, infuriatingly, it isn't a touchscreen. Blame the Mercedes-Benz-derived tech for that (and curse the fiddly trackpad and rotary wheel).

It's such a stylish and intricately-designed interior, you can't help but admire the craftsmanship. Everywhere you look, there's an interesting detail to enjoy. This is all-bespoke and the driving position feels sporty too, with the pedals stretched ahead and a feeling you're sitting within it, not perched atop. The steering wheel is beautiful to hold. Being an Aston, though, it also has a multitude of fiddly touch-sensitive buttons on the centre console, because nothing's perfect.

In the rear, it's airy and accommodating, helped by a huge panoramic glass roof. It's easily the most spacious Aston ever, with a wheelbase of more than three metres serving up loads of legroom. The 632-litre boot is accommodating, if a bit shallow (and also so richly trimmed, you won't really want to put a muddy dog in there).

And so, into the real world, for the day-to-day DBX experience. The wonderful engine continues its V8 hum in the background, ever-present, but in the right



ON TEST

ASTON MARTIN DBX

way. Steering continues to be natural as well – responsive but not grabby, with a very natural, sog-free response and careful accuracy. This is a good thing, as the DBX feels wide on the road, a large car that needs precise placement.

Ride quality has firm undertones at lower speeds, and it can crack audibly into potholes. This grumbly knobble is due to the 22-inch wheels, and it does have a more flowing air-suspended feel as speeds rise. There can still be an audible thud at times, though, perhaps just to remind you this is a sporting SUV rather than a wafting Range Rover.

Even so, it has waft-along effortlessness to make long journeys a breeze. Refinement on the motorway is excellent, and the high seating position feels very elegant – the view down the creased, curvaceous bonnet is regal. Body control is excellent and you can fling it around curving A-roads without unsettling your passengers thanks to the uncanny lack of body-roll. The general poise is excellent.

Back home, we loaded up for a day-trip. The kids loved it: they had acres of space, a great view out and the high-end luxuries were unlike anything they'd ever seen.

It was the first time we'd ever been able to go out in an Aston Martin as a family and I lost count of how many times they exclaimed 'whoa'. Not to mention the squeals when I squirted it.

The drive was brilliantly soothing, and I just wanted to carry on. The DBX is a car you won't tire of in a hurry (particularly if you can swallow the 16mpg average that I recorded).

The family who stopped me in a multi-storey car park said it all: "What a magnificent car." You wouldn't get that reaction from a Bentayga. Some posh SUVs feel a bit like mongrels. The Aston

HOW ASTON MARTIN MAKES THE DBX HANDLE



The hi-tech all-wheel drive chassis is cleverly designed to ensure superb on-tarmac cornering and minimal body roll

Martin DBX is a thoroughbred, as purely focused on being a super-SUV as a Range Rover is on being a luxury SUV. It's exactly what the doctor ordered. He can consider it a job well done.

OUR VERDICT

Five years in development, and you can tell. The Aston Martin DBX feels a cut above other posh SUVs – and convincingly feels like a genuine sporting super-SUV.

It looks striking (wait until you see it in the metal), and the interior is magnificent, while practicality is like nothing the

company's ever made. Yes, the ride can be a bit too 'sporting', and Aston still hasn't fully resolved its fiddly infotainment and scattered buttons. It feels very big on British roads at times, too. But

the highs outweigh this: a magnificent V8, surprisingly entertaining handling, impeccable refinement and an overall feel of in-built, high-end luxury. The car that had to be right, is right. **AMD**



Forget rear-wheel drive cars with a clever limited-slip diff and the magic sauce of an expert dynamics team. With all-wheel drive SUVs, there's a huge amount of extra hardware to sort, which makes that expert dynamics team work all the more intensively.

The DBX's four-wheel drive system has electronically-controlled centre and rear differentials. It uses adaptive triple-volume air suspension, which can vary in both ride height and spring rate. And there's also a 48-volt electronic anti-roll system, plus an endlessly-tweakable electronic stability control system and custom 'quick-ratio' electronic power steering.

It's all hung off cast-aluminium suspension mountings with double-wishbone split-link front and multi-link rear suspension. These are uncorrupted by anti-roll bars, thanks to the 48-volt system – which is so powerful, it can reduce body-roll levels to those comparable with a DB11. But there's finesse within it too, and it can allow individual

wheels to use almost the entire range of suspension travel. Aston Martin says this is good for on-road ride comfort, but also for off-roading, where full wheel articulation is required.

Even Aston Martin freely admits the engineering team has had to work on things it's never needed to before – such as hill descent control, which lets the DBX negotiate slippery slopes in a controlled manner. The Bosch-supplied ESC system also has roll-over stability control, while Aston Martin quotes a 500mm wading depth. A clever addition here is a breather pipe on the electronic rear differential. Why? So owners can reverse a trailer into water while launching a boat, without damage.

The air suspension allows ride height to be raised by 45mm, or lowered by 50mm to make it easier to access when parked. Lifting the suspension increases the approach angle from 22.2 to 25.7 degrees, and the departure angle from 24.3 to 27.1 degrees. As the

company says, it gives the DBX the ability 'to tackle terrain that no Aston Martin has contemplated before'.

They had to go testing in a different way too, heading into muddy forests and gravel roads for the first time. For a bit of fun – and for honing off-road dynamics – one test location was the Walters Arena rally stage, previously known for forming part of the WRC Wales Rally GB. Fittingly, it's located just north of the St Athan factory where the DBX is built.

But the DBX has, like the firm's sports cars, also been honed for the track – probably just one of a handful of SUVs to be given a circuit-based focus as well. This is thanks in part to the off-road all-wheel drive system; the electronic active centre diff can freely vary torque between front and wheels, from a nominal 47:53 rearwards split, to nearly 100 per cent of torque being sent rearwards. Once there, it can also be distributed left-to-right through the electronic LSD, optimising both traction and dynamic response (think: drifting).

There is a total of six driving modes to adjust all of the gadgetry and hardware, including Sport and Sport+ for on-road driving, Terrain and Terrain+ for off-roading. Drivers can also customise multiple settings, or turn it all off entirely (again, think: drifting).

Aston Martin worked with Pirelli (the Italian company was the official technical partner for DBX tyre development) to create three bespoke tyres for the car. The summer P Zero is the default rubber, with Pirelli Scorpion Zero all-season and Scorpion Winter tyres also available.

As for stopping this 2.3-tonne super-SUV, six-piston aluminium calipers and ventilated, grooved steel brakes measuring a massive 410mm (that's over 16 inches!) at the front and 390mm at the rear are fitted. This, according to Aston Martin, gives the DBX braking performance 'on a par with the mighty DBS Superleggera'. Expect carbon ceramic discs to arrive in due course, too.

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ASTON MARTIN *driver*

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LIVING WITH THE DB7

If you've always dreamed of an Aston Martin and assumed they were out of reach then think again. The DB7 is currently an affordable prospect, but what's the cheapest Aston like to live with?

WORDS: PAUL WAGER





OWNERSHIP

ASTON MARTIN DB7

The Aston Martin DB7 sits alongside controversial classics like the MGC, and Triumph Stag as a car which divides opinion like few others.

By the moneyed DB4/5/6 brigade, it's often looked down upon as a Ford/Jaguar hybrid lacking the genes required of a 'real' Aston Martin, yet those of us well versed in the brand's history will be well aware that without it, the marque simply wouldn't be with us today.

For perspective, one need only consider the comment of Aston Martin's erstwhile owner, the extravagantly pinstriped Victor Gauntlett who when asked by a financial journalist how he proposed to make a small fortune out of Aston Martin simply quipped "start with a large one!"

At that time Aston Martin could number its annual sales in the hundreds and when the marque was finally acquired by Ford in 1991 to sit alongside Jaguar, Land Rover, Volvo and Lincoln in its Premier Automotive Group, it was obvious that volumes would need to increase.

Salvation came from an unlikely direction, namely a cast-off proposal for a Jaguar XJS replacement which had reached the pre-production stage before being canned by Ford on cost grounds.

The abandoned project had been designed to fit the same wheelbase as the XJS and when stylist Keith Helfet, in a moment of curiosity overlaid his design on the blueprints of the XJS it was found to be a remarkably good fit.

Helfet showed his findings to Jaguar engineering chief Jim Randle who then

presented it at a board meeting of the TWR/Jaguar joint venture, JaguarSport which manufactured the XJ220 as well as producing the XJR road cars. TWR boss Tom Walkinshaw liked the idea sufficiently to propose that his firm build the car in limited numbers to replace the XJ220. Agreement from Jaguar was duly received and the project was given the title 'Project XX.'

The result was that TWR worked with Jaguar engineers to develop the car for production on the XJS chassis, the TWR team being headed by Ian Callum, later to become Jaguar design chief. Changes made at this stage included losing the wraparound windscreen treatment and smooth rear end in favour of a conventional bumper and windscreen, while the famous upside-down Mazda



323 tail lights were also added and the glass area and windscreen position were both altered.

Eventually Jaguar decided to pursue a simpler design which would be cheaper and more efficient to build – that eventually seeing the light of day as the XK8. According to Helfet, Walkinshaw then approached Ford management and suggested that the new car could be built as an Aston Martin with very little change. At the time Aston lacked the resources to develop its own car from the ground up and chairman Walter Hayes was keen to introduce a smaller, lighter and more modern car than its Virage. He had scouted around the Ford empire and ended up at TWR which at the time had been creating prototypes and one-off models for Jaguar but recollected that neither the Jaguar F-Type or anything at TWR was quite what he had in mind. The potentially surplus TWR assembly facilities at Bloxham were however, of interest... if only Hayes could find a suitable product to build there. ►



“According to Keith Helfet, Tom Walkinshaw approached Ford management and suggested that the abandoned Jaguar could be built as an Aston Martin.”



OWNERSHIP

ASTON MARTIN DB7

Interviewed in 1993, Hayes explained why the entry-level car Aston Martin needed couldn't be created at sensible cost at the firm's traditional Newport Pagnell base: it cost £19,000 to build each engine for the Virage, with the entire car taking 56 hours to assemble and swallowing up ten entire hides for the trim.

The decision was taken and with little more than a change of front grille Project XX became Project NPX [standing for Newport Pagnell eXperimental]. And it was Project NPX which went into production at TWR's Bloxham facility – then named Aston Martin Oxford – as the Aston Martin DB7.

In its Aston Martin incarnation, the DB7 lost the twin-turbo engine and four-wheel drive set-up of the original Jaguar prototype, in favour of an Eaton M90 supercharged development of the Jaguar AJ6 straight-six engine and a rear-drive layout.

This was partly at the insistence of Walter Hayes, who felt that a straight-six engine would provide a more distinct link to DB-series Astons of the past. The project had initially been developed to use the Jaguar V12 and using the taller AJ6 engine required developing a new front subframe holding the engine 30mm lower to clear the bonnet.

Intriguingly, the smaller 3.2-litre version of the Jaguar engine was chosen for the Aston Martin, instead of the 4-litre unit, apparently in order to create a higher-revving unit with more sporting appeal. The DB7 ran 40 per cent more supercharger boost than Jaguar's own forced-induction engine and with 335bhp, the DB7 was up on power compared to Jaguar's own supercharged versions of the 4-litre AJ16 engine making for a quick car: driving through a Getrag five-speed box 0-60 came up in 5.8 seconds with a top speed of 165 mph.

The DB7 was unique for Aston Martin in that it was a steel-panelled car with composite wings, bonnet, nosecone, sills and bootlid where its predecessors had been largely alloy-panelled but was also the firm's first monocoque car: all the previous models had relied on a separate chassis. This also had an important bearing on production costs and enabled the firm to market it at £78,500 when the



OWNERSHIP

ASTON MARTIN DB7

Virage had kicked off at £133,000. Still an expensive car but much more accessible than previous models and something which contributed to its relatively high sales.

The steel bodyshells were constructed at Motor Panels in Coventry and then transported by road to Bloxham, where they were joined by the composite panels supplied from TWR's Draycott facility and the seats provided by Aston itself in Newport Pagnell.

The car was launched at the 1993 Geneva show and production began in September 1994, with the Volante convertible introduced in January 1996. In 1999, criticism of the Jaguar-derived powertrain was silenced when Aston Martin introduced the Vantage, powered by a mighty 5.9-litre V12 engine and good for 186mph thanks to its crushing 420bhp.

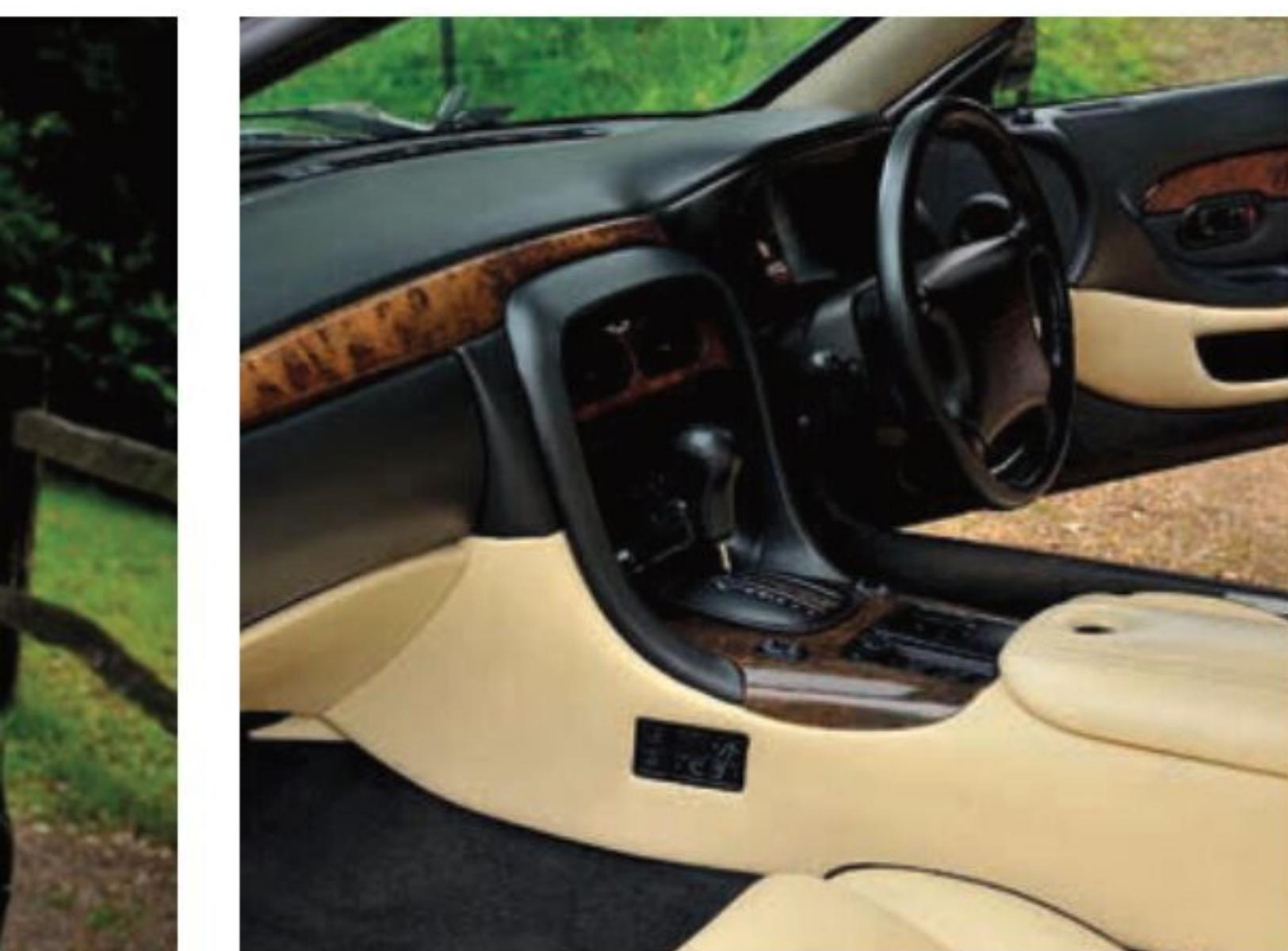
Unsurprisingly, sales of the Jaguar-engined car were hit hard and it was discontinued in mid-1999. The V12 was accompanied by styling changes, the most obvious of which was an enlarged intake and front grille, with the lights revised to suit. The Citroën CX door mirrors were replaced by Jaguar items, while the suspension was also revised.

From 2000 the Vantage was offered with an optional ZF five-speed automatic, with a 'Touchtronic' option offering manual shifting with steering wheel buttons.

In October 2002 the updated GT (manual) and GTA (automatic) versions of the V12 were launched, good for 435bhp with the manual box and 420bhp in automatic form.

190 GTs and 112 GTAs were made. Sitting on updated suspension 20% stiffer with bigger Brembo brakes, the GT models are identified by mesh grilles, bonnet vents, boot spoiler and their 18-inch wheels, as well as special aerodynamic undertrays. The GTs also received a bigger-bore exhaust but with an internal valve to retain a civilised note when not under full throttle, while the transmission received a twin-plate clutch and a quick-shift linkage.

In January 2003 the limited-edition Zagato-styled car was unveiled and in 2004 production was discontinued, the DB7 being replaced by the Gaydon-built DB9. ►



OWNERSHIP

ASTON MARTIN DB7



OWNING THEM

With the straight-six DB7 introduced at £78,500 and the Vantage a cool £94,500, these cars were priced up with the finest exotics back in the day so it's not unreasonable to expect them to come with some of the running costs of top-end cars. In practice though, that's offset to some extent by the huge amount of Ford

and Jaguar componentry hiding under the sleek bodywork while the passage of time has seen things like 18-inch wheels become commonplace, meaning items like tyres aren't the cost they were when the cars were new.

Rather than the potential running costs though, perhaps the first question a potential owner should ask themselves

is whether the DB7 is the car for them. Dynamically, the DB7 is much more grand tourer than outright sports car, yet this is offset by a ride which is stiffer than the Jaguar it's based on. They feel like big cars on the road and are quickly out of their depth when hurled around like an MX-5.

Perhaps surprisingly, it's the six-cylinder car which is the more relaxing



lack the precision of assembly found in, for example, a mass-produced Porsche. Build quality can be characterised as being broadly on a par with '90s Alfa Romeos in that there will always be a squeak or rattle somewhere and one or two little jobs which need attending to. As legions of Alfa fans will attest, this is all part of the enjoyment of ownership and if you're reasonably practical then you can generally keep on top of things yourself.

In fact, for the DIY-minded owner these cars need not be too daunting and once you've plucked up the courage to get stuck in, you'll find it comes apart just like any other car: for example, the inner door trims are held in place by the usual screws and bolts, removal being a 10-minute job.

The Aston-specific dashboard and console assembly is similarly easy to dismantle although its hand-built nature makes it fragile – and you damage the veneered parts at your peril, since used parts are both rare and costly.

The interior third brake light is notoriously weak and the retaining tabs are usually snapped, meaning it no longer sits level. The solution is either to glue it in place with Sikaflex-style mastic, or simply remove it entirely and sit it centrally on the rear shelf where it will stay put without needing to be fixed in place.

And speaking of brake lights, the switch on the brake pedal is known to fail and when this happens it will be impossible to shift the automatic out of Park. Your local Aston Martin dealer will happily relieve you of £250 for the component, or you can simply buy a used XJS/XK8 switch for a fifth of that and it's a quick job to transfer just the switch rather than the entire bracket.

Unless they're garaged, many DB7s will have a whiff of damp to them and there are several reasons for this. One which is often mentioned is poorly sealed windscreens, with the flimsy scuttle panel plastic trim also allowing leaks if it's not fitted properly. The door seals are also fragile and are one of the few costly Aston-specific parts with no Jaguar alternative. Used parts are around but new seals are an outrageous £925 each, so it pays not to damage them.

A third cause of a stale-smelling cabin is the heater, which can suffer with the



to drive: the savage power of the V12 easily overwhelms the chassis and it's something of an unlikely hot rod. In a straight line on a dry road it's brutally fast even in automatic form, yet this translates to a car which is hard work in the wet and in everyday traffic. The Ford-sourced traction control is a basic system which lacks the processing power to efficiently

curb the wheelspin and even on premium tyres the car is a lively companion on a damp road. It is of course great fun but if that kind of thing isn't your cup of tea then either the straight-six DB7 or even the Jaguar XK8 may be more palatable.

As for the practical aspects of ownership, it's important to remember that these were hand-built cars and as such



matrix itself clogging up and from failing blower fans, the result being that the interior never gets properly warm or dry. The fans themselves are XJS parts but in the Aston are mounted vertically, for which they weren't designed and the bearings will wear out, meaning at best a noisy fan and at worst complete failure. At a colossal £1216 each from Aston Martin, it pays to source XJS parts which are £480 brand new from Jaguar specialists and far less for used parts. Replacing the fans is often quoted as a costly dash-out job by marque specialists, but it is in fact a DIY proposition to to the job without going to those lengths: on the passenger side the wiring will need to be eased out of the way and the driver's side requires the instrument pack to be removed for access.

Underneath, brake discs and pads are similarly straightforward DIY, while the car's Jaguar and Ford ancestry makes

ABS problems easy to diagnose. Simply tell your scan tool the car is a 1999 Jaguar S-Type and it will happily access the control module, which itself is shared with the S-Type as well as Ford Crown Victoria, Lincoln Town Car and a few others. Vantage wheel speed sensors meanwhile are S-Type parts, meaning new ones can be had for as little as £17 each against the £140 Aston Martin cost.

One fragile area of the system is the link wire which connects the wheel speed sensor to the wiring loom, especially at the rear where it can easily be damaged. Something of a hybrid part specific to the DB7, it uses an XJ40-style connector on the inner end with the S-Type connector at the sensor end and is an outrageous £187 from Aston Martin. The clever solution though is to obtain the used S-Type or XJ part and get busy with the soldering iron to transfer the inner plug

from the original part. While you're under there, the suspension is essentially XJS and there are plenty of bushes to keep you busy, with some easy for the DIY owner and some needing proper workshop facilities.

On the subject of the rear suspension, its subframe makes accessing the differential drain and fill plugs tricky but with a suitable tool an oil change can be done at home and is worthwhile for peace of mind to ensure it's full. A noisy rear end is common on higher-mileage cars and it's one way of preventing this.

One other benefit of the Jaguar componentry is that although many DB7s were supplied with a compressor and can of sealant instead of a spare wheel, an 18-inch Jaguar XK8 space saver fits in the boot (albeit it at an angle) and both fits the hubs and clears the brakes – an ideal thing to carry on a long trip.



Under the bonnet, the six-cylinder car is far easier to work on than the V12 in its packed engine bay. Routine servicing is well within the scope of a home mechanic, although the quantity of oil needed by the V12 may take you by surprise: it takes 11 litres, which comes in at a hefty £122 for Castrol 10W60. Throw in a set of 12 plugs at £120, oil filter at £27 and a pair of air filters at £214 each – although they are cone-style filters which can be cleaned – and you're up to £700 just for the parts even if you're getting your own hands dirty.

The straight-six is a slightly more manageable proposition, with the oil at £80, plugs just £30 and an oil filter for a tenner, while engine bay access is much easier.

The V12 engines can also suffer from problems with the crankcase breather system which will cause engine oil to drip on to the air filters, resulting in a big cloud of smoke at start-up. The

filter in the breather system is a cheap Ford Motorcraft part, but a fair bit of dismantling is required to access it.

By far your biggest issue with the Vantage however concerns the long-term longevity of the engine. The 'V12 tick' is a phrase seen all too frequently in DB7 forums and relates to a possibly disastrous problem involving oval bores, piston slap and knocking little ends.

It's difficult to diagnose and even on a lengthy test drive might not be obvious which is one reason why a pre-purchase inspection by an expert is recommended. From above with the bonnet up the infamous tick sounds just like that – a rhythmic ticking you could easily dismiss as a noisy tensioner or drive belt. Run the engine at 3000rpm for a few minutes though then listen underneath with it idling on a workshop lift and the noise will be much more pronounced from the sump

area. There's no cure for the problem, although various suggestions of using different grades of oil can mask it and yes, a rebuild is as costly as you would expect.

Don't let it put you off though: after all, there are plenty of well-used DB7s and DB9s with the V12 engine out there, many of them having clocked up high mileages without problem.

If you were wavering in a decision between six-pot and V12 models, this could well be the thing that makes you decide.

VERDICT

You do need to be committed to run one of these cars but assuming you've picked up a decent example to start with, the ownership experience can be easier than something equally exotic like a Ferrari.

With a little bit of DIY tinkering and a friendly marque specialist, you can enjoy an Aston Martin for real-world cost.. **AMD**

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DBS SUPERLEGGERA

ALMOST WITHOUT COMPARE

We drive Aston Martin's super-GT flagship – the 725bhp DBS Superleggera – and ask whether it's sufficiently special to justify its £225,000 UK-market price tag

WORDS: TIM PITT
PHOTOGRAPHY: MOTORING RESEARCH

BEHIND THE WHEEL

DBS SUPERLEGGERA

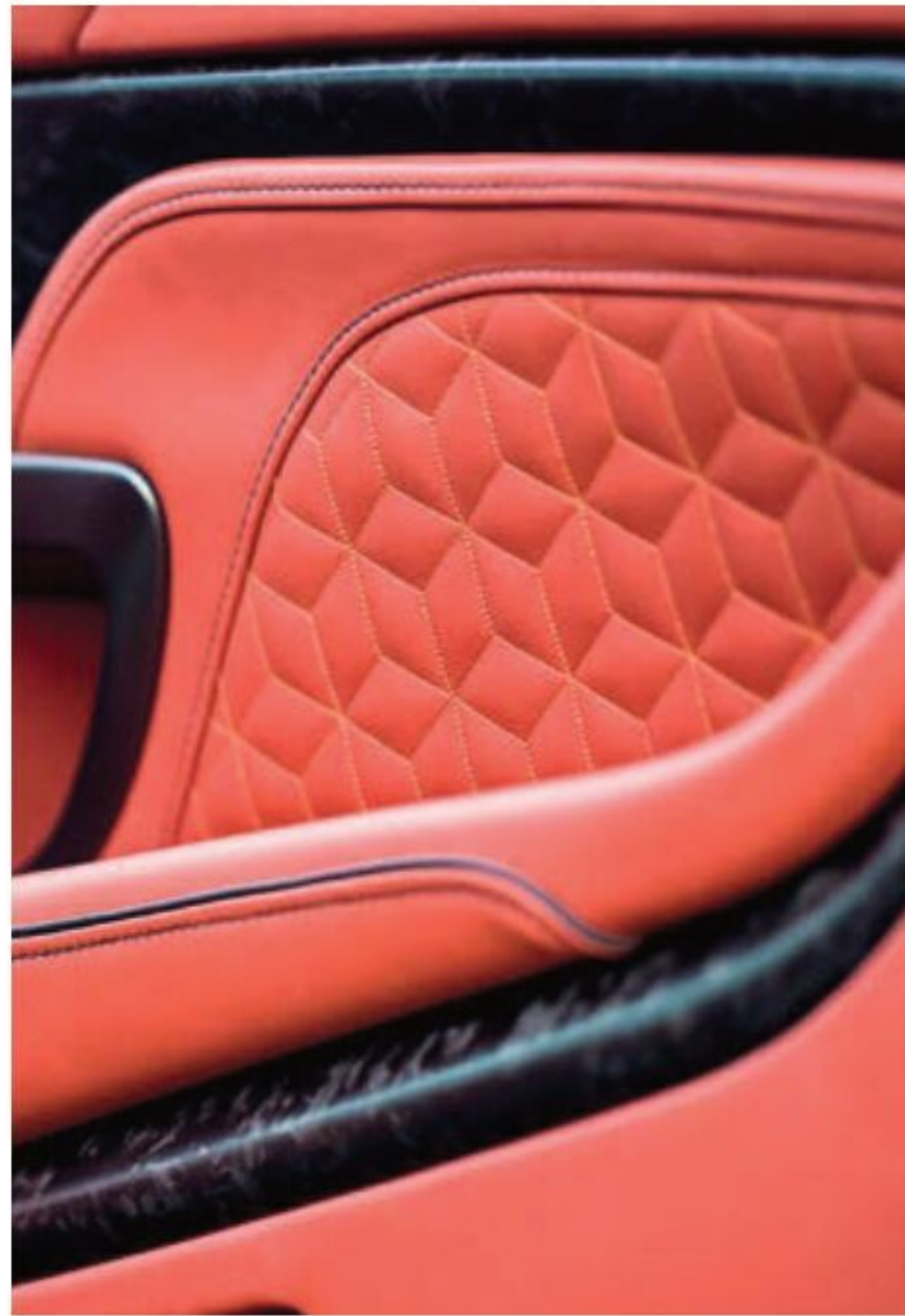
We've already seen Aston Martin's mid-engined future, led by the Valkyrie and Valhalla hypercars.

Among the company's 'mere' supercars of today, however, the current flagship is somewhat more traditional: a £225,000 super-GT to rival the Ferrari 812 Superfast. The DBS Superleggera (soon to be known simply as the DBS) may draw upon past glories, but there's nothing old-school about its vital statistics: 725 horses and a titanic 900Nm (663lb.ft.) of torque, which translates to 0-62mph in 3.4 seconds and a top speed of 211mph. Not so long ago, such numbers really were strictly hypercar territory.

All that oomph comes from a 5.2-litre twin-turbocharged V12, driving the rear wheels via an eight-speed paddle-shift transmission. Carbon-ceramic brakes and a mechanical limited-slip differential help keep everything pointing in the right direction. In theory, at least.

Every body panel on the DBS differs from the donor DB11, with an aerodynamic package that generates 180kg of downforce at VMax. Weight-saving carbon-fibre is used for the huge clamshell bonnet, roof and rear deck, yet there's nothing especially 'super light' about the 1693kg Superleggera's kerb weight. No matter. As chief stylist Marek Reichman remarks: "If Ferrari can use an English word [Superfast], we can use an Italian one."





“All that oomph comes from a 5.2-litre twin-turbocharged V12, driving the rear wheels via an eight-speed paddle-shift transmission”



The Superleggera (meaning ‘super-light’) name was first used by Touring – the Italian styling house behind the classic DB4, DB5 and DB6 – and the curvaceous chrome script beside those bonnet ‘nostrils’ exactly replicates the originals of the ‘60s. It’s a nod to the past on a design that doesn’t dwell on former glories.

At the DBS launch, Aston Martin helpfully lined up the car alongside a DB11 and Vantage, and it was immediately apparent which of the trio was most powerful. Reichman calls the car a “brute in a suit”; but if that’s the case, this is a tightly-fitted tracksuit rather than the pressed pleats of a DB11. Like an athlete in peak condition, it bulges in all the right places.

BRITISH BRUTE

A huge honeycomb grille feeds air to that hungry V12, while slash-cut ‘curlicue’ strakes and jutting ‘open-stirrups’ in the front wings (echoing the Vulcan and Vantage GTE racer) help airflow along the fulsome flanks. At the rear, a gorgeous sliver of naked carbon-fibre – dubbed ‘Aeroblade II’ – serves as a fixed spoiler. Wheels are 21-inch forged alloys wrapped in Pirelli P-Zero tyres: 265/35 front and 305/30 rear.

Other aero tech includes a carbon-fibre splitter that channels air beneath the car, which is then accelerated and exhaled via a racing-style double diffuser. The result is downforce without drag, and a design that – to borrow Marek’s words – “exudes an ▶

Aston Martin suggests the only true rival to its £225,000 super-GT DBS is the latest Ferrari 812 Superfast



BEHIND THE WHEEL

DBS SUPERLEGGERA

At the rear, a gorgeous sliver of naked carbon-fibre – dubbed ‘Aeroblade II’ – serves as a fixed spoiler



immense potency”. Nobody will mistake the DBS Superleggera for anything less than a very fast car.

Amazingly though, the DBS is still a four-seater. It’s horrifically cramped back there, of course, but just bearable for short journeys (or for those still in short trousers). If nothing else, the rear chairs provide extra luggage space – fitting for a grand tourer, and a useful advantage over the 812 Superfast.

Compared to the exterior, the inside has received a relatively mild makeover. The most obvious upgrades are hip-hugging ‘Sports Plus’ seats (trimmed in leather and Alcantara) and the Vantage’s squared-off steering wheel. Also spot the shapelier instrument binnacle, longer shift paddles and double chevron motif stitched into the seats and roof lining. (Nobody tell Citroen.)

Elsewhere, most of what you see and touch is stock DB11, and that’s both a good and bad thing. On the plus side, the cabin has a focused, cockpit-like feel, with a fully-adjustable driving position and decent visibility (for a supercar). Perceived quality is impressive too, if not in the Audi or Porsche league.

Less positively, the DBS retains the DB11’s mix-and-match switchgear and

out-of-date Mercedes-Benz media system, with blocky graphics that are more Amstrad than Apple. Not great when you’ve just spent nigh-on a quarter-mill.

As you’d expect, there’s a huge range of ‘personalisation’ options available. Highlights include a carbon-fibre steering wheel, embossed DBS logos on the headrests and a choice of five colours for the seatbelts. Speak to Aston Martin’s brilliantly-named Q division though, and the only limits are your imagination and bank balance. Now, about those front machine guns...

BIG NUMBERS

“The key number here is 900Nm,” explains chassis supremo, Matt Becker. “That’s 182Nm more than the 812 Superfast and 150Nm than a One-77.” Yep, the DBS out-grunts Aston Martin’s 2009 hypercar, which boasted the world’s most powerful naturally-aspirated engine when new. That’s the pace of progress.

What that number feels like on the road is harder to define. It means effortless progress, aural refinement and the ability to drive almost everywhere – even in the Austrian mountains where the car was launched – in fourth gear. Oh, and acceleration that feels like a spade to your



SUPERLEGGERA: NO LONGER SEEING THE LIGHT

'Two illustrious names, one magnificent super-GT' was how Aston Martin hailed the DBS Superleggera at its launch. Since then, however, two have become one: the Superleggera ('super-light') tag is to be dropped for the 2022 model-year.

The move has apparently been made to 'simplify nomenclature across the range and focus the offering to customers'. For the same reason, Aston Martin has also dropped the AMR branding from the V12-engined DB11 (but has retained the AMR's higher power output and dynamic suspension upgrades).

The Superleggera name was originally added to 'pay homage to the innovative lightweight construction methods pioneered by Italian coachbuilder, Touring'. Using it marked "the return of a great Aston Martin name," said former CEO, Dr Andy Palmer. But it seems customers didn't quite understand the connection, nor why a proudly British car was wearing an Italian badge.

These days, Aston Martin is keen to simplify, add focus, and draw customers in with a straightforward offering and clear model hierarchies. The DBS is back to being 'just' DBS: a range-topping super-GT that's "immaculately styled, obsessively engineered and outrageously potent... every inch the Aston Martin flagship". We couldn't have put it better ourselves, Dr Palmer – and we're sure new CEO Tobias Moers will agree.

“Every body panel on the DBS differs from the donor DB11, with an aerodynamic package that generates 180kg of downforce at VMax”

solar plexus. The DBS is utterly relentless. Its torque curve is more of a plateau, peaking at 1800rpm and remaining flat until 5000rpm: a huge wedge of mid-range wallop that's both hilarious and hugely addictive. I can't imagine ever tiring of it.

That omnipotent V12 defines the driving experience, but doesn't overwhelm it; Becker's efforts with the chassis come a close second. Lift the bonnet and you'll see the engine is pushed back as far as possible, providing near-perfect 51:49 weight distribution. Adaptive damping is standard, with three settings – GT, Sport and Sport Plus – for suspension and throttle/gearbox response. A mechanical limited-slip differential with torque vectoring manages the rear axle, rather than the electronic 'E-Diff' of the Vantage.

The comparison with the Vantage is a valid one, though. Both cars were tuned from scratch by Becker (unlike the older DB11, developed before he joined the company) and the Superleggera

TECH SPEC

Price: £225,000

Engine: 5.2-litre twin-turbo V12

Power: 725bhp @ 6500rpm

Torque: 663lb.ft. @ 1800-5000rpm

Gearbox: 8-speed paddle-shift auto

0-62mph: 3.4 seconds

Top speed: 211mph

Fuel economy: 22.9mpg

CO2: 285g/km

Front suspension: Double wishbones, coil springs

Rear suspension: Multi-link, coil springs

Brakes: Carbon-ceramic discs

Wheels: 21-inch forged alloy

Dry weight: 1693kg

Length: 4712mm

Width: 2146mm

Height: 1280mm

BEHIND THE WHEEL

DBS SUPERLEGGERA

feels like a bigger, brawnier version of its critically-acclaimed cousin. There's the same instantaneous turn-in, the same meaty response from the steering, the same benign balance. Make no mistake, the DBS can go very sideways indeed, but it communicates so clearly that it never feels intimidating. Its carbon-ceramic brakes are easy to modulate and brutally effective, too. To quote Becker again: "You don't need to be a hero to get the best from it".

Ultimately, the DBS lacks the fingertip finesse and sheer chuckability of the Vantage, but that's missing the point. It sticks faithfully to its super-GT remit. Even in Sport Plus mode, the ride is commendably comfortable and the quad exhausts sound evocative, not flagrantly anti-social. Provided you could stomach its 22.9mpg thirst, there can be few finer means to tackle a cross-continental road trip.

Apart from the Volante version, perhaps. For closer to £250,000, the

drop-top DBS offers a fabric roof that takes 14 seconds to retract beneath the rear deck. The Volante is 170kg heavier than the coupe and 0.2 seconds slower to 62mph. However, when driven al fresco, it adds an extra layer to the DBS experience, amplifying the thunderous V12 in glorious surround-sound. There aren't many cars we prefer as convertibles, but this is one.

OUR VERDICT

According to Aston Martin, the Ferrari 812 Superfast is the Superleggera's only real rival. Yet even that comparison may be a stretch. The Italian car is sharper, spikier and far more highly-strung – even

in 'standard' rather than Competizione form. Its rewards need to be worked for, and while that's hardly a chore, they're less accessible as a result.

The DBS, with its monstrous and magnificent V12, is easier to exploit. A forgiving chassis and that tidal wave of torque mean you can enjoy more of its performance, more of the time. Italian stallion or British bulldog? The choice depends more on personal preferences than one car being inherently 'better' than the other.



Perhaps the Superleggera's greatest rival actually comes from within: the 639hp V12 DB11. This half-way house between the DB11 V8 and DBS is a sizable £50,000 cheaper than the latter and not hugely slower (3.7sec, 208mph). However, for all its style and speed, it doesn't look or feel as supercar-special as the Superleggera. Very few cars do. **AMD**

“The DBS out-grunts Aston Martin’s 2009 hypercar, which boasted the world’s most powerful naturally-aspirated engine when new”

The DBS's wheels are 21-inch forged alloys wrapped in Pirelli P-Zero tyres – 265/35 front and 305/30 rear

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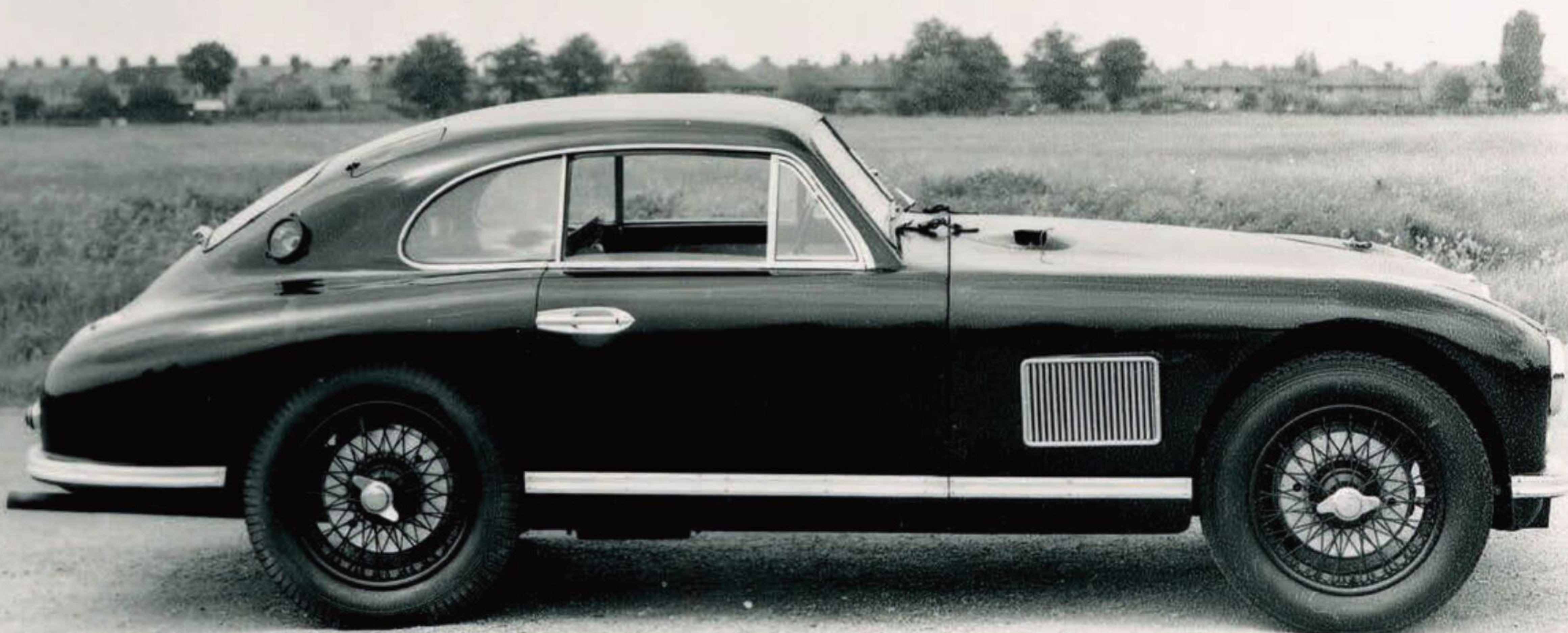


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FEATURE

THE 007 CONNECTION

The

007



IMAGE: Shooterz. Courtesy of RM Sotheby's.

Connection

WORDS: SAM SKELTON

Over almost seventy years, he has become without doubt Britain's best-loved and best-known spy. But Ian Fleming's finicky bachelor with a flat in Chelsea, a love of Bentleys and an ageing Scottish housekeeper to come home to once his workplace romances

came to an end was not the man that the majority of his fans fell in love with. That was the Bond of the screens – a Bond who seemingly spent little time at home, who always had a fitting witty remark, and who drove Aston Martins. 007's connection with the marque had been forged in a book, but only as an MI6 pool car, and it was the

film world that forged a link that many have come to see as the ultimate act of product placement. Since 1964's Goldfinger, James Bond and Aston Martin have been joined at the hip, with no fewer than eleven Astons driven by the man and several others appearing in the infamous Q-branch workshops.





Goldfinger - the book

As we saw in issue one of *Aston Martin Driver*, James Bond's first Aston Martin was slightly misnamed on page. And while it's highly unlikely that Ian Fleming intended our hero to chase Auric Goldfinger across Europe in a DB3S, the DBIII name does make the intended model seem somewhat ambiguous.

Offered a choice of a Jaguar 3.4 or the Aston Martin, Bond had chosen the Aston because not only did it suit his cover as a well-to-do and adventurous young man, but because it had up to date travel documents, an inconspicuous colour, and a series of useful gadgets – albeit not in the same league as the screen cars which were to follow. The battleship grey car had switches to alter the appearance of the headlamps and tail lamps to fox anyone being shadowed or shadowing him, it had reinforced bumpers to serve as rams if necessary, it had the Homer radio pickup, and a concealed compartment for a long barrelled Colt .45. There was also hidden space built in – a boon for smugglers of all kinds, not just those with secret equipment to carry.

Later passages refer to Bond putting luggage in the back of the car rather than a separate boot suggesting that the DB MKIII was a saloon similar to the one we tested last month. Ultimately it would end up slightly mangled at the rear through a deliberate attempt to stop a pretty girl – but it would not be involved in any chases like its cinematic successor.

Goldfinger

When the time came to transfer 007 to the silver screen, the DB MKIII was passé. As was Bond's Bentley, explained away by Q as having had its day. Bond would be using "this Aston Martin DB5, with modifications". New for the film was the infamous ejector seat, used to 'defenestrate' Goldfinger's gun-toting henchman – and while the oil slick and bulletproof shield were both very useful, ultimately it was the use of a mirror that led to the car's untimely service interruption as Bond struck a wall to avoid the reflection of his own headlamps. Two cars were used for filming – a former factory prototype was fitted with the gadgets, and an unladen production car was supplied for close-up shots and road chase scenes, given that the gadgets added some 300lb in weight. BMT216A would see a return at the start of *Thunderball*, in which the bulletproof shield would once again prove to be a useful fitment.

James Bond's DB5 would prove to be the longest-running car in the series; effectively taking the place of the Bentleys driven by the character in the books and with a growing ambivalence as to whether it belong to MI6 or to him. The gadgets would continually change – with champagne in the armrest for Goldeneye's cameo rather than switchgear, and with miniguns behind the headlamps in *No Time To Die*.





The Living Daylights

It was courtesy of Victor Gauntlett and film art director Terry Ackland-Snow that Aston Martin wrested the James Bond franchise back from Lotus. Ackland-Snow convinced Aston to bring a car to Pinewood. "Cubby Broccoli sat in it and Michael Wilson drove it. They said, 'Can we take it for a spin?' Cubby loved it. The waiting list was two years. Cubby asked them to deliver them in six weeks..."

The Volante in the first part of the film was Victor Gauntlett's own car – and he wasn't shy about helping the production out. "When we wanted his Aston in Vienna he said, 'I'll bring it out' – and he drove it out there for us!"

After its winterisation at Q-branch – a process which ensured that the V8 saloons provided could be considered as the same car – it was deployed in the Czech Republic, complete with lasers to slice up police Ladas, skis, and a self destruct system. Improbably, the car later reappeared in No Time to Die as Bond's own car – suggesting that at some point Q-branch retrieved the remains and rebuilt the car.

On Her Majesty's Secret Service

It should come as no surprise that a new James Bond would need a new Aston Martin. And the timing of On Her Majesty's Secret Service was ideal – Aston not only had the new DBS body, but the new V8 engine was starting to come on stream. Unfortunately, Aston didn't have a V8 ready in time to loan to the film company, so GKX8G – an Olive Green DBS with a Vantage-spec engine – was a six cylinder model that received V8 overdubbing in post production. This is how it was able to squeal its tyres on sand.

The car was a works demonstrator, believed to be chassis DBS/5234/R – though DBS/5109/R was reputed to be used for studio scenes. The latter, FBH207G, is known to survive in Miami.



FEATURE

THE 007 CONNECTION

Die Another Day – KE02EWW

Arguably the most controversial of the 007 Astons, the Vanquish – or Vanish, as it was termed by the new Q – had machine guns in the bonnet vents, missiles in the grille, and – key to its part in the plot – a supposedly invisible surface courtesy of cameras and screens on the shell. This would be the only Bond car to be pitted against an equally tricked-out baddies' machine- Zao's Jaguar XKR also had missiles and a rocket launcher among its arsenal.

Reports at the time suggested that the stunt cars used the drivetrains from the Ford Explorer with V8 engine and all wheel drive, as well as gearboxes that permitted 100mph in reverse. The space gained under bonnet permitted the mounting of the rockets.



SECRET AGENT SPOOFS

007 was not the only secret agent to use an Aston Martin. In spy spoof series Johnny English, Aston Martin enthusiast Rowan Atkinson would use both a DB7 Vantage and a 1979 V8 Vantage, while fellow agent Simon Ambrose would drive an Aston Martin Rapide.

Meanwhile in 1981's *The Cannonball Run*, Roger Moore would play a suave agent called Seymour Goldfarb who claimed to have "drifted into playing a rather popular character" while behind the wheel of a Silver Birch DB5 that was "full of surprises". The car used, 6633PP, was in fact the same DB5 prototype that had served as the gadget car for *Goldfinger* in 1964.

Casino Royale

Casino Royale's hero car was a DBS V12; as crashed at the Millbrook Proving Ground in Bedfordshire while chasing Le Chiffre's henchmen in their Jaguar in what at 25 seconds – plus 15 seconds of rolling – was probably the shortest James Bond car chase in history. Gadgets were restricted to a spare gun and a medical kit – Daniel Craig's Bond was far more sensible than the outgoing iterations, and had no need for the fancy gadgetry. That said, a medical kit with a remote link to headquarters to identify poisons, a selection of antidotes, and a defibrillator is rather more comprehensive than the first aid kit you might find in lesser models.

Earlier in the film, Bond had won a DB5 from a corrupt Greek official in a move designed to be read as a power play – the man would later be killed, though the fate of the Aston remains unknown. Perhaps it is this car that would subsequently reappear in *Skyfall*?

Quantum of Solace

There is barely time for MGM's lion to disappear off screen in *Quantum Of Solace* before we see an MI6 Aston evading baddies. *Quantum* is meant to pick up where *Casino Royale* left off, and it is while transporting Quantum official Mr White to a secret MI6 chamber in the Italian city of Siena that Bond has to drive





EVERY BOY'S BOND CAR

Almost every schoolboy in the 1960s wanted James Bond's DB5 – and courtesy of Corgi Toys, they could. Launched in 1965 to tie in with the release of *Thunderball*, the original Corgi DB5 had been created by adapting the company's DB4 model which had gone out of production the previous year. Unlike the DB4, the DB5 did not have an opening bonnet. But it did have an opening ejector seat roof, extending rams and front wing machine guns, and came boxed with "top secret" documents and a 007 lapel badge. Introduced in October 1965, the timing was just two months ahead not only of the Christmas rush, but the next Bond film. The first run were painted gold despite aping a silver film car, as Corgi didn't want the cars to appear unfinished as supplied. Publicity materials showed a silver car, and it would take until the reissue in January 1968 for Corgi to offer the DB5 in Silver Birch.



as if his life depended upon it. The chase – which involved a number of Alfa Romeo 159s – made the news during filming, as an accident had seen one of the Astons slide off the road into Lake Garda, and a stuntman in intensive care after an accident between an Alfa Romeo and a lorry. The Aston's trademark wing vent appears just forty seconds into the film, as Bond and the villains weave in and out of fast-moving traffic.

By the time 007 arrives in Siena the DB5 has been mangled almost beyond recognition; devoid of a driver's door almost white with the debris of cliff faces having destroyed the black paintwork, and making two cars destroyed in what the plot tells us was just a matter of weeks.

Skyfall

Perhaps as a result of his reckless actions with the pair of DB5s above, MI6 appeared reluctant to issue 007 another new Aston during *Skyfall*. Instead, the only official cars we see are Bill Tanner's Range Rover and M's official Jaguar XJL – in which Bond kidnaps her for her own protection – while Bond uses a rented Mercedes in Hong Kong. It's only when Bond goes off-grid in a bid to draw out Raoul Silva that the iconic DB5 makes its return. Hidden in a lock up in Deptford is a DB5 – yet again, in Silver Birch, registered on UK plates as BMT216A but without the rotating plate holders of the *Goldfinger* car. If this meant to be the car from *Skyfall*, converted to right hand drive? Or is it a decommissioned version of the *Goldfinger* car? A reference to the ejector seat makes it entirely possible, as do the machine guns in the front wings. Or is this the film world's "Silver Beast" a personal car equipped with weaponry?

Through the wonders of CGI and modelling, the DB5 is destroyed at the end of the film in a blast of minigun fire from Silva's helicopter. In a fit of anger, 007 then destroys most of Silva's henchmen by blowing up his ancestral home.

Spectre

Somewhat cruelly, Q claims that the DB10 seen in his workshop in *Spectre* was meant for Bond, but will now be reassigned to 009 following Bond's "grounding". Fully bulletproofed, with gadgets, it would be

FEATURE

THE 007 CONNECTION



seen in action when Bond ignored M's instructions to stay in Chelsea and followed Spectre to Rome for a group meeting.

The DB10 of course was never fully productionised, and it's appropriate that Spectre henchman Mr Hinx would chase Bond through the ancient city's streets in an equally implausible Jaguar CX-75 concept car. During this chase we would see Backfire, Atmosphere, Exhaust and Air buttons – with their crude Dymo type labelling. Atmosphere filled the car with Frank Sinatra for 009 – while Backfire would immolate the chasing Jaguar and Air would eject 007 as he “parked it in the Tiber.”

Q-branch also rebuilt Bond's DB5 for him, further blurring the lines as to whether it was the official model from Goldfinger or the one won in Casino Royale. Ben Whishaw's Q references the Desmond Llewellyn line about bringing the car back in one piece in a manner that must have seemed unfunny even to him. The end of the film saw Bond and Madeleine Swann heading off in the DB5 for a new life – one which the next film would interrupt.

NTTD

New Astons got relatively little screen time in the latest Bond film; 007 having returned to the V8 from The Living Daylights after his DB5 faced a sideswipe from a Range Rover and a barrage of gunfire in the

pre-credits sequence in Matera, Italy. Those cars, incidentally, were stunt cars built around an unspecified straight six producing around 300bhp – speculated by many to be the unit from the BMW M3 E46.

Having given the DB5 the same sort of makeover as Quantum's DBS and having left his Land Rover in Jamaica, Bond would retrieve the V8 saloon from a similar London lockup to the Skyfall DB5 before using it to track Madeleine Swann to Norway. Without spoiling the ending of the

film for anyone, the V8 ultimately becomes a gift to Swann.

New Double-O agent Nomi drives a DBS Superleggera – tested elsewhere in this issue – while one scene sees M standing in front of the Valhalla supercar in Q-branch. Given that in previous Daniel Craig era films the M16-issues Aston of choice for 00 agents has tended to be the DBS, it looks likely that the Gaydon company will continue to supply cars from this line for James Bond films moving forward. **AMD**





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A QUESTION OF COLLECTABILITY

2014 VANTAGE N430 COUPE

WORDS: ROB HAWKINS PHOTOGRAPHY: PAUL WALTON

Should one of a hundred Nürburgring-themed Vantage N430 models be mothballed as a potential investment or simply be driven and enjoyed for the purpose it was designed for? We hit the roads of County Durham to find out.





Everything seems to scream extra special when you look over the eight-year-old Vantage N430. There are under 12,000 miles on the odometer of this example and a clean bill of health for all of its MOT tests, so no matter how rare and collectable this Aston Martin may be, it's a good starting point to know it has been looked after and hardly used. Obvious differences from the standard model include the N430 badges on the rear and the sill covers, along with the embroidering in the headrests for the front seats.

This Mariana Blue car should also have garish red stripes along the cant rails, up the windscreen pillars, around the front grille, along the front splitter and over the door mirror covers. A previous owner has toned them down with a removable wrap of carbon fibre-effect vinyl. Maybe I'm getting old, but I've seen too many Citroën

Saxos and Honda Civics with colour mismatching akin to a standard N430 in an attempt to look different and to buck the trend – and the carbon fibre is a far more muted and discreet alternative in my opinion. Such outrageous colour-coding can work if it's done subtly, such as on the Vantage F1 Edition we featured in the first issue of AMD with its bonnet stripe – but not when the clash is so extreme. The idea behind it all was to give a nod to the DBR1 with its green and yellow paintwork, but some of the options offered on the N430 were not quite so elegant.

The interior is suitably upmarket, though, and nothing near as controversial as the exterior should be. For instance, the Alcantara over the top of the instrument binnacle, along with the carbon fibre surround for the gear lever and the digital displays to accompany the traditional analogue speedo and tachometer are all subtle limited-edition features. Originally, the framework for the front seats would have





been constructed from Kevlar and carbon fibre to create a high-back bucket-style upholstered in leather, but this model has a pair of standard seats (except for the embroidered logos) so they remain fully electronically adjustable via the switches on the gearbox tunnel.

This car has a few costly optional extras, such as Bluetooth connectivity that would have cost £495 when ordering, along with cruise control for an extra £295. Modestly priced extras when you find out how much the sat-nav with its pop-up screen would have cost. A whopping £1795 extra. It looks impressive when it rises out of the top of the dashboard, but such a price would be hard to justify now, especially considering most mobile phones offer a better service. While these options were standard on the Vantage S – a car which is now more affordable than the N430 despite costing £7000 more when new – a direct comparison on price and value is not straightforward.

ON TEST

2014 VANTAGE N430 COUPE



Under the skin of the N430, most of the mechanical components are taken from the Vantage S – making it an easier comparison on paper. The suspension, for instance, which comprises upper and lower wishbones and coilovers at each corner with front and rear anti-roll bars, includes the S-spec electronically controlled dampers. The dinner plate-sized brake discs all round with multi-piston calipers include ABS and traction control as you'd expect from a 2014 model, but also brake assist (more on that later).

Under the bonnet, there's a naturally aspirated 4735cc all-aluminium quad-cam V8 (four valves per cylinder) with a 11.3:1 compression ratio and a dry sump system. On paper, there's 430bhp at 7300rpm and 490Nm (361 lb ft) of torque at 5000rpm – the same specification for the Vantage S.

But the N430 had lightweight forged alloy wheels – and those Kevlar and carbon fibre seats to help reduce the

overall weight by 20kg (hardly worth the bother when the total unladen weight is 1,610kg, making it a mere 1.2% reduction). Choosing a six-speed manual gearbox also helped to save £5,000 over the seven-speed automatic option with a paddleshift. Then there's the paintwork – while divisive, it does mark the N430 out as a rarity.

When launched, the N430 had some stiff competition from the likes of Audi's R8, Porsche's 911 3.8 Carrera S and Jaguar's F-TYPE R, all of which were priced around the £90k mark alongside the £89,995 Aston. Even the BMW M6 coupe was a contender of sorts for similar money. The only winner on price was the Chevrolet Corvette Stingray at £61,495, although it's not really a consideration for most Aston Martin customers. Nowadays, the Porsche has depreciated the least in value.

The argument for the N430 being a potential investment and worthy of being mothballed perhaps concerns its limited-edition predecessors, the N400 and N420. With Vantage V8 production ending in 2017, the N430 was the last of the line for the Nürburgring-themed models, so it could possibly be the best, or at least the most desirable. Will this



translate into investment potential? Only time will tell. On the other hand, how about simply buying one of these cars to use and drive? After all, it's pretty much a Vantage S by another name, and there's surely no desire to preserve one of these for future collectability?

Keen to find out, I've borrowed this example from Aston Workshop, which lists two N430s on its website. It took a few minutes of looking for a start/stop button and realising there wasn't one to realise that the key fob doubles up as a starter button once inserted into the dash. Spatial awareness and the proportions of the N430 take a few minutes to adjust to from inside. In theory, it's a small vehicle in some ways – it's a mere 43cm longer than a Mk1 Mazda MX-5 at 4.38m (172.6in), but some 10cm wider than a Jaguar F-TYPE. From the inside, there are blind spots everywhere, although the reversing cameras and door mirrors do their best to help - the door mirrors angle themselves downwards when reverse is selected, then flip back up when you move forwards again, a useful feature that has the potential for the mirrors to tie themselves in knots if you are rapidly moving forwards and backwards to parallel park in a tight space.





Fortunately, after a few minutes I knew where each wheel and corner was located. I also discovered the intelligence of the reversing cameras when they almost screamed at me for reversing out of an entrance to a field and on to the road during our photoshoot. Something had picked up the markings on the tarmac and quickly warned me I was going backwards on to a main road.

Other impressive features include the brake assist that I mentioned earlier. It can be annoying if it's too keen and restricts setting off, but on this N430, it was perfect for eliminating the use of the fly-off handbrake for hill starts. And it's also clever enough to apply brake assist only when needed – when setting off on hills, for instance. It's a feature that's not really necessary on such a car with a separate mechanical handbrake caliper on the rear discs, but it won my vote in this case.

Other aspects that bowl me over include the manual gearbox. I admit I can put up with an automatic gearbox, especially one with a paddle-shift, but I always prefer a clutch pedal and a stick for ultimate gear control. With six forward gears, I'd read some press reports from 2014 that slated this manual gearbox, yet I couldn't find any problems with gear selection on the move, whether I was changing up or down the 'box. On one occasion I did make the mistake of deselecting reverse and being too quick to select what I thought was first, only to find I was setting off in third gear! Luckily, the torquey V8 didn't complain and got on with it. Sadly, reverse gear isn't so easy to select as the six forward gears, so

perhaps that was the criticism highlighted in those press reports. It's alongside first gear, requiring the gearlever to be pushed down a little. It was often quite notchy to select, but never failed to engage.

Initially, I had reservations over this N430's steering. It's hydraulically power assisted, which those old press reports praised for being positive and better than the emerging electronic systems of the time that were regarded as vague. At first, the heaviness of the steering felt as though the drivebelt to the power steering pump was possibly missing. It's also consistently heavy at all speeds and over all surfaces. Whilst three-point-turn manoeuvres aren't exactly hard work, I did wonder whether the steering could do with being a little lighter. Yet it all became apparent when I started to be more confident with tackling corners at faster speeds. The steering remained positive at all times, especially under hard cornering, with no feedback. It was only at very slow speeds that I became concerned with the occasional tramline of the tyres and subsequent pulling on the steering.

I soon realised that I needed to and could confidently be as aggressive as I wanted to be with this N430, although I suspect I wasn't trying hard enough when Aston Workshop managing director, Dave Cummings, joked that if I could look at the speedo when driving, I wasn't driving fast enough.

It's easy to drive this Aston sedately, despite what its performance figures say. Consequently, you have to make a determined effort to drive it at the limit, when the noise from the induction and exhaust changes to a guttural growl and

all hell breaks loose. For country lane test-driving, such opportunities are limited, but there are more chances to brake and corner hard and exit just as hard, which this N430 does with the minimum of fuss. The brakes are pin-sharp for road use. The suspension is firm, but keeps most of the feedback away from the driver. I could occasionally hear minor panel rattles, but would have been more concerned with hollow knocking and the feeling of scuttle-shake, of which there was none. The entire car noticeably pitched over particularly rough country lanes, which was at first a little alarming, but once I tuned into its handling characteristics, I could accommodate this typical shortfall of a smallish car with an equally short wheelbase.

I soon realised this N430 is an ideal candidate for a country lane blast to blow the cobwebs away. It's quiet and refined enough for a long trip, although limited in luggage space, so that would be a little challenging. Instead, it's a toy for the weekend and wouldn't embarrass itself on a track day.

Returning to the original point of this article, could this N430 also be a viable investment? It ticks the boxes for rarity and limited-edition features, although there are quite a few such models, so perhaps it's more reassuring to note that it will probably hold its value better than a standard Vantage or even an S. Cars are surely meant to be driven, and no more so than this N430. **AMD**

● Thanks to: Aston Workshop; 01207 268932; <https://aston.co.uk>. The pictured car is for sale at £64,950

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ASTON MARTIN PEOPLE
VICTOR GAUNTLETT



Victor Gauntlett ran Aston Martin from 1981 to 1991, turning it from an ailing business into a valuable asset and negotiating the Ford buyout.

ASTON MARTIN PEOPLE

VICTOR GAUNTLETT

The man who brought Aston back from the brink.

WORDS: SAM SKELTON MAIN IMAGE: ASTON MARTIN HERITAGE TRUST

It's widely quoted that Victor Gauntlett was once asked how he managed to make a small fortune while Executive Chairman of Aston Martin Lagonda. "That's easy," he is said to have replied. "I began with a big one." This one statement sums up the man's drive, his passion for a brand which he couldn't bear to see go to the wall, and his keenness to push ahead with policies he felt were right.

"It was wonderfully disarming shortly after becoming Chairman of Aston Martin to be presented to the Duke of Edinburgh

who said to me 'What made you get involved in Aston Martin apart from an error of judgement?' I think I saw it as an imperative to be honest, things were going quite well for me in the oil business and I did actually think 'I do not want to be involved in the final collapse of a company like Aston', and I certainly didn't want my grandchildren to say to me, 'Grandad, why was it when you were a director of Aston Martin they stopped making motor cars?'"

Gauntlett had formerly been a key player in a number of petroleum companies, including Pace Petroleum which he had

founded in 1972 and turned into Britain's leading supplier to independent garages. Describing himself as "Half overgrown schoolboy, half hard-nosed businessman," in 1980 he had bought a 10% stake in Aston Martin Lagonda alongside Tim Hearley of CH Industrials. In 1981 both expanded their shares to 50% with Gauntlett assuming control of the company.

Aston Martin needed the new thinking. Just 30 cars found homes during 1982, and something needed to change in order to generate an income for the company. Under Gauntlett, Aston Martin expanded the business of its in-house coachbuilder Tickford as a means of generating capital. Tickford's products included a luxury variant of the Austin Metro, and the Tickford Capri – a Ford Capri with turbochargers and an Aston Martin Vantage style body kit. It would also produce a very special Triumph Stag for one unnamed customer, which survives to this day.

Aware that Aston Martin would need more investment than he could make alone, Gauntlett sold his shareholding in 1983 to shipping magnate Peter Livanos, subsequently to reinvest in a 25% share of the company the following year. He was retained as Executive Chairman throughout. From then he prompted heavy investment in the Lagonda project, targeting it at wealthy individuals in the Middle East as the ultimate way to stand out. While the Lagonda may have upset European traditionalists, in Qatar and Oman it found eager buyers.

In 1986 Gauntlett negotiated the return of Aston Martins to James Bond, lending his personal V8 Vantage Volante to MGM ▶

ASTON MARTIN PEOPLE

VICTOR GAUNTLETT



Cars like the Frazer-Tickford Metro would bring in much needed capital during the early 1980s.

for filming and selling Cubby Broccoli a Volante of his own for use in America. He turned down the opportunity to appear as a KGB general in *The Living Daylights*, reputedly General Pushkin – “I would have loved to have done it but really could not afford the time!”

Gauntlett also launched two new models, the V8 Vantage Zagato and V8 Volante Zagato, with up-to-date bodies atop the existing mechanicals. 52 Vantage Zagatos and 37 Volante Zagatos were built.

The following year Ford bought a 75% interest in Aston Martin, intended to inject the company with the funds it so badly needed to develop new models. Subsequently it would buy the remaining 25% in 1990.

“Basically we had to face bringing new models to the market,” said Gauntlett, speaking in 1997. “And that requires enormous amounts of money. And there was no way, even in a good period, that we could generate the cash required for investment. The phone call from Ford was a seminal moment. I think I’ve been quoted as saying it took me fully half a second to bite their hand off down to the ankle.”

The first of these new models to see the light of day was the Virage, largely developed under Gauntlett and introduced at the 1988 Birmingham Motor Show. Effectively an update of the V8 saloon concept utilising new styling, new componentry and an updated engine, this was to form the basis of the marque’s model range into the 2000s – a legacy which would almost outlive the man. Gauntlett also spearheaded Aston Martin’s 1989 return to Le Mans, with the

AMR1 racer. Finishing 11th at Le Mans and 6th in the World Sports Prototype Teams Championship the AMR1 was a valiant effort, but the season would result in excessive spending and this combined with rule changes on the horizon for 1991 meant that Aston Martin would withdraw from competition for 1990. The company would not return to motorsport until the DBR9 of 2005.

What Gauntlett ultimately managed to do was turn Aston Martin’s fortunes around. Had there not been a man with his vision and foresight at the helm from

the early 1980s, production numbers would not have been high enough for the company to survive. It was his vision, the reintroduction of Tickford, the return both to James Bond and to racing, the links with Zagato, that ensured the company had the funds to develop the Virage. Without this the company certainly wouldn’t have been viable into the 1990s – and while Ford’s money helped, it’s unlikely that Ford would have been interested in Aston Martin Lagonda had Gauntlett not effectively turned the company around in under a decade. The marque’s very survival, therefore, is his legacy.

Gauntlett stepped down as Chairman of Aston Martin in 1991 after ten years at the top. In 1988, aware that he would soon be stepping down, he returned to the oil business – founding Proteus Petroleum which he would subsequently sell to Texaco in 1998. Away from business and motoring, he was a keen aviator, a trustee of the RAF Museum and chairman of its fundraising committee. He was also a trustee of the Maritime Air Trust, and held the rank of honorary air commodore with the Royal Auxiliary Air Force.

Victor Gauntlett died on 31 March 2003 aged 60, of a heart attack. He was survived by three sons, a daughter, and his wife **AMD**



The Tickford Capri was arguably the best known Tickford creation.



The V8 Zagato and subsequent Virage are Gauntlett’s legacy.

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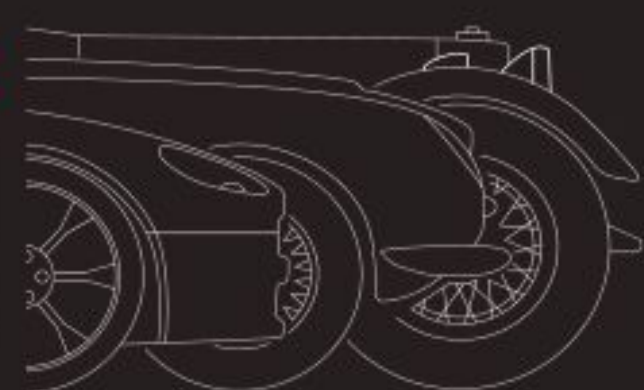
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**1966 ASTON
MARTIN
DB6 4.0**



**1965 E-TYPE
4.2 FHC**

WORDS AND PHOTOGRAPHY: PAUL WALTON

CIVIL WAR

Which is the best Sixties grand tourer? We drive both to discover just what makes for the ultimate classic GT.

THE SIXTIES

E-TYPE VS DB6

Let's be honest here; if you owned either a Jaguar E-type Series 1 or an Aston Martin DB6 when they were new you were definitely winning at life. No other cars still represent the zenith of Sixties British glamour or say you've arrived in all senses of the word quite as much as these two.

A famous and desirable duo they may be but whether it's comparing a Monet with a Manet, a 2002 Chateau Lafite Rothschild with a 1951 Penfolds Grange Hermitage or even Eastenders and Coronation Street, one always has to be better than the other. So which out of this pair of icons do we put ahead today?

Splitting them won't be due to their looks alone since both are as close to automotive perfection as you can get. The E-type is clearly the smaller of the two and, derived from the Le Mans-winning D-type, kept the same lithe, sinewy and clean looks as the racing car.

This fixed-head coupe is perhaps the most desirable of the early cars: a Series 1 but with the then new 4,235cc version of the XK engine. Arriving in 1965, although at 265bhp the power remained the same as the 3.8, the update offered improved torque and flexibility.

"The new 4.2-litre Jaguar is very great car indeed," said Autosport magazine in its October 23 1964 issue. "Almost unbelievably smooth, quiet and flexible, it is comfortable on good and rough surfaces alike. Yet it has tremendous performance instantly on tap but will idle for hours in city traffic without complaint."

However, unlike the later, more bloated series, the update didn't change the design and so the familiar glass-covered headlights and large, oval-shaped bonnet vent remain that together make the E-type one of the most famous cars in the world.

But, I'd argue, not quite as famous as the Aston Martin even though it's not the model most think it is. Introduced in October 1966, the DB6 featured a higher roof line plus a shortened Kamm tail than the outgoing DB5 to counteract rear lift. Having a separate body and chassis results in the DB6 towering over the compact E-type with its modern unibody. But its size gives Aston more of





a muscular and beefier appearance than the dainty Jaguar.

Yet by having the same basic proportions and the same shape of vaned grille as the DB5 plus this example being in Silver Birch, it might not be the model famed celluloid spy, James Bond, has driven on and off since 1964 but everyone will be able to recognise it as an Aston Martin because of his escapades.

It's about now we when need to address the elephant in the room; at £5,000 in 1966, the Aston Martin was £3,000 more expensive than the Jaguar, a huge £60k in today's money. And that difference is even larger today; while this gorgeous 1965 E-type 4.2 FHC is worth around £150,000, the DB6 from 1966 is £250,000 more.

But does it deserve the higher sum?

On first glance, maybe. Whether it's due to the Bond connection or simple, old-fashioned rarity – a mere or 1,788 DB6s were produced compared to 38,412 E-type Series 1s – but I can't deny the Aston has slightly more allure than the E-type. Those who witnessed the cars



THE SIXTIES

E-TYPE VS DB6

driving in convoy through the beautiful Yorkshire Moors for this feature certainly thought so since it was the silver car that got all the attention, the poor old E-type barely given a first never mind a second glance.

And so, despite messing around with cars for almost 25 years, even I'm taken in by the charm of the Aston and cannot wait to get behind the wheel. Large and roomy, it's certainly more comfortable than the E-type whose cockpit is so tight you feel like you're wearing it rather than sitting in it. Plus, by being 3.75in longer than the DB5, the extra length allowed Aston to insert two admittedly tight rear seats; to have the same in the Jaguar you'd need the less proportionally perfect E-type 2+2 which arrived in the same year as the DB6.

Although it's clearly better built (but so it should have been considering the huge difference in price) the chrome and art deco-style shape of the dashboard makes the Aston's dash appear overly twee and convoluted compared to the E-type's simple, racing inspired layout.

The DB6 is powered by a 3,995cc straight six that was designed by Aston's long-term engine designer, Tadek Marek.





“One of my favourite aspects of driving an E-type is looking through the screen and down the long, voluptuous bonnet.”

Like the XK unit that first saw service with the 1948 XK 120, this wasn't a fresh engine either. First used for the DBR2 racing car from 1956 it was modified for road use, starting with the DB4 two years later, and only replaced by Marek's 5.3-litre V8 over a decade later.

Founded in 1913, Aston's history is even longer than Jaguar's and even more complicated with several owners in that time. It's most famous era is arguably the Fifties and Sixties when it was owned by British industrialist and tractor magnate, David Brown. After buying the ailing company in 1947, the subsequent DB range are some of the most celebrated British sports cars of all time. Even though Brown had sold the company in 1972 and it had been owned by Ford since 1989, when a new model was revealed four years later, as an immediate link to the earlier cars it was christened the DB7. Aston Martin has continued to use the name ever since with its current range topper being the DB11.

Due to all this history it's with more than a little anticipation – or perhaps fear when I remember its value – as I turn the DB6's ignition key, hit the starter and hear the big engine fire with a purposeful growl.

Like Aston's previous models from the 1958 DB4 onwards, the DB6 utilises Carrozzeria Touring's Superleggera (or superlight) technology that consists of aluminium panels on a light tubular framework. Although this makes the car lighter than it would have been if made in the traditional way, it still weighs a hefty 1,525kg, 200kg more than the E-type.

But thankfully, with 325bhp the Aston's free-revving straight-six is still strong enough to result in a hard and eager acceleration – when Autocar tested the car for its 25 February 1966 issue, the writer managed to reach 60mph in 6.5 seconds, half a second faster than the E-type 4.2 FHC when had been tested by Motor magazine two years previously.

This eagerness is encouraged by the five-speed gearbox that's not only remarkably easy to use for a 50-year old unit but allows the car to cruise more comfortably than the E-type with its Jaguar-designed four.

Said Autocar; “The car is deceptively fast, streaking along at a relaxed 120mph ▶



THE SIXTIES

E-TYPE VS DB6

TECH SPECS

Engine: 4,235cc inline 6

Power: 265bhp

Torque: 283lb ft

0-60mph: 7.0 secs

Top speed: 150mph

Transmission: 4-spd man

Price new: £1,992

Value now: £150,000



as effortlessly as some other cars manage 80mph." Six decades later, that hasn't changed. Due to the five-speed 'box and the smoothness of the engine, I certainly find the DB6 the more relaxed of the two.

But I'm being honest, the DB doesn't feel as sharp as the E-type; the steering isn't as accurate while the physical throws of the transmission are almost as long as the car itself and don't lend themselves

to short, snappy changes. And the Aston's engine might have 60bhp over the E-type's, but it never feels as eager or responsive and neither does it sound as distinctive. Despite all of the Aston's considerable charm I'm still missing that twin cam wail of the XK unit.

Having a live axle, it doesn't ride or handle as well either and can't disguise its bulk through corners when fast changes

of direction unsettle the body. Put all of this together and it makes the DB6 more of a GT in the same way the XJ-S would be a decade later rather than a blue-blooded sports car. But is the car's unmistakable magnetism still able to win out over the sportier E-type?

I certainly prefer the Aston's spacious interior when I switch cars and climb into Jaguar's cramped cockpit. As well as

TECH SPECS

Engine: 3,995cc inline 6

Power: 325bhp

Torque: 290lb ft

0-60mph: 6.5 secs

Top speed: 148mph

Transmission: 5-spd man

Price new: £4,998

Value now: £400,000



“Due to all this history it’s with more than a little anticipation – or perhaps fear when I remember its value – as I turn the DB6’s ignition key, hit the starter and hear the big engine fire with a purposeful growl.”

banging my head off the low the low roof, I also need to be double jointed to get both legs over the wide sill and then fit under the large, wood-rimmed wheel.

One of my favourite aspects of driving an E-type is looking through the screen and down the long, voluptuous bonnet. Although just as exciting in the Aston when, peering over its large bonnet vent, I feel like the aforementioned secret agent

on a mission, I still prefer the Jaguar since the view makes any journey look and feel like I’m at Le Mans.

The 4.2-litre XK unit might have 60bhp less than DB6’s 4.0 but it still feels a little eager and a tad more responsive plus, despite what the motoring magazines of the time found, quicker too. As mentioned earlier, the Jaguar-designed ‘box is faster and more accurate than the five-speeder

in the Aston with shorter changes which aids acceleration. I do miss the fifth gear, though, since the noise of the high revving engine can become hard work over long distances, hence why many E-type owners chose to fit a modern five-speed unit which transforms the car.

Where the E-type really shines is its handling. Fitted with Jaguar’s famous independent rear suspension, it rides



much better than the Aston, not feeling as loose or squirrely over rough surfaces. With perfectly controlled body roll and perfectly weighted steering, I'm able to attack corners faster than in the Aston. Aston's 1959 victory of the Le Mans 24-hour might have come two years after the D-type's final success there but the E-type feels much closer related to its competition ancestor than the DB6 does to its own, the DBR1.

Just as I have a favourite from my earlier choices (Monet every time, I don't care as long as its red and I'd rather stick pins in my eyes rather than watch either) so I do with these two cars. Although there's no denying it would be a pleasure to own an Aston Martin DB6, thanks to its better handling and responsive engine, I'd enjoy driving the E-type more. **AMD**

● *Thanks to: Classic & Sportscar Centre (www.classicandsportscar.ltd.uk) for the use of both cars featured*



MARKET TRENDS:

WORDS:
JEFF RUGGLES

GOOD VALUE DB MODELS

Charting the values of the beginnings of the DB line, and a potential new entry point.



This 2005 DB9 sold at WB & Sons for £21,800 in April.

DB9 (2004-2016)

For years, the DB7 has been the most affordable way into an Aston Martin. However, with prices gradually on the rise for the car many deemed to have saved the brand, its DB9 successor has become a viable alternative.

First unveiled in 2003, the DB9 was a huge leap forward for Aston Martin, becoming the first model to be built at the firm's Gaydon factory using its new aluminium-intensive VH engineering methodology. It would remain in production until 2016 and see many tweaks along the way, with the drop top Voltante joining the range in 2004 and the first major revisions coming in 2008 when power was upped from 456 to 470bhp and chassis improvements were made.

More revisions arrived for the 2011 model year, with a cosmetic facelift and new adaptive dampers, but the biggest changes occurred for 2013 when nearly 50 per cent of the DB9's parts were altered. Power was upped to 510bhp, which became 540bhp for the swansong GT model.

With production ending just six years ago, the range of DB9 prices is understandably wide. Age plays a major role, with each facelift adding a premium and the 2013-on cars the most expensive.

However, with later cars still new enough to suffer depreciation, it's the pre-2008 examples that are most intriguing. Values fell steadily during the 2010s, falling under £30,000 in 2018 and hitting

a low in November 2020, when a 2006 car sold at auction for just £14,750. Since then, the threshold has been upped to over £20,000, with £30,000 becoming the norm.

The Voltante models experienced a similar pattern, enjoying a recovery after a lull in 2020, and generally command around £5000 more than an equivalent coupe. With both, mileage and condition are paramount and good examples can still command north of £40,000. However, with the later cars potentially set to get cheaper, the DB9 market looks



DB2, DB4/2, DB MARK III



A figure of £161,667 changed hands for this DB2 Vantage at H&H last December.

Of course, the DB9 was far from the only Aston to signal a new era. Rewinding back to 1950 saw the emergence of the hugely significant DB2, which was the first successful model of the David Brown era and ushered in the new DB model line.

The DB2 was widely praised, but it too was continually evolved, with a drop-head coupe and more potent Vantage options soon offered. In all, 411 were produced before its DB2/4 successor arrived in 1953 with its 2+2 layout and novel hatchback, along with a drop-head option. A Mark II version followed in 1955, with a rare notchback coupe also made available. In all, 764 DB2/4s were built.

Things were freshened up by the DB Mk3 Mark III in 1957 (the 2/4 label was dropped). As well as the regular 2+2, it continued to be available as a drop-head (plus a handful of fixed-head coupes), lasting in production until 1959, with 511 built.

With only 1700 built, these Feltham-built Astons are rare but considerably cheaper than a DB4 or DB5. The DB2 tends to be the most valuable, followed by the

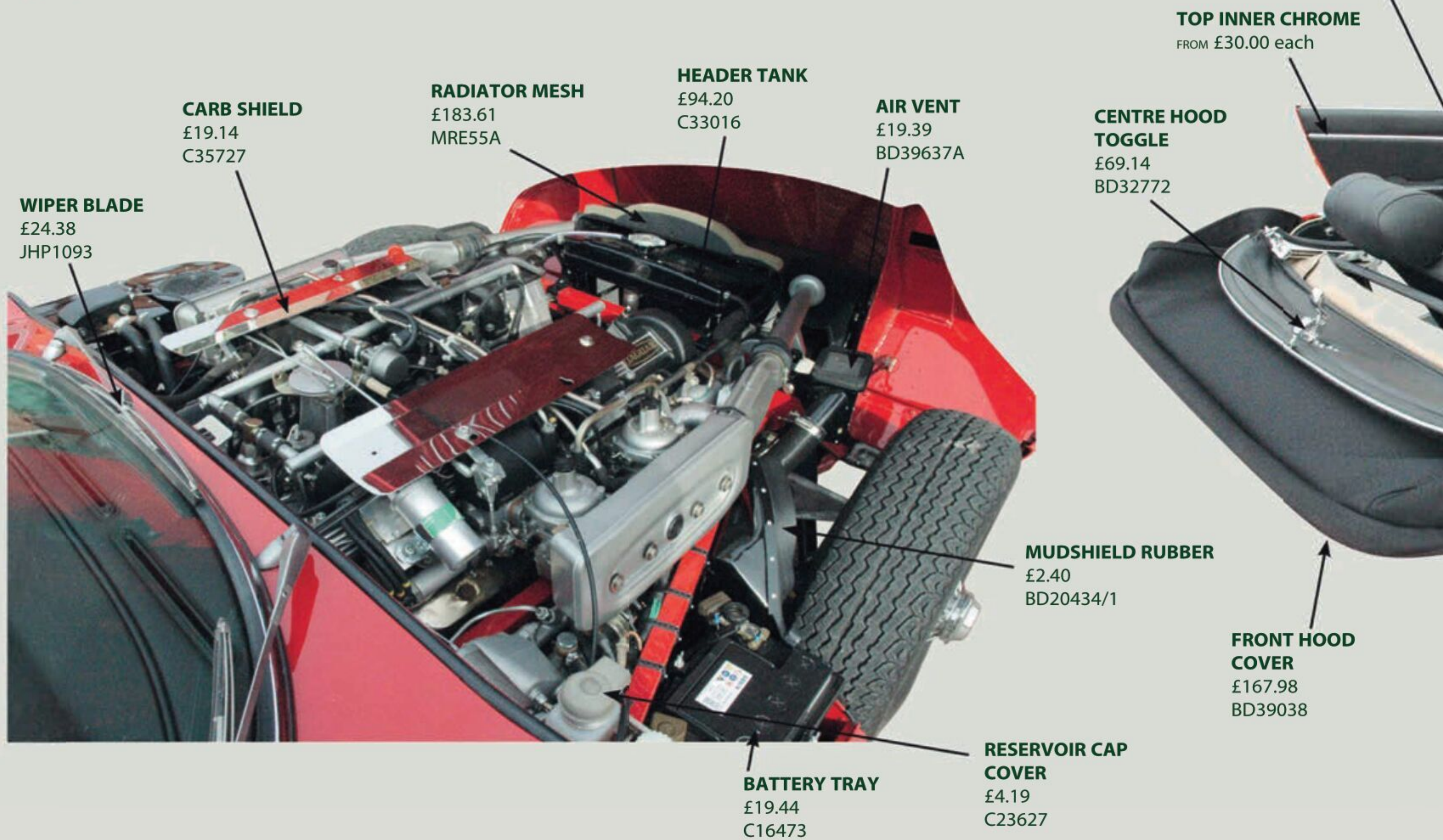
DB Mark III then the DB2/4. Prices for all peaked around the mid-2010s but have corrected slightly in recent years.

Nevertheless, only a basket-case DB2 will be under £100,000 nowadays, with most cars over £200,000 and a Vantage commanding a premium. The DB4/2 routinely achieved £200,000 in 2015-2016, but £130,000 is now more like it

at auction, with a couple slipping under the £100,000 barrier recently. For the Mark II notchback, expect to pay an extra £50,000.

DB Mark III values, meanwhile, have also dropped from a peak of over £200,000 to settle around £125,000-£140,000. For all models, drop-heads can sell for up to £100,000 more.

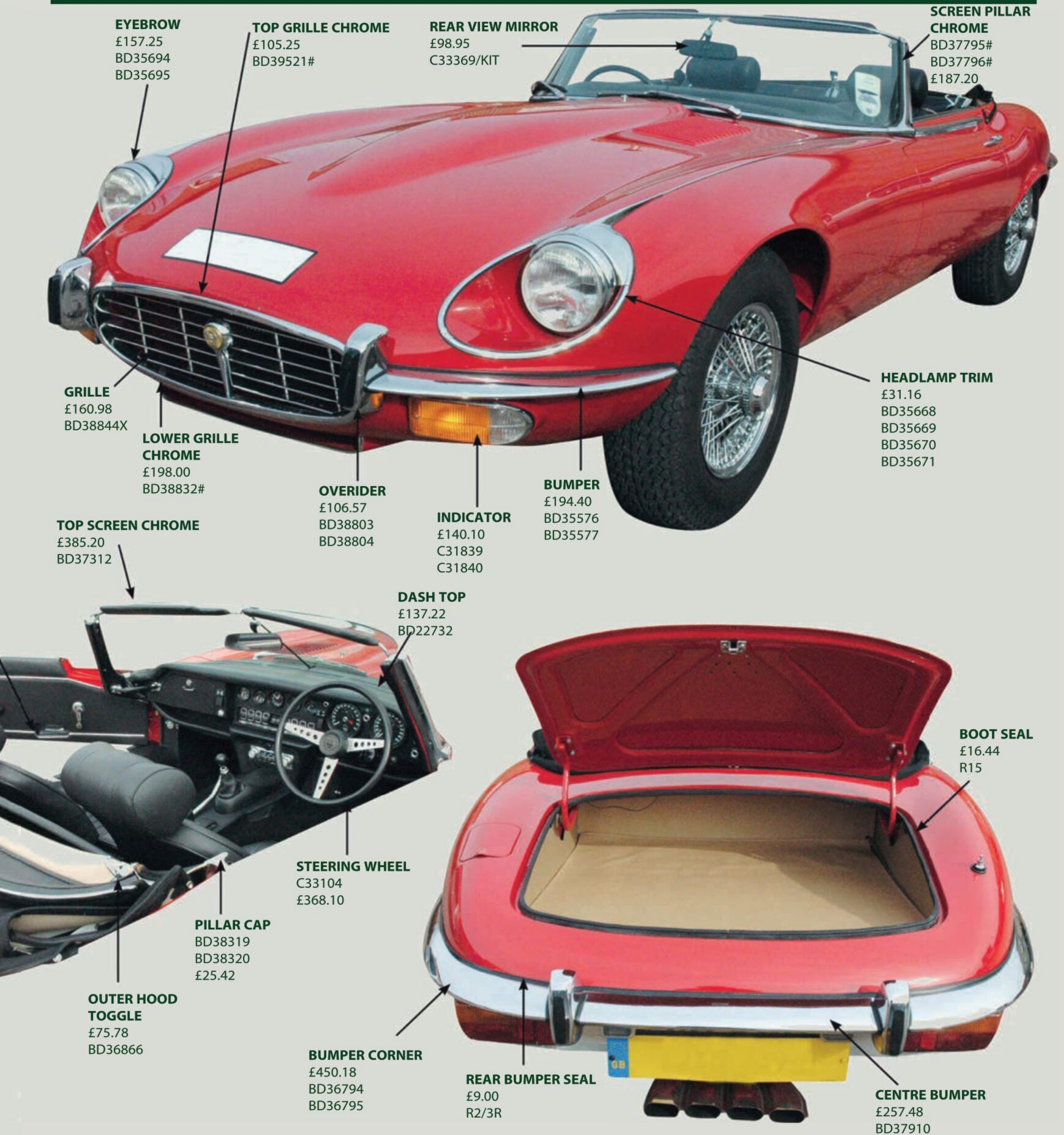




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MOTORSPORT

in association
withBy Matt James
Editor,
Motorsport News

How Aston Martin chased the ultimate prize at Le Mans

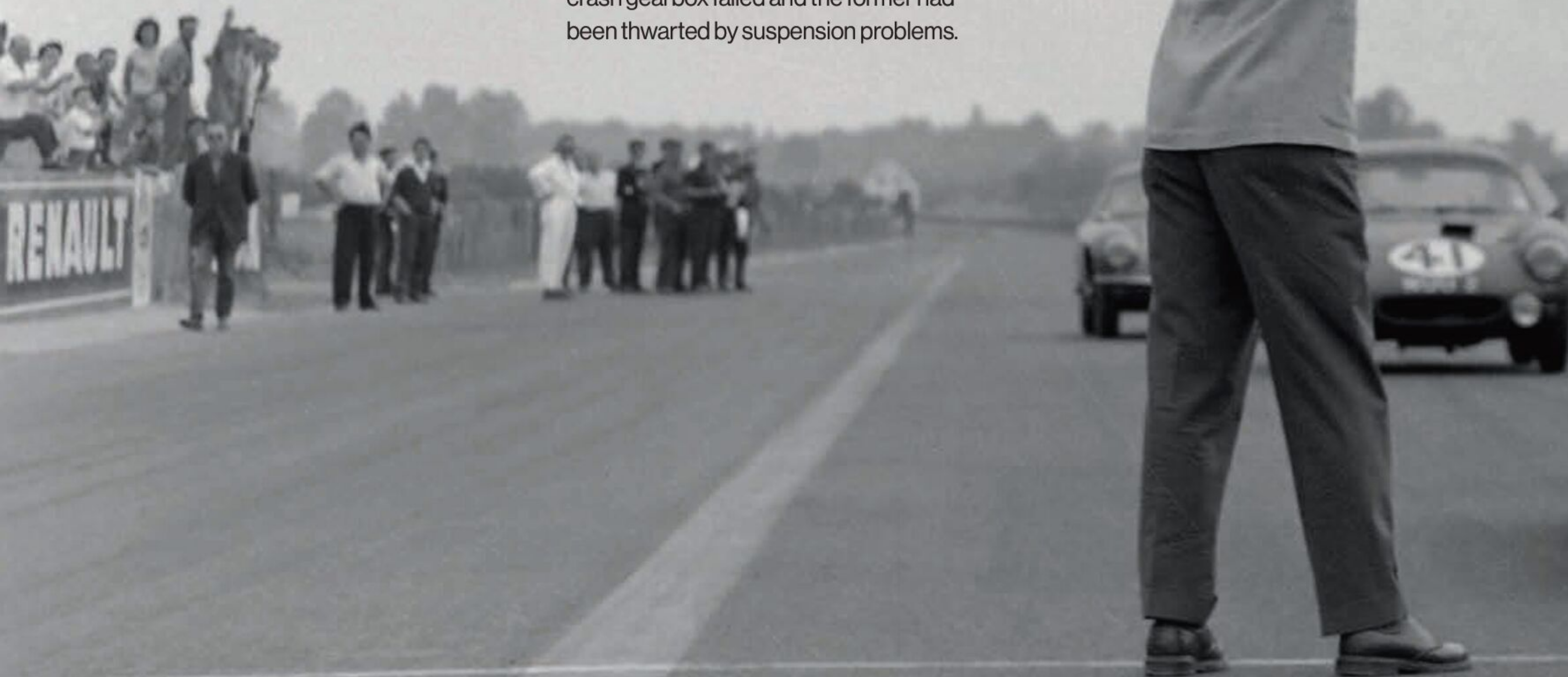
The 24-hour race proved a tough nut to crack, but 1959 was Aston's greatest season

The best things in life are worth waiting for, or so the old adage goes. For Aston Martin, success at Le Mans was some three decades in the making and its 1959 victory stands as a shining beacon of its success at La Sarthe.

In the early days of the race around the public roads in France, which began in 1923, claiming a victory in the event was as much to prove the efficiency and reliability of the relatively new-fangled motor car as it was to do with beating the competition.

The beginning of Aston Martin's love affair with the twice-around-the-clock French classic race came in 1928 with the T-Type model.

The company was in the hands of William Renwick and ace engineer Augustus Bertelli, who had rescued it from its financial straits and Bertelli was on the driving strength for the first assault on Le Mans in the 1,495cc, 55bhp machine alongside George Eyston. There was a second Aston Martin International entry for Jack Besant and Cyril Paul. The latter retired when the four-speed crash gearbox failed and the former had been thwarted by suspension problems.



It was an inauspicious start and it took the firm until 1931 to return. When it did, with the 1.5-litre International, Aston Martin was a much more competitive proposition. While two of the trio of entries were scratched during the race with bodywork problems, Bertelli and co-driver Maurice Harvey made it to the flag in fifth place, winning their class.



The International was a good servant and picked up more class success one year later in the hands of Sammy Newsome and Swede Henken Widengren on a track layout that more closely resembles the Le Mans raced on today.

The Ulster version was introduced in 1935 and Aston went to France mob handed. All but one of the seven-strong fleet of 1.5-litre fliers all made the end of the event and the third-placed car of Charles Martin and Charles Brackenbury claimed the prestigious Index of Performance (based

on efficiency given the engine size, rather than outright pace) – just seven laps behind the monstrous 4.5-litre winning Lagonda of Johnny Hindmarsh and Luis Fontes. It was a head-turning performance.

The Ulster was replaced by the Speed Model, and the firm continued to enter Le Mans through to the outbreak of World War Two but mainly as a leading class player and the cars were in the hands of privateer – or 'gentlemen' - racers. ►





Shortly after the end of the hostilities, David Brown bought the Aston Martin company for, reportedly, just over £20,000 and set it on a trajectory for the top step of the rostrum in France.

The DB1 ('David Brown 1') made its first public appearance at the London Motor Show in 1948. The two-seater front-engined rear-wheel-drive model appeared at Le Mans in privateer hands in 1949 and both cars entered made the finish line, but Aston wanted to do things properly – one of the DB1's entered had been a prototype for what followed next.

Aston returned to Le Mans as a factory outfit in 1950 with the DB2. With a 2.6-litre Lagonda-derived engine slotted in, the works car of George Abecassis and Lance Macklin took fifth and the class win in the up-to-3000cc division and it was followed across the line by the sister car of Reg Parnell and Charles Brackenbury. Things got even better with an overall podium for Lance Macklin and Eric Thompson in 1951.

In 1953, the DB3S, the successor to the uncompetitive DB3, was revealed. It went into the mid-June race short of testing mileage and neither works car made it to the chequered flag. Somewhat stung by the failure, better things were promised with more mileage under the sportscar's bonnet by the time the next edition came around. The DB3S was a winner in the World Sportscar Championship – the first year of the contest – in that same season, though, with September's Tourist Trophy falling to Pat Griffith and Peter Collins.



Five works cars and two private entries started the event including a 2.9-litre supercharged version handled by luminaries Reg Parnell and Roy Salvadori were entered for Le Mans for 1954. However, numerous crashes and a head-gasket failure for the supercharged star car put paid to any hopes of glory.

The 1955 Le Mans would prove to be one of motorsport's darkest days as Pierre Levegh's Mercedes somersaulted into the crowd and killed 83 spectators. It was hard going on the track too with an uprated Jaguar D-type making its La Sarthe debut and Merc had its 300SLRs. The silver machines were withdrawn after the tragedy on Saturday afternoon and the Jaguar of Mike Hawthorn and Ivor Bueb were five laps clear of the Peter Collins/Paul Frere-driven DB3S by the close of play on Sunday after the Aston had stuck to a strict lap-time regime from legendary team manager John Wyr. It was a result that Aston Martin repeated in 1956 with Stirling Moss and

Peter Collins – just a single lap behind the winning Jaguar D-type of Ninian Sanderson and Ron Flockhart.

Only a privateer older DB3 took the finish line in 1957, as the new DBR1/300 was in its nascent stages. It had made its debut at Le Mans that season but none of the works cars finished. Aston Martin had been picking up the scraps in the World Sportscar Championship too and won the Nurburgring 1000kms in 1957 and again in 1958 with the DBR1/300. For that 1958 season – and as a delayed reaction the Le Mans tragedy – sportscar regulations were restricted to three litres, a move with suited Aston's cars perfectly as they had been running to that capacity all through the life of the DB3 and the early DBR1/300.

For 1959, the company was fully focused on both the World Sportscar Championship and finally claiming that elusive outright victory at Le Mans.

Aston faced competition from Ferrari's 250 GTO long wheelbase machine, and the



privately-run semi-works Ecurie Ecosse Jaguar D-types. Although subsequently denied by Stirling Moss, the Aston Martin he shared with Jack Fairman was sent out to 'break' the fleet of Ferraris early on. Team manager Reg Parnell was supposed to have instructed the number four car to push the 250 GTOs as far as he could and leading the early stages seemed to prove that was be the case.

Moss and Fairman stretched the Italian cars as far as they could before their own engine cried enough as the clock ticked towards 9pm on Saturday. It had lasted an hour longer than the privately-run car of Peter Whitehead and Brian Naylor, which had been involved in a bad shunt just as evening was starting to fall.

The two 'tortoise' Astons, driven by the Roy Salvadori and Carroll Shelby combination and the Maurice Trintignant and Paul Frere crew, were in prime position to pick up the cudgels when the leading Ferraris fell apart. With four hours to go, the leading 250 GTO of Olivier Gendebien and

Phil Hill overheated and seized its engine.

Parnell acted quickly and told his two leading cars, which were now 1-2 on track, to drop their pace by up to 15 seconds per lap to protect their engines and see the chequered flag. They made it and were 25 laps ahead of the nearest opposition.

It was Aston's second win on the bounce in the 1959 World Sportscar Championship after its Nurburgring victory and the British firm made it a trio of wins in the final round of the season at Goodwood in early September to wrap up the manufacturers' title (an individual drivers' crown was 21 years away...).

The title was an ironic one as Aston had never intended to chase the 1959 WSC silverware, only focusing on Le Mans. However, the success at the Nurburgring (which was the warm-up for the 24 hours) allied to the Le Mans win meant that the Goodwood triumph gave it a maximum score when dropped scores were taken into account.

Even then, the sportscar programme had been increasingly overshadowed by David Brown's ambition to tackle grand prix motor racing, a plan that ultimately became folly and took the British firm's eye off the sportscar ball.

When the Formula 1 DBR4 made its race debut in the Dutch Grand Prix at Zandvoort just two weeks before Le Mans, it was uncompetitive and Brown focused his efforts on the single-seater. That meant the DBR3/100 signed off with its domination at Le Mans and then didn't build on that success.

That would be the end of the Aston Martin story as a full factory outfit for nearly 30 years. There was the privately funded Group C effort in the 1980s with the Aston Martin-powered Nimrod in 1982 and the Steve O'Rourke-backed EMKA effort but, even in the hands of RML (the ace car preparation firm), the works blessed AMR1 in 1989 hardly ripped up any trees with a solitary 11th place finish at La Sarthe in the hands of Briton Brian Redman, Irishman Michael Roe and Greek driver Costas Los.

Aston didn't rekindle its works interest in the 24-hour race until 2005. The firm was then owned by Ford but a link-up with Prodrive, who built the machines, opened its eyes to the increasingly popular GT arena. While prototypes headed the way at the front of the grid at Le Mans (and there was a disastrous attempt on this with the Lola-built B09/60, in 2008 and 2009, but the less said about that they better), the DBR9 fitted neatly into the headline GT1 category.

Prodrive boss David Richards lead a consortium which bought Aston Martin in 2007. Prodrive is essentially a race team and pushed forward with the GT programme, which would enable the new investors to reap the rewards and sell versions of the GT racer to customer teams.

The first GT1 success came in 2008 with the DBR9 and it won again with the Vantage GTE in 2014 and in 2017.

Aston Martin has become a major player in GT racing and it will continue to take Le Mans seriously as it is the best shop window of it all. Its chances of outright success to match the 1959 result might not be finished yet either.

Aston was one of the first to embrace the Hypercar generation with the Valkyrie model, which fits neatly into the new headline class for the iconic race. There have been rumours of a Valkyrie back in the leading division in the near future and that prospect has fans licking their lips already. **AMD**



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FROM THE CLUBHOUSE



Concours time



Cars rest whilst their occupants talk about them in the pub

Image: David King

Spring in the northern hemisphere is traditionally the start of the season for Aston Martin Owners Club events as cars that have been squirrelled away for winter blink their way out of the garage and into the glorious warm sunshine. Well, that's the theory. However, it's not a theory that holds up to much scrutiny.

Firstly, the AMOC is a worldwide club and our members in Australia held their biennial "Australian National" during the autumnal month of April. Secondly, the Club's International Concours took place on the duller and drizzlier of spring days in Surrey... c'est la vie, as we say in the UK!

Another 'national' event in spring was hosted by the America East Section in Massachusetts.

Meanwhile, around the world, local pub meetings, drives, tours and barbecues continue throughout the seasons.

It's events like these that ensure everything to do with Aston Martin can be fun. What's more, not owning an Aston Martin is no barrier to enjoying the social side of the Club.

If you're thinking about joining the AMOC, why not 'try before you buy'? Whether or not you own an Aston Martin all the worldwide areas will be happy to

welcome you to a local social event so that you can meet the people and see what they're like. You'll certainly be made very welcome and, hopefully, that will convince you to stay a while longer! The AMOC is a thriving international club of

people who simply love Aston Martin cars. There's room for more members, no matter what car you drive.

You can find out more at www.amoc.org or by calling +44(0) 1865 400400.

MEANWHILE IN AUSTRALIA...



Last one to 60mph buys the beer!
Image: Peter Saglietti

Richard Furse tells us about his visit to the Australian National

When I got off a 10,500 miles 24hr flight to go to the Australian National event, having previously met only one of the Australian members in the flesh, I wasn't sure what to expect. Of course, I knew I was going to get a ribbing about 'Poms'

(what the Australians call we Brits) and cricket. What I had not expected was such a genuinely warm welcome from the 120+ people who were there.

Armed with some clear instructions and event clothing I embarked upon a series of experiences that make the effort of attending such events so worthwhile.

The 2020 National (eventually run in 2022) was a 4-day event based in a large modern country hotel and consisted of:

- **Friday** - Arrive and settle in. Welcome dinner (I was introduced as the mad Englishman who had made the trip).
- **Saturday** - Concours at a park in the local town. Dinner and dancing in a local winery.
- **Sunday** - Golf challenge and free day.
- **Monday** - Track day at Sandown. Buffet dinner.
- **Tuesday** - Observation run (Drive Out). Lunch and event dinner, prizegiving.

I then stayed on for the post national tour

- **Wednesday** - Drive around Melbourne to Lorne via their equivalent of "Sandbanks" in Poole, UK.
- **Thursday** - Lorne. Drives on spectacular roads to wonderful local sights.
- **Friday** - Drive to Ballarat. Gold Rush town. Visits to a very good machine shop and local museums.

- **Saturday** - Free day in Ballarat. Evening history show in recreated old gold rush town.
- **Sunday** - Lunch in Daylesford.
- **Monday** - Drive to Echuca. Steam powered paddle boat trip and dinner.
- **Tuesday** - Return to the UK.

Inevitably with any large event, not all activities suited everyone, Consequently, the organisers had ensured that every aspect included an alternative. I now look back with great fondness on an event that cost locals the equivalent of £200 all in.

I could not recommend the trip more highly and I would strongly encourage people to go... from anywhere in the world!



A glorious autumnal display at the Australian National. Image: Peter Saglietti

WHY JOIN THE AMOC?

- Welcome pack and member offers/discounts
- Monthly and quarterly publications
- World class concours events
- Visit to places of interest with exclusive access and display space
- Tours – national and international
- Racing and track days
- Full access to the AMOC Forum (a great technical resource)
- AMOC approved insurance scheme
- Prestigious Club merchandise
- Members are welcome at any local event, anywhere in the world, including BBQs, picnics, displays at stately homes and museums, tours, holidays, car meets, etc.
- All members are also supporters of the Aston Martin Heritage Trust, which includes access to an amazing archive, artefacts collection and displays at the AMHT Museum (free entry) plus their annual journal, 'Aston

THE SPRING CONCOURS



Suitably attired intrepid members toast Her Majesty. Image: Ian Kendall

The Spring Concours forms the final part of the Club's annual International Weekend that includes a drive, BBQ, formal dinner, prize giving and, of course, some very clean cars.

The 2022 event took place at the magnificent Loseley Park in Surrey during HM Queen's Platinum Jubilee celebrations. The tithe barn hosted a dinner on the Saturday evening where members from around the world (including Australia and Japan) met to

renew friendships and make new ones.

The drive on Saturday, organised by the local Area Representative David Such, enjoyed the best of the weather and took in some of the lovely Surrey countryside and driving roads. A pub meal is always a must for comparing notes afterwards.

A thunderstorm overnight that faded to drizzle all morning ensured that the concours competitors had anything but dry roads and perfect conditions for their final, pre-judging, polish. The conditions dictated that chassis wouldn't be judged this time around, to the huge relief of those arriving at 07:30 to maximise their final preparation time.

Around 50 cars lined up for the white gloved inspection in 16 classes. The persistent dullness of the day didn't disguise the still shining chrome nor the fun shared by competitors and spectators alike.

Tours of the historic Tudor house and garden in full spring bloom were popular. The coffee stand was busy - not selling cold drinks! - and the Club's suppliers and

partners added to the day's variety.

The star attraction was the Aston Martin Bulldog that has almost completed its well-publicised restoration at the expert hands of CMC Bridgnorth, Shropshire who kindly brought the car and answered many questions about it. Firing it up wowed the crowd and stimulated a plethora of mobile device recordings. It also trumpeted the end of another successful and memorable event in the AMOC social calendar – especially for those who took home a Club trophy.



A clean car receives the judges' attention. Image: Phil Rablin





MEET THE EXPERTS

We visit the Aston Workshop in County Durham

WORDS AND PHOTOGRAPHY: Rob Hawkins

The biggest independent Aston Martin specialist in the north-east of England started on an old sheep farm, just a mile away from the famous Beamish Museum. Founder Bob Fountain was already passionate about repairing and driving Aston Martins, so he was quick to set up such a business on the sheep farm he had bought. Nowadays, that business is known as the Aston Workshop and still occupies the same 37 acres of

farmland, but in a modern set of buildings that cover 45,000 square feet and includes facilities such as a showroom full of cars for sale, an assortment of engine rooms and a fully equipped bodyshop with spray booths.

Bob has semi-retired but lives next door. He also owns the local pub/hotel to ensure his Aston Martin customers are fed and watered and if they need to stay over, there's a range of discounted accommodation for them.

Whilst the background history to the Aston Workshop is interesting, the work undertaken by this independent specialist is potentially mind-blowing. As we walk around the workshops, managing director Dave Cummings points to a collection of new engine blocks in the corner. These are indeed brand-new cast aluminium blocks, manufactured for AW and ready for CNC machining in-house to ensure they can be assembled into new engines. In the workshop, engineer Kelvin explains that one of the first jobs is to remove any unwanted burrs from the casting and machine flats on the exterior to enable components to be fitted, all of which is completed by computer-controlled machinery. Building engines from scratch in this way is a huge undertaking both financially and in terms of time.

Such ambitious undertakings are hardly surprising when we enter another workshop and find Colin working on a re-creation of the DB4 GT Zagato. To many, this is one of the ultimate Aston Martins ►

MEET THE SPECIALIST

ASTON WORKSHOP



Technician Luke removes the brake calipers from a late Nineties V8 Coupé as part of a thorough and comprehensive service.

and on a par with a Ferrari 250 GT in terms of looks, rarity and value. Should you have a spare £1.8m, then it won't buy you a genuine Zagato (only 19 of them were built), but it will provide you with an authentic re-creation from AW, using a donor DB4 to start with (they usually have a few in the salesroom). Aston Workshop is now completing its eighth order, which entails shortening the chassis by five inches, making a lightweight aluminium body by hand and upgrading several components ranging from the electrics to the engine.

Upgrades appear to be popular at AW and the majority of them are not nearly as expensive as the Zagato re-creation. For instance, owners of a DBS V8 or AM V8 can have the engine enlarged to six litres and equipped with Weber 48mm IDF carburettors to produce an impressive 320bhp, although this can be further increased to around 460-470bhp with upgraded camshafts and a higher compression ratio. Known as the Evolution 6.0, there are many more upgrades to help modernise and improve this iconic car, which when launched back in 1969, was the fastest four-seater production car in the world.

Anyone with an AM V8 can take it a stage beyond the Evolution 6.0 at Aston Workshop and have what they call a Superleggera V8. According to AW, this "combines the charismatic V8 performance of Aston Martins of the 1970s and 1980s with bespoke hand-crafted design recalling the beautiful Superleggera models of the 1960s – a gorgeous two-plus-two seater,



One of the last DBS models stripped of its exterior panels and ready for a respray in the spray booth.



Welder and panel beater Paul demonstrates the dying art of using an English Wheel.

and successor to the DB6 as conceived by our craftsmen."

We spot the body buck for the Superleggera (prototype) in one of the workshops, which initially began with sketches and clay models, but now makes use of computer drawings. However, the new aluminium bodywork for the Superleggera is all handmade using the same weight saving methods and processes of the original cars of the 1960s of which the staff at AW have become so familiar. The first customer order is now in the workshop and is due to be finished in 2023.

Possibly the most controversial upgrade on offer from AW, or one that divides opinion,

is an electric conversion for the DB4/5/6 (1958-1971). It's a fully reversible conversion that results in a usable classic with a 200-mile range, a 0-60mph time of less than six seconds and a top speed of around 112mph. Recharging the lithium-ion batteries takes up to eight hours if the 7kW on-board charger is plugged into a domestic 240v socket, but a 22kW fast charger reduces this down to one or two hours (or less depending on remaining charge). Prices start at around £168,000 (including VAT) and the first conversion should be finished later this year.

These ambitious projects are perhaps a natural progression of a business that caters for most jobs in-house. Those new engines we mentioned are assembled in a spotless engine room (old engines are dismantled elsewhere in a separate workshop). When we walk in, technicians Alex and Sam have a rare straight-six block from a DB2/4 Mk3. Alex explains why a length of flat steel bar is bolted to the top of the block; this is because the cylinder liners are loose in this engine, so need to be held in place for now to prevent them falling out. Once the engine has been assembled, it will spend several hours on the dyno being run in and checked.

Some of the work at AW is clearly challenging. For instance, we spot a rare V8 Coupé (produced between 1996 and 1999) that requires a thorough service. Inevitably, it's sometimes a case of one step forward and two steps back when parts as simple as a fuel filter are not what everyone expected them to be (and there are two of them tucked away) with different fittings. Technician Luke isn't fazed by such dilemmas, although he jokes that he's going on holiday soon and wants to have the car finished in time.

In a separate building, we discover the bodywork aspects of Aston Workshop. Welder and panel beater Paul is confident the rusty remains of a DBS that are secured to a jig can be rebuilt as he demonstrates the art of making a front panel using an English Wheel. Nearby, a ten-year-old DBS (one of the last – the model ceased production in 2012) is hard to recognise with all of its panels removed. It's being masked up and cleaned before being pushed into the spray booth for a respray.

There's so much going on at AW, and we've hardly mentioned all the cars for sale, although one of them is featured as a test drive in this issue on page 54. **AMD**

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MODEL HISTORY: 70s AND 80s V8s

Marek's masterpiece made metal; finally sorted, its V8 takes the firm into the supercar league, revives Lagonda, and attracts the attention of Ford



David Brown, Aston Martin chairman, wanted even faster and more luxurious road cars as the Seventies approached; after attempts to bring a racing Lagonda V12, designed by Professor Robert Eberan von Eberhorst to road car production failed, thoughts turned towards a V8, for reasons of weight, packaging and power output. Testing revealed in the early Sixties that the Tadek Marek six couldn't be taken out much past 4.1-litres, and the desire for a high-speed, four seat touring car selected a V8 configuration by necessity; rival Bristol came to a similar conclusion during this decade.

Marek, tasked with bringing the new engine to life, began work in 1963 and had a running prototype 4.8-litre prototype

TIMELINE

1969 DBS V8 announced; Sir David Brown has a one-off four door Lagonda DBS V8 produced for his personal use.

1970 5.34-litre, Bosch fuel-injected DBS V8 [Series 1] finally arrives after nearly three years of the stop-gap DBS. Far more powerful than the outgoing Marek six, it weighs just 30lb more than the older engine when fully dressed.

1971 US certification finally arrives for the DBS V8 in October, allowing cars to be sold there. Mid-engined Aston V8-powered Siva S530 mooted as a production car but remained a one-off.



1972 Series 1 V8 production ends in May, giving way to the AM V8 [Series 2]. Sir David Brown relinquishes control of Aston Martin to William Wilson's Company Developments. Sotheby Special/Ogle Aston Martin revealed at Montreal, with special Triplex glass and a tail full of brake lights (showing stopping force). Two examples were eventually built.



two years later, known as DP218. Extensive testing in modified DB5s showed some oil starvation, but it was nothing compared to what happened in competition. Marek wasn't keen on seeing his engine race, but despite breakages, the engine was enlarged to 5.0-litres and fitted a pair of Lola factory entries for its 1967 T70 MkIII racing car. At Le Mans, one car holed a piston, while other retired with fuel injection issues. ►

1973 AM V8 [Series 3] cars debut; Bosch fuel injection is replaced by four twin-choke Webers.

1974 Four-door Aston Martin Lagonda V8 [Series 1] launched; seven are built, with production terminating two years later.

1975 A new consortium, Aston Martin Lagonda (1975), saves the firm from insolvency.

1976 Razor edge' William Towns-styled Aston Martin V8 Lagonda [Series 2] debuts, sales don't start until 1979, however.

1977 'Britain's first supercar,' the V8 Vantage [Series 1], appears. Power is up to 390bhp; aerodynamic aids include a chin air dam and large rear spoiler.

1978 'Oscar India'/'October Introduction' [Series 4] AM V8s released, with a facelift and revised suspension to control rear-end lift at speed. V8 Vantage production continues, with cars facelifted to match. Drophead Volante [Series 1] launches.



MODEL HISTORY

70S AND 80S V8S

With a litany of faults evident, it was clear the new V8 wasn't up to scratch for use in Aston's new car, the DBS. It launched instead with the outgoing 4.0-litre Marek six in 1967, while Aston's engineers worked to improve the V8's stiffness. Alan Crouch, later of Ricardo, added stiffening ribs, strengthened the main bearing housings and added longer cylinder head bolts, all the while increasing capacity to 5.34-litres. The work took almost two years, and the DBS V8 which resulted, complete with Bosch fuel injection, looked outwardly similar to the DBS.

An air dam and stiffer suspension did much to contain the V8's quoted output of 345bhp, while GKN alloys wheels directed air to larger brakes. At the rear, De Dion suspension, beloved of Aston chassis designer, Harold Beach, put power to the road; he had wanted to fit such suspension as far back as the DB4, and it had made a fleeting appearance on the ill-fated Lagonda Rapide.

DBS V8 production didn't last long before new nomenclature arrived in 1972; goodbye DBS V8 (and chairman David Brown), hello AM V8 saloon. By Series 3 production had begun in August, a quartet of Webers replaced had replaced the Bosch fuel injection; a retrograde step in some eyes, but the earlier system had proved unreliable. It made the concurrent Vantage modifications (from 1977) easier to produce for future models.



1980 Gull-winged Bulldog supercar revealed with a mid-mounted Marek V8 a target speed of 200 mph. It remained a one-off, but still exists, having been restored by Classic Motor Cars (CMC) during lockdown.

1981 Victor Gauntlett becomes Aston's new chairman.

1986 AM V8 [Series 5] cars now launched, with Weber-Marelli fuel injection and BBS wheels. Volante ['Series 2'] finally updated with Oscar India styling package and body-kitted Volante Vantage ['Series 3'] no available. Lagonda V8 [Series 3]

arrives. Extensive changes to electronics, styling mostly unaltered. V8 Vantage [Series 2] arrives at the same time, with further 'X Pack' upgrades available. Spiritual successor to the DB4 Zagato, the V8 Zagato, shown at the Geneva Motor Show, available in coupe and Volante drophead body styles.

1987 The Living Daylights features a 'winterised' V8 Volante (V8 saloon). Lagonda V8 [Series 4] revealed at the Geneva Motor Show. William Towns rounds off the edges of the car and changes the pop-up lights for fixed units. Ford buys 75 per cent of Aston Martin shares.

1988 Quad-cam Virage launches, with the help of US engine specialist, Callaway. Chassis based on Lagonda V8 [Series 2] but new from A-pillar backwards, funded in part by sales of the V8 Zagato.

1989 Last AM V8 [Series 5] of all body styles, produced.



Image: Ian Kendall



By the end of the Seventies, the 'Oscar India' raft of mechanical and visual facelifts were coming in (1978) alongside the drophead Volante variants and the radical, Williams Town-penned Lagonda V8 had finally gone on sale (1979). The latter four-door saloon had been announced three years earlier, plagued by electronic bugs; previous attempts to bring back the marque, based on the DBS V8 and AM V8 saloon, didn't even break double figures.

The five-lamped, gull-winged, stillborn Bulldog of 1980 remained a fascinating one-off – but it wasn't the first time a Marek V8 had been mounted in the middle of a road car. Nine years previously, factionalism within the Brown family had killed off any chance of the Siva S530 making production.

1986 finally saw fuel-injection return for the Series 5 AM V8s, though the 'X Pack' power options retained carburettors. Radical work with the surgeon's knife brought back a modern interpretation of the DB4 Zagato – the V8 Zagato. Shorter, lower, stiffer and far lighter than the V8 saloon, fewer than 100 were built over a four-year period.

With the AM V8 platform showing its age, and with a Bond appearance now to its name (in 1987's *The Living Daylights*, as well as a cameo in 2021's *No Time To Die*), work began on its successor, the Virage. Using a shortened Lagonda V8 platform as its basis, US engine specialists reworked the Marek V8 for the Nineties, gifting it a pair of quad cam cylinder heads. Debuting in 1988, the Virage, its career undistinguished, birthed the brutal twin supercharged nameplate-in-its-own-right Vantage, in 1993, before shuffling off the mortal coil in 1996; the Vantage, further updated, finally laid the Marek V8 to rest in 2000. **AMD**





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ON SALE
2 SEPTEMBER

DB9 BUYING GUIDE

With Aston Martin's still stylish V12-engined grand tourer close to being two decades old, we explain what to look for when buying one of these great value super cars



V8 VANTAGE PROTOTYPE

With 40 percent more power over the standard V8, the Vantage is considered to be Britain's first real supercar. To mark the model's 45th anniversary, we take a drive in an early prototype



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ASTON MARTIN DB6



1967, £170,000. A generally good, smart, sound example, but offered as a project, due to a seized engine and the need for re-commissioning. Please call 01248 602649, Wales. (T)

114827

ASTON MARTIN DBS



1969, £145,000. Registered 1st August 1969 this Aston Martin DBS coupe has been residing in France over recent years. Prior to this the history file includes details of engine and suspension rebuilds. Where MOT certificates indicate very little use over the last 15 years, the car has more recently benefited from a replacement five speed Tremec gearbox, a full repaint in California Sage and a complete interior re trim. Supplied fully serviced with 12 months MOT. Please call 01993 849610, South East. (T)

114935

ASTON MARTIN DB7



2004, £279,000. The DB7 Zagato was introduced at the Pebble Beach Concours d'Elegance in August 2002 and later shown at the Paris Motor Show the following October. It was only offered for the 2003 model year, with a limited run of 99 cars built (a 100th car was produced for the Aston Martin museum), all of which immediately sold out. . Please call 01993 849610, South East. (T)

114936

ASTON MARTIN VANTAGE S



2016, 21,000 miles, £69,995. V8 Roadster. Petrol, automatic, Casino Royale. Please call 01798 874477, Sussex. (T)

ASTON MARTIN LAGONDA



1988, £105,950. F Aston Martin Lagonda Series 4. Finished in Coniston Sand (one of only 5 manufactured in this colour), with glass sunroof to the rear and Parchment interior with contrasting Dark Brown piping, Beige carpets and Walnut veneers. Please call 02085 679729, London. (T)

ASTON MARTIN DB9



2006, 33,000, £40,995. V12, petrol, automatic, onyx black. Please call 01798 874477, Sussex. (T)



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ASTON MARTIN VANTAGE



2007, £39,950. Finished in the most desirable colour of Onyx Black with Obsidian Black leather and a black mohair hood this car has had just two previous owners, has covered just 48000 miles with full dealer and specialist service history with no expense spared. The car is powered by the 4.3 litre V8 engine and 'sport shift' manual gearbox. In 2016 the car had a replacement clutch fitted and has covered just 6000 miles since For a full driving experience and walk round video click the link below or go to the Oselli you tube channel. Please call 01993 849610, South East. (T)

114939

ASTON MARTIN VANTAGE



1998, POA: Registered 20th May 1998 this Supercharged Vantage to full V600 'works dynamics' specification is finished in the most desirable colour combinations of Royal blue metallic with parchment piped blue leather and dark blue carpets. With just 28000 miles and full dealer and latterly 'works service' service history the car wanted for nothing with no expense spared in its maintenance. Most recent works undertaken at 'Works Service' included a full service, new clutch, instrument upgrades and 'Nardi ' steering wheel. With out doubt the V600 limited edition has to be regarded as one of the most collectable of the 'Newport Pagnell' aluminium bodied generation Aston Martin's Supplied fully serviced with 12 months warranty. Please call 01993 849610, South East. (T)

114937

ASTON MARTIN V8



1974, £99,950. Finished in original Kentucky blue with bark blue trim this car was purchased from Work Service some tow years ago for the purpose of taking part in Classic Rally's in Europe. The most recent being the Gataag Rally in 2020. But due to limited use the car is now for sale. Prior to its use the owner spent over £50,000 on engine rebuild, suspension upgrade and AP braking system. The car has since proved very reliable. Please call 01993 849610, South East. (T)

114940

ASTON MARTIN DB7 i6 VOLANTE



1998, 60,000 miles, £32,995. Petrol, automatic, Buckingham green. Please call 01798 874477, Sussex. (T)

ASTON MARTIN DB7 i6



1998, 57,500 miles, £29,995. Petrol, automatic, Pentland green. Please call 01798 874477, Sussex. (T)

ASTON MARTIN DB2



1955, £140,000. Aston Martin DB 2/4 Mk1 completely restored in original Moonbeam Grey with red leather interior. Period upgrade include 4Litre Vantage engine, 5 speed gear box, disc brakes, etc. In current ownership for past 42 years. Please call 01483 486379, South East. (T)

ASTON MARTIN DB4



1960, £549,995. An outstanding Series II Aston Martin DB4. The body is exceptional, the paintwork is pristine, chrome work outstanding and the engine bay first class. The interior has a wonderful high-quality yet aged feel to it, everything works correctly and on the road this Aston Martin DB4 Series II is quite simply outstanding. Please call 01944 758000, London. (T)

ASTON MARTIN DB6



1967, £299,995. DB6 manual coupe. Red with black interior. Good history and low (relative) mileage. Service history will follow but the car is fully serviced by Oselli with 12 month's MoT. Please call 01993 849610, South East. (T)

VIEWPOINT



Paul Walton explains why Aston should forget F1 and return to Le Mans

Having missed the previous two years due to strict Covid-19 restrictions, it was terrific to finally return to Le Mans in mid-June for the famous 24-hour race. It remains the pinnacle of motorsport and as much fun as when I first went 25 years ago.

It was especially satisfying to see the Aston Martin Vantage of TF Sport take top honours in the GTE-Am class (pictured below), the British team's second victory with the car in three years.

You'll remember Aston Martin itself used to have a works entry, winning the GT class four times since its 2004 debut and GTE-Am once in 2014. Considering the always stiff competition, it's a fine record but Aston pulled out of sportscar racing at the end of 2020 in preparation to enter Formula 1 the following year leaving the racing to independent teams such as TF Sport.

Yet I'd argue its class victory does more for Aston Martin's image than Sebastian Vettel's sixth at the Azerbaijan Grand Prix over the same weekend. With the racing car looking largely like the road version, it shows what the Vantage is capable of whereas the company's recent F1 effort has been on the whole disappointing, especially for a company with such a distinguished history in motorsport.

Due to new and complicated GT rules from 2023 onwards, it remains to be seen whether there will be a Vantage in next year's 24-hour race, but there is an even more exciting proposition: the Valkyrie. Designed primarily for Le Mans' new Hypercar class (which replaced LMP1 in 2021), Aston's previous management pulled the plug on the car's racing programme before it could turn a wheel in anger. Yet it's been widely reported that Lawrence Stroll – the Canadian billionaire that

became a major shareholder in Aston Martin during early 2020 – is seriously considering entering the car in next year's event.

I don't suppose there's a motorsport enthusiast anywhere in the world that doesn't want to see a Moss Green Valkyrie charge down the Mulsanne Straight side-by-side with Ferrari's as yet unnamed Hypercar entry, a repeat of the 1959 race when, as I'm sure you'll know, Aston came out on top to take its so far only overall victory.

In my eyes, with British manufacturers involved in the French 24-hour race since its 1923 inception, Le Mans and the heritage that goes with is a better fit for Aston's image than being stuck in the Formula One mid-field.

No matter what happens, I'll definitely be there in 2023, hoping to witness my first win of this historic race by a British team. **AMD**



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ASTON MARTIN IN THE THAMES VALLEY



1958 Aston Martin DB MkIII in Midnight blue with tan interior. Known to us for the past 20 years and an excellent motor car. Seriously good value..... **£175,000**



1958 Aston Martin DB MkIII in Elusive blue with Burgundy hide interior. Undoubtedly one of the best we have ever encountered. My own car **£275,000**



1955 Aston Martin DB 2-4 in Burgundy with tan hide interior. Rebuilt to a very high standard by Four Ashes about 10 years ago. A super driving car **£185,000**



1966 Aston Martin DB6 in Deep Ocean blue with Oatmeal hide interior. Body-off restoration 6 years ago with minimal use since. Better than New..... **£345,000**



1971 Aston Martin DBS V8 in Signal Red with contrasting Cream hide interior. Undoubtedly one of the best available and splendid to drive..... **£145,000**



1978 Aston Martin V8 Oscar India in Aegean blue with Oatmeal hide interior. With Walnut dash and door cappings. Enormous well documented history file..... **£129,950**



2000 Aston Martin DB7i6 in Buckingham green. With Forest green and Tan hide interior. Multiple concours winner and will suit the most discerning of customers..... **£29,950**



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