

ASTON MARTIN DB7 3.2 BUYING GUIDE

ASTON MARTIN

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ISSUE 7



driver

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75 YEARS OF DB

DB1 MEETS DB11



+ IAN
CALLUM
BIOGRAPHY

VANQUISH V12
AM'S BEST SUPERCAR



THE DB4 AT 65



V8 EVOLUTION



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The Aston Martin DBX707 represents the ultimate expression of the luxury SUV. Featuring 707 metric horsepower and 664 lb ft of torque, the DBX707 can hit 60mph in 3.3 seconds and go on to reach 193mph, all while carrying five adults in complete comfort. This 2022 model is finished in Q Collection Cosmos Orange over an Onyx Black leather interior with Q Collection Californian Poppy stitching. With an extensive list of optional extras including paint protection film, Vivid Orange brake calipers and electronically deployable tow bar, this 1,059 mile DBX707 is now available at Aston Workshop.



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LICENCE TO THRILL

By pure coincidence, 2023 marks major anniversaries for both the Aston Martin DB range plus the James Bond character. It's 75 years since the 2-Litre Sports – retrospectively known as the DB1 – made its debut and 70 years since Ian Fleming's first novel to feature 007, *Casino Royale*, was published.



With one adding to the image of the other, the two will be linked forever. Bond first drove an Aston, a DB Mk III, during Fleming's seventh book, *Goldfinger*, in 1958 which was replaced with a DB5 for the film version five years later. These two appearances would be the beginning of a long connection between the two equally iconic brands that continues to today.

To mark both of these anniversaries, to begin with we're looking at the history of the DB range by driving an incredibly rare DB1 and comparing it to its current successor, a DB11 (p14). We then look at the history of the DB4 which is enjoying its own 65th anniversary (p26), plus what to look for when buying a DB7 that debuted 30 years ago.

We then drive a Vanquish on page 56, similar to the one Bond used in *Die Another Day* from 2002 (pictured above). While he used his to chase a North Korean super villain across the cold wastelands of Iceland, we tackle the equally daunting Cat & Fiddle road that cuts across the Peak District. Renowned for being one of the UK's best but also dangerous roads, 007 had it easy by comparison.

With the DB range being as much of a backbone to Aston's image as the cars are to the Bond series, expect both to be linked for several years yet.



Follow us on Instagram: [@Aston_Martin_Driver](https://www.instagram.com/Aston_Martin_Driver)

Paul Walton

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UP FRONT NEWS

DBX707 BECOMES F1 SAFETY CAR

When the lights went out for the start of the 2023 FIA Formula 1 World Championship season in Bahrain in March, the world's most powerful ultra-luxury SUV, the DBX707, was the new official FIA medical car.

Thanks to the 707's significant engine, transmission, suspension, and brake upgrades, the drivers of the F1's medical car will now be able to get the medics to where they are needed faster than before.

Supplying the sport's official cars has supported Aston Martin's product development, with data gathered from the DBX being driven by a professional

driver around the Grand Prix circuits helping its vehicle dynamics' experts push boundaries while developing the high-performance DBX707.

One of the key upgrades is the introduction of a new wet clutch transmission, providing noticeably faster gearchanges and an improved launch capability known as 'Race Start' that is ready and waiting for the call to action from Race Control. Also key to the dynamic feel of the car, Pirelli, Formula 1 Global Tyre Partner, provides specifically developed P Zero tyres underlining the DBX707's driver-focused credentials.

The DBX707 has been adapted and equipped for its role as the FIA's official medical car. The essential equipment required – including fire extinguishers, medical bags and a defibrillator – all has its own place in the DBX707's interior, so it is easy to check everything is on board. The car is fitted with FIA-approved racing seats, each with a six-point racing harness as it will be driven to the limits on the track. The passengers will have access to communications from race control and be able to see not only the FIA marshalling



system but biometric data from the F1 drivers and live television images, which will allow early assessment of any incident.

Roberto Fedeli, Aston Martin's chief technology officer, said, "DBX707 is the perfect vehicle for the critical role as an Official FIA Medical Car of Formula 1, providing the performance and punch required for the world's greatest racing circuits, in addition to the flexibility and space required by the sport's officials and medics.

"We are delighted to continue our partnership with Formula 1® and the FIA this season, with the pinnacle of motorsport a perfect environment for Aston Martin to showcase the capabilities of our ultra-luxury high-performance cars. With the eyes of the world on our products, there is pressure to perform, but that intensity pushes us to constantly improve. Seeing our cars used in an official capacity at such prestigious events is something that everyone at Aston Martin is very proud of."



THREE IN THREE FOR VANTAGE

The Vantage has made it three podium finishes from the opening three rounds of North America's ultra-competitive IMSA WeatherTech SportsCar Championship with another strong performance at the Grand Prix of Long Beach, in California.

Reigning GTD class champions, Heart of Racing, saw the successful duo of Roman De Angelis and Marco Sørensen finish second on Saturday.

The Aston Martin proved to be the perfect machine to tackle the bayside circuit with three-time FIA World Endurance GTE champion Sørensen storming to pole position in a time 0.2 seconds under the previous lap record.

Sørensen led the opening stint and handed over to De Angelis as he reached his minimum mandatory drive time after 37 of the 100 minutes. Running side by side with another car, the 2022 GTD champion ran in close contention for the rest of the race and finished second.

The result put the duo second in the GTD points standings with Heart of Racing second in the Teams' standings and Aston Martin second in the Manufacturers' Championship.

Aston Martin works driver Ross Gunn qualified second in the GTD Pro class and finished fourth in the race in the #23 Heart of Racing car he shared with Alex Riberas. The pairing hold fifth in the GTD Pro points.



GIRARD-PERREGAUX REVEALS AM WATCH

Aston Martin and the manufacturer of exclusive watches, Girard-Perregaux, have combined forces to create the Laureato Green Ceramic Aston Martin Edition, the first Laureato timepiece to feature a green ceramic case and bracelet.

Sleek, contemporary, and elegant, the watch dial is presented in a cross-hatch design, a diamond-like pattern found on Aston Martin's original logo used from 1921-1926, as well as the quilted leather upholstery found in some of the marque's high-performance vehicles.

Aston Martin's iconic association with the colour green began many decades ago, when manufacturers raced in the colours of their country of origin, in this case British Racing Green. Since then, Aston Martin racing cars have competed in various shades of green before resting on the now familiar Aston Martin Racing Green, which adorns its Formula 1 cars. It was a logical conclusion for this co-branded timepiece to be dressed in green, a colour that evokes thoughts

of performance and success. Marek Reichman, executive vice president and chief creative officer of Aston Martin said, "Our goal was to conceive an advanced luxury product. Interestingly, Patrick and I spent a lot of time talking about the folklore of the Laureato and the design play between shape and proportion of its iconic bezel.

When he shared GP's exploration into the optical properties of technical ceramics, micro beads, and microns, I became quite enchanted by this idea of the past becoming the future. We're always exploring combinations of technology, colour, and materials in Aston Martin sports cars to enrich performance, functionality, and owner enjoyment. Together we've fused these ideas and attributes to generate this cool new Aston Martin GP Laureato".

Presented in a 42mm or 38mm model (limited to just 388 and 188 examples respectively), the new timepiece will be available to buy worldwide in selected Girard-Perregaux retailers from June 2023.



ASTON'S ONLINE F1 CONFIGURATOR

Aston Martin has launched an all-new environment for its online configurator, welcoming customers to specify their own perfect car within the Aston Martin Formula 1 Team's pit garage.

In what is a world first amongst any automotive manufacturer, customers, fans, and dealer partners can now virtually specify any of Aston Martin's range within the high-performance setting of an F1 pit garage.

The new digital environment displays Aston Martin's AMR23 challenger within the garage, allowing customers and fans to take inspiration from the pinnacle of motorsport engineering and design when bringing to life their bespoke interpretation of an Aston Martin.

Following Fernando Alonso's stunning podium finish at the season-opening Gulf Air Bahrain Grand Prix, the online

configurator also proudly exhibits the third-placed trophy in exquisite 3D ultra-high definition detail, allowing users to enjoy the team's first silverware of the season, while having the ability to zoom in to explore every fine detail of the car.

Renato Bisignani, head of global marketing and communications at Aston Martin said, "Offering a choice

of exquisitely designed and ultra-high definition backdrops – from studio environments to real locations – is a key ingredient to our award-winning configurator's success, inspiring our customers to visualise their perfect Aston Martin across global locations, while taking inspiration from the thought-provoking backdrops.



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VANTAGE WORLD TOUR

The father-and-son team Phil and Will Churchill have started their 25k-mile journey around the world in their high-mileage 2005 Aston Martin V8 Vantage (as seen in issue 6 of AMD), which will see their Vantage World Tour eventually cross 35 countries over several years.

After leaving the RAC on London's Pall Mall on 26 February 2023, the pair drove to the port of Liverpool ready for the car to be shipped to New York. After flying to America a week later, Phil and Will have since driven across the States, visiting Detroit, Chicago, Indianapolis, and Houston before crossing the border into Mexico.

Their 2023 challenge is to drive from Pall Mall to Panama, and so after leaving the car safely in Cancun, they will return in October, to tour South America.

They aim to raise at least £24,901 (£1 for every mile of the Earth's equator) for suicide prevention charity Campaign Against Living Miserably (CALM), who last year had over three million minutes of potentially lifesaving calls via their helpline and webchat services.

Phil commented: "We want to raise awareness of the shocking statistics, as while a passion for cars is predominantly a male pastime, men also account for 75 percent of all suicides in the UK. CALM is working to prevent suicides, the largest killer of men under 50 in the UK, and so the Vantage World Tour is raising money to support their work."

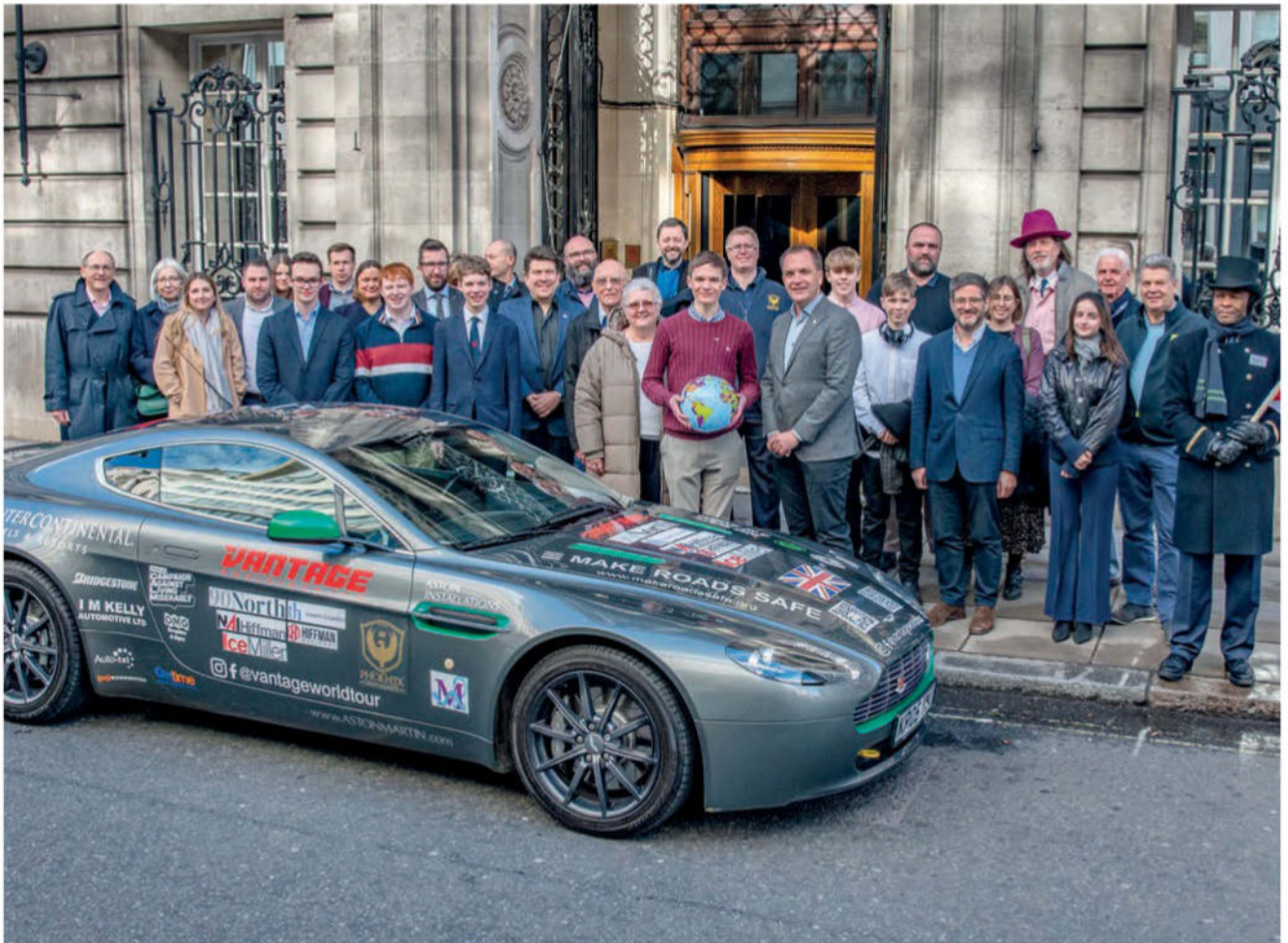
Simon Gunning, CEO at CALM said, "We're honoured that Phil and Will have taken on a challenge of a lifetime to support CALM. The lengths our supporters go to in order to raise

funds and awareness for our cause is staggering and enables us to continue to be there for whoever is struggling. We wish them the best of luck with their monumental challenge."

More than £11,500 has been raised already, and to donate to the Vantage World Tour in support of CALM, the link is www.justgiving.com/vantageworldtour.

To learn more about this adventure and the fascinating history of the car itself, including having been driven 30,000 miles in 30 days in 2006 and from Tokyo to London in 2007, the website is www.vantageworldtour.com, with daily updates during the 2023 Challenge: Pall Mall to Panama on Instagram (@vantageworldtour) and Facebook (Vantage World Tour).

Image: Mike Venables





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ASTON MARTIN *driver*

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HISTORY

75 YEARS OF DB

LASTING LEGACY

WORDS & PHOTOGRAPHY PAUL WALTON



Although Aston Martin's first post-war sports car from 1948 was officially called the 2-Litre Sports, it's more commonly known as the DB1, the first of a long line of models to use the name that continues to this day. To mark 75 years of the DB range, we're comparing the first and last to use it



O THER THAN a pair of 'Ms', can any two letters sound as exciting when joined together than 'D' and 'B'? Representing some of the finest performance cars ever made in this country, 'DB' has become as famous as the models themselves and one of the

few car names that's become part of our mainstream culture. This is partly due to its longevity. Although officially first used in 1950, an even older car can claim to be the first. To explain this history, we're looking at the original model to be unofficially given the name, the 2-Litre Sports, plus its current descendent, the DB11 Volante. ►

HISTORY

75 YEARS OF DB



When northern industrialist, David Brown, bought Aston Martin in 1947, what he got was a car company that wasn't actually producing any cars. What it had, though, was an awkward-looking four-door saloon prototype that was put together between 1939 and 1940. Commissioned by AM's then managing director, R. Gordon Sutherland – who christened it the Atom since it had lots of performance in a small package – the car was the work of the company's lead engineer, Claude Hill.

It was based on a modern tubular chassis that used square and rectangular section tubes, which Hill had first experimented with several years earlier for another prototype that was informally known as 'Donald Duck'. The Atom was originally powered by Aston's existing SOHC 2.0-litre inline four that was fitted to the Speed Model cars between 1936 and 1940, but was replaced in 1944 by a new engine, an OHV 2.0 that was again the work of Hill.





Brown only bought the company after test-driving the prototype and seeing its potential. "I decided to try the Atom and took it home, and put it through its paces over the Pennines," reminisced Brown in Geoff Courtney's 1978 book, *The Power Behind Aston Martin*. "I liked it, particularly the superb road holding although it was a bit underpowered and not very good looking."

To solve the issue of the 2.0-litre's lack of power, Brown later bought Lagonda for its new W.O. Bentley-designed 2.6-litre straight-six engine. But with this motor not due to be ready for some time, yet knowing Aston needed a new model, he commissioned Hill to update the Atom for production.

After Claude Hill and works test driver, St John (Jock) Horsfall, drove a bare chassis on the road for several weeks, it was decided the best way to evaluate the car was to race it. And so, the third prototype built was entered into the gruelling 1948 Spa 24 Hour Race in July and fitted with a narrow, vintage-looking body plus cycle wings and a tall radiator grille. The drivers were Horsfall plus Leslie Johnson who had enjoyed a decent level of success in rallies before the war.

In terrible weather conditions, the Delage D6 of the French pairing, Henri Louveau and Louis Gérard, quickly took

the lead, but it was soon overtaken by the Italian, Luigi Chinetti, driving a Ferrari 166S. But following Gérard crashing the Delage because of heavy rain and the Ferrari's head cracking at midnight, the Aston of Horsfall and Johnson eventually took the lead and stayed there for the victory.

It was an incredible result and clearly showed what the 2.0-litre prototype was capable of. "This convincing victory by this new British high-performance car puts Aston Martin right on the map again in a sphere of competition activity in which this make has always excelled," said *Motorsport* magazine's report of the race in its August 1948 issue. "How impatiently private sportsmen will now await delivery of the latest 2-litre Aston Martin!"

Aston's winning car was returned to the UK when amongst other appearances it was used for demonstration runs at Shelsley Walsh Hill Climb. The car was later rebuilt with a new body for the 1948 Earls Court Motor Show that kept the original's large radiator grille but was now flanked on either side by two smaller vents. It was offered for sale at the show as 'The Spa Replica' but at £3,109 it wasn't sold and neither were there any more orders taken, so the sole example was retained by Aston Martin and used by David Brown Jnr until 1950.

The car was involved in a serious accident two years later that resulted in a new chassis. After spending several decades in European museums, the Spa Replica returned to the UK in the early 2000s when it was restored by the then owner. It's thought the car is now part of a private collection of important Aston Martins based in Switzerland.

Alongside the Spa Replica on Aston Martin's Earls Court Show stand was the actual production model. Simply called the 2-Litre Sports, with David Brown preferring open cars over closed, it featured a new drophead coupe style of body that was the work of Lagonda designer, Frank Feeley.

It featured bulbous front wings – their size cleverly allowing for storage of the spare wheel in the right side which was accessed by a removable panel, and the jack and toolkit in the left – which fell in a curve to a point at the base of the two



HISTORY

75 YEARS OF DB





doors. The rear wings were egg-shaped complete with spats with cut-outs to make room for the wheel spinners. At the nose was the same three-piece radiator grille design as the Spa Replica although the lower vents were made longer.

“The new Aston Martin with its completely up-to-date lines, carries on the tradition of a series of fine looking open cars,” was *Motor* magazine’s view in its 6 October 1948 issue.

Hill’s 1,970cc four-cylinder engine was fitted with two SU carburettors and produced 90bhp. It was then joined to a four-speed gearbox sourced from David Brown Engineering located in Huddersfield that had synchromesh on the final three ratios.

With it being a convertible rather than a saloon like the original Atom prototype had been, Hill needed to strengthen the chassis by duplicating the main longitudinal members. The suspension was based on the Atom’s featuring an improved version of its independent trailing-link layout at the front. Coil springs were located at the tip on a cast alloy upright and an anti-roll bar was also fitted. At the back were again coil springs and an anti-roll bar plus a Panhard rod to locate the live axle.

“I felt it essential,” said Hill in the April 1949 issue of *Motorsport*, “to employ really soft springs to obtain truly comfortable riding and I was confident that I could do this without destroying sportscar controllability.”

Although the leather upholstery and full weather protection made the car relatively luxurious for the time, at £2,331 it was also expensive, especially when the six-cylinder Jaguar XK120 that also debuted at the 1948 Earls Court Motor Show was £1,263.

It was probably due to the high price why the 2-Litre Sports was a slow seller. Despite a privately entered example (registration UMD 123) finishing a fine 11th at the 1949 Le Mans 24 Hours, just 12 examples were produced, including the Spa Replica, before the car was replaced in May 1950 by a larger, grander, and faster DB2. Named in honour of the company’s owner, it resulted in the 2-Litre Sports subsequently but unofficially becoming known as the DB1. ►

HISTORY

75 YEARS OF DB

Yet that wasn't the end of the model. A short time after production had ended, John Cavendish (later Lord Chesham who in 1966 became vice chairman of the Royal Automobile Club) contacted David Brown about buying an Aston Martin convertible. Since the DB2 was a coupe only, Brown replied that the company's Feltham factory could make him a new 2-Litre Sports, but only if he found two more customers to make the job more cost-effective. Cavendish agreed and in the spring of 1950, the 2-Litre Sports was put back into a very limited production. The three were subsequently registered OPD 51, 52 and 53 with Cavendish's car being the third.

The example featured here was the first of this series and was originally bought by Dr Campbell Golding of St John's Wood for his wife, Barbara. The Goldings were friends with the grandfather of current owner, Allan Southward, whose own father, Robin, always loved the car. "He always said to Mrs Golding, 'When you come to sell it let me know since I think it's fantastic,'" Allan tells me.

In 1968, when Barbara was ready to sell, she remembered Robin's enthusiasm and sold it to him for a mere £710d. When Robin stopped at the motorway services near his London home after collecting the Aston, a complete stranger offered him £1,000 cash for it, but he still said no, reckoning it was worth more. His father was less than happy with that decision. "He said, 'Why have you spent money on that rubbish? You should have accepted the offer,'" Allan tells me of his grandfather's reaction to his son buying the relatively antiquated 18-year-old car.

Robin would drive the DB1 regularly over the next decade and Allan remembers attending several AMOC events with his father and siblings.

Although as an engineer, Robin was able to repair the Aston Martin whenever something broke, it was never restored and, according to Allan, by the early Eighties it was starting to fall apart. The final straw came when the front wheels went in opposite directions after Robin braked at the bottom of a hill. It would mark the start of a 40-year restoration.

"My father began to take the car apart piece by piece to fix it," Allan tells me,





HISTORY

75 YEARS OF DB



Robin Southward and OPD 51 (far right) with TME 474 that appeared at the 1948 Earls Court Motor Show and UMD 123 that finished 11th at Le Mans in 1949



Barbara Golding with her car during a French holiday in 1954

“but quickly realised it was held together by a wing and a prayer. A lot of the wood that supports the body had rotted away and the chassis was also rusting so he deconstructed it entirely.”

After the chassis had been shotblasted and repaired, Robin started to rebuild the car at the same time as the owner of the second of the three was restoring his and they started to help each other. But as is often the case, life got in the way and the restoration ground to a halt. “It

sat in pieces in boxes,” remembers Allan, “the bodywork was stripped back to the aluminium and was simply resting on the chassis.”

In the late Nineties, Allan convinced his father to allow him to restart the restoration. “I was doing little bits every weekend but it got to the point when I couldn't get it running and my father, who'd had an operation, couldn't come in the garage any more to help. So I decided I needed professional help.”

After taking advice from well-known marque specialists, Pugsley & Lewis of

Beckenham, Kent, Allan gave the car to Peter Pryce-Tidd of General Automobile Services in south Croydon who in 2014 finally got the car running well enough for it to be put back on the road.

Yet it still wasn't perfect. The engine had been rebuilt in 1982 but hadn't been a good job. “It never ran amazingly well,” admits Allan, “and it consumed a lot of oil but as far as my father was concerned, that's just the way it was.” The four-cylinder unit has only recently been rebuilt by Pryce-Tidd complete with new liners, pistons and conrods while a new radiator ▶



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HISTORY

75 YEARS OF DB

and electric fan were also fitted. With the four-speed 'box reconditioned at the same time, the DB1 is as finished as any old car can be.

Sadly, Robin passed away in 2019. Although for the last few years he'd been too ill to drive, he was still able to sit in the passenger seat of the car he'd loved for seven decades. "It was important I got the car running as well as I could so I could take him to AMOC meetings like he did in the Seventies," explains Allan. "He was there in 2017 when it was voted runner-up of the People's Choice Award at the Simply Aston Beaulieu event."

Looking resplendent in its metallic blue, it doesn't surprise me when Allan tells me it went one better at the same event a few days before we meet, taking home the trophy.

But if I'm being honest, due to its rather old-fashioned and traditional design, I don't think it's as good looking as the svelte XK120. Yet it's still a very elegant car, the nose dominated by that huge grille treatment that even in this early form clearly reveals its pedigree.

When Allan kindly allows me a drive of his pride and joy, I immediately accept. With only nine of the 15 examples known to have survived (including THX 231 that appeared on the brochure cover, TME 474, the 1948 show car, plus UMD 231, the example that raced at Le Mans in 1949), it makes his DB1 one of the rarest Astons I'll ever be fortunate enough to experience.

It's certainly easier to climb into than the low-slung Jaguar and offers much more interior room as a result of its design. The interior is typically simple for a car of this age, the dash consisting of several white-on-black dials spread out across the width of the fascia. Yet with the

softly sprung bench covered in soft leather plus the full weather protection including winding windows, it makes the car relatively luxurious for a Forties sports model. The throttle is interesting, though, a wooden ring hung off the end of the pedal that rotates under my foot as I press it. After being initially concerned, the unique design actually results in a smooth action.

The four-cylinder engine starts in a heartbeat and although Allan warns me that the rebuilt gearbox is stiff, I soon find first and make a start. In its November



1948 issue, *Motorsport* said of the engine, "It is an unobtrusive, rugged type of unit." Seventy years later that's still the case. The eager and responsive nature of the four-cylinder engine results in a chunky performance that takes me by surprise. With plenty of torque, it's not always necessary to change down either, the 2.0-litre unit having the ability to accelerate in third or even fourth.

The relatively modern suspension means it rides nicely for a car of this age, easily coping with the imperfections in the road. But at slow speeds, the worm-and-roller steering wanders more than a teenager's mind during a history lesson. Although it improves slightly at higher speeds, it certainly lacks the accuracy of other performance cars from the period such as the XK120.

Yet this doesn't detract from the DB1's appeal or its importance in Aston Martin's post-war history. The car's mix of luxury and performance would become the backbone for all future Aston Martin models as the beautiful Devine Red DB11 Volante parked alongside Allan's car proves.

Due to the iconic status of the famous DB4/5/6 family, there might have been a two-decade gap between the DBS name being dropped in 1972 and the 1993 debut of the DB7, but the DB brand has always been central to the company's image. The current model is the DB11 that arrived in 2016 as a replacement for the DB9, the DB10 name being used for a bespoke concept model developed specifically for the 2015 James Bond film, *Spectre*.

Almost seven decades might separate the DB11's debut from the DB1's, meaning they're as different as a Viennese Waltz is from Grime, but the shape of their radiators is an obvious link as it is with all other models. The three-grille layout of the 2-Litre Sports was continued for the DB2 and later amalgamated creating the basic design that's been used ever since, albeit more stylised.

With the red car powered by the Mercedes-Benz sourced 4.0-litre turbocharged V8 that produces 528bhp (the coupe also has the option of a 5.2 V12 with 630bhp), their performances are as different as their designs. Whereas Allan tells me his DB1 is happiest when trundling at 50mph, the DB11 V8 Volante has a top speed of a face-peeling 192mph.

When I peer inside the DB11, the digital dials, touchscreen and the complicated ventilation controls make the DB1's interior look like the cockpit of the Wright Flyer by comparison. Yet its lavishness must be how the DB1's interior was seen when compared to more ordinary cars including the Morris Minor MM and Land Rover that also made their debuts at the 1948 Earls Court Motor Show.

The 2-Litre Sports might not be the first car to be officially called a DB, but there's no denying it was the first to offer the level of luxury and performance those two letters have come to be closely associated with over the last 75 years. **AMD**

● **Thanks to: Allan Southward (DB1) and Kevin Kelly (DB11) plus Winston Rouse from the AMOC (www.amoc.org)**



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2005 Aston Martin DB9 Sports Pack Upgrade - £29,995

This DB9 comes in Titanium Silver with a Moon Shadow leather and Phantom Grey carpet interior. It has the ZF Touchtronic II 6 speed gearbox with various factory options such as a heated windscreen, powerfold mirrors, heated front seats and cruise control, in addition to the usual standard features such. But it's the factory fitted sports pack upgrade that totally transforms this DB9. A standard DB9 is incredible - but this is even better!



2011 Aston Martin Rapide - £39,995

This Rapide is in the very smart specification of Onyx Black with a Sandstorm leather interior. It comes with a sizeable options pack including a rear seat entertainment system, ventilated front and rear seats, an alarm upgrade and a rearview parking camera system amongst others. With such an options list, long distance journeys will just melt away.



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ORIGIN OF THE SPECIES

WORDS & PHOTOGRAPHY PAUL WALTON





As the first Aston Martin to be designed by Touring and the first road car to use the company's new straight-six engine, the DB4 laid the foundations for its later, more famous models. For the car's 65th anniversary, we look at its history before driving a beautiful, early model



MODEL PROFILE

DB4

BEING THE first of something isn't a guarantee that you'll be remembered. Take Frenchman, Louis Blériot, for example. He might have been the first to fly across the English Channel on 25 July 1909, yet compared to the more famous Charles Lindberg who crossed the Atlantic 18 years later, he's a mere footnote in aviation history.

Or Martin Cooper, a former Motorola employee, who on 3 April 1973 was the first person to make a call using a mobile phone. Hardly a well-known name today, he was no doubt also the first to get a sales call on one as well.

And then there's the DB4. Although it was the first Aston Martin to be designed by Touring using its Superleggera style of construction, plus the first road car to be powered by the company's new straight-six, the car has always been overshadowed by its more famous replacement.





Yet it deserves more than that. As a handsome and fast model in its own right, the DB4 propelled Aston from a manufacturer of simple sports cars into one more known for its glamorous GTs.

To mark the car's 65th anniversary, we're looking at the DB4's history before driving a beautiful, early example.

Debuting in 1950, the DB2 had firmly established Aston Martin in the British post-war car industry. But by the middle of the decade and even after a 1953 facelift that resulted in the DB2/4, in terms of its performance and interior space, the car was starting to feel old-fashioned.

So, in 1954, Aston's chief engineer, Harold Beach, began work on a replacement that was internally known as Project 114 due to its number on the company's project register. Beach initially designed a new perimeter type of frame for the car and it used a development of the same double wishbone front suspension as the DB3S and DBR1 racing cars. Plus, for the first time in Aston Martin's history, at the rear was a De Dion rear axle.

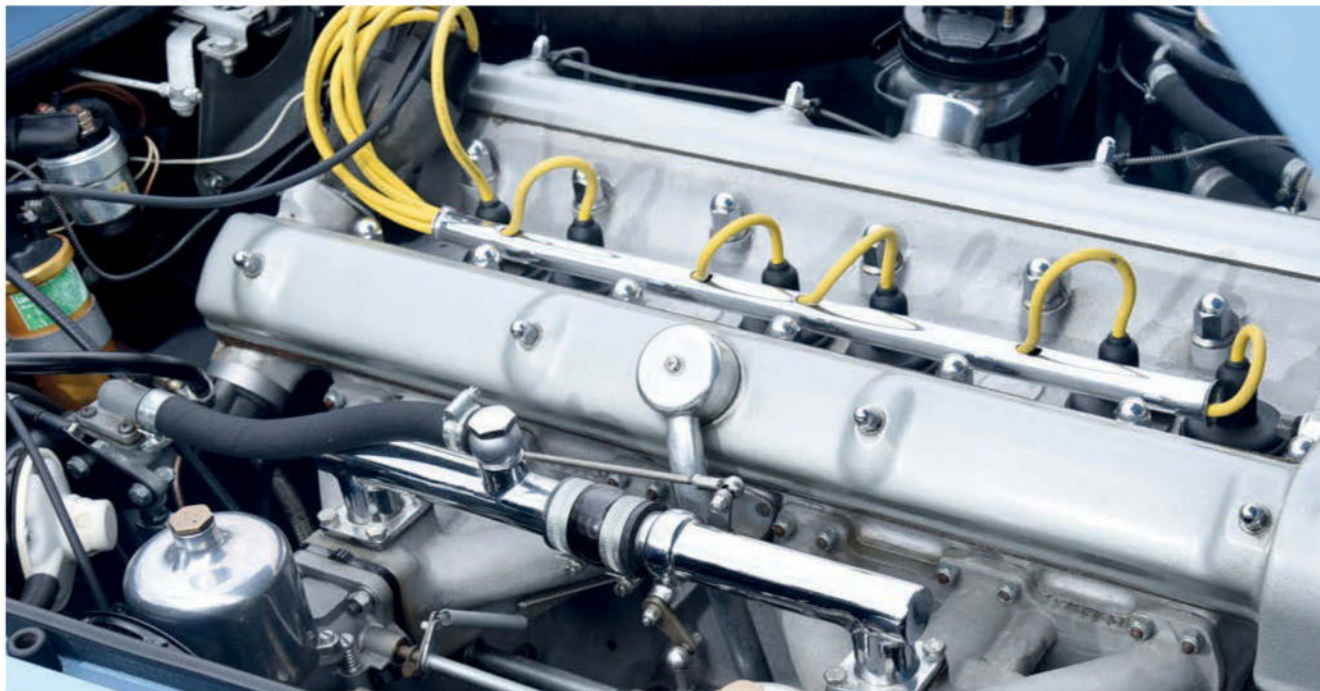
By the end of the year, an unbodied prototype powered by Aston Martin's current 2.9-litre straight-six engine was already being tested. The car was later fitted with a four-seat body designed by Aston's then designer, Frank Feeley, and used by the company's chairman, David Brown, as his personal transport.

Looking like a bloated Alvis, Brown later suggested the Turin-based carrozzeria Touring, should design the car instead. The link between the two comes from around the same time when three DB2/4 chassis were sent to Touring to each have a pretty barchetta-like roadster body fitted.

Touring, though, wouldn't develop a new car on Beach's chassis; it would only do so using its own Superleggera style of construction that consisted of a framework of small-diameter steel tubes that are covered by thin alloy body panels. After patenting Superleggera in 1936, Touring had used it on and off since 1938, mainly for special-bodied Alfa Romeos.

MODEL PROFILE

DB4



"I was sent to Milan to liaise with them [Touring] over the type of body structure they proposed, although the front and rear suspension of Project 114 was retained with more up to date ideas," said Beach in Geoff Courtney's 1978 book, *The Power Behind Aston Martin*. "I was going to and fro between England and Italy as I had to work with Touring quite a bit. They were a fantastic crowd."

What Touring had designed was a clean-lined, well-proportioned fastback style of coupe that despite its Italian parentage was every inch the Aston Martin. And although at 4.5m long and 1.7m wide it was a relatively large car due to the Superleggera construction, but the finished model weighed a mere 1,392kg (3,070lb), a whopping 71kg (156lb) lighter than a Jaguar XK150 3.4-litre fixedhead coupe.

"When you think of it, it was a major exercise to turn my proposed perimeter frame – which regarded the chassis as separate from the body – into Touring's idea of a platform frame, which viewed the chassis and body almost as one and far more integrated," continued Beach. "I really accepted this idea of regarding them as one rather than as separate entities because of the tremendous weight-saving and improved stiffness."

Power would be courtesy of a new 3.7-litre straight-six that had been

designed by Aston's Polish engine designer, Tadek Marek. "He and I worked very closely together," said Beach about the designer in *The Power Behind Aston Martin*, "and I found him to be a clever chap." Although initially used for the DBR2 racer in 1956, the DB4 would be the first road car that used the engine.

Coming with twin SU HD8 carburettors, the engine produced 240bhp at 5,500rpm, sufficient for a dash to 60mph in a little under nine seconds and a maximum speed of 140mph. These were considerably better figures than the final iteration of the DB2, the DB Mk III with its

2.9-litre engine that arrived in 1957, and it put Aston Martin into another league of car manufacturers. The transmission was a four-speed manual gearbox made by the gearbox division of the David Brown Corporation.

By July 1957, the first DB4 prototype to feature Touring's body and chassis, Beach's suspension plus Tadek's engine was ready for the road. "I was immensely thrilled with it," continued Beach in Courtney's book, "especially when you remember it was the first car completely designed by the company under David Brown."

LIGHT SWITCH



Stirling Moss on his way to winning Goodwood's Fordwater Trophy in a DB4 GT in April 1960

Someone else who was overjoyed by the new car was Aston's chairman who personally tested the prototype around his home in the Chilterns. "That car went really well and David Brown was thrilled," explained Beach further. "It was fantastic, in a completely different world from the handling and roadholding points of view in particular. When David Brown had finished, he said to me, 'This is a very promising motor car.'"

One aspect of the car's mechanical design that changed before it reached production was the rear suspension. The De Dion axle that Beach had wanted from the outset was found to be too noisy when joined to the David Brown gearbox and the Huddersfield-based engineering company couldn't find a solution. It was therefore replaced by a standard set-up of

trailing arms and a Watts linkage. With its good looks and powerful engine, the press reports were understandably positive when the new model, now officially known as the DB4, made its debut at the 1958 British Motor Show in October. "This new and exciting car, which is certainly in the top grade of Gran Turismo cars," said *Autocar* in its October 3 1958 issue, "should prove to have a performance equal to most of the exotic continental cars in this category and, of equal importance, it will be marketed at a price competitive with them." Indeed, at £2,650 in 1958 it was considerably cheaper than the BMW 507 and Maserati 3500GT.

Perhaps due to its development taking a mere four years, in 1960 and after 149 standard cars had been produced, the DB4 received some minor updates. These

included opening rear quarter lights made from flat rather than curved glass plus a front-hinged bonnet. Larger front brake calipers were also added, the sump was enlarged from 14 to 17 pints and the oil pump was updated. Although Aston never gave this or any of the three further updates an official designation, today it's known as the Series 2.

As the 52nd example produced, the Wedgewood Blue car seen here is a very early example of the Series 2. First registered on 20 May 1960, the car spent its early life in the north of England. After being with the same owner between 1965 and 2006, the still unrestored car was sold with just 57k miles on the clock before being sold again six years later. Over the next three years it was the recipient of a full nut-and-bolt restoration, its now immaculate condition making it a perfect representation of an early DB4.

The profiles might be almost identical, but the DB4 has a very different character from that of the more familiar DB5. With circular headlamps, a simple aluminium mesh grille in the familiar shape of the radiator opening and the same tall rear lights as the DB Mk III that originated from the Humber Hawk and that were also used on the Alvis TD21, it appears more old-fashioned than its racier replacement. Yet it's still a handsome car, Touring's delicate lines are perfectly proportioned while the large, 16in wire wheels give it a sporty, almost muscular presence.

Although the DB4 was entirely built at Aston's Newport Pagnell factory, the pair of Superleggera badges along the edge of the bonnet are due to Touring granting Aston Martin a licence to build the car using its lightweight system. The Italian wording and the mystique surrounding it makes the already stylish car feel more so.

The shape and layout of the well-equipped dial binnacle located directly in front of the driver is largely similar to that of the DB Mk III and is dominated by the large speedo and rev-counter. Covered in more chrome than a Wurlitzer jukebox, it too makes the car look older than it is.

Thrumming into life the moment I twist the key in the ignition, the 3.7-litre engine soon settles down to a lively sounding grumble. After carefully negotiating the remote Cotswold roads that surround



The DB4 was the first Aston Martin to have its full production at Newport Pagnell

The GT was a lighter and faster version of the DB4, aimed primarily at racing

In September 1959 Aston introduced a competition version of the DB4 that was aimed at gentlemen racers. Not only was it lighter and shorter than the standard car, but thanks to three Weber carburettors and a raised compression ratio resulting in 300bhp, it was faster too. The GT was the first Aston to feature faired-in headlamps with domed covers, a design it would continue with until 1970 when production of the DB6 Mk2 came to an end. At the hands of some of the best drivers of the day, the GT

variant was incredibly fast and therefore very successful. "All closed road-going Astons seemed muscular and strong and a little agricultural," said Stirling Moss in his 1987 biography, *My Cars, My Career*, "but the DB4 GT was also quite well balanced, it had bags of power and when I drove against the Jaguar saloons it was no contest."

Just 75 GTs were produced in four years plus another 19 that were fitted with an even lighter bodyshell by Italian coachbuilder, Zagato.

MODEL PROFILE

DB4



The Classic Motor Hub where the car is currently for sale, I eventually reach a long straight. With the road ahead of me empty, I nail the throttle hard, the straight-six responding instantly as I do so, causing the big car to accelerate with a keenness that takes me genuinely by surprise. As the speed grows the cabin is soon filled by the distinctive deep growl of the Tadek-designed six.

David Brown's four-speed transmission is surprisingly fast and accurate considering its age, the speed of its changes further aiding the car's swiftness. With its sharp, nicely weighted steering and perfectly set up suspension that allows the car to remain composed through corners, it makes the DB4 a genuine sports car in the same mould as the Jaguar E-type or Triumph TR4. Yet thanks to the supple ride and spacious, comfortable interior, it could also be argued the Aston Martin was the UK's first genuine high performance long distance grand tourer.

"To drive the DB4 really fast still leaves one moderately relaxed," said *Motor* magazine in its 23 November 1960 issue. "Consequently, a long journey made without trying results in quite absurdly high averages and relatively little fatigue." Six decades later and no doubt the same could still be said of the car.

Over the next three years, until production finished in June 1963, the DB4 was given three more largely minor updates. The Series 3 from April 1961 introduced rear demister vents and an electronic tachometer while the tall rear light clusters of the Series 1 and 2 were swapped for three separate circular lenses for the indicator, rear/brake light and red reflector, each set on a heavy chrome base. Just six months later, Aston released the Series 4 that featured a new radiator grille that had horizontal and vertical bars plus a lower bonnet and air scoop.

At the same time, Aston Martin introduced two new DB4 variants, including a stylish convertible, and a higher performance Vantage model. The latter was recognisable by having the same style of faired-in headlights as the GT. With three SU carbs, a revised cylinder head, bigger valves and a higher compression ratio, power was increased by ten percent over standard to 266bhp.

For the fifth and final series that arrived in September 1962, the rear reflectors had been relocated to the bumper due to the addition of reversing lamps while the front indicator lenses had also been enlarged. More importantly, the Vantage was lengthened by 9cm to increase rear legroom while the roof was raised slightly.

Together, these changes laid the foundations for arguably Aston's most famous model, the DB5, that physically differed little from the Series 5 Vantage. It's this similarity together with its many Bond appearances that has resulted in the car forever overshadowing its predecessor.

So, while the DB5 has become part of British culture, appearing on everything from postage stamps to book covers, the DB4 is barely recognised. Even its one moment of glory, Michael Caine's grey convertible in the 1969 film, *The Italian Job*, is ruined when the car is apparently shoved off a mountain by a huge digger. We're just as bad. While the DB4 gets this single feature to mark its 65th anniversary, the next issue of *AMD* will be almost entirely dedicated to the DB5 turning 60.

Yet despite its lack of media presence, unlike Blériot and Cooper in the history of aviation and communication, the DB4 is clearly more than just a footnote in Aston Martin's past. In terms of its looks, comfort, and performance, by being the first in many ways, the car set the standard for all of the future models that continue to this day. **AMD**

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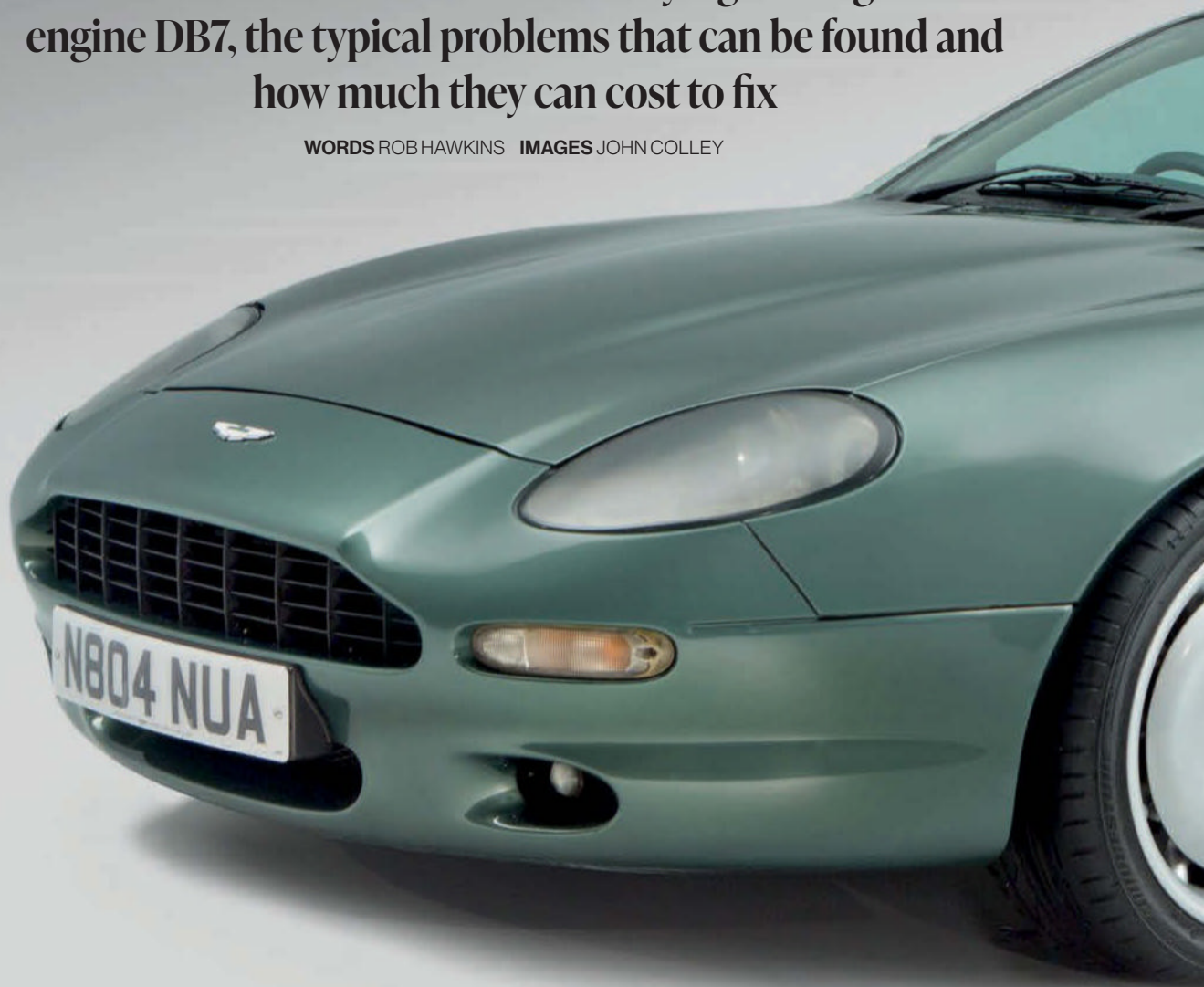


DB7 3.2

BUYING GUIDE

Discover what to look for when buying a straight-six engine DB7, the typical problems that can be found and how much they can cost to fix

WORDS ROB HAWKINS IMAGES JOHN COLLEY



ONE OF the cheapest routes into Aston Martin ownership has got to be to buy a DB7, especially one with a 3.2-litre Jaguar AJ6 (Advanced Jaguar Six) derived engine that was commonly found in the XJ40. In fact, most of the car is derived from Jaguar, sharing a close resemblance to the first generation of the XK8 and XKR, but also utilising a number of its parts from Ford. Can such a parts bin sports car make it cheaper to run and repair? Read on to find out.

The DB7 was unveiled at the 1993 Geneva Motor Show, and production commenced the following year. A coupe was only available until 1996, when the Volante (convertible) was introduced alongside. Three years later, in 1999, a six-litre V12-powered DB7 Vantage was launched, which shaved almost half a second off the 0-60mph time of the straight-six and helped to boost the overall image of the DB7 as a serious supercar. The straight-six models were consequently axed in May 1999 after roughly 3,000 of them had been sold.

We're only looking at the straight-six engine models for this buying guide, which are far from inferior when compared with the V12, but often cheaper to buy and potentially easier to work on (we'll focus on a separate DB7 V12 buying guide soon).

The facts and figures for these models are hardly disappointing, with a top speed of 165mph, a 0-60mph time of 5.8 seconds and peak torque of 368lb ft at a low 3,000rpm, although should you rev the engine to 5,500rpm, you'll be able to make the most of the 335bhp at the flywheel. ►



BUYING GUIDE

DB7 3.2

The DB7 is a moderately large sports car, with an overall length of 4,631mm, making it almost as long as a new BMW i4, and just as wide at 1,820mm. Inside, however, it's not so roomy with adequate space for a driver and front seat passenger, but limited legroom in the rear that means the rear seats are only suitable for small children or very small adults.

Weighing in at 1,725kg, the DB7 is far from light in sports car terms, which means you'll need at least a two-ton trolley jack to raise a wheel or two. Working on these cars with their Ford and Jaguar parts requires a set of metric spanners and sockets, along with some hex (Allen key) and Torx bits.

STRAIGHT-SIX VALUES

It's not always straightforward to spot whether a DB7 for sale has a straight-six or V12 engine. Anything registered before 1999 will be a straight-six, and anything advertised as a DB7 i6 should have a six-cylinder engine under the bonnet. 1999 was the crossover year, when straight-six production ended and the V12 was introduced.

The values of these models generally start at around £20,000 for a coupe, with anything below this amount potentially needing some obvious repairs, such as paintwork or engine trouble. What may seem like a bargain at £10-£15k, could cost more to fix than buying a meticulously maintained example at £20k.

The vast majority of DB7 models for sale in the straight-six category are coupes, so consequently, the rarer convertibles demand a higher price - expect to pay upwards of £30,000. Whichever model you want, most are equipped with a four-speed automatic gearbox, although these early DB7s were also fitted with a five-speed manual, but they are hard to find.

If you are looking at a DB7 as an investment, then there are a few limited-edition models that may be of interest. The DB7 GTS for instance, is one of them. Commissioned and built for Aston Martin Sales of Mayfair and launched at the 1996 Goodwood Festival of Speed, Chiltern Aston Centre completed all of the work and also converted owners' cars to GTS spec, which included bonnet bulges

and louvres, yellow piping around the front nose cone and along the waistline, Speedline Aliseo split-rim alloy wheels, a sports exhaust system, white gauges with a GTS logo and additional wood in the cockpit.

The Volante Stratstone LE is another collectable, associated with Aston Martin dealer Stratstone of Mayfair in London. This was built by Aston Martin in 1999, comprising nine coupes and ten Volantes, all in RHD with special order Bowland Black paintwork, a light grey interior and a numbered plaque on the sill that stated which of the 19 cars each one was and the name of its first owner. Many more limited-edition and potentially collectable models were produced, but most of these were V12 powered.

CORROSION

Being of a steel monocoque construction with front and rear subframes that look very similar to those from the Jaguar XJS, the DB7 was fitted with plastic composite front wings, a bonnet and bootlid until 1997, after which the bonnet was made from steel, but the rest were still constructed from plastic, although aftermarket GRP panels soon became available.

When visually checking the exterior, look closely at the panel gaps to spot signs of accident damage, and carefully inspect the paintwork for mismatched panels that haven't been correctly blended in, suggesting a partial respray. Any major panel damage can be expensive to repair. A complete bonnet



assembly, for instance, costs around £3,300, whereas a used bonnet can cost upwards of £500 and a new bonnet hinge assembly is a little over £200 new. And if you need a new headlight unit, then they can cost around £2,000 or more per corner. Some parts vary greatly in price, such as front wings, where genuine components cost over £3,000, but GRP copies are cheaper at around £150 each.

One of the major issues with the DB7's bodywork concerns corrosion. Water ingress into the engine bulkhead area can result in expensive and time-consuming welding repairs, so check around this area for damp and rust. The bulkhead is double-skinned,



Water ingress into the engine bulkhead area can result in expensive and time consuming welding repairs



so it may be difficult to fully assess all of the metalwork, which is an important structural part of the vehicle.

Other areas of the bodywork that are easier to assess, but just as susceptible to corrosion, include the sills, floors, chassis legs, the bottom edges of the doors, the wheelarches, jacking points and rear radius arm mounting points. Even the metal surround for the rear screen on a coupe can trap water and corrode, so look for bubbling paintwork and also water ingress in the boot and the back of the interior.

Chris Knowles at KWE Cars explains that the DB7 used the same floor pan as the XJS, "So corrosion will be found in the same places, notably floor pans, jacking points, sills and subframes."

Some repair panels are available and are reasonably priced, such as a closing panel for the sill at under a tenner, but don't forget to account for the cost of welding.

BUYING GUIDE

DB7 3.2

SUPERCHARGED SIX-CYLINDER

Look for evidence of annual oil changes and servicing of the DB7's supercharged six-cylinder Jaguar engine. The Eaton M90 supercharger's drivebelt, for instance, should be replaced every 30,000 miles.

"The Eaton M90 supercharger should have its oil changed every 50,000 miles even though it's declared to be oiled 'for life,'" says Chris Knowles. "The M90 supercharger is very hard to find now. Ideally, get a sample of oil out of the supercharger and look to see how black it is." Chesterfield-based Powerhouse can rebuild the M90 supercharger, replacing the internal bearings and oil seals from upwards of £305, although a failed end seal that's leaking oil can be fixed for £125. They also sell rebuild kits for £46-£95,

but you will need a press to fit the new bearings, and they warn that the pulley can be difficult to remove, resulting in damage to other components.

Upon start-up, listen for top- and front-end rattles, suggesting timing chain issues, such as a failed tensioner. Chiltern Aston charges £2,840.30 for a timing chain replacement.

Listen also for blowing from around the exhaust manifolds (there are two), which can crack and cost around £250 each. And any rattles at idle from around the supercharger may mean it needs a part or full rebuild, as mentioned.

Look around the engine bay and underneath for oil leaks. The camshaft covers are known to leak, often fixed with new gaskets that cost around £85.



GETRAG OR GM

The choice of manual or automatic gearboxes in the DB7 are similar to those used in the Jaguar XJR (X300 generation), which comprises a Getrag 290 five-speed manual or a GM 4L80-E four-speed auto. Of the models we found for sale online, all were equipped with an automatic gearbox.

During a test drive, make sure automatic changes up and down the gearbox are smooth. Listen for clonks during a gearchange, whether it's from the gearbox, propshaft or differential at the rear, which could suggest issues with worn joints or bearings.

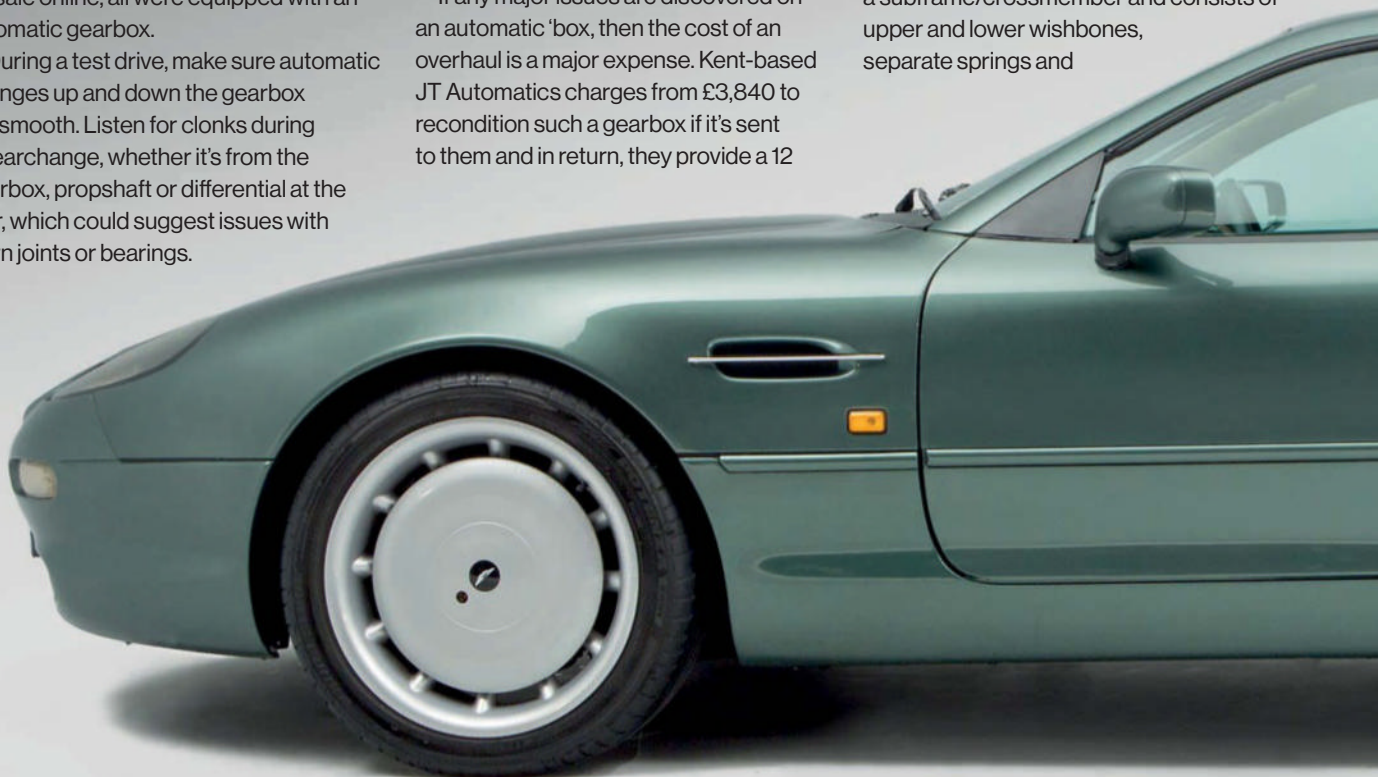
Ask the seller whether the automatic gearbox has been serviced, which involves an oil and filter change. The service interval varies between the specialists we have spoken to, but it should be conducted every 50,000 miles. Chiltern Aston charges £278.43 for this.

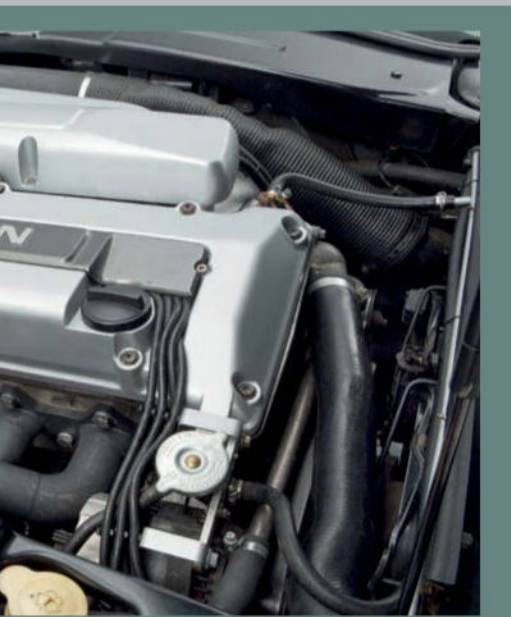
If any major issues are discovered on an automatic 'box, then the cost of an overhaul is a major expense. Kent-based JT Automatics charges from £3,840 to recondition such a gearbox if it's sent to them and in return, they provide a 12

months or 12,000 miles warranty. For upwards of £5,040, they'll remove and refit the gearbox and include a 24 months or 24,000 miles guarantee.

SUSPENSION

The front suspension is partly secured to a subframe/crossmember and consists of upper and lower wishbones, separate springs and





dampers and an anti-roll bar. Look for excessive corrosion in components such as the coil springs, the lower spring seat and the subframe. A misting of oil and dirt around the damper may mean it's leaking – budget for around £100-£200 per

damper. A pair of front coil springs costs £655. Listen for front-end knocks and rattles during a test drive, which may mean a suspension bush has worn. These can cost as little as £10 (a pair of bushes for a front upper wishbone cost £145), but it can be difficult to track down the cause of each unwanted noise. Worn mounting and drop-link bushes for the front anti-roll bar are a possible cause of a front-end knock when driving – new bushes cost between £17 and £54 a set.

The rear suspension consists of another subframe, which also houses the differential. There's a substantial lower arm at each rear corner, with a radius arm and twin coilovers. Each driveshaft forms the upper suspension arm. The design is very similar to the Jaguar XJS, so carefully check the condition of the subframe, looking for corrosion.

Check the large rubber mounts for the rear radius arms, looking for perishing that may result in poor handling. Budget for around £375 for a new radius arm with bushes. Look for leaks around the dampers and broken coil springs. If clonks and knocks can be heard from the rear

when setting off, try to lever against the universal joints for the driveshafts to check for play, which could be the cause of the problem.

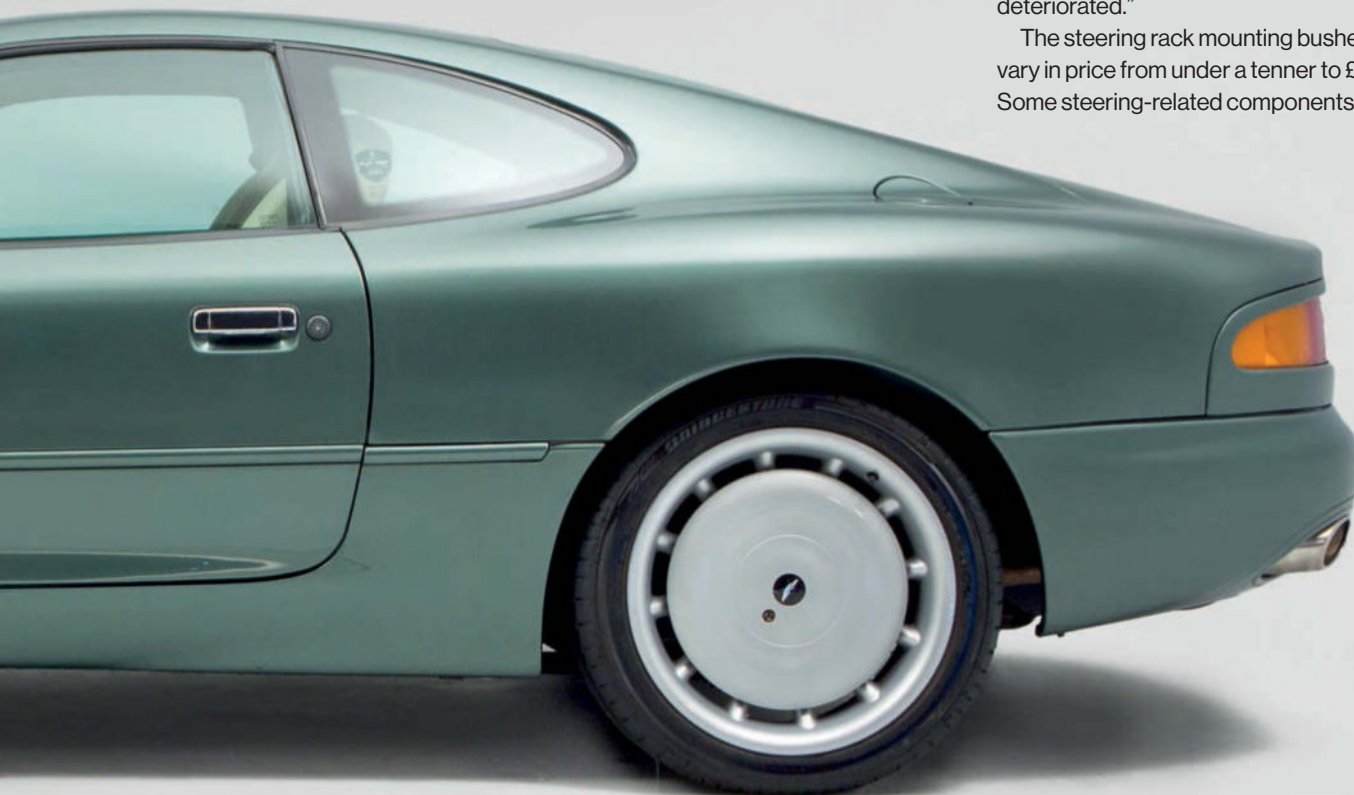
"The biggest risk is if the differential is leaking or noisy," says Chris Knowles. "Check underneath for oil from the input and output shafts. Removing and reconditioning a diff can be over £4,000 since the rear suspension has to be fully removed and stripped."

STEERING

A power-assisted rack-and-pinion steering system is employed on the DB7. With the engine running, make sure the steering is smooth to operate and consistent when turned from lock to lock. If there are any concerns, look inside the engine bay for the power steering pump and trace its hoses and pipes to look for power steering fluid leaks.

"Check steering play by driving at around 20mph, and move the steering wheel," advises Chris Knowles. "The car should change direction with around a half-inch of movement at the rim. More than this means the rack bushes or other rubber suspension parts have deteriorated."

The steering rack mounting bushes vary in price from under a tenner to £180. Some steering-related components are ►





During a test drive, check to see whether the steering pulls to one side under braking, which may suggest a seized caliper

no longer available new, but some can be overhauled. Aston Martin Bits, for example, sells an overhaul kit for the DB7's ZF power steering rack, which consists of a selection of seals and costs £97.55. AMB also sells a pair of steering rack gaiters for £35.75. However, they warn that the power steering pump is an exchange and reconditioned part only (used ones sell for around £300).

BRAKES

A dual-circuit, servo-assisted braking system is used on the DB7, with vented discs and four-pot calipers at the front and solid discs and single-piston calipers at the rear. The handbrake consists of a pair of mechanically operated shoes inside a drum that's part of each rear brake disc.

Chris Knowles explains that the DB7's braking system is now starting to show problems, often because the DOT 4 brake fluid isn't refreshed every couple of years, so it absorbs moisture,

which results in internal corrosion and failure of seals. "Take a cheap brake fluid moisture level meter and check," he recommends. "Anything more than three percent water shows poor maintenance."

During a test drive, check to see whether the steering pulls to one side under braking, which may suggest a seized or inactive caliper, or tracking issues. Afterwards, check whether any of the brakes are hotter than the others, but don't touch the brake discs, especially if they are hot. From what can be seen of the brake discs, look for corrosion, cracking and excessive wear. Some parts are expensive, such as a brake caliper (front or rear) at around or over £700 – it may be cheaper to have an old caliper overhauled instead. And even if a car for sale clearly needs a new set of discs and pads all round, don't disregard this because the total cost of all the parts (excluding fitting) will come close to £1,000. ▶





BUYING GUIDE

DB7 3.2

We have also found that some parts are unreasonably expensive, such as a wheel speed sensor at around £200, but the same sensor is used on the Jaguar S-TYPE and costs under £20 (and the same applies for some of the wiring to those wheel speed sensors).

INTERIOR CHECKS

Carefully inspect the condition of the upholstery, looking for tears, scratches and sagging, especially in the driver's seat bolster where getting in and out of the car generates the most amount of wear here. And don't forget to look at the headlining on a coupe, which can sag.

There's plenty of leather and walnut inside that can easily get damaged and be costly to replace, such as the veneer panels. Some parts, however, are quite cheap, providing you know where to find them because they are sourced from other makes and models. The steering wheel, for instance, is from a Jaguar XJ (X300 generation of the mid-nineties). The switches for the electric windows are from a Ford Granada and the interior door releases are from a Mazda MX-5. Look at photos of a Jaguar XJS's instruments and they are similar to the DB7's.

Check that all of the equipment works, from the electric windows and central locking to the air-conditioning and cruise control (the electrically adjustable seats only work when the handbrake is on). Problems may seem trivial, such as having to lock the passenger door from the inside because it doesn't work with the central locking, but this can easily result in a bigger issue if it doesn't lock at all or locks and won't unlock. The ECU is located in the passenger footwell and can suffer from water ingress.



VERDICT

The six-cylinder engined DB7 is one of the cheapest routes into Aston Martin ownership, but because of their low values, many examples are neglected and sold with problems, so tread carefully. Buying from a reputable independent specialist or dealer who offers a warranty is worth the extra over buying privately with no comeback. Should you find an example that has been pampered, keep up the good work and you should be rewarded with reliability and an enthralling taste of supercar ownership.

Check the air-conditioning works because it may not be easily fixed with a regas, but could mean the evaporator needs replacing, which is a 12-hour job and costs nearly £800 to buy. Other air-con components that can fail are similarly pricey, such as the compressor (pump) at nearly £700, the condenser (the equivalent of a radiator) at £450 and worst of all, the air-con and heater blower motor at around £3,500.

John at Aston Martin Bits, who sells new and used parts, says that some of the popular sellers on the DB7 concern the seat tilt mechanism and the door handles (interior and exterior). "The seat's tilt

lever has a small fixing clip in it that wears over time," he says. He also warns of some components only being available on an exchange basis, such as a reconditioned window regulator (the motor for winding the door glass up and down) from Aston Martin, which costs £521 and may take a few months to be turned around.

If you are looking at a Volante (convertible) model, then make sure the hydraulically operated hood folds up and down smoothly. If there are any issues, a refresh of the hydraulic fluid may help, although there may be a leak or a component failure. A fluid refresh costs around £70.

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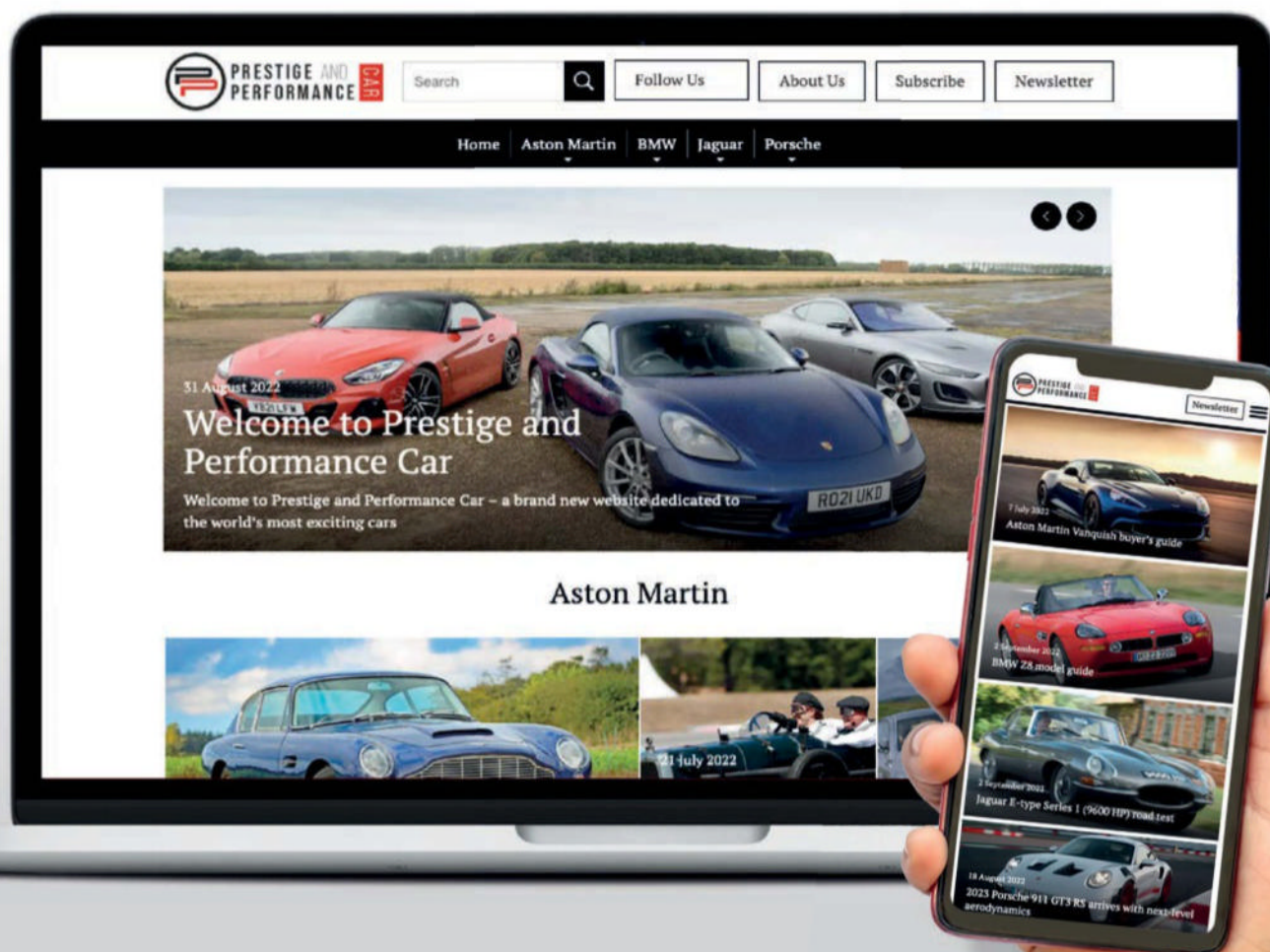
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REINVENTION BY DESIGN

In 1990, Ian Callum left a lucrative design job at Ford to take a gamble on a creative role at the new TWR Design. It proved to be the making of him, as well as the reinvigoration of Aston Martin

WORDS RICHARD GUNN IMAGES AMD ARCHIVE

IN THE early Nineties, Aston Martin was beleaguered. That wasn't anything particularly new – Aston Martin has spent most of its existence living perilously. But, newly acquired by Ford, it had to pay back the massive investment made in it and prove itself a success on a scale like never before. The key to that lay in a new car that moved away from ageing technology and an engine born in the Sixties, towards something more accessible and modern yet still irrefutably an Aston.

The result was the DB7, and it did all this, and more; revitalising the marque, establishing a design language that echoes through to today, and selling in greater numbers than any predecessors. It also made a star out of the man who created it, Ian Callum. While he was quite prominent as a designer prior to the DB7, it was within industry circles after a career spent at Ford. The lithe and elegant new Aston Martin put him alongside the Giorgetto Giugiaros, Giovanni Michelottis and Frank Stephenson of this world. Subsequent work, ►





One of the first cars Callum worked on at Ford was the RS200 rally car in 1984

six years of Ian's life, the family didn't even own a car. When one finally came, it was a pre-war Standard Flying Ten – hardly being the stuff of dreams in 1960. But little Ian found himself fascinated by its curves, even if that was less aesthetic appreciation and more about using its front wings as a makeshift slide, much to the annoyance of his father. The ageing Standard didn't survive long though; Ian recalls his father arriving home one day on foot because its engine had fallen out. A Vauxhall Victor replaced it.

His grandfather encouraged his interest in cars, taking him to see the freshly launched Jaguar E-type in an Edinburgh dealership after Ian had seen it in Life magazine. "It was so different and perfect and so utterly beautiful," he remembered.

Callum enjoyed working on the Escort RS Cosworth the most during his time at Ford



including the Vanquish and his range of Jaguars, has only cemented that position.

Yet prior to the DB7, Ian Callum hadn't even designed an entire vehicle from scratch, having been more focused on items like steering wheels at Ford – shades of his Aston Martin predecessor William Towns there, who designed seats at Newport Pagnell before coming up with the DBS. Callum confessed to being both 'terrified and naïve' at the 'enormous risk' with what was essentially an Aston Martin reboot. "But it came out pretty well," was one of his conclusions. Most would say it went well beyond that.

Ian Callum's story began in Dumfries, Scotland, where he was born in July 1954. His father was a solicitor with little interest in motoring, yet his two sons – Moray followed Ian in November 1958 – would both go into vehicle design. For the first



A handwritten signature in black ink, likely belonging to Ian Callum, is written across the bottom of the page.

While at Ghia, Callum created these Zig and Zag concepts



"I'd never seen beauty like that before... If I hadn't seen that E-type in that magazine on that day, I'm not sure my life would have been the same." Dumfries also had a Jaguar dealer, where Ian would gaze at models such as the Mk2 through the showroom window.

Away at boarding school, Ian generally enjoyed artistic subjects more than academic ones; however, the real catalyst that set him on his future creative path



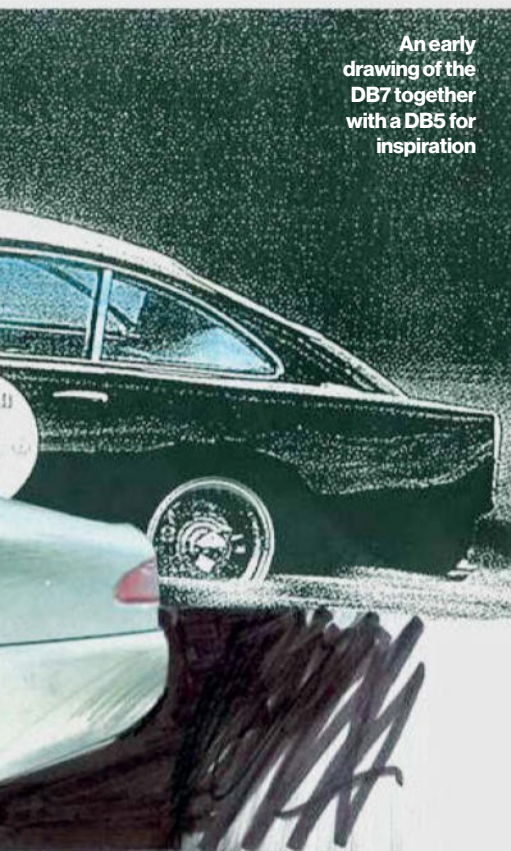
The finished DB7 from 1993 helped reinvent Aston Martin

came when he was 14. The teenager regularly wrote to car companies asking for advice on how to become a car designer, but only one replied, and that was his favourite, Jaguar. The positive response came from no less than the company's technical director and vice chairman, Bill Heynes, recommending that he take up engineering drawing and also do a course in art.

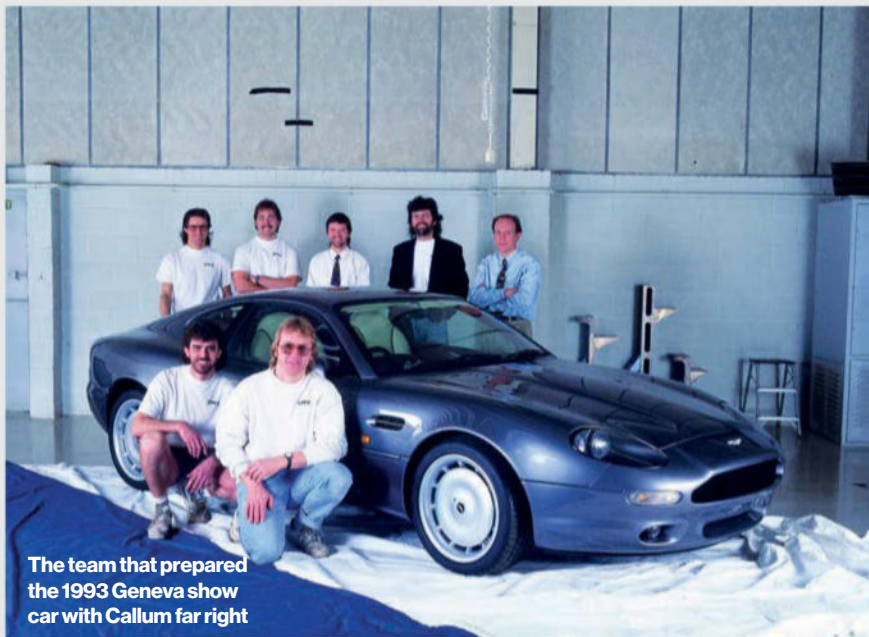
The sound advice was followed, and Ian applied to Lanchester Polytechnic in Coventry for a place on its Transport Design course in 1971. But he didn't really take to the city and also suffered illness. After a year, he returned to Scotland and continued studies at Aberdeen Art College and Glasgow School of Art. He emerged with a degree in industrial design, and a portfolio that included a taxi that took power from energy created by the brakes, and a mid-engined two-seater sports car. Ian Callum the student was metamorphosing into Ian Callum the vehicle designer.

Nevertheless, there was still some way to go. In 1977, Ian had an interview with Wayne Cherry, Vauxhall's head of styling. It didn't lead anywhere, so he returned to education and a postgraduate course at the Royal College of Art. Two truly fortunate factors came into play; he was sponsored by Ford, while a fellow student was Peter Stevens – future Lotus, McLaren, Subaru, and MG-Rover designer. The two became friends, with

An early drawing of the DB7 together with a DB5 for inspiration



Callum (right) with Neil Simpson who was responsible for the DB7's interior



The team that prepared the 1993 Geneva show car with Callum far right

BIOGRAPHY

IAN CALLUM

Although Volvo's then design director, Peter Horbury, is seen here with the C70, it was the work of Ian Callum



Ian even buying a £350 modified Volvo PV544 from him. The sponsorship from Ford finally led to a proper job offer, and in 1979, Ian signed up as a junior designer at its Dunton Technical Centre in Essex and was given such glamorous tasks as door mirrors and steering wheels for Transits. But he appreciated the education in the “nuts and bolts of real car design.” He also travelled to Australia and Japan, where he worked on Mazdas. In the mid-Eighties, his destination was Italy and Ghia, Ford’s Italian studio. There he was later (in 1988) joined by younger brother, Moray, as a consultant. While in Turin, the junior Callum would pen the Lagonda Vignale, the four-door, five-seater saloon that was a tentative but ultimately unsuccessful attempt to relaunch the Lagonda brand.

The older Callum sibling worked on the rallying-focused RS200 and the Escort RS Cosworth, the latter remembered with particular fondness. “The Escort Cosworth was the first complete car I’d worked on, and during my time at Ford, I enjoyed it the most.” Other vehicles with his input were the 1989 Ghia Via Concept and the Fiesta-based Zig and Zag. The Zig was a curvaceous small roadster, while the Zag was a futuristic-looking pocket-sized van.

A continuing rise through the Blue Oval ranks for the Ghia studio manager seemed assured. But then Ian found himself back at Dunton and doing steering wheels again. So a job offer from his friend Peter Stevens was timely and welcome,

even if it meant walking away from one of the globe’s biggest automotive players to join a new and unproven start-up business.

TWR Design was a development venture for Tom Walkinshaw’s TWR Racing, with Peter Stevens in charge – until McLaren dangled the tempting carrot of being its chief design officer in front of him. He recommended Ian Callum as his replacement. Thus, in 1990, Ian took a huge leap of faith, swapping the mighty resources of Ford for what he jokingly referred to as a “little tin shed in Kidlington.”

Ian’s first role was to rework the nose of the Jaguar XJR-15 two-seater sports car, which had a somewhat disturbing tendency to lift at speed. TWR’s new chief designer and general manager successfully reined that in. Then came another Jaguar project – but one that proved to be much more significant.



ABOVE: L-R: Aston Martin’s CEO, Bob Dover, vice president of Ford, Jacques Nasser, and Ian Callum with the Vantage Project

The Vantage Project from 1998 took just 12 weeks to complete and evolved into the Vanquish from 2001



The Callum designed Nissan R390 raced at Le Mans in 1997 and 1998



Callum redesigned the DB7 slightly for the V12-engined Vantage model that debuted in 1999

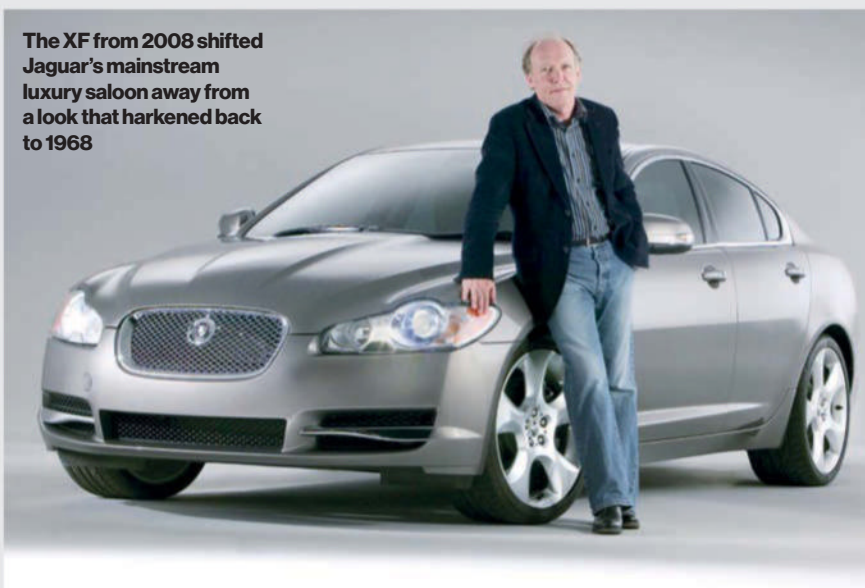
LEFT: In 1999 Callum (right) moved to Jaguar as design director when he was joined by former Lotus designer, Julian Thomson

Jaguar had been working on its proposed Keith Helfet-designed XJ40-based XJ41 sports cars throughout the Eighties but this was canned in 1989 due to rising costs. The project was reborn when Helfet tweaked the XJ41 concept to use the XJ-S architecture. Tom Walkinshaw from Jaguar's then racing partner, TWR, subsequently agreed to build the car the same facility in Bloxham as the XJ220 supercar.

Jaguar had only just been acquired by Ford in 1989, joining Aston Martin as a Blue Oval property. And the TWR XJ-S reinvention made much better sense as an Aston Martin, for which volumes would be lower but prices higher. So Tom Walkinshaw instead approached the firm's chairman, Walter Hayes, and convinced him that, with modifications, the car could be the next Aston instead.

Ian was tasked with the car's body design, his brief was to come up with something that looked like a direct descendant of the DB6. "It started off as a Jaguar but everything was redesigned and changed," said Ian. So, for Project NPX (Newport Pagnell eXperimental), styling cues from the past were incorporated; the slim, elongated grille shape echoed the DB3S, the wing vents had been an Aston Martin trait since the DB4, the rear had hints of the DB2 and there were suggestions of the DB4 GT Zagato in the overall shape. "They

The XF from 2008 shifted Jaguar's mainstream luxury saloon away from a look that harkened back to 1968



The I-PACE from 2018 was Jaguar's first all-electric model



RIGHT: For the Vanquish's 20th anniversary in 2001, Ian reworked the car through his new design agency, CALLUM



put an Aston Martin DB5 in the design studio," recalled Ian. "Which I respected, but I could have drawn an Aston from memory; it was so ingrained in me from my childhood."

For all its backward glances though, Ian's masterful handiwork was also utterly modern. In order to accommodate the tall Jaguar-derived (but supercharged) AJ6 six-cylinder engine without putting a bonnet bulge or raised nose, which would have compromised its 0.31 drag coefficient, the front subframe was rebuilt to lower the engine. The engineers weren't happy, but the designer won out – a measure of just how much autonomy and trust was placed in Ian Callum.

When Ford executives came to London to see how TWR was progressing during March 1992, they were amazed not to be confronted by a clay model or even a glass-fibre representation but a full metal, running prototype, constructed in just three months. "The Ford executives couldn't believe it," said Ian. "I have never

seen a reaction like that before or since in my life. They were astounded that the car had been built and finished."

The DB7 was unveiled at 1993 Geneva Motor Show in March, showcased alongside brother Moray's Lagonda Vignale; a Callum double bill. The DB7 was a success with critics – a stunning and worthy holder of the DB title – but even more importantly, it was a sales hit with customers too. And for its creator? "I designed the car on my own," said Ian. "It meant so much to me. I knew that it had to be nothing but perfect. That was absolutely paramount in my mind."

TWR Design and Ian Callum were suddenly the hot new kids on the block. Volvo came calling for its Volvo

C70 Coupe, as did Nissan for its R390 endurance racer. And the revitalised Aston Martin naturally beckoned again. The DB7 Volante appeared in January 1996, which proved more of a challenge than expected, with Ian having to rework the rear seats, deck and wings as well as chop the roof off.

Then, for the North American International Auto Show of January 1998, Aston Martin teased the shape of things to come with its Project Vantage concept; another Ian Callum masterpiece put together in just 12 weeks. "The DB7 was deliberately built to be a beautiful car with a more restrained shape than the big V8 Astons in production. Having done that, I had to get more aggressive again with the

Project Vantage, to stress the car's extra potential without losing its Aston purity."

When a V12 engine was dropped into the DB7 to create the Vantage model, Ian carried out the cosmetic enhancements to reflect its greater potency. He had some regrets about not going further than reshaped sills, a more dramatic nose with an enlarged grille, and some light modifications. "I was very reluctant to change anything about the car because I thought it was perfect the way it was. I realise now it was the wrong attitude to have."

The DB7 Vantage appeared in 1999. That same year, Ian Callum left TWR for Jaguar, after its head of design, Geoff Lawson, unexpectedly passed away. But with both Jaguar and Aston Martin now within Ford's Premier Automotive Group, he bestrode both marques. The Aston Martin V12 Vanquish of 2001 was the productionised realisation of Project Vantage, although as similar as it looked to its show car predecessor, only the roof remained unchanged. Ian remodelled, albeit subtly, everything else.

Aston Martin finally got its own design director in 2001, when Henrik Fisker joined from BMW. While he is credited with the overall design of the DB9 (2003) and the V8 Vantage (2005), there was considerable input from Ian Callum. Questioned in 2010, Ian put it at "pretty much 100 percent" for the DB9 and "a good 80 per cent" for the V8 Vantage.

However, gradually Jaguar took over Ian's time completely. After the facelift of the S-TYPE and metamorphosing the X-TYPE into an estate for 2004, he moved Jaguar away from the retro themes favoured by Geoff Lawson. His 2005 XK was a very handsome machine, if rather reminiscent of the DB9 but did

much to reinvent the brand's design themes. Then came the 2008 XF and the XJ of 2009, which finally shifted Jaguar's mainstream luxury saloon away from a look that harkened back to 1968. Subsequent efforts included the 2010 C-X75 concept, the 2012 revamp of the XF and its Sportbrake estate variant, and the superb F-Type of 2012. For 2015, there was the XE compact saloon and the second-generation XF, with Jaguar's first SUV, the F-PACE, hot on their heels. In 2018, the all-electric I-PACE began manufacture. Jaguar certainly kept Ian Callum very busy. June 2019 proved highly significant. In recognition of his services to the British car industry, Ian was appointed a Commander of the Order of the British Empire (CBE) in the 2019 Birthday Honours of that month. But he also announced he was leaving Jaguar, albeit retaining a consultancy link. Soon afterwards, he set up CALLUM, his own

design agency specialising in bespoke creations of all kinds. Being his own boss allowed Ian to revisit one of his greats, the Vanquish, and comprehensively rework it for the 2020s as the Aston Martin CALLUM Vanquish 25, limited to just 25 examples. "Some design stories are better second time around," he stated.

But whatever comes next for one of Britain's best-known designers, and whatever fields he turns his considerable talents to, the Aston Martin DB7 will always be a crowning glory. It is what Ian has called his "happy car. It changed my life and has allowed me to do what I really want to do. The reaction to the car was tremendous. It gave me a lot of satisfaction to know that I had created something so nice, so successful. I became known as a successful designer... I got a lot of work from that and I was able to make a very good living out of designing." **AMD**



MODEL PROFILE

VANQUISH



FIRE POWER

WORDS & PHOTOGRAPHY PAUL WALTON

To mark the 25th anniversary of a unique concept the eventual Vanquish production model was based on, we're driving an example of the V12 supercar across one of the UK's best driving roads



MODEL PROFILE

VANQUISH

AFTER CLIMBING for what seems like thousands of feet, the road finally flattens to reveal the full barrenness of the Peaks. With nothing ahead of me but empty tarmac, I pull the left-hand paddle mounted on the steering column, feel the six-speed 'box clunk down a gear before flooring the throttle. The moorland immediately becomes a blur of green and yellow as I do so, the hardness of the V12 coupe's acceleration matching that of the view around me.

Thanks to the isolated location and the car's performance, I can't help but feel like I'm in a Bond film. But while there's no doubting that I'm more Norman Wisdom than Pierce Brosnan, with the Vanquish appearing in *Die Another Day*, it's an understandable daydream.

Yet the car is more than just a movie prop; fast, responsive, and full of contemporary technology, it's considered by many to be one of Aston's best and most important sports cars from the past 25 years. To discover if this is true, I'm taking a 2005 example across one of the UK's best driving roads, the Cat and Fiddle in the Derbyshire Peak District.

The origins of the Vanquish go back to early 1997 and a meeting between Ford's vice president, Jac Nasser, with several Jaguar executives and Bob Dover, Aston Martin's then CEO and chairman. According to Dover, Nasser initially asked the Jaguar people if they wanted a concept for a forthcoming motor show. When they said no, Nasser said the same question to Dover. "I replied that I did," he says in David Dowsey's 2007 book, *Aston Martin Power, Beauty and Soul*. Nasser said he'd give a million dollars to fund the project and that it should be called the Vantage Project since the name was synonymous with high-powered Astons.

"There are a number of reasons for doing a concept car," continued Dover, "to gauge opinion when you are not confident about the design, to see whether you can stretch the boundaries a bit."

The project's timing, though, would be tight. "Jac wanted us to try and get it finished for Detroit [Motor Show] as a concept car the following January [1998]," continued Dover in *Power, Beauty and Soul*, "which meant we had to get it

finished by about mid-December and freeze everything by about October."

Dover quickly put everything in place to develop such a concept which included finding a stylist. After contacting several other British designers, Dover eventually went to TWR's Ian Callum who had been responsible for bringing another Aston Martin to production in the early Nineties.

"I was not so presumptuous to think because I had done the DB7 that I would automatically be considered for the job,"

said the Scot in David Dowsey's book.

"I didn't think for a minute that I would automatically pick up the mantle at Aston Martin. I had some stripes but I wasn't that arrogant. So I went to meet Bob." The meeting was successful.

"In March [1997] we gave the [development] job to TWR," continued Dover. "My brief to Ian was that I wanted something a bit more aggressive than the DB7, somewhere between the V8 and the six-cylinder DB7, which turned into



the Vantage Project.” Openly influenced by the DB4 GT Zagato of 1960, what Ian eventually created was a simple yet muscular car that although featured several of the older car’s design cues, was far from being an overly retro cliché. Importantly, it was exactly what the boss was looking for.

“When Jac Nasser saw the back of the car, he said ‘That’s the car that I want,’” recalled Callum. With Aston Martin seen by Ford as the pilot for forthcoming

technology, the Vantage Project would be overflowing with new developments. The most important of these was the car’s tub being constructed from aluminium honeycomb while aluminium chassis sections and roof pillars were reinforced with carbon fibre. It was claimed at the time these materials and construction method saved more than 50 percent in weight compared to steel while also increasing torsional rigidity by more than 100 percent.

The other big news was the engine; the Vantage Project would be the first Aston Martin to be powered by a V12, beating the DB7 Vantage by a year. A 5,935cc unit with chain-driven twin overhead camshafts per bank and four valves per cylinder, it developed 442bhp and 320lb ft of torque. Aston Martin reckoned the V12 gave the Vantage Project a 200mph top speed and a 0-60mph time of just four seconds.

The engine began life in the early Nineties as a concept designed by Ford Advanced Vehicle Technology and Cosworth Engineering. Originally touted to power the Lagonda Vignale if the 1993 Ghia-designed prototype ever reached production, the unit finally broke cover at the Turin Motor Show in 1994. It was then used in Ford’s GT90 concept the following year and then in the Reynard-engineered, hot rod-inspired Indigo Show Car in 1996.

TWR’s design manager, Neil Simpson, was responsible for the Vantage Project’s interior which featured both carbon fibre and aluminium trim while the seats were in saddle brown-coloured Connolly leather. Looking and feeling highly contemporary, it was very different from the traditional walnut-covered dashboard of the-then current but by now elderly V8 model.

Painted in a distinctive shade of metallic green called Derwent, when the Vantage Project made its debut at the 1998 Detroit Motor Show it was heavily praised by its critics. “Merely glance at the sinewy body shaping and drool begins to form at the corners of your mouth,” said the American magazine, *Motor Trend*, in September 1998 after being lucky enough to drive the fully functioning car, albeit at 50mph. “From the wide shoulders, hunkered-down stance, and aggressive-looking underbody tray to the graceful greenhouse arc and deft integration of the traditional Aston grille opening, this is one gorgeous machine.”

Unusually for a concept, the sole example of the Vantage Project wasn’t destroyed and after being kept by Aston, was sold at auction in 2016. After being in storage for several years, the car needed to be restored to bring it back to its original condition.

Aston might have publicly said the Vantage Project was merely a prototype, ►



MODEL PROFILE

VANQUISH

but it was a very different story behind the scenes. “We knew that if we got a lot of public support at the Detroit Show that we could build that car, which we obviously went on to do,” said Dover many years later. “We were confident we could put the Vantage Project into production, there was never any doubt that in my mind. It was just giving Ford the confidence that it could do it with the V12 engine as well.”

Jac Nasser personally gave Dover the green light for the car after it was displayed at the Geneva Motor Show in March 1998.

“He looked at me and said, ‘You will do this and I will get my money back.’ That is how it was done. It was too small to go through the Ford Motor Company Product Approval process.”

The car was the first production Aston to feature a bespoke bonded aluminium composite chassis with a carbon fibre backbone that would influence Aston’s later VH platform, which all future cars from the DB9 onwards would be based on. A steel, aluminium, and carbon fibre subframe supported the engine while carbon fibre windscreen pillars supported the roof.

Hydro Automotive Structures in Worcester built the shell from extruded aluminium and carbon fibre that was then bonded to the chassis. After arriving at Newport Pagnell, it was clothed with hand-finished and superformed aluminium panels. Finally, each car received eight coats of paint and lacquer.

Although the 5.9-litre V12 was retained, it was now in what Aston called a ‘Stage 2’ state of tune. This included a new air induction system, uprated camshafts and manifolds plus a revised crankshaft and valve gear which together increased power to 460bhp. But due to the Vanquish being 500kg heavier than its concept predecessor, the 0-60mph time increased by almost a second while the max speed was lowered to 186mph.

Transmission was a similar six-speed Tremec manual gearbox as used in the DB7 Vantage, but changes were actuated by an electro-hydraulic clutch via Formula 1-style paddles on the steering column, a system that was developed by Magneti Marelli and previously seen in the Ferrari Modena F1.



“The technology was extremely important,” continued Dover in *Power, Beauty and Soul*. “We could have used a manual shift very easily but the paddle shift was something I wanted to do. The V8 was getting very out of date technologically, the six-cylinder DB7 didn’t break any new ground and we needed to get back at the top in terms of technology.”

Although the eventual production car looked similar to the Vantage Project, Callum made several minor changes to the design and other than the roof, none of the surfaces remained the same. The track was widened, the crease on the rear haunches was softened and the side windows were teased out a little to create more interior room. The side air intakes were also reshaped as was the





location where the exhausts exited the rear valance.

Simpson's starkly modern interior of the Vantage Project was not universally admired, so the cabin of the production car was more conventional. But there was still plenty of aluminium, meaning the dash remained more contemporary than that of the V8 models.

To continue Aston's long tradition of V names, the car was christened Vanquish. Unsurprisingly, it received unanimous praise when it was revealed at the 2001 Geneva Motor Show in March.

"The Vanquish is a major step forward," said *Road & Track* magazine in its November 2001 issue, "with a specification that makes the Ferrari 550 look staid and traditional."

With Aston Martin moving to a new, purpose-built factory located outside Gaydon in Warwickshire during September 2003 where all future models would be made, the Vanquish was the last car to be wholly produced at the company's historic home of Newport Pagnell. Unlike the model it was replacing, the ageing V8, it was only available in coupe form although the Italian carrozzeria, Zagato, did produce a single roadster prototype in 2003.

To solve the later issue of the much cheaper V12-engined DB9 from 2003 having 10bhp less power than the Vanquish, in 2004 Aston Martin

introduced a faster version of its flagship model. Thanks to new cylinder head casings with fully machined inlet ports and combustion chambers that improved airflow, plus new fuel injectors and revised engine mapping, the power of the V12 was increased to 520bhp. This gave the car a genuine 200mph+ top speed while the dash to 60mph dropped slightly to 4.8 seconds.

As a way to make the car even sharper to drive, it was also given the originally optional Sports Dynamic Pack that featured changes to front suspension, which included revised damping plus shorter springs and steering arms. The brakes were also updated with 378mm ventilated and grooved discs at the front and six-piston calipers. Since 'Vanquish Vantage' was considered too much of a mouthful, this new model that replaced the standard car in Aston's range was called simply the Vanquish S.

"This derivative makes the car more special," said Aston's then new CEO, Dr Ulrich Bez, at the launch of the Vanquish S at the Paris Motor Show in September 2004. "It is the fastest and best handling car we have produced, the ultimate high-performance Aston Martin."

To discover if that's still true, I'm driving a Tungsten Grey Vanquish S over the famous Cat and Fiddle road that cuts across the peaks between Buxton and Macclesfield. Named after the inn of the same name located at the summit, other than the many speed cameras that line the road, its long straights, fast corners, and desolate location makes it the perfect test for this 200mph supercar.

The first thing that strikes me about the Vanquish is how it hasn't aged. The basic design might be 25 years old, but the crisp lines, perfect proportions and aggressive stance make it appear surprisingly modern. Swap the old-fashioned multicoloured rear lamps for contemporary LEDs and it could easily be a current model.

If I'm being honest, the same can't be said of the interior. Despite the acres of quality, hand-stitched leather covering every surface, since the switchgear in the centre console is the same as those used in my own considerably cheaper, mass-produced Jaguar XK8 from 2000, ►



Pierce Brosnan as 007 behind the wheel of a Vanquish while being chased by a Jaguar XKR in the 2002 Bond film, *Die Another Day*

MODEL PROFILE

VANQUISH

in my eyes it lessens the cabin's appeal. The V12 starts immediately after I twist the Ford-sourced Tibbe key in the ignition and press the starter button located high in the centre console, sounding surprisingly quiet for such a large motor. After pulling both of the steering column-mounted paddles at the same time to put the transmission into neutral and then the right one to engage first, I gently squeeze the throttle and start my ascent of the Cat and Fiddle.

The second thing to strike me about the car is how easy it is to drive at slow speeds. It might be a 200mph supercar but as I follow the heavy traffic it feels smooth, refined and surprisingly docile. This increases significantly when I learn to lift off the throttle slightly when I change gear that stops the car from uncomfortably lurching forward.

It's only as the road plateaus at the 1,690ft (520m) summit, which offers tremendous views across Greater Manchester way in the distance that, with the road finally empty and no speed camera in sight, do I finally change down and squeeze the throttle hard. Despite the car's considerable size and weight, the V12 responds instantly, resulting in breathtakingly hard acceleration. With the engine revving all the way to 6,000rpm, the cabin becomes filled with a high-pitched wail until I finally lift off the throttle a little, pull on the right paddle and change up.

Thanks to nicely weighted steering and perfectly damped suspension that results in limited body roll, the Vanquish is a fully accomplished sports car and I'm able to

scythe the big car effortlessly through the Cat and Fiddle's many sweeping S-bends with all the confidence of a V8 Vantage. That said, through a fast corner there is the feeling that a lot of weight is being hustled along.

With the road straightening once more, I squeeze the throttle hard again to become a silver-coloured missile hurtling through the barren landscape.

Yet despite its huge firepower, like a hitman with perfect manners and wearing a perfectly cut Savile Row suit, the Vanquish, unlike its brutal V8 predecessor, remains refined at all times. It was this mixture of style and speed why the Vanquish made the perfect Bond car, appearing in 2002's *Die Another Day*. With 007 not driving a current Aston since the Cumberland Grey AM V8 in *The Living Daylights* 15 years earlier, current Bond actor, Pierce Brosnan, had been pushing for the character to return to the brand since he'd taken over the role for *Goldeneye* in 1997. After using a variety of BMWs for his first three outings, he finally got his wish when Ford agreed with EON Productions to supply all the vehicles for his final film, including a Vanquish for Bond himself.

Constructed by Aston Martin, four pre-production examples were rebuilt with a Ford 302 V8 mounted as far back as possible leaving room for a four-

wheel-drive system sourced from a Ford Explorer SUV. The extra traction was needed for the chase towards the end of the film across an Icelandic frozen lake with a similarly equipped Jaguar XKR Convertible. These 4x4 Vanquishes also featured the car's substantial weaponry which included missiles and machine guns behind the grille plus retractable shotguns under the bonnet air vents. Three largely standard 'hero' examples (chassis numbers 500172, 500173 and 500174) were then used for the close-up and interior shots.

Although Bond's Vanquish hasn't achieved the same cultural impact as his DB5 did in *Goldfinger* 40 years earlier (not helped by the simply ludicrous 'adaptive camouflage' that made it become 'invisible'), it remains one of 007's most memorable cars. As I descend towards Macclesfield, I can't help but think the same could also be said about the Vanquish in Aston's recent history. Although later V12 models including the 2008 DBS and second generation of Vanquish from 2012 are even faster, they lack the style, aggressiveness, and old-fashioned handmade character of the 2001 original.

So, while I'm a long way from being a secret agent, 25 years after the original Vantage Project concept made its debut, as Q said in *Die Another Day*, the Vanquish remains, "The ultimate in British transportation." **AMD**



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EVOLUTION OF THE SPECIES

WORDS & PHOTOGRAPHY PAUL WALTON



With its V8 now to six litres and featuring fuel injection plus a modern six-speed gearbox and beefed-up suspension, this 1976 AM V8 Saloon is a modern interpretation of an always-popular classic Aston Martin



MODIFIED

V8 EVOLUTION 6.0

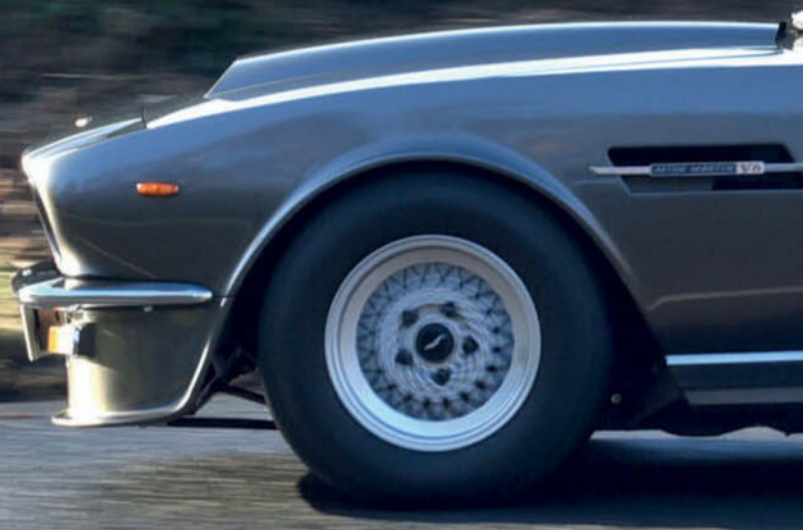
THE CUMBERLAND Grey AM V8 Saloon James Bond uses in the 1987 film, *The Living Daylights*, might have featured more weapons than the Wile E. Coyote uses to try and capture the Road Runner, but the many upgrades made by Aston Workshop to this similar-looking example make them look a bit pointless by comparison.

Cumberland Grey might be the same colour as 007's car but thanks to the increased capacity of its V8, plus the addition of fuel injection and sharper suspension, it's a very different animal. Faster, sharper, and more driver-focused, Bond wouldn't need a rocket to escape the KGB if MI6's Q Branch had given him this example.



The Cumberland Grey AMV8 used in the 1987 Bond film, the *Living Daylights*

“A deep chin spoiler from a Vantage results in the car having more of a strong, muscular appearance than a standard model of this age”



The AM V8 in question began life as a left-hand-drive 1976 Series 3 Saloon in Tankard Grey that was originally exported to Japan but later bought by a British expat for his Florida residence. As a long-standing customer of Aston Workshop, he asked the County Durham specialist to 'sex up' his car.

Aston Workshop's first job when it arrived in 2019 was to assess the car's condition, which senior technician, Keith Slater, now describes as 'solid'. It was then fully stripped and the body taken back to bare metal before being resprayed in the same shade of Cumberland Grey as Bond's Aston. But due to extra metal flakes being added to the paint, when



the weak winter sun on the day of my visit to Aston Workshop finally makes an appearance, it results in the car having a noticeably warmer and bronzier sparkle than normal.

A set of 15in BBS alloys as fitted to the Oscar India generation of AM V8 from 1983 onwards replaced the original GKN alloys which were then shod with slightly wider 225/70 tyres. Together with a deep chin spoiler from a Vantage results in the car having more of a strong, muscular appearance than a standard model of this age.

Apart from the dashboard needing to be retrimmed in black leather, the rest of the interior was deemed good enough to be left alone.

The original 5.3 V8 was retained but its capacity increased to 6.0 litres, the crankshaft and stroke were kept but ▶



MODIFIED

V8 EVOLUTION 6.0



new pistons were added and the bore increased. Aston Workshop replaced the carburettors that were fitted to all AMV8s between 1973 and 1986 with modern electronic fuel injection plus individual Jenvey throttle bodies which, thanks to being neatly packaged in the huge original airbox, means when I lift the huge bonnet, the engine appears to be largely standard.

Together with the cylinder head being ported and polished, these modifications have resulted in the engine now producing 430bhp, around 130bhp over standard. With an approximated 0-60mph time of a mere 5.5 seconds, these figures make even the heat-seeking missiles in Bond's car start to look a bit pathetic by comparison.

Chrysler's sluggish TorqueFlite three-speed automatic transmission, that the

car was originally fitted with, was swapped for the same variety of Tremec six-speed manual as fitted to the DB7 Vantage.

This was combined with a custom-made propshaft but the ` fully refurbished with new bearings and mountings. "The diff cradle is a common weak-spot," explains Calvert, "so it's been strengthened to deal with the extra power."

The suspension has also been beefed up to cope with the increased performance that included Spax coilovers and a thicker front anti-roll bar while telescopic dampers, again sourced from Spax, replace the factory-fitted lever arms at the rear. Stopping power is courtesy of six-piston calipers in aluminium and grooved discs that improve braking.

Christened the 'V8 Evolution' by Aston Workshop, the result is a handsome,





well-balanced, and perfectly presented car that, thanks to the sympathetic nature of the upgrades, doesn't look too different from a standard example. Cumberland Grey perfectly suits the AM V8's square-edged design and, the Bond connection aside, it's easy to understand why the colour is now as popular for owners as Silver Birch is for the DB5.

With its big, squishy, leather-upholstered seats, the interior hasn't lost the model's famed comfort. I might be sat on the other side of the car, but the slightly chaotic layout of the dashboard is identical to the Vantage prototype I tested in issue four of AMD that originated from the same era as this one.

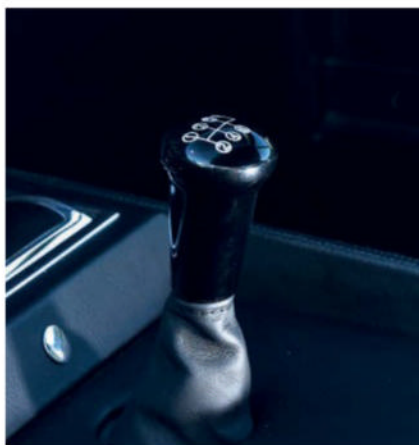
It's only when I turn the key and fire that huge lump sitting a metre or so ahead of me does the car's now harder personality start to make itself known. Like a

crouched leopard preparing to chase down a gazelle, I can feel that the engine is ready to go, its mammoth size causing the body to rock ever so slightly from side to side on tickover. It sounds slightly louder too, despite the standard twin exhaust pipes being retained.

After easing the stiff transmission into first and releasing the clutch, the engine requires little throttle to propel the car forwards with a hard, confident swagger. The engine feels much stronger than a standard 5.3 unit, the fuel injection making it more responsive. Together with the short ratios of the Tremec unit, this results in an urgency to the acceleration not usually felt in an Aston of this vintage, even a Vantage, and it needs little effort to thunder down the road like a dark grey tornado.

The stiffer suspension means it doesn't ride quite as smoothly as a standard model, but the pay-off is it feeling much more composed through corners. By suffering from little body roll and the refreshed power steering feeling sharp and accurate, bends can be attacked with vigour rather than carefully negotiated like normal.

One thing that hasn't changed is the car's weight and size, which I'm always aware of. Together with that extra power it needs my full concentration at all times, meaning I don't find it the easiest or most relaxing of drives. Despite the fat





tyres are still able to find plenty of grip in the wet, greasy conditions on this cold winter's day, the car's often squirrely nature means if I don't treat it with respect, it won't be James Bond that I look like when I'm towed out of a ditch, but that incompetent coyote.

Thankfully, the uprated brakes do a sterling job at bringing this uncompromising beast to order. Strong yet progressive, I'm both amazed and grateful how much speed they can quickly scrub off as I approach a tight bend. But with so much power at hand, after braking and then snicking the 'box down to third, when I squeeze the throttle after negotiating the corner, the car again accelerates with sudden and uncompromising ferociousness. Yet despite its power, what I like most about

“What I like most about the car is how the updates work with the original design”

the car (which is now for sale through Aston Workshop) is how the updates work in perfect harmony with the original design. The basic chassis, for example, might have been designed in the Sixties for the DBS from 1967, but it copes well with the extra performance and doesn't feel like a preposterous, over-engined hot rod. Like the name implies, it really is an evolution of the AM V8.

Aston Workshop is now able to offer anything from similarly completed examples

to individual upgrades or anything else owners, who are looking to 'sex up' their own AM V8, might want. Like a menu, they're able to pick and choose the modifications that suit them and their needs.

One thing Aston Workshop won't be offering, though, are heat-seeking missiles or jet power. Not because it can't but because they're not needed. **AMD**

● **Thanks to: Aston Workshop**
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LITTLE WONDERS

WORDS & PHOTOGRAPHY PAUL WALTON



Although better known for its high performance models, Aston Martin, and its former coachbuilding subsidiary, Tickford, have produced a handful of much smaller cars. We look at two; a unique coachbuilt Mini from 1984 plus the more recent Toyota iQ-based Cygnet

HISTORY

TICKFORD MINI & CYGNET



TICKFORD MINI

Tickford's origins go back to 1830 when Joseph Salmons opened a coachbuilding business on Newport Pagnell's Tickford Street. Originally called Salmons & Sons, it initially concentrated on horse drawn carriages but by the end of the decade had moved into the burgeoning automotive industry.

By the Twenties, Salmons & Sons was producing drophead coupe bodies for several British marques including MG, Rover, Standard, Triumph and Wolseley. In 1925 it patented a winding hood called the Tickford that could be raised or lowered



by a cranked handle. When the company changed hands in 1943, its name was changed to suit.

In December 1954 Tickford was bought by Aston Martin and Lagonda owner, David Brown, and although it started producing bodies for the DB2/4 followed by DB Mk III, the real reason behind the purchase was the coachbuilder's sizable factory.

The cars might have been assembled in Feltham, but the bodies had previously been produced by Mulliner in Birmingham and the rolling chassis, engines plus other parts by the David Brown Industries factory at Meltham Mill near Huddersfield plus the nearby tractor engine factory at Farsley. Therefore the Newport Pagnell facility allowed the majority of production to come under one roof starting with the DB4 from 1958 onwards.

All subsequent Aston Martin and Lagondas would be made there until September 2003 when after 45 years and 13,000 cars, production was moved to a brand new facility in Gaydon, Warwickshire. Tickford Street remains part of the Aston Martin story and is home to the company's Heritage department plus a new car dealership and service centre.

Other than a small Tickford Coachwork badge on the front wings of the DB2/4 and Mk III, following its amalgamation into AML, the name disappeared. But in 1981 when AML started a new bespoke engineering service to develop products for other automotive and engineering companies it chose to call it Aston Martin Tickford.

From the design of the Jaguar XJ-S' complicated targa roof to developing the MG Maestro Turbo for Austin Rover, AMT soon worked on a variety of projects.

One of its most famous cars from this period was arguably the Capri Turbo. The brainchild of former British racing driver turned test driver, John Miles, it featured a turbo version of the Cologne 2.8-litre V6 that produced 205bhp allowing the car to reach 60mph in just 6.7 seconds. The suspension was beefed up and a body kit that helped reduce drag was also available. Despite costing £14,000, six grand more than a standard Capri 2.8, 86 were produced between 1983 and 1986.

But as well as performance models, Tickford was also involved with small cars including a bespoke version of the



Austin Metro for another coachbuilder, the Northampton-based Frazer, in 1982. It featured a fully leather lined interior, Wilton carpeting, a stereo system by German sound specialist, Uher, a glass fibre body kit, teledial alloys and four Marshall fog lights. The engine was tuned with a Weber twin choke carburettor, hotter camshaft, bigger valves, and gas flowed cylinder head.

"The transformation, while retaining all the features that make the Metro so attractive," said Frazer's marketing blurb, "covers all aspects of the car, from appearance and comfort to performance and handling."

Although at £11,600 it put the Frazer-Tickford Metro into Ford Granada Ghia X 2.8 or BMW 525i territory, 26 were still made.

Yet this wasn't the last small car Aston Martin Tickford was involved with. In 1984 it was commissioned to build a unique and totally one off Mini. Although facts behind the car are sketchy, it's believed it was ordered for a wealthy Saudi Arabian Prince who was involved in the oil and gas industry.

The project was based on a left-hand-drive 1000 HLE and featured a similarly sumptuous interior as the then current AMV8 Series 4. The usually stark interior was replaced by a full walnut covered

dashboard with the four dials that were located directly in front of the driver inset into the wood. In the leather lined centre console was a complex Clarion stereo plus graphic equalizer. The Recaro front seats and the rear bench were then covered in the same rich red hide resulting in a very luxurious interior.

Other than the chunky glass fibre body kit, the most noticeable exterior change were the stacked rectangular headlights and the Vantage style of blanked off grille and front air dam.

It's thought the car cost an incredible £50k which in the mid-Eighties would have also bought a much larger coachbuilt car, including Aston Martin's own AMV8. Unsurprisingly, the car remained a total one off.

Having being part of a private collection for many years, the Tickford Mini has recently resurfaced and is currently for sale through classic car specialists, JD Classics of Chelmsford, where I've travelled to see it.

First impressions? Although the body kit, blanked off grille and 13in Minilite-style of alloys give the diminutive car a surprisingly muscular appearance, the size of the four headlights make it look like it's wearing a pair of welding goggles.

But when I open the door, the lush interior is testament to the skill of Tickford's craftsmen. It's not known how involved the main Aston Martin factory was with the car's development but the richness of the burr walnut and the soft, buttery like feel of the leather reminds me of the AMV8 Series 4 I drove in the previous issue of *AMD*. The stack of Uher sound equipment takes up the entire centre console and looks more complicated than the flight deck of a Space Shuttle.

Tickford was sold to CH Industries around the same time as the car was being developed. After a period of independence and later being owned by British motorsport specialists, Prodrive, in 2013 it was bought by a British inspection and product testing company, Intertek. Although the name has once again disappeared in the UK, it continues in Australia where it's involved with performance and design enhancements for the current Ford Mustang.

This sole Mini might have been the last small car Tickford was involved with, but it wasn't Aston's. ►

HISTORY

TICKFORD MINI & CYGNET

ASTON MARTIN CYGNET

As the first compact car to be badged an Aston Martin plus its close links to an existing Japanese model, no other model has been as controversial in the company's 110-year history as this one. "The new Aston Martin Cygnet is either a fabulously clever way to make a heap of money and cut CO2 emissions," said *Car* magazine in 2011, "or an abomination not fit to wear the iconic winged badge, depending upon whom you talk to." And after over a decade since its debut, the same can still be asked of this tiny Aston.

The reason behind the car were new impending fleet emission targets from 2012. Without a parent company to offer more eco-friendly cars to balance out the averages, Aston's CO2 figures across the model range were too high.

Such a car would also open Aston to a new market. "We need to satisfy demand where we know it exists," said Aston's then CEO, Ulrich Bez, when the finished car was finally revealed in 2011. "We have many customers who live in London, Paris, Rome or Milan, and who would like to drive their Aston Martin more often, but with a V12 sports car, it's just not appropriate. They tell me that they want an Aston Martin that fits better into their urban lives. And it is our job to give them what they want."

So in July 2009 when Aston Martin announced it would be a rebranding an existing, more fuel efficient car, the project made perfect sense. What took most by surprise, though, was the choice of that car; the Toyota iQ, a tiny, less-than-stylish hatchback that had been around since 2008.

Legend has it, the car's origins stem from when Bez and Akio Toyoda, the then president of Toyota Motor Co and grandson of its founder, met at that year's Nürburgring 24-hour race. During a late night party Bez admitted to Toyoda that Aston Martin needed a small car to lower the company's CO2. After Toyoda replied he'd been disappointed by the sales of the iQ, a plan to help each other out was quickly hatched.

The finished model was named Cygnet and revealed at the 2011 Geneva Motor



Show in March. Although it looked similar to the iQ and had the same general proportions, the only panel the pair had in common was the roof. Everything else, including door skins, wings, and bonnet, were all bespoke while at the front was the traditional Aston grille.

Yet despite these changes there was no denying its humble roots. "The Aston Martin Cygnet looked more than a bit out of place amidst its swoopy, low slung, high dollar brethren on the Aston stand at the Geneva show," said the American magazine, *Motor Trend*, at the time.

Bez, though, was adamant the move

was still the right one. "We're bringing style, design, and craftsmanship to the small car segment," was his view at the time of the car's reveal.

Although the interior was reupholstered in the same quality of leather as Aston's other models, under the skin was the standard Toyota iQ mechanical components including the 1.33-litre four-cylinder petrol engine with a six-speed manual or continuously variable transmission (CVT).

Press reaction was largely negative. "For car enthusiasts like us, the Cygnet holds little appeal," was *Car* magazine's view.

Even Bez admitted the feedback had been mixed. "It's a new, younger customer who really likes the car," he said at the car's Geneva reveal. "For the more traditional customers, those who have a classic DB4 as well as a DBS – I'd say one or two out of every ten has an objection. They write letters to me threatening that they'll never buy an Aston Martin again if we make this car.

"But when I write back, invite them to pay us a visit, and explain why we need this car, almost all of them come around. Ultimately they understand that change is needed. The dinosaurs are slowly dying out."

When the Cygnet reached production the following year, completed Toyota iQ donor cars in black, white, or silver, were shipped from the Toyota factory in

Takaoka, Japan, to Gaydon where they were transformed into Cygnets which included being repainted in the colour of the customer's choice. The 150 hours it took to produce a Cygnet was just 50 shy of the DB9's build time making it very labour intensive for a small car.

It was probably this why at £30,995 the Cygnet was twice as much as a standard iQ, even though it offered the same level of performance and interior room.

Unsurprisingly, the Cygnet was always a slow seller. Despite Aston initially announcing up to 4,000 would be sold annually, when production quietly came to an end in September 2013 a mere 300

had been sold, split 50/50 between the UK and the rest of Europe. This makes it one of the rarest postwar models Aston has ever produced.

With JD Classics having a Cygnet in stock as well as the Tickford Mini I reckoned it was the perfect opportunity to revisit the car. I say revisit; I've never actually driven one before but I have the iQ in the late 2000s. I remember thinking even then it wasn't a handsome car, being too simple and child-like compared to the much more stylish Fiat 500 but the new Gaydon-designed panels plus Aston grille don't change this. What it does have, though, is much better detailing than the model it's

based on as illustrated by the jewel-like enamel badges, discreet Cygnet script in the door handles and DB9-style of wing vents. Like the Tickford Mini compared to a standard model, on first inspection the beautiful leather that covers most of the interior's surfaces results in the Cygnet's interior feeling much more luxurious than the iQ's. But look closer and where this meets the cheap plastic of the mass produced donor results in an awkward ▶



HISTORY

TICKFORD MINI & CYGNET



juxtaposition. The door grab handles are a good example; simple, cheap plastic items that have been wrapped in hand-stitched leather.

Although the Cygnet is very unAston-like to drive, taking almost 12 seconds to reach 60mph, the 97bhp 1.33-litre four-cylinder offers a peppy performance that's perfect for zooming through busy city streets. However, it still takes almost 12 seconds to reach 60mph and can just about reach 100. This lack of power makes it easy to understand why in 2018 a customer asked Aston's bespoke division, Q Branch, to build a Cygnet with a 4.7-litre V8 from a Vantage.

After driving this version with the six-speed manual 'box, it's also easy to understand why more examples were ordered with the CVT. Due to the shortness

of the gear linkage, the changes are stiff and notchy and it's impossible to perform a clean shift in either direction. But other than speed humps suddenly feeling like Everest, its supple suspension results in a surprisingly smooth ride for such a short wheelbase.

Despite what the badge says, the Cygnet clearly isn't a true Aston Martin and like the Tickford Mini, remains a curiosity in the company's long history. But both cars still clearly illustrate how even a little Aston charisma can transform even the most mundane and ordinary cars into something much more special. **AMD**

● Thanks to: *JD Classics*
(www.woodham-mortimer.com)



Aston's designers redesigned the iQ's exterior to create the Cygnet



The car the Cygnet is based on, the Toyota iQ from 2008



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MOTORSPORT

in association
withBy Matt James
Editor,
Motorsport News

Le Mans 1959

With the Le Mans 24-Hour race celebrating its 100th anniversary this summer, Matt James recalls Aston Martin's sole victory there 64 years ago

THE ORGANISERS of the Le Mans 24 Hours are, quite rightly, proudly puffing out their chests and shouting about the 16 entries in the top-flight Hypercar division for the 100th anniversary of the race in 2023.

In that ten decades of history, 25 manufacturers have claimed the silverware at La Sarthe and only 12 of those are multiple victors. Sitting among the list of one-time triumphs is the single 1959 success for Aston Martin.

The entry list for this year's edition of the twice-around-the-clock race seems rather sparse when you look at the line-up for that 1959 encounter. There were

15 entries in the headline up to three-litre class with 21 factory-backed cars in total across the divisions.

The three-car Aston Martin line-up was joined in the main class by a trio from Ferrari, Lister, and Tojeiro.

Aston had something to prove after the 1958 race. It had gone toe-to-toe with Ferrari and Stirling Moss had stretched out an early lead of 95 seconds before the first pit halts were due, only for the engine on the DBR1/300 to throw a conrod. The sister car of Stuart Lewis-Evans crashed during the fifth hour as rain swept across the Central France circuit. There were red faces all around.

Although the DBR1/300, which had

first raced at Le Mans in 1956, had proved its pace, its fragility handed the victory to Ferrari, with Olivier Gendebien and Phil Hill winning by more than ten laps. Aston salvaged some pride with a second-placed finish for Peter and Graham Whitehead, albeit in the outmoded and privately entered DB3S machine, which was becoming long in the tooth.

Aston realised that it needed to be better prepared in 1959 take on the might of Ferrari. It focused its efforts on Le Mans, which was originally scheduled to be its only sportscar race outside of its ill-fated Grand Prix effort with the DBR4. However, team manager Reg Parnell, who used to have a unique style of

The winning DBR1/300 of Carroll Shelby and Roy Salvadori





issuing instructions to the team members via a megaphone, relented and ran a car at Sebring and one at the Nürburgring 1000kms which was just two weeks before the Le Mans showpiece.

Victory in Germany for Stirling Moss and Jack Fairman was a promising sign ahead of that season's major prize.

The DBR1/300 was a refined machine when it returned to Le Mans in 1959. The bodywork had been remodelled and was more rounded than the previous challenger and featured a heightened rear section to improve the airflow. It also now had partially enclosed wheel arches. But the hardest yards of all had been done to beef up the transmission between the 2922cc straight six engine and the Avon tyres.

Aston, which had been represented on the grid in every edition of the race since 1931, had co-opted some of the finest drivers of the generation into the cockpit of the three DBR1/300s. Grand prix hero Stirling Moss was again partnered with Jack Fairman (4), another entry was driven by French pair Maurice Trintignant and Paul Frère (6) while a third was shared between Roy Salvadori and American Carroll Shelby (5). There was also a fourth example, the privately entered machine of Graham Whitehead and Brian Naylor (7).

Race day for the 27th running of the Le Mans 24 Hours dawned wet, but the dark clouds soon rolled away to produce a scorching hot mid-summer day on June 20.

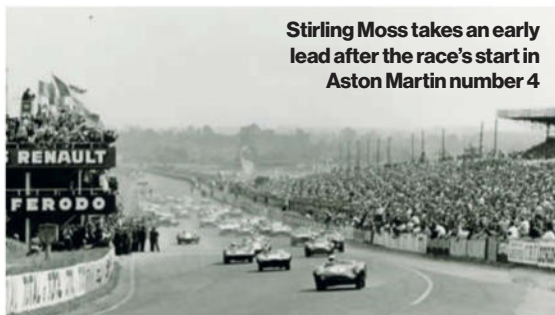
Stirling Moss was a master of the Le Mans start, where drivers had to sprint from the opposite side of the circuit, clamber into the cockpit of their racers, fire them up and power away. The British ace was first to the controls of his sportscar and blasted away in first place, setting a ferocious pace. He was helped when the Ferrari 250 Testa Rossa of Jean Behra, which had been put on pole position by his co-driver and Le Mans rookie Dan Gurney, had proved difficult to fire up and the French driver slipped down to almost last place and began a fightback.

Moss still had other Ferraris to worry about, though, since the 250 TRs of Olivier Gendebien and Hermanno da Silva Ramos took up the pursuit. The recovering Behra made short work of the middle order



Car number 4 of Stirling Moss and Jack Fairman outside Le Mans' famous Hotel de France before the race

Stirling Moss takes an early lead after the race's start in Aston Martin number 4



MOTORSPORT

LE MANS 1959

and was up to third at the end of just 60 minutes of racing. But there was subtle work at play here: Moss' machine had been fitted with a development of the six-litre engine which with 255bhp was producing slightly more power than the sister Astons. There were concerns about the reliability with the tweaked powerplant, so Moss' role from the get-go had been to try to stretch the three works Ferraris to breaking point as they sought to rein in the flying DBR1/300's pace, which would then leave the way clear for the other two more conservative Aston entries to prevail. It worked perfectly.

Although Behra had managed to wrest the lead from Moss in the second hour, he had been putting too much stress on the Italian machine's 2953cc V12 motor and that would come back to bite him later.

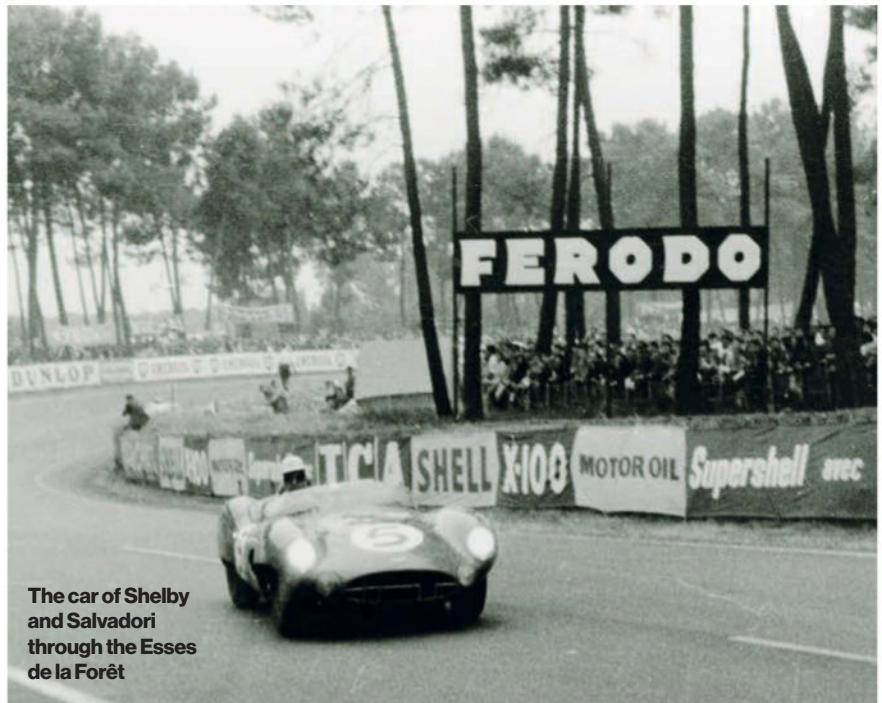
One of the three works Ferraris was out before the sun had set at La Sarthe with gearbox troubles. The Scuderia still had hope though. Behra and Gurney must have sighed with relief when Moss' Aston finally broke six hours into the French classic. Part of the car's air intake had been ingested into the motor and damaged the inlet valve, which meant the British car and its star-turn driver was parked up.

The pole-winning Ferrari took up the running from the side-lined Aston, although signs of the early stress on the car forced it into a length pitstop to repair damage to the gearbox, as well as being instructed to pit by the race organisers to fix faulty lighting. The 250 TR rejoined but was out of the race for good just before 0200hrs with an overheating engine.

Although the retirements had put the Carroll Shelby and Roy Salvadori car up into the lead, the stress still wasn't over for Aston Martin. While Ferrari was throwing caution to the wind in mechanical terms, Aston stuck to a strict regime of lap time so as to protect the hardware.

Gendebien zeroed in on the first placed car and moved his Ferrari into the lead when the Aston threw the tread off its tyre and required an unscheduled pit halt in the early hours of the morning. It gave the Gendebien/Phil Hill car a two-lap lead as the sun began to re-emerge.

The Ferrari had opened up a three-lap lead by the time 1000hrs on Sunday



The car of Shelby and Salvadori through the Esses de la Forêt

came around, but there were soon furrowed brows in the Scuderia's pits. The V12 engine had begun to overheat – another legacy of having had to push too hard early on in the chase to haul in Stirling Moss – and the motor began to sound very second-hand. Shortly before midday, the head gasket cried enough.

And so with only four hours remaining the Astons, which had looked like they would be facing another defeat to what were arguably faster machines from other manufacturers, were running in first and second places.

The Carroll Shelby and Roy Salvadori-crewed entry was leading the car of Paul Frère and Maurice Trintignant and with all of the major opposition out of the running, the leaders could afford to slacken their pace over the final stages of the race – which was just as well, because the first placed car had begun to consume oil at an alarming rate.

Even after slowing by up to half-a-minute per lap, the triumphant car crossed the line one lap ahead of the sister machine, and the duo were 25 laps clear of the rest of the opposition.

There was something alarming happening inside the cockpit of the winning car, too, since Carroll Shelby had been suffering with dysentery during the race and was fearful of heart problems in the



The DBR1/300 driven by Carroll Shelby and Roy Salvadori



Car number six of Frère and Trintignant leaves the pits



David Brown, Aston Martin's chairman (left) with winning driver, Carroll Shelby

epic endurance battle. He later admitted that he had driven with a nitro-glycerine tablet under his tongue to counteract any problems, but that was something he had not told the team before the start of the event.

Team-mate Salvadori had himself only recently recovered from the flu, and he was pressganged into driving for 14 of the 24 hours given his co-drivers' health concerns.

Not only had Aston Martin finally taken the longed-for success at La Sarthe, but it was also a day of days for the British firm as there was a podium finish in the Thermal Index of Efficiency ranks (which assessed a car's performance on weight, speed, and fuel consumption) and in the Index of Performance, which was a predetermined formula of how far a car should travel given its engine capacity.

Team patron David Brown donned his Sunday best to greet the cars over the line

at 1600hrs on Sunday and that, in itself, was significant. It was to be Aston Martin's last attempt at Le Mans until the marque was revived in the Eighties.

A costly and disastrous attempt to take Aston Martin into grand prix racing in 1959 with the unreliable and slow DB4 had turned the luxury brand's attentions away from motorsport. However, the Nürburgring success allied to the victory at Le Mans persuaded Aston to enter the final round of the 1959 World Sportscar Championship, which was the Goodwood Nine Hours in early September. A winning run from Carroll Shelby, Stirling Moss and Jack Fairman meant that the DBR1/300 had taken its third victory in a row, and it was enough to give the British firm the global title ahead of Ferrari.

It was quite the way to sign off what had been a golden period in Aston Martin's competition history. **AMD**

Roy Salvadori (second right) confers with teammate Carroll Shelby during a pitstop. Team manager, Reg Parnell, stands in the middle with a megaphone



Stirling Moss gives Aston Martin teammate, Paul Frère, a drink of champagne for finishing second

MEET THE EXPERT
STRATTON MOTOR COMPANY

Stratton Motor Company's founder and managing director, Roger Bennington



HIDDEN DEPTHS

After being established in the early Seventies, Stratton Motor Company has become one of the country's most experienced independent Aston Martin specialists. We talk to the company's founder and managing director, Roger Bennington, to discover more

WORDS AND PHOTOGRAPHY: PAUL WALTON

DRIVING PAST Stratton Motor Company's showroom in the sleepy Norfolk village of Long Stratton, 12 miles south of Norwich, reveals only a fraction of the company's many services. Behind the wide expanse of clean plate-glass windows and the row of beautifully prepared pre-owned and classic Aston Martins is one of the UK's most experienced marque specialists that offers several highly specialised services.

"We're very unique because we repair carbon fibre, glass fibre and aluminium," the company's founder and managing director, Roger Bennington, tells me. "We also paint, trim and rewire; we do everything, all in-house. And we also look after our customers properly."

With his father owning several garages in the Greater London area, Roger has been around the motor trade all his life. Following an engineering apprenticeship with

a couple of main dealers that sold Jaguars and Rovers, he began working for his parents. Following their retirement to a farm outside Norwich in 1959, Roger continued working for the new owners of their former business before he moved to Norfolk to join his family in 1965.

Roger soon started dealing in cars from his father's farm, Jaguar E-types especially, before buying an Austin, MG, Riley, and Wolseley dealership in the nearby village of Long Stratton on June 12 1972.

"It was a run-down shack," he tells me with a smile. "It had two wind-up petrol pumps at the front and an asbestos-roofed tin shed out the back." Even though barely any of the original structure remains today, the location has been central to the majority of Roger's operations ever since. In the subsequent 50 years, the site has grown to over seven acres and today includes a modern, clean, and well-equipped workshop plus paint and ▶

MEET THE EXPERT

STRATTON MOTOR COMPANY



Stratton Motor Company specialises in all generations of Aston Martin

trim shops, as well as a separate area to prepare cars for sale. Roger has recently acquired another nine acres of land close by where he plans to build a new workshop for the company's restoration services, keeping the existing facility for sales and servicing.

The company and the buildings themselves might have grown significantly since those early days, but the showroom itself hasn't lost the intimacy of a small specialist. "People still like the traditional feel it offers over the large glass and steel dealerships," continues Stratton's general sales manager, Kevin Jordan, who has been with the company for several years. "Someone might have a lovely shopfront but not the full facilities to take care of a customer's car. So our team's experience with these cars is a big advantage for us."

Having become familiar with the marque after buying his first, a DB6 Volante, in the late Sixties that was followed by several V8s in the Seventies, Roger was approached by Aston Martin. "At the time, Botwoods of Norwich had the Aston Martin franchise," Roger explains, "but due to the ongoing fuel injection



The recently completed Bahama Yellow DB6 Volante that was restored by Stratton's own workshop

problem that few could solve, they threw in the towel. At the time we were often at the Newport Pagnell factory to buy bits and pieces for the cars we were selling and in 1976 they asked if we wanted to become a service agent."

Roger was appointed a distributor of new cars four years later but since Aston Martin only had a handful of UK dealers at the time, he essentially looked after the south east and south west of the country. "We sold as many V8 X-Packs

in the Eighties as the factory did," he remembers. "I delivered cars everywhere." Thanks to Roger's knowledge and passion for the brand, the dealership grew considerably over the next two decades, eventually becoming the third largest Aston Martin dealership in the world.

From the outset, servicing has always been an important part of the business; later becoming an Approved Aston Martin Bodyshop Repair Centre to join its Heritage dealer status. The company is



A DBS and V8 Vantage in Stratton's spacious showroom

now the leading independent specialist in the East of England and has the abilities to look after all generations of Aston Martin, from classic models to the current Gaydon era. Due to its long connections with the marque, Stratton has subsequently become synonymous with quality. "It's nice when you're at an auction and a V8 X-Pack comes up, for example, and the auctioneer says it's been, 'Looked after by the well-known Stratton Motor Company.'"

The specialist also offers full restorations, either for customers or its own cars ready to be sold. In Stratton's showrooms are a number recently restored cars including a Bahama Yellow DB6 Volante. The perfection of its condition is testament to the skill of Stratton's workforce, many of whom have been with Roger for over four decades.

Yet he still recognises the need to invest in the future. "We try and take three apprentices a year," he tells me. "Most of our team have been through many of Aston's official training courses for the cars so they can teach the new boys, bringing them up to speed."

Stratton's facilities also include storage for long or short term options for customers new and old. ►

'People still like the traditional feel it offers over the large glass and steel dealerships...'



Stratton's clean and well-equipped workshop

MEET THE EXPERT

STRATTON MOTOR COMPANY



LEFT: A Vantage Roadster is tested at the workshop's dedicated MOT bay. Next to this is the new wheel alignment equipment that the company has recently invested in

owned cars that he and Kevin want to sell rather than suffering the smaller margins of brand-new cars.

On the day of my visit, I spot several late models in the showroom that include a 2012 V8 Vantage S and a DBS from 2012 plus many classics ranging from a DB2/4 to a rare DB4 convertible and three genuine V8 Vantage X-Packs. And these are just what's on display; Roger reckons at any one time Stratton has around 200 Astons on the premises, some for display, some being worked on and some in storage waiting to be prepared.

Another important side of Roger's business is motorsport. After competing himself in the late Sixties, later moving into rallying in the Seventies with an ex-Triumph TR7 V8 works car, he eventually formed a separate racing division initially with classic cars, but in 2007 he bought a V8 Vantage N24 and formed another company, Stratton Motorsport which now owns a fleet of seven Vantage GT4s. These are hired to customers with race preparation and trackside support coming as part of the deal, although the company can also offer the same for customer's privately owned cars.

That long line of plate glass might not reveal everything that Stratton Motor Company can offer Aston Martin owners, yet it's clear what it can't conceal is Roger's continuing passion for the brand that he's dedicated much of his life to. **AMD**

Because of the enormous development costs needed to bring the site up to Aston's then standards, in the early 2010s, Roger took the brave decision to lose Stratton's main dealer status. "At the time, Aston Martin wanted all of its dealers to have the same corporate image," explains Roger, "but we felt it wasn't financially viable. But we could still carry on being an approved service agent plus our official Heritage work."

Yet despite the change, Roger says it's the best thing that could have happened since it's allowed the company to concentrate more on the Heritage vehicles plus sell a good selection of pre-



A Virage in one of Stratton's two on-site paint booths



Cliff Warner from the bodyshop prepares a Vantage for paint



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1962 Aston Martin DB4 Series 5 Convertible POA

Fiesta red with grey hide interior, special series SS spec engine, 4 speed, chrome wheels, extensive restoration, 48,888 miles



1969 Aston Martin DB6 Volante (5 Speed manual) £950,000

Bahama Yellow with black leather, mohair hood, air con, chrome wire wheels, power steering, 75,000 miles



1985 Aston Martin Volante V8 (LHD) £199,950

Dark Blue with tan interior, restored to include new interior and Mohair hood, bare metal repaint, new sills, 49,000 miles



1988 Aston Martin V8 Vantage X-Pack £375,000

Salisbury Blue with blue hide, manual 5 speed, car 68 out of 131 genuine factory built cars, 67,000 miles



1990 Aston Martin V8 Lagonda Series 4 £99,995

Buckingham Green with tan interior, air con, auto, full restoration, new sills, bare metal repaint & mechanical overhaul



1992 Aston Martin Virage Volante £79,950

Lagonda Red with cream interior, automatic power hood, good condition throughout, 65,000 miles



2001 Aston Martin Vanquish £59,995

Derwent Green with Chestnut Brown interior, silver calipers, 2+2 seating, full AM service history 45,786 miles



2005 Aston Martin Vanquish Sports Dynamic Pack £86,995

Basalt Black Metallic with Obsidian Black interior, Platinum fascia console, Linn Sound, 2+2 seating, 15,700 miles



2007 Aston Martin DB9 Coupe Touchtronic £39,995

Tungsten Silver with Sandstorm leather, walnut fascia, electric heated memory seats, navigation and bluetooth, 18,828 miles



2009 Aston Martin DBS Rare Manual £99,995

Lightning Silver with Obsidian Black leather & alcantara seats, adjustable suspension, 2+0 seating, 31,000 miles



2014 Aston Martin V12 Vantage S £89,995

Tungsten Silver with Obsidian Black, Premium Audio, 10 spoke diamond cut alloys, ceramic brakes, 13,433 miles



2018 Aston Martin Vanquish Zagato Speedster £614,995

Ming Blue with Aurora Blue and Argento Grey leather interior, high specification, car 20 of only 28 cars made, 679 miles



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FROM THE CLUBHOUSE



An Aston Martin with a destination



The AMOC hosts several annual events across the UK including the Imperial War Museum Duxford in May for its Spring Concours



The chill winds have hopefully ended, verdant green shoots are everywhere and fauna are up to what fauna get up to in the spring. All across the UK and the rest of the northern hemisphere there are enthusiasts taking dust covers off glorious automotive works and battery conditioners removed as Aston Martins are awoken from their winter slumbers.

Then comes the pleasure of that first post-winter drive to brush off real or imaginary cobwebs as we warm our car's engines and gingerly test brakes.

We know Aston Martins are a pure joy to drive and that is one of the reasons why we all covet them, but there is something better – an Aston Martin with a destination.

The Aston Martin Owners Club hosts numerous annual events across the



globe, from international meetings, local evenings at the pub, track-based events, multi-day tours or just a day's driving to a country house. The idea of doing any or all of these with other Aston Martin drivers is thrilling.

One of the most prestigious single marque concours is the Aston Martin Owners Club Spring Concours. And this year it is at Duxford Aerodrome in

Cambridgeshire on 12-14 May 2023.

If you have ever wondered what a concours is, it's a unique experience that demands more than just a beautiful car; it's about a perfect one. Vehicle judging is a true test of excellence. It's not just about looks, but about every single detail being thoroughly examined by trained judges. The bar is set high, but that's what makes it so inspiring. Whilst the car must be the ►



best of the best to win Elite class, that's something to strive for. With dedication and hard work, the results can be truly breathtaking.

As a member of the Aston Martin Owners Club there is a wealth of knowledge members are willing to share and it should inspire us to aim for perfection and strive to make our cars look inspiring. Whilst the Elite class is the pinnacle of achievement in the concours world and something to aspire to, you have to start somewhere and the AMOC Spring Concours is a great place to find out more.

Even better, when you have finished enjoying the cars and said your hellos at the AMOC stand, there's a visit to IMW Duxford itself.

Aircraft first flew out of Duxford in 1912 and in WW1 it became a fighter station and then a sector station for the Battle of Britain, hosting both Spitfires and Hurricanes. In 1943 it became a fighter airfield for the Lightnings and Mustangs of the United States Airforce, later receiving a Distinguished Unit Citation (DUC) for Operation Market Garden (the abortive attack on the Netherlands river crossings) plus another DUC for attacks on Airfields in Czechoslovakia. It was returned to RAF use after the war and used for early jet fighters before being declared surplus to requirements in 1969. In 1977 it was

acquired by the Imperial War Museum and houses the fighter collection, an amazing set of aircraft that all still fly. This includes Spitfires, Mustangs, Hawks and Corsairs. On site there are over thirty listed buildings such as hangars from WW1 and WW2, with many still in use.

The Imperial War Museum was set up to record the civil and military war effort and sacrifice of the UK and colonies during WW1, but has since been expanded to include all conflicts. Other sites that you will doubtless have visited include HMS Belfast and the Churchill War Rooms (under Whitehall).

This promises to be an automotive, aviation (and actual) feast.

If you really want to immerse yourself into one of the ultimate Aston Martin Owners' experiences, you can have a full weekend starting on Friday with an informal social dinner. This is followed by a tour of the truly beautiful Cambridge countryside on Saturday and a champagne reception and dinner under the wings of Concorde with a chance to catch up with old friends and perhaps make some new ones in the evening.

And just when you thought it could not get any better, on Sunday the Spring Concours starts in earnest and those who have spent the previous days fettling their machines will be still hard at work with final cleaning and polishing to catch a judge's eye. Within the club, members possess many of the finest and rarest Aston Martins that still exist and they sit well alongside newer models including those still being produced by AML.

WHY JOIN THE AMOC?

- Welcome pack and member offers/discounts
- Monthly and quarterly publications
- World-class concours events
- Visits to places of interest with exclusive access and display space
- Tours – national and international
- Racing and track days
- Access to the AMOC forum
- AMOC-approved insurance scheme
- Prestigious club merchandise
- Members are welcome at any local events 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 free entry and display at the AMHT Museum, plus their annual journal, Aston.
- JOIN ONLINE AT amoc.org
- +44 (0)1865 400400

You don't have to enter your car into the concours to attend a concours. You could just drive your Aston Martin to Duxford in May, show off your car with hundreds of other Aston Martins and see what we do. To quote one of our long-standing members, "I joined for the cars and stayed for the friends". **AMD**



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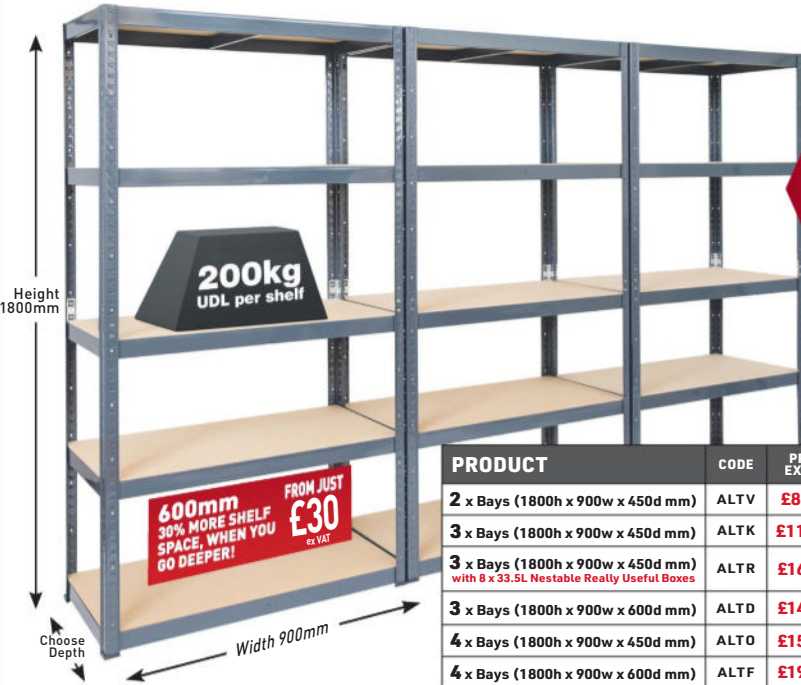
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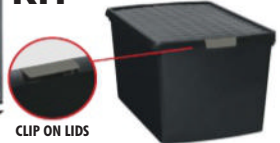


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116558

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. Please call 01993 849610, South East. (T)

116560

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)

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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. Please call 01993 849610, South East. (T)

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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)

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ASTON MARTIN VANTAGE



£125,000. First registered 22/06/2015 Aston Martin Vantage S sport shift, finished in the most stunning colour combination of Sunburst Yellow with Obsidian black leather with yellow features and stitching along with a black mohair hood. Please call 01993 849610, South East. (T)

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£399,000. Here we have a very unique V8 rebuilt at no expense spared in developing the car into a 450 + BHP (with 520 ft lb or torque), super Vantage fuel injection car. Finished in Cumberland Grey, 'Black Connolly' trim, with contrasting grey carpets, (James Bond Living Daylights Spec). Please call 01993 849610, South East. (T)
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ASTON MARTIN VANQUISH



£59,995. A new Aston Martin for the 21st Century, the V12-engined Vanquish coupé debuted at the Geneva Auto Show in March 2001. Styled by Ian Callum, the man responsible for the DB7, the Vanquish was inspired by one of Aston Martin's most celebrated models: the DB4 GT Zagato. Debuted in the DB7 Vantage, and Aston Martin's first power unit of its type. Please call 01798 874477, South East. (T)
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£99,950. 1988/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, Greater London. (T)
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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 01248602649, Wales. (T)
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£28,000. Excellent condition v12 Vantage finished in Sky Silver with Parchment over blue interior and Walnut facia. All original including Aston Martin umbrella. Car has been owned for 8 years garaged with dehumidifier. Fully serviced by both main dealerships and AMOC recommended specialist. Current MoT and Taxed. Excellent engine with stainless steel sports exhaust that has an exceptional tone. Please call 07814807378, South East. (T)
113860

ASTON MARTIN DB7



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ASTON MARTIN *drivers*

Following an 18-year career with Aston Martin that's seen him win several major victories for the marque, Darren Turner has become one of its most successful drivers

DESPITE DARREN Turner enjoying considerable success during his long career with Aston Martin, winning the GTD class of the 24 Hours of Daytona with a Vantage GT3 in January 2023 was still an important moment for the then 48-year-old. "It's something that I think nearly every driver dreams of," he admitted afterwards.

Born on 13 April 1974, in Camberley, Surrey, Turner started his racing career in single-seaters, winning the 1993 Renault Sport Championship in 1996, a performance that helped secure him the coveted McLaren Autosport BRDC Award.

On the strength of this and together with racing in Formula 3, in 1997, Turner began a long career in F1 testing, working with Arrows, Jordan, and McLaren, staying with the latter until 2005.

It was thanks to Turner's connections with Mercedes-Benz, which powered McLaren at the time, that secured him a seat in the German DTM series, driving a CLK for Team Rosberg in 2000 and 2001. Due to poor results he was let go by the outfit, turning to ASCAR, a UK-based stock car racing series, for 2002, when he won six of the 16 rounds.

Turner's first experience of endurance racing arrived in 2003 when established British motorsport specialist, Prodrive, approached him to drive a Ferrari 550 GTS for the Sebring 12 Hours, Le Mans 24 Hours, and the Miami round of the American Le Mans Series. He stayed with the team for 2004 when he and his co-drivers, Colin McRae, and Rickard Rydell, finished a fine ninth at Le Mans.

Turner was asked to test and then race a DB9-based racing car that Prodrive was in the process of developing for

Aston Martin. The eventual DBR9 was immediately fast and over the next few years, he took several class wins including the GT1 category of the Le Mans 24 Hours in 2007 and 2008. "I've been lucky with the amount of cars I've enjoyed over the years," Turner said in 2019, "but the DBR9 will always be my absolute favourite."



As well as racing for SEAT in the British Touring Car Championship between 2006 and 2008, Turner continued his links with Aston Martin, driving the DBR1-2 sports prototype in endurance racing that was initially designed by Lola, but developed by Prodrive under the Aston Martin banner. Using the same 6.0-litre V12 as the DBR9, the car was quick and Turner was instrumental in the team, securing the 2010

Le Mans Series Teams' title. But since the DBR1-2's 2011 replacement, the AMR-One, was uncompetitive, Aston abandoned the project, concentrating on its new GT car based on the V8 Vantage instead.

Turner enjoyed several successes throughout the decade with the car, including winning the European Le Mans Championship in 2016 and 2017, plus his third class victory at the Le Mans 24 Hours in 2017 when he also broke the lap record. "It's an amazing result," he enthused afterwards. "Aston Martin and all of the technical partners brought their best game to this weekend and I'm very proud to be part of this team."

Success continued when the car was replaced by the new generation of Vantage GTE in 2018. With Aston Martin pulling out of GT racing at the end of 2020 to concentrate on its burgeoning Formula 1 entry, Turner has subsequently competed for privateer outfits on either side of the Atlantic that have continued with the car. In 2021 and 2022, he won the GT4 Pro-Am title of the British GT Championship with Newbridge Motorsport while also competing for The Heart of Racing team in the American IMSA series.

The latter's 24 Hours of Daytona class victory in January this year was Aston's first win there since originally entering the Florida Endurance Classic in 1964 and sees Turner's place assured as one of the marque's most esteemed drivers.

With rumours that the company is considering entering the FIA World Endurance Championship's new LMH category with the Valkyrie to compete against cars from Ferrari, Peugeot, and Toyota, Darren Turner's long and fruitful association with Aston Martin is far from over. **AMD**

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
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