

V8 VANTAGE BUYING GUIDE

ASTON MARTIN



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driver

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132-PAGE ANNIVERSARY ISSUE

THE DB5 AT 60

THE CAR
THE HISTORY
THE ICON



BRUTE FORCE VANTAGE V600



UNIQUE DB5 V8



DB5 SHOOTING BRAKE



DB5 vs BRISTOL

The V12 Vantage S represents the ultimate version of the VH2 Vantage, mating a 565bhp V12 engine to the brand new Sportshift III 7-speed transmission. Capable of 205mph and able to reach 60mph in only 3.7 seconds, the V12 Vantage S was the fastest car Aston had ever produced. This car is finished in Hammerhead Silver over an Obsidian Black and Galena Silver leather interior. Extensive options include Yellow Lipstick/Jet Black Rear graphics, AM 700W Premium Audio, Carbon interior pack, side strakes and grille, and Satin Black lightweight wheels. 23,710 miles covered from new documented by a full service history.



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2014 V12 VANTAGE S

£84,950

1958 DB4

£649,950



In Wedgewood Blue with an off white interior. No. 7 of 15 DB4 prototypes built in 1958, oldest currently in the UK. Driven by David Brown, and for testing and advertising. Full Aston Workshop restoration in 2006.

2015 V8 VANTAGE

£59,950



In Tungsten Silver, with Obsidian Black Leather and contrasting Silver stitching. The V8 engine is paired to a Sportshift II gearbox. Many optional extras. One owner from new, full service history. 10,142 miles.

2006 V8 VANTAGE

£37,950



This early manual model is finished in Meteorite Silver over an Iron Ore Red leather interior with matching stitching. Includes many optional extras. 24,951 miles from new and features a full service history.

2003 VANQUISH LHD

£64,950



Left hand drive example in Tungsten Silver with two tone Dark Grey leather/Claret Alcantara. Comes with Grey Brake Calipers, Powerfold Mirrors, 6 CD changer and Heated Seats. 24,118 miles.



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TAKE FIVE

MY WIFE usually has as much interest in cars as I have in painting the living room. But when I mentioned to her about this special edition of AMD that celebrates 60 years of the DB5, even she seemed impressed.

Admittedly her first reaction was, "Who do you think you are? James Bond?" but it's due to the car's long and successful connection with the famed celluloid spy why she, like everyone else in the world, not only knows and recognises the DB5 but understands its allure.

Yet as the several features in this issue dedicated to the model show, there's more to it than simply being 007's machine gun-wielding company car. A drive in a beautiful recently restored example reveals that, at its heart, the DB5 was one of the best performing and prettiest models of the era. A rare coach-built Shooting Brake version then shows a more practical side, while the existence of a unique V8-engined example is like discovering Bond having an even more powerful twin brother.

But as our guide to the car's weak spots also illustrates, it's not perfect, with several potential issues.

Annoyingly, my wife's surprising enthusiasm for the DB5 has had an equally unexpected result – apparently, I now have to find some about decorating.



Paul Walton
Editor



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UP FRONT NEWS

DB12 REVEALED



New Aston Martin DB12 gets V8 power, all-new suspension and an interior overhaul in a bid to take the fight to Ferrari

This is the new Aston Martin DB12, a direct replacement for the outgoing DB11 and, at least for now, the DBS Superleggera. With modern rivals like the Ferrari Roma and Bentley Continental GT getting the upper hand over the older car in recent years, Aston's focus has been on delivering more

power, improved dynamics and – perhaps most crucially – a thoroughly reworked interior.

While still based on the same platform as the car it replaces, the DB12 sports a new, more aggressive design that blends the svelte good looks of the DB11 with the aggression of the DBS. The enlarged trademark Aston grille dominates the front end flanked by new LED headlights, while clean, smoothed side panels lead towards a more familiar-looking rear end. New 21in standard-fit forged alloy wheels and smaller, frameless wing mirrors set off the DB12's modernised design.

The famous Aston Martin V12 is notable by its absence in the DB12, replaced solely by an updated version of the now-familiar AMG-sourced 4.0-litre twin-turbo V8. The handbuilt unit produces 671bhp at 6,000rpm and a healthy 590lb ft of torque

between 2,750 and 6,000rpm; 0-62mph is sorted in 3.5 seconds and the top speed is 202mph. Aston says these increases in power and torque were achieved via new cam profiles, optimised compression ratios, larger turbochargers, plus reworked engine- and oil-cooling systems – which may account for the size of the DB12's new grille. Power is fed through an eight-speed automatic gearbox with a shortened final drive and improved shift speeds.

In its quest to deliver on its 'super tourer' brief, Aston Martin has paid particular attention to the DB12's dynamic character. An electronic differential features for the first time on an Aston, linked to a revised ESC system. The company claims improvements in cornering, with more agility and response at low speeds and 'total composure' in high-speed bends.

The car is seven percent stiffer than its predecessor thanks to new braces and undertrays, which in turn allows the DB12's new suspension to do its best work. Adaptive dampers and stiffened anti-roll bars are employed, with claimed improvements in refinement, steering feel and driver connection. The DB12 is set to be the first car to use the latest Michelin Pilot Sport 5 S tyres as standard equipment, measuring in at 275/35 R21 front and 315/30 R21 at the rear, complete with a bespoke compound and accompanying 'AML' markings.

While the DB12's exterior styling



DBX AMR23 EDITION

and engine are new yet familiar, the same can't be said for the thoroughly overhauled interior. Aston has clearly made a concerted effort to reach the bar set by its rivals, ditching the dated, Mercedes-sourced infotainment in favour of its first-ever bespoke system. Displayed across two 10.25in high-resolution touchscreens, the new infotainment incorporates wireless Apple CarPlay and Android Auto connectivity, a new internet-connected 3D sat-nav system and an all-new accompanying smartphone app.

Leather and Alcantara upholstery abound as expected, but here it's used to trim a clean, unfussy dashboard with strong horizontal lines and a driver-focused feel. The centre console rises high between the front seats, with a rotary switch presented within easy reach to switch between the car's five drive modes: GT, Sport, Sport+, Wet and user-adjustable Individual.

The standard-fit 390W 11-speaker audio system can be replaced by an optional system from Aston's new audio partner Bowers & Wilkins – a 1,170W, 15-speaker set-up with dedicated 3D headline speakers and a subwoofer.

Pricing for the new Aston Martin DB12 is yet to be announced but it's safe to expect a premium over the outgoing DB11 V8. Customer deliveries are expected to begin in Q3 2023.



To celebrate the success of its Formula 1 team, Aston Martin has released a special version of the DBX707. Named after the brand's Formula 1 challenger, the AMR23 Edition features a combination of unique colour and trim features by Aston Martin's bespoke service, Q by Aston Martin. This includes Podium Green paint, a unique 'Q by Aston Martin' bumper badge and Aston Martin Racing Green brake calipers. There are also lime accents to the sculptured carbon body kit reminiscent of the AMR23 F1 car.

Inside, there's lime contrast stitching, carbon fibre veneers and dark satin with

carbon fibre jewellery. The AMR23 logo also appears on the door sills to leave occupants in no doubt of the Aston Martin racing bloodline.

"The AMR23 Edition takes DBX707 to a new level of intensity, creating a stand-out ultra-luxury SUV with incredible road presence," said Alex Long, Aston Martin's head of product and market strategy. "We are successfully competing at the pinnacle of world motorsport and this represents a key pillar in our brand and product strategy for our road cars."

The DBX707 AMR23 Edition is now available for customers to order.



HONDA JOINS ASTON MARTIN F1 FROM 2026

Honda has confirmed that it will link up with the Aston Martin Formula 1 team as it returns to the grand prix grid as a powerplant provider in 2026.

Multiple title winners Honda returned to Formula 1 in an ill-fated partnership with McLaren in 2015. It then forged a successful relationship with Red Bull in 2019, powering Max Verstappen to the title in 2021 before announcing it was stepping back from the series, although it continued to assist the newly created Red Bull Powertrains division.

Honda says it has been brought back to the sport by F1's stated desire to become carbon neutral from 2030 and beyond.

Toshihiro Mibe, the global CEO of Honda said, "One of the key reasons for our decision to take up the new challenge in F1 is that the world's pinnacle form of racing is striving to become a sustainable racing series, which is in line with the direction Honda is aiming toward carbon neutrality, and it will become a platform which will facilitate the development of our electrification technologies."

"Honda and our new partner, the Aston Martin F1 Team, share the same sincere attitude and determination to win, so starting with the 2026 season, we will work together and strive for the championship title as Aston Martin Honda."

Martin Whitmarsh, the group chief executive officer of Aston Martin Performance Technologies, added, "The new 2026 F1 power unit regulations are a huge and important change but one which we are confident we can navigate successfully together. Jointly with our strategic partner Aramco, we can look forward to open collaboration towards a common goal. Our future works partnership with Honda is one of the last parts of the jigsaw puzzle slotting into place for Aston Martin's ambitious plans in Formula One."

Aston's current engine manufacturer, Mercedes, will continue to supply the team with power units for the next few seasons.

VANTAGE SCORES SECOND AT LE MANS

The Vantage GTE of the TF Sport scored a fine second in the LM GTE class of the 2023 24 Hours of Le Mans, the 100th running of this famous race.

Despite qualifying second in Thursday's Hyperpole session, a podium had initially looked unlikely for the number 25 car – driven by Ahmad Al Harthy, Michael Dinan and Charlie Eastwood – after it had dropped outside the top 15 following its first pit stop. But as rain, safety cars and caution periods made conditions challenging, the Aston Martin fought back to third place with two and a half hours to go at which point Eastwood climbed aboard for his final stint. He closed a 20-second gap on the car ahead and passed it around the outside with 90

minutes left to take over second place, where he would finish.

TF Sport's team principal Tom Ferrier said, "The result is a testament to the Aston Martin Vantage GTE. It's the ultimate GT car for Le Mans and always seems to fly around here. There were times in the race when I didn't think we were going to be anywhere near it because the start was messy and we dropped back. But we have enough experience of Le Mans now to know that if we just stay calm and look at the way the race is most likely to unfold, we can usually make good decisions."

The North American team The Heart of Racing then scored a strong sixth-place finish on its first appearance at Le Mans, fighting back from 18th place at the start



L-R: TF Sport's Tom Ferrier on the podium with his drivers, Ahmad Al Harthy, Michael Dinan and Charlie Eastwood

and a one-lap delay in the pits (in the second hour) to repair damage caused by contact.

Huw Tasker, AMR head of partner racing said, "It's great to see Vantage on the podium at Le Mans, and not just any Le Mans, but the centenary event that truly is the biggest race in the world. ORT by TF did an excellent job."

The North American The Heart of Racing team came home sixth in GTE

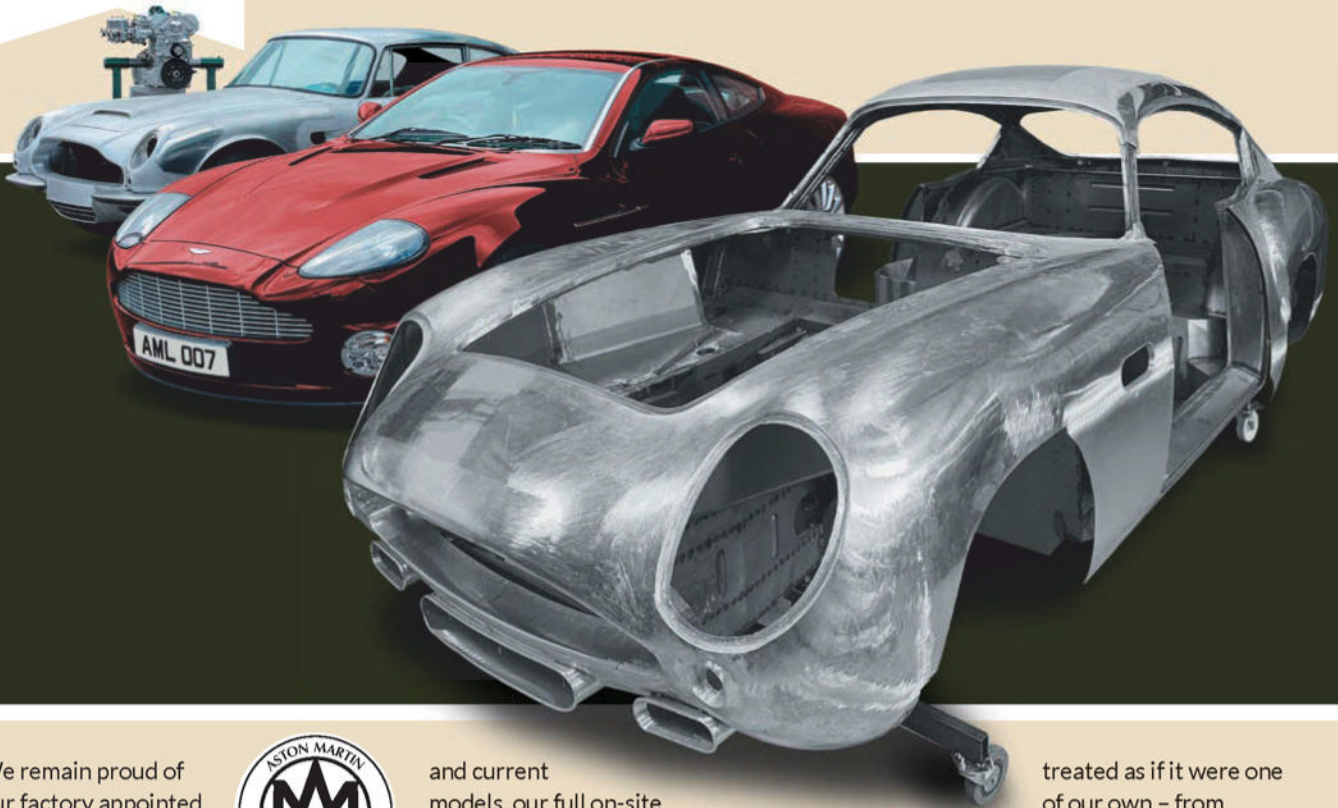




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BULLDOG TOPS 200MPH

The one-off Aston Martin Bulldog has finally achieved the mission it was built for, reaching 205.4mph on a runway in Scotland.

The work of renowned designer William Towns, with its twin-turbocharged 5.3-litre V8 engine producing 600bhp and its proposed 237mph top speed would have made it the fastest production car in the world when it debuted in 1980.

But while it did reach 192mph during testing at MIRA, the Bulldog was never quite able to top the magic 200mph mark.

Aston had originally planned to build 15 to 20 Bulldogs, but only one was ever completed, and after reputedly being sold in 1981 to a Middle Eastern prince, the car disappeared. It was recently discovered and purchased by renowned collector Philip Sarofim who had one goal: to see the car pass the double ton, just as Towns and Aston Martin's then chairman, Victor Gauntlett, dreamed of.



Darren Turner with the Bulldog before his 205.4mph run

In early 2020, the Shropshire-based specialist Classic Motor Cars was given the task of restoring the Bulldog which, under the supervision of Gauntlett's son, Richard, took 18 months to complete. Although the painstaking rebuild secured the prestigious Coppa d'Oro at the 2022 Concorso d'Eleganza Villa d'Este in Italy, the real aim was always to top 200mph. It finally achieved this in early June at the hands of three-time Le Mans winner for Aston Martin, Darren Turner, at Machrihanish airfield, close to the town of Campbeltown on Scotland's western coast.

"Bulldog's 200mph goal has been over 40 years in the making, being part of that legacy is a fantastic feeling," said Turner. "The Bulldog has now fulfilled Aston Martin's Eighties promise and everyone who has worked on the car—from those who first designed and built it, to Classic Motor Cars who undertook the restoration under the management of Richard Gauntlett, can feel very proud."

According to Turner, the conditions on the day were "perfect for the run" and the car performed perfectly too, "easily hitting the 200mph mark."

Q NEW YORK

Aston Martin has opened the doors to Q New York, its first ultra-luxury flagship location on 450 Park Avenue, New York City.

The new location brings the highest levels of the iconic British brand's bespoke service, Q by Aston Martin, to North America for the very first time, providing the most sophisticated luxury specification experience available anywhere in the world.

The new location will serve as a showcase and launch venue for Aston Martin's latest products, from unique special builds to limited-edition models and newcomers to Aston Martin's current portfolio.

As part of a custom-made appointment, clients will be able to visualise their personalised Aston Martin on a 10.5m x 3.5m LED wall capable of providing an ultra-high definition, 360-degree view of any Aston Martin in real-life size. A live



Aston Martin's executive chairman, Lawrence Stroll, during the opening of Q New York

video link from Manhattan to Aston Martin's design studio in Gaydon, UK, then enables real-time communication with the brand's designers and the Q team, providing the most bespoke and sophisticated commissioning experience available outside of a personal visit to the headquarters.

"The opening of our first flagship Q location, in our largest commercial market, is the latest distinct expression of Aston Martin's shift to an ultra-luxury brand," said

the company's executive chairman, Lawrence Stroll, during the opening in mid-June. "It demonstrates our ambition to drive global growth and create elevated customer experiences to match our owners' passion for Aston Martin. With a 92 percent increase in Q by Aston Martin take-up in the Americas last year, this is the perfect time and the perfect place for us to open our very first global flagship location."



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FAMOUS FIVE

WORDS & PHOTOGRAPHY PAUL WALTON

TOGETHER WITH the original Mini and Land Rover Series 1, the Aston Martin DB5 is one of a handful of British cars that's instantly recognisable.

You don't need to be a motoring expert to know what it is or what it represents; the epitome of Sixties cool.

But while the Mini helped to bring motoring to the masses and the Land Rover made four-wheel drive mainstream for the first time, the DB5 has always been a low-volume niche model, only affordable by the well-heeled, more so today due to their current six-figure values. So, why has the car become so famous?

Judging by this beautifully presented 1965 Californian Sage Green example that's been freshly restored by Chiltern Aston Centre, looks have clearly played their part in the car's now legendary status.

The work of the Italian coachbuilder Carrozzeria Touring of Milan, the coupe's fastback design was very European, making it similar in concept to Vignale's Maserati Sebring and the Ferrari 250 GT Lusso by Pininfarina. This made it the most elegant British grand tourer of the era, arguably more so than its cumbersome-looking rivals of the day that included the Jensen CV-8 and Bristol 408. From the famous Aston grille and faired-in headlights to the gently tapering tail, the ►

The Aston Martin DB5 is easily one of the most recognisable cars in the world. For its 60th anniversary, we drive a recently restored example to explain why it's become such a cultural phenomenon



MODEL PROFILE

DB5



car remains as effortlessly beautiful as it was on its Earls Motor Court Motor Show debut in October 1963.

Yet while the car remains as well known today as when new, its heritage isn't and what's often overlooked by the majority of people is that the DB5 was almost identical to the outgoing DB4 Series V Vantage that had arrived in September 1962. As *Motorsport* magazine said in a review of the Earls Court Motor Show in its November 1963 edition, "The DB4 gave way to the DB5 before the show but only detail changes have been made." The main aesthetical differences between the two were twin fuel fillers and a slightly different shape of boot lid.

It wasn't just the design that had been reused, either. The DB4's steel platform chassis had been kept as was Touring's

Superleggera construction of alloy panels over a tubular frame.

There are probably two reasons why much of the Series V Vantage had been recycled. Firstly, as an all-new car with an all-new method of construction, the DB4 hadn't been cheap to develop. As the company's then owner and chairman Sir David Brown said in Geoff Courtney's 1978 book, *The Power Behind Aston Martin*, "The DB4 was completely new, and a brave and expensive step."

Secondly, and more importantly, the DB4 had been relatively popular – in five years, 1,110 examples were produced (plus another 75 GTs and 19 Zagato-bodied cars), making it Aston's best-selling model at that time. So, the company was simply following the old adage, "If it ain't broke, don't fix it".

“The car remains as effortlessly beautiful as it was on its Earls Motor Court Motor Show debut in October 1963”



One thing that had changed, though, was the price. At £4,175 at its 1963 launch, it made the DB5 £429 more expensive than the outgoing DB4 Series V Vantage. Considering an Austin or Morris Mini at the time was under £500 and even a Jaguar E-type 3.8 fixedhead coupe was a little under two grand, the DB5 was clearly not for the hoi polloi. It was reserved for rock stars, royalty, and yes, a certain British secret agent (but we'll get back to him).

I might not be any of the individuals listed above, but as I climb into the car, sit in the large, comfortable beige leather seat and soak in the comforting atmosphere, I'm still able to appreciate how luxurious the DB5 must have been at the time. Not only were electrically powered windows now standard – an almost unheard-of addition in 1963 – but

MODEL PROFILE

DB5

the chrome bezels around the many and well-laid-out dials in the radiator grille-shaped instrument panel in front of me sparkle like jewellery. It all makes the DB5's interior look and feel more stylish than its rivals such as the E-type's which, by being influenced by Jaguar's racing cars, is much starker by comparison.

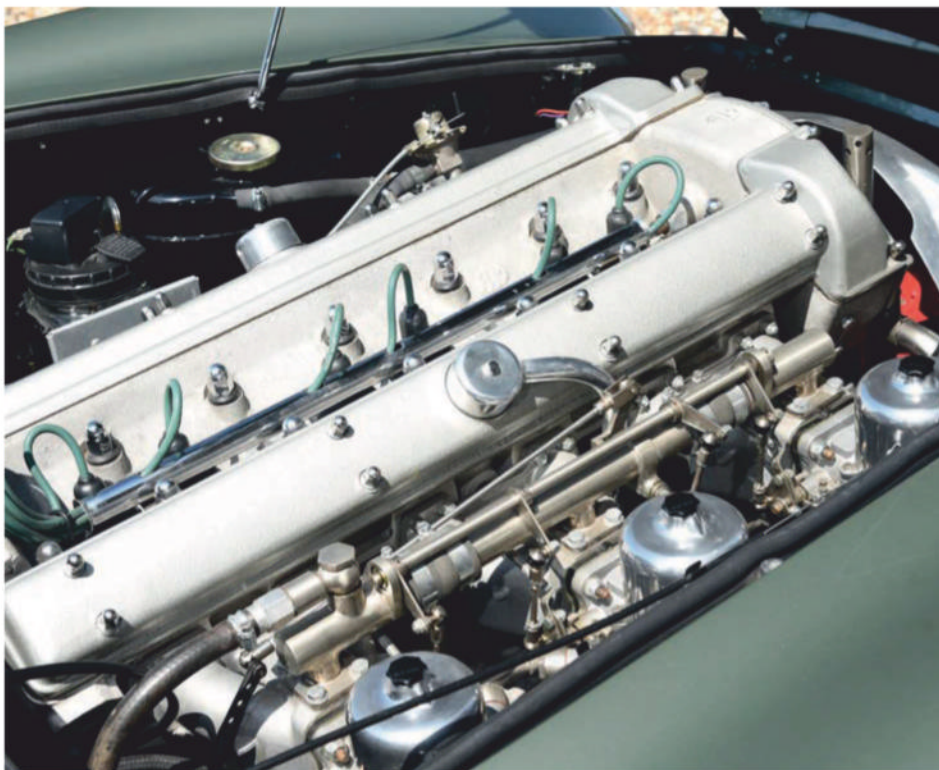
There isn't the same feeling of claustrophobia as the earlier DB4s can sometimes give either, since the DB5, like its Series V Vantage predecessor, was 5in longer, the extra length balanced out by a slightly higher roofline. That said, the rear two seats are useless unless for children, but I doubt many DB5s ever carried kids. That's what the nanny's Austin 1100 was for.

Even by DB5 standards, this is a very special car. Recently restored by established marque experts, Chiltern Aston Centre, its first owner was a London-based business, E. Coates & Co. Ltd. It's not known how long they kept the car, but in March 1970 it was sold via a dealer to a new owner in the north-west of England. After receiving £700 for his 1968 Vauxhall Viva GT, he paid a mere £1,695 for the car.

At some point, he changed the colour from its original Californian Sage Green to Burgundy. When the engine failed in the late Seventies, due to not having the money or the ability to repair it himself, he pushed this once beautiful car into a barn and left it there.

It only remerged in 2006 when, after the owner sadly passed away and the DB5 became the property of his daughter, it was bought by Gordon Wyles from Chiltern Aston Centre. Pictures from that time reveal the sorry state it was now in; still in Burgundy, the bonnet was off and the dismantled engine was in the boot. Despite being complete, after so many years in a barn, it required a full body-off restoration.

Busy with customers' cars, it's taken several years for Chiltern's team of technicians to complete it, which included returning the DB5 to its original colour of Californian Sage Green and the engine being rebuilt by RS Williams. But judging by the now immaculate condition of the car, it was clearly worth the wait and is now a perfect representation of this iconic model.





After the engine bursts into life with a charismatic twin-cam growl, I find first, release the clutch, try to forget the car is worth more than I'll earn in my lifetime, and slowly make a move.

It's worth ignoring its values, too, since despite the hype that's grown around the car over the past 60 years, at its heart the DB5 has always been one of the best performance models of the era. This is partially due to the car's 4.0-litre version of Aston's straight-six that replaced the 3.7 in the DB4. First seen in the Lagonda Rapide from 1961, it later powered the unique DP212 racing car that was only ever raced in period once at the following year's Le Mans when it retired due to engine failure.

The rare Vantage version of the DB5 that arrived in September 1964 (of which a mere 65 were produced) had triple Webers, resulting in the 4.0-litre producing 314 bhp. With three SU HD8 carburettors, the standard version like this one still had 282bhp, 40 more than the DB4's 3.7.

When *Autocar* magazine tested a standard DB5 in its 18 September 1964 issue, it reached 60mph in just 8.1 seconds and had a top speed of 143.6mph. This made it one of the fastest British production cars, putting it on a par with Ferrari's V12 models and perhaps more importantly the many American V8-engined British-built GTs of the time as well, such as the Bristol 408, Gordon-Keeble and Jensen CV-8.

On a long, straight road I put aside the zeros that are running through my head, blip the clutch, grab the gearlever and snatch third which sends the rev-counter needle dancing on the far side of the dial. As I squeeze the throttle, the engine picks up speed with an eagerness of a smaller, sportier, lighter car, rewarding me with a hard burst of blue-blooded power that fills the cabin with a loud but never harsh gravelly note.

Thanks to the smooth and linear power delivery of the 4.0-litre, reaching and then maintaining high speeds isn't the hard work like it can be in other sports cars of the era. "Perhaps the most impressive feature of the Aston's performance is the lack of fuss, and the consistency of the way it covers the ground," continued *Autocar's* 1964 test of the car. "Without

the speedometer one could be excused easily for not approaching the speed, not the short space of time it has taken to reach it."

The first handful of DB5s had the same David Brown Ltd sourced four-speed gearbox as its predecessor but, as a very late car from March 1965, this one has the later five-speed 'box from ZF that was originally an option but later became standard. Slick and easy to use, the way it slots into gear far smoother than the notchy four-speed Jaguar was fitting to the E-type at the time helps its performance. The DB5 could also be specified with a three-speed Borg-Warner DG automatic transmission that was around £70 more expensive than the manual.

The other major mechanical upgrades made to the DB5 included a 9.5in diaphragm clutch by Laycock instead of the DB4's 10in Borg & Beck single dry plate, plus an alternator rather than the older car's dynamo. The amount of silencers had doubled in size to four and finally Girling disc brakes replaced the DB4's Dunlop system.

Although the DB5 looks like a big car, that Superleggera bodywork means it tips the scales at just 1,500kg making it a mere 250kg heavier than the considerably smaller E-type FHC, which gives the car an agility I wasn't expecting. With surprisingly accurate and beautifully weighted steering, a perfectly composed chassis plus limited body roll, the DB5 remains a terrific sports car, perfect for the long, sinuous roads of the continent. Yet by not being overly damped, the suspension can also handle the worst that the British roads have to offer.

An interesting option at the time were Armstrong Selectaride dampers that had four settings that could be manually changed depending on the type of road surface plus how quickly the car would be driven.

Yet it wasn't just down to the car's good looks, high speed and great handling why 1,021 DB5s were produced in a mere three years (898 being coupes, the remaining 123 convertibles). In September 1964 what amounted to a 110-minute advert for the car was released, commonly known as the third James Bond film, *Goldfinger*. ►

MODEL PROFILE

DB5



You can read about the actual example used for the film, BMT 216A, elsewhere in this issue but the model was chosen because in Ian Fleming's original novel from 1959 of the same name, Bond drove a DB MkIII and the producers simply wanted to update it.

Not only did the now Silver Birch-coloured example look fantastic on the big screen, perfectly matching Connery's

cool, calm and collected interpretation of the British spy, but the many clever and never-before-seen gadgets quickly turned it into one of the first genuine motoring icons. Look up any review of the film from the time and, together with Connery's performance, they all mention the car.

"In one enormously exciting scene James Bond's Aston Martin DB5

(hydraulic overrider rams, tyre cutter, twin Browning machine guns, protruding from the indicator-like housings, rotating number plate, smoke bomb ejector, and radar scanner in the left wing mirror) is chased round a factory site by Korean thugs in three Mercedes Benz," said *The Guardian* in its 18 September 1964 issue. "It is all excitement and heavily self-mocking good humour."





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1982 Aston Martin V8 Volante
Presenting this left-hand-drive 1982 Aston Martin V8 Volante that is finished in a color scheme of Canterbury Blue complemented over a tan interior with Dark Blue piping and Blue carpets. Equipped with 3-speed automatic transmission, V8 engine, front-wheel disc brakes, dual exhaust outlets, Smiths instruments, VDO temperature gauge, option dash pad, power operated convertible soft top, side marker lights, three-spoke steering wheel, "Volante" badging, alloy wheels with Goodyear tires, jack, tool roll, and a full-size spare tire fitted in the trunk. Amenities include air conditioning, dual-side mirrors, forward-folding front seats with head restraints, power windows, sun visors, cigar lighter with an ashtray, glove compartment, center console, and a Blaupunkt radio. Also includes a service voucher with stamps and a copy of the certificate of ownership dated from December, 1984. An exciting opportunity to be a part of a select few to own a piece of British automobile history that is mechanically sound.
For \$99,500



1969 Aston Martin DBS
Presenting this rare 1969 Aston Martin DBS (1 of 181 left-hand drive DBS) finished in a color scheme of British Racing Green complemented with a gorgeous tan interior. Equipped with a 5-speed manual transmission, front-wheel disc brakes, Weber carburetors, Smiths instruments, Lucas ammeter gauge, quad headlamps, dual exhaust outlets, "Vantage" badging, Moto-Lita steering wheel, chrome trim/bumpers, air conditioning, Kienzle analog clock, sun visors, headrests, knock-off wire wheels with Michelin tires, and a full-size spare tire fitted in the trunk. An extremely coveted DBS that is currently not running and is an exciting opportunity to be a part of a select few to own a piece of British automobile history.
For \$98,500



1971 Aston Martin DBS V8 Saloon
Presenting this left-hand-drive 1971 Aston Martin DBS V8 Saloon that is finished in red complemented with a black interior. This rare example is #111 out of only 399 ever produced. Equipped with an automatic transmission, V8 engine, front-wheel disc brakes, dual exhaust outlets, Smiths instruments, Lucas ammeter gauge, quad headlamps, chrome trim/bumpers, dual headrests, Kienzle analog clock, Philips radio, sun visors, "V8" badges, dual-side mirrors, lockable glove compartment, alloy wheels with General XP 2000 V4 tires, three-spoke steering wheel, and a full-size spare tire fitted in the trunk. An extremely scarce DBS to acquire, this is such an exciting opportunity to be a part of a select few to own a piece of British automobile history that is mechanically sound.
For \$79,950



2002 Aston Martin DB7 Vantage Convertible
This 2002 Aston Martin DB7 Vantage Convertible featured with 47,592 miles on the odometer is finished in an elegant color combination of black combined with a tan interior. Equipped with an automatic transmission, V12 engine, four-wheel disc brakes, dual exhaust outlet, black convertible soft top, three-spoke steering wheel, tool kit, "DB7 Vantage" badging, and alloy wheels. Amenities include air conditioning, power-adjustable seats, center console with storage, analog clock in the center of the dashboard, sun visors, an umbrella in the trunk, and dual-side mirrors. In addition to the equipment, this DB7 Vantage comes with an owner's manual booklet and a clean Carfax report. British classic cars are constantly rising in value and this is an excellent opportunity to acquire this exclusive hand-built Aston Martin Vantage that will need some cosmetic work, nonetheless, this classic is mechanically sound.
For \$23,500



2004 Aston Martin V12 Vanquish
Presenting 2004 Aston Martin V12 Vanquish featured with 41,578 miles on the odometer and finished in an elegant color combination of Black combined with a Black and Tan interior. Equipped with an automatic transmission, V12 engine, four-wheel disc brakes, dual exhaust outlet, a three-spoke steering wheel, center console, dashboard analog clock, and alloy wheels. British classic cars are constantly rising in value and this is an excellent opportunity to acquire this exclusive hand-built Aston Martin V12 Vanquish that is mechanically sound.
For \$48,500

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MODEL PROFILE

DB5

The effect DB5's appearance in *Goldfinger* and these many reviews had on Aston Martin's image was stratospheric. It quickly put this still relatively small and very British car manufacturer on the world stage, giving it and the car itself an international profile no amount of race victories could ever achieve.

"As soon as the film was shown, a massive wave of publicity hit us, like no other car firm in history had ever experienced," wrote the company's former engineering director Dudley Gershon in his 1978 book, *Aston Martin 1963-1972*. "All of a sudden, every ten-year-old boy knew the name of Aston Martin. It ran in an amused way right through every strata of society, and if we had been able to produce 50 DB5s every week, then we could have sold them."

It's probably down to this continuing link to 007 why the DB5 remains universally

famous. With the DB5 appearing in several later films, from 1995's *Goldeneye* to the recent *No Time To Die*, it's hard to think of another car that's had so much continuing exposure over the last six decades. The result of this is the DB5 becoming part of our culture, as British as red telephone boxes, warm beer and cricket. Over my 25 years messing around with cars for a living, none has ever caused as much attention as this one did on the day of our shoot.

This status as one of the most famous cars in the world helps explain why, as mentioned earlier, the car is currently worth big money. Whereas DB4s are around £350k (even the largely identical Series V Vantage), DB5s are – depending on condition and history – between £500k to £750k.

Due to relatively low sales and reusing existing technology, the DB5's popularity doesn't come from what it achieved for the British motoring industry like the Mini and Land Rover. It's simply down to its good looks and for being the preferred



choice for British secret agents. Yet due to its subsequent impact on British society, the DB5 has still earned its place as one of the world's most recognisable cars. **AMD**

Thanks to: Gordon & Guy Wyles from Chiltern Aston Centre for the DB5 featured. The car is currently for sale and for further information please visit www.chilternaston.co.uk or call 01442 833177



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QUIET GENIUS

Harold Beach joined Aston Martin in 1950 and would stay with the firm until 1978. During that time, his superb chassis and suspension work helped the company cement its reputation for excellence and exhilaration

WORDS RICHARD GUNN IMAGES KELSEY ARCHIVE

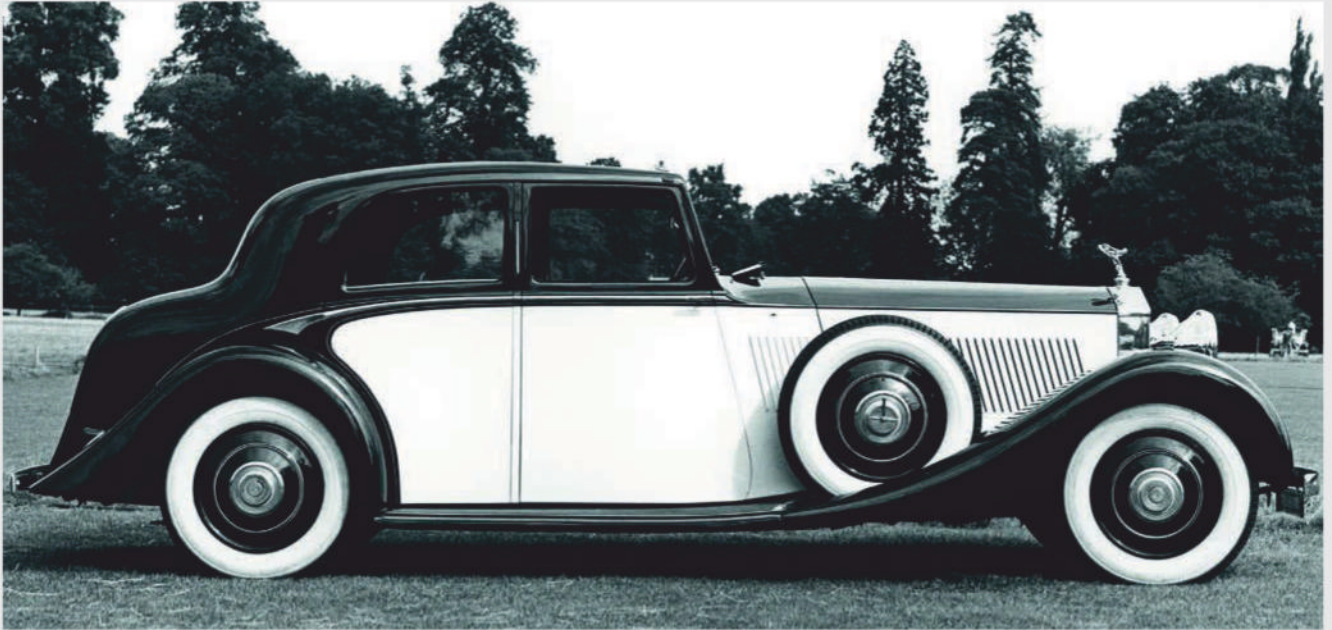


WHEN IT comes to vehicles, stylists may steal all the limelight, but it's what's underneath that can make or break a model. A sports car may be beautiful, it may be powerful, it may be fast, but if it doesn't handle and lacks the substance to match the looks, then it can easily be game over. Fortunately for Aston Martin, it had Harold Beach making sure that its machines lived up to everything their appearances promised. Without his considerable engineering expertise in chassis and suspension design from 1950 through to 1978, cars from the DB4 through to the V8 might have felt and behaved very differently. His contributions to the company were enormous, yet he was content to remain a behind-the-scenes boffin, away from all the glory. Because of this, he's a relatively unknown quantity today, despite living to be nearly a hundred.



BIOGRAPHY

HAROLD BEACH



A Rolls Royce Phantom II with a body by Barker for the period Beach worked for the coachbuilder in the late Twenties

Harold Beach emerged into the world on February 15 1913 in Acton, west London. His parents were affluent enough to have him privately educated, which set him up well for further education at the local technical college. The teenager had his heart set on being a draughtsman and went straight from college into an apprenticeship at the automotive coachbuilding firm of Barker & Co, initially at its Mayfair factory. The date was 1928, and while the firm had made a recent name for itself with its Rolls-Royce bodies and patronage by the Royal Family, by the late Twenties it was beginning to struggle. Rivals were developing more lightweight techniques using aluminium and the more traditional Barker & Co found itself falling behind. Not that any of this would have been known to the eager young Harold, earning 30 shillings a week.

When Beach was transferred to Barker's drawing office, he must have been delighted that the draughtsmanship career he longed for was beckoning. However, things soon turned sour, thanks to a boss that Harold described as 'an absolute tyrant'. He took a dim view of his new recruit's printing



One of the first Astons Beach worked on after joining the company in 1950 was the DB4/2



An image taken in the early 2000s following its restoration of Beach's original Project 114

talents and threatened him with the sack if things didn't improve. There was no sympathy at home either. "When I got home, I told my father and he said that if I got the sack, he would strap me," Beach

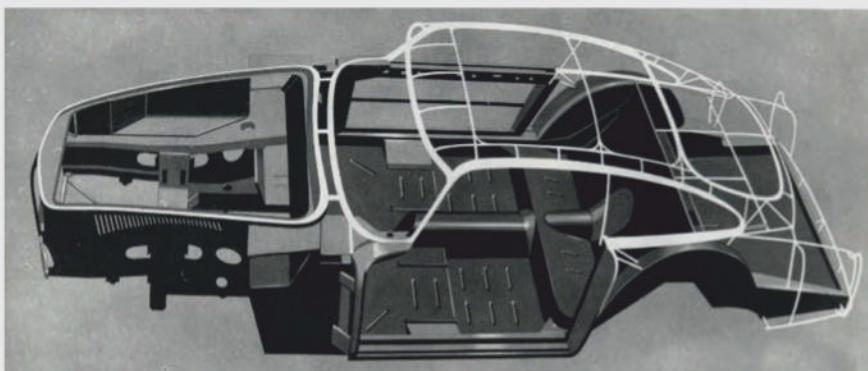
recalled. In the face of these twin threats, he worked hard to up his printing game, and saved both his job and his behind.

One of the company's directors was the aristocratic Viscount Curzon, who was keen on motorsport. He enlisted Beach to work on his exotic Bugattis, Alfa Romeos, Delages and Mercedes, cars that filled the teenager with awe and wonder. "And there was me, a draughtsman not yet 20, being able to do some design work on them. What a magnificent grounding!"

Such golden times were not to last though. The Great Depression of the early Thirties exacerbated Barker's financial issues and lack of progression. Fearing the firm wouldn't be around for much longer, Beach decided to seek alternative employment. In 1933, he left Barker for

Beardmore Motors, the Hendon-based taxi manufacturer. The glamour of racing cars was swapped for designing and drawing commercial vehicles, but at a time when unemployment was rife, Beach saw sense in a job that offered more long-term security. He regarded William Beardmore as, “very much a stop gap” and jumped ship after three years, to join the former manager of Barker’s engineering department, James Ridlington. He’d set himself up as a component manufacturer, fulfilling lucrative contracts for Rolls-Royce and others. By now (1936), Rolls-Royce owned Bentley and Harold found himself tasked with building a lightweight aluminium body for a 4¼-litre Bentley to compete in the RAC Tourist Trophy in

► **The eventual production version of the DB4 from 1958 was a handsome and fast car**



▲ **The DB4’s substructure showing Touring’s Superleggera method of construction**

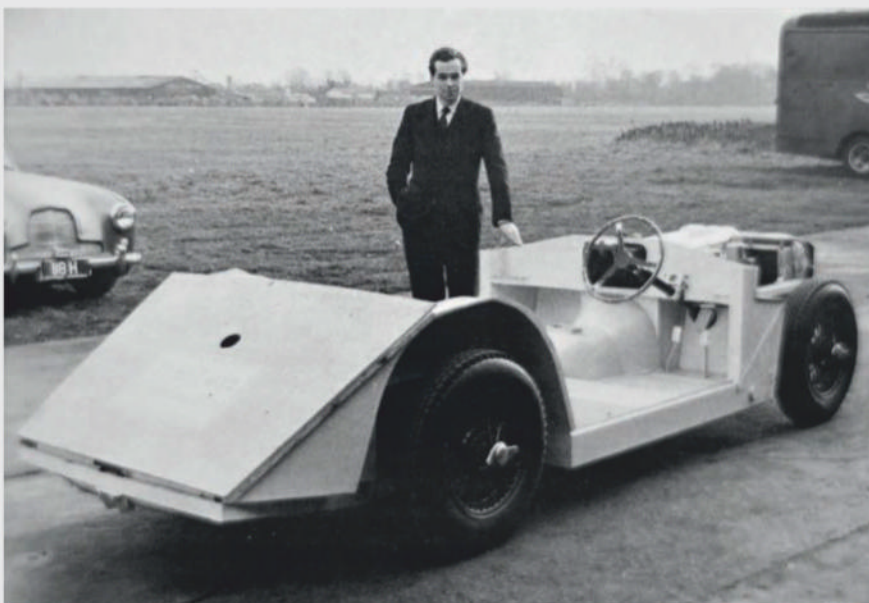


Ards, Ireland. The car, commissioned and driven by cotton mill owner Eddie Hall, finished second, thanks in part to its huge 48-gallon fuel tank which meant it didn’t have to pit. Harold was also responsible for crafting that too.

The outbreak of the second world war in September 1939 curtailed Beach’s second go at designing racing machines. Instead, he went to work with the Hungarian engineer Nicholas Straussler, best-known for the amphibious tanks used during D-Day. Harold though was involved with more humdrum tasks such as designing airfield componentry. He stayed on with Garner-Straussler Mechanisation after hostilities ended while, as he put it, “We tried to involve ourselves with other activities which never really came to much”. He also married his girlfriend, Mabel, during the same period.

In 1950, Harold came across a *Daily Telegraph* advertisement for a design draughtsman at David Brown Tractors (Engineering) Automobile Division in Feltham, west London. He knew enough about the motor industry to recognise that this wasn’t a role working on agricultural equipment, but for David Brown’s newly acquired Aston Martin and Lagonda. “This was the job for me – it must be,” was his instant reaction. He was utterly convinced that he’d blown the interview when he asked for £11 a week – ten shillings more than offered. But a letter inviting him to start work at Feltham arrived a few days later.

Beach’s tenure at Aston Martin began in September 1950. The DB2 had been launched earlier in the year, so he began work on its successor. His appointment coincided with that of Robert Eberan von Eberhorst, the Austrian engineer responsible for the pre-war Auto Union



Harold Beach with an early chassis for the eventual DB4



The DB4 was the first road car to use Tadek Marek’s new 3.7-litre straight six

BIOGRAPHY

HAROLD BEACH

Although an update of the DB4 Vantage Series V, many consider the DB5 from 1963 to be Beach's greatest achievement



Type D Grand Prix racer, who'd also collaborated on the Porsche 356. Harold described his joining in the chief engineer capacity as a "sensational event", but von Eberhorst decided to completely scrap all the work that had been done. Thus, when the DB2/4 appeared in 1953, it was more a four-seater evolution than a revolution, still retaining the Claude Hill-designed suspension of its predecessor. "But it was a lot of work wasted," reflected Beach.



The DB6 from 1965 had a longer wheelbase and slightly higher roofline than its predecessor



The DB5 used a 4.0-litre version of Marek's straight six which in standard form produced 282bhp

Project 114, the internal name for the planned replacement for the DB2/4, was Harold's next task. It seemed this time that he would get his way, with a separate (perimeter type) chassis replacing the too-flexible tubular structure of the previous cars. He conceived the suspension as wishbones at the front with a De Dion rear axle. A prototype was put together on which "the roadholding and handling were fantastic". Then, after some disagreements between Eberhorst and John Wyer (Aston Martin's competitions manager), the former departed the company during 1956. Wyer was made general manager and Beach unexpectedly found himself as Aston Martin's new chief engineer. Wyer opted to go to Touring of Milan for a body to



In 1969 the DBS was finally fitted with Marek's new 5.3-litre V8, an engine the car always meant to have

Harold remembered. "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,' and I said, 'Thank you, Mr David.'" The DB4 had been born.

What *Autosport* magazine dubbed the "Aston Marvel" was launched the following year. By that time, it had lost Beach's De Dion rear axle because it proved too noisy when mated to the David Brown gearbox. But in all other respects, what lay beneath the DB4's stunning skin was Harold Beach's chassis magic mated with Tadek Marek's power know-how.

While there were teething troubles with Marek's new engine, the DB4 was a big success – although, naturally, not enough of one to actually make any money for Aston Martin. It metamorphosed into the DB5 in 1963, with an enlarged engine but Beach's chassis and suspension still underneath. The inherent strength of the platform was proved with the DB5 created for the James Bond film *Goldfinger*. Gadgets weighing 300lbs (135kg) were installed, albeit with Marek supervising the installation by the film production company's special effects team rather than Beach, without compromising its abilities. Well, too much.

be mounted on Beach's design. But the Italian carrozzeria rejected it and asked instead for a more integrated platform frame. While Beach was probably disappointed that a lot of his hard graft was destined to disappear once again, he also readily accepted that a platform chassis with a steel framework would bring weight saving and rigidity benefits. He worked closely with Touring to update his previous ideas so they were suitable for the Superleggera (super-light) process. Another close collaborator at the same time was Tadek Marek, who had arrived from Austin in 1954, and was busy inventing

an entirely new engine for Project 114.

Because of the changes demanded by Touring, the DB4's introduction fell behind schedule, leading to the interim DB MkIII – a DB2/4 MkII with a Marek-modified engine, different dash and the debut of the grille shape that would become such an Aston Martin trademark. But while the first DB MkIIIs were finding new homes during 1957, the company also got the first Project 114 prototype up and running. The weekend after completion, Beach and Wyer drove it to David Brown's farm so the boss could try it out – which he did, at considerably higher speeds than it had ever done before. "That car went really well, and David Brown was thrilled,"



Although Beach liked Towns' styling for the DBS from 1967, he also considered it too wide and unwieldy to be a true sports car



The year of 1963 was a hectic one for Aston Martin and Harold personally. His friend, John Wyer, went to work for Ford, leaving what he described as a 'great vacuum'. Then Beach found himself transferred from Feltham, where the marque's service, design and racing facilities were housed, to the Newport Pagnell factory in Buckinghamshire that Aston Martin had acquired in 1956 when it bought the Tickford coachbuilding firm. The facility had been constructing road cars from the DB4 onwards, but with Aston Martin's withdrawal from motorsport in 1960, the decision was taken to close the Feltham plant completely and focus everything on

Newport Pagnell. "We all regarded the town as being out in the wilds, and it's not surprising that there were serious misgivings," said Harold. "In addition, there was no offer of disturbance allowance, help with housing or anything like that." David Brown believed that three quarters of the design team would move north; but in the event, only Marek and Beach were prepared to do so. Around 20 members of staff, with a wealth of Aston Martin expertise, decided not to go. "So we came up with no staff whatsoever and were faced with the prospect of recruiting new people with no experience. Just think how much experience we lost overnight because of that decision."

Still, one of the rookies Beach subsequently took on was a certain William Towns. He'd come as a trim designer from Rover, but Beach recognised more potential in him than just creating new seats. "It was obvious that he had a flair for styling. David Brown saw one of his drawings and suggested to me that he should do some of the styling for the car we were working on. Towns produced some proposals, and that is how the DBS body was created."

Before that car came to fruition, there was the DB6 of 1965. There were significant changes to Beach's chassis, with a 3.75in lengthened wheelbase and relocated rear axle which, together

In 1972 the DBS name was dropped and the car became known as the V8



with the aerodynamic Kamm tail, helped improve high-speed stability. The Superleggera process was also abandoned in favour of a body-on-platform chassis, due to the extra support needed for the extended back end.

The DBS debuted in 1967, running alongside the DB6. While Beach regarded Towns' styling as excellent, both he and Marek also considered it too wide and unwieldy to be a true sports car in the mould of its predecessors. For the new Aston, the DB6's chassis was widened by 4½in and the wheelbase lengthened by an inch. And, finally, Beach got his earlier desire of a De Dion rear axle, the incompatible David Brown transmission having been ditched during the DB5 days. The car had always been intended to be fitted with Marek's new V8 engine, but it took until 1969 for that to happen. When the Bosch fuel injection system, which was adopted in 1972, proved problematic, it was Beach who tried to solve the issues, spending a lot of time over in Stuttgart. But it was to no avail and in 1973, the V8 reverted to quad Weber carburettors instead.

By then, David Brown had sold Aston Martin (during 1972) to Company Developments, a Birmingham investment bank consortium. Beach was promoted to director of engineering, but the Company

Development days were especially troubled and on the last day of December 1974, all car production ceased. It didn't restart until September 1975 under new owners Peter Sprague, George Minden, Jeremy Turner, Alan Curtis and George Flather. Beach continued his previous role, but no longer with director status. In early 1978, at the age of 65, he retired. His parting gift to Newport Pagnell was designing the power-operated soft-top for the new V8 Volante.

As a relatively private and unassuming man, Harold was content to live a quiet life post-Aston Martin. One of the few times he had the spotlight turned on him was when he was the star guest at the 50th anniversary celebrations for the DB4 in Newport Pagnell in 2008. It was a rare chance for him to appreciate the high esteem that so many Aston aficionados held him in. Two years later, on January 24 2010, he passed away aged 96. His wife Mabel had died some years before.

Harold Beach had a very long life, dedicating 28 years of it to Aston Martin. He may be little known outside of marque circles, but within them, he is rightly lauded as the man responsible for helping make the cars from the DB4 through to the V8 so competent, able and exciting, yet was content to let others have the glory. **AMD**



Before retiring in 1978, Beach's parting gift to Aston Martin was designing the power-operated soft-top for the new Volante

MODEL PROFILE

DB5 RADFORD SHOOTING BRAKE

WORDS & PHOTOGRAPHY PAUL WALTON

Instigated by David Brown himself but hand-built by a London-based coachbuilder, Harold Radford, the DB5 Shooting Brake was aimed at Aston Martin owners who enjoyed outdoor pursuits and therefore needed more interior room. Just 12 were produced and we've tracked one down

BRAKE ROOM



MODEL PROFILE

DB5 RADFORD SHOOTING BRAKE

THE ASTON Martin DB5 can be described in many ways: beautiful, powerful, and desirable are just three adjectives that perfectly fit this now iconic model. Yet the one thing it can't be called is practical. With its low roof line, lack of rear interior space and modest boot, even an original Mini would be a better choice for the supermarket run.

Ironically, this is the issue that faced Aston Martin's then owner, (Sir) David Brown. Something of an outdoorsman, the car didn't offer enough room for his polo gear or Labrador. Legend has it that

in September 1965 he took the dog into an Aston Martin board meeting, put his four-legged friend on the long table and said, "Build me something he can sit in."

The result was the DB5 Shooting Brake, an elegant three-door estate that with its extended roof, and resultant large luggage space plus hatchback style of rear door, turned the car into a genuine multipurpose vehicle at a time when such models were relatively rare. With the estate market still very niche at the time and largely consisting of smaller cars such as the Mini Countryman and Morris Mini Traveller, it made the DB5 Shooting Brake ahead of its time.

This wasn't the first time Brown had considered such a car. In the early Sixties he asked Touring of Milan to design a five-door estate based on the Lagonda Rapide. But with the car being a slow seller – only 55 were produced in its three-year production run – the market for such a model would have been tiny so the project was scrapped. Assumed lost, Touring's plans were discovered in the early 2000s and between 2005 and 2006 a specialist in the north east of England, the Carrosserie Company (UK) Ltd of Barnard Castle converted the seventh Rapide saloon off the production line into an estate.

“Something of an outdoorsman, the car didn't offer enough room for Brown's polo gear or Labrador”



MODEL PROFILE

DB5 RADFORD SHOOTING BRAKE

Before we go any further, let's make the distinction between a shooting brake and a mere estate. Although there isn't anything official, it's universally accepted that an estate is a large, mass-produced, five-door hatchback, favoured by suburbanites for the school run and supermarket visits, slugging it on overcrowded roads with SUVs. Proper shooting brakes are usually a conversion of an existing model that's built in tiny numbers and with three doors.

Although the project was instigated by David Brown, since the factory was too busy keeping up demand for the regular DB5, the eventual car was the work of independent British coachbuilder, Harold Radford.



MODEL PROFILE

DB5 RADFORD SHOOTING BRAKE

Radford had started in the motor trade during the mid-Thirties when he borrowed a few hundred pounds from his father, a wealthy shipping broker, to start a car business, Harold Radford & Co Ltd, in South Kensington, London.

"I felt there was an opening for somebody who was going to have proper business training to start a motor business, and play the game 100 percent", said the then 77-year-old Radford during a rare interview with journalist, Giles Chapman, in 1986. "No putting back speedometers and all that sort of outrageous nonsense. It was something I was determined to do."

Thanks to his connections in the 'old boy' network, Radford was busy from the outset, soon opening an impressive glass-fronted showroom that was usually filled with nearly new Rolls-Royces and Bentleys, opposite the South Kensington underground station.

His move into coachbuilding was a result of customers asking him to modify cars to suit their needs. Largely mechanical-based to begin with, Harold was soon converting the big saloons into 'shooting brakes', large wood-framed estates that were popular for transporting guns and equipment during shooting parties held at country estates.

The work was subcontracted to Southgate-based coachbuilders, Seary & McReady. After the war (when he had joined the Mechanical Transport Corps), Radford bought a controlling interest in the company, relocated it to Ealing and changed the name to Harold Radford (Coachbuilders) Ltd. In 1948 he developed his Countryman conversion range for Rolls-Royce and Bentley that consisted of 40 luxurious and often clever designs. These included anything from a drinks cabinet, folding seats and an innovative split tailgate conversion to an entire coach-built body designed for field sports.

Following his father's death in 1947, Harold became more involved with the family's shipping company, taking over completely in the early Fifties. He eventually sold his coachbuilding business at the end of the decade to the Swain Group that owned several dealerships, which in turn became part



of Provincial Traction Company Ltd in 1961. Harold Radford Ltd was later amalgamated with the service and body repair side of London's leading Rolls-Royce and Bentley dealer, HR Owen, which Provincial also owned.

Radford was arguably best known during this time for several upmarket modifications it had developed for the humble Mini during the mid-Sixties under its De Ville name. It was another coachbuilder, Hooper, that had started the trend for an upmarket version of the diminutive car after producing one in 1963 for British film star, Peter Sellers. But when its rival wasn't interested in taking the idea further, Radford was more than happy to do so. Favoured by the rich and famous, the Radford Mini de Ville remains synonymous with the Swinging Sixties.

Despite going bankrupt in 1967, the





Radford name lingered on with a new company until 1975. It has been revived three times since then; the first came in 1992, two years after Harold himself had passed away, and consisted of modifications for the Mini. The second was a £30k transformation of BMW's Mini in 2005. Neither came to much. More recently, the Radford name has been attached to a new company headed by the 2009 F1 champion, Jenson Button, TV presenter Ant Anstead and British car designer, Mark Stubbs. It plans to build a mid-engined sports car, the Type 62-2, that's heavily based on the Lotus Exige.

After selling to Swain, Harold was originally kept on as managing director, but despite later being sidelined to 'consultant', he continued to hang around his former business. "He wanted to remain associated just to be able to say, 'I am Harold Radford,'" said Eddie Collins, the company's then manager, during a recent interview. "He was an absolutely charming man, though – someone who I would call a proper English gent."

Still highly connected, it was Radford himself who secured the deal to convert the DB5 into a shooting brake. "David Brown, whom I knew very well indeed, came to me and asked if I would do

an estate car on his Aston Martin, for shooting and that sort of thing," continued Harold in Chapman's 1986 interview.

The conversion was extensive and affected the whole car from the windscreen backwards. Radford's engineers took tin snips to the Aston's alloy roof and blended in a new panel that extended backwards to a one-piece rear door, hinged at the roof, and assisted by springs. One problem with the conversion was that the tubular structure of the roof also had to be cut away, reducing the rigidity of Touring's clever Superleggera system.

Designed to create as much luggage space as possible, the shooting brake's boot had a volume of 1,100 litres, making it slightly larger than that of the Ford Anglia Estate. But like the rest of the car's mechanics, the DB5's rear suspension was left alone, meaning it was for light loads only. But even after the conversion, Radford claimed the car was still capable of reaching 150mph while braking from 100mph to a complete stop took just six seconds. It was therefore marketed as, "The world's fastest dual-purpose vehicle".

The first example was for Brown himself and debuted on Harold Radford's stand at the 1965 Earls Court Motor Show in ►

MODEL PROFILE

DB5 RADFORD SHOOTING BRAKE

October. The shooting brake was then offered as a production model available to order through Aston Martin's dealers, but it was still modified by Harold Radford. The conversion cost £2,000 – the same price as a Jaguar Mk X 4.2 – which, when added to the DB5's £4,250 list price, resulted in a car that cost more than a Rolls-Royce Silver Cloud III. It's probably for this reason why only a further 11 DB5 Shooting Brakes were produced and of those, just four were left-hand drive.

The example shown here is apparently the only one to have been based on a DB5 Vantage. Commissioned by Aston Martin main dealers, Cyril Williams Motors Ltd of Wolverhampton, the finished car was delivered to its first owner in 1966.

Design-wise, modifying an existing car into something else rarely works; the awkward-looking Jaguar XJ Series 3 estate by Avon-Stevens from the

Eighties is a prime example of how bad it can be. But the DB5 Shooting Brake is clearly the exception to this rule. Its clean and svelte lines together with perfect detailing results in a car you'd think was designed and built at Aston Martin's Newport Pagnell factory and not in a shed in London. It's certainly better looking than Radford's later DB6 version that was more hearse-like resulting in just six being produced.

When I lift the nicely sprung tailgate, I'm surprised by how much interior room there is considering the car it's based on. Admittedly the large step in the floor that's created when I tumble the rear seats forwards means the DB5 Shooting Brake wouldn't be anyone's choice for a trip to IKEA, but I still reckon there's more than enough for both a saddle and a Labrador to sit comfortably.



Yet due to the high values the 12 examples are currently worth, it will have been a while since any have seen some muddy paw prints. In 2019, one of the four left-hand-drive cars was sold at auction in America for \$1,765,000 (approximately £1,414,000).

There's no denying that's a huge sum, but the car's practical boot yet still handsome lines together with the same high performance as the standard car results in a highly desirable package. So desirable in fact that Harold Radford's DB5 Shooting Brake can be described by another word - perfect. **AMD**

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OPEN SEASON



The Short Chassis Volante from 1965 was the first Aston Martin convertible to use this now legendary name. Based on the final unused 37 DB5 chassis, we look at the unusual history of this extremely rare and now sought-after model

WORDS PAUL WALTON
PHOTOGRAPHY RM SOTHEBY'S/TOM HAINS



MODEL PROFILE
SHORT CHASSIS VOLANTE



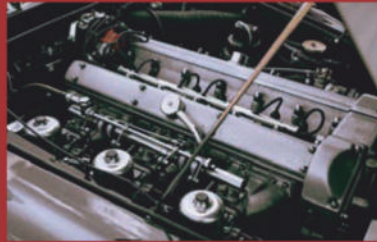
MODEL PROFILE

SHORT CHASSIS VOLANTE

WHETHER USED to describe the remains of yesterday's lunch or yours truly every time a playground football team was picked, the term 'leftover' never symbolises anything good. It's usually reserved for what's unwanted, unneeded and, unused.

Yet it was due to Aston Martin using leftover parts in the mid-Sixties that resulted in the company producing what would become one of the prettiest and now most sought-after models from the entire David Brown era, the Short Chassis Volante. With it being the first to be called this now legendary name, unlike my school football career, despite its dodgy start in life, the car's place in the company's history is assured.

When production of the DB5 ended in September 1965, Aston Martin discovered 37 of the car's chassis hadn't been used. Since the wheelbase of the



new DB6 was 9.5cm longer than its predecessor's to create more interior space, these frames weren't suitable for the new car. But instead of simply disposing of them, the company's management decided to use the 37 chassis as the basis of a striking if not low-volume interim open model that would plug the gap between the DB5 Convertible coming to an end and the DB6 version going on sale the following year.

Touring's Superleggera coachwork style of aluminium panels over a lightweight tubular frame that was first used for the DB4 from 1958 was again utilised. The look of the car was similar to that of the DB5 Convertible, including the same faired-in headlights and swept back rear rather than the DB6's new style of Kamm tail. Yet it also encapsulated many of the new car's features such as the split front and rear bumpers, the Triumph-sourced rear 'cathedral' light clusters plus an enlarged oil cooler opening at the front. The interior featured Connolly leather ▶



MODEL PROFILE

SHORT CHASSIS VOLANTE

stitched in the V-pattern, which was first introduced for the DB6, while the lined convertible top was made of high-quality Everflex and pebble-grain vinyl as used by Rolls-Royce.

The car was powered by Aston's familiar 4.0-litre straight-six that was fitted to both the DB5 and DB6. Only three of the 37 Volantes were ordered to Vantage specification that, thanks to three Weber carburettors instead of the standard model's SUs, raised the engine's power from 282bhp to 325bhp.

The end result was a handsome, well-proportioned and beautifully detailed car and with just 37 produced it remains the lowest-production convertible in Aston Martin's history. More importantly, it introduced a new name that's still used today. When the company's distribution manager, Kent Monk, saw the car, he was the one who allegedly suggested calling it Volante.

A derivative of *volare*, the Italian for flying, the name was first used for three Alfa Romeo experimental racing cars that had been built between 1952 and 1953. Called Disco Volante (or 'flying saucer'), the name perfectly described the shape of these very low yet very wide competition cars. It's not known if Monk had these prototypes in mind when he suggested the term to Aston's management, but since they too were designed by Touring there's a definite connection between the two.

As an accurate description of what it was like to drive Aston's new, low-slung convertible, Monk's idea was adopted and seen in a large chrome script on the car's bootlid.

The chassis of the first few examples were still stamped with the DB5C numbering sequence but was later changed to DBVC.

To differentiate the 37 examples from the longer DB6 version that arrived in October 1966, they were later known as the 'Short Chassis', but this was always an unofficial title. And neither were they a DB6 like they're now often incorrectly described as; a brochure for the model simply calls it the Aston Martin Volante.

The new car might have been built using leftover parts but its price didn't reflect this. At £5,000 in 1965, the Volante



was £250 more than the outgoing DB5 Convertible, three grand more than an E-type 4.2 open two-seater and a whopping £3,900 over the price of an Austin-Healey 3000 Mk III.

Due to its high price and exclusivity, it should come as no surprise that the 37 examples were reserved for Aston Martin's best customers, including the car seen here, chassis DBVC/2310/R. On 13 May 1966 it was delivered to the Leeds headquarters of clothing retail giant, Montague Burton Ltd, where it was used by Raymond Burton who was the son of the company's founder and namesake.

Although he'd worked for the family business from just after the second world war until the Seventies, Burton was always more interested in exotic cars and together with his twin brother, Arnold, took part in rallies throughout the Fifties.

Burton kept the Volante until 1971 when it was bought by Ken Hipwell who embarked on a three-year restoration that included a bare metal respray in a startling shade of lime green. During the four decades Hipwell owned the car it was mainly kept in storage, meaning the mileage only rose by a mere 20k.

After being sold in 2013, the new owner

commissioned leading Aston Martin specialist, Desmond J Smail Ltd, to restore the car, which included returning the bodywork to its original and more fitting Cairngorm Brown plus rebuilding the engine to 4.2 litres and transforming it from right- to left-hand drive.

Due to their position of being one of the rarest production models in Aston Martin's long history together with their handsome looks, the 37 Volantes are now extremely sought after by enthusiasts of the marque and demand huge prices. When the first example from October 1965 (DB5C/2301/L) came up for sale at an American auction in 2017 it went for \$1,705,000 (approximately £1,322,730) while chassis DBVC/2335/L sold at an Italian auction two years later for a staggering €1,805,000 (around £1,582,639).

With Aston Martin reusing the Volante name for the majority of its convertibles since then (no doubt including an open version of the recently announced DB12), these 37 Short Chassis might have started life as a way to utilise leftover parts yet due to the car's importance on the company's past, present and future, it's clearly anything but. **AMD**

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HISTORY

JAMES BOND'S DB5

SECRET SERVICE

WORDS PAUL WALTON IMAGES AMD ARCHIVE



Bond actor Sean Connery with one of the DB5s in Switzerland during the filming of *Goldfinger* in 1964

Although an Aston Martin DB5 has appeared in several James Bond films, there's only one true version and that's the first. We look at the complicated history of BMT216A

IT MUST have been a scene worthy of a James Bond film. In the dead of night, a team of thieves broke into an airport hangar and stole something of immense value. It was then loaded onto a cargo plane that disappeared into the darkness, never to be seen again. Yet what those daring robbers were after wasn't gold, diamonds, or a top-secret weapon with the potential to destroy the world, but rather Bond's own car, the original Aston Martin DB5 that was driven by Sean Connery in *Goldfinger*.

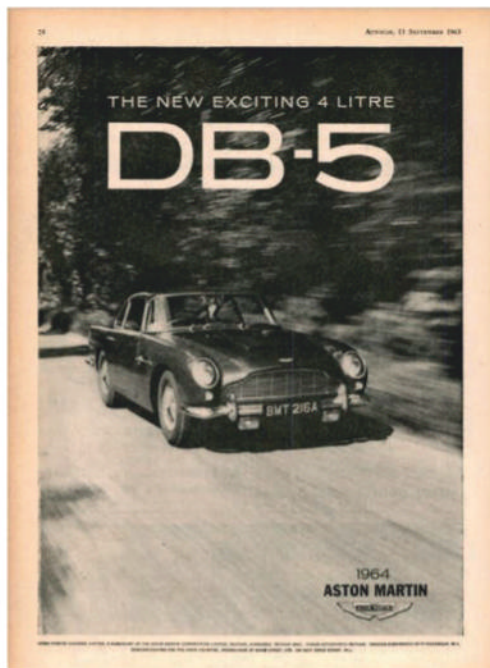
Following the film's 1964 release, its many clever gadgets made the silver coupe undeniably the most famous car in the world. And due to 007 driving a DB5 in another eight Bond films, from *Thunderball* in 1965 to the most recent, 2021's *No Time to Die*, it still is.

Yet what's often forgotten is that the legend of the Bond DB5 started with one specific example, the first to have all the gadgets fitted for *Goldfinger* that was seen throughout the film. But despite its place in both motoring and film history plus its potential seven-figure value, the car hasn't been seen since that fateful night 26 years ago.

For three of the first six James Bond books, the British spy drove a 1930 Bentley 4.5-litre with an Amherst Villiers supercharger. Then in 1957, the author behind the series, Ian Fleming, received a letter from a Dr GRGD Gibson who said although he enjoyed the stories, he felt such a car was now old-fashioned, suggesting an Aston Martin instead. Fleming wrote back, thanking Gibson for his suggestion, saying, "Bond was in the process of being re-equipped".

When the *Goldfinger* novel appeared two years later, Fleming had taken Gibson's advice, and his secret agent now drove an Aston Martin DB MkIII.

"The car was from the pool. Bond had been offered the Aston Martin or a Jaguar 3.4. He had taken the DB III. Either of the cars would have suited his cover – well-to-do, rather adventurous young man with a taste for the good, fast things of life. But the DB III had the advantage of an up-to-date triptyque, an inconspicuous colour



A 1963 magazine advert for the DB5 clearly showing BMT216A



The DB5 appeared in the 13 September, 1964, issue of *Autocar*

HISTORY

JAMES BOND'S DB5

– battleship grey – and certain extras which might or might not come in handy.” Those extras consisted of a Colt .45 in a ‘trick compartment’ under the driver’s seat, a homing device, a switch to alter the type and colour of the car’s front and rear lights plus reinforced steel bumpers in case he needed to ram enemy cars.

In late 1963 when the company responsible for the Bond films, Eon Productions, was preparing to turn *Goldfinger* into a celluloid version, production designer, Ken Adam, and special effects expert, John Stears, decided to take the gadgets fitted to Bond’s car one step further. They might have been considered outlandish in 1959 but as Stears explains in Dave Worrall’s 1993 authoritative book about 007’s first DB5, *The Most Famous Car in the World*, they were, “not really spectacular enough for a James Bond movie.”

With the MkIII not large enough for what they wanted plus being out of production since 1958, it was decided to use Aston’s latest model instead, the recently revealed DB5 that had made its debut at the Earls Court Motor Show in October 1963. Adam and Stears then designed a series of deadly weapons that were concealed within the car’s bodywork, operated by a touch of a button in the interior.

They did keep some of Fleming’s ideas, though, including the homing device and the never seen gun tray although the reinforced steel bumpers became over-riders that could be extended by 18in.

Not all of their ideas, such as front-mounted flame throwers, made it to the final car while some were modified. The rear bullet screen, for example, was originally designed to flip up on hydraulics rather than raise vertically out from the boot.

The next thing the pair needed was an actual car. “It started with a phone call I received from Harry Saltzman, the co-producer of the film *Goldfinger*,” said Aston Martin’s then general manager, Steve Heggie, in *The Most Famous Car in the World*. “He wanted to borrow an Aston to use in his 007 movie. We had many such requests in those days from film producers and in general it cost Aston Martin more than it was worth.” Apparently, Saltzman choked when Heggie replied that he’d sell him one at the retail price, asking had he not seen Bond’s first two outings, *Dr No* and *From Russia With Love*?

A meeting was still set up at Newport Pagnell in November the same year amongst several Aston executives that included Heggie with Adam and Stears. After the pair explained what they had planned for the DB5, the Aston men still turned down their request stating it wouldn’t be feasible to modify the car to how they wanted. During their return journey to Pinewood Studios, where the Bond films were made, the dejected Adam and Stears discussed the possibility of using another car, such as a Bentley or a Jensen. Yet no matter what was suggested, none suited the special features they already had planned for the DB5.

There was no question of buying one, either, since they had to follow the producer’s strategy of borrowing as many products as possible.

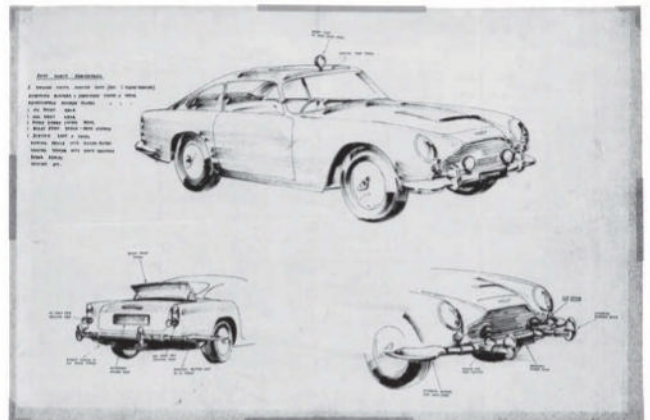
But after several more discussions, Heggie finally started to understand the publicity possibilities by being involved with a Bond film, telling Aston’s chairman, David Brown, it was too good an opportunity to miss. And so a compromise was made; Aston would provide the film’s producers with a pre-production DB5 in



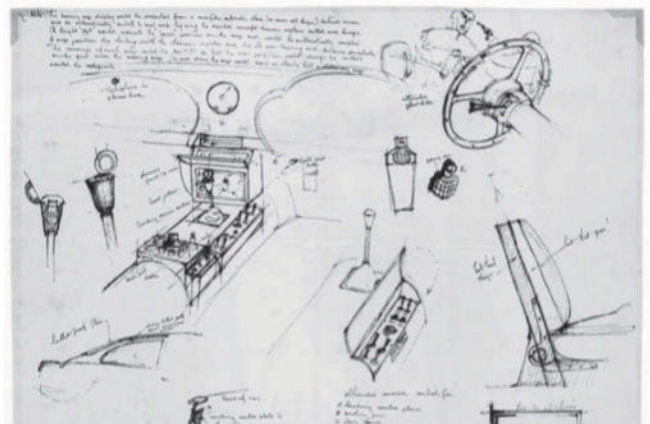
BMT216A as it appeared in a January 1964 episode of *The Saint*



A detail shot of the extending over-riders and revolving numberplate



Ken Adam's initial drawings for the weapons. Note the different design for the rear bulletproof shield



Adam's sketches for the interior modifications including the centre armrest full of controls



BMT216A choking a crowd during a 1964 publicity event in London

Dubonnet Red – chassis DP/216/1, registration BMT216A – that started life as a DB4 Series V Vantage used by the company's research and development department. It had also been used for the company's marketing literature plus appeared in the 13 September, 1963, issue of *Autocar* magazine.

Its Bond appearance wouldn't be the car's first time on screen, either, since it had previously appeared in an episode of British TV show, *The Saint*, starring future Bond actor, Roger Moore, that was shown in early 1964.

Aston delivered the car to Pinewood in January the same year. With the gadgets now written into the film's script, despite some reluctance from Stears' staff due to their complexities, there was no going back. "When I first mentioned to the lads my intentions," the special effects expert said in *The Most Famous Car in the World*, "well, their language was rather choice to say the least. Let's just be polite and say they thought I was off my rocker."

The first task of the conversion was the hatch for the car's famous ejector seat. "Ever since I was a small boy, I had wanted to own an Aston Martin," continued Stears, "and here I was drilling holes in the roof of my dream car!"

It's easy to forget now what a big deal this was in 1964. Even Bond showed surprise when Q showed him the car 22 minutes into *Goldfinger*, saying, "An ejector seat? You're joking," to which Q replies, "I never joke about my work 007."

The seat itself was an assembly from a fighter plane and activated by a compressed-air cylinder, which threw a dummy about ten metres up into the air. But since it is significantly larger



Connery stands with a DB5 on the Furka Pass in Switzerland during the filming of *Goldfinger* in July 1964

HISTORY

JAMES BOND'S DB5

than a normal seat, it was only installed for the scene when it was used. In the film it was operated by Bond using a button hidden in the tip of the gearlever that had been specifically designed by Adam.

The bulletproof screen was made from a strong, lightweight alloy called duralumin that was then profiled to the exact contours of the car's rear. After being slotted into two vertical runners, it was then raised through a slot in the boot lid by a hydraulic system, activated by a button on the centre console.

A pair of Browning .30 caliber machine guns were located behind the front indicators, the gunfire simulated by an electric motor that distributed ignited drops of acetylene gas. These then discharged themselves inside the gun barrels.

The tyre cutters were the idea of the film's co-producer, Harry Saltzman, who had been a fan of Ben-Hur. In the film, these were projected at the touch of the button from the wheel centres, but in reality they were simply welded to the wheel hubs and turned in the opposite direction of travel.

Behind the nearside rear light cluster were jets that squirted oil, and smoke canisters sourced from the army that were fired out of the exhaust system to provide a smokescreen to the rear.

There was also a radar scanner in a racing type of wing mirror and a tracking screen in the cockpit. In reality this was a section of a map illuminated by a beam of light beneath the fake radio.

With filming due to start in March 1964, it took Stears and his team just six weeks to design, construct and install the complex series of gadgets into the DB5, which added 300lb to the car's weight. It was then resprayed in Silver Birch since it was the closest colour to the battleship grey of Bond's MkIII in Fleming's book.

It's said the gadgets cost £25,000 to produce, five times the DB5's initial price. Due to its value, the car was deemed too precious to be put through the rigmarole of filming and so Aston

Martin agreed to supply a second standard example, chassis number DB5/1486/R, that was registered FMP 7B.

Whereas its gadget-laden sister had the older four-speed 'box by David Brown, the newer car was fitted with a five-speed manual transmission by German manufacturer, ZF, which, according to Stears made it, "the better of the two".

Plus, due to BMT216A being a hard-worked development hack, it was never in great condition. "It was a real bone shaker," said former Aston sales executive, Mike Ashley, in *The Most Famous Car in the World*.

This second DB5 (called the 'road car' by the film's production team) was used for long shots and high-speed chases that didn't need the gadgets. Although largely identical, it can be identified in *Goldfinger* by not having side indicators on the front wings or the aerial situated by the offside mirror.

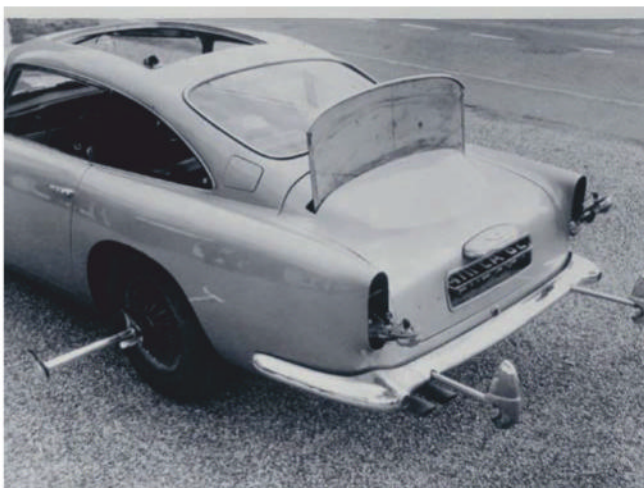
BMT216A (now known as the 'effects car') was saved for the close-ups of Bond actor, Sean Connery, and the scenes when the weapons played a major part of the storyline. These included the tyre slashers damaging the Ford Mustang driven by Tilly Masterton plus when one of Auric Goldfinger's henchman was shot through the roof when Bond fired the injector seat.

The four-month filming process took place at Stoke Park Golf Club in Buckinghamshire and the Furka Pass in Switzerland although the less exotic Pinewood Studios backlot was also used as a substitute for Goldfinger's Swiss factory.

When Heggie visited Pinewood to see the condition of BMT216A after filming had completed in July, he was in for a shock. Parked in a quiet corner of the studio, the once pristine car was in a poor condition. "Looking like a sick dog," is how he describes it in *The Most Famous Car in the World*. "Dusty, dirty, hardly driveable." Since the DB5 was to appear in London's Leicester Square in September for the film's international premier, Heggie quickly arranged for it to be transported back



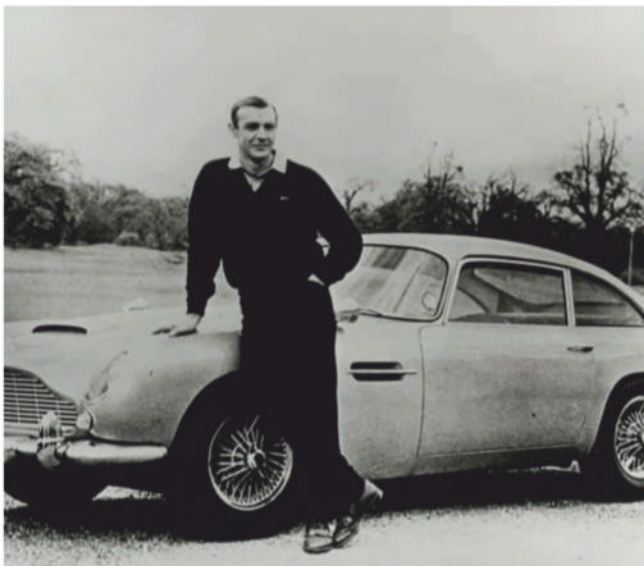
A rare shot of the road (left) and effects cars together during filming of *Thunderball*



The rear over-riders, bulletproof shield, tyre shredders, oil jets and ejector seat hatch.



The effects car on display in London in October 1964



Connery with the DB5 outside Stoke Poges Golf Club that was a location used in Goldfinger

to Newport Pagnell where it was brought back to a roadworthy condition. It was then used for marketing events across the globe including appearing at the Paris Motor Show and a long tour of America.

With the film receiving rave reviews, the car was in huge demand and from Fleet Street to children's TV, BMT216A was everywhere. For the first time in cinematic history, a car became a celebrity in its own right, becoming just as famous as its human counterparts. It's here where the legend of the Bond DB5 really started.

"Hardly a day went by without either head office or our London showrooms receiving a request for the James Bond car to be displayed at or take part at a carnival, school sports day or the like," said one of Aston's salesman at the time, Bob Stevenson, in *The Most Famous Car in the World*. "I must have spent endless Saturdays at these kind of events, being pestered by wide-eyed schoolboys who wanted to see the ejector seat."

To keep up with the demand to see the car, Eon Productions gave the road car similar gadgets to those fitted to BMT216A. It then bought two more identical Silver Birch DB5s – chassis 2008 and 2017 – which were also fully kitted out. Never appearing in any films, this second pair have since become known as the 'press cars'. All three have survived.

Following a brief cameo in the pre-title sequence of the next Bond film, *Thunderball*, from 1965 plus another exhausting marketing schedule, by early 1968 Aston Martin reckoned the road and effects cars had reached the end of their PR potential. BMT216A was disposed of first and in April was returned to Newport Pagnell where it was returned to standard condition. "Removing non-standard equipment and rebuilding as standard DB5," says an Aston Martin works service sheet from the time. Yet strangely, the road car (FMP 7B) was later sold with all its spy equipment still fitted.

Understandably, Stears was angry and confused by this decision. "I will never understand Aston Martin's philosophy in trying to constitute the vehicle into a road going car again," he says in *The Most Famous Car in the World*. "After all the free publicity it had given them, I would have thought they would have put it in a glass case and preserved it forever."

All of the electrical and hydraulic mechanisms were removed and a new boot was fitted to conceal the slot where the bulletproof screen once raised out from. According to Dave Worrall in *The Most Famous Car in the World*, there's no documentation on how Aston's engineers got round the hole in the roof for the ejector seat. When 216 was inspected in the Nineties, the roof showed no signs of the hatch being welded back into place, meaning it was probably fitted with a replacement roof. The car was then given a new coat of Silver Birch paint.

Due to Bond's former DB5 having by now 50k miles on the clock, the grey leather interior was looking worse for wear and so dyed black. By replacing the middle armrest and centre console where the gadget's control panel and radar screen had been located, the car's exciting past was totally removed.

In August 1968, a Kent-based businessman, Gavin Keyzar, contacted Aston Martin about potentially buying a used DB6.

HISTORY

JAMES BOND'S DB5

After being told there weren't any available, he was offered the ex-James Bond DB5 instead. According to Gavin's son, Rupert, it was up for £2,250 but his father managed to knock the price of the most famous car in the world down to £1,800. Although the car came with supporting paperwork from Aston Martin to prove its provenance, the famous BMT216A registration was later transferred to one of the press cars, 2017, and DP/216/1 was given 6633PP instead.

"With my dad being a canny businessman," Rupert tells me, "he said to himself, 'I know what I've got here; I'm going to put the gadgets back into it.' And so with a local coachbuilder and his brother who was an electrical engineer, they reinstated them all."

Rupert says his father used the car regularly, often parking the silver Aston and then changing the numberplates to confuse the wardens. "He definitely had fun with it."

Gavin kept the Bond DB5 until 1972 when, needing the money to buy a house for his growing family, he sold it for £8,000 to Richard Losee, an American jeweller from Utah, who also owned the black and yellow Rolls-Royce Phantom III that appeared in *Goldfinger*. For the next 14 years, Losee exhibited the two cars at events across America, even renting the now clearly tired-looking DB5 to the producers of the 1981 comedy, *The Cannonball Run*, when it was reunited with former *The Saint* actor, Roger Moore, who was also still playing Bond at the time.

When Losee retired in 1986, he entered both the DB5 and Rolls-Royce into a Sotheby's auction when the Aston was bought for \$250,000 by a real estate developer, Anthony Pugliese III. With aspirations to become a film producer, he originally planned for the car to be used in a series of spy films although this eventually came to nothing.

Pugliese kept the car in an airport hangar at the small Boca Raton Airport in Florida where he maintained a collection of pop culture items. These included one of Christopher Reeve's Superman costumes, Harrison Ford's bullwhip from *Indiana Jones* and the black felt bowler hat worn by henchman Oddjob in *Goldfinger*.

With Pugliese's brother-in-law, Robert Luongo, in charge of its schedule, for the next decade the Bond DB5 continued to be exhibited at car shows and museums across the States which helped keep the car as famous as ever.

And then in the dead of night on June 18 1997, thieves tore a security gate off its hinges. After cutting off the hangar door's padlock and disarming the alarm, without the key to open or start the car, a chain must have been fastened to the DB5's axle since two long black tyre marks in the concrete showed it was dragged away.

What happened next is open to conjecture; some reckon it was loaded onto a cargo plane and flown away. Others say it was put on the back of a truck and simply driven through the airport's front gates. Either way, due to the facility being almost deserted at this time of night, the thieves got away with the most famous car in the world without being noticed.

Over a quarter of a century later, those behind the robbery or the reason for it still aren't known. What is known is that the insurance company paid Pugliese in full what the car was valued for at which, thanks to its high profile, had risen to \$4.2m. Today

that number is potentially between \$15m-\$20m, hence why the search for Bond's DB5 has never stopped and there remains a \$100,000 reward for anyone with information that would result in its recovery.

The man now in charge of looking for the car is Christopher Marinello from Art Recovery International that specialises in locating stolen works of art. "I've been working on the case since 2007," he said during a recent interview, "and will continue to do so until the car is recovered, or the title dispute resolved in an amicable, discreet fashion."

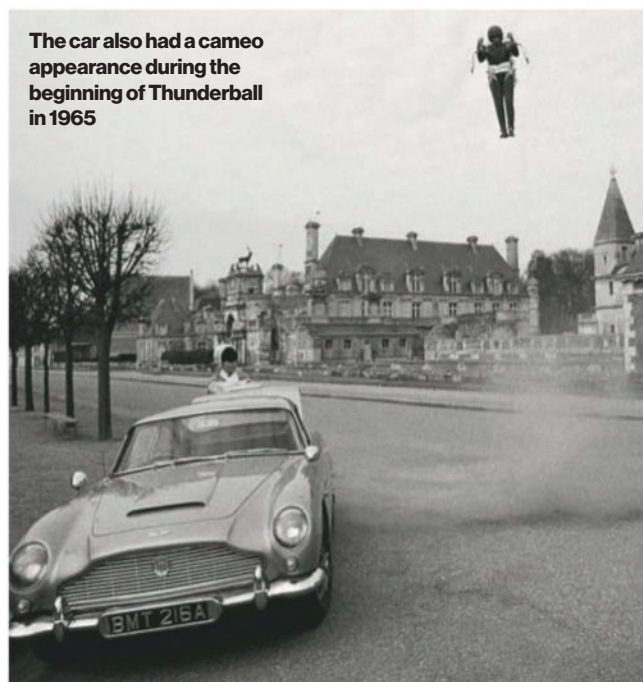
In 2022, Marinello announced he'd finally discovered the car is potentially at an undisclosed 'private setting' somewhere in the Middle East. Despite there being several copies made over the years, its identity as chassis number DP/216/1 has been authenticated by an anonymous but trusted third party.

"We don't know how the car got to where it is currently, but we do have a solid lead and strong verification," continued Marinello. "It is time for someone to suggest a meeting to resolve this dispute."

Yet despite being lost, DP/216/1 continues to have an impact on Bond's cars. His DBS in 2006's *Casino Royale* and the DB10 he used to chase a Jaguar C-X75 across Rome in *Spectre* from 2015 might have been very different cars but as Aston Martins laden with gadgets, they were both clearly influenced by the DB5.

Plus, the DB5 has once again become a central part of Bond films, appearing several times since 1995's *Goldeneye* when it was registered BMT214A. Eight carbon fibre replicas with spaceframe chassis and modern BMW V8s were even made for 007's latest outing, *No Time to Die* from 2021.

Yet these are ultimately nothing but copies. As the original, no matter where it is or its current condition, the 1963 DB5 with chassis number DP/216/1 is the only one that can genuinely claim to be the most famous car in the world. **AMD**



The car also had a cameo appearance during the beginning of *Thunderball* in 1965



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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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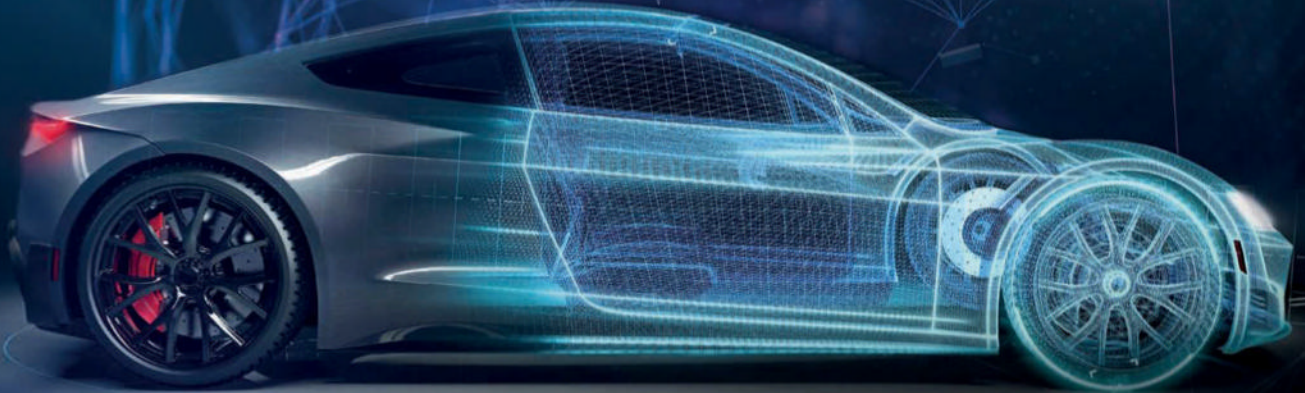
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ASTON MARTIN DB5 WEAK SPOTS

Discover the common problems associated with the DB5 and
how much they can cost to fix

WORDS ROB HAWKINS PHOTOGRAPHY ROBERT GEORGE



A

STONE-CHIPS

Look for bubbling paintwork, often caused by stone-chip damage. If water gets under the paint and into the aluminium underneath, it will corrode and lift the paintwork. Paint repairs may result in a full front-end respray.

B

ACCIDENT DAMAGE OR POOR RESTORATION

Check the gaps between the headlights, indicators, front grille and bonnet are similar on both sides and not excessive. Accident damage or poor restoration work can result in a non-symmetrical front end.



F

FRONT BUMPER

New chromed front bumper costs over £3,000 (excluding fitting). Aston Workshop takes 8-10 hours to fit one. Look out for stainless steel non-original replacements. Check for corrosion and flaky chromework. Rechroming costs over £500.

C

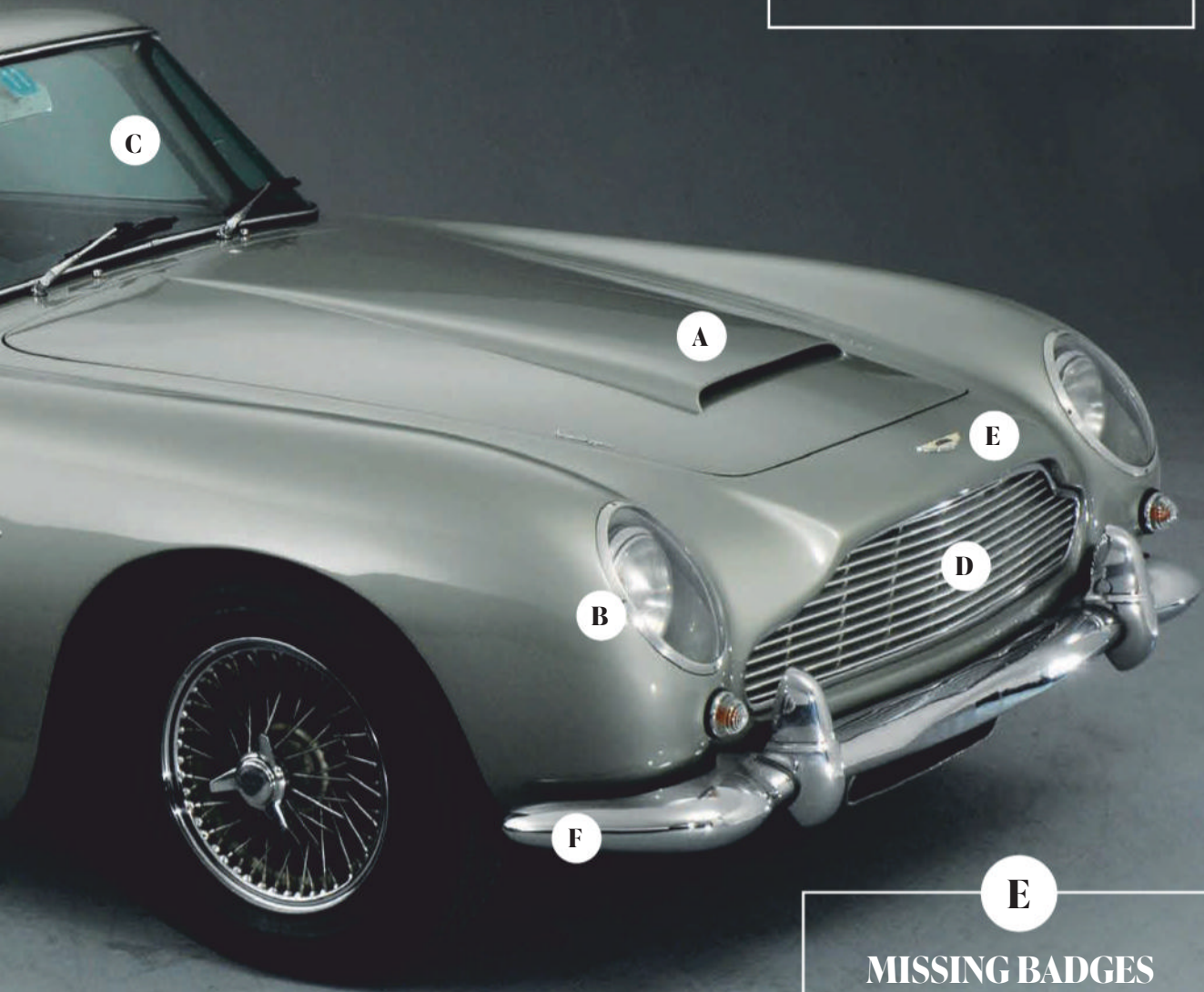
WINDSCREEN

Look for cracks and deep scratches from worn windscreen wipers, along with chips from stones. A replacement windscreen costs over £1,500 and the insert (outer trim) is over £200.

D

FRONT GRILLE

Check for stone-chip damage and missing or broken slats. Repairs may be possible, but otherwise a new grille costs over £1,800.



C

A

E

B

D

F

E

MISSING BADGES

Missing or damaged badges can be expensive to replace, with the bonnet badge at nearly £250. Check what should be present and that it's fitted.

Steel tube framework inside the rear wing area supports the aluminium bodywork, but can corrode or become damaged in the event of an accident.

A

JACKING POINTS

Look underneath for the front and rear steel jacking points. Inspect them for corrosion and make sure they haven't been crushed or damaged.

B

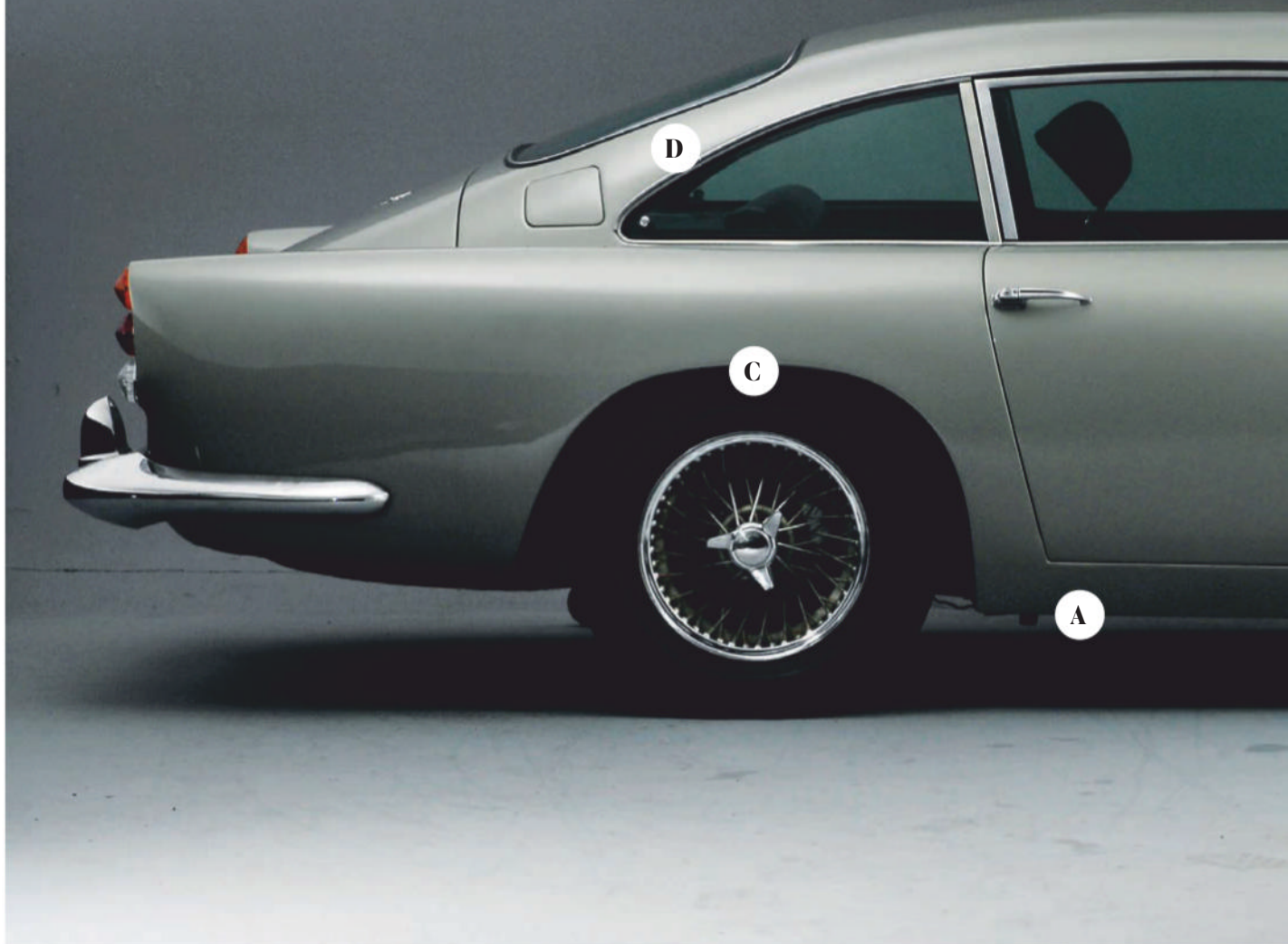
DOOR CORROSION

Feel along the bottom of the aluminium door skins for bubbling paintwork and corrosion.

D

C

A



C

WHEELARCHES

Feel around the wired edge where the aluminium rolls around the wire. This can be a moisture trap and an area of corrosion. Poor repairs will result in a swollen wired edge.

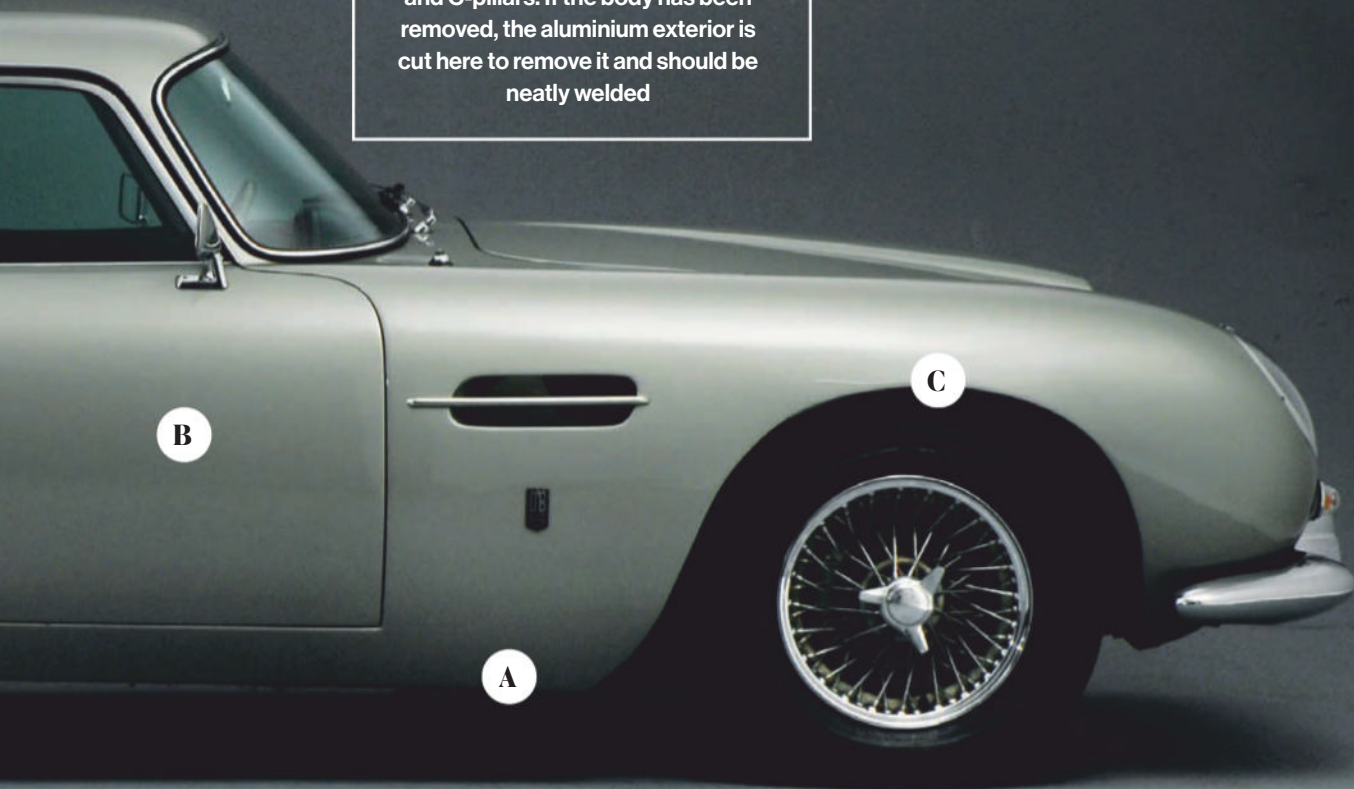
D

CUT LINES

Look for cut lines a couple of inches above the waistline across the A- and C-pillars. If the body has been removed, the aluminium exterior is cut here to remove it and should be neatly welded

DB5 PARTS PRICES

Front or rear brake disc.....	£380
Front brake caliper	£1084
Clutch master cylinder	£172
Windscreen	£1530
Door glass	£694
Door mirror.....	£54
Rear screen	£220
Glass washer bottle and pump	£660
Fuel filter	£10
Set of interior mats	£275
Chrome numberplate surround	£597
Exhaust manifolds.....	£1915
Instrument clock (analogue)	£441
Fuel gauge	£268
Owner's handbook.....	£172
Suspension bush kit	£723/£583 (front/rear)



A

LEAKY & NOISY SALISBURY 4HA

Rear axle oil leaks are often caused by a blocked breather hole or blown seals. Excessive noise from the axle when driving is usually caused by worn components or incorrect halfshaft bearing replacement. Budget from £1,000 for a rebuild (excluding removal and refitting).

B

REAR INNER ARCHES

Steel inner arches can corrode, especially around the radius arm mounts. Aluminium closure panels should have a seal between them and the body to avoid damage to the outer body panel.

C

REAR FRAMEWORK

Steel tube framework inside the rear wing area supports the aluminium bodywork, but can corrode or become damaged in the event of an accident.

D

BOOT FLOOR

Steel boot floor and spare wheel well can corrode. Inspect all steelwork up to the inner wheelarches and rear bulkhead.



E

SILLS

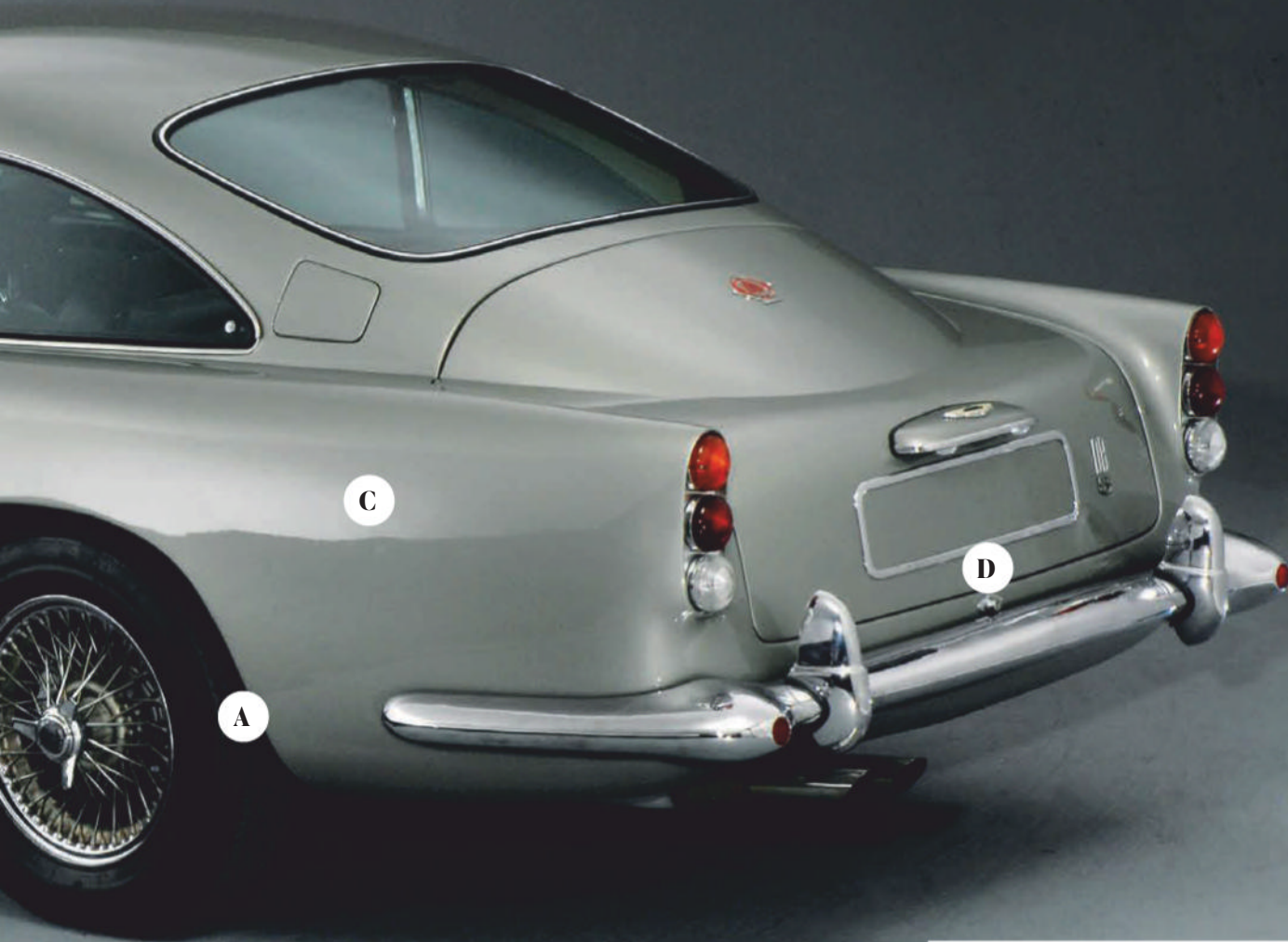
Look for corrosion of the aluminium exterior sills and underneath to where the steel chassis is exposed. Corrosion of both may mean a full strip and rebuild.

F

DROPPED DOORS

Check the gaps around the doors. Open them to check they don't drop and close them gently to ensure the hinges support them. Hinges can wear.

Look underneath for the front and rear steel jacking points. Inspect them for corrosion and make sure they haven't been crushed or damaged



Thanks to: Aston Workshop (01207 268932/www.aston.co.uk)

BUYING

DB5 WEAK SPOTS



A

CORRECT GEARBOX

ZF five-speed manual is the most popular, so check it's genuine and not a modern upgrade, unless that's what you want. Transmission can typically chatter at idle.

B

MISSING SWITCHES

Can be expensive to source, such as an electric window switch at £500-£1,000. Heater controls are similarly pricey.

C

STEEL FLOORS & TUNNEL

Corrosion of steelwork for the floors, propshaft tunnel and inner sills is expensive to repair, often requiring a full or partial strip down.

D

ELECTRICAL ISSUES

Originally positive earth 12-volt, but most are converted to negative. Bad earths, poor repairs and deteriorated wiring cause numerous problems. Budget for over £10,000 for a full rewire.

A

OIL LEAKS

Look for oil leaks from around the camshaft covers, sump and between the engine and gearbox (rear main oil seal).

B

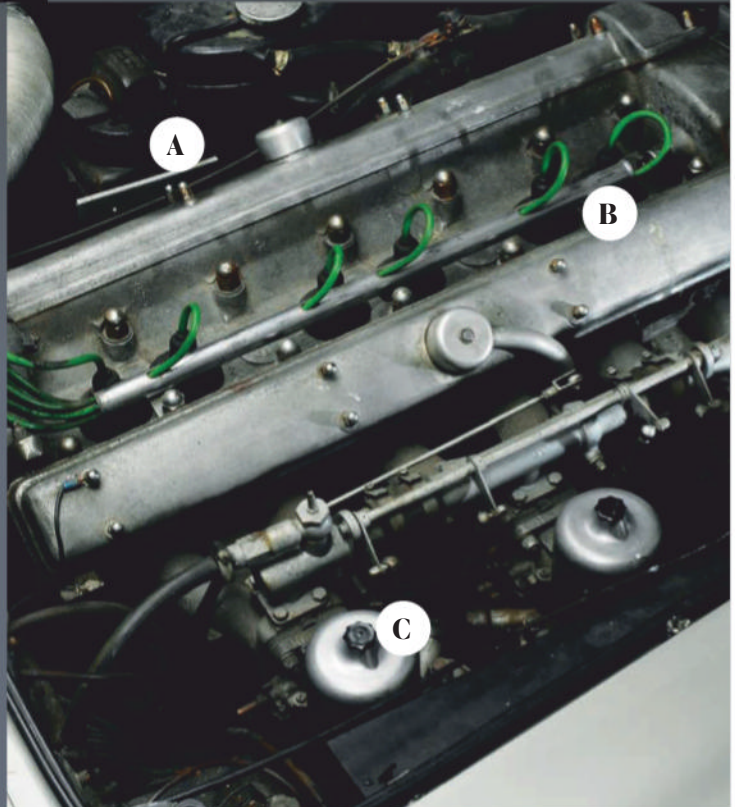
WEEP HOLES

Engine block has weep holes, so look for coolant residue or oil leaks or both (mayonnaise). Be wary if these weep holes have been blocked.

C

COOLING UPGRADES

A bonus if an electric fan, high-flow water pump and aluminium radiator are fitted, but are these masking a silted-up engine and other cooling issues?



A

B

C

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GRAND TOUR



**ASTON
MARTIN DB5**

As a variety of cars we excelled at, there were plenty of British-built grand tourers during the Sixties and one of the best was the Aston Martin DB5. Or did the rarer Bristol 408 offer something more?

WORDS SAM SKELTON PHOTOGRAPHY PAUL WALTON & WILL WILLIAMS

**BRISTOL
408**



THERE IS always a danger, with widely revered experiences and items, that you can lose track of the reality amid the myth. And while there are scores of 'top ten grand tourer' lists out there that put the Aston Martin DB5 squarely in first place, the odds are that some writers have never even sat in a DB5, let alone driven one. The only way to verify

such statements is to test the car – not in isolation, but against period rivals that the would-be Aston Martin owner might have considered as alternative purchases. At over £4,000 in 1963 there are few cars that really stack up – the Jensen CV-8 was 25 percent cheaper, the Gordon Keeble was a new and untried brand produced in tiny numbers, and the Bentley Continental was really too sedate. Jaguar E-type, you say? At under half the price, an Aston fancier would have considered

it beneath him. The Bristol 408 makes for an interesting comparison, though. Like the Aston, it evolved from an earlier model, it was launched in 1963, and replaced with a further evolution after just a few short years. It's also a sporting brand which developed its image throughout the previous decade, and at £4,459 was within ten percent of the DB5's list price of £4,175 at the end of 1963. A fair alternative, then – but which one was the better grand tourer? ►

TWIN TEST

DB5 vs BRISTOL 408

We don't need to discuss the history of the DB5 in depth here – it's already been covered elsewhere in this issue. Suffice it to say that the model was a development of the DB4, fitted with a larger 4.0-litre variant of the Marek six borrowed from the Lagonda Rapide and a five-speed ZF gearbox. Following its 1963 launch, production continued to 1965 when it was replaced by the similar-looking but not as sharp DB6. High-performance Vantage and open-roofed convertible models were offered – and the last of the DB5 chassis were used after production ceased for a new convertible, styled to resemble the DB6, called the Aston Martin Volante.

The Bristol 408 story begins with the 406 model – the first Bristol to use the same broad body shape that would evolve through to the 411 of the mid-Seventies. But it was with the 407 that the die was truly cast. Bristol needed a new engine – its pre-war BMW-derived six no longer being up to the task of sporting motoring. Having tried to develop its own six-cylinder, it tried the 4.0 unit from the Armstrong Siddeley Star Sapphire. But Tony Crook, at the time a shareholder in Bristol, claimed that when Bristol tried to order a Chrysler TorqueFlite transmission, it was told that Chrysler was happy to supply its V8 engine too. Bristol tested the engine, and found it was both capable of high performance and a cost-effective solution – especially given that Bristol ordered engines and transmissions from Canada rather than the States. As Canada is a Commonwealth nation, this meant that the engines and gearboxes were not subject to import duties. The 408 of 1963 incorporated a heavy facelift, abandoning the earlier-type Bristol nose in favour of a large and modern grille with squared indicators either side lending it an almost Italianate flair. Apt, when you consider that the DB5 was the work of the Italians and yet is seen as resolutely British. Early models were 5.1-litre, revised to 5.2-litre by the 408 Mk2 of 1965. This car also incorporated a revision to the push-button transmission, to prevent the unwary from moving the car into gear at rest.

Bristol also launched the 409 in 1965 – a model intended to replace the 408, but which sat alongside it until the 408 ceased production in 1966. It would incorporate

an alternator, a mildly restyled nose and softer springing alongside optional power steering.

Two different takes on a similar market, then – both evolutions of an earlier model, and both replaced by softer models. But which one is the better grand tourer?

Let's consider the two on their aesthetic merits first. And while the word may perhaps be overused in the press, the fact remains that the Aston Martin DB5 is an iconic shape. The cowed headlamps speak of aggression, the pronounced and square-edged waistline still looks rakish, while the glasshouse's lines suggest that at least lip service had been paid to aerodynamic ability. From the rear, it's a similar story – the complex curvature of the boot lid reminds you just how many working hours went into this car when new, as well as hiding a useful amount of luggage space. Little details like the wing vents are now commonplace but would have been seen as an especially neat feature in 1963. And the Florida Blue paintwork only serves to set it off further. It's not original; this car left the factory in Goodwood Green – but it was in its Florida Blue iteration that it was used as the basis for Airfix's DB5 kit. This car therefore has no doubt contributed in its own way to the childhood dreams of scores of Aston hopefuls. In Florida Blue or Goodwood Green, it makes a refreshing change from the now ubiquitous Silver Birch.

Likewise, our Bristol's colour combination is not standard. It's believed to have been grey when it left the factory, though time has not recorded the precise shade. It was resprayed in white, at the behest of its first owner, at just two years old, and would subsequently gain a vinyl roof to allow its Tudor Webasto sunroof to blend in. It was also formerly the property of noted actor Sir Christopher Lee, though it's not known whether the Webasto had been fitted prior to his purchase. And while white might not have been my first choice of colour on paper, in the metal it serves to accentuate the Italianate looks of the 408. The Hillman Minx taillights are well integrated into the shape, which is more upright than the Aston and larger in general. Its squared-off shape is less rakish, but no less attractive for it. On cosmetic appeal, the Aston has





TWIN TEST

DB5 vs BRISTOL 408





it – but only by a whisker. The differences between the two continue on the inside. Our Aston's upholstery has a beige interior, which highlights the contrast between the leather and the black finish of the dashboard. It's not quite a gloss finish, but nor is it satin – it's reflective of light and materials but not in a way that will cause issues at speed. You sit behind a bank of seven gauges, with a well-stocked centre console incorporating air distribution controls and a radio. The big steering wheel with its wood rim and three spokes looks the part, as do the three organ pedals in the footwell. But for the larger driver, it's harder to get in and out than you might expect. I'm a long-legged 6ft 1in, and there isn't space between the pedals and steering wheel for my legs when I get in. Some mild contortion later and I can drive, but in order to reach the wheel properly I have to adopt a splay-legged position that I can't help feeling would be wearing over time. Shut the door and it's up against your side – while I'd stop short of suggesting that the DB5 is a cramped car, it's certainly not a car given to excesses of space.

The Bristol is a different story. Again, there are seven instruments ahead of the driver, but now they're nestled in one of the finest pieces of lacquered burr walnut you could find this side of the Chippendale workshop. And the wood continues behind the binnacle and across the full width of the car, with door cappings and a dash top rail made of the same stuff. The Dove Grey leather and blue carpets work well together, and it's awash with nice little details. The steering wheel, for instance, has little fluted finger rests atop the two spokes – while selection of Drive on the automatic transmission is made with little organ keys sitting to the right of the main instrument binnacle. There's a lot more space in here than there is in the Aston – space, in fact, for four adults north of six foot to travel in comfort. It almost feels like an unfair comparison at this stage – should we have compared the Bristol with the Lagonda Rapide instead? But it's still a two-door tourer, and on the road we might find more similarity between the 408 and the DB5. Time to find out.

We're in the Bristol, so we'll take that first. Turn the key, select D using the organ keys, and we're off. The steering is heavier

than we might have expected – but then, this is a large car upon which power steering was never an option. It's not the sharpest steering, but this is a gentleman's grand tourer rather than a sports car. You sit upright, almost akin to a saloon car, and the suspension is pleasantly compliant. It's only when you put your foot down and the 5.1-litre V8 comes to life that you realise that this is a little more than your average large and comfortable saloon car. And once it wakes up, it starts to feel a little more sporting with it. You're always aware of its size, but the more confident you get the more you realise that it actually corners rather well. The brakes on our test car weren't as good as they should have been – we suspect that the servo was failing – but with sufficient effort the brakes were impressively good. Custodian Guy Hinchley, who brought the car to our shoot, believes that with a working servo the brakes are almost up to modern standards, and we're inclined to believe him. So far our driving impressions have been objective – but there is a subjective side to the Bristol too. A car like this makes you feel a little smug – like you know something that the wider world doesn't. And it's especially true of the Bristol given its rarity and relative obscurity. Driving it is a special experience.

Now, let's be clear on this, we're not saying that driving a DB5 is anything less than special. But there's a lot of hype surrounding both the marque and the model – you will not find anybody in the Western world who is unaware of exactly what this car is and how good it is supposed to be. The subjective aspect of the experience is therefore different – while you know that everyone else knows how good it is, the pleasure here is to be derived from the fact that you are actually experiencing it first hand and living out every small child's fantasy.

The steering is sharper than in the Bristol, and the overall experience is much more like a sports car – though in examples with worn steering rack bushes it's possible to feel a little chatter through the wheel on uneven surfaces. Put your foot down and snick your way up the accurate-feeling gate of the ZF 'box and this car is noticeably faster than the Bristol – but its in-gear acceleration can't match

TWIN TEST

DB5 vs BRISTOL 408



the torque of the larger V8 in the 408. Yet somehow, and despite torque being a defining part of the GT experience, it doesn't seem to matter much. In the DB5 you find yourself wanting to seek out the twistier route, playing with that beautiful gearbox and direct steering and making the most of the throttle before you have to brake again. It's a much more engaging car to drive than the Bristol is, but is that enough to ensure victory in this test?

I'd hoped to write this twin test without

any reference to the gadget-laden Silver Birch elephant in the DB5's room. But editor Paul Walton summed up the difference between these two cars well when he suggested that James Bond may have had the Aston, but Q would have driven home at the end of the day in a Bristol 408 instead. It may be less dynamic, but it's more separate, more exclusive, and equally traditional. And – while I know Paul disagrees – those qualities help to make the Bristol my victor.

It goes without saying that the Aston Martin DB5 is a special car. Even without its cinematic history, Aston Martin would almost certainly have sold as many, and they would be just as desired by classic car enthusiasts today – it offers a near unique mix of sporting prowess and style that would have been hard to match in period. When it came to finding an alternative for our test we struggled, not least because so few cars offer a similar blend of abilities. And with the





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TWIN TEST

DB5 vs BRISTOL 408



pairing we have here, it's true that the Aston is the prettier and more engaging to drive of the two. But as a grand tourer, I think the Bristol is ultimately the more accomplished car. There is undoubtedly more space in the Bristol; front, rear and in the boot – a boon for long-distance touring. The suspension settings are more conducive to crossing continents in comfort. And while it is objectively less powerful than the Aston, its power delivery is more effortless for long-distance cruising. The DB5 is better suited to the Alpine pass, but the Bristol just gets on with the autoroutes making international travel a breeze. And while it's less pretty and less engaging on a twisty

B-road than the Aston, it's hard to avoid the difference in values today. In period, the Bristol was around ten percent more expensive than the Aston – and I can certainly see why that hurdle would have made the less sporting and arguably less pretty Bristol seem like a poor choice. There is a reason why Aston Martin sold over 1,000 DB5s and Bristol sold just 83 of its 408s, after all. But even that price differential no longer counts in Aston Martin's favour, with the DB5 buyer able to buy ten or twelve 408s for the same money.

There are areas in which the Bristol is a better car and areas where it is worse than the DB5 – but even in the areas

where the DB5 is better, it's not so much better as to warrant the considerable difference in value. I'll take the Bristol and the half a million in change please – and with careful investment of the latter, I'll let the interest pay for grand tours of my own every few years.

But if the pull of the legend is too strong to resist, and you can afford it, I'd understand if you went for the DB5 instead. **AMD**

● **Thanks to: Guy Hinchley and Ian Gatiss for supplying the Bristol plus Classic Motor Hub (www.classicmotorhub.com) for the Aston Martin where the car can be seen for sale**



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POWER TOOL

WORDS & PHOTOGRAPHY PAUL WALTON



To aid development of the Tadek Marek-designed V8, Aston Martin produced a one-off DB5/DB6 hybrid in early 1966 that was powered by the new unit. Despite being a well-used prototype, the car survived and we've driven it



HISTORY

DB5 V8





THIS IS a car that shouldn't exist for two very important reasons. Firstly, Aston Martin never officially produced a V8 version of the DB5. And secondly, as a development mule it would normally have been destroyed once its work was over. Yet here it is, a Newport Pagnell-built V8 version of Aston's most famous model. Although the car breaks all the rules, it still represents an important and specific moment in Aston Martin's history.

The reason behind the car's existence is simple. When Aston needed to test the new V8 designed by Polish engineer, Tadek Marek, in early 1966, it produced a unique car using mainly surplus parts.

Newport Pagnell's experimental department took a DB6 platform, removed the rear end and created a new one that would accept either a live axle – which Aston had used since the Fifties – or the De Dion arrangement which was being assessed for the future DBS model. "Some deepish thought went into that backend to give us that facility," said Bill Bannard during a recent interview about the car, who at the time of its construction was with Aston Martin's experimental department.

Leftover DB5 panels then clothed the chassis but since the 6 was 4in longer, it needed extra bodywork between the door and rear wheelarch. Even more confusingly, a grille from a DB4 was used presumably because there was one in the workshop. "A real mongrel," is how Bill describes the car. He goes on to say it was still fully painted and properly presentable, but it was never intended to be an attractive motor car and so was not polished.

An early version of the V8 was then shoehorned under the bonnet in a space originally designed for the straight-six. As Bill says, getting the engine into place took, "An awful lot of patience." He went on to say that the biggest issue due to the lack of room was getting the exhaust manifolds to fit, especially since Newport Pagnell didn't have a pipe-bending machine. "We obtained two stacks of bends," he continued, "and the first manifold we put on the car were five or six pieces welded together."

As the first prototype to be built at Aston's Newport Pagnell factory, it was given the chassis number 001/D/P.

The car was ready in March 1966 when it was registered NPP 7D (according



HISTORY

DB5 V8



to Bill, NPP was for Newport Pagnell Prototype). His surviving handwritten logbook shows it was regularly driven by the great and good of Aston Martin, from its chief designer, Harold Beach and Marek himself to William Towns, the designer of the DBS.

Bill drove the car the most though. "Enormous fun – but lethal," was how he describes it today. Needing to put as many miles on the engine as possible, the DB5 V8 would be driven between 350 and 400 miles a day but usually close to the Newport Pagnell factory in case of an issue and never using the same roads twice. "I was doing a little bit more than the legal speed that was required," explains Bannard.

For the next three years the car was used to assess different variations of the V8, including 4.8, 5.0 and the eventual 5.3 litres. It was driven to Germany to have fuel injection by Bosch fitted plus Italy for Weber carburettors of both IDA and DCOE design, the former necessitating a much larger bonnet bulge.

"It was a very nice, docile motor," continues Bill, "that gave 80 or so more horsepower than the current DB6 and could be quite exciting when pushed."

As a development mule, it had no

ventilation system meaning it became incredibly hot inside, yet Bill reckons this was actually a positive. "It relieved us of the problem of putting that sophistication into the car and it stopped many people wanting to borrow it since they didn't want to deal with those problems."

Even after the focus had moved on to the V8 version of the DBS in the late Sixties, the prototype was still occasionally used. "If one had to go somewhere and it was available and you wanted a bit of fun, well, hey, what a nice way to enliven the day!" laughs Bill.

His logbook finishes with a handwritten note saying it was destroyed in January 1969 yet somehow it escaped the crusher albeit with a straight-six and live rear axle. It was sold via a London-based Aston Martin specialist, Vic Brass, and was later owned by the well-known racing car preparer, Dave Reece, who together with advice from Bill, refitted a De Dion rear axle plus a 5.3-litre V8. The car was then entered into the Birkett 6 Hour race at Silverstone during the Nineties when it eventually retired whilst battling with a DB4 because of seized brakes.

The DB5 V8 was restored later in the decade by renowned marque experts, RS Williams, who carried out a three-





year rebuild on behalf of the then owner, transforming the car from a rough-and-ready prototype to something close to what a production version could have been like. Among the changes, 16in wheels were fitted because due to the power of the early V8 (352bhp and 402lb ft), it kept breaking its 15in originals.

After spending two decades in storage on the island of Jersey, it was sold in 2022 via well-known Aston Martin specialist, Nicholas Mee, to Bryan Webb, a lifelong enthusiast of the marque. Bryan contacted the magazine earlier this year due to DB5 V8 being mentioned in issue five of *AMD* during the Tadek Marek biography. "You should really come and try it for real," he said.

I didn't need to be asked twice.

Resplendent in its Pacific Blue paint and dripping in bright chrome, the car would turn heads even without its unique position in Aston's history. It's only when I look closely do I notice the car's proportions have changed a little due to being 4in longer plus being wider due to the arches that have been teased out slightly. Together with its large oil cooler under the correct DB5 style of grille, plus a lack of bumpers and a more prominent bonnet bulge, the changes give the

car a much beefier appearance than a standard example. When Bryan lifts the bonnet, squeezed in the engine bay – and I do mean squeezed – is a V8. It's not the original of course; it was fitted with many development versions of Marek's V8 during its time as a test hack, all of which will have been destroyed. More used to seeing the unit in the later AM V8 range, it looks as out of place in a DB5 as a diesel would in the rear of a Formula One car.

Considering its current telephone number value, I'm extremely honoured when Bryan offers me the driver's seat. As a result of its thorough restoration over two decades ago, I doubt the now beautifully trimmed interior would have looked this good when the car was still used as a test hack. It appears largely standard until Bryan points out the speedo that finishes at 200mph, 20mph over standard which, like Clark Kent revealing a little of the Superman logo under his suit, gives a hint of the car's so-far hidden potential.

There's no denying its character when the V8 loudly bursts into life before settling down to a deep, meaty burble. Thanks to its size and power, the car rocks from side to side on tickover reminding me of the Jensen CV-8 my father owned when ▶

HISTORY

DB5 V8

I was a child. With a light clutch and the responsiveness of the engine, the car is surprisingly easy to drive. I initially find the five-speed transmission with a dog leg first is stiff and notchy, but this becomes easier with speed.

And then on a long, empty road, I snick the 'box down to third, and squeeze the throttle hard. The V8 responds instantly, the hardness of the acceleration genuinely taking me by surprise. Considerably lighter than the later AM V8s I've driven, it's certainly faster and more responsive than its newer descendants.

It does lose a little of the standard DB5's refinement, though, feeling as raw as a Sixties British GT with an American V8 such as that CV-8 or a Gordon Keeble. Little wonder Bryan says the car has forever ruined standard DB5s for him and he now finds them too slow by comparison.

A lairy hot rod it might be but with perfectly weighted and nicely damped steering, it handles like the thoroughbred sports car the DB5 always was. Remaining stable through fast corners, it allows me to exit the bend at speed before nailing the throttle to once again feel the full force of the V8.

What surprises me the most about the car, though, is how well the DB6 platform copes with the extra power of the 5.3-litre. Heavy acceleration doesn't unsettle it and neither do fast corners.

It's a truly remarkable car and I can't help but think if a V8 version had reached production then the DB5 could have been seen as the UK's first genuine supercar. Certainly, due to all that power, James Bond wouldn't have needed so many gadgets to defeat Goldfinger's henchmen but rather just put his foot down.

Yet there's more to the car than just speed. As the first Aston Martin to feature Tadek Marek's V8, it represented the company's future fortunes and a link between the David Brown era and the late Eighties when the final car to use the engine in its original guise, the AM V8 Series V, was produced.

The car might not supposed to have survived or even exist but thanks to its speed, performance, and positive impact on Aston Martin, I'm still very glad it does. **AMD**

● Thanks to: The car's owner, Bryan Webb



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TWIN TEST

DB7 3.2 vs XJS 4.0

SIBLING

WORDS AND PHOTOGRAPHY: PAUL WALTON



DB7 3.2

RIVALRY

Despite coming from two different manufacturers, by sharing much below the surface, the DB7 and Jaguar XJS are closely related. We compare a straight six-engined example of each to discover which of these surprising siblings we prefer



XJS 4.0

IT'S SURPRISING how many of us have unexpected relatives. Former American presidents Barack Obama and George W Bush, for example, are apparently tenth cousins while the comedian, Josh Widdicombe, is a descendant of the 14th century British monarch, King Edward I. Even more amazingly, my wife is said to be related to Sir Isaac Newton.

Yet perhaps the most unexpected family members are the Aston Martin DB7

and Jaguar XJS. Despite being as different in character and image as my wife is from a 17th century astronomer, physicist, and mathematician, with one heavily based on the other, they aren't so much distant relatives as non-identical twins.

But like all siblings, with their production overlapping by a couple of years, it made the pair rivals. So, like choosing between two very different but unexpectedly related American politicians, which of these automotive siblings do we prefer today? ►

TWIN TEST

DB7 3.2 vs XJS 4.0

The reason for this association is simple; the DB7 started life in the late Seventies as a Jaguar, an XJ40-based sports car project that would have eventually replaced the XJS. Internally known as the XJ41, it was the work of Jaguar designer, Keith Helfet, who was (and still is) unashamedly influenced by the company's most iconic model, the E-type, meaning it had a very classic look compared to the many wedge-shaped models of the era such as the BMW M1, Ferrari 308 GT4 and the Lotus Esprit.

"For me, the origami styling fashion from the mid-Seventies was completely unappealing," he said during a 2018 interview about the car. "I don't do square lines; I do flowing sculpture and that's what Jaguars are about."

Despite ten years of constant development, due to its increasingly complicated specification which later included a turbocharged engine and all-wheel drive, the XJ41 was canned in 1989 by Jaguar's then new owner, Ford, due to rising development costs.

Keith was naturally devastated by the decision. "I was distraught, I was absolutely gutted. It had all gone so sour and I was really upset about it," he continued.

Not a man to give up, he later realised the hard points of both the XJ41 and XJS were the same, meaning the body of the new car would fit onto the chassis of the older one, so his design could be resurrected at a fraction of the original cost. Jaguar's engineering director, Jim Randle, brought up the proposed project at the next board meeting of JaguarSport (a satellite company owned 50/50 between Jaguar and Tom Walkinshaw Racing). The independent motorsport team that had taken Jaguar back to the winner's circle of the Le Mans 24 Hours, was also in the process of building the company's XJ220 supercar. Walkinshaw himself saw the potential of the XJS-based XJ41 and agreed to take the reborn car on when it became known as Project XX.

Unbeknown to Keith, Jim and everyone else at Jaguar, Walkinshaw later approached Ford's senior executives suggesting if the car was badged as an Aston Martin – which the American company had also bought in 1987 – it



could be sold for a much higher price. The American giant readily agreed to the plan, securing the car's future pedigree. When Jaguar heard about this, though, it quickly became known as 'Project Double Cross'. Although the car would be assembled at the former JaguarSport facility located outside Bloxham where the XJ220 had been produced, Aston soon rechristened it NPX, which stood for Newport Pagnell Experimental.

The design remained largely as per the XJ41 although TWR's chief designer, Ian Callum, added the familiar Aston Martin radiator grille. "I did a complete review of the DB7's predecessors to determine the styling cues that make an Aston an Aston," said Callum in the June 1993 issue of *Automobile* magazine. "To get the 'atmosphere' right, I focused on the DB4, the DB5 and DB6. They are the most successful Astons, visually, and the ones people remember most. I wanted to design something that has its own personality but evokes their honesty and integrity without being a pastiche."

Despite the change of pedigree, the chassis and suspension (double





wishbones at the front with lower wishbones and driveshafts acting as upper links at the back) remained largely as per the XJS. Even the engine was Jaguar-sourced, a 3.2-litre version of the company's by now elderly AJ6 straight-six unit that first saw the light of day as a 3.6 in 1983. Not only did this keep development costs down but it fulfilled the desire of Aston's then chairman, Walter Hayes, for a six-cylinder since it was the same as those used by the company's iconic past models.

To create lots of usable torque from a high-revving, short stroke engine but minus the lag associated with turbos, it was fitted with a supercharger sourced from an American automotive engineering specialist, Eaton. This raised the power to 335bhp resulting in a 157mph top speed and a 0-60mph time of 5.8 seconds, putting the car's performance on a par with the BMW 850 CSi, Mercedes-Benz SL500 and the Porsche 911.

The engine and chassis weren't the only components that were recycled since much of the car was also sourced from

With its bold proportions, the XJS was always a good-looking car, but the new plastic bumpers and modern alloys made it more so



TWIN TEST

DB7 3.2 vs XJS 4.0

companies both within and outside of Ford's empire. The rear light clusters and chromed door handles, for example, are both from the Mazda 323 while the wing mirrors came from the Citroën CX. The electrical and ventilation systems came from Jaguar.

Yet Walkinshaw remained unrepentant about this heavy parts sharing. "There was never any talk of designing a car that was brand new from the ground up," continued the Scot in *Automobile* magazine. "It was essential to use components available in the Ford family."

None of that mattered, though, when the finished model made its debut at the 1993 Geneva Motor Show and the critics were swayed by its handsome looks. "Subjective an issue as taste maybe, the new Aston's aesthetics are inescapable" said *Motorsport* magazine when it finally experienced a car for its December 1994 issue. "Its proportions are exquisite, its purpose unmistakable."

The eventual name also did much to hide the car's outsourced origins; by christening it the DB7, it instantly linked the new model to its iconic predecessors.

The company's former owner, David Brown, was apparently very happy by the decision. "I am of course delighted and very honoured that the new Aston Martin should be designated a 'DB,'" he wrote in a 1993 letter to Walter Hayes. "From what I have seen of it, I am sure it will be a world beater and more than worthily uphold the 'DB' tradition."

Yet it wasn't cheap. At £78,500, when the DB7 went on sale a year after its Geneva debut, it was £40k more expensive than the XJS 4.0 and five grand over the cost of the Porsche 928 GTS. But importantly, it was almost £100k less than the existing and still largely handmade Vantage, positioning Aston Martin in a new, more mainstream market for the first time.

When I open the driver's door of this 1997 example, it's difficult to understand

how Aston dared to charge so much. The switchgear is clearly sourced from Ford resulting in the same plasticky atmosphere as a Scorpio, while the thin and cheap-looking veneer isn't an integral part of the dash like it is in the XJS but simply stuck onto the central console with holes for the ventilation controls. Plus, admittedly this example has done 97k miles, but it hasn't worn well with much of the leather fraying in places or even coming apart due to poor stitching.

Despite the healthy 335bhp from the engine, because of the slow and lazy nature of the four-speed automatic fitted to this example, I have to give the throttle a proper shove for it to kick down and generate any kind of purposeful response from the engine. Admittedly, the resultant acceleration feels strong, more so than the XJS's 4.0, but due to the

When I open the driver's door of this 1997 example, it's difficult to understand how Aston dared to charge so much





rough and raucous noise coming from the engine, pushing the DB7 hard is never a pleasurable experience. This lack of refinement might have been acceptable in the Eighties when the engine was new, but by the following decade it must have made the car feel incredibly old-fashioned, especially for one that cost close to £80k.

Where the DB7 comes into its own is the handling. With taut, well-damped suspension, it remains composed at all times which with the perfectly weighted steering results in a car that feels like a genuine sports car. The downside is a firmer ride than its Jaguar sibling, picking up imperfections in the road that the XJS would have glided over.

Yet for all its faults, the DB7 is still a hugely likeable car with massive amounts of character. Plus it has rarity on its side, too; just 2,473 3.2s were produced compared to 21,702 XJS 4.0s, although this does have an impact on their values. A DB7 3.2 coupe, similar to the example featured, is worth between £20k-£25k, a

good ten to fifteen grand over an XJS 4.0.

But just as when the car was new, is it worth the extra money over its Jaguar relation?

With Aston Martin taking over Project XX, Jaguar no longer had a replacement for the XJS which by 1990 was 15 years old. Other than a minor facelift in the early Eighties, that had seen the introduction of a slightly more economical version of the thirsty 5.3-litre V12 – the HE – plus the 3.6-litre straight-six (AJ6) and a more traditional interior where wood replaced the harsh black vinyl of the original, the car remained almost as when it first went on sale in the mid-Seventies.

While Jaguar's engineers developed a largely brand-new model, the eventual XK8 from 1996, the short-term solution was to give the XJS a major £50m facelift. Although the car's overall design didn't change, it resulted in several detailed updates which included a flatter roofline, the deletion of the front quarter lights and window surrounds plus new rectangular

smoked rear lights. The bodywork also benefitted from a new manufacturing process at Jaguar's Castle Bromwich plant. Of the 490 panels it took to build an XJS bodyshell, 180 were changed to improve build quality. For example, the original wings were made up of five different pressings all individually welded together, but in the new car they were manufactured in a single pressing.

Inside, the unusual 'tumbler' style of dials of the original were replaced with traditional circular gauges taken from the XJ40 saloon, plus there was updated switchgear.

Together with new lattice-style wheels, updated exterior colours and interior trim plus a 4.0-litre version of the AJ6 that now produced 223bhp, it brought the XJS into the new decade. "The changes have made it look smarter from most angles," was the view of *Autocar* magazine in 1991.

The XJS was given another minor update in 1993, which saw new colour-coded plastic bumpers that arguably made it more contemporary. But more importantly, there was also a new version of the 4.0, the AJ16 from June 1994, that had a new cylinder head and block, revised cam profiles, a higher compression ratio with new pistons, lightweight valve gear plus new sequential fuel injection, all designed to improve the engine's performance and durability. With another 18bhp over the 4.0-litre AJ6, the car's 0-60mph time dropped to 6.9 seconds while economy improved by 5.9 percent to 24.3mpg.

Despite the car being by now close to two decades old and in terms of its design and interior packaging clearly old-fashioned compared to newer models, these changes helped it to remain relatively popular and in 1994 6,918 examples of all varieties were produced. Admittedly at under £40k the car was more affordable compared to some of its rivals, the DB7 especially, but judging by this handsome Flamenco Red 4.0-litre example, cheap or not, it's still easy to understand that number.

With its big, bold proportions, the XJS was always a good-looking car, but the new plastic bumpers and modern style of alloys made it more so. Although I'd argue the DB7 is prettier, there's no denying ►

TWIN TEST

DB7 3.2 vs XJS 4.0



the XJS has real presence, aided in no small part by those unique and always controversial buttresses located behind the rear screen.

Admittedly this pristine XJS has a mere 25,000 miles on the clock, but the Jaguar's interior is better built than the DB7's. Not only is the quality of the plastics better and the veneer thicker, but there's less obvious reliance on Ford parts. And although clearly old-fashioned, it makes no apologies for that and unlike the Aston isn't trying to be anything else.

It always amazes me how little room the XJS's cabin offers for such a large car. Not only are the rear seats unusable but even the front can feel tight, more so than the DB7 due to the shape of the glass area.

With the XJS's straight-six producing 241bhp, 94 less than the DB7's supercharged 3.2, acceleration can best be described as sedate, reaching 60mph in a fairly lethargic eight seconds. Pressing the sport button on the gearlever surround helps a little, allowing the engine to rev harder until the four-speed ZF-sourced automatic gearbox changes up. Yet it never feels as sprightly as the DB7, the normally aspirated unit never as eager to deliver its power as the supercharged version. It's more refined, though, and squeezing the throttle hard doesn't result in the same deafening roar as the DB7's 3.2.

Where the XJS really comes into its own is the suspension. Supple enough to absorb the worst that the poor state

of our roads has to offer yet still having a firmness to control body roll enabling me to take corners reasonably quickly. Although at 1,612kg it's 138kg lighter than the DB7, it doesn't feel as agile, which together with the overly assisted steering means it's never a true sports car like the Aston gets close to being. Despite the many updates and changes of engine the XJS had over the years, the car still ended as it started, as an old-fashioned grand tourer.

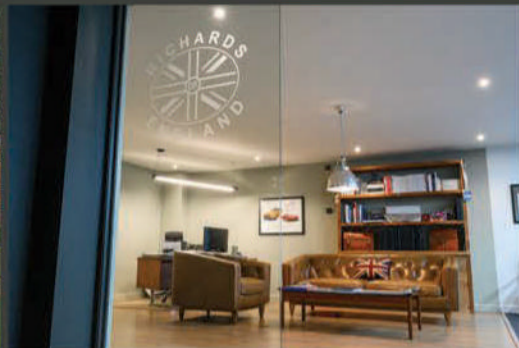
It's clear by this example that even at the end of its production the XJS remained a highly desirable and sought-after car. But is it special enough to take on the rarer, prettier, and more performance-focused DB7? ►





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TWIN TEST

DB7 3.2 vs XJS 4.0

I make no apologies that I openly admit to loving both of these models. The XJS is a car I have admired since I was a child and have considered buying one several times. Plus the DB7 featured here is AMD's own project car and during the many hours spent behind the wheel I've come to fully appreciate how special the model is. An exciting, late night drive thundering down the A1 following the photoshoot in Yorkshire with the V12 GT featured in issue six will remain with me forever.

Yet in my view there's one clear winner out of the two – the XJS. As engaging as the Aston Martin can be to drive, in terms of refinement and build quality, it can't compete with the Jaguar. The DB7 might be prettier, but its

poor build quality and dated engineering counteracts those good looks. The XJS clearly isn't be perfect but it's less of a compromise than its parts bin special Bloxham sibling.

Plus, I can't ignore their current values. Although £25k is cheap for an Aston Martin, especially compared to the six-figure sums of its famous DB predecessors, by coming from the same lineage as the iconic E-type, ten grand makes the XJS 4.0 arguably more so.

So as closely connected as the two cars are, as my wife's relationship to Newton shows, being related doesn't always result in being similar. **AMD**

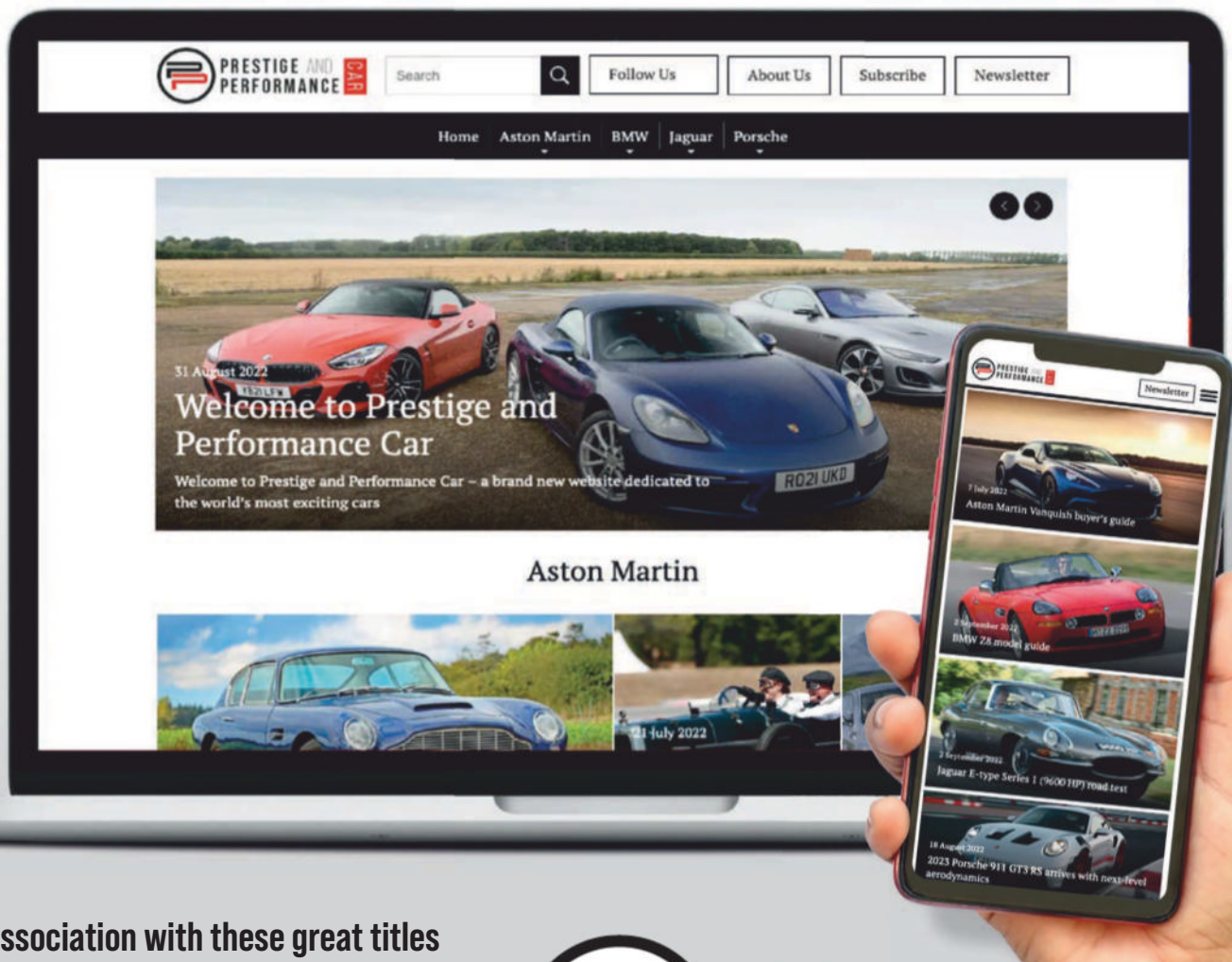
● **Thanks to: Owner of the XJS 4.0 featured here, Ian Collier**



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V8 VANTAGE BUYING GUIDE

Can you afford to buy, run and repair a 4.3- or 4.7-litre V8-powered Vantage that was manufactured between 2005 and 2017? Find out the answers with our comprehensive buying guide.

WORDS ROB HAWKINS



THE V8 Vantage produced between 2005 and 2017 can look far too tempting on paper: a sub-five seconds 0–60mph time with a top speed of between 174mph and 190mph, a dry-sump'd quad-cam 4,280cc or 4,735cc all-aluminium V8 engine mated to a six-speed manual gearbox or a six- or eight-speed semi-automatic Sportshift, bonded aluminium bodywork and resale values that start from around £25k.

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exhilarating performance and handling this supercar boasted when it was new and why it worried the likes of the Porsche 911.

Based on Aston Martin's VH Platform, rumblings of the V8 Vantage appeared as a concept car in 2003 at the North American International Auto Show. Two years later, it was officially launched at Geneva as a coupe with prices starting at £79,995.

By 2007, the convertible was added to the model line-up, which were all powered by a 4,280cc V8 engine that had been derived from Jaguar's AJV8 motor but was equipped with numerous components exclusive to Aston Martin (the engine was code-named AJ37). The displacement was increased to 4,735cc in May 2008 and so all models are now

classed as having either a 4.3 or 4.7 V8 engine.

The early V8 Vantage was criticised by the press as needing to be revved hard to get the most out of its performance (peak power of 385bhp was found at 7,000rpm and peak torque of over 300lb ft required 5,000rpm from the engine), so Aston Martin was seemingly always tweaking those figures to shake that poor reputation. They well and truly fixed the problem in 2011 when the Vantage S was launched, which boasted 436bhp at the flywheel of its 4.7-litre V8 and produced 347lb ft of torque, not to mention a top speed of 189mph.

In 2009, the V8 Vantage was accompanied by the V12 model (we're only looking at the V8 in this buying guide, but will evaluate the V12 in a



separate buying guide soon). The V8 continued for another eight years, before it was replaced by the next generation of the Vantage and powered by a twin-turbocharged 4.0-litre V8 from Mercedes-Benz.

Sales throughout the 2005-2017 V8 Vantage's production life peaked in 2006 and 2007 at over 2,300 per year and totalled over 12,000 during its entire time.

VALUES & COLLECTABLES

The V8 Vantage has yet to acquire classic car status, so whilst used car values have dropped, they may continue to drop further – many of those early 2005-2007 models that were sold for at least £80k are now for sale at around a third of this value. Later models can demand an extra £20k, which for a supercar that's around eight years old, is comparative to a similar age of Porsche 911.

"Values took a hit early in the life of the Vantage due to the great financial crisis of 2008 but since then, the depreciation curve for a Vantage has been remarkably gentle," says Guy Jenner of HWM. "There is always demand for nice examples. They have a great chassis, naturally aspirated V8, hydraulic power steering that is full of feel and rear-wheel drive with an LSD. They are a set of ingredients that are not easy to find in the car market. Vantage has that sweet spot of driver engagement, usability and timeless beauty."

Prices don't appear to differ too greatly between the coupe and convertible (roadster), whereas the Vantage S and anything with limited-edition status seem to warrant more money, as do the models with a manual gearbox instead of the semi-automatic Sportshift.

Guy Wyles at Chiltern Aston recommends looking for a 2012-2016 model year Vantage if your budget allows, especially if you want a Sportshift

transmission. "The later eight-speed Sportshift 2 gearbox designed by Prodrive is a vast improvement over its predecessor," he says. "These later model year cars also enjoy many of the Vantage S improvements over the standard pre-2012.25 model year Vantages, including bigger brakes, wider tyres, quicker steering and hill-start assist." There are numerous limited-edition models to note, such as the Nürburgring celebration line-up, which started with the N400 in 2007, boasting 400bhp from its 4.3-litre V8 and a Sports Pack that later became available on standard models (lightweight wheels, uprated springs and shocks, and a revised rear anti-roll bar). The exterior of the N400 was available in Bergwerk Black, Lightning Silver, or Karussell Orange. Inside, there's perforated leather and a map of the Nürburgring stitched into the centre armrest along with a numbered plaque. Only 480 coupes and convertibles were produced to celebrate



the 480 seconds it took the N400 to complete a lap of the Nordschleife circuit. Later N-models include the N420 and in 2014, the N430, which carried a £89,995 price tag and was equipped with most of the mechanical components from the Vantage S, including electronically controlled suspension dampers.

Other models to look for include the V8 Vantage GT and GTS, the latter of which was marketed solely in the US in 2017 with a limited production run of 100, and a lightweight and more powerful 440bhp GT8 coupe (150 examples) in that same year.

Prodrive were involved in tuning the V8 Vantage and offering a number of upgrades, so look out for models such as the N24, GT2, GT4 and Rally GT, although many may not be road legal. They also offered four upgrade packages for road-going vehicles, covering the engine, suspension, wheels and styling.

Whilst limited-edition models may prove tempting as an investment, it's



“Vantage has that sweet spot of driver engagement, usability, and timeless beauty”



BUYING GUIDE

V8 VANTAGE

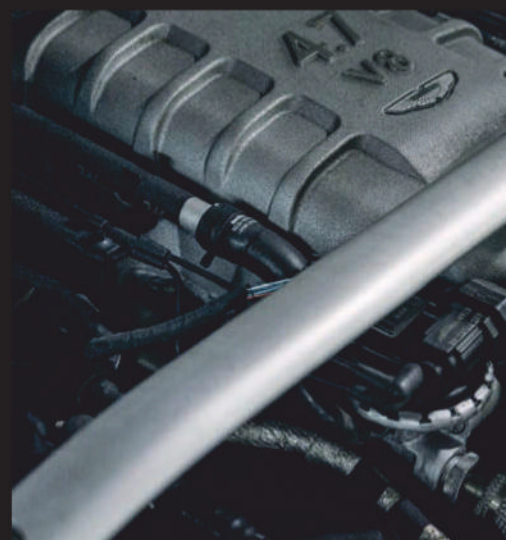
ENGINE

With two sizes of V8 petrol engine (4.3 and 4.7), the later 4.7 has cylinder liners pressed into the aluminium engine block, whereas the 4.3's are part of the block (they are bored). Both engines use a timing chain and Chiltern Aston has found that oil leaks can emerge from around the timing chest area. Blocked breathers can also result in oil leaks, especially if the crankcase ventilation valve becomes clogged up. A replacement costs around £150. Leaks around the camshaft covers can often be fixed with a new gasket for £24.

Check the upper engine cover is secure as it can work loose and melt on the exhaust manifolds.

Popular upgrades include ECU remaps and performance air filters and exhaust systems (including sports cats). Aston Martin specialist, Bamford Rose, offers a twin throttle body upgrade (a single throttle body is fitted as standard) that promises roughly an extra 20bhp for £3,600.

Look for coolant leaks and residue from the coolant hoses and around the radiator. The coolant expansion tank is made of plastic and has some narrow plastic outlets, which could potentially fracture and leak, so look around this area for signs of coolant residue. A new tank costs £250 (and it's wise to replace the pressure cap for £90), whereas a new radiator is around £1,000.



essential to ensure there's sufficient evidence to prove a car's provenance. So, if you are looking at buying an N400, for example, don't solely count on the map of the Nürburgring being stitched into the centre armrest as proof. Ask to look at any paperwork and verify the registration plate and VIN (vehicle identification number) with an Aston Martin dealer.

PRACTICALITY

At 4,385mm long, the V8 Vantage is no longer than a BMW 1 Series, but much wider - at over two metres (2,022mm), it's larger from side to side than SUVs such as the Volvo XC90 and just as wide as a Lamborghini Urus. Compared to the Porsche 911 that the V8 Vantage was aimed at competing against, it's wider by almost 20cm, but shorter in length by the same amount. And when compared to a DB9, it's roughly 30cm shorter in length, but similar in width.

The V8 Vantage's dimensions do make it look short from end to end but unmistakably wide. What you get on the inside is strictly two seats and a 300-litre boot. It's a roomy interior for two, but there are blind spots everywhere, so reversing cameras, parking sensors and door mirrors are essential. On some models, the door mirrors automatically adjust to provide a view of the ground when reversing.

Guy Wyles at Chiltern Aston explains there's a satisfying knack to driving a

V8 Vantage with a Sportshift gearbox, but some potential problems can arise. With Drive selected so that gears are automatically engaged, it can feel lumpy, and reversing on a cold engine will be quicker than most drivers expect (the engine idles faster when cold).

This lack of control, especially when reversing uphill, can result in the clutch slipping, which eventually

leads to it burning out. Guy Jenner at HWM sheds more light on this subject, explaining, "Reverse is geared to the equivalent of second gear, which is what makes reversing uphill a challenge. It is something you adapt to." He also sums up many of the incorrect opinions and attitudes towards the Sportshift gearbox, explaining, "It is not an automatic, it is an automated manual. It really needs to be

RUNNING COSTS

For a supercar that's now the price of a brand-new Ford Kuga, it's not that expensive to run. Annual car tax should be around £695 and with fuel consumption in the low twenties, expect the 80-litre petrol tank to last for around 350 miles between fill-ups (and cost over £100 to brim it from empty).

Servicing costs can be quite reasonable, and the recommended service interval is every 12 months or 10,000 miles. Chiltern Aston charge between £638.39 and £791.15 for a service on a V8 Vantage, which includes a brake fluid change every 24 months or 20,000 miles and a coolant change every 60 months or 50,000 miles. Extras include a cabin filter every 20,000 miles, an air filter at 30,000 miles, spark plugs every 84 months or 70,000 miles and a gearbox oil change every 40,000 miles.





driven on the paddles all of the time and requires interaction with the throttle to smooth out shifts.

If you enjoy this type of engagement, there is great satisfaction to be had from using it. It is a little slow compared to a dual clutch system but still faster than you could change manually. If you are looking for a torque converter auto, it won't be right for you."

BODY & CHASSIS

The V8 Vantage has an aluminium body tub, which is bonded together and can be expensive and complex to repair, especially if it has been involved in an accident. A rear wing, for instance, costs around £7,000, a front bumper is at least £1,200 (and around £2,000 for a rear bumper), a complete door costs over £4,000 and a similar amount for a bonnet.

Inspect the paintwork for signs of corrosion, which start with bubbling where the aluminium has oxidised. This can be treated by sanding down the affected area to bare metal, applying a rust inhibitor to seal the aluminium and respraying it to blend in the repair. However, a repair to a rear wheelarch, for instance, can easily result in having to blow in the entire rear quarter, so costs can soon escalate.

"With the broad shoulders of the Vantage, the rear arches are particularly prone to stone-chipping," comments Guy Jenner at HWM.

Check around the door handles and edges of the doors for signs of paintwork damage where moisture gets underneath and corrodes, resulting in the paint lifting – according to Chiltern Aston, it often starts with a blemish that looks like

a small spider under the paint. CA also finds the paintwork on the door mirror struts lifts and flakes off due to corrosion. They have found the factory-finish paint lasts for around 10 years, but these can be refurbished by Chiltern who charges £785 to strip a pair of door mirrors, repaint the assembly, rebuild and refit them. Alternatively, a new pair of struts can be bought and fitted by them for £960.

Look underneath the vehicle along the sill area for what looks like a chassis rail. This area can easily get crushed if someone incorrectly lifts the vehicle using a trolley jack positioned underneath it. If damage is visible, then it won't affect the structural rigidity of the vehicle, but it's an expensive and time-consuming job to fix the problem.

There's a steel subframe at the rear of the V8 Vantage, so inspect it for corrosion. At the front, there's an aluminium subframe (cradle).

The doors swing up slightly upon opening, so check the struts that lift them to ensure they can support the door. Fortunately, a new strut only costs around £25. Similarly, check the bonnet and tailgate remain open and supported on struts. These cost around £30 each. ►



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V8 VANTAGE



Inspect the front grille, which can work loose (rattle) and also turn milky. A replacement assembly costs around £200, although there are some upgrade options, such as a lightweight AMR mesh style that was fitted to the GT8 for a little over £500.

Water ingress can be a problem on the V8 Vantage. Open the tailgate to look and feel around the boot area for damp. There are drain holes to let water out, but these can become blocked, resulting in the water leaking into the boot. Similarly, feel around the carpets in the cabin for damp.

TRANSAXLE

The six-speed manual gearbox was supplied by Graziano Trasmissioni of Italy for the V8 Vantage and was the only gearbox fitted until 2007 when Aston Martin introduced their Sportshift six-speed automated manual. It was developed by Prodrive and incorporates a clutch, but no clutch pedal. Gearchanges can be conducted automatically, or via steering wheel-mounted paddles. In 2012, the Sportshift II was introduced, which was a eight-speed.

Both manual and Sportshift gearboxes were fitted throughout the production life of the V8 Vantage and they are all a transaxle design, which means they are mounted in the rear of the vehicle, where traditionally,



WHEELS & TYRES

18in-diameter alloy wheels were initially fitted to the V8 Vantage, before 19in 20-spoke wheels were added in 2008. The width of the wheels is wider at the rear (8.5 inches at the front and 9.5 or 10 inches at the rear), which not only means that the road wheels cannot be swapped from front to rear, but also the tyres, which are wider – 235mm for the front and 275mm for the rear.

Bridgestone Potenza tyres were fitted as standard, which should last for around 20,000 miles, but more importantly, should be changed every six or eight years. A four-digit date stamp on the sidewall of the tyre will indicate when the tyre was manufactured – 4812, for example,

denotes the tyre was manufactured in the 48th week of 2012. Expect to pay around £200-250 per tyre.

Common problems include swollen wheel nuts, which at worst can mean a socket cannot be used to undo them. In such cases, a socket for undoing rounded-off fastenings may save the day, but if you want to check for such problems, try fitting the correct size of socket over all of the wheel nuts.

If a vehicle has a tyre pressure monitoring system (TPMS), the batteries that power each sensor and transmitter are mounted inside each wheel and will eventually go flat. Budget for around £150 to replace the batteries in one wheel, which involves removing the tyre.

INTERIOR

The standard of the interior is very high, with leather upholstery, electrically adjusted seats, climate control, a CD stereo, and airbags to the front and side. Some components are from the Volvo parts bin, which can help with sourcing replacements. The electric window switches and even the key fob are from Volvo, along with most audio and navigation systems.

On early models, the sat-nav will probably be out of date and it may be cheaper to simply rely on your mobile phone instead. Similarly, there may be no Bluetooth connectivity.

“The last of the 4.7 Vantages built enjoyed wireless music streaming and Apple CarPlay,” says Guy Jenner at

HWM. “Aston Martin often gets a hard time over infotainment but anything with the Garmin satellite navigation is really quite usable.” Check both electric windows work smoothly because a new regulator (motor and mechanism) costs around £360.

If a secondary remote fob is still with the vehicle (it enables the doors to be locked and unlocked, but there’s no ignition key), then Aston Martin Bits says the plastic exterior can get damaged and the buttons wear out – it was included from 2009 onwards. They sell a replacement case for £130, which requires the innards to be transferred.

Test the air-conditioning by setting it to maximum cold and leaving the engine to run with the doors closed. A

V8 Vantage with a full-service history should have the air-con tested and regassed annually, but if there are any issues, don’t assume a refill will fix it. A leaky condenser costs around £500 to replace and a new compressor is priced at roughly £1,000.

“Early 2006 cars have quite a sport seat with reasonably tight seat bolsters,” says Guy Jenner at HWM. “For the 2007 model year, the seats became more accommodating to suit a wider range of body shapes. Carbon lightweight seats were an expensive option. They are far more sporty than the standard seat and don’t suit everyone, but they look great and have a following. Be prepared to pay a premium for this option.”

only the differential would be fitted on a rear-wheel-drive vehicle. This helps to even out the weight of the vehicle between the front and rear to almost 50:50, which for an aluminium-bodied supercar that tips the scales at between 1,570kg and 1,705kg, helps to optimise handling.

During a test drive, check that the operation of gearchanges is smooth and in the case of the manual 'box, there’s a sufficient biting point on the clutch pedal. Listen for any transmission noises that may change when pressing or releasing that clutch pedal (sometimes caused by a worn clutch release bearing) and whether the engine seems to over-rev under hard acceleration, which is a sign of a worn clutch.

Any concerns with the clutch, whether it’s a manual or Sportshift need to be carefully considered because whilst a clutch slave assembly costs £400-£800, a friction plate and clutch cover cost over £1,000 and a complete clutch assembly including flywheel costs around £3,000, and that’s excluding fitting, which is at least 10 hours.

SUSPENSION

The front and rear suspension consists of aluminium upper and lower wishbones with coilovers and anti-roll bars. Sports Pack upgrades included firmer springs, dampers and mounting bushes as well as

lighter alloy road wheels. Electronically controlled dampers were fitted to some models. At the front and rear, there’s an aluminium upright that houses the wheel bearing and which the wishbones are attached to (called the knuckle).

During a test drive, listen for knocks and rattles, which could indicate a worn suspension mounting bush or a worn drop-link for a front or rear anti-roll bar. Drop-links are roughly £30 each, whereas larger components can be expensive, such as a damper at around £900 and a spring at £600 (complete assemblies can be a little cheaper, but are still over £1,000).

If any of those suspension wishbones need to be replaced, each one costs around £500. And if the front wheel bearing is droning during a test drive, a new assembly costs almost £400.

Chiltern Aston says that the lower wishbone bushes last for around 10 years, after which they start to perish and adversely affect the handling of the vehicle, although it’s rarely identified at an MOT test. They charge £3,840 to change all the lower wishbones.

STEERING

Power-assisted rack-and-pinion steering is fitted to all models of the V8 Vantage. A quick rack was fitted to the Vantage S, which was fitted as standard to all models

from 2012 onwards. Steering issues appear to be rare, although routine wheel alignment will help to preserve the tyres and is recommended if the wheels are kerbed.

Still on the subject of kerb damage, Aston Martin Bits warns that a damaged track control arm (it’s fitted between the steering rack and track-rod end) is not available new from Aston Martin (only a complete steering rack), but they sell them for £300 each.

BRAKES

Brembo brakes with vented discs (335mm front and 330mm rear) were fitted as standard, with a separate mechanical caliper for the handbrake fitted to the rear discs. Brake assist was incorporated from around 2012.

Check the handbrake works, especially for Sportshift models where Park is often used instead. If a handbrake caliper is seized, it may be more economical to replace it – budget for around £300 for each one.

A visual inspection of the brake discs will help to see whether they are worn and corroded. Expect to pay around £850 for a set of front discs and pads (excluding fitting), but potentially more if you need to replace the wear sensors, shims and brake pad retaining pins. ▶

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EXTERIOR

There are several potentially expensive components on the exterior of the V8 Vantage. With halogen projector headlights and LED taillights, ensure all are working properly.

Check the headlight lenses to see if they have turned opaque through overexposure to sunlight (ultraviolet). Chiltern Aston says that they can often restore them and they also apply a UV protection, but if they are beyond repair, a new pair costs around £3,000 fitted.

If several of the LEDs inside a rear light unit have failed, it may be possible to have them replaced by an auto electrician, or it may be easier to buy a replacement rear light unit, but they are expensive at around £1,000 each.

Aston Martin Bits says that they sell lots of indicator side repeaters for around £24 each, but are unsure what happens to the old ones and why there is a huge demand for them!

Check the headlight washers work when operating the windscreen washers. A new assembly costs around £250, although an electric pump is cheaper at £75. Aston Martin Bits says that the

headlight washer jet covers can fall off, so check they are present. A new one costs around £40.

Whilst inspecting the front of the vehicle, look at the condition of the plastic front splitter mounted to the underside of the front bumper, which can get damaged if it hits a speed bump. A new one costs around £200.

Other exterior parts that can easily get damaged and potentially fall off include the front mud flaps (also called stoneguards), which cost £107 for a pair from Aston Martin Bits.

Make sure the fuel filler cap can be released from the cabin. It's cable operated via an actuator and whilst a snapped cable can be replaced for £20-£40 and a new actuator costs around £90, they are awkward and time-consuming to fit. "Fuel filler caps are prone to sticking but Aston Martin have taken the precaution of fitting an emergency release in the boot that is easy to access," says Guy Jenner at HWM.

If you are looking at a convertible, inspect the condition of the hood, which should be made from mohair. It's electronically and hydraulically operated,

so test it to ensure it works smoothly. Avoid pausing its operation midway as this can create problems.

VERDICT

The V8 Vantage is currently a moderately young supercar that's available to buy for almost the same price as a brand-new family runabout, but don't expect its repairs and running costs to be equally cheap. Look for examples that have been pampered and meticulously maintained, and after buying, ensure you have a reserve of cash to spend on any unexpected repairs. In return, you can have a taste of Aston Martin's Porsche 911 rival but with the added bonus of greater exclusivity and British performance engineering.

Thanks to:

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MODEL PROFILE

VANTAGE V600

With its twin supercharged 5.3-litre V8 resulting in huge performance, yet still having the kind of luxurious interior Aston was now renowned for, the Vantage was the quintessential British supercar of the Nineties. Thirty years after its debut, we explore its history and later development before taking one of these refined brutes for a drive

WORDS & PHOTOGRAPHY PAUL WALTON

IT SEEMS a pity that during the Nineties MI5's Q branch equipped James Bond with a series of boring BMWs when his preferred brand for almost 30 years, Aston Martin, had an absolute goliath of a car in its arsenal, the Virage-based Vantage. With a twin supercharged 5.3-litre V8, what it lacked in weapons and gadgetry it made up for with sheer brute force.

Perhaps the real reason why Q switched Bond over to a boring 5-Series was due to the time it took to arrive. Although the Virage had debuted in 1989, it would take another three years for the Vantage version to finally make an appearance, plenty of time for Q to lose interest and do a deal with MI5's local BMW dealer instead.

Yet with the updated 5.3-litre V8 fitted to the Virage capable of producing much more than 306bhp, there was always going to be a faster version. The issue was it needing a longer development time than previous generations of Vantages.

Work on the car (internally known as the DP2055) had already started by the time the first examples of the Virage were leaving the Newport Pagnell production line in late 1989. The first task for the team responsible for the car's development was to decide the power the V8 would need if it was to achieve the 186mph they'd previously targeted as their top speed goal.

"A computer analysis of the power requirements for the performance targets had been conducted by Andrew Marsh who was the Vantage project manager," said the man responsible for the engine, Arthur Wilson, in David Dowsey's 2007 book, *Aston Martin: Power, Beauty and Soul*. "This analysis had initially identified a need for 486bhp. Later, this was to rise to 500."

Rather than use the 6.3-litre version that the V8 Aston's Works Service was currently offering to Virage owners who were wanting more power, Wilson decided to stick with the standard car's 32-valve 5.3 instead meaning the extra power had to be found another way. "About the time that I was thinking about the Vantage, the Eaton company had done the Thunderbird using its M90 supercharger that looked about the right size and had a lot of product validation testing behind it for Ford," continued Wilson. "My recommendation was that we go with the supercharger route and that we should do it in-house. [Aston's

then chairman] Victor Gauntlett and engineering director, Andrew Woolner, accepted my recommendation and we went ahead."

With two Eaton superchargers fitted to the 5.3-litre, Wilson was able to get more and more power from the engine until he was told to rein it back by the project's new manager, Mike Booth, who had taken over from Marsh in late 1990. "The torque figure was in the 600-plus range," continued Wilson. "We were on target for power at 500-plus horsepower, but the torque was raising concerns over transmission reliability. I changed the cam timing to push the power up-range, which



gave a very flat torque curve and reduced the peak torque to a more tolerable 550lb ft. Power went up to 550bhp which is why we came to overshoot the horsepower target for the project.”

As a way to enable the engine to cope with the extra power, a new crankshaft and Cosworth pistons were required. The V8 was then mated to the same ZF six-speed manual box as those Virages fitted with the 6.3-litre

To counteract the axle tramp (or wheel hop) that the early prototypes suffered from, caused by the increased power, the car needed substantial suspension changes such as stronger springs and shock absorbers, but this resulted in an overly harsh ride. The answer was a torque tube, a stationary housing around the driveshafts that holds the rear end in place during acceleration and braking. “A prototype tube was made by folding up steel plate, which was used in the chassis. We cut the mounting off the existing axle and welding them to it. It was a totally standard propshaft complete with universal joints,” said Steve Bolton, principal engineer for Aston’s Special



Vehicle Operations, in *Power, Beauty and Soul*. Despite the ad hoc design, it was kept throughout the Vantage’s production run. “It wasn’t bettered and there was no need for a redesign,” continued Bolton. “If it works, why change it?”

A year after becoming Aston Martin’s chairman in late 1991, former Ford vice-president Walter Hayes had made his friend (Sir) Jackie Stewart an executive director of the company. The three time F1 World Champion was then brought in to help develop the Vantage on the road, driving the car before and after the torque tube had been added. “If a car has a lot of power and performance, it becomes all the more critical to see that it’s always balanced and under precise control,” explained the Scot about his involvement during a 1993 interview. “That’s why we take such trouble with the subtleties when refining a car like this.”

Aesthetically, the Vantage was closer to what the designers, John Heffernan and Ken Greenly, had originally envisaged for the Virage, but which had been watered down by Aston Martin. And ►

MODEL PROFILE

VANTAGE V600

so, with its six square headlights under rectangular Perspex covers, twin side vents plus substantially flared wheelarches to accommodate the larger wheels and tyres, the result was a much leaner and aggressive car than what it was based on. The Virage's original VW Scirocco-sourced rear light clusters had been swapped for more stylish individual circular units while an inbuilt rear spoiler helped to promote 150-170lb of downforce. The car's drag was also improved having a Cd figure of 0.34 compared to the Virage's 0.356. So major were the changes, only the roof and door skins were carried over.

The interior was also updated with electrically heated Recaro seats, a new dashboard layout, more veneer plus a four-spoke steering wheel from the Lincoln Town Car.

The result was a handsome and distinctive car, arguably more so than the Virage, but with 550bhp, it was also the most powerful production Aston Martin. With a 186mph top speed and a 0-60mph time of 4.6 seconds, this made it one of the world's fastest cars at the time. This made it different from the one it was based on which had never gone down well with the critics. So when the new model finally made its debut at the 1992 British Motor Show, the Virage name had been dropped and it was simply called the Vantage. "We thought, 'Let's not remind anyone' and got rid of the word," said Steve Waddingham in a 2021 interview who back then worked for Aston and continues today as the company's historian. "This was a different animal."

At £177,600, it was £46k more than the Virage and over thirty grand more than its nearest rival, the Ferrari 456GT. Yet the press were still largely positive when the car finally went on sale a year later. "What the Vantage is, and what cars like the Virage, Volante and Zagato are not, is a real Aston Martin; a big, very beautiful, very fast albeit expensive GT with so much appeal and purpose behind it that it is more an experience than it is mere transport," was *Autocar & Motor* magazine's verdict in its 25 August 1993 issue.

Unsurprisingly, it was the reserve of the rich and famous. Adam Clayton, the bass guitarist from the Irish rock band U2, had one as did Elton John while the Sultan

of Brunei specified his Vantage with an automatic gearbox.

By being expensive and largely handbuilt, taking around 1,200 hours to construct when a Ford Fiesta took just eight, even by Aston Martin's standards the Vantage was unsurprisingly never a strong seller. In six years around 250 Vantages were produced making it one of the British company's most exclusive models from the past three decades.

The final nine were a special edition that celebrated Aston Martin's win at the 1959 24 Hours of Le Mans. Debuting in 1999, these Le Mans models featured five-spoke magnesium alloy wheels with centre caps, a blanked radiator with twin openings, bonnet cooling ducts and redesigned wing vents similar to those of the race-winning DBR1.

Yet this wasn't the only special version Aston would develop for this already special car. In the mid-Nineties, Steve Bolton and Arthur Wilson were putting together an even more powerful example of the supercharged 5.3-litre V8 for an overseas customer to counteract it losing power in hot weather.

"One of the concerns with the car in extreme climates was that the intercooling system wasn't as efficient as it could have

been," said Steve Bolton in *Power, Beauty and Soul*. "We needed to liberate more power. As well as revise the superchargers and exhaust system to improve the intercooling system and thus, the performance was a necessity."

The pair found by increasing the cooling they could take advantage of the increased charge being developed by the new superchargers, resulting in 600bhp.

Although developed for an individual client, Aston still decided to offer the upgraded engine as an aftermarket package for existing Vantage owners.

According to Steve Bolton in Dowsey's book, the V600 name came from simply where the car sat in Aston's project list. "The previous project number was 590, so this became 600. It was just the next series of numbers. It was coincidental that that was also the power output."

But unlike the original (now universally but unofficially known as the V550), it was never a type-approved model; customers brought their existing Vantages back to Aston's Works Service for the conversion. And neither was it a particular specification; owners simply picked the upgrades they wanted from a menu meaning of the 50 produced, none were identical. There wasn't a time limit either with some cars –



such as the one featured here – not having the alterations completed until well into the 2000s. Even today, Aston's Works Service department could technically still transform a V550 into a V600.

Other changes available as part of the V600 package included AP Racing brakes with six-piston calipers front and rear while the existing rear brake caliper was reused as a park brake. The ZF manual gearbox was also turned into a five-speed close-ratio unit by having the sixth gear blanked off.

The front and rear suspension systems were completely reworked and incorporated stiffer Eibach springs, Koni adjustable sports dampers and a stiffer anti-roll bar. Traction control was also offered. Finally, the cars were fitted with special 18in, five-spoke alloys by Dymag shod with sticky Goodyear Eagle tyres.

Visually, the V600 differed little from the standard Vantage, only set apart by a revised Works Prepared chrome grille surround plus subtle V600 badging on the boot lid and side vents.

When the V600 upgrade was revealed at the 1998 British Motor Show at Birmingham's National Exhibition Centre, from its (proposed) 200mph top speed to the £233,682 price tag (including car),



everything about it was big, bold and brashy.

And 25 years later, judging by the gorgeous Chichester Blue example in front of me, it's clear nothing has changed. While its immediate replacement, the Ian Callum-designed Vanquish from 2001, is a relatively discreet and elegant gentleman's carriage, this isn't something you can say about the Vantage. Yet I still find the car's hard, uncompromising and chiselled lines attractive and, together with the six headlights, flared wheelarches and huge 18in wheels, this gives the car more of a muscular presence than the boxer Conor McGregor would in a public gym.

With this being a 1998 model, it features round rather than square headlights plus Jaguar-sourced wing mirrors instead of the same Citroën CX versions as the DB7 that were fitted to the early examples. A new sports exhaust was also available around this time. Later cars then had door handles from the Ford Mondeo complete with an integrated key hole plus a revised cooling system.

First registered on 1 January and supplied new by Stratton Motor Company in Norfolk, the car's first owner was Viscount Rothermere, the chairman of the company that owns the *Daily Mail*. He sold

it three years later when it had 11,000 miles on the clock via Stratton to a Mr James Grundy of Bolton.

In April 2003, the blue Vantage was sent to Aston's Works Service department for a partial V600 upgrade that consisted of a close-ratio gearbox modification plus the sports exhaust which together cost £10,724. It returned to Newport Pagnell a year later for the uprated brakes (costing another £13,000) and in 2006 it finally had the 600bhp engine upgrade plus the same style of wheels as the Le Mans edition that had a combined cost of £11,500. Although the V600 badges were added, it kept the original radiator grille.

The aggressiveness of the car's exterior makes for a strange juxtaposition with the very traditional interior. Apparently it took the hide of nine cows – otherwise known as a 'herd' – to upholster the Vantage's interior and from the handsome if firm Recaro seats to the dash top, it's everywhere. It's not known how many trees were felled for the veneer, but since it's covering every other surface, it must have been a forest worth. Instead of the plain and cheap-looking plastic binnacle of the early Virage I tested for issue four of *AMD*, the five now separate dials are housed in a single piece of veneer directly in front of the driver. ▶

MODEL PROFILE

VANTAGE V600

Thankfully, the bland Lincoln-sourced steering wheel has been swapped for the optional and much more appropriate three-spoke by the Italian manufacturer, Nardi.

Once you've forgiven the Ford-sourced switchgear for the ventilation plus the exposed Torx screw heads dotted across the fascia, it's still beautifully put together. Whereas its cheaper rivals were mass produced by robots, judging by its fit and finish, the Aston was clearly handmade by Newport Pagnell's artisan craftsmen. It offers a very elegant, calming and comfortable ambience that lasts until the moment I turn the key and fire the goliath of an engine in front of me.

The V8 starts instantly, sounding louder than if I was stood next to a jet engine. If the car's size and aggressive demeanor didn't reveal what its true intentions were, then I just got a pretty good idea.

Yet to begin with, I find the Vantage surprisingly easy to drive. Although the five-speed gearbox can be stiff and notchy, with the V8 offering 606lb ft of torque, it's not always necessary to change down, accelerating as keenly in fifth as most cars do in third.

The suspension is surprisingly pliable for such a powerful car and although firm, it's never back-breakingly so. Finally, the AP brakes might be razor sharp but they're still progressive and controllable by the sole of my size ten boot.

And then on an empty stretch of the

road, I dip the clutch, manage to slip the transmission down to third and nail the throttle hard. Have you seen the bit in Stanley Kubrick's 2001: A Space Odyssey when astronaut Dave Bowman goes through the monolith Stargate and everything becomes a blur? It gives an idea of what the Vantage is like at speed. Unbelievably yet effortlessly fast, with so much power, the car is propelled forward with a velocity that my subconscious takes a split second to take in. And unlike turbocharged supercars such as the Jaguar XJ220, there's no lag, the Eaton superchargers being constantly spooled up and ready to deliver their deadly punch.

With so much torque, the revs keep rising until the engine's once deep growl becomes a higher pitched wail and I finally press the clutch and snatch fourth ready for the exhausting process to start again. From the Ferrari 3.0-litre V12 of the Fifties and Sixties to BMW's 5.0-litre V10 in the E60 generation of M5, I've experienced some magnificent engines over the years. But in terms of sheer brute force as well as theatrics, nothing matches the 600bhp version of Aston's 5.3-litre V8.

It needs all that power too since, by tipping the scales at just under 2,000kg, the Vantage is no agile sportscar that can be flicked from one direction to another but a big, uncompromising bruiser. Yet treat it with respect and, despite too much body roll that can occasionally cause

the car to float around a little through fast corners, it can be made to hustle through roundabouts relatively quickly. But you're always aware of its desire to swap ends at the exit of a corner.

As *Autocar & Motor* said in 1993 when testing a V550, "The only way you can avoid this is to either lose some speed or find a better road."

Yet these criticisms don't take away what a truly magnificent machine the Vantage V600 is. Big, uncompromising and monstrously fast yet still having the same handmade feel of Aston's earlier cars, which has been sadly lost in recent years. Although the 2001 Vanquish was the last to be produced at Newport Pagnell after assembly moved to a new facility outside Gaydon, Warwickshire in September 2003, in terms of drivability and usability it was much more mainstream than the Vantage with less of its hand-crafted feel.

Despite its relative rarity, it makes the Vantage an incredibly important model in Aston's long history. Q might not have got chance to equip one with guns and gadgets, but thanks to its power, performance and handmade feel, it was already special enough without them. **AMD**

● **Thanks to: Owner of the Vantage V600 featured here, Rob Smith. The car is currently for sale and anyone interested can contact him at rob@slotraccoon.co.uk**





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Successful yet cautious

Matt James explains how the Silverstone based team is not getting carried away

ASTURNAROUNDS go, Aston Martin's performance in this season's Formula 1 World Championship has been nothing short of remarkable.

The Lawrence Stroll-owned team lumbered its way through the 2022 campaign with a difficult Mercedes-powered AMR22 chassis handled by Lance Stroll and Sebastian Vettel. It finished a lowly seventh of the 10 teams in the Formula 1 Constructors' Championship.

Despite that underwhelming showing, the signs of improvement were there for those who looked hard enough into the facts and figures. Aston was the only team in the bottom part of the grid which consistently improved its performance as 2022





Alonso leads Stroll in Azerbaijan



Alonso on the podium after finishing second at Monaco

drew on and, over the last half of the campaign, it scored 67 percent of its overall points haul from the 22-race season. That demonstrates that the team did not stand still and that it had pushed hard on the development front.

To put Aston's achievements into perspective, the upturn in performance from multiple champions Mercedes was the next highest at 54 percent.

When billionaire Lawrence Stroll rebranded the Racing Point team as Aston Martin in 2021, his mission statement was that he had never failed in any business venture he had undertaken before, and he felt the same about the Formula 1 squad. Those are easy words, although catching up to – and even surpassing – the established grandees such as Red Bull, Ferrari and Mercedes requires not only deep pockets but expertise and a lot of time. Stroll did put his money where his hopes were.

When Vettel made the shock announcement of his retirement in the latter part of last year, two-time world champion Fernando Alonso was swiftly recruited to partner Lance Stroll in the driving seat and there were perhaps more fundamental moves in the background.

Dan Fallows, previously the aero expert at grand prix dominators Red Bull, was brought in as technical director at the start of 2023, while Eric Blandin, former head of aerodynamics at Mercedes, was co-opted as the deputy technical director. Luca Furbatto, the man who was chief designer at Alfa Romeo's Formula 1 operation, was also recruited. ►

Those aren't the headline signings. They aren't the men who will make the back page of a national newspaper fizzle, but they are the vital pillars that any team needs to underpin future success.

A new HQ at Silverstone is being populated now after a Covid-delayed build and it promises to give the brains trust, which Aston gathered, a free rein to explore every technical avenue it can think of. That means 2024 should be extremely exciting.

Back to this season. Aston has leapt to the front of the pack in a considerable stride, and it can rightly be mentioned in the same sentence as Mercedes as the best of the rest behind the mighty Red Bull.

While the 2023 AMR23 had the benefit of the growing technical team, it also had the impetus from Alonso, who is known as a hard task master when it comes to eliciting effort from the backroom staff.

Before a wheel had turned at the start of 2023, there was a mutual love-in from the team towards the 41-year-old driver and vice versa. Those platitudes aren't unusual when the wraps come off any new racer: at that stage, no one has lost a race and there isn't blame for underperformance being cast in any direction.

However, the warm feeling has only strengthened over the start of the campaign. Alonso is driving with all the verve he showed during his two title-winning seasons in 2005 and 2006. He started the campaign with five podiums from the first six races and that was capped with a second place at the Monaco Grand Prix.

While the result on the streets of the principality was a highlight of the year so far, it was also tinged with a hint of what might have been as a late-race blunder when calling the right tyres to be on in the rain-afflicted race took Alonso away from what was a realistic shot of fighting for the victory against Red Bull's maestro Max Verstappen.

Team principal Mike Krack's philosophy on the missed chance in Monte Carlo says a lot about the attitude the squad adheres to despite its increased performances in 2023. "We are not gamblers, we are a data-driven team, we look at all the information we

are having. [We could have been more ambitious in Monaco] but if aggressive means gambling, then we would not have," says the Luxembourger. "When you make decisions, you have to rely on the data that you have."

And there it is: progress step by step while keeping the team's feet on the ground. On the wider question of whether Aston Martin can topple the might of Red Bull in any given race this year, the boss is circumspect once again. He is a master at managing expectations.

"I think that is very difficult to say [if we will win a race outright in 2023] because it's such a relative competition that you are depending on the pace of others, you are depending on yourself, so I think it would be bold to say we will win this one, or that we are close to winning," Krack explains. "We have to see. We have to be there at each opportunity that is coming and, if it comes, we have to be ready, and until then we have to work hard to keep ourselves in the position to be there. I will not make any predictions of when we're going to win a race."

The ace up Aston's sleeve this year has been the raft of technical know-how imported from other teams which has led it to build a chassis which is as adept at slower technical tracks like Monaco as it is at the faster circuits such as Saudi Arabia.

Earlier in the season, Red Bull team chief Christian Horner took a cheeky dig at the collected boffins now working together at Aston Martin, saying that it had recycled ideas that were first seen on his machines. "It's nice to see our old car doing so well..." quipped Horner.

But that is the point. Red Bull had the best of the best and it had the brainpower to deliver it consistently. With Aston's aggressive recruitment strategy, it has bought into some of that intelligence and it is reaping the rewards.

The closer Aston gets to the front, the more tempting it will be for leading engineers from other teams to step on to the British Racing Green bandwagon too. The story might only just be starting here.

Alonso has already alluded to the fact he wants to be part of the revamped challenge for quite some time. When he signed up for the team in 2022 it was revealed as a 'multi-year' deal. Many insiders thought, reading



Aston's new campus will soon be ready

between the lines, that this meant a season or two in the cockpit before taking a back seat with a more consultative role.

However, with the increased competitiveness of the car and Alonso's reignited passion for success, might he make it into modern day record books as the oldest contemporary top-flight racer?

The team's ambassador and former F1 racer himself, Pedro de la Rosa, is a countryman of Alonso and he has made his views clear recently. "Personally, I see [Fernando] staying more than two years [in the driving seat]," says De la Rosa. "This is due to his involvement, his enthusiasm and his performance. Any team would want to have Alonso. Fernando's decision will be



Aston has been at the head of the pack in 2023



Aston Martin F1's team principle, Mike Krack



conditioned by his performance on the track. " [He] enjoys fighting for victories. As long as he knows he's competitive, he'll continue. And the day he sees that he is not competitive and that he has dropped physically, well, he will want to dedicate himself to something else. But I don't see any sign that Fernando has lowered his performance at all, neither in involvement, dedication, enthusiasm or performance on the track."

That news has, understandably, been welcomed by Krack. There is a very good reason why the medium- to short-term timescale is important for the team and the drivers. There is a substantial rule change coming into Formula 1 in 2026, and it is a

revamp which has already attracted the likes of Audi, Ford and the GM-owned Cadillac (if approved) on to the grand prix grid. The revised regulations surround the hybrid powerplants which will demand three times the amount of electrical power to be produced by the motors, which will all run on fully sustainable fuel.

This has been the catalyst for several grandee manufacturers to commit to grand prix racing and Aston Martin's success so far has prompted Honda to join forces and return to use Formula 1 as a platform to shout about its green credentials. The deal was announced in May and will kick into life for the 2026 campaign and it will

be an exclusive agreement. Honda is a powerhouse in F1, having won titles with Red Bull and most notably being the driving force behind all three of Ayrton Senna's world title victories with McLaren in the late Eighties and early Nineties.

It is the final building block in Lawrence Stroll's ambitions, and the carrot dangling in front of Alonso is almost impossible to resist, even though he will be in his mid-forties when the new partnership is born.

That is all for the future. The talent pool back at base still has work to do to unlock the last fractions of a second from the AMR23 and, spurred on by Alonso who has already urged the blackroom crew to rush through upgrades to the chassis, there are races yet to be won.

If Aston Martin can go from seventh in the constructors' table to second and put one over on the Silver steamroller at Mercedes, then it will be one of the most amazing turnarounds in grand prix racing for the last decade.

Lawrence Stroll's commitment to never failing in any business that he has tackled will not be measured by a runners-up position in the title fight, nor will it be met with a couple of race wins here and there when the Red Bulls falter. Aston Martin's vision is to reach the top of the drivers' and teams' competitions and the progress it has made so far shows that it is an achievable target.

There has to be caution – as displayed by Krack – because coming from such a low base as it did in 2022, the bigger gains come easy. It is a simpler task to get to within half a second of a lap of the frontrunners by doing the job properly. Unlocking the final few fractions in 2024 and beyond is where the experts will really prove their salt. It is certainly something that Alonso thinks is on track to happen. **AMD**



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Tim Lewis (left)
and Martin
Pugsley

RISK MANAGEMENT

Following its owners originally meeting in the late Seventies and joining forces a decade later, Pugsley & Lewis has become one of the south-east of England's leading Aston Martin experts. We head to its Beckenham-based workshop to discover more



RISK COMES from not knowing what you're doing," Warren Buffett, the successful American businessman, once said.

Although it must have been a gamble for Martin Pugsley and Tim Lewis to leave an established Aston Martin specialist to branch out on their own, it would have been lessened due to their extensive knowledge of the cars they'd be working on.

Both Martin and Tim started their careers as apprentices for the race division of established Aston Martin specialist RS Williams, which at the time was based in Brixton, south London.

Martin was first, joining in the mid-Seventies. "My dad was a chauffeur and I was always into cars," Martin tells me. "In 1975 my uncle was the manager of a sheet metal company based next door to RS Williams. He heard they were looking for a school leaver so I went down, had a chat and that was it." Tim arrived four years later, also straight from school.

Both trained at RSW as mechanics, learning the skills they continue to use today.

When RS Williams' race operation moved to Milton Keynes in 1989 due to closer links with Aston Martin itself, neither Martin or Tim wanted to relocate and so decided to set up on their own. "It didn't suit me to go there with a young family," says Martin. "And I wanted to start my own business anyway," continues Tim. Since they'd always got on well, it was Tim's idea for the pair to join forces and start their own company. They



The shell of a recently repainted DB6 ready to be rebuilt

“On the day of my visit, the spacious and well-equipped facility was a hive of activity”..

took on a couple of RS Williams' former apprentices plus a car cleaner and a member of the office team who also didn't want to move north. This small team allowed Martin and Tim's burgeoning company to hit the ground running.

With their new premises close to their previous employer in Brixton, they were asked to finish off some work, including the final example of the four Sanction II DB4 Zagatos that were produced by RSW in the late Eighties and early Nineties. “We walked the last chassis around the corner to our shop and built it up there before sending it to Zagato in Milan,” says Tim.

Despite these lofty beginnings, Martin and Tim's plan was always more down to earth – to service classic Aston Martins, largely the DB4, DB5 and DB6 plus the V8 models, which as Tim says with a smile, were still new cars when the pair started in business. And 34 years later this remains at the heart of what they do, although they've since added the DB2, DB2/4 and MkIII to their repertoire. Plus, as Aston itself has modernised so has Pugsley & Lewis and thanks to investing in modern diagnostic equipment, the company can



A typical day at Pugsley & Lewis with a V8 Vantage, V8 Volante and DB4 all being worked on

now look after the later Gaydon-built era of models up to the mid-2010s.

“We see a lot of the newer cars when they're over three to four years old that have run out of warranty,” explains Martin. “Most main dealers aren't always keen to look after cars of that age.”

Due to their experience and expertise, the pair's gamble paid off and Pugsley & Lewis quickly became one of the leading independent Aston Martin specialists in the south-east of England. “We'll see a car

on the road and more often than not, we'll know it.”

Yet Pugsley & Lewis' reputation goes beyond just south London or even the UK since they regularly receive calls for restorations and other work from all over the world.

It was due to this success why it didn't take long for the pair to quickly outgrow their original Brixton premises and in 1994 they moved into their current and much larger workshop down the road

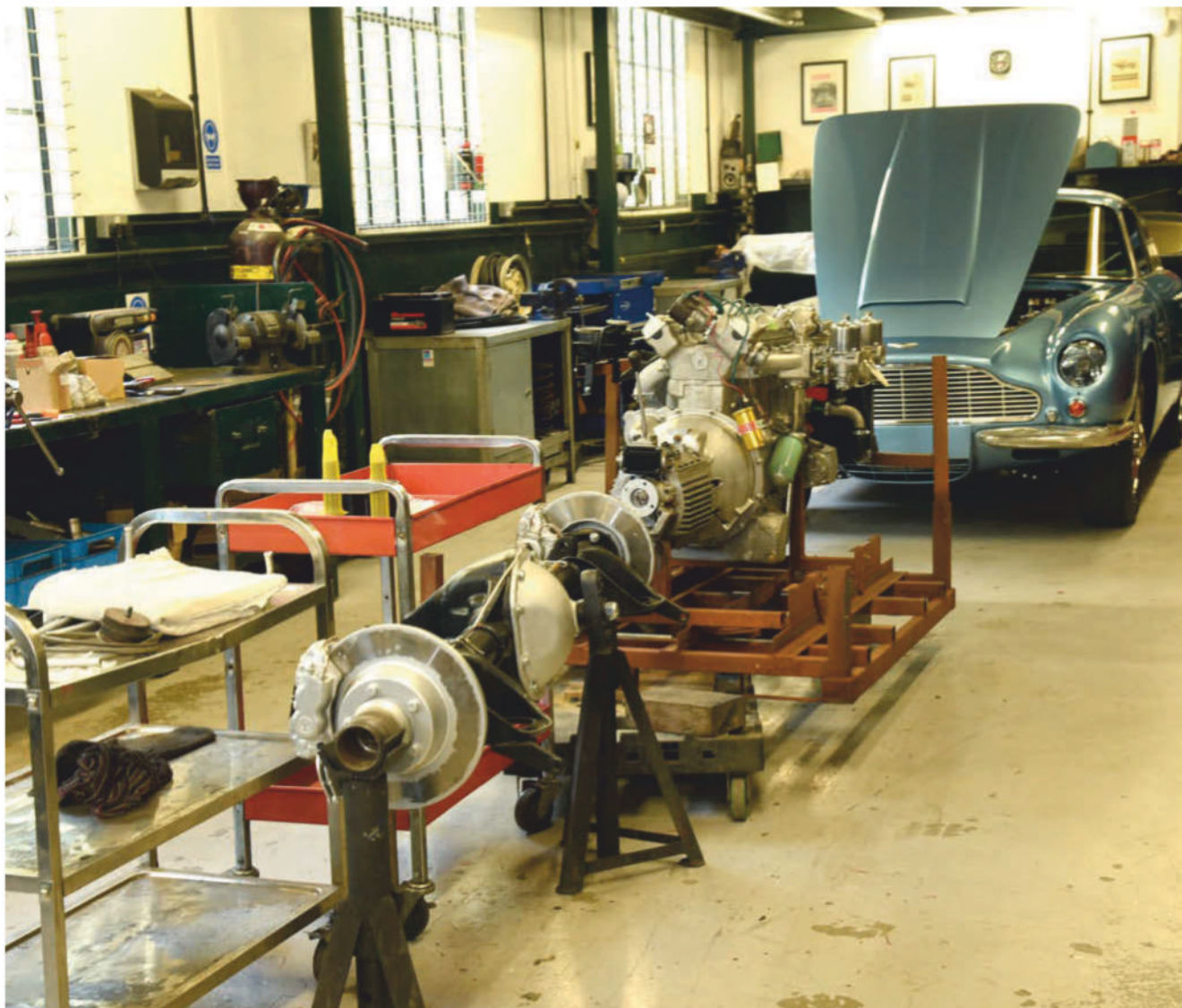


Stan Peplinski works on the soon to be electrified AMV8 saloon



A DB4 having an engine rebuild

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in Beckenham. Tucked away at the end of a quiet leafy road, it is nicely secluded without being too isolated.

On the day of my visit, the spacious and well-equipped facility was a hive of activity, full of a wide variety of models that perfectly illustrate the kind of work Pugsley & Lewis offers Aston Martin owners. These include a V8 Vantage having a service, a DB4 needing an engine rebuild plus an immaculate DB6 saloon that was coming to the end of a long restoration, much of it done on site.

"We generally have two or three restorations on the go these days," says Tim. "We only farm out the aluminium and paint work." They've also started working closely with a trimmer. "We put everything in and get it fitted before he takes it away to do his stitching," Martin explains further. A reasonably new trend in restorations is for

modern modifications such as a stereo or hidden inertia reel seatbelts. "We can make all the alterations for these," finishes Tim.

They also fit other more mechanical upgrades such as power steering to DB4s, 5s and 6s plus air-conditioning. Yet perhaps the most exciting project is one of their own. In the corner of the workshop is the bare shell of a 1977 AM V8 saloon that's been slowly transformed into an electric vehicle. "We fancied 650bhp in the back of the V8," says Tim with a wry smile. Although they both say the project is purely for their own interest, it could become something they offer customers in the future.

While it was clearly a risk all those years ago for Martin and Tim to branch out on their own, their many satisfied customers both locally and across the globe show it was one worth taking. **AMD**

The DB6 that's coming to the end of its long and thorough restoration



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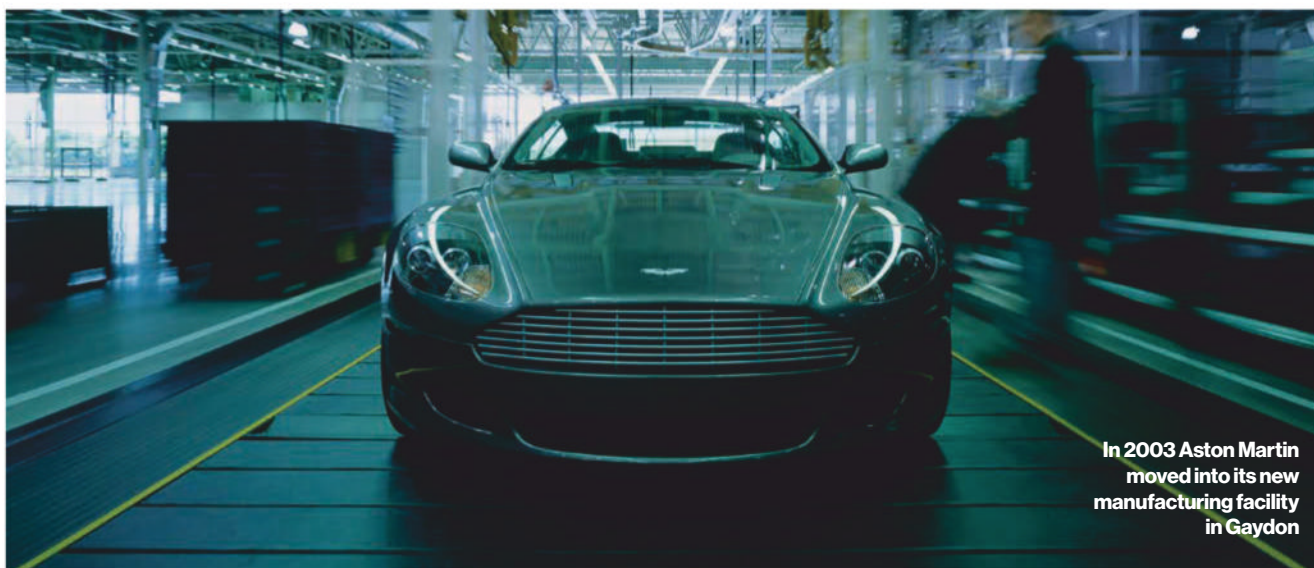
FROM THE CLUBHOUSE



Aston Martin



Owners Club celebrates



In 2003 Aston Martin moved into its new manufacturing facility in Gaydon

THIS IS a year of exciting milestones for Aston Martin with the company celebrating some significant anniversaries. To begin with,

Aston Martin has been in the automotive industry for 110 years, and it will mark 75 years since the first DB (named after (Sir) David Brown, the company's then chairman) car was produced – the 1948 2-Litre Sports, which was later known as the DB1. In addition, 2023 celebrates 60 years since 007's iconic car of choice, the DB5, was launched, 30 years since the DB7's debut on the road and 20 years since the Gaydon facility opened launching the DB9 model. Aston Martin Owners Club are celebrating all these milestones with a variety of events to please all pockets and devotees of the marque.

One major milestone this year is the centenary of the 24 Hours of Le Mans. This is being celebrated at the Le Mans Classic from 29 June to 2 July at the world's most famous circuit. The Aston Martin Owners Club will be there, with

2023 marks 100 years of the 24 Hours of Le Mans which Aston won in 1959 with the DBR1



club members from around the world, celebrating with 120 cars on show.

Aston Martin has been a part of the Le Mans race since 1928, when two AM415 'Internationals' debuted. Over the years, the company has participated in 53 races. They achieved overall victory in 1959 and have had 19 class wins. By the time you read this, hopefully, they

may have achieved a 20th. Throughout the Fifties and under David Brown's stewardship, Aston Martin was becoming more established and producing better designed and more robust cars. Brown, however, was committed to winning one of the greatest events in sports car racing at Le Mans. In previous years, the DBR1, despite being winners at Nürburgring,

The AMOC will be celebrating 60 years of the DB5...



had been outperformed at this event by larger machines. During 1959, even with the regulation change to 3-litre engines, the factory-built Ferrari 250 Testarossas were still faster than the Aston Martins. Despite this, the Aston Martins had superior handling, and (Sir) Stirling Moss, along with co-driver Jack Fairman were tasked with taking on the Ferraris.

In preparation for the 1959 Le Mans race, Aston Martin devised a plan to take advantage of Ferrari's flaw of overheating. Roy Salvadori and Carroll Shelby were given a target lap time that was 10 seconds slower than Ferrari's fastest lap, while Maurice Trintignant and Paul Frère were advised to run even more conservatively in the third DBR1. Despite the slower pace, the plan worked and the Salvadori/Shelby number 5 DBR1 completed 323 laps – one more than Trintignant/Frère – after 24 hours. As we approach the Le Mans Classic, where 1957-1961 era cars will take to the track, the question remains whether

Aston Martin will be able to replicate their victorious performance of 1959.

As a club, along with celebrating historically important landmarks in Aston Martin history, we also help preserve history through our support of the Aston Martin Heritage Trust, both financially and with paraphernalia. Members' benefits from this relationship include invitations to a variety of AMHT events, the opportunity to search for car history in the trust's archive and free access to the museum, which for the month of June has a Le Mans Exhibition, to name a few.

With summer underway in the northern hemisphere, we have a lot of exciting events to look forward to that celebrate our brand. If you cannot make Le Mans Classic, the AMOC event calendar is filled with a variety of activities, including international events, race days, and local drive-outs, plus historic events like the

WHY JOIN THE AMOC?

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

AMHT Festival celebrating 25 years, Thruxton Historic 2023 and the St John Horsfall Pre-War Race at Silverstone. Of course, we can't forget about classic summer traditions like picnics and barbecues. We're excited to make the most of this season and enjoy everything it has to offer.

Come and join us and find out what you have been missing from your Aston Martin life. To quote one of our long-standing members "I joined for the cars and stayed for the friends." **AMD**

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... and the DB7's 30th anniversary



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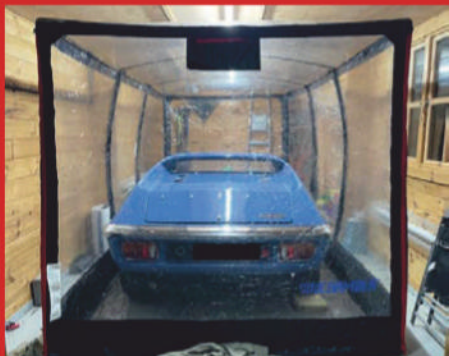


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2004, £279,000. The DB7 Zagato was introduced at the Pebble Beach Concours d'Elegance in August 2002 and later shown at the Paris Motor Show the following October. It was only offered for the 2003 model year, with a limited run of 99 cars built (a 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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£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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ON SALE
1 SEPTEMBER 2023

DB12

We test Aston Martin's latest grand tourer, the DB12, and ask if it is as good as it looks



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ASTON MARTIN *drivers*

Roy Salvadori was one of Aston Martin's most important drivers throughout the Fifties. We look at his long and successful career

ALTHOUGH NOT a household name like Sir Stirling Moss is today, Roy Salvadori still enjoyed a successful career in motor racing, much of it spent with Aston Martin. The highlight of his time with the company was undoubtedly winning Le Mans 24 Hours in 1959.

Born in Dovercourt, Essex, in May 1922 to parents of Italian descent, Salvadori became interested in motorcycles as a child. A serious accident in 1940 while riding a friend's BMW meant he missed military service.

It was maybe due to his injuries that he later turned to cars and in 1946 bought a MG R-Type single-seater with a supercharged 745cc engine. He entered it in the UK's first post-war motor race held at Gransden Lodge Airfield, ten miles west of Cambridge, on 15 June 1946, finishing second behind the man who would later design the Mini, Alec Issigonis, in his Austin Seven-based Lightweight Special. "I had been thoroughly bitten by the motor racing bug," he admitted in his 1985 autobiography, *Roy Salvadori Racing Driver*.

Salvadori quickly progressed to even quicker cars including a Riley 2-Litre single-seater that was followed by the ex-Tazio Nuvolari Alfa Romeo P3 Monoposto.

Wanting to enter Grand Prix, he raced a Maserati 4CL that was owned and prepared by Prince Birabongse's famous Whitmouse garage in Hammersmith. Unfortunately, Salvadori was hit by another car at the Curragh Road circuit in Northern Ireland which ruptured the fuel tank, setting the car alight. Thankfully he escaped uninjured, but due to financial reasons couldn't complete a full season in 1950.

He bought a Frazer-Nash the following year that was quickly swapped for a

Jaguar XK 120, which he raced with great success. He was also occasionally asked to drive a privately owned Ferrari 2.7-litre sports car. Roy and the car's owner, Bobby Baird, were contenders for overall victory at the Goodwood Nine Hours in August but eventually finished third after being black-flagged late in the evening when the Aston Martin team complained that one of the Ferrari's lights was out. "I had driven throughout as though the race was a ten-lap sprint," continued Salvadori in *Racing Driver*, "and it was the best performance of my career to date."



Due to the strength of this and other strong performances, in early 1953 Aston Martin's team manager, John Wyer, asked Salvadori to become part of the team. They'd known each other since the Forties when the garage Wyer had worked for at the time had prepared Salvadori's Alfa Romeo. "That was the beginning of an association which would bring us both considerable success," wrote Wyer in a forward to a chapter in Salvadori's 1985 biography.

From Snetterton to Goodwood, Salvadori soon started to win races up and down the UK, earning himself the nickname 'King of the Airfields'. One event he had no

luck at, though, was the Le Mans 24 Hours having retired every year between 1953 and 1958. That changed in 1959 when he and his American teammate, Carroll Shelby, took the victory in their DBR1. Admittedly many of their main rivals, including Ferrari, Ecurie Ecosse and Lister, had all retired, yet it was still a fine victory and vindicated Salvadori's place as one of the UK's finest drivers.

"On that circuit, on that particular day, he proved himself to be the best driver around," continued John Wyer in *Racing Driver*. "No team manager could have asked for a greater performance." Salvadori had also raced in Formula 1 throughout the Fifties, first for Connaught and then Cooper. Although his results were patchy and he never won a race, when Aston entered the World Championship in 1959 with its first single-seater, the DBR4/250, it was natural he became one of its drivers. Yet the car wasn't a success and he finished only twice, both times in sixth place. Aston pulled the plug on the project at the end of the 1960 season. After two further lacklustre seasons with the Yeoman team, Salvadori retired from F1 at the end of the 1962 season.

He continued to enjoy great success in sports cars including with the Jaguar E-types of both Briggs Cunningham and John Coombs plus the Aston Martin's DB4 GT. His final victory for the marque, that he enjoyed so much success with, came in September 1963 when he won the Coppa Inter-Europa at Monza.

Salvadori retired from driving in 1965. After briefly acting as a team manager for the Cooper F1 team between 1966 and 1967, he left motorsport for good to focus on his own business in the motor trade. He later moved to Monaco, passing away on 3 June 2012, aged 90. **AMD**

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
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