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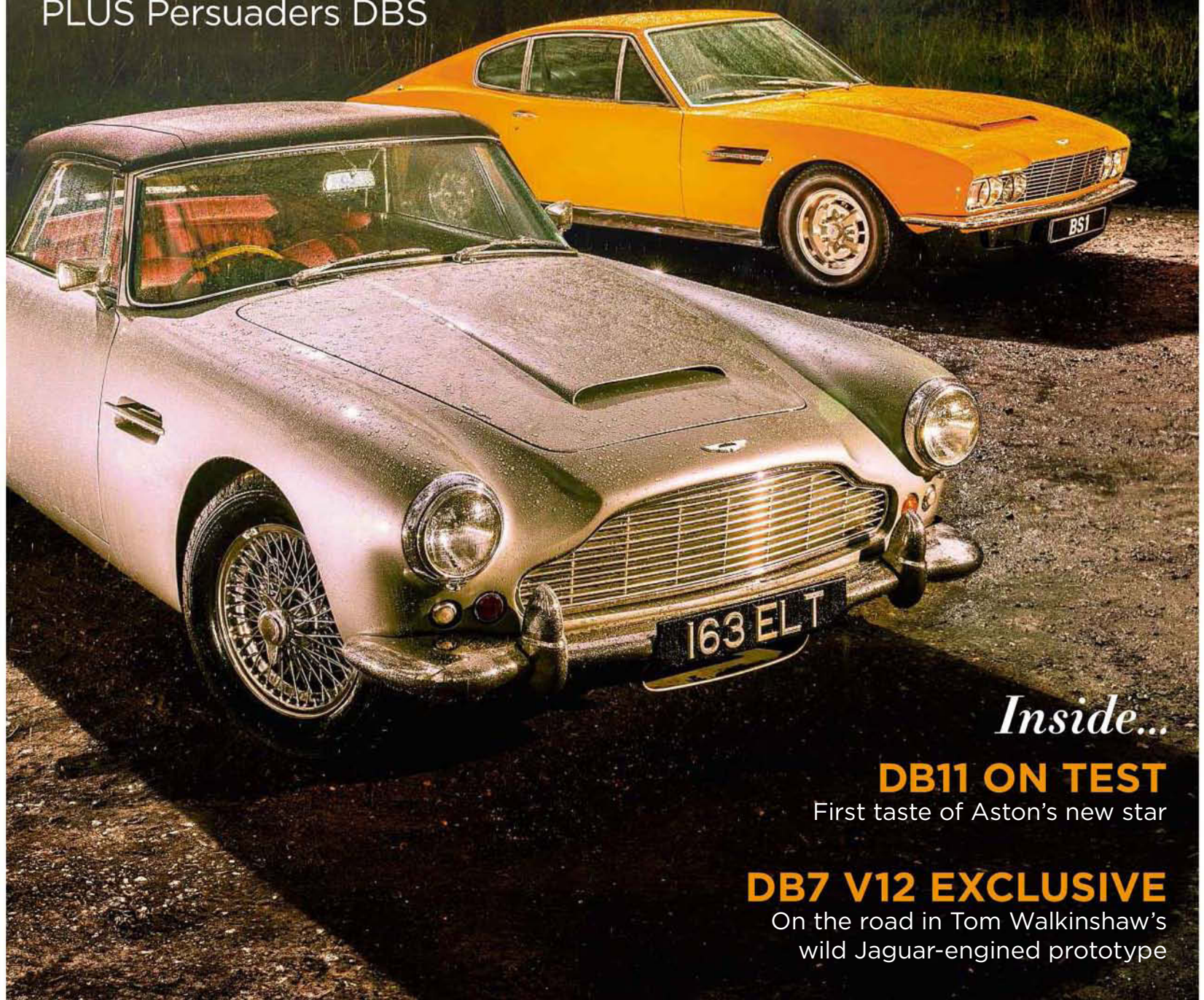
# VANTAGE

ISSUE 14 | SUMMER 2016

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## BEYOND BOND

**Astons on screen:** We drive  
Italian Job DB4 Convertible  
PLUS Persuaders DBS



*Inside...*

**DB11 ON TEST**

First taste of Aston's new star

**DB7 V12 EXCLUSIVE**

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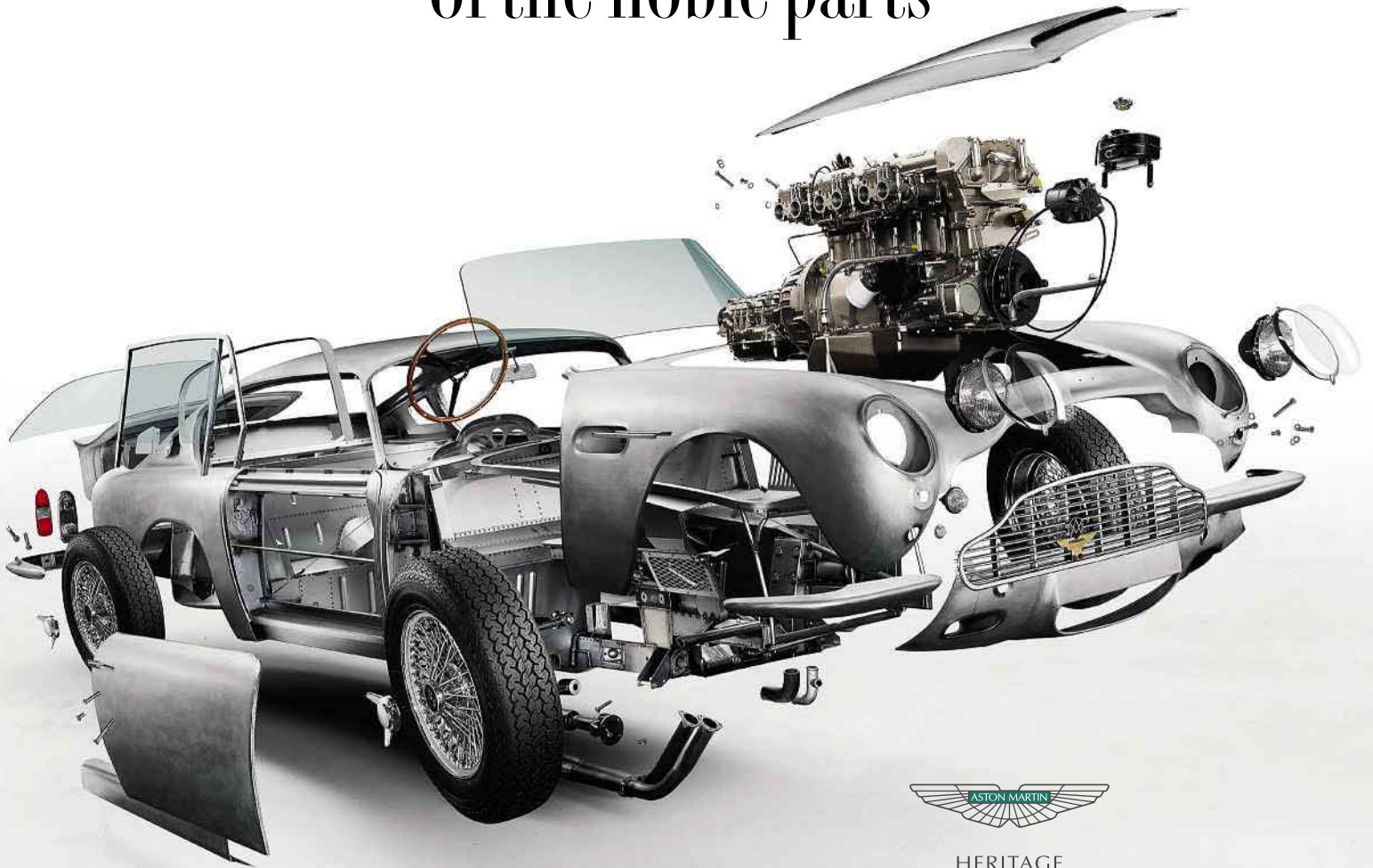
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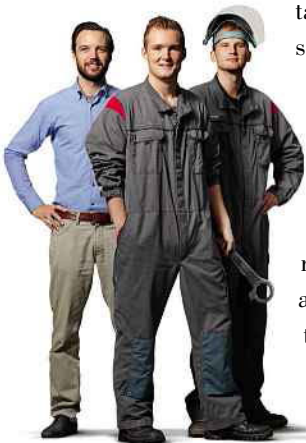
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# Viewpoint

## Why DB11 has to deliver



SUCH IS THE PACE of development at Gaydon these days, it's genuinely hard to keep up. Witness another issue of *Vantage* and another raft of exciting new Astons. Whether it's the welcome – and surprising – decision to offer the V12 Vantage S with a manual transmission, the equally welcome – but perhaps more predictable – announcement of a track-inspired Vantage GT8 and Vanquish-based Zagato, or the frankly astonishing (no pun intended) news of a collaboration

with Red Bull that will see an all-new Adrian Newey-designed hypercar, Aston Martin is making headlines.

Ridiculous though it sounds, with so much going on, it would be easy to forget about the DB11. Fortunately, Aston provided us with the perfect reminder of its most important new model in a decade by granting us an early drive of a ride and handling development prototype. Though it's far from a definitive appraisal – we'll bring you that in our next issue – our time at a private test facility near Rome offered a fascinating and tantalising glimpse of what the signed-off car will feel like.

If impressions from this early 'engineering' drive are accurate, Aston's all-new GT unashamedly refocuses its emphasis on refinement and luxury. With a sporting twist, naturally.

The importance of those special qualities was brought to the forefront of our minds in the making of another story for this issue. Comparing one of the first DB9s with one of the last was a valuable exercise. Not just because it graphically illustrates just how much the DB9 has evolved, but because it highlights what an achievement that car was when it was launched.

The GT8s and Zagatos and hypercars are enormously exciting of course, but successfully replacing the DB9 is more important than all of those projects combined. Aston Martin needs a new landmark car. DB11 needs to deliver.

**Richard Meaden**, editor

The next issue of *Vantage* will be on sale on September 2, 2016. For subscriptions and back issues visit [www.astonmagazine.co.uk](http://www.astonmagazine.co.uk)

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# Bulletin

News, analysis and events

## Vanquish gets the Zagato treatment

LATEST COLLABORATION BETWEEN  
ASTON MARTIN AND ZAGATO HAS  
CARBON BODY AND MORE POWER

WORDS DAVID LILLYWHITE | IMAGES ASTON MARTIN

ASTON MARTIN AND ITALIAN design house Zagato have joined forces once again to launch a new limited-edition model, the Aston Martin Vanquish Zagato.

The new car was unveiled at the prestigious Concorso d'Eleganza Villa d'Este on the banks of Lake Como, Italy, just as this issue of Vantage went to press. That's the same event at which the 2011 V12 Zagato was unveiled, and the Vanquish Zagato follows on from that model in style but is even more comprehensively equipped, making it the most luxurious Aston Martin yet made.

The model is the result of a close collaboration between Andrea Zagato, company CEO (and grandson of founder Ugo Zagato), and Aston Martin's chief exterior designer, Miles Nurnberger, the whole project overseen by design director Marek Reichman. The bodywork is produced in large, one-piece carbonfibre panels that reduce split lines in the body and help to keep weight down.

It's certainly what we've come to expect





of an Aston Martin Zagato: lighter and more powerful (with 600bhp) than the donor car, good-looking and yet unashamedly aggressive, and possessing certain design cues that have defined these limited-edition models since the very first, the DB4 GT Zagato, broke cover at Earls Court in 1960.

'There's a brutality about the DB4 GT Zagato,' says Reichman, 'and it's very powerful, but it's delicate in places. too, like those slim pillars and the chrome around the headlights. The rear wing grows the muscle - it looks like it's grown the bodywork out to the side. That mixture of brutality and beauty; that's typical Zagato, surprising and kind of disruptive. Aston Martin is about elegance; Zagato disrupts that.'

The modern-day interpretation of that is clear to see in the new Vanquish Zagato. The huge front grille, the bulging rear wings, the exaggerated front overhang and the truncated tail with deploying spoiler make for a car that's

racier and more powerful-looking than the majority of the Aston Martin range, and, just to allay any doubt that this is a Zagato, there's the double-bubble roof, a Zagato trademark since the '50s (though it didn't feature on the DB4 GT Zagato).

'It's about changing the balance of the car,' says Reichman. 'It's less what we'd perceive as perfect balance. For racing you want a shorter tail, for less weight. We've cut the roof too - not physically, more of a visual cut that makes the windscreen look like the visor of a helmet.'

There are plenty of obvious Aston Martin influences too: some elements reference the new DB11, especially the aerodynamic profile, and other influences can be seen in the mirrors and rear end (One-77), the bladed LED rear lights (Vulcan) in classic round Zagato style, and the strake running from wheelarch to door (CC-100 concept and DB11).

And the huge front grille? 'The DB4 GT Zagato is all grille,' says Miles Nurnberger. 'Aston Martins have a two-piece grille,

with a lower intake, but we needed to find a way to have that Zagato face; so we have a large one-piece intake on the Vanquish Zagato, with floating DRLs [daytime running lights] and the grille made up of Z-shapes.'

Inside, it's just as striking, with aniline (uncoated) leather - 'It feels like the most amazing nubuck,' says Reichman - quilted in a unique pattern that, unsurprisingly, references the classic Z-shape. Switchgear is knurled aluminium, interior brightwork gets a bronze metallic coating and the finishing will be of an even higher quality than that of the current top-of-the-range Vanquish.

Thus equipped, the Vanquish Zagato builds on a small but highly collectable range of Aston Martin Zagatos that was initiated by both David Brown's and Ugo Zagato's fascination with motor racing and their wish to beat Ferrari in the important GT World Championship of the early 1960s. The resulting DB4 GT Zagato, built on the short-wheelbase DB4 GT and





clothed in lightweight, thinner-gauge aluminium, was driven by now-legendary drivers, including Jim Clark, Innes Ireland, Stirling Moss and Roy Salvadori. Four of the 19 built went on to compete in the 24 Hours of Le Mans between 1961 and '63.

After that, the Aston Martin collaboration went cold until 1986, when the 186mph V8 Zagato – an angular, divisive interpretation of the DB4 GT Zagato – was released to the surprise of the automotive world. Just 52 were built as coupés and 37 as convertibles.

It then took until 2002 before the two companies would work together again, with two variants of essentially the same model, the coupé DB7 Zagato and the open top DB AR1 (the AR standing for American Roadster), both based on the V12 DB7. These saw a return to the DB4 GT Zagato's curves and characteristic front grille; 99 of each were built.

The relationship was rekindled again in 2011 for the next model, the V12 Zagato, which was released to celebrate the 50th anniversary of the DB4 GT Zagato's production. Once again 99 were built, with two race versions, Zig and Zag, produced for the Nürburgring 24 hours race, and all sold almost immediately, cementing the highly collectable status of an Aston Martin Zagato.

'You're not a shrinking violet if you buy a Zagato; you've made a courageous choice,' summarises Marek Reichman. 'We want customers to use their cars, to show them off. That's one of the reasons why we based this one on the two-plus-two Vanquish. Customers will be able to drive for long distances; it's for elegant, exciting journeys. If I could have, I'd have made that drive to Villa d'Este, all the way over the San Bernadino Pass. It's made for journeys like that.'



## Some they made earlier

The relationship between Aston Martin and Zagato goes right back to the start of the 1960s. The DB4 GT Zagato was unveiled at the 1960 London Motor Show and production began the following year. It continues to be an inspiration.



1960 DB4 GT Zagato set the template: lighter, faster and altogether edgier than the standard car



1986 V8 Zagato (convertible version pictured) divided opinion but was one of the greatest Astons to drive



2002 DB7 Zagato and its DB AR1 convertible sibling put the curves back into the relationship



2011 V12 Zagato was based on the dazzlingly rapid V12 Vantage. Aston's Marek Reichman oversaw the styling



2013 saw Zagato reveal three unique Aston-based specials, including this Virage-based shooting brake



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# Water wings

ASTON MARTIN DESIGN TEAM HELPS  
CREATE AM37 'SPORTS SUPERYACHT'

WORDS JETHRO BOVINGDON | IMAGES ASTON MARTIN

IT DOESN'T GET MUCH COOLER than pointing the long, elegant bonnet of your Aston Martin south and not stopping until you get to Monaco on a warm summer's evening. Maybe you'll stay at the Hotel de Paris, spend an evening on the tables at the Casino de Monte-Carlo. The next day? A short amble down to the Hercules Port and then a day on the yacht, I guess. And it would be only natural and fitting for the yacht to be as effortlessly stylish as your Vanquish or One-77. Which is where the AM37 comes in, a collaboration between Quintessence Yachts and Aston Martin. And just about the most ridiculously desirable object on planet Earth.

Aston Martin's design department is obviously incredibly highly regarded even beyond the usual automotive boundaries. So much so that it has a three-person team under the banner 'The Art of Living'

that's dedicated to projects away from car design. They've produced fabric collections with renowned couture fabric and lace maker Emilia Burano, exquisite furniture with Formitalia and now the jaw-dropping AM37 with Quintessence.

Marek Reichman, chief creative officer and design director, explains what made them take on such an ambitious project and what makes this 11.28-metre (37ft, hence the name) sports superyacht unique. You have to imagine him smiling broadly as you read, because he really is fired-up about the AM37. 'Quintessence were coming with a blank sheet,' he begins. 'They were saying: "This is going to be your design, with some practical input from our naval architect."

'We clay-modelled it here, we did the surfacing here, every piece of data to create the boat came from here. So that

was part of the attraction - they were not coming with a perceived view of what AM37 should be.'

Even so, Reichman's vision wasn't easy to execute and there were plenty of heated debates with the naval architects, the Dutch firm Mulder Design. 'It was harmonious after we'd had our struggles!' he laughs. 'What I learnt is that different disciplines apply the same techniques but at different times. It was like when I first got here. You have to prove your knowledge. Now the relationship is good - we've both learnt a huge amount and they're saying: "We're glad we didn't force you away from those ideas."

So it's a luxurious, sporting yacht available with two 370bhp Mercury diesel engines or twin 430bhp Mercury petrol engines, or in S form with twin 520bhp petrol engines and a top speed of 52



‘It has all the power that you need, when you need it. Just like a DB11, absolutely’



knots (60mph). It has a composite hull and carbonfibre structural strengthening, beautiful teak decking and accommodation consisting of a small galley kitchen, sofa/double bed, dining table and toilet (because even the super-glamorous produce waste). Each AM37 will be built in Southampton and, while pricing hasn't been confirmed, we'd bet on not getting much change from £1 million. But what makes it Aston Martin?

‘It's always based around beauty. It has to be,’ explains Reichman. ‘In itself that creates longevity. The hull is very sharp – you look at the front view and many powerboats have a bluff front these days, whereas AM37 is quite traditional. I wanted this look so that when seen in profile AM37 has a very defined point at the front. Stemming from that is the teak cabin, the greenhouse flowing up from it with that unique concave glass. The metal strips that run from the tip of the yacht and sweep up the glass create a very cab-rearward look, so even when it's static it looks like it's powering away.’

Beyond the simple beauty there's innovation driven by the aesthetic, too. An electrically operated three-piece deck made from carbonfibre completely covers the cabin when the boat is moored and then retracts below the aft deck, where it joins the carbonfibre Bimini cover that can be raised to provide shade from the sun. Marek loves this feature. ‘When you're moored you get this beautiful deck – and that came from the inspiration of seeing stunning Thames River cruisers: beautiful wooden cruisers that are so simple.’

Of course an Aston Martin can't just look right and Marek and Quintessence were at pains to ensure the AM37 was suitably effortless. ‘We wanted AM37 to feel like it's planing, smooth and controlled,’ he recalls. ‘So you can only hear the sound of the water, not the boat interrupting it, fighting the surface. An incredibly serene ride, easy and comfortable to go fast in and therefore confidence-inspiring. It's not an out and out speedboat, it's a pleasure powerboat that has all the power that you need when you need it. Just like a DB11, absolutely. When you see AM37 moored beside one of our cars I'm certain you'll see the shared philosophy, the shared authenticity. They'll impart the same feelings and sensations.’

**Left, from the top**

Aston design themes continue into the cockpit; top speed will be 52 knots; carbonfibre deck slides forward to cover the cockpit when moored





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# Aston and Red Bull plan 'world's fastest car'

COLLABORATION WITH RED BULL F1 DESIGNER WILL SET NEW BENCHMARKS FOR ROAD CAR PERFORMANCE

WORDS RICHARD MEADEN | PHOTOGRAPHY AML/RED BULL

ASTON MARTIN IS BUILDING a hypercar. Not a track-only follow-up to the Vulcan, but a fully fledged road-legal machine that promises to set stratospheric new performance benchmarks. The project, known internally as Nebula, is the first fruit of the partnership between Aston Martin and the Red Bull Formula 1 team. Hard information remains sketchy, but, from what we've been told and whispers we've heard, all indications are that it will stand alongside the McLaren F1 – itself built by an F1 team and conceived by Gordon Murray – as an era-defining car and a truly remarkable Aston Martin.

Led by Red Bull's genius designer, Adrian Newey (a long-time Aston owner), the AM-RB 001 will be a rolling thesis in cutting-edge aerodynamics and packaging. The challenge for Aston Martin's director of design, Marek Reichman, will be to marry this purity of function with a form that retains the essence of Aston Martin. This is a mouth-watering prospect, but, such are the claims made about the AM-RB 001's performance, it's hard to imagine exactly what the car will look like.

Clues are out there, though, for both Red Bull and Aston Martin have indulged flights of fantasy in the pixelated world of the PlayStation game, *Gran Turismo*. First, Newey created his and *Gran Turismo* creator Kazunori Yamouchi's vision of the ultimate no-limits racing car with the X2010 (pictured over the page).

Then Aston's Martin's DP100 Vision Gran Turismo concept (below) celebrated the marque's centenary by looking to the future. It's not so far-fetched to imagine both virtual cars influencing the design and technology of the AM-RB 001.

According to Aston, the car will be capable of lapping a circuit at the pace of a modern F1 car, yet be perfectly useable on the road and, more crucially, perfectly drivable by mere mortals. No road car has ever managed to strike this balance, or come close to approaching such rarefied lap times, yet the claims are serious.

Newey's involvement means the car will generate unprecedented levels of

downforce, most likely provided by equally unprecedented reliance on underfloor aerodynamics so that the bodywork remains clean for Reichman to achieve the smooth, fluid surfaces for which modern Astons are renowned. Little is known about the powertrain, but some kind of hybrid system is likely, with technology taken from today's F1 cars. Whether the engine will be related to Aston's new twin-turbo V12 is unknown, but given the inevitable weight and packaging constraints – and the likely inclusion of some kind of KERS – it's unlikely the current production motor will be suitable. Could it be a pair of F1-spec



**Top and above**  
 'Teaser' graphic (top) is all Aston Martin has officially released. DP100 concept from *Gran Turismo* may provide another clue



**Left and above**  
F1 designer Newey heads the engineering team. X2010 concept holds more clues to AM-RB 001

V6 turbos? Who knows? But it's fun to speculate. Likewise it's fun to wonder at a target weight. The McLaren F1 weighs just 1100kg. It's hard to imagine Newey would want to build something heavier than the 25-year-old icon. And if you assume the car will have in the region of 1000bhp, you don't need to be a mathematician to deduce the power-to-weight ratio will rival that of a stick of dynamite.

A full-scale model of the car is due to make its public debut later this summer. Aston Martin is already registering statements of interest. Pricing is anyone's guess, but somewhere in the region of £2m seems probable. What we do know is that it's the most intriguing and eagerly awaited piece of exotica in a generation.

## ...while Vulcan goes road-legal

LONG BEFORE WE SEE the new Aston/Red Bull hypercar, the extreme and so far track-only Vulcan is set to become the fastest road-legal Aston Martin yet, thanks to a collaboration with the RML Group. This extraordinary project was born when a small group of customers told Aston Martin they'd love to drive their Vulcans on the road. Late last year, the RML Group - the Northants-based motorsport and engineering company owned and run by Ray Mallock - was asked to develop a conversion kit to allow road registration under UK low-volume type approval rules, which also cover EU member states and certain other markets.

Aston's CEO Andy Palmer worked extensively with RML during his tenure at Nissan on highly-specialised projects such as the Juke R (a small 'crossover' with GT-R underpinnings) and the ZEOD RC hybrid Le Mans racer, so he knew their expertise with low-volume manufacturing and engineering solutions to complex concepts. This ingenuity has been put to the test with the Vulcan road car project, perhaps more so than anyone envisaged.

'It's actually a huge undertaking to take a Vulcan and then convert it into a road car that satisfies legislation and meets the expectations of demanding customers,' explains Michael Mallock. 'Certainly it requires a much bigger package of work than you'd expect!'

While the aim was very much to make a road-legal Vulcan rather than redevelop it into a full road car, the list of changes is vast. Most noticeable will be additional headlights, set much higher, but in fact every panel is subtly changed to meet requirements. There are new side mirrors, the ride height will be changed for the sake of usability with revised springs and dampers, there's a new exhaust system, additional engine cooling, changes to the brakes to make them easier to use at road speeds... the list goes on.

While the Vulcan will remain fiercely uncompromising, the RML Group has looked at every part of the package with road use in mind. There will be an electric lifting system to get over speed bumps, and the front splitter and rear diffuser are tweaked to improve clearance, too. There



**Above**  
Changes to make Vulcan road-legal (and useable) will include headlights and increased ride-height

will be more steering lock (necessitating new front uprights), a new central locking alarm/immobiliser, and the required handbrake and E-marked glass.

Despite the long list, the conversion will be reversible and was intended to keep the character of the Vulcan intact. Power outputs remain exactly the same in all three modes, so up to 820bhp. The conversion cost hasn't been confirmed, but let's just say you could buy a V8 Vantage for weekends and a Rapide S for family duties and have change left over.





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EXPERIENCE MATTERS





# Hardcore V8 Vantage: catch it if you can

TRACK-INSPIRED LIMITED-EDITION GT8 SELLING FAST

WORDS RICHARD MEADEN | PHOTOGRAPHY ASTON MARTIN

IT MIGHT BE GETTING LONG in the tooth, but the V8 Vantage is showing no signs of losing its bite if the GT8 is anything to go by. Following in the slipstream of its big brother the GT3-inspired GT12, the GT8 is Aston's road-going interpretation of its Vantage GTE World Endurance Championship contender.

Developed by Aston's Special Projects team, the £165,000 GT8 is a strictly limited-edition model with a production run of 150 cars. Powered by a slightly more powerful iteration of the familiar 4.7-litre naturally aspirated V8, the GT8 has 440bhp and 361lb ft of torque and is available with a choice of six-speed manual or seven-speed Sportshift II paddleshift gearbox. Performance? Well, it'll hit 60mph from a standstill in 4.4sec and storm on to a top speed of 190mph. Presumably on the Mulsanne Straight.

So far as suspension and brakes are concerned the GT8 keeps things simple, with fixed-rate dampers (with a suitably track-focused set-up) and cast iron discs, 380mm at the front, 330mm rear. Michelin Pilot Sport Cup 2s and a mechanical limited-slip diff complete the package.

In keeping with its road-racer vibe, the GT8 focuses on reducing weight to increase performance. Savings come from extensive use of carbonfibre, though to achieve the claimed 100kg saving and 1510kg kerbweight you'll need many of the cost options. These include a carbonfibre roof, centre-lock forged magnesium wheels, polycarbonate rear screen and side windows, a titanium centre-exit exhaust and carbonfibre sports seats.

If you go for that little lot you may as well go for the optional aero package and 'halo' paint scheme. The former adds a large wing to the rear decklid and an additional lower element to each corner

of the front splitter, while the latter gets you brightly coloured accents mimicking those on the GTE race-car. As you can see, it looks the part. Sounds the part, too, according to those who've heard it. But then it should do for what amounts to a near-£200k car when optioned to the hilt.

How will it drive? It won't have the borderline lunatic performance of the GT12, but experience of that car's nose-heavy weight distribution and limited traction suggest the lighter, less powerful but better-balanced GT8 will be a more biddable machine. We also like the fact you can have it with a manual gearbox, and the old sweet-shifting six-speed unit at that, even though the paddleshift transmission is perhaps more in keeping with a 21st century quasi-racer.

By the time you read this the chances are all will be sold. If you're one of the lucky 150, bravo! If you're not, console yourself with the fact we'll bring you a full test of the GT8 in the next issue.

**Above and below**

Optional aero package adds the large rear wing and the lower elements to the front splitter; 'halo' paint scheme adds race-car-style accents





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# DB4 GT: icon reborn

ASTON MARTIN WORKS TO BUILD A LIMITED RUN OF 'CONTINUATION' CARS; POSSIBILITY OF RACE SERIES

WORDS RICHARD MEADEN | IMAGE AMHT ARCHIVE

AS WE CLOSED FOR PRESS, news was emerging from Aston Martin Works of an extraordinary plan to produce a special series of DB4 GT Continuation cars. Details were sketchy, but it seems the cars will be completely new, rather than relying on original DB4 donor cars. As you would expect, numbers will be limited. The precise quantity is unknown, but is unlikely to approach the 75 original DB4 GTs built in period. If one were in the mood to speculate, a further 25 cars would round things up nicely.

Practically and emotionally, Works' recently refurbished facilities at Newport Pagnell are the perfect place in which to build this new batch of cars, and the combined pool of knowledge and experience at the Tickford Street premises is second-to-none.

The decision to build these cars is sure to divide the Aston Martin community, just as the four Sanction II and a further two Sanction III DB4 GT Zagatos did in 1991 and 2000. Contentious at the time – despite being built using donor cars and given 'works approved replica' status by the factory – the Sanction cars are now classics in their own right, albeit with values a long way behind those of the original batch of 20 cars.

Like much of the project, the precise specification of the Continuation cars

remains undisclosed, but it's reasonable to assume they will adopt some of the engine and chassis enhancements that have become the default specification for all but the most committed purist. There's also the question of whether the Continuation cars will be road-registered, as all original DB4 GTs were in period, or whether they will be built as FIA-approved race-cars (like the batch of six Lightweight E-types recently built by Jaguar Heritage), or track-only cars in the vein of Aston Martin's own Vulcan. Price? Well with the aforementioned Lightweight E-types reputed to cost around £1.2m (plus taxes) we can expect the DB4 GT Continuation to be in the same seven-figure ballpark. As Astons have always been reassuringly expensive when compared with Jaguars, perhaps even a little more.

Though controversial, the DB4 GT Continuation project is a bold and interesting move by Works. Combining Aston Martin's proven business models for so-called 'boutique' supercars such as the One-77 and Vulcan, and special limited-series models such as the V12 Zagato, Taraf and new Vanquish Zagato, the DB4 GT Continuation promises to tap into the same rich seam of top-tier Aston Martin enthusiast who until now has perhaps not considered a owning a classic Aston. We envy them already.

## IN BRIEF



### NEW DEALERSHIPS

Aston Martin continues to expand its dealer network in the UK. At the end of March it opened a 14-car showroom for new and pre-owned Astons in Newcastle. The facility, part of the Stoneacre group, also has a 'Q by Aston Martin' lounge and a workshop staffed by Gaydon-trained technicians. Launch party VIPs included Aston Martin CEO Andy Palmer and Stoneacre bosses Shaun Foweather and Paul Thursby. Meanwhile another new dealership, Aston Martin Bristol, part of the Dick Lovett group, will be opening this summer.



### WORKS TRACKDAY

Aston Martin Works is running its annual trackday for Aston owners at Silverstone on June 23. The trackday package, which is priced at £950 per car and driver, plus £80 per guest, includes full hospitality, a pre-circuit vehicle health check at Works, multiple track driving sessions, and as much or as little track instruction as each driver desires (no previous track experience is required). To find out more or reserve a place on the trackday, email [experience@astonmartinworks.com](mailto:experience@astonmartinworks.com)



### DB4 DP2155

We've been asked to point out that the value of the unique, Works-developed DB4, designated DP2155, as featured in the last issue of *Vantage*, is currently estimated at £2.2 million, not £1.2 million as was printed erroneously in the specification table. We apologise for the error. The car is currently for sale. For more information, please contact: [am.dp2155@gmail.com](mailto:am.dp2155@gmail.com)



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# GTEs shine at Silverstone and Spa

ENCOURAGING PERFORMANCE FOR ASTON'S NEW WEC CARS  
BEFORE ALL EYES TURN TO LE MANS

WORDS RICHARD MEADEN

PHOTOGRAPHY DREW GIBSON

THE SILVERSTONE GRAND PRIX Circuit played host to the opening round of the 2016 World Endurance Championship (WEC), a large home crowd braving wintry conditions to see the best marques, teams and drivers go head-to-head in the world's best race series. And after an encouraging winter's testing of its new GTE contender, Aston Martin Racing (AMR) went to the fast Northamptonshire circuit with high hopes of a strong start to the season.

The departure of long-standing AMR driver Stefan Mücke (now driving for rivals Ford) has prompted a shake-up in AMR's driver line-up, with Mücke's former driving partner Darren Turner made an honorary Dane and joining Nicki Thiim and Marco Sørensen in the #95 GTE PRO Vantage. In AMR's other GTE PRO entry, Scot Jonny Adam graduates to a race seat in the #97 Vantage alongside Kiwi Richie Stanaway and the rapid Brazilian, Fernando Rees. Meanwhile in GTE AM - happiest hunting ground for AMR in recent years - Canadian Paul Dalla Lana is teamed with Mathias Lauda, son of F1 legend Niki, and veteran Portugese racer Pedro Lamy in #98.

Unseasonable weather - snow, actually! - wreaked havoc in the qualifying session. Of the AMR entries, the #97 crew made the best of it, qualifying P5 in GTE PRO, one place ahead of #95, while the #98 car achieved P6 in GTE AM. Enjoying much-

improved weather for the race, Turner, Thiim and Sørensen each drove double-stints to work their way to a strong P3 in the #95 car. Dalla Lana, Lauda and Lamy went one better in GTE AM, finishing in P2 after a faultless race.

From Silverstone, the WEC teams headed to Belgium for the Six Hours of Spa. Traditionally the warm-up for Le Mans, Spa is a favourite among teams, drivers and fans, with a strong result here building valuable momentum for Le Mans. Qualifying was a mixed bag for AMR. The #98 GTE AM entry claimed an emphatic class pole position, while #97 proved once again to be the quickest of AMR's two PRO entries in P3. The #95 car secured a disappointing P6, but was expected

to make good progress in the race.

And so it did, Sørensen moving rapidly from 6th to 4th on the first lap and holding that position for the pit-stop, where he handed over to Nicki Thiim. Unfortunately #95's race would end spectacularly in the second hour, the GTE PRO Vantage sent tumbling after making contact with another car. Happily, Thiim emerged unscathed from the incident. Consolation came in the form of a double podium finish for the remaining AMR cars, #98 taking victory in GTE AM and #97 finishing P3 in GTE PRO.

As we close for press, the battle for GTE honours at the Le Mans 24 Hours was poised to be an epic, with established regulars Ferrari, Porsche and Chevrolet joining Aston Martin in an intense battle with the returning Ford. On this, the 50th anniversary of the GT40's outright win at Le Mans, Ford wants nothing less than GTE victory to mark the occasion. Much as we'd appreciate the historical symmetry of such a win, we're hoping it's an Aston Martin that takes the spoils in France.



**Top and above**  
GTE PRO Vantage of Turner, Thiim and Sørensen was strong P3 at Silverstone, while #98 won the GTE AM class at Spa

## AMR'S RACE DATES

**June 18/19** 24 Hours of Le Mans  
**July 24** WEC Six Hours of Nürburgring  
**September 4** WEC Six Hours of Mexico City  
**September 17** WEC Six Hours of Circuit of Americas  
**October 16** WEC Six Hours of Fuji



# From Scottish Malts to Monaco

FROM RELIABILITY TRIALS TO FULL-ON TRACK ACTION, IT'S BEEN A FINE START TO THE CLASSIC MOTORSPORT YEAR

WORDS STEPHEN ARCHER

PHOTOGRAPHY PETER McFADYEN, SCOTTISH MALTS

IT SEEMS ONLY YESTERDAY that the sun set on the 2015 season but, as with F1, classic events seem to grow in number and increasingly stretch across the calendar. April saw the re-run of the famous Tour Auto, now known as the Tour Auto Optic 2000. Unusually, there was only one Aston Martin in the event but it was a rather special, French-entered DB2, one of the few, very early 'three-grille' cars with the 'washboard' side-vents. This is a well-sorted car and the driver pairing of Laurent and Marion Desplaces finished a fine 19th overall out of 67 starters.

Run at a rather more leisurely pace, but on equally wonderful roads, was the Scottish Malts rally in late April, blessed with decent weather and some superb cars. The DB2 of John Jackson and Victor Ramsey won its class and the DB5 of Mark Shipman and Bob Rutherford bagged a class second. Whisky galore, too.

The Donington Festival in early April is now a major fixture on the calendar and typically brings out some fine cars. Heinz Stamm brought his 'Spa' 2 Litre from Germany and was rewarded with a class win in both pre-war races. The Stirling Moss Trophy for pre-1961 sports cars saw the ex-Whitehead brothers DBR1/5 (the



DBR1/5 made strong showing at a damp Donington, while DB2 (below) bagged class win on Scottish Malts

only privately entered DBR1 in period) finish a creditable 8th overall in the hands of owner Wolfgang Friedrichs and Simon Hadfield. The Woodcote Trophy for pre-1956 sports cars saw Mark Midgley's DB3, shared with Chris Woodgate, finish a superb 6th overall. The 42-lap race was also graced by Chris Jolley's former Alpine Cup DB2 (8th), the matching pair of DB2/4s of Nigel Batchelor (11th) and Wilhelm Grandidier (14th), and Steve Brooks' DB3S (18th). Arguably the performance of the event, though, was the 3rd overall achieved by the Friedrichs/Mallock DP214 replica in the Pre-1963 GT race against particularly strong opposition.

In mid-April, the AMOC race season got off to an unconventional start, sharing a meeting with British GTs at Brands Hatch. The Intermarque Race saw the GT4 of Tom Black finished second after a fine drive, ahead of Chris Kemp's similar car. The DB4 Lightweights of Nicolas King, Tarek Mahmoud and Matt Le Breton reminded the crowd of modern racegoers what fantastic cars these classic Astons are.

Mid-May saw the tenth running of the Monaco Historic, and though much of the racing is dedicated to single-seaters there were two races for which Astons were eligible. The re-run of the Sports Car race of 1952 included Martin Melling's team DB3/5, the ex-Angela Brown DB4 of Arlette Muller, and the DB3Ss of Steve Brooks and Wolfgang Friedrichs. They made a fabulous sight on the tortuous GP circuit, Brooks hustling his Aston to an impressive 7th overall.

## DIARY DATES

- June 11** AMOC Silverstone (with British GTs)
- June 18-19** Brooklands Double Twelve
- July 23** AMOC Snetterton
- July 29-31** Silverstone Classic
- August 13** AMOC Brands Hatch Indy
- September 9-11** Goodwood Revival
- October 1** AMOC Silverstone National





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Artwork by Andrew Hill at [www.automotive-images.co.uk](http://www.automotive-images.co.uk)



# AMOC makes a splash in the city

FIFTY ASTONS CREATE AN ADDED SPECTACLE AT ONE OF LONDON'S NEWEST ATTRACTIONS

WORDS NIKKI WRIGHT PHOTOGRAPHY DAVID WRIGHT/MARTYN GODDARD



**Left and above**

Aston Martins of all ages lined up in London's Granary Square to enjoy the choreographed fountains in the early summer sunshine

EARLY STARTS AND military precision are synonymous with Aston Martin Owners Club events, and never more so than in the heart of London at one of the capital's newest attractions, Granary Square, Kings Cross, on Sunday, May 8.

As reveille was sounded across the AMOC team mobile phones, dawn was breaking and the tranquillity of Granary Square – showcasing a world-class water fountain attraction – was gently stirred by the imminent arrival of 50 Astons.

Situated on the banks of Regent's Canal behind King's Cross station, Granary Square is at the historic heart of London, surrounded by old buildings that create a wonderful atmosphere and distinctive character. It also features a spectacular creation of over 1000 choreographed fountains, each individually controlled and lit in different colours, creating audible splashing rhythms as the water appears to dance, delighting onlookers.

The team, having aborted an attempt to set up the event the night before due to security issues, had to pull out all the stops to be ready for the 7am arrival of the first wave of cars. Before long, a fantastic display of the power, beauty and soul of members' Aston Martins from every era of production proudly filled Granary Square and continued along the length of the boulevard leading to King's Cross station.

Basking in glorious early-summer sunshine, members, visitors, staff and volunteers alike enjoyed a very memorable day celebrating the pride of Aston Martin ownership, soaking up the atmosphere of the Square, and enjoying the shops and restaurants.

All good things must come to an end and as 4pm approached the call for 'ladies and gentlemen to please start your engines' was the cue for the unique sound of 50 Astons leaving their London stage.

Later this year, the Club's Autumn Concours Dinner and Concours Display will be on Saturday 24 and Sunday 25 September at beautiful Compton Verney, an 18th Century country mansion near Kineton in Warwickshire that has been converted into an art gallery. The dinner will be held in the manor's stunning halls and members will have a chance to experience its unusual art exhibition.

To purchase tickets to the Autumn Concours (only available to Aston Martin Owners Club members) email the AMOC events team at [events@amoc.org](mailto:events@amoc.org), and for full details of all the 2016 Aston Martin Owners Club events and racing series, visit [www.amoc.org](http://www.amoc.org).

Membership of the AMOC is open to both owners and enthusiasts alike. Full details of how to join and membership benefits can be found on the Club's website, [www.amoc.org](http://www.amoc.org). And for membership inquiries, email [hqstaff@amoc.org](mailto:hqstaff@amoc.org) or call 01865 400400.

**DIARY DATES**

- June 17-19** Le Mans 24hrs club camping
- June 24** Blyton Park trackday
- July 3** Burghley House charity event
- July 8-10** Le Mans Classic
- August 10-14** International meeting, Sweden
- Sept 24** Autumn Concours Dinner
- Sept 25** Autumn Concours, Compton Verney, Warwickshire



# The calm before the storm

EX-PRINCE PHILIP LAGONDA 3-LITRE GRABS THE HEADLINES  
IN AN UNUSUALLY QUIET QUARTER

WORDS CHRIS BIETZK

PHOTOGRAPHY H&H; BONHAMS; RM SOTHEBY'S/DARIN SCHNABEL



**Clockwise from left**

Prince Philip's former daily driver was the jewel in the crown of H&H's April sale; a 1934 12/50hp was excellent value at £85,500; this DB AR1 came to auction in as-new condition



history: the 1954 Lagonda 3-Litre Drophead Coupé Mk1 built for the Duke of Edinburgh. Commissioned by Prince Philip as a family runabout, it was equipped from new with the Mk2-type power hood and floor-mounted gearbox, as well as a radio telephone and an additional vanity mirror for the Queen.

Referred to by his chauffeur (who also drove the car on occasion) as a man who likes to 'step on it', Prince Philip put 35,000 miles on the car in seven years, some of those clocked up on an official tour of Australia, and his enjoyment of the car - as well as the excellent support provided by the factory - earned Aston Martin Lagonda a Royal Warrant. Carefully maintained since its days in the Royal fleet, and offered with a vast history file, it brought a very strong £339,000.

If you're wondering *exactly* how much the car's history was worth, the results of Bonhams' Aston Martin Works Sale (21 May) might give you some indication. That auction, which falls awkwardly between our deadline and our on-sale date, features a 1955 3-Litre DHC, a project car estimated at £25,000-35,000. Concours-condition examples are asking around £100,000 on the private market.

Of course, the 3-Litre is not the main attraction at the Works Sale: by the time you read this column we will know just how vast a sum was paid for DB3S/5, the 1953 sports-racer driven by luminaries such as Sir Stirling Moss, Peter Collins and Graham Hill; formerly owned by another, Roy Salvadori; and originally built for the use of none other than 'DB' himself, David Brown. Restored by Works at a cost of £311,000, it has been valued at £6,000,000-7,000,000.

And the excitement doesn't end there. The day before the Works Sale, Silverstone Auctions will offer eight Astons (look out for the barn-find early DBS - £50,000-60,000), while Historics at Brooklands has, at the time of writing, secured half a dozen for its 11 June event... and the Monterey Car Week sales are now just around the corner, too. The quietness of the past few months will soon be a distant memory.

HOW EXACTLY is it possible, we keep asking ourselves, for a three-owner DB AR1 Zagato to have covered fewer than 700 miles in 13 years? Like a wasp in a jar this question has clattered around our brains for weeks now, in a quarter that has given us little else to think about.

The Tungsten Silver 2003 DB AR1 was one of only three Aston Martins offered at the annual Amelia Island auctions in March (Bonhams brought a V8 Volante and Virage Coupé to the party), and was sold by RM Sotheby's for \$363,000 - \$63,000 more than its top estimate. The premium price was, of course, a function of the car's bewilderingly unused condition; sadly the market's fetish for no-mileage cars is likely keep this Aston off the road in the future, too.

Happily, among the other auctions concluded since the last issue of *Vantage* there were some rather better-loved cars, including arguably the buy of the year so far, a 1934 12/50hp. Offered by Bonhams

at the Goodwood Members' Meeting sale on 20 March, chassis G3/297/L is, as the last part of that number indicates, a long-wheelbase car - originally a Saloon but re-bodied as a Tourer long ago.

With two owners since 1971, the first of whom restored the car in the 1970s, the car has been driven extensively on AMOC events and many others besides, and remains a reliable and willing mount. Estimated to make between £80,000 and £120,000, it found a new home for an all-in price of £85,500. There is no other Aston of comparable character and rarity that can be had for that kind of money.

Also appealing was the pretty 1954 DB2/4 Saloon sold by H&H on 20 April for £207,200, the subject of a nut-and-bolt restoration following a long period in dry storage, and ready again for the kind of enthusiastic use recorded by the first owner in the original instruction book.

At the same auction H&H offered another car with a well-known early



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# Desirables

*Aston-related objects of desire, including a dead-on model of the departed DB9*

## DB4 GT Zagato print by Arthur Schening

\$30 | [www.scheningcreative.com](http://www.scheningcreative.com)

Artists are drawn to the shapely DB4 GT Zagato like moths to a flame, and the latest to trace its lines is the American illustrator Arthur Schening, whose many 19x13in prints – Group C racers are a favourite subject – are dangerously affordable.



## Autodromo Prototipo chronograph

\$625 | [www.autodromo.com](http://www.autodromo.com)

Proof that a properly smart drivers' watch needn't cost the Earth, the Prototipo features a clever Seiko hybrid 'meca-quartz' movement (quartz for timekeeping, mechanical for the chronograph function), and styling that reminds us that product design in the 1970s wasn't all bad.



## Piloti Superleggera racing boots

£180 | [www.piloti.uk.com](http://www.piloti.uk.com)

The super-comfortable, FIA/SFI-approved Superleggera remains the pick of the Piloti range, but the brand now offers a variety of smarter shoes, too, for those occasions – board meetings; court appearances; my sister's wedding, apparently – when the flame-retardant look is inappropriate.



## Bicester Heritage tool roll by Malle

£149 | [www.mallelondon.com](http://www.mallelondon.com)

Our sort of 'bag for life', this Bicester Heritage-branded roll is made of durable oiled cotton and bridle leather, with brass buckles. Given the quality of construction, it's reasonably priced at £149; the temptation to fill it with expensive new tools, of course, will be strong...



## 1:8-scale DB9 model by Amalgam

£5040 | [finemodelcars.com](http://finemodelcars.com)

Aston Martin might have called time on the production of the 'world's most beautiful car', but fortunately the folks at Amalgam will still build you an original-spec DB9. Crafted by hand with the help of Aston's own CAD data, it is a superbly accurate tribute to a car that continues to swat away pretenders to its throne.

Desirables is compiled by Chris Bietzk. If you'd like to have an item considered for inclusion, email [eds@vantagemag.co.uk](mailto:eds@vantagemag.co.uk)





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It seems reports of the death of the manual gearbox have been exaggerated. Aston Martin's blisteringly quick V12 Vantage S will soon be available with a seven-speed manual, and we've driven it

# POWER SHI





# FTING

WORDS RICHARD MEADEN  
PHOTOGRAPHY MAX EAREY





**L**ike a once-common species persecuted to the brink of extinction, sports cars with manual gearboxes have been on the endangered list for years. Thankfully, Aston Martin has assumed the role of conservationist by offering its sportiest series-production model – the V12 Vantage S – with the option of a stick shift for the first time. It's an unexpected but wholly popular move. CEO Andy Palmer is a self-confessed petrolhead, so you just know this is something he's championed. He's a good man is AP.

Of course, it's impossible to discuss the V12VS without recapping, or rather paying reverential respect, to its frankly blistering specification and performance. There's always been something wondrous about the concept of a car as compact as the Vantage concealing a stonking V12, and the V12VS takes this to a new level with a fiercely tuned version of Aston's 5.9-litre V12 that's good for 565bhp and 457lb ft of torque. I'd go so far as to say no production Aston has ever felt more ferocious than this car. The sense of explosive power makes your heart pump every time you touch the throttle, the knowledge that tyres and torque are constantly warring factions enough to make your mouth go dry. This car is dynamite.

Does swapping paddles for a stick make much difference? More than you'd think, actually. Without the need to work a clutch and gearstick, Sportshift III asks little from the driver. You can even leave it in Auto, for heaven's sake. So while you always have to pay the car due respect, it's not a cerebral process. The manual transmission immediately places you in a position of greater influence and responsibility. You need to think about what you're doing and plan ahead. I believe this process is called driving.

The gearbox itself is a seven-speed unit derived from the paddle-shift 'box. Aston hasn't held back on the nostalgia, placing first gear in the classic dogleg position (far left and back from neutral) with the remaining six forward gears arranged in a conventional H-pattern. It's a nice touch for those of us who think doglegs are something special, but it does mean you have to give yourself time to learn your way around the 'box and the gear positions before shifting becomes intuitive. Given that it's this kind of interaction that purists like us claim to crave, it would be churlish to gripe, but you do occasionally find yourself getting a bit lost in the ratios. Not that it really matters when you have that powerhouse of a V12 at your command – it'll pull pretty much any gear at any revs – but we like to get things right, don't we?

#### Above and opposite

Manual option will be available from autumn, when 2017MY cars come on stream. Sport-Plus pack includes the striking paint job (other colours are available)

Acknowledging that the novelty of a stick may encourage newcomers to the dark art of changing gear, Aston Martin's engineers have developed AMSHIFT, which is basically a cheat for those who haven't spent the last 20 years attempting to master heel-and-toe throttle-blip downshifts. Engaged by pressing and holding the Sport button, AMSHIFT also enables you to make upshifts while keeping the throttle pinned wide open. Even though I prefer to do the blips myself, I'll readily concede the automated *whoop-whoops* are great fun. I'm really not sure about the flat-shift function though. It just doesn't feel right to operate the clutch and gearstick while keeping your right foot flat to the floorboards. I'm sure I pull a pained expression whenever I try to do it, as though the act is going to do the engine and transmission mortal damage. It doesn't, of course, but my brain simply refuses to unlearn habits engrained over the last 25 years.

Now the slightly disappointing bit. The gearshift isn't actually that great. Or rather the spring bias that ensures the neutral plane sits







'No production Aston Martin has ev







ever felt more ferocious than this car'





## V12 Vantage S manual

**ENGINE** V12, 5935cc **MAX POWER** 565bhp @ 6750rpm **MAX TORQUE** 457lb ft @ 5750rpm **TRANSMISSION** Seven-speed manual, rear-wheel drive, limited-slip diff, TC, DSC **SUSPENSION** Front and rear: double wishbones, coil springs, adaptive dampers, anti-roll bar **BRAKES** Vented carbon-ceramic discs, 398mm front, 360mm rear, ABS, EBD **WHEELS** 9 x 19in front, 11 x 19in rear **TYRES** 255/35 ZR19 front, 335/30 ZR19 rear, Pirelli P Zero **WEIGHT** 1665kg **POWER TO WEIGHT** 345bhp/ton **0-60MPH** 3.7sec (claimed) **TOP SPEED** 205mph (claimed) **PRICE** £140,000

between 4th and 5th gears isn't great. Against expectations, it's easy to whip the lever up and across from that dogleg 1st and into 2nd, but unless you apply subtle but deliberate leftward lateral pressure to the lever as you pull back from 2nd into 3rd, the lever will find 5th. As I've said, the V12 hardly breaks stride if you do, but wrong-slotting does knock your confidence.

The good news is that, once into 3rd, the rest of the gears are a cinch to find, and you really do find yourself immersed in the act of driving in a way paddles simply don't deliver. But you need to be mindful of that 3rd/5th conflict on the way back down the 'box, too. Familiarity does help to finesse your inputs, but every now and again you drop the ball, which is annoying. Porsche struggled with the shift quality of its own seven-speed manual when it was first introduced, but has since improved it considerably. Aston will doubtless do the same.

Deliveries of the manual V12VS will begin in the autumn for the 2017 Model Year, with no

limit on production for European markets. US customers will also get the manual option, but production will be limited to 100 cars. We drove a pre-production car, so it didn't have the new AMi III infotainment system that will come as standard in all MY17 customer cars. However, it did come with the Sport-Plus option pack, which includes the striking contrast paint scheme and fantastic ten-spoke alloy wheels. Judging by the attention the car attracted, this option pack should be very popular indeed.

It's always exciting when a manufacturer bucks a trend and offers something for the keenest enthusiasts. Best of all, according to Andy Palmer, it's not a one-off: 'Broadening the scope of the V12 Vantage S with a manual transmission is an indication of our desire to offer the keenest drivers a more analogue and immersive machine to enjoy,' he says. 'I'd like to take this opportunity to reiterate that the manual gearbox remains an integral part of our product plans, and will do for many years to come.' Refreshing news indeed.

Of course, the six-million-dollar question, at least for a self-confessed champion of the stick such as myself, is were I in the position to buy a V12 Vantage S, would I specify it with a manual or Sportshift gearbox? If you'd asked the question during the familiarisation phase, I'd have taken a while to give you an answer. But after a decent spell behind the wheel on some of my favourite roads, I have to say there's still something magical about the combination of a big, fierce V12 and a manual 'box. When it comes to the V12 Vantage S, I'll stick with the stick. ♣



## The original V12 Vantage

There's a delicious symmetry about the V12 Vantage S being made available with a manual gearbox as it nears the end of its life, for it completes a circle that began back in 2008, when Aston Martin first shoe-horned a V12 engine into the nose of a Vantage.

Even then, Aston's pocket battleship was a glorious anachronism, being one of the last great sports cars to feature a manual transmission. Indeed, by the time production ceased, it was the last series-production stick-shift V12.

That original V12 Vantage could never be accused of lacking performance, but comparing the original with the latest V12V S manual illustrates the pace of change, even in a model that revels in its old-school appeal. Peak power has increased from 510bhp to 565bhp, peak torque from 420lb ft at 5750rpm to 457lb ft at the same revs. The power-to-weight ratio has taken a northerly hike from 308 to 345bhp-per-ton, while top speed has risen from 190mph to a sensational 205mph, but it's the delivery that illustrates the evolution most vividly. The S is considerably sharper, with razor-like throttle response and a sense of barely contained performance, while its three-stage adaptive damping broadens the scope of the chassis.

Of the pair, the S is much the more aggressive machine. If anything the performance figures don't do it justice. Yet the original V12 Vantage remains a formidable and completely seductive car. The presence of a gearstick doesn't define either, but it contributes unquestionably to their unique appeal.

'There's something magical about the combination of a big, fierce V12 and a manual gearbox'





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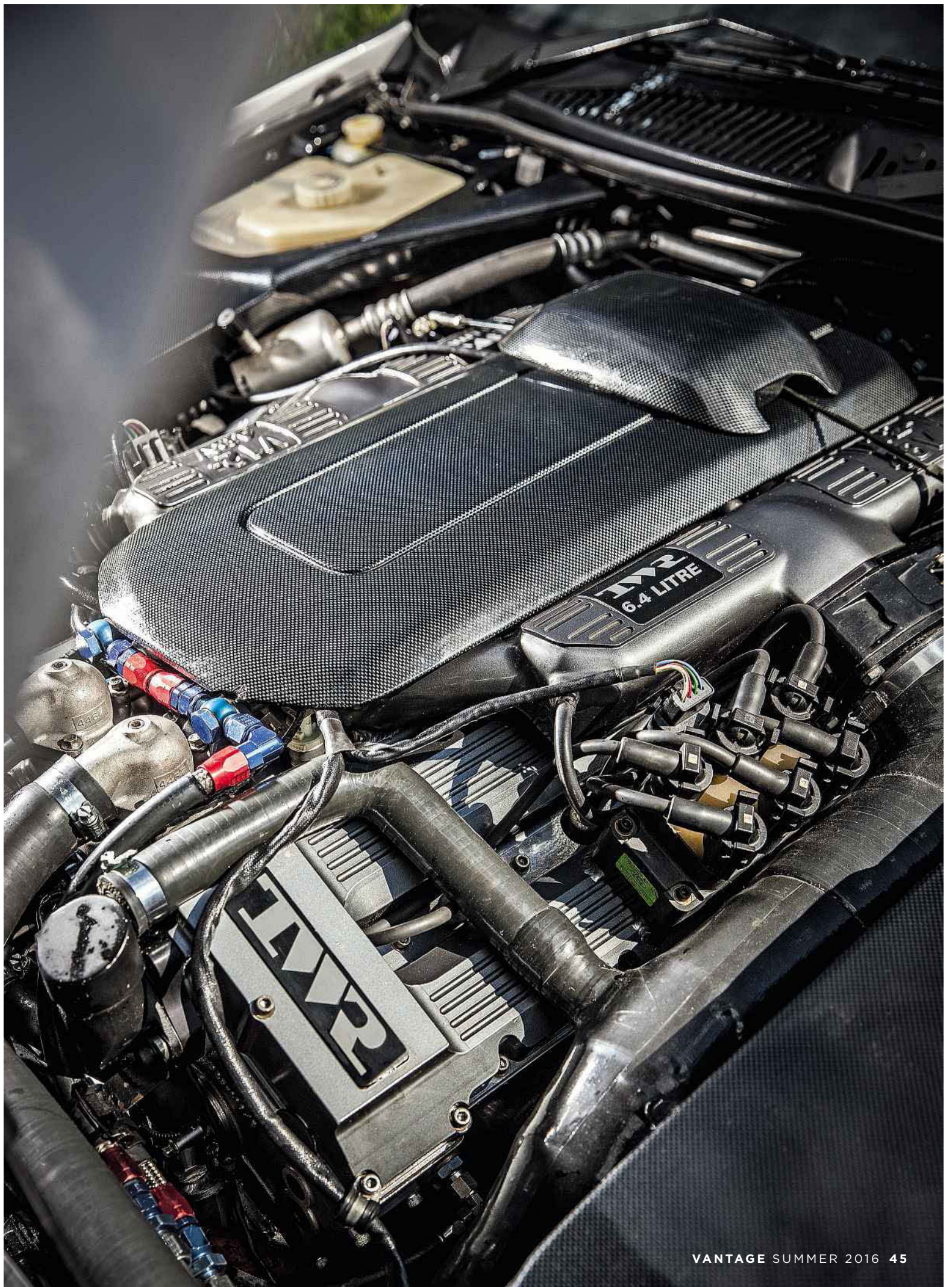
# WILDCAT

Long before the V12 Vantage, even before the DB7 Vantage, TWR created this wild, V12 Jaguar-engined DB7. We drive it

WORDS JOHN SIMISTER | PHOTOGRAPHY CHARLIE MAGEE











**T**wo years ago, *Vantage* ran a story on the genesis and development of the Aston Martin DB7. In it, we wrote of how Tom Walkinshaw, the man who made the DB7 happen at a time when Aston Martin needed a new direction and Jaguar had canned Walkinshaw's pitch to make an XJS replacement, assumed that the new 'affordable' Aston would be powered by Jaguar's V12.

Walkinshaw knew the engine intimately, having raced it in various guises, modified it, championed it. But it didn't happen because Ford, then owner of Aston Martin, favoured a supercharged version of Jaguar's still-young AJ6 straight-six. Tom Walkinshaw, however, was never a man to be rebuffed. Partly because he could, and partly because he wanted to show why he was right, he built a Jaguar V12-powered DB7 anyway in the hope that Aston Martin would ask for more of them.

The press loved it, judging by Steve Cropley's story in *Autocar* of September 18, 1996. Cropley's tale tells how Walkinshaw craved the effortlessly blistering pace of a V12 engine, how the DB7 (by then well-established in production) wasn't quite enough, and how he found himself drawn to a Ferrari 456. Who could blame him? The 456 is a fabulous Ferrari, a handsome and characterful machine oddly undervalued today (it can't last).

But... the boss of Aston Martin (Oxford) Ltd driving a Ferrari? That couldn't be right. What happened next is the car you see here.

Both car and engine are one-offs, and nothing to do with the V12-engined DB7 Vantage that arrived three years later. Other than making the point that a DB7 V12 might be a good thing, of course. The Vantage's Ford Duratec-

derived engine made 420bhp initially, 435bhp later, from its 5.9 litres. This machine is altogether fiercer, even on paper: 6.4 litres, nominally 475bhp (the truth could be well over 500) with 470lb ft of torque, a Jaguar V12 engine like no other. Here, surely, is the proper spirit-guide for today's differently shaped V12 Vantage S.

It takes little time to reach that conclusion. Just the few seconds needed to cannon your way through all the throttle travel and all six gears. Have I ever driven a car with such a broad spread of monstrous torque? Amble along at 1000rpm in fourth, press the accelerator and *whoomph!* The DB7 lunges forward as though carrying half its mass, engine note building from dirty thrum to the open-mouthed *waaaap* typical of a free-breathing V12 as it passes through its rev-range's halfway point. The pull goes a little way past the 6000rpm peak-power speed, but there's no point in using it. Not when there are enough muscle fibres here to give vigorous momentum gain even in a sixth gear so long-striding that 70mph represents just 2000rpm.

You'd think that would help contain the fuel thirst, but doing that is an uphill battle. The fuel gauge functions almost like a reverse accelerometer, with an ever-present whiff of part-burnt hydrocarbons to amplify this notion, despite the notional presence of a pair of catalytic converters. But it's worth it, just to hear and feel a throttle response of stunning explosiveness and a build-up of *g*-forces guaranteed to scramble your inner ear's balancing mechanisms if you unleash all the forces through the lower gears. There are no independent performance figures recorded, but I'd estimate 60mph in usefully under five seconds. Theoretical top speed, given the gearing and the power curve, was calculated by TWR at 182mph.

#### Above and right

Tom Walkinshaw's prototype DB7 V12 not only had a unique engine, but unique bodywork too, shaped by Ian Callum. Interior, too, is clearly DB7 but with a number of twists, such as the instruments being set into wood veneer







**Right and below**  
Jaguar-engined Aston stretches its legs for the first time since it was recommissioned by Oselli. Below: body was created in clay by DB7 designer Ian Callum

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## *DB7 Take Two*

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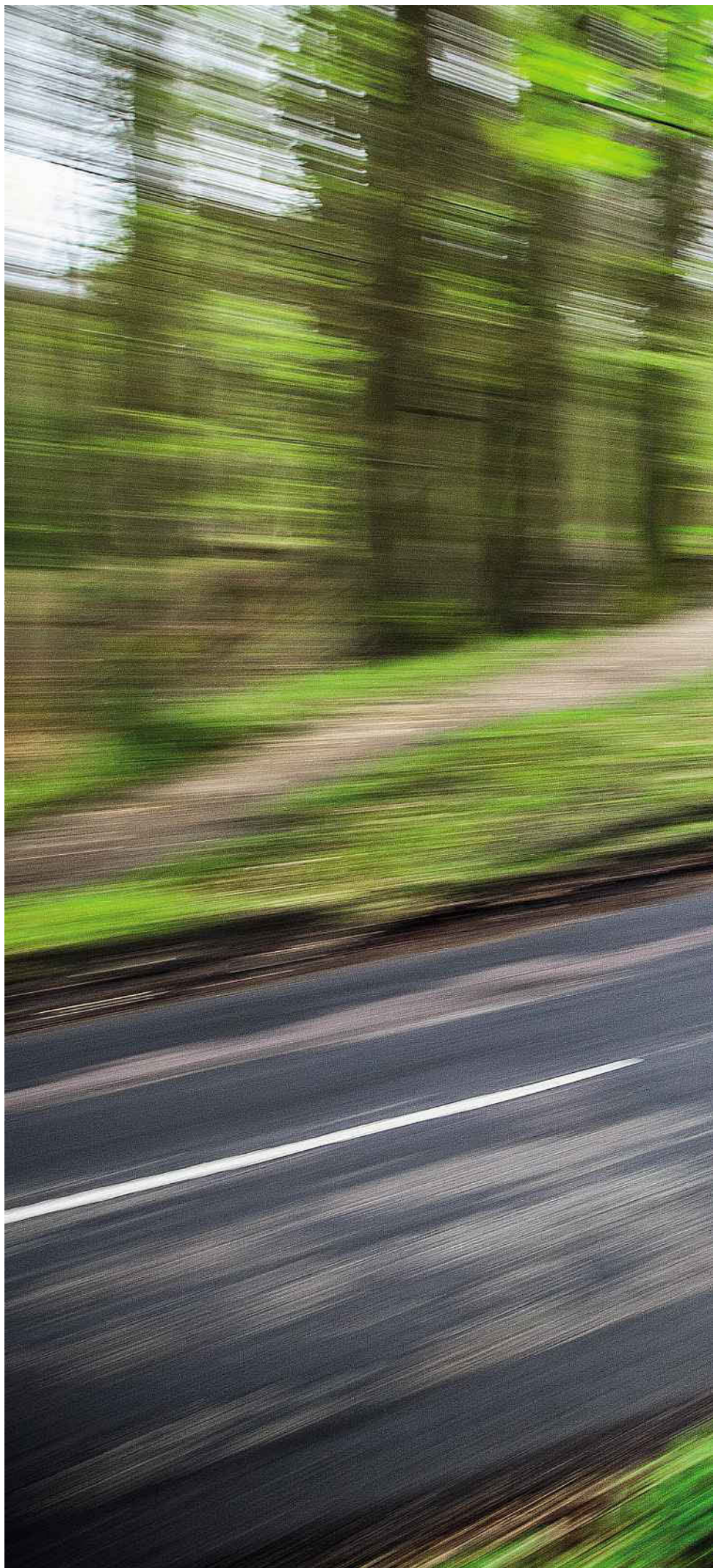
Ian Callum was finding life at TWR's design division full of freedom and excitement after the strictures of Ford. The DB7 was the first design project he could truly call his own, so he was ideally placed to shape the up-muscled, Jaguar V12-powered version that existed as a glint in Tom Walkinshaw's eye.

'It was a good bit of fun,' Ian says now. 'I thought it had around 600bhp and it didn't weigh very much. The first time we test-drove it, we ripped the rear axle right out of the floorpan, so the engineers had to strengthen it a bit. We made this prototype and the plan was to make more, but with changes going on at Aston maybe Tom lost his intent a bit too quickly.'

'Remember we did put a V12 in the first prototype

DB7, but [Aston chief] Walter Hayes said it was the baby Aston and should have a straight-six, which was taller so we had to drop the subframe. With this car, Tom wanted to sell the idea to Aston Martin but they had other things in mind.' As we later saw, with the DB7 Vantage.

Ian shaped the TWR V12's new lower panels and rear spoiler to generate some downforce, improve cooling, cover the wider rear wheels and add muscularity without making the car look like the recipient of an aftermarket bodykit. The sheet metal was unchanged. 'We just clayed it up [as seen in the photos below] and took a mould, then made a set of glassfibre panels and a second set to be on the safe side.' One set is on the car. Where, we wonder, is the other?











## *Twelve into a Seven will go*

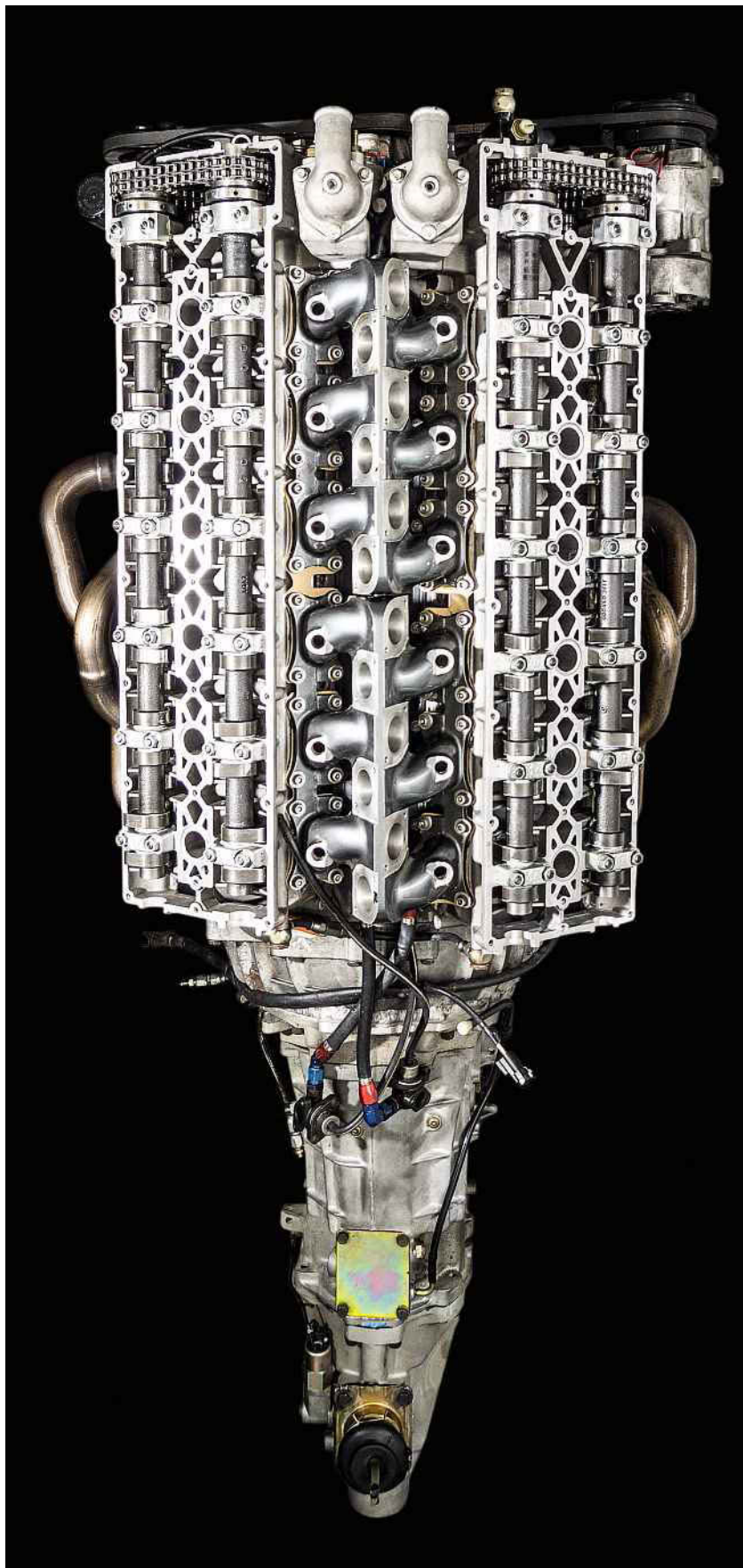
But only just. 'One of the head gaskets had gone when we got it,' says Oselli's Paul Eales, son of boss David. 'When we saw what a fiddle it would be to get the exhaust manifolds off, we reckoned it would be easier to pull out the entire engine.'

Which is what they did. In replacing the gasket, they could wonder at the cylinder head (and its twin on the opposite bank) and see that, despite sharing a four-valves-per-cylinder, twin-cam design, it's a different casting from those of TWR's V12 race engines. The ports and valve sizes are those needed for a tractable road engine, as are the camshaft profiles. All are unique to this car. Spares don't exist; if needed, they would have to be specially cast, forged, machined, whatever was required.

With cam covers and inlet plenums removed, castings of mind-boggling complexity are revealed. So are twin

thermostats and a pair of indestructible-looking, duplex-chain camshaft drives. Below is an overbored version of Jaguar's aluminium cylinder block and a steel crankshaft machined for a longer stroke; above it, once the engine is back together, is an injection and ignition system controlled by Zytec engine management as used in the XJR-series race cars. With, to a degree, some refinements for cold starts and low-speed manners.

TWR's Jaguar-based V12s weren't the first with four camshafts, though. That honour goes to the engine of the never-raced XJ13 racing car, which pre-dated the two-cam production engines, though the XJ13 had but two valves per cylinder. As for the TWR 48-valve V12 as used in the Jaguar XJR-8 and XJR-9 Group C racers, it typically made a rousing 720bhp from its seven litres. Now that really *is* fierce.





‘The engine feels more like that of a Le Mans racer than a continent-shrinking grand tourer’

In short, the engine feels more like that of a Le Mans endurance racer than a continent-shrinking grand tourer. It has a terrible idle, all burbles and dyspepsia and uncertainty, sometimes stopping altogether unless it’s just had a good thrash to clear the passages. As it approaches the *waaaap* zone, it’s the antithesis of the silken V12 and more like a tetchy straight-six with a disintegrating crankshaft damper. But at high revs it’s a sonic triumph, rich and sharp and joyful. And quite unlike any other Jaguar V12 that has taken to the road.

How so? Because it has twin overhead camshafts per bank actuating four valves in each cylinder. Sounds obvious today, but Jaguar never built its road V12 in that form because there was never a market for it. So this engine uses experience gained from TWR’s Jaguar Le Mans racing programme before that switched to turbocharged V6s – although this isn’t quite a Le Mans unit, as the adjacent story explains.

The ample outputs are sent not through a regular DB7’s Getrag gearbox but, via an AP twin-plate clutch of meaty yet bearable heft, into a Borg-Warner T56 gearbox used also in Corvettes, the Virage-shaped Aston Martin Vantage and the Dodge Viper. Its shift is easy enough given the inertia of the gearwheels its synchromesh has to rein in, but reverse is cunningly hidden next to the fifth-gear slot and obtainable only if the drop-down handbrake is engaged, thus releasing an electric blocking system. It’s a failsafe to prevent a noisy, unproductive and expensive shift from fourth to backwards.

Other changes from standard DB7 fare are the huge AP Racing brakes, with four-piston calipers on the front and mounted on revised uprights and hubs, some rear-end strengthening, and a light recalibration of springs, dampers, anti-roll bar and steering effort. This is more to suit the speed potential and Walkinshaw’s tastes than a reaction to an engine-induced change in weight distribution, because the entire V12 weighs under 5kg more than the standard supercharged six.

And then there’s the way it looks. Ian Callum designed the original DB7, and he also designed this evolutionary side-turning with its flared-out lower body, its low front air-scoop with added gulpability, and its flamboyant rear spoiler. The Cromodora wheels are unique, too, specially machined to this car’s required offsets and wider than a standard DB7’s.

Now look at the number plate. L5 AML is the number the DB7 wore when first registered in July 1994 as the second pilot-production car, as revealed by the PLT02 that ends its VIN, but some time after its TWR reinvention in May 1995 it was re-registered as TWR 97. The TWR Group took formal ownership in September 1995, and by the time of *Autocar’s* test a year later it had covered just 10,000 miles, of which around 8000 were driven by Tom himself.



**From the top** ‘PLT02’ on the end of the VIN reveals this car started life as the second DB7 pilot-production car. Four valves per cylinder were usually unique to Jaguar’s racing V12s, so this is one special engine. Borg-Warner six-speed gearbox was the same type later seen in the Virage-shaped Vantage





Now, 20 years later, that tally has got no further than 13,700 miles, because the Aston Martin spent much of that time residing in a Dutch collection until it was acquired by Aston specialist Oselli in June 2013. The opportunity came, and given Oselli boss David Eales's insatiable curiosity for all things Aston (he used to run Works Service), he just had to seize it.

As a very early car, L5 AML is an intriguing study in TWR's efforts to get to grips with the DB7's mix of steel and composite panels. To be frank, the panel gaps between bonnet, front wings, front bumper and the doors' front edges are appalling in their width and variability, thanks to the rather mobile integrity of those early composites. They did look better in those *Autocar* shots two decades ago, though.

Inside, too, things were clearly still fluid in the journey from prototype to production car. Unlike a standard DB7, this machine has a wood-veneer setting for its instruments, but it neither aligns with nor matches its neighbour on the main dashboard. And the warning lights glow hopelessly dimly behind their dark-tinted cover strip. If you were the new, and first, owner of this DB7 you would be very unimpressed by these solecisms of quality and integrity. Thing is, it doesn't really matter in 2016: this car is what it is, a unique piece of Aston Martin history, and its superficial imprecisions help tell its story.

And now, quality critique completed, I'm blaring through the Buckinghamshire backroads again, marvelling at this magnificent engine's omnipresent thrust. I've also

noticed that the Cromodoras are wearing a long-obsolete and well-worn model of Yokohama tyre, almost certainly the footwear that's been fitted since 1995. This may be why, on the slightest hint of a damp road, there's much scope for comical wheelspin in third gear and, on occasion, even fourth.

So it's just as well that, despite its potency, this feline hybrid is a big pussycat to handle. It steers accurately, albeit with an exaggerated and anaesthetised lightness more 1990s Jaguar-like than expected of an Aston, and its balance in a bend is impeccable provided you don't twitch your right foot too much. It feels much like a normal DB7 with the added frisson of a firecracker under its wheels. Bumps are smothered smoothly enough, and those ample brakes feel indefatigably strong and progressive.

It all works rather well, given that the car is as early a DB7 as you'll find and the engine is a unique installation, and you even find yourself warming to the cabin's mid-90s obsession with curves and ellipses, almost naïvely dated now and curiously unsettling in the way they deprive your eye of a dimensional reference point.

Would an Aston Martin DB7 V12 have worked as part of an upwardly extended DB7 range? Of course it would – and of course it did, in Ford-friendlier form. But having driven this one, the original and the inspiration, I think the world would have been richer for its replication. That throttle response. I can't get it out of my head. 🍷

*Thanks to Oselli Ltd, where the TWR DB7 V12 might be for sale.*

### *Aston Martin TWR DB7 V12*

**ENGINE** 60-degree V12, 6400cc, aluminium block and heads, dohc per bank, 48 valves, Zytec engine management  
**POWER** 475bhp @ 6000rpm officially, probably more  
**TORQUE** 470lb ft @ 4500rpm  
**TRANSMISSION** Six-speed Borg-Warner T56 manual gearbox, rear-wheel drive  
**SUSPENSION** Front: double wishbones, coil springs, telescopic dampers, anti-roll bar  
 Rear: double-wishbone geometry with driveshaft as upper link, trailing arms, four co-axial coil springs and telescopic dampers  
**STEERING** Rack and pinion, power-assisted  
**BRAKES** Vented discs all-round  
**TYRES** Yokohama AV1, 245/40 ZR18 front, 275/35 ZR18 rear  
**0-60MPH** sub-5sec (estimated)  
**0-100mph** 10.2sec (claimed)  
**TOP SPEED** 182mph (claimed)





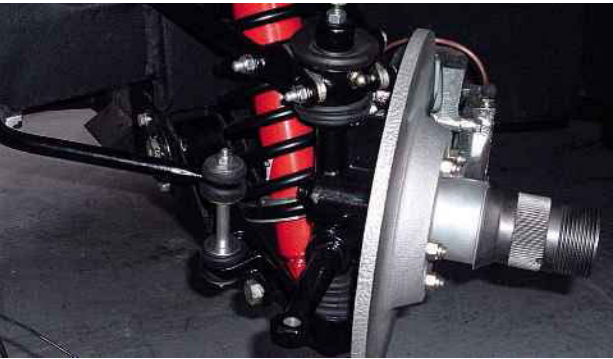
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# PREETY CAR

James Bond's DB5 isn't the only celebrated screen Aston. We kick off this celebration of the best of the rest with a drive in the DB4 Convertible from *The Italian Job*

WORDS STEPHEN ARCHER | PHOTOGRAPHY JAMES LIPMAN







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"The Michael Caine crime corker is back a classic... not to be missed"  
★★★★★  
by Tom De Haven

MICHAEL CAINE... NOEL COWARD  
"THE ITALIAN JOB"

The poster features a large red arrow pointing right, with the title 'THE ITALIAN JOB' in white and black letters. A circular inset shows a red Bentley Continental GT. The background is a blue and white geometric pattern. A silhouette of a man stands in the bottom right corner.





“Mr Bridger. I’ve got a job lined up. This is important. Four million dollars in gold. Europe. The Common Market. Italy...” This approach by Charlie Croker (Michael Caine) to get Mr Bridger (Noël Coward) to back his planned heist has a particular resonance just now, as the UK prepares to go to the polls to decide whether or not it wants to stay in the EU. *The Italian Job* was in large part a satire on the Common Market, as the European Union was then known. Plucky, cheeky Brits take on Europe and the Mafia and steal Chinese gold from under the noses of the Turin Police...

In 1968, when the film was shot, the Common Market was becoming a hot topic and the political momentum to become a part of it was growing. At the same time, the UK – and London in particular – was at the height of its ‘swinging’ renaissance and the nation had something of a swagger on. Life outside the European Union was just fine, thanks.

But while the notion of thumbing a nose at Europe had undoubted appeal to the British filmgoing public, it was just one of the elements that made *The Italian Job* such a hit. The cast boasted a fine array of British character actors, topped off by the in-vogue Caine and the much-



revered Coward, for whom this would be the last appearance on screen. (He’d accepted an invitation to come out of retirement from the director, Peter Collinson, who happened to be his godson.) Coward towered over proceedings from his prison cell, and Caine was good value, too, but the movie was not all theirs. In contrast to the ragtag British mob, the Mafia were portrayed as smooth corporate operators, their boss, Altabani, played with suave charm by Raf Vallone. And then there were the cars.

At the heart of the plot is the heist in Turin. To get the gold out of Italy, the gang would famously use three Mini-Coopers in red, white and blue. But as back-up for a quick getaway they had two E-type Jaguars – and Croker’s DB4

**Above and top**

In the film, Charlie Croker (or ‘Captain Croker’ as he’s calling himself here) collects his DB4 Convertible from secure storage in Park Lane. Today the building is a Mini showroom and this (top) is as close as we could get. But we were able to restage the unveiling in the nearby underground car park

Convertible. I suspect that you, like I, always cringe at the scene where they’re stopped on the pass, the E-types are flattened and Altabani eyes the Aston, turns to Croker and delivers his famous line: ‘Your car? *Pretty* car’. He then signals the digger driver to attack the DB4 before flipping it over the precipice.

For a generation of cinema-goers it was a scene every bit as traumatic as Bambi learning that his dear old mum had bought it. So it gives





'Altabani approaches the Aston and delivers his famous line: "Your car? *Pretty car*"'





**Right and below**  
 Charlie Croker (Caine), girlfriend Lorna (Maggie Blye) and the DB4 arrive at the gang's workshop.  
 Below: 163 ELT today, outside Croker's Denbigh Mews, Notting Hill pad

me enormous pleasure to report that I'm here in London in 2016 to collect Charlie Croker's Aston and revisit some of the locations from the film.

Some of you may be surprised to find that it still exists, but many more of you will know that it wasn't 163 ELT that tumbled down the mountainside, but a cunningly disguised Lancia Flaminia, rebodied to look like the DB4. Have a look at the final pic in this feature, on page 62; it's clearly not an Aston.

So 163 ELT survived, and here it is, looking absolutely gorgeous in original Snow Shadow Grey with black hood and burgundy leather trim. I collect it from the Battersea residence of current owner Brian Morrison, who has generously brimmed the tank and even warmed it up for us. Don't you just love Aston owners?

The straight-six, an RS Williams 4.2-litre conversion of the original 3.7, fires instantly and ticks over sweetly, sucking in air through its original twin SU carburettors. First gear slots home with an easy precision and the medium-weight clutch takes up with pleasing progression. Even in the first 100 yards it's obvious that this Series 4 DB4 is a special car, superbly maintained and set up. With the ample torque provided by the increased capacity of the engine, we're smoothly into the London traffic, hood in place for now. I make a mental note to keep an eye out for diggers...

Our first photocall is the underground garage where the DB4 is first glimpsed in the film. With Croker having served a two-year stretch in jail, he emerges to be reunited with his Aston. 'Captain' Croker (as he's apparently passing himself off) suggests to the garage owner that 'not enough air is getting to the second carburettor', which gives him the excuse to have the bonnet opened whereupon he recovers a large cash-filled wallet from under the carburettor and extracts a wad of crisp notes to pay the garage owner his storage fee. His explanation for the wad of cash is that he has been in India, shooting tigers for bounty. 'I used a machine-gun,' he explains.

The film location was a car park underneath 77 Park Lane, which we discover is now a modern Mini showroom and so, alas, out of bounds. So we recreate the scene in another underground car park in Park Lane instead.

In the movie, we next see the Aston arriving at the Royal Lancaster Hotel, where Croker's girlfriend has arranged an orgy for him as a coming-out surprise. Caine is seen emerging from the car but in fact he didn't drive it at all, for the simple reason that he couldn't actually drive. In a later scene we see him appear to drive the Aston into the gang's workshop – in fact the crew had given the car a hefty shove to get it rolling into shot with our hero at the wheel.







**Above and left**  
 Street corner near the Mews is as busy and bustling today as it was in 1968, and everyone loves the Aston. Below: twin SUs, as original, but the engine has benefited from an RS Williams conversion from 3.7 to 4.2 litres. There was a three-carb Vantage engine option in period, but the majority of Convertibles had standard engines





‘We next see the Aston arriving at the hotel, where Croker’s girlfriend has arranged an orgy for him’



While the Park Lane garage is now full of Minis and the Royal Lancaster has undergone extensive remodelling in the intervening years; the mews location of Croker’s bachelor pad in Notting Hill is astonishingly similar to how it was in 1968 when filming took place. On the corner there is still a bustling bric-a-brac store, and the Mews itself still has its ancient cobbles. It was a stylish setting for Croker’s flat and it makes a perfect backdrop for this part of today’s shoot. When we find ourselves surrounded by a large crowd of Italian tourists visiting Portobello Road, it really does feel as though the car has taken us back to 1968.

Those Italians love the Aston, but then so does everyone who comes across it. Piloting the DB4 through London traffic – hood down now for enhanced all-round vision – you’re gripped





partly by awe and partly by the fear than an errant motorist might clip it. In fact it has such a presence and draws such attention it's almost as though it's being protected by a giant bubble of appreciation. It really is a very special machine.

By this point in the movie the DB4 is firmly established as Croker's glamorous means of getting around London in the run-up to the heist, even though it is girlfriend Lorna (Maggie Blye) who is usually behind the wheel (and more than once exits the DB4 without using the door, which still makes me wince!). Following a pre-robbery briefing by Mr Bridger, who's been allowed out of prison to attend a staged funeral, the three Mini-Coopers, support vehicles, E-types and the DB4 head to Italy.

Now, the Alps would have made the perfect setting for the final shots in this article, but for

some reason the editor said the Chilterns would suffice – something to do with the budget... So off we head up the M40.

Hood in place again now as rainclouds threaten, the DB4 makes a fine cruiser, even without the overdrive option. Acceleration can be brisk but the real joy is the way in which a slight squeeze of the pedal is rewarded with such easy, torque-driven progress. Tadek Marek would surely have approved of this 4.2-litre version of his wonderful twin-cam straight-six.

Though clearly re-trimmed at some point in its life, 163 ELT's hides have a nicely worn-in, period character, adding to the feeling that this car is both a time-warp experience and a much-used and enjoyed driver's car, willing and able to be driven great distances. To my mind it's the pinnacle of the early '60s European grand

**Opposite and left**

In the movie, Croker arrives at the Royal Lancaster Hotel in Bayswater for a welcome-home orgy (as you do). Our man Archer has to make do with a coffee. Opposite: heading out of London towards the Chilterns – not as glamorous as the Alps, but less chance of running into gun-toting mafiosa

tourer, a fast, practical, luxury sporting car with breathtaking style, demanding just enough effort to be engaging without being tiring.

It wasn't always maintained in such fine fettle, though. Indeed, even in 1968 it had seen distinctly better days...

Today, movie-makers often demand fees from manufactures for cars to appear on screen; they seldom buy them. In the '60s, things were rather different. While Gianni Agnelli, the head of Fiat, was happy to give or lend dozens of Fiats and Alfas to the movie company and even





pulled strings to allow them to create a real traffic jam in Turin, BMC would give no more help to the film-makers than sell them the Minis at trade price – and they needed a lot of them! The E-types and the DB4 were secondhand cars bought for the movie by Oakhurst, a production company run by the actor Stanley Baker, whose business partner, Michael Deeley, was also the producer of *The Italian Job*.

The DB4 was bought for just £700, cheap even by the standards of the day, though as David Salamone, who played Mini driver Dominic in the film and helped procure the cars, recalls, 'it was pretty rough'. It was even rougher after the digger had attacked it in the Val d'Aosta. But at least we know it was a Lancia that went over the edge and that no Astons were seriously harmed in the making of the film.

Or do we? As with all good yarns, this one has another possible twist.

Take another look at the DB4 in the shot with Mafia boss Altabani on page 57. Notice anything different about it compared with the scenes of the car around London? Well, it appears to have lost its bumper over-riders for a start; it also seems to have gained a mohair hood in place of the Everflex roof of the car in the garage, and the radio aerial appears to have crept forward along the wing a good six inches, while the front indicators appear to be the larger, Series 5 items. Are we in fact looking at two different Astons?

A source close to the production told us that a second, even rougher DB4 was bought purely for the scene with the digger. It was rigged with explosives to make its demise more dramatic but they went off before the car had gone fully over the edge, causing crew members to duck for cover and seriously damaging the Aston.

### *DB4 Convertible (Series 4)*

**ENGINE** In-line 6-cyl, 3670cc (this car converted to 4.2)  
**MAX POWER** 240bhp @ 5500rpm (this car c290bhp)  
**MAX TORQUE** 240lb ft @ 4250rpm (this car c290lb ft)  
**GEARBOX** Four-speed manual **SUSPENSION** Front: double wishbones, coil springs, telescopic dampers, anti-roll bar. Rear: live axle, trailing arms, Watt's linkage, lever-arm dampers **STEERING** Rack-and-pinion  
**BRAKES** Solid discs **WHEELS** 5 x 16in **TYRES** 195 R15 Avon radials **WEIGHT** c1500kg **POWER TO WEIGHT** c160bhp/ton **0-60MPH** 8.5sec **TOP SPEED** 136mph  
**PRICE NEW** £4449 (£92,500 in today's money)

So the resulting footage was unusable. Hence the need to have the rebodied Lancia as a stand-in. If that's the case, while we see a Lancia being destroyed, in fact an Aston had already made the sacrifice – for no gain. Ouch.

Salamone, though, insists there was only one DB4. With a new book by Matthew Field on the making of the film due soon, we'll have to leave the question hanging for now, like a certain bus at the end of a certain film. If there was a second

DB4, its identity is unknown. If anyone finds it, I've got a great idea for another feature...

What we do know is that the real 163 ELT, the car that appears in all the early scenes, was sold in the early '70s through a Ford dealership to Aston enthusiast Roy Dudley. The car was not in great condition and Roy only kept it for a year, but subsequent owners have held onto it for considerably longer. Brian Morrison has owned it for 26 years and clearly cherishes it, in part for its history, mostly for its extraordinary beauty and the fact that it's such a joy to drive.

Cars of this age can be hard work in town; even on the open road they can tire the driver. But 163 ELT is different. It's one of those Astons you never want to stop driving – for anything. 'Take me to Italy, now,' it seemed to be saying, 'but maybe choose a different pass.' ♡

*With thanks to Brian Morrison, David Salamone, Garry Dickens, Paul Roberts, Paramount Pictures.*





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# HEADLIGHTS, CAMERA, ACTION!

Astons – and Lagondas – have featured in films and on television since the early '50s. And not a single Silver Birch DB5 in sight

WORDS ANDREW ROBERTS | IMAGES DRIVEPAST.COM

**THE DEVIL'S HAIRPIN** is not among the world's greatest motor racing films. Released in 1957, it celebrates a world where men use gallons of hair oil and thump tables in an aggressive manner and Packards have whitewall tyres. The screenplay seems to revolve around Cornel Wilde as Nick, a racing driver who finally regains the championship and the affections of his parrot (it is a strange picture), but in amongst the high drama and 'Pretty Pollys' is an Aston Martin DB3S.

Similarly, few would put 1962's *The Brain* – millionaire businessman's brain is kept alive post-accident – on a list of significant British horror films, but it does feature a DB4 Series 4 in amongst the low-budget histrionics.

Connoisseurs of Aston Martin and Lagonda have long realised that there is cinematic and televisual life above and beyond the 007 franchise. Sometimes the car can play a major role in the drama. A good example is the DB2/4 Drophead Coupé driven by Tippi Hedren as Melanie Daniels in *The Birds* (does it survive?), or occasionally an Aston will appear in the most unlikely of surroundings; a DB2/4 convertible pops up in the 1964 Malaya-set drama *The 7th Dawn*, while a DB4 cameos in the 1960 British comedy *Doctor in Love*, largely because the producer, Betty E Box, was a keen motorist.

Indeed, it is two British comedies of the Macmillan era that provide some of the best screen outings for Aston Martins, even if one of them is appearing under a nom-de-film. Many fans of Terry-Thomas have wondered, on seeing the first screen version of *School for Scoundrels*, as to the actual nature of the 'Bellini' that the arch-cad drives. The name appears to be Italian and indeed the front treatment was courtesy of Carrozzeria Touring. However, *Vantage* readers would instantly recognise the caddish car owned by 'Raymond Delauney' as a DB3S fitted with a GRP tail-fin, and this is indeed the case.

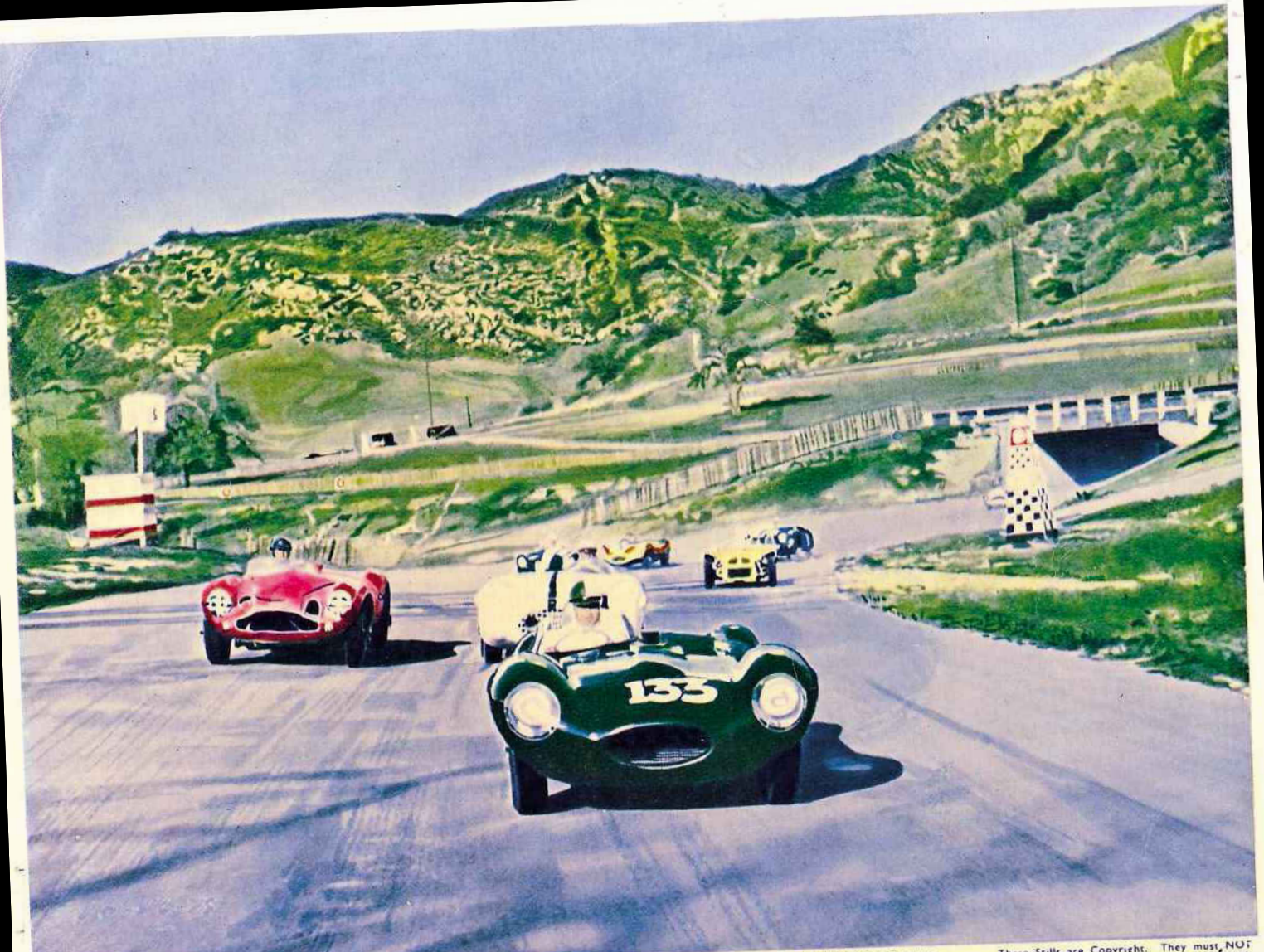
The 'Bellini' began its life as a road car built for David Brown himself but was soon pressed into service by the racing team and enjoyed a fine career on the track in the hands of the likes of Stirling Moss and Peter Collins. It also took part in the 1955 Mille Miglia before being sold to privateer Dennis Barthel in 1957. By 1959, when it was being filmed at ABPC studios in Elstree and on location in Hertfordshire, it had acquired a new body and the registration PAP 625.

Today it bears its original 9046 H registration and resembles its original factory team car appearance after restoration at Aston Martin Works (you can read the whole story in issue 8). In 2014, DBS3/5 took part in – and finished – the modern Mille Miglia. Bang on, old chap!

## Right

A DB3S was one of the best things about *The Devil's Hairpin*, released in 1957. Similarly, 1955's *The Fast and The Furious* (no relation to the modern franchise) has little to commend it beyond some appealing 1950s machinery, including an early DB2 Drophead





PARAMOUNT  
presents

**THE DEVIL'S HAIRPIN<sup>A</sup>**

VISTAVISION  
TECHNICOLOR

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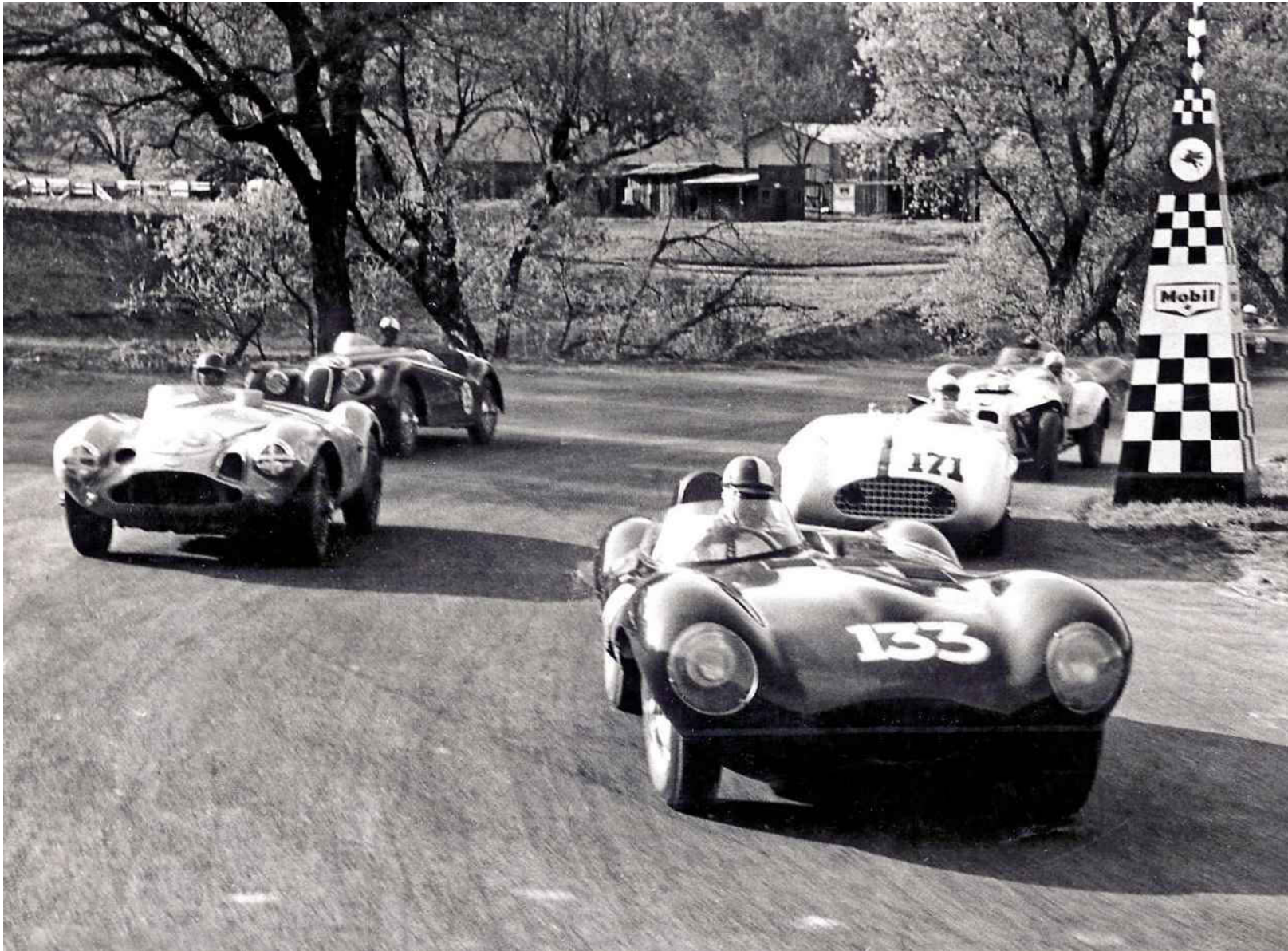
**THE DEVIL'S HAIRPIN**

Starring  
**ARTHUR FRANZ · MARY ASTOR**

TECHNICOLOR

Produced and Directed by Cornel Wilde  
Written by James Edwards and Cornel Wilde





'...a world where men use gallons of hair oil and thump tables in an aggressive manner'

The other celebrated British comedy featuring an Aston Martin is, of course, *The Wrong Arm of the Law*, shot in 1962 and featuring the world's most unevenly matched car chase. Aston DB4 GT vs police Wolseley 6/90 is not exactly a fair battle; the GT had a lightweight body and an uprated engine with triple Weber carburettors producing 302bhp at 6000rpm while the Wolseley had a bell.

This was the picture where renowned Aston specialist Richard Williams assisted with the cars and although it was not the first Peter Sellers film to be associated with the marque – a 1954 DB2/4 appears in *The Two Way Stretch* – any picture where a DB4 takes off from a humpback bridge has to be unmissable.

The main car, 41 DPX, was sold at auction a few years back. In some scenes it was apparently doubled by a works experimental and demonstration car with a Zagato-spec powerplant and a lightweight chassis because the main automotive star was reportedly suffering from engine problems at the time.

Even aside from the motor cars, *School for Scoundrels* and *The Wrong Arm of the Law* are always worth watching, as Terry-Thomas and Peter Sellers were at the top of their respective games. Another cinematic gem, *Chase a Crooked Shadow*, features a Lagonda LG 45R Rapide speeding through the narrow mountain roads of Spain's Costa Brava region; unusually for a British production of 1957, much of the film was actually shot on location.

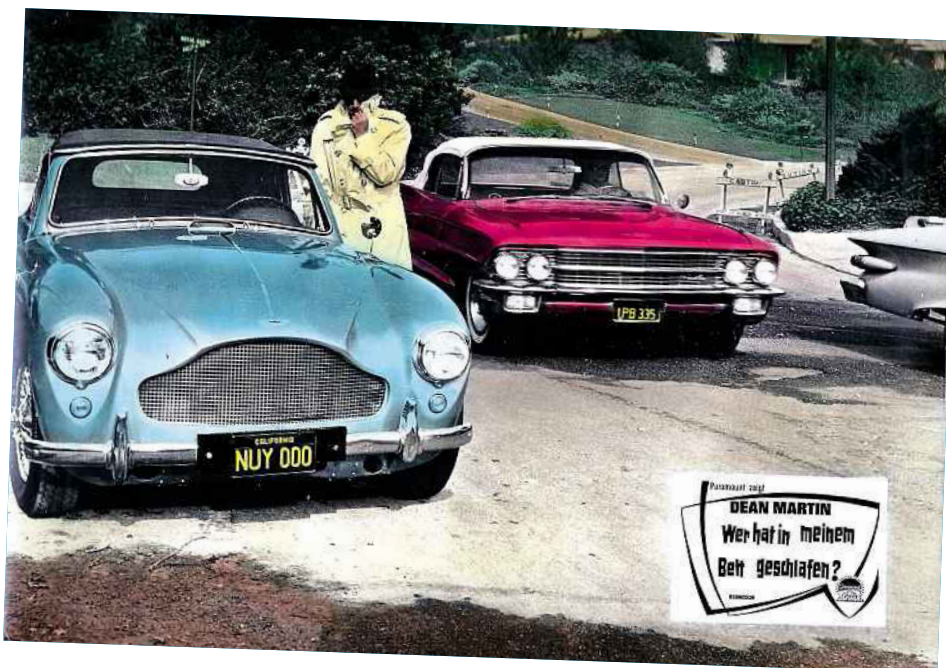
The black-and-white photography is pin-sharp, the performances are all excellent, with Richard Todd displaying his seldom-exploited talent for sinister charmers, and the sight of the Rapide basking in the Iberian sun is alone worth the price of a DVD.

There are other filmic outings for the Lagonda marque – John Mills at his most determined pilots a 3 Litre saloon in *The Vicious Circle*, and a 2 litre Speed Tourer appears in the underrated psychological drama *The Mind Benders*, but *Chase a Crooked Shadow* remains a minor classic for film and car fans alike





**Clockwise from far left**  
 Action from *The Devil's Hairpin*; *The Green Helmet* saw a drive-on role for a DBR1; opening titles for the ultra-obscure 1965 TV series *The Sentimental Agent*, and a lobby card for the 1963 comedy *Who's Been Sleeping in My Bed?*



With many pictures, however, the viewer is faced with an inevitable dilemma – does the prospect of revelling in machinery that thrills outweigh wooden performances or an inept script? Few would claim *The Green Helmet* as a cinematic masterpiece – even if Wales doubling for Sicily and Sid James as an Australian motor mechanic are inadvertently hilarious – but it does feature, in a drive-on cameo, an Aston Martin DBR1.

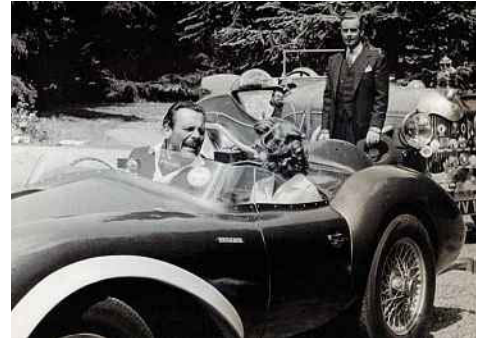
Similarly, viewers have been known to sit patiently through the 1954 Hammer B-film *Mask of Dust* (any film in which the best performance is from Raymond Baxter is unlikely to win many Oscars) for the authentic Goodwood footage. Others endure *Monte Carlo or Bust*, a 1969 comedy that seems to last for several years, for the sole reason of a 1936 Aston Martin 2-Litre.

This does rather beg the question of whether *The Italian Job* is worth seeing for the Mini-Coopers and the Aston Martin DB4 Convertible (as featured on the preceding pages). The film could certainly do with losing about 20 minutes



**Left and below**

*Chase a Crooked Shadow* is not only a fine film, it also features a splendid Lagonda, while *School for Scoundrels* famously stars Terry-Thomas and his 'Bellini' (really the ex-Moss DB3S/5)



There would also be some splendid motor cars – Patrick McGoohan's John Drake used a DB2/4 on one occasion in *Danger Man*, while the opening episode featured a DB MkIII.

The first time an Aston Martin featured as the co-star in an ITC drama was in *The Sentimental Agent*, a truly obscure offering from 1963 that does boast a swinging theme tune and a DB4 Series 5 Vantage, registration no. 432 FLD, provided by Brooklands of Bond Street, in the opening credits. Also around this time, the prototype DB5 appeared with Roger Moore in an episode of *The Saint* titled 'The Noble Sportsman'; this Aston Martin was later painted in silver and fitted with some rather unconventional accessories for a certain 1964 Pinewood Studios production.

But in terms of ITC Astons their finest show has to be *The Persuaders!*. When you combine Tony Curtis, Roger Moore, Roger's eyebrows, some aesthetically challenged fashions and a limited amount of genuine location footage, you will have one groovy TV show. Especially when 'Lord Brett Sinclair' drives a 1970 Bahama Yellow DBS 'V8', that was – as you can read on the following pages – actually a cunningly disguised DBS6.

Such minor subterfuge is of little account when thrilling to the Aston Martin dicing with Curtis's Dino 246GT, revelling in John Barry's theme tune or just marvelling at the implausible toupée sported by that week's white-dinner-jacketed villain. Those of you who want to overdose on this sort of nostalgia will no doubt enjoy the following feature...

The inevitable challenge when considering the screen roles of Aston Martins and Lagondas is the temptation to fill the house with DVDs, for where does one draw the line? The DB6 driven by an orange Stewart Granger in the dire Anglo-German thriller *The Trygon Factor*? The DB MkIII in the Dean Martin comedy *Who's Been Sleeping in My Bed*? The DBS that guest stars in the 1969 series of *The Avengers*... **V**

## Drivepast.com

The wonderful posters, lobby cards and film stills on these pages are just a small selection of the many hundreds available at Drivepast.com, the website of dealer and collector Paul Veysey.

Paul, a UK-domiciled New Zealander whose first career was as a voice-over artist, fell into collecting and selling posters almost by accident after his wife bought him as a birthday present a 'quad' for the 1956 British film *Checkpoint*, which, coincidentally, has a strong Aston Martin element (see separate feature on page 80).

'It occurred to me that there might be a living to be made out of old motor cars, old movies and graphic art,' he says. That was some 20 years ago, and his website, Drivepast.com, is now established as a leading resource for original film posters, lobby cards and stills, more than half of which are motoring or motorsport-related.

The most sought-after are for iconic movies like *Bullitt* and *Le Mans*. 'The French poster for *Le Mans* is quite beautiful,' says Paul, who currently has one on the site for £2250. But an original lobby card for the same movie can be had for as little as £85. Look out for Drivepast at major UK motoring events or visit drivepast.com for more.

of padding, Michael Caine's role is not his finest (it seems to consist of saying 'bloody' every five minutes and the best acting in the film is from Benny Hill) – but the DB4 does look truly splendid. Strong chaps have been known to weep at the scene where the Mafia tip the 'Aston Martin' over a cliff, only to be mollified when they realise that it is in fact a heavily disguised Lancia Flaminia 3c Cabriolet, modified by a Turin coachbuilder. New rumours that a second Aston was destroyed might trigger a relapse...

Meanwhile, Aston Martin enthusiasts who favour the small screen know that there is only one real choice of programme-maker: ITC. For 20 years, the Incorporated Television Company produced thrilling dramas involving square-jawed, hamming actors wearing fezzes in a corner of Elstree Studios' car park. Sometimes the venue would vary – the car park might belong to MGM-British or Pinewood – but 'border crossings' constructed of balsa wood in the middle of Black Park and driving on the wrong side of the road in Hertfordshire in order to replicate 'France' were infallible ITC tropes.





*Desmond  
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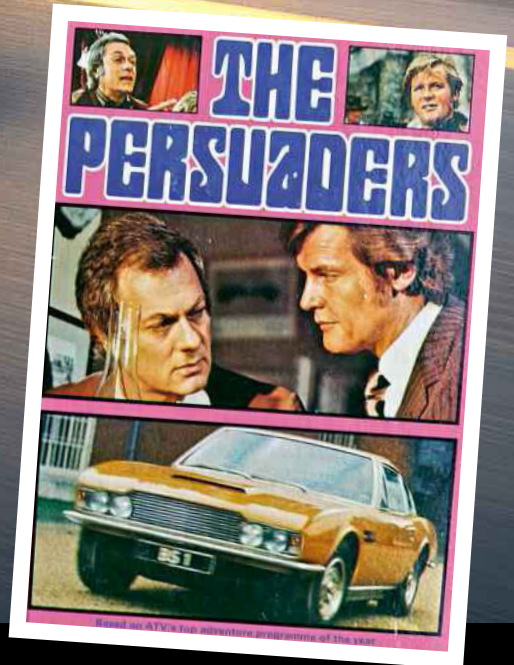
# PERSUADED

*The Persuaders!* may not have been TV's finest hour, but a drive in Sir Brett Sinclair's eye-catching DBS leaves our man with a warm glow of nostalgia

WORDS ANDREW ENGLISH | PHOTOGRAPHY TIM ANDREW











**T**he 'phone rang. I turned down the wireless and picked up.

'Go to Oxfordshire and drive *The Persuaders* Aston,' said The Voice. 'Report back.'

That was it. No 'Andrew darling, join me for an alcohol-sated lunch. I'll pitch the feature and pay for your cab home...'

I looked out of the window as the wind clattered rain at the glass like handfuls of gravel. Just what were we all doing in September 1971 when Diana Ross's *I'm Still Waiting* topped the hit parade, Ted Heath won the Admiral's Cup, Duke Ellington played the USSR and *Overture*, the first of 24 chronicles of the life and times of playboys Lord Brett Sinclair and Danny Wilde, debuted on ITV?

*The Persuaders!* What a title, though it attracted the catchy sobriquet *Gullguttene* in Norway and *Suparnici* in Yugoslavia. It went down a storm in Austria, and they loved it in Germany and France, but British audiences tended to side with noted TV wit Frank Muir who called it 'the best bad series ever made'.

Outside, the wind stripped leaves and removed hats. I sipped my Java while briefing my gorgeous pouting assistant, aka Wikipedia.

*The Persuaders!* was one of those Lew Grade action/thriller/adventure capers that began with Patrick McGoochan in *Danger Man* in 1960, ran through *The Prisoner* (1967 to 1968), *The Champions* (1968 to 1969), and *Department S* (1969 to 1970). They introduced us spotty prepubescent to the notion that Patrick McGoochan might really be a secret agent since he seemed to play little else in his career, the idea of a giant translucent rubber balloon as civic-enforcement device, and the exotic charms of Alexandra Bastedo, the woman from Hove who turned down Steve McQueen. Attagirl!

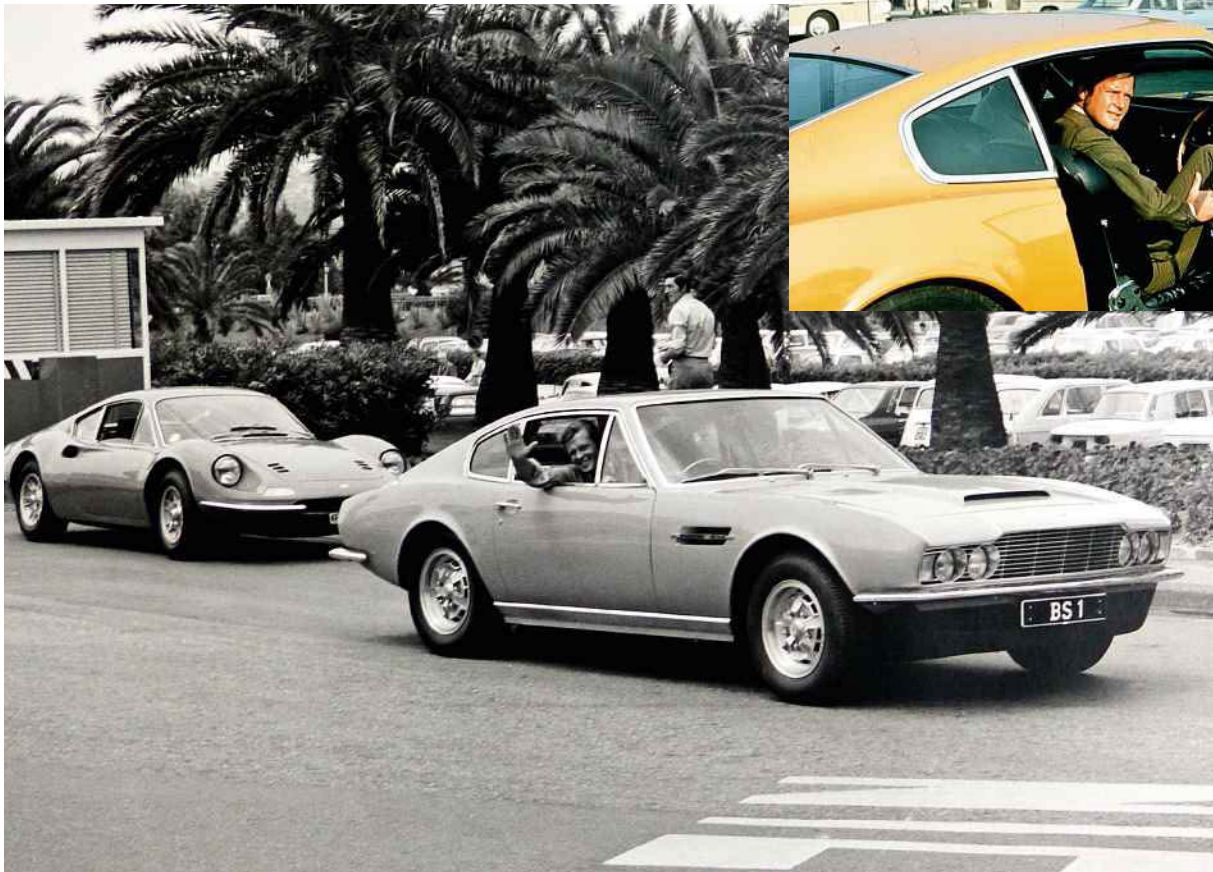
Each *Persuaders* episode cost about £100,000 to make, which was a lot back then. Roger Moore's spectacular suiting (if not his eye-searing shirts) were provided by cloth merchant Pearson and Foster, for which Moore was a director, but tailored by Cyril Castle, who also made his suits in *The Saint*. The series almost didn't happen after Tony Curtis (who played Danny Wilde) was arrested at Heathrow on

charges of possession of cannabis and there've been interviews with cast members since who have suggested that it was Curtis's fondness for 'Jazz Woodbines' that contributed to the poor atmosphere on set and Moore's reluctance to involve himself in a second series, although he was nursing a contract as the replacement James Bond at the time.

You want more? Apparently, the series' success in Germany wasn't due to the cardboard sets, excruciating dialogue or TV *Batman*-style choreographed fight scenes, but rather to the archly knowing overdubbing, which made it a cult hit. Various remakes have been proposed, associated in no particular order with Steve Coogan, Hugh Grant, George Clooney and Ben Stiller. While the existence of an 'official' *Persuaders* Appreciation Society posits the possibility of a dastardly 'unofficial' version, despite exhaustive researches we failed to turn one up. We did ask Sir Roger for a comment about the car and his memories of the series, but

**'Cast members have suggested that Curtis's fondness for "Jazz Woodbines" contributed to a poor atmosphere on set'**





**Opposite page**  
 DBS draws admiring glances at Harrow School, alma mater of Lord Brett Sinclair, as played by Roger Moore (above and left).  
 Top: Andrew English takes a trip back to the early '70s in Sinclair's DBS V8 (which was actually a six-cylinder DBS underneath)





‘The colour shocks, but it suits the car, with its brutish lines, muscled haunches and perfect proportions’

received no reply. This might indicate the lowly place the series has in this knighted thesp’s long and distinguished oeuvre, but it might equally indicate he was washing his hair that day. [That’s enough *Persuaders* rubbish – Ed.]

Actually that first episode stands up, just, mainly because it has a plot, though the first car you see is neither Danny Wilde’s Ferrari Dino nor Lord Brett Sinclair’s Aston, but a Renault 16. That initial scene-setter leads into the famous split-screen opening credits with the two heroes’ background montages played out to John Barry’s classy theme tune. Lord Brett Sinclair’s posh one appears to indicate an upbringing in Highclere Castle, followed by Harrow School and Oxford University with blues for rugby and rowing, then a stint in the Coldstream Guards followed by careers as a jockey and a racing

driver. Ironic, then, that Moore’s real-life background wasn’t anything of the kind. Born in Stockwell in south London, he attended Battersea Grammar School, failed to graduate from Durham University and saw out his national service as a second lieutenant then a captain in the Royal Army Service Corps.

The first appearance of his lordship’s Aston Martin DBS comes almost simultaneously with Wilde’s fire-engine-red Dino 246GT. It was the Aston we all wanted, though. Apparently it had been at the suggestion of Moore that the series producer Robert Baker approached Aston Martin, who proved more than happy to supply a car. In fact, though the DBS V8 had recently been announced, it was impossible to supply one, so a 1970 Bahama Yellow DBS, chassis number 5636, registered PPP 6H, was pressed





**Left and below**  
Moore actually got a credit for Sir Brett's tailoring. Well, it was the '70s. Below: popping the bonnet reveals the DBS's 4-litre straight-six with its trio of SU carbs



into service, gussied-up cosmetically as a V8 with new hubs and GKN alloys and V8 badging.

After filming, it was sold by H R Owen to the first of its six private owners. At that time it had done about 5000 hard miles. By 1995, and with a further 70,000 on the clock, it was getting a bit decrepit and so its fourth owner, Mike Sanders, consigned it to Aston Martin Works Service for a complete rebuild. Another owner and another 6000 miles on the clock takes us to May 2014 and the Bonhams Works sale, where it was offered as the star lot. Jeremy Levison, London-based divorce lawyer and art collector, set his cap at the car after seeing it at Newport Pagnell.

'I fell in love with it aesthetically,' he tells me. 'It's a piece of sculpture; those lines... I think the DBS is the most beautiful of the 1970s cars and the best-looking of that Aston Martin range.'

Levison knows his Astons. He's owned DB6s as well as Ferraris and other '60s icons. He bid for *The Persuaders!* car on the telephone from an artist's studio. After paying £533,500 without buyer's premium, he admits, with some irony: 'It rather blew the art budget for that month.'

Since then it's not done a lot and Levison admits he should drive it more, though he generously says that one of the great pleasures of ownership is seeing others' reactions to it. 'I like the fact that it gives a lot of people a little bit of pleasure,' he says.

So it rolls up in Oxfordshire on the back of a truck and my first reaction is one of mild shock at the colour. It suits the car, though, with its brutish William Towns lines, all muscled haunches and perfect proportions. While the DBS is known (mainly because we journalists

keep saying so) as the 'forgotten Aston', it's actually quite a rare thing, with only 790 standard cars built plus another 70 Vantage models. Towns's new GT was much wider than the DB6 it was designed to replace (though in fact the Mk2 DB6 was built alongside the DBS for three years), but it offered four proper seats, much-improved de Dion location for the solid rear axle and a heavy platform chassis still powered by the 282bhp, 4-litre, six-cylinder engine (325bhp in triple-Weber Vantage form) and ZF five-speed transmission.

We're here because Sinclair went to Oxford. Later we'll be driving to Harrow. And after lunch we'll pay a flying visit to Pinewood, where the non-location scenes were shot. Driving down to the French Riviera would have been fun, but given the DBS's prodigious thirst (mpg in the



*DBS (Persuaders spec)*

**ENGINE** In-line 6-cyl, 3995cc **MAX POWER** 282bhp @ 5500rpm **MAX TORQUE** 288lb ft @ 3850rpm  
**TRANSMISSION** Five-speed manual, rear-wheel drive, limited-slip differential **SUSPENSION** Front: double wishbones, coil springs, telescopic dampers, anti-roll bar. Rear: de Dion tube, trailing arms and Watt's linkage, coil springs, Armstrong Selectaride lever-arm dampers  
**STEERING** Rack-and-pinion, power-assisted **BRAKES** Discs front and rear, 290mm front, 264mm rear **WHEELS** 7 x 15in front and rear **TYRES** 225/70/15 Avon radials  
**WEIGHT** 1717kg **POWER TO WEIGHT** 167bhp/ton  
**0-60MPH** c8.0sec **TOP SPEED** 140mph

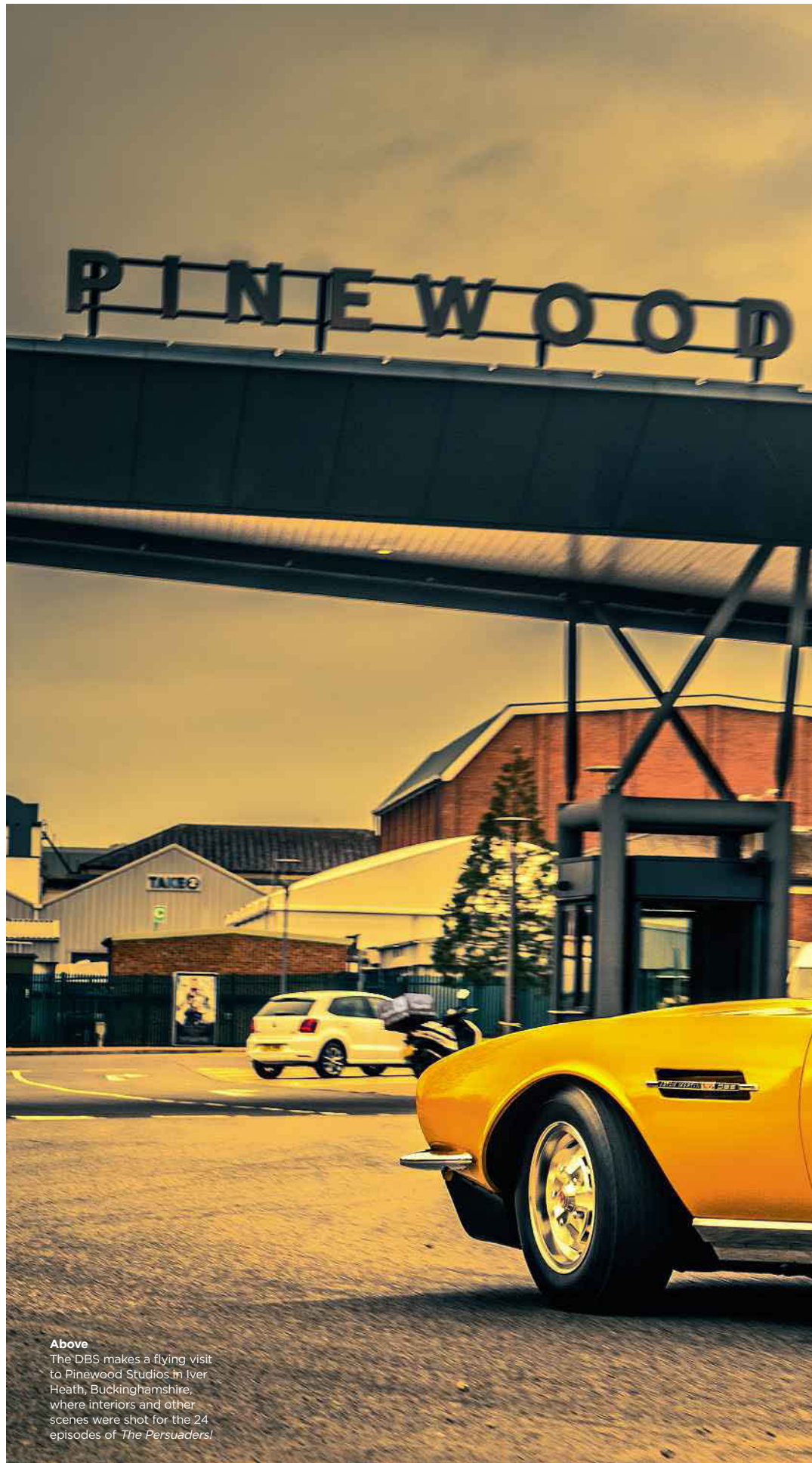
mid-teens, if you're careful) the fuel bill alone would have consumed the magazine's budget.

Climb in and survey that dash... The rev-counter with its markings in all their Smiths radialness, seven separate dials, the flicking ammeter, the bouncing speedo, the nine idiot lights and the period LW/MW Radiomobile, which is backed up by the equally dated Sony FM/AM cassette player hidden in the glovebox. There are flick switches, rotary switches, quadrant switches, push buttons and piano switches; some look as if they should control the hydroplanes of a submarine, others the undercarriage of a moderately sized aircraft. One indicator blinks at the cadence of Rimsky-Korsakov's *Flight Of The Bumblebee*, the other like a cat stretched on a warm Rayburn.

One way to view the DBS is as a rather charming transition point between the DB6, arguably the last of the classic DBs, and the William Towns era. It can also, of course, be viewed as the point at which David Brown's long proprietorship ended and the most turbulent period in Aston's history began. Another perspective is provided by the replacing of the Jaeger instruments in the earlier DB series with slightly cheaper-looking Kienzle and Smiths items – some things got cheaper in this transition, though by no means everything.

This is a pleasingly tactile car, from the hollow *click-clack* of the plastic gearknob and the linkage to the truck-derived gearbox, to the cool varnished-wood rim of the dished steering wheel, the warm plastic and aluminium dials that seem like refugees from a '70s Ferguson stereo, and the quite lovely, well-sat-upon leather chairs, even if they're not the most comfortable in the world despite designer Towns's background in seat design. Each armrest has its own cigar lighter, which, given Tony Curtis's chosen cigarette filling on *The Persuaders!* sets, could doubtless tell a story. There's even an absurdly small fire extinguisher in the passenger footwell, which looks barely capable of putting out a flaming bee. And none of this would pass diddly squat in a crash test. Those dive-plane heater controls would turn your knee into a hedgehog in a ding.

Starting from cold, it woofles and wheezes, ticks and clatters, and expresses mild annoyance at being woken up. But with a trio of Skinners Union carburettors slurping and squirting, it's surprising docile once warm. It'll hold its

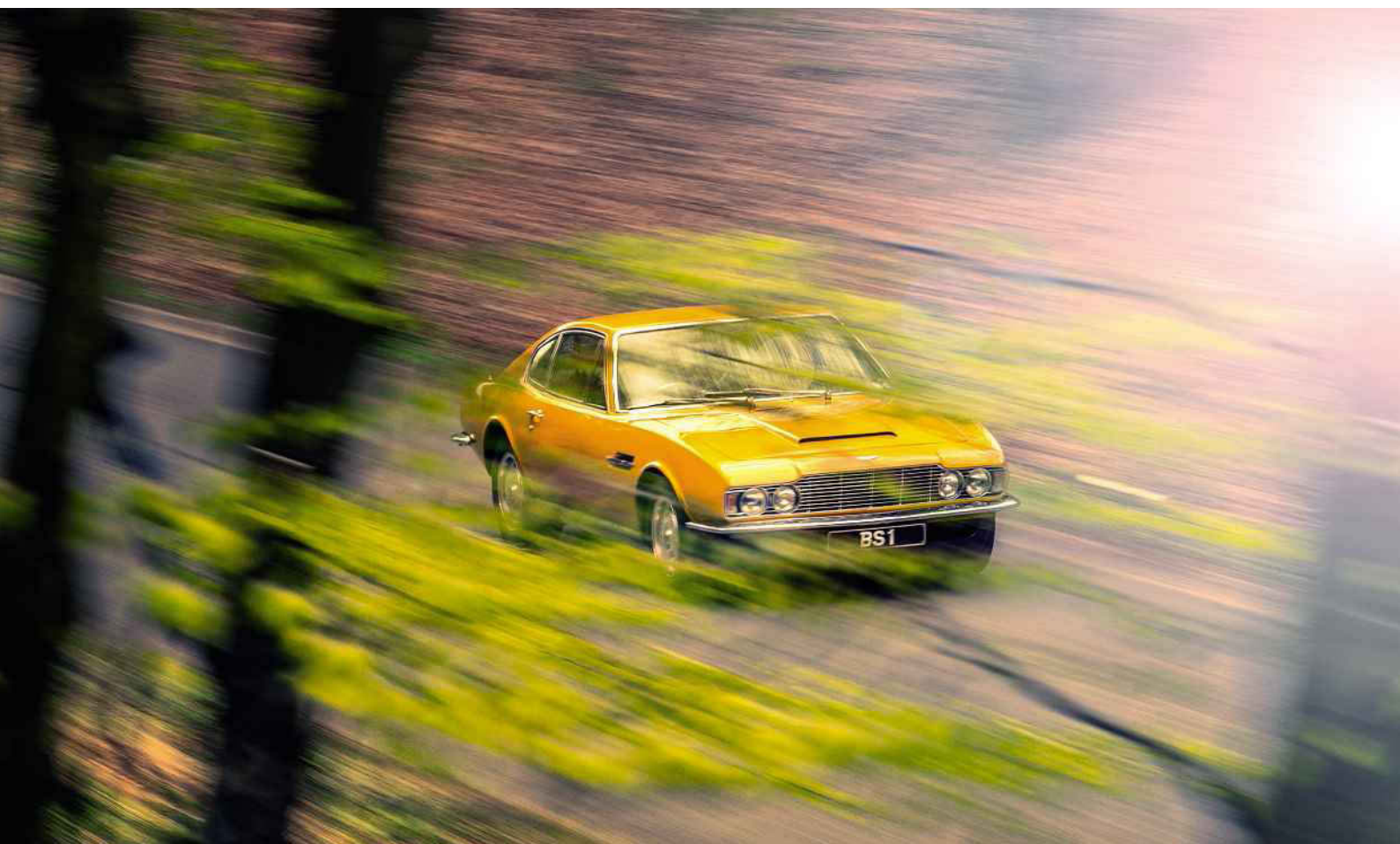


**Above**  
 The DBS makes a flying visit to Pinewood Studios in Iwer Heath, Buckinghamshire, where interiors and other scenes were shot for the 24 episodes of *The Persuaders!*









temperatures in traffic, pulls cleanly from idle, and waits patiently with the engine turning over for however long you want, wakening only when you floor the absurdly long-travel throttle, which requires a hitch of the right hip to get it to the firewall.

Performance? Not really in the Aston idiom, but it'll snarl with the best and the figures (top speed of 140mph, with 0-60mph in about 8.0sec or 7.0 on Webers) belie its languid nature. It's brisk rather than fast, but the appeal is more about the tractability and how refined these cars are when they're not mucked around with.

The steering is terrific; not sharp in the modern way, but progressive, though it does pump wheezily at the 225/70/15 Avons when parking. The chassis is softly sprung and, despite the better control of the de Dion rear, it wanders over poor surfaces, corkscrews over bumps, and rolls if you over-hurry the steering. You can clearly see this in the chase sequence from the first episode of *The Persuaders!* But that's part of its charm. Push it harder and it feels quite a handful. With a kerbweight of around 1700kg and being 6ft wide, there's a lot of it. So you need to choose which road you are going to launch it at, although, on the odd occasion the rear tyres made a bid for freedom, the chassis gave lots of warning and it was a relatively simple correction. Had it been wet, that mightn't have been so easy. The brakes,



**Above and left**  
Looking suitably dashing on Oxfordshire backroads. Left: a previous owner got both Moore and Curtis to add their autographs to the underside of the bootlid

while powerful and (mostly) progressive, have a lot to do and at low speed they also have that double-tap abruptness as one of the twin brake servos comes in a millisecond before the other.

The DBS is certainly long-legged, with the revcounter showing just 2500rpm at 60mph in fifth, and on the motorway you can feel the miles amassing under those tall Avons. In traffic, however, the weight of the throttle, brake and clutch make you feel you've had a workout on a recumbent bicycle rather than a drive.

And that colour... Welcome back bright hues. We get lots of flashes and thumbs-up in our tenure, and I suspect not all of them because the car is recognised, more because it's just such a damn good-looking thing. At one point we were

running in convoy with a pistachio-hued Fiat 500 and a Kermit-green Porsche Cayman. Barack Obama was in town, not too far away, but people must have thought he'd brought Mork and Mindy, too.

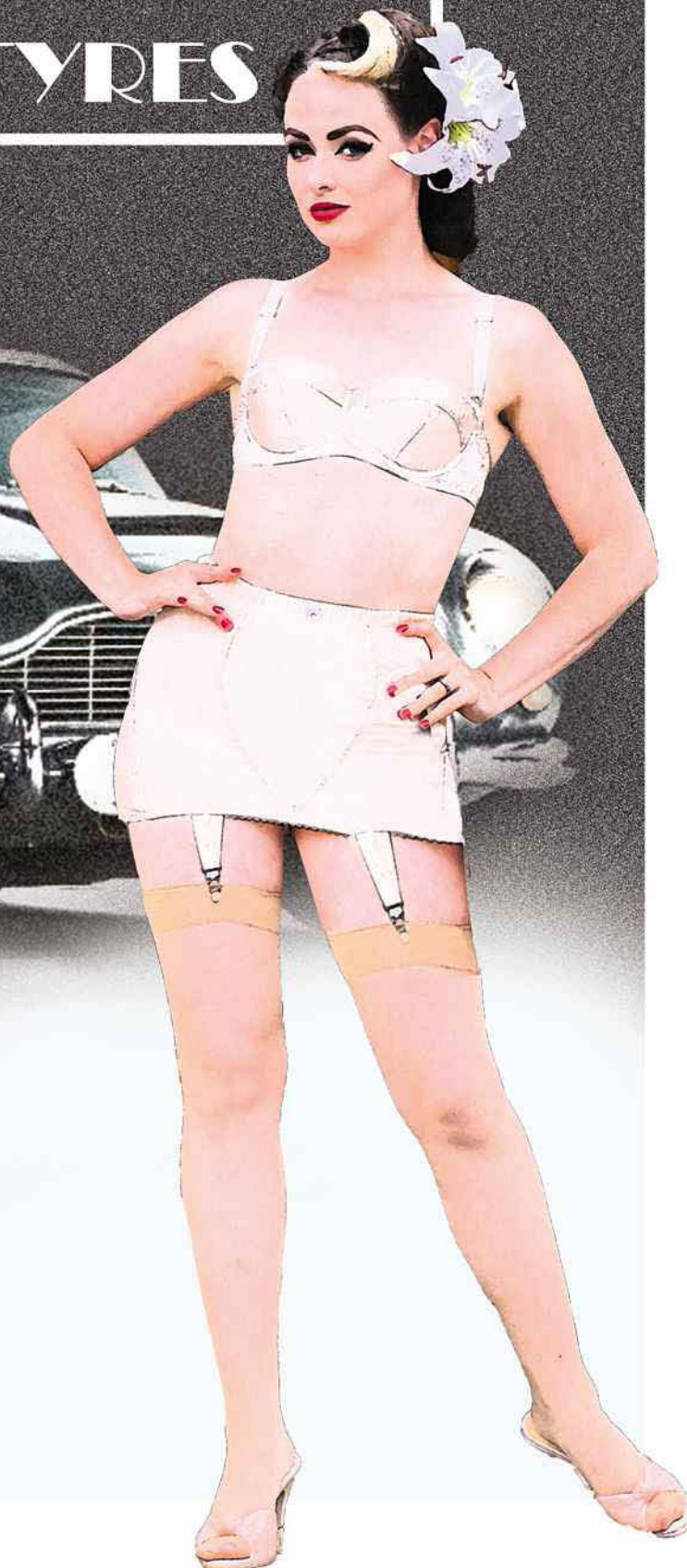
Sure, it's a transitional car; the V8 made it obsolete and there's a poignancy about that as well. It's certainly not the fastest of Astons and it's a big old thing, but there's real charm and particularity there. It's beautifully kept, albeit probably at no expense spared, and Levison is right, the shape is perfectly proportioned and quite beautiful. I didn't expect to like it much, but I did. Rather a lot, in fact. ♣

*With thanks to Jeremy Levison and Harrow School.*





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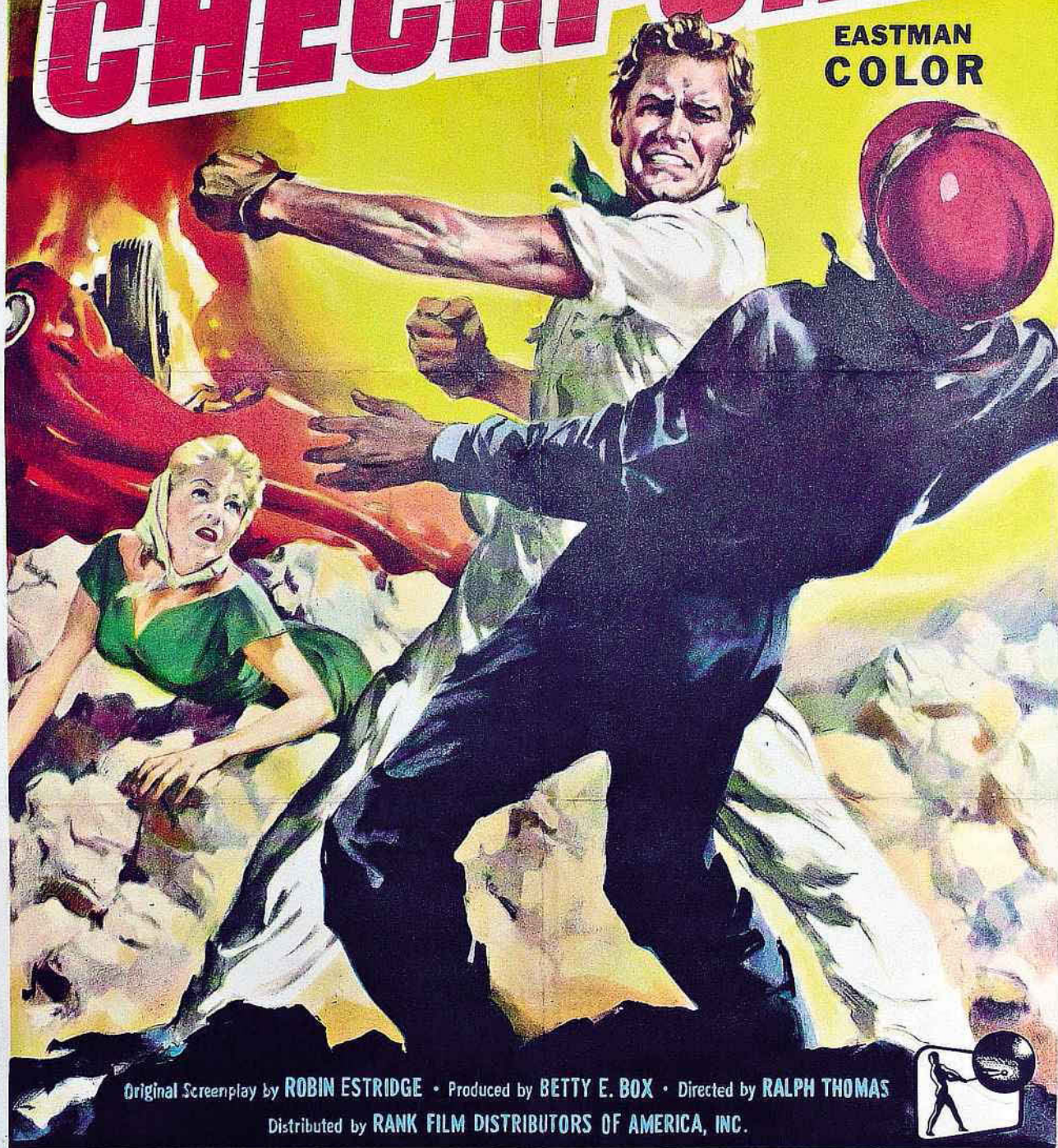
THE RANK ORGANIZATION presents

**ANTHONY STEEL**  
**Odile Versois • Stanley Baker**  
**James Robertson Justice**

In

# CHECKPOINT

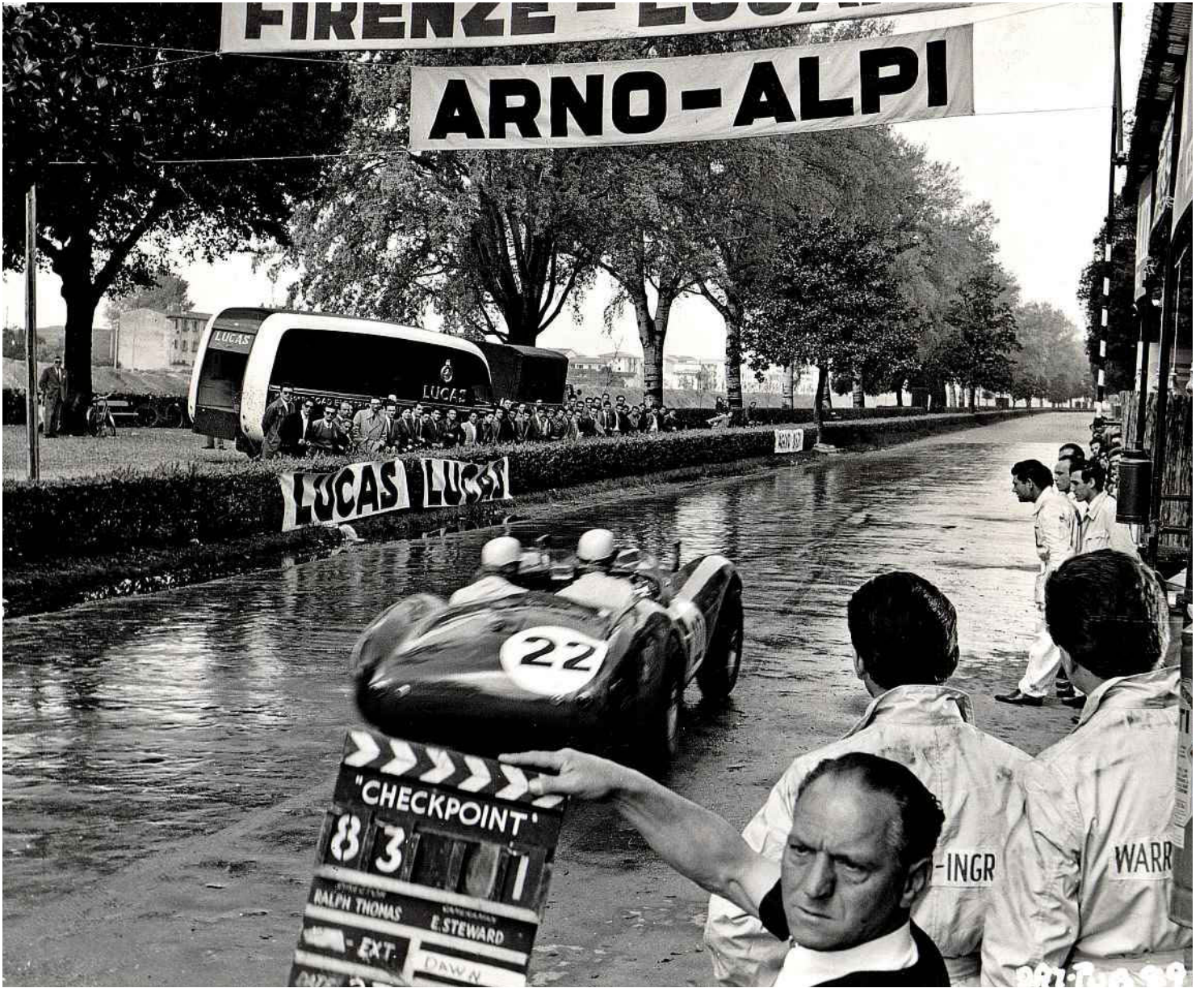
EASTMAN  
COLOR



Original Screenplay by **ROBIN ESTRIDGE** • Produced by **BETTY E. BOX** • Directed by **RALPH THOMAS**

Distributed by **RANK FILM DISTRIBUTORS OF AMERICA, INC.**





# MAKING MOVIES

A number of Astons as well as examples of the ill-fated V12-engined Lagonda DP115 racer starred in 1956's *Checkpoint*.

This is the fascinating story of how it was made

WORDS RICHARD HESELTINE | IMAGES DRIVEPAST.COM / RICHARD HESELTINE



**T**here is a particular genre of film that rarely gets good press. Movies rooted in motorsport are almost always cliché-ridden, over-the-top, and a hard watch for anyone with a passion for the real thing. But 1956's *Checkpoint* is an exception.

Sure, in period, this Rank Organisation production hardly had racing fans leaping to their feet to express their admiration with cheers, whistles and deafening applause. Because it's pure hokum. But, in this instance, perspective is everything. It really is amazing the difference the passage of 60 years makes.

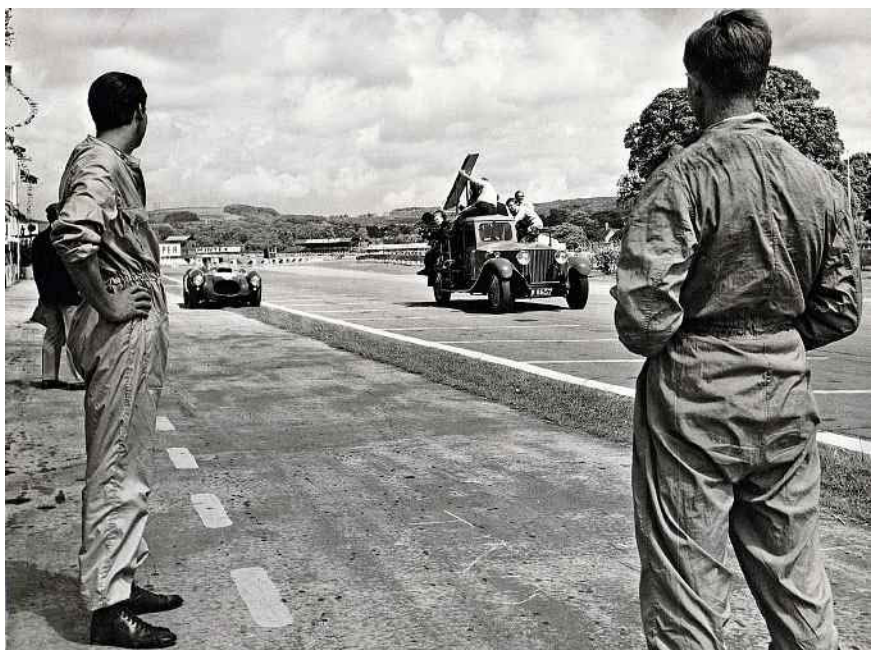
While nominally starring lantern-jawed leading man Anthony Steel and a clearly-slumming-it Stanley Baker as the wrong 'un of the piece, the film's true heroes were the Lagonda V12s and assorted Aston DB3Ss and 2/4s that featured extensively. Factor-in footage of the real Mille Miglia spliced with staged sequences and there's much to love about *Checkpoint*. However, if Aston Martin owner David Brown (not yet Sir David) hoped to bask in the reflected glow of his products' on-screen performance, he was surely disappointed. His cars were dubbed 'Warren-Ingrams' for their roles on the big screen.

The plot, such as it was, centred on Baker as an industrial spy known only as O'Donovan who is tasked with persuading an Italian designer to sell his secrets for a new demon tweak (variously described as a 'new fuel-injection system' and a 'fuel intake'). Instead, he breaks into the 'Volta d'Italia' factory in a bid to steal design secrets for unhyphenated motor magnate Warren Ingram (James Robertson Justice). The only problem is, he sets off an alarm while opening a safe. A security guard is shot trying to stop him and a gun battle then ensues with the *polizia*, the factory catches fire as he makes good his escape, and five policemen perish in the ensuing inferno.

O'Donovan is ordered to sit tight while preparations are made to smuggle him out of Italy. But how? It just so happens that the 'Arno-Alpi' road race is being staged and the finish line just happens to be over the border in Switzerland...

Battle-hardened works Warren-Ingram driver Bill Fraser (Steel) is described as '...not having a nerve in his body', but even he is rocked after his co-driver appears too drunk to compete (his champagne has been spiked...). Instead, O'Donovan takes his place under the alias John Vernon-Spencer and, despite his face being plastered over the newspapers, merely donning goggles is enough of a disguise to fool everybody. Fraser, however, eventually gets wise to the ruse but is kept in check by gun-totin' O'Donovan until he is able to slip off the intended route without his adversary noticing. The film ends with a climactic cliff-top battle as the hero's Warren-Ingram teeters on the edge. Spoiler alert: it falls into the Mediterranean and the bad guy dies.

The film was directed by Ralph Thomas, perhaps best remembered for helming the *Doctor* series of comedies







that were hugely popular in Britain during the 1950s. For this, his thirteenth film, he once again worked with producer Betty E Box, who was tasked with finding suitable cars and drivers for the action sequences. And it's at this juncture that Aston Martin entered the picture. It remains unrecorded whether or not Box approached other manufacturers, but team manager John Wyer was receptive, if only to begin with.

That could have been because at least one DB3S was reputedly purchased for use in the film, although a pair of Lagonda DPI15s appeared in the majority of action scenes. Somehow, you imagine Wyer would have been all too keen to be rid of these V12 sports-racers that had proved such a drain on resources while failing to make an impression at Le Mans and elsewhere. Built at the behest of David Brown, and famously disliked by the majority of those who drove them in period, the Lagondas were of no further use as competition tools, that's for sure. They were refurbished for the film, while a mocked-up bodyshell was made for the climactic finale.

Future Le Mans winner Roy Salvadori was then tasked with finding a team of wheelmen. He roped in John Young, Cliff Davis, John Coombs and test driver Roy Parnell

among others. In a later interview with *Aston* magazine, Salvadori recalled arriving in Florence for his first day on the job: 'The director, Ralf Thomas – a super chap who had been in the Tank Corps before the war – asked me to meet him at the Ponte Vecchio so we could run through things and he could introduce me to the cast.

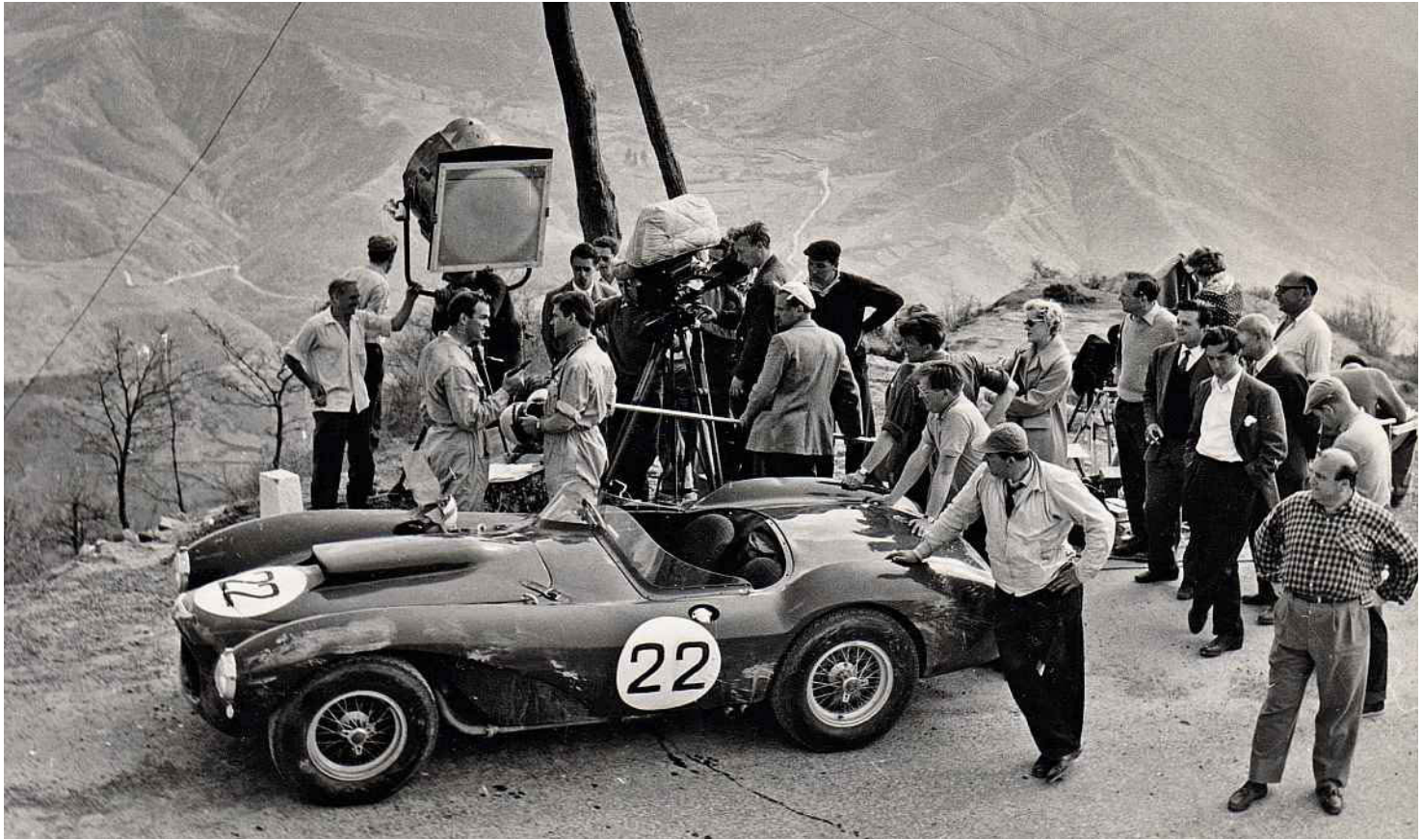
'I got talking to Anthony Steel, who seemed quite knowledgeable about motor racing, and he asked whether I felt like a coffee. Well, when the coffee came, he ordered two cognacs, and I told him I didn't drink that early in the day. "That's alright," he said, and drank both. This went on for some time; we had several coffees, and he had two cognacs with each. When we left, I had to pay the bill!'

Later that same day, a clearly inebriated Steel fluffed his lines and was removed from the set by Thomas. He was fired, only to be forgiven shortly thereafter. Nevertheless, Steel's boozing became a constant source of amusement for the real drivers on the roster. But if the leading man was proving a handful, maintaining continuity was an even bigger issue. For starters, the production almost came unstuck because it rained heavily during the 1956 running of the Mille Miglia. As a result, actual footage was incompatible with the altogether sunnier, staged stuff.

**Clockwise from top left**

The climactic cliff-top scene involved a mock-up of the V12 Lagonda; utter cad O'Donovan (Stanley Baker) stays in the car for a pitstop on the 'Arno-Alpi' race; O'Donovan confronts racer Fraser (played by Anthony Steel); shooting at Goodwood, the unlikely Rolls-Royce camera car lurches out of the chicane





‘To heighten the sense of speed and drama, the crew weren’t above employing somewhat grisly tactics’

No matter, this was showbusiness, so realism didn’t really enter the equation. The ramp start of the real Mille Miglia, for example, was substituted for a ‘Le Mans start’ in which driver *and* wingman had to run and jump into their cars before blasting away. Also, the countdown to the start was in English! That said, some effort was made to get things right, with Salvadori in a DB3S interloping with competitors on the actual event, the plan being to film the action as he passed through Florence before pulling off into a petrol station. He did just that, only for the attendant to become animated as he thought Roy and the cameraman were actual competitors. Their new friend filled up the car to the brim and wished them good luck...

In order to heighten the sense of speed and drama, the film crew weren’t above employing somewhat grisly tactics, either. Young, who was Steel’s on-track double, was horrified when the crew threw millet onto the road to entice chicken to feed there just as he came blasting around a corner and deliberately slid his Warren-Ingram wide. Decades later, the self-confessed animal lover recalled seeing feathers everywhere – and not being best pleased when asked to do it again.

Nevertheless, he warmed to Steel to the point that he attended his wedding to Swedish actress Anita Ekberg partway through filming. Young even had a line in the film (‘Hey, come on Bill!’) and enjoyed a brief fling with the female lead, Odile Versois. Midway through the shoot, however, he was obliged to take on additional driving duties after Salvadori was injured at Silverstone. Just to

**Above**  
High in the Italian Alps, filming the close-up of the confrontation between a gun-totin’ Stanley Baker and the thoroughly decent Anthony Steel

add to Salvadori’s misery, his own DB2/4 had been left out in Italy in anticipation of him returning. In his absence, it gained hand-painted numbers on each door and was ‘raced’ in the film. It was decidedly secondhand by the time it arrived back in Newport Pagnell.

While the majority of filming took place in Italy, other scenes were shot rather closer to home. The Volta d’Italia factory in the opening scene was, for instance, the Fairthorpe works in Chalfont St Peter, Buckinghamshire (Fairthorpe Atoms appear on the ‘production line’). Some of the on-track sequences were filmed at Goodwood, with cameras being mounted to a 1927 Rolls-Royce Phantom 1 that was specially adapted by technicians at Pinewood Studios into what was effectively a single-seater truck. That wasn’t the end of its Aston Martin connection, either: it was subsequently pressed into service during the production of James Bond vehicle *Thunderball*.

*Checkpoint* was not a towering success, but it wasn’t a complete dud, either. *The New York Times*, for example, stated: ‘It is kids’ stuff – a lot of pistol-flinging and knocking-out of drivers with drugs and sinister snarling by the villain at innocent people and fighting for the wheel of a racing car on hairpin curves... But the scenes of actual racing along the roads of Italy are really something to see: beautiful, exciting and dramatic in the excellent Eastman color that is used.’

That’s a fair assessment. *Checkpoint* isn’t high art, but if you love Astons (and Lagondas), it should be compulsory viewing. It is what Sunday afternoons were made for. ♣





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FIRST AND LAST | DB9 GENERATIONS

# FROM FIRST TO LAST

The DB9 has been the bedrock of Aston Martin for 12 years. As its replacement draws near, we compare the first and last of the line

WORDS RICHARD MEADEN

PHOTOGRAPHY GUS GREGORY





**LIKE ALL CHAPTERS** in Aston Martin's history, the journey from first to last DB9 has been eventful to say the least. From its triumphant launch – symbolic for also setting in motion the Gaydon era – and immediate sales success to the dark days of the global financial crisis and the fight back to financial security, the DB9 has stood firm.

The 'DB' models have long been the bedrock of Aston Martin. As standard-bearers for the marque, it's the DBs that have consistently possessed and displayed the qualities that define what separates an Aston from the rest. In modern marketing speak, they are custodians of Aston Martin's DNA. As such, it was inevitable that the team responsible for reinventing the company – a surprisingly small group of passionate engineers and designers led by the fearless and boundlessly energetic German, Dr Ulrich Bez – would do so with an all-new DB.

Built around a clever and innovative new aluminium structure that would go on to underpin Aston Martin's push into new sectors with the entry-level V8 Vantage and four-door, four-seat Rapide, DB9 was nothing short of a revolution. And, as it turned out, a revelation. Carrying the momentum created by the dazzling Vanquish and finally freeing Aston Martin clear from the baggage associated with the DB7's hand-me-down Jaguar underpinnings, the DB9 was Year Zero for the revitalised marque.





FIRST AND LAST | DB9 GENERATIONS







To have been a motoring journalist at the time and experience those energised days first-hand was something truly special. The sense of anticipation surrounding the DB9 was almost unbearable; the launch – held in the heart of the Alpes Maritime in the south of France in March 2004 – was a triumph. Discovering that the car was even more beautiful and drove even better than we'd dared hope emphasised just how far Aston had come and how serious it was about becoming a top-tier brand to rival the very best. There were a few hiccoughs in the months that followed, most notably the first UK press cars not feeling quite so sweetly set up as those supplied for the international press launch, but still there was no doubt the DB9 was a star in the ascendency.

Walking up to Gavin Culshaw's beautiful California Sage DB9, those memories come flooding back. More recent memories of this very car, too, for we featured it back in issue 9 when we explored the notion of the 'Affordable Aston'. In the company of its little brother, the V8 Vantage, a DB7 Vantage and a rather fine Virage, it more than held its own. In fact, such was its bewitching combination of looks, performance and long-distance luxury, we – well, I – gave it the nod.

More than a year on, it has become even more desirable. It really is an effortlessly elegant design. Emphatic yet understated, it exudes a rare kind of confidence. And so it should with such immaculate proportions and lithe confluence of lines. Light seems to flow and dance along its flanks, drawing your gaze from nose to tail via its subtly accentuated shoulders and haunches. No one element shouts for attention, no detail sits awkwardly. It's a beautifully resolved, resolutely handsome car.

The interior is equally classy. Back at the launch, I can recall being completely blown away by the bold use of new materials, such as bamboo for the door cappings, and the 'waterfall' centre stack. Culshaw's car features walnut, which seemed a little more conventional back then, but now looks spectacular. Smooth and tactile, like an oil-finished gun stock, it brings a modernist feel to the interior, as crisp and clean as an Eames chair. Some of the plastics seem perhaps a little dated, but even these – a kind of fine crackle-finish graphite – have worn well and look like they'll get more stylish with age. A dozen years since its

launch, the DB9's interior remains a special place to sit.

I'd forgotten you actually have to insert a conventional ignition key into the steering column, then push the glowing glass starter button mounted in the centre of the dash. The V12 sounds hearty but not raucous, quickly settling into a satisfying burble. Back in 2004, power and torque peaks of 450bhp and 420lb ft were more than respectable for a sporting GT with a luxury twist, and while they might pale a little compared with the 540bhp and 457lb ft of 2016's DB9 GT, knowing you're in a car capable of almost 190mph and hitting 60mph in less than 5sec still delivers a certain sense of wellbeing.

Despite those impressive performance figures, mellow is the best word to describe the DB9's demeanour. Simple, too, because there are no suspension modes to play with, as there are in later cars. The elementary PRND buttons arranged across the centre stack work the transmission, with a pair of paddles offering you the option of self-shifting if you feel inclined. As you'd hope, the 5.9-litre V12 is silky-smooth with muscular mid-range torque that surges you along with little apparent effort. On part-throttle, the exhaust note simmers nicely, hinting at what's in reserve, but not shouting about it too soon. It's a fabulous car in which to make simple, unfussed progress.

**Clockwise from top left**

Meaden gets reacquainted with Gavin Culshaw's wonderful early DB9; the 5.9-litre V12 produced 450bhp in the first generation of cars, which was enough for a top speed approaching 190mph; handsome 19in wheels frame grooved and vented iron discs



‘Light seems to flow and dance along its flanks, drawing your gaze from nose to tail via its subtly accentuated shoulders and haunches’











The six-speed automatic transmission is equally happy shuffling gears itself or letting you decide, using the paddles. Aston Martin was among the first to make torque-converter autos viable alternatives to conventional manual or automated sequential manual gearboxes in terms of responsiveness and dynamism, so although the upshifts and throttle-blip-assisted downshifts are a little soft-edged in 2016, the fact this early DB9's gearbox still delivers a level of satisfaction, and not frustration, as is so often the case with hardware subject to such intensive development, is testament to the advances it made back in the day.

So delicious is the DB9's ability to cover the ground without having to try, you could be forgiven for not digging deeper into its reserves of performance, but squeeze the throttle that bit harder and hold a gear that bit longer and you reveal this consummate GT's sporting edge. Wound out to 5500rpm and beyond in the intermediate gears, the DB9 has a serious turn of speed. It's an intoxicating feeling to tap into the meat of a big V12's performance. More so when it's combined with an unusually balanced blend of comfort and agility. No wonder the DB9 quickly established itself as the new benchmark for sporting Grand Tourers.





**Clockwise from left**

Today's DB9 has a more chiselled, modern look; engine output has swollen to a formidable 540bhp; GT's cabin replaces wood veneer with high-gloss piano black trim



Considering the perennial accusation levelled at Aston Martin's design team that all its cars look the same, it's something of a surprise to find that the current DB9 GT retains little or none of the original DB9's body panels or detailing. This all stems from the slightly strange decision back in 2011 to squeeze a new DB9-based Virage model in between the DB9 and DBS. After just 18 months and 1100 or so cars, the Virage was canned, but its fuller, more muscled style was carried over into the comprehensively refreshed DB9 that appeared at the end of 2012.

Together with the new bodywork, this revamped DB9 received a more potent V12 developing 510bhp and 457lb ft of torque, plus adaptive damping with Normal, Sport and Track settings and carbon-ceramic brakes as standard. It's this sharper, harder, faster recipe that has been further developed into the 540bhp DB9 GT tested here. Seen in the company of its earliest forebear, today's DB9 is the more immediately striking. Its stance is more predatory, its physique more bulked-up. It's modern and still undeniably beautiful, but less subtle.

The ingress ritual is still the same. Push the lollystick door handle at one end and pull the other, swing the swan-wing door upwards and outwards, then drop down into a





low-slung driver's seat. The bold expanses of wood veneer of the early car have gone, exchanged for leather, glass and high-gloss piano black surfaces. Its super-clean, contemporary and more ergonomic, but somehow it feels less original, less brave.

The old Ford Escort key has long since been junked in favour of the weighty, expensive-looking crystal key (I can't bring myself to refer to it as the Emotion Control Unit) that you insert into a slot where the original DB9's glass starter button used to sit. The starter motor emits the same rapid churn before the V12 fires with a far spikier fanfare than its predecessor. It heralds a sharper and more focused drive: Gaydon-built Astons have got harder and more aggressive over the years. The upside is a car that's keener than the original, but the trade-off is in its shift of emphasis from that of a GT with sporting edge to a sports car with Grand Touring sensibilities.

There's no denying the frisson of excitement you get from the GT, and it's fun to flick from one suspension mode to the next as mood or road surface changes dictates, but there's an underlying tension in the GT that means you never quite manage to settle into the journey like you can in the original car. The ride isn't quite as supple in Normal, and while Sport does deliver impressive body control and a better sense of connection at the kind of pace the GT is happy to carry on challenging roads, Track feels too stiff and in truth a bit pointless in a near-1800kg car.

Both cars have great steering, the level of hydraulic assistance enough to take the effort out of driving, but not so much as to remove the feel or sense of connection. The original DB9 has superior fluidity, the GT more grip and turn-in response to work with, but both possess a natural athleticism and enthusiasm for twists and turns that the equivalent Bentley or Benz simply can't match. They are both a pleasure to hustle, coming into their own at the point less fleet-footed GTs begin to feel out of their depth.

If you're a keen driver, this is what makes all Astons special and the DB9 a standout car in the GT class.

The GT really could do with the eight-speed auto 'box as fitted to the Rapide and Vanquish, but, with its days numbered and DB11 waiting in the wings, Aston clearly couldn't justify the investment. It's a shame, for the newer gearbox would be the last piece of the dynamic puzzle. As it stands, you need to run the GT with Sport mode engaged for it to feel as urgent as a 540bhp V12 GT should.

One area where the newer car does demonstrate a clear advantage over the old is braking, its standard-fit carbon-ceramic discs delivering significantly greater stopping power with better pedal feel and no loss of progression or refinement. They feel over-specified, with masses in reserve, where the original DB9's feel adequate at best and over-stretched if you carry the kind of speed the engine and chassis are capable of delivering when worked hard.

Tastes and expectations have changed considerably since 2004. Just how much is reflected in the 12-year evolution that separates these two fine cars. Elegance traded for impact; implied potency swapped for overt firepower, the DB9 of 2016 has added spicier ingredients to the recipe with mixed effect. Of the pair, it's the original that feels the more comfortable in its own svelte skin, the purity and confidence of its execution shining testament to the quality of the primary concept. The last-generation car is faster, firmer, more muscular and more sporting, but in chasing these obvious objective improvements, some of the subjective sweetness has been lost. There never was anything quite like the first DB9. That's why it's a landmark car. There still isn't anything that quite manages to combine the present DB9's pace, poise and panache, even as it begins to feel its age. The DB11 has some big shoes to fill.

*Thanks to Gavin Culshaw for allowing us to enjoy his DB9 and Lincolnshire Aviation Heritage Centre ([lincsaviation.co.uk](http://lincsaviation.co.uk)).* **V**

### *DB9 (first series)*

**ENGINE** V12, 5935cc **MAX POWER** 450bhp @ 6000rpm **MAX TORQUE** 420lb ft @ 5000rpm **TRANSMISSION** Six-speed Touchtronic auto (six-speed manual option) **SUSPENSION** Front and rear: double wishbones, coil springs, telescopic dampers, anti-roll bar **BRAKES** Vented discs, 355mm front, 330mm rear, ABS, EBD **WHEELS** 8.5 x 19in front, 9.5 x 19in rear **TYRES** 235/40 ZR19 front, 275/35 ZR19 rear **WEIGHT** 1800kg **POWER TO WEIGHT** 254bhp/ton **0-60MPH** 4.9sec (claimed) **TOP SPEED** 186mph (claimed) **PRICE** £109,000 in 2004 (£155,500 in today's money)

### *DB9 GT*

**ENGINE** V12, 5935cc **MAX POWER** 540bhp @ 6500rpm **MAX TORQUE** 457lb ft @ 5500rpm **TRANSMISSION** Six-speed Touchtronic II auto **SUSPENSION** Front and rear: double wishbones, coil springs, adaptive dampers, anti-roll bar **BRAKES** Vented carbon-ceramic discs, 398mm front, 360mm rear, ABS, EBD **WHEELS** 8.5 x 20in front, 11 x 20in rear **TYRES** 245/35 ZR20 front, 295/30 ZR20 rear **WEIGHT** 1785kg **POWER TO WEIGHT** 307bhp/ton **0-60MPH** 4.4sec (claimed) **TOP SPEED** 183mph (claimed) **BASIC PRICE** £140,000



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# MOMENT OF TRUTH

A test session at the Bridgestone proving ground provides our first taste of the radical, twin-turbo DB11. So, what does the first new-generation Aston feel like?

WORDS JETHRO BOVINGDON | PHOTOGRAPHY MAX EAREY





BRIDGESTONE



People who don't own an Aston Martin or haven't had the pleasure of driving a recent Vantage, DB9, Vanquish or Rapide seem always to be clamouring for change. A new model arrives with a shade more power and a facelift and they throw their arms in the air. 'Boring! Give us something new!' they lament. But I'm guessing that many customers – and potential customers – are pretty happy for Aston Martin to follow a path of steady evolution. To keep the sublime elegance, the exquisite sense of proportion, and engines that might not 'do the numbers' compared with some rivals but absolutely hit the spot in terms of noise, character and sense of occasion.

Yet change is coming. Those dissenters will get their way and some of the changes might just make loyal owners question whether this is 'their' Aston Martin any more. Engines will be downsized and turbocharged (in some cases they'll also be built by Mercedes-AMG), each model will get a more distinctive look and feel, there will be an electric or hybrid 'crossover' model... It seems the very ground at Gaydon is shifting like sand. So should we be excited or trepidatious? Today will give us a good clue because we get to drive a DB11 prototype on wet and dry handling circuits at a Bridgestone proving ground near Rome. The DB11 features a new bonded aluminium chassis that will also underpin the next Vantage, Vanquish and Rapide, and a new, 5.2-litre engine with two twin-scroll turbos. It's also the first new model to be signed-off by new Vehicle Attributes chief engineer Matt Becker. In other words it's A Very Big Deal.

I guess I'm somewhere between the Revolutionaries and the Traditionalists. Sadly, I've never owned an Aston but I do appreciate why people treasure them so. However, I'm also keen to see a new generation of cars with a new chassis, a new look and a sat-nav system I don't want to rip out of the dash and throw into a field every time I use it. I'll call myself a Cautious Radical for the sake of argument. Today, aesthetic judgements are put on hold as our car, VP (Verification Prototype) 5079, is still running full camo, is delightfully ragged around the edges after thousands of hard kilometres and has an interior trimmed in left-over baby-blue leather. It's a used and abused test car, pure and simple, but as a tool to judge the dynamic behaviour of DB11 and its new chassis and drivetrain it's also just about perfect.

Actually, maybe not. 'I guess the car is 80-85 per cent there dynamically,' explains Matt Becker as we head out onto the track for a couple of demonstration laps. 'In GT mode we're pretty much there but we're still finalising our plans for Sport and Sport Plus modes for the suspension. I want there to be a real step in terms of response but I don't just want to make the car harsh.' This dedication to the DB11's GT credentials is reiterated several times by Matt. 'When I arrived, I drove an X1 prototype – essentially a cut-and-shut DB9 with the new suspension, steering and drivetrain – and I knew I could work with it. The car just felt fundamentally good, but the ride was way too stiff and

the steering response too aggressive. This is a GT car. That doesn't mean it'll be lazy. It needs to be extremely comfortable but also agile and connected.'

That apparent dichotomy is achieved through optimisation and integration of key components. The new chassis is stiffer by around 15 per cent and lighter, too; the suspension is by double wishbone at the front and a multi-link set-up at the rear (the DB9 was wishbones all-round) and features Bilstein's latest continuously variable Skyhook dampers with the aforementioned GT, Sport and Sport Plus baseline settings. Also new is the adoption of electric power steering and torque-vectoring by braking, both of which greatly enhance the DB11's agility.

The steering is absolutely key, as Matt explains. 'The beauty of the steering ratio, which is quite fast at 13:1 and 2.4 turns lock-to-lock [the DB9 was 17:1 and a Ferrari is typically around 11.8:1], is that instead of having to restrict the roll in the car to increase agility, the speed of the rack creates the response without incredibly aggressive roll support. That allows us to let the car breathe.' Becker is ex-Lotus so creating cars that 'breathe' where others try to beat the surface into submission is in his DNA. It also happens to be a pretty attractive quality in an Aston GT car.

I'm robbed of the pleasure of firing up the V12 when my turn to drive arrives. The car has just been loaded with the latest calibration settings and if the engine is switched off they'll disappear. Even so, it's nice to hear that the familiar, complex tone of an Aston 'twelve' is still present and correct at idle. Select D and VP 5079 rolls away with a refinement you might not expect given its careworn look. First impressions – the ones you get in the first 100 yards – tell you that this car rides beautifully, that the engine has an effortless delivery but still the sharpness usually associated with natural aspiration and that the new steering is silky-smooth but very, very responsive. It's also quieter than a DB9. The whole car just feels *new*, which I'm heartily relieved about. Imagine coming all this way to find it's just a DB9 with a chunk more torque and a little less character.

Within a lap or two it's obvious the DB11 is far from that. In fact, although it has Aston Martin sensibilities, it's very much its own car. The steering really is a great deal faster than that of Astons we're used to, and creates surprising agility. More impressive still is that this rate of response is met with deft control by the chassis, front and rear reacting as one to inputs, body-roll building quickly but then stabilising to give you a really settled, balanced platform to exploit. Ramp up from GT to Sport and Sport Plus and there's a sensation of body movement being tolerated and then decisively controlled. The result is that the chassis communicates very clearly; you can feel the weight transfer, but there's that steely control just beneath the surface for when you want to drive the DB11 like a sports car.

Backing up this agility, which seems to rip kilos off the car as you drive, is a drivetrain also capable of making mass evaporate. The DB11 is physically longer, wider and lower than the DB9 and weighs only a sliver less at 1770kg dry, but the 5.2-litre V12, bolstered by



#### Above and right

Wet handling circuit provides an exacting workout for DB11's bespoke Bridgestone S007s. Engineer uploads the latest calibration settings. The baby-blue leather used to trim this verification prototype was apparently left-over stock (we can't imagine why)







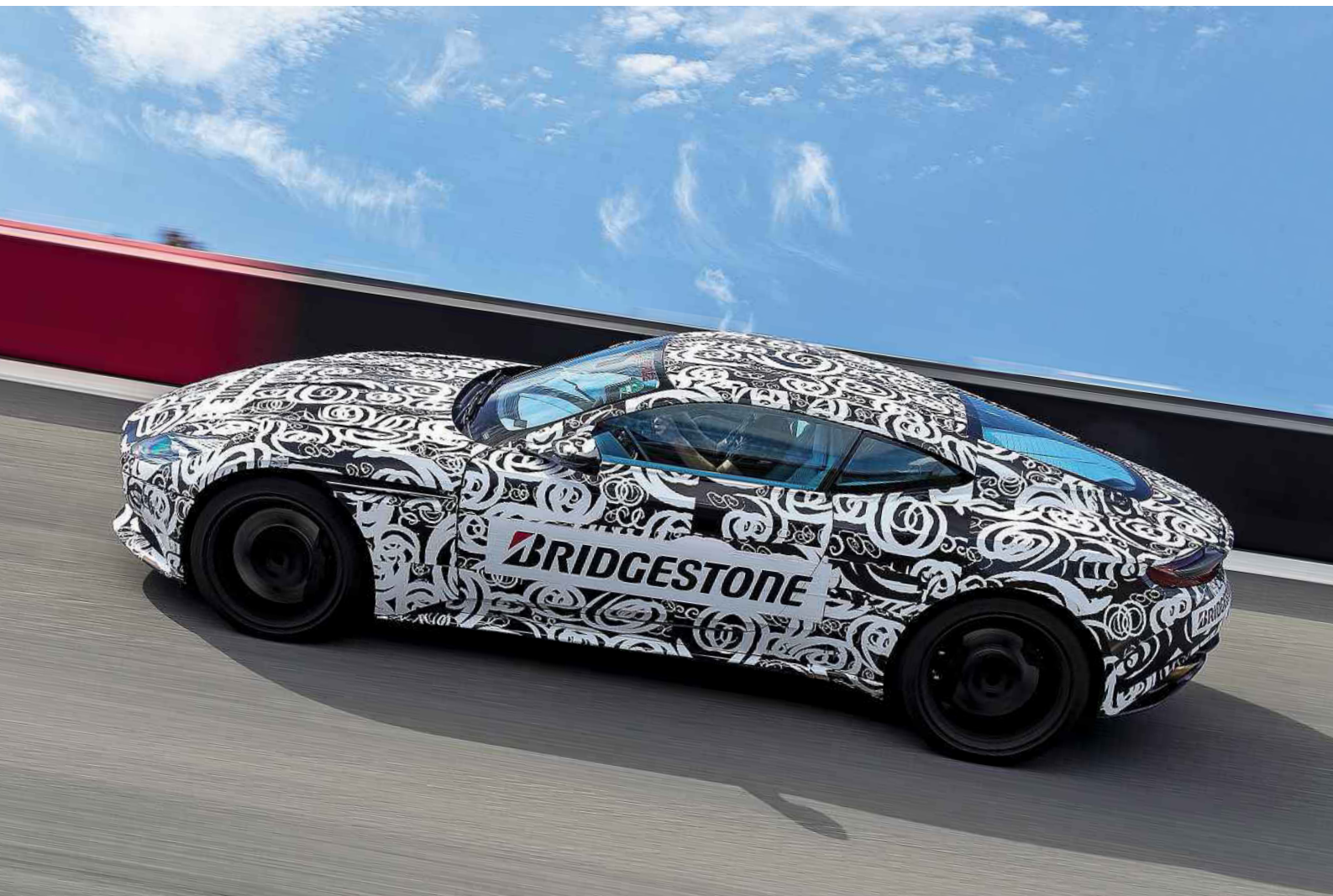


‘The 5.2-litre V12,  
bolstered by those twin  
turbochargers, hurls it  
along at a mighty pace’









those twin turbos, can hurl it along at a mighty pace. It produces 516lb ft from just 1500rpm all the way to 5000rpm and, with that smooth-shifting eight-speed automatic 'box, the DB11 always feels in its sweet spot. Open the throttle at any speed and the car strides forward. It's not a clumsy, surging delivery and, despite that flat torque 'curve', the DB11 seems to pile on speed with ever greater insistence right up towards the rev-limiter. Turbo lag? There's not much to speak of and although it misses that crisp, clean top-end zinginess that only a naturally aspirated engine produces, for the most part this clever new V12 feels supremely powerful but also admirably precise. Special mention should go to the bespoke Bridgestone S007s, which do a fantastic job considering the monumental forces they're facing.

With an empty dry handling circuit to play on, it's very easy to push the DB11 right to the edge of grip and discover that, even when you peer over the precipice beyond, the drop-off is gentle and forgiving rather than a steep cliff. For me the most impressive thing is how it talks to you all the time. The steering has a smoother, lighter and much faster action than that of a DB9 and it's not pulsating with that finely detailed feedback we've grown used to in Astons, but it does have nuance

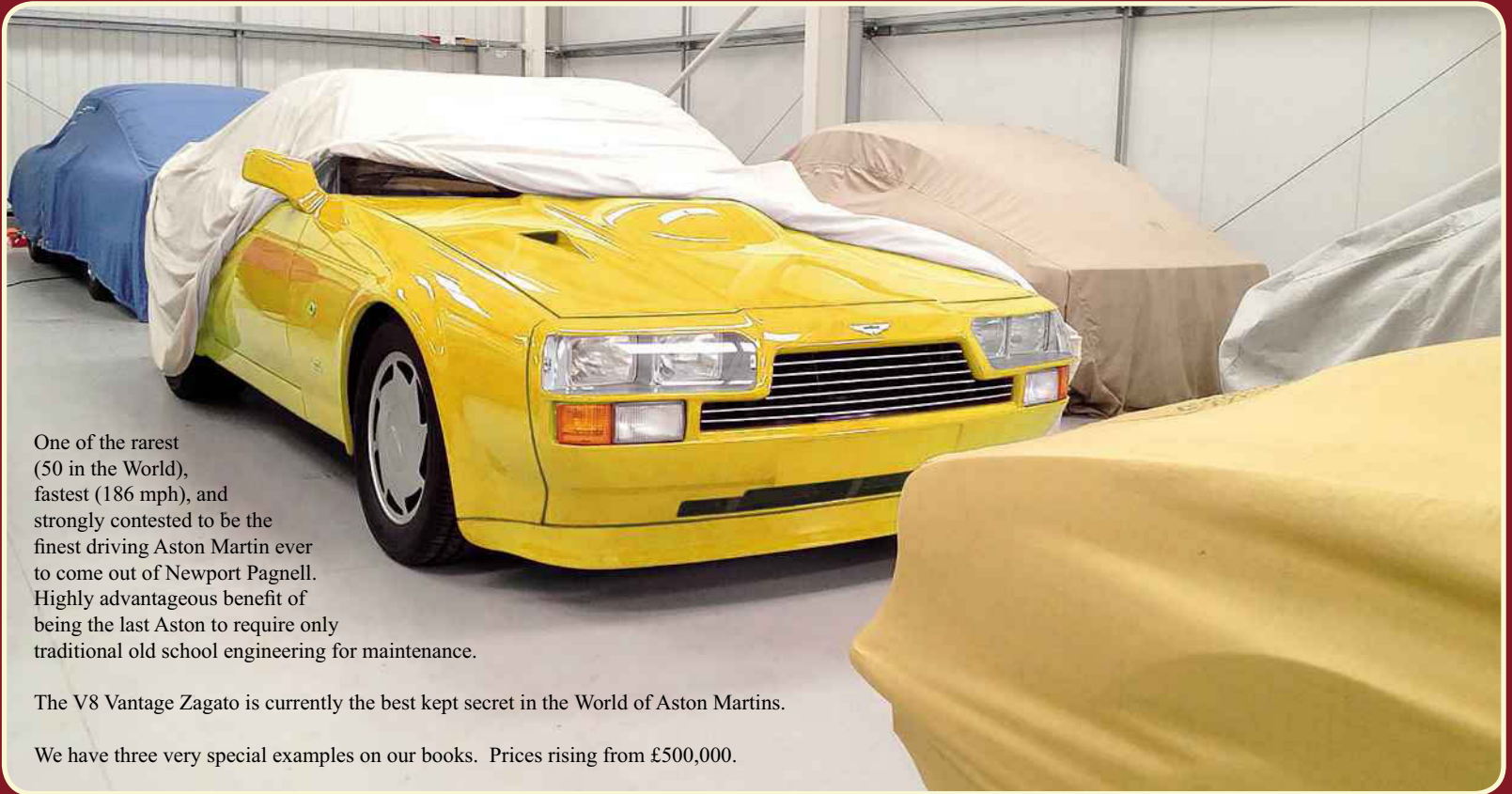
and you feel it lighten when the front tyres start to lose grip and then reconnect when you lift the throttle to snap them back into line. The seat is full of information, too, and I can genuinely feel that the 'yaw centre' is located right in the middle of the car, just as Matt suggested it was earlier. The result is that the DB11 seems to pivot right around your hips. For such a big machine it really does inspire confidence.

Of course, a flat-out dash around a circuit designed to torture tyres and 20 minutes slip-sliding around a wet handling facility can't provide all the answers. Will the supremely comfortable ride survive the lumps and bumps of Britain's semi-broken road network? Can the new V12 really match the sonorous, sharp-edged excitement of the old 5.9 once the shock of the sheer performance fades, and will cylinder deactivation work smoothly? Put simply, is the DB11 special enough to herald a new beginning for Aston Martin that will spawn a range of unprecedented breadth and stretch into new sectors? For now it's impossible to say for sure. However, everything I've experienced at this Bridgestone facility suggests that, while DB11 represents a new direction, its roots remain firmly in the dynamic traits and unique charisma we know and love. ♣

#### Above

Prototype's camouflage masks DB11's sophisticated new aero. The bonded aluminium structure beneath will underpin a whole new generation of Astons





One of the rarest (50 in the World), fastest (186 mph), and strongly contested to be the finest driving Aston Martin ever to come out of Newport Pagnell. Highly advantageous benefit of being the last Aston to require only traditional old school engineering for maintenance.

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If you feel you meet the necessary criteria for ownership of this remarkable Aston Martin please contact us for further information.







# TOY STORY

This is Aston Martin CEO Andy Palmer's 'new toy', a simply magnificent 1980s V8 Vantage. We hitch a ride with the boss – and try it for ourselves

WORDS MIKE DUFF | PHOTOGRAPHY MAX EAREY

**ANDY PALMER IS** offering me a set of keys, holding them up so I can see how small they look. They may not be much to look at, but I know that they will unlock and start the immaculate 1980 Aston V8 Vantage that we're standing next to. 'Do you want to drive?' he asks.

Of course I do. But keen as I am to experience what was, when new, one of the fastest cars on the planet, my first instinct is to decline this very generous offer. Because this Vantage is Palmer's personal car, bought for a considerable sum last year and having just emerged from a hefty service

at Aston Martin Works in Newport Pagnell that I'm sure will have been accompanied by an equally weighty bill. It has also just been awarded a 'Gold' grading under Aston's new Approved Provenance scheme.

It is absolutely immaculate – condition as good as when it first left the factory, if not slightly better. Palmer has already told me that he's hardly had a chance to drive the car since buying it. Meaning that, if anything goes wrong, I will be remembered forever as the man who crashed the CEO's car while he sat next to me in the passenger seat...





**Above and opposite**  
Palmer takes *Vantage* for a spin in his *Vantage*, fresh from a service at Works and being awarded a Gold grading under the new Assured Provenance scheme

Senior auto executives love to talk about older cars, but they very rarely get their money anywhere close to their mouths when it comes to investing in their company's back-catalogue. Not so Andy Palmer; pretty much the first thing he did after taking over at Aston Martin was to put the word out that he was interested in a Vantage of this era. After a six-month search, he bought this 70,000-mile example last year, becoming its seventh owner.

With many CEOs, this would feel like a publicity stunt. But not here. Palmer has invested a six-figure sum into buying the Vantage and says he plans to keep it forever. He's also quick to say that, even if he didn't now run the company that once built the V8, he would have reached this point eventually.

'I was living in Japan, and it's always hard to own cars out there,' he says, talking about his former role as Nissan's head of product planning. 'When I came back to the UK, my plan was always to get something nice. The Vantage was always on the list, very near the top in fact. This is the car I lusted after when I was a teenager. I was really looking for a '79 car because that was the year I started work. But 1980 is close enough; it was the year I got my licence.'

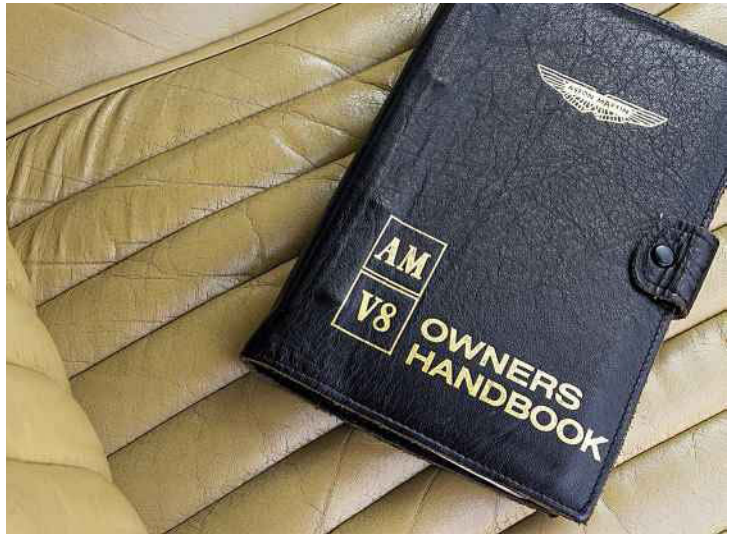
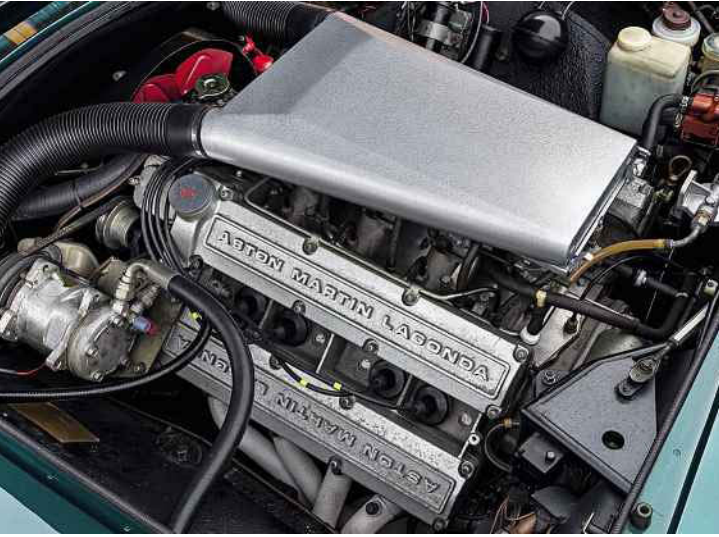
He won't say exactly what he paid for it – 'a lot, but not too much' – and admits that his wife got a very nice handbag at about the same time. 'To be fair, she was all in

favour – she said "you've worked very hard, you deserve a toy".'

And what a toy. The V8 Vantage was Aston's response to the unseemly power battle that broke out in the late 1970s, and elegant proof that the gentlemen's expresses the company made at the time could be tuned to keep pace with upstarts like the Porsche 911 Turbo and Ferrari Berlinetta Boxer. It was based on the V8 Saloon – as the coupé was called back then – but reworked with hotter camshafts, a new air intake box, a revised cylinder head and four 48IDF carburettors. With around 375bhp when it was introduced in 1977, it was the brawnier sports car on the market. Like many, Palmer's car was subsequently upgraded to even brawnier 400bhp-plus 'X-Pack' spec. It also changed colour at some point, having originally left Newport Pagnell wearing brown but now being finished in Grampian Green, another period-appropriate shade.

Palmer has also subjected the car to Aston's new Assured Provenance programme – he shows me the fat, leather-bound folder documenting the car's history from its construction onwards. Virtually everything is as it was in period, with the cabin giving off the heady aroma of nicely worn leather and the wooden dashboard practically groaning under the weight of buttons. As I strap myself into the driver's seat – it would have been rude to actually refuse the keys – Palmer points out the original Pioneer





'I've still got my original cassettes! I'm going to be listening to The Stranglers'





radio-cassette player. I ask if he's planning to replace it with one of those retro-styled modern units that will pair with his phone and stream music. He answers with a snort: 'No chance! I've still got my original cassettes! I'm going to be listening to The Stranglers. And if anyone calls me when I'm driving, then I definitely won't be answering.'

The engine burbles into life, quieter than I was expecting. The Vantage was described when new as the first British supercar, but the extra performance didn't mean losing the civility that defined contemporary Astons. I set off at a suitably respectful pace with the first task being the need to acclimatise myself to the dog-leg manual gearbox – first is back and left. To be honest, I'm expecting to have to find some excuses for truculent low-speed behaviour, especially given the four carburettors that sit in the vee of the vast engine and have to breath-in the heat it generates. But there's no hesitancy; throttle response is crisp and direct, the clutch is firm but easily modulated and the gearchange is light and accurate. Even the steering feels good; 1970s

**Opposite and above**  
Astons were heavy on the walnut veneer in the early '80s. Palmer is particularly happy with the period-correct radio/cassette. Engine is original 5.3-litre V8 uprated to 400bhp X-Pack spec

power steering was often set up to deliver finger-twirling lightness, but the Vantage's is nicely weighted and alive with sensation.

'It feels remarkably modern, doesn't it?' affirms Palmer, looking impressively relaxed for someone who is experiencing his pride and joy from the passenger seat for the first time. 'Don't be shy about pushing a bit harder.'

Suitably admonished, I get keener with the long throttle pedal. I've been driving on the motor's abundant low-down torque, but it's happy to announce that it enjoys to be revved as well, exhaust note hardening along with the pressure exerted by the seat on my back. We're on the dual-carriageway that leads from Newport Pagnell towards Olney when a glance at the speedometer needle reveals an alarmingly serious number, causing me to back off.

'I was lucky to avoid getting done by a speed camera the first time I drove it,' Palmer admits. 'It was a mobile one and fortunately for me he was still setting up when I drove past.' How fast was he going? 'Fast enough,' he replies. 'It would have been very embarrassing.'





Having established that it's going to be impossible to give my full attention to both the car and the chance for an uninterrupted conversation with the boss of Aston Martin, I do the sensible thing and stop so that we can swap places. Palmer sets off at a relaxed pace but with a familiarity that belies the fact he's hardly had a chance to drive the Vantage. He spends plenty of time in performance cars, of course – and will even be driving the works GT3 racer at Bathurst later this year.

We're on very familiar turf for him now, on the road that leads to Cranfield. This is home to Nissan's vast European Technical Centre, where Palmer used to work. 'Probably a fair few former colleagues among this lot,' he says at the stream of Nissans and Infinitis blatting the other way. Having started as a 16-year-old apprentice for AP Brakes, Palmer has grafted his way to the top, earning two degrees in the process and becoming one of Nissan's most senior managers as chief planning officer and executive vice-president – a role that saw him frequently top lists of the most influential Brits in the global car industry.

As we turn back to Newport Pagnell – Palmer is due in another meeting – I turn the conversation to why he chose to give up his high-power role for a relative minnow like Aston Martin. For any enthusiast it's easy to see the appeal, but as a senior executive it meant moving to a company

**Above**  
Aston's big coupé never looked better than in late '70s/early '80s Vantage form with its arch-filling tyres and integrated rear spoiler

that has produced fewer cars during its entire 103-year history than his previous employer builds globally in a typical week.

'I was really enjoying what I was doing at Nissan. I love cars, I had a big budget and I could make ten new cars a year. But I was kidding myself that I'd achieved my dreams. When Aston came knocking, it woke me up – call it a mid-life crisis or a reality check. I thought I'm never going to be CEO of Nissan or Renault, I'm never going to live out what I set my goal to be.'

He's certainly made his mark at Aston, with the fully funded plan to replace the entire model range and add the DBX electric crossover and Lagonda saloon to the mix. 'People are starting to believe in it,' he says. 'We're still close to the start of the journey, but I really think we can turn Aston into a sustainable business, a major player.'

Lots will be new, but lots will be familiar as well. One of the things we do know is that the current Vantage will be replaced next year by a new model, one that will be powered by a version of the twin-turbocharged 4-litre V8 that Mercedes uses in its AMG models.

Sitting in the original V8 Vantage makes the question inevitable: will the new car carry on with the same name?

'That decision hasn't been taken,' says Palmer, pausing for effect, '...but we'd be mad to walk away from heritage like this, wouldn't we?' 🗨️





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# THE SPECIAL ONE

As Aston Martin announces plans for a new hypercar, time to reassess its last no-expense-spared machine, the One-77. Seven years after its debut, it's still thrillingly special

WORDS PETER TOMALIN

PHOTOGRAPHY MATTHEW HOWELL





**THE ONE-77 IS THE SORT OF CAR** around which legends are spun. One customer, so the story went, bought a second example just so he could have it stripped down to its naked carbonfibre tub, with the sole intention of displaying it in his home as a piece of art. Another bought not one, not two, but *ten* cars. More than one buyer insisted that their One-77s forgo the usual pre-delivery test drive so that they could be delivered – and inevitably salted away in dehumidified storage – with zero miles on the clock. All good stories, and all, as far as we can ascertain, true.

All of which appears to confirm the suspicion that cars like the One-77 – billed as the fastest and most expensive Aston ever, and limited to just 77 examples – are bought primarily as investments. Nothing wrong with that, it's their money, etc, etc. Except that the One-77, perhaps above all supercars, was conceived and engineered for the sheer thrill of driving. Thankfully, other buyers appreciated that fact and have driven their cars long and hard on both road and track, as we shall hear.

One of the reasons that legends sprung up around the One-77 was that the motoring

media were denied access to the car by Aston Martin. This caused no little angst and gave rise, in turn, to some actual myths. Aston, it was said, didn't want anyone to drive the car because [stage whisper] it wasn't very good.

What other reason could their be? After all, even Bugatti did press launches. Motoring hacks, sceptical animals at the best of times, smelled a rat. But their olfactory sensors were wonky. Aston's rationale was simple: as each and every One-77 had a buyer long before the production run was complete, press coverage was something they could happily live without.







## 'A FUSION OF STATE-OF-THE-ART TECHNOLOGY WITH TIME-HONOURED CRAFTSMANSHIP'

Fortunately, a couple of owners were willing to allow a small handful of journalists – and thus, vicariously, the rest of us – to discover the truth. And when the lucky few did get their mitts on the One-77's eccentrically shaped wheel with its squared-off, Alcantara-trimmed sides (apparently much nicer to hold than it sounds) they found it to be truly astounding.

Harry Metcalfe, then editorial director of *evo* magazine and one of the few members of the motoring media who might conceivably have been in the market for the ultimate Aston, was blown away by the visceral nature of its performance and by the challenge it presented.

'There's nothing quite like a car that can spin its wheels in a straight line at beyond motorway speeds to grab your attention,' he wrote. 'Yes, it's demanding to get right and I haven't quite mastered it yet, but I'm desperately keen to learn. I bet some of the owners won't be up to it and will either abandon their One-77 to gather dust in a collection or sell it on as quickly as possible. But they'd be missing the point, because this is a monster of a car – over-powered yet impossibly charismatic.'

What made it so? A fusion of state-of-the-art technology with time-honoured craftsmanship. So the supremely stiff and light (just 180kg) carbonfibre tub was skinned with hand-crafted aluminium: those extraordinary front wings were each formed from a single piece, and each took three weeks to shape and perfect.

Aston's 5.9-litre V12 was comprehensively reworked by Cosworth Engineering. It was bored and stroked to 7.3 litres, its weight reduced by 60kg, mostly by re-engineering the internals, which in turn allowed it to rev higher; it was dry-sumped, and the compression ratio was up to 10.9:1. The quoted peak power was 750bhp, though once the engines were run-in they were typically producing 770bhp, an extraordinary figure for a naturally aspirated engine (indeed the most ever recorded at the time). Not the least remarkable thing about this monster of an engine was that it had to retain the durability and emissions compliance of Aston's series-production units.

Perhaps the one area where the One-77 looked off-the-pace on paper was in its transmission. Where dual-clutch gearboxes had become the norm, the One-77 had a six-speed single-clutch automated manual. Sure enough, with a twin-plate semi-race clutch, it was the one area that attracted criticism, low-speed take-up being afflicted by a degree of stuttering.

No problems once it hits its stride, though. A 0-100mph time of 6.9sec was recorded during testing, which put the Aston in the top echelon. Top speed was quoted as 220mph-plus.

#### Opposite and below

Interior is awash with leather and carbonfibre, clearly an Aston but with familiar themes stretched and teased out into something altogether more dramatic. Bootspace is compromised by chassis supports and inboard dampers

Suspension followed race-car practice, with fully adjustable inboard spring/damper units. Engineers spent time with each customer, fine-tuning the settings to suit their own tastes and driving style. The very brave could turn the DSC to track mode, or switch it off altogether.

The production run began in 2010 and the final car was delivered in August 2012. Out of the 77 cars built, only nine are right-hand drive. With a broad palette of paint and trim colours, no two One-77s are alike, though options were limited to special metals for the switchgear: gold (£40,000), dark chrome (£30,000) or ruthenium (£15,000). Yes, it really does exist; I looked it up. The original list price was £1.05 million plus local taxes, but this rose to £1.15m in 2011, which for a UK buyer meant £1.38m once the VAT was added.

And the market today? Just before we went to press, Bonhams at its Monaco sale was offering no.25, a Swiss-registered, 850km, one-owner example, with an estimate of £1.4-1.8 million. Meanwhile the car pictured here, with similarly low miles, was in the process of being sold by Aston Martin Works 'within that sort of range'. Earlier this year, London-based Joe Macari sold another low-miler, the advertised price: £1.7m. Not too many bargains to be had then...

Servicing requirements are, unsurprisingly, rather more exacting than for a regular series-production Aston – either annually or every 5000 miles. Aston Martin Works charges £1752





'IT'S A PIECE OF AUTOMOTIVE ART.  
THE MATERIALS AND THE  
CONSTRUCTION ARE  
JUST BEAUTIFUL'







**Opposite and above**

Fins on the carbonfibre diffuser occasionally need repairs; quilted under-bonnet sound-deadening for the mighty V12

(including VAT) for the most basic service and £2947 for the intermediate one. The 'biggie' comes at 50,000 miles, a hefty £5500 because it includes replacing the 12 spark plugs, a particularly labour-intensive job. Parts prices? Brace yourself. A pair of rear Pirelli P Zero Corsas costs around a grand, and a set of front brake pads is roughly the same again.

While it's unlikely that running costs will cause the average One-77 owner too much lost sleep, mileage per gallon is strictly single figures unless you're pussy-footing along a motorway. Even with a 21-gallon tank, that means fairly frequent fuel-stops. And while we're talking practicality, luggage capacity is virtually non-existent (maybe a briefcase, for a clean pair of briefs...). Those P Zero Corsas, 335mm wide at the rear, really don't like cold conditions. It's a wide car, too, so it needs sweeping B-roads rather than squiggling country lanes. Oh, and the rear diffuser hangs low, making its fins somewhat prone to snagging, though they can be replaced without binning the whole section.

All of this is simply par-for-the-course for a 750bhp, 220mph, £1.4 million exotic. And the most pleasing thing in this tale is that none of the above has prevented a number of owners from clocking up some seriously big mileages.

'We have owners who have driven their cars all over Europe,' says Works commercial director Paul Spires. 'One car we see is approaching 50,000km. And the cars that get used more tend to be the better cars. They like to be exercised.'

Works has more experience of the One-77 than anyone. 'Over 30 of the 77 cars come here for servicing from all over the world,' continues Spires, 'and on top of that we fly technicians out to service cars in the field as well.'

Given that so much of the engineering follows race-car practice, it's no surprise that Works also





### ONE-77 SPECIFICATIONS

**ENGINE** V12, 7312cc **MAX POWER** 750bhp @ 7600rpm **MAX TORQUE** 553lb ft @ 5000rpm **TRANSMISSION** Six-speed automated manual transaxle, rear-wheel drive, limited-slip differential, DSC **SUSPENSION** Front and rear: double wishbones, coil springs, inboard adjustable dampers, anti-roll bar **STEERING** Rack-and-pinion, power-assisted **BRAKES** Vented, cross-drilled ceramic discs, 398mm front, 360mm rear, ABS, EBD **WHEELS** 9 x 20in front, 12.5 x 20in rear **TYRES** 255/35 ZR20 front, 335/30 ZR20 rear, Pirelli P Zero Corsa **WEIGHT** 1630kg **POWER TO WEIGHT** 468bhp/ton **0-62MPH** sub-3.7sec (claimed) **TOP SPEED** 220mph+ **PRICE NEW** £1,380,000 (UK price, incl VAT) **VALUE NOW** £1.4m-plus

supports a number of owners who track their One-77s on a regular basis. 'It's actually a really good track car,' says Spire. 'We had one owner at Paul Ricard who literally drove it all day. I don't think I've ever put so much petrol in a car!

'To me it's a piece of automotive art. The materials and the construction are just beautiful. And the sound is unlike any other Aston Martin. Every time one is fired up, the whole place comes to a halt. It's an awesome bit of a kit.'

As Harry Metcalfe concluded in that *evo* road test: 'From the outset, the One-77 was designed to be the ultimate modern-day Aston, and after my day with it I'm very happy to tell you that it hits the bullseye. Big time.'

As more supercars use forced induction or hybrid power, the One-77 will stand as the most wonderful monument to the visceral appeal of a vast, hugely powerful, high-revving, naturally aspirated petrol engine. Aston's new hypercar will be a very different animal. No doubt faster still and with its own unique challenges and rewards. But safe to say we'll never see anything quite like the One-77 again. **V**

### What the road testers said at the time

**'THE ONE-77'S ON-BOARD** symphony is bewitching from the moment the key is pressed, but poke the Sport button and it's enriched even further. Because the exhaust runs inside both sills, you're rewarded with an almost surround-sound effect. But it's the change in character of that mighty V12 that really gets my attention. Not only has engaging Sport given me access to the full 553lb ft of torque (without it you get only 75 per cent of the total) but the engine has gained an almost VTEC-like top-end howl. From 4500rpm on, it's as if there's a squirt of nitrous finding its way into the engine; it storms through the rev-range with no let-up before clattering into the 7500rpm limiter. And it feels as if the torrent of horsepower is in full flood at that point, such is the relentlessness of the V12 on full song.

All of this means I'm really having to concentrate in the driving seat because the delivery of all that power to the rear wheels is just plain vicious when you approach the top end of the rev-range. But boy, does that make the Aston exciting. There's nothing quite like a car that can spin its wheels in a straight line at beyond motorway speeds to grab your attention.

With each millimetre of throttle delivering a further spike in power, this is not a car you can drive with the accelerator welded to the floor in the hope the electronics will sort it all out. No, this is a proper, old-school, high-horsepower, front-engined supercar that demands proper respect, especially in the patchy-grip conditions we've got today, and in my book it's all the better for it. I don't want some easy-driving machine

delivering mind-altering performance on a plate; if that's all you want, go buy a Veyron. With the One-77, there's real work for the driver to do to extract the best from it.'

- *evo* magazine, February 2013





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# TIME MACHINE

Ray Mallock has a long history with Aston Martin, and this DB6 Mk2 takes him right back to where it all began

WORDS JETHRO BOVINGDON | PHOTOGRAPHY AMY SHORE

RAY MALLOCK'S LIFE STORY seems to be inextricably linked with Aston Martin. He began his working life there in the late '60s and, one way or another, his and Aston's stories have intertwined almost ever since. In the halcyon days of Group C endurance racing, Ray developed and drove the Nimrod for the Viscount Downe team. The car ran as high as 3rd overall at Le Mans in 1982 before engine issues saw it slip back to a still highly creditable 7th when the chequered flag fell. Later, in 1987, he became engineering director of the newly formed Proteus Technology, which designed, developed and raced the innovative all-carbonfibre monocoque AMR1. In '89 he was once again an Aston Martin driver at Le Mans but sadly the car retired. The promise and frustrations of the AMR1 project still hurt. 'All this effort, upheaval and blood, sweat and tears came to naught,' he rues. 'We could have achieved fantastic things with the AMR programme but the rules changed and we were out of options...'

Since then, RML Group, his high performance automotive engineering firm, has raced and won in the BTCC with Vauxhall and WTCC with Chevrolet, grabbed victory at the gruelling Sebring 12-hour race with the Saleen S7R, competed at Le Mans numerous times including with the innovative Deltawing Nissan ZEOD RC, built a small run of Nissan Juke road cars with GT-R



drivetrains and completed countless other road, rally and race projects. And now the Mallock/Aston Martin relationship has been rekindled. Just days before this shoot, it's announced that RML will offer a factory-approved package to make it possible to road-register the ultra-extreme Vulcan trackday hypercar. Yes, really.

Today isn't about how you fit a handbrake and proper headlights, raise the ride height or fit an exhaust system to make the Vulcan a 'road car' (in the loosest possible sense, I imagine). We've come to RML's base in Wellingborough, Northants, to talk to Ray about his freshly restored Azzuro Blue DB6 Mk2 – and to recreate a moment captured in 1969 just down the road in Salcey Forest.

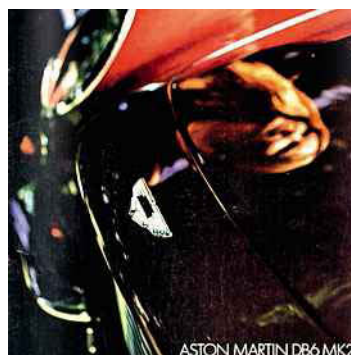
Back then, Ray was a 'painfully shy' 18-year-old, working as an apprentice at Aston Martin in Newport Pagnell. However, he was also an emerging racing talent and regarded as a relatively safe pair of hands by his boss. By then he'd progressed from the production line, fitting steering racks and brake lines to DB6s, and was working in the sales and PR department. Despite being several years short of the 25-year minimum age to get on the driving list, Ray was entrusted with any number of DB6s for various tasks. Including a photoshoot for the DB6 Mk2 brochure.

'There's a nice, gentle curve at the end of the forest straight that we used,' he remembers with a grin. 'We spent a while going through that corner at quite high speed, and doing three-point turns at the bottom by that lovely house there. To the point that the brakes faded because we'd done it so many times...'

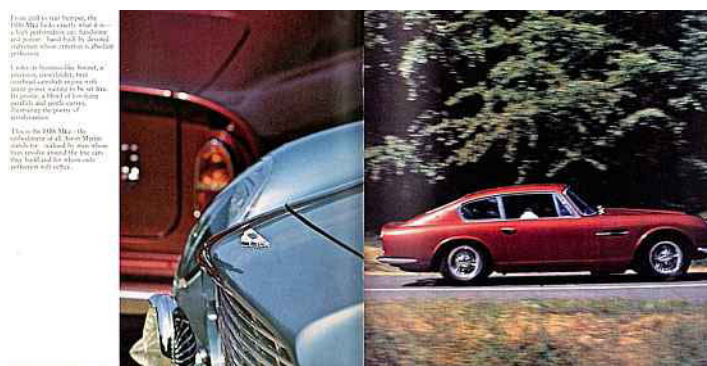
It's hard to imagine quite what an effect all this would have had on a teenager in his first proper job, but it's no surprise that over the years Mallock has always quite fancied a DB6 Mk2 of his own. Preferably in the Dubonnet Red of the car he drove for the brochure. 'To be honest I've never had that much of an interest in high performance road cars for my own use,' he says. 'The kicks I get out of cars have been on the racetrack. With one exception. I've always had a soft spot for the DB6 Mk2 because of the history and that shoot; always had half an eye on one.'

Ray's son Michael was well aware of this (and probably fancied having a DB6 knocking around, too!) and in 2013 suggested his dad take a look at one that was coming up for auction at the Bonhams Works sale. With Ray down in Devon at the time, Michael and great family friend Richard Williams (of RS Williams renown) gave the car a thorough inspection. 'They both said it was looking like a good car and, based on the reserve, it could be a good buy,' says Ray. 'So I was in this bizarre situation of bidding on the phone for a car I'd never seen. Anyway, I ended up buying it and, I have to say, it's the most wonderful thing.'

'I was in the bizarre situation of bidding on the phone for a car I'd never seen. But I have to say, it's the most wonderful thing'



**Left and below**  
This 1969 brochure for the then-new DB6 Mk2 featured an 18-year-old Ray Mallock at the wheel for the action shots. Forty-seven years later, he's back on those same roads in his own DB6 Mk2, beautifully restored at the RML Group HQ



The car Ray ended up with was the penultimate DB6 Mk2, built in December 1970 and originally sold in April 1971 to a Mr Thomas Overbury by HW Motors Ltd. Chassis DB6Mk2/4343/R was a two-owner car with SU carbs (not a Vantage with the high-compression head and triple Webers) and had covered 58,000 miles. It had been subject to a restoration some years ago, at which point its straight-six was rebuilt by Oselli and uprated to 4.2 litres. It wasn't Dubonnet Red, but later, when Ray looked at the brochure again, he realised the front cover actually featured two cars... one of which was Azzuro Blue.

Ray had himself a very nice car but, being an engineer, he obviously wanted to check just *how* nice. 'It looked very good cosmetically,' he begins. 'The chassis and engine numbers matched, it was very original and hadn't been messed around with too much, which was what I wanted. So we knew it was a good basis. My original intention was to tidy it up and use it, but we got it into work, took the engine out...' Ray's voice trails off, almost as if he's only just realised how inevitable it was that the process would escalate. 'We knew we wanted RS Williams to look at the engine as it hadn't been refreshed in a very long time and Richard knows them better than anyone, and we knew we wanted to strip, crack-test and rebuild the suspension and rear axle and check the dampers, so one thing led to another... It ended up being a complete body-off rebuild.'

The restoration (see page 124) used one or two outside suppliers but was managed, devised and mostly executed in-house under the watchful eye of Jim Adamson with lead technician Doug Packman. 'I like to know what's going on with a car and there's no better way to do that than to do it in-house,' continues Ray. 'Plus we thought it'd be an interesting project because quite a lot of the skills required are transferable from our motorsport activities – like crack-



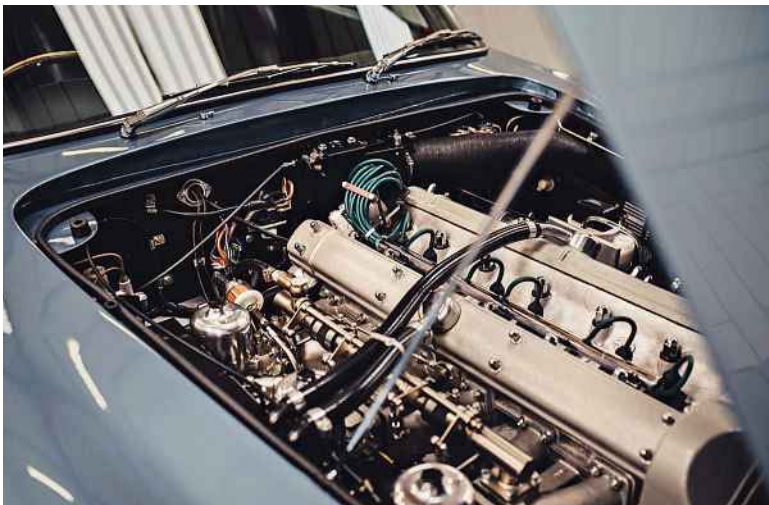






### *DB6 Mk2*

**ENGINE** In-line 6-cyl, 3995cc (this car uprated to 4.2 litres)  
**MAX POWER** 282bhp @ 5500rpm  
**MAX TORQUE** 288lb ft @ 3850rpm (all figures for standard specification)  
**TRANSMISSION** Five-speed manual, rear-wheel drive, limited-slip diff  
**SUSPENSION** Front: double wishbones, coil springs, telescopic dampers, anti-roll bar. Rear: live axle, trailing arms, Watt's linkage, lever-arm dampers **BRAKES** Solid discs, 290mm front, 270mm rear  
**WHEELS** 6 x 15in front and rear  
**TYRES** 205 x 15 front and rear  
**WEIGHT** 1498kg **POWER TO WEIGHT** 191bhp/ton **0-60MPH** 8.4sec **TOP SPEED** 150mph  
**PRICE NEW** £4595 in 1969 (£72,000 in today's money)





testing, refinishing the wiring loom work, damper dyno testing, all those sorts of things. Our various departments were able to utilise their knowledge and expertise.'

The end result, complete with an RS Williams 4.2-litre engine and handling kit and RML-spec attention to detail, is utterly stunning. Later, Jim tells me it's deliberately not been taken to the nth degree to win concours awards. It's there to be driven. So we do... straight out into a hailstorm. Thankfully it's short-lived, and by the time we get to Ray's old stomping ground the sun is almost as dazzling as the flawless paintwork. 'I haven't driven it nearly enough,' Ray confesses. 'Just a few runs out to Silverstone.' It later transpires that a trip to Silverstone also involves several laps, monitoring of brake temperatures and all the other things that race teams do when shaking-down a new project. 'My wife and I have got the wild idea of disappearing to the South of France in it. Quite when that'll happen remains to be seen!'

The South of Northants will do today. That straight-six has the characteristic, deep, brawny note as Ray retraces his steps from 1969. There'll be no brake fade today but the racer inside still burns strong (he's off to Monaco for his first race around the street circuit in a couple of weeks) and he's not hanging around. 'It actually handles beautifully,' he says. 'We wanted to make sure the suspension and steering were working as they should, so we paid close attention to things like stiction in the steering, anti-roll bar

mounts... Everything was worked through with real care. Of course, you can just put these things together, but then maybe it's bump-steering all over the place or it's not working as it should. That's something we're able to bring to this world, I suppose. That knowledge from racing.'

Ray is a quiet, thoughtful guy. Perhaps traces of that 18-year-old's shyness remain. But he's a fascinating chap to be around, because of all that knowledge, all those amazing experiences at Le Mans and all the other race-tracks, and also because you can sense just how deep his love of cars and motorsport goes. Over the course of our time out in the DB6 you can almost see his incredibly busy schedule being blown away on the breeze. It's obvious he's really enthralled by this car.

'What a marvellous thing to do,' he says, phone in hand as he snaps a shot of the car parked in a lay-by just a few hundred metres from *that* corner. 'Incredible to think this is that same stretch of road. I never dreamt I'd be back here 47 years later in my own DB6 Mk2.'

**Opposite and below**

Ray had the DB6 repainted in its original Azzuro Blue, which, by wonderful coincidence, was also the colour of the second car in the 1969 brochure. FPE 230J, though, was the second-last example built. Engine is RS Williams' 4.2-litre





## The restoration story

RML's restoration of FPE 230J took two years and to some extent had to fit around other projects: the sort that pay for DB6 Mk2 restorations. The quality of the work mirrors that of the group's world-class racing cars, built for the likes of the World Touring Car Championship, and stems from a similar ethos: commission the very best suppliers for specialist tasks, measure and stress-test every component, reassemble those parts with meticulous care and then embark on a proper shakedown test to iron-out any niggles. It was a learning process for RML, too, and sucked up 3000 hours.

The body was stripped, sand-blasted and powder-coated. Repairs to the aluminium bodywork were handled by Shaun Rush at ASR Motor Body Engineering, while RS Williams supplied the 4.2-litre engine and front dampers and anti-roll bar. The

trimming was also handled by a local specialist, but wherever possible the car was left original. Much of the bodywork survived and the dash was deliberately not repainted to leave something of a patina.

RML's expertise was in managing the process, crack-testing and rebuilding suspension, steering and axles, completing the paintwork and, of course, physically reassembling the car to an extremely high standard. Since Ray's DB6 Mk2, they've also completed a full body-off restoration of a DB5 and have a DB6 Volante in the workshop awaiting work. On the day of our visit, it's parked beside a Vulcan that's being converted to road spec. Cool place, RML...

### Right and below

From sound-but-tired bodysell to absolute perfection... just some of the stages in the restoration of FPE 230J, managed by RML





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Engine size	6300
Doors	2
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Interior	Fawn leather with beige carpets

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### 1977 Aston Martin Vantage



Chassis V8/11640/RCAV - first production Vantage produced by Aston Martin for the then chairman of the company George Minden. Since then this car has had just one other owner and incurred just 62000 miles with full history. After a full make over at the factory in 1988 the car was upgraded to automatic transmission. **£195,000** ( can also be manual!)

### 1984 Aston Martin V8 Volante



1984 Aston Martin V8 Volante. Although little history with this car, the car is nicely finished in Dark Blue with a Blue Mohair hood and magnolia trim. Only 53000 km recorded on this left hand drive automatic transmission model. **£149,000**

### 1978 Aston Martin V8 S Manual



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# AUTOMATIC CHOICE?

First came the ASM automated gearbox, then the Works manual conversion. Now Aston Workshop has fitted the Vanquish with a traditional auto – and for some it could be the best option yet

WORDS JETHRO BOVINGDON | PHOTOGRAPHY ALEX TAPLEY







**I** think we can all agree that the original Vanquish is a fabulous car and a real landmark for Aston Martin. It featured a bonded aluminium chassis developed in conjunction with Lotus, which set the template for all future models. It utilised carbonfibre and other composites in the structure and crash boxes, further underlining Aston Martin's new confidence to push the limits and look at innovative materials and technologies. The beautifully sculpted yet powerful styling also set a new aesthetic that's endured to this day... In fact, I don't think it's been surpassed yet. It looks sensational and impossibly glamorous, even parked up beside a Little Chef in a nondescript service station, which is where I find this rather special Vanquish that's been given a unique engineering twist by the guys at Aston Workshop.

But if it's so good, why re-engineer the Vanquish at all? The answer, as you may have guessed, is That Gearbox. The Vanquish was the first Aston to feature a robotised manual 'box operated by paddles mounted on the steering column. The ASM/SSM (Auto Shift Manual/Select Shift Manual) system was relatively new tech, and early cars were pretty compromised. In auto mode the 'box was slow and unrefined, while manual operation required technique (a lift on upshifts) to smooth the changes and never felt particularly fast nor robust. Many a Vanquish clutch has been sacrificed on a quest to reverse-park on a slight incline.

There are those who really like ASM and there's no question it was refined over the life cycle of Vanquish and Vanquish S, but there's also a healthy demand for an alternative, as evidenced by the popularity of the Aston Martin Works manual gearbox conversion. We've tried that conversion ourselves (issue 7) and loved how it intensifies the Vanquish's credentials as a drivers' car but, for some, two pedals will always be preferable to three. Which is where this Aston Workshop conversion comes in. Once again it's a Vanquish with ASM removed. But this time instead of just ditching the hydraulically-operated clutch system and gearshift actuators and leaving the original six-speed unit in situ but with a good old-fashioned lever to operate it, there's a modern, refined, six-speed automatic gearbox. The conversion costs £18,500 plus VAT, takes three days and promises to create a more useable, accessible and intuitive driving experience.

Jump into the car and everything is familiar. The lovely view over that rippling bonnet, interrupted by the incongruous and cheap-looking windscreen wipers. The sense you're sat a little too high and that you'd like the chunky three-spoke steering wheel slightly closer. There's no new gear-selector, the Aston Workshop system utilising the same controls and logic as a standard car. So simply twist the key, pull both paddles for neutral, press the red starter button and then smile when the 5.9-litre V12 erupts with that trademark barrel-chested growl. Pull the right paddle and roll away...

As promised, the Vanquish has hushed manners and the ratios slip quietly from one to the next. Richard Furse, Aston Workshop's director of research and development, tells me how two customers on test drives were already completely sold on it by the time the 'box had slipped into third gear. I'm not quite at that point yet, but already I understand why those who drive their Vanquish mainly in urban environments might be. Just manoeuvring out of the car park and then punching out into a gap in traffic on a busy roundabout, this car feels so much more effortless. Basically, it requires no familiarisation or technique. I'm carefully assessing how smooth it is, noting the shift points and how engine and 'box interact because I'm here to review the conversion, but I suspect that if I wasn't I wouldn't give the 'box a second thought. I'd just jump in and drive.

The conversion might appear seamless but a huge amount of work has been gone into it. The old Tremac T56 is removed and replaced by a GM-sourced 6L80 six-speed torque-converter auto. It's not the most cutting edge of 'boxes compared with, say, the ZF eight-speed fitted to the latest Vanquish S, Rapide S and new DB11, but it's strong, quick-shifting and commendably smooth. It was standard-issue in the previous generation Corvette and high-performance versions of the Camaro in the US and the Holden Commodore in Australia. More importantly, Aston Workshop, in conjunction with Gearbox Developments Limited, has been able to tune the 'box to its own requirements for





**Left and below**  
Auto conversion is integrated seamlessly, so you still use the original selector buttons on the centre stack and the paddle-shifters for manual gearchanges, just as you would with the original automated manual. Six-speed auto complements the original 5.9-litre 460bhp V12 beautifully, too.





## 'This upgrade might allow you to fall back in love with one of Aston's finest creations'

the Vanquish and can actually tweak the way the torque-converter locks up and the speed and intensity of the 'shift if the customer wants a harder-edged experience, for example. The 'box also retains the option of using the paddle-shifters and, just like an ASM car, has an automatic rev-match function on downshifts. Aston Workshop will also offer the conversion as a plug-and-play kit comprised of a bell-housing, gearbox and torque converter, propshaft and a gearbox selector module to trusted specialists.

We slip onto a dual carriageway and the 'box continues to impress. The gearing is quite a bit shorter than standard, with first, second and third good for 40mph, 67mph and 103mph respectively, compared with the original's 60mph, 89mph and 121mph. Don't worry – in sixth it's still just ticking over at a cruise (it's still geared to 236mph in top, down from 250mph!). Go for kickdown and it drops from sixth to third decisively, the V12 crying out that steely howl. The Vanquish still has a lovely, unstoppable relentlessness to its delivery. Peeling off the main road and onto a well-trodden test route, I flick in a downshift, which simultaneously

ensures that the 'box is now locked in manual mode. The automatic conversion nails the GT stuff but does it blunt the focus of the Vanquish when you want it to behave like a sports car?

The answer is, mostly, no. There are occasions when the torque-converter doesn't lock up quite as quickly as you'd like (again, this can be tweaked) and there are rare moments when the 6L80 will clunk in a manually requested upshift, but for the most part it's obedient and more than punchy enough to feel exciting. Automatic gearboxes have come an awful long way in recent times and this set-up does feel like a natural fit with the Vanquish's indomitable V12. Smooth and quiet when you want it to disappear into the background and responsive enough when you want to feel the lovely flowing nature that characterises the Vanquish when you start to push it a bit harder.

Is it better than the ASM/SSM system and the original Tremac T56 'box? For me, yes. There is a certain satisfaction from mastering the standard car but it does date the Vanquish a bit too obviously and frustrates as often as it rewards. Is it as good as a brand new eight-speed 'box from a DB11, for example? No, but then it would

be unreasonable to expect that level of sophistication and eye-popping shift-speed.

Does it make the Vanquish more useable, which was really the core motivation for Aston Workshop embarking on the two-year development of this conversion in the first place? Absolutely. If you have a Vanquish and you don't get along with the standard 'box this is a really good upgrade and might allow you to fall back in love with one of Aston's finest creations. That has to be a good thing. In fact, now that you can go for the driving purist's option of a six-speed manual through Aston Works, tap into the Vanquish's sublime GT ethos with this Aston Workshop auto conversion or simply stay true to the original concept and stick with ASM, there really is a Vanquish for everybody. What a fine world we live in. **V**

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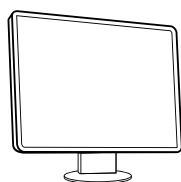
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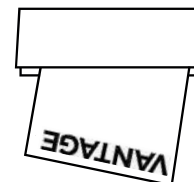
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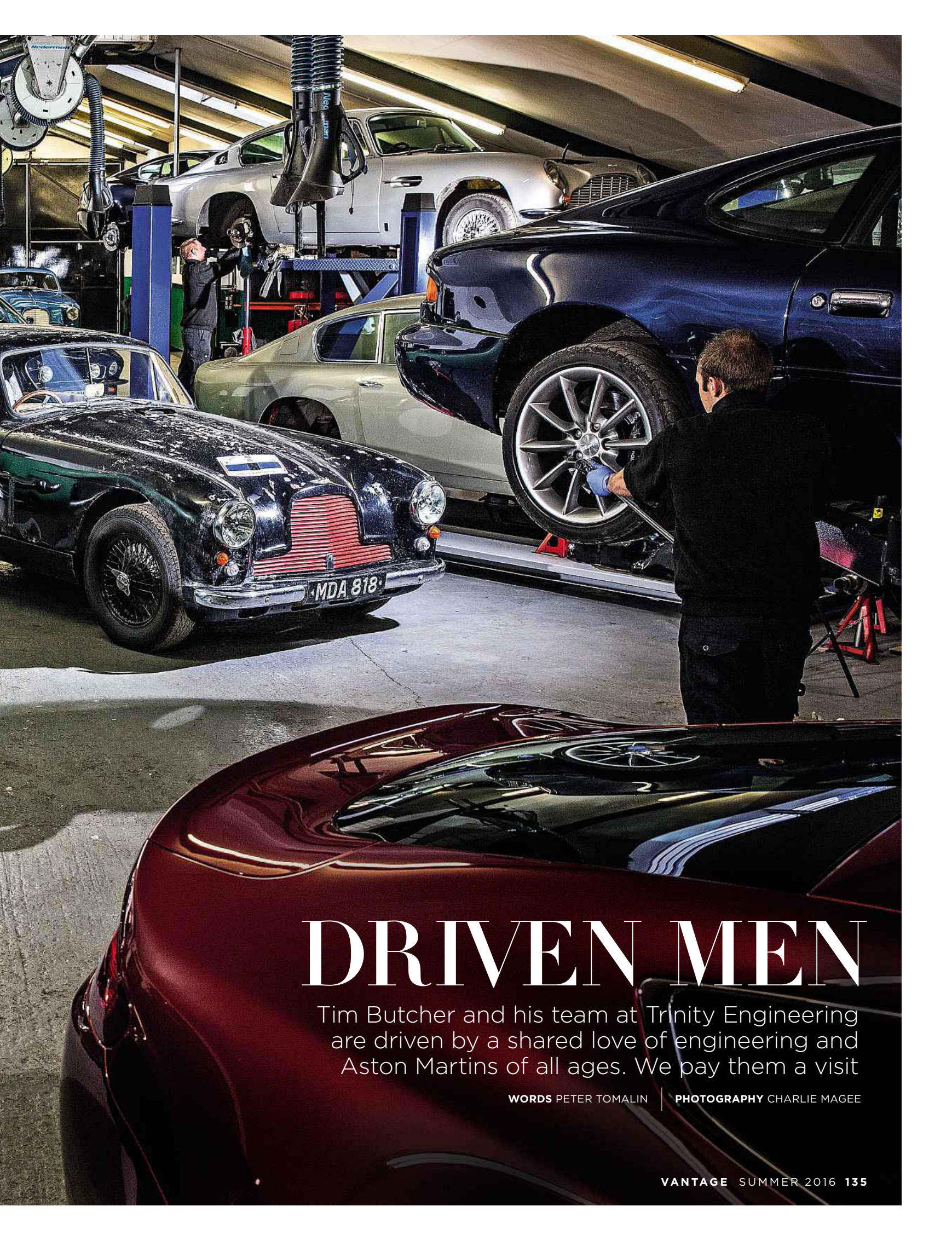
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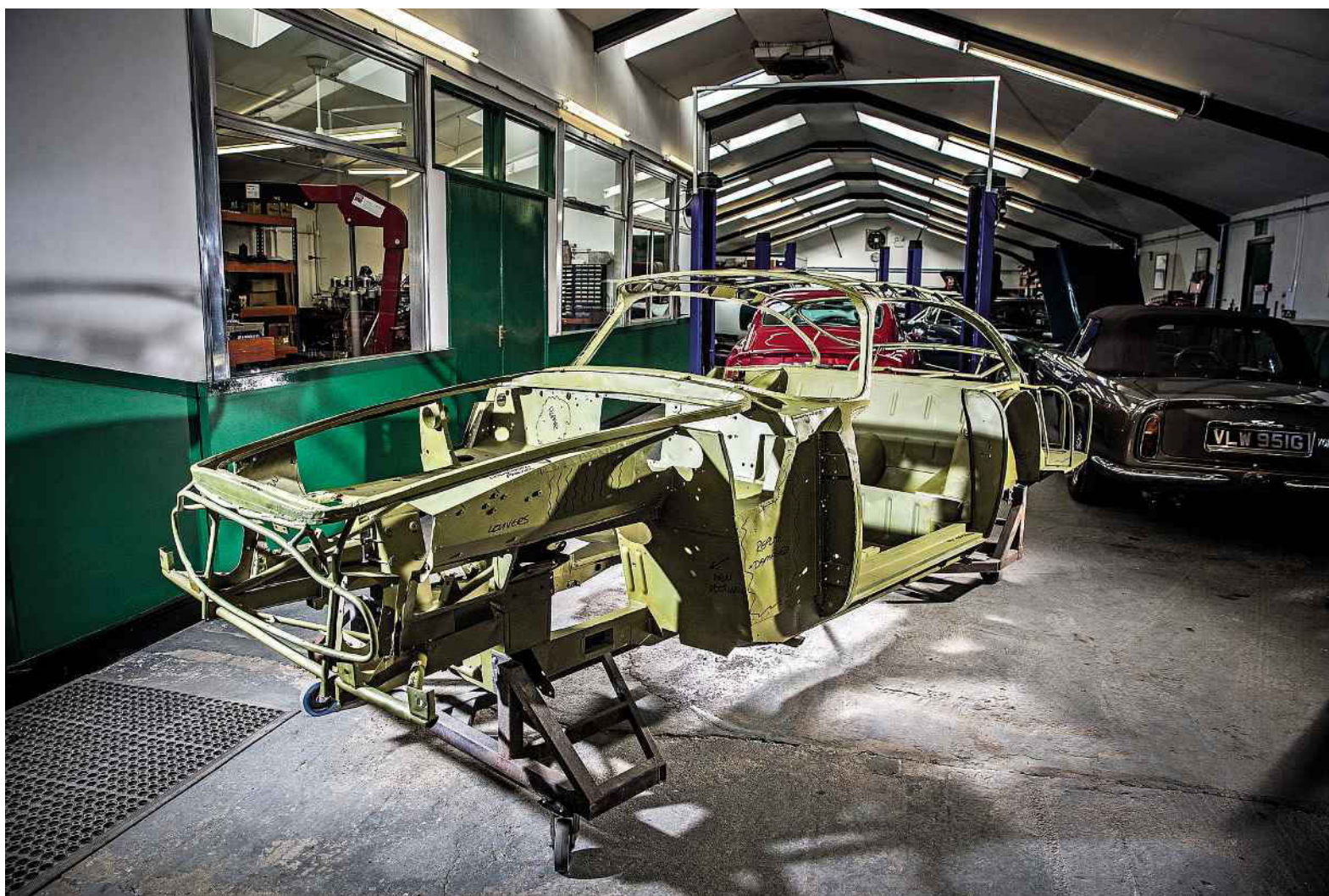
# DRIVEN MEN

Tim Butcher and his team at Trinity Engineering are driven by a shared love of engineering and Aston Martins of all ages. We pay them a visit

WORDS PETER TOMALIN

PHOTOGRAPHY CHARLIE MAGEE





**E**ngineering is Tim Butcher's passion, equalled only by his love of Aston Martins. Such is his evangelical zeal for both that after an hour in his company you too may very well feel a compulsion to roll up your sleeves and get stuck into a DB2/4 diff. You will also start to believe that there is no greater joy on this Earth than stripping an

Aston to its constituent parts then building it back up, better than new.

Tim is owner and sole director of Trinity Engineering, which is based in Cobham, Surrey. And if the location has a familiar ring to it, that's probably because it's also the home town of a certain RS Williams.

Pretty ballsy, you'd think, to set up shop barely a crank's throw from one of the biggest names in the classic Aston world. Even more so when you hear that Tim learned his trade under Richard Williams himself. But then Tim, you soon realise, is a pretty determined individual and someone who was always likely to make his own mark in the Aston world. 'Driven' sums him up pretty well.

Today, both workshops – restorations in one, servicing in the other – are abuzz. There are 12 mechanics at work across the two, plus three staff in the parts store, others in the machine and trim shops, plus a receptionist and a van driver, 19 in total. It was all rather different when Trinity Engineering first opened its doors back in September 1999.

'When we started, it was just me and a mechanic, just one unit, and our "stores" was a box of spark plugs,' laughs Tim. 'Ater we'd set up the workshop and got all the equipment in, that was all I had money for!

'I was the new kid on the block then. There were the established independents, RS Williams, Aston Engineering,

Aston Workshop and so on. Breaking into that world, you've got to have something different, and we decided we were going to offer the absolute highest quality of engineering available – because that's what I knew – for as reasonable a price as we could.

'So we started with a clientele that was not super-wealthy. They were people who were running their Aston on a budget. And though along the way we've collected a number of very high-end clients, some of whom have the cars as investments, I'd say 85-90 per cent of the cars we see are owned by absolute enthusiasts.

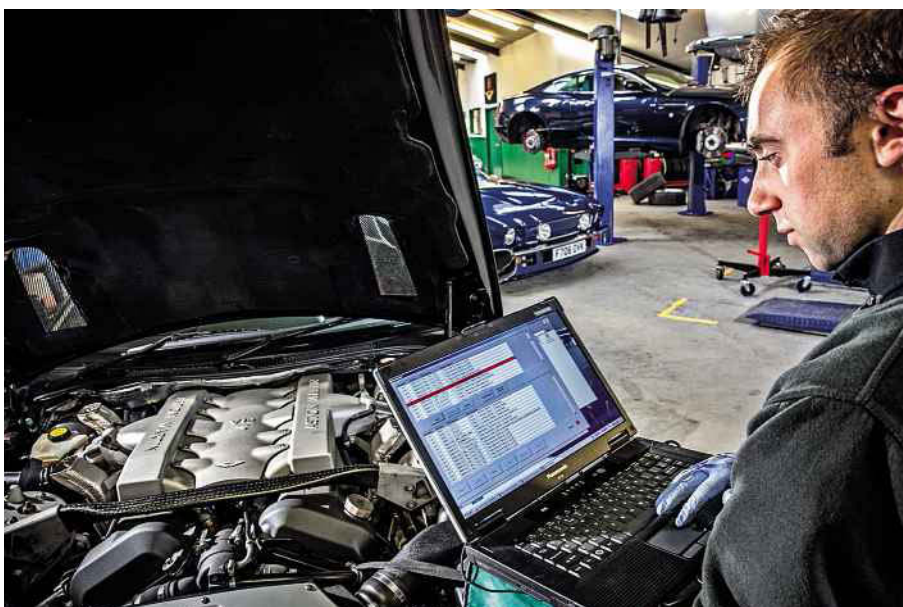
'Anyway, by the time we opened, I'd persuaded about 25 or 30 people to give their cars to us, so that was the first few months' work. Today we probably look after around a thousand cars.' And why 'Trinity'? 'I didn't want to have my own name because I wanted it to reflect a team of like-minded people,' says Tim 'So Trinity, being three, stands for Aston Martins past, present and future.'

Currently, that means everything from the Feltham Astons of the early '50s right through to recent Gaydon products like DB9 and V8 Vantage. As they fall out of the factory warranty, Trinity is there to pick them up.

'I always wanted the diversity, and I didn't want anyone ever to turn up with an Aston Martin that we couldn't repair,' says Tim. 'So we will service, maintain and restore everything from DB2 to DB9.

'When DB9 came out we realised it was a very different sort of animal and would attract a different sort of buyer. Originally we decided to do them only for owners of existing Heritage cars. Looking after a modern car for someone when you already looked after their old car was a nice, smooth transition for us. But eventually we opened the doors to anyone with an Aston outside warranty.





'We don't do servicing on the modern cars the way a main dealer would. We do it very much along the lines of how an older car is done. So it's much more in-depth, which we've found over the years is the most efficient way to service a car. You find stuff in a way you wouldn't if you stuck a to strict, minimalistic service regime.'

Surely that can't come cheap. If I were to bring a DB9 for an annual service, how much would that cost me? 'Parts, labour and VAT, about £1500,' says Tim. 'And that's a very thorough service – wheels off, brakes apart, undertrays down, full inspection and report, MoT, the whole package.'

'After DB9, V8 Vantage owners were embraced in the same way – but again, only for owners who buy into that mentality. If they're not a long-term owner and they just want a stamp in the book, then we're probably not the best choice for them. If they want to keep the car and have an ongoing relationship with the people looking after it, then that's our customer. And it must be working because we now have over 200 modern cars on our books.'

As an engineer, is there a period of Astons he particularly admires? 'Oooh, over the years Aston Martin has made so many fantastic cars,' he muses. 'I've always liked the Feltham cars. There's a charm about them. To drive, they have a completely different feel – if you closed your eyes you'd know you were in a DB MkIII, say, rather than a DB4. There's a world of difference in the way they were engineered, too, but we love working on the Feltham cars.'

'The DB4, 5 and 6 are the icons, of course, and have those beautiful Marek engines. But because I apprenticed on the V8s and that was the poster on my bedroom wall, I have a particular affection for that era. I know them inside out. I own a V8 Vantage and there's something about them that just puts a silly grin on your face!

**Clockwise from top left**  
 DB5 shell, ready for repairs; John Brundle and just some of the parts he creates in the machine shop; Dan Maunders and Landy Aquilla tackle V8 wiring; DB6 mid-resto; Ed Timbrell runs diagnostics on a V12





‘A DB9 owner has the same pride in their car that a DB5 owner has. There’s mutual respect’

‘Then there’s the DB7, really the first Aston you could use every day because everything worked every day. The modern V8 Vantage and DB9 are both fantastic cars. Everyday-useable but with real Aston heritage and feel. I go to lots of Aston meetings [outside work, Tim’s a director of the Aston Martin Owners Club and chairman of the social committee] and I can tell you that a DB9 owner has exactly the same pride in their car that a DB5 owner has, and there is a mutual respect between the two.

‘A lot of owners have a modern and an older Aston, of course. I’m the same. As well as my 1978 Vantage, I have a DB7 GT prototype, a DBS V12 and a baby V8 Vantage, which my wife uses. They’re all great for different reasons.’

So how much repair work and restoration does Trinity do in-house and how much gets farmed out? ‘We do as much as we possibly can here. That way you can control the quality and the speed. Chassis and body repairs and paint are done off-site. Extensive machining might be done elsewhere, but we have our own machine shop so we do a lot of our own engine work. We rebuild and refurb all mechanical components, suspension, brakes and so forth. We also do our own trimming and electrics. There’s not much we can’t take on.’ A typical Trinity restoration takes up to two-and-a-half years and costs £200,000 plus VAT.

In the restoration shop, a DB5 skeleton stands stripped and etch-primed, awaiting rectification, notations in felt-tip marking where rust, accident damage or an earlier repair have been discovered. ‘You find weld-lines where they shouldn’t be any,’ explains Tim. ‘Here we found a kink in the bulkhead, so we’ll end up replacing the whole bulkhead.’ At the other end of the shop, a DB6 Mk2 in shimmering Cambridge Blue is ready for final reassembly.

Feeding the service and restoration shops, the extensive stores are stocked floor-to-ceiling with hard-to-find parts: original DB2/4 inlet manifolds, DBS V8 pedal-boxes, differential cradles, door glass for DB4 and 5 Convertibles, even seat runners... ‘Whenever we find stuff we can buy, we do, because we’re going to need it one day. You can’t do a proper restoration without proper parts.’

The workforce includes two apprentices: ‘Edward is three years in and, just like I was, he absolutely immerses himself in everything Aston Martin. Jay, who’s the son of one of our most senior engineers, has been here only six months but he’s getting his head round what working at this level is all about.’

Bringing the next generation through clearly means a lot to Tim. ‘It’s great to see these lads. I’ve always had a passion for engineering, working with my hands, making things beautiful. So many young people today don’t get a chance to learn these sorts of skills. I’d love eventually to be able to have more people here learning these skills, maybe have somewhere people can come in, several evenings a week, and learn about how old cars go together.

‘What better career could you have than repairing and maintaining some of the world’s most beautiful cars? Of course, I’m sure that someone who loves Ferraris feels exactly the same – it’s just the wrong badge on the front!’



**This page, from the top**  
In the trim shop, Barry Tomlinson tackles a DB4 seat that has clearly seen better days; in the engine shop, a rebuilt ‘special series’ engine with triple SUs is ready to be reunited with a DB4 Series 4 Vantage









## TIM BUTCHER

...ON THE ROOTS OF HIS ASTON MARTIN PASSION, AND LEARNING HIS TRADE AT RS WILLIAMS AND MCLAREN

**T**im Butcher, I have quickly come to appreciate, likes things *just so* – and that extends to his two beautiful Hungarian Vizslas, Mango and Ruby, mother and daughter, who share his office. When I arrive around lunchtime, I see that he’s ordered-up a plate of delicious sandwiches, which sit on the edge of his desk, very much at snout height. If this were my office and a plate of grub had been placed thus, I’m ashamed to say that Bo, our black lab, would have helped himself before I’d managed the ‘How’ in ‘How do you do?’.

Tim’s dogs, by contrast, are impeccably well behaved. ‘I could leave the room for 30 minutes and they wouldn’t touch a crum,’ he tells me. I’m not entirely convinced. But then he’s built this thriving business through a combination of determination, hard work and setting exacting standards – and encouraging all around him to live up to them. Vizslas included.

But how did it all begin? Where did the passion for Aston Martin – and engineering – come from?

Tim was born in Fulham, London, his dad a tool-maker who later joined the Army. His mum, meanwhile, had various jobs, including at one stage in a sweetshop – and it was through that sweetshop that Tim got his first break.

‘It was about 1980, I’d have been about 12 or 13. I was delivering the newspapers and I found out that one of the people I was delivering to was an Aston owner. I was already mad-keen on cars and I’d been studying motor engineering at school: I was lucky we had a vehicle engineering workshop and the teachers were old-school mechanics. I was good with my hands and just fascinated with how things work.

‘Mum got chatting to this chap and asked him whether there was somewhere I could get some work experience, basically to see if this was just a passing phase. To the surprised of both of us, he said: “Well, he can come and work for me.”

‘It transpired this chap, John Goaté, had a mews garage with three Astons – a DB4 lightweight race-car, a DB4 GT racer, and a 1974 V8. And for the next two years I went there

after school, evenings, at weekends, whenever, changing spark plugs, pulling bake pads out... One evening he took me home in the V8. It was the first Aston Martin that I’d ever been in and that was it – I was hooked.

‘One job I’ll never forget, because it was so laborious, was scraping all the underseal off a DB4 shell by hand before it was sent off to be repaired. When it came back a few months later it was this absolutely beautiful DB4 Lightweight. John campaigned that car and I was able to go along to the race meetings to help. So at 15 I was hanging the board over the pitwall, which was just so cool. It later transpired that the car had been built by RS Williams, then in Brixton.

‘John introduced me to Richard Williams, I went for an interview – one of the most daunting things I’ve ever done – and I was taken on as an apprentice. That was 1983, I was just coming up to 16, and I left school to go and work for Richard.

‘I’d already decided that this was going to be my future. So as a schoolboy trying to break into the Aston world it was a dream come true. I cycled each day from Fulham to Brixton and my first weekly wage packet was £50.’

There could hardly have been anywhere better to have an apprenticeship. By that time RS Williams was established as one of the world’s foremost Aston specialists with close ties to Newport Pagnell – in the late ‘80s it ran the AMR1 Le Mans effort (Tim was team electrician). ‘As an engineer, endurance racing is the ultimate challenge,’ he says, ‘to make a car that will run for 24 hours without breaking.’

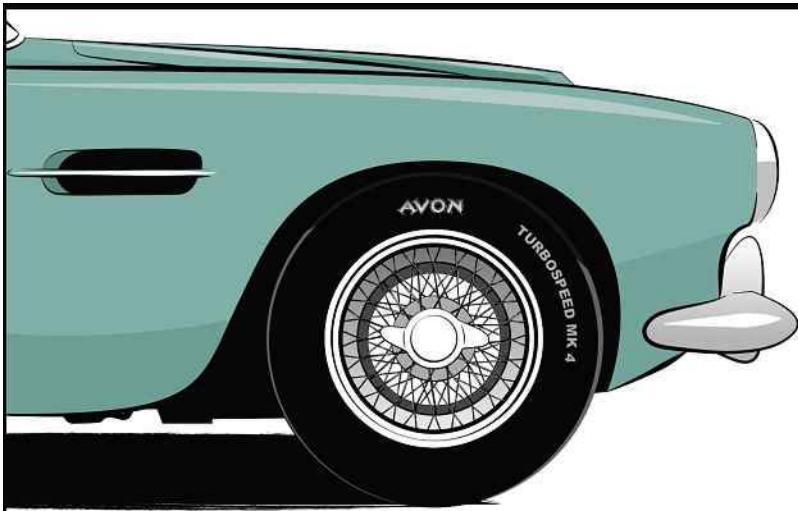
Tim was with RS Williams for almost 15 years, rising to project manager, one of his projects being the Sanction II DB4 GT Zagatos. ‘It was a wonderful time, but I’d gone as far as I could.

‘I had a clause where I couldn’t work for a competitor for 12 months, so I went to work for the McLaren Formula 1 team as an electrician. I had 18 months there from the end of ‘97 through to the beginning of ‘99 – they were the Hakkinen/Coulthard days, when they were just unstoppable. I learned different levels of professionalism and attention to detail that have been pivotal to what we do here.’

What, I have to ask, was Richard Williams’s reaction when he set up just down the road? ‘Surprised, I imagine. It must be very difficult when your “offspring” branch out on their own. I did go and see him and explain what I was going to do. I think he appreciated why I was doing it. It can’t have been easy for him in the early stages, having competition in the area, but I’d like to think that many years later there is no animosity and we have mutual respect.’

So Richard Williams and Ron Dennis as mentors. No wonder the dogs are so well-trained. Later we pop back to his office so that I can retrieve my briefcase. The Vizslas are curled up in their basket, the remaining sandwiches untouched. Are you listening, Bo? ♡





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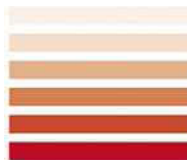
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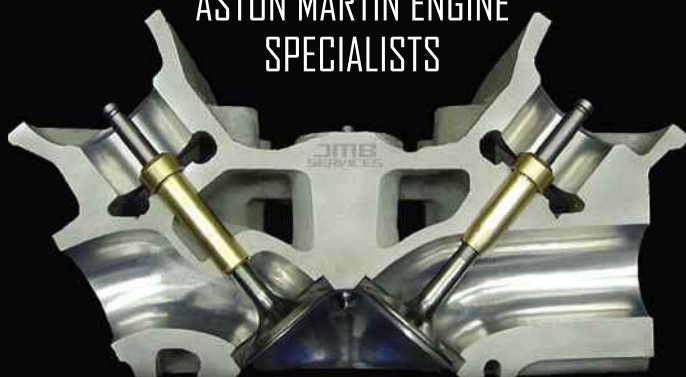
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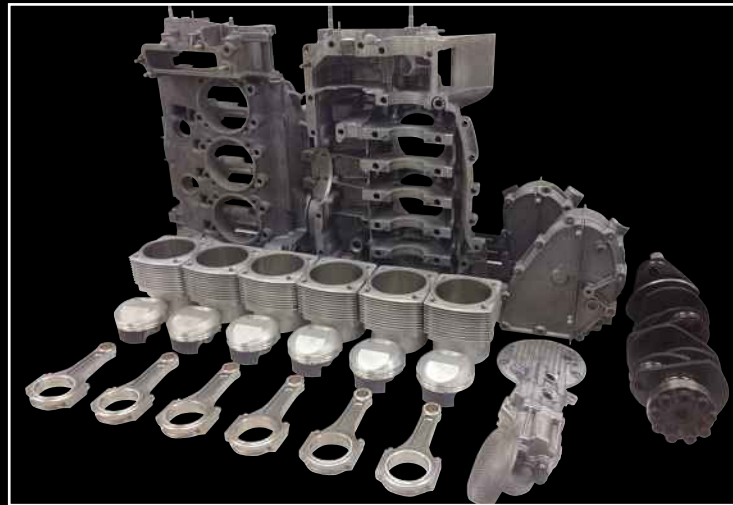




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# ALL THE ROAD CARS 1920s-1930s

## Sports/Super Sports 1920-1925



**SPECIFICATION**  
**Engine** 1.5-litre in-line 4  
**Power** 55bhp  
**Torque** n/a  
**0-60mph** n/a  
**Top speed** 90mph

Although the first 'Aston Martin' had been created in 1915, the Great War meant production didn't actually start until 1920. And because the early years were all about motorsport, it wasn't until 1923 that cars went on sale to the general public. The Sports was advanced for its time, with four-wheel brakes and a fully floating rear axle, and in Super Sports form it got a twin-cam, 16-valve four with a lusty 55bhp. Business was tough, though, and after around 60 cars had been sold, the company went into receivership in 1925.

## Second Series/New International/Le Mans 1932-1934



**SPECIFICATION**  
**Engine** 1495cc, in-line 4  
**Power** 70bhp  
**Torque** n/a  
**0-60mph** n/a  
**Top speed** 85mph

Price reductions, made possible by out-sourcing more components, and continuing motorsport success at Le Mans and elsewhere helped lift sales of what are now known as the Second Series cars. Particularly well received was the Le Mans model introduced in 1932. Its high-compression engine pushed power up from 60 to 70bhp. Tourers and saloons were still built but were overshadowed by the sports cars - more than 100 examples were sold of the Le Mans alone. There was also a (much rarer) four-seater version.

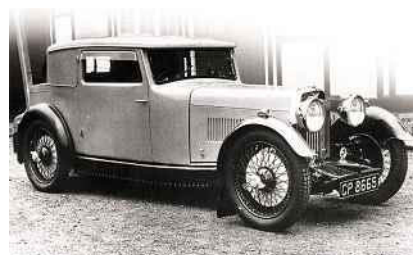
## Ulster 1934-1936



**SPECIFICATION**  
**Engine** 1495cc, in-line 4  
**Power** 85bhp  
**Torque** n/a  
**0-60mph** n/a  
**Top speed** 100mph

Most revered of all the early Astons, the Ulster was named in celebration of the Works racers' success in the 1934 Tourist Trophy and was effectively a replica of those factory cars. With power now up to 85bhp from the latest version of the 1.5-litre ohc four, it was enough for Aston to guarantee a 100mph top speed. These cars are distinguished by their sleek body and boat-shaped tail, which houses a horizontally mounted spare wheel. Twenty-one Ulsters were built, all of which are believed to have survived.

## First Series/International 1927-1932



**SPECIFICATION**  
**Engine** 1495cc, in-line 4  
**Power** 56bhp  
**Torque** n/a  
**0-60mph** n/a  
**Top speed** 80mph

With new financial backers, a new factory in Feltham and a new ohc 1.5-litre engine, the era of 'Bertelli' Astons began in 1927. There were sports and competition models, and also a tourer and a saloon (pictured), while 1929 saw the introduction of the low-slung, dry-sumped International model, based on the company's widely successful racing cars of the day. The International was fast and refined but the price was high and sales remained slow. In all, 129 'First Series' cars were produced.

## Third Series (MkII) 1934-1936



**SPECIFICATION**  
**Engine** 1495cc, in-line 4  
**Power** 73bhp  
**Torque** n/a  
**0-60mph** n/a  
**Top speed** 85mph

The MkII was a development of the Second Series, intended to be a more useable yet faster version. A new balanced crankshaft assembly and a few other minor mods to the 1.5-litre engine saw peak power rise to 73bhp, though the top speed for the two-seater remained at 85mph. Short- and long-chassis versions were available with a number of different bodies, including tourer, two-door saloon and drophead coupe. A short chassis with lightweight body was adopted as the Works car and ultimately became the Ulster.

## 2-litre Speed/Type C 1936-1940



**SPECIFICATION**  
**Engine** 1949cc, in-line 4  
**Power** 110bhp  
**Torque** n/a  
**0-60mph** n/a  
**Top speed** 95mph

To broaden the appeal of its range, in 1936 Aston introduced a 2-litre engine, based on the 1.5 but with increased bore and stroke and domed pistons. The Speed model was created for the 1936 Le Mans, though in the event the race was cancelled. Some 25 were eventually sold. In 1938 it was decided that eight leftover Speed chassis should be used to create a more 'modern-looking' Aston. The resulting Type C, with rather bulbous bodywork, didn't go down well with enthusiasts and the last one sold at Christmas 1940.



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# ALL THE ROAD CARS 1930s-1950s

## 15/98 1937-1939



### SPECIFICATION

**Engine** 1949cc, in-line 4  
**Power** 98bhp  
**Torque** n/a  
**0-60mph** n/a  
**Top speed** 85mph

Using the new 2-litre engine in wet-sump form, the 15/98 range (15 from the RAC rating, 98 the peak bhp) included saloons and tourers, but they were heavy and hence slow (slow-selling, too: a planned run of 100 cars was slashed to 50). Better was an attractive short-chassis roadster (pictured). There was also a unique 'monoposto' streamlined single-seater designed to go for the 2-litre outer circuit record at Brooklands. The outbreak of war meant it was put into extended storage before its potential was realised.

## DB2 1950-1953



### SPECIFICATION

**Engine** 2580cc, in-line 6  
**Power** 105bhp  
**Torque** n/a  
**0-60mph** 12.4sec  
**Top speed** 116mph

The DB2 was the first officially to wear the initials of Aston's new owner, David Brown. It also featured the marque's first six-cylinder engine - in fact a Lagonda unit designed under WO Bentley and picked up when Brown acquired Lagonda shortly after bagging Aston. This 2.6-litre twin-cam was initially temperamental, but once sorted it endowed the sleek, Frank Feeley-designed DB2 with impressive performance, especially in 125bhp Vantage form from 1951. A total of 411 DB2s were built, including 102 dropheads.

## DB MkIII 1957-1959



### SPECIFICATION

**Engine** 2922cc, in-line 6  
**Power** 162bhp @ 5500rpm  
**Torque** n/a  
**0-60mph** 9.3sec  
**Top speed** 120mph

The MkIII (note: not DB3) was effectively the third series of the DB2/4, but Aston dropped the 2/4 nomenclature for its 1957-1959 range of coupes, dropheads and fixed-heads. The lines were smoother and more purposeful, the grille previewing decades of Astons to come, and even in its lowliest tune the Willie Watson six was now making well over 150bhp (up to 190bhp on triple Webers). The MkIII actually overlapped with the introduction of the DB4 by several months, and total production of all three variants hit 551.

## 2-litre Sports (DB1) 1948-1950



### SPECIFICATION

**Engine** 1949cc, in-line 4  
**Power** 90bhp  
**Torque** n/a  
**0-60mph** n/a  
**Top speed** 93mph

Retrospectively known as the DB1, the 2-litre Sports was the first Aston Martin to appear after the Second World War and the first under the ownership of wealthy industrialist David Brown. It was based largely on a pre-war prototype known as the Atom, and it featured refinements such as all-round coil spring suspension as well as a new 2-litre pushrod four-cylinder engine designed by Claude Hill. Lacklustre performance, largely a result of the heavy bodywork, and a high price meant only 16 examples were sold.

## DB2/4 1953-1957



### SPECIFICATION

**Engine** 2922cc, in-line 6  
**Power** 140bhp  
**Torque** n/a  
**0-60mph** 10.5sec  
**Top speed** 120mph

The '4' tacked onto the end of the DB2's title denotes the addition of two extra seats. The 2+2 seating was made more habitable by a higher rear roofline, and there was a handy 'hatchback' opening rear window. The extra weight slightly took the edge off the performance, so Aston boosted capacity to 2.9 litres in 1954, taking power to 140bhp. The mkII of 1955 incorporated a rear-end restyle, and there was also a rare 'notchback' hardtop version of the drophead. Around 750 DB2/4s were produced in total.

## DB4/DB4 GT 1958-1963



### SPECIFICATION

**Engine** 3670cc, in-line 6  
**Power** 240bhp @ 5500rpm  
**Torque** 240lb ft @ 4250rpm  
**0-60mph** 9.0sec  
**Top speed** 140mph

The definitive Aston shape was born with the DB4, the work of Italian design house Touring, its 'superleggera' aluminium bodywork being wrapped around a steel platform. The DB4 also introduced a new, Tadek Marek-designed all-alloy twin-cam straight-six, originally in 240bhp 3.7-litre form. In all there were five series of DB4s, each adding subtle refinements to the original formula. Vantage versions had 266bhp, and the short-wheelbase track-biased GT a formidable 302bhp. Total production: 1210.



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# ALL THE ROAD CARS 1960s-1970s

## DB4 GT Zagato 1960-1963



**SPECIFICATION**  
**Engine** 3670cc, in-line 6  
**Power** 314bhp @ 6000rpm  
**Torque** 278lb ft @ 5400rpm  
**0-60mph** 6.1sec  
**Top speed** 154mph

The rarest, most beautiful and most desirable of all post-war Astons. With the shortened chassis and highly tuned engine of the DB4 GT (but with an even higher compression ratio), and clothed in even lighter aluminium bodywork of quite exquisite proportions (the work of a young Ercole Spada), Zagatos today command vast sums at auction. Incredible to tell, then, that the original planned run of 25 was reduced to 20 because of lack of take-up. The unused chassis numbers were eventually recycled in the '90s as the 'Sanction' cars.

## DB5/DB5 Volante 1963-1966



**SPECIFICATION**  
**Engine** 3995cc, in-line 6  
**Power** 282bhp @ 5500rpm  
**Torque** 288lb ft @ 3850rpm  
**0-60mph** 8.0sec  
**Top speed** 145mph

Really another evolution of the DB4 (it would have been Series 6), the DB5 is now revered in its own right – and famous above all other Astons – wholly because of its role in the James Bond film franchise. In looks it was virtually identical to the DB4 Series 5 Vantage; the main change was the 4-litre engine and the option of a five-speed gearbox, which soon became standard. Regular DB5s had 282bhp, Vantage versions 314bhp, and there were now disc brakes on all four wheels. Total production reached 1023.

## DBS/DBS V8 1967-1972



**SPECIFICATION**  
**Engine** 3995cc, in-line 6  
**Power** 282bhp @ 5500rpm  
**Torque** 288lb ft @ 3850rpm  
**0-60mph** 8.4sec  
**Top speed** 140mph

The DBS ushered in a whole new look for Aston, its modern lines the work of Englishman William Towns. It was also supposed to introduce Tadek Marek's all-new 5.3-litre V8 engine, but that wasn't ready in time, so the DBS was launched with the familiar straight-six from the DB6 (the two models ran concurrently for three years). The 310bhp V8 was finally available from 1970, but the six-cylinder continued until 1972 as the entry-level Aston. Some 787 six-cylinder DBSs were produced, and 402 V8s. Buying guide, *Vantage* issue 2.

## Lagonda Rapide 1961-1964



**SPECIFICATION**  
**Engine** 3995cc, in-line 6  
**Power** 236bhp @ 5000rpm  
**Torque** 265lb ft @ 4000rpm  
**0-60mph** 9.0sec  
**Top speed** 130mph

David Brown had bought Lagonda in 1947, shortly after buying Aston Martin. He wanted it chiefly for its Bentley-designed straight-six engine, but production of the pre-DB Lagonda models continued until 1958. The Lagonda name then vanished for several years, but in 1961 it reappeared on a new four-door saloon based on the DB4 but with the 4-litre engine that would soon power the new DB5. The Rapide (an old Lagonda model name) was fast and capable but the front styling was awkward and only 55 were sold in four years.

## DB6/DB6 Volante 1965-1971



**SPECIFICATION**  
**Engine** 3995cc, in-line 6  
**Power** 282bhp @ 5500rpm  
**Torque** 288lb ft @ 3850rpm  
**0-60mph** 8.4sec  
**Top speed** 150mph

A longer wheelbase and extended roofline – ending in the distinctive cut-off 'Kamm' tail – made the DB6 a decent four-seater, while its slightly heavier build, softer ride and the options of an automatic gearbox and air-conditioning showed that the DB line was moving into GT territory. The base engine was carried over from the DB5, though the Vantage now produced a claimed 325bhp. The Mk2, which arrived in July 1969, had flared wheelarches over its wider wheels. Total DB6 production: 1967.

## AM V8/V8 Volante 1972-1990



**SPECIFICATION**  
**Engine** 5340cc, V8  
**Power** 310bhp @ 5500rpm  
**Torque** 360lb ft @ 3500rpm  
**0-60mph** 5.7sec  
**Top speed** 155mph

If the '60s were Aston's golden era, the '70s saw the glow fade with frequent financial crises. David Brown had sold up, so the big coupe became the AM V8, its convertible sibling the V8 Volante and the troublesome fuel injection system was dropped in favour of four Weber carburettors. Early cars had around 310bhp, but emissions regs saw that figure diminish through the decade. The company's lack of cash meant the V8 would soldier on for almost 20 years, in which time 4021 were built. Volante buying guide, *Vantage* issue 4.



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# ALL THE ROAD CARS 1970s-1990s

## Lagonda saloon 1974-1976



### SPECIFICATION

**Engine** 5340cc, V8  
**Power** 280bhp @ 5500rpm  
**Torque** 301lb ft @ 3500rpm  
**0-60mph** 6.2sec  
**Top speed** 149mph

Based on the AM V8 but with a stretched wheelbase, the 1974 Lagonda saloon was the first car since the 1961 Rapide to wear the Lagonda badge, and it was not a success. Most of the blame can be attached to the 1974 oil crisis, which seriously limited the appeal of any V8-powered supersaloon, let alone one that would rarely see mpg in double figures. In fact the Lagonda was an impressive and capable machine, but during the two years of production just seven were sold (though another was later assembled from parts).

## Lagonda 1978-1990



### SPECIFICATION

**Engine** 5340cc, V8  
**Power** 280bhp @ 5500rpm  
**Torque** 301lb ft @ 3000rpm  
**0-60mph** 8.8sec  
**Top speed** 143mph

One of the most extraordinary cars ever to reach production, the William Towns-designed Lagonda caused a sensation when it was unveiled in 1976. Its advanced but troublesome electronics delayed production for almost two years, and the price was stratospherically high (£50,000 in 1980), but it eventually found a market in the Middle East and stayed in production for more than a decade, during which 645 were sold. Under the bonnet was the familiar V8, its performance somewhat blunted by the two-ton kerbweight.

## V8 Vantage/Vantage Volante 1977-1989



### SPECIFICATION

**Engine** 5340cc, V8  
**Power** 375bhp @ 5500rpm  
**Torque** n/a  
**0-60mph** 5.3sec  
**Top speed** 170mph

Often described as 'Britain's first supercar', the Vantage of 1977 was based on the AMV8 but was now a model-line in its own right. With a 375bhp version of the 5.3-litre V8 (later 405bhp) and a top speed of 170mph, it was pitched head-to-head with the Ferrari Boxer and Lamborghini Countach for the title of world's fastest car. Distinguished by its blanked-off grille and bonnet scoop, deep air dam and bootlid spoiler, it certainly looked the part. By the time production ended in 1989, 534 had been built, 192 of them Volantes.

## V8 Zagato/Zagato Volante 1986-1989



### SPECIFICATION

**Engine** 5340cc, V8  
**Power** 432bhp @ 6250rpm  
**Torque** 400lb ft @ 5000rpm  
**0-60mph** 4.8sec  
**Top speed** 186mph

Resurrecting the partnership with Italian design house Zagato in the mid-'80s was a masterstroke by Aston's then-boss Victor Gauntlett, especially when all 50 coupes were immediately snapped up at £87,000 a pop (37 convertibles were also built). The '80s Zagato couldn't match the beauty of the '60s original, but its performance was sensational. Based on the V8 Vantage but with even more power and considerably lighter, it broke 5sec from 0-60mph and was verified at 185.8mph, making it the fastest Aston yet.

## Pocket Buying Guide Lagonda



### IN A NUTSHELL

Still probably the most divisive car ever produced by Aston Martin, the Lagonda wedge caused a sensation in the late-70s and still turns heads today. More a luxury cruiser than a sporting machine, its stock has begun to rise again in recent years.

### WHAT TO PAY

It's still possible to find presentable, driveable cars for around £50,000, but restoration can be fearsomely expensive, so tread carefully. At the 2015 Bonhams Works sale, an excellent, low-mileage car made £87,000. The very best Series 4 cars (these later models tend to be better-sorted, though the smoothed-over lines lost some of the original's purity) can fetch £100,000-plus.

### NEED TO KNOW

Mechanically virtually identical to the classic Aston V8, so

parts are widely available and servicing is reasonably straightforward. Bodywork and electrics are more problematic. Unless you're prepared to spend well into six figures on a full restoration, it's crucial you establish that the body is sound. The sills are the main weakpoint and a major job to repair properly. Check the door gaps - it's a long chassis, and if any of the doors don't close cleanly, it's a sure sign of problems underneath.

The Lagonda's electrical systems are notoriously troublesome - particularly the electronic dash. In fact there

were several variations. The first cars had crude (by today's standards) LED displays. There was then a slightly more robust second-generation of LEDs, and after that came the CRTs (a trio of cathode ray tubes - like miniature versions of old-fashioned TV sets). Finally the Series 4 cars got rather more reliable VF (vacuum fluorescent) gauges.

Experts have found fixes for most of the glitches, but some owners simply have traditional analogue dials fitted instead. It's probably the sensible option - but then who buys a Lagonda to be sensible?



# BACK ISSUES

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## ISSUE 2 (SUMMER 2013)

- DB4 road test
- Le Mans-winning DBR1/2 driven
- The straight-six story
- Bertone Jets driven
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- 1970s V8 Vantage – the original Aston supercar
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- Lagonda meets Rapide S
- From Virage to Vantage – the '90s Astons
- DB7 buying guide



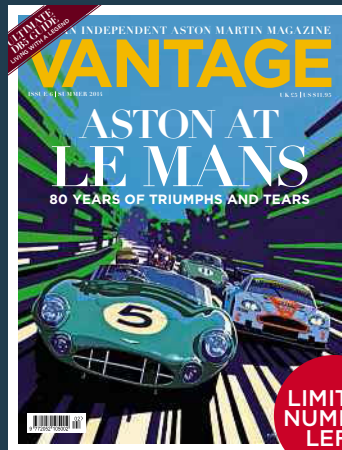
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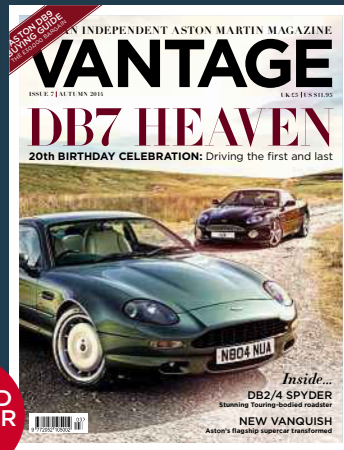
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- Stirling Moss on his favourite Astons
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# ALL THE ROAD CARS 1990s-2000s

## Virage/Virage Volante 1989-1996



**SPECIFICATION**  
**Engine** 5340cc, V8  
**Power** 330bhp @ 6000rpm  
**Torque** 350lb ft @ 3700rpm  
**0-60mph** 6.0sec  
**Top speed** 155mph

By the mid-'80s the AM V8 and its Vantage big brother were living on borrowed time, and, under the direction of Victor Gauntlett, Aston began work on a replacement. The Virage was largely still based on the V8, but its new body (by John Heffernan and Ken Greenley), an updated 32-valve fuel-injected V8 and other refinements were enough to give Aston new impetus. In 1992 came the Volante version, and also a Works-developed 500bhp 6.3 monster with widened bodywork. Sales of all variants reached 1050.

## Vantage (supercharged) 1993-2000



**SPECIFICATION (V600)**  
**Engine** 5340cc, V8, twin s/c  
**Power** 600bhp @ 6200rpm  
**Torque** 600lb ft @ 4400rpm  
**0-60mph** 4.6sec  
**Top speed** 190mph+

The wide-bodied 6.3-litre V8 had shown the appetite for a faster Virage, and in 1993 came the full-house Vantage version, extensively restyled (only roof and doors were carried over) with a twin-supercharged version of the 5.3-litre engine providing 550bhp and 550lb ft - at the time the most powerful production engine in the world. In 1998 came the V600, with an additional 50bhp - enough to propel this near-two-ton monster to a reported 200mph. A final run of 40 'Le Mans' special editions brought total production to 279.

## DB7 V12 Vantage/Vantage Volante 1999-2003



**SPECIFICATION**  
**Engine** 5935cc, V12  
**Power** 420bhp @ 6000rpm  
**Torque** 400lb ft @ 5000rpm  
**0-60mph** 4.9sec  
**Top speed** 185mph

The DB7 was given a major fillip in 1999 with the launch of the Vantage model, its styling beefed up by Ian Callum and with the first appearance of a brand-new 5.9-litre V12 engine that would go on to power the next generation of flagship Aston Martins. With reworked suspension too, the Vantage was a significant step on from the six-cylinder DB7 but cost just a few thousand pounds more - it was no surprise that sales of the standard car dried up and it was quickly phased out. The desirable run-out Vantage GT had 435bhp.

## V8 Coupé/V8 Volante 1996-1999



With the Virage running out of steam in the mid-1990s, Aston Martin relaunched the model as the V8 Coupé - basically a Virage with revised bodywork inspired by the new twin-supercharged Vantage model, including its faired-in headlamps and four round tail-lights. Power was slightly up, the acceleration slightly sharper and the top speed was quoted, not terribly helpfully, as 'over 155mph'. An improvement in almost every way over the Virage, sales were, however, glacially slow. Just 101 Coupés and 63 Volantes were sold.

## DB7/DB7 Volante 1994-1999



**SPECIFICATION**  
**Engine** 3228cc, in-line 6, s/c  
**Power** 335bhp @ 5750rpm  
**Torque** 361lb ft @ 3000rpm  
**0-60mph** 5.8sec  
**Top speed** 157mph

Aston couldn't survive building handfuls of handbuilt supercars; a more affordable model was needed. Ford, who had bought a majority share in AML in 1987, knew this and in 1994 launched the Ian Callum-styled DB7 - evoking memories of the 1960s DB cars - with a supercharged 3.2-litre straight-six and a steel monocoque that had its origins at Jaguar (Ford-owned at the time). A Volante followed in 1996. DB7 sales eventually topped 7000, making it then by far the most numerous Aston. Buying guide, *Vantage* issue 3.

## Vanquish/Vanquish S 2001-2007



**SPECIFICATION**  
**Engine** 5935cc, V12  
**Power** 460bhp @ 6500rpm  
**Torque** 400lb ft @ 5000rpm  
**0-60mph** 4.5sec  
**Top speed** 190mph

While DB7s were rolling out of a new factory at Bloxham, back at Newport Pagnell an all-new flagship model was in development. Launched in summer 2001, the Callum-penned Vanquish had a 460bhp version of the V12 and a bonded aluminium platform that would be developed for all subsequent Astons. Its automated paddleshift manual gearbox was criticised initially for its slow responses. This was improved, as was the handling, for the 520bhp Vanquish S launched in 2004. A total of 2578 Vanquishes were sold.



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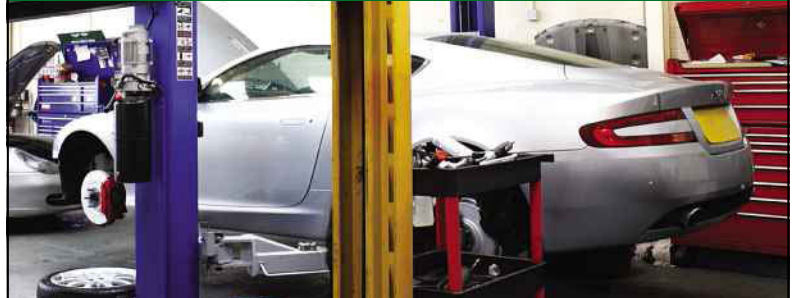
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# ALL THE ROAD CARS 2005-present

## DB7 Zagato/DB-AR1 2003-2004



**SPECIFICATION**  
**Engine** 5935cc, V12  
**Power** 435bhp @ 6000rpm  
**Torque** 410lb ft @ 5000rpm  
**0-60mph** 4.8sec  
**Top speed** 185mph

Like previous Aston/Zagato collaborations, the DB7 Zagato used a shortened chassis, lighter bodywork and familiar Zagato design cues (like the 'double-bubble' roof). It also had an uprated engine, in this case the Vantage's V12 tuned to 435bhp. The production run was limited to 99 cars, all of which were snapped up. The DB-AR1 was a Zagato-designed, somewhat impractical 'speedster' version of the DB7 (it didn't even have a hood) aimed specifically at the west coast of America, where most of the 99 examples still reside.

## V8 Vantage/V8 Vantage Roadster 2005-present



**SPECIFICATION (4.3)**  
**Engine** 4281cc, V8  
**Power** 380bhp @ 7000rpm  
**Torque** 302lb ft @ 5000rpm  
**0-60mph** 4.8sec  
**Top speed** 175mph

Aston's answer to Porsche's 911 and originally conceived as a mid-engined car. Compact and more overtly sporting than the DB9, the Callum/Fisker-styled V8 Vantage has overtaken the DB9 to become the biggest seller yet, with more than 16,000 so far finding homes. Its Jaguar-derived quad-cam V8, originally 4.3 (4.7 litres and 420bhp from 2008) gives brisk performance and an extrovert soundtrack - best enjoyed in the Roadster, which arrived in 2007. The 'S', with 430bhp, arrived in 2011. Buying guide, *Vantage* issue 1.

## V12 Vantage/V12 Vantage Roadster 2009-present



**SPECIFICATION**  
**Engine** 5935cc, V12  
**Power** 510bhp @ 6500rpm  
**Torque** 420lb ft @ 5750rpm  
**0-60mph** 4.1sec  
**Top speed** 190mph

The notion of shoehorning Aston's 5.9-litre V12 into the compact V8 Vantage was always amusing, and when Aston turned the concept into reality in 2009 it produced one of the finest drivers' cars in its history. Distinguished by its rows of (functional) bonnet vents, the V12V builds on the V8 Vantage's agility and adds another dimension of performance and desirability. The Roadster arrived in late 2012. Best of all, though, is the 565bhp 'S' launched in 2013. With a top speed of 205mph, it's the fastest series-production Aston ever.

## DB9/DB9 Volante 2004-2012



**SPECIFICATION**  
**Engine** 5935cc, V12  
**Power** 470bhp @ 6000rpm  
**Torque** 443lb ft @ 5000rpm  
**0-60mph** 4.6sec  
**Top speed** 190mph

The DB9 was effectively a successor to the highly successful DB7 Vantage, with the latest version of the now-familiar 5.9-litre V12, a Touchtronic auto transmission option, and the first appearance of the largely aluminium 'VH' platform, all clothed in another gorgeous Ian Callum body, refined by his successor, Henrik Fisker. It was also the first Aston to be built at Gaydon. A Volante version arrived in 2005, and in 2008 power grew to 470bhp. For 2013MY the car was given a major visual and mechanical refresh, now with 510bhp.

## DBS/DBS Volante 2007-2012



**SPECIFICATION**  
**Engine** 5935cc, V12  
**Power** 510bhp @ 6500rpm  
**Torque** 420lb ft @ 5750rpm  
**0-60mph** 4.2sec  
**Top speed** 191mph

Resurrecting a name last seen in the late '60s, the DB9-derived DBS replaced the early-noughties Vanquish as the flagship production car in 2007 and gained huge cachet when it was adopted as 007's company car when Daniel Craig assumed the tuxedo for *Casino Royale*. With power ramped up to 510bhp, aggressive styling, harder-edged dynamics and a manual gearbox, the DBS was Mr Hyde to the DB9's Dr Jekyll. A Volante appeared in 2009. At the end of 2012, the DBS was replaced by the new Vanquish.

## Rapide 2009-2012



**SPECIFICATION**  
**Engine** 5935cc, V12  
**Power** 470bhp @ 6000rpm  
**Torque** 443lb ft @ 5000rpm  
**0-60mph** 5.0sec  
**Top speed** 184mph

With Porsche enjoying considerable success with its Panamera saloon and new markets opening up for luxury cars, it was only a matter of time before Aston spun-off a four-seater saloon from its VH platform. The Rapide went into production in late 2009, initially at Magna Steyr in Austria. Despite (or perhaps because of) its sports car-like dynamics, sales haven't been as strong as Aston would have hoped, and production moved to Gaydon in late 2012. Relunched as the Rapide S for 2013 with a deeper new front grille and 550bhp.





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# ALL THE ROAD CARS 2010-present

## One-77 2010-2012



### SPECIFICATION

**Engine** 7312cc, V12  
**Power** 750bhp @ 7600rpm  
**Torque** 553lb ft @ 6000rpm  
**0-60mph** 3.6sec  
**Top speed** 220mph+

Aston's answer to the Bugatti Veyron and Pagani Zonda hypercars was the One-77, a no-expense-spared, handbuilt, all-carbonfibre rocketship with the world's most powerful naturally aspirated engine (some have recorded an astonishing 772bhp) and an equally gobsmacking £1.15m price-tag. Strictly limited to 77 examples, the last was delivered in August 2012, though Aston retains one for PR work. The few who have been lucky enough to experience the One-77 describe it as challenging, rewarding and utterly thrilling.

## V12 Zagato 2012-2013



### SPECIFICATION

**Engine** 5935cc, V12  
**Power** 510bhp @ 6500rpm  
**Torque** 420lb ft @ 5750rpm  
**0-60mph** 4.1sec  
**Top speed** 190mph

The V12 Zagato is the most recent Aston to feature the badge of the famous Italian styling house - though in fact this particular Zagato was styled by Aston's own Marek Reichman. It was another strictly limited edition: in this case just 101 were made. Based on the V12 Vantage, the Zagato was rebodied in carbonfibre and aluminium, though the mechanical package was virtually unchanged. Still, since the V12 Vantage was already one of the finest drivers' Astons of all time, that was hardly a concern - even at £396,000 a pop.

## DB9 2013-present



### SPECIFICATION

**Engine** 5935cc, V12  
**Power** 510bhp @ 6500rpm  
**Torque** 457lb ft @ 5500rpm  
**0-60mph** 4.5sec  
**Top speed** 183mph

The revised DB9, launched at the start of 2013, was substantially different to the 2004 original. The styling borrowed the short-lived Virage's sharper chin, dramatically shaped sills and flicked-up tail spoiler. Underneath was a more powerful 510bhp V12 with a torquier delivery, a stiffer aluminium structure, revised suspension and carbon brakes. The result: a quicker, better-handling and more refined car, its only real flaw its ageing six-speed gearbox. Late 2015 brought the DB9 GT with 540bhp. An all-new replacement is due in 2016.

## Virage 2011-2012



### SPECIFICATION

**Engine** 5935cc, V12  
**Power** 490bhp @ 6500rpm  
**Torque** 420lb ft @ 5750rpm  
**0-60mph** 4.5sec  
**Top speed** 186mph

Bringing back a name from the 1990s, the 2011 Virage slotted into the range between the DB9 and the DBS - and even avid Aston fans wondered if it wasn't a variant too far. The idea was to sell a more aggressive car than the DB9 (but one that wasn't as extreme as the DBS). All the panels except the roof were subtly restyled, while the V12 gained an extra 20bhp, though the overall feel was still very much GT. Sales were slow, and when the thoroughly revised DB9 was launched for 2013MY, the Virage was quietly dropped.

## Vanquish/Vanquish Volante 2012-present



### SPECIFICATION (2015MY)

**Engine** 5935cc, V12  
**Power** 568bhp @ 6650rpm  
**Torque** 465lb ft @ 5500rpm  
**0-60mph** 3.6sec  
**Top speed** 201mph

The original Vanquish was a landmark car - in many ways the first of the modern Astons with its largely aluminium underpinnings - and it was a brave move to resurrect the name for the current flagship. If the new car isn't quite the same game-changer, the combination of aggressively shaped carbonfibre bodywork, 568bhp from a reworked V12, adaptive damping and carbon-ceramic brakes is still an intoxicating one. A Volante arrived in late 2013, and in late 2014 both versions got a refresh that included an eight-speed gearbox.

## Rapide S 2013-present



### SPECIFICATION (2015MY)

**Engine** 5935cc, V12  
**Power** 550bhp @ 6750rpm  
**Torque** 457lb ft @ 5500rpm  
**0-60mph** 4.8sec  
**Top speed** 190mph

The Rapide S, launched in January 2013, represented a significant evolution of Aston Martin's four-door sports car. A more aggressive grille and headlight treatment gave it considerably more road presence, while, under the bonnet, variable valve timing and a new management system lifted the power of the V12 from 470 to 550bhp, dropping the 0-60mph time to just 4.8sec. In late 2014, the S was given an extensive refresh, which included the introduction of an eight-speed gearbox and a host of detail refinements.



# HEROES: TOM WALKINSHAW

WITHOUT DB7 THERE WOULD BE NO ASTON MARTIN AS WE KNOW IT, AND WITHOUT WALKINSHAW THERE WOULD HAVE BEEN NO DB7

WORDS JOHN SIMISTER PHOTOGRAPH ARROWS ARCHIVE

A controversial subject for heroism status? Well, heroes aren't always whiter than white, and sometimes to do heroic things you have to bend the rules a bit.

But look at what Tom Walkinshaw did for two of the most illustrious, best-loved names in Britain's motoring history. Jaguar was floundering under British Leyland and needed a boost, and in 1982 Tom Walkinshaw Racing (TWR) made a fierce European Touring Car racer out of the silken XJ-S. In 1984 he won the championship. Next, TWR developed a series of Jaguar-badged Group C endurance racing cars, initially using highly developed, big-capacity versions of Jaguar's V12 engine. The team won the World Sports Car Championship in 1987 and Le Mans in 1988.

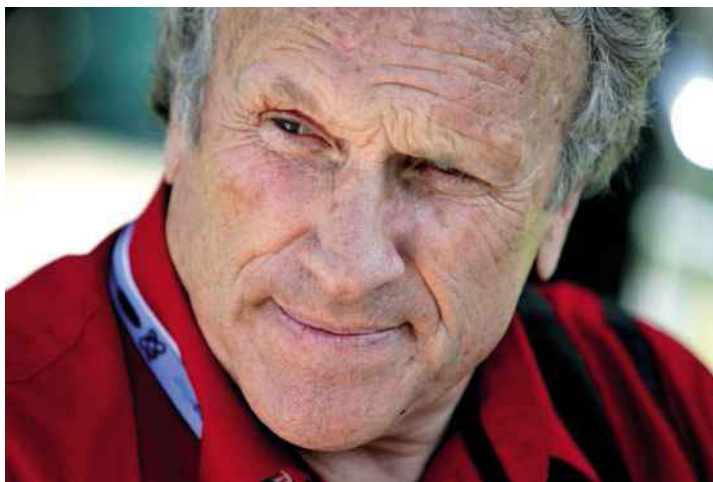
Various other racing connections grew and prospered, notably a 35 per cent financial stake in the Benetton F1 team in 1991 with Tom as engineering director. The team signed up Michael Schumacher, and we know the rest.

These, then, are among the credentials of the outfit that, in 1990, triggered the re-birth of Aston Martin into what it is today. Not that this was the intention when TWR began work on Project XX, a putative replacement for the XJ-S, at its research and development site in Leafield, Oxfordshire, once a BT training centre.

Developing cars under contract for big manufacturers was a major earner for the TWR empire. For Ford, TWR styled the Escort Cosworth and created the Puma, both shaped by ex-Ford designer Ian Callum. TWR engineered Volvo's C70 coupé and convertible, and the TWR tag was applied to various tuned versions of Jaguar's XJ-S and XJ6, as it had been to a tuned Mazda RX-7 some years before.

And then there was Jaguar's XJ220 supercar, which TWR re-engineered from the unworkable original concept and built at a new facility in Bloxham, Oxfordshire, among some most unfactory-like stone buildings. With XJ220 production finished, TWR needed another use for this factory. Jaguar's in-house F-type proposal, XJ41, had grown too heavy and too expensive, so TWR offered an alternative based on modified XJ-S underpinnings.

That was XX. But Jaguar, by then under Ford control, decided instead to go its own way, with the XK8 the eventual result. Ford, however, was also wondering what to do with moribund and recently-acquired Aston Martin.



**Left** Walkinshaw was brusque and didn't suffer fools, but he got things done - including producing the car that would save Aston Martin in the 1990s

Walkinshaw, ever the opportunist, proffered what Callum describes as the 'half-done project'. TWR could make a new Aston Martin, ultimately to be called DB7. The structure's hard points were there, so Callum designed a new body with an Aston look. Walkinshaw, naturally, planned on using the Jaguar V12 engine, so the new car, renamed Project NPX, was designed around it. Ford, however, favoured Jaguar's straight-six, which was taller and wouldn't fit under Callum's body design.

Trouble. 'Pete Dodds, the engineering manager, asked me to raise the bonnet,' says Callum, 'but that made it look even more like a Jaguar. Tom asked me how much we'd need to lower the engine, and I said about 25 or 30mm. "Right, we'll drop the engine," said Tom, much to Pete's annoyance because it meant they'd have to design a new subframe.'

That was typical Walkinshaw, designing and adapting on the hoof, no committees, no corporate inertia. But, as the DB7 went through its life, he was gradually squeezed out of the picture as our story on his one-off DB7 V12 (page 44) tells. TWR began the design for the Vanquish, and Callum shaped it there, but Ford controlled the project and brought in Lotus to refine the structure. The usefulness to Ford of Walkinshaw, the loose cannon, was over.

And what of TW himself, the brusque Scot born in 1946 near Penicuik, Midlothian, into a family of market gardeners? Sadly he is no longer with us, having succumbed to cancer in 2010 at a too-young 64 years, but in 1996, with DB7 production well established, he did

achieve his ambition of owning an F1 team. That was Arrows, and for 1997 Tom signed newly crowned World Champion Damon Hill. This surprising combination showed flashes of promise, almost winning in Hungary, but thereafter Hill left the building and Arrows finally faded away in 2002 along with the rest of what had become the TWR Group.

Walkinshaw's roots in saloon-car racing remained strong throughout. In the '70s he was successful in BMWs and Capris, once winning races in both on the same day at different tracks. He set up Tom Walkinshaw Racing in 1976, and under this banner his Rover Vitesses later dominated British Saloon Cars, winning all 11 races in the 1983 series but losing the title over engine rockers and bodywork later deemed illegal. In his lateral thinking about rules and regs, Walkinshaw resembled Colin Chapman. So did the way those rules could come back to bite him.

He was famous for his absolute control of his projects, for his combustible temper and his inability to suffer fools. A journalist I know crashed Tom's personal XJ220 when testing it for a mag, by driving it at speed over instead of around a roundabout. The worst part was going to be the confession. According to Tom's PA it would be one of two extremes: either total explosion or he'd be fine about it.

The writer met Tom at the test track shortly after and plucked up the courage to confess, fearful of the famous Walkinshaw wrath. 'Ah, shit happens,' replied Tom. The gods, Walkinshaw included, were smiling that day. **V**



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**2004 Aston Martin DB7 GT** finished in Skye Silver with contrasting Black hide interior and black Wilton carpet throughout. This 3 owner motor car comes with a complete service history with Aston Martin Main dealers and recognised specialists. The history file contains numerous invoices for annual servicing and has been maintained regardless of cost. The GT specification was upgraded from the standard Vantage with not only an increase in BHP and Torque but greatly improved chassis design and consequent improved handling. The specification includes Sports GT seats, 6 speed manual transmission, fully adjustable steering column, electrically adjustable heated seats, white dials, alloy pedals and heated front and rear screens. Unique to the GT are special 18" 5 spoke alloy wheels, a 4.09 final drive and larger Brembo brakes and a top speed in excess of 180 mph. The car has been owned by a trustee of the Aston Martin Heritage Trust and has formed part of a small collection and has only been replaced to make way for a newer Aston. GT's are very rare and rarely come to market, so here is an opportunity to acquire a piece of Aston Martin history that is bound to continue to gain value. Realistically priced at **£53,950**



**PROBABLY THE BEST ASTON MARTIN DB7 VANTAGE IN CAPTIVITY IN TIME WARP CONDITION.** This 2000 registered motor car supplied by Lancaster (Sevenoaks) has covered a mere 12,800 miles and is like the day it left the Aston Factory. Finished in Buckinghamshire Green with contrasting Forest green and Parchment hide interior with Walnut cappings and Green Wilton carpet throughout. Just serviced by Grange Aston Martin, the car is like new to drive and is probably unique in terms of condition and mileage. The specification includes Touchtronic transmission, climate control, electrically adjustable heated seats and mirrors and 18" multi-spoke alloy wheels with speed rated tyres. **£44,950**



**1972 Aston Martin AM Vantage** finished in Rhodium Silver with contrasting Blue hide interior and blue carpets. This is a comparatively rare model as only 70 were manufactured. Both paintwork and interior are in very nice condition and the car drives very well. Sold by us about 8 years ago, the last owner has used the car sparingly during that time and it remains in excellent condition throughout. The specification includes Chrome wire wheels and automatic transmission but if manual transmission is preferred we have now converted many of these cars using a modern 5 speed box which we feel greatly improves the performance. Please enquire for more details of what we consider to be a fast appreciating motor car. **£79,950**



**1978 Aston Martin V8 "S"** with original 5 speed ZF Manual transmission. Finished in Raven Black with contrasting red hide interior with Wilton carpet throughout. The Aston Martin V8 Series III was introduced in August 1973 with the discontinuance of the Bosch fuel injection system and the introduction of quadruple twin choke downdraft Weber carburetors. The "S" stands for "Stage one tune" and whilst alterations may be subtle, they enhance an already good car. This particular car was supplied new in 1978 by Robin Hamilton Ltd and comes with a chronologically detailed file containing records of servicing by Aston Service (Dorset) and other well-known specialists and with details of chassis restoration and subsequent rust proofing. In recent times it has formed part of a small collection and is in fine condition throughout. Both paintwork and interior are of a high standard and the car is fitted with air conditioning. With the benefit of the Manual gearbox, it is a real motoring pleasure to drive. Please enquire for further details. **£89,500**

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