

# AUTOCAR

18 SEPTEMBER 1996 £1.80

## SECRET ASTON V12!

**WORLD  
FIRST DRIVE**

★ 475bhp ★ 182mph  
★ 0-100mph 10.2



**PACKED FULL OF THE  
BEST USED  
CARS  
FOR SALE IN THE UK**

**COUPE TRIPLE TEST**  
Brilliant Hyundai vs Renault vs Fiat



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Once upon a time, Tom Walkinshaw thought he'd like to own a Ferrari 456 GT. Mid-engined Jaguar XJ220s were all very well, the TWR boss reckoned, but for day-to-day driving you couldn't beat a fast, well-bred, front-engined coupe. Naturally, he was proud of the Aston Martin DB7 that his team had designed and engineered, but he wanted something more. Something with the instant power of a really big engine and the refinement of a true long-distance road-eating GT. And something, preferably, that yowled a V12's yowl when you showed it a decent stretch of road.

The problem nagged. The Ferrari beckoned. But somehow it didn't seem right for someone at the heart of the British car and motor racing industries – and so close to Aston Martin – as Walkinshaw to drive a 456. Might confuse people. Then a solution dawned. An obvious solution, you might say. Why not put a familiar car (the Aston DB7) and a familiar engine (TWR's development of the Jaguar V12) together and build a true British super-coupe? As well as providing an elegant coupe with ground-shaking performance, it would be a rolling advert for TWR and its talent for creating cars.

Two years ago, work began. TWR's engine people, body designers and suspension experts – a crack cross-section of the 150 engineers who now work at the new Leaffield tech centre near Witney, Oxfordshire – came together to thrash out the spec: a V12 with TWR's own four-valve heads, a six-speed 'box, AP Racing brakes, uprated suspension, large but discreetly packaged wheels and tyres, plus body modifications that stressed this car's role as a DB7 derivative, not a successor.

The donor was one of TWR's development cars. Work was fitted in between "paid" projects. "We all got down to it when we had time," says Pete Dodd, general manager of TWR Engineering. "This place is full of enthusiasts, so we had no shortage of hands. It was an easy project, in a sense. The client was Tom and though he's very discerning, there was only one man to please."

No company outside Jaguar has greater



## "EVEN AT ASTON AND JAGUAR, THE CAR IS UNKNOWN"

familiarity with the ubiquitous single ohc V12 from Browns Lane. TWR has raced them in various saloons and Le Mans cars, and super-heated them for a whole range of JaguarSport road cars. For this application they used an overbored 6.0-litre block with a specially made steel crankshaft and purpose-designed four-valve-per-cylinder heads, their twin camshafts per bank worked by a unique chain drive system.

TWR engine boss Geraint Castleton-White is quick to point out that these heads bear little or no relationship to previous 24-valve heads for racing applications: the valves and ports have been optimised for "fast road" driving, and both the inlet and exhaust manifolds are specially fabricated for this car. The cam profiles are unique, and the car's fuel injection and ignition are linked by a race-theory Zytec engine management



This DB7 was designed specifically for Tom Walkinshaw (above). The interior is almost identical to that of the normal DB7. Car has a well-balanced, neut

system. But no list of engine mods gives the full clue to the subtlety of the work done. Castleton-White and his engineers have given the car refined, predictable responses and well-sorted controls, so that the engine's huge urge is in no way intimidating. Claimed power is 475bhp at 6000rpm, supported by 470lb ft of torque at 4500rpm. Despite all this, the engine is catalyst equipped, well silenced and tuned to run very cleanly.

Power goes through a twin-plate AP Racing clutch (modified for a relatively gentle take-up), with a six-speed Borg Warner T56 gearbox behind it, the same unit used in tough versions of the Chevy Corvette, and in the latest, twin-supercharged Aston Vantage V8. It is famous for its enormously tall top gear, which in the Walkinshaw V12 gives an estimated top speed of 182mph, at a mere 5300rpm. The lower ratios are close, though. Using 6000rpm change points, the car will





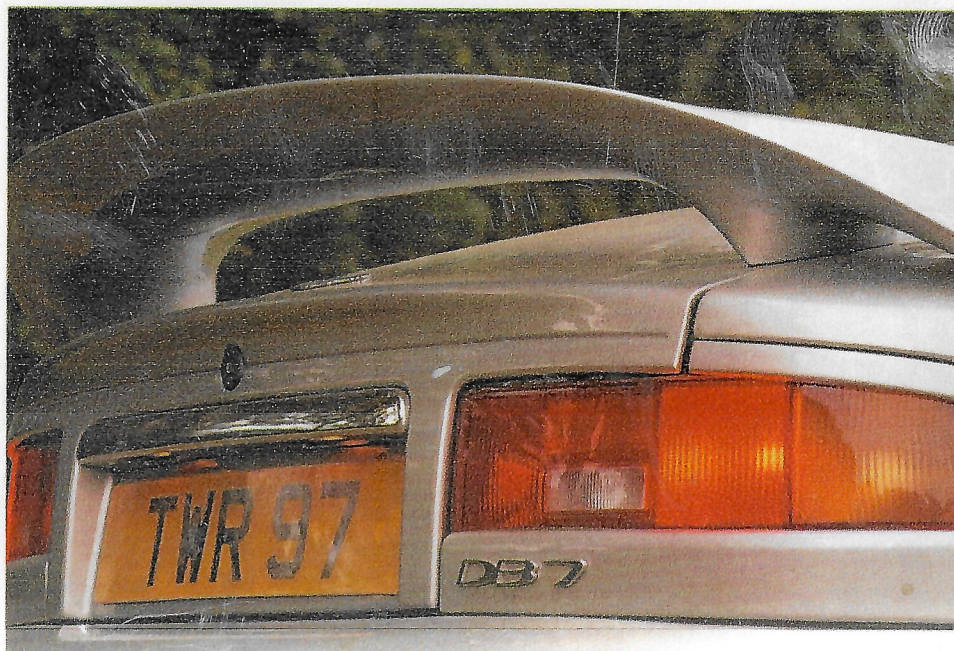


stance, but power oversteer is available on demand. Rear spoiler, designed by Ian Callum, is unique to this car and is designed to give zero lift at speed

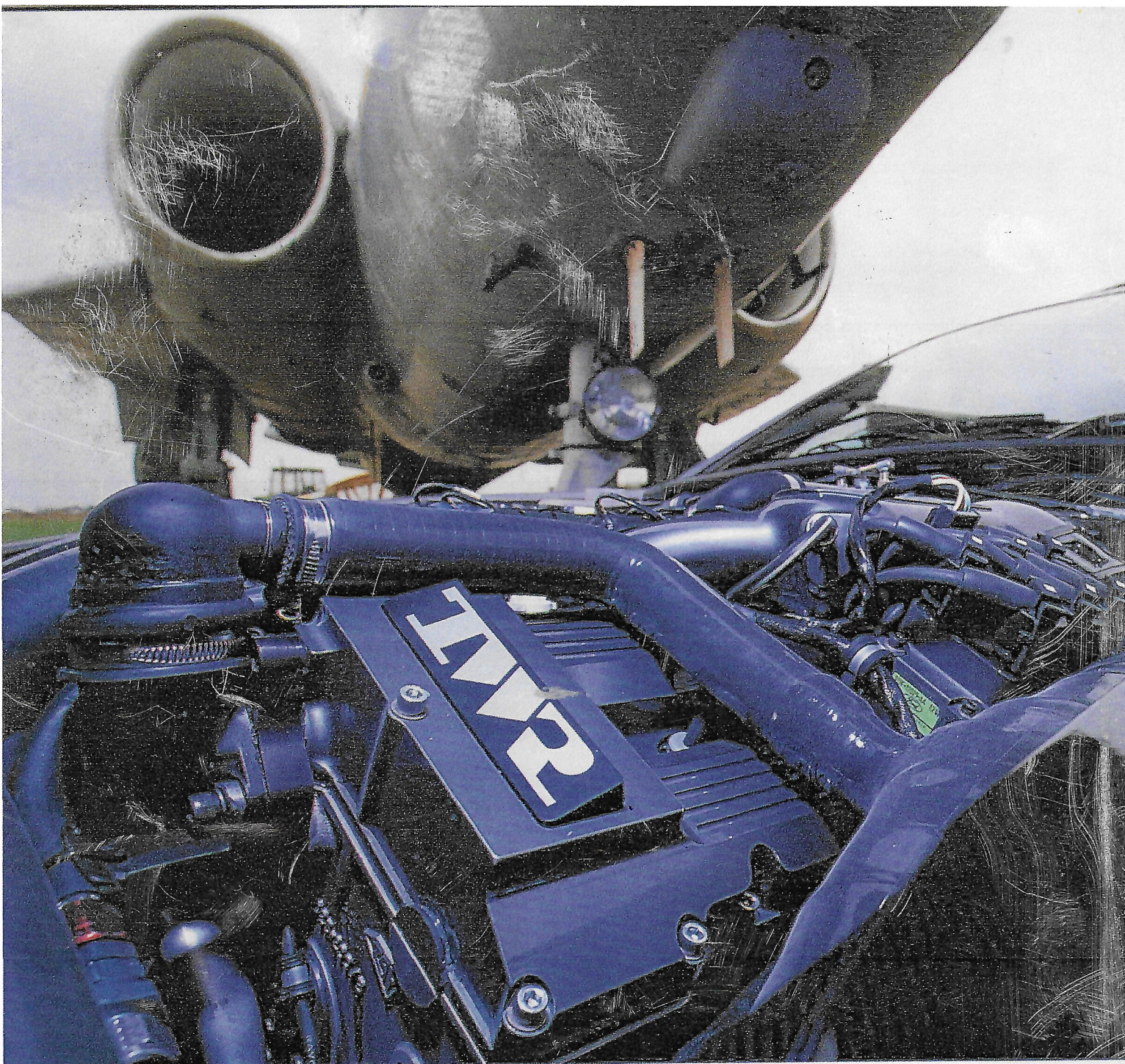
do 43mph in first, 62 in second, 90 in third, 117 in fourth and just over 160 in fifth.

Chassis tuning, though thorough, has entailed no serious geometry changes. The car has unique front hubs and wheel bearings (to cut brake pad "knockback"), and its springs, dampers and anti-roll bars are all rerated. The car's alignments are spot on. The enormous front brakes are AP Racing ventilated discs with four-pot alloy calipers and a 14.25in diameter. The rears are AP too, but smaller, with two-pot calipers. Unusually for a one-off, the car has anti-lock brakes, a latest-spec Teves system, but there's no hint of anything as unseemly as traction control. Steering is standard rack and pinion with minor adjustments to rim effort to suit the boss's especial tastes. The tyres, finally, are squat AVS Yokohamas, 245/40 ZR18s in front and 275/35 ZR18s behind. Plenty of rubber on the road. ♦

ANDREW YEADON







TWR engine boss Geraint Castleton-White (above right) and his team are very familiar with Jaguar V12, so they could adapt it to suit the fast, road-going

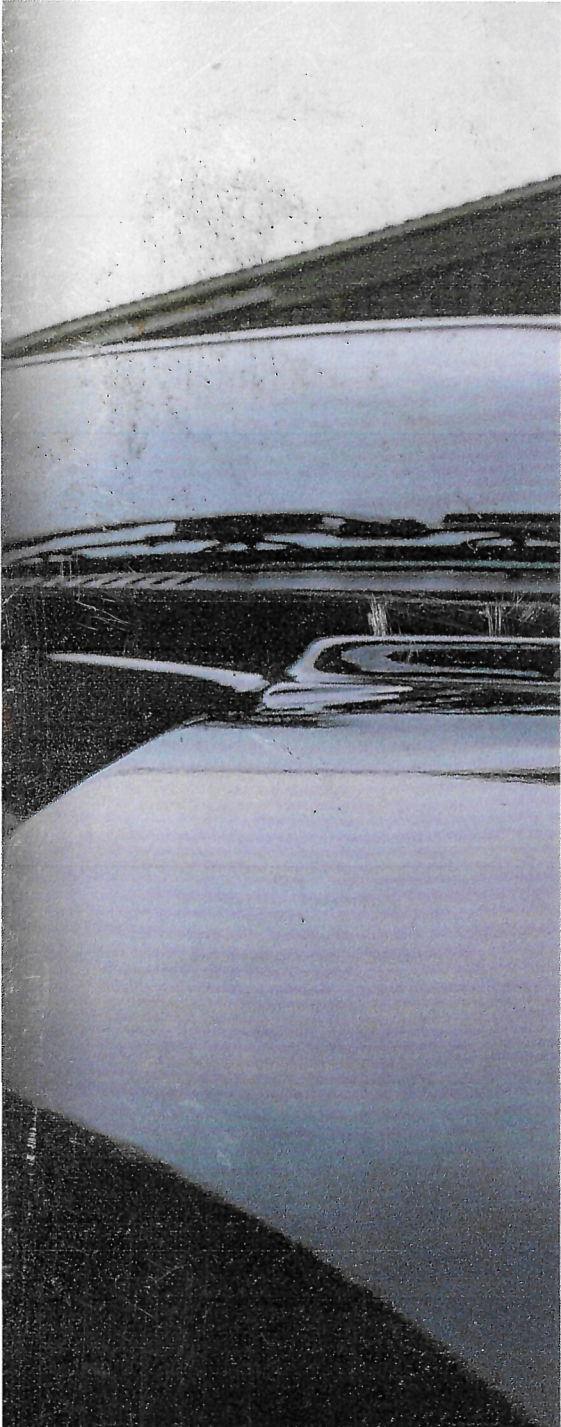


Much of the work on the body and engine modifications was done at TWR's Leaffield technical centre

Just how much the exterior should change was the subject of lively debate. Design boss Ian Callum, who conceived the original DB7, was anxious neither to cheapen the car's restrained shape with obvious "devices" nor appear to be updating the classic original.

"The DB7 is quite a pure shape," he says, "so changing it was risky. But I didn't feel as nervous as if I'd been changing someone else's design." The central theme was to make the car look shorter than the original in the same way an Aston DB4 Zagato does. Callum devised shapes to take the lines closer to the ground, at the same time including a neat lower air scoop at the front with overtones of racing Astons of the '60s and a sweeping boot spoiler. "It was a quick job," Callum says, "so we didn't change the metal. But there are new sills and nose panels, plus little arch extensions on the rear to preserve the legality of the big tyres. The wheels are an existing Cromodora design, but we had the company cast up and



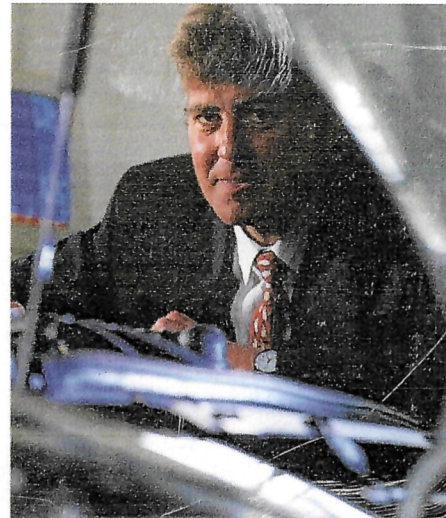


(because the six-speeder lever sprouts from a slightly different place from the regular Aston) and a little sign on the wheel which says: "Tom, you can't select reverse without the handbrake on". As soon as you see the change pattern, you see the sense of this. Reverse is alongside fifth in the narrow, four-slot gate and protected by an electronic lock-out worked off the handbrake light. It wouldn't be good, as you flat-changed into fifth at 110mph, to pick up reverse instead...

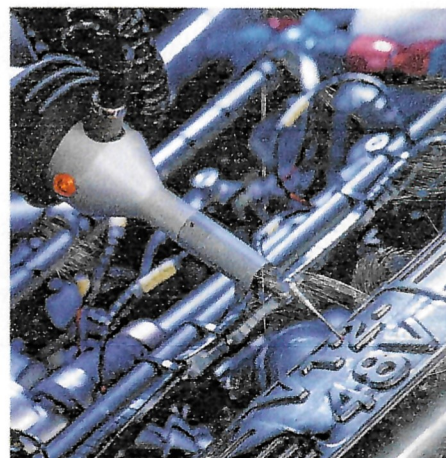
The engine is smooth and gentle when it starts, though clearly more purposeful than a standard 6.0-litre. Slotting into first needs little movement but plenty of effort of left leg and arm, because the gearbox has a quickshift, and the AP clutch is as heavy as you'll find in a road car. It's progressive, though. If you give the engine 1500 and let the clutch in, the whole thing will murmur away as easily as you like.

The steering is instantly familiar as a DB7 system, perhaps a little heavier. But the car's dominating early impression is of quietness and suppleness at low speed. As it starts to accelerate - second, third - it copes well with transverse ruts, manhole covers and all the untidiness that lurks at the edge of British rural roads. Damping is impressive, but subtle. There's no sign of nose-heaviness, because the suspension rates are higher and because the installed weight of the new V12 is only 3 or 4kg greater than that of the standard six with supercharger and attendant plumbing. The gearbox's action is positive and heavy. It matches the clutch perfectly. The throttle has plenty of travel, and its action is deliberate. Time to try the power.

It's enormous. In first and second gears, full noise, there isn't much point in taking your hand off the gear lever. The needle is into the red-marked sixes as quickly as you can think, engine at first emitting a delicious single-tone yowl that develops into a chord as the tachometer zips past 4000. There can be wheelspin in first and second, if you deem it, huge tyres and limited-slip diff be damned. But you get a real perception of



**"POWER IS ENORMOUS: WHEELSPIN IS THERE, IF YOU WANT"**



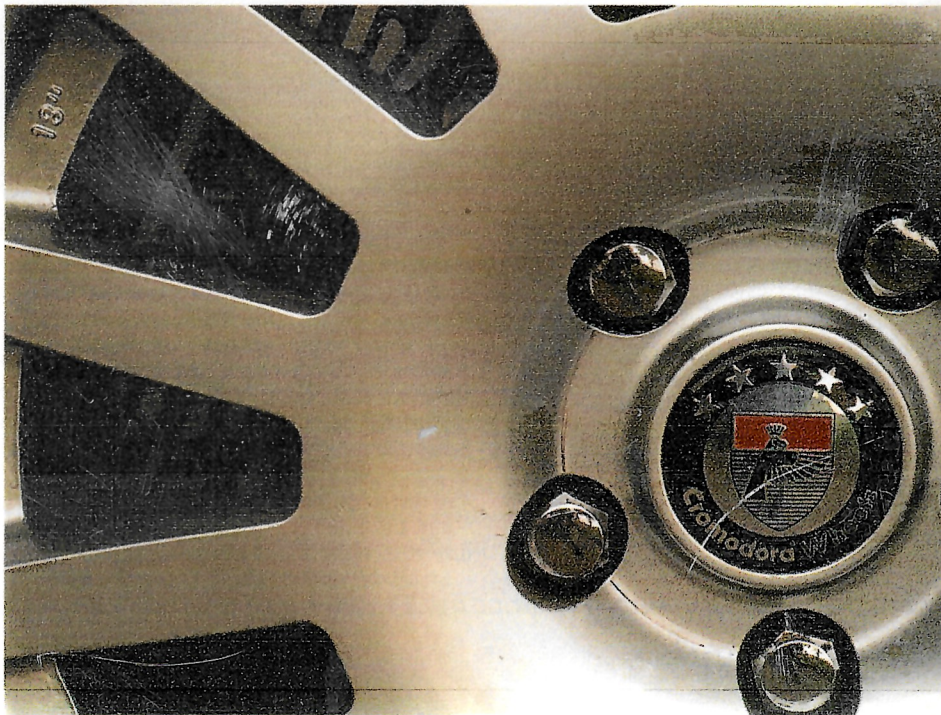
**requirements of the boss. Engine bay designed as much as rest of the car, and attention to detail extends all the way to specially cast Cromodora alloy**

machine some for our car's special offsets."

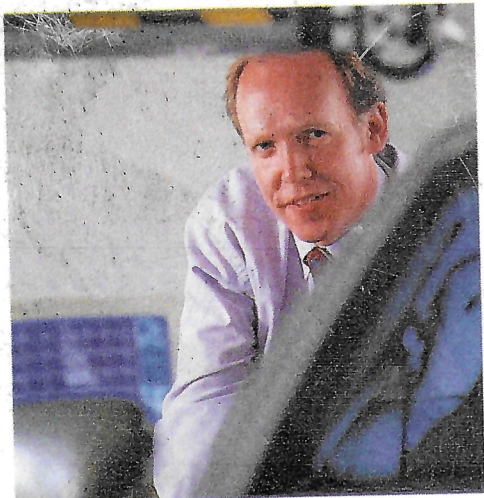
And that rear wing? In contrast with many a designer, Callum has no problem with aerodynamic devices, if they work. A car with the potential of this needed something close to zero lift, so the designers had no trouble giving the V12 its shapely rear appendage, and attached it where wind tunnel testing proved it was most effective. So the rear wing not only looks good but also works.

When we tested the car, a week ago, it had 10,000 miles on the clock, around 8000 of them driven by the man in charge, over a year. It seems amazing that this car could have kept a low profile, but it did. Even at Aston Martin and Jaguar, the car is unknown. It seems Tom Walkinshaw, his plain and straightforward enthusiasm completely undimmed by a pressure-cooker business life, uses the car to drive and not to commute.

When you slide into the driver's seat, the car is all familiar DB7. The only foreign objects are a different centre console







## "AMAZINGLY, THE ENGINE IS NOT THE TWR DB7'S BEST POINT"

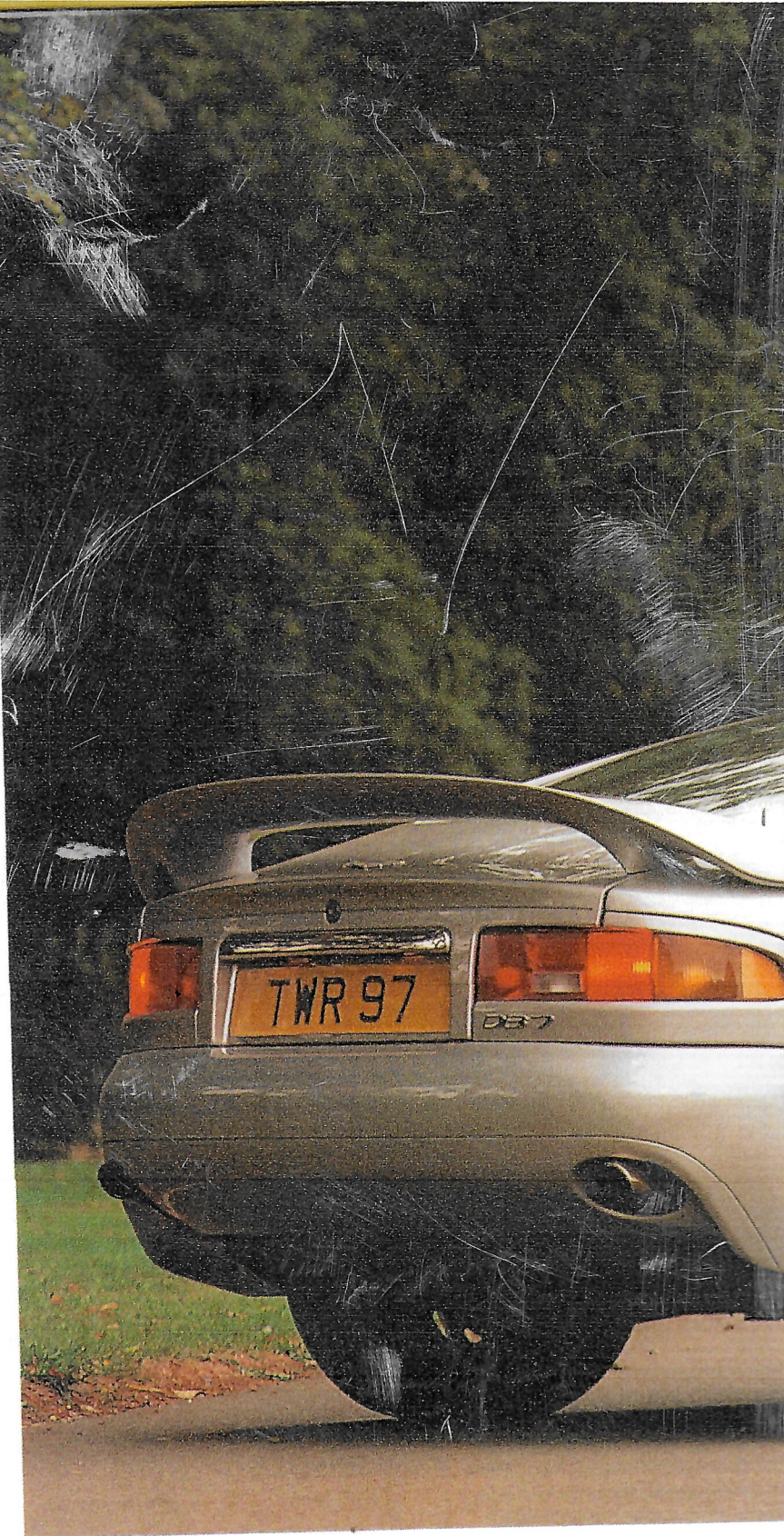
the car's performance when you come up for air in third, and flash from 60 to 90mph in 3sec or so. The car has so much torque that at 80 in third, at full noise, it still feels on the verge of wheelspin. Probably isn't, but only because of the superb Yokohamas.

We had to find an airfield to prove that the performance soared upward and onward. In fourth and fifth, the car remains amazingly muscular. And even in sixth it will accelerate strongly from 2000rpm. Or 70mph.

You would be forgiven, now, for thinking that the engine is this car's best point. Amazingly, not. For me, it's the brakes. Brakes, engine, refinement, ride. In that order. "Best brakes I've used in a road car," it gushes in my notebook. Maybe they aren't, but, if not, I can't remember any better. The huge retardation, the precision, and the stability of the car under full retardation are a credit to the team that engineered them. If I owned this car, I'd have to accelerate all the time, just to feel it stop.



Ian Callum (top) designed the front nose spoiler



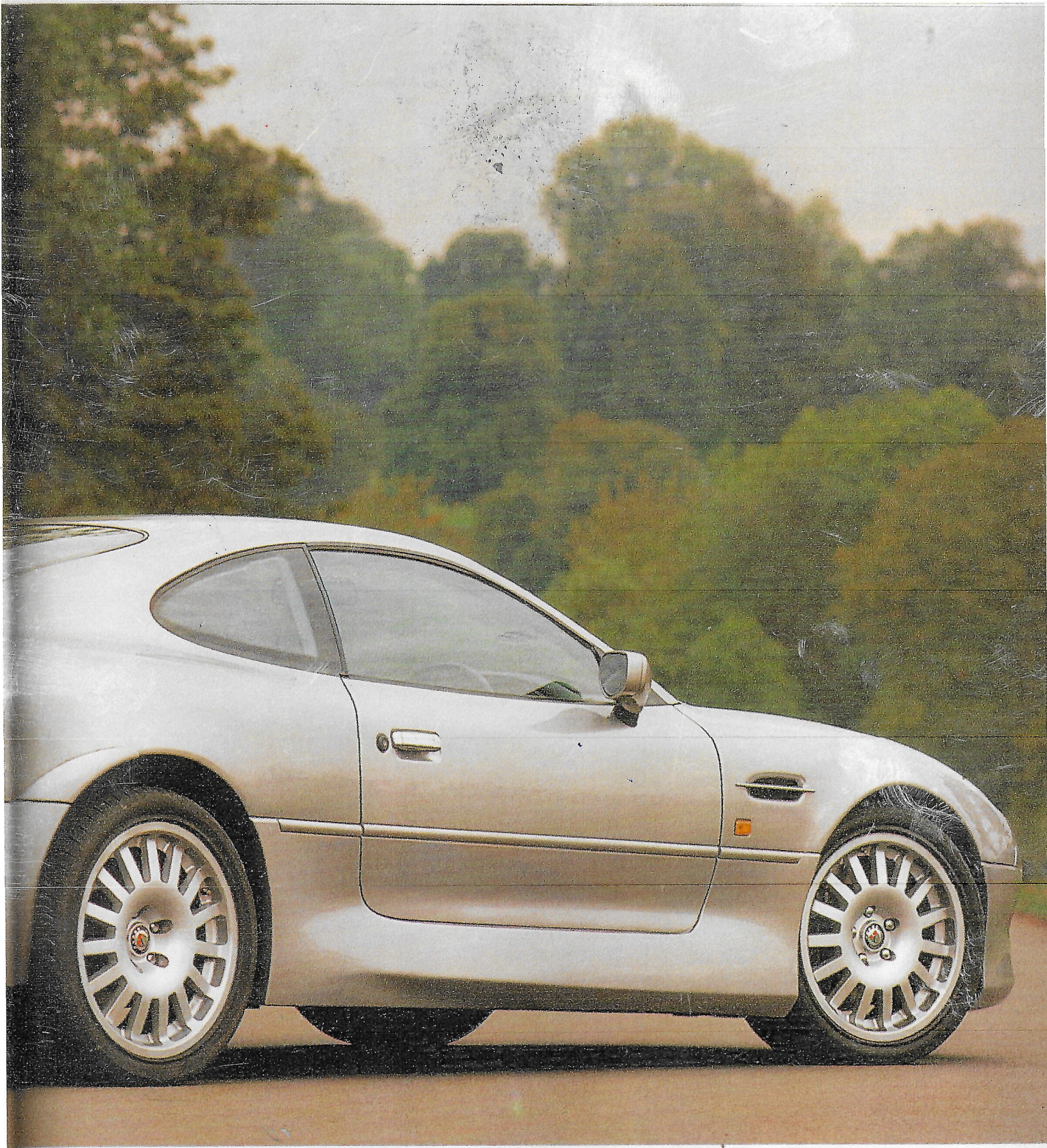
The chassis is great, too, but then the standard car is also rather handy. It seemed utterly neutral to me, with a tail that could be poked out with the abundant power and held, if you're prepared to chamfer Mr Walkinshaw's personal tyres. For my taste, the front suspension rates could be a shade stiffer to cope with the worst Oxfordshire humps, but I'll bet all that has been debated. Whatever, the car is very firmly in 456 territory for steering, handling and ride – and I handed it back at the end of a big day with the deepest pangs of regret.

In all discussions about his Aston V12, Tom Walkinshaw's people remain impervious

to suggestions that they should build replicas of this car if approached by heeled customers. The car is stripped off, they insist, a showpiece for developing cars, and a way of the boss from needlessly blowing hard-earned cash on a Ferrari 456. Customers would be better registered directly with Newport Pagnell.

From a road tester's point of view, the TWR Aston V12 makes a fascinating case about the DB7. It proves the car brilliantly to extra power and refinement. The Vantage, when it comes, could be very, very special.





## ● TWR ASTON MARTIN DB7 V12

**HOW MUCH?** n/a

**On sale in UK** So far, it's a one-off TWR special

**HOW FAST?** 0-60mph n/a **Top speed** 182mph **MPG:** n/a

**ENGINE** **Max power** 475bhp/6000rpm **Max torque** 470lb ft/4500rpm

**Specific output** 74bhp/litre **Installation** longitudinal, front, rear-wheel drive

**Capacity** 6400cc, 12 cyls in vee **Made of** all alloy **Bore/stroke** n/a **Compression ratio** n/a

**Valves** 4 valves per cylinder, dohc per bank, incorporated into unique TWR-designed cylinder heads; unique camshaft profiles and drive system

**GEARBOX** Type 6-speed Borg Warner T56, with quickshift

**Ratios/**mph per 1000rpm

1st 2.97/7.2 2nd 2.07/10.4 3rd 1.43/15 4th 1.0/19.6 5th 0.8/27 6th 0.62/34.3

**SUSPENSION** Front double wishbones, coil springs, anti-roll bar Rear lower wishbones with drivershafts acting as upper links, coil springs, anti-roll bar. Revised front and rear damper settings; revised front and rear coil spring rates; revised front and rear anti-roll bars; unique uprated front axle, hub and bearings designed to reduce brake pad knockback

**STEERING** Type rack and pinion

**BRAKES** Front 362mm ventilated discs with four-piston aluminium calipers

Rear 305mm ventilated discs, with two-piston aluminium calipers **Anti-lock** Teves

**WHEELS AND TYRES** Size front 8x18in, rear 9x18in

Made of lightweight aluminium alloy

**Tyres** front 245/40 ZR18, rear 275/35 ZR18 Yokohama AVS

All TWR's figures



and pulled through by guys with a winch out of sight. as a spectacular day.'

the more powerful car attracting only a modest increase over the DB7, the V12 Vantage proved so popular that it quickly accounted for almost 90 percent of DB7 production. As a result, it forced the six-cylinder model out of production in 1999, even though it stayed on the company's list in 2000.

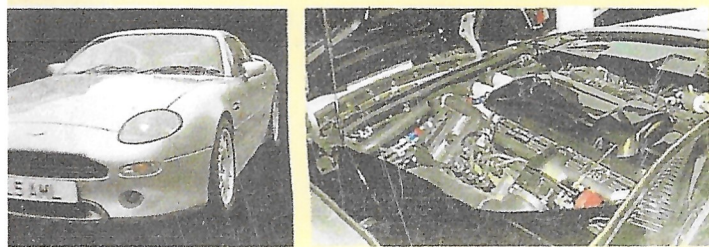
David King

King began his automotive career in 1985 with Panther Cars, where he was involved in the development of the Panther Solo. He joined Jaguar in 1986 and was promoted to Programme Manager in 1991; he worked on the XJ40 becoming Project Manager for the new cars. King joined Aston Martin in 1995 as Chief Programme Engineer. His tasks included launching the DB7 Volante and introducing the DB7 to the North American market. He also led a team of 40 engineers in the development of the V12 DB7 Vantage and, later, the DB9, V8 Vantage, DBS and N24 racing car. In 2007 he was promoted Head of Product Communications and Motorsport.



Jaguar 6.4-litre V12 DB7

When the DB7 Vantage was in development, a silver prototype DB7 was built for TWR boss Tom Walkinshaw. Fitted with a 6.4-litre V12 engine producing 475 bhp @ 6000 rpm and 400 ft/lb of torque @ 4500 rpm, it endowed the car with a top speed of 182 mph. TWR was fishing to get the business for DB7 engines, to give us with more powerful engines. The 6.4-litre Jaguar engine was one of its ideas,' said Kingsley Riding-Felce. The car was designed as a running advertisement for TWR's use. It featured a host of enhancements including an Ian Noyes-designed body kit, Borg Warner six-speed gearbox, modified suspension, AP Racing brakes with ABS, Cromodora wheels and Yokohama tyres. However, the 6.4-litre DB7 remained a proposal – the proposal was rejected and TWR later sold the car. TWR was trying to sell engines to us and the Jaguar engine was a obvious alternative because the V12 was such a huge mountain to climb financially,' said Bob Dover. 'But whether it is an Aston Martin or a Ferrari, it is important to have your badge on the engine.'



The V12 engine dramatically changed the DB7. With 17 percent more power and 17 percent more torque, a new ratio six-speed gearbox and with a modest weight increase of only 122 lb, the car was transformed from a 335-horsepower Grand Tourer into a 420-horsepower supercar.

Model	Weight (lb)	0-60 mph (seconds)	Top speed (mph)
DB7	3802	5.7	165
DB7 Vantage	3924	5.5	185

Erroneously labelled a 6.0-litre unit, the V12 was actually 5.9 litres, being 5935 cc. It was developed jointly by Aston Martin, Ford Research and Vehicle Technology (Ford) and Cosworth Engineering and consisted of a 89 mm bore and 79.5 mm stroke, Cosworth aluminium alloy head, cylinder block, four-valves-per-cylinder and a compression ratio of 10.3:1. In December 1999 Touchtronic transmissions became an option.

The DB7 Vantage's body was very obviously a development of the DB7. But in order to match the new car's stronger performance, a complementary, slightly more aggressive body was needed.

The sills were reshaped, the grille enlarged and new fog/indicator lights were fitted. 'When it came to doing the Vantage I have to say I have some regrets,' said Ian Callum. 'It was obvious the car had more power so the car had to also be more powerful. But I was very reluctant to change anything about the car because I thought it was perfect the way it was. I realise now it was the wrong attitude to have, I have to admit that's how I felt at the time, with some justification I think.'

'I love the front. The spotlights were directly from the racing cars; it was something very Aston Martin that I can relate to, so that's the idea behind it. Because it had to have a bigger cooling area the front got lower and more dramatic. From the rear I had my reservations about some things. In my mind it should have been more aggressive but I think it works quite well.'

Changes were not only made to the appearance of the car. The chassis came in for extensive alterations in structure, especially around the transmission tunnel and suspension geometry to give the car a sportier, stiffer ride. The steering was also revised to give a sharper feel. The body structure was strengthened and improved, too. David King, Engineering Manager said, 'The Vantage is more focused towards handling, whereas the six-cylinder car has an excellent balance between ride and handling.'

Previously, Vantage models had consisted of revised and rated versions of production engines used in standard models. The DB7 Vantage utilised a completely different engine, which contained six extra cylinders. It could have been called the DB8, but in any case it was a magnificent aberration in the annals of Vantage history.



# V12 Power: The DB7 Vantage

The 1950 Aston Martin has applied the Vantage name to the fastest cars in its range. At first the name denoted only a tuned engine not available for otherwise standard cars: carburettors would replace twin carbs, compression ratio would be raised, and there would be new camshafts with more aggressive cam profiles. But the V8 Vantage of 1993 was more fully developed in every area, the engine benefiting from work on big valve engines that had been part of the Lagonda programme, and improvements to its aerodynamic performance drawing on wind-tunnel work for the Robin Hamilton V8 race car. The V12-based Vantage of 1999 continued the tradition, adopting not only a unique twin-supercharged 5.3-litre V8 but also a heavily reworked body and redeveloped suspension. It was almost inevitable, then, that at some point a higher performing Vantage version of the DB7 would be offered. But until that

came along, Aston Martin's Works Service operation at Newport Pagnell would fill in the gap, demonstrating that the DB7's supercharged straight-six engine could be modified to produce considerably more power. Chassis tweaks to cope had been developed early on in the model's production life, for the stillborn DB7 GT racing project. But the DB7 Vantage that would appear early in 1999 would be more than just a DB7 with a few performance tweaks: its refinements would extend to every area, from a reworked interior to upgraded brakes, a redeveloped floorpan and, of course, a more powerful new engine – and a significant one, at that.

## The First V12

Tom Walkinshaw ran a very special DB7 during 1996, developed by the TWR engineering teams by then based at the company's



*Tom Walkinshaw's V12 DB7, on sale at classic car specialists Oselli in 2005. The one-off car was fitted with a 6.4-litre, 48-valve Jaguar V12.*



## V12 Power: The DB7 Vantage



*The extended sills and reworked valances gave the V12 DB7 a much more extreme appearance, but there were no changes to the sheet metal.*



*At the back, TWR's V12 DB7 incorporated a boot-mounted aerofoil to cut high-speed lift.*

new technical centre at Leaffield, near Witney in Oxfordshire. It was built partly to satisfy the stringent personal requirements of Walkinshaw himself, but also as a showcase for TWR's ever-improving engineering capabilities — and perhaps as a hint to Aston and Ford management that a super-DB7 might be a good idea. This one-off had a different engine

and gearbox, highly developed suspension and brakes, and bodywork modifications that were visually and aerodynamically effective.

It was painted a sober silver grey, but Walkinshaw's DB7 was anything but sober in its specification and execution. It was an amalgam of existing parts and new ideas so while the basic DB7 shape was retained



Ian Callum came up with a package of modifications that made the car seem shorter and lower, and improved its aerodynamic efficiency. 'Tom's idea was it would be the ultimate Aston, with different styling,' Callum recalls. 'It was quite extreme.'

A new nose-moulding incorporated a deeper, chunkier air dam to guide air around the fatter tyres, and there was a bigger intake under the number plate to feed the engine bay. Deeper sills carried the line of the air dam along the side of the car to a new rear bumper moulding, which was both deeper and wider.

Tiny extension pieces married the wider bumper to the curve of the rear wheel arch. A boot-lid-mounted wing that extended out over the car's flanks at the rear, was proved in the wind tunnel to cut rear-end lift at speed to a negligible amount. Remarkably, the more aggressive and more efficient new shape was created without altering any of the car's sheet metal, the changes being confined to the plastic mouldings.

The revised styling hinted that this car was something special, and so it proved when the bonnet was lifted. Like the engine in the pro-

# TWR Aston Martin DB7 V12 (1996)

<b>Chassis and body</b>	Steel monocoque with composite bumpers, sills, front wings and boot lid. Two-door, two-plus-two coupé	<b>Rear</b>	Double wishbones, longitudinal control arms, coil springs, monotube dampers, anti-roll bar
<b>Engine</b>	Front engine, longitudinal	<b>Steering</b>	Rack and pinion with power assistance; 2.54 turns lock to lock; column has reach and rake adjustment
<b>Block material</b>	Aluminium alloy	<b>Wheels</b>	8J x 18 front, 9J x 18 rear Cromodora alloy
<b>Head material</b>	Aluminium alloy	<b>Tyres</b>	245/40ZR18 front, 275/35ZR18 rear Yokohama AVS
<b>Cylinders</b>	V12	<b>Brakes</b>	Front: 362mm ventilated steel discs with alloy four-piston calipers Rear: 305mm ventilated steel discs with two-piston aluminium calipers; drum hand brake Teves anti-lock system
<b>Cooling</b>	Water	<b>Dimensions</b>	
<b>Lubrication</b>	Wet sump	<b>Length</b>	182.9in (4,646mm)
<b>Bore x stroke</b>	90 x 84mm (estimated)	<b>Width</b>	72.0in (1,830mm)
<b>Capacity</b>	6413cc (estimated)	<b>Height</b>	49.6in (1,260mm)
<b>Main bearings</b>	7	<b>Wheelbase</b>	102.0in (2,591mm)
<b>Valves/operation</b>	4 valves per cylinder, twin chain-driven overhead camshafts per cylinder bank	<b>Kerb weight</b>	3,850lb (1,750kg) (estimated)
<b>Compression ratio</b>	Not known	<b>Fuel tank capacity</b>	19.6gal (89ltr)
<b>Induction/ignition</b>	Zytek fuel injection	<b>Performance</b>	
<b>Maximum power</b>	475bhp at 6,000rpm	<b>Top speed</b>	182mph (293km/h)
<b>Maximum torque</b>	470lb ft (637Nm) at 4,500rpm	<b>Acceleration</b>	0-60mph: 4.8sec approx.
<b>Transmission</b>	Six-speed Borg-Warner T56 manual gearbox; limited-slip differential	<b>Production</b>	1996: 1 car built for Tom Walkinshaw
<b>Suspension and steering</b>			
<b>Front</b>	Double wishbones, coil springs, monotube dampers, anti-roll bar		



duction DB7, this was a Jaguar-based unit – but there the similarities ended. The supercharged 3.2-litre straight-six of the production car was replaced by a four-valve Jaguar V12 derived from a racing engine developed for TWR by engines expert Al Melling. As a race engine it had only a brief career, but TWR persisted with its development for other applications. It was this engine that had originally been planned for Project XX/NPX, until Walter Hayes had insisted on a switch to the supercharged six. Walkinshaw and his team were now building a DB7 the way they had originally intended it to be built.

TWR's racing engines had run with capacities of up to 7.4 litres, and for road use the V12 had been run with a 90mm bore and 78.5mm stroke, giving a capacity of 5993cc. Walkinshaw's DB7 ran a further enlarged version with bespoke steel crankshaft and a capacity of 6.4 litres: the exact dimensions are not clear, though the capacity suggests it may have had the same 90mm bore and 84mm stroke as the 6.4-litre V12 built by Jaguar's Harry Mundy in the early 1970s. The standard Jaguar V12 made do with a single overhead camshaft on each bank of cylinders, operating 12 valves. The 4-valve version, in addition to its extra complement of valves, was treated to a pair of chain-driven cams with unique profiles, operating inside new cylinder heads that were substantially reworked from their racing origins to suit fast-road use. Race-style Zytek injection metered fuel into bespoke inlet manifolds in the 'valley' between the cylinder banks, while specially fabricated manifolds on the outside of the engine delivered the exhaust gases via catalytic converters to a pair of tailpipes. According to TWR, the 48-valve, 6.4-litre V12 generated 470lbft of torque and 475bhp, no less, despite weighing in only a few pounds heavier than the supercharged 3.2-litre six it replaced.

The immense torque of the engine was harnessed by a heavy, twin-plate AP Racing clutch and a six-speed Borg-Warner T56

gearbox, the same gearbox that was by then being used in the Aston Martin Vantage. An electronic reverse-gear lock-out ensured that reverse could only be selected with the hand-brake on, making manoeuvring a chore but avoiding potentially costly mis-shifts on the move. Running on vast Yokohama AVS tyres, 275/35ZR18s at the rear on specially made Cromodora alloy wheels, the Walkinshaw DB7 was geared for more than 34mph (55km/h) per 1,000rpm in top gear, and TWR reckoned it should be capable of 182mph (293km/h) flat out. Acceleration times weren't recorded, but with a power-to-weight ratio of around 275bhp per tonne, and the ability to hit 60mph (96km) in second gear, it should have been able to sprint from rest to 60 in well under five seconds.

Few fundamental changes were made to the DB7's running gear. Stiffer springs, dampers and anti-roll bars worked with those huge wheels and tyres to offer grip aplenty, and the car's awesome urge was tamed by AP Racing disc brakes, 14.25in diameter at the front with four-pot alloy calipers, controlled by a Teves anti-lock system. Even so, the fortunate few who got to drive it were bowled over by the ability of the modified DB7 to cope with the TWR engine's awesome output, with neutral handling and strong brakes. *Autocar* liked the 'Secret Aston V12' so much they put it on the cover of the magazine. . . .

## Ford's V12

The engine that would eventually power the production DB7 Vantage was also a V12, but it had Ford, rather than Jaguar, ancestry. It started out as an after-hours 'skunk works' project in Dearborn, and first appeared in public at the Turin show in 1994 as a mock-up, alongside the Lagonda Vignale concept car (see Chapter 4). It was thought that the V12 would be an ideal powerplant for the Vignale, though the show car was actually powered by