

CLASSIC DRIVER

Aston Martin DBRS9 - the inside story



There are toys, there are Big Boy's Toys - and then there's the Aston Martin DBRS9. Created by Aston Martin Racing, the team that makes the top-level ALMS and FIA GT racing contenders that wow the crowds at Sebring, Silverstone and Le Mans, the DBRS9 is a DB9 totally modified for racing, yet retaining a lot of the road car's features that not only means with a little upgrading it will run 'out of the box' in the world's premier GT races, but it's also a very user-friendly machine for anyone familiar with fast road cars on a circuit.

The car has already won races in 2006, its first year of international competition, and **Classic Driver** are proud to have covered the exploits of the [Autosport Designs Racing Team](#) running a couple of cars dubbed "The best looking cars in the series" in the USA.

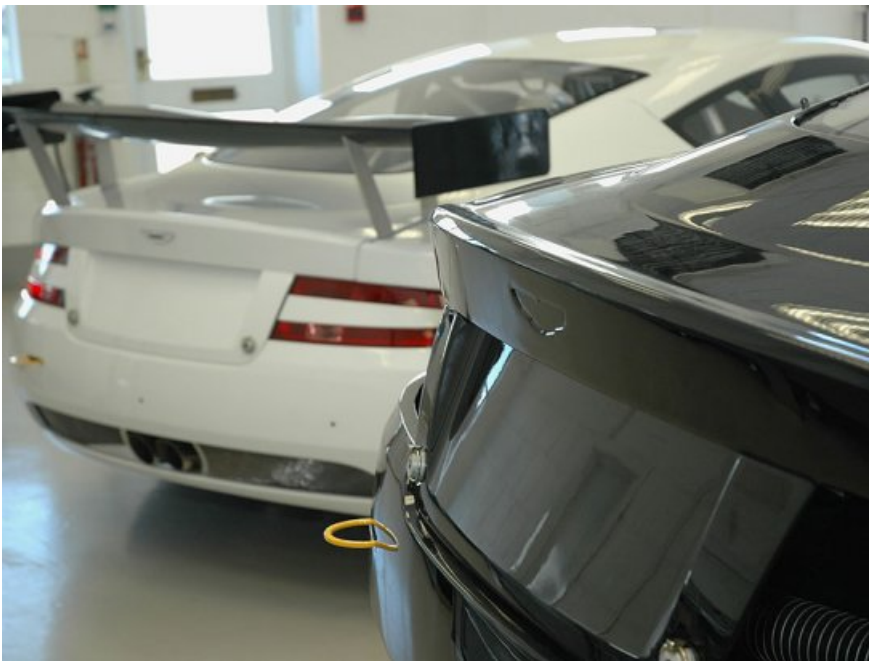
Arriving at Aston Martin Racing's headquarters at Banbury, just a short hop down the motorway from Aston Martin itself, you can immediately see why AMR and Prodrive have been so successful over the years. With extensive in-house facilities that run from engine building to fabrication, the company has probably more on-site machining and manufacturing resources than many Formula 1 teams (and er, they have one of those too, that will be joining the grid in 2008...).





A tour of the production process reveals the cars being built up from Aston Martin's bonded aluminium chassis, installing the tuned 500+bhp V12s and 'spider's web' roll-cage (that's bonded to the aluminium roof for extra safety and stiffness), then clothed in aerodynamically enhanced carbon-fibre composite bodywork that includes a front 'splitter' and rear wing. The Team can spec individual cars as required so the standard 6-speed manual can be upgraded to a 6-speed sequential, and options like an air-jack lifting system and centre-lock wheels can be fitted to make long-distance pit-stops faster.





But the great thing about it is that you can buy a piece of 21st century Aston Martin competition heritage without the paraphernalia of international racing, and just use the car for a few club events or high-end track days where the intoxicating mix of the Aston Martin winged badge, V12 roar, front-engine/rear-wheel-drive handling and Formula 1-standard preparation will be unbeatable.



It's not a road car so you won't be able to drive it there, but once at a track it won't need a laptop or hot engine oil to start. You get in, start it up, and off you go.

Which is what I did - from the passenger seat at any rate - last week at Silverstone as a guest of Aston Martin Racing who were running an Experience Day for sponsors and guests in their customary smartly efficient (but friendly) way.

The man behind the wheel was regular team driver Pedro Lamy from Portugal, who's had many top place finishes for Aston Martin this year in the USA, also coming in 5th place at Le Mans. He drove Formula 1 for Lotus in the early '90s (a spell that saw a **big** testing accident at this very circuit...) and has won an awful lot of races since, including the Nürburgring 24 Hours an amazing four times.





If not the daunting 'Ring, the Club Circuit at Britain's grand prix track is nevertheless challenging when damp in patches and with over 500 bhp at your disposal. Strapped tightly (steady, Aston Martin Racing can fit wider bespoke seats, with runners if necessary, but your Editor fitted perfectly thank you!) into the carbon fibre Recaro and facing a suede-finished composite dash, I waited while Pedro snicked the sequential lever (the black car was a true GT3 contender) into first and gunned it out of the pits.



The acceleration is strong enough for most people but, set to a backdrop of tuned V12 bark, the view of the track ahead through the sun-stripped screen is to die for; you **are** driving down the Mulsanne at 300+ kph, with a yellow Corvette on your tail, it's that good. The corners come up at a fair old rate but as ever when passengering with these guys they make it look so easy and the Brembo callipers and iron discs (manually adjustable for bias) haul the 1280 kgs car down *just* enough for the corners, that are taken with no roll or pitch whatsoever.

British readers will be familiar with the tight Luffield complex that takes forever in a historic racing car. Not in the DBRS9 it doesn't, just turn in and floor it. Even a little show-boating by Lamy fails to upset the car, and we all like a bit of tail-out action don't we?



Just a few laps - the last-but-one definitely pushing the envelope - and the car's back in the pits for a few minor checks and the next passenger. And given the engineering excellence and quality of construction, you get the impression that it will keep this up all day, the whole package having an 'unburstable' feel to it that's perfect for a wealthy enthusiast wanting hassle-free enjoyment of a genuine 'Le Mans racer for the road'.

I also felt that the car would be a friendly one to drive in anger, it's not in any way intimidating like (I would imagine) a recent F1. With the badge on the bonnet and the tried and tested Aston Martin Racing set-up, it's not for every pocket (cars start at around £175,000 + VAT) but considering what you get and OK, perhaps taking a view on its future 'investment' value, it makes sense. Throw in a few track days abroad, the odd 'clubbie' and a corporate day in the car suitably dressed in your company's colours and it scores highly in the bangs for bucks category.

And you are buying into the whole Prodrive/Aston Martin Racing scene too, with back-up and ongoing development via the various race teams. They will support the car on its first running (anywhere in the world) but remember for most of the time it's an out of the box new car that can be run by any experienced team.

In the final analysis, like any product from Aston Martin, Ferrari or Porsche you don't really **need** it - but a few laps in the hot seat will soon make you realise boy, you really **want** it.

For further details contact Aston Martin Racing via www.astonmartinracing.com or call +44(0)1295 754004.

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