

CLASSIC DRIVER

Two special Aston Martins, spanning 20 years of Classic Driver

Lead

This year, we are celebrating our 20th anniversary with the Aston Martin DB11 Classic Driver Edition. The grey and green Grand Tourer was inspired by a very special Aston Martin V550 from 1998 – the year Classic Driver first went live...

If you'd have fired up your computer this time 20 years ago and typed 'classic cars for sale' into AltaVista or Yahoo, Classic Driver would have been among the few results to pop up – not that the selection would have been particularly wide, mind. Yes, in the year that brought us Armageddon and the Apple iMac, we first went online. And, remarkably, we've been there ever since.



Around that time, our publisher Alexander Knapp Voith – who'd previously founded Car & Driver, the Hamburg-based Aston Martin, Lagonda, Bentley, and Rolls-Royce dealership that offered wild customization services to its most affluent clients – ordered this very Aston Martin Vantage V550, which was then the pinnacle of [the Virage breed](#). The special colour combination of Charcoal Grey over green leather was itself inspired by a particular DB6 MKII. Unbeknownst to Knapp Voith, those colours would form the basis of Classic Driver's brand identity for the next two decades.



When we teamed up with Q by Aston Martin at the beginning of 2018 to create a special edition DB11 to celebrate our 20th anniversary, it thus felt only right to use the V550 as our primary reference – particularly given that such 1990s supercars have now come full circle and are enjoying something of a renaissance. In the case of [the Aston Martin Virage derivatives](#), it's not difficult to see why.

Much has changed in the last 20 years and perhaps nowhere is this more evident than in the automotive world. Aston Martin's cars, for starters, are no longer hand-beaten by men in white coats at Newport Pagnell. But it was this era of bespoke coachbuilding and craftsmanship that we wanted to nod to with numerous special features, all the while honouring the DB11's thoroughly modern aesthetics and technology. Our lead designer Benjamin Knapp Voith takes up the tale.





"We had to respect that 20 years have passed, and the world is a very different place in 2018," he recalls. "We thus had to respect the DB11 in its modernity and shape, particularly when applying the V550's colour palette. We took measures to achieve this by adapting the colours for the modern world – inside, the tone of green is cooler, and we gave the grey a contemporary twist by adding green pearls." We christened the new interpretation of the Charcoal Grey 'Classic Driver Grey'.



A conscious decision was also made to keep both the exterior and interior colour schemes monochromatic – a characteristic that was all the rage in the 1990s and actually accentuates the design of the DB11 today. "We wanted to let the car's design speak for itself and not interrupt it with lots of split changes and different colours," explains Knapp Voith. "There's not a black roof, for example, like you see on many other DB11s, and the only contrasting colour inside is the fascia inlay in Classic Driver Grey."



In addition to the 'Classic Driver Grey' paintwork and special-order Eifel Green upholstery (yes, we're also striving to Make Green Great Again), other bespoke features unique to the DB11 Classic Driver Edition include the satin green-tinted carbon fibre trim, which, as Knapp Voith explains, references Aston Martin's racing heritage, and the enamel fender badges. "We didn't want any brightwork on the car save for the Aston Martin logo and our fender badges, which were handcrafted by the same people who make the iconic Aston wings."

Opting for the newer V8-powered DB11 rather than the original V12 was even done on purpose, as a tribute to the legendary Tadek Marek-designed V8 in the V550. "In the 1990s, the Aston Martin V12 arrived with the DB7 and the Vanquish, but the blown V8 in the V550s and V600s was the pinnacle." Of course, the way the twin-turbo DB11 delivers its 500bhp is altogether more controlled and refined than the brutish V550.



As you can imagine, we're rather proud of the DB11 Classic Driver Edition, which is why we announced a limited run of 20 examples, including both Coupés and Volantes, [a small number of which are still available to buy](#). The subtle Grand Tourer, which reveals its most special intricacies the closer you look, is a fitting tribute to both the V550 from which it drew its inspiration and, of course, Classic Driver itself. "The lucky owners of these cars will own a modern piece of Aston Martin's history and heritage built in a limited number, which is very rare and very special," concludes Knapp Voith. Well... what are you waiting for?

Photos: Tom Shaxson for Classic Driver © 2018

Gallery

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