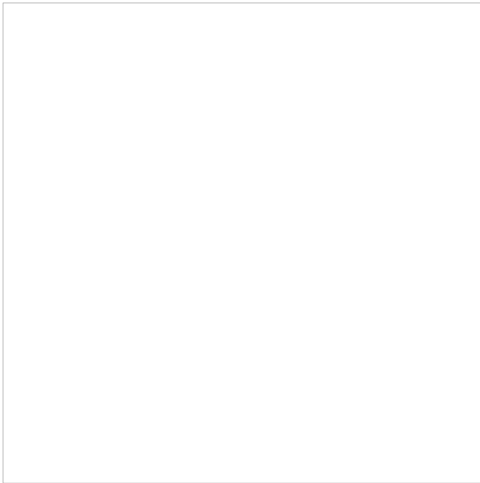


CLASSIC DRIVER

Test drive - The Aston Martin DB4 by Beacham



“The thing with these cars is they really do have the ‘got to have it’ factor”, so says long time Aston specialist Nicholas Mee on a surprisingly bright January day in Chiswick, West London. Standing outside the Brackenbury Garage, DB4 warming up quietly (more of which anon) in the background I would agree with Nick, David Brown's boys got it so right in the late Fifties with the DB4, that later 6-cylinder cars may be more practical, but the original first couple of Series DB4s have the purer line. “Of course, they were very modern cars at the time but on today’s crowded roads you do tend to think twice before driving them everyday” continues Nick.



True, but we are not standing next to an everyday restored DB4, it is a ‘Beacham DB4’ and therein lies the answer to the problems of 21st century motoring in a mid 20th century bespoke performance car. Beacham, perhaps more famous for their work on Jaguars, are a New Zealand based engineering company that will carry out a complete nut and bolt restoration, whilst doing so improve those areas which can be discreetly modified to provide a much easier car in traffic, yet retain that unique, ‘Aston’ character. This particular car, a desirable (for the deep bonnet scoop, early grille and ‘church window’ rear lights) Series II model was sent to be ‘Beachamised’ and has recently returned to this country.

The principle improvements are aimed not just at performance, though rest assured the 4.2 engined car will travel along very along nicely, but also at the holy grail of motor engineers, '**Noise Vibration and Harshness**'. To this end the suspension has been tuned all round, adopting telescopic rear shock absorbers, different road springs and revised front suspension. Judging from my first drive an awful lot of work must have gone on to deaden the sound normally coming from engine, exhaust, gearbox and tarmac. Power steering of the modern electric-hydraulic type is fitted, the David Brown 4-speed ‘box replaced by a modern 5-speed, with a suitably light clutch to match. Refrigerated air conditioning, central locking, a suitable sound system and inertia-reel seat belts, together make the cockpit a very comfortable place indeed on a long, or town bound journey. Needless to say the car is beautifully trimmed and painted as befits a complete ground-up restoration, this time in Nicholas Mee’s own Brackenbury Green, with a deep St James Burgundy leather interior.



Nick briskly shook the car down in moderate London traffic. The first impression is of smoothness and quiet, the booming exhaust has been silenced and potholed roads despatched with a level of ride comparable with a modern car. A nice induction roar permeates the cabin; after all you don't want the thing completely silent, now do you? A brief blast down the A4 shows that, despite its twin SU set up, the motor, clearly tuned for torque, will give you all the power you could reasonably need to just keep on going all day long. The seats, recently upholstered are comfortable and higher up than I can remember of other DB4s, but then to all intents and purposes it is a new car so these will settle down with time. Nicely warmed up now, it's my turn in the driver's seat.

Throwing a leg under the slightly smaller steering wheel (don't need the size now, with the PAS), then it's a quick 'lifesaver' over my right shoulder (no wing mirrors) and we're off. Carefully balanced steering, light clutch and an easy shift make the car easy to drive in town – no question about that. One thing you cannot get away from when driving any £100k + car is that feeling of the whole world gunning for you and an accident just round the corner. Luckily it wasn't and after a while, having relaxed, the whole experience becomes a little easier on the mind. Nick informs me the brakes are being bedded in and, after some adjustment, will pull up without the slightly wooden feel I at first experienced. They are uprated with three-piston calipers. That apart, nice response, light controls, great visibility from the original design, it really is a very pleasant driving experience.



But is that what it should be? The DB4 is one of the greatest sports cars ever made and it's meant for ex-Army, Edward Fox, types to master as they would a thoroughbred hunter or Riva powerboat, surely the noise and muscle flexing are all part of the deal? Not at all, say I. If Aston had had access to the mechanical refinements used in this car back in 1960 you can bet they would have used them. OK, so you won't use it for the daily commute – Nick's *smart* you may see in the background is a 100 times more practical – but you would use it more than an original, standard DB4 for two-up holidays on the continent, going to Ascot or Glyndebourne; just using it for the sake of it and not worrying about overheating engines (or passengers).

Anyone got a Beacham Jaguar to try as a comparison?



This particular car is available for sale. For further details please click [HERE](#)

Story/photos: Steve Wakefield

Gallery

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