

CLASSIC DRIVER



Aston Martin V8 Vantage finishes epic journey from Tokyo to London

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It's completed over 110,000 miles, and now sits outside the InterContinental London Park Lane a little dirty with the odd bash and scrape from an adventure that's lasted 7 weeks or so, having covered 10,000 miles of sometimes virtually un-navigable roads in the heart of Asia and far eastern Europe; 'it' is the '30,000' Aston Martin that's done sterling service for the cause of road safety and will be generously offered for auction in aid of charity at the end of this year.

The cause that set the British pairing of **Richard Meredith** and **Phil Colley** on this once in a lifetime (until the next time...) trip was the **Make Roads Safe** project that's aim is to make the world more aware of the plight of mainly low-income countries where road deaths amongst the young are often killing as many as more familiar causes such as TB or malaria.

Under the broad banner of **Driving Home Road Safety 2007**, the pairing had the support of the **United Nations**, the **Federation Internationale de l'Automobile (FIA) Foundation** and **UNICEF**.

Aston Martin provided the car - the **V8 Vantage** that had already covered 30,000 miles in a month

and was subsequently tested by **Classic Driver** on a road trip to Scotland last year - as a measure of good faith in the project, as well having the chance of putting yet more miles on a chassis that proves the marque is, as company Chief Executive Officer **Dr Ulrich Bez** put it in London at the end of the trip, "not just beautiful and for collectors, it's a combination of luxury and practicality".



The two drivers (without any accompanying support from Astons) set off on June 25, crossing the **East China Sea** into **South Korea**, spending 18 days travelling through **China**, then entering **Kazakhstan, Krygyzstan, Uzbekistan, Turkmenistan, Azerbaijan, Georgia** and **Turkey**, reaching the end of the **Asian Highway** in **Istanbul**, before completing their drive through **Bulgaria, Serbia, Croatia, Slovenia, Austria, Germany, France** and the **UK**.

The British pairing are the first to traverse the embryonic **Asian Highway** network of roads that will, within ten years or so, connect East with West (with the aid of a few ferries).

At the trip's conclusion the car was in fine fettle mechanically, having been prepared with just a service and the addition of a sump guard. The tyres were the standard **Bridgestones** as fitted to production V8s and never punctured, while the car simply used its fair share of oil, water and petrol during the journey.

Meredith and Colley experienced the highs and lows of transcontinental driving in an Aston: *nearly* running out of unleaded, enjoying a \$2.00 fill-up in Turkmenistan, 68° C in-car temperatures - and finally having the pleasure of overtaking **Michael Schumacher's Maserati** in a chance encounter on a French autoroute north of Paris nearing journey's end.

Dr Bez - who'd spent several years working in the Far East for Daewoo, and understands the importance of improving road safety in these environments - has been an enthusiastic supporter of the project:

"We have followed Richard's and Phil's ups and downs all the way, and admired their determination. The car, too, has been more than up to the demanding task they asked of it, and we are very proud of its unfailing reliability. This journey has been the V8 Vantage's toughest test to date, and reiterates that the Vantage is a truly useable and durable sports car."



And as a generous statement of faith in the **Make Roads Safe** project, Astons will donate the famous car to the charity - to be auctioned later this year.

For further information please visit www.makeroadssafe.org and www.astonmartinasiahighway.com.

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