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**ASTON  
DB4GT  
VS  
FERRARI  
250 SWB**

# BATTLE OF THE GT LEGENDS

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# ULTIMATE SHOWDOWN #20

# Aston Martin vs Ferrari

As at home on the Route de la Corniche into Cannes as they are on a track, these stunning coupés are the finest GTs of all time. **Russ Smith** tries to pick a favourite

PHOTOGRAPHY **TONY BAKER**





# DB4GT 250GT SWB

**B**ecause this is the final round in our *Ultimate Showdown* series, we thought it only right to finish on a high note. All it needed was two 'ultimate' cars. And it wasn't that hard a choice in the end. The Ferrari 250GT SWB and Aston DB4GT probably rank as the two most desirable cars from the end of that era when the sufficiently well-heeled could race competitively on Sunday then peel off the numbers and drive their toy as a stunning GT for the rest of the week.

Today, these are blue-chip collectibles that tick every box: exclusivity, competition history, stunning beauty, notable owners and star drivers. And their dual-purpose past holds true as they continue to fulfil two roles in life. Both competed in period at events such as the Goodwood TT, which the Ferrari won twice (1961 and '62) in the hands of Sir Stirling Moss, and you'll still find examples on the grid at the

Revival for the same race. Moss also raced DB4GTs at Goodwood, winning the Fordwater Trophy at the Easter Meeting in 1960.

Step from the starting grid to the champagne-fuelled world of exclusive tours and concours, and you'll see the Aston and Ferrari flaunting their seven-figure price-tags and six-figure rebuild bills. Open any magazine feature on *Greatest ever drivers' cars* or *Most beautiful classics* and you'll find them there, too. How many red-blooded enthusiasts wouldn't nominate one or both for inclusion in their dream garage?

With so few built, and such a strong race pedigree, the biggest challenge was to find 'road' examples for the fairest possible comparison. These two got close enough; the Ferrari—a 1960 steel-bodied car—has a lightly breathed-on V12, and the Aston 'six' is bored out to 4.7 litres, but we'll make allowances for that. Both are otherwise to factory spec, and have a combined value of £4.4m. Phew! Let the last battle commence.







It's rare to find a Short Wheelbase in 'road' trim, and a real treat when you do – especially when it has such beautiful patina

## Interior

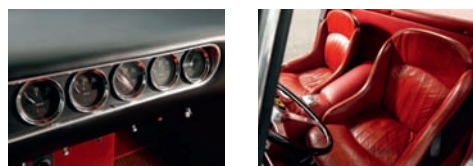
★★★★☆

There's a more modern feel to the Ferrari's cabin, or what passed for modern in the '60s. It's simple and functional, with lots of smooth surfaces, but also extremely stylish. Though everything else has been refurbished, this car's inviting bucket seats remain delightfully original, with the kind of patina that it's impossible to replicate. They're firm, though not uncomfortably so, but the side supports are far from embracing for my 'racing snake' frame.

In the popular Italian tradition, you get two large cowed dials dead ahead, with five gauges lined up across the dash in a recessed unit that also houses the ignition switch. You turn this to fire up the fuel pumps, then push the key like a starter button – a proper event, every time.

Other than that there's a lot of vinyl, some simple chrome door furniture, plus a large, shiny ashtray dominating a transmission tunnel that speaks of different times. There's nothing that doesn't need to be there: this is obviously a car designed with performance in mind.

Like most SWBs, this car is left-hand-drive – only 11 were built with the wheel on the right – so you get an awkward handbrake lever by your right knee, but otherwise it's easy to adapt to.



Bank of secondary gauges; firm bucket seats lack support

## Styling

★★★★★

With the stance of a racer plus show-stopping elegance and detail, the Ferrari was sent from heaven for the world's playboys. Unmistakably fast and expensive, its appearance in 1959 must have made the Jaguar XK150 look horse-drawn, and could probably cure baldness, too. From the decorative quarter-bumpers through the functional bonnet scoop to the XXL fuel filler biting a chunk out of the bootlid, this was, and still is, a car to lay down your fortune for.

Pininfarina itself rates this as one of its most successful designs and, even with the benefit of 50-plus years of hindsight, it's impossible to see how it could have been improved upon. There's muscle in those flowing curves and pronounced haunches that prevent the car from looking too pretty, with aggressive air vents to seal the deal. And if you want to see just how effective those vents were, look at a photo of one of the first 14 SWBs that didn't have them – at least at first.

Ferrari and Pininfarina continually tinkered with the design, and 1961/'62 SWBs have larger 'screens and curvature changes to every panel. Not that you'll notice, such is their subtlety. Only the door-top, which was altered from curved to straight, gives the game away.



Minimalism is key to the detailing; vents arrived on car 15

## THE EXPERT'S VIEW

James Cottingham



"The Short Wheelbase was the only Ferrari built that could be enjoyed on the road without compromise and also be raced on the track (and be competitive). Period race results show that the 250GT SWB was always more successful than the Aston Martin. The GTO that replaced it is clearly the more desirable car, but with their values so far out of reach today the SWB is the next obvious choice.

**'The GTO that replaced it is clearly the more desirable car, but is it necessarily better? It's certainly not as usable as an SWB'**

But is the GTO necessarily a better car? It's certainly not as usable as an SWB.

"Alloy-bodied cars rarely come on to the market, and are often purchased by a different kind of buyer than those for steel cars. Most want an SWB for road use and the occasional tour or rally, for which a steel car is more than enough. They stay fresher-looking for longer, too – the alloy cars pick up dents and cracks in the paint as soon as they have left the workshop following a restoration."

Thanks to James and Jeremy Cottingham, DK Engineering; 01923 287687; [www.dkeng.co.uk](http://www.dkeng.co.uk)



## ASTON MARTIN DB4GT



Classic dashboard design echoes mouth-like grille, and bright timber steering wheel trim lifts sombre – but top-quality – cabin

### Interior

★★★★☆

Very much the grand tourer, the Aston says: “Sit down, relax – has anyone offered you a drink?” Almost everything is black or chrome, with first-class materials and finish. Only the push-pull switches scattered around the dashboard cause a Roger Moore-style raised eyebrow. They’re late-’50s Morris Minor in origin.

There’s an almost delicate appearance to the flat-spoked, wood-rimmed steering wheel. With exposed rivets and a black face it looks like a family heirloom alongside the Ferrari’s tiller, but I mean that in the comforting tones of an *Antiques Roadshow* presenter. There’s a clear view through it to a properly busy arrangement of seven dials – up from four or five on standard DB4s – set in a gunmetal-painted fascia.

The leather seats are flat, but more supportive than they look and comfortable for distance work. The well-spaced, floor-hinged pedals are a little offset to the right, but not awkwardly so. It all feels awfully British and clubby, so pulling on this car’s racing harness felt as incongruous as donning a Kevlar vest for a cocktail party.

In the back is a large parcel shelf with luggage straps. You’ll need this, because the entire boot is given over to a 30-gallon fuel tank and the spare.



Interior is a traditionalist’s paradise; luggage behind seats

### Styling

★★★★☆

The Aston could equally wear the Ferrari’s ‘SWB’ tag because it is, in effect, a regular DB4 with 5in chopped out between the wheels – largely from the doors – to improve handling and reduce weight. That sounds like a recipe for fashion disaster, but only when it’s pointed out do you notice how short the doors are, such is the superb proportion and balance that the styling retains. Those doors also lack the standard DB4’s fixed window frames, which is an instant point of reference – and often a bone of contention when you find that they don’t seal so well at speed. Wind noise can be an issue that is only alleviated by lowering the glass a fraction.

Doors aside, there are few at-a-glance ways of telling a GT from other DB4s. Even the cowl lamps were later adopted for Vantage models, and the scoops, grilles and rear lights changed along with the rest of the range. You’ll rarely find a GT fitted with bumper overrides, however.

Put the Aston alongside the Ferrari and, as a Pininfarina fan, it pains me to say that I feel the Brit just edges a win in the beauty contest. Perhaps not enough to separate them on points, but there’s something magnetic about the DB’s curves that draws your eyes to it.



Chunkier handles; oval vents became a DB Aston signature

### THE EXPERT’S VIEW

Richard Williams



“With just 75 examples built, the DB4GT is always going to have rarity on its side. And, as a more sporting version of an already great car, no one is ever likely to drive one and come away disappointed. It also seems like quite a bargain compared to the Ferrari – why do they cost that much more?”

“Something that’s rarely mentioned about these cars is the sensational spares situation.

**‘The DB4GT has rarity on its side and seems like quite a bargain compared to the Ferrari. Why do they cost that much more?’**

I cannot remember the last time I had to tell a customer that they would have to wait for their car because we couldn’t get a particular part for it. You can even go to Aston Martin and buy a new GT-spec block or cylinder head.

“When buying a DB4GT, make sure that it is a car with no question marks hanging over it. If there is any doubt at all over its history, with this much money at stake you should pay to have it looked over by one of the recognised Aston Martin specialists.”

Thanks to Richard Stewart Williams Ltd:  
01932 868377; [www.rswilliams.co.uk](http://www.rswilliams.co.uk)





Webers hidden beneath 'baking tray' scoop on this road car, but distinctive crackle-black cam covers give away Colombo V12

## Engine

★★★★★

If the Aston's engine is one of the greats, Ferrari's Colombo V12 qualifies for icon status. It was the beating heart of the superstars the Prancing Horse legend was built upon: Testa Rossa, 250GTO, 275GTB and, of course, SWB.

A surprisingly compact unit for a V12, it largely hides its cast and finned aluminium beauty beneath understated crackle-black cam covers with subtle Ferrari logos. In this SWB, everything is further concealed by the large tin tray that channels cool outside air to the trio of Weber downdraught carbs. It all gives the clear message that these engines are about go, not show. But you still probably wouldn't say no to one mounted under glass as a decoration.

Like the Aston it enjoys the symmetry of twin distributors, in this case with one supplying each bank of cylinders, topped by a single overhead camshaft. That's the layout, but the lasting memory of those who encounter this engine is the sound it makes. I promise little originality in describing it, because the cliché book has been stripped bare in the past, but the V12's thrashy mechanical howls, wails and eagerness to rev have an infectious quality that stirs the blood. It wants to play, and you'll want to join in the game.



Beautifully finished engine bay; air scoop feeds Weber trio



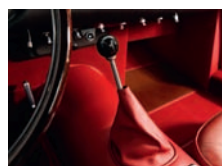
## Drivetrain

★★★★☆

The 250's gearlever sticks far higher out of the transmission tunnel than seems right and is topped by a simple fluted ball, but the action feels weighty and mechanical yet pretty slick, particularly in comparison with the baulky Aston. Anyone expecting the trademark slotted chrome gate will be disappointed, but there's an appealing plain leather gaiter and slim chrome stem that sits well with the rest of the interior.

As with the Aston, this is a homebrewed gearbox with just four speeds on offer, featuring Porsche-patented synchromesh on the ratios that probably helps to explain the pleasant shift. Perhaps it's the 4:1 final-drive ratio on this car (there were plenty of options), or the more urgent and intrusive engine noise coupled with a personal degree of mechanical sympathy, but it's hard not to start wondering about an extra cog once you get above 85mph. Not that the car seems bothered, and pressing on into three figures doesn't actually increase the noise much, it just changes to a higher pitch. All the same, it might have scored more with a five-speed.

The clutch is comfortably weighted, with no special effort needed. As with the Aston, the rear axle is kitted out with a limited-slip differential.



No clichéd open gate here; Borrani wires the perfect finish



## The knowledge

### What to pay

The going rate for the 95 steel-bodied SWBs is currently £1.5-2.25m. Enough to warrant a 'POA' from most dealers, and prices are rising. And yes, that lower figure does only buy you what amounts to a project. For alloy-bodied cars (68 built), the figures are more like £3m to £3.5m, and that's for a regular one with no special race history, for which the sky is the limit. You'll need to write a cheque for nearer £5m for one of the 19 'SEFAC' cars that left the factory with high-output Comp/61 V12s.

### What to look for

- Do your homework and decide if you have a preference for one particular variant, and whether your budget buys an alloy or steel car
- Does the car have its original body, engine and 'box with matching numbers? And what does the history tell you about past rebuilds?
- What is the current condition of the body, chassis and interior? If you don't feel confident about judging any approaching expenses, hire a specialist to give you an accurate picture

### What to read

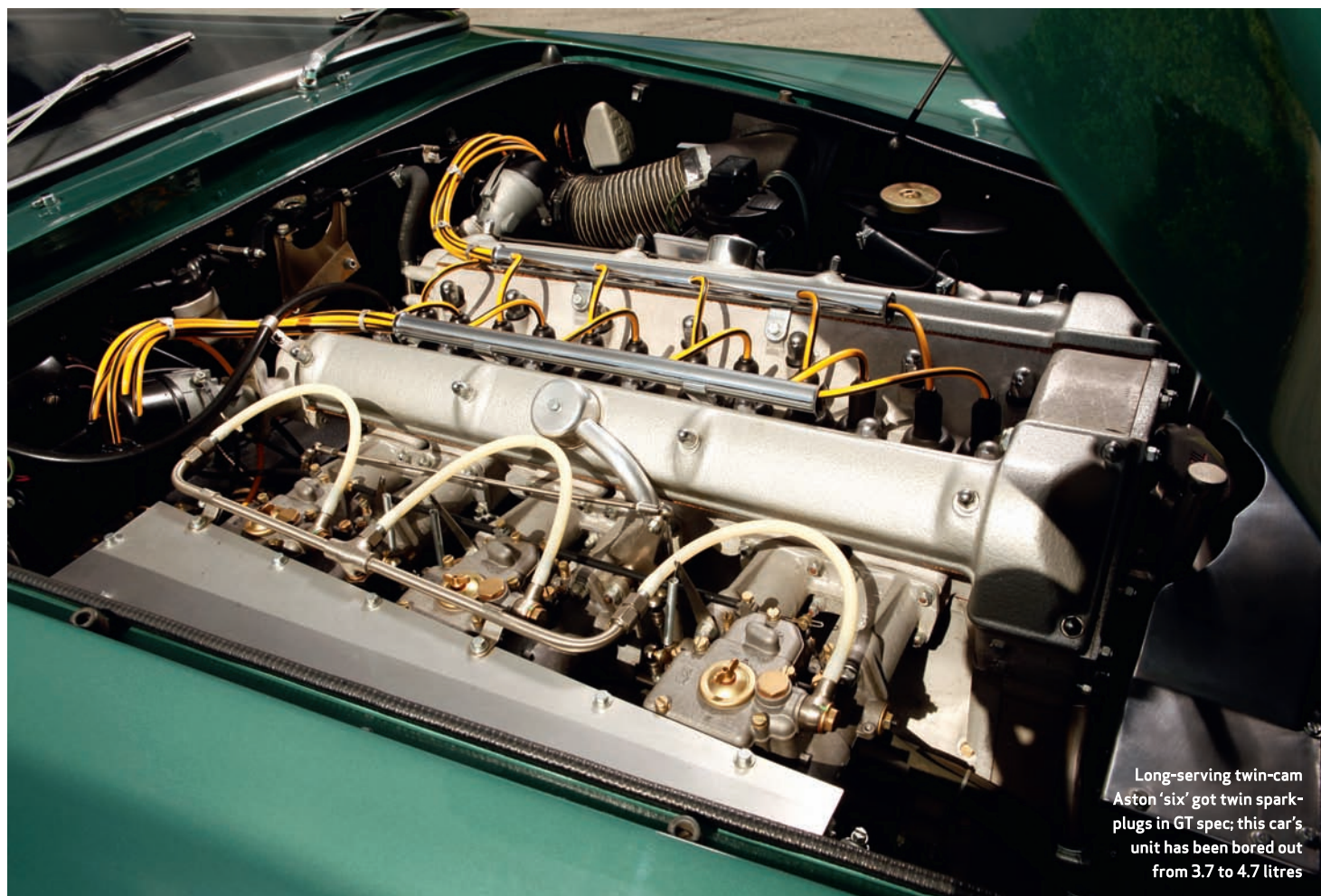
- Ferrari 250GT SWB Ken Gross
- Ferrari 250GT Jim Riff • Ferrari 250 Grand Touring Cars Nicola Cutrera

### The club

- [www.ferrariownersclub.co.uk](http://www.ferrariownersclub.co.uk)



## ASTON MARTIN DB4GT



Long-serving twin-cam Aston 'six' got twin spark-plugs in GT spec; this car's unit has been bored out from 3.7 to 4.7 litres

### Engine



Both of these cars' power units are guaranteed inclusions in any book of legendary engines. Designed by ex-Austin man Tadek Marek, the Aston's twin-cam straight-six has a unique claim to fame as Britain's first all-aluminium production engine. Its layout carries strong echoes of Jaguar's XK unit, but any similarities are largely visual. The Aston 'six' is lighter for a start, with larger bores and a shorter-stroke crankshaft.

Always a looker, from its enamelled cam covers to the cast-alloy sump (which holds more than two gallons of oil), the 3.7-litre version of the 'six' used for the DB4GT is even more exciting, both visually and in how it performs. Triple Webers replace the standard car's twin SUs, and the GT has two spark-plugs per cylinder. The resulting viper's nest of leads is shared by two distributors, one driven off each camshaft.

Other contributors to the transformation from the DB4's 240bhp into 302bhp included big valves and hotter cams, while a lightened crank and conrods allowed it to rev to 6500rpm.

It makes some wonderful noises, all several octaves lower than the Ferrari, even when gruff growl rises via throbbing mid-range bass bellow to werewolf-in-a-cave yowl at high revs.



Triple sidedraught Weber carbs fed by greedy bonnet bulge



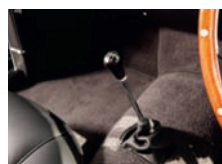
### Drivetrain



The only area of disappointment with the Aston is the gearbox. Of the company's own design, it has a notchy and quite agricultural feel that is at odds with the rest of the car and serves to remind you that the David Brown of the car's DB initials was first a tractor maker. It doesn't like going backwards much, and came with instructions to slot the lever into second to better balance gear rotations and ease the passage into reverse. No worse, I suppose, than habitually selecting second before first in Minors and Midgets.

To be fair, there aren't a lot of miles on this car since a very thorough restoration, so the shift may free up with use, but no one has ever exactly sung the praises of DB4 gearboxes. You might wish for the ZF five-speed from a later DB5 but, though the overdrive top gear would be handy, the change is barely any better, if at all.

At least the chosen ratios are well matched to the car's performance, and the reality of only having four rather than five gears turns out to be perfectly acceptable; you don't keep grabbing for another gear as you might in many cars of this era. There's also a nice weight and feel to the clutch, in this case uprated to cope with the more powerful 4.7-litre engine.



Slim lever, obstinate shift; subtler wires for reserved Brit



## The knowledge

### What to pay

The market for DB4GTs is fairly slow, but they still sell at good prices – for a DB4GT, that's between £700k and £1.3m for a road car with no special history, and the upper figure should buy you something like the mint example in our photos. At the lower end, expect a car that is usable, but with wear and tear you can no longer call patina, or a good, complete project. You may find cars offered for less, but be very wary about what you would be getting into.

### What to look for

- Establish that it has been looked after by people who know what they're doing. Any deferred maintenance is likely to prove costly
- The thin aluminium panels dent very easily, so look for waviness in high-use areas – around the doorhandles and the rear edge of the bonnet
- These 'sixes' are noted for high oil pressure, so expect 80-100psi at 3000rpm when warm
- Unless you are a specialist, or buying from one, get the car inspected by someone who is

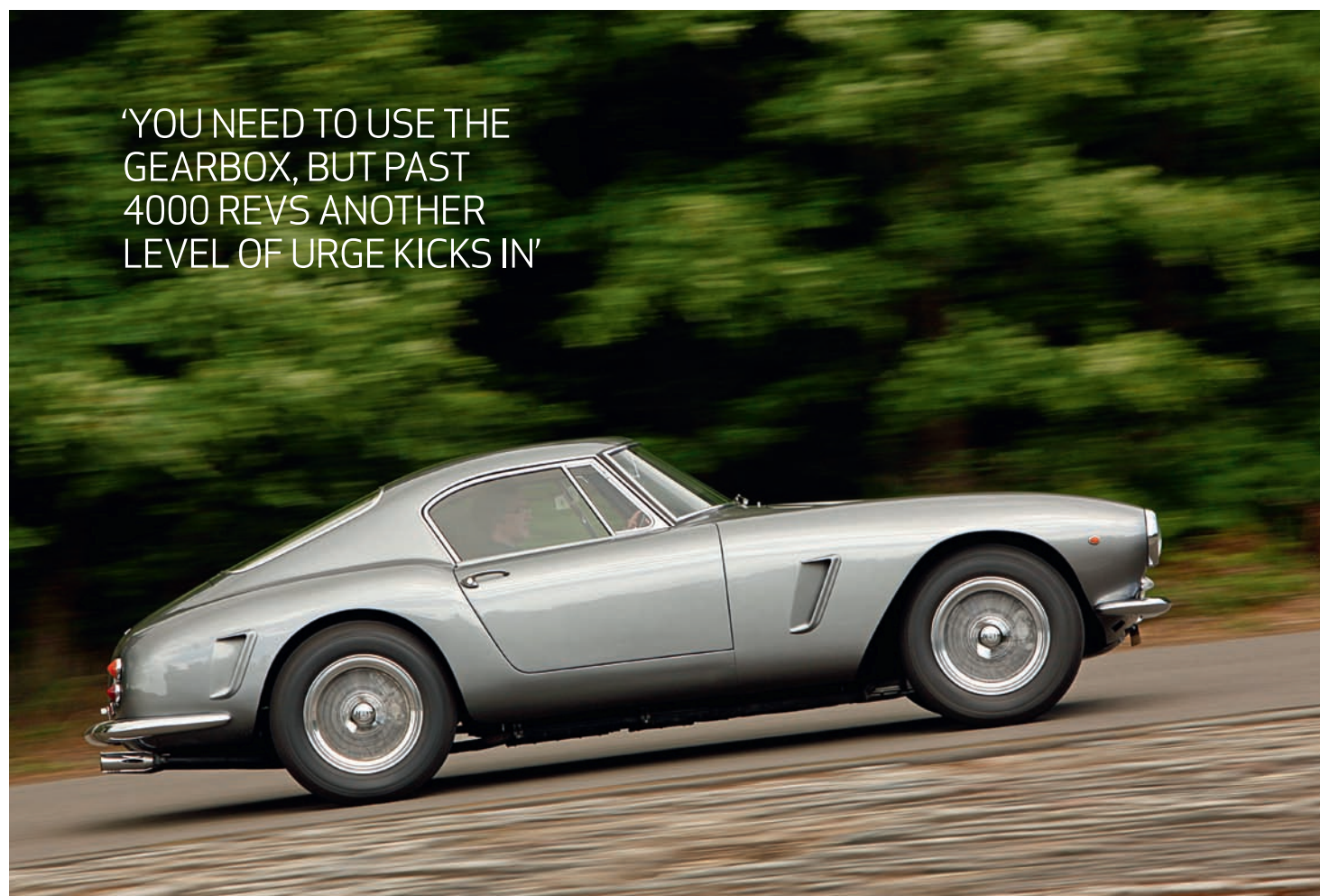
### What to read

- Aston Martin, Ever The Thoroughbred Robert Edwards
- Original Aston Martin DB4/5/6 Robert Edwards
- Aston Martin DB4, DB5 & DB6, The Complete Story Jonathan Wood

### The club

- [www.amoc.org](http://www.amoc.org)





## Performance

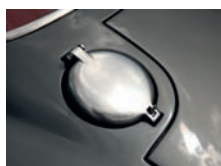
★★★★★

It's fair to say that the SWB wouldn't have outperformed a standard DB4GT, let alone this one. The Ferrari is nearly 10% lighter than the Aston, but that doesn't make up for it being 20% down on power. Push both cars the same way along the same roads and you can feel the SWB's relative lack of torque; you need to use the gearbox more to keep the engine on song because the V12 doesn't do its best stuff until you get past the 4000rpm mark, when another level of urge kicks in. Different gearing and the V12's freer-revving nature almost wipe out the rest of the theoretical gap between the cars in full-bore sprints for nought-to-whatever times but, unless you are drag-racing like that, it's the Aston Martin that has the edge.

What the Ferrari does do is make more fuss and better vocalise how hard it is being driven. Don't take that the wrong way – what I'm talking about is part of the essential essence that makes the 250GT SWB so special. Its passion bubbles over when you hit the go pedal and this car always sounds and feels excitable and exciting. You can never settle down and relax in the Ferrari in the same way that you can in the Aston Martin, but would you ever want to?



Veglia tacho reads to 8000rpm; chunky race-style fuel-filler



## Handling

★★★★★

In stark contrast to the Aston, the Ferrari simply loves corners. None of this should come as a surprise, given these cars' extensive competition history, but there's real delight to be had from the way it goes about the task. Drive it like you mean it and the SWB rewards by going exactly where you point it: no fuss, no drama. And you needn't be scared to try that, or think it involves holding a race licence, because the Ferrari is remarkably forgiving and easy to drive fast.

Part of that comes from the relatively unsophisticated suspension, which still uses leaf springs to locate the rear axle. That gives a familiarity to the way the SWB behaves, which is like an advanced example of an everyman's sports car, but honed by the very best of chassis engineers. And it doesn't bite back.

The steering is much lighter than the Aston's, and doesn't weight up in corners. Instead it keeps sending clear messages about grip, which is even better than the DB's on the same-sized tyres. And the default setting of neutral handling adjusts nicely on the throttle, just how you want it to. Throw in the better brakes and you have the perfect package: a car that does everything you ask of it while also flattering your abilities.



SWB has wonderful balance and poise; gorgeous rear view

## SPECIFICATIONS

**Sold/number built** 1959-'63/163 (approx)

**Construction** tubular steel chassis, aluminium or steel (usually with aluminium bonnet, boot, doors) body **Engine** all-alloy, sohc-per-bank 2953cc V12, three twin-choke Weber 40 DCZ/DCL6 carbs **Max power** 240bhp @ 7000rpm **Max torque** 183lb ft @ 5500rpm

**Transmission** four-speed manual, driving rear wheels via LSD **Suspension: front** wishbones, coils, anti-roll bar **rear** live axle, semi-elliptic springs, radius arms; telescopic dampers f/r

**Steering** ZF worm and sector **Brakes** Dunlop discs, with Bendix servo **Wheels & tyres** 5½ x 16in Borrani wires, 185 x 16in tyres **Length** 13ft 9½in (4200mm) **Width** 5ft 5in (1651mm)

**Height** 4ft 2in (1270mm) **Wheelbase** 7ft 10½in (2400mm) **Weight** 2560lb (1164kg)

**0-60mph** 6.3 secs **Top speed** 144mph (with 4:1 axle ratio) **Mpg** 15 **Price new** £6469

## EVOLUTION

**1959** October: 250 *granturismo* short-wheelbase *berlinetta* announced at the Paris Salon as the Tour de France's successor. It is the first Ferrari coupé with disc brakes

**1960** Steel (street) body joins aluminium (competition); wing air vents. Late in the year, doorframes lose dogleg top, quarterlights added, rear vent moves from screen to roof

**1961** Subtle panel changes, fuel filler moves from boot to rear wing, teardrop side markers fitted. Late in year, rims drop from 16 to 15in

**1963** Last 250GT SWB is delivered in February. The model is replaced by both the 250GT Lusso and the 250GTO





'IT'S AN UNREMITTING POWER TSUNAMI, BUT DELIVERED WITH REAL SILKY SMOOTHNESS'

## Performance

★★★★★

I've had to dock the score by a notch for this section, due to this car's uprated 4.7-litre engine. A dyno printout in the leather-bound history file says that this puts out 355bhp against the standard 302bhp, so you'll need to mentally reduce my impressions by a similar ratio. As it is, if the factory had turned the engines out like this then the Aston would easily have rated the full five stars for performance.

It gives you an idea of what a European muscle car might have been like. An unremitting power tsunami, but delivered with the kind of silky smoothness you simply don't get from a V8. There's no peakiness to the delivery, it just builds and builds the harder you press the pedal. Pass the 100mph mark and this DB4GT is still only just getting into its stride. As in many modern performance cars, there isn't the sensation that you're travelling particularly fast, and that adds to the confidence you feel in the Aston.

At lesser speeds the engine is incredibly tractable, making the car really easy to drive, even in heavy M25 traffic on the way to the test track. It even happily pulls away in second gear. You don't need to be a superhero to drive this DB4GT, but it will make you feel like one.



Redline is 6000, but 5000rpm more is safe; recessed fuel cap



## Handling

★★★★★

This is where the differing characters of the two cars really came to the fore. The Aston takes the role of traditional grand tourer, and gives an Oscar-winning performance. Few cars of this era could even approach its ability to travel seriously quickly over long distances on open roads. And its suppler ride ensures you'd that do so in great comfort, too. The level of stability and assuredness when you push hard through fast, sweeping corners is astonishing, and the grip from those skinny tyres defies the laws of physics. As a mere mortal, I was never able to break traction.

Much as you wouldn't expect Colin Firth to turn up playing the hero in *Fast & Furious 5*, however, the DB4GT has its limitations in being a GT and not a sports car, and they show up most in tighter corners. There the steering weights up quite a bit, with plenty of previously unnoticed understeer pushing you wide, and still no sign of the well-located tail kicking loose. The effect is heightened when you go from lock to lock in the twisty stuff, where compared with the Ferrari the Aston feels almost clumsy. The brakes aren't quite as sharp either, possibly due to the DB's extra weight, so it doesn't shed speed so willingly for those corners.



No overriders for GT; shorter doors and no windowframes



## SPECIFICATIONS

**Sold/number built** 1959-'63/75 (not including Zagatos) **Construction** steel platform chassis, alloy body panels over steel tubular frame

**Engine** all-alloy, dohc 3670cc 'six', twin spark-plugs, three Weber 45DCOE carbs

**Max power** 302bhp @ 6000rpm

**Max torque** 270lb ft @ 4250rpm

**Transmission** four-speed manual, driving rear wheels via LSD **Suspension: front** wishbones, telescopic dampers, anti-roll bar **rear** live axle, parallel trailing arms, Watt linkage, Armstrong lever-arm dampers; coil springs f/r

**Steering** rack and pinion **Brakes** Girling discs

**Wheels & tyres** 5½ x 16in Borrani wires with 185 x 16in Avon tyres

**Length** 14ft 3½in (4362mm)

**Width** 5ft 6in (1676mm)

**Height** 4ft 4in (1321mm)

**Wheelbase** 7ft 9in (2362mm)

**Weight** 2796lb (1271kg)

**0-60mph** 6.4 secs

**Top speed** 150mph **Mpg** 14 **Price new** £4534

## EVOLUTION

**1958** October: DB4 is unveiled at the Paris Salon. With a top speed of 140mph, it bags the title of 'Britain's fastest car'

**1959** Stirling Moss wins GT race on 2 May at Silverstone in the prototype DB4GT, Design Project 199. The new model is announced in October, at £4534 (£779 more than a DB4)

**1960** DB4GTs finish second and third in the Goodwood TT – behind the Moss SWB.

Lighter, faster DB4GT Zagato appears at the London Motor Show in October (19 built)

**1963** Last DB4GT leaves the line in March to make way for the DB5, considered so much better that there is no need for a GT version



## ULTIMATE SHOWDOWN FERRARI 250GT SWB vs ASTON MARTIN DB4GT



### The alternatives



#### MASERATI 3500GT

**Sold/no built** 1957-'64/2227 **0-60mph** 7.6 secs  
**Top speed** 136mph **Mpg** 19 **Value** £75-200,000  
Maserati turned its focus to road cars with this Touring-styled coupé, but there's no denying the marque's competition pedigree. Twin-cam 'six' has 220bhp, or 235bhp with Lucas fuel injection.



#### MERCEDES-BENZ 300SL

**Sold/no built** 1954-'63/3258 **0-60mph** 7 secs  
**Top speed** 140mph **Mpg** 21 **Value** £200-550,000  
Born of the Carrera PanAmericana and Le Mans racers, the spaceframe-chassis Gullwing boasted all-independent suspension and a fuel-injected 'six'. By the time the Aston and Ferrari arrived, though, the SL was available only as a Roadster.

'TWO OF THE MOST ALLURING CREATIONS OF ALL TIME, PLUS AN EMPTY TRACK ON WHICH TO TEST THEM. ALL I HAVE TO DO IS DECIDE WHICH IS BETTER'

### The verdict

Our photographer took one look at these cars and said: "You must be like a kid with keys to the sweetshop." Actually, I felt more like a horny teenager in the *Playboy* mansion. Two of the most alluring creations of all time, plus an empty track on which to put them through their paces. All I had to do was decide which is the better car.

From a straight value-for-money point of view that's easy, because I can see no logical reason for the rarer DB4GT being half the price of the 250GT SWB. Factor out prices, though, and it gets a little more difficult.

In some ways, the Aston wins. It's more complete and easy to live with; more powerful in the mid-range where you do most of your

driving. But then the Ferrari sprinkled its magic dust on me. It truly is the better driver's car, and it would be interesting to run this test with a heart-rate monitor fitted, to see how much quicker my pulse raced when driving the SWB.

All I know is that there was a difference, and it was more marked the more challenging the roads became. There is a spanner in the works, though: when later discussing my disappointment in the Aston's handling with Richard Williams, I discovered that his firm has developed suspension mods that don't alter the car's originality, but do make it corner more like the Ferrari. Now that's something I'd like to try. More laps please, Mr Editor. 