

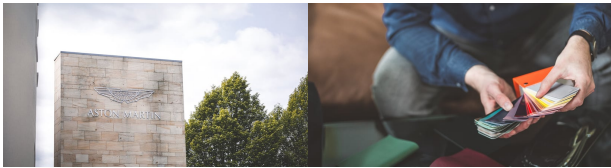
CLASSIC DRIVER

Designing and building the Aston Martin DB11 Classic Driver Edition

Lead

Automatisation might be taking over the automotive industry – but if you want a truly bespoke car, robots still cannot beat artisanal craftsmanship and human skills. Therefore, our limited Aston Martin DB11 Classic Driver Edition is, above all, a handmade Grand Tourer in its purest form.

A perfect match

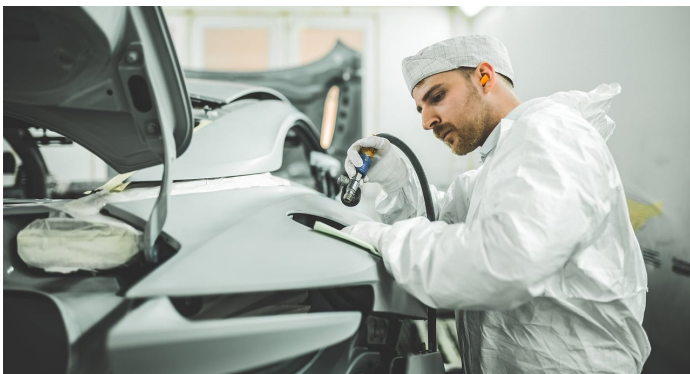


For Classic Driver, Aston Martin has always been the Holy Grail of the automotive world. No other manufacturer has built sports cars as elegant and subtle yet powerful and competitive as the British company in its 100-year-plus history. And while Aston Martin boasts an illustrious heritage, it is also driven by innovation and rapidly moving towards the future of transportation, producing some of the most advanced and avant-garde sports cars and Grand Tourers of our time. But still, its production is very much based on craftsmanship and artisanal skills, characteristics that are especially demonstrated by Q by Aston Martin, the company's in-house personalisation department, responsible for making almost any automotive dream a reality.



Having cultivated a taste for rare, handmade and powerful cars over the past two decades, teaming up with Q by Aston Martin to produce a limited edition car to celebrate our 20th anniversary felt like a perfect match from the start. And having always held a soft spot for Aston Martin's more lightweight eight-cylinder Grand Tourers, we quickly decided on the agile DB11 V8 Coupe and Volante.

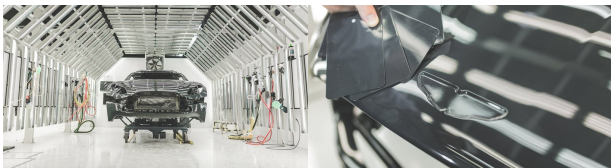
Shades of grey



Inspiration for the colours, trim and details was drawn from numerous cars and objects from our 20-year history, and our lead designer, Ben Knapp Voith, soon developed the initial mood boards visualising the Classic Driver spirit. In our first design meetings with Q by Aston Martin in Gaydon, we narrowed down our ideas to one approach that felt best suited to the car and the occasion of our anniversary.



“One of the great aspects of this project is that we were approached with a very clear idea about what the car represents,” says Robert Lihou, Colour & Trim Designer at Q by Aston Martin. “It celebrates the past and the present, but also looks into the future.”

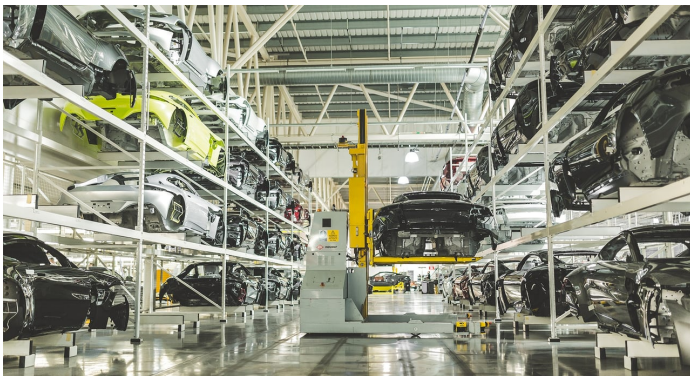


Inspired by Aston Martin’s classic Charcoal Grey – a colour first seen on a DB6 MKII from the collection of our founder and later revived for his Vantage V550, which served as early inspiration for Classic Driver’s corporate grey – the team developed a new colour that sported the original’s glossy and deep effect, but also gave the shade a modern twist by adding very fine and subtle pearls that lend the car an elegant green glow when it’s exposed to sunlight. To achieve the best possible visual effect, the paint – now officially named Classic Driver Grey – had to be applied to each body by hand prior to entering the production line.



“Each vehicle will be individually hand-sprayed, giving a bespoke feel,” says Richard Bosworth, industrialisation specialist for Akzo Nobel, Aston Martin’s paint technology supplier. “We tried to achieve a flat grey, but also using modern pearl pigments – greens, yellows and whites – all working together in sync. Together with the interior, the vehicle will look quite stunning.”

Happily ever after



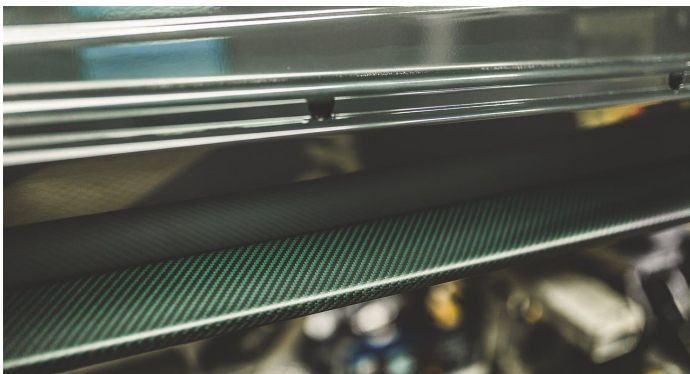
Having left the paint shop and been polished by hand for another day, our first coupe entered the production line where it would spend 48 hours being assembled at 34 work stations, before arriving at the end of the line and proceeding to final testing. Seatbelts, carpets, door and roof panels, head- and taillights, and bumpers and wings were all carefully fitted by workers during the two day and two night shifts the car spent on the line.

Halfway along the production line, the car's body was married to its engine, the new 4.0-litre biturbo V8 that is more than 100kg lighter than the V12 but boasts an impressive 496bhp at 6,000rpm and 675 Nm of torque between 2,000rpm and 5,000rpm. After it was filled with fuel for the first time, the car arrived at the vehicle test stations at the end of the line and the engine was fired, interrupting the industrial soundtrack of the factory floor with its feral roar.

Artisans of leather and trim

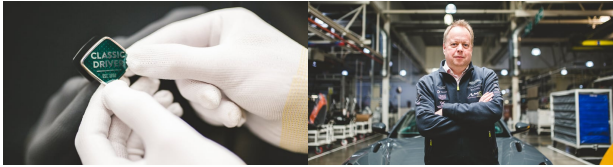


Dark green has been Classic Driver's key corporate colour for 20 years, so the modern-looking shade of Eifel Green from Q by Aston Martin's Caithness leather portfolio was our immediate choice for the interior. In deference to classic Aston Martin cockpits, we opted for the cleanest seats without any additional brogue pattern. They were finished with Classic Driver logos, stitched into the headrests in Parliament Green thread by the impressively skilled and steady-handed leather workers in the factory's trim shop. We also decided to finish the centre dash inlays not in leather or carbon-fibre, but in the exterior colour - an option that was popular among discerning Aston Martin clients in the 1960s.



Taking the subtle grey and green exterior colour combination, we added another twist in the form of a bespoke carbon-fibre bodywork package - including front lips, side splitters, a rear diffuser and matching wheel centre caps - tinted in satin Eifel Green. This gives the car a subtle yet distinctive presence that demands a second look to fully appreciate.

20 cars for 20 years



"This collaboration is the perfect way to celebrate Classic Driver's 20th anniversary," says Aston Martin's President and CEO Andy Palmer while the car rolls off the production line towards the trim and final line where it will receive its final décor, including the famous Aston Martin winged badges and the Classic Driver fender and doorsill plaques. "I can't think of a better way to say happy birthday!" We couldn't agree more.

Photos: Rob Cooper / Mathieu Bonnevie for Classic Driver © 2018

Gallery

