

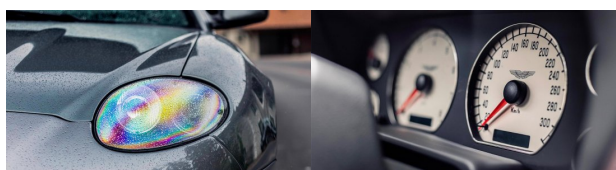
CLASSIC DRIVER

Why it's time to reconsider the Aston Martin DB7 Zagato

Lead

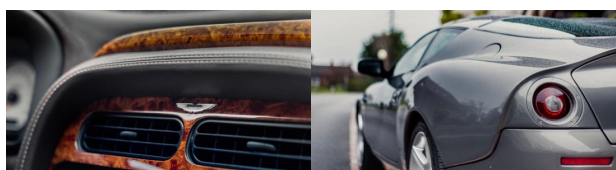
Like a fine wine, the Aston Martin DB7 Zagato has been quietly maturing and increasing in desirability to collectors. And if you deconstruct the ingredients that form its heady Italo-Anglo cuvée of power, style and rarity, it's not difficult to see why...

Collecting cars is a bit like collecting wine – you're never quite sure if a bottle that's been in the cellar for five, 10 or 20 years will turn out to be a delicious revelation or a sour surprise. If we'd have coughed up close to £100,000 for an Aston Martin DB7 back in the early-2000s, we'd now likely be ruing the day we ever set foot in the showroom. However, if we'd have forked out the extra £60,000 for the exotic Zagato-bodied version, of which 99 examples were hand-built at Bloxham, it would be a different story altogether.



The result of a fanciful conversation between Aston Martin's CEO Ulrich Bez and Andrea Zagato at the Pebble Beach Concours d'Elegance in 2001, the DB7 Zagato was conceived as an elaborate swansong for the long-serving Grand Tourer and a fitting way of rekindling one of the automotive world's most evocative partnerships – one, we might add, that still flourishes today.

In August 2002, a hastily built prototype was shown to Aston's most well-heeled clients at a private gathering on London's Savile Row, a fitting location to reveal the automotive embodiment of a strapping English gentleman in a sharply tailored Italian suit. By the time the production version was shown at the Paris Motor Show the following month, the order books had been filled – just 99 cars, so as to safeguard its desirability in the decades to come. For context, you're more than three times more likely to see a Vanquish Zagato than you are another DB7 Zagato.



We'd be inclined to say that the DB7 Zagato's styling – a premier cru of noughties design – has played just as big a role as its rarity in bolstering its desirability. It's hardly surprising that there are echoes of the mythical DB4GT Zagato all over the Anglo-Italo DB7. Well, it was never going to look like the boxy and comparatively terrifying V8 Vantage Zagato from the 1980s, was it?

It's an imposing design that's far too easy to dismiss at first glance. But spend some time to consider its overall proportions and drink in its countless, beautifully executed details and it all starts to make sense. It's textbook Zagato, from the sensuous 'double bubble' that extends to the rear window to the voluptuous rear haunches and the sheer Kamm tail that conceals an ingenious boot-lid that drops down on slick metal cables.



For all the Aston Martin DB7 Zagato's visual extravagance, it's the small square cut-out on the rear bumper, in which the fog and reverse lights are neatly fitted, that's perhaps our favourite feature. It's a neat solution to an aesthetic-driven problem (single rear light clusters *do* look better) and telling of the careful attention to detail paid by the car's designers to ensure the first Z-badged Aston in over 15 years lived up to its illustrious forebears.

Beneath the sleek aluminium body resides a shortened DB7 GT chassis, a mighty 6.0-litre V12 tuned to develop 440bhp and a good old-fashioned six-speed manual gearbox. It's also a not insignificant 60kg lighter than the standard DB7, which, we're told, is noticeable from behind the wheel. Throw in an interior that blends sumptuous aniline leather with carbon-fibre bits and pieces and you've got an Aston that takes the best of the old and new worlds – an appealing proposition for discerning collectors who like to actually use their cars.



The Aston Martin DB7 Zagato is the finest bottle of Merlot, slowly maturing in taste and increasing in desirability – a glance at the values of the handful of examples in the Classic Driver Market will confirm that. Its rarity is music to collectors' ears and, without question, the tiny Z on its flanks automatically makes it among the most desirable objects of design on the planet. It's not too late to celebrate Zagato's centenary, you know. Now, what's the automotive equivalent of raising a glass?

Photos: Sports Classics Geneva

Gallery

