6 September 1973

AUTO CAR

12½p

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TWO ROAD TESTS
Aston Martin V8
Volvo 164E

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AUTO TEST

ASTON MARTIN V8 AUTOMATIC

Improved performance, greater economy

AT-A-GLANCE: New version of V8 Aston engine with four Weber carburettors and automatic transmission, proves nearly as quick as manual injection model, and fractionally more economical. Smooth transmission with good control. Excellent brakes; precise but rather heavy power steering. Poor low speed ride gets better at high speed. A well-equipped car with magnificent stride for long journeys.

OPEN the bonnet of the Aston Martin V8, a new version of which is announced today, and you will see an impressive line-up of carburettors nestling under a huge air filter, in place of the former fuel injection. Direct comparisons are difficult since our previous Aston Martin test dealt with the five-speed manual version, whereas this test car has automatic transmission; but all acceleration figures are within 2 sec of the injection model and economy, despite the penalties of automatic, is better.

In response to full throttle the engine gives out a throaty roar and the car rockets away to reach 60 mph (still in low) in 6.2 sec. This is only 0.2 sec slower than the fuel injection manual car and 100 mph is reached in a remarkably quick 15.7 sec. The time for the standing quarter-mile is also very quick indeed—14.7 sec—and this short distance is sufficient to take the speed to 97 mph. All this is closely comparable with the figures obtained in our earlier Aston Martin V8 test; and without the power losses of automatic transmission, the new carburettor version of the engine in the five-speed car should prove quicker still.

On top speed alone, the automatic car even with carburettors comes some way below the figure set by the manual injection car, but this, too, may be accounted for by the power losses of automatic transmission, and the slightly lower gearing. A 3.07 to 1 final drive is now used in place of the 2.88 unit. The maximum speed runs were timed in perfect conditions on the Continent.

In some respects the engine benefits from the change to carburettors, and maintenance should be simplified. In particular, the response to the throttle is more immediate than before, and there is faultless, smooth idling without any tremor or hunting. The accelerator action is pleasantly progressive and the driver feels in complete command of the huge amount of power available.

For cold starting there is now a manual mixture control, a sliding lever which moves vertically, below the facia. In warm weather it proved scarcely necessary to use this, as the engine would respond with a touch of throttle instead, even for the first start of the morning. Starting when hot, however, is always a problem. The makers' advice that the engine should be started when hot with the throttle "just cracked open" was carefully followed, and sometimes it worked; but on many occasions a lot of embarrassing churning over on the inordinately noisy starter motor was necessary before it would fire. Once the engine has started it pulls cleanly straight away, without any protracted warming up or stalling at traffic lights.

As impressive as the car's vigorous acceleration is its effortless fast cruising. In contrast with the trend for automatic cars to be too low geared, the Aston is still geared for speed, and 100 mph corresponds nicely with 4,000 rpm on the slightly over-reading rev counter. Long distances were covered with the car cruising at a relaxed 120 mph, and the willingness of other drivers to pull over and make way for the Aston and the rapidity with which speed can be regained, contribute to the exceptionally high average speeds which can be achieved on Continental motorways.

Noise

A real grand tourer, the Aston is one of those cars whose quietness becomes more impressive the faster it is driven. With refrigeration as standard, there is never any need to have windows open for ventilation. Both front and rear quarter vents are fixed, and the lack of wind noise is most impressive. At low speeds, and when ac-

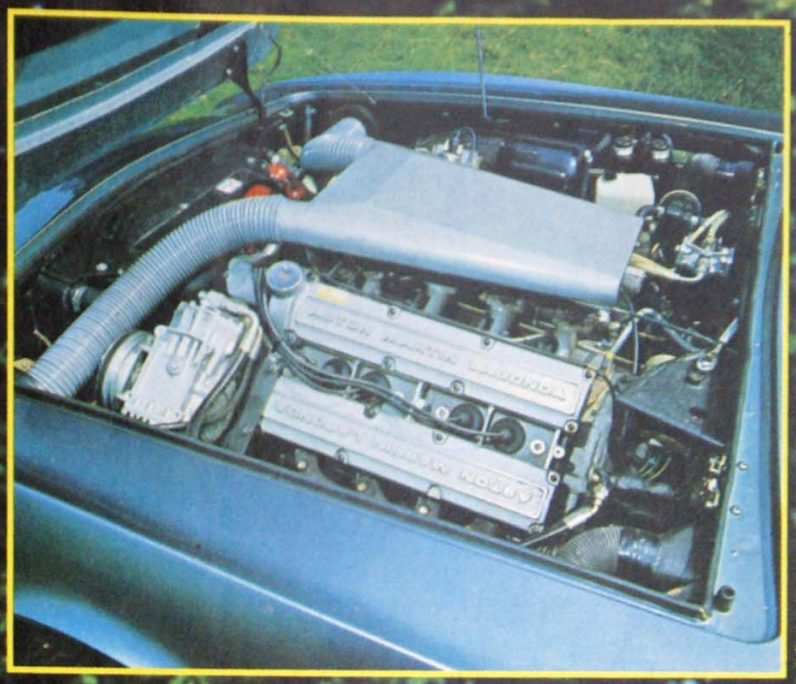
celerating hard, the engine is relatively noisy and sounds fussy; one is never left in any doubt that this V8 engine has four overhead camshafts bearing directly on to valve buckets instead of the more usual arrangement of hydraulic tappets. Yet as speed goes up, the noise level seems to go down, and voices have to be raised only slightly at three-figure speeds.

Transmission

The Aston is similar to the Jensen Interceptor in using Chrysler Torque-flite automatic transmission. On account of the engine noise already mentioned, one notices all the more the "slip" in the torque converter, and when accelerating amid town traffic it is evident that the engine speeds up, but that the car does not at once respond. This effect is greatly reduced if the manual selector is used to bring in Intermediate. The selector arrangement follows a very logical pattern we have long advocated, with free movement between the two most frequently needed positions—D (or top gear) and Intermediate. Stops, cleared by pressing a button in the top of the central selector lever, are positioned on either side of these points, protecting accidental engagement of either Neutral or Low. Because it is so easy just to pull the lever back for Intermediate, this tends to be used more frefrequently, giving good part-throttle response.

Transmission changes both up and down are extremely smooth, even if Intermediate is selected on the overrun for engine braking. Upper limits for the kickdown are at 67 mph into Intermediate, and 30 mph into Low. Maximum automatic upshift speeds in the two gears are 44 and 78 mph respectively on full throttle, but the selector can be used to hold the gears to 64 and no less than 108 mph, corresponding to the start of the red zone on the rev counter at 6,000 rpm.

Moved fully forward, at rest, the selector locks the transmission in the Park position, to supplement the handbrake, which holds reliably on a 1 in 3 gradient.



The latest version of the Aston Martin uses four Weber downdraught twin-choke carburettors in place of the previous fuel injection. The large air-cleaner for the carburettors is positioned above them and has necessitated a bigger air intake on the bonnet top. The underbonnet appearance is neat and organised, and the cam covers for the four overhead camshafts dominate the scene. Below: the larger air intake is the only external identification of the carburettored car. The beautiful, yet purposeful lines remain unchanged

Ride and Handling

Power assistance is a standard fitting on the Aston Martin V8, in conjunction with rack and pinion steering, and it reduces the effort of controlling the car without spoiling feel. It is still relatively heavy, and the turning circles are excessive. There is a lot of reaction through the steering on poor roads, but the wheel can be held lightly and the car follows a straight course without too much conscious steering. At high speed the extreme accuracy of control is appreciated, and maximum speed runs were very easy and undemanding.

In much the same way, the ride comfort improves with speed. At low speed the total lack of compliance in the suspension gives a decidedly knobbly ride, and any substantial bump in the surface brings sharp reaction and audible thumping

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ASTON MARTIN V8 AUTOMATIC

through the suspension. Road noise diminishes, and the ride becomes more level as the speed builds up, and the comfortable way in which the car soaks up big undulations at speed on a motorway is very satisfying, and contributes to the restful high-speed progress. Selectaride dampers are no longer fitted, but the compromise chosen is a good solution.

With a close to 50/50 weight distribution, the Aston is an extremely well-balanced car with tremendous cornering power available when required. There is quite strong castor action which feels like understeer, but the wheels actually follow a chosen line very accurately indeed. In extreme conditions the rear wheels slide outward, but do so in a smooth and controllable manner. Grip in the wet on the Avon tyres fitted is good, and either in braking or cornering, the car is unlikely to skid unless provoked.

Brakes

Large diameter disc brakes are fitted at front and rear, with twin servos; both front and rear discs are ventilated. In ordinary driving one gets the impression of having to press the pedal rather firmly, but this is more a result of speeds that are higher than in most cars rather than any criticism of the brakes themselves. The pedal is wide on the automatic transmission model to suit left or right foot braking. A moderate effort of 80 lb produces a better than 1 g stop from 30 mph. A little fade built up during repeated tests from 70 mph, but it was only slight. The occasional need to use the brakes firmly from above 100 mph produced some roughness by the time the speed had come down to about 50 mph, but again without impairing their effectiveness. There is considerable nose-dive under heavy braking.

As well as holding securely on steep gradients, the handbrake gives unusually good deceleration of 0.42 g from 30 mph, when used as an emergency brake, and this represents a big improvement over the earlier model. A fly-off handbrake is retained. Separate front and rear hydraulic systems are fitted, with individual low fluid level warning tell-tales.

Fuel

Aston's official recommendation for the carburettor V8 is fuel of 97-octane minimum rating, which should be a great relief to owners travelling far abroad, where nothing over 98-octane is usually available. Twin SU electric fuel pumps are in the boot, close to a tank of redesigned shape allowing the spare wheel to lie flat in a well formed beside it. Capacity is unchanged at 21 gallons.

Consumption varied considerably during the test, falling to below 10 mpg in London traffic, and reaching a best of 16.5 mpg on a run when the performance was not used too hard over a main road route with a lot of traffic to keep down speeds. Sustained 120 mph cruising still did not affect the consumption figure too badly, and on such journeys 13 mpg was regularly obtained. The overall consumption, including testing and considerable town work, was 12.4 mpg, after correction for a slightly *under-reading* mileometer. From full tank to the point when the fuel warning lamp begins to flash (3 gallons remaining) there are 18 gallons available, enough for some 240 miles as a touring range.

The tank has twin filler flaps beneath magnetically-fastened flaps. They should both be open to provide venting for fast refuelling. An important point—regrettably overlooked on one occasion during the test—is that the boot must not be opened during refuelling, as the lid fouls the fuel flap when open.

There was no noticeable drop in engine oil level during the test, and we were impressed at the way the magnificent big engine remains so spotlessly clean and free from grime or oil stains on long journeys.

Embossed leather upholstery, a full complement of instruments, and sensible sighting of the controls all add up to the finest in Grand Touring comfort. Power steering permits the use of a small diameter steering wheel, while the selector lever for the Chrysler Torqueflite automatic gearbox falls readily to hand

Fittings and Equipment

In most respects the interior appointments come up to the high standard which one expects in so expensive a car. The seats are upholstered in embossed leather. There is a good range of fore-and-aft adjustment, but no ready provision for adjustment of height. A large handwheel on the inside edge of the squab of both seats adjusts the rake of the back rest, and most drivers find they can obtain a very comfortable seating position. Although the new bigger dome on the bonnet can be seen from the driving seat, there is still a good view forward. It is only judgement of the considerable (6 ft) width of the car that is sometimes a little difficult.

A small lever on the outer edge of the seat releases the catch and allows the back rest to tip forward for access to the rear compartment, and even adults find it quite easy to climb in the back. Because of the fairly steep fall in the roof line, headroom in the back is pretty limited and there is a fairly sharp ridge just above the heads of those sitting in the back. The back seat is essentially shaped for two, with a folding centre armrest, but three can sit there at a pinch for short trips, and in fact the car was used to carry five adults and two young children on one occasion, without too much discomfort. Both front and rear seats are fairly softly upholstered, and comfortable to sit in; but although there is some curving of the front seat squabs, even more lateral support on corners would be appreciated. We certainly emerged feeling fresh and free from any discomfort, after covering long distances in the Aston.

We were lucky to have some very warm weather during the test, giving ample opportunity to assess the refrigeration system, which is a standard fitting. There is a four-speed control for the booster. On the slowest setting it is still quite effective, and scarcely audible; the faster speeds can be used when required, to accelerate the cooling-down procedure. A sliding lever with electrical contacts regulates the air-conditioning and temperature. Moved fully to the left it cuts out the compressor; about $\frac{1}{4}$ in. from the left the air-conditioning is at maximum output, and as the lever is moved to the right, the cooling effect is reduced by blending with ambient air. We found that it was generally possible to obtain just the right amount of cooling, and the system generally worked extremely well.

The lever below the temperature regulator controls the distribution of incoming air, which is supplied through no fewer than eight outlets. Two of these are footwell outlets, one on each side, and others are distributed neatly about the facia, with adjustable vanes. When the car has been parked in the sun and become very hot inside, the interior temperature is quickly reduced by the refrigeration. Our only criticism of the system is that after about an hour or so it tended to cut-out, but it quickly recovered if the compressor was switched off for a minute or two. A pool of condensation sometimes trickles out beneath the car when it is parked, causing consternation to passers-by.

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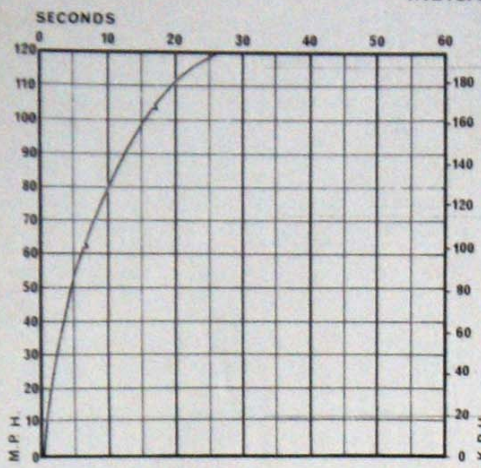
ASTON MARTIN V8 AUTOMATIC (5,340 c.c.)

ACCELERATION



SPEED MPH TRUE / INDICATED	TIME IN SECS
30 / 30	2.6
40 / 40	3.7
50 / 50	4.8
60 / 60	6.2
70 / 70	8.2
80 / 80	10.2
90 / 90	12.7
100 / 100	15.7
110 / 110	19.8
120 / 120	25.0

GEAR RATIOS AND TIME IN SEC

mph	Top (3.07–6.14)	Inter (4.45–8.9)	Low (7.52–5.04)
0–20	—	—	1.5
10–30	—	—	1.8
20–40	—	—	2.0
30–50	—	2.9	2.1
40–60	4.2	3.3	2.5
50–70	4.8	3.7	—
60–80	5.7	4.0	—
70–90	6.4	4.4	—
80–100	6.8	5.3	—
90–110	7.5	—	—
100–120	9.3	—	—

Standing ¼-mile
14.7 sec 97 mph

Standing Kilometre
26.7 sec 122 mph
Test distance
1,520 miles
Mileage recorder
1.3 per cent under-reading

PERFORMANCE

MAXIMUM SPEEDS

Gear	mph	kph	rpm
Top (mean)	146	235	5,570
(best)	147	237	5,600
Inter	108	174	6,000
Low	64	103	6,000

BRAKES

FADE
(from 70 mph in neutral)
Pedal load for 0.5g stops in lb

1	40–35	6	40–35
2	40–37	7	40–35
3	45–35	8	45–35
4	45–35	9	50–35
5	40–35	10	50–35

RESPONSE (from 30 mph in neutral)

Load	g	Distance
40 lb	0.37	81 ft
60 lb	0.75	40 ft
80 lb	1.04	37.6 ft
100 lb	1.05	28.7 ft
Handbrake	0.42	72 ft
Max. Gradient	1 in 3	

COMPARISONS

MAXIMUM SPEED MPH

Maserati Indy 4.7	(£9,677)	156
Porsche Carrera RS Touring	(£7,193)	149
Aston Martin V8	**(£9,593)**	**146**
Jensen SP	(£7,320)	143
Jaguar E-Type V12	(£3,580)	142

0–60 MPH, SEC

Porsche Carrera RS Touring	5.5
Aston Martin V8	**6.2**
Jaguar E-Type V12	6.8
Jensen SP	6.9
Maserati Indy 4.7	7.5

STANDING ¼-MILE, SEC

Porsche Carrera RS Touring	14.1
Jaguar E-Type V12	14.6
Aston Martin V8	**14.7**
Jensen SP	14.8
Maserati Indy 4.7	15.6

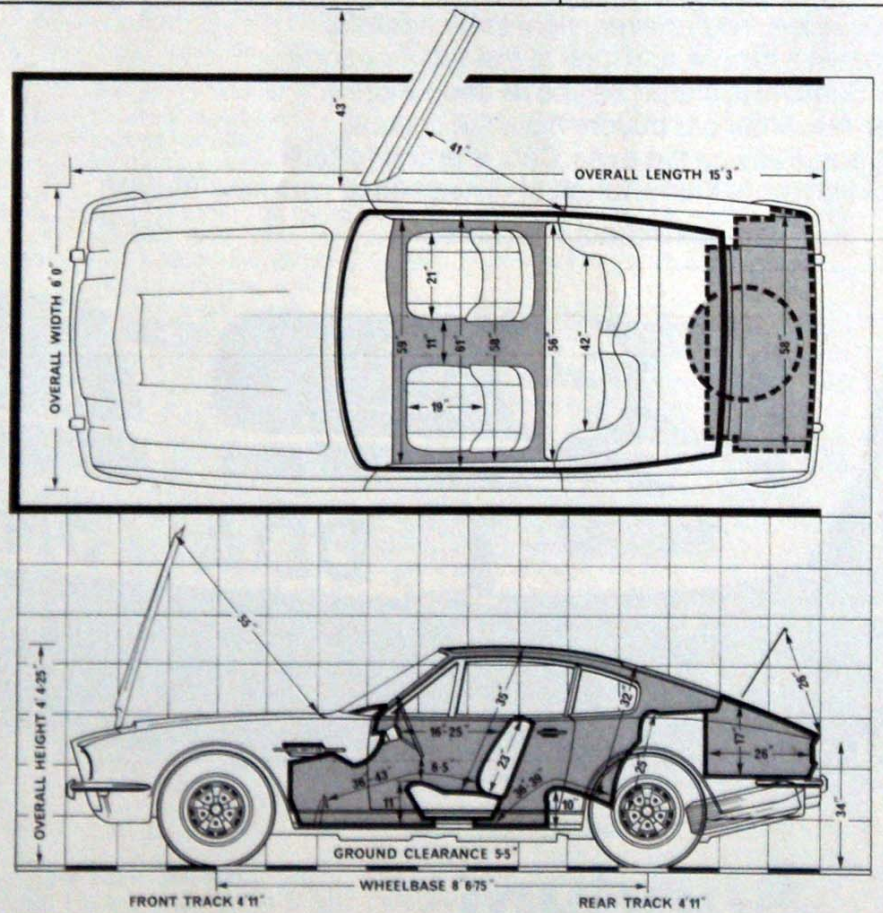
OVERALL MPG

Porsche Carrera RS Touring	16.7
Jaguar E-Type V12	15.2
Maserati Indy 4.7	13.9
Jensen SP	13.0
Aston Martin V8	**12.4**

GEARING

(with GR70VR 15 in. tyres)

Top . . . 26.2 mph per 1,000 rpm
Inter . . . 18.1 mph per 1,000 rpm
Low . . . 10.7 mph per 1,000 rpm



STANDARD GARAGE 16 ft x 8 ft 6 in.

CONSUMPTION

FUEL
(At constant speed—mpg)

30 mph	22.1
40 mph	19.3
50 mph	18.8
60 mph	17.5
70 mph	15.9
80 mph	14.3
90 mph	12.7
100 mph	11.3

Typical mpg 13 (21.7 litres/100 km)
Calculated (DIN) mpg . . . 14.5
Overall mpg . . . 12.4
Grade of fuel . . Premium, 4-star (min. 97RM)

OIL
Consumption (SAE 10W/40) . . . negligible

TEST CONDITIONS
Weather: Perfect. Wind: 0–10 mph.
Temperature: 24 deg. C. (76 deg. F).
Barometer: 29.8 in. hg. Humidity 46 per cent.
Surfaces: Dry concrete and asphalt.

WEIGHT
Kerb Weight 35.06 cwt (3,930 lb—1,783 kg).
(with oil, water and half full fuel tank).
Distribution, per cent F, 52.0; R, 48.0.
Laden as tested: 38.35 cwt (4,300 lb—1,950 kg).

TURNING CIRCLES:
Between kerbs L, 41 ft 1 in.; R, 41 ft 4 in.
Between walls L, 43 ft 4 in.; R, 43 ft 5 in.
Steering wheel turns, lock to lock 2.9.
Figures taken at 4,300 miles by our own staff at the Motor Industry Research Association proving ground at Nuneaton and on the Continent.

SPECIFICATION FRONT ENGINE, REAR-WHEEL DRIVE

ENGINE

Cylinders	8 in 90-deg vee
Main bearings	5
Cooling system	Water; pump, thermostat and viscous-coupling fan
Bore	100 mm (3.94 in.)
Stroke	85 mm (3.35 in.)
Displacement	5,340 c.c. (326 cu. in.)
Valve gear	Twin overhead camshafts per cylinder bank
Compression ratio	9-to-1. Min. octane rating: 97RM
Carburettors	Four Weber downdraught twin-choke 42 DCNF 27
Fuel pump	Twin SU electric
Oil filter	Full-flow, remote mounting
Max. power	Not quoted
Max. torque	Not quoted

TRANSMISSION

Gearbox	Chrysler Torque Flite 3-speed epicyclic with torque converter Top (Auto) 1.0–2.0 Inter 1.45–2.90 Low 2.45–4.90 Reverse 2.2–4.40
Final drive	Hypoid bevel, limited-slip, 3.07 to 1

CHASSIS and BODY

Construction	Steel box-section chassis with steel superstructure and aluminium body

SUSPENSION

Front	Independent; double wishbones, coil springs, telescopic dampers
Rear	De Dion axle located by twin radius rods each side and Watts linkage coil springs, lever arm dampers

STEERING

Type	Adwest power assisted rack and pinion
Wheel dia.	15 in.

BRAKES

Make and type	Girling ventilated disc front and rear, divided hydraulic circuits.
Servo	Two vacuum type
Dimensions	F 10.75 in. dia. R 10.38 in. dia.
Swept area	F 259 sq. in., R 209 sq. in. Total 468 sq. in. (244 sq. in./ton laden)

WHEELS

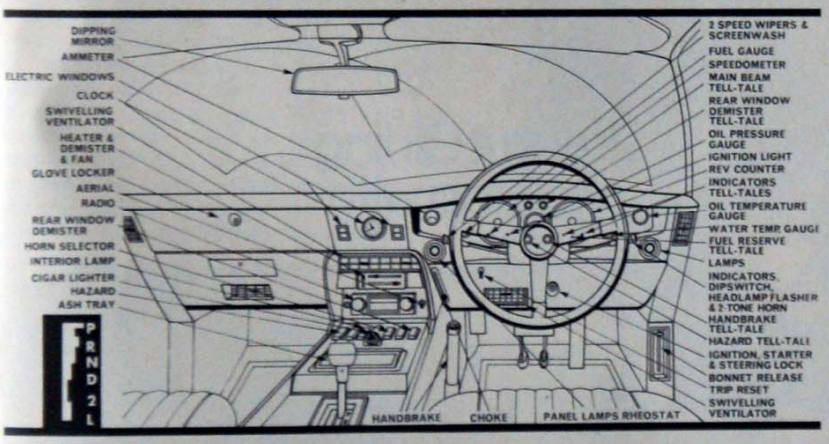
Type	Cast aluminium alloy, ventilated 7 in. wide rim.
Tyres—make	Avon
—type	Radial ply tubed
—size	GR70VR—15 in.

EQUIPMENT

Battery	12 Volt 68 Ah.
Alternator	75 amp
Headlamps	Halogen 110/120 watt (total)
Reversing lamp	Standard
Electric fuses	12
Screen wipers	Two-speed, with flick-wipe provision.
Screen washer	Standard, electric
Interior heater	Standard, water valve control.
Heated backlight	Standard
Safety belts	Standard
Interior trim	Leather seats, nylon headlining.
Floor covering	Wilton carpet
Jack	Hydraulic pillar
Jacking points	4, under sills
Windscreen	Laminated (with Sundym tinting)
Underbody protection	Bitumastic treatment after painting.

MAINTENANCE

Fuel tank	21 Imp. gallons (95.5 litres)
Cooling system	32 pints (inc. heater)
Engine sump	20 pints (11.3 litres) SAE 20/50. Change oil every 2,500 miles. Change filter every 5,000 miles.
Gearbox (automatic)	15 pints. SAE ATF-A. Change every 20,000 miles.
Final drive	3.5 pints. SAE EP90LS. Change every 10,000 miles.
Grease	6 points every 2,500 miles. 4 points every 10,000 miles.
Valve clearance	Inlet 0.008–0.009 in. (cold). Exhaust 0.012–0.013 in. (cold).
Contact breaker	0.022 in. gap.
Ignition timing	10 deg. BTDC (static) 30 deg. BTDC (stroboscopic at 3,000 rpm)
Spark plug	Type: Champion N9Y. Gap 0.025 in.
Compression pressure	140–150 psi.
Tyre pressures	F 35; R 35 psi (normal driving) F 40; R 40 psi (high speed) F 40; R 40 psi (full load)
Max. payload	750 lb (340 kg)



Service Interval	2,500 miles	5,000 miles	10,000 miles
Time Allowed (hours and mins.)	7.00	15.00	23.00
Cost @ £3.30 per hour	£23.10	£49.50	£75.90
Oil Change	£5.00	£5.00	£5.00
Oil Filter	—	£1.10	£1.10
Breather Filter	—	—	—
Air Filter	—	—	£3.30
Contact breaker points	—	—	—
Sparking plugs	—	—	£2.64
Total Cost:	£28.10	£55.60	£87.94

Routine Replacements:	Time (hours & mins)	Cost (labour)	Spares	Total:
Brake Pads—Front (set)	1.00	£3.30	£19.14	£22.44
Brake Pads—Rear (set)	1.30	£4.95	£5.38	£10.33
Exhaust System	5.00	£16.50	£93.50	£110.00
Clutch	10.00	£33.00	£67.64	£100.64
Dampers—Front (pair)	4.00	£13.20	£22.53	£35.73
Dampers—Rear (pair)	2.00	£6.60	£32.38	£38.98
Replace Drive Shaft	6.00	£19.80	£58.67	£78.47
Replace Generator	1.30	£4.95	£34.10	£39.05
Replace Starter	1.30	£4.95	£46.92	£51.87

Only one belt is used to drive the compressor although two pulleys are provided. Power consumption is considerable and, for example, adds over 1 second to the time taken to accelerate from 30 to 100 mph in Intermediate. Naturally it was switched off for all performance testing.

Electrically-operated window lifts are standard, with two-way switches accessible on either side of the electric clock. The window lifts work vigorously, and are independent of the ignition—one can still close the windows on locking up even if the key has already been taken out of the ignition and steering lock.

The combined Stereo Eight Radiomobile cartridge player and AM radio is standard. It is not up to the quality of the rest of the car since as a radio it is inferior to the ordinary Radiomobile push-button set, and cartridges are awkwardly big for a car such as the Aston in which extra interior space is at a premium.

As an alternative, buyers may specify the Bosch self-seeking AM/FM stereo radio, or a combined radio and stereo cassette unit. The aerial is telescopic, with electrical remote operation; the switch for it is to the right of the set.

Just below the radio is a line of switches across the width of the console, with hazard warning light switch on the left, and switch for the heated rear window (also standard) on the right. Either side of the cigarette lighter is a switch for the usefully bright interior lights, and a horn change-over switch. The horn is sounded by pressing in the right-hand steering column lever, which is also the indicators switch and headlamp flasher control. If the horn changeover switch is down, the finger-tip button sounds a dignified deep bass, changing to strident air horns when the switch is up. Two more switches on the console are blanks for optional equipment. A finger-tip switch on the left of the column works the two-speed wipers which clear the screen well on the driver's side but, on the test car, left a large triangle uncleared in front of the passenger. The knob is pressed in to work vigorous electrically-operated washers, and is pulled back towards the screen to give a single to-and-fro sweep of the wipers.

It seems rather pretentious that the speedometer is calibrated to 200 mph. A larger instrument with wider calibrations up to 160 mph would have been preferable, and for Continental touring, kph markings would be appreciated. However, the speedometer is one of the most accurate we have ever had, remaining correct within 1 mph right up to 130 mph. The matching instrument on the right is the rev counter, with red sector starting at 6,000 rpm. All the instruments have chrome bezels and flat glasses prone to pick up confusing reflections. Smaller dials indicate amps, fuel level, oil pressure and temperature, and water temperature. In fast cruising, all three needles—oil pressure and temperature and the water temperature, are steady at about the 85 mark, which makes it easy to check them at a glance. The Kienzle clock keeps very good time. Warning lamps above and below the oil pressure gauge are for choke (above, left) and handbrake (below, right). The other two are separate indicators for loss of brake fluid. Main beam, ignition, low fuel, and indicator tell-tales are fitted in the speedometer and rev counter.

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ASTON MARTIN V8 AUTOMATIC. . .

The dual fuel filler caps, below the rear screen, are no longer fitted with locks; light alloy wheels are standard

Living with the Aston Martin V8

A push-down lever on the right releases the bonnet for which, being front-hinged, there is no safety catch. A prop has to be used to hold the bonnet up, but one is provided on each side, which helps greatly as the width of the panel is too great to reach across. Access under the bonnet is very reasonable indeed, considering the size of the engine, and dipsticks for engine oil and transmission fluid are easily reached on the right. All piping and much of the wiring is conveniently accessible, and there is very good access to the distributor and sparking plugs. Lucas Opus electronic ignition is used, eliminating the routine attention required by a distributor with conventional points.

The four huge Weber carburettors are positioned within the vee, where they are easily reached once the air filter has been unclipped and lifted up. A single drive belt powers the alternator alone, and another drives the refrigeration compressor. Twin belts drive the water and power steering pumps, as well as the big multi-blade fan, for which there is a viscous coupling to reduce noise and power losses at high revs. A usefully bright light on the inside of the bonnet panel comes on when the bonnet is open. This is independent of ignition or lighting switches, but as a battery isolator switch is fitted in the boot — a long established Aston tradition — it is easy to turn it off when working on the engine.

A single wing nut is undone to release the battery cover for topping up, and as the unit is located in the boot, away from engine heat, need to top up should be rare. On top of the battery cover are straps to fasten the jack and a generous set of chrome-plated tools by King-Dick. There is also a bright boot lamp, which comes on when the boot lid is raised, and the boot itself can be left unlocked when desired. The spring loading of the boot lid on the test car was too weak, and would not hold the lid up when the car was on a gradient.

The jack is of quick action hydraulic pillar type, and jacking points with rubber grommets are readily accessible beneath the sills.

For convenience when locking the car, the passenger door can be locked remotely by means of a switch on the armrest of the driver's door; but the driver's door itself can be locked only from outside, with the key. Separate keys are provided for ignition, doors and boot.

Above: Push-button switches replace the previous rocker types, and the air-conditioning panel has been completely redesigned

Left: at the rear, the seats are well shaped, with small armrests at the outboard ends; note the very neat fitting of the seat belt to the transmission tunnel

Safety belts are of the inertia reel type, by Britax. They are slightly awkward to reach with the doors closed, and tend to get caught on the back end of the armrest; but once fastened they are comfortable and there are buckles on the belts to allow the lap strap component to be pulled really tight while the shoulder strap is restrained only by the inertia mechanism, as some people like. The facia is well-padded, but it is surprising that the steering column lock and the adjustment for the trip mileometer both protrude in areas where they could cause injury to the driver's knees in an accident.

A small panel in front of the passenger can be unscrewed with a coin and removed to reveal the neat array of fuses. Space for oddments in the car is confined to the wide and quite roomy locker in front of the passenger. Its lid serves as a tray, when open, and is lockable. Inside this compartment is a neat pull-out map reading light. There are map pockets on the backs of the seats. Ashtrays for the rear passengers are built into the rear part of the doors, and the front ashtray is a huge tip-up unit in the console.

Conclusion

Full appreciation of the Aston Martin V8 comes only when the car is used for a substantial Continental journey; then its unobtrusive way of covering the ground at great speed can be enjoyed to the full. Around town and in traffic, it tends to feel very bulky, and the high noise level in low speed acceleration is a bit irksome. As a piece of engineering from a small firm with limited resources, it has to be admired and the change from fuel injection to carburettors seems to have produced worthwhile improvements. □

MANUFACTURER:
Aston Martin Lagonda Ltd., Newport Pagnell, Buckinghamshire

PRICES	
Basic	£8,050.00
Special Car Tax	£670.84
VAT	£872.08
Total (in GB)	**£9,592.92**
Seat Belts	standard
Licence	£25
Delivery charge (London)	Free
Number plates	£6
Total on the Road (exc. insurance)	**£9,623.92**
Insurance	Group 7
EXTRAS (inc. VAT)	
Electric sunroof	£369.41
Rearguard foglamps (pair)	£29.79
Halogen Spot or foglamps (each)	£12.51
Rear seat belts	£19.66
Non-standard paint or trim	£143.00
Door mirror	£11.44
TOTAL AS TESTED ON THE ROAD	**£9,623.92**