

# McCAHILL TESTS

# The



With famed maestro Paul Whiteman, Tom admires the Italian-looking \$7,290 Aston coupe.

**A stylish looker, and a real bomb that can do zero to 60 in less than ten seconds, the DB 2-4 Aston is a hot sports car.**

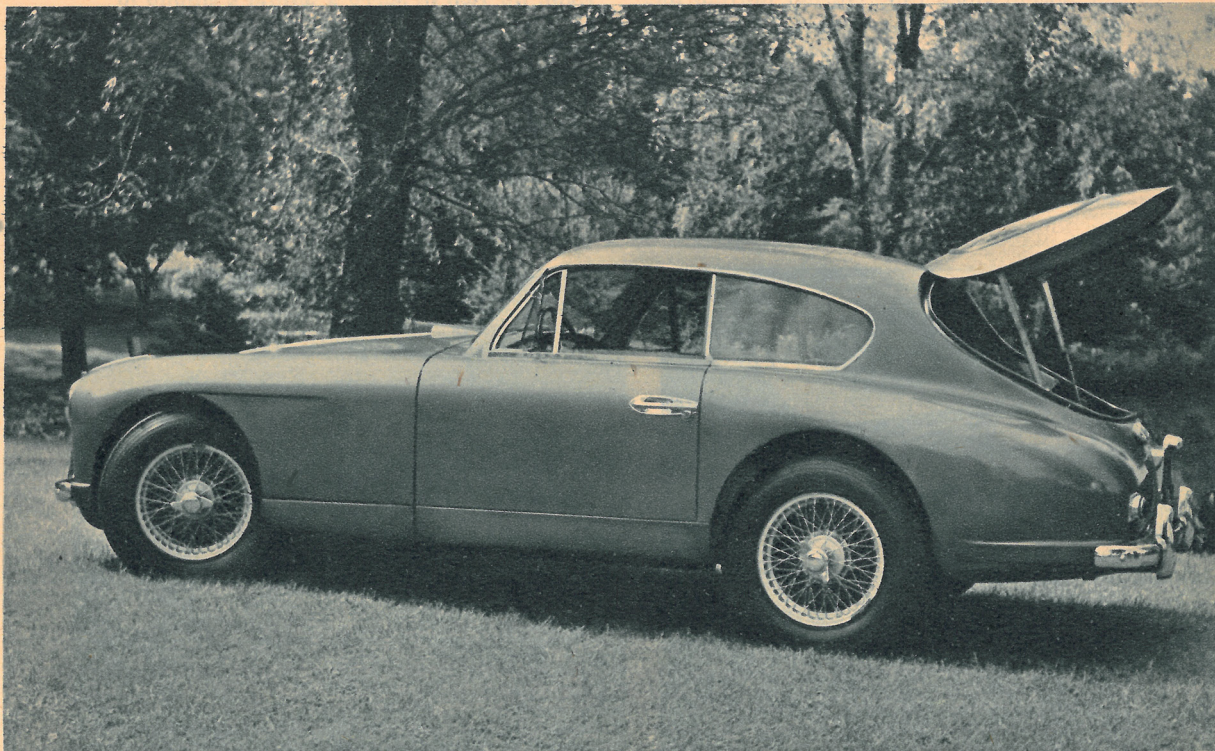
**By Tom McCahill**

**S**TILETTO it up the middle, or slice it down the back, any way you do it the Aston Martin still comes out the best-looking car ever nailed together in England. As English as Yorkshire pudding and a correctly-rolled umbrella, its design is nevertheless 100 per cent Italian school.

Back in 1951 I tested the first post-war Aston in the United States. I didn't like the way it handled *at all* and I said so on these pages. The front end was very unsure and the car was, in my opinion and Phil Walter's (who made the tests with me), slightly less dangerous than playing stick-ball with a loaded grenade. Front-end changes were made by the factory almost immediately and the car quickly gained the reputation of being one of the finest sports car coupes in the world. And



# Aston Martin



DB stands for manufacturer David Brown; 2-4 means that it seats two or four people.

rightly so. However, my rough criticism of the first one in the country, which I *still* say was an awful dog, gave the pseudo and prototype purist and automotive pamphleteer a field day. If I had accused Churchill of being a white slaver I couldn't have started a bigger rumpus. In fact, to this day, almost four years later, I still get letters telling me I goofed on this test.

Now, boys and girls, your Uncle Tom can goof like anyone else, but this time I don't feel I did. Discounting any ability I might have, Phil Walters, winner of the 1954 Watkins Glen Grand Prix, felt the same way and he shared in the original driving tests with me. To quote him as best I can remember, Phil said, "This car scares me to death." Anyone reading this who thinks he can outdrive Walters, or outnerve him

in a tight spot, will please step forward.

I am relating all this at the outset because I think the new Aston Martin DB 2-4 is one of the greatest sports car buys in the world and I don't want to give anyone a chance to say I am backtracking to make up for what I wrote in 1951. That car was a real pig, period.

The Aston Martin comes as close to being the perfect sports car, with complete utilitarian features, as you can find. The new DB 2-4 is better than any they have ever built before and can be called, with a certain amount of reservation, a four-passenger job with loads of luggage space. Actually, behind the two comfortable barrel seats in front are two leather-covered holes which can be used in an emergency by a full-blown adult but are more appro-

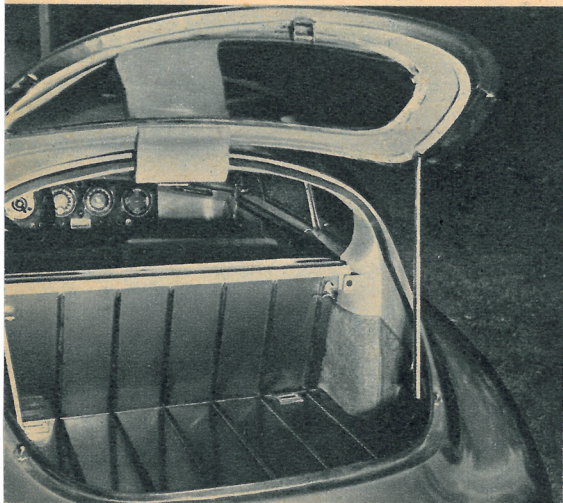


priate for Junior, going on 12, and little Petunia, age unknown. This is a sports car for the guy with small issue, not only in numbers but in size.

The most attractive feature to me is the way this model turns into an American station wagon-like carrier. For the average guy this is the greatest advance in sports car design since they started putting engines in them. The graceful rear deck opens up like the rear deck of any suburban and the back of the rear passenger seats folds forward, making a metal floor long enough to carry two unconscious basketball players. The opening in the back, with rear deck lifted, is wide enough and high enough for a polar bear to walk

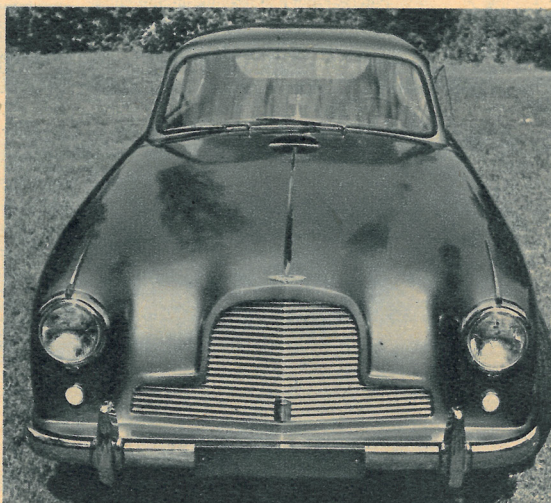
inside without removing his hat. The quality of the appointments and interior finish are superb and the cars are now coming through with foot vents to relieve the very unpleasant heat conditions of the past.

Here for the first time is a magnificent, high-performing sports car with enough room for two to carry a winter's supply of clothes, the television set and two cases of beer. You can unload your Aston in Florida and immediately enter a race with the car, bearing in mind that very few production sports cars in the world can beat you—if any—providing you hold the term "production sports car" to the letter. These jobs, ready for a trip or a race, will top 120



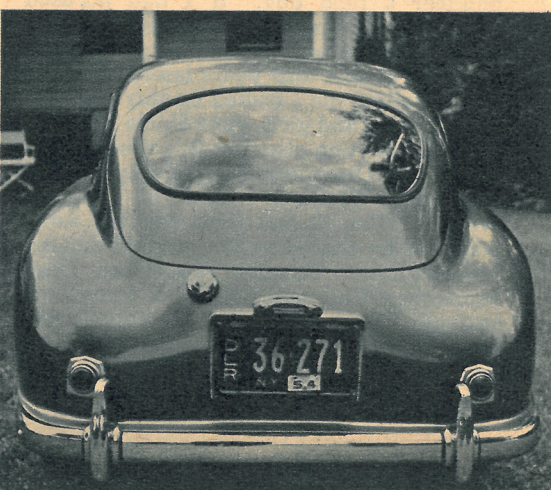
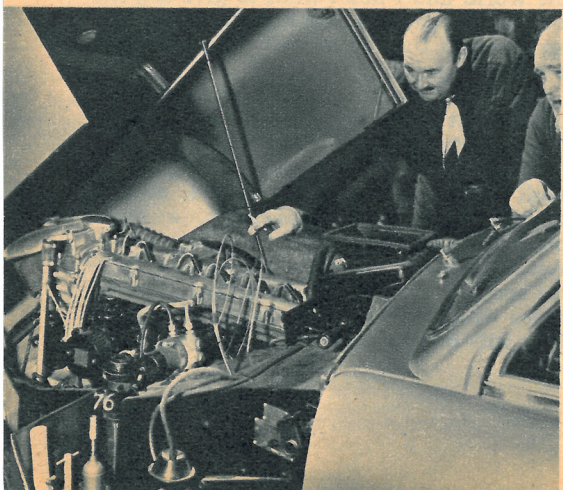
A rarity among sports cars, the Aston has lots of luggage space. When rear deck is pushed back it provides two small seats for extra passengers.

Bandleader Whiteman and Tom inspect the power plant. Note the way the hood, hinged at the front, opens up to give complete access to engine.



Smooth, flowing lines of the car contribute to a top speed of better than 120 mph. Entire hood, including lights and grille, opens toward front.

Time after time, says Uncle Tom, he clocked the Aston coupe's zero to 60 mph acceleration at less than 10 seconds, red-hot performance for any car.





mph and get to 60 from a standstill—with two people—in under 10 seconds.

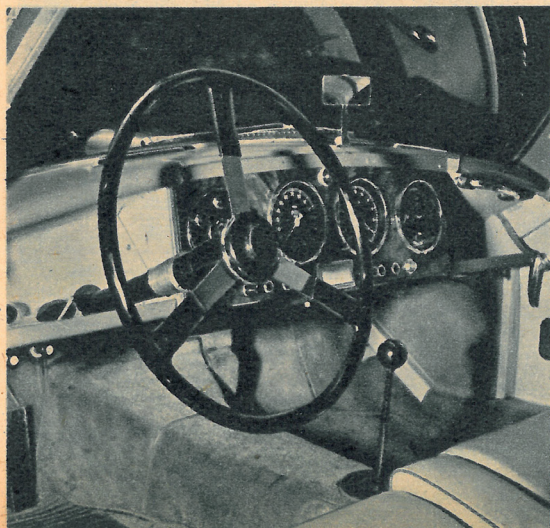
What really sold me on the Aston, as a truly great sports car, was an incident I was witness to at the Le Mans race back in 1952. In my book, *The Modern Sports Car*, I tell about this and here is what I wrote:

"Here is the epitome, the most perfect use of a sports car I have ever witnessed. At the 1952 Le Mans race in France, two Englishmen drove an Aston Martin coupe in the 24-hour grind and finished in seventh place against the best competition in the world. After the race, instead of sending the car to a garage to be shipped home, as most Le Mans entries are, these two Englishmen drove it to the Conti-



Taking the sharp turns on McCahill's private test course the Aston "grooved them like the Super Chief," Tom learned. He thinks the car is great.

Interior appointments of the car are the finest. Steering wheel can be adjusted up and down for the convenience and overall size of the driver.



## SPECIFICATIONS

### MODEL TESTED:

1954 Aston Martin DB 2-4 Coupe

### ENGINE:

6 cylinder, OHV; bore 3.267 inches, stroke 3.54 inches; maximum torque 144 foot pounds @ 2400 rpm; brake horsepower 140 @ 5000 rpm; piston displacement 178 cubic inches; compression ratio 8.2 to 1

### DIMENSIONS:

Wheelbase 83 inches; overall length 159½ inches; tread 54 inches front, 54 rear; width 65 inches; height 53½ inches; weight 2,500 pounds; standard tire size 6.00x16; gas tank 20.4 gals

### PERFORMANCE:

0 to 30 mph, 3.7 seconds

0 to 50 mph, 7.9 seconds

0 to 60 mph, 9.8 seconds

0 to 70 mph, 13.9 seconds

Top speed, 120-123 mph

### SPEEDOMETER ERROR:

At 60 mph on speedometer, actual speed 60.3 mph

nentale Hotel (where I happened to be staying, too), parked it at the curb and, I assume, went to bed immediately after their long 24-hour ordeal.

"The next morning before eight o'clock I was walking Joe, my Labrador Retriever, out in front and I noticed that the car was where the boys had left it the afternoon before.

"While I was still on the street, the two drivers came down with a load of luggage, packed her up and started for home and England. The car responded instantly and tool away as if it were brand-new, despite the fact that less than 24 hours before it had finished seventh in the World Series of automobilism. The drivers didn't even check the oil before starting out and, as it roared away, I couldn't help but feel that I had just witnessed the fulfillment of a true sports car in the 'Big League'; transportation AND a sporting companion in one vehicle."

That was a terrific demonstration. But the new ones are even better than that great Le Mans car. The engines are now a full 3 liters against the former 2½-liter mills of the past. This gives them a lot more dig and these new jobs in highway tune can now cream the former cars that were equipped with what they called the Vantage or competition engine, which was 8.5 to 1 compression against the standard 6 or 7 to 1 cars of three years ago.

Dave Ash of Inskip, the importers, brought the test car to my place and, with Paul Whiteman, we put this rig through its paces. First, I took it to my dust and gravel pit, where [Continued on page 203]



## **The Aston Martin**

[Continued from page 77]

we made a number of high-speed turns and was not surprised in the least when the Aston grooved them like the Super Chief on a slow bend. Where this Limey bucket really showed its class was in the acceleration trials made two ways on a level stretch with two full-size males aboard. This mouth-watering trap gets away like a scalded gazelle in love. Zero to 60, time and time again, was under 10 seconds, which will plaster the hottest American car to the road.

On my own proving grounds there is a half-mile stretch, straight as an arrow, uphill all the way at an even 18 per cent. Along this stretch are two trees, distinctly shaped for easy spotting and about a quarter-mile apart. For years now, in addition to my acceleration runs, I have run cars up this hill from a stand-still start, clocking the time between these two trees, just for my own information. To me this has shown what real dig qualities the car has when not running on a flat stretch. I use these figures in evaluating hill climb ability. (My regular hill climb is 28 per cent for almost a half mile.) Over the years I have found that most small-displacement cars show off very poorly on this 18 per cent climb.

The 1954 Buick Century has the American record for this stretch and, as you know, the Buick engine displaces almost as much as the Queen Mary. On this stretch the Aston was a full second and a half *faster* than the Buick on this short uphill run and the fastest sports car I have ever tried out here. Needless to say, I have never run a 4.9 Ferrari or Cunningham up this road. But I have tried dozens of cars, such as Jags, Super Porsches and similar ilk. The point is: this new Aston Martin is a real bomb, up or down hill.

In summing up, I believe Dave Ash explained it best when he said, "The new Aston is a true gentleman's car that's a real ball to drive." •

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