

# Road Test: Aston Martin DB4-GT Zagato

*With help from Zagato, Aston Martin intends to beat Ferrari in GT racing—in plush comfort*

When Englishmen started buying Ferrari Berlinettas about two years ago to race in home events (and paying 50% purchase tax on the high price and the customs fee), David Brown knew he must do something. He did. To the three variants of Aston Martin DB4 then available (standard fastback coupé or convertible and the three-carburetor GT version on a five-inch-shorter wheelbase), he added the car in the foreground of this month's cover picture, the lighter, still more powerful, Zagato-bodied DB4-GT.

We are obliged to Fridolin (Fred) Haechler of Aarau, Switzerland, for lending this car, race-prepared at the Feltham factory for the owner to campaign in American events. It is a potential GT winner and can run away from many out-and-out competition sports cars. As tested, it was geared for over 150 mph. Acceleration times therefore do not truly reflect its drag-strip potential, yet the standing quarter-mile time was out-

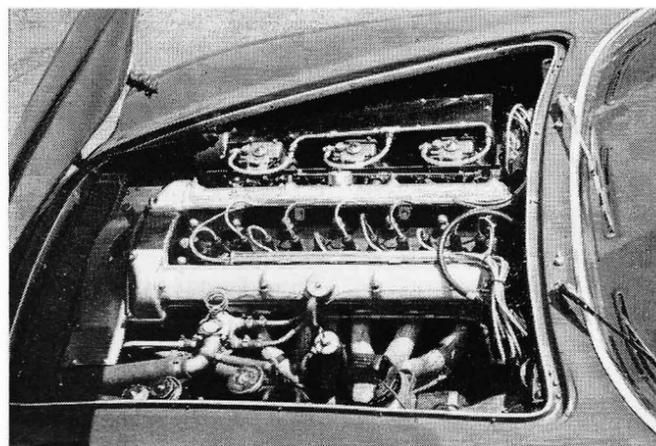
construction is quite conventional. In its three versions, it has two, three and three carburetors with compression ratios of 8.2, 9.0, and 9.7 to one and outputs of 263, 331, and 344 bhp.

The Zagato body is about 350 pounds lighter than the standard one. It has no bumpers and only its windshield is glass; the other windows are plastic.

Placed very low, the seats have enough adjustment that a driver of any size can make himself comfortable. Furthermore, the steering column can be raised or lowered and the wheel moved in or out. The tail of the body is filled with gas tank and spare tire and the room behind the seats is barely adequate for what two persons would need on a short trip.

In road driving, the car can be quite docile. Tremendous torque is always on tap, even at low rpm. The engine is red-lined at 6,000 rpm and should not be run continuously above 5,500 rpm. The David Brown gearbox is not on a par with the rest of the car. First-gear engagement at a standstill can provoke crunching noises due to clutch drag, and downshifts are more rapidly made than upshifts. Going from first to second is particularly slow. The twin-plate clutch, however, proved so smooth that the car could be started from rest and driven away through the gears with the throttle at its idle setting (normally 700 rpm).

The Zagato understeers throughout the speed range.

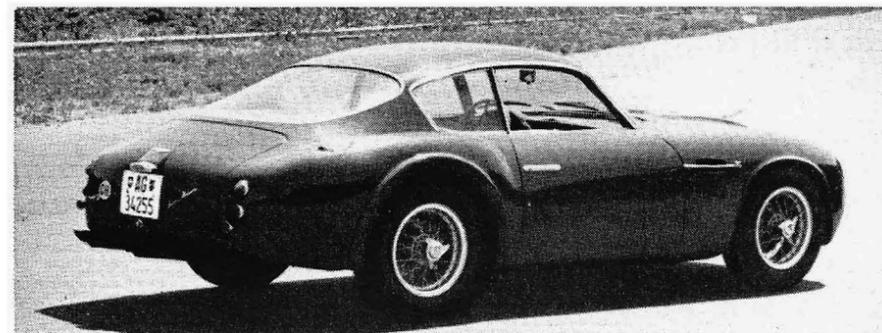


The powerful six-cylinder twin-cam engine is sturdily built but also very heavy. The accessibility is remarkably good.

On a tight circuit, the firmly sprung car can be a bit of a handful due to the heavy steering, but no car could be more stable. The large wood-rimmed steering wheel affords an excellent grip—a necessity at racing speeds. Unevenness in the road surface is transmitted to the wheel; on a fast bumpy corner, the car rocks gently sideways, with the steering wheel accompanying the movement. The cornering power is amazing and the rear-end behavior nearly perfect. Our track-testing was done with the 37½-gallon tank nearly empty; behavior would surely differ with it filled.

Though the Girling disc brakes do not have the power assist used with the Dunlop discs on the standard DB4, pedal pressures are fairly light at moderate speeds. While it is hard to lock the wheels at 100 mph, the car can always be stopped without difficulty.

Thus combining super performance with luxurious comfort to give both driver and passenger a grand sense of safety, Aston Martin's DB4 Zagato joins the thin ranks of GT cars that support the old definition of a sports car: a car that can be driven pleasantly on public roads or at race-winning speeds on circuits. **cjo**



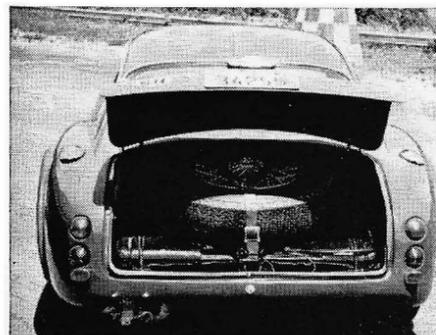
Despite its short over-all length of 168 inches, the newest DB4 has very sleek lines and looks poised for jumping straight from a standstill to racing speeds.



The car corners flatly even when approaching the limit, but the high steering forces require a very firm grip on the wheel rim.

## ASTON MARTIN DB4-GT Zagato

Price as tested: \$14,250 POE N.Y.  
Importer: J. S. Inskip, Inc.  
304 East 64th St.  
New York 21, N.Y.



### ENGINE:

Displacement..... 224 cu in. 3,670 cc  
Dimensions... 6 cyl, 3.62-in bore, 3.62-in stroke  
Valve gear:  
Compression ratio..... 9.7 to one  
Power (SAE)..... 344 bhp @ 6,000 rpm  
Torque..... 284 lb-ft @ 5,400 rpm  
Usable range of engine speeds: 1,000-6,000 rpm  
Fuel recommended..... Super premium  
Mileage..... 10-18 mpg  
Range on 37½-gallon tank..... 375-675 miles

### CHASSIS:

Wheelbase..... 93 in  
Tread..... F 54 in, R 53.5 in  
Length..... 168 in  
Ground clearance..... 6.25 in  
Suspension: F: Ind. wishbones and coil springs, anti-roll bar. R: Rigid axle, parallel radius arms and torque rods, transverse Watt linkage and coil springs.  
Steering..... Rack and pinion  
Turns, lock to lock..... 2½  
Turning circle diameter between curbs..... 34 ft  
Tire and rim size..... 6.00 x 16  
Pressures recommended..... F 42, R 45 psi  
Brakes; type, swept area: Girling disc—12-in F, 11-in R, 500 sq in  
Curb weight (full tank)..... 2,890 lbs  
Percentage on the driving wheels..... 49

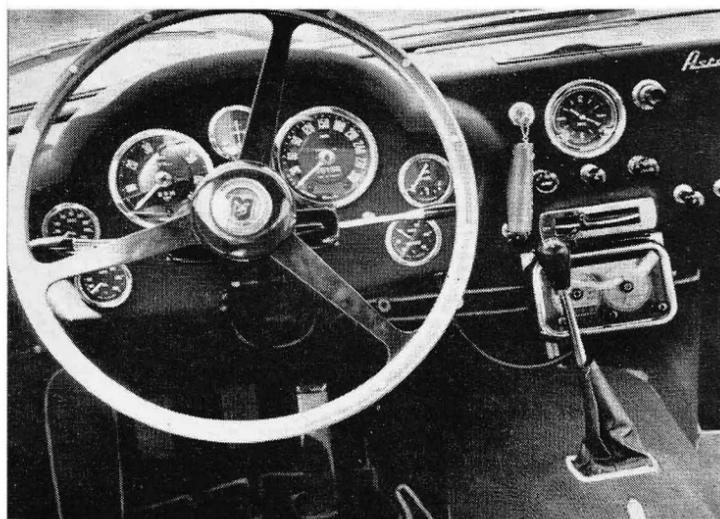
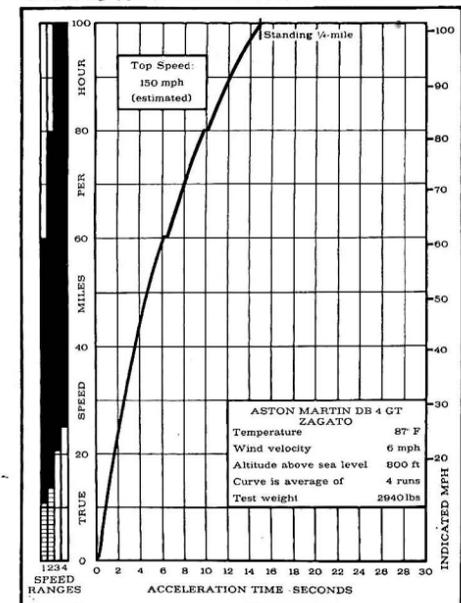
### DRIVE TRAIN:

Gear	Synchro	Ratio	Step	Overall	Mph per 1000 rpm
Rev	No	2.44		8.07	11.0
1st	Yes	2.50	36%	8.25	10.9
2nd	Yes	1.85	48%	6.13	13.6
3rd	Yes	1.25	25%	4.14	20.3
4th	Yes	1.00		3.31	25.3

Final drive ratio: 3.31-to-one standard, 2.93-3.54- and 4.09-to-one optional, hypoid bevel with Powr-Lok differential.

### ACCELERATION:

Zero to	Seconds
30 mph.....	2.7
40 mph.....	3.5
50 mph.....	4.8
60 mph.....	6.0
70 mph.....	8.0
80 mph.....	9.7
90 mph.....	12.1
100 mph.....	15.0
Standing ¼-mile.....	15.2



The complete instrumentation in the Zagato test car was augmented by the Speed Pilot used as a training aid by the owner.

standing, with an elapsed time of just 15.1 seconds.

The DB4 chassis, which was introduced in 1958, was completely new. It abandoned the VW-like trailing-arm front suspension of the DB2 for unequal wishbones, and rearranged the rigid rear axle's suspension (without granting independence). The coil springs were placed behind the axle, shorter radius rods were used, this time parallel to the driveshaft and supplemented by torque arms as on the Volvo 122-S.

The 3.7-liter engine, under development since 1955, has two overhead camshafts driven by chains, but its