

CLASSIC DRIVER

This Bertone-designed Aston Martin DB2/4 is your ticket to concours glory

Lead

If you're craving a car that is as unique as it is drop-dead gorgeous, with a hugely interesting past that combines English engineering, American ingenuity and Italian design, you could be the perfect custodian for this 1954 Aston Martin DB2/4 heading to RM Sotheby's New York sale on December 8th.



It's the age-old question: is it possible to make a great car better, even if that car has been designed with consideration, engineered by masters of their craft, and enjoyed by thousands of enthusiasts? It's a tall ask, but for some, it's the journey of bettering the best that evokes joy, and this Bertone-designed Aston Martin DB2/4 Coupé might just be the ultimate slice of trans-Atlantic perfection.

Our journey begins not in Newport Pagnell, nor Turin for that matter, but instead, Indiana, USA. Our main character is Stanley H. Arnolt II, or "Wacky" as he was sometimes called. In the world of sports cars, Arnolt's name is attached to some seriously legendary stories, after becoming one of America's biggest hitters when it came to bringing Italian design influence on the 'conventional' cars within in the market. Initially selling British vehicles based in Chicago during the 1950s, Arnolt would go on to form a long-standing relationship with Bertone, allowing the Italian designer to coach-build unique creations using Alfa Romeos, Bentleys, and even a Ferrari or two.



All were naturally gorgeous machines, but Arnolt's finest commission came from Bertone using the ultimate gentleman's express at the time: an Aston Martin. There was a total of seven 'Arnolt-Aston Martins', with designs that differed from series to series, but the DB2/4 you see before you is the only coupé in existence, delivered to Paris in 1954 to the founder of Simca, hence the rear tail-light design, which was taken directly from a Simca.



Visually, the DB2/4 is a magnificent looking car. Retaining the signature Aston Martin front grille, the front end appears more pronounced but perfectly tailored, but as we move even just a few inches to reveal a glimmer of the side profile, the coupé takes on an entirely different style to what Aston Martin had intended. Bold, swooping arches transcend this regal British cruiser to an entirely new time zone, one with far more sunshine and pasta aplenty. There are signature touches of Bertone's Franco Scaglione throughout the car's exterior, but most notably along the wraparound rear window and creases along the side panels. Our favourite part of the entire design has to be the straight-lined rear arch, presenting a striking contrast to the soft curvature of the rest of the exterior, therefore instantly drawing your gaze to it with a healthy dosing of intrigue. Everywhere you look, at every different angle, the car oozes charm and glamour, something even the original-designed DB2/4 had in spades, showcasing the talents of Bertone's pencil work even further.



Despite Arnolt and Bertone's best efforts to get multiple versions of the car built, Aston Martin had refused to supply any more chassis to the effort, leaving this piece of automotive art somewhat dormant. It was shown, even well after its completion, at both the 1957 and 1958 Turin Motor Shows, with only a colour change from white to blue, each time on the Bertone stand. The coachbuilder's intentions were simple: place the car in front of Aston Martin's noses enough times that they would consider using Bertone to develop the soon to be produced DB4. This, as we all know, sadly never came to fruition, but you can't help but respect the determination, and it opened the floodgates for people wondering what a Bertone-designed DB4 would look like...

After its stint as a four-wheeled supermodel, the Bertone coupé made its way to the United States in 1976, where it began a new life as a show winner across various states and owners, before it passed hands for the last time to the current owner. Despite already being in a show-winning condition, there is always work to be done, and the car was given to Aston Martin specialists Kevin Kay Restorations in Redding, California in 2019. The goal was to return the car to its "show stand-correct" style, with the all-important metallic blue shade being matched to traces of the original finish, located below the headlight bezels and in the boot area.



Like many classics, the DB2/4 had undergone some modifications over the decades, so the restoration team fabricated the 1955 front bumper and taillights, as well as the bonnet trims, sun visors and many interior elements. All of this perfection came at a cost, over 800,000 dollars to be exact, but it would all be worth it when the car appeared at this year's Pebble Beach Concours d'Elegance, where it was honoured with First in Class.

The interesting part of the story is the car's future, and where this [RM Sotheby's auction](#) will lead it. The car has yet to be shown publicly since Pebble Beach, therefore leaving the door open for the next custodian to not only enjoy this perfectly restored piece of history, but to take part in virtually any top-level concours event on the planet. In fact, it has already been invited to be displayed and compete at the Concorso d'Eleganza Villa d'Este in 2024.



While golden-era Ferraris or pre-war Bugattis will always be show-stoppers and prize winners, there is something so endearing about this mid 1950s sports car, showcasing the amalgamation of English sporting heritage, American inspiration and ingenuity, and the ambition and confidence of Bertone and Italy's finest artisans. The biggest question is this: do you wear your sharpest Italian suit when driving it, or perhaps a Texan tuxedo, or simply a head to toe ensemble in tweed?

This wonderful 1954 Aston Martin DB2/4 Coupé will go under the hammer at [RM Sotheby's upcoming sale in New York, which takes place on December 8th, with an estimate of between 1,200,000 and 1,600,000 dollars.](#)

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