



ASTON MARTIN DB4 GT

Once the fastest and most advanced production car in the world, the DB4 GT was born from Aston Martin's finest 24 hours.

For years, Aston Martin had sought victory at the 24 Hours of Le Mans. It was the 1959 running of the famed endurance event, and Aston Martin had entered every year since 1931—every year, for 28 years. By the mid-1950s, the works team had the purpose-built DBR1 race car, a slew of talent, and successes at Spa and the Nürburgring. And yet, so far, to no avail at Le Mans.

But the 1959 running promised to be a showdown: with its 250 Testa Rossa, along with previous winners Olivier Gendebien and Phil Hill—the first American to ever win in France—Ferrari was the defending champion. But Aston Martin had won at the Nürburgring, for the third year in a row. With Stirling Moss, Aston Martin quickly took the lead—but he and Jean Behra's Ferrari traded positions long into the night. Behra was driving with Dan Gurney; in the other Ferrari, Hill and Gendebien. In another Aston Martin: the British driver Roy Salvadori, a Formula One star who had been with the team since 1953. Along with him, Carroll Shelby, just 36 years old, who had come from a stint of farming chickens outside Dallas, Texas, years

before he would be known for leading Ford to victory at the exact same race.

After nine hours of a healthy lead, the last Ferrari fell away from the pack. Reliability problems had doomed all three Testa Rossas, and Gendebien's car seized its engine just that morning. The Ferrari defense was over. Shelby had been fighting a heart condition, bouts of dysentery, and carried a nitroglycerin pill under his tongue, just in case. He neglected to tell his team this. Salvadori drove for 14 out of 24 hours: he was trying to ward off the flu.

The two sick drivers finally crossed the finish line in first place, with a second Aston Martin (drivers Maurice Trintignant and Paul Frère) behind. For the team that had been trying for close to three decades, a 1-2 finish was a dreamlike result. By the end of 1959, Aston Martin won the Constructors' Championship. Aston Martin owner David Brown was ready and waiting at the finish line, dressed in his Sunday best. When his team returned to Gaydon, Warwickshire, he wanted to do something big, something to not only celebrate the victory but to reflect it