

# 1950 Aston Martin DB2 Vantage Coupe



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**Too many times in today's car market, potential buyers let the perception of imperfections get in the way of what is truly more important.**



This superb DB2 was sold new to William "Bill" Spear, wealthy amateur American racer and a close friend of Briggs Cunningham, the famed American gentleman racer and sports car builder. In fact, the two of them each ordered a new DB2 in November 1950.

LML/50/19 is the 19th car built, an [original](#) right-hand drive example - and one of the very rare cars with the early three-piece front grille and side vents. It was supplied to Spear through New York agent Hoffman Motor Car Co. and delivered to him on 8th December 1950. Factory build sheet records confirm that it was red with rust-colored trim and with the engine (no. LB6V/50/240) fitted with racing valves, distributor, three spare wheels and tires, two spare carburetors and the latest type brake shoes. It is, according to the AMOC, the first Vantage-engined Aston Martin in the world. The Vantage specification engine referred to larger SU carburetors as well as a higher compression ratio engine giving 125 bhp at 5,000 [rpm](#).

Spear entered LML/50/19 into the first ever Sebring six-hour race on 31st December 1950 in the Sam Collier Memorial Grand Prix of Endurance, where Rand & Marshall drove it (car number 9) and finished second in class, 15th overall.

Upon its acquisition by the current owner, it was sent to Aston Martin specialist Kevin Kay to have it fettled, with such things as the wiring, lights and new front spring towers. The original polished DB2 wheels were replaced with period correct - but more understated - black wires. No major mechanical

work was needed, although a thorough check, primarily for safety, was conducted. A new set of Vredestein tires were fitted just before the car was shipped to Europe to make its debut in the 2009 Mille Miglia Storica, wherein it performed beautifully.

The engine sounds and feels very strong with an excellent gearbox. It should be noted that the engine number is missing on the timing case cover.

### SCM Analysis

This car, Lot 270 at RM's Sporting Classics of Monaco sale on May 1, 2010, was sold for \$395,158, which continues a solid trend in the rising value of historically correct and significantly rare Aston Martin automobiles.

The Aston Martin DB2 featured here is one of a number of recent early David Brown-era cars that have blown through their auction catalog estimate. This shows that it is very difficult indeed to properly calibrate what a buyer will pay to add a historically important car to their collection versus a run-of-the-mill street car. In my view, if the buyer had instead purchased a [concourse](#)-condition street DB2 Coupe without any racing pedigree there would have had enough change left over to buy a nice 2010 Aston Martin V8 Coupe. That's the difference.

### The value of old-school history

Should there be that much value disparity between a street car and a car that has a cache of wonderful, period black-and-white photography from places such as Sebring, Le Mans or Watkins Glen - and driven by gents named Collier, Shelby, Moss, Salvador? I guess so. Brother, there's nothing like appreciating and understanding the value of that grainy old school photography. There's no denying that a car is sexier if it is the one in the period shots.

New and mature collectors alike have for some time been seeking out examples of favorite classics that will allow them an obvious leg up against their peers, especially when they're trying to gain an entrée into events that focus on historically significant cars.

As a bonus here, lot number 270 seems to be a turnkey example, which adds greatly to the appeal.

We all hear of great barn finds that have been off the radar for quite some time, but the reality of taking that that romantic notion and putting it back on the road, in a condition reliable enough to compete in a 1,000-mile event, may consume stacks of cash and years of time before it can turn one wheel revolution in an adrenaline-burning rally. There's a huge upside to having something that has been well maintained, proven and just needing a new owner to add gas and fill out event applications.

### Racing past blows away imperfections

Years Produced:	May 1950 - April 1951
Number Produced:	411 - including 100 Drophead Coupes (with three-piece grille)
Original List Price:	\$4,800
SCM Valuation:	With provenance, \$350k - \$400k
Tune Up Cost:	\$1,200 - \$2,400
Distributor Caps:	\$75
Chassis Number Location:	Brass plaque in engine compartment and on top of upper, right-side chassis rail
Engine Number Location:	Stamped on top right side of front timing cover
Club Info:	Aston Martin Owners Club, Attn: Susan Laskey, 1301 Avenue of the Americas, 30th Floor, New York NY 10019
Web Site:	www.astonmartins.com
Alternatives:	Ferrari 166 or 212 coupe, Alfa Romeo 1900 CSS, Lancia Aurelia convertible
Investment Grade:	

It is paramount that proper perspective on the [provenance](#) of a vehicle must not be underestimated these days.

If this car was devoid of the young Sebring race history and its other early 1950s provenance, an appraiser or savvy collector (perhaps trying to beat the seller's price down) might have unfairly described it in a slightly more jaundiced way. It could have been reduced to "A nice older survivor that has been well maintained by a proper marque specialist but is an example that suffers from an unfinished complete color change and is missing its engine case number."

Granted, early three-piece DB2s are as rare as rocking-horse manure. If you truly want one, this would have been great opportunity to make the acquisition, but the car does have some large, glaring exceptions. Needless to say, the significant provenance rightfully overshadows the cosmetic foibles and potential engine number issue.

United Kingdom marque specialist Nicholas Mee of London, England and Bonham's auction house both recently sold early important DB2 coupes, so this car is not a fluke. The result of this auction, although higher than RM's estimate, may not have been a surprise to anyone chasing a nice example.

I really feel that the new owner was mature in his decision to not let imperfections get in the way of this great purchase. Too many times in today's market, potential buyers let the perception of imperfections get in the way of what is truly more important. I doubt the exclusion of a factory tool roll or original owner's manual would have made the car any less exciting to drive. Who cares if the front timing cover has been replaced? The car would not be safer on the original rims and tires either. I hope you see what I'm driving at..

In a great many instances, cars that have been campaigned may not have a matching-numbers engine. They also may have cosmetically modified in period, and they may have undergone radical modifications to satisfy new racing regulations. The important lesson is to not get all caught up in useless anorak chatter - and just grab your checkbook with the confidence to go for it.

This car was well bought, hopefully by someone who will continually use it as it was designed to be used. The new owner should give this car a proper second life, wear it out - and then fix it and use it again.