



hot engine setup would be a big, oversquare, American-type V-8, but with all the goodies like an aluminum-alloy block, hemispherical heads, four overhead cams, etc., etc. Fuel injection was something Corvette-club types fanned their jaws over, so I naturally went for four two-barrels. Then there'd be a five-speed synchromesh transmission with an overdrive fifth, and a limited-slip differential. I don't know why I wanted a limited-slip differential; I didn't know how any kind of differential worked no matter how much slip it had, and I still don't. But it sounded good, and so did all that other stuff.

Well, here it is, complete in every detail. The Aston Martin Volante has a 326-cubic-inch oversquare V-8 semi made out of broiler-foil metal all right, and it's supplied with the full complement of camshafts. And sitting right up there on top are four of the cutest little Weber two-barrels you'd ever care to spend a week tuning. Slapped on behind is a five-speed transmission of the genuine racer variety with the pattern arranged so that it shifts right into reverse every time you go for second—just the way I would have planned it myself. And, of course, it has a limited-slip differential. There are a few details, like electronic ignition, that I don't think were invented yet when I was designing this car, but otherwise it's all I could have asked for. Except the five catalytic converters make it sound like a warm cat after lunch.

The suspension is pretty much to my

*“Stay in school, work hard,
and you can have a car
like this. Of course,
smuggling dope helps.”*

specifications, too. There are unequal-length control arms with Konis inside coil springs up front, and a de Dion rear axle with parallel trailing arms and a Watt linkage in the rear. That was about as much as I knew about automobile suspensions in 1963, and it seems to be about as much as Aston Martin knows now.

But it's the styling that's really perfect. Oh, I would have had my petty differences with it. I preferred a slightly longer hoodline and would have opted for wire wheels and a more rakish wheel-opening treatment. And the five-mile-an-hour bumpers are an unfortunate touch, but that's the government's fault. Still, this is just what I wanted. Why, I don't think I had more than two or three sketches that whole year that were better-looking than this. I remember how I'd work and work on a drawing until I had exactly what I wanted, and then the flash of inspiration would come: “You know what would be incredibly cool—a convertible!” I couldn't wait to get to the drugstore after school and get tracing paper and draw this perfect car with no top. And I guess somebody at Aston Martin couldn't wait to get down to the drugstore and do the

same thing to their V-8 GT. Anyway, Aston Martin is square on the same wavelength with me when I was fifteen, right down to the Naugahyde-colored leather semi-bucket seats and black-faced dials in walnut burl. I suppose that's because, if the truth were told, we were both trying to design a DB3. You'd think it would be easy for them since they already made a bunch once before, but maybe they lost the instructions.

Not that the Volante is amateurishly built. Basic structure and finish detail are both exquisite, but there seem to be certain things about the science of auto design that Aston Martin, uh, forgot. Like rear-seat legroom. There isn't any. Not too little. None. The rear seat will come in handy if your wife plans to take a lot of thalidomide during pregnancies, but you won't be able to get even one kid back there if you have the normal kind with legs and everything. Still, it's a good place to put one suitcase (not too large) because when it comes to luggage space there isn't any of that either. And that's not because the spare takes up all the trunk room, because it's not in there. As a matter of fact, I couldn't find it at all. I'm sure it's around someplace, but I never figured out where.

Incidentally, there isn't much front legroom either. It must be pretty annoying to spend \$70,000 for a car and then bang your shins every time you use the gas pedal, brake, or clutch. Actually, it would be pretty annoying if you hadn't spent a cent. This is a Grand Touring car, but I don't know how grand you're

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