



Steve with his DB9



# Astons on the Web

by Steve McEvoy

Three years ago I purchased my first Aston Martin, a 2005 DB9 Coupe in Merlot. I was enthusiastic to enjoy my new (to me) car and looked forward to becoming her caretaker in the years ahead. I possess some basic mechanical skills and own a few spanners, so I was actually thinking I might try and tackle some of the routine maintenance tasks. You know, enjoy exploring the technical beauty of the car while saving a few dollars in the process.

In the USA (I live in Northern California) Aston Martin dealerships are few and far between – 100 miles away in my case. I was timid about tackling even an oil change initially, and took her to a local Maserati dealer (gasp!) for the 1 year/10k service. Lightened of \$800 for a basic oil change, I

vowed that the next year I would take on the challenge myself.

As the next service approached, I began to prepare myself. Step 1, get a service manual. I fired up Google and searched 'Aston Martin DB9 manual', and then rummaged through forums and a plethora of dubious articles and links, but none provided a legitimate manual. Eventually I found my way to the [AstonMartinTechInfo.com](http://AstonMartinTechInfo.com) website. The materials aren't free, but neither is a Chilton's manual you purchase in a store. I purchased a one-day membership and downloaded my own copy of the Official Aston Martin DB9 Workshop Manual. Armed with what I figured would be the bible on the process I

dug in, only to be disappointed by the level of detail provided for the do-it-yourselfer. Clearly the manual was written as a 'suggested process guide' for a dealer service technician, and was devoid of shared tips and tricks.

A simple example of this is in one of the most basic processes, putting the car up on jack stands. Perhaps your home garage has a hoist, but my Sweetie has yet to allow me to turn the garage into a fully equipped shop and I make do with jack stands. Sure enough the manual has a section on jacking and using stands, which includes the wisdom that the only place you can safely place the jack stand is at one of the four jacking points. Do you see the conundrum? Your jack needs to be



Finding information about maintaining his new pride and joy should have been easy



This isn't as simple as it might first appear



Not everything you find on the internet is typical of the marque

using the jacking point to lift the car, leaving no place for the jack stand.

I continued my search of the web to gather information on how to perform a 2-year/20,000 mile annual service. I was surprised at how difficult it was to find a quality, complete and detailed description of the process. Of course I found all sorts of posts on forums like PistonHeads.com, 6SpeedOnline.com and AMOC.org, but these posts often contain a lot of incomplete 'opinion' without any reference. You'll find discussions of what the correct spark plug gap should be, and answers ranging from 'It's correct right out of the box, no need to check them' to '0.025' or '0.060'. Sheesh, what's the real answer with some proof? (0.047"-0.051" is the right answer according to the Workshop manual in case you are wondering.)

If I wanted to change the engine in a Honda Civic, I can find 10 YouTube videos showing the whole process. When I searched YouTube for 'Aston Martin DB9 Oil Change', there was zero, zip, nada. What made me even more frustrated was that one of the top YouTube hits when you simply search '2005 Aston Martin DB9' is a very annoying hatchet job video by a disgruntled mechanic expounding on how Aston Martin refused to warranty an exploded engine on his



www.aston1936.com is where Steve's material can be found

customer's car. The video doesn't make any reference to the fact the owner likely ran it low on oil before the engine grenaded. Worse yet, this video has been viewed 63,000 times! It is NOT representative of the marque or model, and I wanted to find a way to combat this travesty.

It was at this point that I decided to undertake creating my own resource on the web for DB9 owners like me. I have a few computer skills and am not afraid of learning so I set up a simple website at WordPress.com (for just a few dollars) and a channel at YouTube.com (for free). I borrowed my neighbour's GoPro camera (thanks Rob!) and decided I would shoot video of the 2-year service process and post the entire step-by-step process online with a write up and a video. We are not talking about high production quality *Top Gear* stuff here, but at least I can show you the exact process because you are seeing it done for real and it's not just hand waving. And thus Aston1936.com was born (why not Aston2005.com? My DB9 is

car number 1936.) This is not complicated stuff. If you can manage to use Microsoft Word to write, you can use WordPress to create a website. The GoPro software that's included with the camera is simple enough and anyone can make the videos and put them up on YouTube. If I can do it, you can.

So, armed with my new tools and attitude I decided to create my first article and video, 'How to Uncork your DB9', covering the fairly popular and simple process of removing Fuse 22 to permanently open the exhaust bypass valves and give your car that throaty roar you'd normally only hear above 3000 rpm. I remember after I posted it being thrilled that just 3 days later someone had watched it on YouTube! I was off to the races.

Since then I have completed about 85+ articles and videos covering nearly every aspect of a 1- and 2-year service, explained what causes a lumpy idle and how to change your spark plugs and coil packs to cure it, and many more topics (it's a 10-year-old British car after all, there is *always* something needing attention). After just a year, the site has readers from 125+ countries viewing more than 200 posts each day. My plan is to cover how to deal with the issues that come up on a decade-old DB9 so that others might be able to tackle the issues themselves, and keep more happy Astons and owners on the road. I publish about one short article each week. (I do have a day job in case you are wondering, this is just a hobby.) The entire thing is non-profit, nothing is being sold. I receive so much great advice and encouragement from other owners this is my way of giving back.

All of this got me thinking – why aren't more owners doing the same thing for their cars? As the forums prove, there are many, many wise, experienced owners and enthusiasts that hold a wealth of information about the models and are willing to share. Perhaps we can extend this beyond the classical format of answering questions in a forum and include some of the newer technologies like blogs and YouTube. What if we had a central AMOC website where various contributors can do their part and share their knowledge as an ongoing and definitive repository of each model? A Wikipedia of sorts dedicated for the marque, accepting content from anyone knowledgeable. Imagine [www.AstonMartinDB9.info](http://www.AstonMartinDB9.info) as the holder of our group knowledge on the DB9, and [www.AstonMartinDB5.info](http://www.AstonMartinDB5.info) for the DB5, etc. This way we can save and pass along the knowledge to the next generations of owners of these beloved cars.



Fuse 22 will uncork your DB9



DB9 owners will find plenty of interest on Steve's site

'Astons on the Web' will be a regular feature in *AM Quarterly*. In each issue I will endeavour to feature some interesting aspects of Astons on the internet that will hopefully peak your interest to explore further. I certainly don't claim to know everything about Aston Martin, but will enjoy exploring the Web and sharing what I find with you. For this to work even better, I would love to hear from you what things you've found about Aston on the internet. Please send me links to interesting sites, your thoughts and suggestions by emailing me at [AstonsOnTheWeb@amoc.org](mailto:AstonsOnTheWeb@amoc.org)