

Red alert

With a life-long love of Aston Martins, Spice Girl Geri Horner has a stand-out new addition to a collection that started with a DB7

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MY ASTON MARTIN



On a hot July day, among the rolling acres of an Oxfordshire country estate, a gleaming Aston Martin Vantage sits pride of place on the immaculate gravel driveway. Its vibrant Hyper Red paintwork catches the light, a scarlet statement. “She doesn’t have a name yet — I’ve only just got her,” says Geri Horner, emerging from the house. “I name all my cars.” She is tiny, tanned and undeniably glamorous, dressed head to toe in white with matching Jimmy Choo pumps.

Of course, anyone born north of Y2K will recognise Horner as Ginger Spice, one fifth of the phenomenally successful all-female pop supergroup that dominated the charts of the 1990s and 2000s with its playful mix of personalities and sassy girl power-infused hits. The group recently reformed (minus Victoria Beckham) for a sell-out tour — Spice World - 2019 — drawing fans in their droves to assorted venues across the UK and Ireland. The as-yet unnamed Vantage even got in on the act; Horner’s Instagram feed shows her taking a gleeful spin around the cavernous Wembley Stadium during rehearsals.

Back in Oxfordshire, Horner slides into the front seat, bringing the V8 engine roaring to life before it settles to a contented purr. With its sleek silhouette and flowing, lithe lines, the car is potent yet alluringly feminine. Horner looks right at home behind the wheel.

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myself. I got her after I had a tour around the Aston Martin factory,” Horner explains, enthusiastically recounting the intricate process behind the marque’s cutting-edge car production. “It was so inspiring — the artistry, the craftsmanship. The team let me test drive this new Vantage, in red. I would never have picked red for an Aston Martin normally, but it looked so gorgeous.” She pauses. “Also, as you get older, you end up getting a bit... safe? As grown women, we want to be practical and functional, but also to still feel the energy and vibrancy [of younger years]. Picking the Vantage in that red expressed that for me.”



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F1 aficionados may be aware that Horner is married to Christian Horner OBE, Team Principal of the Aston Martin Red Bull Racing Formula One team. The pair tied the knot back in 2015, officially cementing Horner’s new status as racing royalty, although her passion for motoring was instilled from a young age. Growing up in North Watford, her car-dealer father often took her to automobile auctions and banger races, and she recalls the busy garages and grease-stained mechanics of her childhood with fondness.

“And I’ve got a long history with Aston Martin,” she adds. “Back before I made it in my career, I was sitting in traffic one day — probably in my Fiat Uno — when I heard this amazing roar, an engine. I thought, ‘Oh my god, what is that?’ It sounded like a tiger. When I realised it was an Aston Martin, I just knew I wanted one. Aston Martin is quintessentially British and never goes out of style. There’s power in the engine, but look at the curves of its cars — Aston Martin is actually very female.”



After rising to Spice Girls fame, Horner used her first record deal paycheck to purchase a red 1965 MGB Roadster, but it was upon the launch of her first solo album — *Schizophonic*, in 1999 — when she finally got her wish, splashing out on an “absolutely beautiful” Aston Martin DB7. Since then, she has acquired a V8 Vantage — “in silver, much more classic” — and a classic DB5 Vantage, in addition to the recent acquisition of the elegant red Vantage. Her husband also owns a DBS Superleggera.

“It does sound a bit excessive, doesn’t it? My favourite model is the DB5 because I’m very interested in vintage cars and because of the Bond attachment,” Horner enthuses. “I’m looking forward to the DBX coming out, too. With that, I’d be able to have the kids in the back while still feeling the elegance of an Aston Martin.”

We take a walk about the grounds of Horner’s country house, where she and the family stay when not in London — along with their young son, Monty, Horner and Christian each have a daughter from previous relationships, Bluebell and Olivia, respectively. It is a rather bucolic idyll, complete with vegetable gardens and a veritable menagerie of animals — dogs, cats, ducks, chickens, horses and miniature donkeys

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included. Margo the Airedale terrier lollops over and insists on taking a star turn in front of the camera.

In addition to Horner’s enthusiasm for car collecting, I wonder how much motorsport features in her life. After all, she has appeared as a guest on *Top Gear* and *Formula 1: BBC Sport* in the past and Christian’s connections must surely open doors.

“I did go to F1 races before I met Christian, but he has — forgive the metaphor — lifted the bonnet on how it works. Now, I have much more admiration for it as a team sport,” she says. “There are a thousand people behind that one driver. It’s so technical and the margins for error are massive. Watching a pit stop is amazing — the teamwork and the nerve, the ability to handle pressure on the spot. I was there when [Aston Martin Red Bull Racing driver] Max Verstappen won the Austrian Grand Prix this year. It was amazing.”

Other recent highlights include doing hot laps with Christian in a Vanquish S in Bahrain, and with Helmut Marko, head of Red Bull driver development, in a DBS in Austria, while the loan of a Rapide AMR resulted in a scenic drive through the south of France to Milan. “That was beautiful. I felt like Michael Caine in *The Italian Job*, when he’s driving along the coastline.”

By this time we are ensconced in Horner’s airy kitchen. She insists I try one of her homemade brownies, baking being a passion these days, before attempting to put a finer point on her enduring passion for cars.

“Driving is freedom — and freedom is power,” says Horner. “As a woman, that feeling, that independence, is so important. The moment I get in my car, I’m not beholden to anyone. I’m out of there.”