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ASTON MARTIN DB4GT

# ZAGAT

Produced by CMC

Story by Terry O'Neill



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1:18

**W**hen is a replica not a replica? When it's an artistic representation. You see, a replica is an exact copy, whereas an artistic representation allows the artist freedom to be innovative. What has this to do with CMC's Aston Martin DB4GT Zagato diecast model car, you say? I'll get to that soon, but first a little background about the real car.

In 1959 Aston Martin built an experimental short-chassis lightweight GT version of its DB4GT, aimed at competing with Ferrari. Stirling Moss raced the prototype at the International Trophy meeting at Silverstone, where he won the first ever GT race. The DB4GT was officially launched at the London Motor Show in October 1959, and was followed up one year later with possibly the most notable Aston Martin ever made, the DB4GT Zagato. Italian coachbuilder Gianni Zagato managed to trim more weight from the car by replacing steel with aluminum panels, using Plexiglas windows and thinner leather trim. Power output was increased by an extra 10bhp by raising the compression ratio. The Zagato body design was (and still is) sensational, but the car was very expensive, and only 19 were initially built of a planned 25. The Zagato's six-cylinder engine was modified to give a top speed of over 150mph, and it accelerated from 0-60mph in six seconds. The factory did not race any Zagato models but assisted private entrants to race, including motorsport drivers Jim Clarke and Roy Salvadori. Despite all this the DB4GT Zagato was never able to compete evenly with its main rival, the Ferrari 250GT SWB Berlinetta.

An Aston Martin DB4GT Zagato is now the most desirable of all Aston Martins. In 1991 Aston Martin sanctioned the building of four Zagato cars made from original leftover short chassis, and these were named as 'Sanction 2' cars. In 2000 the last two remaining short chassis were again sanctioned by Aston Martin to be built, and these are the 'Sanction 3' cars. The 'Sanction' cars are not replicas but actual DB4GT Zagatos, separated only by time. Aston Martin will not sanction any more Zagato models so as not to spoil the market. To sum up, there were the original 19 cars followed in later years by six sanction cars, making the build total 25.

CMC's recently issued 1:18 model of the Aston Martin DB4GT Zagato (M-132) is super-engineered to the finest detail possible. CMC has also given the model the deep and lustrous paint job it truly deserves. It is finished in Aston Martin Racing Green, and soon in a special Le Mans white version too. However I do wonder why CMC chose to produce a DB4GT Zagato with the larger wider grille (of which only two exist) instead of the 'machismo' smaller grilles, which are more representative of the real car (I know which one I'd prefer).

Now remember I started this review by asking a question about replica versus artistic representation. That's because included with the CMC model is a brochure that, among other things, states the following: "*CMC based its replica on the 19 original Zagatos and has it painted in Aston Martin Racing Green*". A statement like this fired up my curiosity – are they saying that this model is a fictional amalgamation of all 19 Zagatos and painted in a color of CMC's choice? In that case the model would not be a replica of a real car, but instead an artistic representation of the combined 19 original cars. Why has CMC gone down this 'fictional' path when their history indicates the opposite? A quick email to CMC brought a reply that led me to a page on their website, where they attempt to answer this. In a nutshell: CMC acted on the recommendation of the licensor (Aston Martin) when it decided not to base its model on any one of the 19 original cars. That's because of each car's individual uniqueness and historic variations that would make the replication of any one car pointless. To quote CMC, "*Rather the replica is designated to capture what is most reminiscent of the defining characteristics of the DB4 Zagato and its historic involvement in international racing. Representativeness rather than 'historic accuracy' was a top priority*". They go on to mention the 'Verkehrshaus Lucerne' (Lucerne Museum of Transport) where a DB4GT Zagato is on exhibit. CMC quote: "*Mr. Ercole Spada, chief stylist of the Zagato studio house in the 1960s, is known to have scanned this exhibit digitally and found it 'identical' to what he had had in mind when designing the famous DB4 GT Zagato*". Is this then the car CMC based its model on – after all, there has to be a defining start point. Well, the model certainly resembles it, apart from color. The finishing CMC quote: "*The M-132 replica that CMC has developed is approved by Aston Martin. It is a powerful reminder of the DB4 Zagatos in terms of its characteristically neat styling, cutting-edge mechanics, and historic involvement in international racing (i.e. Aston Martin Racing Green and engine hood latches, etc.). We hope customers will find in their hearts appreciation of this approach, as well*". It remains to be seen just how collectors will react to this approach by CMC. It certainly goes against the norm, but there are also those collectors who will see artistic merit in this. These are the ones who view precision models as works of art and are not necessarily interested in historical accuracy. There is also the thought that this may become a unique and highly collectible item because of CMC's variation in thinking. Who knows?

Looking at the finer details, it is amazing how CMC manage to make those numerous tiny parts (all 1825 of them) fit so neatly together. All doors are functioning, as are the bonnet and trunk lid, with the slimmest



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of gaps. There are some tiny external door handles and shiny side trims that run forward to side air vents; and a small covered lamp on each door. The doors have sliding side windows and inner leather-covered panels with a door pull handle and leather stop strap, and are held shut magnetically. Greeting your eyes is a nicely replicated

right rear fender (you'll need the tweezers for that). A particularly nice aspect of many CMC model cars is the exquisite wire wheels that are made from stainless steel spokes, nipples, and turned metal. In this case they replicate the sporty Borrani central locking wheels, complete with locking nuts that are 'handed' for left or right-side tread attachment. Real

### The six-cylinder engine fills the whole engine bay and is a complex marvel of cables, plumbing and wiring, the big inline six itself and Webber carburetors with trumpet air intakes.

interior complete with wood-rim steering wheel, imitation carpet and ribbed rubber pads, detailed leather-covered seats and full instrumentation on a wrinkle-paint-finish dashboard, and check out the flocked roof lining – nothing's forgotten. Driver's pedals and a stubby shift lever are in there too, for the authentic finishing touches.

The headlights are particularly well done, with protective clear covers and metal rims. The six-cylinder engine fills the whole engine bay and is a complex marvel of cables, plumbing and wiring, the big inline six itself and Webber carburetors with trumpet air intakes. It looks great and has the mechanical interest that only a DOHC engine can deliver. The front air intake 'eggcrate' grille represents the larger, wider type and is completely made from etched metal. Underneath it are three air ducts (one wide, two narrow) that supplied air to the oil cooler and front brakes. Very fine Aston Martin badges adorn the front and rear shrouds, and the distinctive Zagato 'Z' badge is attached on each side. All windows have replica stainless steel finishing trim frames fitted with a degree of tolerance that is mind-boggling. And just take a look at the windshield wipers – sophisticated metalwork with real rubbers – just what you'd expect from a precision model.

Lifting up the trunk lid reveals a small space filled with a removable spare wheel and tire, neatly locked in with a three-point leather strap and buckle. Only a masochist would try to undo it and then buckle it up again, such is the fineness of the item. The stubby trunk lid design is reminiscent of Ferrari, but then Zagato designed those too. Look closely under the lid and you'll see the rear numberplate light has wiring running from the lamp all the way around the trunk and across to the inside frame – that's dedication for you. Two minuscule locking spring hooks are attached at the base of the lid and can be locked into place using special tweezers provided with the model. A fuel filler with opening cap and lock is located on the

rubber (Dunlop) tires complete the effect, and each wheel is removable for inspection of the braking system.

Finally we get to the underbody of this model, which is yet another adventure into the world of super-detailing. Apart from the noticeable twin exhaust pipes leading out to the rear, there are an amazing number of items to see. The metal underbody tray provides a solid base for all items to be attached, and these take in all fuel and oil lines each with its own brackets and rivets, electrical wiring, and various cables that actually do start and end where they're supposed to. All suspension parts are represented and yes, it does work.

CMC deserve highest plaudits for creating this beautiful jewel, even with some doubts hanging over its credibility (which may ultimately enhance its collective status). The Aston Martin DB4GT Zagato is in the top 10 most desirable cars in the world. While most of us could never own a car like this, we can, thanks to CMC, own a representation that is large enough to appreciate its great looks, amazing detail and artistic charm.



#### Aston Martin DB4GT Zagato

SCALE: 1:18

ITEM NO: M-132

PRODUCER: CMC

AVAILABLE FOR: \$518