

CLASSIC DRIVER

2011 Aston Martin DB9: First Drive



June 2010: This is the latest DB9, deliveries of which will commence next month. The engineering team has introduced subtle styling changes and these, together with a now standard, 'Adaptive Damping System', prompt the British company to proclaim it the "world's definitive grand tourer".

We drove a Touchtronic-equipped DB9 coupé, beautifully finished in the new shade '**Amethyst Red**' (with interior colour '**Deep Purple**'), back from [this year's Le Mans 24 Hours](#).

Visually, the changes are as follows: a new grille sits above a new front bumper and revised lower intake; attractive, hexagonal-design mesh is used front and rear; a more pronounced 'hockey stick' curve can be seen on the sill, ahead of the rear wheels; clear rear light lenses; 20-spoke diamond-turned alloy wheels as standard, and new headlamp bezels.

As options, 2011MY buyers can choose alternative new-design wheels (fitted to this car), the brilliant **Bang & Olufsen** hi-fi, a 'Bright finish' grille, and a '**Double Apex**' alloy finish on the centre console – an attractive touch you see here.



The new package is finished off by a new tyre-pressure monitoring system and a revised Bluetooth microphone. It's evolution rather than revolution – the design, now seven years old, is one of the sexiest out there, so why change it?

Under the skin, the big news is the introduction, as standard, of **ADS** ('Adaptive Damping System') control, similar to that fitted to the **DBS** and **Rapide**. The settings are bespoke to the **DB9** and mean that default mode is optimised for ride comfort, while '**Sport**' tightens things up for more press-on motoring.

As a result, the previous '**Sports Pack**' option is no longer offered. While most buyers will opt for the extra-cost, six-speed **ZF Touchtronic 2** automatic, a six-speed manual is still available.



Behind the wheel, having cleared the immediate post-race Le Mans traffic and gunning the big V12 along French D-roads, the first thing you notice is the improved ride and much quieter cabin. The outgoing journey was done in a **V12 Vantage** – a fairly uncompromising speed machine, with prodigious engine performance and a sporting, no-holds-barred ride.

Now that **Aston** has this at one end of the 12-cylinder range (together with the similarly powered, 510bhp **DBS**) and the luxurious, grand touring **Rapide** at the other, it can afford to be less compromised with the **DB9**.







The car has matured into the perfect long-distance GT, with no supercar pretensions; and it's more comfortable in its (still sublimely attractive) skin. The 470bhp, 6.0-litre V12 gives it a top speed of 190mph, while 0-60mph comes up in 4.6 seconds – fast by anyone's standards.

As ever, a manual will get the most out of the engine, although holding third and fourth with the transmission mapping in 'Sport' will cope with most circumstances, unleashing the car's full potential.



Selecting the firmer damping position with the new **ADS** button makes the car more responsive to a degree, but it's less uncompromising than the old, optional **Sports Pack**. I think that's partly a function of the much

better NVH characteristics of the 2011MY version, and partly due to memories of two drives last year in a manual **Sports Pack-equipped DB9** that demanded careful handling in less-than-perfect conditions. It was, I recall, something more akin to the **V12 Vantage** than **Rapide**.



The latest **DB9** is no less a driver's car; it's just that, freed of the necessity to produce a supercar covering all possible buyer profiles, the company can concentrate on producing the perfect long-distance grand tourer, as at home on an everyday commute to **Canary Wharf** as covering mile after mile from **Calais** to **Cannes**.

In the latest-specification **DB9** - available now - **Aston Martin** has achieved this very well.







The car tested was a **2011MY DB9 Coupé Touchtronic**. In the UK, the **DB9** range starts at £122,445 for the six-speed manual, and £125,445 for the **Touchtronic**.

The car was finished in **Amethyst Red** with **Deep Purple** interior. Options fitted included: 10-spoke lightweight (forged and machined alloy with a diamond-turned face) wheels, £995; **Double Apex** alloy fascia trim, £495; **Bright finish** grille, £295; **Bang & Olufsen** hi-fi, £4750.







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