

# CLASSIC DRIVER

## 'The Persuaders': By Aston and Dino from Geneva to Monaco

### Lead

This journey had it all: an international cast, exotic locations, two definitive cars from the 70s and 80s and a brush with the Law on the French Riviera. 'The Persuaders' were back.

It was *Lord Brett Sinclair* (Simon Kidston) who'd hatched the plan. "Let's take my Aston Martin V8 Vantage 6.3-litre, pair it up with a Dino and drive from Geneva to [the Monaco Historics](#)," he'd said.

"Nice weather, bit of fun, really Roger Moore and Tony Curtis stuff. And the Aston's just back from Aston Martin Works; it's ready to go."

So it was an early start for me, SK and Kidston SA's Emanuele Collo on Friday 11 May. Monaco here we come — 500+ kilometres of stylish motoring in two cars equally at home in Geneva or Monaco.







The route was a straightforward one: depart Chez Kidston in Kidston SA's long-term-loan Rolls-Royce Ghost; collect Dino from storage; drive through Switzerland and France; navigate the Mont Blanc tunnel to Italy, and then start the long, curving drive through the Aosta to Genoa.

From there, it's the classic tunnel-after-tunnel route made by many a Ferrari or Aston along the Italian and French Riviera into Monaco.

And with the Salisbury Blue V8 Vantage sporting a very special exhaust, the 'tunnel' part was always going to be interesting.



But we're getting ahead of ourselves. The journey starts with classic Alpine motoring. You know, white peaks, babbling clear streams and the open road ahead.





We'd elected Emanuele, an Italian, to drive the 246 Dino GTS. So, inside the Aston it was a/c on and the big 6.3 just ticking over at 2000rpm for road-legal speeds with the special Aston Martin Works-fitted gearbox in sixth. With A-ha's 'The Living Daylights' giving way to more appropriate Matt Monro ('On Days Like These'), the iPod and bespoke hi-fi was soon blasting out the inevitable segue of John Barry film scores.

This is motoring at its best. Over in the Dino, Emanuele was clearly enjoying the sunshine, targa roof off and stowed behind the front seats. There were times, it has to be said, when the Aston's 500bhp left the little Ferrari in its wake. The performance from this most superbly prepared car is colossal.

When [I briefly drove it last year](#), I did sort of wonder, "Why the six-speeder?" Well, Newport Pagnell to Olney is hardly Aosta to Alessandria. It is one massively fast car, with a 285 – 290km/h potential coupled with easy cruising and ferocious in-gear acceleration. The handling and braking modifications I tried previously work a treat *in extremis*, too.







If you own an Aston V8 Vantage, this is the spec to have (although do be on the best of terms with your neighbours, it is LOUD... as you will read more about later).

Coffee time was an opportunity to swap seats with Emanuele and leave 'Brett' solo at the controls of his Saturn V for, let's just say, a 'test run'. I've never driven a Dino before. Coming from the big Aston, it's certainly different but still a real thoroughbred, none the less. Lovely (okay, a little off-centre) driving position. Wonderful gearbox in the classic, gated Ferrari style. Double de-clutching is a joy and the driving experience comes straight from the base of the driver's seat.

It is a delight, and the performance from this very tidy Dino isn't at all shabby. For reasons of respect for the little car we maintained a steady indicated 140km/h on the Autostrada, and it did not miss a beat. I've never really fancied a Dino until now, but, well, I've got the bug. And I wouldn't turn a red one down, either – that's saying something.







We're now well on the way to Monaco and the Autostrada that hugs the Ligurian coast. The big Aston is making the most outrageous noise as it pops and spits flames on over-run. Bright sunshine gives way to tunnel blackness again and again and the traffic thickens as an early Friday getaway approaches.

We are not without our admirers. An espresso/water/panini stop at possibly the last *Area di Servizio* in Italy gave the cars and drivers a little respite, as well as an opportunity to meet the local *Polizia*. Nice guys; car enthusiasts, too, who wanted to know what speed they would do. We ventured a guess, adding, "Where legal, of course".

Yes, we agreed, the police are Not a Bad Bunch. It was ironic, therefore, when only a few kilometres later, now in France, we attracted the attention of rather more than just a car enthusiast policeman. We had two problems: a slight excess of *vitesse* and whether our *échappement* was strictly legal in France.









Ever the diplomat, SK patiently explained in fluent French that, “Yes, the exhaust *must* be legal as it was fitted by Aston Martin themselves.” I think I heard *usine!* and *veritable!* a few times, too. It convinced me.

On the matter of the speed, well, a tactical retreat was beaten, and after a handful of 50-euro notes were exchanged we were on our way, slightly poorer in pocket but still in charge of the Aston. A score draw, to use a sporting parallel.

So, there was to be no meeting with retired Judge Fulton. And no further capers righting wrongs on the Riviera. Just a gentle drive into Monaco and a rendezvous with Emanuele and the Dino at The Fairmont, cocktails, and the satisfaction of having completed 520 kilometres in true ‘Persuaders’ style.

Photos: Classic Driver

## Gallery



























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