

Star of the Show

Aston Martin's new DB12 is big on ferocious power and even bigger on mystique.

By Nick Czap



DESPITE ITS REPUTATION as a locale for hiding wealth, Monaco excels at flaunting it, principally by means of pricey personal conveyances. As such, the minuscule country is home to an extraordinary concentration of ultra-luxury and high-performance automobiles, which slink and shriek along its streets, day and night, in an endless, exhibitionist parade.

Long accustomed to the show, Monaco's residents barely bat an eyebrow, but heads were turning, and

conspicuously so, on a morning in late May as I cut along Av. Princesse Grace in the latest incarnation of Aston Martin's vaunted DB series, the DB12.

Why all the attention? There was the unmistakable grille, of course, more voracious than ever, the better to cool a new twin turbo V8 power plant 30 percent more potent than that of its predecessor, the DB11. And there was the muted but menacing growl from the pipes, and a body as chiseled as it is sleek, a virtuosic balance of force



and finesse. But there's a more fundamental reason that Aston Martin's super tourer makes such an impression against a backdrop of automotive excess, which is that the DB12 is blessed with a quality known as mystique, and in a battle with bling and flash, mystique wins every time.

I hadn't come to the Riviera for a contest, though. I'd come to drive, and after a second espresso at a cafe round the corner from Hotel Metropole, it was into the Alps for a deep draught of precisely the sort of driving the DB12 was built for.



Aston Martin's DB12 can reach 60 miles an hour in under 3.6 seconds and a maximum velocity of 202 mph.



And while I was smitten with the coupe at first glance, by the time I'd ascended 3,000 feet into the Préalpes d'Azur, just past the village of Saint-Vallier-de-Thiery, I was feeling a far deeper connection.

There was a delicious physical connectedness to be sure, from a perfectly weighted wheel clad in satiny Oxford Tan leather to a 16-way adjustable Sport Plus seat holding me close in the curves to a magnificently firm brake pedal transmitting an almost telepathic level of feedback from the DB12's carbon ceramic rotors.

But there was an emotional resonance as well, for in their wizardry, Aston Martin's engineers had imbued the DB12 not only with immense speed (60 miles an hour in under 3.6 seconds and a maximum velocity of 202 mph), but with a vivid sense of eagerness, which, combined with its ferocious sound, makes it feel wonderfully, wildly alive. And if it's true all living things have a soul, then this is why, whipping along Route de Castellane, arm's-length from a low stone barrier and a 1,000-foot drop, I felt not alone in the heights, but in the company of a kindred spirit.

The DB12's twin turbo V8 power plant is 30 percent more powerful than the DB11's.



As I began my descent, the sky turned from blue to slate, the clouds unleashing a deluge, the road now a river. An alarming scenario in a lesser car, but no cause for concern in the DB12, whose bespoke Bi-Compound Technology Michelins clung to the wetness, utterly unfazed. I found myself relishing rather than cringing at the abyssal views from Route Gréolières, a sinewy line in the rock face carved by a deity's finger. Pairing

my Astell&Kern music player with the DB12, I cued up a favorite album by Sébastien Tellier. A slow, insistent beat poured from the 15-speaker Bowers & Wilkins surround sound system. It was a song about Biarritz, summer, suntans and love. The Bay of Biscay was a long way away, but I was closing in on Nice, where the sea is especially blue, and if you swim far enough from shore, you can see mountains. [ml](#)