

Seat Time

Aston Martin DBS
A charging warhorse
for modern times



FROM THE HIP

- Hand-assembled goodness, responsive Touchtronic manu-matic, roaring V12 engine
- Less than 48 hours to test the car

I've been riding the streets of North Orange County for maybe an hour now, ensconced in the hand-stitched, leather-clad Aston Martin cockpit. It's an '09-and-a-half DBS, the first of its kind to incorporate the Touchtronic 2 automatic. I flip through the gears using machined aluminum column-mounted paddles, each shift engaging instantly with a small metallic ping that's more felt at the fingertips than heard.

This is my first big Aston; all the rest have been V8s. At \$269,000 it ranks as the fifth most expensive automobile I've ever driven, behind a Mercedes-Benz and three Lamborghinis.

But I've got to say it's probably the most elegant. The Benz was an SLR and the Lambos Murciélago variants—rides all well worth lying, cheating and stealing for, but the Aston is different. How exactly is difficult to put your finger on. It casts a spell. If I somehow inherited 270 grand tonight, I'd be down at the dealership tomorrow. Inheritance and nest eggs be damned.

Build quality inside and out feel totally bulletproof—cliché, sure, but a fitting description. You really feel as though you could drive it through a hail of gunfire like a certain not-so-secret agent. Or maybe just outrun the bullets entirely.

The exterior design is quite possibly the most incredible ever put to carbon and sheetmetal. The DBS, like yesterday's Vanquish, radiates brute aggression yet still drips wanton sensuality. They're two seemingly opposing branches of the visual spectrum that Aston Martin designers have historically forged into a single, unbelievably potent aesthetic.

The most striking thing, though, is the duality of its driving nature. Operated with gentle, fluid inputs and a fraction of throttle, it's absolutely quiet and docile in a way most other super sports cars are not.

Start horsing it around anywhere past half throttle and it changes completely and utterly, its true, half-slumbering nature waking with unbridled fury. The rear end squirms as 295-width Pirellis struggle to harness the pavement, the engine roars angrily and you storm around slower traffic—that would be just about all of it—with an almost perverse sense of impunity.

Back on the freeway, headed home from a late evening of street prowling. A few thumbs-up, a couple slack jaws; one guy got so excited he did a cartwheel in the middle of the crosswalk. The car still flies below a lot of radar. Those who notice you directly and realize what they're looking at will either worship you or curse you and question your parentage. Anyone

who doesn't might just brush it off as another low-slung sport coupe. A Ferrari is ten times more ostentatious, a Lamborghini a hundred times more outrageous. But this relative subtlety is also part of the Aston Martin appeal.

I look down and see with alarm I'm cresting triple digits. The DBS isn't alarmed; it's hardly breaking a sweat. Seems I can feel the V12 pulsing through the steering wheel. It's not an unnatural or intrusive harmonic, more a hypnotic thrumming, a heartbeat maybe, welling from within a hard-charging destrier that most times seems only partially a mechanical construct.

I park it in the garage, sit and stare. I should probably do something constructive—sleep maybe. But I've only got 32 hours left. Need to make every minute count. —Karl Funke



2009 Aston Martin DBS

Layout	Longitudinal front engine, rear-wheel drive
Engine	6.0-liter V12, dohc, 48-valve
Transmission	Six-speed Touchtronic 2 automatic
Performance	Peak Power: 510 hp @ 6500 rpm Peak Torque: 420 lb-ft @ 5750 rpm 0-62 mph: 4.3 sec. Top Speed: 191 mph Economy: EPA est. not listed
Price as Tested:	\$269,000