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BANG & OLUFSEN



WELCOME

Dear Reader,

A very warm welcome to the summer issue of Aston Martin Magazine – a special edition entirely dedicated to our brand-new, four-door, four-seater sports car: the Rapide.

From its very first concept phase in 2006, I always knew this car would be special – not only for its class-defining configuration, but also for the fact this expanded capacity would be packaged with Aston Martin’s potent V12-powered GT capabilities as the most beautiful four-door car in the world.

But with production at our new plant in Austria barely a month into full swing, it was only this May when Rapide demonstrated another, unexpected talent: racing. A stripped-back but otherwise barely modified road car, driven by myself, Matthew Marsh, Chris Porritt and Wolfgang Schuhbauer took 2nd in class and 34th place overall at the Nürburgring 24-Hours in Germany, out of a field of some 200 cars.

While the race itself is testament to Aston Martin’s unflagging team spirit under gruelling conditions – not to mention an incredible personal experience, as it always has been around the Nordschleife, whether behind the wheel of our Vantage N24 ‘Kermit’ or class-winning V12 Vantage ‘Elwood’ – Rapide’s unprecedented success at the Nürburgring speaks volumes of the Aston Martin philosophy. A philosophy built on proactive dialogue between our road and race activities.

Over the next 60-or-so pages, I hope you enjoy reading about the many facets of Rapide, from testing to manufacture, production to racing, and much more besides. It is a car of which I am especially proud, after my 10 years as CEO at Aston Martin – one that should prove to be another milestone in the history of a company famous for its automotive icons. Whether you are gazing from the cossetting back seat, absorbed in the scrolling scenery, or taking the car to task through a winding mountain pass, I’m confident you’ll never experience anything quite like the Rapide.

For now, I wish you happy reading and enjoyable motoring.

DR ULRICH BEZ
CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER



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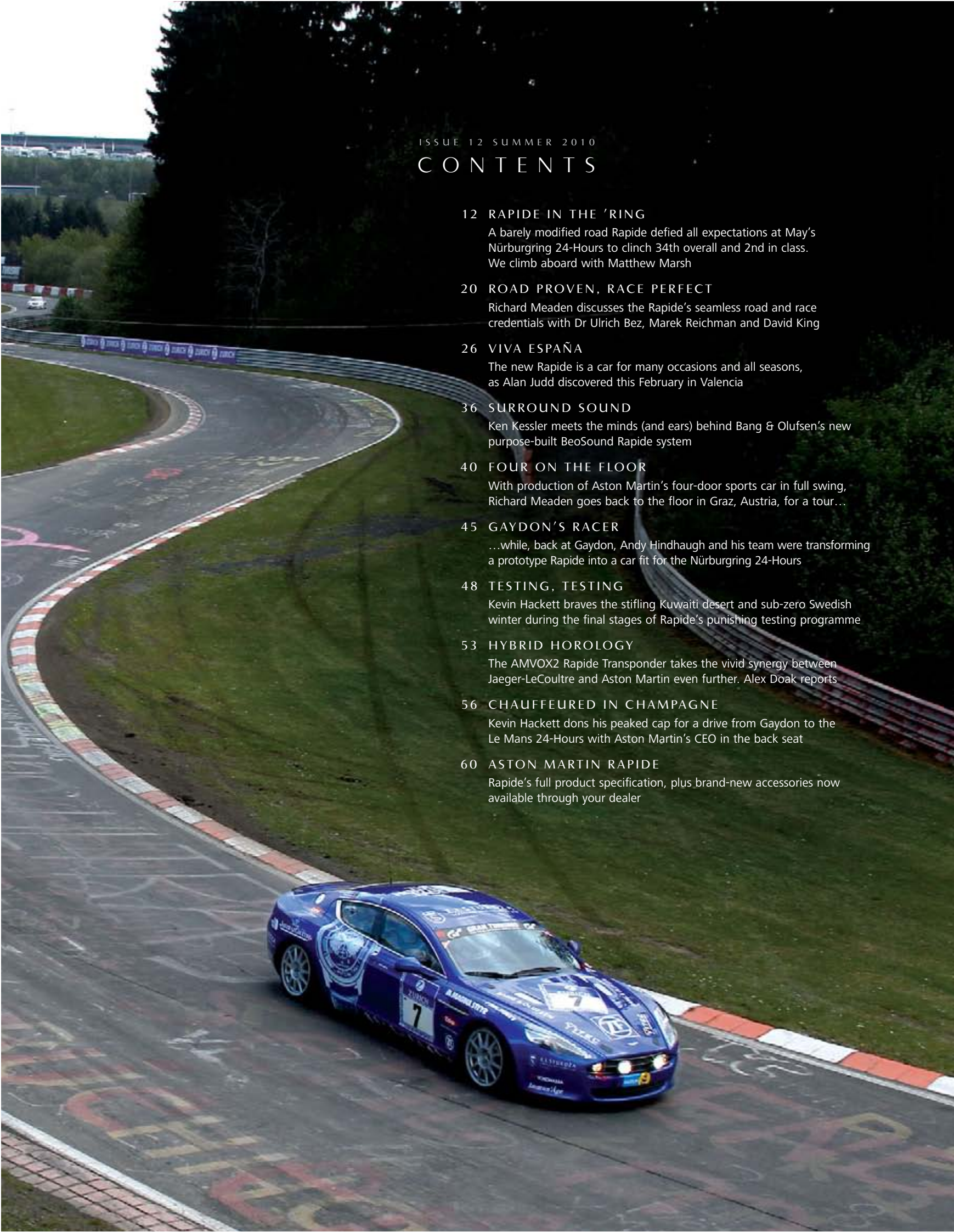
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Rapide's full product specification, plus brand-new accessories now available through your dealer

ASTON MARTIN LIFE

RAPIDE AROUND THE WORLD

Prior to its hugely successful media launch in Valencia this February, Aston Martin's new four-door sports car, Rapide embarked on a lengthy global tour of high-profile unveilings – generating in the process a 'buzz' rarely felt before for any new car, let alone an Aston Martin. From Europe to the Middle East, then Asia, the Pacific and throughout the United States, VIPs, customers and media representatives were all treated by their local dealerships to first sight of what most believe to be the 'most beautiful four-door, four-seater sports car in the world'.

While the Rapide made its presence felt at 20 UK events, Aston Martin's European team was kept especially busy with visits to 30 locations within just two months, from Oslo to Rome, Bordeaux to Moscow. In the Far East, crowds were wowed by Rapide's elegant but powerful proportions in Beijing, Hong Kong, Tokyo, Osaka and Nagoya from 24 January to 7 February.



ABOVE: The capacious boot space of the Rapide garnered plenty of interest at the dealer launch in Kuwait, on 13 February. Normally 317 litres, the rear seats can be folded at the touch of a button to create a flat loading space, increasing the compartment to 886 litres.



ABOVE: A particularly glamorous event held in the Ballroom of The Dorchester Hotel, London attracted over 400 people and plenty of orders.



ASTON MARTIN LIFE

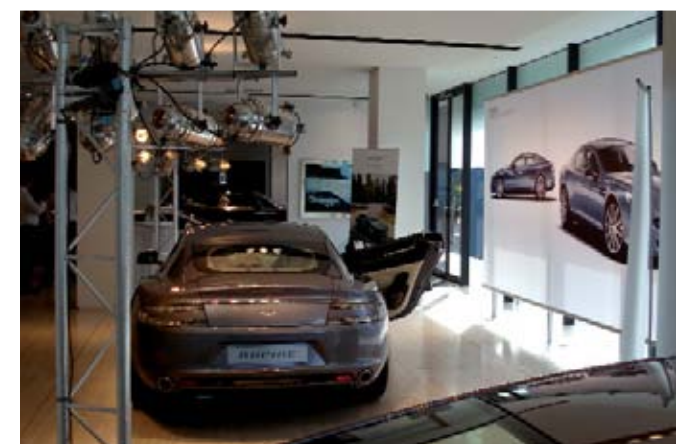


TAIWAN DEBUT

Aston Martin's Taiwan (Taichung) dealership unveiled the Rapide to 50 journalists and 200 guests on 5 June with a sparkling preview event and a spectacular display of new and classic cars at the Greatbuilding VIP reception centre in Taichung. Alongside the gleaming-white 'hero' was a DBS Coupe, DBS Volante, DB9, V8 Vantage, V8 Vantage Roadster, Vanquish S, and DB7 Vantage.

FIRST IMPRESSIONS

Guests and customers of Aston Martin got to grips with the Rapide's beautifully appointed interior during a hyperactive tour of the UK – a launch programme that took in all 20 dealerships, from Belfast to Jersey, between January and March.



UNDER THE SPOTLIGHT DOWN UNDER

Aston Martin Australia held Rapide launch events throughout March at the dealerships in Sydney, Melbourne (pictured) and the Gold Coast, where fashion designer Daniel Lightfoot was spotted amidst the throng.

ASTON MARTIN LIFE



WELCOME TO GRAZ

As production of Aston Martin's new car gets into full swing at the Aston Martin Rapide Plant (AMRP) in Graz, Austria (see Richard Meaden's report from page 40) customers are being invited to the manufacturing facility to complete the specifications for their new four-door sports car. As well as being able to witness their car taking shape on the floor, an all-new customer showroom boasts two dedicated customer specification rooms.

If you're interested in arranging a tour at any Aston Martin site, including the headquarters and main production facility in Gaydon, Warwickshire, please contact your local Aston Martin Dealer who will make a booking on your behalf



PROVEN

Aston Martin's base at Millbrook Proving Ground in Bedfordshire was the venue for Rapide's UK customer debut in April. By all accounts, the new V12-powered sports car handled the demanding Hill Route fabulously.



KING OF THE CASTLE

With its 30-date launch tour wrapped up in March, European Aston Martin customers wishing to get better acquainted with the Rapide's impressive dynamics have been spoiled. A particularly fairytale scenario played out in Prague, Czech Republic, where the local dealership had exclusive use of the Hotel SEN chateau – not to mention the full Aston Martin model range and four driving instructors.



FOUR DOORS IN LA

Aston Martin played host to over 300 special guests at the SLS Hotel in Beverly Hills, Los Angeles, on 11 November, for Rapide's North American debut. Welcoming the customers, VIPs and local media to the luxurious surroundings of the Garden Terrace – where Aston Martin's new four-door sports car drew avid admirers throughout the night – were Dr Ulrich Bez, new Chief Commercial Officer Michael van der Sande and Julian Jenkins, the Vice President and General Manager of Aston Martin North America.

ASTON MARTIN LIFE



ON SONG IN SINGAPORE

A particularly glitzy launch event in Singapore, held in collaboration with Aston Martin's partner brands Bang & Olufsen and Jaeger-LeCoultre heralded the arrival of Rapide in southeast Asia on 14 May. Over 280 VIP guests from Singapore and Malaysia enjoyed food and drinks from the Peach Garden Restaurant as Dr S K Djeng, Derek McCully and Dato Robin Tan from Aston Martin Singapore, and Operations Manager – Asia of Aston Martin Asia Pacific – Shoichi Terashima unveiled the new four-door sports car.



FOUR!

Central European customers and VIP guests of Aston Martin experienced the leisurely side of the four-door Rapide during a hugely enjoyable, two-day ride and drive at the Beuerberg Golf Club near Munich, Germany – an event made perfect by gloriously sunny weather and crystal-clear views to the Alps. Needless to say, there was ample boot space for the golf bags.



HEAVEN IN THE GREEN HELL

Between 27 and 29 April, customers eager to discover more about Rapide's impressive dynamic abilities enjoyed an adrenaline-fuelled Driving Experience at Aston Martin's Test Centre at Nürburgring – where a barely modified racing version of the new sports car went on to prove itself at the notorious 24-Hours event in May (see page 12).

ASTON MARTIN LIFE



DIAMONDS IN DÜSSELDORF

Düsseldorf’s most elegant shopping street, Königsallee was the place to be seen on 5 May, when Aston Martin teamed up with top celebrity magazine *Gala* to throw a star- (and gem-) studded event at Tiffany & Co. Making a stylish entrance in the convertible DB9 Volante, Aston Martin Chief Executive Officer Dr Ulrich Bez (pictured) was on hand to greet the 300 VIP guests – many of whom were themselves chauffeured in comfort by a fleet of seven Rapides, on their German public debut.



MOUNTAINS OF THE PYRENEES

Aston Martin’s inaugural ‘On Tour’ driving event proved hugely popular, with nine couples enjoying a particularly grand five-day tour of the Pyrenees, between 30 May and 4 June. A distance of 750 miles was covered effortlessly and stylishly in a customer line-up including the V8 Vantage, DB9, DBS, V12 Vantage, DB7 Vantage and Vanquish S – joined by a new Hardly Green Rapide (pictured). From Biarritz, via Boltana and Andorra, all the way to Barcelona, the scenery was spellbinding.

Further information on future tours can be found on www.astonmartindrivingexperiences.com or by calling +44 (0)1926 644291



RAPIDE REACHES AFRICA

Aston Martin Sandton in Johannesburg debuted the Rapide to South African customers on 27 May – an epic event attended over 1,000 guests, as well as Marek Reichman, Aston Martin’s Director of Design (pictured) and the One-77 supercar, whose first customer deliveries are imminent.



DRIVING DAYS 2010/11

Aston Martin offers something for everyone when it comes to driving experiences:

DRIVING EXPERIENCES

Jaeger-LeCoultre Tour and Drive, Switzerland:
20 August. Price per person: £750
Purdey Clay Pigeon Shoot and Driving Days UK:
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Roederer Champagne Weekend, France: Date TBC
Price per person: £2,495

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ASTON MARTIN LIFE

From Adelaide to Zagreb, the Aston Martin Rapide has made the headlines across the automotive, business and lifestyle media. The verdict? A phenomenal four-door success story

COVER STAR

First unveiled as a concept car at the American Auto Show in Detroit in 2006, and given the green light when shareholders took the reins at Aston Martin in 2007, the final production version of the Rapide was unveiled approximately 18 months later at the IAA Frankfurt Motorshow – testament to Aston Martin's unrivalled ability to turn a concept into reality at short notice, with very few alterations along the way.

Attention from international media has always been keen, ever since the four-door model's announcement. But following its international media launch held in Valencia this February, coverage has stepped up several gears, with front covers, special issues and countless column-inches dedicated to Rapide. A vast spectrum of automotive, business and lifestyle titles were introduced to the new car in southern Spain, representing 30 countries and titles from Auto Motor und Sport to the Financial Times, from local Valencia newspapers to journalists travelling 40 hours from Australia. Needless to say, feedback as a result has been hugely positive. From the car's ample accommodation to its thrilling driving experience, the Rapide has won the hearts of passengers and drivers alike – not to mention the millions of car enthusiasts who have 'read all about it'.





RAPIDE IN THE 'RING

It may have four doors and four seats, but the new Rapide is no slouch. Conceived, like all Aston Martins, as a sports car through and through, a barely modified roadgoing example defied all expectations at May's Nürburgring 24-Hours to clinch 34th overall and 2nd in class. We climb aboard with journalist and driver Matthew Marsh for a taste of the 'Green Hell'

'Obviously we won't win,' Aston Martin's Chief Executive Officer Dr Ulrich Bez declared when inviting me to join him at the 38th Nürburgring 24-Hours. 'We'll be driving a street version of the new Rapide against purpose-built racers. Of course those will be faster, ultimately. But we can prove the Rapide – even with four doors – is a proper sports car. We'll aim to finish, prove the reliability – take no risks.' So this will be ironic, I think, as the car in front spins across the track. It's a real-life opportunity to test the anti-lock braking system from a speed (we're in sixth gear) way above those legal on British roads. Except that such a challenge does not sit comfortably with our 'no risk strategy', which – as I feel the ABS at work through the brake pedal – I recall Dr Bez reminded me of shortly before I took to the track.

Graham Humphrys, the Aston Martin Team Chief Engineer, used his experience from more 24-hour races than he has fingers and toes to develop a strategy that combines low risk with high efficiency. We play to the strengths of the car. The low- and mid-range torque of the six-litre motor pulls us around the track using high gears and low revs. We lift off the gas early and let momentum take us into the turns. A front-mid-engined car with the gearbox ahead of the rear wheels (developed right here on the Nordschleife) has tremendous dynamic abilities and we use these to maximise cornering speed – carrying speed through the corners.





By saving fuel, without really losing any time, we squeeze an extra lap from each tank of gas and make fewer pit stops than the opposition. Of course a lap here – which combines the sinuous Nordschleife with the modern day F1 track – covers 25 kilometres. That’s five times the length of most Grand Prix circuits and makes our 10-minute lap time more than respectable.

Of course the track is only part of the challenge. We share it with 199 cars (whittled down from 230 entrants) of hugely contrasting performance with drivers of wide-ranging skill. Close attention to the mirrors is needed to give room to the specially designed racers focused on outright victory. For the past four years, the Ring has been dominated by Porsche and their semi-works Manthey team. BMW has returned to the scene of its 2005 triumph with two of its new GT2-spec M3 cars and a roster of WTCC star drivers. Audi’s R8 dominated qualifying, taking the first four positions on the starting grid. And there’s even a Ferrari 430 entered by legendary sports car engineer Horst Farnbacher (with his super-talented son Dominik at the wheel).

But what gives the event its unique feel – differentiating it from the other classic endurance races at Le Mans, Spa and Daytona, and attracting 250,000 spectators – are the hordes of saloon, hatchback and small sports cars. Almost every brand is represented; there’s even a Ginetta. And a Volvo. Thankfully the driver of this lime-green example, which ends up twisted by the side of the track in the midnight darkness, telegraphs that an accident is likely by the way he blocks me, repeatedly, a few corners before his demise. What kind of person races a Volvo, I think? Is he in a hurry to pick up the kids and the shopping? Now what’s he doing? Schwedenkreuz. It’s a corner named after a former tax collector killed by deserters from the Swedish army, so legend has it. And more to the point, it’s approached over a blind crest at some 250 kilometres per hour. Not the place to be veering onto the narrow strip of grass besides this ancient track. We emerge unscathed, the Rapide and I, proof positive of the stopping power of the dual cast brake discs, six-pot callipers and various bits of electronic wizardry (Electronic Brakeforce Distribution, Emergency Brake Assist and so on) which one is blissfully unaware of until the need to avert disaster arises.

It’s the same with the Dynamic Stability Control. At road speeds it’s difficult to sense the DSC’s input, but on a race track you can feel it making subtle adjustments to speed and attitude by gentle application of the brakes on each corner of the car. This is not some special motorsport trickery but the very same system provided as standard in the road car. It can’t – as Senior Engineer Chris Porritt puts it – ‘defy the laws of physics’, but the DSC provides an amazing amount of control close (and just over) the limit of adhesion. Which is just as well. My heart is racing now but the Rapide’s not missed a beat – as it won’t for the whole race. The V12’s 470 horses propel us down the steep hill into the compression at the bottom, the Fuchsröhre. They say a startled fox hid here during construction of the circuit in the mid-1920s. Oily Volvo detritus on the windscreen means I would struggle to see any nocturnal canids tonight. ‘Does this car have a screen washer?’ I ask Race Engineer Paul Thomas over the radio. I can imagine him rolling his eyes as he replies telling me it’s controlled, as usual, from the column stalk.

Of course it is. This Rapide – registration KX09 KTE, hence the nickname ‘Katie’ – is the same as those rolling off the production line at Aston Martin’s Rapide Plant (AMRP). It really is a road car with the only modifications being those essential for racing: a roll cage, the removal of interior trim, re-tuned suspension and the fitting of racing tyres and fuel tank. All four doors open, as usual, and the gearbox is the production standard six-speed semi-auto from ZF.

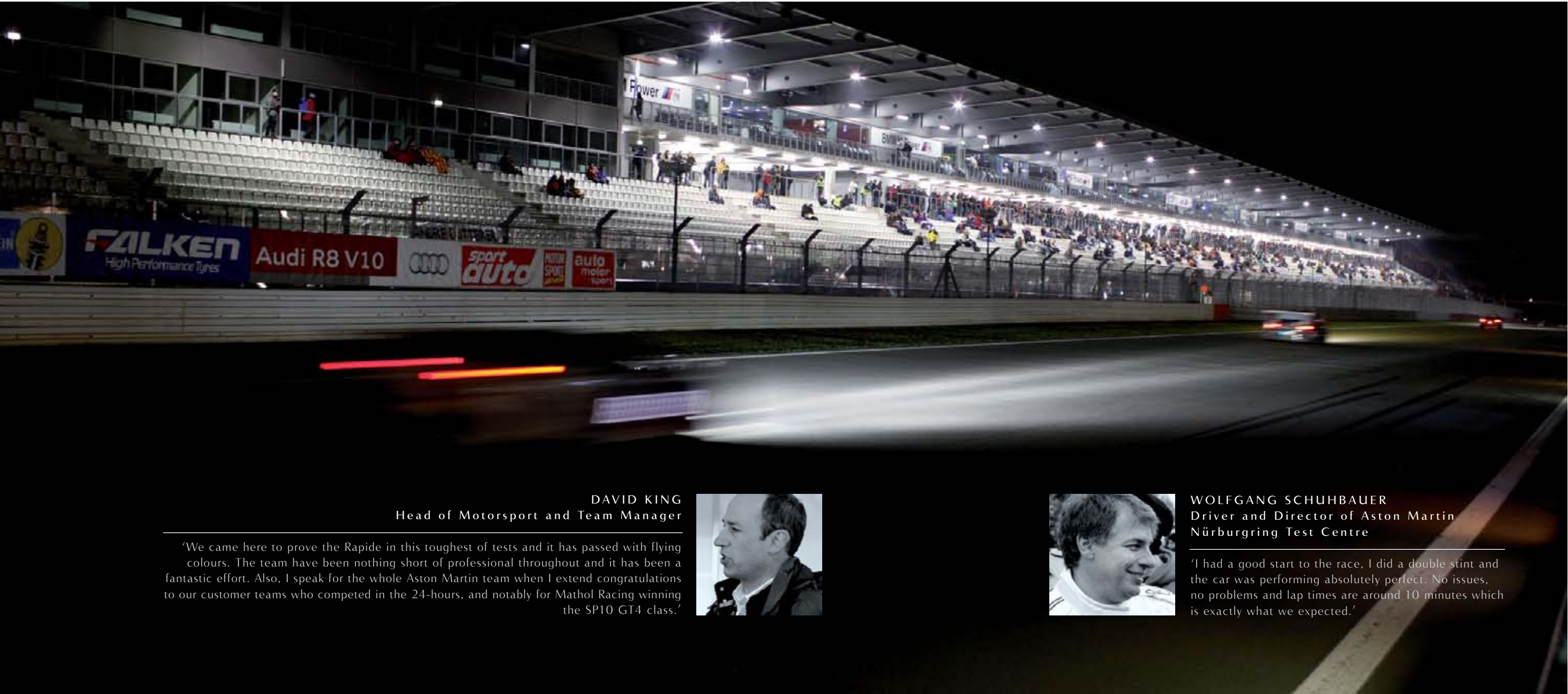


Dr Ulrich Bez with Akio Toyoda, President of Toyota. They first met at the Nürburgring in 2007, forming a friendship that resulted in Cygnet – Aston Martin’s city car, based on Toyota’s iQ, which was on display at Nürburgring this year



ANDY HINDHAUGH
Lead Technician

‘I spent a week at the ‘Ring with Wolfgang before its shakedown race. We worked our way from base settings to a set-up he was really happy with. When it came to the race itself, the car ran faultlessly. Knowing we achieved the maximum is hugely satisfying.’



DAVID KING
Head of Motorsport and Team Manager

‘We came here to prove the Rapide in this toughest of tests and it has passed with flying colours. The team have been nothing short of professional throughout and it has been a fantastic effort. Also, I speak for the whole Aston Martin team when I extend congratulations to our customer teams who competed in the 24-hours, and notably for Mathol Racing winning the SP10 GT4 class.’



WOLFGANG SCHUHBAUER
Driver and Director of Aston Martin
Nürburgring Test Centre

‘I had a good start to the race, I did a double stint and the car was performing absolutely perfect. No issues, no problems and lap times are around 10 minutes which is exactly what we expected.’



It’s true the Rapide attracted grins from other competitors before the event began. Long-wheelbase four-seaters are not usual fare at racetracks. Now though, they’re not smirking. Not when the Rapide keeps up through the twisty bits, belying its size, remaining irritatingly close, headlights bright in their mirrors. Especially not when it reaches the long straight and slips efficiently through the air, pushing ahead of those cars tuned specifically for racing. Going full-throttle through the kink at Tiergarten at the end of the long straight, we see more than 285kmph on the clock – and Porsche GT3s falling behind in our mirrors. Now it’s the Rapide’s pilots – Dr Bez, Porritt, Test Centre Director Wolfgang Schuhbauer, and I – who have smiles on their faces.

There’s nothing light-hearted about Andy Hindhaugh and his team of engineers from Aston Martin’s R&D department in Gaydon. At least not until after the race, when they might celebrate with locally produced beverages. Hindhaugh’s crew prepared the Rapide – and its sister, the green V12 Vantage – for this event which Dr Bez calls, ‘the ultimate final engineering durability test.’ Like the cars, these guys are not racing specialists. They’re the very same technicians who bring to life the road-car designs of Marek Reichman.

Backseat drive

Richard Meaden, one of the ‘Kermit’ V12 Vantage drivers, was whisked from the UK to the ‘Ring by Rapide: ‘I love driving, but with the prospect of a long week’s build-up culminating in 24 relentless hours racing ‘Kermit’ with the Aston Martin factory team, I jumped at the chance to ride to the Nürburgring ‘Ring in the back of a Rapide. I’d experienced the Rapide before, but only from the driver’s seat, so this was my opportunity to experience Aston Martin motoring from a fresh perspective: the rear seat. At 5’10” tall on a good day I’m of average height, but given the Rapide’s rakish roofline I’m still surprised when I find there’s headroom to spare. The view from the back is spectacular, affording you a panoramic view of the Rapide’s wonderfully stylish cockpit. If I’d known the entertainment system included rear-headrest DVD screens, I’d have brought a movie to while away the journey – Steve McQueen’s Le Mans perhaps – but the mighty Bang & Olufsen hi-fi even succeeds in making Race Engineer Paul Thomas’s dodgy playlist sound good. Despite getting snarled in some epic traffic jams around Brussels, which meant we took nine hours instead of the usual seven to complete the journey, it was a truly memorable – and comfortable – drive.’

The Privateers

- 59 GENTLE SWISS RACING – SP10 GT4
V8 Vantage N24 / 4th in class / 46th overall
- 60 MATHOL RACING – SP10 GT4
V8 Vantage / 5th in class / 78th overall
- 61 MATHOL RACING – SP10 GT4
V8 Vantage / **1st in class** / 27th overall
- 66 TIM SCHRICK – SP8
V8 Vantage / DNF
- 67 BIRCHWOOD RACING – SP10 GT4
V8 Vantage N24 / DNF
- 74 GENTLE SWISS RACING – SP8
V8 Vantage N24 / 5th in class / 84th overall



Yet once installed at the track they become fiercely competitive, never accepting defeat. Team Manager David King channels this energy and leads by example. When the Vantage is stranded by the side of the track with a fuel pump problem on Sunday morning, he sprints off to fetch it back to the pits. The first car to hand is the prototype of the Cygnet city car, on mere display duty today. Beetling through the throng, King quickly reaches where Dr Bez's DBS is parked. With this, he tows the Vantage back to the garages. Hindhaugh's boys descend, locust-like, onto 'Kermit' and she's soon back in action – screeching out of the pits to a round of applause from the Japanese Gazoo Racing squad.

This is the team of Toyota's CEO, Akio Toyoda. Their Lexus LF-A is a purpose-built racer but, as in the past two years, it competes in the same SP8 class as the cars from Gaydon. There's a friendly rivalry between these two very different manufacturers whose leaders share common passions and values. Aston Martin's luxurious Cygnet concept, based on Toyota's iQ, was born here at the Nürburgring after a personal meeting between Bez and Toyoda. For fun, Ulrich has presented Akio with a model of a blue V12 Vantage – a reminder of which marque won the class last year (and the year before – using the N24 V8 Vantage).

For most of this race, it looks like Toyoda's son's model car collection might receive another addition courtesy of Dr Bez, but a random fuel pump drama drops the Vantage to third place and denies a hat-trick of class wins. Gazoo's success is well deserved and congratulated.

Meanwhile Katie's race – despite the best efforts of a Volvo driver – goes like clockwork and results in an amazing second place in class – and 34th overall from 123 finishers. This does not go unnoticed: 'I just had a call from a friend in the USA,' Dr Bez tells me. 'He was so impressed by the speed of the Rapide that he wants to order one on Monday.' We didn't win – and that was never the target – but the Rapide's result, showing pace and reliability throughout, is a victory for the concept of developing and testing Aston Martin's products in the heat of battle.



Helping Hands

The Rapide race car project could not have happened without the support of several of Aston Martin's key suppliers and brand partners. The company extends its sincere thanks to:

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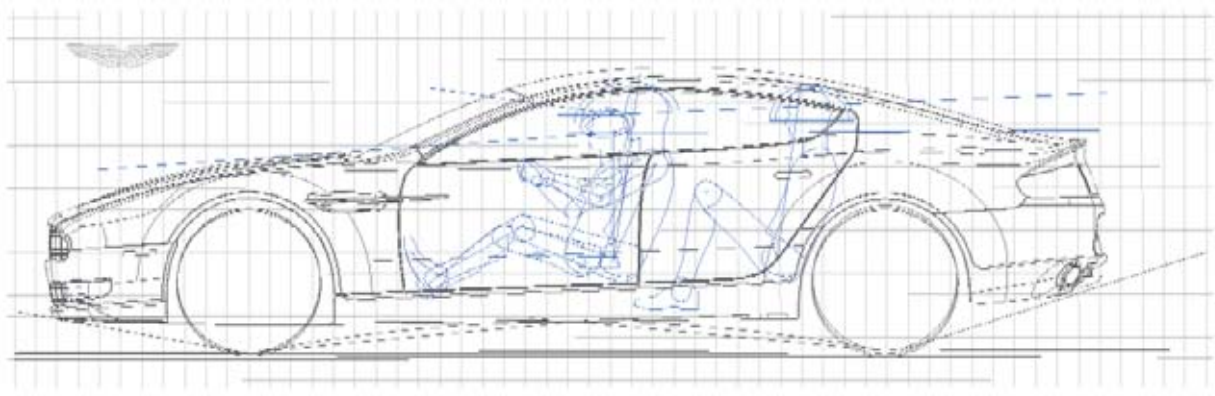
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ROAD PROVEN, RACE PERFECT

Richard Meaden joins Dr Ulrich Bez, Marek Reichman and David King in conversation at Aston Martin's Gaydon HQ, where – in the viewing garden of the new Design Studio – a gleaming new Rapide sits besides its triumphant, race-soiled sister 'Katie'. As things soon become clear, there's actually very little separating the two...



‘What I needed, and what I had, was a designer who could look at a beautiful car like the DB9 and not be afraid to imagine it with a longer wheelbase, a pair of extra doors and maybe a higher roofline’
DR ULRICH BEZ

Even by the standards of a forward-thinking CEO like Dr Ulrich Bez, the four-door, four-seater Rapide was an ambitious and convention-challenging vision. A very real test of the brand’s elasticity and the versatility of the Vertical-Horizontal or ‘VH’ bonded-aluminium platform, the Rapide wasn’t just breaking new ground for Aston Martin, it was something new to the motor industry in general.

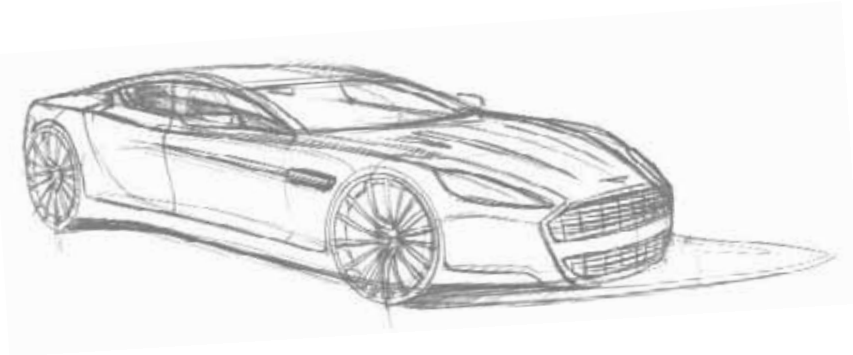
Like most great ideas though, once brought to fruition it’s hard to remember a time before they were present. Standing next to a production Rapide with Dr Bez and Aston Martin’s Design Director Marek Reichman, it’s easy to take its success for granted, and all-too easy to skip through the four years of hard graft that stood between that initial bold concept and today’s brilliant reality.

For Dr Bez, the inspiration behind Rapide was born from the desire to put a modern twist on the time-honoured Aston Martin recipe of performance and four-seat practicality, so ably demonstrated by the DB models of the fifties and sixties.

‘These cars had four seats, they had luggage space, but they also had performance and sporting character. Over time this combination was lost to bigger engines, more comfort and more safety. What we have done with the Rapide is to bring back that four-seat usability in a low, sporting, exclusive car that has the feeling of specialness you expect from an Aston Martin.’

As we walk around the Rapide road car listening to Dr Bez discussing the motivation and inspiration that drove the project, it’s clear that Marek Reichman, Aston Martin’s Design Director, is re-living the moment he was issued with the biggest challenge of his career to date: ‘What you’ve just heard from Dr Bez is basically how I was briefed in the early days. It was my job to take that emotion and passion and translate it into the form language. The sentence that really hooked me was: “Marek, please make the most beautiful four-door car in the world.” Now that might sound like a tough task – and it was – but it’s also exactly what a designer wants to hear. It’s thanks to the size and agility of Aston Martin, the lack of committee decisions and the speed with which we can work that I had such a clear direction to follow.’





‘As we started to develop the form, we put an extra 40mm in the roof, called Ulrich over and he said: “It looks much better!” The roofline has a lot of tension that really creates the sense of the car pouncing’
MAREK REICHMAN



What began as an exercise in building a four-door DB9 soon evolved into a whole new car: familiar in proportion, surfacing and details, but at the same time something wholly fresh and new. Again it was the combination of Bez’s drive and Reichman’s can-do confidence that gave the project the impetus it needed.

‘What I needed, says Bez, and what I had, was a designer who could look at a beautiful car like the DB9 and not be afraid to imagine it with a longer wheelbase, a pair of extra doors and maybe a higher roofline. There had to be the feeling that it was possible. What we have now is, I believe, the most elegant Aston Martin of all, yet it accommodates passengers of well over 6ft tall in the rear.’ Reichman takes up the story: ‘We originally worked on a car with the same roof height as the DB9, but as we started to develop the form we put an extra 40mm in the roof, called Ulrich over and he said: “Ah, it looks much better!” The roofline has a lot of tension that really creates the sense of the car pouncing. It’s a true four-door sports car.’

Both Reichman and Bez are clearly passionate about what Rapide represents, both from design and engineering standpoints, but also for what it says about Aston Martin’s ability to grow and carve new niches. Dr Bez again: ‘I believe that a car of this type being sporty isn’t about going two tenths of a second faster here or there, it’s about the feeling you get from driving everywhere. For me, what makes the Rapide special is the beauty, the usability, the powertrain concept, the weight distribution and, of course, the performance. It’s the ultimate road car solution. It offers everything.’

Parked alongside the Rapide road car is something rather special: ‘Katie’ the Rapide race car which, just a few weeks before, crossed the line to score a remarkable 2nd place in class and 34th place overall in the Nürburgring 24-Hours. Like the road car, ‘Katie’, so-called because her registration plate ends in the letters ‘KTE’, is close to Dr Bez’s heart, for it was he that made the decision to take the Rapide racing. It was also Bez who was behind the wheel when ‘Katie’ took the chequered flag at the Nürburgring.

If the decision to build a four-door, four-seat road car challenged the public’s perception of what an Aston Martin could or should be, Dr Bez’s decision to take the Rapide racing also raised a few quizzical eyebrows. Not it has to be said within Gaydon. Indeed so far, as those inside Aston Martin were concerned, it was perfectly natural, as David King, Aston Martin’s Head of Motorsport and Team Manager for the company’s long-running exploits at the N24 race explains:



If the decision to build a four-door, four-seater road car challenged the public’s perception of what an Aston Martin could or should be, Dr Bez’s decision to take the Rapide racing also raised a few quizzical eyebrows. But as far as Gaydon was concerned, it was perfectly natural

‘When Dr Bez came to me and said he wanted to take the Rapide racing, I was delighted, because it is a continuation of the philosophy we started five years ago with ‘Rose’ (the first Vantage N24 race car) that says our road cars are so fundamentally right that you can take them on a race track with almost no modifications. Taking the Rapide racing is the perfect way to illustrate that while it has four doors and four seats it has all the inherently sporting attributes of the VH platform.’

For Marek Reichman, working on a racing Rapide has been a thoroughly enjoyable distraction: ‘We never conceived the Rapide as a potential racer, but because we make sports cars at Aston Martin, to see one as a racecar somehow feels right. Right from the moment Dr Bez and David King said we were going racing, the design team felt it should be a real gentleman’s racer. We worked hard to get the right colour and graphics to reflect this. If you look, you’ll see that the blue paintwork has been specially created to match the blue of the Zurich/ADAC number panels on the front doors. We also kept the majority of graphics white to make the car looks as cohesive as possible. I went to the Nürburgring to watch the race and it was great to see the car on track and in the pitlane, and to see how enthusiastic the fans were about it.’

Dr Bez is one of only two drivers in the world (Chris Porritt being the other) to have raced every car the Aston Martin team has built and entered for the Nürburgring 24-Hours. So how does it compare?



‘Some people say that the Rapide’s transmission is a soft option compared to a DSG box. Certainly when you drive through London it is, and is all the better for it. But as we have proven just a few weeks ago, it is absolutely a sports option when you drive around the Nürburgring! Of course compared to a V8 Vantage N24, or the V12 Vantage racecar, the Rapide doesn’t have the same level of agility, but it compensates with tremendous stability. The Nürburgring is all about confidence under braking and cornering, and the Rapide is very neutral and stable. It was really a big delight to race.’



VIVA ESPAÑA

The new Rapide is a car for many occasions and all seasons, as Alan Judd discovered this February in Valencia – a city that, like Aston Martin's new four-door sports car, enjoys an electric blend of history, cutting-edge design and considerable passion



Would I go to Valencia for the launch of the Aston Martin Rapide? I was packing my bags before I put the phone down. But along with the toothbrush, I travelled with two unasked questions: why Valencia and who is the Rapide for?

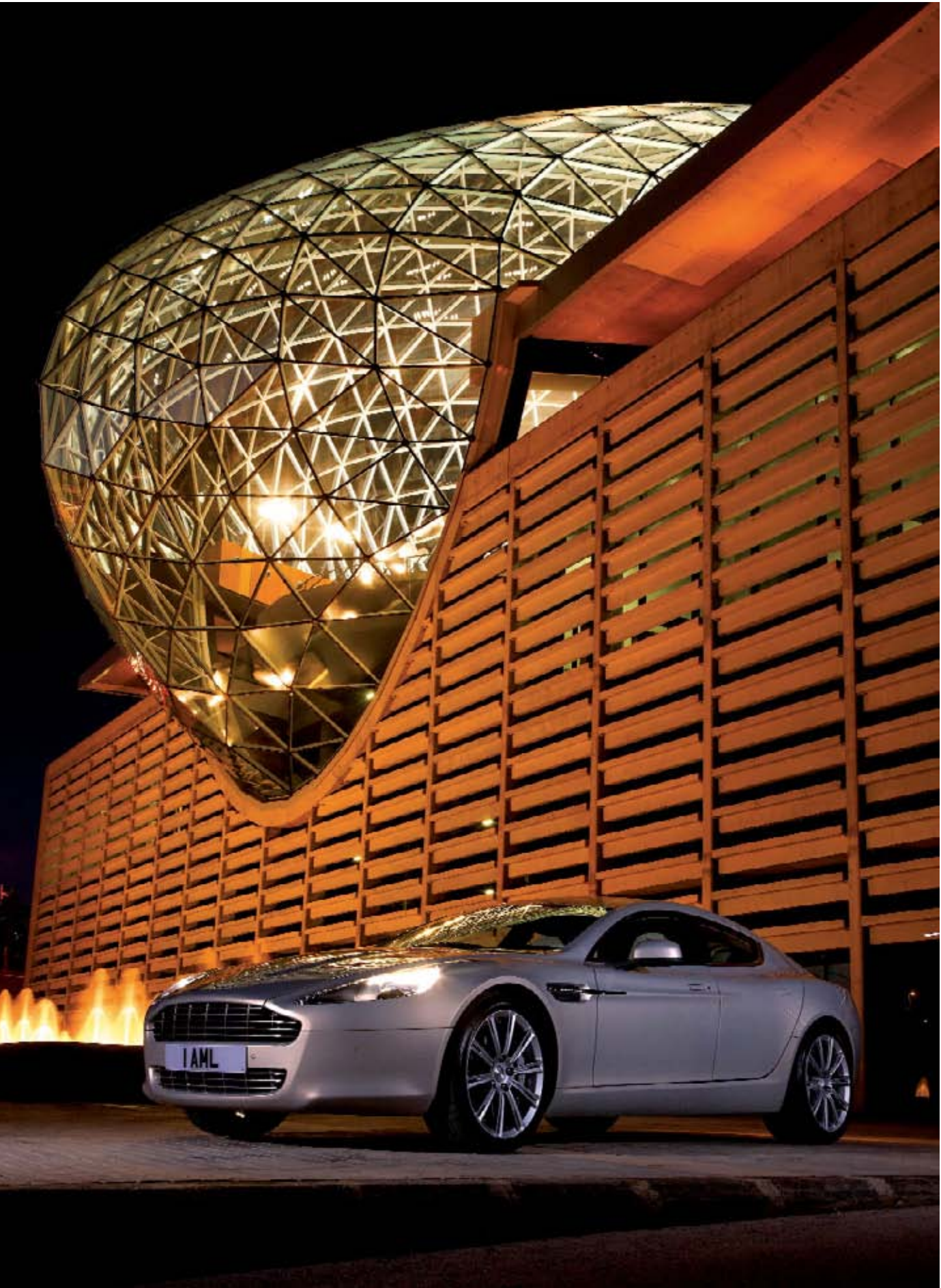
I knew one thing about the latter, based on seeing the concept car in Geneva in 2006: that it was probably the most beautiful four-door car in the world. Marek Reichman's design is svelte, graceful and powerful, curved (in his words) like a wooden ruler under tension. That image is as apt as you would expect from a man who in his spare time designs houses, skis, ties and shoes and who is never seen without pad and pencil. So it was clear that the Rapide is a car for people with aesthetic sensibility, clear too from the six-litre V12 (184mph top speed, 0–60mph in seconds)



that it's a machine intended for drivers skilled in the art of what in Edwardian times was called 'motorism'. But four doors and four seats – is this the family Aston Martin or is it still the sporting Aston Martin? Both, as I was to discover. I had never seen Valencia and my notions of it were few and hazy: Spanish port, old, part of a great trading empire, probably some beautiful buildings, allegedly the birthplace of paella and resting place of the Holy Grail (though it hasn't been seen for some time). Also some modern associations: Formula 1, the America's Cup, famous contemporary architecture. So something old, something new; perhaps that tells us something about why we're going there.

Stepping through the door of Hospes Palau de la Mar, you knew instantly that you were in Spain. I've always loved those traditional Spanish interiors – cool, high, darkly-timbered, almost erotically mysterious – but in this case the attractions of a 19th-century palace are combined with the conveniences of a thoughtfully modern hotel spa. So you have everything you want – and it all works. Dinner that night was a lively affair – inevitably, when Dr Bez is there – in an 1836 wine and tapas bar, the Casa Montana. Breakfast the next morning was in the great vaulted covered market amidst a colourful profusion of local produce. One of the oldest and largest running food markets in Europe, Mercado Central was completed in 1928, bringing thousands of street stalls beneath one magnificent roof across 8,000 square metres.

It was difficult to tear ourselves away from the vibrant Valencian colours, ceramics and mosaics, but the prospect of finding and finally driving the new Rapide drove us on. To the basement vaults of Vicente Gracia, as it transpired – an internationally acclaimed jewellery designer who displayed a range of contemporary takes on traditional themes. We had to retrieve our jewel-like car keys from numbered deposit boxes and it was then that the more perspicacious of our party (which did not include me) began to get the picture.





Those long sweeping roads through Valencia's surrounding country – slightly reminiscent of Clint Eastwood's westerns, with vistas you never want to leave – would be impressive in any car. But they're made for the Rapide



The rest of us got it in the underground car park of the futuristic City of Arts and Sciences. This remarkable modern complex, which includes an opera house, a planetarium and an art gallery, is sited half in the bed of a diverted river. Aston Martin had taken over the entire car park, carpeting and lighting it to display a dozen Rapides. Since they intend to make only 2,000 a year, we're unlikely ever to see anything like that number assembled in one place again. It was then that the theme of the launch became apparent.

As Dr. Bez, Marek Reichmann and 15 technicians demonstrated various features of the car: the upward-inclined, curb-avoiding swan-wing doors; the slim yet strong B-pillars that, along with the shaped front headrests, give rear passengers a better view than many larger cars; the swage line (a traditional coach-building term) that runs from the front wing to the rear door, deceiving the eye into shortening the wheelbase; the elongated headlamps that do the same for the front overhang; the exquisite

magnetic leather and metal grab handles; the boot that takes golf clubs with the seats up, skis with them down. As these and more were pointed out, we began to appreciate that the Rapide is Valencia on wheels. It's the mixture of ancient and modern, of tradition and new technology, that makes this car one of the most desirable on the planet.

Nowhere is that mix more obvious than in its audacious four-door/four-seat configuration. Plenty of sports cars have rear seats that are little more than parcel shelves but the Rapide is a genuine four-seater in which adults can travel in comfort farther than from here to the next roundabout. Alright, there's less legroom than in most full-size saloons but I'm six feet tall and greatly enjoyed my hour's chauffeured drive out of Valencia, watching the scenery scroll by from my richly upholstered bucket seat. Furthermore, ingress and egress are both executed with elegance intact, if you remember not to move head and legs simultaneously.

As for the drive, those long sweeping roads north, through Valencia's surrounding country towards Castellón – slightly reminiscent of Clint Eastwood's westerns, with lunch stops at places and vistas you never want to leave – would be impressive in any car. But they're made for the Rapide (see box). That it has power (470bhp, 443lb.ft.torque) goes



without saying; it's the handling and steering feel that are worth emphasising, the latter enhanced by just the right degree of unsprung weight (bits such as brakes and wheels that are outside the dampers and springs). There's a battery of electronic wizardry to help on those rare occasions when a driver's enthusiasm outruns his or her driving skill, but even without that, most will find this a supremely well-mannered and disciplined car – whether with four up or one; on the open road or in busy mid-town Valencia.

So who is it for? Simple: it's for those who love Aston Martins, have petrol in their veins and want to share the experience. They won't be short of company.



- A VALENCIA
City of Arts and Sciences
- B ALCUDIA DE VEO
- C MONTANEJOS
Casa Olvidio
- D ALCUBLAS
- E PUÇOL
Campo Anibal
- F VALL D'UIXO

The northern route

MONTANEJOS – CAMPO ANÍBAL – VALL D'UIXO

Alan Judd was chauffeured through Valencia's ultra-modern City of Arts and Sciences (A) to Valencia's northern city limits, whereupon he switched from his comfy rear seat to the cockpit, to put the Rapide's performance characteristics to the test. After exiting the A7 towards Castellón at the 56km mark, the twisting and vertiginous CV-223 mountain road offers up some beautiful but challenging conditions. Through Alcudia de Veo (A), then onto the CV-20 towards MONTANEJOS (C) for a coffee stop at Casa Olvidio. Take the CV-195 through Caudiel, then the N-234 and CV-236 through Toras and the CV-245 along the narrow and twisty roads to Alcublas (D). Another 55km of tight downhill and rustic tracks back towards Valencia, to Campo Anibal restaurant in Puçol (E) – a delightful converted farmhouse serving local delicacies with a gastronomical twist. After lunch it's back north through Vall d'Uixó (F), then back home to Valencia.



'YOU COME STEAMING OVER THE START-FINISH LINE FLAT IN 6TH GEAR. THE APPROACH TO THE FIRST CORNER IS QUITE AWKWARD, BUT THE RAPIDE MAKES IT EASY, BECAUSE YOU CAN PRE-SELECT THE GEAR YOU WANT – in this case all the way down to 2nd gear. Then all you need to do is brake (hard!) and the automatic transmission will immediately pop you into your desired gear at the perfect moment. The first few miles of the N24 lap comprises the modern GP circuit. It's smooth, wide, and first corner aside you don't drop lower than 3rd gear for the rest of the lap. Most cars tend to understeer around the GP circuit, but the Rapide feels very neutral, thanks to its long wheelbase and excellent weight distribution. It's very predictable and easy on its tyres, which is perfect for an endurance event. The left-hander onto the Nordschleife is always a bit tricky, especially in a powerful, rear-drive car, but again the Rapide feels very stable. Once you begin the zig-zag run down Hatzenbach – working through 3rd, 4th and 5th gears – you do become aware that the Rapide is unusually long for a race car. It doesn't feel ungainly, but you have to be aware of how much car you're threading through between the kerbs! You approach Flugplatz fast, in 5th gear, just dab the brakes before the crest to settle the car, then pop up and over and into the fast double-apex right without touching the brakes again. As the road drops away again, you shift into 6th gear and keep your foot hard down, braking only slightly and downshifting to 5th for Schwedenkreuz. Aremberg is 3rd gear, but you're soon back up through 4th then 5th on the way down into the Fuchsröhre compression, then briefly on the brakes, downshift to 4th and be greedy with the kerb on the left. This sets you up nicely for the 2nd gear Adenauer Forst chicane. The entry to Metzgesfeld is very bumpy, but the Rapide rides it smoothly, helping you carry speed into this deceptively quick left-hander. You then have a long, fast and technical downhill run through Kallenhard, 'Miss-Hit-Miss', Wehrseifen and finally the bridge at Breidscheid. From here it's a steep climb up Ex-Mühle, through the 5th gear Lauda Kink to Bergwerk. THIS IS A CRUCIAL CORNER, A GOOD EXIT HERE WILL WIN YOU TIME ALL THE WAY UP THE STEEP, SINUOUS AND CHALLENGING 6TH GEAR ASCENT THROUGH KESSELCHEN TO THE FAST 4TH GEAR KLOSTERTAL KINK, THEN ON TO THE FAMOUS BANKED KARUSSELL. From Hohe Acht (the highest point on the circuit) to Pflanzgarten 2, the circuit has a great rhythm. The Rapide flows so well through here, and the Touchtronic automatic transmission makes it effortless, allowing you to focus solely on your line through the twists and turns of Wipperman, Eschbach and Brännchen. It's a terrific part of the lap that leads to the small Karussell: a landmark that starts your thinking about the long Döttinger Höhe straight. You enter Galgenkopf (the double-apex corner onto the straight) in 4th, then upshift to 5th before the exit. I then radio my fuel reading to the pits and take 6th as we pass the visitors' centre on the right. Then there's just time to wave to a few Porsches and BMWs as you overtake them before hitting our peak speed of 296kmph in the Tiergarten compression. I then downshift to 5th gear for the flurry of squiggles at Hohenrain, then 3rd gear for the final left-hander that feeds you back on the GP circuit to start another lap'

A LAP OF THE 'RING: CHRIS PORRITT, ASTON MARTIN RAPIDE DRIVER
NÜRBURGRING 24-HOURS, 15-16 MAY 2010





Bang & Olufsen's Concept Developer Kresten Krab-Bjerre

SURROUND SOUND

You can imagine the glee that resonated through the Bang & Olufsen Automotive R&D department when the Rapide was announced: that extra listening room is to an audio engineer what a long, smooth open road is to a petrolhead. **Ken Kessler** turns it up

It's simple physics: bass quality, which provides the 'weight' to music, depends on the size of the speaker and the space in which those low notes can flow. Why not 'try this at home' with a clock radio or iPod dock? Moving from one of the smaller-rooms to your lounge, the music spreads; it flows; it even seems to breathe.

What the Rapide's added cabin dimensions have given the wizards at Bang & Olufsen is more space to play with both the physical size of the hardware and the way sound is dispersed through the passenger area. And, just as they optimised each sound system to specifically address the dimensions and interior details of the DBS, DB9 and V8 Vantage, their work for the BeoSound Rapide System exploited the car's environment with the same obsessive precision. Their task was compounded by two challenges that did not affect the original DBS system: how to deliver the correct spatial effects to four passengers rather than two; and how to fill nearly double the cabin volume.



Bang & Olufsen's Morten Lydolf, who worked on the development of the BeoSound Rapide, explains: 'We were so pleased with the sound of the system in the DBS that we wanted to replicate it exactly in the Rapide, but for four passengers instead of two.' To accomplish this, the BeoSound Rapide sound system increases the component count over the virtually identical DBS' system with 15 active speakers instead of 13, through the addition of two more 140mm woofers. They also raised the total amplifier power to, 'A bit more than the DBS' 1000 watts,' according to Lydolf. In effect, Bang & Olufsen duplicated in the rear of the Rapide what you find in the front of the DBS.

As Aston Martin owners have come to expect, the BeoSound Rapide system integrates completely with the control unit in the vehicle. Conveniently, to free the driver from having to fine-tune the system manually as the four seats fill up, the system can detect how many passengers there are, and automatically adjust the sound's directional

characteristics and sonic focus accordingly. Cleverly, this is aided by integration with a familiar safety feature: the seatbelts – a most pleasant inducement to 'buckle up'. The driver, however, retains full control, because this automatic setting is accompanied by user-accessible settings to optimise the system for front-only, driver-only, rear-only or 'all seats'.

Familiar to those who have enjoyed Bang & Olufsen's in-car wizardry in other Aston Martins are the motorised tweeter units forged around the company's patented and automatically operated ALT (Acoustic Lens Technology). They emerge smoothly from their hiding places to deliver the generous 180° horizontal dispersion of the high frequency sounds, providing listeners with an expansive, almost cavernous sense of space. It's a rare opportunity for passengers to experience an authentically proportioned sound stage regardless of which seat is occupied.



Bang & Olufsen's Acoustician
Morten Lydolf

'Although you sit low within the car, every speaker is positioned more or less exactly where I'd like. I know it's right when I stop listening for flaws, and start listening through the system to the music'

With system components in place, Bang & Olufsen's Acousticians step in. 'With Aston Martin, we got an early opportunity to suggest the optimum location for each loudspeaker,' Lydolf enthuses. 'Although you sit low within the car, every speaker is positioned more or less exactly where I'd like. I know it's right when I stop listening for flaws, and start listening through the system to the music. Only once we're happy with the static tuning,' he continues, 'do we take the car out on the road and work on the dynamic tuning.'

The dynamic tuning means, once again, the driver's hands are freed: the system adapts automatically to changing noise conditions, eliminating any need to adjust the volume to compensate for Aston Martin's sonorous V12 or for changing road or weather conditions. And it's not just the volume: BeoSound Rapide also adjusts bass, mid-range and treble levels according to the noise conditions in the cabin and the vehicle's speed.

Of course, with Bang & Olufsen, it's never enough to simply sound beautiful: it has to look beautiful too. Just as the operational functions are integrated into the control system, the units themselves are integrated with visual fluidity. For Bang & Olufsen's Concept Developer Kresten Krab-Bjerre, it was too good an opportunity to miss: 'We can't predict what a customer's home might look like. But with the Rapide we already have the finished environment, so we can work extremely carefully to ensure that there's total visual harmony within it.'

The speakers are hidden behind smoothly contoured, aluminium loudspeaker grilles that complement the handcrafted interior, as if having been sculpted as an integral part of the Rapide's gorgeous cabin. So, for those who have experienced the seemingly irresolvable dilemma of housing a state-of-the-art sound system in carefully appointed domesticity, thanks must be given to Bang & Olufsen for doing it so faultlessly inside the Rapide. Then again, they've been doing it in homes for 85 years.

Further information
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FOUR ON THE FLOOR

With production of Aston Martin's new four-door sports car in full swing, **Richard Meaden** goes back to the floor in Graz, Austria for a tour of Rapide's new production plant, and asks just how Aston Martin overcame the challenges of not only establishing a 'little Gaydon' abroad, but also bedding down a process for a brand-new car

Nine months ago, Aston Martin Magazine visited Aston Martin’s Rapide Plant in Graz, Austria, as the very first pre-production cars were being completed. This was the starting point for a new era in Aston Martin’s illustrious 95-year history and the culmination of three years of intensive effort from the small but dedicated team of engineers who had moved from Gaydon to Graz to oversee the creation of Aston Martin’s pioneering overseas production facility. To recap, the Rapide story began as a concept at the Detroit Autoshow at the start of 2006. This debut was quickly followed by a commitment from Aston Martin’s shareholders to put the Rapide into production. With the burgeoning success of the Vantage, DB9 and DBS model lines Aston Martin’s Gaydon HQ was already approaching its limit of 8,000 cars per year, and this led the company to search for a suitable partner with which to build the Rapide.

After a rigorous selection process, Aston Martin decided Magna Steyr’s knowledge, skills and enthusiasm for the Rapide project set the company apart. An agreement was reached in March 2008, and later that year work began in Graz creating a dedicated production facility – the Aston Martin Rapide Plant (AMRP) – for the marque’s eagerly awaited four-door coupe. Establishing the AMRP required an unprecedented level of co-operation, co-ordination and a rigorous commitment to regular communication, as Aston Martin’s Product Development Director, Ian Minards explains: ‘This has been a big project and we have only been able to succeed by working closely together and maintaining strong lines of communication between Gaydon and Graz.’

The AMRP, like Gaydon, places an emphasis on quality and craftsmanship, shunning the constantly moving production line typical of most other car factories in favour of a series of workstations. Here, time can be lavished upon hand-building the Rapide

Minards’ man on the ground in Graz was Nick Miller, General Manager of the New Model Launch team. As leader of the core team of Aston Martin engineers on secondment from the UK, it was Miller’s task to ensure the AMRP mirrored the values and standards achieved at Aston Martin’s Gaydon headquarters: ‘Around October/November time, we began our tooling try-out. We built a set of cars – 34 to be precise – some of which were used by our engineering team, but the majority we used on the international press launch in Valencia. Any problems that were identified on these cars, we then assessed and rectified. We then put fixes in that were implemented in a re-run using the same tooling. We then ran the same loop again in the Pilot Production (PP) build, and built another 31 cars at that stage. This is a further refinement, a further iteration if you like. Again our colleagues in the Marketing department used a number of these cars, but we also put cars onto an evaluation fleet. These cars were driven by test drivers on a two-shift basis; we got them to 60,000 miles as quickly as we could to flush out any remaining problems and get the fixes in before we began to build customer cars.’

Some 240 technicians and craftspeople work at Graz, building the Rapide. As Miller explains, this presents a challenge that highlights what separates making an Aston Martin from any other car: ‘The fine tuning and finessing of the product is fundamental to building an Aston Martin and therefore a big challenge for the technicians. The fit and finish of the body panels and paintwork, the leather and the precision of its stitching, the fact that our quality standards are right at the top-end makes working on Rapide so demanding, but ultimately so rewarding for those involved.’



Cubism

Rob Evans is Aston Martin’s New Model Quality Manager, which means he’s spent the last few months in Graz, Austria, obsessively poring over the accuracy, consistency, fit and finish of all the Rapide’s major body and interior trim components. Throughout this time he has relied upon an invaluable, if somewhat enigmatically named tool known as the ‘Environmental Cube’. Common in large-volume car production, but almost unheard of on low-volume cars like the Rapide, the ‘cube’ is a nominal body – a datum point if you like – on which all the Rapide’s body and interior components can be checked.

Made from a number of solid pieces that have been machined from solid to incredibly tight tolerances, these blocks fit together to form a life-size Rapide buck. Evans and his team use the ‘cube’ to assess the quality and consistency of new or revised components; if the component fit the contours and fixing points on the cube, then they should be perfect on the production car. It’s an engineer’s dream, and the most serious indication of Aston Martin’s commitment to achieving the very highest standards.





ABOVE: OK to sign off: Dr Ulrich Bez approves the first customer Rapide off the line with Siegfried Wolf, Director and Co-Chief Executive Officer, Magna International

For a company that respects its history and tradition by continually striving to achieve exciting new goals, Graz – second only in size to Vienna, with six universities and UNESCO World Heritage status – is a wholly appropriate home for the Aston Martin Rapide Plant (AMRP), where the very latest manufacturing methods combine with time-honoured craftsmanship. The AMRP – like Aston Martin’s production facility at Gaydon – places an emphasis on absolute quality and craftsmanship, shunning the constantly moving production line typical of most other car factories in favour of a series of static workstations. Here time can be lavished upon each stage of hand-building the Rapide: only once work is completed at one station the bodies are moved to the next along the line, in a total build process that takes approximately 220 man-hours per car.

From the preparation of the Rapide’s aluminium body frame, or Body-in-white (BIW) and the painstaking paint processes that make Aston Martin’s paint finish the best in class, to the Trim Shop where highly-skilled craftspeople shape and stitch finest leather to create the Rapide’s magnificently upholstered interior, the AMRP is a centre of automotive excellence. Just as Vantage, DB9 and DBS customers are invited to Aston Martin’s UK headquarters at Gaydon, prospective Rapide customers are encouraged to visit Aston Martin’s new production facility in Graz to see the AMRP for themselves. Not only are guests assured a warm welcome and a memorable experience, the airy customer atrium also provides the perfect space to for the grace and powerful presence of the display Rapide to work its magic. Should temptation strike – as it surely will – there are two dedicated specification rooms, which contain everything clients require to assist them in creating their perfect Rapide in privacy and comfort.

According to Miller, the completion of the customer atrium was one of the highlights of his time in Austria: ‘I remember the reaction of Dr Bez. He came out in May 2009, and although the physical production line was in place, the building hadn’t been corporately branded. When he came back a few months later, he was completely bowled over and so excited to see it completed and ready to receive customers. It now feels like a little piece of Gaydon has been transplanted to Austria. We’ve regularly got customers touring the AMRP, seeing the tubs and body panels being assembled. Some have even come to see their own car being built, which is a great indication of the attachment they feel towards their car right from the very beginning.



GAYDON’S RACER

While the roadgoing Rapides were starting to roll out of the AMRP 850 miles away, Andy Hindhaugh and his small but dedicated team of colleagues at Aston Martin’s headquarters in Gaydon were beginning to tackle the task of transforming a Verification Prototype (VP) Rapide into a car fit to compete at the Nürburgring 24-Hours

In his role as Lead Technician in the Test and Verification team of Aston Martin’s Prototype Operations department, Hindhaugh’s job is to oversee the gruelling development programmes that all Aston Martin’s new models are required to pass. It’s a position that sees him travel the world, gaining an intimate knowledge of each new model’s inner workings. Since 2006 this job – and those of his colleagues in the Test and Verification team – has also included building, developing and running Aston Martin’s Nürburgring 24-Hour road-derived race cars.

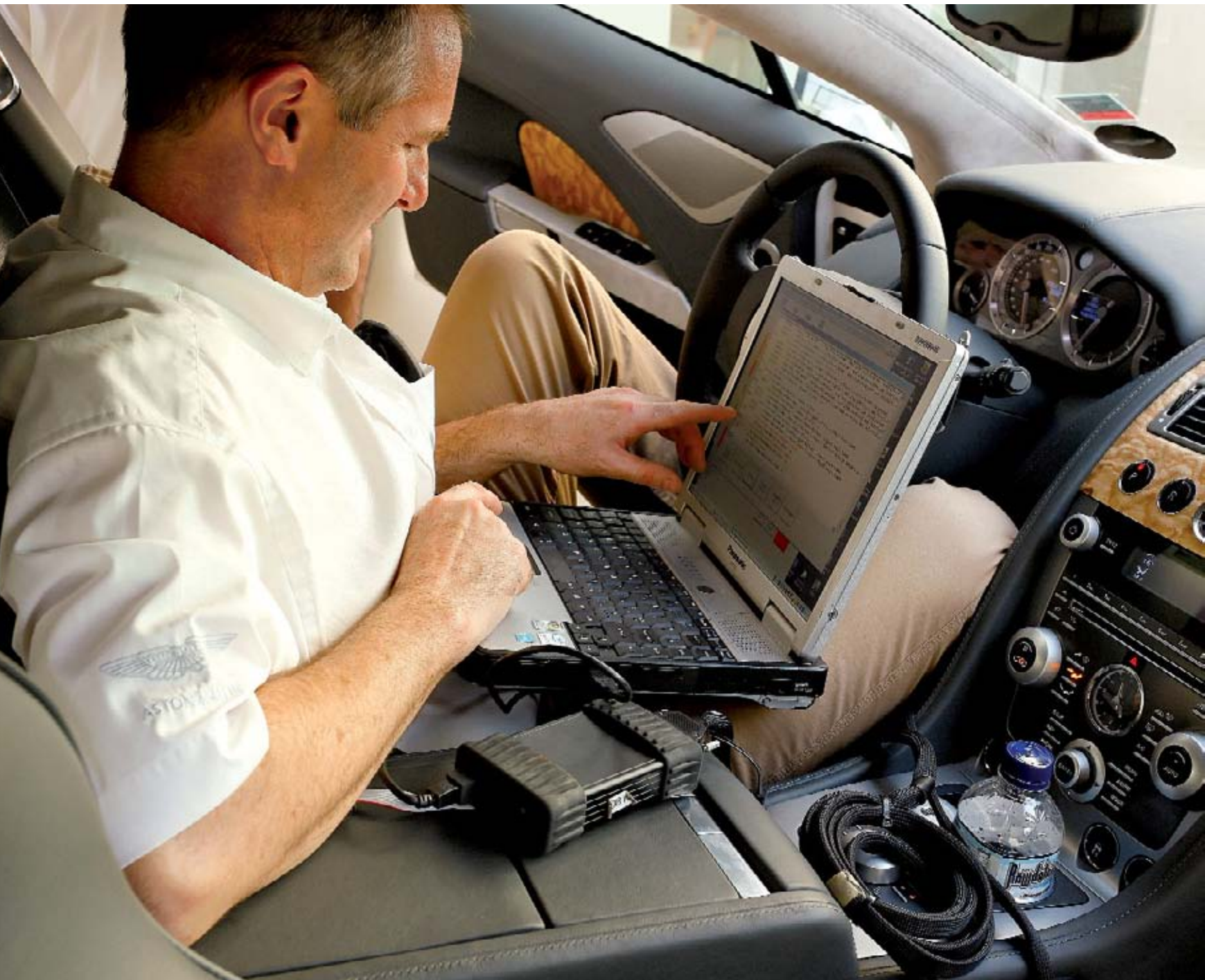
Building ‘Katie’ was a big task in more ways than one, as Hindhaugh explains: ‘We got the VP car in the second week of January. It was a fully finished car, so we had to strip it back to a bare tub. We weighed it before we started, then weighed all the components as we removed them to get an idea of how much weight we could save. By the time we’d finished we’d save 500kg!’

‘We approached the build in a meticulous manner,’ Hindhaugh continues, ‘because we know that doing things right first time makes for a super-reliable car in the race. For example, Dean Knowles spent three weeks paring back the wiring loom to the bare essentials. It was an incredibly painstaking job, but it saved 25kg. When we came to start the car for the first time, he only had to re-attach one connection. It’s great to work with such talented guys. ‘Once ‘Katie’ was built, I spent a week at the ‘Ring with Wolfgang Schuhbauer, Director of Aston Martin’s Nürburgring Test Centre and one of the car’s four drivers, before its shakedown race. We worked our way from base settings to a set-up he was really happy with. When it came to the N24 race itself, the car ran faultlessly. Knowing we achieved the maximum is hugely satisfying.’

RACE ENGINEER MAKES ROUTINE RADIO CALL REQUESTING A FUEL READING, THEN INSTRUCTS DRIVER TO 'PIT THIS LAP'. Driver responds, confirming the instruction to pit. Meanwhile the pit crew – comprising 11 engineers – clears space at the fuel pump and stands ready to receive car outside Garage 10. Chief Engineer Graham Humphrys stands in pitlane to guide Rapide into correct area outside garage. Rapide stops at pump and switches off engine. Refuelling commences. THE DATA ENGINEER ENTERS CAR FROM PASSENGER DOOR AND PLUGS IN LAPTOP COMPUTER TO RAPIDE'S DATAPORT TO RETRIEVE LAP DATA FOR ANALYSIS. Depending on the stint schedule the driver and tyres may also be changed. If so, the driver change is overseen by Lead Technician Andy Hindhaugh, who makes sure driver is strapped-in securely and that they have attached radio lead and can hear instructions from race engineers. Graham Humphrys instructs driver to 'zero' the fuel meter, then guides car out into pitlane, reminding driver to observe the pitlane speed limit of 60kmph. The driver then completes a seven-lap stint before the whole process is repeated.

PIT STOP PROTOCOL, ASTON MARTIN RAPIDE
NÜRBURGRING 24-HOURS, 15-16 MAY 2010





TESTING, TESTING

Kevin Hackett took a back seat aboard a prototype Rapide last July, through the stifling Kuwaiti desert – the final leg of a punishing testing programme that also bore the brunt of a Scandinavian winter, as well as relentless hours on the track. All stark reminders of the lengths Aston Martin will go to get their cars just right



‘The cars were driven 3,000km to Kiruna, Sweden and tested for over two weeks in conditions down to minus 35°C. It’s so cold there that NASA uses it for astronaut training and the cars covered more than 10,000km each time we went there.’

If the Aston Martin Rapide possessed a passport, it would have run out of pages to stamp, even before a single customer car rolled off its dedicated production line. From the moment the company decided to build the world’s most beautiful four-door sports car, its test and development schedule was put into action and it was far from a holiday, despite the locations being worthy of any traveller’s wishlist. I can speak from personal experience, having accompanied Aston Martin’s Vehicle Engineering Manager, Simon Barnes and his team through the arid deserts of Kuwait while the Rapide was undergoing its final hot weather testing. It’s an extreme environment and perfect for getting the measure of a car when refining its capabilities.

Heat, though, is only one punishment that Aston Martin’s cars must endure in the quest for the perfect sports car. The polar opposite (quite literally) was carried out in the sub-zero climes of Sweden, long before the Rapide needed to apply the factor 50 for our Kuwaiti adventure. While in Kuwait, we were subjected to temperatures in excess of 50°C and were unceremoniously sandblasted by the desert winds. But things were just as tough in the Arctic Circle, as Barnes explains:

‘We took the Rapide to Arvidsjaur in Sweden in the winters of 2008 and 2009 for DSC (Direction Stability Control) development on the frozen lakes, while winter durability testing for cold-start calibration, HVAC (Heating, Ventilation and Air Conditioning) and heating performance took place at Volvo’s test centre in Kiruna, again in northern Sweden.’ When it came to the testing at Kiruna, the Rapide was really punished. ‘The cars were driven 3,000km to Kiruna and tested for over two weeks in conditions down to minus 35°C,’ says Barnes. ‘It’s so cold there that NASA uses it for astronaut training and the cars covered more than 10,000km each time we went there.’

Minus 35°C is beyond ‘cold’ – and, again, I can speak from personal experience, having spent a couple of days driving on frozen lakes not that far from the North Pole. Remove a glove from your hand and within seconds you can feel it beginning to die. Your lips bleed, you’re constantly feeling in bad shape – it’s not pleasant despite the undeniable beauty of the surrounding landscape. And while a Rapide or any other Aston Martin might never actually be used in these conditions, the engineers in charge of making them need to know they’ll be reliable and safe to use, wherever in the world they end up.

So a Rapide’s central locking will never freeze up, it will defrost its windows quickly, its cabin temperature will rise to a comfortable level before you’re shivering and the seats will keep your derriere nice and warm. And apart from all that, it will get you where you need to be in safety and comfort.



‘It’s easy to bake a car in an oven, but there’s more to hot-weather testing than ambient temperatures... Only testing in real-world conditions like the Kuwaiti desert will do’
Simon Barnes, Vehicle Engineering Manager



Like me, you may have thought that, because many of the Rapide’s features – such as Aston Martin’s proprietary bonded-aluminium ‘VH platform’ architecture, its six-speed Touchtronic transmission and its glorious handbuilt 6.0-litre V12 engine – have been steadily honed and refined during active service in other models, it would negate the need for all this extra testing. You’d be wrong, because each model’s design puts unique stresses, strains and demands on its individual components.

As if the Rapide’s testing in extremes of heat and cold wasn’t enough, it also racked up the miles on the most demanding road in the world: Germany’s legendary Nürburgring. Aston Martin has its own dedicated Test Centre just a couple of minutes from the track’s main entrance, where Barnes and his team are based whenever they’re pushing a new model hard, developing its chassis, powertrain and driveline. ‘With Rapide we were there for four weeks,’ he recalls. ‘We did 385 laps, which works out at 7,000km of flat-out driving.’ No wonder it did so well when it raced there earlier this year. The Nürburgring was also utilised for transmission calibration development, with one car covering over 20,000km, and Germany’s network of unrestricted autobahns was used for high-speed road testing.

So, where else did the Rapide end up in the name of science? Back to Barnes: ‘Cooling and Thermal development work took place at the Nardo test facility in southern Italy in 2008 and 2009, using their handling circuit and the 12km high speed bowl at over 180mph. Dry handling development and sign-off happened in Idiada, near Barcelona.’

HVAC development may have taken place in Sweden but for real extremes, the team headed for Arizona in late 2008. There, says Barnes, a typical day’s drive started in Phoenix at 35°C and ended four hours later at the Grand Canyon where it was minus 18°C. ‘It’s the biggest temperature differential over the shortest distance anywhere in the world, that we know of – at least when it comes to somewhere that’s easily accessible. And the car covered about 5,000km.’ Hot Environmental Testing took place in 2008 and 2009 when the team drove two Rapides from the Gaydon factory to the Nürburgring and tested them on the track. They then drove to Italy’s world famous Stelvio Pass to assess high altitude performance before carrying on down to Nardo for high speed cooling performance tests. Each trip took three weeks and both cars clocked up over 10,000km.

According to Barnes, the UK also played a vital role in bringing the Rapide to production readiness. ‘We carried out PAScar testing at MIRA, which is a test of the vehicle’s structural stability and durability over mixed road surfaces. The test covers 45,000km which simulates 160,000km of customer usage.’ Barnes says all this as if it’s just in a day’s work. And it is for him and his colleagues, who tirelessly punish Aston Martin’s pre-production models, taking them to their limits, making sure that we can enjoy the finished product wherever and whenever we choose. Unsung heroes? Absolutely. And, while their work on the Rapide is obvious to anyone that gets to experience it, it’s only a matter of time before the world’s harshest conditions beckon once more, bags are packed and passports are dusted off.



Calleija

ENGAGING BRILLIANCE

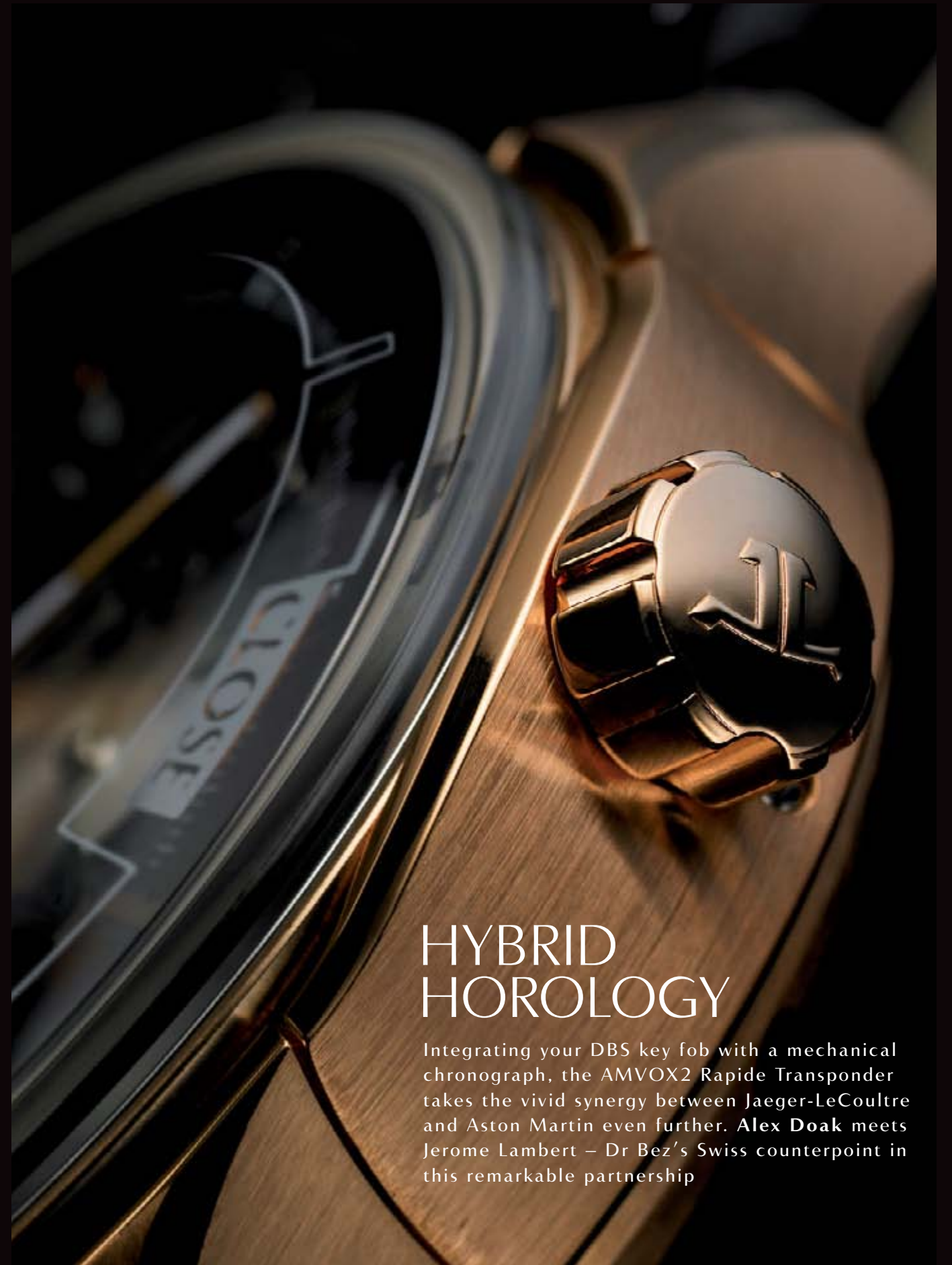


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amvox



HYBRID HOROLOGY

Integrating your DBS key fob with a mechanical chronograph, the AMVOX2 Rapide Transponder takes the vivid synergy between Jaeger-LeCoultre and Aston Martin even further. Alex Doak meets Jerome Lambert – Dr Bez's Swiss counterpoint in this remarkable partnership

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Since 2004, the AMVOX wristwatches have always managed to embody the shared values of Jaeger-LeCoultre and Aston Martin to dramatic effect. What started as a welcome return of Jaeger-LeCoultre’s 1960s ‘Memovox’ alarm watch – AMVOX1, styled with an uncanny adherence to the Aston Martin aesthetic – soon took everyone by surprise by evolving into AMVOX2. A brand-new chronograph movement (already a difficult mechanism to master), it did away with conventional pushbuttons and consigned start, stop and reset functionality by pivoting the sapphire crystal.

This clever allusion to the glass ‘Start’ button found in all modern Aston Martins was the most tangible link ever seen in an industry bustling with watch ‘car-llaborations’ that banked solely on dashboard or alloy-wheel-inspired design. But in 2008, the relationship between the AMVOX2 watch and Aston Martin sports car deepened further, after Jaeger-LeCoultre and Aston Martin’s respective CEOs Jerome Lambert and Ulrich Bez got talking one evening: ‘The idea stemmed from an inspiring conversation between both of us!’ recalls Lambert with characteristic enthusiasm. ‘We dreamt together of what could create the most extraordinary marriage of our two brands, of what we could achieve when our teams could work together. In fact, we were filled with adrenaline when we thought about James Bond controlling his car with a watch.’

AMVOX2 did indeed undergo an overhaul worthy of Bond’s Q-Branch: not only did the AMVOX2 DBS Transponder offer a vertical-trigger chronograph operated by pressing at 12 and 6 o’clock, but press the touch-sensitive crystal between 8 and 9 o’clock and, with a quiet ‘kerchunk’ and a discrete flash of lights, your DBS unlocks. Touch between 3 and 4 o’clock and the doors lock again.

The Transponder circuits’ geometry and wiring had to be completely redesigned from a watchmaker’s perspective; a feat of innovation that required the most development

‘We dreamt together of what could create the most extraordinary marriage of our two brands. We were filled with adrenaline when we thought about James Bond controlling his car with a watch!’

Created specially for Aston Martin DBS owners, this was the first mechanical timepiece to operate as the key to a luxury sports car. And it’s now available for owners of Aston Martin’s new four-door, four-seater sports car. Echoing its elegant economy of design, the AMVOX2 Rapide Transponder features for the first time a two-tone material in satin-brushed pink gold and titanium.

Jaeger-LeCoultre certainly had its work cut out, miniaturising the electronic components of the Aston Martin key fob and integrating them within the existing AMVOX2 mechanical movement. ‘This was totally uncharted territory,’ explains Lambert, ‘our teams worked closely together – at times, even co-located – for more than 18 months. They were incredibly energized by the challenge.’

A major consideration was the Transponder’s transmission. As well as keeping everything together, a watch case acts as a Faraday Cage protecting the sensitive, ticking balance spring from environmental electromagnetism. In reverse, it hampers the broadcast of the coded signal to your Aston Martin. Therefore, the 128mm-long metal antenna was attached to the inside surface of the sapphire crystal. Not only does this permit the same 10-metre operating range as the conventional fob, but it also places a critical distance between the Transponder’s electromagnetic antenna and its delicate, ticking balance wheel.

It is difficult to imagine a watch more closely or more faithfully intertwined with the car itself – let alone so cool. But it’s testament to the two marques’ genuine affinity for each other that this remarkable timepiece has come to being.



Globetrotter

If you’re the sort to tour in your Aston Martin on a truly grand scale, then the new AMVOX5 World Chronograph is probably the watch for you. By selecting a city on the turning flange, instant local-time indication in any of the world’s 24 time zones is possible. What’s more, with a wry nod to the watch’s automobile lineage, Jaeger-LeCoultre have replaced ‘London’ with ‘Gaydon’ for the GMT zone. The AMVOX5 World Chronograph will only be made in a limited series: 300 with a ceramic and titanium case, and 200 with a ceramic and 18ct pink-gold case.

www.jaeger-lecoultre.com

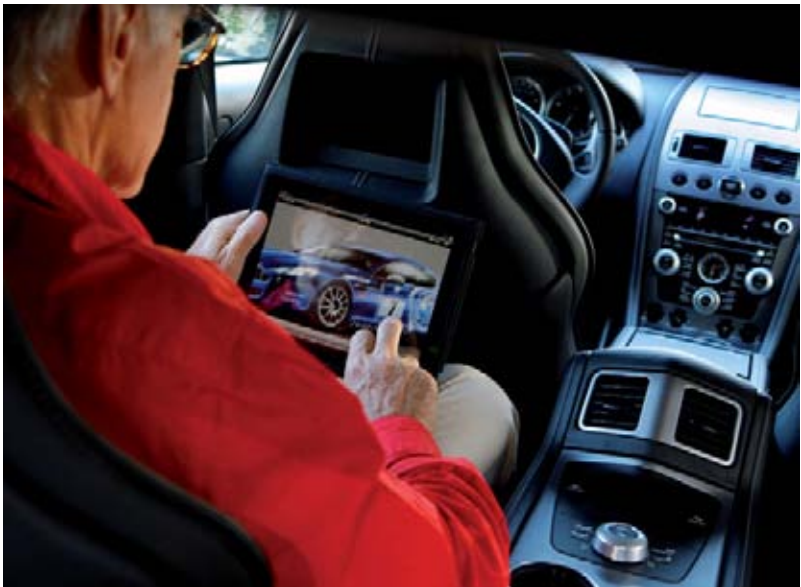


CHAUFFEUR IN CHAMPAGNE

Last year saw Aston Martin commemorating its overall victory at Le Mans in 1959 with a return to glory in the LMP1 class. In the year since, one of the company’s most important new roadgoing models has been launched: the Rapide. Kevin Hackett’s mission, which he happily accepted, was to drive the world’s most beautiful four-door sports car from Gaydon to the Le Mans 24-Hours with none other than Aston Martin CEO Dr Ulrich Bez in the back

This is a journey I’ve made in times past, so I know what we’re in for: fast driving on French toll-roads down to Reims, a night at the Royal Champagne hotel followed by a hard day’s drive to Le Mans along some truly stunning (and usually empty) back roads through glorious countryside. And, to cap it all, a ringside seat in Aston Martin’s hospitality suite to watch 24 hours of racing. Understandably, I’ve been counting down the minutes.

I collect Dr Bez in the Tungsten Silver Rapide and head through some of the worst weather the British summer can throw at us in the direction of Folkestone’s Eurotunnel. Visibility is practically zero as the spray from lorries creates a wall of rainwater but the Rapide’s surefootedness is extremely reassuring. Dr Bez, never a man to waste time, makes and takes calls on his iPhone which, on the rare occasions it’s not in use, finds a convenient home in the Rapide’s centre console. At which point he starts work on his new iPad.



‘I’m able to keep working on the move in the Rapide. Everything is easily to hand. If I’m driving, then I hook up the phone through the Rapide’s BlueTooth connectivity; if I’m a passenger, either in the front or the rear, there’s plenty of room for everything’



Rapide’s generous boot allows Dr Bez to stock up with a couple of cases of Louis Roederer, without stealing room from his luggage. ‘I still have room behind the rear seats for my briefcase and other work items, so when I’m sat in the back I can use this space almost as an office desk’

‘I’m able to keep working on the move in the Rapide,’ remarks Dr Bez. ‘Everything is easily to hand. If I’m driving, then I hook up the phone through the Rapide’s BlueTooth connectivity and if I’m a passenger, either in the front or the rear, there’s plenty of room for everything.’

Apart from the Rapide’s obvious attributes as a highly developed, thoroughbred sports car, it’s the sheer versatility of it that deeply impresses me. As Dr Bez speaks on the phone, the Rapide is refined and quiet, enabling him to converse without raising his voice. For me, in these conditions, it’s best to leave the Rapide to take care of the gearchanging and I leave it in Automatic mode, which makes for relaxed cruising – perfect for long stretches of motorway driving.

The short crossing on the Eurotunnel means no phone calls for a while, which provides the opportunity to enjoy the Rapide’s wonderful Bang & Olufsen sound system, turning it into a veritable concert hall on wheels. But before long we’re in France, and the weather turns out to be even worse than it was in England. The French motorways are excellent and, with the race only two days away, they are peppered with UK registered sports cars (many of them Aston Martins), their owners making the same pilgrimage as us. As we tear past them en route to Reims, the weather begins to clear and the Rapide soldiers on relentlessly.

Reims is the capital of Champagne production and we have a rendezvous for dinner at the house of Louis Roederer – surely the purveyors of the world’s finest fizz. After dinner the Rapide’s generous 317-litre boot allows Dr Bez to stock up with a couple of cases, without stealing room from the rest of his luggage. ‘I still have room behind the rear seats for my briefcase and other work items,’ he says, ‘which means when I am sat in the back I can use this space almost as an office desk. Everything is easy for me to reach and nothing is able to slide about like it would on a normal car’s rear seats.’

The following day, as we head for Le Mans, the sun is out and the skies are clear. Dr Bez has work to do, so opts to take a literal back seat where he can carry on undisturbed. The Rapide’s individually sculpted rear seats provide excellent support, which is essential on these flowing back roads. They mean I can press on without worrying about my passenger being thrown about behind me.



Following D-roads south of the Paris mayhem through Tincourt, Reuil and Port à Binson, we stop at the Château d’ Augerville in Boulancourt for a coffee and a bite to eat before heading for Orléans on the N60. It’s on these superb country roads that I use the Rapide’s Touchtronic paddle-shift, for it transforms the car from relaxed cruiser to proper sports car. Dr Bez is still busy in his rear seat, happily working on his iPad while I enjoy a thrilling drive. In the back of my mind is the inescapable thought that only a few weeks ago, the Rapide was raced at the Nürburgring 24-Hours – little wonder it tackles these French roads with almost contemptuous ease.

There’s time for a final blast along the A10 Autoroute towards our Château at Le Grand-Luce, barely a few miles from the Le Mans circuit. As I pull up outside and open the rear door, Dr Bez emerges unfazed, unruffled, relaxed and smiling – ready to cheer on his team at the world’s greatest 24-hour race. Mission accomplished.





RAPIDE PURE ASTON MARTIN



ASTON MARTIN

Rapide is the world's most elegant four-door sports car. It exists in a class all of its own – a stunning evolution of Aston Martin's unmistakable design language, accommodating four adults in luxury and comfort with benchmark levels of driver engagement and refinement



[rapide]

The elegant Rapide, functional yet luxurious, provides space for up to four adults combined with an engaging driving experience synonymous with all Aston Martins. As the marque's first production four-door sports car, Rapide encapsulates core values of Power, Beauty and Soul; four 'swan wing' doors provide access to cossetting sports seats both front and rear, bestowing occupants with ample accommodation.

Rapide's rear environment has been intelligently packaged to create a space where passengers feel a part of the driving experience with clear views to the front and sides. Comfort and support is supplied in the form of two hand-trimmed individual seats and a personal heating and air conditioning system. Aiding the practicalities of everyday use, a 317-litre luggage compartment affords generous space for belongings for all four occupants whether they are sports bags or, indeed, sets of skis, creating an Aston Martin which can be enjoyed on any occasion, anytime, anywhere.

As Chief Executive Officer, Dr Ulrich Bez said: 'With Rapide, the entire family can enjoy their Aston Martin together in unison, in an invigorating yet comfortable environment, sitting low, with plenty of visibility from every seat and with new levels of comfort, refinement and entertainment.'

Aston Martin's design team paid special attention to creating a rear passenger space that is cossetting, giving both passengers an equally sporting feel to that of the driver while providing as much forward and side visibility as possible

[rapide]

Whether you are driving swiftly to a black tie event with friends or leaving the city for a family weekend by the coast, the Rapide is the solution – a sports car with ability, bringing more people to the power, sensations, and pleasure that only an Aston Martin can deliver

DESIGN
Instantly recognisable as an Aston Martin, the Rapide assumes its extra doors gracefully to visually remain every bit a sporting coupe as its sister models. Rapide's low roofline combined with uniquely styled 20" wheels contribute to its sporting stance, and the iconic side strake is elongated to meet the rear doors. Echoing the beauty of the exterior, Rapide's interior welcomes all occupants to an exquisitely hand-crafted and spacious cabin. Two individually appointed sports seats form the rear environment of the Rapide, from which passengers can benefit from the optional rear entertainment system: two LCD screens integrated into the back of the front headrests. Aiding the practicalities of everyday use, the rear seats fold at the touch of a button to create a flat loading space, increasing the luggage compartment from 317 litres to 886 litres.

PERFORMANCE
The Rapide is a sports car – a thoroughbred that can be enjoyed by four people in unison. The front mid-mounted 6.0 litre V12 engine produces 470 bhp and a resultant 0-60 mph time of 5.0 seconds. Despite its extra versatility, the Rapide's low roofline, and therefore low centre of gravity, makes it feel like an agile coupe. Despite the Rapide being 290 mm longer than the DB9, it was a key objective to maximise the structural rigidity accounting for the increased length in wheelbase. Subsequently, the Rapide's structure would require 28,000 Nm of force to be twisted through 1 degree. This torsional rigidity is a key element in delivering the car's excellent dynamic. The standard six-speed Touchtronic 2 automatic transmission has been calibrated to ensure that the additional weight of Rapide has had a minimal impact on fuel economy, emissions and performance. Along with 'Park', 'Reverse', 'Neutral' and 'Drive' modes, the system also includes a 'Sport' mode, which engages a more aggressive gear-shift strategy as gear changes feel sharper and more forceful, engine speed matching on downshifts is more aggressive and in full automatic mode, upshifts occur at higher speeds.

CONTROL
With the six-speed Touchtronic 2 automatic gearbox mounted to the rear of the car on the transaxle, the Rapide's weight balance is near perfect at 51:49, contributing to its outstanding dynamics. This provides the driver with an engaging drive on demanding roads, and a refined, relaxed and effortless drive on motorways and main roads. For the first time on an Aston Martin, Rapide features a dual-cast brake system. The brake discs are made from two materials, cast iron and aluminium, taking advantage of the former's heat resistance and latter's weight-saving properties, bestowing greater braking performance, reduced corrosion, and less wear.



TECHNICAL SPECIFICATION
rapide

BODY <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Four-door body style with tailgate and 4 individual seats• Extruded bonded aluminium VH body structure• Aluminium, magnesium alloy and composite body• Extruded aluminium door side impact beams• Single bi-xenon headlamps with integrated LED side lights and direction indicators• LED rear lamps and side repeaters	STEERING <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Rack and pinion, Servotronic speed-sensitive power-assisted steering, 3.0 turns lock-to-lock• Column tilt and reach adjustment	INTERIOR <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Full grain leather interior• Walnut facia trim• Iridium Silver centre console outer finish and Graphite inner finish• Auto-dimming interior rear-view mirror• Auto-dimming interior rear-view mirror with garage door opener (USA and Canada only)¹• Electrically operated front seats• Memory front seats and exterior mirrors (three positions)• Dual-stage driver and passenger front airbags• Front occupant side airbags• Head protection airbags for front and rear occupants• Heated front and rear seats• Heated rear screen• Automatic front and rear temperature control• Organic Electroluminescent (OEL) displays• LED map lamps and ambient lighting• Trip computer• Cruise control• Hard Disk Drive (HDD) satellite navigation system^{1,2}• Bluetooth telephone preparation¹• Satellite radio system (USA only)• Powerfold exterior mirrors• Front and rear parking sensors• Tyre pressure monitoring¹• Alarm and immobiliser• Remote-control central door locking and boot release• Tracking device (UK only)³• Umbrella	IN-CAR ENTERTAINMENT <ul style="list-style-type: none">• 1000 W Bang & Olufsen BeoSound audio system with ICEpower[®] technology• Integrated Apple iPod[®] connector⁴• USB connector with Waveform Audio Format (WAF), Windows Media Player (WMP) and MPEG (MP3) audio file compatibility• 3.5 mm auxiliary input socket	DIMENSIONS <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Length 5019 mm (197.6")• Width 1929 mm (75.9") excluding mirrors; 2140 mm (84.3") including mirrors• Height 1360 mm (53.5")• Wheelbase 2989 mm (117.7")• Front track 1589 mm (62.6")• Rear track 1613 mm (63.5")• Fuel capacity 90.5 litres• Kerb weight 1990 kg (4387 lb)
ENGINE <ul style="list-style-type: none">• All-alloy quad overhead camshaft, 48-valve 5935 cc V12• Front mid-mounted engine, rear-wheel drive• Fully catalysed stainless steel exhaust system with active bypass valves• Compression ratio 10.9:1• Max Power 350 kW (470 bhp/477 PS) at 6000 rpm• Max Torque 600 Nm (443 lb.ft) at 5000 rpm• Acceleration 0–60 mph in 5.0 seconds; 0–100 km/h (62 mph) in 5.2 seconds• Max Speed 296 km/h (184 mph)	SUSPENSION <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Front Independent double wishbone incorporating anti-dive geometry, coil springs, anti-roll bar and monotube adaptive dampers• Rear Independent double wishbones with anti-squat and anti-lift geometry, coil springs, anti-roll bar and monotube adaptive dampers• Adaptive Damping System (ADS)	BRAKES <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Front Dual-cast brake discs, 390mm diameter with six-piston calipers• Rear Dual-cast brake discs, 360mm diameter with four-piston calipers• Dynamic Stability Control (DSC)• Anti-lock braking system (ABS)• Electronic Brakeforce Distribution (EBD)• Emergency Brake Assist (EBA)• Traction Control• Hydraulic Brake Assist (HBA)• Positive Torque Control (PTC)• Electronic Park Brake (EPB)	OPTIONS <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Cooled front and rear seats• Twin-screen rear-seat entertainment system with 6-disc DVD player, auxiliary input, wireless headphones and remote control• Alternative facia trim finishes: Mahogany, Piano Black, Bamboo, Tamo Ash, Nexus Alloy, Double Apex• Perforated leather seat inserts• Matching wood door trim• Colour-keyed steering wheel• Second glass key• Magnum Silver rear lamp infills• Delete model badging• Delete protective tape• 20" 20-spoke alloy wheels – Graphite finish• 20" Multispoke alloy wheels – Silver finish, diamond turned• 20" Multispoke alloy wheels – Graphite finish, diamond turned (pictured previous page)• Alternative brake caliper finish – black, red, silver• Embroidered 'Rapide' seat logo• Personalised sill plaques• Auto-dimming interior rear view mirror with garage door opener (Europe only)• Alarm upgrade (volumetric and tilt sensor)• Tracking device^{1,3}• First aid kit• Ashtray and cigar lighter	FUEL CONSUMPTION Litres/100 km (mpg) <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Urban 22.6 (12.5)• Extra-urban 10.4 (27.1)• Combined 14.9 (19.0) GAS MILEAGE (North America only) <ul style="list-style-type: none">• City 13 mpg• Highway 19 mpg CO₂ EMISSIONS <ul style="list-style-type: none">• 355 g/km

¹ Not available in all markets
² Includes Traffic Messaging Channel (TMC) in Continental Europe
³ Complies with UK Thatcham Category 5 requirements. Excludes subscription. Standard in UK
⁴ iPod[®] is a trademark of Apple Inc., registered in the US and other countries

GEARING UP

A brand-new range of official accessories are now available, with which to kit out your Rapide – all designed and crafted to Aston Martin's exacting standards, as you'd expect. Contact your dealer to find out more and to place an order



- 1 **ULTIMATE CAR COVER** This weather-proof cover is 'tailored' to the Rapide's exact contours, for both indoor and outdoor use
- 2 **OVERMATS** A set of four for the front and rear foot wells, trimmed in tone-matched hide with a heavy-duty backing
- 3 **SADDLE LUGGAGE** Crafted from English saddle leather, this kit comprises two shoulder bags and two rucksacks, complete with bottle carriers
- 4 **BOOT MAT** This colour-matched 'finishing touch' for your Rapide's interior is fully bound in leather
- 5 **CHILD SEAT** One of three available age groups, this nine-month-to-four-years seat from Britax – branded with the Rapide logo – anchors directly to the car, while the foot prop prevents rotation



POTENZA S001

PERFECT PRECISION

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