

## REGISTRAR'S CORNER

by Tim Cottingham



The 2010 Geneva Motor Show saw the launch of the Azurite Black UB-2010 in tribute to Dr Bez and his 10th anniversary of being at the helm of AML. E11998 was the only UB-2010 with a Volante chassis number

### Geek's Guide to the DBS V12 Volante

The DBS V12 coupe had been in production for over a year when the Volante version was first shown at the 2009 Geneva Motor Show. Whilst the coupe was a direct replacement for the Vanquish S, the DBS Volante represented a combination that AML had not offered for 10 years by putting their most powerful engine in their flagship open car. This isn't something that AML always offer, but when they do the results are always spectacular and instantly desirable. Who can resist the pull of a DB4 convertible with the GT engine, the late 1980s overly bespoiled V8 Vantage Volante or the super-rare 1999 supercharged Vantage Volante Special Edition. So, the DBS V12 Volante is another shining example of this rare combination.

In the last article covering the coupe car (*AM Quarterly*, Summer 2018), we noted that DBS production was held back by the ongoing financial crisis. So, you will be unsurprised to hear that DBS Volante production only reached 845 cars in total over three model years (MY). This is not a great number at all as the cars are well spread around the globe making them a rare show at any Club event.

#### VIN Information

All DBS and DBS Volantes have the letter E in position 12. This is unusual as both before and since, it has been more customary for coupe and Volante derivatives to have different letters in position 12. So, A = DB9 coupe,

B = DB9 Volante and so on.

Thus, the way to differentiate between the coupe and Volante VIN is that the coupe has a '0' in position 13 whereas the Volante has a '1'. Or to make it easier to understand, E00010 is a coupe, E11213 is a Volante. Except that it's even not quite that easy either. To begin with, the Geneva launch Volante had a coupe

chassis number, E01028 as witnessed at the time. AML records now show it may have subsequently been changed to E11213 prior to sale.

Following this, a rare oversight occurred at AML that allowed a further 24 Volantes to be sold with E0\*\*\*\*chassis number, all of which were special editions.

Position	Meaning	Example	Description
1, 2 & 3	World Manufacturers Identifier Code (Assigned by BSI)	SCF	Aston Martin Lagonda Limited
4	Restraint System	F	Restraint Type 2 - always F because of the 2+2 Seating Configuration
5	Transmission / Steering	A B C D	6 spd Manual / RHD 6 spd Manual / LHD 6 spd Automatic / RHD 6 spd Automatic / RHD
6 & 7	Vehicle Line / Body Type / Seats	CC	VH3 Convertible (Volante), 2dr, 2+2 seater
8	Engine Type	D	AM08/(5.9 Litre, 380kW, V12)
9	Check Digit	0 to 9 or X	As per specified calculation
10	Model Year	9, A, B or C	2009MY to 2012MY
11	Assembly Plant	G	Gaydon, UK.
12 & 13	Series Identifier	E1	DBS Convertible (Volante), although some E0 - see text
14 to 17	Sequential Identification Number	1028 to 3384	Subject to position in build sequence

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E13161 is the sole example of the DBS Volante Dragon 88. Shown at the Beijing Motor Show 2012, featuring Amethyst Red coachwork, Spicy Red interior and gold-plated Aston Martin wings badges

### Seating Configuration

All DBS Volante were built with 2 + 2 seating using the standard sports seats as the only option. It was simply not possible to order lightweight seats or 2 + 0 configuration although I have no doubt some cars will have been converted by Works or another coachbuilder into a pure two-seater. Those back seats are terribly tight so as to be almost superfluous. It's not just the diminished legroom but shoulder room is tight too.

### Hand of Drive

Left-hand drive cars predominate as expected with a split almost identical to the coupe. The split is 323 RHD to 522 LHD (38.2% RHD, the coupe is 36.5% RHD).

### Gearbox

Now this is where it starts to get interesting. At launch, the manual transmission was standard fit, the Touchtronic 2 box was a cost extra. By May 2011, whilst the manual gearbox derivative remained available to order, the Touchtronic 2 became the standard transmission and the price of the manual was adjusted upwards to match. We now know that the DBS coupe manual isn't especially rare; hard to come by certainly, but not especially rare with almost 1000 examples sold. This represents almost 39% of the production run. Manual DBS Volantes are super rare by comparison with only 44 examples delivered worldwide, representing a smidgen over 5% of production.

What we found particularly intriguing is the markets these cars were sold to.

### Market Spread

The British market was especially strong for the DBS Volante with 276 sold. The second country for sales was North America with 220. But it's the way each market took to manual cars that is surprising. In Europe, it's customary to learn to drive in a manual car (stick shift), not everyone does but most people pass their driving tests in a manual. In the USA, folk almost exclusively learn to drive in automatics. Who doesn't smile at the US internet meme showing a conventional

gear stick, promoting it as the ultimate anti-theft device? So how come the USA took 26 manual Volantes and the UK only eight?

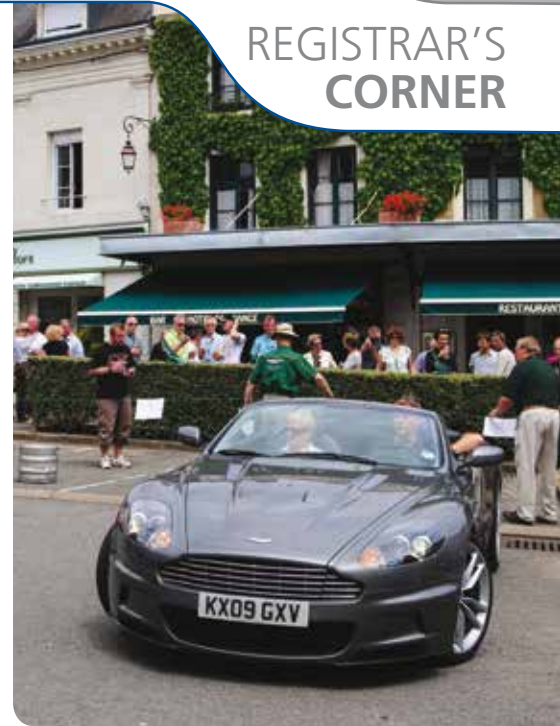
Even then, the eight UK manuals include four demonstrators built for the launch of the model, leaving only four UK cars with a manual gearbox spec'd by the first owner. The Volante sold well in many countries of mainland Europe with 268 examples [Author – 267 as in the table?], ten with the manual gearbox.

The Middle East took only 18 cars (no manuals) and Asia Pacific only 49 cars (one manual).

	DBS Volante sold
UK	276
Mainland Europe	267
North America (USA & Canada)	220
Middle East	18
Asia Pacific	49
RoW	15

### Model Year

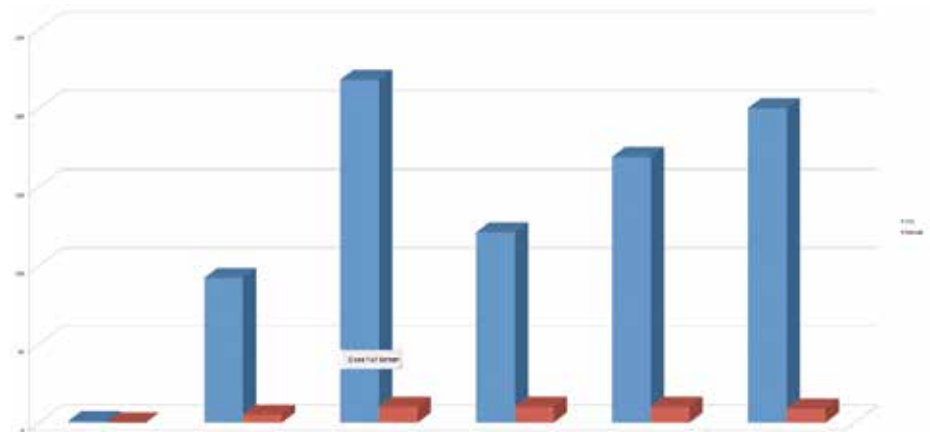
Like the model year distribution of the coupe, many more DBS Volantes were sold soon after introduction but, unlike the coupe, the manual cars were more evenly spread through the production run.



The Hotel de France is a well-known meeting place for Aston Martins. This is the European press demonstrator, E11235 in Hammerhead Silver, and if you look closely, it's being driven by Marek Reichman, Director of Design at AML

	TT2	Manual
2009MY	1	0
2010MY	92	5
2010.5MY	218	10
2010.75MY	121	10
2011MY	169	10
2012MY	200	9

	DBS Volante sold
2009	1
2010	97
2010.5	228
2010.75	131
2011	179
2012	209





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E11213 is a very famous DBS Volante. This particular car was used during the press launch and was famously driven by Jeremy Clarkson in Romania on a feature on BBC's Top Gear. It is one of only eight UK cars with a manual gearbox.



E13257 is a US spec Carbon Edition. It is worth noting both the black grille and the reverse diamond cut wheels, options first seen on DBS with the Carbon Edition. This is a rare example of the DBS Volante with the manual gearbox. Spotted in 2013 during Monterey Car Week, this rare car also features walnut facias, extremely rare for a VH-era car.

The sole 2009MY car was the Magma Red launch car unveiled at Geneva. The 2010MY cars were first delivered from the summer of 2009. The 2010.5MY cars delivered from late summer 2009 featured the taller wing mirror design, introduced due to a change in legislation. The 2010.75MY cars were delivered from spring 2010. The 2011MY cars have the desirable glass switchgear fitted as standard and the Enhanced Tyre Pressure Monitoring System was introduced. For 2012MY the DBS received the new Garmin SatNav and the Bosch Beam Blade Windscreen wipers.

The final examples of the DBS Volante were delivered in autumn 2012.

### Special and Limited Editions

#### UB-2010

To celebrate 10 years at the head of Aston Martin, CEO Dr Ulrich Bez commissioned a limited edition to his own personal specification. The launch UB-2010, showcased at Geneva 2010 and built for Dr Bez himself, was a Volante. It was built to 2010.75MY spec although the remaining 12 production cars were all 2011MY spec. One single manual example was built to European spec. Following the launch car, E11998, the remaining 12 customer cars were sold with E0\*\*\*\* chassis numbers. Once UB-2010 production ended, the colour especially formulated for the car, Azurite Black, eventually became available across the entire AML range to special order.

For the 2010.75MY the special but not

limited edition Carbon Black was offered with the Volante coachwork. In total, 87 examples were built with only three with manual transmission, all LHD (US and German markets). Carbon Black cars can be found as 2010.75MY, 2011MY or 2012MY.

Following on from the Carbon Black were the Carbon Editions, again an unlimited special edition with 51 Volantes sold, all 2012MY. Only two were built with manual transmission, both LHD for the US market. Carbon Editions were available with a choice of colour; AML Carbon Black, Flame Orange and Ceramic Grey. The Carbon Edition was the first DBS to feature black bonnet and side strake meshes, as well as a black front grille. The bright front grille was available as a no-cost option whereas the Magnum Silver mesh grilles were a cost option. Like the UB-2010, 12 examples of the Volante were built with E0 chassis numbers.

Exclusively available to the Chinese market, AML offered the Dragon 88 models during 2012. The limited edition was launched at the Beijing Motor Show with a DBS Volante, finished in spectacular Amethyst Red with Spicy Red leather, a car destined to remain unique. All of the remaining DBS Dragon 88 cars were built as coupes. Convertibles are extremely rare in China, possibly due to the air quality in major cities which ranges from unhealthy to hazardous. Whilst Amethyst Red remains available to this day, it remains a rare yet beautiful colour.

The final run out model for the DBS was

the Ultimate, a label first used a few years before on the Newport Pagnell built Vanquish S, but this was the first time customers could own an Ultimate Volante. This 2012MY car could be specified with AML Carbon Black (yet again!), Quantum Silver or Silver Fox, all with the number plate surround painted in Carbon Black II with a gloss or satin finish. Forty-one examples of the Ultimate Volante were built for sale in the UK, mainland Europe and the USA. Only two manuals were built, both LHD, US market cars.

### Colour choice

As with the Coupe, the most common hue to be found on a DBS Volante is black with 325 examples (38.4% of production), massively skewed by the popular Carbon Black cars. Silver comes second with 277 examples and white grabs third place with 70 cars. Magma Red as seen on the launch car helped to push red above both blue and green up to fourth place with 41 examples.

In total, 54 different colours were applied to the Volante, the most common being AML Carbon black with 149 examples.

### In Summary

I hope that if you were inspired by reading our last article to buy a DBS coupe, you are now not kicking yourself for not waiting to get a Volante instead. It represented for 3 years the absolute pinnacle of the Aston Martin range, that rare combination of exclusivity, power and open coachwork. The manual DBS Volante was almost as scarce as the late 1980s V8 Vantage Volante Prince of Wales, but who knew? 🧐



E01028, the first production DBS Volante finished in Magma Red over Havana Tan at the 2009 Geneva Motor Show

