



ASTON MARTIN VIRAGE COUPE &  
JAEGER-LECOULTRE AMVOX 5 WORLD  
CHRONOGRAPH

BY JAN TEGLER

**T**aking a seat in Aston Martin's 2012 Virage Coupe brings a host of sensations. Prominent among them is the intoxicating scent of Bridge of Weir leather, the special hand-stitched hide that covers the Coupe's seats and much of its luxurious interior. It's refreshing—at once sense-awakening and soothing - like a superbly mixed cocktail.

**WITH HISTORICAL TIES** extending back to the 1920s, the modern partnership between Aston Martin and Jaeger-LeCoultre has produced a similarly satisfying blend. The AMVOX collection, launched in 2004, fuses the sophisticated engineering and style integral to both brands in a series of advanced timepieces.

The line derives its name from Aston Martin ("A", "M") and a nod to the renowned JLC Memovox ("VOX"), the first automatic watch with an alarm function. The initial model in the collection, the AMVOX1 Alarm utilizes the alarm-equipped JLC 918 caliber. Then, in 2005, Jaeger-LeCoultre introduced the innovative AMVOX2 Chronograph with its vertical trigger case, allowing actuation of the chronograph by merely pressing the crystal. In 2008, the AMVOX2 DBS Transponder debuted, enabling the wearer to start/stop his DBS with the watch itself.

The latest model in the collection, the AMVOX 5 World Chronograph, was designed to recall the AM DBR1-2 Coupes campaigned by Aston Martin Racing in the top class of international sports car racing from 2009 through 2011.

## SERENE, SPORTING

**AT THE HEART OF THOSE** advanced prototype racecars was the same basic V12 that resides under the long hood of the Virage. Throaty at low rpm yet quiet and reserved while cruising, the 5.9 liter unit emits a smile-inducing wail at high rpm perfectly reflecting the Mr. Hyde/Dr. Jekyll character of this gentlemanly GT.

Around town the low, wide Virage cuts a dashing figure, with crisp lines and muscular curves—tasteful yet dead sexy. The coupe I drove wore an understated hue known as "Tungsten Silver HB" and drew admiring second and third looks from curbside observers. Fronted by the open mouth grill so identified with Aston Martins, the Virage looked ready to take a bite out of today's best sports cars or make an entrance at a gala event.

In Normal mode, the Virage is buttoned-down and relaxed, not urging you to drive hard at every opportunity—more a car for the adult in you. Aston's newly developed Adap-



tive Damping System "reads" the road continuously, selecting up to five different stiffness settings to cope with varying conditions. Throttle tip-in is almost too lazy in this mode but the car will respond if prodded.

Push the polished glass Sport mode button (one of eight such switches) on the lower left-hand corner of the center console and the Virage gets competitive. Gear changes courtesy of its six-speed, paddle-shift ZF automatic quicken, throttle response improves

and gears can be selected and held without the trans automatically shifting up. Pressing the button just to the right of the Sport mode selector cues the ADS to firm up the suspension, adding another five settings to cope with more spirited driving.

## 4.6 SECONDS

**GIVEN EVER-TIGHTENING** global fuel economy and emissions standards, sitting behind any contemporary V12 is a fleeting privilege.

**ENGINE:** 490 hp 5.9 Liter V12

**CURB WEIGHT:** 3935 pounds

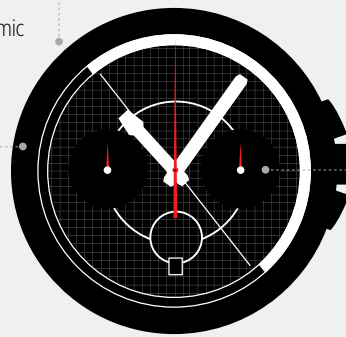
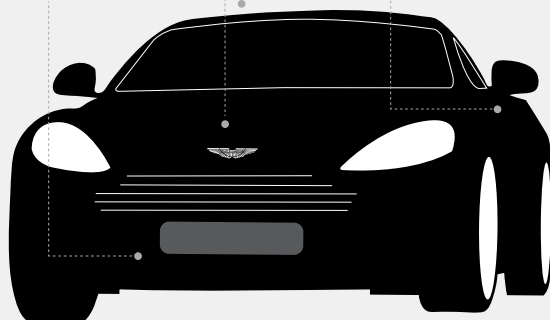
**MOVEMENT:** Automatic self-winding Jaeger-LeCoultre Calibre 752 chronograph

**DIAL:** Colors from LMPI racing car: blue, grey and orange. Styling is inspired by mechanical components such as the car air vent

**TRANSMISSION:** 6-speed automatic

**FUEL ECONOMY:** 13 city/18 highway

**CASE:** 44 mm, ceramic



**STRAP/BRACELET:** Black calfskin and Cordura

**Base Price:** \$207,895

**Price:** \$19,900

Mounted behind the centerline of the front axle, the Virage's 12-cylinder produces 490 hp and 420 pound-feet of torque—figures that sit neatly between those of the less powerful DB9 and slightly more aggressive DBS. AM says the Virage runs to 60 mph in 4.6 seconds. That seems about right from the seat-of-the-pants. Power delivery is smooth but forceful in keeping with this GT's persona.

All-around performance is quite impressive. I drove the Virage hard and I'd say it nails the target AM's engineers were aiming for. It's an impeccable GT car that swallows miles effortlessly but can also be hammered with confidence. Credit the Virage's commendably solid chassis. Based on the same "VH architecture" that has underpinned Aston models since early last decade, this evolved structure imparts a feeling of one-ness to the big Coupe. So good is the platform that I only noticed the Virage's heft (3,935 pounds) when pushing near the car's respectably high cornering limits.

Special mention should be made of the huge carbon-ceramic brake discs in the car's 20-inch alloy wheels. Clamped by six-piston calipers they're not only powerful and fade resistant, they deliver terrific feel through the pedal.

Interior fit and finish is spot-on with that fragrant leather, polished glass and aluminum everywhere you touch. Our tester had piano-black veneer on its center console and a pitch-perfect 1,000-watt, 13-speaker Bang & Olufsen BeoSound audio system. Tweeters magically rise from the dash when the system is turned on - a nice if pricey (\$8,330) op-

tion. Seat comfort and support is very good for the long haul or hauling through corners. The only significant complaint is Aston's updated Garmin navigation system, which remains too complex.

Otherwise, the Virage is a delicious GT car with a near perfect balance of refinement and aggression.

## INSTRUMENTS OF TIME

**THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN** Aston Martin and Jaeger-LeCoultre begins with French watchmaker Edmond Jaeger. Jaeger, who partnered with Jaques-David LeCoultre to produce the first J-LC watches just after the turn of the 20th century, was also a watchmaker to the French Navy.

In the years before and during WWI, he developed mechanisms to measure speed for the service—chronographs, tachometers, kinemometers and counters. By the 1920s, Jaeger speedometers were present in most of the luxury cars of the era and were indispensable equipment on the top racing cars of the day.

Jaeger gauges were present in the earliest Aston Martins, including the company's first car, a 1915 hill climb racer called the "Coal Scuttle". Jaeger gauges were also present in the most successful prewar Astons, the 1.5 liter-powered Le Mans, International and Ulster models built through the 1930s.

"The partnership is really the reflection of a deep mutual admiration and was born out of mutual respect and passion for mechani-

cal excellence, powerful design and daring performance," says Isabelle Gervais, Jaeger-LeCoultre's International PR Director.

"Aston Martin and Jaeger-LeCoultre share many philosophies," Dr Ulrich Bez, Aston Martin CEO adds. "Each company has a rich heritage and both are dedicated to producing the finest hand-crafted designs in their respective fields."

Coordination between the automaker and the *manufacture* is close and continuous, Gervais reports. "We take every opportunity—events, meetings, a simple call—to discuss any idea that might give birth to an exciting project. These ideas can come from CEOs as well as from our respective teams."

The limited edition (250-pieces) AMVOX 5 World Chronograph is a good example of the collaboration. The chronograph's dial emphasizes instant readability, echoing the high legibility of the instruments in the cockpit of the AM DBR1-2 Coupes and brings to mind the air vent grills found on the cars' bodywork.

The name "Aston Martin" takes prominence, replacing the city-name London symbolizing the zero Meridien on the world time city disc. The chronograph's counters are made in carbon fiber to recall the avant-garde materials used in the Coupe's chassis while the high tech ceramic case mirrors the LMPI's carbon-ceramic disc brakes, made to resist temperatures of over 300°C. Finally, the JLC movement hums with the same precision as the V12 that distinguishes the Virage. ●