



# DESIGNING A PARTNERSHIP

FOR JAEGER-LECOULTRE AND ASTON MARTIN, PASSION AND HIGH-PERFORMANCE MAKE PARTNERSHIP GO



Jaeger-LeCoultre AMVOX2  
Rapide Transponder

**THE ASTON MARTIN MANUFACTURING FACILITY IS SOMEWHERE OFF IN THE DISTANCE, BEHIND A COPSE OF TREES JUST BEGINNING TO TURN AUTUMNAL COLORS, BUT I AM TOO PREOCCUPIED TO NOTICE.** I concentrate on the road as I floor the V12 Vantage roadster, pushing the tachometer needle toward 4,000. I knew that bypass valves in the exhaust system open at 4,000 rpm, boosting power and letting the melody of the engine play. As I hit the magic number, the engine's roar drops an octave and the car just about jumps off the road as it surges forward relentlessly, powerfully and somewhat less than legally.

This was the scene on a quiet country road near Gaydon, Warwickshire, England, where the speed limits are slower than the

BY KEITH W. STRANDBERG





Aston Martin's idling speed. I didn't go fast for long, just long enough to get a sense of the power of this sports car, and then it was back to the sedate and sensible speeds familiar to English village life.

Driving the V12 Vantage roadster was part of the experience when I toured the Aston Martin facility late last year. I was there to get a better sense of the basis for the longstanding Jaeger-LeCoultre and Aston Martin partnership. After having toured the factory, interviewed the designers, driven the car and bought the T-shirt, it's all quite clear to me. These are two industry and technology leaders who pride themselves on navigating the cutting edge in their respec-



tive fields, focusing on both performance and aesthetics, working together to share their passions and combining their corporate DNA to produce something new that has a bit of both companies inside it. And that's exactly what Jaeger-LeCoultre's exceptional Aston Martin watches offer.

#### THE WATCH MANUFACTURE

One of the few true manufactures in the industry, Jaeger-LeCoultre has the capability to make just about everything that goes into its watches. In addition, like Aston Martin, this maker emphasizes both aesthetics and performance. One of Jaeger-LeCoultre's most iconic watches is the classic rectangular Reverso, but the brand has added a performance element to its offerings with the Master line and the AMVOX line—watches that can dive deep, soar high and go fast, as epitomized by Jaeger-LeCoultre's association with Aston Martin and Aston Martin Racing.

Walking through the Jaeger-LeCoultre factory reveals an interesting dichotomy: here watches are created in the

time-honored way by a company that can be described as incredibly cutting edge, from its manufacturing facilities to the high-tech machines that turn out the parts for watchmakers to carefully hand-assemble. In addition, R&D at Jaeger-LeCoultre explores the newest materials drawn from the worlds of racing, aeronautics and more.

"These are two companies with a lot of history and tradition and a focus on innovation," says Jaeger-LeCoultre designer Magali Mettraller, who also draws parallels between the partners' manufacturing processes. "The Gaydon facility is very impressive when you see how many things there are done by hand, just as we do here. We are making special products for our clients, and they are likewise very dedicated to their customers."

#### THE AUTO MANUFACTURE

Just as Jaeger-LeCoultre is intent on pushing the boundaries of materials and engineering with its timepieces, Aston Martin focuses on both mechanics and design, and its commitment to design is clearly shown in its state-of-the-art de-

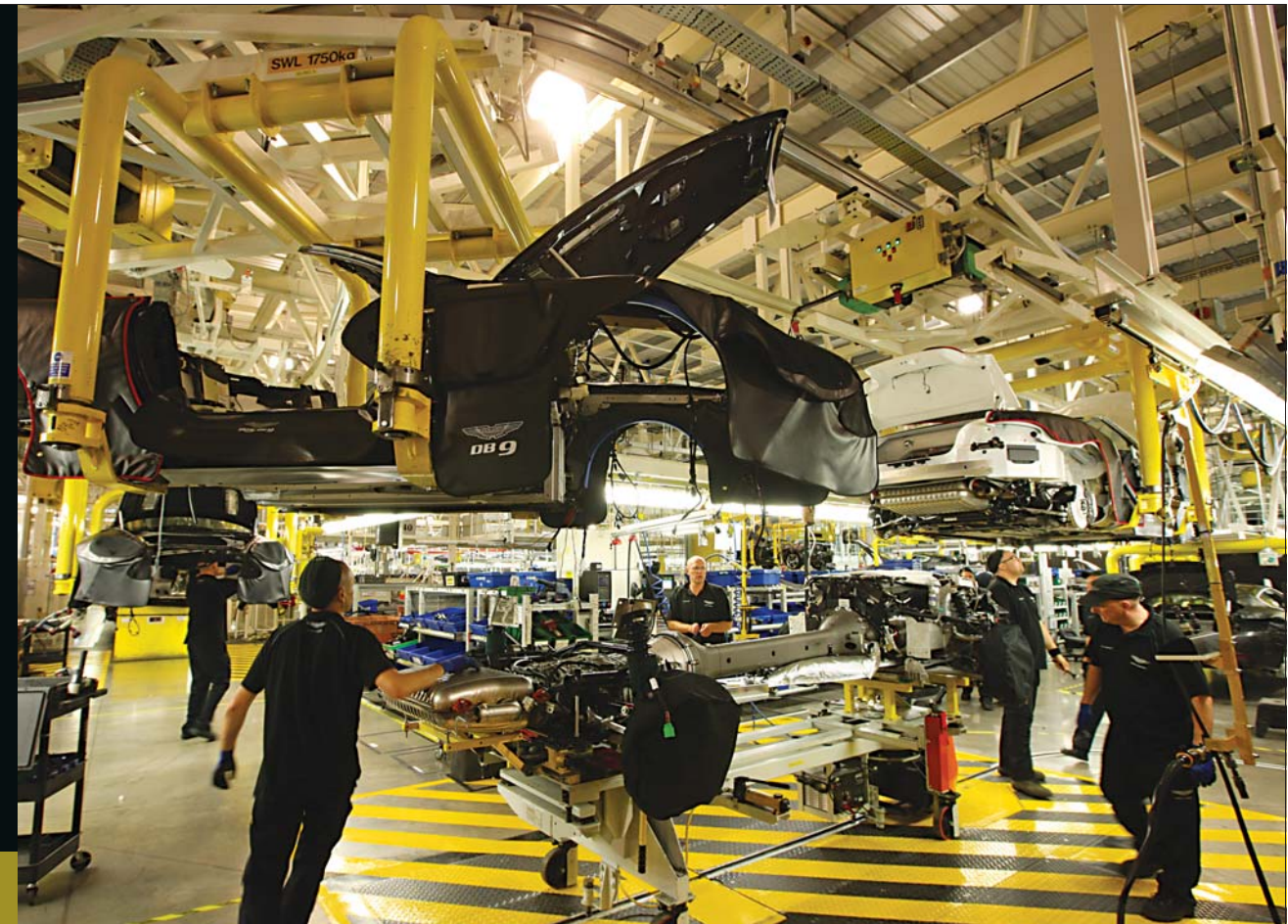


#### ASTON MARTIN AT A GLANCE

- Aston Martin's Gaydon facility opened in 2003
- The Design Studio opened in 2007
- 85 percent of all Aston Martins ever sold are still running or in a collection
- The Gaydon facility houses the largest collection of Aston Martins under one roof
- Every Aston Martin made is a custom order; there are no cars in stock
- Aston Martin sells every car it makes

"THE PARTNERSHIP PUSHES THE CREATIVITY IN ALL OUR WATCHES." — MAGALI METTRALLER





sign studio, which opened in 2007 next to the Gaydon manufacturing plant.

“The design studio shows the progress of the company, how we have moved along,” says Marek Reichman, director of design for Aston Martin. “We have always been renowned for our style, and now the design leader has its own

design studio, one that is close to production and to the engineers. I’m now a stone’s throw from the office of the CEO. The design studio is a fantastic place to work; it’s ecologically friendly—all the wood used was regenerated in nine minutes, and we use geothermal heating. With beautiful materials all around us, it is a great environment.”

“I want my designers to be happy,” Reichman continues. “We were in rented accommodations before, but we created the new studio from scratch, and it is laid out exactly as we want it. It has proliferated ideas and has made the process—from sketch to production—quicker.”

Reichman is an interesting man, a designer who draws inspiration from everything—including his ride to the design studio on his Ducati 996, one of motorcycling’s most beautiful designs—and is constantly sketching, even in high-

level Aston Martin meetings. “Some of the first sketches for the One-77 supercar were done in board meetings, not because I am bored, but because I doodle,” he explains. “Sometimes I have no idea where things come from. Shapes appear. When I talk about an emotional subject, these shapes just come to me. I take pens and paper with me everywhere I go.”

While the highest technology is used in the production of the engines and the parts that go into the cars, there’s no escaping that each Aston Martin is hand-assembled, and, in many cases, the leather is hand-stitched, with great care put into every step of the production process. As with a Jaeger-LeCoultre watch, every car produced could be considered a *pièce unique* because so much hand work goes into it. While there is only one robot in the Aston Martin facility, there are 450 employees



“WE HAVE ALWAYS BEEN RENOWNED FOR OUR STYLE, AND NOW THE DESIGN LEADER HAS ITS OWN DESIGN STUDIO.” — MAREK REICHMAN



Jaeger-LeCoultre’s AMVOX2 DBS Transponder chronograph

## HISTORICAL ORIGINS

Jaeger-LeCoultre and Aston Martin are quick to point out the historical origins of their corporate partnership; Jaeger-LeCoultre’s Web site even mentions that Jaeger instruments were featured on the dashboard of a class-winning 1.5-liter LM racecar from the 1930s. So why do classic postwar Astons like James Bond’s DB5 all wear gauges and clocks marked Smiths? It turns out that ownership changes, a byzantine system of licenses and international manufacturing rights as well as the destructive reach of World War II all contributed to a murky veil that clouds the details of the collaboration’s early days.

By 1925, Jaeger-LeCoultre’s British subsidiary Ed Jaeger London Ltd had come to specialize in automotive instruments. Two years later, however, a 75 percent stake in Ed Jaeger was acquired by British clockmaker Smiths. Smiths retained the licensing deal that had existed

between the continental Jaeger-LeCoultre company and its subsidiary, which was renamed British Jaeger Instruments Ltd. in 1931, and received significant technical input from the French-Swiss concern in the development of battery-impulse car clocks in the late 1930s.

Smiths clocks and gauges became *de rigueur* for most collectible postwar British cars, dominating the dashboards of Jaguars, Austin-Healeys, Sunbeams and the prestigious Aston Martin DB models. But experts agree that Smiths dashboard instruments throughout the decades have continued to use the basic design and technical specifications of the Jaeger units they replicated under various licensing deals as late as 1961. So, in fact, names aside, Aston Martins have been graced with Jaeger dials far more consistently than any contradictory nomenclature might suggest.

—Mike Daly



V12 VANTAGE

Based on Aston Martin’s hugely successful V8 Vantage, the V12 Vantage was officially unveiled at the 2009 Geneva Motor Show. It features a 6-liter V12 engine producing 510 brake horsepower and 420 pound-feet of torque with a top speed of 190 mph and acceleration of 0–62 mph in 4.2 seconds. Production is limited to 1,000 examples.



working in two production lines—one for the DB9 and DBS and the other for the Vantage. Any employee can stop the production line at any time if he or she identifies a problem, and the line stays stopped until the problem is resolved. By way of comparison, it takes 202 hours to assemble a DB9, while a Ford Fiesta is completed in 50 hours. Aston Martins spend 50 hours in the paint shop alone.

Along the way, there are numerous quality control checks, and, once the car is completely assembled, there is a final check. When the car passes this detailed quality inspection, a badge bearing the name of the quality-control technician is affixed to the car.

THE ADVANTAGES

Because it makes sense and is based on shared values, we can expect the relationship between Jaeger-LeCoultre and

“THE V12 VANTAGE IS THE ULTIMATE PERFORMANCE INTERPRETATION OF THE VANTAGE RANGE, COMBINING OUR MOST AGILE MODEL WITH OUR MOST POWERFUL ENGINE.” — DR. ULRICH BEZ, CEO

Aston Martin to continue and to produce advantages. Aston Martin gets watches made by one of the best manufactures in the business, and Jaeger-LeCoultre aligns itself with one of the world’s best automobile makers. Jaeger-LeCoultre also learns from its partnership with Aston Martin. “The partnership pushes the creativity in all our watches,” says Metrailler. “When we remain open to the influences from other industries, such as the car industry, we are more

aware of the materials and the design ideas being used, which helps everything. With our Aston Martin projects, we can be more innovative and more surprising than in our regular collection—it is one line where we can do things a little more crazy.” Is that crazy as in seeking the rush of hitting 4,000 rpm in a V12 Vantage on a quiet village road? If so, then that’s a good thing. [astonmartin.com](http://astonmartin.com)  
[jaeger-lecoultre.com](http://jaeger-lecoultre.com)