



Jaeger-LeCoultre AMVOX2 DBS Transponder in 18 ct. pink gold and with the vertical trigger chronograph already present in the AMVOX2 partnership line. The transponder device allows the Aston Martin DBS owner to lock and unlock their sports car thanks to pressure sensors on the sapphire crystal and a miniaturised open/close circuit re-thought specifically to fit a wristwatch.

Fob Off



You need never lose your car keys again - but only if you're lucky enough to own an Aston Martin DBS. For soon you'll be entitled to the latest 'AMVOX' watch from Jaeger-LeCoultre, which could easily rank as the most vivid embodiment of a car-watch collaboration yet.

Alex Doak

With the advent of *Quantum of Solace*, in which James Bond resumes his position behind the wheel of an Aston Martin DBS, it almost seems bizarre that it's still an Omega strapped to his wrist, and not a Jaeger-LeCoultre. Not merely because of Aston and Jaeger's well-documented partnership - more because the new AMVOX2 DBS Transponder could stand alone as the most 'Q-Branch' feat of horolo-gadgetry ever conceived.

Almost as far-fetched as the buzzsaw Submariner in *Live and Let Die* or the laser-beam Seamaster in *Goldeneye*, only far cooler.

Make no mistake, the Seamaster Professional 300M is a fine watch, and an instrument entirely befitting the utilitarian needs of a double-oh agent in the field. Perhaps its modern incarnation, *sans* laser, is the most





The Aston Martin DBS is a 6.0 litre V12 powered, race-bred, two-seater with an aerodynamic design and built with performance technology that bridges the gap between road and track vehicles.

fitting yet, given Daniel Craig's raw, 21st-century depiction of a bruised and battered Bond. However, I can't help but imagine Eon Productions are kicking themselves for missing such perfect product placement. Oh well, they'll just have to console themselves with their Avon Cosmetics, Ford Mondeo and Coke Zero partnerships.

Rumours abound

The rumours surrounding the Transponder watch were, in actual fact, planted as far back as the Frankfurt Motor Show in 2007. On the eve of the auto calendar's biggest fixture, the city's chichi Cocoon Club played host to a double unveiling of ice-cool proportions: the new race-bred Aston Martin DBS, paired with Jaeger-LeCoultre's 'DBS' chronograph. Both were tweaked and tuned versions of existing icons - one essentially being the V12-powered DB9 coupé with a new carbon-fibre bodykit and improved brakes and suspension, the other the AMVOX2 with a cutaway dial - but both could hardly fail to raise eyebrows, and champagne flutes. Whether it was intentional or not, the effusive CEO of Aston Martin, Dr Bez, raised a few more eyebrows that night when he hinted at the next joint project alongside his Jaeger counterpart Jérôme Lambert: a watch that controls the car.

It was easy to jump to conclusions, and we all did. Memories of Pierce Brosnan steering his BMW Seven Series with a mobile phone sprang immediately to mind. But it's to both parties' credit that the scope of the latest AMVOX was a mystery to most till as recently as August. Of course, the wait was always going to be worthwhile, as one need only remember the stir that AMVOX2 caused upon its release in 2005. Not only was this chronograph a genuine horological first, dispensing with pushbuttons in favour of a 'vertical trigger' system linked to the pivoted sapphire crystal - it was also a delicious allusion to Aston's famous crystal "Engine Start" button. After years of car and watch-brand collaborations that banked solely on aesthetic cues taken from dashboards, radiator grilles, wheel alloys and what have you, here was something novel, clever and rather fun. We even forgave them for painting the lever mechanism red to look like brake callipers.

What had started as a welcome revival of Jaeger's long-lamented Memovox alarm watch had quickly turned into a deeply involved relationship. As Lambert reminds me: "The partnership between Aston Martin and Jaeger-LeCoultre is much more than a collection of watches. It is really the reflection of a deep mutual admiration and we draw huge inspiration from both universes."

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So how did Jaeger manage to top even the AMVOX2?

"More than working on a formal agenda of exchanges, we take every opportunity - events, meetings, a simple call - to discuss any idea that might give birth to an exciting project. Dr Bez and myself were dreaming about what could be the most dramatic watch for Aston Martin, and we naturally arrived at an AMVOX able to assume a role in the car's functioning. Playing around with the start button, it was a short step to imagining a watch controlling the locking mechanism."

It's quite remarkable. As well as all the time-telling and chronograph machinery, let alone the winding rotor, Jaeger and "a selected Swiss technical workshop" have managed to squeeze the electronic components of the DBS key fob into the AMVOX2's existing 44 mm-wide case, raising its height by just 1 mm in the process. And, importantly, they've kept the watch buttonless: To unlock your car, you simply touch the crystal between 8 and 9 o'clock; to lock it, press between 3 and 4 o'clock.

"A miniaturisation of the transponder module found in the regular key fobs was necessary to be able to house it inside the watch base," explains Lambert. "And for this development phase, Jaeger-LeCoultre needed a specialist able to master the electronic issues from a watchmaker's perspective. Aston Martin's engineers and its key manufacturer was of course involved in the research, but the reworking and redesign of the circuit, the wiring and the transmitter antenna was managed by Jaeger-LeCoultre and a selected Swiss *atelier*."

Kept in range

The end result is actually a module weighing just a few grams and less than half the size of the original system - while still operative to the usual range of 10 metres.





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That the latter is the case demonstrates the second ingenious feat of engineering, beyond miniaturisation. As anyone with a decent O-Level in Physics would realise, the watch case - especially Jaeger's chunky specimen - acts as a tiny Faraday cage, protecting the delicate metal components within from environmental electromagnetic forces. In reverse, it would clearly hamper transmission of the transponder's pulse. The boffins therefore mounted the 128 mm-long metal antenna on the underside of the sapphire crystal, in the shape of the crenellated hour markers below. Not only does this allow a clear signal to your DBS, but it also places distance between the pulse and the sensitive balance spring.

The touch-sensitive 'open' and 'close' zones use, as you may have guessed, the same technology as that already found in iPhones, PDAs and, yes, the Tissot T-Touch. Unlike the chronograph, still operated by pushing at 12 or 6 o'clock, there's no way of switching off the function, so there is a chance you'll accidentally reopen your car if you brush your hand across your cuff. However, be reassured that the locking system of the DBS is designed to automatically lock again after 120 seconds if a door isn't opened. Plus, of course, only Aston Martin dealers will be able to authorise the timepiece to 'talk' with your specific DBS, so there's no danger of someone else at an Aston Martin Owner's Club concours making off with the silver birch DBS he could never get in the first place.

So far, so very Aston. But does the new Calibre 751E's extraordinary hybridization of horology, microelectronics, and, let's face it, downright gimmickry really suit a *grand dame* such as Jaeger-LeCoultre, celebrating her 175th birthday this year? Apart from the brazen "DBS" badge slapped across the Transponder's dial, it probably does. Jaeger - home to the Reverso, the Calibre 101, the Gyrotourbillon - has dared to step beyond its integral

Swissness and to challenge our modern conception of what a luxury watch can do, with flair no less.

"The point was not to replace the horological and mechanical function with an electronics device," assures Lambert, "but to integrate an existing technology, reworked from a watchmaker's angle, into the watch, while keeping the whole functionality of the mechanical chronograph. In this respect, the AMVOX2 DBS Transponder perpetuates our historical legacy of applied creativity."

Fit for the role

Given Jaeger's recent proliferation of creativity and variety, not to mention our easy acceptance of its connection with Aston - undoubtedly a 'Cool Brand', but still unafraid to flash "power, beauty, soul" across the speedo on ignition - there's probably more scope for the Transponder here than anywhere else along the Jura. For while the intuitive leap between it and such heavyweight feats of horology as the Duomètre Chronographe or Reverso Triptyche might at first seem insurmountable, all of them feel absolutely 'Jaeger'.

Which leaves us wondering, with Bond out of the equation, what cinematic superhero really deserves the AMVOX2 DBS Transponder? That's easy. Those sleek and stealthy aesthetics, in combination with such a snazzy gizmo seem destined for a sole agent - the Dark Knight himself. Even better, Bruce Wayne is already a Jaeger convert, having sported a Reverso Grande Date in both of his recent Christian Bale incarnations. Sure, he already drives a Lamborghini Murcielago, but there's bound to be room at the manor for one more supercar. Or perhaps Monsieur Lambert should get to work on the Batmobile? Now there's a thought...

Exclusively available to DBS customers only, the DBS Transponder watch will be available to order from October 2008. This is a special Aston Martin commission, and therefore only available through Aston Martin dealers and not via Jaeger-LeCoultre boutiques. The price of the watch is: £27,500 inclusive of local taxes.

Further information:

www.jaeger-lecoultre.com

www.astonmartin.com

