



Twin Peaks

Jaeger and Aston pair-up with new products that scale the heights of their legendary canons

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The partnership announced between Aston Martin and Jaeger-LeCoultre in September – inaugurated at the launch of the Vanquish S – seemed such a natural fit that it was a surprise it had taken so long to be put into practice. Two famous marques with a shared target market collaborating to their mutual advantage and producing a little extra energy greater than the sum of its parts – the holy grail of fusion. Why did they wait until now?



(Above) Unveiled at the Paris Motor Show in September, the Aston Martin V12 Vanquish S. The hand-built 6.0-litre V12 generates a maximum power of 520 bhp (388 kW) at 7000 rpm, making this the fastest road going Aston Martin ever produced. Top speed is more than 200 mph; 0–62 mph (100 km/h) accomplished in only 4.8 seconds. (Left) The new partnership revives a link between the two companies that goes back more than 70 years. The dashboard of the 1.5-litre Aston Martin LM from the 1930s – a regular class winner in motorsport, including Le Mans – was dominated by Jaeger instruments.

The relative rarity of collaborations such as Jaeger and Aston's suggests that positive results are far from guaranteed, while the success stories do little to reveal what the secret formula might be. The success of Girard-Perregaux's collaboration with Ferrari over the last 10 years is probably the model most would like to emulate (though possibly not the denouement, whereby the Swatch Group steps in, as seems likely to happen). Born out of the interests and relationships that existed between Gino Macaluso of Girard-Perregaux and Luca di Montezemolo of Fiat and Ferrari, the project was underpinned by a mutual understanding and respect. Without the benefit of such a chance relationship, Jaeger-LeCoultre and Aston Martin have had to be far more careful in the way they set up the collaboration. Clearly, the two companies have a similar approach to their respective pursuits. Both make luxuries that appeal in themselves rather than in their ability to meet utilitarian needs. But from where does that extra spark come, which makes the relationship more than mere commercial opportunism?

Shared values

Jaeger-LeCoultre seem to believe the credibility of the venture can be derived from their historical link to Aston Martin using dashboard instruments made by the Jaeger subsidiary set up in 1925 to

serve the fledgling motor industry. While there is a certainty of recognition here (how many people saw the Jaeger name on a dashboard before they saw it on a dial?) it seems an unnecessary prop. While both companies revere their pasts and carefully nurture the traditions established over time, this is not really illustrated through the sale of speedos, despite the simplicity of the story making its point well enough. The real basis for lending credence to the collaboration concept is in the history of the companies' output of excellence. For every DB5 there is a Memovox; for every Reverso there is an LM or an Ulster.

If the Jaeger connection seemed a little contrived on closer inspection, then the setting for the launch had its own interest. The typically English and typically Swiss companies celebrated their union on the eve of the motor show in Paris, where the V12 Vanquish S was being launched. Aston Martin's somewhat unassuming CEO, Dr Ulrich Bez hailed their shared philosophies, stating: "Each company has a rich heritage and both are dedicated to producing the finest hand-crafted designs in their respective fields." He then proved the point by unveiling the new Vanquish. Its slightly heavier, 'butcher' look had journalists struggling to find fault; a search that ended with rather lacklustre criticism of the bicycle reflectors stuck next to the exhaust pipes.

Memovox unveiled

Then came the unveiling of the watch that Jaeger has chosen to mark the new collaboration. At first sight, it is as bereft of cross-branding as the car it is meant to complement. You need to see the watch side-by-side with Aston's offering to notice that the same leather is used for the strap as for the seats of the car; the metallic grey of the dial is also an Aston Martin design cue. Best of all, however, is the model Jaeger-LeCoultre chose to use: that classic of the post-war decades and contemporary of the legendary DB5, the Memovox.

It is in the design of the new Memovox that Jaeger's instrument heritage does come into its own, as the dial has been twisted to resemble the counters of old, through both the 270° sweep of the numerals and indices and the general feel of the layout. Satisfyingly, this is a nicely balanced exercise that does not push the idea too far. It is also noticeable in this respect that the Aston Martin name only appears on the caseback. The watch will be made available in a limited-edition, grey-dialled titanium version and a black-dialled steel case.

As with both Jaeger-LeCoultre and Aston Martin, the real magic lies out of sight. Less dramatic perhaps than a Cosworth-tuned V12 that makes over 500 bhp, the Memovox alarm system has been refined to give the new watch a very attractive and noticeable alarm tone that derives from a new alloy and a redesigned profile. ●

Further information: Jaeger-LeCoultre, Tel: 0800 587 3420, www.jaeger-lecoultre.com



(Top) Steel version of the Aston Martin Jaeger-LeCoultre, with black leather strap and black dial. Its calibre 918 movement adapts and succeeds the automatic Memovox alarm calibre, which will celebrate its 40th anniversary next year, when the watch will be made available to buyers. (Bottom) Just 750 examples of the Aston Martin Jaeger-LeCoultre Titanium Edition will be produced, featuring a titanium case, metallic grey ruthenium dial – similar to those used in Aston Martin dashboards – with a dark brown leather strap produced from Bridge of Weir leather – as used in the interior of the Vanquish and the DB9.