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Aston Martin Vanquish

Mr. Bond's Carbon-Fiber Tuxedo

Rating: 8/10 *Excellent, with room to kvetch*

\$280,000 · [More info from Aston Martin](#)

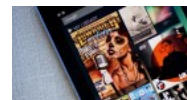
Reviewed by [Eric Tegler](#) November 9, 2012 | 6:30 am | Categories: [Automotive](#)

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Photo courtesy of Aston Martin

James Bond is nothing if not consistent — shot, drowned, pushed out of an airplane with no parachute, he always comes back. And he's always wearing an impeccable tux. That's what makes an icon. And that rule to consistently deliver the goods — and to look good doing it — is one followed not only by Mr. Bond, but also by one of his favorite automakers.

Aston Martin has remained consistent for most of its 99-year history, producing sharply designed, poshly appointed and distinctly British sports cars for the luxury market. The company has stuck to the formula with its new range-topping [Vanquish](#).

But consistency can be a double-edged sword. Just as you can throw out a Bond film title and your average Joe may struggle to tell you which actor portrayed 007 in that particular flick, show anyone (aside from Aston enthusiasts) a contemporary Aston Martin and they won't be able to tell you whether it's a Vantage, Virage, or DBS. That holds true for the new Vanquish — it's essentially the same tuxedo with some new bits underneath.

Because Aston does bespoke like Chevy does floor mats, there will likely be a completely naked carbon fiber Vanquish available.

It is a damn good-looking thing though, building subtly on the shape of the Vanquish that debuted in 2001. While similarly sized, the new Vanquish looks leaner, its lines sharper and more tapered amidships. It also borrows cues from Aston's recent [One-77 supercar](#) (out of production after just 77 were built) including the tighter waistline, elongated side strakes, and LED light blade rear clusters. There are hints of carbon fiber, too, visible on the front splitter, side skirts, door mirrors and rear diffuser.

Every body panel on the new Vanquish is constructed from carbon fiber, a choice Aston made because of its high strength-to-weight ratio and reduction in mass (though Ferrari would disagree). Fewer individual body panels are required and the panel gap on the C-pillar joint is no

longer present. A new rear Aero Duct (fancy spoiler) is fashioned via an innovative method of laying-up carbon fiber.

Because Aston does bespoke like Chevy does floor mats, there will likely be a completely naked carbon-fiber



Vanquish available. (Aston already has a “cutaway” Vanquish display model in exposed carbon.)



How We Rate

- 1 A complete failure in every way
- 2 Barely functional; don't buy it
- 3 Serious flaws; proceed with caution
- 4 Downsides outweigh upsides
- 5 Recommended with reservations
- 6 A solid product with some issues
- 7 Very good, but not quite great
- 8 Excellent, with room to kvetch
- 9 Nearly flawless; buy it now
- 10 Metaphysical product perfection

Photo courtesy of Aston Martin

Beneath the carbon cloak sits an evolution of Aston's decade-old VH platform. Aston insists VH — “vertical horizontal” — is a methodology rather than an architecture, so we'll just call it the re-engineered DBS chassis. The lightweight bonded aluminum structure incorporates a tub with carbon-fiber components. Compared to the outgoing DBS, according to Aston, the weight is down, 75 percent of the parts are new, and rigidity is up 25 percent.

The engine is a considerably re-engineered 6.0-liter V12 (Bond requires 12 cylinders). The block has been revised, there are new heads with dual variable valve timing, an uprated fuel pump, enlarged throttle bodies and an improved “big wing” intake manifold, to cite a few changes. Peak power is 565 hp at 6,750 rpm, and peak torque is 457 pound-feet at 5,500 rpm. With a curb weight around 3,834 pounds, Aston reports the Vanquish can attain 60 mph in 4.0 seconds on the way to a 183 mph top speed.

It feels that fast, especially on the narrow “B” roads (about 1.5 lanes) of the English midlands where I drove it. These are some of the most gritty, undulating, curvy roads in the U.K., and Aston develops its cars on them. The Vanquish's three-mode (Normal, Sport, Track) suspension handles them with aplomb, combining admirable compliance with excellent body control. The stiff chassis provides the foundation for front and rear double wishbones with coil springs and adjustable shocks. Cocktails all 'round for the Adaptive Damping System engineers who've done a bang-up job.

The steering is similarly well-sorted, giving little up to that of the new Porsche 911 I got into following the Vanquish launch. Aston's rear-mid mounted, six-speed Touchtronic 2 automatic/sequential manual gearbox does the business well and more smoothly than competitors' double-clutch transmissions. That said, it was flummoxed twice whilst puttering through quaint English villages.

The Vanquish isn't really a track car, but it's quite capable of outrunning the bad guys. Your fairer driving companions will approve of the fine-scented cockpit materials like Bridge of Weir Luxmil leather and Alcantara, all hand-stitched. Even the headliner looks tailored.



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Photo courtesy of Aston Martin

If there's one area where the Vanquish falls flat, it's in ergonomics and infotainment. Familiar elements from the glass key/starter module to the gear-selection buttons remain, though the center stack is a bit different. The speedometer and tach dials are attractive but difficult to read, hence a new digital speedo display. Suspension mode and cruise control buttons on the steering wheel look like afterthoughts. Aston trumpets the center information screen's haptic feedback, but it's still too small and saddled by lackluster navigation and menu logic.

The standard Bang & Olufsen sound system wasn't quite tuned up on the early production cars I drove. Aston says final adjustments on the audio system is ongoing. Tire noise on the funky roads was an unexpected issue. Space wasn't, though, the Vanquish enjoying more occupant space than the DBS. Back seats are optional, but most suitable for those bound and gagged. Rear and rear three-quarter visibility isn't great, but the exhaust note is.

The Vanquish breaks little new styling ground — but then, Daniel Craig could probably throw on Sean Connery's old tuxedo and look just right. That's a good thing. Class doesn't go out of style, and neither will the Vanquish. Carbon fiber? That's another question.

WIRED Sexy shape. Highly composed driving dynamics and near 600 horsepower. Hand-finished interior smells like Ralph Lauren's saddle cabinet.

TIRED Occasional hitches in the auto-trans at low speed. Standard paddle-shifters should be longer. The optional squared-off steering wheel feels awkward when cruising. As nice as the shape is, there's just something too familiar about it.

Photo courtesy of Aston Martin

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I thought this was an article about an actual carbon-fiber tuxedo.
You tricked me, jerks.
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Salinelvy → P F · 12 days ago
If there was such a tuxedo, there would also need to be such a dress. Fair's fair.
I would like to see a carbon-fiber kilt, myself.
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mijikal · 19 days ago

The Kuwaiti company that has majority share in AM is trying to sell. Toyota has shown interest. The result could be a sports car that's both 'British' and reliable. Then the world ends.

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MustBeSaid · 20 days ago

What's with the steering wheel? Did someone decide to go home early one day? Looks terrible.

6 ^ | v · Reply · Share >



Pope Ratz · 20 days ago

Nice, but why is the steering wheel on the wrong side?

3 ^ | v · Reply · Share >



dan1101 → Pope Ratz · 19 days ago

It's so your sword arm is free to duel with others out the window.

15 ^ | v · Reply · Share >



Sam Stroup → dan1101 · 19 days ago

Good selling point.

0 ^ | v · Reply · Share >



P F → Pope Ratz · 19 days ago

It's a British thing.

2 ^ | v · Reply · Share >



Duke Kelly · 20 days ago

This car is very attractive!

1 ^ | v · Reply · Share >



Duke Kelly · 20 days ago

You can't be serious about the steering wheel.

1 ^ | v · Reply · Share >



Andrew Swerlick · 20 days ago

"Your fairer driving companions will approve of the fine-scented cockpit materials like Bridge of Weir Luxmil leather and Alcantara, all hand-stitched. Even the headliner looks tailored." Is this supposed to imply that the reader is male? If I'm reading it right that's pretty blatantly sexist

1 ^ | v · Reply · Share >



Jonathan Huyghe → Andrew Swerlick · 20 days ago

It's a nod to the James Bond theme, another example would be "it's quite capable of outrunning the bad guys", by which the author probably does not literally imply that the reader will be partaking in car chases with criminals.

Also why can't men be fair and appreciative of fine leather? Isn't that sexist too?

18 ^ | v · Reply · Share >



Duke Kelly → Andrew Swerlick · 20 days ago

Yes, you're oversensitive. Do you know the demographics of Aston Martin owners? Do you know the marketing plan? Who is their target audience? I, too, can purchase flowery smelling shampoos, but I am not offended that a particular ad is targeted at women. Get off your high horse, buddy.

9 ^ | v · Reply · Share >



stderr · 13 days ago

The automatic transmission? Good grief.

0 ^ | v · Reply · Share >



NewGawker · 19 days ago

Where's the lovely wood in the interior that's supposed to be synonymous with fine English cars?? And that stitching on the seats.. gaudy.

0 ^ | v · Reply · Share >

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Example in the eyes of the team, medical in the normal eye was lighter...

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