
How much would you pay to be James Bond?

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On the 9th of September 2015, an auction house in Guernsey had a peculiar item up for bid; amongst arts and antiques, there was a small plate with three digits on it. The number in question will undoubtedly be familiar to many; in fact, it is hard to think of a three-digit sequence more recognisable in the world today. 007 appeared stencilled in white on a black background and the unassuming registration plate would entitle the successful purchaser to legally adorn any vehicle of their choosing with the iconic number. The final and winning bid was an amazing £240,000 from an anonymous purchaser leaving many to wonder about the type of vehicle that would carry the plates. I think it is safe to assume that many hoped it would be an Aston Martin.

From a famous number to a famous car

During preparation for the third instalment of the James Bond franchise, 1964's *Goldfinger*, legendary film designer Ken Adam was busy with a new idea for the world's most famous civil servant. His idea centred on Mr Bond's means of transport; surely spies were renowned for their clever devices and why wouldn't that extend to their cars? Along with a slew of ideas for the types of gadgets that could be found in a spy's automobile he also had an exact car in mind, Aston Martin's DB5. The leadership at the car company had several misgivings when approached by Adam and other members of the film's production crew but were ultimately talked into the idea, and thus, two Aston Martins were delivered to Pinewood Studios in January 1964. The rest is celluloid history. Despite a now longstanding relationship between the brand and the man with a license to kill, the DB5 remains the most famous of them all. In fact, to many, the car is the most famous car of all time. Quite a feat for a model that only ever saw less than 900 produced.

Skip ahead 55 years

In recent times many automobile brands have begun to look back on some of the best models produced in times gone by. It is impossible to open an automobile magazine today and not see the latest "continuation" model, as the industry describes it. Classic cars with classic style have been celebrated and reborn, ready for the modern world, but very few could have guessed at the latest example of a vehicular trip down memory lane. More than half a century after stealing the show in *Goldfinger*, the first new DB5 rolled out of the Aston Martin plant on the 6th of July, 2020. The truly remarkable thing about this release is not the modernisation of the car but rather the addition of some rather unique new features – certainly, features that did not come standard with the commercially available model from the fifties, though probably not entirely new if you were in the employ of Her Majesty's secret service. The Aston Martin DB5 *Goldfinger* Continuation has, as much as law permits, got the same array of fiendish devices that left villainous cronies in smoking wrecks in the opening moments of the film it is named after.

Front-mounted Browning machine guns and an ejector seat?

Despite very little modification to the original car, modern science has proven helpful in one way with regard to the new DB5; for the first time ever, all the special features have been fitted into the vehicle at the same time. During the original filming, endless hours and meticulous care were devoted to replacing one gadget with another. As the crew had only a single car to work on, any damage was inconceivable, so the devices that powered the modifications had to be swapped remarkably carefully. There was never any possibility of having multiple additions working at the same time. Luckily, as time has passed, everything has become a lot more compact and, therefore, can all fit into a smaller space. For those who have never seen the film or have forgotten over time, the following is a list of the valuable tools that 007 had at his disposal.

Exterior:

- Rear smoke screen delivery system
- Rear simulated oil slick delivery system
- Revolving number plates front and rear (triple plates)
- Simulated twin front machine guns
- Bullet-resistant rear shield
- Battering rams front and rear
- Simulated tyre slasher
- Removable passenger seat roof panel (optional equipment)

Interior:

- Simulated radar screen tracker map
- Telephone in driver's door
- Gear knob actuator button
- Armrest and centre console-mounted switchgear
- Under-seat hidden weapons/storage tray
- Remote control for gadget activation

It is probably a good time to make clear that the word “simulated”, which appears next to a number of the original gimmicks, is with very good reason. So no, upon purchasing your new DB5 you will not be able to encourage fellow drivers to move aside with a quick spray of machine gun fire. Despite initial consideration, you will also be unable to get rid of unwanted passengers via the roof, although you can get a removable panel fitted. Somehow the idea of trying to push someone through a small sunroof at high speed sounds a lot less cool.

Ultimately, we return to the initial question and headline of this article, how much would you pay to be James Bond? As Aston Martin has only made 25 of the Goldfinger Continuation, it is certainly more likely to stand out than a new BMW, but at a price of over R60 million, you would probably expect that. Another important consideration is that the car is not road-legal, so the likelihood is that admiring glances are likely to be restricted to those who are willing to join you on a country lane or potentially an abandoned aeroplane runway. Despite these significant drawbacks, if you really do have R60 million spare and some wide-open space, this is probably as near as you can get to this mythical figure. The obvious next step would be to chat to someone in Guernsey about their registration plates.