

The last Zagato

In late 1960 Aston Martin and Zagato combined forces to create an Anglo/Italian hybrid, the DB4GT Zagato. Born of a desire to produce a lightweight racer with improved aerodynamics, capable of competing and winning on any race-track, it was an intoxicating mixture of exceptional beauty and enhanced performance.

Aston Martin's initial association with Zagato only became a sales success with the passage of time; results on the race track were limited at best. A number of cars remained unsold after production had ended and it wasn't until a few years later they all found owners. The original plan was to build twenty five cars but production was halted after only twenty cars were completed; two of those Zagatos used the same chassis number! The last few cars built languished at the Aston Martin factory until they were sold off cheaply to AM's Walton upon Thames dealer, HWM.

Many hoped the pan-European collaboration would be reprised when the V8 engined cars entered production in the 1970s. Not long after the carburettored AM V8 had been released in 1973 Autocar speculated in their July 12th. edition whether a V8 Zagato would ever be built. It was over a decade since the original debuted and scribes pondered the thought of another Italian clothed model.

Subsequent financial difficulties and numerous ownership changes curtailed any development over the following decade. The thought of the iconic collaboration remained firmly in the background until the future of Aston Martin could be assured. It took until 1984 before the situation was secure enough to contemplate renewing it.

Twenty four years after the 1960 launch of the Zagato bodied DB4GT and thoughts once again turned to reviving the historical partnership. The nineteen originals had become the most sought after Aston Martin road cars ever built; many regarded them amongst the most beautiful designs ever created. Just as the Ferrari's successful 250 GT short-wheelbase Berlinetta (SWB) provided the competitive inspiration for the first Zagato, the March 1984 announcement of the 288GTO had a similar effect on AM's decision to develop a Zagato bodied V8.

A sense of relative calm had returned to Newport Pagnell in early 1984. Sales steadily increased and the trans Atlantic shareholders had set about reorganizing the company. The AML stand at the Geneva Motor Show in March was a low key affair with Peter Livanos displaying his LHD York Red V8 Vantage (chassis number VOL12400, ironically, after an accident that wrote it off, this car became the Vantage Zagato prototype). Alongside it were a LHD Kensington Silver V8 Volante (15330) and a matching Lagonda (13331). Located nearby was Carrozzeria Zagato's stand, a fortuitous coincidence as it would turn out.

Star of the show was Ferrari's 288GTO, one of a new breed of limited edition "homologation" specials built to compete in the FIA's Group B series for circuit racing. Porsche had introduced its competitor, the 959, at the Frankfurt Motor Show a year earlier. A minimum build of 200 cars was required to meet the regulations and both the Porsche and Ferrari quickly sold out. Livanos was eager to acquire the Ferrari, but being rebuffed in his efforts, suggested to Victor that they should build something similar. It was an idea Gauntlett had harbored since becoming involved with Aston in 1980, having owned a DB4 GT Zagato.

The Zagato stand, manned by chief financial officer Guido Cantele, was entertaining the same idea and approached AML's neighbouring display to gauge their interest. The warm reception shown by Peter and Victor was the catalyst for a further meeting where the decision was made with the Zagato brothers to build the V8 Zagato.

Production began in 1986 with a target of 50 production cars. A bare chassis equipped with all mechanical parts was shipped to Zagato in Italy to be bodied and trimmed. Upon completion it would be returned for rectification and sales preparation in the special area in the service department. Early cars required quite a bit of remedial work whereas cars built in the latter half of 1987 were to a higher standard when received from Zagato.



Supreme style, legendary performance and safety.

The Aston Martin Vantage Zagato is the ultimate expression of the art of high performance. It is a 1984 V8 engine which combines the renowned engineering of the V8 Vantage with the sleek and aerodynamic style of the legendary Italian designer Zagato.

The Vantage is a true road racer, underpinned by a dedicated and tested chassis, with its unique V8 engine, 2500 cc, 24 valves, 160 bhp, 160 mph, 0-100 in 7.5 seconds, and its 1000 kg weight, it is a masterpiece of engineering, designed to be the ultimate in performance.

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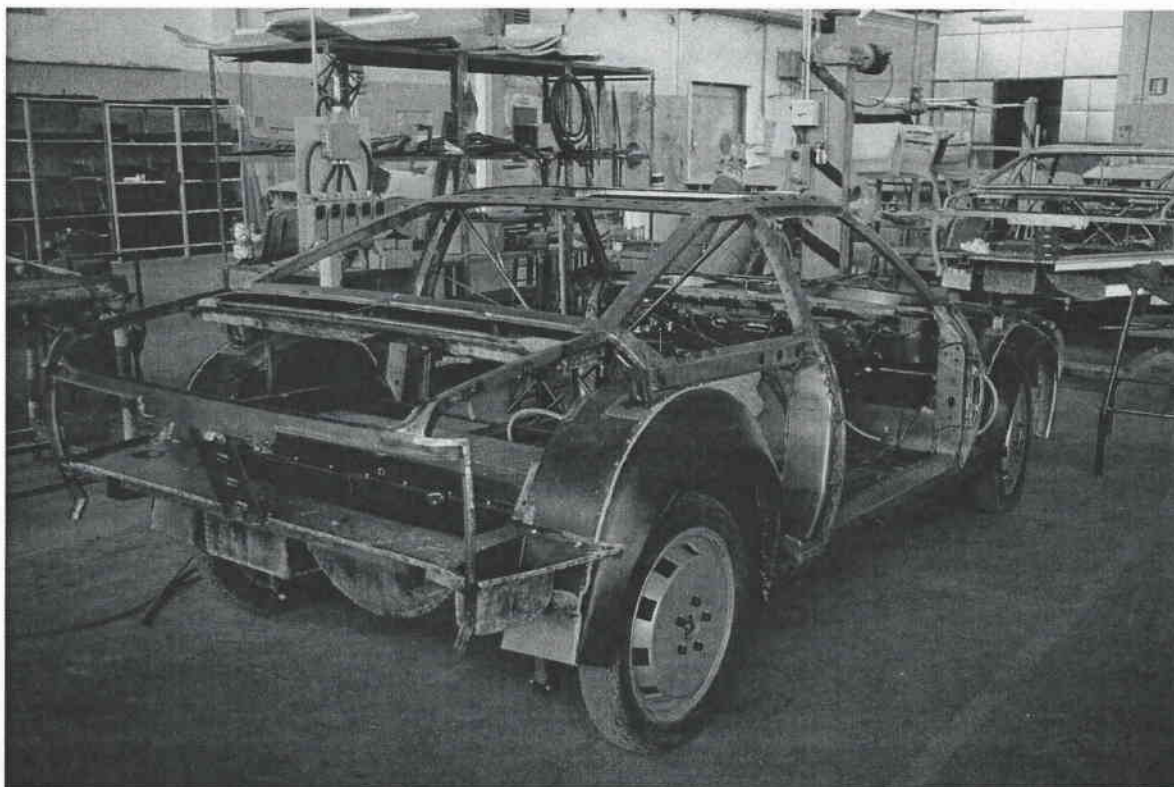
ASTON MARTIN LAGONDA LIMITED London (Sales) Newport Pagnell (Production) MERTON, England. Telephone: Newport Pagnell (01908) 6221 Telex: 8374

SCFCV81Z8HTL20043

Aston Martin V8 Vantage Zagato Chassis number V8ZHR20043 was one of the later cars, finished in September of 1987. The car was ordered on November 14th 1986 by Sheikh Abdul Al Thani of the Qatari Royal family; the initial sales indent shows the colour as Javelin Grey (one of six standard paints offered for the Zagato, code 249617) with special Docks grey leather (code 509) for the interior and no alcantara on the headliner. Carpets were in beige (code 96). Middle East specification with LHD were the build requirements.

MODEL: VANTAGE ZAGATO**SALES INDENT No: V8VOL20043****ENGINE No:****CHASSIS No: SCFCV81Z8HTL20043****PAINT: JAVELIN GREY 249617****DRIVE: LHD****LEATHER: GREY (DOCKS 509 AS USED ON ZAGATO
20027's HEADLINING)****AXLE RATIO: 3.54:1****CARPET: BEIGE 96****SPEEDO: KPH****HEADLINING GREY (SAME AS INTERIOR LEATHER)****HOOD:****LIGHTING:****EXTRAS:****V8 WEBER VANTAGE ZAGATO MANUAL SPEC TO MIDDLE EAST SPECIFICATION****NO ALCANTARA REQUIRED IN INTERIOR****PURCHASER: CHAPMAN SPOONER (AL THANI)****ORDER No:****DELIVERY:****Date issued: 14th November 1986****Signed: C Barrett****Circulation: K. Wingate (11)****B. Smith****Buying Office (2)****G. Tonkin****R. Court****C. Barrett (Original)****P. Smith****P. Child****6008****G. Hoden****I. MacLaren****K. J. Riding Felce**

Factory records indicate the V580X Vantage engine was built by Mike Peach using block number 110 and heads numbered 117 on the left and 112 on the right side. Testing on the engine dyno was completed on April 2 1987 after an hour of running in with a power output around 340bhp and no problems reported. The rolling chassis with engine and manual transmission (numbered 090084 with a 3.54 ratio differential numbered 87A 31440) was dispatched to Milan at the end of the month.



Upon completion in Italy it returned to Newport Pagnell in August with the registration, E601XMJ, issued on the 25th. Final inspection, after rectification work, was completed on September 14th 1987 by Peter Child. Dispatch from AML to the delivering agent, Chapman Spooner, occurred on October 1st. Upon delivery to Sheik Al Thani, the car was based in Europe/UK and never exported to the Middle East.



By July 1989 the Vantage Zagato had accumulated 5640 km on the odometer, with the majority of the use on European roads. In mid 1989 it was involved in a fatal accident in Spain whilst being driven by one of the owners employees. He lost control on a winding road and plunged into a ravine. Upon return to the AML service department it was considered unrepairable, but to everyone's amazement both doors still opened and closed.

In negotiation with the insurer, Norwich Union, it was decided to rebuild 20043 with a new chassis and body, as per the estimate of July 19 1989. Zagato were coming to the end of production on the Zagato Volante so a new chassis fitted with the original running gear and mechanicals was built up and sent to them for bodying. A number of enhancements from the Volante were specified including an updated interior and bodywork (rear bumper).

As it was essentially a new car AML issued a sales indent on July 13th 1989. Colour was Litchfield Black with Parchment leather piped in Black. Carpets were black edged in parchment and the headliner was also parchment.

MODEL: VANTAGE ZAGATO SALES INDENT No: V8VOL20043
CHASSIS No: SCFCV81Z8HTL20043

PAINT: LITCHFIELD BLACK DRIVE: LHD

LEATHER: PARCHMENT 3672 PIPED BLACK 8500 AXLE RATIO: 3.54:1
(AML TO SUPPLY)

CARPET: BLACK EDGED BLACK (AML TO SUPPLY) SPEEDO: KPH

HEADLINING: PARCHMENT 3672 LEATHER (AML TO SUPPLY)

HOOD:

EXTRAS: NOTE : REBUILD

VANTAGE ZAGATO MANUAL SALOON

FRONT OF DASHTOP IN BLACK 8500 LEATHER (BY WINDSCREEN BASE). REST OF DASH IN PARCHMENT LEATHER

VOLANTE ZAGATO INTERIOR WITH GLOSS BLACK WOODS. CENTRE CONSOLE LID TO BE SUPPLIED BY AML, GLOSS BLACKED BY ZAGATO, AND SUPPLIED LOOSE IN CAR.

PURCHASER: SHEIKH AL THANI

Date Issued: 13 July 1989

Signed: *C Frost*

6008 K Wingate
 D Eales
 M R Haysey

Buying Office A McCloskey
P R Smith N Hewlett
M T Abraham C M Frost(Original)

Upon completion in August of 1990 the odometer was zeroed to indicate renewal/refurbishment of all mechanical components. The engine/gearbox/transmission had been fully rebuilt along with all suspension parts.

Final invoicing was issued on August 29th 1990 with labour for the rebuild costing £16525 and parts at over double this. Delivery of the car back to the UK was delayed with Zagato holding the car "hostage" pending payment of outstanding invoices. It was all sorted by July 6th when 20043 was transported back to AML.



ASTON MARTIN LAGONDA LIMITED

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Telephone: 0908 610620 Fax: 0908 613708 Telex: 82341 AML-G

INVOICE

SHEIKH HAMAD AL THANI

29/ 8/90
C003010

V.A.T. No. 479 3149 10

- 1 -

INVOICE No. 00003669

Re: ASTON MARTIN ZAGATO 20043
Reg. No. E601 XMJ Mileage 05640

To: .Carrying out all necessary repairs to place the vehicle into its pre-accident condition, including fitting complete new chassis and bodywork, at agreed price with Norwich Union Insurance.

11625.00

Additional to carrying out the above repairs and changes to original specification as per our Estimate of 19th July 1989:-

Retrimming interior in Parchment leather including headlining. Re-trimming forward edge of dash top in Black with Black carpeting with Black leather binding.

1100.00

Installing Zagato Volante style interior with woods in special Black finish.

2500.00

Replacing missing Blaupunkt radio and speakers.

Installing remote key operated alarm system with auto-door locking, ultrasonic sensors to the interior and auto window closing.

650.00

Respraying all exterior bodywork in Litchfield Black.

650.00

LABOUR TOTAL

16525.00

To Supplying Parts

WARNING TRIANGLE
JACK ASSY-V8

1 19.09
1 60.90





End of the line

Essentially the completion of the rebuild signaled the end of the relationship between Zagato and AML. What started as a casual conversation at the 1984 Geneva motorshow culminated in 51 Vantage Zagato coupes and 38 Zagato Volante convertibles being completed, or so history had recorded.

The rebuild of 20043 adds a further number to that list and is the last V8 Zagato built by the iconic partnership. Just as Aston Martin built two DB4GT Zagato on the same chassis number in the early 1960s, the practice was repeated in the 1980s with 20043.