

The Bondmobile

The cars James Bond chooses to drive are nearly as famous as Agent 007 himself. With last year's release of *Skyfall*, the 23rd official Bond film, we take a look back at the cars that have partnered the agent through fifty years of Bond history.

Forget the Bond girls. It is all about the car. Whether it is an Aston Martin, Lotus or BMW, James Bond is guaranteed to have a classic piece of machinery at his disposal, decked out with a host of technological advancements courtesy of Q Branch. This was not always the case. When James Bond burst onto movie screens in *Dr No*, elaborate gadgetry and sleek cars were not the order of the day.

007's first car was in fact a Series II Sunbeam Alpine convertible with not a single modification. It was reportedly borrowed from a local resident as the only suitable sports car available near the film shoot site. A Bentley Mark IV featured in many of the Bond novels but it is as fictional as the spy himself. No such Bentley model exists. To compensate, a Derby Bentley convertible made

an appearance in the second Bond movie, *From Russia with Love*.

It was in both the Goldfinger book and movie that the Aston Martin DB5 first starred and despite tumultuous affairs with other manufacturers, the Aston Martin captured Bond's heart. The original DB5 was equipped with radar, machine guns, oil slick dispensers, smoke screens, a bullet-proof windshield, and perhaps the most iconic Q addition, the passenger ejector seat. It made people sit up and notice, and they realised the DB5 was back at the start of *Thunderball*, with the addition of rear-facing water cannons.

In the late '60s the Toyota 2000 GT was genuinely seen as a cutting edge futuristic car. Advanced engineering



techniques such as independent suspension, disc brakes on each wheel, and a 6-cylinder engine along with a limited production run of 350 made it the perfect match for Bond, in *You Only Live Twice* although its eminence was short-lived with the Aston Martin back in favour for *On Her Majesty's Service*. In this instance, however, the DBS Vantage muscled out the DB5.

In *Diamonds Are Forever* it was time for Bond to conquer an American muscle car. The Ford Mustang Mach I was used in one of the 007's more spectacular car stunts, where Bond urges the car onto two wheels to squeeze down a narrow alley. This



was hard to beat and may explain why *Live and Let Die* featured a double decker bus. American cars were granted another spectacular stunt opportunity in *The Man with the Golden Gun* with an AMC Matador Coupe jumping a broken bridge. This seems like a camera trick but was in fact a genuine stunt. Later in the film the Matador transforms into a plane, which was more of a trick. Plane wings and a tail unit were attached to the car and in the film it flew from Bangkok to an island in the China Sea. In reality the maximum distance was somewhat less, at around 500 meters.

Continuing the transforming car tradition, the Lotus Esprit in *The Spy*





Who Loved Me turned into a submarine armed in typical Bond fashion with surface-to-air missiles, depth charges, underwater sight screens and torpedoes. The innovative design of the 1979 Lotus somehow made this vaguely plausible. The Lotus Esprit was so popular that it was brought back in *For Your Eyes Only*, where one Lotus Esprit self destructed early in the film and the second appeared only briefly. Really, the star of this film was the lemon yellow Citroen 2CV. It is lucky Bond only had to outrun a couple of Peugeot 504's or this rather sluggish car may have been his downfall.

In *A View to a Kill*, Bond commandeered a Renault 11 for a pursuit through Paris. The car meets an ignominious end when the entire back half is ripped off. This is the catalyst that sends Bond back to

Aston Martin in *The Living Daylights*, after which BMW entered the scene to compete for Bond's affection. *GoldenEye* saw the launch of the BMW Z3, a secret up until the film's

release, but the car didn't get much play, with Bond still favouring his now vintage, DB5. The DB5 made another appearance in *Tomorrow Never Dies*, but the BMW, this time a stately





750iL, scored more screen time. *The World is not Enough* saw a continuation of the BMW love affair but by the time *Die Another Day* rolled around Aston Martin were back in the driving seat. This time the car had machine guns under the hood, rockets behind the grille, and cannons under the chassis. The ejector seat also returned.

Aston Martin have been the manufacturer of choice since then. *Casino Royale* featured the Aston Martin DBS which despite limited gadgetry set a Guinness World Record by rolling seven and a half times. The DBS also starred in *Quantum of Solace* gaining additional exposure for being smashed up during filming in Italy. In a nostalgic full circle, *Skyfall* sees 007 revert back to the 1963 Aston Martin DB5, proving once again that classic design is timeless.

There have only ever been six actors officially cast as James Bond. In order of highest to lowest average revenue per film* these notorious individuals are:

1) Sean Connery (\$756 million)

Sean Connery was a relative unknown when he debuted in the first Bond movie, *Dr No*, retaining the role for the next four movies. He exited saying he would '...never play Bond again.' This promise didn't last long. He sat out one movie then reprised the role in *Diamonds are Forever*, his last official Bond film.

2) Daniel Craig (\$687 million)

Daniel Craig may not have been everyone's choice of James Bond but he won the crowd over with his muscular physique and intense characterisation in *Casino Royale*. *Skyfall* is his third reprisal as 007. He also had the distinction of appearing across from Her Majesty The Queen in a short film for the opening ceremony of the Olympics.

3) Pierce Brosnan (\$585 million)

Pierce Brosnan was originally cast for the 007 role in *The Living Daylights* in 1987 but his commitments to NBC show *Remington Steele* delayed his appearance until 1992 when he re-energised the series in *GoldenEye* after a six year hiatus. Four films later despite popular demand, he departed, rumour suggesting that the producers wanted to move on to a new, younger actor

4) Roger Moore (\$546 million)

Television actor Roger Moore was a popular choice to follow on from Sean Connery and brought a lighter touch to his seven appearances as Bond. His character is recognised as coming into its own with *The Spy Who Loved Me*, which showed a more relaxed 007 with a tongue-in-cheek sense of humour. He retains the distinction of being the longest serving actor in the role to date.

5) George Lazenby (\$457 million)

Australian model George Lazenby had no previous acting experience when he was cast as Bond in *On Her Majesty's Secret Service* in 1969. Prior to the release of the film, Lazenby announced that he no longer wished to play the role of James Bond. This was probably a wise move as his characterisation of the Agent proved unpopular. He remains the only actor from outside the British Isles to portray 007 in a feature film.

6) Timothy Dalton (\$349 million)

Timothy Dalton had been considered for the role of James Bond several times and was finally cast as a last minute decision when Pierce Brosnan became unavailable. He lent a ruthless streak to the Bond character in his two films, *The Living Daylights* and *License to Kill*, reverting to the darker character of the books.

* Figures are global box office revenue adjusted for inflation, taken from www.bbc.co.uk

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