

CLASSIC DRIVER

Aston Martin Cygnet: Design Analysis



Chris Hrabalek has strong views on the new Aston Martin city car: but does he love it or hate it?

The **Aston Martin Cygnet** is a fantastic concept. If you don't share this opinion or cannot understand the brilliance of this car, nor its instant classification as an automobile milestone, then it's probably better that you stop reading now.

In the history of the automobile, few products have been radical enough to make a difference in arguably the most conservative and complex era of product design. Vehicles such as the **Ford Model T**, the original **Mini**, the **Smart Fortwo** and the **Segway** have one thing in common: a perfect blend of engineering, design and execution.

Since the **Smart Fortwo's** introduction at the **1998 Paris motor show**, over a decade ago, and after thousands of new car debuts from hundreds of different brands, there has only been one car that can match this original two-seater city car with regard to conceptual uniqueness: the **Toyota iQ**.

Quite why the **Toyota Motor Corporation** was not brave enough to brand and market the iQ as a real 'Lexus' from day one is beyond me; the car is sold with a respectable price premium and, in modern times, size (or the lack of it) is no longer a criterion of luxury. On the contrary, genuine luxury equals freedom, and there's certainly no freedom in trying to find a parking space for a **Bentley Arnage**, **Maybach 62** or **Rolls-Royce Phantom** in a downtown metropolis during rush-hour.

Now, one could probably argue that a hyper-luxury limousine should be chauffeur-driven. Perhaps; but where is the luxury in limiting choice and hence restricting freedom? Especially when a product such as the **Phantom** is so beautiful, so magical, to enjoy from the commanding position of the driver's seat.

It's refreshing to see that Aston Martin is a brand with vision. After criticism of the **DBS** and initial doubts regarding the **One-77**, the **Aston Martin Cygnet** has hit the bulls-eye. The metaphor used by **CEO Ulrich Bez** to understand the Cygnet – 'an exclusive tender for a luxury yacht' – is as promising as the intention to sell the Cygnet only to existing Aston Martin owners. What's better than showing off your status? Having status!

A cruise through the finer locations of this world, and past the driveways of multi-million-pound villas in any country you care to name, would prove that next to the odd ultra-luxury limousine is almost always a small city car, parked there for the 'other half' – or often for the self-indulgent big cheese.

It would be unfair to be harsh regarding the styling of the **Cygnet** at this stage, especially since the technical brief given to **Design Director Marek Reichman** was comparable to the hands-tied package of your average bus designer. Not much room, in other words, for creative flexibility. I would be surprised if **Marek** had more leeway than +/- 2mm. Rather than niggling away at a well-executed styling proposal, it's probably better to wait and see; or rather 'experience' the Cygnet under real-life conditions.

The **Aston Martin Cygnet** is a truly amazing product. It's original, brave and clever, and will provide the brand with a realistic solution which enables it to continue selling hairy-chested **V8** and **V12** supercars, even under ever-tightening EU fleet emission legislation. And I am more than certain that there will be the odd client dying to get their hands on the '**Emotion Control Unit**' of the **Cygnet**, probably even prepared to purchase an additional **Vantage V8** alongside it, just to experience this modern and ultimate feeling of luxury.

Text: Chris Hrabalek
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