

Aston Martin V8 Vantage iPod Install

The Aston Martin Vantage was the perfect step up from her Porsche 997S. A totally new level of driving experience came with the car. Never a day goes by without people giving her Aston the thumbs up. That rarely happened with her former Porches. But, still, something was missing for fun cruises... an iPod.



Leather everywhere and the jewel-like instrument panel absolutely required the install neither detract nor permanently mar.



The question was *where* to mount an iPod. The instrument panel and dash are completely taken up. Attaching a normal iPod mount would create an ungainly appearance. The glove box would hide the iPod, but make controlling the iPod too difficult. I decided to try mounting a Nano inside the “coin holder” That trifling space would need to hold the iPod and all the needed circuitry to feed a signal into the radio system. I would have preferred a direct connection. I’ve previously hacked in a direct connection in a

Lexus, but probing cables and injecting signals in hopes of finding the right wires was more surgery than I was willing to do in an Aston. So, a FM transmitter was the practical choice.

Kensington produces an FM RDS transmitter/car charger (model 33364). The RDS feature allows track information to appear on the radio display. The challenge was fitting the entire adapter and iPod into a volume which is perhaps half that of the adapter itself.



Taking the circuit boards out of the casing, shortening the interconnecting wires, trimming away excess PC board, and chopping the power plug short enough to fit flush with the power socket allowed everything to fit. This installation is NOT for the feint of heart. Good general mechanical and electronics skill are needed. I'm presenting this to show it can be done, but by no means is this a step by step guide.

I won't be posting more detailed instructions. If you need more detailed instructions, you don't have the basic skill set needed to attempt this installation. Get someone who has the skills to do it for you.

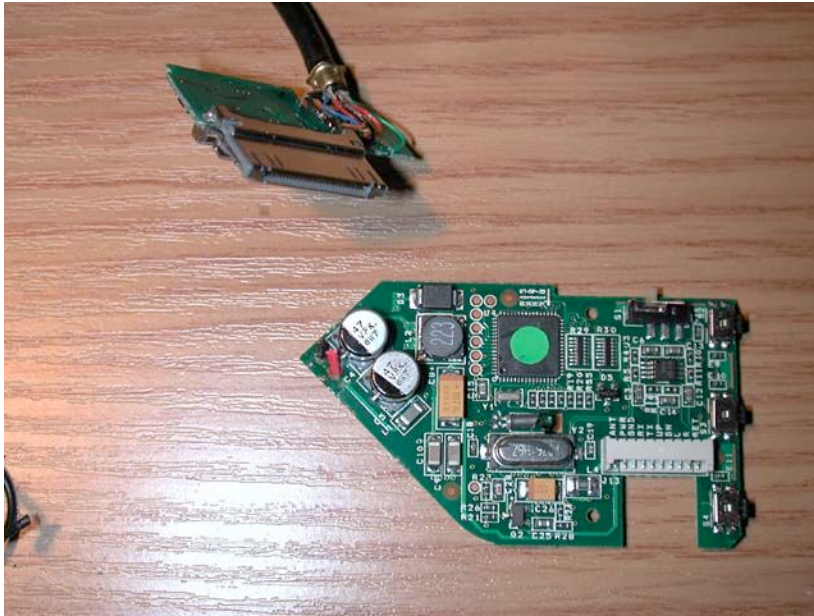
This is how the Aston looks AFTER the iPod is installed.



The Nano is revealed by opening the door. Otherwise the install is completely invisible. No permanent modifications were made. The iPod and the FM transmitter circuitry can be made to fit into that tiny space. The iPod controls are easily accessed to pause, play, go forwards and backwards. I strongly discourage selecting tracks and playlists while driving.



Here you see the Kensington adapter's circuit boards removed from their casings. The smaller board is has the plug which goes into the iPod. Because the length of the iPod Nano plus the circuit is longer than the coin holder, the plug board must be extensively modified to make it fit. By the time I was done, a significant portion of that circuit board's rear was removed and the cable reattached to exit the bottom of the board. Luckily, the main board did not require physical modification.



The power plug portion of the casing was cut free from the rest of the casing to form a plug which is much shorter than normal. It needs to fit flush with the socket once inserted or else the iPod and support shelf won't fit. A flush fit plug also means you need a way to remove the plug once inserted. I placed a loop of nylon fishing line through a hole drilled in the plug's plastic. Pulling on the loop allows one to remove the plug.



Next you see the modified parts and shortened wires mounted on the bottom of a plastic shelf using hot melt glue. The shelf was fashioned from a plastic electrical junction box and sculpted to fit within the coin holder. Copious grinding and beveling was needed to make the front edge of the shelf thin enough. You'll notice the portion of the shelf which would otherwise lie over the power plug was cut away to allow more space. The shelf was intentionally sculpted slightly too small, then covered with rubber fusion tape to make a nice black, non-slip surface for the iPod to rest upon.



Viewed from the top, you can see the black rubber fusion tape. The shortened power plug with removal loop is connected to the main board with a short length of flexible wiring. Of course, the fuse is still in place within the plug. The iPod dock connector board is much smaller now and covered with black electrical tape. Hot melt glue was used to secure the cables to the PC board after resoldering. Note, the switches for setting FM frequency are very fragile and one can easily destroy the yellow plastic tape which holds the switches together. I wrapped the connector with black tape to help hold the switches together. One needs to use the tip of a pen to actual the switches, but that is a rarely done operation.



The power plug is inserted into the power socket and the shelf lowered into position. Once in place, the shelf is level and will support the iPod. Here the iPod is about to be docked.



The Nano is docked in a neat looking install that is stealthy and completely reversible.



Power to this socket is normally always on. To solve this problem, cross wiring at the cabin fuse box was done to tap a circuit which switches off when the key is removed. I chose the passenger seat circuit because it turns off and is a relatively non-critical circuit. One hurdle was finding which fuse feeds to the power socket. The owner's manual does not list that circuit, but I found it through a process of elimination. I presumed it was a high current fuse, so I checked the higher amperage fuses until I found the right one.

Sorry, I don't recall the fuse number and was too annoyed with the manual's circuit omission to stop and take picture.

I disconnected the plug from its original current source by substituting a blown fuse for the normal one. Then I used brass fuse taps and a jumper wire to cross connect the socket circuit to the passenger seat circuit. Be sure you connect to the *fused* side of F61 and not the hot bus side. Because the iPod is a very low drain item, it won't overload the passenger seat circuit. However, once this is done, you must *never* plug in a high amperage item into the power socket.

There you have it. An iPod neatly installed in an Aston Martin Vantage. The sound is enjoyable and it is nice having the track information show up on screen. I would still prefer a direct connection, but already the wife greatly prefers her iPod over shuffling CD's.

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