

# AutoWeek



**ZOOM**

The upgraded Aston Martin Vantage, in coupe and convertible form, will reach U.S. dealers in August.

By **JONATHAN WONG**

Three years after Aston Martin's V8 Vantage stormed onto the scene, the automaker is performing some updates to its Porsche 911 fighter.

Highlighting the 2009 changes is a reworked V8 powerplant with increased cylinder bore and stroke, a new forged-steel crankshaft, connecting rods and cast-aluminum pistons to bump displacement from 4.3 to 4.7 liters. The result is a 40-hp jump from 380 to 420, a torque increase of 44 lb-ft to 346 and slight improvement in fuel economy over the outgoing

engine.

Both manual and Sportshift transmissions get revisions, with a lightened clutch and flywheel for increased throttle response. Additionally, Sportshift benefits from dual throttle map software, with a comfort mode for smooth power delivery and a sport mode with more aggressive mapping. The ability for the gearbox to sense steering inputs and hold a lower gear through corners is also added.

A revamped suspension features standard Bilstein dampers, stiffer springs and bushings and modified steering geometry. A new sports pack option for coupes consists of lighter forged wheels and even stiffer Bilsteins and springs and a thicker rear antiroll bar for an additional \$3,785.



**ZOOM**

The center console of the Aston Martin Vantage gets a makeover for the 2009 model.

Exterior changes are limited to new 19-inch wheels, but inside there's a redone center console, a hard-drive-based navigation system and, borrowed from the DBS, a glass and polished-stainless-steel ignition fob.

We gave the V8 a short workout on the German autobahn, where the additional punch made the middle of the rev band lively en route to redline. Aston says top speed is a believable 180 mph, but we only

saw 160 during our brief time with the car.

The car's sports pack suspension shone as we tackled twisty back roads, the car staying well planted around corners, showing only occasional understeer. However, the stiff suspension doesn't

punish occupants as much as expected and should be well suited for daily driving. Steering feedback and response are good and, combined with the more potent engine and comfortable cabin, make

driving the Vantage quickly a thrill.

The 2009 V8 Vantages, both coupes and convertibles, reach dealers in August, with base pricing expected to increase approximately 5 percent over last year's \$113,400. The performance improvements are worth the increase and make the Vantage an even stronger contender to steal some sales away from Porsche's 911.

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