

bonded and riveted main tub, rather than the exterior body panels and roof, the end result of these modifications mean that the Vantage Roadster is one of the most rigid convertibles on the market; in fact Aston claim it is more rigid than a Lamborghini Murcielago coupe.

It is very unusual for a manufacturer to set-up their soft top to be stiffer than their coupe equivalent,

but further evidence of the engineers' confidence in the Roadster's chassis was the suspension settings. At launch, spring rates were around 14 % stiffer front and 16 % rear, compared to the coupe, although these have been adjusted slightly along the way. It also featured revised upper damper mountings and bump stops, with changes to bump and rebound rates, while the anti-roll bars are unchanged from those of the coupe.

The Roadster also premiered modifications to the braking system: the servo now features a higher boost ratio for better initial bite and feel. In fact the chassis, steering and brake improvements first introduced on the Roadster would filter down to the coupe for the 09MY.

So I am pleased to tell

you that you can have your cake and eat it. Here is a car that offers near coupe levels of rigidity and handling with an exhaust note so loud it can wake the dead. Ladies and gentleman the Vantage Roadster is NOT a Volante soft top, it is a "hairy-chested" real

sports car in the true British tradition.

Further good news comes in the form of modifications to the 4.3 litre engine that improve fuel economy and reduce CO2 emissions, while still maintaining the same outputs; these were introduced on

the Roadster first and would also feature on the 2008 model year coupes, plus the more powerful

Vantage N400 special editions.

The roof is triple layered also using thinsulate material for good insulation, with a quality alcantara inner lining. This combines with hard panels and a heated glass rear screen to offer near coupe-levels of

refinement roof up. Initially completely creak free roof up, personal experience found that after

time the odd creak (particularly around the doors) will intermittently creep in on bumpy roads; but the Roadster is very well put together and overall actually seems quieter than the coupe - due to the added boot panel and carpet damping rear tyre

and exhaust noise.

Aston chose a fabric roof as they are

lighter and ensure a lower centre of gravity for the car when compared to fashionable steel folding roof mechanisms. No need to fiddle with clips or levers: the whole mechanism is controlled with one finger electronically and it opens/closes very quickly

