



At the 2006 Paris Motor Show Aston Martin debuts a new automated manual transmission option for the V8 Vantage – Sportshift.

Sportshift adds electro-hydraulic control to the existing Vantage 6-speed manual gearbox to offer improved shift times and replaces the conventional manual gear lever with push button controls on the centre console to select 'Auto Drive', 'Reverse' or 'Neutral'.

Manual gear changes are selected in Paddle Shift Mode - the new ultra-quick system provides the driver with heightened precision via fingertip control of gear changes using paddles, forged from lightweight magnesium, located directly behind the steering wheel to progress smoothly and swiftly through the ratios.

Aston Martin Chairman & Chief Executive Officer, Dr Ulrich Bez said: "Sportshift offers a truly engaging and rewarding driving experience giving an even greater performance feel. It is the sporting choice which we have developed to perfectly suit the inherent characteristics of the Vantage."

Sportshift offers gear changes up to three times faster than the manual transmission already available, with the driving enthusiast able to access precision gearshifts in less than 200 m/s. To adapt to all driving conditions, an additional 'Comfort' mode offering a more relaxed gear change is also available, which is selected via a single button on the centre console.

Honed at a range of testing locations including Nardo in Italy and the Nürburgring in Germany, Sportshift is the result of 18 months of intense development. "Driving enjoyment is paramount to the qualities of the Vantage and crucial to this is a superb gear change action. Sportshift offers accessible performance and even greater driver engagement, increasing driver focus and allowing achievement of a faster gear change without having to remove a hand from the wheel." says Chief Programme Engineer, Dave King.

Sportshift functionality is also enhanced with a low speed 'crawl' feature, which acts as a manoeuvring aid, gently engaging the clutch to move the car up to 4mph - allowing the driver to focus on positioning rather than throttle control when parking. Additionally, Sportshift includes a user-selected 'Auto Drive' mode, which, when operated, will take full control of the timing of all changes and select the appropriate gear for all conditions.

At 4.38 metres long, Vantage is the smallest model in the Aston Martin range. Purposeful, low and striking, with a richly atmospheric and cossetting interior, the car debuted to critical acclaim at the 2005 Geneva International Motor Show. Powered by Aston Martin's new 4.3 litre 380 bhp engine, a low emission, all aluminium alloy front mid-mounted V8 that is unique to Vantage and develops 410 Nm (302 lb.ft) at 5000 rpm.

The Sportshift gearbox further strengthens the choice available in the Vantage range, supplementing the six-speed manual transmission already available.

Equipped with Sportshift, Vantage retains low polar moment of inertia and excellent balance, with a negligible increase in overall weight and minimal impact to the Vantage's optimal 49:51 weight distribution. Equally, top end performance is unchanged, at 280 km/h (175 mph). However, the 0-100 km/h (62 mph) sprint is achieved a fraction faster than the manual car's time of 5.0 seconds.

The Vantage is manufactured at Aston Martin's Headquarters at Gaydon, Warwickshire, UK, a facility that combines Aston Martin's renowned hand-built bespoke attributes with the technology required to manufacture the bonded aluminium VH architecture. Exquisitely designed and detailed with class-leading agility and performance, Vantage is a practical 2-seater with a large tailgate providing access to a 300 litre rear luggage compartment.

Dr Bez added: "Sportshift offers an even more exhilarating driving experience, strengthening the Vantage's position as the world's most desirable sports car."

Prices for Vantage Sportshift will be confirmed at a later date, with deliveries to customers commencing in quarter two of 2007.