

drive



TECHNICAL SPECS

MODEL: BENTLEY CONTINENTAL GTC
ENGINE: 6 LITRE TWIN-TURBOCHARGED
0 – 100KM/H: 4.8 SECONDS
TOP SPEED: 314KM/H

Boldly Bentley

Derek gets into the driver's seat of the beautiful Bentley Continental GTC

Chances are I wouldn't be behind the wheel of the latest Bentley Continental GTC if Barney Barnato hadn't jumped overboard on a voyage from South Africa to England. It's not clear why the mega-rich exploiter of the Kimberly diamond fields ended his life in the icy Atlantic. What is clear, however, is that his son Woolf eventually inherited his fortune.

With Woolf's penchant for daredevil driving he became one of the Bentley Boys and, more importantly, a financier and chairman of the struggling manufacturer which had also been famous for its aero engines.

Fast forward 80 years and W.O. Bentley's company is now in the hands of Volkswagen. According to chairman Wolfgang Dürheimer, who likes to match his tie with the colour of the latest car, the GTC is a "true British convertible, true to those classic Bentleys of the past".

Well, even allowing for some hybrid history, I would beg to

/WATTS ON WHEELS with Derek Watts/



differ with Herr Dürheimer. Some of those classic Bentleys of yesteryear were extremely regal and boring. In comparison, this new GTC, with a huge matrix upright grille, muscular air-moulded front wings, jewelled headlights and striking LED daytime running lights, is anything but conservative.

Add the plush hand-crafted interior with a choice of 17 soft-touch leather hide colours (plus a few combinations) and seven painstakingly selected wood veneers, and you can make a mammoth statement.

You could spend a whole day playing with the online configurator. I thought the French Grey exterior, Fireglow Red interior with contrasting stitching and Dark Burr walnut fascia was rather engaging.

Personalisation comes at a cost of course. A glasses case to match the upholstery, for instance, would set you back £410. I didn't have the courage to ask for the local equivalent!

It would crease the pin stripes of the bosses in Crewe, but I see

JZ and Beyoncé stepping out of this bravely designed Bentley rather than Lord Alan Sugar. And there's enough room for baby Blue Ivy in the back.

Performance certainly isn't stately. Bentley claims this is the stiffest body in the world (don't let your mind wander) which means precise control of all the suspension gizmos. The result is better handling response and stability. With the six litre W12 engine thrusting this all-wheel-drive 2t-plus convertible supercar to 100km/h in 4.8 seconds, you can certainly put those claims to the test.

But with times a tad tight, don't sign up just yet. Rather go on the waiting list for the new four-litre V8 model, which has been developed with Audi. An eight-speed transmission ensures performance is virtually the same, and the frugal engine even shuts off four cylinders when easy riding.

Plus, the wait will bring the bill down to under R3 million rand. You'll thank me for it one day!