



“ As discrete as a well tailored suit, it doesn't shout for attention, but quietly expects it ”

BENTLEY CONTINENTAL FLYING SPUR

# “Not shaken but stirred...”

James Bond's REAL car in the books was a Bentley and NOT the Aston Martin so beloved of today's Bond aficionados.

Settling behind the wheel of the Continental Flying Spur I wondered what Ian Fleming's hero would have made of today's Bentley. Licensed to thrill? It certainly behaves as one would expect and is still the top car that Bond would aspire to. In a very short time indeed he would have felt utterly confident and at home.

There's all the comfort to satisfy the most demanding sybarite. Any 'shaking' has been eliminated, giving a ride quality that is quite magnificent thanks to the programmable air suspension.

But as for the 'stirring': that comes from the gargantuan power and performance of this technical tour de force that is a rolling demonstration of wonderful engineering. This car has it all – twin turbos, all wheel drive, and astounding pace.

My soul was indeed corrupted. Absolute power had cast its spell in this vehicle of rare breeding: the world's fastest (200 mph) four-

door saloon. Some, I mused, might say that to offer the buying public a saloon car capable of such speed is bordering on the seditious. But I disagree, for the Spur felt so well within itself and

so very relaxed that such criminal velocities would rarely be reached. Indeed, one is encouraged to proceed at a gentle pace – not feeling pressured by either the contingencies of the journey undertaken, or by the impetuosity of other road users. It is a safe and relaxing car to use.

Understated in appearance, but rewarding to the second glance – and there always is a second glance – this Bentley oozes pedigree. As discrete as a well tailored suit, it doesn't

shout for attention, but quietly expects it, assuming that transcendental quality possessed by only a handful of special cars. Above all though, it was the sense of indomitability that I liked most: the impression of quality and class rather than a feeling that this might just be the greatest saloon car in the world.



## Honda blazes trail with new Fireblade

Harkening back to the original Bentley's sporting pedigree, and almost in unintentional homage to W O Bentley, creator of the marque, the initial W is carried over into the W configuration of the magnificent twelve-cylinder, six-litre, 553 bhp engine – a behemoth of unsurpassed potency and refinement that can push the two-and-a-half tonne giant to its top speed.

Obviously, for domestic motoring in our overcrowded isle the potential for speed must remain untapped – however, at any speed the Flying Spur injects an element of fun! - since it is, despite its sophistication, essentially an extravagance. But then nothing is more enlivening than an extravagance thoroughly indulged in. Precise steering, minimal roll, and brakes so powerful that your viscera try to break out of your skin, mean that in A to B terms this offers a most rapid way to travel, thanks to an alacrity that totally belies the size of the car – if you can afford the fuel at around twelve mpg. For ordinary mortals, that's a thirst that is the motoring equivalent of Poseidon's – but of course the 'far-from-ordinary' mortals who have the wherewithal to possess this £117,500 machine will not be deterred.

I hazard a guess, however, when caught in one of today's unavoidable traffic jams, even they will be tempted to glance in a mildly discomposed way at the alarming

motion of the petrol gauge needle. I suppose though, that's the penalty you pay for premier league performance. (Or is that the Continental GT?).

And there's so much of that performance in terms of torque that the six-speed, ZF transmission is best left in auto mode. Changing gear by using the lever or wheel-mounted paddles is all very well if you want to create work for yourself, but you won't go any quicker.

Thankfully there is huge space inside so that you and your passengers will never feel cramped and can spread out and revel in the luxury that wood, leather and lovely carpets bring. It is indeed a monument to fine quality and taste, highlighting the importance of insulating the motorist from the petty niggles and annoyances of our overcrowded, underfunded carriageways.

As the name suggests, this is a carriage for continental cruising, and on the autobahns of – I hate to say it – it's native land where Mercedes was once king, it will undoubtedly ascend the throne as the true sovereign of the roads. Volkswagen might own Bentley, and some Flying Spurs are built in Dresden, but thankfully all UK cars are built at Crewe, and since we're all in Europe now, perhaps, we can claim some of it as one of ours. I certainly wish it was one of mine.

*Simon Taylor*



### Specification

Price £8,995. On sale February. Contact Grantham Honda 01476 576111 for further details.

Engine/transmission: 999.8cc, four-cylinder four stroke with 16 valves: 175bhp at 12,000rpm, 84lb ft torque at 8,500rpm. Six-speed gearbox, chain final drive. Performance: top speed 175mph (est), average consumption n/a.

**HONDA**  
The Power of Dreams



The Impreza 2.5 WRX STI - due in spring 2008 when power, performance, pricing and equipment levels will be announced. This model will be visually more aggressive than the rest of the five-door Impreza range and will form the basis of the 2008 Subaru World Rally Championship entry.