

# BENTLEY CONTINENTAL W12 GT SPEED CONVERTIBLE

By Jim Mc Cauley

The Continental has been the mainstay of the Bentley's recent world-wide success with over 50,000 sales, and the latest model carries sharper panel detailing presenting an altogether more assertive



bodyshell than its predecessor. The new bodystyle also introduces the smaller V8 unit into the range while the original W12 continues. The larger engined option has received a modest power upgrade and now outputs 616bhp with 800Nm of torque available from 2,000 to 5,000 rpm. With top speed given as 202 mph, Bentley claims that it is the world's fastest 4-seater convertible, but more importantly are its initial acceleration times. This convertible accelerates from rest to 60 mph in just 4.1 seconds, reaching 100 mph in 9.7 seconds. Security is assured through the all-wheel drive with a full supporting electronics package to maintain safe delivery.

Riding 10mm lower than the coupé, body rigidity for a convertible is extremely impressive as was the hood insulation on the test car. Positioned low in the cabin and cosseted in the surrounding leather, you are reminded that this is a luxury tourer in the mode of past classics from the marque. And, with the hood down, a neck warming function rebukes the cold airflow to maintain occupant warmth. With eight ratios on offer in the transmission, movement between gears goes almost unnoticed while manual override is just a finger stretch away on the column mounted paddles. Sensibly, these are mounted on the column rather than on the steering wheel, so can always be immediately located.

Driving the W12 back to back with the smaller V8, one has to ask if the £12,000 premium represents added value or indeed greater appeal, as the 4.0 litre is only a shade away performance-wise from the W12 and feels more responsive and agile on home roads. However, for those who might use the car frequently on faster Continental roads, the W12 could fulfill the need, but again one must consider overall pace with more frequent visits to en-route filling stations, 19.5 mpg compared to the 26.7 mpg of the V8.

Even with a choice of four suspension settings, ride comfort overall remains acceptable given the size and weight of the car with very good



suspension insulation to maintain the ambience of the cabin. And it is within the hallowed confines of the 2+2 interior that owners can relish their individual preferences. While a range of colours and finishes is available in the standard price specifications, a pre-purchase visit to the factory will open up a world of choice from exterior colours on the production line to the range of upholstery combinations and veneer choices for the instrument panel and interior cappings.



The Bentley Continental GT Speed Convertible is a purchase option for a minority of car lovers, which can be finished to high levels of individual specification to finely detail it to personal taste. And it is also a statement of power and wealth as the car can easily cross the £200,000 price barrier as individual elements are added. There is competition, but none that compete with the ultimate accolade that this is the world's fastest 4-seater convertible.