

CLASSIC DRIVER



British International Motorshow 2002

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The British International Motorshow 2002 was launched yesterday at Birmingham's National Exhibition Centre Complex. Despite the absence of Mercedes-Benz and BMW many other manufacturers felt the event was worthy of introducing new models, and Britain's indigenous motor industry was well represented by Aston Martin, Jaguar, TVR and Morgan. All of whom had something to announce in Birmingham

Named 'Car of the Show' by a panel of independent judges, **Bentley's Continental GT** was receiving its first UK public outing having been launched to the press at Somerset house last week. The Crewe company's stand was one of the most impressive and featured all the current production, as well as the third placed Le Mans car mounted on the wall. Chief executive Franz-Josef Paefgen said "The Twenties marked the first Golden Age of Bentley, and with the GT and other exciting products we are entering a new Golden Age for Bentley. The Continental GT is only the beginning." It was also the first time since the 1930s that Bentley has attended a British show as an independent company. Full production of the car commences in 2003 and with the orders currently on the books it is sold out until mid 2004. Next year will see the end of the Azure and Continental production, models which have been at the heart of the company for the last few years.

Aston Martin showed their **DB7GT** model, which we have covered in news item whilst **Ferrari** decided to debut their "**Enzo**", mid-engined supercar on a revolving plinth, but with no personnel on hand. Sister company Maserati was also absent whilst fellow Italian supercar maker **Lamborghini** showed one car from its UK importer on a magazine stand.

Ford's Premium Automotive Group were in the centre of the action for not only was Aston showing the '7GT but **Jaguar** was able to give the new '**XJ**' model its British debut and **Volvo** was showing its **XC90 Sport Utility 4x4** to a British middle class audience firmly wedded to the marque with years of 'school-run' experience. Also within the PAG area was a rather thin display of the three Bond cars featuring in the forthcoming movie you may have heard about. Bob Dover gave a manful performance given the closeness of the two Bond girls on the stand, which was designed to look like the ice scene in the film. JB's **Aston** equipped with studded tyres and machine guns, whilst the baddie's **Jaguar XKR** bristled with rockets, gatling guns and grenade launchers.

More new-to-the-UK machinery from Germany was to be found at **Audi**, with their new-shape **S4 Avant**, as well as the totally new **A8**, both of which were beautifully made and designed. In close proximity **Porsche** had brought two versions of the **Cayenne** to Birmingham and this does look a very effective alternative to BMW's X5. In addition some revisions to the popular **Boxster** model were on show.

Both **TVR** and **MG-Rover** had decided to launch powerful front-engined rear-wheel drive supercars at Birmingham. **TVR's T350C**, based on Tamora underpinnings is in the recent tradition of the Blackpool company of producing a curvy bodyshape propelled by a very powerful motor, this time the 350bhp six-cylinder. **MG-Rover** announced the **XPower SV**, a V8 engined two-seater coupe from the pen of McLaren F1 designer Peter Stevens. Full details of this exciting car appear in our Car of the Week feature. A name from the past, **Invicta**, has been revived with a surprisingly attractive coupe and is the subject of a special news story on Classic Driver.

Dutch manufacturer **Spyker** had several of their unique models on display and used the occasion to launch the **C8 Laviolette** model, complete with aircraft propeller style steering wheel, to a bemused audience. On more traditional ground **Alfa Romeo** was able to show its many UK fans the latest in the GTA line-up; the **147**. With a 250bhp V6 motor the car is claimed to be the most powerful hatchback in the world. Performance figures of 153mph top speed and just 6.3 seconds 0-62 mph may well bear this out - if the front tyres don't.

The show is open to the general public from Friday 25th October to Sunday 3rd November. Opening times are from 09.30 to 19.00 with the final day closing at 17.30. Full details are available on the official show website www.motorshow.co.uk



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