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Rolls-Royce - New Phantom celebrates first birthday in Detroit



The Rolls-Royce Phantom was unveiled at the North American International Auto Show in January 2003 and now returns to Detroit in 2004 to celebrate its first full year of production. This occasion also marks the beginning of the 100-year anniversary celebrations of Rolls-Royce. Charles Rolls and Henry Royce first met in May 1904 and agreed to go into business together, laying the foundations of this world-renowned marque.

At Goodwood, Rolls-Royce Motor Cars' head office and manufacturing plant in England, production was gradually being ramped-up over the year, from one car a fortnight to the current level of five cars per day - the planned full production running-rate. The approach was to ensure absolute quality every step of the way.

The company finished 2003 having built 481 Phantoms, 200 of which in November and December, each one to the specific requirements of its new owner. Many of these motor cars are still in transit as they head to all points of the globe, but in 2003 300 customers took delivery. North America is by far the biggest market for the Phantom and accounted for approximately half of retail sales last year. Cars have been sold in 24 different countries in total, as far afield as Australia, Malaysia, Russia and Thailand. Rolls-Royce Motor Cars currently has a network of 61 dealers worldwide, which will rise to 70 in the coming months.

Speaking in the run-up to the Detroit show, Rolls-Royce Chairman and CEO, Tony Gott, said, "I am extremely proud of what we have achieved in our first year. It was an enormous challenge to launch a totally new car, in a new plant, built by a new team and sold by a new dealer network, but we did it and on time. One of the most gratifying things about the past year has been the wonderful reaction to the Phantom both from the media, customers, Rolls-Royce Owners' and Enthusiasts' Clubs and the general public whenever the Phantom has made a public appearance."

Looking to the year ahead, customer orders are strong and now the ramp-up phase is completed Rolls-Royce is looking forward to a successful first full year of operations in 2004. The company is also preparing to play its part in the Rolls-Royce 100 year anniversary celebrations.

On 4 May 1904 in Manchester, England Henry Royce met Charles Rolls in the Midland Hotel and Royce presented a motor car he had developed. Rolls was impressed, the two gentlemen decided to join forces and an engineering legend was born.

The centenary will be celebrated with a programme of events throughout the year, beginning with a world tour organised by the Rolls-Royce owners' and enthusiasts' clubs. The tour starts in New Zealand at the end of January and will include Australasia, Europe and the United States, finishing at Pebble Beach, California in August. Other events will be announced as the year unfolds.

Story/Photos - Rolls-Royce

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