

CLASSIC DRIVER

Bentley Continental Supersports



The wraps are off Bentley's fastest (204mph) car. The Continental Supersports debuts at the Geneva Salon and will not only be the company's most powerful Bentley ever, but also its first 'FlexFuel' performance car.

FlexFuel means that the 621bhp stripped-out GT will run on either petrol or E85 biofuel (or any combination of the two) and is the first in Bentley's range to do so, with all cars to be compatible with renewable fuels by 2012. North American Bentleys will be offered with this capability by the summer of 2010, following regulatory approval.



The company states that, "E85 biofuel can offer a reduction of up to 70 per cent in CO2 emissions on a 'well-to-wheel' basis". 'Well-to-wheel' is "a measurement of a fuel's net CO2 contribution to the atmosphere, not just tailpipe emissions... a way of quantifying how much CO2 a fuel emits from its growth or extraction (well) to its combustion or deployment (wheel). It includes refinement, distillation and transport of the fuel".

Named after a 1920s evolution of the 3-litre Speed, the Supersports is 110kg lighter than a regular GT Speed mainly by virtue of the elimination of the rear seats and the use of all-new, lightweight sports seats with carbonfibre 'clam-shell' backs. Extensive use of carbonfibre in the cabin helps weight reduction, as do standard-fitment CCM brakes.



Compared to the already mightily fast, standard GT Speed, power is up by 3.5% and torque - now 800Nm, or 590lb ft - by 6.7%. The ZF six-speed automatic gearbox has been uprated to a 'Quickshift' version, reducing gearchange times by a half and allowing the 'box to go down two gears at a time. Various software changes allow throttle 'blipping' to match road speed, as well as cutting revs much faster on upchanges.





The suspension broadly follows GT Speed practice, although various improvements have been made for the latest Bentley. It will have an electronic stability programme unique to the car.

With its reduced weight, increased power and speedier gearbox, the new car will sprint to 62mph in just 3.7 seconds. Even more impressive, 0-100mph is achieved in only 8.9 seconds. Maximum speed is 204mph.

If the interior, with its carbonfibre, Alcantara and new, 'Soft Touch' leather is of an altogether more sporting Bentley, the exterior has been only subtly modified.

The rear wheelarches have been widened to accommodate the wider-offset, unique-to-the-model 9.5J x 20in forged alloy wheels. At the front, two large air intakes now flank the lower central 'post box' grille, feeding a greater volume of air to the intercoolers. Small air exits on the bonnet help manage underbonnet heat and airflow. At the rear, a new bumper houses unique elliptical exhaust pipes.



All exterior brightwork is finished in a unique, dark-smoked steel finish. As with any Bentley, personalisation means a customer can order pretty well whatever he or she fancies. However, for launch, the company will be presenting four new exterior colours, all exclusive to the Supersports: pearlescent **Ice** and **Quartzite** and - a first for Bentley - two matt finish colours, **Light Grey Satin** and **Dark Grey Satin**.

Dr Franz-Josef Paefgen, Bentley's Chairman and Chief Executive commented:

"The Continental Supersports reflects the passion and enthusiasm of Bentley's engineers and designers. This is the fastest, most extreme Bentley ever, dramatically styled to underline its supercar character. Importantly, it also pioneers the use of FlexFuel technology in the luxury sector."

No prices have been announced. The Bentley Continental Supersports will be available worldwide from Autumn 2009.



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Photos: Bentley

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