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The 2012 Bentley Continental GT Speed

Lead

Bentley has revealed its fastest production model ever, in the form of the 205mph, 616bhp Speed variant of the W12-engined Continental GT.

Following a principle set by the previous generation Continental GT, the Speed variant sharpens driving dynamics and boosts power over the standard model: this time up to 616bhp and 590lb ft.

That translates to a top speed of 205mph – which not only betters that of the regular W12, but also the Supersports model which crowned the previous generation. The 0-62mph benchmark is also dispatched rather more quickly than the current W12's effort, down from 4.4 to 4.0 seconds.

Until a likely Supersports variant arrives later in the MKII Continental's life, it'll be the Speed that is tasked with taking the fight to [the new Aston Martin Vanquish](#), ironically revealed on the same day as the Speed. Early signs suggest Bentley might have won Round 1: its candidate trumps the Vanquish by 51bhp and 22mph at vmax, despite undercutting (or so we assume) the price of the Aston by a significant margin.





It remains to be seen which will prevail beyond the specification sheets, but the Speed will fight Crewe's corner equipped with a host of improvements to its dynamic abilities. A stiffer chassis and tweaked steering and suspension settings, plus a lower ride height, aim to give it a more agile character – while still, Bentley claims, avoiding a compromise to the touring abilities of the Continental.

Revisions also mean the Speed is the first W12 Conti to receive the ZF 8-speed automatic gearbox, which until now has only been found in V8 models. This contributes towards an overall 12% improvement in fuel economy and CO2 emissions against the regular W12, giving 19mpg and 338g/km.





Styling changes are kept to an almost-imperceptible minimum; only marque aficionados will identify the darkened grille, lower front air intakes and 'rifled' twin tailpipes which set it apart from the car upon which it's based. Inside, the hand-made cabin has the Mulliner Driving Specification fitted as standard, which includes quilted perforated leather and embroidered Bentley Wings headrest emblems.

Among the first to be cosseted by it will be "modern-day Bentley Boys" Juha Kankunen, Guy Smith and Derek Bell, piloting it up the Hill when it makes its international debut at the [Goodwood Festival of Speed](#) from 28 June.

Photos: Bentley Motors

Gallery

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