

SARTORIAL EL



EGANCE

The world of luxury has a bounty of experiences that captivate the senses; the sensation of supple soft grain leather in a Rolls-Royce, the Haute Horlogerie of a Vacheron Constantin watch or the sonorous growl of a Crewe built Bentley V8 motor



For some, cars like the Rolls-Royce Ghost and the Bentley Mulsanne can be an opulent and ostentatious display of wealth – even a cry for attention, perhaps. For others, and I include myself in this camp, they are a thing of beauty and craftsmanship of a bygone era, yet there is a future; they are cleaner, more frugal, safer and faster than ever and therefore are worthy machines to covet.

In an attempt to captivate the senses, I travelled to London to pay homage to a world of art, fashion, inspiration, collaboration and beauty with two of the most quintessentially British automotive brands in history - Rolls-Royce and Bentley. They have shaped and inspired the bespoke car world for decades - and still do, thanks to the inspired curatorship of automotive

groups BMW and Volkswagen respectively.

Exclusively modern and contemporary, their individual design DNA draws on more than 95 years of heritage, much of it shared. The typical Rolls-Royce or Bentley owner has more than just one car in their portfolio, and therefore can often afford to drive some of the more overtly sporting cars as well. But what do these owners normally choose as alternatives? When I met up with Alex Innes, Bespoke Designer for Rolls-Royce, in Park Lane, I asked him what car he considers primary competition for the brand? “A Riva Iseo yacht, an apartment in Monaco or a race-horse”, he smiles. I realised that people who buy these cars tend not to worry about making their bond payment and they certainly have other cars tucked into the humidified garage.



“Both of these objects of desire excite the senses - modern masterpieces that usher in a new level of sensory indulgence”

Whilst some enjoy a real driver's car, not everyone is fond of driving. A lot of driving takes place in cities and built up areas with stop-and-go traffic that frankly, is no fun, so it may as well be done in the lap of luxury. Parked at the foot of Europe's tallest building - the London Shard – ‘my’ Rolls-Royce Ghost arrived on a low-loader and was immediately surrounded by Chinese tourists who photographed the car from every conceivable angle. Driving from the Shard, over London Bridge in frantic rush hour traffic with a R5.5m car could have been trauma inducing, but even the bus drivers let me out of side roads with a smile and a wave.

If spectral ghosts are symbolic of those unresolved moments in history that linger, the worldly Rolls-Royce iteration is a suave, totally resolved place to be, with its crème light leather

that bids you a welcome worthy of any head of state. No one would say the Ghost - with its V12 engine and proud Spirit of Ecstasy on the prow - is a shrinking violet, but the cabin looks almost reductivist in its layout. A hint of rich, timber spice from the walnut veneer combines with a freshness brought by the panoramic sunroof to provide the unique sensation of real luxury.

I found the simplicity of operating the Ghost inspiring. You just point the car in the direction you wish to go and press the accelerator - it's that simple. No need to think about shifting through eight gears, just an effortless surge of power with an automatic transmission so seamless, it delivered the sensation of an infinite first gear. Driving a Rolls-Royce is an esoteric experience. You sit high, with the Marie biscuit-thin steering wheel elegantly in your hands as

the sound of its 6.5-litre twin-turbo V12 rises barely enough to be heard over the almost non-existent wind and tyre roar. If you want to see 100 km/h appear on the elegant circular speedometer from standstill, the 4.9 seconds it takes will elicit all of that glorious V12 engine noise. It'll dispatch all but the most aggressive of sports cars at any traffic light Grands Prix whilst still retaining its dignified composure. It may be difficult to think of a 5.4 metre, 2.4 tonne land yacht as sporty, yet that's exactly how the Ghost feels. We are probably all haunted, both by things we experience, and the numerous things we'll never know - but this Ghost is one I chased and am glad to have caught.

The sorrow of handing the Ghost keys back were mitigated entirely by the arrival of the refined and rare Bentley Mulsanne.



CHRISTOPHER JENNER



It was right in the heart of ultra premium Rolls-Royce territory, at the Café Royal, just off Regent Street that I met one of South Africa's most dynamically successful designers. The ebullient Christopher Jenner is a graduate of the Johannesburg School of Art and the Boston School of Design in Cape Town and has been London based since 2010.

Working globally, he employs a design strategy called 'fractal analysis'. This technique of discovery deconstructs a task into multiple facets to represent the heritage, product and personality of a brand. He then assembles a seamless story from the application of colour and texture to develop the relationship between storytelling and design. "Brands need to passionately engage creativity and craft to communicate the stories which lie at the heart of their attraction", says Jenner, his South African twang giving way to an emerging BBC English accent.

His work is featured regularly in the international press and consulted by the global trend forecasters and his commercial projects generate worldwide exposure. "Successful brands passionately combine creativity and craft when communicating the stories which lie at the heart of their attraction", he says. His latest work, for Penhaligon's of Regent Street is a fusion of classic Edwardian splendour and Japanese Manga. "I decided to do something a little different. The perfume brand has its roots in Edwardian barbering and the traditions of English eccentricity and perfumed whimsy."

Flexibility is the Mulsanne's greatest dynamic asset - it's both cossetting and involving at the same time. The Mulsanne's ride is perfectly comfortable most of the time, but is not as compliant as the Ghosts in the way it absorbs poor road surfaces. But this aristocratic automotive palace changes character once Sport mode is engaged and it's remarkable how hard you can press it along twisty country roads. It's a highly satisfying driver's car - a hand-built positive bank statement.

The Mulsanne's engine is a comprehensively re-worked version of the original Bentley V8 of 1959, but with all of the very latest technology, including an eight-speed ZF automatic gearbox. Bentley's V8 twin-turbocharged 6.75-litre is famous for having 'waves of torque' (377kW and 1019 Nm of torque). As

good as silent at idle, you glance at the rev counter to make sure the car is still running, yet you are never far from the refined brute available at the blip of your right foot.

The R6.16m Mulsanne combines modern elegance and classic rich detailing on every surface. The winged 'B' badge sits atop the big, bluff, wire-mesh radiator grill, flanked by prominent circular headlights, instantly recalling its motorsport lineage. In many ways the Bentley is the more compelling owner-driver car, offering a truly remarkable experience at the wheel.

Yet it was the Ghost that garnered most attention everywhere it went and is one of the most comfortable limousines available today. Both of these objects of desire excite the senses - modern masterpieces that usher in a new level of sensory indulgence. **BC**