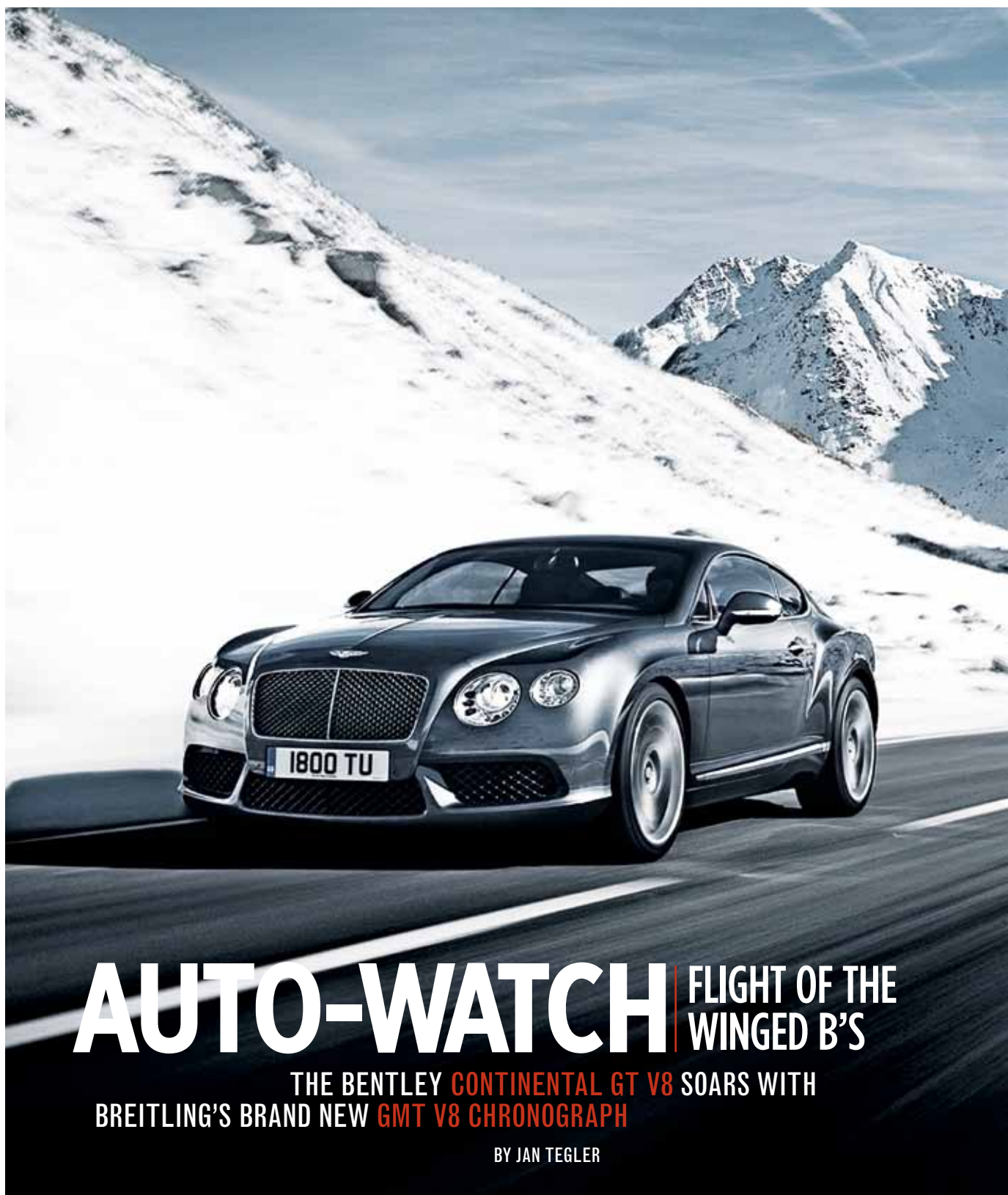


# PASSIONS



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# AUTO-WATCH | FLIGHT OF THE WINGED B'S

THE BENTLEY CONTINENTAL GT V8 SOARS WITH BREITLING'S BRAND NEW GMT V8 CHRONOGRAPH

BY JAN TEGLER

**NO** two auto-watch partners share DNA like **Bentley** and **Breitling**. First allied in 2002, the bonding of these luxury makers represents one of the longest standing car-timepiece relationships. The pairing coincided with the launch of the Continental, the most successful model in **Bentley's history**.

**THE DIVIDEND FOR BREITLING** has been an acclaimed collection known as "Breitling for Bentley." The result for Bentley is visible every time you get behind the wheel of the storied marque's sexy coupes - a dashboard clock bearing Breitling's signature and dashboard instruments designed with the Swiss manufacturer's input. Now the two "winged-B" brands are debuting new models which extend their lines.

Launched in 2003, the Continental coupe and convertible (GT & GTC) have been a sales powerhouse for Bentley, reinvigorating the brand with more than 50,000 sold worldwide. The stylish W12-powered coupe (the most powerful Bentley ever made upon its introduction) was an instant hit with customers ranging from celebrities and sports figures to those with a taste for statement-making aesthetics and performance.

That's why the debut of a new Continental powered by an eight cylinder engine is big news. Introduced at the recent North American International Show, the V8 combines subtle styling changes with a bundle of cutting edge powertrain technologies that make this variant the most advanced model in the Bentley stable.

The Crewe, the England-based manufacturer, claims a forty percent

improvement in fuel efficiency and CO2 emissions for the new model and a range of over 500 miles on a single tank of fuel. "Variable displacement" (four of the V8's cylinders are deactivated under light throttle load), a new eight speed automatic transmission and variable power assisted steering contribute to the improvement in fuel mileage.

But Christophe Georges, the president & COO of the Americas for Bentley, says the Continental V8 does more than improve efficiency.

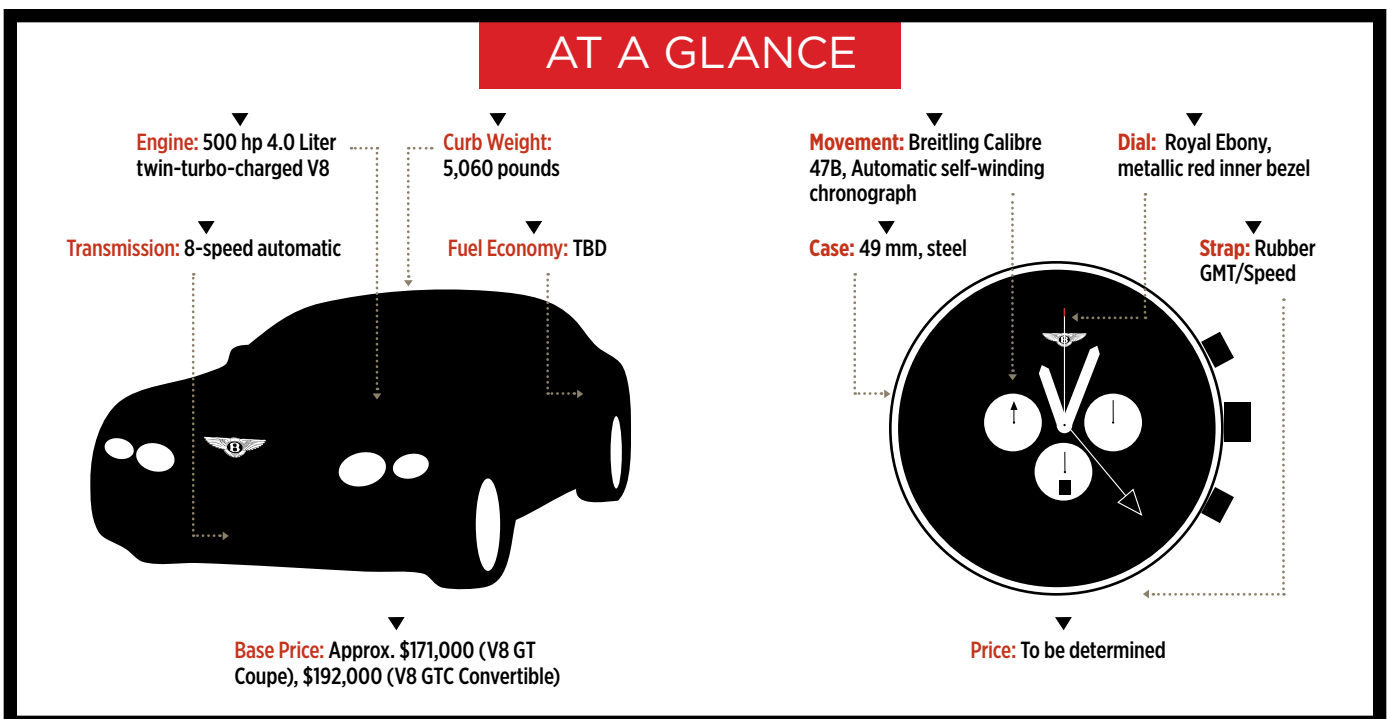
"The new car extends the line's range," Georges explains. "It gives a new appeal for the Continental with the power and performance one expects from Bentley and a new driving experience."

Objectively, Georges hits the nail on the head. Bentley says the 4.0 liter direct-injected, twin turbocharged V8 (developed with Audi) delivers 500 hp and 487 pound-feet of torque between 1,700 and 5,000 rpm, yielding 60 mph in 4.8 seconds (just two-tenths behind its 12 cylinder sibling) in transit to a 188 mph top speed that is 11 mph shy of the flagship variant. The 55 pounds shaved from the Continental's weight are said to make a difference as well.

Subjectively, I agree - for the most part. Having driven several W12-engined Continentals in past years, I'd say the thrust generated by this smaller power plant feels equally impressive. The all-wheel-drive V8 does seem to grip better than the heavier W12 Continental with less understeer and better turn in. Still, the difference is occasionally hard to discern in a car weighing over 5000 pounds.

It certainly sounds better. Dig into the V8 and you're rewarded with a rumble that turns to a howl as revs build. Bentley engineers spent considerable time tuning the engine to generate aural excitement and it paid off. The V8 Continental's aggressive note neatly distinguishes it from the W12 version.

## AT A GLANCE









Exterior cues are quieter. The V8 Continental sets itself apart with a gloss black matrix grille, a three-segment lower front bumper with black air intakes, “figure eight” exhaust pipes and red enamel Bentley winged B badges. Twenty-inch alloy wheels are standard while an optional 21-inch six-spoke design is available too. Inside you’ll find suitably luxurious appointments including a V8-specific Dark Fiddleback Eucalyptus veneer, two-tone leather seats, shorter center console and of course the Breitling clock.

It’s a satisfying atmosphere from which to observe heads turning and fingers pointing as you roll past. Like its stable mate, the GT V8 calls out to curbside spectators in a masculine way. Breitling watches have long done the same.

As with the W12 Continental, there will be a convertible version of the V8, the GTC V8 model. Expect similarly eager performance from the drop-top along with the extroverted charm that makes this one of the foremost boulevardiers on the planet. Pricing for U.S. models had not been announced at press time but expect V8 Continentals to be about ten percent less expensive than the W12 models.

Christophe Georges is keen to emphasize that the twelve cylinder will remain as the flagship but we think the V8 is the wave of the future.

### BREITLING & BENTLEY BOND

**THE PARTNERSHIP BASICALLY** grew from the effort Bentley was making to re-brand themselves after they separated from Rolls Royce, according to Lisa Roman, Breitling’s Marketing Director.

“Bentley came to us originally looking for sponsorship for their Le Mans racing program (Bentley won the 24 Hours of Le Mans in 2008 with their “Speed 8” LMP1 prototypes). But when we discussed it with them we looked at the branding and the history of both companies and our logos, and there was crossover there. Ironically, Bentley produced engines for aircraft too (the Bentley BR.1 rotary was produced in large

numbers, powering the Sopwith Camel in WWI) so getting together in a broader way just made sense.”

From the outset, the partnership has brought Breitling designers together with Bentley engineers at the automaker’s facility in Crewe. Breitling personnel routinely visit the Bentley factory to interact with Bentley design staff in the early stages of new model development for the Continental range.

The meetings have provided inspiration for the fourteen models now in the Breitling for Bentley collection, leading directly to the automotive

design elements incorporated in many of the timepieces. The knurled bezels on several of the models evoke the knurling on the shift knobs and controls found in the Continental. Similarly, the oscillating weight visible through the sapphire crystal caseback of the Bentley Barnato chronographs echoes the design of the wheels on the latest versions of the big coupe.

The new limited edition (250 pieces) GMT V8 chronograph pays tribute to the Continental GT V8 with its mobile inner city bezel featuring a metallic red shade

that matches the red background of the Bentley emblems which distinguish the V8. The color also recalls the V8 that made its world debut on Bentley’s stand in Detroit.

The GMT V8’s clever multiple time zone display employs a red triangular-tipped additional hour hand actuated by a pushpiece on the left side of the case. The hand moves forward in one-hour increments in order to display a second time zone while distinguishing between day and night hours. The rotating 24-city inner bezel allows users to immediately read off the time in all the world’s time zones in relation to that shown by the 24-hour hand.

The watch is just the latest example of partnership that will continue in years to come thanks to an extension of the agreement (announced in 2011) between the two luxury brands. Like the new engine at the heart of the Continental GT V8, Breitling’s GMT V8 chronograph extends the Breitling for Bentley collection. ●

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