

COMMERCE

Bentley and Louis Vuitton provide consumer a taste of 1930s luxury

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1931 Bentley

By FORREST CARDAMENIS

Automotive restoration expert William Medcalf Vintage Bentley is sweetening the pot with period detail on its latest vehicle for sale.

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A 1931 8-liter Bentley with a rear luggage rack will be sold with vintage Louis Vuitton suitcases to boot. The luggage will help in completing the vehicle, making it a valuable collector's item.

"[The luggage] adds another element and symbolizes the decadence of the type of owners that own these cars," said William Medcalf, founder/CEO of William Medcalf Vintage Bentley. "Rather than having to scratch around with your bag in the foot well, this means you strap the bag onto the back and head off at high speeds.

"It is a bit mad, but it is typically British in its approach," he said.

Period luxury

The 1931 8-liter Bentley is one of only 100 of its type. The vehicle is still fitted with its original 8-liter engine, the largest on Bentley's line at the time.

At time of production, Bentley's four-seater vehicle was advertised as being able to reach 100 mph with four passengers and luggage.



Bentley engine

The vehicle was also successful in the racing word. In 1969, the vehicle was driven to Ghent to a timed race, but the then-owner encountered trouble with weather and ferry crossings.

The driver arrived late the night before the competition but nevertheless finished fourth behind newer models. It averaged 125 mph both ways, setting a Bentley course record.

Helping to preserve the vehicle's history, it will be sold with a large file of its history, including notes from previous owners detailing the care and work done throughout its nearly 90-year life.



Bentley with Louis Vuitton luggage

As the history will verify, the car has been unchanged since its creation, with William Medcalf only performing a mechanical overhaul to make the vehicle drivable.

Helping to bring the car's history to life are the two Louis Vuitton suitcases that will be sold with the vehicle. The Bentley's bespoke metal fastenings on the front and rear were designed to hold the luggage.

Not only is the Bentley a rare automobile for collectors looking to own a piece of Bentley history, but the inclusion of the suitcases will give the owner a peak at 1930s luxury, providing an element of anthropological interest.



Bentley with LV luggage

"These are historical cars, and it is history you are buying," Mr. Medcalf said. "It depends on the owner, though; some really want lots of documents and trawl through it all, and others aren't worried about it.

"The experience is about history, so the better the file the better it is for the buyer," he said. "But equally they go out and put their own history on it. We never own any of these cars, we are just caretakers for the next generation; the history always gets added to."

Collector cars

Collectors and resellers have noticed the potential that cars of historical interest continue to have with consumers.

Recently, international auctioneer Sotheby's disrupted the auction industry by turning to a new channel.

On Dec. 10, the Sotheby's Apple TV app was launched with the "Driven by Disruption: New York City" automotive sale, which included Janis Joplin's Porsche. Sotheby's year was defined in part by initiatives that give it a larger online presence ([see story](#)).

Even for newer models, consumers are prepared to pay a high price for history.

Less than two weeks ago, it was revealed that a collector in California will be the first consumer in the world to receive British automaker Rolls-Royce's new model, Dawn.

The collector placed a winning bid of \$750,000 for the Dawn during the Naples Winter Wine Festival Auction in Naples, FL on Jan. 31. With the release of the Dawn model, which was promoted heavily on social media and through a digital launch, Rolls-Royce is ushering in a new era ([see story](#)).

"[Our buyers] are normally self-made, outgoing entrepreneurs who know a good thing when they see it," Mr. Medcalf said. "They want a bit of fun and adventure from the car, and want to buy into the whole Bentley and Bentley boys thing and everything that comes with it.

"If you own a Vintage Bentley you drive it to work and go everywhere in it," he said. "They have always been a drivers' car and the owners will hammer it down the motorway to an event or even take it shooting for the day. It is muck and bullets, a proper tool for a proper job."

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