

AUTOMOTIVE

History fuels bespoke Bentley commission

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The brand's Mulliner Design team crafted a one-of-one Bentayga in collaboration with British menswear label Private White V.C. Image credit: Bentley

By AMIRAH KEATON

British automaker Bentley is advertising the company's bespoke capabilities.

The latest update out of its Crewe headquarters involves the brand's Mulliner department: responsible for all special-edition designs at Bentley. The team recently sold a one-of-one Bentayga crafted in collaboration with British menswear label Private White V.C., putting its details on display in a new video; the launch arrives as luxury vehicle commissions play an increasingly key role in generating sales and prestige across the industry.

One-of-one sales and stories

As the automaker reaches sales milestones, Bentley's release demonstrates what is possible from a technical perspective.

With it, Bentley proves that the handcrafted projects make for equally unique marketing opportunities.



Bentley's Private White V.C. Bentayga, by Mulliner. Image credit: Bentley

Dubbed the "Private White V.C. Bentayga, by Mulliner," its most recent model of note features a distinct back story, one rooted in the heritage of Bentley's business partner and illustrated in a video that adapts the tale.

It opens with its main character flipping through the pages of a comic book entitled "Victor."

The literary chronicle, like the Private White V.C. Bentleyga, represents the life and times of Private Jack White, a Victoria Cross awardee. The honor, one of the U.K.'s highest for military members, goes to British Armed Forces veterans who are found to have exhibited extreme bravery during enemy battles.



The commission's cabin comes equipped with commemorative finishings. Image credit: Bentley

Mr. White, born in 1896, moved back to Manchester after having received the cross for rescuing 60 men, including an officer, as well as equipment, during World War I.

The nature of his determination, a product of the hero's decision to tie a telephone line around his body and swim through river water under gunfire to save his comrades in arms, would power the founding of what is now a 150-year-old operation.

Seconds into Bentley's film, a shot of a brick surface painted white displays the phrase "Handmade in England" below larger lettering that spells out "Private White V.C."

The preview gives clues as to where some of this work took place.

The film was shot at Private White V.C.'s River Irwell factory

Beginning as a pattern cutter apprenticeship at a raincoat factory, Mr. White steadily climbed the ranks, becoming that very warehouse's sole owner 20 years into his tenure there.

Private White V.C., established in 1853, would make acts of service a tradition in light of its origins and those who led its path. In the early 20th century, the company supplied cotton gaberdine trench coats to the Allied Forces.

More than 100 years later, Private White V.C. earned the title of England's largest manufacturer of medical-grade gowns and surgical masks, jumping into action as a Department of Health and Social Care volunteer amid the COVID-19 pandemic.

Bentley's experts, together with the brand's leader James Eden Mr. White's great-grandson is currently CEO of Private White V.C. saw to it that these historic details were recognized today.

Aspects of the story are reflected in the car's finishings. Viewers watch as these elements come together, the video excerpt depicting the process of creation that guided the commission at hand.



Victoria Cross emblems are applied to the ride's headrests. Image credit: Bentley

Seat piping, embroidery and bespoke features infuse traces of copper, nodding to the phone cords Mr. White wrapped around himself when attempting to ensure the safety of his troop.

Victoria Cross emblems are applied to the ride's headrests. Organ stops finished in anodized copper adorn the dashboard, and an outline of Private White V.C.'s Cottenham House factory ornaments to the passenger fascia.

Other items a Lancashire-woven cashmere cloth sought out exclusively for Bentley's cabin to commemorate Jack White's regimental blanket stripe was converted into loose cushions, placed onto the custom Bentley's back seat are reminiscent of Mr. White's gallantry, recalling the moments that matter most to his legacy.

The business of coachbuilding

Between 2014 and 2021, Bentley built 1,000 personal commissions.

The company's Mulliner Design team shattered this record in 2022, completing more than 500. Special touches are considered at each stage: the Private White V.C. execution, for instance, comes with a clothing capsule, the full package sold to "a local enthusiast," according to a statement.

"Reaching the milestone 500th Commission in a year would not have been possible without the ongoing support of both the main Bentley Design Studio and all the other functions of the wider Mulliner Team," said Paul Dickinson, chief commercial officer of Mulliner, Motorsport at Bentley, in a statement.



The special-edition model features a distinct back story. Image credit: Bentley

"2021 had already been a record year for Mulliner Design that saw the team needing to grow by 50 percent to meet customer demands and in 2022 that team has really been tested as it has seen a year-on-year increase of 85 percent in customer/retailer commissions," Mr. Dickinson said. "Their hard work, dedication and passion to each and every one of these commissions means that we have never had such beautiful examples of personalization leaving Crewe."

In 2023, Bentley says that more of its clients than ever before about three-quarters of its buyers personalized their cars, up 43

percent from those who chose to seek options beyond the 46 billion configurations available.

This is not to say that the division goes without competition ([see story](#)), as ultraluxury industry players worldwide expand their networks, and as Bentley itself navigates a sales dip ([see story](#)).

It is the automaker's commitment to collaboration ([see story](#)), customer service ([see story](#)) and creative storytelling ([see story](#)), however, that could illuminate its path to recovery.

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