

EVENTS / CAUSES

## Bentley bolsters US Flying Spur launch via three-city tour

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By TRICIA CARR

Bentley Motors is pushing the U.S. reveal of its new Flying Spur model among best prospects in the British automaker's largest market by holding invitation-only events in three cities.

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**Luxury Daily**

Bentley is partnering with American Express Publishing's Departures magazine to host a series of three "One Night Only" events in the United States, the first of which took place March 26 in New York. Select guests gathered to witness the unveiling of the Flying Spur, chat with craftsmen from the automaker's Crewe, England-based factory and watch a performance by singer-songwriter Solange Knowles.

"It is all about creating relationships," said Chris Ramey, president of [Affluent Insights](#), Miami. "Small events allow you to better understand who your best prospects are.

"It is also about surprising and delighting in such a way that the customer becomes engaged with the brand," he said. "Touch their hardstrings and you'll have them forever.

"The rarer it is, the more valuable events become, and every luxury brand should be doing events like this."

Mr. Ramey is not affiliated with Bentley, but agreed to comment as an industry expert.

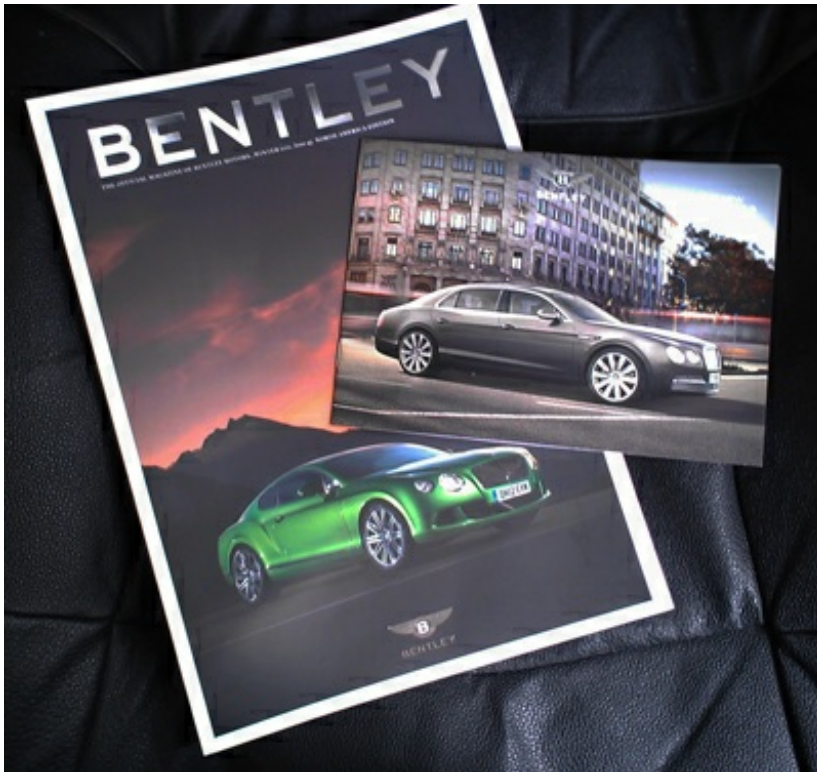
**Bentley** was unavailable for comment before press deadline.

Party time

Attendees gathered at Stephan Weiss Gallery at Urban Zen, New York, for the “One Night Only” event.

Upon arrival, guests mingled among couches and high tables near the bar as DJ Harvey Viera provided music.

Copies of the winter 2012 issue of Bentley magazine and a pamphlet on the Flying Spur were available to guests.



*Magazine and pamphlet*

Other attendees gathered to view a display of the craftsmanship put into the Flying Spur’s interior.

Two artisans from Bentley’s British factory were in attendance to walk guests through some of the design processes for the interior.





After a brief introduction, guests were able to sit inside the Flying Spur.

Among the attendees was American rapper Waka Flocka who had preordered the Flying Spur.

Ms. Knowles gave her performance an hour later with a full band. Attendees gathered in front of the stage to watch her sing a short set.



### *Performance*

The next day, the Flying Spur made its public debut the New York International Auto Show where Bentley is also showing the enhanced 2014 Mulsanne model.

The Flying Spur represents a combination of Bentley's luxury craftsmanship and new technologies such as touch-screen infotainment, mobile connectivity and Wi-Fi, a rear seat entertainment suite and an eight-speaker, eight-channel audio system.

The model offers more power than any other Bentley four-door vehicle in its history, per the brand. It can travel 0-60 miles per hour in 4.3 seconds and has a top speed of 200 miles per hour ([see story](#)).

The Flying Spur has a base retail price of \$200,500. Consumers can currently order the car for delivery during the second quarter.

"There are two kinds of prospects - those who are already considering buying a Bentley or perhaps a Mercedes or a Rolls-Royce, and those who are not thinking about the possibility of buying a Bentley," said Al Ries, founder and chairman of [Ries & Ries](#), Roswell, GA.

"The former are likely to show up in a showroom and take a look, but the latter may be tempted to attend an American Express event, perhaps just to hear Solange Knowles," he said. "If an automaker wants to increase its sales, it needs to reach out to prospects who don't have Bentley on their 'maybe I'd like to buy one' list.

"An event like this one can attract those prospects and potentially expand the market for Bentley automobiles."

Ready for departure

The Flying Spur will travel to Miami and Los Angeles following its appearance at the auto show to be featured at additional "One Night Only" events.

Bentley seems to be putting much effort into the model's U.S. launch since the country is its largest global market, per the automaker.

The event series is part of a broader partnership between the automaker and Departures magazine, which is distributed to American Express Platinum Card and Centurion members.

Bentley put the majority of its advertising spend for the year into the magazine, per Departures. The automaker took out eight total pages for 2013.

Departures partnered with Bentley to create the three-city Flying Spur tour. Upcoming events will offer the same opportunities as the New York party including the chance to sit in the vehicle.

"I predict you will see more private events like this one," Mr. Ries said. "With the rising costs of advertising, and the declining productivity of advertising, marketers of relatively low-volume high-end products are searching for new ways to reach prospects.

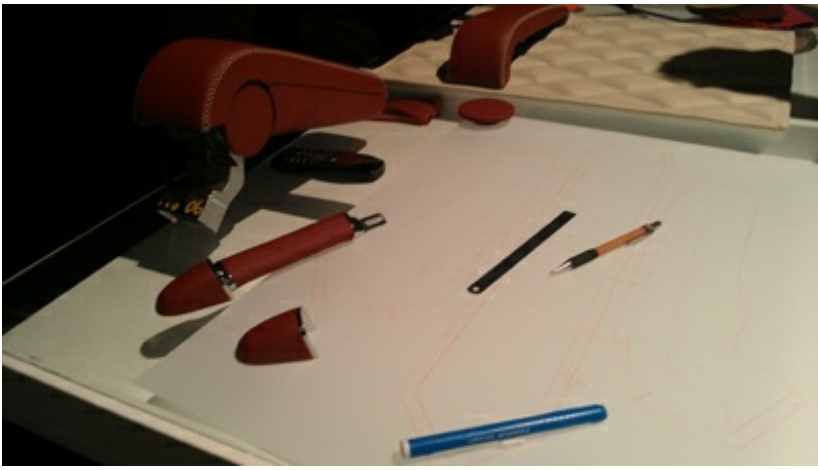
"The joint venture with American Express is a very good idea," he said. "It allows Bentley to reach high-income individuals that may not have responded to invitation issued by the automaker itself."

Below are photographs from the New York launch party.



*Flying Spur barrier*





*Craftsmanship showcase*



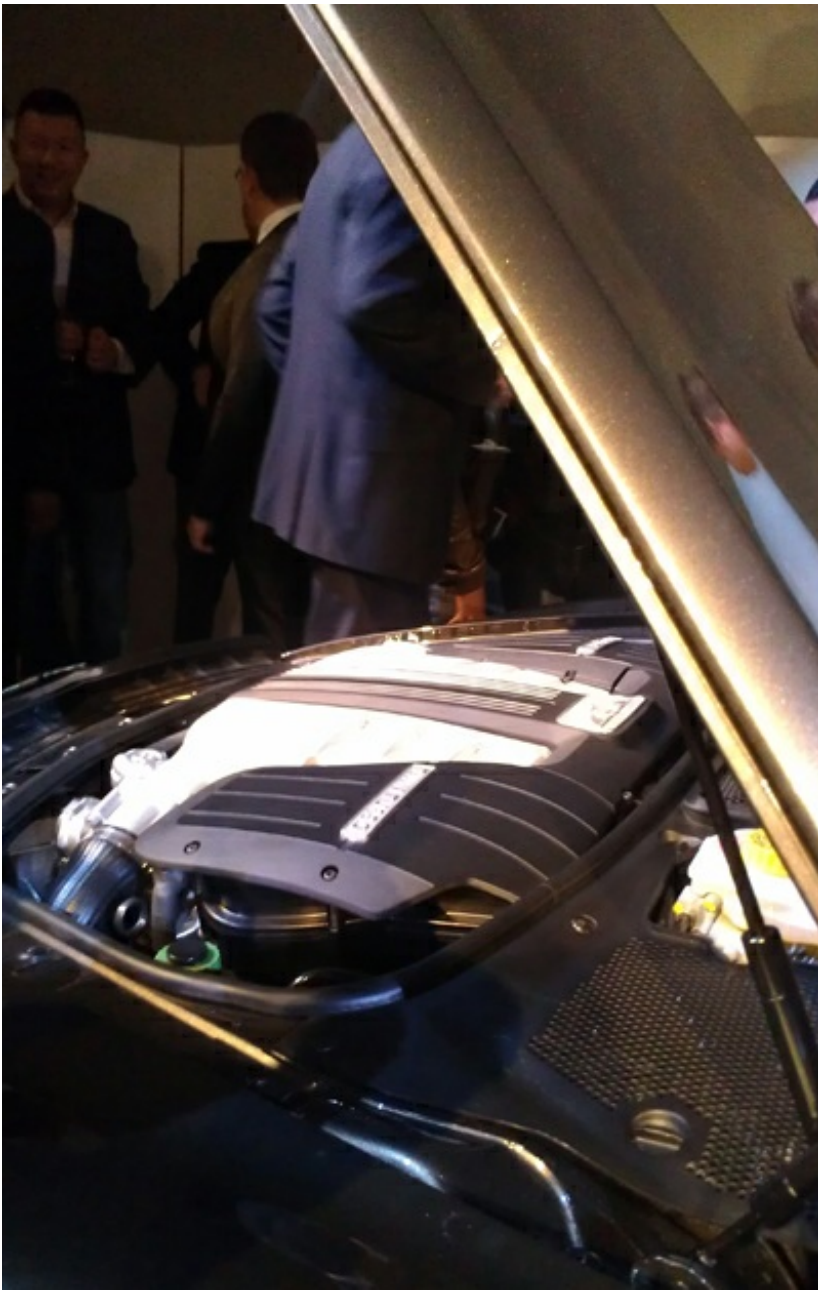
*Bar*



*Guests admiring the Flying Spur*



*Flying Spur wheel*



*Engine*





*Steering wheel*



*Rear view*



*Ms. Knowles on stage*





*Guest inside the Flying Spur*



*Front view*

Final Take

*Tricia Carr, editorial assistant on Luxury Daily, New York*



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