ROLLS-ROYCE | MEDIA INFORMATION

PHANTOM AT 100:

REFLECTING AND SHAPING THE WORLD THROUGH BESPOKE

Wednesday 8 October 2025, Goodwood, West Sussex EMBARGO UNTIL 13:00 BST

* Rolls-Royce reflects on 100 years of Bespoke Phantom motor cars
* Examines Phantom as both a reflection of, and an influence on, contemporary culture
* Traces evolution of commissions in response to social, technological, and cultural change
* Underlines Phantom’s enduring ability to enhance and enable its owner’s lifestyle
* The ultimate blank canvas for individualisation over eight generations

*“The story of Phantom’s first 100 years is uniquely human, told through the Bespoke details commissioned by generations of clients. The evolution of their requests, richly detailed here, reflects profound shifts in society, culture and technology. It also highlights Phantom’s unique capacity to capture its owner’s personal tastes and desires – a quality that continues to draw clients to the marque, and indeed to Phantom itself, today.”*

**Chris Brownridge, Chief Executive, Rolls-Royce Motor Cars**

**PHANTOM’S CULTURAL LEGACY: A 100-YEAR STORY TOLD THROUGH BESPOKE**

Since the launch of the first Phantom in May 1925, motor cars bearing this storied nameplate have enabled their owner to create something entirely unique and personal to them. Through the Bespoke details they commissioned, Rolls-Royce Phantom clients have also expressed the values, priorities and aesthetics of their time. Tracing Phantom’s evolution shows how these have shifted – sometimes subtly, often profoundly – over the past 100 years. Yet Phantom remains a constant: the perfect canvas for individualisation and self-expression.

In its early years, Phantom was supplied as a rolling chassis, on which the owner commissioned bodywork from a specialist coachbuilder. Many of the examples referenced here stand as monuments to the art of these superlative craftspeople – one that was almost lost entirely, until Rolls-Royce initiated a spectacular present-day revival at Goodwood through its Coachbuild department.

**POWER AND PRESTIGE: PHANTOM AS A SYMBOL OF INFLUENCE**

As the largest, most imposing and unashamedly luxurious Rolls-Royce model, Phantom immediately became the instinctive choice of royalty, heads of state and other dignitaries as a way to project their status and influence.

Among the earliest Phantom I commissions of the 1920s were elaborate conveyances for India’s rulers, the Maharajas. Some examples had bodywork decorated with intricate silverwork, or fabricated entirely in burnished copper, specifically designed to reflect the sunlight and create a dazzling spectacle to impress their audiences.

Almost half a century later, a Phantom VI built for the Lord Mayor of London featured a specially shaped central armrest in the rear cabin to help support the impressive but extremely weighty ceremonial mace – part of the incumbent’s official regalia – during public appearances.

**PRIVACY AND EXCLUSIVITY: THE EVOLUTION OF PERSONAL SPACE**

In stark contrast to their modern counterparts, these high-ranking early 20th century Phantom owners were generally remote figures, rarely seen and largely unknown to the public. A Bespoke Phantom was the perfect means to preserve their mystique, reinforcing their status while giving them complete control over their exposure to the public eye.

Many Phantoms featured rear cabins fitted with privacy curtains – a feature still available today. They were especially popular in India, where so-called ‘purdah’ motor cars were fitted with thick curtains to screen passengers from outside observation. Other exalted owners took a more direct, mechanical approach to maintaining their distance; a Phantom IV made for the British Royal Family had rear seats that were adjustable back and forth, so occupants could slide themselves in and out of view as the situation demanded.

This royal motor car’s successor, Phantom V, featured a transparent Perspex dome, giving the same visibility as an open car. Once necessary appearances were concluded, a two-piece aluminium cover, stowed in the luggage compartment, could be secured over the top to provide complete privacy.

**CONFIDENCE AND CONFIDENTIALITY: PHANTOM AND THE AGE OF FAME**

As the 20th century progressed, increasing public interest in prominent people’s lives, fuelled by the growth of mass media, made Phantom’s role as a sanctuary even more important. Celebrity owners frequently specified tinted rear windows: among the first cars in Britain to be equipped with them was the Phantom V commissioned by John Lennon in 1965.

Whether public figures or private clients, many Phantom owners used their motor cars to hold confidential discussions. There are numerous examples of Phantoms fitted with a soundproofed partition incorporating electric communication controls, so the rear-seat passengers could communicate with the chauffeur when necessary, but could not be overheard at other times. This feature is still available today with the marque’s Privacy Suite.

Secrecy and discretion could take other forms. In 1928, Otto Oppenheimer, a British businessman who ran the London operations of the De Beers diamond company, specified his Phantom I, known as ‘The Black Diamond’, with a secret compartment to transport uncut diamonds. Its location was known only to him, coachbuilder Hooper & Co. and Rolls-Royce. Almost a century later, this motor car’s beauty and mystique were reaffirmed when it was named overall winner of the prestigious Cartier Style et Luxe Concours at the 2025 Goodwood Festival of Speed.

**EXTRAVAGANCE TO UNDERSTATEMENT: THE CHANGING FACE OF LUXURY**

While Phantom has long been the preferred motor car of the world’s wealthiest people, how they choose to express their success continually evolves. When Phantom debuted in 1925, the Art Deco movement was at its peak. The influence of this sleek industrial aesthetic, built on sharp geometric shapes and gleaming metallic surfaces, is clearly visible in Phantom III, launched in 1936. One example even featured polished copper wings, and many more incorporated decorative Art Deco flashes and motifs.

These commissions offer a vivid insight into the period’s perceptions of luxury, which leaned towards the lavish and opulent, with gold-plated brightwork, gold and silver inlays and interior fittings, intricate marquetry, exotic wood veneers, and soft furnishings finished in materials such as astrakhan wool and damask.

One of the most extravagant commissions was ‘The Phantom of Love’, created in 1926 by Clarence Gasque, finance director of Woolworths UK stores, as a gift for his wife, Maude. Inspired by an 18th century sedan chair in the Victoria & Albert Museum, the interior was conceived as a tribute to her passion for French design and history. With an unlimited budget, Wolverhampton coachbuilders Charles Clark & Sons created an interior worthy of Versailles, complete with Aubusson tapestry upholstery, a hand-painted ceiling with gilded cornices, and a Louis XIV-style drinks cabinet topped with an ormolu clock and porcelain vases of gilded metal and enamel flowers.

This was a time when some of the most spectacularly eccentric commissions in Rolls-Royce history were brought to life. Gerald Tyrwhitt, 14th Baron Berners — famous for dyeing pigeons in a variety of pastel hues at his Oxfordshire estate — specified a clavichord keyboard beneath the front seat. Mrs E. Churchill-Wylie went further still, commissioning a Phantom equipped with a bar, gramophone, picnic set, writing desk, cigar cabinet and boot-mounted wash basin.

The following decades saw a shift toward more understated commissions, where material provenance and quality spoke louder than decoration. William Playne Twill – an English take on Scottish tweed – was popular for its handsome, pinstriped finish. Though no longer in production, it remains highly prized by collectors. Equally favoured was ‘West of England’ cloth, sourced from traditional woollen mills in the South West of England and offered in a wide variety of colours. Her Majesty the Queen favoured Light Grey and Baroda Blue in her Phantoms of the 1950s and 60s.

**LEISURE AND ENTERTAINMENT: THE MOTOR CAR AS A SOCIAL SPACE**

Favoured by crowned heads and the international elite, Phantom quickly became a fixture of high society. Its first decade was defined by Art Deco elegance — what followed introduced a more discreet kind of indulgence.

For clients in the United States, this was the era of Prohibition. For those with sufficient thirst and imagination, Phantom could offer some relief. Several socialites – including one of the biggest stars of the silent movie era – specified a secret compartment to transport liquor in defiance of the law; one Phantom II Continental had what the order coyly described as a ‘cocktail set’ concealed in the C-pillar.

With the repeal of the Eighteenth Amendment in December 1933, drinks cabinets were more openly commissioned, displayed and enjoyed. That spirit of celebration continues today, with Rolls-Royce offering a wide array of Bespoke accessories for those with a taste for the exceptional, including the Champagne Chest and Cocktail Hamper. This ethos is woven into the very fabric of the contemporary Phantom: its Champagne Cooler features two distinct settings, precisely calibrated for vintage and non-vintage cuvées.

Of course, entertainment was not limited to the liquid kind. Bespoke features commissioned beyond Prohibition reflected developments in technology as well as society. Phantom II 18GX is known to have been equipped with a wind-up gramophone; from the 1930s, radios were widely specified in Phantom III and its successors. In the 1960s, Phantom V 5LVA33 was among the first Rolls-Royce motor cars to be fitted with a television, at a time when just one in four British homes owned one.

Through the 1960s and 70s, television would also transform the careers and profiles of a new generation of rock and pop superstars, for whom Phantom was the only choice. These motor cars included some of the era’s most sophisticated and potent in-car audio systems, providing a template for today’s meticulously engineered Bespoke Audio system. However, one feature – a microphone fitted for Elvis Presley – has the unique distinction of only ever being requested once.

**A CONTEMPORARY CANVAS: THE GOODWOOD ERA**

Phantom commissions in Rolls-Royce’s early Goodwood era drew inspiration from an increasingly wide range of themes, reflecting the global nature of the reenergised brand and the diverse lives and passions of clients around the world.

One Phantom VII commission in particular marked a watershed moment, challenging Rolls-Royce to push its Bespoke capabilities beyond craftsmanship and into the realm of art. Phantom Serenity combines imperial silk, fine embroidery and hand-painting — the latter requiring artisans to undergo specialist training — to reimagine the rear suite as a garden sanctuary beneath flowering trees. The response was instant and global: Serenity had expanded the definition of luxury.

A similarly defining moment was the unveiling of Phantom Drophead Coupé Waterspeed. Celebrated today as an expression of the marque’s own history and values, this motor car pays tribute to Sir Malcolm Campbell’s record-breaking feats in the Rolls-Royce-powered Bluebird K3 boat. Its striking Maggiore Blue paint finish, brushed steel deck and open-pore Abachi wood interior signalled a new era of creative and technical confidence within the Bespoke Collective.

These motor cars inspired more clients than ever to bring increasingly ambitious ideas to the marque. Among the many Bespoke Phantoms that Rolls-Royce has been graciously permitted to share with the world is Phantom Syntopia, a collaboration with Dutch fashion designer Iris van Herpen. Inspired by the intricate layering techniques of haute couture, this one-of-one commission included a silk headliner that took almost 700 collective hours to complete — as well as its own unique fragrance.

Phantom Scintilla, meanwhile, draws its creative energy from the marque’s own mythology. Designed to capture the fleeting wonder of the Spirit of Ecstasy figurine’s presence, it incorporates Bespoke features inspired by the apparent movement of ‘Eleanor’s’ robes. These include expansive interior embroideries comprising 869,500 stitches, and an animated Starlight Headliner completed with 4,450 perforations that reveal subtle flashes of a metallic silver fabric beneath.

These motor cars represent just a glimpse of the remarkable diversity of Bespoke Phantom commissions created at Goodwood. Each is a singular response to a client’s vision, and with new inspirations drawn from ever more unexpected worlds, the next chapter promises to be even more extraordinary.

**A CENTURY OF CULTURAL EXPRESSION**

The first century of Bespoke Phantom motor cars underlines a simple truth; as the ultimate canvas for self-expression, Phantom – more than any other motor car in history – reflects its owners, and the world and eras in which they live. Every individual example expresses and preserves the tastes, attitudes, cultural conventions and aesthetic influences of its own era – a unique work of history and art that tells a deeply personal story. Over a century of evolution, one thing has remained constant. Through Bespoke, Phantom is not only the best car in the world: it is the best car for its owner and their world.

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## TECHNICAL INFORMATION

* **Phantom:** WLTP combined: CO2 emissions: 373-362 g/km; Fuel consumption: 17.3-17.8 mpg / 16.3-15.9 l/100km.
* **Phantom Extended:** WLTP combined: CO2 emissions: 373-362 g/km; Fuel consumption: 17.2-17.7 mpg / 16.4-16.0 l/100km.

Further technical information: <https://bit.ly/3XtQW7q>

FURTHER INFORMATION

You can find all our press releases and press kits, as well as a wide selection of high resolution, downloadable photographs and video footage at our media website, [PressClub](https://www.press.rolls-roycemotorcars.com/rolls-royce-motor-cars-pressclub).

You can also follow the marque on social media: [LinkedIn](https://www.linkedin.com/company/rolls-royce-motor-cars/); [YouTube](https://www.youtube.com/user/RollsRoyceMotorCars); [Instagram](https://www.instagram.com/rollsroycecars/); and [Facebook](https://www.facebook.com/rollsroycemotorcars).

EDITORS’ NOTES

Rolls-Royce Motor Cars is a true luxury house, creating the world’s most recognised, revered and desirable handcrafted Bespoke products for its international clientele.

There are over 2,500 people working at the Home of Rolls-Royce at Goodwood, West Sussex. This comprises both its global headquarters and Centre of Luxury Manufacturing Excellence – the only place in the world where Rolls-Royce motor cars are designed, engineered and meticulously built by hand. An [independent study](https://www.press.rolls-roycemotorcars.com/rolls-royce-motor-cars-pressclub/article/detail/T0414618EN/%C2%A34bn-for-uk-plc%E2%80%99:-rolls-royce-motor-cars-%E2%80%93-the-great-british-success-story) by the London School of Economics & Political Science confirms that since the company first launched at Goodwood in 2003, it has contributed more than £4 billion to the UK economy and adds more than £500 million in economic value every year.

Rolls-Royce Motor Cars is a wholly owned subsidiary of the BMW Group and is a completely separate, unrelated company from Rolls-Royce plc, the manufacturer of aircraft engines and propulsion systems.

CONTACTS | GOODWOOD

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| --- | --- |
| Director of Global Communications  Emma Begley: +44 (0)1243 384060 [Email](mailto:emma.begley@rolls-roycemotorcars.com) | Head of Corporate RelationsAndrew Ball: +44 (0)7815 244064 [Email](mailto:andrew.ball@rolls-roycemotorcars.com) |
| Head of Global Luxury and Corporate Communications Marius Tegneby: +44 (0)7815 246106 [Email](mailto:Marius.Tegneby@rolls-roycemotorcars.com) | Global Product Communications ManagerLuke Strudwick: +44 (0)7815 245918 [Email](mailto:luke.w.strudwick@rolls-roycemotorcars.com) |
| Head of Global Product CommunicationsGeorgina Cox: +44 (0)7815 370878[Email](mailto:Georgina.Cox@rolls-roycemotorcars.com) | Global Bespoke Communications  Malika Abdullaeva:  +49 151 6019 7646 [Email](mailto:Malika.Abdullaeva@partner.rolls-roycemotorcars.com) |
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CONTACTS | GLOBAL

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| --- | --- |
| The Americas Gerry Spahn: +1 201 930 8308 [Email](mailto:gerry.spahn@rolls-roycemotorcarsna.com) | Asia Pacific (South) and India Juliana Tan: +65 9695 3840 [Email](mailto:Juliana.Tan@rolls-roycemotorcars.com) |
| Central/Eastern Europe and Central Asia Frank Tiemann: +49 160 9697 5807 [Email](mailto:frank.tiemann@rolls-roycemotorcars.com) | Central and Western Europe  Ruth Hilse: +49 89 382 60064 [Email](mailto:ruth.hilse@rolls-roycemotorcars.com) |
| China  Ou Sun: +86 186 0059 0675 [Email](mailto:Ou.Sun@rolls-roycemotorcars.com) | Japan and Korea  Yuki Imamura: +81 90 5216 1957 [Email](mailto:Yuki.Imamura@rolls-roycemotorcars.com) |
| Middle East and Africa Haya Shanata: +971 56 171 7883 [Email](mailto:haya.shanata@rolls-roycemotorcars.com) | United Kingdom and Ireland  Isabel Matthews: +44 (0)7815 245127 [Email](mailto:isabel.matthews@rolls-roycemotorcars.com) |