

CAR REVIEWS

Crème de la crème convertibles

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Convertible sales ground to a halt in the 1970s, along with the British motor industry, which was the most passionate promoter of the breed. MGs, Triumph TRs, Austin-Healeys, open-roof Aston Martins and E-type Jaguars were all a mark of free-spirited Englishness. When they bit the dust, so did a little slice of British motoring romance. But drop-top cars were soon to make a magnificent comeback, never mind that their former British champions stayed firmly in their tombs. Nowadays even the one-time strait-laced car makers like to take their tops off. The two cars we've decided to showcase are not exactly conservative, or cheap, but they are the crème de la crème of the convertible market – in our eyes anyway!

New Bentley Continental GTC

While the first Continental GTC was elegant and understated, the assertive stance of the new model delivers a more contemporary and muscular presence.

The four-seater luxury convertible features a fresh, spacious and sumptuous hand-crafted cabin, with soft-touch leather hides, an extensive range of wood veneers, cool-touch metals and deep-pile carpets. In addition, the GTC's fabric hood is complemented by acoustic glass and under-body panels, for optimum noise isolation.

Behind the wheel, a wide track, sharp steering and retuned suspension provide an exhilarating and class-leading drive. Bentley's advanced all-wheel drive system features a new 40:60 rear torque bias (compared with 50:50 of the original GTC) minimising understeer during hard cornering and allowing you to manage the car's line and balance via precise throttle control.

This compelling dynamic package is combined with a powerful 6.0-litre, twin-turbocharged W12 engine as well as a new QuickShift transmission, enabling superfast gear changes up to a top speed of up to 200 mph.

Price: £135,760



New Mercedes-Benz SLK

The new Mercedes-Benz SLK is an attractive car but you'll only be able to demonstrate to one friend at a time that, in this case, looks keep pace with performance. It is a strict two-seater after all.

Indeed, the third generation SLK takes driving pleasure and open-air enjoyment to a new level. It blends light-footed sportiness with stylish comfort, a striking sports-car design with total suitability for everyday use and top performance with exemplary ecology.

On the outside, the body of the new SLK emphasises its classic roadster proportions and puts them in the spotlight to thrilling effect. Behind the long bonnet there is a passenger compartment positioned far back, and a short tail end. Inside, the cabin is quite generous for a two-seater.

Under the bonnet, the SLK 350 harbours a powerful new 6-cylinder engine, featuring the standard-specification ECO start/stop function. This enables commendable efficiency without compromising on sportiness. In fact, it is up to 25 per cent more economical than its predecessor. Yet the 306 bhp, 3498 cc lump can thrust you from 0 to 62 mph in just 5.6 seconds and on to a top speed of 155 mph. And, amazingly, even if you flex the SLK's muscle, the car can return up to 39.8 miles per gallon.

If truth be told, the potent pocket-rocket offers fun at the wheel in every respect, with no feeble compromises. It succeeds in uniting sumptuous seating and high-quality equipment with athletic prowess. All-weather driving enjoyment – with the roof open and closed, in leisure-time and everyday use – is also firmly anchored in the SLK's genes.

With all these attributes the all-new SLK 350 from the German geniuses at Mercedes-Benz is surely one of the most refined and practical roadsters available on the market today.

Price: £44,225