

WORLD EXCLUSIVE! DRIVING THE STRATOS 'ZERO' CONCEPT CAR

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Octane

FUELLING THE PASSION

BENTLEY AT 100



EXP4 - A TRUE VINTAGE ICON

*Driving one of the
earliest Bentleys*

TOURING IN THE CONTINENTAL GTC

*An emotional journey
to WW1's battlefields*

WORLD'S FASTEST FOUR-SEATER

*First production
R Type Continental*

VICTORY AT LE MANS

*Reuniting the 2003
24 Hours winners*

BUMPER CHRISTMAS GIFT GUIDE • JOCHEN MASS • 1990s RAILTON DRIVEN • CHEVY 'FANGIO' COUPE • FERRARIS ON TOUR

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Books

REVIEWED BY OCTANE STAFF AND CONTRIBUTORS



Book
of the
month

Ballot

DANIEL CABART & GAUTAM SEN, Dalton Watson, £270, ISBN 978 1 85443 303 9



History, they say, is written by the victors; but in the world of motoring it's the survivors who get to make their voices heard. Ballot didn't start making cars until 1919 and went out of business in 1932, but in its brief flowering it produced some of what Americans call the 'winningest' race cars of the age. They were victors, indeed, if not ultimately survivors.

As Robert Coucher mentioned in his road test of a 1920 Ballot 3/8 race car last month, publisher Dalton Watson has just released this stunningly comprehensive two-volume history of the Ballot marque. Not just cars, either. Ballot was initially a supplier of engines (from 1905) and more than 50 different car makes used them. Ballot engines could also be found powering motorboats, railway inspection vehicles, water pumps and generators – one of the many period advertisements reproduced here shows an artist's impression of hapless German soldiers of WW1 being electrocuted on barbed wire in the trenches thanks to a Ballot generator...

It's a mammoth undertaking and the authors have wisely delegated certain sections to other writers with particular expertise. So, for example, Karl Ludvigsen contributes the chapter on 'The Technology of Ballot Grand Prix Engines', while Rudy Henry, the grandson of engineer Ernest Henry – whose overhead-camshaft engine designs made Ballot cars so successful, and directly influenced the likes of Harry Miller and Sunbeam's Louis Coatalen – has produced a biography of his grandfather, the

result of a lifetime's research. Other contributors include *Octane's* David Burgess-Wise and Doug Blain of *The Automobile*, who has owned two of the six surviving Ballot 2LS sports-racers.

Combining superb period images, brochures, adverts and newspaper clippings with beautiful studio-style photography by Makarand Baokar, the result is a handsome slipcased history that's attractively laid out to allow text and images to 'breathe'. Photographs are frequently used across a spread – as in the portrait, above, of Ralph De Palma in chassis 1008 ahead of the 1921 Grand Prix de l'ACF – and the text is easy on the eye, thanks to a decent type size and plenty of surrounding white space. This approach means that what could easily have become a dense, cloying mass is remarkably easy to digest, whether sampled in small portions or feasted on in one sitting.

Volume One covers Ernest Ballot and the history of his company, plus engine designer Henry, the Grand Prix engines, Ballot race cars and the events they competed in. Volume Two profiles Ballot road cars, miscellaneous engines, Ballot's impact on other marques, and a round-up of appendices dealing with, for example, Ballot road test features. It's hard to imagine anything that the authors may have left out, although we'd like to know what was the eventual fate of the spectacular Ballot factory on the Boulevard Brune in Paris, with its facade of coloured enamel bricks. Perhaps a Parisian *Octane* reader could enlighten us? MD



The Jensen Genome

RICHARD CALVER, from £300 in UK, ISBN 978 0 9751291 3 5

This Australian-produced magnum opus has been rumoured for a while, but is far more than the updated chassis register and data book many expected. There are new tables for Jensen commercials and S-V8s, while pre-war and early cars have been revised and others updated.

The landscape hardback weighs in at 5kg, 730 pages and 100 or so photos and is so hefty it had to be hand-bound. Nice touches include decent-sized, squint-free text, colour-coded page edges for easy navigation, and a set of bookmarks for favourite pages.

Non-Jensenistas be warned: this may be essential info for owners and nerds, but it is not a bit of light bedtime reading for the casually interested. Even so, with only 500 copies being printed – and pre-orders from the Antipodes accounting for 100 of those – it will have no trouble selling out, and then will likely accrue in value as demand grows. In fact, at £300, the *Genome* is far less than copies of Calver's 1991 chassis data book are advertised at. See richardcalver.com/suppliers for details on how to order it, who from and for how much.

In terms of the blood, sweat and tears that went into *The Jensen Genome* and the quantity of information that flows so freely out of it, this behemoth would be a shoo-in for Book of the Month if it weren't such a niche title and subject. JE

