



PHOTOS: COURTESY OF BENTLEY

Bentley's Sparkling Anniversary

CELEBRATING 60 YEARS OF V8 POWER

Although separated by decades, the origins of the latest Mulsanne V8 engine can be traced back to the 1959 S2.

LUXURY AUTOMAKER BENTLEY is fired up celebrating its Diamond Anniversary. This crowning achievement wasn't for a vehicle, but rather for marking 60 years of use for its venerable L-series V8 engine. The powerplant arrived on the scene in 1959, being first installed under the bonnet of the brand's S2 model.

Today, a similar engine continues to be used in the latest flagship, the Mulsanne. While its true technology has drastically changed over the past 60 years and while every part of the original engine has been reengineered, the basic principles and dimensions defining the marvelous motor have remained the same.

The S2 model's V8 was 6.2-liters and had been in development since the early 1950s. Engineers working on the project were tasked with producing an engine at least 50% more powerful than

the outgoing six-cylinder. However, they were restricted to having it take up the same amount of space. Weight couldn't be increased either. The team succeeded with the resulting engine being 30 pounds lighter.

In 1965, the V8 was redesigned for the new T-series, soon growing in 1971 to 6 ¾-liters to deliver more torque. When the first Mulsanne arrived in 1980, major changes were in order. Stricter emissions controls had to be implemented, as well as improved passenger safety for front-end collisions. The Mulsanne Turbo brought a turbocharger, soon followed by a twin-turbo design. All along the journey, output kept climbing, reaching levels above 500 hp. The late 1990s and early 2000s brought increased vehicle production, which necessitated the engine undergo further development to meet demand.

Today, the heart of every Mulsanne is still handcrafted in the brand's Crewe, England, headquarters, assembled by a small team of engine technicians. The V8 engine is still 6 ¾-liters, boasts 530 hp, and has 811 lb-ft of torque. It is capable of moving the massive, luxury sedan to a top speed of 190 mph and 0 to 60 in just 4.8 seconds. 



Matt Avery is an automotive author and historian. His new book, "COPO", documents Chevy's ultimate muscle cars, showcasing over 40 of the world's best COPO examples. Learn more at COPOthebook.com