



A GENUINE SPIRIT OF ECSTASY

As well as providing its classic power and comfort in the Wraith, Rolls-Royce has also created a car for pure driving pleasure



CINDY-LOU DALE

IS A WRITER AND EDITOR SPECIALISING IN MOTORING AND TRAVEL

Rolls-Royce is known for designing some of the most luxurious cars money can buy, but now it has ventured into new terrain and built the closest Rolls has ever come to a suave GT — one you'll want to drive as opposed to be driven in. With a twin-turbo, 6.6-litre V12 engine, what do you think driving the Wraith is going to be like? Well, it's opulent, extravagant even, and yes, it is excessive. But it's way more than that, as what rolled down the ramp of the Rolls-Royce truck outside my house was the most powerful car it has built. The Wraith is a serene thoroughbred, of luxurious heft and tranquillity. On looks alone it is way more than a two-door coupe rework of its bigger brother; it holds considerable allure, it's lower and leaner, with understated curves which underline its uncompromising automotive aristocracy.

The Wraith is the most driver-orientated Rolls ever built. Show it the open road and the V12 hums calmly in the background, as if it could hardly be bothered. It drives exactly how one would expect it to: perfectly. The unobtrusive heads-up display on the windscreen shows the whisper-quiet engine to

be more than sprightly — on the road it feels planted and stable. It uses double-wishbone front and multi-link rear suspension, with self-levelling, roll-cancelling air suspension and adaptive dampers. It's initially surprising that there are no paddles, but once you're in the driver's seat you'll quickly understand that the wall of torque and effortless power mean the car glides through gear changes indiscernibly. But don't expect it to climb trees! It steers with fingertip lightness and even though it's quick and stable through bends, you need to get the glide right, with a slow-in/fast-out approach, if you want to come out the other side in a state that befits a Rolls. Get it wrong and the stability control gets grouchy and it will under-steer like a channel ferry.

But it's the discreet and unobtrusive 21st-century in-car technology that will help keep you out of trouble — like the satellite aided transmission linked to the eight-speed gearbox which hooks up with GPS mapping data to see beyond what the driver sees; it anticipates your next move based on location and your driving style, then selects the most suitable gear for the terrain ahead. Corners, motorway junctions

