

I've had the pleasure of working with Bentley Motors on a number of occasions over the years. I've written videos, dealer conference presentations, the entire contents (video and graphics) of a combined heritage museum at Crewe, brand introductions, dealer training, and car launches.

Hard to choose examples really, but here are a couple I like. The first is a live theatre script that was used to set the scene for a launch event at Le Mans, featuring cars from the entire history of the brand. It's followed by a short video script used in the heritage museum, telling the legendary story of Wolff Barnato's race against Le Train Bleu...

Tim Birkin's Introduction

BRING UP AUDIO FX: GENERAL BACKGROUND ATMOSPHERE OF A 1920s RACETRACK. DISTANT ENGINES, VOICES, CROWDS MILLING AROUND, DISTANT BAND PLAYING

REVEAL BLOWER BENTLEY ON STAGE, SURROUNDED BY SUITABLE PITS PROPS...

AND BIRKIN, SEATED ON A FUEL CAN OR PILE OF TYRES

TIM BIRKIN:

Just a few moments to go...

A few precious moments. Alone with my thoughts, before the race begins...

You're wondering where we are, I expect. The Grand Prix D'Endurance, Le Mans, 1928. Exactly seventy years ago. Welcome!

I hope you're enjoying yourself - I'm certain I'm not. I'd be smoking cigarettes by the dozen if I didn't have such a distinguished audience. I know times have changed between my time and yours...

But one thing hasn't changed - and that's this feeling a driver gets just before the race. Utter misery! I've been pacing up and down the pits ever since we lined up the cars on the other side of the track.

I don't know who the steward was who ordained that the cars should be in line an hour before the start, but he certainly wasn't a driver. Or he'd have known how tense the waiting can be. Nothing to do except snap at small boys asking for your autograph...

It's different for the other members of the team. Over there, WO Bentley on his high stool, surrounded by the timekeepers with their stop watches and their charts...

On my right, Nobby Clarke and his mechanics, scurrying round with their fuel and their oil, their stacked tyres and spares and tools of every description. They've got plenty to get ready before the flag falls.

But not me - or any driver for that matter. We simply have to wait. It's quite the hardest part of racing, I tell you...

FOR A MOMENT, HE IS LOST IN THOUGHT. THEN HE LOOKS UP CHEERFULLY

Thank God it doesn't last for long! Just a few more minutes - and I can stop worrying whether I left the car in gear.

When that flag falls the anxiety drops away like a cloak from my shoulders. It'll be hectic - I grant you that. The first seconds of the race always are. But that's what I've prepared for. Top to third, third to second, into the first corner - and away!

There's a wonderful harmony to it, you see: the driver becomes more mechanical, the car more human. That's the glory of the race - and there's nothing more to dread.

Except possibly mechanical failure. But I'm driving a Bentley today. The new four and half litre. No other racing machine to match it - not the Aries, not the Lagonda, not the Alvis, not even the big Stutz from the United States. Every mechanical detail has been faithfully checked by our mechanics...

The race plan for the three team cars has been carefully worked out...

And it's a beautiful sunny morning in June.

HE GLANCES AT HIS WATCH, THEN PUTS ON HIS HELMET

I believe it's going to be an interesting day. Now imagine the race: moving forward in time from my life - to yours. I'd love to stay and chat with you - but we've got a legend to build...

You'll be waiting to greet me at the finish, I trust ?

WE HEAR A WHISTLE BLOWING

Of course you will... Wish me luck...

CUT LIGHTS. BIRKIN EXITS. SIMULTANEOUSLY, THE BACKGROUND CROWD NOISE DIMS...

WE HEAR THE SOUND OF THE DRIVERS RUNNING ACROSS THE CIRCUIT...

FOLLOWED BY AN ENORMOUS ROAR OF ENGINES FROM THE BACK OF THE ROOM.

THE SOUND SWELLS, AND TRAVELS OVER THE AUDIENCE'S HEADS...

AND WE CUT TO VT - WITH BIRKIN IN HIS CAR. AT THE START, HE APPEARS TO BE SITTING AT THE WHEEL OF A 1928 FOUR AND HALF LITRE.

IN A SINGLE CAMERA MOVE, WE FOLLOW BIRKIN AS HE RACES AROUND THE TRACK. AS HE TRAVELS, HE BEGINS TO TRAVEL FORWARD IN TIME, PASSING A SUCCESSION OF BENTLEYS FROM DIFFERENT ERAS

AS EACH CAR IS OVERTAKEN, THE VISUAL TREATMENT CHANGES SUBTLY, TO REFLECT THE STYLE OF EACH ERA.

AT THE SAME TIME, BIRKIN'S IMMEDIATE SURROUNDINGS START TO BE TRANSFORMED - SO THAT BY THE END OF THE LAP, WITH EACH CAR OVERTAKEN...

HE IS SITTING BEHIND THE WHEEL OF A BENTLEY ARNAGE.

THE REVEAL SEQUENCE CLOSES WITH A LONG SHOT OF THE ARNAGE CROSSING THE FINISH LINE, AND TAKING THE CHEQUERED FLAG. THE CAR DRAWS TO A HALT, AND BIRKIN GETS OUT, DRESSED IN AN ARMANI SUIT. AS THIS HAPPENS, THE NEW NAME - THE BENTLEY ARNAGE - IS REVEALED ON SCREEN.

Le Train Bleu

1930 - and two well-known motor car firms have begun to advertise in the motoring press that their cars are swift enough to travel from Cannes to Calais faster than the renowned 'Train Bleu'. While in Cannes, Bentley Chairman Woolf Barnato gets into a casual debate, contending that the achievement is of no particular merit - and wagers that he can in fact cross the channel to England in his Bentley Speed Six before the train arrived at Calais.

There are no takers for the bet - considered a late-night boast - but Barnato resolves to prove his point in any case. He is accompanied as spare driver on his journey by Dale Bourn, a well-known amateur golfer...

5.54 PM, Carlton Bar, Cannes. Have received word that the Blue Train left for Calais on schedule. I am anxious to be away, but Woolf seems unconcerned - especially as he knows the train will go first to Marseilles, where it will stop for about an hour...

7.00 PM, Aix-en-Provence. Our first stop for petrol. Our boot is filled with bidons of fuel, in case of emergency. As a result, we can go no faster than 80 mph without bottoming out. Woolf shows no sign of tiring: I expect to do very little driving on this run...

11.59 PM, Lyons. Nicely up to schedule. Woolf has arranged for a petrol station to stay open until midnight, so we should be just in time to refuel. A smattering of rain suggests we may not have such an easy run from here onwards...

4.20 AM, Auxerre. Heavy rain now, for several hours. No sign of the petrol lorry which Woolf arranged would meet us here. The by-pass is empty, so we have determined to try the town centre instead, hoping the lorry will be waiting there...

7.30 AM, Paris. After the delay at Lyon - where we eventually located the petrol lorry in the town - we ran into the cloud front that had been dealing out the rain. Consequently we are now three-quarters of an hour behind schedule. This may also be a result of my taking the wheel for two hours, to give Woolf a much-needed rest...

10.30 AM, Boulogne. Have been required to take it easy since soon after Paris, when we burst a tyre. With only one spare, a second blow-out would have meant the end of the run. Happily, we have just arrived on the Quai - a full hour before the boat leaves. Plenty of time for breakfast in the station buffet...

1.00 PM, Folkestone. Super-efficient service from the RAC: word seems to have preceded us that we should be given priority. We have succeeded in reaching England two and half

hours ahead of the Blue Train's arrival at Calais - a clear vindication of Woolf's contention that other manufacturers have nothing to crow about in beating the train as far as Calais. We plan to continue the run to London at a leisurely pace...

3.20 PM, London. Just past the clock at Victoria on the Vauxhall Bridge Road. Woolf turns to me and remarks 'Do you know we've got to London before the train has got to Calais?' Next stop Bourne's Club, to clock in four minutes ahead of the train's arrival at Calais...