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## KING OF HEARTS

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## KING OF HEARTS

Words and pictures by John Grafman

Valentine's Day is known to many as the sweetest holiday of all. And who am I to argue? From candy to cars, all tokens of affection are welcome. To really savor the flavor one must go west. Or, maybe I should say, to West Hollywood. This is where celebrities go to enjoy the trappings of romance, and to be seduced by the hippest trends.

This adventure to find the sweet life in L.A. requires first class transportation. A limo might be perfect for such a journey as one can open a bottle of bubbly in back and enjoy the ride. But, this is Southern California, and we enjoy the luxury of sunny skies while others have snowstorms. So, it is fitting that we find suitable means of arriving in the form of a Bentley Continental GTC.



The convertible version of the GT is the epitome of magnificence, from the unparalleled beauty of the coachwork, to the stealthy smoothness of the twin-turbo, twelve-cylinder motor that produces a staggering 550 horsepower. Even the most persistent paparazzi would have a very tough time keeping pace with this big Brit. Perhaps this is why Paris Hilton opted for one. However, with a vibrant pink paint job ala' West Coast Customs, I don't think she will escape notice of anyone.



Our search for the sweetest Valentine takes us to the 2009 Valentine Celebrity Romance Suite' at La Boheme on Santa Monica Boulevard. The regal qualities of the Bentley didn't escape the notice of the valets, (whom one would think would be jaded) , and they place the sizable two-door smack dab in front of the entry. A price tag that closes in on a quarter million-dollars after options is an attention getter even in this town.

While the back seat where my guest is seated is less than spacious, it is still hard to find reason to depart these confines which are swaddled in some of the finest of leathers in two-tone, and trimmed with exquisite premium Mulliner veneer chestnut wood that mirrors the other virtues the car offers.



La Boheme has been a landmark on the boulevard for decades and the latest remodel has brought this up to par with any of the other trend setting eateries in town.

Dozens of companies have congregated inside this airy villa for one purpose, and

one purpose only, getting products into the hands of celebrities. While this might not be as good as having Michael Jordan endorse Nike's basketball shoes or Hanes Underwear, or Tiger Woods selling the virtues of the latest Buick, this does allow companies to reach out and touch the stars. In turn, the actors and actresses get to sample the latest in everything from shoes to skin care products. How sweet is that?

This is like stalking big game cats with filet mignon. If one can't track down Hollywood stars with treats like this, then it's time to go back to the minor leagues. Within moments our scope is fixed on none other than Tia Carrera. She is brimming with a warm smile as she is coddled by Mimishooz, one of the fashionable footwear companies displaying the latest trends. The unique custom designed high-top sneakers are very nice, but the GTC still wins out, albeit the shoes are considerable less expensive and do offer a good means of getting from point A to point B.



Tia Carrera

Also spotted is Menyone DeVeaux. She is starring in the biopic Notorious (the life and death story of Notorious B.I.G.). Far from the gansta rap world, Menyone is here trying on some catchy footwear from Sheikh. Given the warm glow on her face, a few would wonder if diamonds really are a girl's best friend. With a smile as bright as hers, no one would notice if she actually had shoes on or not.



Menyone DeVeaux

Menyone says that she loves L.A. because "I get to enjoy any seasonal wardrobe, without the snow. Its the weather, Hello!" She'll tell you a favorite Valentines' Day gift is a nice trip to the Virgin Islands, but when the subject turns to cars her personality comes through "Fun, well-rounded, fearless and sexy" are what turns her on.

Having the right handbag is almost as important as having the right car for the occasion. Sofia Milos is hard at work deciding what fits her style among the choices on display.



Sofia Milos

A few minutes later, Hollywood heavy and bad guy, actor Robert Davi appears. Above the masses on the interior balcony Robert has a few moments with Kama Sutra's sensuous oils and lotions before being besieged by the camera-touting mob. It's not easy being famous. Kama Sutra's products encourage romantic harmony and well-being, which is more than can be said about the paparazzi.



Fashion designer ZsaZsa Bodizs and Robert Davi

As it turns out over the course of the afternoon this affair is awash with

celebrities including Melanie Griffith, William Shatner, Eric & Eliza Roberts, Hector Elizando, Esai Morales, Carrie Preston, Kathy Najimi, Corey Feldman, Greg & Elizabeth Grunberg, Catherine Oxenberg & Casper Van Dien, Alice Greczyn, James Avery, James Kyson Lee, Jeff Garlin, Jodi Lynn O'Keefe, Kathy Joosten, Keisha Knight Pulliam, Kym Whitley, Lou & Carla Ferrigno, Christian De La Fuente, Ted McGinley, Nadia Bjorlin, Neal McDonough, Michael Welch, Nia Long, Robert David Hall, Rolanda Watts, Stacy Keibler, and Tony Dovoloani to name just a few.



The Bentley offers the Mulliner bespoke program for those who want a personal touch in trim, paint, and the material that comprise the interior surfaces. Likewise, Dougal Munro, president of Holland and Sherry, and Christian Boehm, VP of the Tom James Company are showcasing the finest in men's clothes. The nearly unlimited choices of fabrics for suits means no Bentley owner needs to look like anything less than a million dollars, even when the car isn't available. Camille Flawless Haute Couture brings her hand-sewn, Swarovski-embellished creations to Hollywood. Normally, the only place to find these amazing gowns is at the luxury Venetian Hotel in Las Vegas. Worn by such notables as Paris Hilton, Kim Kardashian and Mrs. Kobe Bryant, these chic and sensuous gowns will be given exclusively to the brightest stars attending the Oscars. Of course, making an entrance is as much about how one arrives as what one is wearing.



The Continental GTC offers a jewel like shifter with hundreds of tiny facets cut into the knurled chrome shifter knob that not only sparkle, provide a little extra texture for holding on. Similarly, Miami's haute couture jewelry designer, Liz Alpert of Jewelry of The Spirit, is eye-catching as well. It's hard to say no to a nice cut stone for the holiday; heart shaped, please.



Valentine's Day can have the profound effect of turning romantic relationships into marriage. Mon Amie — the West Coasts' most elegant & premiere bridal salon presented its elegant top designer bridal gowns, veils & bridal accessories to lust over. Colette Jewelry located in nearby Beverly Hills is one of Mexico's most renowned jewelry designers, Colette is a favorite of Salma Hayek, Jessica Alba, Sophia Loren and Raquel Welch. If the wearing of Mon Ami and Coletter Jewelry is just too serious, the Armies Wear hand made arm bands in an array of colors — each one adorned with crystals, bugle and seed beads, a favorite of Madonna, should do the trick.

Ashley Van Dyke, of Emerald Sports and Events last minute gift suggestion for Valentines' Day to the guys is, "Every girl loves a day at the spa. It's refreshing and good for the soul." And when it comes to cars, the GTC "Makes for a great getaway car if the Valentine's date doesn't go as planned." But, if you are planning on getting her one in spite of her warning remember her preference, "Black, because it's a super sexy color."



While looking good in the rarefied sheet metal of the Bentley GTC is easy enough in any color really, a little extra touch of make-up is sometimes a good idea. This is especially true with the top down as everyone else wants to catch a glimpse of those behind the wheel. Lip-Ink® Patented Wax Free  $\text{A}^{\text{f}}\text{A}^{\text{c}}\text{A}^{\text{c}}\text{a}$ ,  $\text{A}^{\text{f}}\text{A}^{\text{c}}$  Semi-Permanent® Cosmetics keeps the lips wet and supple even with the top down and the Santa Ana

winds howling. Another choice might be Hollywood Pin-Ups' sexy vegan cosmetics made with pure organic products and packaged in glittering old-Hollywood-style jars and bottles keeps one looking camera ready with a good conscience. Want more sizzle? Original Bombshell's collection of rich moisturizers from Love at First Light to Spoil Me can make some of the meeker out there blush.

Livin' la Vida Loca requires those on the go to put the brakes on and shift the brain into park in order to make it from one day to the next, at least for a few hours. GLOtoSLEEP is a sleep mask that clears your mind, and quickly relaxes you and gets you to sleep naturally. Having the "I haven't slept in weeks" look only works for Courtney Love. Most in this town, star or not, opt for a little better.



HAI Elite has celebrities covered with the very latest in innovation with its new-age ceramic hair-styling tools. Looking perfect is always key to dodging the cover of some supermarket tabloid, and it should be considered standard equipment in a convertible. However, the GTC is an anomaly in the world of drop tops as so little turbulence is experienced within the cabin. Perhaps just an extra dose of styling products will suffice. Nevertheless, BLO & GO has a revolutionary hair styling tool that frees up your hands from holding a blow-dryer and delivers a stunning, salon blown-out hairstyle. One can't always count on hair spray and pomade.



Putting the foot to the floor in the heavy, all-wheel drive automobile can turn numbers like 0-60 in 4.8 seconds and top out at 195 MPH. Putting your feet in Shiekh Shoes turns heads nearly as fast. These gorgeous shoes will drive any woman wild with sexy stiletto styles and classic looks. The Capelta Boots by Monique are sensational, jaw-dropping, vintage glamour at its best. Each Brazilian, handcrafted boot blends a mix of vintage and salvageable materials, predominately recycled appeal, detached decorative emblems and texture fabrics. Like the Bentley these are fashionable and allow the owner a one-of-a-kind experience.

Celebrities not having a celebration just doesn't seem right. Imperial Collection Super Premium Vodka is an image product, with prestige and status, just like the stars. From the filtration process to the exquisite design in harmony with extraordinary contents, this is literally a heart-warming drink. Direct from Russia, where drinking vodka is an art, Aisburg Vodka has premium vodka and exotic collection of flavored vodkas just to take the edge off. Also, Mata Hari, Europe's most prestigious, authentic, Bohemian-style absinthe provides a unique special treat. They say, "absinthe makes the heart grow fonder" which holds an extra special meaning on this holiday.



Nadia Bjorlin and Brandon Beemer

More goodies are on hand from Clara Kasavina Collection, EJ Diamonds, RYN Footwear, Green Apple, It Works!, Secret Spa, Aglow Candles, The Sedona Rouge Hotel & Spa and The Golden Door, and Premium Natural Spring Water. Plus attending celebs are treated to gifts from Cadillac Fragrance For Men, True Religion Fragrance for Women, Olivier Napa Valley, Zevia Soda, Here Comes The Guide, Sedona Rouge by Body Bliss, Indira Jewelry, Lane Bryant, Bestow Boutique, Juan Juan, and from 'bee to you,' Honey Pacifica gourmet honey to satisfy any romantic.



Mignon Chocolate is the epitome of the sweet life. These exquisite, European hand-made creations, based upon a 3rd generation secret family recipe, include such mouth-watering delights as chocolate covered orange peel strips, liquid caramel crowns, hand-rolled truffles and other delectable confections – a favorite of the Hollywood elite.

All the trappings of the good life are tasty, no doubt about it. But taking them home in the Bentley is the sweetest treat of all.



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