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Issue 51 – May-June 2025

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Classic Mercedes

May-June 2025
• Issue 51

COVER PHOTO
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EDITORIAL
Editor: **David Sutherland**
Email: **david.sutherland@kelsey.co.uk**
Art Editor: **Rob Terry**
Contributors: **Eric Collins, Mark Cosovich, Jonathan Fleetwood, Tim French, Steve Hall, Reed Hitchcock, Richard Mason, Kyle Molyneux, Terry Oborne,**

ADVERTISEMENT SALES & PRODUCTION
Russell Bedford
01732 445328
russell@talk-media.uk
Ad Production: **Talk Media**

MANAGEMENT
Executive Chairman: **Steve Wright**
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SUBSCRIPTIONS
Six issues of *Classic Mercedes* are published per annum
UK annual subscription price: £52.44
Europe annual subscription price: £64.44
USA annual subscription price: £64.44
Rest of World annual subscription price: £70.44
UK subscription and back issue orderline: **0845 241 5159**
Overseas subscription order line: **0044 (0) 1959 543 747**
Toll free USA subscription order line: **1-888-777-0275**
UK customer service team: **01959 543 747**
For customer service support, please visit:
https://help.kelsey.co.uk
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Tel: 0906 802 0279
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cars@kelseyclassifieds.co.uk
Kelsey Classifieds, Kelsey Media, The Granary, Downs Court, Yalding Hill, Yalding, Maidstone, Kent ME18 6AL

DISTRIBUTION
Distribution in Great Britain
Seymour Distribution Limited, 2 East Poultry Avenue, London, EC1A 9PT
Tel. 020 7429 4000, www.seymour.co.uk
Distribution in Northern Ireland and the Republic Of Ireland
Newspread, Tel: +353 23 886 3850

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"I FIND THE W111 CABRIOLET MIND-BOGGLINGLY BRILLIANT TO LOOK AT "

In this issue of *Classic Mercedes*

In the classic world I'm sure people buy a Mercedes cabriolet for a number of well considered reasons, not just because the sun is out. Nonetheless, as spring arrives I'm pondering their delights, hence the special section on four-seat droptops from page 24.

We start with my favourite, the W111, which I find mind-bogglingly brilliant to look at, and if not quick in its hardly over-powered 220SEb form, then still good to drive considering it's not that much younger than me. We then fast forward to the outer limits of the classic era to sample a rare 1990s V8-engined cabriolet, a 208-series CLK430. If you like low-key, this understated car would suit nicely, and it's a bargain too!

Matters are concluded by a round-up of every four-seat convertible that Mercedes has built since the late 1940s... and several it didn't, but maybe should have.

Next issue is May 30 – remember we're now bi-monthy!

David Sutherland
Editor



Who's been bringing you the classic stories in this issue



Peter Haynes

Peter is a mover and shaker at auction house RM Sotheby's, and it was he that made it possible for us to reproduce RM's authoritative story and wonderful images of the 1954 W196R Streamliner grand prix car it sold in February (pages 48-54). "It represented a once in a lifetime opportunity for a collector," he says. "The fact that it achieved in excess of €50m is testament to its place as one of the greatest racing cars in history."



David Sutherland

Normally this slot is reserved for contributors, but in my final issue of *Classic Mercedes* as editor I'm pulling rank and hogging it. Thirteen years ago I was asked to create a magazine on old, loved Benzes. I've been editing it ever since, and have driven almost every post-war classic Mercedes, learned a lot about the firm's history and met many great people – it's all been a huge pleasure. So goodbye, and thanks all for reading!

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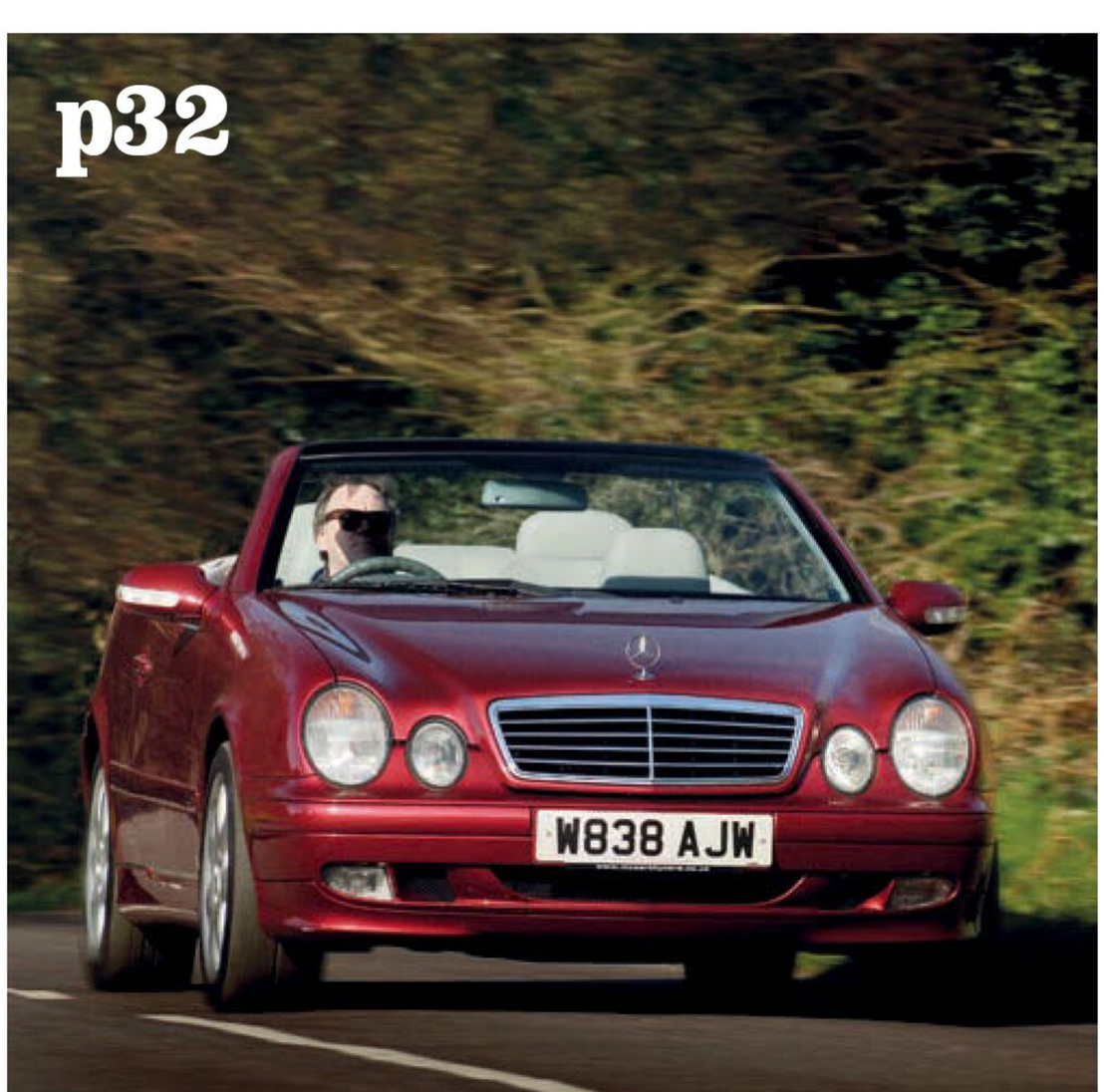
Classic Mercedes
is published bi-montly.
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CLASSIC NEWS

UK AND INTERNATIONAL REPORTS FROM THE CLASSIC MERCEDES WORLD

Muscle million

'Pre-merger' AMGs make £1.1m but prices well short of expectations

A pair of 'pre-merger' AMG conversions – legendary 'Hammer' models – have sold for enormous amounts, underlining the rapidly growing interest in these 1980s and 90s hot Mercedes. At its auction at Amelia Island in Florida in mid-March, Gooding & Company offered a 1989 300CE AMG 6.0 which made $665,000 (£516,400), and a 1988 300E AMG 6.0 fetching $753,000 (£584,700).



The six-litre 'Hammer' 124s were AMG's most notable 80s conversions.

However both cars, bravely entered into the sale with no reserve, fell way short of their expected prices. The 300CE, Lot 135, carried a £1.5m-$2m (£1.2m- £1.6m) pre-sale estimate, while that for the 300E, Lot 136, was $1.25m-$1.75m (£970,000-£1.36m).

The 300CE is one of around 25 built at AMG's Affalterbach factory, but is the only known example with a five-speed manual gearbox. Both cars were first delivered in Milan in Italy to the industrial tycoon Raul Gardini. Since his death in 1993, the cars have a had a number of owners, the most notable being infamous Italian car collector, Luigi Compiano, who bought the 300E.

His business went bankrupt in 2013 after he had siphoned corporate funds to amass a personal collection of 450 cars, 80 boats, and thousands of motorcycles. The collection was seized by the Italian government and its contents sold in 2016 at the highly publicised no-reserve Duemila Ruote auction in Milan, where the 300E was sold for €84,000 (£70,500). At Amelia Island, Gooding also offered a 1991 300TE AMG 3.4-24 at no reserve, which was bid up to $128,000 (£99,400).

Classic car values cool



Some classic owners face the possibility of their cars being worth less than they paid for them.

Following several years of booming classic car prices, partially fuelled by the peculiar market forces the Covid pandemic unleashed, values are now falling to pre-Covid levels. That is the verdict of the UK auctioneer which regularly offers the largest number of Mercedes-Benzes at its events, following a disappointing first-of-year sale held in Berkshire in March (see Classic Events, pages 8-9).

"Currently the market is soft, which has an impact across all eras and car values, including 'affordable' cars," said Michael Hodges of Buckinghamshire-based Historics Auctioneers. "On top of all this, there is the likelihood that those in the market may feel that values are going to drop further and so they may keep their cash in their pocket."

He also believes this is starving the market of the best classics. "It's likely that some owners of fine cars will be less disposed to sell now unless they have to, so it's possible there will be a shortage of super quality cars on sale."

Mansell's 560SEC on the move



Nigel's old left-hand-drive C126 is familar to us at *Classic Mercedes*.

The 126-series 560SEC once owned by 1992 F1 champion Nigel Mansell, which has appeared at various times in *Classic Mercedes*, has moved on to another owner. Part of Mercedes' UK heritage road test fleet for over a decade, it was personally purchased by a Mercedes-Benz executive in 2023, who sold it on in February this year.

It was disposed of on commission by all-makes classic specialist The Hairpin Company in Wiltshire, asking price £55,000. "There was lots of interest and it went for in excess of £50,000," said Hairpin's Neil Dickins.

Mansell ordered his Champagne metallic C126 in left-hand-drive, and in two years commuted 15,000 miles between Monaco and European grands prix. It then spent time in a Midlands classic car collection before serving as everyday transport for the art critic Brian Sewell and featuring in his TV travel programmes. Sewell (who died in 2015) swapped the 560SEC for a new Mercedes A-Class.

W196 Streamliner sold for £42.6m

On February 1 a 1954 W196R in enclosed-body Streamliner form became the most expensive grand prix car ever to change hands in a public sale, one that both Juan Manuel Fangio and Stirling Moss raced in period. One of the four *Stromlinienwagen* cars used in the 1954 and 1955 F1 seasons, it had been owned for 60 years by the Indianapolis Motor Speedway Museum, which received it as a gift from Mercedes-Benz in 1965 in recognition of the carmaker's successful Rassociation with the 'Brickyard' race circuit.



The W196R Streamliner is only the second Silver Arrows to be auctioned.

The auction was conducted in the Mercedes-Benz Museum in Stuttgart by RM Sotheby's, which achieved a price including buyer's premium of €51,155,000 (£42,565,500). Only one Silver Arrows F1 car has been publicly sold before, an open-wheel W196R also raced by Fangio and auctioned by Bonhams for over £19m in 2013.

The IMSM said it will use the proceeds to invest in its 180-car collection, and also to acquire more cars. Read the full story of the Streamliner and the auction sale on pages 48-54.

Cooling on


No longer supplied by M-B, but SLShop will sell you a 300SL radiator.

Good news for those who need a replacement coolant radiator for their R107 300SL but have discovered Mercedes-Benz dealers can no longer supply them: as of June 2025, Warwickshire classic Mercedes specialist SLShop will offer one it has engineered in-house, and which it describes as a "true replica of the genuine Mercedes article". The problem for owners was aggravated by there being no cross-compatibility with other Mercedes models.

"We dismantled an original radiator and had each component 3D scanned," explains Jack Ward, SLShop's operations manager. "We've commissioned production of the eight individual pieces all over the world, but final assembly, heat and pressure test as well as quality control will happen in-house. It will be tested to 20psi, which is double what would ever occur in service."

The price isn't yet revealed, but SLShop hopes that it can be made available for under £1,000. It plans to extend availability to the 420/500SL, as five of the eight 300SL pieces are the same for these.

Cars and art



Mercedes-Benz big on collectable art since the 1970s.

A collection of works by world-famous artists is presently on display at the Mercedes-Benz Museum in Stuttgart and can be seen until October 2025. The 30 exhibits are of 20 artists including Andy Warhol, Sylvie Fleury and contemporary artists such as Kai Fischer, Claudia Wieser and Heba Y Amin. They deal with "issues such as the influence of iconic brands on society, the convergence of art and design, the validity of systems of order and measurement, and the development of abstract art," the Museum explains.

The Mercedes-Benz Art Collection was founded in 1977 and is today considered one of the most important European corporate collections, having won an international reputation. The collection includes around 3,000 works by more than 800 artists, and attaches great importance to acquiring works by younger artists.

In other news...

M-B celebrates top motorsport year


Late February saw Mercedes-Benz kick off its 70th year celebrations of the 1955 racing season it dominated, with a stunning display at the ModaMiami 2025 event in Miami. This included a 300SLR, an R129 Silver Arrow Edition, an E60 AMG and an SLR McLaren.

Mercedes pays tribute to Gottlieb Daimler

The automobile pioneer who died in Cannstatt 125 years ago at 65 is being honoured for his "outstanding achievements for the company and the development of modern mobility" by Mercedes-Benz Heritage. In August an replica of his two-wheeled *Reitwagen* will be shown at classic car events.

Manor Park Classics extends auction ops

The leading 'fixed site' classic car auction house in the north west of England has acquired Southampton-based auctioneer Barons, which mainly specialises in the affordable classic car price range. The deal marks the start of an expansion, says MPC.

Record numbers visit M-B Museum

In 2024 a total of 882,422 visitors from 162 countries walked through the doors of the Mercedes-Benz Museum, a 10 per cent increase on the previous year, the carmaker reports. On September 12, 2024 it welcomed its 13 millionth guest since opening in May of 2006.



IMAGES Gooding & Company and Brian Henniker/Mercedes-Benz Group AG/SLShop/Classic Mercedes



R230 SLs now so cheap, centre '03 500SL with a roof issue making £2,746.

UK Slowdown!

After a boom in classic car prices fuelled at least in part by Covid, values in the UK are now heading back down to earth. David Sutherland attended one recent auction where this was very much in evidence and not much was selling strongly

IMAGES David Sutherland

Historics Auctioneers Ascot Racecourse Sale

Location Ascot, Berkshire
When February 1, 2025

In recent years Historics Auctioneers in Buckinghamshire has evolved into the auction house offering the largest number of Mercedes-Benzes in the UK, which allows its sales to be ready indicators of the strength of the classic Benz market, albeit at the more affordable end of the spectrum. And during its first 'physical' (as opposed to online) event of 2025, held at the Ascot Racecourse in early February, the signs were definitely of some bidder reticence.

From the Mercedes perspective, the sale looked like it was going to be an SL benefit, the roadster in a variety of model generations accounting for all but two of the 16 star cars entered.





ABOVE
Muso Jay Kay's restored, pristine 380SLC was bid up to a strong £37,500.

LEFT
SL65 AMG seller wanted £53K-£63K, but bidders didn't want to go there.

But by the end of the sale one of two things, or perhaps both, seemed to have happened: low bidder appetite, and sellers being too ambitious with their reserves.

Almost certainly the latter was a factor. While setting a reserve is typically the result of a conversation between the auctioneer and the seller, ultimately the seller has the final say. It's now widely accepted that the classic values boom during Covid is now correcting itself, bringing



Lots of body, interior and mechanical work, but £95K-£115K too much.

financial pain to some owners who bought their cars four to five years ago expecting prices to keep on rising. But apart from one outstanding car, an immaculate 107-series 380SLC, the only Mercedes lots that sold were those entered in the sale with no protective reserve.

Historics spokesman Michael Hodges did not attempt to put a brave face on matters, commenting, "People were gawking but not buying. The market has gone soft – even at the affordable end. As a result, many of the best cars are being held back as owners decide that this not a good time to sell, leaving a higher proportion of mediocre cars."

He added, however, that some outstanding cars, or those with a good provenance are still selling well, one being the star of the auction's Mercedes contingent, an immaculate 380SLC entered by petrolhead musician Jay Kay of Jamiroquai. A 1981 car, therefore very late on in C107 production and benefiting from the 380 all-alloy V8 engine, it had covered just 41,000 miles and had undergone a 'nut and bolt' restoration at the UK's foremost SL specialist, the SLShop based in Warwickshire. It made £37,500 (within its estimate range) including buyer's fee, strong for a C107 that isn't the rally homologation 450SLC 5.0 or 500SLC. By comparison, a 1980 450SLC in average condition made £9,438.

Presently, the R230 SL generation that succeeded the R129 in 2002 is the cheapest SL you can buy, open market prices dropping below £3,000. But of late the more special models are regularly seen at classic auctions, Historics offering four of them at Ascot. Two examples of the mightiest R230 of all, the six-litre V12, 600bhp-plus SL65 AMG, both from 2004, carried pre-sale estimates of £53,000-£63,000 and £68,000-£78,000 but neither sold. Another V12, a 2003 SL600 was more modestly entered, £15,000-£20,000 expected of it, but no one came forward. An early, 2002 SL55 AMG did find a buyer – as a no-reserve entry it went for £8,008.

The traditional classics did little better. A 1960 190SL with a £95,000-£115,000 estimate did not sell, nor did a 1971 280SL Pagoda (£80,000-£95,000). Even a 1980 R107 350SL hoping for an accessible £14,000-£17,000 was unwanted.

But if sellers were likely to have been largely disappointed, it was a good day for the bargain hunters. The cheapest Benz of the sale was a 2003 SL500 at £2,746, another of the same, a year younger fetching £3,432.

After many years being shunned, the 1990s 140-series S-Class is beginning to enjoy some classic recognition, though it's still usually of low value. A 1996 S500l, the long-wheelbase model, and with the best 140 engine, sold for £4,233. However, the left-field Mercedes at Ascot was the 1990 240GD in Singapore Military spec. £12,298 and just needing road registered! CM





TOP
With its £85K-£95K hope, this late production 280SL remained unsold...

ABOVE
...and even with a reserve between £14K to £17K this 350SL didn't sell.

BELOW LEFT
Cheap stuff did shift, like this 140-series S500L that achieved £4,233.

BELOW MIDDLE
Early, '02 500SL with SL55 AMG alloys and exhaust sold for £3,432.

BELOW RIGHT
Military GD240 moved on for £12,298, low-ish for a classic G-Wagen.







Arabian adventure

The first Oman Classics rally took place in February, and enjoyed organisational help from 300SL expert HK-Engineering, which ensured W198s were involved

IMAGES HK-Engineering

Oman Classics 2025

Location Sultanate of Oman
When February 17-22, 2025

The Oman Classics, 2025 its inaugural year, is an exclusive rally style tour in the Sultanate of Oman, a country on the south eastern coast of the Arabian Peninsula. The driving takes places over four days, with time built in at either end for familiarisation and relaxation. "Explore deserts, mountains, and ancient cities, staying in Oman's finest hotels," says the organiser. "With exclusive events, cultural experiences, and full support along the way, this rally promises excitement at every turn."

HK-Engineering, based in Polling in southern Germany and the world's leading W198 300SL Gullwing/Roadster specialist, believes that the premium classic car scene in this region has much potential, and so became involved in organising the Oman Classics, working with the local team of Zainab Al Mamari and Manuel Kiefer. "This rally marked the beginning of a long-term project," revealed HK founder and boss, Hans Kleissl, never a man to knowingly shun a spot of motoring adventure. His close involvement unsurprisingly saw no fewer than nine 300SLs participating, most of which were flown in from Germany.

The four-day programme offered participants a series of highlights. A special moment was the vehicle presentation directly by the sea at the exclusive Shangri-La Al Husn Hotel, attended by high-ranking personalities from politics and business. Memorable experiences followed, including a stop at the 5-star Alila Hotel, perched on the highest rock in the region, an overnight stay at a desert camp, and the closing event in Muscat, set in an historic ambiance.

For the Sultanate of Oman, this was the first event of its kind, and both the organisers and participants seemed extremely satisfied. "The country not only surprised us with its impressive beauty but also with its hospitality and enthusiasm for events like this," said one participant. All 300SLs entered safely reached the finish line, testament to the integrity of the 300SLs, and to the professional support HK-Engineering provided. CM





TOP
Always an interesting mix of road traffic on events in this region.

RIGHT
Entrants were assured that their valuable cars would be looked after.



BELOW LEFT
Nine 300SL Gullwings and Roadster took part, most from Germany.

BELOW
The four-day event including a 'glamping' overnight in the desert.



£10K heroes

Four Mercedes-Benzes sold for four figures at auction

£10K HEROES IMAGES Anglia Car Auctions/Barons Manor Park/Brightwells/H&H Classics

◆ Metal for money, you'll look long to better this: a 126-series flagship saloon, the 560SEL, sold for £7,875 in H&H Classic's sale in Buxton in Derbyshire in mid-February. It's benefited from a lot of work including a full body refurbishment and an overhaul of the four-speed auto transmission. Great buy!



◆ An alternative to the 126-series S-Class on the left was this 1979 W116 280SE, its high bid similar at £7,700 when auctioned in early February by Barons Manor Park in Southampton. The six-cylinder auto has had just two owners, and since 2023 has come out of storage and been recommissioned.



◆ Aside from the 16-valve models, the six-cylinder 190E 2.6 is, for many, the most sought after W201. This quite late, 1991 car in a good colour offered at Brightwells in Herefordshire in February got 29 bids but only made £3,623, which seems cheap. It had been stored for eight years, so work was needed.



◆ Almost touching the upper limits of our '£10K Heroes' budget, this 1985 R107 280SL, an abandoned restoration project from 2023, sold for £9,828 at Anglia Car Auctions in King's Lynn in Norfolk in January. Recent work on the 98,000-mile R107 included new brake calipers and discs.



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Letters

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Josh salutes the instigator of this unique conversion.

Weighty issue

The Winter 2024 *Classic Mercedes* cover story on the R107 300SL stopped short of saying the 300 was a sharper drive than the 420 or 500, though you intimated as much, concluding that, "in many ways it's a better drive than the V8s". This has been said many times, but I have to question why.



Andrew doesn't agree that the R107 300SL is nimbler than the V8-engined 500SL...



... because the M103 six is barely any lighter.

The earlier iron-block M116 V8 did indeed weigh a lot more than the six-cylinder M110, adding nearly 50kg extra at the front. However, the M103 six-cylinder unit in the 300SL you featured reportedly weighs 200kg against the M117 at 207kg, so I doubt the extra weight would make a difference. Additionally, the M103 engine is an iron-block which extends further ahead of the axle than the alloy-block V8s, so if anything the 300 would be more nose heavy.

Interestingly, in the same issue you champion the M119 R129 500 as "the one to have" rather than the 320. Having driven the M113 V8 SL500 and M112 V6 SL320 back to back, I can say the V6 has a sharper turn-in, but then it barely projects beyond the front axle line. The M112 is also 25 per cent lighter than the preceding M104 straight-six, which no doubt helps.

Andrew Scott, North Shields, Tyne and Wear

Power problem

Buried in the text of the W198 300SL Roadster appraisal in the Spring 2025 issue of *Classic Mercedes* was the coy admission that the car was fitted with a power-assisted steering system, from EZ Electric Power Steering in the Netherlands. How I imagined the purists wringing their hands at this desecration of the hallowed W198!



Adrian approves of power-steering for a W198.

But let's face it, marvellous though the 300SL is, the heavy steering blights it if you are looking for a relaxing drive rather than 1950s authenticity. I'm sure that power-assistance transforms the Mercedes, and while we're about it, let's have disc brakes fitted, which will give it the acceptable stopping power the original drums can't!

Adrian Baskerville, Aldeburgh, Suffolk

Well engineered modifications to the W198 are usually considered acceptable if they are fully reversible – Ed

Classic mistake

I would like to take issue with you on your assertion in the Spring 2025 issue of *Classic Mercedes* that the original model CLS is going to be a future classic, an outcome you are so sure of you devoted six pages to it. The arguments were well presented: its stunning looks, its ground-breaking 'coupe' configuration and the two excellent model variants, the CLS55 AMG and the diesel CLS320CDI.

But there is a flaw in you logic: numbers. Production was well over 100,000 cars, which means it isn't going to be scarce any time soon, and until that happens people won't pay big money for them. But that's good, because we can buy them cheap and enjoy them!

Jack MacGillivray, Peterhead, Scotland



CLS won't be classic until it's scarce, says Jack.

Conversion factor

Massive respect to Brett Parker for his incredible, imaginative project, marrying up a Fintail 230S body with a 124 coupe platform, interior and engine (*Classic Mercedes*, Spring 2025). I would love to have been a fly on the wall at his eureka moment, and also when he told people what he planned to do.

I was also fascinated by the sensitivity he showed over details of the conversion, such as feeling guilty at not telling the 124's previous owner he'd be chopping up a perfectly good modern classic Mercedes. Modified cars usually turn me off – but this was inspired!

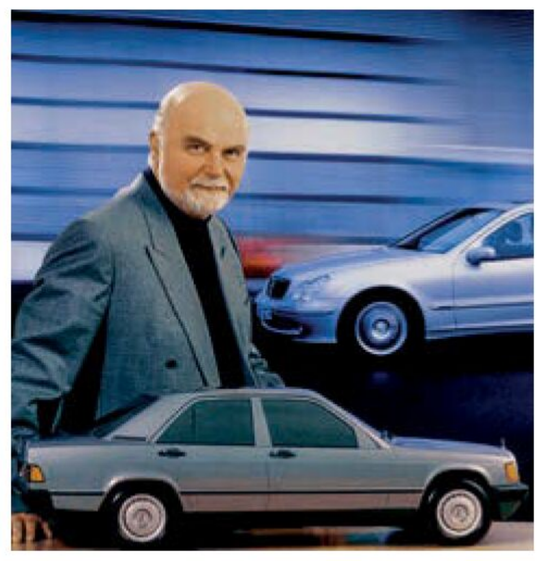
Josh Rhinelander, Cheyenne, Wyoming

When I received Brett's story and photos I read through in complete fascination! – Ed

People skills

I was interested to read the appreciation of Mercedes-Benz styling chief, Bruno Sacco. It seems that in his day and in previous decades, he and his colleagues in equivalent posts were charismatic 'personalities', something that doesn't happen in the multinational company that Mercedes-Benz has now become. Or maybe I'm just looking at history with my rose-tinted spectacles.

Dylan Bronwen, Cardiff, Wales



Sacco was a Mercedes personality, says Dylan.

IMAGES *Jonathan Fleetwood/Brett Parker/Classic Mercedes*

Get in touch!

Email letters and pictures to the *Classic Mercedes* Editor:
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Wishbone, front, upper, left & right, late version

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VETERAN MERCEDES SPECIALIST MARK COSOVICH HAS FOUR DECADES OF TALES TO TELL

50 not out!



The 123-series will reach 50 this year, an anniversary not lost on our 123 expert, Mark Cosovich. There are still quite a lot around, but the difference between a good and a bad one is cavernous – something he feels isn't widely known, even among 123 owners

IMAGES Dimitris Legakis/*Classic Mercedes*/Mercedes-Benz AG



Mark fully restored this 230E, and it will drive as well as a new one did in 1985.

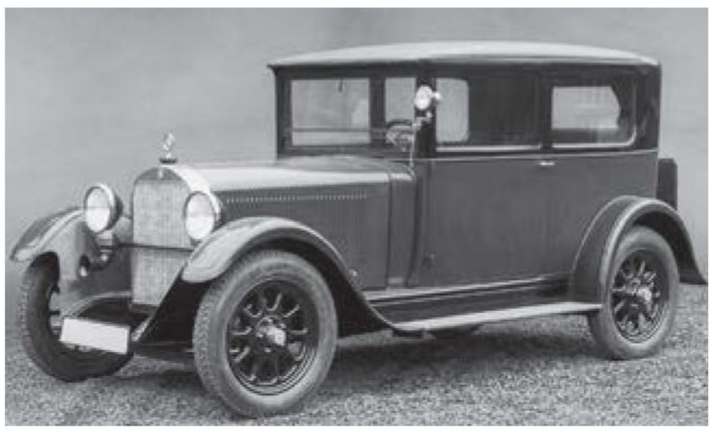
Later this year it will be possible to own a Mercedes-Benz 123-series that is actually half a century old, the first production cars, the W123 saloons, being unveiled to the public in September 1975. Daimler-Benz was of course a very different company 50 years ago, one primarily renowned globally for its engineering excellence in many other fields besides motorcars, such as its superb commercial vehicle range, aircraft and machine diesels. In car production it was not a massive player compared to others such as Ford, General Motors or the large Japanese manufacturers; passenger car output in 1975 totalled 350,000.



Firm seat innards are essential, otherwise the driver isn't well located and the car feels loose.

"Engineered like no other car" really was a truism besides being a memorable advertising slogan. Fifty years is a very long time in the motor industry, and when buying my first W123 in the late 1970s, cars then that were 50 years old were vehicles from the 1920s, which mostly did not even have brakes on all four wheels. But I feel a 123 today does not seem to be the old age that it is – it's still competitive and comfortable to drive in today's traffic, and by any standards this must be an astonishing achievement.

The vast majority of the 2.4 million 123s manufactured no longer exist, and this is particularly true of the vehicles supplied to the UK market and northern European countries, due to the colder and wetter weather. Obviously, the survivors are those which have been cared for, but most 123s fall into two categories.



The 123-series is now 50 years old. Fifty years ago, this is what a 50-year-old car looked liked (shown is a Mercedes Type 8/38hp), many not having brakes on all four wheels.



Sadly, once a 123 gets this bad, restoration isn't an economic proposition.

"IN THE 1970s, CARS THEN THAT WERE 50 YEARS OLD WERE FROM THE 1920S, WHICH MOSTLY DIDN'T EVEN HAVE BRAKES ON ALL FOUR WHEELS"

First are the original, very low-milers which have been mothballed and stored. Before they are driven they would need a full and careful recommissioning. The second type are the well cared for or fully restored examples that we at W123 World here in Swansea in Wales have maintained and restored for many years. In the UK, few of these cars are now used as daily drivers anymore, those wishing to own them usually motivated by a desire to have this piece of amazing engineering from 40 or 50 years ago.

Until recently, owning a 123 has been a bit of a minefield, as partially restored or incorrectly rebuilt examples have been widely offered, often on internet auction sites. Sadly, the new owners never get to enjoy these vehicles as they would be when correctly restored, or as they were when new in the late 1970s and early 1980s. Here's a relevant memory from some 20 years ago, when I was invited to judge vehicles at a Mercedes-Benz Club concours d'elegance event at Woburn Abbey, at a time when I had formed the 123-series section of the Club.

Comments were made to me then that the 123 was a "sloppy old barge" compared to later Mercedes models. Supposedly knowledgeable enthusiasts at the event told me the steering was too vague, the suspension too soft, the brakes not sharp enough and so on. I saw this as a challenge and told them: "My W123 isn't any of that, and any of you can take it for a spin around the park!" A couple of enthusiasts did just that, and after they found that it drove superbly, tracked evenly and had excellent brakes and suspension they came back crestfallen. "Ah, but you've upgraded everything on your 280E," they said. "Sorry, you are all wrong," I replied. "The the only difference is that mine has had all of the 20-year-old suspension and brakes and steering components replaced, because they all worked, but not like they did in the 1970s."

It was a satisfying moment, but my point was to show how things change in 20 years, not the 50 years we are now at with the 123. Many small things which you might not think about deteriorate, for example the seat springing and the horsehair pads in the seat base; if these have broken up, which is very common, it invariably means the driver is not secure so the cars feels loose. I've often fitted many new components in the course of restoring a 123, and usually the first thing the owner says after driving it is how comfortable the seat is now, not commenting on the huge amount of other work carried out!

To have a 123-series today is to own a piece of unique engineering which belongs to a period now long gone. No other vehicle rides or drives like one, except perhaps the 116-series S-Class introduced five years before the 123. This was basically a bigger version in every way, and is now even rarer to find in good order, and usually punitively expensive to restore and run.

Sadly, I'm old enough to remember what it was like in the 1970s to enter a Mercedes-Benz showroom and purchase these cars as they were intended to be. Put simply, they did not have any real competition back then, and for some of us, even today they still don't. CM



The 116-series launched in 1972 is basically a bigger version of the 123.

OLD SCHOOL MERCEDES DEVOTEE REED HITCHCOCK SHARES OWNERSHIP THOUGHTS

Moving on



We tried to stop him, but Reed insisted on saying goodbye to his wonderful 500SEC. For him, selling is part of the thrill of ownership, and here he tells us how he got a good price by entering it into an online auction at no reserve

IMAGES Reed Hitchcock



Reed's 500SEC boards a transporter taking it to the pre-auction prep.

The 1983 C126 500SEC, which you may have read about in past issues of *Classic Mercedes*, is gone. It was a massively enjoyable car, and this one was the exact specification I'd have chosen if I'd ordered it new from Mercedes: early (pre-facelift) C126, five-litre M117 motor, Astral Silver, heated orthopaedic blue velour seats and air conditioning. So what changed? Having owned the car for nearly two years – a very long time for my garage – I started thinking a while back that I'd done just about everything I wanted to do with it.

While attending a Bring a Trailer Alumni event in Westchester County, New York last autumn, I ran into my old friend Dean Laumbach, a classic Mercedes 'power seller' on the online US auction platform. Dean has a reputation for selling the best of the best Mercedes on Bring a Trailer, and I'd recently engaged him to assist in the sale of a 2012 S212 E63 estate, which resulted in a good price.

Every time Dean has seen the SEC he's asked me when I'm going to let him sell it.



This was it departing the Mercedes-Benz Classic Center in California in 2023, bound for the Virginia Hitchcock residence.

IMAGE Mercedes-Benz Group AG


Much as he loved it, eventually its time was up.

"THERE IS A DIFFERENT ENERGY AROUND NO-RESERVE AUCTIONS, WHEN BIDDERS KNOW THAT THERE IS A REAL POSSIBILITY THAT THEY WILL END UP WITH THE CAR"

This time I told him that it might be sooner than later. He was intrigued, and I started plotting. We'd done the road trips in the SEC, we'd won awards at shows, and we'd got it to as good a state as could reasonably be expected. From there I just felt like I was done with the car. It was time for a new automotive challenge.

After a little hemming and hawing on my part, I finally told Dean it was time. In a matter of days the car was on a trailer to New Jersey where Dean would then tend to any small needs, comprehensively detail the car, and shoot pictures and video for the auction. He also changed the oil, to ensure that any prospective buyer would get a car 100 per cent ready to go. This all happened much faster than expected, and from my door to the auction start was about two weeks.

Like most auction venues – online or in-person – Bring a Trailer offers both reserve and no-reserve auctions. With very few exceptions, Dean insists on no-reserve auctions for cars he sells. I have to agree: there is a different energy around these auctions, when bidders know that there is a real possibility that they will end up with the car, as opposed to a secret unknown amount that may or may not be achieved at the end of the day. As a seller, this is nerve-wracking but exhilarating. For my wife I suspect it was more the former, at least until the last 10 minutes of the auction.

Selling a car online offers sellers the opportunity to reach potential buyers across the country or even the globe, but it also opens the door to what is often referred-to as the 'peanut gallery' – the armchair keyboard warriors with nothing better to do than to pick apart every photograph or detail of a car for sale. One of the reasons to work with someone like Dean is that over the course of the 535 cars he's listed on the site to date, he has established that reputation of honesty in presentation and again, representing the best. I've sold a few cars there in the past, and while I do my best to be as upfront and honest about all aspects of a vehicle, because these cars often have 'stories' it's easy to get caught out by commenters on some detail or other that you've neglected to mention – and that stands to affect your final price.



The silver 500SEC did its fair share of classic car events in the US.

I figure that the Dean effect adds about 10 per cent over what I'd get if selling on my own, but his fee is much less than that. Over the course of the seven-day auction, we got off to a strong start, and then bidding stalled for what seemed like an eternity. Every night my wife would come home from work and ask me where the bidding was. We fretted as the car lingered for a while well below what we had invested in it or even what we'd originally paid. I mean, if I can get what I paid for a car I'm a tremendously happy guy; if I can recoup the additional investment of repairs, accessories, and the like, I'm ecstatic. Throughout the auction, until you surpass whatever threshold you've set, there is a constant voice – at least in my head – telling me I'm going to lose money.

It's that last 10 minutes where it all levels out. Bidders don't want to show their cards too early, so they wait until the end. At least on this platform, while some bidders will wait until the very end, the clock resets to two minutes with every bid starting at 1min 59sec to go. That's when the heart starts racing, panic sets in, and then, at least in this case, there is the euphoria of hitting the target number – then exceeding it! Suffice it to say, we felt very pleased with the end result.


M-B Club's Rugger Smith (left) and Omar Abou Zied flank Reed.

Reed Hitchcock lives in Virginia, USA and is co-host of the **Totally That Stupid** *motoring podcast and blog Web totallythatstupid.com*

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INSIGHTS AND OPINIONS FROM INSIDE THE CLASSIC MERCEDES TRADE



Spring clean

A classic car brought out from long winter storage needs some 'recommissioning'. Eric Collins explains what that will involve

IMAGES Richard Mason / *Classic Mercedes*

Ideally, before a car goes into storage it should have a service to replace all fluids, and the same when it re-emerges. Customers think they're paying twice, but are probably unaware that the harsh laws of chemistry apply to a hibernating car. Modern fuel contains at least five per cent bioethanol, which is hygroscopic, meaning it absorbs water, creating corrosion over the winter in places you really don't want it.

But if you've drained the fuel or run it to empty and then replaced it with a specialist, ethanol-free storage fuel, you're protecting the system from rust. Storage fuel can last three years, and its additives clean the engine and prevent oxidisation, which of course extends engine life. Putting in 20 to 30 litres is adequate, and the engine will run better when it comes out of storage. At £4.30 a litre it's not cheap, but preferable to replacing carburettor, fuel-injection, fuel pump and fuel accumulator components. If laid up with regular petrol, this needs draining, the filter changed and a check for rust and sediment; if there is rust in the tank, it needs repairing. Only then add fresh fuel and start the engine.

Spare parts, even new old stock, can fail prematurely due to poor quality or deterioration. Check the belts for signs of fraying and replace even if new-ish, the same with hoses showing leakage stains or cracking. At the same time, the coolant will need replacing because it loses its anti corrosion and lubrication properties.

A classic that's been in storage may need new brake fluid before venturing out, as water in the fluid under pressure can damage metal components in the braking system. And the longer the storage period, the more more likely the brakes are to seize. I've seen disc pad linings coming away from the backing plate because the bonding has failed.

The same applies to the shoes in drum brakes. We've had cars where the brake lining is spinning around inside the drum, causing problems. The old asbestos ones that were riveted on didn't have that issue, because asbestos to some extent is self lubricating. So leave the handbrake off.

There's a similar issue with manual gearboxes, because clutches can seize unless the pedal is kept depressed. Tools that will facilitate this are cheap enough, and save expensive problems at recommissioning. I've seen broom handles being used with the other end jammed against the seat squab.

Batteries are best maintained on a smart charger, not by running the engine with the car static, which results in condensation in the cylinder bores and premature wear. Air filters need checking for damp and even rodent infestation; rodents get into many places and wreak havoc with wiring.

The car's exterior needs attention, especially if the car hasn't been in a climate-controlled facility. Best pre-storage practice is to put wax on the paintwork and chrome, which gives an extra layer of protection and helps prevent the chrome from pitting; this is especially important for classics kept outdoors under a cover, given the likelihood of trapped moisture. Recommissioning is then simply buffing the wax off. Similarly, the car interior needs wiping down with a mould blocker prior to storage, then it's just a matter of cleaning the interior, without having mould stains and smell to contend with. CM

A CLASSIC THAT'S BEEN IN STORAGE NEEDS NEW BRAKE FLUID BEFORE VENTURING OUT, AS WATER IN THE OLD FLUID DAMAGES METAL COMPONENTS IN THE BRAKING SYSTEM



Proper car care over winter pays dividends in springtime.



After winter storage, new oil, coolant and brake fluid advised.



A mould blocker will prevent the interior smelling unpleasant.

⇨ *Eric Collins is director of Classic Car Mechanic in Liphook, Hampshire*
Tel:+44 (0)1428 746648
Web www.classiccarmechanic.co.uk

PICTURE ICONS PERFECT

September 1991, Frankfurt: 124-series cabriolet launched

No car manufacturer has exploited the convertible configuration in the way Mercedes-Benz has in the last seven-plus decades. In particular, the carmaker has all but owned the four-seat cabriolet market, other marques periodically participating but none demonstrating the same staying power. As spring appears, it therefore seems appropriate to devote a special section to star-badge droptops with a useable rear seat, and this begins overleaf with the W111 cabriolet, possibly the most glamorous four-seat Mercedes model of the post-war period.

For over 20 years from the arrival of the W136 170S in Cabriolet A and Cabriolet B form in 1949, Stuttgart offered four-seat cabriolets. In 1951 the opulence dial was turned up to eleven when the 300S Cabriolet/ Roadster was announced, hand-built on a shortened 300 'Adenauer' limousine chassis, and with unparalleled luxury that made it one of most expensive cars in the world at the time. It was effectively replaced in 1956 by the 220S, a super luxurious two-door Ponton drophead which ran until 1960.

Momentum was lost after the W111 cabriolet was discontinued in 1971, partly due to worries that soft tops might be outlawed in the US, Mercedes' most important export market. Hence from that point, the SL was the only convertible in the line-up. But when the 124-series, as pictured here, marked a cabriolet comeback after 20 years, it was as glamorous and sophisticated as its customers would expect. Stylist Bruno Sacco re-worked the magic on his 124 coupe, and safety – now a worry for convertible owners – was state-of-the art. And over 30 years on, it's one of the most practical classic soft tops you can buy.

IMAGE Mercedes-Benz Group AG

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Four-seat cabriolets

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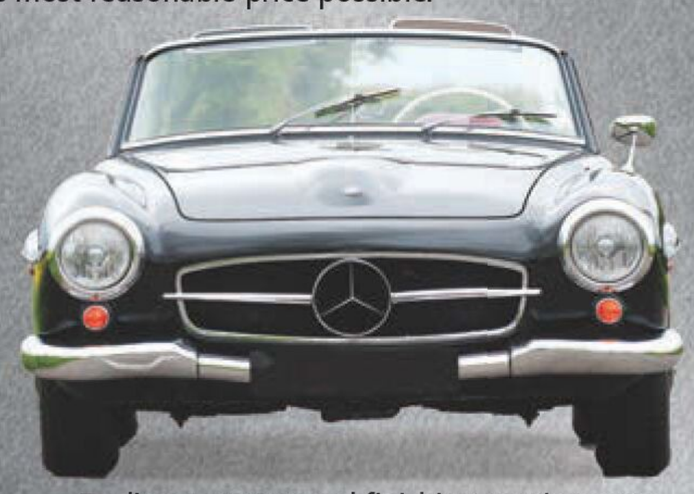
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Cover story

Top of the world

IMAGES JONATHAN FLEETWOOD

Mercedes Four-seat cabriolets

“In February 1961 Mercedes-Benz raised its game with the introduction of the W111 luxury coupe, and a convertible six months later, that broke technical barriers”

To follow…

Page 32
CLK430
Driving a ‘below the radar’ V8 208-series



Page 38
12 four-seaters
We round up a dozen Mercedes droptops



The Mercedes-Benz W111 is the most glamorous four-seat cabriolet ever made, many feel, especially the final, top-of-the range, V8-engined 280SE 3.5. But in fact the most delivered model was the first and least powerful, the 220SEb, and here David Sutherland describes it and its evolution, and drives it. Following this, as part of our spring cabriolet special section, we look at a more modern drophead Mercedes and also present a guide to all Stuttgart's other post-war four-seater cabriolets



It's natural to feel quite superior when driving a W111 cabriolet.



Specifications

Mercedes-Benz 220SEb Cabriolet (W111)

ENGINE M127 2,195cc 6-cyl
POWER 118bhp@4,800rpm
TORQUE 140lb ft@3,900rpm
TRANSMISSION 4-speed automatic
WEIGHT 1,510kg
0-62MPH 13.7sec
TOP SPEED 106mph
FUEL CONSUMPTION 25.2mpg
YEARS PRODUCED 1961-1965
NUMBER BUILT 2,729

All figures from Mercedes-Benz

"W111s were based on the Fintail saloon launched two years earlier, with the same wheelbase but a plainer, fin-free tail. No body parts were interchangeable"



LEFT
The fuel-injected 2.2 straight-six came from the 220SEb Fintail.
BELOW
An imposing Mercedes grille star sits atop a dummy radiator cap.



Daimler-Benz, the Mercedes-Benz parent company, hobbled into the 1950s a much reduced industrial entity, its factories 80 per cent destroyed in World War Two, and its 1930s swagger vanquished. Indeed, its 1948 annual report concluded that, practically speaking, the company ceased to exist. Yet within five years Mercedes had almost totally reinvented itself. Its pre-war grand prix racing dominance had been restored (albeit for a brief two-year period), and the sensational 300SL 'Gullwing', launched in 1954 amply demonstrated that even with its pared down financial muscle compared to pre-war resources, the company was still a technology leader.

The 1953 Ponton, with its monocoque construction and passenger safety cell, had re-established the carmaker as a credible force in the mainstream market, the four-door, 'three-box' saloon exposing the four- ⇨

Driving the 220SEb Cabriolet

By today's standards the original W111 cabriolet model has no horsepower to spare, but David Sutherland insists it's still a car that answers to the description 'fabulous'

On first sight of this W111 220SEb Cabriolet, I found myself consumed by its overall magnificence, unable to think of another convertible motorcar with such overwhelming presence. The enormous, highly polished chrome grille and double-decked bumpers are highlighted by the stunning silver-grey metallic paintwork (DB180), while for me the blue leather interior is the perfect match for it. My eyes then took in the detailing which also contributes to the exquisite appearance: the traditional upright Mercedes star with mock radiator cap, chrome hub caps and whilte wall tyres, polished interior wood trim and large, thin-rimmed cream-coloured steering wheel.

Once comfortable in the generously sized and padded seat, you can see what you have the pleasure of sitting in. No modern, low slung and so enclosed driving position that reversing without a rear camera is impossible; in a droptop W111 you can see the big bonnet in all its curvature and the big star marking its leading edge, while the straight, elbow-height waistine allows the passing world to be easily taken in. You cannot help but feel superior at the helm, no doubt the way Mercedes intended it when it launched the car over 60 years ago.

There is however a slight coming down to earth when starting the engine, a reminder that even although this particular W111 (personally owned by SLShop proprietor Sam Bailey, but nonetheless included in the SLShop stocklist at the time of our visit) was priced at £149,999 it is still the smallest-engined and least powerful version. The straight-six is from the era when large cars often had relatively small engines for tax reasons, hence the M127's 2.2-litre capacity and comparatively meagre 118bhp. To get the big cabrio moving smartly, all the available horsepower must be summoned, in otherwards pedal to metal. Handling is 'period' too, with vague steering and lots of bodyroll. But on a nice warm day it hardly matters that the 220SEb has not much more than half the output of the 1969-1971 280SE 3.5, and wobbly cornering, because with the roof lowered riding in the W111 is an unutterably lovely experience.



ABOVE
The 220SEb Cabriolet isn't a quick car, but it can be enjoyed slowly.

Lowering and raising the substantial canvas hood is a manual, not electric procedure, but unexpectedly easy given that a typical sports car hood of 60 odd years ago could be a pig to deal with. Simply twist two levers at the top of the windscreen to release it and push it back. Unlike SLs and subsequent Benz cabriolets, the hood is not stored under a metal cover, but it looks neat enough once the tonneau cover is in place and the fasteners popped. And the W111 is still a handsome two-door with the roof in place.

This 1966 220SEb is a gorgeous example of the breed. It's in its original colour, and over just 64,000 miles and four previous owners has been more than dutifully maintained. Sam Bailey claims it to be one of the best around, and that's not an idle boast, I'd say.



BELOW
A wonderful top-down profile, provided the tonneau cover is fitted.

You'll be pushed to find another classic car interior as glorious.

⇨ cylinder 170- and six-cylinder 220-series models, and even the big 300 'Adenauer', with their running boards and separate wings as the pre-war designs they essentially were. Daimler-Benz was riding the wave of West Germany's *Wirtschaftswunder* ('economic miracle'), its optimism and confidence not only reflected in its new models but in the way in which it was building itself into an international company, opening a factory in Argentina, with Brazil and India to follow shortly.

In 1961 Mercedes-Benz raised its game even further, with the introduction of the W111 luxury coupe and convertible models that not only broke technical barriers but are regarded by many as the most handsome Mercedes cars of the post-war period. The coupe version came first, revealed in February at the opening of the new Daimler-Benz Museum in Untertürkheim in Stuttgart, the even more seductive cabriolet arriving in August.

The W111 was not Mercedes' first large four-seat convertible. Indeed, its introduction overlapped with the final year of the 300d Cabriolet D, the last of the Adenauer variants which had been in production for a decade. But Europe had not seen the like of it, nor the coupe: a low, sleek and notably long booted vehicle borrowing its proportions from big, 1950s American cars, although shorn of their extreme rear wings and wild chrome embellishments. This was, of course, no random inspiration, because North America was where a high proportion of Mercedes' top-range models were sold, thanks to the efforts of its high profile, New York based importer, Max Hoffman.

The W111 two-door was only seven inches longer than the preceding, 128-series Ponton-based 220SE Coupe/Cabriolet. But its square-rigged modernity, the work of Mercedes's then burgeoning styling department which included the talents of Paul Bracq and Bruno Sacco under the leadership of Gullwing stylist Friedrich Geiger, makes the difference seem greater. This was Mercedes' first pillarless coupe as we know them now.

The W111s were based on the



LEFT
The gear selected via the steering column shift is displayed on the fascia.

BELOW
Rear seat space is hardly generous but the car qualifies as a four-seater.

BOTTOM
The fascia's walnut veneer is polished to a beautiful, radiant shine.





six-cylinder Fintail saloon launched two years earlier, with the same wheelbase but a plainer, fin-free tail. The resemblance is clear – although no body parts were interchangeable. The sole cabriolet model offered for the first year was the 220SEb, its six-cylinder, overhead camshaft 2.2-litre Bosch-injected engine taken from the Fintail 220SEb, and producing the same 118bhp and 140lb ft of torque. Transmission was either four-speed manual or four-speed automatic, and the W111 was the first Mercedes to use disc brakes, beating the W198 300SL Roadster to it by a couple of months.

The 220SEb Cabriolet, with body stiffening to compensate for the roofless construction, used an identical powertrain, and the drophead would mirror the coupe's specification throughout the five-model evolution that ended in 1971, when the W111 two-door range was replaced by the C107 SLC coupe. The first addition to the W111 coupe/convertible range arrived in March 1962, the Geneva motor show hosting the launch of the 300SE, a variant with sufficiently different engineering for Daimler-Benz to assign it a separate code, W112. Its three-litre engine bore no relation to the 220SEb unit, instead the M189 was a new development of that which had been used in the big 300 Adenauer saloon, and also the 300SL Gullwing and Roadster, redesigned with a light-alloy cylinder block to reduce weight. It gave 158bhp and 185lb ft, the former figure rising by 10bhp in January 1964 when the fuel-injection pump was made into a six-plunger unit.

Whereas in the 220SEb a four-speed manual gearbox was standard equipment, and automatic transmission optional, in the 300SE a four-speed automatic was the default specification. A year later a four-speed manual gearbox was offered, reducing the car's price, while a ⇨



ABOVE
Lowering and raising the hood is fairly effortless, but easier with two people.

W111 cabriolet values

The impressive 1961-1971 droptop sells for serious money – if it's the flagship 280SE 3.5 in pristine condition, David Sutherland explains

Mercedes' W111 convertible is a car that became a sought-after classic more or less as soon as production ended in July 1971. It did not follow the common pattern of falling values and the worsening condition of surviving cars, before scarcity drove up prices a decade later; they were always expensive, as were the coupes, the lack of a replacement for the W111 surely part of the reason. But despite this history, the way in which one particular W111 cabriolet model, unsurprisingly the range-topping 280SE 3.5 Cabriolet, has rocketed in the last decade is remarkable. Notwithstanding the occasional infamously-owned W100 600 limousine that comes up for sale, the best W111s are now generally the third highest priced Mercedes-Benz classic behind the 1954-1963 300SL Gullwing/Roadster and the 1952-1958 W187 300S/Sc.

Prices of 280SE 3.5 Cabriolets at international auctions in the US (where most of the premium-level cars change hands) start at $300,000 (around £242,000), and, according to auction analyst Glenmarch, the highest auction price so far for a 280SE 3.5 Cabriolet is $676,000 (£545,700),



ABOVE
Sold for £545,700, this 280SE 3.5 is the most expensive auction W111.

achieved by RM Sotheby's in Monterey, California in 2022 for a 1971 example from a collection. The same auctioneer touched $500,000 (£403,700) with a 1971 car the following year, again at Monterey.

At the other end of the W111 cabriolet spectrum, the 220SEb, is about a third of the price of a V8. Glenmarch lists them as selling for a little over £100,000. The 280SE Cabriolet (the same facelift bodywork model as the 280SE 3.5 except with straight-six power) can make double that. If W111 cabriolets simply aren't within your budget, always remember that W111 coupes are much cheaper.



LEFT
The second priciest 280SE 3.5 at auction was bid up to £403,700.



⇨ ZF five-speed manual 'box was added to the options list.

Besides the 'racier' engine, the 300SE also featured air-spring suspension and powered brakes, with rear disc brakes over the 220SEb's rear drums. To differentiate the flagship coupe and convertible models, a chrome waistline strip ran along each side of their bodies, chrome also encasing the wheelarch edges. The price was well over a third higher than the 'base' car.

The next evolutionary step came in September 1965, when the 250SE replaced the 220SEb. Engine capacity grew to 2.5 litres, taking output up to 148bhp and 159lb ft of torque, and both it and the 300SE had 14-inch wheels instead of the previous 13-inch rims, larger brake discs (from the new 108-series saloon, which had effectively replaced the six-cylinder Fintail saloons), and hydro-pneumatic self-levelling rear suspension.

By 1968 the 300SE's all-aluminium six – complex, expensive to produce, and no longer a particularly comfortable fit in the Benz engine hierarchy – had come to the end of the road. It, as well as the 250SE, was replaced by the 280SE, its 2.8-litre straight-six not far short of the 300SE's output despite its smaller cubic capacity, at 158bhp and 177lb ft of torque.

Mercedes' V8 era had now begun, and in 1969 the 280SE 3.5 appeared (the 280SE continued alongside it), boasting the M116 3.5-litre V8. Equipped with Bosch D-Jetronic electronic fuel-injection and an early form of engine management system, it offered 197bhp and 211lb ft of torque. Its introduction coincided with the sole body update to the W111 coupe and convertible, a typical tweak of that era at Mercedes: the height of the radiator grille was reduced, and the bonnet line correspondingly lowered. The bumpers also gained rubber strips.

The W111 coupe was an exclusive car, with 28,918 built in the decade long production run, but the convertible



TOP
With its hood up the W111 cabrio becomes a graceful pillarless coupe.

INSET
Oddment tray between the front seats is one more exquiste detail.

even more so, its total 7,013. The drophead W111 notching up the highest sales worldwide was the 220SEb, which found 2,729 customers in four years and eight months. The 280SE came second with 1,390 sales, the 280SE 3.5 third at 1,232, the 250SE fourth at 954, and the 300SE – despite having the longest production run, at almost six years – is the rarest, with just 708 sold.

From today's perspective, an obvious question to ask is where was the W111's successor, because the 107-series SLC and the R107 two-seat roadster it was based on, arguably weren't the equals of the W111 in terms of prestige and presence. By then, Federal legislation threatened to outlaw convertibles in the US (although it never did), this being one possible reason why there was no direct replacement for the W111 cabriolet. Another was that to base a new coupe and convertible on a large saloon would have entailed waiting at least a year until the 116-series S-Class was launched, which management did not want to do. The spiritual success to the W111 did eventually arrive: the V8-engined 126-series SEC launched in 1981, although not in cabriolet form. CM

Thanks to SLShop near Stratford-upon-Avon in Warwickshire for the loan of the 220SEb Cabriolet
Tel +44 (0)1789 337 070 Web theslshop.com

"The drophead W111 notching up the highest sales worldwide was the 220SEb, which found 2,729 customers in four years and eight months"

Will anyone notice if I just slip off to the Côte d'Azur for a while, Editor Sutherland wondered.

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Soft POWER

While the AMG-fettled version of the original CLK is the model that attracts most attention, there's another V8 with a lower key image that some might prefer. David Sutherland looked at the CLK430 and came away impressed **IMAGES** Terry Oborne

Mercedes Four-seat cabriolets

The hood displays Mercedes' usual thoughtful design, including a sealing system and integral drip rail arrangement that among other things makes it car wash resistant

Think of a Mercedes CLK, the sleek and compact coupe and cabriolet built in two generations from 1999 for a decade, with V8 power and you may well imagine an AMG-engineered car, either the CLK55 AMG or the CLK63 AMG which replaced it. But not quite on the radar was a third model with a big capacity motor and plenty of power but without the Affalterbach fanfare: the CLK430. No bodykit or AMG wheels and badges, it was a more subtle proposition with the anonymity of a four-cylinder CLK, something that a particular group of customers desired.

Here we look at that car in its early form, the A208 CLK430 Cabriolet. introduced at the 1999 facelift for the 208-series. Against the CLK55 AMG's 342bhp and 376lb ft torque, output from the 430's 4.3-litre three-valve engine (on which the 5.4-litre AMG motor was based) was 275bhp and 295lb ft torque, fed to the rear wheels through a five-speed Tipshift automatic gearbox with manual mode.

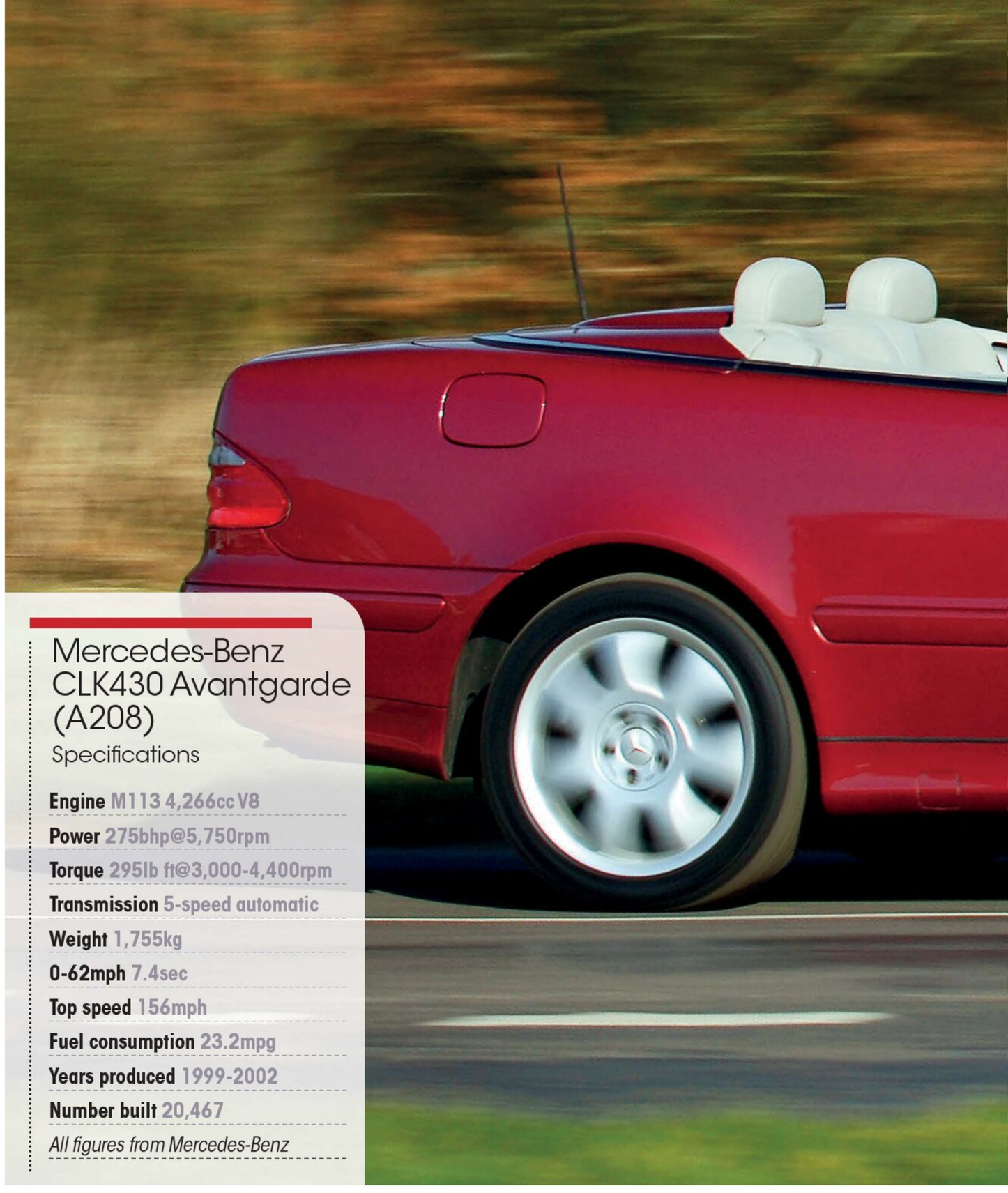
It could be purchased in Elegance or, as seen here, Avantgarde form featuring stiffer suspension, seven- as opposed to five-spoke 17-inch alloy wheels (with 225/45 tyres), and de-chromed bodywork bar the grille and badging. Extra equipment over the CLK320, which sold in higher volume, included leather seating, electrically adjustable front seats with memory, climate control rather than manual air conditioning, and metallic paint. This particular car also had the optional Parktronic, automatic dimming mirrors and the wind cheating Draught Stop.

As you would expect, the hood with its glass rear screen, designed and fitted by the coachbuilder Karmann in Osnabrück displays Mercedes' usual thoughtful design, ⇨



The optional Draught Stop is very effective at reducing wind buffeting, but it does render the CLK a two-seater and it also takes up boot space, which is already tight.

This V8, crammed into the engine bay is a communications expert, rocking as you blip the throttle at standstill, and rumbling vibrantly through the large, oval tailpipe



Mercedes-Benz CLK430 Avantgarde (A208)

Specifications

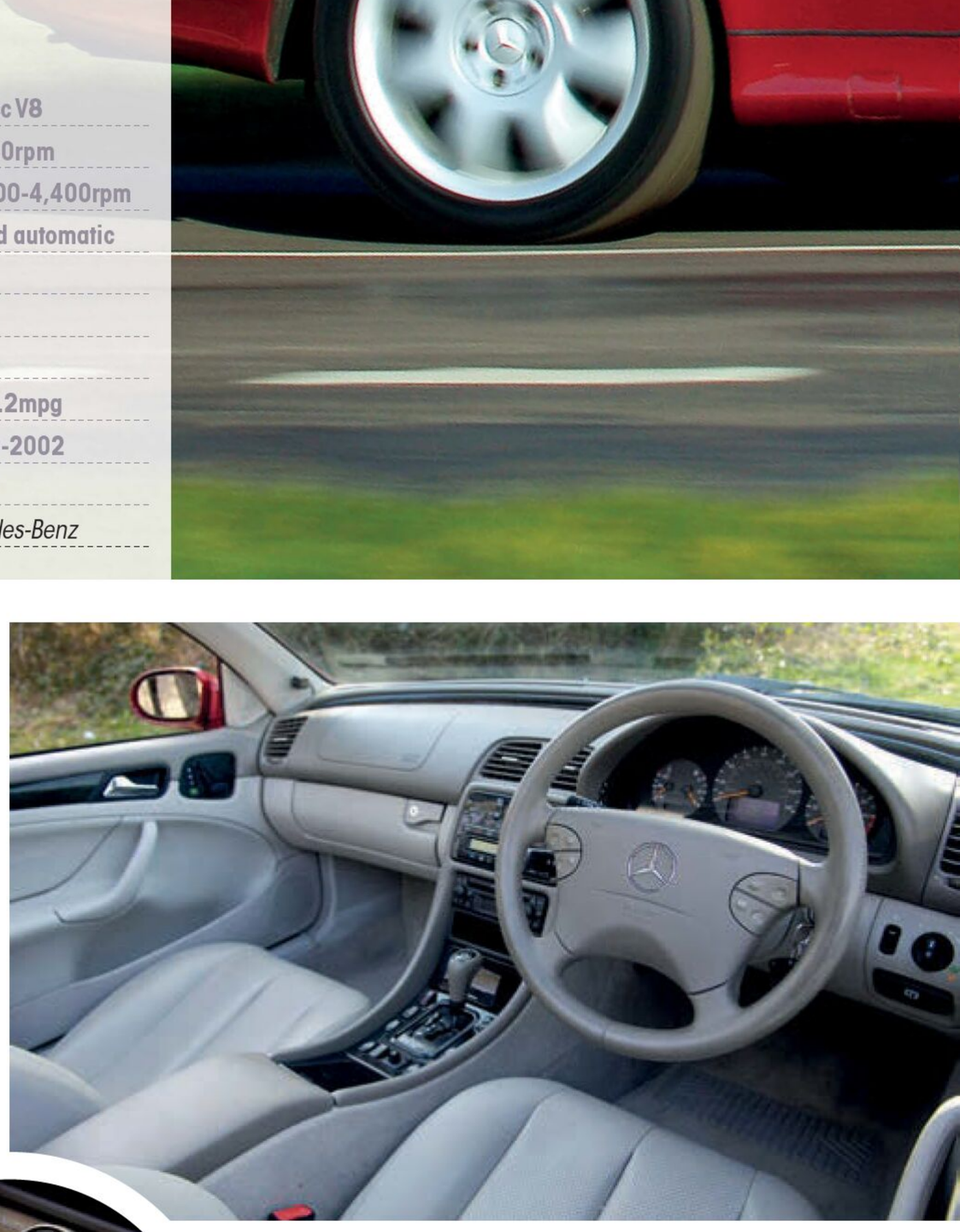
Engine M113 4,266cc V8
Power 275bhp@5,750rpm
Torque 295lb ft@3,000-4,400rpm
Transmission 5-speed automatic
Weight 1,755kg
0-62mph 7.4sec
Top speed 156mph
Fuel consumption 23.2mpg
Years produced 1999-2002
Number built 20,467

All figures from Mercedes-Benz

⇨ including a special sealing system and integral drip rail arrangement that among other things makes it car wash resistant, the carmaker said at the time. Its 20-second operation doesn't impress in the same way the retractable metal roof on SLKs and 230 series SLs do, but it offers a largely effort-free convenience. You undo a central catch at the top of the front screen and push it upwards, after which electric power, activated by a red glowing switch on the centre console takes over, the hood folding itself back before disappearing under a metal cover flush with the bodywork – as Mercedes hoods have done for decades.

With the hood down, the CLK enjoys a sleek wedgy profile, the domed hood cover a stylish detail, and the wheelarches filled nicely by the big alloys (although it's also a looker with the hood up, and also the pillarless delight that the otherwise elegant C208 coupe wasn't). As you would expect though, much work was undertaken to keep the drop top CLK safe: the A-pillars and screen frame were said to be strong enough to afford roll over protection, and as with the preceding A124 Cabriolet the rear headrests pop up instantly to double as roll protectors for the rear of the car, should sensors detect body and suspension angles suggesting a serious accident is likely.

The safety equipment plus added bracing on the floorpan sees the CLK430 Cabriolet weigh in at 200kg more than the coupe, but with so much power and torque



RIGHT
The A208 interior is well designed but lacks the quality of older Mercs.

BELOW CIRCLED
Gearbox is five-speed automatic, no manual option on this model.

BELOW
Specialists rate the M113 V8 as one the very best Benz engines.





on tap this is of no consequence, and in a relatively small car it is a lovely feeling to have a big V8 upfront. Mercedes V6 engines of this era were smooth and efficient but didn't really talk to you – this V8, crammed into the engine bay and concealed under the black shroud is a communications expert, rocking as you blip the throttle at standstill and rumbling vibrantly through the large, oval tailpipe, as if the Noise Vibration Harshness experts were for once called in to dial in soul.

It, and the electronically regulated automatic gearbox are the perfect partners, so much so that it's hard to imagine when the Tipshift's manual mode could be much use. Whether you are trickling along at not much more ⇨

V8s and the CLK

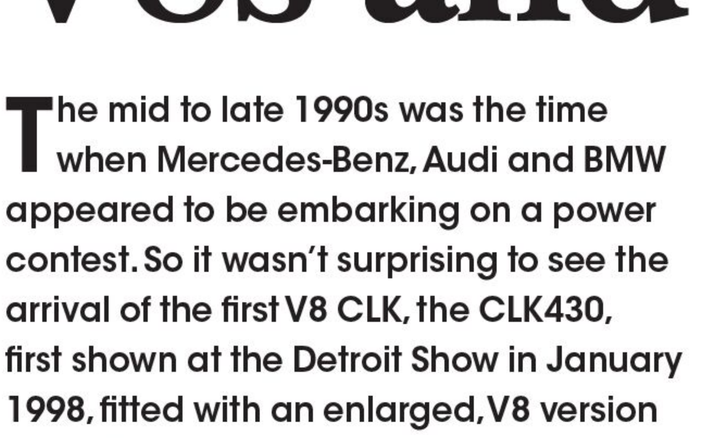
Throughout the CLK's production it gained ever more powerful V8 engines

The mid to late 1990s was the time when Mercedes-Benz, Audi and BMW appeared to be embarking on a power contest. So it wasn't surprising to see the arrival of the first V8 CLK, the CLK430, first shown at the Detroit Show in January 1998, fitted with an enlarged, V8 version of the 3.2-litre M111 V6. It ran on bigger wheels than did other CLKs, half an inch wider at 7.5-inch and one inch larger in diameter at 17-inch.

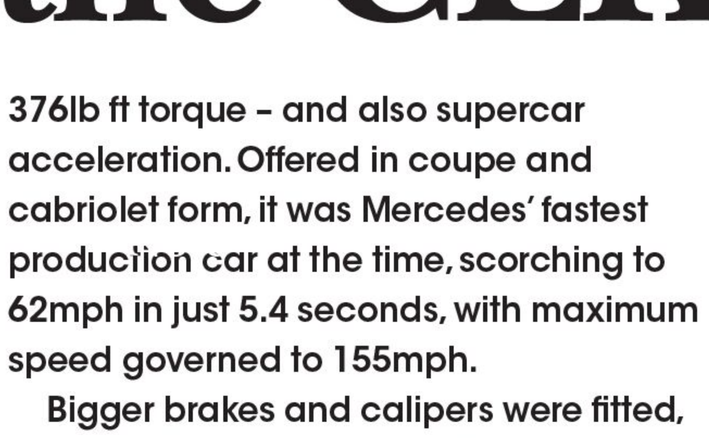
The 430 didn't stay long as the CLK flagship, as in September 1999 the CLK55 AMG appeared, its 5.4-litre V8 engine, the M113 with lightened camshafts and pistons toted 342bhp and a storming 376lb ft torque – and also supercar acceleration. Offered in coupe and cabriolet form, it was Mercedes' fastest production car at the time, scorching to 62mph in just 5.4 seconds, with maximum speed governed to 155mph.

Bigger brakes and calipers were fitted, while on the outside the AMG tweaks consisted of larger intakes in the front bumper and redesigned side skirts, said to improve air flow. But perhaps the true, if less obvious, exterior sign of the 55's muscle were the differing sizes of front and rear wheels and tyres: 7.5x17-inch at the front with 255/45 tyres, 8.5x17-inch rear rims with 245/40s. While power and performance reached an awesome level, so did the list price, around £60,000 (that's £110,000 in today's money).

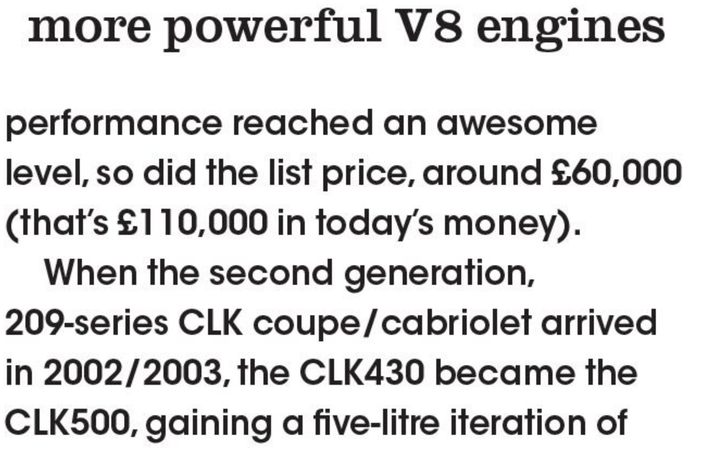
When the second generation, 209-series CLK coupe/cabriolet arrived in 2002/2003, the CLK430 became the CLK500, gaining a five-litre iteration of the M113 producing 302bhp and 295lb ft torque, while the 5.4-litre powertrain for the CLK55 AMG was carried over unchanged apart from a 20bhp rise to 362bhp. In mid 2006 the CLK55 AMG became the CLK63 AMG, gained the all-new 6.2-litre M156 – AMG's first built-from-scratch motor – which gave 474bhp at a screaming 6,800rpm.



A208 CLK55 AMG CABRIOLET (1999-2002)
As from the 208-series facelift in autumn 1999 the flagship was the CLK55 AMG, available in coupe and cabriolet form.



A209 CLK500 (2003-2009)
When the 208-series CLK gave way to the 209 in 2003 the CLK430 successor was the five-litre CLK500, with 302bhp.



A209 CLK63 AMG (2006-2009)
For the last three years of CLK production, the Afalterbach bmodel was the 6.2-litre CLK63 AMG, just 1,119 made.

Anyone who regularly drives with the roof down will be grateful for the easily attachable Draught Stop, even if it effectively turns the CLK into a two-seater

⇨ than tickover, or revving the V8 to extract maximum performance (0-62mph is more than respectable if not super-quick at 7.4sec) it is best to leave the selector alone. And on a cabriolet of such a relaxed nature one wonders how many times the ESP traction control de-select button will ever be pressed, but it is there for these who want a partial insight (it takes out the traction control but not the ESP itself) into what can happen when so much horsepower is suddenly fed through the rear wheels.

It is likely that potential buyers will see the CLK cabriolet, presently available for £5,000-£10,000 as a cheaper alternative to its predecessor, the 124-series cabriolet commanding double that, therefore comparisons are worth making. The CLK offers more agile and taut handling, the steering in particular less vague even though rack and pinion steering was not adopted until the next, 209 generation. But ride comfort is inferior, aggravated by the larger wheels and tyres.

The front seating position is lower than in the A124, which will please some drivers but not others, but one thing anyone who regularly drives with the roof down will be grateful for is the easily attachable Draught Stop, even if it effectively turns the CLK into a two seater. The frame is located on lugs either side of the body, with retractable netting to prevent objects on the rear seat blowing away.

The CLK was based on the 202 C-Class platform whereas the A124 was a derivative of the E-Class of the time, but the younger car has much the same rear leg space, which is generous by coupe and convertible standards. Getting in and out can be a little awkward, however the 'easy entry' seats, which slide forward electrically when the backrests are folded down, and move back afterwards at least minimise entry/exit gymnastics. But the folded hood has to be stored somewhere, and when down the Cabriolet loses 70 per cent of its boot capacity, decreased a little more when the Draught Top is stowed in its case in the boot.

One aspect in which the 208 falls short compared to the 124 is the look and feel of the interior. It cannot be faulted ergonomically but even the CLK430 with its leather and dark wood veneer lacks the traditional Mercedes class, with too many lightweight plastic fittings, the light grey colour scheme not helping either.

Those looking for an A208 CLK Cabriolet might logically judge a four-cylinder car, the two-litre CLK200 or the 2.3-litre CLK230 Kompressor the most sensible proposition. Given the higher fuel (sub-20mpg in town) and likely maintenance costs, why invite financial heartache by doubling the number of cylinders and the engine capacity? We'd say that V8 power and refinement in this delectable droptop make it worth living dangerously. CM





ABOVE
208-series cabriolet shape is quietly elegant, not knock-out gorgeous.

RIGHT
Rear headrests serve as a vital safety feature, becoming roll protectors.

BOTTOM
The folded hood has to live somewhere, hence boot capacity is limited.





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RHD, finished in signal red with cream hide interior, headrests, rear seats, cruise control, ABS, light up vanity mirrors, tinted glass, hard & soft tops, automatic, power steering, spare wheel unused, complete with all tools, stereo system, power windows, virtually a one owner, last owner for 33 years, this car is just remarkable condition, 86,000 miles from new, full history, garaged, papered from new, drives like new, very difficult to find a better one of this last model.





Mercedes sports 300SL 1988/9 finished in astral silver, with navy blue interior and matching soft top, complete with hard top, rear seats, over mats, tinted glass, stereo system, light up vanity mirrors abs, alloys, power windows, automatic, power steering, spare wheel never used, complete with all tools, only one previous owner, only 23,000 miles from new, with excellent service history from new, new MOT by Mercedes and recent service, with tracker and immobilizer, garaged from new, just magnificent throughout. £59,750.





Finished in gleaming unmarked classic white, with black hide interior, rear seats, hard and soft tops, automatic, power steering, power windows, ABS brakes, alloys, stereo system, 69,000 miles, service history, complete with all tools, new Mot supplied on purchase, only three previous owners, always garaged, drives superb, excellent example.





Finished in unmarked gleaming signal red, with hard and soft tops, rear seats, headrests, overmats, stereo system, power windows, tinted glass, complete with all tools, auto, power steering, only 87,000 miles from new, all original paperwork from new. Absolutely first-class history, with only one previous owner, amazing condition, drives smoothly just like new, pampered and garaged from new, probably one of the finest available.



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Four-seat cabriolets

IMAGES Terry Oborne/Craig Pusey/ Eric Richardson/Mercedes-Benz Group AG

There is something wonderfully hedonistic about a four-seat convertible Mercedes. In hardtop form the cars are solid Home Counties respectability, but with the roof gone their character changes completely. Think French Riviera, precocious minor royalty, all-over suntans, serious designer shopping. A ragtop Merc is the perfect accessory.

In some instances, ownership requires Plutocratic money: if you fancy the ultimate W111 cabriolet, a 280SE 3.5, it'll cost £200,000 to £400,000, and a 300/300Sc from the 1950s will be double that. But while Mercedes-Benz pampers the rich, it also takes care of ordinary people. There's something for every budget, starting at a 208-series cabriolet from the 1990s, which can be £2,000 to £3,000. Here, we look at 12 Benz droptops that take four in comfort from the post-war classic years, mostly normal production models, but a couple born of the imagination of independent engineering minds and another that sadly was still born. So with these and other cabriolets elsewhere in this issue, we've got everything covered!



The 170S Cabriolet B was a full four-seater, and built in higher volume than the 2+2 Cabriolet A.

W136 170S Cabriolet A/Cabriolet B (1949-1951)

The first full production car Mercedes-Benz built after World War Two was the W136 saloon launched in 1947, and based on the pre-war, separate chassis W230 design, its bulbous wings and free-standing headlamps evidence of that. It was all the factory could achieve, given it was still largely deystroyed from World War Two. However, modern updates included coil spring front suspension and a manual gearbox with synchromesh on all four forward gears, and as of 1949 the carmaker offered a pair of two-doored convertible versions of the 170S, the Cabriolet A and Cabriolet B.

They shared the same 1.8-litre M136 four-cylinder engine producing 50bhp, and also sat on the same wheelbase. However, the Cabriolet A, which was a two-seater with a nominal rear seat, was slightly longer than the Cabriolet B due to a more stylised, pointy tail, and was pitched as a sportier car, costing around 20 per more when launched. The Cabriolet B had a more conservative look, and a proper seat in the rear.

These are extremely rare, in two years some 1,600 of the A built and half that number of the B. Their scarcity makes them hard to value, although they can make big bucks when they do appear for sale; the pristine 1950 A seen below was sold at Monterey week in August 2021 by international auctioneer RM Sotheby's for $257,600 (£191,50).

Key facts

ENGINE/CYL/POWER 1,767cc/4/50bhp

TRANSMISSION 4-speed manual

NUMBER BUILT Cabriolet A 830, Cabriolet B 1,603

PRICE RANGE £50,000-£200,000



The Cabriolet A was smaller but sportier than the B, and also more expensive new.

W187 220 Cabriolet A/ Cabriolet B (1951-1955/1953)

Unveiled at the first Frankfurt motor show, in April 1951, the racy W187 220 two/three-seat Cabriolet A (shown below) and more reserved four-seat Cabriolet B (right) offered hope of better times to come as West Germany rebuilt after World War Two, and marked Mercedes' return to the luxury six-cylinder class with the new 2,195cc M180 overhead-camshaft engine. This 79bhp unit had huge development potential built into it and would remain a staple of the Mercedes engine range until the mid-1960s. Other improvements included uprated brakes, and the altogether more sophisticated package allowed Mercedes to increase prices over the 170S models by several thousand Deutschmarks.

The 220 family was in effect only a stop gap measure, as the introduction of the Ponton with its integrated chassis was due within a couple of years, a development that would move Mercedes-Benz into a more modern automotive era. Hence these two specialised versions of the 220 had a short and uneventful production run. The Cabriolet B was discontinued in May 1953 after just 997 units while the Cabriolet A continued into 1955 and notched up 1,278 sales. They were glamorous cars to be seen in, and for their time quiet and refined machines for both town and autobahn driving.





Similar in execution to the 170S, but the 220 Cabriolet A/B had a six-cylinder motor.

Key facts

ENGINE/CYL/POWER
2,195cc/6/79bhp

TRANSMISSION 4-speed manual

NUMBER BUILT Cabriolet A 1,278, Cabriolet B 997

PRICE RANGE £50,000-£200,000



Compared to the A's tiny rear seat, the B was a proper four-seater, entry through by then dated 'suicide' doors.



W186/W189 300 'Adenauer' (1952-1962)

In March 1952, four months after the steel-roofed 300 was launched, the soft top 300 Cabriolet D appeared. It would be offered through most of the 10-year, four-model production run of the 'Adenauer', nicknamed thus because the West German Chancellor through all the 1950s, Konrad Adenauer, always used one as official government transport, though never a Cabriolet.

The 300 Cabriolet D used the same three-litre straight-six engine as the two-door 300S except with two rather than three carburettors. The year 1954 saw the arrival of the 300b Cabriolet with more power and better brakes, and the year after that the 300c replaced it, bringing the option of an automatic transmission among other useful developments.

The most significant – and final – development came in 1957, when the 300d Cabriolet D was introduced. Revised bodywork freshened up the ageing looks of the original, and fuel-injection saw output at 158bhp, some 45bhp up on the original 300. These and other changes made it worthy of a new model designation, W189.

The Adenauer saloon can still be bought relatively cheaply by classic standards. But that doesn't apply to any of the Cabriolet D models, which are few and far between, having accounted for just 700 of the 10,700 Adenauers produced.

Key facts

ENGINE/CYL/POWER
2,996cc/6/113-158bhp

TRANSMISSION 4-speed manual, 3-speed automatic

NUMBER BUILT 300 Cabriolet D, 455; 300b Cabriolet D, 136; 300c Cabriolet D, 51; 300d Cabriolet D, 65

PRICE RANGE £150,000-£250,000



ABOVE
The Adenauer is the only Mercedes 4dr cabriolet of the post-war period.

RIGHT
Rear cabin is massively spacious and easy to gracefully enter and exit.





W188 300S/300Sc (1952-1955/1955-1958)

Built on a shortened 300 Adenauer chassis, the drophead 300S was sold as the Cabriolet A, and also the Roadster with a lighter hood that was bereft of the 'coach joints' at the rear. Aimed at those who did not have to ask the price of anything, Mercedes employed Europe's best craftsman, of which there was no shortage in those years, to build and trim the cars, and to finish them to individual customer specification. Its styling has more than a little pre-war flavouring, but it was designed to appeal to the new post-war super wealthy.

At the 1955 Frankfurt motor show a revised model was announced, the visually very similar 300Sc. Many small improvements were incorporated, but the chief upgrade was a switch from the triple carburettors to fuel-injection, raising the three-litre straight-six's power by 25bhp to 173bhp; the *Einspritzmotor* badge attached to the bumper tells of the hiked engine output.

With sales totalling just 446, some classic car analysts believe the 300S/Sc to be undervalued in relation to other models, but prices appear to be progressively rising. At the Amelia Island auctions in spring 2023 a 1953 300S Roadster in pristine condition was bid up to $735,000 (£575,500, the car pictured here), making the 300 two-door the most highly priced post-war Mercedes after the 300SL Gullwing/Roadster.

Key facts

ENGINE/CYL/POWER
2,996cc/6/148, 173bhp

TRANSMISSION **4-speed manual**

NUMBER BUILT **300S Cabriolet A, 203; 300S Roadster, 141; 300Sc Cabriolet A, 49; 300Sc Roadster, 53**

PRICE RANGE **£500,000-£1.1m**



ABOVE LEFT
In 1952 you couldn't buy a more exclusive car than the Mercedes 300S.

ABOVE RIGHT
Its bespoke interior was hand-made by the best craftsmen available.

RIGHT
The 300S used the 300 saloon's 3.0 engine, but with three, not two carbs.

W180/W128 220S/220SE 'Ponton' (1956-1959/1958-1960)

A prototype cabriolet adaptation of the six-cylinder 220 Ponton saloon appeared at the Frankfurt motor show in 1955. Full production began in July 1956, by which time Mercedes had switched to a more powerful 99bhp twin-carburettor 220S specification, to take account of the cabriolet's 60kg weight increase over the four-door. This was a flagship car, which, like the 300SL, was designed to appeal to mainly US customers with its curvaceous modern styling and high specification.

The 220S Cabriolet shared little structurally or visually with the somewhat austere Ponton. It had a shorter wheelbase (by 120mm), an impressive rear overhang and lots of chrome to break up its otherwise featureless flanks. It was a shape that invited two-tone paintwork and whitewall tyres, and it looked sophisticated and rich.



Key facts

ENGINE/CYL/POWER
2,195cc/6/99-118bhp

TRANSMISSION **4-speed manual**

NUMBER BUILT **220S 2,178; 220SE 1,112**

PRICE RANGE **£80,000-£200,000**



ABOVE RIGHT
The cabrio was based on the Ponton saloon, but with *much* more luxury.

LEFT
There was a practical aspect in that the rear seat could be folded flat.

The 220S Cabriolet went out of production in October 1959, the Bosch fuel-injected 220SE version in production from the previous October carrying on until November 1960. As with its predecessors, it was an expensive car, increased in price over the previous W187 220. Hence sales were modest but lucrative, 3,290 worldwide deliveries in total, although this compared to just under 2,100 sales of the mechanically identical 220S Coupe and 220SE Coupe.







ABOVE LEFT
The stunning two-door body is Fintail-based.

ABOVE RIGHT
This is the 2.8-litre engine in the 280SE.

RIGHT
Leather and wood interior is exquisite.

W111/W112 (1961-1971)

The astonishingly glamorous W111 cabriolet first appeared in 1961, it and its coupe stablemate based on the longer, six-cylinder versions of the Fintail saloon, though with no common body panels. Europe had not seen the like of it, nor the coupe, before: a low, sleek and notably long booted vehicle that borrowed its proportions from big, 1950s American cars, although not their vast rear wings.

The first model was the 220 SEb with its 2.2-litre 118bhp engine, this joined by the 300SE in March 1962, a variant with sufficiently different engineering for Daimler-Benz to assign it a separate code, W112. It used a three-litre, Gullwing-derived engine, and also featured air-spring suspension and powered brakes, with rear disc brakes over the 220SEb's rear drums. By 1969, the W111 coupe/cabriolet had evolved into the 280SE with a lower and sleeker bonnet line, and a 2.8-litre engine.

There would be one further W111 model, the V8-engined 280SE 3.5 introduced in 1969 and sold alongside the 280SE until production of both ended in mid 1971. W111 droptop values have pulled way ahead of the coupe equivalent, especially the 3.5, which can now command in excess of £400,000.

Key facts

ENGINE/CYL/POWER
2,195cc/6/118bhp – 3,499cc/V8/197bhp

TRANSMISSION **4/5-speed manual, 4-speed automatic**

NUMBER BUILT **220SEb, 2,729; 300SE, 708; 250SE, 954; 280SE, 1,390; 280SE 3.5, 1,232 220SE 1,112**

PRICE RANGE **£100,000-£450,000**



No hood supplied with the 'Coupe', instead an extended rear cabin.



It has a rear seat, but with hardly any legroom it's of very limited use.

W113 250SL 'Coupe' (1967)

The closest any SL generation has come to being a genuine four seater was in 1967 when the so-called Coupe version of the 250SL appeared at the Geneva motor show. The model amounted to a regular 250SL – the second of the three W113 iterations – that was targeted at warm, rain-free territories, wealthy southern California the main destination. If customers ticked the 'Code 417' option the car was supplied with the usual Pagoda hardtop but not a hood, as owners wouldn't need it, the space this freed up allowing a small rear bench seat to be fitted.

The 250SL is the rarest of the W113 trio, its one year production accounting for just 5,196 out of 48,912 Pagodas built. Within that sub-total, few Coupes were sold, for obvious practical reasons, and it's believed that some Coupes have been converted to normal W113 spec.

Key facts

ENGINE/CYL/POWER
2,4966cc/6/148bhp

TRANSMISSION **4/5-speed manual, 4speed automatic**

PRICE RANGE **£80,000-£250,000**


Kent-based Crayford engineered this excellent conversion.

W123 280CE St Tropez (1978)

Mercedes-Benz never manufactured a 123-series cabriolet. But two engineers, David McMullan and Jeff Smith, who had formed Crayford Auto Development in 1963, decapitated a 280CE and called it the 280CE St Tropez. In any other circumstances lawyers would have pursued Crayford – but instead Stuttgart liked what it saw and offered it in dealerships with a full manufacturer's warranty.

Many of the cars of that period that were made into convertibles by independent coachbuilders looked awkward, but this one was different. Crayford, which had previously made estate versions of 123s and the preceding Mercedes W114s, had done a masterful job – the hood looked just right raised or lowered, the sole giveaway that it wasn't a factory design being the absence of a metal cover to conceal the lowered canvas. Had the quality been anything less, the carmaker would not have allowed it anywhere near its prestigious showrooms – indeed, management might not have been so happy with Crayford had McMullan remembered to mention that the hoods were scavenged from crashed Ford Mustangs languishing in US scrapyards.

In 1978 the St Tropez, powered by the 2.8-litre M110 straight-six, cost £21,924 – almost double that of the standard 280CE, making it by far the most expensive Mercedes available, bar the 450SEL 6.9. It's thought five to 10 were built.

Key facts

ENGINE/CYL/POWER
2,746cc/6/183bhp
TRANSMISSION **4-speed automatic**
PRICE RANGE **£20,000-£40,000**

C126 500SEC Buchmann 'Magic Top' conversion (1983)


A rare beast indeed, probably about 10 of these ever built.

In the absence of a factory-built 126-series cabrio, sibling engineers Rainer and Dieter Buchmann of bb GmbH & Co based in Germany and already experienced in droptop conversions for Porsches, decided to fill the gap, and spent a million Deutschemarks perfecting a folding hardtop for the SEC, which took two years of development. The finished car was called the Magic Top 7 and was unveiled in 1983, gaining wealthy fans in the places that mattered: Germany, America and Saudi Arabia. It's known that at least one – the car pictured – was shipped to Japan. But by 1986 the company was bankrupt, with 10 Magic Top SECs sold and not all of them completed.

One of the greatest achievements of this Magic Top conversion is that it very nearly replicates the shape of the original roof (the C-pillars are just a bit thicker than usual). Another feat of engineering is the one-touch operation of the roof: an unassuming button on the dashboard (previously used for the original sunroof) turns this world beating coupe into a full blown four-seat drophead in around 35 seconds.

Key facts

ENGINE/CYL/POWER
4,953cc/8/228bhp
TRANSMISSION **4-speed automatic**
NUMBER BUILT **10 (estimated)**

W201 190E 2.6 (1990)

Prior to the launch of the 124-series, Stuttgart considered building a 190E droptop, but eventually decided not to on the basis that a 124 would be a more suitable and more profitable venture. What a great car that would have been, and two built-up prototypes owned by Mercedes-Benz, one of which lives in the carmaker's museum in Stuttgart, remind us of that. Under the bonnet is a 2.6-litre M103 straight-six while the cabin is leather trimmed and well equipped, indicating that the model offered would have been priced at a premium level.

The prototype's bootlid is an inch taller than a standard 190E saloon's, no doubt because Mercedes' engineers required extra space for stowing the folding soft top (which featured a glass panel, not the plastic section as on the SL of the time, the R129). This also required the rear seat to be located further forwards than in a 190 saloon. A pity this 190E never happened, but some of its engineering found its way into the 124-series cabriolet.


If ever a still-born cabrio deserved to be built it was surely the 190E.


Less rear seat space but it's still usable.

Key facts

ENGINE/CYL/POWER
2,579cc/6/164bhp
TRANSMISSION
4-speed automatic
NUMBER BUILT **2**

124-series (1991-1997)

A massive effort went into ensuring the roofless 124-series, the A124, had the same level of structural rigidity as the C124 coupe it was based on, the design incorporating much extra metal bracing members, while the crash safety system was derived from the R129's. Rear seat space may be a casualty of many cabriolets, but Mercedes made sure that two adults could sit comfortably, one of many aspects that make the A124 an appealing modern classic.

The multi-layered, glass screened canvas roof is so insulating that noise levels are pretty much on a par with the coupe. Operating it isn't as convenient as it could be, however, as you have to unclip the front and push it up, and then endure the whirring and clunking as the canvas bumps itself down under a metal cover on the body behind the rear seat.

You can still get a reasonable example for £10,000 provided you are prepared to take the four-cylinder E220. It lacks the E320's silken M104 six, but it's cheaper to run, and powertrain apart is virtually identical to the E320. The ultimate model is the E36 AMG with its big-valve, 3.6-litre engine, but this is an extremely rare car, this and its Affalterbach exclusivity putting it a price league of its own.


In cabrioland the 124 could be the ultimate practical classic.

Key facts

ENGINE/CYL/POWER 2,199cc 4-cyl/148bhp – 3,604/268bhp
TRANSMISSION 4/5-speed automatic
NUMBER BUILT 33,952
PRICE RANGE £10,000-£25,000





LEFT
For many, the M104 3.2 straight-six is the choice 124 engine.

FAR LEFT
The optional leather trim is desirable, and most six-cylinder cars have it.

A209 CLK (2003-2009)

The model that replaced the 208-series cabriolet in 2003 stuck to the same successful formula: C-Class based and with a wide range of engines, from 1.8-litre, four-cylinder to 6.2-litre V8. At the 2005 facelift Mercedes had the courage to offer a diesel version, not what many might expect under the bonnet of a fashionable convertible, using the then new OM642 three-litre V6.

The evolutionary A209 featured sleeker and sharper-edged bodywork than the A208, said to be far stiffer and thus boasting the same torsional rigidity as the coupe, while a raft of practical improvements were presented. Boot capacity, always an issue when a power hood is fitted, was increased by 10 per cent. Safety aspects including the sensor-controlled roll-over protection system, seat belt tensioners and multiple airbags were also upgraded.

The many customers wishing a convertible bearing the three-pointed star but not concerned about big performance were happy to buy the entry level CLK200. The more ambitious could opt for V6 power in the form of the pre-facelift CLK240 or post-facelift CLK280/350, while the 'regular' V8 was the CLK500, first five-litre and later 5.5-litre.


Available with a wide range of engines, the CLK sold in big numbers.



ABOVE
Interior is stylish but it lacks the solid quality of older cabrios like the 124.

Two AMGs were offered, the CLK55 AMG with the 5.4-litre M113 V8 and the CLK63 using the high-revving, 6.2-litre M156 V8. The A209 cabriolet was a popular model range, with over 140,000 made, and they are are presently the bargain Mercedes cabriolet, with prices from £2,000-£3,000; although the CLK55 AMG is more expensive, and the CLK63 AMG considerably more so.

Key facts

ENGINE/CYL/POWER
1996cc 4-cyl/161bhp –6,208cc/474bhp
TRANSMISSION 6-speed manual, 5/7-speed automatic
NUMBER BUILT 140,139
PRICE RANGE £3,000-£20,000



Stirling Moss and Denis Jenkinson prior to winning the Mille Miglia in Italy.

Winner takes all

With new racing cars designed, Mercedes-Benz attacked motorsport in 1955 with a vengeance and won almost everything it entered that year. We look into the Stuttgart archive to find the details of these victories

IMAGES Mercedes-Benz Group AG

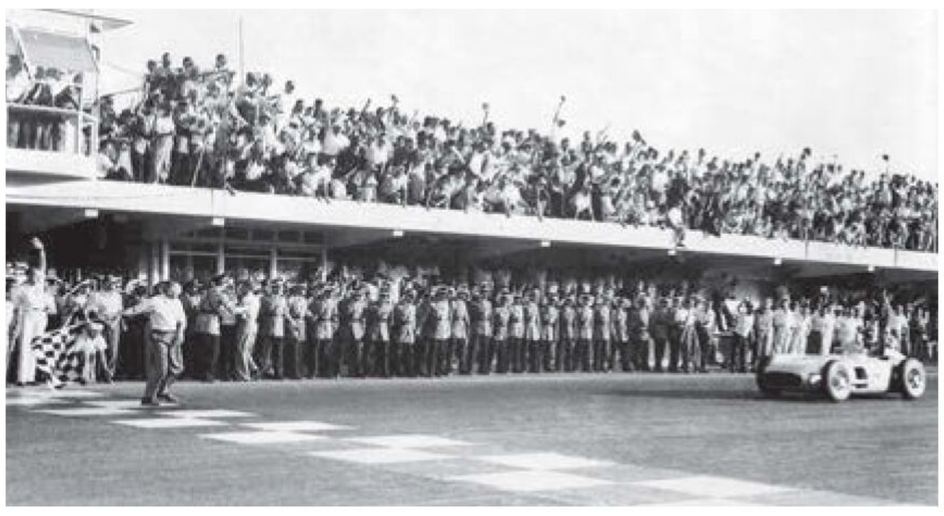
Seventy years ago, the Mercedes-Benz Silver Arrows were practically unbeatable throughout the entire racing season – in all the major classes of international motor sport. In 1955, the Stuttgart racing team, with Juan Manuel Fangio at the wheel of the W196R, won the Formula 1 world championship for the second time running, and achieved a triumph in the sports car world championship with the W196S 300SLR, while Werner Engel became European touring car champion in the road going W198 300SL. Major national titles were also won, for example victory in Class D of the Sports Car Club of America.

The public and the motor racing world celebrated Mercedes-Benz for this uniquely successful season, no manufacturer having previously dominated the international racing events of a single year quite so comprehensively. This was due to a combination of innovative technology, a highly motivated team, and meticulous planning and organisation. The racing team's attitude was aptly illustrated by one example, the legendary Blue Wonder, a 100mph transporter developed by Mercedes in 1955 as a one-off workhorse for urgent conveyance of racing cars between the factory, race tracks, and for practice sessions.

The preparations for the triumphs of the Silver Arrows team 70 years ago began in 1952, when Mercedes re-entered the international racing scene with the 300SL racing sports car, winning numerous victories. The winning resumed in 1954, immediately after Mercedes had returned to grand prix racing, when Juan Manuel Fangio won the world championship by a wide margin at the wheel of the new W196R Silver Arrow. For 1955, Mercedes brought this development process to full fruition, as apart from Fangio, it was above all the young Stirling Moss

BELOW LEFT
Juan Manuel Fangio wins the Argentinian Grand Prix in January.

BELOW RIGHT
Moss and co-driver 'Jenks' in the 300SLR sports racing car.













ABOVE
Fangio (left) with Moss on winning the Eifel Race at the Nürburgring.

ABOVE RIGHT
Don't forget the Ponton, driven to a class victory in the 1955 Mille Miglia.

"NO MANUFACTURER HAD PREVIOUSLY DOMINATED INTERNATIONAL RACING SO COMPREHENSIVELY. THIS WAS DUE TO TECHNOLOGY, A MOTIVATED TEAM, AND METICULOUS PLANNING"

ABOVE
Another laurel wreath for Fangio as he wins the Dutch GP in mid-June.

ABOVE RIGHT
Sharing a 300SLR, Moss and Peter Collins won the Targa Florio in Sicily.

who shone in the new 300SLR racing sports car.

It was already clear by mid-January that the 1955 motor sport season was likely to be a particularly successful one for Mercedes-Benz. Improved even further since the 1954 season, the W196R competed in the Argentine Grand Prix in Buenos Aires, the first Formula 1 race in the 1955 calendar. Reigning champion Fangio, driving a Mercedes-Benz Silver Arrow, emerged as the winner of this hot, gruelling race in his home country after superhuman efforts.

But Mercedes-Benz also had another appointment in Argentina, on January 30 the Silver Arrows squad lining up at the start of the non-championship Buenos Aires Grand Prix. Fangio was the winner, ahead of Stirling Moss, with Karl Kling taking fourth place.

In this race the Silver Arrows were powered by a new three-litre engine which engineers had developed from the 2.5-litre, eight-cylinder power unit of the Formula 1 racing car. This was the engine that came to be used in the new 300 SLR racing sports car with its muscular, streamlined bodywork, developed by Mercedes-Benz to win the battle for the world sports car championship, and which would make its official racing debut three months later.

In grand prix racing Mercedes-Benz placed – as in the previous year – its confidence mainly in classic style racing cars with exposed wheels, with three different variants of the W196R body design for 1955 (the 'R' stood for 'Racing' to distinguish it from the sports car, which bore an 'S' in its name). The major difference between them was the wheelbase. A fully enclosed racing car similar to the streamlined variant with which Mercedes-Benz had opened the 1954 racing season was not used until the Italian Grand Prix, the last Formula 1 race of 1955.

Following a moderate performance in the Monte Carlo Grand Prix in Monaco (also the European Grand Prix), the Belgian Grand Prix began a breathtaking series of three 1-2 victories for Mercedes-Benz, each time with Fangio in first place, and a 1-2-3-4 victory for the Silver Arrows in the British Grand Prix in Aintree, Moss across the line first, followed by Fangio, Kling, and Piero Taruffi.

Effectively, after the disappointing start in Monaco, Mercedes-Benz won all subsequent Formula 1 races of the 1955 season. But this was because the Grand Prix races in Germany, France, Spain, and Switzerland were ⇨

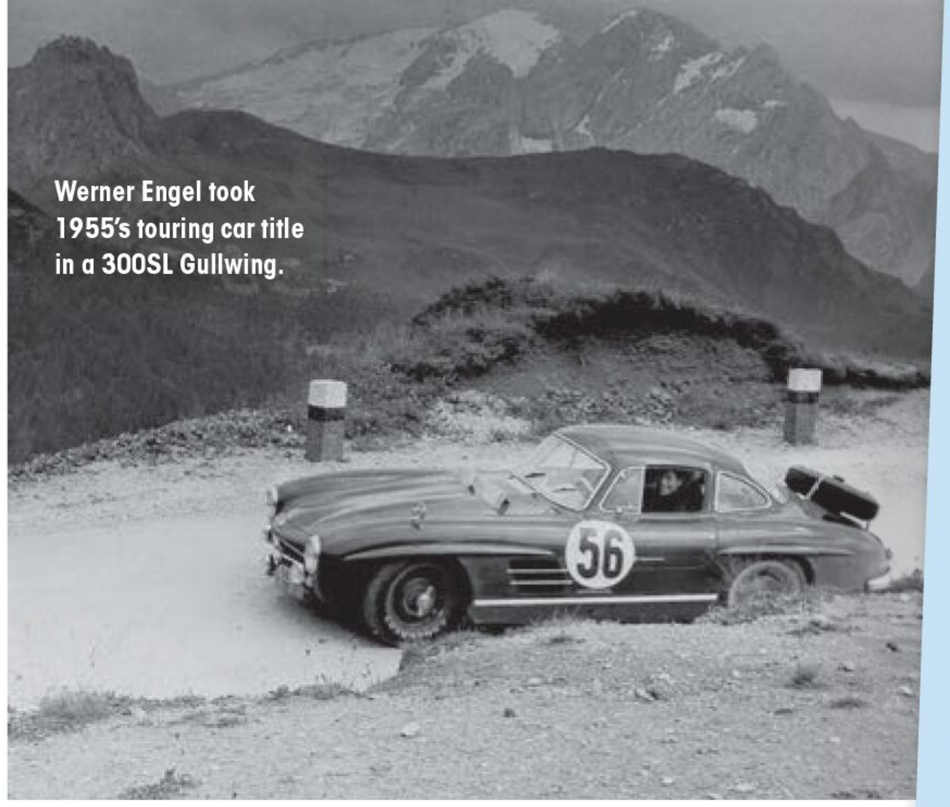




Clockwise from left: grand prix W196R Streamliner, its W196 open-wheel partner, and the 300SLR for the sports car championship.



"MERCEDES-BENZ THE MANUFACTURER DID NOT WIN A TITLE IN THE 1955 FORMULA 1 SEASON – BECAUSE THE CONSTRUCTORS CHAMPIONSHIP WAS ONLY INTRODUCED IN 1958."


Werner Engel took 1955's touring car title in a 300SL Gullwing.

⇨ cancelled following the tragic accident during the Le Mans 24-hour race in June, in which Mercedes-Benz driver Pierre Levegh was involved in the worst crash ever to have occurred in motor racing history, leaving over 80 dead.

Fangio won the Formula 1 driver's title with 40 points ahead of Stirling Moss on 23. This was the second world championship title in succession for the Mercedes-Benz racing driver and his W196R, and his third championship title overall.

Mercedes-Benz the manufacturer did not win a title in the 1955 Formula 1 season, despite five victories, four second places and one third place in seven races – simply because while the drivers' world title was awarded from the start of the series 1950, the constructors' championship was only introduced in 1958. This made the company's commitment to the 300SLR for the World Sports Car Championship in 1955, where the title went to the most successful constructor, all the more important.

The new racing sports car, whose technology was closely related to that of the Formula 1 car, made its debut in the Mille Miglia, a two-day, 1,000-mile race from Brescia to Rome and back at the end of April. Stirling Moss, with his co-driver Denis Jenkinson, won probably the most gruelling road race of the era in the best time ever set in the Mille Miglia. It took the pair 10 hours, seven minutes and 48 seconds to cover the distance of around 1,000 miles, an average speed of 97.9mph. Fangio, driving with no co-driver, crossed the finishing line in second place just 31 minutes and 45 seconds later – a similarly outstanding performance.

The Stuttgart-based brand also demonstrated that the sporting excellence of Mercedes-Benz cars extended from thoroughbred racing cars to regular production models. In addition to the 300SLR's overall victory, the production 300SL Gullwing and 180D Ponton were the winners in their respective classes.

Following the Fangio-Moss 1-2 victory in the International Eifel Race at the Nürburgring in Germany, the 300SLRs were at the starting line for the Le Mans 24-hour race in June. But after Pierre Levegh's 300SLR became airborne and crashed into the crowd causing considerable death and injury, racing manager Alfred Neubauer, in consultation with senior management, decided to withdraw the leading 300SLRs from the race. This made the pressure to win the remaining races even greater.

In the International Tourist Trophy in Dundrod, Northern Ireland, the penultimate race of the World Sports Car Championship, the 300SLR triumphed by taking the first three places – but the points from the Sicilian classic, the Targa Florio, were still needed for the title. This was a heart stopping final event, for Mercedes-Benz had taken part in only three of the five races conducted so far, and Ferrari was in the lead by a few points.

Mercedes needed a victory to secure the title, and also had to ensure that competitors Ferrari and Jaguar achieved only a third place at most. Even under this immense pressure, Stuttgart was able to continue its series of victories, and emerged triumphant with first place for Moss and Peter Collins, second for Fangio and Kling, and fourth place for Desmond Titterington and John Cooper Fitch. The title in the bag, the Mercedes racing department's star shone more brightly than ever... if only for a short period. CM


The extraordinary 100mph Blue Wonder transporter had a 300SL engine.


The race team attend the sad closing of the Silver Arrows in late 1955.

★ Headlines of 1955

★ *The sole Grand Prix not won by Mercedes-Benz was Monaco in May, named Grand Prix d'Europe, where pole setter Fangio had transmission trouble and Moss blew his engine. It was won by Ferrari driver Maurice Trintignant, the Frenchman starting from ninth on the grid.*

★ *After the Argentinian military overthrew President Juan Domingo Perón's government in a coup d'état, Mercedes-Benz Argentina S.A. was place under trusteeship by the military government. It was later seized and the carmaker's legal ownership not recognised until 1958.*

★ *West Germany formally joined the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation at a ceremony held in the Palais de Chaillot in Paris. The USSR saw the inclusion of West Germany in NATO as a direct threat, and in the same year created a counter-alliance, called the Warsaw Pact.*

★ *The Hollywood film star James Dean was killed in a road accident in California. The 24-year-old actor was behind the wheel of his Porsche 550 Spyder (the model seen below) when it was involved in a head-on crash with another car 30 miles east of Paso Robles.*

★ *Deep snow and persistent freezing temperatures across the UK left many parts of the country cut off from essential supplies, more than 70 roads blocked by snowdrifts as high as 30ft. The Royal Airforce worked flat out to drop food and medical supplies to the worst affected areas.*



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Super SALE!

In early February 2025 a rare event occurred – the sale of a 1950s Mercedes-Benz grand prix car, a W196R in Streamliner form and which took both Manuel Fangio and Stirling Moss to victory. Auction house RM Sotheby's brings us the car's full history, and we also look at the auction in Stuttgart in February, where it made £42.6m

IMAGES RM Sotheby's/Mercedes-Benz Group AG

1954 Mercedes-Benz W196R Stromlinienwagen

Specifications

Engine 2,496cc 8-cyl in-line
Fuel system Bosch direct injection
Power 250-290bhp@8,260rpm
Transmission 5-speed manual, rear mounted gearbox
Weight 829kg
Top speed Over 300kph (188mph)
Years produced 1954
Number built 4

All figures from Mercedes-Benz

"THE STREAMLINED ENCLOSED-WHEEL BODY WAS INTERMITTENTLY CAMPAIGNED WITH THE OPEN-WHEEL GRAND PRIX-STYLE BODY DURING THE 1954 AND 1955 RACING SEASONS."



The new regulations governing Formula 1 for 1954, announced in advance to give interested manufacturers well over a year to develop a suitable car, were relatively simple, specifying that normally aspirated engines could not exceed 2.5 litres, while supercharged engines were limited to just 750cc; other than mandating a single centred seat, the rules for coachwork were unspecific. Mercedes-Benz racing department director Dr Fritz Nallinger and his fellow directors at Mercedes-Benz recognised this as a unique opportunity to return to the company's motorsports roots in grand prix racing, and a new, well staffed *Rennabteilung* (racing department) was created. Rudolf Uhlenhaut was the principal engineer overseeing the new grand prix model's development, and began with a truss-type narrow-diameter tubular space frame similar to the W194 300SL sports racing car's chassis. Dubbed the W196R, this chassis was equipped with front independent suspension via double wishbones, torsion-bar springs, and cutting-edge hydraulic telescopic shock absorbers. More significantly, the rear suspension was governed by a low-pivot swing axle that was personally developed by Uhlenhaut. Massive Alfin drum brakes were mounted inboard to lower unsprung mass.

It was concluded that a straight-eight engine configuration displacing 2,494cc would deliver the most consistent power. Designed around a complex Hirth roller-bearing crankshaft, the engine was essentially two four-cylinder motors in unison, with two camshafts for each intake and exhaust. It was equipped with racing components including dual ignition and dry-sump lubrication, while featuring revolutionary desmodromic valve gear instead of standard valve springs. Bosch high-pressure direct fuel injection guaranteed a reliable and smooth power application.

The M196 engine initially developed around 250bhp, ⇨





⇨ which was gradually improved over two seasons to 290bhp. The motor was positioned low in the front compartment, canted by 20 degrees to save space, and coupled to a rear-mounted five-speed gearbox actuated by a single-disc dry clutch. Unusually, the gearbox featured synchromesh on the upper four gears, while a limited-slip differential ensured superior traction. Fuel was provided by a specialised 178-litre tank with compartmented baffles that reduced surging under cornering.

Since the new formula specified so few coachwork limitations, Nallinger and Uhlenhaut concluded that a streamlined aerodynamic body with enclosed wheels would optimise high-speed courses, while an open-wheel grand prix body would be ideal for more twisting circuits. The low and wide streamlined body featured minimal frills, chiefly distinguished by a wide, open-mouth grille, cooling inlets on the rear shoulder haunches, and moulded character lines across the tops of the front wheel wells.

ABOVE LEFT
The Streamliner was the 'normal' W196R with fully enclosed bodywork.

ABOVE
Juan Fangio and Stirling Moss both occupied this seat and drove in anger.

These bodies were built out of Elektron magnesium alloy, providing a shell even lighter than aluminium, for a total weight of just over 40kg. The streamlined enclosed-wheel body was intermittently campaigned with the open wheel grand prix-style body during the 1954 and 1955 racing seasons. The factory designation for the enclosed-wheel coachwork was *Stromlinie*, or Streamline, and today these cars are also known as Streamliner or *Stromlinienwagen* (streamlined car). With such powerful mechanical specifications and slippery lightweight coachwork, the W196R could exceed 186mph, making it one of the fastest grand prix cars yet constructed.

Chassis number 00009/54, sold by RM Sotheby's in Stuttgart on February 1, 2025, is one of 14 W196R chassis built, and it is believed to be one of 10 known complete examples surviving at the end of the 1955 Formula One season. Of those, this example was one of only four mounted with the Streamliner coachwork. It was an ⇨

"FOR SIX DECADES THE W196R HAD BEEN FASTIDIOUSLY STORED BY THE INDIANAPOLIS MOTOR SPEEDWAY MUSEUM, OCCASIONALLY INVITED TO ATTEND IMPORTANT EXHIBITIONS"

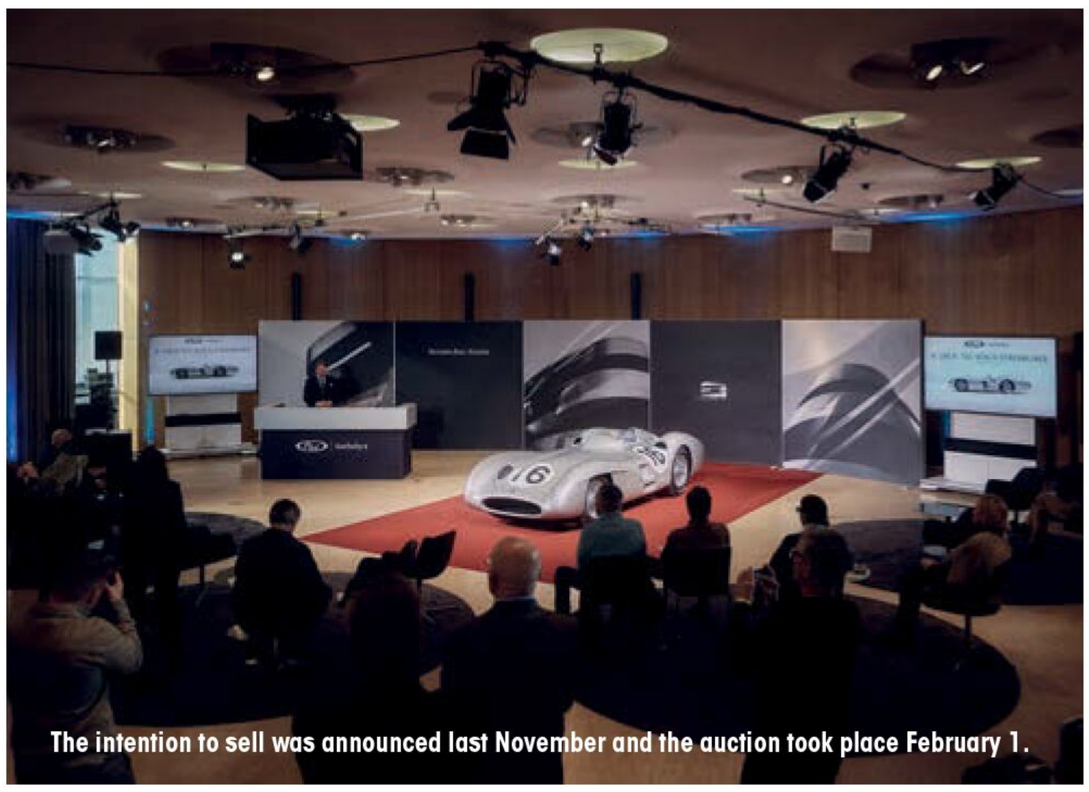


Going, going… gone!

In an exciting auction in the Mercedes-Benz Museum the iconic racing car changed hands for over £42.6m, Tim French reports

At a normal auction a car typically sells in a matter of seconds, but at the Mercedes-Benz Museum in Stuttgart on Feburary 1 it took auctioneer Sholto Gilbertson of RM Sotheby's over seven minutes to bring his hammer down. But then he did extract a bid of nearly €46.6m while despatching the 1954 Mercedes-Benz W196R Streamliner put up for sale by the Indianapolis Motor Speedway Museum to a new home. Once the buyer's premium was added, the price paid was €51,155,000 (£42,565,500/$52,443,100).

An opening bid of €20m was quickly raised in €5m increment to €40m, after which a long pause saw Gilbertson using all his banter and trade tricks to restart the bidding. A €42m bid was raised to the €46.5m hammer price in €2m steps. It wasn't the most expensive Mercedes ever sold, that honour going to the 300SLR 'Uhlenhaut Coupe' fetching £116m in May 2022, but it's the most expensive racing car, making £13.6m more than the 1964 Ferrari 250 LM by Scaglietti which RM Sotheby's also sold on behalf of IMSM four days later.



The intention to sell was announced last November and the auction took place February 1.

The W196R was sold with the blessing of Mercedes-Benz, which donated it in 1965, M-B Heritage boss Marcus Breitschwerdt involved in the process and commenting, "What a thrilling auction that was! I congratulate the lucky buyer." Unsurprisingly, the buyer chose to remain anonymous.

The Museum let the Mercedes go for one simple reason: money. "This, and the other 10 cars for sale, will set an endowment that will support the museum, allowing us to get more of the 180 cars we have running, and also make acquistions," commented Jason Vansickle, a vice president at IMSM.



Sixty years after Mercedes-Benz donated it to the Indianapolis Motor Speedway Museum in the US, the grand prix winning W196R Streamliner returned to Stuttgart to be sold to a new owner.

W196R Streamliner

Auction specifications

Year 1954

Chassis no 00009/54

Vendor Indianapolis Motor Speedway Museum

Auction RM Sotheby's, Mercedes-Benz Museum, Stuttgart, Germany

When February 1, 2025

Pre-sale estimate In excess of €50m (£41.1m, $52.7m)

Price achieved €51,155,000 (£42,565,500, $52,443,107)



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ABOVE
It existed because loose grand prix rules weren't specific on bodywork.

⇨ integral component of the factory racing campaign that saw Mercedes-Benz capture two Formula One Drivers Championships in as many attempts, and one World Sportscar Championship during the same period. Driven to victory by Fangio at the 1955 Buenos Aires Grand Prix, and to the fastest lap by Stirling Moss at the 1955 Formula One Italian Grand Prix at Monza, this W196R had been successfully piloted by two of history's most famous and accomplished racing drivers.

Post-racing

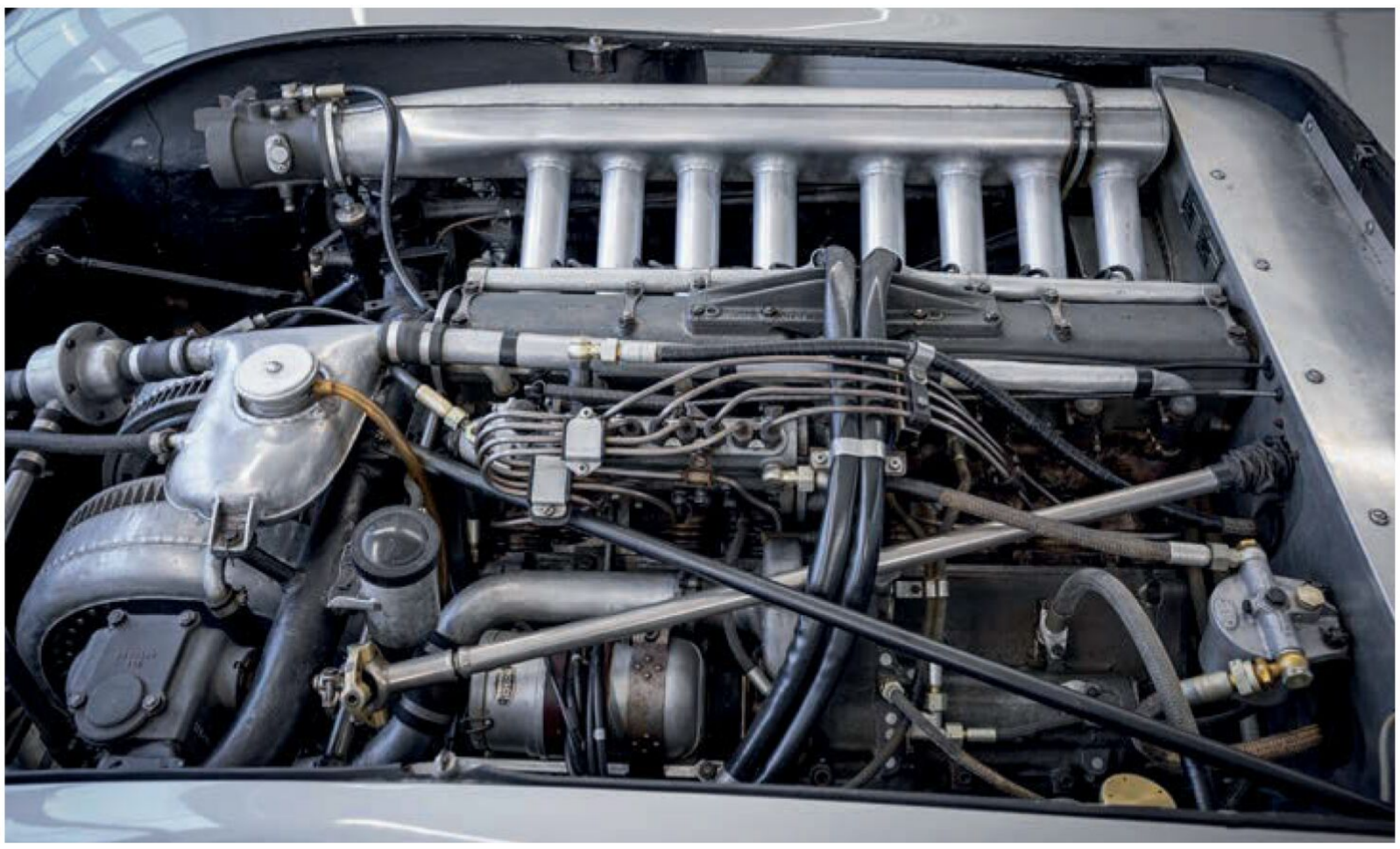
At the conclusion of 1955, when Mercedes-Benz withdrew from Formula 1, the 10 different complete W196R examples remained in running order, including the four with the Streamliner coachwork. Chassis were designated with numbers 1 to 15: numbers 1 and 15 were eventually scrapped, and number 11 was never actually assigned to a chassis. In October 1955, Mercedes-Benz held an official ceremony to retire the W196R, publicly shrouding the cars in dust sheets before transferring them to the company's museum in Stuttgart. While the Daimler-Benz Museum initially retained all 10 remaining W196R examples, four cars were eventually donated to prestigious museums around the world, including chassis number 00009/54.

The post-racing path of chassis number 00009/54 was set in motion in September 1964, when a contingent from the Mercedes-Benz Club of America visited the marque's Untertürkheim plant in Stuttgart. During this visit, a conversation ensued between the club's Wilhelm 'Bill' Spoerle and the manufacturer's Dr Friedrich Schildberger about donating a race car to the "planned new museum on the grounds of the Indianapolis Motor Speedway."

As Mercedes-Benz president Walter Hitzinger and chief engineer Dr Nallinger explained in a March 1965 letter to Anton 'Tony' Hulman Jr, the colourful business impresario who had purchased the Brickyard 20 years previously, "In view of the special significance of Indianapolis in the history of automobile racing and also in particular view of our own company's contribution, we have now decided to give you a 2.5-litre streamlined car, Type W196, built in 1954, as a gift for exhibition in your museum." Mercedes-Benz had a tie to America's greatest race, having won the race in just its fifth running in 1915 when Ralph DePalma drove a Mercedes to victory, one of just a handful of Indianapolis 500 wins for a European manufacturer.

The Streamlimer was shipped to the US through the port of Baltimore in late April 1965. It was then trucked to Indianapolis and officially donated to the Indianapolis Motor Speedway Foundation on Sunday, May 30, 1965.

BELOW
The 2.5 straight-eight motor first made 250bhp, later rising to 290bhp.



At the Indianapolis Motor Speedway Museum

For almost six decades, the W196R had been fastidiously stored and maintained by the Indianapolis Motor Speedway Museum, occasionally being invited to attend important exhibitions, such as the 1996 Amelia Island Concours d'Elegance, the 2003 Canadian International Auto Show, and the grand re-opening of the redesigned Petersen Automotive ⇨

⇨ Museum in December 2015. The car participated in the first Velocity Invitational (then called Sonoma Speed Festival) event at Sonoma Raceway in 2019, and it was then shown at the Amelia Island Concours d'Elegance once again in 2020.

The W196R has been displayed at the IMS Museum periodically, including in the 2020–2021 From the Vault exhibition. When not on display, it was part of the Basement Collection VIP tours of the Museum's vehicle storage location. Most recently, it was part of the Mercedes-Benz display at the 2024 Pebble Beach Concours d'Elegance.

The Streamliner has been treated to two mild bouts of sympathetic freshening during its more recent lifetime, first undergoing a refinish in the correct DB180 Silver Metallic in 1980, with race number 16 in white roundels, as per the 1955 Monza livery when driven by Stirling Moss. In late 2015, in preparation for its display at the Petersen Museum, the car received a second refinishing of the coachwork by experts at Canepa Motorsports in Scotts Valley, California, and it continues to be a startling testament to the brilliance of the *Stromlinenwagens* at Monza.

There is no small irony in the fact that this W196R has spent so many decades in the care of the IMS Museum. For at the end of the 1955 season, according to motoring historian Karl Ludvigsen in his book *Mercedes-Benz: Quicksilver Century*, some minds at Mercedes-Benz wondered how the model might fare in the Indianapolis 500. Initial research and development calculations were undertaken to create performance projections.

But after these initial calculations were made, the pursuit was dropped in the face of anticipated high costs and a lack of pure necessity. The W196R had achieved everything it was built to do, thus no further campaigning was deemed necessary. Its shocking form, however, inspired a number of Indianapolis 500 hopefuls – perhaps most notably Jimmy Daywalt and the Sumar Special – to incorporate elements of its streamlined design into their own cars for 1955.

Chassis number 00009/54 represents only the second W196R ever offered for private ownership (an open-wheeled car, chassis 00006, was auctioned by Bonhams for over £19m in 2013), and the sole example offered with the Streamliner coachwork. Presented in its proper Monza livery from the 1955 Italian Grand Prix, and documented with a trove of period materials, 00009/54 has moreover never been formally presented for judging or driven in any vintage events; it should experience a rapturous welcome at any of the major events for which it is eligible. Ideal for display at flagship concours d'elegance like Pebble Beach or Villa d'Este, the magnificent W196R will surely also experience great acclaim at significant marque events worldwide.

The future caretaker can take pride in ownership of a bona fide competition legend that is one of Formula 1's most successful models ever. Absolutely astonishing in every respect, from its advanced, powerful engineering and truly singular coachwork to its remarkable motorsport provenance – driven by two of the biggest names in the history of motorsport, this W196R is surely a gem without parallel. CM





TOP
Simple controls, and this was an era before driver safety harnesses.

ABOVE
'Knock-off' wire wheels, inboard of which lay massive drum brakes.

"CHASSIS NUMBER 00009/54 REPRESENTS ONLY THE SECOND W196R EVER OFFERED FOR PRIVATE OWNERSHIP, AND THE SOLE EXAMPLE OFFERED WITH THE STREAMLINER COACHWORK"

⇨ *The images and the main text in this article are reproduced courtesy of RM Sotheby's Tel l +44 (0)20 7851 7070 Web www.rmsothebys.com*



One of four W196R grand prix cars with the Streamliner body.

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The original C63 AMG with its normally aspirated V8 engine and comprehensively uprated chassis is the best compact performance car in the world, many feel. It's also surely on a fast track to classic status, David Sutherland predicts

IMAGES Steve Hall/Terry Oborne

This car's roots go back three decades to when Mercedes-Benz introduced the first AMG cars to its showrooms – high performance versions of the C-Class, E-Class and SL

For those who like a super quick but practical car, the 204-series C63 AMG launched in early 2008 is a pretty good definition of the dream. It has all the power and performance you're surely ever going to need, is comfortable, spacious and generally a very practical four-door saloon – and to cap it all bears one of the world's most prestigious nameplates. But although in fast Benz circles its very mention inspires awe, they still answer the description, 'secondhand Mercedes-Benz', and some knock around for £12,000-£15,000 in the motor trade. But for how much longer? It's our opinion that with all that engineering and pedigree, the C63 in both saloon and estate form can only become sought-after, commanding collector's money, and perhaps sooner rather than later.

This outstanding car's roots go back over three decades to when Mercedes-Benz introduced the first AMG-tuned cars to its showrooms – high performance versions of the C-Class, E-Class and SL. They were intended as an answer to BMW's hugely respected M cars, particularly the M3 and M5, object lessons in how to build hot saloons that were superb to drive while retaining all the refinement of the regular model, and which boosted the marque's image no end.

Those first steps to capitalise on the efforts of the then still independent AMG – based in Affalterbach near to Stuttgart, and long established as Mercedes' approved tuner – were cautious, some might even say unsure. The W202 C36 AMG, for example, used a 3.6-litre version of the C280's 2.8-litre straight-six engine, but while its 276bhp and 284lb ft torque were almost half as much again, the C36 was an underwhelming and unrefined performer when compared to the silken M3. Much the same applied to the E36 AMG, derived from the 124-series E-Class when pitted against the M5.

It would be over a decade from the launch of the C36 before Mercedes finally settled on the AMG formula that worked best for the C-Class, and indeed all other AMGs – the big, smooth and torquey V8. The C36 of 1993 evolved into the 4.3-litre V8 C43 four years later, a car that had the power but arguably not the chassis to go with it, after which Mercedes switched to a 3.2-litre V6 motor for the 203- series C32 AMG, supercharging it to compensate for the lack of cubic centimetres.

At the 203's 2004 facelift, the C55 AMG arrived, with the engine it could and should have had years earlier, ⇨


The C63 used the M156 V8, AMG's first scratch-built motor.

The bonnet was given power domes, the front bumper made into a substantial section with a large intake, while bulging wheel arches accommodate the extended track.

the 5.4-litre M113 V8 which by then was the AMG staple. With 362bhp backed up by 376lb ft of torque, the new flagship C-Class was the discreet and delicious powerhouse its predecessors never quite were. It did not have, or need, the supercharger of the S, SL and CL models using this engine.

When that engine began to be pensioned off as from the mid 2000s, due to Mercedes' desire to get out of supercharged V8s, the AMG-powered C-Class stepped up in capacity again, to evolve into the incarnation considered here, the C63 AMG, in 2008, shortly after the launch of the 204-series. Unlike the preceding M113 5.4-litre V8 which it replaced, the M156 was a essentially a high-revving racing engine and would indeed serve in factory motorsport. Besides the C63, it went into other premium Mercedes ranges; for the C63 it produced 451bhp and 443lb ft torque, up 38 and 18 per cent over the C55 AMG. And while that car ran a five-speed automatic transmission, the C63 stepped up to a seven-speed AMG Speedshift Plus 7G-Tronic, featuring throttle blipping downshifts, the power delivered though substantially uprated drive shafts, aided by a three-stage ESP traction control.

That the C63 was a very special car was also seen in the significant changes applied to the chassis. The 204's normal front strut and rear multi-linked configuration was retained, but featured a new three-link front axle with a 35mm widened track, while the rear track was increased 12mm. The steering system was re-engineered for a tauter feel, and brakes were six-piston caliper discs up front and four piston at the rear.

The C63 AMG came as standard with 18-inch wheels, fitted with 235/40 front and 255/35 rear tyres but, to take 2009 prices as an example, a 19-inch rim (235/35, 255/30

Mercedes-Benz C63 AMG saloon/estate (W204/S204)

Specifications

Engine M156 6,208cc V8
Power 451bhp@6,800rpm
Torque 443lb ft@5,000rpm
Transmission 7-speed auto
Weight 1,795kg
0-62mph 4.5*/4.6sec*
Top speed 155mph
Fuel consumption 20.6mpg
CO^2 emissions 319/326g/km
Years produced 2008-2014

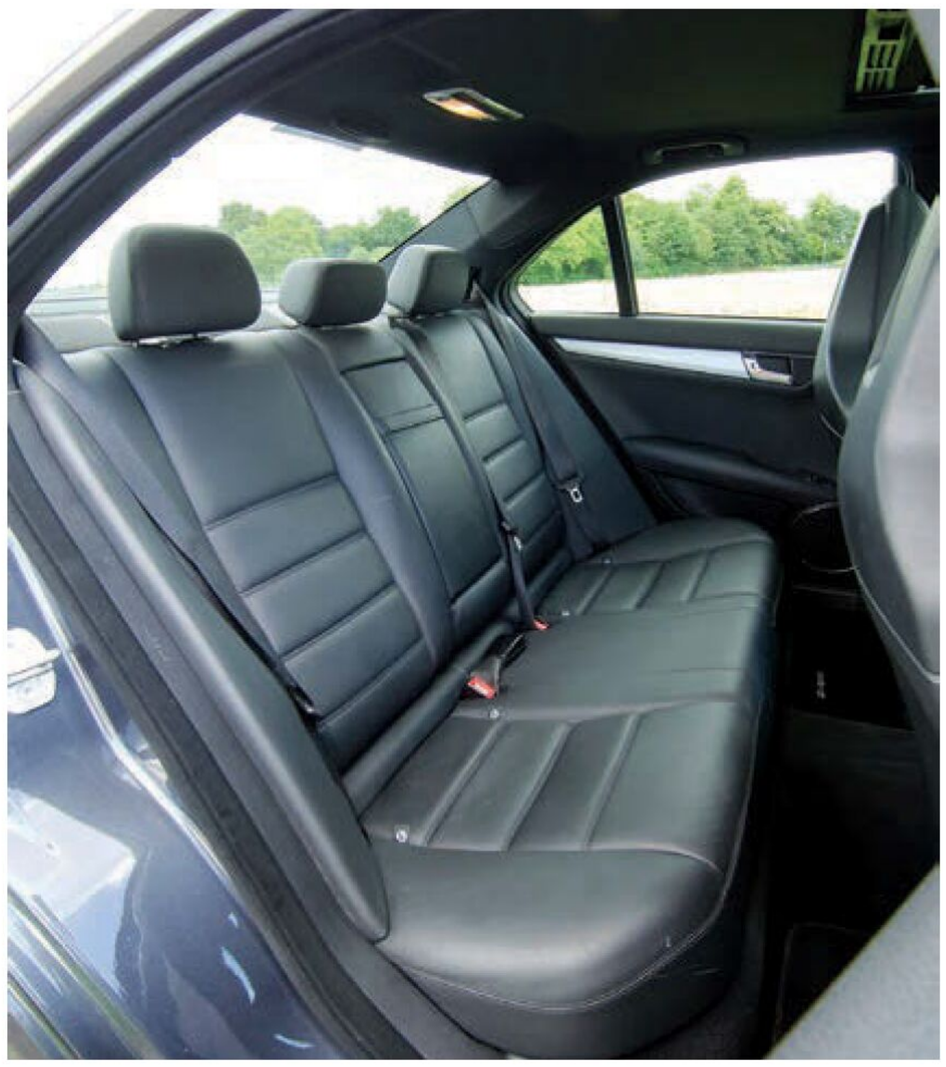
*All figures from Mercedes-Benz; * AMG Performance Package cars 4.4sec*




Body widening was necessary so the 35mm/12mm widened front/rear axles could fit.











ABOVE
Leather sports seats fitted; wheel part of the Performance Package.

TOP LEFT
C63s prior to the 2011 facelift have a fold-out, not fixed Comand screen.

MIDDLE LEFT
Fronts seats electrically adjusted with memory, and are also heated.

LEFT
A spacious rear cabin that takes three adds to the C63's practicality.

RIGHT
Interior trim looks and feels basic, even austere, but is very high quality.

tyres) was a £600 option. There were other choices too, such as the AMG Performance Package priced at £3,100 (see last page), while for £2,200 more you could have the AMG Driver's Package, which removed the electronic speed limiter and also included AMG driver training.

For the visual treatment, the bonnet was given power domes, the front bumper made into a substantial section with a large intake, while bulging wheelarches accommodated the extended track. In customary AMG style, interior upgrades were limited, for the C63 comprising a pair of superbly supportive front seats trimmed in nappa leather and a chunky, flat-bottomed steering wheel containing the extra AMG sport functions. However a carbonfibre interior trim, replacing the aluminium finish, was available for an extra £1,520.

In July 2010 a run of 20 C63 AMG saloons and estates badged DR520 were made available through Mercedes-Benz World in Brooklands in Surrey. They have the AMG Performance Pack, and also an extra 62bhp and 37lb ft torque, which Mercedes said was made possible by a technology transfer from the SLS AMG including forged pistons, con rods and a lightweight crankshaft. ⇨



⇨ Then in February 2011, for a UK on-sale date of July, a significantly revised C63 AMG was announced. It featured the AMG Speedshift MCT seven-speed transmission, using a wet start-off clutch rather than a torque converter which, among other things, brought a claimed 10 per cent improvement in economy. Engine output for the standard model remained unchanged, but the AMG Performance Package now included an engine specification similar to that of the DR520 although the power increase was quoted at 30bhp.

At the same time, the suspension and steering were further honed, an aluminium bonnet with differently shaped power domes was fitted, as was a revised grille and exterior trim. Changes to the fascia included upgraded Comand, and a fixed, rather than folding information screen, as per the 204 C-Class facelift.

The C63 AMG Edition 125 appeared in 2012 to mark Mercedes' 125 years, but was merely a slightly better equipped model. The final development prior to the end of production in 2014 was the Edition 507 (denoting engine output) featured the uprated engine, in this form giving an additional 49bhp and 71b ft torque.

Driving the C63 AMG saloon

The criticism of some past AMGs has been that although extremely fast cars, lack character. This arguably applied to the 203 C55 but certainly not to the C63: the M156 is thrillingly noisy when revved – the harder it works the more evocative it sounds – and delivers devastating acceleration from any speed. And the V8's throttle blipping on down changes certainly adds to the aural enjoyment. The chassis is very stiff – but stops short of the rock hard ride early AMGs suffered. Steering is quick, perfectly weighted and has good feel, while the brakes, featuring composite front discs, offer huge stopping power.

"For all its performance and handling, the C63 can also be the perfectly practical saloon that can transport the family in comfort and fit in a normal garage"

But for all its performance and handling, the C63 can also be the perfectly practical four-seater saloon that transports the family in comfort and will fit in a normal garage, and this is of course is a key part of its appeal. The seats look good and are indeed very supportive, and are fine-tuned with electrical adjustment. The rear seat is made for three, rather than two, as is sometimes the case at this end of the market, adding to the car's usefulness, and if the rear seats are not as grippy and comfortable as those in the front, the rear cabin is very spacious, offering plenty of head and legroom. And if more serious load carry is needed, there's the mechanically identical estate.

But of course be prepared for a heavy fuel bill, as the M156 will drop to 10-12mpg in town and can't be coaxed to much above 25mpg out of it, although every C63 is compliant with London's Ultra Low Emissions Zone (ULEZ)

ABOVE
Mercedes decided its racy 204 C-Class was going to look the part.

RIGHT
The boot is quite large, and the split-folding rear seat extremely useful.



and won't attracted the added Congestion Zone penalty.

The car's classic potential was thrown more sharply into focus when in 2015 the succeeding 205-model C63 AMG arrived with a four-litre twin turbo V8. It offered better economy and lower emissions – but none of the M156 engine's unruly, naturally aspirated character. Some say the 204 C63 AMG was better than the BMW M3 it was benchmarked against. It is certainly an outstanding combination of track level performance and value, and although Mercedes hasn't given a production total, the bonus is that there's no shortage of them out there, waiting to be bought at affordable prices. So right now could be the best time to get one into your garage. CM



RIGHT
Super-practical C63 AMG Estate arrived shortly after the saloon...

BELOW
... it's mechanically identical to the saloon, a true hot shot wagon.

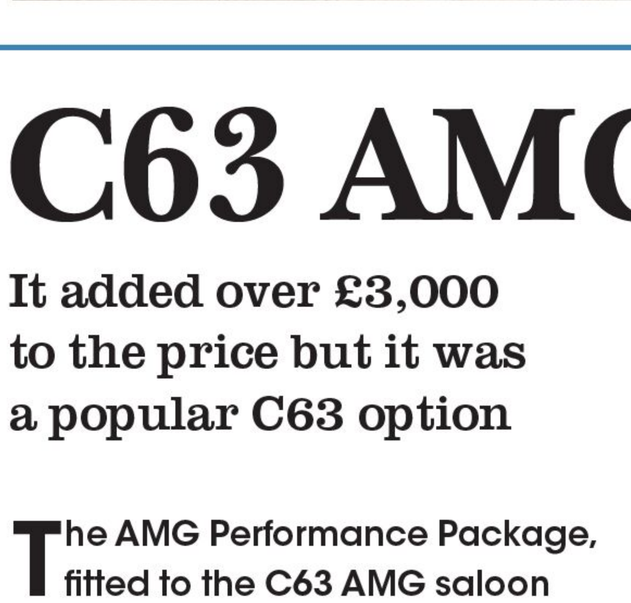


C63 AMG Performance Pack

It added over £3,000 to the price but it was a popular C63 option

The AMG Performance Package, fitted to the C63 AMG saloon photographed here, added to the car's already super sporty specification. The price we've quoted here was that applying in 2009: £3,142. An uprated braking system was fitted which included composite front discs to replace the regular steel items, the already stiff suspension setup was made even more so, and a locking rear differential was installed (this could also be specified separately on non-Performance Pack cars at a cost of £1,530). In the cabin, you got a steering wheel trimmed in leather and Alcantara.

Unsurprisingly, the Performance Pack makes the hot C-Class feel even more firm on the road, especially if the AMG multi-spoke 19-inch wheels – an obvious complement to the pack – are fitted. The AMG Driver's Package raises the C63's maximum speed above the electronically limited 155mph, now quoted at 175mph.



ABOVE
In 2009 a C63 AMG was over £51K, but there were cost options too.

LEFT
The reasonably-priced AMG Performance Package was popular.

AMG optional equipment

Code	Item	Notes	C63 Saloon	C63 Estate	Basic RRP excl. VAT (£)	Total RRP incl. VAT (£)
	AMG PERFORMANCE STUDIO					
P30	**AMG Performance Package** consisting of: AMG high-performance braking system with compound brake disc on front axle AMG rear-axle limited-slip differential lock AMG Performance suspension AMG Performance steering wheel trimmed in nappa leather/Alcantara®		O	O	2,731.91	3,141.70
250	**AMG Driver's Package** Includes an increase to the electronically limited top speed and attendance at an AMG 'Power & Passion' driving event	Please ask your Retailer for more information	O	O	1,897.87	2,182.55
788	**AMG alloy wheels, multi-spoke design** front: 235/35 tyres rear: 255/30 tyres		O	O	510.64	587.24
H73	**Carbon Fibre Interior Trim Package**	Please check with your Retailer for availability	O	O	1,336.17	1,536.60
U26	**AMG floormats**		O	O	59.57	68.51
471	**AMG rear-axle limited-slip differential**		O	O	1,327.66	1,526.81



Eugen Böhringer in Argentina 1963, after rolling a 220SE which landed on its roof.

Unknown hero

He was Mercedes' most successful works rally driver in the early 1960s, and gave the SL Pagoda its one and only victory, but rallying's low profile resulted in Eugen Böhringer being one of motorsport's best kept secrets. **David Sutherland** looks at his life and achievements

IMAGES Mercedes-Benz Group AG

With its purpose-built, wondrous looking cars the pinnacle of automotive engineering, its trackside glamour unparalleled, and the sheer amount of cash flowing through it since its inception in the early 1930s, Formula 1 has always side-lined rallying, even the highest level of that strain of motorsport. And nowhere was that more evident than in the case of Mercedes-Benz on its return to international motorsport in the early 1950s.

Daimler-Benz entered its space-framed 300SL in a single season of high profile road races in 1952 as a stepping stone to a grand prix comeback, which it hoped would recall its glory racing days of 1934 to 1939, when not winning a race had almost become a matter of surprise rather than disappointment. The carmaker's season and a half of F1 participation, 1954 to 1955, delivered what was intended, with the advanced W196R sweeping all before and delivering back-to-back F1 titles for its ace driver, Argentinian born Juan Manuel Fangio.



ABOVE
He drove the W113 to its sole works rally win, the 1963 Spa-Sofia-Liège.

In 1952, Stuttgart drivers including pre-war grand prix



Driving a Pagoda in the 1964 Spa-Sofia-Liège, Böhringer couldn't repeat the previous year's win, finishing third.



hero Rudolf Caracciola took part in the Monte Carlo Rally driving the staple Mercedes-Benz saloon of the day, the W187 220. But there was little support nor encouragement from the then newly reformed motorsport department, headed by the architect of Mercedes' outstanding pre-war racing success, the legendary Alfred Neubauer, who is said to have considered rallying a waste of motorsport resources and was not happy with his team's participation in it.

ABOVE
He took a class win in the Monte Carlo every year from 1961 to 1965.

BELOW RIGHT
1963 Monte Carlo and a cigarette break and some car maintenance.

BELOW
Trying very hard indeed on the 1963 Argentinian Touring Car Grand Prix.



"MOTORSPORT BOSS ALFRED NEUBAUER IS SAID TO HAVE CONSIDERED RALLYING A WASTE OF RESOURCES AND WAS NOT HAPPY WITH HIS TEAM'S PARTICIPATION IN IT"

But Mercedes rallying was boosting by the activities of private drivers, such as ex-Luftwaffe night fighter aircrew member Walter Schock, who campaigned his own 220 Ponton in the Solitude Rally, a rallying event consisting of a series of special stages that had been added to the existing circuit racing at Solitude Castle near Stuttgart in Germany. Of the 174 participants starting from 11 locations, Schock and his co-driver Rudolf Moll won the event, which counted towards the German touring car championship and probably helped elicit factory support for the activity.

A turning point for Mercedes-Benz in rallying was late 1955. It's often assumed that the car maker quit F1 and the World Sports Car Championship because of the terrible accident one of its cars was involved in at Le Mans in June of that year, when over 80 spectators died. But Mercedes management also decided that having demonstrated its engineering expertise in the field of performance and racing, its cash would now be better directed at proving the toughness and reliability of the cars that its customers actually bought. Rallying was the obvious method, and thereafter Schock and others enjoyed increased funding – although the participation was low key, Schock still entering as a privateer even ⇨





Böhringer on the 1962 Acropolis Rally in Greece, Peter Lang his co-driver.





⇨ though he was driving a 300SL Gullwing in some events, and ended 1956 with both the European and International rally championship titles in his pocket.

Therefore by the time another Stuttgart-born driver, Eugen Böhringer, arrived on the rallying scene in 1960 at the relatively old age of 38, the Mercedes-Benz rally team had been honed into a competitive force, fielding the Fintail that had been introduced the previous year. The model that competed was the then flagship 220SE, with its 118bhp fuel-injected, 2.2-litre engine.

For the time, the six-cylinder Fintail was a heavy and somewhat unwieldy car to use in European rally events, but this only highlighted Böhringer's special skill in throwing the Mercedes through challenging routes as though it was a car half its size and weight. The Swabian's first success was on the 1960 Monte Carlo Rally in which, with Hermann Socher as co-driver, he finished in second place, behind the 220SE piloted by Walter Schock and co-driver Rolf Moll.

ABOVE LEFT
In Argentina in 1962 he was beaten by Ursula Wirth and Ewy Rosqvist.

ABOVE RIGHT
Improvised serenades on the rest days of the tough 1962 Argentinian event.

"BÖHRINGER OVERCAME TIREDNESS ON LONG-DISTANCE EVENTS BY CONSUMING A MIXTURE OF HOT MILK AND GLUCOSE, SPICED UP WITH A SPOONFUL OF RUM"

Böhringer never achieved an overall win in this prestigious event, staged in the January snows in the mountains inland of the French Riviera, but it nonetheless became his speciality, as he took a class victory every year from 1961 to 1965. And there were compensations, being runner-up in the 1961 European Rally Championship and winning it the following year. In 1962 he drove the Fintail to victory in the Acropolis Rally, the Poland Rally and the 3,400-mile Liège-Sofia-Liège Rally. He is said to have overcome tiredness on arduous long-distance events such as this by consuming a mixture of hot milk and glucose, suitably spiced up with a spoonful of rum.

For 1963, Böhringer showed his driving versatility by

Eugen Böhringer
A rallying life



Böhringer always picked co-drivers with great care, Klaus Kaiser being one.



Born: January 22, 1922, Rotenberg, Stuttgart, Germany
Died: June 19, 2013, Stuttgart
Family background: Hotel business
First rally: Entered his own Mercedes 219 Ponton in the 1958 Solitude Rally near Stuttgart, and finished second
Mercedes-Benz career: A member of the Mercedes rally team, 1960-1964
Final rally: 1965 Monte Carlo, driving a Porsche 904
Rally wins: 13
Rallying high points: 1962 European Rally Champion, winning the 1962 and 1963 Liège-Sofia-Liège Rally



Kaiser and Böhringer looking pleased after winning the 1963 Spa-Sofia-Liège.

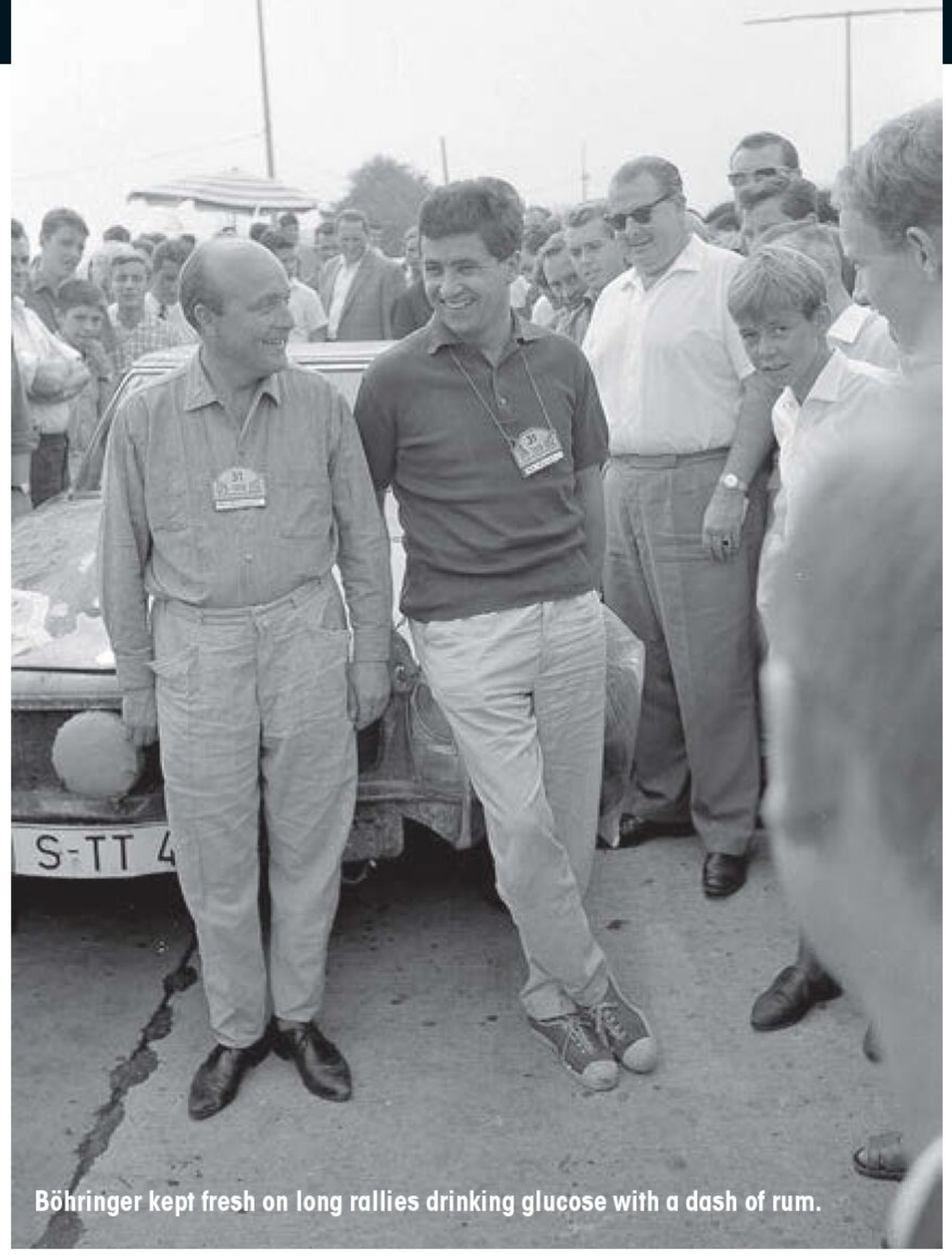
switching to the W113 230SL roadster launched in that year, a lithe steed that could hardly have been more different to pilot than the bulky Fintail (he'd also rallied the three-litre 300SE Fintail). With Klaus Kaiser in the co-driver's seat of this pre-production Pagoda with a 300cc increase to 2.6 litres and reinforced suspension among other modifications, he won the Liège-Sofia-Liège Rally, becoming the first driver to win the 93-hour marathon two times in a row. There were two other victories in 1963, the Acropolis and Poland, along with second in the Monte-Carlo and in the Germany Rally.

His final season with Mercedes-Benz was 1964, after which the factory withdrew from rallying and touring car racing. He wanted to take a third win in the Spa-Sofia-Liège Rally but only managed a third place; the organisers awarded him a gold trophy in recognition of the fact that winning their rally, with its 85 per cent dropout rate, twice and achieving a high placing in the other two years he entered was outstanding.

Indeed, he was Mercedes' most successful rally driver of the early 1960s, with 13 wins. In 1965 he entered ⇨



On his way to a class win in the 1963 Monte-Carlo Rally.



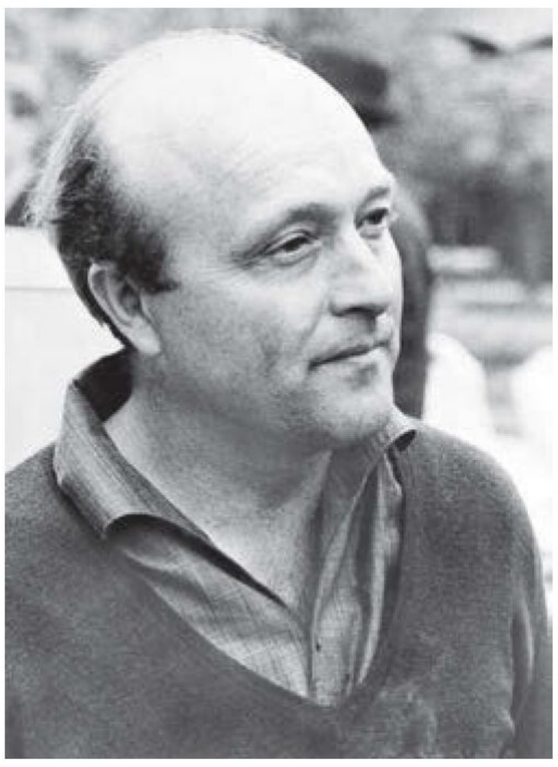
Böhringer kept fresh on long rallies drinking glucose with a dash of rum.

"IN 1964 THE GERMAN MAGAZINE KRISTALL SAID, "HIS COMPETITORS FEAR HIM, BECAUSE HE ALWAYS TAKES THINGS TO THE EXTREME LIMIT AND ALWAYS RISKS EVERYTHING"

⇨ the Monte Carlo in a Porsche 904, after which the 43-year-old decided to hang up his helmet. He remained involved with motorsport, however, and along with other racing drivers formed the Solitude Revival association, in tribute to his motorsport roots.

Böhringer, who died in Stuttgart in June 2013 aged 91, may have finally entered motorsport almost by chance, but there were early signs that motoring and perhaps motorsport was in his blood. In 1928 his father, Gottfried Böhringer established a bus service between Stuttgart-Rotenberg and Untertürkheim for employees at the Mercedes-Benz plant, and one of these buses was driven by Eugen's mother Emma, one of the first women in Stuttgart to hold a driving licence. The family had purchased a Mercedes 16/45hp model in 1925, which his mother also drove.

Eugen trained as a chef and then became manager of his family's hotel in Rotenberg, overlooking Stuttgart. But he developed a fascination with Mercedes cars,



ABOVE
He was a hotelier in Germany before, during and after his rally career.

which eventually led to him taking up a bet between friends to enter his 219 Ponton in local and regional competitions. He took a second place in 1958's Solitude Rally, and won it again in 1959 and 1960, after which he became one of the new generation of drivers hired by the Mercedes team manager, former Silver Arrows grand prix driver Karl Kling.

Besides his rum and glucose intake, Böhringer also applied his gastronomic expertise to rallying preparation. "Three weeks before the start of such a trip, I begin to restrict the fluid intake somewhat," he once revealed. "In addition to my good bourgeois Swabian diet, I then take carrot extract to strengthen my eyes, as well as building up the nerves. Anyone who sits at the wheel of a car for four days and four nights at a special rally and chases it at maximum speed needs the eye of an eagle and nerves like wide noodles." But, he added, "Nevertheless, the best driver would have been stuck if he had picked the wrong co-pilot."

In a feature on Böhringer published in late 1964, the German magazine *Kristall* said, "His competitors fear him, because he always takes things to the extreme limit, always risks everything, and demands the utmost of himself, of Klaus Kaiser and of the Mercedes-Benz 230SL that they are driving in the rally, right up to the very last second."

The stocky, balding Böhringer, who retained his hotelier interests throughout his rally years, never had a high profile, and even during his career peak in 1962, the year he won the European Rally Championship, he was overshadowed by two blonde women, Ewy Rosqvist and Ursula Wirth, who were part of the factory squad and who sensationally won the Argentinian Touring Car Grand Prix by a three-hour margin. But his solid run of results was what Mercedes-Benz wanted in order to underscore the durability of its road cars, and on his passing the carmaker described him as "remarkable". CM


The Spa-Sofia-Liège 230SL had a 2.6 engine and uprated suspension.

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Back to the **future**

In a few months, lucky owners will be driving an incredible re-imagination of the 1990 190E 2.5-16 Evolution II, masterminded by AMG co-founder, Hans Werner Aufrecht. ***Tim French*** *lays out what we know about it so far*

IMAGES HWA AG



"WHEN THE FIRST BUILD SLOT, FOR CHASSIS 000, WAS AUCTIONED IN TEGERNSEE IN GERMANY IN JULY 2024 BY RM SOTHEBY'S, IT FETCHED €1.31m"

Thirty-five years ago Mercedes-Benz released the 190E 2.5-16 Evolution II, the road legal version of an extraordinary, rule-bending race car that would finally win Stuttgart the hitherto elusive *Deutsche Tourenwagen Masters*, or DTM race series trophy in Germany. Production of the 502 cars took place between May and July of 1990, and this ultimate manifestation of what had began as the humble W201 190/190E in 1982 became an instant motorsport collectable. Many of those fortunate enough to get on the customer list immediately consigned their cars to their classic collection, and today even most Evo IIs with more than delivery mileage are little used. Typical auction prices are presently £250,000 to £350,000.

AMG, then still an independent Mercedes tuner, played a significant role in the development of the original 190E 2.3-16 into a production racing car, and 2025 sees one of the company's co-founders, Hans Werner Aufrecht, reviving the iconic saloon. Through his company HWA AG, one of the most respected firms in the race preparation business, he is building 100 super saloons that, from what we know so far, will bring the original Evo II bang up to date. It's called the HWA Evo, and the first customers will receive their cars later in 2025. The price will be the equivalent of €714,000 plus local taxes, around £715,000 in the UK, and if that seems a high price, demand is already assured: when the first build slot, for chassis 000, was auctioned in Tegernsee in Germany on July 2024 by RM Sotheby's it fetched €1.31m including buyer's premium and taxes, and by February 2025 the order book was nearly full. Unsurprisingly, many customers are owners of the original Evo II.

The term 'restomod' is not one that HWA likes to hear used. The HWA EVO will provide "a contemporary, ultra-focussed driving experience through the empathetic application of the very latest materials and technology, allied to the most advanced design, engineering and manufacturing techniques," the press release informs us. HWA's Chief Technical Officer, Gordian von Schöning, further explains, "Not only have we called upon our own decades of experience at the cutting edge of motorsport and supercar production, but we have leveraged techniques and partnerships that would normally only be found at major OEM level to ensure our car is worthy of the Evo name." The supercars he references are two Mercedes-Benz race homologation cars, the 1990s CLK-GTR *Strassenversion* (Roadster) and 2004 Mercedes-Benz CLK-DTM AMG, and also the 2008 Mercedes-Benz SL65 AMG Black Series.

So what actually is this enormously expensive, re-imagined Evo II beneath its dramatic looking exterior shell? It's a four-door saloon with a carbonfibre body, 1,350kg at the scales and using a twin-turbo, three-litre V6 engine that will produce up to 500bhp. Unusually nowadays, a six-speed manual gearbox will be fitted (the gearstick carrying a numbered plaque).



Some aspects of the Evo are still virtual mock-ups but this vehicle exists.

⇨ The build process begins with a careful selected donor W201, stripped back to its original steel chassis. The front and rear chassis sections are removed and replaced with new motorsport-grade aluminium and high-strength steel subframes, designed in-house by HWA. This not only brings modern levels of crash impact performance and suitable safety in a car of this type, but allows the suspension to be mounted directly to the new chassis structure, creating a rigid platform for maximum handling precision and driver feedback.

The chassis is further modified to allow the engine to be mounted as low and as far back as possible: the front axle is moved forward by 50mm compared to the 190E, ancillary components are repositioned, and the gearbox located at the rear, in Porsche 924/944/928 style. "This front mid-engined, transaxle layout enables a targeted 50/50 weight distribution for motorsport-derived handling characteristics," HWA explains.

The retained steel mid-section – including the A, B and C pillars – is then extensively reinforced, ensuring a super rigid structure. In contrast to the original W201, the HWA Evo will boast more than double the torsional stiffness, comparable to a state-of-the-art production supercar. In total, three-quarters of the original car is replaced, after which the full chassis is electro, or KTL (*Kathodische Tauchlackierung*), coated for manufacturer-level corrosion protection.

With the chassis prepared, engineers can then begin assembling additional components including DTM-derived wishbones, billet-machined wheel carriers and various suspension parts, "the company also leveraging longstanding relationships with industry-leading partners to ensure cutting-edge performance." Two brake options, steel and carbon ceramic, are supplied by Brembo, minimising rotating mass and unsprung weight. KW dampers, manually or electronically adjustable depending on vehicle specification, are custom designed, with stability further strengthened by anti-roll bars from suspension expert H&R.

HWA is taking the unprecedented step of working with Bosch to develop its own ESP system, incorporating anti-lock braking activation, as well as creating a bespoke ECU. "It is unheard of for a bespoke, low volume manufacturer like HWA to partner with a top-tier



ABOVE
Road wheels are much larger than the 1990 Evo II's 17-inch alloys.

BELOW
The W201 body/chassis is heavily modified to make it super-strong.





HWA ensured that the connection to the W201 Evo II was very clear.

"THE PROCESS BEGINS WITH A DONOR W201, STRIPPED TO ITS STEEL CHASSIS. THE FRONT AND REAR CHASSIS SECTIONS REPLACED WITH NEW MOTORSPORT-GRADE ALUMINIUM AND STEEL SUBFRAMES"

OEM supplier like Bosch for such a limited production run," von Schöning points out. "But when evaluating how to realise the full potential of the car, and do justice to the level of engineering that we have put into it, we concluded that going to such lengths was the only option."

Full carbon bodywork is fitted to the re-engineered chassis and frame. The bespoke mouldings not only include individual sections such as the doors and roof, but unprecedented single structures which encapsulate the entire front and rear ends of the vehicle. "Manufacturing these areas as a single form is highly challenging, but allows for the bodywork to take on a structural element, contributing to the finished car's exceptional rigidity while enabling its remarkably light kerb weight," says HWA. Throughout the process, motorsport precision is balanced with real-world reliability, durability, comfort and safety. In addition to intensive



ABOVE
The starting point for an HWA Evo is a sound and stripped-back 190E body.

190E 2.5-16 Evolution/Evolution II

The flambouyant, be-winged saloon was born in 1990 as a result of Mercedes' mounting desperation to beat the BMW M3 in production car racing, Tim French explains.

After four years battling BMW in DTM racing with the 190E 2.3-16 and then the 190E 2.5-16 but never managing to take the title, Mercedes-Benz upgraded the latter into the 190E 2.5-16 Evolution for the 1989 season, with more horsepower and aerodynamics. When that was enough for a clutch of wins but not silverware, Mercedes and AMG developed the Evolution II, a last throw of the dice and extreme to the point that its legality was questioned.

The black plastic cladding shielding the top of the rear windscreen was fitted because the DTM rulebook decreed that rearward visibility should not be interrupted by a rear wing, and as the window cover hid the rear wing from view, the setup didn't break the rules. Rivals didn't like it, but the over-sized wing reduced drag by 20 per cent on the race track and increased downforce. By the time Klaus Ludwig wrapped up the DTM championship for Mercedes-Benz in 1992, the race car engine used a new type of steel in the



The 190E 2.5-16 Evo II when it was first unveiled...



... and how it looked once decked out in DTM war paint.

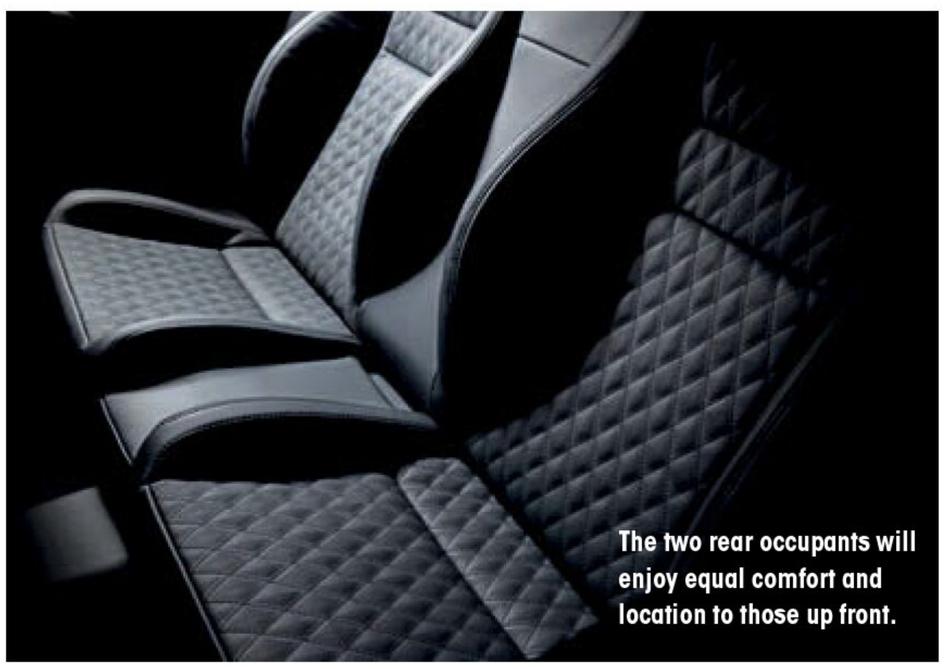
construction of the con rods, which again caused controversy up and down the pitlane, the tougher steel allowing for higher engine revs.

While the regulations required 500 road cars to be built for sale, two extra were produced, in silver rather than black, one each going to AMG and Mercedes. If by favour, string pulling or even subterfuge you found yourself in the Evo II delivery queue, in the UK you would have paid £55,000 for the left-hand-drive only homologation special. That's £135,000 in today's money and, as current values show, was a very good investment.

IMAGES Mercedes-Benz Group AG



Seats, fascia shape and instruments are a salute to the original Evo II.



The two rear occupants will enjoy equal comfort and location to those up front.

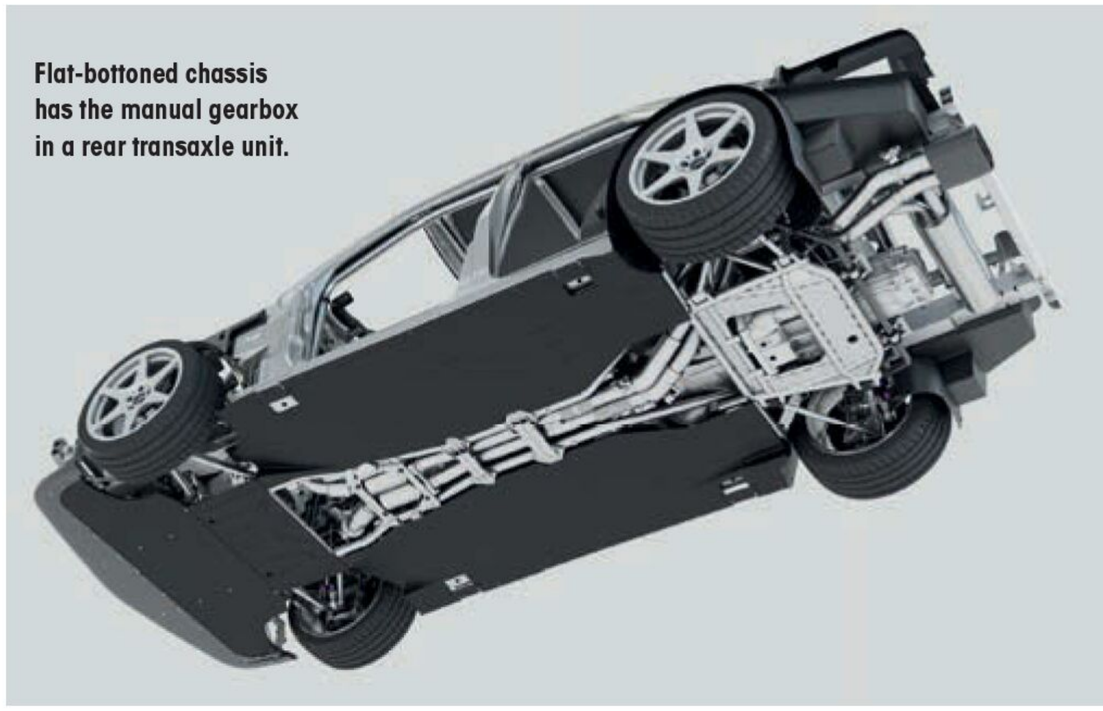
"FAMILIAR 190E DETAILS SUCH AS THE DASHBOARD, DOOR HANDLES AND FOUR- SPOKE STEERING WHEEL WILL BE RECOGNISABLE, BUT ARE SUPPLEMENTED BY MODERN FEATURES"

⇨ simulation programmes, physical crash tests were undertaken to ensure optimum occupant protection standards were achieved.

HWA revealed the Evo's interior in the form of a 1:1 scale recreation of the centre section of the car's body, built to establish design and engineering targets, as well as evaluate ergonomics. Ahead of final refinements to the fit, finish and material quality set to grace the company's homage to the Mercedes-Benz 190E Evo II, it indicates key cabin themes, a balance between the timeless, driver-focussed appeal of the original and the comfort, safety and performance afforded by modern technology.

Familiar 190E details such as the dashboard, door handles and four-spoke steering wheel will be recognisable, but are supplemented by modern features including a customisable digital gauge cluster, a central infotainment display, wireless charging and a state-of-the-art sound system. To maintain a suitable balance between electronics and analogue engagement, the screens will serve as information displays only, with tactile, physical buttons for functions such as the volume, electric windows, central locking and climate control. Motorsport DNA is seen in the integrated roll cage, fully clad in Alcantara, front seats with four-point harnesses and bolstered rear seats.

The HWA Evo project has been endorsed by the Mercedes tuning division that Hans Werner Aufrecht established almost six decades ago, and has been described as a "reinterpretation and revival project using state-of-the-art technology to modernise the powertrain, chassis, brakes, aerodynamics, comfort and safety to create an uncompromising reinterpretation of a classic."
Although much about the HWA Evo was still at the virtual or top secret stage as we went to press, we know for sure that it is going to be a very, very special motorcar. CM



Flat-bottoned chassis has the manual gearbox in a rear transaxle unit.



...When the Evo II arrived at grands prix it got almost as much attention as the racing cars.

HWA plans to build 100 of its Evo, and says the order book is nearly full.

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UNDER THE HAMMER

The auction year got off to its usual lively start, and in the next six pages we look at five Mercedes classics sold at international sales in January and February of 2025 by Artcurial Motors, Bonhams and RM Sotheby's

IMAGES ARTCURIAL MOTORS/BONHAMS/RM SOTHEBY'S

Young at heart

ARIZONA

Late enough in production to be a car with disc rather than drum brakes, and showing under 50,000 miles, this lovely 300SL Roadster is an all-round stunner

Lot 138
Mercedes-Benz 300SL Roadster

Year	1962
Engine/power	2,996cc/237bhp
Chassis no	198.042-10-003027
Engine no	198.980-10-003093
Body no	198.042.10.00039
Front axle no	003092/003075
Rear axle no	003204
Auction	RM Sotheby's Scottsdale Sale
	Biltmore Resort, Phoenix, Arizona
When	January 24, 2025
Pre-sale estimate	$1.3m-$1.6m (£1.03m-£1.27m)
Price achieved	$1,325,000 (£1,052,000)

As the original Mercedes-Benz 300SL Gullwing exited stage left in 1957 after three years, its successor, the 300SL Roadster, debuted at that year's Geneva motor show. The conversion of the 300SL to an open car meant redesigning the chassis, which was strengthened significantly to compensate for the loss of the roof structure.

Enthusiasts who may have worried about the *Super Leicht* going soft had absolutely no cause for concern. Thanks to a fully synchronised gearbox, significantly improved engine mechanicals, new rear axle design, and a wide range of final drive selections available to customers, the Roadster remained among the fastest accelerating automobiles on the road. In 1961, the factory further upgraded the Roadster with Dunlop disc brakes at each corner. These greatly added to the model's already stellar high-speed touring capabilities by reducing braking distance, while greatly improving braking feel and wet weather performance.

With just three recorded owners since 1964, this superb and eminently usable disc brake 300SL Roadster has been a treasured prize since its earliest days. Presented after 25 years of care under its most recent owner and showing just shy of 46,500 miles on its odometer at cataloguing time, this Roadster is ready to undertake long distance drives at a moment's notice.

A US-market car, chassis 3027 is said to have been delivered new on March 2, 1962 finished in White (DB50) over Burgundy (202) leather with a black soft top and equipped with sealed beam headlights, a Becker radio, Dunlop tyres, and a hardtop. Though 3027's original delivery destination remains unknown, by 1964 it had reportedly found its way to Pennsylvania. Many years later, it was procured by the previous owner, who commissioned an extravagant restoration sparing no expense, which was said to have been completed by a marque specialist in the mid-1990s. During this restoration, chassis 3027 was refinished in its period correct colour combination of Fire Engine Red (DB534) over Natural (1068) leather beneath a tan soft top.

Having acquired the Roadster in 1999, the consignor has thoroughly enjoyed driving it on a variety of cross country tours, including the Colorado Grand and numerous other classic events. As such, it has travelled more than 11,000 miles under current ownership and benefited from regular maintenance by noted marque specialists, including Mercedes-Benz Classic Center, Scott Grundfor, and Art Thumwood's Star Classics, invoices for which are on file.

Since 2017, the Roadster has been lavished with more than $29,000 (£23,000) of mechanical upkeep by the Mercedes-Benz Classic Center in California, including a full transmission rebuild. Meanwhile, the consignor's private mechanic has carried out routine maintenance using parts sourced from marque specialists.

Importantly, 3027 retains its matching numbers chassis,

"THE SOLE MODERN UPDATE HAS BEEN A PIONEER STEREO SYSTEM, COMPRISED OF A HEAD UNIT INTEGRATED INTO THE FACTORY RADIO'S LOCATION AND A PAIR OF FOUR-INCH SPEAKERS"





ABOVE
With discs brakes and in pristine condition, it's close to perfection.

LEFT
The odometer shows under 46,500 miles, which can be verified.



RIGHT
White body became Fire Engine Red, the interior burgundy now 'natural'.





LEFT
The metal roof was a factory cost option, therefore it's quite rare to see a 300SL Roadster that has one.

BELOW
Despite its superb condition it's been no garage queen, the previous owner driving it 11,000 miles to events.



three-litre engine, bodywork, rear axle, steering box and front axles. The accompanying factory hardtop is colour-matched to the car but unstamped, while the currently fitted gearbox is an earlier, correct type unit from 1959. The sole modern update to chassis 3027 has been the fitment of a Pioneer stereo system, comprised of a head unit tastefully integrated into the factory radio's location under the fascia and a pair of four-inch speakers. In addition to its removable hardtop, the car is accompanied by a copy of its factory data card, tools, original chassis and body tags, and 30 years of service documentation.

ABOVE
Importantly, the engine, transmission and body numbers are 'matching'.

To this day, this beautiful 300SL Roadster projects an indelible aura of speed, power, and sophistication. It is fast enough for the sports car lover yet comfortable enough for those who demand luxury to accompany the pace, and it remains one of the most desirable cars in the world, regardless of era. CM

Silver star

ARIZONA, USA

Originally registered in Germany, this Gullwing, in the body colour many regard as the best, then made its way to the US where it spent 20 years being cared for in a classic collection



The Gullwing was the cornerstone of a New Hampshire collection.

Lot 154P
Mercedes-Benz 300SL Gullwing

Year 1956
Engine/power 2,996cc/212bhp
Chassis no 198.040.6500063
Engine no 198.980.6500071
Body no 198.040.6500058
Auction Bonhams Scottsdale Auction The Westin Kierland Resort & Spa
When January 25, 2025
Pre-sale estimate $1,450,000-$1,550,000 (£1,150,000-£1,239,000)
Price achieved $1,490,000 (£1,183,000)



It was fully restored over 20 years ago, and well maintained since.

The original road-going 300SL coupe was the direct descendant of the Mercedes-Benz Le Mans W194 competition coupe, conceived in 1952 to wrest the World Sportscar Championship from Alfa Romeo, Ferrari, and Lancia, which were dominating post-war endurance racing. Mercedes-Benz historian W Robert Nitzke writes that company management wanted to jump back into Grand Prix racing, where it had been so successful before the war, but lacked the time and resources to develop a new single-seater race car for 1954.

Instead, Chief Engineer Fritz Nallinger suggested the company build a new sports car based on the robust SOHC, inline six-cylinder engine from its luxurious 300 'Adenauer' series, but substantially modified. Because the engine and drivetrain were relatively heavy, the chassis would have to be extremely light. Test Department manager Rudolf Uhlenhaut sat down with construction engineer Joseph Müller and laid out an extremely light (70kg) and rigid lattice-work chassis capable of accommodating the big straight-six engine.

However, one major problem soon presented itself: there was no way to mount conventional doors without compromising the rigidity of the chassis. The solution was to cut the doors into the roof, but that meant hinging them from the top, thus giving birth to this car's timeless signature design feature.

The Mercedes racing sports car's first race was the 1952 Mille Miglia, where Karl Kling finished second to Giovanni Bracco's open Ferrari, while Rudolf Caracciola was fourth, the two 300SLs split by a Lancia. The third 300SL had gone off the road early in the gruelling contest. Next came the Grand Prix of Berne,

"PRESENTED AS IT LEFT THE FACTORY IN THE CLASSIC LIVERY OF DB180 SILVER OVER SPECIAL NAVY BLUE LEATHER, IT EXEMPLIFIES PURPOSEFUL TEUTONIC STYLE."

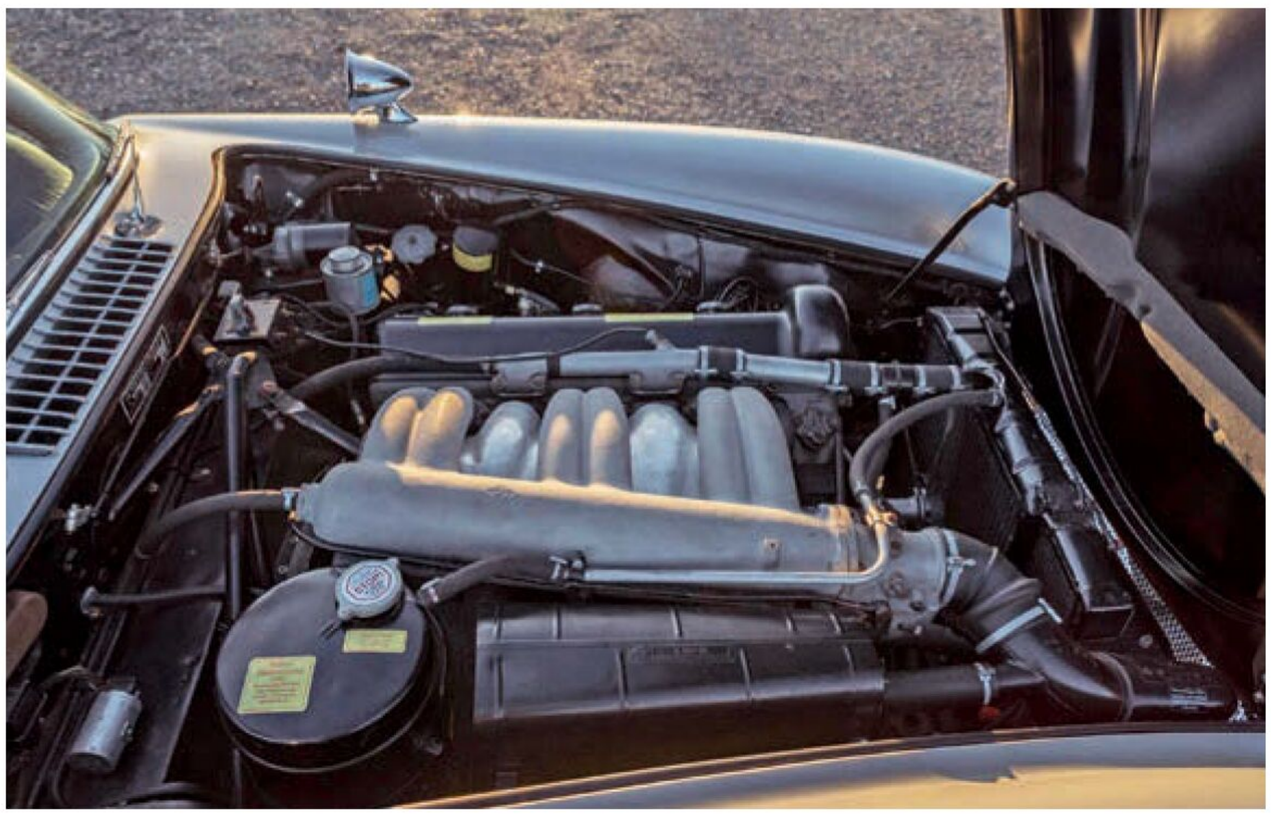


where a quartet of 300SLs took the start and swept the top three positions, Caracciola having crashed in what would prove to be his last race. The racing 300SLs spawned the legendary eight-cylinder 300SLR, which further dominated motorsport until the tragedy of the 1955 24 Hours of Le Mans, after which Mercedes-Benz pulled out of international racing for decades.

Max Hoffman, the influential and enterprising New York foreign car importer, is credited with urging Mercedes-Benz to build a production version of the 300SL racing car for the ravenous US market – which some say became the original 'supercar.' The 300SL Gullwing, in final form, was memorably unveiled at the New York International Motor Sports Show in early February 1954, and actual production began that autumn. The road car differed slightly in appearance from the racing coupes and featured revolutionary new Bosch mechanical direct fuel-injection.

Between 1954 and 1957, a total of 1,400 Gullwings were delivered to eager purchasers, and in 195 the elegant and refined 300SL Roadster followed in its wheel tracks. These proved to be even more successful, with 1,858 units produced.

ABOVE
This 300SL was first registered in Germany before going to the US.

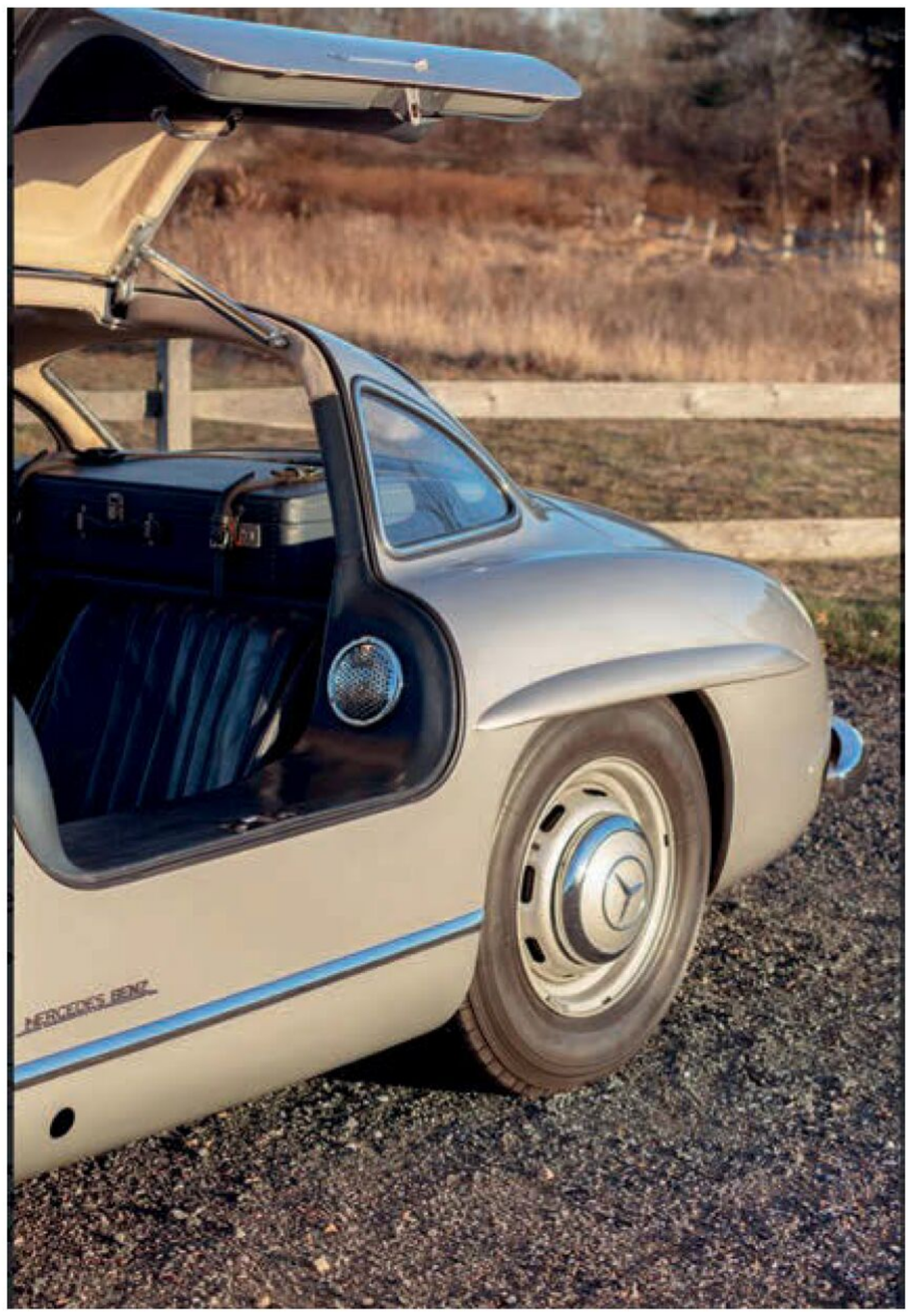


RIGHT
Paperwork shows the engine and body to be matching numbers.

BELOW RIGHT
It's been used periodically, which always helps a classic stay in good shape.

BELOW
A Becker radio was carefully fitted, as were door shut speakers.





Chassis number 6500063 is a 1956 300SL Gullwing finished from new in the iconic Mercedes-Benz colours of DB180 Silver over 333 Navy Blue leather upholstery. According to Eric Le Moine's Gullwing register, this car was delivered new to Karl Anton Henschel of Kassel, Germany in March of 1956. It made its way to the USA, landing in the care of a Mr Olson of Minneapolis, Minnesota. Service records on file show it in the care of Mr Don Stern of Mahwah, New Jersey in the early 2000s, and in 2005 it was sold by Legendary Motors of Gazelle, California.

This firm described the car as being painstakingly restored from "a 20,000-mile survivor", which generally corresponds with mileage noted on service receipts, though actual mileage has not been verified. From there, it found its way to Salem, New Hampshire and into the extensive Moonridge Collection of Mr Charles Schwager. The car continued to enjoy regular care and was a cornerstone of the collection for nearly 20 years.

Since its restoration, chassis 6500063 has taken on an honest charm earned through years of gentle use and attentive care. Presented as it left the factory in the classic livery of DB180 Silver over special Navy Blue leather, it exemplifies purposeful Teutonic style. Features include colour-keyed wheels, blue fitted luggage and a period Becker radio. It was accompanied by a tool roll, owner's handbook, and a copy of the Mercedes-Benz factory data card, confirming its original specification and matching numbers engine. CM

Pullman power

PARIS, FRANCE

Thanks to its rare configuration and full restoration, this Landaulet made top money for a 600

Lot 251
600 Pullman Landaulet 6dr


The Pullman's sheer size made it suitable only for heads of state.

The world's most important people were driven in Mercedes-Benz 600s, and the top choice of this extremely exclusive model was the Pullman Landaulet. This custom-built car of state, constructed on an imposing 3,900mm chassis, proved so exclusive that it was never actually included in the manufacturer's catalogue. Each 600 was individually handcrafted by senior Mercedes-Benz craftsmen personally selected by factory managers. The list of available options and finishes for each of the 26 long-wheelbase 'Six-Door' Landaulets built matched the unique personalities of their original owners – with a cost and level of labour intensity that was usually more often associated with bespoke private aircraft.

Delivered new as an official state limousine to the government of Portuguese Guinea (Guinea-Bissau) amid its revolutionary struggle in early 1974, this incredible 'six-door, short roof' Pullman Landaulet is one of only a handful of examples produced in this configuration. This vehicle is also notably equipped with exterior handles on the middle door. An accompanying data card copy shows that it was originally specified with Black paintwork (DB040) over black leather upholstery and generously equipped with a Becker Grand Prix TR radio with remote control and automatic antenna, a Reims II adapter, Tekade BSA 21 car phone, undershields, tropical battery, and a standard flagpole mount for the front right wing.

Year 1974
Engine/power 6,332/147bhp
Chassis no 100.015.12.002320
Engine no 100.980.12.002397
Auction RM Sotheby's Rétromobile Sale
Louvre Palace, Paris
When February 5, 2025
Pre-sale estimate €1.3m-€1.6m (£1.08m-£1.33m, $1.36m-$1.68m)
Price achieved €1,355,000 (£1,128,000, $1,420,000)

This 600 Pullman Landaulet remained in Africa for an unknown period before making its way to the United States; by 1991 it had been registered in California. Living in California until 2003, it was then imported to Germany.

In April 2010, it was purchased by a resident of Böblingen, who enjoyed the car without issue until 2019, when he commissioned 600 guru at the time, Kienle Automobiltechnik based near Stuttgart, to execute a mechanical restoration which ultimately exceeded €280,000. Notable selections from the accompanying packet of Kienle invoices show complete rebuilds of the engine, gearbox, steering assembly, axles, Behr air conditioning system and exhaust system. This Landaulet also received a full sorting of its notoriously tricky high-pressure hydraulic system, as well as new spring bellows, hoses, lines, adjustment rods, and a rebuild of the system's compressor unit.

Beautifully presented in the period correct colour scheme of White (DB050) over pristine red leather upholstery and a black Landaulet top, this six-door, short roof Pullman Landaulet is an extraordinary and distinguished example of Mercedes-Benz's most decadent, exclusive creation. CM


Mechanicals and suspension have all been overhauled.


It was first delivered with black leather but someone thought redder would be better.


When you need to meet your people, this is a good way.

The images and descriptions of the 300SL Roadster on pages 74-75 and the 600 Pullman Landaulet on this page appear courtesy of RM Sotheby's Tel +44 (0)20 7851 7070 Web www.rmsothebys.com; the images and descriptions of the 300SL Gullwing on pages 76-77 and the 300S Roadster on page 79 appear courtesy of Bonhams Tel +44 (0)20 7447 7447 Web www.bonhams.com; the images and description of the 220 Cabriolet A on the opposite page appear courtesy of Artcurial Motors Tel +33 (0)1 4299 2020 Web www.artcurial.com

Timeless charm

PARIS, FRANCE

A rare, early 1950s Mercedes cabriolet, and well cared for over its seven decadess

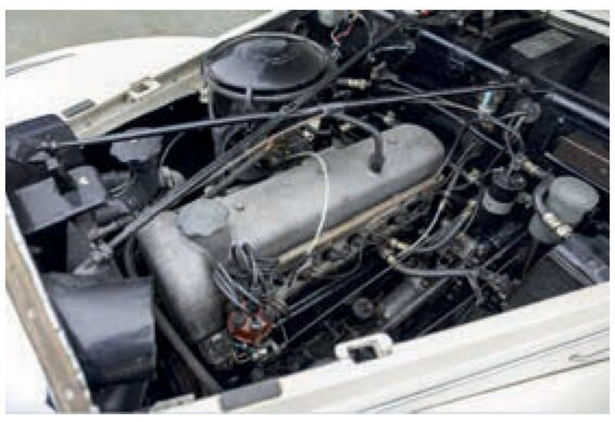
Lot 22
Mercedes-Benz 220 Cabriolet A

At the first Frankfurt motor show, in April 1951, Daimler-Benz proudly unveiled the 220 and 300 models, both powered by modern in-line six-cylinder engines with overhead camshafts. The 220 was offered in three body types: saloon, Cabriolet A and Cabriolet B, while a coupe version was later made available at the request of major customers. Only 1,278 of the Cabriolet A were manufactured for the 1952 production year.

This particular example had been registered in Paris since 1957 when Gilbert Thos acquired it in 1985. Like other vehicles in his collection, it enjoyed a full, high quality restoration carried out to similar standards as cars he restored for Mercedes-Benz France. Inside, the red leather upholstery is enhanced with elegant woodwork touches, and the dashboard is equipped with a period Becker radio. The engine is the right type and from the correct year, and has been subject to the same amount of care as the rest of the car. The W187 Mercedes is known for its exceptional consistency and has the ability to cover long distances without fatigue, making this model highly sought-after by collectors.

In 1958 Gilbert Thos founded his own business in Saint-Ouen, the heart of the coachbuilding industry. His business prospered, along with his reputation. It was then that Mercedes-Benz France made him its official bodywork specialist. CM

Year 1952
Engine/power 1,767cc/51bhp
Chassis no 1870120445552
Engine no 1809200465052
Auction Artcurial Rétromobile Sale
Paris
February 7, 2025
Pre-sale estimate €80,000 - €120,000 (£66,600-£99,900, $83,900-$125,800)
Price achieved €82,248 (£68,500, $86,230)


In the early 1950s six cylinders meant sophistication.


Although dated looking even when launched, the W187 220 is a most elegant car.


Interior restoration carried out by a top Benz expert.

Preserved posh

PARIS, FRANCE

A very good example of one of the world's most expensive cars available in the early 1950s

Lot 143
Mercedes-Benz 300S Roadster

Elegantly styled in the pre-war manner yet technologically bang up to date for the early 1950s, the W187 300S was custom built by Mercedes' best craftsmen. The two-doored car boasted a lavishly equipped interior featuring supple leather upholstery, beautiful burr walnut trim, chromium-plated dashboard instrumentation and precision-made switchgear.

Production was limited, only 760 examples of the 300S and its successor, the fuel-injected 300Sc, leaving the factory between 1952 and 1958. A total of 94 were the Roadster version, which was mechanically identical to the Cabriolet apart from a lighter canvas hood with no exterior coach joints; of these cars, 141 were the original 1952-1955 300S Roadster.

The 300S engine was the same unit as used by the 300 'Adenauer' limousine, but more powerful due to triple as opposed to twin Solex carburettors. Power output 148bhp and maximum speed was 110mph.

This 300S Roadster was delivered new in Spain, as evidenced by its supplier's plaque engraved 'Angel Martinez Burges, Barcelona'. Owned by the vendor for 45 years, it was restored during his ownership and looked after by his team of mechanics. Accompanying documentation at the sale consisted of Spanish registration paperwork, restoration photographs, 1953 M-B catalogue, factory build sheet (heavily discoloured) and an original instruction manual. CM

Year 1953
Engine/power 2,996cc/148bhp
Chassis no 188012 001765
Engine no 188920 0018253
Auction Bonhams Les Grandes Marques du Monde à Paris, Grand Palais, Paris
When February 6, 2025
Pre-sale estimate €400,000-€500,000 (£330,000-£416,200, $419,400-$524,200)
Price achieved €310,000 (£258,000, $325,000)


This 300S Roadster has spent many years in Spain.


No other car fascia of the 1950s matched this quality.


Three carburettors allowed the engine to make 148bhp.

EVERY ISSUE INCLUDES

- Mercedes made from the early 1950
- Restorations and recollections
- Fascinating historical features
- Buying advice




NEWS

CLASSIC NEWS

UK AND INTERNATIONAL REPORTS FROM THE CLASSIC MERCEDES WORLD

HWA drip-feeds 'Evo' details

First of 100 modern day Evolution 16 will be delivered later in 2025

Museum F1 Lewis tribute

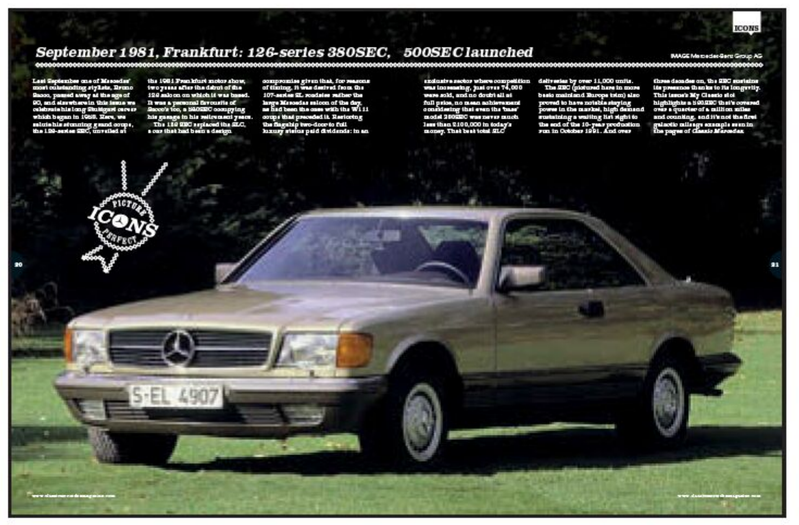
'Best ever' W111 sold

Classic Mercedes now bi-monthly!

Parts supply improving

Final Gullwing is sold

In other news...


ICONS

September 1981, Frankfurt: 126-series 380SEC, 500SEC launched

IMAGE Mercedes-Benz Group AG


Cover story

ROADSTER W 198 300SL

Road king

IMAGES JONATHAN FLEETWOOD

When the 300SL Roadster replaced the Gullwing in 1957 it featured a number of improvements that made it better to drive, many feel. Kyle Fortune got behind the wheel of this stunning, restored example to savour the best sports car of its day

"In the 1970s it was acquired by a noted US historic aircraft collector, Don Knapp, who used it around the airfield where his aviation collection was stored"

Classic Road test SL SHOP


CONVERSION 220S

Fintail fantasy

When **Brett Parker** in New England bought a dilapidated 230S he became consumed with the idea of swapping the Fintail shell onto a more modern chassis. Here he explains how he tracked down all the various parts, large and small, to make his unusual and ambitious plan a reality. IMAGES Brett Parker

I started looking into stroker wheelbase cars to the Fintail to try to find something that could be a donor chassis for a body swap


MERCEDES PEOPLE Bruno Sacco obituary

Bruno Sacco 1933-2024

In a long career with Mercedes-Benz, Bruno Sacco oversaw the styling of a number of landmark models, and was among the first of Stuttgart's stylists with a public image. Tim French looks at his life and the tributes to him following his death in September 2024.

IMAGES Mercedes-Benz Group AG

"THE HIGH POINT OF HIS STYLING CAREER IS WIDELY JUDGED TO BE HIS 'FAMILY' OF SALOONS BEGINNING WITH THE 126-SERIES S-CLASS, LAUNCHED IN 1979"


FUTURE CLASSIC 210-series CLS

Road to stardom

From the moment the CLS four-door 'coupe' was unveiled in 2004, its pure and stunning shape marked it out as a Mercedes that could go classic sooner rather than later. David Sutherland describes the C219 and asks if collectors are forming a queue

IMAGES Tony Obame/Mercedes-Benz Group AG

There is no reason why a coupe should be restricted to Two doors. Mercedes had built a four-door coupe in the form of the 300d 'Adenauer' in 1957

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Overlooked!

IMAGES Terry Oborne/John Colley/James Mann

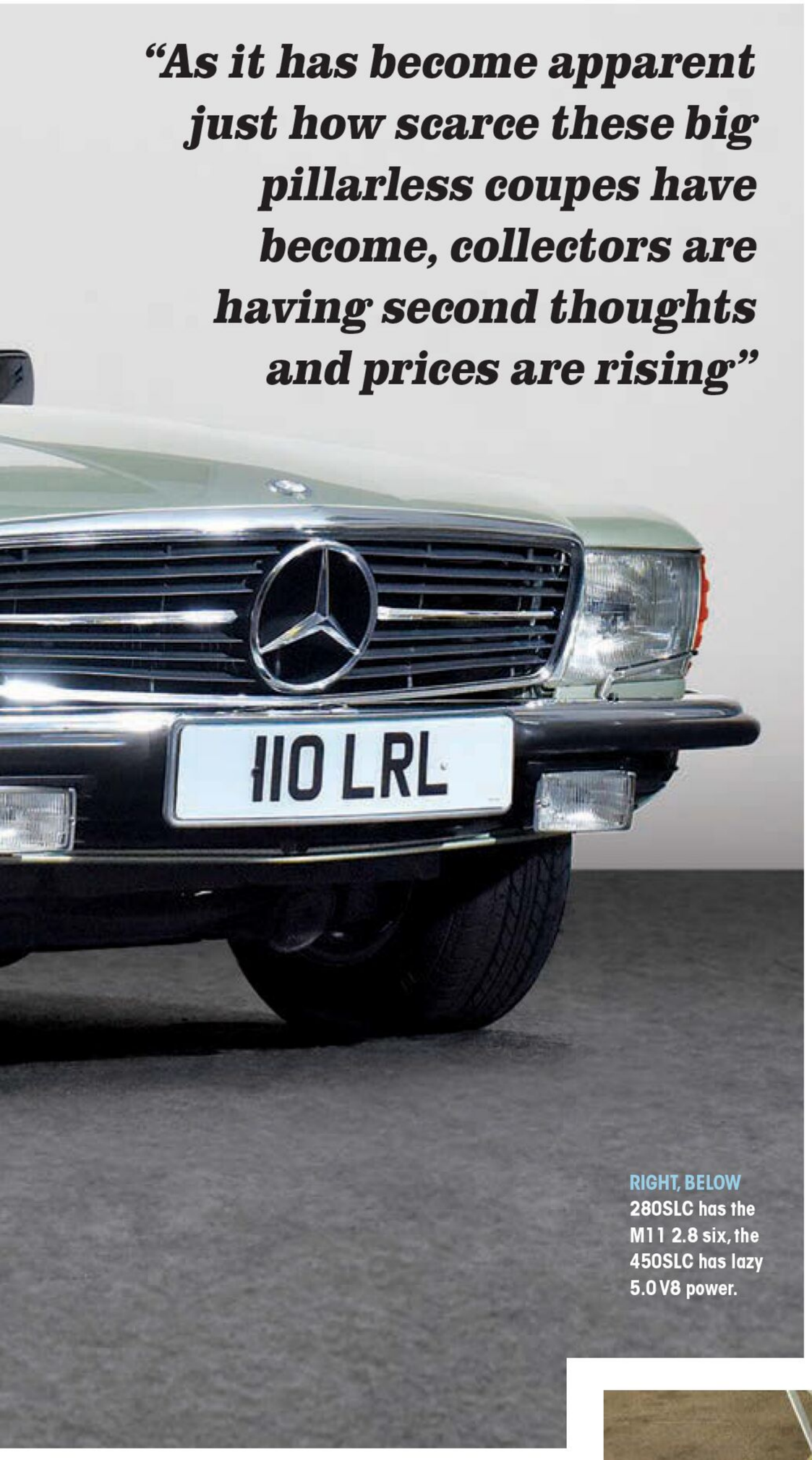
The SLC which replaced the W111 pillarless coupe in 1971 not only lacked that car's sheer glamour, but it was also overshawdowed by its roadster stablemate, the R107 SL. However in recent years collectors are regarding it more favourably, and prices are rising. But it's a still a most affordable modern classic Benz, so what do you need to look out for when buying one?

Down the years there have been a number of Mercedes-Benz models that the classic market overlooked until it was almost too late, and the SLC, built for a decade until October 1981, was among them. While the R107 SL roadster on which the SLC was based has been collectable ever since its production ceased, and hence survives in substantial numbers, the C107-coded coupe became forgotten and unloved once the striking 126-series coupe arrived to replace it. A total of 62,888 SLCs were manufactured, hardly an inconsequential number, yet are rarely seen, many having vanished, presumed scrapped.

Perhaps people felt the SLC, 360mm longer in wheelbase and length than the SL and with awkward rear window trims (there to disguise the fact that the rear windows could not be fully lowered) lacked the SL's graceful lines. Values stayed low, which meant that relatively minor problems could spell a one-way trip to the crusher.

But things are now changing. As it has become apparent just how

"As it has become apparent just how scarce these big pillarless coupes have become, collectors are having second thoughts and prices are rising"



RIGHT, BELOW
280SLC has the M11 2.8 six, the 450SLC has lazy 5.0 V8 power.

scarce these big pillarless coupes have become, collectors are having second thoughts and prices are rising. They are still to be found for £4,000 to £5,000, which gets you into a rolling project, but the big difference is to be seen at the other end of the market, with the very best ones heading towards £50,000.

So now is almost certainly your last chance to pay reasonable money for one of the most expensive and exclusive Mercedes-Benzes from the 1970s. They are mechanically simple in most respects, immensely durable provided they aren't too rusty, and there are lots of specialists who know them through and through.

Design, evolution

The Paris motor show of October 1971 saw the C107's debut, six months after the SL roadster had been unveiled. The first model to go on sale, in February 1972, was the 350SLC using the 3.5-litre M116 V8 engine producing 197bhp, this coming to the UK market two months later. In July 1972 the 450SLC was added but sold exclusively in North America until February 1973, its M117 4.5-litre V8 with US spec emissions equipment producing a paltry 192bhp; when it was launched in mainland Europe, and the UK, output was 225bhp. Both came with a three-speed automatic transmission as standard, but in some markets the 350 could be ordered with a four-speed manual gearbox. However once the 450 arrived, the 350 was dropped from the UK range, so is a very rare car here.

SLCs were set up for comfort, with long coil suspension springs and Mercedes' usual recirculating ball steering. In 1974, no doubt in response to the 'oil crisis' that had gripped the world since the previous year, Mercedes installed its 2.7-litre, M110 DOHC six-cylinder engine, ⇨

Specifications/ years built

280SLC (M110 2,746cc 6-cyl, 175/183bhp) 1974-1981

350SLC (M116 3,499cc V8, 192/197bhp) 1972-1980

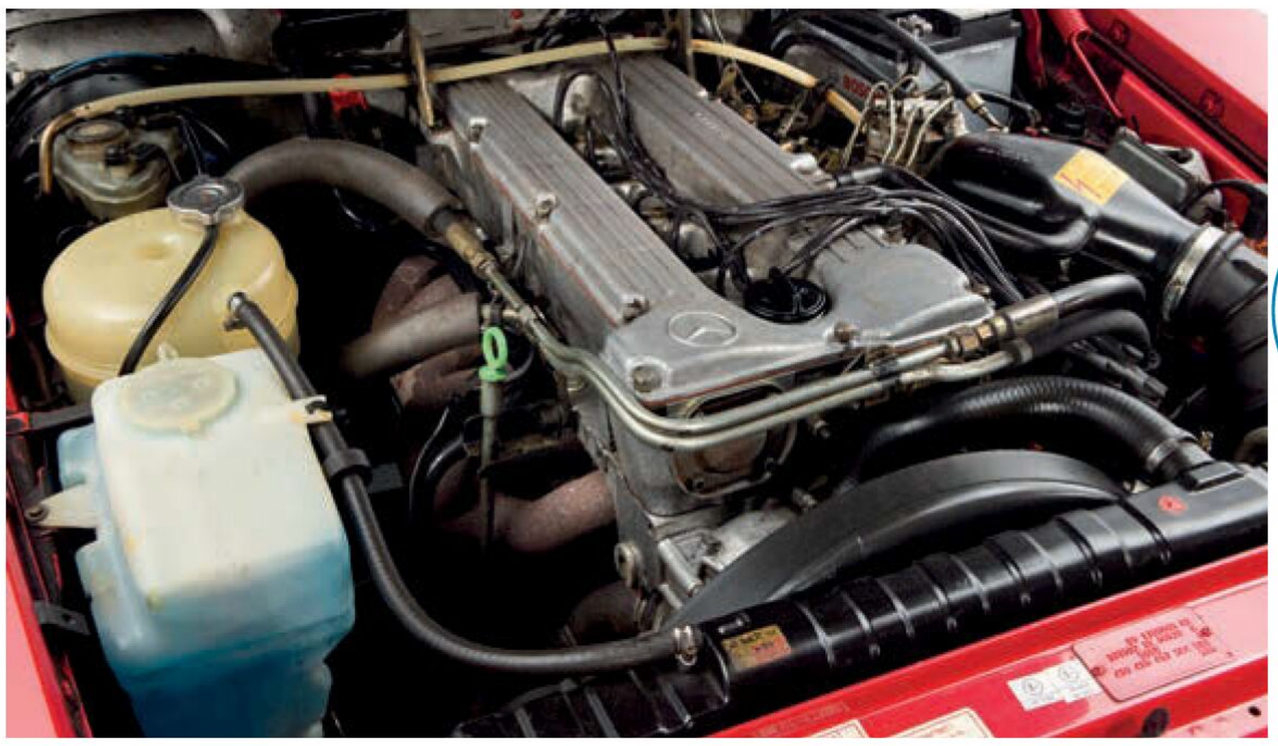
380SLC (M116 3,818cc V8, 215bhp) 1980-1981

450SLC (M117 4,520cc V8, 222/214bhp) 1972-1980

Not officially imported to UK

450SLC 5.0 (M117 5,025cc V8, 237bhp) 1978-1980

500SLC (M117 4,973cc V8, 237bhp) 1980-1981



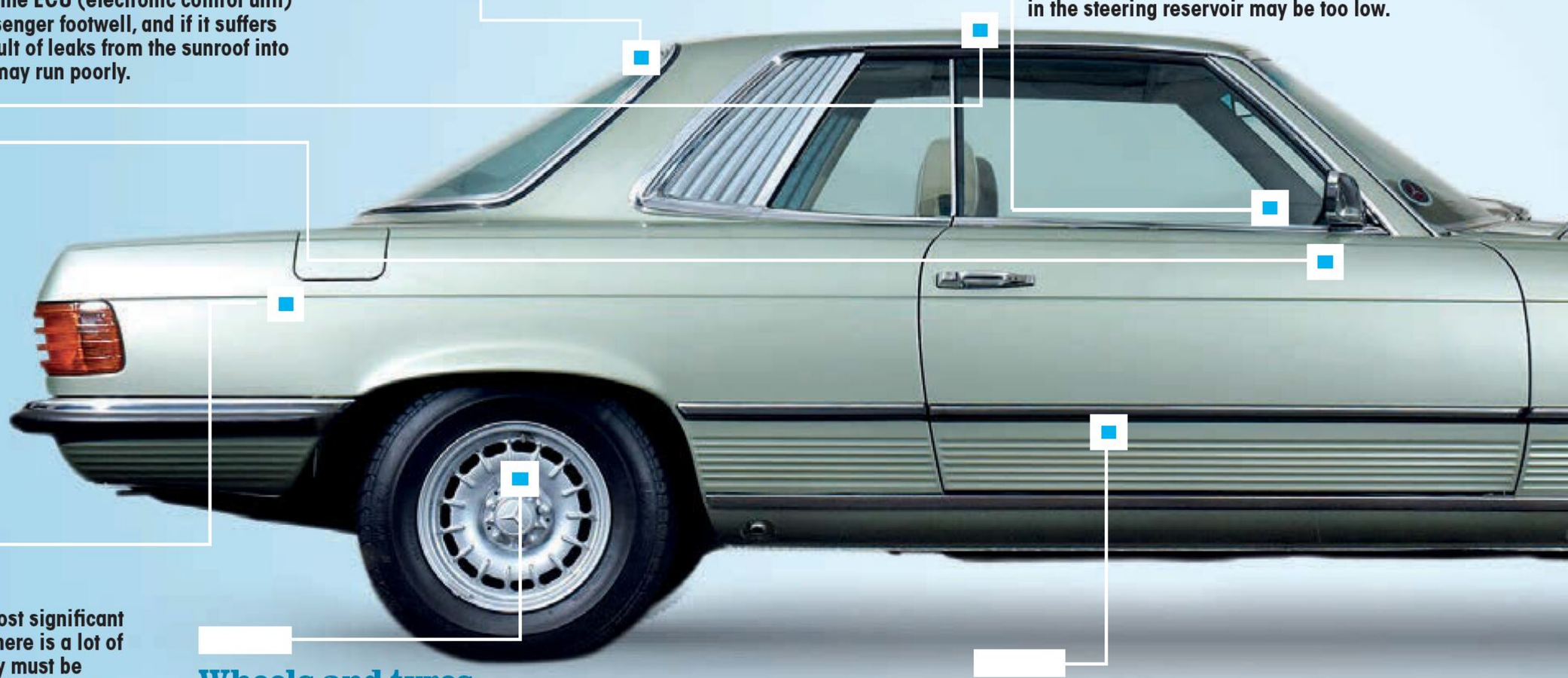


What goes wrong (technical information supplied by Bruce Greetham Classic Benz)

Sunroof
As on most classic cars, a sunroof is as much a curse as a delight."The sunroof models can suffer with drainage problems front and rear, water leaking all the way down into the sills," says long standing SL expert Bruce Greetham of Bruce Greetham Classic Benz in Worcestershire (+44 (0)7359 660954, www.classicbenz.co.uk). He also points out that the engine ECU (electronic control unit) is mounted in the passenger footwell, and if it suffers water ingress as a result of leaks from the sunroof into the cabin, the engine may run poorly.

Rear screen
The rubber seal holding in the rear screen eventually goes hard, not only letting in water that causes rust under the screen surround, but corroding the heated rear screen element. The front screen, which is bonded in can become detached at the lower edge.

Steering
Even when new the C107's steering lacked much feel, and with wear added vagueness sets it.The power-assistance pump may leak too, and to check this you will need to inspect from underneath, as leaks will not be spotted by looking in the engine bay. If the system 'groans' when lock is applied, the fluid in the steering reservoir may be too low.



Heater
The flaps inside the heater box (which is the same either with or without air conditioning) can jam, which means the temperature cannot be adjusted. If this has happened, you will not be able to move the slider controls on the fascia."It's a dashboard out job," says Greetham.

Bodywork
Bodywork is easily the most significant aspect of an SLC, and if there is a lot of rust, walk away."The body must be checked for advanced corrosion in the bulkhead areas, chassis legs, inner and outer sills, boot floor and floorpans and so on," Greetham warns."If this is evident on the car, then in most cases it is not worth undertaking repairs unless the car has some sentimental value."

Wheels and tyres
Wheels were either steel with colour-matched hub caps or 'Mexican hat' alloys, all rims 14-inch. If the alloys, more commonly fitted than steels, are in poor condition, it should be possible to source a set of four, as they were fitted across the Mercedes range. Check tyre condition, as premium brand replacements are expensive: a Michelin MXVP for the pre-1980 185 HR 14 is around £250 per tyre, and a 205/70 Michelin XWX for the V8s nearly £400.

Interior trim
The interior is a crucial aspect of a C107. Most had a deep pile velour trim, which, unlike leather, can't look better with age."The early interior fabrics are now hard to find, and the cloth is very expensive," Greetham comments.

"This is classic 1970s Mercedes-Benz. You sit behind a huge steering wheel, and on seats more likely to be trimmed in velour than leather"

⇨ good for 182bhp, in both the SL and SLC, the latter badged 280SLC. It had a four, rather than three-speed automatic gearbox, and could also be ordered as in four- or five-speed manual form.

The 280SLC was not sold in the UK at that point, therefore the 450SLC was the sole C107 delivered in Britain throughout the 1970s. Between November 1975 and February 1976 all three engines were modified for lower emissions, mechanical Bosch K-Jetronic fuel injection replacing the electronic D-Jetronic, and transistorised ignition replacing the time honoured mechanical points set up. The 450SLC's output dropped slightly to 214bhp.

In September 1977 Mercedes introduced the limited run 450SLC 5.0 (see the 'Rally car for the road' heading), and the final C107 development came in 1980 with the introduction of a new model, the 380SLC, its 3.8-litre V8, an all aluminium re-working of the M116, generating a comparatively high 215bhp. In October 1980 the 280SLC was finally imported to the UK, its output having dipped in 1976 and then restored in 1978 to its original level. The 450 ceased production in October 1980, while the 280 and 380 continued for a year until the 126 SEC arrived.

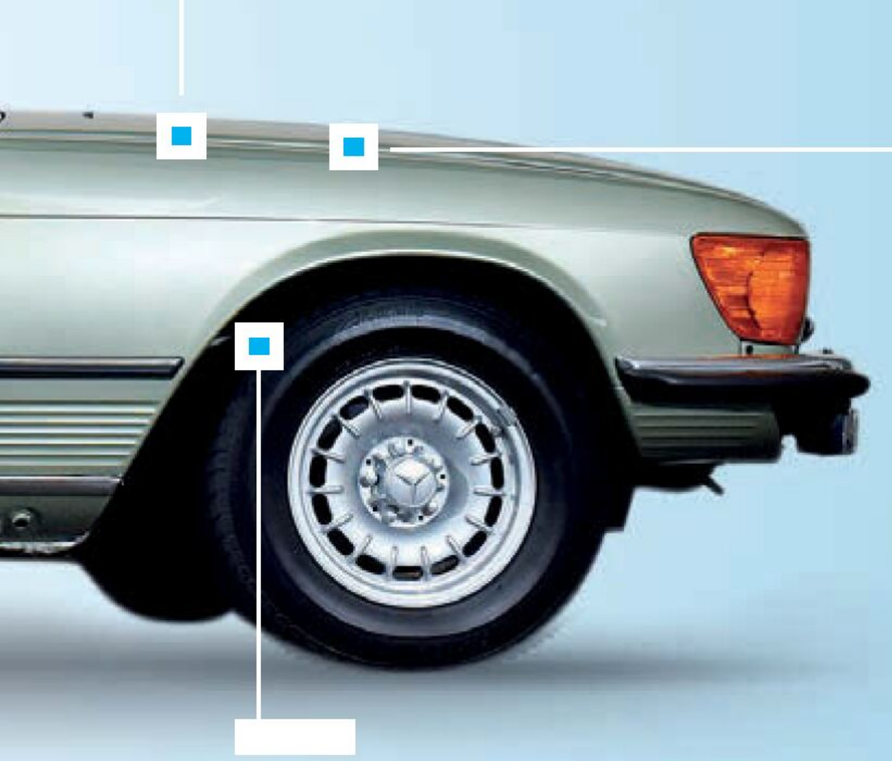


RIGHT
This 280SLC interior is trimmed in chequered fabric and MB-Tex vinyl.

Engine

The M117 V8 is reliable and long lasting, although sheer age can now work against it. For example, the exhaust manifold is likely to be rusted solid against the engine's iron block, turning a straightforward task such as changing the manifold gasket into an engine-out job. This problem does not affect the all-aluminium 380SLC M116 engine.

On M117s, you must check for the condition of the camshaft chain, a long chain that serves both cylinder banks. A rattling noise means it could be about to break with potentially devastating consequences for the cylinder heads and valves. Also check the condition of the camshafts, by removing the oil filler cap and looking in at the state of the cam; if it's worn, the opposite one is likely to be the same.



Fuel-injection

Greetham warns of the problems of pre-1976 cars' fuel system. "They have the early D-Jetronic injection system which is complicated to fix when it goes wrong," he says, "and specialist knowledge is needed to understand it." The rubber pipes tend to perish and leak.

Suspension

There are no particular issues here, but once again age can be the enemy. The suspension and subframe bushes are likely to be worn, which affects handling, making the SLC feel vague at the front. It's also likely that the suspension dampers will be worn and possibly leaking too.



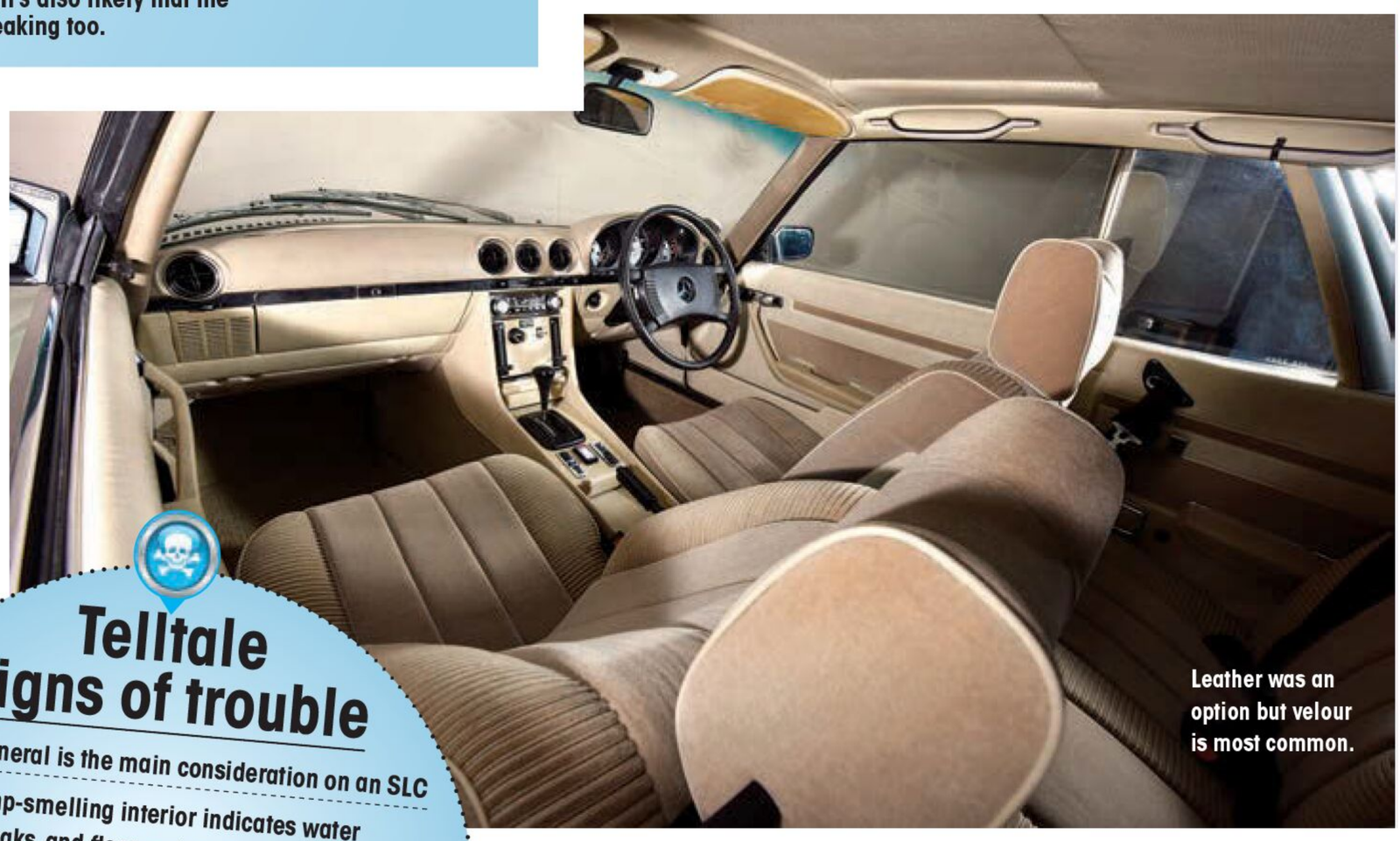
The SLC's front cabin including dashboard is identical to that in the R107 roadster.

Driving the C107

This is classic 1970s Mercedes-Benz. You sit behind a huge steering wheel, facing a dashboard that as well as being almost identical to the R107's looks solid and functional, and you have the usual springy seats, more likely to be trimmed in velour than leather. The rear seat will take two adults, but space is not generous.

The 4.5 V8 is woofly and relaxed, but the pace is not quick, due in part to the lazy three-speed gearbox. Specialised five-litre cars apart, the late arriving 380SLC is widely reckoned to be the best model, thanks to the M116 engine being more lively, and the four-speed automatic gearbox more responsive than the three-speeder.

The 2.7-litre engine in the 280SLC changes the car's character somewhat, as it needs to be revved to shift the car briskly (though the C107 is not significantly heavier than the R107). Handling is failsafe, not at all sporty but well balanced. ⇨



Leather was an option but velour is most common.

Telltale signs of trouble

- Rust in general is the main consideration on an SLC
- Damp-smelling interior indicates water leaks, and floor and bulkhead rust
- Rubber seal on rear screen likely to be perished
- Engine camshaft condition can be checked through oil filler cap
- Pre-1976 fuel-injection troublesome due to perished/leaking pipes
- 450SLC exhaust manifold fixings can be corroded to cylinder head



LEFT
The rear seat is just big enough to qualify the SLC as a four-seat coupe.

Milestones

February 1972 350SLC the first model on sale

August 1972 The 450SLC is added to the range

November 1975-February 1976 Mechanical Bosch K-Jetronic fuel-injection is fitted across the range, replacing the electronic D-Jetronic

May 1978 Limited run 50SLC 5.0 introduced to homologate the SLC for the World Rally Championship

March 1980 350SLC is replaced by the 380SLC; the 450SLC 5.0 now the 500SLC, with a 4-speed auto

September 1981 All models are discontinued

What a 450SLC will cost to buy

In the UK there is only one model left that is even remotely common, which is the 450SLC, the version delivered in largest numbers worldwide and which accounted for almost exactly half of all production (31,739). According to www.howmanyleft.co.uk, 150 450SLCs are taxed and tested in the UK, and a further 225 are on SORN (registered but untaxed), but the 280SLC and 350SLC don't even appear. Encouragingly, a graph on the site shows that after a long decline, 450SLC numbers have stabilised.

Prices of SLCs span a wide range, starting at £3,000-£4,000, which commands a running example but almost certainly not a trouble-free one. For that you will need to pay the best part of £10,000. A £15,000 budget is enough for a largely fault-free car.

The rare 450SLC 5.0 and 500SLC are obviously a different proposition, fetching a premium over regular 450SLCs. Most of the trading in these cars takes place in either Germany or the US, where the majority were first delivered. These do not make the big bucks you might expect. From £20,000 commands a reasonable example, but in Classic Events in this issue we mention a 171,800-mile 500SLC auctioned by Bonhams in Germany for just £10,200. We've given price brackets up to £50,000, but very few SLCs make this money

Price range

£3,000-£6,000 280, 380 and 450SLC, running but probably in need of some body and mechanical work

£6,000-£10,000 Complete, usable examples, but some rust and best considered an ongoing project car

£10,000-£20,000 This a good price range to search in if you want a sound if not immaculate example

£20,000-£30,000 Investment grade SLCs start here, and usually the minimum for a 450SLC 5.0/500SLC

£30,000-£40,000 Original condition body and interior, genuine sub-50K miles and a full maintenance history

£40,000-£50,000 Only 'time warp' C107s make this level. Must have sub 50K miles and as new condition

Typical servicing/maintenance costs (including labour, VAT)

Lubrication service £253

Major service £496

Gearbox service £310

Replace timing chain and tensioner £1,185

Front brake pads and brake discs £600

Replace front subframe bushes £320

Engine mounts £450

Shock absorbers, front/rear £1055

Four premium brand tyres (Michelin MXVP 185 HR14, Michelin XWX 205/70 VR14) £1,020, £1,560

Parts and servicing prices from Bruce Greetham Classic Benz; tyre prices from Longstone Tyres



ABOVE
Steel wheels and painted hub caps are seen on some SLCs...

ABOVE RIGHT
... but the majority of cars came with these 'Mexican hat' alloys.

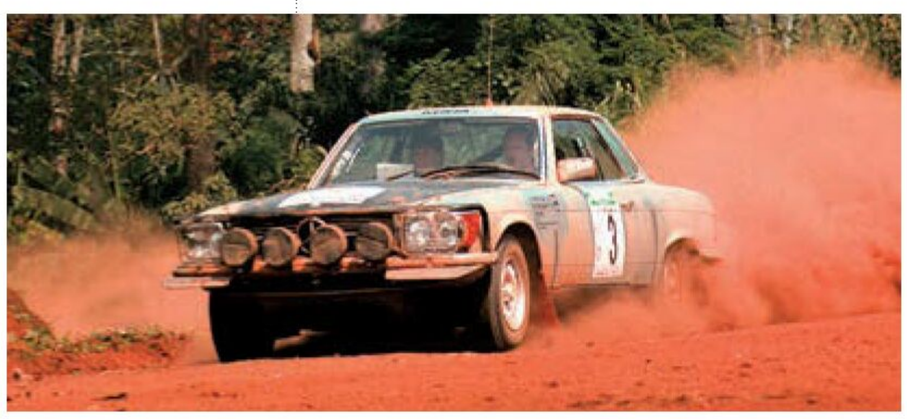


Rally car for the road

The 450SLC 5.0, introduced at the Frankfurt motor show in 1977 amounted to Mercedes' first 'homologation special'. With its five-litre all aluminium V8 40kg lighter than the 4.5 and producing 237bhp/296lb ft, and a further 80kg shed through use of aluminium for the bonnet, boot lid and bumpers, and special lightweight wheels, this was the car Stuttgart entered in the World Rally Championship from 1978 to 1980 (with moderate success). Badge apart, you can tell it from a regular C107 by the small black plastic wing on the boot, and the grey finish on the lower side bodywork. Seats are lower set.

It received a four-speed automatic gearbox and slightly modified engine for 1980, though output remained the same, and was rebadged the 500SLC. Road trim production of both models totalled 2,769, all left-hand drive. Even in their rallying days the cars lacked a high profile, and have never been celebrated in the way some homologation cars have (for example the 1990 190E Evolution II), hence values remain modest.

BELOW
The factory ran SLCs in international rallying from 1978 to 1980.



Verdict

After decades being shunned, during which it almost became extinct, the SLC is rehabilitated in the eyes of collectors, and some now even hail it as a nicer car to drive than the R107 roadster. It's certainly a good prospect if you don't want a convertible.

But affordable as they can be, C107 ownership mustn't be half-hearted. You must spend money maintaining it properly, and the uncomplicated nature of its design is not reflected in running costs, which will be high, at least until you get it sorted to your satisfaction. That said, look after an SLC after you buy it, and it will probably look after you when you come to sell it. CM

Just under half of the 62,888 C107s built were the 450SLC.



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ALL THE CLASSICS

Need a quick summary and a guide to the price of the classic model you fancy, or just want to know what models Mercedes-Benz has built over the years? Here we review every Mercedes road car made from the late 1940s until the end of the 'young classic' era in the late 1990s, listing cars' key details and a price range, plus what to look for when buying, and also the issue date of a major article on it in *Classic Mercedes*

Values

The values given are based on asking prices in the UK and internationally, and also achieved prices at local UK and major international classic auctions. The lower figure in each price range is for a car that is complete and running, and excludes dismantled cars. The higher value is for one in exceptional original or restored condition, and includes the buyer's premium paid at auction



W136 170 (1946-1955)

The pre-war, 'suicide'-doored W136 saloon and cabriolet got Mercedes-Benz back in business after World War Two. The 170V saloon resumed in 1947, using a four-cylinder 1.7-litre engine, and was replaced by the 170S in 1949, with more power and a more spacious body. The last-of-the-line was the 1953-1955 170S-V. W136s date from a time when German-made cars of any kind were rare outside Germany, but nonetheless they are to be seen for sale quite regularly, and are still affordable classics.

Engine/cyl/power range 1,697cc/4/38bhp - 1,767cc/4/44bhp **Transmission** 4-speed manual **Number built** n/a **Values** £15,000-£20,000/$20,000-$30,000 **What to look for** Severe body corrosion, body and interior trim parts likely to be hard to source **Article date** Winter 2014



W186/189 300 (1951-1962)

Called the 'Adenauer' because German Chancellor Conrad Adenauer used them while in office throughout the 1950s, the 300 marked Mercedes' return to limousines of some pre-war grandeur. All models used a straight-six three litre engine, which gained fuel-injection when the big saloon, also made available as a four-door cabriolet, was revamped in 1957 with an elegant, pillarless body, as seen here. Values were low for many years but good ones are now rising significantly at auction.

Engine/cyl/power 2,996cc/6/113-158bhp **Transmission** 4-speed manual, 3-speed auto **Number built** 11,413 **Values** £20,000-£100,000/$27,000-$135,000 **What to look for** Body rust and age-fatigued parts, engine can be difficult to tune, not many parts still available **Article date** Autumn 2017



W187 220 (1951-1955)

Part of the effort to increase the Mercedes-Benz model line in a short time, in order to boost post-war factory production, the 220 introduced in 1951 was a six-cylinder car based on the 170V. Besides the four-door saloon which was the prime seller, it was offered in two-door coupe, convertible Cabriolet A and Cabriolet B form, and also as a four-door 'open tourer' model. Later cars had a more powerful version of the original 2.2-litre engine, developed for the Ponton.

Engine/cyl/power 2,195cc/6/79-84bhp **Transmission** 4-speed manual **Number built** 18,467 **Values** £20,000-£40,000/$25,000-$50,000 **What to look for** Body corrosion, interior condition, general engine health, parts availability **Article date** Winter 2018



W188 300S/Sc (1951-1958)

This model began the Mercedes tradition of offering a two-door based on the top Stuttgart saloon, in this case the 300 Adenauer. Hand-built by specially selected craftsman, the 300S was super luxurious and correspondingly expensive, and was offered as the Coupe, the Cabriolet A, or Roadster with a simpler hood. In 1955 it evolved into the 300Sc, gaining fuel-injection for the three-litre engine. It has become the most coveted post-war Mercedes after the 300SL models.

Engine/cyl/power 2,996cc/6/148-173bhp **Transmission** 4-speed manual **Number built** 760 **Values** £350,000-£650,000/$450,000-$750,000 **What to look for** Almost all have been restored at some point, so check for substandard work **Article** Autumn 2015



W120/W121 (1953-1962)

Nicknamed 'Ponton' after the clever, easily removable engine and subframe assembly, these four-cylinder models were a technical milestone thanks to the 'three-box' design and integrated body and chassis offering much increased crash safety. It was built in 1.8-litre petrol and diesel form (180, 180D), later graduating to 1.9-litre units, and was Mercedes' first big volume model in the 1950s, with well over half a million built (including six-cylinder cars), some being manufactured in Mercedes' factory in South Africa.

Engine/cyl/power range 1,767cc/4/40bhp - 1,897cc/4/74bhp **Transmission** 4-speed manual **Number built** 442,963 **Values** £15,000-£35,000/$20,000-$45,000 **What to look for** Body corrosion and amateur body rebuilds, deteriorated interior trim, engine off tune **Article** Spring 2023



190SL Roadster (1955-1963)

While the Gullwing was Mercedes' 'halo' car, the similarly styled but smaller bodied 190SL launched a year later was intended as a far less expensive, volume model, and thus did without the alloy space frame, instead borrowing the Ponton's humble, four-cylinder saloon underpinnings. The performance offered by the 1.9-litre engine was thought modest even at the time, but the compact Mercedes roadster was a comfortable and stylish tourer, and nearly 26,000 were delivered to customers, mostly to the USA.

Engine/cyl/power range 1,897cc/6/ 104bhp **Transmission** 4-speed manual **Number built** 25,881 **Values** £60,000-£200,000/$70,000-$270,000 **What to look for** Twin carburettors badly worn and causing misfires, badly rusted cabin and boot floors **Article date** Autumn 2023



W180/105/128 (1954-1959)

A year after the four-cylinder Ponton made its debut in 1953, the six-cylinder models followed, using the same front subframe and suspension, but with a new and more sophisticated rear axle, and distinguished by their longer nose (the wheelbase was 100mm longer) and added chrome trim which gave a more exclusive appearance. All used the same 2.2-litre engine, the 220, 219 and 220S with a single carburettor, while the 220SE, launched for the final year, had Bosch fuel-injection.

Engine/cyl/power 2,195cc/6/84-113bhp **Transmission** 4-speed manual, 4-speed semi-automatic **Number built** 111,035 **Values** £20,000-£40,000/$25,000-$55,000 **What to look for** Rust, fuel system problems, electrical issues, worn rear diff **Article date** n/a



Ponton Bakkie (1955-1958)

The Ponton pick-up was built for one specific reason, to sidestep import duty on cars imported to South Africa, where Mercedes had a significant presence by the mid 1950s. Partially built-up W120 Ponton chassis were delivered to various contractors there, who assembled and sold the Bakkie (meaning pick-up), which qualified as locally made. It's unlikely that any were delivered outside South Africa, and all were 1.7-litre petrol, but some were later converted to use a diesel engine.

Engine/cyl/power 1,767cc/4/51bhp **Transmission** 4-speed manual **Number built** 400 (estimated) **Values** £25,000-£35,000/$30,000-$45,000 **What to look for** Engine conversions, body corrosion, history that can date the vehicle **Article** date Summer 2017



W198 300SL (1954-1957)

The world's first supercar, featuring a fuel-injected engine and a lightweight spaceframe chassis, and the model that re-established Mercedes' engineering credentials after World War Two. Gullwings have long been the ultimate Mercedes classic of the post-war years, especially the 29 alloy-bodied examples, and it's authoritatively estimated that 95 per cent of the 1,400 built survive. They have become so valuable that their owners rarely drive them other than at classic car events.

Engine/cyl/power 2,996cc/6/212bhp **Transmission** 4-speed manual **Number built** 1,400 **Values** £1m-£6m (alloy bodied)/$1.35m-$8m **What to look for** Most restored, so check for originality of parts, and for matching engine, chassis and body numbers **Article** Winter 2020



W180/128 220S/SE (1956-60)

Although they were derived from the six-cylinder Ponton saloon launched two years earlier, the elegant coupe and cabriolet models oozed considerable extra exclusive style, and found much favour with affluent US customers. Built on a 120mm shortened chassis, the first models were the 220S Coupe and 220S Cabriolet using the Ponton's regular carburettored 2.2-litre engine, this giving way to the same unit with fuel-injection and more power in 1958, these cars badged 220SE.

Engine/cyl/power range 2,195cc/6/105-118bhp **Transmission** 4-speed manual, 4-speed semi-automatic **Number built** 5,371 **Values** £80,000-£200,000/ $100,000-$260,000 **What to look for** Rust, out of tune engine **Article** Summer 2018

IMAGES Stefan Bau/John Colley/Terry Oborne/Richard Truesdell/*Classic Mercedes*/Mercedes-Benz Group AG

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300SL Roadster (1957-1963)

Introduced as a more 'civilised' replacement for the Gullwing, the W198 300SL Roadster of 1957 used conventional side-hinged doors and ran with modified rear swing-axle suspension that was less nervous on the limit. The interior had a more luxurious feel, too. For many years Roadster values lagged behind Gullwings', but there is evidence from many intenational actions that this sleek convertible, so beloved of Hollywood glitterati of the late 1950s, is fast catching up the prices of its coupe stablemate.

Engine/cyl/power 2,996cc/6/237bhp **Transmission** 4-speed manual **Number built** 1,858 **Values** £800,000-£2.0m/ $1.1m-$2.5m **What to look for** Poor quality bodywork rebuilds from when values were far lower, body and trim parts can be hard to source. Sky high restoration costs **Article** Autumn 2023



W110 Fintail (1961-1968)

The Fintail in four-cylinder form defined the mainstream German car industry of the 1960s and was a vehicle with wide appeal, its spacious body just as suitable for family transport as it was for taxi work. Coming two years after the six-cylinder Fintail, the production life of these shorter-nosed saloons was divided into two phases: cars built until mid-1965 were the 1.9 petrol 190c and 2.0 diesel 190Dc, and thereafter the 2.0 200 and 2.0 200D, these versions losing their predecessors' dated looking wing-top front turn indicators.

Engine/cyl/power range 1,896cc/ 4/79bhp - 1,988cc/4/94bhp **Transmission** 4-speed manual, 4-speed automatic **Number built** 622,453 **Values** £15,000-£20,000/ $20,000-$40,000 **What to look for** Floor, sills and chassis legs can all suffer rust **Article date** Winter 2024



W111/112 Fintail (1959-1968)

For the first two years, the Fintail was offered only in six-cylinder form, and the only engine was a 2.2-litre, the best model being the fuel-injected 220SEb. This was displaced as the flagship by the three-litre 300SE of 1961 boasting a high specification including air suspension, and its own W112 designation; it is now by far the most collectable Fintail. Six-cylinder models are recognisable from the fours by the vertical front lamp clusters and longer nose, and also by added brightwork.

Engine/cyl/power range 2,195cc/6/ 94bhp - 2,996cc/6/168bhp **Transmission** 4/5-speed manual, 4-speed auto **Number built** 344,751 **Values** £20,000-£90,000/$25,000- $120,000 **What to look for** Rusted bodywork **Article date** Summer 2023



W113 SL Pagoda (1963-1971)

Made in 230SL, 250SL (1967) and final 280SL form (1968), the W113 SL – its 'Pagoda', name inspired by the inward sloping hardtop – is regarded as one of the prettiest of Mercedes' post-war roadsters. It's also still a surprisingly modern drive – provided the complex fuel-injection linkage is set up properly, and the suspension springs and dampers are in good order. A few 250s were built in 'coupe' format, with no soft top and an extended rear cabin. The 280SL is the most sought after.

Engine/cyl/power range 2,306cc/ 6/148bhp - 2,778cc/6/168bhp **Transmission** 4/5-speed manual, 4-speed auto **Number built** 48,912 **Values** £40,000-£200,000/ $50,000 -$270,000 **What to look for** Rusted floor, engine tune **Article** Summer '23



W111/112 two-door (1961-71)

The W111 coupe and cabriolet, launched in 1961 and built on the Fintail platform, offered Americans a near American-sized pillarless luxury coupe. It, and the cabriolet, started out with the staple Benz 2.2-litre six-cylinder engine which gave the 220SEb only adequate performance. But the W111 progressed through 2.5-, 3.0- and then 2.8-litre incarnations, culminating in 280SE 3.5 V8 guise, the model which, especially as a cabriolet, has risen head and shoulders in value above the rest.

Engine/cyl/power range 2,195cc/ 6/ 118bhp - 3,499cc/V8/197bhp **Transmission** 4/5-speed manual, 4-speed auto **Number built** 35,931 **Values** £50,000-£300,000/$65,000 -$400,000 **What to look for** Rust, poor running V8 **Article** Summer 2017



W100 600 (1963-1981)

The 600's aero-engineered hydraulics, new V8 and perfect, Paul Bracq styling saw Mercedes-Benz displace Rolls-Royce as the maker of the 'best car in the world'. The biggest seller was the SWB 600, but LWB Pullmans and open-topped landaulets were available, too, and the bespoke nature of the car ensured that few if any examples shared exactly the same interior specification. Prices have risen fast of late, especially of those cars with a famous or infamous former owner.

Engine/cyl/power 6,332cc/V8/247bhp **Transmission** 4-speed auto**Number built** 2,677 **Values** £80,000- £500,000/$100,000-$650,000 **What to look for** Leaking hydraulics are the killer; hugely expensive to repair, and parts *very* pricey **Article** Autumn 2023



W108/109 (1965-1972)

The W108 was launched to replace the six-cylinder Fintail, which was felt not to be sufficiently distanced from the four-cylinder models to fully exploit the luxury market. The series began modestly as the 2.5-litre twin-carburettor/fuel-injected 250S/250SE and three-litre 300SE, but the most memorable (and now by far the most sought after) model was the W109 300SEL 6.3 of 1968, the world's first 'super saloon'. 3.5- and 4.5-litre V8 models followed to give added appeal in the US.

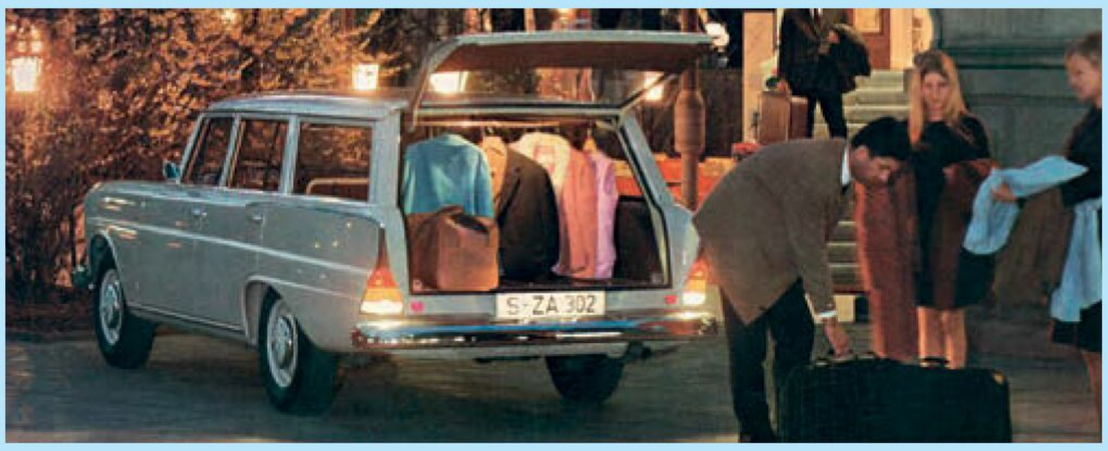
Engine/cyl/power range 2,496cc/6/128bhp - 6,332cc/V8/247bhp **Transmission** 4-speed automatic, 4-speed manual **Number built** 383,100 **Values** £25,000-£100,000/$30,000-$120,000 **What to look for** Body rust, smokey engines, deteriorated interior trim **Article date** Winter 2021



W114 coupe (1968-1976)

The 'Stroke 8' coupe that was introduced almost a year after the saloon was slightly lower, but had the same wheelbase and overall length, leaving it with a very long boot. At the time some thought this looked rather unbalanced, but it is now part of the car's charm. The two-door was built only as a W114 six-cylinder, but in that respect shared the saloon's engines, the M110-engined 280CE introduced in 1972 usually the favourite model due to its lively performance Sadly, very few of these pillarless coupes survive.

Engine/cyl/power range 2,496cc/6/128bhp - 2746cc/6/182bhp **Transmission** 4/5-speed manual, 4-speed automatic **Number built** 56,521 **Values** £15,000-£40,000/$20,000-$50,000 **What to look for** Engine and bodywork checks as for saloon **Article date** Spring 2020



W110/111 Universal (1965-68)

Prior to manufacturing its own estate cars, Mercedes farmed the assembly work out to specialist firms, IMA in Belgium being commissioned to produce Stuttgart's first 'proper' wagon, the Fintail-based Universal. This could be purchased in four-cylinder, short-nose W110 form as the 200 petrol and 190D/200D diesel, but, confusingly, also as the short-nose, round headlamp W110 230 (seen here) or the long nosed, vertical lamped W111 230S, both with six-cylinder power. All are rare.

Engine/cyl/power range 1,988cc/4/54bhp - 2,306cc/6/118bhp **Transmission** 4-speed manual, 4-speed auto **Number built** 2,750 (est) **Values** £20,000-£35,000/$25,000-$45,000 **What to look for** As for Fintail 4-dr, check state of load bay **Article** Summer 2021



R107 SL (1971-1989)

Able to claim by far the longest production period of any SL generation, the elegant R107, with its lazy V8s and comfortably sprung suspension, was designed for North American tastes. The six-cylinder 280SL was introduced as an 'economy' model in 1974, and, at the other end of the spectrum, the 5.5-litre 560SL arrived at the 1985 facelift, but the 1971-1980 450SL achieved the highest sales, nearly 66,300. Top condition R107s, regardless of engine size, have raced in value.

Engine/cyl/power range 2,746cc/6/175bhp – 5,547cc/V8/227bhp **Transmission** 4/5-speed man, 4-speed auto **Number built** 237,287 **Values** £15,000-£120,000/ $20,000-$160,000 **What to look for** Rusted front bulkhead, rear wings **Article** Winter '24



W114/115 Stroke 8 (1968-1976)

To replace the by now dated Fintail, for 1968 Mercedes-Benz conceived the 'New Generation' or 'Stroke 8' W115 (four-cylinder) and W114 (six-cylinder) saloons featuring a plainer body that would set a lasting template for what would become the E-Class. A multiplicity of engines saw service, but the best of all was the 2.7-litre twin-cam M110, installed just before the 1973 facelift. At the facelift the front quarter windows disappeared, and a padded 'safety' steering wheel was fitted.

Engine/cyl/power range 1,988cc/4/54bhp - 2,746cc/6/182bhp **Transmission** 4/5-speed manual, 4-speed auto **Number built** 1,843,328 **Values** £10,000-£30,000/$15,000-$40,000 **What to look for** Rusted engine bulkhead **Article** Winter 2017



C107 SLC (1971-1981)

Mercedes-Benz did not replace the W111 coupe/cabriolet with another S-Class-based design, instead building the next generation flagship two-door on the R107 SL, stretching the wheelbase 360mm but using the same interior and engines, 2.8-litre six-cylinder up to a five-litre V8. For many years the SLC was a 'sleeper' with low values, but recently collectors' interest has picked up, the homologation 450SLC 5.0 and 500SL built from 1978 to 1981 the most coveted.

Engine/cyl/power range 2,746cc/6/175bhp - 4,973cc/8/237bhp **Transmission** 4/5-speed manual, 3/4-speed auto **Number built** 62,888 **Values** £15,000-£70,000/ $20,000-$95,000 **What to look for** Rust is the biggest problem **Article** Winter 2023

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W/V116 S-Class (1972-1980)

The W116 SE and stretched V116 SEL models brought with them the title 'S-Class', and defined that model's role as the default director level car. The 350SE/SEL and 450SEL 3.5- and 4.5-litre V8s were the most delivered models, but the range was topped and tailed by the extraordinary 450SEL 6.9 and the six-cylinder 280SE/SEL, while there was even a turbocharged diesel specially engineered for North America. The 116-series S-Class was a long disregarded Mercedes, but good ones now attract collectors.

Engine/cyl/power range 2,746cc/6/154bhp - 6,834cc/V8/282bhp **Transmission** 3/4-speed automatic, 4/5-speed manual **Number built** 473,035 **Values** £15,000-£70,000/$20,000-$90,000 **What to look for** Rusted front bulkhead, wings, 6-cyl engine tune **Article date** Winter 2022



W/V126 S-Class (1979-1992)

With its discreet lines and impressive technical and safety innovations, the 126-series consolidated the S-Class as the luxury car of choice, beating the BMW 7-Series on prestige, and the Jaguar XJ6 on build quality and reliability. The choice model is the 1985-on 560SEL, while the North America only turbodiesel 300SDL and 350SDL have a cult following there. There are signs of values picking up, but regular- (SE) or extended-wheelbase (SEL) 126s in good condition remain young classic bargains.

Engine/cyl/power range 2,746cc/6/154bhp - 5,547cc/V8/296bhp **Transmission** 4/5-speed manual, 4-speed auto **Number built** 818,036 **Values** £8,000-£35,000/ $10,000-$45,000 **What to look for** Rusty front/rear wings, expired ignition coil, 6-cyl poor starting **Article** Autumn 2019



W/S123 saloon/estate (1976-85)

It is said that the 123-series was Mercedes' most thoroughly engineered model to date when it appeared in early 1976, and the level of attention to detail and build quality supports that view. The saloon came first, offered with a variety of petrol and diesel engines, while the estate model that followed a year later was almost a model in its own right, featuring among other things a space-saving rear (self-levelling) suspension, and a tailgate that was part of the crash safety cell. It's the most sought after 123.

Engine/cyl/power range 1,988cc/4/54bhp - 2,746cc/v 6/182bhp **Transmission** 4/5-speed manual, 4-speed automatic **Number built** 2,588,657 **Values** £12,000-£40,000/$15,000-$50,000 **What to look for** Body rust and general wear **Article dates** Winter, Spring 2024



C126 SEC (1981-1991)

After the C107, the S-Class-based SEC saw Stuttgart back in the luxury coupe market proper. Its glorious pillarless body and all the refinement of the 126-series saloon made it very popular despite high purchase prices. Mercedes didn't bother with a six-cylinder version, the base model initially the 380SEC with its 3.8-litre V8 engine. The most popular model was the five-litre 500SEC, but the one the classic market like most is the grunty, 296bhp 5.5-litre 560SEC, launched at the September 1985 facelift.

Engine/cyl/power range 3,839cc/V8/201bhp - 5,547cc/V8/296bhp **Transmission** 4-speed automatic **Number built** 74,060 **Values** £20,000-£60,000/$25,000-$80,000 **What to look for** Rusted rear parcel shelf, rattling timing chain tensioner, front ball joints **Article** Summer 2024



C123 coupe (1977-1985)

Unlike the preceding W114 two-door coupe, the C123 used a shorter wheelbase and overall length than the saloon, lending a more balanced appearance. Pre-1980, the entry model was the carb fed 2.3-litre 230C, replaced by the fuel-injected 230CE, while the top model was the 280CE with its 2.8-litre M110 six with 183bhp. Two diesels were built for North American customers only, the 1977-1982 naturally aspirated 300CD, and the 1981-1985 300CD Turbodiesel which replaced it.

Engine/cyl/power range 2,307cc/4/108bhp - 2,998cc/6/123bhp **Transmission** 4/5-speed auto, 4-speed manual **Number built** 99,884 **Values** £15,000-£50,000/$20,000-$65,000 **What to look for** Rusted screen surrounds, sills **Article** Winter 2018



W201 190E (1982-1993)

Returning to the 'small' car market to compete with the BMW 3-Series and Audi 80 proved a good move for Mercedes-Benz, considerably increasing Stuttgart's annual output. Initially there were two-litre carburettored and fuel-injected models (190, 190E), but diesels and a 2.6-litre petrol six-cylinder followed. Solidly built and without complex electronics, the W201 is DIY-friendly and inexpensive to maintain. Until recently they were cheap to purchase but are now a Merc young timer rising in value.

Engine/cyl/power range 1,997cc/4/104bhp - 2,599cc/6/164bhp **Transmission** 4/5-speed manual, 4-speed auto **Number built**1,879,629 Values £5,000-£15,000/$6,500-$20,000 **What to look for** Rusted acking points **Article** Autumn 2018



190E 2.3-/2.5-16/Evolution/ Evolution II (1984-1993)

Mercedes-Benz launched the BMW M3 chasing 190E 2.3-16, a homologation model, to legalise the W201 in motorsport. It began in 2.3-litre form with a Cosworth-designed 16-valve cylinder-head, and in 1988 at the W201 facelift became the 2.5-litre 190E 2.5-16. As DTM competition mounted, in 1990 it was developed into the Evolution and later that year the Evolution II, this ultimate model recently having gone gold, low mileage cars (as most of them are) able to top £300K at auction.

Engine/cyl/power range 2,229cc/ 4/175bhp - 2,463cc/4/232bhp **Number built** 26,234 **Values** 190E 2.3-/2.5-16, £20,000-£50,000/$25,000-$65,000; Evo/II £100,000-£330,000 /$130,000-$435,000 **What to look for** Worn out engine mounts, exhaust manifold on 2.3-16 breaks **Article** Summer 2022



500E/E500/E60 (1991-1995)

When Mercedes-Benz instructed Porsche to install the SL's five-litre V8 in the W124, an all-time great 'Q-car' emerged. Looking like any other W124 apart from wider wheelarches, the 500E (badged E500 as from mid-1993) delivered a velvet punch while cossetting its occupants. It wasn't built in right-hand drive form, but it was officially available in the UK nonetheless, and of late has gained in collectability, especially the E500 in Limited trim. A small, unspecified number of the six-litre E60 were built in 1993 and 1994.

Engine/cyl/power 4,973cc/V8/ 316, 322bhp **Transmission** 4-speed automatic **Number built**10,479 (all LHD) **Values** £25,000-£80,000/ $33,000-$100,000 **What to look for** Rust on wings, engine wiring loom degrades, faulty throttle actuator cases misfires **Article date** Winter 2023



W/S/C/A124 saloon/estate/ coupe/cabriolet (1984-1997)

The 124-series kicked off in 1984 with the W124 saloon, the S124 estate following in 1985, and the pillarless C124 coupe brought glamour in 1987 in 200CE, 230CE and 300CE form. The two-door format was further exploited with the A124 cabriolet launched in 1991, Mercedes' first full four-seat drophead for 20 years. Some enthusiasts prefer the pre-1992/ 1993 facelift 'big grille' cars, with their simpler two-valve engines, and the star badge mounted on the grille rather than the bonnet.

Engine/cyl/power range 1,996cc/ 4/120bhp - 3,199cc/6/217bhp **Transmission** 5-speed manual, 4/5-speed automatic **Number built** 2,729,120 **Values** £6,000-£20,000/ $8,000-$25,000 **What to look for** rusted jacking points, faulty wiring loom **Article date** Winter 2022 (saloon)



C36/C43 AMG (1993-2000)

The original 'hot' W202 C-Class sold by Mercedes-Benz used the M104 four-valve engine, enlarged from 3.2 to 3.6 litres and with bigger valves, while the chassis was uprated. The C36 feels like a traditional tuned car with more harshness and less ride comfort. The C43 AMG that replaced it in 1997 added much refinement, its M113 4.2-litre V8 as smooth as it was powerful. The C36 was only ever a saloon, but the C43 was offered in wagon form too. Both models are on the cusp of classic status, but badr rust limits values.

Engine/cyl/power range 3,606cc/ 6/276bhp - 4,266cc/V8/302bhp **Transmission** 4/5-speed auto **Number built** 5,221/3,857 **Values** £10,000-£30,000/$13,000-$40,000 **What to look for** 6-cyl head gasket leak, 202 body rust-prone all over, cracked front suspension arms **Article** Winter 2018



R129 SL (1989-2001)

This SL model is regarded as the last of the young timer generation, with traditional Benz styling and build quality. It was offered with a wide range of engines, from a 2.8-litre (SL280) to a 7.3-litre V12 (SL73), but popular choices were the 500SL/SL500 and SL320. Lacking the R107's sweet looks, the R129 is only now appealing to collectors, the six-litre SL60 AMG (1993-1998) particularly sought after and currently selling for up to £50,000. The six-cylinder cars are affordable practical classics.

Engine/cyl/power range 2,799cc/ 6/190bhp - 7,291cc/V12/ 518bhp **Transmission** 5-speed man, 4/5-speed auto **Number built** 237,287 **Values** £10,000-£50,000/ $15,000-$70,000 **What to look for** Rusted wings, spring top mounts **Article** Winter 2023



C/A/W/S124 E36 AMG (1993-96)

The 124-series in its four body forms was among the first wave of 'official' AMG models sold through Mercedes-Benz showrooms from 1993 and 1994. All used the 3.6 litre AMG tuned engine seen in the C36 AMG, while springs and dampers were similarly uprated and a bodykit was optional. Production numbers were never released, but we do know the UK sales: 24 coupes, 14 cabriolets, 12 saloons, and seven estates. They have added value over regular 124s, but are still undiscovered.

Engine/cyl/power 3,606cc/6/268bhp **Transmission** 4-speed automatic **Number built** undisclosed **Values** £20,000-£40,000/$25,000-$50,000 **What to look for** Normal 124 issues of rusted jacking points and front wings, and rotting wiring loom **Article** Issue 2

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125147

MERCEDES-BENZ 240



1998, 70000 miles, £1,200. Navy blue, 4 door automatic, grey leather interior, electric windows, power steering. Clean motor. One owner from new. No MOT. Buyer collects. Please call 07900357314, Scotland.

125299

FEATURE YOUR **MOTOR** IN YOUR FAVOURITE MAGS! OR FIND YOUR NEXT!

MERCEDES 420SL (R107)



£49,500. 1987. Light Ivory with matching hardtop, contrasting leather interior and brown soft top. Current owner over 20 years. Extensive history file. Totally standard, has original tool kit, first aid, book pack, fire extinguisher and radio. Stunning condition. Leeds. Please call 07770784690, Yorkshire and the Humber

MERCEDES BENZ CLK 500 CABRIOLET 2DR PETROL AUTOMATIC



2003, £7950. 278 g/km, 306 bhp. Convertible Mercedes CLK 500 in silver - very good condition and low mileage. Mileage - 40582. Fuel type - Petrol. Body type - Convertible. Engine - 5.0L. Gearbox - Automatic. Doors - 2. Oxted, Surrey. Please call 07887743151, South East

MERCEDES SLK 280



2007, £3300. Auto red 77K on clock, MOT Sept 2025, recent service, immaculate inside and out! New updated media's system cameras and radio/ cd player £500 fitted in September 2024 - only 5 previous owners drives as it should. Exmouth. Please call 07595744571, South West.

MERCEDES CLK 200 KOMPRESSOR



£3500. 2005 Jasper blue. With blue soft top & two tone leather interior. Lovely condition with FSH & will come with 12 mths MOT, used very sparingly hence only 67k from new. Never used in bad weather & cherished by a meticulous owner. All bills from new. Cheltenham. Please call 07968430044, South West.

MERCEDES BENZ COUPE



Offers over £1000. 2001. Orange Mercedes Benz Coupe, immaculate interior, engine running, ULEZ compliant. Unused since 2017, left outside. Mileage- 27,000. MOT ran out, 1 flat tyre and flat battery, requires recovery from NE31. Lovely project, offers over £1000. Please call 07989142822, London

MERCEDES-BENZ R129 300 SL



1992, £9,995. 24 Valve, Convertible, Automatic, 2960 (cc), 2 doors. Owner is reducing collection of classic cars, Mercedes and MG's in the UK. The car has been owned since July 2009. The logbook shows 4 previous owners. 119,000 miles. Best offer secures. Cheltenham. Please call 07576315669, South West.

MERCEDES CL55



2002, £8500. AMG W215, low mileage 85k, FSR, MOT Nov 2025, auto, fully loaded, double glazed, heated/cooled seats, Bi zenon headlights, key less entry/ignition, etc etc, first to see will buy, loss of storage forces sale. Please call 07584 020272, South East.

MERCEDES CLK 230



£1795. Kompressor Cabriolet Evolution (208.448) X reg 101,859 Mileage, Mot until Nov 25 (no advisories) Cabrio roof in perfect working order. ABS / ESP/5 speed Auto tiptronic with summer and winter settings. Electric seats and rear headrests. MB CD/Radio Black Leather. Liverpool. Please call 07785712087, North West.

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CARS@KELSEYCLASSIFIEDS.CO.UK

MERCEDES ML380



1999, £2750. Auto Estate, full leather, full length sunroof, electric windows, cruise control, towbarbar, two keys, all books, some service history, MOT 2025. Please call 01482 654302, East Yorkshire.

MERCEDES SLK200 KOMPRESSOR AUTOMATIC

2004, £1,450. 2 previous owners, current owner since 2016, MOT until May 2025. Good working order, only 42,000 miles. Some service history, a cherished car. Aberdeen. Please call 0784 309 3635, Scotland.

MERCEDES UNIMOG 404



£4,950. 1959/60. 12,500 miles. Registered 1965 L/H/D. Petrol, been kept as protection for field fires only. Starts and drives well. Hose reels, pump, tank, tools, PTO, crew cab. History and books. Please call 07814 658275, East of England

10365

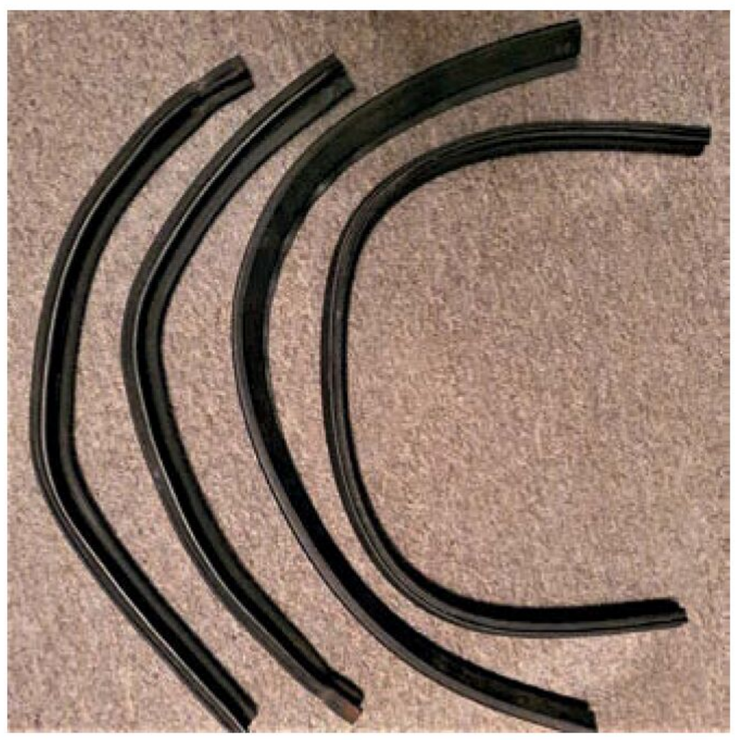
PARTS, MISC & ACCESSORIES

MERCEDES PARTS

£50. 2 working door lamps and will show the Merc sign on the ground when the doors are opened approx 2 1/4 x 1 1/2. Please call 07748 546561, Wales

10441

MERCEDES 280CE/230CE UPPER DOOR WINDOW SEALS & ALLY ROOF TRIM CLADDING



£220. The Seals and Cladding Trims were taken off my 1983 280CE and replaced with new ones from Mercedes-Benz. There is some cracking of the external side rubber sections but could be fixed using superglue and shoe polish. Cheltenham. Please call 07576315669, South West.

ORIGINAL MERCEDES 10-HOLE ALLOY WHEELS



POA. Set of four, 6 ½ x 15H2, complete with Mercedes logo wheel centres and wheel nuts, plus full set of locking wheel nuts. Originally C280, W202. Only 2000 mls. Truly excellent condition, original packaging. Best offer secures. Buyer collects. Herefordshire. Please call 07916770910, West Midlands.

MERCEDES E 220 AMG PART LED HEADLAMPS



2014, £1000. Location Stirling Scotland. Part numbers A2128261191 and A2128261291. Please call 0034722174407, Scotland.

EASY HOIST FOR R107



£225. Easy Hoist for R107, barely used, but no longer required. For collection from Faversham, Kent. Save yourself some money on the new price of £595. Bargain £225. Faversham. Please call 07774622782, South East

COMPLETE INTERIOR TRIM FOR W124 COUPE



£250. In cream cloth inclusive of front and rear seats all door cards, 4 headrests and centre console and rear seat divider. No carpet. From 1995 model with low miles swapped for leather. 250 Stirling. Chichester. Please call 07508875934, South East

FEATURE YOUR **MOTOR** IN YOUR FAVOURITE MAGS! OR FIND YOUR NEXT!

SPARES

£20-£60. 200 series W124 types. '80's-90's: grill surround + emblem vgc £60. W/pump orig. perfect £40. Dealers S.E. torch new boxed £20. 20 new chrome wheel bolts (M12x1.5) £20. W/shop manual + 2 Lg merc books & mags £35. Astro A1 cordless tyre pump new boxed £35. Nexpeak batt charger new boxed £35. Crime mags cheap (swap classic usa car, planes mags) other items tools, books/mags etc. Please call 01277 200530, South East.

SET OF REFURBISHED W126 FLAT FACED ALLOYS

£450. With very good tyres. Large quantity of W123 steel wheels, some with tyres, sets of four W123 wheel trims, various colours, various W123 spares too many to list. Please call 07747 447556, East of England.

R107 SL REAR BUMPER

£1200. Complete, original Mercedes with parts stickers 1989. New parts, old stock. No messages, collection only. Please call 07503 739538, London.

MERCEDES ENTHUSIAST MAGAZINES

POA. From Jan 2015 (£4.30) to Mar 2016, all in very good order. Please call 07447 941524, South West.

TWO REAR WHEELS FROM MERC CLS 2021



POA. Both have a small crack on inner rim. Weldable repair possible. 275/30 R20 (Rim 9J20ET33). Please call 07930557269, East of England.

AMG 19 ALLOYS



POA. A1 condition. Missing one center cap. Open to sensible offers only. AMG 19 alloys no wheel bolts included. Contact Bruce. Birmingham. Please call 07415906208, West Midlands

46 MERCEDES CUSTOMER MAGAZINES AND BROCHURES

£40. From the 1990's. All very good condition. Please call 01482 840991, Yorkshire and the Humber.

REGISTRATIONS

TWO FANTASTIC NUMBERPLATES



£1250 - £3250. Both on retention – M5500B (£1,250 ONO) and SALLUTE (£3,250 ONO). Please call 07950 741778, South East.

OV12 BYE NUMBERPLATE



£3500. On retention. Please call 07766 570973, South East.

TWO NUMBERPLATES ON RETENTION



£300-£350. NKZ 433 (£350) and S16CNS (£300), open to offers. Please call 07980 933829 or please email: nickstilwell59@gmail.com, South East.

REGISTRATION

£19500. On retention. 126 MPH. Bought for a Pagoda (126 mph top speed) in the seventies but looked good on many cars since. Completely compliant with the law (no spacing problems) Please call 0208 366 4639, Greater London.

OYY 655 REGISTRATION



£950. OYY 655 on Retention Certificate (V778). Please call 07886 533021, Scotland.

WANTED

FRONT DOOR LOCKS AND KEYS

Wanted. For handles on 1988 230TE (124-series). Please call 01277 200530, South East.

MERCEDES C CLASS

Wanted. 1.8cc 4 door saloon. 1994 to 1999. Auto. One or two owners. Low mileage. Excellent condition. Will travel. Please call 07787 802941, North West

10325

PARTS FOR R129

Wanted. Steering idler arm bushing for a 2001 SL500 Silver Arrow. Have tried the usual parts places in the UK and Europe without success! Please call 07359 017584, South East.

The bright stuff

In the mid-1990s, as part of an effort to lower its customer age profile, Mercedes-Benz introduced a collection of hard-to-miss 'youthful' colours. Tim French looks at the designo package of that time

IMAGES Mercedes-Benz Group AG





As the 1980s progressed it was becoming clear that Mercedes-Benz cars, while not ceding anything in engineering and build quality, were starting to look staid against the more exciting models Audi, BMW, Alfa Romeo, Saab and others offered. Hence, in the early 1990s Stuttgart decided that the best fix was to design cars to appeal to younger customers.

The first step came in 1993 with the launch of the 190E's successor, the 202-series C-Class, which was available in an equipment hierarchy of 'Esprit' (basic), 'Elegance' (luxurious) and 'Sport' (racy). At the time, critics predicted that trim packs of the kind Ford or Vauxhall might provide would cheapen the Mercedes image, but they turned out to be a big success and remain in place today in a similar form.

The next move was even more radical for conservative Mercedes: the introduction in 1995 of the designo initiative. No longer need the exterior paintwork and interior trim be a safe and sober hue – customers prepared to pay could have their cars finished in almost any colour found on the artist's palette. In that year the first Mercedes-Benz designo consulting centre for customisation opened in the customer centre at the Sindelfingen factory. There, brand experts were on hand to plan individual dream cars in discussion with customers.

The 1996 C280 Sport (alloys wheels, 25mm lowered and firmed suspension) seen below, and which resides in the Gallery of Everyday Heroes room in the Mercedes-Benz Museum in Stuttgart, is a good example of how designo could transform an understated, even bland, saloon into a car that really does grab attention.

The vivid exterior metallic green (colour code MB252), which extends to front and rear aprons, trim strips and exterior mirrors, is continued in the designo interior, the seats and door panelling featuring the contrast between green and black elements and black sides. Or as the company puts it, "this customised design demonstrates the saddler's art with a flair for sporty aesthetics. Using the rear seat unit as an example, the various rectangular, green components of the seat, backrest and head restraint together form a vertical stripe – as if dynamically applied with a brush on the canvas of a modern work of art."

Probably a relatively small number of 202 C-Classes were given the designo treatment, which arguably lent itself better to the sporty models in the range, the SLK roadster quite often seen with the radiant colours. It didn't have to be expensive, either: in the mid 2000s A-Class customers could order one of four leather/Alcantara seat combinations for £830 extra.

TOP
By 1995 M-B customers could have any colour.

ABOVE
Quite a few R170 SLKs were designo specced.

BELOW LEFT
"A demonstration of the saddler's art," said M-B.

BELOW
designo certainly added sparkle to a 202-series.





Although the 1990s saw an explosion of colours in the model range, since its post-war revitalisation Mercedes-Benz had placed value on this aspect. In 1953, star cars were only available in five different paint finishes as standard, but by 1956 there was already a wide choice, of 26 monotone and 23 two-tone paint finishes.

In 2021, designo was replaced by the Manufaktur programme of customisation across all model series with exclusive equipment for the exterior and interior along with custom paint finishes. In December 2024, Mercedes-Benz opened the new Manufaktur Studio in the Sindelfingen plant. Here, customers can experience first-hand how their car is customised according to their wishes with attention to detail, classic craftsmanship and state-of-the-art production technologies. CM

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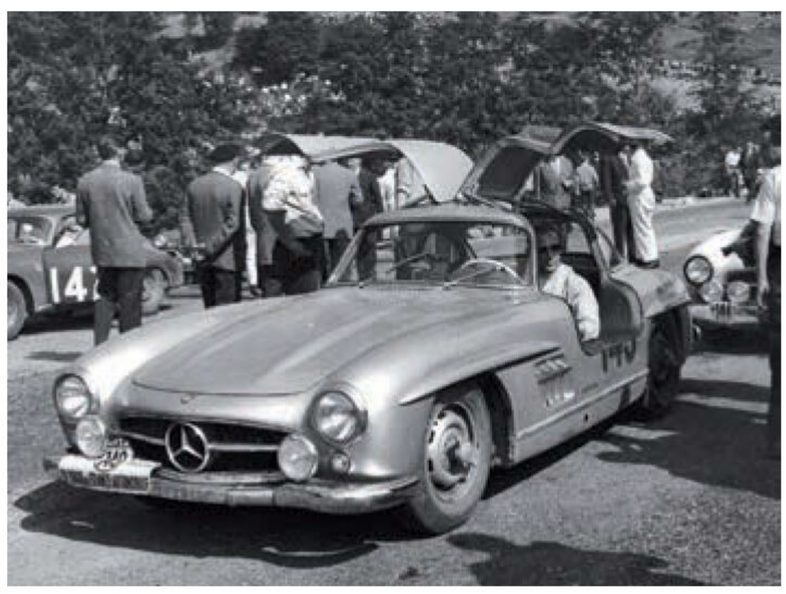
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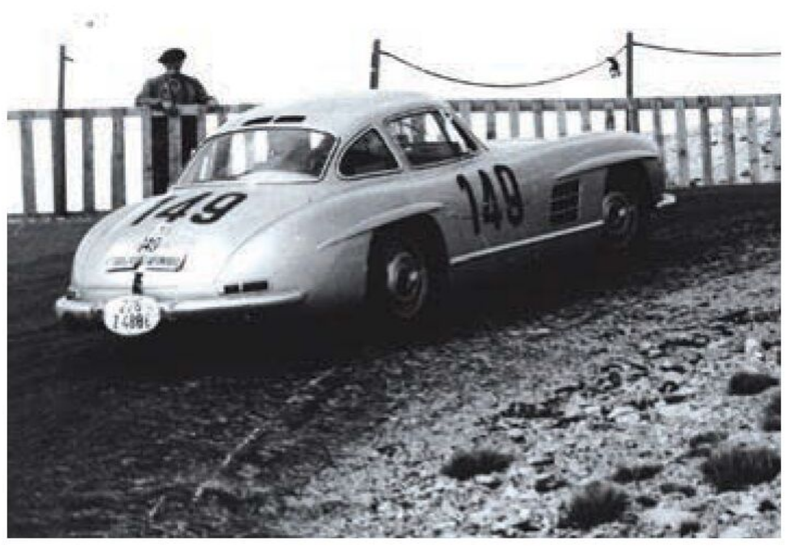
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