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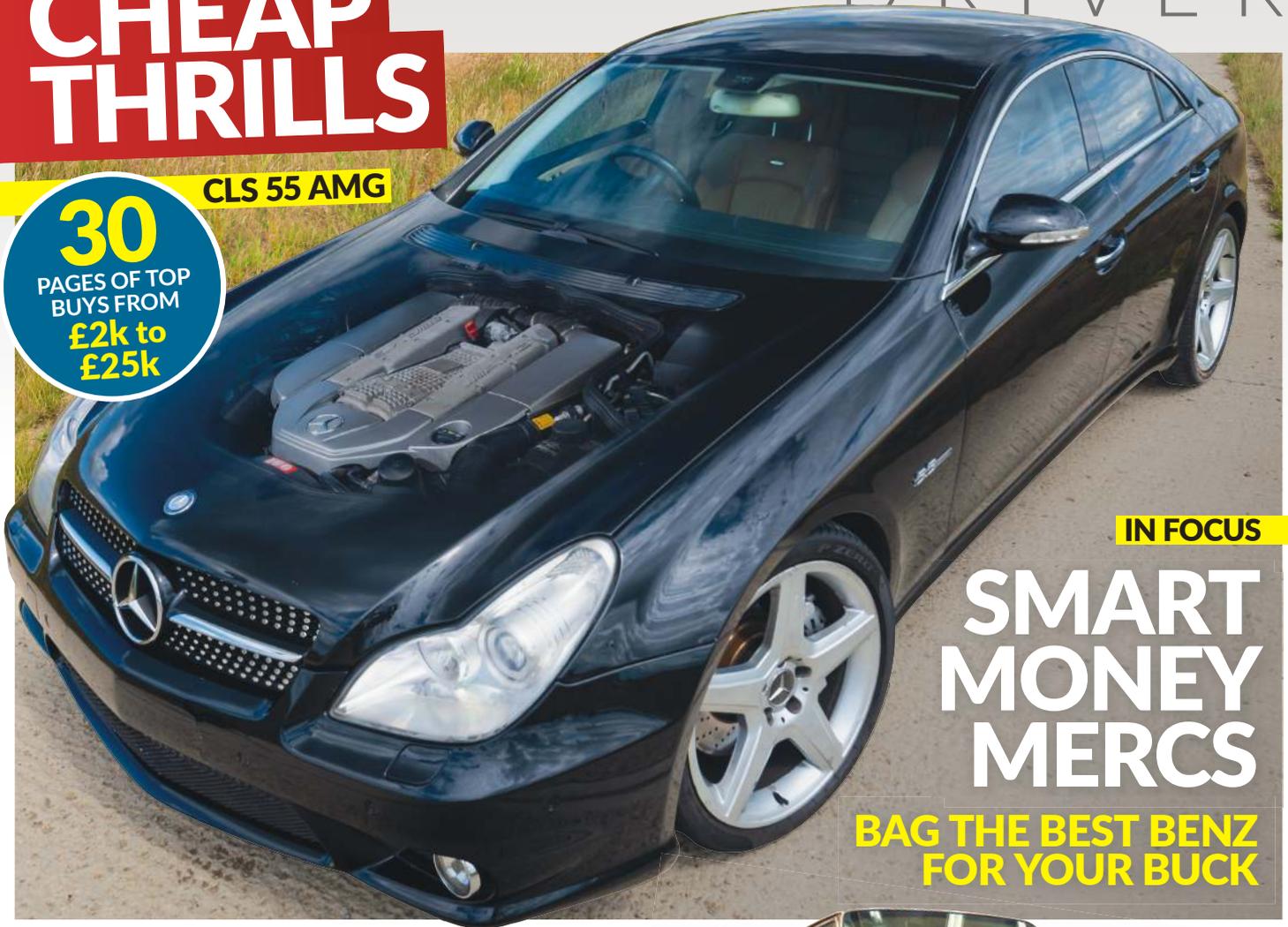
DRIVER

**CHEAP
THRILLS**

CLS 55 AMG

30

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BUYS FROM
£2k to
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IN FOCUS

**SMART
MONEY
MERCs**

**BAG THE BEST BENZ
FOR YOUR BUCK**

W114 220 AUTOMATIC
MEGUIAR'S COMPETITION
BUILD ENJOYS THE LOW LIFE



35 years of the first E-Class
A celebration of W124
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South African collection
Dream garage visited
Sensational fleet of classics





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DRIVER
SEE PAGE 74
FOR DETAILS

VARIETY PACK



ONE OF THE greatest aspects of being an enthusiast of Mercedes cars is the ability to indulge in the huge breadth of vehicle types

produced by the manufacturer during its long and fruitful history. There really is a Mercedes to suit every budget, which is why we decided to bring together some of the used car market's best buys for this special issue of *Mercedes Driver*.

Ranging from £2k to £25k, the four-wheelers we've picked offer their own special qualities, whether it be as the perfect platform for a restomod project, a fuel-friendly drop-top or as an aggressive powerhouse of performance. We've picked cars spanning as far back as the W114 and as recent as the R171 SLK, but don't think that means we've neglected the very latest Mercedes metal. After all, depending on your point of view (and how healthy your wallet is), you may think the

facelift GLC represents a lot of car for the money. Available in a variety of flavours (including the all-important AMG), the model's many variants are profiled on the following pages.

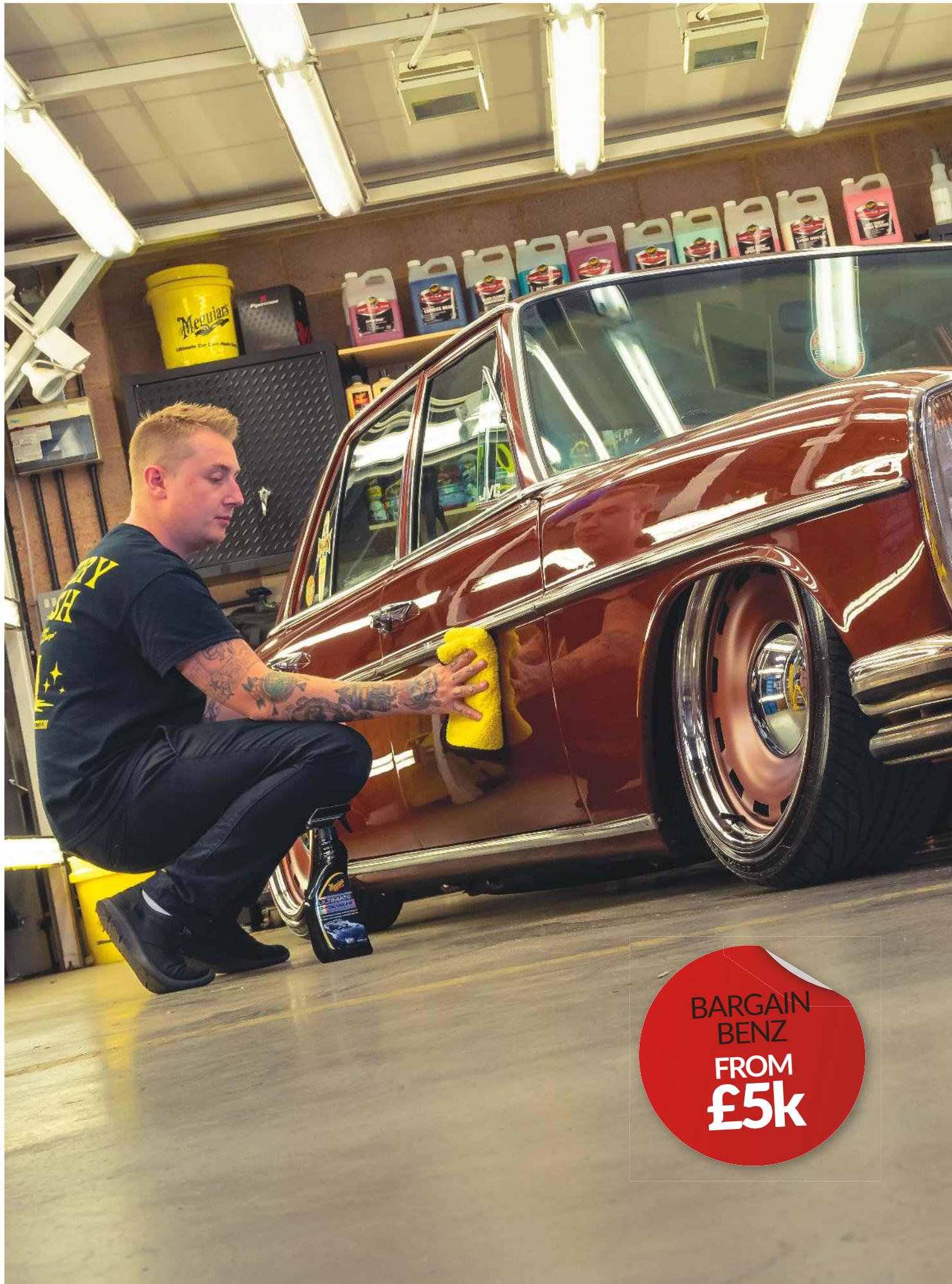
We're also celebrating one of the manufacturer's key anniversaries in this issue of *Mercedes Driver*, namely thirty-five years of W124, a model offered in a massive range of body styles and power packages. Of course, owning a Mercedes is one thing, but getting the very best out of it is quite another. To help you enjoy seat time to the fullest, we've started a driver coaching series, kicking off with top tips to help you achieve steering with finesse. By following our step-by-step advice, you'll be amazed at how much better your Benz will take bends. All you need to do is decide which car to buy beforehand!



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**BARGAIN
BENZ
FROM
£5k**

A close-up, low-angle shot of the front of a classic red Mercedes-Benz W114 220. The car is elevated on air ride, and its chrome grille and headlights are prominent. The background shows a garage setting with a 'Fire exit' sign and various cleaning supplies on a shelf.

SMART
MONEY
MERCs

SOLO MISSION

Dale Masterman struck out on his own when it came to the build of this stylish W114 220 on air ride

WORDS Emma Woodcock PHOTOGRAPHY Dan Sherwood

The guys at Meguiar's UK know how to build project cars. Two of the automotive care company's team members, Tom Clarke and Dale Masterman, grabbed hearts, minds and column inches throughout 2018 with their wild creations. One, a lowriding Ford Crown Victoria, combines a deluxe interior with simple style. The other, a Datsun pickup in the fashion of a 'Hakosuka' Nissan Skyline GT-R, shows just how far a practical Japanese joy toy can be pushed. For 2019, however, the detailing experts craved a fresh challenge, which is why they were pitted against one another with the task of assembling their perfect projects.

A widebody, eye-popping Renault 5 GT Turbo is Tom's interpretation of the brief. Dale has taken a very different direction, pursuing the smooth, simple style of a 1970s hot rod. And, for that, he needed a suitable retro ride. "I've always been inspired by the period's outrageous car culture," he explains. "I liked the idea of working with a vintage Mercedes that wouldn't break the bank. I love the shape of the older Benzes, which is why I knew my latest build had to be based on the W114 platform."

Unveiled in 1968, the W114 and four-cylinder W115 are reliable, ubiquitous and affordable mid-size saloons and coupes sharing much of their mechanical componentry with other Mercedes models. They're a great choice for anyone looking for a usable classic Merc: add restrained-but-timeless Paul Bracq styling and you've got the perfect starting point for a classic show car. Dale soon selected a scruffy, 1971 220 daily driver with automatic transmission as his project base. "We took a hit on the body panels because we knew the

driveline had been looked after," he explains. "To my mind, that was far more important." Back in the Meguiar's workshop, he stripped the shell back to basics and set to work. The front wings, rear sills and a number of inner panels have been replaced with new pattern pieces, while the doors have been swapped for well-preserved originals from a donor W114. With a solid base secured, Dale's attention could shift to the first round of modification, and that meant a trip to see the chaps at The Install Company.

Search through social media and you'll soon see why Dale is so keen to work with the Leicester-based custom car specialist. Known for dropping everything from modern Lamborghinis to Ford Escort RS Cosworths onto customised, high quality air suspension, the firm's talented team of technicians were perfectly placed to help Dale drastically lower his new toy. "I wouldn't trust anyone else to work on this car," he stresses. "Phil, The Install Company's founder, knows exactly the attention to detail I expect. He also knew I wanted the lowest W114 on the largest wheels!"

GRAND SLAM

The Install Company's success is indisputable; the Meguiar's Mercedes now dips so low it can lay the front section of its frame on the ground. That's thanks to an air system using both Air Lift Performance 3S electronic management and four Air Lift airbags originally specified for a Volkswagen Golf. Beyond these components, however, the suspension is entirely boutique. "Phil is very much a 'measure twice, cut once' kind of guy," Dale explains. Consequently, the car wears a collection of small chassis alterations, custom bag



Above The W114 makes an excellent starting point for a retro-themed build thanks to the model being in plentiful supply and most surviving examples being offered at a pleasing price point

Left The car's upper paintwork has been treated to metal flake through 'lacing', an old-school technique favoured by lowriders, who use lace as a stencil to create a subtle pattern on the panel

Overleaf C obra Seats helped to switch the car's blue MB Tex to the Forest Green leather



COPPER SUNSET BRONZE GIVES THIS W114 A STRONG '70S LOOK WITHOUT BLOWING THE BUDGET

mounts and freshly fabricated attachments, each designed to get the W114 that little bit lower.

Bespoke rims came next, Detroit Steel Wheels agreeing to create custom rims for the project after a meeting at SEMA, the legendary Las Vegas tuning show. Measuring eight inches in width at the front and nine at the rear, the steel eighteens are in the manufacturer's Delrays style. "I wanted these particular wheels for their rectangular cutouts," Dale confirms. "They mimic what was originally fitted to the car." Keen to stay true to his history as a painter, he sprayed the super steelies himself. Matched to the bodywork, the chrome-plus-monochrome result is the prime example of classic American showmanship.

Don't let appearances deceive – the paint itself is entirely contemporary. A current Peugeot colour, Copper Sunset Bronze, gives this W114 a strong '70s look without blowing the budget. On Dale's request, Kustom Kolors paint shop baked a subtle variation into the roof. In dim light, the shade looks the same, but when sunshine hits, the panel lights up with a silver base, Copper Sunset lacing in a clearcoat candy-tinted with Root Beer, an American House of Kolor shade that ranks among Dale's favourites.

The US references continue with car's streamlined overall look. The driver's door mirror,

grille emblem and rear badging, for example, have been removed, while Dale has painted the rear lights in a red tinted clearcoat to create single, solid-shade lenses. "It's the rule of thumb when it comes to American customs," he explains. "You never break the lines!" Only a double front bumper deviates from the stripped-back mantra. Provided by project sponsor, Bagged Benz UK, many consider the part far more desirable than the single-level original.

FIZZY LIVING

Decked out in blue MB Tex, complete with equally aqua switches, handles and dashboard fixtures, the original Mercedes interior provided a stylish contrast to the factory off-white bodywork, but now, with the Copper set and shining, Dale had a problem. "It looked," he says, "like a can of Irn Bru!" A call to Cobra Seats and upholsterer extraordinaire, Edd Aldridge, kickstarted the hunt for new trim. Before long, the perfect material had been located: Forest Green leather. The base colour now runs over the bolsters, squabs and seat tops, set off by muted, mint centres. Still Forest Green, but distressed and assembled with vertical fluting, they're a nod to both the Mercedes' original styling and the twin-tone cabins of 1950s North American land yachts.

DRIVER

Q&A



DALE MASTERMAN

First Mercedes
This one

Favourite Mercedes
It's got to be this one. Yep, this is the one!

Best thing about your W114 220 automatic
Freedom of creativity

Worst thing about your W114 220 automatic
I'd like to make the chrome more presentable, but I like the dinks and dings on the side trim

With the seats away, Dale could pivot to banishing every trace of blue from the cabin. He's dyed each trim section to gloss black and only the speedometer provided a challenge. "The area where the face interacts with the glass cover repeatedly caused a reaction with the dye. Getting it to look right was hard work, but the end result proves my labour of love really paid off," he smiles. One final tweak completes the interior's visual transformation, and it's Dale's favourite change. Down in the footwell, his W114 now makes use of a period Mooneyes accelerator pedal, a gift from his father. Shaped like a foot and complete with five polished toes, it's a direct link to the 1970s hot rod scene and suits the finished build perfectly.

BRING THE NOISE

There's another major alteration hiding in the cabin, but it's nothing you'd easily spot. Eager to retain the car's uncluttered lines, Dale has worked with JVC to install a collection of slimline amps, subs and speakers which sit beneath the door cards and underneath the rear bench. Only the double DIN head unit hints at the change. Sat in the centre console, it takes the place of the original radio.

Smooth and shining, Dale's completed build was ready for its highly anticipated public debut a few weeks ago. Players Classic was the event of

Up in the air

Air suspension is nothing new: American car manufacturers translated the concept into high-end passenger vehicles in the 1950s. Mercedes wasn't far behind. From the August 1961 launch of the 300 SE, the 'Fintail' saloon could be ordered with an air suspension system that used a single, conical bag on each axle for springing, with air coming from an engine-driven compressor. A more conventional torsion bar also featured, added to maintain stability. The concept later appeared in the W110 600, before it was superseded by a hydropneumatic setup for the 450 SEL 6.9.

choice, the annual tuner extravaganza providing the perfect audience for the low-running saloon. "Displaying the car at the show was great fun," Dale recalls. "It made for a refreshing change to the norm. There aren't many Mercedes cars like mine in the UK, which is why so many people were asking me about the colour and stance." Online, the 1970s smasher continues to attract widespread interest; an Instagram poll asking Meguiar's British audience to choose between Tom's Renault and the bagged Benz proved too tight to call, while a similar vote overseen by Meguiar's American customer base returned an overwhelming Mercedes win.

Whatever the result, Dale is enjoying his dream drive and hopes to keep the tailor-made saloon long after it finishes its stint as a Meguiar's promotional tool. "I'm over the moon with it!" he smiles uncontrollably. "I've invested a lot of time, creativity and passion in the project, as has everyone who's worked on it. The completed build is just as good as I imagined it would be." Showstopping looks haven't caused this heavily modified W114 to abandon the standard model's customary usability either. "It's got to the point where I can't drive my normal everyday car anymore," Dale grins. "I just drive everywhere in the Mercedes." Meguiar's mission accomplished. 





SHOWSTOPPING LOOKS HAVEN'T CAUSED THIS MODIFIED W114 TO ABANDON THE MODEL'S USABILITY

Livewire

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New GLB debuts with option of seven seats

Eighth model in the Mercedes compact car family

Powerful proportions with short overhangs and off-road-oriented design, not to mention optional 4MATIC all-wheel drive and a special off-road light which helps detect obstacles immediately in front of the vehicle at low speeds – it's safe to say the new Mercedes-Benz GLB is a versatile SUV! It's also a spacious family car thanks to being available with an option of seven seats, the first Mercedes in this segment available with so many pews.

With powerful and efficient four-cylinder engines, driving assistance systems, the intuitively operable MBUX infotainment kit, plus supreme levels of comfort, the new Mercedes model has all the strengths of the

current compact-class generation from our favourite manufacturer.

At 2,829 millimetres, the GLB has ten centimetres more wheelbase than the new B-Class. Together with the function-oriented greenhouse, this feature is decisive when it comes to the generous amount of space. The headroom in the first seat row is 1,035 millimetres – a best in this segment. At 967 millimetres, the effective legroom in the rear of the five-seater is at an especially comfortable level.

The load compartment capacity of 560 to 1,755 litres (figures for the five-seater) boasts the qualities of an estate. On request, the second seat row can be longitudinally adjusted and as standard the inclination of the backrests is adjustable in several stages.



This enables the load compartment to be enlarged by up to 179 litres and put to even more versatile use.

The new GLB is manufactured at the Aguascalientes (Mexico) plant and, for the Chinese market, in Beijing. German production begins later this year. At the time of writing one in three Mercedes vehicles sold is an SUV, and one in four a compact model. A compact SUV like the GLB, therefore, combines all the success factors of the company's highest-volume segments. Moreover, with the arrival of the GLB, the Mercedes compact car family now consists of eight models: the A-Class, A-Class Saloon and long-wheelbase A-Class Saloon, B-Class, CLA Coupé, CLA Shooting Brake and the GLA are already on the market.

In 2018, over 609,000 customers all over the world took delivery of a compact Mercedes. Arguably more impressive, since





the A-Class was launched in 1997, over 6.5-million vehicles from this segment have been sold worldwide by Mercedes dealerships.

As mentioned earlier, the GLB is the first compact vehicle from the company to offer a third seat row on request. The included safety equipment includes retractable head restraints, a side window airbag, plus ISOFIX and TOP-Tether anchorages for child seats. These can be used to attach up to four child seats in the rear.

Comfort details in the third row include two drink holders between the seats, as well as two stowage compartments with a rubberised insert on the left and right in the load compartment trim, each with a USB port. The seats can

be lowered so that they sit flush with the load compartment floor in order to add more luggage space.

The new GLB places its trust in the four-cylinder petrol and diesel engines which were completely updated to relaunch the Mercedes compact model series. In comparison to the previous generation, these new powerplants are characterised by significantly increased power, improved efficiency and emissions.

The gateway to the petrol-model range is the M282 with a displacement of 1.33 litres in the 120hp GLB 200. This engine has cylinder shutoff for efficient operation in the partial-load range. The two-litre M260 features in the 224hp GLB 250 4MATIC.



Mercedes-AMG triumphs in VLN

Mercedes-AMG Motorsport not only claimed a 1-2 in the overall result, but also a pair of class wins in the SP8T and SP10 categories in the fourth season round of the VLN Langstreckenmeisterschaft Nürburgring. With this result, Mercedes-AMG seamlessly builds on excellent VLN achievements, with second place overall and a class win (SP10) in the hotly contested 24-hour race just before we went to print. In partly changeable conditions in the Eifel, the Black Falcon Team AutoArena Motorsport with starting number six secured the overall win, also marking the first victory for the Mercedes-AMG GT3 in the 2019 VLN season. In second place, the GetSpeed Performance team scored its first overall podium finish at the Green Hell since changing to Mercedes-AMG. The class wins for the Black Falcon cars with starting numbers 162 and 155 rounded out the successful achievements for Mercedes-AMG.



Mercedes stays top of premium segment

After the first six months of the year, Mercedes continues to be the leader among premium car brands in a highly competitive worldwide sales market. From January to June, 1,134,729 new Mercedes cars were handed over to customers. Unit sales decreased in the first half of the year primarily due to ongoing model changes for SUVs, the brand's segment with the largest volume. In the second quarter, Mercedes sold a total of 573,856 cars. Sales momentum in those three months came primarily from the new compact-car models, including the new A-Class Saloon, the new B-Class and new CLA Coupé. In June, Mercedes sold 196,230 vehicles, maintaining premium segment market leadership in markets including Germany, the United Kingdom, France, Switzerland and Canada.

CLA Shooting Brake builds begin in Hungary

Experimental production techniques see drones deliver parts to technicians for plant maintenance

Just a few months after the CLA Coupé, the new CLA Shooting Brake is starting to roll off production lines at the Hungarian Mercedes-Benz plant in Kecskemét. This not only means Mercedes-Benz Cars is putting the two sportiest models in the new compact car generation onto the roads in well-proven top quality, but in production too, the company is setting standards with respect to flexibility, efficiency and sustainability. It means the international ramp-up cascade for compact cars starting with the new A-Class in April 2018 has reached a further milestone.

"Many distinguishing features of the smart production of tomorrow are already in place at the Mercedes-Benz plant in Kecskemét," says Christian Wolff, CEO and Site Manager of Mercedes-Benz Manufacturing Hungary Kft. "We work on a networked, digital and flexible basis, so the ramp-up of the new CLA Shooting Brake fits seamlessly into our production processes. All this is possible thanks to our highly-motivated and well-trained workforce. We are proud of this team. Together, these colleagues ensure the success story of the CLA will continue at the Kecskemét location."

Since it commenced production in 2012, the Hungarian Mercedes-Benz plant has constantly increased in importance within the global production network of Mercedes-Benz Cars. Alongside digital networking, the strengths of the production network also include direct dialogue with the lead plant for Mercedes compact cars in Rastatt, Baden-Württemberg, Germany.

The production network for the company's compact cars has a total of six plants on three continents: as well as Kecskemét, there are locations in Rastatt, Beijing (China), Uusikaupunki (Finland), Aguascalientes (Mexico) and Hambach (France). They currently produce seven models: A-Class, B-Class, CLA, CLA Shooting Brake, GLA,

A-Class Sedan and the long-wheelbase A-Class L specifically for the Chinese market. The workforce in Kecskemét produces the CLA Shooting Brake and the CLA Coupé exclusively for the world market.

Modern Industry 4.0 technologies distinguish all the production locations of Mercedes-Benz Cars. This enables the plants to respond to changing customer wishes with maximum flexibility. Market fluctuations and a wide variety of equipment variants make it necessary to ensure maximum agility in production, too. Numerous physical and technological innovations help to bring this about. For example, a futuristic pilot project is currently under way at Kecskemét to find out how airspace can be used to optimise logistics. Over a period of around five months, replacement parts needed for plant maintenance were carried over the rooftops – between warehouses and maintenance workshops – of the production shops by drones. This additional transport option increases flexibility and reduces traffic within the plant. The project will also be piloted at other Mercedes locations in the future.

Other applications at the plant in Kecskemét also provide examples of how Mercedes-Benz Cars is continuously developing its production network further. For example, in the newly constructed body shop, the bonnets and boot lids/taillgates for the new model series are produced in so-called flexi-cells. Modular, exchangeable stations make it possible to switch between models within a very short time. Kecskemét also employs new technologies when transporting parts; driverless transport vehicles move the wheel arches – and even the entire bodyshells – of the new compact models between the individual assembly stations in the body shop. This improves both efficiency and safety in the workplace. The aim is to eliminate fork-lift trucks from the assembly shop, mainly in the interests of safety. Special roller platforms are used instead, taking the form of small trains.





Mercedes prepares for Formula E attack

Preparations for the entry of the Mercedes-Benz EQ Formula E Team in the ABB FIA Formula E Championship are in full swing. Following the successful shakedown of the new Silver Arrow 01 at Varano in late March, the team returned to the racetrack in Italy for two days of testing. Taking turns at the wheel of the car were current Formula E drivers, Gary Paffett (twice DTM champion) and Stoffel Vandoorne, each completing two half days of testing.

The team put in 218 laps, gaining valuable insight into the new power unit which is due to make its debut in Formula E this November. "It's obviously different from any Mercedes I've driven before, but it's been a fantastic test," said Paffett. "The professionalism and the skill of engineering within the team is exceptional. There's no doubt there is a lot of work to do, but we've got some really good mileage under our belts, and the car has been very reliable. It's been a good couple of days and I can't wait to get back in the cockpit."

The sixth season of the first all-electric formula racing series gets under way on 22 November in Saudi Arabia. In the intervening weeks and months, the Mercedes-Benz EQ Formula E Team has plenty of work to get through to ensure that it is competitive from the start. "At Varano, we completed our second set of tests in preparation for season six," said Ian James, Managing Director of Mercedes-Benz Formula E Ltd. "All in all, it has been two very positive days of testing, during which we were able to put the new power unit in the car through its paces, but we also saw there's still a lot to do so that we arrive well prepared for the first race in November."



See you there...

2019 E-CLASS DAY

Mercedes-Benz Club UK's annual E-Class day will be taking place at the Buckingham Railway Centre on 11th August. As always, all member cars are welcome, but it will be the W210, W211, W212 and W213s that will be display parked, although new for 2019, the invitation is also extended to the CLS models. Situated just outside Aylesbury, the Rail Centre offers a great day of entertainment for everyone, including a visitor centre, full size train rides, miniature train rides, museum, restoration shed, Royal Dining Coach from 1901 and Royal Mail Coach. Hop online at visit bit.ly/mclubevents

HAMPTON COURT CONCOURS OF ELEGANCE 2019

The annual Concours of Elegance held at Hampton Court Palace brings together no fewer than sixty of the rarest cars from around the world. Many of the exhibits will never have been seen in the UK before. Head over to bit.ly/concourshampton for ticket information for the event, which will take place Friday 6th to Sunday 8th September.

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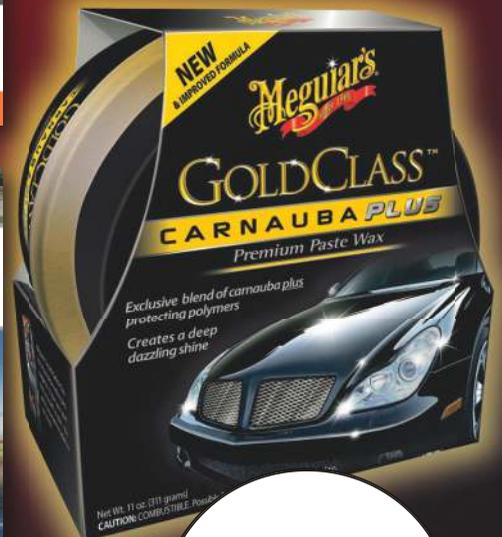
The smell of engines mingles with the roar of iconic race cars at Goodwood Revival, a three-day festival celebrating historic motor racing. Starting 13th September, action and static displays promise to wow in equal measure. Get yourself over to bit.ly/goodrevival

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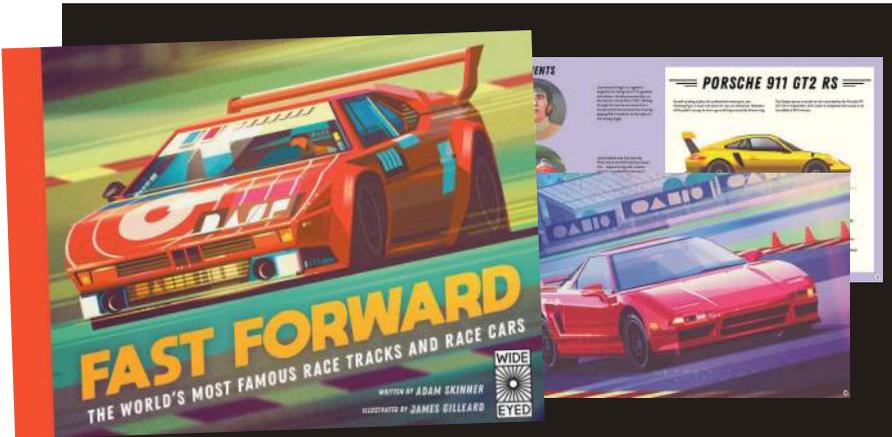


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ebcbrakes.com



POWERFLEX INSERT FOR A45

This Powerflex polyurethane upper engine mount insert for the A45 AMG slots into the original mount to limit movement of the engine in a bid to provide increased stability under acceleration. Suited to modified cars as part of wider suspension upgrades, a small increase in noise and vibration is to be expected after installation, but the results are worth it.
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powerflex.co.uk



RECOMMENDED READ FAST FORWARD: AN ILLUSTRATED GUIDE TO THE WORLD'S MOST FAMOUS RACE TRACKS

Send your kids on an epic adventure as they explore the planet's most iconic race circuits across thirteen countries, five continents and, er, eighty pages. Beautifully illustrated by artist, James Gilleard, this hardback from Quarto imprint, Wide Eyed Editions, and written by sports journalist, Adam Skinner, presents some of the most iconic cars campaigned at each track and offers easy-to-digest insight into some of the most impressive motorsport moments each venue has played host to. From Pikes Peak to Bathurst, from Daytona to Silverstone, your little ones will meet the world-class drivers who have helped to make each circuit famous. The star of this beautifully presented hardback, however, is Gilleard's distinctive, angular artwork, ensuring there's plenty here to entertain big kids too.

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DIRENZA DECAT PIPE FOR W204 C63 AMG

Strong and durable, Direnza's decat kit for the W204 C63 AMG is a direct replacement for your car's factory catalytic converter and promises to unleash extra performance through derestricted gas flow. Additionally, T304 stainless pipework delivers a more aggressive exhaust note, while CNC-machined flanges and super-precise TIG welds guarantee accurate fitment and longevity. Making purchase more appetising, Direnza is offering 0% finance on all orders over £150 and is including free UK delivery and a lifetime warranty with each decat pipe sold.

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FAST FASHION

Sports car looks and a 5.4-litre supercharged V8. The CLS 55 AMG turns heads and snaps necks for less than the cost of your gran's Ford Focus

WORDS **Emma Woodcock** PHOTOGRAPHY **Dan Sherwood**

SMART
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Style radiates from the first-generation CLS. Just look at a well-maintained example and it's clear to see. Indeed, it's hard to believe Mercedes' original sketches date back to 2001; the pre-production Vision CLS wowed marque enthusiasts in 2003 and the first road cars reached their owners a year later. That's all thanks to the work of Michael Fink, designer of the CLS, first-gen CLK and Maybachs 57 and 62. His creation combines sloping, elongated overhangs with a strong, constantly curving roof and a pronounced shoulder line to create a shape making a virtue of its art deco simplicity.

Looks are top of the list when Mercedes itself describes the CLS. Emphasising the car's powerful

haunches, pillarless windows and luxurious, two-plus-two interior, the manufacturer categorises the model as the C219. The affix underlines a key difference between the CLS and the E-Class with which it shares so much: one is a traditional saloon, the other – in Mercedes' own terms – is “a four-door coupe”. The concept was a radical departure from noughties norms, but it's one retaining serious staying power. Not only has Mercedes retained the nomenclature for the second and third-generation CLS, CLA and AMG GT four-doors, competitors, including BMW and Audi, have adopted the title for their own models, not limited to the A7 and 4 Series Gran Coupe. Perhaps this is why the 219 still feels fresh – the magnificent Mercedes set a style new car buyers still enjoy today.

Slide in the cabin and strong visual language »

Overleaf AMG interior is a wonderful balance of executive saloon and sports car chic



**COUTURE AND CRUSHINGLY QUICK,
THE MODEL IS NOW A DEEPLY
TEMPTING MODERN CLASSIC**

continues. Every 219-generation CLS benefits from an upward curving burr walnut dashboard, creating a shape reflecting the exterior styling and matched with sculpted door cards. Leather features throughout, while a pronounced central tunnel emphasises the space between the twin rear seats. For the range-topping CLS 55 AMG introduced in 2005, Mercedes added Nappa hide, aluminium shift paddles and a four-spoke sports steering wheel for extra ambience.

DRESSED TO IMPRESS

Our favourite car maker didn't stop there. A deeper front valance, rear diffuser and four fat ovals of exhaust system signify a conversion boasting wider wheels, adjustable AIRMATIC air suspension (dropping the AMG 10mm lower than other CLS models in all driving modes) and dampers with thirty percent stiffer compression. Together, these components provide the perfect setting for the CLS 55's snarling soul: a supercharged, 5.4-litre M113 V8 with 476bhp and 516lb-ft torque. Couture and crushingly quick, the model is now a deeply tempting modern classic.

Usurped by the 6.2-litre CLS 63 AMG in 2006, the CLS 55 AMG wasn't long for the new car

world. Production numbers are correspondingly low. Consequently, it's unusual to see more than a handful of examples for sale at any one time. Moreover, potential buyers need to bring patience to their search. The wait, however, is more than worth it: standard cars with five-figure odometer readings and full service history are regularly offered around or below the £10k mark. The same budget only buys an E55 from 2004 or earlier with over 100k miles, while an equivalent CLS 63 AMG demands fifty-percent more than its smaller-engined sibling. With big power and stunning style, the 55 offers superlative value for anyone who dares to go hunting.

Si McNally is one such Merc fan. Communications Manager at British Touring Car Championship team, Power Maxed Racing, and an experienced project car builder who's created outrageous Volkswagens, he spends his life around serious performance machinery, but it's never dimmed his admiration for brilliant Benz. The proud, new owner of the AMG exhibited on the pages before you, he's had the CLS in his sights since the model was launched in dealer showrooms.

"It must have been 2005," he recalls. "I was walking back home from college when I saw

DRIVER Q&A



SI MCNALLY

First Mercedes
A C240 drift car

Favourite Mercedes
W140 S70 AMG

Best thing about your C219 CLS 55 AMG
The engine

Pet peeve
Cup holders - there's one and it's not great!





Nardo nailed

AMG not hot enough for you? Then it's time to talk to BRABUS. The power-crazed German tuning firm produced the ultimate 219 in 2006, when it dropped a 720-horsepower version of Mercedes' twin-turbo M275 V12 engine into a CLS AMG bodyshell. That's enough to pummel the car past 227mph, something BRABUS proved by throwing the development car around the Nardo test track in Italy to set a world record for the fastest-ever four-door. Were that not enough, the 'Rocket' also benefits from a full custom body kit with extended carbon fibre, monobloc alloys, firmer suspension and gigantic twelve-piston front brake calipers.

a black CLS 55 AMG roll past. It's a Mercedes that's been at the top of my must-own list ever since." Fourteen years later, his dream has finally been rendered in black paint and cream leather. The search took time – Si dedicating ten weeks to the cause – but there was never a question of compromise. It had to be a CLS 55 AMG, it had to be black and it had to have that interior. "The specification I was looking for just didn't seem to be available," he remembers. "Fortunately, just as I was beginning to lose hope of bagging my dream drive, a friend of a friend told me about this very AMG." Though the acquaintance wasn't looking to sell, Si had the bit between his teeth. Subsequently, the CLS now has a new owner!

PENNY WISE

Despite its formidable specification, CLS parts prices won't provide an oil-stained culture shock. A huge amount of the car's running gear is shared with the contemporary E55 AMG, after all. With this in mind, the Power Maxed media man wasted no time in refurbishing the V8-powered more-door. He quickly turned his hand to a range of servicing tasks, spending less than you might think along the way. Replacement discs and pads for all four corners came in at £500, the ITG air filters which sit beneath the bonnet retail at £70 and minor air suspension faults needed little more than access to a diagnostics computer. Messier tasks won't

TAKE THE PLUNGE AND IT WON'T BE LONG BEFORE THE V8 COUPE TUGS AT YOUR HEART

break the bank either: Si spent £540 on a genuine Mercedes supercharger service kit, while a £70 bundle of fluids and filters have restored the transmission to pristine condition.

Treat a CLS 55 well and the model responds in kind. Period reviewers raved about the car's broad skillset – praising its ability to blend blunt force with fluent road manners – and the AMG still exemplifies the best of Affalterbach today. "For a big car, it's *really* quick," Si laughs. "A friend of mine has a Porsche 997 Gen II Turbo and the AMG can keep up without any trouble." Away from the public road, a race track isn't the natural habitat for this executive express, but the CLS still knows how to impress. "It's more predictable than you'd think, especially under braking conditions. It turns in really well and, of course, it's very good at going sideways!" Such enthusiastic use does come at a cost, though – Si's apex-clipping excursions drop fuel economy to a staggering 3.8mpg.



Facing page Despite 5.5-badging, the AMG's V8 is a supercharged and twin-intercooled 5.4-litre unit commonly referred to as the M113K, where K stands for Kompressor, the German word for supercharger

Left All AMG engines are hand crafted, with a commemorative plaque added to each finished powerplant, complete with the signature of the engineer responsible for assembly



Below It may be over fifteen years old, but the C129 shape still looks thoroughly modern, especially when treated to a touch of Affalterbach magic

Return to regular use, and the black beauty offers no such shocks. Si has yet to suffer a single unexpected failure and his AMG returns an easy 25mpg when cruising. "I like the fact it's a bit Jekyll and Hyde," he tells us. "I can hit a motorway, chat away on the in-cabin phone connection, leave the suspension in Comfort mode the car is perfectly happy, but fire up Sport 2 mode and it becomes an absolute weapon."

Low purchase prices create space to build a CLS 55 AMG to your liking, and that's exactly what Si has planned. Appearing as one of our project cars over several future issues, the supercharged four-door is set to benefit from lower suspension, more power and a substantial volume boost. Visual changes will arrive to match, echoing the stylistic force of cars such as the BRABUS Rocket, taking the AMG to places even the guys at Mercedes could never conceive. We've heard Milltek Sport, DNA Tuning and Maxton Designs mentioned. Watch this space.

The CLS 55 offers a range of benefits. Take the plunge and it won't be long before the V8-propelled coupe tugs at your heart. "I bought my AMG just to scratch an itch, but I've really fallen in love," smiles Si. "Once I've got the car where I want it, I'll be keeping it for the long term." Pleasingly, he won't be shy about adding miles. "The CLS might be one of my toys, but I plan to use it whenever there's an opportunity to do so." Packing almost five-hundred ponies, high-tech luxury and looks which refuse to age, this awesome AMG is proof that the devil can wear Prada on a Primark budget.



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TORQUE *Driver*

Peter Dumbreck

They say everything comes in threes. That was certainly true of the CLR's ability to become airborne at the 1999 24 Hours of Le Mans...

Extensive preliminary testing went well. The CLR's engine was great, and though we identified areas we could improve upon, there was no indication the car was unstable. With a total height of just 1,012mm, the extremely flat GT-prototype was designed and built from September 1998 to meet the extreme challenges of the 1999 24 Hours of Le Mans. The development objectives were aerodynamics for maximum speed with relatively low lift, the lowest possible weight and optimum stability, enabling the car's engineering to withstand constant maximum stress over the duration of what promised to be a punishing race.

Technically, the CLR was based on the CLK-LM, a car which had been tried and tested during the 1998 season. The model's components were then enhanced and, in some cases, reinforced for CLR use. Everything was going well until we arrived at Le Mans. Lead driver, Mark Webber, experienced front axle lift during qualifying. The car became airborne at Indianapolis. Understandably, everyone in the Mercedes camp was taken aback, but we concluded we'd witnessed little more than a freak accident. It certainly wasn't enough to stop us running. Thankfully, Mark was uninjured, but to avoid a repeat of the incident, contact pressure on the two remaining CLRs was increased by twenty-five percent through altered aerodynamic measures. The team were permitted to rebuild Mark's damaged car.

All three CLRs had qualified, but during Saturday morning preparations, Mark once again became airborne over the brow of the Mulsanne. This time, his car rolled onto its roof before sliding to a stop. Needless to say, his car was withdrawn from the race.

I remember the drivers coming together in the team bus to discuss what we should do next. I had total confidence in the team's engineers. If they said we race, then we race. Off the back of two major crashes, the decision to continue wasn't taken lightly, especially when Mark confirmed he'd done absolutely nothing wrong. The two remaining cars were readied for action, albeit with even more tweaks to prevent instability, plus an instruction to myself and



teammates, Nick Heidfeld and Christophe Bouchut, not to get too close to the car in front for fear of encouraging aerodynamic instability in slipstream.

When you're travelling at 200mph, what's too close? 100m? 50m? 20m? I was fighting hard for second place. It was the seventy-fifth lap and I was catching the Toyota as we approached Indianapolis, the site of Mark's first off. "I'm far enough behind the Toyota, right?!"

I remember seeing sky. I knew what was happening, though my memory of the incident is sketchy. I recall my CLR's nose lifting before the car was thrown high in the air. It pirouetted several times before being fired through nearby trees at rapid pace. Amazingly, the car landed on all fours.

Unlike Mark's accidents, mine was broadcast all over the world. Mercedes immediately withdrew the CLRs and dropped out of sports car racing altogether, much like it had done at Le Mans in 1955. Fortunately, nobody was hurt in 1999 – I escaped with only minor bruising, something I can say only because the narrow area of trees my CLR travelled through had been logged a few days before the accident. Amazingly, I landed precisely where the trees had been cut down.

Despite my many motorsport accomplishments, the CLR crash is what I'm remembered for. I might not recognise myself as the driver in the captured film of the incident, but at least I lived to tell the tale. 📷

Above Peter's accident at Le Mans in 1999 led to changes in regulations dictating how Le Mans racing cars should be designed, plus it encouraged safety-focused alterations to the circuit itself

Twitter @AhLovejoy
www.peterdumbreck.com

Despite my many motorsport accomplishments, the CLR crash is what I'm remembered for

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TORQUE *Enthusiast*

Rosemarie Maslin

Club membership can offer more than regular meets with fellow marque enthusiasts. It can be a vital lifeline for those who find themselves treading new ground...

Most fans of the three-pointed star know the best way to tap into a community of likeminded folk is to join Mercedes-Benz Club UK, a hugely valuable resource for anyone lucky enough to be in charge of a Mercedes car.

What you might not realise, however, is that there's huge benefit in joining *before* you buy a Mercedes! While it's true to say that most people do it the other way around, the club's vast pool of pre-loved cars advertised for sale makes it a great place to buy your next cherished vehicle. Joining is also a brilliant way to establish a new network of friends.

My husband and I moved from Kent to our home in central England many years ago. We didn't know anybody where we settled, but as lifelong petrolheads, local car meets became a fantastic forum for us to forge new friendships. Club life was fantastic fun, so much so that I didn't hesitate to volunteer for the position of Mercedes-Benz Club UK Events Assistant when I saw the position advertised in *The Gazette*, the club's excellent magazine (another benefit of membership!).

That was eighteen years ago. Not long afterwards, I was asked to take on the position of Membership Director, a role I performed at the same time as my next appointment, the club's Events Director. These jobs afforded me a fascinating opportunity to see how the club operates from the inside out, awareness and experience which serves me well in my current position as the club's Chairperson, an appointment I accepted on the 1st June 2018.

I take huge pride and get immense satisfaction from being so involved with the club, be it from an operational or enthusiast perspective, largely because my husband and I feel Mercedes-Benz Club UK has given us so much over the years. Whether it be local meets or international road trips, we love participating in events which have brought us together with so many people we now consider close friends. More importantly, performing in the various club roles I've held over the years, not least my current position, enables me to give something back to the club by way of thanks.



It doesn't matter how involved you are with the club (not everyone is able to invest time outside of event attendance), you can still take advantage of its many benefits. For example, we partner with a panel of insurance companies covering all ages of Mercedes vehicles, from old to new, with cover heavily discounted for members. Favourable offerings from other service providers are published in *The Gazette*, along with technical articles and information relating to forthcoming events. And, as alluded to earlier in this *Mercedes Driver* guest column, you don't need to be an owner in order to be a member. An enthusiasm for the marque is all that's required!

As my personal journey with the club over the course of the past two decades demonstrates, there's opportunity and reward for anyone who wants to participate in the running of the organisation and its events, but the biggest reward of all is open to any member, no matter how active they wish to be: the potential for close bonds, lifelong friendships and the promise of an amazing social calendar make joining Mercedes-Benz Club UK essential for any owner or enthusiast of Stuttgart's greatest car maker. We look forward to welcoming you to the fold.

Above The UK's only officially recognised club for Mercedes-Benz owners and enthusiasts offers a huge amount of benefits in exchange for a membership fee far lower than what's asked for by clubs focused on the output of other German manufacturers

www.mercedes-benz-club.co.uk

The potential for close bonds, lifelong friendships and the promise of an amazing social calendar

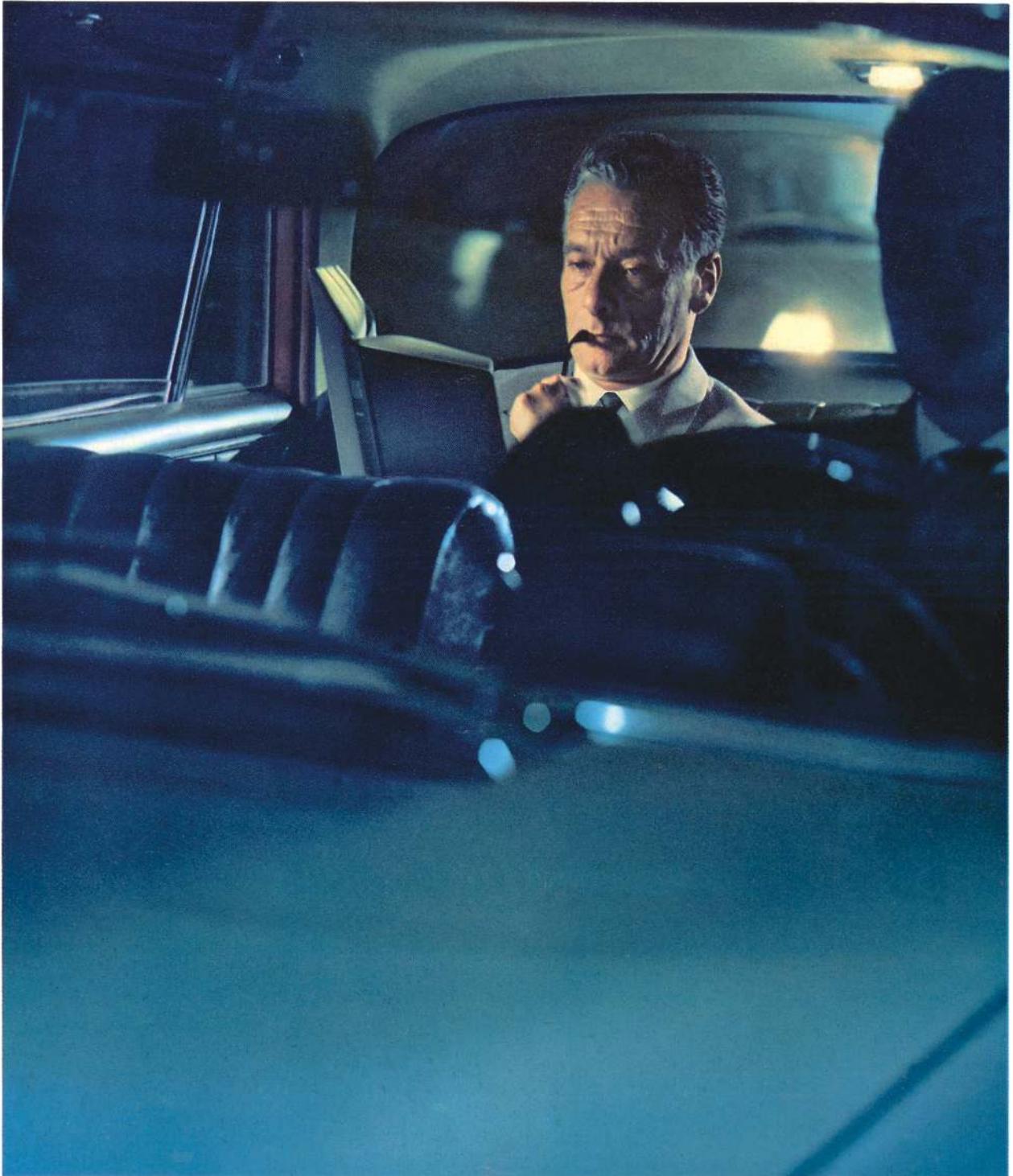
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For your information: Mercedes-Benz safety means: Passenger compartment reinforcement, special safety tap lock, single-joint swing axle with compensating spring, frame floor

unit — 4 out of altogether 5,200 Daimler-Benz patents (as of April 1964). In addition, Daimler-Benz automatic transmission and power-steering for all models on request.

MERCEDES-BENZ



FROM THE
VAULTS

1970 1971 1972 1973 1974 1975

BARGAIN
BENZ
FROM
£2k to
£25k

PIONEERING FORCE

Every inch a standard-setter and now regarded as a modern Mercedes icon, the W124-series was the first E-Class and evokes a golden era of production at Sindelfingen

WORDS **Richard Gooding** PHOTOGRAPHY **Various**

Loved by taxi drivers the world over and arguably the definitive modern Mercedes, the W124 had a hard act to follow. The W123 enjoyed stellar success all over the world, and with almost 2.7-million units sold, became the most popular Mercedes of all time. Even so, from the moment W123 production started in 1976, groundwork for its successor had already begun. W124 styling experiments were frozen in 1981, the graceful lines (which still look fresh almost four

decades later) drawn by factory design supremo, Bruno Sacco, based on initial ideas by his team members, Joseph Gallitzendörfer and Peter Pfeiffer. The finished car was introduced to eager European buyers in January 1985.

The W124 drew engineering parallels with another celebrated Sacco design, namely the W201 190. Sharing many traits with the 'Baby Benz', the medium-size challenger continued the manufacturer's technical revolution by adopting a body aerodynamically honed for efficiency. Multi-link

Above Assembled for Mercedes by Porsche, the 500E (and later E500) remain among the most desirable Mercedes cars ever built

1976 1977 1978 1979 1980 1981 1982 1983 **1984**

rear suspension and a strut-configured front axle with individual A-arms were cribbed from the W201, while the pioneering use of lightweight and high-strength steel promoted impressive fuel economy.

As cool now as it was then, the eccentrically distinctive single windscreen wiper cleared eighty-six percent of the front glass and boasted the largest wiper pattern of any car! Optional rear head rests folded down remotely to improve vision, while safety innovations made the W124 one of the most robust Benzes ever built; improved deformation zones and enhanced rollover, side impact and pedestrian protection marked out the W124 as a true safety star. Four-cylinder petrol engines were carried over from the W123, the carb-fed two-litre and Bosch KE-Jetronic injected 2.3-litre lump powering the 107bhp 200 and 130bhp 230E respectively. 2.6-litre and three-litre straight-sixes for the 166bhp 260E and 188bhp 300E were subsequently ushered in. An expansive derv-burning family started with the 72bhp two-litre 200D, although buyers were invited to graduate to the 89bhp five-cylinder 2.5-litre 250D or splash out for the three-litre straight-six 300D,

its 109bhp boosted later to 143bhp with the aid of a turbocharger. In fact, fuel injection was standard on every W124 bar the lowly 200 and, in addition to aiding performance, the system made engines cleaner and more frugal, additional indicators the W124 was at the absolute forefront of automotive excellence. Optional catalytic converters eliminated even more emissions-inspired guilt.

LOAD LUGGER

The covers were pulled off the W124 estate in September 1985. Coded S124, the sleek slopeback offered seats for five or seven Swabians, the rudimentary rear-facing pews folding into the luggage compartment floor. In no way a challenge to proper MPVs (such as the Renault Espace), the septet-shifting S124 added a dash of extra practicality to the 124 range. To prevent a step when the rear seats were folded for carrying extra cargo, the squabs were 10cm higher than the saloon.

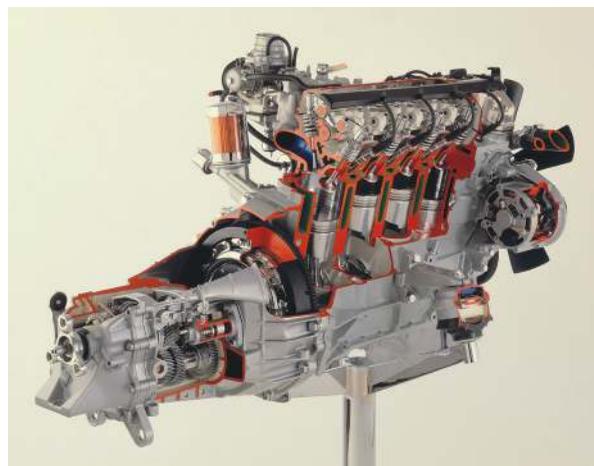
A third body style glided in during 1987. Eighty-five millimetres was chopped from the W124's wheelbase to create the swept-back C124 coupe, the svelte

Power play

The 360bhp W124 300E 5.6 AMG arrived in 1987 and was the first four-door to break 186mph. Borrowing the W126's V8, the Grossaspach super-saloon was nicknamed *The Hammer* due to its ferocious, Lamborghini-gobbling pace. The Benz-approved 268bhp E36 AMG came in four-door, estate, coupé and cabrio flavours in 1993 and a six-litre V8 E60 arrived a year later. Over in Bottrop, BRABUS concocted a 501bhp, twelve-cylinder 500E which produced 517lb-ft of tarmac-twisting torque!

FROM THE
VAULTS

1967 1968 1969 1970 1971 1972 1973



Past master

Head of Mercedes design from 1975 to 1999, Bruno Sacco contributed to a golden age at Sindelfingen. In addition to the W124, his most influential design is arguably that of the W201 190, which established Mercedes as a compact executive car player. Under the stewardship of Paul Bracq, Sacco believed in bold, simple design and the correlation between Merc's varying models. Responsible for a huge swathe of Benzes, from the W126 and W140 to the SLK and R129 SL, he also penned the Wankel-engined C111.

sports car also benefiting from a lack of B-pillar. Reinforcements to the A-pillars, door and sills gave the two-door the same safety levels enjoyed by its saloon-bodied sibling, and with a roofline reminiscent of the sedan, rear headroom remained impressive. A clean window and lower exterior panels painted in contrasting colours ensured the C124 cut quite a dash. 230CE and 300CE models were the first to leave the launchpad.

The backroom bods at Benz had been working on an automatically engageable four-wheel drive system. The resulting 4MATIC setup featured an additional front-wheel drive with transfer gear and differential. Only offered on six-cylinder W124 and S124 models, the all-pawed mid-size Mercs were almost 12,000DM more expensive than their rear-wheel drive stablemates. The 121bhp 200E and turbocharged 250D appeared in 1988, alongside ABS and a heated driver's door mirror. S-Class innovations, the washer jets and their water tank were also warmed.

Important developments for the final first-generation W124 included new pre-chambers for the naturally aspirated diesels. The Diesel 89 initiative

introduced angled fuel injection pumps with altitude correction jets reducing particulate emissions by up to forty percent with the assistance of a special oxidation catalyst and exhaust gas recirculation system. Second-gen W124s debuted at the Frankfurt Motor Show in September 1989, most noticeable buy their new side-rubbing strips and lower body cladding taken from the C124. A push upmarket heralded the arrival of more chrome trim, colour-coded door mirror cases and revised interiors. A new Sportline package lowered the body closer to seventeen-inch rims and added stiffer suspension, as well as leather for the steering wheel and gear stick.

Borrowed from the R129 300 SL-24, the 217bhp three-litre six-cylinder lump powering the W124 300E-24 featured variable valve timing. An extended wheelbase W124 arrived on the scene, too, creating a modern Mercedes limo perfect for presidents and plutocrats. Developed with Lorch-based coachbuilder, Binz, the stretched six-door measured an extra 800mm in length and included a centre bench with near identical dimensions to the rear seat. Without question, it was a beautiful Benz ideal for dignitaries of distinction.

1974 1975 1976 1977 1978 1979 1980 1981 1982 1983 **1984**

Above Load lugging S124 is one of the bargain buys of the range, with the super-practical seven-seater currently available for as little as £2k

Right Only 85mm shorter than the saloon, the C124 coupe combines spacious interior and luggage area with sports styling



The limo may have been bigger in size, but the most exciting W124 built packed a far larger power punch. Landing in 1991 amid a burst of tyre-squealing terror, the 500E was a formidable performance machine. Co-developed with Porsche, the five-litre V8 from the 500 SL - the R129 was based on the W124 chassis - was shoehorned into the W124, turning it into a truly super saloon. With 322bhp and 354lb-ft torque, the new range-topper could scamper to 60mph in 5.9 seconds and on to a limited top speed of 160mph. Leather Recaro sports seats and clever self-levelling suspension made the brawny bruiser a luxury express. All units built were left-hand drive, even those imported to countries where a steering wheel is usually on the right.

MERC MONSTER

Flared wings, a wider track and deeper side skirts lent the 500E a more aggressive air, but the pumped-up body caused production issues. With wings too wide to fit through the assembly line of the Sindelfingen plant, the model was largely assembled by engineers at Porsche in nearby Zuffenhausen, each car returning to Mercedes for paint and delivery.

Totalling eighteen days production per car, it's no surprise the 500E emptied wallets for a significant sum (134,520DM). A run of five-hundred limited cars commemorated the ten-thousandth 500E to roll off the production line, a special W124 presented to Porsche racing legend, Hans Herrmann. Resplendent in Sapphire Black or Brilliant Silver and supplied with a custom leather and wood interior, the 500E Limited looked the part with 190E 2.5-16 Evolution II-style alloys and remains one of the most desirable cars in the W124 line-up.

The final 124-series body style arrived with the A124 drop-top. Strengthening plates and additional struts were added to eliminate shake and body roll, while specially developed dampers further curbed vibrations. Reinforced A-pillars achieved saloon levels of safety, bolstered by a linear bar behind the rear seats. Impressively, the part took just 0.3 seconds to pop up in the event of a roll. The folding roof with its heated rear glass was concealed under a flush cover.

September 1992 introduced significant mechanical changes insofar as turbocharged 250D and 300D engines, along with all petrol powerplants, switched to four-valve technology. Two-litre and 2.2-litre

Facing page Two-litre M102 inline-four was carried over from the W123, with the resulting M102.922 producing 107bhp in the W124 200

FROM THE
VAULTS1977 1978 1979 1980 1981 1982 1983 **1984**

Clockwise from above Wide 500E/E500 body dimensions required to accommodate V8 engine and running gear are clear to see; 500E Limited inherits 190E Evolution II styling cues; E60 AMG was limited to an unverified 147 units; 124 limo was a big hit with the German government; designer, Bruno Sacco, takes a trip down memory lane in the company of early 124 sketches

M111-derived units propelled the 134bhp 200E and 148bhp 220E, while new 2.8-litre 280E and 3.2-litre 320E models (making use of M104 sixes) replaced the 260E and 300E. The three-litre engine wasn't killed off completely, though, and lived on in 300E 4MATIC models and the A124 convertible. Porsche's extensive 500E chassis modifications benefited the new 275bhp 4.2-litre V8-loaded 400E, and a raft of new equipment, including a driver's airbag and central locking, became standard on the W124 kit list. Five-speed manual gearboxes were finally added to the four-cylinder car's specification.

THIRD WORLD

A visual update announced the third-generation W124 and brought looks in line with other models in the Mercedes range. Clear indicators, an S-Class aping integrated radiator grille, a three-pointed star bonnet badge and a smoothed-off boot lid were the obvious identifiers. More importantly, the car was renamed E-Class, with all W124s adopting badges which took the letter E and followed it with the model identifier. Suffixes were dropped, D models were now referred to as Diesel and the old E (Einspritzung, the German word for fuel injection) was no longer needed due to the discontinuation of carburettor models. Additionally, the 400E became the E420 to accurately reflect its engine capacity. The car also gained larger front brakes from the SL.

W124 production was officially ended in August

1995, after over 2.7-million units (volume including 2.2-million saloons) were assembled. That wasn't the end of the model's story, though: the E250 diesel and E220 were built by Mercedes-Benz India Ltd (a joint venture with TATA Engineering) until December 1997. Amazingly, E220s and E320s were manufactured in Indonesia until 2000! And guess what? The modern classic Merc still isn't dead! South Korean manufacturer, Ssangyong, licensed the W124 design and continues to produce a stretched local market version with a choice of 2.3, 3.2 and 3.6-litre engines. Named Chairman, the model galvanises the W124's well-deserved reputation for quality and million-mile durability thirty-five years after the mega Mercedes was went into production.

Massive production volume and a mind-boggling array of model options means there's a W124 to suit every taste in style, power and, pleasingly, every budget. £2k will bag you a perfectly presentable E220 coupe, E300 estate or 300CE saloon on eBay, while at the upper end of the price spectrum, £20k sees you in the market for a ridiculously low mileage E320 Sportline drop-top from a specialist dealer. Add an extra five grand and you'll find yourself in 500E/E500 territory. That's a lot of car for the money!

Clearly, the massive scale of what's available is beyond the scope of this article, suffice to say, no matter how tight your purse strings, there's a W124 waiting to take its place on your driveway. All you need to do is get out there and start searching!

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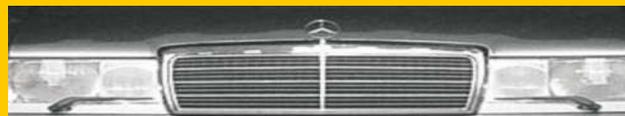
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Hold promise

In the first article in our series promoting driving finesse, professional driver coach, Neil Furber discusses steering grips and techniques

Steering is the ideal place to begin any series concerning driving techniques and vehicle technology. Although I'd normally start any driver coaching session with a discussion about seating position, it's the driver's interaction with the steering wheel that often requires the most attention. It really can make all the difference! Of course, I don't wish to gloss over the importance of finding the 'ideal' setup with respect to the rest of the seating recipe, but since some older Mercedes cars have limited seat adjustment, I'll always favour an optimised driver-to-wheel relationship whenever possible. After all, some of the greatest pleasure gained from driving a Mercedes comes from the way the car handles bends. Tyres and chassis respond best to smooth-flowing input; improving your grips and techniques will enable you to optimise movements and receive the best information back from the rubber wrapped around each wheel.



Introducing Mercedes Driver's resident driving expert, Neil Furber. With a technical background as a mechanical engineer in the Formula One industry, Neil brings a unique technical insight to driver coaching. Splitting his time between the French Alps and the UK, he coaches drivers through his brand, Drive 7Tenths (drive7tenths.com).

REACH, RAKE AND GRIPS

What is the best position for the steering wheel and how should it be held? My personal preference is for hands at the quarter-to-three position and just below the shoulders, with both arms showing a bend a little larger than ninety degrees at the elbows. For recent models in the Mercedes range, lots of adjustment exists, but in my experience, many owners fail to realise they can adjust their car's steering wheel both up/down and in/out to suit their individual dimensions. It's certainly worth spending time reevaluating your seating position and trialling different settings for the rake (up/down) and reach (in/out) angle. Sometimes, a small change in backrest angle can help, but there should be enough range to copy with all but the most extreme cases.

As a quick check to ensure things are in the right place, relax your shoulders back into the seat and let an outstretched arm fall gently on the centre-top of the wheel rim. If your wrist is on the rim, you've achieved the ideal

position. If you find your palm, fingers or forearm in contact, I'd suggest having another go.

In terms of grip, there's nothing wrong with the ten-to-two position. Many drivers prefer this. I've come to favour the quarter-to-three grip, however, for three important reasons. Firstly, there's a little more range available at the limits of the 'fixed grip' technique. Secondly, the slight extra spacing between the hands reduces muscular effort during steering. Thirdly, the hands fall naturally to the indicator stalks and paddles now fitted to many Mercedes sports cars. I'm certainly no fan of one-handed grips, asymmetric hand positions or palming the wheel! My favourite example of bad technique is the one-armed bandit – the classic 'reclined seat and one straight arm with hand at the top' motorway cruise pose. This is often justified as being comfortable. In truth, the pose usually stems from fatigue in the arms and shoulders when the steering wheel is too far away.



Good technique A quarter-to-three grip is a good place to start when evaluating and optimising steering control.



One-armed bandit This classic motorway cruising pose is the perfect example of what not to do when behind the wheel of your Mercedes.



The pretzel We can discuss the detail of 'fixed grip' steering on the following pages, but this is the technique taken to its limit!



Wrist check Distance is good if your wrist can sit on the wheel rim when your shoulders are positioned back in the seat.

THREE CORE TECHNIQUES

It's important to make one thing clear: driving isn't a case of right versus wrong. It's more a case of good, bad, better and best. Simply put, finding a good habit or a better way of doing things will help to create an improved driving experience. A combination of small changes can be greater than the sum of

their parts. With this in mind, I'll introduce you to three core steering techniques. Once mastered, these top tips can be blended when necessary (e.g. if you feel doing so is the best way for you and your Mercedes to take a particular series of bends with maximum control).

Fixed Grip

This is the technique most commonly used by race drivers and offers the best feel and control when small steering angles are used. The hands are 'fixed' to the wheel and rotate it without changing grip. When looking to create those silky-smooth steering inputs for high-speed cornering, fixed grip steering is certainly my first choice.

The first few degrees of steering are the most important to help let the tyres and chassis start to work before the bend develops fully. The counterbalanced nature of two opposing hands on either

side of the rim allows a level of finesse unrivalled by any other technique. It's ideal for up to ninety degrees of steering wheel movement, but, at the limits, can reach half-a-turn, even a little more with a well-placed thumb. Relying too heavily on the limits of this technique can make your arms look like a pretzel, though! It also leads to a loss of control. A pre-loading of the wheel (hands preadjusted) or the 'pull push' technique offer a better solution in these cases.



1 A quarter-to-three grip gives the best feel when initiating a turn.



2 The 'fixed grip' technique is great for flowing bends up to a quarter of a turn.



3 This image shows where things become less comfortable and control-limited.

Pull-Push

Not to be confused with the learner-style 'shuffling', this technique offers great benefits for smooth steering when you'll need between ninety degrees of steering wheel movement and full lock. Alternate hands feed the wheel in half-turns by 'pulling' down from the top or 'pushing' up from the bottom. It's an ideal method for tight bends, exiting T-junctions and low-speed car park manoeuvring. Although

the staple technique for the majority of 'advanced' drivers trained in police or civilian circles, it'll never offer the refinement and finesse achievable with fixed grip steering, but is certainly a technique worth mastering for the right situations. It's not the best technique for skid control, though. Far too slow! This is where 'rotational' steering comes into play.



1 Note the position-leading hand placed at the top of the wheel rim.



2 'Pull' down smoothly with the wheel sliding through the other hand.



3 Continue to pull until hands meet at the bottom, then swap hands.



4 'Push' the other side of the steering wheel up with your second hand.



5 Continue to push until both hands meet at the top of the steering wheel.



6 Swap hands again and continue if you feel more lock is needed.

Rotational

I'm sure many of you will have been told to stop crossing your arms at some point. Rotational steering is just that. The hands change grip around the rim, one after the other following a rotational movement. I've sat next to plenty of drivers using this technique to negotiate junctions and tight bends and none of the individuals I've observed have looked comfortable. In fact, once we've worked on 'pull-push' steering, they immediately prefer that technique! Rotational steering is best for when very high steering angles are needed quickly. It's useful for manoeuvring in tight spots, where you may need to move between full lock left to right and when dealing with large oversteer skids.

The beauty of the technique comes from it starting as 'fixed grip' steering. If necessary, crossing a hand over to grab the next armful of lock to regain control of a skid can be done seamlessly. Once truly mastered, using rotational steering will make it easy to find the 'straight ahead' position once a skid is back under control. The secret lies in where to hold the wheel throughout the technique.

We'll take a look at the finer points of steering in a forthcoming article focusing on cornering, but if you would like more information on the core techniques outlined in this article, visit drive7tenths.com and view my detailed tutorials.



1 Rotational steering starts with the 'fixed grip' technique, so ensure you're working with a quarter-to-three grip of the wheel.



2 Now turn the steering wheel. Once passing the quarter-turn position, the leading hand lets go.



3 As illustrated in this photograph, the leading hand crosses after letting go of the steering wheel.



4 The leading hand then grips the rim of the steering wheel.



5 Flip the other hand.



6 Continue with 'fixed grip' steering towards lock stops. You've just completed this month's Mercedes Driver coaching tutorial!

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Wheels in motion

A good set of wheels will deliver improved performance and handling. Here's the first instalment of our two-part guide examining the benefits of the right rim...



As we all know, the right wheels can make or break the look of a car, but they can also deliver significant improvements to the way your Mercedes handles, accelerates and stops. Wheel design has much more of an impact on performance than many people give it credit for; unsprung weight, the cooling efficiency of your brakes and the geometry of your suspension are all affected by the rims you fit. The design of a wheel is essential in the search for peak performance. Let's take a closer look.



UNSPRUNG WEIGHT

The term 'unsprung weight' refers to any mass on the road side of your car's suspension springs. Typically, this includes hubs, driveshafts, brakes and wheels. You can reduce unsprung weight by fitting alloys in place of steel wheels. Doing so will result in quicker turn-in, sharper steering response and better braking. In rallying and other motorsport disciplines (where suspension components are worked hard), having a lighter unsprung weight puts less stress on dampers, meaning they'll perform better and last longer.

DIAMETER

Large diameter wheels are often considered to be more aesthetically pleasing than smaller rims, but that's not why they're used in motorsport applications. The truth of the matter is that bigger wheels provide space for bigger brakes. It's a given that beefy calipers loaded with large discs offer better braking performance than smaller stoppers, and to run a big brake setup, you need big wheels to wrap around them. It's as simple as that!

That's not to say that fitting the biggest set of wheels you can find is necessarily the best idea in terms of performance. Bigger wheels require low profile tyres to keep the rolling radius as close to the original wheel and tyre measurement as possible. In theory, this keeps gearing correct, speedos accurate and suspension geometry unaltered, but bigger wheels weigh more than their like-for-like smaller counterparts, increasing unsprung weight.





WIDTH

The main reason for fitting wider wheels is to use wider tyres that offer greater grip through a bigger contact patch with the road. Contrary to popular belief, rim width is measured from inside lip to inside lip (as opposed to the overall outside dimensions of the wheel) in order to take the thickness of kerb lip out of the equation. It's not uncommon to see modern 4x4 alloys with a kerb lip of over 20mm thick, making the outside measurement of an eight-inch rim appear to be more like nine-inches!

It's not always the case that wider wheels are the best choice for a car. For example, twelve-inch wide wheels may work well at the back end a Porsche 911 due to the amount

of weight over the rear axle (and the amount of downforce generated by the car's aerodynamics), but the same size wheels at the back of a Vauxhall Astra? There simply isn't enough weight at the rear of a typical hot hatch to warrant fitting them. Without weight spread across the tyre, it won't generate enough heat to work properly or safely.

The surface the car is likely to be driven on is also an important consideration. A silky smooth race track offers lots of contact with a tyre, so wider wheels work better here than they would on loose gravel or on a poorly maintained public road (it's safe to say the UK has more than its fair share of those!).

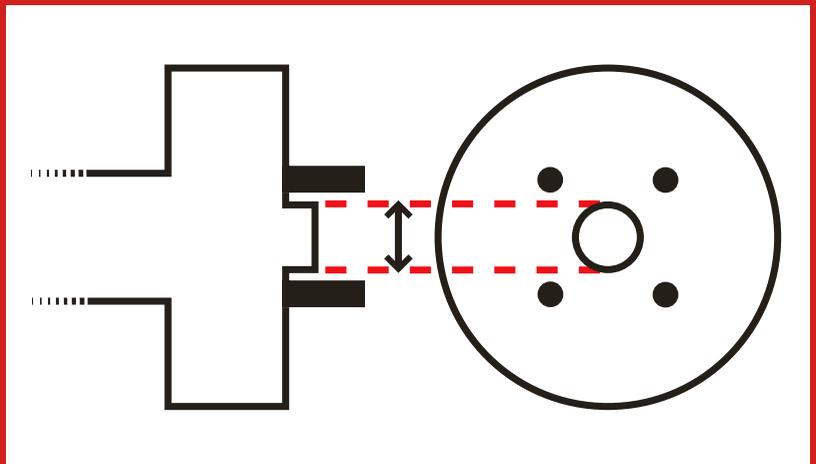


CENTRE BORE

The centre bore of a wheel is the diameter of the hole that fits onto the flange of the hub. Most modern wheels are hubcentric, meaning that they'll fit tightly onto the hub, transferring the vehicle's load as they do so. With this fitment, vibration is massively reduced and the accompanying studs or bolts do nothing other than hold the wheel in place.

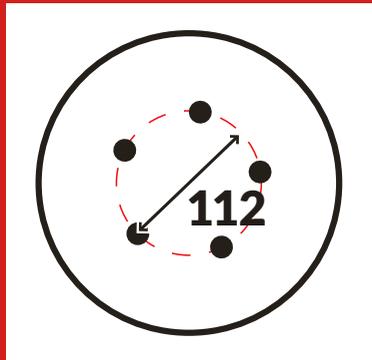
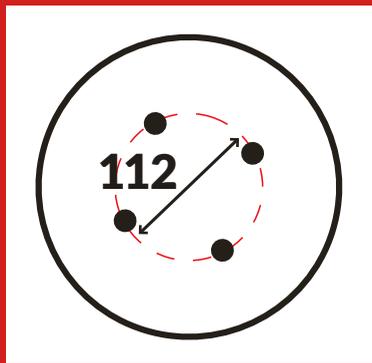
When it comes to lugcentric wheels, the studs or bolts take the load of the car because the centrebore isn't a snug fit onto the hub. This type of wheel is uncommon and requires regular replacement of the studs or bolts.

Many mass-produced aftermarket wheels feature a larger-than-required centre bore. In these instances, the bore can be shimmed to the required size by fitting plastic spigot rings.



PCD

Pitch Circle Diameter (PCD) refers to the bolt pattern of the wheel. It is the diameter of the circumference of the centre line of the drilling holes. Imagine drawing a perfect circle that went through the centre of all the bolt holes, then measure the diameter of the circle you've just drawn. That's the PCD. It's a standard unit of measurement used to identify the bolt pattern of a specific wheel. It is always quoted as the number of bolt holes followed by the diameter of the circle we just mentioned. For example, a W201 190E's 5x112 PCD has five bolt holes positioned around a 112mm diameter circle. Some aftermarket manufacturers offer 'multi-fitment' products, where two sets of bolt holes and machined on the same wheel.



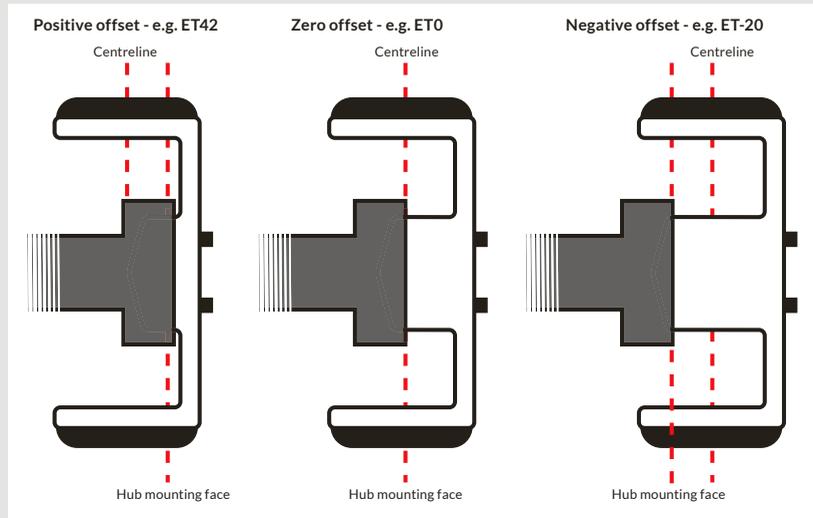
OFFSET

Referred to by the term ET (an abbreviation of Einpresstiefe, the German word for 'insertion depth'), the offset of a wheel not only dictates whether it will fit a particular application, but it also influences the handling abilities of the host vehicle. Offset measurements easily confuse people, so let's try to explain them here.

The easiest way to understand offset is to draw an imaginary line directly down the centreline width of the wheel. If the hub mounting face is directly on this line, the wheel has an ET of zero. If the mounting face is nearer the outside face of the wheel, the ET is positive. If the mounting face is nearer the inside edge of the wheel, the ET is negative. Cross reference these descriptions with the diagram below.

Changing to a different offset can have a huge impact on the way a car looks and handles, with most petrolheads opting for a wider offset to increase overall track width and for the aesthetic appeal of wheels that fills their arches. However, many wheel manufacturers suggest you keep offset as close to OEM specification as possible, especially when playing with a road car. Standard wheels will have been developed in accordance with factory geometry settings and will have been extensively tested and developed to eradicate any unwanted characteristics, such as bump steer, understeer or torque steer.

By changing the offset of your wheels, you may unwittingly be negatively affecting your car's geometry. You can apply additional

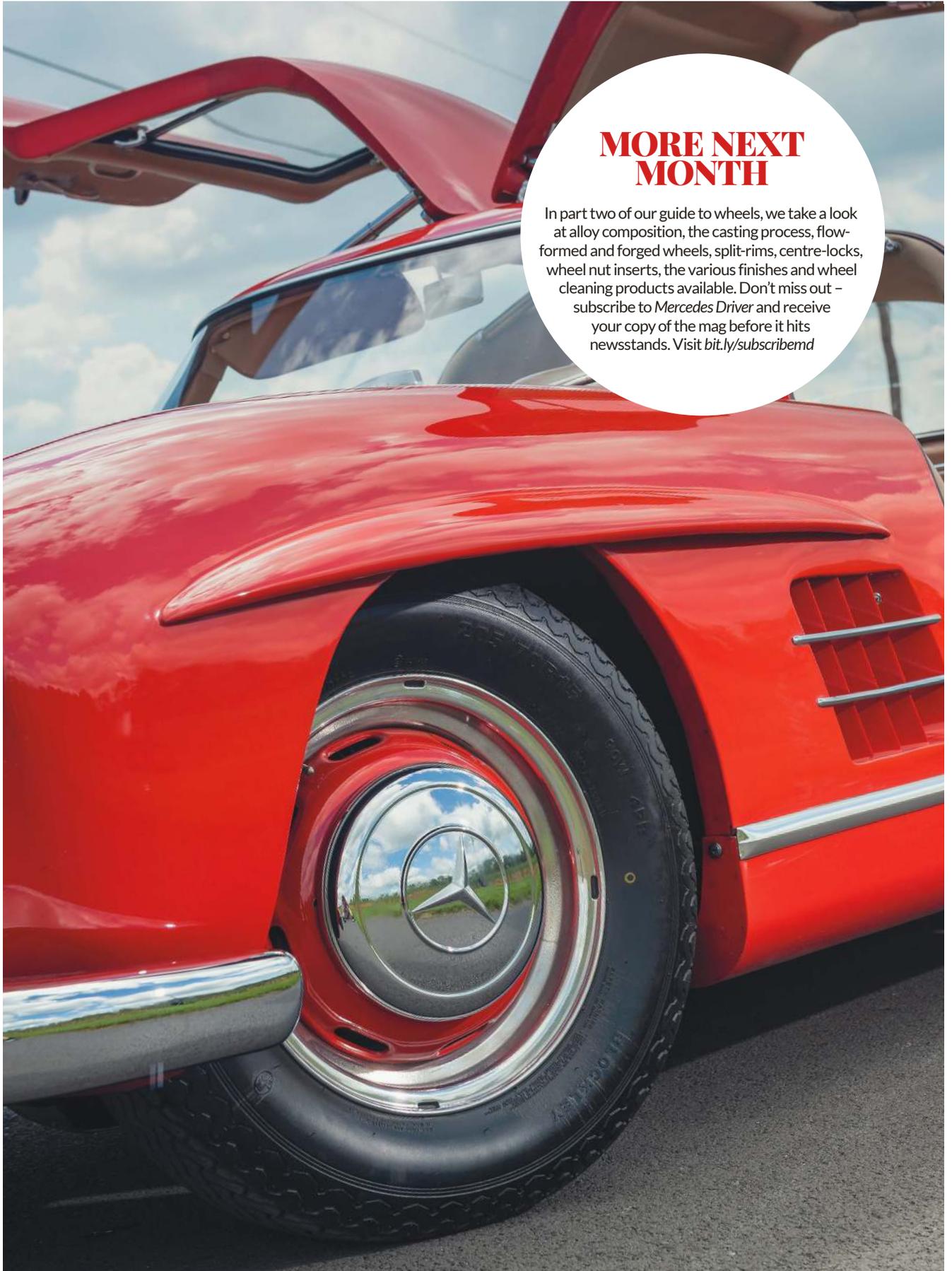


aftermarket equipment to correct the change, but in the ideal world, you would look to increase wheel width equally either side of the centreline in order to ensure the offset remains unchanged.

This is not always possible when you're doing battle with brake caliper clearance, damper positioning or uncompromising wheel arch cavities. In these instances, the changes you make are a compromise between the width of your replacement wheels and the choice of offsets available to you at the point of purchase.

MORE NEXT MONTH

In part two of our guide to wheels, we take a look at alloy composition, the casting process, flow-formed and forged wheels, split-rims, centre-locks, wheel nut inserts, the various finishes and wheel cleaning products available. Don't miss out – subscribe to *Mercedes Driver* and receive your copy of the mag before it hits newsstands. Visit bit.ly/subscribe-md



RIM PROFILE

Rim profile is the shape of the wheel between the inner and outer kerb edges. It features a well that allows the tyre to be fitted to the rim. This is essentially a cutout which gives the inside edge of the tyre somewhere to go when its outside edge is being fitted.

Most standard wheels have a shallow and progressive tyre well. This makes tyre fitting easy, but the way a tyre well 'dishes' can reduce the amount of space available to accommodate larger brake discs and calipers. Motorsport wheels tend to use an aggressive rim profile to maximise the amount of space inside the rim, but the downside to this approach is more difficult tyre fitting.

It's worth noting that different applications attract their own rim profiles. In fact, there are standardised measurements for different rim profiles to highlight their compatibility with specific tyre sizes. The most common automotive rim profile is known as 'J' (hence a 7J alloy), but there are other designators applied to agricultural, motorcycle and heavy machinery wheels.



FACE DESIGN

Looks are usually the reason someone buys a particular design of wheel, but the face of a wheel can offer far more than cosmetic appeal. Wheels with an open spoke design aid brake cooling and heat dissipation by encouraging increased airflow around the brake assembly. In some instances, the shape and angle of the holes or spokes actually creates a turbine effect, sucking in vast volumes of air to provide better cooling.

Many motorsport-oriented wheels, including the Compomotive TH and similar designs from OZ Racing, feature a disc-like blank with small cooling holes around the outer edge. These are great where braking and chassis equipment needs to be protected from harmful debris (e.g. gravel on a rally stage). Fifteen52 Tarmac and Bola B10 designs feature chunky spokes to ensure even more airflow with maintained strength and rigidity.

CONTACTS

Bola Wheels bolawheels.co.uk

Compomotive Motorsport comp.co.uk

Revo Technik revotechnik.co.uk

Wheelwright wheelwright.co.uk

Image Wheels imagewheels.co.uk

Fifteen52 fifteen52.com



BUYING *Your next Mercedes*

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Buying R171 SLK

With purchase prices low and a wealth of engine and trim options to choose from, now's the time to buy the drop-top you always promised yourself

WORDS **Cuttie Williams** PHOTOGRAPHY **John Colley**

The Mazda MX-5 is the most successful roadster of all time, and while it's true to say you can pick up a used example of the Japanese joy toy for peanuts, there's no getting away from the fact it's a massively common car from a manufacturer not ordinarily associated with prestige production vehicles. If you want all the fun of *al fresco* driving in a superbly built drop-top with one of the world's most respected manufacturer identities stuck to its front end, then the second-gen SLK is the car for you.

"What about the R170?" we hear you cry. Granted, the earlier SLK can be a

big bargain and is especially attractive to those working with a budget topping out at five grand, but most marque enthusiasts agree that the first-gen compact luxury roadster looks dated when compared to its successor, a model manufactured between 2004 and 2010 and currently available to buy on the used car market from £6k upwards.

The fast-operating, electrically folding roof of the R170 was carried over to the R171 (albeit with a slightly revised design), but the newer car's looks were massively updated, as was the car's overall construction: it received a 30mm longer wheelbase, extra width and length, higher strength steel, fully galvanised

bodywork, the option of a seven-speed Trionic transmission. Within a year of landing in main dealer showrooms, the car was being showered with awards, including Canada's Car of the Year 'Best New Convertible' accolade.

Clearly, the new Mercedes was a welcome edition to the company's product portfolio, but even today, almost a decade since the last R171 rolled off the production line, the roof-down Benz still turns heads. Penned by SLR McLaren planner, Gorden Wagener, it's easy to spot toned-down design elements of the grand tourer injected into the form of the racy roadster, one of the biggest bargains on the Mercedes scene today.



ENGINES

Let's start at the bottom and work our way up. The SLK 200 Kompressor was powered by the 1.8-litre supercharged M271 producing 161hp. The SLK 280 made use of the three-litre M272 V6 producing 228hp, the SLK 350 came with a 3.5-litre development of the same engine, while the SLK 55 AMG packed a 395hp punch thanks to its M113 V8. An update to the range in 2008 saw the SLK 200 Kompressor get a boost to 181bhp, while the SLK 280 was replaced by the SLK 300, which featured the same specification as its predecessor. The SLK 350, however, saw a jump to 301hp. The SLK 55 AMG remained unchanged, but a newer, more hardcore 'Black Series' came along in 2006, bringing with it a 395hp development of the same M113 V8 fitted to the standard AMG. Updated valvetrain and intake components were fitted to the facelift models, improving mpg.



HISTORY & IDENTITY

Make sure you paw through all documentation supporting claims of servicing and maintenance in accordance with the manufacturer's recommended schedule. Demand to see receipts or invoices proving the seller's suggestion of repair work and replacement parts. Be wary of any unexplained periods of the R171 you're looking at being off the road. If in doubt, have a full inspection carried out by a marque specialist. If you're in an owner's club (such as Mercedes-Benz Club UK), check to see if this is a service you can take advantage of as a member.

Enter the SLK in question's details into the DVLA's online vehicle enquiry service (hop on t'internet and visit bit.ly/dvlaenquiry). It's free to use and will give you key information about the Mercedes you're looking at. Additionally, take a few minutes to view information held on the DVLA's MoT history database (point your browser at bit.ly/dvlamot). Another free service, it'll provide you with details of all

passes, fails, advisories and mileage at the point of each test. Just remember that in the UK, cars aren't required to be tested for the first three years of their service life, which coincides with the expiration of standard manufacturer warranties.

Invest a couple of quid in an online history check from the excellent mycarcheck.com. You'll get instant confirmation of any registered accident history (insurance claims), as well as details relating to changes of registration, any outstanding finance and the car's number of previous keepers. You'll also be able to tell if the R171 you're eyeballing was ever stolen or subjected to a change of colour. Use the service's preformatted sales receipt and you're covered if what you buy and what the search results suggest you're buying end up being two different things.

Despite this vote of confidence, check to make sure the results match what's listed on the car's paperwork. Don't be afraid to ask questions. The seller should have nothing to hide.


BUYING *Your next Mercedes*


Oil changes are the cheapest and simplest way to ensure continued operation of your SLK

TRANSMISSION

Choice is once again the name of the game. The SLK 200 Kompressor was offered with a six-speed manual gearbox and the option of a five-speed automatic, while the SLK 280 featured the same manual cog cruncher, but an option of 7G-Trionic. The same was true of the SLK 350, whereas the SLK 55 AMG was only offered with 7G-Trionic (and AMG Speedshift) due to it being marketed as a 'true driver's car'. Things changed with the arrival of the AMG Black Series, however, when the powerful pocket rocket was offered with an option of five-speed automatic transmission.

FACELIFT

As indicated in our rundown of the engines fitted to SLKs, the range received a facelift in 2008, with a revised front end, new alloys and a diffuser-style apron introduced.



SERVICING

Ensure all supporting paperwork highlights observed regular service intervals in accordance with manufacturer instruction. The engines are chain driven, so timing belts aren't a concern, but frequent oil changes should be high on any owner's priority list. Earlier cars have a service interval of up to two years, but we wouldn't advise leaving fluid changes that long. To promote longevity, we'd recommend an oil change once a year or every 10,000 miles at the very least. Prevention is better than cure, and oil changes are the cheapest and simplest way to ensure continued operation of your SLK's beating heart.

V6 BALANCE SHAFT

Every model has a horror story, and SLKs fitted with M272 V6s are the guilty party here. In short, weakened metal was used in the manufacture of the balance shaft sprocket on early V6s. The fix is expensive, the symptoms are unusual valvetrain noise and an ECU fault code.



PRICE WARS

Like many Mercedes models, the R171 SLK's many different engine, transmission and trim options makes it a model spanning all tastes in style and performance, from mild to wild. Prices on the used car market are also reflective of the level of bang you'll get for your buck. Here's a snapshot of what we found when searching through online classifieds:

2007 200 KOMPRESSOR

Black paintwork, 69k miles, heated black leather, Airscarf, parking sensors, full main dealer service history, full twelve-month MoT £5,999

2010 350

Grey paintwork, 33k miles, fabric wind deflector, 7G-Trionic, fresh factory floor mats, crack in windscreen, accident repaired £6,000

2008 280

Silver paintwork, 93k miles, unmarked black leather, full specialist service history, Airscarf, parking sensors, premium head unit £6,250

2007 280

Black paintwork, 50k miles, grey leather, COMAND navigation, full mean dealer service history, only one owner from new £8,995

2005 55 AMG

Matte grey metallic vinyl wrap over silver paintwork, 132k miles, full specialist service history, LED daylight running lights, aftermarket touchscreen satnav, bulging folder of receipts and other paperwork £11,995

2005 55 AMG

Black paintwork, 51k miles, black leather, Airscarf, Logic 7 surround sound, folding door mirrors, CD multichanger in glovebox, extra cup holders, twelve-month warranty £12,750

2007 55 AMG

Silver paintwork, 22k miles, Airscarf, new oil and coolant, gearbox overhauled, new rear shocks, new front control arms, new Continental tyres, tracker, tyre pressure monitoring system £14,950

TOTAL RECALL

The R171 was the subject of only one recall during its production life. Affecting cars built before October 2008, the complaint concerned fuel supply not being discontinued in the event of collision. A new control unit was fitted at main dealers to remedy the problem. If the SLK you're thinking about buying was produced in the first four years of the model's life, look through the supplied service history to ensure there's a record of work carried out.

GRAND EDITION

The car pictured on our pages is the R171 Grand Edition, a version of the SLK 200 equipped with the standard 1.8-litre supercharged engine, but finished in special trim as a 'last hurrah' for the R171 prior to end of production. Unique badges, smoked headlight surrounds, eighteen-inch multi-spoke alloys, red interior stitching for the Nappa-trimmed heated leathers and the short-lived Mercedes Airscarf neck-level heating system (air vents integrated into the head rests were fitted as standard).





BUYING *Your next Mercedes*

BODYWORK

The metalwork on these cars was fully galvanised at the factory. Rust is virtually unheard of, but it's worth keeping an eye out for signs of accident repairs, especially on higher output models, including AMGs, which are likely to have experienced far more in the way of 'spirited' driving than the base models.

Check to make sure panel gaps are uniform. Look for differences in colour between sections of bodywork. Look inside wheel arches and under the sills for evidence of overspray indicating corrective paintwork has occurred.

Headlamps can discolour. They can also attract surface imperfections through stone chips. Replacement lights are expensive, so consider purchasing a headlamp restoration kit as your first attempt to rectify the problem. Meguiar's and Autoglym produce kits available online.

Check the back of the bonnet by the wiper blades. Owners often change the blades and catch the panel, causing paint to chip. Check the windscreen for cracks and chips.



ROOF OPERATION

With the engine running, actuate the folding roof and listen carefully to the noise it makes as it retracts and extends. There shouldn't be any untoward creaking or banging. You're looking for smooth operation. Don't be alarmed at the subtle whirring noise. This is the roof's control pump in operation. After you've carried out the checks, start the process again, but this time, leave the roof in a half-open state. Take the opportunity to inspect the roof's seals, notorious for leaking. Check to make sure the seals aren't squished to the point of deformation, and make sure there are no rips, nicks or splits in the rubber. If you suspect new seals are likely to be required, factor this in to the price you're planning to pay for the car. Don't be put off buying if this is the only fault found, but don't be afraid to use knackered roof seals as a bargaining chip.



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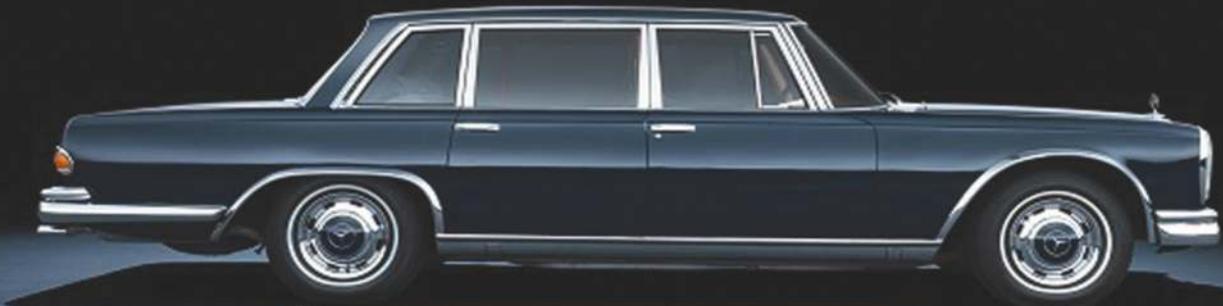
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Look no further...



THE LONGEST DAY

This year's 24 Hours of Nürburgring was one of the best yet. It also delivered an unexpected turn of events for Mercedes-AMG after the race had finished...

WORDS **Cuttie Williams** PHOTOGRAPHY **Mercedes-AMG**

The 2019 24 Hours of Nürburgring had highs and lows in store for Mercedes-AMG. In top qualifying, a pair of AMG GT3s prevailed against strong competition from the best Nordschleife teams, including those campaigning Porsches. From the front row of the grid, the #2 Mercedes-AMG Team Black Falcon GT3 and the #48 Mercedes-AMG Team Mann-Filter entry took on the race twice around the clock. During the first half of the race, Adam Christodoulou (GBR), Maro Engel, Manuel Metzger and Dirk Müller (all GER) managed to rack up thirty laps of the track – a mix of modern Grand Prix circuit and classic Green Hell – while leading the field. During the night, however, an unfortunate accident forced the candidate for victory to retire from the race.

In the second half of the 24-hour distance, there were incidents galore at the front of the field. The Mann-Filter 'Mamba' with starting number 48 and drivers, Lance David Arnold, Maximilian Götz, Christian Hohenadel (all GER) and Raffaele Marciello (ITA), were on course for a podium finish. While lapping another car on Sunday morning, the steering of their car became badly damaged. In the subsequent stint, Götz incurred further damage and was unable to avoid propelling the car into barriers at 'Hohe Acht'. Until that moment, the quartet had been able to put the cars ahead under serious pressure with consistently fast lap times.

From then on, the #6 Mercedes-AMG Team Black Falcon car had the best chances in the battle for victory. Patrick Assenheimer, Nico Bastian (both GER), Yelmer Buurman (NED) and Gabriele Piana (ITA) had started the classic endurance race

from sixth on the grid and were able to establish themselves among the front runners with largely trouble-free stints. Four hours before the 24 hours were completed, the quartet was in fourth place with good chances of a top result when an accident took this Mercedes-AMG GT3 out of the race as well. *Drat!*

As several other teams also retired or dropped back in the turbulent final part of the race, the #3 Mercedes-AMG GT3 of Black Falcon and the #16 Team GetSpeed Performance car suddenly found themselves within reach of a podium finish. With the GetSpeed Vodafone GT3, Kenneth Heyer, Jan Seyffarth (both GER), Tristan Vautier (FRA) and Renger van der Zande (NED) established themselves in the top ten with a strong performance. Sadly, technical failure with just two hours of the remaining led to retirement for this team as well. There's a theme developing here, yes?!

GET AHEAD

The Black Falcon GT3 with starting number 3 remained unaffected by the 'curse of the Nordschleife'. Maximilian Buhk, Hubert Haupt, Thomas Jäger and Luca Stolz (all GER) had started from eighth on the grid and managed to defend their top ten position throughout the race. With thirty minutes remaining, final driver Haupt managed to benefit from a pit stop by an opponent and moved up into third place. After 156 laps, he crossed the finish line. With his podium result, he secured the best classification of the seven Mercedes-AMG GT3s that had taken part in the race.

Third place in one of the world's most challenging motorsport events is a respectable result, but things would only get better following close of action. Stewards controversially disqualified





the Team Manthey Racing team (Porsche 911) from their second-place finish *thirteen days* after the race due to a noted Full Course Yellow infringement. The car was found to have exceeded the performance limit stipulated in the Balance of Performance (a regulation designed to keep competing teams on a level playing field). Provisionally, this pushed the Black Falcon team into second place. At the time of writing, it is not known whether Team Manthey Racing will appeal the decision.

The #18 GetSpeed Performance car also brought a strong performance to the finish. Luca Ludwig (GER), Jules Szymkowiak (NED) and the two 24-hour newcomers, Fabian Vettel and Philip Ellis (both GER), had started from fourteenth place and finished the endurance racing classic in seventh place overall. That made the quartet also the second-best combination in the Pro-Am classification of the SP9 class. The GetSpeed sister car, the #17 AMG GT3 with Rooster Rojo J2 Racing design, had to deal with some problems in the opening stages of the race. As the race went on, Janine Hill (GBR), John Shoffner (USA), Markus Palttala (FIN) and Fabian Schiller (GER) managed to make up ground and finished fourteenth.

For the #70 Mercedes-AMG GT4, the race was a successful affair. In the SP10 class, the Black Falcon Team IDENTICA regularly featured in the lead of its class from the thirteenth hour onwards. In the closing stages, Marek Böckmann (GER), Yannick Mettler (SUI), Tobias Müller (GER) and Tristan Viidas (EST) cemented the top position, finally securing the 24-hour title defence for the GT4 from Affalterbach. In the SP8T class, the #46 Black Falcon Team KNUFFI Mercedes-AMG GT4 finished in sixth place. See you back at the Green Hell for 2020's round of 'Ring raiding!





SECOND COMING

From thoroughly modern fuel cell to the age-old tradition of an AMG V8, the facelift GLC offers plenty of smiles to the mile

WORDS **Neil Briscoe** PHOTOGRAPHY **Mercedes-Benz**



In terms of breadth of range, there's arguably no other model in the current Mercedes-Benz line-up matching the just-revised GLC SUV. The number of different variants from which you can choose is, at first, genuinely bewildering, especially to those of us used to picking between petrol and diesel engines. With the latest round of model updates, you'll be able to select three different drivetrains (a standard GLC 63 and a hotter GLC 63 S), a petrol plug-in hybrid (arriving later this year), a diesel plug-in hybrid (this time next year) and even a hydrogen-fuelled F-Cell model that also just happened to be — you guessed it — a plug-in hybrid. Oh, and once again, you can also pick from regular and coupe body shells.

Confused? Don't worry. It's actually pretty straightforward once you get to grips with what's on offer. In essence, the GLC has been treated to revisions to help keep it fresh in the face of stiff competition in the premium SUV segment. On the face of it, these are the same changes thrown at the C-Class saloon, estate, cabriolet and coupe models this time last year.

LIGHTS ALIVE

When it comes to the model's exterior, the alterations amount to something close to mild pampering, as opposed to a full-on makeover. The most obvious change are the headlights, which are now slimmer, sleeker and will come with LED illumination as standard. The radiator grille has been tweaked, too, and is now wider at the bottom than the top, giving the GLC a touch of GLE aesthetic. The bumpers have been revised and, at the rear, the exhaust outlets have been integrated into the bumper shape, although as is increasingly common, the exhausts don't actually pass

gas through these outlets. They're really just items intended for decoration.

On the inside, there's a clear sense of not fixing what wasn't broken and, as the GLC's cabin still looks fresh, Mercedes hasn't really changed the styling nor fixtures. The biggest update is the adoption of all-digital instrumentation (available as an option) and a larger (also optional) central screen for the MBUX infotainment system. Again, these are more or less the same changes lavished on the C-Class in 2018 and, as with the saloon, the effect isn't as dramatic as you'll find in the cabins of the A-Class, E-Class or GLE. There's none of the super-cool 'digital plank' you'll play with in the cockpits of those cars.

Nevertheless, the new instruments look good in their digital layout and are far more adaptable than those offered by most car makers. We still love the yellow-on-black Sport layout for the main dials, which is very much a throwback to the 1980s Mercedes saloons, and all the cooler for it. The MBUX system that takes care of your in-car entertainment needs is also excellent. The system's graphics look rich and expensive, befitting a car of this price tag and calibre. The 'Hey, Mercedes' digital voice assistance is still one of the better such systems (even if it isn't exactly perfect when it comes to interpreting what it is you're asking for) and the optional Augmented Reality overlays — placing satnav arrows onto a live video feed from the front-facing camera — make this the best navigation system currently in use. The only drawback? Mercedes has shifted from the simple, rotary COMAND system for inputs to a laptop-style trackpad, which is fiddly to use on the move.

At least you can be reassured by safety features. The active braking setup has been upgraded to ensure

Below If practicality is as important to you as performance, the new GLC takes some beating

Facing page A variety of engines and trim options make the facelift SUV a brilliant offering no matter your need or location, although we fully expect East Asian markets to be where the model really flies





Name game

Observing the current Mercedes-Benz naming convention, the manufacturer's SUVs use the base name GL, followed by the model in question's placement in our favourite firm's product hierarchy. For example, the G stands for *Geländewagen* (the German word for off-road vehicle) and alludes to the long-running G-Wagen, a model currently enjoying its fortieth anniversary. The G is followed by the letter L, which acts as a linkage with the letter C, the GLC being the SUV equivalent of the C-Class. First introduced in 2015, the GLC proved to be a hugely popular offering in the growing luxury SUV market. Predictably, China is a key market for the GLC.





Facing page We're not entirely sure why it's necessary for every car powered by an electric or hybrid motor to be covered in blue accents, but in keeping with tradition, the F-Cell comes with cyan stripes

Bottom right Kindle-style stick-on tablet seems like a missed opportunity for a model many might expect to make use of a digital 'ribbon' display

it can help you avoid collisions with crossing traffic. Additionally, it can help stop you from accidentally turning into the path of a cyclist in your blind spot. The traffic jam assistance is also improved (it'll follow the car in front if it can't detect sufficiently clear road markings), while the active cruise control can slow you long before its radar or camera notes slow moving cars ahead thanks to the input of LiveTraffic digital reports.

The petrol-powered GLC 200 and GLC 300 (both based around the same two-litre turbocharged engine, with 197hp and 258hp respectively) now get mild-hybrid EQ Boost 48-volt systems allowing them to spend more time switched off when driving in stop-start conditions around town. The kit will also add an extra 14hp to provide extra poke.

SPLASH THE CASH

The diesel models have seen bigger changes, with the adoption of the OM654 two-litre engine, familiar to owners of the E-Class and C-Class. This is the engine into which Mercedes has sunk a whopping €3 billion (about £2.68 billion at the time of writing) of research and development cash, and it shows. The OM654 is so much quieter and smoother than the old 2.1-litre OM651, a powerplant Mercedes insiders tell us "we squeezed the last out of". Aside from a touch of clatter a rattle on cold starts, the GLC's new diesels are a world apart in terms of refinement.

They're good on performance, too. Well, the new GLC 300d certainly is, anyway. Fundamentally the same 245hp, 369lb-ft engine you'll find in the bigger GLE, it feels spry enough in the bigger Benz and positively rapid here in the smaller, lighter GLC. In fact, you can sprint to 62mph from rest in just 6.2 seconds,

which is knocking on for decent hot hatch pace, yet the GLC will easily crack the 50mpg barrier if you ease off the throttle and cruise gently. It's hard to match that kind of performance with a petrol or hybrid engine, so we guess Mercedes isn't kidding when, even in the wake of Dieseltgate, it says these units "underline the future viability of diesel engines".

Road and wind noise are well suppressed in the 300d too, making it a smoother and quieter cruiser. If it's smooth and quiet you really want, however, then maybe you should try the F-Cell version of the GLC!

Well, you can't. It's not for sale in the UK yet and only available for leasing in mainland Europe. Even so, it's a fascinating glimpse into a possible future not involving batteries and long charging times. Saying that, it does involve batteries, due to the F-Cell being a plug-in hybrid using the same battery stack as the petrol or diesel variants of the facelifted GLC. That adds some thirty miles to the model's overall range, bringing it to a quoted 297 miles, assuming you've filled the two hydrogen gas tanks to their maximum 4.4-litre capacity.

The beauty of the F-Cell is that, unlike having to sit around waiting for your electric car to charge its batteries, you can fill up with hydrogen in a matter of minutes. Pull in, hook up, drive off. Simple, providing you can find a hydrogen filling station, which at the time of writing, isn't the easiest task in the world

We're simplifying F-Cell's plus points. Granted, it's incredibly clever technology, but it has its compromises. It's heavy, and the single electric motor develops a mere 211hp, thereby lacking the sucker-punch acceleration of the all-electric, four-wheel drive Mercedes EQC.

And you can really feel the extra weight in the corners, where the GLC isn't badly behaved, but lacks the

Overleaf Well executed AMG styling is just enough to give the facelift GLC plenty of road presence without generating unwanted attention





incisiveness of a regular car. You can also sense that the extra mass of batteries and tanks is slowly, but unstopably, dragging you towards the outside of the corner. F-Cell is amazingly silent, though. Quite apart from generating zero engine noise, the system benefits from Mercedes adding an acoustic windscreen and beefed-up noise suppression material, resulting in one of the most refined Mercedes available.

QUESTION TIME

Why has Mercedes built the F-Cell, though? And why has it made the model part of the regular GLC range, when the all-battery EQC gets its own special designation, unique styling and even a mention on Lewis Hamilton's Formula 1 car? When asked, the Mercedes engineers we spoke to mumbled and spoke in hushed tones of exploring options for the future. From what we can tell, it seems as though Mercedes wants to keep working on hydrogen power simply to keep its hand in, just in case the tech ever really takes off. Fair enough.

On to the inevitable AMGs, then. Only V8 versions are available to order right now. A turbocharged V6 GLC 43 AMG will follow in due course, but eight-cylinders is hardly something to be upset about! You can elect to buy a 'regular' 476hp GLC, but, of course, duty demanded we sampled the maximum-attack S model, complete with its 510hp twin-turbocharged four-litre V8 driving all four wheels through a nine-speed 9G-Tronic automatic gearbox. It's a

Look east

The GLC, like its predecessor, the sharper-looking GLK (codename X204), began assembly at Mercedes' plant in Bremen, Germany, in 2015. Since the main GLC production site in Bremen was quickly running at full capacity, Mercedes decided to expand production by utilising the Valmet Automotive plant at Uusikaupunki, Finland, in early 2017. Due to huge demand for the GLC in East and Southeast Asia, assembly also takes place in local plants located in Beijing and Malaysia. China and nearby countries are massive markets for European SUV makers, as proved by China becoming Porsche's biggest sales base.

configuration good enough for a 3.8 second sprint to 62mph and a top speed of 174mph, as long as you ask your Mercedes dealer to, ahem, kindly remove the electronic speed limiter.

As well as the usual Comfort, Sport and Sport+ modes, the S model also comes with a Race setting accessed though the Porsche-style rotary controller dangling, so temptingly, from the right-hand spoke of the AMG's steering wheel. V8 merry hell is unleashed! Actually, even in Comfort mode, this is a serious SUV, with staggering cross-country pace. Activate Race mode and not only does the AIRMATIC suspension sharpen, the steering weights up and the throttle pedal gives you earlier access to maximum shove. It also opens all the stopcocks on the sports exhaust and induces a crackling, cackling, manic series of overrun pops and bangs. With the GLC's extra height and weight, you can feel that it's neither quite as precise, nor quite as enjoyable as the C63 AMG S, but the GLC does have the advantage of standard-fit 4MATIC four-wheel drive, so its all-weather capability is heightened. Besides, if you're comparing the precision of this with its lower-slung cousin, you're doing it wrong. Better just to hold on tight and revel in the high-speed, full-volume performance of that mighty V8.

From ultra-silent fuel cell to the full-on insanity of the AMG V8, the facelifted GLC has taken us on a fascinating journey. See what we mean about the model offering breadth of range?! 



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KI92 VBD

PROJECT

DECISION TIME

Despite its perfectly presentable cosmetic order, there's a lot wrong with our Blue-Black W201 190E 2.6. Stick or twist?

WORDS & PHOTOGRAPHY **Dan Furr**

Regular readers will recall how in the last issue of *Mercedes Driver*, I suggested that following my initial 190E fault finding mission, "it may be the case more serious problems are uncovered when the car is raised in the air and given a thorough inspection in the workshop." You may also remember me saying "for the time being, I'm going to give the old girl the benefit of the doubt." Well, the benefit of the doubt was well and truly given and more serious problems were uncovered when the car was raised in the air!

The scene of analysis was the workshop of Huntingdon-based service and maintenance centre, SOS Automotive (sos-automotive.com). Company boss, Seweryn Sidor, sees a high number of Mercedes cars travelling through his firm's doors, which is why he was looking forward to poking and prodding the *Mercedes Driver* 190E. My only hope was that enthusiastic poking and prodding wouldn't go straight through the blowing silencer I reported on in our last issue!

I needn't have worried. Sew patched up the offending part with exhaust paste to temporarily fix the blow until new pipework is ordered. This is something I'd delayed until I knew exactly how

much of the exhaust needs to be replaced. In fact, other than giving the car a thorough service with all new fluids, filters and spark plugs, I've refrained from fitting any other components in case the outcome of our investigation suggested K192 VBD's required remedial work would prove to be prohibitively expensive.

END TO END

Starting at the front of the car, Sew identified mismatched tyre profiles, an irregularity I recognised as soon as I was given the keys to the 'Baby Benz' a few months ago. The tractor-spec black circle on the nearside front catches the surrounding wheel arch over bumps in the road! Sew also pointed out the sorry condition of both front shock absorbers, which are leaking badly and are wearing heavily deteriorated sleeves. The radiator is slowly leaking coolant (just one of the reasons I've had to top up the anti-freeze more often than I'd anticipated), plus there's a coolant leak from the thermostat housing. Most concerning of all, however, is the major oil leak coming from the back of the engine. It's not enough to require a constant top up of lubricant, but it's certainly not a fault that's going to fix itself any time soon.

The brake fluid is well past its best, and in

Bottom left Ignition components were severely deteriorated, causing a misfire

Below Differential seals are leaking fluid in every direction



PROJECT

addition to the previously mentioned spark plugs, the distributor and ignition leads are in desperate need of renewal. Indeed, one of the leads was perished to the point it was causing a misfire, a complaint cured by another temporary fix: nabbing a replacement lead from beneath the bonnet of a nearby Mercedes!

A compression test returned satisfactory results, but there was bad news as we made our way towards the back of the car. Sew confirmed the rear manifold, mid-section of exhaust and back box are in desperate need of attention, but he also spotted oil leaking from the rear differential seals. We detected evidence of previous weld repairs on the chassis, too.

SHOCK AND AWE

Unsurprisingly, with a dodgy tyre and a knackered shock occupying each corner, the car's alignment is all over the place, but its brakes are also in a less than desirable state, with new discs and pads required as a matter of urgency. The combined cost of all necessary parts and labour to bring the car back to its best won't come cheap, especially with the busted heater matrix taken into consideration, which makes me wonder whether we're looking at a fault too far. There's no denying the great cosmetic condition of the car, especially when you consider the fact it has covered 200k miles, but neglect on the part of previous owners has left us with a predicament: suck it up or move on and start again with a better Benz? Watch this space. 🚗

Right Exhaust paste plugs the Swiss cheese-spec exhaust until we decide what our next step with the project will be

Below 200k-mile 2.6-litre inline-six cruises nicely, but presents a catalogue of errors, not least a major oil leak





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BITTEN BY THE BUG

We uncover a special collection of immaculate Mercedes cars hidden in the wine and wheat-producing Western Cape of South Africa

WORDS **Sudhir 'Banzai' Matai** PHOTOGRAPHY **David Marchio**

A few kilometres outside of Cape Town is the suburb of Durbanville. It's a place noted for its wide, tree-lined streets, good schools and Saturday afternoon *braais* (barbeques). It's the middle of the week when we arrive at, seemingly, the wrong address. We check to make sure the information we were given is correct, and yet we find ourselves standing outside an accountant's office. A wander inside encourages talk with a receptionist, who confirms we're in the right place and the man we've come to meet will be with us shortly.

Graham Van Heerden arrives seconds later. After formalities are taken care of, he guides us through a series of offices and ushers us towards a separate building on the far side of a neighbouring courtyard. We enter and are immediately blown away by what we see; sleeping silently in a pristine private showroom are almost three dozen immaculate Mercedes cars spanning almost sixty years of automotive history.

As a teenager, Van Heerden kept a close eye on Mercedes models and admits to being a non-participating enthusiast until he started receiving pay cheques. "I had the option of buying a brand-

new Nissan when I first entered the workplace," he grins. "The company I worked for offered good finance deals through a link with the Japanese manufacturer. Obsessed with the three-pointed star, however, I chose to buy a second-hand W108 280 SE instead!"

GLOBAL REACH

We ask the obvious: how did a young kid in South Africa find himself drooling over the output of a German car manufacturer. "Looking back, I blame my father for my obsession!" he roars. "In 1973, he bought a new W115 230.4. I loved that car, and from the moment it landed on our driveway, I started following the brand. Dad was also smitten, as proved by the fact he replaced one Mercedes with another from that time onwards. Even today, as a man in his eighties, he owns three different Benzes!"

As he talks us through the many cars in the dream garage we've walked into, he pauses next to a grey W180 220 'Ponton'. "Of all the cars I've kept, this one has been with me the longest. At the time I bought it, nobody paid much attention to the model. I bought the car exactly as you see it here. It's totally unrestored." Before long, he wanted another 220 to keep the grey car company. "I managed to get hold of a coupe and a cabriolet. My 220 S drop-top is »



THE MAJORITY OF THE CARS ARE UNRESTORED, ALTHOUGH THE W186 IN HIS FLEET HAS BEEN STRIPPED AND REBUILT





Above Immaculate W124 drop-top takes pride of place in the Van Heerden garage

Right Graham's mancave is littered with old Mercedes service books and other memorabilia relating to the manufacturer's output



Facing page All but hand-built as the Mercedes flagship, the W186 is often identified as an *Adenauer*, named after Konrad Adenauer, the first Chancellor of the Federal Republic of Germany, who employed six custom cabriolet, hardtop saloon and landaulet versions of the W186 and its successor, the W189, during his tenure between 1949 and 1963





Facing page Beautiful blue takes years off Van Heerden's stunning C126 560 SEC

Right Dummy mechanic tricks visitors to the Mercedes wonderland into thinking there's a spanner man working on the cars at all times

a rare car. I'm led to believe there are fewer than thirty right-hand drive examples surviving to the present day."

He spots us eyeballing the paintwork on one of the many Mercs displayed before us. He confirms the majority of his cars are unrestored, although the W186 'Adenauer' in his fleet has been treated to a recent strip and rebuild. "I'm more project manager than restorer!" he laughs. He's also a man who doesn't seem to like the idea of only owning one of each model, as evidenced by the groups of cars occupying his personal playground. "You've spotted my Fintails!" he chortles. "Truth be told, I used to dislike the styling of these cars until I laid eyes on my 1964 W111 220 S. The car was in perfect condition with just 17,000 miles on its odometer. I handed over a large cheque and drove the old girl home from where the seller was living in Johannesburg." That's a distance of almost 1,500 miles, a big ask for an old car, nevertheless the retro ride coped brilliantly with what was being asked of it.

Van Heerden admits it was the '64 car which really kick-started the collection we're enjoying today. "A W111 drop-top and various other Fintails followed soon after the 220 S's arrival," he recalls. Soaking up the rich smell of vintage hide tinged with the feint odour of motor oil, we squeeze between

the tightly parked cars and stop when we spot a W109 300 SEL 6.3. "I found it on a farm up country," we're told. "The car was in relatively good cosmetic shape, but the mechanical equipment left a lot to be desired." It took five years for the vivacious V8 to be brought back to its best, with more Mercs being added to Van Heerden's hoard along the way.

STATELY HOME

We zip past a series of W114s. The long-wheelbase example present formerly belonged to the President of the Kingdom of Lesotho, an enclaved country within the border of South Africa. A 190E 2.3-16 catches our eye. Van Heerden picks up a small-scale die-cast model of the car from a nearby display cabinet. It's a diminutive depiction of the 2.3-16 Niki Lauda raced at the Nürburgring back in 1984. "I've taken my 190E 2.3-16 to the race track," reveals Van Heerden. "It's pretty good in the corners, but in the straights, it feels mighty underpowered by today's standards. Even so, hammering the car around a circuit is a huge amount of fun!"

We amble past a beautiful W123 230 TE cargo carrier that appears to be in showroom condition. Cabriolet, coupe and four-door W124s lurk nearby, the latter gaggle of greats spearheaded by an immaculate E500. As if that wasn't impressive

Below Die-cast W201 190E 2.3-16 is the same colour as Graham's full-size version and commemorates Niki Lauda's time with the model at the Green Hell in 1984

THE LONG-WHEELBASE W114 PRESENT FORMERLY BELONGED TO THE PRESIDENT OF THE KINGDOM OF LESOTHO



enough, an SLS AMG is parked less than a metre away. "This is my second SLS," confirms Van Heerden. "I owned a red example, which I regretted parting with from the moment I handed its keys to the new owner. A few years later, I righted that wrong by buying this fantastic example. It has plenty of extras, including a wealth of non-standard carbon-fibre trim. It's the newest car in my collection, primarily because I'm not a fan of turbocharged engines, which most modern Mercedes cars make use of."

TELLING TALES

Despite newer Benz-badged belters not yet making it into the Van Heerden arsenal of German metal, his awesome array of desirable motors is far from lacking. What's impressive is how he has a personal connection with each successive car we're attempting to familiarise ourselves with. This isn't a gathering of Benzes for the sake of owning a high number of desirable four-wheelers. Van Heerden has an emotional story to tell about each vehicle. There's a personal link between the man and each of his machines. The same is true of the various Mercedes-themed artefacts decorating his enviable mancave, whether it be rare factory documentation or any one of the multitude of colour-coded hub caps pinned to the wall. In short, this extraordinary, hidden compound of purely Mercedes machines can be summed up by the manufacturer's famous slogan: the best or nothing.

Right E500 sits happily alongside SLS AMG in the temperature controlled lockup outside in Durbanville



Below Van Heerden has a personal tale to tell about each of the cars in his collection, with the same true about every one of the rare and interesting parts decorating the nearby walls, tables, shelves and floor



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2001(Y) BMW 330i SE Saloon, Titan Silver, Grey hide, 1 owner, 29300 miles, FSH.....£5,795



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CLASSICS REBORN

Mercedes-Benz isn't just concerning itself with the sale and supply of new cars, as proved Mercedes Classic's hugely popular All Time Stars programme

The restoration of Mercedes cars is nothing new, but did you know Mercedes itself is in on the act? Underlined by the Mercedes Classic seal of quality, carefully selected retro rides wearing the three-pointed star can be viewed and purchased directly from the Mercedes-Benz Museum in Stuttgart. Indeed, since 2015, Mercedes Classic's All Time Stars brand has been making the dreams of enthusiasts and collectors come true by presenting freshly restored or recommissioned vintage Benzes ranging from fascinating pre-war classics to popular 'youngtimers'.

Models originally assembled during the 1950s and 1980s are especially popular with buyers, who enjoy paying for their dream drive refreshed or comprehensively restored by the company's

specialized engineers and technicians. The know-how of these brand specialists, not to mention huge enthusiasm for the culture of originality across Mercedes as a whole, is what sets All Time Stars cars apart from other restored Mercedes metal. Welcome transparency and dependable classification of all finished vehicles guarantees buyers will receive precisely the Mercedes they're looking for, with a 160-point inspection and an independent Classic Data report provided with each sale. These cars don't come cheap, but as the old saying goes, you get what you pay for. The three categories Mercedes Classic uses to define its All Time Stars offerings are:

Concours Edition

Cars which are in rare original condition with exceptionally low mileage.

Above 2011 C197 SLS AMG is one of the latest additions to the All Time Stars catalogue



Collectors Edition

This category comprises older and more recent classics in good technical order and visual condition. Each car's individual and authentic patina is retained to ensure special character.

Drivers Edition

This is the category for enthusiasts of the Mercedes-Benz brand who want to get hold of a classic which can be used as a daily drive. The excellent technical condition of the cars makes them ideal candidates for full restoration, but Mercedes Classic has held off carrying out such extensive work for fear of owners considering the finished builds far too good for regular road use. Don't forget, the manufacturer wants its products to be used as intended!

The boom in the value of classic vehicles in recent years has seen demand for pre-loved Mercedes cars supplied through the All Time Stars brand reach record highs, with even rare racing cars (including W202 DTM weaponry) being brought back in-house in order for Mercedes Classic spanner men to get busy affording these special cars a new lease of life before they're shipped to their new homes.

If you're interested in finding out more about the All Time Stars programme, the cars currently on offer and exactly what goes into each finished build, visit mercedes-benz.com and click the link for museum and company history. There, you'll be able to view the current portfolio of manufacturer-supplied pre-loved vehicles, which at the time of writing, includes a huge selection of W111 Cabriolets, SLs of all ages and even a C197 SLS AMG. Happy shopping!

Clockwise from top left
W111 280 SE 3.5 Coupe,
W111 280 SE 3.5 Cabriolet,
W126 280 SE, W111 280 SE
3.5 Cabriolet, W113 280 SL
and R129 SL 320 Mille Miglia



JET SET JUNIOR

Powered by a dependable inline-six, the 280 SL matches down-to-earth prices with a mile-high ownership experience...

WORDS **Emma Woodcock** PHOTOGRAPHY **Adrian Brannan**

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CHEAPER, LIGHTER AND MORE FRUGAL THAN THE V8 MODELS, THE R107 280 SL FAST BECAME A SUCCESS



A strong shoulder line, a chiselled bonnet and just enough chrome. To look at any 107-series Mercedes is to witness aesthetic clarity. Penned by factory stylist, Joseph Gallitzendörfer, and created to succeed the pert, precise Pagoda cars, the third-generation SL still speaks of muscle, indulgence and dignified restraint, yet upon the model's launch in 1971, there was only one engine configuration that could turn that talk into market-leading walk – the 107 was released into the wild with a pair of V8s in the form of the 3449cc M116 and the 4520cc M117.

Large displacement motors would go on to define the range. The early bent-eights carried the 350 and 450 all the way to their 1980 withdrawal, before revised, alloy-block 116 and 117 powerplants appeared in the updated 380 and 500 SL. The larger-engined model soon established itself as a range staple, joined by the V8-powered 420 and 1985's gargantuan, 5547cc 560 SL, a car surviving until the end of 107 production in 1989.

It can sometimes seem as though all attention clusters around the eight-cylinder SLs, but that's just not true. As the 107 cements its reputation as a thoroughly usable classic, collector attention is quickly moving towards the 300 SL. A latecomer to the 107 range, the six-cylinder stunner was announced alongside the 107's second and final

facelift and benefits from the three-litre M103 engine. It's a rugged, torquey unit, with a single overhead camshaft, hydraulic lifters and standard Bosch KE-Jetronic mechanical fuel injection. It also handles modern traffic without complaint. Combined with a modernised interior and extensive galvanisation (which all post-1985 SLs feature), it's enough to make the 300 SL an attractive and appreciating proposition, yet the 300 isn't the only way into a six-cylinder 107. Eleven years before the M103 car stole the Frankfurt Motor Show, Mercedes introduced a straight-six to the 107 range for the first time. The new engine bore the codename M110 and had already seen service across the Mercedes saloon selection, powering both the W114 and the first-generation S-Class. Thanks to the 1973 oil crisis, the motor stepped up to the SL in 1974 to provide an option for economy-minded buyers. Cheaper, lighter and more frugal than the V8 models, the 280 SL fast became a success. Enduring until 1985, it benefits from the longest production run of any R107 variant. Today, it's a model offering conspicuously good value for money, with an entry point of around £12k.

HISTORY REPEATING

The six-cylinder configuration might have been a departure for the early 107, but it was business as usual for the *Sport Leicht* concept at large. Way back in 1952, the earliest 300 SL racers used an inline-six, a tradition following through to the related 300

DRIVER Q&A



PAUL GERSON

First Mercedes
190E

Favourite Mercedes
Gotta be a Gullwing!

Best thing about your R107 280 SL
Its originality

Worst thing about your R107 280 SL
The handbrake gaiter cover – I can't find a replacement!



Hit for six

Daimler wasn't the first manufacturer maker to create a six-cylinder car. That credit goes to Spyker and its innovative 60HP, a Dutch racer that was also the first car to boast four-wheel drive. The German firm wasn't slow to adopt the idea. Wilhelm Maybach created an eleven-litre, six-cylinder Mercedes racer in 1906, a machine that used overhead valves and a single camshaft to sit at the bleeding edge of engine technology, predating the first straight-six Mercedes road car by a year. Less adventurous than its motorsport counterpart, the 75HP used three pairs of cylinders to translate 10.180cc of displacement into ground-shaking action.

SL supercar and the later W113. Look forward, way past the end of 107 production, and Mercedes has continued its commitment to six-cylinder power; a straight-six supported entry-level R129 SLs until 1998, while a V6 option has been available in every SL, SLC and SLK since.

Pull focus back to the M110 and the motor's versatility stands out. Also employed in everything from the deluxe W126 S-Class to an '80s variant of the Geländewagen, the 2746cc design underpinned the Mercedes range for over fifteen years and boasts a well-deserved reputation for dependability. It's not all worthy utilitarianism, though. Thanks to its double overhead camshaft design, the M110 needs almost 6000rpm and an enthusiastic right foot to deliver its peak performance, rewarding drivers with a sweet, rising rasp that builds all the way to the redline.

Raw numbers are less impressive, falling some forty horsepower short of the 450 and its 225bhp output, but this engine is about more than headlines. Producing 185bhp and 177lb-ft torque, the M110.926 in post-1976 280s is plenty to keep the 1500kg SL moving. "You don't buy a car like this to go fast," says Paul Gerson, owner of the crisp 1984 car in our photos. "The only time it's ever felt short on power is when I asked it to climb to the top of the Alps. It's a Mercedes with great engine, and one with an old-fashioned spirit."

Run against the clock and the difference between six and eight-cylinder SLs is far from noticeable.

While the early 450 could only be ordered with a three-speed automatic, pushing a lazy 3.07:1 final drive ratio, the 280 reached dealers with three transmission choices: standard four or five-speed manuals or a four-speed automatic. Each option features a shorter, sportier final drive, allowing the six-cylinder model to hit 60mph in 10.1 seconds, just 1.3 seconds behind the high-capacity range topper. For a model with such humble origins, that's extraordinarily impressive.

Glistening against a clear sky, Paul's Silberblau Metallic 280 SL looks ready to fly at standstill. Like all mid-production 107s, it benefits from cavity wax corrosion protection, optional anti-lock brakes, a driver's airbag and the steering wheel from a W126-generation S-Class. Each change elevated the 280 above earlier SLs, and each is proof of Mercedes' commitment to ongoing improvement. "I love the way these cars are built," says Paul. "The engineering is fantastic." As owner of Different Class Cars, a London dealer specialising in the esoteric, he's spent plenty of time around SLs and knew this one was special.

PEER THROUGH

The pair first met twelve years ago, when Paul spotted a photograph of the car in a classified advert and couldn't resist having a gander. "It just looked like a good car," he laughs. "Over the years, you get a gut feeling for these things." His hunch lived up to closer inspection; the 280 started life

Facing page Despite covering 82k miles and put to use regularly, Paul's cherished R107 280 SL features factory paintwork and entirely original cabin furniture

as a dealer demonstrator, before entering a Lord's private collection for the following two decades. Always garaged, the car's metalwork has needed nothing more than an extensive jet wash over the course of Paul's ownership. Originality also permeates the cabin – the entire interior is original, including the factory radio, while a new plastic window (to replace a creased original) was the only renovation demanded by the canvas roof.

CONTINENT CRUISER

To make everything 'just so', the car's door and wing mouldings have been replaced, the rear bumper and front number plate rubbers have been renewed, and new, genuine Mercedes shock absorbers and springs replace the aged originals. Well versed in the model's potential problems, Paul has also replaced the central locking accumulator. "It's located beneath the nearside front wheel arch," he explains. "That's a silly place to put it. Road dirt gets trapped in exactly that spot." The tank and its mounting plate have both been swapped for new, fully lacquered items

Below You'd look this happy if you were stepping into a 280 SL as well presented as Paul's!

to prevent future corrosion. In fact, thanks to its winning mechanical and cosmetic condition, this 280 is more than capable of acting as an effective long-distance companion. Paul generally keeps the car's mileage low, but a 2017 trip to Italy was too much to resist. "We ended up going down to Apulia in the heel of Italy," he remembers. "The distance covered was 4000 miles, door to door. The car performed brilliantly every step of the way. Everywhere we parked up, there were people coming out to appreciate this beautiful modern classic."

Back home, his wonderful 107 attracts just as much attention. Purists and power junkies might think otherwise, but the general public adores the 280 SL. "I can come back to my car and see fingerprints where people have leaned in for a closer look," Paul grins. "Truth be told, the 2.8 just happens to be the engine this particular R107 is equipped with. I bought the car because of how good it is as a whole." From Middle England to the Med, the 280 needs no replacement for its low displacement. It's still a high-flying Mercedes driving experience!

FROM MIDDLE ENGLAND TO THE MED, THE 280 NEEDS NO REPLACEMENT FOR ITS LOW DISPLACEMENT





UNDER THE HAMMER

HAMMER TIME!

A mixed bag of results from our favourite auction rooms, with the current sales slowdown affecting Mercedes metal young and old...

WORDS **Dan Furr** PHOTOGRAPHY **Toots Pyc**



2016 C190 AMG GT S EDITION 1

Learning from the success of its first in-house sports car, the SLS AMG, Mercedes-Benz's AMG division began developing a new, high-performance coupe and roadster with the help of Formula 1 star, Lewis Hamilton. The resulting AMG GT was officially unveiled to the public at the 2014 Paris Motor Show and went on sale as the GT and GT S variants in March 2015, the latter going on to become the 2015 F1 safety car.

The GT S is a more highly equipped variant of the GT. The M178 engine in this variant is tuned to an output of 516hp and 495lb-ft torque. The key



differences the GT S gains over the GT include an electronically controlled limited-slip differential, race-oriented driver modes, adaptive suspension, a new exhaust and a lithium-ion battery.

The AMG GT S Edition 1 was released with special matte finish Selenite Gray paint, leather and Alcantara-wrapped sports seats, red seat belts, a carbon-fibre roof and a special body kit with a fixed rear spoiler. The 2016 example seen here was offered at RM Sotheby's Auburn Sale and has covered less than 200 miles from new, but not even this was enough to invite a winning bid.

1999 C208 CLK 200

Mercedes has long had a knack for creating coupes and roadsters from mid-size saloons without noticeably changing the dimensions of the base model, but it may surprise you to learn that despite wearing a W210 E-Class front and rear end, the C208 CLK is actually based on the W202 C-Class platform, a move designed to cut manufacturing costs. The example pictured here was built two years after CLK production commenced and has covered just 53k miles since that time. Offered with a fully stamped service book when recently offered at Anglia Car Auctions, the silver machine had no trouble selling.



1987 W201 190E 2.3-16

Equipped with an automatic gearbox, this Smoke Silver 190E 2.3-16 has been the property of just four owners from new and was offered at Anglia Car Auctions with 103,282 warranted miles. The bulging history file boasts an original bill of sale confirming a 1987 purchase price of £31,035, a sum including optional extras

totalling £2,782. The manufacturer service book features ten main dealer stamps and is accompanied by a stack of Mercedes parts receipts, all MOT certificates, an original sales brochure and factory handbooks. A four-spoke steering wheel signals the car's sporty credentials, with bidders entertained enough to push the sale price to almost £17k.

1997 R129 SL 320



Faster, harder-edged and more driver-orientated than its R107 predecessor, the R129-series SL was launched at the 1989 Geneva Motor Show. Brimming with cutting-edge technology, the model's impressively rigid two-door monocoque shell featured an integral rollover bar that deployed in less than a third of a second (if the car ever sensed an impending flip) and a fully automatic convertible roof. Reputed to develop some 228bhp and 232lb-ft of torque courtesy of its 3,199cc straight-six, the SL 320 was a paragon of refinement, despite its claimed ability to sprint from 0-60mph in 8.4 seconds and on to 149mph. Sadly, the example offered at H&H's recent Cheshire sale failed to find a new home.



UNSOLD!



UNDER THE HAMMER

1986 R107 300 SL

While Mercedes build quality has often faltered, the durability of the R107 has long been beyond doubt. The model's production run spanned almost two decades, totalling 237,287 SLs and 62,888 SLCs, many still in service today. The 300 SL replaced the 280 in 1985 and was powered by a SOHC 2,962cc straight-six. The variant's lighter weight provided a handling advantage over its bulkier V8 siblings. This immaculate 1986 example was the subject of an £11,371 restoration and repaint by SL Shop in 2011. H&H recently supplied the car complete with soft and hard tops.



1991 W201 190E 1.8

SOLD FOR
£1,870



The first owner of this 1991 190E liked it so much, he kept the car for two decades! It's a very clean 'Baby Benz' featuring a desirable manual gearbox. The odometer shows 74,827 miles and the eleven stamps in the service book, the MOT history and the overall condition of the car support the figure. H32 TDT has an MOT to May 2020, although there are three advisory notices relating to the condition of the tyres. The factory tool kit is present and correct (not that the winning bidder at Brightwells Leominster Classic sale will need it!), as is the factory first aid kit. A clean and honest car, it's rare to find a 190 in such good condition at such an agreeable price point. Congratulations to the new owner!



2003 R230 SL 500

Another victim of 2019's observed sales slowdown, this 2003 SL 500 failed to shift when offered by RM Sotheby's as part of its Auburn sale, although one of the reasons the car was unable to find a new owner is most likely the fact the vendor submitted CARFAX information relating to a past accident late in the sales cycle. Nevertheless, what we're

looking at is an expertly repaired example of a five-litre V8 roadster finished in Brilliant Silver Metallic over black leather. One owner from new and kitted-out with many luxury appointments, the automatic-loaded 302hp drop-top features subtler styling than the popular AMG-fettled R230, yet offers a similarly satisfying driving experience.

BARGAIN BUY





UNSOLD!

1959 W128 220 SE

Proving it's not just newer cars refusing to leave their owners, this beautifully presented 220 SE was offered as part of RM Sotheby's European Luxury Collection sale, but will be staying with the seller for the foreseeable future. Powered by a fuel injected 2.2-litre inline-six with performance managed by a four-speed manual transmission, the classic Benz was advertised with a lower estimate of \$50k, a sum encouraged by a recent frame-off restoration and a stack of professionally refurbished parts, including a Becker Mexico radio. In many respects, this is the perfect Ponton, but bidders weren't convinced.



2004 R170 SLK 320



The beautifully styled R170 SLK was introduced in 1997 to compete with the Porsche Boxster and BMW Z3. Setting the Mercedes apart was an ingenious folding electric hard-top, which could open or close at the touch of a button in near to thirty seconds, the balletic operation never ceasing to delight onlookers. Revised in 2000, the model came with a choice of three engines: the four-cylinder 165bhp SLK 200 and 195bhp SLK 230 or the top-of-the-range V6 SLK 320, packing a 220bhp punch. Mated to a five-speed auto box, this gave the 320 a 0-60 time of 6.3 secs with a top speed of 152mph. This stunning SLK 320 has covered only 14,440 miles in the hands of just three enthusiasts. The last owner acquired the car through Brightwells and immediately sent his purchase to marque specialist, Gerry Doverman of Hereford, for a full service, check-over and transmission fluid renewal, work costing £765. A fun 2,000 miles of motoring followed before the car was returned to Brightwells for sale in July.



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W123

280 E



1976, 108,136 miles, £8,500. December 1976 (W123) 110 engine. K-Jetronic. Hellelfenbein/Cream. New wings, nice clean motor in and out. Please call 07706976762, Leicestershire. 9789

W124

124 ESTATE



1995, 190,000 miles, £3,000. Taxed and tested. Lots of history. Please call 07725 9661999, Essex. 9768

230 TE ESTATE

1988, 70,000 miles, POA. Many extras and new parts such as gearbox, battery, radiator, exhaust etc and snap on tools and collectables. Please call 01277 200530, Essex. 9978

W201

190 2.5 D



1991, 330,660 miles, £950. Diesel 2.5 saloon, pearl blue metallic, cloth interior fitted, ES roof, EW x 4, ABS, MoT March 2020, extensive service history with MoT's, drives well despite mileage. Please call 01516 390149, Wirral. 9984

SL

R107 350 SL



1973, 95,380 miles, £18,750. Brand new hood, new water pump, two tone blue exterior, very good condition all round and rust free. Please call 01514 267709, Merseyside. 9955

R107 420 SL



1987, 118,000 miles, £22,999. The deep blue vinyl interior seats and carpet in this 80's classic complements the crisp white exterior and blue mohair roof beautifully. The Mercedes SL is a stylish and elegant classic sports car. This example is exactly what you would want from the R107 model and it looks as good now as it did 32 years ago. Please call 01454 501314, Chipping Sodbury (T). 9844

R129 300 SL



£4,995. Auto miles 167 801 first registered 1/8/1992 mot may 2020 full history up to 124 137 in book Plus over £6,000 worth of maintenance invoices documenter plus old MoT, etc. Black/black leather good condition throughout drives excellent PX possible. Please call 07860 527820, Essex. 9562

R129 280 SL



1994, 115,000 miles, £6,500. Hard and soft top, auto, everything electric and has full service history. Please call 01614 274325, Cheshire. 9961

C-CLASS

W219 CLS 320 CDI



2008, 81,000 miles, £5,995. Auto in black with black leather interior. FSH extras including heated electric memory seats, SatNav, cruise control, air-con and absolutely immaculate condition throughout. Please call 01652 678417, North Lincs. 9757

S-CLASS

W140 S500 COUPE

1994, 108,000 miles, £4,250. Owned for 11 years in very good to excellent condition inside and out. Blue in colour with cream unmarked leather. Some service history with 10 months MoT, new battery and excellent tyres. Please 01639 633230, Wales. 9812

W221 S63 AMG



2013, 40,000 miles, £46,000. Stunning very rare S class S63 AMG LWB black with tan leather, private plate and mint condition. Years MoT FSH. Please call 01483 282830, Surrey. 9947

WINNING WAYS

Bernd Schneider used the W202 C-Class to great effect in 1995, winning the year's German Touring Car Championship. Additionally, he secured the driver's title in the 1995 International Touring Car Championship, which included DTM races at Mugello, Donington, Estoril and Magny-Cours. This photo shows man and machine leading the pack, with fellow Mercedes driver, Dario Franchitti, running close behind.





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