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WELCOME MERCEDES DRIVER



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FOR DETAILS

SWEET SALOONACY

THE EXTRAORDINARILY diverse range of cars produced by Mercedes means we're never likely to run out of feature content for *Mercedes Driver*, yet despite the colossal selection of vehicles with the three-pointed star stuck to their front end, I've decided to dedicate this issue of the magazine to my favourite style of motor: sporty saloons.

Across the following pages, you'll find a selection of fantastic four-doors we think will make for shrewd buys before prices continue to rise any more than they already have. From the W110 owned by John Roberts to the CLS 55 AMG, there's no shortage of stylish saloons for you to consider before buying your next Benz.

The Mercedes scene is only as vibrant as it is because of your continued enthusiasm for cherishing and, in some instances, modifying Mercs. This is why we feature real cars owned by real enthusiasts. After all, owners are the best people to speak to when it comes to finding out what a particular model is like to live with, how easy it is to work on and what the availability of parts is like. These can all be deciding factors when it comes to determining what your next car might be. We're sure some of you asked existing owners for their opinions at the recent Lancaster Insurance Classic Motor Show, a huge event held at Birmingham NEC showcasing some of the very best of what our corner of the automotive scene has to offer. For the benefit of those who weren't able to make it to what's

billed as the UK's biggest and best indoor celebration of retro rides, we've printed our show report in this edition of the mag. Club displays, trade offerings and an exciting auction were bursting at the seams with Mercedes content. Expect to see some of the show's star cars in forthcoming issues of *Mercedes Driver*.

As I write this introduction, I'm glancing out of my office window at a garden full of flowers in bloom. The trees outside my window are covered in green leaves. The sun is shining. If I didn't know any better, I'd say this was the middle of summer, yet I'm going to have to utter the C-word. No, not *that* C-word! I'm referring to Christmas. You won't be hearing from us again until the new year, when we'll be gearing up to celebrate a packed calendar of Mercedes anniversaries. Across the holiday period, we'll be working hard to bring you more exciting features focusing on real-world cars. Don't hesitate to get in touch to let me know what Benz-badged beauty you're playing with. You can contact me directly by email, Twitter or via the *Mercedes Driver* Facebook page.

Have a cool Yule. See you in 2019!



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BUILT LIKE A TANK

Richard Moore's love of the W210 has culminated in
the preservation of this spotless E55 AMG

WORDS **Dan Furr** PHOTOGRAPHY **Dan Sherwood**



LAST CHANCE
SALOONS



The chaps at AMG may have struggled to find their feet when it came to developing the definitive big-power W210 following the model's launch in the mid-1990s, but after the low-volume production six-cylinder E36 AMG in 1996 and the left-hand drive, V8-propelled E50 AMG in 1997, the arrival of the E55 AMG in 1998 signalled the availability of ballistic power and executive comfort in equal measure, not to mention tasteful styling which has weathered exceptionally well over the years.

"I'm a big fan," explains Richard Moore, owner of the super-low mileage minter we've come to paw over in rural Cambridgeshire. "I bought my E55 following time spent in a W210 E320 I bought as a mile-muncher back in 2008. The car was rough around the edges, but mechanically sound and remarkably comfortable. I run a business dealing in the acquisition and restoration of military hardware. The work takes me to cities in far-flung corners of eastern Europe. At least twice a month, I'd hop into the E320 at half past three in the morning before driving across the continent, arriving at my destination at dusk feeling as fresh as I did when the journey started."

As is the case with many Mercs of the era, the dreaded tinworm took hold of the tireless workhorse. "I retired it from the road for fear of MOT failure," sighs Richard. His concern was premature. "I ended up giving the car to a friend in need of a cheap runabout. He took great pleasure in telling me he was presented with a fresh test certificate without the need for any required remedial work. That superb

E320 was subsequently put into service as a daily for a further two years!" he gasps.

The tough six-shooter had proven its mechanical durability, but its high mileage and tatty bodywork meant it was hardly a contender for show and shine silverware. "I know the joy of owning and caring for a special car, not least of all due to my past career restoring and dealing in Jensen Interceptors," continues Richard. "I wanted to buy a vehicle I could cherish, which is why I decided to attend a sale of classics at Anglia Car Auctions in King's Lynn a year after parting with the E320. I hadn't seen the list of what was being offered, and I certainly didn't intend to return home as the owner of an E55 AMG, but that's exactly what happened after the car I'm in possession of today rolled into view, taking its place as the very last lot of the auction."

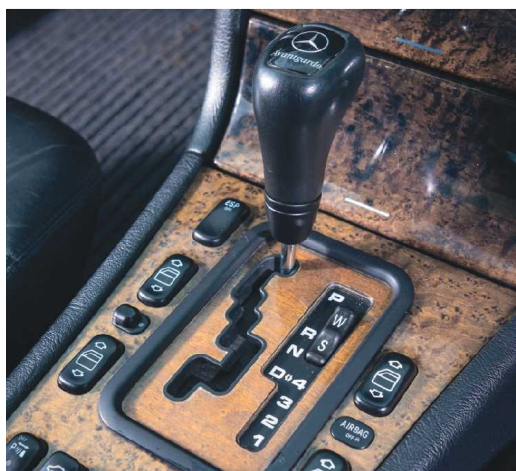
SURPRISE PACKAGE

Offered from the director of the auction house's personal collection, the car registered a smidge over 59k miles and was in first-class cosmetic condition. Already wowed by the W210 range from time spent driving the E320, Richard knew the three-owner, AMG-badged beauty he was looking at was a well-built car and one of the very best executive saloons money could buy when new to market as the turn of the century drew near. In contrast, he was unaware of the car's extraordinary performance.

"I was impressed with the way the car looked and its high specification, but at the time of my purchase, I didn't realise how much power AMG had given the E55!" he laughs, acknowledging instant access to 354bhp and 391lb/ft torque

Facing page Pre-facelift rear end gives away the age of this particular W210 E55 AMG

Below Travelling at high speed has rarely been so comfortable!



Rich history

Everyone knows AMG as the high performance arm of Mercedes, but not all enthusiasts are aware of the fact AMG was founded in 1967 as an independent tuning firm. DaimlerChrysler took a controlling interest in AMG shortly after the launch of the E55 AMG, becoming sole owner of the business in 2005. In 2013, it was announced Aston Martin had agreed to a technical partnership with AMG, affording the British brand access to significant Mercedes resources, thereby enabling the development of bespoke eight-cylinder powerplants and use of Mercedes electronic engine management systems in new Astons.



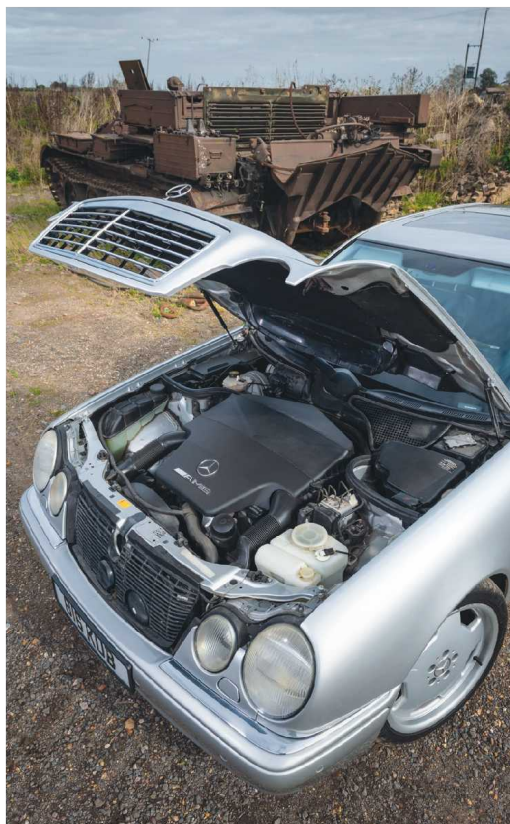
AT THE TIME OF ITS RELEASE INTO THE WILD, THE E55 AMG WAS VIEWED AS AN EXCEPTIONALLY POTENT MACHINE



from the model's naturally aspirated 5.4-litre V8, plus the ability to complete a dash to 62mph from rest in 5.4 seconds. These figures might not sound earth-shattering when compared to the poke of today's performance Mercedes offerings, but at the time of its release into the wild, the E55 AMG was viewed as an exceptionally potent machine, especially when its huge size was taken into consideration. "I remember driving along stretches of dual carriageway leading from the auction house to my home. I was struck by how quick the car is, how responsive the steering and handling is and, of course, what an amazingly comfortable ride the chassis delivers." Eat your heart out, E320!

SECRET WEAPON

Loaded with a smooth five-speed automatic transmission and rolling on staggered AMG eighteens, Richard's car is a late pre-facelift E55. Black leather, automatic electronic climate control, heated electrically adjustable seats and a Becker Audio 30 head unit make for a cosy cabin well-suited to long journeys, although the car's proud owner is quick to point out this particular piece of heavy artillery hasn't picked up where his six-cylinder W210 left off. "I've covered fewer than 2,500 miles in my E55 since buying it eight years ago. I've ensured the car's maintenance schedule and servicing is carried out in accordance with the manufacturer's instruction, commissioning Mercedes-Benz of



DRIVER

Q&A



RICHARD MOORE

First Mercedes
W210 E320

Favourite Mercedes
SLR McLaren

Best thing about your W210 E55 AMG
I have every confidence in the reliability of the car on long journeys

Worst thing about your W210 E55 AMG
At first glance, the pre-facelift boot lid makes the car look like something your grandad might drive





NOTHING RENEWS INTEREST IN A MODEL QUITE LIKE A SIGNIFICANT ANNIVERSARY

Peterborough to undertake all work when required, but other than the occasional leisurely drive to Wales and outings for summer car shows, I'm the custodian of an AMG which doesn't cover a lot of ground."

NO SURRENDER

Suppressed mileage explains the maintained blemish-free condition of the car's bodywork. Well, almost. "It's not quite that straightforward," says Richard. "Just like my E320, the W210 range in general suffers corrosion for fun, especially around wheel arches, wing bottoms, doors, the boot lid and spring mounts. The E55 AMG is no exception, which is why I keep mine in a temperature-controlled garage. I don't mind admitting I wouldn't dream of intentionally driving the car in the rain. I even think twice about hitting the road in damp conditions! My advice to anyone thinking of buying, keeping and caring for an E-Class of this age is to thoroughly inspect all known problem areas around bodywork and to make sure you have

Above Despite being two decades old, the E55 AMG's bonkers-for-the-time power ensures the mighty Merc can hold its own against modern big-power executive saloons

a garage or somewhere similar to keep the car dry. It won't forgive you for being left in the open where it's exposed to the elements."

Despite owning his E55 AMG for almost a decade, Richard's advice comes at the right time. After all, twenty years have passed since the launch of the W210 E55 AMG, and nothing renews interest in a model quite like a significant anniversary. The importance of the E55 in the Mercedes story is one today's buyers – many who grew up in the late 1990s with a poster of the big V8 pinned to their bedroom wall – are rightly appreciating, a sentiment encouraging asking prices to rocket skyward, with large bags of cash being thrown at low-mileage, low owner examples.

Is Richard considering satisfying demand for clean E55s by parting with his pride and joy? "I'm undecided," he admits. "I love the car, partly because I bought it with money I inherited after my father passed away, but also because it's an exceptional example of an important piece of AMG history. Of course, the sensible voice inside my head tells me to sell up and buy a vehicle I'll put to better use, but those noises are silenced as soon as I hop inside the E55 and take it for a spin. I'm instantly reminded of the car's effortless performance!"

Close to twelve thousand W210 E55 AMGs were built during five years of production, allowing purchasers in the present to pick and choose specification and styling (pre-facelift or facelift cars) thanks to a high number of surviving examples being offered for sale at any one time. As Richard suggests, however, the W210's enthusiasm for rust means you should approach any E55 you're thinking about buying with caution. Don't be afraid to pay more for an example in excellent condition with low miles, but also don't spend too long deciding when might be the right time to buy. Top-notch E55 AMGs won't be available at an attractive price point forever. Now, where did I put my cheque book...?!



Livewire

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Triple DTM joy for Mercedes-AMG

Team, driver and manufacturer titles wrap up thirty years of excellence in famous touring car series

After thirty years, 436 races, 140 pole positions, 193 fastest laps, seven manufacturer titles, eleven driver titles and fourteen team titles, Mercedes ended its time in the Deutsche Tourenwagen Masters (DTM) in fine style when works driver, Gary Paffett, was crowned champion a few weeks ago. The Brit took third place in the last round of the season at the manufacturer's home circuit, Hockenheim. Audi driver, Rene Rast, fought hard to win the fixture, but Paffett's finish was his tenth podium of the season, an achievement leading to a tight four-point advantage over the German. It was enough to secure victory.

"It's absolutely incredible," said Paffett. "This is the best day of my life! I've spent the past thirteen years working hard to get back to the top of my game after winning DTM for the first time in 2005. It's taken a long time to achieve my goal, but this year, Mercedes gave me a great car. I was out on my own for most of the last race and had plenty of time to think about the situation. I found myself counting down the number of laps I had left of my DTM career! I'm sad to draw a close on what's been an amazing chapter of my life, but it's a fantastic feeling to have won the 2018 title for Mercedes in its last year of participating in the competition. Thanks to every single member of my team for all their hard work throughout the season."



While continuing to campaign successfully in Formula One, Mercedes will now switch its efforts from DTM to Formula E, a move which sees Aston Martin replace our favourite manufacturer as the third marque on the DTM grid alongside Audi and BMW.

"We've done it!" cried Mercedes DTM boss, Ulrich Fritz. "Congratulations to Gary on his second DTM title. It was an incredible fight at the end of the season, with a very close finish in the final race. For us to be returning to Stuttgart with the driver, manufacturer and team titles is nothing short of sensational!"

Mercedes secured its first DTM title in 1992, when Klaus Ludwig raced to the top spot from behind the wheel of a 190E 2.5-16 Evolution II. Top honours came again in 1994 and 1995 before the series



folded in 1996 due to unsustainably high costs. Relunched in its current guise four years later, Mercedes once again reigned supreme, winning the lion's share of titles until Paffett's historic victory signalled the end of the manufacturer's presence in the championship.

DTM has undergone significant changes since Mercedes first participated in 1988. The series looks set for more upheaval following the announcement its regulations will be merged with those of Super GT next year, a move designed to encourage internationalisation – half of the season's races will be held outside Germany – and the participation of a greater number of teams and manufacturers. Meanwhile, all eyes will be on Formula E where Mercedes intends to continue its winning ways.



B-Class range now available to order

The Mercedes-Benz B-Class is now available to order, with prices starting from £26,975 for the B180 Sport. The B200 Sport is available from £28,525, the B200d Sport will set you back £29,625 and the B220d AMG Line costs £32,375. The latter features eighteen-inch five-spoke alloys, a three-spoke multifunction sport steering wheel trimmed in Nappa leather, sports seats, a diamond radiator grille with chrome pins and a single louvre, AMG body styling and carbon-structure trim with red-stitched Artico and Dinamica microfibre upholstery. The optional Executive equipment line can be added for £1,395 and includes a 10.25-inch media display. For further information, pop along to your local main dealer.



E-Class Coupé and Cabriolet offerings grow with new E350 model

Mercedes has added the E350 engine to the E-Class Coupé and Cabriolet, with prices starting from £44,750 for the hard-top and £49,246 for those wishing to drive *al fresco*. The E350 features a two-litre petrol powerplant with EQ Boost, offering 299bhp and 400Nm of torque. EQ Boost uses a 48-volt onboard network with a belt-driven starter/alternator. The system adds 14bhp to the engine's overall output, encouraging a 0-62mph dash in 5.9 seconds (6.1 seconds for the drop-top). Both the Coupé and Cabriolet come complete with a 9G-Tronic Plus nine-speed automatic transmission as standard equipment. The cost-option Premium package is available for £2,395 and includes COMAND Online, wireless charging, a 360° external camera and Multibeam LED Intelligent Light System.

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RECOMMENDED READ SLK R170 AND R171 HISTORIES

In these two fantastic books from respected automotive

publishing house, Veloce, marque expert, Brian Long, examines the full history of the first and second-generation SLK. Covering German, North American, British, Australian and Japanese markets, these full-colour volumes have been compiled with assistance from Mercedes-Benz and are pitched as the definitive records of SLK design, development and production from 1996 until the arrival of the R172 in 2011.

Long's journey into the world of the R170 spans 192 pages, revealing all there is to know about the origins of the ground-breaking compact luxury roadster. Starting with an introduction to the Mercedes brand, the book showcases SLK concept cars and provides full coverage of all production R170s, as well as details of the optional extras offered with each model. Comprehensive appendices describe year-by-year changes, engine specifications, factory colours and production volume.

Picking up where the R170 book finishes, Long's examination of the R171 spreads across 224 pages. Brochures, advertising materials, cutaway diagrams of key mechanical components (including engines, steering and transmission equipment) join talk of the R171's aerodynamic advantages. Detailed CAD images from the Mercedes design department and a look at interesting SLK spin-offs (hello to all you Chrysler Crossfire fans!) make this the most detailed appraisal of the R171 to date.

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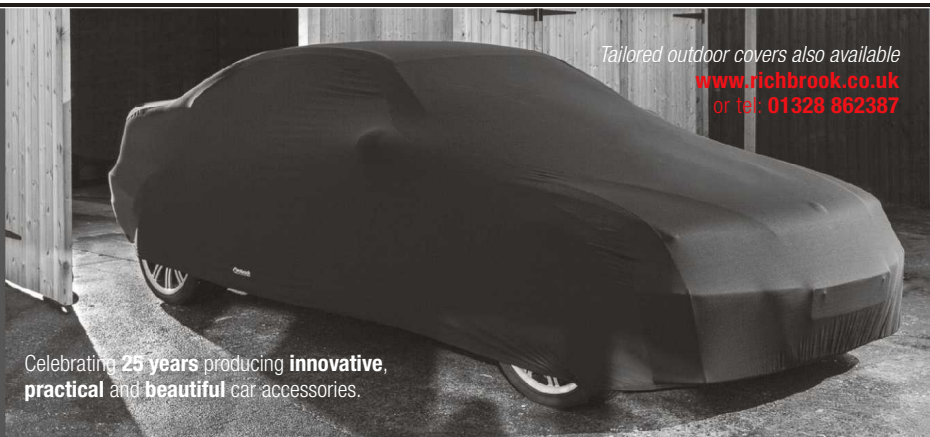
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FIVE ALIVE

This quintet of unusual W124s may have roots in familiar territory, but each car offers something different to the norm

WORDS **Dan Furr** PHOTOGRAPHY **Angelika Emmerling**

With close to twenty different engine variants, four different gearboxes, every body shape you care to think of and a choice between rear-wheel drive and four-wheel drive configurations, the W124 holds status as one of the most diverse cars ever offered by Mercedes. Being all things to all people, however, can be a double-edged sword. After all, the runaway success of the W123's

successor resulted in such high-volume production that spotting a W124 in the wild today isn't exactly anything to shout about.

In this regard, the W124 is the victim of its own success. Needless to say, in order to catch the eye, an example of the model needs to be something special, which is why we popped back to Mercedes' motherland to take a look at a selection of astonishing cars catering for those who want their treasured four-wheelers to stand out in a crowded parking lot. From mild to wild, here are the W124s you need to know about.





**1991 260E
LIMOUSINE**



**1994 E36 AMG
SPORTS TOURER**



**1993 BOSCHERT
B300-24 SPORT**



**1993 BRABUS
E65 V8**



**1997 E220
FINAL EDITION**

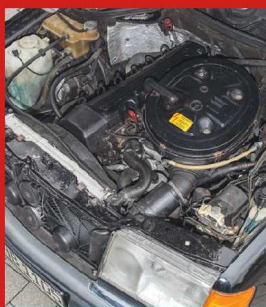




GOOD MEASURE

If you were a buyer looking for a Mercedes on behalf of the Anthill Mob, then the W124 limousine (V124, if you're being picky) would have featured high on your hit list. The bulky six-door measures more than five and a half metres in length and offers comfort coupled with no-nonsense executive functionality.

Practical details include power steering, air-conditioning, electric everything and self-levelling suspension. Performance was hardly paramount in the minds of prospective purchasers, which is why Mercedes saw fit to install its smallest six-cylinder engines (initially a 2.6-litre M103 unit before increasing displacement with a switch to the 2.8-litre M104) or



FAST FACTS

1991 260E LIMOUSINE

Engine 2548cc 12-valve single-cam inline-six
Gearbox Four-speed auto
Power 160bhp @ 5800rpm
Torque 220Nm @ 4600rpm
0-62mph 11.0 secs
Wheelbase 3600mm
Kerb weight 1655kg

the option of a 2.5-litre diesel, affording the stretched stunner enough torque to pull its many passengers and their briefcases without ever feeling sluggish.

2,342 W124 limos were produced between 1990 and 1994. The vast majority of those sold were the 260E variant built during the first two years of production. The example featured here has covered 140k miles thanks to a

busy life providing service to dignitaries working at Germany's Federal Foreign Office. It's a brilliantly built machine offering passengers in the third row the feeling they're a VIP heading to an event where they'll be welcomed as guest of honour. How easy it is to park the large barge outside the destination venue is another story.





FULLY LOADED

Despite a mind-boggling number of W124s to choose from, a big-power wagon was missing from the factory line-up. You'd need to jump forward to the W210 before being able to get your hands on an eight-cylinder cargo carrier from your local main dealer, but what if your heart was set on a W124 estate and you exhibited a strong distaste for rear tyres? AMG (then yet to be assimilated into manufacturer operations) had you covered with the option of its E36 load lugger conversion.

All you needed to do was hand over an E320 tourer donor vehicle and a vast sum of cash. In exchange for

your hard-earned dosh, you received a fire-breathing station wagon pumping out 272bhp from a naturally aspirated 3.6-litre lump. Your new car wore seventeen-inch alloys wrapped in 235-profile rubber and displayed plenty of exterior AMGery (front apron, side skirts, flared wheel arches, spoilers, colour-coded grille trim and door panels), although the original owner of the green giant seen here opted to omit some of the more pronounced bodywork decoration, even if the optional Malachite Green paintwork was as eye-catching as the performance delivered by the angry inline-six.

Of the 172 E36 AMG Sports Tourers built, you're looking at what's considered the most expensive conversion of them all. The garish twin-tone leather, the trim-matched Nokia carphone, the electrically operated sunroof, the additional speakers buried in the headlining. These special orders didn't come cheap, but the buyer was rewarded with opulence on wheels and a modified Mercedes only 10km/h slower than the V8-equipped E500. With more room in the back and arguably more smiles to the mile, the E36 AMG wonder wagon is one of the rarest and most desirable of all W124s.



FAST FACTS

1994 E36 AMG SPORTS TOURER

Engine 3604cc 24-valve twin-cam inline-six
Gearbox Four-speed auto
Power 272bhp @ 5750rpm
Torque 385Nm @ 3750rpm
0-62mph 7.2 secs
Wheelbase 2800mm
Kerb weight 1640kg





SHORT CUT

It's an R129, right? No, wait. It's a C124. Hang on, it's... what is it exactly? You're looking at a Boschert B300-24 Sport, a fixed-roof two-door based on a 300 CE kitted-out with a customised R129 front end. Nice!

As the 1980s were drawing to a close, Hartmut Boschert, an engineer from Emmendingen, fancied making a Gullwing-styled sports car using a modern Mercedes as his platform to play with. The then-new 300 CE seemed like the perfect base model. SL body parts were fitted and the car's C-pillar was moved forward by almost thirty centimetres, an alteration which not only drastically changed the coupe's appearance, but one which was intended to promote better road handling thanks to a shortened rear end with less overhang. Of

course, this change means the roof is much shorter than when it rolled off the production line, as are the rear side windows.

The resulting Boschert B300 was revealed at the Frankfurt Motor Show in 1989. A non-Gullwing B300-24 Sport (like the car pictured here) was introduced a short while later. The asking price was super-high due to the amount of fabrication and custom parts required for each build. For example, the bonnet and bumpers are bespoke fibreglass parts, while the R129 grille is shortened in width. The front wings and rear quarters look standard, but they're Boschert parts shaped with custom folds and contours. Only the doors, boot lid, wheelbase, cabin furniture and engine remain as Mercedes intended, although you could put paid to standard power by asking for your B300-24 Sport to come loaded



FAST FACTS

1993 BOSCHERT B300-24 SPORT

Engine 2960cc 24-valve twin-cam inline-six
Gearbox Five-speed auto
Power 220bhp @ 6400rpm
Torque 265Nm @ 4600rpm
0-62mph 8.0 secs
Wheelbase 2715mm
Kerb weight 1450kg

with twin turbochargers. Suits you, sir!

As you might expect, the B300-24 Sport doesn't exactly behave like the R129 its front end apes. After all, the car's chassis is that of a largely unchanged W124. There's no denying the 24-valve inline-six – in this instance, an engine fired up by remote control – enjoys travelling at high speed, but there's little difference between the performance of Boschert's creation and that of a standard 300 CE. In a world where R129s and W124s do very different jobs and can be acquired with zero effort, it's difficult to see who the B300-24 Sport appeals to. Needless to say, Boschert's ambitious production volume target of three hundred units was never realised, making his unusual pet project a rare sight today.

BIG HITTER

What's your ultimate W124? We'll bet there are many of you thinking about the 400 E, 500 E and E60 models right now. These V8-powered behemoths propelled an everyday car into an entirely new automotive sphere thanks to outrageous power figures and engines ranging between 4.2-litres and six-litres of displacement. Rarely had there been such a magnificent mix of luxury and sporting prowess in a Mercedes production car.

Readers of the November/December issue of *Mercedes Driver* (order a copy by visiting bit.ly/issuesmd) will have enjoyed our article detailing the history

of the world's biggest tuning firm, Brabus. Company head honcho, Bodo Buschmann, was convinced there could be more to gain from tuning the W124. He ably proved the point by launching the Brabus E65 in 1993. Taking a standard E500 as a base – yet refraining from adding extra bodywork adornments – the boys from Bottrop fitted staggered eighteen-inch five-spokes with wide-profile tyres, Brabus-branded Alcon brakes and understated model-specific interior trim. Not much to differentiate the E65 from a stock E500, then? Oh, wait. We forgot the hulking great 6.4-litre

32-valve quad-cam V8 chucking out a huge amount of torque, close to 450bhp, an exhilarating top speed of 177mph and the ability to complete the 0-62mph sprint in no more than a rapid 5.2 seconds. Not bad for a big ol' brute weighing 1710kg!

V8-bolstered W124s are highly sought-after today, but much like the W124 range as a whole, they're not considered to be difficult to get hold of thanks to production in excess of 10k units (all of them left-hand drive). The Brabus E65, on the other hand, is a prized collector's item fetching big bucks. 1990s super saloons don't get much more impressive than this.



FAST FACTS

1993 BRABUS E65

Engine 6409cc 32-valve quad-cam V8
Gearbox Five-speed auto
Power 450bhp @ 5900rpm
Torque 662Nm @ 3800rpm
0-62mph 5.2 secs
Wheelbase 2800mm
Kerb weight 1710kg





FINAL COUNTDOWN

By 1995, Mercedes was ready to call time on W124 production in readiness for the launch of the W210. More than 2.5-million (yes, you read that correctly) examples of the earlier model found homes after the manufacturer's product reveal took place in Spain during the winter of 1984. With more than a decade of sales success to celebrate thereafter, a 'last hurrah' seemed entirely fitting.

W124 cabriolets may be much larger than most drop-tops, but that didn't stop close to 34,000 of you placing an order for a C124 at your local dealership in period! 1,390 Final Edition W124s were



FAST FACTS

1997 E220 CABRIOLET FINAL EDITION

Engine 2199cc 16-valve twin-cam inline-four
Gearbox Four-speed auto
Power 150bhp @ 5500rpm
Torque 210Nm @ 4000rpm
0-62mph 11.9 secs
Wheelbase 2715mm
Kerb weight 1630kg

completed between October 1996 and July 1997. Given option code 907, these commemorative cabriolets featured black leather, burl wood, air-conditioning, lowered suspension and seventeen-inch AMG alloys.

Engine options were limited to two-litre and 2.2-litre inline-fours with a lone inline-six in the form of the 3.2-litre M104. Surprisingly, more than half of

buyers excited by the Final Edition opted for the larger four-cylinder engine, as fitted to the beautiful blue example pictured on these pages.

Muted colours, dignified styling and respectable performance made the limited-run four-seater an attractive purchase and an instant future classic. W124, we salute you!



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TORQUE *Enthusiast*

James Aveil

Everyone knows classic Mercedes cars are pleasing to the eye, but did you know they can comfortably accommodate American muscle?

Id Mercedes saloons look great and can be bought at a low price due to the high number of four-door models produced in huge volume over the years. This is great news for those of us who want

to drive a stylish retro ride, but find ourselves having to work to a tight budget. The trade-off is performance, where foot-to-the-floor action doesn't always deliver enough poke to keep up with modern traffic, but with a bit of clever thinking, even slow saloons wearing the three-pointed star can be given a new lease of life.

My 1969 W114 250 is a good example of a Mercedes with pedestrian pace being afforded fresh energy. The car's engine bay is huge, a characteristic allowing me to consider a wide range of powerplants to swap with the M114 2.5-litre straight-six fitted at the factory. I love the idea of my German sedan running on American muscle, which is why the engine I've bought is a 4.5-litre V8 originally bolted to the front end of a Dodge Dart.

I've trial-fitted the Mopar lump and its accompanying Torqueflight A904 four-speed automatic gearbox, and I'm delighted to report there's loads of room left for me to work at the nose of my car. I'll have to make custom engine mounts and I'll need to update the propshaft, but with the sport-profile camshaft, four-barrel carburettor and other parts I've acquired, I'm expecting a big increase in power which I intend to put to good use when travelling across the country to the various shows my car attends each summer.

It's not just engine and transmission swaps made easy by the availability of space around the car's mechanical components. There's so much emptiness at each corner, I've been able to fit a custom air ride suspension system utilising Firestone double-bellow bags linked to twin Viair compressors and a four-gallon Air Lift Performance air tank. I've relocated the rear shock absorbers and added bespoke framework to support the alterations. There's plenty of room to play with. Put it this way, I certainly haven't had to shoehorn any of this third-party equipment into place!



For modifiers like myself, Mercedes saloons built in the 1960s and 1970s are fantastic platforms to use for restomod projects. A friend of mine owns a BMW E30, and there's absolutely no way he'd be able to equip his Bimmer with my car's new engine and gearbox without a serious amount of fabrication work taking place. That's not to say a cheap old Merc isn't going to present problems. For want of a better example, my two-owner W114 needed sills, inner wheel arches and a nearside front floor pan after I brought it home on a low loader from where the seller lived. The brakes were seized through a lack of use, the engine was in need of attention and the bodywork required new paint, but a few weeks spent working on the driveway with my dad (the owner of a modified W114 280) saw my brown Benz spring back to life before I used it to hit the show season in style.

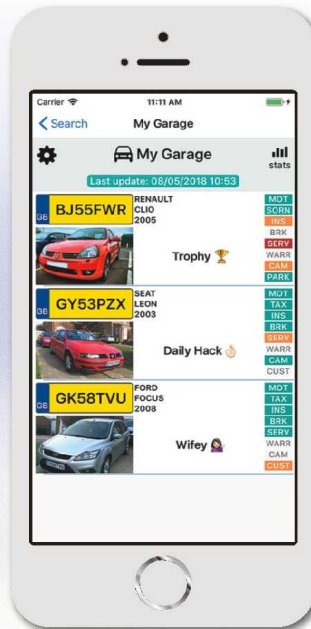
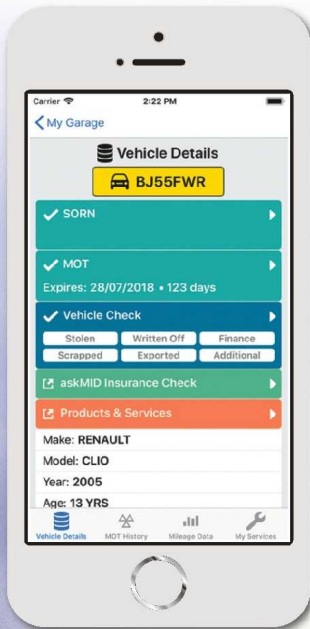
Above Air ride provides the 'low' and a 4.5-litre Dodge Dart 273ci V8 will provide the 'go'

My two-owner W114 needed sills, inner wheel arches and a nearside front floor pan after I brought it home on a low loader



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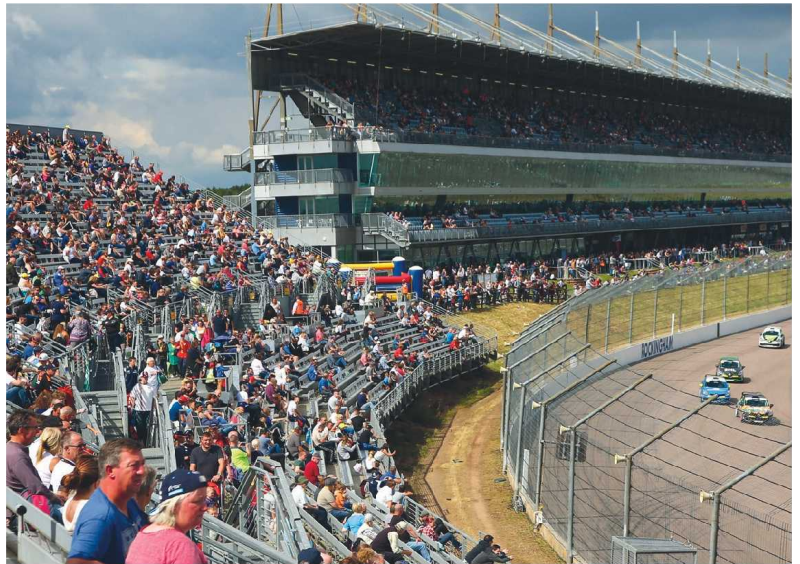
For spectators and racing drivers alike, Rockingham offered a unique motorsport experience before the venue closed its gates to the public in November...

The closure of any motorsport venue is a regrettable occasion, but a circuit shutting its gates for the last time is an even sadder turn of events when you have close personal experience of the track in question. This is certainly true of my feelings regarding the recent end to racing activity at Rockingham Motor Speedway, a modern racing facility now being repurposed for auction and fleet car storage.

I remember visiting the site to watch the British Touring Car Championship with my father back in 2003. As a spectator, I was immediately taken with the high-speed nature of "Europe's fastest racing circuit". The grandstands were packed full of spectators making the same level of noise you'd expect to hear at a Premier League football match. Later, as a racing driver, I marvelled at the circuit's brilliant design. It's a technical track delivering unexpected challenges making it hard to achieve repeatable fast laps. The same is true of Cadwell Park and Anglesey. As a racer who doesn't like to take things easy, I revelled in the testing driving conditions Rockingham presented, making it one of the highlights of my race calendar.

I've won at every one of the UK's major circuits, but Rockingham is 'the one that got away'. It's frustrating to think I'll never be able to add the venue to my list of racing conquests, but I'm well aware of the fact my complaint pales into insignificance when wider concern regarding the future of Britain's racing circuits is brought into question. Yes, Rockingham's closure has received a vast amount of press coverage, but what of grassroots motorsport venues facing similarly difficult financial circumstances? Many small-scale oval tracks have their future hanging in the balance.

It's easy to visit high-profile venues and marvel at their first-rate facilities while you're enjoying the spectacle of the UK's biggest motorsport events, but none of us should forget Britain's proud history of entry-level racing popular with privateers who don't have the funds to hit Silverstone or Brands Hatch whenever the mood takes them. It's these guys who frequent much smaller circuits, and



it's these guys who stand to be hit hardest as the venues they love continue to disappear.

The romantic in me hopes Rockingham's story as a competition venue isn't over. You only have to think back a few years to the state Donington was in to realise the fortunes of a racing venue can be reversed if there's money on the table and a strong amount of goodwill from key stakeholders. Positive sentiment seems to be something which has been missing throughout the majority of Rockingham's seventeen years in operation; you don't have to wait long after sparking up a conversation about the site before somebody chips in with a negative comment.

One of the greatest moments in racing is where you get the balance of your car just right on the approach to a corner and can tackle it flat-out. Your foot is pressed as close to the floor as the accelerator pedal will allow and you sail through without slowing. Rockingham is rare insofar as there are a few spots on the circuit where this activity is possible, making the track an absolute joy to compete on. Let's hope the venue's gates reopen in the future. I want that elusive Rockingham win! 🏁

Above Rockingham Motor Speedway was the first banked oval constructed in Britain since the closure of Brooklands in 1939

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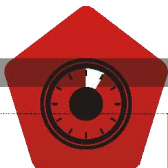
You only have to think back a few years to the state Donington was in to realise the fortunes of a racing venue can be reversed

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FIVE MINUTES WITH...

Dougal Cawley



Who are you and what do you do?

I'm Dougal Cawley, managing director at Longstone Tyres. You could say I specialise in providing unusual rubber equipment for gentlemen to pleasure themselves with at the weekend!

When was Longstone Tyres established?

The company has been in business for more than sixty years. I took charge of the operation in 1999. Previously, the firm only supplied tyres for prewar cars, but recognising an opportunity to serve a far bigger customer base, I enlarged the Longstone Tyres portfolio to include products for classics and Youngtimers. Today, we cater for road and race cars as old as those built before WW1 and as new as those produced at the time of the Falklands War.

Where is the company based?

Bawtry, which is about ten miles outside Doncaster on the South Yorkshire Riviera.

How many people work with you at Longstone?

We're a team of eight, including myself, my wife and my nephew. All of us are fans of vintage vehicles. Our tyre packer uses a W123 280E as his daily!

Do you drive a Mercedes?

I own a W210 E320 limousine. It used to be a funeral director's coffin follower. I've got three teenage kids and a dislike for MPVs, so a stretched Mercedes enables me to get the Cawley family, our friends and loads of luggage in the back whenever we want to head out for a day of fun.

Above Dougal works closely with first-class tyre manufacturers to help with the design, development and production of modern, retro-styled black circles to suit vintage vehicles, including classic Mercs

What's your favourite Mercedes?

The Blitzen Benz, a race car built in 1909. Only six units were assembled. I had the privilege of changing a tyre on one of the survivors at Brooklands.

Can we follow your adventures online?

Mercedes Driver readers are invited to visit the Longstone Tyres Facebook page and our website, which can be found at longstonetyres.co.uk. We regularly produce videos highlighting the benefits of our products against lesser alternatives. We also publish interesting articles comparing tyre design in the hope of helping owners of older cars to select the right product. We work closely with top tyre manufacturers, including Pirelli and Michelin, in the development of new tyres for many older German cars, including those built by Mercedes.

What advice would you give to a *Mercedes Driver* reader getting ready to replace their car's tyres?

Try not to be ruled by cost when choosing new rubber. All too often, I hear from owners who begrudge buying quality tyres because they think the low financial worth of their car doesn't justify the spend. This is a huge mistake that not only compromises safety, but fails to take into consideration the fact poor tyres will make suspension work harder, ultimately costing you more in the long run. *Mercedes Driver* readers are welcome to visit Longstone Tyres in person to see the difference in quality between premium and budget tyres in detail. The kettle is always on!

An opportunity not to be missed!

We pride ourselves on being an approachable team able to provide the best advice when it comes to selecting tyres to suit the weight, suspension and driving characteristics of any older car.

Thanks for your time, Dougal. It's appreciated!



Rubber soul

Without tyres, your Mercedes is useless. Here's what you should be considering in advance of buying your car's next set of black circles...

WORDS **Dan Furr** PHOTOGRAPHY **Various**

Never underestimate the importance of good quality tyres. The rubber you choose will affect your car's acceleration, braking and cornering abilities. You need to buy wisely, especially if modifying; there's little point in trying to maximise power output, improve suspension or beefing-up brakes if the black circles you've fitted undermine the time, energy and money you've invested in enhancing other areas of your four-wheeled friend.

Tyres are the only part of your Mercedes in direct contact with the road. Give serious thought to the kind of driving style and road conditions you expect the car to be subjected to. Have a read of the next few pages where we highlight what you should be thinking about before shelling out for your pride and joy's next set of boots.



COMPOUNDS

The rubber compounds used in the construction of a tyre will differ dramatically between tyre makes and models. This is because manufacturers invest huge sums of money developing bespoke compounds in order to meet specific criteria, keeping the 'recipe' for each compound a closely guarded secret!

There are thousands of different tyre compounds in production at any one time. A vast number of different ingredients (some natural, some synthetic) are used to produce whatever attributes a particular tyre might require. Some of these elements are designed to keep air within the tyre, some are introduced to allow sidewalls to flex. Others help bind the incorporated nylon and steel belts together. The compound most people refer to is the part of the tyre in direct contact with the road.

This tread compound includes complicated polymers and, occasionally, trace levels of silica. These materials provide a tyre with resistance to abrasion, tears or cuts, and they prevent the tyre from losing its structural integrity. It is, however, the mix of natural and synthetic rubbers, carbons and oils that has the biggest impact on a tyre's lifespan. In essence, the greater the rubber content, the more grip a tyre will offer, but this comes at the expense of longevity – soft, grippy tyres wear much faster than harder compounds containing more carbons.

When you hear manufacturers refer to hardness and softness of tyres, they're not talking about how the tyre feels when touched. No, these terms are in direct reference to how rubber molecules interact with the road. The rubber used

goes through a process called 'vulcanising'. This converts rubbers and polymers into a more durable material by adding elements such as sulphur. These ingredients create crosslinks between the polymer chains and rubber molecules, having the effect of making the material less sticky, but more durable.

One of the main differences between harder and softer compounds is how the addition of sulphur affects rubber molecules. In a soft compound (a greater percentage of rubber) the crosslinks caused by the vulcanisation process are fewer in number. This means the rubber molecules and polymer chains are longer between crosslinks than they are in a harder compound. The longer the rubber molecules are, the more they can interact with the road surface, resulting in more grip. In contrast, the rubber molecules



Above Many different layers combine to form a finished race or road tyre

HOW ARE TYRES CONSTRUCTED?

To understand what makes tyres do what they do, let's look at how they're made.

Almost all radial road tyres are constructed the same way, with the only major differences being the compounds used and the final tread pattern design. The process of building a tyre starts with steel beads. These are encapsulated in rubber and form the tyre bead as we know it, providing the starting point for the rest of the tyre to be built upon. Next comes the liner (a non-porous, nylon-reinforced rubber used to form the basic shape of the tyre). This creates an airtight seal between the steel beads which enables the tyre to be inflated.

Tyre body plies (more parts made from nylon-reinforced rubber) are added on top of the liner. The quantity applied depends on intended application, but a typical road tyre will feature two or three plies. Steel reinforced sheets of rubber known as 'belts' are then added in order to provide the tyre with strength and durability. The quantity and type of steel belts used will help to determine the

finished tyre's load and speed ratings. Like plies, the number of belts will depend on the tyre's intended use, but you'll find two or three in most road tyres.

This blend of plies and steel belts is finished with a final layer of nylon-reinforced rubber before the tread cap is applied. The compounds of the rubber used in the tread cap will alter between road and race applications.

At this stage of construction, the tyre is still 'green', meaning the layers of soft, sticky, pliable rubber need to be cured. Curing involves applying heat and pressure, a process which causes the layers to bind together, creating what is essentially a hardened rubber laminate capable of delivering the desired characteristics. The curing press used will also indent the tread pattern design into the outer tread cap layer, as well as producing the required tyre markings and sidewall lettering.

Use our handy guide on page 43 to decode tyre markings, including speed ratings, date of manufacture, profile, rotation and safety test information.

in a harder compound are more restricted, resulting in a tyre with less grip.

As already mentioned, a soft tyre will wear faster than a hard tyre. It's the movement of the rubber molecules and the friction they generate that provides the grip we

crave, but it is also this same friction that causes the tyre to wear. In other words, you need to choose a compromise between the level of grip you want and the amount of time you're prepared to wait before treating your Mercedes to another set of tyres!



TREAD PATTERN DESIGNS

In addition to compounds used during construction, a tyre's tread pattern is a unique feature driven by ever-evolving research and development programmes carried out by manufacturers keen to combine function and form through appealing design. The different tread patterns available for road tyres can be split into three main categories: symmetrical, asymmetrical and directional.



SYMMETRICAL

A symmetrical tread pattern features the same pattern across the whole of the tyre's contact surface. This means the tyre can be fitted to any of your car's four wheels.

ASYMMETRICAL

An asymmetrical tread pattern is a design changing as it spreads across the width of the tyre's contact surface, meaning the tyre has an inside and an outside edge that needs to be observed before fitting. The outer edge and shoulder area of an asymmetrical design usually features, large, stiff tread blocks to help absorb high loads and maintain stability during cornering. Asymmetrical tread patterns also tend to have an inner edge comprising tightly-packed grooves. These help to disperse water and to provide enhanced grip in wet conditions. Asymmetrical designs usually feature a wide, continuous centre rib which encourages stability for straight-line speed.



DIRECTIONAL

Directional tread patterns differ from symmetrical and asymmetrical designs insofar as they're symmetrical across the width of the tyre. In other words, they have no specific inside or outside edge, yet they have a design which only works in one direction of rotation. Put simply, directional tyres are designed to be fitted to a pair of wheels (nearside or offside). They must be reversed for fitting to the opposite side of your Mercedes.

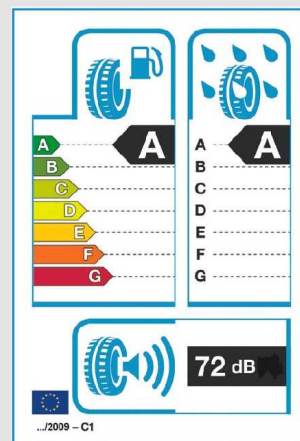
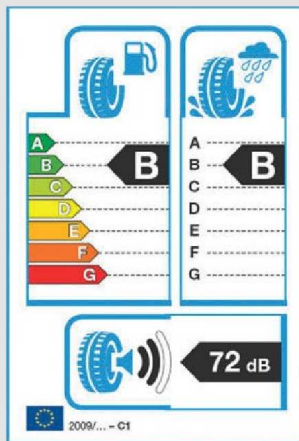


Directional tyres offer advantages over asymmetrical patterns. The primary benefit is wet weather performance – the high number and aggressive nature of grooves typically used on a directional pattern equates to greater water dispersion than any asymmetrical design. These deep directional grooves extract water from the centre of the tyre tread and throw it from the sides, resulting in impressive wet grip. In the dry, the same aggressive grooves have no water to disperse, but their larger tread blocks offer a

greater contact patch with the road than symmetrical tyres, thereby offering increased grip and reduced road noise.

Interestingly, it's possible to combine both asymmetrical and directional tread patterns in a design featuring both an inner and outer edge as well as a direction of rotation!

In short, directional tread patterns usually feature a stiffer tread block on the outer edge (similar to that of an asymmetrical tyre), but the pattern tends to incorporate aggressive grooves in keeping with the design of a directional tyre.



EU TYRE LABELLING

Since late 2012, all new tyres have to conform to an EU-approved labelling system. This information is displayed using the same easy-to-understand standardised system found stuck to white goods. Tyres are graded on wet weather performance, fuel efficiency and road noise, making it easy to compare different products on a like-for-like basis. Grades range from A to G (without D being used). A is the best performer, G is the worst. There are, however, key considerations you should be aware of:

FUEL EFFICIENCY

'Fuel efficiency' sounds attractive to most motorists and forms part of the EU's drive towards lowering vehicle emissions, but what a tyre is being tested for here is its rolling resistance (the amount of energy it takes to keep the tyre moving). Yes, a higher rolling resistance will cause the car to burn more fuel, but that's not necessarily a bad thing in terms of performance.

It may mean your tyre boasts superior levels of grip!

WET WEATHER

The wet weather rating is important for Mercedes owners who want to know a tyre's expected performance in wet and slippery conditions. The test involves driving a car along a wet road at 50mph and measuring braking distance to a complete stop. The difference between each rating is close to three metres, meaning there's a huge eighteen-metre difference between A and G-grade tyres!

NOISE LEVELS

Tyre manufacturers are keen to keep noise pollution to a minimum. The rating shows noise measured in decibels. There's also an accompanying 'sound bar'. One black bar indicates the tyre meets current legislation. Two black bars prove the tyre meets required noise restrictions. Three black bars tells you the tyre is at least three decibels below the future legal limit.

SHOULDER BLOCKS

While we're on the subject of tread pattern designs, it's worth us taking a look at the shoulder block area of a tyre. This is the area between the tread pattern and the sidewall taking the brunt of the car's lateral forces during cornering. As a consequence of this punishing treatment, shoulder blocks tend to be fairly chunky in their design, maximising the contact patch with the road as the tyre moves around under heavy cornering forces.

The grooves between the shoulder blocks are known as



'sipes'. Their job is to help keep tyre temperatures low. They also help to disperse water in wet driving conditions.

Sipes are deliberately spaced to ensure shoulder blocks are not uniformly sized. Instead, the size of the shoulder blocks differs all the way around the circumference of the tyre. This has the effect of altering harmonics and reducing the effects of unwanted road noise.

If shoulder blocks were all the same size, the tyre would produce an irritating hum when travelling at a steady speed.



WINTER TYRES

In recent years, winter tyres have increased in popularity. Some countries in mainland Europe force drivers to make use of them during the cold season! As the name suggests, the compounds and tread patterns used in the construction of winter tyres makes them more suited to cold, slippery, and icy conditions.

The adopted rubber compounds tend to include increased amounts of silica designed to help the tyre remain flexible in lower temperatures. Additionally, winter tyre tread patterns tend to feature deep grooves designed to clear snow, ice, slush, and water with increased efficiency.

Winter tyres are easily identifiable thanks to their

'snowflake' or 'snowy mountain peak' marking found on sidewalls. While these tyres will generally outperform summer tyres in temperatures below 7°C, they don't work as effectively in warmer temperatures. In the UK, there is currently no legal requirement for drivers to make use of winter tyres, but many experts think there may

be a change in legislation due to increasingly extreme winter weather caused by perceptible climate change. An alternative to buying two sets of tyres (one for winter, one for summer) is the purchase of 'all season' tyres. These feature a higher silica content than traditional summer tyres and keep rubber flexible in cold conditions while ensuring good performance in the warm.



HEALTH CHECK

You should take great care to avoid premature tyre failure. Ensure optimum performance at all times by observing the following:

TREAD WEAR

Abnormal tread wear is one of the most common causes of tyre failure. This condition is usually generated by incorrect suspension geometry (common on cars with altered ride height) or poorly operating brakes. Overinflated tyres will also encourage worn tread.

SIDEWALL DAMAGE

Tears, cuts, bubbles and other compromises to the sidewall are dangerous. If spotted, replace the tyre immediately. Typical causes of cuts and tears are hazards in the road, while bubbles and scrapes to the sidewall can be caused by impact damage from potholes and contact with kerbs.

TYRE SEPARATION

Separation of the tyre construction is uncommon and can be difficult one to spot. Bulges in the sidewall,

tread face or shoulder of the tyre are the usual indicators. Typical causes include excessive heat build-up as a result of underinflation or overinflation, as well as water entering the tyre carcass from an existing tear.

BEAD DAMAGE

Another unusual complaint, but one to be aware of. Bead damage is usually caused by poor fitting, particularly if an asymmetrical or directional tyre has been applied to the wrong wheel. The metal bead can bend or break leading to sidewall damage.

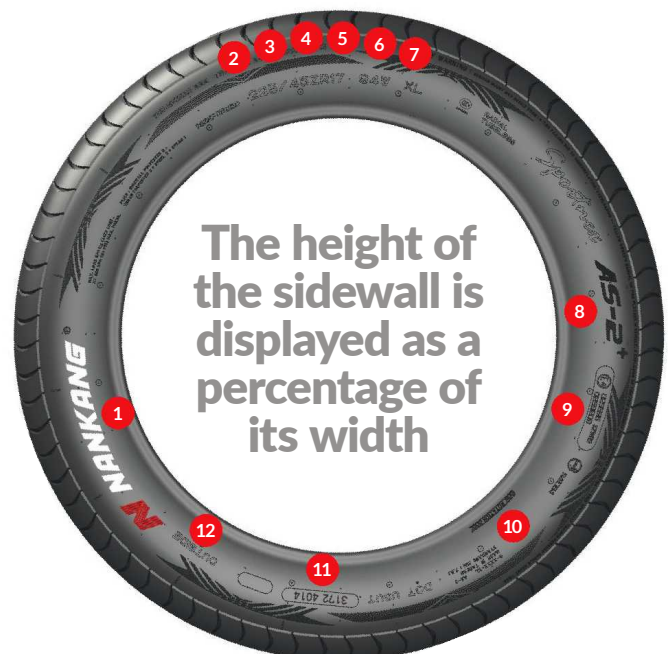


SIDEWALL MARKINGS

The markings stamped on a tyre's sidewall contain information detailing everything from the date of construction to the maximum safe speed and load rating. The fact tyres are produced for use worldwide means some tyre markings won't apply to Mercedes owners in the UK. Here are the codes you should be concerned with:

1 NANKANG Name and branding of tyre manufacturer.
2 225 Width (in mm) of tyre
3 45 Height of sidewall as a percentage of width, in this case forty-five percent of 225mm.
4 R R denotes tyre is radial.
5 17 Rim diameter (in inches).
6 94 Load index. Ranges from 50 to 150 and refers to the maximum load rating of the tyre. 94 indicates a maximum load index of 670kg.
7 W Speed index. This letter ranges from N to Y and refers to the maximum speed rating of the tyre. W indicates 168mph.

8 AS-2+ Tyre product name.
9 E4 01234 ECE mark proving tyre meets Economic Commission for Europe safety standards. The E4 designation in the circle indicates testing was carried out in the Netherlands. E1 would indicate Germany. E11 is the UK's ECE code.
10 ROTATION Tyre direction.
11 (4014) Date of manufacture. The first two digits (40) highlight the week, the second two digits (14) refer to the year.
12 OUTSIDE Denotes outward facing sidewall on asymmetrical tyre to avoid incorrect fitment.





TRACK DAY TYRES

Slicks provide the best performance on smooth, dry surfaces, primarily because all of the tread area is in contact with the asphalt. This sounds great, but slicks aren't road legal. Thankfully, many manufacturers offer road-legal tyres designed to be used at the track. These tyres tend to feature a high rubber content and a tread pattern with minimal grooves, resulting in a large contact patch and superior grip at normal operating temperatures, not to mention the ability to disperse water in wet conditions. Tyres such as Nankang's AR-1 and Toyo's R888R fall into this category.

The downsides to road-legal track day tyres are an increased rate of wear and reduced wet weather performance when compared with traditional road tyres.

Left Track-friendly road tyres are a big hit with owners of modified cars due to huge contact patches and excellent levels of grip in dry driving conditions



Run-flats have proved to be less than popular among driving enthusiasts

RUN-FLATS

Many new cars come supplied with run-flat tyres. Unsurprisingly, these do exactly as their name suggests, allowing a tyre with no air pressure to be driven for a limited period of time. This is great news if you get a puncture, but run-flats have proved to be less than popular among driving enthusiasts, primarily because the design of the tyre makes use of super-stiff sidewalls (a feature strong enough to support the weight of the car after the tyre has lost its air pressure).

Unsurprisingly, rigid sidewalls can deliver a rough ride when compared to the experience of rolling on traditional performance tyres. Moreover, the reduced flex in run-flat sidewalls hampers performance (remember, it's the movement of rubber and the way it interacts with the road that gives us grip). Run-flats are best suited to repmobiles covering mega miles, unless you believe the convenience of not having to replace a wheel and/or tyre at the side of the road is more important than performance.

CONTACTS

Nankang UK nankangtyre.co.uk

Longstone Classic Tyres longstonetyres.co.uk

Falken Tyre falkentyre.com

Toyo Tires UK toyo.co.uk



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MERCEDES 280SL/8 1969

12,437. Finished in O50 White with Black Leather the vehicle comes with matching colour hardtop and black softtop. UK supplied right hand drive with automatic transmission. Fully restored by John Haynes this vehicle now presents in pristine condition. Viewing and inspection is highly recommended to appreciate its quality.

£169,995



MERCEDES 280se 3.5 Cpe 1970

136,974 km
Finished in Midnight Blue with Blue Leather. A left hand drive example with wonderful history, low ownership and rare air-conditioning. Very original and well cared for through its previous owners. W111 3.5 Coupes are becoming increasingly desirable.

£89,995



MERCEDES CL55 AMG KOMPRESSOR 2003

39,375. Finished in Brilliant Silver Metallic with Anthracite Leather. A very rare vehicle with extremely high specification and low mileage. With a full service history and every MoT from new the condition is as virtually new. Without question the finest of its kind available. A great vehicle for enjoyment and investment.

£24,995



MERCEDES SL55 AMG 2005

59,212
Finished in Obsidian Black Metallic with Grey Leather. Only 1 former keeper with an impressive main dealership full service history. Extremely high specification and maintained to the highest standards. This SL55 AMG is fully sorted and raring to go.

£24,995



MERCEDES SL500 2003

31,709. Finished in Obsidian Black Metallic with Beige Leather. 5 speed automatic, ABC, bi-xenon headlights, heated and ventilated seats, parktronic, 18" alloy wheels, Comand system. Low ownership, very low mileage and full service history. Presenting in almost as new condition this is the nicest SL500 we have had the pleasure of offering. Viewing and road test is highly recommended.

£15,995



MERCEDES CL600 2001

44,222
Finished in Green Black Metallic with Java Beige Leather. 5 speed automatic, ABC, bi-xenon headlights, heated and ventilated seats, active cylinder shut off for economy, parktronic, AMG styling package, keyless go. With only 1 former keeper from new and an extensive history file this V12 still represents a top of the range vehicle in great condition.

£14,995



MERCEDES E55T AMG 2006

124,301
Finished in Brilliant Silver Metallic with Black Leather. Extremely high specification and maintained to the highest of standards through its former owners. Full service history and recently serviced by John Haynes. A stunning performance vehicle in top condition throughout.

£14,995



MERCEDES S500L 2006

70,868 miles
Finished in Tanzanite Blue Metallic with Beige Nappa Leather and Burr Walnut Veneer. Huge specification and in exceptionally good condition. Full service history and well sorted this pioneering S-CLASS represents the pinnacle of its era for luxury and comfort.

£14,995



MERCEDES 230E 1983

136,325
Finished in Midnight Blue with Cream Cloth. Known to us for nearly 25 years this vehicle has a huge history file with all MoT's from new and service history with 22 stamps in the original booklet. A W123 that presents and drives in this condition is rare to find especially in such a wonderfully smart colour combination.

£9,995

Specialists in the buying and selling of Classic and Youngtimer Mercedes-Benz vehicles

GOLD RUSH

Fast and studded with stacked headlight finery,
this W108 280 SE 3.5 has the Midas touch

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



LAST CHANCE
SALOONS



Two hundred ponies. Three and a half litres. Eight cylinders. Mix with Paul Bracq lines and you've got a compelling combination. Produced between 1970 and 1972, the 280 SE 3.5 introduced the M116 V8 to the short-wheelbase W108, creating a prototypic super saloon and a performance legend. Mercedes was on to a winner. Needless to say, searing in burnished amber, this 1971 example owned by Phil James more than deserves its gold paintwork.

He's favoured large Mercedes cars for decades, having been introduced to the marque's merits by a 1981 W126 500 SEL many moons ago. The car belonged to his first boss. Even so, Phil found himself despatched to recover the louche leviathan after it suffered a breakdown. "I was nineteen years old," he recalls. "I got the car up and running and was immediately taken aback by how fast it was. It felt as though I had to keep my foot on the brake to maintain a steady 30mph!"

Five years later, the very same Benz-badged beast was being readied for sale. Phil didn't think twice. Despite the car going on to provide him with faithful service, however, he had his eyes on the top rung of the ladder: a 560 SEL complete with every factory option. A dark blue example benefitting from individual rear buckets, full hydropneumatic

suspension and all the toys joined the 500 on his driveway in 1992, but the new arrival's presence signalled the end of the smaller-engined W126's time at the James residence. "My old boss was keen to get his car back. I ended up agreeing to sell it to him. To this day, I can't believe I parted with such a brilliant Benz. I must have suffered some form of mental lapse!"

The unique 500bhp TVR Boss Cerbera and a Lamborghini Diablo followed before Phil was presented with the opportunity to buy another mega Mercedes. The car in question was collecting dust at the back of his friend's paint shop. The mention of stacked headlights and 280 SE 3.5 badges on the car's boot lid was enough of a temptation for the boy from Buckinghamshire to register his interest, but he wasn't sure he was interested enough to buy. A short while later, his phone rang with news the car had found a new owner. You snooze, you lose!

SECOND CHANCE

How much had the car sold for? Phil had to find out. "Surprisingly affordable," came the response. If he'd have known the acceptable sale price was so low, he'd have bought it himself. "Well," said his friend. "If you're still interested, I'd rather sell it to you." The deal was done, and two potential plans for the project swiftly developed: if the car was in

Below Slushbox makes for effortless continent cruising in Phil's magnificent Merc

Bottom The car's user interface may be simple, but there's no denying its retro chic



Saving bacon

Any racing fan will know why Phil was considering turning his gorgeous gold W108 into a Red Pig replica: the one-off 300 SEL fielded by AMG in the early 1970s is one of the most famous touring car racers ever built. With wide arches, wider tyres and a bored-out 6.8-litre V8, the Pig had pace to spare at Spa when it defied critics to finish second overall and first-in-class at the Belgian circuit's twenty-four hour endurance race in 1971. Denuded of its bumpers and painted bright red, we can only imagine what the 400bhp monster looked like to other competitors! Originally developed by a covert team of Mercedes engineers, the project raced successfully in Macau before being sold to AMG. Thus, the *Rote Sau* was developed for its greatest success!





DRIVER

Q&A



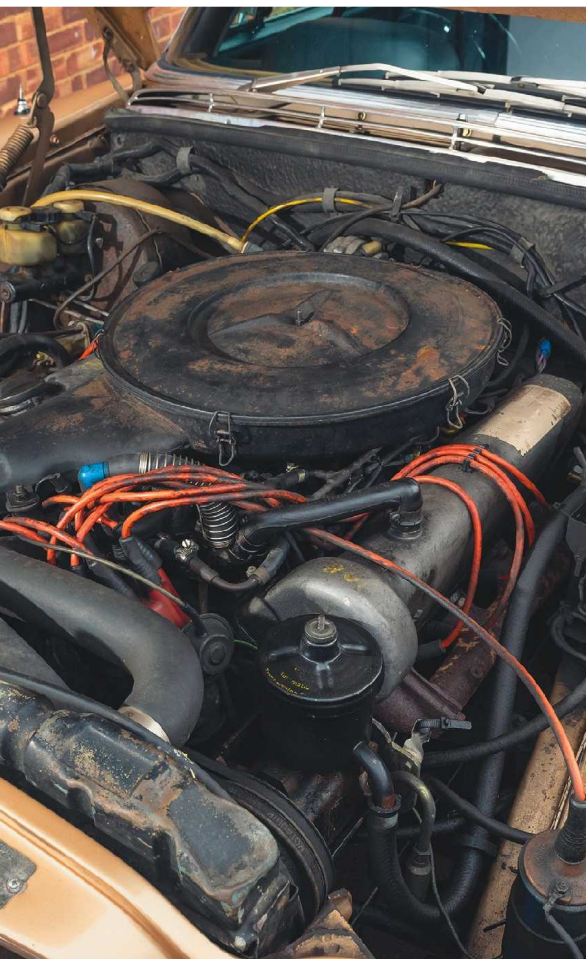
PHIL JAMES

First Mercedes
1981 500 SEL

Favourite Mercedes
Maybe Jay Kay's
ex-Coco Chanel W100?

**Best thing about your
W108 280 SE 3.5**
Probably the colour

**Worst thing about your
W108 280 SE 3.5**
It's tough, but if I had
to nit-pick, I'd say the
car's poor windscreen
demisting abilities



Above Galaxy whitewalls add extra depth to the car's exterior

Left Phil is proud of the fact his W108 is used in all weather and covers many miles

good overall condition, it would be put back on the road after necessary recommissioning work, but if the snoozing four-door proved to be a rotter, it would be turned into a Red Pig replica racer and punished at the track.

On arrival at Milton Keynes-based marque specialist, Autoclass, the 280 SE was treated to a thorough inspection. The results tipped Phil's plans towards preservation; despite sitting in storage for a decade, the 3.5-litre engine was in good condition and the body was largely free from corrosion. "It looked worse than it was," he confirms. "The car had been partially stripped, much of its exterior trim had been chucked into the boot space and panels appeared to have been flatted back ready for fresh paint. Funny little things like the bonnet latches needed to be replaced, but those parts are easy to obtain direct from Mercedes." Fresh fluids, filters, a full service and concerted work on the Bosch D-Jetronic electronic fuel injection system was all the car's beating heart required. Only the condition of the paintwork stood in the way of a rapid return to the road.

Impressed by the full respray they'd given his 560 SEL a few years earlier, Phil asked the guys at Autowerx Bodyshop in Milton Keynes to get his W108 shining again. Working from a paint pot found buried in the car's boot, the team replaced the original straw-tinged gold with its current brighter shade. Warm and full-bodied with bronze undertones, the gorgeous finish draws stares whenever it's on display. "The colour looks great, even when covered in a layer of road film," smiles Phil. "People always want to stop and talk to me about the car whenever I'm filling up at







a fuel station. I never imagined folk would be so enthusiastic about my Mercedes. They certainly don't expect me to tell them I use it as a daily!"

BEST FOOT FORWARD

It's the attention to detail which brings this build to completion. All five wheels, including the spare, have been fitted with Galaxy R1 whitewall rubber supplied by North Hants Tyres, while pre-1975 black and silver registration plates add an extra air of authenticity. Not content to stop there, Phil even attended our photo shoot with his feet tucked firmly into gold-flecked Jeffery West suede winklepickers! "I only ever wear winklepickers," he admits. "The guys at Jeffery West come up with incredible creations. This pair matches my Merc!"

For three years, this wonderful W108 has served as a dependable daily companion. Living outside and used in all seasons, the big-grilled Benz has


Above Gorgeous paintwork was applied to the car by the guys at Autowerx Bodyshop in Milton Keynes

Facing page A lazy old Benz is a comfortable place to be when it comes to long journeys

covered 15,000 miles since Phil returned it to the public highway. Occasional air locks in the power steering system have been the only cause for complaint. "The car has demanded little from me other than routine servicing. It's a cared-for Mercedes, but it isn't mollycoddled. When I'm ready to embark on long trips, all I do is look at the oil level, check tyre pressures and get going," he says, referencing the historic race meetings at Spa Francorchamps he attends with his retro ride ably fulfilling its role as his transport of choice.

Previously, he'd used a Lamborghini Espada to carry him across the continent. As you'd expect, differences between the big V12 grand touring coupe and his Benz are pronounced. "At first, friends would ask me why I hadn't turned up in the Lambo!" he laughs. "I wouldn't have a word said against the car, but I don't mind admitting an Espada is a physical machine to drive. In contrast, the Merc is an easy cruiser. I love it!"

Despite his apparent need for speed, Phil has no plans to play with his 280 SE's standard specification. Furthermore, he hasn't a desire to sell the sensational saloon any time soon. "Oh no," he stresses. "Where would I find another classic like this? It eats miles, it looks fantastic, it's utterly usable and I can go anywhere in it. This car has exceeded all my expectations!"

His vote of confidence reminds us of *The Life and Death of King John*, where Shakespeare suggested there's no need to "throw a perfume on the violet" and said nothing was to gain from "painting the lily". Indeed, if you have a W108 280 SE 3.5 that performs and looks as good as Phil's at your disposal, why "gild refined gold"?! 



NEC CLASSIC MOTOR SHOW

Amazing Mercedes cars were the highlight of the UK's biggest
and best indoor presentation of vintage vehicles

WORDS & PHOTOGRAPHY **Dan Furr**

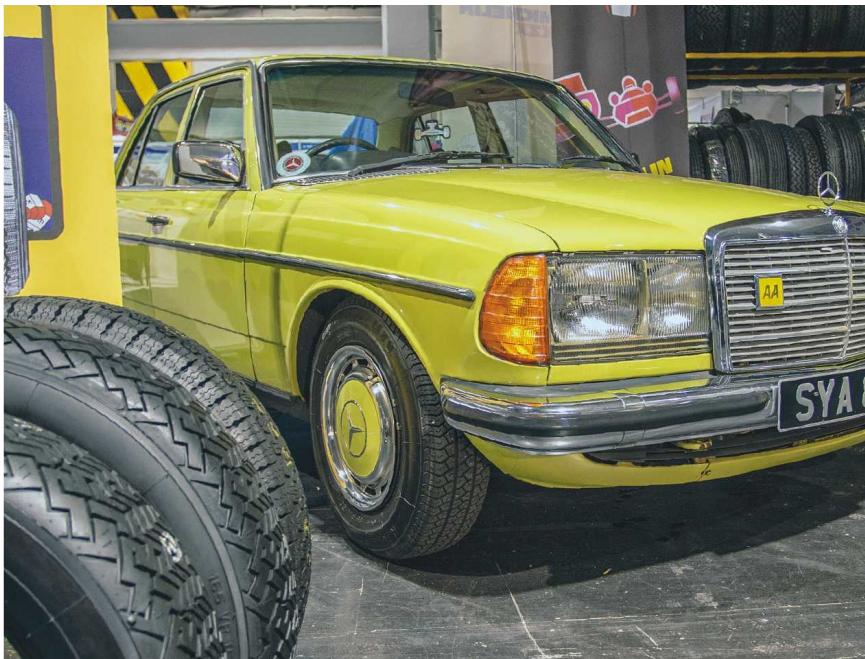


Top The SL Shop wowed visitors to its stand with this gorgeous red R107

Facing page Keep 'em peeled for a full feature about Geoffrey Hunter's Moss Green 600 in a forthcoming issue of Mercedes Driver magazine

The second weekend of November saw Birmingham's National Exhibition Centre taken over by the Lancaster Insurance Classic Motor Show, an event bringing together lovers of vintage cars from all over the UK. Covering more than one million square feet (approximately eighteen football pitches), the show played host to over three thousand iconic retro rides, including a high number of Benz-badged beauties.

Three hundred clubs presented a diverse mix of cars, vans, motorcycles and tractors (yes, really!), affording show-goers the opportunity to discover rare motors spanning a century of automotive history. A huge autojumble, a 'best of the best' showcase from the car care experts at Meguiar's, a highly anticipated multi-marque Silverstone



Auctions sale and more than five hundred specialist exhibitors also provided much to marvel at.

GREEN WITH ENVY

Mercedes Driver readers who were able to get to the three-day event delighted in the huge footprint Mercedes metal occupied in hall number one. Mercedes-Benz Club UK's display included Geoffrey Hunter's 1965 Moss Green Grand 600, a stunning short-wheelbase wonder originally owned by successful music industry manager, Gordon Mills. The stand also featured Derek Wood's 170V, a rare right-hand drive sports roadster built for a British Mercedes customer in 1938. Powered by a 1,697cc four-cylinder engine and producing just under 40bhp, it's a fantastic example of a car praised for its smoothness and efficiency at the point of manufacture eight decades ago.

A surprise inclusion among the club's many exhibits was the brooding black Maybach S 650 supplied by Mercedes-Benz UK. Packing a level of comfort likened to that of a first-class cabin aboard a Boeing 777, the large barge is the company's flagship in luxurious motoring and cut a striking figure, attracting a constant stream of admirers throughout the weekend.







Elsewhere, The SL Shop proudly exhibited a pristine red R107, while Gmund Cars, Hemmels, Kerbey Motors, Graeme Hunt and Devonshire Motor Company were among the many dealers and restorers offering interested parties the opportunity to own a modern classic of their own.

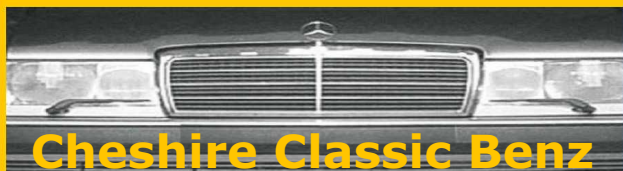
JAPANESE DREAM

Not to be outdone, the on-site Silverstone Auctions sale offered a selection of interesting retro rides to prospective purchasers. A 1989 300 SL and a four-litre V8 G-Wagen being offered from the private car collection of Jamiroquai frontman, Jay Kay, commanded the attention of those present, as did three spotless Pagodas, a 1971 280 SE 3.5 V8 coupe, big-power W124s, a 2005 SL65 AMG and a selection of Mercedes-themed automobilia. Our pick of the sale's huge lot list was a 1994 left-hand drive E500 recently imported from Japan. Despite low mileage and an attractive price point, however, the car failed to find a new home.

Huge thanks to all participating clubs and their members for wheeling out brilliant builds. We're looking forward to next year's show already. Fingers crossed for the appearance of an even higher quota of Mercedes machinery!

Above 1989 R107 300 SL owned by Jay Kay sold at the on-site Silverstone Auctions sale for £28,688





The Finest Examples of Mercedes-Benz Cars from the 1960s to the 1990s

300SL Roadster 1988F

Astral Silver metallic, matching hardtop, blue soft top, blue sport check interior, 4 speed auto, ABS, electric windows, rear seats, original alloy wheels, FSH, 103,000m £28,950



300SL Roadster 1986C

Signal Red, matching hardtop, dark brown soft top, Saffron sport check interior, 4 speed auto, electric windows, rear seats, original alloy wheels, FSH, 51,000m £35,950

E320 Sportline Cabrio 1996N

Ruby Red metallic, Mushroom leather, black soft top, 4 speed auto, airbags, heated seats, wood/leather steering wheel, original Sportline 15" alloys, FSH, 89,000m £16,950



S420L Limousine 1998S

Tourmaline Green met, Mushroom leather, mega spec inc. dual zone climate, F/R elec seats, elec sunroof, wood/lthr steering wheel, elec rear blind, orig 17" alloys, FSH, ONE OWNER, 27,000m . . . £17,950

E320 Sportline Cabrio 1994L

Blue/Black metallic, grey leather, black soft top, 4 speed auto, cruise, airbag, electric seats, electrically adjustable steering column, leather steering wheel, original Sportline 15" alloys, FSH, 96,000m £15,950



SL320 Roadster 1996P

Green/Black met, Mushroom leather, new black soft top, panoramic hardtop, 5-Sp auto, ABS/BAS/ESP, climate, cruise, airbags, leather steering wheel/gearknob, original 16" alloys, FSH, 86,000m . £11,950

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TAKE CHARGE

Throwing caution to the wind, Tim Dunne splashed out on an SL55 AMG after years spent driving down-to-earth diesels

WORDS **Dan Furr** PHOTOGRAPHY **Dan Sherwood**

What was it that first spiked your interest in Mercedes cars? Perhaps your formative years were spent in a household shared with family members who expressed affection for the three-pointed star? Maybe you were exposed to a mind-blowing AMG or Brabus at an early age? For oil and gas sector construction manager, Tim Dunne, the story is far less deep-rooted. "A mate was selling a diesel-powered W202 at a time I was on the lookout for a reasonably priced car capable of high mileage at low cost. I wasn't on the hunt for any particular make or model. My friend's C 250 D simply happened to be the right car at the right time."

The four-door's attractive asking price was due to a suspected gearbox complaint. Tim took the car to a trusted mechanic who immediately recognised the problem to be linked to an electrical fault. A quick fix marked the beginning of five fault-free years of happy motoring until the trusty C-Class made way for an Audi A6.

"I owned the VAG saloon for three years," he explains. "It was a lovely car, but I preferred being behind the wheel of a Mercedes. I decided to go shopping for a tidy W212 E-Class. Funnily enough, the 2009 E350 CDI I bought came from another of my friends!"

Tim still owns the car and speaks highly of its reliability, fuel economy and ability to ferry him up and down the nation's motorways in comfort whenever he's out and about visiting construction sites. "I struggle to think what I could replace my E350 with. It's been a wonderful workhorse, and no other car seems to offer the same value for money. I'll probably end up buying a W213 diesel when purchase prices become more agreeable."

At this point in our story, you'll recognise Tim for being a man who spends his pennies sensibly. He certainly doesn't come across as being the kind of guy who'd blow a massive amount of cash on an impractical sports car best suited to drivers who have shares in an oil refinery, right?! Wrong. "I got a value added tax refund against the self-build barn I live in," he grins. "Suddenly, I found myself in command of a spare twenty grand and a hankering for a modern SL. Before long, I was cooing over a fantastic example of an SL55 AMG being offered by Centurion Motors, a specialist car dealership in Kettering."

FINE SPECIMEN

Registered in late 2003, the raucous R230 ticked every box on a buyer's wish list. One owner from new? Check. Low mileage? Check. Full main dealer service history? Check. Perfect cosmetic and mechanical condition? Check. "I remember thinking the car was utterly beautiful in every way," beams Tim. "Pleasingly, the guys at Centurion had fitted new roof seals to counter the common complaint of water leaking into the mechanism of the folding drop-top. It really was an SL55 wanting nothing more than a new home!"

More than happy to add his name to the supercharged V8's logbook, Tim was soon driving a minty fresh Mercedes sharing very little in common with the conservatively dressed diesels he'd been commuting in. How did he find jumping from a sensible saloon into a near-500bhp AMG billed as the most powerful production Mercedes ever built when the model was launched in 2002? "The way the supercharger delivers power from the 5.4-litre V8 is intoxicating!" he roars. "The car is nothing short of amazing, offering masses of grip and totally obedient handling. I've managed to lose the back end a couple of times, but only on

Below Tim's pre-facelift SL55 AMG achieves a full roof retraction in twenty seconds, whereas the later R230 SL55 AMG managed the same task in no more than sixteen seconds





loose surfaces, and only when I've really punished the car in the hope of achieving a bit of spin." He's also thrilled to be charge of a convertible which manages to achieve the rare feat of looking just as good with the roof up as when it's folded down.

He admits to dropping the retractable hardtop – a process taking just twenty seconds – whenever he's out and about exploring the massive 516lb/ft torque his silver plaything promises to exploit. "I see little point in owning a convertible and leaving the roof up," he reasons. "That said, I do allow the car to maintain its coupe-esque looks if my wife, Claire, is with me. She doesn't like the bluster of open-top motoring messing with her hair!" he roars.

Enhanced by Turbine wheels, the beautifully proportioned lines and sleek curves of the SL55 AMG we're looking at make it difficult to believe we're in the presence of a *Sportlich Leicht* approaching its twentieth birthday. Indeed, if Tim stuck a personalised number plate at each end of his road rocket, most admirers less than familiar with the Mercedes product range would be forgiven for thinking he was pulling up in a car far newer than a fifth-gen SL. "People want to

speak to me about my SL55 whenever I stop at a fuel station or parking lot," he smiles. "All credit to Mercedes for developing such an enduring styling package. It's a real talking point when I'm on my travels." Proving the model's appeal, another of his Mercedes-owning mates rushed out and bought an SL55 AMG immediately after being bowled over by the look, sound and performance of the supercharged speed machine being enjoyed by the Dunnes. We can see why!

TREAD CAREFULLY

Clearly, the force-fed AMG's form is a huge part of the appeal, as is the function of the M113 V8 nestled beneath that long bonnet, but it would be churlish of us not to acknowledge the fact these cars have a reputation for going horribly and expensively wrong. Perhaps unsurprisingly, common faults are usually associated with stock R230 componentry, including temperamental electrical systems and the convoluted roof mechanism. No such problems for Tim. "I've covered eleven thousand miles in the car without complaint," he assures us. His chosen spanner man is Albert Lock, a well-known Mercedes

DRIVER Q&A



TIM DUNNE

First Mercedes
W202 C 250 D

Favourite Mercedes
W212 E350 CDI

Best thing about your SL55 AMG
The linear delivery of supercharged power

Worst thing about your SL55 AMG
It's far too good to use as my daily



ONE OF THE BEST-LOOKING PRODUCTION SPORTS CARS SINCE THE TURN OF THE MILLENNIUM

specialist based in Rushden. Lock has been responsible for all the car's servicing and health checks throughout Tim's happy five years of AMG ownership. The seasoned Mercedes mechanic has repeatedly confirmed his opinion the shimmering two-door is an exceptional example of an SL55. More importantly, he's happy to report it's an AMG completely free of fault.

Coupling devastatingly good design with a

Above Supercharger allows for instant access to the car's massive torque, a feature Tim enjoys taking advantage of

massive amount of power, the SL55 AMG is a modern classic. Bag a good one, and you'll wonder why it took you so long to buy one of the fastest and best-looking production sports cars assembled since the turn of the millennium. Speak to Tim if you need further convincing regarding the value for money offered by this marvellous Mercedes. He's very good at spending carefully, or so we were led to believe!



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2003 Mercedes SL500, Jasper Blue, 1 lady owner, 62000 miles, FSH £9,795



2000 Mercedes SLK320, Brilliant Silver, Black hide, 63000 miles, FSH £5,795



1994 Mercedes 300SL R129, Signal Red, Cream leather, 62000 miles, FSH £8,495



1999 Mercedes E55 AMG, Brilliant Silver, every extra, 65000 miles, FSH £8,995



1962 Jaguar Mk2 3.8, Red, Beige hide, PAS, Auto, CWW, Good car £21,995



2001 Mercedes SLK320, Designo Metallic Purple, 20000 miles, FSH £9,795



2000 Mercedes SLK230, Brilliant Silver, Black Hide, 44000 miles, FSH £5,995



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2001(X) BMW Z3 2.2i Roadster, Titan Silver, Black hide, 61000 miles, FSH £5,295



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1997(P) BMW E36 328i Convertible Auto, Samoa Blue, 62000 miles, FSH £4,995



1968 Triumph TR4A IRS, LHD, Dark Green, wire wheels, very nice £24,995



2003 BMW Z4 3.0i Convertible, Metallic Silver, Black hide, 62000 miles. £5,795



1999 Mazda MX5 Mk2 1.6i, Racing Bronze, 1 owner, 27000 miles, FSH £3,995



1999 BMW Z3 1.9 Roadster, Boston Green, Green/Beige hide, 34000 miles. £5,495



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Brake time

Stopping power is just as important as being able to achieve high speed. We took time out to answer a selection of commonly asked questions about braking systems...

WORDS **Dan Furr** PHOTOGRAPHY **Various**

1. What are brake pads made from?

Brake pads are often made from a variety of different materials. Standard street compound pads are usually a nonmetallic composite of synthetic properties. They offer excellent bite in the cold and low noise when called into action, but they lack heavy duty friction and their effect will 'fade' at relatively low temperatures when compared to performance pads.

At the other end of the scale, race compounds are usually fully metallic or ceramic in their make-up. Offering much higher levels of friction, these pads are less susceptible to fade, but they need warming up in order to operate properly due to a poor cold bite. They're great for the track or 'spirited' driving, but poor for nipping to the shops and back!

A good 'middle ground' is a sport compound pad. Made from semi-metallic materials, the cold

bite is good and the warm bite is even better. You may hear a small amount of noise during braking (especially when slamming on the anchors), but it's a small price to pay for big gains in friction and noticeably reduced fade.



Above Choosing the right brake pad will make a huge difference to the stopping power of your Mercedes

2. What does DOT mean when it comes to rating brake fluid?

DOT is a system created by America's Department of Transport (see what they did there?!) to grade brake fluids based on their boiling points. DOT4 has a minimum boiling point of 230°C, more than enough for street driving. DOT5 has a much higher boiling point, ideal for racing. It's worth noting DOT5 fluids include silicone-based ingredients, so check to make sure your car's braking system is compatible before filling up.

3. Why is it important to change brake fluid regularly?

Glycol-based brake fluid is hygroscopic, meaning it loves to absorb moisture. This is terrible for the continued effectiveness of brake fluid, primarily because it dramatically reduces the desired boiling temperature. Put it this way, just three percent water in DOT4 fluid can halve its boiling point! Over time, moisture can find its way into brake fluid via micro pores in a fluid reservoir filler cap, poor quality brake lines or compromised seals. Furthermore, moisture in brake fluid forms bubbles which causes spongy pedal feel. Don't ignore the manufacturer's recommended brake fluid service interval.



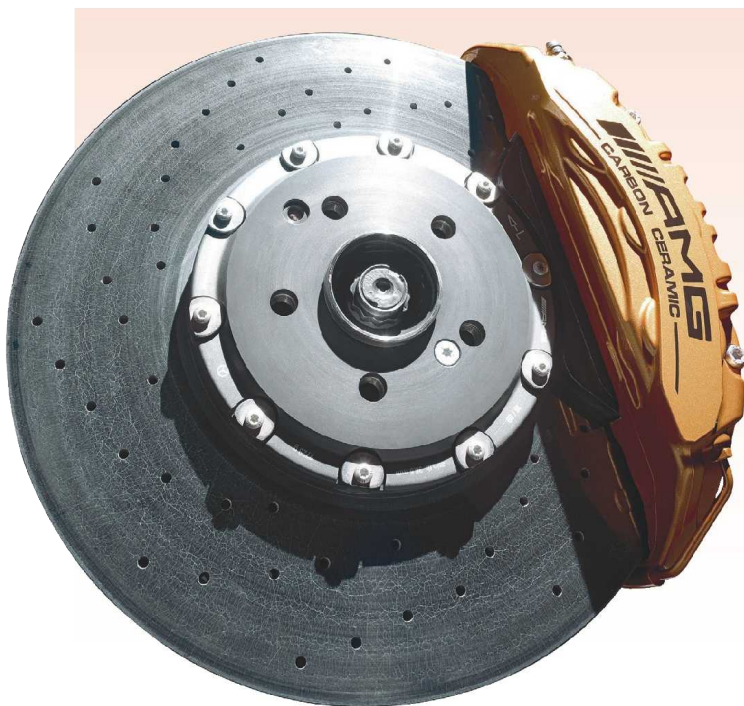
4. What does bleeding brakes actually do?

Much like moisture, air will

find its way into your car's braking system over time, so it needs to be bled out like the air that occasionally needs to be released from the radiator in your living room. The biggest problem with having air in your car's braking system is that unlike brake fluid, air is compressible. This causes 'spongy' pedal feel. If left unattended for significant periods of time, complete brake failure may occur. Bleeding the brakes allows the air to escape. Good riddance!

5. Why are bigger discs more effective than smaller discs?

When you increase the diameter of a disc (and change your car's calipers accordingly) the amount of braking torque exponentially increases. In theory, the bigger the disc, the faster you'll stop, but you're limited by how much grip your car's tyres will allow. For example, depending on the quality of the tyre you've bought (read our guide to different types of tyre design by flicking to page 38), discs over a certain size will force you to brake so hard a loss of grip encourages ABS to kick in (where the system is present). Keep in mind the fact brake discs are heavy items which may impact the effectiveness of your car under acceleration. The recommended size of discs depends on the model of Mercedes you own and your driving style, but generally speaking, heavy cars require large discs for effective braking, while lighter cars can get away with running smaller discs.



6. Why are ceramic brake discs so expensive?

Ceramic discs are made from a compound of carbon and ceramic materials. The manufacturing process is complicated and drawn-out. A single disc can take up to a month to produce! Additionally, ceramic discs are ordinarily only used in ultra-high-performance applications. Disc manufacturers won't admit it, but supercar tax may be at play when it comes to the price of these parts!

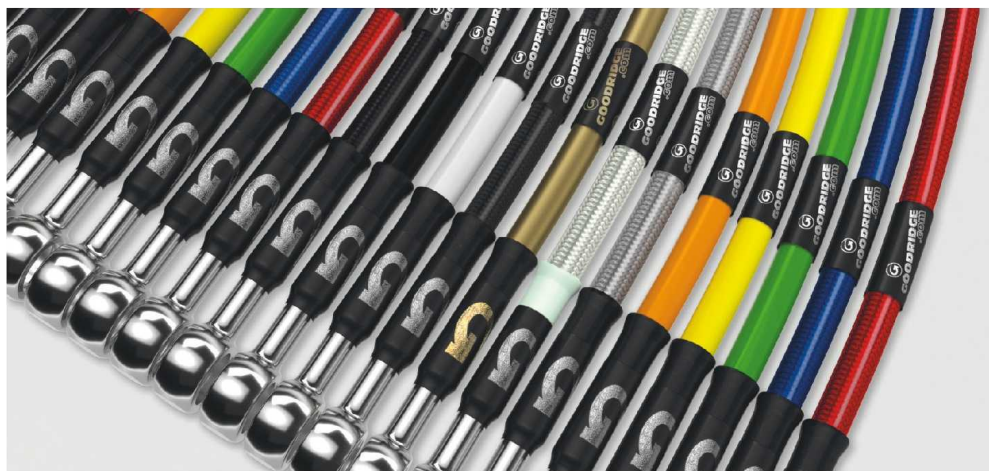
Left Ceramic discs are optimised for modern supercars and professional motorsport applications





7. Why do many of today's performance brake discs feature drilled holes or grooves?

There are a couple of reasons for having grooves, slots and/or drilled holes in your car's brake discs. Firstly, the friction created between pad and disc under load produces a lot of heat. Toasty temperatures can lead to brake fade. Grooves and holes allow heat to escape. They also help to channel water, dirt and other unwanted material away from the contact surface of the disc, thus maintaining maximum friction during operation. Many modern sports cars feature grooved discs as OEM equipment.



Above Braided brake hoses are a low-cost upgrade and can be colour-coded to your car

8. Why do people fit braided brake hoses to their cars?

Braided hoses, such as those made by Goodridge and HEL, feature a Teflon inner wall with an outside layer comprising strands of braided stainless steel designed to offer massively increased safety and durability over

factory rubber hoses. Furthermore, OEM rubber hoses tend to expand during operation, whereas braided hoses retain their shape, allowing for a much firmer pedal feel. A firmer brake pedal means better feedback and better braking, which equates to heightened safety and confidence when travelling at speed. **D**



9. Why are two-piece brake discs considered better than single-piece brake discs?

The last thing you want when flying down a straight at 100mph and slamming on your car's stoppers is sudden brake fade. Two-piece discs come supplied with aluminium centres often referred to as 'bells'. Surprisingly, the contact area between the disc and bell is minimal. This is great for heat dissipation and makes the disc very light, but more often than not, a brake kit of this nature is overkill for a road car. Furthermore, you may need to invest in a larger set of wheels – and, therefore, new tyres – to accommodate the increased size of bigger calipers and brackets designed for two-piece discs. They're a great idea for a performance Mercedes, particularly if the car in question is put to work on track days. Thankfully, you'll only have to replace the outer disc when it comes to servicing your brakes.



Above Two-piece discs are a mainstay of performance motoring, where the aluminium centre 'bell' is separate from the outer disc



10. What is a hydraulic handbrake?

A hydraulic handbrake replaces a car's conventional cable-operated unit by connecting to the main braking system and using the same hydraulic pressure to clamp the rear calipers. The advantage of a handbrake of this nature is its immense power, but this is an illegal setup for street use and will reward you with an MOT failure if you don't obey the rules.

11. Why are they outlawed?

In addition to keeping your Mercedes in place when you've parked it on a steep incline, a handbrake is considered to be your car's emergency brake (a backup in case your main

braking system fails). The law states a road car's handbrake must be cable operated and fully independent from the main stoppers. Now you know!

12. Why are fixed calipers generally held in higher regard than floating calipers?

Many modern cars come with floating/sliding calipers loaded with one or two pistons. When hydraulic pressure from the master cylinder forces the piston against the pad, the whole caliper is pulled inwards as the pads clamp down on the disc, hence them being referred to as 'floating'. A downside to this mode of operation is that the pads on the outer side of the caliper tend to wear unevenly. Another is that since the pistons need to travel so much, the brake pedal can feel unresponsive. Fixed calipers, like those on many Mercedes, feature multiple pistons on each side. Since the pistons are clamping from both sides, the caliper doesn't need to move. It remains fixed in place. This results in even pad wear, more effective braking, and a firmer, more responsive brake pedal.

13. I want to impress the ladies. How do I perform the perfect handbrake turn in my W202?

We've often pondered the same question. Ask Ken Block. Let us know what he says.

CONTACTS

Goodridge goodridge.co.uk **EBC Brakes** ebcbrakes.com **Tarox** tarox.co.uk **MTEC Brakes** mtecbrakes.com
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WINNING WAYS

Tin-top triumphs have been a mainstay of Mercedes motorsport for thirty exciting years. Let's take a look at the works team's greatest victories.

WORDS **Dan Furr** PHOTOGRAPHY **Various**

Despite Mercedes-AMG announcing its decision to quit DTM in order to focus its non-F1 motorsport efforts on the burgeoning Formula E series, our favourite manufacturer and Germany's domestic touring car championship have been a match made in heaven. Success started when Mercedes joined the modern DTM's predecessor, the Deutsche Tourenwagen Meisterschaft, at the start of what we now consider to be the golden age of touring car racing.

It was 1988, and factory bosses exploited the abilities of the 190E to full effect by putting it in the hands of star driver, Johnny Cecotto.

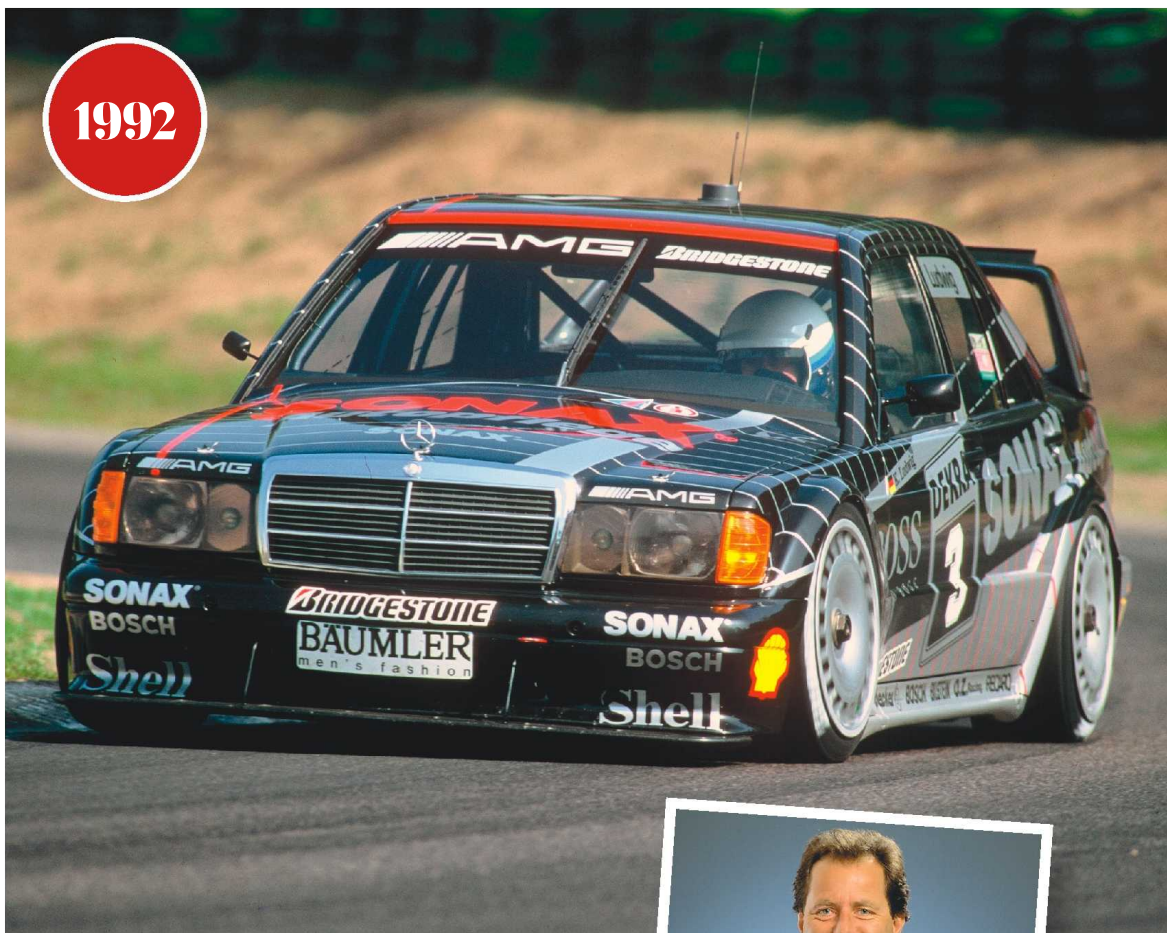
Privateer teams were already well aware of the Cosworth-tweaked 190E's abilities at the track, but it took the works team four seasons of racing to secure the first of eleven driver's titles. In this trip down memory lane, we take a look at each of these factory wins, amazing achievements contributing to a colourful history of touring car success climaxing with 2018's triple trophy haul. Mercedes-AMG, DTM's gonna miss you!

Above Mercedes-AMG's bid for DTM dominance started in 1988 when superbike champion and F1 star, Johnny Cecotto, was placed in charge of the 190E 2.3-16

1978 1979 1980 1981 1982 1983 1984 1985 1986 1987 **1988**

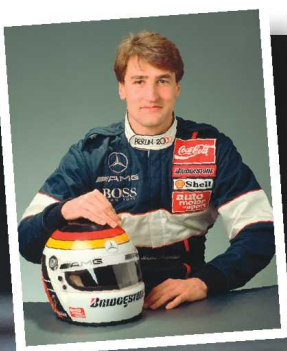
1988-1994

F1 star, Johnny Cecotto, stormed to a sixth place finish in the works team's first season of DTM action. RS500 pilot and experienced Le Mans driver, Klaus Ludwig, won the title that year, an achievement impressive enough for the big-wigs at Mercedes to invite him to pilot the 190E 2.3-16 and 2.5-16 Evo in 1989. Always ranking high at season end and rated as one of the DTM's fastest men on four wheels, it took Ludwig until 1992 to win the championship in a Merc, an achievement he managed from behind the wheel of the achingly cool 190E 2.5-16 Evo II. Nicola Larini fought hard to win the series for Alfa Romeo in 1993, but Ludwig was never one to rest on his laurels, securing his second DTM title for Mercedes with the D2 Privat C-Class in 1994.



FROM THE
VAULTS

1971 1972 1973 1974 1975 1976 1977

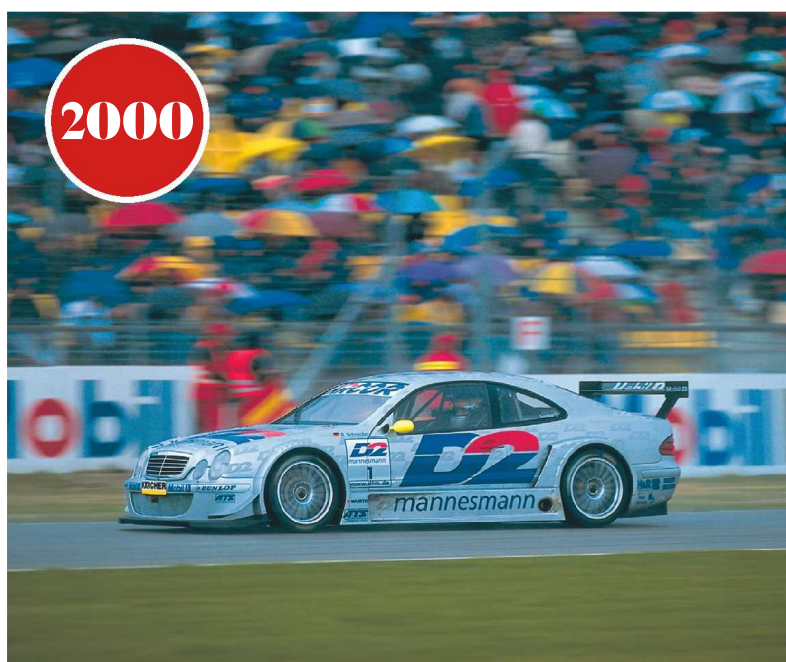


1995

**1995-2001**

Ludwig bid farewell to Mercedes at the end of 1994 to compete in the DTM with Keke Rosberg's Calibra, a move opening the door for Bernd Schneider to prove his ability to attack the asphalt in convincing style. He did exactly that with the C-Class in 1995, winning the series with a convincing twenty-five point lead over his nearest rival. By this time, tin-top racing in Europe was proving more popular than F1. Works teams had the budget to prove it. Sadly, costs spiralled out of control, resulting in unsustainable racing and the cancellation of DTM at the end of 1996. The series was reborn in 2000 after Mercedes' disastrous Le Mans efforts. Once again, Schneider won the DTM (this time, in the CLK) and repeated his success in 2001.

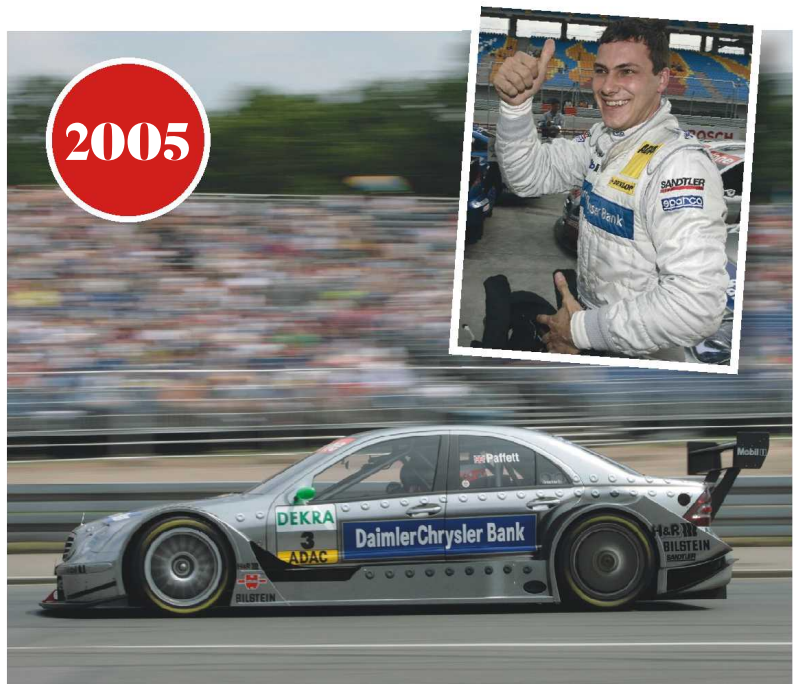
2000



2001



1978 1979 1980 1981 1982 1983 1984 1985 1986 1987 **1988**



2003-2006

Schneider had the bit between his teeth in 2003 after finishing second in the 2002 DTM. Returning AMG touring cars to winning ways, he drove the Vodafone-liveried CLK to a triumphant series victory. He could only manage a sixth place finish at season end in 2004, but a young Brit named Gary Paffett was more comfortable with the new C-Class, pushing his HWA works car to second place in the championship behind the Audi A4 driven by Mattias Ekstrom. Paffett's clear determination paid dividends in 2005, when the boy from Bromley won his first DTM title, piloting his silver C-Class to beat Ekstrom by thirteen points. Schneider was never far behind, though, winning an amazing fourth DTM title in 2006.



FROM THE
VAULTS1981 1982 1983 1984 1985 1986 1987 **1988****2010****2015****2010-2018**

Paul di Resta won the 2010 DTM for Mercedes before embarking on a career in F1. The works team had to wait five more years for one of its drivers to return to the top spot, a feat managed by Pascal Wehrlein before he too moved to F1. Paffett secured the team's final DTM driver's title in 2018 with the C63.

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BUYING *Your next Mercedes*

PERFORMANCE SALOON BEST BUYS

The four-doors offering the best bang for your buck in 2019

WORDS **Dan Furr** PHOTOGRAPHY **Various**

LAST CHANCE
SALOONS

In this issue of *Mercedes Driver*, we've focused on some of the Benz-badged super saloons creeping up in value. There's plenty more four-door fun to choose from than the models we've showcased, though, which is why we've compiled this list detailing the keen quartet of performance saloons we think you should pay attention to when preparing for your next fix of high-octane action. We've considered reliability, practicality, performance, tunability, market value forecasts (to avoid you losing money!) and a broad range of budgets. Sit back, relax and prepare to go shopping.

You can argue amongst yourselves about whether the CLS is a 'proper' saloon

W219 CLS 55 AMG

If you fancy a modern Mercedes saloon balancing practicality, performance and excellent value for money, the superb W219 CLS 55 AMG is the perfect solution. You can argue amongst yourselves about whether the CLS is a 'proper' saloon (there will be a fair few of you who'll brand us heretics for considering the fastback design of the feisty four-door as anything but the hallmark of a coupe), but what isn't up for debate is the immense amount of fun on four wheels this AMG delivers.

Like most Affalterbach-branded Mercs, the secret to the CLS 55's success lies beneath its bonnet, where a 5.4-litre supercharged V8 with three valves per cylinder produces 476bhp and a mighty 516lb/ft torque, resulting in a 0-60mph time of less than 4.7 seconds. A quick steering rack and adjustable AirMATIC suspension help to sharpen the car's

character when you're done with the humdrum of the school run or weekly shop, while giant eight-piston anchors (nabbed from the SL 55 AMG) are more than capable of bringing galloping ponies to a sensible canter.

Revealed at the Paris Motor Show fifteen years ago, the CLS 55 AMG is no spring chicken, but the model's age is immaterial when you consider those timeless lines, luxury leather, fantastic performance and the availability of tuning packages able to hike horsepower past the 600bhp mark with the minimum of effort. Best of all, you can currently bag this bargain Benz for less than ten grand. Find one finished in Obsidian Black and enjoy being in control of your very own supercharged stealth saloon!

VITAL STATISTICS

PRICE £9,500+
AVAILABILITY ★★★★★
COOL FACTOR ★★★★★
POWER 476bhp
0-60 4.7secs





If you're not fussed about switching driving position, a left-hooker offers great value in the UK



W201 190E 2.5-16

Mercedes success in rallying with the C107 was celebrated the world over, but after the four-wheel drive revolution brought about by Audi and Lancia in advance of 1982's Group B competition regulations, our favourite manufacturer decided to focus its attention on touring car racing instead. British engineering firm, Cosworth, had already been asked by Mercedes to produce a high output engine for the then-new W201, a commission resulting in a modified 2.3-litre M102 inline-four wearing a twin-cam sixteen-valve alloy cylinder head.

To take the car racing, DTM required homologation of the Cossie-fettled four-door, a demand which ensured motorsport fans could wander into their local main dealer and place an order for a 190E 2.3-16 in street trim. For Joe Public, the engine was detuned to 185bhp and 174lb/ft torque with a 0-60mph time of less than eight seconds, but Cosworth's fingerprints could be detected throughout, not least of all thanks to the

visibility of the Coscast logo stamped into the specially prepared cylinder head. The marking indicated the part was cast at the firm's foundry in Worcestershire before being shipped to Germany where Mercedes technicians assembled each tuned tall engine.

In 1988, five years after the launch of the 2.3-16, an updated sixteen-valve 190E arrived in the form of the 2.5-16. Concerns regarding the 2.3-litre engine's weak timing chains were addressed, while power was boosted to 204bhp (reduced to 194bhp with a catalytic converter in place). Formerly a cost option, an electronically controlled limited-slip differential designed to maximise traction was fitted as standard equipment.

Mercedes didn't shout about Cosworth's involvement in its multi-valve, race-bred road car adventures, which as any Ford fan will tell you, is one of the contributing factors keeping the German sports saloon at a reasonable price when compared to other Cossie-tuned,

race-developed sports cars of the era, such as the three-door Sierra RS, a car proudly wearing Cosworth branding at each end. The 190E 2.3-16 is the easier of the two Mercls to get hold of, and it'll probably be a cheaper car to buy if you're in a hurry, but our advice is to exercise patience and hold out for a 2.5-16. High mileage examples can be bought for 2.3-16 money, and if you're not fussed about switching driving position, a left-hooker offers great value in the UK, plus you'll be buying a car with a greater resale price if you're happy to pitch your boisterous Benz back to buyers in mainland Europe when you're done with the fun.

VITAL STATISTICS

PRICE £15,000+
AVAILABILITY ★★★★★
COOL FACTOR ★★★★★
POWER 204bhp
0-60 7.2secs



BUYING *Your next Mercedes*



Producing acceleration to make contemporary supercars twitch

W124 500E/E500

In the late 1980s, just as an explosion in the number of supersonic production saloons being launched by German manufacturers was about to get underway, Mercedes engineers were working to capacity on development of the new S-Class. Keen to release a high-performance version of the W124 without delay, factory bosses hopped across town to ask the nice chaps at Porsche to lend a hand.

The R129 SL's double overhead cam five-litre engine was the powerplant of choice, with Porsche given the job of developing changes to the W124's chassis equipment and body in order to accommodate the 32-valve V8 and all necessary supporting hardware. Unfortunately for Mercedes, the resulting bulge-arched super saloon was too wide for the W124's production line! The boys at Benz had little choice but to ask Porsche to assemble each 500E, a welcome request at a time Porsche was in financial dire straits (again) and employed workers at Zuffenhausen with a reputation for twiddling their thumbs.

The 500E's wide track, lowered ride height and blistering performance was paired with understated looks, making it far more of a 'wolf in sheep's clothing'

than offerings in the same class from other manufacturers, including Opel/Vauxhall and its Lotus-engineered Omega/Carlton. The effect of being a 'surprise package' coupled with limited production volume, not to mention the role of Porsche in hand-building each car, has ensured the 500E's maintained status as one of the greatest performance saloons of the 1990s.

Towards the end of its four-year on-sale cycle, the 500E was given a facelift (bonnet, headlights, grille, colour-coded bump strips, clear indicator lenses, revised boot lid, tinted rear light clusters) in accordance with what was happening with the rest of the W124 range. Repackaged and sold as the E500, the updated executive sports machine featured bigger brakes (nicked from the SL600) and new in-car entertainment equipment to accompany the luxury sports leather supplied by Recaro. Regardless of the territory they were offered in, all 500E/E500s were left-hand drive.

Contrary to what you might be thinking after reading our glowing report, these cars are easy enough to get hold of today thanks to more than ten thousand units sold in period. Most survivors are in good condition thanks to the enthusiasm of

knowledgeable owners who tend to take exceptional care of the special W124s they're in possession of. A similarly specified 'narrow body' built by Mercedes exists in the form of the 4.2-litre W124 400E, but the smart money is on the five-litre, wide-arched wonder put together by Porsche. Free of AMG badging and producing acceleration to make contemporary supercars twitch, the mighty Merc continues to be respected as a modern classic and will prove to be a sound investment if bought at the right price.



VITAL STATISTICS

PRICE £20,000+

AVAILABILITY ★★★★★

COOL FACTOR ★★★★★

POWER 322bhp

0-60 5.6secs

W202 C43 AMG

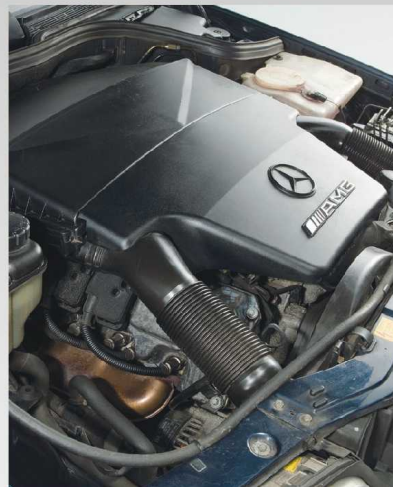
Readers of last month's *Mercedes Driver* (order a back issue copy at bit.ly/issuesmd) will recall our comprehensive W202 AMG buying guide. At the risk of sounding like a stuck record, we'll happily repeat our opinion C36s and C43s are brilliant cars shooting up in value as surviving examples in good, original condition become increasingly difficult to get hold of.

As the successor to the Cosworth-tuned 190E, W202 AMGs had a lot to live up to, but in 1995, the C36 AMG landed with a naturally-aspirated straight-six producing nigh-on 280bhp. The car looked great, performed brilliantly and shifted plenty of units, but as most fans of old-school, big-engined sports-tuned cars will tell you, there ain't no replacement for displacement, which is why the C43 AMG was launched for the 1998 model year.

Packing a 4.3-litre V8, lifting parts from the contemporary E55 AMG and chucking out well over 300bhp, the C43 didn't look wildly different from its predecessor, but the new car was a huge step forward in the way AMGs

were assembled following the tuning company's assimilation into Mercedes; whereas the C36 was a C280 dismantled and rebuilt in AMG trim, the C43 was purpose-built on the Mercedes production line. It was also the first C-Class to be loaded with a V8. A sports tourer was offered to broaden the model's appeal.

Whether you're after a C36 or C43, you'd better act fast. Cars free of noticeable bodywork imperfections (these boxy Benzes were assembled at a time Mercedes was skimping on the quality of materials used during construction) will cost far more than those a little rough around the edges, but rest assured there are bargains to be had, and even cars in need of cosmetic correction can be put back to excellent visual order thanks to the availability of replacement panels at low cost. Avoid W202 AMGs with dodgy gearboxes and you should be able to secure a superb sporty saloon at a price which won't break the bank.



VITAL STATISTICS

PRICE £5,500+

AVAILABILITY ★★★★★

COOL FACTOR ★★★★★

POWER 302bhp

0-60 5.7secs



The new car was a huge step forward in the way AMGs are assembled





GREY POWER

The R107 is looking better by the year, and this
1988 300 SL is pristine perfection

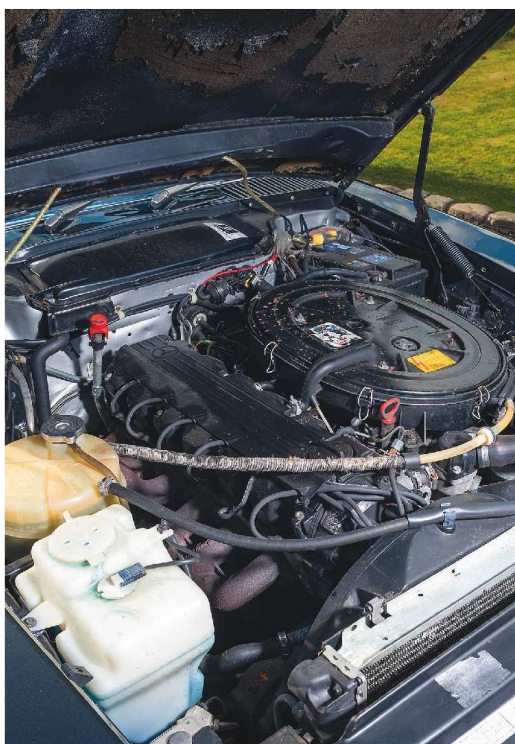
WORDS **Emma Woodcock** PHOTOGRAPHY **Dan Sherwood**

Pushing up and over, the bonnet bulges forward, urging over the headlights. Wedged with lumps of chiselled orange, the glass rhombuses have plenty of moxie themselves, crammed hard up against the horizontal swellings of the radiator grille. Bang in the middle, pinstriped with a single line of chrome, stands the oversize marque roundel. Any astute observer knows we can only be talking about the R107! Economical yet defiantly masculine, the third generation *Sport Leicht* remains an iconic automotive design.

Look a little closer and you'll see the Mercedes we've come to enjoy on a chilly day in Cheshire is a late production model. It was first registered in December 1988, to be precise. The tell-tales are subtle, but they're there. The bumpers suggest it, complete with the deep front lip spoiler. Those uncluttered alloys are also a giveaway and, if you really know what you're looking for, the door handles will contradict any attempt to disguise the age of the car. Yep, the 300 SL sitting before us is an almost original survivor bearing testament to an era when our favourite manufacturer perfected the art of capability without clutter.

Following careful renovation, this pristine R107 is ready to take us *all around the world*, and with good reason. When the four-seat drop-top first hit the open road exactly three decades ago, rising soul star, Lisa Stansfield, was behind the wheel. Or, at least, that's what several people who have worked on the car – or have been lucky enough to own this particular Mercedes – have told us.

Evidence is scant, but teasers are present. Paul Dey (the classic car nut who recently recommissioned this stunning SL) shows us the



way. "Follow the trail and the story makes sense," he suggests, pointing to an original dealer sticker from a Mercedes merchant in Manchester, a city close to Stansfield's native Rochdale. There's also paperwork highlighting the car's export to Ireland, where the singer lived for a number of years. Of course, we invited her to tell us about this deep grey SL's early life, but at the time of writing, we're still waiting for a reply. Perhaps she's still out looking for her baby?

NEXT CHAPTER

Several decades after it was first released into the wild, the car found itself under the guardianship of a dedicated enthusiast and amateur restorer. Sharing garage space with a chrome-grilled 230 CE and a 1970s Fiat 124 Spider, the future for this magnificent Mercedes looked promising. Half-stripped, the car was ready for a full recommission, but tragedy struck when its owner unexpectedly passed away. His three classic cruisers were sold to Paul in 2016.

Though the circumstances were undesirable, Paul was perfectly placed to be the SL's new keeper. As proprietor of Altrincham-based car dealer, Dey Motor Company, and a lifelong petrolhead, he adores any interesting automobile and has owned a high number of desirable

Left Straight-six boasts low miles, indicating Stansfield found her baby much quicker than anticipated



machines made by Mercedes. His love of the marque started in his teens, when he was exposed to the 300 SEL owned by his friend's father. Eventually, Paul was in a position to buy a Mercedes of his own. "It was a W201 190E registered in the early 1990s," he tells us. "The car was just two years old when I bought it from the finance director of a local golf and country club." Painted black, well specified and fitted with oversized alloys, the fast four-door remained with its new owner for two years until it was replaced by a CL 600 Lorinser. A 500 SL and a C63 AMG DR520 followed.

When the 300 SL seen here landed at Paul's workshop, the car wasn't running and much of its componentry was being stored in boxes. Thankfully, an inspection delivered positive results, confirming excellent overall condition bolstered by no more than 48,000 genuine miles. The bodywork was unsullied, with corrosion only affecting one of the front wings. A replacement panel quickly solved the problem, allowing the car to be on the receiving end of a full respray soon after. Glittering and multi-tonal, the finish proves grey needn't be synonymous with boring. It also takes years off the R107.

There was no way Paul's team was going to stop there, though. Fresh paint demanded

Touch base

Introduced in 1985 and produced until the R129's arrival in 1989, the 300 SL might not have had the twist of its bent-eight siblings, but it's every bit as desirable today. Powered by a smooth and reliable M103 straight-six, the model picked up where the older 280 left off, benefitting from a number of facelift enhancements. Key changes include firmer suspension, a pronounced lip spoiler, heated door mirrors and a redesigned steering rack. Together with the friendly nature of the torquey six-cylinder engine, the result is a thoroughly usable modern classic.

details to match. Renewed rubbers and brand new exterior brightwork was supplied by The SL Shop, while the fifteen-inch alloys were stripped and powdercoated by The Wheel Specialist in Manchester. The flat faces are protected by fresh tyres in the original 206/65/15 profile.

Inside, preservation was the key focus while working on the cream-beige, part-cloth interior. "It was in fairly good condition when I bought the car," says Paul. Nevertheless, the door cards and floor mats both demanded replacement. With the exception of these parts and a little reassembly here and there, the cabin otherwise remains untouched. Each luxuriant inch of sunny leather and polished wood barely shows a tenth of its age, creating a 1980s timewarp only a modern Pioneer head unit dares to disrupt.

NO PROBLEM

Under the bonnet and up in the substructures, the 'Stansfield SL' offered little else to worry about. An overhaul of the brakes brought stopping under control, while the suspension was already in satisfactory condition. Even the engine and transmission – cold from years off the road – called for nothing more than fresh lubricant. "That's all we did," smiles Paul. "The car ran



faultlessly thereafter." Despite the focus he placed on bringing the car back to perfection, he was confident his team wouldn't encounter problems along the way. "Nothing is hard to work on when it comes to the 300 SL," he reveals. "To my mind, it's one of the last Mercedes built where everything is screwed together, unlike modern cars which appear to be clipped together!" With this in mind, what advice would he give *Mercedes Driver* readers considering an SL build of their own? "If you're planning to restore an R107, try to keep the boot lid in place," he roars. "The springs are a huge pain to refit. I know this from bitter experience!"

After six months of unrushed work, and with most of the car's original equipment still in place, the great

Above and below Gorgeous grey paired with cream interior takes years off the R107

grey drop-top stood as a testament to enduring Mercedes build quality. Paul was ready to hit the road. "I finished the recommissioning work, drove the car for a short while and then received a request from one of my clients asking if he could be the SL's next owner. I hadn't even found time to compile the history folder!" The R107's admirer was Neil Macleod, founder of bar and restaurant chain, Vodka Republic, and owner of Manchester's first Bohemian bierkeller, Alberts Schloss. "He was on the hunt for a usable classic. If you're not in a rush to get anywhere fast, a 300 SL fits the bill perfectly. This car pretty much drives itself!" grins Paul. We can see why Neil was so keen. Pristine and trouble-free, motoring in a modern classic doesn't get much easier.

DRIVER

Q&A

PAUL DEY

First Mercedes
A late 190E

Favourite Mercedes
For a driver's tool, it doesn't get much better than the C63 AMG DR250, but for a cherished classic, a W112 300 SE cabriolet ticks all the right boxes

Best thing about your R107 300 SL
Its originality and supposed provenance

Worst thing about your R107 300 SL
Don't ever take the springs off the boot lid!



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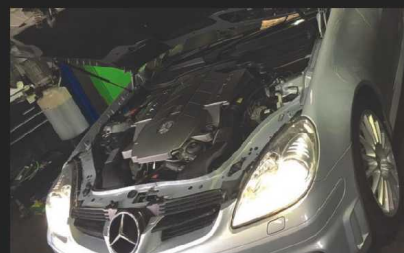
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A FAMILY AFFAIR

John Roberts' love for Mercedes cars can be traced back to the 1990s, when he first worked on his late father's W110 200

WORDS **Dan Furr** PHOTOGRAPHY **Dan Sherwood**



LAST CHANCE
SALOONS



When you bring to mind the various cars you've owned, there's bound to be a standout ride which holds a special place in your affections. Contrary to what many non-

petrolheads might think, sentiment is likely to trump specification. This is certainly evident when speaking with Mercedes die-hard, John Roberts, a man who can count a high number of technically brilliant and powerful cars on his motoring CV, but favours his 99bhp W110 above every vehicle he's bought to date.

It doesn't take long to discover why the midsize Mercedes means so much to him. "My late father bought the car new when he was stationed in Singapore serving with the RAF in 1967," he tells us. "He intended to buy a Volvo, but the salesman in the dealership he visited was less than attentive. Frustrated at not being taken seriously, Dad wandered across the road to Cycle and Carriage, a company engaged in the retail, distribution, provision and aftersales service of Mercedes cars in Southeast Asia. He took an instant liking to the W110 on display in the company's showroom and placed an order."

The W110 was launched in the early 1960s as a four-cylinder variant of the six-cylinder W111. The range's *Heckflosse* rear end was designed to follow a design trend favoured by car buyers in Mercedes' growing North American sales market, although function was offered in addition to form; given the catchy designation, *Peilsteg*, the short fins were advertised as being useful for judging how much

distance is available when reversing into tight parking spaces. Not that these features have helped John. "Four months ago, I bent the rear bumper when backing my W110 into a lamppost," he sighs. "The part is split into two sections joined by a collar in the centre. It would have been possible to repair the affected area, but it worked out cheaper for me to import a new genuine bumper being offered for sale by an enthusiast in Germany."

LONG JOURNEY

The car he's in possession of is a petrol-powered, digit-tastic W110.010 200, meaning it's a facelift W110 loaded with a 1988cc twin-carb inline-four. Only in production for three years, the model is a rare sight in Britain. "Dad shipped the car from Singapore to England when he returned to the UK in 1970," explains John. "By the mid-1980s, it was a tired old Merc, but one of my cousins recognised its retro charm as being exactly what she wanted for her wedding car." Consequently, John's dad replaced weathered grey paintwork with a lick of pure white, cleaned the burgundy upholstery – including the rare front bench – and restored the car's brightwork in time for the big day in the summer of 1986.

By 1987, the well-travelled four-door was hidden beneath a tarpaulin outside the Roberts residence in Letchworth Garden City, where it remained untouched for six years. "As a kid, I saw the car as nothing more than a lump in the yard!" laughs John. "I remember kicking a football against the bodywork. In fairness, it was a wreck. Dad even considered scrapping the car until my mum gathered a load of



Pillar to post

The W110 was the entry-level midsize Mercedes in the 1960s, originally offered with a 1.9-litre petrol or two-litre diesel inline four. The model first made its appearance in 1961 before being given a facelift in 1965, when the displacement of offered engines was increased. Production lasted until 1968, making John's two-litre petrol W110 a late example of the fintailed four-door. The W110 and its six-cylinder sibling, the W111, were the first Mercedes production cars extensively tested for crash protection, with crumple zones introduced to absorb kinetic energy on impact. The jury's out on whether John's altercation with a lamppost was a test!



Above It's amazing to think you can buy this much retro chic for less than the cost of your mate's grocery getter

Left Burgundy trim looks super-fresh despite being more than half a century old

cleaning products and brought the interior up to what seemed like a factory fresh finish. She told him there was no way he was allowed to give up on this classic Mercedes. I'm glad she intervened!"

Clearly an industrious chap, John's dad erected a double garage with an integrated spray booth. Roberts Jr was now in his teens and keen to get involved in what he saw as an exciting automotive project. "I helped strip the car alongside a beige donor W110 Dad bought for £600 as a source for spares," he recalls. "Most of the work he carried out was cosmetic, including fresh paint and replacing chrome where necessary, although I was surprised to come home from school one day to find him in the middle of converting the car from manual transmission to automatic using the gearbox out of the donor." The switch required the beige benefactor's drivetrain ancillaries and propshaft, but even with all the required parts available, the conversion didn't prove completely successful. "Shifting was clunky, which is why dad swapped back to the manual 'box a couple of years later. I still have the automatic unit, though. I'm tempted to have it rebuilt and installed at a later date," muses John.

MOVING FORWARD

Occasional outings to classic car shows ("that's where my interest in vintage vehicles really took hold") followed the white wonder's return to the road until John's father passed away in 2005. A short while later, the young Mercedes fan took it



**W110 OWNERS ARE MORE LIKELY TO
FIND SPARES IN MAINLAND EUROPE
THAN IN THE UNITED KINGDOM**





DRIVER

Q&A



JOHN ROBERTS

First Mercedes
This one

Favourite Mercedes
W198 300 SL roadster

Best thing about your W110 200
Memories of working on the car with my father

Worst thing about your W110 200
The required engine and gearbox work!

Above 99bhp two-litre petrol engine has been rebuilt following the discovery of damaging debris floating around the sump

upon himself to restore the car to the standard you see displayed on the pages before you. "The engine wasn't running right," he reveals. "I asked a skilled mechanic to take a look. He reported back to me with news the bottom end was in desperate need of attention, a condition proved by the discovery of metal floating around the sump. Subsequently, the block was completely stripped and restored, as was the manual gearbox. For the first time, I was able to experience how the car must have felt when it was new," he says, referring to the faultless running of the two-litre M121 engine. "This W110 is never going to win a drag contest, but it's now more than happy to cruise along at eighty!"

The brakes, suspension and exhaust were replaced in advance of another round of cosmetic updates. Chris Bray at classic car specialist, Finishline UK, was given the job of repairing distressed door bottoms and other exterior metal before the application of brilliant white the car wears today.

LUCKY FIND

Leatherwork is original, yet there are interior modifications those with a keen eye may have noticed. The rear-view mirror, for instance, is a wooden part handmade by John's dad many moons ago. He also added a mix of wood and chrome details to the dashboard. A new colour-coded steering wheel sourced from Poland replaces the "crazed and cracked" original part, a purchase demonstrating how British W110 owners are more likely to find spares in mainland Europe than in the UK, even if local autojumbles occasionally throw up the most unlikely of items. "I was rummaging through a box of old Mercedes parts being offered by a trader at a

car show held at Knebworth House, when I spotted a brand new W110 swan neck door mirror. I paid less than four quid!" beams John, pleased at securing a bargain that'd make David Dickinson proud.

At fifty-two years old, this splendid saloon is getting more use today than it has experienced in decades, largely due to the fact John has resurrected its role as a wedding car in order to pay for ongoing mechanical maintenance. When he's not donning a sharp suit and wrapping ribbons around his four-wheeled friend's front end, this 1960s smasher can be seen on display at shows throughout the summer season. "Despite its advancing years, it's a car capable of surprising a lot of what's on the road today," he reflects. "I'm considering adding better soundproofing to the cabin to make long journeys more pleasurable, and I'll probably get busy with a detailing session in the engine bay when the warm weather returns, but that's about all my Merc is in need of," he smiles, proud of a restoration well done.

A low number of W110s were sold in the UK before being discontinued in 1968. In contrast, the model was a big hit for Mercedes elsewhere, with more than half a million units built for worldwide distribution. There's no shortage of spares to be found at reasonable cost outside Blighty, although your biggest challenge is going to be finding a rust-free right-hand drive car to fit them to. Don't let hard work dissuade you from looking, though. Now is the time to buy, with prices of respectable W110s currently matching what your next-door neighbour paid for his second-hand Ford Focus. Just like John and his father before him, exercise a little patience, and you'll be rewarded with a stylish saloon which may end up being the highlight of your car history.



UNDER THE HAMMER

HAMMER TIME!

Mercedes metal produced a mix bag of results at the Silverstone Auctions Lancaster Insurance NEC Classic Motor Show multi-marque sale...

WORDS **Dan Furr** PHOTOGRAPHY **F. Bentos (Mrs)**

UNSOLD!



1993 500E

Built to rival BMW's M5 and developed in close co-operation with Porsche, the W124 500E was an instant classic. The car presented here is a modified example delivered new to Japan before being sourced from the Land of the Rising Sun by a respected UK sports car dealership in 2017. Staggered seventeen-inch AMG split rims, twin-tone paintwork and flared wheel arches contribute to the car's aggressive looks, while limited volume production promised prospective purchasers membership of an exclusive club. As huge fans of snarling super saloons, we rated this 64k-mile beauty as our favourite Mercedes at the NEC auction. Unfortunately, despite an attractive lower guide price of £30k, pristine leather and a five-litre V8, the big Benz failed to find a new home. Pity.



2001 G400 CDI SWB

Revered and reviled in equal measure, the G-Wagen polarises opinion. Ugly and boxy to some, it's the most capable and best-engineered 'fourby' of all-time to others! First registered in April 2004, this beast is no ordinary G-Class thanks to its status as a top-of-the-range G400 CDI SWB powered by a mighty twin-turbocharged V8 packing 250bhp and 413lb/ft of torque. One of only 828 examples made, the four-litre military-style utility vehicle was treated to an £8,500 engine overhaul at G-Wagen Reading in 2015 when in the custody of Jamiroquai singer, Jay Kay. Covering only 3k miles since the work was carried out, the diesel-fed powerplant is barely run-in!



2015 MAYBACH S600

With only one previous owner (Mercedes-Benz UK), this discreetly finished S600 features Obsidian Black paintwork with Seashell Grey Nappa leather. Complete with massive specification and chauffeur driven at all times, this fastidiously maintained Maybach comes complete with silver champagne flutes, temperature-controlled cup holders, an immense 24-speaker audio system, massaging seats, heads-up display and assisted night view. With a six-litre bi-turbo V12 and a 132.5-inch wheelbase, this super-luxury four-door represented amazing value for a vehicle of its kind when it went under the hammer at the NEC.



1966 230 SL



Another UK-supplied car, this 230 SL shows just 71k miles with complete service history. Sporting 'matching numbers' and just two owners from new (the last keeping the car since 1974), this 'time capsule' Pagoda's history file displays eighteen main dealer service stamps. Finished in Silver Grey Metallic and fitted with a recently reconditioned radiator and expansion tank, rebuilt brakes, fresh tyres, new filters and fluids, the car benefits from automatic transmission and the original Mercedes-Benz build sheet. Low ownership, classic colours and an original interior convinced us the car would shift for more than its final sale price.



SOLD FOR
£72,000



UNDER THE HAMMER

1991 500E

One of just twenty-nine examples sold on the UK domestic market, this wolf in sheep's clothing was first registered on 28th March 1991 and bought by a member of the Vardinogiannis shipping dynasty. Having enjoyed a cosseted life in Belgravia and offered on the open market for the first time, this five-litre monster has been meticulously maintained throughout its life, covering just 35,415 miles from new. A detailed history file illustrating servicing only ever carried out by technicians at Mercedes-Benz Chelsea appealed to bidders in the room and those telephoning their bids from remote locations.



2005 SL 65 AMG



Introduced in 2002 after some five years of development, the R230 was an engineering *tour de force* packed full of sophisticated electronic driver aids promoting spirited driving with superior safety features. An instant hit thanks to sensational styling, the car – and its super-quick folding electrically operated roof – remains a firm Mercedes fan favourite. The R230 SL 65 AMG seen here was assembled in 2005 and features the expensive cost option of a panoramic glass roof. Current mileage is 48,178 backed up by main dealer invoices and service stamps. One of the best-looking and angriest AMGs of the Noughties, this twin-turbocharged V12 road rocket was a fantastic buy in Brum.



1971 280 SE 3.5 COUPE

The 3.5-litre 280 SE typifies the resurgence of larger-engined Mercedes models in the late 1960s following a relaxing of the manufacturer's fiscal restraints. This delightful 1971 example is finished in Metallic Silver with a sumptuous black leather interior. The car benefits from recent restoration work

commissioned by previous owner and *Peak Practice* actor, Gary Mavers. New floor panels, new brakes, refreshed suspension and new carpets were fitted at a cost of close to £4,000. A look beneath the car reveals an impressively clean chassis, although not a characteristically tantalising enough to encourage bidders to dig deep.

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£36,000



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190

190 DIESEL



1992, 96,200 miles, £1,100. Saloon, black with grey cloth interior. MoT to April 2019. Last owner since 2001. 5 speed manual with electric factory sunroof and electric windows x 4. All round good condition. Please call 01516 390149, Cheshire.

3877

190E



1991, 99,000 miles, £2,235. 2.0 litre, petrol, full service history, MoT, manual 55p, blue cloth interior, radio/CD, four electric windows and sunroof. Please call 01270 627761, Cheshire.

5881

230

230 CE



1982, 170,000km, POA. VGC with full service history. LHD, spent all its life in France until last year. Four speed manual with green tan leather interior. Full MoT on sale. Please call 07788 410375, Hadleigh.

6141

230TE ESTATE

70,000 miles, POA. Many extras and new parts such as auto box, battery, exhaust, rad and brakes. Please call 01277 200530.

6393

320

S320



1999, 71,000 miles, £5,250. Superb body with immaculate cream leather interior. Huge specification including glass sunroof, split rim alloys, S/H, garaged. Please call 07860 862025, London.

6634

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116,000 miles, £2,450. Fully loaded. Restored car to showroom condition. Shown in summer classic car events. Modern day classic. Please call 07716 949723, Essex.

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280 SL



1982, 54,000 miles, £24,999. Rare model with manual gearbox, power steering, electric windows, central locking, ABS brakes, factory fitted rear children seats, alloy wheels, spare wheels and a fitted alarm system. Please call 07545 703474 (T).

6510

320



1995, 59,000 miles, £11,450. Azure blue, beige leather, partwood steering wheel. Climate control, electric seats, 4 new tyres, new battery fsh, 11 dealer stamps, 2 keys and 12 months MoT. Please call 07902 032101, Nottinghamshire.

2895

380 SL



1984, £38,900. Hard and soft top, un-restored and totally original and in beautiful condition throughout. Been in storage since 2006. Please call 07831 884045, Gloucestershire.

6022

450 SL



1973, 88,000 miles, £9,950. LHD Californian import with all duties paid. The car is rust free and comes with soft and hard top. Please call 01460 77760, Devon.

6674

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MERCEDES SL TROLLEY

£100-£150. For storage or hardtop, mine was 1997. Also Suzuki wagon R engine with drive shafts. Please call 07544 244739.

1152

VARIOUS PARTS

POA. Hard top mouldings, wing & door mouldings, sill mouldings (inner & outer), rear panel mouldings "B" pillar chrome caps, outer door handles, front & rear bumpers (used & new). Please call 01773 835462, Derbyshire.

5610

W113 SPARES

POA. Grille Star surround, indicator switches (new), headlamps and cover, rear lamps, lenses, surrounds, rev counter, fuel gauge (used). Please call 01773 835462, Derbyshire.

1094

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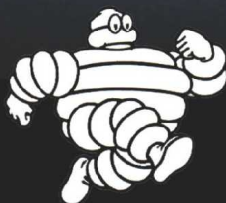


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