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1970 280 SL
RESTORED W113
PAGODA BEAUTY



ISSUE 11 MARCH/APRIL 2019 £4.99

Mercedes

DRIVER

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PAGES OF
PRACTICAL
POWER



G-WAGEN TURNS 40

CELEBRATING FOUR DECADES
OF THE SENSATIONAL SUV

PLUS

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W204 C63 ESTATE

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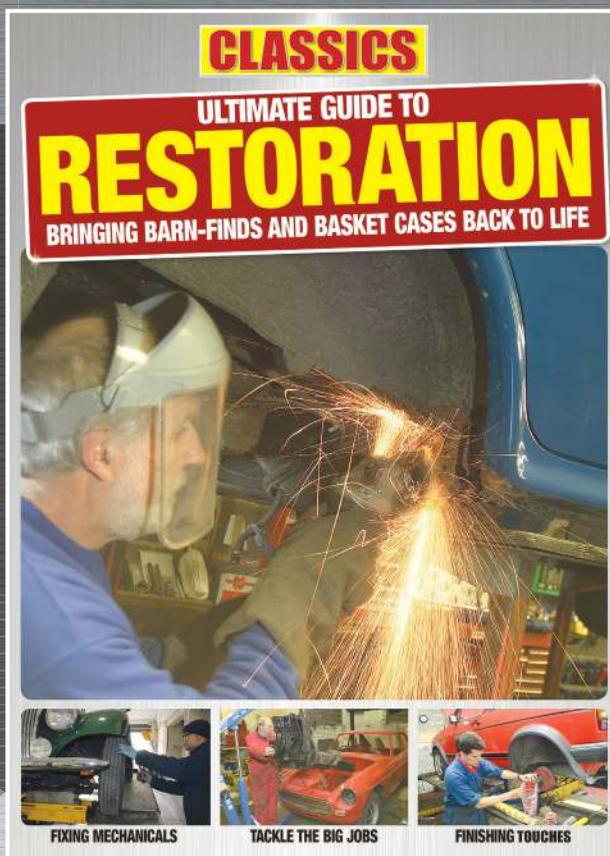
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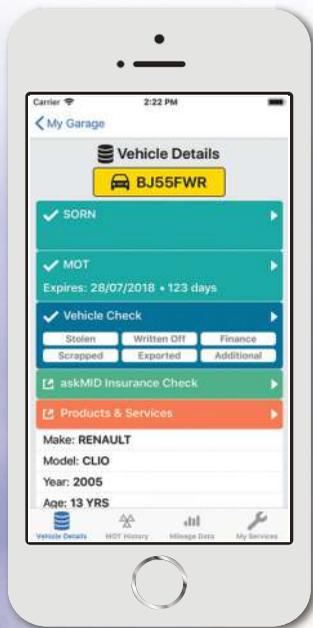
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Mercedes Driver is published every eight weeks.

UK annual subscription price: £34.93

Europe annual subscription price: £42

USA & Canada annual subscription price: £42

Rest of World annual subscription price: £45

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Mercedes Driver Customer Service Team
Kelsey Publishing Ltd, Cudham Tithe Barn, Berry's Hill,
Cudham, Kent, TN16 3AG, United Kingdom

DISTRIBUTION

Seymour Distribution Ltd,

2 East Poultry Avenue, London, EC1A 9PT

www.seymour.co.uk Tel: 020 7429 4000

PRINTING

William Gibbons & Sons Ltd

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**SUBSCRIBE TO
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DRIVER**
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FOR DETAILS

PRACTICAL PERFORMANCE

THE G-CLASS has become such a popular fixture in all walks of automotive life, it's difficult to believe Mercedes was ready to ditch the ditch-climber a decade after it was first introduced to the world. Thankfully, forty years following launch, the success of the model as a military tool, joy toy and inner-city runaround has ensured a new, tech-heavy generation of G-Wagen has been released, promising the all-conquering SUV a fantastic future just as bright as its pleasing past.

The G turning forty had us thinking about the amazing range of Mercedes cars offering performance and practicality in more or less equal measure. Recognising the fact many of our readers have a need for a Benz with decent load capacity, but don't want to settle for entry-level trim, we've dedicated this issue of *Mercedes Driver* to showcasing a selection of quick cars just as happy to fly along the autobahn as they are manoeuvring in and out of tight parking spaces at your local hardware store. Got a mountain of rubbish to shift to the tip? Want to get there quickly? Flick through the following pages and check out our pick of what's on offer.

There are, of course, those of you lucky enough to be able to split their driving duties between multiple Mercedes, offering a seasoned workhorse the job of the school run, weekly shop and trips out with the dog, while a far less practical plaything remains tucked up in the warm until prolonged periods of sunshine allow

for plenty of smiles to the mile in your cherished chariot of choice. The various generations of SL are the most iconic examples of Mercedes-badged fun on four-wheels, which is why we're thrilled to feature two *Sport Leicht* stunners in this issue of the magazine.

The W113 and the R107 we've pointed our cameras at are nothing short of amazing. Similarly impressive are the power gains today's tuners are able to achieve when playing with far more modern Mercedes sports cars. The appointment of direct-fit aftermarket hardware and accompanying ECU mapping has made vastly improved performance more accessible than ever before. We took time out to examine what can be done to afford new Mercedes cars the kind of enhanced power owners of older vehicles wearing the three-pointed star can only dream of.

Radically increased performance is of little use if the car you're driving is tramlining all over the road and chewing through tyres for fun. With this in mind, we bring you our guide to the importance of correcting and customising alignment. The article can be found on page 66.

Enjoy the mag!



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WONDER WAGON

The W204 C63 AMG estate is a naturally aspirated, V8-propelled cargo carrier producing big bhp

WORDS Dan Furr PHOTOGRAPHY Chris Wallbank



PRACTICAL
PERFORMANCE



Marc Wale, head of premium sports car sales, service and modification outfit, MW Performance (visit mwperformance.co.uk), pauses for thought after we ask what first attracted him to the facelift W204 C63 AMG wagon currently taking shelter in his Chester showroom. He draws a long breath. "I'll be honest with you," he begins. "I thought I'd avoid Mercedes ownership until I was at least sixty years old, but after driving this thing, I take back everything I previously said to friends, relatives and colleagues about Benz-badged cars being best suited to pensioners. The C63 AMG is nothing short of amazing!"

The Iridium Silver stunner to steal his heart has covered just 38,000 miles since its registration in September 2011. It's a magnificent Mercedes, albeit an unusual choice for a man ordinarily seen behind the wheel of V8s born the other side of the world. "I'm a huge fan of Holden imports from Australia," he beams, noting our interest in the various Holden Special Vehicles (HSV) and Vauxhall-badged V8s in MWP's spotless service centre. VXR8s, Monaros and even cargo-carrying Maloos occupy floorspace in the company's workshop, where Aussie bruisers sit pretty alongside more commonly seen eight-pot performance machines from the VAG fold. "Despite my love for big-engined VXRs, I've always been fond of naturally aspirated, V8-powered German weaponry." As if to prove the point, he shows us a recent magazine feature starring his 444bhp Audi

RS5 4.2 FSI Quattro coupe. "The RS5 is great, but the AMG is a wilder animal. It flies up the road like a scalded cat!"

The C63 AMG was first introduced to the UK domestic market in 2008. Offered in saloon and estate format, the model chucked out a smidge over 450bhp and delivered 442lb/ft torque thanks to a punchy 6,208cc M156 90° V8 race-ready powerplant. Whereas previous AMG engines were developments of existing Mercedes lumps, the M156 was a 'clean sheet' build with its own bore spacing and block design. Making use of four valves per cylinder and double overhead cams, the unit was put to use in supremely powerful vehicles wearing the three-pointed star, including the 475bhp CLK63, the 503bhp ML63 and the 507bhp E63, all launched a year before the C63's release into the wild.

ON THE RECORD

The upshot of using a purpose-built engine was a lack of compromised performance, resulting in the C63 trouncing the Audi RS4 and BMW M3 despite being detuned when compared with other M156-equipped road rockets in the AMG product range. In fact, the C63 saloon was the quickest four-door production car in the world at the time of launch, with the estate version offering massive performance and high levels of practicality in equal measure. Super-responsive steering and restrained driver aids added to the sense of being in charge of a race car on the road.

The W204 was blessed with a facelift not long after the turn of the decade, resulting in vastly

Facing page A comfortable, roomy rear coupled with furious firepower makes the C63 AMG difficult to ignore when considering your next performance estate



Hot cakes

The W204 was first revealed in January 2007 at the Geneva Auto Show. Main dealer order books opened in March of the same year, yet the C-Class coupe wasn't introduced to the range until 2011, when a series of facelift alterations were being applied to the the popular saloon and estate models. The two-door brought huge success to an already big-selling Mercedes product, resulting in more than 2.4 million units shifting worldwide. The UK was especially fond of the W204, as was the USA and its neighbour, Canada, where the mighty Mercedes took the fight to BMW's 3 Series for the title of best-selling compact executive car.





VARIOUS POWER OUTPUT UPGRADES WERE OFFERED THROUGHOUT THE C63'S SEVEN-YEAR PRODUCTION RUN

more aggressive exterior styling and even more cabin comfort. The C63 was refreshed as part of the change, which saw a coupe join the AMG line-up. A switch to SpeedShift Multi Clutch Technology (MCT) in place of the faithful seven-speed 7G-Tronic automatic transmission was also introduced. Aluminium paddle shifters graced a revised flat-bottomed steering wheel, while chunky eighteen-inch five-spoke punctuated each corner.

Various power output upgrades were offered throughout the C63's seven-year production run, the most notable being Performance Package Plus saloons and estates, Black Series coupes and the angry Edition 507, a 500bhp 'last hurrah' available in all body styles. There was a low volume, UK-only DR520 (518bhp, 479lb/ft torque) too. Reassuringly, main dealer cost options were available no matter which flavour AMG you fancied. Marc's lairy load-lugger, for example, wears nineteen-inch 'turbines' in place of standard smaller five-spokes.

COME CLEAN

"It's a brilliantly kitted Mercedes," he muses, impressing upon us the fact any car to make it into his personal or professional possession has to feature super-low miles, a low number of owners, solid service history, be free of cosmetic imperfection and operate just as well as the day it left the factory. "I love the sharp lines of the late W204 C-Class, a design made even bolder by



DRIVER

Q&A



MARC WALE

First Mercedes
W202 C220 CDI

Favourite Mercedes
SLS Black Series

Best thing about your C63 AMG estate
The noise

Worst thing about your C63 AMG estate
It's not particularly good in the snow

**NOT FOR THE FEINT-HEARTED,
A W204 C63 AMG IN ANY GUISE
WILL KEEP YOU HONEST**





AMG treatment,” he grins. “Then there’s the bark of the M156 on full chat. The noise is unreal. It certainly encouraged me to buy with my heart over my head! I don’t mind admitting I consider the RS5 to be far better suited to daily driving duties, but when it comes to fun on four wheels, the AMG is the car you want to be in charge of.”

TIPPING POINT

Not for the faint-hearted, a C63 in any guise will keep you honest. “The limited intervention of the AMG’s electronic stability program means you need to keep your wits about you when pushing hard, especially in wet weather. Regardless of whether you’re driving with or without traction support activated, you need a big pair of conkers to keep control of a C63 when trying to find out where it bites back,” warns Marc.

Of course, you’re looking at photographs of an estate, and as you’ll have noted from the theme of this issue, we’re focusing our attention on powerful Mercedes cars providing real-world usability irrespective of high horsepower. Pleasingly, the C63 AMG estate ticks every box, offering a huge load area and masses of cockpit refinery, which as far as Marc’s car is concerned, includes full Designo black leather, active blind spot, intelligent lane departure, DISTRONIC Plus adaptive cruise

Rare form

The W204 Edition 507 is a limited version of the C63 AMG boasting a power figure of 507PS (500bhp) and 450lb/ft torque. Built in all W204 body styles, the model features a Black Series ‘nostril’ bonnet, matte black or grey AMG wheels, a rear spoiler, smoked lights, black exterior trim and AMG sports stripes stretching the length of each side skirt. Six-piston stoppers, a choice of three different interior finishes, a sports steering wheel trimmed in Alcantara, red dash lighting and Piano Black interior plastics also feature on the 507, which was introduced to the European market in the spring of 2013.

control (automatic speed regulation with proximity awareness relating to the nearest vehicle travelling ahead), COMAND infotainment and a stack of other hugely desirable tip-top trim. Make no mistake, this is a phenomenal AMG promising plenty of smiles to the mile.

“If money was no object, I’d keep the car in my personal collection,” sighs Marc. “It’s an epic machine with full Mercedes main dealer service history. Previous mature owners have kept the car completely free of defect. You’re looking at a totally immaculate C63 AMG packing the best colour combination. An example of the model in this specification and condition is a rare find and one I’m going to struggle to part with, but needs must. At least my HSVs will keep me amused!”

V8 thunder from Down Under is all very well, but with the C63 AMG estate’s 1,500-litre load capacity, superior build quality, ballistic power, outrageous exhaust note and striking looks, not to mention a currently pleasing price point on the used car market, it’s difficult to think of a better practical performance Mercedes, especially if you’re a fan of fast, furious eight-cylinder engines free of forced induction. And if the cool cargo carrier on these pages takes your fancy, then perhaps you should get in touch with Marc’s team at MWP? Well, what are you waiting for?! 

Livewire

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Pricing and specification for G350d revealed

Orders being taken for the most powerful diesel-powered factory G-Wagen to date

In recent years, the G-Wagen has forged an enviable reputation as a luxury city slicker pumping out bonkers bhp from a variety of petrol-hungry V8s, yet the new G350d serves to remind us of the Stuttgart SUV's origins as utility vehicle thanks to the use of a three-litre, six-cylinder diesel lump producing a conservative 286bhp. Even so, torque is suitably lofty at 600Nm, making this the most powerful diesel engine ever to have been fitted to a G-Class. And with a published on-the-road price of £94k, it'll cost you close to fifty grand less than a G63.

A dash to 62mph from a standing start takes just 7.4 seconds, with the G350d topping out at 124mph. A respectable

29.4mpg can be achieved if you drive sensibly, although the predictable cost options of an AMG styling pack, big rims (measuring twenty inches in diameter), LED exterior lighting, full leather, a 12.3-inch full-colour information display screen, bling-tastic chrome grille decoration, ambient lighting – with a choice of eight different colours – and triple-zone climate control are reassuringly available for members of the Chelsea set who worry about the G-Wagen being pared-down for off-road use. Perish the thought, eh?!

Of the various trim choices available, the Premium package costs £5,995 and comes with Multibeam intelligent lighting, adaptive air suspension, a Burmester sound system, interior air ionisation, ambient lighting



with a choice of sixty-four colours (yes, you read that correctly), a sliding sunroof and a 360° parking camera. The evocatively named Night package can be added for £1,700 and introduces stealth-like styling to the proceedings thanks to the inclusion of smoked indicators and taillights, a black radiator grille, black exterior mirrors, dark-tinted glass, a black spare wheel ring and the aforementioned AMG twenties painted black with a high-sheen finish.

The Winter package costs £1,750 and brings a heated windscreen and auxiliary heater with remote to the party. A heated steering wheel is available for an extra £275. Meanwhile, the Rear Seat Entertainment package is yours for £2,995 and comprises a duo of ten-inch touchscreens, a digital TV tuner, an integral media player and WiFi.

Interestingly, black circle manufacturer, Falken, is set to supply OEM tyres for the new G-Class. The model will be fitted with a choice of Falken Wildpeak A/T3WA or



AS210A 265/60/R18 rubber as standard. As you can imagine, requirements from tyres on the boxy SUV are high, which is why Falken's products were subjected to punishing quality tests by Mercedes before being approved for use.

Despite being designed with the durability and long life required for the off-road sector in mind, the Wildpeak A/T3WA continues to perform well when subjected to on-road driving, impressing with its quietness, even at high speed. The AS210A, however, is the product best suited to town and regular road use. With its M+S (mud and snow) labelling and accompanying snowflake symbol, the product can be used during winter in snowy and icy conditions. "The approval to fit the new G-Class with Falken tyres recognises our constant strive for high performance in both development and production," commented Christian Stolting, Key Account Manager for Falken Tyre Europe. Order books are open now, with the first G350D deliveries expected this summer.



Mercedes announces eighth consecutive record sales year

Our favourite manufacturer sold more than 2.3 million cars globally in 2018, making it the most successful sales year in the company's history, and one confirming Mercedes as the best-selling premium automotive brand in the world. This extraordinary success is partly as a consequence of demand from the Asia-Pacific region, where the E-Class has been shifting in huge numbers. "In 2018, Mercedes-Benz was at the top of the premium segment in the automotive industry for the third year in a row. In a highly competitive environment, we also remained at the top from month to month, thanks to double-digit growth in China and many new models that have delighted customers worldwide. We'll continue rejuvenating our portfolio throughout 2019," said Dr Dieter Zetsche, Chairman of the Board of Management of Daimler AG and Head of Mercedes-Benz Cars.



Carlex Design releases Monster X concept

Aftermarket automotive modification firm, Carlex Design, is launching a new truck-focused arm to its business. Named Pickup Design, the brand will focus on luxuriously finished utility machines. The fun begins with the Monster X concept, a six-wheeled version of the X-Class featuring carbon-fibre body panels and widened wheel arches to accommodate massive wheels and tyres. Sharply contrasting against the brooding finish of the wicked weave is a bright yellow load area. An LED lightbar sits above the cab, while a big bonnet scoop hints at an as-yet-unknown powerplant with enough grunt to take full advantage of that extra axle. Custom lowered suspension, a winch and carbon-ceramic brakes are also hinted at. For more information about Carly's X-Class limited editions, visit pickupdesign.com

See you there...

LONDON CLASSIC CAR SHOW

This 'must attend' event for fans of old-school motors brings together international dealers, manufacturers, clubs and parts specialists at one of London's premier event spaces. The show's most pleasing feature is an indoor driving runway where classic cars are fired up and driven for the entertainment of those in attendance. See, smell and hear a huge variety of iconic cars under one roof between 14th and 17th February. For more info, visit bit.ly/classicshow

4x4 EXPO

Billed as "the biggest, busiest and best indoor 4x4 show in the UK", 4x4 Expo takes place Sunday 24th February at Stafford Showground. If you're building, preparing, modifying or maintaining a G-Wagen or any other kind of 4x4 for motorsport, overlanding, greenlaning or just for fun, then this is the show for you. Kids attend free if accompanied by a paying adult, and a wide variety of club stands and trade exhibitors promise to impress. Visit bit.ly/4x4show for tickets and directions.

NEC RESTO SHOW

The Classic Car & Restoration Show takes place at the NEC between the 22nd and 24th March. Last year's event attracted more than 28k visitors across three days, bringing together all aspects of classic motoring, from concours show cars to rot-ravaged builds. Point t'internet at bit.ly/restonec

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The newly designed Micro-Start XP-1 personal power supply is an evolution of the original XP-1 mini jump-starter from power sports battery manufacturer, Antigravity. The award-winning XP-1 was a big hit when launched at the Speciality Equipment Market Association (SEMA) Show, not least of all due to the pocket-sized product's compact design (measuring L171xW83xH27mm) and light weight. Indeed, it's difficult to believe such a tiny jump starter can kickstart petrol engines packing up to five-litres of displacement and eight cylinders, but that's exactly what this awesome bit of kit does.

As well as breathing life into your impotent Mercedes, the Micro-Start XP-1 can power and charge your smartphone, camera, tablet and various other devices thanks to the inclusion of four different power ports, including a 19V connection for laptops, a 12V standard output suitable for most accessories and twin 5V USB charging points.

Packaged in a convenient carry case, the kit comes complete with everything you need to jump start your car or charge your electronics no matter where you might be stranded. There's no need for an electrical outlet or power station; the Micro-Start XP-1

is a self-contained jump starter and battery pack which can be recharged up to 1,000 times, ensuring a long service life despite the product's attractively low cost.

For diesel engines (up to 7.3-litres) or commercial workshop use, take a look at the Micro-Start XP-10 heavy duty jump starter. Both the XP-1 and XP-10 can be ordered online from Antigravity's website, where you'll also be able to view the company's full range of modern battery solutions.

Price: £149.95
antigravitybatteries-uk.co.uk
 or call 01702 301664



MEGUIAR'S HEADLIGHT RESTO KIT

Those of us in charge of older vehicles may be suffering from a case of 'yellow lens'. No, that's not an unsavoury medical term, but refers to the light inhibiting oxidation and discolouring of a car's outer headlamp. Fortunately, the detailing masters at Meguiar's are on hand to help with a single-step headlight restoration kit. The included 'Plast-RX' formula works in tandem with the supplied buffing pad and your power drill to safely deliver amazing results in minutes. Let there be light!

Price: £22.50 meguiars.co.uk



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ITG PROFILTER AIR FILTER FOR MODERN MID-SIZE MERCEDES

Filtration specialist, ITG, has announced the expansion of its Mercedes intake range with this versatile 'ProFilter' for a wide array of recent models (C180 BlueEFFICIENCY 1.6, C180K BlueEFFICIENCY, E200 (2013+), E250, GLC/Coupe, 250/350e plug-in hybrid and GLK 200). Tri-Foam – a specially created reticulated polyester foam blend optimised for performance applications – is the material of choice for all ITG filters thanks to its maximised airflow, enhanced cleaning efficiency and impressive resistance to dust. ITG has been at the forefront of filtration and induction technology for decades, with a burgeoning motorsport programme seeing the company tasked with supplying teams in F1, BTCC and WRC. Expect a slight increase in power, torque and subtly enhanced induction noise after installation.

Price: £144

itgairfilters.com or call 02476 305386



ROMAN MIAH POSTER PRINTS

Petrolhead and talented artist, Roman Miah, produces amazing watercolour works depicting supercars, including new Ferraris, Porsches and McLarens. His latest offering is this poster print of an extraordinary piece he created starring the AMG C63 Black Series. Printed on high-quality 250gsm silk paper, hand-signed by Roman prior to despatch and available for just twenty notes, this superb A2 (420x594mm) print would look fantastic hanging on any Mercedes enthusiast's wall. Roman also offers custom original artwork complete with a certificate of authenticity. Contact him via his website if you're interested in having a watercolour of your own four-wheeled friend produced.

Price: £20

romanmiah.com



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UK-based motorsport equipment specialist, Gala Performance, is offering Swisstrax products with special emphasis on the 'open profile' Ribtrax range. Manufactured in Europe, Ribtrax features a hidden joint design and is available in nineteen different colours. The product can even be produced with a custom finish, including a depiction of the Mercedes three-pointed star! With the ability to withstand static weight loads of twenty tonnes per square metre (thirty-five tonnes rollover), each 18mm thick, non-slip tile is arguably the strongest flooring solution of its kind, which is great news for those operating jacks and lifting equipment. No special tools or prior experience is required for fitting, and being completely modular means tiles which succumb to accidental damage can be replaced individually. Ramps are available to tidy any exposed edges. Reassuringly, the product comes with a generous fifteen-year warranty as standard.

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Price: £215.99 momo-uk.co.uk



RECOMMENDED READ

HOW TO BUILD YOUR OWN ENGINE COFFEE TABLE

We've all seen coffee tables made from engines, but have you considered building one for your personal mancave or girl shed?! Gergely Bajzath regularly enjoys positive feedback on social media after uploading photos of his original engine-based furniture. In this brilliant book from automotive publisher,

Veloce, he shares his methods in the hope of helping you to create your very own coffee table centrepiece. From the best choice of engine base, to instructions on design and fabrication for appearance and safety, Bajzath guides readers through forty-eight illustrated pages highlighting painting techniques and the correct method to prepare a glass top for a safe service life. Amazingly, you can get your mitts on this coffee table tome about, erm, coffee tables for less than £2 in Veloce's winter sale. Place your order by telephone and quote special offer code EIGHTY18. Be sure to send us pictures of your cool creations!

Price: Special offer £1.99 (RRP £9.99)
veloce.co.uk or call 01305 260068

UPDATED AUTOBRITE DIRECT SNOWFOAM LANCE

Car care product specialist, Autobrite Direct, is constantly updating its range with exciting new offerings, but don't be fooled into thinking the British company doesn't keep an eye on its legacy products! The popular Autobrite heavy duty snowfoam lance, for example, has recently been redesigned with an ergonomically superior single-litre bottle. Able to withstand high temperatures and accompanied by an adjustable spray nozzle able to accommodate 180bar pressure, the kit is fully compatible with Karcher, Alto, Lavor, Bosch and M22 pressure washers thanks to the inclusion of a quality brass adaptor to suit your preferred hardware. If you order an Autobrite snowfoam lance direct from the company's website today, you'll get 500ml of Magifoam mix thrown into the deal. What are you waiting for?!

Price: £34
autobritedirect.co.uk
or call 01782 623819



AIRTEC CHARGE COOLER UPGRADE FOR AMG A45

Engine cooling and forced induction specialist, Airtec, has added to its ever-growing catalogue of performance equipment for modern Mercedes cars by introducing a charge cooler upgrade for the AMG A45. 70mm thick, 500mm wide, 150mm high and supplied with 19mm pipework, the kit comes complete with silicone hoses in a choice of colours. Silver or black finishes can be optioned for the radiator, which can be ordered with or without the Airtec logo on display. A simple performance upgrade for anyone in charge of a standard or remapped A45, this cool (literally) kit is available to order at a pleasing price point direct from the Airtec website.

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BOX CLEVER

An unlikely upmarket urban hero, the G-Wagen started life as a go-anywhere boulder basher before evolving into what many regard as a powerfully posh load-lugger

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



PRACTICAL
PERFORMANCE



When it comes to greatest hits, the three-pointed star has a jam-packed back catalogue to brag about. Most of these luminaries are stylish saloons, but there's one chart-topper continuing to ride high. Literally! We are, of course, talking about the G-Class (or G-Wagen to Merc maestros), a boxy belter cutting an unmistakable silhouette. Square-jawed and just as square-arched, the cargo-carrying Benz celebrates its fortieth anniversary this year, although in 2019, the upright utilitarian machine is arguably respected as more posh than practical.

The G-Wagen story began in 1972, when Daimler-Benz and Austrian engineering outfit, Steyr-Daimler-Puch, joined forces to start work on what would eventually be launched as the W460. The Baden-Württemberg boffins were responsible for design and testing, while the guys in Graz formulated the production plans. Two years after work began, the first prototypes scrambled over boulders. In 1975, the factory-to-hand-assembled 'G Model' was built. Described as "universally useful" in Mercedes marketing materials, the G-Wagen was intended to be used in as many ways as possible, constructed using a large number of contemporary Mercedes production parts

Below and facing page
Despite the G-Wagen's status as the favoured 'Chelsea tractor' for many city-dwellers, late model luxury and looks do little to hide the G's origins as a go-anywhere utility vehicle

and offering simple repairs. The Geländewagen (roughly translated into English as 'cross-country vehicle') design also incorporated Complete Knock Down (CKD) build methods to ensure assembly could be achieved from a convenient kit of prefabricated parts.

Debuting in December 1979, the civilian G-Wagen was available with a choice of 2,400mm and 2,850mm wheelbases. The shorter of the two models came in wagon or convertible flavours, while only a long-wheelbase station wagon was on the menu. Van versions with panelled back ends were also listed, and though the lengthiest G-Wagens were equipped with four doors, the long-wheelbase vans shared the two-door layout of the standard short-wheelbase model when the spectacular Stuttgart SUV hit the UK domestic market back in 1981.

The 90bhp and 102bhp four-cylinder 2.3-litre 230G kicked-off proceedings (the fuel-injected 123bhp 230GE joined the range in 1982), with the 2.8-litre 150bhp six-pot 280GE being the petrol-powered range-topper. 2.4-litre four-cylinder and three-litre five-cylinder diesels with 72bhp (240GD) and 80bhp (300GD) respectively kept the derv-burning end up, with the 88bhp 250GD elbowing out the 240GD in 1985. A 107bhp two-litre 200GE was marketed in Italy and other selected territories.



British boxes

The AMG G-Wagens shifted the focus of the Mercedes mud-plugger and encouraged tuners to turn it into a fast and luxurious on-road riot. Brabus, Hamann and Mansory are just three notable outfits which have waved spanners over the G-Class, with Brabus' six-wheeled 704bhp G700 6x6 being arguably the ultimate G-Wagen brute. AMG has also tried its hand at building giant-power Gs. The brand's twin-turbo V8 6x6 boasts 544bhp, five differential locks and specification ready to tackle the biggest of desert storms! The 422bhp G500 4x4² followed, yet the most outlandish factory G is 2017's G650 Landaulet. Built with posh brand, Maybach, the model produces 630bhp from an angry V12. Definitely a fast and expensive way to get your wig ruffled!





Beneath the bonnet of W461 G-Wagens sat a 2.9-litre lump in either 95bhp naturally aspirated or 123bhp turbocharged states. Fitting another of the model's original briefs, 461-series G-Wagens were reserved for military and public service use. Armed for the forces, the W461 has proved supremely popular, with more than forty-five military operators choosing to employ the services of the mud-plugging Mercedes!

PICK AND CHOOSE

Distinctive looks penned by the Sindelfingen design studio feature short overhangs and a narrow width for easy manoeuvrability (power steering arrived in 1987 to ease bicep burden), while the box-section frame was the robust backbone of the G-Class. Ensuring the vehicle lived up to Mercedes' premium image, a vast number of body styles rolled out of Graz. Rigid axles and switchable all-wheel drive was standard. Even with the optional differential locks were fitted, Mercedes claimed the G would be able to cross even the most challenging of terrible terrains. To that end, an additional 'cross-country' gear (similar to that of Porsche's legendary 959 supercar) kept the G-Wagen moving over seriously loose surfaces. Four-speed manual and automatic transmissions transferred power to the road or dirt track.

The ultimate in rough stuff was conquered in 1983, when a 280GE piloted by Le Mans legend, Jacky Ickx, and his co-driver, famous French actor, Claude Brasseur, won the Paris-Dakar rally. Back on the asphalt, the G-Wagen's coil springs and shocks offered a comfortable ride, once again proving this box on wheels was a bona fide

Above The G500 4x4² features the all-wheel drive powertrain of the G63 AMG 6x6 (minus one of the AMG's axles) blended with a four-litre biturbo V8 more in keeping with sports car performance than a cross-country utility vehicle, yet, as seen here, for the 4x4², off-roading starts where lesser SUVs capitulate

Left A wide range of short and long-wheelbase body styles have been offered during the G-Wagen's four-decade lifetime, including tin-top, open-top and van variants



WITH THE ADDITION OF
COMAND INFOTAINMENT, THE
G-WAGEN SEEMED MORE DELUXE
THAN DOWN-TO-EARTH



member of the Mercedes family. An austere cabin with perpendicular-planned surfaces and acres of painted metal featured funky checked seat trim and bank-vault Benz build quality.

A facelift in 1989 saw the G-Class reintroduced as the W463. The fuel filler cap was now covered behind a flap. A body-coloured front end also marked out the newcomer. A wood and leather interior added an air of opulence and highlighted the chunky Merc's transformation from sensible to swish. Full-time four-wheel drive, three electric differential locks and an ABS safety net added more go-anywhere ability. Atop the G-Wagen mountain sat the 170bhp 300GE until the walnut-wielding 240bhp V8-powered 500GE arrived in 1993. The G-machine was now seriously powerful and practical! The following year, when Mercedes revised the format of its product line designations, the G-Class name became official, and after its limited production run five years earlier, the eight-pot G500 returned in June 1998. Now pumping out 300bhp and 324lb/ft torque from its five-litre powerplant, the heavy hitter pampered its lucky drivers with air-conditioning, heated seats, eighteen-inch rims and metallic paint. A powered roof for the Cabriolet and a new M112 V6 G320 rounded out revisions.

The UK was the G's biggest right-hand drive market, but sales halted in 1996. They restarted in 2010. Amazingly, official imports to North America only started in 2002! Another shake-up of the model line saw the introduction of a new dashboard and technical tinsel, including automatic exterior lighting and windscreen wiper functionality, as well as dual-zone climate control.



Above A heavily modified G-Wagen is an obvious choice for carrying the pontiff, right?!



With the addition of the Command infotainment system, the G-Wagen seemed to be more deluxe than down-to-earth! More upmarket trinkets resulted in sales increasing by sixty percent, despite the arrival of the more car-like M-Class.

STRENGTH IN NUMBERS

The G500-aping G400 CDI was a V8 diesel brother to the range-topping petrol-fed eight-cylinder brute and used the 250bhp eight-banger from the S-Class. Die-hard disciples who worshipped at the church of G, however, were rewarded for their loyalty with the arrival of the divine G55 AMG. Producing a devilish 354bhp and an impressive 387lb/ft torque from its 5.4-litre V8, the ballistic box scrambled to 62mph from rest in just 7.4 seconds. Top speed was limited to 130mph, but in 2004, the model gained a supercharger to become a full-fat 500bhp powerhouse, reducing the outgoing AMG's 0-62mph time by two seconds. **27**

At the other end of the scale, the G350 BlueTEC heralded the inevitable arrival of emission-lowering technology. Indeed, pedestrian protection regulations threatened to call time on the G-Wagen in 2006, but Mercedes managed to ensure their star SUV's survival and went a step further by introducing the smaller-engined G320 CDI. Enjoying this new flush of youth, the model found itself on the operating table again in 2012, a move which resulted in fresher looks, LED running lights and yet another sculptured interior. It wasn't just a tweaked appearance emerging from the surgeon's knife; the G65 AMG announced the availability of a twin-turbocharged V12 heart knocking out an extraordinary 612bhp! The G65 had form: it first appeared a decade earlier as a limited edition with a 6.3-litre V12, yet with 174bhp more, the G65 offered truly supersonic SUV swiftness!

ALL-TERRAIN TERROR

In the UK, the £123,112 bi-turbo V8-propelled G63 AMG boasted 544bhp and a 0-60mph time of 5.4 seconds, while 2017's G65 AMG Final Edition cost a massive £278,000 due to its super-high specification and limited-volume production of just sixty-five units.

Almost four decades after it was first made available for purchase in Mercedes dealer

Papal pick-up

The G-Class has many devoted fans, including successive Popes. Preparations for John Paul II's visit to Germany in 1980 saw his W460 230G 'Cabriolet' wow onlookers with gold accents, a cut-down windscreen and a glass enclosure from where the pontiff waved to worshippers. In 2007, Benedict XVI received a new *Papamobil* in the form of a Vatican-shaded Mystic White G500, complete with folding windscreen, standing deck and, of course, red-carpeted steps (maybe they add 20bhp?). The G-Wagen Popemobiles reaffirm the notion that the flat-panelled Benz SUV is a classic car deity!

showrooms, the G-Wagen's most thoroughly re-jigged variant was launched on 14th January 2018 at the Detroit Motor Show. Don't be fooled by the continuation of the W463 designation. The 2018 incarnation of the super SUV features an independently sprung front axle and the S-Class's digital dashboard. Externally hinged chic highlights this is definitely – and defiantly – a luxury SUV. There's little trace of the wonder wagon's pragmatic past: the 422bhp twin-turbo V8 G500 and the £143,305 585bhp AMG G63 are currently the only G-Wagens available to buy new.

Looking back, the arrival of a V8-driven G-Class ensured the brilliant Benz appealed to social climbers. In doing so, it helped pave the way for the huge popularity of luxurious SUVs and crossovers we see today. Since 1979, over 300,000 G-Wagens have left Graz, proving the DNA of the model a roaring success. Undoubtedly heavenly bodies in the cosmos of achingly cool modern classics, the big-power Gs have forged legendary status. Marketed with the Stronger than Time tagline, the G-Wagen may now prioritise luxury ahead of load-lugging, but good, used examples of the rugged, reliable and right-angled G-Class can be bought for as little as fifteen grand. If you're in the market for an ice-cool carry-all capable of riding high in the chic car charts, don't look any further.



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TORQUE *Enthusiast*

Kieron Maughan

A love of rock music and a passion for classic cars have combined to form the basis for an exciting project concerning four-wheelers driven by famous musicians...

My first Merc was a manual SLK I bought as a sister car to my TVR Griffith. I was in my mid-twenties and found myself regularly covering a lot of ground. The TVR lived up to its reputation as a flaky motor, meaning the SLK was used to cover many miles in a short space of time. I loved its roof. I loved its early traction control system. I was less keen on its broken diff!

I ditched the SLK and bought depreciating moderns. To combat a trend of losing money fast, I formulated a devilishly masterful plan, which saw me buy two 'modern classic' Mercs I considered would hold their value. The first was a freshly painted five-door W463 300D in Gunmetal. I was immediately smitten, so much so that I ignored the warnings on my RAC-authored pre-inspection report and bought the G-Wagen anyway.

"These German SUVs have a reputation for being indestructible. What could possibly go wrong?!" I asked myself. The answer to that question is "quite a lot, actually." The RAC man was right. After a few weeks, my G-Wagen's gearbox started playing up. To make matters worse, my wife was using the big box to ferry our kids to school when the transmission decided to throw a major hissy fit. After our children made their way into the classroom, Mrs Maughan battled with the Benz, trying to shift into reverse, but to no avail. Forward ratios were seemingly unaffected, leaving her no choice but to travel up the facing kerb and slowly around the outskirts of the school's cricket ground before finally exiting the car park she'd so easily entered. Fortunately, a failed bit of plastic on the gear selector was recognised as the only cause for complaint. The replacement part cost a tenner. Phew! 20k fault-free miles followed.

The other car I bought was an R107 500 SL. The body was tatty, but the car's previous owner had spent a fortune on mechanical maintenance at independent Mercedes specialist, John Haynes. Air-conditioning, heated seats and an outside temperature gauge (OTG) were present, as was gorgeous blue paintwork and a colour-coded hard top. Over the last eight years, my wife and I have



treated the car as a rolling restoration, racking up more than 40k enjoyable miles along the way.

My day job is in the field of IT, but I have a personal project influenced by my status as a failed rock musician: over the course of the past decade, I've been archiving information and imagery concerning the cars rock stars have driven since the late 1950s. My hope is to translate the work into a television programme. The archive features more than 25k photos, movie footage, material from the Ferrari and Jensen archives, as well as plenty of Mercedes coverage. I've interviewed more than forty musicians, including Nick Mason, Ginger Baker and Suzy Quattro. Many more pop and rock personalities have agreed to participate in the project as soon as it gets commissioned by a television network.

In the meantime, there's a sizzle on YouTube (visit bit.ly/kieronmaughan) providing a taster of what the project is all about. I'm currently working with a production company with a view to settling on final format, but if any of you have stories or photographs of rock stars and their cars, then I'd love to consider them for inclusion. Email info@rockstarscars.co.uk or hit me up on Twitter. I look forward to hearing from you. 📧

Above Kieron's W463 300D proved to be a brilliant workhorse after early problems with gear selection were cured

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I've been archiving information and imagery concerning the cars rock stars have driven since the late 1950s



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TORQUE Contributor

Simon Inglis

To C or not to C? That is the question asked of my mother when the time came to bid farewell to her BMW after two decades of happy motoring...

Almost twenty years ago, Mum took hold of a nearly new BMW 318is. As you'd expect, the car was in immaculate condition. She loved being behind the wheel of the Bimmer, an E36 she drove along the 100-kilometre route through the Adelaide hills to her place of work each day. The car happily coped with the challenges of icy winter mornings and the searing 40°C heat of summer. In fact, the reliable 3 Series served my mother so well, she couldn't stand the thought of parting with the car, even when evidence of wear and tear was becoming painfully apparent.

Eventually, mounting repair bills were impossible to ignore. Mum accepted her cherished chariot was costing much more than its financial worth to keep on the road. Besides, nearly two decades had passed since her faithful BMW rolled off the production line. Not only was it a car from another century, it was a car from a long-passed era of automotive design and development. It was time to let go.

Regular readers of Mercedes Driver will recall the article published about the W203 I bought a few months ago. Supplied with an excellent volume of repair bills and a complete service history, the car has proved itself a brilliant buy. Impressed, I was determined Mum should make the swift shift from a BMW to a Mercedes. Moreover, I was excited by the prospect of her joining me in W203 ownership. There was, however, the not insignificant matter of convincing her to move away from a brand she was so fond of.

Any notion of sticking with BMW was knocked on the head as soon as she tested an E90 3 Series. She failed to be won over by the model's start button, having had experience of "real starter buttons, not this electronic gadgetry" in an assortment of classics. A short while later, I spotted an MY05 C180 Kompressor listed in local classifieds. Offering a full file of history and barely 85k kilometres on the clock, the car was too good to ignore, which is why I arranged a test drive. I wasn't disappointed; with barely a mark on its fabulous gold paintwork, full black leather and a clean bill of mechanical health,



the wonderful W203 made my older C180 seem like a presentable banger! The deal was done and Mum was soon driving her lovely new Mercedes.

She learned to drive in Rome and was fortunate enough to spend time in London at the peak of the swinging Sixties. The best way to describe her is as Joanna Lumley's long-lost twin! Eccentric? Yes, but not radically so. She's a woman who knows what she wants, a determination extending to her taste in cars. For example, after Dad talked his way into a great job in Italy, she insisted he dismiss their tatty Volkswagen in favour of a Porsche 356! Cars that followed included a Citroen DS, BMW E30s and a tasty W124 for my school run.

Following retirement, she doesn't drive as far as she used to, meaning she was opposed to the idea of buying a brand new car. Besides, she sees them as "refrigerators on wheels" when compared to older vehicles. Being the charmingly stubborn individual she is, I'm not even sure she'd have accepted a silver C-Class like mine. Thankfully, the golden hue of her perfect W203 gets the seal of approval. Here's to many years of happy Mercedes motoring, Mum!

Above This gold-coloured W203 has a lot to live up to following the twenty happy years Simon's mum spent behind the wheel of her beloved BMW 318is

Being the charmingly stubborn individual she is, I'm not even sure she'd have accepted a silver C-Class like mine

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FIVE MINUTES WITH...

Dale Phillips



Who are you and what do you do?

I'm Dale Phillips, Chief Operating Officer at transmission specialist, Quaife Engineering Ltd.

How long have you been with the company?

I joined Quaife in 2001. Engineering has always been my passion, but I opted to study for a degree in food chemistry. Inevitably, I was unhappy in my chosen field, which is why I seized the opportunity to apply for a job at Quaife when the opportunity arose almost two decades ago.

We're guessing you didn't walk straight into one of the company's top jobs?!

No! I spent my first eighteen months at Quaife de-burring gears in advance of moving into the firm's machine shop. I then went on to work in the sales department. A stint in the fitting department followed before I found myself getting more involved with the technical development of Quaife products. Later, I managed front of house operations. As you can see, over the course of close to twenty years, I gained a comprehensive understanding of Quaife, its products and the way all aspects of the business work, meaning I was well placed to help Michael Quaife and his sister, Sharon, with the running of the company's commercial activities when they announced their decision to take a step back from day-to-day involvement.

How many people work alongside you at Quaife?

The team comprises eighty employees responsible for the design, development, manufacturing, fitting

and servicing of Quaife products in-house. The roles covered by the team also include marketing and administration duties.

What are Quaife's most popular products for Mercedes vehicles?

Mercedes owners tend to be the kind of drivers who like to upgrade and improve upon factory specification. Quaife ATB limited-slip differentials make a huge difference to cars fitted with open differentials as standard. ATBs are available for a wide range of Benz-badged vehicles, including the W201 190E all the way up to the Mercedes-McLaren SLR! We also manufacture and supply upgraded gear sets, including close-ratio dog-engagement kits, as well as full uprated gearboxes. Visit the Quaife website and download our recently updated catalogue for a full Mercedes application list.

Why should a Mercedes Driver reader upgrade their car's transmission with a Quaife ATB limited-slip differential?

When used in anger, torque can take its toll on transmission components. A 'fit and forget' Quaife ATB limited-slip differential will deliver confidence in the form of reliability and longevity whilst vastly improve the driving experience, especially if you're looking to take a fast-road Mercedes onto the track. The resulting increased grip and better handling will also enable you to get the best out of typical performance-enhancing engine upgrades.

Can we follow your adventures online?

Mercedes Driver readers are invited to visit the Quaife Facebook page, to follow us on Twitter and to view our website, which can be found by pointing your browser at www.quaife.co.uk

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

Right Quaife was founded in 1965 before the underlying design of its ATB limited-slip differential went on to be used by major manufacturers and motorsport concerns, including Benetton F1, a team which fitted a Quaife differential to the car Gerhard Berger used to win the 1986 Mexico Grand Prix



STAGE SCHOOLED

Modern AMGs have encouraged the growth of a vibrant Mercedes modifying scene, where drastically improved performance can be achieved at low cost

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





P5AAY

SCAR
PERFORMANCE

Gary Conway, Managing Director at London-based performance tuning specialist, GCAP Performance, is leaning over the engine bay of a ravishing red CLA 45 AMG 4MATIC.

The car is strapped tight to the rolling road it's soon to be tested on in the brightly lit, soundproofed dyno cell we're calling home for the afternoon. "Modern turbocharged Mercedes cars like this are a modifier's dream come true," he grins, the proverbial kid in a sweet shop. "When working with older, naturally aspirated AMGs, any significant hike in horsepower is a major undertaking and will cost the owner a huge sum of money. The manufacturer's decision to switch its premium sports models to turbocharging technology, however, has opened up a whole new world of Mercedes modifying enabling enthusiasts to personalise and improve the performance of their cars at a sensible price point."

Reinforcing what he says, a huge amount of aftermarket tuning equipment for modern AMGs has been developed by established hardware manufacturers since the launch of the CLA 45 we're staring at on the rollers. The age-old mantra *there ain't no replacement for displacement* has been ditched in favour of a turbocharged two-litre, inline-four configured for blistering performance. It's the classic hot hatch setup, and one which has served Mercedes well in recent years, ensuring huge sales of the A 45, CLA 45 and GLA 45, a trio of four-wheel drive, turbocharged terrors based on

a shared platform driven by what's claimed to be the world's most powerful series-production four-cylinder engine.

ALTERED STATE

"Not so long ago, you were expected to accept an AMG in standard configuration as being the best it could possibly be," muses Gary, acknowledging the Mercedes scene as being low on the priority list when it came to target demographics exploited by independent tuning companies. Of course, majorly revised Mercedes vehicles have been available as turnkey products from the likes of Brabus for decades, but as far as straightforward engine tuning in exchange for big bhp on a standard road car was concerned, modifiers had to look to the output of other performance vehicle makers to satisfy their tuning demands.

As Bob Dylan once sang, the times they are a-changin', which is why Gary's AMG-loving clientele has embraced the world of modern Mercedes modifying with open arms. Hertfordshire resident, Steve Osterfield, owner of the CLA 45 we're the company of, for example, is a regular visitor to GCAP's Notting Hill workshop, where he's been keen to explore the various stages of power upgrades available for his raucous red road rocket.

"As far as GCAP is concerned, the different stages of upgrade offered for the two-litre engine in the A 45, CLA 45 and GLA 45 are references to the required hardware for each progression through the power range," explains Gary. It's important to make this distinction because many mappers will use an 'off

Below AMG's turbocharged two-litre powerplants have proved hugely popular with those who like the idea of hot hatch hoenery in a premium quality sports car





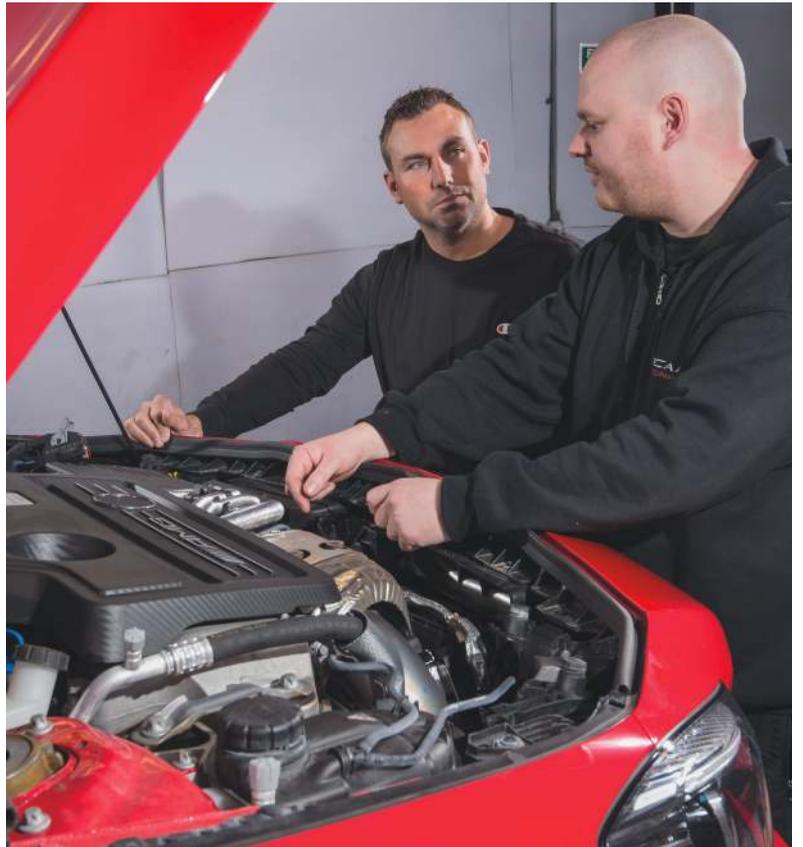
Above and left Checking the health and performance of the engine before work begins is vital, not just to measure the effect of the changes, but also to ensure the mechanicals are in safe operating condition

the shelf' ECU update to bundle with a customer's shopping list of physical componentry, meaning two different owners with the same model of Mercedes will end up with exactly the same software. To the uninformed, this might not look like a problem. After all, all AMGs are equal, right? Wrong. "All ECU updates supplied by GCAP are bespoke," stresses Gary. "We'll happily provide multiple customers with the same hardware, but each car is evaluated and mapped on its own merit. Not only does this enable us to take the operating condition of each vehicle into consideration, but it allows us to find out from the owner what his or her driving style is like and what they want to achieve from the updates being applied."

DIFFERENT STROKES

The requirement is different for every customer. "One of my clients is hell-bent on his car achieving the highest performance figures the dyno can deliver. Another has no interest in what's printed on his rolling road documentation. He's more concerned with driveability than big numbers." It's these different demands which necessitate bespoke software solutions, regardless of the common price paid. So what did Steve from Stevenage want from his car's day on the rollers? As we were quick to find out, he was hungry for everything on the menu!

A GCAP Stage 1 upgrade for the A 45, CLA 45 and GLA 45 consists of new ECU software only, but pushes the AMG being tweaked from the standard power output of 375bhp (model year 2016)





onwards) past the 400bhp mark with an expected 410lb/ft torque and increased throttle response. The ECU itself doesn't need to be removed from the host vehicle thanks to GCAP's OBD-compliant Autotuner professional mapping tools.

A Stage 2 power package features a revised map working in conjunction with a Nortech Performance intake kit. "The CLA 45's engine struggles with breathing due to a hugely restrictive airbox," continues Gary. "The induction system GCAP makes use of features an uprated air filter combined with an oversized nylon adaptor for the standard induction port, effectively enlarging the passage of air feeding the turbocharger." Owners should see power increased to 415bhp with 420lb/ft torque.

The Stage 3 upgrade includes all of the above, plus a 3.5-inch de-cat downpipe. In Steve's car's case, the changes equate to a safe and reliable 448bhp and 450lb/ft torque. On first impression, it looks as though the downpipe has made the biggest difference, but as Gary points out, the enlarged exhaust pipework and the free-flowing air filter work in harmony to ensure unrestricted air flow front-to-back, meaning the full potential of the downpipe can only be realised with an uprated air filter in place.

NEW BLOOD

It's easy to see why power increased by such a huge margin with the minimum of bolt-on modifications is so appealing to owners of modern

Above ECU parameters are interpreted and configured on a laptop in real-time

Facing page Thermal imaging hardware is used to determine the operating temperature of the turbocharger and engine

HOW MUCH WILL IT COST?

A 45, CLA 45, GLA 45 AMG

All prices inclusive of VAT

STAGE 1 £495

400-410bhp, 410lb/ft

- Remap (custom tune/health check)

STAGE 2 £720

415-420bhp, 420lb/ft

- Remap (custom tune/health check)
- Induction kit (cone filter plus airbox modification sleeve)

STAGE 3 £1,920

435-450bhp, 450lb/ft

- Remap (custom tune/health check)
- Induction kit (cone filter plus airbox modification sleeve)
- Exhaust (3.5-inch downpipe/primary decat delete)

Visit the GCAP Performance website at gcaperformance.co.uk or give Gary's team a call on 0207 229 3325



turbocharged Mercedes cars. Further power gains can be had by progressing to Stage 4, where an upgraded turbocharger and other supporting modifications come into play, but the cost increases accordingly, which is why Gary's customers almost always stop at the pleasingly priced Stage 3. Whatever their requirements, a variety of tests are carried out on the car to be tuned prior to work taking place. The checks involve everything from reading tyre pressures to monitoring engine operating temperatures (an engine running worryingly lean will get hot quickly). The condition and quality of fluids and filters, the effectiveness of fuelling equipment, the grade of petrol sitting in the tank and the state of the car's existing map will all be taken into consideration before work begins, allowing clear 'before and after' results on the rolling road to be achieved after the health of the car's engine is given a nod of approval.

HERTS AND MINDS

Steve is a happy man. His CLA 45 is leaving the rolling road for Stevenage with far more power than the car produced when he arrived to meet Gary a few hours earlier. It's no wonder these fantastic, two-litre, turbocharged AMGs have become a big hit with lovers of hot hatches, compact coupes and subcompact sports saloons who are flocking to the rapidly growing Mercedes modifying scene after years spent enjoying the performance output of rival manufacturers.

Play it safe

The CLA 45 AMG shares its DNA with the A45 AMG thanks to the common use of an M133 two-litre turbocharged engine, 4MATIC all-wheel drive and a trick seven-speed transmission with added paddle shifters. Sports suspension, nifty speed-sensitive steering, a big brake kit, three-stage ESP and the usual AMG trimmings make for an enticing performance package. Early CLA 45s produced 350bhp, while 2016 models were updated with power to the tune of 375bhp and a reduced zero to 60mph time of just 4.1 seconds. Not only is the CLA 45 (and its A 45 and GLA 45 siblings) perfect for power upgrades, it's also a model respected for first-rate safety.



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AUTOSPORT INTERNATIONAL

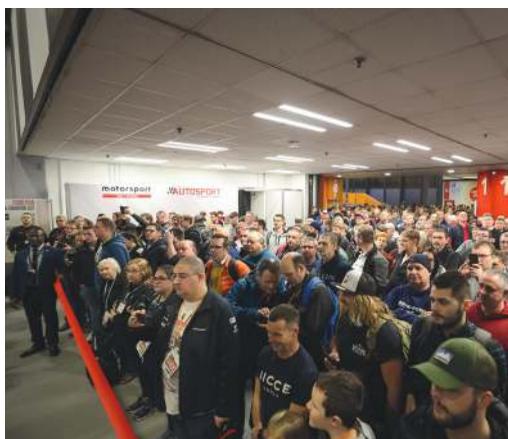
Cars, stars and live action entertainment thrilled visitors to the NEC a few weeks ago

WORDS & PHOTOGRAPHY **Dan Furr**



Early January saw show season kick off in style with the arrival of the annual Autosport International event held at Birmingham's National Exhibition Centre. An opportunity for motorsport teams and engineering firms involved in all aspects of racing and rallying to showcase new products, cars and star drivers, the first two days of the show were dedicated to trade visitors until McLaren Racing CEO, Zak Brown, and the company's Formula One drivers, Carlos Sainz Jr and Lando Norris, welcomed the ticket-carrying public to a packed weekend of live action and club stands.

Visitors to the show were treated to a variety of Mercedes motorsport machines, including those



Top Read about some of the amazing Mercedes cars offered at the on-site auction by flicking to our review on page 92

Facing page Vehicle wrapping and paint protection specialist, Caged Steel, exhibited one of the more eye-catching cars in the form of this AMG GT R



racing in the British GT series. Team Parker Racing's bright blue AMG GT4 dazzled, its long nose hinting at the 510bhp twin-turbocharged four-litre V8 lying within. Elsewhere, fans of tin-top racing were treated to a chance to view Cicely Motorsport's Cataclean-sponsored British Touring Car Championship A-Class up close following the team's recruiting of Renault Clio Cup star, Daniel Rowbottom. The BTCC rookie has experience in several single-make series, including the Lotus Elise Trophy and the SEAT Cupra Championship. He'll join Cicely stalwart, Adam Morgan, on the grid when this year's BTCC gets underway at the beginning of April.

REALITY CHEQUE

Thrilling stunts wowed showgoers in the main arena, while the increasing popularity of virtual racing saw round four of the Le Mans Esports Series take place at the NEC. The two-hour endurance event comprised racers who had qualified for inclusion online, as well as those who scored fastest times across the four days of the show. Gamer, Shaun Arnold, triumphed (scoring the biggest share of a ten grand prize pot) thanks

Facing page Motorsport was the order of the day, with British GT and F1 cars forming the lion's share of the Merc track attackers on display

Top Crowds gathered to witness the grand unveiling of 2019's WRC cars

Above McLaren had a big presence at the show, with the team's F1 drivers (Lando Norris and Carlos Sainz Jr) joining McLaren Racing CEO, Zak Brown, in opening the event

to a storming drive from pole position. Doing so qualifies him for the Super Final and a chance to take his place on the real-world Le Mans podium in a fight to win the lion's share of a £160,000 prize fund, a sum demonstrating just how serious virtual racing has become in recent years.

Running alongside Autosport International was the Performance Car and Tuning Show, where social media stars, celebrated racing drivers and television personalities wowed expectant fans with heavily modified road cars. Even more amazing street vehicles marvelled attendees when the on-site auction got underway, with interested parties able to bid on a wide range of desirable cars, including rare Porsches, Ferraris, Jaguars and a selection of brilliant Mercedes cars, not least of all a 2005 Crystal Laurite McLaren Mercedes SLR trimmed in Silver Arrows Red. Pitched as "the ultimate grand tourer with everyday usability," the 617bhp supercharged V8 was one of the auction's star cars, shifting for a cool £197k.

We're already looking forward to next year's Autosport International bash. See you back at the NEC in January 2020!



280 SL
AUTOMATIC

SDL 285J

GREEN WITH ENVY

In awe of the concours convertibles he witnessed in his youth, John Roberts made it his life's ambition to buy a classic drop-top

WORDS Dan Furr PHOTOGRAPHY Dan Sherwood



Shelby Cobra. Series 1 Alfa Romeo Spider. Lotus Elan. Porsche 911 Targa. Everyone has a favourite 1960s drop-top. "I'm a big fan of the first-generation Jaguar E-Type and the W113 Mercedes-Benz SL," says Letchworth inhabitant, John Roberts. "To my mind, these are the quintessential sports cars of the era, built during a time when a glamorous convertible promised a fantastic amount of fun on four wheels." As a young petrolhead accompanying his father around car shows in the late 1980s, John was in awe of the open-topped motors he found himself exposed to. Such was his excitement, he promised himself that someday, somehow, he'd experience *al fresco* motoring from behind the wheel of his very own exotic roadster.

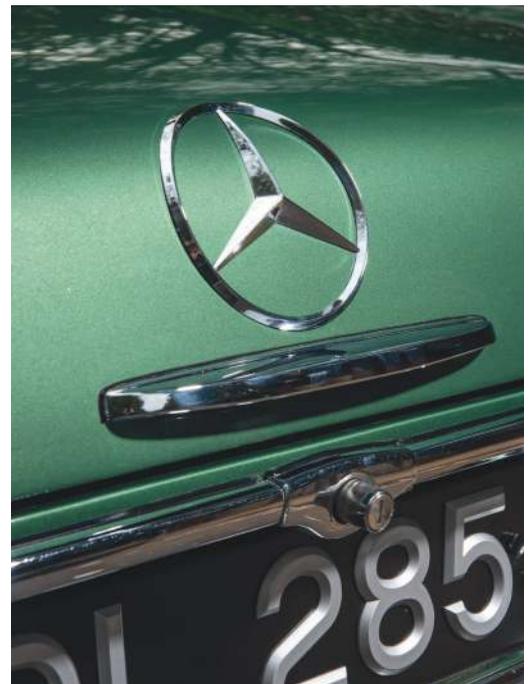
As you'll have gathered from a glance across the pages before you, he's now the proud proprietor of a handsome Moss Green 280 SL, yet his journey to Mercedes ownership didn't start with his appointment as the Pagoda's pilot. Indeed, regular readers will recognise John's name from the W110 200 feature we published in our last issue (order a

copy of the magazine at bit.ly/issuesmd). Bought by his father new in Singapore during the late 1960s, the 99bhp fintailed four-door has been afforded a new lease of life thanks to a recent restoration following John's name being listed as registered keeper on the super saloon's logbook.

The labour of love has resulted in a spotless classic Benz, a car holding much in the way of sentimental value for John. "I have fond memories of helping my dad to work on the 200 when I was a kid," he recalls. Unsurprisingly, as is the case with projects permeated by personal passion, he has little interest in the car's financial worth. "It's a Mercedes I never intend to part with," he stresses. That's not to say he doesn't pay attention to market trends, though.

"When buying the SL, I had my mind set firmly on ensuring I was pumping my money into a car capable of generating a decent return further down the line," he admits. It was a mission statement resulting in viewings of many W113s before he settled on the gorgeous green example we've come to see in the world's first Garden City. "I tested five different SLs," he continues. "I even travelled all the way to Amsterdam to a view a Pagoda being offered for sale

Below and facing page From top to bottom, John's 280 SL is utterly immaculate in every way





by a classic car museum. It was a beautifully finished SL in black, but a patchy history put me off making a purchase. I was adamant the W113 I would end up buying had to be perfect in every way."

CLOSER TO HOME

The search led him to the door of Silver Arrows Automobiles in Putney. Company boss, Michael Lavers, was only too happy to wax lyrical with John about the 1970 280 SL sitting in the firm's showroom. "We chatted for close to four hours!" laughs the lad from Letchworth. Having gleaned every detail from Michael, he happily paid the asking price and was soon the new owner of a pretty Pagoda equipped with a four-speed automatic transmission.

The car's unusual combination of Moss Green paint and Cognac leather is nothing short of stunning, but close to five decades of being rolled out in sunny weather resulted in the top of the door cards becoming slightly discoloured. It was a complaint only the beadiest of eyes would have noticed, but John's a perfectionist, wanting nothing but the very best presentation for his beautiful Benz. "I enlisted the help of automotive upholstery specialist, D:Class," he tells us. Known for repairing or retrimming Mercedes

leather of all ages to an original finish, the Chobham-based business has an impressive client list, including Mercedes-Benz World and McLaren Racing. D:Class also has a reputation for stocking a large range of cloths and leathers specific to Mercedes models. Needless to say, the SL was in safe hands when it came to reupholstering the affected hide.

By John's own admission, other cosmetic work carried out on the car since he bought it in 2015 has been required simply as a consequence of ill fortune or user error. "A devastating stone chip appeared in the windscreen not long after I brought the car home from Putney," he sighs. "After replacing the glass, I had to have the front end resprayed due to a scratch I caused when removing the grille. At least the incident offered the perfect opportunity to address the introduction of unsightly stone chips," he adds, attempting to draw a positive out of the situation whilst highlighting the fact he isn't afraid to use the car whenever the mood takes him. "It's completed various road trips, including the London to Brighton run. I don't think I'll ever forget happily cruising along in my super-reliable SL while various vintage Jaguars retired at the side of the road with mechanical problems!"

DRIVER

Q&A



JOHN ROBERTS

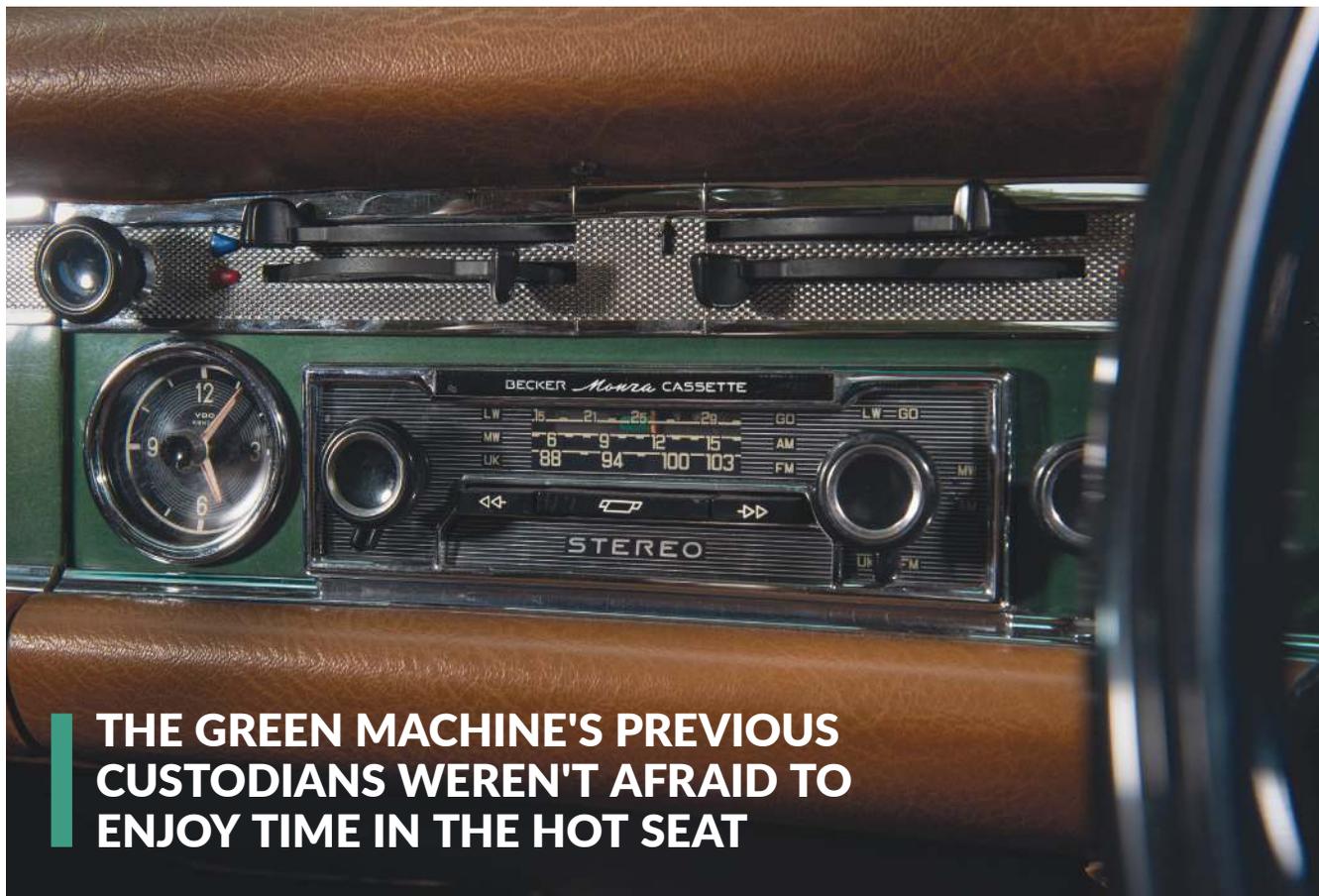
First Mercedes
1967 W110 200

Favourite Mercedes
W198 300 SL

Best thing about your 1970 280 SL
Sun out, roof down!

Worst thing about your 1970 280 SL
Horrific fuel economy





THE GREEN MACHINE'S PREVIOUS CUSTODIANS WEREN'T AFRAID TO ENJOY TIME IN THE HOT SEAT



Sport star

The W113 is widely regarded as one of the most beautiful cars of all time. Regularly included in lists of the most stylish sports cars ever built, the pretty Pagoda was also used by established motorsport teams in rallying. In 1963, a 230 SL driven by Eugen Bohringer won the 6,600km Spa-Sofia-Leige rally stretching from Belgium to Bulgaria. The car currently resides in the Mercedes museum in Stuttgart. Later, touring car driver and former Porsche pilot, Dieter Glemser, entered a modified 230 SL into the 1965 Acropolis Rally. Unfortunately, he was given the wrong directions at a crucial point of the competition, costing him a comfortable lead.

A shade over 91k miles covered from new suggests the green machine's previous custodians weren't afraid to enjoy time in the hot seat, leading us to question the mint condition of its leather. "All four of my Pagoda's former owners took exceptional care of the car," says John. "For the best part of his two-decade time in charge, the last owner installed W124 seats in order to preserve the condition of the originals!" A somewhat unusual move, but one allowing the cool cabin of this superb SL to wow anyone who lays eyes on it; the green drop-top has been the star of many recent classic car shows – some of you may remember seeing it displayed on the Mercedes-Benz Club stand at the London Excel – and it has even starred in a music video.

MANY TALENTS

While not a pure sports car like the aforementioned air-cooled Porsche, the W113 is a far more versatile retro ride capable of munching many miles without you feeling weary at the end of a long trip. Comfortable cruising is the nature of the beast, although its class-leading handling, mechanical fuel injection, light weight, short body and wide track ensure it's a Mercedes with plenty of poise. The 2,778cc M130 engine propelling John's car is the biggest of the three inline-sixes offered during the model's eight-year production run, with the four-speed automatic transmission – a common four-speed manual and a highly desirable ZF five-speed

SPARE PARTS ARE READILY AVAILABLE AND CAN BE SOURCED THROUGH A VARIETY OF SPECIALISTS



were also available – a welcome accompaniment for those who consider the car to be the perfect grand tourer. The only concern an owner needs to address before hitting the road is whether to remove the optional concave hard-top.

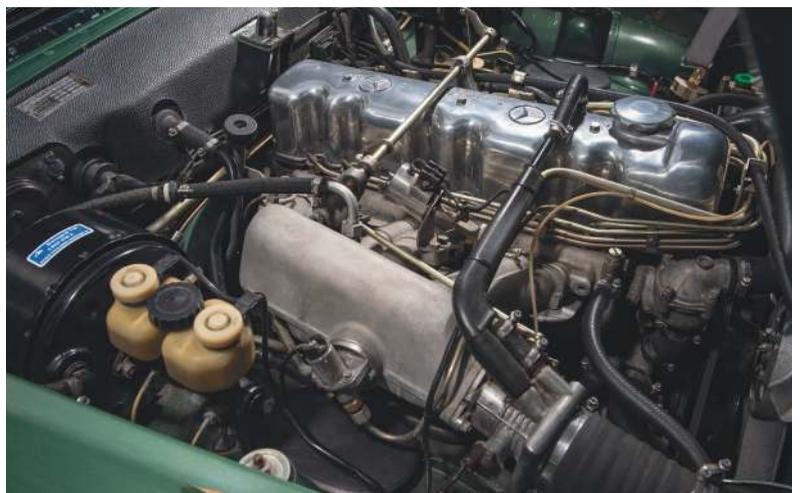
DOWN AND OUT

Talking of which, the roof was the one feature of John's SL to stump him during a period of familiarisation shortly after he bought the car. "I didn't realise the standard soft-top retracting mechanism can get stuck if you operate it incorrectly," he cringes. "I was staring at a Pagoda with its roof part-way down and jammed fast! I couldn't work out what I'd done wrong, leading me to seek the assistance of classic Mercedes

specialist, Roger Edwards Motors. I drove all the way from Letchworth to the company's workshop in Amersham with my car's roof half-retracted!"

Due to the fact almost fifty-thousand Pagodas were built between 1963 and 1971, spare parts are readily available and can be sourced through a variety of specialists, including the manufacturer's own legacy model support service. Importantly, maintenance costs aren't horrendous when compared to those of other sports cars built during the same period, making the W113 an attractive proposition if you can meet the object of your desire's asking price. "I'll be keeping hold of this one for many years to come," grins John, pleased with the purchase he promised himself all those years ago.

Above Believe it or not, you're looking at a 1970 280 SL navigating its way around the world's first roundabout





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Full classic interior restoration

■ d:class automotive specialise in full interior management and restoration of all Mercedes-Benz models. We are able to offer original colours and finishes, including correct perforations, in cloth, velour, tex and leather. We also offer period interior/boot carpet linings and produce overmats for certain models. The fundamental part of any restoration is being able to sympathetically complete the job to as true to when the car left the factory. We have a large knowledge and have completed many 111, 113 and 107 interiors. All of our work is carried out in-house by trained trimmers with vast experience and comes complete with full workmanship guarantee. d:class have completed work for customers as far afield as France and Holland, a testament to d:class' craftsmanship and attention to detail. Our quality of work speaks for itself.



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■ We are able to repair single damaged areas only without having to go to the expense of replacing a whole cover. The common problem of worn bolsters can be solved within a couple of hours work, replacing the worn cloth, velour, tex or leather panel. Another common fault is split stitching, often seen on the CLK models. This again can be repaired as a while-you-wait service. Connolising and small burn repairs are also a speciality and can, within the Surrey area, be offered as a mobile service.



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■ d:class can offer for all models, a full upgrade from cloth to leather. This will be done to O.E.M. spec ensuring that it is finished using original patterns, perforations, styles and colours. We use only high grade leather with exact grains and all work is done in-house, not a kit made over in China! Our cloth to leather service carries a full 3 year guarantee.

Or if you prefer you can overhaul your interior with a completely new and unique finish. We can trim your car in non-Mercedes colours, again in a high grade leather. Many unique and award winning interiors have been produced and restored by d:class and once they have rolled out of our workshops can be seen, not only nationwide, but featured widely on the continent.



Hood fitting and rear screen repairs

■ A full hood fitting service is available in-house. The 111, 113, 107, 129, 124, 208, 209 are all catered for. Our hoods come with a 1 year guarantee and are available in a range of colours to suit. We can supply and fit original Mercedes-Benz or aftermarket hoods.

Many Convertible owners experience the common issue of the deterioration, discolouration and eventual cracking of the perspex rear screens in the 113, 107 and 129 models. This is simply remedied by the inexpensive replacement of the perspex screen with the exact thickness and avoiding any extra cost resulting in the replacement of the entire hood.

For a professional and friendly service to Mercedes owners, club member owners, traders and Mercedes-Benz main dealerships visit www.dclass.co.uk or phone 01483 722923

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■ **When calling, please mention Mercedes Driver**

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Braided hoses

Braided hoses and updated fittings are excellent replacement parts for ageing rubber pipework and fasteners prone to failure...

Big brake conversions, increased engine fuelling demands and high-performance transmission upgrades are just a few features of modified motors which push

the limits of standard specification rubber fluid transfer hoses and their accompanying factory fittings. The solution is to fit steel braided hoses, perhaps adding Airforce Navy (AN) fixings for good measure. Not only will braided lines withstand higher pressures,

they'll dissipate heat far more effectively. They'll also allow for strong hose ends to be fitted, removed and refitted several times without risk of fraying, damaging or weakening of parts. They look great too. Improved function and enhanced form? What's not to love?!



Hoses

Two basic braided hose types exist. The primary type is rubber (or synthetic rubber) tube with an inner half-braid covering matched with a full-braid outer stainless steel layer. This type of hose has a working temperature range of between -50°C and +150°C and is well suited to fuel, oil and cooling systems where lightweight materials, flexibility, increased resistance to heat and sure-fire durability is required.

The second type of braided hose is a Teflon tube with a single-braid outer cover. The working temperature of this type of hose is between

-73°C and +232°C. It's a more aggressive type of hose, ideal for braking systems and where unusually high-pressure fuel, oil, coolant and other working fluids are present.

Using either of these two options as your starting point, you might be tempted by twin-layer synthetic hoses with a half-braid sandwiched between layers. There's also the option of ultra-strong, super-light, Kevlar-braided hoses for serious motorsport applications and *Mercedes Driver* readers who intend to build a custom four-wheeler to assist their crimefighting activities in Gotham. Or something.



Hose ends

AN fixings are supplied with either male or female ends in a wide variety of sizes to suit your chosen application. As you'd expect, the ends screw together to complete a joint. Ordinarily, the male end is fixed to the car's supporting component (e.g. fuel tank, turbocharger housing or oil reservoir). In the case of braking systems, the male end takes the form of a banjo union with a threaded fixing.

A key advantage of AN fittings is that the unions can be straight, angled or even able to turn a hose 180° to allow the plumbing of bespoke pipework in the tightest of areas. Adaptor unions can also be used on an AN system. Utilising these parts gives you the flexibility of adding extra angles to the hose line. You could even use them to increase or decrease hose bore to suit your requirements. Additionally, AN unions will allow you to split the line into multiple lines via T or Y-piece sections.

Fitting

Most braided hose manufacturers supply ready-made kits (e.g. braided brake hose solutions) for various makes and models of car. If your pride and joy happens to be a bit rarer than the rest, then fluid transfer hose manufacturers, including HEL, Goodridge and Hosetechnik, will be happy to make a bespoke kit for you. If, however, you're feeling adventurous, you can measure the length of hose required, work out the AN fixing dimension needed and make your own kit. The boxout to the right demonstrates how you do it.

1 Buy enough hose for the job. Measure the length of each hose you intend to replace. Indicate where to cut by wrapping masking tape around the new hose and placing a mark where you intend to chop. The best way to cut the hose is with a junior hacksaw, but let the blade do the work – exert too much pressure and the hose ends may fray.

2 With the hose end (an AN fitting) securely supported, you can insert the newly cut hose using a twist-and-push motion. Bear in mind the hose needs to be inserted until it reaches the back of the socket threads.

3 Mark the position of the hose after it has been inserted into the hose end. This will allow you to see if the hose is being pushed out when you assemble the hose end.

4 We found it helpful to apply a little light oil inside the hose and on the threads of the hose fittings. We also used a pair of longnose pliers to 'open' the hose before inserting into the hose end. Ensure the hose end and nipple are treated to a liberal coating of oil to prevent snagging.

5 Check to make sure everything is 'square' in order to prevent cross-threading. Gently insert the hose end into the hose until the threads engage. Hold the hose to prevent it from being pushed out as the hose end is inserted.

6 Tighten both halves of the hose end together. Use the correct spanner to prevent damaging the hose end. Ensure there is sufficient oil on the threads at the point you tighten the parts. Continue to tighten the hose end until you have a gap of approximately 1mm between the two halves. For a neat finish, rotate so that both 'flats' line up.

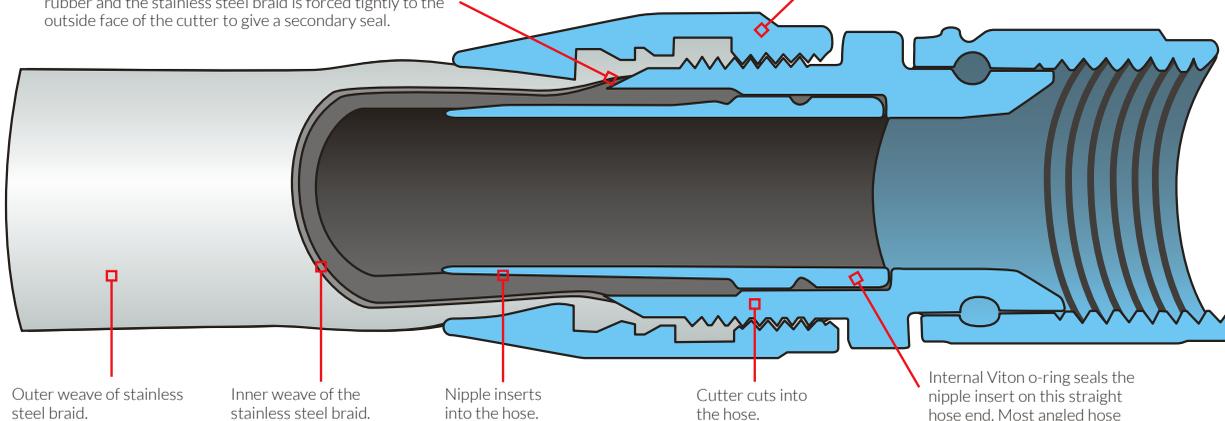
7 Before you fit the hose, it's vital to check it hasn't been pushed out of its end fitting. If all appears okay, a quick clean and the removal of the previously applied masking tape is all that requires your attention. Job done!



SPEEDFLOW 100 SERIES DIAGRAM

Double seal created by the cutter ensures rubber is forced between the cutter and nipple as primary seal. A layer of rubber and the stainless steel braid is forced tightly to the outside face of the cutter to give a secondary seal.

The mechanical fixing of the hose occurs when the stainless steel braid is trapped under the socket nut. The stepped internal face grabs and holds the braid.



Outer weave of stainless steel braid.

Inner weave of the stainless steel braid.

Nipple inserts into the hose.

Cutter cuts into the hose.

Internal Viton o-ring seals the nipple insert on this straight hose end. Most angled hose ends are a single piece from seat to nipple insert.

SECOND COMING

Al Kingsley's AMG GLC 43 4MATIC heralds his return to Mercedes ownership after years spent piloting Porsches

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



PRACTICAL
PERFORMANCE





As highlighted throughout this issue of *Mercedes Driver*, it's not unusual to hear those whose blood has its own octane rating tell stories about cars they've bought with their heart when they should have been paying attention to what their head was telling them. As a case in point, German automotive marque enthusiast, Al Kingsley, is happy to admit he hasn't always adopted common sense when parting with his hard-earned cash in exchange for favoured four-wheelers, but even he's surprised by the approach he took when determining whether to buy an AMG GLC 43 4MATIC last year.

"I visited Mercedes-Benz of Peterborough in the hope of test driving the AMG I'd set my sights on, but only non-AMG GLCs were available to evaluate. There was, however, an AMG C43 sitting in the showroom. I reasoned a test drive in a standard GLC would give me a sense of how roomy and practical the AMG I was interested in buying would be, while a test drive in the C43 would provide me with a feel for the performance I could expect from the three-litre twin-turbocharged V6 powering the sporty SUV," he grins. "On reflection, if you're looking for help when buying a new car, it's probably not a good idea to ask me for advice!"

Above Al's decision to invest in every cost option has resulted in a stupendously specified cabin featuring full leather and carbon-fibre dash trim

Fortunately, his unorthodox approach to figuring out whether the GLC 43 was a suitable replacement for his Porsche Macan Turbo proved successful. "I loved my Macan," he continues. "Like the AMG, my Stuttgart-crested crossover featured a twin-turbocharged V6, but I fancied a change after two years of using the Porker as a daily driver. Previously, I'd owned a diesel-powered Cayenne. In terms of performance, it was gutless, yet it did offer plenty of cabin space and fantastic levels of comfort. I was determined to buy another petrol-powered SUV, but not recognising anything new in the Porsche product portfolio capable of floating my boat, I turned my attention to the output of other manufacturers."

THIS IS THE ONE

A Maserati Levante and a Range Rover Velar were high on Al's list of potential purchases, but limited engine options and poor customer service from the dealerships he visited filled him with dread. He'd shied away from Mercedes due to not being a massive fan of the company's GLK-era designs ("I didn't think they were as hard-hitting as offerings from Audi and BMW"), but the GLC's smoother lines and fantastic specification in AMG trim convinced him to return to three-pointed star ownership many years after his name first



appeared on the logbook of a Benz. "As a much younger man, I bought a 190E," he recalls. "I wanted the Cosworth-fettled 2.3-16, but insurance and budget considerations meant I had to settle for a two-litre model! In between the 190E and the GLC, my wife and I have driven various practical daily grinds, including an A-Class and a couple of B-Class MPVs. I've always been struck by how reliable Mercedes cars are, even if the models I was driving were fairly uninspiring," he adds, not oblivious to the fact the AMG he's now using each day offers reliability and practicality along with a mighty 362bhp and 384lb/ft torque produced by a 24-valve six-shooter begging to be hammered hard.

When the pedal does hit the metal, Al's white wonder proves its bark to be as big as its bite. "The roar under load reminds me of the sound my BMW E46 M3 made," he chuckles. The naturally aspirated Bimmer may have rasped for fun, but it didn't feature anywhere near the level of refinement offered by the pearlescent Designo Diamond White Bright belter he's now in possession of. Indeed, the factory option list thrown at this particular AMG is huge, comprising full black leather, twenty-inch bi-colour AMG multi-spokes, Night package black exterior trim, aluminium running boards ("they look great, but do nothing other than rub the back of your leg when exiting

the car!"), carbon-fibre interior trim, panoramic glass sunroof, memory seats, keyless entry and ignition, Premium Plus in-car entertainment kit and Burmester surround sound audio. In short, Al ordered all Sport and AMG Line equipment before adding to the list with every other available option. Well, almost every option...

DRIVING SOUTH

"I loved the look of the head-up display in my mate's BMW X5, but the wait to have the Mercedes equivalent applied to my new GLC was unacceptably long. I decided to press ahead without the feature, reasoning the AMG's driver aids and satellite navigation were perfectly adequate. Unfortunately, I was wrong," he sighs.

The problem, he says, is how far ahead of the game rival manufacturers are when it comes to the effectiveness of Mercedes infotainment system user interfaces and functionality. "To put it bluntly, Mercedes satnav is rubbish. The map is a basic linear graphic, quite unlike the sophisticated layout of what you'd find in a similarly specified Porsche. Furthermore, I've regularly found myself following directions provided by my GLC's navigation system, only for the visible arrow to point right while the audio instructions tells me to turn left!"

That's not all he's upset with. "The centre

DRIVER

Q&A



AL KINGSLEY

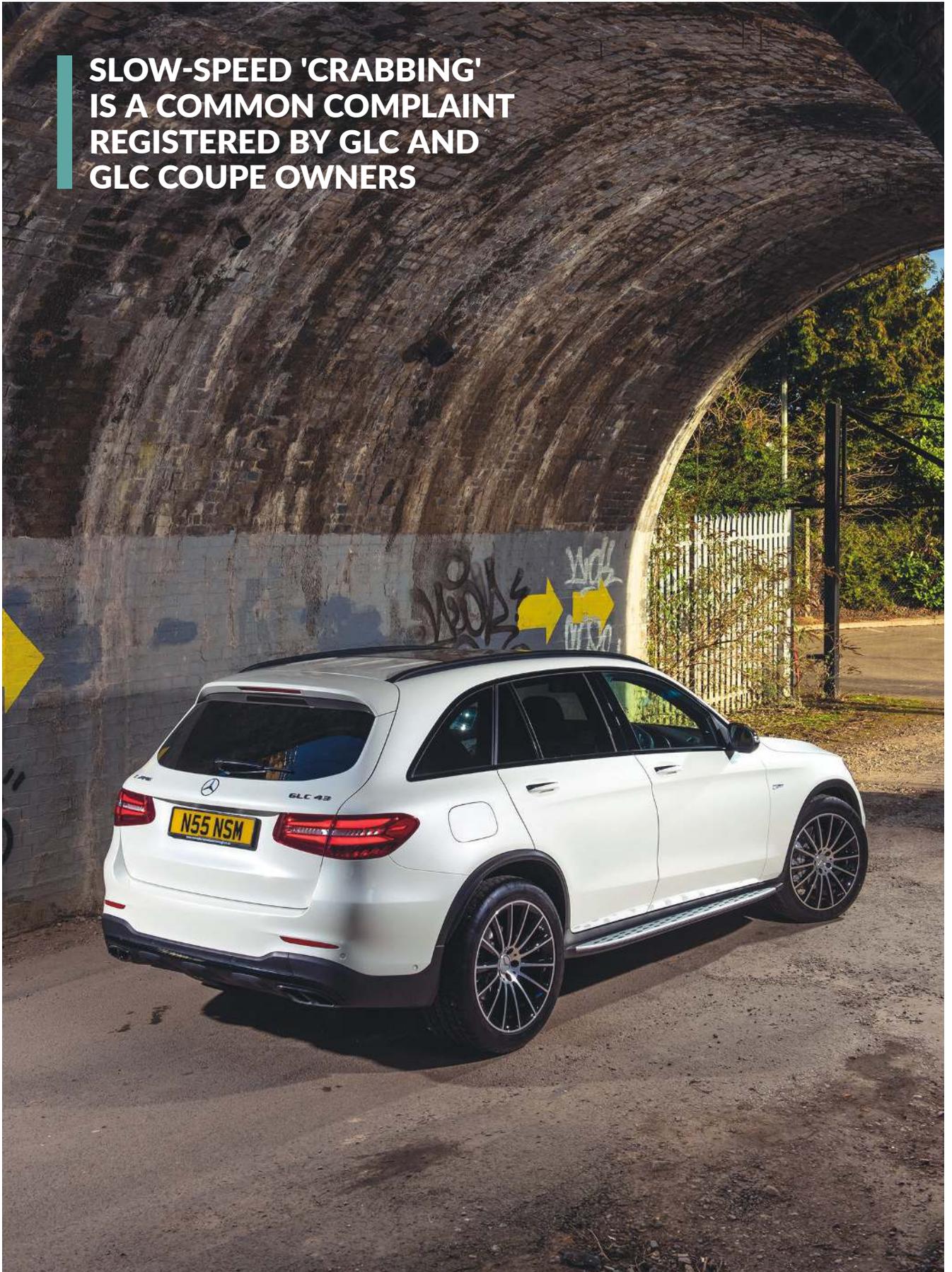
First Mercedes
190E 2.0

Favourite Mercedes
190E 2.3-16

Best thing about your AMG GLC 43 4MATIC
The sound when you give it 'the beans'!

Worst thing about your AMG GLC 43 4MATIC
Rubbish satnav and wheel judder on full lock

**SLOW-SPEED 'CRABBING'
IS A COMMON COMPLAINT
REGISTERED BY GLC AND
GLC COUPE OWNERS**





All for one

Introduced for the 2016 model year, the GLC-Class replaced the more angular GLK. The three-letters making up the GLC base name represent *Gelandwagen* (German for 'off-road vehicle'), L for *link*, and C to position the GLC alongside the C-Class in the Mercedes-Benz catalogue of cars. Four-door coupe and five-door hatchback body styles are available to choose from, along with a range of engines working their way up from a nippy petrol-fed two-litre turbocharged inline-four to a four-litre biturbo petrol V8 producing 503bhp and 516lb/ft torque. V6s and single-turbo diesels are also available powertrain options. All GLC engines make use of a 9G-Tronic nine-speed automatic transmission system.

console jog wheel and overhanging touchpad are too close to one another. It's a poor design and makes me think Mercedes is lagging five years behind Audi when it comes to this stuff. There's also a sharp judder and a horrid noise if reversing on full lock. At first, I thought I was experiencing a surprising consequence of fitting twenty-inch wheels and tyres, but I've since discovered slow-speed 'crabbing' is a common complaint registered by GLC and GLC Coupe owners."

SHOOT YOU DOWN

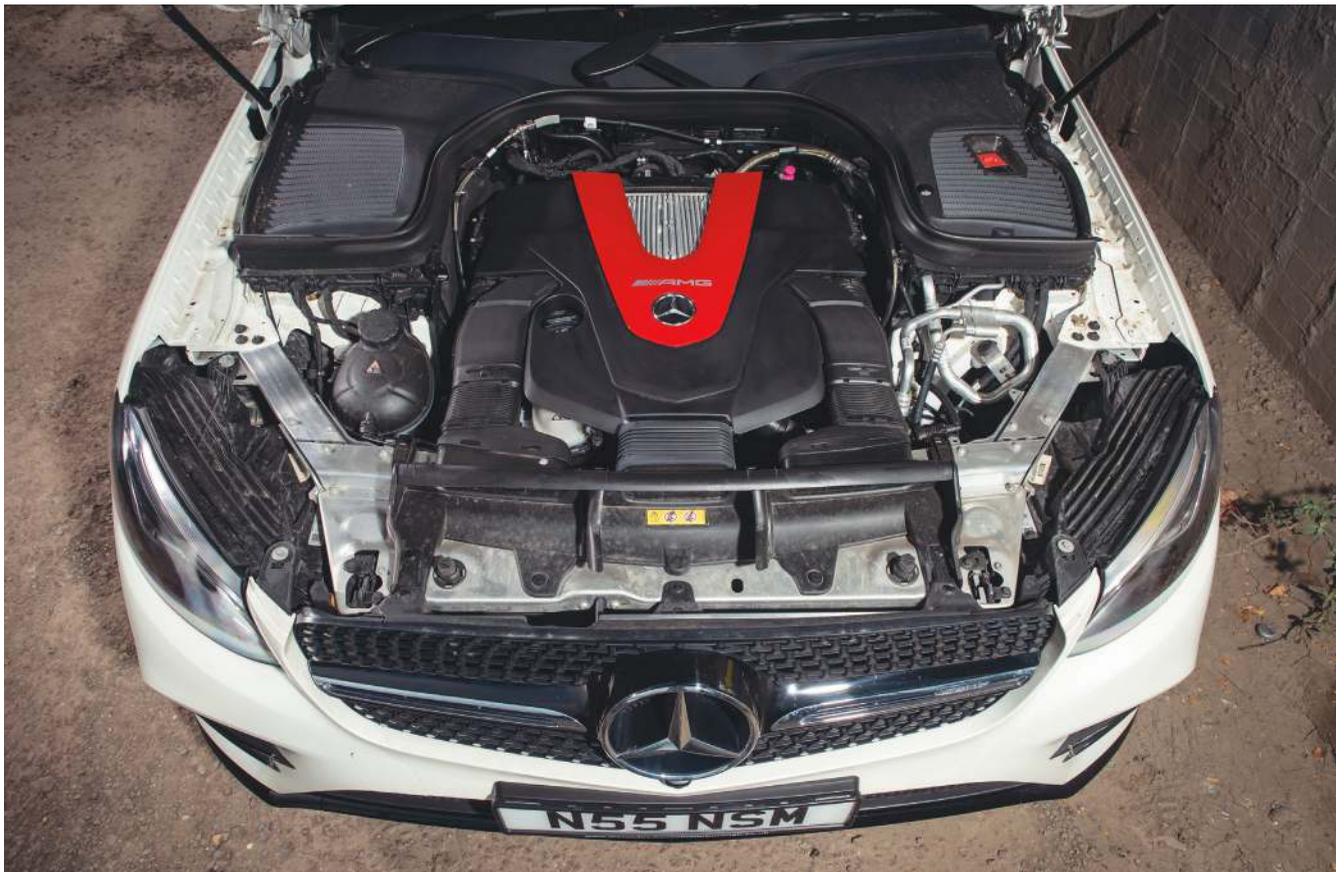
Indeed, many GLC pilots are infuriated by what they see as a manufacturer refusing to correct their cars; Mercedes released a statement saying the problem is a 'comfort' issue – as opposed to a safety concern – where low ambient temperatures cause changes in the flexibility of tyre sidewalls, a

condition felt when applying full lock and travelling at slow speed in cold weather. The solution? "Mercedes suggests fitting winter tyres," sighs AI. "Many owners find this to be an unacceptable response to an unacceptable problem, especially when independent investigations suggest applying optimised alignment settings will virtually eliminate the problem. You just don't expect to have this kind of complaint after buying a brand new AMG!"

BREAKING INTO HEAVEN

Not that he's letting the rare occasion his GLC is on full lock hinder his enjoyment of the white wagon. "It stacks up well against the Macan," he confirms. "The Porsche has a bigger engine, encouraging the release of more power than the AMG produces, but the Mercedes hunkers down in the twisties just as well. Additionally, it has a more spacious interior, and I love the combination of black leather, carbon-fibre dashboard trim, red stitching and colour-matched seat belts. I optioned a 360° camera system too, making this an SUV my wife and I feel totally comfortable parking in tight spaces."

Despite the aforementioned gripes, he doesn't regret buying the AMG, a tool he uses for work and play. "It ferries me to the office during the week and becomes our family car for shopping and dog walking at weekends. It's a good-looking machine with plenty of power waiting to be unleashed," he concludes. Just don't go asking him for sensible advice when it comes to test driving your next practical performance Mercedes!





Align of duty

We paid a visit to the home of British Touring Car Championship team, Power Maxed Racing, and met with Chris Dear, Technical Director at Absolute Alignment, to find out how you can keep your Mercedes on the straight and narrow...

WORDS Dan Furr PHOTOGRAPHY Dan Sherwood



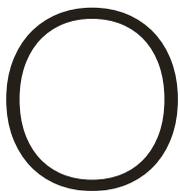
to correct alignment, and even then the person charged with carrying out the work is usually a local tyre fitter reading whatever factory settings his computer tells him needs to be dialled-in to the car in question.

The problem with this approach is a complete lack of input from the car's owner regarding preferred driving style, tyre choice, modifications and the environment the car is driven in. After all, while factory-prescribed alignment settings might be satisfactory for the majority of drivers, it doesn't necessarily follow that those same settings are suitable for you and your Mercedes. Indeed, in the real world, a 'one size fits all' solution is entirely unsatisfactory, especially if you've added upgraded components (springs, bushes or dampers) to your car's suspension system, or if you partake in different types of driving – including track days – from the pilot's seat of the Benz-badged beast you hop into for regular road use.

ALTERED STATE

Whether you've smacked a pothole, fitted coilovers, are experiencing vibration through the steering wheel or simply have no evidence of alignment being carried out on your car in the recent past, it's a good idea to seek the assistance of an accessible alignment specialist (no, not your local tyre fitter!) who can use factory settings as a starting point, rather than the end goal. With this in mind, we paid a visit to the workshop of Power Maxed Racing (powermaxedracing.com), a manufacturer-supported British Touring Car Championship team based in Bidford-on-Avon. Waiting to greet us was Chris Dear, Technical Director at Absolute Alignment (absolutealignment.co.uk), the company responsible for the design and manufacture of state-of-the-art 3D, digital and Bluetooth alignment equipment used by top-flight motorsport teams and main dealers worldwide.

At this point you'd be forgiven for thinking we're living in fantasy land, but the truth of the matter is you can have your Mercedes' alignment sorted by the very same engineers who work on championship-contending BTCC cars week in, week out. Not only that, but the equipment used on your car will be the same Absolute Alignment kit used in the pit lane to radically reduce Power Maxed Racing's lap times. And with prices starting as low as £35 for basic front-wheel alignment, there really is no excuse not to ensure your car handles flawlessly complete with your personal preferences taken into account. 22



Optimising alignment is one of the most important factors in ensuring your car performs at its best. Whether the Mercedes you're driving is heavily modified or retains standard specification, poor alignment can adversely affect tyre wear, fuel economy, handling (including steering response) and

general vehicle manoeuvrability.

Influenced by the condition and configuration of suspension equipment, poor alignment can be checked and corrected at low cost, making it one of the most effective ways of improving the way your car behaves on the road or track without you having to spend big bucks. Sadly, most owners wait until their car develops problems – pulling from one side of the road to the other or running on tyres with low tread – before they seek a specialist

THE BASICS

In automotive terms, alignment is essentially the adjustment of your car's suspension components in order to alter the angles of the wheels, thereby influencing how tyres make contact with the road, a condition which will affect overall handling and grip. When a technician checks and adjusts the alignment of your car, there are three areas he or she will be concerned with:

CAMBER

In short, this is the angle of the wheel and tyre when viewed from the front or rear of the car. You may have heard the terms negative camber (inward tilt, where the bottom of the wheel is further out than the top) and positive camber (outward tilt, where the top of the wheel is further out than the bottom) being used when discussing chassis settings. When correcting camber, the bias towards negative or positive tilt will depend on your suspension setup, your driving style and the intended application. For example, you might request negative camber to aid with extra grip during cornering. Unwanted camber misalignment can occur simply as a consequence of worn bearings, ball joints or incorrectly fitted parts.

TOE

Toe refers to the angle of the wheel and tyre when looking down from above. Toe-in is the term used when a tyre points inwards, toe-out is used to describe a tyre pointing outwards. A commonly used point of reference to demonstrate what's meant by toe is a pair of feet (of course!). Look down at yours. Imagine them as being a bird's eye view of your car's front tyres. Angle your feet inwards. This is a demonstration of toe-in, often requested by owners of rear-wheel drive cars to assist with straight-line stability, albeit at the expense of turn-in response. Now angle your feet outwards. This is the effect of toe-out.

CASTER

You've looked at your car's wheels and tyres from the front (caster) and from above (toe). Now it's time to view them side-on! Caster is arguably the most difficult to understand of the three main areas of concern when getting to grips with alignment. The term refers to the displacement of the steering axis from the vertical axis when viewed from the side of your car. If positive caster is present, the steering axis will tilt towards the driver. Negative caster tilts towards the nose of your car. During alignment, caster adjustment encourages self-centring steering, which helps with straight-line stability at speed.



Chris Dear
Absolute Alignment

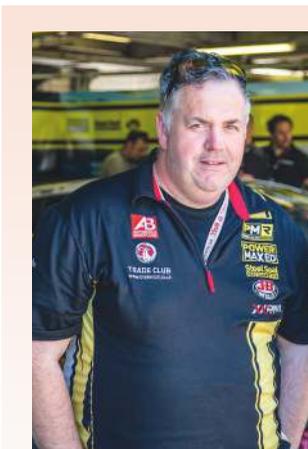
“Correcting or customising the alignment of your Mercedes is one of the best ways to ensure it handles perfectly irrespective of its specification. Of course, prevention is better than cure, which is why I recommend keeping on top of alignment settings by introducing regular checks, a habit which will ensure tyres last longer, fuel economy will be improved, comfort will be maintained and handling will be kept sharp. Ultimately, you'll end up saving money, plus you'll enjoy a noticeably more pleasurable driving experience from your Mercedes.”



WHEN TO ADJUST ALIGNMENT

Most aftermarket parts suppliers and manufacturers will recommend fresh alignment shortly after the installation of new suspension equipment. “You might have installed new coil springs, new dampers or a different design of tyre,” muses Chris. “All of this work can have a negative impact on alignment. For example, changing the ride height of your car will alter camber. As a rule for road cars, I recommend correcting alignment after any alteration to steering or suspension equipment, although in the ideal world you’d also have alignment checked every six months or after every six-thousand miles covered, thereby ensuring perfect continued operation and maintained safety.”

Standard cars may suffer the impact of negative alignment simply through day to day driving on the public highway, where rough surfaces, potholes and other unwanted conditions are experienced. “All of these factors can adversely change the characteristics of a car,” explains Chris. “Furthermore, the way you drive might be totally different to the way someone else in charge of the same model of vehicle takes to the road. It stands to reason default factory alignment isn’t necessarily going to be suitable for both drivers. If you don’t know when alignment was last checked on your car, or if you have reason to think steering isn’t as precise as it should be, book an appointment with a specialist.”



Martin Broadhurst Power Maxed Racing

“The effects of alignment are often vastly underestimated. You can spend thousands on the best dampers, bushes and tyres, but if they don’t work together in perfect harmony, you might as well stick with a standard setup. Achieving optimised alignment is inexpensive, yet it remains an aspect of car maintenance

overlooked by many drivers, which is a shame when you consider the massive difference it can make to the handling of even the most basic of vehicles. Put it this way, Power Maxed Racing has carried out custom alignment on everything from front-wheel drive road cars to rear-wheel drive competition machinery pumping out big bhp. Every owner has reported back to us with confirmation of improved handling and reduced tyre degradation. Whether you’re driving a performance sports car on the road or a dedicated racing machine at the circuit, professional alignment dialled-in to reflect your driving style, expected road conditions and your car’s unique characteristics will drastically improve performance.”





The alignment work has been configured with our modified W126 SEL's tyre design, wheel dimensions, ride height and suspension equipment taken into consideration

HOW IT WORKS

After asking you about the specification of your Mercedes, its suspension equipment, how you drive and how you want the car to behave, the Power Maxed Racing boys will check tyre pressures and lift each wheel onto an Absolute Alignment low-friction turn plate before fitting precision wheel clamps and Bluetooth wheel alignment heads. The operator will then refer to the wheel alignment system's data bank, software which provides the official full wheel alignment specification for the car being corrected. As mentioned earlier, a generic tyre fitter will treat this information as a target, whereas it should be considered a starting point to tailor alignment to your needs and personal preference.

The steering wheel is straightened and the Bluetooth alignment heads are levelled. The wheels are then turned ten degrees left and right, allowing the operator to record caster. You will be shown live data on the information system's screen, confirming the 'before' measurements, which will be provided to you as a printout when the work is complete.

Each of the Bluetooth heads features a camera, much like an iPhone. These cameras check camber levels by observing multiple points on each wheel. Laser technology is deployed and sends signals from head to head, effectively creating a virtual 'box' around the car through the accuracy of light. The dimensions of this box and other gathered information is then fed to the supporting software, resulting in on-screen data highlighting where corrections to alignment are required.



Sonia Patmore
Eibach UK

"To enjoy the benefits of altering your car's suspension, get alignment checked after the changes have taken place. A skilled technician using good quality equipment will be able to finely adjust camber, toe and caster in

order to find the perfect balance between these areas and your needs as a driver. In recent years, owners have become more aware of the importance of optimising geometry beyond OEM settings. This is fantastic news for manufacturers of aftermarket performance suspension equipment."

All the out-of-specification angles will be changed until they register 'green'. In other words, precise alignment will be achieved in accordance with manufacturer settings. This returns your car to its factory-prescribed alignment regardless of the modifications you've made. It's at this point input regarding your driving style, the desired characteristics of your car and the environments it regularly finds itself in comes into play.

"Most garages set alignment to factory specification, but custom settings are vital when it comes to an individual getting the best out of his or her car," says Power Maxed Racing's Technical Director, Martin Broadhurst. "An extreme example of this logic in action is the impact of tailored alignment on the cars we race in the BTCC. Aside from the obvious safety benefits, optimised alignment can radically reduce lap times," he adds, acknowledging the team's understanding of sports cars, modifying and tyre design. "Proper alignment is more than just setting angles. It's about altering the characteristics of a car to make it perform brilliantly in any given environment. This is why race teams alter the alignment settings on their cars to suit whichever circuit and track conditions they happen to be working with."

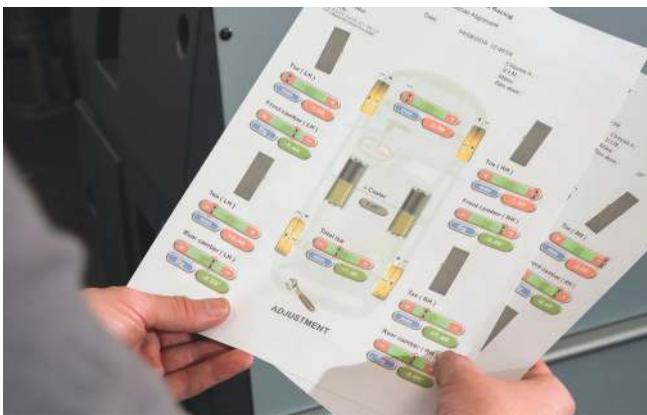
Starting at the rear of the vehicle, adjustments to camber, toe and caster are applied in accordance with the owner's wishes and the specialist knowledge of the operator. The 'squareness' of the chassis is determined and all information is saved as a profile for future reference. A printout showing the final alignment readings is produced, providing the owner with clear 'before' and 'after' data. »



Ben Lawson
Nankang Tyre UK

"Poor alignment can cause irregular tyre wear and less than desirable handling. Tyres may be scrubbing on the inside or outside edges. This can make your car feel twitchy, as well as encouraging 'tramlining',

whereby you find yourself having to correct steering as you're involuntarily pulled towards one side of the road or the other. If these conditions sound familiar, get your car's alignment checked and corrected. You'll improve performance at the same time as encouraging longer tyre service life."



THE RESULTS

We definitely noticed feel at the wheel to be sharper and more responsive following the alignment work, which has been configured with our modified W126 SEL's tyre design, wheel dimensions, lowered ride height and aftermarket suspension equipment taken into consideration. The result is smooth and stable fast-road driving, and it's great to have confirmation the car's chassis is nice and straight.

Corrective and custom alignment promises to deliver the elimination of excessive tyre wear (the primary reason for reduced grip), the improvement of fuel consumption, crisper handling, increased stability and better steering response. Not bad for a service starting at £35, and all the more pleasurable for the work being carried out by one of the British Touring Car Championship's most popular teams.

CONTACTS

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Nankang Tyre UK

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Eibach UK

01455 285850 eibach.com/uk



Your battery must be ready to perform when you are – look after it properly!!

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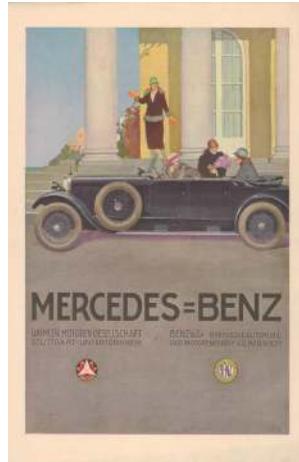
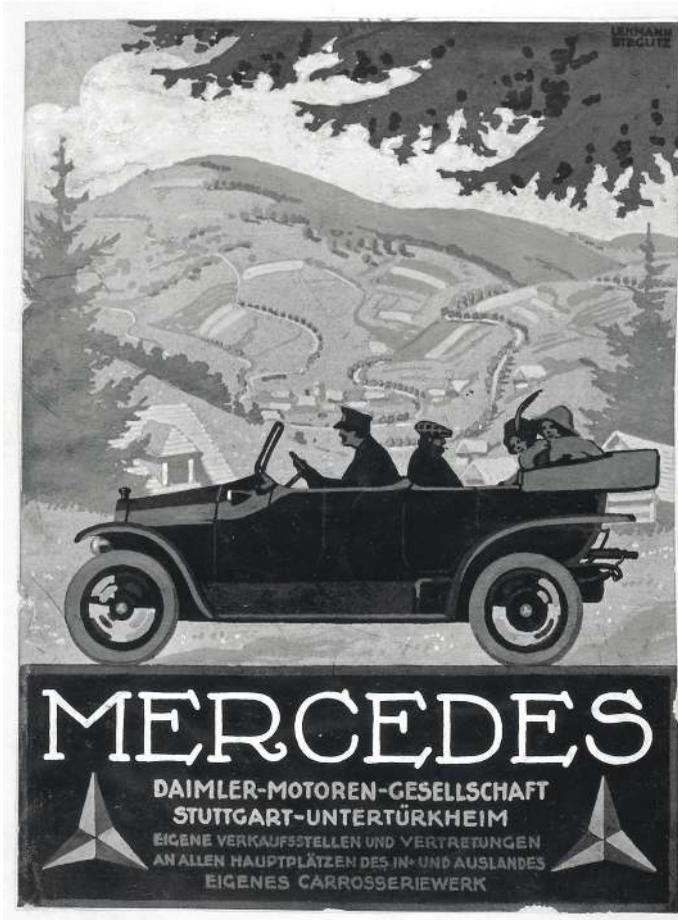
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ART ATTACK

Starting with the world's first automobile advertisement, early Mercedes production car history can be traced through the company's vibrant classic marketing materials

Top right In 1888, Benz produced the first advert promoting the motor car

Facing page Women were a key target audience for early Mercedes marketing materials

Back in the 1880s, barely anyone believed the newly invented automobile had a future. Thankfully, Gottlieb Daimler, Wilhelm Maybach and Carl Benz thought differently. "In those days, nobody believed anyone would countenance the idea of giving up the elegant horse and carriage for an unreliable, squalid, puffing and rattling iron vehicle!" laughed Benz many years later.

He and other visionaries opened up new

horizons with the invention of the automobile. Of course, the early years of motorised vehicle development were tough, a period marked by fear of mechanical breakdown, a lack of understanding about the new technology and resultant sluggish demand. First and foremost, the general public had to be convinced this new means of transport was safe. Benz was no great fan of advertising (or "business recommendation" as it was known at the time). He held the view that the quality of a product should speak for itself. Nevertheless,





WERKMANN SARBEIT

ist auch heute im Zeitalter der Serienfabrikation von ausschlaggebender Bedeutung. In welchem Maße, erfahren Sie noch nicht bei der Probefahrt, sondern erst viel später — oft zu spät! / Daß eine Automobilmärke Jahrzehnte hindurch den Ruf hat, unverwundliche Automobile zu bauen, sollte Ihnen doch zu denken geben. / Gründlichkeit und Gewissenhaftigkeit, diese bewährten und allgemein anerkannten deutschen Eigenschaften, finden ihren hervorragendsten Ausdruck in einem Erzeugnis wie es der MERCEDES-BENZ-Wagen ist.

DAIMLER-BENZ-AG-

Die berühmten Vierzylinder noch wertvoller aber nicht teurer

180 180 D
190 190 D



MERCEDES-BENZ



La nouvelle MERCEDES-BENZ TYPE 170 S ayant acquis une réputation internationale et une popularité exceptionnelle en très peu de temps par ses performances quasi révolutionnaires, est maintenant lécitable aussi en France

AGENCE GÉNÉRALE
Ch. B. Deferre
Paris VIII - 10, Rue de Bondy

TYP 170

der fortschrittlichen Gekochschere von der Gegenwart — Qualitätsmerkmale der besten Automobilmarken der Welt.

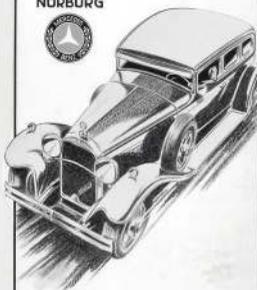
Eine hehrliche Spannung für die Fahrt mit der neuen Erfindung — Eine hervorragende auf dem Automobilmarkt keine Bedenken der Lichftung — Eine leicht veränderte Freude für den Besitzer im praktischen Gebrauch.



MERCEDES-BENZ

MERCEDES-BENZ

TYP NURBURG



he published the world's first automobile advertisement for the patented motor car in 1888. The emphasis was on what was described as "goodwill advertising", or to put it another way, a trust-building exercise. To that end, initial literature made claims about the new contraption being "absolutely safe" and "always ready for service" with "no special operating skills required".

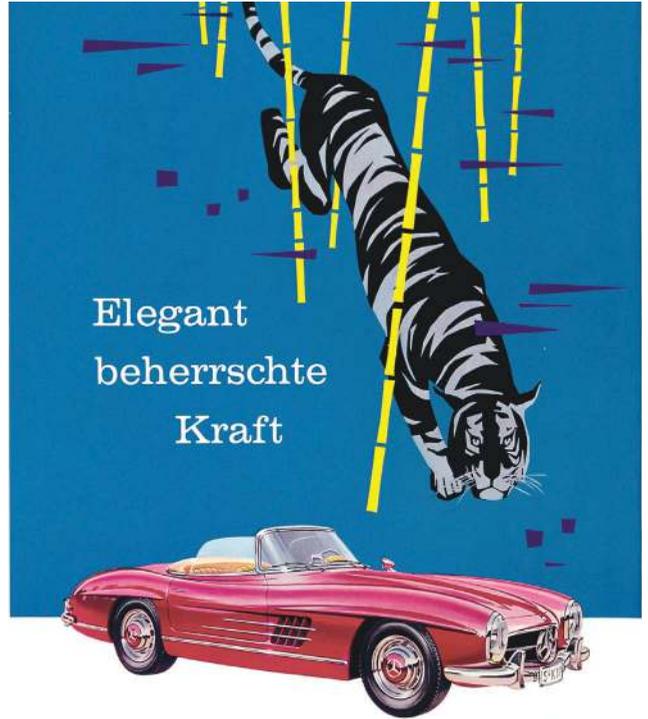
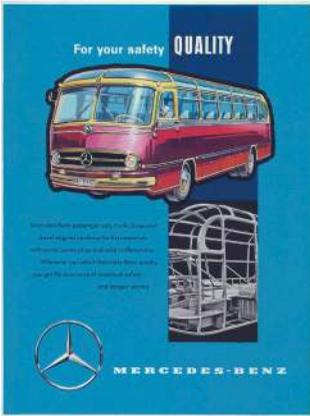
The first automobiles wouldn't have been built without the drastic economic and social changes which took place in the nineteenth century. Even so, the car's rise to popularity was slow, a challenge made difficult by social, economic and political factors. For example, Germany's population grew

by almost 150% to fifty-six million in the space of a century. Subsequent rural flight and urban squalor were accompanied by poor incomes and low purchasing power, meaning movement of the population and industrialisation rendered mechanical transport evermore important. Mobility was essential for people to earn a living.

CHASING HISTORY

The democratisation of mobility failed to begin in Germany until after the Second World War. In contrast, Henry Ford heralded the start of mass motorisation in the USA almost fifty years earlier. Unexpectedly, Germany was playing

Above Bright reds and yellows have remained the most popular colours for attracting attention in crowded advertising space



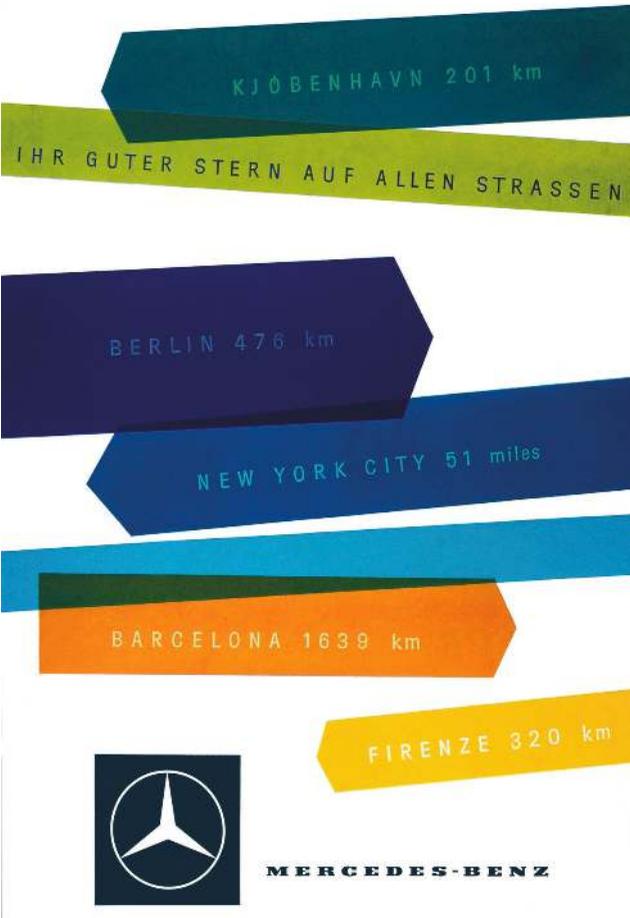
Wo man sich für die gebändigte Kraft eines starken Motors begeistert, wo man ein erregendes Fahrerlebnis in einem faszinierendem Wagen sucht, da steht der neue Mercedes-Benz 300 SL Roadster im Mittelpunkt des Interesses. Leicht und elegant beherrschen Sie die geschmeidige Kraft dieses modernen Seriensportwagens, denn seine 225 PS liegen sicher in Ihrer Hand. Form, Leistung und Fahr-eigenschaften reißen in diesem dynamischen Wagen zu vollendeter Harmonie.

Typ 300 SL ROADSTER

MERCEDES-BENZ



Der gute Stern auf allen Straßen



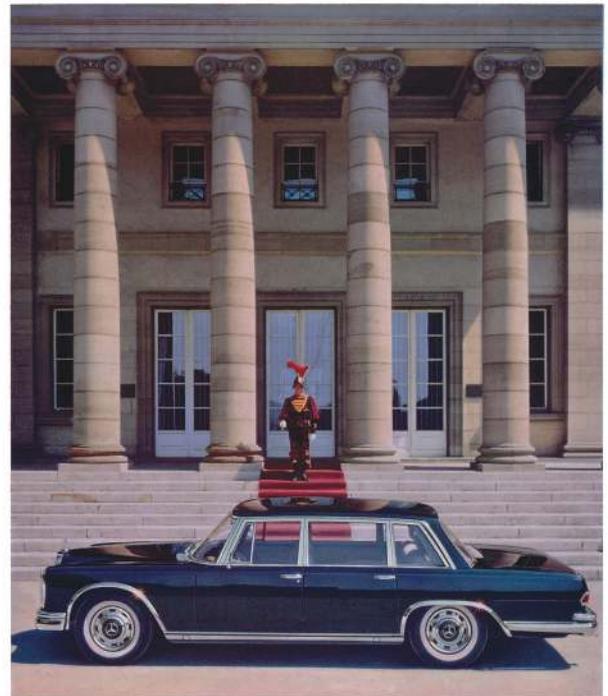
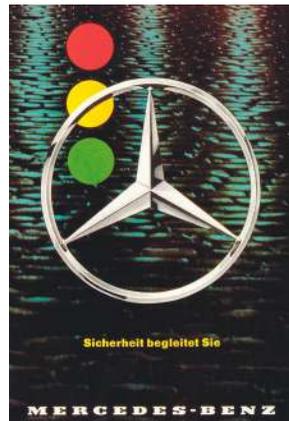
catch-up, despite the Daimler and Benz companies amalgamating in 1926. The three-pointed star and Benz's laurel wreath motif combined to form a new trademark promising "superior quality and reasonable prices." This confident message formed the basis of a strong advertising campaign in the face of prevailing competition.

In 1931, the pressures of global insecurity forced the company to retire from motorsport. Adverts for the firm's production cars, however, continued to be created in the style of classic racing posters. They proved successful, but recognising the need for outside support at a time advertising was becoming more systematic and more modern in

Bottom right This colourful advertisement announced the union of the Mercedes and Benz brands in 1926

character, Daimler-Benz employed the services of a professional advertising agency in the 1950s. The automobile was increasingly becoming an object of desire, and the new Mercedes-Benz adverts targeted the aspirations, wishes and projections of the post-war generation.

The prototype 300 SL arrived ready for racing in the spring of 1952. A revival in colourful poster design saw artistically painted works of art distributed across the globe to celebrate Mercedes success at the track. It was a way of promoting the technical superiority of the manufacturer's output at the same time as demonstrating the quality of technology bred at the racing circuit and imbued



The new Ambassador

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Mercedes-Benz 600. An Ambassador of progress, of quality and noble tradition respected the world over. The Grand Mercedes takes its place among the elite.



in the firm's production passenger cars. A win on Sunday meant sales on Monday.

BATTLE OF THE SEXES

It wasn't just affluent men who needed to be wooed into main dealer showrooms. Women were becoming increasingly self-confident and independent, requiring their own cars as a means of indulging a passion for fast-road fun. At least, this is how the automotive advertising of the day depicted women and wheels, although there were still many Mercedes advertisements produced targeting women with children, where the safety features of Mercedes cars was the primary marketing message.

Above Photography was used prominently in Mercedes advertising artwork from the start of the 1960s

Advances in the field of photography and the introduction of full-colour printing at a fraction of the price demanded by old-school methods saw Mercedes advertising posters become more vibrant as the post-war years progressed. Illustrations reigned supreme, but they became more lifelike, more sophisticated and more attractive than before. Racing posters continued to follow the same familiar format they'd been produced in since the 1920s, while advertisements for Mercedes road cars moved towards more template-driven, photography-based designs. It's a style that has evolved dramatically during the course of the past half-decade, and one which continues to dominate Mercedes marketing materials today.

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CLASSIC345



THE LITTLE THINGS

Bim Mountain's 1988 300 SL could be any other R107 on the market, but pay close attention and you'll soon find his pride and joy is in a league of its own

WORDS **Emma Woodcock** PHOTOGRAPHY **Matt Woods**



Pop the latch and lock the releases, the boot lid is ready to arc up and open. One hand on the chrome finisher, one steady movement and we're looking at five sides of the carpeted cuboid below. Finished in a warm, pristine grey, only the lawn-worthy show strips break up this R107's storage compartment. To the inexpert eye, there's really no story to tell.

Luckily, we've got Bim Mountain as our guide. A lifelong petrolhead who recently opened specialist luxury car sales business, Kerbey Motors (visit the website at kerbeymotors.com), he's just the man to unveil the secrets of this late production 300 SL. Removing the monochrome fuzz lining the boot's furthest wall, he reaches in and tugs the wind-up jack free. With the three-pronged metal hulk out of the way, he returns to pop a plastic cover from of its mounting points. Twice folded and tinged with the slightest hint of aquamarine blue, there lies the roadster's original build sheet. Granted a plastic pocket during final assembly, it's been hidden here ever since. It's a welcome surprise, and one taking a knowledgeable owner to discover.

CHANGE CHANNEL

This is the kind of thing you learn when you make Benz your business. After a career ranging from selling vans to customers in the Channel Islands, to offering haulage for the Scottish oil industry, Bim landed in 2015 with a just-sold company, plenty of time on his hands and a deep drive to start his next endeavour. It had to be automotive. It had to be Mercedes-Benz.

"I've always had a passion for these cars," he explains. "They're lovely machines." Glancing



Left Every aspect of Bim's 300 SL is utterly spotless, including its chassis and suspension equipment, which has been treated to cleaning, shot-blasting, powdercoating and full wax protection



over his 1988 *Sport Leicht*, no right-minded car lover could disagree. A late production example wearing piercing white paint and a part-cloth interior, his 300 SL was the most accessible R107 in the range when sold new. It remains a usable real-world drive to this day. Key statistics include 178bhp and 184lb/ft torque from the smooth M103 straight-six, with Bim's car sending power to the road via a four-speed automatic transmission. Sixty from rest takes a fraction under ten seconds. Top speed is 121mph.

We'll be the first to admit those figures won't snap necks, but that was never the 300's rationale. Introduced in 1985 to replace the ageing 280, the 300 mixed a new engine with a wide selection of facelift detail tweaks. The R107 'big picture' was the same as ever – think double wishbones at the front, a semi-trailing arm axle at the rear and disc brakes in each corner – but the little details soon add up; like its up-range V8 siblings, the new six-cylinder model made use of a revised steering system, harder shock absorbers, a standard-fit limited-slip differential and even fancy door handles from the W126 S-Class.

One late model tweak stands above all others when assessing an R107's liveability in 2019: final facelift cars like Bim's feature wheel arch liners

Take it home

If you'd like to be the owner of the wonderful white 300 SL you see on the pages before you, then you're in luck! This ravishing R107 is currently being offered for sale by Bim through Kerbey Motors, the Mercedes sales specialist he recently established. Highlighting the fact all cars he offers are totally pristine, he's priced the SL at a cool forty grand. His stock list, however, caters for all budgets, and currently includes a W201 190E 2.6 and a stunning W126 420 SEL that's covered just 9,000 miles from new! Expect to see the large barge in a forthcoming issue of *Mercedes Driver!*

and galvanised body shells. These features may be why the white 300 SL we're cooing over has survived into its fourth decade without any major blemishes. "To be fair, the car was in good shape when I first saw it," he remembers. "Most of the paintwork appears to be original. I immediately took a shine to what I was looking at!"

MAINTAINED MAGNIFICENCE

Content with his purchase, he aimed the sharp-creased bonnet for his premises in Pulham Market, a village situated fourteen miles outside Norwich. "The car drove beautifully," he smiles. "In all honesty, even after all the time and work I've invested in bringing this SL up to its best mechanical and cosmetic condition, the drive is just the same today," he adds, hinting at just how good his SL was to begin with, and how fastidiously maintained the car continues to be.

An early inspection of metal beneath its hard top revealed nothing to be concerned about. "You never know what you're going to find when you take the lid off an R107," says Bim. "I've seen many SLs where rust remains hidden until disturbed by investigation." Thankfully, his 300 was nothing like the corroded cars he's talking about; freshly exposed body panels



DRIVER
Q&A



BIM MOUNTAIN

First Mercedes
CL55 AMG

Favourite Mercedes
1954 Gullwing

Best thing about your R107 300 SL
Its original condition

Worst thing about your R107 300 SL
Air-conditioning would be a nice feature

were pristine, as was the roof itself. The good luck carried over to the soft top, an unmarked Mercedes original.

The hunt for corrosion continued, but there was hardly any to be found. Keen to keep things that way, Bim lifted the car on a ramp and broke out the cavity wax – a whole twelve cans of the stuff! “I’ve sprayed it into all vulnerable areas, including inside the sills,” he confirms. The chunky chrome bumpers required complete disassembly to keep rust at bay, necessitating the chipping away a rubbers before removing the ornamental casing to access the plain metal underneath. It’s just as well Bim carried out the work; the steel surfaces exhibited imperfections, requiring remedial work amounting to shot-blasting, powdercoating and a liberal application of protective wax.

LONG HAUL

The bumpers are now fit to last another three decades. At the rear, the chrome cap has been replaced by a like-for-like part free of troublesome pitting. Drop down beneath the car





and there's another surprise in store. "I like the underside of my cars to look as good as the top!" Bim smiles. "I try to go the extra mile, ensuring every little part is cared for properly." For the 300, his attention to detail meant removing plastic splash guards and neutralising anything he didn't like the look of.

The anti-roll bars were the first parts to grab his attention. Weakened by years of all-weather use, they had to be removed, blasted and powdercoated before he was prepared to allow them to be united with new bushes. The suspension and subframes provided fewer issues, but – as a cursory glance shows – he worked hard to scout out and grind away every surface not meeting with his exacting standards. A fresh coat of satin black finished the job.

The longer you spend looking at this SL's undercarriage, the more a specific feature stands out; rushing down the vertical, clefting the car in two, the satin black exhaust is in a condition capable of making most moderns weep. It's all thanks to rigorous restoration of the system's pipework. Moreover, with the possibility

of under-bonnet temperatures taken into consideration, the manifolds benefit from a heat-resistant coating withstanding everything this side of 1,400 degrees! Brand new brass nuts and replacement gaskets, meanwhile, show no stone has been left unturned.

FINISHING TOUCH

There was just one task left: Bim's R107 needed smooth moves to match its solid structure. Wearing their 76,000 miles with grace, the engine and transmission looked reliable, but their tough taskmaster wasn't taking any chances. A full driveline service, including fresh automatic transmission fluid and an accompanying sump filter, has been carried out as a precaution. The steering system also benefits from new oil, along with new filters and a replacement damper, while fresh front discs keep the brakes in check.

This SL could be stuck in a time warp. After all, Bim's mighty Merc looks and sounds the same as the day he first laid eyes on it. Proof that little details soon add up!

Top It's not the most powerful of R107s, but Bim's brilliant white 300 SL is no slouch

Facing page Factory build sheet was found tucked away in a dedicated plastic pocket hidden behind boot carpet



BUYING *Your next Mercedes*

**PRACTICAL
PERFORMANCE**

Buying W164 M-Class

The second-generation M-Class is available in a range of trim and engine options to suit all tastes and budgets...

WORDS **Robert Smith** PHOTOGRAPHY **John Colley**

Buying a practical performance Mercedes sounds like a fantastic idea, but not everyone wants – or can afford to run – a V8-powered monster or a Benz furious on forced induction. The truth of the matter is a low-cost load lugger with plenty of room for the kids, dog, luggage and weekly shop is all that many require from a cargo carrier wearing a three-pointed star. Practical performance doesn't have to mean breakneck speed and enforced stops at every other petrol station, no matter what AMG owners tell you!

Once upon a time, the big-wigs at Benz decided the time had come to phase out the all-conquering G-Wagen. The boxy fourby had been in production for well over a decade. Deciding a new, more comfortable SUV was required, the company entered into partnership with Mitsubishi to develop a new line of civilian-focused utility vehicles based on a shared platform. In 1992, a year after Mercedes announced its joint venture with the Japanese manufacturer, the plan was put on hold due to the PR-friendly explanation of “technical problems”.

Following the same path as Porsche when its partnership with Volkswagen came to an abrupt end during the creation of the 924, Mercedes brought further development for its new SUV in-house, and from 1993, continued work without outside assistance.

GENERATION GAME

The resulting W163 M-Class was launched in early 1997 with a range of trim options. It was a big hit, not least of all due to well-publicised safety and performance features (numerous airbags, electronic stability control, optional four-wheel drive). A range of engines were also offered, from a petrol-fed 2.3-litre inline-four all the way through to the M113 5.4-litre lump more commonly associated with the W210 E55 AMG. Heck,

the original M-Class even appeared in one of the *Jurassic Park* movies!

BMW wasn't impressed. The Bimmer boys demanded Mercedes cease using M-badging on the M-Class due to the presence of the same letter on BMW's motorsport-inspired output. As a compromise, Mercedes agreed to add an extra letter to model names whilst retaining the M-Class marque for marketing purposes. Thus, the two-letter ML nomenclature was introduced to vehicles bundled under the M-Class umbrella until the range was reborn as GLE in 2015.

The second-generation M-Class came in the form of 2005's W164. Design work started in 1999, some six years prior to the model's launch at the North American

A sharper, more aggressive look promoting aerodynamic qualities



International Auto Show. Lower, longer and wider than the W163, the newer SUV had a sharper, more aggressive look promoting more advanced aerodynamic qualities. Once again, a variety of engine options were available, including a 6.2-litre V8 for the inevitable AMG, making the ML 63 the most powerful naturally aspirated SUV in the world. For those after more civilised machinery, a three-litre turbocharged diesel V6 or a 3.5-litre petrol V6 free of snail-shaped bhp booster were available to choose from. A facelift in 2009 brought redesigned lights, bumpers, door mirrors, wheels, grilles and cabin furniture to the party, while BlueTEC nitrogen oxide-reducing technology was introduced to diesel engines in the range.

The W164 was replaced by the W166 in 2011. First-gen MLs can currently be bought at surprisingly low cost on the used car market, but their dated looks and drab interiors encourage many buyers to go on the hunt for the more modern W164. Comfortable, roomy, good-looking, capable of returning decent fuel economy (AMGs aside, of course!) and a reputation for being more reliable than its successor, the second-gen M-Class represents a lot of SUV for the money. Here's what you need to be aware of when inspecting your prospective purchase.



BRAKES

A high number of aftermarket manufacturers have satisfied M-Class owners with reasonably priced, high-quality pads, discs, fluids and hoses. EBC Brakes, for example, offers pads in different compounds to suit a range of driving styles and environments. Pick whichever setup suits you best by visiting bit.ly/ebcbrakes

Factory rubber brake hoses deteriorate with age, resulting in a 'spongy' pedal feel. Braided hoses from Goodridge will restore braking efficiency by refusing to flex under load. Pleasingly, thanks to a wide choice of finishes, Goodridge braided brake hoses can be colour-coded to match the look of the ML you're interested in buying. Hop online and visit bit.ly/goodridgeuk for more info.

TRANSMISSION

Whereas W164 engine options are vast, the gearbox for all models is the 7G-Tronic automatic unit. Promising smooth operation, quick shifting and fast acceleration, the seven-speed transmission isn't without its problems.

For a start, many owners complain of experiencing the exact opposite of smooth operation when shifting up gears in early W164s. Gearbox ECU software updates are a popular first fix, but hardware problems can also be at play; a faulty 7G valve body (plus speed sensors) is a common complaint, resulting in limp mode when you least want it. It can be expensive for a garage to rectify the problem, so look for evidence of the work already done. The 7G's control module can also prove problematic. Even after remedial work is carried out, many owners continue to experience 'jerky' gear changes.

The bottom line is that the majority of owners experience little in the way of trouble and enjoy endless miles of happy motoring, while an unfortunate minority

wonder why Mercedes saw fit to slap a complicated seven-speed transmission on a range of engines which would be perfectly happy with a good old-fashioned five-speed slush box attached to them! Do your homework, check supporting paperwork and make sure you take the ML you're eyeballing out for a long test drive, shifting up and down gears, pulling away abruptly and experiencing a range of speeds to help determine the health of the gearbox you might end up working with.

These horror stories might concern you, but it's worth bearing in mind silky smooth shifting can often be restored simply by servicing the 7G with fresh fluid. It's a job which should be carried out every 40k miles. Delve back into the history file and look for evidence the job has been done. A competent home mechanic can change the fluid with the correct tooling (instructional videos can be viewed on YouTube), whereas those less familiar with a set of spanners may wish to enlist the services of an independent Mercedes specialist. Expect to pay somewhere in the region of £200.



BUYING *Your next Mercedes*

SUSPENSION

Airmatic adjustable air ride was introduced to the W164 to allow for smoother travelling, no matter the quality of surface. Adjusting damper rates and ride height enables owners to tailor their M-Class to the environments they expect to drive in, making adaptable suspension supremely attractive over a 'one size fits all' standard system. Of course, the presence of Airmatic is likely to attract extra cost, plus you'll have additional maintenance concerns, but the general consensus is Airmatic delivers a far better dynamic driving experience when it comes to getting the best out of the second-gen M-Class.

Compressors can become overworked, sensors can play up, valve blocks can prove problematic and those using their W164s in more rural settings might experience the negative impact of water ingress, causing electronic elements to miscommunicate. The high number of Airmatic-equipped Mercedes cars and SUVs built since the turn of the century

means most specialists are familiar with the common faults associated with the system, but that doesn't mean to say fixes will be cheap.

Airmatic is a sophisticated setup designed to improve cornering and handling, reduce body roll and alter damping rates on the fly. Fixing hardware failures (failed strut or compressor, blown fuses, troublesome height sensors, leaking air lines) are not beyond the skills of the home mechanic, but you'll want to ensure any stored diagnostic trouble codes are confirmed before you start chasing problems.

Test the effectiveness of Airmatic on the M-Class you're looking at before parting with your hard-earned cash. If the compressor is knackered, the vehicle will fail to rise after being lowered. If all is well, you'll hear the compressor operating and you'll be lifted skyward. If you don't hear the compressor firing into life, a problem exists and further investigation will be required. Once again, YouTube videos are on hand to help.



WHEELS & TYRES

Kerbed wheels and worn tyres are a concern when it comes to any vehicle of the W164's age. Fortunately, help is at hand from professional wheel restoration companies, including Wheel Genie (wheelgenie.co.uk). As for black circles, a wide range of tyres to suit all budgets and driving environments is available from Nankang, Falken, Yokohama and Toyo. This isn't an area where you should be scrimping. Tyres are the only part of your M-Class in contact with the road. Don't take risks by fitting inferior rubber.

If the tyres on what you hope will be your new W164 are past their best, look to see if there's uneven wear on the inside edges. It might be difficult to spot, but this condition could be a sign of badly affected alignment. Fresh alignment is also something we'd recommend after suspension upgrades or repair work. Consider the cost on top of new tyres before parting with your hard-earned dosh. Helpfully, we've included a feature on the importance of correcting and customising alignment in this issue of *Mercedes Driver*. Have a butcher's on page 66.

VEHICLE CHECKS

Notwithstanding experiments with hybrid technology, the W164 was offered with seven different engines. The entry-level petrol lump was a 3.5-litre V6, while derv fans could opt for a 3.0-litre V6 equipped with a turbocharger. All other engines were V8s, including 4.6-litre, 5.0-litre, 5.5-litre and 6.2-litre petrol powerplants and a lone 4.0-litre diesel.

Clearly, the specifics associated with each of the engines fitted to the W164 is beyond the scope of what we're able to highlight here, but no matter the beating heart beneath the bonnet of the ML you're looking at, it's vital you check to make sure the vehicle's vital organs have been well maintained. To that end, ask to see all documentation supporting claims of servicing in accordance with the manufacturer's recommended schedule. Demand to see paperwork proving the seller's suggestion of repair work and replacement parts.



Test the effectiveness of Airmatic on the M-Class you're looking at

Be wary of any unexplained periods of the vehicle being off the road. If in doubt, have a full inspection carried out by a marque specialist. If you're in an owners club, check to see if this is a service you can take advantage of as a benefit of membership.

Enter the W164 in question's details into the DVLA's online vehicle enquiry service (visit bit.ly/dvlaenquiry). It's free to use and will give you key information about the M-Class you're looking at. Additionally, take a few minutes to view information held on the DVLA's MOT history database (visit bit.ly/dvlamot). Another free service, it'll provide you with details of all passes, fails and advisories associated with the Mercedes you're thinking about buying. You'll also be able to check registered mileage at the point of each test. Check to make sure all details tally up with the paperwork you're presented with.

Invest a couple of quid in an online vehicle history check from mycarcheck.com or

similar. You'll get instant confirmation of any outstanding finance, accident history, changes of registration and the number of previous keepers. You'll also be able to tell if the M-Class you're looking at has ever been stolen or had a change of colour.

If you want to take your checks a step further, consider the benefits of investing in Carly's Connected Car app for your smartphone. The software is compatible with Mercedes vehicles and is able to tap into the host car's multiple ECUs to check for correlation with the visible speedometer. The low-cost kit can detect whether data has been manipulated. Visit the website shop.mycarly.com for more information.

Ideally, the ML that's tempted you will have been maintained by a Mercedes main dealer or a reputable independent marque specialist. If services have been skipped or non-specialist garages have been tasked with jobs, this may be a sign the car hasn't been properly looked after.





BUYING *Your next Mercedes*

BODY

By nature, the M-Class is a workhorse. With this in mind, it's highly likely you'll be looking at a vehicle that's been more susceptible to scratches, scrapes and other cosmetic damage than a more traditional Mercedes road car. Don't be afraid to take time to inspect every inch of the W164 you're looking at in detail. The seller shouldn't be rushing you.

Check panel gaps and variations in colour between panels. There may be a perfectly plausible explanation for differences spotted, but consider the possibility the W164 you're looking at has suffered accident damage. It pays to be prudent, so don't be afraid to ask questions. You might save yourself a whole heap of cash and headaches in the long run.

Check window seals and headlight rubbers for signs of moisture ingress. Delaminated windscreens are known to be a problem for cars of this age, a complaint producing a milky stain. The only fix is new glass, so factor the cost of this into the price you're prepared to pay for the SUV before you.



Five-seater capacity extended to seven-seat space with the introduction of the bigger X164



INTERIOR

As you'd expect from a utility vehicle, the W164's interior is focused on function, with five-seater capacity extended to seven-seat space with the introduction of the bigger X164 GL-Class following frustration registered by W163 owners about problematic accessibility to the third row of seats in the M-Class's pre-W164 standard body.

Hard-wearing leather and half-leather upholstery features across the range, but higher mileage W164s may exhibit bolster wear or nicks in their hide. Automotive upholstery repair and restoration specialist, Awesome Interiors (awesome.eu.com), is well-versed in correcting the condition of tired leather and fabrics in luxury vehicles, so don't be dissuaded

from the purchase of an otherwise magnificent M-Class. Instead, use the condition of worn cabin furniture as a strong bargaining chip.

Examine carpets, door cards, side panels, the centre console and front foot wells for signs of water ingress. There should be nothing to worry about, but it's better to be safe than sorry. Moisture in the passenger's front foot well might not be anything more than a blocked scuttle drain overflowing. If in doubt, have a poke. The seller should have nothing to hide, so don't be afraid to ask difficult questions or of making requests to help you better understand what you're looking at. Oh, and make sure you test every button and switch in the cabin. It's the best way to make sure all gadgets work correctly!



PRICE

When compared with its predecessor, the W164 has held its value in recent years, but that's not to say there aren't bargains to be had. Expect to pay more for low-mileage vehicles riding on Airmatic suspension and dressed in AMG Line accessories. Here's a taste of what we found advertised online:

2006 ML 320 CDI

Pewter paintwork, 69k miles, full black leather, four owners from new, full MOT with no advisories, cherished vehicle
£6,500

2007 ML 320 CDI SPORT

Gloss black paint, 110k miles, black half-leather, full main dealer service history, AMG styling pack, twenty-inch AMG wheels, full-colour information display
£7,995

2007 ML 63 AMG

Silver paintwork, 90k miles, full leather, two owners from new, same owner for past seven years, huge history file, privacy glass, immaculate throughout
£10,250





UNDER THE HAMMER

HAMMER TIME!

Magnificent Mercedes machines were the star attractions of recent auctions held at the National Exhibition Centre and Mercedes-Benz World...

WORDS **Dan Furr** PHOTOGRAPHY **Your mother's special friend**



2005 McLAREN MERCEDES SLR

Manufactured between 2003 and 2010, this sensational supercar allowed Mercedes to partner with its then Formula One technical partner, McLaren, to showcase collective experience in the development, construction and production of high-end performance cars. Just like the model's 1955 namesake, technological developments abound, including a 5.5-litre, 24-valve, supercharged V8 producing 617bhp, making it one of the most powerful engines ever found in a production sports car. This particular SLR was bought by the seller through Taylor and Crawley in 2005 and has been owned by him ever



since. Finished in the SLR's quintessential colour combination of Crystal Laurite Silver over Silver Arrows Red leather, the car remains in remarkable condition, having covered just 6,700 miles from new. Unsurprisingly, a full service history is present, the most recent stamp being inserted into the gorgeous grand tourer's folder of files in 2017 by marque specialist, Avantgarde. Given the surge in popularity of the Ford GT and Porsche Carrera GT in recent years, it came as no surprise to see this mega Mercedes fetch close to £200k when the hammer finally fell at the Silverstone Auctions Autosport International Sale last month.

1992 W124 500E

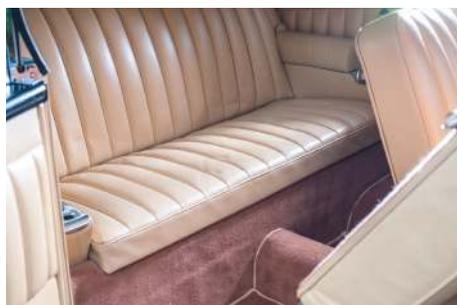
Created in close co-operation with Porsche, the 500E was the W124 Mercedes hoped would put a big dent in an increasingly popular 'super saloon' market dominated by the BMW M5 and featuring even crazier four-wheeled creations, such as the Lotus Carlton. This superb 500E was sold new to a buyer in Italy, where the car remained before being shipped to the UK a year ago. Finished in black with black leather and accompanied by a comprehensive service history highlighting ground covered totalling 149k miles, the fabulous four-door was offered with a lower estimate of £18k, yet still failed to find a new home when offered at the Historics November Sale at Mercedes-Benz World.



UNSOLD!



**SOLD FOR
£121,500**



1935 W18 290 CABRIOLET B

The W18 entered production in 1933 as a replacement for the 350/370 Mannheim series. The newer model – commonly referred to as the Type 290 – boasted several advanced engineering features, including hydraulic brakes, a transverse leaf/coil front suspension, a coil-sprung floating rear axle and a 60bhp side-valve, six-cylinder engine. Body styles included a four-door touring car, a four-door saloon and four types of two-

door convertibles or cabriolets (A, B, C and D designations). The car presented here is a 1935 W18 two-door Cabriolet B in super-rare right-hand drive configuration. A life spent in Persia and Country Antrim was followed by a twenty-year restoration in Dorset before the seller grabbed the car's keys in 1998. To his regret, advancing years encouraged him to offer the car at the Silverstone Auctions Autosport International Sale in January.

1979 W116 450 SEL



In our Nov-Dec 2018 issue, we showcased a 560 SEC thought to be the last new Merc owned by F1 hero, James Hunt (order a copy of the mag at bit.ly/issuesmd). In the article, we spoke about the 450 SEL sat atop bricks outside Hunt's home in South West London. The car was fully restored in 1995 and has recently been cared for by marque specialists, SS Motors. Hunt bought the brown barge in 1980. In a state of disrepair by the time of his death in 1993, the 6.9-litre land yacht sold at auction for just £4k prior to its comprehensive restoration. The work cost £24k, making the recent sale price at the Historics auction hosted at Mercedes-Benz World something of a bargain buy.



**SOLD FOR
£27,000**



UNDER THE HAMMER

1991 R129 SL 500

Born out of the earlier 500 SL, the R129 SL 500 featured many new and innovative ideas, such as electronic damping, an automatically expanding rollover bar and a multi-link rear axle. Fully operating electric hood, windows, door mirrors and seats made the model easy to live with. The car pictured here is a 1991 example with cost-option AMG alloys and 93k on the clock. The wood trim is in excellent order, as is the twin-tone paintwork. A pretty car it may be, but not even five-litres of V8 grunt and a lower estimate of just seven grand was enough to attract bids at the Mercedes-Benz World Historics auction a few weeks ago. Pity.



2004 R230 SL 65 AMG



Introduced in 2001, the R230 SL was an engineering tour de force. Painstakingly modelled on a state-of-the-art supercomputer, the new arrival boasted an air of barely contained aggression delivering huge road presence. Packed full of sophisticated electronic driver aids, the devastatingly good-looking drop-top was an instant it. The power-operated aluminium folding roof was particularly admired, disappearing into the top of the boot in a matter of seconds. This UK-supplied SL 65 AMG was first registered in 2004 and comes complete with desirable panoramic roof. Excellent condition inside and out, the car has covered just 67k miles and produces 604bhp thanks to a fire-breathing V12 equipped with twin turbochargers. The price fetched at the Autosport International auction represents a lot of car for the money!



2002 C209 CLK 500

If you're the kind of Mercedes fan who loves Lewis Hamilton so much you'd enjoy having his pouting mug airbrushed on the bonnet of your Benz, then you'll kick yourself for missing this customised CLK 500 when it was offered at auction a few weeks back. The creation of artist, Paul Karlake, the car features wild styling comprising wide wheel arches, staggered rims, an adjustable rear wing and,

erm, Hamilton's head on the hood. Beneath the bespoke artwork, however, lies a standard CLK road car, complete with an interior looking even greyer and drabber than usual as a consequence of remaining untouched against Karlake's brightly coloured exterior updates. A curious collectible for fans of F1, the car sold for marginally more than its lower estimate at auction.

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