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Mercedes ENTHUSIAST

Issue 246
Apr/May 2024

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Editorial comment and the latest from the *Mercedes Enthusiast* team

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"Can a modern four-cylinder turbo really hold a candle to a 1950s straight-six? Find out from page 20"

When it comes to ownership stories in this issue of *Mercedes Enthusiast*, we've really pushed out the boat. Not only do we bring you Gareth Charlton's adventures with a rare E430 Estate from the 210-series E-Class generation, in this magazine you'll find features on Dennis Lowe's 230SL Pagoda converted to battery power for life in London, plus Tony Scott Andrews' awesome AMG GT C Roadster living on the Isle of Wight, and 190E race cars piloted by independent Mercedes specialist Cor de Jong and his son in The Netherlands. Not forgetting a 560SEC with a few tasty upgrades.

Our cover story compares a 300SL Roadster to the latest SL43, and the big question is – can a modern four-cylinder turbo really hold a candle to a 1950s straight-six? You'll need to turn to page 20 to find out. And on the subject of SLs, make sure you scan the link to our exclusive *Mercedes SL* magazine found on page 28. Recently updated to include the latest R232 generation of SL Roadster, the high-quality publication is worth buying for the yearly production data alone.

Our next issue, on sale May 17, includes a story on the original CLS. Mercedes no longer produces the four-door coupe or its Shooting Brake estate variant, and that's something I'm particularly sad about. All three generations were fantastic cars.

Kyle Molyneux
Executive Editor

Who's been doing what in this month's *Mercedes Enthusiast*...

Wilhelm Lutjeharms
In this issue of *Mercedes Enthusiast*, South African contributor Wilhelm Lutjeharms heads for the hills in a beautiful W198 300SL Roaster and takes along Mercedes-AMG's latest addition to this multi-decade sports car range in the shape of an SL43. Driving them back-to-back makes for an interesting comparison, but does the new SL's four-cylinder powertrain win over Wilhelm? You'll need to head to page 20 of the magazine to find out!

Albert Mensinga
Dutch contributor Albert Mensinga has brought us two fantastic features this issue – one focusing on a deliciously evil looking 560SEC, and the other a pair of 16-valve 190 saloons raced by a father and his son. That father happens to be Cor de Jong, proprietor of an independent Mercedes workshop, and who sold the 560SEC to its latest keeper after carrying out significant restoration work. Find out more about that V8 coupe from page 52, and read about the hot 190s from page 60.

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Cover story

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▷ Big touch-screen angled towards driver.

The latest Mercedes launches, news and motorsport

News

CLE Cabriolet

Mercedes reveals details of replacement for C-Class and E-Class convertibles

The new Mercedes-Benz CLE Cabriolet is now available to order in the UK, with prices starting from £52,995 OTR for the CLE200 AMG Line. Although based on the CLE Coupe, the Cabriolet version is equipped with a multi-layer fabric soft top that can raise and lower in 20 seconds while the vehicle is travelling at speeds of up to 37mph.

The UK range comprises the aforementioned 201bhp CLE200 four-cylinder, as well as the 254bhp CLE300 4Matic (from £59,745) four-cylinder – both of which are two litres. The 376bhp CLE450 4Matic (£70,265) packs a three-litre straight six, and the sole diesel is the 194bhp CLE220d (£55,060) four-cylinder. All engines are paired with the latest 9G-Tronic Plus autobox and 48V mild hybrid technology, which includes a second-generation integrated starter generator (ISG) that provides the equivalent of up to 23bhp/147lb ft torque of support from lower speeds.

The CLE Cabriolet is equipped with the Aircap electric wind deflector system and the Airscarf neck level heating system as standard. The latest MBUX infotainment system with a free-standing 12.3-inch digital instrument cluster and 11.9-inch driver-oriented central display are also included.

AMG Line cars roll on 18-inch alloy wheels, while AMG Line Premium examples get 19-inchers, and AMG Line Premium Plus spec boasts 20-inch wheels; range-topping Premier Edition spec cars receive 20-inch multi-spoke AMG rims in black, plus the Night Package. The CLE Cabriolet's basic spec comprises automatic climate control, LED High Performance headlamps with Adaptive Highbeam Assist, a multifunction sport steering wheel in nappa leather, 64-colour ambient lighting, wireless device charging, Blind Spot Assist, Traffic Sign Assist, and the Parking Package with a reversing camera.

The new CLE Cabriolet is available in eight body colours, including exclusive Manufaktur finishes Patagonia Red, Alpine Grey (Solid) and Opalite White. The soft top is available in Black, Red or Grey. For the interior, customers can specify leather in Black, Tonka Brown/Black, Macchiato Beige/Black or Power Red/Black. CLE Cabriolet Premier Edition features nappa leather upholstery as standard, in Black, Tonka Brown/Black or White.

△ Multi-layer fabric roof and seating for four occupants.

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SL73 AMG sold!

A 1996 Mercedes-Benz SL73 AMG with just 3,027km (1,880 miles) on the clock has sold for £340,000 in an online auction hosted by the website Collecting Cars. The R129 Roadster left the factory as an SL600 before being converted to SL73 specification for the Brunei royal family.

Under the bonnet is a naturally aspirated, 7.2-litre V12 producing 518bhp and 553lb ft of torque, handled by a modified five-speed automatic transmission. AMG achieved this output through the installation of a new crankshaft, titanium pistons, big-valve cylinder-heads and a sports exhaust system.

Arriving in the UK in 2017 before undergoing restoration work at NJS Solutions of Brands Hatch, this Diamond Black metallic SL73 is believed to be one of just two in right-hand-drive. Other spec highlights include AMG body styling, 18-inch split-rim alloys, uprated suspension, a carbon fibre engine cover, plus an AMG steering wheel and instrument cluster.

Walnut wood and black leather throughout; AMG instrument cluster.

Carbon V12 cover with 'For the Royal Family of Brunei' script.

Kienle absorbed by M-B

On February 1, Mercedes-Benz Heritage GmbH acquired parts of the former Kienle Automobiltechnik GmbH business, located in Heimerdingen, and integrated them into the Mercedes-Benz Classic Centre. As part of this process, Kienle's experienced specialists will join the Mercedes fold, and with them follows an extensive stock of spare parts as well as specialised work equipment.

Mercedes-Benz Group AG merged all Classic activities into Mercedes-Benz Heritage GmbH in spring 2023, strengthening the Classic division.

News in brief

△ **HAMILTON-FERRARI DEAL**

After 222 starts, six drivers' championships, 82 wins, 148 podiums and 78 pole positions, Lewis Hamilton has confirmed he's leaving the Mercedes-AMG Petronas F1 Team at the end of the 2024 season. The seven-time British world champion has signed a deal with Ferrari for 2025 onwards.

△ **LIMITED EDITION A45 S**

The A45 S 4Matic+ is now available in Limited Edition spec, complete with AMG green hell magno paint, exclusive 19-inch alloys, yellow detailing inside and out, plus Night packages and the AMG Aerodynamics Package.

△ **SALES IN 2023**

Mercedes-Benz Group sold 2,491,600 vehicles in 2023 (+1.5 per cent on 2022). Electric passenger car sales hit 222,600 (+73 per cent). Europe bought 659,400 cars, Asia 963,800, North America 339,500, and RoW 81,100.

▽ **AMG CLE53 PRICING**

Mercedes-Benz UK has confirmed the AMG CLE53 4Matic+ Coupe is priced from £72,990 OTR in AMG Premium spec. The other version, in AMG Night Edition Premium Plus trim line, will cost from £78,740.

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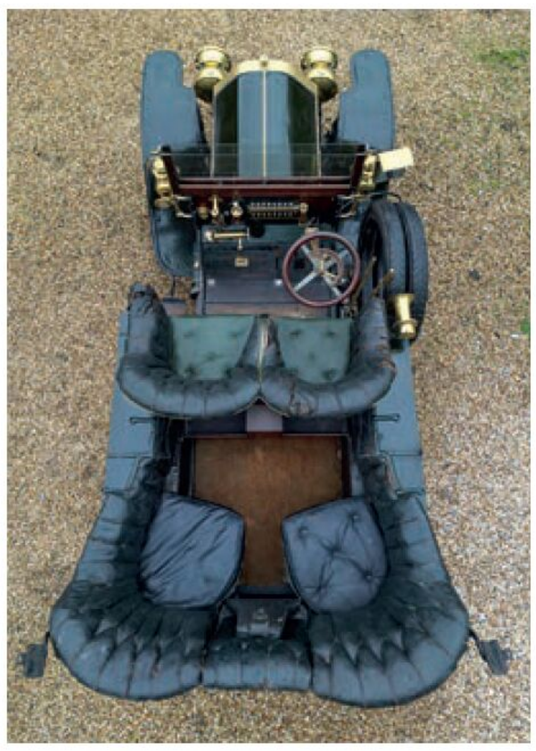
1903 Simplex

Shortly after we went to press, a 1903 Mercedes-Simplex 60hp was being offered in Gooding & Company's Amelia Island Auctions event with an estimate of more than $10,000,000 (almost £8m).

One of just five original 60hp Mercedes known to survive, the automobile was built for British publishing magnate and motoring pioneer, Alfred Harmsworth. Power comes from a 9,236cc, in-line four-cylinder engine with single Zenith carburettor, the 60hp developed at 1,100rpm.

As Gooding & Company reported, "After being prepared in garages behind Villa Mercedes, Emil Jellinek's private home in Nice, Harmsworth's Sixty was raced on the Promenade des Anglais, setting a record in the mile-long speed trial." It also set the fastest time at the Castlewellan Hill Climb in 1903. The beautiful 'Roi des Belges' body, which it still wears today, was added shortly afterwards, built by the prestigious coachworking firm J. Rothschild et Fils.

"After Harmsworth's passing, ownership was transferred to his son, Alfred John Francis Alexander Harmsworth. The car was well maintained by the family, and soon after Lord Montagu opened the Beaulieu Motor Museum in the mid-1950s, the Mercedes was taken there and put on display," confirmed G&C.



△ This car was a hill climb winner when new.

And that's where it stood until 2023, a few outings along the way, including the VCC's annual London-to-Brighton run, driven by Lord Montagu and other automotive luminaries such as racing driver Jim Clark and journalist Bill Boddy, helping to keep things in working order for its next custodian.

Life cycle assessment

Mercedes-Benz has published environmental information relating to its products since 2005. The so-called "360° environmental check" is based on a comprehensive ecological footprint for the respective vehicle and is verified by independent assessors.

The latest check analyses the environmental impact of the new E-Class as represented by the E300e. To show the influence of using renewable energy to charge this plug-in hybrid, Mercedes-Benz compared two possible scenarios: the driver used electricity either from renewable sources, or from the conventional EU electricity mix.

In the first scenario, the CO2 emissions over the entire lifecycle of the E300e are almost half of those in the second scenario. Both calculations are based on a total distance driven of 250,000km (155,000 miles).

Mercedes says 175 components of the new E-Class with a total weight of 99kg can be manufactured in part from resource-conserving materials (recycled polymers and renewable raw materials). Mercedes-Benz production has been net carbon neutral at all its company-owned plants worldwide since the start of 2022. The company already covers around 45 per cent of its entire energy consumption in production with electricity from renewable sources. The aim for all Mercedes-Benz production facilities worldwide by 2039 is to work 100 per cent with renewable energies with zero CO2 emissions.

TALKING POINT

This month's Talking Point...

You have £5,000 to spend on a used Mercedes-Benz. Tell us what you'd buy

"I bought my 2001 W203 C320 with just under 60,000 miles for a little over £5,000 in Australia." **Danielle De Jager**

"That's about what I paid for my W108. I'm not sure if I could do that again..." **Peter Shacklock**

"I bought a 140-series 300SEL for 3,700 euros." **FritzenFest**

"The best W126 I could find for 5,000 pounds." **Ron Yu**

"I paid £6K for a 2010 C350 Estate with 52,000 miles." **John Measday**

Take part in **Talking Point** every month on Facebook, Instagram and X. See the bottom of page 6 for our respective websites!

Merc Spotter

This astonishing looking Mercedes-Benz was spotted in London. Created by Xtreem Motors in Streatham and based on a 1961 Ponton, underneath the heavily modified bodywork is the running gear from a 204-series C63 AMG, including fire-breathing 6.2-litre V8! The interior is equally impressive, featuring C63 fittings throughout, plus red leather upholstery, seat harnesses and a custom roll cage.

Seen an interesting Mercedes or caught one in an unusual situation? Send a picture to **info@mercedesenthusiast.co.uk** (subject 'Merc Spotter') or by post to Mercedes Enthusiast, 17 Wickham Road, Beckenham, Kent, BR3 5JS.

A 1989 Sauber-Mercedes C9 race car shares tarmac with a 1956 300SL Coupe – the Gullwing celebrating its 70th anniversary in 2024. The silver racing machine pictured, with start number 61, finished second in the 1989 sports car world championship; another C9 took the crown in the hands of Jean-Louis Schlesser. In fact, the C9 was something of a monster, winning eight out of nine races in 1989 alone, including a 1-2 finish at the 24 Hours of Le Mans with drivers Jochen Mass, Manuel Reuter and Stanley Dickens (1st place), and Mauro Baldi/Kenny Acheson/Gianfranco Brancatelli (2nd place).

IMAGE MERCEDES-BENZ GROUP AG

Star Shot

SAUBER MERCEDES
AEG
Castrol
MICHELIN
BILSTEIN Castrol
61
N HL

Recalling trailblazing Mercedes-Benz cars of yesteryear

204 C-Class

Taking the fight to BMW's 3-Series, the 204-series C-Class was great looking, well built and had a range of exciting and frugal powerplants

WORDS DAVID SUTHERLAND IMAGES TERRY OBORNE AND CRAIG PUSEY

When Mercedes-Benz entered the 'compact' saloon market in 1982 with the W201 190 range, the product on offer was effectively a smaller version of the existing cars in the stable: elegant, superbly engineered and refined – and equally conservative.

Much the same approach was adopted for the original, 202-series C-Class that replaced it 11 years later, but by the time the 203-series took over in 2000 Stuttgart had taken what for it was a bold decision and aimed for younger customers. The approached worked – although only in part, because while the 203-series was far more tactile to drive than its predecessor, it was still no BMW 3-Series, which for long had been the benchmark sporty saloon.

Finally, in 2007, a C-Class arrived that could look the Beemer in the eye – the 204-series. Its 55mm longer and 42mm wider body eschewed the 203's gentle curves for a more aggressive look including a mouthier grille. And, in a quite radical move for a four-door Mercedes saloon that was the company's best selling model series, on Sport versions (see above right) the bonnet-mounted star disappeared in favour of a grille badge (to avoid alienating traditionalists, the SE and Elegance retained the bonnet star).

Indeed, while trim separation on previous C-Classes had been subtle, there was little chance of not recognising the Sport model. Besides its grille badge, it wore 17-inch diameter wheels (one inch up on standard) and a bodykit courtesy of AMG, while the suspension was dropped 15mm. Inside there were sports seats and a sports steering wheel with paddleshifters (for automatic models), while under the skin speed-sensitive parameter steering was standard and for this model was more directly geared, and the brake discs were larger and cross-drilled. Petrol Sport models used a sports exhaust system, too. Available on certain Sport versions, the Dynamic Handling Package brought a 'Sport' mode to improve throttle and automatic gearshift response, and added continuously variable damping. It all added up to a highly accomplished motorcar.

Throughout its eight-year production life, including a facelift in 2011, there was of course a multitude of engines to choose from, starting with a 1.6-litre petrol, and including various iterations of Mercedes' staple 2.1-litre turbodiesel engine. However, the most memorable addition to the line-up came one year after launch, in 2008, the 6.2-litre C63 AMG with its hand-built M156 V8 packing

▷ Wood trim was available in the 204-series C-Class.

△ Facelifted interior with integrated display for Comand.

▷ Room for three adults; panoramic sunroof was extra.

▷△ C350 V6 petrol here in discreet Elegance spec.

451bhp and 442lb ft torque.

Whereas the preceding 203-series C55 AMG amounted to a large-engined C-Class, the C63 (built in Saloon and Estate form initially, followed by a Coupe) was almost a model in its own right. The 204's normal front strut and rear multi-linked configuration was retained but featured a new three-link front axle with a 35mm widened track, while the rear track was increased 12mm. The steering was re-engineered for a tauter feel, and brakes were six-piston caliper up front and four piston at the rear. For the visual treatment, the bonnet was given power domes, the front bumper a substantial section with a large intake, while bulging arches accommodated the extended track.

The C63 AMG is a mighty machine, another example of Mercedes-Benz blowing the competition into the weeds. But you don't need its V8 firepower to enjoy a 204 C-Class, because regardless of what's under the bonnet, the third generation C-Class is as near perfect a smallish-ish four-door saloon (or five-door estate) can be.

All engines are quiet, responsive and offer plenty of performance, even the C180 Kompressor BlueEfficiency 'tax-buster', and if you like diesels then the three-litre V6 C350 CDI offered right up to the end of production in 2014 is a dream, delivering torquey performance combined with very decent fuel economy. The equivalent that doesn't frequent the black pump is the C350 petrol with its gorgeously sweet 3.5-litre V6, although few were sold in the UK.

But one notably impressive aspect of the 204-series has nothing to do with performance or style: build quality. After Mercedes' disastrous product quality fail in the early 2000s, which saw the marque plummet to near the bottom of consumer surveys, all the stops were pulled out to fix matters and, as these things take time, the 204-series was the first model in which the wrongs were righted. For example, the fascia and interior mouldings, less decorative than in the 203, feel more substantial, while the electronic module crash rate appeared to tail off considerably. The 204 helped revive the Mercedes-Benz as a car that felt well built and long lasting.

It's now 10 years and two C-Class generations since the 204-series made way for the 205-series, but we still see many perfectly usable looking examples around, with hundreds offered for sale from £3,000 bearing 100,000 miles but looking ready for the same again. C63s, although celebrated as the last hurrah of the NA V8s, are still gently dropping and coming into the price sweet spot, available for £15,000.

With the 204-series, Mercedes took the already good 203 C-Class and made it excellent. If you don't want to sign up to the ubiquitous SUV, it's good to know that the traditional but still modern saloon car is out there waiting to be enjoyed.

Insight from a Mercedes-Benz tuning industry veteran

Seven million!

Spotted on a Spanish island ferrying tourists to and from an airport, this long-wheelbase 1986 240D has racked up almost seven million kilometres in service, as Ian Kuah explains

With a population of around 860,000, Gran Canaria receives over four million tourists each year. Situated in the south of the island, the popular resort town of Maspalomas is famous for its restaurants and bars, and also a record-breaking Mercedes-Benz 240D.

Originally purchased in 1986 by Domingo, a local taxi driver better known as "Dominguito", this oil-burning V123 seven-seat saloon was not registered until August 1988. The 2,399cc, naturally aspirated diesel engine (OM616) offers a paltry 71bhp and 101lb ft of torque, numbers that sound totally inadequate for hauling this solidly built, 1,585kg stretched Mercedes and its occupants up hill and down dale. While the 240D's performance against the stopwatch can certainly be described as glacial, progress is helped by the closer ratios of the five-speed manual gearbox, the only option that Domingo specified.

Domingo passed away in 2008, and his son Francisco took over the taxi business. By this time, the trusty 240D had seen 3,700,000km (2.3m miles) pass under its wheels, time and tide having taken a significant toll on both the bodywork and mechanicals. When the question of scrapping the car arose, Rafael, one of the three regular drivers and a professional mechanic who admired the car's over-engineered quality, jumped in with the idea of a nut-and-bolt restoration.

And so a few months later the 240D emerged from its slumber as good as new, replete with a few upgrades to help both car and driver on its second lap. To improve safety Rafael installed vented front brake discs and reinforced the rear subframe (taken from a W126 S-Class), while long sessions behind the wheel were made more comfortable by a Recaro seat. A factory roof rack was also fitted to provide extra luggage carrying capacity for over-ambitious holidaymakers.

Working eight-hour shifts, the tough 80s Mercedes that is now part of local folklore on Gran Canaria carries passengers 24/7 on the 65km round trip from the airport to Maspalomas, racking up about 700km a day, or nearly 5,000km each week. Based on an average occupancy of six passengers, the 240D has probably transported around 1.4m people over the years, and its seats are periodically re-sprung and re-upholstered to keep the interior in top condition.

> **"At some point the original engine gave up the ghost, but the second motor is still going strong"**

At some point the original engine gave up the ghost, but the second motor is still going strong. A third engine has been procured and put in storage for the day when this one eventually expires. To ensure reliability, a scrupulous maintenance regime involving weekly oil and filter changes is adhered to. And every 1,000,000km the engine is stripped and checked for wear, with the pistons and rings renewed if required, and the valves ground or replaced.

The 123-series holds the record as the most produced Mercedes-Benz model, with almost 2.7m made between December 1975 and January 1986 in Saloon, Coupe, Estate and Long-wheelbase forms. Of these, 13,700 were 'V123' saloons with 630mm longer chassis.

In the 1970s, Mercedes-Benz was the only carmaker with the confidence to fit an odometer that read to 999,999 miles. With almost 7,000,000km or 4,350,000 miles under its belt, this 240D has likely been round the clock more times than any other vehicle in the history of the motorcar. That is equivalent to going around the Earth 175 times, or travelling to the Moon and back nine times. Simply extraordinary, I think you'll agree.

IMAGE DAN MORGAN

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The expert on all things Mercedes gives us his latest views...

Future nostalgia

David Sutherland considers the rise and fall in popularity of old cars among later generations of drivers, and puts forward his own suggestions for Mercedes to watch out for in the future

While the classic car market as a whole reacts to economic forces and – with a few blips along the way – values rise over the long term, it contains some interesting hot spots and cool spots. Some cars come into favour while others fade, and what drives these preferences is a much simpler force than you might think: age.

Many of us choose a classic, or modern classic, based on nostalgia, often a much-loved car our parents drove when we were young, the mere sight of one unlocking multiple fond memories. Once we are an adult and at the point in our careers where there's a few quid to spare – usually 20 or 30 years on – we try to wind back the clock and buy that same car. What else could explain, for example, the extraordinary rise in value in recent years of Ford Escorts and Mk3 Cortinas, humdrum 1970s cars built by the million and scrapped by the million and forgotten about for decades?

For a while now, cars from the 1980s have been hot, not least of all Mercedes-Benzes. This must be helped by Benzes from that era being not only great designs, thanks to stylist Bruno Sacco who made them look perfect and the engineers who refined them to perfection, but also because they have been so long lasting. You'll still see a few 190Es, 124s, 126s and R107 SLs around, but when did you last catch sight of, say, a Ford Granada or a Citroën CX?

Crucially, demographics have given them a lift too. "'Generation X', born 1965 to 1980, are at peak earning capacity," explains classic car insurance specialist Hagerty. "Those guys have money in their pockets, their kids are flying the nest, and they have an empty garage that needs to be filled."

But as the car collecting torch passes from one generation to another, there are losers in the market. Some reckon that demand for cars from the 1950s and 60s is slipping, because there are far fewer people left – the 'Baby boomers', who recall them from the time. In this category we can exclude the major classics like the 300SL, SL Pagoda and W100 600, but forming an attachment with a Ponton or Fintail will be based on admiration, not memory.

Of course, nothing stands still in the classic market, and while Hagerty reports that Gen X buyers are still increasing, it says the next wave of buyers is just around the corner, with their own spending preferences. "The real growth has been in younger drivers: 'Millennials' have increased five percentage points in the last year. For those guys, a whole new world of newer classics are the ones they aspire to."

Many Millennials came of age in the early 2000s, and one car lots of them love, judging by auction activity, is the Subaru Impreza Turbo in classic blue, that driven by the late rally hero Colin McRae fetching £480,500 last August. So what might become the top Millennials Mercs?

Hagerty also points out that Millennials have a hard-wired environmental awareness, and that recently bigger-engined cars aren't doing so well when crossing the auction floor. So maybe the AMG supercharged and turbocharged CLs and S-Classes of that time won't be a good investment bet. That said, surely the 204-series C63 AMG, the outrageously definitive super hot saloon of the later 2000s with 6.2-litre V8, will make it onto the list.

△ When did you last see a CL203-series C-Class Sports Coupe? Sutherland reckons the V6 is a future star.

△ The W169 A-Class is an underrated Benz, says DS.

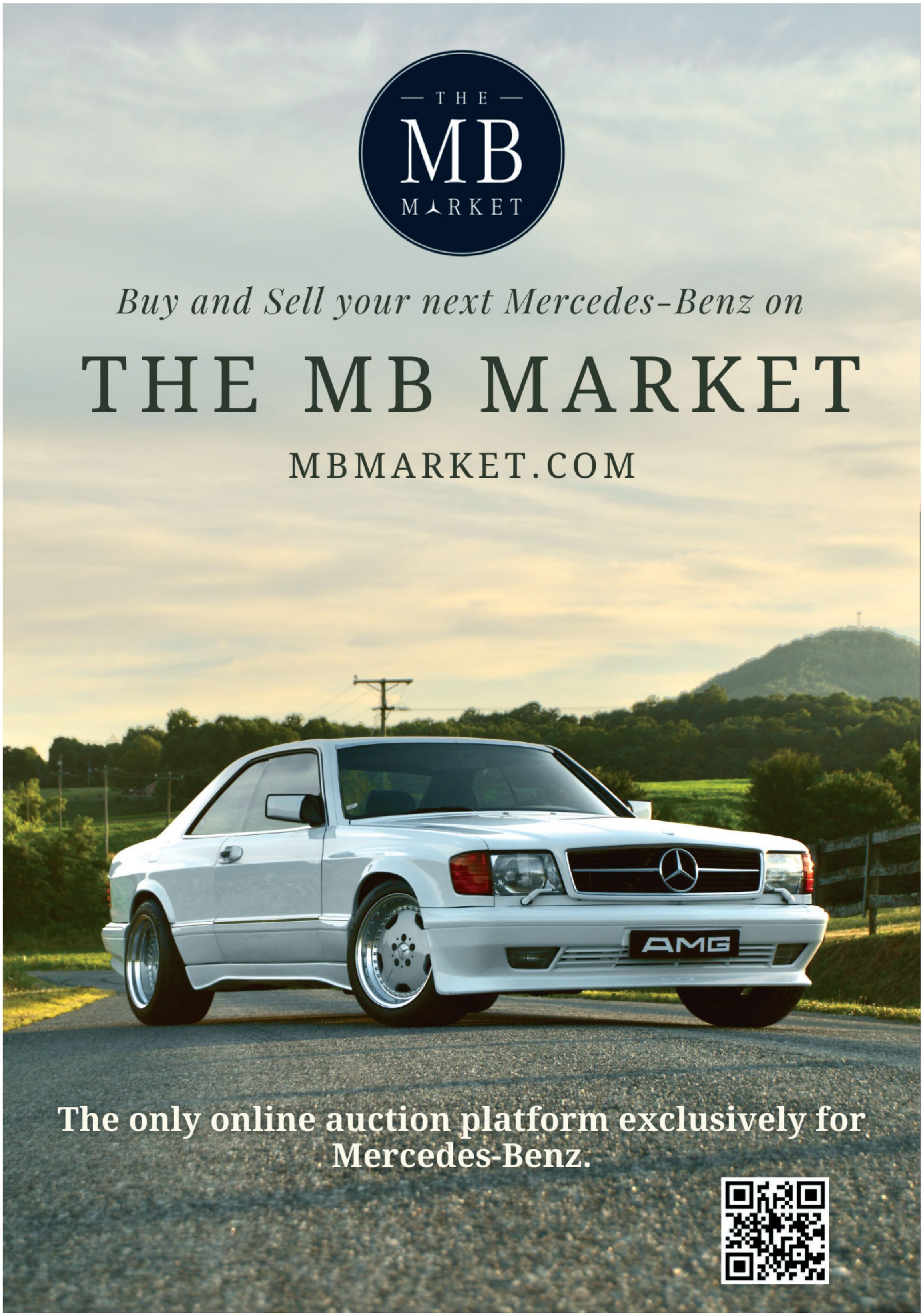
△ How could we resist the 6.2-litre C63 AMC V8?

There are other obvious candidates, such as the second generation R171 SLK and original C219 CLS four-door 'coupe'. But I would like to shout out two below-the-radar possibilities, which are probably already forgotten by most people. I ran a 2007 W169 A180 CDI for eight years and loved it, and thought it so underrated. It was better in almost every way than the ill-sorted W168 original, with great build quality, comfortable seats and more rear cabin room that a regular-wheelbase S-Class. The 'sandwich' construction to allow for a future electric version in which the battery would sit under the floor provided a nicely elevated driving position, but it also gave it a quirky, 'old' image which Mercedes eventually wanted shot of. But maybe some Millennials will recall their unfashionable parents' joy at how easy it was to park and will want one in their garage.

Another Benz I recall with affection is the 203-series C-Class-based Sports Coupe (later the CLC) from the early 2000s. It was Stuttgart's version of a 'hot hatch', and drove well, especially in 3.2-litre V6 C320 form. With the rear seat folded, it had the most enormous boot you could imagine, so maybe there will be fond memories of dads loading in lawnmowers and the like with junior standing by in open-mouthed adulation? They say nostalgia isn't what it used to be – they're wrong!

> **"As the car collecting torch passes from one generation to another, there are losers in the market"**

IMAGES DAVID SUTHERLAND AND MERCEDES-BENZ GROUP AG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Social Club

Mercedes-Benz related highlights from the world of social media

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1991 Mercedes-Benz 300TE-24 3.4 AMG wagon: 3.4-litre AMG M104, AMG Hammer bodykit, three-piece AMG wheels, option code 990, AMG gauge cluster and 500E headlights. *This 120,000-mile 'baby Hammer' was bid to $56,000 (around £44,400) but failed to sell.*

Weistec Engineering

@weistec

Here is a look at the stunning CLK Black Series by @stancelab fitted with our stage 2 Weistec Supercharger. *This white coupe makes around 672bhp and 662lb ft of torque.*

Marcin Sobolewski

@marcin_globus

Benz up your life.

This great condition 190E 2.3 was discovered in Warsaw, Poland and was photographed by @wouczer_.

Sira.CarCollector

@sira.carcollector

'GKS 3' [a 500SEC] was always destined for the spotlight. An original international AMG cover car, it was commissioned by the owner of AMG UK dealer 'Ron Stratton' for himself. It had a spin around the Nürburgring before going to a Mr John Clarke. After a 14-year journey, it came into our collection before heading to sunny Miami and The Patina Collective.

Ryan Friedman Motor Cars

@ryanfriedmanmotorcars

Confirmed by Mercedes Benz USA as the only Ireland Green SLS AMG to ever leave the factory! This paint was a $14,000 option on the build sheet with a letter from Mercedes themselves to support this statement. With a stunning complementary Cognac interior, this is subjectively the best looking SLS ever produced.

This unique supercar has since joined a large collection on the East coast of the US. Picture by @HJKPhotography.

Anej Ferko

@anejferko

Each of us has some childhood dream. Mine was to own a convertible. An SLK was my first 1:18 model that I bought at Spar in Vič. I grew up but the childish wish remained. And then this Mercedes came along. Blue like the sea. Facelift model, automatic, heated seats, original radio, factory fresh and with known history! And on top of that with only 111,000km. I just couldn't resist.

The 2002 R170 SLK200 Kompressor shares garage space with a 219-series CLS320 CDI in Slovenia.

DD Classics

@ddclassics

Our brilliant Brabus S800. Finished in spectacular, special-order Candy Red coachwork and Anthracite Brabus fine leather. Truly the ultimate S-Class Coupe!

Under the bonnet is a four-litre V8 biturbo making 789bhp/737lb ft. The asking price at this prestigious Surrey dealer was POA.

Barış Türkay

@thevalleyofcars

Chilly.

This R129 SL320 is finished in lovely Azurite Blue and lives in Turkey.

The Mercedes-Benz Club

@themercedesbenzclub

A club member's special W126 imported from Canada is the lovely unique colour on our stand at the NEC Classic Motor Show.

Pictured is a 1981, Inca Red 300SD Turbodiesel with just 51,000km (31,600 miles).

SLShop

The SLShop

2024 promises to be a bumper year of events at SLSHOP. We have Open days, Mini meets, a Best of Wales Tour and plenty of chances to enjoy your car in the company of like-minded enthusiasts.

Find out more at theslshop.com.

Edward Hall Classic Mercedes

@edwardjshall

A sneak peek of a car we will be putting up for sale: 1967 250SE Coupe with just three owners from new. Manual transmission. Recent rebuilt engine and full history from new.

What does almost
70 years of development mean
for Mercedes' most iconic model?
Here, we put AMG's latest SL43 head-to-head
with a 1957 300SL Roadster to find out...

OPEN

*"Since the 1950s, **Mercedes' SL** range has **epitomised the brand**"*

Cover story

SEASON

WORDS **WILHELM LUTJEHARMS**
IMAGES **PEET MOCKE**

△ Fuel injection inspired by fighter plane technology.

▽ W198's dials are made up of intricate details.

▽ Beautiful '300SL' script on glovebox lid.

It is quite a sight. The Mercedes-Benz 300SL Roadster (W198) always impresses when you are in its presence. It is truly one of the most beautiful Mercedes-Benz models from the 20th century, and its market value is a testament to this fact.

Since the 1950s, Mercedes' SL range has epitomised the brand. Now in its seventh generation, the SL continues to offer the appealing combination of performance and style with an al fresco experience. Originally offered with four- and six-cylinder engines, the range has since catered for enthusiasts of V8s and even V12s.

For the latest R232 generation, Mercedes called exclusively on the services of performance division AMG and streamlined the range. The entry-level SL43 pictured here is outgunned by SL55, SL63 and SL63 S E Performance plug-in hybrid variants. However, in some markets only the SL43 is available, which makes it a rather important car.

The SL43 is fitted with a derivative of the two-litre, four-cylinder, turbocharged engine

*"Now in its **seventh generation**, the **SL** continues to offer the appealing combination of **performance and style**"*

found in the AMG A45. However, Mercedes-Benz has decided not to offer the full-fat 415bhp/369lb ft powerplant of the A45 S super hatch, instead settling for outputs of 376bhp and 354lb ft torque. Unusually for a modern powerplant, it is quite an interesting engine to look at when you lift the bonnet, as the entire turbocharger assembly is in clear view.

Up close or from a distance, the new R232 SL grabs your attention in an enticing and romantic manner. It is beautifully sculpted with a smooth rear design and a more aggressive front. The matte white paint colour with the 21-inch, multi-spoke wheels gives it a near show car stance, reaffirming its positioning as a top-line roadster from Affalterbach.

First impressions

The classy and wonderfully modern influence continues when you climb in and press and hold the button on the large infotainment screen to lower the fabric roof neatly behind the two small rear seats. The leather, stitching, layout of the cabin and especially the lighting contribute to a comfortable and luxurious space that cocoons its occupants – especially as you drop down low into the sports seats.

Start the engine and you might be surprised by the deep(ish) exhaust note the four-cylinder makes. Indeed, during normal everyday driving you could believe you're working a motor with more cylinders. Clever technology like the electric turbocharger (which uses a small motor to start turning the turbo's shaft before the effect of the exhaust gases assists) means zero turbo lag, with strong performance just a flex of the right foot away. ▷

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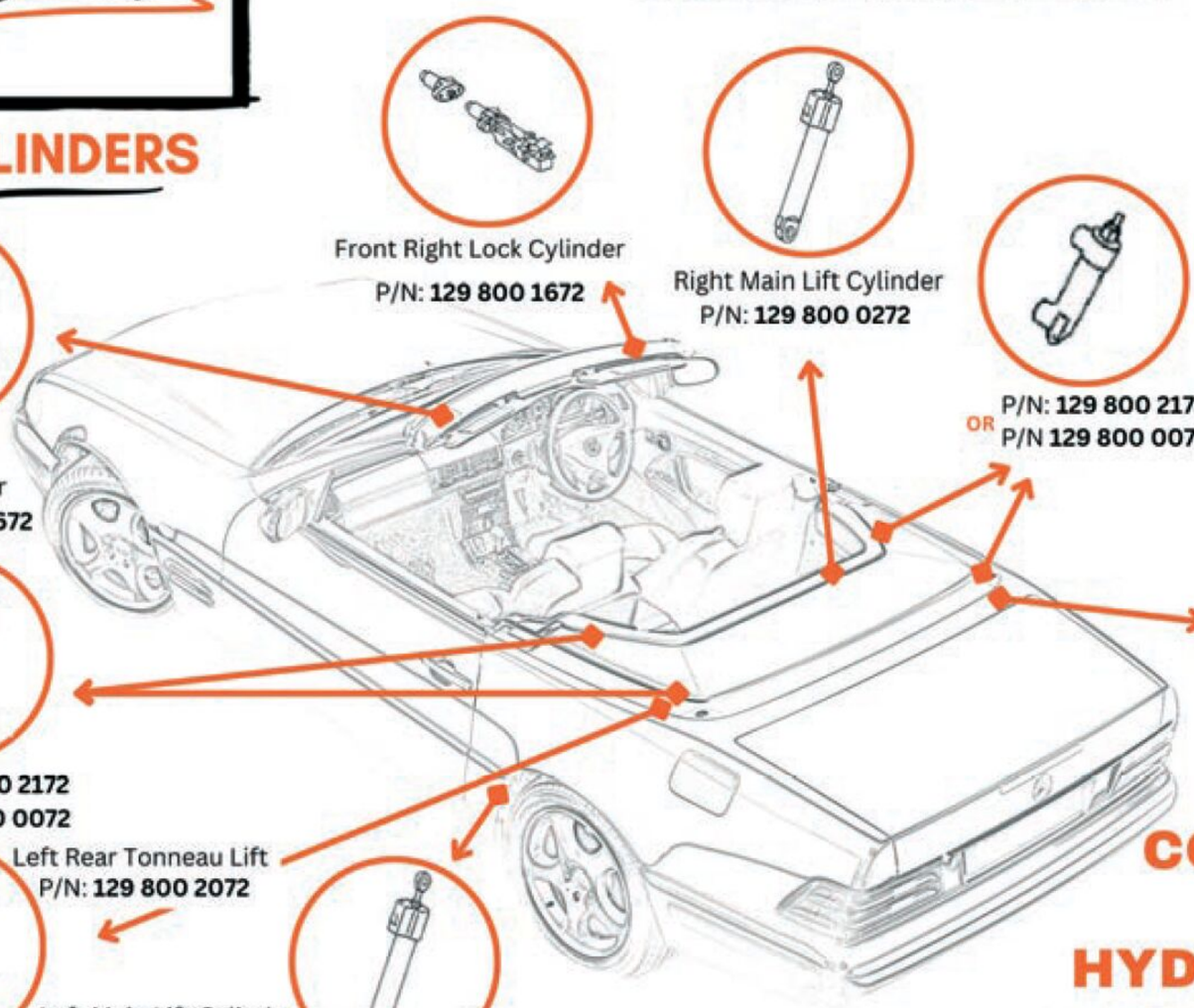

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▷ 21-inch AMG rims; no Active Ride on SL43.

▷▷ 2+2 seating in latest SL aids practicality.

▷ Push the SL a little harder and a few cracks appear in its armour, however. The nine-speed automatic AMG Speedshift MCT gearbox is simply not as smooth and sophisticated as expected (especially when gearing down). Grip levels are high though, even without the Active/Ride Control suspension and rear-axle steering found on higher powered models, and the SL43 changes direction with conviction despite a 1,810kg kerb weight. In fact, it feels lighter than the numbers suggest.

In-house rivalry

As much as I'm enjoying the SL, my day improves dramatically when a 1957 Mercedes-Benz 300SL Roadster pulls into view. The car's beauty is truly breathtaking, the silver paintwork only enhancing the flowing design. The driver and his son are both very tall individuals and, as they rise out of the SL, you are starkly reminded these cars are from a very different era.

Once seated, the low shoulder line of the 300SL makes you feel much less part of the car than you do in the modern SL. In the W198, you are closer to the road and nature, and are invited to drink in more of your surroundings. The large steering wheel and dinky gearlever are elegant touchpoints, and the lever shifts easily through the four gears with a tight mechanical action. Peering over the long bonnet, each front corner of the 300SL is entirely visible, and I immediately think ▷

*"The **SL43 changes direction** with conviction despite a **1,810kg kerb weight**"*

The SL – a brief history

Top racer turned grand touring sports star

Over seven decades ago, a Stuttgart-born sports car swiftly etched its name into legend. Conceived with the ambition to propel the Mercedes-Benz brand through motorsport triumphs, the inaugural SL (Sport Leicht) emerged – an on-road racer. Debuting in 1952, the 300SL (W194) swiftly conquered global race tracks, clinching notable victories like a remarkable one-two at the 24 Hours of Le Mans and sweeping the top four at the Nürburgring Grand Jubilee Prize for sports cars in its first year. The SL's triumphs swiftly elevated it to legendary status.

In 1954, the victorious racer gave way to the production model, the 300SL (W198), famously dubbed the "Gullwing" for its distinctive doors. In 1999, a panel of auto journalists hailed it the 'Sports Car of the Century'. Further chapters in its storied history include the sleek 'Pagoda' (W 113, 1963-1971), the enduring R107 (1971-1989), with an impressive 18-year production span, and its successor, the R129 – a vehicular sculpture defined by its bold wedge shape. R230 (2000-2011) and R231 (2012-2020) generations injected the breed with a new level of technological sophistication and hitherto unmatched power.

Today, the abbreviation 'SL' remains synonymous with one of the world's enduring automotive icons.

*"In the **W198**, you are **closer to the road** and nature"*

△△◁ Neat tail light design; chrome bumpers. △△ One of 554 300SL Roadsters made in 1957. △ 'Eyebrows' served an aero purpose too.

▷ about the engine, which had to be tilted to allow this perfect view and, in the process, necessitated the iconic bonnet bulges. Today, Mercedes calls such features 'power domes'.

As 300SL Gullwing production came to an end in 1957 – the same year the Roadster's production started – Mercedes-Benz could implement what it had learned from the space-framed Gullwing, as well as its racing programme. Updates included reshaping the Roadster's petrol tank, moving the spare wheel (which provided more luggage space), and updating the rear suspension layout, thereby addressing the tricky on-the-limit handling that was endemic in the coupe; the single joint swing axle received a new 'compensating spring' to manage wheel camber angle during suspension travel.

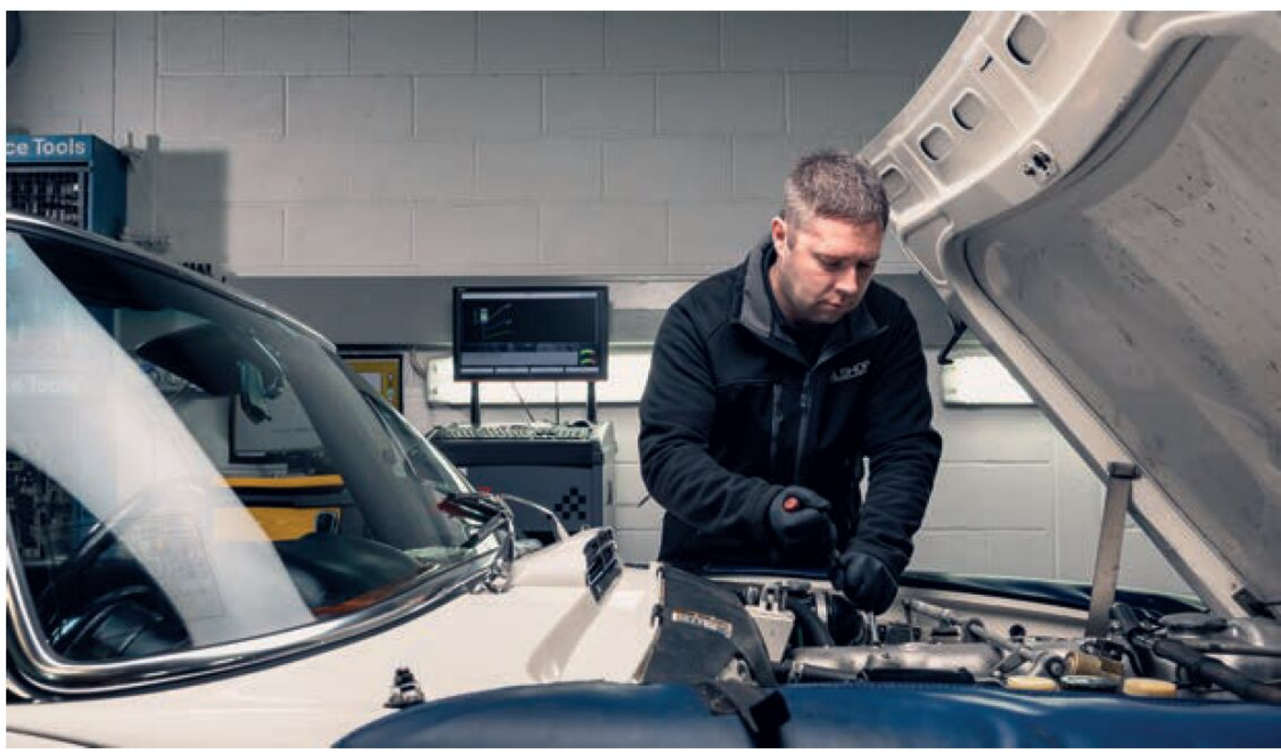
Weighing 35kg more than the Gullwing, the Roadster's final drive ratio was shortened while the optional 'competition' camshaft from the Gullwing was part of the standard equipment on the Roadster, both to the benefit of acceleration and response.

Mechanical music

Suddenly, my focus turns to the burble emitted from the chromed, flattened exhaust tip. The exhaust note has a constant, relatively deep sound, but put your foot down and the note becomes deeper still. As you approach the upper part of the rev range, there is another change in the tone, which borders on a full-throated growl.

When the mood takes you, and in this Mercedes it certainly will, the engine flies ▷

SLSHOP



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Mercedes SL magazine

The creators of *Mercedes Enthusiast*

Gottlieb Daimler, a founding father of Mercedes-Benz, had a motto: 'The best or nothing'. It was these words which drove him to great success in the then fast-growing automotive industry, and it is these words which inspired us to create the ultimate guide to the Mercedes-Benz SL (updated in 2022).
Scan the QR code to order your copy.

△ Four-cyl not as powerful as that seen in the A45 S.

▽ Full digital display for the SL43's driver.

▷ through the rev range like that of no other Mercedes-Benz I've driven from this era.

There is no slack or hick-up through the rev range, just a smooth sweep of the needle as it passes the numbers. Leave the gearbox in fourth gear at 2,000rpm, put your foot down, and it will elegantly start to pick up speed. You sense this is an old engine, but the way it works makes you think twice about its age. How fast this car must have felt back in the late 1950s!

Spirit of competition

The navigation equipment in this 300SL's cabin was fitted in Europe, as the current owner plans to participate in the modern version of the Mille Miglia in the near future. Long ago, the car also underwent restoration, the work partly done in South Africa and partly in Europe.

*"Without the **300SL**, automotive history would be quite **different**, and the Mercedes-Benz brand **worse off**"*

Looking back, we must appreciate Max Hoffman, the official US importer of Mercedes-Benz cars during the 1950s, and his grand vision. He convinced the board of Daimler-Benz that they should build a road-going version of the 300SL Coupe, as well as the Roadster. Without these cars, automotive history would be quite different, and indeed the Mercedes-Benz brand worse off, I imagine.

Despite a few disappointing aspects to its drive, the SL43 feels fabulously modern and as a 2+2 is more practical than any predecessor. Asking customers to pay at least £108,165 for a four-cylinder convertible is a stretch though, even for an SL.

The SL43 can't lay claim to the same motorsport pedigree as its spiritual forbear here can, but it nonetheless offers a sophisticated and fabulously sporty convertible experience thanks to its exclusive development by AMG.

Just the facts

Mercedes-Benz 300SL Roadster (W198)

Engine M198 2,996cc 6-cyl Power 212bhp@5,800rpm
Transmission 4-speed manual, RWD Weight 1,330kg
0-62mph 10.0sec Top speed 155mph Fuel consumption 22.6mpg
Years produced 1957-1963

Mercedes-AMG SL43 (R232)

Engine M139 1,991cc 4-cyl turbocharged Power 376bhp@6,750rpm
Torque 354lb ft@3,000-5,000rpm Transmission 9-speed auto, RWD Weight 1,810kg
0-62mph 4.9sec Top speed 171mph Fuel consumption 30.1-31.0mpg
CO2 emissions 206-212g/km Years produced 2023-on

All figures from Mercedes for a 1957 300SL Roadster and 2023 AMG SL43 as pictured; fuel consumption for 300SL according determined at 3/4 of top speed (not more than 110kph/68mph) plus 10 per cent, and for SL43 according to WLTP; top speed of 300SL dependent on rear axle ratio

Unrequited

love

The 210-series E-Class did not cover itself in glory at launch, but almost three decades later is developing a loyal and passionate following

WORDS **GARETH CHARLTON** IMAGES **ADE BRANNAN**

> “The 210’s reputation implies that you’d need to be a glutton for punishment to persevere with ownership”

△△ Electric front seats (and wheel) with memory.

△ On the approach to 150,000 miles.

△△ Cruise control and speed limiter system.

▽ Wood and leather trimmed wheel with airbag.

I've long since embraced my luddite status. The new 214-series E Class, with its swooping lines, bewildering array of driving assistance systems and electrified drivetrain technology may be upon us, but you have to rewind four generations to the W/S210, with its propensity to rust, antique feel and litany of electrical gremlins to truly pique my interest.

I'm being facetious, of course, but the 210's reputation implies that you'd need to be a glutton for punishment to persevere with long-term or repeated ownership. However, to focus on only the negatives is to ignore a, in my opinion, far longer list of positives: relative design simplicity, interior space, feel and airiness, and a line-up of engines that includes several legends, to name a few. They're also now an uncommon sight on UK roads.

I'm not blind to the 210's foibles. I've covered many miles in first a brilliant S210 E320 CDI Estate, then a W210 E55 AMG Saloon and ultimately a rusty but trusty S210 E55, all of which had their issues but provided positive ownership experiences. What's

more, they cemented my love for this generation of E-Class and Mercedes in general. I'd previously owned a 124-series 320CE and C107 450SLC, but since my first foray into the land of 210 ownership I've enjoyed a C215 CL500 in Almandine Black, and we've also had three SLKs: two R170s in 230 and 320 guise, and a brilliant R171 350. In fact, I'd probably even swap my beloved V8 One Ten Land Rover for a G-Wagen, and don't get me started on Unimogs…

I wasn't looking to buy another car, but V8s and interesting colours are my thing. I found this pre-facelift E430 while nostalgically mourning the sale of the Aragonite Blue metallic E55 Estate. Dusting off my rose-tinted specs, the car was, rightly or not, quickly justified.

Ownership impressions

I won't argue that the 210-series' flaky reputation is completely unjustified. Indeed, the recent works completed to this 1998 example would seem to back up most stereotypes. However, the youngest examples are over 20 years old and issues are, today, very much typical 'old car problems'. If you want to run anything of this vintage regularly then you need to do so with realistic expectations. That's not to make light of issues that arose when these Mercedes were only a few years old, but it's 2024 now and those that are left are aging.

This isn't the place for an argument around sustainability, or to debate the whole life environmental impact of anything that hasn't yet been mined or manufactured, but for the nominal mileage I now do a V8 is eminently justifiable and gloriously satisfying.

So for me, the E430's M113 eight-cylinder is a sizeable tick in a suitably shaped box. Around 275bhp and 300lb ft torque is ample grunt for most situations and it feels as though the 4,266cc lump is rarely breaking sweat. It compares favourably to the E55 in 99 per cent of situations: of course, the trick 5.4-litre's additional 74bhp and 96lb ft makes itself felt when your toes are buried into the carpet, but that is a rare and risky occurrence in the UK. The E430 provides all the V8 burble you'll ▷

"I wasn't looking to buy another car, but V8s and interesting colours are my thing"

Peter Jarvis

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1988 LHD 560 SL 1988 Left hand drive Finished in Paget Red with Parchment hide interior, centre arm rest, overmats, headrests, hard and soft tops, light up interior vanity mirrors, first aid kit, complete with all tools, expensive stereo system, power mirrors, cruise control, airbag, air con, ABS, power windows, tinted glass, power steering, automatic, only 49,000 with service book and history, always garaged, drives like new superb.

Mercedes 560SL Sports 1988 LHD — £39,500

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

Mercedes Sports 1985 280SL — £27,750

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

Mercedes 300SL Sports 1989 — £45,750

Finished in gleaming Astral Silver with superb blue contrasting interior, also matching navy blue carpets, automatic and power steering, excellent chrome, tinted glass, power windows, period radio with blue tooth, walnut veneer dash, with a power sunroof, original factory alloys, complete with all original tools, only covered 46,000 miles from new, complete with all service history and various invoices. Very difficult to find a car in this condition, a rare find, always garaged and pampered from new, hence this condition. A very fast appreciating asset.

Mercedes 450 SLC, 1978 — £45,500

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

Mercedes Sports 280 SL 1981 with personal reg number — £27,500

Finished in brilliant smoke silver with, beige hide interior, hard and soft tops, headrests, light up vanity mirrors, expensive stereo system, power windows, tinted glass, air con, alloys, abs bakes, air bag, srs, power steering, automatic, complete with all tools, 49,500 miles, history garaged from new. This car is just breath taking.

Mercedes 560SL sports 1988 LHD — £44,750

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“Around 275bhp and 300lb ft torque is ample grunt for most situations”

▷ ever need, and it slides through the five-speed auto effortlessly.

This has also had the common M113 leaks remedied, received a full service, including all 16 spark plugs, and electrical issues around a troublesome throttle position sensor fixed. More good news is that, in the last 12 months, the gearbox has received a full rebuild of the valve body, new electrical connectors and conductor plate. Front wings? Replaced with new during the winter of 2022. In 210-series bingo, the previous owner encountered pretty much a full house.

Back in the hot seat

That’s not to say it’s perfect, but I wasn’t expecting it to be. Happy with the seller’s description and apparent honesty, I committed to making a North Yorkshire to Norfolk pilgrimage to once again fill the 210-shaped void in my life. Placing faith in the UK’s rail network, what looks on paper to be a straightforward journey turned into a voyage of epic proportions that lasted what felt like days. Arriving dishevelled on a rare warm day, the E430 provided an immediate and familiar sanctuary.

△ Two additional jump seats in this S210's huge boot.

In the sunlight, in particular, gleaming Emerald Black metallic (189U) looks fantastic with original blue-tint glass and I’m immediately reminded of why I’m such a fan of the S210 shape. With different specifications the model is capable of chameleon-like changes in character – from classically understated Elegance with a two-litre petrol, to continent crushing six-cylinder diesels, bahnstorming V8 petrols and most options in between. For me, this is almost perfect.

This car was originally specified with 18-inch AMG alloys and lower suspension, which perfectly complement its slab-sided muscularity. I love the blend of square proportions, shapely headlight and bonnet lines holding aloft the unmistakable tri-star. I think the staggered 18-inch monoblock alloys are some of the best OE wheels ever fitted and the perfect option for a 210.

OK, so the E430 has slightly different front and rear bumpers, side skirts and lacks the AMG tailpipes, but to untrained eyes it’s at least 90 per cent of an E55. Or so I tell myself.

The old school charm continues inside. The low door line makes for a wonderfully light cabin, while the splashes of wood provide, for me, a classic feel that’s added to by the angular dash ▷

Production details

The 210-series E-Class Estate launched in May 1996, 11 months after the Saloon was presented. Compared with the preceding 124-series wagon, boot space in the S210 had grown by 70 litres, with the split-folding rear seats only ramping up practicality.

The S210’s fuel tank was relocated to behind the rear axle and necessitated a highly reinforced structure to protect occupants in a rear-end collision. This configuration also had the effect of providing particularly strong supporting parts, locks and anchorages for the rear seat backrests.

Customers could choose between Classic, Elegance and Avantgarde trim lines. Engines comprised four-, five- and six-cylinder diesels, plus direct-injection four-cylinder petrol motors, V6s petrols, and large-capacity V8 petrols including a 5.4-litre AMG variant. 4Matic versions of the E280, E320, E430 and E55 were offered, too.

At the facelift in 1999, more than 1,800 parts were changed by Mercedes-Benz. There was more standard equipment than before including ESP and a multifunction steering wheel from the S-Class, while efficient new diesel engines out-torqued their predecessors, and a six-speed manual gearbox became standard on cars displacing up to 2.8 litres; the automatic was a five-speed. From mid-2000, new supercharged four-cylinder petrols and a new V6 in the E240 joined the fold.

The 210-series Estate bowed out of production in 2001 and was replaced by the S211 E-Class Estate.

▽ 18-inch AMG monoblocks never fail to impress.

▽▽ Above this V8 model sat the high-power AMGs.

▽▽▽ Gareth Charlton has owned a few 210s before this one.

▷ and presence of big, solid buttons. Add the legendary M113 engine and it still feels quite a special place to be. Proud 'Airbag' lettering doesn't exactly festoon the interior but does provide a regular hint that you're in something more 'modern', although I use the term loosely.

For someone with bad knees and tomophobia, the driving position is a joy. The electrically adjustable wheel and seat position flexibility allows you to sit unusually low, and the memory settings mean that even the most spiteful of garages, friends or families cannot upset your comfort for long. Even the grey leather, normally my least favourite colour, works beautifully with the glass hue.

The M113 purrs immediately into life, idles perfectly and ushers me through traffic and towards the first of Norfolk's 12,000 roundabouts with a minimum of fuss. In doing so, it offers an experience akin to an American muscle car, albeit more dynamic. I'll probably upset a few by writing that (of both audiences!), but for the effortless performance, burble, automatic gearbox and arguably over-assisted steering, it's meant as a compliment.

Plans

The front wings have been replaced and painted well, but I'd like to tidy up a few areas of bodywork. There are one or two bits of trim that could be improved – a bumper scuff and slight crack, a couple of bubbles that should be sorted and some customary rust on the tailgate that we'll address. Not at all bad for a 26-year-old estate, and it's overall a nice example that I believe is worth improving further.

Inside, many of the common gremlins that afflict interior and dash lights, fuel gauge and electric windows have all been addressed in the last 12 months. Apart from a door card that could be made to fit more snuggly there is little work to do. Or at least there was until the first time I put the windows down at above 65mph, at which point the headlining descended like a heavy grey cloud of tears. And you have to put the windows down as the air conditioning doesn't work.

Family favourite

Mechanically, in almost 1,000 miles together, the E430 has rung no major alarm bells. As I am still fundamentally a child at heart, I'd like to fettle the exhaust to provide the V8 with a little more vocal fortitude. I enjoy the ambiance and the car's ability to waft, and I am not going to spoil that, but one of the most enjoyable aspects of V8 ownership is the soundtrack and this can undoubtedly be enhanced without any unnecessary vulgarity.

> "I'd like to fettle the exhaust to provide the V8 with a little more vocal fortitude"

It is credit to the 210-series that this has already become my family's favourite car and our go-to transport for almost every occasion, including picnics using the sixth and seventh seats. It's a vehicle that lends itself to road trips and there are a number that I'd like to tackle: the north coast of Scotland and the Mercedes-Benz Museum in Stuttgart. I've even looked at winter tyres with thoughts of ferries, Norway and the northern lights in mind.

As I've told myself repeatedly, a 210-series E-Class can be all the car you ever need. An added bonus of being passionate about a less popular model is that you can get exceptional value for money, then spend that saving on super unleaded, a multimeter and welding wire...

Just the facts

Mercedes-Benz E430 Estate (S210)

Engine M113 4,266cc V8 **Power** 275bhp@5,750rpm **Torque** 295lb ft@3,000-4,000rpm **Transmission** 5-speed auto, RWD

Weight 1,730kg **0-62mph** 6.9sec **Top speed** 151mph **Fuel consumption** 23.3mpg **Years produced** 1997-1999

All figures from Mercedes-Benz for a 1998 pre-facelift car as pictured; fuel consumption according to NEDC combined

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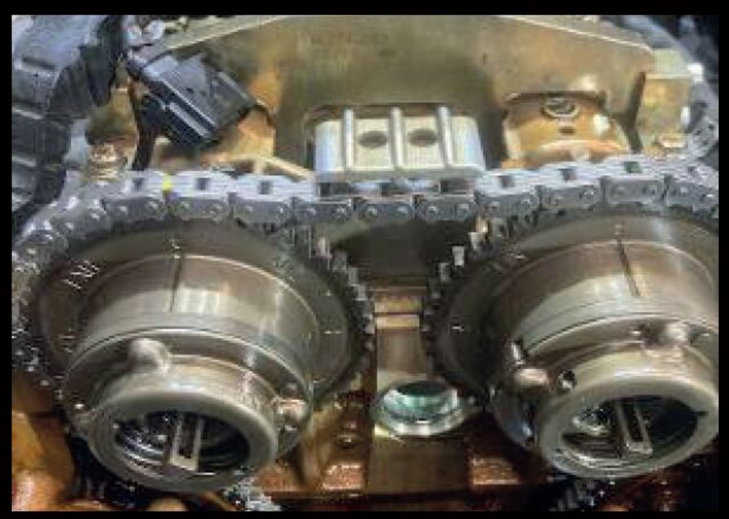

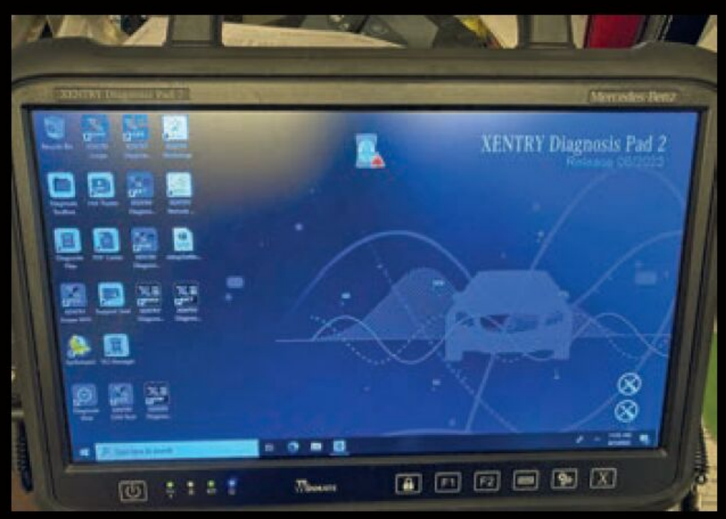

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> When you stop and think about it, the advantages are numerous

QUIETLY content

Retroelectric Car's conversion of Dennis Lowe's 230SL to battery power has made him a very happy man – find out why...

WORDS **JAMES FOSSDYKE** IMAGES **JASON DODD**

Dennis Lowe was 28 when he bought this SL.

The idea of modifying cars, and particularly classic cars, is a divisive one. For some it's a passion, while others see it as blasphemy of the highest order. And the idea of turning a desirable classic into an electric vehicle is even more of a touchy subject among car enthusiasts.

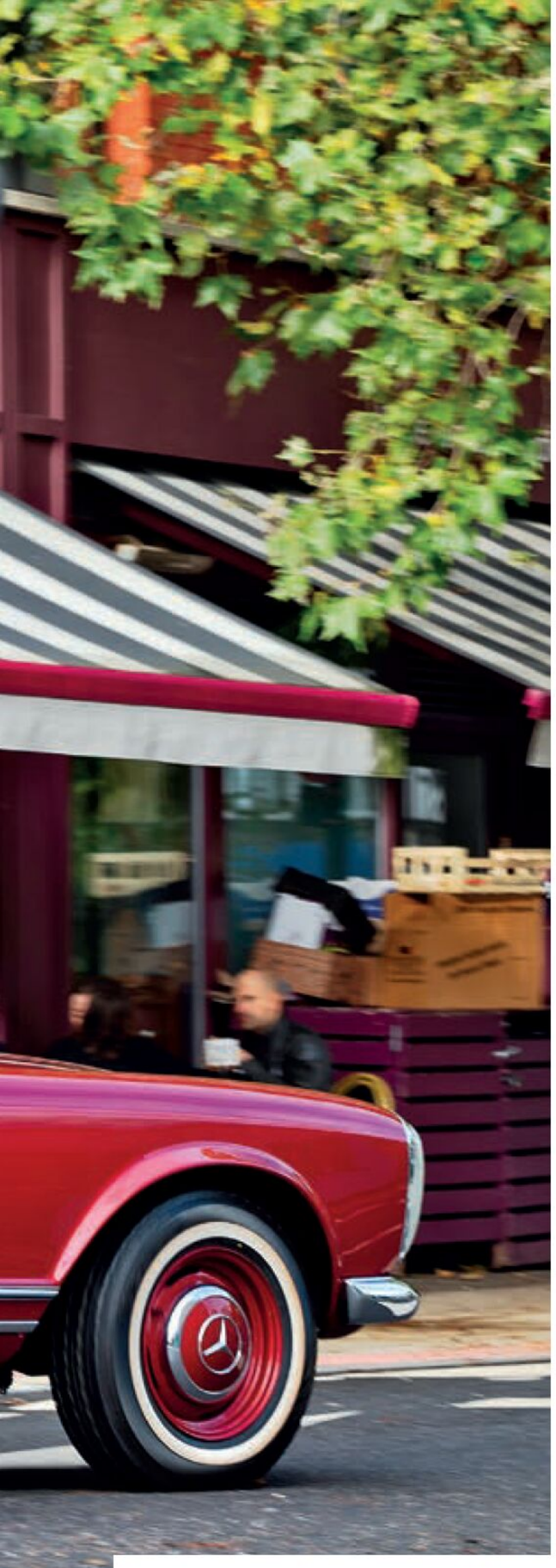
Yet when you stop and think about it, the advantages are numerous. Not only do you get the low emissions and running costs of an electric powertrain, but you get the chance to turn a car that probably wasn't especially reliable when it was new into something that starts on the button every time. Not that ▷

> It was one of those classics that worked most of the time and looked alright from a distance

◁ Retroelectric is located on Nile Street in London.

◁ ▽ Seat belts matched to the exterior colour.

▽ Zero emissions running for this classic Mercedes.



▷ you'll notice, of course, because it'll be silent.

So while some will see that as ripping the heart from a glorious classic that should be preserved and protected, others will see it as a great way of getting some tatty classics out of the barn and onto the road, where everyone can enjoy them every day.

That's the approach taken by Retroelectric Cars, a London-based company that sees electrification as an opportunity to get classics into everyday use, rather than an insult to their memory. And as if to prove they're still petrolheads, the team there will restore classics with petrol engines too, if you ask them very nicely. But as the name suggests, electric conversions are Retroelectrics' bread and butter, and the firm has carved out a niche (albeit a slightly inadvertent one) swapping the wheezy, air-cooled engines in old VW Beetles and Porsche 356s for shiny, quiet and powerful electric motors. But though that's a speciality, it's hardly the only iron in Retroelectrics' eco-friendly fire.

△ Top materials and genuine parts used throughout.

Which is why, when Dennis Lowe chose to bring in his W113 Pagoda, the company was all too happy to work its magic on one of the most desirable classic Mercedes on the market. The donor car – a 230SL in what might be called careworn condition – wasn't anything too spectacular. Usable, but hardly a concours example, it was one of those classics that worked most of the time and looked alright from a distance, but it was becoming too much of a burden for its owner in terms of maintenance. The brief: to use the existing body and cabin to create a more eco-friendly and more user-friendly car without damaging the aesthetic appeal, which was Dennis' reason for buying the car in the first place.

"I was 28 and I'd just had my first big bonus," he says. "It was purely an aesthetic decision. Simply put, this was the coolest car in the universe, with so much 1960s 'dolce vita' Riviera charm and style. It also worked, so I could drive it every day in London."

Retroelectrics' work started with the removal of the engine and gearbox. From there, the car was treated to a full restoration, with everything stripped down, repainted, re-chromed and replaced where necessary. Indeed, Retroelectrics' Tim Hustwayte reckons the lion's share of the not-insignificant conversion cost (from £47,000) was taken up not by the switch to electric power, but by the restoration, which used premium materials and genuine parts where possible.

Retroelectrics' attention to detail is plain to see from the cabin, which looks almost exactly as it would have done when it was new. The company toyed with the idea of fitting a better sound system than the single-speaker unit fitted atop the dash, and the option was there to replace the original radio with a single-DIN system with lots of fripperies. But instead, the original radio's fascia was retained, with the back end reworked to accommodate Bluetooth connectivity.

Now, the system looks completely original, but the functionality is equivalent to that of a more modern setup. Similarly, the hides used to retrim the leather seats are of the same grade as those used by Bentley in its modern grand tourers, so the quality is impeccable, and the look remains classic.

Of course, that's a bit of a metaphor for the whole car, which looks every inch the pristine classic, but all is not quite what it seems. The 230 engine, which is arguably not the most desirable powerplant in the W113 SL range, was no great loss, and it has been replaced with a shiny new electric motor housed deep in the bowels of the car. ▷

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> The car can be connected to a public or domestic charging point

△ The W113 always stands out from the crowd.

△▷ A case of plug and play for this SL Pagoda.

▽ Type 2 socket hides behind a metal filler cap.

▷ That sends 118bhp (88kW) to the rear wheels via a single-speed reduction gearbox and the original driveshaft, providing performance that isn't necessarily a match for modern electric hatchbacks, but is more than sufficient for driving around town and generally keeping pace with traffic.

As the powder-coated cradle that holds the battery uses all the same mounting points as the original powertrain, Dennis was offered the chance to keep the original running gear should they wish to convert back to petrol power at any time, but he declined. Instead, the engine was packed off to power another ailing SL, allowing that to stay on the road in more-or-less original form. Nevertheless, the option remains for the Retroelectrics car to be returned to straight-six form whenever another engine can be sourced, should Dennis have any desire to do so.

But Dennis is an electric car convert, having already owned modern electric vehicles, so the likelihood of seeing this car at the petrol pump any time soon is low. But you might see it at a charging point, because the 26.5kWh battery that lives under a bespoke cover under the bonnet is connected to an industry-standard Type 2 charging point where the fuel filler would ordinarily be placed. Obviously, the filler cap had to be remanufactured to look and feel the part – the team decided the car deserved a proper metal filler cap – but this was duly done, and unless the car is plugged in, there's very little evidence of its change of heart.

Lift that filler flap, however, and the car can be connected to a public or domestic charging point, albeit without the luxury of the rapid charging afforded to modern Mercedes electric vehicles. Nevertheless, with a battery that's about the same size as that of a modern C-Class plug-in hybrid, charging the car is achievable in five to six hours. ▷

Nut-and-bolt restoration

The installation of electric components is only half the story

Dennis Lowe's 230SL is more than just an electric conversion. Although Dennis likes electric cars, he already loved the W113 when it had a petrol engine. So he was keen to keep the look and feel of the car intact despite the quest for more everyday usability. A large part of the Retroelectric's work was centred not on the conversion, but on the restoration of the SL to its original glory.

As Retroelectric Cars' Tim Hustwayte put it, Dennis' car was reasonably tidy but it wasn't without its problems. The first job, therefore, before even considering the installation of the electric powertrains, was to rectify all those issues by cleaning up the car, getting it on a jig and stripping it right down. The engine, gearbox and suspension were all removed and cleaned, with the powertrain heading off to save another SL.

With all the components removed and categorised, Retroelectrics then sent some parts away for re-chroming, and decided which would need replacing. Most notably, the front cross member had deteriorated to the point at which full replacement was deemed the best option, while several unused brackets in the engine bay were replaced too.

From there, the car received a fresh coat of paint and some powder-coating for the bumper brackets, before being reassembled and retrimmed. As well as "Bentley-spec" leather and the revamped radio, there's a new electric heater, but the urge to add air conditioning was resisted.

As a result, Dennis' car looks and feels much as it would have done when it left the factory, albeit with a couple of minor upgrades. And because the conversion is reversible, the result is technically a restomod, but though the heart transplant was a drastic measure, it's still more 'resto' than 'mod'.

> It receives so much goodwill and attention. I think that's largely driven by the timelessness of the design

▷ As the transition to electric power hasn't seen any appreciable weight gain for the 230SL, the range is far greater than the zero-emission range of a C-Class. Retroelectrics reckons around 120 miles is achievable in the real world, which is enough for most days out and Sunday blasts, which is the bread and butter of a well-loved classic.

Despite that, Retroelectrics hasn't done much to the suspension apart from a full restoration so, much like the original SL, the electric car offers great ride comfort and an amicable gait, but it isn't quite a sports car – even with the electric motor on board.

Dennis appreciates the extra torque, which makes it quick enough to keep up with traffic, but it isn't used as a true sports car. Instead, it's a semi-daily driver, and though the keys aren't necessarily the first out of the box when it's time to go anywhere, the SL gets more use than most mollycoddled classics. Shopping trips, days out and the like are all in the offing in a way that simply wasn't possible before the conversion. Mechanical infidelities and niggles put paid to that. Now, Dennis says the thing he likes most about the Mercedes-Benz is the lack of need for maintenance.

"The worst thing about the car before the conversion was the maintenance of that aging petrol engine," he said. "So many components failed over time, but maintenance of an electric motor is minimal compared with any petrol engine, let alone a 60-year-old one. Now the car is essentially maintenance-free."

For Dennis, that has helped to make his dream car even more special, and it means he has kept using it for local driving. And in and around the capital, where onlookers are numerous but expensive and spectacular cars are ten a penny, the SL is something that draws plenty of attention. And whereas a modern, high-end cars might attract the wrong kind of attention, Dennis says the public affection for the W113 is plain to see.

"There's nothing better," he purrs. "It receives so much goodwill and attention. I think that's largely driven by the timelessness of the design when everything else in modern motoring is seen as throwaway and ephemeral. The SL is exquisite."

The debate surrounding restomods and electric conversions will doubtless continue to rage, but whatever your take on the thinking behind the Retroelectrics SL, there are some undeniable advantages to the build. For one, it allows Dennis to use his car on a more regular basis than before, taking away some of the frustrations that come with classic ownership and getting the SL's fabulous lines in front of more people than ever. Secondly, it clearly makes Dennis incredibly happy. And no matter the cost, the powertrain, or the thinking behind a car, that's the most important thing.

Just the facts

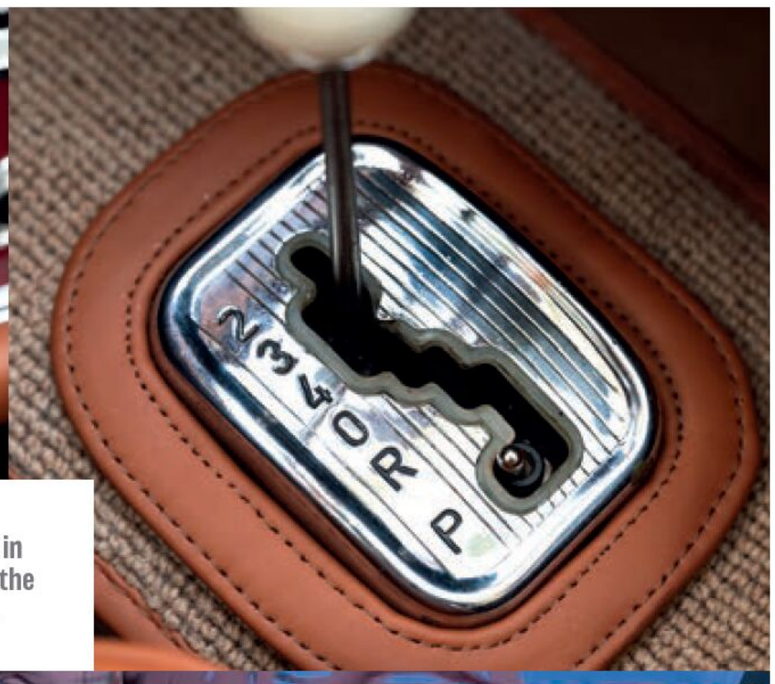
Mercedes-Benz 230SL by Retroelectric Cars (W113)

Drive system 26.5kWh battery + electric motor **Power** 118bhp **Transmission** Single-speed auto, RWD

Electric range 120 miles **On board charger** 6.6kW **CO2 emissions** 0g/km

All figures from Retroelectric Cars

Find out more about Retroelectric Cars at Web www.retroelectrics.co.uk Tel 020 3488 4915



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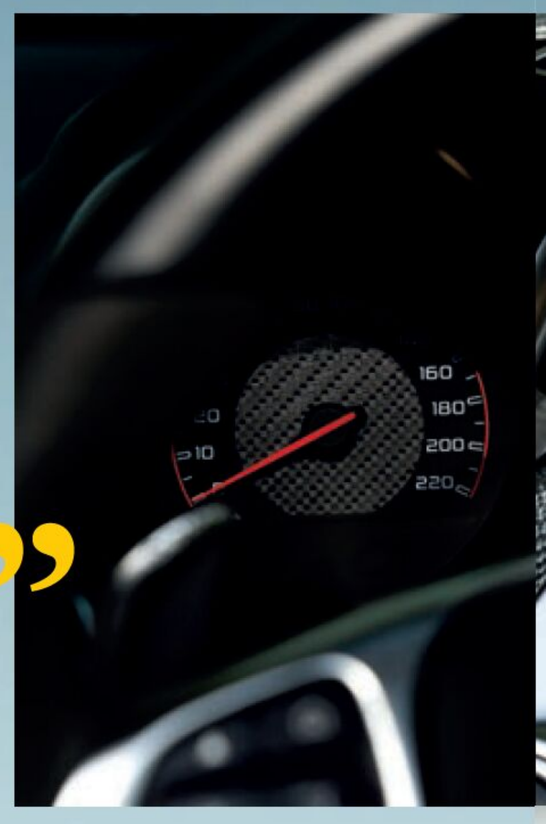
Hot C

This glorious Mercedes-AMG GT C Roadster belongs to Tony Scott Andrews and enjoys an idyllic existence on the Isle of Wight – so what's it like living with so much power on a relatively small island?

WORDS **MATT ROBINSON**
IMAGES **CRAIG PUSEY**

“It remains a traffic-stopping car to this day”

> “It’s quick, it has tremendous grip and, being an AMG, it does what you ask of it”



“Some years ago now,” says Tony Scott Andrews, “I was lucky enough to have a job as a motor racing official that provided me (and others) with a key to a nice new Mercedes, which would be waiting for me at whatever airport car park I was at, having been transported there from the country of the previous race. It was my introduction to Mercedes, and I was impressed. It was as a result of this arrangement that I discovered top speed limiters, for instance – so it all started there, really.”

Tony, now the chairman of the British Automobile Racing Club (BARC), is a man who has had an enviable life in and around motorsport, but it is his love of Mercedes cars which has brought about this particular *Mercedes Enthusiast* story. And while Tony himself has a fascinating history of Mercedes ownership, he’s eager to point out that he wants us to focus more on the car itself, which he thinks is a model that deserves plenty more exposure on these pages: it’s the Mercedes-AMG GT C Roadster.

Not that we’re complaining about swinging the spotlight onto a 549bhp/501lb ft V8 open-top that was developed by Affalterbach. And the C is a particularly interesting model. Introduced in 2017 when the AMG GT family received a minor visual update and some small power increases, it was to serve as the flagship of the Roadster line, sitting above the 469bhp GT and the 515bhp GT S, gaining much of the latter car’s technical updates over the (for want of a much better phrase) entry-level model, and then adding to that with rear-wheel steering, a wider body and a substantial 34bhp power hike, with torque upped by 7lb ft accordingly.

Range ambitions

However, the GT C stopped short of the monster 577bhp iteration of the M178 four-litre biturbo seen in the GT R, which – at the time – Mercedes-AMG said would only be sold

◁ Macchiato Beige leather a classy choice.

◁◁ Driving modes include max attack Race.

◁◁◁ AMG speedo reads to a cool 220mph.

◁◁▽ Parts from the GT R were used on the GT C.

as a Coupe. As it happened, the company reversed that decision and did an AMG GT R Roadster in 2019, but that always seemed a slightly confused concoction: a soft-top body on the one hand, and ultra-track-dedicated chassis focus on the other. It'll satisfy some, of course, but the GT C Roadster just seemed that bit happier in its skin.

And it remains a traffic-stopping car to this day, especially when resplendent in the gorgeous colour combination of Tony's car. For such a wonderful spec – Magnetite Black metallic bodywork, tastefully offset with a Macchiato Beige leather interior – it comes as a surprise to find out he didn't buy this car as new, although he is keen to point out it's how he would have specified it anyway had he been ticking boxes in a dealership at ordering time. ▷

▷ "I bought it in September 2021 from my friend James Grant of SG Group and Sons in Hove," Tony explains. "It would have been some four years old then and had covered 11,000 miles, but to my untrained eye it appeared 'as new'. I had seen one previously in Southampton which had the same matte grey paint as an E63 S that I owned, and for which I had a particular dislike, so this spec was what I would have wished for."

Affalterbach special

Ah yes, previous AMGs – Tony's had quite a few of those. By no means an exhaustive list, the roster of Affalterbach's greatest hits which have been in his possession is quite incredible and includes an E55 Kompressor Estate, no fewer than three SL55s, hot-rod MLs of both the 55 and 63 varieties, a CLS55, SL63s from both 2013 and 2015, a C63, the aforementioned E63 S 4Matic+, which he had as both the four-door and as the desirable Estate, and a GLE63. He's currently also got a GLC63 keeping the GT C company, so this is someone who truly knows his stuff when it comes to AMG.

Yet it seems like the GT C has its hooks into him like few other cars he's owned in the past. One reason for that is the 549bhp Roadster's muscular appearance, with the rear bodywork 68mm wider than that of a GT or GT S, covering a rear track enhanced by 44mm to 1,695mm overall and then bolstered with massive 305-section tyres. It also sits 27mm lower to the road than a contemporary GT Roadster, hunkering it to the tarmac even more for a greater aesthetic effect.

Tony says, "When it was parked alongside my 2015 SL63, of which I was particularly fond, the GT C – just to look at – was in a different league. The other versions of the GT don't seem to have quite the same visual allure, but I think the wider-bodied GT C Roadster really is millimetre perfect. Of all the hundreds of cars I have owned over more decades than I like to think about, I have never had a car that has attracted so many appreciative comments."

Driving impressions

Living on the Isle of Wight, Tony makes the fair point that a V8-powered soft top that'll get close to the magic double-ton flat out is perhaps not strictly necessary. Indeed, his one minor quibble with the car is that it can often feel quite wide on the island's narrow roads, but his report on the way it drives is glowing. "On smooth tarmac, it is really, really good. It is quick, it has tremendous grip and, being an AMG, it does what you ask of it and goes where you want it to. It's one of those cars where the more you drive it, the more you appreciate it. The steering seems to be fairly high-geared and quite light. Add to that the four-wheel steering and it's probably best becoming accustomed to it before trying to set any records with it. On wet roads, you just need to be sensible with it, as with any other fairly powerful rear-drive car."

The suspension, even in Comfort setting, can be "a bit too hard and unforgiving," adds Tony, but he also says that depends on what you're comparing it to. "My SL63 was much better at absorbing broken tarmac, but the GT C is much more of a sports car," he says. "If I wanted to drive from the Isle of Wight to Scotland, the more sybaritic SL63 would come into its own. But to really enjoy driving, then it's the GT C Roadster every time – not even mentioning the sound it makes."

This probably comes down to something Tony highlights himself – that AMG developed the GT, solely for AMG; it was only the company's second-ever dedicated model (which is to say, one built from scratch, rather than one that was spun off an existing Mercedes car) after the stunning SLS. That, he adds, makes it feel less "mainstream" than other AMGs he has owned, and more "focused, more interesting and entertaining to own and drive." Yet, he maintains, it can still be used as a daily driver, as it's docile enough to pootle about at low speeds while wind buffeting in the cabin is kept to a minimum when motoring top down. Even the running costs are reasonable, considering the performance on offer.

△ More grunt than GT S with 503bhp/479lb ft.

△△ Ride Control suspension; rear limited-slip diff.

"The longer I have it, the more I would wish to keep it"

All of which makes us wonder why Tony is considering selling this GT C, though he's in half a mind as to whether to let this beauty go. "The longer I have it, the more I would wish to keep it," he says wistfully, "but there is an argument that says someone in their late 70s living on the Isle of Wight doesn't really need a 200mph sports car. I guess the response there is to say that it would be OK to keep it, then, as it's apparently capable of 'only' 196mph!"

To keep, or not to keep?

Perhaps we should leave Tony to convince himself of all the many reasons he should retain the magnificent GT C, because he sums it up expertly as follows: "The AMG goes rather well, is great to drive and, seemingly by common consent, is a particularly beautiful car to look at. Oh, and there's the noise of that fabulous V8 too. Surely, it's one to cherish, especially in this allegedly electric age. What more could one want, apart from, that is, sustainable fuel?"

We don't know, Tony. Perhaps a job where you turn up at any European airport and find a familiar Mercedes waiting there for you? And if said Mercedes could be one of these mighty GT C Roadsters, then that would sound like complete bliss to us.

Isle of Wight resident Tony Scott Andrews has owned many AMGs.

Just the facts

Mercedes-AMG GT C Roadster (R190)

Engine M178 3,982cc V8 biturbo **Power** 549bhp@5,750-6,750rpm **Torque** 501lb ft@2,100-5,500rpm **Transmission** 7-speed auto, RWD **Weight** 1,735kg

0-62mph 3.7sec **Top speed** 196mph **Fuel consumption** 22.1mpg **CO2 emissions** 259g/km **Years produced** 2017-2022

All figures from Mercedes-Benz for a 2017 car as pictured; fuel consumption according to WLTP

The promised land

Imported to The Netherlands from Japan, this 1990 560SEC Widebody has since undergone a colour change, engine upgrade and more at the request of its latest custodian

WORDS **ALBERT MENSINGA** IMAGES **NOORTJE BLOKLAND**

"The SEC is a 1980s icon and my dad's example made a mega mark on me"

The 126-series Mercedes-Benz S-Class reigned from 1979 to 1992 and defined the luxury saloon market. Meanwhile, the two-door SEC stood as the ultimate grand coupe, particularly in 'King of the Hill' guise with 5.5-litre M117 V8. Today, you can pick up a 500SEC with less than 100,000 miles for around £15,000 if you don't mind a scratch or two and are comfortable with the idea that major work could be necessary at any moment. A good 560SEC model, on the other hand, could set you back at least 10 grand more.

Since arriving in The Netherlands, this Japanese 560SEC Widebody has undergone significant revival work, including a colour change from white to black, and received a few other upgrades courtesy of its latest owner.

Mercedes-Benz specialist Cor de Jong (of Mercedes-Klassieker Service) is one of a handful of dedicated craftsmen cherished by the Dutch Mercedes community who enjoy 1960s, 70s and 80s cars such as the R/C107 SL/SLC, 116- and 126-series S-Classes, and R129 SL. If you're living over here and you're in the market for a Mercedes that works and is period-correct, you don't need to look further. Grab your phone and call Cor, or drop by his cosy garage in Rossum, about a 90-minute drive from where your ferry lands in Hook. He is also the guy who will point you to the other four or five top workshops based in The Netherlands; "The best or nothing" is a credo fit for only a few…

The owner of this particular 560SEC Widebody likes to stay under the radar and thus will remain anonymous in this story. "I love Mercedes," he begins. "My dad owned a grey 560SEC. When I drive a car, it must be a Mercedes. It feels like a flying carpet but with decent performance. Also, the sheer quality and robustness of *Das Haus* are awesome.

"I daily drive a 2015 E500 Kombi [estate]," he continues. "The SEC is a 1980s icon and my dad's example made a mega mark on me, which did not fade as time went by. One day I just had to have one, preferably a widebody. Contemporary cars are basically computers with wheels. I prefer the analogue look and feel of older machines; huge infotainment displays, random beeps and lots of bright warning lights make me nervous!"

The search begins

So how did he come to own the 560SEC pictured here, captured in all its glory by Noortje Blokland? "About three years ago, I went to Cor and asked if he had a classic Benz for me. When I laid my eyes on the all-white SEC in his showroom, it was hard to resist looking at anything else, but I understood it was a project. When I say that it was 'all-white', I mean it. Even the rubbers were white.

"The engine was in great shape though, and everything around it was sound but hardly easy on the eye. The real hurdle, however, was Cor himself as he had earmarked this Mercedes SEC as his own future project. After a coffee or two, he let the SEC go, and we decided to create something special for me.

"Cor respects originality, whereas I wanted

something bling and bold," our mystery man continues. "I had a ruby red leather interior in mind, matched to my Apple MacBook Air cover. As for the exterior, originally the car was painted in 199 *Blauschwarz* [blue-black] metallic, which I considered returning to for this project. However, at the paint shop we discovered a Honda colour [pictured], which at different angles and levels of sunlight has deep shades of green." From that moment, the decision was an obvious one for this new SEC owner.

How the 560SEC came into Cor's possession is an interesting tale. "One day, a customer came to me with a Japanese E500 Kombi, obviously custom-built," Cor explains. "I sorted the engine and made the car work and look right. My client was happy with the results but became tempted by a 190E 2.5-16 Evolution that I had for sale. He offered a straight swap for his E500, which I refused. But then he included the SEC plus extra money in the deal...

"The SEC's blue-black bodywork had been transformed into white by a visually impaired artist who bought the car in a Japanese auction," Cor continues. "However, the bumpers and ▷

"The SEC's blue-black bodywork had been transformed into a white by a visually impaired artist"

△ 105,000km covered; white faced dials.

△△ AMG wheel matched to seats' black leather trim.

△△△ Headlights altered for driving on the right.

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△ One of the best road stances ever, we would say...

◁ The big V8 feels more lively thanks to mods.

▷ other add-ons looked odd and wrong. Part of our deal included splitting the cost of returning the SEC back to its original spec.

"I was giving the deal and project some thought, and then the pandemic kicked in," Cor remembers. "The world changed overnight and I was afraid my business would stop, at least for a few months. To have some money in my pocket rather than a car on the forecourt, I called the guy interested in the 190, fetched the 560SEC and then delivered the Evolution to his doorstep. A few seasons later, the now-owner of the SEC walked in and spotted his dream Mercedes to be."

Before it's too late

Cor continues, "A restoration takes time because sourcing individual parts is a real pain. In fact, it's getting harder and harder to find what I need. But the SEC is now almost finished. One of the last bits was the headlights, originally fit for a right-hand-drive market, of course. To be legal for European roads, we had to switch back to left-hand-drive guise, but these units are impossible to find for under 800 euros. We tinkered inside the original lights and figured out how to make adjustments and get them right.

"To build a car like this is an investment and now's the time to do it."

"This general shortage of parts for older cars is why the prices of certain models soar dramatically," Cor adds. "Mercedes used to have vast amounts of classic parts in store, but not anymore. To build a car like this is an investment and now's the time to do it. Tomorrow you will be too late."

For the owner, there were no shortcuts to making his Mercedes 'as new'. Despite this approach, he intends to use his 560SEC on a daily basis, which is most commendable. The added reliability instilled by restoration work done correctly will only add to the big coupe's appeal. The gold Maxilite Penta style wheels (9J and 10J front/rear), wrapped in 17-inch tyres, are one of the SEC's standout features and were expertly finished by Puc Polish located in Belgium.

Much to the delight of its owner and Cor, the SEC sailed through its road legality inspection, receiving praise from the tester for its great overall condition in the process. The 5,547cc V8 (with 296bhp/336lb ft torque as standard) was by no means short of thrust from the factory, but now provides rawer entertainment thanks to the new 'spaghetti' headers and complete electronic fuel injection with electronic ▷

▷ injectors and eight coils from Elbe Engineering, regulated by a Lambda sensor. This setup replaced the stock mechanical-electronic Bosch KE-Jetronic injection. "Basically, it has transformed into a sports car engine," he confirms.

Behind the wheel

At tickover, there's a comfortingly deep V8 hum mixed with other mechanical sounds. At lift-off, the more direct response achieved by Cor's fettling is noticed immediately. Anyone with a modicum of SEC experience will appreciate this car's sheer tightness delivered by such a successful restoration, while noticing the project's more modern approach that hasn't sacrificed much by way of authenticity.

Ever since my dad drove a Wolseley 16/60, I've had a soft spot for cars with proper radiator grilles. Mercedes of the 1960s and 70s claimed particularly distinctive grilles and so I've always admired the W114/115, W116, W123 and 126-series. In 1982, even the ultra-modern W201 190 retained a traditional front design like there was no alternative.

▷ **Room for four in this modern classic Benz.**

The 126-series SEC disrupted the high-end car scene when it arrived in 1981. To me, the Jaguar XJS was the only car that came close to it in terms of appearance and performance. That said, a few years ago I drove a six-litre V12 Jag and was disappointed by its interior, which I found cramped and uncomfortable. I also had no words for the cornering abilities of the otherwise classy Brit…

This 560SEC, however, proves a revelation. It offers everything I could wish for in a modern classic, including space for four adults. The XJS has since been ditched from my list of favourite 1980s cars, while my admiration for the SEC continues to grow.

There's a thin line between loving and hating modified Mercedes, and a 126-series is easily ruined. This one I like. To my mind, Cor's work has been meticulously executed – the coupe has the perfect road stance, it employs striking colours to stand out from the crowd, it possesses an improved V8, and features an ideal set of wheels. It's a bold statement to say this is an SEC 'reimagined', but I would cautiously and respectfully label it as such.

◁ **You'd never guess who made this paint colour.**

▶ Thank you to Cor de Jong of Mercedes-Klassieker Service Web Mercedes-klassiekerservice.nl. From page 60 you can read about the 16-valve 190 track cars owned by Cor and his son Lucas

"The 126-series SEC disrupted the high-end car scene when it arrived in 1981"

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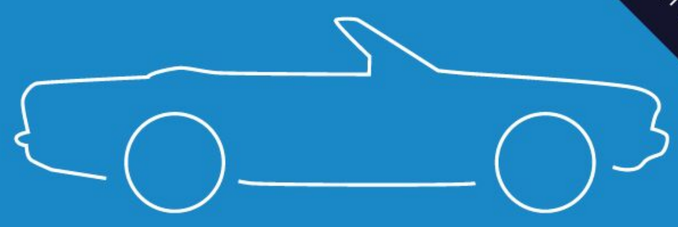

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Natur

WORDS **ALBERT MENSINGA**
MAIN IMAGES **NOORTJE BLOKLAND**
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Mercedes specialist Cor de Jong (right) with son Lucas and their 190s.

father and son progression

A father and son share their passion for hot 190s, including a 2.3-16 and Evolution model which they race in a classic Dutch series

The name Peter Pfeiffer may be unfamiliar to some, but he's undoubtedly one of the greats of post-war Mercedes-Benz design. Joining the Daimler-Benz group in 1968, he took charge of Mercedes-Benz design in 1999 and oversaw the shaping of iconic cars such as the 215-series CL and 219-series CLS until his retirement in 2008. But not before penning the external design of the W201 190 (launched in 1982) under the watchful eye of Bruno Sacco.

The compact saloon took Mercedes in a radical new direction, and especially in 16-valve form – the first of which (the 2.3-16) arrived in 1984. To understand this model's significance, let's go back to its beginning. Between 1974 to 1982, Mercedes invested over one billion deutschemarks into the 201-series to compete with the formidable BMW 3-Series (E21/E30). In 1982, the introduction of the all-new 190 set the stage, although it left something to be desired in the power stakes.

But then came 1984 and the 190E 2.3-16, which debuted at the Frankfurt motor show. On the racing front, the 190 faced fierce competition from faster Volvo 240 Turbo and Ford Sierra RS500 cars. Both the street and racing Mercs featured a 2.3-litre four-cylinder engine with a 16-valve cylinder-head developed by Cosworth and designated 'M102.983'. On arrival, output was 182bhp.

> I spot two racers in full livery, plus an Evolution and Evolution II fit for auction

It proved a successful formula in endurance terms at least, with three prototypes achieving record times for 25,000km, 25,000 miles and 50,000km at the Nardò test track in Italy – the latter completed in just 201hrs 39mins 43secs with an average speed of 154mph (247.9kph). At race tracks, however, BMW's mighty M3 forced Mercedes to develop faster 2.5-litre and Evolution variants of its 190, with road-going versions to match.

The 190E 2.5-16 of 1988 (192bhp; M102.990 engine) inspired the first Evolution, which arrived in 1989 (unchanged power but revised bore and stroke to improve 'rev-ability'; M102.991 engine). The Evolution II of 1990 (232bhp; M102.992 engine) was more extreme in every sense.

After years of trying, in 1992 Mercedes and driver Klaus ▷

△△ These cars see action in classic series.

△ Cor is a long-time fan of the baby Benz.

▷ Ludwig finally secured the drivers' championship crown in DTM – Germany's premier touring car series. The race-spec 190s were very different beasts to their road-going counterparts, however, boasting double the horsepower and rev limits in excess of 10,000! Today, all four versions of these 190 are sought-after.

My first Mercedes

Dutch Mercedes specialist Cor de Jong (born in 1966) operates Mercedes-Klassieker Service, a garage specialising in 1960s, 70s, and 80s cars. When photographer Noortje Blokland and I visit his workshop, there's an E500 on the ramp, an SLC in pieces, a Pagoda lying in wait, as well as an R107 SL and a 560SEC (featured on pages 52 to 58). Four 190 centrepieces sit under a giant DTM banner covering almost the full width of the building. I spot two racers in full livery, plus an Evolution and an Evolution II fit for auction.

When the W201 came to market, 16-year-old Cor became an instant fan. His dad had a Mercedes-Benz garage and the 190 stood out. That was no accident as it was the first Mercedes designed to appeal to a younger audience. Especially with the arrival of the 2.3-16, anything between a Golf GTI and Alfa Romeo GTV6 had to watch out. BMW's trump card in this segment was the 323i until the M3 came in 1986.

For Cor, it was inevitable that a 16-valve 190 would be his one day. "By September 1983, AMG offered widebody kits and tuning gear to enhance performance and looks," he remembers. "At the time, there was a huge modifying scene and every Dutch street featured at least one colourful Opel Manta, loud Ford Escort, or Simca 1000 with go-faster striping and plastic bits. A standard 2.3-16 had a 0.32 drag coefficient, which was as good as you could get. The add-on bodywork obviously helped, and there was the Nardò records to prove it.

"Dutch TV broadcasted two national channels and a handful of programmes from abroad. Germany brought the DTM races to us, and that kept me at home. Also, my then girlfriend and now wife and I jumped in our 190E to see some live action. I have Klaus Ludwig's autograph somewhere. What a hero!

"I eventually bought a 16-valve Cosworth to tinker with," Cor continues. "I worked as a mechanic first in Rotterdam at a main dealer, and later as the first mechanic in a new branch of the same company, closer to my home. My dad's health was the reason I took over his workshop in 1995.

"I like it when a car is super responsive, and a 16-valve 190 is just that. It's a fun thing to drive and it's built like a tank. It wasn't until 2018 that one of my sons and I got the itch to buy one for track use. Colleague and fellow Cosworth fan, Marcel Wüst introduced me to a black racer and the car seen here, a

Major modifications have taken place inside to meet racing regs.

△△ Six-point harness keeps you firmly in place.

△ Four-cylinder motor now makes up to 250bhp.

△ Adjustable spoiler adds extra downforce.

> Germany brought the DTM races to us, and that kept me at home

2.3-16 in yellow and white. He suggested, 'If you buy the white one, I'll race you in the black one'.

"A few months later, I was out on the Zandvoort track in my first NKHTGT race. My son Lucas joins me now, and we enjoy the father-and-son experience. Not only in helping each other out, but also in racing one another.

Racing spirit

"Recently, I sold an Evo II to a guy who came from an E30 M3. He enjoyed the Benz so much more. There's a 16-valve fanbase for sure, but enthusiasts need to be careful. Evolutions with 1,500 miles or less don't exist outside a museum now. Most cars did have their issues or were rebuilt for a specific purpose. I know my 190s and when I test drive one, a to-do list always pops up in my head. Out of respect for these cars and the desire to keep their souls alive, I inevitably get to work and fix anything that's wrong. Evidence of this can be seen in the ▷

▷ This Martini-liveried saloon was found in Spain.

HOME DELIVERY

CELEBRATING THE WORLD'S GREATEST CARS

From the publishers of Mercedes ENTHUSIAST

★ SPRING – ISSUE 46 ★

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Emerging from the banking at the Zandvoort circuit in The Netherlands.

▷ other cars here [a 2.3-16 and Evolution]. Both are mint examples, and both are for sale," Cor adds with a smile.

Cor's workshop, located just outside Rossum, is a true Benz sanctuary, and his love for the 190 is obvious, hence the giant banner. In that sense, the 190 track cars are something of a break from the norm. "It's impossible to turn a street car into a racing car without doing major work," he admits. "Stripping a car is a massive job. There are few original DTM racing cars around, hand-built in thinner steel, with aluminium doors and bonnet, and underpinnings that are completely different to those of the road-going cars.

I like it when a car is super responsive, and a 16-valve 190 is just that

"Oddly enough, these 30 or so cars were recognised as full members of the W201 family with corresponding chassis numbers. It goes without saying that these cars are cherished and extremely valuable. Of course, many were lost in the process of racing…

"Inevitably, our track cars have lost their originality and are basically rolling projects in continuous progress. I found the silver Evolution with the Martini livery hidden in Spain. My son and I drove to Madrid to have a look, agree on a price, and bring it to my shop – a 1,100-mile journey all in.

"The 190 from Wüst came with a proper cage and has all the necessary components to compete in historic racing," Cor continues. "The Spanish car was originally built for rallying and weighs an extra 100kg to keep it intact. The work has been done properly, however, by a tuning company called Vagspeed Motorsport. Fitting a fresh and lighter cage is a big no-no, as regulations won't allow it, so it is left alone. Even drilling a hole to fit a mirror will destroy your ambitions to race."

Proflex suspension

Cor's son Lucas joins us at the coffee table. He's an enthusiastic racer on the track who drives a W124 200E as a daily. "Both cars have a welded body to stiffen things up. The cage adds even more reinforcement," he confirms. "The white 190 came with an H&R coil-over setup we did not agree with, so we changed it to Proflex, which works very well. Our Spanish racer sat on Engimek suspension, but is now also equipped with a kit from Proflex. It's a custom setup and offers more relaxed behaviour. A standard 16-valve basically is a street racer. Their handling is sublime. Also, pootling around town is no problem at all. ▷

◁ The silver 190E has a high-tech digital display.

▽ Full roll cage protects the driver when racing.

▽ Work on this W201 done by Vagspeed in Spain.

△ Evolution style alloy wheels ramp up the racing look.

△ **Racers with their road-going counterparts.**

◁ **There is good-hearted rivalry between the guys.**

▽ **The 190 gave Merc the DTM crown it craved.**

▷ They're such great cars."

Lucas' father sheds more light on his experiences. "I bought used racing cars because of the money involved: from scratch, a serious car sucks up €200,000 to €300,000. At their peak, a DTM engine pumped out 380hp at insane revs. A two-race daily programme involved at least two engines. In and out was a 15-minute job. In period, mechanics told me that from the moment a DTM engine fires up, it starts to disintegrate.

> We work on our own engines and settle with 200 to 250bhp

Rolling projects

"Today, a 350hp, 2.5-litre engine fit for one racing season will set you back €35,000. As this is a bit stiff, we work on our own engines and settle with 200 to 250hp. In a 1,150kg shell, that's enough power to have fun in the Dutch HARC series in which we share the track with cars made between 1982 to 1990. Both our 190s compete in the 'Above two-litre' class in Group A suitable for modified cars, together with MX-5s, E30s, Toyota Corollas and Starlets, and Volvo 360s. A lap of Zandvoort is done in around 2mins 12secs. Readers of *Mercedes Enthusiast* should come and watch us."

Consider the invite extended, Cor!

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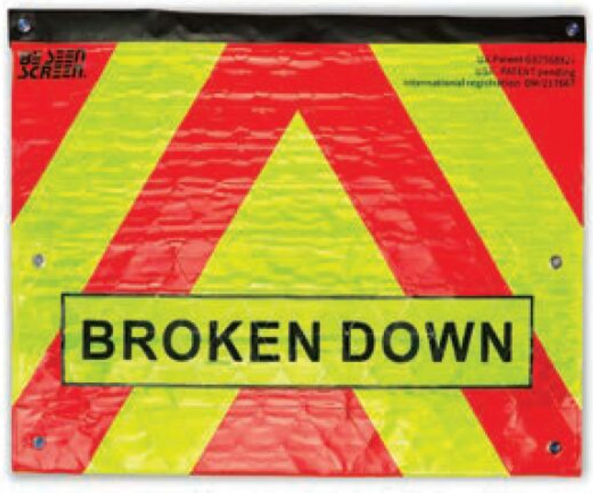

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"The E-Class was never anything less than utterly relaxing"

Benefits of a kind

The E300e plug-in hybrid combines a four-cylinder petrol engine with battery and electric motor to reduce emissions and beat the tax man, but how does it fare on UK roads?

WORDS **KYLE MOLYNEUX**
IMAGES **MERCEDES-BENZ GROUP AG**

The electrification of Mercedes continues apace, not least with the latest W214 E-Class. The E300e plug-in hybrid promises the best of all worlds: tax-busting zero-emissions running, electrically assisted performance, and the confidence boosting range of a traditional fuel tank.

That last point is not to say the E300e can't munch miles on battery power alone; on paper, the 25.4kWh lithium-ion pack is good for 68 to 71 miles depending on the vehicle's specification. That is roughly double what the 213-series E300e could manage…

As with the new C300e (tested in our December/January 2024 issue), which has an identical setup, the E300e's battery is hooked up to an electric motor and this combination can, among other benefits, increase the performance of the two-litre four-cylinder petrol motor. By itself, the turbocharged M254 engine makes 201bhp and 236lb ft of torque. Yet when the electric system is called on, the E300e achieves headline figures of 309bhp and 406lb ft of twisting force, for a strong 6.4-second 0-62mph time and 147mph top end. For reference, the C300e weighs 105kg less than the E-Class so is three tenths quicker to 62mph and 5mph faster flat out.

Styling wise, there are some interesting details on the new E-Class including an illuminated front grille with shapely black

Superscreen dashboard with separate display for the front passenger.

◁ The four-pot grumbles like a diesel but feels smooth enough.

▽ 10 to 100 per cent charge in two hours at 11kW.

▽▽ Touch controls for rear air conditioning.

surround (not sure about that one) and rear LEDs in the shape of three-pointed stars (now those I do like). The cabin's central MBUX touchscreen is particularly enormous at 14.4 inches, and in this car is accompanied by a 12.3-inch display for the front passenger (the whole lot comes under the banner 'MBUX Superscreen', which is part of the AMG Line Premium Plus spec). And how could I forget the 12.3-inch digital instrument cluster for the driver? This high-tech kit is somewhat at odds with the standard-fit ash wood trim on the centre console.

There's a superb amount of space inside the W214 E-Class, and with good reason considering the four-door body measures 4.9m long, up to 2m wide and 1.5m tall. With regards to interior dimensions, think 221-series S-Class and shave off a few millimetres in every direction. Due to the battery, the E300e's boot swallows 370 litres rather than 540 litres, although there's no annoying lip in the floor like before.

I found the driving position in this latest E-Class strangely high, even with the seat at its lowest point, and the steering wheel didn't quite have the telescopic reach I needed. These points weren't an issue for me in the previous generation E-Class, or the generation before that. Also, the lovely ambient lighting strip that runs around the edge of the dash is reflected into the windscreen which isn't ideal, especially at night.

Real world testing

So how does the E300e fare as a plug-in hybrid? With ambient temperatures of around 8C while running on battery power alone for short school runs and a longer jaunt through several towns, I managed 52 miles before seeing 0 per cent charge. On that matter, the E300e's on-board charger has an 11AC capacity, meaning a recharge from 10 to 100 per cent using an 11kW wallbox takes two hours. Sadly, there is no DC fast-charging option on this Mercedes. Note that braking converts some energy back into electricity to recharge the battery a bit.

Driving in Hybrid mode, which sees the engine and battery/electric motor seamlessly working together, I averaged 50mpg in 60 miles without too much care for efficiency. Fuel tank range was reckoned to be 405 miles.

All the while, the E-Class was never anything less than utterly relaxing. There's some road noise on the move, but this saloon is very much a baby S-Class, even in Sport mode, and gracefully absorbs bumps in the road. The steering is light but never loose, and the brakes easily moderated. I'd call the ride achieved by the selective dampers slightly taut but mostly 'plush'.

I remember when Mercedes went BMW 5-Series hunting with its W212 E-Class, and ramped up the involvement and driving dynamics. For this W214 generation, the executive saloon has returned to its roots. Available as a Saloon and Estate, and with a five per cent Benefit in Kind tax rate that is six times lower than even the E220d, for example, the E300e makes a good case for itself. The fact the Saloon costs from £68,020 (£76,585 as tested) and didn't quite achieve the official efficiency numbers in my hands is slightly disappointing, but I remain convinced that plug-in hybrid Mercedes are ideal for certain buyers.

We managed just over 50 miles before the battery ran out of charge.

Just the facts

Mercedes-Benz E300e (W214)

Engine M254 1,999cc 4-cyl turbocharged + electric motor and 25.4kWh lithium-ion battery

System power 309bhp **System torque** 406lb ft

Transmission 9-speed auto, RWD **Weight** 2,210kg **0-62mph** 6.4sec

Top speed 147mph **Fuel consumption** 470.8-565.0mpg

CO2 emissions 13g/km **Years produced** 2023-on

All figures from Mercedes-Benz for an AMG Line Premium Plus car as pictured; fuel consumption according to WLTP

Bargain Benzes

In the latest instalment of our buying focused series, we reveal six of the best £10,000 Mercedes buys available on the second hand market

WORDS GUY BAKER IMAGES DEALERS

It might not seem like a substantial amount to spend, but if you believed you'd struggle to find appealing pre-owned Mercedes on a £10,000 budget then you'd be very much mistaken.

We've scoured the classifieds to find six of the very best £10,000 Mercedes you could buy right now. Each one claims slightly different talents and provides a unique ownership experience, so if you're in the market for a 10 grand Merc there should be a few here that tempt you.

Third-gen A-Class offered a more conventional drive than its predecessors.

Hatchback

A180 BlueEfficiency Sport (W176)

Classy, practical and economical, the A180 Sport makes an ideal compact all-rounder

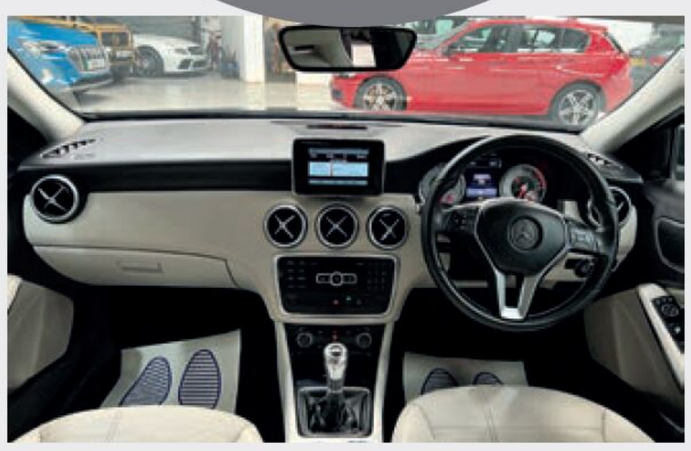
There's much to commend about Mercedes' W176 A-Class, and in A180 Sport guise it's reasonably fun to drive. It's not especially quick but it looks good, boasts a premium interior and is fairly economical for a petrol-powered hatchback. The official combined figure is 51.4mpg.

Residual values are strong and your road tax bill would be just £180 a year, with all Sport models possessing a decent spec that includes alloy wheels and cruise control. And many examples also have a range of desirable extras such as heated and electrically adjustable front seats, Parktronic parking sensors and satellite navigation.

The 1,595cc, four-cylinder turbocharged engine provides 148lb ft of torque from just 1,250rpm, enabling the A180 to cover the 0-62mph dash in 8.3 seconds before topping out at 126mph. A seven-speed auto was available as an option but many buyers prefer a six-speed manual. This black, one-owner A180 Sport from 2014 had the latter transmission and was available at Wembley Prestige Cars Ltd (www.wembleyprestigecars.com). Stickered at £9,670, it had covered 72,000 miles and packed full MBSH, 17-inch alloys, a 5.8-inch colour display and part-leather seats.

BUYING TIPS

Your A180 should claim full service history, a long MOT, no oil leaks and a clean bill of health on a Mercedes diagnostic check. You must test every electrical item as a few owners have reported problems with the radio and the central locking, and if any warning lights illuminate the problem must be fixed before you pay for the car. There have been a few recalls too, so check that these have been addressed, and some owners have suffered water ingress into the boot and rear footwell.



Just the facts

Mercedes-Benz A180 Sport (W176)

ENGINE 1,595cc 4-cyl turbocharged POWER/TORQUE 120bhp/147lb ft

TRANSMISSION 6-speed manual, FWD 0-62MPH 9.2 seconds

TOP SPEED 126mph FUEL CONSUMPTION 51.4 mpg

£10,000 BUYS 2014 A180 Sport with 70,000 miles

Estate
CLS250 CDI BlueEfficiency Shooting Brake (X218)

A classier and more exclusive alternative to a C-Class or E-Class Estate – and surprisingly frugal too

Ultimately, an estate car is all about load carrying but that doesn't mean you have to sacrifice style on the altar of practicality. And if you choose a CLS Shooting Brake as your next Mercedes then you could have the best of both worlds.

Our budget is sufficient to bag a well-maintained, 2012 CLS250 CDI BlueEfficiency Shooting Brake with around 110,000 miles on the clock. With a 201bhp four-cylinder turbodiesel motor under the bonnet, the X218-generation Shooting Brake boasts a hefty 369lb ft of torque at a mere 1,600rpm, so there's plenty of poke even when heavily laden.

And although it may not possess quite as much capacity as say an E-Class Estate, the seven-speed automatic CLS looks and feels a class above. In 146mph '250 CDI' guise, the Shooting Brake is pretty frugal too, with an official 53.3mpg combined economy figure.

Something like this 62-plate, Obsidian Black, AMG Sport example we discovered at Norton Car Sales Ltd (www.nortoncarsalesltd.co.uk) in Manchester would fit the bill perfectly. Advertised at £10,595, you should be able to negotiate the price down to £10,000.

Not as roomy as an E-Class, but more exciting.

Just the facts

Mercedes-Benz CLS250 CDI BlueEfficiency Shooting Brake (X218)

Engine **2,143cc 4-cyl biturbo** Power **201bhp/369lb ft**

Transmission **7-speed auto, RWD** 0-62mph **7.8sec**

Top speed **146mph** Combined fuel consumption **53.3mpg**

£10,000 buys 2012 CLS250 CDI BlueEfficiency with 110,000 miles

BUYING TIPS

There's quite a kit list on the CLS so make sure that everything works, especially the infotainment system and the automatic gearbox. Yours must come with a blemish-free service record and all recalls addressed; there was one to replace the factory injectors and another to apply new software to reduce nitrogen oxide emissions. Your local Mercedes dealer can check this for a small fee. And watch out for clogged DPFs on cars that have recently covered a low annual mileage.

Saloon
E55 AMG (W211)

The archetypal iron fist in a velvet glove, Mercedes' supercharged E-Class is now a rare find

Arguably the finest AMG E-Class, Mercedes' W211 E55 AMG delivers old-school supercharged V8 performance in leather-clad luxury, and is fast becoming a collectable modern classic.

Boasting an awesome soundtrack, the E55 AMG provides genuine supercar performance thanks to its IHI-supercharged V8, which produces 469bhp and a staggering 516lb ft of torque. And despite the E55's age, 0-62mph takes just 4.7 seconds.

Without a top speed limiter the E55 can hit 180mph, but it's equally happy playing the executive cruiser role, with five-speed AMG Speedshift automatic transmission, plush two-tone leather trim with electric heated memory seats and a top-spec Harman Kardon Logic 7 sound system. All cars boast AMG bodywork, suspension, brake and wheel treatment.

Most buyers pay more for a lower-mileage example, but our 10 grand budget puts you behind the wheel of a 2004 car with up to 150,000 miles. And if it's in as good condition as this full service-historied, silver example we spotted advertised for £9,995 at the Barclay Motor Company in Birmingham (www.bmc-cars.co.uk) then you should be onto a winner.

BUYING TIPS

Check the bodywork for rust as even apparently small issues can hide a much larger problem; E55s made from 2004-on appear to have better factory corrosion protection. Put the sat nav and infotainment system through its paces as some have failed, but the engine and transmission seem to last for ever as long as they have been properly serviced on time. Problems with the standard-fit Airmatic suspension, however, can be very expensive to resolve. We'd steer clear of modified cars.

△ The E55's performance is off the scale; more torque than the E63.

Just the facts

Mercedes-Benz E55 AMG (W211)

Engine **5,439cc V8 supercharged**

Power/torque **469bhp/516lb ft**

Transmission **5-speed auto, RWD**

0-62mph **4.7sec** Top speed **155mph**

Fuel consumption **21.9mpg**

£10,000 buys 2004 E55 AMG with 150,000 miles

SUV
GL320 CDI 4Matic (X164)

Big and bold but never brash, the GL320 CDI delivers unbeatable metal for your money

When Mercedes' spacious GL arrived in the UK in 2006, many felt it was simply too big. But times have changed, with the X164-generation car now appearing positively modest in size compared to some of the latest SUVs. Our £10,000 budget will bag you a pre-facelift 2008 GL320 CDI with around 100,000 miles. This model ran from 2006 to mid 2009 before being replaced by the GL350 CDI, and it carries the 221bhp OM642 turbodiesel engine which is good for 376lb ft of torque from 1,600rpm, so carrying heavy loads isn't a problem. The seven-seat GL features air suspension as standard.

Mercedes' 7G-Tronic transmission works well here, and although it's not really built for speed the GL320 CDI can still top 130mph when seriously pushed. And most examples were well specced by their original owners. There aren't that many GL320 CDIs around though, so you may have to wait a while until you find something like this silver 2007 car spotted for sale at Norde Motors Ltd (www.nordemotors.co.uk) in the West Midlands. With 106,000 miles, it claimed four previous owners and packed a full service history record plus plenty of optional extras.

△ Huge inside and out; V6 diesel motor.

Just the facts

Mercedes-Benz GL320 CDI 4Matic (X164)

Engine **2,987cc V6 turbocharged**

Power/torque **221bhp/376lb ft**

Transmission **7-speed auto, 4WD** 0-62mph **9.5sec**

Top speed **130mph** Fuel consumption **28.8mpg**

£10,000 buys **2008 GL320 CDI with 100,000 miles**

BUYING TIPS

The X164 GL is a complicated Mercedes, so yours mustn't have any missing service points and should have had any issues addressed straight away. Check everything – this will take some time – looking for oil, water or power steering leaks, off-road damage and electrical malfunctions. Some owners have reported issues with the sunroof, powered seats, tailgate closing and the air suspension, which can be especially expensive to put right. And ensure that the multimedia has the latest updates – if not get a quote from a Mercedes dealer before agreeing a price.

BUYING TIPS

Complete service history and rust-free bodywork are key. Check for any signs of damage to the fabric hood, the optional hardtop roof or the suspension, and look out for water leaks into the boot, plus oil leaks and misbehaving electrics (including seats, windows and soft top).

Also confirm that the rollover bar hasn't previously deployed, and that the exhaust catalysts haven't given up the ghost and caused emissions to rocket.

Coupe
CLK200 Kompressor (C209)

Second-gen CLK based on the W203 C-Class; supercharged 4-cyl.

Affordable and surprisingly good value, the CLK200 Kompressor Coupe makes a great future classic

Mercedes' pillarless 'C209' CLK Coupe is a bona fide future classic, with the pre-facelifted 2002 to 2005 model now two decades old. Stylish and affordable, the facelifted 2005 to 2008 models were a little bit quicker and more efficient than the original cars – and our budget bags one of the finest late CLK200 Kompressor models with a low mileage.

The popular CLK200 Kompressor motor, which packs a supercharger, an intercooler, variable valve timing and four valves per cylinder, provides six-cylinder-like performance, but with four-cylinder efficiency. And like all C209 Coupes, the CLK200 K is well made, comfortable and carries an air of elegance without being showy in any way.

And although this two-door is very happy cruising along, a livelier driving experience is only a press of the throttle pedal away thanks to that supercharger. It's practical too for a mid-sized coupe with four decently sized seats, and is relatively inexpensive to buy and run.

With as much as £10,000 to spend you really can buy the best, such as this silver, 30,000-mile CLK200 Kompressor specced in the Avantgarde trim line and registered in 2009 that we spotted for sale at Avante Cars near Glasgow (www.avantecars.co.uk).

BUYING TIPS

With such a big budget for a CLK you can afford to be picky so avoid cars that aren't rust-free, have higher mileages or don't have a complete service history record. Watch out for any hint of engine misfires, worn suspension components, rattling windows, tired exhaust catalysts or electrical malfunctions. Broken seat belt valets and electric headrests are quite common so make sure they work properly, and get the engine mounts checked as the originals may need replacing.

Just the facts

Mercedes-Benz CLK200 Kompressor Coupe (C209)

Engine **1,796cc 4-cyl supercharged** Power/torque **181bhp/184lb ft**

Transmission **5-speed auto, RWD** 0-62mph **9.1sec**

Top speed **140mph** Fuel consumption **33.6mpg**

£10,000 buys 2009 CLK200 Kompressor with 30,000 miles

Roadster
SL320 (R129)

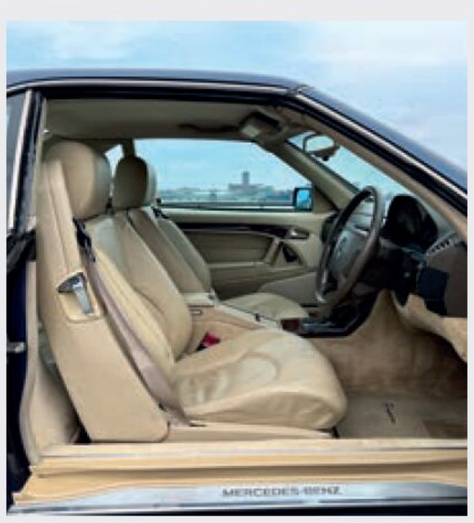
▷ A £10,000 budget gets you a facelifted car with around 100,000 miles.

One of the best modern classic Mercedes you could buy right now – but avoid unloved examples

Demand for Mercedes' once unloved R129 SL has risen significantly over the last few years, with this usable youngtimer boasting plenty of class and comfort, as well as collectability. But affordable examples are becoming harder to find by the day.

The June 1998-on, second-facelift cars generally command a higher price, however the pre-facelift SLs are much better value, with a cherished 1995 SL320 with around 110,000 miles within our 10 grand budget. And although the SL320's V6 performance feels more like a continental cruiser than a sportscar, the handling is surprisingly competent, whilst the impressive standard spec includes a five-speed automatic transmission, rollover protection, ABS, ASR, heated electric seats, cruise control and walnut or chestnut wood trim.

This great looking, 1995 SL320 at Richard Harris Cars Ltd (www.richardharriscars.com) in Merseyside is exactly the kind of car you should be looking for. With impressive provenance and the original removable hardtop, it had covered 109,702 miles and was advertised at £9,990.



Just the facts

Mercedes-Benz SL320 (R129)

Engine **3,199cc 6-cyl**

Power/torque **228bhp/ 232lb ft**

Transmission **5-speed auto, RWD**

0-62mph **8.4sec**

Top speed **149mph**

Fuel consumption **28.3mpg**

£10,000 buys 1995 SL320 with 110,000 miles

Mature choices

If you're seeking modernity and fantastic value for money then you should target five- to 10-year-old Mercedes, as our used car market expert explains below...

WORDS **GUY BAKER** IMAGES **MARKS TEY CARS, MOTOR LOUNGE AND STRATUS CARS**

Understated E220d SE Estate at Motor Lounge was a mere £15,950.

The average values of UK used cars have been falling for the last five months, and this trend has been seen across almost all sectors of the market, with many Mercedes models affected. Not great news for sellers, but excellent news for buyers – especially if you know which models to target.

In a falling market, the trick is to focus on those models which are bucking the trend and losing *less* in depreciation. Right now, as far as Mercedes are concerned at least, this appears to be vehicles aged between five and 10 years old. Some are holding their value, with a few even increasing. And these tend to possess much of the latest tech and can be nearly as efficient as contemporary equivalents yet are a long way off consideration as a future classic.

At the far end of this age window lies the 216-series CL500, an epic but now defunct model which was of course replaced by the S-Class Coupe nearly a decade ago. They're few and far between these days, but if you come across a well-maintained example with a lowish mileage and a few optional extras, such as this imposing Obsidian Black 2014 example we spotted at Marks Tey Motors near Colchester (www.marksteymotors.co.uk), then take a much closer look.

Stickered at £19,650, this car would have set its first owner back over £100,000 and came with a full service history, black leather upholstery, black ash wood trim, a reversing camera, Bluetooth, front and rear parking sensors, Speedtronic cruise control, bi-xenon headlights, Comand infotainment with an eight-inch colour display, and 19-inch AMG alloy wheels.

△ 2014 CL500 at Marks Tey Motors was priced at under £20,000.

△ 50,000-mile C350e plug-in hybrid yours for around £15,000.

If you can live with 29.7mpg combined fuel consumption then the CL500 could make a wonderful buy. If not, then how about something altogether more efficient, and contemporary, like a 213-series E220d SE Estate? This 2017, Iridium Silver metallic, one-owner E220d Premium SE Auto Estate for sale at Motor Lounge Ltd in Radlett (www.motorlounge.co.uk) was just £15,950, and packed an impressive spec. With a typical 90,000 miles, full black leather upholstery and ULEZ-compliant, you could expect to achieve over 50mpg on a longer run, with torquey 145mph performance when needed.

As well as the Premium Pack, a panoramic glass sunroof, a rear-view camera, satellite navigation, heated seats, the Parking, Memory and Mirrors packages and a powered tailgate, it also had 18-inch alloys and a full service history record.

Plug-in hybrid

If neither of these two options are your kind of thing, then maybe a 205-series C350e Sport might fit the bill instead? As little as 15 grand bags a 50,000-mile, 2017 example with plug-in hybrid capability, impressive performance and excellent efficiency. We're talking 0-62mph in 5.7 seconds and as much as 50mpg in real world driving.

This mint looking 66-plater at Stratus Cars (www.stratuscars.co.uk) in Basingstoke is typical of what you could buy, boasting black Artico leather, 17-inch alloys, heated seats, a reversing camera, satellite navigation, a seven-inch colour display and the Airmatic Agility package. An impressive amount of kit for the money.

▶ *Fancy something with a bit more flair? Then check out our top three £20,000 Mercedes convertibles instead, found on page 76!*

Forecourt find

230TE (S123)

Occasionally we come across a classic 123-series Mercedes-Benz that's still in great condition, but this Silver Blue metallic 230TE manual built during the year 1983 really is something special. With just 32,000 miles and immaculate throughout, it claimed a blue cloth interior matched by blue carpets, and was for sale at Yorkshire Classic and Sports Car based in Ripon.

Originally sold by Castles Northgate Mercedes, it packed factory options including mudflaps, an automatic aerial and a cassette box, and also came with the original owner's manual, handbook, instructions for the radio and the maintenance record, a long MOT, a spare key, a history file full of invoices, and the original supplying dealer invoice. The asking price for this 134bhp classic was £54,995.

Dealer information:
Yorkshire Classic and Sports Car
Tel 01765 609798
Web www.ycsc.co.uk

△ First owner kept the car until 2009; roof rails a nice detail.

▷ Car comes with original supplying dealer invoice.

▽ Five-speed manual gearbox and just three former owners.

Mercedes market

Knowing the Mercedes-Benz marketplace means you can make the best buying decisions. But that requires up-to-date market information, however, which is why we generate fresh Mercedes market data every month, to give you the best chance of bagging a great deal. A car's colour, spec, fuel type, mileage and drivetrain all affect its value...

The top 6 best-selling used Mercedes

(In order of used examples advertised for sale; percentage of total used Mercedes market)

1 C-Class (21.4%)
2 A-Class (20.4%)
3 E-Class (13.0%)
4 CLA-Class (6.5%)
5 GLC-Class (5.9%)
6 GLA-Class (5.8%)

What's in a colour?

The colour of your Mercedes could affect its future desirability and its residual value. So, what are the top five colours on the used Mercedes market?

1 Black (29.0%)
2 Silver (18.9%)
3 White (17.7%)
4 Grey (17.0%)
5 Blue (9.9%)

Miles ahead

Low-mileage Mercedes often possess better residuals, whilst high-mileage cars can offer better value

Less than 50,000 miles 53.5%
Between 50,000 and 80,000 miles 25.2%
More than 80,000 miles 21.3%

Fuel watch

How are used Mercedes powered?

Diesel 52.4%
Petrol 38.0%
Hybrid 7.3%
Full electric 2.3%

Drivetrain

Four-wheel drive Mercedes usually offer greater traction, but often poorer fuel economy. Rear-wheel drive Mercedes can be more fun to drive, but trickier on the limit

Four-wheel drive 23.5%
Front-wheel drive 31.3%
Rear-wheel drive 45.2%

Auction spotlight

A round-up of recent prices paid for average-condition Mercedes in auctions across the UK

- **SLK200 Kompressor**
1.8-litre, petrol, manual, 2005/05-plate, 69,000 miles, **£3,200**
- **SLK280**
3.0-litre, petrol, auto, 2007/07-plate, 96,000 miles, **£3,700**
- **CLS500 Coupe**
5.0-litre, petrol, auto, 2005/05-plate, 101,000 miles, **£4,100**
- **S320 CDI**
3.0-litre, diesel, auto, 2007/57-plate, 96,000 miles, **£4,400**
- **SL500**
5.0-litre, petrol, auto, 2004/04-plate, 88,000 miles, **£6,000**
- **SL55 AMG**
5.4-litre, petrol, auto, 2003/53-plate, 97,000 miles, **£9,800**
- **GLA200 AMG Line Executive**
1.6-litre, petrol, auto, 2018/68-plate, 68,000 miles, **£14,700**
- **SLC300 AMG Line**
2.0-litre, petrol, auto, 2018/18-plate, 45,000 miles, **£15,250**
- **A250 AMG Line**
2.0-litre, petrol, auto, 2019/68-plate, 41,000 miles, **£16,300**
- **A35 AMG 4Matic Premium Plus**
2.0-litre, petrol, auto, 2019/19-plate, 34,000 miles, **£24,000**
- **CLS400d 4Matic AMG Line PP Coupe** 2.9-litre, diesel, auto, 2018/68-plate, 50,000 miles, **£24,800**
- **E350 Cabriolet AMG Line Premium Plus** 2.0-litre, petrol, auto, 2020/70-plate, 38,000 miles, **£25,900**
- **CLA250 Coupe AMG Line Premium Plus** 2.0-litre, petrol, auto, 2021/70-plate, 28,000 miles, **£26,250**
- **GLC300d 4Matic Coupe AMG Line Premium** 2.0-litre, diesel, auto, 2019/69-plate, 66,000 miles, **£29,100**
- **GLE300d 4Matic AMG Line Premium** 2.0-litre, diesel, auto, 2020/20-plate, 37,000 miles, **£34,900**

And remember...

Always arrive early at car auctions, pick up the sale catalogue and examine the vehicles in the line-up before the bidding starts. In addition to the hammer price, you'll have to pay a small buyer's fee. You'll need to provide a deposit of at least £500 (in cash or by Maestro or Visa Delta debit card) but the balance of the purchase price and the buyer's fee can be paid banker's draft, cash, cheque, telegraphic transfers, credit or debit card.
Find your nearest auction house check out www.british-car-auctions.co.uk or www.nama-uk.com

TOP THREE

£20,000 convertibles

An attractive Mercedes-Benz droptop is always going to glean envious glances, but you might expect to pay top dollar for the privilege. However, you can pick up a mint condition convertible for less than you might imagine, if you know which models to target in your search. In this issue's Merc Buyer, we've selected three ideal £20,000 contenders – each offering a different take on the convertible theme – that represent great value for money at the moment. So there should be at least one droptop here that floats your boat. E-Class petrol, C-Class diesel and AMG roadster with turbocharged V6. The question now is: which Mercedes would you choose?

E300 Cabriolet (A238)

With an appealing blend of performance and economy this great looking convertible ticks all the boxes. And you could be sitting behind the wheel of a 55,000-mile, 2018 example for just under 20 grand. Despite being a turbocharged four-cylinder, the E300's 0-62mph dash takes just 6.6 seconds and there's a meaty 273lb ft of torque on tap whenever you need it. Combined economy tops 42mpg and it'll cost you £180 to tax. Just make sure yours comes with a few tasty factory options to keep resale value as high as possible.

C220d Cabriolet (A205)

If fuel economy is important then a C220d AMG Line Cabriolet could be the ideal droptop for you. Our budget bags a 2019 minter with less than 50,000 miles, full M-B service history and a year's MOT. Equipped with Mercedes' excellent 7G-Tronic auto and possessing 295lb ft of torque from just 1,400rpm, there's plenty of poke when you need it, but you won't need to visit the black pump often, with combined fuel consumption at 52.3mpg. Many examples boast optional 19-inch alloys, the Memory Package and cruise control.

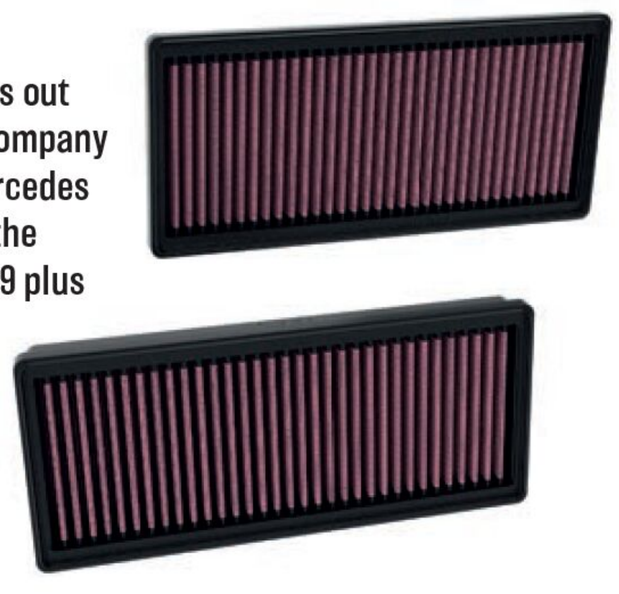
AMG SLC43 (R172)

If you value performance over parsimony then a 2016 or 2017 AMG SLC43 might make your ideal convertible partner. Its three-litre, six-cylinder biturbo powerplant makes 362bhp and 384lb ft of torque, and the SLC43 looks the part too. All cars come with the 9G-Tronic transmission, a host of AMG accoutrements, a seven-inch high-resolution colour display, Airscarf and Dynamic Select with five different driving modes. The 0-62mph sprint takes just 4.7 seconds and the top speed is limited to 155mph.

Latest products and accessories

K&N Airfilters for GLE, GLS, S-Class and G-Class

When it comes to uprated air filters, one name always stands out – K&N. With a wealth of experience and a trusty record the company has launched new high-flow air filters for the 2020-2023 Mercedes GLE580/GLS580 V8, 2018-2023 Mercedes S560/S580 V8 and the 2020-2023 Mercedes G500/G550 V8 models. Priced at £149.99 plus VAT and offering maximum filtration, the part number you need is 33-3183 and it's available to order now. You can find out more information about this product and other K&N cold air intakes for these vehicles and other Mercedes at www.knfilters.com.



Mercedes-Benz Baseball Cap

Offering protection in all weather conditions Mercedes' stylish Anthracite baseball cap is made of polyester and is very comfortable to wear. Boasting a water-repellent outer fabric and a perforation on the side to ensure good ventilation on warmer days it's adjustable and fits all head shapes.

A tonal sandwich peak with white Mercedes-Benz lettering and a raised 3D Mercedes star on the front, in combination with a perforated Mercedes star on the side, complete the attractive design. And you can buy one from your local Mercedes-Benz dealer priced at £66.50 – just ask for product number B66954291.

CKS Racechip Tuning Box for C63 and C63 S (W205)

Mercedes tuning expert CKS has released a Racechip Black Performance Tuning Box for AMG's 205-series C63 and C63 S models. A more affordable alternative to a full bespoke remap, it could increase output by up to 92bhp and 147lb ft of torque, and comes with App Control (see Apple and Google app stores).

Offering up to seven fine tuning maps and coming with a two-year engine warranty, it can be reset to stock output at any time and costs just £575.94 including VAT. Just order part number: RC-ULT-CO-W205-C63 from www.cksperformance.com.

Signature Tune AMG C43 Coupe

Own an AMG C43 4Matic Coupe? Here's how to make it even more fun to drive

The C43 goes well and sounds great with that V6 turbo.

STEVE HALL

Full of character, as well as potent performance, the 205-series AMG C43 4Matic Coupe delivers impressive acceleration and grip, thanks to its three-litre six-cylinder, DOHC turbocharged engine and 4Matic four-wheel drive system.

Producing 362bhp at 5,500 to 6,200rpm, and 384lb ft from 2,000rpm, in standard factory form the C43 can dispatch the benchmark 0-62mph dash in a mere 4.7 seconds, and the car's curvaceous styling appeals to the heart. With power transmitted via a tuned version of Mercedes' 9G-Tronic automatic transmission, and impressive handling, not to mention an expensive feeling cabin, the C43 really is an impressive drive.

But that doesn't mean that the C43 Coupe can't be improved. And that's why some owners have enhanced their C205's performance, whilst others have looked to further improve the handling and braking, as well as adding personal styling touches.

Engine

The first place most owners start is the engine, with a typical stage 1 ECU remap capable of taking your C43's output close to 420bhp and 460lb ft. With a few further breathing and exhaust modifications a stage 2 car should be capable of reaching 445bhp and as much as 515lb ft. And we'd recommend spending a little more on a bespoke remap to maximise your C43's engine safety.

Transmission

As the same time as an ECU remap some tuners can also remap your C43's 9G-Tronic transmission TCU. Check out owners' forums and tuners before making a final decision on this, but most owners who have had this done report marginally quicker and smoother gear changes.

Suspension

AMG's C43 factory setup is geared very much for fast road use rather than track work, so if you're intending to push your C43 hard then consider fitting some uprated anti-roll bars - Whiteline and H&R do nice ones. And some lowering springs, or better still, full coil-overs will enhance your C43's cornering and braking - YSR, H&R, Bilstein, V-Maxx and AP are all viable options.

Brakes

As with the suspension the C43's braking is great for fast road use but can still be bettered for track days, with a good selection of both pads and discs available. And if you need the ultimate in stopping power then a big brake kit is the answer, with YSR, K Sport, Brembo and EBC all selling suitable kits. And don't forget to fit some braided HEL or Goodridge brake hoses too.

Wheels and bodywork

Most owners stick with AMG alloys, but there are also loads of other different wheel options available - multi-spoke designs seem to be the most popular. And if you fancy adding individual body parts to your C43 then there are carbon mirrors, front splitters, rear diffusers, rear side splitters, rear bumpers and side skirts - as well as styling options from Mansory, Lorinser and Brabus.

Interior

Interior items are easily changed, with carbon door and centre console trim especially popular, whilst a few owners have spent big on full cabin makeovers from Mansory or Lorinser. But don't go overboard, otherwise you could affect your C43's appeal to future buyers and its resale value.

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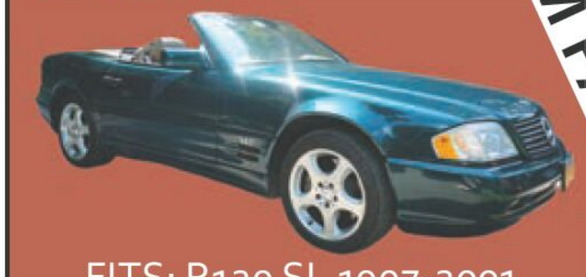

FITS: R129 SL 1997-2001

Sindelfingen W116

SIW 116

SIW 116

The W116 was regarded as the world's finest car and was the epitome of S Class quality, built at the Sindelfingen factory in Stuttgart

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AND MUCH, MUCH MORE!

Mercedes ENTHUSIAST June/July 2024 issue **ON SALE** May 17th

Contents are subject to change

"On a warm and sunny day, little beats a pillarless Mercedes with all four windows dropped"

The right stuff

A modern classic interpretation of the two-door 'E-Class' type Mercedes, the C123 built on the success of its W114 predecessor. Here's everything you need to know about the second best-selling 230CE

WORDS **DAVID SUTHERLAND** IMAGES **ERIC RICHARDSON**

Judging by the amount of comment and feedback coming our way, the 123-series Mercedes built from 1976 until 1986 could well be the most loved Mercedes 'modern classic' of all. That may be partly down to the sheer numbers delivered around the world, approaching 2.7 million, which leaves it a car held in affection by so many, whose families owned them when new, and found that no subsequent car – Mercedes or otherwise – generated quite the level of admiration and affection. But nostalgia apart, the 123-series was undoubtedly a feat of both engineering integrity and product quality for its time; the list of other mid-1970s cars still surviving and good for everyday use doesn't take long to compile.

Four 123 body shapes were offered, the four-door W123 Saloon overwhelmingly the highest seller, accounting for almost 90 per cent of all production. The long-wheelbase V123 spin-off sold 13,700 times over. Sales of the S123 Estate came close to 200,000, while the pillarless C123 Coupe volume was just under 100,000. It's this last version that we look at in depth here, specifically the four-cylinder 230CE, which was a popular version. Not the top seller even at 29,858 sales, it should be mentioned; Mercedes customers of that time tended to go for the highest spec model in a range, hence the six-cylinder 280CE outsold it by some 2,300 units, albeit over a longer production period.

The 280CE, with its 2.7-litre M110 twin-cam engine, is regarded as the most desirable C123 (although the North America-only 300CD Turbodiesel has its own cult following in the US), yet there is also a feeling among some that the 230CE is, overall, a better choice. It looks identical, and the lesser performance is compensated for by better fuel consumption and the likelihood of less expensive engine maintenance. Does this premise hold up, or should you opt for the 280CE on the basis that in a Mercedes, six-cylinders are always better than four?

Design and evolution

The C123 was introduced 14 months after the W123, at the Geneva motor show in March 1977. The two successive generations of coupes looked similar, the main differences in appearance between the 1968 to 1976 W114 Coupe and the C123 that replaced it being the latter's horizontal rather than

Spotted for sale

PRIVATE SELLER
230CE
1984/A, 5-speed manual, white, tan MB-Tex, alloy wheels, body/mechanical restoration, £35,000, London

Just the facts

Mercedes-Benz 230CE (C123)

- Engine M102 2,299cc 4-cyl
- Power 134bhp@5,100rpm
- Torque 151lb ft@3,500rpm
- Transmission 4-/5-speed manual/4-speed automatic, RWD
- Weight 1,380kg
- 0-62mph 11.5/11.5/12.3sec
- Top speed 112/112/109mph
- Fuel consumption 21.6/21.6/23.0mpg
- Years produced 1980-1985

All figures from Mercedes-Benz, including for post 09.1983 4-speed manual, and post 05.1983 5-speed automatic cars; fuel consumption according to EEC urban

On a warm and sunny day, little beats a pillarless Mercedes with all four windows dropped, this also emphasising the C123's fine looks. But on a car lacking electric rear windows, using the manual winders is a nuisance. The driving position is dominated by a needlessly large steering wheel, which of course is part of the vintage appeal.

What you'll pay

Approximately 1,200 C123s were officially imported to the UK, and a reasonable estimate including those that have a SORN certificate and are kept off the road suggests 200 to 300 C123s remain, mostly 230CEs and 280CEs, but also a handful of 230Cs. Hitherto, the C123 was the highest valued 123-series, but lately the Estate model has become more fashionable and commands the most money.

Notwithstanding some people's preference for the 230CE's simplicity over the added complexity of the 280CE, the latter is nominally worth more due it being top of the range, but in practice the small numbers available on the market leave values dependent on condition.

There are three categories of 230CE, says to Peter Lewis of Cheshire Classic Benz. "There are cars that are perfectly viable, with a shabby interior and rust, which you can buy for £3,000 to £4,000, but which won't be nice to own," he says. "To get something that is right in most respects you have to spend £8,000 to £10,000."

Very good 230CEs are now around £20,000, but prices for the best example can go way higher than that. Last year, Walt Motor Company in Berkshire sold a near immaculate 230CE, sourced from South Africa, for around £50,000. ▷

vertical front lamp clusters, and the shorter rear body. But the structure incorporated improved crash safety, including a repositioning of the fuel tank from under the boot floor to above the rear axle.

The C123, 85mm shorter in wheelbase than the saloon from which it was derived, was launched in a three-car range. The base model was the 230C, using a four-cylinder, 2.3-litre carburettored M115 engine producing 108bhp, while the 280C and 280CE were both powered by the M110, 2.7-litre six-cylinder engine, the latter with fuel-injection and producing 175bhp. The 280C was never imported to the UK.

In those years Mercedes customers tended not to be overly concerned about power outputs, the brand quality and prestige the chief attractions. Even so, the 230C's lethargic, 14-second 0-62mph acceleration and a maximum speed barely into three figures marked it out as an underpowered car ("not of overwhelming temperament", Mercedes admits). Hence in 1980, the 230CE replaced the 230C, its new M102 engine, with Bosch K-Jetronic fuel injection instead of the single Stromberg carburettor, giving 134bhp (a 26bhp increase) along with 151lb ft torque which was a useful 10 per cent improvement. A four-speed automatic gearbox was standard equipment for the UK market, the four-speed manual a no-cost option. At this point, anti-lock braking and a driver's airbag became optional across the 123-series range.

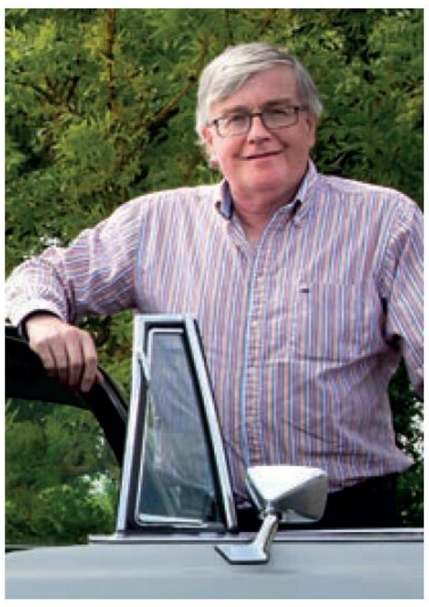
The 123-series was from an era before mid-term facelifts, but for the 1982 model year the 230CE and 280CE were made available with a five-speed manual gearbox as a cost option to the four-speed manual, and which would later become standard when manual was specified. At the same time, a number of detail changes were implemented including the addition of an 'economy' gauge within the instrument panel, and electric adjustment for the passenger mirror (the driver's remained manually adjusted). The C123 was discontinued in September 1985, by which time most cars were being delivered with metallic paint, an electric sunroof and alloy wheels.

Driving the 230CE

The C123 is the archetypal 1970s/80s Mercedes-Benz: solid, comfortable and relaxing. While the 230CE was claimed at three seconds quicker to 62mph than the 230C and could make a 118mph top speed, performance was never a consideration for its customers, who happily paid Jaguar money for family hatchback pace.

The real joy of a C123 is the unique, serene feel that makes slowness irrelevant. Noise is low, the engine and transmission are smooth, and the old fashioned recirculating ball steering, while lacking in feel, capably absorbs road shocks. The suspension is firm by the standards of the day, yet thanks to wisely chosen damper rates and 70-series tyres soaks up bumps. By today's standards the C123 rolls a lot in corners, but holds the road well, and the brakes are powerful and remain good enough.

C123 230CE Inside and out



Specialist overview

Pete Lewis, proprietor of Cheshire Classic Benz near Macclesfield

"Rust is the big thing on 123s. It is not always easy to spot because it affects the nooks and crannies, and the rear end of the C123 seems to be more prone to rust than the 123 Saloon's. The engine doesn't have all the electronic stuff that goes wrong in the later cars, and if you can get hold of a decent 230CE it should be fairly inexpensive to run."

www.ccbenz.co.uk

Powertrain

- The camshaft chain (which is a single-row rather than the duplex type that was fitted to the 230C engine) can break - but it usually stretches and rattles first, so that is a warning sign that a replacement is needed.
- Excessive smoke from the exhaust indicates valve guide wear, but this is only expected at high mileage, as the M102 is very durable.
- The four- and five-speed manual gearboxes have a long and slow shift though the clutch should be light and smooth. The four-speed automatic must change smoothly.
- The radiator is made from plastic and aluminium, and by now will be well past its natural lifespan, as the aluminium will have corroded and hardened with age, reducing the ability of the coolant to circulate. If a new radiator cannot be sourced, the original must undergo recoring.

"Excessive smoke from the exhaust indicates valve guide wear"

Mercedes' 2.3-litre four-cylinder a fine choice for the C123.

Suspension, steering and braking system

- 'Bounce' the front and rear of the car to check that the suspension dampers retain the ability to do just that; they should feel firm.
- The 123-series has Mercedes' traditional recirculating ball steering, which is vague at the best of times. But check for excessive free play around the straight-ahead position, which indicates the wear that if severe enough could fail the MOT test. The only cure is to locate a replacement steering box still in good condition.
- Make the usual check on the brake discs, looking for a lip at the edge of the disc, while a screeching noise under braking indicates pads urgently in need of replacement. Ensure the brake fluid pipes are not cracked.

In January 1982, a 230CE was £11,930; the 230E was priced at £9,985.

Spotted for sale

MERCEDES SPECIALIST 230CE

1984/A, 5-speed manual, green, tan cloth trim, alloy wheels, recent restoration, £14,995, Richmond, Surrey

Shorter than a saloon; pillarless profile part of the C123's charm.

Bodywork and wheels

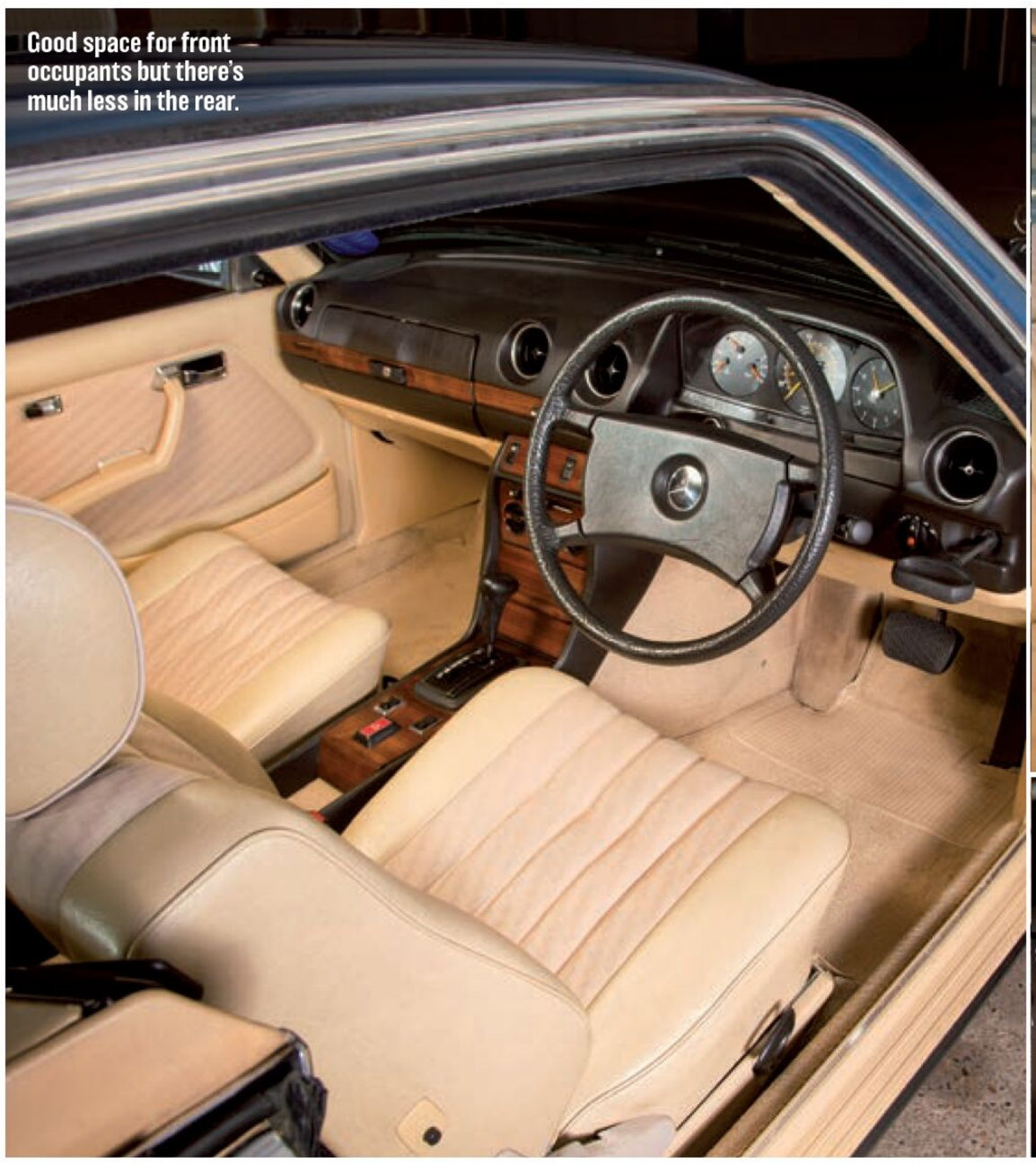
● Serious rust can be expected in many places, including on the front wings, wheelarches, sills and rear screen surround, the floor, the front and rear subframes, the front suspension turrets, and inside the boot.

● The sunroof – fitted to most C123s – can be a cause of corrosion. The seals are not designed to be waterproof, being made of felt. The metal drainage tubes from the sunroof cassette corrode or become detached.

● The C123's rear screen is larger than the Saloon's, and is thus more prone to leaking, causing rust to form around the edge of the glass.

● A vitally important aspect is the state of the rubber seals for the front and rear side windows, which have to provide wind and noise insulation without the help of a central pillar. These are very expensive, explaining why it is not uncommon to see cars with perished rubber seals, and they have to be fitted by a 123-series expert.

● Check the condition of the tyres, bearing in mind that these cars were designed to run on a tyre size that is no longer mainstream, 195/70HR14. Suitably sized tyres are available from specialist outlets such as Longstone Classic Tyres in Doncaster, but carry a premium if you specify the premium brands needed to optimise handling.



Good space for front occupants but there's much less in the rear.

Interior and electrics

● If a C123 has shabby seats and trim, think twice about buying it unless you can live with it like that. Interior trim is notoriously difficult to repair, because while some of the fabrics may still be available, they won't have many years of sun fading so won't match the rest of the trim.

● It's quite likely that by this stage the driver's seat will have lost much of its firmness due to the seat's interior springs having weakened, which will spoil the driving experience.

● There is minimal electrical equipment even on a high spec 230CE, but check that what is fitted does work properly. Try the electric windows (which don't raise or lower quickly at the best of times), and the air conditioning controls, if this optional extra is fitted. ▷

C123 230CE Inside and out

Spotted for sale

CLASSIC CAR DEALER 230CE

1981/W, automatic, blue, tan cloth, steel wheels, 54,000 miles, £7,950, Manchester

Verdict

If you fancy one of Mercedes' delightfully discreet modern classic coupes, then the C123 could be for you. While they have become quite scarce, they still are a more realistic proposition than the preceding and now ultra rare W114 Coupe, and have a period charm that the C124 that followed doesn't yet have in full. The 280CE is undeniably a more stimulating model to drive than the 230CE, but it is likely to make bigger maintenance demands.

Most importantly, you must buy a solid example – a cheap 230CE could be the most expensive of all. Settling for a bad one with the idea of 'doing it up' won't work, as you will throw good money after bad. Instead, spend as much as you can afford to get one with solid bodywork and a decent interior – and investment potential, too.

Typical basic servicing costs

(A/B services including VAT)

Model	3,000-mile service	6,000-mile service
230CE	£540	£715

Quotes from Roger Edwards Motors

Non-routine servicing costs

- ★ Front brake discs and brake pads **£195**
- ★ Exhaust system (aftermarket) **£1,500**
- ★ Four suspension dampers **£800**
- ★ Radiator recore **£450**
- ★ Four Pirelli Cinturato CN36 195/70VR14 tyres **£985**
- ★ Front seat spring reinforcement **£117**

What you'll pay

£3,000-£4,000 Running but rusty cars with interiors in poor overall condition

£4,000-£7,000 Usable cars but with corrosion present and generally rough around the edges

£7,000-£10,000 Solid and sound examples, but still not worthy of complete refurbishment

£10,000-£15,000 Reasonable cars at the lower end of the range, mostly rust-free, some history at the top end

£15,000-£20,000 Expect an original or fully restored car at this price range with no rust present

£20,000-£30,000 Should be in very good condition and have a distinctly taut and unworn feel

£30,000-£50,000 For this money, a 230CE must be a minimal-mileage and immaculate 'time capsule' example that looks and feels like new

DEREK COARD

South African connection

Mercedes-Benz has manufactured cars in South Africa since the 1950s, its factory in East London turning out over 77,000 123-series Saloons. Coupes were never built there, but the factory's presence helped make the country a strong market for the marque, with many 123 Coupes delivered there from Germany – and many are still rust-free, thanks to the mostly sunny climate. South African born Pieter Van Der Walt of Walt Motor Company in Newbury in Berkshire now imports these cars for sale in the UK.

It is possible to import 123s privately from South Africa, which even after shipping costs and import duties can still be a worthwhile buy. But care is needed. "Many farmers bought 123s and would drive them on their farms, which wasn't good for the cars," Pieter explains. "Also, South Africa does have a lot of rust-free cars in its dry, desert-like regions but it has a long coastline too, and cars could have been there a long time and got rusty." A reliable shipping agent is also required.

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Born survivor

The ever-dependable R129 SL goes up for sale – or does it? Meanwhile, Martin Buckley's suspicions about his 230CE 'garage find' prove correct

WORDS & IMAGES **MARTIN BUCKLEY**

FACTSHEET

CARS 1996 SL280/1984 230CE
OWNER Martin Buckley
LOCATION Cirencester, UK
PURCHASED November 2021/October 2023
UPDATES SINCE LAST REPORT SL280 hides from winter with a for sale in the window; 230CE's spruce up gets it running again

△ A deep clean has revealed remarkably straight bodywork.

△△ The four-cylinder coupe will soon be sent to W123 World.

I must have put 2,000 miles on the SL280 last summer using it for long runs where its refinement made it preferable to my hard-riding Audi A2, although it probably uses three times as much fuel. With the arrival of winter, however, I have refitted the hardtop and tucked away the SL the idea being that – for the right offer – it would be sold.

That said, my wife's emotional attachment to this vehicle means this position can change at any time, which is a shame as I have dozens of other classics I would like to spend the money on. As it was her late dad's car, parting with the SL is difficult, but Mia is also reluctant to drive it. I was going to get a few bits of paintwork done but another car took the slot. So here the SL280 sits, gathering dust until the sun shines once again or a buyer can be found. Give me a call if this 65,000-mile Mercedes is of interest – 07798 797262.

▽ Any car with sentimental value is difficult to sell on.

The 230CE mentioned last time (December/January 2024 issue) has turned out to be a superb find with almost zero rust, paintwork that will largely revive and an unusual specification that includes the two-year-only, five-speed manual gearbox option (I wonder how many they built?) and wind-down windows – much easier to sort than the electric type which are a nightmare to set up, I am told.

> **"This little C123 is so good that it deserves to be gone through completely"**

Unleashing the potential

Apart from some wear on the driver's seat, the beige cloth is in great order and the electric sunroof works perfectly – a major bonus on these cars. My first job was to find a set of steel wheels and hub caps to replace the hideous five-spoke aftermarket Wolfrace wheels (with spacers on the rear) fitted by some previous owner probably in the 1990s; it's funny how such details can give the impression a car has been abused yet nothing could be further from the truth.

The 230CE has essentially spent the last 20 years in a dry garage wrapped in blankets. Mercedes specialist Edward Hall, based in Buckinghamshire, got the wheels together for me and my wife Mia carefully masked and painted the hub caps, although I may end up fitting alloys.

I got my new mechanic find, Antonio of Tetbury (that makes him sound like a hairdresser, but he is actually an aeronautical engineer) on the case before Christmas, tasked with getting the 230CE as near to on-the-road as his limited workshop facilities (it's freezing and there's no ramp) allowed. Having fitted new brake calipers, lines and hoses, cleaned out the fuel tank, and changed the fuel pipes, the 230CE now runs and drives although it still requires a cold start enrichment unit for the injection.

Although at 130,000 the mileage is nothing special, this little 123-series Coupe is so good that it really deserves to be gone through completely, which is what Mark Cosovich at W123 World, located just outside Swansea, will be doing for me shortly.

Movers and shakers

Blakley Leonard acquires a 280E with AMG mods, while appreciating the usability of his E55 and letting one R107 SL go to focus on another

WORDS & IMAGES **BLAKLEY LEONARD**

FACTSHEET

CARS 2001 E55 AMG/1984 280E/ 1989 560SL
OWNER Blakley Leonard
LOCATION Virginia, USA
PURCHASED January 2021/October 2023/December 2022
UPDATES SINCE LAST REPORT W210 AMG foglight fails and new brakes required; W123 280E settles into the fleet; 560SL swapped for 500SL

Since my last report, the W210 E55 AMG has continued to be my primary mode of transportation, and mechanically has given me no issues whatsoever. A couple of weeks ago I did have a foglight bulb go out which was surprisingly not fixed by simply replacing the bulb. I'll be digging into this a bit more when I get the time.

The brake rotors and pads are most likely due for a change as they've never been touched since I bought the car. A slight vibration when hitting the brakes from high speed is a pretty good sign it's time. Fortunately, a brake job on a W210 AMG is relatively easy and significantly less expensive than on a W211 or later model AMG. I've yet to find another car that can match the perfect blend of performance, reliability and comfort that this car provides.

Back in October 2023 I purchased a Euro-spec, 1984 Mercedes-Benz 280E on The MB Market, which came fitted with a full AMG bodykit and AMG Penta wheels. The W123 in general is a very special car to me because the first Mercedes my father ever purchased was a 1983 300D. That's the car I ended up growing up in and I've still got it.

My original idea was to add an AMG kit to the car and turn it into exactly what this 280E already is. It was an easy decision to buy the 280E, allowing me to regularly drive my ideal W123 while maintaining the originality of my dad's old Mercedes-Benz.

This W123 is a Euro-market version that was imported into the United States in 1985. Aside from the added AMG goodies, my favourite attribute of this car is the colour combination: Thistle Green metallic over a patterned green cloth interior. I've always been a sucker for green cars. Even my dad's 300D is Forest Green so this seemed perfectly appropriate for the lineage. Aesthetically, the car is fantastic with excellent paint, refinished Penta wheels, a perfect dashboard and interior wood with no cracks.

The car also drives great but does leak quite a bit of oil despite being a petrol M110 engine. The leak was fully disclosed by the seller so I knew what I was getting into, but I'm a glutton for punishment I suppose. For now, the 280E and E55 seem to be the perfect two-car solution, providing a blend of classic and modern motoring with endless style.

△ **The E55 AMG will be treated to new brake discs and pads.**

△△ **560SL heading to online auction as a 500SL assumes duties.**

▽ **280E AMG from Europe finished in Thistle Green paint.**

▷▽ **127,000 miles on the clock; just look at that colour combo!**

Next project

I've also had the chance to enjoy my R107 a bit as I've got it fully sorted. I purchased this 1989 Mercedes-Benz 560SL over a year ago and I've enjoyed it sparingly. With the recent acquisition of the 280E, I've decided to sell the 560SL and have spent most of the last couple months ensuring it's all set for the next owner. For the sale, I'll be auctioning the car on MBmarket.com to free up some space. I won't be without an R107, however, as I still have a Euro 1984 500SL which I rescued from a warehouse and has become my own barn find project. More to come on that Mercedes…

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MERC TRADER

FOR BUYING & SELLING

C215 CL55 AMG 2002, low mileage (82,000), FSR, MOT November 2024, auto, fully loaded, double glazed, heated/cooled seats, bi-xenon headlights, keyless entry/ignition, first to see will buy, loss of storage forces sale, £8,500. Tel: 07584 020272, Whyteleafe, Surrey. ***[DW11]***

450SL 1980, 89000 miles, historic car, ULEZ-compliant, Silver Blue, tan leather interior, hardtop and brown soft top, well cared for and maintained for last 23 years. FSH and MOTs. Runs beautifully. Always garaged. £27,500 Tel: 07864712297. South East London. ***[DEW8]***

R129 SL500 Completely original, Brilliant Silver, rust-free, just 88,000 miles, stunning condition throughout, with black unmarked leather, matching hardtop with stand, superb condition, fully functional, non-leaking soft top. Please ask for more photos. Tel: 07794 556081. Rayleigh. ***[DEW5]***

C180 Kompressor Elegance SE 2004, automatic, finished in Jasper Blue with Alpaca leather interior, one elderly owner, only 26,000 miles, full and very detailed service history, always housed in heated garage, as new. £4,995 ONO. Tel 01494 876160 or 07507 839109. ***[CM46P6R]***

E220 Cabriolet 1995, beautiful condition with comprehensive service history, 109,400 miles. The car looks and drives perfectly and has recently had new brakes/discs, new Goodyear tyres and refurbished alloys. Grey leather interior also in great condition and heated front seats. Tel: 07902 433000. ***[DEW10]***

W113 280SL 1969, RHD, Silver Blue with black MB-Tex. Automatic with power steering and matching hardtop with Becker Mexico radio/cassette player. Recent restoration with extensive documentation. Concours winner. £190,000. Tel: 01227 701088. Kent. ***[DEW3]***

SL350 2008, facelift model with sports pack, 315bhp, memory climate seats with heat scarf, electric folding mirrors, front and rear parking sensors, climate control, panoramic roof, six-CD changer, two keys and much more, 72,195 miles may increase slightly, service history. Tel: 01227 272164. Kent. ***[DEW6]***

280SL 1984, 101,000 miles, Signal Red with Palomino interior trim, walnut wash, leather steering wheel, hardtop (with stand), dark brown soft top (immaculate), lots of history and paperwork, MOT May 2024, drives very well, always garaged, lovely looking car. £22,000. Tel 07759 740515 Suffolk. ***[CM46P8R]***

SL500 Rare 40th anniversary model in blue-green. One of 150 UK models, 18-inch AMG alloys, blue soft top, grey soft leather, panoramic roof, xenons. 83,000 miles with extensive service history, with all book packs and MOTs. Fantastic condition. Recent new wing and refurbished hood. MOT to August 2024. Tel: 07739 119783. ***[DEW9]***

CLK200 1.8 Kompressor Cabriolet Avantgarde 2008 (08 reg), 91,500 miles, 1.8 petrol, 184hp, MOT May 2024, five-speed Tiptronic automatic, comprehensive SH including 7 service stamps. Car has come from Edinburgh £3,990. Tel: 07947 730561. Bradford ***[DEW4]***

CLK 3.2 litre engine, electric soft top, automatic, registered 16/7/2000, for restoration or spares, starts. £POA. Tel: 07392 713472. Glasgow. ***[DE]***

190E 2.0 1992, automatic, 185,250 miles.FSH with all supporting bills, ESR, rear head rests, ALD and four electric windows. Recent new front wing, new front and centre exhaust, new battery, fuel pump, water pump, radiator, and ATF fluid changed. Everything working to come with new MOT for asking price. £3,250. Tel: 07483 149808. Northallerton. ***[CM46P2R]***

SLK230 Kompressor 1999, serviced and MOT'd through John Haynes during my five-year ownership. Blue/black heated leather seats. CD radio with Bluetooth. M-B Club member. MOT until mid-July 2024. Tyre pump, first aid kit, mesh wind break and original handbook. £2,500. Tel: 07730 437219. West Sussex ***[CM46P1R]***

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190E 2.3-16 Champagne Silver. My son and I bought this car as a restoration project, but have to accept it is beyond us. Will need more time and money than we have. 175,000 miles, the engine at some point was restored. £7,995. Tel: Mike 01730 892697. Petersfield, Hampshire. ***[DEW2]***

SL350 V6 with AMG sport pack, 2013 facelift model. 60,000 miles, full M-B service history, Obsidian Black paint and black leather piped white, glass roof, heated memory seats, electric wind deflector, F/R PDC, AMG body/alloys/steering wheel – excellent example. ***[BCW12]***

S350d AMG Line Premium Facelift model, one private owner, 2018/18 plate with 44,000 miles. Full M-B dealer history, rarely found in Anthracite Blue with black nappa hide, panoramic glass roof, 20-inch alloys, 360 cameras, heated/cooled seats. Stunning S-Class throughout. £37,950. Tel: 01323 741891. Eastbourne. ***[BCW10]***

SL500 2010 (Jersey registration), no delivery option available – must be collected. Very good condition overall, some small marks commensurate with age. Silver with grey leather. AMG alloys with new Yokohama tyres. Full-service history. Drives very well. 30,000 miles. Two owners. £14,000. Feel free to text. Tel: 07829 990082. St Lawrence, Jersey ***[LAP11]***

320CE Cabriolet Sportline 1993, gold with mushroom leather and brown hood. Needs recommissioning easy winter project. £4,995 more pictures available on WhatsApp or call. Tel: 07936 151814. ***[CM46P3R]***

E320 Coupe 1994, automatic, pillarless metallic blue body, cream leather seats, air con, electric seat, electric sunroof carefully owned, full service history, £6,995. Tel: 07507 757777. Stockport. ***[BCW11]***

R230 SL350 3.5-litre, 2008, 56,000 miles. Present owner 14 years, full service history. New batteries and tyres. Panoramic roof. ABC and Distronic. £11,750 – sell to best offer. Tel: 07876474675. Surrey. ***[BCW7]***

C140 CL500 35,000 miles, superb condition with Brabus wheels and exhaust. Fine impressive example. Silver with black leather. MOT May 2024. £18,500 Tel: 07970 288908. Cardiff. ***[LAP16]***

CLK320 2005, 15,500 miles, silver with grey leather, immaculate condition, sat nav, heated seats, three owners, service history, MOT and ULEZ-compliant. A nearly new car for £5,000! 07507 388003 Wiltshire. ***[CM46P4R]***

C180 Kompressor SE 2007 silver coupe, petrol, manual gearbox. Good condition with great performance. Leather seats and a sliding sunroof. One owner, full service history, ULEZ compliant. Full year's MOT, recent warranty works and new tyre. £1,500 ONO. Tel: 07485 696275. Midhurst. ***[BCW4]***

C240 Elegance Automatic, 1998, silver four-door saloon with 2.4-litre V6 petrol. New MOT to November 2024 .SH, four new tyres, original alloys. Rare sunroof, cruise control and original M-B over mats, very good and clean interior. Owned for 11 years and lovingly cared for. Private plate not included. Sensibly priced at £2,750 ONO. Tel: 07761 765401. Warminster. ***[BCW9]***

CLK200 Kompressor Cabriolet Avantgarde Two-door, 2008/08 plate, 91,500 miles, 1.8 petrol, 184bhp, MOT May 2024, automatic five-speed Tiptronic auto. Comprehensive service history – seven service stamps. Car located in Bradford but has come from Edinburgh. £3,790. Tel: 07947 730561. ***[LA8]***

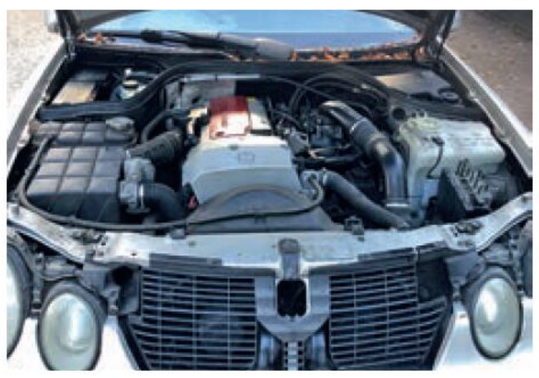
E500 Avantgarde 2004, automatic V8 petrol in special order Cubanite Silver in great condition with black interior. FSH – dealer and local independent. Three owners, 122,000 miles, mostly used for motorway miles during my ownership. Alloys and tyres in good condition, tinted windows and recent B service, plus MOT. Open to sensible offers around £3,500. Collection from South Yorkshire. ***[BCW8]***

CLK200 Coupe Tanzanite Blue, electric sunroof, automatic. Full service history with Mercedes-Benz Hertford. Registered 2004. 86,000 miles only. Alloys need some attention. OIRO £3,500. Tel: 07831 639870. St Albans. ***[LAP4]***

A-Class AMG 104,000 miles, good condition throughout. Tel: 07552 497917. Leighton Buzzard. ***[LAP10]***

CLS320 CDI Very clean inside and out, 172,000 miles on the clock, 18-inch alloy wheels. Tel: 07868 858687. Dartford. ***[LAP7]***

ML63 AMG 2007 with 66,500 miles, three owners, FSH– part MB/part independent. Last service 3,000 miles ago with new front discs and pads. Body ding and dent free, paint with a few hardly noticeable stone chips to bonnet, and interior in near perfect order, full spec. Tel: 07531 866501. Fleetwood. ***[LAP9]***



CLK320 Coupe 2005, 15,500 miles, silver with grey leather, immaculate condition, sat nav, heated seats, three owners, SH, new MOT, ULEZ compliant, spare wheel with unused cotton gloves. Second CLK not used and space needed. £5,000. 07507 388003. Wiltshire. ***[LAP10]***

190E 2.6 Automatic, four-door saloon, 1994, blue, in excellent condition. Only two previous owners. All documentation from when it was first bought in London. It has only done 32,000 miles. Always serviced, well maintained and kept in a garage. Price £14,850. Tel: 07928 474718. Littlehampton. ***[LAP13]***

A-Class Hatchback Immaculate condition, one owner from new, SH from Mercedes. Has another two years warranty from main dealer. 2 keys, Guard X cleaning pack. Tyre pressure machine. Tel: 07878 820763. Derby. ***[LAP15]***

R129 300SL-24 1992, automatic, 112,000km, substantial history file including receipts and MOTs, electric soft top and rollbar, hardtop with stand and cover, stainless steel Powerflow exhaust, new hood and lining, full showerproof car cover, rare Lorinser 2.5-inch rim wheels, good 235/45R17 tyres, wind deflector, superb condition, £12,000. Tel: 07768 566336. Pewsey. ***[CM45P10R]***

C320 Elegance 2005, 52,000 miles, rare sporting 3.2 V6 engine, just had £1,200 full Mercedes B service, refurbished wheels, new tyres, impressive condition throughout, £7,500. Tel: 07870 506121. Peacehaven ***[CM45P11R]***

C124 E220 Coupe 1995, 165,924 miles. Almandine red with mushroom leather interior. FSH, owned for last 22 years and currently on SORN. Any reasonable offer considered. Tel: 01905 773720 for further details. Worcestershire. ***[CM45P1]***

190E 1994, one of the last produced. 2.0L petrol, automatic, Nautical Blue. Owned and looked after for the last 15 years, excellent condition for age. MOT. Original Blaupunkt stereo. 82,000 miles. £4,250 ONO. Tel: 07711 167619. Hadleigh, Suffolk. ***[CM45P8R]***

A124 E220 Cabriolet 1996/N reg. Here is a chance to own a rare E220 Cabriolet finished in Ruby Red metallic, cream leather interior, electric roof, automatic, 12 months MOT, 93,000 miles with service history, dry stored, in exceptional condition throughout. Numberplate not included. £12,250. Tel: 07860 449633. Cambridge. ***[CM45P9R]***

300SL 1988, Diamond Blue with grey leather interior, 140,000 miles with Mercedes-Benz service history up to 94,000 miles, MOT, heated seats, Blaupunkt radio. Always been garaged, completely resprayed over 10 years ago and only 500 miles since. Owned for 19 years. £16,500 OVNO. Tel: 07497 700972. Bath. ***[JK36]***

230E Automatic, fuel injection, Smoke Silver metallic with brown cloth, electric windows, sunroof, very good condition. A pleasure to drive, priced to sell. Would PX a 190D. £POA. Tel: 0151 6390149. Wallasey. ***[JK37]***

SL320 2000, 57,800 miles, full service history. Fastidiously maintained condition, full mechanical appraisal on SLShop website. £19,500 ono. Tel: 01746 783878. South Staffs. ***[JK35]***

500SL 1986, silver, blue leather, 116,000 miles. Recent factory hood. Long term lady owner. MOT July 2024. Drives superbly. £26,500. Tel: 01904 700 277 or 07968 056464. York. ***[JK34]***

350SLC 1972 fully restored in 2014 for Drew Pritchard, repainted, all welding done, gearbox rebuilt three years ago, leather trim, steering box overhauled, £15,955. Tel: 07503 739538. West London. ***[JK31]***

CLK230 K Cabriolet Evolution 2.3-litre, red top, supercharged engine, 99,347 genuine miles, 12 month's MOT, one previous lady owner, in very good overall condition. Everything works as it should. Drives and looks great. More pics available call or Whatsapp. Tel: 07785 712087. Crosby. ***[JK28]***

350SL 1976, rare colour Mercedes, black textile trim, needs paintwork, 95,000 miles, many invoices, fully recommissioned, automatic, personal plate, tax and MOT exempt, ULEZ exempt, £1,395. Tel: 07503 739538. West London. ***[JK32]***

MERC TRADER

380SL 1985, Smoke Silver with 76,622 miles. Factory hardtop with convertible top tucked inside. I have owned the car for 25 years. Reason for sale is I'm getting too old. No MOT but in running order, needs some TLC to bodywork. Good refurb project. £8,000 no offers. Tel: 01822 841757. Tavistock, Devon. ***[JK27]***

450SL 1980, 89,000 miles. Historic car, ULEZ compliant. Silver blue, tan leather interior, hardtop and dark brown soft top. Well cared for and maintained for last 23 years. FSH and MOTs. Runs beautifully. Always garaged. £29,500 Tel: 07864 712297. Orpington, London Borough of Bromley. ***[JK23]***

300SL-24 1993, black/tan, two owners, full Mercedes-Benz service history, 99,000 miles, new discs/pads always garaged, cost new £69,575, 14,000 miles in last 20 years, MOT March 2024. £8,000. Tel: 01371 876647. Essex. ***[JK25]***

SL350 with full service history, absolutely stunning, 79,800 miles, full set of spare wheels with winter tyres included, £8,000. Tel: 07427 161268. Barnstaple. ***[JK3]***

S320 CDI L 2009, LWB, luxury saloon with only 79,000 miles, silver, grey leather, all S-Class refinements with fully adjustable rears seats. One previous owner, FSH at MB dealerships, all invoices and current MOT. This car has always been garaged with little winter use and is now surplus to my requirements. Please call for further details. £9,750 OVNO. Tel: 07836 232969. email: mbdneg@gmail.com. ***[JK20]***

190E 2.6 1990, in need of respray and minor body work. AMG bodykit, split alloys, sunroof. Broken front screen and O/S front drop glass, but otherwise intact and drives well. Nice engine gearbox not too far off, nice project, £POA, Tel: 07950 872537. ***[JK26]***

C-Class Elegance An original example of Mercedes W202. Only two owners from new, cared for by current lady owner for last 23 years. FSH, under 100,000 miles on the clock. Viewings and sensible offers welcome. £2,000. Tel: 07588 484630. Portsmouth. ***[JK22]***

E320 Cabriolet Sportline 1996, P reg, automatic, Tourmaline Green, black leather, black soft top. 142,000 miles, MOT till 2024, service history. Full Sportline spec, air con, cruise etc. One of the last registered 1996 cars. Needs cosmetic TLC, offers on £10,700. Tel: 07956 995556. Pinner, Middlesex. ***[JK21]***

190E 1990, automatic, petrol, three keys, replaced front calipers, pads, rear springs, shocks, starter. Faults rear electric windows, offside door outer handle, door card tops, driver's seat. Paint good but lacquer peeling and pitted. £2,550. Tel: 07712 638766. Worthing. ***[JK1]***

A180 CDI AMG 2015, Night edition, covered 31,000 miles from new with SH. Finished in metallic Cosmos Black with contrasting black Anthracite leather/microfibre interior. This Mercedes has all the usual luxurious refinements and is a stunning example of this model. Exceptional quality and it drives without fault. Must be one of the best examples of this model. Will come with 12 months MOT and warranty. Please feel free to ask for any more information. £POA. Tel: 07779 335737. Burton on Trent. ***[JK10]***

380SLC 1980, 86,000 miles, petrol blue with cream velour interior, very good condition throughout, drives very well, three owners and full history since new, tax free and ULEZ exempt, a real head-turner, £22,000. Tel: 07721 746433. Kent ***[EFW7]***

SLK280 2007, only 47,800 miles, super smooth 3.0L V6 with seven-speed auto, petrol, 231bhp, leather interior, Airscarf, parking sensors, £5,250. Tel: 0711 132422. Essex ***[LA]***

300SE 1986, W126 frame, Petrol blue, sunroof, automatic, five-seater saloon. With present owner for 30 years. 166,000 miles now and MOT until December 2023. Full history receipts, and £3,000 spent on the superstructure recently. Health condition denies me the energy to complete an update. This vehicle needs a new owner to complete the task. £2,000 ono. Tel: 0208 789 5466 or 07940 019857. ***[JK6]***

SLK200 spares or repair in Linarite blue, 2000, failed MOT (rear suspension mounts corroded), 113,000 miles, upper bodywork good, engine/transmission good, vario-roof all working, no warning lights on dash, car in South Yorks. Buyer to collect £500 or best offer. Tel: 07970 864242. Doncaster. ***[JK2]***

C140 CL600 V12 coupe, 1998, 90,000 miles, silver metallic, refurbished two-tone blue-grey nappa leather, refurbished alloys, fully loaded spec, FSH, immaculate inside and out, drives perfectly, MOT to Aug 2024. Price reduced to £17,500 ono. Tel: 07714 471014. Dorking, Surrey. ***[JK11]***

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E220 Coupe 1994, 114,000 miles, red, FSH, refurbished alloys, refurbished cream leather with red piping, new front/ rear windscreens, new tyres, immaculate inside and out, MOT to Mar 2024, last serviced Feb 2023, Price reduced to £6,000 ono. Tel 07714 471014. Dorking, Surrey. ***[JK12]***

CLK Coupe 1999, V reg, 72,000 genuine miles. Tel: 07877 632842. Watford. ***[LA]***

450SE 1978 automatic, yellow, brown leather, 112,000 miles, full Mercedes service history, ESR, alloys and much more. Some body corrosion but a worthwhile restoration. Not run in 15 years. £3,750. Tel: 01904 700277 or 07968 056464. York. ***[JK33]***

E350 CDI Coupe V6, 2012, less than 42,000 miles on the clock with FSH, and fully updated Mercedes-Benz virtual logbook. The car has been maintained via both Mercedes-Benz main dealers and specialists. Low-mileage coupe is finished in metallic black with a light grey leather interior with Apple CarPlay upgrade. £13,000 ono. Tel: 07872 594487. Ilkey. ***[JK8]***

W124 200E Avantgarde 1990, metallic silver blue, auto, spares or repair, £POA. Tel: 07413 064712. Suffolk ***[EFW4]***

C126 500SEC, 99,000 miles, Arctic White, black leather interior, ESR, air con, AMG monobloc alloys on Pirelli P Zero tyres, bills, history, tools, jack, triangle, M-B first aid kit, £POA. Tel: 07737 447556. Suffolk ***[EFW3]***

C123 280CE 1983, 80,000 miles, auto, flat Sahara Beige, olive cloth interior, ESR, air con, excellent chrome, M-B splashguards, spare wheel, tools, triangle, MB first aid kit, history, £POA. Tel: 07737 447556. Suffolk ***[EFW2]***

180 Ponton 1954, petrol saloon, I have no time to complete this easy project, some re-chroming and bead blasting has been done, it is now ready for someone to complete the project, £8,000 ONO. Tel: 07877 198628. Bedhampton ***[EFW11]***

W123 230E 1981, 120,000 miles, metallic silver blue, four-speed manual, good blue cloth interior, air con, MB alloys, service history, spare wheel, tools, jack, triangle, first aid kit, £POA. Tel: 07413 064732. Suffolk ***[EFW6]***

E280 Avantgarde 2001, 81,000 miles, auto saloon, two owners from new, comprehensive service history, immaculate inside and out, Ruby Red metallic with anthracite leather, £4,999 ONO. Tel: 07850 187400. Ormskirk ***[EFW14]***

W116 450SE 1979, 95,000 miles, auto, metallic magnetite blue, bamboo leather interior, air con, excellent chrome, M-B splashguards, owner's wallet, histories, spare wheel, tools, jack, M-B first aid kit, fire extinguisher, £POA. Tel: 07737 447556. Suffolk ***[EFW1]***

CLS350 CDI Grand Edition Four-door, two owners from new (one being the dealer as ex-demo) same owner since 2010, FSH with all receipts, excellent condition for the year, one-year MOT, two keys, £6,450. Tel: 07768 511243. Milton Keynes ***[EFW12]***

W201 190E 1990, Arctic White, auto, very good blue block cloth interior, ESR, spare wheel, M-B splashguards, tools, hack, triangle, first aid kit, bills and history, £POA. Tel: 07413 064732. Suffolk ***[EFW5]***

INTERNATIONAL MERCEDES

W110 Mercedes for spares 1963, engine, gearbox, back and front lights already sold, all doors available, car located in Portugal, can ship worldwide, email: bets4money@gmail.com or Tel: +35 1917417059. Portugal. ***[DEW7]***

190SL Roadster 1963, completely restored. Everything has been rebuilt, refinished or replaced. Runs and drives as new. This car is a work of art. It would look at home in an art gallery as well as the street. The hardtop is completely restored as well. The Dove Grey soft top is a nice touch. Tel: +852 4532 7865. Pontianak, Indonesia. ***[CM45P12R]***

190SL 1957, in excellent restored condition. Red with light beige interior, interior is in excellent condition, good set of tyres all around and a spare also comes with the car. The engine runs strong and is the original fitted from new. The transmission goes into gears with no problems. The clutch is tight. Good chrome, rare find in such beautiful condition. There are no dents, dings or scratches anywhere, no rust and very solid underneath, the top is also in excellent condition, all the gauges work. Tel:+812 6902 8460. Surabaya. Indonesia ***[CM45P13R]***

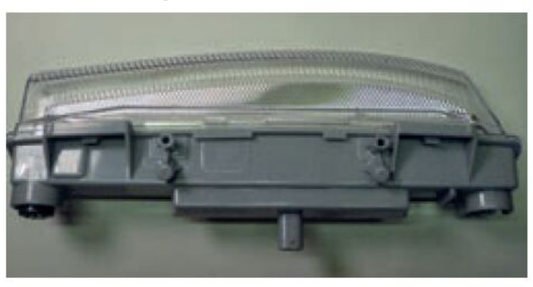
MERC TRADER

W140 S500 1997, 153,000 miles in great condition, original silver paint, rust-free car, accessories and functions to specs. Tel: 8184379756. Los Angeles, California. ***[BCW1]***

W201 2.5D Five-cylinder, 40,000km on mechanicals, total rebuild and blueprinted with Evolution II rims. Body has original colour, no rust and has done 599,000km. Exhaust has been handmade, uses 4.6 litres of fuel per 100km. AUD$16.200. All invoices available and total $25.000. Tel: +61 437 356887. Tasmania, Australia. ***[LAP14]***

PARTS, MISC & ACCESSORIES

Mercedes Benz S-Class sales book For 1992 models. 72 unmarked pages, excellent second-hand condition, rare book. £9.50. Tel: 07399 359072. Canterbury ***[DEW1]***



Pair of new SLK sidelights/ running lights £50. Tel: 01903 784375. W.Sussex. ***[LAP1]***

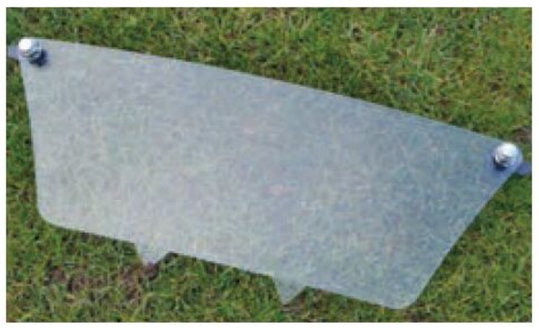
Mercedes Enthusiast magazines All editions from issue 1(Nov 2001) to issue 242(Aug/Sept 2023). Buyer to arrange colleion. £150. Tel: 07775 828963. Harrogate, N. Yorks. ***[DE]***

Genuine 18-inch AMG alloy wheels For C-Class, part number A2054019600. £495. More photos available on WhatsApp or call. Tel: 07936 151814. Merseyside. ***[BCW13]***

W212 E-Class SE headlights For 2013-2014 facelift model. Includes both control modules on each headlamp. Price £1,290. Tel: 028 66341988 or +353 862553232. Enniskillen. ***[LAP5/6]***

Gearbox paddleshift extensions For SLK (2011-on), new condition, £30. Tel: 01903 784375. West Sussex ***[LAP2]***

Ponton doors As new with factory tags. Actual barn find. Buyer responsible for all crating and shipping. Located in Oregon City, Oregon, USA – 15 miles south of Portland Oregon. $850 USD or best offer. ***[BCW3]***



Large Perspex windbreaker With fittings, for SLK (2011-on), as new, £50. Tel: 01903 568799 or 01903 784375. W.Sussex ***[LAP3]***

W124 steel wheels Set of four with 195/60R15 Goodyear UltraGrip winter tyres, wheel covers and steel bolts. Used on E220 Coupe. Tyres undamaged and barely worn with consistent 8mm tread depth. Not used since 2020 but properly stored. £300. Tel: 07747 691148. Warminster. ***[BCW16]***

Pre-merger AMG brochure pack Early pack covering W123, W126, R107, G-Wagon as per photos. Fold out brochure and 7x vehicle photos/data sheets. Rare pack in good condition. £350. Tel: 01329 849901. Fareham. ***[CM45P4R]***

NO. PLATES

Two cherished registration plates Both on retention: 4929 H (£6,000) and 784 HRH (£2,500). Would take loss to sell pair. Tel: 07583 613521. Tamworth. ***[DE]***

V8 GLX numberplate A fantastic private registration for your V8 Mercedes, on my GL420 for many years, now on retention. £10,000 ono. Tel: 07973 739431. London. ***[DE]***

OV12 BYE numberplate On retention, certificate must go on a 12-reg car or newer. £3,500 ONO. Tel: 07766 570973. ***[CM46P5R]***

Two private registration plates On retention. TR24 CTR (£2,550) and AR24 BLE (£4,000). £Offers invited. Tel: 07583 613521. Tamworth. ***[DE]***

R4 PMG My lovely old Mercedes isn't for sale merely the registration plate. I was given a quote for it two years ago, but willing to accept less, perhaps £800 ONO. Tel: 01296 436814. Aylesbury. ***[JK30]***

190 COS Personal plate, currently has certificate of entitlement. Ready to transfer, open to offers. £POA Tel: 07999 993268 Email: kyingcheng@yahoo.com. Newcastle upon Tyne. ***[JK]***

126 MPH Personal plate, purchased for a Pagoda in 1971 and used on many cars since. Looks good and has no legal problems (gapping). On retention certificate. £POA. Tel: 0208 366 4639. Middlesex. ***[JK]***

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C180

Still with the ability to charm, imagine one journalist's surprise when time in the company of an entry level C-Class proved more memorable than he could ever have expected

WORDS **MATT ZOLLO** IMAGES **TERRY OBORNE**

You might find it strange that someone lucky enough to have driven many of Mercedes' most loved and respected models has chosen an encounter with a W202 C180 as one of their more memorable experiences. And you would be quite right.

The W202 C-Class comes from a period when Mercedes-Benz was not putting cars together with quite the same uncompromising level of quality and solidity as it had done previously and, rightly or wrongly, its reputation suffered as a result. Then there are the engine and trim level of the car in question. Far from top of the W202 tree, a C180 Elegance has the least powerful petrol engine in the range, as well as plastic wheel trims and cloth upholstery. And then there is the elephant in the room – or rather the elephant that had just left the showroom – in the shape of its much loved predecessor, the W201. If ever a car was a tough act to follow, the W201 was it.

Yet it is because of this that the W202 ended up being etched in my memory. Despite my initial small touch of scepticism and despite its occasional flaws, during my day with the C180 – on the bustling arterial roads and deserted country lanes around Somerset – it turned out to be a very capable and complete car, far better than its slightly shaky reputation suggested, and what I would imagine to be a fine ownership proposition.

It rolled quietly and smoothly down even the craggiest back road, its high profile tyres and softly sprung suspension providing a comforting ride that would be quite alien to owners of those modern cars that try to act 'sporty', while still feeling more composed and refined than many wobbly classics. It was by no means an enthralling experience that made my insides tingle, but cruising with the midday traffic it felt as competent as I felt content.

The 1,799cc M111 engine did its job admirably, which is all you can expect of a 120bhp petrol engine in a medium-sized saloon body, and the automatic gearbox ensured that you did not have to think any more than the bare minimum about extracting sufficient performance from it. Sure, a cultured six-cylinder soundtrack would have been nice, but that is a luxury and not a necessity in a car like this.

> **"Cruising with the midday traffic, it felt as competent as I felt content"**

Since that drive over 10 years ago, the then very reasonable retail price of £2,500 has about doubled for a good W202 from a dealer. That still strikes me as excellent value for money for a car that is still a cut above the comparable rest. The interior is leagues ahead of the cabin of any Passat or Mondeo of a similar value, both in terms of quality and ambience, and you can bet the mechanicals feel tighter and newer than those of similar mainstream products.

In the context of cheap to buy and run cars, you could not really find anything better if you wanted dependable, tasteful, comfortable and frugal transportation. Many people would say you are not getting the most memorable driving experience for your money, but this writer would disagree.

△ The C180's 1.8-litre four-cylinder engine produces a modest 120bhp.

▷ The W202's comfortable and relaxing ride won over journalist Matt Zollo.

▽ Elegance trim line meant hub caps for the 15-inch wheels and cloth upholstery.

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