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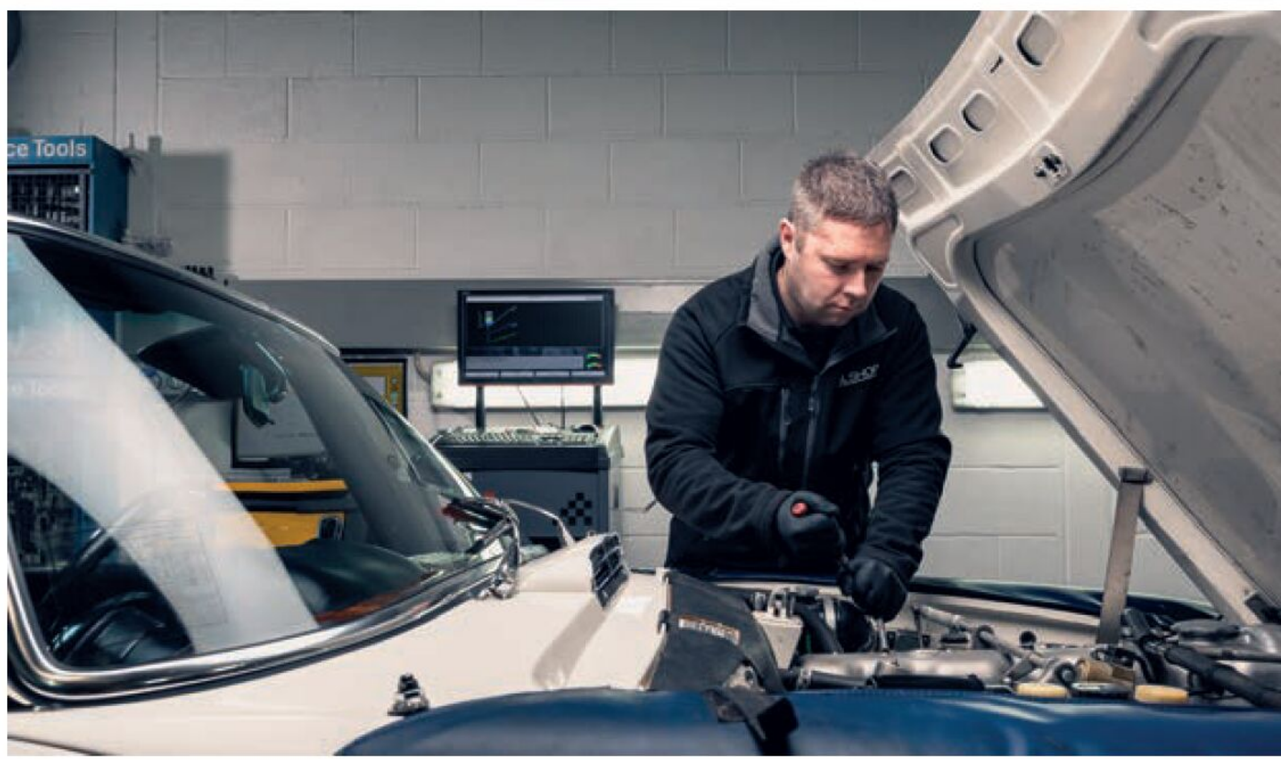
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BUYER'S GUIDE – R231 SL500



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Mercedes ENTHUSIAST



Issue 248
Aug/Sept 2024

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> *I find great hope in the idea that even just eight in 100 classic car drivers are aged under 30*

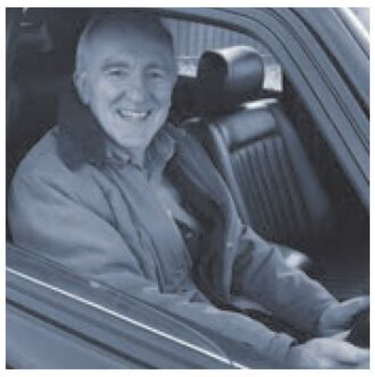
I read an article on *The Telegraph* website recently, entitled 'Why the under-30s have fallen in love with classic cars'. Writer Iain Macauley's piece contained some interesting facts from classic vehicle insurer Footman James. For example, eight per cent of classic cars in the UK are owned by under-30s. The article seemed to define 'classic cars' as those machines built before the 'modern classics' of the 1980s and 90s, and that pretty much falls into line with what we've done since 2001 when *Mercedes Enthusiast* arrived on the scene. I find great hope in the idea that even just eight in 100 classic car drivers are aged under 30, as it suggests those machines in which we still find great joy today have a future of some form.

Aside from the unique way older cars drive, which sees their pilots more engaged in the physical action of travelling from A to B, there are other benefits to driving an old motor, reckons Footman James. For example, the average insurance premium for a classic car in 2023 was £261 compared to £400 for a modern vehicle. Classics can also be simpler to maintain, and parts are generally cheaper. Keep miles low and there's an environmental benefit too, as new electric cars create an average of 26 tonnes of CO2 during their production, says Footman James; a classic doing 1,200 miles a year produces an average of 563kg of CO2. Food for thought for all drivers...



Kyle Molyneux
Executive Editor

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



Richard Mason
"Two enthusiasts with polar opposite opinions on 124s meet for this issue, allowing you dear reader to decide what flavour of 124 floats your boat. Is it the totally factory perfect original, or at the other end of the scale customised with bodykit, flared arches and Japanese stickers?" Richard Mason asks. "What's beyond any doubt is that these drivers love the 124 as it approaches 40 years old." This issue's cover story begins on page 20, and is followed by a car that came before the 124: the 123-series.



Kyle Fortune
"The new G-Class has been a long time coming. Although it looks similar to before, under those familiar boxy lines are some fairly revolutionary changes. That includes the option of a fully electric powertrain with four individual motors alongside more conventional diesel and petrol models." Kyle Fortune has followed the cars from prototype through to the finished production vehicles, which he drives in this issue of *Mercedes Enthusiast*. Head to page 64...

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The latest Mercedes launches, news and motorsport

News



10 million

Mercedes' Bremen factory hits production milestone and celebrates in style

The Mercedes-Benz plant in Bremen has reached a significant milestone in its 46-year history: the 10 millionth vehicle with the star badge has now rolled off the production line. The anniversary vehicle was a fully electric EQE.

To mark the production anniversary, the plant also brought out the very first Mercedes to roll off the production line in Bremen in 1978: a 123-series Estate (pictured above with the EQE).

With around 11,500 employees, the Mercedes-Benz Bremen Plant is one of the largest private employers in the region. Nine models are currently manufactured at the site: the C-Class Saloon and Estate, the CLE Coupe and Cabriolet, the GLC SUV, the GLC Coupe, the Mercedes-AMG SL Roadster and GT models, and of course the electric EQE.



Fastest sellers

Data from Auto Trader, the vehicle sales platform, has shown that one- to three-year-old Mercedes-Benz GLC-Classes were the fastest selling used cars during May and June 2024, on average taking just 11 days to sell. GLBs of the same age were the fourth fastest sellers, taking an average of 13 days to find a new home, while the C-Class Cabriolet was ranked ninth fastest seller, taking a mere 15.5 days to sell.

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OTA updates

Mercedes-Benz has introduced a further development for partially automated driving in Europe. The Automatic Lane Change function (ALC) is now available in the Driving Assistance Plus Package for 33 European countries including the United Kingdom, France, Germany, Ireland, Italy, the Netherlands, Poland, Portugal, Spain and Sweden.

A total of 15 Mercedes-Benz C-Class, E-Class, S-Class, GLC, CLE, EQE, EQS, EQS SUV and EQE SUV models can now be equipped with ALC – directly ex-factory and/or via an over-the-air update.

The ALC function extends the more than 40 driving assistance systems already available from Mercedes-Benz. ALC enables the car to automatically initiate a lane change on suitable motorways when Active Distance Assist DISTRONIC is activated, in order to overtake slower cars or follow the route to the next exit.

AMG PureSpeed



On the run up to May's Monaco Grand Prix, Mercedes-AMG removed the covers from the radical looking PureSpeed. Limited to 250 units, the two-seater lacks a roof and windscreen but boasts a unique HALO safety system similar to that seen on modern F1 cars.

The styling is inspired by the AMG One hypercar, and the body features plenty of carbon fibre. The rear wheel covers are closed to enhance aerodynamics, while the two flying buttresses behind the seats are reminiscent of legendary racing cars such as the 300SLR, in which Stirling Moss and Denis Jenkinson won the 1955 Mille Miglia in Italy. Engine details were not available at the time of writing, but a V8 biturbo motor is likely to lurk under the bonnet.



News in brief



△ **EX-MOSS ROADSTER**

A 1992 R129 500SL previously owned by Stirling Moss sold for £11,250 including buyer's premium in H&H Classics' Duxford auction on June 19.



△ **EARLY PASSION**

Young Driver has launched 'Young Driver Exclusive Collection', an all-new programme designed to enthuse 10- to 17-year-olds about the joy of driving, while honing their car control skills further still after initial training in Vauxhall Corsas. Young Driver Exclusive Collection offers kids the choice of piloting one of three very special sports and luxury cars: a Mercedes-Benz SL500, a Porsche 911 Carrera 4, or a Bentley Continental Flying Spur.



△ **SUCCESS IN AUSTRIA**

George Russell claimed victory for Mercedes in late June's Austrian Grand Prix, with Lewis Hamilton finishing fourth. In a race that was slow to the boil, late drama saw George taking advantage of a clash between Max Verstappen and Lando Norris to take the chequered flag.

▽ **SPA DAY**

Mercedes-AMG was the most successful manufacturer at the recent 24 Hours of Spa with six podium finishes to its name.





HWA Evo

After months of teasers, HWA Cars finally debuted its finished Evo – a modern interpretation of the legendary 190E 2.5-16 Evolution II.

Wrapped in full carbon fibre bodywork, power comes from a three-litre V6 twin-turbocharged engine making 444bhp and 406lb ft of torque. The motor features dry sump lubrication and is linked to a six-speed manual gearbox. An optional performance package increases output to 493bhp and raises the top speed from 168mph to 185mph.

Riding on KW suspension, on the end of which sit 19-inch front and 20-inch rear wheels housing 380mm/360mm brake discs, the Evo treats those lucky enough to sit inside to a Recaro driver's seat and special 1990s-inspired digital instruments.

HWA says it will build only 100 examples of the Evo, with prices around the £700,000 mark. The process involves using a donor W201 190 and stripping the chassis back to bare metal before cleaning and coating it. The perfect 50:50 weight distribution of this rear-wheel drive saloon is achieved through the relocation of the 190's alternator, air conditioning compressor and power steering pump among other things.





50 years ago

On July 12 1974, Mercedes-Benz presented the world's first five-cylinder diesel engine passenger car in the form of the 240 D 3.0 'Stroke 8'.

The engine had the same stroke-bore ratio and the same cylinder spacing as the four-cylinder engine of the 240 D with 48 kW/65 hp. From 1974 to 1976, 53,690 units of the 240 D 3.0 were produced. The OM617 continued to be built in the 300D of the 123 model series until 1985.

The term 'Stroke Eight', which is commonly used in classic car circles today, was created due to the addition of '/8' in internal Mercedes-Benz publications for all models released in 1968. However, the abbreviation is only used for the 114 and 115 model series in classic car parlance.

Talking Point



This month's Talking Point...

Which generation of Mercedes do you think is the most special?

"The W201 was a game-changer and was a compact choice for a new generation of customers." **Donovan Croucamp**

"The 116-series is the most important of all S-Class cars, raising the standards not just for luxury cars but all cars." **Dave Klink**

"I'd say the Bruno Sacco years - W126, W124 etc." **Mark Burmester**

"The SL series shows the glamour of the star." **Edward Fiore**

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

Merc Spotter



"At the end of last year, a few friends and I decided to jump into our cars and head to the Nürburgring," writes Chris Behan. "The most appropriate of the three was a four-wheel-drive Golf, but the V12 CL got the most attention in the car park. Poor weather and a greasy track meant getting out of corners was a bit of an arduous job, but we still managed to overtake everything except the 'Ring taxis!"

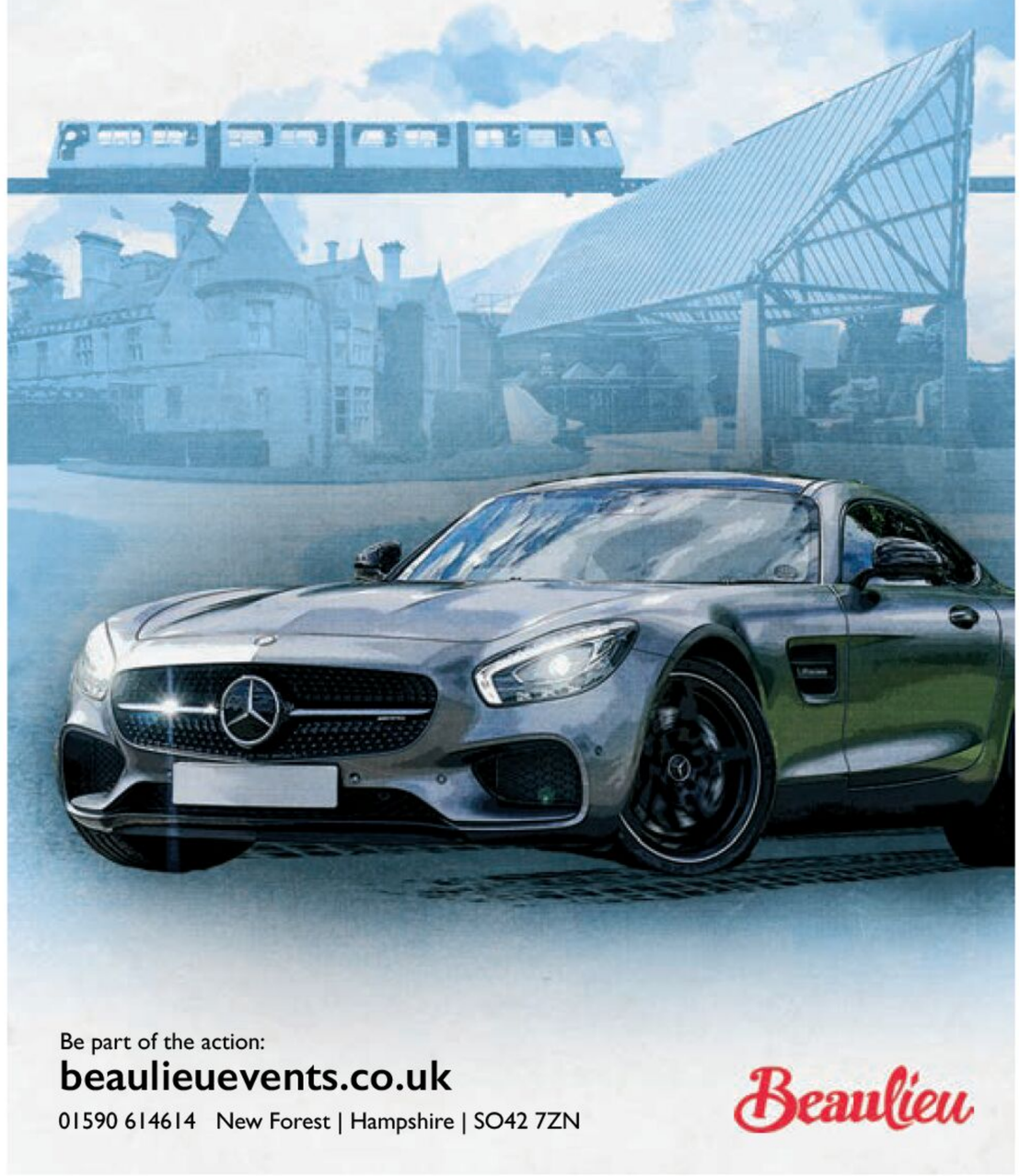
Seen an interesting Mercedes or caught one in an unusual situation? Send a picture to **info@mercedesenthusiast.co.uk** (subject 'Merc Spotter') or by post to Mercedes Enthusiast, 17 Wickham Road, Beckenham, Kent, BR3 5JS.

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A 1989 300GD (blue car) is hustled through a corner as a 1980 230G (red car) and 1983 280GE 'Rallye' (olive green car) follow in hot pursuit. By the time production of the 460-series G-Wagen ceased in 1992, almost 52,000 civilian versions had rolled off the Graz production line in Austria. It had been a sensational run; the very first Gëlandewagen was presented in February 1979.

In this issue of *Mercedes Enthusiast*, you can read our review of the brand new electric G-Class (pages 64 to 67).

IMAGE MERCEDES-BENZ GROUP AG




S PV 114H
S BA 103N

Recalling trailblazing Mercedes-Benz cars of yesteryear



W201 190

Courting a more youthful buyer, Mercedes' pioneering 190 saloon combined world class engineering with sophisticated styling. These four-doors have since become a must-own modern classic

WORDS **DAVID SUTHERLAND** IMAGES **MERCEDES-BENZ GROUP AG**

It's a low-key, even innocuous saloon that doesn't stand out in a crowd, but the W201 190 is among a number of models in Mercedes-Benz's history that arguably saved the carmaker from losing its prominence in the market. Looking back at the mid to late 1970s and the Stuttgart line-up tells you why.

That period saw seismic changes in the car market. In 1975 Volkswagen made its Golf into the GTI and created the 'hot hatch' genre, while in the same year BMW invented the 'junior executive' niche with the original E21 3-Series; both appealed to the emerging generation of monied, young achievers who wanted a sporty but practical car, and quite soon other marques copied them.

> **Its all-new multi-linked rear axle was genius**

However, the nearest Mercedes-Benz offerings in the 1970s were the W114/W115 'Stroke Eight' and W123 saloons, and much as we love them now, they had none of the fizz of the BMW and VW upstarts, and more worrying still were models heading into a customer demographic dead end.

What was needed was a smaller and more affordable product to attract 'youth'. At the time, Mercedes doing a hot hatch was a concept too far, but a saloon below the mid-sized 123-series made a lot of sense, and fortunately one of the most talented stylists the carmaker has ever employed, the Italian-born Bruno Sacco, was at the peak of his career and ready to deliver exactly what was needed. He masterfully re-imagined his breathtakingly good 126-series flagship of 1979 into a compact four-door, retaining the same elegance and charisma, while on the production side engineers ensured that it also shared the same high build values.

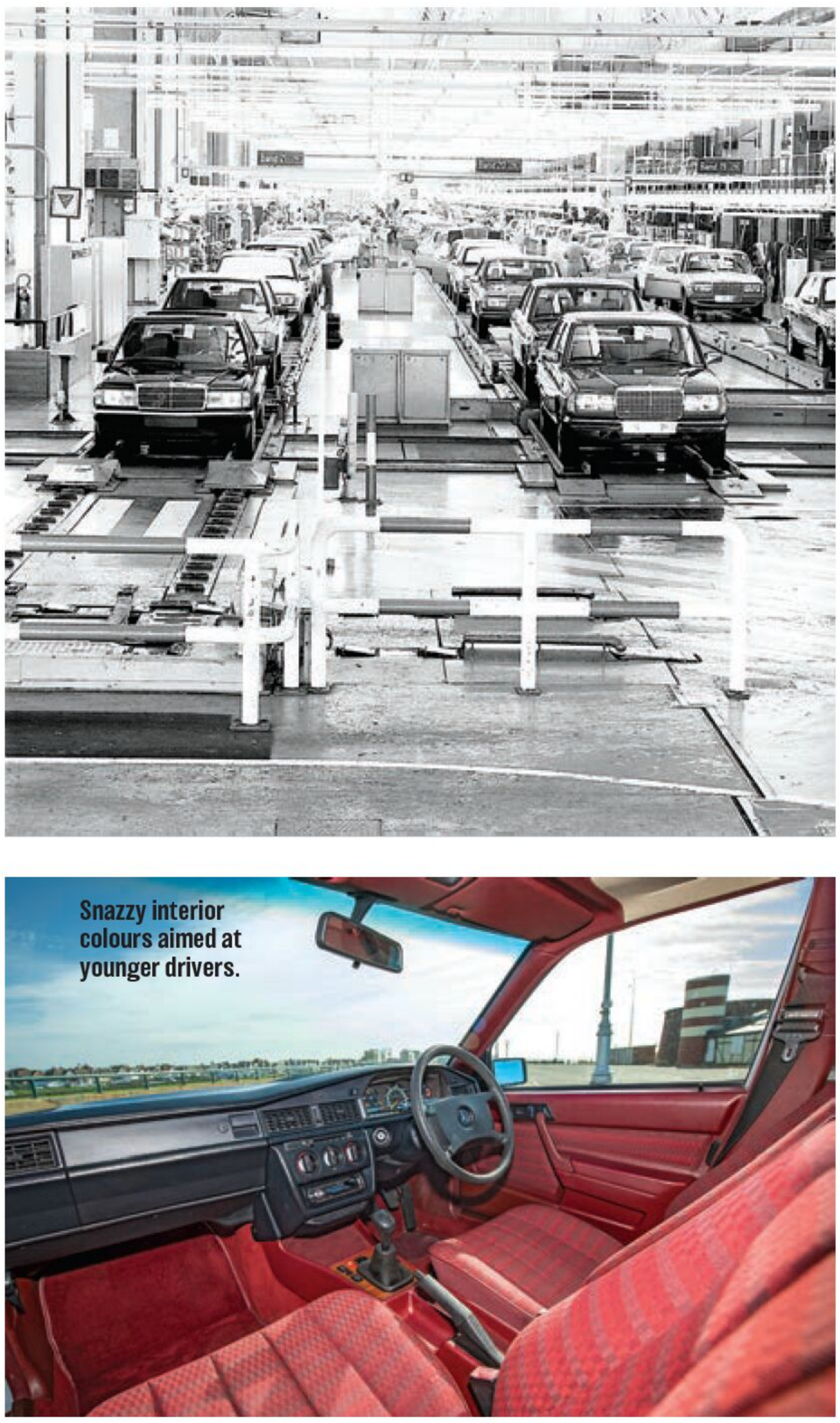
A 42 years younger version of myself attended the press launch of the W201 in Spain to drive the two models initially made available: the carburettor-fuelled 190 and injected 190E, their two-litre, four-cylinders producing 89 and 120bhp. There had been some 'sniffiness' that a 'small' car would hurt the Mercedes image, but a very short time behind the wheel revealed that the W201 was everything a bigger Benz was, just in a neater package.

Ace up its sleeve

On performance, the cars fell short of that offered by the BMW 3-Series, which could be had with Munich's marvellously sweet straight-six. But those were still the



▷ Sophisticated multi-link rear suspension setup.





◁ W201 and W123 rolling off the Sindelfingen line.

△ The 190 was unmistakably a Mercedes-Benz.

Snazzy interior colours aimed at younger drivers.



▽ In-house designers work on the cabin details.



2.3-16 of 1984 served as the top model for a time.

days when it didn't matter if a car was pretty slow. The 190E was more responsive than the 190, but I recall that over the scenic route through Spanish plains and villages, with hardly any traffic to overtake, I found the 190 quieter and smoother, and generally a delight to drive, even with its manual gearbox.

In one respect the W201 was vastly superior to the 3-Series: handling. Its all-new multi-linked rear axle was genius, allowing ample bump absorption and good rear axle location, hence the car was in a different league of roadholding compared to the skittish-in-the-wet BMW. The devoid-of-feel recirculating ball steering discouraged fast twirling of the helm, but at least in the UK power steering was standard.

The W201 is from the time when Mercedes interiors combined austerity with simple but supremely stylish design. But you could have easily been sitting in the next model up, a 124-series, or the S-Class, thanks to the same style of instruments, fascia and trim. It had been Sacco's intention to build this three-car family offering the ideal, non-conflicting model hierarchy.

The two-model range was soon expanded, the 2.2-litre 190D diesel following in 1983, as did a 2.3-litre 190E 2.3 for some markets. And few knew it at the time, but Stuttgart was working on a production racer, which in 1984 would be released as the 190E 2.3-16, a high-performance homologation special fitted – outrageously for Mercedes-Benz – with a bodykit and spoilers. It and the succeeding 190E 2.5-16 are now collectibles, while the 1989/1990 190E 2.5-16 Evolution and Evolution II variants, especially the latter, are now £200,000-plus investments. The affordable favourite is the 190E 2.6 introduced in 1986, which finally enabled the mainstream W201 to look the BMW 325i in the eye, thanks to the smooth yet lusty, 2.6-litre, M102 straight-six engine producing 158bhp.

The rest is history

Mercedes-Benz had judged its customers' preferences perfectly. In the first full year, 1983, almost 110,000 were built, indeed it was in such demand that sales of the W123 – two years from the end of production – suffered as buyers realised that good things came in small sizes. The 190 range peaked at some 214,000 units in 1987, and was still selling well when replaced in 1993 after a production run of nearly 1.9m.

Besides the integrity of its design, the W201 has proved itself an immensely durable car, more so than the 202-series C-Class that replaced it. Four decades on from launch, it might seem an underwhelming car to drive, but it should also be clear what a giant this little Mercedes was. And less clear where Mercedes would have been without it.

Insight from a Mercedes-Benz tuning industry veteran

Seductive six



Automotive expert Ian Kuah recalls the six-cylinder 190E 2.6, which brought a whole new level of refinement to the W201 while instilling an additional layer of sportiness in the baby Benz

When it went on sale in 1982/1983, the W201 came as the entry-level, carburettor-equipped 190 with 89bhp, and the fuel-injected 190E with 120bhp. A five-speed manual gearbox and cloth upholstery were standard, with a four-speed automatic, leather upholstery and air conditioning the most desirable cost options.

This small Mercedes sold by the bucket load, the idea of a modern, dynamic Mercedes appealing to many whose only other choice was the more overtly sporting BMW 3-Series. However, Mercedes was not resting on its laurels, and while it later added a 134bhp 2.3-litre version of the four-pot motor, initially for the US market, the real coup de grâce arrived in 1986 with the 190E 2.6.

Introduced in 1984 for the W124, the 2,599cc M103.940 and 2,962cc M103.980 straight-six motor featured an iron block and alloy crossflow cylinder-head. The engine was canted over 15 degrees to the right to reduce installation height in the engine bays of the W201, W124 and W126.

Sharing the same 80.25mm stroke as the 178bhp three-litre version, the 2.6 has a shorter 82.9mm stroke compared to 88.5mm for the 3.0. However, being more 'square' than 'under-square' makes the smaller engine freer-revving on its way to producing its 164bhp (158bhp with catalytic converter).

My first encounter with the 190E 2.6 was a MBUK press car with the optional automatic transmission. Its lower weight helped it feel as rapid as the 300E I had recently stepped out of, while its compact size added agility on country roads. While not quite as refined on the motorway as its bigger brother, the silky smooth six added an air of sophistication missing from the in-line four, whose gruff soundtrack under firm acceleration was far from enthusiast material.

My old friend John Watson, the European Sales Manager for Mission Electronics of Huntingdon in the 1980s, was lucky to have a car enthusiast boss, the late Farad Azima, who drove a BMW M5 and allowed his senior staff their own choice of car. Five forward gears are better than four, with acceleration, refinement and economy the main beneficiaries. John put his name down for a 190E 2.6 manual, which was soon plying the German autobahns. John took me to lunch one day and I was quite surprised at how rapid his well-run-in 2.6 manual felt.

Almost 20 years later, I had a manual C350 Sport Coupe test car from MBUK, and it struck me that this engaging V6-powered machine was the spiritual successor to the 190E 2.6 manual. Both these compact Mercedes sixes prove wrong anyone who thinks that manual Mercedes are not drivers' cars.



△ The 190E 2.6 arrived in 1986; Mercedes-Benz went on to build 104,907 of them in manual and automatic forms.



△ The baby Benz was crying out for this six-cylinder.



△ A more traditional looking grille now fitted to the EQS.

> **"I was quite surprised at how rapid a well-run-in 2.6 manual felt"**

SAVING FACE

The advent of the EV has created a styling conundrum for car designers, as there is no longer a need for a radiator grille to admit cooling air to the engine bay. Of course, this is form following function in its strictest definition, and some automotive manufacturers do provide pseudo grilles to stop their cars from looking faceless and somewhat odd to buyers.

Mercedes-Benz is the oldest carmaker in the world, so the presence of a clear marque identity from an instantly recognisable radiator grille is no stronger than here.

Some customers have not been enthusiastic about the smooth 'lozenge' look of the latest EQ electric cars, nor the loss of the traditional grille – the instantly identifiable 'face' that tells others in no uncertain terms that they are driving a Mercedes-Benz.

Thus it comes as no surprise that the facelifted EQS comes with a suitable interpretation of the traditional Mercedes grille. The luxury saloon looks a whole lot better for this update and it may just be enough to encourage more people to sign on the dotted line for the electric car, which will now cover almost 500 miles between charges thanks to an increase in battery capacity.

While there will always be younger potential S-Class buyers who like new electronic 'toys', it appears that the bulk of long-term S-Class owners really do prefer a more traditional approach to luxury.

IMAGES IAN KUAH & MERCEDES-BENZ GROUP AG

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Optional extras



Expansive lists of options are a thing of the past in Mercedes' case, says David Sutherland, as he digs out old pricing brochures and dreams of what he could have bought 30 years ago

In the course of compiling the Buyer's Guide on the R231 SL500 in this issue (pages 80 to 84), I dug out an early price list and took a close look at all the factory options offered for it when new a decade ago. There were so many, nearly 30, that I decided to make a thing of it, illustrating that it would have been possible, if not feasible or sensible, to increase the 2014 £80,000 price tag when new by over a quarter by adding extras.

I like to picture the scene in the showroom as a customer impatiently grabs the new car order form from the incredulous salesman and proceeds to tick every single option box before handing it back to across the desk, saying, "Right lad, let me know when it's ready."

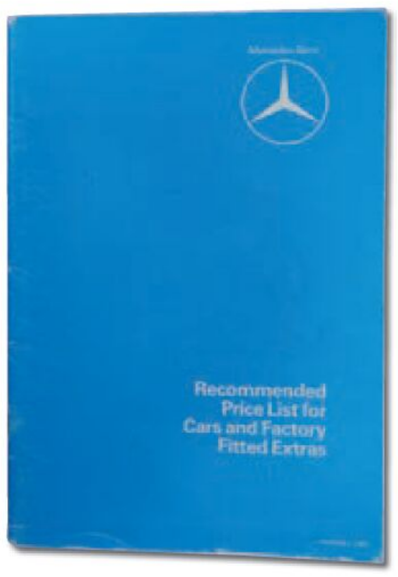
I love the idea of Mercedes making such a vast choice of extras available, the ultimate expression of this being the W100 600 limousine, which could be ordered with so many different fittings it's said that none of the 2,677 built between 1964 and 1981 were identically equipped to any other. However, it was in the 1980s that the star carmaker got into factory options in a big way for other models, even the basic model W201 190 and 124-series.

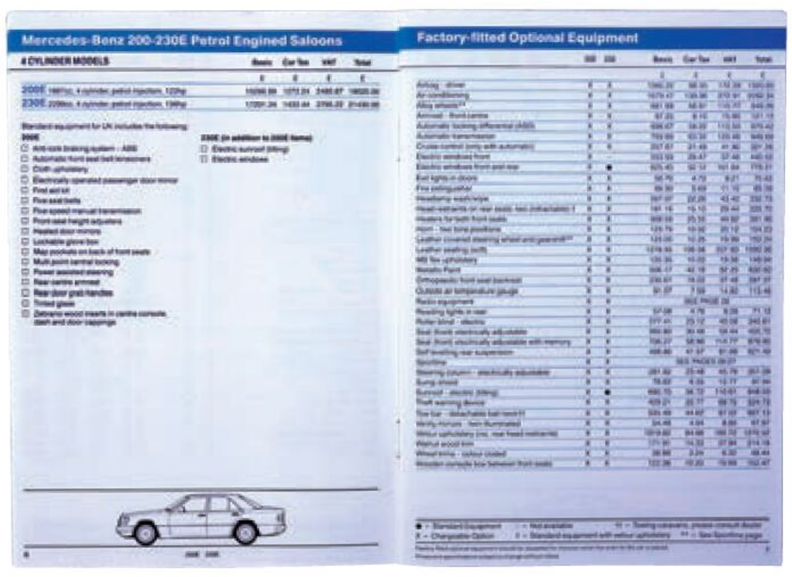
Apart from this situation being so characteristic of the thorough, Germanic approach, it was also a useful ploy to contain already high model prices during a pre-Euro currency period when the Deutsche Mark was appreciating through the roof and making the already pricey cars ever more expensive in European export countries. Making items optional instead of standard allowed a less expensive before-extras list price, and BMW and even Volkswagen indulged too, but were amateurs compared to Mercedes-Benz.

I bring up the subject here because it seems, sadly, that the days of the long and fascinating options list are gone. Browse a current A-Class brochure hoping to see a choice of costed goodies and you'll be disappointed. It's the same situation at the other end of the spectrum with an S-Class or the AMG SL. Now, it's about bundled packages, for example the C-Class Saloon/Estate presently comes, in the UK at least, as Urban Edition, AMG Line, AMG Line Premium and AMG Line Premium Plus.



△ Specify every conceivable extra on the W124 200E and you'd be looking at a bill for over £36,000 in 1990!





△ Mercedes-Benz pricing brochure from February 1990 offers a vast array of extras for the 124-series.

Convenient, well-attuned to the market and probably readily available. But I can't order the increased capacity fuel tank or sump guard that once would have been offered.

But there's no restriction on nostalgia, and one treasured document in my filing cabinet is an official Mercedes-Benz UK price list from February 1990, listing all model and factory option prices. And the car with one of the longest lists of options was the humble W124 200E in all its low spec, two-litre 'Plain Janery'. Not that it was a cheap car, its £19,000 list price on a par with a Saab 900 Turbo 16, Ford Granada Ghia and Alfa Romeo 164.

If you paid that price for the mid-size Benz, you'd collect a four-door saloon whose creature comforts stretched to just central locking and heated door mirrors (only the passenger side electrically operated), items that Mercedes included because they were safety related, as was anti-lock braking. Beyond that stretched almost more items that could be squeezed onto an A5 page while maintaining a readable font size – 38 in total.

As I love adding things up I have more than once totalled them. Excluding effective duplicates, such as an electric instead or manual sunroof or front/rear and not just front electric windows, and also leaving out the complexities of the Sportline catalogue, it would have been possible to nearly double the invoice, to over £36,000.

Some things we now take for granted, for example air conditioning and a driver's airbag, look enormously expensive at £2,092 and £1,320 respectively (or £5,000 and £3,150 indexed to today's money). But it's the obscure stuff that most piques my interest. Who'd pay £1,271 for velour seating, not so very different from the standard cloth, instead of paying a bit more for leather? But then hide wasn't so fashionable 34 years ago. I would have asked for the two-tone horn at £154, illuminated vanity mirrors at £68 and colour-coded wheel trims at £48, just for the thrill of placing the order.

It's almost certain that no entry-level W124 ever heaved under the load of every optional extra possible. But if I ever saw one with even half the kit available, I know I would want to make it mine.

> "It's the obscure stuff that most piques my interest"

IMAGES DAVID SUTHERLAND

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Social Club

Mercedes-Benz related highlights from the world of social media



Wallner Classic

@wallnerclassic

Seeing a completely wrecked Mercedes-Benz 190SL like this is sure to break any classic car enthusiast's heart. We've got our work cut out with this one, but we're excited to bring it back to its former glory.



Prestige Car Service

@mercedes_workshop_horndean

Probably a workshop record. Original 2007 battery on this E-Class. 17 years old. We always go on about using OE batteries. They are better.



Bonhams|Cars

@bonhamscars

This 1979 500TE AMG Estate with 5.2-litre M117 V8 developing 295bhp at 5,250rpm sold for an incredible $138,000 (around £109,000) including buyer's premium during Bonhams' 'AMG Rediscovered' event in Los Angeles in June.



Autogespot

@autogespot_monaco

Here we have the legendary Mercedes-Benz 300SL Gullwing painted in gloss black cruising down the famous Monaco hairpin. It seems that this owner loves classic cars, as previously an Aston Martin DB4 GT Zagato was spotted wearing the same numberplate.

Picture credit: @damors1 and @autogespot



Mechatronik

@mechatronik.official
Wedding day in the workshop.



Autoclass Garage

@autoclassmk
Two generations of V8 SL outside our Milton Keynes workshop. Which Mercedes-Benz would you choose to drive?



Sam Zalesky

@sammyz_16
This 1992 190E 1.8 features a rare bodykit and alloy wheels from Carat Duchatelet. The mileage stands at just 76,000 and its owner has upgraded the interior to 190 Cosworth specification. This black-on-black saloon also boasts a full AMG brake kit, and a 40mm lower ride height on new suspension components.



Historics Auctioneers

Historics Auctioneers
1968 280SE Coupe with 93,800 miles estimated at £47,000 to £55,000. This rare W111 Coupe was going under the hammer during Historics' Summer Serenade event in Datchet, Berkshire on July 20.



Auto Icons

@autoicons_official
1985 Mercedes Benz 280CE restored by Kienle Automobiltechnik.
The 123-series Coupe spent its last few thousand miles in the UK before being imported to Singapore in 2021. The odometer currently shows a mere 25,000 miles covered!



Auto Leitner

Auto Leitner
1990 Mercedes-Benz 560SEC. Rare ABC Widebody conversion. Ultimate 1980s car!
Über rare C126 finished in Diamond Blue metallic and priced at €175,000 (£148,000) by the Dutch dealer.



Alphons Ruyl Fine Classic Cars

@ruylclassics
About six years ago, I had the opportunity to buy this SEC from the son of the first owner, an industry professional from Maastricht and living just over the border in Lanaken.
1984 380SEC with 97,000km (around 60,000 miles) priced at €35,800 (£30,200).

FAB AT

"The W124 had greater competition from the likes of BMW, Audi and Lexus"

Cover story

40

The must-have Mercedes for managers, cabbies, driving enthusiasts and old money on the lookout for something prestigious yet capacious, the 124-series range is unmatched for its breadth of abilties. Here we mark 40 years of these illustrious motorcars with help from two enthusiast owners

WORDS **RICHARD MASON**
IMAGES **STEVE HALL**



Life begins at 40 for the W124 as this favourite Mercedes youngtimer reaches a milestone – in November 2024 to be precise, four decades after the Saloon was presented to the world in Seville, Spain. The W123 was a hard act to follow, epitomising Mercedes-Benz build quality and longevity; think of all those taxis still going strong in far flung corners of the world. However, the sales figures speak for themselves, the W123 Saloon selling 2.3m times over while the W124 Saloon (1984-1995) hit 2.2m.

The 124-series range also boasts Estate (S124; 1985-1996), Coupe (C124; 1987-1996) and Cabriolet (A124; 1991-1997) variants, the grand production total an astonishing 2,737,860 units.

Notably, the W124 (officially known as the 'E-Class' from the June 1993 update) had greater competition from the likes of BMW, Audi and Lexus. Nevertheless, Mercedes with its strong brand and customer loyalty was well placed for success. And the customising and tuning houses of the era agreed. This was a car they could not so much improve as take to another level that niche customers craved and, more importantly, would pay for.

Firms like Carat Duchatelet, RennTech, Carlson, Zender, Lorinser, AMG and Brabus were the go-to people for wings, rear aprons, front splitters and dazzling alloys giving kerb appeal. Some companies would add plush interiors, if your budget had stretch, incorporating Recaro CSE seats with multi-function switches flanking body- and thigh-hugging bolsters that added the ultimate in posh. Other customers preferred to splash their cash on performance enhancements.

Leading the way was AMG, although Brabus had a strategy of 'anything you can do we can do bigger'. AMG offered the complete package – bodykit, wheels, interior and more power via agents around the world such as Stratton in the UK and Yanase in Japan. In 1986, the W124 560E AMG was the fastest four-seater car on the planet, its 360bhp allowing it to sprint to 60mph in five seconds, 0.3secs faster than a Porsche 928S.

However, instructing AMG to equip your W124 with a volcanically powerful engine was expensive to say the least. That 560E AMG with all the extras was £35,000 on top of the car's £23,000 purchase price. In the UK, Turbo Technics offered a cheaper option, utilising a twin-turbocharger conversion to the tune of £8,000, but suspension modifications were extra.

No versions of the 124 escaped bodykit and performance enhancements, although the Coupe and Saloon were the most popular to be modified. Eventually, in 1991, Mercedes joined the fray with its own 'Q-cars' in the form of the 500E and 400E. Due to production capacity constraints, Mercedes brought in Porsche to design and build the chassis modifications to accommodate the V8 engine's size and performance.

Many enthusiasts enjoy 124s as a starter classic, especially a few years back when they were notably cheap. Enthusiasts typically fall into one of two camps. Either those who love modified 124s or the purist for whom only an original will do. Here we meet diehards from both camps: Gary Norrington, Mercedes-Benz Club valuer and lover of originality, and Neville Brown who has a collection of over 20 uniquely modified Mercedes. Both find fulfilment in a job done well done and are perfectionists.

"I love buying Mercedes of the 80s and 90s that need a little TLC," Gary explains. "I do much of the mechanical work myself. I'm a stickler for perfection and always use original Mercedes parts where possible. Once I've got the car back to original condition, I then start looking for another to work on. Often my perfection results in selling the car at a loss but this is my hobby, it's what I enjoy. I've got a soft spot for 124s. I've owned all body styles apart from the Cabriolet.

"One of my keepers is a 300CE with 190,000 miles on the clock," Gary adds. "I have owned at least four Estates including a 300TE-24 with the Sportline option. But the one I've kept is a 230TE. It's not my daily driver though, as it's far too good for that." Find out more about that car shortly...

"Leading the way was AMG, although Brabus had a strategy of 'anything you can do we can do bigger'"

Gary has bravely driven his original and almost factory fresh 230TE into Neville's den of modified Mercs. Neville explains his passion: "Unmodified cars bore me to death, but once I add a styling kit they become like art to me. But like all good art it has to be genuine. Maybe I've taken it to another level because I fuse styling items together. With art, as long as it looks right that's all that matters."

Neville's artistic automotive world had a seismic shift when he discovered Japanese styling houses like Auto Fashion Factory of Yokohama. "They were bonkers in what they were doing. I couldn't believe it. It was mainly the interiors and bodywork. This was all happening in the 1980s. I wish I could have visited Japan then."

Neville may have missed visiting the land of the rising sun, but he's immersed himself in magazines and memorabilia from online auctions and forum groups to create his own little corner of Japan. Let's run through what Neville owns...





Raid steering wheel in this W124 E500 Ltd.





◁ Strut brace added above the mighty M119 V8.

△ Desirable Limited model from Japan.

▽ Refurbished bird's eye maple wood trim.

1995 E500 Limited (316bhp)

About 950 of the E500 were badged the 'Limited' – this a special final version available with Brilliant Silver or Sapphire Black paintwork set off by 17-inch, six-spoke alloy wheels. The leather interior has a unique diamond pattern on the seat inner panels and door cards. Production ended in April 1995.

Neville's silver Limited was imported from Japan (where else?) in 2015 with an original registration date of July 1995. "When I got it, the speedo showed about 190,000km, so about 120,000 miles. Someone had fitted AMG wheels and the rear AMG ducktail spoiler. I'd read that Auto Fashion Factory had created designs that added some panache to the interior. So I decided to have the same done to mine. Replacing the steering wheel with a Raid was an immediate improvement to my mind.

"I refurbished the bird's eye maple wood trim and even had that veneer fitted to the tips of the electric seat switches on the doors," Neville continues. "Next, where the interior door handle recess is and other recesses, I've had them painted black instead of that awful grey. Auto Fashion would have done that too. Then I've added lots of stickers in the way the Japanese did. I couldn't get originals so I had replicas made.

"Another styling touch was fitting carbon fibre trim above the rear numberplate. Other than that, I've not done anything else except enjoy driving it," Neville adds. ▷





Square tips for the AMG exhaust setup.

The E500 wasn't the only V8 in the W124 range...





△ Full AMG bodykit for this W124 Saloon.

▷ 22,802 of the 400E were built by Mercedes-Benz.





"I've owned at least four estates including a 300TE-24 with the Sportline option"

▷ 1993 400E AMG 4.2 (275bhp)

The 400E/E420 shares the same chassis as the 500E/E500, although not the flared arches. As the 400E wasn't sold in the UK, Neville looked overseas for one. "This AMG 4.2 originally came from the Pyrenees in France where I discovered it February 2010," he confirms. "Of course, I couldn't leave it standard so I fitted a genuine AMG bodykit plus full AMG suspension including shocks and springs. That lowered the height by 35mm and of course stiffened it. Actually, Bilstein made the shocks for AMG at the time, although not exclusively – sometimes Koni did. The exhaust was changed to AMG, too.

"I had to leave the steering wheel standard because of the airbag. Dials are AMG and the rear seats are twin bucket type with side pockets from a 500E. I was lucky to get them in the exact colour that matches the front seats, which I've left as standard."

The red and black Karo protective mats contrast strongly with the interior colour scheme but Neville likes them. What about driving it? "To be honest, driving this car is no different to the E500, at least in normal everyday driving. It's still quick with bags of torque."

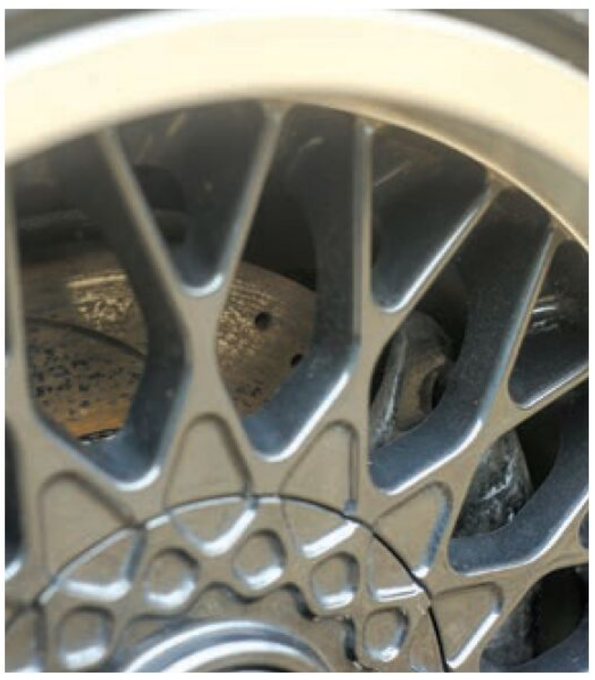
△ The W124's cabin has aged very well indeed.

▽ 35mm lower AMG suspension enhances stance.



△ Turbo Technics added the rare turbo system.

▷ 16-inch alloys and cross-drilled brake discs.





1988 300CE Twin Turbo 'Brabus' (307bhp)

Apparently, Mercedes-Benz agreed to maintain this car's warranty despite the fitment of aftermarket turbocharging. "Yes, that's my understanding," says Neville. "As long as the work was done by Turbo Technics or its agent Hughes of Beaconsfield, which was a Mercedes dealer, then the car received manufacturer approval.

"Apart from the twin-turbocharger system, plus Lorinser shocks and springs, this car was bog standard when I bought it. Oh, and it had some Carat Duchatelet wood trim."

This wasn't enough for Neville, though. "I fitted all genuine Brabus items like shocks and springs plus a bodykit and wheels. It's fitted with a full Brabus exhaust system, too. The interior has Brabus gauges and a Brabus steering wheel."

Gary's nudging me to query the Brabus rocker cover, which says 'Brabus 3.6 Litre' despite Neville's car retaining its standard three-litre unit. "I got everything from a chap in Germany who had a genuine 3.6-litre but the engine had blown up. The Brabus 3.6 engine produces 245bhp whereas this turbocharged three-litre is pushing out just over 300bhp. I've uprated the brakes using Japanese Tarox discs and pads, but the calipers are the standard one-pot."

Neville confirms the Astral Silver paint is original apart from the bodykit and black radiator. That's impressive for a 36-year-old car, although the mileage is under 70,000 which certainly helps preserve the condition. ▷

△ A red Brabus finish for this three-litre six.

▽ The Brabus theme continues inside the C124.





Key dates

November 1984
W124 Saloon makes its debut at a media event in Spain.

September 1985
S124 Estate makes debut at Frankfurt motor show alongside first 4Matic car.

September 1985
All petrol engines except 200 carb model offered with three-way catalytic converters.

May 1987
C124 Coupe makes debut at Geneva Motor Show.

September 1988
Standard equipment now includes ABS, a heated driver's door mirror, and a heated water tank plus heated water jets and hoses for the windscreen washer system.

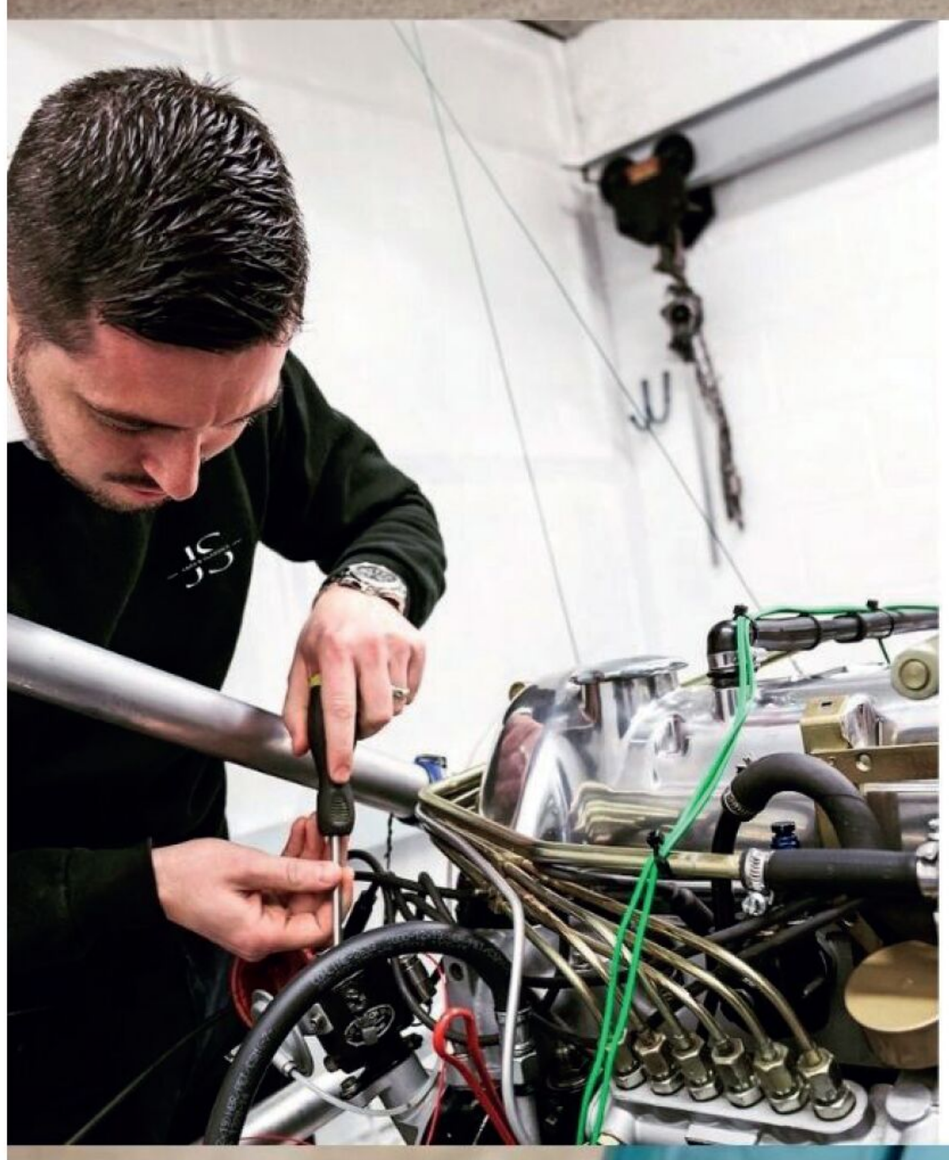
September 1989
First facelift brings exterior tweaks including side body cladding from the Coupe, plus interior changes such as improved seats; Sportline enhancements (sports suspension, wider wheels, cabin upgrades) also offered.

October 1990 Range-topping 500E Saloon introduced at the Paris motor show.

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▷ The underbody is 'mint', says owner Neville.

"Of course, I couldn't leave it standard so I fitted a genuine AMG bodykit plus full AMG suspension"

▷ 1994 E320 Estate (217bhp)

Neville had this E320 Estate bought on his behalf at auction in Japan. It's standard spec but he's got big plans for it, such as the fitment of a 3.6-litre M104 AMG engine. "When you get this car on a ramp, it's mint underneath. It's now fitted with a full set of AMG shocks and springs plus AMG Aero II alloys. The exhaust is standard apart from chrome AMG tips. There's AMG instruments too."

Neville's goal is to make this car match his E500 apart from the engine. A subtle exterior modification is replacing the rectangular panel beneath each headlamp with ones with three air intakes. Neville says, "I don't think they do anything but it matches the E500. I've replaced the centre interior console with an E60 one. All the wood has been changed to match the bird's eye maple wood of the E500. Even the tips of the electric seat buttons on the doors have the same wood veneer. There's a Raid steering wheel again to match the E500, plus Recaro CSE seats have been fitted. These required special sub frames and additional side covers. I want the E500 and E320 to be twins."

Incidentally, it's not widely known that Recaro made the ordinary seats for the W124. I mention to Neville that I've met people with ex-Japanese W124s which have suffered what seems like premature gearbox failure. "Yes, the gearbox just died on this one when my wife was driving it on the M25. It gave no warning just lost all gears, so I've had it rebuilt. I noticed these Japanese cars don't have the 'S' to 'E' mode switch on the 'box. I wonder if that makes a difference? I doubt the Japanese are drifting them in car parks, though…" ▷





△ Centre console inspired by the top E60 AMG's.

▽ The thickly bolstered Recaros look the part.

▽▽ Six-cylinder could make way for a 3.6-litre unit.

▽▽◁ Controls for the S124's rare Recaro CSE seats.





Key dates *(continued)*

September 1991 A124 300CE-24 Cabriolet makes its debut at Germany's Frankfurt motor show.

June 1992 Mercedes-Benz produces its two millionth 124-series vehicle.

September 1992 Second facelift adds new four-valve petrol engines that are more powerful and more efficient; new six-cylinder engines also arrive.

October 1992 Driver's airbag, central locking and electrically adjustable mirrors become standard-fit; four-cylinder models receive five-speed automatic.

June 1993 Further styling updates including new 'integrated' radiator grille design from the S-Class, and transparent indicator lenses; cars now badged with 'E' prefix ('E300 Diesel') and officially called 'E-Classes'.

August 1995 W124 Saloon production comes to an end - total units produced: 2,221,907 (including extended wheelbase saloons and chassis with part-bodies for conversions).

February 1996 S124 Estate cars are no more, their production total at the Bremen factory 340,503.

March 1996 C124 Coupe production ceases with 141,498 units built.

July 1997 A124 Cabriolet production ends after 33,952 vehicles made.







◁ M102 four-pot motor with Bosch KE-Jetronic.

△△ Just under 65,000 of these cars were built.

△ Interior in great condition after 147K miles.

▽ The 124-series Mercedes has universal appeal.

▷ Gary's 1991 230TE (130bhp)

Gary's no stranger to S124s, as the Estate is known, and purchased this beauty seven years ago. "I just wanted a non-rusty TE and this one came up," he says. "Of course, when I got it home I discovered rust. Not much – a small scab on the inner rear wing, probably minor accident damage that hadn't been repaired well. But other than that, it was solid because typically the front wings rust behind the indicators, and the inner wings rust especially underneath the washer bottle. More serious is rust around the rear subframe mountings, but this one's fine."

Gary says a deal breaker would have been rust in the jacking points and load space rear windows. He makes a distinction between the non-facelift cars made before 1993 and the facelift that came after. "Pre-1993 124s benefited from non-water-based paint. It's more durable. They had thicker underseal and the metal was better quality. Maybe it's the combination of those factors which helped their rust resistance?

"This car's been garaged all its life, which makes a big difference. I'm only the fourth owner and the one before me had it 20 years."

Gary's eye for a good car spotted some mysterious damp. "I noticed a little dampness around the inside of the windscreen," he explains. "Later, when I got the car home, closer examination revealed the screen wasn't bonded in place. I was horrified. It was just sitting in this gloop with only its weight keeping it in place. Under heavy braking the screen could have come out. I think it'd been replaced about three years earlier, however the bonding agent had failed. The owner had tried to cover it up with mastic. Possibly that's why he sold the car. It was easy to lift the screen out but it took me hours to scrape all the muck and black grime out. Only then could I get a brand new windscreen fitted in place.

"On the test drive, I'd noticed the suspension was rather hard," Gary continues. "I've come across this before and it's to do with the rear hydraulic self-levelling suspension spheres. There's one on each side of the Estate and, as well as fluid, they also have nitrogen in them. Over time, the seals deteriorate and the gas escapes causing the rock hard suspension. I had the spheres replaced by my local mechanic. It's the third Estate that he's fixed for me.

"Otherwise, all I've done is preventative maintenance such as servicing the wiper motor, changing the rubber hoses and replacing the automatic gearbox fluid and filter regularly," Gary confirms. "The only failure was the power steering hose leaking slightly. I had to get a hose made up because Mercedes-Benz no longer supplies them."

For a 33-year-old car, the paintwork has an ocean-deep gloss with no marks. Gary agrees. "As far as I know, the paint is original apart from the wheelarch I mentioned. Being non-metallic, it does come up well – just polish it and it looks like new again. Metallics are prone to lacquer peel which is costly to remedy."

Final thoughts

Sitting in the TE, the creme beige leather not only looks fresh but has that aromatic smell that oozes quality. "I've not had to clean inside, and there's no wear. The car's used only for long trips of 600 or 700 miles over a few days, but then I may not use it for six months. It's so comfortable and even the original air conditioning works. If only it had cruise control. That said, it's my ideal car and does mid 30s per gallon. The carrying capacity is enormous and there is so much glass – it feels airy and bright inside. And it has a certain class."

"The carrying capacity is enormous and there is so much glass – it feels airy and bright inside"

So what does Gary think of Neville's modified cars? "I do see the appeal of them, maybe as show cars. But really, I'm a purist." And what are Neville's thoughts on Gary's Estate? "I agree it's got class, it's uncomplicated. I like it."

Five generations of E-Class have arrived since the 124-series cars bowed out of production, but their appeal lives on. Here's to the next 40 years and beyond!



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A wonderful world



When David Brooks became heavily involved with Mercedes-Benz World in Surrey, his affinity for the brand rocketed to new heights. It led to a passion for the W123 and this restored 1984 230E – driven daily

WORDS **SIMON JACKSON** IMAGES **JASON DODD**

"My love for the W123 was born through Mercedes-Benz World in Surrey"

"His stoic resolve could hold no longer and ownership of a classic Mercedes-Benz beckoned"

▽ Colour-coded hub caps for the 14-inch wheels.

▽ 3.2 turns lock to lock; 4.3 turns without power assistance.









◁◁△ Mercedes built 245,588 of them (1980-1985).

◁△ Back then, the star emblem sat atop the grille.

△ Injected M102 motor; '230' had an M115 with carb.

The vast majority of car enthusiasts can easily trace back the specifics of their passion to a defining moment in time. Often an affinity for a particular make or model is born from a family member or influential friend, as many of us will testify first-hand, a gentle nudge in those formative years can so easily lead to a lifelong obsession. For 52-year-old David Brooks, the story could easily have been that simple. Flanked by a family of true petrolheads, including a father who drove classic sports cars, and two brothers with encyclopaedic automotive knowledge, David's destiny might have seemed a foregone conclusion. However, of all things it took a building to unleash his adoration for Mercedes-Benz – albeit a rather special one.

"We've always loved cars in our family and that stays with you," David smiles. "My dad drove a Jaguar E-Type and an old Bentley when I was growing up, and for many years my brother owned a W123 wagon in cream – the best colour. But my love for the W123 was born through Mercedes-Benz World in Surrey. I was Project Manager for the purchase and construction of the site, track and building."

Though he's since moved into a new line of work, David's impressive CV includes a wealth of previous roles at Mercedes, beginning in 2002. By his own admission, though, the most rewarding period of his career was when his involvement with the Weybridge facility blossomed. From the planning stages through a three-year construction period, David lived and breathed "M-B World", watching the place develop and grow before being asked to stay on as Operations Manager upon the site's completion in 2006.

David's career trajectory saw him become heavily involved with the classic car side of the multi-million-pound destination, from sourcing and caring for one of its star attractions – the 1955 300SL Gullwing (bought from celebrity chef James Martin), to hosting famous faces such as Sir Stirling Moss, John Surtees and Elton John. David regularly travelled all over Europe for what he was proud to call work, accruing a healthy network of contacts from the Mercedes-Benz scene along the way, and enjoying perks like a new AMG company car every six months. However, in 2010, his stoic resolve could hold no longer and ownership of a classic Mercedes-Benz beckoned. That it would be a W123 scratching his itch perhaps went without saying, and the perfect man to help source one was W123 expert, Mark Cosovich, of W123 World in Swansea – the guy who literally wrote the book on the model.

"I really liked the T-series wagon," David explains. "Mark found me one with 19,000 miles on the clock, and on its original tyres! It was in such incredible condition that it was really a museum piece, it went on display at M-B World for about five years."

The bright red 230TE is now a well-known example, but David was stuck between a rock and a hard place. While the estate was a fabulous machine, it was just too good to actually drive, and so following its time on show in Surrey, a spell in storage awaited before David sadly decided to part with it. All this coincided with a move into a new profession.

Having departed his position at M-B World in 2013 when he moved to further roles at Mercedes-Benz in Milton Keyes and Stuttgart, David left the fold altogether in 2020, going into business with his brother and setting up Artisan Memorials in Kent, which offers handcrafted headstones and gravestones. This called for the purchase of a utilitarian pickup fit for work purposes, but for David, now a diehard Mercedes stalwart, a truck was never going to cut the mustard as his daily wheels. Upon the sale of the 230TE estate, David asked whether there was anything W123 shaped lurking on Mark's radar, this time a car that could be used as Mercedes always intended – every single day.

"I'd always had a hankering for a useable classic car," David tells us. "And that's the thing about the W123; it's useable, it's old fashioned – there are virtually no electrics on it. Yes, it has electric windows and an electric sunroof, but there are no computers. And it's just built so well, in fact the build quality is absolutely amazing. I'm no technician, but I trusted Mark and I knew that if I bought the right car I could use it daily."

It just so happened that Mark was in possession of the perfect vehicle, a W123 ▷

Peter Jarvis

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



Mercedes 300SL Sports 1989 £45,750



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



Mercedes 300SL Sports 1988/9 £59,750



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



Mercedes Sports 1985 280SL £27,750



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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"David now commutes in the car every day without problem"

▷△ Just about to cross the 160,000 -mile threshold.

▷ Four-speed auto a worthwhile extra on the W123.

▷ saloon that he had owned for around a decade. While its restoration had been put off for the majority of that time, its rebirth was finally well underway. Previously owned by a Senior Consultant in London, and having spent much of its life in the south of France, happily this 230E was devoid of serious corrosion. All the same, Mark was invested in doing things properly with a full restoration, stripping back the Thistle Green machine to basics for a full respray, fitting a new M-B Tex interior, new woodwork, and a fresh four-cylinder engine. Finally, David specified period hub caps over the alloys the car was fitted with, a worthwhile expense in our view.

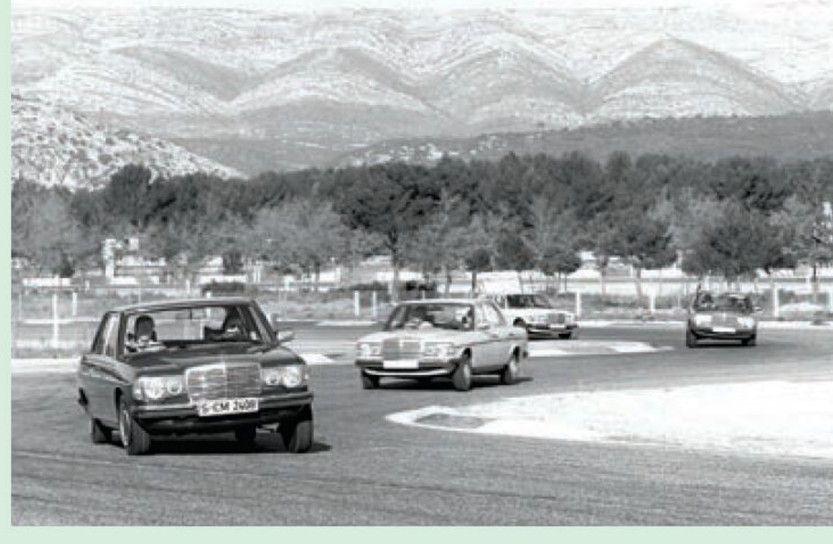
"It's in great condition," David enthuses. "The surprising thing about it is that, after driving cutting-edge Mercedes cars for 20 years, I'm now suddenly back in 1984 with a Blaupunkt radio and no reversing sensors! But it brings you back to basics and you realise that you don't need those things."

David now commutes in the car every day without problem. We're told that it starts perfectly, runs well and drives extremely smoothly. And of course, everything is functional, in fact it's all still under warranty from Mark – much like those new cars David was so accustomed to.

"As Mark says, it's like your dad's or your grandad's Rolex watch – so well built," said David of his timeless appreciating asset. "It puts a smile on your face, and gets such lovely remarks from people. These normally come from older chaps, but it does have a wide appeal – people are always coming up to me and saying how nice it is."

David is also finding the W123 a surprisingly practical partner for modern life. That period perfect MB-Tex interior is exceptionally family-friendly, especially when it comes to his five-year-old daughter, while the four-cylinder engine suits his short four- to five-mile commute, the ▷

Journalists put the new W123 through its paces on track.



W123 launch

An exclusive look at the 1976 event

Mercedes-Benz introduced its new mid-size saloon to automotive journalists from January 22 to 28 1976, at the Paul Ricard Circuit in southern France. The cars were transported from Stuttgart to France by a specially chartered train from the German Federal Railway. A total of 33 different models from the 123-series were showcased under the Mediterranean sun.

The media's reaction was very positive, praising both the car's engineering and design. Customers agreed, as the first year's production sold out quickly after the W123 launch, with used models often selling for their original price during that first year.

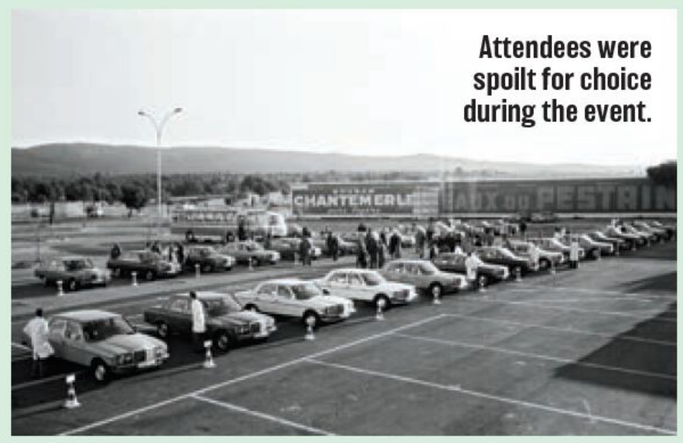
Technically, the 123-series introduced many safety innovations, and aesthetically it featured design elements from the current 116-series S-Class and 107-series SL/SLC models. For example, the headlamps were positioned horizontally rather than the traditional vertical setup.

The W123 was also notable for its excellent build quality, functionality and variety of engines. At the premiere in France, Mercedes-Benz presented nine different models, ranging from the 200D to the 280E, each with a wide range of features and equipment.

The launch event took place at Paul Ricard circuit.



Attendees were spoilt for choice during the event.



W123 LAUNCH IMAGES MERCEDES-BENZ CLASSIC

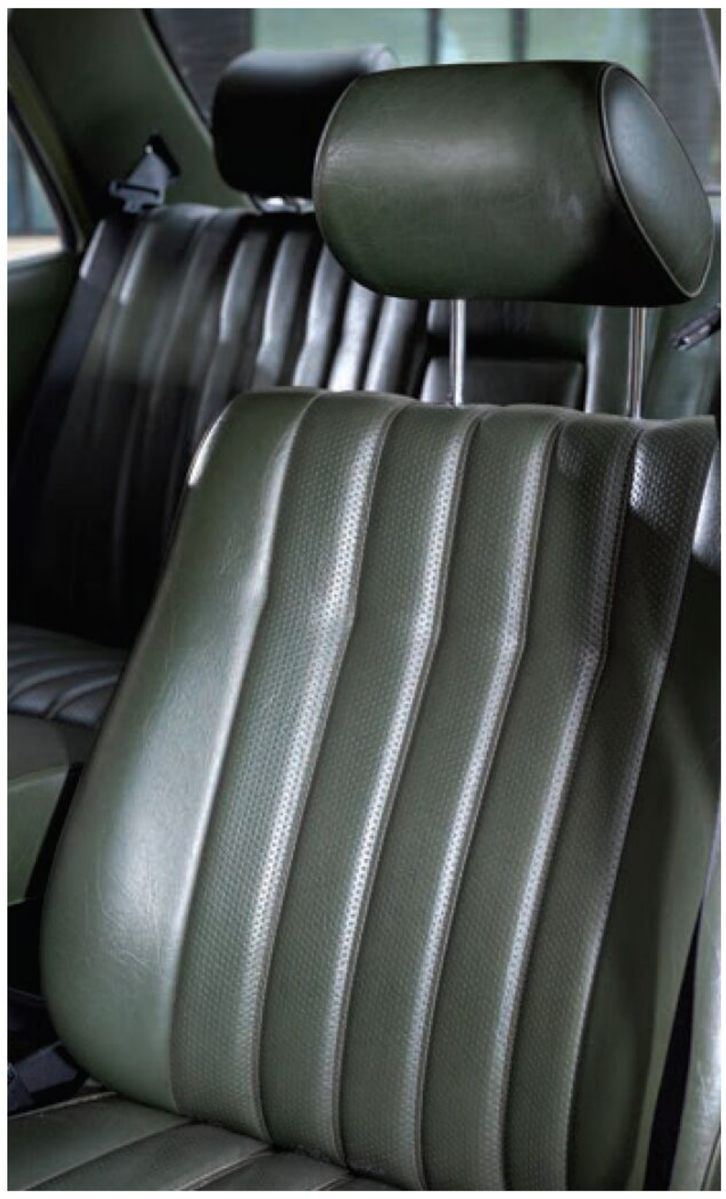
"I just feel so safe in the hands of Mercedes"

▷ 280E "a bit too juicy" for David. Furthermore, David is very open about his own limited mechanical ability, underlining how easy the robust W123 is to own, even for those with less hands-on experience of running an older car. David's advice for those in a similar position is simple: "Buy the absolute best that you can afford from the best supplier. I think it's cheaper in the long run."

Quizzing David on what the future holds for him and this striking W123 reveals a pretty simple answer – he'll continue to drive it daily, enjoying the virtues of this reliable modern classic. There is one trip, however, that we feel David should undertake some time soon – a return to his beloved Mercedes-Benz World in Surrey. "I will take it to M-B World," David smiles, "But, it does break my heart to go back there. I wrote the design brief for that building – my DNA is in it, and although it has evolved enormously since I left, it holds a very special place in my heart. It was a privilege to work there."

When we push David a little further still on what lies ahead, there's talk of owning another 123, perhaps a Coupe or an Estate, even an entirely different classic car altogether, but clearly his heart sits with Mercedes, and we can't see that changing. "Sometimes I think I'll get an old Bentley or something like that, but I just feel so safe in the hands of Mercedes," David admits. "I'd love one of those old 450SELs, but right now I've got a car that I can use every day and yet it feels special every time I drive it."

It seems that Mercedes-Benz, and the W123, are now very much David's world.



◁ The W123 has double-wishbone front suspension.

▷ Fresh MB-Tex and wood fitted during the resto.





△ 230E model the perfect halfway house for David.



Just the facts

Mercedes-Benz 230E (W123)

Engine M102 2,299cc 4-cyl **Power** 134bhp@5,100rpm **Torque** 151lb ft@3,500rpm **Transmission** 4-speed auto, RWD **Weight** 1,360kg
0-62mph 12.3sec **Top speed** 109mph **Fuel consumption** 23.0mpg **Years produced** 1980-1985

All figures from Mercedes-Benz for a 1984 230E as pictured; fuel consumption according to EEC urban

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North London, Rickmansworth, M25 Jct 18

07976 367111

Private collection. All owned for 5 years. May consider P/X.



280SE 2.8 Automatic | 1974 W108 86,000 miles, 4 owners, factory air conditoning, amazing condition. **£POA**



250CE | 1971 W114 81,000 miles, 3 owners. **£23,995 ONO**



280SE 3.5 Coupe Auto | 1971 W111 21,000 miles, original unmarked Black leather. **£150,000**



250CE Auto Coupe | 1971 (J) 84,000 miles, immaculate and rust free. **£19,995**



250CE | 1974 W114 White, 80,000 miles, totally rust free. **£22,995**



280CE | 1974 W114 Silver, e/windows, air con, absolutely rust free. **£24,995**



CL500 Coupe | 1998 67,000 miles, service history, 3 owners. **£10,995**



S420 Saloon | 1996 W140 Facelift Model, 43,000 miles, 2 owners. Immaculate. **£9,995**



280CE Auto Coupe | 1978 W123 65,000 miles, 4 owners, service history. Free road tax. **£17,995**



190E Auto 2.0 | 1991 66,000 miles, service history, Silver with Blue cloth, sunroof, e/windows, alloys, 3 owners. **£6,495**



190E 2.0 Auto | 80,000 miles, Black with Black leather, service history, sunroof, windows, alloys, 2 owners. **£6,995**



500SEC Coupe | W125 83,000 miles 3 owners Smoke Silver, leather, air con. Immaculate. **£POA**



500SEC | 1989 (G), just 40,000 miles. Hong Kong import. Rust free, immaculate. **£POA**



420SEC | 1986 82,000 miles, full-service history. **£POA**

“Providing comfort for four adults over long distances, the spacious cabin looked and felt particularly plush”



△ Twin-turbo V12 in the CL65 AMG a force to savour.



△ Marrying body and engine at Sindelfingen.



△ CL55 F1 Safety Car (2000) and Bernd Mayländer.

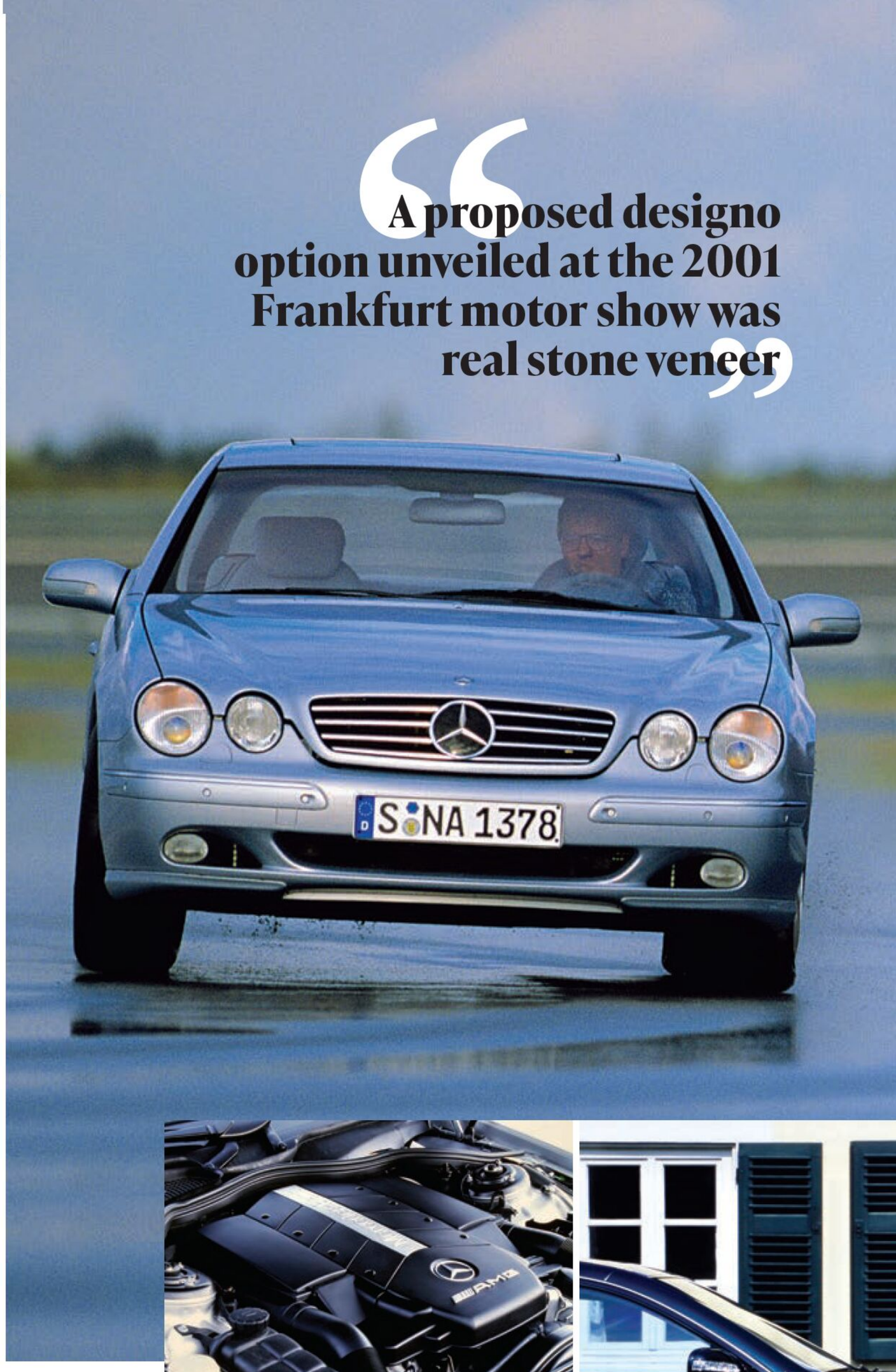
Everlasting beauty

Debuting to great acclaim 25 years ago, the technologically sophisticated 215-series CL still has exceptional road presence and power to match

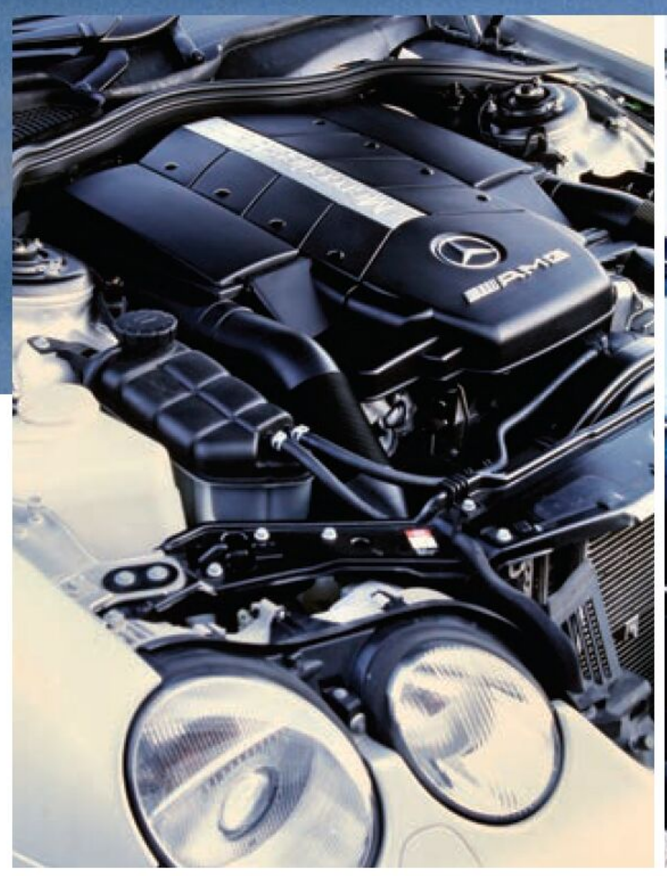
WORDS **IAN KUAH**
IMAGES **IAN KUAH, MERCEDES-BENZ GROUP AG & STEVE HALL**



△ High quality wood and leather used throughout.



“A proposed designo option unveiled at the 2001 Frankfurt motor show was real stone veneer”



▷ AMC's first CL55 kicked off with 355bhp.



Back in 1999, it was hard to imagine a sleeker example of the Mercedes' pillarless coupe art than the all-new C215 CL. Based on the W220 S-Class platform, the final Mercedes model to be supervised from concept to production by design chief Bruno Sacco appeared as a redeeming angel after the styling faux pas of its clumsy looking predecessor. Oozing a perfect mix of classic and modern two-door elegance from stem to stern, the new CL's perfect proportions effectively disguised near S-Class dimensions. Its distinctive 'face' featured large outer and small inner oval headlamps flanking the horizontal Mercedes 'sport' grille. At the other end of this clean, gently wedged profile the slim C-pillars clearly drew inspiration from the roof line of the iconic W111 Coupe. It was also the first production Mercedes whose front wings and boot were made from a light and strong composite material.

Although the big coupe's stance undoubtedly benefited from 18- or 19-inch wheels with wider rears, the entry-level CL500 looked just fine on the standard issue 17s, neatly side-stepping the "it needs larger wheels" comment that afflicts so many cars.

Providing comfort for four adults over long distance, the spacious cabin looked and felt particularly plush with the optional Exclusive Nappa Leather trim that swathed the dashboard and transmission tunnel in soft leather. Customers who vilified Mercedes for the W220 S-Class's backward step in cabin quality found nothing to complain about in the CL's cabin, which was sourced from a different supplier.

Engine range

A proposed designo option unveiled at the 2001 Frankfurt motor show was real stone veneer for the centre console and door trim areas. However, the highly specialised process required to hand-craft ultra-thin layers of stone to the requisite contours came with an eye-watering price tag that even the wealthy were reluctant to pay.

While the W111 Coupe offered the choice of a straight-six or a V8, and C126 owners experienced five capacities of the M117 V8 during its decade-long reign, C140 buyers were given the choice of eight or a dozen cylinders under their flagship coupe's prow. This '*spitzenklasse*' (top class) spirit lived on in the C215 whose V8 and V12 represented the middle and top engines in the three-valves-per-cylinder, SOHC, modular M112 V6, M113 V8 and M137 V12 all-alloy engine family.

On paper, the 302bhp/339lb ft, 4,966cc M113 V8 and 362bhp/391lb ft, 5,786cc M137 V12 were ostensibly more emissions friendly than their four-valves-per-cylinder and DOHC 316bhp/347lb ft, 4,973cc M119 V8 and 389bhp/420lb ft, 5,987cc M120 V12 predecessors. Unfortunately, bereft of the variable intake valve timing and DOHC arrangement of the outgoing 32- and 48-valve engines, the new 24- and 36-valve SOHC units delivered less power and torque as well as reduced punch and throttle response. In short, they were a backward step for keen drivers.

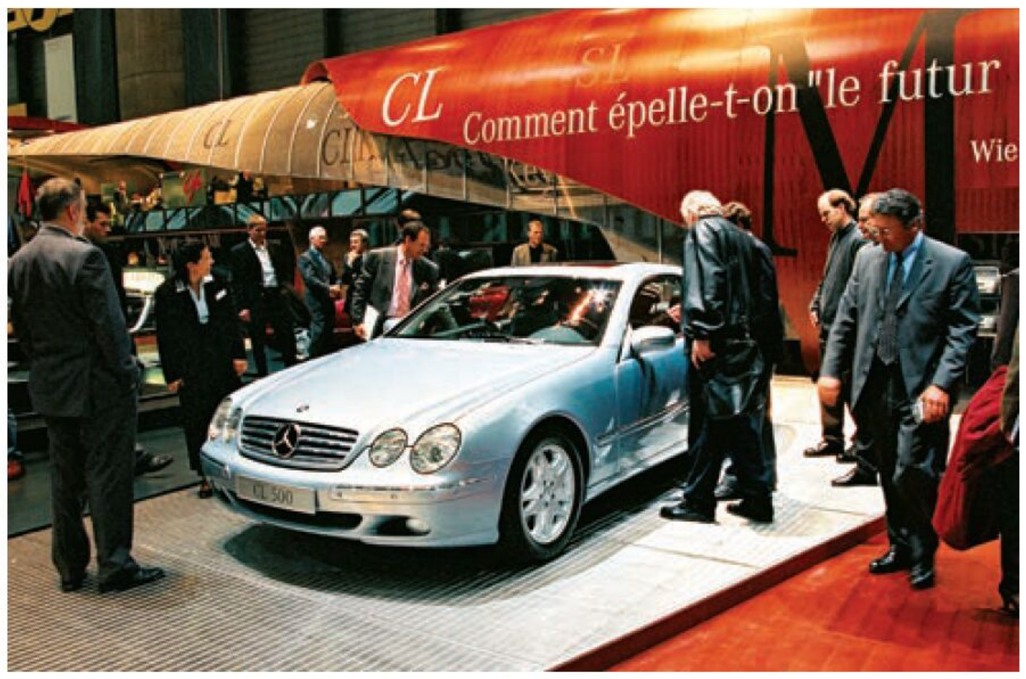
To redress the balance, the AMG-developed, 5,439cc, naturally-aspirated M113 V8 that made between 342bhp and





◁ Unique wheel design of the CL600 V12 model.

△ Body control improved by 68 per cent with ABC.



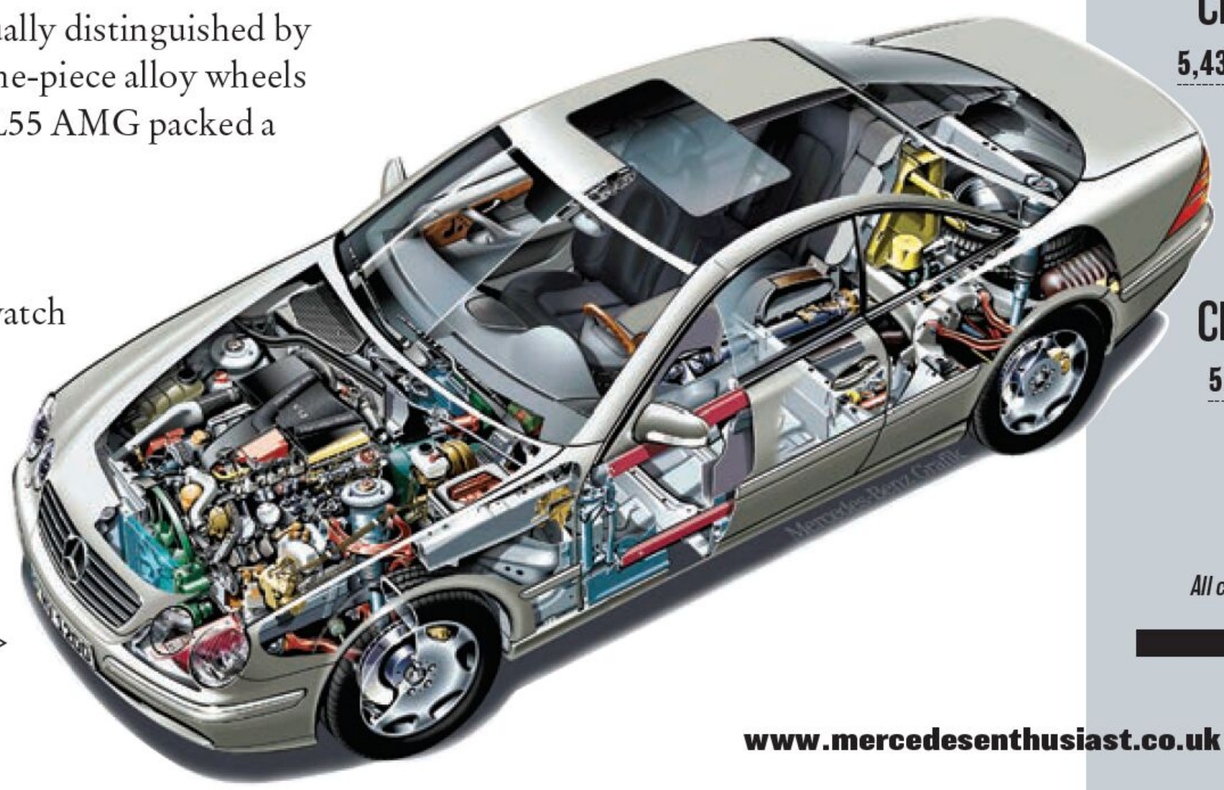
▽ CL500 debuts in 1999 at the Geneva show.

▽▽ Under the skin of the 215-series CL.

362bhp in the C55, CLK55, S55, SLK55 and ML55 AMG models depending on their intake and exhaust installation configuration, was installed in the CL. Visually distinguished by an AMG body styling kit, 18- or 19-inch one-piece alloy wheels and four oval exhaust tips, the exclusive CL55 AMG packed a 355bhp punch.

Power to please

Splitting hairs with the CL600 in the stopwatch race to 62mph, the CL55 AMG featured a bombastic V8 that was the sporting counterpoint to the silky smooth V12 that rolled out the red carpet whenever you asked for forward motion. A mailed fist in a velvet glove, it delivered a deep chested sporting roar under full throttle, ▷



Range at a glance

Pre-facelift

CL500 (1999-2002)
4,966cc M113 V8
302bhp/339lb ft
0-62mph in 6.5sec
32,224 built (up to 02.2006)

CL600 (2000-2002)
5,786cc M137 V12
362bhp/391lb ft
0-62mph in 6.1sec
6,348 built

CL55 AMG (1999-2002)
5,439cc M113 V8
355bhp/391lb ft
0-62mph in 6.0sec
Number built not documented

CL55 AMG F1 Limited (2000)
5,439cc M113 V8
355bhp/391lb ft
0-62mph in 6.0sec
55 built

CL63 AMG (2001-2002)
6,258cc M137 V12
438bhp/457lb ft
0-62mph in 5.5sec
26 built

Post-facelift

CL500 (2002-2006)
4,966cc M113 V8
302bhp/339lb ft
0-62mph in 6.5sec
32,224 built (up to 02.2006)

CL600 (2002-2005)
5,513cc M275 V12 biturbo
493bhp/590lb ft
0-62mph in 4.8sec
2,255 built

CL55 AMG (2002-2005)
5,439cc M113 V8 supercharged
469bhp/516lb ft
0-62mph in 4.8sec
4,163 built

CL65 AMG (2004-2005)
5,980cc M275 V12 biturbo
604bhp/737lb ft
0-62mph in 4.4sec
777 built

All cars electronically limited to 155mph

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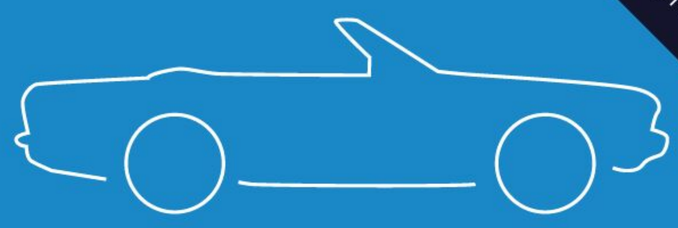
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△ Assembling the 6.0L M137 V12 at Berlin-Marienfelde.



▷ CL55 gained a supercharger at the 2002 facelift.



△ All CLs boasted a smart twin-pipe exhaust system.

▷ while its crisper throttle response emphasised the more direct line between your right foot and the stable of well-fed horses under the bonnet.

2002 update

The 2002 facelift brought a mild restyling of the front and rear bumpers and revised rear lights with four slim white turn signal sections in place of two larger ones. While the 302bhp CL500 remained mechanically unchanged, the revised CL55 AMG stormed in with the full-fat supercharged M113 K motor (469bhp) that had already made the SL55 AMG a legend in its own time.

The flagship CL600 also received a significant performance boost thanks to the all-new M275, 5,513cc biturbo V12, which simultaneously appeared in the S600 and SL600. Dispensing 493bhp at 5,000rpm, with 590lb ft of torque from 1,800-3,500rpm, this engine was chalk and cheese on so many levels compared to its short-lived, naturally-aspirated, 362bhp predecessor.

“The CL65 AMG arrived in 2004 trumpeting a mighty 604bhp”

The first non-Maybach coupe to use the enlarged M275 AMG motor, the CL65 AMG, arrived in 2004 trumpeting a mighty 604bhp and 737lb ft of torque. While its top speed was electronically limited to 155mph like all other Mercedes models, engineers revealed to us that an unfettered car could waft past 200mph with ease.

Yet the rarest of all C215 variants was far from the most powerful. This was the pre-facelift CL63 AMG of 2001, of which just 26 were made during November that year. Offered exclusively to selected AMG customers in Europe and Asia, these cars have attained a near Unicorn status against the backdrop of 6,348 pre-facelift CL600s sold between 1999 and ▷

Tuner specials

Brabus 5.8

Soon after the CL's 1999 launch, Brabus offered subtle body styling additions, uprated springs and 8.5J and 9.5Jx 19-inch three-piece Monoblock V alloys to give the car a more purposeful look. The 20mm lower sport springs required recalibration of the ABC suspension's control unit, and the finishing touch was the four-pipe Brabus exhaust.

In this pre-facelift CL500 era, you could tick the box for the Brabus 5.8-litre conversion, which used a long throw steel billet crankshaft and high-performance pistons to achieve a swept capacity of 5,729cc and a healthy 400bhp at 5,800rpm with 427lb ft of torque between 3,300 and 4,700rpm. When the supercharged CL55 AMG went on sale in 2002, the Brabus K8 upgrade took its output to 542bhp.



△ Brabus' engine upgrades for the early CL500 culminated in an output hike to 400bhp.



△ Extravagant Mirus convertible by Styling Garage – one is currently being restored.

Styling Garage Mirus

Styling Garage founder Chris Hahn is a trailblazer in the world of folding hard and soft top technology, and his CL500-based SGS Mirus Convertible raised many eyebrows at the 2005 Top Marques Monaco show.

Mirus is Latin for 'wonderful' or 'amazing', and this car was designed to address the needs of those wanting an elegant folding hardtop convertible Mercedes with four proper seats. The roof folding mechanism operates along the lines of a four-seat SL/SLK, but with the big curved rear window swivelling aft to lie flat before the roof panels fold downwards into the space under the double-hinged bootlid.

Sadly, the project's Russian investor proved unable to follow through, and the first car is still languishing somewhere in Moscow. However, the second car was found and brought back to the SGS workshop in Hamburg where it is currently being restored.

▷ 2002, and the grand total of 8,603 CL600s made between 1999 and 2006.

The heart of this pre-facelift CL600-based AMG special was a hand-built, 6,258cc (84.5x93.0mm bore and stroke) version of the 5,786cc (84.0x87.0mm bore and stroke) M137 V12, designated M137.980. With an output of 438bhp at 5,500rpm and 457lb ft of torque at 4,400rpm, this limited production naturally-aspirated engine also powered 70 S63 AMG L (V220) and five G63 AMG (W463), making all three prime collectors' cars.

> **The C215 left the starting gate with the five-speed electronically-controlled automatic gearbox**

Special models

The other sought-after CL is the CL55 AMG F1 Limited Edition, of which 55 cars were produced at the end of 2000. The only mechanical change was the addition of carbon-ceramic front brake discs clamped by Brembo eight-pot calipers.

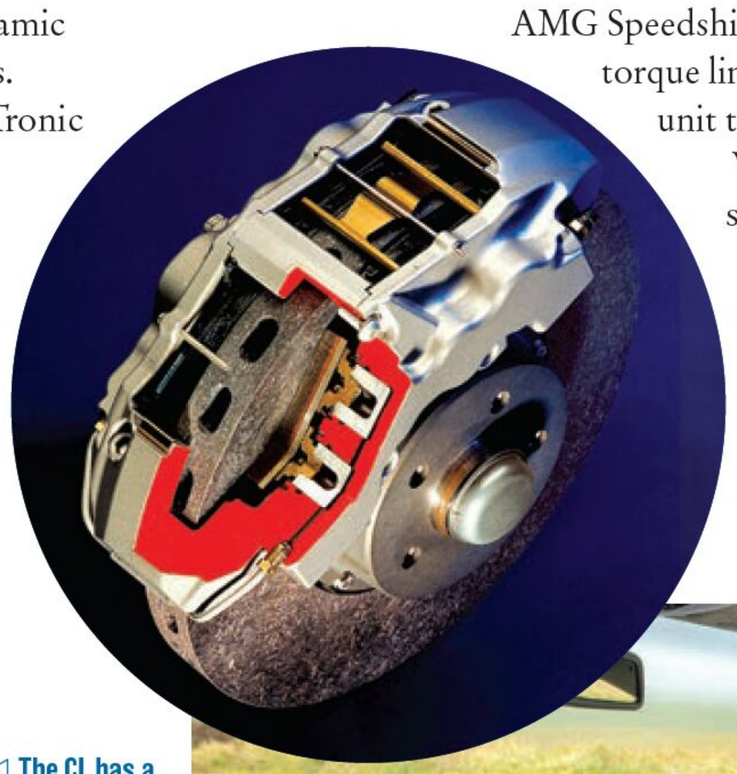
The C215 left the starting gate in 1999 with the 5G-Tronic five-speed electronically-controlled automatic fitted to V8 and V12 models, and the Mercedes-Benz Speedshift was introduced as a performance feature on an updated version of this gearbox in 2001. Speedshift provides manual mode and active downshifting with a lateral-g pre-set to ensure the transmission does not upshift mid-corner and destabilise the car. The AMG Speedshift five-speed auto arrived with the CL55 AMG in 2002, providing mechanical torque converter lock-up from first gear for better performance and response, along with a steering wheel button shifting feature.

Mercedes is unique amongst German carmakers in developing and manufacturing its own automatic gearboxes. Its 7G-Tronic transmission debuted on the CL500 in autumn 2003, and the AMG Speedshift version arrived soon afterwards. Due to torque limitations, the V12 cars retained the five-speed unit to the end of C215 production in 2006.

While Active Body Control (ABC) suspension gave the CL superior chassis dynamics to the Airmatic suspension on the S-Class, the latter's optional 4Matic was not offered on the much lower volume coupe. By close of play in 2006, Mercedes had produced a total of 47,984 CLs of all types excluding the 26 CL63 AMG specials.









△◁ The CL has a drag coefficient of just 0.28Cd.

△▷ CL55 F1's fibre-reinforced ceramic discs.

◁ Just 55 CL55 AMG F1 Limited Editions built.

▷ Large doors for a cabin styled like no other around.

▽ Few other road cars could match the 604bhp CL65.



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C55 AMG **£10,495**
W203. 2005. 47k miles. High spec. Superb throughout.

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THE eighth WONDER

If you were to say '2.3' in connection with a W201 Mercedes 190E, almost inevitably thoughts would turn immediately to the 16-valve Cosworth and all which that entails: its original genesis as a rallying project, the subsequent legendary one-make race at the newly minted Nürburgring GP circuit in 1984 (and one Ayrton Senna making the rest of the field look ordinary), the values of used 16-valvers going all over the place as their desirability was traded off against a reputation for less-than-stellar reliability... as Mercedes-Benz fans, we know it all.

And yet, the car you're looking at here is a W201 190E 2.3, but it's not a 16-valver. Instead, it's the eight-valve model, using a derivation of the M102 four-cylinder petrol motor which formed the basis of most 190 engines. It was an engine, and a model of the 190 family, that was originally only intended for the North

This is a W201 Mercedes 190E 2.3, but it's not the 16-valve Cosworth model that you probably know best of all. Instead, it's a rarer eight-valve model from the US, and its Polish owner explains how it ended up being cared for in Eastern Europe

WORDS **MATT ROBINSON** IMAGES **@KACZY_ & @WOUCZER_**



△ Once Marcin saw this 2.3 he had to have it.

> The car you're looking at here is a W201 190E 2.3, but it's not a 16-valver

American market, although it later made its way to other global points of sale – notably in South Africa, which is a right-hand-drive country like us – yet it never officially made it to the UK's shores. If you see any eight-valve W201 2.3s over here, they'll be imports.

But we're not in the UK for the car you see in these pictures. Instead, we're over in Poland, where this excellent example of the rarer, lesser-known 190E (yes, it had KE-Jetronic fuel injection, rather than a carburettor, in this format) 2.3 belongs to Marcin Sobolewski.

Marcin, in a revelation dear to this writer's heart, is also a motoring journalist over in his native land, which is how he came to be aware of the W201 Mercedes-Benz he now calls his own. And it's a cautionary tale, if you can call it that, of idly flitting through social media when your financial guard is down.

"I bought it three years ago, literally by chance," he explains. "I had four cars already and I didn't plan to buy anything else. But while I was browsing Instagram, I saw a post from my friend Rafal – he is a freelance photographer who works for our car magazine, among other clients.

"Two of his colleagues import older used cars from the US to Poland, with a focus on Mercedes-Benz and Lexus, and he takes photos of the cars offered for sale here. He put ▷

> It's a cautionary tale of idly flitting through social media when your financial guard is down

▷ photos of this W201 on his Instagram account. I saw it… and I just fell in love."

It's hard to fault Marcin for that, of course, as the car is sublime, but one of the things that will be obvious to we European Mercedes fans is that it obviously has the US-spec headlight clusters. That, though, was a big part of the appeal to Marcin. "I lived in the US for some time as part of my studies and I was there when I was first driving cars – I still have a lot of family over there and I just love US-spec cars with their side-marker lights, often high levels of standard equipment and the narrow mounting for the registration plates. I even like the '5mph' impact bumper, although I'm aware many people think quite the opposite, especially on cars like the R107 SL."

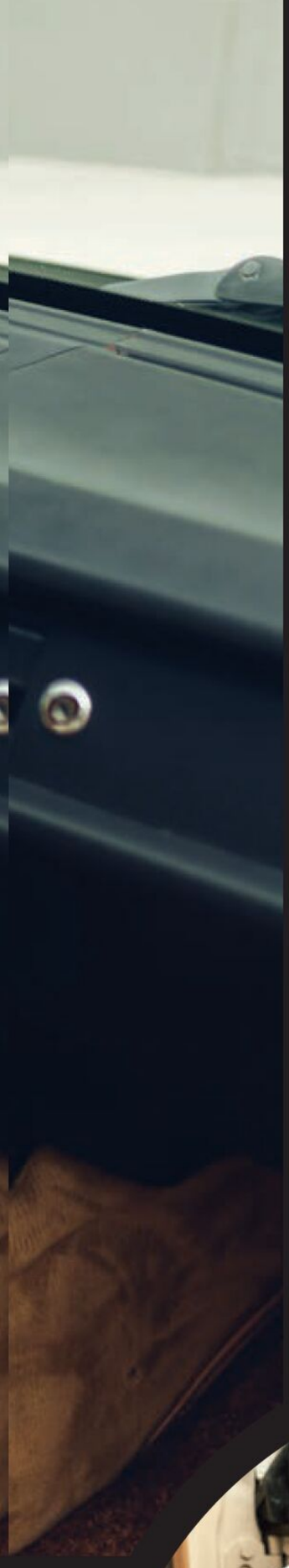
There was another, even more obvious reason for this 190E 2.3 catching Marcin's eye on Instagram.

"Colours make cars," he says, candidly. "I have a black W140 S-Class, and I have a lot of respect for Elegance configurations with darker paints, but when you go to car enthusiast meetings every W201 you see is black or navy blue or silver, or just maybe dark red. This one, of course – OK, on the one hand it looks like a German taxi! But on the other, it's just sunny and it makes you smile."

He was tipped over the brink of the impulse-purchase precipice when he saw the specification of the US 190E 2.3, which came with air conditioning. It was also reasonably priced at around €5,000, and the importers had already subjected it to a basic inspection in Poland that checked the fluids and brakes, and also revealed that this W201 – a breed of Mercedes known for hiding away plenty of ▷











◁ W201 cabins don't get much more inviting...

△ Headlights a subtle hint at this 190's origin.



The long way home

Baby Benz returns to where it all began

Later this year, Marcin has a big trip planned for the W201 190E 2.3 because he admits that while he commutes into Warsaw in it, he doesn't drive it as much as he'd like.

He'll remedy that in summer, though, because he's going to do a 2,000-mile round trip to the Mercedes-Benz Museum in Stuttgart in the car, to get some photographs in front of the Merc's spiritual home. He's also going to another carmaker's heritage facility in the German city – a famous neighbour and former partner of Mercedes, in fact. Can you guess who?

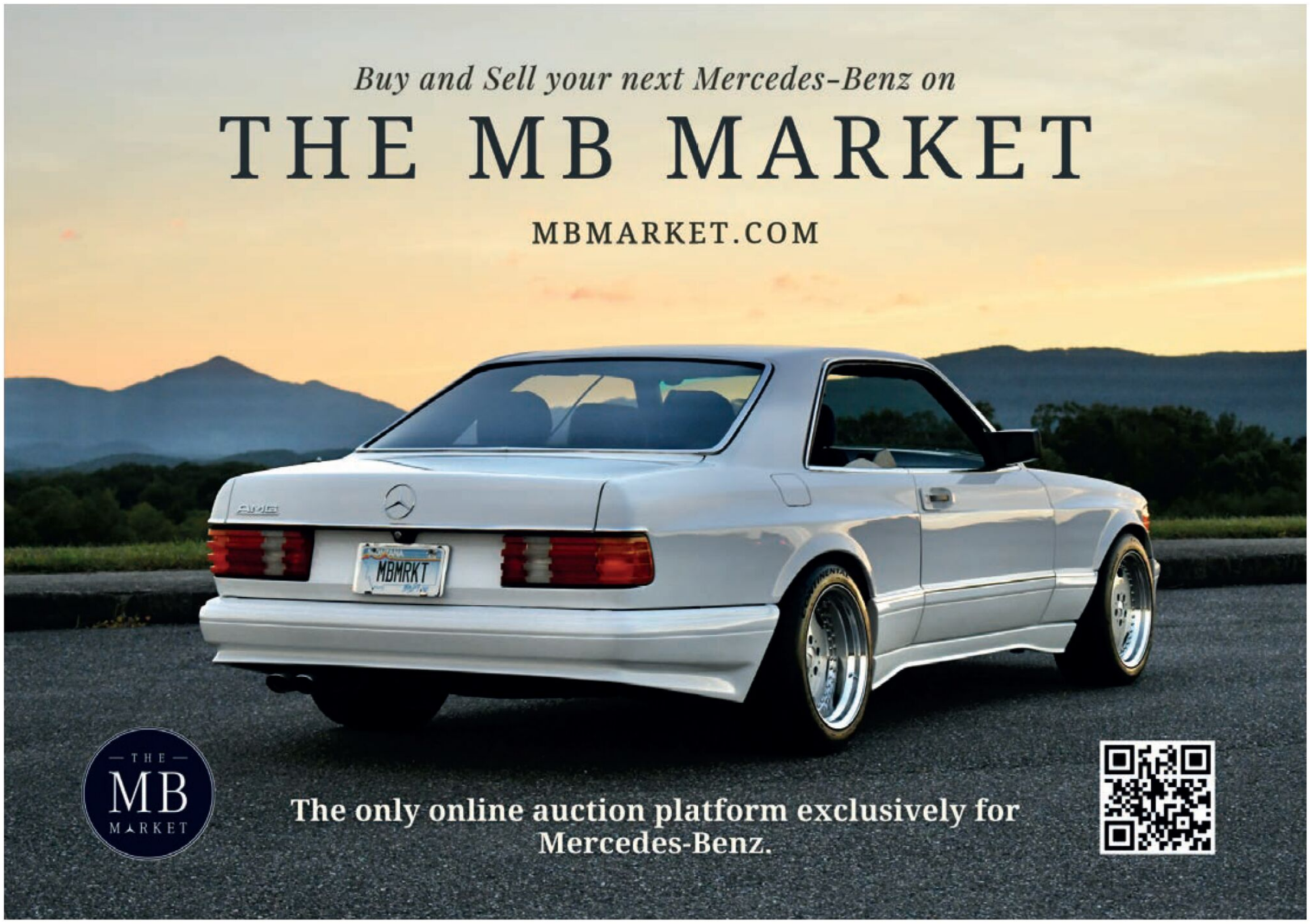
"In the future, I will probably try to sell it, but I'm not in a hurry," Marcin confirms. "But I want to catch some magical moments in it for its 40th birthday, so I'm going to do some nice trips and live my passion in my 'mayonnaise' baby Benz."

So, this ultra-rare 190 will have come full circle: back in the city of its birth, via the circuitous route of an extended stint in the United States before its rehoming near Poland's capital city. Although, if he wanted to really take it back to the point of manufacture, he ought to loop the ten miles or so out to Sindelfingen, one of two sites in Germany where the W201 was built. Taking in Bremen too might be a bit much, though...

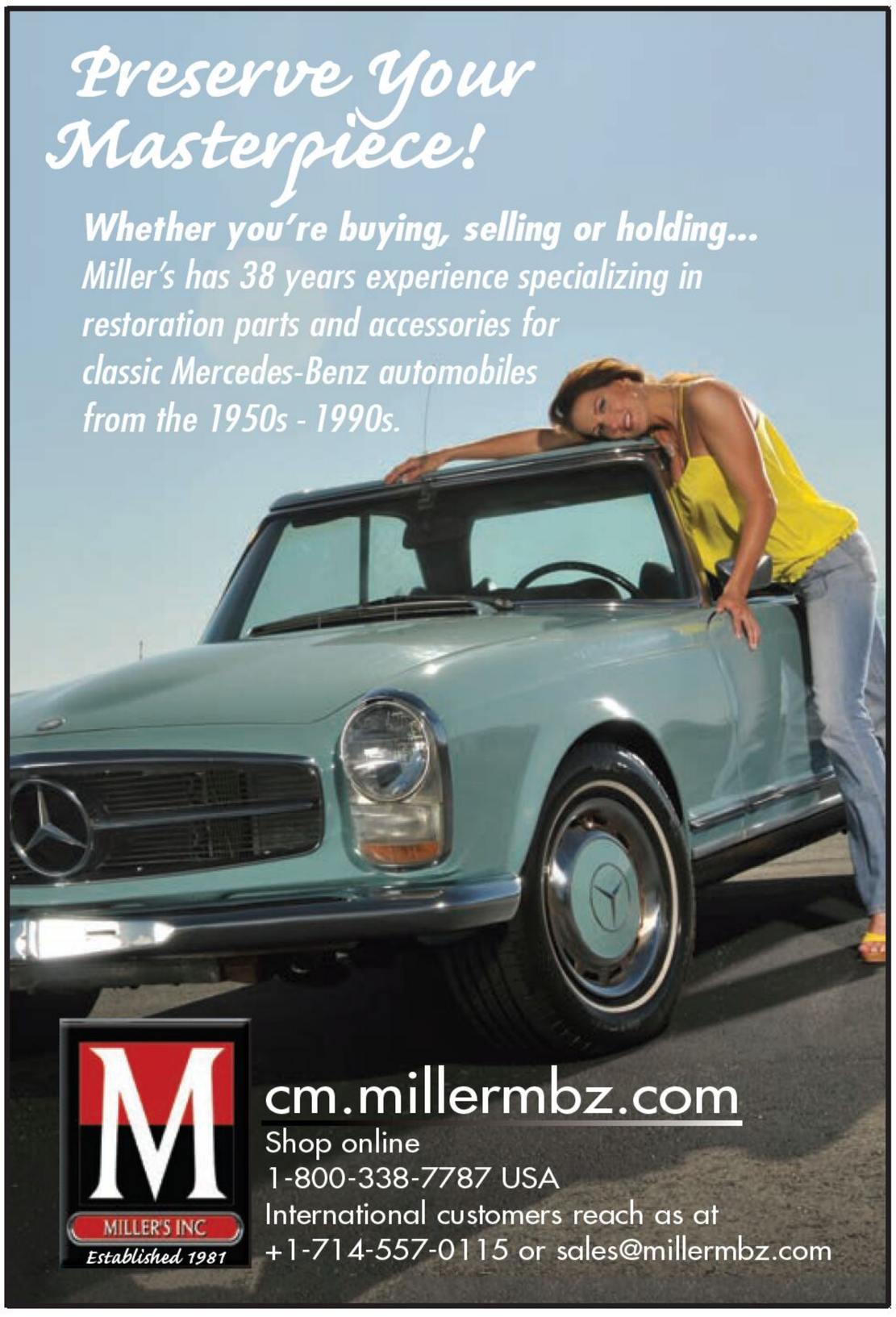
◁ 'Respect your elders' – wise advice!

◁◁ No side cladding on this early W201.

△ Vehicle in brochure a near perfect match.


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> In older Mercedes what I appreciate most is the ride comfort, ergonomics and quality

▷ rot, even on nicer examples – was only really rusty in its sills and nowhere else.

It's by no means Marcin's first three-pointed star rodeo when it comes to Mercedes ownership, though. And it's also comfortably the one with the smallest engine of his assorted models, as this is a guy who enjoys a 140-series S-Class – he's had three of the things so far.

"It all started with a 140-series 600SEL I bought about 12 years ago," he recalls, "and I've always made sure that I've had one or more older Mercedes-Benz ever since. The 140 was followed by a couple of C140 Coupes, with an S500 first and then an S600 after that – I had the 600 for more than eight years. The first two 140s were, shall we say, cars which gave me some vital experience in what owning an old Mercedes entails?

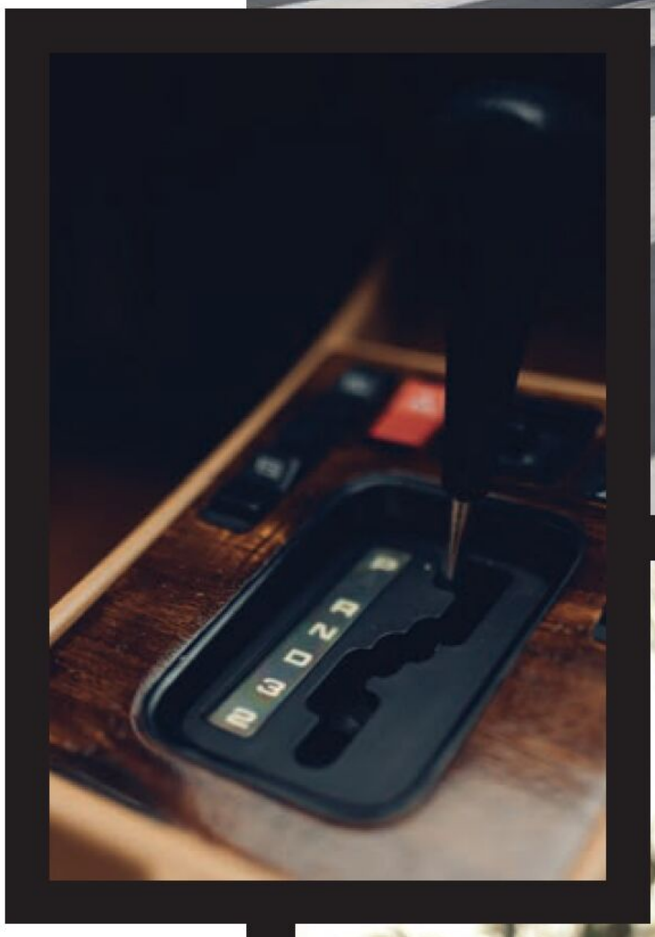
"Anyway, I now have a white R129 SL, a black 140-series 600SEL, and of course this 190E 2.3. By buying these cars, I have made my childhood dreams come true. Here in Poland, Mercedes-Benz models from this era have almost magical status. And because of my job as a motoring journalist, I get to drive lots of new cars anyway, and that's enough for me!

"Personally, I prefer something older, more timeless. Times change, life is short, so it's very nice to drive an older Mercedes roadster or V12 limousine. I believe that even if I sold them all, the strong and wonderful memories would remain for the rest of my life."

For a man who's had a succession of mighty-engined and top-end Mercs, the appeal of a four-pot 190 with a rippling 113bhp might seem odd. But Marcin says, "I'm not an AMG guy, I like sports cars but in older Mercedes what I appreciate most is the ride comfort, ergonomics and quality. Frankly speaking, I would prefer the 2.6-litre version because of the six cylinders, but this 2.3 is OK.

"Its engine runs smoothly, if the injection and electrical systems are in good order, and while it might not be an autobahn master, to drive into and out of Warsaw it's fine. On a motorway here, the optimal speed is 120 to 130kph [about 75 to 80mph], not just for the engine's sake but because this is an older car with brakes that are not as powerful as those on modern vehicles. ▷





△ Four-speed auto with Drive in the middle spot.



▷ Resplendent centres for these 14-inch alloys.

▷ **“For everyday use, I really appreciate the ride comfort and the subtlety of the W201. It also has a high level of chassis refinement – it’s like a miniature W126 S-Class.** That also refers to the build quality and the way the doors close. I’m loving the feeling of space in it too, because it has such a big glasshouse. And I’ve had lots of positive encounters with it. People ask about it, make appreciative gestures and smile towards it. I think it’s mainly because of its colour!”

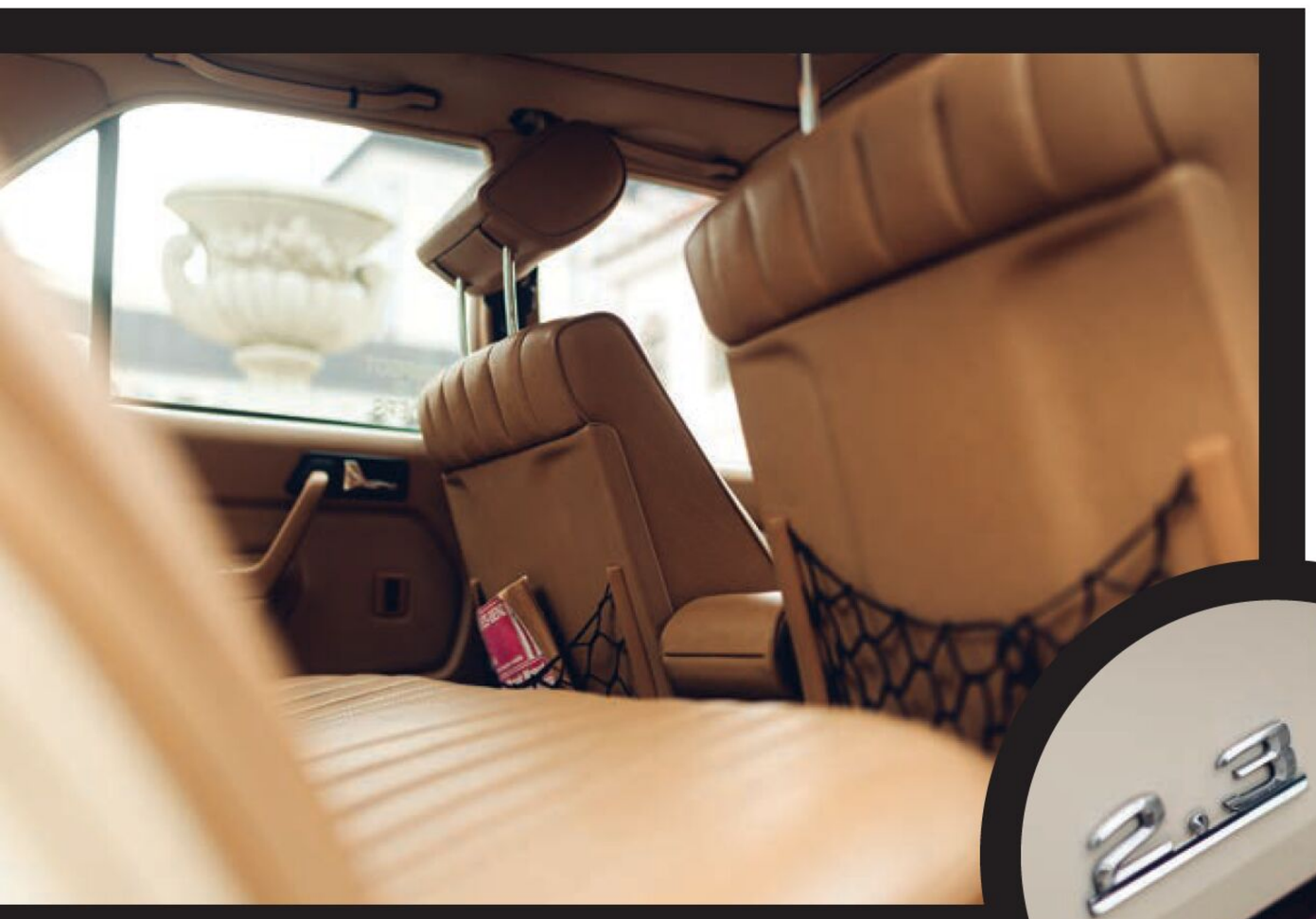
Of course, this import impulse buy hasn’t all been plain sailing. “The car always starts quickly, but it had some leaks, I had to change the sills for the rust, and it is always a game of roulette with paintwork and the body,” he admits. “I changed many interior parts, like switches, sun visors and backrests, but luckily you can find such bits easily as there were nearly two million W201s made [officially 1,879,629]. The biggest challenge was the engine and transmission were a bit rough, but new ignition parts and some fine-tuning by Warsaw-based specialists soon sorted that.

“I also did some of the work myself, painting the plastic bumpers – yes, it is possible! – and fitting a Becker radio with Bluetooth so I can listen to music from my smartphone. I’ve learned a lot as both an automotive enthusiast and a car journalist, and I’ve also had an exciting and pleasant time searching for parts.

“I’m left with a car that is really good in the city. It is quite small – maybe not so roomy in the rear, but it’s narrow in the body so driving through the urban areas is a piece of cake – and agile, and it doesn’t consume much fuel. It’s also 40 years old this year, which means I will no longer need a special registration to enter the centre of Warsaw.”

> “I’ve had an exciting and pleasant time searching for parts”

And so, Marcin and the 190’s future looks bright. He’s got to source a new headlining in the cabin due to two holes in the roof material – “there’s always something to do on an old car”, Marcin laughs – but otherwise he’s just going to enjoy his rare 2.3-litre W201, which might be a classic but is still “modern in regards its suspension and traction”. All of which means that this wonderful old four-door Merc is thankfully still going strong, even if few people knew that a less celebrated eight-valve 190E existed in the first place.







◁ Arrived in 1983 and departed in ’93 – 186,610 built.

◁◁ Later cars had revised seat backs to aid space.

△ 148,000 miles and counting for this four-cylinder.



Just the facts

Mercedes-Benz 190E 2.3 (W201)

Engine M102 2,299cc 4-cyl **Power** 113bhp@5,000rpm **Torque** 133lb ft@3,500rpm **Transmission** 4-speed auto, RWD

Weight 1,220kg **0-62mph** 10.6 seconds **Top speed** 113mph **Fuel consumption** 31.0mpg **Years produced** 1983-1993

All figures for a 1984 US-spec car as pictured

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SPECIALIST **CARS**

The spirit of freedom

Stunning CLE Cabriolet excels in 450 straight-six form, but you'll pay for the privilege of driving this latest four-seat drophead

WORDS **RAZIZ REHAN** IMAGES **MERCEDES-BENZ GROUP AG**



◁ Alloys size 18-, 19- and 20-inch for the UK market.



▷ Two individual rear seats with Isofix points.

▷▷ 11.9-inch central display as standard.



The CLE Cabriolet starts at just over £53,000 OTR in the UK market.

> “Not only must the CLE succeed three loved model lines, but it also must live up to the illustrious back catalogue that precedes them all”

The three-pointed star is no stranger to open top driving. On the contrary, Mercedes-Benz has one of the biggest back catalogues of successful and desirable cabriolets in perhaps all of car history.

One of my most memorable driving experiences was a casual drive in a 300SL Roadster around Mercedes’ Immendingen testing ground at a classic event. Of course, a vastly different car to the one we’re talking about here, but at its core that feeling of driving a beautiful and luxurious Mercedes droptop will never fail to bring a smile to our face.

Strange then, that the new CLE is the only Cabriolet the company now makes, notwithstanding the latest AMG-only SL. The entire model catalogue has come under scrutiny for being too expansive and thus a significant reshuffle has been ordered across segments, with the cabriolets perhaps the most affected of the lot. Previously, customers had the choice of the C-Class, E-Class and S-Class open tops, all three serving different lifestyles and purposes. Now, the burden falls squarely on one product: this new CLE Cabriolet. Not only must it succeed three loved model lines, but it must also live up to the illustrious back catalogue that precedes them all. So, big shoes to fill. And these were always shoes that focused on head-turning design, high luxury and an emotion-invoking driving experience.

The CLE starts off on the right foot. It might be the best looking modern Mercedes-Benz. Few design elements on the car are all-new. For example, the rear lights are directly off the GLC, the lower front end is borrowed from the new E-Class, and the rest of its design modus operandi from the latest C-Class. Yet instead of creating a mismatched monster, this Frankenstein approach has created one of the most elegant looking modern Mercedes, at least to this reviewer’s eyes.



Four or six?

It’s more elegant than the C-Class Cabriolet, significantly more muscular than the E-Class, and stays true to heritage with the classic soft top. Its size is more akin to the E-Class Cabriolet, particularly inside where it gives rear passengers more space than the C afforded. Indeed, the CLE is the largest cabriolet in the mid-size segment.

There are plenty of engines in the line up too, starting with four-cylinder offerings in the CLE200 (201bhp), CLE220d (194bhp) and CLE300 4Matic (254bhp). Regardless of variant, every engine is a mild hybrid, providing a short ISG-assisted performance boost of 23bhp and 147lb ft before the turbo spools, making turbo lag a thing of the past. ▷





◁ **Measures to reduce buffeting in the cabin.**

▷ During the car's international press launch, we bagged access to a CLE450 4Matic, promising an emotive straight-six engine note and a potent 376bhp. As we set off, the weather in Tenerife seems conducive to the cabriolet experience being bright and warm, but strong winds will also put the CLE's ability to cosset to the test. The M256 engine is a fabulous and modern, in-line six-cylinder, pleasurable not only acoustically but with power reserves that never feel strained. The mild hybrid system responds quickly and confidently to throttle inputs even in Comfort mode, and dialling up to Sport gives the car a different character altogether, in a way that did not exist in previous generations.

Sport mode in the 450 also benefits from an optional toggle in the system for 'Progressive Sport Sound' – tapping this augments the car's engine note in the interior using live analysis of the engine and really makes going faster much more exciting.

Even with the roof down, the CLE feels confident tackling the seemingly endless twisty roads. There was a worry that the lack of rear-wheel steering in the CLE Cabriolet would mean the car would feel much larger when pushed on more challenging roads. But if anything, the whole driving experience seems more natural and less intrusive than the exaggerated 'on rails' feeling the sibling Coupe sometimes gives. At the very least, it suits the more relaxed character that we expect of this variant. Shifting with the paddles is better than it's been in the past, with the nine-speed doing a commendable job in Sport mode, but don't expect AMG-like shifts; here things are engineered to be far more relaxed.

Open air comfort

Driving slower is perhaps an even more enjoyable experience. Despite the high winds there's hardly any buffeting experienced with the roof down. This is partly thanks to the standard-fit Aircap – a two-part electronic wind deflector. The experts present on the launch made quite a song and dance about this setup with an augmented reality presentation showing the aerodynamic prowess of the system, and rightly so. Even at motorway speeds, the combination of the windscreen deflector and rear wind deflector mean hardly any turbulence in the interior, and it manages to keep this reviewer's long locks looking significantly less mop-like than most open tops would.

That paired with the standard Airscarf neck heating should allay any fears about using this car throughout the year. The ride is also cosseting on perfect Spanish roads, even on the huge 20-inch optional alloys, though I suspect UK roads won't fare as well in this regard, so maybe stick to the 18s or 19s!

Making the interior a copy paste C-Class was a decision that I initially took issue with, as the CLE is meant to satiate the demands of both C- and E-Class customers yet sits at a higher price point (the base

▽ **Multi-layer top opens/closes in just 20 seconds.**

Other CLE Cabriolets at a glance

	CLE200	CLE220d	CLE300 4Matic	AMG CLE53 4Matic+
Price	From £53,030 (AMG Line spec)	From £55,070(AMG Line spec)	From £59,780 (AMG Line Premium spec)	Price TBC
Engine	1,999cc 4-cyl turbo + ISG	1,993cc 4-cyl turbo + ISG	1,999cc 4-cyl turbo + ISG	2,999cc 6-cyl turbo + ISG
Power & Torque	201bhp/236lb ft	194bhp/324lb ft	254bhp/295lb ft	443bhp/413lb ft
0-62mph	7.9sec	7.9sec	6.6sec	4.4sec
Fuel and emissions	41.5mpg 153g/km CO2	57.6mpg and 129g/km CO2	38.2mpg and 167g/km CO2	29.4mpg and 217g/km CO2







It is possible to seat four adults in the CLE Cabriolet.

CLE200 starts at £53,030 OTR in the UK). I felt customers would be left with an interior arguably less luxurious than the E-Class. But more time on the road told a different story, as I quickly realised that this is the right tool for the job.

The interior is sportier than the more luxurious concept in the E-Class, and it suits the sportier drive that this CLE offers. The slim sport seats keep you firmly in place, and the main centre screen angles toward the driver making them the focal point of this cockpit. Mimicking the Mercedes SL, that centre console screen comes as standard with an electric tilt function. This allows the screen to tilt forward and thus negates any sun glare when the roof is down, this capability proving far more helpful than expected during our time together.

Another nice innovation is how the leather seats have a special coating which reflect the sun's rays, keeping the seats up to 12C cooler. Of course, this feature will also be effective when the roof is closed.

Speaking of closing the roof, it takes only 20 seconds and conveniently can be done up to speeds of 37mph.

> "The mild hybrid system responds quickly and confidently to throttle inputs even in Comfort mode"

The roof's fit and finish is practically indistinguishable from that of a coupe when closed, thanks to the multi-layer construction and high level of sound deadening materials used throughout.

The six-cylinder is undoubtably strong and exciting, but the CLE450's starting price of £70,320 brings it dangerously close to the AMG CLE53 4Matic+ variant recently announced (and expected to cost from around £79,000). I suspect that for most buyers, much of what I've enjoyed here will also survive in the four-cylinder cars. Namely the head-turning design, clever standard-fit comforts, and the responsive mild hybrid system.

Trying to please everyone is an approach that often fails, but with the CLE it's hard to argue that this isn't a better product than what it replaces. It succeeds in giving C-Class customers more practicality, tech and luxury, while providing E-Class drivers with the sportiness they've missed out on. Put simply, Mercedes-Benz has created what for most will be the 'Goldilocks cabriolet', regardless of what previous model you subscribed to.

Just the facts

Mercedes-Benz CLE450 4Matic Cabriolet (A236)

Engine M256 2,999cc 6-cyl turbocharged **Power** 376bhp@5,800-6,100rpm **Torque** 369lb ft@1,800-5,000rpm **Transmission** 9-speed auto, 4WD
Weight 2,080kg **0-62mph** 4.7sec **Top speed** 155mph **Fuel consumption** 35.5mpg **CO2 emissions** 180g/km **Years produced** 2024-on

All figures from Mercedes-Benz; fuel consumption according to WLTP

High-riding heroes

Mercedes of just a few generations ago can prove winning used buys, but which of these two talented SUVs would prove the better companion - ML or GL?

WORDS **GUY BAKER** IMAGES **TERRY OBORNE**



◁ The ML can't compete with the GL's seven seats.



▷ These 20-inch alloys were extra on the GL-Class.

▷△ ML's AMG Sport spec adds these 19-inchers.

*"Just **like** their **contemporary equivalents**, these imposing Mercedes **weren't cheap** when new"*

They may not be good looking in the traditional sense, but well styled SUVs always catch the eye, with these two more mature takes on the SUV theme still possessing bags of road presence. With a robust stance and angular styling that has stood the test of time, both the W166 ML350 Bluetec AMG Sport and the even mightier GL350 CDI BlueEfficiency wear their sizeable Mercedes-Benz three-pointed stars with pride and exude confidence.

But just like their contemporary equivalents, these imposing Mercedes weren't cheap when new. In 2014, a brand new ML350 Bluetec AMG Sport would have set you back around £50,000 whilst a nearly new, 2012-registered GL350 CDI BlueEfficiency would have carried a similar price tag. However, the passage of time has been kind to Mercedes buyers, with a decent GL350 CDI BlueEfficiency now between £7,000 and £13,000 – and the more popular ML350 Bluetec AMG Sport a surprising £8,500 to £20,000 buy.

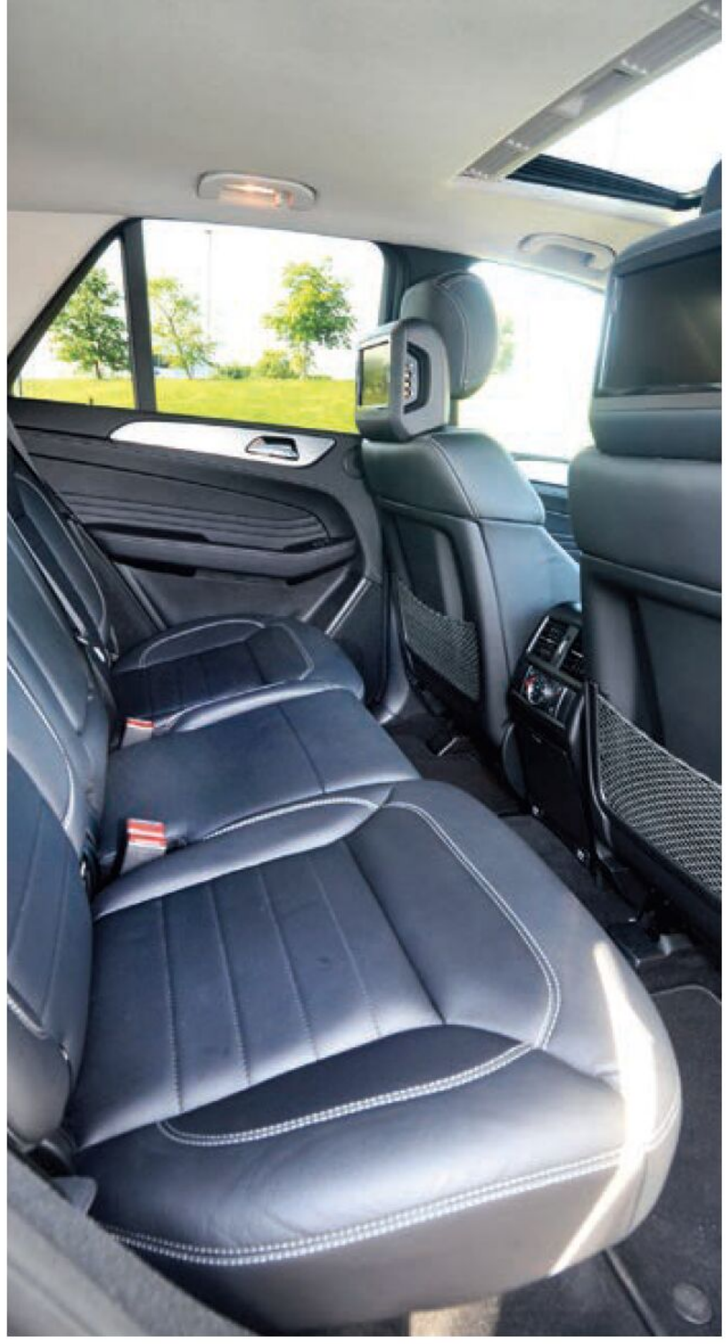
An older SUV isn't for everyone, of course, as they inevitably come with elevated running costs. However, if you're in the market for a pre-owned SUV then at these prices it would be foolish to not consider these two impressive Mercedes.

Brute strength

At first sight these SUVs look pretty similar. Both pack the same three-litre OM642 V6 turbodiesel engine and seven-speed automatic transmission, but from the side and rear they reveal their different characters. The ML350 Bluetec enjoys a sportier stance, whereas the chunkier X164 GL350 CDI BlueEfficiency appears more functional – and a tad more imposing too.

Slip into the driver's seat and the GL350 CDI BlueEfficiency claims a traditional-feeling Mercedes cabin complete with seating for seven, whilst the ML350 Bluetec exudes a more contemporary ambience, with slightly more modern tech to boot. And that's not surprising as the W166 ML is a slightly newer design than the X164 GL.

Now considered a medium-sized SUV, the 2,175kg ML350 Bluetec was produced between 2012 and 2015, before being rebranded the GLE350d with the release of the facelifted W166 model. Carrying Mercedes' updated 7G-Tronic Plus seven-speed automatic ▷





This ML has full Airmatic air suspension - a £1,700 option new!







△ The ML's rear bench has space to spare...

▷ Powered bootlids for both SUVs here.

▷△ ML's V6 diesel gives gutsy and silky power.



The ML350 Bluetec AMG Sport is 4,804mm long and 1,796mm tall.

▷△ Inside, the ML is bold, safe and still modern.

▷ Colour screen brightens the ML's two-hole cluster.



▷ transmission, the 2012 ML350 Bluetec claimed improved fuel economy, optional adaptive Distronic Plus cruise control, an active lane departure warning system, and Airmatic air suspension, as well as active anti-roll bars to help reduce body roll.

Open front and rear differentials were fitted, plus a four-wheel electronic traction system (4ETS) to simulate front and rear differential locks. And for those who really needed it, an optional Off-Road Package was also available with a two-speed dual range Magna Powertrain transfer case with a central diff lock, revised gearing, underbody skid plates, and a selectable six-mode driving system.

The marginally older GL350 CDI BlueEfficiency, on the other hand, is very much a full sized luxury SUV, weighing in at a substantial 2,505kg. Produced from 2009 to 2012, this GL packs a similar amount of power and torque to the W166 ML but that extra mass inevitably blunts performance. A 0-62mph time of 7.9 seconds (rather than 7.4 seconds for the ML350 Bluetec) does make a difference, and fuel consumption suffers too.

However, the four-wheel-drive GL350 CDI BlueEfficiency claims greater cabin space plus a plush spec that includes leather upholstery, electric seats, automatic climate control, 19-inch alloys and Airmatic air suspension. And most first owners also seem to have selected a reversing camera (a wise decision), and rear seat infotainment screens.

A Grand Edition version of the GL was also offered from late 2010 and featured a redesigned front bumper, a taller three-slat grille, 20-inch AMG alloy wheels, bi-xenon headlamps, and a revised two-tone interior.

Ownership

The sheer size of both these Mercedes SUVs – plus the fact that they pack turbodiesel motor rather than fire-breathing V8s – doesn't make for the sportiest of driving experiences. Compared to lighter more focused Mercedes they both feel weighty and somewhat imprecise, although the ML350 Bluetec in AMG Sport guise (pictured) is a tad more rewarding. But what they do offer is a commanding and comfortable driving experience that's relatively quiet and reasonably rapid.

As well as providing an excellent view of the

Match up

Model	Image and style	Driving experience	Buying and owning
ML350 Bluetec (W166)	7/10	7/10	8/10
GL350 CDI BlueEfficiency (X164)	7/10	6/10	7/10



Airmatic suspension is standard on this range-topping SUV



△◁ GL's later V6 diesel boasts even more power.

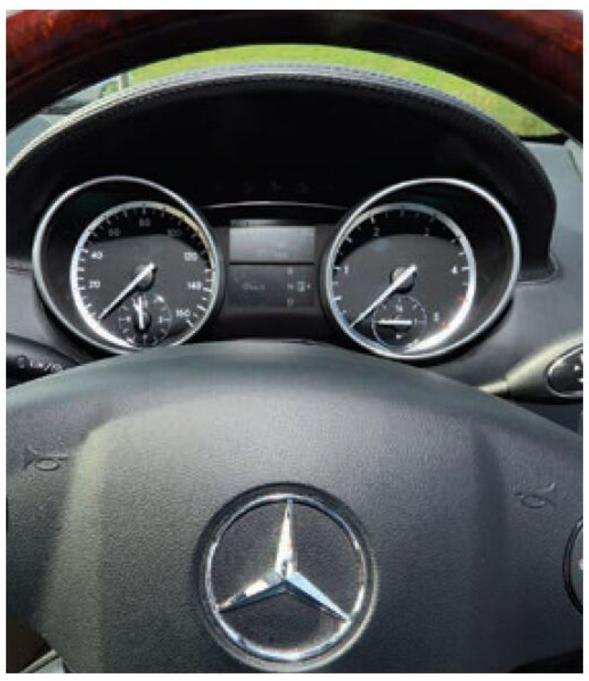
◁ One-touch control for GL's rearmost pews.

△ Optional rear screens in this GL350 CDI.









◁ More basic dials and central display of the CL.

◁△ CL's interior has a tasteful and traditional look.



The CL is 5,099mm long and 1,840mm tall – and certainly looks it!

road ahead, the driver and passengers should arrive at their destination relaxed and recharged, as long as the journey hasn't included too many pothole ridden back roads. The GL350 CDI does suffer from greater body roll on undulating surfaces, and its steering is less communicative than that of the ML, but it did come with Airmatic suspension as standard, whereas it was only an option on the ML350 Bluetec.

Grip-wise, however, you'll have nothing to worry about with either SUV, with both models demonstrating excellent traction, and braking in both is reassuring too, as long as you stick to sensible speeds. There is a noticeable difference in performance between the two though, with the ML350 Bluetec offering quicker acceleration at lower speeds. That said, the GL never seems to lack pulling power, even when heavily laden. But don't expect contemporary levels of fuel economy – a fully-loaded GL350 CDI in particular suffers when driven hard.

*"The GL350 CDI claims **greater cabin space** plus a **plush spec** that includes **leather upholstery**"*

Parking in tighter spaces requires a degree of experience even in the smaller ML350 Bluetec, and at nearly 300mm longer the GL350 CDI can be trickier. But both SUVs come with parking sensors as standard and the GL's greater carrying capacity will prove a bonus for some. With a larger boot and greater rear legroom it's a more relaxing place for rear-seat passengers, plus there's the potential bonus of being able to carry seven on shorter journeys.

Off-road, these four-wheel-drive SUVs can deal with the kind of situations most drivers are likely to face, but when it comes to running costs there is a significant difference. Although the GL350 CDI is more capacious and cheaper to buy, it's more expensive to maintain and service.

Falling into insurance group 48-49 rather than group 42-45 means higher premiums for the GL350 CDI, typical road tax is £675 to £710 a year (compared to just £385 a year for the ML350 Bluetec), and the official combined fuel consumption is just 30.7mpg, versus 39.2mpg for the smaller ML.

Buying advice

Both Mercedes possess sophisticated mechanical and electrical systems, so that means plenty of things that could potentially go wrong. And that's why we'd recommend you ▷



◁ Both cars have a gearlever on the steering column.

▷▽ ML's boot swallows 690 to 2,010 litres.

▷▽▽ The GL's boot takes 300 to 2,300 litres.

▷ only ever consider buying a well-maintained example with a blemish-free service history record and no known issues.

Connect any prospective purchase to a diagnostic machine before agreeing a price and ensure that all recalls have been addressed; your local M-B dealer can check this with the car's VIN. And don't be under any illusions – servicing and maintenance costs for both these SUVs can be high.

The OM642 engine employed in both models is readily remapped to just over 300bhp and 510lb ft but only consider a remap if it's in fine fettle. Speaking of which, there a number of known issues that can potentially affect this engine. These include failed turbo actuators, DPF/EGR problems, oil cooler leaks, failed NOx and engine sensors, oil leaks from the turbo seals and worn main bearings. Avoid any ML350 Bluetec or GL350 CDI with a noticeable ticking noise at idle or during low engine speeds.

A decent 164-series GL350 CDI BlueEfficiency will set you back between £7,000 and £13,000, with the majority privately advertised, but we'd hold out for a less risky, mint looking dealer example with a full service history and only a few owners. With relatively few around it may take you a few months to find the right car. Most have covered very high mileages and watch out for any issues with the door locks, tailgate, sunroof, and tail lights or any signs of rust.

Sunroofs can leak, leading to problems with the sunroof's mechanicals and electronics, check for any sign of underbody damage, and if there are issues with the Airmatic suspension they're likely to be expensive to rectify.

Current market

There are a lot more 166-series ML350 Bluetecs for sale, with prices ranging from £9,000 to £20,000. Again, we'd opt for a safer dealer example rather than a private buy, and make sure yours comes with plenty of options such as full Comand, the Premium and Lighting packages, a panoramic roof, running boards and heated front and rear seats.

ML350 Bluetec specific problems include blown engine sensors, electrical glitches, wiring loom issues, worn suspension components, jammed sunroofs and leaking Airmatic compressors and struts – if fitted as an option.

With a number of similar issues for buyers of either SUV to watch out for, there's not much difference between these two Mercedes models in terms of reliability, but enthusiastic drivers will undoubtedly find the ML350 Bluetec AMG Sport more rewarding to drive. It's also slightly cheaper to run, quicker on the road, and boasts a marginally more contemporary cabin design. But the GL350 CDI BlueEfficiency was better equipped as standard, is more capacious, and now comes with a lower price tag. So, which SUV would you choose?







*"There are a lot **more ML350 Bluetecs** for sale, with prices ranging from **£9,000** to **£20,000**"*

Just the facts

Mercedes-Benz ML350 Bluetec (W166)

Engine **OM642 2,987cc V6 turbocharged** Power **254bhp@3,600rpm**
Torque **457lb ft@1,600-2,400rpm** Transmission **7-speed auto, 4WD** Weight **2,175kg**
0-62mph **7.4sec** Top speed **139mph** Fuel consumption **39.2mpg**
CO2 emissions **189g/km** Years produced **2012-2015**

Mercedes-Benz GL350 CDI BlueEfficiency (X164)

Engine **OM642 2,987cc V6 turbocharged** Power **261bhp@3,800rpm**
Torque **457lb ft@1,600-2,400rpm** Transmission **7-speed auto, 4WD** Weight **2,505kg**
0-62mph **7.9sec** Top speed **140mph** Fuel consumption **30.7mpg**
CO2 emissions **242-254g/km** Years produced **2009-2012**

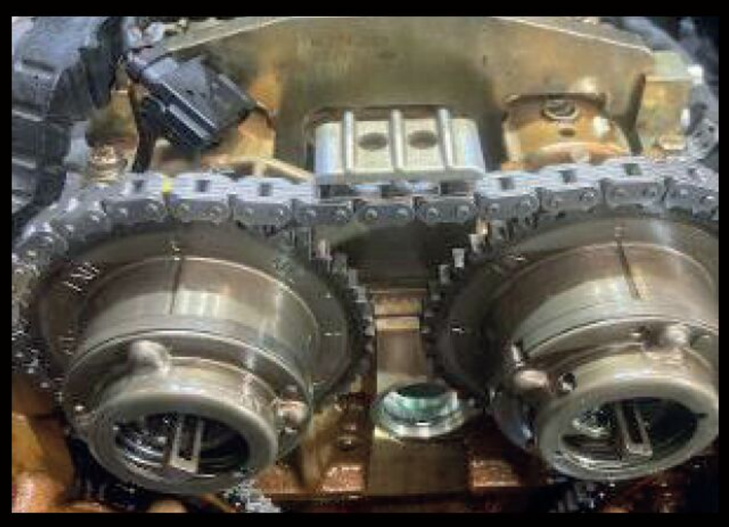
All figures from Mercedes-Benz; fuel consumption according to NEDC combined

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△ A host of AMG extras await those who enter.

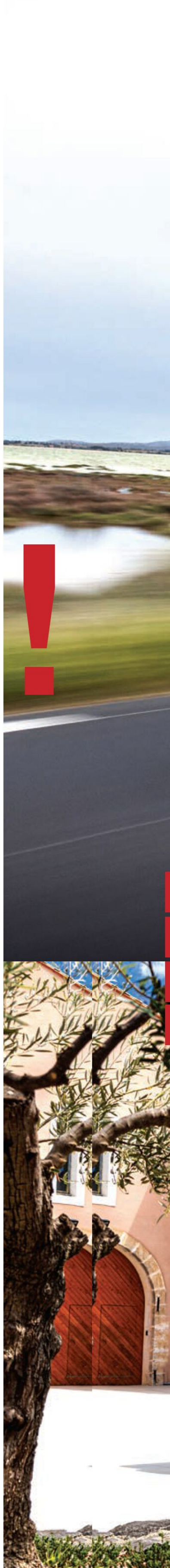
△△ AMG's 577bhp G63 is priced at £174K.

△△△ The £146K G500 (443bhp) has a petrol 6-cyl.

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

The battery-powered G-Class promises a whole new level of on- and off-road performance - we drive the new G580 with EQ Technology and see if it lives up to the hype

Charge!



It feels like this car has been a long time coming. Not the nearly 45-year lifespan that the G-Class boasts but rather – since the W463 model was introduced in 2018 there has been chatter about an electrified G-Class, and it's finally here. We've been in it several times before, experiencing the EQG – as it was called back then – in prototype form on- and off-road, on every surface from tarmac to sand, as well as on snow and ice. That's been exclusively from the passenger seat, with the engineers doing the driving. However, finally, we're in the seat that matters most.

The officially titled 'G580 with EQ Technology' is unquestionably the star of the new model line-up. With its four electric motors driving each wheel, it not only lives up to the G-Class's legendary off-road ability but also adds features like the G-Turn, allowing the G580 to spin within its own length, with the motors on either side turning in opposite directions to deliver its tank turn-aping party trick. It's a clever car. Impressive, too.

We'll come back to the electric G-Class because it would be remiss not to mention the changes Mercedes-Benz (and Mercedes-AMG) has made elsewhere in the G-Class line-up. The entire range has been enhanced and improved. While there's that battery-powered option, there's still a diesel – now the G450d – with a three-litre six-cylinder turbodiesel engine. The G500 now has a three-litre six-cylinder petrol engine, replacing the previous V8. Both these piston engines have some electric assistance thanks to the addition of a mild hybrid drive, which adds 20bhp to both models. It essentially works as a starter generator in unison with the combustion engines.

The result is better performance than the powertrains the new engine choices replace, with the diesel producing 362bhp and the new petrol unit delivering 443bhp. That is enough to propel ▷

"The officially titled 'G580 with EQ Technology' is unquestionably the star of the new model line-up"







◁ The 3,085kg G580 hits 62mph in 4.7 seconds.

◁△ Indicators atop the wings a key G feature.

△ Electric driving range is quoted as up to 294 miles.

“With fully charged batteries, Mercedes-Benz claims a range of 294 miles.”

△ G580’s boot swallows 620 to 1,990 litres.

▷ either to 62mph in under six seconds, with the diesel taking 5.8 seconds and the G500 shaving 0.4 seconds off that for a 5.4-second time. Quick enough, though the changes are really more about economy, with the diesel able to return as much as 31.4mpg on the official combined cycle and the petrol’s consumption being 25mpg. These are improvements, but you’re still not going to be on your local Green Party’s mailing list with those figures.

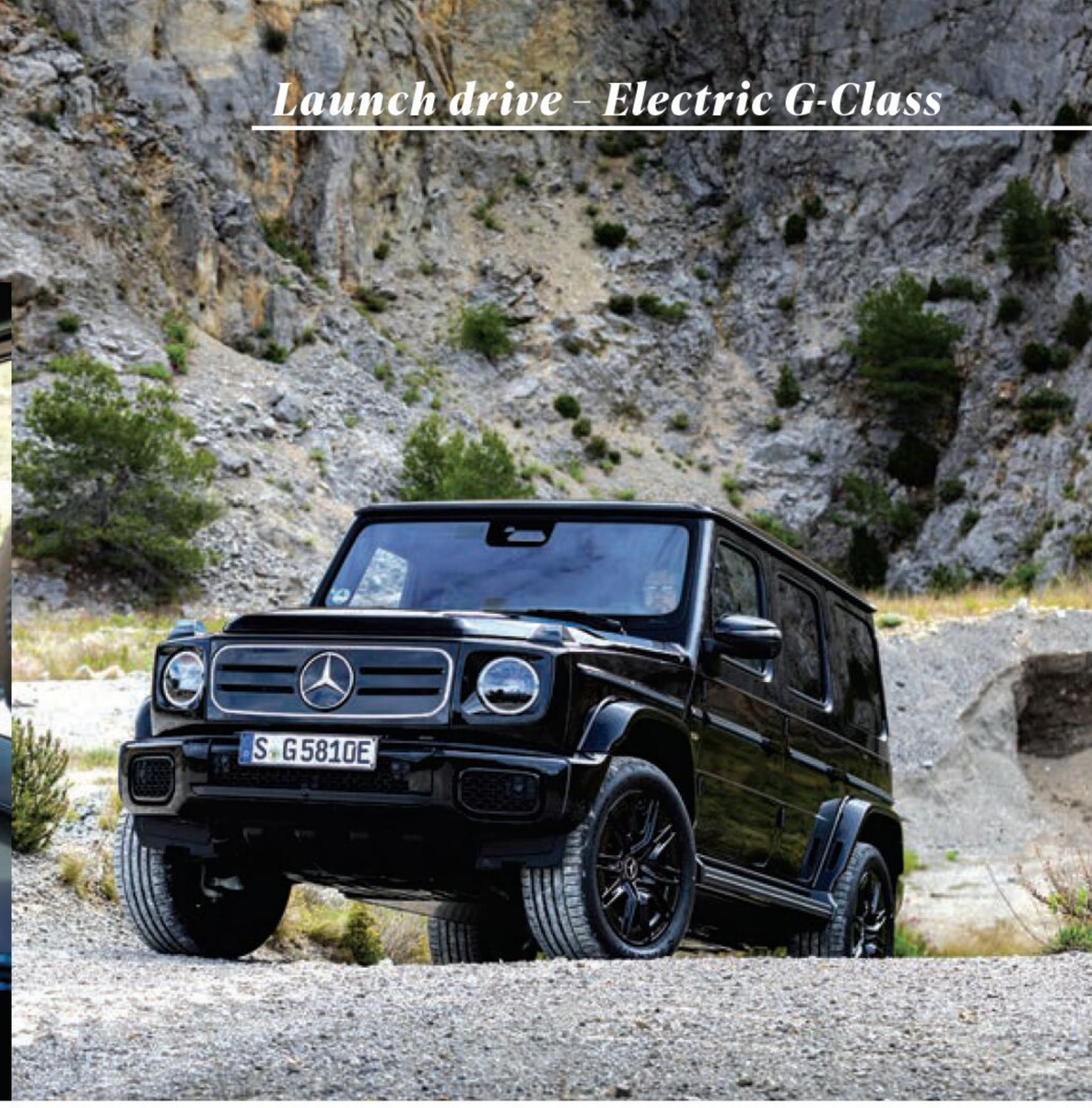
Ignore that and just enjoy the G-Class for what it is, and it’s difficult not to be impressed. The diesel is the preferred engine of the two ‘regular’ combustion choices, with its hugely torquey nature and the slight background diesel chatter that you’re conditioned to hear in a vehicle that can conquer the wilderness with such impunity. The G500 isn’t a bad engine in comparison, but it does somewhat feel like a halfway house between it and the somewhat unhinged output of 577bhp on offer from the mild-hybrid, four-litre twin-turbo V8 that powers the Mercedes-AMG G63.

The G63 isn’t just a powerhouse either; all the current G-Class models have the ability to produce driving dynamics somewhat at odds with their upright, off-road stance and the ancient tech of a ladder frame chassis with the body mounted on top. The G63 now takes it to another level. The AMG chassis engineers have added AMG Active Ride Control with active hydraulic roll stabilisation, and the result is utterly transformative. On-road, the G63 delivers sports car-like precision, and off-road, thanks in no small part to the loss of anti-roll bars, there’s quite ridiculous ability. Really, it’s staggeringly competent, wherever you want to go with it. The G rather suits a rousing V8 soundtrack too, especially an AMG one. This is a car of extremes, in every sense, and it could be difficult to justify – its gluttonous thirst for fuel in particular. The 19.1mpg achieved while driving the G-Class like a WLTP consumption test computer has no place in this world, but damn it – this Mercedes remains a master of its craft.

All of that brings us back to the G580 with EQ Technology, which salves the eco conscience a touch by adding a battery-powered alternative to that AMG model. Its output is broadly similar, with those four electric motors pushing out a combined 579bhp, and their torque exceeding that of the AMG G63 (858lb ft). With fully charged batteries, Mercedes-Benz claims a range of 294 miles. Having been in some prototype examples on a road trip in battery-unfriendly super cold Sweden, we don’t doubt that’ll be possible. Mercedes-Benz EQ electric models typically produce better than quoted range figures when they’re independently tested.

One of the appealing facets of any electric vehicle is the silence, something which caused Merc’s engineers headaches, as the G-Class’s brick-like aerodynamics produce a lot of wind noise. That’s fine when you have pistons causing a distraction, but not in this EQ model. Plenty of time in the wind tunnel led the engineers to reshape the A-pillars and add a slightly rounder profile around the top of the windscreen. These changes were so effective that they’ve been adopted across all G-Class models.









△ New wheel design and large touchscreen.

△▷ Zero emissions from this off-roader.

△ MBUX has additional off-road data.

▽ G580 EQ is priced from £180,860 OTR.

The hushed interior of the G580 is great in town or when creeping and crawling over any terrain you point it at, over or through – it really will go anywhere. However, on the road, we found ourselves reaching for the touchscreen (these are all new and bigger in all G's too) to find the G-Roar function. Normally, we'd be against such aural fakery, but it's done so well and sounds, well, kind of right in the G.

Indeed, everything feels right in the G. Having spent so much time in it prior to actually driving it here, it's not difficult to see why. Mercedes-Benz's engineers are fastidious with all their vehicles, but when it comes to the G-Class that obsession goes to another level altogether. They care, they really care, and they want to make the G the best vehicle it can possibly be. And here, thanks to the changes that have been made, it is, particularly at the most extreme ends of the range. However ridiculous the G might be, it's also utterly brilliant. As ever...



Hamburg-based Caro International GmbH is still in business, albeit under new ownership

▷ The 560TEL – for when a LWB S-Class Saloon isn't enough.





Dream big

Based on the flagship 126-series S-Class, this '560TEL' created by Caro International GmbH could be the ultimate modern classic estate

WORDS **ALESSANDRO RIGATTO**
IMAGES **COURTESY OF RM SOTHEBY'S**

In the automotive world, no premium or luxury car manufacturer has produced a top-of-the-range estate car. Rolls-Royce, Bentley, Audi, BMW, Jaguar and Lexus have all abstained from this niche. Similarly, Mercedes-Benz has never directly manufactured an S-Class Estate or 'T-model'. However, in the 1970s, British coachbuilder Crayford crafted a W108 Estate, and 20 years later, the German company Caro International GmbH created a one-off, 126-series 560SEL-based Estate.

Until the 1970s, estate cars were primarily functional vehicles, purchased by tradesmen and craftsmen for transporting goods or professional equipment. This utilitarian purpose was far removed from the luxury and exclusivity associated with the Mercedes-Benz brand. It is no coincidence that only the outfitters Binz, Miesen and IMA produced the now extremely rare estate variants of the Ponton, W110/111, and W114/115 Stroke 8 models during the 1950s and 60s.

The story changed in the mid-1970s when the Volvo 245/265 emerged in Europe and the USA as a refined and fashionable estate car, challenging the notion that all estate cars were merely work vehicles akin to vans with windows. Mercedes-Benz responded to the Swedish manufacturer in 1977 with its first production estate car, the S123 generation. In 1985, the German manufacturer followed up with the S124, which would become the first generation of the E-Class. It wasn't until 1996 that Stuttgart introduced a second estate model, the 202-series C-Class. In 2012, Mercedes-Benz expanded the T-Model range with a third high-end car featuring a tailgate – the CLS Shooting Brake (X218), complete with four-cylinder, V6 and V8 engines (diesel and petrol).

The Hamburg-based Caro International GmbH, unlike many similar companies from the 1980s and 1990s, is still in business, albeit under new ownership. The company specialises in creating armoured cars, stretched limousines, and customised interiors for premium vehicles, primarily Mercedes-Benz models including the G-Class and V-Class. Caro International also offers consultancy services for top car sellers and buyers, as well as repair and minor modification services. Interestingly, the firm's current digital catalogue even features a Fiat 500 Abarth!

With its expertise in high-end customisation, the German company created a brand new model that did not previously exist in the extensive Mercedes-Benz range. At the same time, performance-oriented tuners like AMG, Brabus, Carlsson, and Schulz focused mainly on enhancing power, torque, and cosmetic upgrades. On the other hand, companies such as Carat Duchatelet, Zender, Trasco, Styling Garage, ABC, Pollmann and





▷ A respectable 110,000km driven since 1990.

▷▷ Unique model badging for a very special Mercedes.

▽ Familiar 126 surroundings for front occupants.







▽▽ 118bhp 230S Universal by IMA (1966-1968).

▽ Beautiful Ponton estate created by Binz.









Sbarro added a touch of untold extravagance to the OEM Mercedes-Benz catalogue. These coachbuilders offered engine swaps, armouring, body style conversions, and exotic interiors – no request was too wild for them during the "decade of excess".

What makes the 560TEL by Caro special is its attempt to cater to Mercedes-Benz's most wealthy customers with a unique and unusual car that wasn't available through the worldwide dealer network. This one-of-a-kind creation also required a special homologation.

The 1990 560TEL conversion exemplifies Caro's reputation. Painted in Pearl Black metallic over black leather, this unofficial S-Class Estate began as a home-market 560SEL equipped with a standard 5.5-litre V8 engine delivering 296bhp, paired with a four-speed automatic transmission. It was delivered to Caro's Hamburg facilities as a new vehicle in May 1990. The German coachbuilder executed the conversion with exceptional creativity; cleverly, the tail lights and rear deck were sourced ▷



△ Boot capacity taken to a whole new level here.

△◁ Heated seats, second horn and more.

◁ 5,547cc M117 V8 makes 296bhp in this 1990 car.



> This unofficial S-Class Estate began as a home-market 560SEL equipped with a 5.5-litre V8



The contemporary yet understated style of the rear captivates from all angles





▷ from the contemporary S124, with high-quality modifications ensuring perfect fitment. The revised cargo area similarly features a blend of components from the S124, enhanced by Caro's expert coachbuilding staff.

Interestingly, Caro International GmbH couldn't use the S124's rear trio of windows, so each of the 560TEL's rear windows was custom-made. These windows are essentially scaled-up versions of the 124 units, cleverly designed to mimic an OEM finish. The roofline, C-pillars, and rear quarter panels were meticulously revised to maintain the SEL's proper geometry and styling with the new rear deck. The rear doors are completely new, with few parts shared with the four-door limousine derivative – mainly the inner panels. The shape of the rear and upper parts of the window frames were also modified to fit the new pillar design. A final detail is the chrome bars on the roof, designed to support ski or snowboard boxes, just like an 'official' estate from Mercedes-Benz.

The outcome is truly remarkable. In fact, it's hard to envision Mercedes-Benz surpassing this creation in this particular market segment. The contemporary yet understated style of the rear captivates from all angles, striking a fine balance between modernity and tradition. Despite the absence of official volume data, the cargo area's size is commendable, harmonising well with the overall body shape.



△ All-round electric windows; four-speed auto.

△△ Those in the rear have plenty of legroom...

△△◁ Sunroof tops off this remarkable Benz.

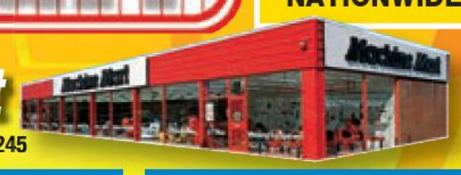
Considering both the initial price of a new 560SEL (DM141,500 in 1990) and the expenses associated with the estate conversion, the completed 560TEL boasted a hefty price tag exceeding DM337,000.

Three and a half years ago, RM Sotheby's auctioned off this luxurious maxi-estate during the January 2021 Scottsdale event. With the odometer displaying just 110,000km (or 68,000 miles), it fetched $112,000 (then around £81,000). For its new owner, it likely represented an exceptional deal: not only was it visually striking, standing out among other estate cars, but it also embodied the practicality inherent in every Mercedes-Benz T-model. Undoubtedly, a wise investment.

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JS MICRO 200	4L	400	£49.98		£59.98
JS MICRO 350	6L	500	£79.98	£105.59	£95.98

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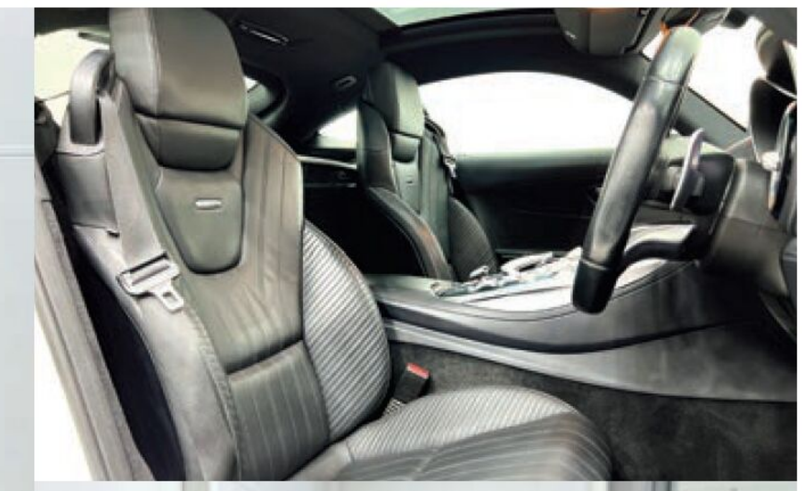
Cut a dash

V8 coupes represent impressive value for money at the moment, as our used car market expert reveals

WORDS **GUY BAKER** IMAGES **TARGA FLORIO CARS, BRIGHT CAR SALES & AUTO SPORTIVA**



Auto Sportiva's Diamond White AMG GT was stickered at under £55K.





V8 coupes still possess greater automotive appeal than many other models despite their limited practicality, high purchase costs and relatively inefficient powerplants. Maybe it's simply the visceral appeal of an aurally rewarding V8 motor, or perhaps those sleek purposeful lines – or just the potent performance on tap that so many petrolheads find irresistible? But one thing's for sure, they're a dying breed.

As with V12s a generation ago, the vast majority of drivers are now reticent to even consider buying a V8, favouring instead sports cars with forced-induction six- or even four-cylinder powerplants, increasingly with electric assistance. But that lack of demand has played into the hands of used car buyers, with many V8 coupes now exceptionally good value. So if you don't cover a large annual mileage and have access to another more practical vehicle, then why not treat yourself to some of motoring's most pleasurable drives?

And where better to start that quest than with the 217-series S500 Coupe? Boasting 449bhp and an ample 516lb ft of torque, this svelte CL-Class successor takes just 4.6 seconds to blast to 62mph, and packs a palatial spec to please even the most demanding of pilots. You can find mint examples at well under £40,000, with this 2017, designo Diamond White S500 AMG Line Premium for sale at Targa Florio Cars Ltd in West Sussex (www.targafloriocars.com) one of the best we've seen.

With just 18,000 miles on the clock, a pristine service history record and black leather



△ S500 Coupe looked at steal at sub £39K at Targa Florio Cars.





△ Legendary 6.2-litre C63 Coupe at BCS priced at just £18,485.

upholstery, the spec is as good as it gets and includes 22-inch AMG diamond cut alloys, the Memory Package, a Burmester 3D Surround Sound System, Climate Front Seats, Wood Polar Interior Trim, the AMG Sports Package, the Air Quality Package, the Light Package and the Comfort Heating Package. Phew! The asking price was a very reasonable £38,990.

Fancy something less expensive, but just as potent? Then look no further than a 204-series C63 AMG Coupe packing 451bhp. This silver Edition 125 Coupe from 2011 and offered at Bright Car Sales in Surrey (www.bcsale.co.uk) is typical of what's out there. With 69,800 miles, it was priced at £18,485 and came with full service history, 12 month's MOT and a comprehensive spec including black leather upholstery, 19-inch AMG multi-spoke alloys, a panoramic sunroof, Comand with a Harman Kardon sound system and an integrated CD autochanger, a reversing camera and heated memory seats. It's hard to beat at this price.

Sports star

However, if you are prepared to pay for the ultimate in used Mercedes V8 coupes, then a four-litre V8 biturbo-powered Mercedes-AMG GT is the car for you. Prices of earlier examples have fallen to previously unseen levels, with a fantastic 2016 example – such as this 20,000-mile designo Diamond White GT in Premium trim line at Auto Sportiva in Kent (www.auto-sportiva.com) – now priced at less than £55,000.

As well as a full service history record, this 456bhp coupe boasts 19-inch AMG alloys, the Premium Package, AMG's sports exhaust and high-performance composite braking system, an AMG mechanical limited-slip differential, the Comand Online system and a reversing camera.

▶ *Fancy something a bit more practical? Then check out our top three Mercedes-Benz Estates available for a £25,000 budget on page 76!*

Forecourt find

E320 Cabriolet Sportline (A124)

Few modern classic Mercedes are more universally loved than the 124-series E320 Cabriolet in Sportline guise, and if you are looking for an exquisite example then this wonderful looking, Brilliant Silver 1994 example at Edward Hall in Aylesbury would take some beating.

With just 39,957 miles and a fabulous specification that included black leather upholstery, air conditioning, electric memory seats, cruise control, an electrically adjustable steering column and remote locking, this gem also boasted complete service history, two keys and a plump history folder. And it could be yours for £29,995.

Dealer information:
Edward Hall Classic Mercedes
Tel: 01844 339666 or 07815 870911
Web: www.edward-hall.co.uk



△ Straight-six model offers 217bhp and a 8.5sec 0-62mph time.



▷ Sportline setup provides a slightly tauter ride quality.



▽ Black leather upholstery and wood in very good nick.

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 (20.3%)
2 A-Class (21.0%)
3 E-Class (13.0%)
4 CLA-Class (7.2%)
5 GLC-Class (5.2%)
6 GLA-Class (5.1%)

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 (29.2%)
2 Silver (19.0%)
3 White (17.5%)
4 Grey (17.2%)
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 49.0%
Between 50,000 and 80,000 miles 25.4%
More than 80,000 miles 25.6%

Fuel watch

How are used Mercedes powered?

Diesel 50.6%
Petrol 35.5%
Hybrid 10.7%
Full electric 3.2%

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 22.7%
Front-wheel drive 31.8%
Rear-wheel drive 45.5%

Auction spotlight

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

- **CLK320 Coupe Avantgarde** 3.2-litre, petrol, auto, 2003/03-plate, 122,000 miles, **£1,350**
- **CLS500 Coupe** 5.0-litre, petrol, auto, 2005/05-plate, 92,000 miles, **£3,900**
- **SL500** 5.0-litre, petrol, auto, 2004/04-plate, 78,000 miles, **£6,400**
- **B200d AMC Line Premium Plus** 2.1-litre, diesel, auto, 2017/67-plate, 48,000 miles, **£12,100**
- **CLA200 Coupe AMC Line Night Edition** 1.6-litre, petrol, auto, 2019/68-plate, 58,000 miles, **£13,700**
- **A180 Hatchback AMG Line Premium Plus** 1.3-litre, petrol, auto, 2019/69-plate, 86,000 miles, **£13,750**
- **C200 Coupe AMG Line Coupe** 2.0-litre, petrol auto, 2017/67-plate, 38,000 miles, **£15,600**
- **GLA200 AMG Line** 1.6-litre, petrol, auto, 2019/69-plate, 30,000 miles, **£17,750**
- **AMG SLC43 AMG** 3.0-litre, petrol, auto, 2017/66-plate, 33,000 miles, **£21,100**
- **CLS350d 4Matic Coupe AMG Line Premium Plus** 2.9-litre, diesel, auto, 2019/68-plate, 66,000 miles, **£21,500**
- **AMG A35 4Matic Hatchback Premium Plus** 2.0-litre, petrol, auto, 2020/20-plate, 36,000 miles, **£24,700**
- **EQC400 AMG Line** Electric, auto, 2021/21-plate, 30,000 miles, **£25,657**
- **C300e Estate AMG Line** 2.0-litre, petrol-electric, auto, 2021/21-plate, 29,000 miles, **£26,100**
- **GLC300d 4Matic Coupe AMG Line Premium 4Matic** 2.0-litre, diesel, auto, 2020/70-plate, 26,000 miles, **£32,200**
- **S560e L Saloon Grand Edition** 3.0-litre, petrol-electric, auto, 2020/69-plate, 40,000 miles, **£40,500**

And remember...

Always arrive early at car auctions, if in person then 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 by 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

£25,000 estates

No one does estate cars quite like Mercedes-Benz. Classy, capacious and stylish, over the years many Stuttgart models have offered a winning combination that rivals simply could not match. And whether you prefer your five-door to major on space and economy, or style and performance, there is a Mercedes station wagon out there for you.

Here we have selected three of the finest £25,000 options for your consideration, each offering a slightly different take on the Mercedes estate theme. So which one would you choose: a swooping CLA compact, a traditional and brilliant E-Class, or something from years gone by with investment potential to boot?



CLA200 Shooting Brake (X118)

If you fancy a contemporary estate with a high spec and great economy, but at a much lower price than a new model, then a two-year-old CLA Shooting Brake could prove an ideal choice. You can pick up a 2022 CLA200 AMG Line Premium example with around 25,000 miles for just under £25,000. Capable of returning 45.6mpg, the 1.3-litre, four-cylinder petrol-powered CLA200 provides sensible 142mph performance, impressive cabin comfort and lots of toys.

OUR PICK



E220d Estate (S213)

Need to carry larger loads? Then step up to an S213 E-Class estate instead, with the E220d AMG Line something of a default choice for many in recent years. As a result, there are now plenty of good used examples around with prices forced downwards – to the extent that you can now buy a 2018 Premium example with just 25,000 miles for a tad under 25 grand. You could better 50mpg on longer motorway runs, whilst the Estate's 7.7-second 0-62mph time and 146mph top speed underline the car's punchy performance.



300TE (S124)

Prefer something with a little more heritage? Then why not invest in a 124-series 300TE instead? Our £25,000 budget would bag a cherished and fully restored, 1991 or 1992 example with around 120,000 miles. You might have to wait for a few months though, as they don't come up for sale very often, but a hewn-from-granite 300TE can still be used as a daily driver. If you keep on top of any rust and maintenance issues, then this Mercedes-Benz should gently appreciate.

Latest products and accessories

Lorinser Power Module for CLS400d (C257)

If you're looking to maximise your CLS400d's performance then a Power Module from Lorinser could be just the ticket. With increased power and torque, combined with reduced fuel consumption, there is much to love with this upgrade.

Made in Germany, Lorinser's Power Module offers different performance modes, with a warm-up timer enabling you to decide when to deploy full power. And you can access the current status via a tailor-made app. Priced at €1,499 including VAT, you can expect to raise engine output from 340bhp to 371bhp and torque from 516lb ft to 567lb ft. Visit www.lorinser.com for full details.



Carluex Air



Carluex Air is a wireless CarPlay/Android Auto Adaptor with an in-built operating system so you don't need to connect it to your phone. The Carluex Air is plug-and-play, offering the ability to stream YouTube, Netflix and Hulu on your car's display screen without requiring a phone. Apps can even be downloaded directly, granting access to navigation, music streaming and more. It plugs into your car's USB port and allows you to enjoy the functionality of CarPlay or Android Auto. Find the Carluex Air at the Carluex website (www.carluex.store) for £136.

Mercedes-Benz Black Golf Umbrella

A perfect companion for the golf course, the official Mercedes-Benz Black Golf Umbrella provides reliable protection on rainy days. Alongside a special black top and black plastic tips, the umbrella has a durable fibre-glass shaft with fibre-glass ribs, providing a wind-proof design. An inlaid 3D Mercedes star badge on the front of the handle rounds off the umbrella's elegantly sporty design.

Available from your local Mercedes-Benz dealer this umbrella comes with a special water and dirt-repellent coating, plus a matching cover. 130cm in diameter, and 100cm long when close it's priced at £86.50. Just ask for Mercedes-Benz catalogue number B66958963.



Signature Tune AMG A45 S 4Matic

Want to make AMG's superhatch even more exhilarating? Here are your options...

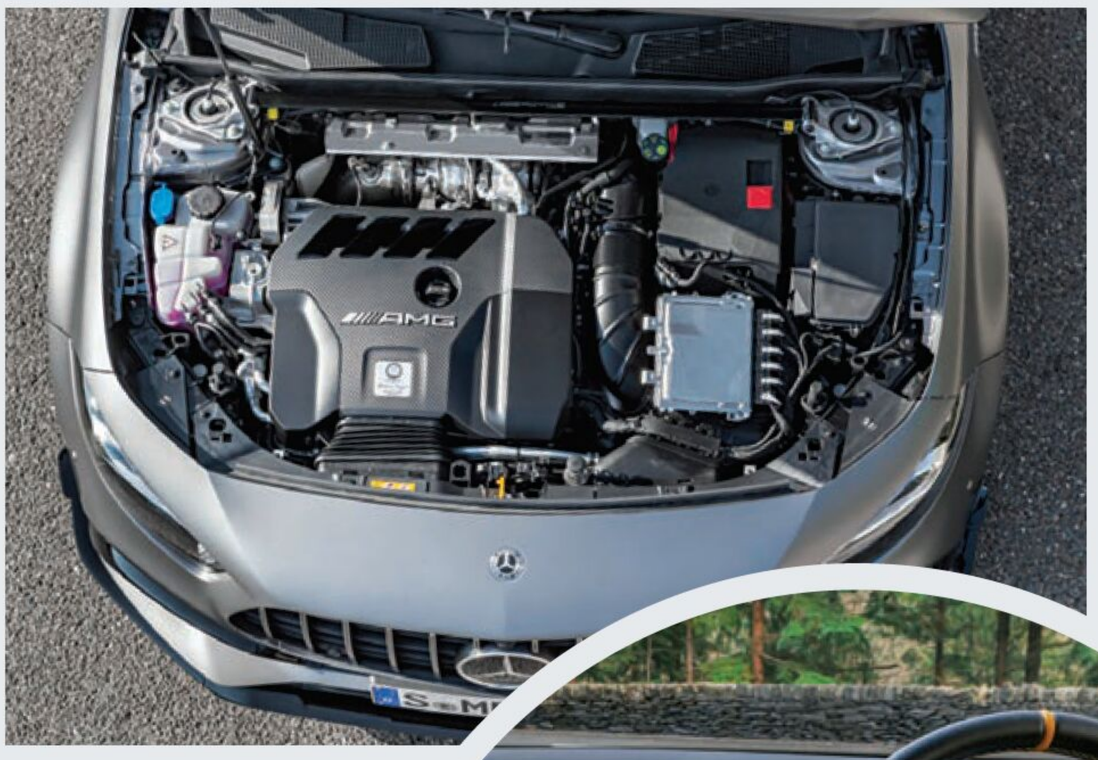


There are few quicker ways to tackle a B-road.

With more than a nod to Japanese rally reps of yesteryear, AMG's 177-series A45 S 4Matic (2019-on) took the two-litre turbocharged 4WD hatchback format and added a premium feel to the experience. And it's one of the quickest ways of getting from A to B.

More engaging to drive than its W176 predecessor, the W177's 1,991cc turbocharged four-pot produces 416bhp and 369lb ft of torque for a 3.9-second 0-62mph time and electronically limited 155mph top end. Power is transferred to all four wheels via AMG's eight-speed DCT gearbox.

Readily tuneable for even greater power, there are plenty of great examples for sale, and with the potential to easily elevate the car's performance, it's no surprise that it's a popular buy with petrolheads up and down the country. Here are the improvements you could make to your A-Class...



Engine

A simple stage 1 ECU remap will achieve anything from 450bhp to 500bhp, with up to 480lb ft possible too. Speed limiter removal could see you topping 170mph, with DMS Automotive, Mallory Performance, Avon Tuning and Brabus all popular tuning houses with owners.

Transmission

MSL, EST Performance and JR Tuning can all remap your A45's transmission and this could deliver marginally swifter gearchanges, smoother gearshifts, a quicker reaction to any paddle shift inputs and enhance the torque too. However, we'd recommend you do this at the same time as any engine ECU remap.

Suspension

A variety of companies offer both lowering springs and full-blown coil-over systems, with the most popular coil-overs being Ohlins, BC Racing, Brabus, Bilstein, and KW with its popular Variant 3 setup. However, Eibach and Koni seem to be the preferred choice if you're going for lowering springs alone.

Brakes

There are plenty of options for uprated pads and discs, but for the best in stopping power you'd be better with a big brake kit. EBC, Forge Motorsport, AP Racing and Brembo all produce these, and make sure to add braided brake hoses if they're not already included in the kit.

Wheels and bodywork

The majority of A45 owners seem to prefer AMG alloys, but if you're planning to take the car on track then most owners suggest 19-inch alloys are optimal. Brabus produce some lovely Monoblock alloys - as well as various trim options - plus there are also plenty of other body styling choices available from companies such as Lorinser.



Interior

Quite a few A45 owners have changed at least some of their car's interior, mostly adding colour-coding plus alloy or carbon trim options. Infotainment upgrades are also popular but make sure that you keep things simple if you're planning to sell on the car.



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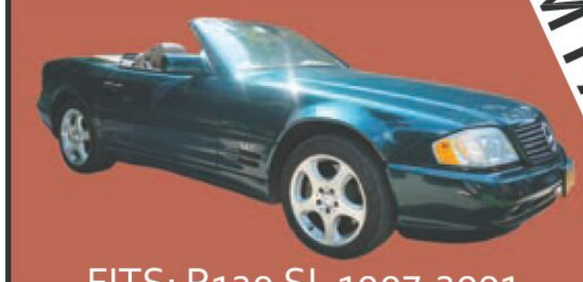
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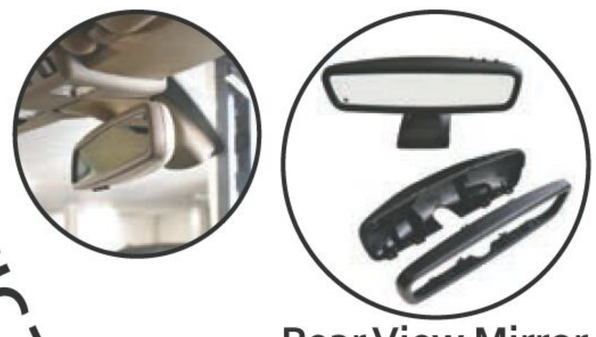
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FITS: R129 SL 1997-2001



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ICON BY MECHATRONIK

Rare SL73 AMG back on the road after 17 years



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CLASSIC CONVERTIBLE

Taking the scenic route in a 220S Cabriolet





Armoured S-Class by Brabus ✦ Historics Auctioneers' market report

AND MUCH, MUCH MORE!

Mercedes ENTHUSIAST October/November 2024 issue **ON SALE** September 20th

Contents are subject to change



Great eight?

What's not to love about a Mercedes-Benz roadster with iconic 'SL' badge and twin-turbocharged V8? Here's all you need to know about the pre-facelift R231 SL500

WORDS **DAVID SUTHERLAND** IMAGES **MERCEDES-BENZ GROUP AG**

When in 2001 Mercedes-Benz replaced the R129 SL with the R230 series, it largely redefined Stuttgart's flagship two-seat convertible. Out went the reserved, comfort-biased cruising nature of the SL and in came sleeker styling and a more sporting chassis, a Mercedes that for the first time since the 1950s could be truly considered a Porsche alternative, its electronic suspension a key aspect.

Since that successful transformation the SL story has been one of careful evolution. So much so that mistaking the facelifted R230 of 2008 with the R231 that followed four years later is understandable. The mid-term update adopted much of the look of the R231, the nose section in particular, some concluding that this made the newcomer seem an anti-climax when unveiled at the Detroit motor show in 2012.

But appearances deceived, as the R231 concealed the important technical advances expected in a new generation of SL. Most significant was the use of aluminium for the structure and front and rear axles, in fact the only non-aluminium parts in the R231's construction being the magnesium sections of the rear floor, and steel implants to boost the strength of the front body pillars. The bootlid was in a carbon composite, and in all, weight was reduced by around seven per cent.

New engines were packed with innovative high-tech components, such as spray-guided direct petrol injection, an all-aluminium crankcase, twin-turbocharging and an air-to-water intercooler. Impressive electronics included evolved safety systems like Pre-Safe, Neck-Pro, Attention Assist and Adaptive Brake.

It all added up to the highest-tech SL ever, and while priced at around £70,000 for even the 'entry' SL350, values have obviously dropped considerably. This premium Mercedes-Benz roadster is now an affordable buy for many drivers, but given the SL's complexity, is it a sensible one?

Design and engineering

The R231 was launched in a four-model line-up, the 3.5-litre V6 SL350 (soon replaced by the three-litre SL400 turbo) at one end and the 5.5-litre V8 SL63 AMG and six-litre V12 SL65 AMG, an eye-watering £139,000, at the other. However, the model we're concentrating on here is the mid-range SL500 (offered as the SL550 in North America) from before the 2016 facelift, which was around £80,000 when new. Now, you'll typically pay £20,000 to £30,000.

While the final R230 SL500 used a naturally-aspirated M273 V8 of 5.5 litres, the R231 equivalent downsized to 4.7 litres. But twin-

Spotted for sale

PRIVATE SELLER
SL500 AMG Sport
2013/13, Iridium Silver, black leather, 20-inch wheels, 103,000 miles, three owners, £18,900, West Yorkshire



"The model we're concentrating on here is the mid-range SL500, which was around £80,000 when new"

Just the facts

Mercedes-Benz SL500 (R231)

Engine	M278 4,663cc V8 biturbo
Power	429bhp@5,250rpm
Torque	516lb ft@1,800-3,500rpm
Transmission	7-speed auto, RWD
Weight	1,785kg
0-62mph	4.6sec
Top speed	155mph
Fuel consumption	31.0mpg
CO2 emissions	212g/km
Years produced	2012-2016

All figures from Mercedes-Benz for the pre-facelift R231 SL500; fuel consumption according to NEDC combined; top speed electronically limited

turbos in the new M278 V8, labelled BlueDirect, more than compensated, 429bhp at 5,250rpm and 516lb ft torque between 1,800rpm and 3,500rpm representing increases of 14 and 32 per cent respectively. On top of that, the newer model was 125kg lighter at 1,785kg, so no surprise that the yardstick 0-62mph dash was cut from 5.4 to 4.6 seconds.

The transmission was the seven-speed automatic, 7G-Tronic Plus, an updated version of the R230's 7G-Tronic. Operated by the stubby Direct Select lever, it offered four modes, from comfort to "emphatically agile", while the throttle blipping on downshifts added to the sporty ambience. AMG-tuned coil sprung suspension served front and rear, the roll-supressing Active Body Control (ABC) active suspension system a £3,000-plus option.

A sole trim pack for the SL500 (and SL350) was offered: AMG Sport. This comprised 19-inch, five-spoke AMG alloy wheels shod with 255/55 front and 285/30 rear tyres, behind which were perforated brake discs, while AMG front and rear aprons, side skirts and a bootlid spoiler in body colour adorned the exterior. The amazing vario-roof as seen on the R230 incorporated a panoramic glass section, and in the cabin occupants enjoyed leather sports seats with designo trimmings, the driver treated to a flat-bottomed sports steering wheel with perforated leather in the grip areas, and silver-finished gearshift paddles. The interior offered increased space over the R230, SL500 appointments also including climate control, Comand Online infotainment, air conditioning, heated memory seats, active parking and more, although some of what you might have wanted was on the options list.

A year after introduction, all R231s received a mild upgrade, with fresh body colours and new alloy wheels. The Comand system was revised to include split-view technology, and the Night View Assist Plus option was made available, making possible hazards visible on the Comand screen. At the 2016 facelift, the SL500 was given a power boost and switched to the nine-speed 9G-Tronic Plus gearbox, and also gained the LED lights and revised exterior trim all models received. However, we're saving the post-facelift cars for a future buying guide.

Driving the SL500

To portray the R231 driving experience, we look back to the very beginning, when our European editor Ian Kuah attended the 2012 press launch. Overall, he was highly impressed, but felt Mercedes-Benz was holding back on sports edginess.

"Iron-fisted body control and impressively low roll angles notwithstanding, the combination of a majestically well damped ride and the new, fuel saving, electro-mechanical, speed sensitive Direct Steer with a variable ratio produces a driving experience that I found was rather too aloof and remote for a roadster with sporting pretensions," he wrote. "On all types of roads, I felt an additional layer of isolation from the road in this new-generation R231 SL."

On the engine, Ian commented, "The engine's vast well of torque, direct fuel injection and the relatively high 10.5:1 compression ratio contribute to the impressive low-speed pick-up, which puts the SL500 in the category of cars with great 'waftability'. A mere tap on the throttle sees you sailing past other cars with minimal effort."

He was certainly impressed at how well the SL was made. "Overall build quality has definitely improved and the new interior feels even more sturdy," Ian found. "The same goes for the exterior. The doors of open cars tend to sound less substantial when the roof is down, but the doors of the new SL close with a particularly convincing sound."

What you'll pay

The most popular of the early R231s were the SL350 and SL400, so the choice of SL500s won't be large, especially given the short, four-year production window, but they are out there, probably around 15 to 20 for sale at any one time on mainstream platforms such as Auto Trader. All are offered either at independent garages or privately; they're now too old for official Mercedes dealers.

You can buy an SL500 for a little under £20,000, and it may well be in reasonable condition. However, it makes sense to stretch the budget to £25,000 if possible, because a lot of SLs are second cars that have covered only low mileage, and this amount gets you into a 2012 or 2013 with under 30,000 miles – only just run in!

The top price for pre-facelift R231 SL500s is usually £28,000 to £29,000, and that secures a 2015 or 2016 car with under 30,000 miles and a good spec. Always look out for a higher than normal equipment spec, which can only be partially reflected in the car's value. ▷

R231 SL500 Inside and out



Specialist overview
Olly Stoner - proprietor of independent Mercedes garage Prestige Car Service in Waterlooville, Hampshire
"The R231 is a great car, much better built than an R230 SL in all respects. We don't see too many because the SL500 wasn't the best selling model, but also because they don't go wrong all that much. The SL500's biturbo V8 is nippy and responds well to a remap. I don't like the look of R231s, though - something I don't often say about Mercedes cars! It's personal, I know, but I can't get used to the front and rear ends."
prestigecarservice.co.uk

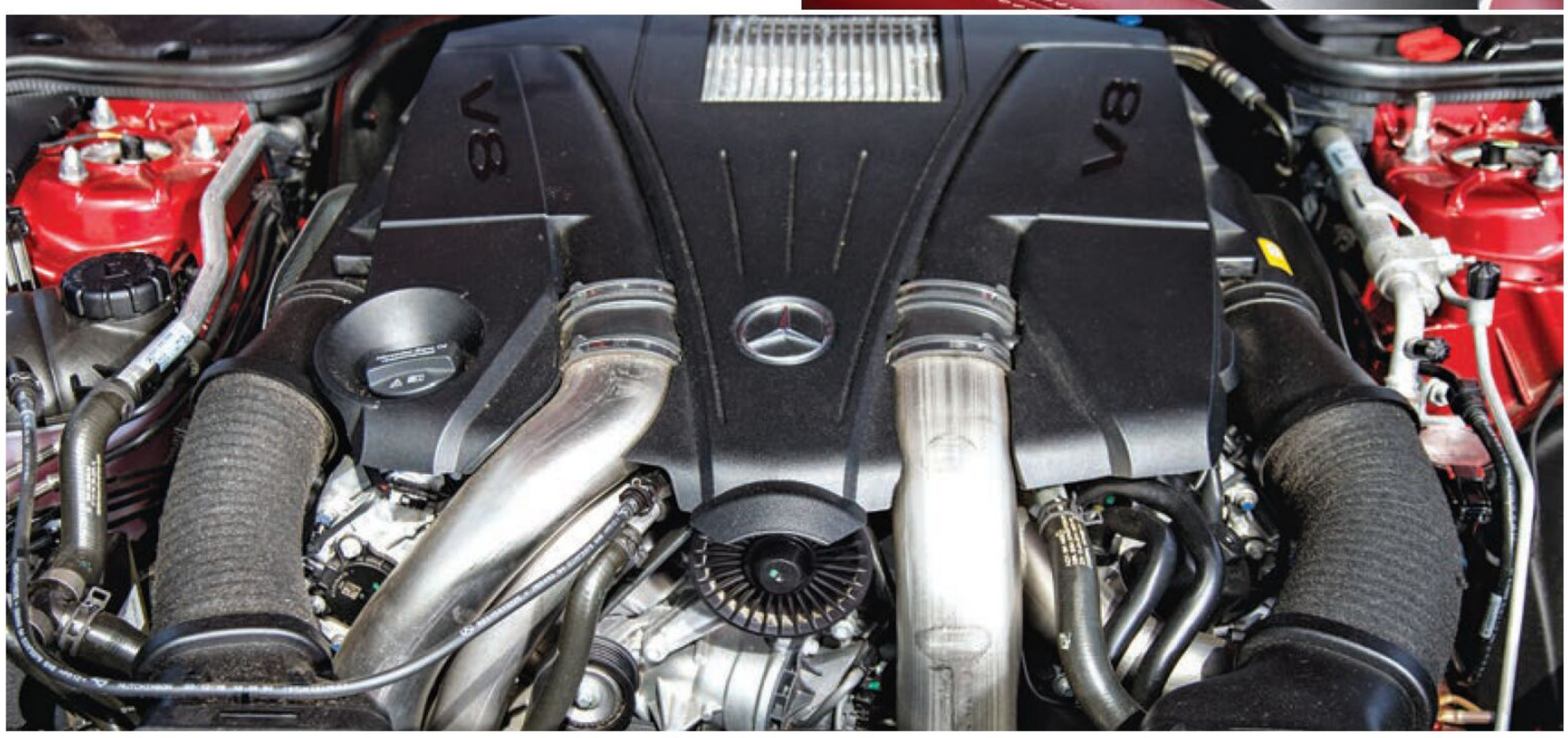
Powertrain

● Faulty coil packs on the SL500's M278 V8 are common, causing a misfire; some only blow fuses, but this also necessitates replacement. There are eight packs, one for each cylinder, but they can be replaced individually rather than as a set.

● The timing chain tensioners on each cylinder-head can rattle on start-up because the oil drains away overnight. But it's more annoying than it is serious. Mercedes' recommended cure is to install a check valve in the cylinder-head to prevent oil draining, which in the early days was carried out under warranty.

● The seven-speed 7G-Tronic gearbox fitted to the pre-facelift R231 SL500 should be reliable - if regularly serviced. But like all modern Mercedes autoboxes, it can, if not properly maintained, suffer from speed sensor issues which makes it stick in one gear, although this problem is far less common than on previous 7G-Tronic systems.


High quality materials are in abundance; Eco efficiency mode.



Suspension, steering and braking system

● Suspension arm ball joints, part of the lower suspension spring link, can wear out. You're unlikely to notice this in driving unless the wear is extreme, and it is often only picked up at MOT time.

● The problems of the R230's Active Body Control suspension have largely been banished, but if an SL500 has this optional extra it should be checked to see it's working properly. Ensure the various suspension modes operate as they should. One specific issue is that the pulsation damper on the ABC pump can fail - if there's a problem, you'll hear a whirring noise when the engine is operating at around the 1,500rpm mark.

● Mercedes' electronic steering rack is less robust than mechanical systems of old. It can be damaged if the car hits a substantial pothole and is hugely expensive to replace. There can be other reasons for its failure and is such an expensive item that an independently reconditioned unit is the most cost-effective solution.

● It's likely that examples of Mercedes' R231 SL sit unused for a while, and on these cars the brake calipers can seize up. Make sure you check for judders when applying the brakes, which could be a sign of warped brake discs. And don't forget to assess the amount of life left in the discs by looking - and feeling - for a lip around the rim's edge. While you're down there, check how much meat is left on the brake pads.


The SL keeps you at arm's length from road imperfections.

Spotted for sale

USED CAR DEALER
SL500 AMG Sport
2015/65, Obsidian Black, black leather, 72,200 miles, high extras spec, £23,900, Oxfordshire





“The timing chain tensioners on each cylinder-head can rattle on start-up”

Bodywork and wheels

● All panels are galvanised or composite, so rust shouldn’t be present. But check the paintwork and panel gaps as anything untoward would signify accident damage.

● The incredible vario-roof has, despite its immense complexity, proved remarkably reliable on all SLKs and SLs using it for over two decades. Nonetheless it’s an aspect that needs inspection, so check the operation and smoothness of the system as it goes up and down. Knocks and bangs heard as the parts move is a worry.

● All early R231 SL500s came with 19-inch alloy wheels with no diameter upgrade available as a factory option (though a few cars will have 20s). That’s still large enough to be vulnerable, so check for cracking. This will probably have been caused by a sharp impact with a kerb or similar.



Comand screen small by today’s standards, but nicely integrated.





Interior and electrics

● The numerous electrical glitches that many Mercedes models suffered in the early 2000s as the cars switched from analogue to electric systems were mostly gone by the time of the late R230s, and the R231 boasts even better reliability. One thing, though, is the auxiliary battery warning light coming on, indicating that battery (under the rear bench where a seat would be) is faulty and will probably have to be replaced.

● Run through the operation of all switches and be satisfied that everything works - electric seat adjustment, air conditioning and so on.

● All R231s have a beautiful leather interior, which is a key part of the roadster’s appeal. So don’t buy a car with any rips or other damage, as repair will not be cost-effective. ▷

R231 SL500 Inside and out

Spotted for sale

USED CAR DEALER
SL500 AMG Sport
2014/14, Diamond White metallic, black leather, 26,000 miles, Harman Kardon sound, two owners, £28,000, Leicestershire





Verdict

Some may conclude the R231 saw the SL spirit diluted somewhat, believing it a less tactile and also less pretty evolution. Nonetheless, it offers worthwhile advances over the R230 in build and durability, which will be more important to many buyers. For example, the trick suspension is sound, and rust doesn't appear to be an issue. However, never forget that an SL will never be a cheap car to run, so you must be prepared for some hefty repair or replacement jobs. Otherwise, that £20,000 high tech roadster might soon seem less of a bargain.



Typical basic servicing costs

(A/B services including VAT)

Model	Oil Service	Major Service
SL500 AMG Sport	£260	£410

Quotes from Prestige Car Service

Non-routine servicing costs

- ★ Replace failed engine coil pack (each) **£125**
- ★ Replace the lower suspension ball joint assembly (both sides) **£890**
- ★ Replace the pulsation damper for the Active Body Control suspension pump **£270**
- ★ Fit a new electronic power steering pump **£4,350**
- ★ Fit new front/rear brake discs and brake pads **£520/£405**
- ★ Four premium brand tyres size (255/35R19 front and 285/30R19 rear) **£850**

What you'll pay

£18,000-£20,000 2012/2013 SL500 with 100,000 plus miles, perhaps patchy history

£20,000-£25,000 Good early example with under 50,000 miles and in sound condition

£25,000-£30,000 Late, 2015/2016 SL500s with under 30,000 miles, well looked after with a high equipment spec

£30,000-£35,000 Few seen at this money but would have to be under 20,000 miles and near pristine

Huge options list

When launched, the R231 was well appointed but equipment wasn't overly generous. Hence a long list of tempting and often very expensive options was published – nearly 30 of them. In 2014, these ranged from cupholders in the centre console for £75 up to £3,080 for active suspension. Other big ticket items were massaging Active Multi-Contour seats costing £1,725, with seat ventilation a further £745 and nappa hide £710, a Harman Kardon surround sound at £1,150, Magic Sky Control (see above) for the standard Panoramic Roof at £1,875, Driving Assistance Package (blind spot, lane keeping and so on) for £2,350 and Keyless-Go at £1,605. Some lesser items that might have been expected to be standard-fit for the near £80,000 price were extras. A reversing camera was £265, an analogue clock £210 and door closing aid £315. The much-celebrated Airscarf was £575 and an electrically operated wind deflector £525. You could theoretically have added over £23,000 in options to the SL500's list price.

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Waiting game

The R129 SL requires a new battery but is otherwise in fine fettle and enjoying time back on the road, while the 230CE awaits restoration

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 New battery on the SL, which could also do with an exterior touch-up; the 123-series 230CE is ready for a trip to W123 World





△ The four-cylinder has enough power and isn't overly thirsty.

The SL280 went straight through its MOT with no advisories, so my wife Mia was at liberty to use it given the weather was improving. We removed the hardtop and put it on its stand, and she drove it for about a week, the only issue being that the battery died and would not take a charge. Thus, a new battery was procured, and all was well.

This car hates not being used, and I am always terrified the hood is going to give trouble. As the SL tends to drain its battery if left for extended periods, I have probably jumped-started or charged it up once too often and killed it off (not good for the ECU that controls the roof), which is annoying as it doesn't seem that long since it last had a new one. Elsewhere, there are several marks on the bumpers at both ends and even the hardtop that could do with being addressed.

The 230CE is still sitting here awaiting a call from Mark Cosovich. He tells me these 123 Coupes are rocketing in value so giving mine the full W123 World treatment seems like the thing to do. I guess this makes sense. They are much easier to drive and deal with generally than the earlier W111 Coupes, and a 230CE is adequately brisk with its 134bhp. I suspect this manual car will really go very well.

I have a set of period-correct Pirelli rubber from Longstone Tyres to fit on a set of alloys Mark is going to dig out, the feeling being that a manual car like this deserves all the 'sporty' options. I am open to offers on this Mercedes as is with the tyres thrown in, but failing that it can go over to Mark.

Hopefully by the time you read this report, the C123 will have made the trip to Swansea. Mark has an extremely late 230E Saloon, the last five-speed manual sold in the UK, which will make a nice bedfellow for the Coupe that is also a late car.



▷ Mercedes are born to be driven, and that includes the R129 SL.

G-Class drive

In April, I went on a press trip to the Mercedes-Benz Classic Centre where they are regrouping their forces and gearing up for doing forensic reports on cars like 300SLs in order to establish provenance. The cost? A mere €20,000. While over there, I got a drive in a four-speed manual 280TE very like the one I'm hoping Mark will sell me one day, and a three-door G-Wagen – something I have never even sat in before. Apart from the gear change, which had the longest 'throw' of anything I've driven, it was reasonably pleasant.

The Classic Centre has 1,100 cars at its disposal, stored in a variety of high security warehouses. I spotted things like the ex-Vatican 600 and 300 Adenauer and all manner of other rarities. In the workshops there was a W196 on a lift and as a treat the ex-Fangio single-seater was fired up. To hear that straight-eight engines bark was a visceral experience.

Land yacht

The 123-series Saloon does daily duties as Blakley Leonard manages to shift his flagship R107 SL and in its place comes a 140-series S-Class

WORDS & IMAGES **BLAKLEY LEONARD**

FACTSHEET

CARS 1984 280E/1989 560SL/1999 S500 L
OWNER Blakley Leonard
LOCATION Virginia, USA
PURCHASED October 2023/December 2022/April 2024
UPDATES SINCE LAST REPORT The range-topping R107 SL has gone to a new home; oil leak fix on 280E in the works



"It was hard to imagine life without a W140 in the collection"

The 1984 280E has continued as my primary driver over the last few months. While it certainly isn't the fastest car I've ever driven, it is considerably quicker than its diesel counterparts and can keep up with modern day traffic without issue. I'm still obsessed about the green-on-green colour combination, and with the AMG kit and wheels the look is very distinguished on the road.

The only slight changes I've made to the W123 since acquiring it are yellow bulb foglights and wheel spacers for the rear. This did require rolling the wings, which I was able to do myself with a fair amount of time and patience.

I have diagnosed the primary source of the oil leak in the car which I mentioned previously (see the April/May 2024 issue): the valve cover gaskets and head gasket. Both will be getting replaced in the next month, and while I'm in there I will also look to tighten the steering bolt since there is some play in the steering wheel. Upon inspection, the flex disc is beyond its lifespan and will also be replaced.

As I've written before, these classic Benzes are a labour of love. Any older car will need relatively consistent upkeep, but in the end it's always worth it. The feeling I get when behind the wheel of these cars (and they're dialled in) is what I'm always chasing. Certainly, one of the best feelings in the world.

Star swap

In other news, the 560SL is officially sold! As planned, the car was successfully auctioned on MBmarket.com and went to a fellow enthusiast who used to be a professional hockey player. After owning this R107 SL Roadster for the past year or so, I certainly want to complete the restoration of my Euro 500SL and get back behind the wheel of an R107. I'm thinking H&R suspension and some Penta alloy wheels this time around. All I need are a few more hours in a day.

△ **Blakley had a very specific list of must-haves for his 140.**

▽ **Source of 280E's oil leak traced to valve cover and head gasket.**

▽▽ **560SL has found a new home via the MBmarket website.**





Not only did I sell my 560SL, I also sold my 1998 S320 to a close friend who had wanted to buy the car for a while. To replace both, I purchased a 1999 S500 L in April. It was hard to imagine life without a 140 in the collection and this particular car ticked a lot of boxes, including being a late model example. Additionally, I wanted black on black this time around with heated seats and xenon headlights. As if that wasn't specific enough, it needed to be a long-wheelbase version with the five-litre M119 V8.

I couldn't pass up the opportunity to buy this one, so I went and picked up the car myself, driving it 250 miles home. I didn't waste any time with this one, getting all fluids flushed, installing a Continental Bluetooth head unit, and swapping the factory wheels for some OEM staggered 19-inch AMG monoblocks. The 19s properly fill out the wheel wells of the enormous 140 and really transform the look.

For those looking for an updated radio head unit that still fits with the 90s styling, I highly recommend the Continental TR7412 for both form and function. Still on the to-do list: paint correction, ceramic coating, and spring pads for the front springs. I'm hoping the spring pads will bring the front down by a quarter inch to make it perfectly level. I know it's minor, but details matter.

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C123 230CE 1985, 190,000 miles, metallic silver blue, automatic, blue cloth interior, sunroof, pillarless, family owned since 1985. Current MOT. £5,000. Tel: 07973 563777. Cambridge. ***[FGW28]***



E63 Premium Saloon 2017, four-litre V8 biturbo, four-door, petrol, 4Matic+, EU6-compliant with stop/start and 612ps. Ghost immobiliser. Rare cream leather interior, 77,000 miles, MOT February 2025, service history. £37,950 OVNO. Tel: 07917 416564. Chorley, Lancashire. ***[FGW25]***



GLE350d AMG Diesel, automatic, private registration not included! Allow 7 days or so to remove private plate. Lady owner, only 26,897 miles from new, bought from main dealers Evans Halshaw in York, service history etc, £26,950. Tel: 07831 523271. Durham. ***[FGW24]***

300CD Coupe 1984, RHD, not California import, five-speed manual with first series W124 R603 six-cylinder diesel engine, in grey primer ready for repainting. £3,750. Tel: 07737 447566. Suffolk. ***[FG]***



S350d AMG Premium Facelift model, 2018, one owner, 45,000 miles, FMBSH, arguably the 'best car in the world', drives like silk, simply stunning throughout, glass panoramic roof, 360 cameras, 20-inch alloys, PX up or down, £32,950. Tel: 01323 741891. East Sussex. ***[FGW22]***



CLK240 This car benefits from a smooth but punchy V6 engine that is great in Comfort mode and then more of a beast when in Sport mode. The inside is immaculate with original Mercedes mats. The leather interior is in great condition, £3,200 ONO. Tel: 07872 538823. West Midlands. ***[FGW21]***



R129 SL500 1992, well presented non-catalytic converter model dark blue with tan interior. Well documented service and maintenance records and invoices. Very good soft top, roll bar and wind deflector. Immobiliser and alarm. Two keys. MOT until 10/24. 104,000 miles (could be good for another 104,000 or more). A future classic. £7,500. Tel: 07970 989051 or 01873 853435. Abergavenny. ***[FGW18]***



SL500 2003, FSH, full MOT, two keys, new AMG alloys, recent tyres, private plate included, 93,000, red leather, selling very cheap due to fuse/relay issue, still drives well but displays false alarms due to electrical problem. I have owned this car for the last six years without issues, £3,995. Tel: 07485 749696. Plymouth. ***[FGW17]***



R129 SL First registered 10/03/1993, I bought the car on 31/08/01, currently 130,000 miles, MOT until June 2025, in the 23 years of ownership it has been regularly and meticulously serviced by Colin Ferns – a known and respected Mercedes dealership, £6,000 ONO. Tel: 07770 914781. Richmond. ***[FGW23]***



310D T1 van 1994, 2.9 diesel, 140,000 miles, professional conversion to camper van, sofa/double bed, four-burner gas hob, three-way fridge, shower, WC compartment with who, inverter, storage and hanging cupboards, fly screens, curtains, bike rack, Fiamma wind -out awning. £3,750. Tel: 0773 7447566. Suffolk. ***[FGW26]***



CL500 1998, with only 35,250 miles authenticated by previous MOTs, Brabus wheels and exhaust. MOT until May 2025, two-tone silver and black leather, light burr walnut steering wheel, dash and auto shift. CL reg included, £18,000. Tel: 07970 288908. South Wales. ***[FGW20]***



190E 2.6 Rebuilt, 92,900 miles, metallic gold, refurbished interior, over £9,000 spent, show condition, asking £11,995 ono. Consider PX up to £5,000. Tel: 07797 483619. Prestatyn, Wales. ***[FGW19]***



R129 SL280 1995, 110,000 miles, three former owners, Azurite Blue/mushroom leather, MOT August 2024. Well maintained example, full M-B/independent specialist history, hardtop stand included, owned since 2020, dry stored each winter with bespoke dust cover and battery isolator, £6,950. Tel: 0131 5579246. Edinburgh. ***[FGW16]***

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C200, as new, original condition, petrol SE, four-door saloon, manual transmission, ULEZ compliant, first registered September 30 2016, one owner from new; genuine 14,000 miles, full service history all original MOTs and receipts, to be sold with a current MOT certificate valid until November 17 2024, £18,500 ONO. Tel: 07484 668773. Cardiff. ***[FGW7]***



C200 Elegance Saloon 2007, finished in Cubanite with cloth interior. 39,435 miles from new, only 2 owners, good condition very clean, FSH. £3,250 or near offer, email anitac37@gmail.com or phone. Tel: 01884 255226. Devon. ***[FGW11]***



560SEC 1992/J-reg, last of these built, 140,000 miles, Almandine red with cream leather interior. Respray and recommissioned four years ago. Great car, happily drive it anywhere, regularly taken to car shows and meets, drives really well, £21,500 ONO. Tel: 07721 508657. Mid Beds. ***[FGW8]***



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, £11,750. Tel: 07737 447556. Suffolk. ***[EFW3R]***



R230 SL350 2004, average mileage for year, 11 months MOT, many new parts, Obsidian Black/refurbished black wheels/ privacy glass, beige interior all standard equipment working including roof, dry stored, new tyres, VGC, £6,750 ono. Tel: 07786 982445. Somerset. ***[FGW9]***



S500 LWB Lorinser 63,000 miles, 1997, comprehensive service records, had major service at M-B Edinburgh including transmission service, electric heated black leather seats, electric heated reclining rear seats, rare factory Bose audio system, Command, CD, electric glass roof. Tel: 07970 529906. Edinburgh. ***[FGW12]***



CLK230 K Cabriolet Evolution 2.3-litre, red top, supercharged engine, 99,367 genuine miles, one previous lady owner, in very good overall condition. Roof and everything else works as it should. MOT until July 2024, some service history and bills, £1,395. Tel: 07785 712087. Liverpool. ***[FGW14]***



R107 280SL Registered January 1984. 91,000 miles, Signal Red, FSH, one owner for the last 15 years. In very good condition with new soft top hood and MOT until Octover 2024, comes with a new bespoke all-weather cover, £24,500. Tel: 07534 139578. Norwich. ***[FGW29]***



380SL 1984, automatic, 85,560 miles, RHD. Anthracite grey, black leather, walnut trim, rear seat, extensive and interesting history, three previous owners, current (M-B Club member) 23 years, historic tax class (MOT, ULEZ, tax exempt). Repainted, bills of £12K+ excluding servicing, garaged with dehumidifier, original service handbook toolkit, hardtop stand, custom cover, £19,950. Tel: 07876 744320. Romford. ***[EFW18]***



SL500 Silver, excellent condition, FSH, three owners, 54,000 miles, dry stored, £6,000. Tel: 07519 919802. Birmingham. ***[FGW4]***



C123 280CE 1983, 80,000 miles, automatic, flat Sahara Beige, olive cloth interior, ESR, air con, excellent chrome, M-B splashguards, spare wheel, tools, triangle, M-B first aid kit, history, £12,500. Tel: 07737 447556. Suffolk ***[EFW2R]***



W124 200E Avantgarde 1990, metallic silver blue, automatic, spares or repair, £450. Tel: 07737447556. Suffolk. ***[EFW4R]***

W123 300CD Saloon 1981, auto, ascot charcoal cloth upholstery, solid, unmolested, no rust, approximately 120,000 miles. £950. Tel: 07737447556. Suffolk. ***[FG]***



W116 450SE 1979, 95,000 miles, automatic, metallic magnetite blue, bamboo leather interior, air con, excellent chrome, Mercedes-Benz splashguards, owner's wallet, histories, spare wheel, tools, jack, M-B first aid kit, fire extinguisher, £12,750. Tel: 07737 447556. Suffolk. ***[EFW1R]***



W201 190E 1990, Arctic White, automatic, very good blue block cloth interior, ESR, spare wheel, M-B splashguards, tools, hack, triangle, first aid kit, bills and history, £2,650. Tel: 07737 447556. Suffolk. ***[EFW5R]***



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, £2,850. Tel: 07737 447556. Suffolk. ***[EFW6R]***



CL500 2012, CL63 look-alike and go-alike, MSL tuned to 520bhp and 623lb ft, superb condition inside and out, 71,000 miles, black on black with carbon mirrors and spoiler, sounds awesome, was Cat N due to front bumper and left front wing, but nothing underneath. Four new Continental tyres. Tel: 07506 713850. Lincoln. ***[EFW9]***



SL55 AMG 2006, 34,000 miles from new. Silver with light grey interior, full service history, Bose audio, just serviced, 12 months MOT, £24,500. Tel: 07939 038875. Gloucs. *[EFW17]*



260E Automatic, only 36,000 miles, great condition car with a lot of work done mechanically, new alternator, exhaust, brakes, super smooth driving Jersey car, from new. Tel: 07797 921695. Jersey. *[EFW14]*



SLK200 AMG Low mileage, only 30,486 miles, service history, one of the last 171 model factory fitted AMG body styling kit, red leather seats with Airscarf and heated, air con, cruise, radio/CD, outstanding! £8,250. Tel: 07836 504639. Northampton. *[EFW6]*



SL280 Automatic, soft top and original hardtop, grey leather interior, fantastic condition all round, service history and all MOT certificates present, MOT valid until December 2024, drives beautifully. loss of garage forces a reluctant sale, next MOT due 14/12/2024, blue, 5+ owners, £7,995. Tel: 07973 344201. Midlands. *[EFW4]*



380SL 1984, automatic, 85,560 miles, RHD. Anthracite grey, black leather, walnut trim, rear seat, extensive and interesting history, three previous owners, current (M-B Club member) 23 years, historic tax class (MOT, ULEZ, tax exempt). Repainted, bills of £12K+ excluding servicing, garaged with dehumidifier, original service handbook toolkit, hardtop stand, custom cover, £19,950. Tel: 07876 744320. Romford. *[EFW18]*



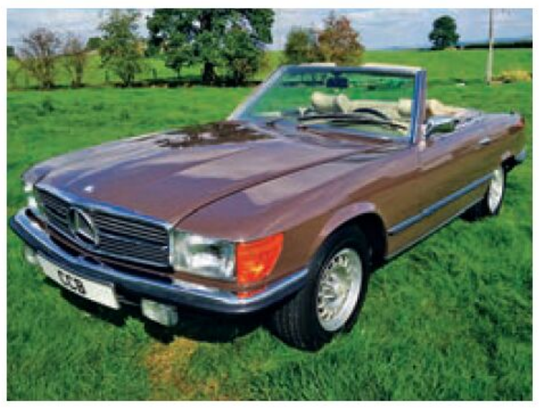
CLS400 AMG Individual 2015, 3.5-litre turbo, 330bhp, 480Nm torque, six-cylinder petrol engine, ULEZ-free, owned for three years, last owner for six years, no expense spared, full MB dealer S/H, (dealer print out available), HPI clear, full MOT, two keys. Tel: 07434 555550. Bury St Edmunds, Suffolk. *[EFW5]*



C215 CL600 V12 biturbo, 2004, beautiful condition, probably the best in the UK and valued by the SLShop, massive history file from day one, no corrosion on the Cubanite Silver bodywork and perfect Alpaca Grey leather, this car drives very well and goes like a rocket, 500bhp, 63,000 miles. MOT 1/5/2025. Tel: 07506 713850. Lincoln, Lincolnshire. *[EFW10]*



SL55 AMG Kompressor July 2002, 48,800 miles, less than 3,000 miles in the last 10 years, dry stored, 12 months MOT, full MB/SH, new tyres, immaculate silver bodywork, as new red leather interior, private reg included. Best in the UK only selling as downsizing collection, £22,500. Tel: 07764 559923. West Midlands. *[EFW2]*



R107 1975, LHD excellent original condition Topaz brown, brown soft top, mushroom MB-Tex interior, rare manual gearbox, original Becker Monza radio/cassette player, original 14-inch alloy wheels, all tools and manuals, only two owners from the same family, 71,000 miles. Tel: 07963 682843. Manchester. *[EFW7]*



CL500 2012, CL63 look-alike and go-alike, MSL tuned to 520bhp and 623lb ft, superb condition inside and out, 71,000 miles, black on black with carbon mirrors and spoiler, sounds awesome, was Cat N due to front bumper and left front wing, but nothing underneath. Four new Continental tyres. Tel: 07506 713850. Lincoln. *[EFW9]*



R172 SLK55 AMG 2013, lovely condition and only 59,000 miles, history from day one, silver coachwork on anthracite leather, all AMG goodies including the IWC clock, Airscarf and Airguide, well looked after. Tel: 07506 713850. Lincoln. *[EFW8]*



300SE Fintail 1965, converted to spring suspension, five-speed manual gearbox which transforms driveability. Superb engine and mechanically very good, no rust. £23,500. Tel: 01624 624867. Isle of Man. *[CM47W16R]*



CLK 200 2004, 87,000 miles. Automatic, sunroof. Power driver seat with memory. FSH. MOT to February 2025, £2,500. Tel: 07831 639870.St Albans. *[EFW100]*



300SE 1989, grey with cream leather interior, wonderful condition with great service history, solid with no rust, all chrome is rust free and everything works as it should, just under 100,000 miles, a fabulous example, genuine buyers only, £7,375. Tel: 07973 344201. Midlands. *[EFW3]*



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]*

230TE 1988, auto, estate, 73,000 miles, MOT, many extras including alloys, cruise control etc. Many new parts: gearbox, exhaust, radiator, battery, water pump. Runs very well. Water leak (head gasket?). £Offers. Swap for a Volvo 245 estate or similar. Tel: 01277 200530. *[EF]*

MERC TRADER



W123 5.6 V8 Red Pig replica A very well-known magazine featured car that has been displayed at Mercedes-Benz World, cost over £100,000 to build! Now on sale for a fraction of that price. MOT'd and road legal, huge fun, call for details. Tel: 07809 200005. ***[CM47W2R]***



SLK230 Automatic, blue, first registered 12/07/2000, two lady owners, present owner from 2005, 61,000 miles. MOT until November 2024, very good condition. Lovely looking car, bodywork excellent, wheels resprayed, great to drive, garaged throughout, selling as the car is now not used, £2,950. Tel: 07729 566318. Ash Vale, Surrey. ***[CM47W3R]***



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]***



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]***



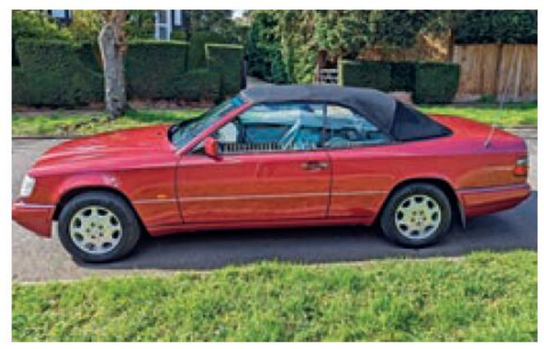
SL320 1999, a stunning example in the elusive Amber Red, only 47,000 miles on the clock, owned by me for over 10 years, with four total, full cream nappa leather interior, a full service history, serviced very frequently in miles and recently along with an MOT, £20,000. Tel: 01322 336202. Dartford. ***[CM47W4R]***



230CE Automatic, 1979, 152,258 miles, selling as project, car has been sat for a few years, needs a bit of bodywork and welding but majority of work was done by previous owner. Car is also tax and MOT exempt, comes with original paperwork and logbook, £3,500 Tel: 07859 185522. Birmingham. ***[CM47W10R]***



C43 AMG Automatic, 1998, unfinished project, I've run out of funds, being sold for spares or a project for someone with a welder. Dismantled for body corrosion repairs, good engine and gearbox, suspension and full leather interior removed for welding, contact seller for further information. Tel: 01474 703701. Gravesend. ***[CM47W1R]***



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]***



W210 E430 1998, 123,000 miles, MOT 2025, automatic, two keys, VGC, electric heated seats, PAS, cruise control, electric sunroof/windows, drives lovely, £2,990. Tel: 07880 698564. Essex. ***[CM47P1R]***



220S Cabriolet 1957, delivered new to the actress Maureen Swanson, fully documented restoration between 1998 to 2014 including full retrim Incredibly rare, one of only 20 RHD 220S Cabriolets maintained in recent years by John Haynes, ready for the summer £92,500 ono. Tel: 07903 055546. West Sussex. ***[CM47W11R]***



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]***



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]***



300SE 1989 Grey with cream leather interior, wonderful condition with great service history, solid with no rust, all chrome is rust-free and everything works as it should, just under 100,000 miles, a fabulous example, genuine buyers only, £7,375. Tel: 07973 344201. Midlands. ***[CM47W7R]***



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]***

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



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]***

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



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. MOTs. Runs beautifully. Always garaged. £27,500 Tel: 07864 712297. SE London. ***[DEW8]***



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]***



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]***



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]***



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]***

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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]***



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 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 came from Edinburgh £3,990. Tel: 07947 730561. Bradford ***[DEW4]***



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]***

INTERNATIONAL MERCEDES



SL60 AMG 1998 Only 49 RHD, 24,500 miles, panoramic hardtop, fantastic drive! Tel: +49 1739514613. Waldkirchen, Germany. ***[FGW13]***



560SEL Delivered new to US Embassy in Canberra in 1989. Fully optioned including reclining rear seats, outstanding condition, AU$38,000. Tel: +61 439856997. Athelstone, Australia. ***[EFW19]***



190SL convertible 1963, this car is absolutely gorgeous. Completely restored, everything rebuilt, refinished or replaced, runs and drives as new. This car is a work of art and would look at home in an art gallery as well as the street. Completely restored hardtop, the dove grey soft top is a nice touch. Tel: +62 85261728437. Pontianak, Indonesia. ***[EFW15]***



560SEL 1988, excellent condition throughout, most mechanical systems have been rebuilt, drives like a dream, very regrettable sale, was planning on this being my retirement car, but health reasons are causing me to retire early. In Australia. Email 1988560selaus@gmail.com best way to communicate. Tel: +61 417317202. Meredith, Victoria, Australia. ***[EFW12]***



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]***



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]***

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PARTS, MISC & ACCESSORIES



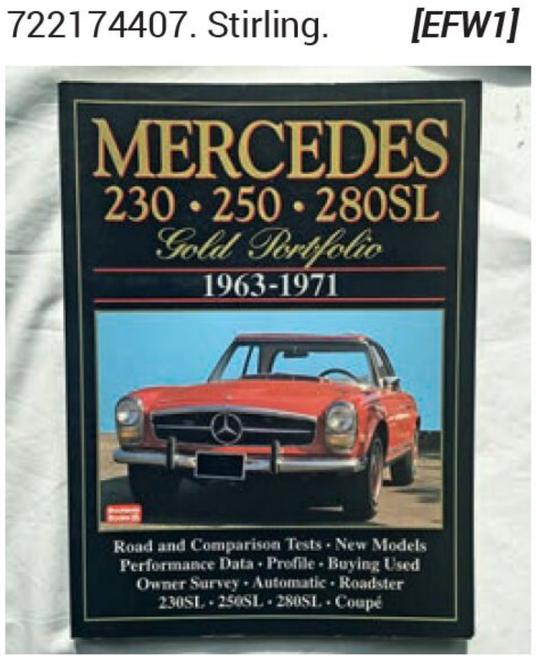
Genuine W202 C-Class wheel plates Four in good condition, silver, £60. Tel: 07961 380971. Romford. ***[FGW10]***



Genuine AMG 20-inch alloys Refurbished and diamond cut, part numbers A2214013402, A2214013302, 8.5JX20 ET43, 9.5JX20 ET43, with Falkon Azenis 285 25 ZR20 93Y and 255 30 ZR20 92Y tyres, 5mm lowest measurement with even wear, very good condition, couple of chips on one wheel Tel: 07985 201291. Cambridgeshire. ***[FGW3]***



2014 E220 AMG part LED headlamps Car exported to Spain, new lamps fitted to pass ITV examination, in good working order, part numbers A2128261191 or A2128261291, £1,200 for the pair. TEL: 0034 722174407. Stirling. ***[EFW1]***



230-250-280SL Gold Portfolio 1963-1971, Brooklands books, 172 unmarked pages, £13.95, excellent as new condition. Tel: 07399 359072. No texts. ***[EFW11]***

Set of refurbished W126 flat faced alloys With very good tyres, £450. Large quantity of W123 steel wheels, some with tyres, sets of four W123 wheel trims, various colours, various W123 spares too many to list. Tel: 07747 447556. Suffolk. ***[FG]***

Mercedes Enthusiast* magazines** from Jan 2015 (£4.30) to Mar 2016, all in very good order. Tel: 07447 941524. Portishead. ***[FG]

Water pump and 2x radiators one new, fits W124, £100. New track rod ends boxed, £25. New 20x wheel bolts chrome, £20. Wheel nuts x16, M12x1.5, £10. Swiss caravan s/steel kettle boxed, £15. Small car cover very good condition, £10. Google hub, new, boxed, £100. Crime mags swap for aircraft mags. Tel: 01277 200530. ***[FG]***

Two fantastic numberplates Both on retention – M5500B (£1,250 ONO) and SALLUTE (£3,250 ONO). Tel: 07950 741778. ***[EF]***

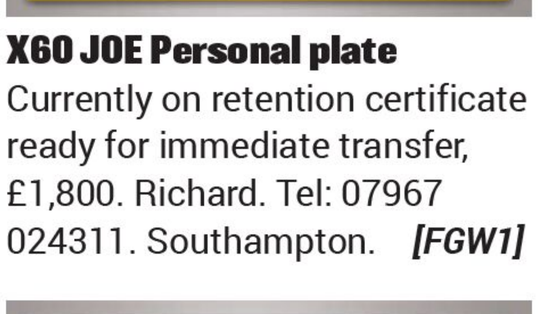
NO. PLATES



X60 JOE Personal plate Currently on retention certificate ready for immediate transfer, £1,800. Richard. Tel: 07967 024311. Southampton. ***[FGW1]***



V8 GLX private numberplate A fantastic plate for your V8 Mercedes. On my GL420 for many years and now on retention. £10,000 ONO. Tel: 07973 739431. Chislehurst, Kent. ***[FGW5]***



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]***



MOY 3D personal plate Currently on retention certificate ready for immediate transfer £600 Tel: 07967 024311. Southampton. ***[FGW2]***



Two numberplates on retention NKZ 433 (£350) and S16CNS (£300), open to offers. Tel: 07980 933829 or email: nickstilwell59@gmail.com Hampshire. ***[EF]***



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]***

WANTED

Parts Wanted for R129 Steering idler arm bushing for a 2001 SL500 Silver Arrow. Have tried the usual parts places in the UK and Europe without success! Tel: 07359 017584. Winchester. ***[FG]***

Front door locks and keys For handles on 1988 230TE (124-series). Tel: 01277 200530. ***[FG]***

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"Contrasting with the vast open landscape, the cabin was utterly cocooning"

CLS350 Shooting Brake

For one South African journalist, the impossibly stylish CLS Shooting Brake was the ideal car for escaping the hubbub of city life

WORDS & IMAGES **WILHELM LUTJEHARMS**

You don't need to justify a drive in a CLS Shooting Brake. One look at the car explains everything. It is simply one of the most stylish estates Stuttgart has made. Suddenly other wagons, even those from Mercedes, look conservative and less appealing. Model ranges differed from country to country; in South Africa the CLS Shooting Brake range was made up of only petrol models, the entry level one being the 350 V6 (pictured).

Get within 100 miles of Cape Town and you are spoilt by such a wide variety of roads and landscapes. In the middle of summer, and with all the usual greenery of the landscape gone (Cape Town is a winter rainfall region), we headed through the northern suburbs of the city, along the West Coast. This area is much drier than the southern coast, but the roads straighten as they make their way towards Namibia.

The CLS350 was fitted with optional 19-inch wheels (an inch bigger than standard), but that had little effect on the ride – it was still exceptionally well damped and comfortable. Before we headed along the open road, a few twisty sections needed to be tackled. With the air suspension in Sport mode, the ride became a little firmer, but the focus remained on cosseting those within.

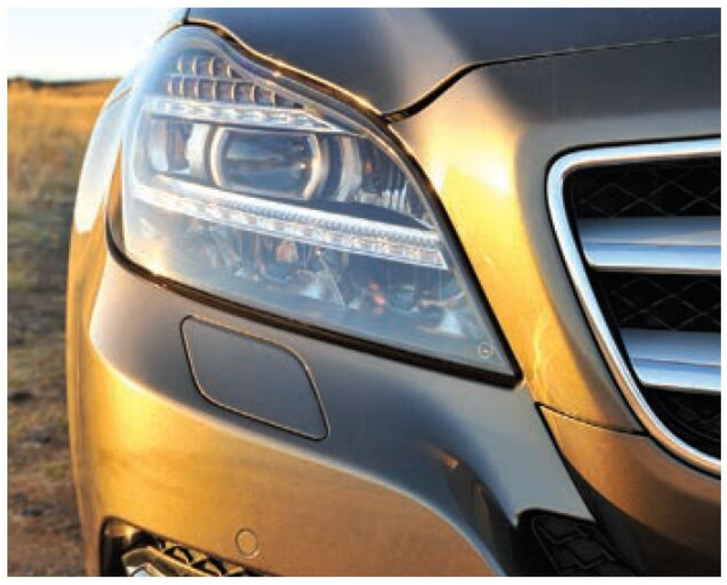
As soon as the road straightened out in front of us, I immediately switched back to Comfort mode. Apart from the sheer level of luxury, the optional Lane Keeping Assist surprised in the way that it used the braking and steering systems to bring the car back from the road's side line, should one briefly wander over it.

Contrasting with the vast and open South African landscape, the cabin of the CLS350 Shooting Brake was utterly cocooning. Due to the raked windscreen, the rear-view mirror is closer to the driver's head than in a normal saloon, as is the roof and A-pillars, but it's certainly not cramped inside the CLS.

The naturally aspirated, 3.5-litre V6 cruises beautifully, but it doesn't offer the low down torque of a turbodiesel. I overtook slower moving traffic and it responded well, the last part of the rev range the most meaningful. However, an AMG model it is not.

As we arrived at Paternoster, the suave CLS Shooting Brake provided a stark contrast to this rural town with its Greek themed houses. Lunch beckoned before a return drive to the Mother City, the CLS remaining just as spellbinding then, too. Not bad for an estate.

△ The very cheapest CLS Shooting Brakes are now under £10,000 in the UK.



▷ Fantastically powerful headlights also give the CLS its distinctive face.



▽ High grade wood adorned the steering wheel, dashboard and door cards.

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