DECEMBER/JANUARY 2025

Mercedes ENTHUSIAST

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Mercedes ENTHUSIAST



Issue 250
Dec/Jan 2025

STEVE HALL

MERCEDES ENTHUSIAST
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Things are going so badly at VW, the future of its historic Wolfsburg plant is in jeopardy

The ongoing tussle between legacy carmakers and politicians hellbent on seeing through their Net Zero agenda is fascinating to witness, even though us drivers are caught slap bang in the middle. I won't be drawn too much on the electric car argument here, but I feel a compromise between auto manufacturers and the likes of the UK government, which plans to ban the sale of new petrol and diesel cars by 2030, must be sought. Extend the timeline a bit, continue building the infrastructure to support electric cars, and give the technology itself time to improve and simplify. To my mind, there is just too much new information for the average driver to understand when it comes to owning an electric car. Even purchasing a home charger isn't exactly straightforward, with customer experiences mixed. It shouldn't be like that.

In the face of stiff competition from Chinese-made EVs, things are going so badly at Volkswagen that the future of its historic Wolfsburg plant is in jeopardy. We're talking about 60,000 jobs here. The fact of the matter is, we're all feeling the financial squeeze and 60 grand electric cars with a 250-mile range are not a priority for many people right now.



There is a reason Mercedes-Benz has refocused its attention on petrol engines of late.

Meanwhile, classic Mercedes continue selling like hot cakes and independent garages are as busy as ever. It's not all bad out there...

Kyle Molyneux
Editor

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



Steve Hall

It's been a while since Steve Hall has driven an AMG version of the 202-series C-Class, so imagine his excitement at being asked to write about the rarest of the lot – the 5.4-litre C55 model, and in UK specification! "It is believed only 59 C55 AMGs exist – 29 of those covering all right-hand-drive markets," he writes. "Within moments of awakening the V8, you just know that here is a car with a bit more attitude." Head to page 20 to read this magazine's cover story.



Albert Mensinga

Following this issue's cover story is a head-to-head between 203-series C32 AMG and C55 AMG Estates. Albert Mensinga and Noortje Blokland were charged with sharing the stories of this powerful pairing. "The silver C32 AMG arrived first, in 2001, and packs an all-alloy, 3.2-litre V6 with three valves per cylinder," Albert explains. "The succeeding and even rarer C55 AMG required a three-inch nose job using components from the CLK to take the mighty 5.4-litre V8." You can find this article on page 26.

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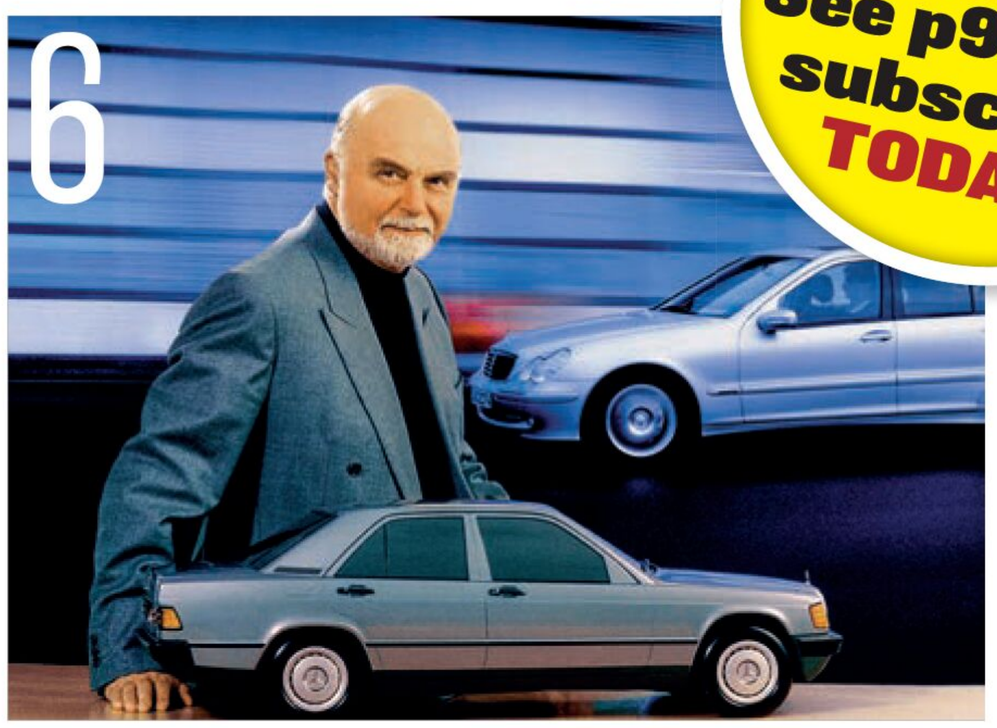

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The latest Mercedes launches, news and motorsport



Bruno Sacco (1933-2024)

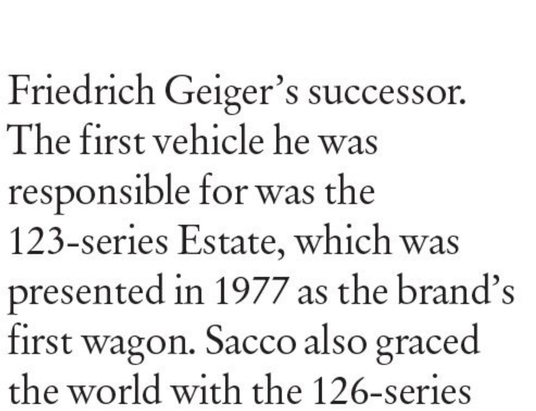
After joining Mercedes-Benz in 1958, he never looked back

Bruno Sacco, one of the best known designers in automotive history, died in Sindelfingen on September 19 2024 at the age of 90. Born in Italy with German citizenship, he was Chief Designer of Mercedes-Benz from 1975 until retirement in 1999.

"Bruno Sacco left a lasting mark on the company with his iconic designs and his passion for aesthetics," said Gorden Wagener, Chief Design Officer of Mercedes-Benz Group AG. "In Bruno Sacco, we have lost an outstanding personality and an impressive aesthete. Our deepest sympathy goes out to his family and friends."

With his appointment as *Oberingenieur* (chief engineer) in 1975, Sacco became head of the Stylistics department as Friedrich Geiger's successor. The first vehicle he was responsible for was the 123-series Estate, which was presented in 1977 as the brand's first wagon. Sacco also graced the world with the 126-series S-Class Saloon (1979-1992) and Coupe version (1981-1991).

"The 126 model series in all design forms is the best thing I have done for Mercedes-Benz," he said in retrospect. No wonder then, that he drove an elegant, dark blue 560SEC during his retirement. The W201 190 (1982-1993), 124-series (1984-1997), 140 S-Class (1991-1998) and R129 SL (1989-2001) cemented his considerable legacy.

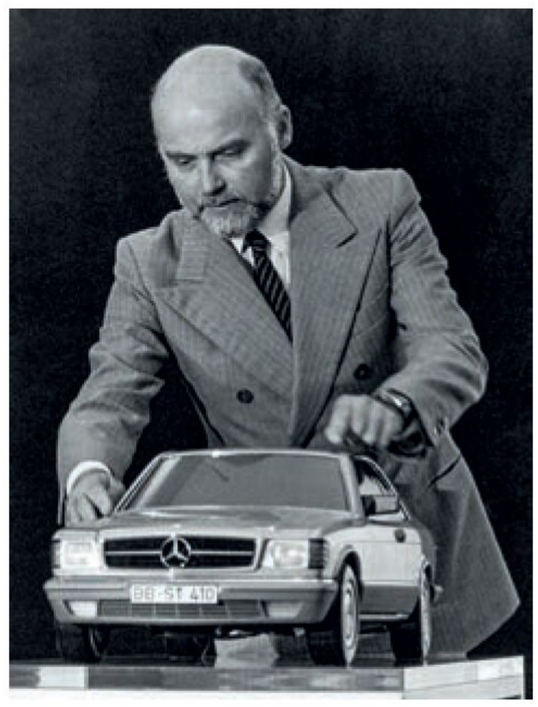


△ F1 champion Jackie Stewart presenting Sacco with a 'Best Designer' award in 1996.

Sacco wasn't quite done yet, however, gifting us the impossibly pretty R170 SLK, as well as the first A-Class (W168), M-Class (W163), CLK (208) and V-Class (W638). His final projects before retirement were the 220-series S-Class and the C215 CL-Class.

Sacco's last day at Mercedes came on March 31 1999, with Peter Pfeiffer succeeding him as chief designer. Bruno Sacco received the honorary doctorate from the University of Udine in 2002, he was admitted in 2006 to the 'Automotive Hall of Fame' in Dearborn, Michigan, and in 2007 to the 'European Automotive Hall of Fame' in Geneva.

Two decades into retirement, Sacco said, "Mercedes has been my life, and I stand for that time one hundred per cent."



△ Sacco reckons the 126-series to be his best work; he drove a 560SEC all of his own.

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NEW CLA



The new-generation CLA wore full camouflage for a surprise appearance at October's Festival d'Hyères international fashion event in south east France.

Based on a new MMA architecture, the next CLA will come in full electric form but petrol hybrid powertrains will also be offered. Due on sale in 2025, the new CLA looks to be a careful evolution of what went before, with swooping styling and plenty of onboard technology (powered by Snapdragon) to keep you safe, entertained and informed.



Junkyard jewels

Just after we went to press, an extraordinary array of Mercedes went under the hammer in RM Sotheby's Rudi Klein Collection event, held in Los Angeles.

"Since 1967, Rudi Klein, a renowned figure in the world of collecting, had quietly amassed a remarkable collection of automotive treasures in a modest junkyard in Southern Los Angeles," RM Sotheby's said.

"Known for his discerning eye and passion for rare and unique automobiles, Klein's collection has long been a well-kept secret, with only rumours of its existence swirling amongst certain collectors' circles."

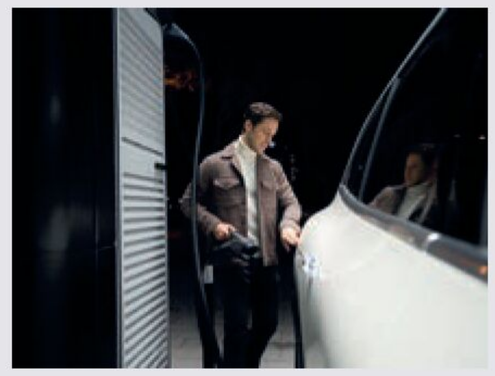
Mercedes-related highlights included a 1956 300SL Alloy Gullwing ($4.5m-$6m estimate; see below), a 1957 300SL Roadster ($800K-$1m), a 1968 600 Grosser ($10K-$15K; left) and a beautiful 1935 500K 'Caracciola' Special Coupe ($4m-$6m; shown above) built exclusively for works racing driver Rudolf Caracciola.



Notable parts on offer included an M100 V8 engine ($2K-$4K), W113 SL hardtops ($1K-$2K), a steering wheel for a Gullwing ($3K-$6K), and even Gullwing doors ($4K-$8K).



News in brief



△ CHARGING POINTS

Mercedes-Benz has expanded its Mercedes me Charge network to over 2,000,000 charging points, spanning 32 countries. The service, now available in Australia and New Zealand, offers easy operation, transparent costs, and access to over 750,000 charging points across Europe with a single flexible contract.



△ POWER INCREASE

Mercedes-AMG has increased the power outputs of its C43 and E43 models for a new production cycle. Power has increased from 402bhp to 416bhp, with a tenth shaved from the 0-62mph times.

△ TRADE WAR

Speaking to *Autocar*, Mercedes-Benz CEO Ola Källenius has warned that tariffs on Chinese electric carmakers in Europe could trigger a "lose-lose" trade war. China is considering raising tariffs on large combustion cars from the EU, which would directly impact Mercedes-Benz among others.



△ LAST OF THE LINE

A 2010 Mercedes-Benz SLR McLaren Stirling Moss – the last of 75 made and finished in special red paint (code 000U) – has sold for €3.2m (£2.6m) in Bonhams' Le Zoute auction in early October. The supercar's mileage stood at just 50km (31 miles).

SLSHOP NEWS

As an extension to its SportLine product range, SLShop has launched a cross-over throttle body EFI Kit for the M117 engine. The kit consists of an SLShop Sportline SL500 Manifold Set, 45mm air horns with filter mesh, a pair of fuel rails, Bosch injectors, 45mm throttle bodies, a wiring loom and operating levers/wheels. SLShop says the kit is ideal for road, track or rally use and is engineered for improved throttle response, power and reliability.

In other news, the classic SL specialist continues to bolster its in-house capabilities with the addition of a trim shop. Following lengthy lead times experienced with its suppliers, SLShop decided an in-house facility was the best way to serve the needs of its clients. Correct materials have been selected and a dedicated facility created at its Stratford-upon-Avon HQ. Find out more at theslshop.com.







LAP RECORD

The Mercedes-AMG One continues to dominate the Nürburgring-Nordschleife, maintaining its position as the fastest production car since October 2022. Despite a lack of serious competition, Mercedes-AMG brand ambassador and DTM driver Maro Engel has pushed the hypercar even further, shaving over five seconds off his previous lap time.

In an officially recorded run, the One completed a lap of the 20.832km track in a staggering 6min 29.090secs, making it the first road car to ever break the 6:30-minute barrier. Equipped with cutting-edge Formula 1 technology, the Mercedes-AMG One is also the only hybrid hypercar to have tackled the world's most challenging circuit, cementing its status as the undisputed leader in the super sports car class.



‘TALKING POINT’



This month’s Talking Point...

What is your favourite Mercedes-Benz estate car of all time?

“However much I love the 124-series Estate, the Shooting Brake version of the CLS was just a bit special.” **Will Roberts**

“The 123-series 280TE: elegantly functional and the twin-cam 280 engine is a sweet six-cylinder.” **Donovan Croucamp**

“I can’t make up my mind. The 123 by a smidge.” **Scott Bleggi**

“I’ve run an S212 E350 CDI wagon for six years. I simply couldn’t ask for more from a Mercedes-Benz.” **Mel Price**

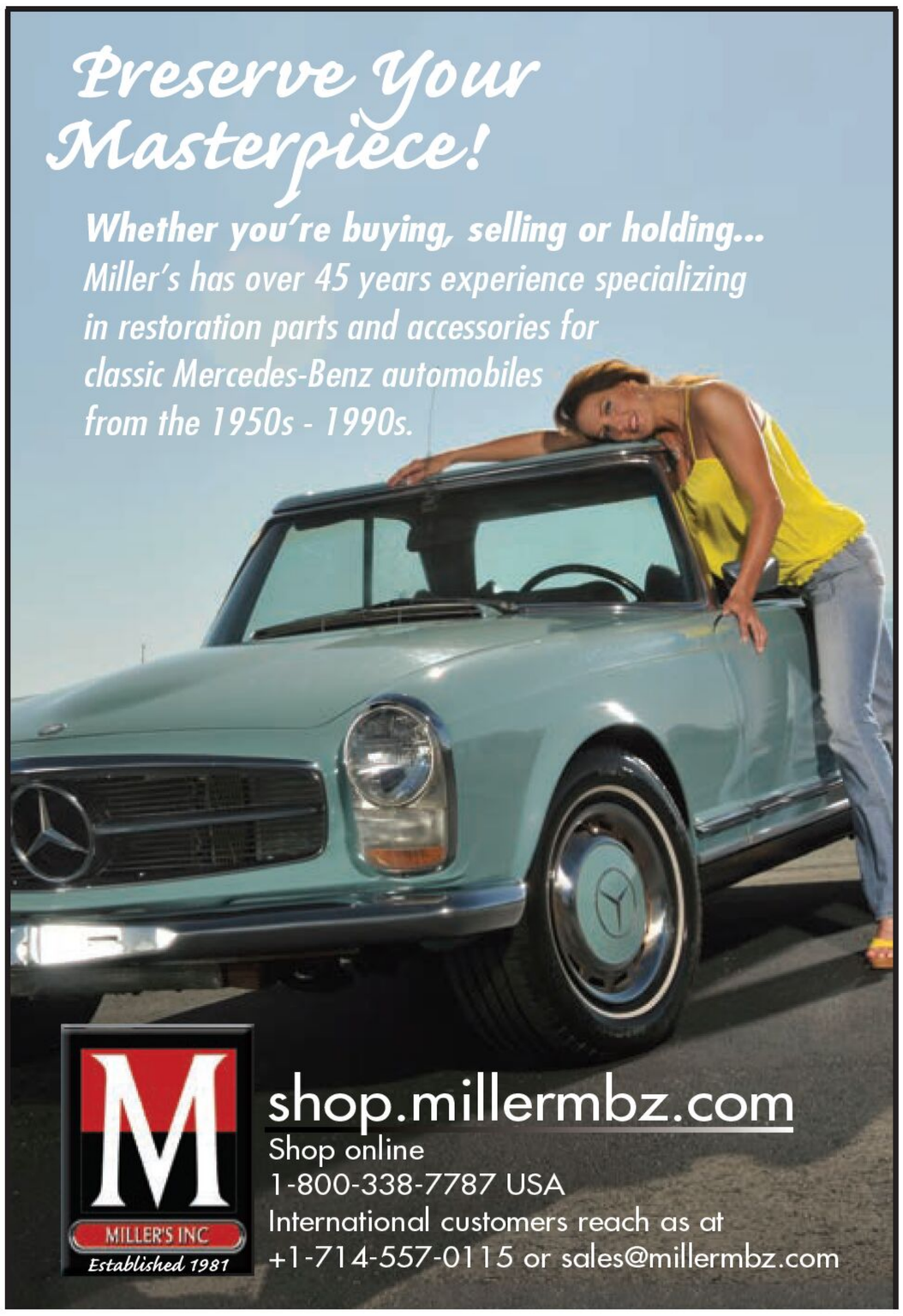
Take part in **Talking Point** every month on Facebook, Instagram and X. See the bottom of page 6 for our respective websites!

Merc Spotter



Mercedes-Benz built just 99,884 123-series Coupes between 1977 and 1985. Plenty are still on the road but sadly not this one, spotted by Harold Kerr in Merseyside. “I felt so sorry for it,” he wrote.

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.





Mercedes-Benz never fails to pull out the stops for the legendary, annual gathering at Pebble Beach, the historic Concours d'Elegance taking place on August 18. This year, the manufacturer took along several members of its US media fleet including a C111-II with *functional* Wankel engine, as well as an R107 450SL, C209 CLK63 AMG, W113 280SL, C217 S650 Cabriolet (Maybach), W210 RennTech E60 RS, V251 R63 AMG and even a 300SEL 6.3!

CREDIT: MERCEDES-BENZ GROUP AG



Star Shot



Recalling trailblazing Mercedes-Benz cars of yesteryear



In its sleekest form, the W221 had a drag coefficient of 0.26!

221 S-Class

The fourth Mercedes to carry the S-Class badge, the 221-series outpunched rivals in the technology stakes while providing a world class experience for the driver and passengers

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

As Mercedes-Benz moved from 126 and 140 S-Class generations to the 220-series in 1998, in-car technology blossomed. Everything from centre consoles and instrument clusters to headrests sprouted a new age of features – coloured infotainment screens with satellite navigation, digital displays with additional functionality, heated and cooled seats, and more airbags than you could shake a stick at.

It's true to say the 220 paved the way for future generations of Mercedes, not just the S-Class, which have harnessed ever greater power from electronics. The 221-series S-Class produced from 2005 to 2013, and facelifted in 2009, took what was very impressive about its predecessor and made it positively mind-blowing. It featured a new-generation Comand infotainment system with innovative controller positioned above the transmission tunnel, as well as radar-assisted Brake Assist Plus, a night vision camera, Pre-Safe occupant protection technology that primed the car before impact, and Active Body Control suspension, which was a combination of Airmatic air suspension and a new Adaptive Damping System.

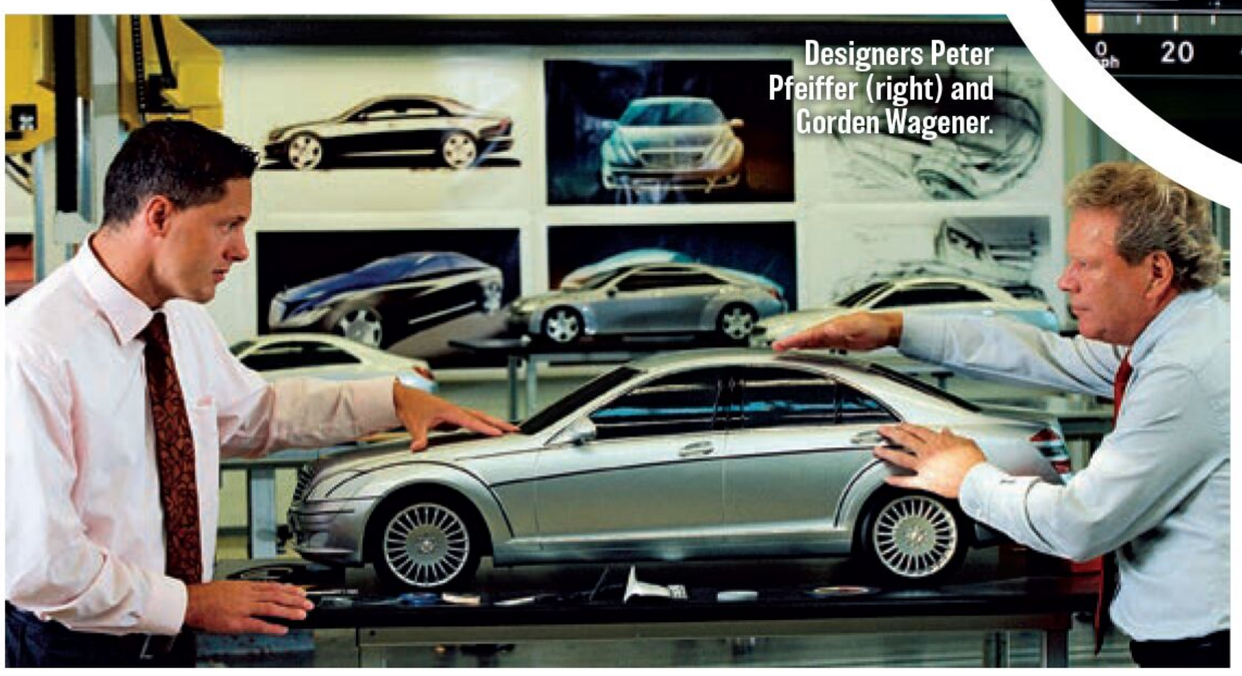
Even as we close out 2024, the 221's sharp details and curving form remain pleasing to the eye, and despite this executive limousine, available in standard- and long-wheelbase forms, being larger than the 220 in every respect, its road presence is as understated as ever. You may not know the 221 boasts a drag coefficient of just 0.26 in its sleekest form. Even the AMG variants – the S63 with 6.2 NA and 5.5 biturbo V8s, the S65 with V12 biturbo – maintained an 'undercover' appearance. The big seller was the three-litre V6 turbodiesel, at first badged S320 CDI and then S350 CDI followed by S350 Bluetec. Other petrol models comprised the S320/S350 V6s and S500 V8.

The 221 S-Class was the first car equipped with a seven-speed automatic gearbox (7G-Tronic), whose gearlever was located on the steering column to create more space for front occupants. It was also the first car to have an Environmental Certificate thanks to the eco-conscious approach Mercedes-Benz took with its development. The 221 was at once wrapped in tradition befitting a top-line Mercedes saloon and yet was utterly groundbreaking.

Facelifted cars can be identified by their slimline daytime running lights



▷ Night View Assist night vision camera made driving in low light much safer.



Designers Peter Pfeiffer (right) and Gorden Wagener.



Reclining rear seats offered in the long-wheelbase cars.



Modern technology is carefully blended with traditional details.

positioned in their front bumpers, their LED rear light clusters, and greater use of interior ambient lighting. A CO2 emissions-busting S400 Hybrid model also came on stream at this time, based on the S350 V6 petrol and featuring a magneto-electric motor bolted to the 7G-Tronic seven-speed automatic transmission, which draws power from a lithium-ion battery – another world first in the automotive sector.

The place to be

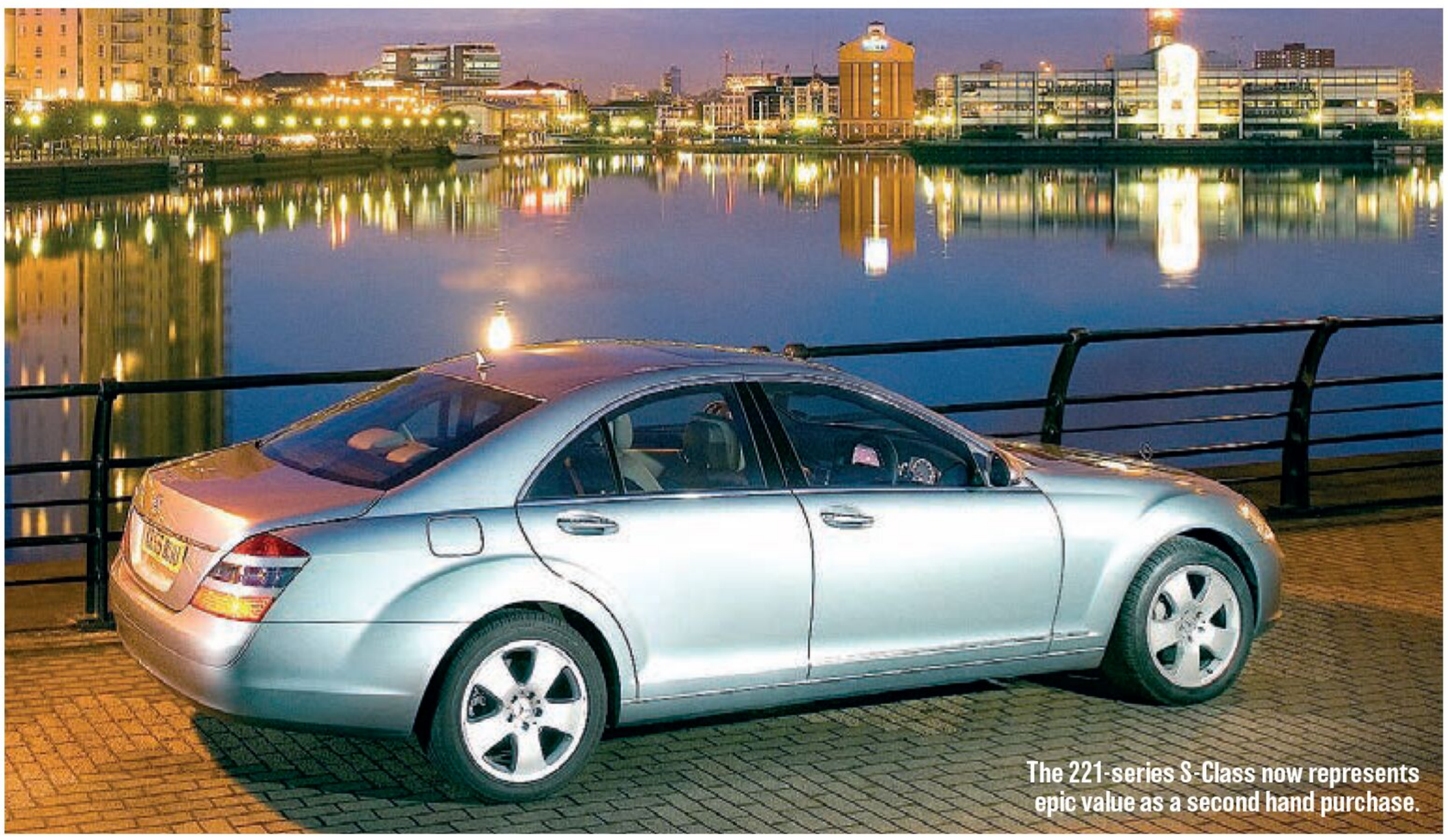
Driving purists may look to the S63 and S65 AMGs, but every variation of the 221-series satisfies from the hot (or cool) seat. Their careful balance of comfort, control and response is exemplary. The 221 is smooth yet forceful, light on its feet yet planted, and ultra-luxurious for its time yet immensely user-friendly. What little it gave away to BMW's 7-Series in the dynamics department, it more than made up for in terms of sheer prestige and appeal as a top-flight chauffeur's conveyance. Sitting in any S-Class is an experience to savour, the sense of quality and the tangible confidence in its own ability highly memorable, the 221-series treating those cocooned within to first class travel – spearheaded by a three-pointed star.

> **"Many loved what they saw, as confirmed by the car's 548,000-unit production run"**

Many loved what they saw, as confirmed by the car's 548,000-unit production run, which ended in May 2013 excepting a few S600s that were built until February 2014. For comparison, Mercedes-Benz made 484,683 of the 220-series, 406,532 of the 140-series, and 818,036 of the 126-series.

Today, even the priciest S65 AMG comes in at under £40,000, which is astounding value for money. The popular V6 diesel is arguably even better – a facelifted, 20,000-mile S350 CDI could be yours for under £15,000. Of course, maintenance won't be cheap, but at least you wouldn't have to fork out on ultra-low emission zone payments as that particular car, being sold privately, was ULEZ-compliant. Trade cars are equally competitive, the 33,000-mile S500 L (with 4.7-litre V8) built in 2012 that we spotted in Winsford was under £17,800.

If you're feeling particularly daring, you could always swap £7,000 cash for the keys to a 2006 S500 (5.5L) with a respectable 55,000 miles. If there is a more capable modern Mercedes for so little outlay, we are yet to find it.



The 221-series S-Class now represents epic value as a second hand purchase.

Insight from a Mercedes-Benz tuning industry veteran

Expert insight



Ian Kuah shares his experiences of the international launches of Mercedes' hotly popular 190 saloons, and highlights the benefits of these exclusive events for journalists and automotive fans alike

One of the good things about attending a car launch at international rather than national level is access to the development engineers and the chance to gain information on details that may not be apparent for the UK market if the car was originally LHD.

This was certainly the case back in 1984 when I was invited to the international press launch of the 190E 2.3-16 at the Nürburgring. In the morning we had the chance to do laps of the 22.835km-long Nordschleife (North Loop) by ourselves, which was quite daunting as I had never been there before. In the afternoon, the Race of Champions took place as the commissioning event on the brand new GP Circuit, where a little-known Brazilian driver called Ayrton Senna left his mark on the motorsport world, snatching victory from a host of big name F1 drivers.

Meanwhile, my discussion with an engineer on the fine details of the Mercedes-Cosworth 16-valve motor revealed that the exhaust manifold on RHD cars was completely different due to the fact that the steering shaft and the original LHD exhaust manifold tried to occupy the same space at the same time.

As equal length pipes are required to balance the exhaust pulses for optimal power and torque, a completely new manifold and downpipes had to be developed. The resulting RHD manifold ended up resembling a musical instrument of the brass persuasion, which the Mercedes engineers affectionately nicknamed *'Der Englische Wald Horn'* or 'The English Forest Horn'.

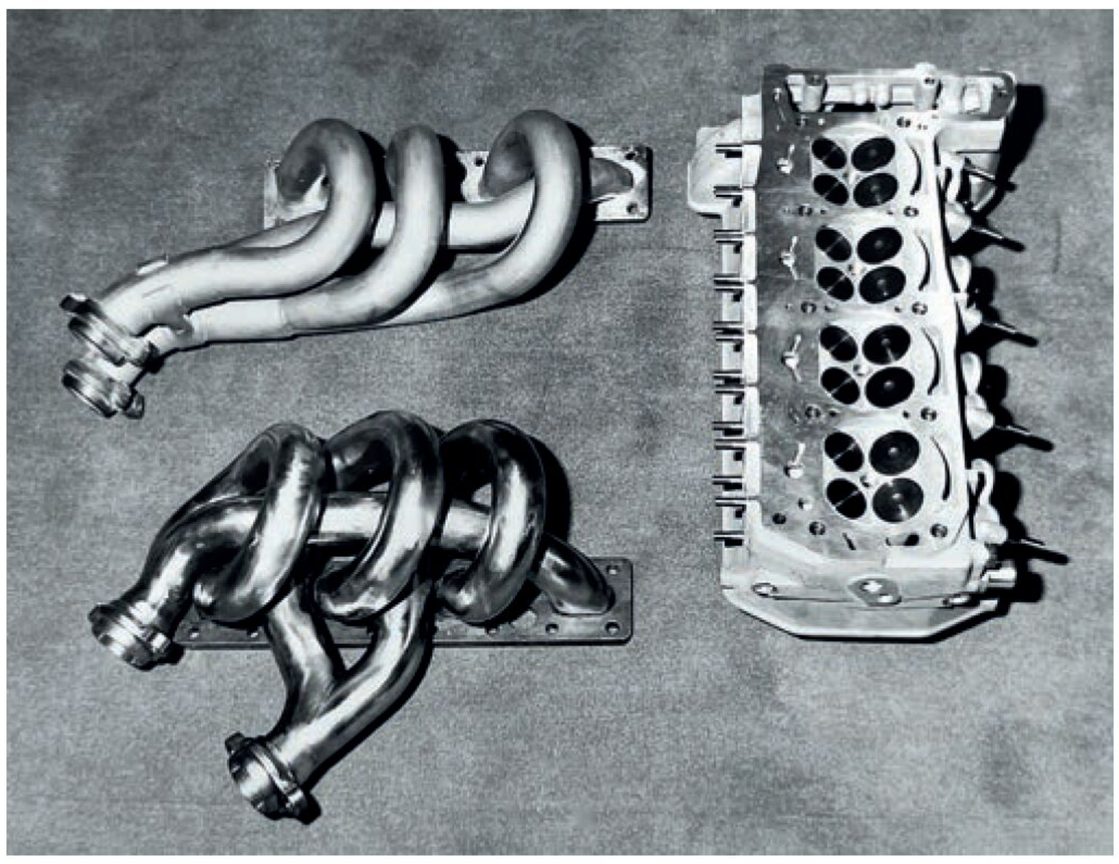
> **"The resulting RHD manifold ended up resembling a musical instrument"**

Six years after that event, I was at Hockenheim for the launch of the 190E 2.5-16 Evolution II. Our small group was picked up at Stuttgart Airport and brought to a nearby town where the cars were waiting for us to drive to the track.

The PR Manager, Dr Wolfgang Reicke, led us up the autobahn in a W126 300SE. We could not help but notice that our high-revving, 232bhp four-cylinder homologation specials were noticeably down on torque compared to the larger, heavier 185bhp automatic S-Class, and we struggled to keep up between 60 and 110mph whenever he floored it on the move after clearing slower traffic. That says a lot about engine displacement and aerodynamic drag.

In the aftermath of a very interesting day at Hockenheim, where I was able to do a back-to-back comparison of the 2.5-16, 2.5-16 Evo and 2.5-16 Evo II on the short and twisty Club Circuit, I wrote a story heavy on technical details and driving impressions.

At the time, I was curious to know if the German PR team actually read in detail what was published in foreign magazines, so I slipped a red herring into my story by quoting "Rudiger Herzhog, the Mercedes development engineer for the Evo II project". Following the magazine's release, I received a phone call from the Dr Reicke, asking who Rudiger Herzhog was as he could not find anyone by that name in the Mercedes engineering team. Bingo!



△ RHD-specification exhaust manifold for the 190E 2.3-16 (bottom) versus the original design.



△ The Evolution II needed its neck wringing to make progress.



△ Ian Kuah was present at the Nürburgring when Senna won.

IMAGES IAN KUAH & MERCEDES-BENZ GROUP AG

‘Bel Can-do’



In November 2022 we introduced the Bel Canto. Instantly making haute horology accessible. This subtly chiming timepiece caused a cacophony. And enormous demand. (The first 600 sold out in 8 hours.) Asked could we produce 5,000 annually, our Swiss CEO Jorg Bader Snr replied: “No. But we’ll find a way.” Because that is our way. Today, our supply chain is as fit for purpose as the gear chain of the new Bel Canto Classic. Which features a dressed-up dial. A dialled-down handset. And a gorgeous guilloché finish, with a precision only achievable (and affordable) using a femto laser. Outward displays, we like to think, of inward grace.

(Bel Can-)Do your research

Christopher Ward

christopherward.com

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

Group think



David Sutherland attends a gathering at Mercedes-Benz World in Surrey and considers the evolution of what appeals about three-pointed stars

You don't have to go far in the Mercedes world to hear people bemoaning that the marque's cars are longer what they used to be in the 1980s and before. Less solidly built, too electronic and lacking the charisma of old. They no longer stand out, they're like any other modern car – they're just not special anymore.

This is partly, but not wholly true, I feel. A Mercedes is no longer made as tough as a tank, but a good modern car doesn't need to be. And if an 'old school' stalwart drove any present Mercedes, I bet they'd be impressed by its performance, handling, refinement, comfort and general cleverness of design – everything apart from it not feeling like a 124-series or a 126-series S-Class.

But what were Mercedes strategists meant to do when by the end of the 1980s it was clear that the select niche it had long dominated was about to be invaded by Japanese brands like Lexus with cars that arguably even exceeded Benz quality? What if Mercedes had continued to build limited numbers (500,000 to 600,000 cars annually) of 'over-engineered' models like the W201 and 124 saloons instead of seeking out cost reductions, higher factory volumes and a more diverse model range, as set out in 1993's Strategic Product Initiative? It would by now probably have lost its independence, part of VW Group or a US or even Chinese car making conglomerate.

Previously, my assumption had been that adopting the modern car manufacturing business model of maximising factory output would see owner loyalty wither away. But after a recent visit to a Mercedes-Benz Club event held at Mercedes-Benz World at Brooklands in Surrey, I'm not so sure this is happening to the extent some think it is.

A lot of the events that M-B Club puts on are based around model anniversaries, and in any given year there are likely to be a number of them. The Brooklands meeting was to celebrate W100 600s (first on sale 60 years ago) and the W198 300SL Gullwing (70 years), but the handful of 600s (no 300SLs could be persuaded out of hiding) wasn't going to make much impact on the considerable area that is the 'Railway Straight' section of the remaining Brooklands track, so the invite had to be thrown open to pretty well any other model that could claim that 2024 marked something.



△ Coupes such as the CLS and CLK are seemingly growing in popularity as they become more affordable as used buys.



△ The 211-series E-Class has also gained favour recently.



△ It's not just modern AMGs that have a following today...

> **"As the generations pass, the perception of classic status changes"**

What were the most numerous Mercedes on the day? The 208- and 209-series CLKs, 36 of which turned up. Next was the original, 219-series CLS, the four-door coupe launched 20 years ago in face of scepticism, but which created a niche others including Audi and Porsche rushed to fill, with 25 present. Then there were the dozen 211-series E-Classes. You'll have noticed that all three are from Mercedes' much criticised 'modern' era; the highest attending 'proper' classics were the 19 G-Wagens and 18 126-series S-Classes.

As the generations pass, the perception of classic status changes, and while for some years now 1980s and 90s cars have been the ones affluent adults recall as family cars in their childhood – a major driver in classic car choice – the 2000s is now coming to prominence as Millennials come of age with spending power and indulge their nostalgia.

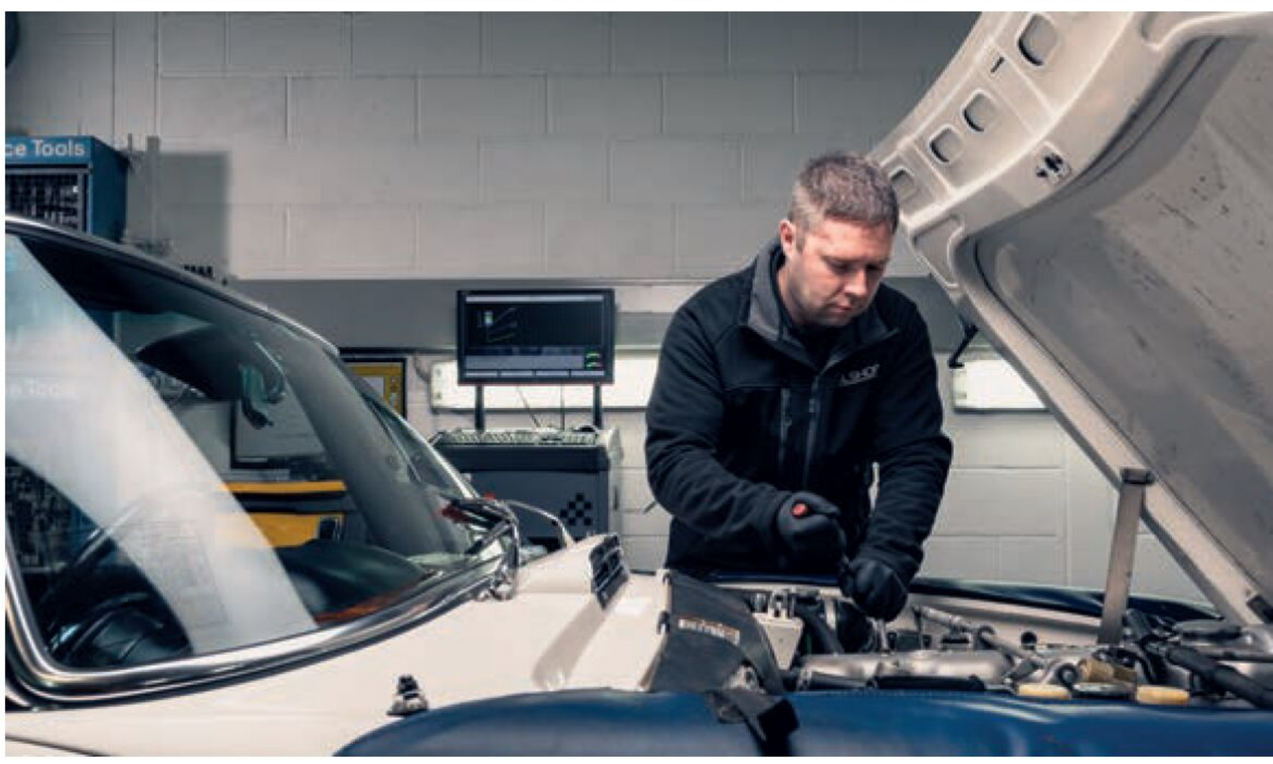
It's great that recent models look set to become cherished, but of course it can take a long time; the R129 SL, for example, was discontinued over two decades ago and still doesn't fetch its original new price. Meanwhile, I hope that as the older generation of owners fades away, their era of classics won't be forgotten.

Of course, we'll always love 300SLs, SL Pagodas and W100 600s, but once there's no one left to remember Pontons and Fintails, their desirability as a classic may diminish (just two Pontons were present at M-B World). That would be a great shame because Mercedes just doesn't build cars like it used to, right?

IMAGES DAVID SUTHERLAND

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Social Club

Mercedes-Benz related highlights from the world of social media



Ian Olive

@unfinished_benzness

Flew down to the Bay Area this weekend to pick up a car I've wanted for a while. My first diesel car was a 1980 300SD so it's only fitting my newest acquisition would be a 1993 300SD. This particular SD is in a rare and lovely shade of Rosenholz (Rosewood). The back seat is one of the most comfortable in history.



Vintage AMG

@vintage.amg

For sale – Mercedes M117 AMG cylinder-heads. These heads have authentic and rare AMG 50.1 cams, solid lifter valve actuation and mounted to 560 heads. These heads were removed from an M117.963 Gen I 5.0L engine and can be installed on any M117 5.0 or 5.6 block.



Garage Blanc

@garage_blanc

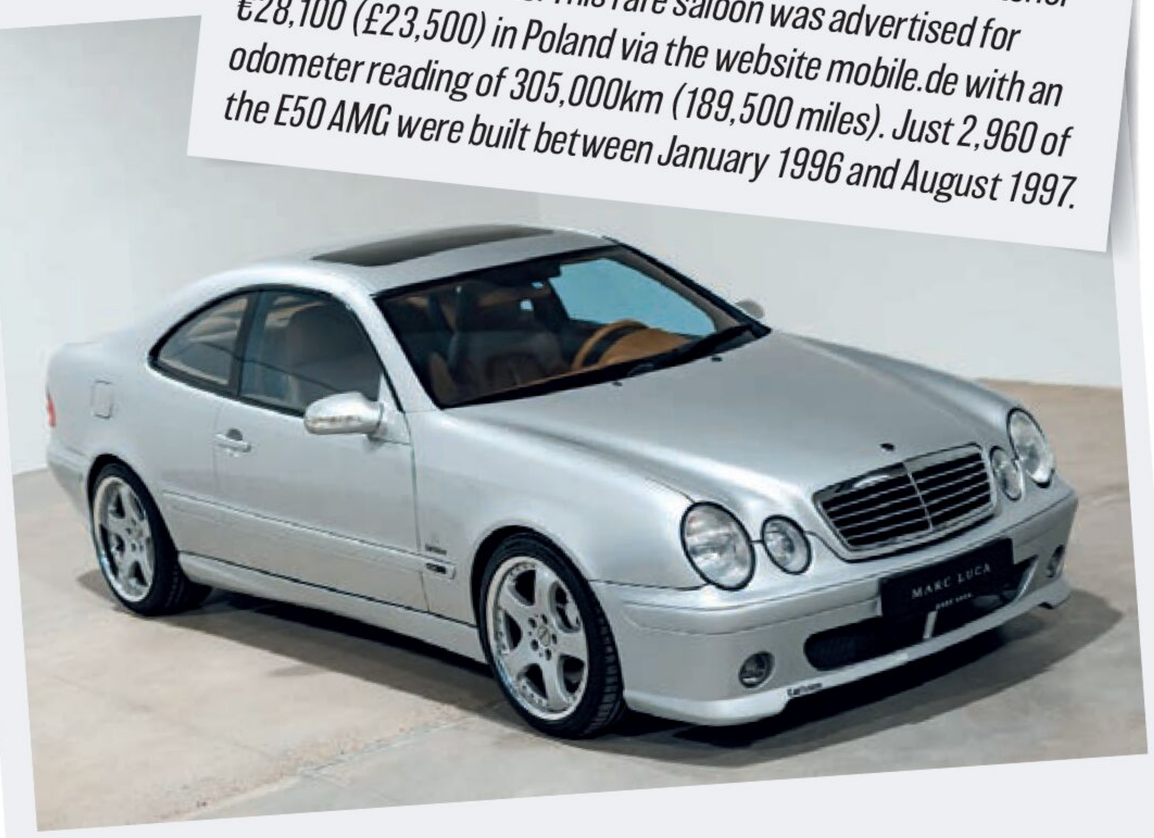
Offered for €27,890 (£23,300) by Garage Blanc in Gelsenkirchen, Germany, this 2001 C32 AMG features a unique interior by AMG Manufaktur, comprising embossed turquoise nappa leather and designo green wood trim. Not for the faint-hearted!



Finest Stars

@finest__stars

Mercedes-Benz W210 E50 AMG from 1996 in British Racing Green (Rolls-Royce Code 9520119) with leather interior in Graphite/Anthracite. This rare saloon was advertised for €28,100 (£23,500) in Poland via the website mobile.de with an odometer reading of 305,000km (189,500 miles). Just 2,960 of the E50 AMG were built between January 1996 and August 1997.

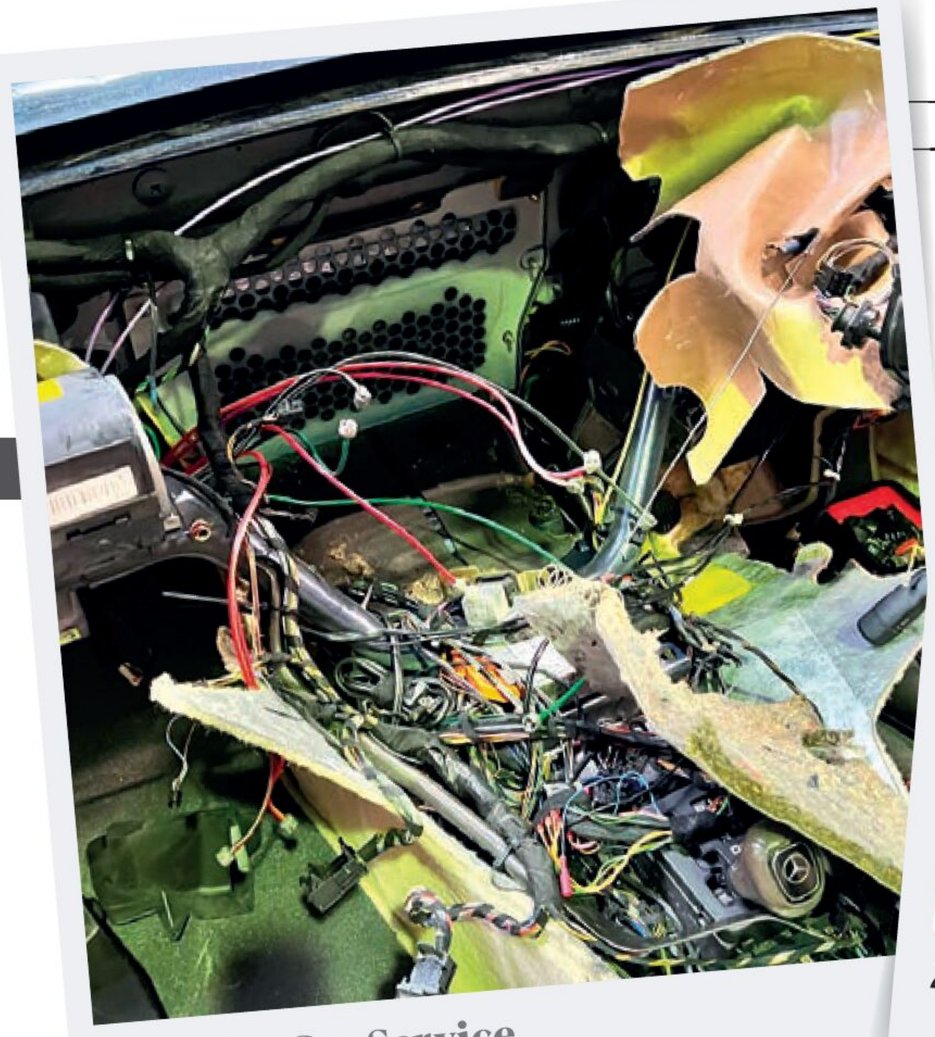


Marc Luca

@marcluca_official

Carlsson CLK CM 60 RS. Super rare and complete car on 33,300km.

This superb looking 208-series CLK was registered in October 2001 and packs a 405bhp V8. It's finished in Brilliant Silver over brown Carlsson leather.



Prestige Car Service

@mercedes_workshops

Another evaporator replacement. I must have done 10 in the last year or so. This one is an R129 SL. Pretty fiddly and quite difficult. Easier than a 124 though. I've done about six SLKs and they are very straightforward compared to this wiring spaghetti.



Mustafa Albasha

special_e55 & e.sexy3

A 2009 E63 AMG with naturally aspirated, 6.2-litre V8 meets its predecessor, a supercharged, 2005 E55 AMG. This handsome pair live in Saihat on the east coast of Saudi Arabia.



Rare Cars Deutschland

@rare_cars_deutschland

Mercedes took a lot of flak for the first C-Class. They did, however, get one thing very right – the design and proportions, as proven by this beautiful C280 Sport I crossed paths with in Berlin last weekend.



Autoclass Garage

Autoclass MK

There are decades between these Mercedes SLs, but at Autoclass we still have the expertise to work on both of them. Do you prefer old or new?



DMS Automotive

@dmsautomotive

DMS AMG GT C 689bhp/900Nm (original 558bhp/700Nm). Exhaust valves angle and burble/crackle on overrun controlled by driving mode.



The MB Market

The MB Market

This 1994 Mercedes-Benz S500 6.0 AMG is finished in Black Pearl Metallic (199) over a Black Leather (261) interior and shows an original 74,429km (47,000 miles). It was delivered new in Japan in June of 1994.

Starting life as a five-litre, AMG Japan equipped this saloon with a six-litre M119 engine, AMG bodykit, BBS AMG Aero II wheels and more. Finding its way to the UK and recently refreshed by John Haynes Mercedes-Benz in Worthing, this S-Class was bid to £33,600 ($44,000) but didn't sell.

ROARING RARITY

Based on the low-volume C43 AMG from the 202-series C-Class range, this 342bhp C55 is considerably rarer still – and that's before you consider its UK specification

WORDS & IMAGES **STEVE HALL**



Succeeding the iconic W201 190, the W202 C-Class was the first Mercedes granted a bespoke motor by AMG, which was no longer a highly regarded tuner that existed outside the orbit of Mercedes, rather a fully fledged partner of the Stuttgart behemoth.

The year 1993 saw the introduction of the C36 AMG with a 276bhp, 3.6-litre straight-six built to the long-standing (and still present) AMG philosophy of 'One man, one engine', sprinkling the magic dust of bespoke hand-built expertise onto the C-Class to create a very special car. Just 5,221 C36 AMG Saloons found homes over a near four-year production run, making it the most 'successful' W202 AMG.

However, it wasn't long before that age-old philosophy was employed when C43 replaced C36 in late 1997, purloining its M113 engine from the E, S, ML and CLK line – vehicles in which it was doubtless less challenging to find room for a 4.3-litre V8. Not that this was a simple transplant job though, AMG once again breathing its magic onto the motor, meaning that whilst the C43 was the smallest Merc to receive the 4.3-litre M113 V8 it was also the most powerful, 302bhp giving it 27bhp of bragging rights over the more prosaic version found elsewhere. Naturally, with a big V8 up front, torque was fit for purpose too, 302lb ft finding its way to the rear axle by 3,250rpm, delivering 0-62mph in 6.5 seconds and a limited top speed of 155mph.

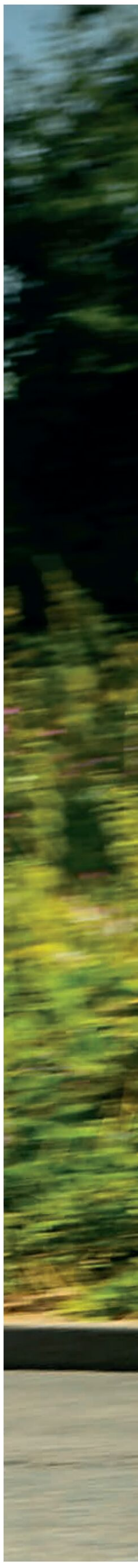
One last blast

With C43 AMG production ending in 2000 along with the rest of the W202 range (superseded by the W203, which brought a whole new set of tools to the big engine/small car game – see page 26) that would normally be that in the potted history of the performance W202 were it not for the C55 AMG you see here.

This car leads me nicely onto what can happen when a bunch of talented engineers decide to go somewhat off-piste, perhaps neglecting to mention to management why they were at work on a traditional day of rest. This W202 hails from the lesser known 'AMG Manufaktur' division, essentially a specialist operation operating outside the corporate structure to produce custom and limited-volume cars for the more demanding customer. It is believed only 59 C55 AMGs exist – 29 of those covering all right-hand-drive markets. I'm not sure the term 'rare' is strong enough but I'll roll with that for now…

With this in mind, I'm sure you can understand why we extend our thanks to owner Craig for allowing us to photograph and drive this beautiful 90,000-mile example, helping us understand just how special a machine that *Autocar* described in its 1999 road test as an 'overpowered, overpriced, and utterly addictive mega Merc' truly is. ▷

"This W202 hails from the lesser known 'AMG Manufaktur' division"



△ **Back when AMGs were understated.**

▷ Not before the details though, because details are important. Here's a couple of good ones to kick us off: £47,640 and £24,760. If you guessed that one of those was the retail price of this car then you'd be halfway there – the first being the 1999 bill for the C43 AMG donor car you had to purchase before sending the second sum to AMG to administer the upgrades necessary to create your C55 AMG.

Being a special division product, this isn't 'just' an engine swap (it is a special one though, being pilfered off the line intended for an E55 AMG). Your C55 AMG would also receive a modified floorpan to clear the bigger, beefier propshaft and differential deemed necessary to handle an extra 74lb ft of torque. The gearbox would be recalibrated to shift with more alacrity, firing its output at a longer final drive which delivered a top speed in excess of 175mph when unlimited. And whilst we're talking performance, how does 0-62mph in 5.5 seconds and 0-100mph in 12.4 seconds sound?

Externally, there's not a lot to differentiate 55 from 43, by which I mean badges… that's it. If the lack of chassis modifications suggests a lack of commitment, it's actually the inverse. The fact AMG deemed it unnecessary to uprate anything suggests how dynamically adept the donor C43 was to begin with. It's the same story inside, the austere functionality of the C43's cabin perfectly reflecting how AMG saw this car – it's all about that magnificent drivetrain.

Underlying aggression

Ah, the drivetrain. It's been a while since I've had the pleasure of driving a C43, but within moments of awakening the C55's V8 you just know that here is a car with a bit more attitude. As you might hope, indeed expect, even at idle the gently intimidating thrum of the V8 talks of a motor that's found itself somewhere it was never meant to be. It rocks the body ever so slightly with a prod of the throttle, the distant V8 rumble full of intent. Of course, a C43 is not dissimilar in character but the C55 amplifies this aspect; it's as though you can feel the engine's extra capacity as it gulps down fuel and air before you've so much as moved the gearlever three notches back to engage Drive.

Tempting as it is, what happens next isn't pinning the right-hand pedal to see what effect 342bhp has in a C-Class, one which incidentally weighs the same 1,570kg as its C43 donor. You'd be forgiven for thinking an extra 1,200cc of capacity might mean more gravitational pull up front but the fact is both motors hail from the same M113 family, the C55 being 7mm wider in bore and 8mm longer of stroke. The long stroke is telling, the C55 delivering its fatter torque curve lower down the rev range, peaking 250rpm earlier than the C43 at 3,000rpm.

So our drive starts with familiarisation, surfing the opulent level of torque without any need to stretch the motor. Right now, it feels – deeper, brawnier timbre to the engine's machinations aside – much like a C43 AMG. Which is to say it conducts itself down our test route in an utterly smooth



▷ **If you thought the C43's V8 was mighty, wait until you experience the C55's 5.4L!**



fashion, the ride taut but pliant, the engine relaxed but very much present, the gearbox slurring shifts adeptly as we barely broach half the rev range. Typical of this genre, the recirculating ball steering isn't the last word in communicative correspondence but it's accurate enough to place the car with ease and weighted nicely in tune with the general feeling of solid heft that denotes every aspect of the C55.

But resist, I can no longer. There's an ample straight ahead, throttle meets carpet, it seems I've awoken the beast. The 'box no longer slurs but punches down a gear and we're halfway round the rev counter building speed at a rate that quickly makes Craig and I giggle at the slightly absurd way we're propelled towards the horizon. Torque may peak at 3,000rpm but it stays there until 4,300rpm before handing over to the building power, of which there is clearly plenty. Earlier, Craig had advised that the five-speed autobox is best left to its own devices (manual shifts being slow to respond to your commands) so I back off ever so slightly, initiating an upshift just short of the 5,500rpm power peak and, well, it doesn't seem to matter because acceleration remains unabated.

And in those few seconds of absurdity, you understand ▷

"The C55 delivers its fatter torque curve lower down the rev range"



△ Carbon effect trim can be found on the doors and centre console, the additional leather reminding of this C's status.



△ Massive torque doesn't mean it's not worth revving the three-valve M113 V8 to its redline; white faced AMG dials.

Owner's view

"It's so calm, elegant and relaxed. Then you floor it and all hell breaks loose. Angry sound, hard gear changes, crazy acceleration. And because of the torque you can do this at any speed. Jekyll and Hyde. I love driving down the road and thinking that only I know how special this car is," Craig explains.

"I really like cars that are rare and understated. I had never owned a Mercedes before but was looking for a good W124 E36 having passed on a couple of bad ones. This came up for sale and I didn't have a clue what it was. The previous owner had clearly taken care of it.

"Since purchasing it, I have spoken with well-respected auctioneers, classic car dealers and experts, and none had heard of it with the exception of Edward Hall Classic Mercedes, which now looks after it. When I go to car shows everyone thinks it's a C43. I understand there are 45 Saloons in the world and 14 Estates. Of those, 29 are RHD and 30 LHD but I've no idea how many are UK spec. This is a genuine UK car completed on July 16 1998. AMG confirmed it started building these in July 1998 through to May 2000, so 2.5 per month. This would be the first or second car and highly likely the first UK car but AMG can't formally confirm this. Off the back of owning this car and loving the story/rarity of it, I've bought a 1991 300E 3.4 AMG manual baby Hammer, which is amazing in different ways.

"There are so many cars that I want to drive, so if a silly offer was made for this C55 I might be tempted, however I've been looking for a 'forever car' for about 10 years now and the C55 has come the closest to being that. It's a cruiser and provides a sense of heritage. It's not an event per se, more a feeling in my head that I am driving a small part of history.

"It's done 90,000 miles so is no garage queen. I don't treat it as such - I drive it as much as I can and will put on the miles (and look after it). Despite its rarity, it should - and needs to - be driven and enjoyed. It was previously owned by Marquess of Blandford, James Spencer Churchill, 12th Duke of Marlborough -relative of Winston Churchill and first cousin of Diana, Princess of Wales."

▷ why buyers chose to part with quite so much to find themselves in possession of this rarity. It's not a car that smacks you in the face like a modern turbo monster, but riding that wave of power and torque is as addictive as it is surprising. And let me say this now: if you think it's just a slightly faster C43, think again because the C55 is on a different plain of performance altogether. If a C43 feels like a well-balanced blend of power and dynamism, then this car quite simply feels a bit too much at times. Which we like, very much indeed.

That over-muscled motor up front harks back to wonderfully unhinged products such as 1986's iconic AMG Hammer, born of a time when AMG was the rebellious outlier. With such limited numbers, the chance of seeing a 202-series C55 AMG, let alone acquiring one for yourself, is remote. As with the C43, the C55 is borderline plain to look at – a real 'you need to know' kind of car. The sculpted bumpers and lower stance over unique alloys lend a certain brooding quality to the aesthetic, but I'd venture that most would see the C55 cruise past and think nothing more than 'nice old Merc'. Right up until they decided they just had to get in front up that slip road and were left hanging in the wake of a barrage of torque and V8 thunder. If ever a car deserved the 'Q-car' moniker, here it is.

▽ There was also an Estate version of the C55 AMG.

"Riding that wave of power and torque is as addictive as it is surprising"

Just the facts

Mercedes-Benz C55 AMG (W202)

Engine M113 5,439cc V8 **Power** 342bhp@5,500rpm **Torque** 376lb ft@3,000-4,300rpm **Transmission** 5-speed auto, RWD **Weight** 1,570kg

0-62mph 5.5sec **Top speed** 155mph **Fuel consumption** 24.1mpg **Years produced** 1998-2000 **Number built** 59

All figures from Mercedes-Benz; fuel consumption according to NEDC combined; top speed electronically limited

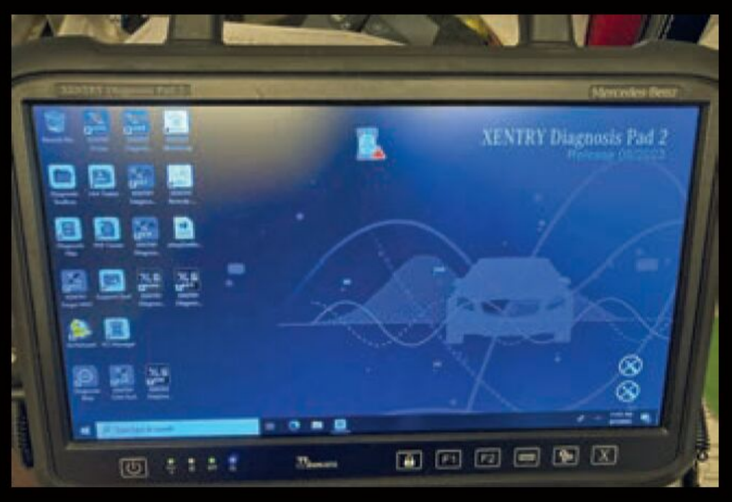
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BOMBER WAGONS

Spiritual successors of the 202-series C55 covered in the previous feature, these supercharged C32 V6 and V8-engined C55 Estates provide an exciting head-to-head

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

Estate cars may be going out of fashion but there remains strong support for the 203-series C-Class, two AMG variations of which grace these pages. In my opinion, most wagons of the early 2000s looked bland, bulky and were generally quite slow. That all changed when the elegant 'S203' wagon entered the scene. A new century brought a new C-Class. This second generation of C-Class design language came from Peter Pfeiffer, who in 1999 was head of design at Mercedes-Benz and therefore the successor to the late legend that was Bruno Sacco.

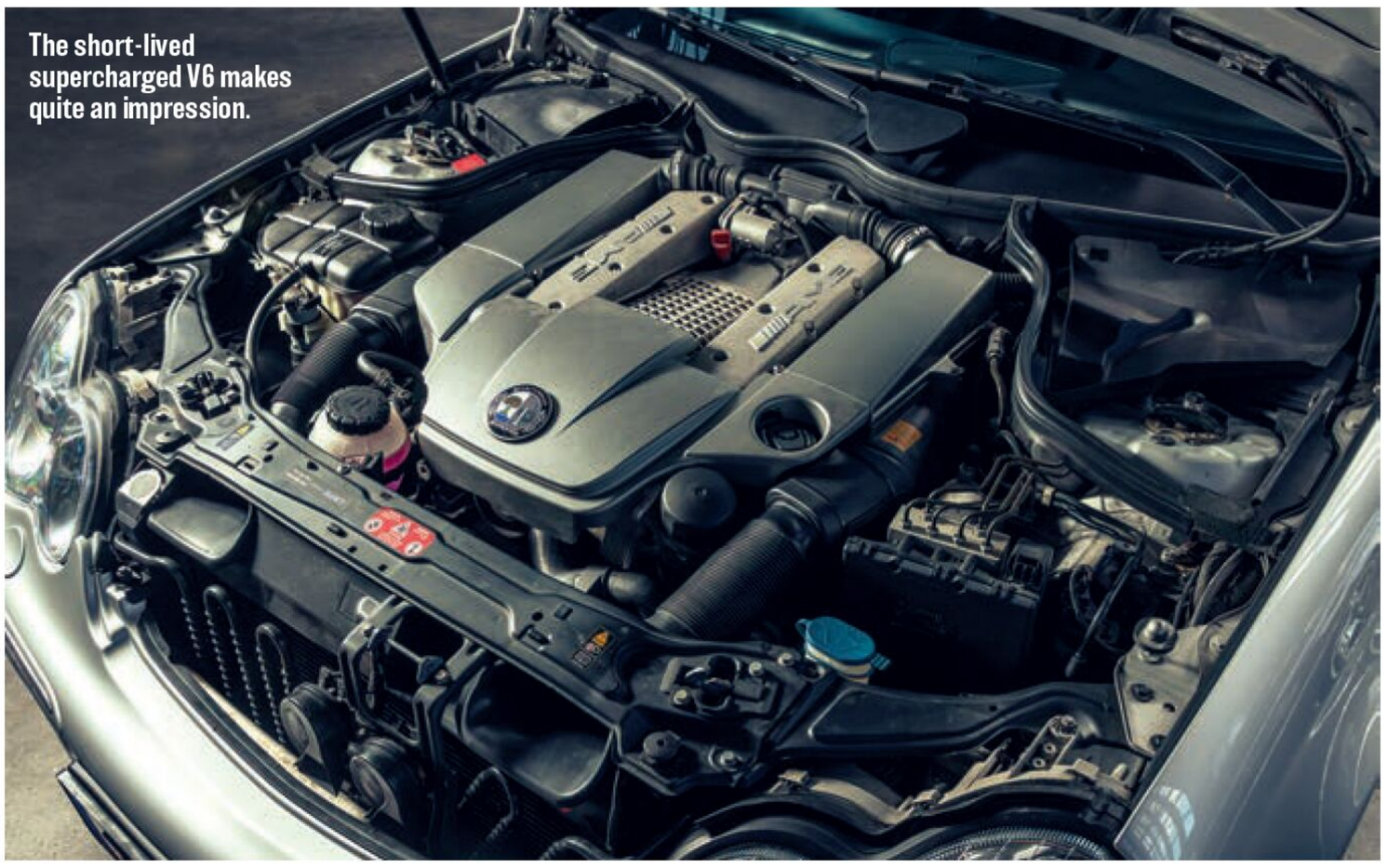
With 1.87 million Saloons and Estates built between 1992 and 2001, the 202-series C-Class was a smash hit, but many would argue the E36 BMW 3-Series was dynamically superior. That changed with the 203-series C-Class. The Estate version benefited from an impressive 0.31 drag coefficient, three-link front suspension, revised rear multi-link geometry, and more communicative rack and pinion steering. Naturally, AMG wanted another shot at taking on BMW's 3-Series, now in E46 form. The resulting efforts can be seen here…

The silver C32 AMG arrived first, in 2001, and packs an all-alloy, 3.2-litre V6 with three valves per cylinder. A Lysholm-type helical supercharger (supplied by IHI) pushes the numbers in the right direction, reaching a whopping ▷

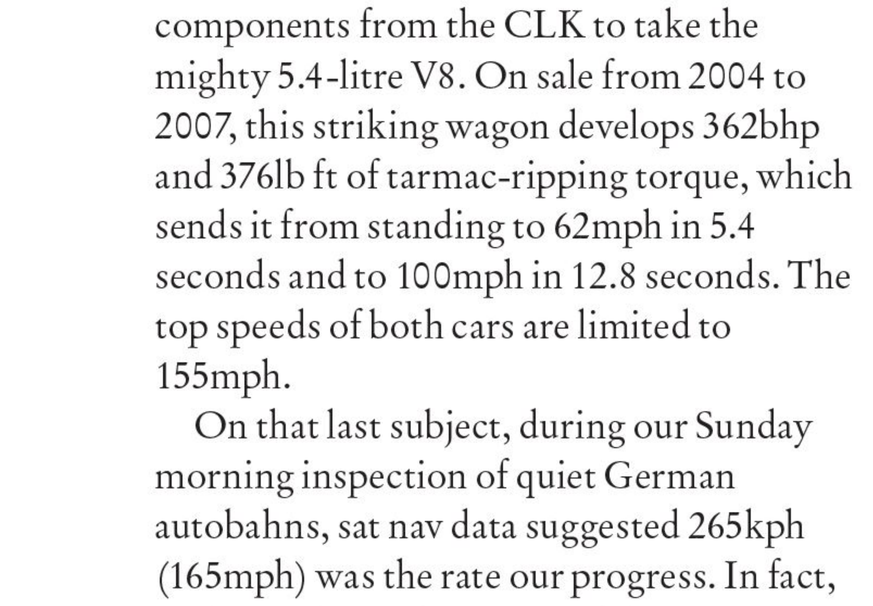
▷ 349bhp and 332lb ft of torque. In the C32 the M3 had finally found its match. Well, actually it was blown away by the AMG: 0-62mph in 5.4 seconds and a reported 0-100mph time of 12.8 seconds! As the Estate (1,695kg) is not much heavier than the Saloon (1,635kg), the numbers should be similar. Not bad for a compact wagon.

The succeeding and even rarer C55 AMG required a three-inch nose job using components from the CLK to take the mighty 5.4-litre V8. On sale from 2004 to 2007, this striking wagon develops 362bhp and 376lb ft of tarmac-ripping torque, which sends it from standing to 62mph in 5.4 seconds and to 100mph in 12.8 seconds. The top speeds of both cars are limited to 155mph.

On that last subject, during our Sunday morning inspection of quiet German autobahns, sat nav data suggested 265kph (165mph) was the rate our progress. In fact, such was the performance of these AMG estates on the approach to their soft limiters, 180mph seemed entirely achievable, especially for the V8-powered C55.


The short-lived supercharged V6 makes quite an impression.

"The Estate benefited from an impressive 0.31 drag coefficient, three-link front suspension and revised rear multi-link geometry"


Melchert Janse brought his C32 back up to scratch.

C32 AMG Estate

Let's chat with the owners of these Mercedes, starting with Melchert Janse – proud keeper of the 2001 C32 AMG. "Before I started as a process operator for the local government, I worked as a diagnostic technician at a Mercedes-Benz specialist. A client had an S203 C32 AMG in for maintenance, so I knew what the car was about. I was completely smitten from the moment I first laid eyes on it.

"Our own family car was a decent two-litre CL203 Sport Coupe, but this V6 Kompressor-fed car was something else! Every time it came in, I saw myself owning one. After completing my studies, I treated myself and bought one. I had only two wishes: it had to be an Estate and fully optioned. In 2021, this one was available in the south of the Netherlands, but with some hidden gremlins. I knew the car inside-out, and I'm familiar with the 203's quirks, so I brought it home, fixed it – including deleting a minor glitch – and have enjoyed it ever since. Until last year, it was my daily driver.

"Just 1,556 C32 AMG Estates were made, and I'm told about 100 are on Dutch plates. I like to drive mine frequently. The odometer reads 291,000km [180,000 miles], but you wouldn't know it from looking at the car. That's because I've made some changes here and there. My private workshop allows for major upgrades and complete restorations.

"The brakes are upgraded, and I've fitted third-party suspension components from an American brand called BC Racing," Melchert adds. "Unlike many suppliers, this setup is an affordable, fully adjustable, and a very comfortable option that has transformed the car's performance. I can adjust the ride height, damping, springs and camber; it's wonderful. From the boot, you'll


△ Half-circle instruments in the C32; two-tone leather a lovely feature; flat-bottomed wheel wasn't standard.



Quietly menacing on the visual front, but brawnier in sound than your usual S203.

△ The 203-series C-Class's facelift of 2004 honed the front end styling and added a few extra creature comforts.

see tubes with tiny screws pointing toward you, allowing you to change the setup to whatever you wish. And I like it comfortable. Bouncing up and down is not for me.

"As you can see, my car received a complete respray in Brilliant Silver, and all wheels are polished to a shine. The typical 203-series egg-shaped projector lenses are completely new. To enhance the sound, my V6 barks through a Supersprint stainless steel sports exhaust. The Kompressor has water cooling, but it's a known fact that the pump isn't big enough. I added an extra water tank, taken from a GLC, to separate the Kompressor cooling from the engine cooling. Cold air is always beneficial, and maybe it even adds some top-end power.

"For the techies, it's worth noting the mechanical work done to the bushings of the five-speed autobox. Bushings are mechanical components used to reduce friction and wear inside the transmission. They act as bearings to support rotating shafts and provide a smooth surface for movement, which is crucial in the complex workings of an automatic transmission system. I changed the diameter to adjust the timing, which is now more direct. Maybe my S203 is a restomod Mercedes – and why not?"

On Melchert's wishlist is a bigger intercooler, a bigger intercooler pump, and a different pulley on the kompressor. Changing from 72mm to 65mm should provide roughly an extra 50bhp!



△ The owner of the C55 is Lies van de Wetering and he found the car online; this 2004 example was sold new in Belgium.



△ An updated infotainment system features in this C55; note the more traditional instrument cluster design here.

C55 AMG Estate

Readers with a strong memory may recall the October/November 2021 issue of *Mercedes Enthusiast*. On pages 42 to 45, you can read my impression of Lies van de Wetering's E50 AMG and his friend's SL60 AMG. The E50 has since been sold because Lies' wife wasn't a fan. Instead, he found this 2004 (facelift) C55 AMG Estate for daily transportation.

With an appetite for more power, Mercedes discontinued the C32's V6 in 2004, ▷



V6 or V8? Each has their merits, but which C-Class engine would you go for?

▷ shoehorned in a V8, improved the ride quality, and made other enhancements before offering the new top model to the market. With only 595 Estates made between 2004 and 2007, this version of the C55 is a rare sight. Was it quicker than the Kompressor V6? Not really. But it does sound amazing and feels more sophisticated on the move.

Lies says, "Before the E50, I was searching for a C270 but found a Lapis Blue C30 CDI AMG Estate [pictured right]. I really liked that car and kept it for seven years. It still felt fresh after 435,000km (270,000 miles), but diesel became problematic here in the Netherlands. It was special and rare – only 830 were made – and it remains the only diesel-fuelled AMG.

"Compared to the C55 AMG, the five-litre V8 E50 had a more race-oriented engine with its four-valve heads," Lies continues. "This 5.4-litre C55 has three valves per cylinder and feels more like a standard Mercedes because the torque is reluctant to deliver that massive push. I sold my E50 for good money and found this C55 AMG on the biggest Dutch online marketplace.

"I sold my E50 for good money and found this C55 AMG online"

"My wife has a strong preference for the S203 model, so now everybody's happy – especially because this is a facelifted car. Unlike most car brands, Mercedes' facelift versions really tend to be the better ones with various updates, and now I have 18-inch wheels. Also, the interior is much more to my liking. The thing is, at the time, an S500 was the same price. Mind you, my C55 was about 2.5 times the cost of an entry-level C-Class."



△ C55 owner Lies van de Wetering's old C30 CDI AMG Estate packing a 228bhp/398lb ft, five-cylinder turbodiesel motor.

The colour is special. It looks like a tinted black, but when the sun shines, the dark blue really comes out. Another reason to avoid scratches and damage is the specially lengthened nose and the longer bonnet that comes with it. The wheelarches need to stay intact as well – you'll have a hard time finding replacements. The front is basically a period CLK, but slightly different...

"Unlike Melchert's C32 AMG, my car is completely stock. In 2004, my S203 was delivered in Belgium until famous Dutch Mercedes-Benz mechanic Marco Kraan imported it, drove it, and maintained it to perfection. I guess those who keep searching will eventually find the best ones on the market," Melchert concludes.

We had a fantastic day out photographing these AMGs in Rotterdam harbour. Parked in front of a maritime supplier, enthusiastic workers soon joined us and talked about the cars. The manager unlocked the gates and invited us to the quayside and inside the historic buildings. Mega!

Just the facts

Mercedes-Benz C32 AMG Estate (S203)

Engine M112 3,199cc V6 supercharged **Power** 349bhp@6,100rpm
Torque 332lb ft@4,400rpm **Transmission** 5-speed auto, RWD **Weight** 1,695kg
0-62mph 5.4sec **Top speed** 155mph **Fuel consumption** 23.7mpg **CO2 emissions** 285g/km
Years produced 2001-2004 **Number built** 1,556

Mercedes-Benz C55 AMG Estate (S203)

Engine M113 5,439cc V8 **Power** 362bhp@5,750rpm **Torque** 376lb ft@4,000rpm
Transmission 5-speed auto, RWD **Weight** 1,695kg **0-62mph** 5.4sec **Top speed** 155mph
Fuel consumption 23.0mpg **CO2 emissions** 293g/km
Years produced 2004-2007 **Number built** 595

All figures from Mercedes-Benz; fuel consumption according to NEDC combined; top speeds electronically limited



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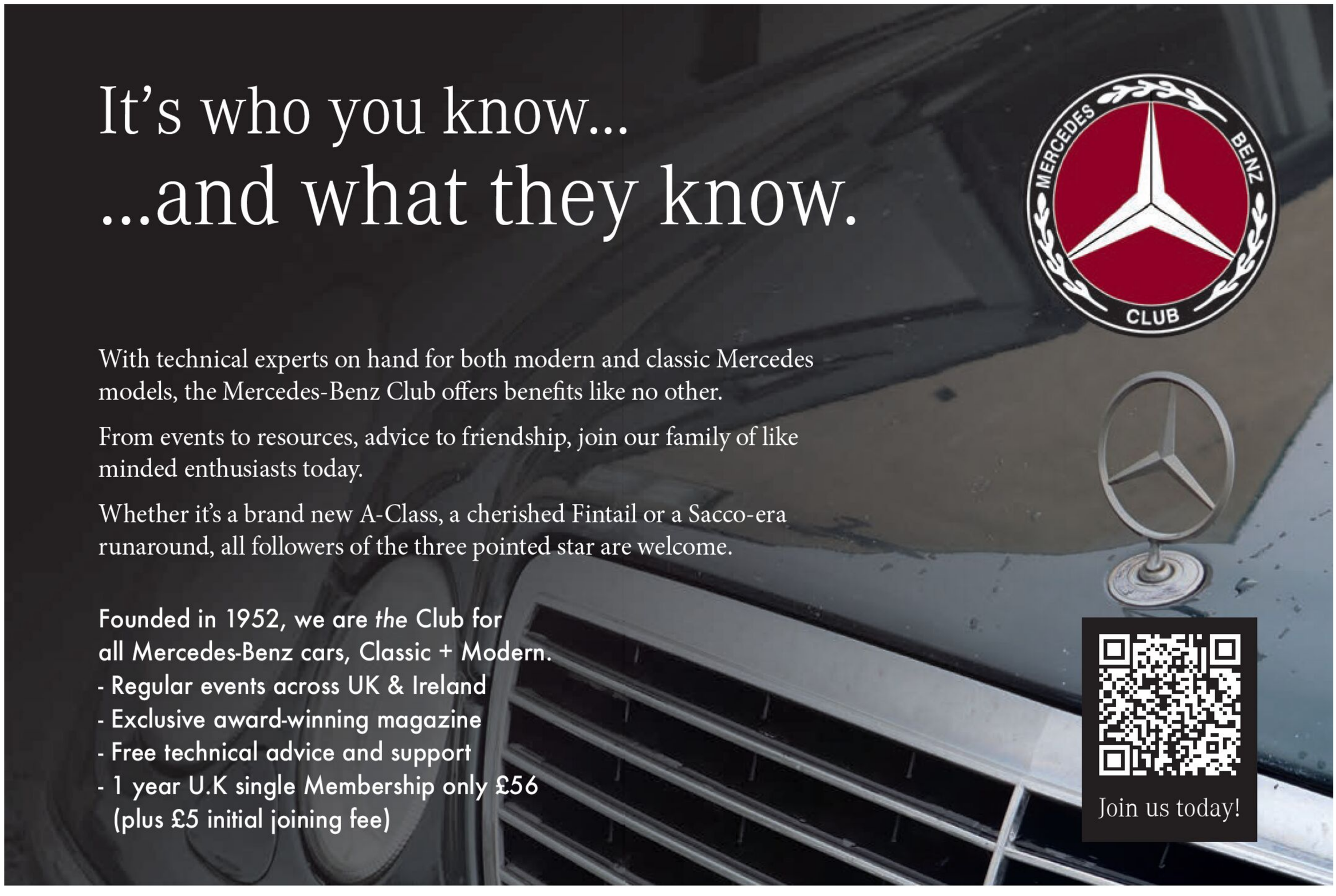


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THE BRIDGE BETWEEN

A cornerstone of Germany's post-war economic resurgence, the Mercedes Ponton range redefined luxury and performance. Spanning E-Class and S-Class-type models, in Saloon, Coupe and Cabriolet forms, these iconic vehicles boasted sleek designs, spacious interiors, and sophisticated suspension. To celebrate their 70th anniversary, we've gathered the passionate owners of six-cylinder versions to share their timeless appeal

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

"In Germany, we faced the autobahns but the Ponton held her own"

Grosser and Pagoda are names that add a touch of class. By contrast, the moniker Ponton whisks us back 70 years, to a time when war was a recent memory and food rationing was still ongoing in Britain. Ponton is German for pontoon, referring to the pontoon bridges that littered war-torn Germany – temporary steel structures used for crossing rivers.

Apparently, a German motoring journalist associated these structures with the silhouette of the all-new W120, and the name stuck. Other explanations cite the shape of the front subframe, to which the engine, suspension and steering are attached. Whatever the reason, the W120 set the stage for Daimler-Benz for the next 70 years, with 'crumple zones', unitary construction, and subframes – all engineering innovations that brought multiple benefits.

High on the list of advantages is cost savings through simplified production. Bolting the engine, steering, suspension and ancillaries to a subframe, which can then be directly attached to the body, is highly efficient. The unitary bodyshell, with its crumple zones, is also easier to produce, with the wings, doors and body panels all flush in a straight line. Many cars from this era still had separate wings and running boards, which looked dated by comparison.

Other Ponton innovations included a dipping rear-view mirror and twin heater controls for both the front passenger and driver. There was even a fuel reserve switch, although it wasn't quite a first in the industry. The solid wood dashboard provided a tactile satisfaction that veneer couldn't match, although it came with a weight penalty. Over time, veneer took pole position in future Mercedes-Benz models due to its lighter weight.

What's striking about the three Pontons we've gathered here is their owners' complete confidence in driving them anywhere. Just after our photoshoot, Michael Eatough drove his 1957 220S to France, followed by Austria, Slovenia and Tuscany – a journey of around 5,000 miles. Our cars comprise two LHD and one RHD, each with distinctly different stories to tell. ▷

"The solid wood dashboard provided a tactile satisfaction that veneer couldn't match"

Just the facts

Mercedes-Benz 220S (W180)

Engine M180 2,195cc 6-cyl **Power** 99bhp@4,800rpm **Torque** 119lb ft@3,500rpm **Transmission** 4-speed manual, RWD **Weight** 1,325kg **0-62mph** 17.0sec **Top speed** 99mph
Fuel consumption 26.4mpg **Years produced** 1956-1959 **Number built** 55,268 (plus 11 chassis)

All figures from Mercedes-Benz for a 1959 car as pictured; fuel consumption determined at 3/4 of top speed (not more than 68mph/110kph) plus 10 per cent

△ **This 2.2-litre saloon has had quite the life.**

1957 W180 220S

▷ "The car spent some 55 years in Beverly Hills, owned by Stanley Monroe-Smith, a local architect," explains Michael Eatough. "He bought it directly from the factory and had it delivered to Rome, where he and his family were on holiday. That was July 1957. Next, it went to Saudi Arabia for two years when Stanley worked for the American Oil Corporation. The car entered the USA in 1959, remaining there until 2015.

"I have all the paperwork from 1957, including the original invoice and copies of correspondence. During the correspondence, Stanley asked Mercedes which currency they would prefer. The manufacturer replied, 'Any currency.'"

Michael first drove a Ponton when he was 17. "An older friend gave me the keys to his Mercedes, the first decent car I'd ever driven. I remember the column change, the three-pointed star dominating the bonnet, and those beautiful body lines."

Fast forward to 2015, and Michael discovers a Ponton by chance. "I was taking my 1960 Porsche 356 cabriolet to my local specialist. While driving up his gravel track, I noticed in a nearby building the unmistakable chrome radiator grille of an old Mercedes. It was a 220S Ponton in white on US plates. It was owned by a businessman who imported cars from North America. The large, upright grille mesmerised me. Excitement took over. I realised I would never chance upon another Ponton, and even if I did, it wouldn't be as gorgeous as this one.

"I went home to think – but not for long. Later that day, I called the owner to arrange for my friend and mechanic, Owen Warboys to check the car over."

Despite Michael haggling down the price, he knew that in the long term he was in for considerable expense. "It was 100 per cent complete; even the Becker Le Mans valve radio was working. In my fantasy world, I imagined blowing up the tyres, changing the oil, and driving off into the sunset. Not a chance. The 16 years of storage had taken their toll. And then, because of other projects, I stored it for another year.

"We had to change everything apart from the body, engine, gearbox and rear axle," Michael explains. "A semi-arid Californian climate had made anything rubber rock solid. The Ponton is like a Swiss watch – the downside being parts can be costly and not always easy to find.

"Owen dismantled the Ponton and was relieved that even after all those years, the wings, trim and other parts unbolted or unscrewed without difficulty. One morning, I went to see the Mercedes on Owen's ramp and I couldn't believe what I saw. The underside was now like new, all repainted to the original specification."

Michael realised that with the underside looking that good, the rest of the Ponton had to match. "I researched the body colour to get the exact code – there could be no compromises. So, we ordered the correct ivory paint, even though it was expensive. Originally, the car was black, but sometime in the

▽ **Michael Eatough came across this old Benz by chance.**







◁◁ The 220S's engine has sufficient punch for driving today.

◁ Interior refinished in deep red leather.

USA, the colour was changed to white. I don't like black cars, hence digging deep to create a car I liked, in a correct period colour. The interior looked shabby, so I had it trimmed in dark red leather, plus a new headlining and a replacement Webasto sunshine roof fitted. This, by the way, was very expensive…

"Meanwhile, I'd decided to take the car to Schwerin, about 100 miles east of Hamburg, for the 2016 Ponton Rally. We hadn't test driven her and 2,000 miles lay ahead. The extent of the road tests comprised two miles to a local Tesco to fill the new tank, and another two miles for an MOT test, which it passed easily. Heading for the Channel Tunnel at Folkestone, the Ponton glided along on her new suspension, serenely cruising at a steady 70mph. We just kept going, confidence growing all the time as we drove through France, Belgium and Holland," says Michael with a smile.

"In Germany, we faced the autobahns, but the Ponton held her own, with oil pressure at the top of the gauge and the temperature staying normal. Two days later, we arrived in Schwerin. It was the first time the Ponton had been back in Germany since 1957. She looked stunning and held her own against the other Pontons. I am very proud to say my car was awarded a prize, which justified all the effort.

"My wife Jane and I call the car 'Monroe' to remind us of the long-term owner, Stanley. Monroe is like having an expensive mistress, but with Jane's approval. However, she is a lovely example and, apart from the repaint, the body is 100 per cent original and was always corrosion-free, so technically it's not a rebuilt car. All the gaps have factory tolerances.

"To restore one of these cars from scratch could cost six figures if done professionally. I remain delighted that my dream has been fulfilled. The Ponton is a very usable car."

1958 W105 219

A very usable car echoes Philip Curtis' experience with his own. His advice to aspiring owners is: "Look for one that's already been restored. If you see one for £10,000, it could cost you ▷

▽ This version was pitched as the 'affordable' model in the Ponton range.



△ The 219 Ponton model was used by Mercedes in rallying pursuits.



Just the facts

Mercedes-Benz 219 (W105)

Engine M180 2,195cc 6-cyl **Power** 89bhp@4,800rpm **Torque** 123lb ft@2,400rpm **Transmission** 4-speed manual, RWD **Weight** 1,260kg **0-62mph** 17.0sec

Top speed 92mph **Fuel consumption** 25.2mpg **Years produced** 1956-1959 **Number built** 27,842 (plus 3 chassis)

All figures from Mercedes-Benz for a 1959 car as pictured; fuel consumption determined at 3/4 of top speed (not more than 68mph/110kph) plus 10 per cent



▷ Two-valve motor with Solex 32 carburettor.



▷▷ Column gear change requires a deft touch to use correctly.

▷ multiples of that to bring it up to scratch. Whereas a £20,000 example should already be in good shape and not need much more expense. My experience is that parts are expensive, especially harder-to-find items. Some parts are interchangeable with the 190SL. However, that's a way more expensive car, and those parts reflect the SL's price point, not the Ponton's.

"Like any car of that era, rust is common, particularly in box sections that are spot-welded, which let in water," Philip continues. "Of course, back then, the metal wasn't galvanised. The outer sills are decorative, whereas the inner box sections give the body its rigidity. The Ponton doesn't have inner wings, so water and muck are flung up onto the A-pillars and the front wing. Over time, these areas rust. However, replacement parts are available."

Philip has owned his Ponton for a little over 20 years. "I've no regrets; it's been a great ownership experience. I spent quite a lot of money on the initial restoration. Back then, all told, it cost me £5,000. This was in the late 1990s. Just after completion, I went to the Goodwood Revival. Parking next to an Aston Martin, I was surprised when the owner said to me, 'Nice car'. Mine was probably a tenth of the value of his."

Since then, Philip's Ponton has had another respray, but one item that's untouched is the radio aerial, reaching far above the roof line. "I think the aerial's original; maybe that length improves the reception…"

Philip's Ponton, like Michael's, has also been back to its homeland. "I've done three or four Ponton rallies; it's a fun car. I'd like to do another Ponton rally, but first I need to deal with some paint blemishes that have appeared – a sign of how much I drive it. Also, every couple of years, I get asked to provide the Ponton for a wedding, so it needs to look the part.

▽ Philip Curtis (left) and Zubair Malik share tales about their cars.

▷ This Ponton preceded the W111 and W112-series two-doors.



Philip's car is the only RHD of the three. He explains that the original owner was an ex-RAF Polish volunteer, Jan Szulman. "Jan remained in the UK after the war, buying the car new in May 1958. I actually met him because I bought the car from him. It had been in storage in Hove since October 1978, with 84,000 miles on the clock, so it had been nowhere in 20 years.

"Montgomery Motors freed off the stuck brakes but didn't try to start it. The company became involved because Jan had no telephone and used its number for his advert. Actually, this was convenient because the company got the car on a lift so I could see underneath. It looked solid enough and that gave me the confidence to go ahead with the purchase. I then realised that Jan was assessing me to see if I was a suitable new owner. Luckily, I passed the test, and he promised to let me have all his documents detailing the car's history."

Sadly, Jan didn't live long enough to see the results of Philip's restoration, but Philip recovered the documents from Jan's housekeeper. "It was fascinating to see that in Jan's first five months of ownership, he'd driven to Hamburg, Zurich, and then Edinburgh. In September, the car was sent by sea to Cape Town with 11,000 miles on the clock. That's a lot of driving for back then."

> *"The spec of the car anticipated the African adventure"*

Interestingly, the spec of the car anticipated the African adventure because it had individual reclining front seats, a tropical battery, uprated springs, and special air and oil filters. It's another Ponton whose life in a warm climate preserved its body, as Philip recalls: "After sandblasting the panels, it was clear to see it was rust-free. But that lengthy storage caused many problems, and I faced similar issues to Michael. The only modification I've made is adding a servo to beef up the drum brakes.

"You know, the Ponton had one mystery, and that was the function of a stalk on the right side of the steering column," Philip adds. "It looked like an indicator stalk, but the indicators operate from the steering boss. I finally discovered it was a headlamp flasher. I never expected that on a car of that era."

1959 W128 220SE Coupe

Zubair Malik's gorgeous 220SE Coupe, like our other two Pontons, benefited from a benign climate in its early years. Owner Zubair takes up the story of his Mercedes-Benz:

"This coupe had spent all its life in Vancouver and the USA ▷



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Just the facts

Mercedes-Benz 220SE Coupe (W128)

Engine M127 2,195cc 6-cyl **Power** 118bhp@4,800rpm **Torque** 140lb ft@3,900rpm **Transmission** 4-speed manual, RWD

Weight 1,380kg **0-62mph** 15.0sec **Top speed** 103mph **Fuel consumption** 26.4mpg **Years produced** 1958-1960 **Number built** 830

All figures from Mercedes-Benz for a 1959 car as pictured; fuel consumption determined at 3/4 of top speed (not more than 68mph/110kph) plus 10 per cent

△ **Another example that spent time in the USA.**

▷ **Fuel-injected engine provides ample thrust.**

▽ **Mercedes-Benz Karosserie plate on the Coupe's doorsill.**

▽▷ **Wood plays a crucial role in ramping up the Coupe's sense of high class.**

▷ until 2004. I have documents showing over $250,000 spent on servicing it. Back then, these cars were undervalued in the USA, so a French collector bought it, possibly to use in the Tribute to Mille Miglia event. There's a souvenir sticker on the windscreen from the event. Later, it was sold to an Italian, and I bought it from him. Incredibly, it's only got 76,000 miles on the clock, and the documents confirm this.

"I've had Ponton Saloons before, but the Coupe is different being hand-built. Although it started life with Hydrak semi-automatic transmission, this was changed to manual well before I had the car. It's a common conversion because with use and age problems developed in the electric vacuum system, to such an extent that more people chose to retrofit a manual system rather than repair the Hydrak."

Zubair's first Ponton experience is similar to Michael's in that it was the first Mercedes he drove. "I was only 13 years old at the time. This was back in Lahore in my father's black 220S Coupe, in 1960. That car's still in the family. Having this 220SE reminds me of my childhood with my parents. And Coupes were special, being roughly 50 per cent more expensive than the Saloon because they're coachbuilt."

Zubair felt his father always wanted him to have a Coupe, so he set about looking for one. But with so few built (5,731), it was to be a long wait. "I eventually found one for sale in Italy in 2016,



but the dealer acting for the owner wanted too much – £100,000. I rang them many months later, but there was no change in the price. We kept in contact for the next four years. Then, in the owner's village, cars were banned. The dealer thought he'd managed to sell it to someone in Poland. They paid a £20,000 deposit but never collected the car for some strange reason. So back came the dealer to me.

"He sent lots of photos of the car, including the underside. It looked perfect. Being the time of Covid, I couldn't visit Italy, so I took a chance and bought it unseen for £50,000. It was delivered to the UK on a low loader from Italy."

Zubair's 220SE is immaculate. "I've only had to pay for servicing; no repairs have been needed." However, he is taking it to a specialist in Holland to have electric power steering fitted. After that, he plans to drive the 220SE Coupe to Germany. Zubair then discreetly points out one item showing its age: the chrome trim below the passenger door. "Over the years, ladies getting in and out of the car with their long dresses have dulled the chrome finish." And he's right, but it's subtle.

Like all our owners today, Zubair hasn't regretted buying a Ponton and loves driving it. Here's to the next 70 years!





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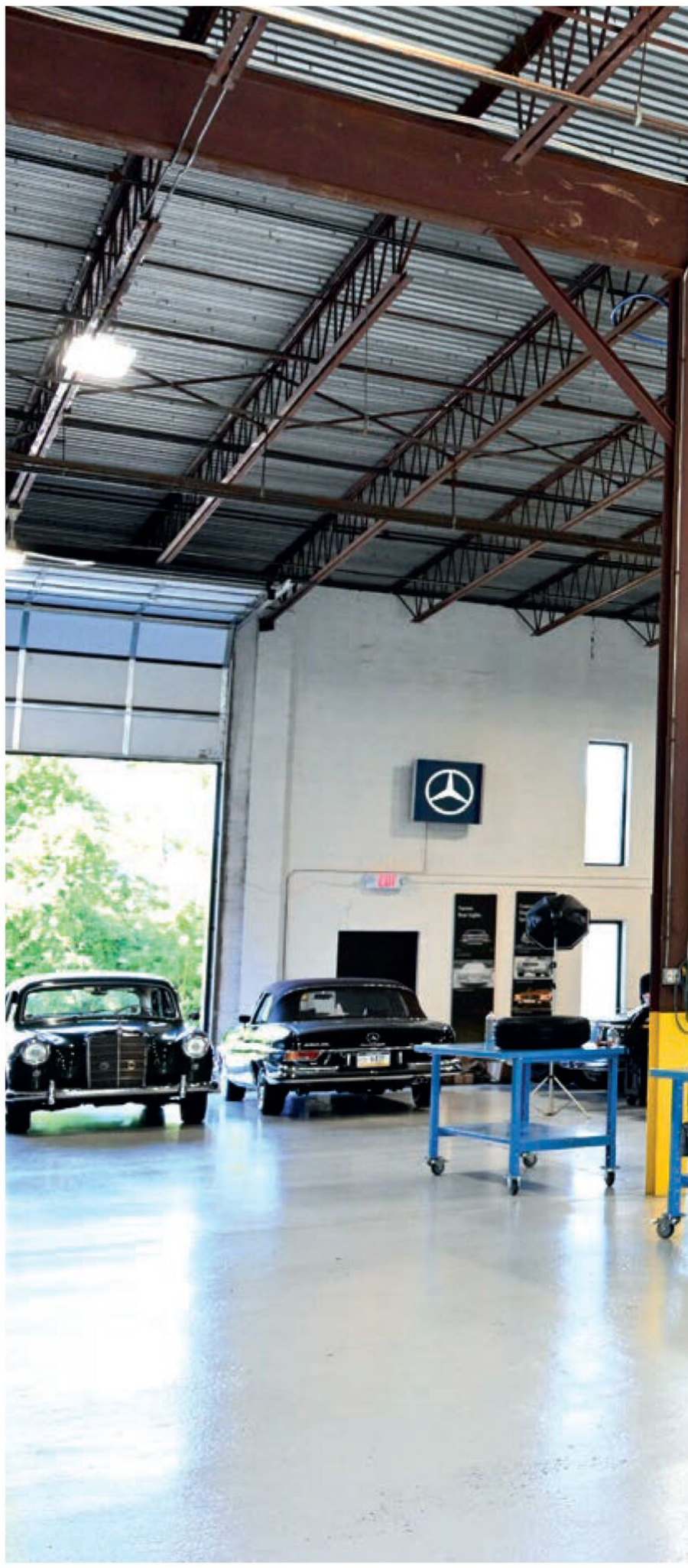
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BUSINESS AND PLEASURE

Fresh out of university, Jaime Kopchinski quickly found himself working for big names in the automotive industry, but a burning passion for older Mercedes-Benz cars saw him open Classic Workshop last spring – and he hasn't looked back since

WORDS **REED HITCHCOCK** IMAGES **KAVEH SARDARI**



▷ The workshop is clean, spacious and filled with interesting M-Bs.

If there's such a thing, I am reasonably certain that Jaime Kopchinski is an old soul. It's not that he is cantankerous or curmudgeonly – quite the opposite. But as you take a look around his Hackettstown, New Jersey-based Classic Workshop and start to engage him in discussion, you find a fellow with a genuine old school passion for oldtimer and youngtimer classic Mercedes-Benz cars, and respect and appreciation for the engineering that went into them. You won't find banks of diagnostic computers at Classic Workshop, but there are loads of hand tools and greasy bits in what must be one of the neatest shops I've ever set foot inside.

Unlike many people who own classic automotive repair or restoration businesses, Jaime did not start out as an apprentice to an aging fountain of automotive wisdom, nor did he inherit a family shop from generations of mechanics. Instead, although a dedicated enthusiast and casual tinkerer of the cars that are now his bread and butter, he went to university in pursuit of an engineering degree.

After graduating, Jaime put his degree to use working for Becker – as in the OEM car stereo company. Among his responsibilities while at Becker was as a test engineer on the W211 Mercedes Comand unit. In his 11 years at Becker, Jaime tested and developed software and other systems for the likes of Mercedes-Benz, BMW, Audi and Porsche, and served as an engineering team leader.



▷ Based in Hackettstown, New Jersey.

▷▷ Jaime has a degree in engineering.

> After graduating, Jaime put his degree to use working for Becker





From Becker, Jaime transitioned over to work directly for Mercedes-Benz in product development. He recalls "long days and stress, but I loved it!" After a few years at Mercedes, the company decided to relocate Jaime's team to Long Beach, California, leaving him with a difficult decision to make. Ultimately, Jaime decided to stay back East close to family and friends, and gave up his dream job at Mercedes-Benz.

For a while, Jaime had been working on cars as a side hustle and a means by which to make a little money to fund his own car habit – first helping friends, then friends of friends, and then word spread. After leaving Mercedes-Benz, he decided to work on cars as a way to make money and build on his side gig. It didn't hurt, of course, that the number of shops able and willing to tackle older cars was dwindling. Before he knew it, Jaime had a waiting list of 30 to 40 cars – and that got the wheels in his head turning.

Meanwhile, Jaime had gone to work for Jaguar Land Rover (JLR) testing software, but he felt the draw of the work that ▷



△ Classic parts require very careful handling.

▽ Pagoda SL receives special treatment.

▷ seemed to be his calling. Around late 2021, he made the decision to work on classic cars professionally in his own shop. His wife was onboard despite the risks, and he gave his notice to the powers that be at JLR, who he says were completely supportive of his decision. In spring 2023, Jaime officially opened Classic Workshop just 15 minutes from his home, 1.5 hours from New York City, two hours from Philadelphia, and just over four hours from Washington, D.C.

Early on, Jaime was concerned that his shop would be too far away from New York, which he considered his most obvious source of clientele. New York is replete with car enthusiasts of all sorts, from Gullwing owners to folks with tattered but well-loved W123 diesels. It turned out that his concerns were unfounded, as his customer base has since expanded to include clients from Maine to the Carolinas and as far west as Chicago and beyond.

Mercedes specialist

So, a man has a dream to build a classic Mercedes workshop specialising in Mercedes-Benz cars, and his operating philosophy will be to make the cars original and to keep them original with a primary focus on quality mechanical repair and restoration. "We want to push the 'reset' button on decades of deferred or substandard maintenance." What he decidedly didn't want to do was to get involved in modifications, car sales, or other distractions. What next?

Having done the job in small scale on his own, Jaime knew all too well that he needed to build a small but effective team. He needed professionals who were interested in and understood classic Mercedes, and who shared his vision for the business. Again, mechanics who truly get these old cars are a dwindling breed, but they are out there. The trick is finding them.

> "I'd like to increase our competency in dying arts such as axle rebuilds, steering boxes, carburettors, and manual transmissions"





When Jaime made it known that he was opening Classic Workshop, he spread the word among his friends and former customers. From day one he had his first employee, Veronica Petriella – a referral from a friend. When she started with Jaime, Veronica was driving a 126-series 300SD L that, by her own admission, had seen better days and now lingers in the lot outside the shop awaiting some love. But the self-confessed "classic car fiend" has a long list of interesting classic cars currently and formerly owned, from a 1984 Pontiac Firebird with T-top and a manual transmission to a stunning replica of Herbie, *The Love Bug*.

Veronica has a penchant for 1980s cars, citing *Back to the Future* and *Knight Rider* as key automotive inspirations, and at present – in addition to the 14 cars in her household – she covets a 126-series 560SEL with a 1980s bodykit à la *Miami Vice*. Critically, Veronica trained as an automotive technician and is hands-on with every manner of mechanical jobs around the shop.

Jaime's second hire was Ike Kitman, an Ivy League university graduate with a degree in English who grew up in a household surrounded by interesting cars and car people. He has also known Jaime for over 10 years. Ike's first car was an Alfa Romeo GTV6 that he won in a bet with his father, but which also drove him to apprentice in a car shop during high school. It made ultimate sense to Ike to learn from the experts, as old cars were clearly a passion. Not unlike Jaime, Ike took on side projects here and there – jobs like rebuilding carburettors – before relocating to the West Coast after college.

Ike went to work at a Porsche shop in Los Angeles to work on his skill set, and then moved over to the Mercedes-Benz Classic Center, USA. He worked at M-B Classic for just over two years before making the decision to return home to the East Coast, where he hooked up with Jaime. Ike also works all around Classic Workshop on all sorts of projects, but his specialty is rebuilding differentials, gearboxes, and subassemblies. He has a long list of Mercedes-Benzes (and other cars) on his wish list, but among them are an old diesel Ponton and a 300SL. First, he has a Pagoda that needs doing – ▷

△ Delightful W121 190SL contrasts with golden W108.





◁ 300SD L owner Veronica (right) and intern Julia.

◁◁ There's a real mix of metal in the car park.



△ Old service guides never fail to come in handy.

▷ not a bad place to be from an ownership standpoint.

Bill Bloomfield is the most recent addition to the shop, but has been around the industry for the longest. Bill came from a US-based tyre and accessories business called Euro Tire, where he worked for 47 years, 29 of which as the owner. Bill has been a car guy as far back as he can remember, starting as a 14-year-old with a VW Dune Buggy. Bill knew both Jaime from his Becker days and also knew Ike. When Bill closed up shop in 2023, he quickly realised that he wasn't done with cars. "Jaime asked me how dirty I wanted to get, and I'd always wanted to get involved with this sort of work," Bill says. "Some guys play golf when they retire. I play with cars. I like to think of myself as 'semi-retired'."

Bill's role around the shop is evolving to be the guy who puts disassembled cars back together. On his plate today are a 190SL getting brake parts, hoses and carbs, as well as a 220S Ponton that was completely disassembled for paint.

Looking further into the next generation of classic experts, Jaime recently hired Julia Rojas as a summer intern. Julia has just graduated from high school and will be heading to university in the fall to study engineering. Julia is another referral – a friend of a friend – who is "very into cars" and is responsible for parts organisation and 'hands-on' help around the shop for everyone who needs it.

Looking forward

"I'd like to increase our competency in dying arts such as axle rebuilds, steering boxes, carburettors, and manual transmissions," Jaime says. "Reputation is foremost, but I also want to be the shop that is not afraid to tackle the jobs that other shops won't touch. We're not afraid to take on anything reasonable!" On a personal note, Jaime and his wife – who also helps at the shop – have a fleet of six Mercs now, from a 1953 170S to a '96 S420, but he'd like to add a nice W140 or maybe a W220 as a daily driver. "The 220 is unloved, but to me defined the current S-Class."

Jaime's shop is a rarity these days, but for him it's an adventure. What started as a part-time hobby has become a booming business with ample opportunity to expand. Mercedes cars are built for the generations, and it is critical for next-generation shops like Jaime's to pick up the baton.

Building a young team that share a passion for classic Mercedes means that the cars we love will be on the road that much longer. It was clearly a risk for Jaime to leave a steady job and venture out on his own – especially with a young family – but despite the 11-hour days and weekends Jaime has no regrets. In his words, "It's long hours, but doesn't feel like it."

Thank you to Classic Workshop for its assistance with this feature
Web *classicworkshop.com*

> Jaime and his wife - who also helps at the shop - have a fleet of six Mercs now

▽ L to R: Ike Kitman, Veronica Petriella, Jaime Kopchinski, Bill Bloomfield and Julia Rojas.



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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

CLASSICS ALWAYS WANTED

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THE ONE AND ONLY

Based on a long-wheelbase S600 V12, this one-off Estate was dreamed up by Falcon Design Germany and recently found itself for sale in the UK

WORDS **IAN KUAH** IMAGES **DK ENGINEERING/ALEX PENFOLD PHOTOGRAPHY**



Up until the 1980s, the four-door saloon and estate were the mainstay transport of American families. Back then, 4x4s and pickup trucks were just utilitarian vehicles and a lot smaller than they are today, while the people carrier and SUV only arrived on the scene in the 1980s and 90s respectively.

Given the much larger footprint of American cars compared to their European counterparts, a full-size station wagon was a practical machine designed to haul a vacationing family and their luggage across state lines. Meanwhile, on the European side of the Atlantic, estate cars offered a useful increment in load carrying ability over the ubiquitous saloons on which they were based.

Fashion is the first thing to go out of fashion, but so far the SUV trend shows no sign of running out of steam. Meanwhile, it has caused the demise of several other vehicle types, the large estate car being a significant casualty of these taller and heavier vehicles that do not actually offer more cabin or load space.

It stands to reason that the bigger the estate car, the more cargo it can carry. However, the main reason Mercedes-Benz has never made an S-Class T-model/Estate is rooted in tradition and social hierarchy. The S-Class, (S for

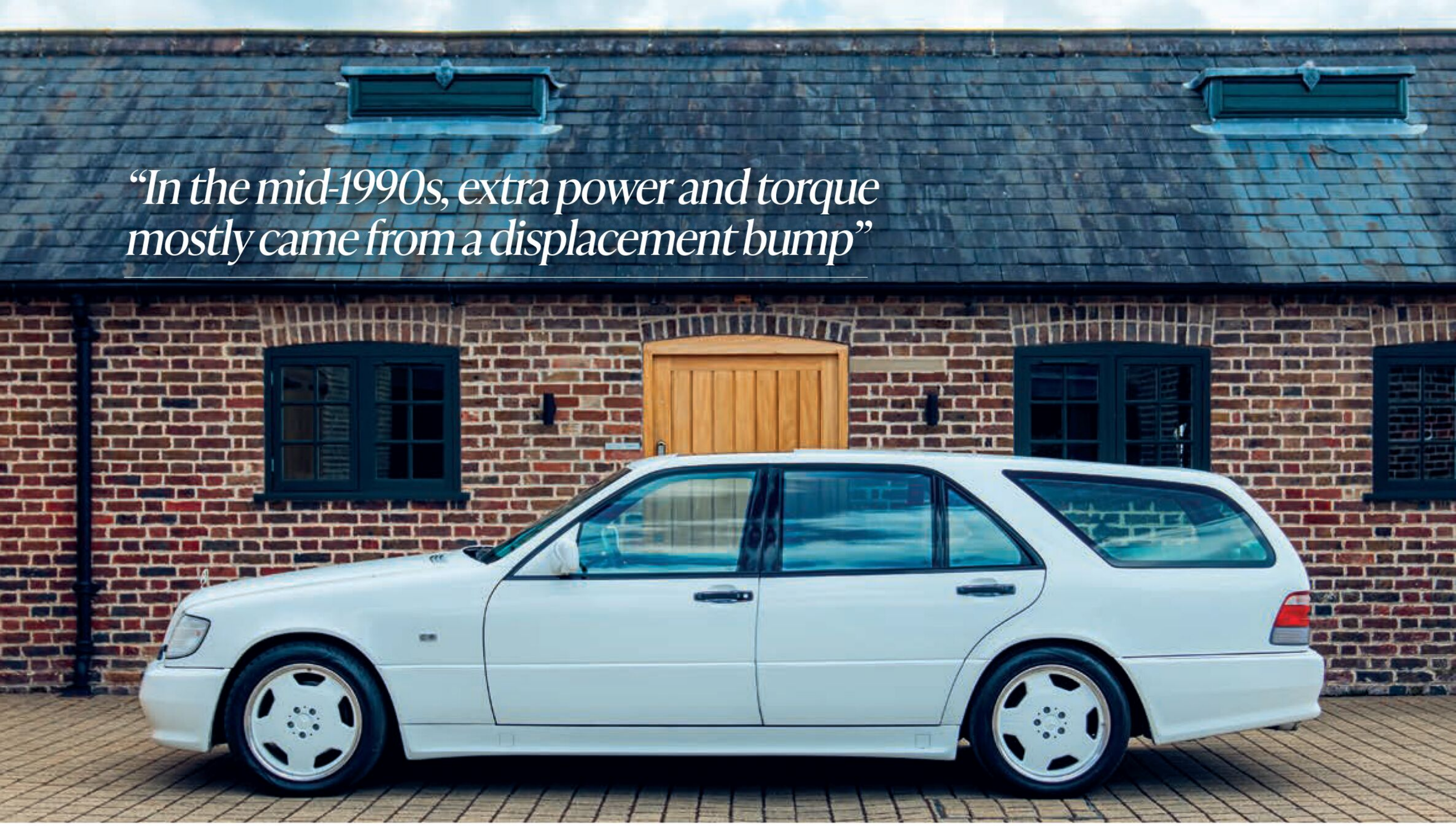
"The S-Class has always been the traditional Mercedes flagship"

‘Sonderklasse’ or ‘Special class’) has always been the traditional Mercedes flagship with the gravitas of being the transport of choice for leaders of nations and captains of industry. Thus, a carry-all version that detracts from this heady image would be a faux pas on so many levels. The same goes for the Audi A8 and BMW 7-Series, so estate car versions have always been the province of the mid-range E-Class, A6 and 5-Series respectively.

Despite this, in 1995 Mercedes planned a run of left-hand-drive T-models based on the standard-wheelbase W140 S500. As it was too small a project to tie up in-house resources, they sub-contracted the development work to Cadform and Binz, whose prototype used the rear roof and D-pillars from the 124-series TE. However, having gone as far as printing the sales brochures for its dealer network, Mercedes suddenly had a change of heart and canned the project. ▷

△ This S600 L’s additional rear bodywork was taken from the ultra-spacey 210-series E-Class Estate.

"In the mid-1990s, extra power and torque mostly came from a displacement bump"



△ **This amazing creation is based on a LWB chassis.**

Special by name...

▷ While there has always been a small but persistent demand for such cars, major manufacturers who live off profit from volume sales cannot afford to pander to a small group of ultra-wealthy clients able to indulge in bespoke projects costing anything from double to several times the list price of the donor car.

Such projects are sub-contracted to smaller specialist companies, which is how the pre-merger AMG company was commissioned to create a small run of S600 L-based estate cars with the full AMG upgrade treatment.

In the mid-1990s, extra power and torque mostly came from a displacement bump, polished cylinder-heads, hotter cams and other tried and tested engine tuning methods. Initially, the M120-based E70 AMG motor displaced 7,055cc from a nearly square bore and stroke of 91.0x90.4mm, versus the over-square 89.0x80.2mm stock dimensions. Output was 518bhp at 5,900rpm with 740Nm (546lb ft) of torque at 4,000rpm.

The ultimate E73 AMG version of this motor saw the bore and stroke further increased to 91.5x92.4mm for a swept capacity of 7,291cc. This helped increase output to 547bhp (555hp) for the S73 T as these cars came to be known. In total, 18 of these special estates were made, with the 10 Brunei Royal Family cars each wearing a 'Brunei 555' badge on the tailgate. All were right-hand-drive and based on the V140 S600 L, with the rear floorpan, roof and tailgate of the S210 E-Class Estate grafted on and integrated around the S-Class tail lights. Most of these cars were only modified at the rear, but the last few left Affalterbach wearing the sleeker C140 Coupe nose. This was a controversial modification as the boxy estate rear better suits the tougher looking, more upright nose of the Saloon.

AMG never made a LHD version of these cars, but at the beginning of 2024 Falcon Design Germany, which is based in Manisa, Turkey, undertook a project to create the first and only



MERCEDES-BENZ GROUP AG

△ Mercedes-Benz got reasonably serious about building an S-Class wagon during the 90s.



△ If you're going to make a one-off wagon, then only a V12 engine will do...

LHD S600 L Estate. The work took two months to complete, the car rolled out in the spring of 2024. It was then delivered to the UK where it was sold by DK Engineering.

Rear of the year

The 1994 S600 L donor car was sourced from Japan. Apart from the official dealer network, many German market Mercedes were personally exported to Japan, a RHD market that accepts both LHD and RHD models. Japan does not use salt on the roads in winter and prestige marques like Mercedes-Benz cover relatively low mileages. Coupled to a stringent roadworthiness inspection regime for cars over three years of age, Japanese market cars are kept in comparatively fine fettle and are thus sought after by European and US buyers looking for low mileage cars in the best possible condition.

When a major manufacturer such as Mercedes plans a new model like the C- and E-Class, the basic floorpan is designed with variations to cover the Saloon, Estate, Coupe and Cabriolet models. These days packaging is made even more complex by the need for hybrid versions whose battery often eats into the boot space, compromising the flat cargo floor of the estate version when the seats are folded down.

Even with a pure combustion engine model, it is common ▷



△ Close-up detailing of the special wood trim beggars belief.



△ Lavish interior features designo green leather (code X08) and designo green wood (code W07).



△ Plush rear seats with their own electric adjustments and heating controls; sunglasses optional.



△ The fixed rear seats mean the S600's boot is not quite as capacious as some might expect.



△ **AMG-ified Benz thought to be the only LHD S600 L Estate in existence.**

▷ for the estate car to have a modified rear axle with self-levelling by hydraulic strut or air suspension, and a flatter fuel tank so as not to compromise the load area. As the Brunei cars were conceived as the S210 Estate was making its market debut they used the rear floorpan from the outgoing S124 TE, carrying over its flatter fuel tank so that the rear seats could retain their fold-flat function. However, it was decided that the Falcon car would have fixed rear seats so the taller saloon fuel tank remains.

The fixed rear seatback arrangement brings to mind the same arrangement on the Robert Jankel Design Val d'Isere estate conversion created in the late 80s on the Bentley Turbo R. But the Val d'Isere also featured part-time 4WD using a hydraulically-driven motor on each front wheel hub. This could be engaged in first and reverse gears up to 30mph and was clearly useful for extracting the car from a muddy car park should rain ever dare to fall at Ascot!

The rear seats on the S600 L Estate retain the Saloon's full electric adjustment, with the chauffeur-driven limousine feature of allowing the rear seat passenger opposite the driver to remotely move the front passenger seat forward and tilt its backrest to provide more space. Falcon followed the process that AMG had laid down back in the 90s by grafting on the rear bodywork of an S210 E-Class Estate and integrating this around the S-Class rear lights.

Like no other

While the Cadform/Binz prototype and the Brunei AMG cars retain the saloon's filler flap position between the rear arch and tail lights, for some unknown reason Falcon moved its flap to the bottom of the wider C-pillar. As the fuel filler flap is almost as wide as the base of the C-pillar and does not line up with any other element of the design it does look rather awkward. Another visual difference is that the AMG cars have roof rails while the Falcon car does not.

"The work took two months to complete and the car rolled out in the spring of 2024"

Colour is always a matter of taste, and while the Polar White (149U) paintwork is not unusual in markets like Japan and the Middle East, the factory black leather interior was swapped out for eyeball-arresting designo Green leather (X08) and designo Green wood trim (W07) inserts on the doors, dashboard and console. Love it or hate it, this lurid green hue is undoubtedly the most controversial aspect of this one-off estate.

Leaving the bodywork standard would have been a missed opportunity and Falcon opted to stay with the AMG theme, enhancing the gravitas of its car with period AMG body styling and alloy wheels. The AMG package for the S-Class introduced in 1992 used 18-inch multi-piece wheels, but these look smaller than they are because of the space taken up by the 20 bolts that are also finicky to clean. The later one-piece AMG wheels with colour-coded centres look larger and do the job without distracting from the distinctive lines of the car.

The Falcon Design S600 L Estate is a throwback to the days when this big Mercedes limousine was the plutocrat's autobahn stormer of choice. The fact that someone could even think of creating a brand new example a quarter of a century later shows the sheer draw of the S-Class Estate concept. The fact that this one found a home so quickly is no surprise at all.

Thank you to DK Engineering for its assistance with this feature
Web www.dkeng.co.uk

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Taming the BEAST

A passionate racing fan initially overlooked the significance of this 450SLC 5.0 when he bought it. Later, he embarked on transforming the vehicle into one of the ultimate Mercedes-Benz AMG tribute race cars, giving it renewed purpose and meaning

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

Some enthusiasts feel the need to recreate a special car, or one they could never otherwise own. We've seen this happen several times in the past, and the results can be quite inspiring. This is partly what happened to Dawie Olivier in South Africa. Besides being a car enthusiast, he is a keen amateur racer and has built several cars over the course of his racing career.

Although this particular 450SLC 5.0 racing car is now in the hands of another Mercedes-Benz enthusiast (whom we'll get to shortly), it was Dawie who came up with the idea and built the car. He was the starting point and was eager to discuss the project.

"I was searching for a car that would be eligible to race in HRSA [Historic Racing South Africa]," he begins. "Then I found this one – a very rare 450SLC 5.0 – but I didn't realise how special they were. SLCs were homologated in Germany during that period to race in the World Rally Championship. I bought it from a guy who had inherited it from his father. Little did I know that the five-litre engine was rather special. I started stripping the car to prepare it for racing when I was informed about a registry for these cars. I also removed

"As you pass 4,000rpm, there is a strong surge from the engine"



the three-speed automatic transmission – all of this before realising how rare these Mercedes are!

"One Christmas holiday, I began reading about these cars and discovered that they were used by AMG with the Mampe Lufthansa Cocktail sponsorship for circuit racing. Mampe, a German liqueur manufacturer, wanted to promote its cocktail that was served on the airline's flights. Only three original cars were built. And the more I tried to research these cars, the less information I found. Eventually, I gained access to all the FIA homologation documents for the Mampe cars."

In the meantime, Dawie raced the SLC, but had to do so with 15-inch wheels, as the car was extremely heavy, and the racing authorities wouldn't allow him to race a replica. "The rules allowed me to install ▷



In the pits at Zwartkops Raceway.

▷ a five-speed ZF manual transmission and upgrade the brakes. I also had a new limited-slip differential built. Once, in a four-hour race in East London, I came fifth overall, which was an achievement. This was mainly due to the car running so reliably."

Next, Dawie contacted the DMSB (Deutscher Motor Sport Bund). "After a couple of days, I received a reply via email with the DMSB's homologation documents for the Mampe racing car, and the sender wished me luck in building the replica. I was extremely thankful and excited about what lay ahead."

With a significant collection of pictures of the original SLC that Dawie had collected over the years, the project began. New bodywork was manufactured but the original aluminium bonnet and bootlid were retained. Dawie tried to stay as true to the original as possible but admitted that it was a mistake on his part to let the three-speed automatic gearbox go. According to Dawie, one reason it was raced in 1978 with the automatic transmission at the time was that there wasn't a manual gearbox reliable enough to handle the torque.

"I fitted a new rack and pinion electric power steering system, as the original was falling to pieces." Dawie also spent a lot of money and energy rebuilding the engine and conducting further research into the car's details.

Track attack

As these photographs perfectly illustrate, with the car parked in the pits of Zwartkops Raceway outside Pretoria in South Africa, it looks nearly identical to the original racer. The purposeful wider wheelarches, with the cutouts towards the back, show off the slick racing tyres and the blank-out headlight surrounds.



△ Chopped wheelarches leave little to the imagination.

Its current owner, Etienne Prowse, is in his element at the track. I quickly learn that he is not only a huge enthusiast, but this is not the only car in his collection. For instance, he is sourcing selective modern classic AMGs purely because he likes them, and good ones are becoming rarer by the day.

"I started collecting cars in 2012, and in 2019 I heard that this SLC was for sale," explains Etienne. "After acquiring the car, I added a few stickers with the goal of making it look as close as possible to the original car. So far, I've only done track days with the car and participated in some Mercedes-Benz Club South Africa events, one of which was a concours event, and another during the


△ Cabin stripped of all unnecessaries and fitted with a cage.


△ Original three-speed auto replaced by five-speed manual.

launch of the new-generation SL."

Driving a race car on a track is always an exciting prospect and this SLC's stripped-out cabin, complete with racing seats, signals its intent. I take it easy through the first few corners and, as expected, there's a directness in the car's response that is vastly different from a standard road car. With wider, grippier tyres and the car being lighter, you can turn in with a greater level of enthusiasm and confidence. It's still not a lightweight, but it's been made to be as close to a race car as possible.

The engine is also more eager to rev than a standard unit. This can be attributed to the car being lighter, the engine having been rebuilt, and the fact that it's now connected to a five-speed manual gearbox instead of a sluggish three-speed automatic. The gearlever continues to shift smoothly between each ratio, and the car rewards you if you can execute a heel-and-toe downshift. Needless to say, the upgraded brakes feel strong, even though this Mercedes is still relatively heavy.

Being a race car, the engine's characteristics at lower revs become less relevant. Even so, as expected, there is still plenty of torque in the mid-range. As you pass 4,000rpm, there is a strong surge from the engine, though you still have over 2,000rpm left before reaching the redline.



The five-litre V8 has really come alive.

Depending on your prior experience with race cars, it can be interesting to drive such a large car, with the expansive bonnet stretching out in front of you and the spacious cabin. At the same time, I can imagine getting into a rhythm with the SLC and doing lap after lap, relying on the dependable performance it has shown over the past few years.

Many tributes to long-gone Mercedes racers have been created, including homages to AMG's first competition machine – the 300SEL 6.8 'Red Pig'. They, like this 450SLC 5.0, never fail to excite and remind how awesome the original machines must have been in their day.



Driving the 5.0 on track was a real thrill.

Just the facts

Mercedes-Benz 450SLC 5.0 (C107)

Engine M117 4,973cc V8 **Power** 237bhp@5,000rpm **Torque** 297lb ft@3,200rpm **Transmission** 3-speed auto, RWD **Weight** 1,515kg

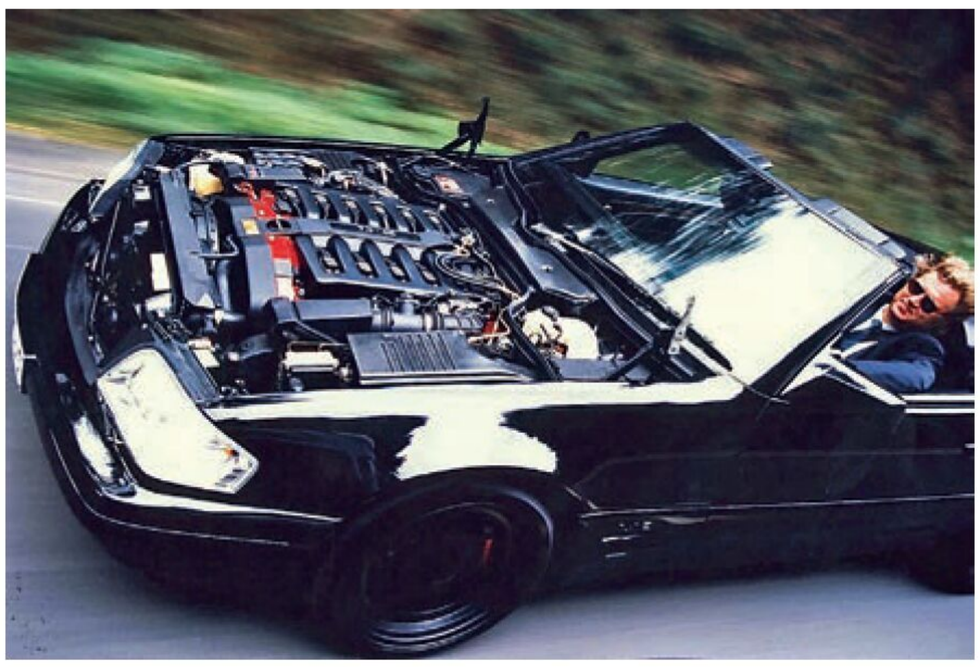
0-62mph 8.5sec **Top speed** 140mph **Fuel consumption** 19.5mpg **Years produced** 1978-1980 **Number built** 2,769

All figures from Mercedes-Benz for a standard 450SLC 5.0 - the car pictured has a five-speed manual gearbox; fuel consumption according determined at 3/4 of top speed (not more than 110kph/68mph) plus 10 per cent

EXTREME MACHINES

Synonymous with enormous power and exquisite detailing, when Brabus got its hands on the SL it was a match made in heaven - and continues to be so

WORDS & IMAGES **IAN KUAH**



Making its international debut at the 1989 Geneva motor show, the R129 SL was also the centrepiece of the Mercedes-Benz stand at the Frankfurt show the following September. Going on sale in the summer in left-hand drive, it reached UK showrooms in the autumn. With long waiting lists around the world and many impatient buyers, some of the early cars changed hands for up to 50 per cent over list price.

Driving impressions of the new SL arrived with a bang in the most literal sense when a Japanese journalist managed to overturn their test car on the press launch event in the South of France. Thanks to the deployment of the stout rollover bar, they escaped unharmed, and Mercedes made good capital of its elegant new roadster's effective occupant protection in a real-world accident.



R129

While all this was going on, the engineers and craftsmen at Brabus HQ in Bottrop were busy readying one of the very first production 500SLs for the prestigious Frankfurt event. The day before the first ever Brabus SL departed for Frankfurt, I was in Bottrop to photograph it and one of my pictures has since become the default image of this car on the internet.

The Brabus front spoiler, side skirts and rear valance with cutouts for the two big, slanted exhaust tailpipes give the Brabus 500SL an even more commanding presence, while the Cognac full leather interior took the already plush cabin to the next level. However, the real stand-out feature for most onlookers was the three-spoke Brabus Monoblock II alloy wheels. Inspired by the Mercedes three-pointed star, this wheel uniquely featured a flush-fitting centre cap covering the five wheel bolts for a cleaner look and somewhat easier maintenance.

The R129 was produced from 1989 to 2001, and along the way Brabus made good capital of tuning the various factory engines. While Brabus had 3.6-litre conversions for the M103 and M104 straight-six motors, there was





△ Cognac leather interior in Brabus' R129.

hardly any reason for an owner of the entry-level SL to spend the money when they could buy the even more potent V8-powered 500SL for a price jump similar to the cost of the larger displacement six-cylinder conversions.

Over time, Brabus produced 5.8, 6.0 and 6.5-litre conversions for the M119 V8, the latter making 444bhp with 488lb ft of torque. These were whopping numbers for a naturally aspirated motor in the early 1990s. While Brabus famously and expensively shoehorned the M120 V12 into a couple of 500Es and tuned them to its 7.3-litre S specification for 574bhp, the arrival of the factory 600SL/SL600 in 1993 made life much easier. I will never forget the day when Bodo Buschmann and I drove out into the countryside in his personal SL 7.3S that sported the licence plate BOT SL 1. That car was a monster and felt more potent than the 1999 SL73 AMG I drove in the previous issue of *Mercedes Enthusiast*.

When you nailed the throttle on the move, the rather lethargic autobox would gather its wits and kickdown. With an almighty V12 roar you were off to the races, pinned back in your seat by the landslide of torque, the SL's long prow chasing the horizon as the countryside turned into a blur. ▷

△ Brabus 500SL and its awesome three-spoke Monoblock rims.



▷ This SL 7.3S was owned by Brabus boss B Buschmann.





◁△ A popular K8 conversion increased the output of the SL55's supercharged V8 to a tyre-shredding 542bhp.

R230

▷ The R230 SL55 AMG was a gamechanger for Mercedes and Brabus as the supercharged 5,439cc M113 K AMG V8 was rated at 493bhp with 516lb ft of torque out of the box. That was already 80bhp more than the Porsche 996 Turbo of the day could muster, and the popular Brabus K8 conversion brought this up to 542bhp.

Once again it was the factory V12 that provided the blank canvas on which Brabus would paint its most potent masterpieces. The fact that the 5,513cc, M275 biturbo V12 was also rated at 493bhp gave Mercedes buyers the choice of two SLs of similar displacement and power output but vastly different characters. While the SL55 AMG was sporting and aggressive, the SL600 with over 70lb ft more torque and an inherently calmer demeanour was the refined long-distance cruiser.

With substantial experience in the tuning of forced aspirated motors, Brabus soon turned the SL600 into a real weapon, with the wick slowly turned up over time until its bespoke 6,233cc motor was making a reliable 720bhp.

Rear-wheel-drive and massive torque is your enemy off the line and against the stopwatch, the Brabus SL V12S scorches the tarmac on its way to 62mph in four seconds, doubling that speed in 10.9 seconds. The 6.3-litre biturbo V12's 811lb ft, electronically limited to protect the drivetrain, will enrapture any torque junkie from the moment the throttle is squeezed until you bump up against the 218mph top speed limiter.

When Mercedes-AMG launched the SL65 with its 5,980cc M275 AMG V12, which also powered the SL65 AMG Black Series, Brabus teased 789bhp out of this motor for the one-off Brabus Vanish made for a Middle Eastern client. This unique motor spec was designated Brabus T65 RS.





◁△▽ Brabus 6.3S biturbo upgrade for the V12 unlocked over 700bhp; 811lb ft torque and RWD requires focus!







△ Not content with the SL65 AMG Black Series' standard and already hefty output, a Middle Eastern customer of Brabus requested the tuner create a one-off Vanish version complete with 789bhp, twin-turbocharged V12 engine (T65 RS).

“Brabus produced 5.8, 6.0 and 6.5-litre conversions for the M119 V8”

R231

The original R230 SL was the last design signed off by the late Bruno Sacco before he retired. Mercedes SL lost its beauty mojo with the arrival of the Peter Pfeiffer-designed second facelift in 2008, and sales of this square-fronted model were not encouraging.

To many, the aluminium-bodied R231 that arrived in early 2012 was a fussy and ungainly design that lacked the suave elegance of both the R230 it succeeded and its BMW 6-Series marketplace rival. Gorden Wagener’s 2016 facelift was an improvement, but there was nothing his team could do about the strangely proportioned, droopy tail and the lukewarm sales continued.

On the bright side, the 5,461cc M157 DE 55 AL biturbo V8 that powered the SL63 AMG was good for an impressive 577bhp. Brabus set about extracting 789bhp and 811lb ft of torque from this V8, and its 800 Roadster exactly matched the output of the heavier M275 V12 that went before. ▷



△ Special carbon fibre covers and air intake arrangement found under the rippling bonnet of this SL rocket ship.

▽ Boasting aero-enhanced bodywork and a freer flowing Brabus exhaust system, the 800 Roadster had 789bhp.





△ Brabus isn’t just about raw power – the company is also world class at creating bespoke interior finishes.



R232

▷ The 18-inch three-spoke Brabus Monoblock II alloy wheel made its debut on the R129 500SL Frankfurt show car. The new Brabus three-spoke Monoblock II Evo 'Platinum Edition' alloy wheel for the R232 unveiled at the Brabus Signature Night in 2023 ▷ is the 21st century reincarnation of this iconic design. Sized 21-inch and 22-inch front and rear, these wheels are shod with 275/35ZR21 and 335/25ZR22 Continental SportContact 7 rubber.

The R232 SL63 AMG leaves the factory packing 577bhp, which is just 3bhp more than the naturally aspirated R129 Brabus SL V12S that weighed 70kg less than the latest 1,970kg 4WD, tech-laden, aluminium-bodied car.

The Brabus iteration of the R232 SL was presented as the 1 of 25 Bodo Buschmann Edition with its four-litre biturbo V8 motor ramped up to 740bhp. While the bespoke carbon fibre trim parts inside and out give the car a lot of its individuality, they do not stand out in great contrast against the black paint and leather. Once again, the three-spoke alloy wheels are the first thing to catch the eye and they shout 'Brabus!' from the rooftops.



When I drove the car in Bottrop earlier this year, the mild weather was perfect for an open al fresco adventure. Despite the 740bhp on tap, 4WD takes wheelspin histrionics off the menu, but it is impossible to disguise the car's weight, which makes the current SL, whether standard or 'Brabus-ised', a fast and comfortable roadster for long trips rather than a Sunday morning blast down a twisty mountain road. Across four generations and 34 years, nothing has changed.

"Despite the 740bhp on tap, 4WD takes wheelspin histrionics off the menu"



▷ Diamond stitched leather upholstery, unique Brabus plaque and carbon fibre trim among the many upgrades.

▽ 22-inch rear wheels crammed under the arches; rear diffuser made of carbon fibre like the exhaust tip covers.

▽◁ The 750 version of the four-litre V8 twin-turbo is good for 740bhp and makes the fast SL63 even more blistering.



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Class war

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

Mercedes' popular A-Class hatchback has been out-selling the C-Class Saloon for over five years in the UK, but a decade ago it was very much the reverse – the C-Class was Mercedes' biggest seller with the unproven W176 A-Class very much the new kid on the block.

Up to that point, Mercedes-Benz had not seriously targeted one of the UK's most popular market sectors – the hot hatch. But with its W176 A-Class of 2012, Mercedes finally entered this competitive arena and took the fight to VW, BMW, Audi and Honda. The frighteningly fast A45 AMG grabbed the majority of the headlines, of course, but it was the A250 AMG Sport that really tackled the conventional competition head-on.

It was, however, more costly than some rivals, with an entry price of £27,435 OTR, and there were Mercedes alternatives available too for similar money – like the nearly-new C250



△ The A-Class's carbon fibre effect trim is rough to the touch; Comand's standard-sized infotainment screen has a large bezel and looks something of an afterthought... Good driving position, though!



The A250 and C250 are two similarly affordable Mercedes that have stood the test of time. But which one makes the best buy today?

BlueEfficiency AMG Sport Plus Saloon. Ten years on, these two similarly powered Mercedes are still going strong with both offering affordable routes into Mercedes ownership, and with price ranges that overlap. An A250 Sport will set you back anything from £6,000 to £18,000 whilst a C250 BlueEfficiency AMG Sport Saloon costs between £6,000 and £12,000. But which makes the best used buy today?

Smart choice

Despite the passage of time the family resemblance between these two stylish Mercedes is clear, with both boasting similar bonnets, grilles and headlights, and their AMG body styling sets them both apart from the more routine models of their day. 18-inch AMG alloys and sports suspension ensure both rivals possess an impressive road stance, with only their side and rear profiles highlighting key differences.

The more youthful looking A250 AMG Sport boasts sculpted sides and a modern rear end, with the cabin also designed to appeal to a younger demographic, featuring rotating air vents, a two-hole instrument cluster and steeply sloping A-pillars.

First introduced at the 2012 Geneva motor show, the front-wheel-drive, W176 A-Class was intended to be more dynamic than its predecessor and sold in five-door format only. Standard A250 Sport models came with climate control air conditioning, cruise control with adjustable speed limiter function, automatic windscreen wipers, and automatic headlights, as well as nappa leather trim on the steering wheel, a multimedia system with a CD player, digital radio, USB input and an eight-inch colour display.

*"Ten years on, these two similarly powered Mercedes are **still going strong**"*

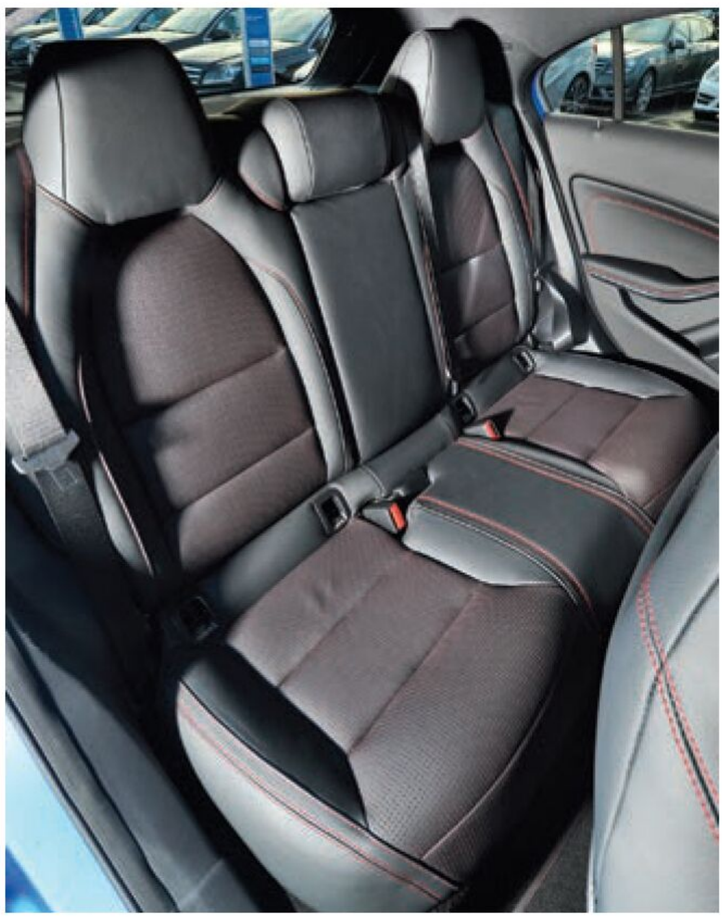


△ **Mercedes added extra metal trim to the dashboard and doors for the facelifted 204-series C-Class; red stitching part of AMG Sport specification; centrally mounted gearlever for the seven-speed auto.**

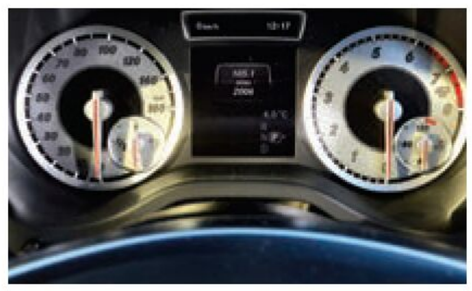
The A250's four-cylinder turbocharged petrol engine (M270) produces 208bhp at 5,500rpm with a helpful 258lb ft of torque from just 1,200rpm, whilst a seven-speed auto transmission was standard. With a 6.6-second 0-62mph time and a 149mph top speed, the A250's performance matched that of rivals like the VW Golf GTI, whilst claimed combined fuel consumption was 47.1mpg. A facelifted version arrived in late 2015 before production of the W176 ended in May 2018, when it was replaced by Mercedes' W177 model.

The rear-wheel-drive, W204 C250 BlueEfficiency AMG Sport Saloon, which was produced between 2012 to 2014 as a facelifted model, claimed similar power output to the A-Class but utilised Mercedes-Benz's 1.8-litre, four-cylinder turbocharged petrol engine (M271) instead, which produced 201bhp at 5,500rpm and 229lb ft of torque.

As with the A250, a seven-speed automatic transmission was standard issue, allowing the C250 to hit 62mph in 7.2 seconds from standstill and top out at 149mph. Official combined fuel consumption is 42.2mpg. ▷







△ Big and bold dials in the A.

△△ AMG Sport's 18-inch wheels.

◁ Good legroom in this hatchback.

▷ A's boot holds 341 to 1,571 litres.

▽ The A250 feels pretty darty.

▽ ▷ Prominent display in the A.







▷ Standard C250 BlueEfficiency AMG Sport features included an engine stop/start system, LED daytime running lights, LED tail lights, a facelifted bonnet with a Sport grille and bumpers, plus an interior makeover which brought the C-Class cabin styling more in line with the W212 E-Class and W221 S-Class.

Effectively an Avantgarde model with the AMG Sport Package, the C250 BlueEfficiency AMG Sport also claimed lower and stiffer sports suspension, upgraded brakes and 18-inch alloy wheels. And as a BlueEfficiency model it offered enhanced economy and weight reduction.

Ownership

Greater power and torque, plus a lower kerb weight, allow the A250 AMG Sport to marginally outperform the C250 AMG Sport, but that doesn't tell the whole story, as the C-Class's more traditional rear-wheel-drive setup enables the saloon to corner as well as its smaller cousin. And the A-Class also has a harder ride, which won't appeal to every buyer.

"The C-Class is more relaxing on long journeys but can't match the A250's fuel efficiency"

Both cars have a seven-speed auto, but the A250's is a dual-clutch system, so what it gains in response it loses in smoothness compared to the C250' torque converter-type. Impressive braking and good visibility (forgiving the A's small rear window) mean you can enjoy driving either car on the open road. Both Mercs are best described as sporting, rather than outright sporty, with the C-Class a more comfortable companion on longer journeys, with finer damping and more accommodating seats.

The C250 AMG Sport Plus you see here has the optional Dynamic Handling Package activated through a Sport button on the dashboard, which brings more sophisticated variable damping as well as elevating gearbox and throttle response. Sold between June 2012 and November 2013, the desirable Sport Plus model also claims Lowered Agility Control suspension and paddleshifters.

Mercedes' A250 AMG Sport, on the other hand, packs a pretty similar spec to the standard C250 AMG Sport model (not the Sport Plus) with Artico leather and sports seats included, but electric sunroofs and metallic paint were options on both cars – although the C-Class did come with parking sensors as standard. It's best to consider every example of either car you







△ Colour display in the C's speedo.

△△ Dynamic Handling pack.

◁ C's boot takes a full 475 litres.

▷ More room for five in the W204.

▽◁ Seven-speed auto in both cars.

▽ Pace comes with little effort.







Match up

Model	Image and style	Driving experience	Buying and owning
A250 AMG Sport	8/10	7/10	8/10
C250 AMG Sport	7/10	8/10	7/10

might view as unique to be honest, as quite a few have additional options fitted, including heated seats, the Dynamic Handling Package, Comand infotainment, carbon fibre-effect trim and entertainment upgrades.

As you'd expect, the A250 has significantly less boot space than the C250, with 341 litres rather than 475 litres, although rear seat passengers actually receive marginally more legroom in the smaller Mercedes. But from the driver's perspective the C-Class does feel a tad more capacious, with greater room in the front cabin and seats that can accommodate even the largest of frames.

In urban environments there's little to pick between these two Mercedes, although the shorter A250 will fit into slightly tighter spaces, whilst both are enjoyable and relatively engaging on the open road. The C-Class, however, is more relaxing on long journeys but can't quite match the A250's fuel efficiency; other running costs are pretty similar overall.

Buying advice

So, which of these well specced Mercedes makes the best buy in 2024? There are several things buyers should consider. Whilst both pack similar petrol-powered performance with price ranges that overlap, the C250 AMG Sport is a much rarer model. This is primarily because a decade ago most C-Class buyers actually opted for turbodiesel models. In addition, the C250 AMG Sport was also available as an equally popular Coupe, as well as a less in-demand Estate.

A W204 C250 BlueEfficiency AMG Sport Saloon will set you back £6,000 to £12,000 depending on age and mileage, whilst the much more numerous A250 AMG Sport is a £6,000 to £18,000 buy.

Remember that the W176 was facelifted in 2015, with later models more in demand – but more expensive as a result. Around three quarters of all A250 AMG Sports are for sale at trade dealerships, but this figure is much lower for the C250 AMG Sport.

Whichever model you choose though, we'd recommend you buy the highest specced example you can, to maximise future residuals. Desirable options with buyers include the ▷



◁ Column mounted lever for the A's auto.

Just the facts

Mercedes-Benz A250 AMG Sport (W176)

Engine M270 1,991cc 4-cyl turbocharged **Power** 208bhp@5,500rpm
Torque 258lb ft@1,200-4,000rpm **Transmission** 7-speed auto, FWD **Weight** 1,445kg
0-62mph 6.6sec **Top speed** 149mph **Fuel consumption** 47.1mpg
CO2 emissions 140g/km **Years produced** 2012-2018

Mercedes-Benz C250 BlueEfficiency AMG Sport Plus (W204)

Engine M271 1,796cc 4-cyl turbocharged **Power** 201bhp@5,500rpm
Torque 229lb ft@2,000-4,300rpm **Transmission** 7-speed auto, RWD **Weight** 1,505kg
0-62mph 7.2sec **Top speed** 149mph **Fuel consumption** 42.2mpg
CO2 emissions 161g/km **Years produced** 2012-2013

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



△ A250's M270-coded four-cylinder unit is more efficient.

*"Both are equally rewarding to drive, but the **A250** possesses a more contemporary **character**"*



△ C-Class's M271 displaces 1.8-litres, the A's motor 2.0.

▷ Intelligent Light System, the Night Package including bi-xenons, metallic paint, Comand, and front and rear Parktronic. And only ever consider purchasing Mercedes packing a blemish-free service history record.

Quite a few W176 A-Class owners have complained about dashboard rattles, although it is a small car with hard suspension, whilst a small number claim their cars have suffered from electrical issues. Bear in mind too that main dealer servicing on an A-Class of this age can seem a bit expensive, so many owners use independent Mercedes specialists instead.

Check that the infotainment screen works properly – Apple CarPlay can be added to earlier cars but it isn't cheap to do, and your A250 AMG Sport should come with all the original keys and documents. Watch out for any signs of timing chain wear, tired camshaft actuators, worn turbochargers and coolant leaks, as all are potential issues on the M270 four-cylinder engine.

Checking the condition of the timing chain on the C250 AMG Sport's M271 engine is essential, too. It can stretch over time which could lead to premature engine failure, whilst any tensioner problems could cause the timing chain to become loose. VVT sprockets have been known to fail and check that there are no blown LEDs in the dashboard, whilst a Mercedes dealer can confirm with the VIN whether all recalls have been addressed on a particular car. There have been quite a few on the 204-series. Other potential C-Class problems include blown mass air flow sensors, crankshaft sensors, and power steering issues.

Given the similarities in reliability, performance and running costs, choosing between these two contenders might not be easy. Both are equally rewarding to drive, but the A250 possesses a more contemporary character and claims slightly better residual values. The C250, on the other hand, feels more refined and boasts rear-wheel-drive, but with a lot more A250s advertised for sale we suspect it's the W176 that most buyers will choose.

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Second-hand SENSE

With used car sales on a sharp rise, amounting to well over four million in 2024, canny buyers can still bag a bargain Mercedes-Benz as long as they go about the process the right way. Here's how...

WORDS & IMAGES **ALAN ANDERSON**

According to Auto Trader, the average price of a used car in the UK stands at a staggering £17,500. That's a heck a lot of money to lay out, let alone waste if you buy badly. But you don't need to be an expert to snare a magnificent Mercedes-Benz if you follow these 10 top tips…

FORM A PLAN

Unlike buying brand new, every second-hand car, even a Mercedes-Benz or AMG, must be judged on their own merits where condition counts first and foremost. So you need to be a bit flexible on the exact model, trim and colour; drawing up a short list of best alternatives is a sensible idea. And wise up on your chosen car, especially if it's a hybrid or EV if this new form of propulsion is alien to you.

TAXING TIMES

With annual VED (Vehicle Excise Duty) levies ranging from zero to £735 depending upon engine cleanliness and year, it's extremely easy to overlook this important detail. So check out a car's emissions rating beforehand. Also remember that nearly new cars costing over £40,000 when new suffer a loaded VED rating for the first five years – £600 before a decrease to £190.



"Whether it be online or on the forecourt, first impressions are usually the deciding factor"

FIRST IMPRESSIONS

Whether it be online or on the forecourt, first impressions are usually the deciding factor. Does your next Mercedes impress as it should? Is the car finished in a favourite colour? That sort of thing. If it misses the mark then find another as you're likely to be disappointed once the honeymoon period is over and likely resell, perhaps at a loss.

HOW MANY MILES

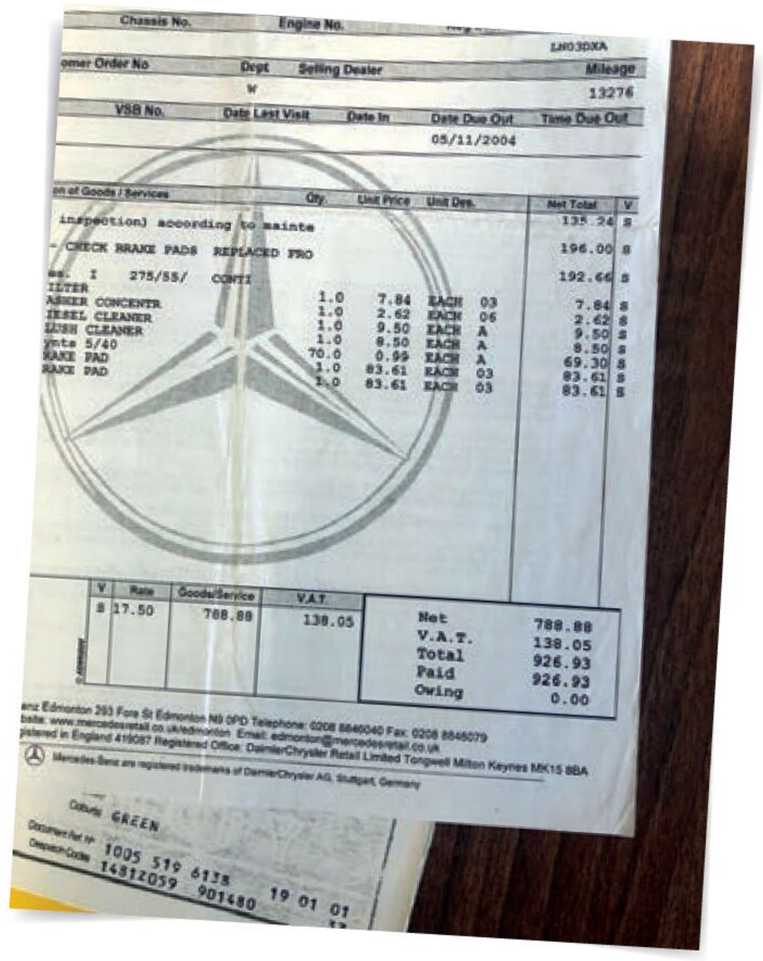
Nothing gives away a car's true age more than its interior. Does it tally with the mileage? Speedometer 'clocking' to falsify mileages is making a return; ironically with newer PCP contract cars where the agreed annual mileage has been exceeded. However, dealerships and main agents know this and can interrogate the software to reveal the true odometer reading. On older cars, carrying out an MOT check (www.gov.uk/check-mot-history) not only posts a general state of health but also keeps a record of mileages.

HISTORY HELP

With a reported 900 crashes a day, it's reckoned that around one in eight cars suffer an accident of some degree – a vehicle data check will clarify it if it's a bad one. These services, such as the hpicheck.com, will not only tell you a car's history but also if it's been stolen, or has outstanding finance remaining. Many good dealers and of course main agents carry out these independent checks as part of the pre-sale preparation.

CRASH COURSE

Even if car comes up 'all clear', these services are not infallible as 'private' repairs may have been carried out. Look for poor panel and door fits; new light fittings and number-plates; signs of overspray or a colour mismatch and check under the wheelarches to see if any chassis or suspension parts have been replaced. Also make sure the car drives straight and true during a road test.



SECRET SERVICE

The service history of any Mercedes is of paramount importance in order to uphold the manufacturer's reputation for durability. On newer models it's most likely to be stored on the dealer database; on older M-Bs, a stamped service history book. Failing that, a sheath of repair bills, preferably by a specialist is OK. No service history should mean no sale… ▷





“With a reported 900 crashes a day, it’s reckoned that around one in eight cars suffer an accident of some degree”

DETAILS COUNT

▷ Sometimes it’s the little details which can say more about how a car has been looked after – such as wheel and tyres. Are the alloy wheels in good order? And the tyres – are they in good condition and of the same make, preferably a quality well known brand? Budget tyres won’t just spoil how a Mercedes drives but also points to cost cutting, which may extend to the mechanicals, such as skipped servicing.

TEST DRIVE

You’re entitled to a test drive and if insured get behind the wheel. A good dealer will do this but if you are refused on both counts, walk away. You need a decent drive of at least seven miles to both acclimatise to the model (which may feel strange) and see whether any faults (such as overheating) develop. To go in-depth would fill an entire issue of *Mercedes Enthusiast* but basically you’re checking that the car feels good and fit for the age and price asked.

Check that no dashboard lights illuminate; the engine performs without undue noises, smoking or overheating, the automatic gearbox is smooth and responsive, and the steering and suspension work efficiently and silently. Oh and check the air conditioning works as it’s reckoned up to half of all systems don’t!

TICKING THE BOXES

By now, if all checks out OK, you should be ready to sign on the dotted. But hold on a minute. Are you really happy with the car, the deal, and even the seller? It’s a truism that nice folk sell nice cars and if something doesn’t click with you, have a rethink.



◁△ **A present and correct owner’s manual pack is a very good sign.**

△ **Don’t be afraid to ask for a test drive, no matter the vehicle’s age.**

▽ **You’ll find only the newest Mercedes at main dealerships.**





WHERE TO BUY

PRIVATE SALES

Many buyers (sometimes mistakenly) assume it's the cheapest route or because they don't trust profiteering dealers. One main plus point is that – hopefully – you're able to meet the current owner and as a consequence gain a clearer history of the vehicle. The seller's demeanour and their dwellings can give you useful signals as to whether the car (and seller) is honest or not.

No warranties are given by a private sale, and be wary if one is implied as it will be meaningless in a court of law. Your only legal protection is whether the car was described dishonestly in any advertisements under the Trades Description Act. Be cagey if the seller is reluctant to provide a test drive, or if the address on the V5C doesn't tally. And never agree to meet anyone in a car park or such like. Always listen to your gut.

DEALERSHIPS

There's nothing more thrilling than visiting a car showroom. Generally, the cars for sale, while being considerably older than main dealer stock, are ready to enjoy and will come fully prepped and refurbished with a fresh MOT. Finance and trade-in terms are usually provided and by law a written warranty must be given. With today's high cost of premises, it's not so unusual to find dealers operating from home. They're not all Arthur Daley-types and the majority of traders are honourable folk, plus remember that you do have the full weight of consumer rights on your side if something goes wrong.



AUCTION

If you like the thrill of a high-speed sale and trying to outwit established traders, you'll love an auction. Certainly, it can net a good deal, but on the other hand, intense bidding can realise a price far higher than you'd bargained for, especially once auction fees and VAT are added to the ▷

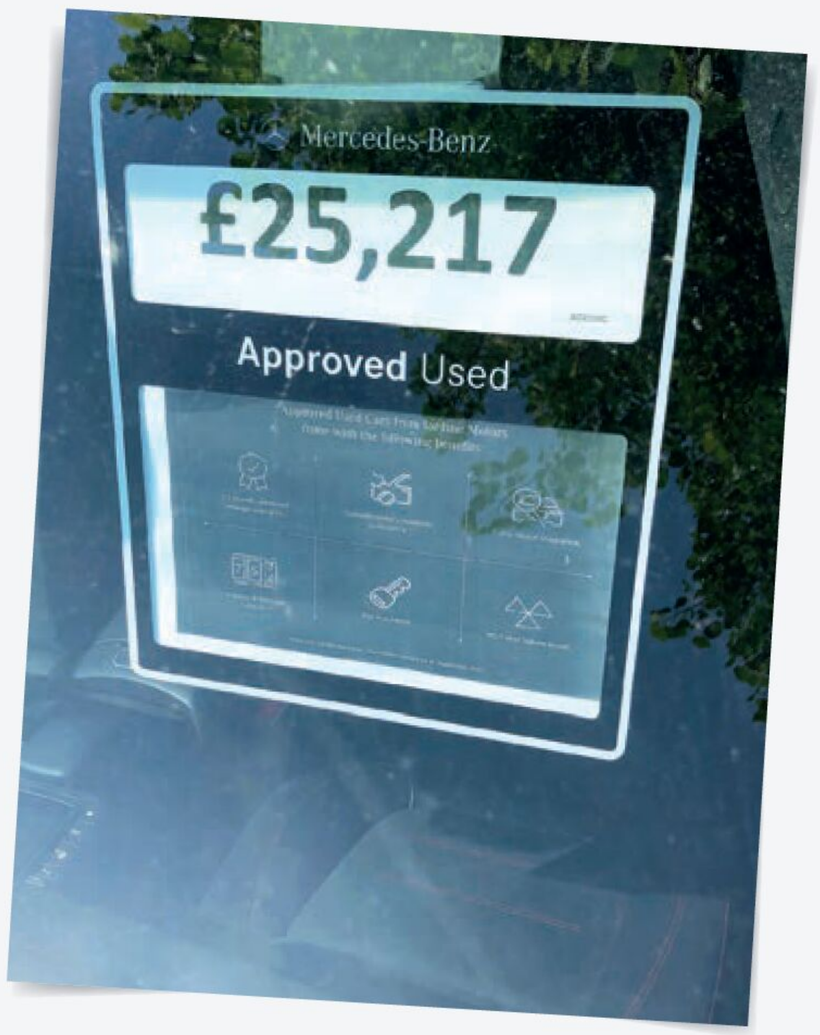


▷ final bill – a point overlooked by many. You have more consumer protection than buying privately because the vehicle must be described with accuracy. With rare exceptions no warranty will be given (other than any remaining on the new vehicle warranty). Also, you need to have the necessary finance at hand and are required to remove the vehicle at short notice.

You need to have a good grasp of cars, a gut feeling and a bit of a lucky streak. The best way to achieve all three is to visit a few auctions as a 'dry run' to see if this fast-lane scene is right for you. A fair compromise may be to enlist the aid of a specialist 'broker' which is in effect a skilled go-between who'll find the right car for you.



"There's nothing more thrilling than visiting a car showroom"



MAIN AGENTS

For many, this is the pinnacle but you usually pay for it in premium prices. There are well over 230 main dealers in the UK operating the Approved Used Cars programme which, in effect, is the closest to buying brand new. Apart from the usual stock (perhaps part-exchanges against new), which can be sourced from across the network there's also opportunities to buy ex-demonstration and pre-registered virtually new models at attractive rates. Also, the manufacturer-backed finance packages will be some of the keenest and easiest around.

Apart from a certain 'snob value' of buying from main dealers, many like the whole experience together with the fact that it's got Mercedes-Benz behind them.

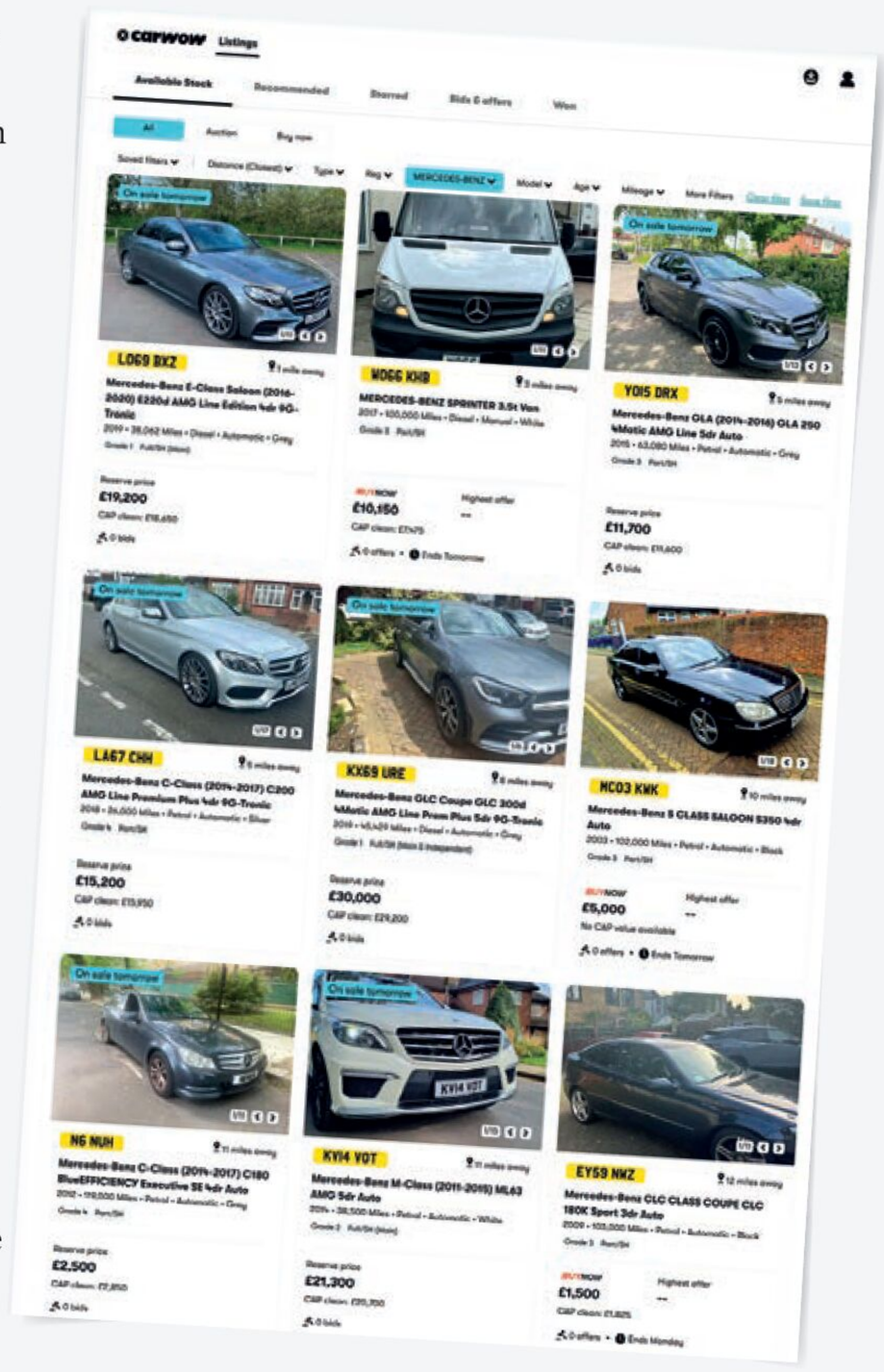
SPECIALISTS

One rung down to a main dealer are dedicated independent Mercedes specialists, many formed by ex-main dealer staff, which can provide an equally top level service; perhaps better as these smaller agents, which rely heavily on recommendations, can give a more personal touch. A good specialist will sell – or can find to your spec – top notch cars plus offer main dealer level of customer care. Screen prices usually fall somewhere between main agent and high street dealer values but you're like to enjoy far better protection than a normal trader can provide simply due to their experience and knowledge.

ONLINE

This buying practice soared during lock down and there's a distinction between traditional dealers offering an online shop and special digital only companies such as Cinch. It's the new modern way to buy a used car, delivered right to your door although traditionalists counter this by saying there's nothing like seeing your new Mercedes in the flesh – and we'd go along with that – as does 90 per cent of buyers according to a recent survey by Auto Trader. Also bear in mind that some, such as Cazoo, have subsequently folded or are in financial difficulties which may cause fears with warranties and so on.

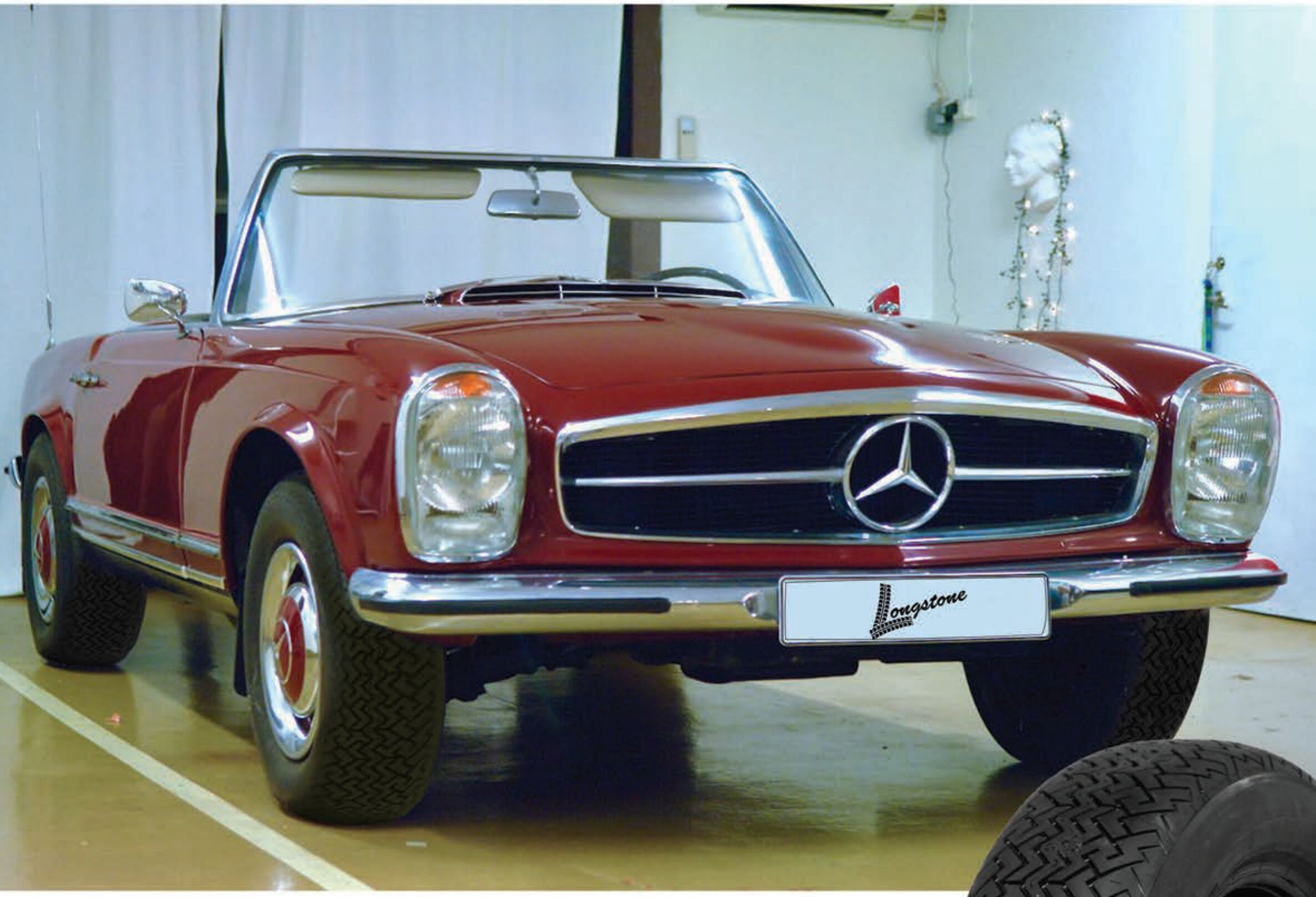
One exception is Carwow because it's not a car supermarket but what it likes to be called a "match-making marketplace". The difference with Carwow is that it doesn't hold any vehicles in stock, but simply puts customers in touch with dealerships meaning financial transactions, warranty and other arrangements are all made directly with the retailer as if they were buying in person, says the company.



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WORDS **GUY BAKER** IMAGES **GULLWING CARS, YORKSHIRE VEHICLE SOLUTIONS & THE CAR SHOP**



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Whatever the time of year, a good looking Mercedes droptop is guaranteed to glean covetous glances, but with the arrival of winter few drivers have buying a convertible at the top of their agenda. And that's the reason why you should.

With demand at its lowest point in the year, you will pay a lot less than you might imagine for the privilege of piloting a mint condition Stuttgart convertible. Most sellers are struggling to find buyers, whilst buyers can afford to be super picky – and expect a significant discount.

However, some Mercedes convertibles offer richer pickings than others, with supply, age and even the latest fashions also affecting the equation. But we've trawled forecourts and classified ads to unearth some of the best droptop models to target right now. And if you are tempted to buy any of them, or other similar examples, then you should have a warm glow all winter knowing that you paid a lot less for yours than everybody else will in the spring.

If your budget is fairly tight then we'd recommend you consider a 209-series CLK, but don't be tempted to buy a tired example in need of a bit of TLC. Far wiser to spend that little bit extra to ensure you won't be facing sizeable bills around the corner. After all, you won't be paying much more for a better car in any case. Seek out cherished cars with just a few owners and less than 120,000 miles.

This Obsidian Black, 2009 CLK200 Kompressor Cabriolet Sport at Gullwing Cars in Bristol (www.gullwingcars.net) is just the kind of example you should be seeking. With 100,000 miles and just two owners, it looked in exceptional condition and came with full service history and an MOT until May 30 2025.



△ 100,000-mile CLK200 Kompressor yours for under £5,000.

It was advertised at £4,990 but an offer of around £4,500 should have secured the deal, and this car packed an impressive spec that included ebony leather, upholstery, recently refurbished 18-inch AMG alloys, bi-xenon headlamps, Parktronic, heated seats and AMG overmats.

Hot drophead

Got a bigger budget for something newer with serious performance? Then the AMG C43 (A205) must be a serious target. Already representing great value for money, supply appears to exceed demand at the moment, so you can glean a serious discount. This Selenite Grey metallic, 2017 C43 Premium Plus at Yorkshire Vehicle Solutions (www.yorkshirevehiclesolutions.co.uk) was a good example of what you could buy. With 58,000 miles and a prodigious spec, it was stickered at £22,989, but could be yours for £22,000.



△ Distinct Mercedes feel inside this Sport-spec cabriolet.

The spec included full black leather, Comand satellite navigation, Airscarf, Aircap, 19-inch AMG alloys, a Burmester surround sound system, front and rear Parktronic with camera, and heated electric memory front seats – and this car came with a full Mercedes main dealer and Mercedes specialist service history. There are quite a few cars like this for sale right now.

If, however, you fancy something a bit more frugal, then consider instead a 207-series E350d/ Bluetec V6 Cabriolet AMG Sport. There are some nice ones around, including this well specced 2013 example in white for sale at The Car Shop in Bedford (www.thecarshopbedford.co.uk). With a mere 40,000 miles, it was priced at a very reasonable £10,950 and could have been yours for as little as £10,500.



△ E350 Bluetec £10,950; AMC C43 below priced at £22,000.

▶ *Fancy something slightly more practical? Then check out our top three £20,000 Mercedes coupes on page 76!*

Forecourt find

300SL (R107)

One of the most popular classic Mercedes models with today's buyers, a good condition R107 is hard to resist. But low-mileage examples are becoming harder to find. So we were delighted to discover this stunning, 29,000-mile 300SL finished in lovely Signal Red at SLShop in Warwickshire.

Surely one of the lowest mileage examples in the UK, this 1989 car came with beige leather and air conditioning plus paintwork and chrome that look as good as they would have done 30 years ago. Hence the £64,995 asking price. Completely original, this car has been meticulously maintained from new, with full service history that includes an extensive set of Mercedes-Benz invoices.



△ Finished in Signal Red (568) over Beige leather (275) – SLShop was asking for £64,995.



△ Straight-six has under 30,000 miles.



△ Air con and Blaupunkt Toronto stereo.

Dealer information:
SLShop in Stratford-upon-Avon
Tel 01789 337070
Web www.theslshop.com



Auction spotlight

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

- **CLK320 Coupe Elegance** 3.2-litre, petrol, auto, 2005/05-plate, 92,000 miles, **£2,250**
- **B200 Turbo** 2.0-litre, petrol, auto, 2006/56-plate, 63,000 miles, **£2,950**
- **SLK350 Roadster** 3.5-litre, petrol, auto, 2008/08-plate, 89,000 miles, **£4,700**
- **SL280 Roadster** 2.8-litre, petrol, auto, 2000/V-plate, 135,000 miles, **£5,250**
- **GLA180 Urban Edition** 1.6-litre, petrol, auto, 2019/19-plate, 48,000 miles, **£14,500**
- **CLS 350d AMG Line Premium Plus Coupe** 3.0-litre, diesel, auto, 2017/17-plate, 48,000 miles, **£16,150**
- **A250e Saloon AMG Line** 1.3-litre, petrol-electric, auto, 2021/71-plate, 51,000 miles, **£17,150**
- **SLC300 Roadster AMG Line** 2.0-litre, petrol, auto, 2017/67-plate, 41,000 miles, **£17,300**
- **AMG A35 4Matic Hatchback** 2.0-litre, petrol, auto, 2019/19-plate, 36,000 miles, **£19,350**
- **A200 Hatchback AMG Line Premium Plus** 1.3-litre, petrol, auto, 2021/21-plate, 34,000 miles, **£19,800**
- **CLA250e Coupe AMG Line Premium** 1.3-litre, petrol-electric, 2021/21-plate, 33,000 miles, **£21,875**
- **S350d L AMG Line Executive Premium Plus** 3.0-litre diesel, auto, 2018/67-plate, 117,000 miles, **£25,000**
- **AMG C43 4Matic Estate Premium Plus** 3.0-litre, petrol, auto, 2019/69-plate, 36,000 miles, **£29,700**
- **AMG E53 4Matic+ Coupe Premium** 3.0-litre, petrol, auto, 2019/69-plate, 20,000 miles, **£35,300**
- **AMG GLC43 4Matic Premium Plus** 3.0-litre, petrol, auto, 2020/70-plate, 12,000 miles, **£41,700**

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

Mercedes market

Knowing the Mercedes-Benz marketplace means you can make the best buying decisions. 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...

Top 6 best-selling used Mercedes

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

1 A-Class (21.1%)
2 C-Class (18.6%)
3 E-Class (11.8%)
4 CLA-Class (7.3%)
5 GLC-Class (6.4)
6 GLA-Class (6.3%)

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 Grey (18.7%)
3 Silver (17.9%)
4 White (16.8%)
5 Blue (10.3%)

Miles ahead

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

Less than 50,000 miles 50.1%
Between 50,000 and 80,000 miles 25.1%
More than 80,000 miles 24.8%

Fuel watch

How are used Mercedes powered?

Diesel 47.7%
Petrol 36.8%
Hybrid 12.6%
Full electric 2.9%

Drivetrain

Four-wheel drive Mercedes usually offer greater traction, but can be less economical. Rear-wheel drive Mercedes can be fun to drive, but trickier at the limit than front-wheel drive models

Four-wheel drive 23.0%
Front-wheel drive 36.7%
Rear-wheel drive 40.3%

TOP THREE

£20,000 Coupes

Mercedes-Benz has been synonymous with coupes for 120 years, and if you spend even a short while scouring the classified adverts then you'll find a raft of appealingly priced models of almost all ages that might tempt you.

Whatever your priorities and budget, there are a variety of two door – and four-door – Mercedes coupes for sale, with those bought from dealerships (rather than private sellers) offering the greatest degree of protection for buyers. We've selected three of the finest options currently available for those drivers on a £20,000 budget.



C220d Coupe (C205)

With buyers increasingly switching to petrol and hybrid-powered vehicles, there are some great deals to be had on diesel-powered Mercedes, with the 205-series C-Class a good example. Twenty grand now buys a 2019 C220d in AMG Line Premium guise with less than 50,000 miles and a few tasty optional extras. Boasting 168bhp, a 149mph top speed, £190 a year road tax and the lure of 50mpg-plus fuel economy, this C205 Coupe is the consummate all-rounder. Stick to one-owner examples with a full service history record.



E300 Coupe (C238)

Fancy petrol power instead? Then we'd recommend you take a closer look at the 242bhp E300 Coupe AMG Line. Our budget bags a 70,000-mile, 2017 Premium Plus example with plenty of desirable options, and you won't feel short-changed in the performance stakes, with the 155mph E300 capable of hitting 62mph in 6.4 seconds from standstill. Official combined fuel economy is a reasonable 35.8mpg and there are quite a few examples around, so you should have no problem negotiating a decent discount.



CL500 (C216)

Some of the finest coupe deals are to be had on slightly older Mercedes, in particular the C216 CL, with 20 big ones putting you behind the wheel of a 2013-vintage CL500 BlueEfficiency Coupe with 429bhp! Stick to cherished examples with just a couple of owners and you can enjoy some of the very best motoring that Mercedes has to offer. The car's performance is substantial in all gears, with 516lb ft of torque on tap and a 4.9-second 0-62mph time. And the cabin is palatially appointed, as you'd expect.

Latest products and accessories



Forge Motorsport Air Intake and Adaptor

If you're looking to maximise your AMG A45's output then Forge Motorsport's Intake Filter and Adaptor combination could add as much as 20bhp. Suitable for A45, CLA45 and CLA45 models, the powder coated, large bore metal intake adapter replaces the very restrictive stock intake adapter and combines perfectly with a bespoke Pipercross filter, which increases flow by up to 30 per cent. It also enhances induction noise. All components are manufactured here in the UK and the kit - product code FMINDK20 - costs just £245.27 including VAT. Find out more at **www.forgemotorsport.co.uk.**

Miofive UK Speedcam app

Worried about speed cameras? You can now improve your road safety with Miofive's new completely free speed camera alert app. Providing real-time notifications for all types of speed cameras, it keeps you informed, alert and protected, while promoting safer driving.

Available for both Android and iOS, features include speed camera alerts, regular updates, seamless background operation, PIP mode and Google maps integration, plus real-time updates on speed camera locations without any hidden costs or subscription fees. This innovative mobile app is currently available for free on the Google Play Store and Apple's App Store. For more information visit **www.miofive.com.**





Autoglym triple-action Ceramic Wash & Protect shampoo

Autoglym's new triple-action ceramic shampoo promises to deliver a superior clean, enhances gloss and adds protection with every wash. Employing new (Si02) technology, its super-concentrated, low-foam formula means a one-litre bottle can deliver up to 33 applications and by laying down a robust, hydrophobic finish, the sophisticated new formulation in Ceramic Wash & Protect also cuts the time and effort that is required to dry the car and ensures that the next clean can be completed more quickly and easily.

Costing £24.99, Ceramic Wash & Protect delivers a deep clean and creates a smooth high-gloss shine. You can find full details at **www.autoglym.com**.

Signature Tune AMG E63

So you've bought AMG's 213-series E63. Here's how can you make this executive road weapon, complete with earth-shattering V8 engine, even finer to drive...



These early 213-series E63s sound absolutely epic and can be remapped.

Arguably the ultimate executive express, good W213 E63 Saloons now change hands from just £37,000 upwards. Sold from 2017-on, a late 2020 facelift saw the standard E63's output raised to that of the pre-facelift E63 S model. So standard cars produce either 563bhp or 604bhp from their 3,982cc, twin-turbo V8 motor, with all S models claiming 604bhp.

Combined with 4Matic four-wheel drive and packing anywhere from 553 to 630lb ft of torque, the E63's performance betters many supercars. But incredibly, with a remap plus the right exhaust system you could make your nine-speed auto-equipped E63 perform even more impressively, with more noise to match. Quite a few owners have also enhanced their W213's transmission, braking, suspension and styling. Here are some options you could consider...



△ Bulging AMG styling hints at the power beneath, all 604bhp of it in the S model specification.

Engine

An ECU remap could elevate your car's output to around 690bhp and 680lb ft! And with the appropriate sports exhaust and induction setup (there are loads of options available) most tuners can also add plenty of crackles and burbles on the overrun too. Speed limiter removal could see you touching 186mph. Tuners such as GAD Tuning, DMS Automotive, Avon Tuning and RennTech all seem popular choices with AMG E63 owners.

Transmission

Getting your car's transmission remapped at the same time as the engine makes a lot of sense. MSL, JF Automotive and JR Tuning are three tuners offering this service, but there are others too. This can provide marginally swifter and smoother gearchanges, a quicker response to paddleshift inputs, and even enhance the available torque at certain points in the rev range.

Suspension

The factory air suspension is impressive, but some owners have fitted full-blown coil-over systems, rather than just lowering springs, with Brabus, Bilstein, Ohlins, BC Racing and KW Variant 3 all popular choices. H&R or Eibach seem to be the preferred choices for lowering springs.

Brakes

Perhaps surprisingly, most AMG E63 owners leave their brakes standard, but the ultimate in stopping power is provided by a big brake kit, with Brembo, EBC and AP Racing and all offering options. But be prepared to spend at least £5,000 of your cash.

Wheels and bodywork

AMG alloys are the preferred option for most owners, but you'll also see E63's sporting rims from Brabus and Lorinser. If you're planning regular track days, we recommend you keep to no larger than 20-inch wheels, and double check that any new alloys weigh less than the OE items. Most owners keep their car's exterior pretty much standard.

Interior

Very much a personal choice here, with some E63 owners opting for colour-coded items, whilst others seem to prefer lashings of carbon and alloy trim. Most, however, retain a factory standard interior. A handful have also upgraded their E63's Comand infotainment system.



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123 rescued from oblivion ✦ Flat out in AMG's C63 Black Series

AND MUCH, MUCH MORE!

Mercedes ENTHUSIAST Winter 2025 issue **ON SALE** December 27th

Contents are subject to change



All-rounder

Handsome, well-built and equipped with a strong six-cylinder engine, the E320 Coupe of 1993 to 1996 is a collectable Mercedes in waiting. Here's what to look out for on these two-doors...

WORDS **DAVID SUTHERLAND** IMAGES **TERRY OBORNE**

It's often said that Mercedes-Benz doesn't make cars like the 123-series of 1976 to 1985 anymore, and exactly the same is said about the model that replaced it, the 124-series, built for 11 years until 1996. Exactly the same is not said about the 210-series which followed the 124, a car that was clearly less solidly made than its predecessor, due to a drive for lower production costs.

Hence the model we look at in this Buyer's Guide, the last of the C124 line, the E320 Coupe, is hailed as the final middleweight Mercedes from the era when the carmaker's engineers held sway over efficiency-seeking accountants.

With its pillarless styling and six-cylinder engine, the E320 Coupe, made over the last three years of the 124's life cycle, was not only a car with no true rivals, but among the most prestigious coupes this side of a 126-series SEC. You'd be paying over £40,000 new in its day, and plenty buyers did – C124 worldwide deliveries totalling 141,500, with nearly 13,800 the E320. This model even outsold its less expensive sibling, the E220, by some 1,400 units.

Given its looks, equipment, image and many other qualities, you might expect the 124 Coupe, and especially the final examples, to be expensive, up there with the R107 SL contemporary. But no, even though it's been gone nearly three decades, the collector market hasn't taken it to its bosom.

The occasional excellent E320 will cause a stir at a local auction when it exceeds £15,000, but generally they go for well under £10,000, and lesser examples less than £3,000. So it's a modern classic at a low price, but is it a bargain Benz that will give you faithful service, or just a cheap liability?

Design and evolution

The E320 Coupe arrived in mid-1993, as part of a three-model 124 Coupe range. Its stablemates were two four-cylinder cars, the two-litre E200 (not sold in the UK) and 2.2-litre E220. The 3.6-litre E36 AMG was theoretically the flagship, but very few came to the UK, leaving the E320 the top model. No updates of any kind were applied to the C124 over the next three years, but to see how the E320 came about we should look back to September 1987, when the 124-series Coupe was introduced.

The 124-series range, launched in 1984, was part of the celebrated trio styled under the direction of the then head of styling, Bruno Sacco. Its stablemate below was 1982's W201 190, while above sat the

Spotted for sale

PRIVATE SELLER
E320 Coupe
1995/M, four-speed auto, black, mushroom leather, new wiring loom, £9,995, West Sussex



126-series S-Class which had been launched in 1979. They formed the perfect model hierarchy, with a recognisable 'family' look but still with their own distinct identity.

The C124 Coupe was the first addition to the 124 range, and despite the strong resemblance with the 124 Saloon shared no body parts apart from the front and rear lights, according to Mercedes. The amount of extra attention given to safety and maximising rear passenger space was impressive, with the A-pillars, side sills and doors strengthened to compensate for the pillarless construction, while the rear roofline was cleverly and 'invisibly' profiled to ensure good headroom.

The braking and suspension, including Mercedes' then state-of-the-art, multi-link rear axle, was transferred across from the 124 Saloon, but the model choice was much simpler: the 230CE with the 2.3-litre, four-cylinder M102 unit, and the 300CE using the recently introduced, M103 single-cam, three-litre straight-six. In the UK, a four-speed automatic transmission was standard equipment on the 300CE, although a rarely specified five-speed manual was available at no extra cost.

At the C124's first facelift, in September 1989, for the 1990 model year, a third model joined the range, the 300CE-24, the forerunner of the E320. Using the M103-based three-litre, 24-valve engine recently introduced for the R129 300SL-24, output was 217bhp, a hefty 39bhp rise over the 300CE, although its torque of 195lb ft was only a small increase. Factory-coded M104, this engine would evolve into 3.2 litres to answer criticism of its lightweight mid-range torque. From the beginning of 1990, the 300CE was available with an electronically regulated five-speed automatic transmission, which would later go into the E320.

At this point, a 124-series could for the first time be ordered with Mercedes' then new Sportline package, which in the UK added £1,700 to the price. It comprised lowered and stiffened suspension, wider wheels and tyres (205/60R15 tyres on 7Jx15-inch rims as opposed to 195/65s on 6.5Jx15-inch), slightly smaller leather-rimmed steering wheel and a Sportline leather gearknob.

From a historical perspective, the 300CE-24's evolution into the E320 can be a little confusing, because so much happened over a short period. In September 1992, the most significant mechanical change in the car's life occurred, with the junking of the original engines in favour of the enlarged, 3.2-litre, 24-valve M104 for the model now badged 320CE, along with the M111 2.2-litre, four-cylinder 16-valve unit for the 220CE. The M104 in the 320CE equalled the 300CE-24's 217bhp, but gave significantly improved torque of 229lb ft, which was delivered lower down the rev band, at 3,750 rather than 4,600rpm.

Nine months later, in June 1993, Stuttgart introduced the cosmetic side of the revamp. This brought a new radiator grille and the three-pointed star moved from the front grille to the bonnet, plus new bumpers and light clusters, and 'eight-hole' alloy wheels to replace the 16-hole design.

The badging was also changed in line with Mercedes' new policy, with 320CE changing to E320. Hence there are a number of 'in-between' cars in circulation, 320CEs with the improved engine, but not the repositioned star badge and trim updates (the same applied to the 220CE/E220). By this time, a C124 could be ordered with an evolved version of the 300CE-24's five-speed automatic gearbox. Production of the E320 Coupe, and other C124s, ceased in March 1996, six months after that of the W124 Saloon ended.

Driving the E320 Coupe

The E320 offers effortless and relaxed performance along with super sweet refinement. The M104 engine also has noticeably more mid-range thrust than the three-litre sixes, particularly the 300CE-24, whose 24-valve conversion seemed to shift the torque peak even higher up the rev range. The optional five-speed automatic gearbox gives the car added responsiveness. The ride is comfortable, but cars with the Sportline suspension feel firmer and are slightly noisier due to the wider tyres.

The C124's cabin is that wonderful mix of Mercedes-Benz traditional styling and solid build quality, with simple, clear instrumentation and handsome mouldings and switchgear. Comfort too is a strong suit, particularly if the car has the multi-way electrical seat adjustment, an added bonus being the optional steering column that electrically adjusts for reach.

Rear passengers get a reasonable deal, hence the C124 is a genuine four-seater. But the best feature of all is surely the pillarless design which, when all four windows are dropped, gives unlimited fresh air to the cabin except without the wind buffeting.

Just the facts

Mercedes-Benz E320 Coupe (C124)

Engine	M104 3,199cc 6-cyl
Power	217bhp@6,600rpm
Torque	229lb ft@3,750rpm
Transmission	5-speed auto, RWD
Weight	1,500kg
0-62mph	7.9sec
Top speed	143mph
Fuel consumption	19.3mpg
Years produced	1993-1996
Number built	13,768

All figures from Mercedes-Benz for a post-03.1994 car; fuel consumption according to EEC urban

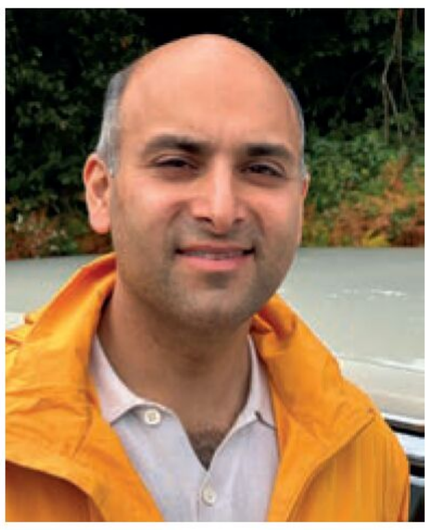
What you'll pay

As surprising as it may seem, prices of most C124s have moved very little since the 2000s, hence at the bottom of the price scale an E320 can be yours for £3,000 or even less. But two caveats: you won't see many at this price, and those you do could be so rusty and worn they are simply not worth having.

A more typical price a private seller would ask is £6,000 to £9,000, which buys a runner but with some of the problems we highlight. Once your budget is £10,000 to £15,000 you can expect one of the best cars. There are now fewer specialist classic Mercedes dealers in the UK than in the 2000s and 2010s, hence most E320s for sale are offered by private sellers.

Considering its price, the E320 Coupe wasn't well equipped as standard, but cars commonly came loaded anyway. 'Essential' options, we'd say, are leather seat upholstery, electric memory seat adjustment and air conditioning (manual or climate control); a well specced E320 is worth more and easier to re-sell. E320s have value over E220s, but not that much, the higher fuel and maintenance costs over the four-cylinder keeping prices in check. ▷

C124 E320 Coupe Inside and out



Jay Manek, Mercland in Nuneaton, Warwickshire

"The big issue on these cars is the wiring loom. There are a couple of good specialist suppliers in the UK, but what people don't realise is that if the loom needs replacing and isn't, it will eventually fry the ECU, and you can't get new ECUs.

"Finding a good E320 isn't as easy as it used to be, because more people are cherishing them rather than using them as daily drivers, and taking them off the road. But it's a great modern classic, especially with the five-speed automatic."

www.mercland.com

Powertrain

● An M104 Achilles' heel is the engine wiring loom, from the era when Mercedes looms were made from biodegradable materials, and may need replacement if they have degraded, which is a £1,000-plus job. Look at the connectors and gently pull back any outer cover - cracked or bare wires are a bad sign.

● Overheating could indicate a worn water pump, a failing viscous fan or a blocked radiator. A poor cooling system can quickly lead to cylinder-head gasket failure.

● The Bosch KE-Jetronic fuel injection is generally very reliable, but with age, deterioration of electronic components such as fuel relays or idle valves can cause poor running. Diagnosis on the E320 is not as efficient as on modern cars - each component must be tested in a logical but often laborious manner.

● The engine rests on special hydraulic mounts, which eventually wear out and fail to support. Listen for a harshness at tickover, especially on full steering lock.



● The four-speed automatic transmissions are strong, the slightly newer five-speed autobox less so. There can be an issue with the electronic fifth gear solenoid, therefore it is important to check that all gears including reverse are engaging, and doing so smoothly. Both automatic gearboxes hang onto gears longer when the engine is cold, to warm up the exhaust catalysts more quickly.

> **"An M104 Achilles' heel is the engine wiring loom"**



Suspension, steering and braking system

● Front lower suspension arm ball joints are a wear and tear item that should be checked for excess play. This requires replacement of the complete suspension arm, and it's advisable to replace in pairs. The rear lower ball joints can also fail, causing a knocking noise.

● The pipework on the E320's standard-fit, self-levelling rear suspension should be examined for corrosion, as they can corrode and leak. Fitting replacement lines around the rear axle takes time and patience, so is likely to be expensive. Rear suspension spheres in need of replacement will cause a bouncy, uncomfortable ride.

● Wheel bearings should be checked for excess play. Front bearings can be adjusted, but rear bearings cannot, and replacement is a labour-intensive job.

● A 'wandering' or vibration in the recirculating ball-type steering usually means the steering damper is worn out, but these are inexpensive and easy to fit. The power steering should be smooth and quiet, and the pump leak free.



Look out for a 'loose' steering feel and suspension knocks.

Spotted for sale

PRIVATE SELLER
E320 Coupe
1994/L, five-speed auto, silver, grey leather, heated electric seats, 165,700 miles, £7,500, Birmingham



There are a few specific areas that can attract the tin worm.

Bodywork and wheels

● The main corrosion points on 124 Coupes are at the bottom of the front wings where they meet the bumper ahead of the wheelarch, behind the plastic side claddings, and the rear subframe arms where they meet the body. Pull off the plastic covers on the side sills and inspect the front and rear jacking points for rust – their condition gives a good indication of the general level of rot around the car.

● The rear windscreen can go a milky colour around the base at each side. This is due to moisture leaking in and gathering at these points, and eventually penetrating the two layers of glass, and the plastic in between, causing the screen to delaminate. Replacing the glass is the only solution, ensuring that the demister electrical contacts, which may have corroded, are properly cleaned and reconnected.

● The earlier, 15-hole alloy wheels resist corrosion better than the 'eight-hole' rims introduced for the 320CE and E320. By now, unless they've been refurbished, they'll quite likely show unsightly peeling lacquer. If the original 6.5Jx15-inch wheels have been replaced by larger rims, as some have, this will adversely affect handling and the ride quality, so choose your wheels carefully.


The C124 is a great way to experience modern classic Merc motoring.

Interior and electrics

● Check that all electrical equipment works properly, as items can fail due to sheer age. Seats should be tried for all of their adjustments, and electric windows should be fast and smooth.

● Most E320s came with the optional electric sunroof, which should move smoothly and quietly. Signs of damp on the floor or under the carpets in the front footwells can indicate that sunroof drainage channels are blocked and have corroded.

● If fitted, check the air conditioning. Due to age, leaks in the system are common, and fan switch components can fail. The most likely leak point is the condenser, and if the air conditioning is not working, it's unlikely that a simple re-gas will revive it.

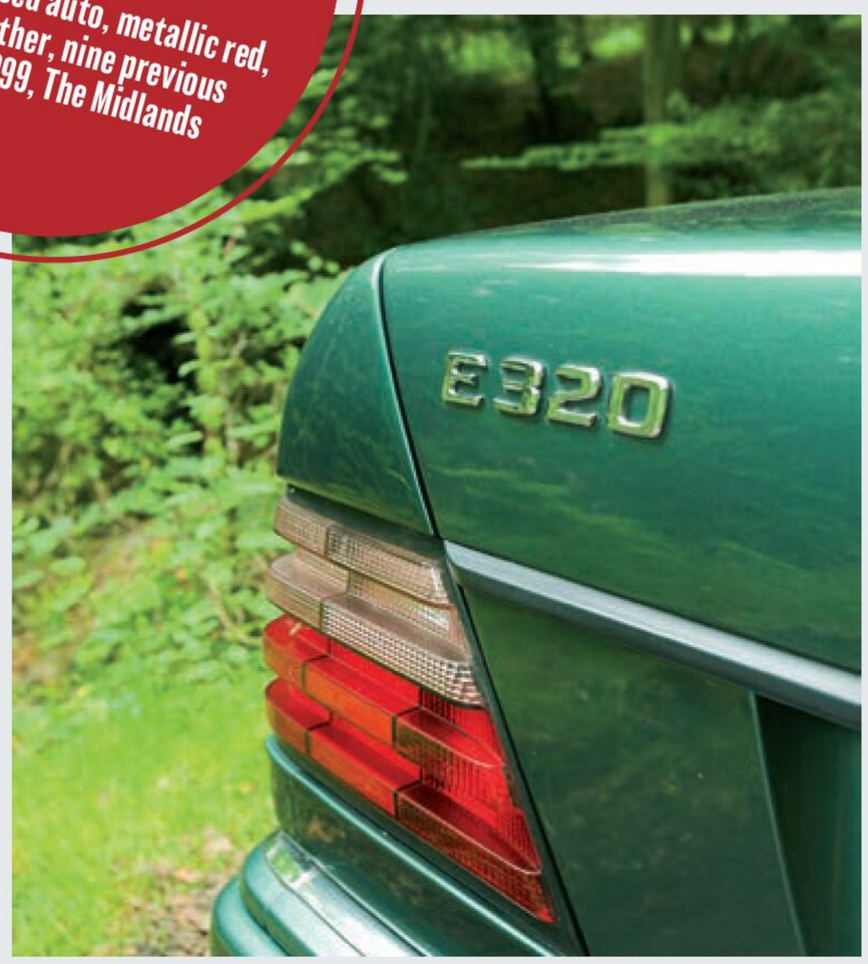
● The seat belt 'butler' mounted next to the front seats should deliver the seat belt without hesitation when the door is closed, and the seat backs should lock into position with the doors closed and transmission in Drive. ▷

E320 Coupe Inside and out

Spotted for sale

PRIVATE SELLER
E320 Coupe
1994/M, four-speed auto, metallic red, mushroom leather, nine previous owners, £12,999, The Midlands





Early vs later C124s

All C124s are now modern classics, but some have more classic status than others. While previously, buyers wanted the last-of-the-line facelifted cars, that has now changed and the early cars are now seen as more traditional, even though the differences in appearance are slight.

However, there's another, more practical reason why the early C124s are gaining in desirability, that of superior build quality: "The paint is better, and in my experience you see far more later cars with rusted wings and jacking points, and rusted rear suspension arms," says Mercedes specialist Edward Hall in Bucks.

The pre-1992 C124s are also simpler mechanically, which is always a bonus for the classic car owner. They do not, for example, suffer from engine wiring loom degradation, an issue potentially haunting every E320 owner.



Typical basic servicing costs (including VAT)

Model	Minor service	Major service
E320 Coupe	£185	£345

Quotes from Mercland

Non routine servicing

- ★ Replace degraded engine wiring loom **£1,250-£1,750 (depending on options)**
- ★ Renew cylinder-head gasket **£2,250**
- ★ Fit new engine mounts **£700**
- ★ Replace front suspension lower ball joint/suspension arm **£1,200 (pair)**
- ★ Replace front/rear brake discs, pads **£400/£360**
- ★ Fit four premium brand tyres (195/65ZR15) **£320**

What you'll pay

£2,000-£4,000 E320s in poor condition, probably not an economic revival prospect

£4,000-£6,000 Reasonable examples, but with rust and some mechanical issues

£6,000-£10,000 The main price range for private sales. Expect over 100,000 miles

£10,000-£15,000 Above average condition and with leather, air conditioning and five-speed auto

£15,000-£20,000 Only the occasional E320 will make this money, and needs to be near pristine, high spec and have the five-speed automatic

Verdict

The 124-series E320 Coupe is surely one of the market's all-time sleepers. It has the perfectly proportioned Bruno Sacco styling, feels like a traditional Mercedes and at the same time has performance easily good enough for present day driving. And yet it's still as cheap as chips, with £10,000 enough to buy a well kept, high specification example.

Given its off-the-scale value, it makes sense to avoid all but the best ones, which will provide a much more rewarding ownership experience. However, we'd also suggest not leaving it too long, because although some are being looked after carefully, flat values will discourage good maintenance and, sadly, cause previously good ones to deteriorate.

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Wear and tear

Martin Buckley and wife Mia call the SL280 into daily use while grappling with the odd roof niggle and bodywork blemish

WORDS & IMAGES **MARTIN BUCKLEY**



FACTSHEET

CAR 1996 SL280
OWNER Martin Buckley
LOCATION Cirencester, UK
PURCHASED November 2021
UPDATES SINCE LAST REPORT Battery drain causes issue with roof; air conditioning compressor seized; bodywork needs attention


The fabric roof has seen better days.

Having sold our Audi A2, the SL280 has been used as a second everyday car given it's nicer to drive on long trips than our Fiat Panda, although not by the huge margin you might expect. My wife Mia tends to use the R129 more than me; as I write this, she's taken it, top lowered, to Cornwall with dogs and all.

I put on the hardtop when laying the SL up for the winter just to get it out of the way, but on removing it this time the old problem of the power hood not wanting to work reoccurred. The other clue was that the rollbar did not want to pop up. As usual, my Mercedes man Gus Meyer came to the rescue with his laptop and sorted out the confused ECU. Problems tend to occur when the SL is not used and the battery drains, but £80 later it was all sorted. The only other expense of late has been a new battery.

The hood itself is starting to look a little tired and there are splits in the Perspex rear windows that don't look great. I meant to ask Gus to do something with the driver's side door card that is not attached properly, but we will leave that for another session. One thing he did discover was that the air conditioning compressor has seized, hence it is no longer blowing cold. He is on the lookout for another one. Apparently, they are not huge money, which makes a change.

Meanwhile, I have managed to adorn the SL's body with various paint scrapes and scratches, particularly on the front bumper, which will need sorting. I also tend to be a little careless with the long heavy doors which, due to our narrow and sloping driveway, whip open when released and come to rest against the wall of the house. Mia's response is, 'You wouldn't treat one of your old cars like that!' She's probably right. Strangely, I don't think of the SL as being all that old or 'classic'.

I exacted my revenge when she forgot to put up the hood and her poor beloved car got caught in a heavy summer shower of rain, potentially to the detriment of its blue leather interior. To her credit, she cleaned up the pools of water with paper towels and there appear to be no lasting effects inside the car.

My dearest does have something of a track record of getting old Benzes damp inside. For example, a few years ago she left the sunroof open on our 124-series 300TD Estate and the resulting mess caused the previously sound wagon to be written off!

△ **Low battery voltage caused the roof electronics to play up.**

"The hood itself is starting to look a little tired"

▽ **Three pooches ready to hit the road, Mercedes SL style.**



Big-hearted

Blakley Leonard is resettling into life with a 140-series S-Class and is in the process of reviving its appearance, while the 280E and 560SEC AMG also receive attention from the Mercedes collector

WORDS & IMAGES **BLAKLEY LEONARD**



Since the last update, I've put nearly 5,000 miles on my 1999 Mercedes-Benz S500 L. It's been my go-to for daily duty and road trips. I've taken it on multiple day trips totalling roughly five hours of driving each, as well as a trip to Atlanta and back. The car has yet to fail me in any way. Aside from the incredible build quality of the V140, the factory sound system in these cars is arguably the best I've ever experienced in any car. Even compared to newer S-Classes or my facelifted W212s, the 140-series reigns supreme. Around town, it's ultra comfortable but I am careful of parking spots since it is not the smallest saloon on the road. I will be "that guy" parking at the very end of the parking lot away from other cars. On the highway, the car cruises at any speed desired without fuss. Despite its considerable kerb weight, the M119 V8 can hustle this car to triple digits very quickly without drama.

A couple of months ago I was able to complete a full paint correction, polish, and ceramic coating which really brought the shine back in the original paint. Over time, swirls and scratches accumulate, and I'm afraid the previous owner of my 140 was no stranger to automatic car washes. Thankfully, a careful hand and time well spent was able to remove most swirls. Still on the to-do list for the 140 are the front spring pads and another oil service.

△ **Mountain roads await the widebodied 126-series coupe.**

◁▽ **Blakley has been enjoying the S500's strong sound system.**

▽ **Finding parts for the W123 can be difficult, as Blakley found out.**

FACTSHEET

CARS 1999 S500 L/1984 280E/1989 560SEC AMG

OWNER Blakley Leonard

LOCATION Virginia, USA

PURCHASED December 2022/October 2023/December 2019

UPDATES SINCE LAST REPORT The long-wheelbase S500 spends plenty of time on the road as improvements are made to its stablemates, the widebody AMG also treated to a proper drive

Driven as intended

The 1984 Mercedes-Benz 280E is still awaiting its service for new valve cover gaskets, head gasket, and flex disc. The gasket kit I had originally ordered for the car turned out to be on backorder and never arrived. As it is with many of these classic Benzes, finding replacement parts has not been easy. I was unable to find another kit that shows compatibility with the W123, but since it's the same engine as the R107 280SL I was able to cross reference another kit. I can only hope this one arrives and fits without issues.

Last week I took out my 1990 560SEC AMG Widebody from the warehouse for a check over in preparation for a trip to Atlanta for the Star Summit with Mercedes-Benz Club of America. The event will go from October 4 to 7 and, as a sponsor with The MB Market, I'll be attending with the 560SEC. It's always nice to have an excuse to bring out the car and enjoy it the way it was intended. Of course, there will be some shows but I'm mostly looking forward to the mountain drive.





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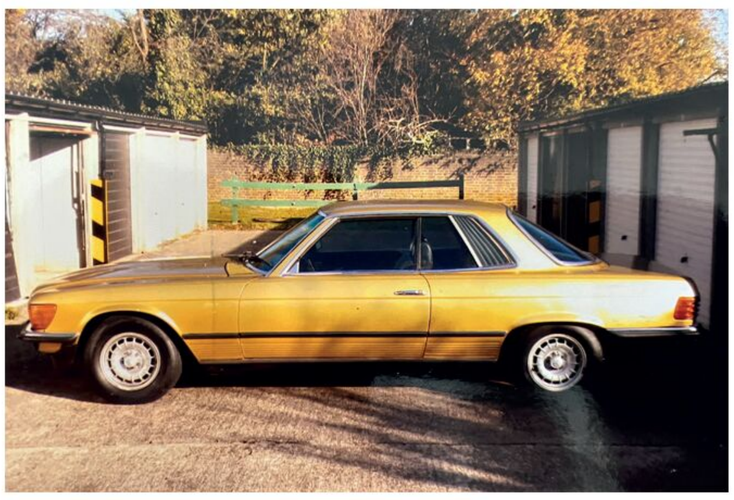
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MERCEDES ESTATE 230TE

POA. Auto 73000mls. MOT 1988. Many extras & new parts: alloys, c/control etc. g/box tyres, brakes, batt, rad, w/pump etc. Very clean runs good, poss h/gasket water leak, clear oil. Offers p/x Volvo 254 estate. Lincoln mk4 1972. Please call 01277200530, East of England.

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124597

MERCEDES ML380



1999, £2750. Auto Estate, full leather, full length sunroof, electric windows, cruise control, towbarbar, two keys, all books, some service history, MOT 2025. Please call 01482 654302, East Yorkshire.

MERCEDES W202 C43 AMG



£9900. In blue looks green in sunlight. Family owned from new until early this year. Recommissioned had thousands spent. All receipts including old tax discs. Bodywork in great shape no rust garaged since 2000. Blue leather, sunroof, cruise control, v good condition, 109k. Please call 07564217814, South East.

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MERCEDES S350L



£2,750. 2005. 52692 miles. M.O.T. July 2025. Everything works. Old man retiring from driving. Best offer secures. Phone Ray for full details and photos. Email ronjones3@btinternet.com. Please call 07712361430, London.

MERCEDES E220 21TD COUPE KV11ZHK



2011, £3495. 10 month mot 107000 MLS. No rust, good cond. V good on mpg. Goes well met grey. Contact for more details. Please call 07501611360, Yorkshire and the Humber.

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MERCEDES-AMG SL63



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MERCEDES AMG GTC ROADSTER



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MERCEDES SL 600



POA. Rare & stunning Black low mileage (64K) example of this AMG R230, June 2003, V12 performance supercar with full Merc Service History specialist dealers. Mine for 13 years & part of a collection: 2 previous owners. Every extras. Please call 07417 503099, London.

MERCEDES E240 ELEGANCE



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2005, POA. 62,000 miles fabulous condition. 12 months MOT. Used for the past 8 years only on a fine Sunday. Cream leather interior. Needs to be seen to be appreciated. Never had any trouble since we bought it. Kept in a heated garage never outside. Please call 07768 769800, Yorkshire and the Humber.

MERCEDES SLK 320



2001, £4995. 65k miles, 1 prev owner. Factory AMG wheels & factory Nav. FSH and folder of receipts, MOT until Feb. Solid mechanically, immaculate bodywork and unmarked 2-tone leather. Enthusiast owned, kept in garage and not used in the wet. Please call 07834368949, South East.

MERCEDES CLK 5.5 AMG



£8,500. 77,000 motorway miles. Full service history. 12 months MOT. Garaged for the last 8 years. Fantastic example, immaculate body work. Pristine condition with Grey leather interior. Fully functional electric hood. 2 new tyres. Lots of receipts. Please email davidgeorge1666@gmail.com. Please call 07359 393301, South East.

124919

MERCEDES SLK 230



1999, £1600. Auto. Reg T916 BRM. 109k miles, Mot 20/02/25, 3 owners. Owned 10 years. 14 stamps and a file of bills. G.W.O. Retractable roof works. Car performs very well with good power delivery. Cruise control, remote central locking, electric windows and mirrors. Black leather and a decent MB hi fi. Please call 07971 079448, South West.

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MERCEDES 190 E W201



1993, £12500. Sportline Automatic. The Car has 'Special Provenance': It was featured in 'Mercedes Enthusiast' Magazine February 2010 on front page and in a five page article. First owner was 'Felicity Kendal', star of the TV Classic 'It's a good life'. Please call 07742375029, South West.

MERCEDES C200



£18,500. 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. Please call 07484 668773, Wales.

MERCEDES 560SEC



£21,500. 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. Please call 07721 508657, East of England.

MERCEDES S500 LWB



POA. 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. Please call 07970 529906, Scotland.

MERCEDES BENZ 320CLS CDI

£4350. 4 door. First Reg 1st September 2008. Well looked after car finished in Silver Metallic, with black leather and wood finish interior. Just completed C Service along with MOT from 1st September. Full Service history from new. Documents to prove 2 previous owners. Please call 07767248263, South East.

PARTS, MISC & ACCESSORIES

GENUINE W202 C-CLASS WHEEL PLATES



£60. Four in good condition, silver. Please call 07961 380971, London.

GENUINE AMG 20-INCH ALLOYS

POA. 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. Please call 07985 201291, East of England.

2014 E220 AMG PART LED HEADLAMPS

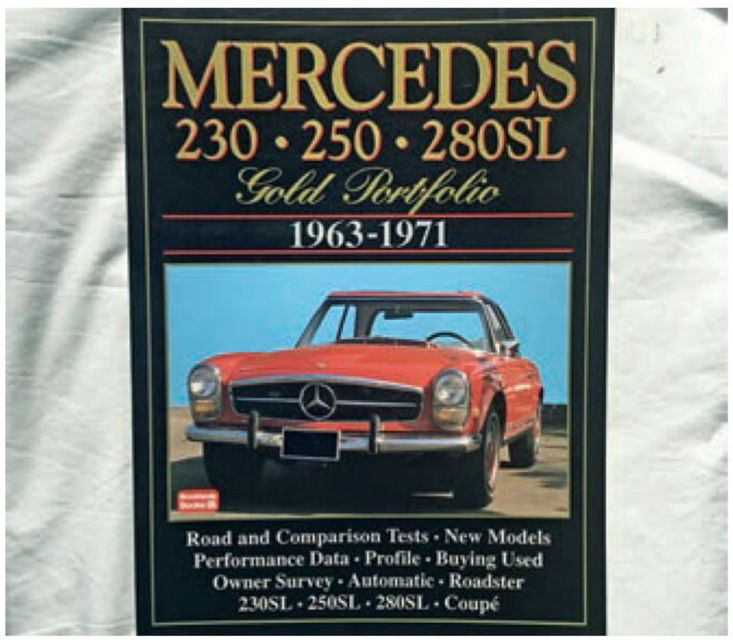


£1200. Car exported to Spain, new lamps fitted to pass ITV examination, in good working order, part numbers A2128261191 or A2128261291, £1,200 for the pair. Please call 0034 722174407, Scotland.

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MERCEDES STRAIGHT 6 CRANK SEAL



POA. New in box. I have 16 of these, part number on photo. Please call 07540467218, West Midlands.

WATER PUMP AND 2X RADIATORS

£10-£100. 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. Please call 01277 200530, South East.

E CLASS SE LINE W212 HEADLIGHTS





£1,200. 2 headlights which include the 2 Control units on each one. Two Original Mercedes OEM Headlights Part Nos. of all the Face lift W212 models which the headlights will fit from March / 03. 2013 and 2014 models. Please call 028 - 66341988 / 00 353 86 255 3232, Ireland.

SPARE PARTS AND TOOLS

£10-£100. Spares: W124 1980's-90's. W/pump, 2 rads £100. Trackrod ends new £25. Wheel nuts 16x £10. Wheel bolts chrome new 20x £20. Small car cover £10. Size M12x1.5. 2 Lg books as new, Merc mags etc £20. Other small items for sale. Sell/swap for Lincoln 1970', manuals, brochures, mags, etc. aircraft mags. Torque wrenches: bahco 811, SP Handitorq 200, £35 ea. 20x magnifier glasses with lights new, head torch new, 3x 'AA' torches. £30 Astro A1 cordless tyre pump new boxed £35. Swiss s/steel 'caravan' kettle 240v new £10. Sell/swap for AFtools, aircraft mags. Adj. wrench 12" new, Stanley knife, plummers adj wrench + 3 jaws new, solar iron, j/hachsaw, wire crimper, 16 hex keys, calories regulator 182H new, Swiss army knife new. £50. Sell/swap for AFtools, aircraft mags, lincoln 1970's brochures, mags, manuals, etc. Please call 01277 200530, South East.

SET OF REFURBISHED W126 FLAT FACED ALLOYS

£450. With very good tyres. Large quantity of W123 steel wheels, some with tyres, sets of four W123 wheel trims, various colours, various W123 spares too many to list. Please call 07747 447556, East of England.

MERCEDES ENTHUSIAST MAGAZINES

POA. From Jan 2015 (£4.30) to Mar 2016, all in very good order. Please call 07447 941524, South West.

R107 SL REAR BUMPER

£1200. Complete, original Mercedes with parts stickers 1989. New parts, old stock. No messages, collection only. Please call 07503 739538, London.

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£3500. On retention. Please call 07766 570973, South East.

MOY 3D PERSONAL PLATE



£600. Currently on retention certificate ready for immediate transfer. Please call 07967 024311, South East.

TWO NUMBERPLATES ON RETENTION





£300-£350. NKZ 433 (£350) and S16CNS (£300), open to offers. Please call 07980 933829 or please email: nickstilwell59@gmail.com, South East.

V8 GLX PRIVATE NUMBERPLATE



£10,000. On my GL420 for many years and now on retention. Please call 07973 739431, South East.

547 SRL PRIVATE REGISTRATION



£3500. On retention certificate. Please call 07779880444, Yorkshire and the Humber.

REGISTRATION

£19500. On retention. 126 MPH. Bought for a Pagoda (126 mph top speed) in the seventies but looked good on many cars since. Completely compliant with the law (no spacing problems) Please call 0208 366 4639, Greater London.

TWO CHERISHED REGISTRATION PLATES





£2500-£6000. Both on retention: 4929 H (£6,000) and 784 HRH (£2,500). Would take loss to sell pair. Please call 07583 613521, West Midlands.

OYY 655 REGISTRATION



£950. OYY 655 on Retention Certificate (V778). Please call 07886 533021, Scotland.

NUMBER PLATES

£2500-£5000. W005H SL £2500. W005SSH £5000. Both on retention ready for immediate transfer. Please call 07811 155010, South East.

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Wanted. For handles on 1988 230TE (124-series). Please call 01277 200530, South East.

PARTS FOR R129

Wanted. Steering idler arm bushing for a 2001 SL500 Silver Arrow. Have tried the usual parts places in the UK and Europe without success! Please call 07359 017584, South East.

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Rich and famous

It may have been over a decade old, but this R129 SL500 Silver Arrow could still turn heads in Los Angeles' public hotspots, as one motoring journalist discovered

WORDS & IMAGES **REED HITCHCOCK**

I am a complete sucker for Bruno Sacco era, boxy Mercedes styling, and of the past four generations of SL roadster, the R129 is my favourite by a long shot. I do still love a nice Pagoda, but frankly the surge in market values has put even the most questionable examples far above my pay grade.

The R107 is a beautiful and iconic car, but from strictly a driving standpoint I find them ponderous and – even in 560 form – a little low on power. The current and last generation versions of the SL certainly aren't slow, but they are still pricey (although coming down fast) and replete with technology that will be expensive to fix if it ever goes wrong.

Enter the R129. Like all of the post-1963 SLs, the term *Sport Leicht* doesn't really suit the R129, but what they lack in lightness they make up for in performance and solidity. These were the last of the over-engineered SLs, sharing key parts with the best Mercedes had to offer in the day, including a chassis based on the W124's, and drivetrains common with the W140's.

Despite their girth, however, the R129s have a remarkably sporting yet luxury feel, with smooth power delivery especially in V8 and V12 forms. That said, having owned the V12 in a 140 Saloon, and given the relatively small difference in power, the five-litre M119 SL500 is the variant that gets the nod from me – ideally one of the last built in order to get the cosmetic upgrades the R129 received over the years, along with the mechanical and electrical sorting that comes with over a decade of production experience.

This car pictured – a 2002 SL500 Silver Arrow – is part of the permanent collection at the Mercedes-Benz Classic Center in California. It has just a handful of miles on its odometer, and looks and smells as if it had just rolled off the factory floor. The two-tone interior, with special grey burled wood and machine turned gauge surrounds, is unmarked and is a downright addictive place to sit. I have to say: one of the best things about this job is that the Classic Center team lets us drive their cars from time to time, and in one of the most convertible-friendly environments there is. Experiencing this special edition R129 SL did not disappoint.

△ Mercedes-Benz Classic Center, USA cared for this limited edition roadster.

> **"What better place is there for a convertible, top down, than the beach?"**

The Silver Arrow limited edition has the later, slightly detuned version of the M119 delivering 302bhp instead of the earlier version's 316bhp. The key difference is that full throttle fuel enrichment was removed from the later cars, although you'd be hard pressed to feel it by the seat of the pants, as I proved repeatedly to onlookers as I powered the car through the rolling hills and dales of the mountainous headlands east of Irvine.

In its monochromatic silver paint scheme, the Silver Arrow maintains a classy yet classic charm, and although prices are presently at an all-time low for R129s, they still draw attention the way they did when new, which is no small feat in the car crazy greater Los Angeles area. In fact, I garnered more attention driving this car than I did in a then new, 2006 SL500 which seemed to blend into LA's automotive landscape. The R129 roadster did just the opposite – years after it ceased to be sold in North America.

So after a thorough flogging through the twisties, I aimed for the coast. After all, what better place is there for a convertible, top down, than the beach? I picked up the renowned Pacific Coast Highway in Laguna Beach and aimed south. More than a few times, I was pleasantly surprised by a "nice car!" from scantily clad beach goers who saw that I was clearly enjoying my drive.

In similar situations, I used to go out of my way to tell folks that the car isn't mine, but sometimes it's OK to bask in the attention. Besides, one of the beauties of Mercedes' R129 – even the V8-powered SL500 – is that although this one isn't mine, almost everyone with a verifiable income can afford one. It's a tremendous amount of car for the money, and still looks every bit the part of range topping, sports touring car.

▽ Silver Arrow spec came late in R129 production.



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