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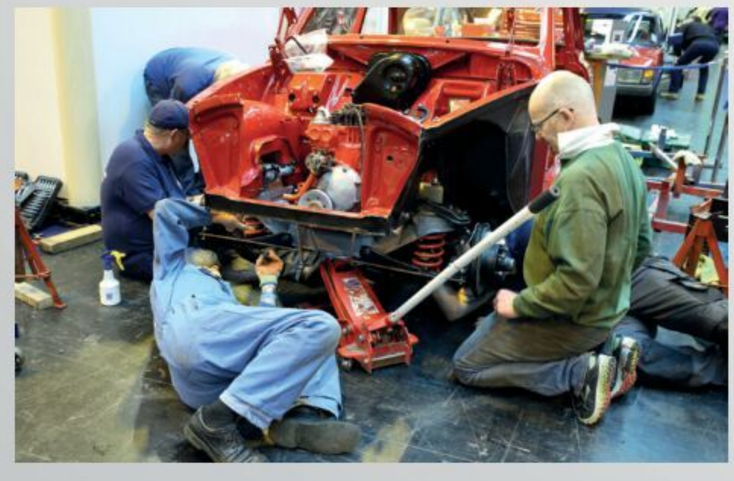
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Feb/Mar 2022

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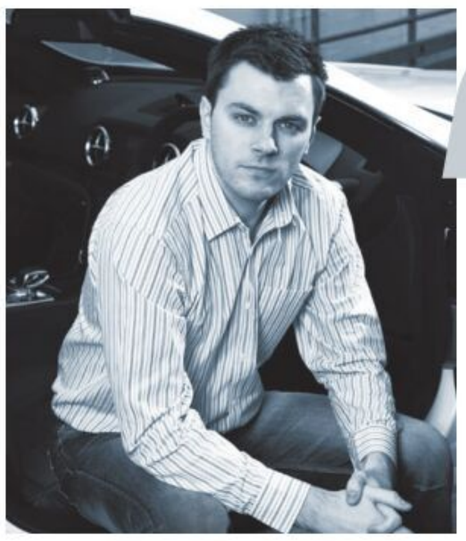
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Editorial comment and the latest from the *Mercedes Enthusiast* team

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"So, let's make a pact: this year, no excuses – we will seize every opportunity to drive our Mercedes"

A new year has arrived – and we should be thankful for it. With 2022 comes fresh opportunities to finish those jobs we've already started, buy that modern classic we've promised ourselves for ages, and finally take that drive down that particular road we keep meaning to explore. I've said it before, but I'll say it again: driving remains one of the last great personal freedoms and we should never take for granted the immense privilege of getting behind the wheel of a car, pointing at a destination and travelling there in our own good time. So, let's make a pact: this year, no excuses – we will seize every opportunity to drive our Mercedes. Just don't forget to tell us how you get on with your adventures...



There is a strong E-Class vibe to the first *Mercedes Enthusiast* of 2022, as we mark the 20th anniversary of the 211-series and take a look at some of its predecessors. Ian Kuah's interview with the now-retired Ulrich Gauffrés, formerly of Brabus, is another highlight, not least because of the fantastic period images of some spectacular machinery. You must also make a point of reading about the 500SE AMG created by Stratton in Cheshire in the mid 1980s. Take another look at its picture on the cover – can you spot what's unusual about it?

Kyle Molyneux
Executive Editor

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



Albert Mensinga
Supporting our 20-year anniversary feature on the 211-series E-Class is Albert Mensinga's story on a collection of that generation's spiritual predecessors. Here's what he had to say about his time mingling with the stars. "It's always a pleasure and good fun to spend a day with serial Mercedes-Benz collector Reinier Groenveld and ace snapper Noortje Blokland in the company of a prime selection of 115- and 123-series Mercedes. I hope you enjoy the article!" The story begins on page 34.



Ian Kuah
Interviewing Brabus' chief technology guru Ulrich Gauffrés shortly before his retirement was a privilege for Ian Kuah. "I've known Uli almost from the day he arrived at Brabus, so our recent chat was a trip down memory lane for us both. Back in the 90s, this quiet, unassuming, professional character kept a massive ship's piston in a corner of his office. It was a stark reminder to his team that their designs should always be as light and as strong as possible!" Read the story on page 42.

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▷ Floating centre console; next-gen infotainment with AI.

The latest Mercedes launches, news and motorsport

News

Vision EQXX

Mercedes pulls out the stops for its most efficient concept car yet

In Mercedes' words, its new Vision EQXX concept takes electric range and efficiency to an entirely new level. Think over 620 miles on a single charge, a record-breaking drag coefficient of 0.177Cd, and lightweight construction based upon the principals of sustainability. The EQXX also boasts a ground-breaking, 100kWh lithium-ion battery developed by Formula 1 experts at Mercedes-AMG High Performance Powertrains (HPP) in Brixworth, UK that is 50 per cent smaller and 30 per cent lighter than the battery found in the high-performing EQS.



Rear floor extends backwards to reduce aerodynamic drag.

Bolstering the electric range of the 1,750kg (gross) Mercedes concept are 117 solar cells on the roof, which support ancillaries including the air conditioning and infotainment, reducing demand on the battery. In combustion engine terms, the EQXX consumes the equivalent of just one litre of fuel per 100km (62 miles), achieving 282mpg. Meanwhile, its maximum system voltage is a super-high 900V (the EQS is 400V). The 20-inch magnesium wheels are wrapped in specially developed Bridgestone tyres and ensure minimal rolling resistance, and the power electronics (part of an electric drive unit housing the single electric motor and transmission) are based on those found in the soon-to-launch AMG Project One hypercar.

The EQXX's body-in-white is made from low CO2 steel, derived completely from scrap metal. The doors are constructed from carbon and glass fibre reinforced plastics, and so-called BionEQXX casting and 3D-printed UBQ material made from a range of waste products are used for various structural components, achieving high strength and capping environmental impact.

The theme of sustainability continues inside where carpets are made from bamboo fibres, door straps are made from AMsilk Biosteel vegan fibre, and the two choices of upholstery – Deserttex and Mylo – are made from cactus fibres and mycelium fungus respectively. Conserving yet more energy is the redesigned heat pump, which uses ambient air and air from the drive system to warm the cabin.

Another first is 'Neuromorphic computing'. Developed in collaboration with California-based BrainChip, the car's computer systems have neural networks, which are vastly more energy efficient and responsive to voice input. The aim is for neuromorphic computing to be production ready in around five years. Game-engine processing and a collaboration with Sonatic to make the MBUX infotainment system more expressive and responsive is set to transform the user experience, too. It's accompanied by 3D navigation on the 8K resolution LED display that stretches across the dashboard – easily the most immersive navigation display yet.

Come back next issue for a closer look at this astonishing Mercedes concept.





△ Hyperscreen dashboard fitted as standard.

AMG EQS53 on sale in UK

Mercedes-AMG has released its first electric performance vehicle, the EQS53 4Matic+. Starting at £154,000 OTR in the UK, the 4WD, electric super saloon is available in two trim lines: Night Edition and Touring. Night Edition features gloss black trim and chunky black 21-inch AMG alloys covering yellow brake calipers. Touring spec projects a more mature image, with smoother bi-colour 22-inch wheels and silver brake calipers, complemented with chrome trim.

Whilst their standard outputs are the same at 649bhp and 701lb ft of torque, the quoted range of the Touring model on a single charge is slightly less (357 miles versus 377 miles). The Night Edition's optional AMG Performance Package (£8,995) unlocks 751bhp and 752lb ft torque, reducing the 0-62mph time from 3.8 seconds to 3.4 seconds, while increasing the top speed from 137mph to 155mph. Also part of the Performance Package are a ceramic composite braking system, a launch control function, a special sound experience with Balanced, Sport and Power modes, plus an AMG Track Pace app and carbon fibre trim.

All models feature the Hyperscreen Package including enormous dashboard screens plus an augmented reality head-up display as standard.

The Last Blast



In a final tribute to Sir Stirling Moss and 'his' 722-numbered 300SLR, in which he won the 1955 Mille Miglia alongside co-driver Denis Jenkinson, Mercedes-Benz organised a special drive through London with a final stop at the Moss family home, where the car was met by Stirling's (and wife Lady Susie's) son Elliot Moss.

Prepared by Mercedes-Benz Classic, at the wheel of 722 was long-time carer Gert Straub, who knows the car better than anyone and whose family have been employed by the manufacturer for generations. During what would be Gert's final mission before taking his retirement (talk about going out on a high), 722 was flanked by police outriders as it made its way through the nation's capital, past iconic landmarks such as the Houses of Parliament, Trafalgar Square, the Royal Automobile Club and The Ritz hotel.

Taking place in September 2020, the occasion was captured on camera by a crew of 50 and has been turned into a short film called *The Last Blast*. The 722-numbered 300SLR, graced with Moss' autograph on the front wing, will now enjoy a well-deserved retirement of its own, taking pride of place in the Mercedes-Benz Museum in Stuttgart.

MECUM AUCTIONS



Trans-Am R107

A unique 450SL recently went to auction in North America. Commissioned for the 1982 Trans-Am race season by Neat DeAtley, a Mercedes-Benz dealership owner in Lewiston, Idaho, USA, the intention was to improve the performance image of Mercedes-Benz through motorsports. Most notably, the V8 SL finished sixth overall at Road America in 1982. For the past 30 years it has been with a Minnesota Mercedes dealer, a friend of DeAtley.

Being a 'silhouette racer', the engine block, camshafts, timing chain and rear light lenses are the only Mercedes original parts. With an engine built by Edwin Hatch, a fibreglass body covers a tubular chassis. Complying with regulations at the time, the original Bosch injection made way for carburettors, and engine capacity was de-stroked from 5.0 to 4.5 litres. At the time of writing, the car was available at Mecum Auctions with an estimated value of $450,000 to $475,000 (around £330,000 to £350,000).

News in brief



△ DOLBY ATMOS

Dolby Atmos in-car audio tech will debut in Maybachs in summer 2022 before being added to the S-Class's MBUX system and offered in other models. Built into the optional Burmester 4D and 3D set-ups, Atmos "adds more space, clarity and depth to music."



△ OM654 FIRE RISK

A coolant pump leak issue on the OM654 four-cylinder diesel engine could pose a fire risk, Mercedes has confirmed. No recall has been posted yet though, due to a parts supply issue. Models affected by the defect are the 167-series GLE/GLS, 205 C-Class, 213 E-Class, 222/223 S-Class, 238 E-Class Coupe/Cabrio, 253 GLC, 257 CLS and 463 G-Class.

□ SOLID STATE BATTERIES

Mercedes-Benz AG has teamed up with and invested equity in USA-based Factorial Energy, to accelerate the development of solid state batteries - expected to be the next step from lithium-ion.

▽ LUXURY LUGGAGE SET

Italian leather producer Santoni now offers a bespoke luggage set to complement the new AMG SL. Made from luxurious nappa leather and available in three colours, this is a significant milestone in the partnership between Santoni and AMG, which began in 2005. See more at www.santoniforamg.com.



There are few, if any Mercedes more famous than the 722-numbered (W196S) 300SLR driven to victory by Stirling Moss in the 1955 Mille Miglia. To mark both Sir Stirling's passing and also 722's retirement from global events, the manufacturer concocted an ambitious plan to drive the silver racer through London with police escort, past many famous landmarks and ultimately to the Moss family home in Mayfair, where it would be met by Stirling's wife Lady Susie and their son Elliot.

Piloting the 300SLR was Gert Straub, a fourth-generation Mercedes-Benz

employee who has tended to the racer's needs for many years and who was also heading into retirement after this evocative and really quite emotional occasion. An official short film about 722's London adventure can be found on YouTube – search *'The Last Blast'*.

At the time of writing, the 722-numbered 300SLR was getting comfortable in its new and permanent retirement home, the Mercedes-Benz Museum in Stuttgart, Germany, where it can be seen by visitors from all over the world.

IMAGE CRAIG PUSEY/DAIMLER AG

Recalling trailblazing Mercedes-Benz cars of yesteryear



The mid-1990s saw Mercedes offer a punchy supercharged engine, and a 2.5-litre turbocharged diesel

202-series C-Class

Smart looks, a great choice of trim lines and excellent road manners made the 202-series C-Class highly appealing when new – and these traits live on today

WORDS **DAVID SUTHERLAND** IMAGES **DAIMLER AG**

By the late 1980s, Mercedes-Benz car production was 500,000 to 600,000 per year, and the Stuttgart manufacturer was in a solid pole position in the prestige car market. But top management concluded that things at Stuttgart had to change.

In the light of motor industry consolidation those production figures no longer looked so reassuring, and now that Lexus had established a bridgehead in the luxury sector with the engineered-to-perfection LS400, it was clear that Japanese manufacturers were no longer content to supply only value-for-money cars.

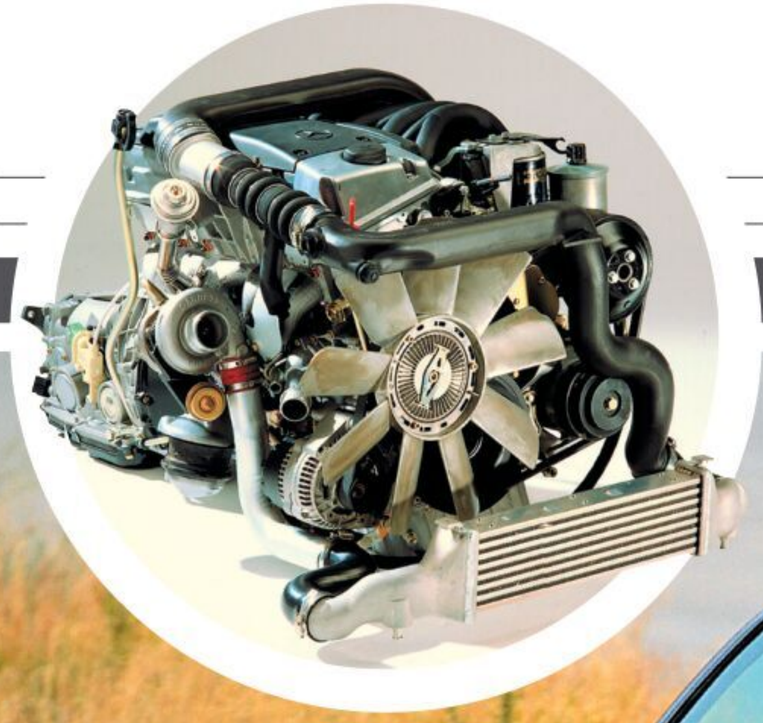
Mercedes decided to make more, and more varied motorcars, and at a reduced cost. It also sensed that buyer's preferences were changing and that the company had to lessen its dependency on the loyalty of an ageing customer base. The first model to appear under the 'strategic product initiative' was the 202-series, the original C-Class, in mid 1993.

It replaced the W201 190 after a highly successful 11-year run, in which time nearly 1.9 million were built. In size and configuration, the C-Class was a direct replacement for it, but there were far reaching differences, one of them risking a ruffling of the feathers of traditional Mercedes customers – the four trim levels, which more than a few pundits predicted would harm its image, given that it was kind of thing Ford or Vauxhall would do.

The controversial trim hierarchy started at Classic, the regular Benz austerity package. Sprucing up the interior and dropping the ride height by 25mm created the Esprit for a spot of youth appeal, while for the more mature tastes, Elegance incorporated extra chrome. Sport models ran the Esprit's lowered suspension but with stiffer springs, and alloy wheels as standard.

Buyers, however, loved the new approach, and those coming from a W201 would also appreciate the much-needed extra rear seat space and also that designers had cleverly made the C-Class feel more of a 'big' car than its predecessor despite length and wheelbase being much the same. This was particularly so in the form of the 2.8-litre, M104-engined C280, which when loaded up with equipment really did feel like a compact luxury car.

Setting aside the C280, the engine line-up wasn't that appealing at first, with uninspiring four-cylinder petrol units and



◁ 148bhp, 2.5-litre OM605 engine used the C250 Turbodiesel.

▽ Early, entry level cars sported orange indicator lenses.





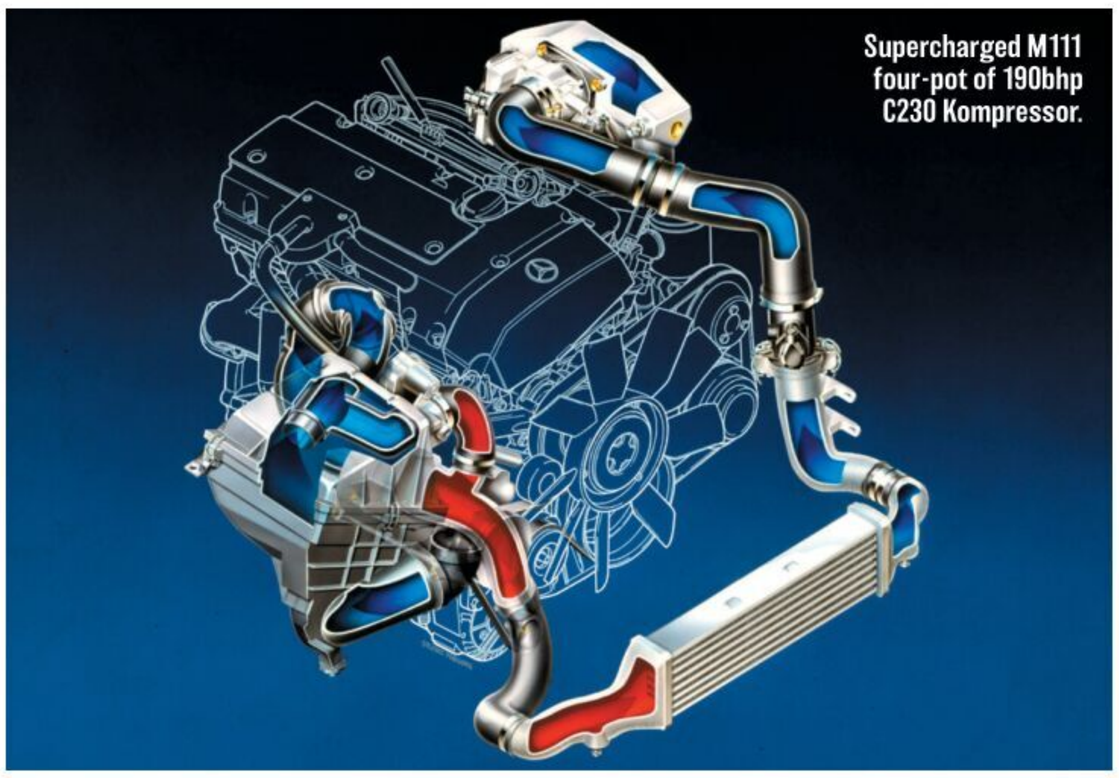
◁ Colour-coded interiors; Elegance trim level shown.

▽ 3.6-litre C36 with 276bhp AMG-tuned straight-six engine.

▽▽ C43 arrived with the 1997 update and had a 302bhp V8.







normally aspirated diesels. But that would change within a few months with the arrival of the C36 AMG, one of the first wave of Affalterbach-enhanced models that have been a part of the Mercedes range ever since.

The mid-1990s saw Mercedes buck an industry trend and offer a punchy if not especially refined supercharged engine, and also a 2.5-litre turbocharged diesel that meant opting for an oil burning C-Class no longer condemned you to snail-like performance. And following the mid-term, 1997 facelift, buyers had every reason to think, 'Why buy an E-Class?' because the entry-level Mercedes was now pretty well matching its skill set in every respect bar size. The sporty but quite raucous six-cylinder C36 AMG had given way to the C43 AMG with its sweet and massively torquey M113 V8, the engine that would become the bedrock of AMG performance.

If the W202 C-Class saloon was conservatively styled (under Bruno Sacco's direction, as with the W201), the S202 Estate added the year before the revamp was one of the prettiest wagons around, and being available with everything from a 1.8-litre to the AMG V8 petrol engine, and various diesels too (including the world's first direct-injection diesel, the 2.1-litre OM611 CDI), it was no wonder Mercedes went on to build almost a quarter of a million of them in just four years.

The 202-series unfortunately fell victim to rust, widely attributed to a switch to water-based paint, and mostly as a result of this the model is now something of a rarity, numbers fading much more quickly than was the case with the W201. But this should not detract from what it did for its maker during a seven-year production life, which incidentally saw Stuttgart move into small cars and SUVs with the A-Class and M-Class.

It helped broaden Mercedes' sales base, competitive pricing and discounts giving it appearances in the UK's top 10 sellers list as an attractive and affordable option for 'Mondeo man'. It also brought the compact Benz a little closer to being a convincing rival to the BMW 3-Series, which hitherto had the compact sporty saloon market sewn up; it would be the 202's successor, the 203-series or perhaps even the 204-series after that which finally proved that Mercedes could build such a car.

In terms of sales, the first C-Class did its job. Just over 1.6 million Saloons and Estates were built – less than the W201 total but it had a shorter production period, and yearly output averaged 261,000 compared to 182,000.

The classic market is beginning to pay tribute to the 202-series. The AMG pair have enjoyed moderate modern collector status for some years, and more recently other models, notably the C280, are showing signs that they are now more than simply old cars. This is very welcome, as the 202 C-Class does not deserve to be a 'forgotten' Mercedes.

Insight from a Mercedes-Benz tuning industry veteran

Jaw-droppers





Star Talk columnist Ian Kuah recalls several modified Mercedes from the last few decades that are memorable for all the wrong reasons and stretched the concept of good taste to its limit

Very few German Mercedes tuners that did business during the 1980s still exist today. AMG's acquisition by Mercedes in 1999 took the company out of the running of independents, leaving Brabus to claim the mantle of largest indy Mercedes tuner (the firm is also the world's largest tuner per se). Carlsson is under its third management team and Lorinser is also still in the game, but sadly MKB went to the wall in early 2020.

All these tuners offer a full range of engine, suspension, body styling and interior upgrades in their own unique styles, and also offer limited edition models. And should you want something more bespoke, these firms will also cater to individual clients' wishes.

With a few exceptions, everything you see from these companies today looks pretty tame compared to some of the aftermarket creations that came out of the roaring 1980s. This was a decade of excess when money flowed from the earth in the form of 'black gold' and oil-rich Arabs dispensed their *nouveau largesse* on an unsuspecting world. Their enablers in the automotive world were a bunch of companies in Germany and the UK whose raison d'être was to embellish Mercedes' 126-series S-Classes to the hilt and beyond at a cost that often exceeded the list price of the base car. Mostly, they created spectacularly gauche mobile gin palaces that reinforced the perception of money, yet bought neither class nor breeding rights. American Express? That will do nicely, sir!

The likes of Koenig Specials and Gemballa all had their moments in the pursuit of the Arab client.

However, the worst lapse of taste during this period arguably came not from the fatherland but from a British company called Chameleon founded by Mike Lahar in 1976. Lahar, who reputedly had a background in finance, saw the upcoming demand for personalised luxury cars and put his money where his mouth was. With its showroom at 63-67 Park Lane, Mayfair, London W1, Chameleon was in a prime position to entice wealthy clients with a penchant for drama on wheels. Alongside its Mercedes conversions, Chameleon also offered bespoke Range Rovers in convertible, and 120-inch and 135-inch wheelbase, six-wheel drive form!

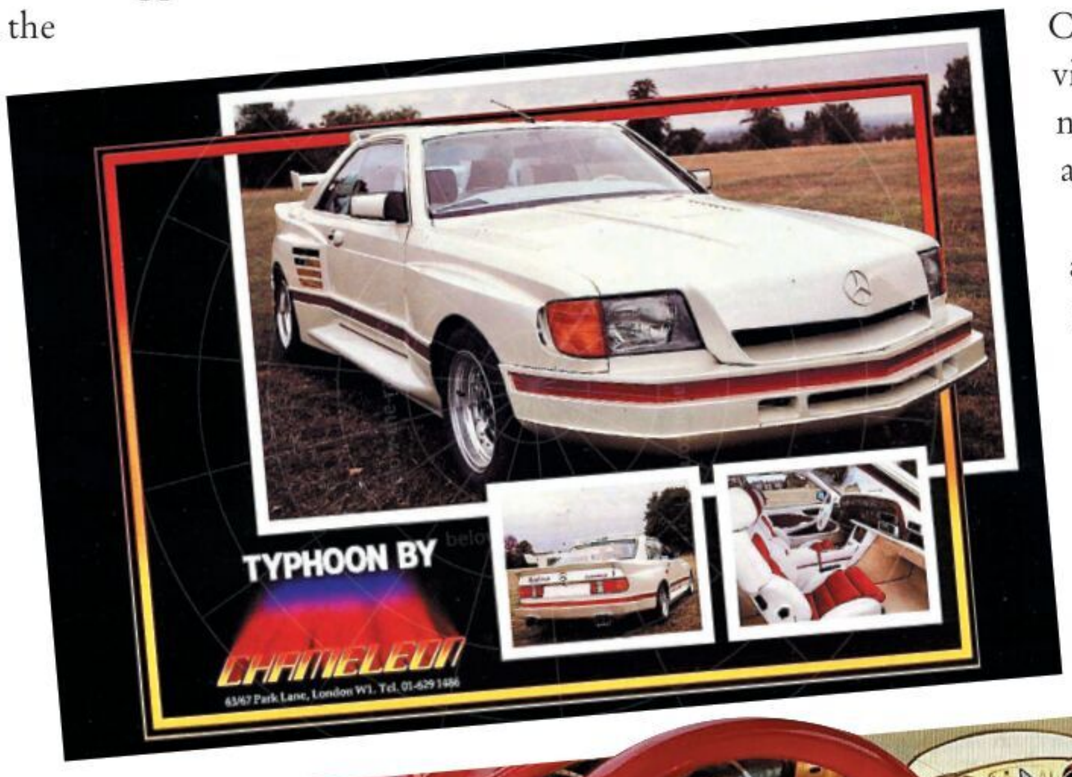
For even more dramatic effect the Chameleon 1000SEL was named Tornado, and the company attached the names Typhoon and Cyclone to its modified 500SEC and 190E respectively. Beauty may well be in the eye of the beholder, but of all the modified S-Class of this era, the 1000SEL Tornado must surely be one of the most vulgar and in-your-face creations ever to wear a three-pointed star badge.

Following the economic crash of the early 1990s, aftermarket tuners took a subtler approach as customer taste now favoured a less overt display of wealth. This new trend continues to this day although the odd abomination still pops up every now and then. The crown for the greatest crime we have ever seen perpetrated on a Mercedes product in the last decade must surely be worn by the SLR 999 Red Gold Dream created by Swiss designer Ueli Anliker in 2011.

> **The 1980s was a decade of excess when money flowed from the earth**

Offered with a price tag of US$11m, everything coloured gold on this car is part of the $300,000 worth of 24 carat aurum applied to the project, much of which was mixed into 25 layers of paint, while unsuspecting components like the wheel bolts and switchgear found themselves embellished with a total of 600 rubies. Considering that the Swiss are usually viewed as serious and retiring in nature, this hideous creation came as a brutal shock to the system.

Words fail me at this point in the article, so I will simply let the pictures speak for themselves! Sunglasses at the ready...



◁ Chameleon 500SEC was a British creation.



▽ Swiss SLR 999 featured gold, rubies and more.

IMAGES CHAMELEON & UELI ANLIKER DESIGN

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

Dealer insight



How do you make money on older Mercedes-Benz cars? For this issue, David Sutherland relays advice from a trader on buying and selling three-pointed stars in the current climate

Interest rates below one per cent and with little prospect of increasing substantially any time soon have prompted some people with savings to announce: "This money I have is doing nothing in the bank – I think I'll buy a classic car and have some fun with it, and then sell it for a profit."

It sounds the ideal home for cash burning holes in pockets, but what are the realities of purchasing a classic Mercedes principally as an investment, as opposed to fulfilling an ownership ambition? I spoke with one specialist who has been in the classic Mercedes business long enough to be familiar with every possible way to make, and lose, money on old cars.

Not wishing to be named lest he ruffles the feathers of his customers, his 'investment' advice starts with deciding how long you envisage ownership lasting. "Some people want a different car every year, working through a bucket list of what they plan to own, but you don't get cars doubling in value every three years," he points out. "I would say the minimum period you need to keep a car for is five years at a pinch, but 10 to 15 years if you want to be assured of coming out ahead."

That perhaps longer than expected ownership is partly due to classic dealers, from whom most cars of any value are purchased, impacting your bottom line. "If you buy from a dealer and sell back to a dealer, there are two lots of dealer profit to be taken into account," our specialist explains.

With this in mind, he advises on how to keep the purchase price down and the retained appreciation up. "My tip is to buy privately – if you've got the bottle and expertise to buy a car with no warranty and no comeback, you'll get it for a far cheaper price!" That might sound brave, even foolish, coming from a trader, but he knows few of us measure up to these requirements, which is why dealers are an essential part of car buying and selling, and of course they provide an additional level of safety and security above what is essentially a stranger selling their car.



Our specialist tipped the S124 as a good, affordable investment.

To make some money, you must buy the right car, as within the overall price movement of the classic market there are individual trends – going up and down. For example, our mystery dealer reckons that while for many years 1950s and 60s cars were great investments, they are tailing off slightly as those from the 1980s and 90s gain in value, now that millennial car enthusiasts in their 30s and 40 and driven by nostalgia and disposable income are buying up the cars their parents once drove.

"Ten years ago, everyone was raving about Pagoda SLs," he says. "Now they're doing the same with the R107, and a few people are starting to look at the R129 SL." One Mercedes that has increased substantially in value in the last five years is the Porsche-built W124 500E/E500, but if you want to catch a Mercedes that feels under-valued, our man directs you to the 1985 to 1996 124-series Estate. He's a big fan, and apart from pointing out its practicality and spaciousness, lauds its comfort and refinement, the latter quality proven when only after speaking with him for 20 minutes on his mobile did I learn that he was not indoors but being driven on the motorway in one.

There's also the not insignificant question of storage and maintenance to factor in, we're reminded. "People often say, 'I should have bought one of these 10 years ago and stuck it in a barn', but if they'd done that it would have crumbled to dust by now!"

Ultimately, the classic car market is governed by the principles of economics. Unless in exceptional circumstances, no big windfalls await, and actual profits are rarely more than a small percentage of what has been put into the car, be that the purchase price, upkeep and eventual selling costs. The sole clear financial advantage the private owner enjoys is that in the UK there is no capital gains tax on the profit made from a classic car.

It's clear what your mindset should be when considering a classic Merc: buy one for what it is as a car – and not as an investment. That way you'll enjoy it, and anything you make when selling will be a nice bonus.

> **"Some people want a different car every year and work through a list"**



△ 500E/E500 now a favourite thanks to Porsche ties.



△ 60s car prices are steadying, says our specialist.

Got something to say about motoring, your Mercedes or ***Mercedes Enthusiast*** magazine? Here's your chance...

Letters

Star letter

Going electric



■ In response to Martin Brommell's letter in the last issue, theoretically I prefer electric cars to petrol or diesel: maximum power and torque are always on tap, and home-charging is tidier than using a smelly refuelling station.

However, the quoted range of EVs is questionable. Ditto the environmental benefits: an electric car's environmental impact is dictated by power source, battery production and end of life disposal. For realistic EV ownership, all parking spaces at every home, workplace and amenity would need charging points, which looks unlikely for some time. So my plan is to continue with my 2007 CLK280, which I have owned for over six years and 40,000 miles. However, at its age, one big expenditure may force it on.

My company unveiled a scheme for leasing brand new hybrid and electric cars, including Mercedes. A potential replacement? Second-hand petrol Mercedes are tempting, though. My annual mileage rarely exceeds 6,000, so diesel seems unnecessary. A C300 hybrid is possible – but my heart wants a high-performance petrol for my Benz fleet.

Michael Redfern, via email



△ Our fleet's S123 caught Uwe Schulz's eye.

Insight from Germany

■ Having read the Running Report 'Tasty trio' (December/January 2022 issue), I noticed that the 123 Estate still has its German numberplate. For owner Blakley Leonard's interest, the 'G' is the town of Gera in Thuringia/East Germany. As you can see, one sticker is scratched. This is normal because such a sticker shows that the car is correctly registered, insured and taxed. When it is scratched the sticker is void and you are not allowed to move the car on a public road. Found on the rear numberplate is an orange sticker, which shows the MOT (two years for a passenger car in Germany). The colour changes every year. There are the 12 months of the year on it, and the number above is the month when you should have your car tested.

Uwe Schulz, Germany

Changing wheels

■ Could I be advised on tyre specifications for my 2018 CLS350d? This beautiful car in Hyacinth Red was purchased new and I love it, although I feel the styling is less distinctive than the previous model. Unfortunately, the ride quality is extremely poor. The culprit is undoubtedly the strange combination of 20-inch wheels with run-flat tyres. These were standard with the Premium Plus Package and may still be offered on the very latest model.

After checking with Mercedes, which took many months (yes, months!) of being passed from Mercedes UK to the local dealer with many emails, I was told standard tyres could not be fitted to improve the ride quality, as the tyre pressure sensors would be incompatible with standard tyres.

Not specifying air suspension with the car is now a regret, but I think a car like the CLS should have better ride comfort. Standard tyres may well be an improvement, but is it such a problem to remove the run-flats?

Bob Cosford, via email

Olly Stoner of Prestige Car Service in Hampshire advises that you are fine to run the CLS on non run-flat tyres.

"The sensors will still work with non-run flats on the car. It will improve the ride no end, but a better option is to reduce the size of the wheel to an 18- or 19-inch size and get some non-run flat tyres that fit them."

Selling your star

■ What's the best way to sell my E55 AMG? Can I post an advert in your magazine?

Thanks for your question, Liam.

You can advertise your car for free in our Merc Trader classifieds. Just scan the QR code below and fill in the simple form!

Liam Ward, via email

△ Bob Cosford's Hyacinth Red CLS350d Coupe.



△ Mert and Phil are owned by Tamara Rose.

Classic Benzes

■ Meet Phil and Mert, a W114 and a W108 280SE 4.5, both from 1973. We have a pair of Mercedes from 1963 as well.

Tamara Rose, via Facebook

Concept with potential

■ I'm not usually that interested in concept cars, but Mercedes' new Vision EQXX really caught my attention. Its 0.17Cd drag coefficient is special all by itself, even before you consider its 600-mile plus electric range using an F1-inspired battery and the eco-friendly materials used in its construction. For once, I can quite easily imagine the EQXX's technology featuring on full production cars. Well done, Mercedes-Benz.

Seb White, London



△ Daimler CEO Ola Källenius with the svelte Vision EQXX.



△ Liam Ward's 28,500-mile E55 from Japan; scan the QR code and advertise your Benz with us!

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TALKING POINT



DAIMLER AG

This month's Talking Point...

What modern Mercedes do you think have classic potential – and why?

"The last CLs and S-Coupes along with high end GTs." **Mathew Kean**

"Mercedes SLS – the first all in-house AMG." **Sana-Ullah Bray**

"The C219 CLS. Just like the C126 SEC, it has timeless looks and is awesome to drive." **Joel Archer**

"209-series CLK Coupe and Cabriolet." **Simon Brown**

"The G-Class, which has used the same iconic shape for more than 40 years." **Donovan Croucamp**

"R171 SLK55 AMG, no doubt. Small numbers made, F1 design, F1 Safety Car and first ever Black Series." **Tony Millan**

Take part in **Talking Point** every month on Facebook, Instagram and Twitter. See the bottom of page 16 for our respective websites!

Merc Spotter



"I was very surprised to see this monster truck 190E," writes Alan Lawrence. "I spotted this three-pointed star in Woodford, Essex. I hope you like it, as it's a bit out of the ordinary!" You're not wrong.

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.



Cheshire Classic Benz

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

300CE Coupe 1988F

Pajett Red met, Palomino leather, aircon, cruise, electric tilt/slide sunroof, illuminated vanity mirrors, heated seats, electrically adjustable seats and original 15 hole alloy wheels, FSH, **only 27,000m . . £19,950**



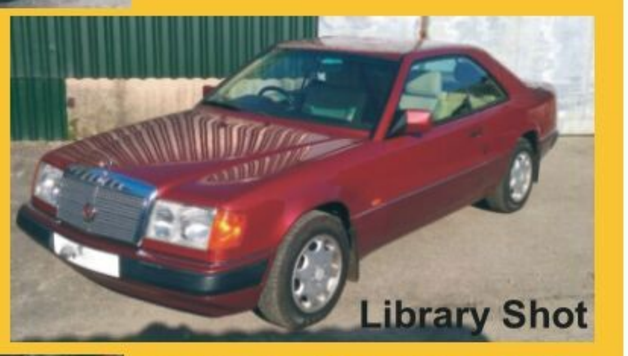


E220 Cabriolet 1996N

Tourmaline Green metallic, black soft top, Mushroom leather, walnut wood, leather steering wheel and gearknob, 4 speed auto, airbags, heated seats, original alloy wheels, FSH, 95,000m **£12,950**

230CE Coupe 1992J

Almandine Red metallic, Mushroom leather, Walnut wood, 4 speed auto, 4x electric windows, elec sunroof, central locking, front & rear armrests, original alloy wheels, FSH, 96,000m. **£9,950**





280SL Roadster LHD 1975P

Topaz Brown, brown soft top, Mushroom MB Tex interior, manual gearbox, manual windows, rear seats, orig Becker Monza, orig alloys, all tools and manuals, FSH, two owners from one family, 71,000m . . . **£34,950**

<< Free UK Road Tax >>

230CE Coupe 1983Y

Champagne metallic, Date cloth, Zebrano wood, 4 speed auto, 4x elec windows, electric sunroof, central locking, f & r armrests, luggage nets, original alloy wheels, ***one owner from new***, FSH, 65,000m . . **£19,950**





E320 Sportline Cabrio 1996N

Azurite Blue metallic, grey leather, blue soft top, walnut, 5 speed auto, cruise control, airbags, heated seats, wood/leather steering wheel, remote c/l, original Sportline 15" alloys, FSH, 94,000m . . **£18,950**

E320 Coupe 1994M

Azurite Blue met, blue leather, walnut, 5-Sp auto, elec windows, aircon, elec seats, airbags, elec steering col, wood/lthr steering wheel, headrests, armrests, cruise, orig Sportline alloys, c/l remote, FSH, 88,000m . **£13,950**



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Social Club

Mercedes-Benz related highlights from the world of social media



PJ Motors

@pj_motors_e7

The modified E55 AMG of PJ Motors and E320 Coupe of @vishal_s10 rub shoulders outside London's famous Ralph Lauren store on New Bond St.



Auto barn

@auto_barn

This time last year we finally added a C32 AMG to the collection. Strangely one of the longest hunts we've had for a car. It took well over a year to find one and many miles looking at other cars.

The C32 is a 53 plate facelifted car with 60,000 miles and the 190E is a 1990 car with 175,000 miles and a three-litre M103 straight-six conversion, up from the original 2.6 litres.

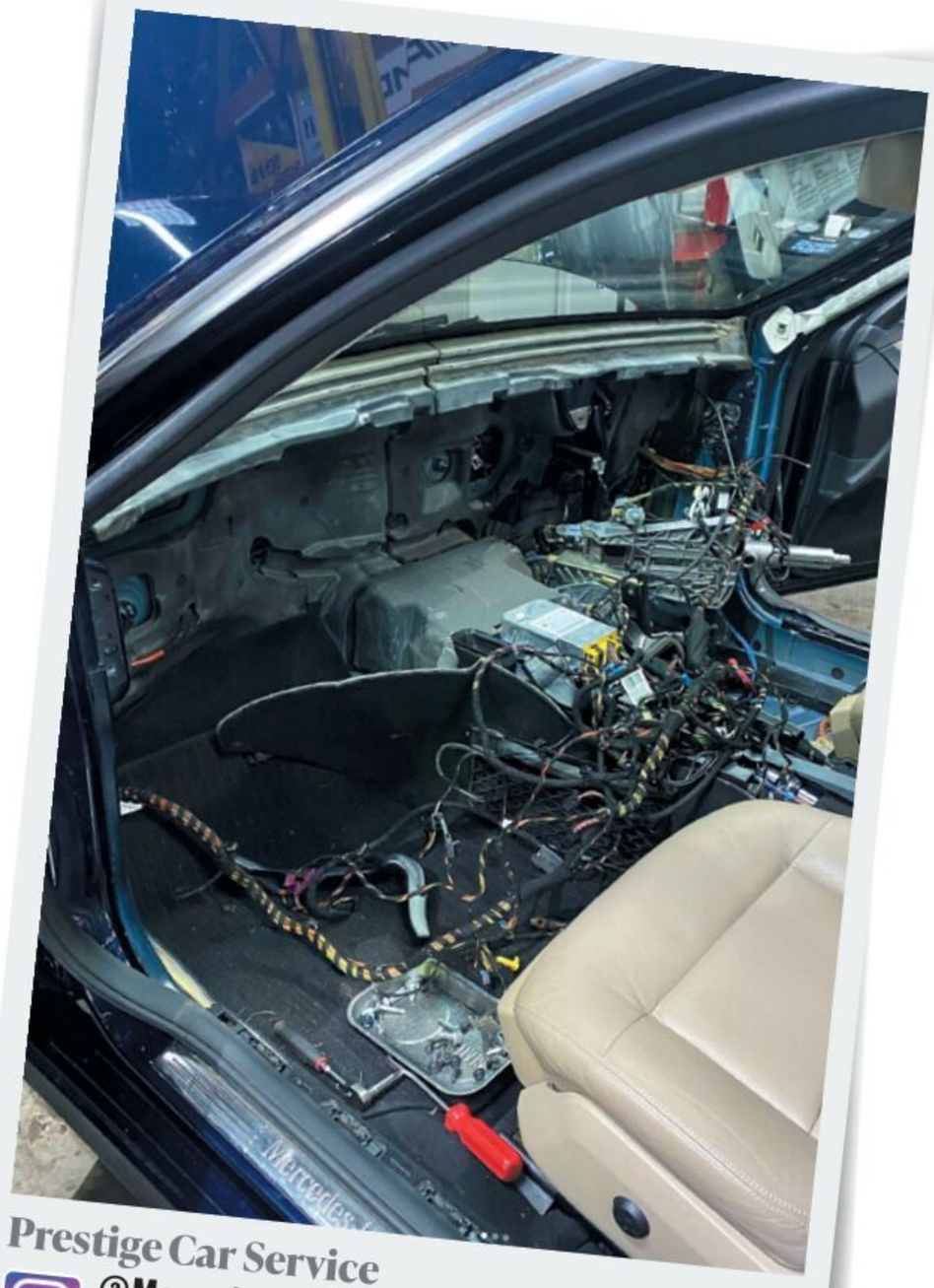


Dom Jones

@domsgarage_

Had an amazing time at Good Vibes Breakfast Club this weekend.

126-series owner Dom Jones, based in the US, is making great use of his 300SD Turbodiesel.



Prestige Car Service

@Mercedes_workshop_horndean

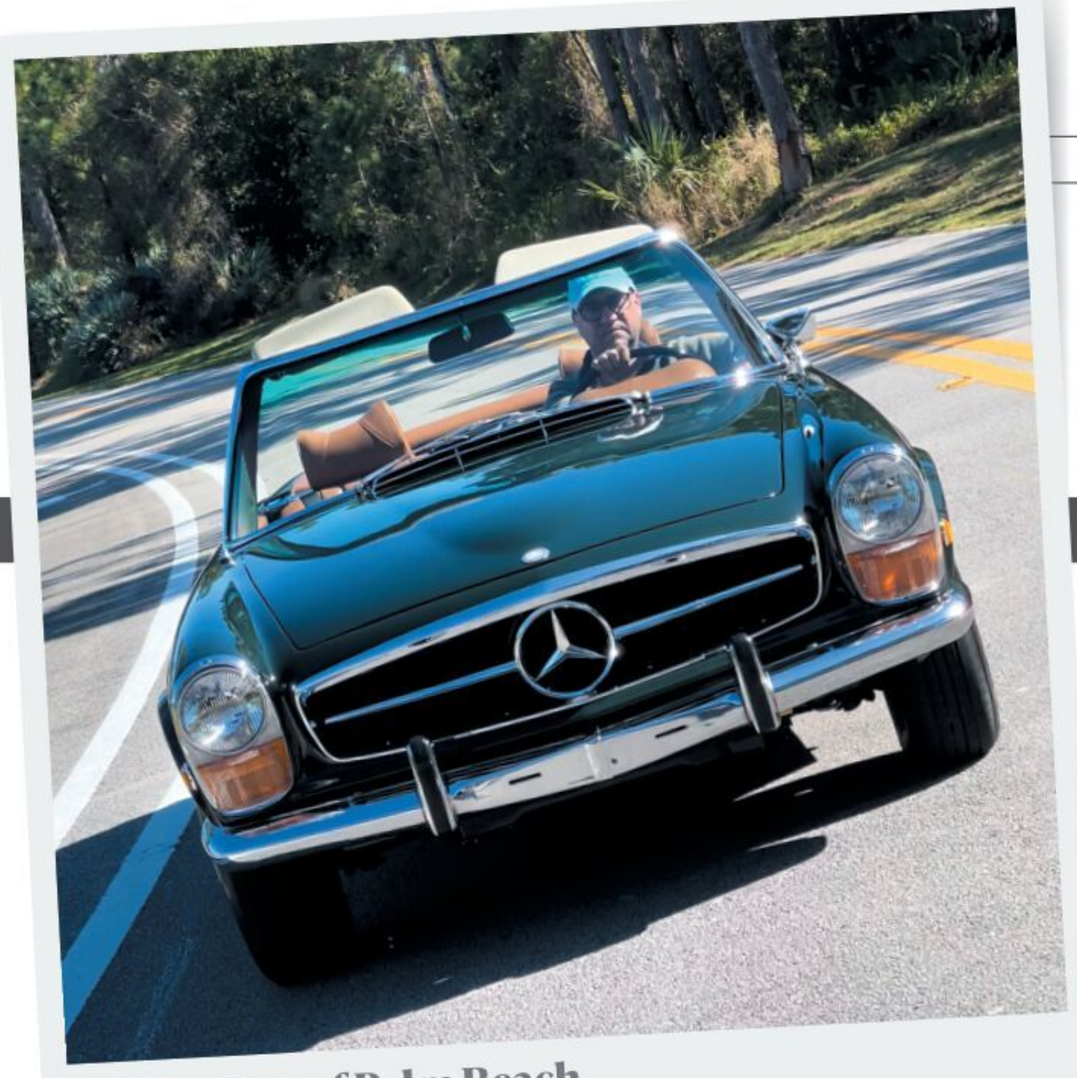
Took the heater box out of this S212 E-Class today. Fiddly little bugger it was. Ready for a new evaporator tomorrow.

Marty Pattin

@martypattin

Got some more stuff taken care of on the Mercedes this last week. I installed some vintage Marchal foglights, Mercedes mud flaps, @bilstein_official shocks up front and I finally got my @therealcocomats.





Unique Cars of Palm Beach

@uniquecarsofpalmbeach

Proud to present our latest restored Pagoda. Finished in Dark Olive Green and Cognac leather interior. Absolutely stunning.



The MB Market

@thembmarket

This 1998 Mercedes-Benz C43 AMG finished in Brilliant Silver metallic (744) over a Silver and Black (588) nappa leather interior. Power comes from an AMG-tuned 4.3-litre M113 V8 paired to a five-speed automatic transmission. The car now shows 156,921 documented miles, 125,000 of which have been added by the seller since 2007. This C43 is one of 579 units shipped for the North American market in 1998 and one of 1,125 total C43s in the market. *Sold for $11,250.*



Chewy RC

@chewy_rc

Wheels up for Wednesday!

This life-like remote control G-Wagen, complete with three axles and Dakar rally livery, is owned by Matthew Hunt and was built by Julian Boyd.



Roger Edwards Motors

@roger_edwards_motors

Paul Sumner of classic Mercedes specialist Roger Edwards Motors, based in Buckinghamshire, captured this beautiful 190SL badge photograph whilst enjoying a well-earned cup of tea.



HK-Engineering

@hkengineering

A morning in October.

Image by @classic.race



CLA 45 S RoseGold

@cla.45.s.rosegold

Winter wonderland.

This awesome rocket ship coupe is billed as the first Rose Gold AMG in Switzerland.

Armed with Merc's latest two-litre turbodiesel, drivers are gifted six-cylinder levels of performance

Worth the wait

The sixth generation of Mercedes' compact executive saloon could be the best yet, thanks to a brilliant turbodiesel engine under the bonnet and a luxurious cabin stacked full of exotic features

WORDS **KYLE MOLYNEUX** IMAGES **DAIMLER AG**



△ Mercedes has played it safe with this C's styling.

▷ Sport display mode; Classic shown top right.

▷▷ Eco, Comfort, and Sport driving modes offered.





During last year's rather infamous UN Climate Change Conference (COP26), Mercedes-Benz was listed among 11 automotive manufacturers that had agreed to "work towards all sales of new cars and vans being zero emission globally by 2040, and by no later than 2035 in leading markets". Other companies signed up to the declaration included Ford, General Motors, Jaguar Land Rover, Volvo and BYD Auto.

It doesn't take a genius to spot the grey areas in that agreement, although Daimler CEO Ola Källenius confirmed to German newspaper *Handelsblatt* that "from 2025 nearly all our money is going into electromobility", dispelling any belief that Mercedes' parent company is going about this enormous transition in a half-hearted manner. Of course, some will argue that change in the car world isn't happening fast enough, and others will say change doesn't need to happen at all…

So, where does this leave cars like the brand new C-Class and engines like this 300d's four-cylinder turbodiesel? The great news is that this 206-series generation of Merc's compact executive already boasts electrified powertrains, and C300e and C300de plug-in hybrid models are on the way. The C's diesel motor, the 'OM654 M', is part of Merc's latest Family of Modular Engines (FAME for short) and incorporates an integrated starter-generator (ISG) between the engine and nine-speed 9G-Tronic autobox, meaning this C300d – and all other C-Classes without a plug socket – are classed as mild hybrids, so certainly haven't been left behind in their maker's pursuit of greener motoring.

The ISG and its 48V electrical system provide a fuel-saving gliding function that sees the engine switched off on the move and restarted seamlessly when required, plus a performance-enhancing EQ boost mode that unlocks an extra 20bhp for short







The rest of the C-Class Saloon range

Coming soon

	C220d	C200	C300	C300e
Engine	1,993cc 4-cyl diesel	1,496cc 4-cyl petrol	1,999cc 4-cyl petrol	1,999cc 4-cyl petrol plug-in hybrid
Power/torque	197bhp/324lb ft	201bhp/221lb ft	254bhp/295lb ft	309bhp/406lb ft
0-62mph	7.3sec	7.3sec	6.0sec	6.1sec
Top speed	152mph	153mph	155mph	152mph
Economy	58.9-61.4mpg	41.5-44.1mpg	40.4-42.2mpg	353-471mpg
CO2 emissions	120-127g/km	146-154g/km	152-159g/km	13-17g/km
Price	From £40,785 OTR	From £38,785 OTR	From £43,500 OTR	TBC

Trim lines

Sport (C220d and C200 only), AMG Line, AMG Line Premium, AMG Line Premium Plus

Prices correct at time of writing; fuel economy according to WLTP Combined

△ Even base spec Cs get those big colour displays.

periods of time. The ISG can also recuperate kinetic energy and convert it to electricity to power the air conditioning compressor.

Armed with Merc's latest two-litre turbodiesel, drivers are gifted six-cylinder levels of performance and the kind of efficiency that would rival base oil burners of a few generations ago. So you still won't get stung too badly at the refuelling station, nor will you suffer crippling costs at road tax renewal time just because you fancied owning a Mercedes that's not an A-Class, or an electric EQ model.

Premium motoring

And the new C-Class really does feel like a class above the mainstream, as it should. The exterior design is handsome in an understated, Germanic sort of way, although even in AMG Line Premium Plus spec as pictured, which adds AMG body styling and 19-inch AMG alloys, you probably won't need to pick up your jaw off the floor at the first time of viewing. However, what the W206 lacks in wow-factor on the outside, it more than makes up for inside and on the move.

Compared to the previous generation C-Class, which shared the same rear-wheel drive 'MRA' platform, this new one is significantly longer (around 110mm), as well as slightly taller and wider. That means more space in the cabin, but not a bigger boot: 455 litres versus 480 litres in the W205 saloon.

Setting aside the sienna brown/black leather upholstery of our test car, what really catches your eye is the standard, 11.9-inch central display sweeping up from the divider between the front occupants. The graphics of the latest MBUX infotainment system are mind-blowing – so crisp and buttery smooth in operation as you flick from menu to menu, and the resplendent flashes of colour add to the overall sense of sophistication.

Mercedes has clearly learned its lesson from infotainment ▷





◁ Four-pot diesel is very punchy in 300d specification.

△ Handling is tidy, the steering quick in its response.

Safety and assistance systems

Just some of the standard features designed to take care of occupants

- Active Blind Spot Assist
- Active Brake Assist with turning manoeuvre function
- Active Lane-Keeping Assist
- Adaptive brake lamps
- Anti-lock braking system
- Attention Assist
- Electronic Stability Programme
- Speedtronic cruise control with variable speed limiter
- Tirefit with tyre inflation compressor
- Tyre pressure monitoring system
- Windscreen wipers with rain sensor

“I really didn’t expect to be so dazzled by the 300d”

▷ systems of just a few years ago which, with their great number of sub menus, made changing and even finding basic cabin functions unreasonably difficult. Now, controls for the radio, satellite navigation, climate control and so on are far more easily reached, and the touchscreen itself is even more responsive to your fingertips.

Drivers are also treated to a 12.3-inch digital instrument cluster display as standard, with several themes to choose from depending on how you wish the whole layout to look. Sport theme’s vibrant red colour scheme and big speedo is tempting, although Classic’s lovely dial set and turquoise coloured area in the centre, which serves as a backdrop for trip readings and driving efficiency ratings, wins my vote. This area can also hold a small version of the sat nav map, should you wish. Suddenly, analogue instrument clusters seem so… last century.

Fast on its feet

I could go on and on about the new C-Class’s cabin, which feels better nailed together than its predecessor’s, but let’s talk about how the W206 drives in 300d AMG Line form. It weighs almost 1.8 tonnes, but this saloon will zip from zero to 62mph in just 5.7 seconds – a decent lick of pace in anyone’s book. Better still, the diesel engine never makes its presence too obvious, this OM654 M motor surely the most refined four-pot oil burner to emerge from Mercedes-Benz.

Not that I thought it would be terrible, but I really didn’t expect to be so dazzled by the 300d. The engine revs with the freedom of a petrol, delivers its lovely, wholesome wave of maximum torque from 1,800 to 2,800rpm, and when you’re dialled back in cruise mode you’ll see at least mid 50s fuel economy on a good run. Mercedes-Benz wasn’t exaggerating when it said the ISG restarts the engine without a hint of vibration, either. The gliding function brings no revolution in efficiency, but it’s satisfying knowing that you’re not using more fuel than is necessary.

The accompanying 9G-Tronic automatic is nearly as impressive as the diesel motor, still lacking the ultra-fast responses to paddleshift inputs that ZF transmissions achieve, but somehow going beyond the oily precision of previous gearboxes and entering the realm of surreal levels of smoothness. It is very easy to forget the car is changing gear at all, in fact.

Pitch the C-Class into your first corner and you’ll probably apply too much steering lock, such is the quickness of the ▷

“As 'normal' C-Classes go, the old C350 CDI was my favourite – until I drove this C300d”

▷ rack. There's near zero feel through the twin-spoke helm – thank the super-efficient electro-mechanical system for that – but the C-Class holds tidy lines even during very rough treatment, the AMG Line spec's 15mm lower sports suspension with selective damping helping with that effortless composure while still offering acceptable – but not exactly mesmerising – ride comfort. Those 19-inch rims do create some road noise, but that seems to be par for the course with cars these days.

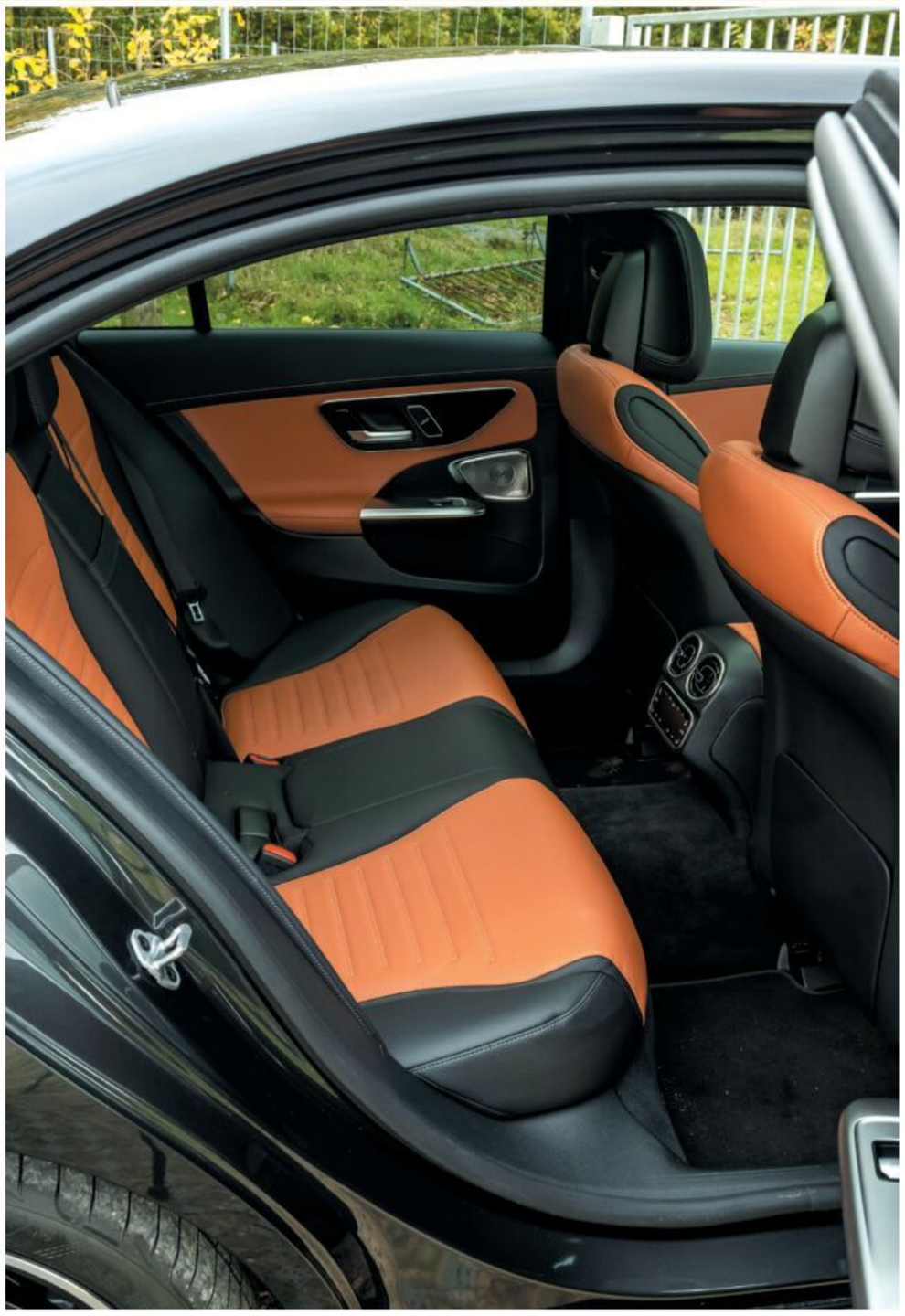
So, do I have any other gripes with the new C300d? I'm not a fan of the 'aerodynamically optimised' wheels, or the plasticky feel to the steering wheel controls and (immovable) seat controls on the doors. And I think the 205-series' metal toggle control for driving mode selection feels nicer to use than the latest touch-sensitive buttons at the bottom of the cabin's big screen, but these are minor annoyances. Yes, the autobox could be more responsive to paddle inputs, but I'd happily sacrifice that extra sense of driving engagement for this level of finesse in full auto mode. The AMG Line's ride comfort could be improved too, without really affecting handling.

Borderline Q-car

Many will not remember the short-lived 204-series C350 CDI with its stonking three-litre V6 turbodiesel producing 261bhp and 457lb ft torque. The saloon was good for 62mph in six seconds flat and I adored it. As 'normal' C-Classes go, it was very possibly my favourite – until I drove this latest C300d.

It's not cheap, starting at £45,925 OTR in AMG Line, or £52,125 in Premium Plus spec as tested. However, if you are looking for a four-door saloon (or estate) dripping with luxury appointments, bundles of driving assistance systems and display screens straight out of a sci-fi novel, plus an engine that'll excite without the financial bite, then save up a few more pounds, pass over the C220d and put your name down for one of these.





△▷ 19-inch AMG alloys of Premium Plus trim line.

▷ More room in the rear; sienna brown/black trim.



Just the facts

Mercedes-Benz C300d (W206)

Engine OM654 1,993cc 4-cyl turbocharged **Power** 261bhp@4,200rpm **Torque** 406lb ft@1,800-2,200rpm **Transmission** 9-speed auto, RWD

Weight 1,775kg **0-62mph** 5.7sec **Top speed** 155mph **Fuel consumption** 53.3-55.4mpg **CO2 emissions** 139g/km **Years produced** 2021-on

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

COVER STORY

Back in business

Selling 1.5 million times over, the 211-series E-Class is an often overlooked star from Mercedes' back catalogue that in many ways helped the company rebuild its reputation following a difficult few years. Here we compare two stunning survivors 20 years after the generation made its debut

WORDS **WILLIAM TERRINGTON** IMAGES **CRAIG PUSEY**



Launched in January 2002 and arriving in showrooms by March, the W211 E-Class Saloon was a huge improvement on its predecessor, the W210, thanks to a combination of superior build quality, design, safety and most notably, technical innovations. These included side airbags and Pre-Safe – the latter tightening the seat belts if the system sensed that an accident was imminent.

Estate versions arrived in showrooms in mid 2003 and the full range was refreshed in 2006, bringing over 2,000 improvements cosmetically and under the skin, including revised grille and light clusters, the introduction of the 7G-Tronic gearbox, and the removal of the innovative but short-lifespan SBC braking system, which premiered with the R230 SL.

The durability and fuel economy of the W/S211 E-Class was demonstrated with the Mercedes-Benz Paris to Beijing rally: a fleet of E320 CDI saloons covered 8,400 miles over 25 days, experiencing a wide range of climates and roads over two continents and nine countries, with no major issues to report and about 10,000 fewer litres of fuel consumed than expected.

The E-Class has long been a staple of the AMG range, but the 211 moved on the game, despite the W210's excellent AMG portfolio. Introduced in 2002 and following the SL55 AMG was the E55 AMG with its supercharged 5.4-litre V8 (M113), which produced 469bhp. This was a giant leap forward over its already potent predecessors and, to give this figure some context, was significantly more than the BMW M5 in production at the time of the E55's launch, (though this was replaced the following year) and was a little more than a contemporary Ferrari 360.

Come 2006, the E63 replaced it, with the legendary M156 6,208cc naturally aspirated V8 churning out 507bhp and a thunderous soundtrack, more aggressive looks included. An added bonus: this was the first Mercedes fitted with this AMG engine.

Twenty years since the first 211-series E-Classes were offered, most are now available for under 10 grand. Improved build quality, more advanced technology, and superior rust proofing have seen more of this generation survive than members of the 210-series and they remain excellent cars. The two models tested

> “The durability and fuel economy of the 211 E-Class was demonstrated with the Mercedes’ Paris to Beijing rally”

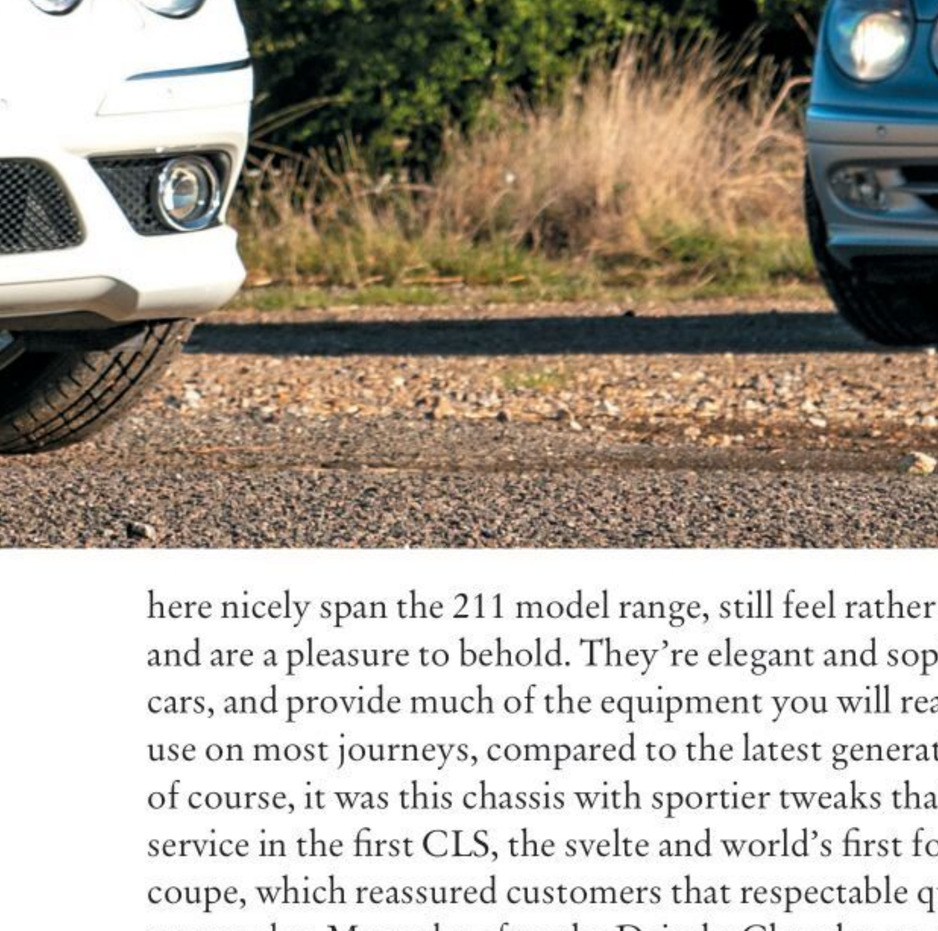
here nicely span the 211 model range, still feel rather modern and are a pleasure to behold. They’re elegant and sophisticated cars, and provide much of the equipment you will realistically use on most journeys, compared to the latest generation. And of course, it was this chassis with sportier tweaks that saw service in the first CLS, the svelte and world’s first four-door coupe, which reassured customers that respectable quality had returned to Mercedes after the DaimlerChrysler era. That only pays further credit to this advanced E-Class generation. Without a doubt, ‘E’ stands for ‘Excellence’.

▽ Around 240,000 211-series Estates were built by M-B.

▽◁ First ‘320 CDI’ badged Es had an in-line six.

2004 E320 CDI Estate

When one first thinks of an E-Class, the sound of a diesel may well come to mind. The 211-series was in production as demand for diesels skyrocketed, the number of variants equalling petrol. Not available in the UK, but showcasing the contemporary perception of diesel, there were two turbocharged V8 diesels – the E400 CDI (2003 to 2005) with 256bhp/413lb ft torque and its successor, the E420 CDI (2005 to 2009), producing 310bhp/538lb ft of twisting force. Even the latest E-Class ▷







“This wagon feels most at home steadily advancing on its rich wave of 369lb ft of torque”

▷ diesels don’t offer that level of torque. However, it was the E320 CDI as tested here that was a best-seller.

This particular car (offered for sale by Mercedes specialist Edward Hall in Buckinghamshire before it was sold) is unusual in that it has been cared for to a standard beyond exemplary. The 145,000 miles under one scrupulous owner are not obvious at all. It could easily pass for half that, in fact. Servicing has gone above and beyond requirements – even the differential oil has had extra changes. No expense has been spared. In addition to 18 main dealer stamps, the gearbox and the pump for that typical of the time SBC system have both been replaced at main dealers. Spreadsheets recording expenditure have been kept. This is most unusual for a diesel estate, or indeed most cars.

The Avantgarde specification packs 16-inch alloy wheels, Anthracite leather, bird’s eye maple wood trim, Comand satellite navigation and heated/electric front seats with memory and lumbar support adjustment. Notable extras include xenon headlamps, a Harmon Kardon surround sound system, phone pre-wiring, and automatic dimming mirrors inside and out. These features combine for a specification that buyers of brand new E-Classes would find difficult to fault.

△ All 211 Estates have level control on the rear axle.

▽ Japanese import with unfamiliar badge.

▽▽ There’s a natural elegance to the cab design.

Despite being a pre-facelift example, made during the time of the notorious DaimlerChrysler corporate agreement, it’s still clearly a quality vehicle. Even the driver’s seat shows little wear. The cabin is much more stylish and ergonomic than that of its predecessor – the higher grade materials and improved control layout make a big difference. The instruments are particularly pleasing to the eye, perhaps even more so than the 212-series’, and the clever, fold-out panel concealing the CD auto changer just below the Comand screen still operates with precision.

On the road, this very practical family car feels supple and is a pleasure to drive. The 3.2-litre, 201bhp straight-six diesel carries you along on a magic carpet. Whilst you can indeed put your foot down and make good progress, this wagon feels most at home steadily advancing on its rich wave of 369lb ft of torque, dependably and safely carrying a heavy cargo if you wish, aided by the standard-fit, self-levelling rear suspension. The extra mass at the back of the Estate is noticeable, though this just contributes to the car’s relaxed feel. Under acceleration, the engine is a little noisy compared to the latest diesels, though it’s a confident cruiser.

2007 E550 Saloon

The 211-series was the last generation of E-Class to offer a non-AMG V8 in all markets. These cars have an illustrious history, with a few roots in the 123-series: a V8 was considered for that generation, though never officially offered (conversions are relatively straightforward, however). From the 124-series, there was the rare 400E/E420 with a four-litre M119 V8, and of course the Zuffenhausen-assembled 500E/E500, while the 210-series included 4.2-litre E420 and 4.3-litre E430 cars.

The 211-series range boasted a 302bhp E500 model whose power increased to 383bhp with the 2006 facelift. Sadly, because of dwindling sales, this rare breed of E-Class V8 disappeared from most markets with the pre-facelift 212- and 207-series E500, offered in Saloon, Estate, Coupe and Cabriolet forms. The model did continue in facelifted form until 2016/2017, but was not available in the UK.

Fastidiously maintained and having covered just 33,000









Pre-facelift Estate hides its 145,000 miles well, both inside and out!



miles since new, this pristine V8 saloon (also offered by Ed Hall before it was sold) with its new car smell, fresh carpets with unfaded and unworn trim and leather, offers time travel back to 2007 – the days of the SLR McLaren, and when V8 and V12 engines were in abundance.

▽◁ E550 saloon fitted with full Airmatic system.

▽▽◁ Dynavin screen could pass as factory fitted.

The 'E550' designation was not destined for British or other European markets, rather the United States and Japan. However, this model has the same 5.5-litre, 383bhp M273 V8 as the E500. Coming from Japan means it's a right-hooker, but the speedometer reads in km/h (to remedy this, the digital readout can be set to mph). The original Comand DVD, though an expensive option, was all in Japanese, so has been replaced with a Dynavin touchscreen system. This set up blends in very well considering it's aftermarket and, what's more, the satellite navigation can be continuously updated with a memory card. There's even a reversing camera fitted, which comes in very handy for avoiding scraping that pristine Calcite White paintwork.

The E550 is equipped with four-zone climate control and an electric rear roller blind, which still operates silently. Bi-xenon headlamps, part of the Intelligent Light System (a world first introduced at the facelift), automatically adjust to weather conditions and even feature an active curving function linked to steering input. The electric glass sunroof really lights up the interior and shows off the chrome and wood trim.

On first impressions, it's easy to think of the E550 as ▷









Sharper styling and bi-xenons for this facelifted V8 saloon.



Calcite White paint an unusual shade to find in the UK market.





“The E550 must surely be the most svelte and sophisticated non-AMG W211 you could hope to find”

▷ simply a fast taxi, however a petrol engine in place of a diesel, no less a 383bhp V8, transforms the experience completely.

△ Twin exhaust system a hint at what lies beneath.

△◁ Four-valve V8 with a pair of overhead cams.

Optionally equipped with the AMG Sports Package, which adds AMG body styling, 18-inch AMG alloys and twin AMG chromed exhaust pipes, this must surely be the most svelte and sophisticated non-AMG W211 you could hope to find. This V8 saloon is perfect if you’re not a fan of the bombastic, tyre-shredding AMG models and prefer something more reserved. The exhaust lets out only a discreet rumble and the torque is addictive and wonderfully distributed: its performance is more accessible more of the time than the diesel. Putting the seven-speed automatic in Sport mode and firming the Airmatic Dual Control suspension coaxes more character from the engine and gives you even more confidence to put your foot down. This is still a car to take if you are in a hurry.

Being a facelifted 211-series, this E550 is even better put together and further refined, that V8 adding extra pleasure. What’s more, there’s no road salt during Japan’s winter, so the underside is immaculate and corrosion-free. As an added bonus, it is EU4 compliant thus congestion charge exempt.

This E550 is amongst the finest and rarest W211s out there. It’s a low mileage car to be savoured and kept away from the road salt it has avoided during the last 14 years. The connoisseurs’ E-Class? Well, it’s definitely a contender.

Just the facts

Mercedes-Benz E320 CDI Estate (S211)

Engine OM648 3,222cc 6-cyl **Power** 201bhp@4,200rpm **Torque** 369lb ft@1,800-2,600rpm **Transmission** 5-speed auto, RWD

Weight 1,885kg **0-62mph** 8.2sec **Top speed** 145mph **Fuel consumption** 38.7mpg **Years produced** 2003-2005

Mercedes-Benz E550 (W211)

Engine M273 5,461cc V6 **Power** 383bhp@6,000rpm **Torque** 391lb ft@2,800-4,800rpm **Transmission** 7-speed auto, RWD

Weight 1,785kg **0-62mph** 5.3sec **Top speed** 155mph **Fuel consumption** 24.6mpg **Years produced** 2006-2009

All figures from Mercedes-Benz; fuel consumption according to NEDC Combined; top speed of E550 electronically limited

Thank you to Edward Hall for the loan of the cars Tel 01844 339666 Web www.edward-hall.co.uk



Salt of the earth

Arriving long before the 211-series E-Class, which celebrates its 20th anniversary in 2022, the 115- and 123-series hardened Mercedes' reputation as a world leader in the manufacturing of immensely competent motorcars

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

*"Back in the 1970s, these **driving statements of durability** were **true objects of desire**"*

It's hard to grasp the sheer impact these modest looking Mercedes-Benz cars had on my childhood. Back in the 1970s, these driving statements of durability were true objects of desire. Even a humble 200D was on a different planet to smelly Opels, rattling Fords and wobbly French bred. The painted hub caps, the iconic radiator front, the indestructible vinyl MB-Tex inside and the robust Paul Bracq design just told me a clear story: '*Das beste oder nichts*' (The best or nothing) packed into a boxy and sophisticated outfit.

History lesson

In short, the W114-series was offered with six-cylinder engines (2.3-, 2.5- and 2.8-litre petrol) and the W115 came with four-cylinders (2.0-, 2.2- and 2.3-litre petrol, and 2.0-, 2.2- and 2.4-litre diesel), as well as a mighty three-litre five-pot diesel. All naturally aspirated.

Turbocharged diesels kicked in at M-B with the futuristic 1976 C111-IID testing vehicle. In 1978, a 109bhp three-litre version was mated with the W116 S-Class and the 300SD became the world's first production turbodiesel saloon. In the 1974 W115 240 D 3.0, a NA version offered 79bhp and in the 1979 W123 87bhp. Serious diesel power competition started in the 80s.

The nickname *Strich Acht* (Stroke 8) refers to 1968, the year of launch. Between then and 1976 (slightly overlapping the 123-series) 1,919,056 W114/115 cars were built. In 1973, the facelift offered a different (lower) front, a modified interior and convenient ribbed tail lights. With so many made, a decent driver can be found for £2,000 in mainland Europe, a fantastic example for £6,000 or more and a concours W115 for £20,000 plus. W114 2.3-, 2.5- and 2.8-liters fetch a premium. Expect high milage but don't worry: these cars are made to last. A big plus is that they still look superb.

Much has been written about the 123-series – the best selling and most successful Mercedes-Benz ever. Almost 2.7 million of all body types were sold in 10 years, up to November 1985. Today, there's a huge choice and prices start from £2,000 for a tatty one. Beware though and buy the best one you can afford and enjoy until you die. I've seen insanely cool looking €15,000 280 Coupes at the best Dutch dealers. Wibble!

Petrol engines range from 2.0-litre to 2.8-litre (93 to 182bhp), and diesels from 2.0-litre to 3.0 litre (54 to 123bhp). Unlike the W114/115, which were only offered in Saloon and Coupe forms, the 123-series range also included a long-wheelbase (V123), Estate (S123) and a bare chassis (F123) fit for special-purpose bodies. This chassis was a strengthened base often used for ambulances or hearses, for example and these could be coachbuilt by specialists such as Binz and Miesen.

With so many different body styles, engines, colours, cabin finishes and options to choose from, chances are that you'll find a 123 to you liking. Prolific Mercedes-Benz collector Reinier Groenveld has more than a handful and my heart skips a beat when his grand looking, dark silver Estate comes into view. But what about the Icon Gold Coupe and the Signal Red 200D?

Reinier, photographer Noortje and myself spent a cloudy afternoon puzzling over which cars would look best and at the same time tell a proper story to fit our readers' wishes. Hard. Very hard. Especially as the menacing anthracite blue skies begged for a quick decision. Finally happy with our selection, it was time to dive in and find out more about these handsome Benzes…



*"The characteristic **woven MB-Tex seats** look untouched, such is the **indestructibleness of the material**"*





△ 220D's speedo with chrome trim reads to 160km/h.

△▷ A wide entry to the safety-focused interior.

▷ Stroke 8 has double-wishbone front suspension.



1972 W115 220D

Of course, all the cars in Reinier's collection have the habit of looking like new and the 59bhp 220D is no exception. Amazingly, it's this car that could well be his favourite. And why not? An SLS is a riot, a Gullwing a superstar, an Adenauer an imposing curiosity, but a 220D is a thing of pure joy. And yes, over here in the Netherlands, a tidy W115 diesel can be found for five to 10 grand. It will be your trusty companion for years to come.

The characteristic woven MB-Tex seats look untouched, such is the indestructibleness of the material. I've driven younger cars with more uncomfortable and worn seats. This 220D, finished in Dark Green (291H) feels like it could take us to Paris and back today. I love it.

"When there's a diesel engine involved, count me in," says Reinier. "It's just a different car compared to a petrol powered Benz. This particular example was previously owned by a farmer. Usually, they'll see genuine use and high mileage. But not this one. The reason why this star looks as new is the love and care the first owner gave it. And it was garaged, at least until the second owner took over. That's where the service history stops. Maybe the 220D was stored for decades when I wiped off the dust in 2002? Today it has seen 54,000km [around 33,500 miles].

"The first Mercedes-Benz I bought was a used W115 240D, which I kept for seven years," Reinier continues. "Then a used W123 240, which I traded in for a 1992 facelift W124 after seven years of driving it. At 50 years of age, and after 11 years of happy driving, I finally acquired the first and only new car I've ever bought – an E320 CDI. After 17 years and about 200,000 miles, it joined my collection. The E-Class was replaced by a 222-series S400d, which is quite a contrast to the green 220D Stroke 8." ▷

◁ 412,829 of the W115 220D cars were produced.





◁ Not all Stroke 8s had wood trim on the dashboard.

▷ Glow plug light at bottom of speedometer.





▷ Blaupunkt radio and controls for the air con.

▽◁ OM617 with mechanical indirect fuel injection.



▷ 1975 W115 240D 3.0

"At the time, a 300 was the biggest diesel money could buy," Reinier explains. "The OM617 straight-five was used from 1974 to 1991 and is a direct development from the straight-four OM616. Basically, an extra cylinder was added, which resulted in maybe the most reliable engine Mercedes ever built. I also have a US-spec 123-series 300TD in my collection.

"This Grey Blue [906G] 240D 3.0 is an American car, restored by Dutch specialist garage Eric Breed. The guy who drove the finished product was not tall enough to be comfortable with it. Eric knew I was on the lookout for a three-litre example and after a call in 2005 I came, saw and bought it. I mean, how can you resist?

"It's a fresh painted, fully optioned automatic," Reinier says. "When Americans order an E-Class-type Mercedes, it has to have everything and more. You're looking at the full package here: tinted glass, metallic paint, four seat belts, air conditioning, electric windows. All it needs now is a new battery. To me, a big plus on USA cars of this era are the absence of ridiculous and ugly safety bumpers. The small reflectors on the nose betray its origins. The dials inside are in kilometres, though."

"This 240D 3.0 is an American car restored by Dutch specialist garage Eric Breed"

"I have a soft spot for Icon Gold and Signal Red..."





1978 W123 200D

Moving on to his Signal Red (568H), pre-facelift W123 200D, Reinier explains, "The round double headlights easily tell you this is an early W123. Also a diesel. Pretty basic. It looks mint. I got this distinctive looking car from a previous and careful owner who was afraid diesels were about to be banned. Well, we'll see. This 123-series has been in my collection since 2006.

"Forty years ago, red or any distinguishing colour was for an SL and not for a modest, entry-level Benz," Reinier comments. "It was not until the W201 190 of 1982 that an exuberant colour like bright red was an OK choice for Mercedes that weren't sporting in nature. I have a soft spot for Icon Gold and Signal Red, so I immediately said yes to this one." It's not hard to see why... ▷



▷△ It's amazing how well the cabin trim has held up...

▷ Different style headlights for this W123 and C123.

▽ Robust OM615 unit with double chain cam drive.

▽◁ PAS means 'just' 3.2 turns lock-to-lock.





Just the facts

Mercedes-Benz 220D (W115)

Engine OM615 2,197cc 4-cyl
Power 59bhp@4,200rpm
Torque 93lb ft@2,400rpm
Transmission 4-speed manual, RWD
Weight 1,375kg
0-62mph 28.1sec
Top speed 84mph
Fuel consumption 33.2mpg
Years produced 1968-1973

Mercedes-Benz 240D 3.0 (W115)

Engine OM617 3,005cc 5-cyl
Power 79bhp@4,000rpm
Torque 127lb ft@2,400rpm
Transmission 4-speed auto, RWD
Weight 1,430kg
0-62mph 20.8sec
Top speed 89mph
Fuel consumption 26.2mpg
Years produced 1974-1976

Mercedes-Benz 200D (W123)

Engine OM615 1,988cc 4-cyl
Power 54bhp@4,200rpm
Torque 83lb ft@2,400rpm
Transmission 4-speed manual, RWD
Weight 1,390kg
0-62mph 31.0sec
Top speed 81mph
Fuel consumption 29.7mpg
Years produced 1976-1985

Mercedes-Benz 230C (C123)

Engine M115 2,307cc 4-cyl
Power 108bhp@4,800rpm
Torque 137lb ft@3,000rpm
Transmission 4-speed manual, RWD
Weight 1,375kg
0-62mph 13.7sec
Top speed 106mph
Fuel consumption 19.0mpg
Years produced 1977-1980

All figures from Mercedes-Benz; fuel consumption for W115s determined at 3/4 of top speed (not more than 68mph) plus 10 per cent, and for 123s according to EEC urban





▷ Under 50,000km on this 230C and it certainly shows!

▽ Stromberg 175 CDT carburettor fitted at factory.

▽▷▷ Velour upholstery looks very welcoming.





▷ 1978 C123 230C

I can't help but drool over Reinier's golden Benz – a 108bhp, 2.3-litre Coupe with carburettor and four-speed manual, and riding on forged aluminium Fuchs wheels (exclusively made for Mercedes-Benz between 1969 and 1985). "Well, it's not the quickest of cars and the back seats are a bit cramped, but this smart one draws you in as it did me in 2004," Reinier remembers.

"I found this immaculate Icon Gold [419H] car at a classic car dealer in the northern regions of the Netherlands, where a lot of specialists can be found – often in tiny villages you will never care to visit. Every time I was at the showroom, I saw this gorgeous coupe and I thought, 'Wow!'. One day, I asked about the car and it turned out there really was no particular reason it was just sat there waiting for a new owner. Maybe the price tag was too high or the back seat too cramped? Folks tend to choose a saloon or estate because a two-door is less practical.

"Also, a coupe is often a second or third car. I bought this gem for less than the asking price. My preference, though, is the biggest engine available, so a 134bhp straight-four 230CE or 182bhp straight-six 280CE. There's enough space in my garage for such a Mercedes-Benz, so one day..."

"Every time I was at the showroom, I saw this gorgeous coupe and I thought, 'Wow!'"

Find out more about Reinier Groenveld's impressive collection in the August/September 2021 issue of Mercedes Enthusiast. *Order via this QR code...*



The CLS-based Brabus Rocket of 2006 achieved 225.2mph at Nardò.

"MY FIRST JOB WAS AT MERCEDES-BENZ. I WAS GIVEN THE CHOICE OF JOINING EITHER THE RALLY DEPARTMENT OR A SPECIAL SKUNK WORKS DEPARTMENT – I CHOSE THE LATTER"

Shortly before Ulrich Gauffrés, Brabus' renowned Chief Technology Officer, retired in autumn 2021, Ian Kuah sat down with him to reflect on his illustrious career

WORDS **IAN KUAH** IMAGES **IAN KUAH & BRABUS**



Ulrich Gauffrés made the jump to Mercedes tuner Brabus on April 1 1985.



△ The original Brabus HQ when Uli visited in 1984.

Every Brabus car is engineered with the same thorough approach you will find at Mercedes-Benz itself. This comes as no surprise since Ulrich Gauffrés, Brabus' legendary and now-retired technical chief, learned his craft in the Development Department at Untertürkheim...

Ian Kuah: When and where did you train as an engineer?
Ulrich Gauffrés: I graduated from Bremen University in 1980 with a mechanical engineering degree, focused on combustion engines.

IK: Have you always been a car enthusiast?
UG: Yes. My passion began early and I bought my first car, a Fiat 500, when I was 17. My school friend's father had a small Fiat workshop and I proudly drove my 500 there to show him. He took one look at it and said, "Nice car, but normally a Fiat 500 has two cylinders, yours is running on one!"

I had no money to buy a new engine, so he said, "You can do the work yourself, here is a toolkit!" Then he explained how to rebuild the engine and offered me the use of his workshop. So I rebuilt the motor, adding a Fiat 126 carburettor and some Abarth parts. This was my first engine rebuild and tuning adventure.

IK: Where did you work before Brabus?
UG: My first job was at Mercedes-Benz in Untertürkheim. I was given the choice of joining either the rally department under Erich Waxenberger, or a special skunk works department between R&D and production that examined new ideas that could be developed for future production.

I chose the latter, and my first task was to help develop 'downsized' turbocharged engines. Downsizing was unheard of in the early 1980s, but the US – our biggest market – was already discussing fuel consumption and emissions.

I took over the job from three engineers – one had retired, one went to BMW, and the third moved within Mercedes. So there I was, a newly minted engineer suddenly in charge of two engine test benches and four or five development cars.

My first assignment was to make a 2.3-litre four-cylinder turbo or supercharged motor to help the S-Class achieve 27.5mpg and meet forthcoming US emission standards. The result was the supercharged 2.3-litre pre-study prototype for the M111.973 that debuted with the SLK230 Kompressor of 1996. This was the only engine I designed at Mercedes-Benz that reached production.

My next task was to develop a supercharged V8, and I decided to have a chat with the Dutch forced aspiration specialist Willy Mosselman who was working as an external consultant for Bodo Buschmann at Brabus. We agreed to meet at the bar on the Brabus stand at the 1984 Frankfurt IAA show. Bodo asked Willy who I was, and we were introduced. Bodo invited me to visit Brabus HQ, so I drove up to Bottrop from Stuttgart and he showed me around.

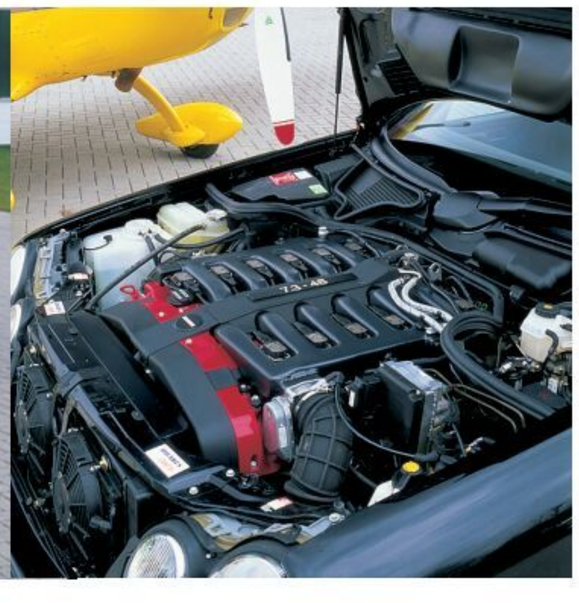
Since its founding in 1977, Brabus had operated out of a rather basic one-storey shophouse across the road from the brand new HQ Bodo was planning to build. I was not impressed with the facilities, the weather was bad, and as there was so much pollution in the industrial Ruhr region at the time, cars with even or odd registration numbers had to drive on alternate days.

I was not familiar with the world of Mercedes tuning, but I was becoming increasingly unhappy at Mercedes because my direct boss was cancelling all my projects. Soon after my visit, Bodo sent me a front spoiler for my W123, and in January 1985 I received another invitation to Bottrop along with a plane ticket. This time Bodo explained his vision of the future for Brabus and asked me to join the company. He also asked me what I needed – test bench, rolling road and so on – to do a proper job. I started at Brabus on April 1 1985.

IK: Did you arrive at Brabus full of ideas?
UG: Not really. I started having discussions with clients, something I never had the chance to do at Mercedes. Clients always say they want more horsepower, but when you speak with them it soon becomes clear they actually mean more torque. So my first project was developing a 2.6-litre version of the M102 four-cylinder used in the W201 and W124.

Next came the M103 three-litre straight-six, which I turned into a 3.5-litre using a steel billet crank with new rods and pistons. The prototype engine had not even turned over once when I found out that Bodo, who was on fire with enthusiasm, had contacted *Auto Motor und Sport* magazine.

We installed the engine in a 124-series T-model [Estate] on Friday afternoon and ran it for the first time that night. We did a rolling road run on Saturday morning and then drove it around to run it in. Bodo had arranged for the car to be at Hockenheim at 8am on Monday for the *Auto Motor und Sport* test, but what we didn't know was that they had planned a shootout against the AMG 300E 3.2. Our 3.5 easily won this comparison, and after the story was published things really took off for us. I then developed the 3.6-litre that was to become our staple six-cylinder conversion of this era.

▽ 210-series E V12 Estate with M120 7.3S engine.

IK: When did you assume overall control of engineering R&D at Brabus?
UG: Five years after joining the company. We started off well, taking the 0.26Cd world record for production cars in 1985 with the W124 Saloon. But while I had a few people helping me, I





△ 211-series E V12 with monster M275 12-cyl unit.

“My first assignment was to make a 2.3-litre four-cylinder turbo or supercharged motor to help the S-Class meet forthcoming US emission standards”



△ Brabus W140 S-Classes with Uli nearby (far right).

did most of the work myself. In those formative years at Brabus, day blended into night and weekends were an abstract concept!

IK: How did hugely powerful, big-displacement engines become a Brabus cornerstone?

UG: Big-displacement upgrades upended the forced aspiration era for Brabus in the mid-80s, and by 1991 the M120 V12 had become a great success story for us.

I remember when we heard about Mercedes acquiring a 51 per cent stake in AMG. Initially we were shocked that the factory would soon begin to sell tuned cars. However, the Mercedes partnership meant that AMG could no longer sell its aftermarket tuning parts, and the time the company would need to re-organise gave us a small window of opportunity.

The new M120 six-litre V12 was due with the W140 S-Class in 1990, and we began to plan a larger displacement version. But as we normally had to wait for the first car to arrive the development time was going to be critical. By sheer good fortune, there was a story in *MTZ* [the motor engineering magazine] that featured a complete technical description of the M120 engine with cutaway drawings. I photocopied and enlarged these drawings, and using the description of the bore and stroke, and all the internal measurements I was able to create my own drawings. This allowed me to play with con-rod lengths and piston bores, exploring possible tuning avenues like the maximum bore, stroke and camshaft lift.

The next stroke of luck was being able to borrow an M120 crankshaft from a friend in the Mercedes development department. I got on a plane to England with this crank and my drawings, and I had Farndon Engineering machine a long-stroke billet crankshaft. The next day I flew to Stuttgart to return the Mercedes crank, and then went to Mahle, which is only up the road from Untertürkheim. The company designed bespoke pistons from my drawings, and these and the long stroke crank formed the basis of our 6.9-litre conversion, which worked perfectly out of the box and sold strongly until our 7.3 was ready. Critically, it was ready as soon as the 140-series S600 hit the market!

By this time, we had a SuperFlow 901 engine dyno and a state-of-the-art flow bench on which I developed the big-valve cylinder-heads. We were probably the first tuner anywhere to use a five-axis CNC machine to shape inlet and exhaust ▷

▽ Brabus 300E 3.6S Saloon and Coupe (124-gen).

▽▷ Tuner's 850 V12 with high-flow intake filter.





▽ Gauffrés and Brabus' R170 SLK V8 with 450bhp.

▷ Bespoke manifold for V12 biturbo motor.

▽▷ Brabus crank, rods and pistons for a V8.





> "We were probably the first tuner anywhere to use a five-axis CNC machine to shape inlet and exhaust ports in mass production"



▷ ports in mass production. We had so many orders that doing this work by hand was too slow, and the CNC machine was 100 per cent consistent.

IK: How tuneable is the M275 / M285 biturbo V12 engine, and why are the OE exhaust manifolds so restrictive?

UG: Mercedes has some of the best engineers in the world, but the OE manifolds had to be designed for efficient fitment by robot tools on a mass production line. Our manifolds required about 15 to 20 minutes to install by a technician with an angled socket tool, which simply would not have worked on the factory line.

Unfortunately, the OE manifold geometry aims the pipe to each cylinder at an angle to the turbine that impedes optimal gas flow, creates uneven exhaust gas pulses and increases back pressure. Without this production line constraint, I was able to design a set of bespoke OE grade, 1,050C high nickel content, cast iron exhaust manifolds with integrated turbine housings. The larger diameter pipework with improved geometry removes the restrictions, optimises gas pulsation from each cylinder to the turbines, and reduces back pressure.

The larger turbine housings give the engine bigger lungs, and with no other physical or ECU changes we picked up 100hp and measured a 100C reduction in exhaust gas temperature, which significantly reduces thermal stress on the engine. This in itself means you can increase boost pressure for even more power.

IK: What was your most exciting project?

UG: Every Brabus project was exciting at the time. From the first 3.5-litre that won the *Auto Motor und Sport* test at Hockenheim to the 6.9 V12 developed off a magazine article, the E V12 7.3S *Guinness Book of Records* win and the latest Rocket 900 – every car was exciting.

▽ New base of 1986; expanded in the late 1990s.

▽▽ Uli feels a strong bond with classic Mercedes.





IK: What was your worst project?

UG: That is easier to answer! In the early 1990s, I tried using a firing order like that of a flat-plane crank Ferrari V8 on our six-litre M119 V8. It was not easy but we did it, and saw a useful power increase on the dyno.

The problem was the soundtrack. It did not have the typical V8 bent crank firing pulses, and when Bodo test drove it he said, "Interesting engine but where is the sound?" I told him we have a Ferrari soundtrack and more power. "That's not good," he said. We let a couple of regular customers drive the prototype, and after they made the same comment as Bodo we cancelled the project.

IK: If you had another two years at Brabus what would you do?

UG: I am happy to say I am retiring with no unfinished business. In the last few years, I worked alongside Jörn Gander, who takes over the hot seat as Chief Technology Officer, and I am very proud that we achieved so many fantastic things together.



Pay to

The club came together nearly 10 years ago out of a group of guys who loved driving fast cars

play

Poland's new Supercar Club allows members to drive a broad range of hot metal, including a certain four-door coupe from the AMG stable that has been tuned to the maximum by Brabus

WORDS ROBB PRITCHARD **IMAGES** PIOTR KACZOR & ANH TU NGUYEN



△△ Carbon ceramic braking system by AMG.

△ Carbon fibre diffuser; tailpipes made of titanium.

In the car park underneath Warsaw's Hilton Hotel there is an eclectic and rather special collection of cars. At first glance, it's hard to imagine why a Mazda MX-5 is parked next to a Porsche Taycan Turbo S, or a Ferrari F8 Spider is near a Mitsubishi Evo X, but these are not the tucked-away possessions of a multi-millionaire with highly varied taste. They belong to a special club: Supercar Club. One of its founders, Kamil Dlutko, explains that everything on display, from the humble MX-5 to the newest Lamborghini, offers a unique driving experience for discerning club members. And 'driving experience' is the raison d'être of Supercar Club.

The club came together nearly 10 years ago out of a group of guys who loved driving fast cars, and kept buying more... and eventually had so many they began wondering how they could stop losing so much money on storage, insurance and servicing. The spark that coalesced the idea into a going concern was an advert in a UK magazine about a time-sharing club for supercar owners. "We thought it would be a great idea to bring this concept to Poland and so we began putting our own cars into the business," Kamil explains. With some healthy investment from Krzysztof Hołowczyc, Poland's own ex-European Rally Championship winner and Dakar driver, things have taken off in a big way. Now, after amassing an impressive 50 of the most desirable cars in the world, the club is ready to go global.

After handing over a subscription fee and passing an advanced driving course specific to each car you want to enjoy, you are welcome to take anything in the extensive catalogue out for a drive. The list currently includes beauties such as a 992-series Porsche 911 GT3, Chevrolet Corvette C8, several top line Ferraris and an Aston Martin Vanquish, but is being added to all the time.

Out of its extensive inventory there are several appealing Mercedes options to choose from including a GT C, GT S and G63, which have to be considered staples for any discerning fan of three-pointed stars. The company even has an AMG A45 S, suggesting it is prepared to think outside the box. However, for us at *Mercedes Enthusiast*, the stunning matte black Brabus 800 grabbed our attention.

The car on which this road weapon is based, the AMG GT63 S 4-Door Coupe, is certainly no slouch. With a time of 7min 27.8sec around the Nürburgring Nordschleife, it once held the lap record for luxury sedans on the testing 13-mile circuit, something that was of course promoted widely by the company at the time. But with an extra 160bhp over the GT63 S's already pretty significant 630bhp, the Brabus leaves the 'standard' AMG far behind, although their top speeds are the same, as the 800 is pegged at 196mph.



With the historic city of Warsaw serving as our backdrop, we couldn't wait to take this monster for a spin. We went out in a few cars that evening, the aforementioned Ferrari F8, a 996 Porsche GT3 and some others. The other cars all felt like supercars from behind the wheel. With everything designed to be sparse and sporty, their cabins screamed 'hard core'. The Brabus 800, on the other hand, is different. The dashboard is so big it overflows into the arm supports and features two screens lit up like the Blackpool Illuminations with subtle neon blues oozing out from behind the buttons, vents and speakers. It feels more like you're at the controls of a spaceship.

Once in the driver's seat, the first thing you should do is adjust the active side supports that press into your ribs like a bouncer shoving you sideways out of a night club. This feature is appealing to some, but having the seat change into an uncomfortable shape mid-corner can be distracting.

Outwardly, the Brabus looks nowhere as extreme as the Ferraris or Lamborghinis and while in convoy with the others, all eyes, and quite a few phone cameras, were on the Ferrari. But put your foot down in the 800 and you are never going to be disappointed. As a bystander, you naturally expect a Ferrari to shoot away, but watching the big Brabus do it always inspires disbelief. The Ferrari is like a well-trained sprinter coming out of the blocks. The Brabus is like a bear bursting out of the bushes. "It's pure power!" Kamil smiles. "With a time of 2.9 seconds, no rear-wheel drive supercar can beat it to 62mph. But it's a four-door sedan with big back seats, so to look at, your brain says it shouldn't be able to do that. But that's what 1,000Nm [737lb ft] of torque does for you!"

The city centre, with its traffic lights and cobbled streets, feels a little restrictive for such powerful speed freaks, as you can only put your foot down for literally a split second before the twin-turbo four-litre V8 has propelled you beyond the speed limit. So to get a better understanding of what this car can do, we asked Kamil where he thinks the mighty 800 fits into the line-up.

As Kamil is the man in charge of a garage full of supercars, and who teaches Supercar Club clients how to drive the Brabus properly, his opinion is worth something. "The size and well-designed aero make it excellent on the road, and the fact ▷

With the historic city of Warsaw serving as our backdrop, we couldn't wait to take this monster for a spin



△ The GT handles like a car half its size (and weight).

△△ AMG-spec wheel with Brabus paddleshifters.





▷ that it is an all-wheel-drive car gives it supreme traction. The way Brabus has engineered the suspension means that when you're driving the GT properly it doesn't feel its size. And when I say it's big, the thing hardly fits in its lane but the wide track means that its high speed stability is amazing. It's like a gecko!"

Kamil loves the sound of the turbo pop-off valve, which reminds him of a Dodge Demon, and he's addicted to the incredible sound from the big bore exhaust, but there are no gimmicks on the 800. "It's a special car," he nods.

Another great way to experience the car's full potential is the Supercar Club's newest venture, and one most relevant to international clients. The company now offers guided supercar tours around some of the most picturesque parts of Europe. The Alps and Croatia in autumn were the inaugural adventures, but they weren't simply 'follow your leader trips', as on the week-long driving holiday, members got behind the wheel of a different car every day: a Ferrari Roma for Monday, a Lamborghini Huracán for Tuesday, an Aston Martin Vantage for Wednesday… "We'll stay in the best hotels, of course," Kamil says, "But we'll also visit some special places like private car collections that aren't normally open for visitors."

Another significant advantage that Supercar Club has over a simple supercar rental is that all the routes it treats members to have been thoroughly researched. They comprise among the most drivable roads in Europe and take in stunning mountain ranges with minimal risk of damage to the cars. "This is important because we have just spent a couple of weeks in Switzerland and Italy, and only about one in 10 of the roads we tried were suitable for these types of cars," Kamil explains.

◁ Club members have over 50 cars to choose from.



◁ Lots of buttons to play with on the centre console.



▽ Huge intakes keep that modded V8 biturbo cool.

The benefits of being a member of Supercar Club don't stop there. Perhaps you're thinking about buying a Brabus 800, but at £257,000 you'd like to make an informed decision based on proper seat time while comparing it to other cars. Or, as Kamil points out, owners of suitable cars could offer them to the collection so that it could make money instead of being tucked away unused. "This is a dynamic project which keeps evolving, reflecting our members' changing expectations and ideas. It's a very exciting time to be involved with the performance car scene in Poland," he adds. Supercar Club members can also suggest new acquisitions, road trips and routes, satisfied in the knowledge this novel form of automotive time-sharing is less expensive than the traditional rental model. Count us in!

▽ Upgraded turbos and 1.6bar of boost pressure.

▽▷ Brabus' PowerXtra B40S-800 package.

▶ *Find out more at www.supercarclub.pl*

Just the facts

Brabus 800 (X290)

Engine M177 3,982cc V8 biturbo **Power** 790bhp@6,600rpm **Torque** 737lb ft@3,600rpm **Transmission** 9-speed auto, 4WD

Weight 2,120kg **0-62mph** 2.9sec **Top speed** 196mph **Years produced** 2019-on

All figures from Brabus except weight which is for a standard Mercedes-AMG GT63 S 4Matic+

> The way Brabus has engineered the suspension means that the GT 4-Door Coupe doesn't feel its size



BRABUS

Labour of love

Recently selling at auction for a record-breaking sum, this fully restored 190SL confirms that many still hold dear the Pagoda's predecessor

WORDS **NEIL BRISCOE**
IMAGES **H&H CLASSICS**

It's temptingly easy to think of the 190SL as the runt of the sporting Mercedes litter. It had, after all, the unfortunate position of sitting alongside the mighty 300SL Gullwing and Roadster in the Mercedes catalogue. That would be a hard enough act for which to understudy, but then the 190SL got replaced in 1963, by the W113 SL Pagoda, a car that even today manages to look sleek, modern and contemporary.

However, there are exceptions to every rule and this particular 190SL is just that. Meticulously restored by Sean Horsey and his team at 1st Choice Car & Body Repairs in Oxfordshire, this particular example is certainly one such exception. Indeed, it's exceptional.

In fact, let's go further than that. This precise 190SL — an original, 1957 right-hand drive version, one of only 562 right-hand drive 190SLs built that year — is a record breaker, and sold at auction last year for £226,000, which is reckoned to be a world record for a supposedly 'lesser' Benz.

You wouldn't necessarily expect such a car to come out of 1st Choice, which is not to be insulting to such a fine supplier, repairer and restorer of cars. Look through its website and you'll see plenty of pictures of satisfied customers standing next to their new or rejuvenated pride and joy, but for the most part these are what one might call fairly normal cars. A Jaguar XF saloon or a Range Rover Sport, maybe. Even a humble Ford Fiesta. Not normally stablemates you would associate with record-breaking, auction-bound restorations. ▷



“This is one 190SL that sidesteps the comparisons with the bigger and faster Gullwing”



190SL
Sporting luxury

Developed by Mercedes at the behest of New York-based car importer Max Hoffman, and making its debut alongside the faster, more glamorous 300SL Gullwing at the 1954 New York motor show, the 190SL looked sleek and sporty, but was mechanically humble under the skin. It was Mercedes' only convertible sports car at the time (the 300SL Roadster arrived in 1957) but used the floorpan and mechanical package of the humble 180 saloon, a car likely to be seen with a taxi sign on its roof.

Mechanicals aside, the 190SL was actually a rather forward-looking car. In comparison to rival roadsters from the UK and Italy, the W121 SL was much plusher and luxurious inside, previewing a general drift away from overt sportiness and towards more luxury motoring that would eventually come to all high-end convertibles through the 1960s, 70s and 80s. Production of the 190SL ran from 1955 until 1963 (a total of 25,881 Roadsters and Coupes with hardtop were built), and it always had the same engine – a 104bhp, four-cylinder 1.9-litre unit, with a top speed of up to 112mph. In spite of such modest performance, it was popular with more than a few celebrities. Grace Kelly we've already mentioned, but other 190SL owners included Zsa Zsa Gabor, Gina Lollobrigida and the Aga Khan.

▷ Look a little closer though, and you start to see some more exotic machinery passing through 1st Choice's hands. A gorgeous, mint green Mk1 Ford Capri GT, for example. Or a 1983 Lotus Esprit Turbo, also green, but this time an almost-black racing green. There's a smattering of Triumph Stags on 1st Choice's books too, and — of course — plenty of Mercedes, from some gorgeous R107 SLs to a stunning creamy-white W113 230SL.

And then there's the 190SL. Have a look at how the car itself, when consigned for the H&H auction at the historic Duxford air museum towards the end of 2021, was described by Damian Jones of H&H Classics: "It has been the subject of an exhaustive two and a half year, photographically documented, 'rotisserie' restoration and is as good underneath as it is on top and the nicest example we have encountered. It is potentially Mille Miglia eligible," said Damian. "This is a wonderful example and very collectable. And this is a car that could just continue to grow in value. It represents everything we mean by the word 'classic'."

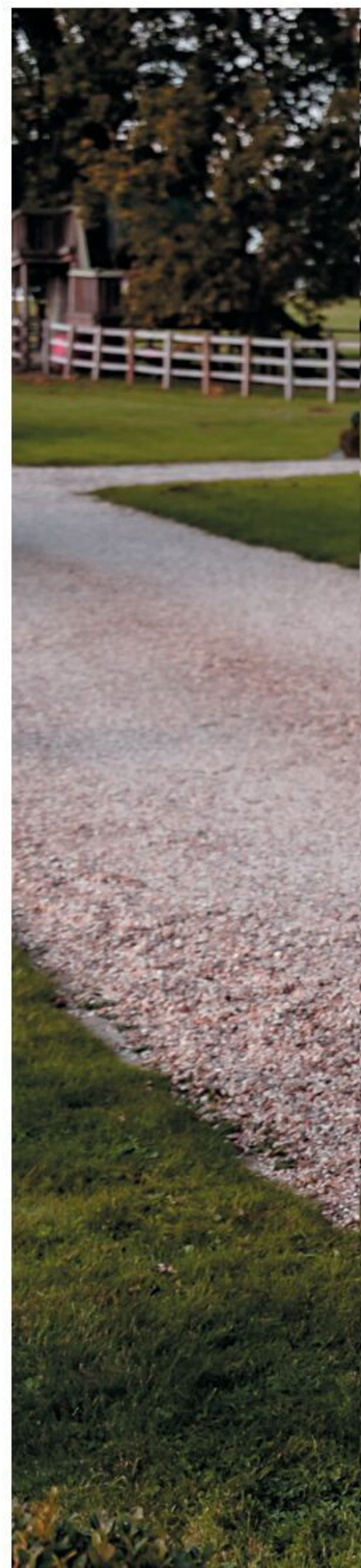
That's quite the description from someone who sees hundreds of classic cars passing across the auctioneer's block every year, and if some of it can be ascribed to auction catalogue hype, there's no hype needed when you look at this finished SL. In its DB190 metallic grey paint, this is one 190SL that sidesteps the comparisons with the bigger and faster Gullwing, or the later Pagoda. Look at it and you can instantly imagine one-time 190SL owner Grace Kelly behind the wheel. The story goes that she used to chauffeur Frank Sinatra around in hers — the two were close friends — but that didn't stop Sinatra later defecting to the charms of a Jaguar E-Type. Would this 190 be enough to bring Ol' Blue Eyes back to the Mercedes fold? I'd say so. The stunning finish is a credit to Horsey and his team, not least because, as with so many restorations, this one looked good at first, but soon became a much bigger task than anticipated.

"The car was in light green and it appeared solid, however when renovations started, years of bodged repairs came to light," Horsey tells us. "It had a good history file going back decades and its previous owner had had it for many years, although when I bought the car, it was actually surrounded by chickens." Local poultry shooed away, the 190SL was brought back to 1st Choice and the first unpleasant discovery was made. "At this time, it was a complete car and was finished in a light shade of green," says Horsey. "However, when the paint came off, we found places with over an inch of filler."

This was not going to be a light-touch restoration for Horsey. The car was entirely stripped back and all of the unpleasant filler was removed. To call it a back-to-metal job doesn't quite do it justice though — this 190SL was stripped back to its component parts, and everything that wasn't perfect was made so. "Throughout the process, I had to gulp more than a few times at how much it was all costing," says Horsey. "It cost me £93,000 to buy, back in the summer of 2018 at a classic car auction. It



△ Designed by Karl Wilfert and Walter Häcker.



Far from a green dream...

This is how the 190SL appeared before the resto work; gleaming new parts ready to revive this classic roadster.





SEAN HORSEY





made vastly over the guide having been entered by its long-term owner. I invested over £100,000 into its restoration on top of the purchase price, and my team of highly skilled restoration staff did a fantastic job. Every nut and every bolt was removed and zinc plated. No expense was spared on the restoration as I wanted this 190SL to be the best there is."

△ **Dashboard colour matches the paintwork.**

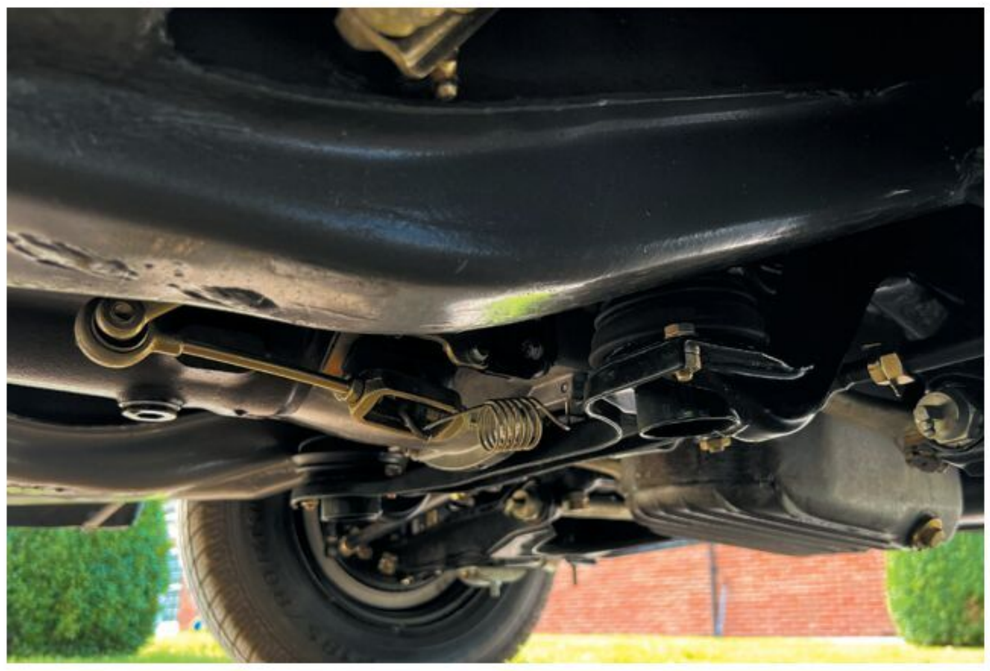
The photos that Horsey shows me are telling. At first, the bright green SL looks fairly solid on the surface (how many times have we all said that, peering at a potential purchase for the first time?), but the next few photos show the extent of repairs (bodges might be a less kind phrase) that lurked below the lime-green finish. Stripped of its shiny paint, the body of the SL looks tired and worn-down by the ravages of time.

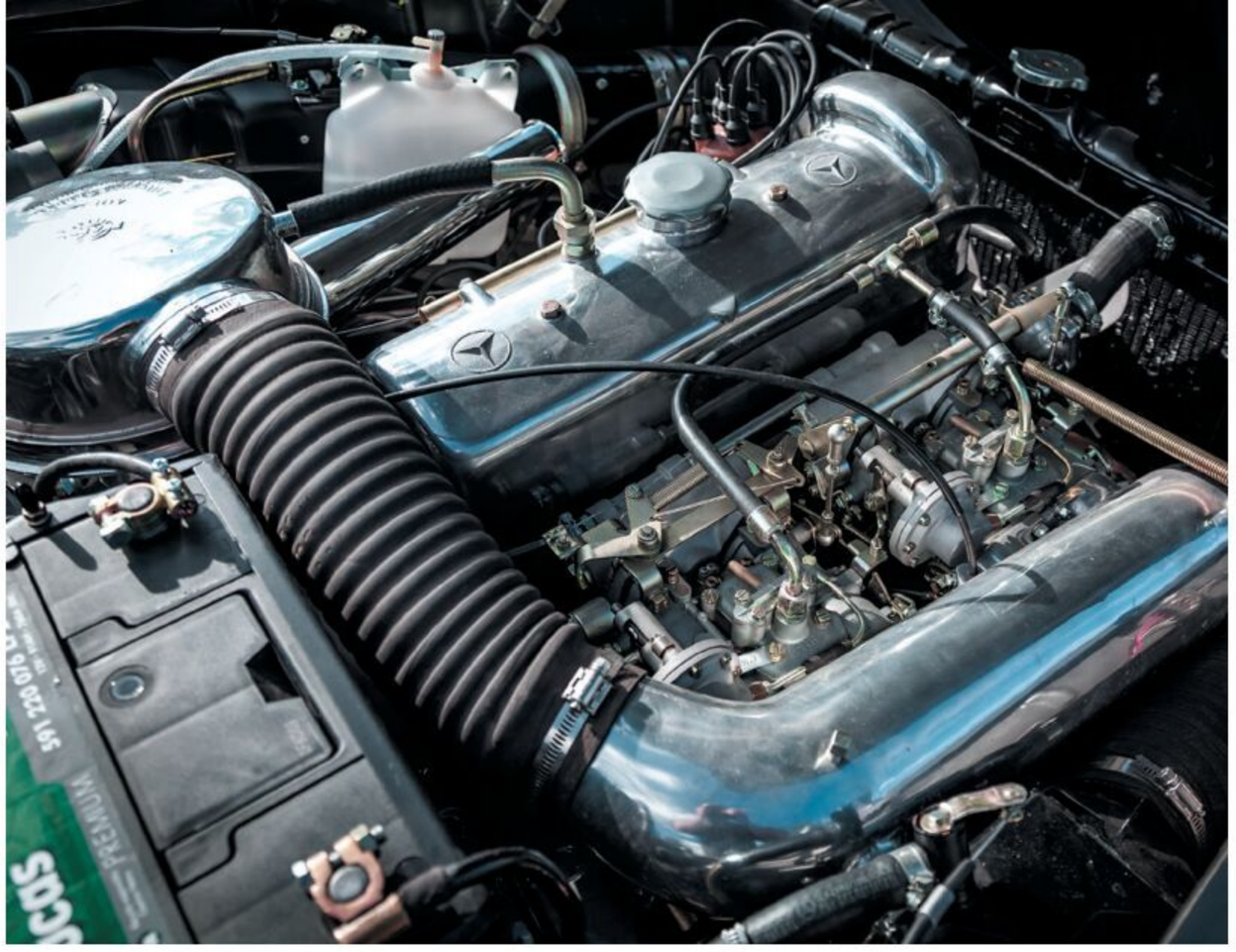
The following photos are, if anything, even more illustrative. Horsey shows me one of components, stripped down to each individual part and laid out neatly on a bench. There are springs, nuts, washers, brackets — everything you need to assemble a classic 1950s roadster – and they all gleam with a beautifully burnished finish. It looks less like a workbench in a classic car restoration garage and more like a window display in Goldsmiths such is the alluring shine coming off each part. Most of these parts will never be seen again, at least until the 190SL needs restoring once more, but the effort that has gone into making each tiny component as perfect as it can be is astonishing.

"The car was taken to a bare shell and sand blasted. This process uncovered the huge amount of fabrication required," says Horsey. "The amount of filler we found was staggering. By the time we'd finished, hardly any filler was used as we got all panels to fit as they should. I'm proud to say that all the work was done in-house. The engine in particular is a work of art."

That last sentiment is undeniable — to see the comparison between the pre-restoration engine bay and the finished article shows just what a dramatic change the 190SL has undergone. ▷







▷ Whereas before it was dirty, grimy and rusting in places, now it looks so perfectly clean and finished that you'd be happy to let a team of food hygiene inspectors have a good poke around it. The little 1.9-litre four-cylinder engine, with a mere 104bhp when new, was not quite one of Mercedes' superstar engines, but here in Horsey's car it's been given superstar surrounds in which to work.

△ **M121 motor with two Solex PHH carburettors.**

△◁ **A pristine underside, as you would expect...**

The same is true of the interior – stripped right back and then delicately and carefully rebuilt, with seats and doors trimmed in a warm, creamy leather that perfectly sets off the dark grey exterior. "All the interior was re-trimmed, and again it was all done in-house by my team at the time," says Horsey. "All trim for 190SLs is hard to find – however we used exact match material. Every part of the build was a challenge – every time we fixed one item, we would then find another problem. The results at the H&H auction spoke for themselves — it made the most a 190SL had ever made at auction with a winning bid on the day, with premium, of £226,000. That's a world record!"

Horsey says that the car was bought by a classic collector who lives in North Wales (and who doesn't want any more details than that included in public) who said that, "The immense quality of the restoration was why he purchased the car."

Is the time ripe for a 190SL revival, then? Horsey thinks so. "I do think the 190SL is a bargain compared to the 300SL, and while the Pagoda is a better driving car, with the price mine made it is up in the same level as the top end Pagoda models. Even at the price paid, in my opinion it's a shrewd investment by the new owner as there are few right-hand drive examples left and very few are restored or kept to the standard of this example."

Just The Facts

Mercedes-Benz 190SL (W121)

Engine M121 1,897cc 4-cyl **Power** 104bhp@5,700rpm **Torque** 105lb ft@3,200rpm **Transmission** 4-speed manual, RWD **Weight** 1,140kg

0-62mph 14.5sec **Top speed** 106-112mph **Fuel consumption** 32.8mpg **Years produced** 1955-1963

All figures from Mercedes-Benz for a 1957 car as pictured; fuel consumption determined at ¾ of top speed (not more than 110km/h, 68mph) plus 10 per cent

"Every time we fixed one item, we would then find another problem"

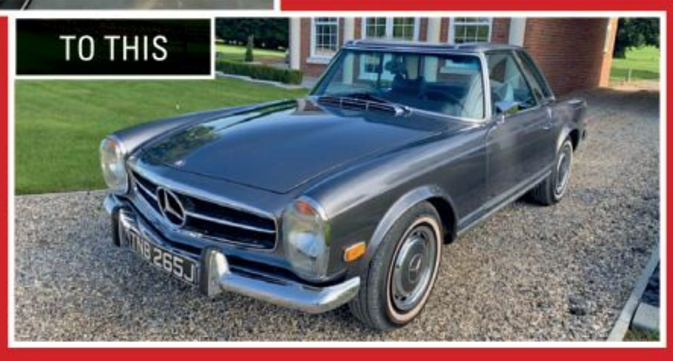
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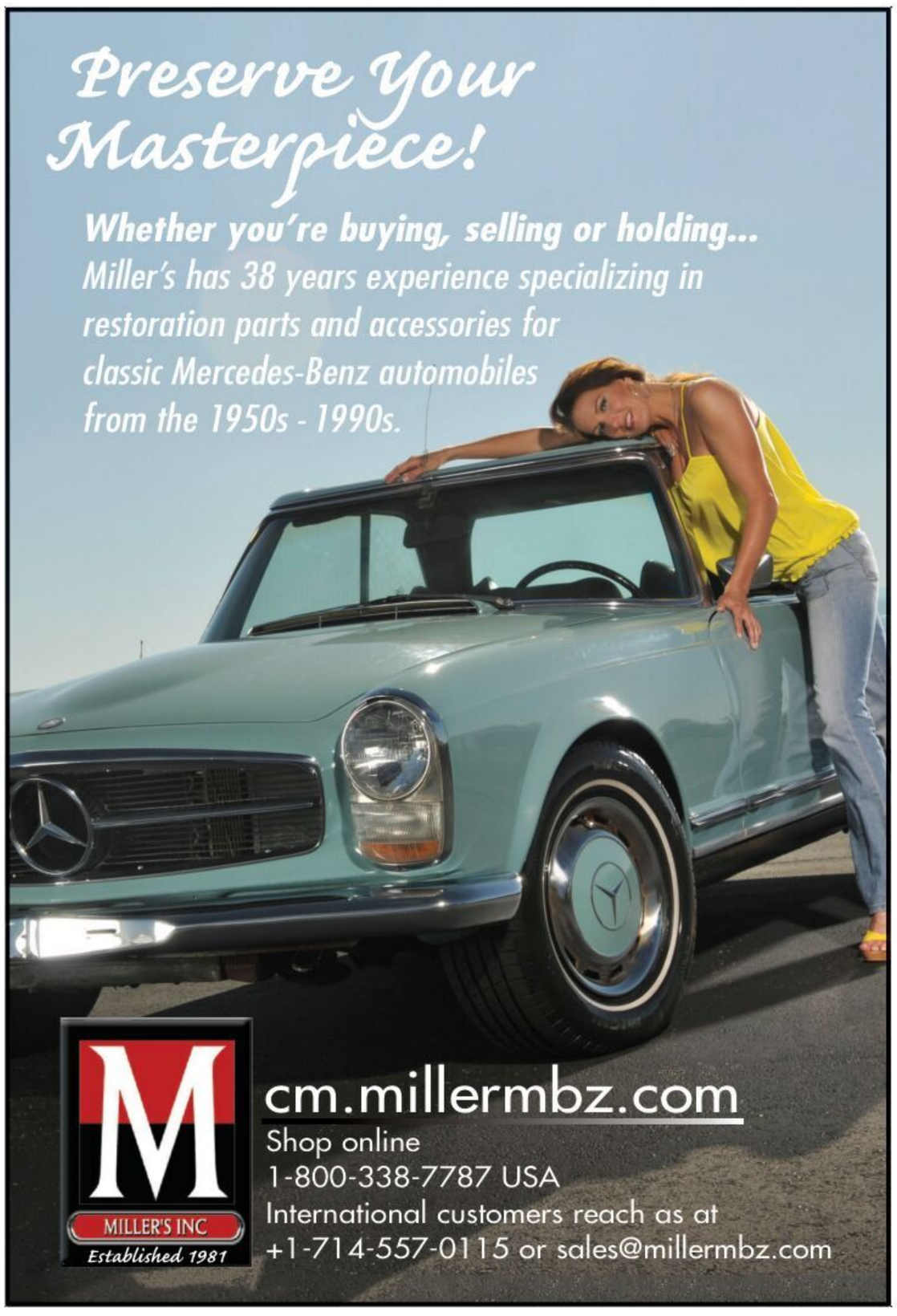
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△ Maybach design study shown in 1997.

▽ Founded by Wilhelm Maybach back in 1909.

“Myths relate to these cars abound, and most of them are unfounded”



Misunderstood?

WORDS **PIOTR R FRANKOWSKI**
IMAGES **DIETER REBMANN & PIOTR R FRANKOWSKI**

The 240-series Maybach cars launched in 2002 and produced until 2013 were meant to represent a rebirth for the historic brand, but it didn't quite work out like that. Piotr R Frankowski tackles misguided beliefs surrounding these flagship saloons

The nearly-forgotten Maybach 57 and 62 were created by starting with a clean sheet of paper and setting out to create the ultimate luxury limousine of the time. The Maybach 57 and 62 models were created to become company flagships, while utilising state-of-the-art technology, and were created with no expense spared. That is rare in the automotive world. Post-Dieselgate and post-coronavirus, it might never ever happen again. Myths relate to these cars abound, and most of them are unfounded.

First of all, let's dispel the internet myth that the W/V240-series was a then-current S-Class, just made longer and differently decorated. Journalists seemed sure that these Maybachs were either based on the 140- or on the 220-series, and this was repeated throughout the press. The first assumption was based on the fact that some chassis components from the 140 S-Class had been adapted for use (nothing strange there), and that the overall shape plus a lot of the interior switchgear reminded journos of the 220-generation S-Class. Nobody needs more proof of the car's provenance than the pricelist of the specialised, unique spare parts one has to order directly from Mercedes today...

Before the W/V240 was engineered and designed, appropriate benchmarks were considered by the Daimler management. For example, the dimensions of the front compartment in the Maybach were copied from the 140-series. The basic idea of having an A/C system with two separate units, front and rear, came from the W100, but in the new car the system was to be capable of both cooling down the interior (the European way) and blowing icy air (the American way). Overall, instead of making the new-era Maybach revolutionary, it was made evolutionary. Completely on purpose. High-end customers abhor unreliability in their cars. The decision was therefore taken to use only proven technologies.

In period, I talked to Jürgen Weissinger, PhD, the then R&D boss for both Maybach and SLR McLaren, now in charge of S-Class and armoured vehicle development. He fathered the Exelero record-breaker, and had begun his career at Mercedes with work on the hydraulics of the legendary 116-series 450SEL 6.9. And this is where we started, by analysing the relative merits of hydraulic (like on the W100 Pullman) and electric comfort systems. Weissinger said that, at least in the advanced development department, hydraulics were coming back and a lot of work was being done on such systems, but they still were not fully fail-safe, since they could fail completely, and electrics were more flexible. Contemporary customers were already so dependent on electric power for their entertainment needs that electrics made more practical sense; the Maybach even had two separate 12V batteries, so that when a customer wanted to watch DVD movies for two hours with the engine off, the engine could still be started afterward.



△△ Piotr (L) with Maybach R&D boss Weissinger. △ Premium carbon trim and mobile phone link. △△△ Interior with cues from S-Class and W100. ▽ Maybachs corner better than some may think.

> "Mercedes' Active Body Control system was not used, as it would not work with the car's weight"

Top of the tree

In 1995, it was decided that the company needed an absolute flagship like the W100, a Mercedes above the S-Class. In 1996, a feasibility study was done and the Tokyo show car, with its sleeping area, special roof, and one wheelbase between the current 57 and 62, created the measurement concept matrix. The car was shown to the public and its reaction was analysed, followed by a more detailed feasibility study.

In mid-1998, the board decided to proceed with a separate Maybach brand rather than a Mercedes Maybach vehicle (an aside: this decision was influenced by Jürgen Schrempp and Jürgen Hubbert, and meant the design team were stuck with an exterior appearance originally intended to look similar to the 220-series S-Class that could no longer be altered). All potential competitors were analysed, and two wheelbases were settled upon. Luckily, the engineers and marketing people managed to convince the bean-counters of the necessity of preserving two ideas from the concept car: the sleeping area (with full crash protection for the





reclined occupant) and a glass roof with switchable transparency.

The body of the show car had been made from carbon fibre, which was impractical for series production. The overall measurements decided upon as a result of the experience with the Tokyo show car led to a choice of brakes, suspension, steering and engine. The measurements led to a weight estimate, where the realistic target for the SWB car was 2.5 to 2.7 tonnes, with 2.8 to 3.2 tonnes for the LWB model. The production body was a hybrid combination of aluminium and steel, with the long rear doors made completely out of aluminuim, the wings and the hood also aluminium, and the bootlid made of special SMC plastic (there were lots of antennas in this car and they would look silly if visible, so they were hidden under plastic).

Under the skin

Air suspension with adaptive damping was chosen because it was efficient at high speed and offered good low speed comfort. As Weissinger explained, the Mercedes Active Body Control system was not used, as it would not work with the car's weight. Some roll in the suspension was retained to enhance driver confidence, and the steering system chosen was the very traditional recirculating ball solution: necessary because of the very high steering forces. Funnily enough, the Maybach was the last car in the Mercedes stable with the so-called block steering/recirculating ball system (*Kugelumlauf*; also employed on the older G-Class), and in the development phase the engineers used the experience gained on the W100 and the 140-series S-Class to fine-tune it.

The brakes were electro-hydraulic, namely the SBC system (later removed from all other Mercs except the SLR). On the Maybach, the two SBC systems were totally separate (for aviation-like redundancy), with eight hydraulic circuits; there were eight pistons up front clutching 296mm-diameter cast iron front discs weighing 18kg. Why not ceramic or carbon, or something even more exotic? In fact, all possibilities had been tested and rejected. Prototypes were extensively tested beyond the Polar Circle, including at very high speeds with ESP off. As Weissinger pointed out, "ESP should not compensate a bad axle design. The feel of the car comes from the basic mechanical systems, and a stiff chassis, ▷



◁ Rear divider screen could be turned opaque.



◁ A 542bhp '62' model looking right at home in St Moritz.

▷ not from the electronics." I drove a Maybach 62 on the frozen surface of the lake in St Moritz, and it acquitted itself well.

And why was the engine a 12-cylinder twin-turbo lump? According to my conversation partner, "12 cylinders is enough". All configurations were simulated and researched, including a V16 (which would have added 1m more length at the front of the car). Weissinger said that "a diesel is not right for the philosophy of the car" and that rumours about a 24-cylinder engine allegedly planned at the beginning were completely untrue. Turbocharging was chosen because a turbocharger isolates the sound of the engine well; there is almost no noise under acceleration, the acceleration seems effortless, as it well should be in a luxury car. The engine could easily attain 737lb ft of torque (1,000Nm) and that was deemed enough for this application.

> "All engine configurations were simulated and researched, including a V16"



△ The M285 V12s were built by AMG in Affalterbach.



▷ Have you ever seen *five* memory settings before?

▽▽ Rear cabin certainly no dog's dinner...

A change in philosophy

How did those cars drive? Very, very well, actually. Low speed ride comfort was slightly inferior to the first-generation Rolls-Royce Phantom, exacerbated by the difficult-to-modulate SBC brakes, but at high speeds all the Maybachs were incredibly good. Stable, rock-steady, even in crosswinds, hugely superior to the first new Phantom above 120mph. Yes, the steering took some getting used to, but the whole car was a solid piece of Mercedes over-engineering.

The pinnacle in terms of performance was undoubtedly the 604/621bhp 62S and not the short-wheelbase 604/621bhp 57S. This is because on the 62S the engineering team preserved the full suspension travel (not so on the 57S) whilst having stiffened nothing in the spring/damper area: special 275/45R20 tyres were used, however, prepared with Michelin. The car remained as comfortable as a 542bhp 62, but put down its grunt with great efficiency. If the need arose, like when, at the Dubai launch, I managed to finally find a challenging corner, it would gamely keep all four tyres on the blacktop despite a huge roll angle. But, you know, almost 2.9 tonnes of kerb weight mean that there are some pretty sizeable forces in play. Despite the weight, the early 604bhp 62S reached 62mph from a standstill in 5.2 seconds and continued accelerating to the artificial 155mph limit.

The current placement of the 'Maybach' moniker in the Mercedes line-up is irony itself: Daimler returned to the original idea, which was at the root of the introduction of the W/V240-series, for it to be simply a model name under the Mercedes brand. Sad, in a way.



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> What you're looking at is a period AMG conversion

There's something unusual going on here. You might have noticed. Looking at this car dead-on, it's clearly an SEC... except, no, the proportions are slightly different. And moving round to the side, there's a whole lot of extra real estate and far too many doors. What you're looking at, in fact, is a period AMG conversion, taking the nose of the 126-series Coupe and painstakingly grafting it onto the statelier proportions of the 500SE Saloon.

Before we get into the intricacies of it all, however, let's take a look at the context from which this all sprung. It's an oft-cited observation that the innovations which appear on the S-Class will filter down to their rival manufacturers' offerings in a few years' time; perhaps the most opulent and unashamed example of Mercedes' premium approach is the 600 *Grosser* – a car designed for film stars, musicians, dictators and despots. Introduced in 1963, it was borne of the ambitious aim of creating 'the best car in the world', something which it arguably achieved with gusto. The entire car, vast and statesmanlike, was plumbed to operate on a hideously complicated system of hydraulics (suspension, windows, privacy shields, the works), because it was felt that this was the smoothest and least intrusive means of making things work: the kind of thing a modern businessman would appreciate: behind-the-scenes efficiency. Occupants of the



Hot in the city

WORDS
DAN BEVIS

IMAGES
JASON DODD

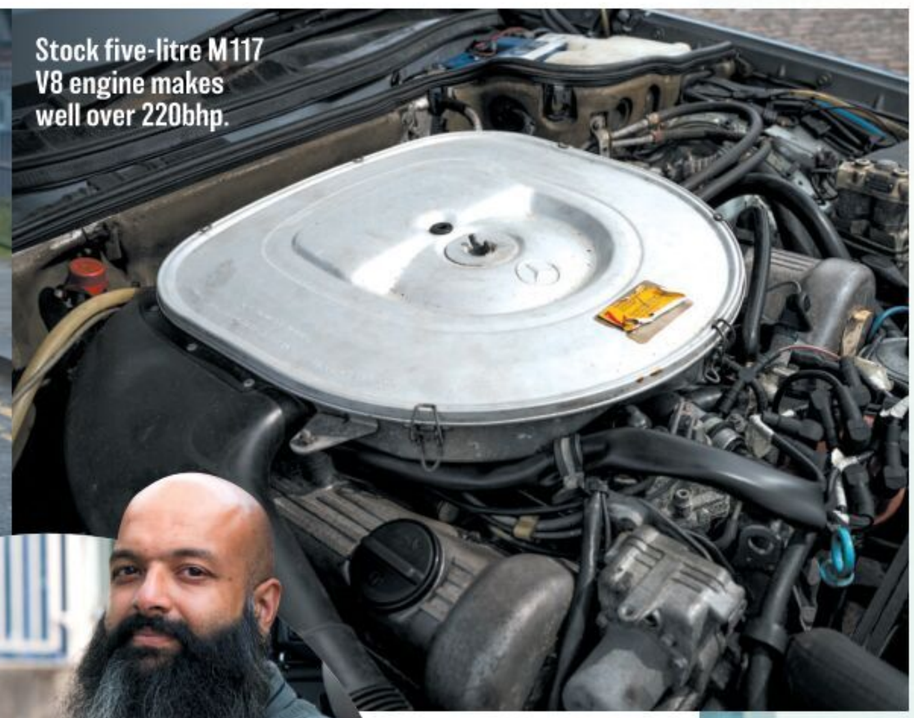
Fusing the elegance of the W126 saloon with the dynamic aesthetic of its SEC stablemate, this period-perfect rarity is an example of 1980s AMG creativity at its finest

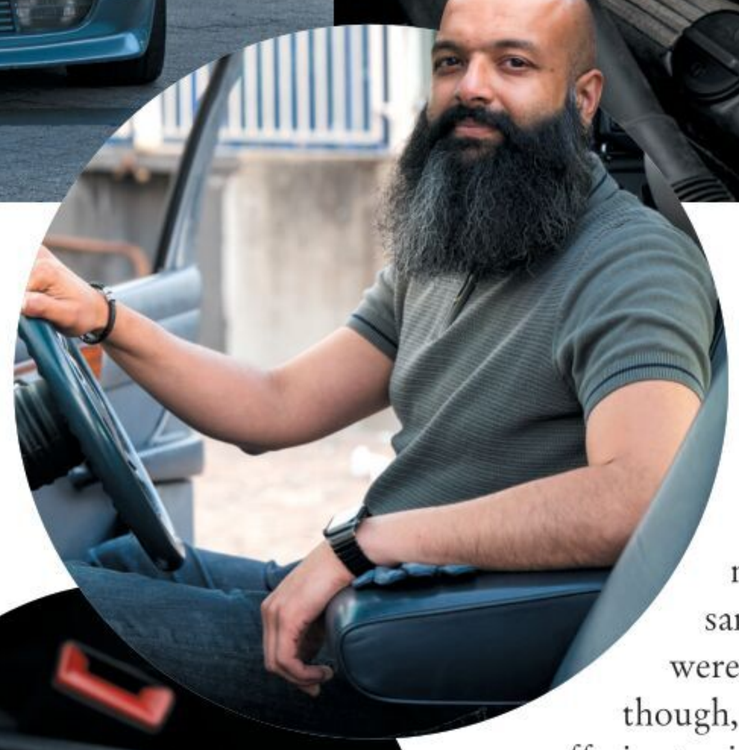
leather-lined, walnut-encrusted, double-glazed interiors would be largely unaware of the rumbling of the substantial V8 up front, although the effect of the LSD might make itself known should they be pursued by paparazzi (or assassins, depending on the owner). And there's the rub: Mercedes-Benz, in the upper echelons of the model range at least, stands for swollen luxury that goes hand-in-hand with outlandish thrust and great physical prowess. The proverbial iron fist/velvet glove.

The 116-series S-Class proudly and bullishly elbowed its way through the fuel crisis, providing post-*Grosser* V8 limo luxury to the moneyed classes from 1972 through to 1980, and the demand for substantial, well-specced ultra-wagons with immense under-bonnet firepower showed no signs of abating as Mercedes-Benz developed the 126-generation S-Class. The 80s were a boom-time for pricey, flashy motors in the UK – the clichés of city boys in red braces and 930 Turbos rang true, although they didn't all fancy widowmaker ▷



△ SEC front end transplant carried out by Stratton.


Stock five-litre M117 V8 engine makes well over 220bhp.



▷ Shyam Bhundia couldn't resist owning this AMG.



▽◁ On-board Mobira telephone a pricey extra.

▷ sports cars; those who wanted the proles to spy their Omega Seamasters as they cruised past had a posh new range of Mercedes *Sonderklasse* models to choose from. The W/V126 built on the luxurious reputation of its predecessor, bulked itself up as if it had been photocopied at 120 per cent, and set about showing the world how money talked.

And it wasn't just Britain that welcomed the model into the fold, of course. The US, Middle East and BRIC economies lapped it up, and this continues to be the case; while the kudos and cachet of having the latest and greatest S-Class is an enduring automotive constant among the caviar classes, you'd struggle to find an oil sheikh or Texan tycoon who didn't also have a cherished 126 in his collection, proudly wearing the gentle patina of several decades of fat-cattery polishing a sheen onto the leather of its cigar-infused interior.

Another interesting point to consider is the involvement of AMG in these swanky luxo-barges. The development and launch of the 126-series Saloon all occurred some time before Mercedes-Benz (or rather, DaimlerChrysler) took a controlling interest in AMG in 1990; before that, AMG Motorenbau und Entwicklungsgesellschaft mbH had operated as its own independent entity – an engineering firm specialising in tuning Mercedes-Benz products, although it did dabble in other brands too (AMG Mitsubishi Galant, anyone?).

The first commercially available, official AMG Mercedes was the C36 in 1993. So, unlike today, when it's possible to walk into a Mercedes-Benz showroom and choose from a variety of official AMG models, it was more the case that an AMG 126 was a bespoke affair, looked on kindly by M-B but by no means officially sanctioned. They were hugely popular though, with AMG offering tuning options and bodykits for all 126s – Saloons, Coupes, even LWB limos – as well as an ostentatious widebody kit for the coupe. And inevitably there was its celebrated six-litre DOHC V8, to whet the appetites of the high net worth speed freaks.

All of this found itself working on an exemplary platform. What was the 126 Saloon all about? Well, Bruno Sacco's design was smart and progressive; while we've been giving you the impression that the S-Class was overtly about brash opulence and hang the consequences, it was in fact a guiding principle of 126 development to integrate the 'Energy Concept': lightweight materials and countless hours in the wind tunnel made the car as frugal as it could possibly be. An improved ride and superior handling were also key principles, and a bafflingly broad array of engine options helped in Mercedes' aim to retain the 'world's best-selling prestige luxury sedan' title while also appealing to a more diverse audience.

If you've ever been in a W126 taxi, your buttocks undoubtedly shimmied to the rhythm of the straight-five three-litre diesel, while petrol variants ranged from 2.6- to three-litre in straight-six form, with V8s starting at 3.8-litres and swelling to a girthsome 5.6. An everyman luxury car? Well, kind of. In terms of body style, it was available in standard four-door saloon guise (SE/SD), long-wheelbase (SEL/SDL) and two-door coupe (SEC) variants, all featuring that vast in-your-face grille that looks magnificently like some kind of chromed breadbin. And with all of these ingredients coalescing, we arrive at Stratton of Wilmslow.

Situated on Water Lane, this specialist dealership has become inextricably intertwined with the AMG name among old-school UK-based aficionados. In the early 1980s, Stratton was appointed by AMG as the sole British distributor of the brand's products – and it wasn't just a case of shipping over AMG Mercs and flogging them to well-heeled clients, the company was fully trusted to build its own examples under licence, and that's what you're seeing here. The car before Jason Dodd's lens today is a genuine AMG 500SE, built by Stratton of Wilmslow and supplied to its first discerning owner in 1984.



> In the early 1980s, Stratton was appointed by AMG as the sole British distributor of the brand's products

The SE's current owner is a serial Mercedes-Benz collector, enthusiast and marque cheerleader by the name of Shyam Bhundia. He's had an impressive variety of retro Mercs over the years, many of them with '500' on the bootlid, and he knows whereof he speaks. "I've always been fascinated by 1980s and 90s Mercedes, and enjoyed going to motor shows as a child," he says. "I bought my first classic in 2016, a 1984 500SEC AMG; this was a project car. Since then, I've progressed to owning a few more, as well as ▷



This 500SE is equipped with an AMG Atiwe wheel.



> An all-original example of an extremely rare Mercedes – it even still has the original Stratton keyring!



▽◁ Original Stratton keyring a great detail! △ Just under 110,000 miles on the odometer.

▷ co-running an Instagram page dedicated to classic German cars: @Deutsche_Classics."

So how did Shyam come to own this extraordinarily rare and original curio? As with so many stories these days, it's thanks to the guiding hand of social media. "I saw a post on Facebook by the previous owner's son-in-law, asking advice on identifying the car due to its SEC front," he explains.

"I started a conversation with him and learned that the car had been in the family from new since 1984; it was ordered brand new with the rare AMG kit from Stratton in Cheshire. The original owner passed away in 2015 and the car had been stored in a garage since then. After a few weeks of chatting, and a trip to Leeds (where the car was kept) from London, we agreed a sale."

It really was too good an opportunity to pass up: an all-original example of an extremely rare Mercedes, in superb condition inside and out – it even still has the original Stratton keyring! The specs are really intriguing too; the full-fat 500SE was treated to the full AMG kit, comprising bumpers, skirts and spoilers, along with the 16-inch BBS Mahle wheels and AMG Atiwe steering wheel.

Of course, the most notable change is the SEC nose job – this was a far more complex undertaking than you might imagine, as it wasn't just a simple bonnet swap. The markedly different proportions and profiles of the two models meant that the conversion required Stratton to fit new outer and inner wings and a different cooler surround too. An in-depth task to carry out on a brand new car fresh from the production line, for sure!

Shyam is the car's second owner, and he's only aware of one or two other SEC-fronted Stratton AMG 500SEs in the country, making this car one of the rarest machines to feature in these pages. "I've owned it for around a year," he says, "and in my ownership I've done a full service, some suspension work, and overhauled the fuel delivery system. There was an issue whereby the car would lose power, and after investigation I found that the fuel tank had rusted from the inside, which was causing fuel starvation. So a replacement tank was fitted, along with a new pump, filter, tank strainer and hoses. The car came with its original black rubber overmats and I've sourced a genuine set of blue ribbed ones."

He's a man with an eye for correctness and detail, and Shyam is keen to take a light touch here to ensure originality and usability without altering or modifying this obscure curiosity. Future plans are to give the suspension a little further attention and finesse the bodywork, but on the whole just to enjoy the car as the piece of automotive art that it is, as well as using it as its original makers intended.

Such is the SE's unusualness that it was featured in the April 1984 issue of *Gran Turismo* magazine, back when it was all shiny and new, and it's just as much of a head-turner today. "People are fascinated by the car," Shyam says, and we can well believe it. Any 126 Saloon is special, and a 500 all the more so. An AMG 500 is approaching holy grail status, but this? This really is something else. A period-perfect example of unfettered AMG creativity.



Just the facts

Mercedes-Benz 500SE (W126)

Engine M117 4,973cc V8 **Power** 228bhp@4,750rpm **Torque** 299lb ft@3,000rpm **Transmission** 4-speed auto, RWD

Weight 1,620kg **0-62mph** 8.1sec **Top speed** 140mph **Fuel consumption** 18.6mpg **Years produced** 1980-1991

All figures from Mercedes-Benz for a standard 1984 500SE on which this car is based; fuel consumption according to EEC urban

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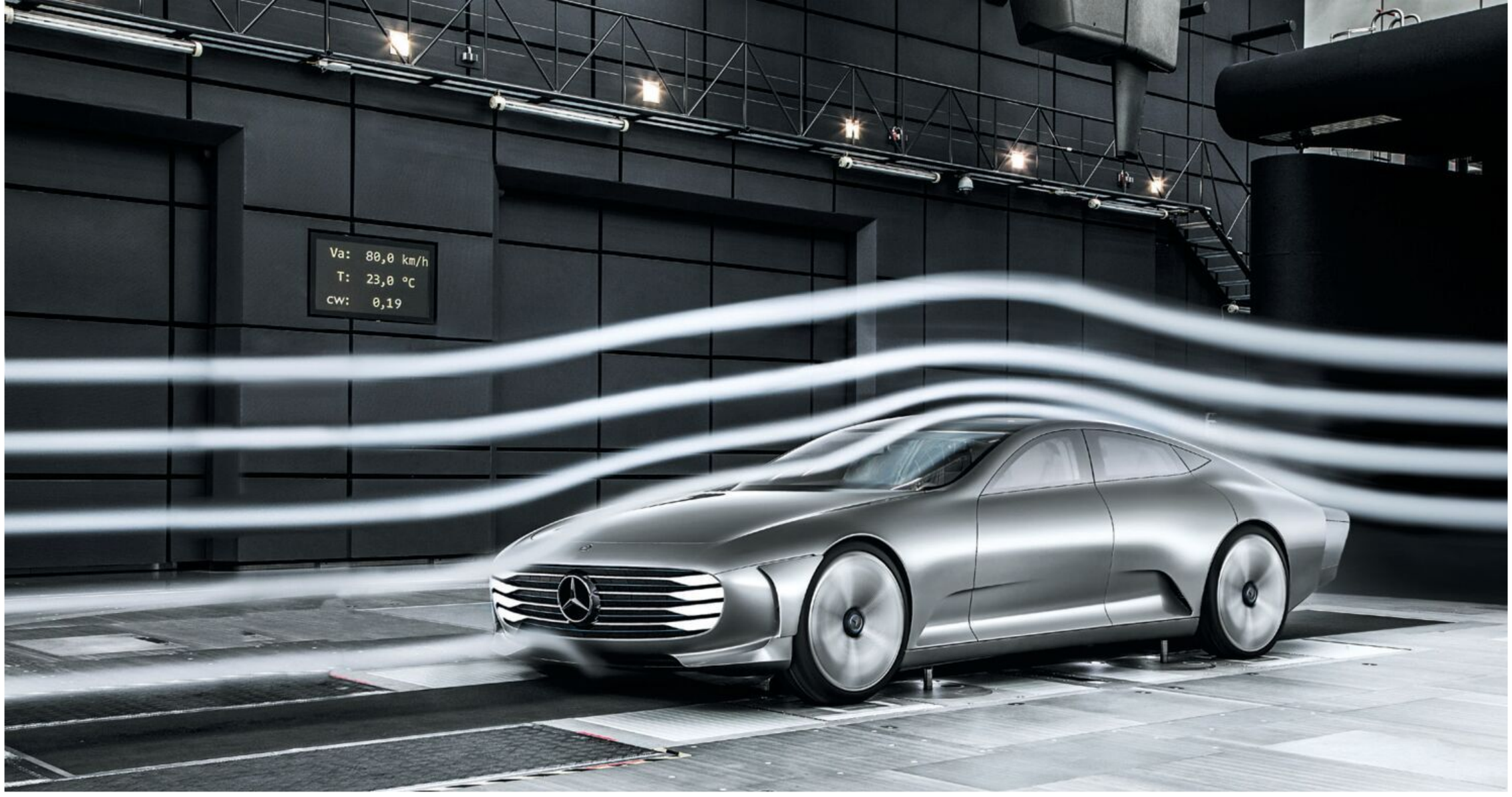








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Aerodynamics

Mercedes was among the first companies to consider streamlining cars in a bid for speed and its methods have only got more sophisticated over time

WORDS **SHANE O' DONOGHUE** IMAGES **DAIMLER AG**

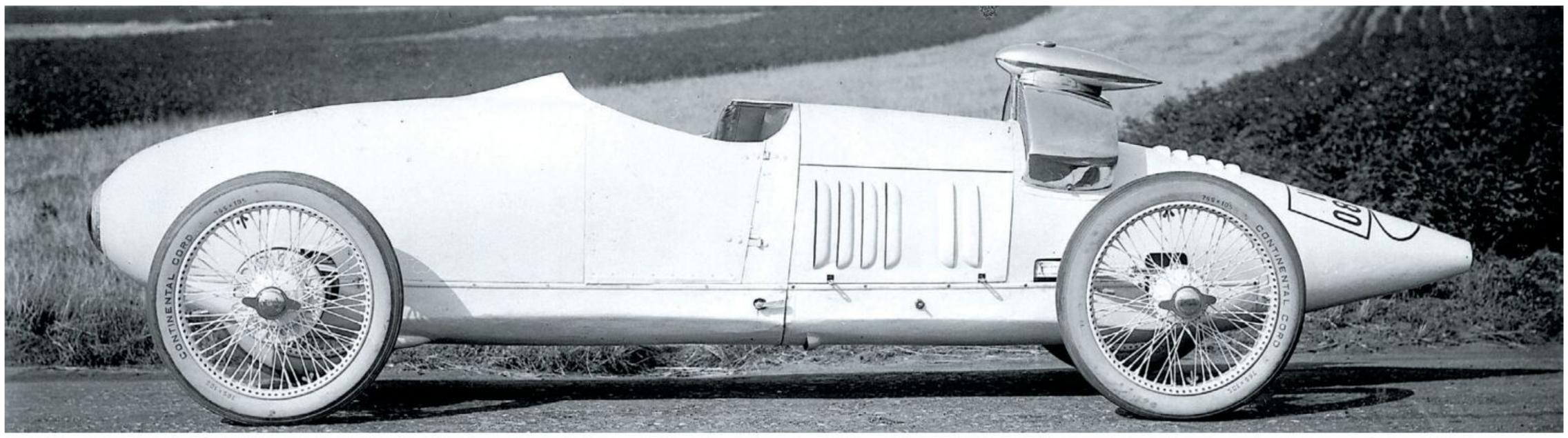
△ Concept IAA with active aero and a drag coefficient of 0.19Cd.

Too many people interested in cars, especially sporting models, the word 'aerodynamics' usually means downforce, but it's a huge field of scientific study, pioneered by the aeronautical industry. There's a lot more to it than mere downforce, too. The aerodynamics of a car affects its drag through the air, wind noise and overall stability as well, plus its ability to keep the windows clear of water and debris.

Aerodynamic lift is the opposite of downforce, in that it exerts an upwards force on the car body. Unless you want a flying car, this is not a good thing. Even small amounts of lift are undesirable, as it alters a car's weight distribution and grip levels by reducing contact pressure on the tyres, leading to instability. Conversely, downforce – or negative lift – adds weight at speed, pushing the car down, which aids stability. Large amounts of downforce are desirable in sports cars and in motorsport, where elevated cornering speeds are desirable and it's usually created using a 'wing'. The lower surface of a wing is longer than the top, meaning the air has further to travel. Therefore, it speeds up, reducing the pressure. The opposite happens on the top surface of the wing, resulting in a net force down on the wing – in other words, negative lift – or downforce.

▽ Benz 'Teardrop' racing car of the 1920s with a two-litre six-cylinder.

Drag is one of the easiest measurements to comprehend – and arguably one of the most important for road cars. As a car travels through the air, the air exerts a drag force on it in the opposite direction. It's not



difficult to understand that a London bus, for example, will experience more drag at a given speed than, say, a Mercedes A-Class. While drag is largely determined by the frontal area of a car, it is also proportional to the speed squared, so at higher speeds, the engine must work much harder to overcome this force. Hence, anything that can be done to reduce drag helps with performance and fuel economy or, in the case of an EV like the EQA, overall range. The drag coefficient is a standardised measure of a car's drag these days and is often quoted by the manufacturer.

Engineers quickly cottoned on to the idea of reducing drag by smoothening the bodywork, with evidence of its implementation by Daimler-Motoren-Gesellschaft as far back as the 1920s as motorsport and speed records took off. The advent of high-speed motorways in Germany also highlighted the need to consider how air flows around a car. A huge amount of work was carried out in the field through the 1930s by Mercedes, resulting in lots of beautiful, smooth-looking cars.

The research arguably culminated with the 1938 540K Streamliner, originally conceptualised for the (eventually abandoned) Berlin to Rome race. The standard 540K had a coefficient of drag (Cd) of 0.57 and a top speed in the region of 90mph. Thanks to new bodywork, including enclosed headlights and even a painted-on Mercedes logo in place of the usual upright item, the one-off vehicle managed a Cd of just 0.36, enabling a top speed of 115mph, with sustained cruising at over 100mph. This car ended up in the hands of Dunlop for high-speed tyre testing and research on public roads.

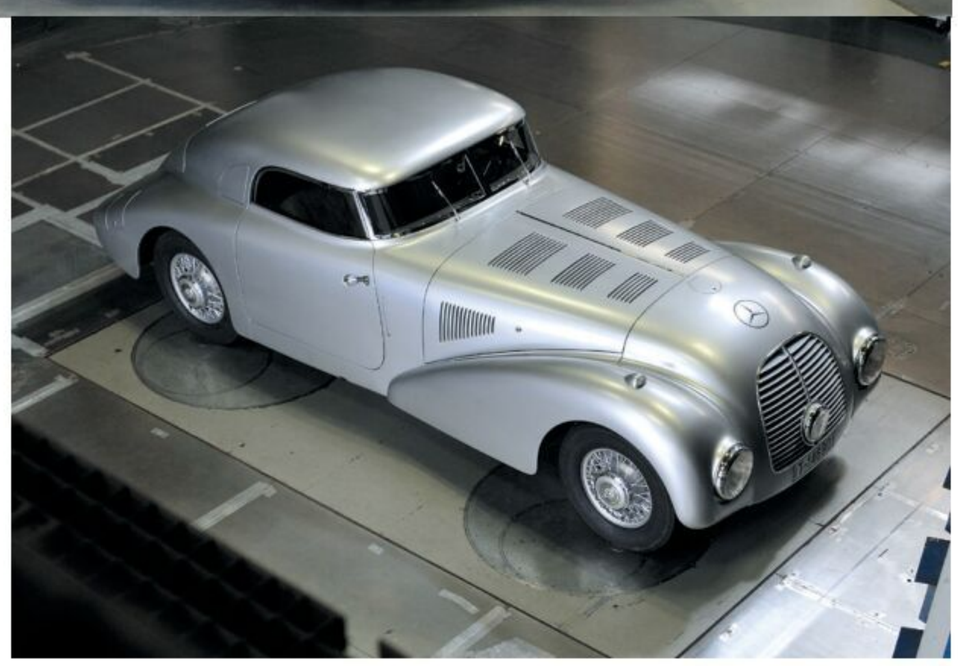
Smooth is fast – and efficient

Daimler AG lays claim to creating the first ever wind tunnel designed specifically for testing cars, in Stuttgart-Untertürkheim, used initially in 1943 and then regularly after World War Two. Nonetheless, efficient, low-drag car bodies took a back seat to extravagant style from the 1950s through the 1970s. The oil crisis of 1980 refocused engineering minds on the discipline. The 1984 W124 E-Class, for example, managed a sector best Cd of just 0.29, and incremental improvements were possible from then on. In 2013, the CLA recorded a value as low as 0.22.

That figure was for the CLA180 BlueEfficiency Edition, which featured significant modification to help it cut through the air smoothly. Just two years later, Mercedes signalled that it was planning to go further when it revealed the spectacular Concept IAA (Intelligent Aerodynamic Automobile) at the 2015 Frankfurt motor show, with a coefficient of drag as low as just 0.19 thanks to active aerodynamics. Above speeds of 50mph, the rear bodywork extended 390mm, other flaps in the bumpers changed position to alter the air flow and even the geometry of the wheels adjusted for minimum drag.



△ W29 540K Streamliner created in 1938 has a Cd rating of just 0.36!



▽ The W124 E-Class deserves recognition for its low-drag design.

▽◁ Sleek CLA180 BlueEfficiency with a cool 0.22Cd rating.

> **Engineers quickly cottoned on to the idea of reducing drag by smoothening the bodywork**

The measures required to achieve this value were quite extreme, and not likely to reach production any time soon, but the lessons learned in creating the show car undoubtedly fed into the development process for the new Mercedes EQS, as its Cd value can be as low as 0.2, depending on specification. Sure, it looks smooth, but the detail design required to achieve that figure is astounding. Sealing of all joints was a top priority, while detailed management of the air flow over, under and around the car resulted in elaborate underbody panelling, hidden spoilers and aerodynamically optimised wheel and body panel styles.

Unlike the dramatic Concept IAA, the EQS's aerodynamic cleverness is hidden, and it has forged a path for future Merc saloons too, such as the similar-looking EQE. To extend the electric range of these, and reduce wind noise over their bodies, it has been necessary to reinvent the typical profile expected of a Mercedes saloon. That may well mean that more people than ever will grow to understand how the study of aerodynamics is so important to the shaping of our cars.





Figures of eight

There are some great deals to be had on used Mercedes V8s, as our UK market expert reveals

WORDS **GUY BAKER** IMAGES **OAKMOORE CAR COMPANY, MANOR HOUSE AUTOS AND JUNCTION 17 CARS**







S500 at Junction 17 with stonking 4.7-litre V8 biturbo at £44,975.

There are plenty of appealing nearly-new and used Mercedes V8s for sale in the UK right now. And some of the best deals can be found on two- to five-year old C-Class, CLS and S-Class models.

The 63 AMG in particular is a real favourite, with plenty around in saloon, coupe and estate guises – and in a variety of colours. Some of the finest value can actually be found on the latter, with cars like this stunning white 2015 C63 V8 biturbo Estate going for just over £30,000. This particular car had covered a typical 51,000 miles and was advertised for sale for £33,995 at the Oakmoore Car Company (www.oakmoorecarcompany.co.uk) in Birmingham.

As you would expect, this C63's spec was impressive and this car also packed full Mercedes main dealer service history, was sold with a six-month parts and labour warranty and claimed just two previous owners. Aside from all the usual AMG goodies, this wagon also came with matte black, 19-inch AMG alloys, matching black nappa leather, the Premium Package and an 8.4-inch high-res colour display.

Another V8 of this era that seems good value is the CLS63 AMG, with some 2016 examples selling for less than £40,000. We really liked the look of this black metallic, 65-plate Brabus-tuned example, for sale at Manor House Autos in Hertfordshire (manorhouseautos.co.uk). With just 33,000 miles on the clock and one previous keeper, it was priced a little higher than your average CLS63 at £43,995, but is a unique vehicle, with a full M-B service history record and a remap to 750bhp!





△ Brabus-tuned CLS63 going for £44K at Manor House Autos.



△ Oakmoore's 51,000-mile C63 Estate was stickered at £33,995.

A beast of a CLS, this car was fitted with a Stage 2 exhaust and £5,000 worth of 20-inch black turbine alloys, as well as the AMG carbon fibre trim package with a rear bumper and spoiler, an eight-inch colour display and a glass sunroof with star lights in the black headlining. Other treats included AMG's rear limited-slip differential, AMG sports suspension with adjustable damping and rear self-levelling air suspension.

Keep it classy

If you like your V8s a little less in-your-face, with classic understated lines, then look no further than a 217-series S500 Coupe AMG Line. There are quite a few of these V8 biturbos advertised for sale at the moment and this Diamond White 66-plater at Junction 17 Cars in Peterborough (www.junction17cars.co.uk) looked a perfect example. It had covered a slightly above average 50,000 miles, but did come with a full Mercedes-Benz service history and an unbeatable spec.

Stickered at £44,975 and clad in premium black leather upholstery plus black poplar wood trim, spec highlights included a panoramic roof, the Burmester sound system, 20-inch alloys, a reversing and top view camera system, a 12.3-inch colour HD display, Airmatic, Airscarf, Active Park Assist Parktronic, Thermotronic luxury automatic climate control and ventilated, electric memory seats with heating.

▸ *Fancy something a bit more capacious? Then check out our top three £20,000 Mercedes-Benz SUVs on page 76*

Forecourt find

300SL (R107)

The Friedrich Geiger-designed R107 SL of 1971 to 1989 is one of the most appealing Mercedes ever made. Period. Even now, it looks fantastic, could easily serve as more than a weekend pleasure, and feels modern enough to avoid unsettling drivers accustomed to much younger cars.

Whilst you might see lower mileage examples, you'll probably struggle to find a better sub-£50,000 car than this Signal Red 1988 300SL automatic we spotted for sale at Peter Jarvis Classic Cars in Kent. Sporting a mint-condition leather interior, hard and soft tops, power steering, ABS brakes, electric windows, the original fire extinguisher and tools, every MOT certificate, the original handbook and wallet and full service history, it had covered just 66,000 miles from new. Even the three-litre, 185bhp straight-six engine looked to be in terrific condition. The asking price was £48,750.

Dealer information: Peter Jarvis Classic Cars
Tel: 01322 669081
Web: www.peterjarvis.net



△ Just 13,742 of the R107 300SL were made in 1985 to 1989.



▷ Four-speed automatic gearbox; full leather seat trim.



▽ M103 engine with 2,962cc displacement and one overhead cam.

Top tips

Car buyers' rights

Buying a used car should be trouble-free. But what are your rights if things don't work out?

The 2015 Consumer Rights Act offers legal redress if you purchase a car from a dealer. Cars must be of satisfactory quality, fit for purpose, and as described, with dealers liable for faults at the time of sale even if they appear later.

Reasonable wear and tear are excluded, but if there's a genuine fault you can reject any car within 30 days of buying it. If it's purchased using finance this should be done through the finance company.

If a fault appears after 30 days you are entitled to a repair, replacement or refund. Dealers have one opportunity to repair or replace the vehicle, after which you're entitled to a refund, with a deduction for 'fair use'.

Proving a car was faulty at the time of sale becomes harder after six months have elapsed, but buy your vehicle with a credit card and you could still claim against the credit company under Section 75 of the Consumer Credit Act.

The 2014 Consumer Contracts Regulations cover online purchases and give you the right to cancel an online purchase in writing within 14 working days, with a full refund.

You have less legal protection buying privately - ask as many questions as possible, use a *Mercedes Enthusiast* Buyer's Guide and ideally get the car inspected by an expert.

Before buying at auction check all the T&Cs - sometimes your rights are excluded with limited redress against the seller, and almost none against the auction house.

Auction spotlight

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

- **CLK220 CD Coupe Avantgarde**
2.1-litre, diesel, auto, 2006/56-plate, 123,000 miles, **£2,150**
- **C320 CDI Elegance**
3.0-litre, diesel, auto, 2008/08-plate, 108,000 miles, **£4,150**
- **CLS320 CDI Coupe**
3.0-litre, diesel, auto, 2007/57-plate, 103,000 miles, **£4,800**
- **SL500**
5.0-litre, petrol, auto, 2003/53-plate, 91,000 miles, **£5,200**
- **ML280 CDI Edition S**
3.0-litre, diesel, auto, 2007/57-plate, 84,000 miles, **£6,000**
- **SL500**
5.5-litre, petrol, auto, 2006/56-plate, 105,000 miles, **£7,500**
- **A180d Sport Premium**
1.5-litre, diesel, auto, 2016/66-plate, 47,000 miles, **£13,900**
- **CLA180 Coupe AMG Sport**
1.6-litre, petrol, manual, 2015/15-plate, 58,000 miles, **£14,100**
- **C300h AMG Line**
2.1-litre, diesel-electric, auto, 2015/15-plate, 76,000 miles, **£14,300**
- **GLA200 AMG Line Premium**
1.6-litre, petrol, auto, 2017/67-plate, 30,000 miles, **£21,600**
- **GLE250d 4Matic AMG Line Premium**
2.1-litre, diesel, auto, 2016/65-plate, 58,000 miles, **£25,100**
- **C200 Cabriolet AMG Line**
2.0-litre, petrol, auto, 2019/69-plate, 26,000 miles, **£25,950**
- **C63 AMG Coupe**
6.2-litre, petrol, auto, 2014/14-plate, 20,000 miles, **£30,100**
- **AMG GLC43 4Matic Premium Plus**
3.0-litre, petrol, auto, 2018/68-plate, 12,000 miles, **£42,200**
- **GLS350d 4Matic Grand Edition**
3.0-litre, diesel, auto, 2019/19-plate, 19,000 miles, **£60,100**

And remember...

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TOP THREE

£20,000 SUVs

SUVs continue to prove hugely popular with UK buyers, and although somewhat late to the party Mercedes-Benz has launched talented contenders in most sub-sectors of the SUV market over the last few years. And that means there are plenty of tasty second-hand SUVs to tempt fans of three-pointed stars. These cars don't come cheap of course, but with so much competition for diesel SUVs in the UK, you'll be surprised what you can buy for just £20,000 – despite the recent hike in UK used car values. The machines below are three of the best choices, but you should also consider the seven-seat GL-Class, which also sits comfortably within our £20,000 budget.



GLA200d (X156)

A 60,000-mile, 2017/67-plate GLA200d could be yours for smidgeon under our £20,000 budget. And with 300lb ft of torque and a 64.2mpg combined fuel economy figure it packs a welcome combination of mid-range urge and impressive efficiency. OK, it's not great off-road - but you're not going to use a small front-wheel drive SUV for that anyway, and many examples are surprisingly well-specced. If you can find a one-owner, Sport Premium automatic with a full M-B service record then so much the better.



GLC250d (X253)

If a GLA is just too small, then twenty big ones will stretch to a 201bhp, 2015 GLC250d 4Matic AMG Line with 95,000 miles. On-road performance is impressive, with a 0-62mph time of 7.6 seconds and a 138mph top speed, whilst 369lb ft guarantees strong acceleration even when fully loaded. And the GLC is pretty handy on the rough stuff too - as long as you aren't too ambitious. Seek out AMG Line cars with tasty options such as 19-inch alloys, Active Park Assist with a reversing camera, and black ash wood trim.



ML350 CDI/Bluetec (W166)

If going off-road from time-to-time is unavoidable then you need a proper SUV, and a 166-series ML350 CDI/Bluetec AMG Sport can certainly mix it with the big boys. Our budget bags a cherished, 2014 example with 75,000 miles, a full main dealer service history and just one or two owners. The performance figures speak for themselves (139mph and 7.4 seconds to 62mph) and with 457lb ft available when needed towing is also a breeze. And all AMG Sport examples have a plush spec.

Latest products and accessories

Mansory upgrades for 223-series S-Class

Elite tuning house Mansory has released a comprehensive customisation programme for Mercedes' latest S-Class which covers four areas: design (with various body applications in carbon fibre), wheels, interior and performance - covering both petrol and diesel engines. Mansory's PowerBox ECU which can be used in conjunction with a four-pipe exhaust system adds 65bhp and 101lb ft to the output of the S400d, and 91bhp and 80lb ft to the output of the S500. For full information on the refinement programme options for the 223-series, visit www.mansory.com.



Lorenzo CLS63S 4M by Pogea Racing

The Lorenzo CLS63S 4M is German tuner Pogea Racing's way of demonstrating how far it can take the 218-series Shooting Brake using parts from its range. The fully-specced Lorenzo is painted in matte 'Pogea Stealth Gray' and boasts 20-inch Pogea forged alloys, KW coil springs, a revised intercooler, new turbo and remap to 740bhp/822lb ft, plus numerous carbon fibre bodykit options and glossy black enamelled tailpipes. Visit www.pogea-racing.com for complete details and parts prices.



Powerflex bushes for W201 Mercedes

If your W201 190's suspension is starting to creak a bit, then a fresh set of Powerflex polyurethane bushes might be just the ticket. Powerflex sells a whole host of W201-compatible bushes, with its front arm front and rear bushes popular sellers, as well as front anti-roll bar bushes (in 22mm and 25mm sizes) and front anti-roll bar to link-arm bushes. Replacing worn rubber bushes with Powerflex items should improve your W201's handling, tyre wear, and braking. There is a stiffer Black Series range too.



Signature Tune E350d

How to make the good-looking W213 E-Class V6 turbodiesel even more fun to drive



An engine remap could unlock at least an extra 40bhp...



An efficient, high performance all-rounder, Mercedes' 254bhp E350d claims 457lb ft of torque in factory trim, translating into a 5.9-second 0-62mph time, yet returns 48.7mpg on the combined cycle. Luxurious and stylish, the 2016 to 2018 E350d is also great value at the moment, and is ripe for further tuning.

Many examples pack a spec that includes 19-inch AMG alloys, ABC air suspension, AMG bodystyling, automatic climate control, cruise control, electrically adjustable heated mirrors, LED daytime running lights, Comand with a 12.3-inch screen, a reversing camera and heated seats if the Comfort Package was selected. And the 350d comes with Mercedes seamless nine-speed automatic transmission.

However, everything can be improved upon and the W123 E350d is no exception - the OM642 engine is readily tuned for greater performance and efficiency, and there are a number of other areas that can also be enhanced.

Top tuning tips

Stick to cars with a full Mercedes-Benz service history where possible, and some kind of warranty covering the engine and mechanicals. Make sure that all recalls have been addressed (there have been a few) and watch out for fogged-up headlamps, misbehaving alarms, any DPF regeneration issues, low AdBlue levels, faulty rear cameras and any signs of oil leaks. Demand isn't high, so you should be able to negotiate a reasonable discount.

Engine

Expert tuner Celtic Tuning recommends a Stage 1 ECU Remap, which for around £450 adds approximately 48bhp and 51lb ft of torque. Meanwhile, a remap at Birmingham-based MSL Performance would add around 40bhp with a 10 per cent increase in torque and slightly better fuel consumption. A similar Stage 1 remap at Quantum Tuning could add up to 52bhp and 45lb ft, whilst some owners also add a high-flow air filter and a sports exhaust - but note that driving on UK roads with a DPF delete is illegal.

Transmission

The factory set-up is good so there's little to improve, but a gearbox ECU remap can give faster shifting times, reset the maximum and minimum rpm for up and downshifts, adjust the torque limiter to unleash more power when it's safe to do so, and produce smoother gearshifts. Various tuners offer this service.

Suspension

OE bushes will wear out so we would recommend fitting some polyurethane replacements, like those available from Powerflex. You can also replace the ARB links and the lower control arms at the front (Eibachs are popular) and the torque arms can also fail. Lowering springs made by H&R are around £240 and aluminium front strut braces start at around £250.

Brakes

Uprated brake pads are available from a number of suppliers including Brembo, Pagid and EBC, whilst braided brake hoses from Goodridge, Tarox or EBC will enhance brake performance feel, as will pricier big brake kits from the likes of Brembo. A few owners have even fitted second-hand AMG brake kits.

Wheels and bodywork

There are a variety of options, from rear boot spoilers, rear diffusers, grilles and alloys, right up to full-blown bodykits from the likes of Lorinser, Mansory, Prior Design and Maxton Design. Xenon HID projector headlights enhance the car's lighting, whilst affordable exterior chrome components and matching valve covers can add a tasteful finishing touch to the appearance.

Interior

As with most modern Mercedes, Android DVD GPS Navigation Command upgrades are available (running Android OS), so you can install any app that you like from the Google Play Store, play DVDs, use Bluetooth hands free and connect to a WiFi network of your choice.

Useful contacts

www.mslperformance.co.uk
www.quantumtuning.co.uk
www.celtictuning.co.uk
www.mansory.com
www.amdtuning.com
www.tarox.co.uk
www.forgemotorsport.co.uk
www.ebcbrakes.com
www.brembo.com/en
www.powerflex.co.uk
www.goodridge.co.uk
www.eibachshop.co.uk
www.bilsteinsuspensionstore.co.uk

EBC Brakes Racing Track Pack

If you take your Mercedes on track, then you know that braking is one of the most crucial aspects of your vehicle's performance. EBC Brakes Racing's new Track Pack allows you to monitor your brake temperatures to maintain optimal performance. This kit contains Ultra High-Performance Super DOT 4 Racing brake fluid, disc heat test paints (designed to melt away at the designated temperature) and 10 caliper temperature strips, which can be applied to the outer edge of your brake calliper to provide a quick and easy real-time reading of the temperature. Check it out at www.ebcbrakes.com.





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"In September 1992, the 500SL engine switched from Bosch KE-Jetronic to Bosch LH-Jetronic fuel injection"

Guts and glory

The M119 V8-powered SLs from the 129-series are among the greatest modern classic buys for those on a reasonable budget, combining robust quality with effortless performance and high-end cabin appointments

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

The R129 generation of the SL could hardly have been more different from the R107 it replaced in late 1989, a model that had been around for 18 years and as a result had come to look and feel old fashioned even if its charisma and customer appeal were undiminished. Whereas the R107, designed in the 1960s, relied on simple, electronics-free mechanicals, everything about its successor was state-of-the-art, from the trick suspension to the incredible pop-up rollover protection system.

But the classic car market can be fickle, and while the R107 has enjoyed collector status from the day it was discontinued over 30 years ago, the R129 has not commanded the same respect. For years after it was replaced in 2001, its values were on the floor, making it by far the cheapest SL you could buy and risking it becoming the 'throwaway' SL.

Of late, though, R129s – at least those in respectable condition – have begun to creep up in price as the market re-evaluates them, and now values generally exceed those of early R230 SLs, the model that replaced it. Furthermore, preferences are developing on particular models. Where previously the 1993 to 1998 SL60 AMG (and unicorn-esque SL70/73 cars) was the only model that fetched any real price premium, the early and mid-cycle 500s have been identified as a good model to bag, due to their motor being the four-valves-per-cylinder, five-litre M119 V8 as opposed to the later M113 three-valver.

So here we focus on these SLs, built from the start of production until the spring of 1998. Has Mercedes' traditional build quality been enough to sustain these complex motorcars, or are they little more than wallet-trashing liabilities?

Design & evolution

The R129, the sixth model to bear the hallowed *Sport Leicht* badge, was unveiled at the Geneva motor show in March 1989, and unsurprisingly was the star of the show. The R107's classic elegance was replaced by a subtle powerhouse look, emphasised by bodywork bereft of chrome apart from the star on the grille and the model badging. Stuttgart legitimately billed it 'a technical showcase' and claimed nothing was shared by the two model generations apart from their 2+2 convertible configuration.

The flagship was the 500SL, and with this model Mercedes broke a tradition of launching a new car with engines from its predecessor. Gone was the R107 500SL's two-valve M117 five-litre V8, replaced with the all-new M119 of the same capacity, featuring multi-valve cylinder-heads and inlet camshaft adjustment. Output



Spotted for sale

PRIVATE SELLER
500SL
1991/H blue, grey leather, ADS, air conditioning, seat heaters, airbag, 56,400 miles, £16,980, Southampton

was 322bhp plus 332lb ft at 4,000rpm, increases of 33 and 15 per cent over the R107 500SL. The 500SL was accompanied by the three-litre 300SL, which did carry over a previous engine, the two-valve M104 unit, and the four-valve 300SL-24.

A four-speed automatic gearbox (with 'Standard' and 'Economy' settings) was fitted as standard to the 500SL. At that point, Mercedes had just come up with the world's first production five-speed automatic, but it was made available only on the 300SL-24.

A new generation acceleration skid control, ASR, was present to warn of and prevent the rear wheels breaking traction, along with ADS, the adaptive damping system that trims the shock absorber stiffness according to road surface quality and road speed. It also incorporated self-levelling; both however were expensive options in the UK in 1989, ASR £1,800 and ADS £2,900.

As on previous SLs, the hood was stowed beneath a neat metal cover, but was electrically powered for the first time on an SL-Class (built into the seat), even the rear-view mirror.

But the cleverest trick of all had to be the pop-up rollover protection system – a significant innovation by Mercedes, which for the first time saw occupants of a fully open car given substantial protection in the event of a roll. Reportedly taking four years and over £8m to develop, a U-shaped bar pops up in 0.3 seconds should sensors monitoring suspension behaviour and the angle of the car to the road anticipate a possible rollover.

When the 500SL went on sale in the UK in autumn 1989 it was priced at £58,000, the second most expensive Mercedes after the 560SEC at £63,000. Leather seats with electrical memory adjustment were included, but if you wanted air conditioning that was another £2,000, driver and passenger airbags £2,200, seat heaters £365 and cruise control £307. And the factory radio equipment list was interesting: a Becker radio/cassette was £1,200 and if a CD player was incorporated the price rose to £2,700! But long queues of customers developed, all paying full list price.

In September 1992, the 500SL engine switched from Bosch KE-Jetronic to Bosch LH-Jetronic fuel injection; in the interests of low exhaust emissions, this no longer featured a richer fuel mix under full throttle, hence maximum power dropped slightly, to 316bhp, although peak torque increased to 347lb ft, occurring 100rpm lower.

In June 1993, the R129 (along with all other Mercedes cars) changed its model badging, with the numbers and letters reversed, the 500SL becoming the SL500. And after six years, in September 1995, the R129 received the first of its two facelifts. Visually, the changes were low key, limited to new wheels and colour-keyed exterior trim and some tweaks in the cabin, but there were significant engineering updates including a new coil pack ignition system and a five-speed electronically controlled automatic gearbox for the SL500, while Brake Assist and ESP traction control were fitted. A glass topped roof became available, and this spec continued until April 1998 when, at the R129's second facelift, the SL500 switched to the dual ignition, three-valve M113 V8 (302bhp/339lb ft).

Driving the 500SL

The M119 V8 will go down as one of Mercedes' best ever engines: it has the same silky refinement as the preceding M117, but a lot more top-end urgency. Notwithstanding the SL60 AMG, many reckon the five-litre V8 is the choice for the R129, as smooth as the V12 but with more character and certainly not wanting in performance. It's a lovely motor to use, making the 500SL/SL500 a supremely relaxed drive. As for the transmission, the five-speed auto fitted in 1995-on cars is nice to have but doesn't fundamentally alter the feel of this roadster.

Inside, the R129 retains the old school Mercedes style. The cabin furnishings are solid and well made, and the contrasting walnut veneer and plastic trim combination has a superior look and feel. The hood, though, is too old fashioned, with exposed metal stays inside, and it was disappointing that when you got a glass rear screen on a VW Golf convertible, the SL item was plastic.

What you'll pay

All change here. Just a few years ago early 500SL/SL500s filled the bargain basement classifieds, but now you won't find many under £10,000. They're still being offered for sale – but as classics, not cheap old Mercs.

At the time of writing, there were plenty examples advertised online by dealers, ranging from £18,500 for a 1995 SL500 with 86,000 miles to £29,500 for an early, 1989/G in classic Almandine Red with just 32,000 miles. The top prices are likely to be charged by the established classic Mercedes specialists; SL Shop in Warwickshire, for example, asked £39,995 for a late, 1997 24-valve with 24,000 miles. However, the cheap R129 still exists if you look for it, such as the privately offered, £6,995 1995 500SL near Sheffield with a sad looking hood and 114,000 – or possibly more – miles showing on the odometer. ▷

Just the facts

Mercedes-Benz 500SL (R129)

Engine	M119 4,973cc V8
Power	322bhp@5,500rpm
Torque	332lb ft@4,000rpm
Transmission	4-speed auto, RWD
Weight	1,770kg
0-62mph	6.2sec
Top speed	155mph
Fuel consumption	17.0mpg
Years produced	03.1989-08.1992

Mercedes-Benz 500SL/SL500 (R129)

Engine	M119 4,973cc V8
Power	316bhp@5,600rpm
Torque	347lb ft@3,900rpm
Transmission	4-/5-speed auto, RWD
Weight	1,800kg
0-62mph	6.5sec
Top speed	155mph
Fuel consumption	17.7mpg
Years produced	09.1992-06.1998

All figures from Mercedes-Benz; fuel consumption according to EEC urban; top speed electronically limited; 500SL model known as the SL500 from June 1993; five-speed auto introduced in September 1995

(17 switches, 15 pressure cylinders and 11 magnetic valves), while a new device called a windbreak made its first appearance. The cabin bristled with electric motors, to move the steering wheel, the seats, the seat belt tensioners

500SL/SL500 Inside and out



Specialist overview
Bruce Greetham of SL Shop, Warwickshire

"The R129 is a reliable car and the M119 is one of the best engines Mercedes has ever made. The sweet spot is 1996 to 1998, the last of the M119s before the M113 came in, when they were really sorted. These are the best R129s in their pure form.

"The engine only has only two common issues, the wiring loom and condensation in the distributor caps of the early engines. The four-speed gearboxes are supposed to be more robust than the five-speeds, but I've never had problems with the five-speed automatic."

Powertrain

● Engines from 1993 onwards used Mercedes' infamous 'biodegradable' wiring loom. Due to the heat, this disintegrates in the main loom (and also in the separate loom in the throttle body mounted inside the vee of the engine) and causes misfiring.

● 500s from before September 1995 had twin ignition rotors (one on each cylinder bank) and their caps are prone to condensation build-up in cold weather, which not only results in fluffy engine running but can irreparably damage the caps. The subsequent coil pack M119s are unaffected.

● A 'tappety' sounding engine is almost certainly due to the plastic oil supply tubes to the tappets losing pressure and becoming incapable of delivering oil. If left in this state, the oil-starved tappets will wear to the point where they all need replacing. Later oil pipes were metal and more durable.

● The five-speed gearbox is generally as reliable as the four-speed, and any shifting problems are more often than not a result of skimped gearbox servicing.





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Suspension, steering and braking system

● On cars with the optional adaptive damping, take particular note of the ride quality - if almost rock hard, the suspension spheres may be faulty.

● Check for noises and clunks from the front suspension - worn lower ball joints can cause a creaking noise.

● Steering precision can be affected by play in the track rod ends, and by leaks from the steering box and the steering damper.

● The brake pipes can rust where they pass over the top of the rear subframe, and the rubber brake hoses perish. And if an R129 is used infrequently, the discs become covered in surface rust, and the rear ones in particular suffer in this respect, due to there being less braking force to clear it.



Designo Light Green paintwork; the R129 SL is 4.5m long and 1.8m wide.

Spotted for sale

USED CAR DEALER
SL500
1995, silver, black leather, Japanese import, RHD, 34,800km (21,759 miles), £19,950, Brighton



M-B made 79,827 500SL/ SL500s with M119 V8; 17s standard from 1998.



"The R129 is a reliable car and the M119 is one of the best engines Mercedes has ever made"

Bodywork and wheels

● The R129 resists corrosion impressively, but the sheer age of the car takes its toll. Check the front wings above where the wing joins the bumper, below the indicator, and also inspect the rear wings. Other areas known to rust are the tops of the suspension mounts, and the front valance below the front bumper and around the boot lock.

● Examine the metal hardtop which came with every R129, and don't be surprised if there is some bubbling of the metal at the bottom of the pillars, where it meets the car's bodywork.

● The three plastic windows in the hood can harden, crack or turn opaque with age. The only cures are replacement windows or a new hood, both expensive options.







Airbags and rollover protection included; the R129 SL-Class is a 2+2.

Interior and electrics

● The air conditioning should be checked for efficient operation; normally a non-functioning system means a leak, usually from the condenser.

● Hood operation should be smooth, because at this age the many sensors and micro switches can play up. Electrical fault finding on early 500SLs can be difficult and time consuming, as they do not communicate so well with diagnostic equipment.

● The rollover bar, which can be raised by a switch on the dash, should also go up and down smoothly.

● All electrics should be tested thoroughly, electric memory seats being a common failure. A new control module under the seat is required. ▷

500SL/SL500 Inside and out

Verdict

Aside from early R230s, the R129 is the only SL available for affordable money; even the very, very best five-litre V8s come at under £40,000, way less than a pristine R107 or W113 Pagoda. The 'problem' for many prospective SL purchases is, of course, the styling, which is quite bland compared to that of other SLs. That's ironic, because based on the driving experience alone, the R129 is arguably a vastly superior car to its predecessor.

But this sentiment leaves the R129, and particularly the M119-engined 500SL/SL500 something of an undiscovered treasure. For £20,000 you'll get a wonderfully well built, comfortable Mercedes-Benz roadster that is fast and refined, and still modern enough for everyday driving. What's not to like?



M119 vs M113

We restricted this Buyer's Guide to the M119-engined 500s, but what's the difference between that engine and the M113 V8, which went into the SL500 in 1998 for the last three years of production? The M113 switched from four- to three-valve cylinder-heads and twin spark plugs, and power and torque decreased slightly – and this was enough to give the M113 car a different character, according to Bruce Greetham of Warwickshire-based SL Shop.

"The M113 is more fuel efficient and cleaner, but it makes the car feel clinical," he insists. "You've got to rev it harder to get the torque, and it has lost that edge the M119 has. You could say it's better but less enjoyable." Bruce also feels that the other changes implemented in the 1998 facelift altered the SL500's feel. "You had nappa leather, fold-in mirrors, and overall it feels softer and more modern. If you're purist, you want a 1996 to 1998 M119-engined car."



DAIMLER AG

Spotted for sale

CLASSIC CAR SPECIALIST
500SL
1992/K, blue, mushroom leather, air conditioning, electric memory seats, 65,500 miles, £18,000, Glasgow

Typical basic servicing costs

(A/B services including VAT)

Model	Oil Service	Major Service
500SL/SL500	£213	£1,424

Quotes from SL Shop

Non routine servicing costs

- ★ Gearbox oil change **£396**
- ★ Fit front brake discs and pads **£531**
- ★ Fit two new ignition distributor caps **£573**
- ★ Renew the engine and throttle body wiring looms **£3,051**
- ★ Replace the lower front suspension arm ball joints and bushes (pair) **£1,738**
- ★ Four premium brand tyres (225/55ZR16) **£600**

500SL/SL500 timeline

● **October 1989**
UK sales of the 500SL (and 300SL/300SL-24) commence

● **September 1992**
The 500SL's five-litre M119 engine switches from Bosch KE-Jetronic to Bosch LH-Jetronic fuel injection, with a slight loss of power

● **June 1993**
Under Mercedes-Benz's new badging policy the R129 500SL is now known as the SL500

● **September 1995**
The R129 range is facelifted, improvements including a standard-fit five-speed automatic in the SL500

● **April 1998**
The 32-valve M119 V8 engine is discontinued, the SL500 now using the three-valves-per-cylinder M113 V8

What you'll pay

£5,000-£10,000 Early 1990s 500SL, with corrosion and little or no service history, and possibly some mechanical issues too

£10,000-£15,000 Average condition 500SLs and SL500s with over 100,000 miles, offered privately

£15,000-£25,000 Good cars with under 75,000 miles, mostly sold by dealers at this price

£25,000-£40,000 Must be an immaculate condition 'time capsule' example, with under 40,000 miles on the clock and a full service history record



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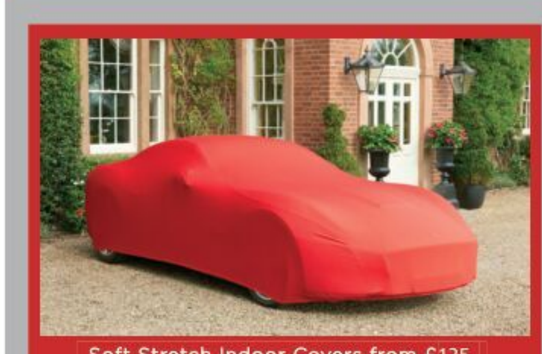
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Best laid plans

An unfortunate, low-speed run in with car park furniture leaves the ML needing surgery, whilst the W108 *almost* gets a new oil pan and gasket

WORDS & IMAGES **REED HITCHCOCK**

FACTSHEET

CARS 1972 280SEL 4.5/2002 ML320/2011 E350 Estate
OWNER Reed Hitchcock
LOCATION Virginia, USA
PURCHASED April 2020/ June 2018/May 2014
UPDATES SINCE LAST REPORT Repainted aftermarket bumper on the ML320 leaves its owner more out of pocket than anticipated



△ The ML320 recently received a kiss of death from a car park barrier.

▷ Around £800 later and Reed's Benz SUV was back to looking its best.

Accidents happen. Heck, it took me decades to live down the fact that on the one-year anniversary of receiving my driving license I caused a three-car collision that resulted in a pickup truck with a tweaked rear bumper, an accordioned then-new W124 300E, and my dad's company car – a Pontiac estate – looking like an old man with no teeth. Suffice to say, I've been there, so I really couldn't be too harsh when my younger daughter texted to let me know that she'd had an unfortunate run-in with a steel barrier in a car park at the wheel of our W163 ML320.

It really wasn't bad – on the surface. No airbags deployed, and there were no injuries or other vehicles involved. There was a decent-sized crack in the plastic bumper, but the lenses and surrounding sheet metal were all fine. Given my limited (knocking wood) recent experience with auto body repair, I ballparked the repair cost at about $500 (about £360). Silly me. There was no damage under the bumper cover, but even using an aftermarket replacement – once paint and labour were added – the cost came out to $1,100 (about £800).

Make or break

Truth is, I could have just left it. When we bought this car in 2018 it cost us $6,000 – so the cost for a cosmetic repair to the bumper approximated 20 per cent of the value of the car then, and probably more like 50 per cent now. Still, I do like to keep my cars in good shape – even the cheap ones. That said, both my daughter and I are far more aware of the current costs related to such things, and I think we'll both be a little more careful going forward. And backward, for that matter.

In other fleet news, the ML320 also got an oil/filter and air filter change, and all I have to say on that is I cannot express enough how simple and civilised the process is with the topside oil extractor. I've said it before and will say it again: with a top mounted oil filter there is no reason to crawl around on the ground to drain oil.

I also finally decided to install the new oil pan and gasket on the W108 280SEL 4.5. The pan fitted appears to be original and has seen better days, and it's one of the cheapest parts one can buy for an M117 motor. It's also among the easiest to replace, so I put the car up on the ramps and laid out the parts, tools, and new oil. Everything was looking great until I went to drain the oil. Remember that topside extractor? Well, despite the lower-mounted oil filter on this car, I've only ever used the extractor on it. The reason for that, as I was painfully reminded, was because I didn't have the 17mm hex wrench needed to remove the drain plug. I took the car down, put everything away, and ordered the wrench. Maybe it'll be done by my next report.

▽ 280SEL 4.5 up on the ramps ready for a new oil pan to be fitted...



Suitably booted

Brand new Yokohama rubber for the turbodiesel-powered SUV, which has also cured itself of a previously reported niggle

WORDS & IMAGES **DAVID SUTHERLAND**

FACTSHEET

CARS 2017 GLC220d AMG Line

OWNER David Sutherland

LOCATION Surrey, UK

PURCHASED September 2017

UPDATES SINCE LAST REPORT Now out of its PCP finance agreement, there is more freedom in where the GLC can go for a well-earned service



For decades, you only had to say "Yokohama" and my mind conjured up a very particular image. A road tyre with a hard, semi-competition compound that younger drivers who raced their cars at club level or attended track days would use because they were road legal and could stay on the whole time. With other quality brand tyre makers mostly concentrating the mass market, the Japanese exploited this niche to the full, marketing the tyres to the point that every impoverished, inverted baseball cap dreamed of having a set on their wildly 'improved' Vauxhall Nova.

Preferring ride comfort, low noise and longer tread life to out and out road grip, I avoided Yokohamas. I was also worried that any association with them would leave me branded a *Max Power* reader. But in fact, Yokohama has had a presence in the mainstream market for many years now, so it seemed appropriate to see how its tyres compared with the likes of Continental, Michelin and so on. Would its compound still be too extreme by comparison to the others?

This question was particularly important for me, given that our GLC220d AMG Line has 19-inch wheels, and 19-inch Yokos of the 1990s would have seen the SUV tramlining and riding like a go-kart. On went a set of Yokohama Advan Sports, which is the sportier of the firm's two road car lines, the other being BluEarth, more of an eco brand for smaller cars. They're the standard fitment, 235/55R19.

First impressions

Straight away it was obvious that the Advan Sports are as quiet as the previous Pirellis: no rumbling or any harshness, and the ride is just as good as before. That's all I can say about them, and it's all that needs to be said. Of course, it's Mercedes' engineers that should take most of the credit, having refined the GLC's suspension, bushing and insultation to such a degree that 19 inches can be so quiet.

I'm also pleased to report that a previous annoyance has cured itself, the parking sensors having stopped their random, uncontrollable squawking. And it seemed that the eco stop-start system had started working after at least a year during which the green light would come on occasionally and the system would operate for a very short time before going off again. However, as the cold weather set in it rarely comes into play.

△ So far, David is impressed by the GLC's new Yokohama tyres.

And finally, the GLC's financial status has changed, the PCP contract being completed after four years and the 'balloon' payment turned into a loan to buy outright. In my previous report, I complained that Mercedes-Benz Finance's quote for refinancing was uncompetitive against one or two high street banks, but when it came to actually applying for these loans, the low APR rates evaporated so I've started a new deal with the car maker. With this, the new tyres, working parking sensors and a fresh MOT, I feel like I'm driving a new car again, even though it has done 34,000 miles!

▽ A C-rating for fuel efficiency and a B-rating for wet grip.



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1988 Finished in Gleaming signal red, with as new beige interior, hard and soft tops, automatic, power steering, ABS brakes, alloys, stereo system, power windows, sundym glass, complete with original fire extinguisher and tools, every old MOT from new, original handbook and wallet, only 66,000 miles, magnificent full service history, garaged from new, this car is superb condition throughout having been pampered from new.

Mercedes 300SL Sports **£48,750**



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

Mercedes 560SL Sports 1988 LHD **£39,500**



1988, LHD, finished in Smoke Silver with Brazil hide interior, auto, headrests, hard and soft tops, centre armrest, over mats, first aid kit, CD stereo system, air-bag, air-con, power mirror, cruise control, ABS, power windows, SRS, outside temperature gauge, tinted glass, expensive Mercedes wheels, only 38,000 miles, service history, drives like new.

Mercedes-Benz 560SL Sports **£39,750**



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**



1988, left hand drive, finished in Impala, contrasting interior headrests, over-mats, hard and soft tops, auto, power, cruise control, ABS, air-con, air-bags, stereo and CD system, SRS, alloys, complete with all tools, 43,000 miles, two owners, garaged from new, service history.

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350SL 1972, excellent condition, kept in de-humidified storage, owned for 30 years, has had any work needed over the years to keep it in tip-top condition, POA. Tel: 07768 936053. Princes Risborough ***[BCW9]***

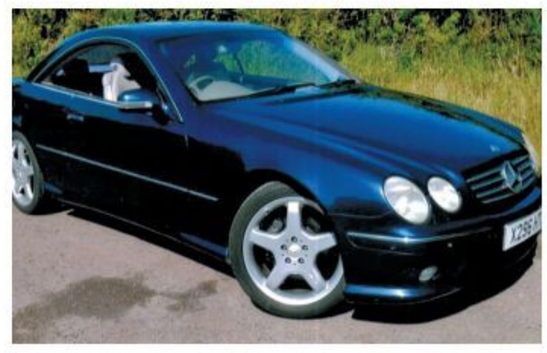
W114 280E 1973, 109,000 miles, red, beautifully presented 280E, MOT until August 2022, very clean interior and exterior, extensive history of work and restoration including photographs and MOTs dating back to 1983, invoices from 1986, POA. Tel: 07955 006780. Bracknell ***[BCW11]***



280SL 1983, stunning Forest Green coachwork, refurbed parchment interior, hard and soft tops in excellent condition, re-veneered central column and steering wheel to a beautiful finish, recent full service with new fuel lines, plugs, fluids and so on, new fuel pump, brakes overhauled, new calipers and pads fitted as needed, steering overhauled with new damper, electrics checked and all new fuses now in situ, new heater/blower fan, new chrome front bumper, Mexican hat alloys refurbed (including new bolts) with excellent tyres, all works carried out by professional mechanics, restorers and craftsmen, car drives beautifully and looks gorgeous, mileage is 138,000, ready to be used, enjoyed and loved, POA. Tel: 07932 666491. Stourbridge ***[BCW18]***



E55 AMG 140,000 miles, over 10 years ownership, comes with history, file of invoices, a lot of money spent on it, pleasure to drive, V8 sounds amazing, interior excellent, no wear and tear, slight rattle from cats, few rust spots, correct AMG 18-inch wheels, POA. Tel: 07837 327536. London ***[BCW21]***



CL500 2000, auto, coupe, X reg, only 50,000 miles, blue, grey leather trim, full service, ownership history, all manuals, MOT until October 2022, unused spare tyre, drives superbly, £3,250 OVNO. Tel: 07885 187076. Newcastle upon Tyne ***[BCP4]***



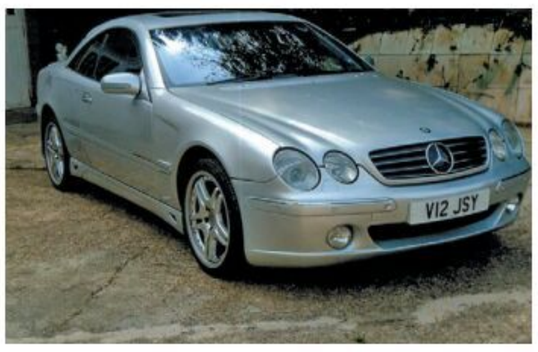
CLK320 2002, V6, silver, black hood , MOT to March 16 2022, 127,000 miles, full spec, grey leather interior, radio/CD, full toolkit, AMG alloys, all owner's manuals, unmarked inside and out, stunning example, a joy to drive. £3,000. Tel: 07933 108280. View at Bourne, Lincs ***[BCP3]***



CLK230 Kompressor Coupe Red top, green, cream interior, reg V945 ABD, registered November 1 1999, 54,000 miles from new, recharged air con, new battery, brand new gear selector module just fitted, garage kept, MOT, superb drive, £4,750 OVNO. Tel: 01775 680989. Spalding, Lincs. ***[BCP5]***

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MERC TRADER



CL600 2001, very special Lorinser V12 CL, believed only RHD version in the UK, 70,000 miles, outstanding Brilliant Silver, black leather, private plate, long MOT, £29,950. Tel: 01483 282830. Guildford ***[BCP6]***



280SE 3.5 Coupe 1970, 81,500 miles, black, black leather interior, sound engine, electrics, body and chassis, interior needs some attention, present owner has loved and cared for this charismatic car for over 25 years, £62,500. Tel: 07971 798442. London ***[CM37W1]***



S124 300TE 4Matic 1989, very good condition, MOT until August 2022, serviced summer 2020, mileage states 88,179 but odometer hasn't worked for some time, relay recently replaced due to random stalling, featured in ***Mercedes Enthusiast*** October 2017, £5,000. Tel: 07796 626537. Kent ***[CM37W6]***



R171 SLK200 2008, Midnight Blue, ivory leather interior, 66,500 miles, MOT until March 2022, lack of use forces sale now that I am retired, owner for the last six years, brings a smile to my face every time I drive it, very good condition, offers around £4,990. Tel: 01686 651284. Welshpool ***[ABW2***



CLK230 Kompressor 2001, Jasper Blue, AMG wheels, 127,000 miles, two-tone leather, two new keys, service history, radio card, owner's manual, thousands spent, all receipts, MOT, immaculate car, phone mornings up to lunch time, £POA. Tel: 01619 454615. Manchester ***[CM37P2]***



E280 CDI Estate Elegance 2006, 2,987cc V6, auto, diesel, Cubanite Silver, 135,000 miles, tax (£340), MOT until May 2022, suspension Sport/Comfort, CD, large boot, dog guard, front/ rear sensors, Bluetooth link from mobile to car audio, alloy wheels, Nokian all-season tyres, two owners, service history, bills from new, £3,500. Tel: 07503 354277. Scarborough ***[CM37P4]***



230S 1965, used daily, good condition, good paint and interior, good underneath, drives well, starts well, ring for more info, £15,250 ONO. Tel: 01754 830035. Spilsby ***[CM37W2]***



SL320 1999, almost like new, no dents, scratches or rust, pristine condition, regularly serviced, automatic, leather interior, walnut dash, heated seats, three owners from new, excellent condition soft top with wind deflector, Mercedes service history, old MOT certificates, electric seats, climate control, CD stacker, nice sound system, good alloys and tyres, 12 months MOT, new car is the only reason for sale, £7,990. Tel: 07940296074. Brentford ***[CM37W11]***



300SL-24 1991, 65,000 miles, all 26 MOTs, FSH, new Mercedes exhaust, brakes, water pump, Dunlop tyres, excellent condition, £9,970. Tel: 01643 862322. Somerset ***[CM37P1]***



A124 E220 Cabriolet Four-seater, 93,331 miles, Azurite Blue, two-door, petrol, automatic, replacement mohair roof installed, mushroom leather interior, electric leather heated front seats, two owners from new, excellent condition, MOT until May 2022, additional front interior included, £11,000 ONO. Tel: 07788 196478. Epsom ***[CM37W4]***



C123 280CE 1985, only done 74,800 miles, full Mercedes history, auto, pristine condition throughout, £12,000 spent with John Haynes Mercedes, the entire bodywork and interior is stunning, rare to see such a great car in stunning beige metallic, four owners, air conditioning, alloys and good tyres, substantial documented service and MOT history, maintained regardless of cost, £19,990. Tel: 07940 296074. Northampton ***[CM37W7]***



SL55 AMG 2004, 82,000 miles, black metallic, crimson full leather, massage seats, glass roof, F1 body kit factory fitted from new, spotless inside and out, voted car of the year by ***Top Gear***, £18,400. Tel: 07860 611302. Exeter ***[ABW1]***



CL500 2000, Brilliant Silver, 99,000 miles, grey leather, automatic, long MOT, running well, too many toys hence the price, £2,200. Tel: 01483 282830. Surrey ***[CM37P3]***



190E 1998, saloon, a really nice clean car, only 140,000 miles, five-speed, manual, all original, MOT until August 2022, only two former keepers, some history, £3,000 ONO. Tel: 07851 212816. Spalding ***[CM37W9]***



E55 AMG 2004, immaculate, 29,000 miles, garaged, zero rust, new-leather smell, collector's piece, £POA. Tel: 07825 374132. Cornwall ***[ABW3]***

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C270 CDI Estate Avantgarde 2004, black, auto, 198,000 miles, MOT until Jan 2022, black cloth interior, recent tyres, new battery, good runner, good condition for year, £1,500 ONO. Tel: 07429 391584. Newmarket ***[ABW4]***



SL320 1998, special limited edition, 91,000 miles, automatic, convertible, very good condition, new alloys, hardtop stand, original manuals, first aid kit, radio, Bose CD player, £10,000 ONO. Tel: 01364 716331. Devon ***[ABW7]***



SL500 1997, 100,411 miles, MOT due March 2022, rare Pearlescent Green/Blue two-tone colour, the last of the R129 SLs, more powerful 32-valve quad-cam V8 M119 engine, later improved five-speed autobox, SL private plate negotiable. £14,500. Tel: 07812 648345. Corby ***[ABW10]***



W126 300SE 1987, super order throughout, impeccable service history, blue velour interior, automatic, electric roof, windows, mirror, Zebrano wood trim, dual air con, radio/cassette, classic wheel trims, FSH 23 stamps, MOT until April 2022, plate excluded, £9,450. Tel: 07958 431991. Northampton ***[CM36W5]***



1989 300SE just 62,000 miles, good condition, however it needs some light restoration, it has rust forming in the usual places but nowhere near as bad as some of this vintage, full service history, a brand new MOT and new tyres, just completed a 500-mile round trip with no issues, £POA. Tel: 07847 423616. Padstow ***[ABW5]***



C270 CDI Elegance SE Saloon, automatic/Tiptronic, showroom condition, Brilliant Silver, unmarked Pacific Blue interior, one driver from new, 52 Reg, 34,900 miles, no short runs of less than 30 miles, garaged from new, fitted with a heated/dehumidifier, usual MB refinements: electric seats, cruise, heated mirrors etc., serviced and MOT'd exclusively by Mercedes main dealer from new, full records, original handbook/documents, full set of keys, exceptionally well cared for, £5,500. Email: Bazhylda1.11@outlook.com. Buckinghamshire ***[CM36W6]***



SLK230 Kompressor 1999/V, auto, 20,500 miles, one elderly owner from 2000, Mercedes history, clean and proper, two keys, all books, collectable car indeed, £7,995. Tel: 07961 808069. Silverspeed. London ***[CM36W1]***



280CE 1985, a refined classic coupe, a period-perfect colour scheme, low mileage for its age, four owners from new, recommissioned in 2019 by John Haynes Mercedes at a cost of around £12,000, gold paintwork, beige velour upholstery, electric windows, rear headrests, Blaupunkt stereo, retrofitted air con (not functioning due to broken fan belt), original owner's manuals and service book, maintenance invoices and registration documents, a copy of ***Mercedes Enthusiast*** will also be included which features this 280CE as a 'Forecourt Find' in 2018, a few small dents on the underside and one small indent in the plastic bumper trim, performed a 6,000 miles service before fitting new engine mounts, a new exhaust and new brakes, 2.7-litre, 182bhp DOHC straight-six with Bosch K-Jetronic fuel injection, four-speed automatic, £23,495. Tel: 07940 296074. Croydon***[CM36W3]***



A124 E220 Cabriolet 1997, four-seater, Azurite Blue, petrol, automatic, mushroom leather interior, electric heated front seats, 99,331 miles, custom chrome twin tails exhaust, bodywork excellent condition, comprehensive service history, MOT until May 22, £8,500 ONO. Tel: 07873 662134. Epsom ***[ABW6]***



Benz Patent Motorwagen Unique opportunity to purchase a fully working replica, owned since 2017, supplied new from Vintage and Prestige, trailered to Mercedes Benz Club events, it has not covered one mile, £POA. Tel: 07739 250610. Telford ***[ABW9]***



W123 280CE 1984, 80,000 miles, beige with olive cloth interior, auto, air, call for further information, £17,500. Tel: 07710 350602. Suffolk ***[EFW1]***



W124 260E 1991, saloon, Midnight Blue, immaculate cream leather interior, original, minimal body rust, partial service history, £2,000 ONO. Tel: 07815 776196. West Wickham ***[EFW9]***

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E320 Coupe Auto, silver, grey leather, slide and tilt electric sunroof, electric mirrors and windows, 10 months MOT, four new tyres, two owners since new, reasonable condition for year, 180,000 miles, £3,200. Tel: 07903 030474. Iverheath ***[CM36W4]***



E320 Cabriolet 1993, FSH, blue, cream upholstery, good condition, 192,000 miles, in the past two years it has had new fuel pumps, rear shocks, hood, MOT until 30 June 2022, £8,995. Tel: 07734 106885. West Midlands ***[EFW10]***



E55 AMG 2004, 28,500 miles, power/heated seats, xenon lights, cruise control, air suspension, immaculate condition, fresh Japanese import, grade 4.5B, zero rust, undersealed, ceramic coated, FSH, £26,500, Tel: 07825 374132. Truro ***[EFW3]***



E220 CDI Estate Avantgarde 2004, auto, 132,750 miles, seven-seater, silver, grey, leather, xenon lights, rear air suspension, pre-wired integrated phone kit, converts to Bluetooth, six-CD player, mudflaps, tow bar, two owners, £4,995 ONO. Tel: 02866 341988. Enniskillen ***[EFW2]***







300SL Sport 1989, auto, facelift model, last of production, fully galvanised body, waxoyled, only 52,000 miles, service history, some invoices, immaculate condition throughout, garaged with dehumidifier, metallic silver, full dark blue leather interior, heated seats, cruise control, ABS, power assist steering, central locking with remote fob, rear seats, new dark blue soft top, hard top in metallic silver, Mercedes fire extinguisher, sealed un opened factory first aid kit and toolkit, vanity lit mirrors, external temperature gauge, more photographs available on request, MOT until June 2022, constantly growing in value, obvious investment, £38,500 ONO. Tel: 07818 222574. Milngavie. Scotland ***[EFW16] + [EFW17] + [EFW18]***



500SEC 1991, 140,000 miles, unmarked burgundy paintwork, cream leather (no marks), recent full gearbox rebuild, no visible rust, rear parcel shelf has been replaced, drives remarkably well, keeps pulling above 100mph, all electrics work, no air con, fully serviced, £17,500. Tel: 07709 391252. York ***[EFW5]***



300SL-24 1993, 61,000 miles, March 2022 MOT, a treat to drive, effortlessly capable whilst remaining enormously comfortable, Imola Red, pebble leather, equipped with factory hardtop, power hood (black), £15,990. Tel: 07812 013963. North Yorkshire ***[EFW4]***



W123 200 1982, under 85,000 miles, 109hp, superb condition inside and out, no rust, new brakes, shocks, battery, timing chain, MOT until December, Tax-free from 2022, South African import, could be concourse with little effort, £7,800 ONO. Tel: 07910 060390. Edinburgh ***[EFW8]***



SL320 1999, 3.2-litre, excellent condition throughout, the entire bodywork and interior is very nice, three owners, nice condition, air con, electric heated seats, electric roof, alloys and good tyres, full Mercedes history documented service and MOT history, mohair soft top, recent service, £7,395. Tel: 07958431991 Northampton ***[EFW20]***



300CE 1992, 24V, silver, black leather, 143,000 miles, five-speed automatic, Sportline suspension, air con, electric sunroof, windows and seats, full history, owned since 1999, £4,500. Tel: 07776 842312. Worcestershire ***[EFW21]***



S500 Facelift, very low miles 49,000, great history, great spec, factory AMG kit and wheels, black, black leather, wood trim/steering, memory pack, xenon lights, Parktronic, soft close, six-CD, new tyres, sunroof, UV reflecting double glazed, beautiful car in great condition, MB club member, £POA. Tel: 07870 963662. Leicester ***[EFW22]***



W212 E350 CDI BlueEfficiency Estate Avantgarde March 2010, two careful owners, full service history, 109,000 miles, excellent condition, silver, grey interior, Comand audio system, memory package, sat nav, heated front seats, reversing camera, Parktronic, leather seats, sliding glass, sunroof with tilt, 7G-Tronic auto, paddles, cruise control, Harmon Kardon Logic7 surround sound system, cornering light function, adaptive main beam assist, tyre pressure loss warning system, £7,000. Tel: 07770 935744. Kent ***[DEW15]***



CLK320 Cabriolet 1999, automatic, 105,000 miles, stunning metallic blue, grey leather, one year MOT, £2,750. Tel: 01483 282830. Surrey ***[EFP1]***



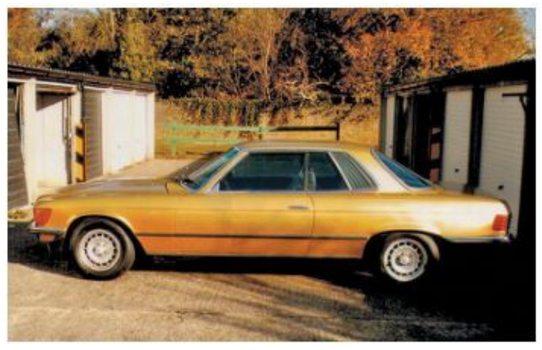
C220 Elegance 1995, one owner from new, covered 18,000 miles, excellent condition throughout, Almandine Red, grey cloth interior, electric sunroof and windows, original Michelin factory fitted tyres, all old MOTs and original purchase invoice, MOT until 2022, £6,995 ONO. Tel: 07979 803938. Uxbridge ***[EFW23]***



C180 Sport 1998, 107,000 miles, saloon, Imperial Red, black interior, dogtooth black and grey dash, pillars etc., one owner, automatic with manual option, runs well, five alloy wheels, electric windows on front doors, cruise control, original Blaupunkt radio/ cassette, numberplates to be retained by owner, exterior paintwork and body etc., needs attention, interior good, with some attention it will be a good collector's car for the future, £2,200 ONO. Tel: 07935 403525. High Wycombe ***[EFP4]***



C240 Sport 1998, 102,000 miles, FSH, black, grey leather interior, auto, climate control, air con, immobiliser, four electric windows, four headrests, AMG wheels, central locking, smooth clean engine, all M-B serviced at Portadown, over £4,000 service bills, £3,250 ONO. Tel: 02840 622535. County Down. Northern Ireland ***[EFP2]***



350SLC 1972, Icon Gold, restored for Drew Pritchard, original leather seats, reconditioned auto gearbox, 70,000 miles, reconditioned steering box, new sills, all welding done, resprayed, many new parts, £16,995. Tel: 07503 739538. London ***[EFP3]***

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INTERNATIONAL MERCEDES



W110 190D Fintail/Heckflosse Naturally-aspirated, in-line four-cylinder diesel engine, engine power: 40kW at 4,200rpm and a maximum torque of 118Nm (87lb ft) at 4,200rpm, rear-wheel drive, four-speed manual gearbox, POA. Tel: 0021222 300041. Egypt ***[BCW8]***



280SL 1983, only 101,093 miles, Mercedes maintenance book, many photos and documents on demand, beautiful car, right-hand drive, POA. Tel: 06071 42044. Lyon, France ***[BCW12]***



W115 240D 1976, car in Portugal but UK supplied when new, ULEZ compliant, white, good running condition but does require attention to some blisters on bodywork and driver's seat, POA. Tel: 07415 129117. Portugal ***[BCW17]***

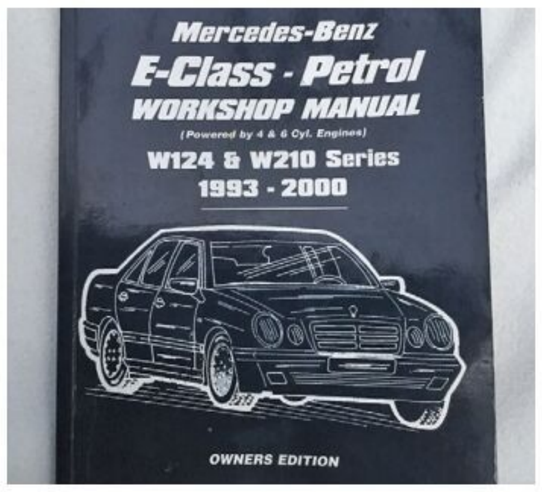


500SL 1993, black, black leather, 8,800km, serviced by M-B, one of the best, €47.500. Tel: +49 15163 275890, Email: kaymel@web.de. Bremen. Germany ***[EFW15***



190SL 1957, originally purchased in Germany, arrived in Toronto in 1970, my father purchased the car in July 1965 with 58,000 miles, never been in an accident or driven in winter, motor taken apart in 1981 with a bad head gasket issue and the engine has not been reassembled, body has been sanded down to bare metal and finished with primer, been in storage since 1981, open to serious offers only. Tel: 1-778-833-2954. Canada ***[CM37W3]***

PARTS, MISC & ACCESSORIES



M-B E-Class Workshop Manual W124 & W210 series, 1993-2000 owners edition, 204 pages, published by Brookland Books, £14. Tel: 07989 951895. Canterbury ***[BCW2]***



Becker BE1350 radio cassette and M-B branded Alpine MC3194 six-disc CD changer Unmarked, from 1995 R129 SL320, CD changer requires repair, original three-way speaker system from same car, £350 ONO (will split). Tel: 07981 062374. Coulsdon ***[BCW7]***



SL320 1999, 3.2L, excellent condition throughout, the entire body work and interior is very nice, in stunning Almandien Red factory Metallic, beige leather interior, radio, three owners, nice condition five-spoke alloys & good tyres, full Mercedes history, substantial documented service & MOT history, electric mohair soft top, maintained regardless of cost, recent service, Mercedes Pagoda forces sale, £7,695. Tel: 07958 431991. Croydon ***[DEW3***

E320 CDI Avantgarde 2002, auto, 3,226cc, diesel, five-door, saloon, dark blue, light beige leather, MOT, 87,000 miles, full service history, amazingly economical, fast and powerful, superb 3.2-litre diesel engine, would make an excellent tow car, please note the MBZ registration, £2,600 – PX old car, kit car, motorcycle or three-wheeler. Tel: 07756 567248. Dorset ***[DEW2]***

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Genuine Mercedes boot liner Part number A205 814 0600, fits W205 C-Class saloon models 2014 to 2021, little used, very good condition, no splits or cracks etc. Costs over £100 from Mercedes, collection preferred but happy to meet up in Tyne-Tees area, £40. Tel: 01429 232291. Hartlepool *[BCW14]*



Genuine Mercedes-Benz S-Class winter wheel package 4x 17-inch alloys with Dunlop winter tyres, both wheels and tyres are in great condition, they come with tyre covers (×4), wheel stand and cover to hold and protect the winter tyres, £400. Tel: 07717 841420. Thatcham *[BCW13]*



Set of four Sachs shock absorbers Good as new, suitable for W108, W109, W110, W111, W112 and W113 models, £250. Tel: 07867 552334. Devon *[BCW15]*

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18-inch AMG alloys Monoblocks, R129 SL, W210 E-Class, genuine Mercedes W210 E55 AMG staggered alloys, good tyres, not kerbed, buckled, damaged or cracked, £1,200 ONO. Tel: 07837 327536. London *[BCW19]*



W210 E55 AMG Front Bumper Genuine Mercedes, removed from 1998 model. Tel: 07837 327536. London *[BCW20]*



Mercedes six-cylinder SL ignition leads Rotor arm, distributor cap and HT lead, used but in perfect working order, new set fitted mistakenly, all original Mercedes parts and packaging, not aftermarket parts which do not perform as well, cost to buy from Mercedes £424.35, £150 ONO. Tel: 07818 222574. Milngavie. *[CM37W10]*

230SL hardtop 1967, ivory in good condition, could use new headliner, $4,900. Tel: 8058 841994. Email: bilflowers@gmail.com. Santa Barbara, C *[CM37]*

18-inch alloys with Bridgestone Potenza tyres Genuine Mercedes, taken from W221 S-Class chassis, will fit other Mercedes models, bought as a spare set but never used, photos can be supplied via WhatsApp/text on request, £500 ONO. Tel: 07850 187400. Ormskirk *[CM37]*



W212 E-Class SE parts 2013 – 2014, facelift model, two headlights, original Mercedes OEM, will fit from March 2013 and 2014 models, includes control units fitted, £1,290. Tel: 02866 341988. Enniskillen *[EFW11]*



Water cooler radiator and fan and frame cowl Fits C-Class (W204), E200 CGI and E250 CGI petrol engine model, part numbers A204 9060 212, £223. Tel: 02866 341988. Enniskillen *[EFW12]*

Window regulators with motors R171 SLK, O/S and N/S quarter, 2005, model, also a supercharger for the same model, all in good condition, £50 each, Tel: 07825 544213. North Wales *[CM37]*

Every issue of *Mercedes Enthusiast* from Issue 1 to present Carefully stored but now need to make space, everyone in superb condition, collection only, open to sensible offers. Tel: 01527 402225. Worcestershire *[CM37]*

18-inch AMG alloys with Goodyear Eagle F1 tyres Genuine, wheels were recently refurbished, came off a W220 S55 AMG W220, will fit other models, staggered fitment, £900 ONO. Tel: 07850 187400. Ormskirk. *[CM37]*

NO. PLATES



21 HRH Cherished registration plate for sale, on retention, original issue, dateless number £POA. Tel: 07583 613521. Tamworth *[BCP1]*



M1BCY Open to offers, feel free to call or massage me, £1,350. Tel: 07738 556978. Radlett *[CM36]*



E19 MKM Registration on retention, available immediately £350. Tel: 01892 613164. East Sussex *[EF]*



A19 OEM Perfect to add to any classic Mercedes Benz 190E, plate is on retention, available for quick transfer with costs already paid, £900. Tel: 07449 205448. Southampton *[DE]*



RAF 668 For sale, 668 was a WW2 squadron number, owned by me since 1973, has original registration book and 1973 MOT document, placed on retention in 2015, £POA. Tel: 07842 586858. Cheshire *[CM33]*

WANTED

MB-Tex, velour interior for a W201 190 saloon (1987 model), will pay good price and collect anywhere in the UK. Tel: 0151 639 0149. Wirral. *[BC]*

Dateless numberplates Top price payed. Tel: 07858 264064. Nr Malpas *[CM36]*

W202 halogen headlamp units Post-facelift, pair of complete UK specification, new or good used. Tel: 01344 876043. London *[EF]*

Set of genuine carpet mats for a 2006 W211 E320 Saloon Preferably a new or mint condition set. Tel: 07949 792278. Leeds *[DE]*

W124 front/passenger or driver seat Black, the car is from 1994. Tel: 01516 390149. Wallasey *[CM34*

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With AMG's 6.2-litre V8 set to be replaced by a more efficient, four-litre biturbo unit, in 2014 we grabbed the keys to a C63 507 Edition and headed to Affalterbach via the Nürburgring to remind ourselves what made its engine so special

WORDS **KYLE MOLYNEUX** IMAGES **CRAIG PUSEY**





◁ Germany is full of great roads that aren't detailed by Google Street View.

◁▽ An impromptu visit to AMG's headquarters in the sleepy town of Affalterbach.

It starts with a turn of the key, a flash of lights in the instrument cluster, and an intake of breath as the C63 fires a guttural bark down a dead quiet street. The 507 Edition-spec AMG couldn't care less that it's 3:30am and that all my neighbours are asleep. Or at least they were.

The deep warbling sound is all the music I need during my journey south to collect photographer Craig Pusey, before continuing towards Folkestone for the Eurotunnel train to Calais. Boarding the shuttle, it won't be the first time that I appreciate the C63's compact dimensions.

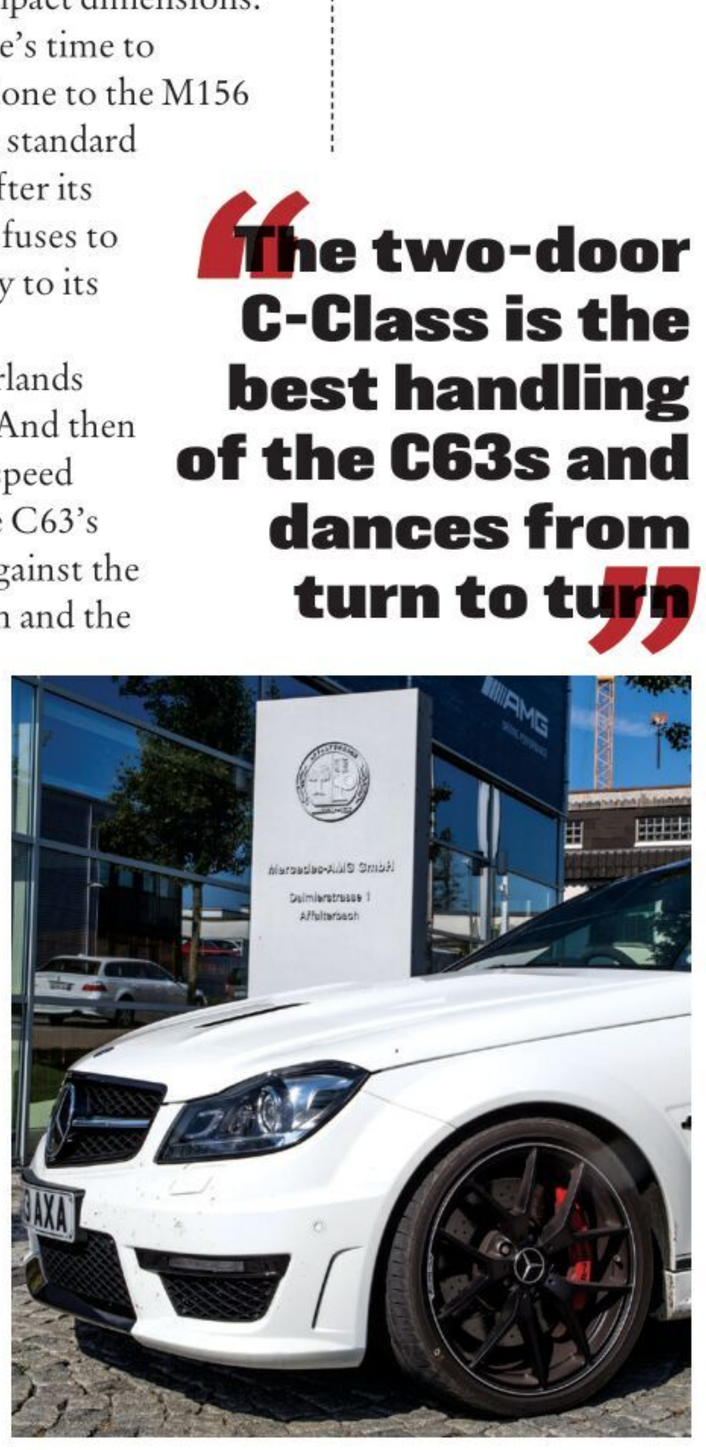
Some 30 minutes later we arrive in France and there's time to appreciate what the 'Edition 507' components have done to the M156 V8's delivery at the top end of its delivery. Where the standard C63 motor's powerful stride begins to shorten just after its peak at 6,800rpm, this upgraded V8 (with 500bhp) refuses to cool off, spinning with new-found ferocity all the way to its 7,200rpm redline.

The C63 effortlessly carries us through the Netherlands and soon we find ourselves on Germany's doorstep. And then we hit the autobahns. And traffic. Moments of high speed cruising are frustratingly brief, the upper levels of the C63's top speed potential remaining untouched for now. Against the odds, we arrive at the Nürburgring by early afternoon and the Edition 507's exclusive appearance attracts smartphone cameras by the bucket load.

Up early the next morning and greeted by beautifully calm weather, the morning birds are quickly outshouted by the 6,208cc, 32-valve V8. Driving alone and on the hunt for an interesting road to reinforce my already healthy bond with the car, the Comand Online's mapping system reveals a squiggly stretch of tarmac not four miles away, just off the 410.

The C63 was born for roads like this one. With its lower centre of gravity, the two-door C-Class is the best handling of the C63s and dances from turn to turn, managing to feel utterly planted on the straights yet positively loose and engaging in the corners, especially with the ESP set to Sport Handling mode (note that you can also turn off this system completely).

"The two-door C-Class is the best handling of the C63s and dances from turn to turn"



After watching SLS AMG GT3s take second and third in the Nürburgring 24-hour race, our journey to Affalterbach resumes. The home of AMG is a strange place, in that it looks nothing like the sort of town that could nurture such extreme engineering; it is quiet and unassuming. The AMG site itself does without security guards and barriers, and even branding until you venture deeper – a massive banner displaying the words 'Welcome to the Home of Driving Performance' above one entrance.

With photographs taken, it's not lost on us that this is the beginning of the end. Thankfully, the 450-mile drive back to Calais provides the perfect conclusion to our trip, with the autobahns far quieter than before; 100mph comes effortlessly, and 120mph not long after. Another 10mph and the C63 is roaring louder than ever, 140mph whistling by as traffic remains mercifully light – the steering beginning to feel flighty too, as aerodynamics take effect. Those aero 'flics' at the front of the Black Series would be very useful right now...

My bottle goes at 160mph but the M156 has made its point. Nine years old or not, it is still a fabulously powerful engine, with unmistakable character that also defines its maker. I can't bring myself to accept its imminent demise as the sun sets on the final leg of our journey.

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